



# Men in Black

## The Silhouette Portraits of the Members of the First Dutch National Assembly\*

• JORIS ODDENS •

In 1799 the Amsterdam publisher Johannes Allart put out a constitutional history titled *Geschiedenis der Staatsregeling voor het Bataafsche volk*, written by the Remonstrant minister Cornelis Rogge.<sup>1</sup> The work was designed as a sequel to the 1796 *Tafereel van de geschiedenis der jongste omwenteling in de Vereenigde Nederlanden*,<sup>2</sup> in which Rogge had given an account of the recent history of the Batavian Revolution that had broken out in January 1795. Following on from the Patriot period (c. 1780-87) and the Orangist restoration (1787-95), this revolution can be seen as the third and last phase of the Dutch revolutionary era. The *Geschiedenis der Staatsregeling* picked up where the *Tafereel* left off: with the opening of the National Assembly on 1 March 1796.<sup>3</sup> Rogge presented his readers with a history of the genesis of the first Dutch constitution, which had come into force on 1 May 1798. His achievement was soon recognized: not long after the publication of the *Geschiedenis der Staatsregeling*, the reviewer for the authoritative literary journal *Algemeene Vaderlandsche Letter-oefeningen* concluded that Rogge had succeeded admirably in treating his material with the appropriate distance.<sup>4</sup> More than two centuries later, Rogge's *Geschiedenis* is still one of the most important contemporaneous

*Detail of fig. 12*

commentaries on the Batavian Revolution.

Nowadays, though, Rogge's *Geschiedenis* is perhaps better known for something other than the content of the text: between pages XVI and XVII of this work there are six fold-out pages of silhouette portraits of the members of the National Assembly of the Batavian Republic (fig. 1). Each page contains twenty-one black outlined white medallions with the names of the parliamentarians, divided into the districts from which the members of the National Assembly were elected: fifty-five members of parliament from densely populated Holland, fifteen from Gelderland, fourteen from Brabant, eleven from Friesland, nine from Overijssel, eight from Groningen, six from Utrecht, five from Zeeland and three from Drenthe. Six times twenty-one is one hundred and twenty-six, and that was the total number of members of the National Assembly. The *Geschiedenis der Staatsregeling*, however, contains only one hundred and eight silhouette portraits (fig. 2). Eighteen of the little white ovals are empty; beneath these medallions are the names of parliamentarians whom Johannes Allart had apparently been unable to trace, or who did not wish to have their silhouette drawn.

The one hundred and eight portraits have acquired iconic status in the



Fig. 1

Fold-out sheet with silhouette portraits from C. Rogge, *Geschiedenis der Staatsregeling voor het Bataafsche volk*, Dordrecht 1799.

historiography of the period around 1800. In many cases there are no other extant portraits of these members of parliament, so the silhouette portraits appear time after time in print and online overviews, and in reference works.<sup>5</sup> Until now, however, almost nothing has been written about the portraits that were made for the *Geschiedenis*, sixty-five of which have been in the Rijksmuseum's collection since 1958.<sup>6</sup> I consequently intend to turn the spotlight on these men in black by exploring the National Assembly and its members, the phenomenon of silhouette portraiture (with particular

reference to the Netherlands) and the silhouette portraits themselves.

### The National Assembly of the Batavian Republic

The National Assembly had its seat in The Hague between 1 March 1796 and 31 August 1797 (fig. 3).<sup>7</sup> This first Dutch parliament functioned at the same time as a legislative and constituent body. Alongside its everyday activities, it had the task of preparing a constitution for the Batavian Republic, as the former Republic of the Seven United Provinces had officially been called since 1795.

Fig. 2

SIMON SCHAASBERG, *Silhouette Portraits of the Sixty-Five Representatives of the First National Assembly of the Batavian Republic*, 1796. India ink. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. nos. NG-402-A to ZZ.



