

Class 5 : Portraits of Many Kinds

A. Rembrandt and the Rest

1. Section title A (Rembrandt: *The Syndics*)
2. Rembrandt: *The Syndics of the Cloth Guild (De Staalmeesters)*, 1662, Rijksmuseum

The thesis of this class is that the dominant medium in 17th-century Dutch art is the portrait, whether of people, places, or objects. This is a literal portrait, *De Staalmeesters*, or *The Syndics of the Cloth Guild* by **Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn** (1606–69). It is the last great example of the **group portrait**, one of the many types of picture that different artists of the Dutch Golden Age chose as their specialty.

3. Some genres of Dutch painting in the Golden Age

For one characteristic of Dutch art in the 17th century is the degree of specialization. Here are some of the genres we find: portraits, group portraits, merry companies, still lifes, landscape, seascape, townscape, churches, domestic interiors, and animals. [All these pictures are from the **Rijksmuseum** in Amsterdam, cropped to a square format.] Most artists specialized in one or two of these and painted little else. Yet, whatever the genre, there is a common devotion to realism that leaves you in no doubt that you are looking at a Dutch painting. In contrast to the international baroque style in the rest of Europe, Dutch art develops distinct national characteristics that entirely justify the title of our course, *National Identity in the Arts*.

4. Rembrandt: *The Syndics*, with various other pictures

Rembrandt was an exception. He did not attempt quite all these genres, but he did more of them than any other one of his contemporaries, plus a lot else as well. Whatever the period, his style is also immediately recognizable—but as *his*, not as Dutch in general. So I realize I must modify my original plan for this class: it is now **Rembrandt and the Rest**.

5. Rembrandt: *Self Portrait with Turned-up Collar* (1659, Washington NGA)

Rembrandt will be the hero of my first hour; **Vermeer** of the second. So who was Rembrandt? He was undoubtedly the greatest self-portraitist of all time, and one of the greatest print-makers. So I want to start by showing you a video I made for my blog at the start of the pandemic. Called **Rembrandt's Moods**, it shows a lot of his self-portraits, in both paint and ink, arranged by attitude or mood. The music is by a German composer, **Johann Christian Schickhardt** (1682–1762), later than any of these pictures, but at least written in Holland, for the Prince of Orange. Anyway, as you watch, I'd like you to think where Rembrandt stands in relation to the contemporary baroque art we saw last week.

6. *Rembrandt's Moods* (video by RB)
7. — still from the above

B. Rembrandt as a Baroque Artist

So is Rembrandt a baroque artist? It certainly looks that way. There is his taste for the theater, for dressing up. There is the vigor of a lot of the poses he strikes. There is his literary bent: his preference for subjects from the Bible and storytelling as opposed to the less active realism of most of his contemporaries. But, as the last few slides suggested, Rembrandt becomes a different man towards the end of his life.

8. Rembrandt: *Prodigal Son* pictures (1637 and 1669)

I can demonstrate this. Compare these two illustrations of the story of the Prodigal Son. In the first, he is in the bothel, “spending his substance on ritous living,” as the Bible has it. Rembrandt paints it as a self-portrait, celebrating his youth and vigor, and his love for his wife Saskia. In the later picture, painted some time in his last decade, he no longer identifies with the son but with the father, though this is not a self-portrait. Look at how each picture treats depth. A moment before, the couple in the brothel would have been seen from the back, but both greet us as we enter the room, turning completely round to do so, and raising a glass of beer. There is no such movement in the later picture, although the depth is even greater. It is achieved by the use of shadow; a deep room in which the light does not penetrate very far. The first is a picture for immediate effect; the second invites quiet contemplation.

