



► **CNA Studies**

December 2022

Michaelina Wautier
and *The Five Senses*:
Innovation in
17th-Century
Flemish Painting

**Center for
Netherlandish
Art MFA Boston**

► **CNA Studies**

December 2022

Michaelina Wautier
and *The Five Senses*:
Innovation in
17th-Century
Flemish Painting

► **Editors**

Series editor

Christopher D. M. Atkins, Van Otterloo-Weatherbie
Director of the Center for Netherlandish Art

Volume editor

Jeffrey Muller, Professor of History of Art and
Architecture, Brown University

► **Sponsors**

“Michaelina Wautier and *The Five Senses*: Innovation in 17th-Century Flemish Painting” and the Center for Netherlandish Art’s Gallery for Innovative Scholarship is sponsored by Northern Trust.

Additional support from the Government of Flanders – Flanders Investment & Trade.

The Founders of the Center for Netherlandish Art are Rose-Marie and Eijk van Otterloo, and Susan and Matthew Weatherbie.

Additional support from The Brown University History of Art and Architecture Department Kermit Champa Memorial Fund.

© 2022 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. All rights reserved.



► Contents

| | | | |
|---|-----------|---|------------|
| Map | 4 | Catalogue | 81 |
| Timeline | 5 | Provenance of <i>The Five Senses</i> | |
| CNA Studies | 6 | Published References to <i>The Five Senses</i> | 82 |
| Acknowledgments | 7 | <i>Sight</i> | 83 |
| Michaelina Wautier and Her Art | 8 | Sophie Higgerson | |
| Prologue by Jeffrey Muller | | <i>Hearing</i> | 87 |
| Technique | 20 | Yannick Etoundi | |
| Regina Noto | | <i>Smell</i> | 90 |
| <i>The Five Senses</i> and the Question of Patronage and Audience | 24 | Regina Noto | |
| Emily Hirsch | | <i>Taste</i> | 93 |
| <i>The Five Senses</i> | 36 | Dandan Xu | |
| Sophie Higgerson | | <i>Touch</i> | 96 |
| <i>The Five Senses</i> and Natural Philosophy | 65 | Emily Hirsch | |
| Dandan Xu | | Provenance of <i>Self-Portrait</i> | 100 |
| How <i>The Five Senses</i> Change Our Measure of Michaelina Wautier's Work | 70 | Published References to <i>Self-Portrait</i> | 101 |
| Jeffrey Muller and Yannick Etoundi | | <i>Self-Portrait</i> | 102 |
| Michaelina Wautier's Portrait Paintings | 75 | Jeffrey Muller and Mohadeseh Salari Sardari | |
| Jeffrey Muller and Mohadeseh Salari Sardari | | | |

- 1 ► The royal palace in Brussels, the seat of government for the Spanish Netherlands—in 1638 Michaelina Wautier moved to the city, where she likely worked for individuals at court.
- 2 ► Gasthuis Street—the site of Wautier’s first home in Brussels, which she shared with her brother Charles.
- 3 ► Kapellekerk (Chapel Church)—Wautier bought a house near this church in 1668.

► Map



Joannes Blaeu, Map of Brussels, from *Novum ac magnum theatrum urbium Belgicae Regiae; ad praesentis temporis faciem expressum*, 1649. Engraving, with pen and ink and watercolor. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

► Timeline

- 1609–1621** ► Twelve Years Truce between the South, Habsburg ruled, Spanish Netherlands (Catholic, in which Wautier lived), and the rebellious, Protestant, North, Dutch Republic.
- September 2, 1614** ► Michaelina Wautier baptized in Mons at Saint-Nicolas d’Havre, the daughter of Charles Wautier, a member of the local regent class and official at the court of the Spanish Netherlands, and Jeanne George, likely from Valenciennes.
- November 24, 1617** ► Her father dies. Wautier is 3.
- 1633/4** ► Her brother Charles arrives in Brussels.
- June 19, 1638** ► Her mother dies. Wautier is 23.
- 1638–1643** ► Wautier moves to Brussels, the capital and court of the Spanish Netherlands—population 70,000. She joins her brother Charles (1609–1703) with whom she shares a house.
- 1643** ► Wautier creates her earliest dated work, a portrait of Andrea Cantelmo, General of the Spanish Army, engraved by Antwerp printmaker Paulus Pontius.
- 1647–1656** ► Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria serves as governor of the Spanish Netherlands. He acquires several pictures by Wautier for his famous collection, now the nucleus of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.
- May 15, 1648** ► Treaty of Münster recognizes official independence of the Dutch Republic.
- 1650** ► Wautier paints *The Five Senses*.
- 1659** ► Wautier paints the *Annunciation*, her last known dated work, now in the collection of Musée-promenade de Marly-le-Roi, Louveciennes.
- 1668/69** ► Michaelina and Charles Wautier buy houses in Brussels near the Kapellekerk/Notre-Dame de la Chapelle.
- November 1, 1689** ► Death of Michaelina Wautier at age 75.
- 1703** ► Death of Charles Wautier at age 94.

► CNA Studies

by Christopher D. M. Atkins

Van Otterloo-Weatherbie Director of the
Center for Netherlandish Art

This volume inaugurates CNA Studies, a digital publication series produced by the Center for Netherlandish Art (CNA). Promoting scholarship is core to the mission of the CNA, a research center located in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The vision for the CNA is to be an international leader in Dutch and Flemish art through the quality of our programs and our sustained commitment to excellence.

This series documents and disseminates research activities facilitated and supported by the CNA. In many cases, this series will produce editions dedicated to the work of students and emerging professionals, providing a publishing opportunity in the early stages of their careers. As a digital publication, CNA Studies promotes access to scholarship. Any scholar, student, or enthusiast of

Netherlandish art with internet access can read about the projects and findings of our activities on the [CNA webpage](#), regardless of location. Publishing digitally also shortens the production timeline so that new research can reach audiences more quickly. You can look forward to future volumes in the series in the months and years ahead.

► Acknowledgments

This publication accompanies [the first exhibition in the Americas of the art of Michaelina Wautier \(1614–1689\)](#), a painter all but forgotten until the rediscovery of her work during the last two decades by art historian Katlijne Van der Stighelen.

The focus here is on Wautier's series of *The Five Senses*. This rare intact set of pictures was virtually unknown until it was acquired by Rose-Marie and Eijk van Otterloo. Signed and dated to 1650, *The Five Senses* establishes a new standard for measuring Wautier's development and achievement while revealing the originality of her style and expression. The exhibition is a part of the Center for Netherlandish Art's Innovation Gallery program, in which the CNA provides a platform for academic partners to share cutting-edge scholarship with broad audiences in Boston. Future museum professionals, professors, and art historians, guided by the expertise of MFA staff, learn the practical and scholarly skills required to create exhibitions and work in cultural institutions. This first exhibition in the program was a collaboration with PhD students in Brown University's Department of the History of Art and Architecture; Yannick Etoundi, Sophie Higgerson, Emily Hirsch, Regina Noto, Mohadeseh Salari Sardari, and Dandan Xu. Jeffrey Muller, Professor of the History of Art and Architecture at Brown, and Christopher Atkins, Van Otterloo-Weatherbie Director of the Center for Netherlandish Art, led the team in a practicum course. From January to June of 2022, the group met regularly at the CNA to engage directly with the paintings and prints included in the exhibition and also to work with the MFA curators and experts who helped us in ways for which we are very grateful.

The curators and authors of this catalogue owe deep gratitude to all the individuals who brought this exhibition to fruition. First and foremost are the lenders to the exhibition Rose-Marie and Eijk van Otterloo, who generously shared their paintings with us, and with wide audiences in Boston and

beyond. Judith Tolnick Champa kindly released funds for student travel. Rhona MacBeth undertook the technical examination of several pictures in the exhibition, and trained students in how to read and interpret the results of those studies. Antien Knaap provided much-welcomed thoughts and advice throughout the project. Benjamin Weiss made choosing prints for the exhibition a very enjoyable and instructive experience. Cara Wolahan and Siobhan Wheeler successfully navigated the logistics of the exhibition at the museum. Catherine Johnson-Roehr and Jordan Cromwell consulted early and often on the exhibition interpretation, and provided training in writing for various audiences. Keith Crippen and Nick Pioggia designed the exhibition and graphics while guiding students through the principles and practices of making an exhibition. Thanks to Creative and Interactive Media, especially Janet O'Donoghue, Jill Bendonis, Sarah Kirshner, and James Zhen. We are grateful to colleagues Joost van der Auwera, Ronni Baer, Koen Bulckens, Ingrid Goddeeris, Nico van Hout, Joelle Kinet, Lara de Merode, and Edward Wouk for their generous help. Finally, we want to thank the student curators Yannick, Sophie, Emily, Regina, Mohadeseh, and Dandan. They met the opportunity for the exhibition and publication with enthusiasm and produced original research that does much to further understanding of Michaelina Wautier and her considerable accomplishments. Special thanks are due to Regina, who did so much to bridge the results of the practicum completed in May 2022 and the exhibition's opening in November 2022. Nancy Safian at Brown smoothed the way for students to participate.

► Michaelina Wautier and Her Art

Prologue by Jeffrey Muller

This essay unites seven distinct points of view, all looking to understand Michaelina Wautier's series of *The Five Senses* (Figs. 1–5), signed and dated to 1650, and her *Self-Portrait* (Fig. 6), likely painted a few years earlier. Under my supervision, a team of six Brown University History of Art and Architecture graduate students took up Chris Atkins's challenge to prepare an exhibition of these pictures for the Center for Netherlandish Art in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In fact, Chris's spark of intelligence lights up the whole project, exhibition, and publication alike. Seven distinct points of view are joined in this essay.

Each graduate student addresses a topic generated by research on one of the catalogue entries for the six pictures in the exhibition: Wautier's series of *The Five Senses* and her *Self-Portrait*. The essay sections also engage with possible solutions to the larger historical problems raised by Wautier's unusual career as a female painter working in mid-17th-century Brussels. There she networked with the Habsburg court, interacted with fellow painters, and, after 1638, shared a townhouse with her brother Charles (1609–1703), also a painter, both of them unmarried.¹ How did Michaelina Wautier gain access to the five boys whom she likely painted from life? Who could have commissioned a series so ambitious as *The Five Senses*? What in Wautier's painting technique is distinctive? In what directions did Wautier continue and change

the rich history of representing the five senses? What kinds of knowledge did viewers bring to their enjoyment of these pictures? In what respects does the sudden appearance of a major signed and dated series like *The Five Senses*, virtually unknown until it was acquired in 2020, alter the reconstruction of Wautier's whole development? And how does her *Self-Portrait* fashion a painter's image that, in different ways, is projected as well onto the canvases of *The Five Senses*? It is no accident that Catherine Johnson-Roehr perceptively suggested we add the word "innovation" to the title of the exhibition. Over the course of a year's research we recognized Wautier's creative invention of new visual concepts and painting techniques. Her very style makes a powerful claim to originality.

¹ See Katlijne Van der Stighelen in *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1619: Glorifying a Forgotten Talent* (Kontich: BAI Publishers, 2018), 22–33, for contexts of court, colleagues, and house.

There is no record of her training and no trace of earlier work before she suddenly emerged as a mature artist in her *Portrait of Andrea Cantelmo* (Fig. 7) (engraved 1643 by Paulus Pontius, 1603–1658).² Maybe the obscurity of Wautier’s artistic heritage has driven an intensive search to pin down the influences that could have formed her. The 1883 auction catalogue, which first mentioned *The Five Senses*, says that color and facture denote “an excellent disciple of Brouwer and Hals,” even though Wautier’s brushwork and figure types owe nothing to these two painters.³ This desire to pigeonhole Wautier as the exponent of one or another older master or artistic tradition culminates in Jahel Sanzsalazar’s essay, “The Influence of Others. The Wautiers, David Teniers and Archduke Leopold Wilhelm’s *Theatrum Pictorium*,” published in the 2018 catalogue edited by Katlijne Van der Stighelen. Philippe de Champaigne (1602–1674), Theodoor van Loon (ca. 1581–1667), Caravaggio (1571–1610), Gaspar de Crayer (1584–1669), Jusepe de Ribera (1591–1652), all are invoked.⁴ The catalogue entries and essay published here give due note to the many and varied visual conventions and symbols that Wautier shared with her contemporaries and with artists who preceded her. But the similarities never prove so strong that you could say, “Oh, she got that from this or that artist.” Her evasion of obvious comparison cuts across the different genres she essayed; history painting as in the *Triumph of Bacchus* or *Annunciation* (1659), portraits such as her *Self-Portrait* or her *Portrait of Andrea Cantelmo*, scenes of everyday life like *Two Boys* (Fig. 8), and the two known still-life pictures.⁵ She seems as well to have modulated her touch to fit the subject. Fred G. Meijer points out how Wautier applied a finer and more intricate handling to depict the delicate flowers in her 1652 *Garland of Flowers* (Fig. 9).⁶ Meijer’s discussion of

this picture raises another, related issue that has clouded recognition of Wautier’s originality. Her still-life pictures had been slotted into a sequence that rendered them dependent on the example of famous still-life painter Jan Davidsz. de Heem (1606–1684). But Meijer notes that Wautier’s dated pictures actually precede de Heem’s work.⁷ Meijer instead emphasizes the individual and independent character of Wautier’s still-lives. The same argument is made below in this essay about Wautier’s everyday life pictures of boys and teenagers, which have been set in a trend dominated by Michael Sweerts (1618–1664). The date of 1650 inscribed by Wautier on *The Five Senses* shows that she came first, so that the assumed “influences” melt away to leave the core of her hard-won originality.

A close look at the brushwork of *The Five Senses* indicates that Wautier aimed at a highly individual manner which rejects association with earlier signature handling of the brush as in the graceful strokes of Van Dyck (1599–1641), the fury of Rubens (1577–1640), the delicate roughness of Brouwer (1605–1648), or the virtuoso slashes of Hals (about 1582/3–1666). Wautier methodically constructed the illusion of three-dimensional forms, working like a bricklayer from dark to light, applying tight, thick, short, chiseled strokes of paint carefully laid down and not visible as separate marks except when viewed close-up or in a high definition photograph. By contrast, the work of even her closest colleague, her brother Charles Wautier, displays smoother, softer, blended strokes. Michaelina Wautier cultivated a style that is original and all her own. The trace of her hand in these strokes communicates the strength that Wautier configured in the poses and glances of portraits she painted to embody the masculine virtues of an army general or Jesuit missionary to China. Wautier portrayed herself in her *Self-Portrait*

² Van der Stighelen in *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1619*, 156–161, cat. no. 1. Further on this portrait, see below, 15.

³ Catalogue d’une très belle collection de tableaux des écoles flamande, hollandaise, française, allemande et italienne, la plupart du XVII^e siècle et de dessins anciens et livres d’art dont la vente aura lieu par suite du décès de feu M. de Malherbe, Valenciennes, 17–18 October 1883, 31, “leur facture et leur coloris dénotent un excellent disciple de Brauwer et Hals.”

⁴ Van der Stighelen, *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689*, 66–83.

⁵ Van der Stighelen, *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689: Triumph of Bacchus*, 208–217, cat. no. 13; *Annunciation*, 230–233, cat. no. 17. For *Two Boys* see below, 17.

⁶ Van der Stighelen, *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689*, 254–256, cat. no. 22.

⁷ Meijer thus concurs with the argument made previously by Hans-Jörg Czech, Leen Huet and Jan Grieten, *Oude meesteressen: Vrouwelijke kunstenaars in de Nederlanden* (Leuven: Halewyck, 1998), and Katlijne Van der Stighelen, 2004, “‘Prima inter pares.’ Over de voorkeur van Aartshertog Leopold-Wilhelm voor Michaelina Woutiers (about 1620–na 1682).” In *Sponsors of the Past: Flemish Art and Patronage 1550–1700: Proceedings of the symposium organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven December 14–15, 2001*, 97–98. Faculteit Letteren, Departement Archeologie, Kunstwetenschap en Musicologie, ed. Hans Vlieghe and Katlijne Van der Stighelen. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2005.

by combining what was thought to be feminine grace with a decisive action in the movement of her hand just about to lay down another stroke on the canvas in front of her. Wautier's *Self-Portrait* and series of *The Five Senses* set in motion her innovative responses to long and deep traditions that the individual sections of this essay and the catalogue entries below will consider in depth.

Artists starting in the 16th century produced series of the five senses to meet the demand for images that could encompass universal knowledge of the world: the five senses, four continents, four seasons, and four temperaments, in which an inexhaustible variety entertained the eye and stimulated conversation. It was good business for print publishers who could sell four or five engravings at a time. Intact painted series of the five senses are rare by comparison. They required intensive labor that would have put them within reach of wealthy buyers who could commission a favorite artist to paint the senses in a way that would appeal to the patron's taste and intellect. Wautier composed her series to hang in a loose symmetry. *Sight* turned right and *Touch* facing left frame a parenthetical enclosure. *Hearing* inclined right and *Taste* to the left balance each other, one picture on

either side. *Smell* is the only sense positioned flat against the picture surface, gathering the four other pictures at the center. Wautier's *The Five Senses* fall into a visual order that matches the dominant hierarchy of the senses, moving from *Sight* at the left to *Touch* on the right.

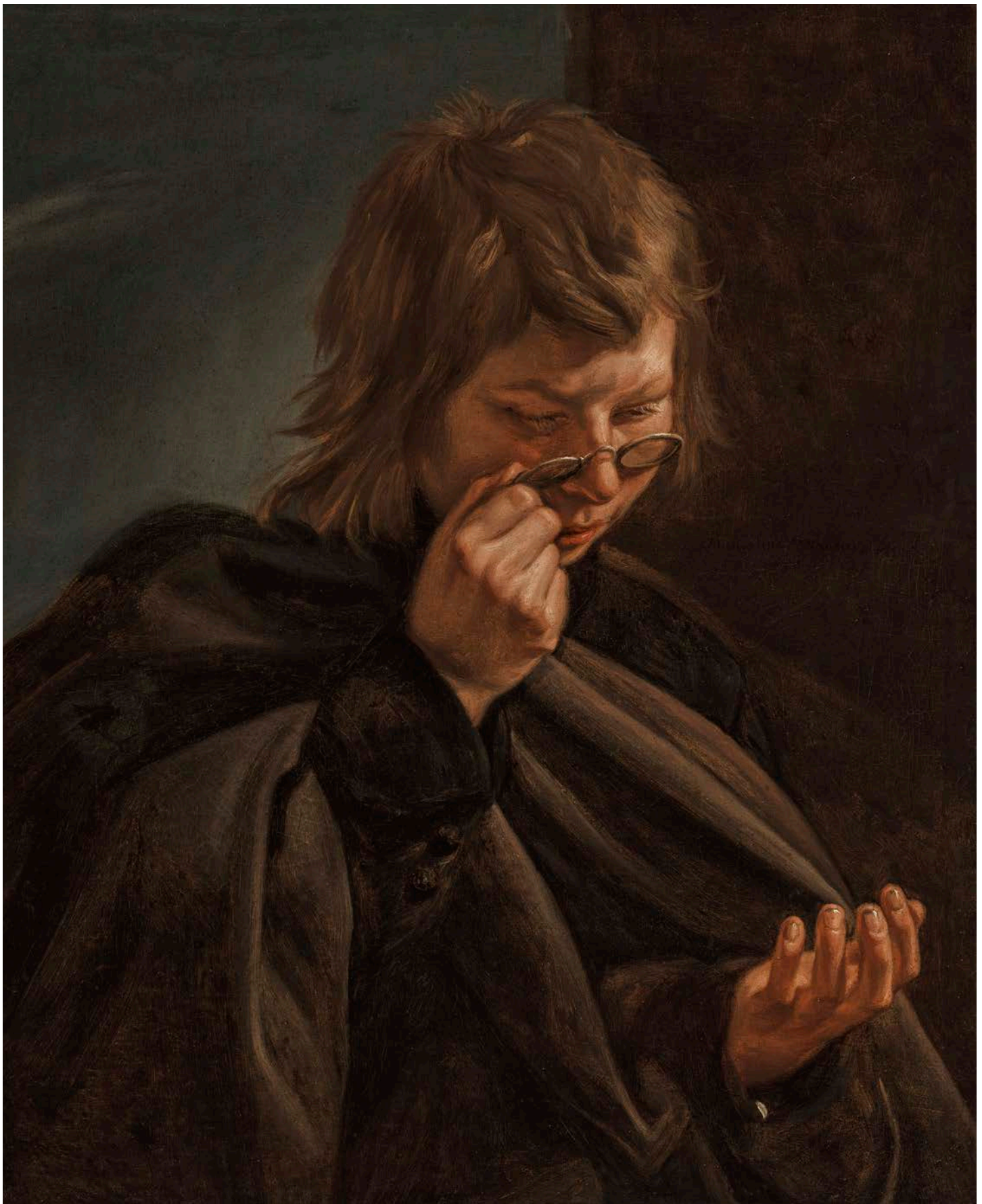


Figure 1. Michaelina Wautier, *Sight*, 1650.
Oil on canvas. 69.5 x 61 cm. Rose-Marie and Eijk van Otterloo Collection.
Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