The first ideas for such a parliament emerged in the early seventeen-nineties. A decade before, around 1780, dissatisfied Dutch citizens had begun to turn against the oligarchic government of the Republic, and more particularly against what they saw as the excessive power of the stadholder. William v of Orange-Nassau behaved like a monarch, whereas in the eyes of these citizens he should have been no more than a very senior civil servant. These unhappy citizens, who called themselves Patriots, wanted above all to be able to elect the people who governed them, so that the grip of a self-perpetuating government drawn from a small group of powerful families could be broken. Throughout the seventeen-eighties, tensions between the Patriots and the supporters of the stadholder mounted, until in 1787 William v put down the Patriot uprising with the help of a Prussian army, and the Patriots were forced to go underground or flee the country.<sup>8</sup>

The revolution that began in France two years later had a huge impact throughout the Western world. Many of the Dutch Patriots, who had fled to France, witnessed at first hand how the revolutionary French had gone about setting up an *Assemblée nationale constituante*.<sup>9</sup> This assembly, which had emerged from the French States General convened by King Louis XVI, set itself the task of drafting a constitution for the French people, but took upon itself the legislative power until such time as the constitution was in place. In their proposals for reform in the early seventeen-eighties, the Patriots had initially wanted to maintain the



Fig. 3

GEORGE KOCKERS,  
*The First National  
Assembly in The  
Hague, 1797.*  
Stipple etching,  
hand coloured,  
680 x 618 mm.  
Amsterdam, Rijks-  
museum, inv. no.  
RP-P-08-86.665.

federative structure of the Republic and introduce the representative system they sought primarily at local government level, but in 1789 they started making plans to establish a national representative assembly in the Netherlands, based on the same principle as the French model, but with a specifically Dutch character.<sup>10</sup>

Several years passed before they could start to work seriously on these plans. It was not until 1795 that the Patriots, who had meanwhile renamed themselves Batavians (after the renowned Germanic tribe that was believed to have populated the Low Countries),



were able, with the support of French revolutionary troops, to bring about the downfall of the stadholder's internally weakened regime. In the meantime the French Revolution had taken a dramatic turn: many thousands of French people had been killed during the Reign of Terror. In the Batavian Republic, as the Northern Netherlands were now known, many people believed that the Terror had been able to break out because the French parliament had been given far too much power.<sup>11</sup> When an official start was made on drawing up a plan for a Dutch parliament in 1795, a great many of those involved were consequently rather wary of an assembly that would have both constituent and legislative authority.

A compromise was finally reached after prolonged and difficult negotiations the National Assembly (Nationale Vergadering) came into being on 1 March 1796: the Binnenhof in The Hague swarmed with people who wanted to experience something of the establishment of the first parliament in Dutch history. Anyone lucky enough to secure a place in the crowded public gallery of the great hall (now known chiefly as the former chamber of the Tweede Kamer, that is the Lower House of the modern Dutch parliament) saw how the elected members placed their trust in Pieter Paulus. This popular lawyer convened the assembled citizens, who had just appointed him their chairman, as the representative body of the people of the Netherlands. The first Dutch parliament officially numbered one hundred and twenty-six members, who had been elected by

an indirect voting system in national elections that had been held in January and February. As the French Assemblée Nationale had done earlier, the National Assembly was to design a constitution, to which end a committee appointed from among the members of the Assembly would start work. While the committee was working on a draft constitution, the National Assembly acted as an interim legislative body.

The make-up of the National Assembly was very diverse. Among the parliamentarians were not a few men who had been able to play little if any part in national government before 1795. This was certainly true of citizens who did not belong to what is now known as the Dutch Reformed Church – men like the Dokkum Remonstrant Taco Schonegevel and the Rotterdam Catholic Johan Brands – who had previously been barred from all public office. The same applied to various citizens of more humble origins; before 1795 neither the Schiedam gin distiller Jacob Nolet nor the Middelburg schoolmaster Henri Rabinel would have penetrated the closed ranks of the regents' oligarchy. And lastly it applied to members from the new provinces of Drenthe and Brabant; they had not had a vote in the old administrative system. The new parliament did, though, also include representatives of the old establishment, rich patricians and scions of noble families, many of whom had joined the reformers during the Patriot era in the seventeen-eighties, men with famous names like Bicker, Teding van Berkhout and De Vos van Steenwijk. They shared the parliamentary benches



with professors like IJsbrand van Hamelsveld and Johan Valckenaer and with various physicians, clergymen and lawyers, but also with a silversmith, a broker and an apothecary.

There was a great deal at stake – particularly once the constitutional committee had presented its draft to the assembly and the debates on the future constitution were continued in plenary session – and the political differences proved considerable. The interrelationships were extremely hard to fathom. Parties were formed within the parliament, but who belonged to which party was shrouded in secrecy because it was generally thought that parties were a bad thing, and party affiliation was not so strong that the various substantive portfolios could be shared out inside the party.<sup>12</sup> This meant that anyone could speak on any subject that came up for discussion in parliament, a fact that regularly produced very long debates. Because each of the one hundred and twenty-six one-man parties had to familiarize himself with every portfolio and did not, as members of parliament do now, have staff to assist him, the pressure of work for the members of the first Dutch parliament was extraordinarily high.