9. *Prodigal Son* pictures by Honthorst and Baburen (both 1623)

10. Hals: *The Prodigal Son*, aka *Yonker Ramp* (1623)

Rembrandt was not the first to paint the Prodigal Son. With or without the excuse of a Bible parable to give them justification, scenes of young people making merry in a brothel or tavern were a staple of 17th century Dutch art. Most of the Utrecht *Caravaggisti* painted them; here are examples from **Dirck van Baburen** (1595–1624) and **Gerrit van Honthorst** (1592–1656)—I mentioned that not all the paintings of music-makers in the little slide-show with which I ended last week had to do with praising the Lord; there is also a strong association of music with sex! And here is an even closer comparison, also from 1623: the so-called *Yonker Ramp and his Sweetheart* in the Met by **Frans Hals** (1582–1666), essentially another *Prodigal Son*. I will be saying more about him in a few minutes.

11. Rembrandt: *The Supper at Emmaus* (1629, Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris)

12. Rembrandt: *The Supper at Emmaus* (1648, Louvre)

The Hals and the Baburen scenes seem to take place in daylight, but Honthorst illuminates the scene by a candle; this was his specialty. **Seymour Slive**, whose book on Dutch painting I find absolutely invaluable, points out that in these days of electric lighting we hardly ever experience the sense of most of a room being in a warm shadow beyond which the light of a candle cannot reach. Rembrandt used a literal candle in only three or four paintings; this lesser-known early work features the effect *twice*.

13. Honthorst: *Christ before Caiaphas* (1617, London NG)

Nonetheless, the *effect* of partial lighting is very important to him. Compare this early Honthorst of *Christ Before Caiaphas* with the late *Prodigal Son*. They are separated by half a century, and there is no

visible light source in the Rembrandt, but all the same the effect is very similar, isn't it? The tonality and backgrounds of both are virtually identical, and both use the effect of figures emerging from darkness as a means to concentrate on *inner* meaning.

14. Rubens and Rembrandt: *Depositions* (1614 Antwerp, and 1633 Munich)

Nevertheless, in his most successful decade, roughly 1632–42, when he was establishing himself rapidly in Amsterdam, Rembrandt obtained a number of big commissions, and he responded in the manner his patrons no doubt expected: baroque in scale and concept. For example, when commissioned by Stadholder Frederik Hendrik to do a series of five paintings (later extended to eight) on subjects from the *Passion*, he looked back for guidance to **Peter Paul Rubens** (1577–1640). Compare his *Deposition from the Cross* of 1633 with the Rubens altarpiece in Antwerp Cathedral (1614). Rembrandt would not have needed to go to Antwerp, although it is not far; he would have known Rubens' design from prints. You would surely call the Rembrandt a baroque picture—but what are the differences? The energy, for one thing. Christ may be dead, but there is a muscularity about the Rubens that makes this a picture of intense action; with Rembrandt, the predominant force is gravity. Rubens places his figures in the foreground; Rembrandt moves them back to the middle distance, and sets a standing figure between us and them, perhaps standing in for us as witnesses. And whereas Rubens' forms are distinct and colors clear, Rembrandt blends them all into the prevailing *chiaoscuro* that you find in all his work. The Rubens, though, is 14' high and intended to be seen at a distance; the Rembrandt is only 5' tall, and is meant more for personal contemplation

15. Rembrandt: *The Blinding of Samson* (1636, Frankfurt)

Rembrandt was slow in completing the eight *Passion* scenes for the Stadholder, and dashed off a quite different Biblical subject in the interim to keep him happy. This one is a large work, 10' across, and no doubt did not require the same introspection as the *Passion* scenes. It is also a unique subject: *The Blinding of Samson*, a much more violent moment in the story than had ever been shown before. It is also the most unambiguously baroque picture he ever painted.

16. Rembrandt: *The Night Watch* (1642, Amsterdam Rijksmuseum)

Which brings us to his most famous picture of all, undoubtedly a masterpiece of his baroque style, *The Night Watch*. The title is a misnomer, but it has stuck; I'll explain more in a moment. Meanwhile, I have prepared a little video of it, set to a Dutch tune from around 1626, though orchestrated by the founder of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, **Hans Kindler** (1892–1949).