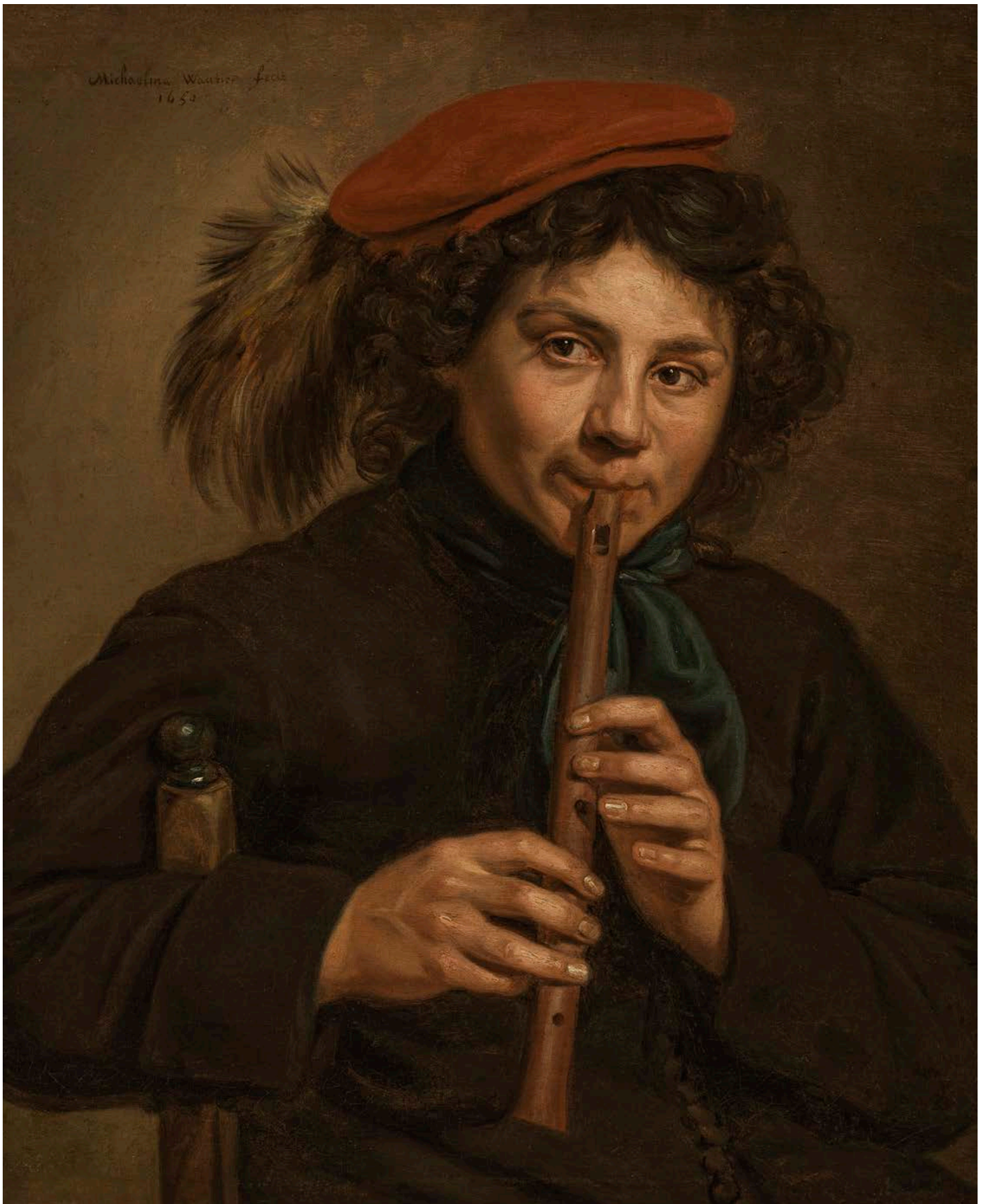


Figure 2. Michaelina Wautier, *Hearing*, 1650.
Oil on canvas. 69.5 x 61 cm. Rose-Marie and Eijk van Otterloo Collection.
Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 3. Michaelina Wautier, *Smell*, 1650.
Oil on canvas. 69.5 x 61 cm. Rose-Marie and Eijk van Otterloo Collection.
Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 4. Michaelina Wautier, *Taste*, 1650.
Oil on canvas. 69.5 x 61 cm. Rose-Marie and Eijk van Otterloo Collection.
Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 5. Michaelina Wautier, *Touch*, 1650.
Oil on canvas. 69.5 x 61 cm. Rose-Marie and Eijk van Otterloo Collection.
Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 6. Michaelina Wautier, *Self-Portrait*, about 1645.
Oil on canvas. 120 x 102 cm. Private collection.
Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 7. Michaelina Wautier, *Two Boys*.
Oil on canvas. 66 x 82 cm. Phoebus Collection.
Photo © The Phoebus Foundation, Antwerp.



Figure 9. Michaelina Wautier, *Garland of Flowers*, 1652.
Oil on panel. 41.1 x 57.4 cm. Private Collection.
Photo © Photograph Courtesy of Sotheby's, Inc.

► Technique

by Regina Noto

Michaelina Wautier's technique, process, and training are mysterious. Few records about her life exist due in part to her gender. There is little written evidence for if or how she trained as an artist, whether or not she went to Italy to study painting, or if she worked from life. To learn more about Wautier's methods, director of Conservation and Scientific Research, Eijk and Rose-Marie van Otterloo Conservator of Paintings, head of Paintings Conservation Rhona MacBeth examined both *Sight* and *Smell* in the MFA's Conservation Lab in the summer of 2022. The other three paintings in the series will be examined in the future.

Beginning with the fabric support itself, both *Sight* and *Smell* are painted on canvases with damaged edges, evident in the higher concentrations of lead white along the sides of each work, which are visible in the X-rays as brighter areas (Figs. 10 and 11). These sections of damage are in different locations from one another; in *Smell*, they are on the upper left edge, and in *Sight*, they show along the bottom right corner. This damage could mark changes to the paintings after production but may also signal Wautier reusing canvases. MacBeth looked for indications of cusping at the edges of both canvases, and while there was potentially some, cusping was not clearly visible. Cusping is a scalloped pattern, set at the edges of the fabric support as a result of the process of pulling it across and attaching it to a wooden strainer. This inability to see much cusping

could mean that the paintings were cut down, but this is not conclusive. Examination of the other three paintings may help clarify this question.

The ground of both paintings consists of a thick reddish-orange layer, covered by a thinner warm-toned gray layer (Fig. 12). It is likely that the three other paintings in the series also have a double ground of this sort. The combination of red and gray creates the appearance of a pale brown or tan ground, which Wautier allowed to show through in certain areas—especially the buttons on the boy in *Sight*'s cuff—as a highlight. This ground layer of red covered by gray was standard in Antwerp and other regions of the Low Countries beginning in the early 17th century, and double grounds were generally widely used at this time.⁸

⁸ Ashok Roy, "The National Gallery Van Dycks," *National Gallery Technical Bulletin: Painting in Antwerp and London: Rubens and Van Dyck*, Volume 20, (1999): 52.

It appears that Wautier may have begun by painting directly on the ground layer. There is no evidence of underdrawing when the paintings were examined by infrared reflectography (Fig. 13). This technique primarily reveals underdrawing in carbon-based materials like charcoal however; if the artist was drawing with a different material, such as white chalk, we would not see it. There is only one drawing attributed to Wautier, so it is clear she drew, but possibly not in preparation for painting. No oil sketches are attributed to Wautier either, unlike Rubens or Van Dyck, though their reliance on oil sketches may have been an uncommon way of working.⁹

In the *Self-Portrait*, Wautier appears to show us her process in some detail. She depicts herself sitting at the easel with a canvas which is in the very early stages of painting. Looking closely you can see that the sitter's position and profile are defined in a few light-colored contour lines, possibly in a white chalk. Wautier seems to depict herself continuing her work by applying dark brown lines with a brush, likely in a dark umber paint. (Fig. 6).

MacBeth described Wautier's painting style as 'drawing with paint,' a phrase Nico Van Hout has applied to Rubens.¹⁰ It is clear from the IRRs, which allow for greater visibility of Wautier's brushstrokes that she drew with her paintbrush. The paint strokes are firm and especially obvious as outlines around the right hand and thumb of *Sight*, a method which Wautier repeats in her depiction of the bottom-most edge of the right hand in *Smell*.

There are very few areas where she edited her initial application of paint in both *Sight* and *Smell*. Both *Sight* and *Smell* have some slight static in their X-rays, elements that do not relate to what we see on the surface of the current paintings, but that is not evidence of Wautier changing her mind in these works—it could be that she reused the canvases and some details are showing in the radiographs. Either she had a plan, in drawings or oil sketches that we do not know of, or she had conceived of the paintings with great clarity and could carry out that idea on the canvas without other preparation. These works show her skill and comfort with paint.

Wautier concentrated most of her attention on the faces and hands of the boys, allowing their clothes and backgrounds to be more understated. Faces and hands are also the areas with the greatest quantity of lead white, which has more body and opacity than the darker, more translucent paint colors. She built up the layers of paint to show the pale skin of the boys with careful but bold strokes. Upon close looking, it appears that Wautier set aside these sections of the canvases, painting them first, then the backgrounds, and then merging the two areas. This working sequence is most apparent in the hair of *Sight*, where Wautier unites the different elements by painting the boy's hair over the blue background after she painted his face and head. Concentrating her focus on the faces and hands of the boys is a method based in portraiture, which fits with Wautier's experience. Her most famous early works, which first brought her success, are portraits, and there is an element of portraiture in the series of *The Five Senses*. Each boy feels specific as if he were real.

We do not know who the boys were, but Wautier may have painted them from life. Other paintings by her appear to feature identical boys—the model for *Taste* is in *Two Boys*, as is the boy in *Touch*, and the boy in *Hearing* is in *Boys Blowing Bubbles* (Fig. 14). This repetition of models is a clue that Wautier may have known these boys or could have painted them from life at one point and then reused their faces as study heads, known as *tronies*. But there is no way to be sure if Wautier painted the boys for the series from life or was using *tronies*.

According to the evidence from this initial technical examination, Wautier appears to have worked in a standard fashion, using a double ground and reserving space for heads and hands, spending more time on those areas, and then painting the figures of the boys and their backgrounds. These conclusions imply that Wautier was trained as a painter in a traditional method, though it is still unclear how she gained this training.

⁹ Nico Van Hout, *Rubens Unveiled: Notes on the Master's Painting Technique: Catalogue of the Rubens Paintings in the Antwerp Museum* (Antwerp: Ludion, 2012), 17.

¹⁰ Rhona MacBeth, discussion August 16, 2022. Van Hout, 90.



Figure 10. X-ray of Michaelina Wautier's *Sight* (1650).
Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 11. X-ray of Michaelina Wautier's *Smell* (1650).
Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

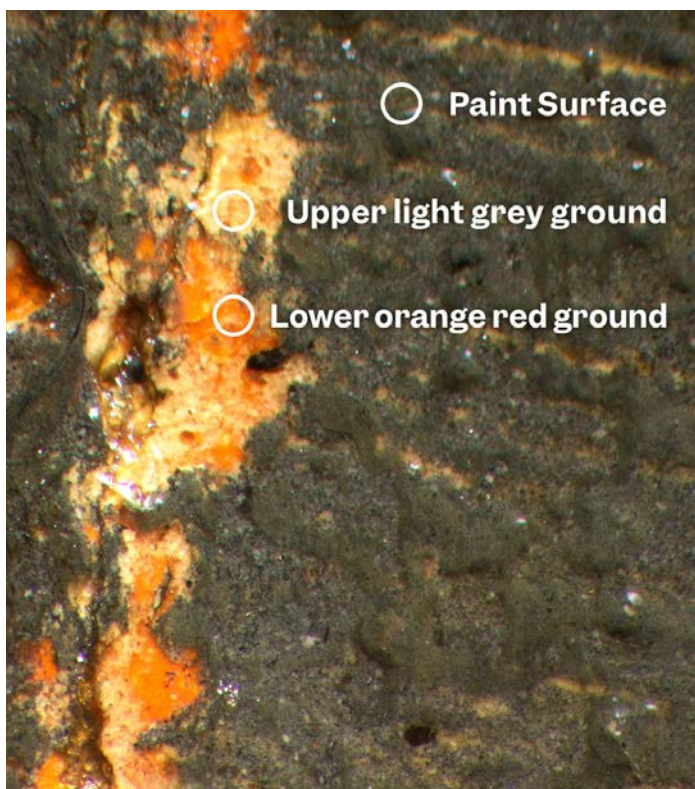


Figure 12. Micrograph of Michaelina Wautier's *Sight* (1650) which shows red ground layer under gray. Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 13. Infrared reflectography image of Michaelina Wautier's *Sight* (1650). Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 14. Michaelina Wautier, *Boys Blowing Bubbles*, 1640s.
Oil on canvas. 90.5 x 121.3 cm. 58.140.
Gift of Mr. Floyd Naramore, Seattle Art Museum.
Photo © Seattle Art Museum, Nathaniel Willson.

► *The Five Senses* and the Question of Patronage and Audience

by Emily Hirsch

The visual coherence among the five paintings and the nature of a series suggests that the canvases were intended to hang as a set, and their size would require a significant amount of space to display together. Therefore, it is probable that the series was a commission, rather than painted for the market. The following section will consider different reasons for commissioning or collecting a painted series of *The Five Senses* in the 17th century to illuminate the possible motivations of Wautier's unknown patron.

Jusepe de Ribera's series of *The Five Senses*, painted around 1615 while the Spanish Ribera lived and worked in Rome, pictures the senses as performed by five adult men: *Sight* holds a telescope with eyeglasses and a mirror on the table before him; *Hearing* plays the lute; *Taste* holds a drinking glass and carafe with crusty bread and dish of pasta in front of him; the raggedly-dressed *Smell* is accompanied by onions, garlic, and a flower; and *Touch* is a blind man who feels the face of a sculpture with a painting set to the side (Fig. 15).¹¹ The original owner of Ribera's series is unknown, but like Wautier's series it is presumed to be a commission. Hannah Joy Friedman posits that the unknown patron was likely in the circle of the Accademia dei Lincei, the first scientific

academy in Rome, where a member demonstrating their scientific and connoisseurial knowledge would appreciate details like Ribera's inclusion of a Galilean telescope in *Sight* and the illustration of the paragone debate between the primacy of sculpture and painting in *Touch*.¹² For this imagined viewer, the paintings are not just to be looked at but are layered with references, nuances, and jokes that prompt conversations in which one reveals their erudition.¹³ Similarly, the paintings that comprise Wautier's *The Five Senses* allude to ancient and contemporary theories of the senses, references to earlier pictorial traditions, and philosophical debates that invite contemplation and discussion from learned viewers.¹⁴ Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel's (1568–1625)

¹¹ Multiple versions of the senses by Ribera exist. This grouping of *Sight*, *Smell*, *Taste*, and *Touch* is according to: Hannah Joy Friedman, "Jusepe de Ribera's Five Senses and the Practice of Prudence," *Renaissance Quarterly* 74.4 (Winter 2021): 1111–1161. Multiple copies of Ribera's *Hearing* exist in private collections, but there is no consensus on the original. Friedman, "Jusepe de Ribera's Five Senses," 1114, footnote 9.

¹² Friedman, "Jusepe de Ribera's Five Senses," 1121–1122.

¹³ Friedman, "Jusepe de Ribera's Five Senses," 1124.

¹⁴ In the mid-17th century, the faculty at the University of Leuven was engaged in a debate over teaching Cartesian philosophy rather than Aristotelian, indicating that a series of the senses like Wautier's would have been germane to a contemporaneous philosophical debate and provoked discussion among learned viewers in the Spanish Netherlands. See: Cat. 93 *Taste*.

monumental series of *The Five Senses* (1617–18)¹⁵ (Figs. 16 and 17) pictures each sense as an allegorical female figure sitting within a cornucopia of objects that illustrate the kinds of knowledge comprehended by each of the senses. The earliest provenance information for the series comes from a 1636 inventory of the Alcazar in Madrid, which records that the series was presented to the Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand by Duke Wolfgang Wilhelm von Pfalz-Neuburg in 1634.¹⁶ Shortly after Ferdinand received the series, he gave it to his brother Philip IV of Spain, and it was then displayed in the Alcazar.¹⁷ Christine van Mulders speculates that the series may have been commissioned by the Infanta Isabella and Archduke Albert and then given to Duke Wolfgang Wilhelm, perhaps after the death of Albert in 1621.¹⁸ The supposition that the series was originally a royal commission is supported both by its ownership in royal circles soon after it was created and the recurring Habsburg imagery in the paintings, such as the inclusion of the Habsburg double-headed eagle, the Habsburg residences in the Spanish Netherlands, and the double-portrait of Albert and Isabella in the *Allegory of Sight*.¹⁹ Likewise, the scale of the project, and the collaboration between two leading painters of Flanders, suggest an especially distinguished patron.

Van Mulders and Ariane van Suchtelen both interpret the series as a celebration of court culture, bringing together an “idealized picture of every facet of courtly life”²⁰ that would have appealed to Albert and Isabella and emphasized the regents’ divine rule, wealth, and erudition. The *Sense of Sight* epitomizes this reading of the series, picturing a room that overflows with ancient and modern works of art, tools of scientific inquiry, exotica like flowers, shells, and a parrot and peacock, and the portal behind the central figure that features the royal residence

in Brussels, Coudenberg Palace.²¹ As discussed in this catalogue, depictions of the senses often have a moralizing function. However, because of its clear association with Habsburg rule and court culture, this series appears to celebrate excess rather than warn against it. Indeed, the paintings should be understood as operating metonymically, with the peaceful prosperity in the imaginary court scenes reflecting the health and wealth of the state at the time that the series was painted, during the Twelve Years’ Truce (1609–1621).

The overwhelming, *Kunstkamer*-style composition of the paintings in Rubens and Brueghel’s series of the senses aligns with the trend of collectors’ cabinet paintings developed in early-17th-century Antwerp by artists including Brueghel and Frans Francken II (1581–1642)²² and presages the later gallery paintings by artists like David Teniers the Younger (1610–1690). These kinds of paintings that bring together a wealth of objects not only contribute to the symbolic function of the painting but also promote the curiosity and wonder of the viewer, who discovers a new detail on each viewing.

The Flemish painter Theodoor Rombouts’s (1597–1637) *Five Senses* (1632) is a single, large painting rather than a series, in which the five senses appear as five men who are gathered together in the order of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell (Fig. 18). This order departs from the traditional Aristotelian hierarchy of the senses that Wautier followed in her series (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch), instead elevating touch to the third position and demoting taste to the last, which follows the hierarchy proposed by Juan Luis Vives in his *De Anima et Vita*.²³ In Rombouts’s *Five Senses*, sight is embodied by an older man who wears eyeglasses and props up a mirror; hearing is a younger man

¹⁵ 1617 is inscribed with Brueghel’s signature on *Sight* and 1618 on *Taste*. Ariane van Suchtelen, “Allegory of Taste,” in *Rubens and Brueghel: A Working Friendship*, eds. Anne T. Woollett and Ariane van Suchtelen (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006), 94.

¹⁶ Christine Van Mulders, *Corpus Rubenianum: Works in Collaboration: Jan Brueghel I & II*, trans. Ludwig Burchard, Jantien Black (London; Turnhout: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2016), 54.

¹⁷ Van Mulders, *Works in Collaboration: Jan Brueghel I & II*, 54.

¹⁸ Van Mulders, *Works in Collaboration: Jan Brueghel I & II*, 54.

¹⁹ Van Suchtelen, “Allegory of Taste,” 94.

²⁰ Van Suchtelen, “Allegory of Taste,” 96.

²¹ Van Mulders, *Works in Collaboration: Jan Brueghel I & II*, 57.

²² Van Mulders, *Works in Collaboration: Jan Brueghel I & II*, 57.

²³ Ioannis Lodovici Vivis Valentini, *De Anima et Vita, libri tres* (Zurich: 1538, Jacob Gesner, 1575), 1159–1166. Thank you to Jeffrey Muller for the reference and translation from Spanish to English.

who plays the lute and has instruments piled around his feet; touch is an older blind man who uses his hands to feel the marble or plaster sculptures laid out before him; taste is a partially undressed young man with foodstuffs strewn at his feet; and smell smokes a pipe and grips a bunch of garlic. Overall, each man's attributes to perform the senses are typical of sensorial iconography in the 17th century. Of the series discussed here, Rombouts's iconography aligns most closely with that of Jusepe de Ribera. Like Ribera, Rombouts was a follower of Caravaggio who studied in Italy and brought elements of Caravaggio's style back to Flanders in the early 17th century,²⁴ most immediately identifiable in this painting with the partially undressed young man representing taste, who evokes Caravaggio's pictures of young men.

After returning from Italy to Antwerp in 1625, Rombouts attracted the patronage of Antoon Triest, Bishop of Ghent, who bought and commissioned multiple paintings by Rombouts between 1627 and 1637, when Rombouts died.²⁵ Between 1631 and 1632, Triest paid Rombouts around 600 florins for a painting of *The Five Senses*, most likely the same one discussed here.²⁶ Although Triest favored religious painting and sculpture, as appears from what is known of his large collection, the Bishop also collected paintings of everyday life, like Rombouts's *Five Senses*.²⁷ On the surface, the appeal of this subject matter for a member of the clergy may have lain in its moralizing function of representing the senses as vulnerable to seduction and deception, which was de-emphasized in Rubens and Brueghel's earlier series. This is most obvious in the figures of taste and smell, who merrily engage in the vices of drinking and smoking. However, the representation of touch as a blind man touching sculpture avoids a purely moralizing reading of the senses. Peter Hecht interprets the relationship between sight and touch in Rombouts's *Five Senses* as satirically illustrating the subordination of the sense of touch to sight. Hecht also sees the paragone debate

between painting and sculpture—embodied by the reflection of the pile of instruments in sight's mirror that illustrates how the art of painting is the true mirror image of nature.²⁸ Still, Rombouts's elevation of touch in the hierarchy of the senses indicates that while touch may be subordinate to sight, one can still gain knowledge through the sense. For a patron who was both a prelate and an avid art collector, Rombouts's *Five Senses* is a sophisticated combination of a moralizing lesson on the senses with a commentary on the status of arts.

Pamela Smith's reconstruction of the Dutch natural philosopher Franciscus Sylvius's art collection in *The Body of the Artisan* sheds light on how a series of the senses might appeal to a scientific-minded collector in the mid-17th century. Along with paintings by Adriaen Brouwer, Frans van Mieris (1635–1681), and Gerrit Dou (1613–1675), Sylvius owned a series of *The Five Senses* by the Dutch painter Jan Miense Molenaer (1610–1688).²⁹ Although the exact series that Sylvius owned is unknown today, Smith posits the Mauritshuis series as a comparable set (Figs. 19–23).³⁰ Sylvius's pursuit of scientific knowledge was rooted in an epistemology of observation and experimentation that elevated the status of the senses, which played an important role in scientific knowledge production.³¹ Smith contends that Sylvius's ownership of a series that likely depicted the senses as performed by crude, uncontrollable, and even violent peasants suggests that this series warned about the danger of the senses when not controlled by reason and judgment.³²

In contrast to this reading of Molenaer's series, Wautier's series appears to capture the moments in which children first develop knowledge and judgment through their senses.³³ Rather than being corruptive, the senses are a generative site for discovery. A patron interested in these dynamics might have commissioned such a series, which relies upon Wautier's skill and erudition to bring to life.