They also had to work in very difficult conditions: the Batavian Republic was embroiled in a war with England and experiencing a deep financial crisis. It is therefore remarkable to see what the National Assembly actually managed to achieve despite the brevity of its session – after eighteen months it made way for a second National Assembly. It was this first Assembly that enshrined

the separation of Church and State in the Dutch constitution, it granted Dutch citizenship to the Jewish community, previously discriminated against, it set in train all sorts of processes that over the years would make the Netherlands a modern state (in terms of, among other things, the system of taxation, education and public health), and it produced a bulky *Draft Constitution* that would, admittedly, be rejected by the Dutch people in a referendum, but would nonetheless later form the basis of the first Dutch constitution, which was ratified in 1798.<sup>13</sup>

The members of the first National Assembly had to endure a great deal of criticism from contemporaries and later commentators – they were accused of an inability to distinguish between the main issues and matters of secondary importance and of being incapable of putting aside their differences in the interests of the state. This, it was alleged, had produced a pitiful draft constitution. As a member of the Remonstrant community – which had much to thank the Batavian revolution for – and an important advocate of the separation of Church and State, the author of the *Geschiedenis der Staatsregeling*, Cornelis Rogge, was very aware of what the first Dutch parliament actually had achieved.<sup>14</sup> In the preface to his book he wrote in no uncertain terms that the silhouette portraits in his book should be seen as a tribute to the protagonists of his account:

I trust that the choice of illustrations will find wholesale approval. In particular I expect



that the nation will not find it objectionable to see displayed at the beginning of this work the shadow images of most of the members of the first National Assembly. Surely no one will doubt that it was the first National Assembly ... that shone such a bright light on every part of the polity and its constitution ... that one can only do justice to it by ... immortalizing the achievements of its members in this way.<sup>15</sup>

### Late Eighteenth-Century Silhouette Portraiture

In the *Geschiedenis der Staatsregeling*, Rogge's publisher Johannes Allart chose to immortalize the members of the first National Assembly for posterity, for the 'preservation and enlivenment' of the 'glorious light' they had shed, by depicting them as dark shadows. No more than Allart did Rogge perceive this as contradictory; silhouette portraiture was regarded as a serious artistic genre and as men of the eighteenth century they were accustomed to view the silhouette of the human face as the 'most faithful likeness' of a person that there could be.<sup>16</sup>

This attitude towards the silhouette portrait, which contributed greatly to the huge popularity of the genre in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, was largely attributable to the 'scientific' underpinning provided by a Swiss theologian. Between 1775 and 1778 Johann Caspar Lavater published the four volumes of his *Physiognomische Fragmente*.<sup>17</sup> This work became an



Fig. 4  
Silhouette machine,  
from J.C. Lavater,  
*Over de  
physiognomie*,  
Amsterdam 1781,  
vol.2, after p. 133.  
Amsterdam,  
University of  
Amsterdam,  
Special Collections,  
o 62-5924.

international bestseller – Allart put out a Dutch translation between 1780 and 1783<sup>18</sup> – and made Lavater a celebrity. In his book the Swiss revitalized physiognomy, a method practised since Greek Antiquity that purported to determine a person's character from their outward characteristics in general and their facial features in particular. Lavater devoted several chapters of his work to the interpretation of silhouettes because, he asserted, physiognomy had 'no more certain and irrefutable proof of its objective truth than silhouettes'.<sup>19</sup>

Lavater's book served the growing market of European and American





citizens with an interest in science, who amused themselves with theories of physiognomy at home or in societies. They applied them to silhouette portraits made by travelling silhouettists, whose numbers rose sharply after the appearance of Lavater's work. Silhouettes were quick and easy to make and relatively cheap. Initially they were drawn or cut by eye.<sup>20</sup> Soon, though, the silhouettists began to respond to the new status of their product by using increasingly ingenious machines that supposedly provided greater precision (fig. 4). The equipment they used was based on the pantograph, a mechanical arm with which the outline of the shadow of the subject could be traced on paper at a reduced size, or on the camera obscura, with which the outline of the shadow could be traced after it had been projected at the size required.<sup>21</sup>