17. Kindler: *Two Dutch Tunes of the 16th Century*, #2 "Our Country is Strong"

C. People in Groups

18. Aert Pietersz: *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. de Vrij* (1603, Amsterdam Hist. Mus.)

19. — the above, with detail

Remember those school photographs? People who belong to a group want to be memorialized. And the democratic United Provinces was full of groups: governing boards, councils, clubs, professional and charitable associations. So the group portrait was a profitable commission for a painter, and Dutch museums are full of them. This one shows the Surgeons' Guild of Amsterdam in 1603. It is just a row of heads, and even when you include the central section—the annual anatomy demonstration by the official *Praelector*—it doesn't really hold together as a picture. This is by an artist called **Aert Pieterszoon** (1550–1612), painted in 1603.

20. Thomas de Keijzer: *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. de Vrij* (1619, Amsterdam Hist. Mus.)

When **Thomas de Keijzer** (1596–1667) painted the same event with the same lecturer in 1619, he at least managed to reduce the number of heads. Perhaps this was done economically, by raising the price charged to each, or perhaps the Guild itself made a heuractic decision. It at least avoids that row of heads, though I can't say it is any more successful as a picture.

21. Rembrandt: *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (1632, The Hague, Mauritshuis)

So when young Rembrandt comes to Amsterdam in 1632 and lucks into such a commission, what does it do? He turns it from a posed picture into one of *action*. This is now a dynamic grouping, with each of the six spectators reacting with fascinated interest to whatever it is that **Dr. Tulp**, that year's *Praelector*, is doing. Rembrandt's baroque tendencies serve him well. As in the *Night Watch*, his innovation was to treat a formal occasion as a real event.

22. Cornelis van Haarlem: *Banquet of the... St. George Civic Guard* (1599, Haarlem)

The *Night Watch* is a commissioned group portrait of a volunteer militia company, a Dutch institution going back to the Middle Ages, through which the burghers of a city would provide for their own policing and defence. By the 17th century, I think, these had become largely social groups, like the Lions Club or Rotary. Certainly the banquets at which these groups were typically painted were dress-up social occasions, as in this militia group painted by **Cornelis van Haarlem** (1562–1638)

23. Frans Hals: *Banquet of the... St. George Civic Guard* (1616, Haarlem, Hals Museum)

24. — the same with detail

The real innovator in this genre was an older artist than Rembrandt, **Frans Hals**, less wide-ranging in his choice of subjects but equally great as a portraitist. Here is his 1616 portrait of the same militia company, of which he himself was a member. These were men he knew personally, and it shows in the detail. Moreover, by the use of the diagonals created by those sashes and flags, and by setting the table slightly askew, he has managed to create a sense of depth in the picture, which in turn gives the men room to relate in different ways to one another, not merely look at the camera and freeze. This was the

first group portrait of this kind that he painted, but there are about a dozen of them in all, each showing more daring formal invention than the last.

25. Thomas de Keijzer: *Militia Company of Captain Allaert Cloeck* (1632, Rijksmuseum)

Rembrandt was not the first to get his militamen up from the table and paint them as if on a real military exercise. Here is **Thomas de Keijzer** again in 1632, and his approach must have seemed an innovation. There is a life to the central figures at least, though he is less successful with the background figures, who seem out of scale (presumably they paid less) and don't avoid the posing-on-the-risers effect.

26. Rembrandt: *The Night Watch* (1642, Amsterdam Rijksmuseum)

27. — the same, with cropped sides conjecturally restored

But de Keijzer's innovations are nothing to Rembrandt's. His most daring stroke is to push the figures backwards into the depths of a mysterious vaguely military space—*not* a night scene, though painted with his usual *chiaroscuro*—that unifies an astoundingly diverse composition, allowing everyone to have his own action. He also added a number of extras, such as the prominent girl in white, to fill out the action. And the picture must have been even more effective before it was cut down to fit a new space in the City Hall; the picture shows an attempted restoration, based on contemporary drawings of the picture in its original site.