²⁴ A. Bréjon De Lavergnée, "Theodoor Rombouts. De vijf zintuigen," in *200 jaar verzamelen. Museumboek Museum voor Schone Kunsten Gent*, ed. Arnout Balis et al (Amsterdam; Gent: Ludion, 2000), 96.

²⁵ Eric Duverger, "L'Evêque gantois Antoon Triest (1577–1657). Collectionneur d'objets d'art et mécène," in *La cathédrale Saint-Bavon de Gand: du moyen âge au baroque*, ed. Bruno Bouckaert (Asnières-sur-Oise: Fondation Royaumont, CERIMM; Gand; Ludion; Paris: Flammarion, 2000), 206.

²⁶ Duverger, "L'Evêque gantois Antoon Triest (1577–1657)," 206.

²⁷ Duverger, "L'Evêque gantois Antoon Triest (1577–1657)," 225.

²⁸ Peter Hecht, "Art Beats Nature, and Painting Does so Best of All: The Paragone Competition in Duquesnoy, Dou and Schalcken," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, Vol. 29, No. ¾ (2002), 194.

²⁹ Pamela Smith, *The Body of the Artisan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 216–217.

³⁰ Smith, *The Body of the Artisan*, 217.

³¹ Smith, *The Body of the Artisan*, 220.

³² Smith, *The Body of the Artisan*, 223.

³³ See: Cat. 96 *Touch*.

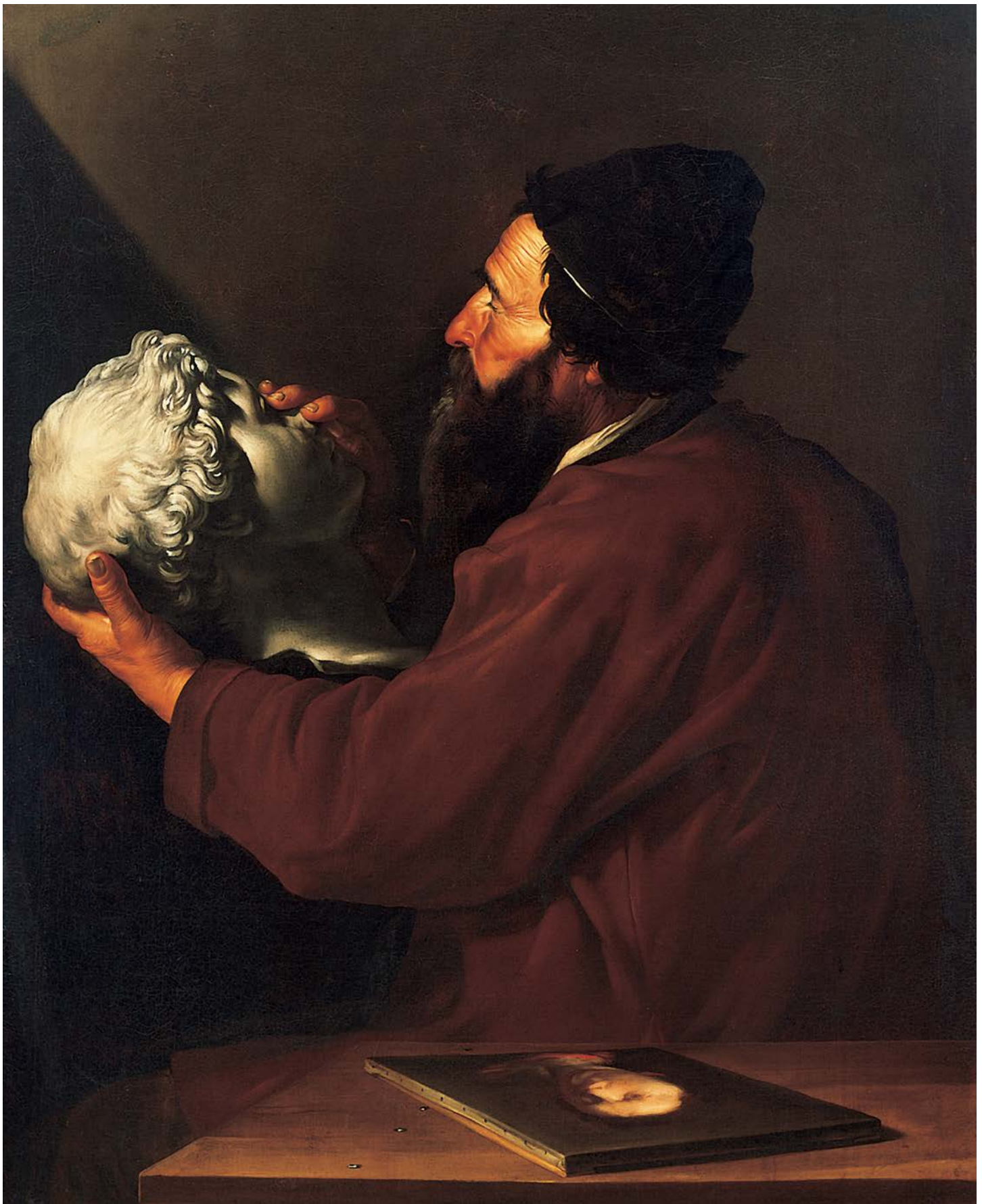


Figure 15. Jusepe de Ribera, *The Sense of Touch*, about 1615–16.
Oil on canvas. The Norton Simon Foundation.
Photo © The Norton Simon Foundation.



Figure 16. Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Elder, *The Sense of Sight*, 1617.
Oil on panel. 64.7 x 109.5 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado.
Photo © Photographic Archive Museo Nacional del Prado.



Figure 17. Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Elder; *The Sense of Hearing*, 1617.
Oil on panel. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado.
Photo © Photographic Archive Museo Nacional del Prado.



Figure 18. Theodoor Rombouts, *Allegory of the Five Senses*, 1632.
Oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent.
Photo © MSK Gent - www.artinflanders.be - Hugo Maertens - public domain.



Figure 19. Jan Miense Molenaer, *Sight*, 1637.
Oil on panel. 19.7 x 23.9 cm. Mauritshuis, The Hague. Photo © Mauritshuis, The Hague



Figure 20. Jan Miense Molenaer, *Hearing*, 1637.
Oil on panel. 19.3 x 24.3 cm. Mauritshuis, The Hague. Photo © Mauritshuis, The Hague



Figure 21. Jan Miense Molenaer, *Smell*, 1637.
Oil on panel. 19.3 x 24.3 cm. Mauritshuis, The Hague. Photo © Mauritshuis, The Hague



Figure 22. Jan Miense Molenaer, *Taste*, 1637.
Oil on panel. 19.6 x 24.3 cm. Mauritshuis, The Hague. Photo © Mauritshuis, The Hague



Figure 23. Jan Miense Molenaer, *Touch*, 1637.
Oil on panel. 19.6 x 24.4 cm. Mauritshuis, The Hague. Photo © Mauritshuis, The Hague

► *The Five Senses*

by Sophie Higginson

In the early modern Netherlands, depicting the five senses as an artistic series became particularly popular in the latter half of the 16th century.³⁴ The five senses joined the four elements, the four seasons, and the four temperaments as a series in which artists could offer viewers encyclopedic variety and which, in print, could increase the sales of their publishers. Series of prints and paintings depicting the five senses may have provided conversation pieces for wealthy and well-educated elites.³⁵

The added layer of discernment and analysis may have related to the shifting perception of the senses as productive and generative human faculties rather than sinful ones. While Wautier's depictions of the senses are symbolically simplified, her work nonetheless exists within a larger framework of sensory depictions that connects her paintings to this theme of deriving knowledge through the senses. Meanwhile, considering the early reception of Cartesian philosophy in the Netherlands by the end of the 1640s, it is possible that Wautier's paintings could spark a debate over the alternative concepts of the senses argued by the Aristotelian and Cartesian camps in particular.

Frans Floris's (about 1519–1570) series of prints depicting the five senses, engraved by Cornelis Cort (1533–1578) and published by Hieronymus Cock in Antwerp in 1561, established a paradigm for artists and a marked point of contrast for Wautier's depiction of the same series (Figs. 24–28). The complicated symbolism and attendant inscriptions of Floris's prints formed a literary puzzle for the viewer to piece together. They combined female personifications, animal symbols derived from medieval encyclopedias, and other earlier conventions representing each sense.³⁶ While the allegorical combination of such imagery first appeared earlier in the 16th century, in Georg Pencz's (about 1500–1550) engraved and etched

³⁴ Carl Nordenfalk, 1985, "The Five Senses in Flemish Art Before 1600" in *Netherlandish Mannerism: Papers Given at a Symposium in Nationalmuseum Stockholm, September 21–22, 1984*, ed. Cavall-Björkman Görel, 135. Nationalmusei Skriftserie: N.S. 4. Nationalmuseum Stockholm.

³⁵ Friedman, "Jusepe de Ribera's Five Senses," 1113.

³⁶ Nordenfalk, "The Five Senses in Flemish Art Before 1600," 140; Lubomír Konečný, "I Cinque Sensi da Aristotele a Constantin Brancusi," in *I cinque sensi nell'arte: immagini del sentire*, ed. Sylvia Ferino-Pagden (Cremona: Centro culturale "Città di Cremona," 1996), 32–33; Katharine Park, "Allegory" in *Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Susan Dackerman. Cambridge: Harvard Art Museums, 2011.

series of the five senses (Figs. 29–33), Floris’s treatment refined this communication of sensory knowledge and physical sensuality.³⁷ Inscriptions extracted from the humanist Juan Luis Vives’s 1538 treatise *De Anima et Vita* accompany each plate and connect Floris’s symbolic representations to a humanist tradition of inquiry on sensory experience and knowledge. Floris personified sight, the noblest sense, thanks to the vast knowledge that it reveals, as a regal, beautifully dressed woman, with the bearing of an ancient Roman statue. She looks into a mirror which reflects the self-knowledge that sight opens to the human soul. The eagle at her side looks directly into the sun, demonstrating how animals share and even surpass human acuity of perception. A column and base at right bring in the art of architecture, founded on sight, measured by mathematics. The eye-like knots in the tree on the left suggest that even the woods can see. At the bottom, an inscription taken from Vives ties the visual symbols with then-current scientific understanding: “The external sense organ of sight is the eyes, while the internal [organ] is two nerves extending from the brain to the eyes.”

Latin inscriptions, an elevated style formed from the artist’s studies in Rome, and the puzzle of visual symbols appealed to a learned, elite audience who could afford to buy a series of five engravings that encapsulated universal knowledge experienced through the senses. Floris’s concept dominated how artists visualized the five senses up to 1600 and beyond.

During the 1590s in Rome, Caravaggio engineered a revolution in how to depict sense experiences. He invented a naturalistic style that creates the illusion of immediate actions so vivid in crisscrossed lines of movement accentuated by contrasts between light and dark that viewers experience the sensations vicariously.³⁸ Caravaggio’s *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* (Fig. 34) (about 1594–1595)—a parody of the Laocoön—captures the recoil of surprise in this unexpected,

uncanny triggering of the sense of touch. Through its half-length format that pushes the protagonist, an adolescent boy, forward from a neutral ground, *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* closely anticipates Wautier’s *The Five Senses* and the many pictures of similar design and subject by the Dutch and Flemish followers of Caravaggio active during the first three decades of the seventeenth century, all the predecessors on whom Wautier drew. After Caravaggio, most painters embodied the senses in immediate experiences of everyday life. Symbolic objects, if included, played a subordinate role to the central and visceral experience of the sense.

Johannes (Joris) van Vliet’s 1634 etching series of *The Five Senses* (Figs. 35–39) powerfully visualizes that change sparked by Caravaggio and then inflected by Rembrandt (1606–1669), whom Van Vliet emulated in Leiden during the 1630s. Instead of Floris’s assemblage of symbols, Van Vliet’s *Sight* reproduces the conditions of sight through a stark opposition between light and dark. This illuminates the study where an old man sits, reading intently, with the aid of glasses and a brightly burning candle. Symbolic objects blend into this flicker of shadow. Glasses, like Floris’s mirror, are instruments that enhance sight. The globe on the table in front and the map on the wall behind capture the universal and measured knowledge gained by seeing. Reading by candlelight in the quiet of his study, the old man learns about everything under the sun through his sense of sight.

Wautier’s series expanded on those changes in representing the five senses wrought by Caravaggio, his Flemish and Dutch followers, and later artists such as Van Vliet. Closer in time, Wautier’s *The Five Senses* built on the momentum from the series painted just a few years earlier by Gonzales Coques (about 1614–1684) and David Teniers the Younger, two painters active in both Antwerp and Brussels, whose work she most certainly knew (Figs. 40–44 and 45–49).³⁹

³⁷ Konečný, “I Cinque Sensi da Aristotele a Constantin Brancusi,” 32–33.

³⁸ Catherine Puglisi, “Talking Pictures: Sound in Caravaggio’s Art” in *Caravaggio: Reflections and Refractions*, ed. David M. Stone (Routledge, 2017), 105. Puglisi dismisses Minna Heimbürger’s argument that Caravaggio’s *Lute Player* represents all five senses at once, but also outlines how many of Caravaggio’s paintings have been interpreted as representations of the senses.

³⁹ Marion Liskén-Pruss, *Gonzales Coques (1614–1684): der kleine Van Dyck* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2013), 83–92, on Coques’ two series of the five senses now in Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, and London, National Gallery.

Wautier's *The Five Senses* introduced differences by which her pictures separate themselves from what came before. Teniers and Coques both worked on a small scale, painted on wooden panels, and posed adult men as their models. Coques combined the portraiture of fellow artists with sense experiences significant for their art. Hans-Joachim Raupp suggests that a Flemish connoisseur could have ordered this fusion of genres.⁴⁰ Wautier, by contrast, painted her series at a life-size scale, and, given their proportions, these pictures would have required a generous space for display. Wautier caught youths in moments of sensory experiment instead of the mature control exercised by Coques's figures. Only *Hearing* among Wautier's senses practices his art with a jaunty, youthful flair. It will be argued below that later artists, especially Michael Sweerts in mid-1650s Brussels, adopted Wautier's innovation.

⁴⁰ Hans-Joachim Raupp, *Untersuchungen zu Künstlerbildnis und Künstlerdarstellung in den Niederlanden im 17. Jahrhundert*. Olms, Hildesheim, 1984.



Figures 24. Cornelis Cort, designed by Frans Floris, published by Hieronymus Cock, *Sight (Visus)*, 1561. Engraving. 28.6 x 35.2 cm. Andrew W. Mellon Fund. National Gallery of Art, Washington. Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington.



Figures 25. Cornelis Cort, designed by Frans Floris, published by Hieronymus Cock, *Hearing (Auditus)*, 1561. Engraving, 28.6 x 35.8 cm. Andrew W. Mellon Fund. National Gallery of Art, Washington. Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington.



Figures 26. Cornelis Cort, designed by Frans Floris, published by Hieronymus Cock, *Smell (Odoratus)*, 1561. Engraving, 28.6 x 35.8 cm. Andrew W. Mellon Fund. National Gallery of Art, Washington. Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington.



Figures 27. Cornelis Cort, designed by Frans Floris, published by Hieronymus Cock, *Taste (Gustus)*, 1561. Engraving, 28.5 x 35.1 cm. Andrew W. Mellon Fund. National Gallery of Art, Washington. Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington.



Figures 28. Cornelis Cort, designed by Frans Floris, published by Hieronymus Cock, *Touch (Tactus)*, 1561. Engraving, 28.6 x 34.8 cm. Andrew W. Mellon Fund. National Gallery of Art, Washington. Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington.



Figures 29. Georg Pencz, *Sight*. Engraving. 7.8 x 5 cm.
From The New York Public Library.



Figures 30. Georg Pencz, *Hearing*. Engraving. 7.8 x 5 cm.
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Figures 31. Georg Pencz, *Smell*. Engraving. 7.8 x 5 cm.
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



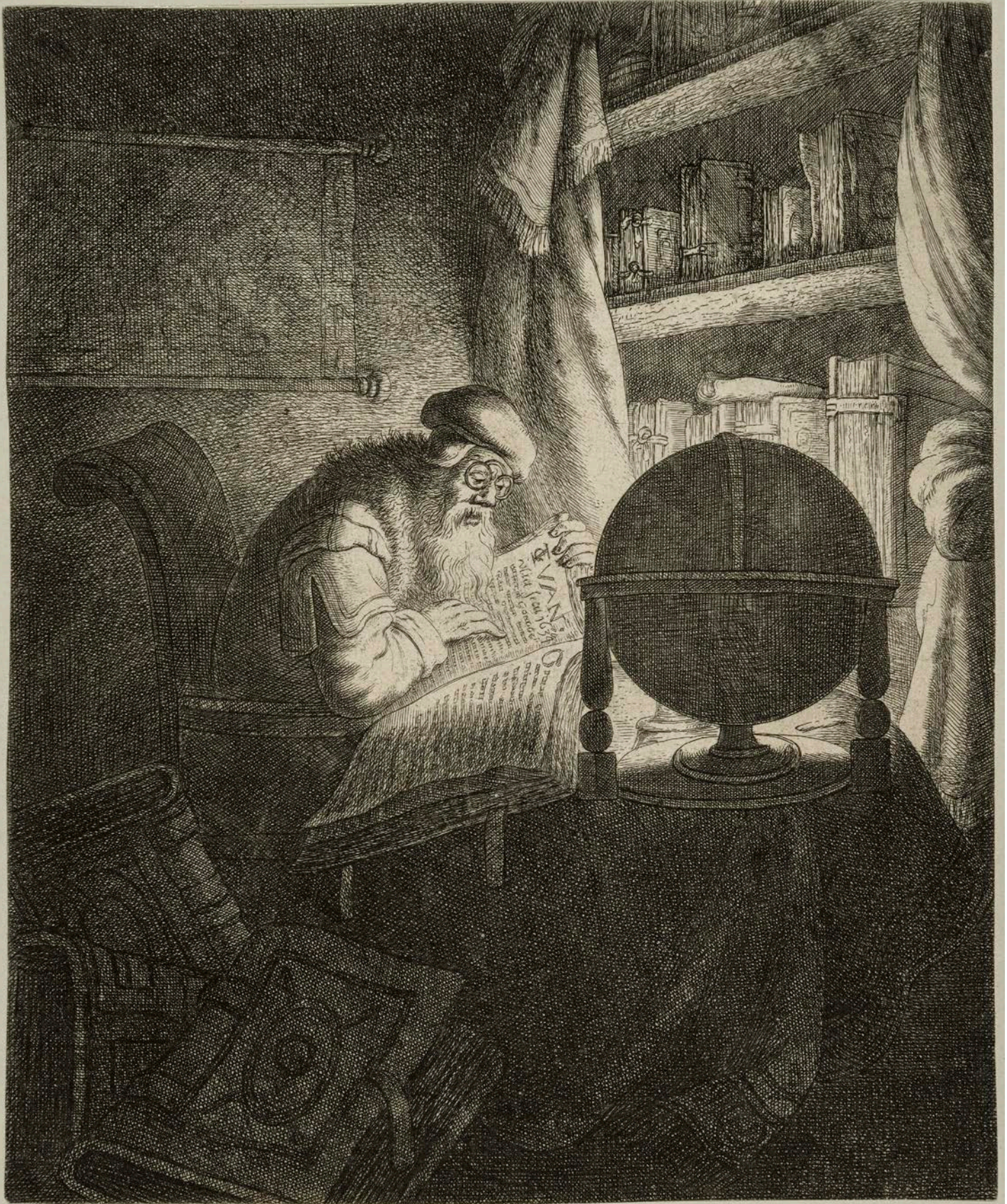
Figures 32. Georg Pencz, *Taste*. Engraving. 7.8 x 5 cm.
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Figures 33. Georg Pencz, *Touch*. Engraving, 7.8 x 5 cm.
Gift of Harry G. Friedman, 1957. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figures 34. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Boy Bitten by a Lizard*, about 1594–5. Oil on canvas. 66 x 49.5 cm. Bought with the aid of a contribution from the J. Paul Getty Jr. Endowment Fund, 1986. The National Gallery, London. Photo © The National Gallery, London.



