



Utrecht Art Supplies

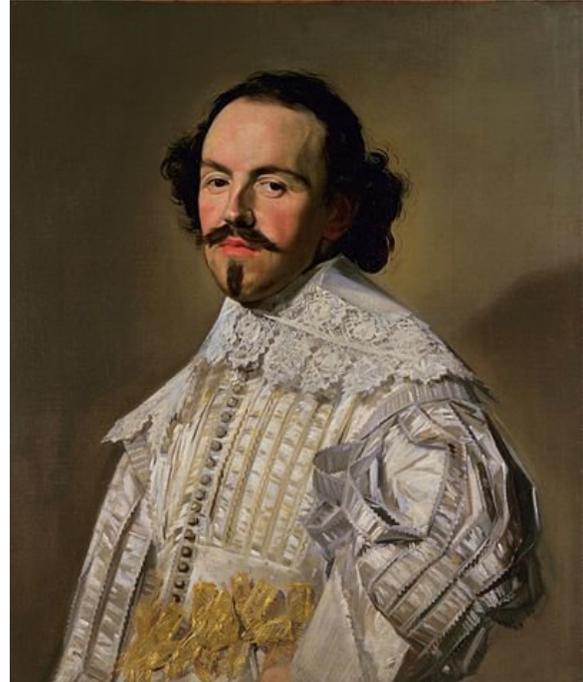
History: The Brushstroke of Frans Hals



"The Merry Drinker" (detail)

Some painters disguise all trace of technique, blending away visible marks into an eggshell-like smoothness. Others, like Frans Hals boldly display technique as the ultimate proof of virtuosity.

The Dutch master rendered skin, hair, fabric and metal with brushstrokes at once calligraphic and descriptive. Unlike contemporaries who blended and mixed together colors on the canvas, Hals allowed spots of color to mix in the viewer's eye, anticipating the Impressionist approach.



"Portrait of a Gentleman in White"

Frans Hals used alla prima techniques across multiple sessions without glazing, describing volumes and textures with parallel and hatched marks reminiscent of engraving. The overall effect is flat and smooth, with heavier whites applied in the last layer.

Hals juxtaposed distinct strokes against blended, smooth passages, further emphasizing the energy and texture of his marks. Use of soft round brushes is evident in his calligraphic, curled marks which thicken and taper in response to the pressure of the hand.



"Drinking Boy"

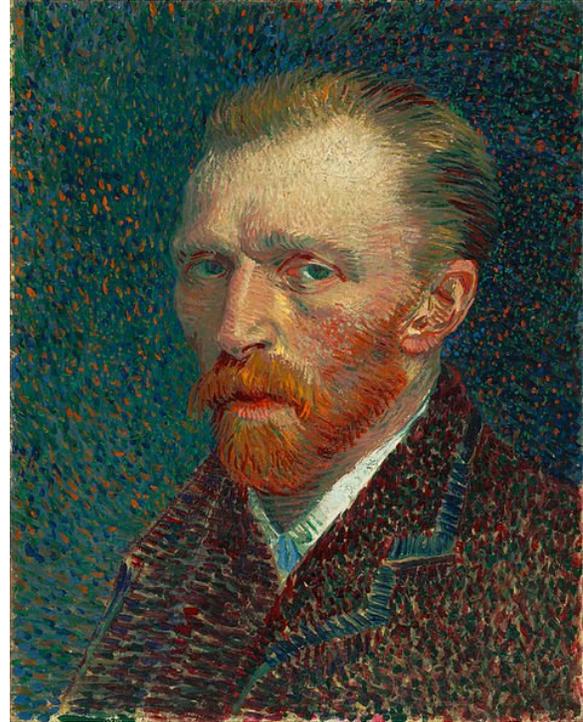
The influence of Hals persists in the work of artists to this date who seek to achieve his seemingly effortless descriptive power and intense yet controlled energy. His approach leaves technique and sequence of application explicitly on the surface in such a way that the observant student might reverse engineer his method.



"Malle Babbe" (detail)

Illustrators and portrait painters found in Hals' technique a path to realism; the Impressionists emulated his unmixed passages, and later

expressionists found freedom in his loose, improvisational marks.



"Self Portrait", Van Gogh

Most prominent among later artists who admired and emulated Hals' technique is Van Gogh. In his work the Dutch Post-Impressionist elevated the brushstroke to the status of a prominent visual element. Following his example the Abstract Expressionists would later make the painterly brushstroke itself the very subject of art.