28. Ferdinand Bol: *Governors of the Wine Merchants' Guild* (1663, Munich)

29. Rembrandt: *The Syndics of the Cloth Guild (De Staalmeesters)*, 1662, Rijksmuseum

Rembrandt's last group portrait, the *Syndics of the Cloth Guild* with which I started, is the least original solution of the three, but it may also be the best picture. You can see by comparing it to a very similar subject by **Ferdinand Bol** (1616–80) done at almost the same time. It is the difference between a great painter and a merely good one—and that great painter no longer merely observes, but sees inside his sitters as human beings.

D. When is a Portrait not a Portrait?

30. When is a Portrait not a Portrait?

This whole class, as you have probably realized by now, is about portraits—portraits of many kinds, not only of people. I am going to show you now a sequence of ten pictures from the Dutch Golden Age, all of the same general size and format (though some have been cropped slightly), and all with the head and shoulders of a single figure. The opening ones are by **Rembrandt** and his circle; I then move on to **Hals** and his circle, and end with **Vermeer**. The question, as you see, is: When is a Portrait not a Portrait? The music is by a Dutch composer called **Sybrandt Van Noordt** (1659–1705), though from the second half of the century.

31. Sybrandt Van Noordt: *Sonata No. 1, Allegro, with selection of trionies*

32. — stills from the above

Well, what did you think? The common factor is that none of these pictures would have been sold under the name of the sitter. All of them, including the *Self Portrait* by Rembrandt with which I started, are studies in character types, age types, or situations such as smoking or drinking. I arranged them so that the more *outré* examples are in the middle; the ones at the beginning and end are more like normal portraits. And indeed many of them have been given names, largely spuriously. You sometimes hear the painting by **Jan Vermeer** (1632–75), bottom row, second from the right, referred to as “Vermeer’s Wife,” and the one above it by **Jan Lievens** (1607–74) is frequently called “Rembrandt’s Mother.”

33. Jan Lievens: Studies of an Old Woman (c.1625)

Actually, there may be some justification for that. At the time these were painted, both artists were living in Leiden and quite possibly sharing a studio. Lievens did a number of paintings with the same model, and who else would have been available. But the point is that the picture would not have been sold that way, only as a study in wisdom or piety. All the pictures I have shown are examples of a peculiar Dutch genre called *tronies*, or character sketches. Never large, it seems they were popular, and could be bought even by middle-class people of limited means.

34. Two Frans Hals paintings in the Rijksmuseum (around 1630)

So back to my original question: when is a portrait not a portrait? Look at these two works by **Hals** in the Rijksmuseum, both dating from around 1630. It is probably not hard to identify which is the portrait and which the *tronie*. What is hard is to distinguish much difference in style between the two. Part of the reason for Hals’ success is his ability to treat even his formal sitters—the ones who were paying him for their portraits—with the same casual manner he used for his *tronies*, giving his paintings of younger sitters in particular a naturalness and vivacity that is not matched by any of his peers. The sitter here is probably either someone called **Nicolaes Hasselaer** or his brother Dirck.

35. Vermeer: *Girl in a Red Hat* (NGA) and *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (Mauritshuis)

I have found a bunch of interesting videos about Vermeer; one of them comes from the National Gallery here, a fascinating technical analysis of the *Girl in a Red Hat*, but the narrator and laid-back music give it all the energy of a yoga video, so I will just put the link on the webpage. The others are from a series I have used before, **SmartHistory**; I’ll show the *Pearl Earring* one now, and another after the break.