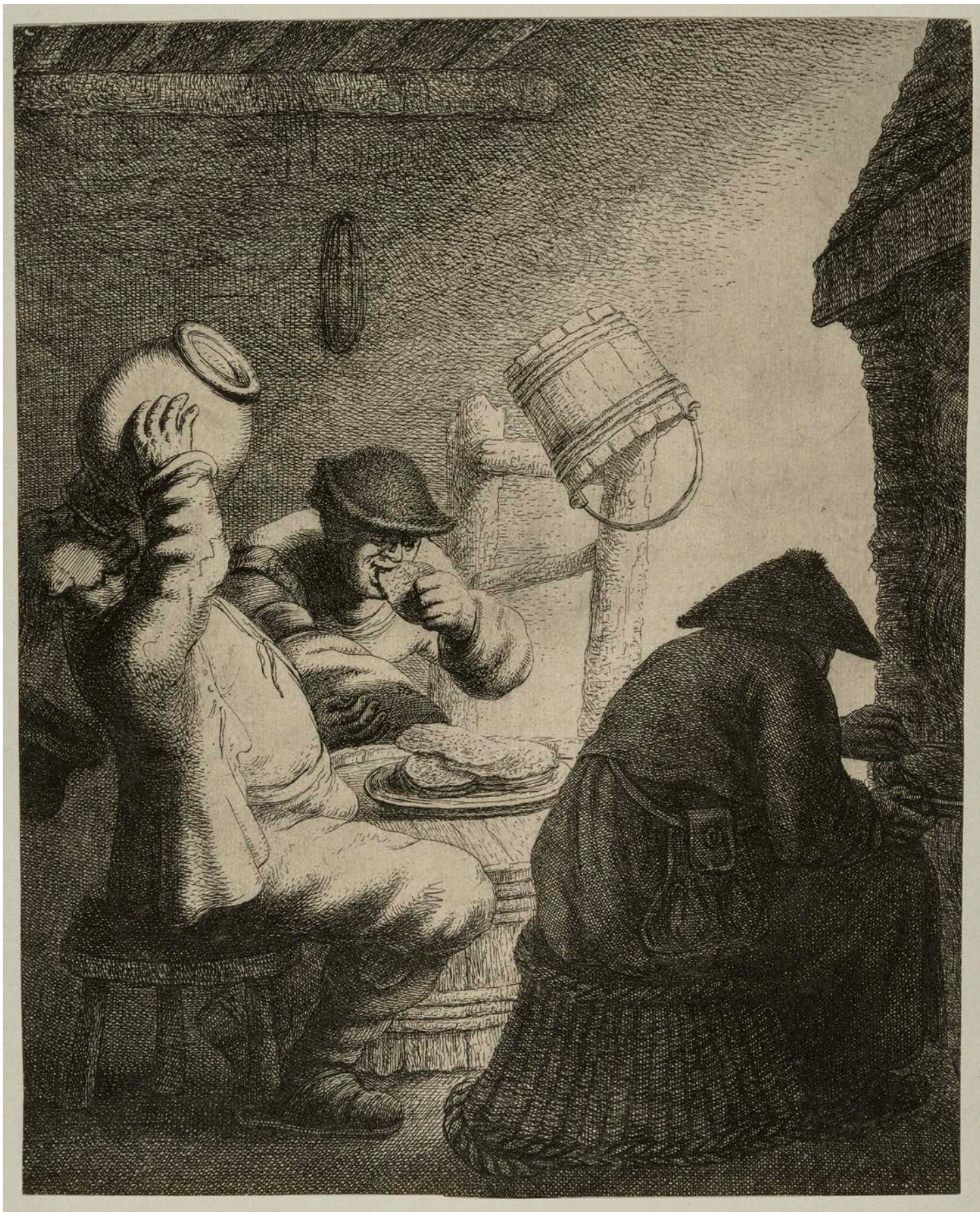
Figures 35. Johannes (Joris) van Vliet, *Sight*, 1634. Etching.
Bequest of William Perkins Babcock. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



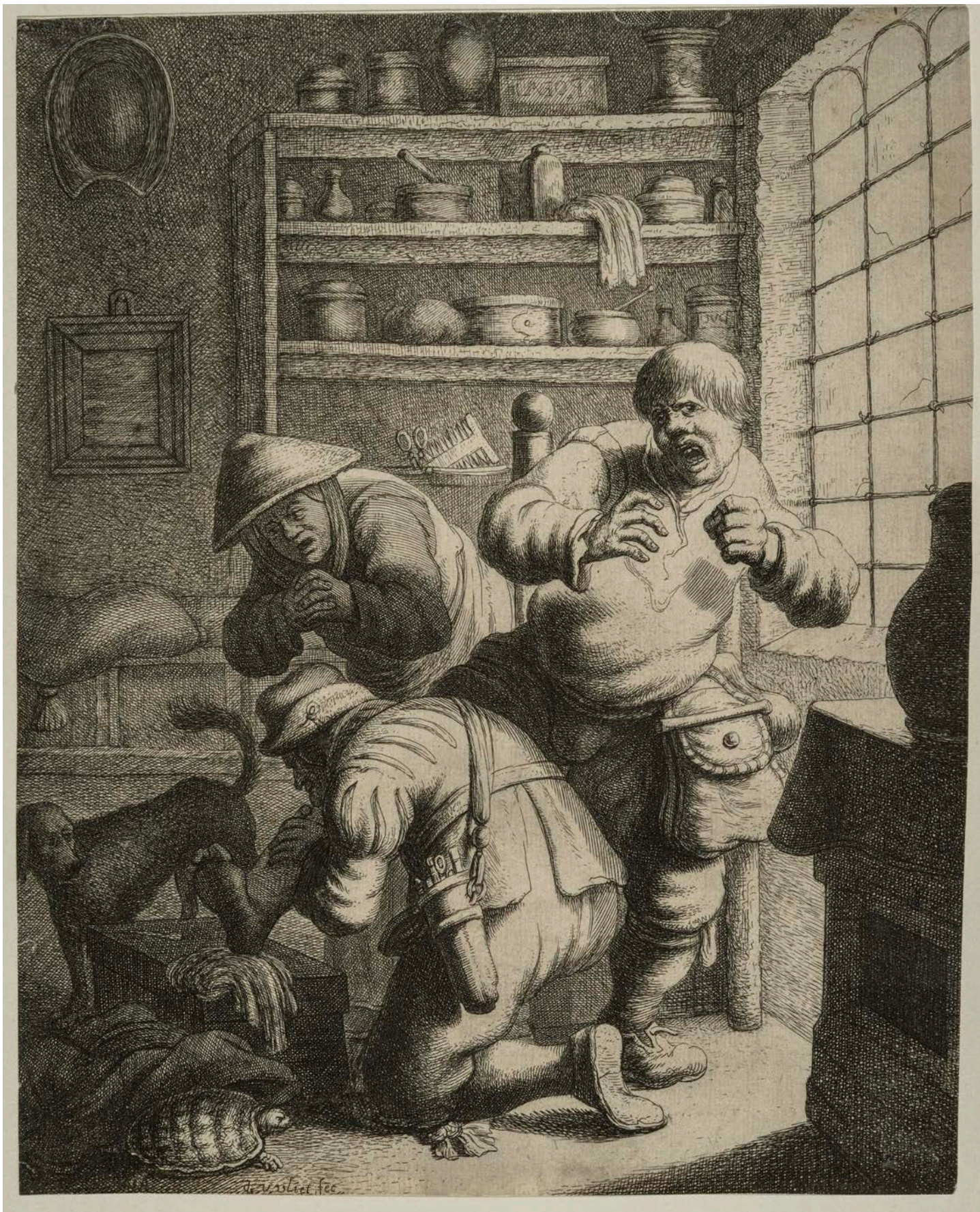
Figures 36. Johannes (Joris) van Vliet, *Hearing*, 1634. Etching.
Bequest of William Perkins Babcock. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figures 37. Johannes (Joris) van Vliet, *Smell*, 1634. Etching. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Figures 38. Johannes (Joris) van Vliet, *Taste*, 1634. Etching.
Bequest of William Perkins Babcock. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figures 39. Johannes (Joris) van Vliet, *Touch*, 1634. Etching.
Bequest of William Perkins Babcock. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



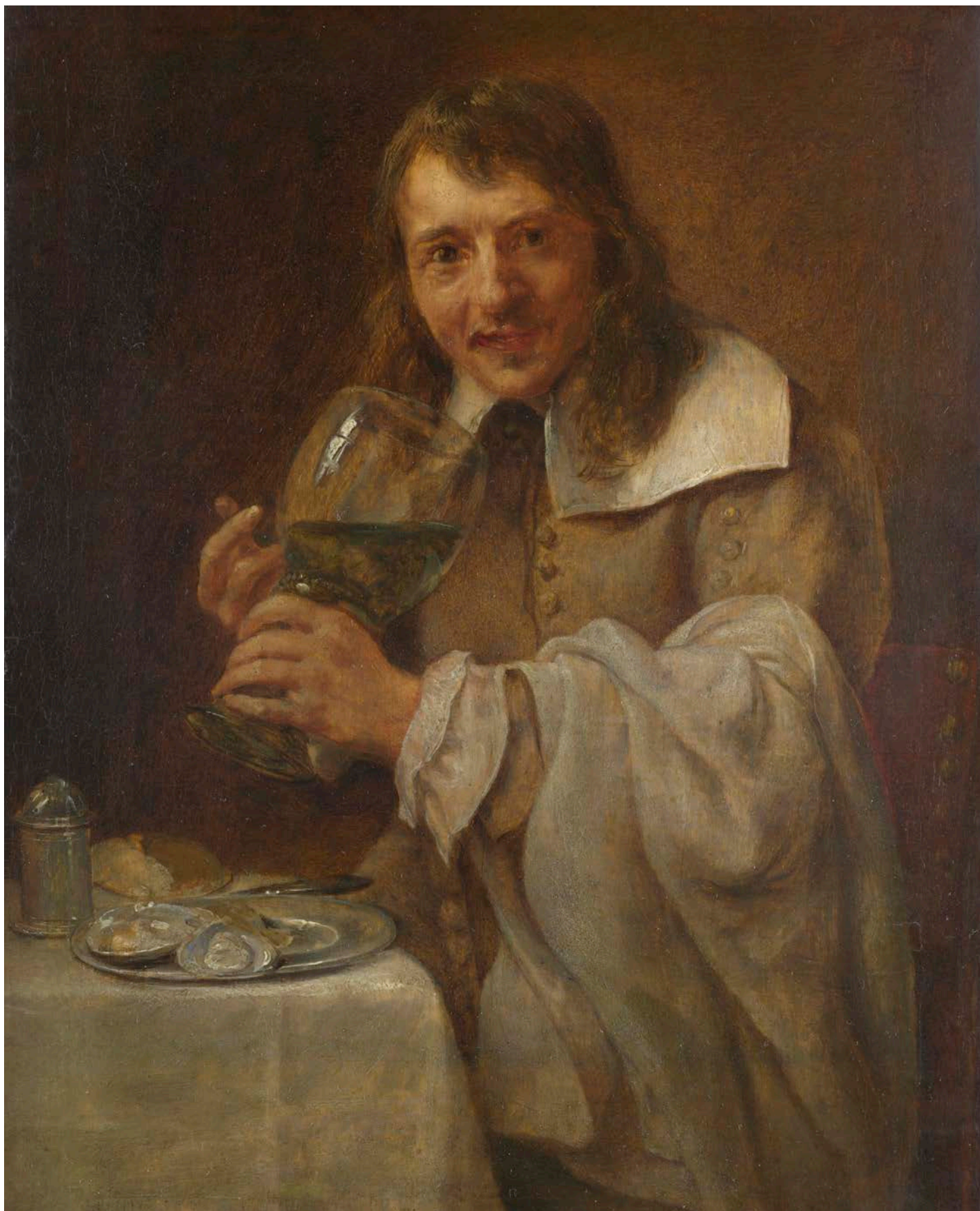
Figures 40. Gonzales Coques, *Sight*, before 1661. Oil on oak.
25.2 x 19.5 cm. Bought, 1882. The National Gallery, London.
Photo © The National Gallery, London.



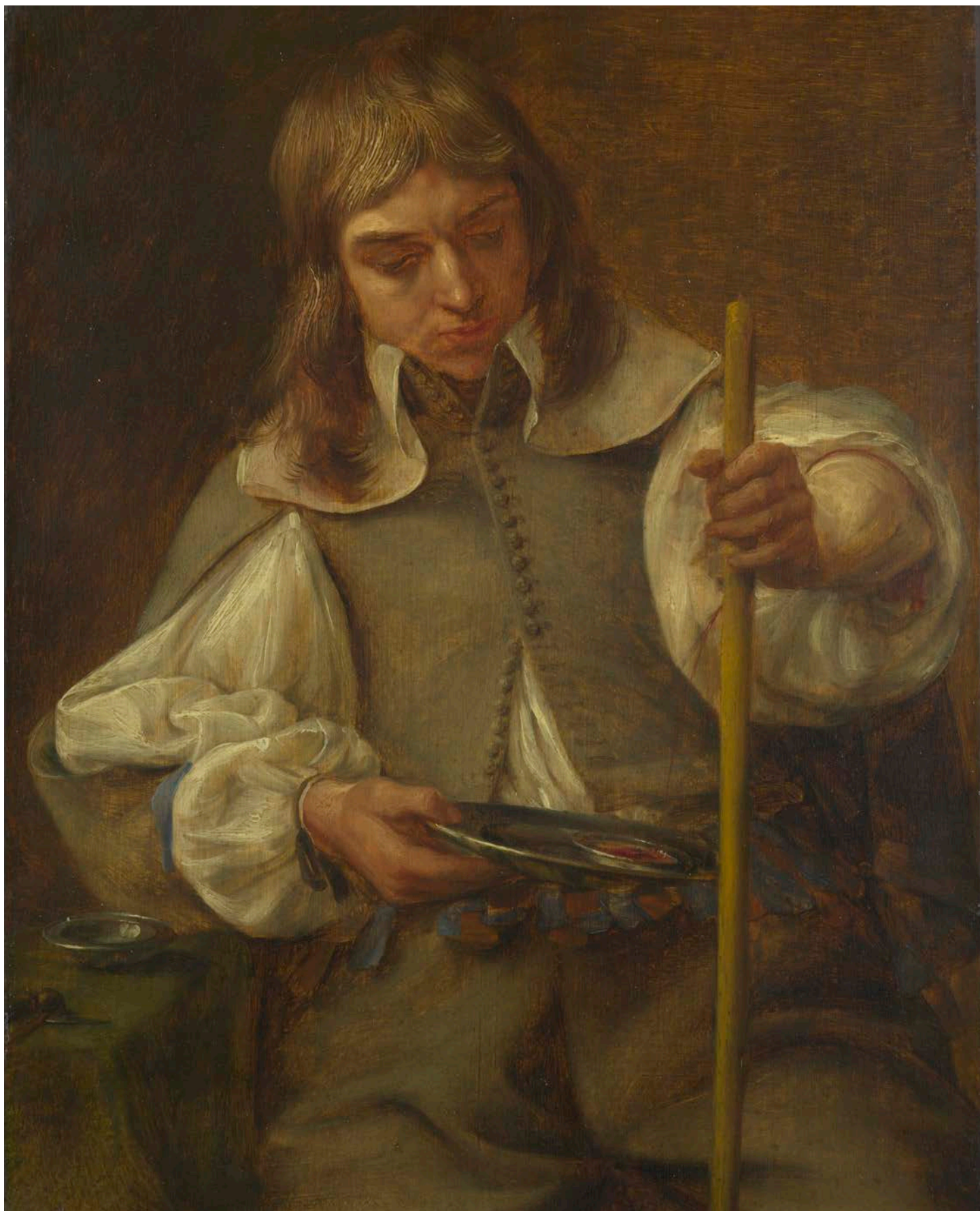
Figures 41. Gonzales Coques, *Hearing*, before 1661. Oil on oak.
25.1 x 19.4 cm. Bought, 1882. The National Gallery, London.
Photo © The National Gallery, London.



Figures 42. Gonzales Coques, *Smell*, before 1661. Oil on oak.
25.3 x 19.3 cm. Bought, 1882. The National Gallery, London.
Photo © The National Gallery, London.



Figures 43. Gonzales Coques, *Taste*, before 1661. Oil on oak.
25.3 x 19.4 cm. Bought, 1882. The National Gallery, London.
Photo © The National Gallery, London.



Figures 44. Gonzales Coques, *Touch*, before 1661. Oil on oak.
25.1 x 19.4 cm. Bought, 1882. The National Gallery, London.
Photo © The National Gallery, London.



Figure 45. David Teniers, the Younger, *Sight*, about 1640.
Oil on copper. Guildhall Art Gallery / Harold Samuel Collection / Bridgeman Images.
Photo © Bridgeman Images.



Figure 46. David Teniers, the Younger, *Hearing*, about 1640.
Oil on copper. Guildhall Art Gallery / Harold Samuel Collection / Bridgeman Images.
Photo © Bridgeman Images.



Figure 47. David Teniers, the Younger, *Smell*, about 1640.
Oil on copper. Guildhall Art Gallery / Harold Samuel Collection / Bridgeman Images.
Photo © Bridgeman Images.



Figure 48. David Teniers, the Younger, *Taste*, about 1640.
Oil on copper. Guildhall Art Gallery / Harold Samuel Collection / Bridgeman Images.
Photo © Bridgeman Images.



Figure 49. David Teniers, the Younger, *Touch*, about 1640.
Oil on copper. Guildhall Art Gallery / Harold Samuel Collection / Bridgeman Images.
Photo © Bridgeman Images.

► *The Five Senses* and Natural Philosophy

by Dandan Xu

To what extent did Michaelina Wautier's series *The Five Senses* and the representations that preceded it depend on the dominant concepts of philosophy and natural history that framed the understanding of the five senses? Did Wautier's innovations in depicting the immediate sense perceptions of children register the controversial arguments of René Descartes that eroded the consensus based on Aristotelian theory from the later 1630s into the 1650s at exactly the time when Wautier painted her pictures, dated 1650?

A key text proves that thinking in terms of the senses and taking sides in the controversy between Aristotelian and Cartesian theories occupied the immediate attention of the learned elite in the Netherlands—south and north—starting from the late 1630s and continuing as a lively issue up to 1650 when Wautier painted her series of *The Five Senses*. Henri van den Nouwelandt, legal counsel and syndic of the University of Leuven, joined several colleagues in condemning Descartes's new methods, first disseminated in the French philosopher's 1637 *Discourse on Method*. Van den Nouwelandt objected to the novelty of Descartes's ideas which threatened to replace the Aristotelian system that had provided the foundation for all instruction at the University.

Descartes's new method directly challenged the reliability of sense perceptions and insisted on mathematical proof and controlled experiments to confirm what the senses perceive. Van den Nouwelandt also couched his arguments against Descartes in a simile that depended on conversant knowledge of Aristotle's theory of the senses.

Our students at the University, have been nourished by their professors with the food of Aristotelian thought, just as nurses chew the food of their infant charges, softening it with their own saliva, so that taste is conditioned to the flavor of what the nurse adds. Leuven students, used to Aristotle, will

not like the flavor of any teaching mixed with a different saliva.”

Saliva as the medium of taste is a standard part of an Aristotelian theory about the senses. Considering the possible range of patrons that have been presented, it is likely that the intended viewers of Wautier’s *The Five Senses* would have brought to their experience both a general knowledge of earlier theories about the five senses and also an awareness that these theories were under attack. An account of that kind of knowledge establishes one possible context to understand Wautier’s pictures.

Wautier’s depictions are part of a long lineage of early modern sense pictures that responded to the same background of philosophical, religious, and scientific inquiry into the function of the senses, which had been a subject of philosophical inquiry since antiquity. The hierarchy of the senses, their interrelation, and the benefits and dangers of the knowledge they generate can all be traced back to ancient Greek and Roman philosophy. In particular, the writing of Aristotle formed a key foundation for understanding the senses’ artistic depiction in early modern Europe.⁴¹

Aristotle believed that the first characteristic of animal life, what sets humans and other animals apart from the rest of their world, was their possession and use of the senses.⁴² However, not all animal life possessed the same senses. While all shared the faculty of touch, for example, he believed that some animals did not necessarily smell or taste. It was the possession of one or more sense faculties in different arrangements that differentiated animals from each other. Humans, having all five at the same time, were thus differentiated from

other animals by the faculty of reasoned thought, which enabled them to reflect on their sense perceptions.⁴³ The senses could act individually and together, and harmony and knowledge arose from their proper management.⁴⁴ The different senses intertwined in the mind, which processed the information the senses generated into knowledge. This interior sense, the ability to reason, was the rarest sensory faculty and, in humans, was the result of the possession and interweaving of the five senses.⁴⁵ The relative rarity and commonness of the senses contributed to their perceived hierarchy of importance. Both Cicero and early Christian authors picked up on Aristotle’s philosophical approach to the five senses and replicated his implied hierarchy of these faculties.⁴⁶

While touch was the universal sense, shared by all animals and distributed across the human body, most ancient philosophers did not believe it was the most important or informative. Instead, sight was the most important of the senses, and in Aristotle’s philosophy, stood at the top of the sense hierarchy, followed by hearing, smell, taste, and touch.⁴⁷ The earliest known catalogue for the sale of Wautier’s series, dated 1883, replicates this hierarchy by listing the painting of sight as the first lot in the set of five, followed by the paintings representing hearing, smell, taste, and touch.⁴⁸ A subsequent auction catalogue from 1898 and a contemporary Christie’s private sales brochure both ordered the paintings in the same way.⁴⁹ Although touch was considered the most universal and basic sense, it was simultaneously indispensable to life. Aristotle believed that the sense of touch was required for having to have a soul. Since everything in the world is in some way tangible, he declared that “it follows that the body of the animal must have the faculty

⁴¹ While Aristotle and other ancient philosophers communicated their belief in specifically five senses, the number five is culturally and temporally specific both to their time and later to medieval and early modern Europe. Other cultures count more than five senses, and contemporary science has added less tangible sense perception, such as proprioception—the sense of self-movement and bodily positioning—and the balancing work of the vestibular system to the category of the senses. See C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 2.

⁴² Aristotle, “*On the Soul*” trans. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library), 77.

⁴³ Aristotle, “*On the Soul*,” 81.

⁴⁴ Alice E. Sanger and Siv Tove Kulbrandstad Walker, “Introduction,” in *Sense and the Senses in Early Modern Art and Cultural Practice: Visual Culture in Early Modernity* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2012), 3.

⁴⁵ Aristotle, “*On the Soul*,” 85.

⁴⁶ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, 23.

⁴⁷ Aristotle, “*On the Soul*,” 141.

⁴⁸ Catalogue d’une très belle collection de tableaux des écoles flamande, hollandaise, française, allemande et italienne, la plupart du XVII^e siècle et de dessins anciens et livres d’art dont la vente aura lieu par suite du décès de feu M. de Malherbe, Valenciennes, 17–18 October 1883.

⁴⁹ Aristotle, “*On the Soul*,” 85.

of touch if the animal is to survive.”⁵⁰ Pliny the Elder additionally believed that touch was, in fact, humankind’s most adept and important sense and that, among animals, humans possessed the most powerful and capable sense of touch.⁵¹

Sight, at the other end of the hierarchy, was believed to be the most specialized and accurate means of generating knowledge of the self and the surrounding world, making it the most important of the five senses. However, Aristotle believed that the senses did not work directly on their objects except for touch. This mediation of the four other senses made them more rarefied than touch.⁵² For example, sight was a process by which the eyes interacted with the world around them, receiving information from the outside and processing it within. Still, this process was mediated by the object being observed and the space between the object and the eyes. Sounds and smells did not directly interact with the ears and nose but were mediated through the air.⁵³ *Taste* was essentially a specialized form of touch but was mediated by saliva.⁵⁴ This mediation between physical activity and sensory experience is evident in Wautier’s paintings. The viewer must imagine the sound produced by the musician in *Hearing* and can trace the putrid vapors emanating from the rotten egg up towards the boy’s nose in *Smell*. Nonetheless, the senses were humanity’s primary means of learning about the world around them. This information could be either beneficial or harmful, as Aristotle believed that “where sensation is, there is also pain and pleasure.”⁵⁵ All five of the senses, in his belief, operated on spectrums of contradiction: sight happened in light and dark, hearing in a high and low pitch, taste in bitter and sweet flavors, and touch along many contrary spectrums, including hot and cold, dry and wet, and hard and soft.⁵⁶ Wautier’s works intermingle the senses while they play with this sense of hierarchy. For example, her *Sight* closely associates sight and touch, two ends of the sensory hierarchy, by depicting the boy looking

through a pair of glasses at the details of his own hand. Indeed, touch appears to be present in all five paintings, albeit decentralized in four, perhaps evidence of its universal quality. Her subjects all make tactile contact with symbolic objects, holding a slice of bread, a smooth wooden recorder, a fragile egg, and thin pince-nez eyeglasses as they investigate their taste, hearing, smell, and sight, respectively. The subjects in *Hearing*, *Taste*, and *Smell* all make eye contact with the viewer, introducing sight into those depictions.