The scientific value of the silhouette did not go undisputed. According to the famous commentator Gerrit Paape, the author of an entertaining little instruction book on making silhouettes entitled *Beknopt en duidelijk onderwijs in het silhouëtteren*, published around 1792 (fig. 5), the usefulness of 'silhouettes or shadow images' to physiognomy had been amply proved by 'the well-known work of the famous Lavater'; nevertheless he remarked that he personally regarded physiognomy as a 'rather inexact science' which was rightly mistrusted by people who would rather base their estimate of someone's character on 'experience' than on 'preconceived notions'.<sup>22</sup> The exactitude of the likeness that the silhouette could provide had mean-

Fig. 5  
Title page of  
G. Paape, *Beknopt  
en duidelijk onderwijs  
in het silhouëtteren*,  
Dordrecht [c. 1798],  
second edition.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum  
Research Library,  
318 F 10.



while become indisputable even for a sceptical child of the Enlightenment like Paape:

Providing oneself in the simplest manner with the shadow form of one's friend; *recognizable at a glance*, and being able to carry it with one, in large or small size, be it in a frame or even in a ring, certainly gives one singular pleasure [my italics].<sup>23</sup>

After physiognomy fell out of fashion in the course of the nineteenth century and the silhouette portrait eventually gave way to the portrait photograph, art





historians generally ignored the genre of silhouette portraiture, probably precisely because of the relative ease with which silhouette portraits could be made. It was not until the cultural and historical worth of works of art became the focus of interest, alongside the art historical value, that a few studies treating the genre in the context of its genesis and use were published.<sup>24</sup>

Typical of the rather contemptuous way in which for a long time people in the Netherlands thought about both the Batavian National Assembly and silhouette portraiture is a passage in an article on the silhouette in the Netherlands by Adolphe Staring, long the only publication on the subject.<sup>25</sup> Although Staring was one of the few among his contemporaries to take an interest in the silhouette portrait, he too stressed the fact that even ‘the least skilled engraver ... could quickly put a silhouette on a plate’, and that silhouette portraits were used in publications chiefly for cost-saving considerations and in the case of ‘nine days’ wonder celebrities, where the publisher had to make haste to get his wares to market before the fame of the subject had faded, so that a laborious and time-consuming copper engraving was not suitable’.<sup>26</sup>

Staring described the members of the National Assembly as the ‘nine days’ wonder *par excellence*’, according them this dubious honour on account of the ‘Batavian Republic’s constantly changing polity’.<sup>27</sup> Although Staring was right to some extent in that the first Dutch parliamentarians were eventually consigned to oblivion, I do not believe that this was why Cornelis

Rogge’s publisher Allart opted for silhouette portraits. Neither Allart nor Rogge could have had any inkling in 1799 that the Batavian Republic would come to a relatively swift end, and the *Geschiedenis der Staatsregeling* was specifically intended as a document for posterity about what they regarded as events that would be important in perpetuity. Contrary to what Staring would like to make it appear, the ambitious (and, it would prove, not wholly achievable) aim of getting someone to visit every member of the National Assembly in his home town within a few years to make his silhouette portrait cannot be described as an example ‘*par excellence*’ of a casual approach. The speed with which a silhouette portrait could be made would undoubtedly have been a factor in choosing the genre, but the decision would have had more to do with the large number of members of parliament whose portraits had to be made.

### The Silhouette Portraits

In 1958 the Rijksmuseum acquired sixty-five original small portraits from a series which, going by the *Geschiedenis der Staatregeling*, comprised one hundred and eight silhouettes in all.<sup>28</sup> These were silhouette busts in profile done in India ink, seven facing left and the other fifty-eight facing right; there does not seem to have been any system as to which way the subject faced. Most of the sitters wear a queue wig (with a pigtail) or a bob wig (a short wig with curls); twelve of the people’s representatives wear their hair loose, the revolutionary style.



The great majority of the members of parliament wear a jabot; one or two have a knotted cravat instead. The sitters' lineaments are depicted crisply and without mercy: Franciscus Guljé's snub nose and Jacobus Janssen's pointed one, Ludovicus de Kempenaer's pout, Jan Willem Evers's double chin, Jacob Jan Cambier's boyish face and the bulldog features of Hendrik Jan Colmschate. The silhouettes of men of whom other portraits also exist, such as Jacob Hahn, Bernardus Bosch and Jan Bernd Bicker, are quite easily recognized. The little portraits are all labelled with initials or forenames and surnames, written by the same hand.

