

# SALOMON LILIAN

## DUTCH OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

### **Dirck Hals**

1591 – Haarlem - 1656

### *A Merry Company*

Signed and dated on the table: DHALS AN 1627

Oil on panel

23.8 x 34 cm.

### **Provenance:**

France, private collection

### **Literature:**

Unpublished

The elegant company portrayed in this charming scene, sumptuously dressed in silks and velvets and fashionable organza ruffs, are gathered around a table in an interior. The grand young gentleman, half turned away from the viewer, is strikingly dressed in vibrant red and wears a grand feathered hat. On the opposite side of the table a woman dressed in a purple-red dress is looking at her neighbour holding a glass of wine. The compact group of four closely gathered figures, jewel-like in their colouristic treatment, loom large on the picture plane, taking up most of the picture surface.

This charming Merry Company is typical of Hals' early work. In this early period (*circa* 1620-27), the artist was influenced by Willem Buytewech (1591/2-1624), particularly in the somewhat elongated figures. Dirck Hals worked from preparatory figure drawings and oil sketches on paper when painting on panel, a working method which accounts for the recurrence of the same poses

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and facial features in his works. Until 1628 Hals adopted his figures from Buytewech directly, as is the case in *La Fête champêtre* of 1627 in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Dirck Hals was a painter and draughtsman of genre scenes, especially merry companies. His rapid technique was undoubtedly derived from that of his brother, Frans Hals (1582-1666). A much stronger influence, however, seems to have been exerted by the Rotterdam painter Willem Buytewech (1592-1624), who lived in Haarlem from 1612-1617. Not only did Hals adopt Buytewech's theme of the 'merry company', but also frequently borrowed his compositions and figure motifs as well.

Dirck Hals was born in Haarlem in 1591, the younger brother of Frans Hals, who was born in Antwerp and no doubt gave him his first training. Their parents had emigrated from Antwerp in or shortly after 1585. The artist is documented as being in Leiden in 1641, and in 1648-49, and he probably spent the intervening years there as well. He joined the Haarlem painters' guild in 1627. The artist was buried twenty-nine years later in Haarlem in 1656.

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