

JULY 09, 2020

# Acquisition: Dirck Hals, "Merry Company on a Terrace"



Dirck Hals

*Merry Company on a Terrace*, 1625

oil on panel

overall: 38.7 x 51.5 cm (15 1/4 x 20 1/4 in.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington

The Lee and Juliet Folger Fund

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The Gallery has acquired its first painting by Dirck Hals (1591–1656), the younger brother of Frans Hals (c. 1582/1583–1666), who was one of the most innovative and prolific artists active in Haarlem in the early decades of the 17th century. Dirck probably trained with his brother and with the

Rotterdam genre painter Willem Buytewech (1591/1592–1624). Buytewech was one of a handful of artists who specialized in small-scale merry companies—scenes of young men and women enjoying themselves either indoors or in the open air. Dirck also explored this engaging theme, but the influence of his brother’s characteristically vivid palette, painterly technique, and animated brushwork imbued his merry companies with distinctive vivacity and lightness of spirit.

*Merry Company on a Terrace* (1625) was painted during the period of Dirck’s best work. The outdoor setting is imaginary and suggests the idyllic country pleasures of the well-to-do. Seated to the left are a woman with a lute and a man with a cello; they are joined by a fashionable young couple who listen to the music. In the background, a young servant readies a display of sparkling tableware and festive dishes, including a spectacular turkey pie. To the right, steps lead from the terrace to a still expanse of water bordered by trees.

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