36. Vermeer: *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (SmartHistory video)

37. Intermission title (Hals: *Meager Company* l.h.s.)

E. So What's the Story?

38. The three Vermeer pictures listed below

The question “When is a portrait really a *tronie*?” is matched by similar question you could ask of many of the *tronies*, “When does a picture tell a story?” Here are three Vermeer works, each showing one or more figures in a contemporary Dutch interior. Question: is this it all, or is there a story here? Let me put them up one by one, and ask you. The titles are traditional anyway, so I’ll leave them out.

39. Vermeer: *The Milkmaid* (1658, Rijksmuseum)

What about this? A kitchen-maid in a Dutch kitchen; no story here, surely? Probably not, although there may be moral meanings implied by what the artist shows. Something about bread being the staff of life, perhaps? More likely an implied moral message about the importance of a clean simple household in Calvinist domestic life.

40. Vermeer: *Allegory of Painting* (1667, Vienna)

This is a different matter, surely? The girl appears to be in costume; there are props in her hands and on the table; and the artist is right there in the middle of the picture, not invisible out here with us. This is usually called *Allegory of Painting* or *The Art of Painting*. The girl wears laurel leaves, which are the first thing the artist has put on his canvas; the tome in one hand and trumpet in the other suggest that she is **Clio**, the Muse of History, or perhaps a personification of fame. The picture, then, is about the artist’s role also in recording things for posterity. It comes from fairly later in Vermeer’s life, and he did not do many others with so obvious a symbolism.

41. Vermeer: *The Wine Glass* (1659, Berlin)

This one, surely, is somewhere in between? A man, a woman, and a glass of wine; some kind of musical instrument on the chair, which we know by now is often associated with sex; is this some kind of seduction? With any other painter, probably yes. With Vermeer, though, we can never be sure; his ambiguity is part of his genius. Let’s watch the SmartHistory episode on this.

42. Vermeer: *The Wine Glass* (SmartHistory video)

43. Vermeer: *Woman Reading a Letter* (n.d., Rijksmuseum)

If you were in a narrative frame of mind, you could ask all sorts of questions about this one, Vermeer’s *Woman Reading a Letter* in the Rijksmuseum. What is in the letter? Who is it from? Does the map perhaps indicate that he is far away? Or none of the above? The point of these exquisitely balanced works that Vermeer produced at the height of his powers, I think, is that you *could* ask questions, but don’t have to.

44. Gerard ter Borch: *The Parental Admonition* (1654, Rijksmuseum)

Here is a painting by one of Vermeer’s contemporaries, **Gerard ter Borch the Younger** (1617–81). The title comes from a German print made from it a century later; **Goethe** picked it up and wrote about it: a

charming morality about a father admonishing his young daughter about the dangers of the world. But is is so? Cleaning the version of the same subject in Berlin revealed a coin between the man's fingers. He seems a bit too young to be her father, anyway. Is this not perhaps a negotiation for sex?!

45. Gerard ter Borch: *Boy Delousing his Dog* (1655, Munich)

But not all pictures are moralities or have to tell a story. Here is another little painting by the same artist, a boy picking fleas off his dog. What could be simpler, more down-to-earth, and more intimate.

46. Steen: *A Woman at her Toilet* (1655, Rijksmuseum)

47. Steen: *A Woman at her Toilet* (1663, Royal Collection)

Here is another down-to-earth intimate scene, a woman going to bed by **Jan Steen** (1625–79). She's had a hard day, it seems; she has tossed her shoes any which way, the garters of her stockings have cut deep into her calves; she has undone her bodice, but not removed it, and it seems she has already used the chamber pot. Other than those homely details, there is no narrative here. But Steen used exactly the same figure a few years later in another composition now in the Royal Collection at Buckingham Palace. And this time, he has placed it behind a classical archway that you would hardly find in a Dutch bourgeois house, and added some significant details: the skull, the ivy, and the music—all symbols of the evanescence of pleasure. Now we start asking questions about what has, or what will, go on in that distant bedchamber....

