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The Cover

The Dutch Republic of the 17th century was the "Athens" of Northern Europe. Not only did it prosper economically and political-ly, but it left the world an intellectual and cultural legacy not often equaled: in philosophy, Descartes and Spinoza; in mathematics, Stevin; in physics, Huygens; in microscopy, van Leewenhoek and Swammerdam; and in painting, more well-known artists than perhaps any other country. Yet the young republic would have been well remembered had the work of only one come down to us: the paintings of Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), son of five generations of millers.

Rembrandt was approaching 40 when he painted *Young Girl at an Open Half-Door* (cover). It is not known who the subject is, although the girl is dressed in the state costume of the orphans of North Holland. Some say she is Hendrickje Stoeffels, who became Rembrandt's third wife.

Artistically, Rembrandt's style has reached its maturity. His paintings have become calmer, simpler, more dignified. Yet that very simplicity belies a complexity that engages the viewer in a dialogue—with the subject, with the artist, with himself—and even gives him a glimpse into the truth of the human spirit. Thus, while the still lifes, landscapes, and genre paintings of the Dutch masters of the 17th century will always be admired for such qualities as their sense of order, of balance, of tranquility and certitude, it is Rembrandt who reaches beyond the viewer's eye and intellect and brushes his soul.—M. THERESE SOUTHGATE, MD

(*Young Girl at an Open Half-Door*. Oil on canvas. 102 × 84.2 cm. Used with permission of the Art Institute of Chicago. Photograph by Joe Fletcher.)

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