However, the information generated by the five senses requires discernment and prudence to understand, a theme that Wautier directly depicts in *Sight* and *Touch*. In these pictures, her subjects are shown learning about the world through their senses. The adolescent in *Sight* closely examines his own hand, communicating that he is gaining a better understanding of himself through ocular exploration. In *Touch*, the younger boy learns the consequences of careless whittling when he cuts his finger, making him grimace and clutch at his head in confusion and pain. While the senses generated immediate knowledge of the world surrounding a person, further reflection was often necessary to make sense of that information. In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle describes this ascension from simple sensation to actual intellect. We may predict, returning to *Touch*, that the young boy will be more careful with his whittling going forward. In the early modern period, this shift from experience to understanding gained increased importance, especially in the realm of the visual arts. The great humanist and architect Leon Battista Alberti praised the human ability to recognize nature’s work in the world and the subsequent ability to build an understanding of the whole environment through partial examples.⁵⁸ The five senses fueled the mind, and positive results could arise from the interplay with one’s abilities to perceive the world and then artistically reproduce the world.

⁵⁰ Aristotle, “*On the Soul*,” 196, 434b.

⁵¹ Sanger, “Introduction,” 5.

⁵² Aristotle, “*On the Soul*,” 196.

⁵³ Aristotle, “*On the Soul*,” 109.

⁵⁴ Aristotle, “*On the Soul*,” 121.

⁵⁵ Aristotle, “*On the Soul*,” 77.

⁵⁶ Aristotle, “*On the Soul*,” 129.

⁵⁷ David Summers, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics*. (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Knowledge derived from the senses arguably led, in this way, to artistic naturalism.

This Aristotelian epistemic scheme that “Nothing in the intellect which was not first in the senses,” however, was challenged by Descartes.⁵⁸ As Cartesian philosophy gained strength during the 1640s in the Netherlandish universities, it is possible that Wautier’s paintings could have been visual prompts for the learned elites to debate with each other about the different theories of the senses and the reliability of sensory knowledge. A quick look at some early reactions to Cartesian philosophy with a focus on the senses and two pieces of circumstantial evidence will support this hypothesis.

By the end of the 1640s, Descartes’s major writings were in circulation, and Cartesian philosophy stirred continuous debates at universities⁵⁹ in the Netherlands, north and south.⁶⁰ The epicenter of the initial reactions against Cartesian philosophy in the southern Netherlands was the University of Leuven. When his *Discourse* was newly published at Leiden in 1637,⁶¹ in the hope of getting reactions, Descartes distributed three of the many copies to Vopiscus Fortunatus Plempius, professor of medicine at the University of Leuven, who sent a copy to his former teacher Libert Froidmont, a professor who taught theology at Leuven from 1628.⁶² Froidmont offered 18 criticisms against Descartes’s work in

letters to Plempius meant for Descartes, who replied through letters to Plempius between September and October of 1637.⁶³ Froidmont objected to Descartes’s mechanical explanation of the operation of the senses at the corpuscular level.⁶⁴ As Lucian Petrescu has noted, the brief exchanges between Descartes and two Leuven professors circulated widely in learned circles.⁶⁵ As analyzed earlier, a letter from another university official, Henri van den Nouwelandt to Plempius epitomized the schism between the Aristotelian and Cartesian camps in Leuven.⁶⁶

In the northern Netherlands, Utrecht and Leiden University were the two centers where early reactions to Cartesian philosophy occurred. Martin Schoock, a professor of philosophy in Groningen, who privileged senses over reason, took up the defense against Descartes for his previous teacher Gisbertus Voetius, a professor of theology at Utrecht University in the early 1640s.⁶⁷ By contrast, some disputations in 1644 at Leiden University defended Cartesian procedure in detail and concluded that one should rest philosophy on the Cartesian method of doubt and the *cogito* rather than starting with sense experience.⁶⁸

In 1647, Gisbertus Voetius presented 40 questions to address his enemies like Descartes in the preface to his first volume of *Disputationes Theologicae Selectae*. Some questions reveal the core of the

⁵⁸ In Latin: “Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu.” Paul F. Cranefield traced the origin and uses of the phrase, see: Cranefield, “On the Origin of the Phrase NIHIL EST IN INTELLECTU QUOD NON PRIUS FUERIT IN SENSU,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 25, no. 1 (1970): 77–89. Also see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Part I, question 84, article 6, <https://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/FP/FP084.html#FPQ84OUTP1>. Andrew Wear points out that the embryonic form of the phrase derives from Aristotle’s *On the Soul*, 432a7, see Wear, “William Harvey and the ‘Way of the Anatomists,’” *History of Science* 21, no. 2 (1983), footnote 71, 248.

⁵⁹ Petrescu, “Descartes on the Heartbeat: The Leuven Affair,” *Perspectives on Science* 21, no. 4 (2013): 421.

⁶⁰ Petrescu, “Descartes on the Heartbeat: The Leuven Affair,” 421.

⁶¹ The full title of the work is *Discourse on the Method of rightly conducting one’s reason and seeking the truth in the sciences, and in addition the Optics, the Meteorology and the Geometry, which are essays in this Method*. For a brief account of its publication, see Robert Stoothoff, “Translator’s Preface,” in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) vol. 1, 109–110.

⁶² Daniel Garber, “Descartes, the Aristotelians, and the Revolution that Did Not Happen in 1637,” *The Monist* 71, no. 4 (1988): 471–475.

⁶³ Petrescu, “Descartes on the Heartbeat,” 402 and footnote 12. Also Garber, “Descartes, the Aristotelians, and the Revolution that Did Not Happen in 1637,” 475.

⁶⁴ Garber, “Descartes, the Aristotelians, and the Revolution that Did Not Happen in 1637,” 475–477. Regarding Froidmont’s criticism of Descartes’ explanation of the sense of pain, the perception of color, and the sensation of cold and heat, see Garber, “Descartes on the Heartbeat,” 402, note 20. For an insightful analysis of Froidmont’s and Descartes’s debate on taste, see Lucian Petrescu, “Cartesian Meteors and Scholastic Meteors: Descartes against the School in 1637,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 76, no. 1 (2015): 32–35.

⁶⁵ See Petrescu, “Descartes on the Heartbeat,” 407 and footnote 25.

⁶⁶ Further on this letter, see cat. 93 *Taste*.

⁶⁷ Theo Verbeek, *Descartes and The Dutch: Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy 1637–1650* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 21.

⁶⁸ Verbeek, *Descartes and The Dutch*, 37. Descartes laid out this Cartesian procedure in his *Meditations on First Philosophy*. It is a meditational approach to achieving reliable knowledge through which the meditator discovered the existence of the pure intellect or “I as a thinking thing” while casting doubts on sensory fallibility and then sought reliable knowledge deduced from the pure intellect. See Gary Hatfield, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Descartes and the Meditations* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), ch. 3–6.

debates on the senses. As Voetius asked, “Is it possible to know something by means of the senses? Can sensory knowledge be certain?”⁶⁹

Given that prints of the five senses were likely to be used to help medical students judge the value of famous anatomists’ diverse opinions,⁷⁰ Wautier’s paintings could have served a similar function among learned elites in the Spanish Netherlands, especially in Leuven. In Descartes’s efforts to lead people away from the senses, he spoke of the Aristotelian belief that the principle of knowledge is in the senses as one of the false beliefs we obtained in childhood.⁷¹ Wautier’s depictions of the five boys could have served as a reminder for Cartesian audiences of Descartes’ rhetoric about childhood and thus as a starting point for a debate on the reliability of the senses.

⁶⁹ Verbeek, *Descartes and The Dutch*, 55.

⁷⁰ Huisman, *The Finger of God: Anatomical Practice in Seventeenth-Century Leiden* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2009) 71–72.

⁷¹ Descartes, “Meditations on First Philosophy, First Meditation,” in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 2, 17.

► How *The Five Senses* Change Our Measure of Michaelina Wautier's Work

by Jeffrey Muller and Yannick Etoundi

In *The Shape of Time*, George Kubler wrote, “When an important work of art has utterly disappeared by demolition and dispersal, we can still detect its perturbation upon other bodies in the field of influence.”⁷² Because Michaelina Wautier's series *The Five Senses* virtually disappeared from public knowledge until the Van Otterloos acquired it in 2020, its re-emergence offers a case to test both Kubler's analogy and the importance of Wautier's series.

The fact that Wautier signed these pictures and dated them to 1650 establishes a new, more accurate standard for judging the attributions and datings of the different unsigned and undated works that have been pulled into Wautier's “field of gravitation” in the process of reconstructing her work. And the new appearance of her previously unknown series, *The Five Senses*, should enhance and change our ability to describe the sequence of how Flemish painters represented the five senses and related subjects after 1650.

The new, more accurate measure for attribution and dating can be applied usefully to a painting that came on the market and, at the last minute, was included in the 2018 Michaelina Wautier exhibition.⁷³ Up to now, this picture has been titled *Everyone His Fancy* based on a superficial agreement with Godfried Schalcken's (1643–1706) about 1692–96 picture in the Rijksmuseum that shows the comedy of two boys, one with egg dribbling down his mouth and the other eating porridge (Fig. 50). The inscription above in English explains the moral of the story: “Every one his

⁷² George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 19.

⁷³ Ben van Beneden, “Prologue: The Wonder of Michaelina,” in *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689*, 11.

fancy.”⁷⁴ Even though Wautier’s picture includes two boys and an egg, the dynamic between the figures is opposite to how Schalcken’s two boys interact. In Wautier’s picture, the older, dark-complexioned boy’s attempt to take the egg is repelled by the fair-complexioned, younger boy in white on the left. Both want the egg in a way that suggests the sibling rivalry between Cain and Abel or Jacob and Esau. The striking contrast in complexion between the two boys offers the most salient clue to explain the subject matter of Wautier’s enigmatic picture, which should, in the interim, be titled *Two Boys* (Fig. 8).

When first attributed in 2018 to Wautier, *Two Boys* was dated about 1655. Comparison with *The Five Senses* strongly confirms the attribution and suggests that *Two Boys* was painted earlier, close to the 1650 date of *The Five Senses*. The models Wautier painted from life in *Two Boys* are identical to two boys she painted in *The Five Senses*. The boy in *Touch* and the boy on the right in *Two Boys* match in age, hair, facial features, and clothing. This boy seems older than the others, defined by his dark, shoulder-length, wavy hair, rosy cheeks, and larger nose structure. He is also dressed in the same attire: a black, button-down uniform with a white, collared ruffled shirt underneath. As for the boy on the left in *Two Boys*, he shares features with the model depicted in *Taste*, particularly around the head and the face. Despite wearing different clothing, they appear to be of the same age and present a similar head structure with a prominent crown and curly, shoulder-length, reddish-blond hair. The eyes also have a strong semblance as the model in both paintings gazes away with his piercing, dark pupils. The similarity between *Two Boys* and *The Five Senses* runs deeper to the handling of brushstrokes and the conventions for depicting details such as shirt collars, hair, the structure of noses, and the formation of eyelids and brows. Therefore, the emergence of *The Five Senses* strongly supports the

attribution of *Two Boys* to Michaelina Wautier and confirms Katrijn Van Bragt’s more recent dating of the picture to about 1650 instead of about 1655.⁷⁵

The comparison between *Two Boys* and *The Five Senses* demonstrates how the insertion of a series of previously unknown signed and dated paintings clarifies the shape of a field defined by Wautier’s work, in Kubler’s sense of the history of art structured by sequences of artworks. A search for pictures painted by other artists after 1650 that may record the impact of Wautier’s innovations settles first on the work of Michael Sweerts. Recent efforts to understand the relationship between Wautier and Sweerts have proven inconclusive and contribute most to a better understanding of the Brussels “context” that the two artists shared.⁷⁶ But, perhaps because Sweerts is now recognized and well-known as a versatile, thoughtful painter, it is implied that he led while Wautier followed or that the two artists exchanged ideas. Lara Yeager-Crasselt perceptively sees the cause of this confusion in both artists’ lack of dated pictures. Of course, the signed and dated series of *The Five Senses* solves this problem. Sweerts returned from Italy to his native Brussels only in 1655 and left for Amsterdam in 1659, never returning. By 1655 Wautier had crafted her own technique and approach to different kinds of subject matter without any detectable borrowing from Sweerts. On the other hand, Sweerts or his workshop in Brussels produced a series of *The Five Senses*, now dated 1655 to 1657, which repeats the defining features of Wautier’s *Five Senses*: each sense embodied in the half-length figure of a boy. Sweerts’s *Smell* (Fig. 51) (about 1658–1661) proffers to viewers a nosegay of flowers instead of the rotten egg in Wautier’s *Smell*, but the format and concept are the same. Sweerts’s *Boy Eating an Egg*, also dated to the 1650s and possibly representing taste from another, partly lost series of *The Five Senses*, comes so close to Wautier’s pictures of *Smell* and *Taste* that it is hard

⁷⁴ Wayne Franits, *Godefridus Schalcken: A Dutch Painter in Late Seventeenth-Century London* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 121–122 (<https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048538638>).

⁷⁵ Katrina Van Bragt in *From Memling to Rubens: The Golden Age of Flanders*, ed. Katharina van Cauteren (Veurne: The Phoebus Foundation, 2020), 404. Van Bragt correctly points out that since in Wautier’s picture “...both boys are intent on the same egg, it seems that a more accurate title would be *Two with the Same Taste*.” But the entry repeats the title *Everyone to His Taste*. The accidental association with Schalcken’s picture should be dropped.

⁷⁶ See Lara Yeager-Crasselt in *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689*, 294–295, cat. no. 39.

to imagine Sweerts could have painted this picture without Wautier's examples in mind.⁷⁷

The re-emergence of Wautier's *The Five Senses* suggests that Kubler was right. These five paintings fix a date that initiated a sequence in Wautier's development, which *Two Boys* quickly followed. Her innovative conception of a series of the five senses as five half-length boys led to similar series painted during the mid-1650s by Michael Sweerts, active in the same city of Brussels.

⁴⁵ See Lizzie Marx in *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689*, 252–253, cat. no. 21



Figure 50. Godfried Schalcken, *Everyone His Fancy*, 1692–96.
Oil on panel. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
Photo © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Figure 51. Michael Sweerts, *Smell*, about 1658–61.
Oil on canvas. Museo Thyssen Bornemisza, Madrid.
Photo © Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

► Michaelina Wautier's Portrait Paintings

by Jeffrey Muller and Mohadeseh Salari Sardari

Although she painted a broad range of subjects from mythologies to still lifes, portraiture comprised a significant part of Michaelina Wautier's total output. This exhibition displays two important examples: the 1643 engraving by Paulus Pontius after her *Portrait of Andrea Cantelmo*, her earliest known work, and the extraordinary *Self-Portrait*, recently attributed to her.⁷⁸ How did Wautier assemble the distinctive characteristics that invigorated her portraits from first to last?

Most of Wautier's portraits depict men with a powerful physical and psychological presence. Wautier produced this effect through strong contrasts of light and dark, diagonal poses that project outwards into the viewer's space, cutting the body off at three-quarters or half-length, and filling the surface of the canvas with the figure to suggest extension on all sides, along with aggressive postures and glances that communicate authority and a spark of animation. Clothing and symbols of identity, from coats of arms and paintbrushes to commanders' batons, sharpen the characterization.

The sitter's pose gives the two-dimensional painting a three-dimensional, sculptural effect that conveys the body's gravity.

Compared with portraits painted by her Brussels colleagues such as Gaspar de Crayer, David Teniers the Younger, and her brother Charles, Wautier's portraits of men emerge as distinctive for their forceful strength. One motivation for this difference may be found in the largest group of individuals she portrayed. These were officers serving in the Spanish army attached to the Brussels court. She

⁷⁸ See the catalogue entry on this picture.

successfully crafted images of resolute military commanders in the *Portrait of Andrea Cantelmo* or in the portrait that could depict her brother Pierre as a cavalry captain.⁷⁹ But the same character is also present in Wautier's *Portrait of Father Martino Martini*, S. J. (Fig. 52), signed and dated to 1654. At this interval in her development, between *The Five Senses*, dated 1650, and the *Portrait of Martini*, Wautier cultivated an assertive short-stroked handling of the brush that laid paint on in vigorous, visible traces to model convincing three-dimensional forms. She turned to a technique rougher than the smooth and subtle transitions from light to shadow, which refined the earlier signed and dated *Portrait of a Commander in the Spanish Army* (1646), now in Brussels. The later military portraits and the portrait of Martini communicate a masculine virtue of fortitude. Van der Stighelen perceptively links the stalwart figure of Martini with Titian's (about 1488–1576) great *Portrait of Pietro Aretino* (Fig. 53), painted around 1545 and now in the Palazzo Pitti.⁸⁰ It could be that Wautier invested her portraits of military men with this same spirit of *terribilità* (intimidating force).

By contrast, Wautier's portraits of women are gentler in character and technique. Her *Self-Portrait* avoids the abrupt transitions of paint and aggressive poses that propel the portraits of men. This gendered difference also is applied to the historicized portrait of *Two Girls as Saints Agnes and Dorothy* (Fig. 54), where the brushstrokes are softly feathered instead of sharply chiseled. Nevertheless, in her *Self-Portrait*, she asserts a commanding presence and active movement, reinforced by the Tuscan column behind on the left that stands as a metaphor for masculine strength (see further below on this architectural symbol).

Two of Wautier's most elaborate and best-documented portraits establish the contexts for her work. Her

Portrait of Andrea Cantelmo, engraved by Paulus Pontius in 1643, is the earliest dated example of her work and connects her with a wide network of patrons, colleagues, and associates. Cantelmo—a nobleman from Naples—joined the international corps of officers who led the Habsburg-Spanish war against the rebellious Dutch Republic to the north. Wautier portrayed him as the victorious general, clad in armor, one hand resting on his baton of command, the other arm akimbo at his side in a gesture that signals “male boldness or control.”⁸¹ His helmet rests on the parapet behind. The Tuscan columns of the building at the left, the simplest and sturdiest of the ancient architectural orders, confirm the image of military bearing and masculine fortitude, a symbol Wautier significantly repeated in her *Self-Portrait*.⁸² The inscription at the bottom states what Wautier makes evident: Cantelmo was “fashioned in body for martial majesty [*ipso corpore ad martialem maiestatem factvs*].” Wautier patterned this portrait type on Rubens's authoritative examples, as in the *Portrait of Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand*, painted about 1636.⁸³

Cantelmo put great faith in Wautier, but we do not know the examples of her work that inspired this confidence because, as said, the *Portrait of Cantelmo* is the earliest creation of her hand known to date. The commission placed her at one distance removed from an array of significant artists, officials, and scholars. The engraver Paulus Pontius was a leading printmaker in Antwerp. In 1662, Wautier's brother Charles testified to the value of a picture by Pieter Snayers (1592–1667). The latter established himself in Brussels as the preeminent painter of map-like battle panoramas and likely designed the scenes inserted into the spandrels of the portrait engraving's frame. It is possible that Wautier painted Cantelmo's likeness in the lodgings of Erycius Puteanus, a famous professor of rhetoric at the University of Leuven.⁸⁴ Cantelmo's tight control of

⁷⁹ Jahel Sanzsalazar, “Michaelina Wautier et les fiançailles de son frère: histoire d'un identifié,” (January, 2014), 90–94; Katlijne Van der Stighelen in *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689*, 182–185, cat. no. 7.

⁸⁰ Katlijne Van der Stighelen in *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689*, 192, cat. no. 8.

⁸¹ Joaneath Spicer, “The Renaissance Elbow,” in *A Cultural History of Gesture From Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg, intro. Keith Thomas (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991), 85.

⁸² James S. Ackerman, “The Tuscan/Rustic Order: A Study in the Metaphorical Language of Architecture,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (Mar. 1983, Vol. 42), 15–34.

⁸³ Hans Vlieghe, *Portraits of Identified Sitters Painted in Antwerp, Corpus Rubenianum* Ludwig Burchard, XIX, 2 (London: Harvey Miller, 1987), 80–81, cat. no. 91.

⁸⁴ Katlijne Van der Stighelen in *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689*, 156, cat. no. 1.

his public image is documented through Puteanus' efforts to write a pleasing inscription for another unidentified portrait. It must have been Cantelmo who coordinated the efforts of Wautier, Pontius, Snayers, and the author of the elaborate inscription on the engraving of 1643.⁸⁵

Wautier's *Portrait of Father Martino Martini S. J.* conjures a power equal to the force that emanates from Cantelmo. But instead of confronting the viewer directly, Wautier turned Martini's fervent glance and massive body towards the distance on the right, perhaps indicating his zeal for the far-off Jesuit mission in China, which he promoted during his 1654 stay in Brussels. Martini's *Portrait* hung in the Brussels Jesuit College until the Jesuits were suppressed and their property sold off during the 1770s.⁸⁶ Like other earlier portraits of Jesuit missionaries to China, this one was displayed in a Jesuit college to honor the man and inspire successive generations to carry the word of God around the world. Wautier meticulously recorded the Manchu fashion of Martini's clothes by which he had accommodated the new Qing dynasty rulers of China.⁸⁷ And Martini himself, or his Chinese assistant, inscribed the painting in good Chinese calligraphy with the Jesuit's Chinese name.