48. Steen: *The Young Ones Chirrup as the Old Ones Sing* (1663, The Hague)

And Steen was known, in fact, for paintings of Dutch life in which the moral message is quite explicit. The Dutch still have an expression, "A Steen household," meaning a house in cheerful disarray. This one illustrates the proverb "The Young Ones Chirrup as the Old Ones Sing," and is a humorous treatise on how *not* to bring up children! The man offering the pipe to the boy is apparently a self-portrait.

49. Steen: *Skittle Players Outside an Inn* (1663, London NG)

The grinning, leering quality of Steen's moralities have always turned me off, so I don't want to leave him on that note. So here is a painting of Dutch life that is exactly what it says it is, a portrait of a community at leisure, and utterly lovely.

And for another portrait of Dutch life, do you remember the 2003 film of **Tracy Chevalier's** *The Girl with a Pearl Earring*? Its attention to detail and lighting shows that the director, **Peter Webber**, has studied painting of the period very carefully. I'll show you the credit sequence in which the title character, **Griet**, is forced to leave the home of her family because her father, a tile painter, can no longer work, and she must earn money as a servant in the Vermeer household. The whole film is worth a second look.

50. *Girl with a Pearl Earring, credit sequence*

F. Houses and their Contents

51. Vermeer: *The Little Street* (c.1660, Rijksmuseum)

Vermeer painted just two pictures that were not domestic interiors. Here is one of them, nicknamed *The Little Street*. It is simply the outside of a Dutch house, with no narrative content whatsoever. But while we have only one such picture by him, there are other artists such as **Pieter de Hooch** (1629–84) who painted similar subjects a lot.

52. De Hooch: *Courtyard in Delft* (1658, London NG)

This is probably the best of them. It might almost be the Vermeer picture seen from the other side, mightn't it? It is a beautiful portrait of Dutch domestic life. There is no story beyond any that you might care to make up, though there is an implied moral. The stone plaque above the archway used to be outside a religious foundation in Delft; its last lines say, "please be patient and meek, for we must first descend if we wish to be raised." Both the Vermeer and the De Hooch have what the Dutch call a **doorkijkje**, or a glimpse through an open doorway into the space beyond. De Hooch made a specialty of it; this picture has at least three distinct planes: the courtyard, the passageway, and the view beyond.

53. De Hooch: *At the Linen Closet* (1663, Rijksmuseum)

Although it is less attractive in color, this interior of his has even more complex spatial implications: the main room in which we are standing, the view up the stairs, the perspective through the front hall to the canal outside and the houses beyond it, and the further space that is reflected in the mirror. Although I have no reason to suppose they knew of one another, it is not a stretch to imagine De Hooch in Holland and **Velázquez** in Spain exploring similar problems at a similar time.

54. Claesz: *The Herring* (1636, Rotterdam) and *Vanitas Still Life* (1630, The Hague)

We have moved from house exteriors through house courtyards to house interiors; it now remains to glance briefly at the next logical stage: the objects in the house. **Seymour Slive** writes: "*No other country produced still lifes in such quantity or quality, and no other branch of painting reveals more clearly the Dutch devotion to the visible.*" He also points out that our term Still Life is a direct translation of the Dutch *stillevens*. As we shall see again with landscapes, still lifes earlier in the century tend to use a relatively restricted palette, like these two by **Pieter Claesz** (1597–1660). The slide also shows two of the predominant types: the moralizing *Vanitas* arrangement at bottom right, and the straightforward portrait of a relatively humble breakfast at top left.

55. Kalf: *Still Life with a Nautilus Cup* (1662, Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza)

Later in the century, however, a quite different type arose, the *pronkstillevens* or sumptuous still life. The point here is not the celebration of simple Calvinist domesticity, but the ostentatious display of the expensive and exotic—and not incidentally the extreme skill of the painter. I don't suppose pictures like these are portraits in the sense that a patron would commission a painting of his treasures; the same props come up again and again in different arrangements by the same artist. But the pictures could be

bought by people of some means, but whose wealth would not support such a lifestyle across the board. This is as close to the baroque as Dutch realism gets. I have put together a little exploration of a few such pictures by **Willem Kalf** (1619–93); the music is the finale of the *Old Holland Suite* by **Cornelis Dopper** (1870–1939). The orchestra may be that of Mahler and Richard Strauss, but the tune at least is from the period.

56. Dopper: *Old Holland Suite, finale (with Kalf Still Lifes)*

G. Under Dutch Skies

57. Vermeer: *View of Delft* (1661, The Hague)

Here is the other outdoor **Vermeer** that I mentioned, his *View of Delft*. I look at that row of houses and wonder whether all the roofs on the left were really covered with the same dull red tile, or all the ones on the right with the same blue-grey slate. There is an organization to Vermeer's use of these two modified primary colors, together with the very pale yellow elsewhere, that speaks to me of a master designer and no more Kodchrome camera. But the thing that is quite new in this picture is the prominence given to the sky. In such a flat country as the Netherlands, the sky takes up a large part of any view, so my final section is called "Under Dutch Skies."

58. The two images below

59. Van Goyen: *Windmill by a River* (1642, London NG)

60. Ruisdael: *Windmill at Wijk bij Doorstede* (1668, Rijksmuseum)

Seymour Slive divides his chapter on Dutch Landscape into two phases: the **tonal phase** of the first half of the century in which artists captured the atmosphere of the low-lying Dutch countryside using a very limited range of colors. Around mid-century, we move into what he calls the **classic phase**—he also uses the word "heroic"—in which the forms become larger and more monumental, and the range of the palette widens. **Jan van Goyen** (1596–1656) is a leading exponent of the first phase, and **Jacob van Ruisdael** (1628–82) the outstanding practitioner of the second. It is very similar to what we have seen with still lifes, the monochrome phase giving way to the more highly colored one.

61. Ruisdael: *View of Haarlem with the Bleaching Grounds* (1673, The Hague)

62. — the same, with photos

We saw Vermeer's *View of Delft*; here is one of several *Views of Haarlem* by Ruisdael; this one is at the Mauritshuis in the Hague. It is most certainly a monumental picture, dominated by the huge sky above, and the expanse of the bleaching grounds in the front (Haarlem carried out an active trade in bleaching linen). I wondered where the artist could have found such a high viewpoint; the museum website says "from a high dune," so I looked it up on Google Earth. The highest elevation I could find was 20 meters, or about 65 feet, which *may* be high enough to deliver such a view, but all the same I think Ruisdael must have raised himself further in his imagination.

63. Ruisdael: *The Jewish Cemetery* (c.1660, Dresden)

64. — the same, with bullet points

Another subject Ruisdael painted in multiple versions was *The Jewish Cemetery*; this is the one in Dresden. Slive points out that these actual sarcophagi can still be identified in the **Portuguese-Jewish Cemetery at Ouderkerk** near Amsterdam, but nothing else is remotely like that setting. Who would even put graves so near to a stream that would flood in rainy weather? No, everything about it—the ruins, the threatening clouds, the bare tree, and certainly that rocky torrent—are symbols of the power of time; the landscape is a morality, another *Vanitas*, as brilliantly handled as **Giorgione's *Tempesta***. And yet the motifs of which it is comprised all derive from detailed study by a brilliant artist of the land around him. I can use it to leave you with three important points that I think apply to much of the art we have been discussing: **17th-century Dutch art depends on meticulous observation, but it is seldom merely photographic, and it may contain other meanings** (though not always).

I have put together one more montage, this time of landscapes. Instead of struggling to find classical music that fits, I am going with a Dutch folk song, “Laet ons den Landtman Loven,” which I think means “Let’s all praise the farmer.”

65. Folk Song, “Laet ons den Landtman Loven,” with landscapes

66. End title (Jan van der Heyden: *Herrengracht, Amsterdam*)