At a minimum, portrait painters needed to present a recognizable likeness. Wautier added to that the expression of character and definition of identity through subliminal visual cues such as strong contrasts of light and dark and through a range of conventions in pose, physiognomy, clothes, and symbolic objects that elite 17th-century viewers could grasp immediately. In practicing the genre of portraiture, Wautier fulfilled her ambition to cross over from one kind of subject matter to the other, applying her knowledge of painting traditions and the learning required for the mythological and religious narratives which she also produced. Her portraits of Cantelmo, Martini, and her own *Self-Portrait* tell stories that animate the spirit of each individual to play a role that shaped the public persona as general, missionary, and painter.

⁸⁵ Erycius Puteanus, *Hondert veertien Nederlandse brieven van Erycius Putenau aan de astronoom Michael Florent van Langren*, ed. J. J. Moreau (Antwerp: De Sikkel/Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1957) https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/pute001hond01_01/colofon.php.

⁸⁶ Van der Stighelen, *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689*, 188–193, cat. no. 8.

⁸⁷ Eugenio Menegon, "The habit that hides the monk": Missionary fashion strategies in late imperial Chinese society and court culture," in *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia: Patterns of Localization*, ed. Nadine Amsler, Andrea Badea, Bernard Heyberger, and Christian Windler (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 41.



Figure 52. Michaelina Wautier, *Father Martino Martini*, S. J. 1654.
Oil on canvas. 69.5 x 59 cm. The Klesch Collection.
Photo © Courtesy of the Klesch Collection.



Figure 53. Pietro Aretino, *Portrait of Pietro Aretino*, 1545.
Oil on canvas. 96.7 x 77.6 cm. The Uffizi Gallery.
Photo © The Uffizi Gallery, Florence.



Figure 54. Michaelina Wautier, *Two Girls as Saints Agnes and Dorothy*.
Oil on canvas, 89.7 x 122 cm. Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp.
Photo © Collection KMSKA - Flemish Community.

► Provenance of *The Five Senses*

M. Boismard (d. by 1876), Cologne; February 16, 1876, posthumous Boismard sale, Galerie Saint-Luc, Brussels, lot 111. M. de Malherbe (d. by 1883), Valenciennes; October 17–18, 1883, posthumous Malherbe sale, Jules de Brauwere, Valenciennes, lots 86–90, probably to Jean-Baptiste Foucart (1823–1898), Valenciennes; October 12–14, 1898, Foucart sale, Hôtel du Défunct, Brussels, lots 151–155. May 28, 1975, anonymous sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, lots M1–M5. 1975, sold by Galerie Steinitz, Paris, to a private collection, Paris; February 2020, sold by this private collection through Christie's, Paris, London, and New York, to Rose-Marie and Eijk van Otterloo, Marblehead, MA.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ M. de Malherbe is described as an amateur in the 1883 catalog of the sale of his collection, which occurred after his death. The auction was held in the northern French city of Valenciennes, close to the Belgian border, which may have been where or near to where de Malherbe lived and died. The catalogue describes his collection as containing paintings from the Flemish, Dutch, French, German, and Italian schools from the greater part of the 17th century, as well as antique drawings and art books. Based on the paintings' coloring and skilled craftsmanship, the catalogue generically describes Wautier as a learned student of Adriaen Brouwer and Frans Hals.

Jean-Baptiste Foucart (1823–1898) lived in Valenciennes. He was a prominent republican lawyer. The catalogue of the posthumous 1898 sale of his collection also describes him as a member of Valenciennes's academic council and honorary vice-president of the local charitable freemasonry group the Society of Incas. Jules de Brauwere, the expert who oversaw the cataloguing of M. de Malherbe's collection, also oversaw the sale of Foucart's collection.

► Published References to *The Five Senses*

Catalogue d'une très belle collection de tableaux des écoles flamande, hollandaise, française, allemande et italienne, la plupart du XVII^e siècle et de dessins anciens et livres d'art dont la vente aura lieu par suite du décès de feu M. de Malherbe, Valenciennes, 17–18 October 1883, lots 86–90.

Catalogue d'une très belle collection de tableaux anciens, incunable typographique, gravures, livres d'art et illustrés, délaissés par feu M. Jean-Baptiste Foucart, Valenciennes, 12–14 October 1898, lots 151–155.

Lizzie Marx, “A Boy with Tobacco” in *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689, Glorifying a Forgotten Talent* ed. Katlijne Van der Stighelen, (Antwerp: Rubenshuis; Kontich: BAI, 2018), 246, 252.

► *Sight*

by Sophie Higginson



Michaelina Wautier
Flemish, 1614–1689

Sight, from *The Five Senses*, 1650

Signed and dated:
Michaelina Wautier fecit / 1650

Oil on canvas, 69.5 x 61 cm

Michaelina Wautier's *Sight* depicts a cloaked adolescent holding a pair of stemless glasses to his eyes. He peers intently into his palm and is framed against a light-modeled background, in this case, two-toned, as if he were positioned against the corner of a wall. To the viewer's left, the blue-gray shades of the background lighten around the figure of the youth and darken in the edges and upper-left-hand corner of the painting. A sharp line intersecting the back of the figure's head divides light from dark. On the viewer's right, a more uniformly black-brown background occupies the right side of the painting. Wautier's confident brushstrokes define the interplay of light and dark not just in the background of the painting but also in the fore, modeling the folds of his heavy cloak. Her expert handling additionally builds up bright creases around his knuckles, in his open palm, and on his furrowed brow, drawing attention to the unseen light source that illuminates the left side of his face from above.

► Philosophical Theories of the Sense of Sight and Its Depiction Here

Drawing on ancient philosophical debates, the sense of sight was a subject of intensive theoretical and scientific study through the early modern period. Its portrayal, often as a component part of a painted and printed series of the five senses, became an increasingly popular theme in the artistic production of the Spanish Netherlands and the Dutch Republic in the second half of the 16th century.⁸⁹ Changes in the philosophical framework surrounding the sense of sight as inherited from antiquity can help conceptualize how Wautier would have understood the process of sight and, thus, how she chose to depict it.

Wautier's depiction of the sense of sight seems to tap into the tradition of sight as a primary generator of knowledge and understanding. Her painting also highlights the sense of sight's position between the exterior world and the interior workings of the mind. The adolescent she depicts is engrossed by what he sees and carefully investigates the intricacies of his palm. His interest in knowing himself better through this close investigation suggests the elevating power of sight to better acquaint us with ourselves and the physical world. Not only do we catch him in a moment of concentrated observation, but our eyes are, in turn, drawn to the object of his sight, his hand. Wautier's careful depiction of his concentration—with both highlight and shadow, she emphasizes the furrows of his brow—additionally connects her depiction to more contemporary understandings of the unseen mental processes behind the act of viewing.

► Deviations From and Similarities to Other Contemporary Depictions

By the time Wautier completed her series in 1650, the representation of the five senses surrounded by numerous allegorical symbols had become outdated.⁹⁰ Scenes of everyday life had largely replaced idealized allegorical representations in all media. The complicated layers of meaning encoded

in prominent painted series like the 1617–18 series *The Five Senses* by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens—whose copious depictions of sensory stimulus surrounding female allegorical figures could not be more different from Wautier's understated approach—were replaced with simplified depictions, often reliant on a single object or action to encode the representation of sense.

Wautier's connection of sight to close study, observation, and learning may more directly connect her to her contemporary Gonzales Coques, who, in one series of the five senses that used fellow Antwerp artists as models and dates to the end of the 1650s, depicted the sense of sight as the painter and engraver Robert van den Hoecke (1622–1668).⁹¹ In another earlier series of the five senses dating to the middle of the 1640s, Coques depicted the sense of sight as a sculptor who wears the same pince-nez glasses that Wautier's figure holds up to his eyes.

Wautier's depiction of the sense of sight deviates from the tradition of depicting allegorical women, a practice associated with the sensory delights of the upper class, and the comedy tradition that flourished around the same time as her artistic practice. Her depiction of the figures in the series not as unrefined objects of mockery but rather subjects of sensory experimentation and learning connects her to her contemporaries but also sets her apart in the long tradition of depicting the five senses.

► Glasses, Mirrors, and Telescopes

Both in the Spanish Netherlands specifically and elsewhere in Europe, glasses and other optical instruments such as mirrors and telescopes were common symbols in artistic depictions of the sense of sight in the 17th century. They were also the subject of scientific experimentation, especially in the Dutch Republic. In *Dioptrique*, Descartes references the accomplishments of Jacob Métiüs, an inventor and lens crafter from Alkmaar, and his 1608 patent for the optical telescope, on the first page of his treatise. The same year, Hans Lipperhey, a Dutch-German inventor, had also filed a patent for a telescope.⁹²

⁸⁹ Nordenfalk, "The Five Senses in Flemish Art Before 1600," 135.

⁹⁰ Ágnes Czobor, "'The Five Senses' by the Antwerp Artist Jacob de Backer" *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek (NKJ) / Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 23 (1972): 317.

⁹¹ Liskén-Pruss, *Gonzales Coques*, 367.

⁹² Descartes, "Dioptrics," 1.

Microscopes, telescopes, and glasses, all used to augment human vision, were prized for their ability to generate knowledge of the natural world and for perfecting the flawed perception of the eyes. Their impact on human perception connected them directly to contemporary philosophy. In *Dioptrique*, Descartes described the invention of the telescope as one of the most important recent scientific discoveries as it allowed its user to see an even more perfect view of nature than that provided by the naked eye.⁹³ Therefore, Wautier's depiction of an adolescent exploring his hand through a pair of pince-nez glasses connects to a larger cultural appreciation for optical enhancement.

In Wautier's time, it is likely that owning glasses (which would have been too expensive for the average worker) and their use to improve eyesight in everyday life would have signified wealth that implied literacy and education.⁹⁴ Depictions of businessmen, especially moneylenders, jewelers, and merchants wearing stemmed and stemless glasses, all played into this association. An engraving (about 1600) by Jan Collaert I (about 1470–1524) depicting the invention of eyeglasses, based on Johannes Stradanus's (1523–1605) design for one of 19 plates comprising his *Nova reperta* or "New Inventions of Modern Times" series, clearly associates eyeglasses with reading, writing, skilled crafts, and modern technical innovation.⁹⁵ Similarly, Gonzales Coques depicted artists wearing glasses to communicate the sense of sight. Alternatively, Rembrandt's 1627 depiction of *The Parable of the Rich Fool* shows the titular example of greed as bespectacled. However, it is more likely that Wautier's depiction of glasses on an adolescent, rather than an adult in a commercial setting, would have suggested the themes of self-knowledge, experimentation, and education rather than wealth or greed. His concentrated gaze, focused on his palm, suggests a desire to know himself better through

close observation. While glasses could enhance an individual's sight, this augmentation did not lend itself directly to increased truth or value in resultant observations. As Descartes explains in his *Discourse on Method*, which reflects on the value of unmediated sensations and stresses the importance of careful reflection on such sensory information, "although we very clearly see the sun, we ought not, therefore, to determine that it is only of the size which our sense of sight presents."⁹⁶ Further discernment and care were needed when handling optical instruments, as they enhanced natural eyesight and brought human perception's limitations into focus.⁹⁷

Based on his age, however, the youth that Wautier depicts likely did not need glasses to improve his eyesight. It is also unlikely that glasses for children or adolescents were a readily available or relied-on technology in Wautier's time and place. Instead, it is probable that the depicted adolescent's experimentation with the glasses is meant to suggest his investigation of their transformative effect on his sight. He may also be emulating behavior he has seen modeled around him, perhaps by older adults who used glasses more routinely and considering the impact of the glasses on his optical abilities.

► The Object of Sight's Gaze

In the 1883 catalogue of the painting's sale in Valenciennes, Brussels-based art historian Jules de Brauwere described the figure in *Sight* as "a man in an expressive pose looking through a pince-nez at a coin in his left hand."⁹⁸ The description is repeated in the auction catalogue of the painting's 1898 sale. By following the direction of the youth's gaze into his palm, one might suppose that he is inspecting some small and detailed object held in his hand. But, there is no visible evidence of anything in the youth's hand. X-rays and infrared reflectograms likewise failed to reveal the presence of an object.

⁹³ Descartes, "Dioptrics," 1.

⁹⁴ Stefana Sabin, *In the Blink of an Eye: A Cultural History of Spectacles* (Reaktion Books, 2021), 32.

⁹⁵ Park, "Allegory." <http://www.aaeportal.com/>.

⁹⁶ René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, trans. John Veitch (June 28, 1995) <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/59/59-h/59-h.htm>.

⁹⁷ Friedman, "Jusepe de Ribera's Five Senses and the Practice of Prudence," 1112.

⁹⁸ Catalogue d'une très belle collection de tableaux des écoles flamande, hollandaise, française, allemande et italienne, la plupart du XVII^e siècle et de dessins anciens et livres d'art dont la vente aura lieu par suite du décès de feu M. de Malherbe. Valenciennes: Imprimeur Louis-Henry, 1883. "Un homme à la figure expressive regarde au moyen d'un pince-nez une pièce de monnaie qu'il a dans la main gauche."

Using a pair of glasses to magnify the ridges and lines of his palm could suggest his close self-evaluation through his sense of sight and links the senses of sight and touch, which formed another artistic theme in contemporary depictions of the senses.

► The Linkage of Sense and Touch

The youth's investigation of his hand suggests the profound connection made in the early modern period between the sense of sight and the sense of touch. In early modernity, the connection between sight and touch was inherited through ancient philosophy and natural history, like other influential ideas on the relationship between the senses and knowledge. In *Parva naturalia*, for example, Aristotle explains how some movements can be perceived by sight and touch. He separates the actions and objects that can be sensed by two senses simultaneously from those that can only be understood by one.⁹⁹ For example, while smell cannot be touched, movement can simultaneously be perceived and understood through sight and feel. Descartes also connects sight and touch in his treatise *Dioptrique*, in which he describes how, when walking on a difficult path at night, one might use a stick to guide oneself and thereby see through touch.¹⁰⁰ He describes blind people's use of such aids in the same way. In his analysis, the resistance or movement of physical objects sensed through the touch of a cane creates a tactile image when the eyes cannot create a visual one.¹⁰¹

The figure of *Sight*'s posture is slightly bent, and looking intently at his hand may suggest palm reading. In the practice of palm reading or divining knowledge through the careful observation of the hand's intricate anatomical structure, the hand is believed to possess information about its owner's personality, constitution, health, and even future.¹⁰² Early modern practitioners of palmistry, such as the English astrologer Richard Saunders, defended the practice from critics by claiming that Aristotle and other ancients, including Virgil, Juvenal, and Julius Caesar,

had all practiced palm reading.¹⁰³ The connection between hand and eye could create self-knowledge and greater knowledge of the world and the future. Whether or not Wautier intended her figure to be engaged in the activity, this link between hand, eye, and knowledge is strongly salient in her work.

Wautier's depiction of the youth looking at his hand connects her additionally to her artistic contemporaries and the larger theme of education and knowledge generation through the senses. Gonzales Coques's depictions of the sense of sight as the artist Robert van den Hoecke and a sculptor suggest the indelible connection of sight and touch in the production of art, an idea of which Wautier herself would have been acutely aware as evidenced by the steady gaze and prepared palette that she depicted in her *Self-Portrait*. Furthermore, the youth that Wautier depicts in *Sight* does not look at his dirty fingernails, which may have been designed to suggest his lower-class position or his relationship to manual labor. Instead, he peers at the fine ridges and contours of his fingertips and palm. This investigation of the minute details of his hand may suggest the experimental and elevating effect of close examination and his better understanding of his sense of touch through exploration using his sense of sight.

This connection between sight and touch extends to Wautier's depiction of the latter sense. In *Touch*, the depicted youth stares not at the knife that has cut him while whittling but at his bleeding finger, directly connecting the physical sensation of his hurt hand with his visual perception of it.¹⁰⁴ In both *Sight* and *Touch*, Wautier may be playing with the dual lingering and fleeting effects of sensory perception. The bespectacled youth's perception of his palm lines may be temporary. His eyes will eventually move on to other subjects. His hand, at the same time, will soon no longer be the object of his perception but a faculty of it when he removes the spectacles from his nose. Wautier's combination of sight and touch in this picture leads the viewer to consider how the senses intertwine to create sensory experiences specific to their interrelation.

⁹⁹ Aristotle, *Parva Naturalia*, 103.

¹⁰⁰ Descartes, *Dioptrics*, 2.

¹⁰¹ Descartes, *Dioptrics*, 3.

¹⁰² Paweł Rutkowski, "Through the Body: Chiromancy in Seventeenth-Century England," April 30, 2019: 33–35. <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.2617073>

¹⁰³ Rutkowski, "Through the Body," 37.

¹⁰⁴ Rafael Mandressi, "Of the Eye and of the Hand: Performance in Early Modern Anatomy," *TDR* 59, no. 3 2015: 60–76. https://doi.org/10.1162/dram_a_00491.

► *Hearing*

by Yannick Etoundi



Michaelina Wautier
Flemish, 1614–1689

Hearing, from *The Five Senses*, 1650

Signed and dated:
Michaelina Wautier fecit / 1650

Oil on canvas, 69.5 x 61 cm

Wautier's *Hearing* depicts a boy in his early teens, sitting on a chair as he plays his recorder and gazes beyond the viewer.¹⁰⁵ He is amongst the eldest of Wautier's models for this series. This figure wears a dark, loose-fitting vest, a knotted neckcloth, and a red beret plumed with brown and grey feathers. The central position of the recorder strongly evokes the sense of hearing symbolized through music. The adolescent sits against a warm backdrop, contrasting with the model's darker features and clothing. Wautier's manipulation of light and shadow enhances this contrasting effect, with his face, hands, and the recorder receiving more light exposure to reinforce their prominence in the painting. More than the other pictures in the series, *Hearing* exhibits a strong continuity with earlier depictions of the senses in Netherlandish art. Music as the key attribute of

¹⁰⁵ Two visitors to the MFA, Robertson and Henry Thacher, independently reported their observation that the recorder player looks past the viewer, implying a larger audience behind.

hearing spanned the shift from older allegorical representations to scenes rooted in everyday life.

► The Sensorial Experience of *Hearing*

The use of the musical instrument to portray hearing can best be understood through the human perception of sound and its dependence on a medium as a conductor. Aristotle's theory of the senses established the authoritative baseline for all discussion during the early modern period. In *On the Soul*, he speaks of hearing as the result of two bodies coming into impact and producing a sound in a given space.¹⁰⁶ The movement of sound, perceived at a distance, therefore, necessitates a medium, either air or water, for it to be heard by an individual.¹⁰⁷ Sound reaches the body through air or water and excites the sense organ within the ear. Given the range and distance sound carries through air and water and its crucial function as a didactic medium, hearing is considered second in the ordering of the senses after sight.

Aristotle's theorization of hearing as the human perception of sound correlates strongly with how artists have represented the sense of hearing over time. Early modern representations of hearing are consistent with Aristotle's theory of the sense. Music, in particular, as the art of measured sound in time, represents this sense, tempered by art according to the number between destructive noise and inaudible quiet attuned to the perceptual range of the human ear. As musical instruments carry an immediate association to sound, their depiction also triggers an automatic response in the viewer's memory of earlier perceptions from this sense of hearing. Artists cultivated a visual stimulus to aural memory by setting the musician directly in front of the spectator, performing in gestures and expressions, and playing to elicit music's mood-changing power.

A mnemonic sensorial experience is therefore triggered, which submerges the viewer into the joyful pleasures, harmony, and extensive diversity of sounds and music.

As such, Wautier's recorder player suggests the sense of hearing through the presence of an instrument at play. The adolescent conveys a certain composure in emotion through the apparent movement of his body as his fingers glide across the tone holes of the recorder, suggesting a melodic tune meant to please the viewer. Amongst the five senses by Wautier, *Hearing* portrays the most joyful emotion, a sensation of pleasure, harmony, and equanimity. Altogether, Wautier's depiction of the sense of hearing exemplifies the joyful and pleasant stimuli that arouse the human body and its senses.

► The Entertainer and His Instrument

The recorder figures prominently in *Hearing*. The wide popularity of this wind instrument makes the association with hearing immediate and joins it with the lute and lyre as instruments commonly featured in 17th-century Netherlandish depictions of the senses.¹⁰⁸

By the 15th century, recorders had become a fixture in European art, largely depicted in scenes of romance, quotidian pleasures, pastoral life, and the supernatural. Due to the recorder's vast distribution over the years, Netherlandish pictures showed individuals of both sexes and all social classes playing the instrument to stand for the "amateur" musician.¹⁰⁹ This symbolism is further elaborated by the instrument's popularity amongst street musicians and children due to its ease of play and relative availability within wider groups of society.¹¹⁰ The recorder's popularity in the Low Countries during the first half of the 17th century was increased even

¹⁰⁶ Aristotle, *On the Soul* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), Part VIII.

¹⁰⁷ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, Part VIII.

¹⁰⁸ Jos Koldeweij, "Van eens esels been de beste fleuyten comen": De blokfluit in de Nederlandse kunst van de 17e eeuw." In *Programma: Holland Festival Oude Muziek*, (27 Augustus–5 September 1993): 53–62.

¹⁰⁹ Anthony Rowland-Jones, 2005. "The Iconographic Background to the Seventeenth-Century Recorder" in *From Renaissance to Baroque: Change in Instruments and Instrumental Music in the Seventeenth Century: Proceedings of the National Early Music Association Conference Held, in Association [sic] with the Department of Music, University of York and the York Early Music Festival, at the University College of Ripon and York St. John, York, 2–4 July 1999*. 86–111. ed. Jonathan Wainwright and Peter Holman. (Vermont: Ashgate, 2005).

¹¹⁰ Ian F. Finlay, "Musical Instruments in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Paintings," *The Galpin Society Journal* 6 (1953), 58.

more by Jacob van Eyck, a carillonneur by profession, whose *Der Fluyten Lust-hof* [*The Flute's Pleasure Garden*] was published in 1644 in Amsterdam. A modern historian has described it as “the most comprehensive collection of solo music for any wind instrument in the entire history of European music.”¹¹¹ *Der Fluyten Lust-hof* was disseminated widely at the time of its publication and later editions. It proved indispensable for soprano recorder players who drew on its wealth of compositions, different difficulty levels, and various tunes.¹¹² Professional musicians and younger amateur players adopted many of the melodies found in *Der Fluyten Lust-hof* as they included detailed instructions on how to play the instrument, complete with pictorial schemas—as such, using the recorder in Wautier’s work points to its availability within her circle and overall popularity.

On another note, the ease with which Wautier’s model in *Hearing* handles the recorder suggests his knowledge of the instrument as he holds it in his hands with a confident yet delicate grip. The maturity of the youth might also speak to an alternative but debatable meaning for the recorder, one that evokes eroticism and fertility due to the phallic form of the instrument.¹¹³ Mary Rasmussen and recorder maker Friedrich von Huene highlight this symbolism in one of Judith Leyster’s (1609–1660) paintings, *Boy Playing the Flute*, where a boy is seen playing the flute while a standing recorder and lute are fixed prominently in the background as complementary objects. Though the erotic connotation of this pairing remains questionable, the depiction of the senses has, in some cases, been paired with iconography invoking sensuality and eroticism, as exemplified in Herman van Aldewereld’s (1628–1669) *Allegory of the Five Senses* (1651) where a woman accepts a rose as a token of “sensual enjoyment”¹¹⁴ or even in Simon De Vos’s (1603–1676) *Allegory of the Five Senses* (about 1635), where a musician serenades a pair of lovers caressing each other passionately.

Moving beyond the recorder, it can also be noted that Wautier’s half-length adolescent, playing an instrument and costumed like a musician, displays similarities with an artistic tradition that followed the powerful example of Caravaggio. In the early 17th century, Dutch and Flemish artists such as Dirck van Baburen (about 1592–1624), Gerrit van Honthorst (1592–1656), Hendrick Terbrugghen (1588–1629), and Theodoor Rombouts (1597–1637) returned from Rome to settle in Utrecht and Antwerp, where they developed an artistic style largely inspired by the art of Caravaggio. Scenes of everyday life were popularized, and in particular, half-length portraits of musicians, often children and young adults, became one of the dominant themes.¹¹⁵ Wautier’s painting of *Hearing* reveals vestiges of this Caravaggist approach, such as the half-length figure composition, the manipulation of light along the instrument and the face to contrast with the warm background, and the use of a street entertainer costume.

The musician’s outfit became a distinctive feature of several of these Caravaggio-inspired works where a performer is depicted alone or as part of a performing group. The entertainer is dressed in large loose-fitted garments layered on each other to add volume to the figure and accentuate the body’s movement while they move to the sound of the music. As for the feather that adorns the performer’s beret, its treatment varies amongst artists as another element that contributes to the depiction of movement in the musical gestures. Wautier gives less attention to this accessory, pushing it into the background and making way for the recorder in hand. As such, Wautier’s treatment of the feather separates her work from earlier artists in that the art of music and performance is primarily expressed through the alluring sound of the instrument rather than through the feather dancing to the rhythm of the costumed player.

¹¹¹ Finlay, “Musical Instruments in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Paintings,” 67.

¹¹² Louis Peter Grijp, “Dutch Music of the Golden Age,” in *The Hoogsteder Exhibition of Music & Painting in the Golden Age*, ed. Edwin Buijsen et al. (Hague: Hoogsteder & Hoogsteder, 1994), 69. Richard W. Griscom and David Lasocki, *The Recorder: A Research and Information Guide*, (Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 201), 530.

¹¹³ Jos Mary Rasmussen and Friedrich von Huene, “Some Recorders in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Paintings,” 31–32.

¹¹⁴ Angelika Glesius et al., *The Five Senses in Painting*. (Luxembourg: Villa Vauban, Musée d’art de la Ville de Luxembourg, 2016), 9.

¹¹⁵ Bernd Ebert and Liesbeth M. Helmus, *Utrecht, Caravaggio and Europe*. (Munich: Hirmer, 2018), 168.

► Smell

by Regina Noto



Michaelina Wautier
Flemish, 1614–1689

Smell, from *The Five Senses*, 1650

Signed and dated:
Michaelina Wautier fecit / 1650

Oil on canvas, 69.5 x 61 cm

Smell depicts a young blonde boy pinching his nose due to the smell of the rotten egg he holds in his left hand. He looks out at us, dark brown eyes wide, frowning slightly but not recoiling. Still, he shows his negative reaction to the egg, an immediate unpleasant sensation that we understand from experience.

The boy in *Smell* is placed against a dark, amorphous brown background. In his simple, tan smock with its somewhat tattered, rolled sleeves and darker brown hat with a small, crumpled brim, the viewer focuses on his eyes and the bright white egg, from which a visible gas emanates upward toward the boy's plugged nose. The hand holding the egg shows dirty fingernails, a detail apparent in each of the other works in the series. Wautier models deep shadows in this work, especially those under the boy's right hand and the cuff of his right sleeve, indicating that the warm, yellow light comes strongly from in front and above him.

In the hierarchy of the senses, *Smell* comes in the middle, and for that reason, Wautier posed this figure as the only one in the series which is strictly frontal and looking directly out from the canvas.

► The Sense of Smell

In *On the Soul*, Aristotle wrote that the “character of smell is not so obvious as that of sound and color.”¹¹⁶ This observation is evident in the painting. Wautier’s choice to paint the odor from the egg as a visible, even if almost imperceptible, cloud of grayish sulfurous gas wafting toward the nose of the boy may indicate that she agreed with Aristotle and felt that smell would be more obvious to the viewer if it were painted visibly, in color. The viewer is asked not to imagine the smell of the egg, but she can see the smell in the painting. This is further reinforced in Aristotle’s description that “air becomes perceptible with smell.”¹¹⁷ The smell of the egg passes through the medium of air to the nose—as a gas—and while air is invisible, the gas is perceptible visually in the painting. In *On Sense and Sensible Objects*, Aristotle writes that “some people think that smell is a smoky vapor,” which perfectly describes the image of the gas released from the egg in Wautier’s painting.¹¹⁸

Still, smell was not as important as sight, the most valued sense.¹¹⁹ Aristotle’s order of senses includes sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.¹²⁰ As viewers of the painting, those who use vision, we see the egg and know its smell from previous experience, but the painting does not ask us to experience the stench in real life. With our sense of sight, we live vicariously through the boy without having to smell a rotten egg. In addition to sight, smell was and is related to taste. Wautier’s decision to make *Smell*’s attribute an egg denotes how Aristotle ties the senses of smell and taste together. By choosing a food as the attribute for *Smell*, taste

is automatically referenced in the viewer’s mind. Galen wrote about how smell has many flavors, both good and bad, just as taste does.¹²¹ And *Taste* is the next painting in the series, following *Smell* directly. The smell of the egg surely warns the boy and the viewer not to eat it, even as it is food. As Juan Luis Vives noted in his 1538 text *De Anima et Vita*, “the faculty of smell has been given to animals, so that what is suitable, what is bad, might be seen so that it might warn the taste before the danger, so that the animal might not put its life at risk by the eager rush to eat, or abstain because of suspicion or fear from healthful food.”¹²² The boy uses his sense of smell to detect the rottenness of the egg. Simultaneously, the boy engages in the sense of touch as well, touching both the egg and his nose. By contrast with Wautier’s *Hearing*, in which the musician plays tempered, artful sounds, the sensory stimulus in *Smell* is repellent.

Smells were thought from ancient times to the early modern period to directly affect the person who inhaled them as if the smell touched them.¹²³ A smell was believed to be a fume, absorbed into the body of the inhaler and taken directly into the brain.¹²⁴ Smelling took both good and bad odors and brought them into the body. Once they were in the body of the person who had inhaled, smells transformed the person internally, sometimes changing their state of mind.¹²⁵

In Wautier’s painting, the experience of smell is evoked by an extreme, unpleasant smell that is familiar to all and causes both the viewer and the boy in the painting to shy away from the rotten egg, even as he extends it to us. Aristotle writes that the senses are attuned to the mean and the extreme, and this is certainly an example of the extreme.¹²⁶ Bad smells were understood to bring disease to those who smelled, and such stench had to be warded away with good smells, such as from a

¹¹⁶ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 349.

¹¹⁷ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 349.

¹¹⁸ Aristotle, *On Sense and Sensible Objects*, trans. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library), 249.

¹¹⁹ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, 147.

¹²⁰ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 141.

¹²¹ “Galen On Hippocrates’ On the Nature of Man,” https://www.ucl.ac.uk/~ucgajpd/medicina%20antiqua/tr_GNatHom.html.

¹²² Ioannis Lodovici Vivis Valentini, de *Anima et Vita, libri tres* (Zurich: 1538, Jacob Gesner, 1575), 31. Thank you to Jeffrey Muller for the reference and translation from Spanish to English.

¹²³ Mark S. R. Jenner, “Follow Your Nose? Smell, Smelling, and Their Histories,” *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 2 (2011): 336.

¹²⁴ Jenner, “Follow Your Nose?,” 345.

¹²⁵ Jenner, “Follow Your Nose?,” 349.

¹²⁶ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 135.

pomander.¹²⁷ As Aristotle wrote, strong smells could “destroy.”¹²⁸

It is possible that the boy, holding himself back from the egg and plugging his nose, is doing so partly to protect his state of mind, body, and brain from the smell. His gesture may also be interpreted as the boy offering the egg out to the viewer, engaging in that well-known and natural reaction to disgust, wherein one smells something awful and invites others to share in the experience.

► The Egg

An egg features prominently in another of Wautier’s works. *Two Boys* includes an egg, which two figures appear to be arguing over. The egg in *Two Boys* is reminiscent of the egg in *Smell*, as they are both white, with their tops jaggedly removed, exposing the runny, shining yellow yolk. In *Smell*, the eggshell is speckled, perhaps indicating its rottenness. But in *Two Boys*, the egg is pristine, unblemished, and ready to eat, with a knife already inserted into it, as tempting drips of yolk overrun its shell onto the fingers of the blissfully clean, white-clad boy who holds it.

Michael Sweerts painted a series of the five senses as well, in which his personification of *Taste* is a blonde boy holding an egg.¹²⁹ The egg is open on the top, as the eggs in Wautier’s paintings are, but Sweerts’s depiction shows a thin crust of bread sticking out of the egg. The boy in Sweerts’s painting looks out at us, holding the ready egg, but does not yet eat. He is more staid than the boys in Wautier’s paintings, merely holding the egg instead of moving to interact with it further. Sweerts was likely influenced by Wautier’s painting of *Smell* but chose to depict a more pleasant version of a boy with an egg.¹³⁰ Sweerts’s series of the five senses dates from

the 1650s, while Wautier’s paintings were signed and dated as works from 1650.¹³¹ Rolf Kultzen does not date these paintings in his Sweerts catalogue, but this timeline makes it more probable that Sweerts looked to Wautier for inspiration.¹³²

Additionally, a painting attributed to Egbert van Heemskerck (1634–1704) as a part of a series of the five senses shows another version of smell.¹³³ This painting, probably completed after Wautier’s series, features a frowning man sniffing a rotten egg with curiosity as another man sitting next to him pinches his nose. The table in front of the two men is set with more eggs and a large loaf of bread. The reaction to the rotten egg in Van Heemskerck’s painting is remarkably similar to Wautier’s boy plugging his nose in *Smell*. However, the location of the men in Van Heemskerck’s work is much more fully realized than in Wautier’s series.

Another indication of the place of eggs in the early modern period was humanist Erycius Puteanus’s *In Praise of the Omnipresent Egg*. In this 1615 text, Puteanus wrote that “no food is better than the egg: the ingestion of this sort of food is total, it purifies the blood, and the nutritive value is optimal since no other food is so nourishing in sickness without overloading the stomach.”¹³⁴ Unfortunately for the boy in this painting, it is much more likely that this egg would result in sickness if he put it in his stomach.

¹²⁷ Ariane van Suchtelen, et al. *Fleeting Scents in Colour* (The Hague: Mauritshuis, 2021), 73.

¹²⁸ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 123.

¹²⁹ Lizzie Marx, “A Boy with Tobacco,” in *Michaelina Wautier 1604-1689*, 246.

¹³⁰ “Michaelina Wautier: The Five Senses: Sight, Hearing, Taste, Smell, and Touch,” Christie’s Private Sales catalogue, 12.

¹³¹ “Sense of Hearing, Sense of Taste,” Staatsgalerie, [https://www.staatsgalerie.de/en/collection/digital-collection/nc/suche/_/_/_/_/werk/aufistung/record.html?tx_datamintscatalog_pi1%5Bcollection%5D=.Rolf+Kultzen,+Michael+Sweerts:+Brussels+1618-Goa+1664,+Aetas+Aurea+12+\(Doornspijk,+The+Netherlands:+Davaco,+1996\),+121.](https://www.staatsgalerie.de/en/collection/digital-collection/nc/suche/_/_/_/_/werk/aufistung/record.html?tx_datamintscatalog_pi1%5Bcollection%5D=.Rolf+Kultzen,+Michael+Sweerts:+Brussels+1618-Goa+1664,+Aetas+Aurea+12+(Doornspijk,+The+Netherlands:+Davaco,+1996),+121.)

¹³² Kultzen, *Michael Sweerts*, 121.

¹³³ Marx, “A Boy with Tobacco,” in *Michaelina Wautier 1604-1689*, 253.

¹³⁴ Jan Papy, “IN PRAISE OF THE OMNIPRESENT EGG: ERYCIUS PUTEANUS’ ‘OVI ENCOMIUM’ (1615),” *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 49 (2000): 328.

by Dandan Xu



Michaelina Wautier
Flemish, 1614–1689

Taste, from *The Five Senses*, 1650

Signed and dated:
Michaelina Wautier fecit / 1650

Oil on canvas, 69.5 x 61 cm

Taste exemplifies Wautier's artistic distinctiveness and invention. By creatively synthesizing different sources, she used her visual language to personify taste as a schoolboy. The picture showcases her way of engaging with taste as a direct and everyday sensory experience with which knowledge starts. Her vision responded to contemporary contexts.

► Staging a Playful and Evocative Moment

Wautier depicted taste by capturing a half-length young boy with long red hair biting into a slice of buttered bread. The boy wears a thick cloak in olive green draped over his chest where the collar of his white shirt flattens out over his black doublet fastened with metal buttons. The pen case and inkwell at his waist indicate his identity as a schoolboy.¹³⁵ Probably during lunch break

¹³⁵ Rembrandt's son Titus in Rembrandt's *Titus at a Desk* holds a similar set of pen case and inkwell. See plate 242 and notes to plate 242 in Ernst van de Wetering, Carin van Nes, *Rembrandt's Paintings Revisited - a Complete Survey: a Reprint of A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings VI*, trans. and ed. Murray Pearson (Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer, 2017), vol.1, 367, vol.2, 631. In *Interior of a School* by a follower of Adriaen Brouwer, a boy with his back to the viewer wears a similar pen case and inkwell hanging on the belt around his waist.

at school and being hungry, without taking off his cloak and penner, the boy grabs a slice of bread in a rush, taking a bite. Suddenly, he notices that someone else is looking at him. The light falling from the left top of the painting highlights his action and the moment he grows aware of a beholder: his schoolmate, we as viewers, or Wautier, the painter. Wautier adds a playful touch by placing her signature “Michaelina Wautier fecit, 1650” right after the depicted inkwell. By staging this evocative “snapshot,” she draws everyone in. What is important here is that the pleasure is more likely to come from the exchanges of glances than from a gastronomic delight. The boy’s morsel of bread and coy, returning gaze invites the viewers to recall their own pleasant memories associated with food.

► Bread, Saliva, and Flavors

The inscription on Frans Floris’s 1561 *Taste*, a verbatim quotation from Juan Luis Vives’s *De Anima et Vita*, offers important clues for understanding taste in the early modern period in Europe and Wautier’s painting. It reads, “The sense organ of taste is a nerve spread over the tongue, which flavors reach, conveyed by the saliva.”¹³⁶ Following the Aristotelian model roughly,¹³⁷ Vives roots his analysis of the senses in the contemporary study of anatomy that emphasizes hands-on experience of the body.¹³⁸ Aristotle holds that taste is a form of touch. Unlike sight and hearing, the two tactile senses (taste and touch) operate through direct contact with their objects rather than through an external medium. In other words, the medium of taste and touch is part

of the perceiver’s body in the form of skin or flesh.

The sensation of taste occurs once the flavor, the object of taste, contacts directly with the sense organs, mediated by a moderate amount of saliva since, at the extremes of being too dry or too wet, no flavor is perceived.¹³⁹ Based on Aristotle’s analytical structure of taste, Vives emphasized the nerve that links the tongue, the external organ of taste, to the brain. He argued that the nerve on the tip of the tongue is most sensitive and thus able to process related information very quickly once the sensation of taste takes place.¹⁴⁰

In his analysis of the function of saliva lending flavor to the tongue as the organ, Vives also incorporated the theories of Galen, who was listed as the second ancient medical author recommended by Vives in his curriculum and whose theories were the foundational knowledge for a medical student during the early modern period.¹⁴¹ Galen related flavors to the mixture of the four elements (fire, air, water, and earth) and the four elementary qualities (hot, cold, dry, and wet).¹⁴² Following a Galenic theory, Vives contended that hot and wet can draw saliva to their flavor. According to him, the most flavorful things are combined hot and wet, such as sugar and wine.¹⁴³

Aristotle’s, Galen’s, and Vives’s concepts of taste shed light on the cognitive tools that an early modern person might use for representing and understanding taste. In Wautier’s *Taste*, mouth and tongue are the organs of taste that the bread and butter are about to touch. Like Floris’s female

¹³⁶ Lo, catalog entry 99, in *Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, 390. The inscription was originally written in Latin, which reads, “SENSORIVM GVSTATVS EST NERVVS SVpra LINGVAM EXPANSVS AD QVEM SAPOR PERVENIT DVCTVS A SALIVA.” See Vives, *De Anima et Vita*, *libri tres*, 25, <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb10192181?page=42,43>.

¹³⁷ On Vives’s discussion of the senses, see Carlos G. Noreña, *Juan Luis Vives and the Emotions*, (Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), 86–94.

¹³⁸ Lo, *Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, 390. For a brief account of studying anatomy in a curriculum designed by Vives for medical students, see A. A. Travill, “Juan Luis Vives: A Humanistic Medical Educator,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* (Summer 1987): 70–71.

¹³⁹ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, Book II. trans. Walter Stanley Hett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 125–33, https://www-loebclassics-com-revproxy.brown.edu/view/aristotle-soul/1957/pb_LCL288.125.xml.

¹⁴⁰ Noreña, *Juan Luis Vives and the Emotions*, 91. Also, see Vives, “DEL GUSTO,” *Obras completas, Primera traslacion Castellana integra y directa, comentarios, notas y un ensay biobibliografico*, ed. and trans. Lorenzo Riber vol. 2 (Madrid: M. Aguilar, 1947–48), 1164–65, <https://archive.org/details/obrascompletas02vive/page/1164/mode/2up>.

¹⁴¹ For the list of authors recommended by Vives for a medical student, Travill, “Juan Luis Vives: A Humanistic Medical Educator,” 68. Also Noreña, *Juan Luis Vives and the Emotions*, 89–90, 110–111. For Galen’s importance in medical traditions, see Evan Ragland, “Chymistry and Taste in the Seventeenth Century: Franciscus Dele Boë Sylvius as a Chymical Physician Between Galenism and Cartesianism,” *Ambix* 59, no.1 (2012), 1–21.

¹⁴² Ragland, “Chymistry and Taste in the Seventeenth Century,” 5.

¹⁴³ Vives, “DEL GUSTO,” *Obras completas*, 1165, <https://archive.org/details/obrascompletas02vive/page/1164/mode/2up>. Jeffrey Muller kindly translated Vives’ discussion of the senses from Spanish and Latin to English for our practicum group.

personification of taste, who is about to eat fruit, Wautier's boy taking his first bite of bread agrees with Vives's analysis of the sensitivity of the tip of the tongue as the first sensation of taste. Meanwhile, from the view of Galenic theory, the butter adds liquid, as does saliva, to the dry bread. The moisture contained in the buttered bread contributes to a good flavor, hinted at by the boy's seemingly smiling face.

Bread is a representative food that serves here as the attribute of *Taste*. In his *De Anima et Vita*, Vives opened his discussion of the soul with an account of nutrition, where he characterized bread as the universal human food. As Vives says, "All nations eat bread or foods that substitute for bread, which are: chestnuts, acorns, roots, and dried fish."¹⁴⁴ In his dietary treatise *On the Power of Foods*, Galen also suggested the essential status of bread as a basic diet and its relationship to nourishment and health.¹⁴⁵ Such characterization accords with Peter G. Rose's observation that bread was "the mainstay of the diet" and that it was often paired with butter or cheese in the Netherlands during the 17th century.¹⁴⁶

► The Sense of Taste in Contemporary Sensorial Debates

Situating *Taste* in a contemporary intellectual context as a potential tool to spur philosophical inquiry, as the essay to this publication suggests, it might not be coincident that Wautier personifies a schoolboy as *Taste*.¹⁴⁷ Henri van den Nouwelandt, in a letter to Vopiscus Fortunatus Plempius, who was appointed to a professorial chair at the Faculty of Medicine in Leuven in 1633, condemned the new Cartesian philosophy introduced and taught at the University of Leuven.¹⁴⁸ According to him, the new Cartesian system threatened to overthrow the authority of Aristotle. He described Leuven students as being nourished and sustained by Aristotelian saliva imbibed from their masters, as discussed in the essay above. It merits attention here that the knowledge of the senses is used as an example to defend the conservative preservation of the Aristotelian system against the introduction and teaching of the new Cartesian philosophy. It demonstrates how widespread knowledge about the senses penetrated the discourse of the learned and elite in Leuven. Wautier's schoolboy could be read as a metaphor that the formation of taste is conditioned by education.

¹⁴⁴ Thanks to Jeffrey Muller who directed me to this source and helped with the translation. The text in Spanish reads, "Se ha comprobado igualmente que todas las naciones comen pan y viandas o lo que sustituye el pan, como son: castañas, bellotas, raices, pescados secos." See Vives, *Obras completas*, 1151, <https://archive.org/details/obrascompletas02vive/page/1150/mode/2up>. The cited text in Latin reads, "Observatum est etiam, nationes omnes pane uti et obsonio, vel re aliqua que panis vicem impleat: nempe castaneis, glandibus, radicibus, piscibus exiccatis." See Vives, *De Anima et Vita, libri tres*, 4–5, <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb10192181?page=22,23>.

¹⁴⁵ Galen, "On the Powers of the Food: Book 1," in *Galen: on Food and Diet* ed. Mark Grant (London: Routledge, 2000), 78–84, 87–90.

¹⁴⁶ Peter G. Rose, "Dutch Foodways: An American Connection," in *Matters of Taste: Food and Drink in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art and Life* ed. Donna R. Barnes and Peter G. Rose (Albany, N.Y.: Albany Institute of History & Art, 2002), 20–22.

¹⁴⁷ It also reminds us of a possible use of the 1561 series that targeted physicians and students of anatomy due to its conflation with anatomical information. Lo, catalog entry 99, in *Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, 390.

¹⁴⁸ For a brief account of Plempius' biography and his acquaintance with Descartes, see Petrescu, "Descartes on the Heartbeat: the Leuven Affair," 402–403.

►Touch

by Emily Hirsch



Michaelina Wautier
Flemish, 1614–1689

Touch, from *The Five Senses*, 1650

Signed and dated:
Michaelina Wautier fecit / 1650

Oil on canvas, 69.5 x 61 cm

Michaelina Wautier's *Touch* is signed and dated 'Michaelina Wautier fecit / 1650' in the upper right corner. The artist pictures a young brown-haired boy from the waist up, dressed in a white shirt and black jacket partially unbuttoned from the bottom. He sits in a chair at a table or desk against an undecorated wall with wood paneling, elements of the room rendered in a modulated palette of beige and brown. The boy looks down at the index finger of his left hand, which is dripping with beads of red blood. His lips part and his nose wrinkles as his face twists into a grimace, and his right hand grips his head. The cause of the injury is explicated by the knife and piece of wood placed before him: he has cut his finger while whittling. The boy's action of displaying his bleeding finger and his frustrated contemplation of the injury are enlivened by the addition of white highlighting on his hand and fingertips and the use of bright red paint for the blood droplets, as well as in his lips and flushed cheeks. The sense is expressed through the emotional reaction of

a young boy in the aftermath of a self-inflicted injury rather than picturing the act of touch itself.

► The Status of Touch

The status of the sense of touch was unstable in the early modern period, reflecting the shifting ancient and medieval associations with the sense. Aristotle considered touch to be the most universal sense but also the most base, describing in *On the Soul* that “all animals have at least one of the senses, that of touch.”¹⁴⁹ Because of touch’s universality, as the sense that is shared by humans and animals, touch fell at the bottom of Aristotle’s hierarchy of the senses that is laid out in *On Sense and Sensible Objects*. An alternative understanding of the status of touch proposed by the philosopher Democritus, with which Aristotle disagreed, suggested instead that all the senses were based in touch.¹⁵⁰ In Democritus’s formulation, physical contact activated all of the senses, and this contact could be visible or invisible—as demonstrated by the extramission theory of sight that persisted into the early modern period, which posited that the eyes send out rays that touch and perceive objects and the world.¹⁵¹ The unstable status of touch continued in the medieval period, when touch was associated with lust and base human impulses as a “gateway to the vices,”¹⁵² but could also bring a person closer to God, such as through contact with relics from holy bodies.

By the early modern period, touch was considered “erotic and animalistic”¹⁵³ but was also newly associated with the pursuit of scientific knowledge. As Elizabeth Harvey describes, “for the physician and the anatomist, the hand signals agency rather than receptivity, the power of sensation harnessed to the service of medical epistemology.”¹⁵⁴ Anatomical dissection, a new form of scientific inquiry, required both the hand and the eye to work together to

gain knowledge about the body. The importance of touch in tandem with sight to the pursuit of certain information is illustrated most famously by Rembrandt’s *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (1632) and nearly a century earlier in the 1543 woodcut portrait of the Flemish anatomist Andreas Vesalius in his illustrated anatomical treatise *On the Fabric of the Human Body*.¹⁵⁵

Wautier’s *Touch* appears to align with the traditional Aristotelian hierarchy of the senses. The boy is depicted in the moment after his injury, capturing his reaction to the painful stimulus. This is unlike the young man in Wautier’s *Sight*, whose searching gaze at his hand suggests the knowledge and wonder that sight enables. In alignment with the Aristotelian hierarchy, *Sight* and *Touch* face each other to bookend the series as the most sophisticated and basic of the senses.

► Blood, Touch, and Craft in the 17th Century

Gonzales Coques’s *Touch* (about/before 1661) at the National Gallery in London offers a unique and unconventional lens through which to understand the relationship between blood, touch, and craft in the 17th century, with which Wautier’s *Touch* might also be in conversation. Coques pictures a young man sitting beside a table and facing the viewer with his left sleeve rolled up and gripping a pole. He watches a spurt of blood stream out of the exposed arm and into a metal dish already full of blood. The practice illustrated here is bloodletting, or phlebotomy: purging blood from the body to balance one’s humors and cleanse a person of old or impure blood that affects the body’s health.¹⁵⁶ Blood could be let from different parts of the body, but the most accessible was the elbow. This site would be used if it was thought that all of a person’s

¹⁴⁹ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 81.

¹⁵⁰ Aristotle, *On Sense and Sensible Objects*, 245.

¹⁵¹ Aristotle, *On Sense and Sensible Objects*, 225. See: Cat. X *Sight*.

¹⁵² Carl Nordenfalk, “The Five Senses in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art,” in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 48 (1985), 2.

¹⁵³ Elizabeth D. Harvey, “Introduction: The ‘Sense of All Senses,’” in *Sensible Flesh. On Touch in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 11.

¹⁵⁴ Harvey, “Introduction,” 11. See also: Rafael Mandressi, “Of the Hand and Eye: Performance in Early Modern Anatomy,” in *The Drama Review* 59.3 (Fall 2015): 60–76.

¹⁵⁵ Heckscher connects the hands-on practice of Vesalius with Tulp, both departing from the practice of medieval anatomy, and suggests that Tulp may have provided Rembrandt with a Vesalian woodcut of an *écorché* forearm for the portrait, see: William S. Heckscher, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp: An Iconological Study* (New York: New York University Press, 1958), 66.

¹⁵⁶ Michael Stolberg, *Learned Physicians and Everyday Medical Practice in the Renaissance* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter Oldenburg, 2021), 191.

blood was affected or if they had a fever¹⁵⁷ and appears to be in the same place from which the subject in Coques's *Touch* is having blood extracted. Although not visible here,¹⁵⁸ bloodletting was typically performed by a barber-surgeon rather than a physician,¹⁵⁹ the profession represented in Adriaen Brouwer's *Touch (The Village Surgeon)* (about 1631–35) in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich.¹⁶⁰

As Michael Stolberg explores in *Learned Physicians and Everyday Medical Practice in the Renaissance*, medicine in the early modern period, specifically early modern German-speaking Europe, was divided between those who practiced medicine as a craft (barber-surgeons) and those who learned medicine as a science (physicians).¹⁶¹ As craftsmen, barber-surgeons had their own guilds, like goldsmiths or painters, and like those artisans, they also had a process for becoming a master craftsman, educating apprentices, and running a workshop.¹⁶² Despite the theoretical divisions between the physician and barber-surgeon, in practice, the physician often relied on the barber-surgeon's practical knowledge and would typically refer patients to surgeons for bloodletting.¹⁶³ Successful bloodletting was a procedure that required skill and knowledge on the part of the surgeon: the right vein needed to be struck, nearby bones had to be avoided, and the wound from which the blood was extracted needed to be properly cared for.¹⁶⁴

In Coques's series, his depiction of touch through bloodletting sits alongside painting and music-making as representations of sight and hearing and is elevated to the third position of the series

instead of the last.¹⁶⁵ At least two of the men depicted in this series are identified as known artists (*Sight* as Robert van den Hoecke and *Smell* as Lucas Faydherbe (1654–1704)), and it is possible that all five are portraits of artists.¹⁶⁶ Coques's *Touch* can be interpreted as illustrating bloodletting as a form of artisanal knowledge. Coques's depiction of bloodletting further recalls the engraving of blood circulation in the arm from the 1628 edition of William Harvey's *Exercitatio anatomica de motu cordis et sanguinis in animalibus*, in which an arm grips a barber-surgeon's pole that a person would hold during a bloodletting, linking Coques to the emergent discourse on the circulation of blood as another example of knowledge gained through manual practice. Wautier's representation of the sense of touch through whittling can also be connected to the role of touch in artisanal practice and as a form of knowledge production. Rather than being a new interpretation of touch, this recalls Georg Pencz's early 16th-century engraving, wherein touch was first conveyed as a manual activity: the craft of weaving.

Manual practice as a site for knowledge production in Wautier's *Touch* is not only conveyed through the boy's whittling but also his reaction to his injury. The boy stares down at his index finger, which weeps red droplets of blood, gripping his head with his other hand. There is a multitude of possibilities for interpreting his expression: annoyance, confusion, shock, or pain. His curled lip and scrunched nose, along with his head scratch, suggest that this is not a visceral reaction to a painful stimulus. The boy is pictured instead in the moment after the immediate

¹⁵⁷ Stolberg, *Learned Physicians*, 190–191.

¹⁵⁸ The man may be performing bloodletting on himself rather than it being done by a surgeon because he is holding the dish for the blood that would typically be held by the surgeon.

¹⁵⁹ Stolberg, *Learned Physicians*, 194.

¹⁶⁰ Brouwer depicts the barber-surgeon as a somewhat crude medical practitioner, performing a painful procedure on a man who winces in pain, in stark contrast to Rembrandt's portrait of the finely dressed physician Dr. Tulp, teaching his lower-status surgeon-students.

¹⁶¹ Stolberg, *Learned Physicians*, 33.

¹⁶² Stolberg, *Learned Physicians*, 513.

¹⁶³ Stolberg, *Learned Physicians*, 516.

¹⁶⁴ Stolberg, *Learned Physicians*, 196.

¹⁶⁵ Juan Luis Vives' hierarchy of the senses in *De Anima et Vita, libri tres* (1538; 1575) also elevates touch to the third position but demotes smell to the last position, which is not followed by Coques.

¹⁶⁶ Liskén-Pruss, *Gonzales Coques*, 85–90. Some of the sitters in Coques' Antwerp (KMSKA) series of the Five Senses have also been identified as known artists.

shock of injury and contemplates the harm that he has accidentally inflicted on himself. This is the universal childhood experience of learning by doing: one learns a knife is sharp when he slices his finger or that a stove heats up when a bubbling pot is touched. From this, the injured person also develops a sense of judgment, a sentiment that is expressly stated in George Glover's (1634–1652) engraving of the sense at the British Museum: "Some may suppose our Judgments are but slender / To have our knives sharpe, our skins soe tender." As learned through sensory experience, judgment can also be interpreted in Wautier's depictions of sight, smell, and taste.

Michaelina Wautier's brother and fellow painter Charles Wautier represented a person's reaction to painful touch in his *Dying Seneca* (about 1640), which pictures the Stoic philosopher committing suicide at the command of the Emperor Nero by being bled by the vein in his foot.¹⁶⁷ Seneca's philosophy, as popularized by Justus Lipsius in the southern and northern Netherlands, emphasized apathy and self-control in one's responses to trying circumstances and was popular in Netherlandish intellectual circles in the late 16th and 17th centuries.¹⁶⁸ Charles

Wautier's depiction of Seneca experiencing the pain of suicide by bleeding draws inspiration from a paradigmatic antique model: the sculpture of *Laocoön and His Sons*.¹⁶⁹ Although on its surface a logical choice for representing pain, there is an incongruity between the anguished reaction of Seneca adapted from the *Laocoön* and the Stoic philosophy that Seneca is supposed to represent. Peter Paul Rubens's painting of the same scene from 1612 to 1613 more appropriately pictures Seneca's acceptance of his fate.¹⁷⁰ Compared with her brother, Michaelina Wautier expresses painful touch through bleeding in a more subtle and intellectually attuned manner.

¹⁶⁷ Jahel Sanzsalazar, "The Influence of Others: The Wautiers, David Teniers, and Archduke Leopold Wilhelm's *Theatrum Pictorium*," in *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689*, 68. Sanzsalazar's attribution is accepted by the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

¹⁶⁸ For Justus Lipsius's systematic revival of stoic philosophy and his circle in the southern Netherlands, see: Mark Morford, *Stoics and Neostoics: Rubens and the Circle of Lipsius* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹⁶⁹ Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500–1900* (New Haven and London, 1981), 243–247.

¹⁷⁰ Elizabeth McGrath, *Rubens: Subjects from History. Corpus Rubenianum* Ludwig Burchard. Volume II, ed. Arnout Balis (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1997), 285–286

► Provenance of *Self-Portrait*

Probably Robert Spencer (b. 1640–d. 1702), 2nd Earl of Sunderland, Althorp, Northamptonshire; by descent to Robert Spencer, 4th Earl of Sunderland (b. 1701–d. 1729), Althorp; by descent within the family to Edward John Spencer, 8th Earl Spencer (b. 1924–d. 1992), Althorp; probably mid-1980s, sold by the Spencer family. 1986, Chaucer Fine Arts, London and Galleria Gasparrini, Rome. January 12, 1989, anonymous sale, Sotheby's, New York, lot 116. 1989, private collection.

► Published References to *Self-Portrait*

For a full list of the published references and exhibition history of this picture up to 2018, see Katlijne Van der Stighelen in *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689: Glorifying a Forgotten Talent* (2018), 166, cat. no. 3.

► More recent literature:

Jahel Sanzsalazar, “Michaelina Wautier y la incomparable Anna Maria van Schurman: feminismo, arte y erudición en los Países Bajos en el siglo XVII,” *Tendencias del mercado de arte*, 113, (Mayo 2018), 86–91, who accepts the attribution to Wautier but identifies the sitter as Anna Maria van Schurman. In our opinion, the similarity with documented portraits of Van Schurman is not close enough to support this identification.

Eduardo Lamas-Delgado, Review of: “Katlijne Van der Stighelen, (ed.), *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689: Glorifying a Forgotten Talent*, (Antwerpen: Rubenshuis-Bai, 2018, 324 páginas) (ISBN:978-90-858-6763-0),” *Philostrato. Revista de Historia y Arte* (2018), 93–94, who notes the different identifications of the sitter by Van der Stighelen (Wautier) and Sanzsalazar (Van Schurman) but leaves the question open.

► **Self-Portrait**

by Jeffrey Muller and Mohadeseh Salari Sardari



Michaelina Wautier
Flemish, 1614–1689

Self-Portrait, about 1645

Oil on canvas, 47.5 x 40.25 in.
(120 x 102 cm.)

Private Collection

The artist portrays herself at three-quarter length in a formal aristocratic setting. She wears elegant, fashionable clothes, sits on a Spanish red leather chair with metal studs, and faces an easel on the right, holding brushes, handkerchief, and palette in her left hand, along with a maulstick, ready to start painting with the brush that she lifts in her right hand. Van der Stighelen argues that the fashion of the sitter's clothes and hairstyle dates the picture to around 1645.¹⁷¹ A closer comparison made below between the style and technique of her *Self-Portrait* and *The Five Senses* lends further support to this dating.

¹⁷¹ Van der Stighelen, *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689*, 170.

► Picturing Art Making

Wautier portrays herself in a way that demonstrates all the materials of her art. The curve-shaped palette was common from the 16th century onward. Her palette shows the range of colors she intends to use at this stage in painting. The dabs of color are arranged from black at the top left to white at the bottom right, with vivid red in the middle. This order matches the prescription illustrated in Roger de Piles's *Les Premiers Elemens de la Peinture Pratique*, which lists the main colors—lead white, ochre yellow, red, and black at the top—while the tints for flesh color are placed below.¹⁷² Ernst van de Wetering states that artists used a variety of colors to mix the various flesh tints: white, yellow ochre, vermillion, red lake, various browns, black, and sometimes *terre verte*.¹⁷³ He also refers to a passage in a Brussels manuscript from 1635 by Pierre Le Brun, which recommends that painters should place the white color in the center of the palette.¹⁷⁴ Wautier's arrangement of colors follows the conventional practice after 1600.¹⁷⁵

The brushes in the painter's hand are used for delicate pictures and minute details with round and square heads. There is a sketch of a head, probably a man with a hat looking toward the painter, on the canvas, painted in a combination of ochre and white outlines. Nails stretch the canvas to the wooden stretcher, and one can see the scalloped pulls of the stretcher at the top left of the actual *Self-Portrait*. It is remarkable that Wautier meticulously paints the weave of the canvas on which she shows herself working, so it is difficult to distinguish between the actual raw canvas on which she has painted her *Self-Portrait* and the fictive, illusory canvas of the picture in the picture. This exemplifies the power of painting to create a new reality out of mineral and organic pigments set down on roughly woven cloth.

► Fashioning Her Image

A monumental gray Tuscan column anchors and ennobles the space behind the sitter on the left. As noted above, the Tuscan order was associated with the virtue of fortitude. On the easel, which establishes depth on the right, a costly watch rests at its base. This watch with a pink ribbon, glass cover, and a golden frame shows Wautier's wealth while simultaneously symbolizing the fleeting vanity of earthly life through the inevitability of death.¹⁷⁶

Like the Tuscan column behind her and the golden watch, Wautier's clothing denotes her aristocratic bearing. At the same time, she presents herself working as a professional painter. The black velvet cloak and white silk dress convey luxurious textures, but, as Van der Stighelen has observed, the loosened neckcloth suggests a private informality. Black was related to 'Spanish fashion' of the 16th century, but black reappeared in European fashion during the 17th century.¹⁷⁷ Wautier's cream-colored dress is made from fine silk and adorned with lace on the cuffs and the collar. She wears a lustrous pearl necklace and bracelet. Her choice of clothes and jewelry shows her wealth and social status. Wautier's pearls give subtle measure and grace to her figure.

Her curly hair dropped on her shoulder and adorned with a flower headband was in fashion at that time.¹⁷⁸ Spiraling curls of women's hair visualize a poetic image of artful carelessness that captures a lover's eyes. This practice goes back to Petrarch and was important in the beauty of Van Dyck's portraits. Her hair, headband, pearl jewelry, and fine silk garments contributed to the aristocratic bearing, and alluring beauty of the woman portrayed.¹⁷⁹

Wautier, in her *Self-Portrait*, sets a fine balance between truth to life and idealized perfection. Depiction of wrinkles, pouches under her eyes,

¹⁷² (Paris: Nicolas Langlis, 1684, 47–49).

¹⁷³ Ernst Van de Wetering, *Rembrandt, The Painter at Work*. (Amsterdam University Press, 1997), 144.

¹⁷⁴ Van de Wetering, *Rembrandt, The Painter at Work*, 144.

¹⁷⁵ Van de Wetering, *Rembrandt, The Painter at Work*, 144–145.

¹⁷⁶ A similar watch with the pink ribbon is depicted in the *Portrait of a Man, Possibly an Architect or Geographer* by Rubens, 1597.

¹⁷⁷ Groeneweg, Irene. "Court and city: dress in the age of Frederik Hendrik and Amalia." *Princely Display*. ed. Marika Keblusek and Jori Zijlmans. (Zwolle: Waanders), 205.

¹⁷⁸ Stijn Alsteens and Adam Eaker et al. *Van Dyck: the Anatomy of Portraiture*. (Yale University Press; Illustrated edition. March 29, 2016), 45.

¹⁷⁹ Johannes Pietsch, "The Materiality of Contemporary Dress Depicted by Rubens and other Flemish Painters," in *Undressing Rubens: Fashion and Painting in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp* ed. Abigail d. Newman and Lieneke Nijkamp (Harvey Miller Publishers, 2019), 81.

and moles states this decision. Her faint, down-to-earth smile demonstrates modesty and dignity. The combination of idealized formality (noble column, fine clothes, elegant pose, and bearing, very much like Van Dyck's portraits) and studied informality, as in the loosened neckcloth and all the details of the natural face, shows the subtlety of Wautier's approach.

► Attribution

From the 18th century to 1962, this *Self-Portrait* was attributed to Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–after 1654), perhaps because Gentileschi was the only female painter whose name could be attached to such a picture.¹⁸⁰ Michaelina Wautier had been forgotten through neglect and bias against recognizing what women had accomplished.¹⁸¹

After several attempts to identify the artist, in 2013, Katlijne Van der Stighelen, Fred G. Meijer, and Jan Kosten, at the request of the owner, examined the painting, and each came independently to the conclusion that it is a *Self-Portrait* by Michaelina Wautier.¹⁸² It was included as such in the 2018 exhibition of Wautier's work. Van der Stighelen demonstrated there how the picture fits into a long tradition of self-portraits by female artists.¹⁸³ However, this attribution has never been supported by a close comparison with Wautier's documented works. This test, by comparison, strongly supports the attribution to Wautier. If we look closely at the painting, we can find traces of her hand everywhere. Compare, for example, how the artist paints the eyes, eyelids, noses, cheeks, and foreheads in *Smell* from *The Five Senses* and in the *Self-Portrait*. The same convention of highlight painted over a darker flesh color is used to indicate the inward curve of the cheek and the outward projection of the lower eyelid in each face.

Each nose shows the same long vertical highlight down the center. The same pastose buildup models the rounded cheeks of both figures. The textures and colors match closely. This detailed similarity persists when the pictures are viewed from a distance, and the whole effect of each is taken into account. In both pictures, Wautier establishes the illusion of a strong animated presence whose gaze engages the viewer. The same comparison could be made with the four other pictures from *The Five Senses*. This series, so recently emerging from obscurity, serves as the standard of measure for attribution because it is signed and dated. In this trial, the attribution of the *Self-Portrait* to Wautier stands firm.

¹⁸⁰ As documented by Van der Stighelen in *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689*, 166.

¹⁸¹ Van der Stighelen, "Forgotten Glory, Flawed Strategy: The Laborious Rediscovery of Michaelina Wautier," in *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689*, 40–51.

¹⁸² Van der Stighelen, *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689*, 171, n.1.

¹⁸³ Van der Stighelen, *Michaelina Wautier 1604–1689*, 166–171, cat. no. 3.

Center for
Netherlandish
Art **MFA**Boston