The decision to acquire the portraits in 1958 was taken by Remmet van Luttervelt, the then curator of the National History Department. It was no coincidence that Van Luttervelt should take a particular interest in the portraits. When he left school and decided to study art history he initially encountered opposition from his father, Remmet van Luttervelt, ex-soldier and, at that time, mayor of Lochem, who was afraid that his son would not be able to forge a career in the profession. However his father allowed himself to be talked round by a good friend of the family – the art historian Adolphe Staring, who continued to act as a sort of mentor to Remmet Jr later in his life.<sup>29</sup>

The portraits, Van Luttervelt noted on the inventory card, originally came from the holdings of the mayor of Wirdum, a village in Friesland; after his death in 1926, they passed into the hands of an art dealer, who later sold them,

save for nine, to one M. Poldervaart; he sold his portraits to the Rijksmuseum for 1,600 guilders in 1958.<sup>30</sup> I know the whereabouts of twelve of the forty-three original portraits that are not in the Rijksmuseum's collection; these silhouettes, all of Amsterdam representatives, are in the Amsterdam City Archives.<sup>31</sup> I have been unable to ascertain whether the remaining thirty-one portraits have survived.<sup>32</sup>

Until now little was known about the creation of the portraits. On the inventory card referred to above Van Luttervelt associates them with a smaller series of silhouette portraits of Dutch officers who in 1793 had been involved in the successful defence of the town of Willemstad in Brabant, which had been besieged by the French; this series appeared in the same year in *De belegering en verdediging van de Willemstad in maart MDCCXCIII* by Pieter van Oldenborgh (figs. 6, 7).<sup>33</sup> We know

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*Fig. 6*  
ANTONI ZÜRCHER  
after a drawing  
by Hausdorff,  
Silhouette Portraits  
of W. Spiering,  
P. van Nievelt,  
J.H. Elsevier,  
J. Schiphorst,  
V.W. van Hompesch  
and L.F. de Pasque,  
1793.  
Etching and engraving,  
198 x 135 mm (plate).  
Amsterdam, Rijks-  
museum, inv. no.  
RP-P-1910-1873.

*Fig. 7*  
ANTONI ZÜRCHER  
after a drawing  
by Hausdorff,  
Silhouette Portraits  
of J.L.E. Scheppern,  
C.L. Teutscher  
von Liesfeld,  
G.H. von Nitzswitz,  
J.A. Brendel,  
J.J. Colthoff,  
C.T.A. Alberti  
and J. Kroon, 1793.  
Etching and engra-  
ving, 199 x 137 mm  
(plate).  
Amsterdam, Rijks-  
museum, inv. no.  
RP-P-1910-1869.





Col. W. Spiering.



Maj. P. van Nievelt.



Kapt. J. H. Elsevier.



Kapt. J. Schiphorst.



Kapt. V. W. Grave van Kompesch.



Kapt. L. F. de Pasque.

*Naamlijst der veldoffic.*

*A. J. J. J. J. J. J.*



Col. Command. J.L.E. Scheppern.



Lt. Col. C.L. Teufelher von Liesfeld.



Maj. G.H. von Nitzwitz.



Kapt. J.A. Bröndel.



Lieuten. J.J. Colthoff.



Kapt. C.T.A. Alberti.



Kapt. J. Kroon.

*Handgezeichnet von A. v. S.*

*L. Janssen del.*

that these silhouettes were made by a man called Hausdorff and engraved by Antoni Zürcher (1754-1837), and Van Lutervelt consequently attributed the silhouette portraits of the members of the National Assembly to Hausdorff and Zürcher as well.<sup>34</sup> It is quite possible that he did this in consultation with Staring, who refers in his article 'De silhouette in Nederland' (given as a literature reference on the inventory card) both to the silhouette portraits of the members of parliament and to those of the officers, although he does not explicitly attribute them to the same maker.<sup>35</sup> Van Lutervelt was not entirely convinced of his attribution, as his comment on the inventory card reveals: 'further proofs of this hypothesis ... should still be sought'.<sup>36</sup>

In theory, the idea that the Swiss-born engraver and etcher Antoni Zürcher (1754-1837) was involved with both series is perfectly possible; he quite often worked with the Amsterdam publisher Johannes Allart, who not only published Rogge's *Geschiedenis der Staatsregeling*, but was also co-publisher of Van Oldenborgh's work. A comparison of the styles, however, reveals that the silhouette portraits of the members of the National Assembly are much finer than Hausdorff's officers' portraits and were therefore probably by a different hand. Nor has any other evidence been found to suggest that Hausdorff (about whom we know nothing more) was responsible for this later series of portraits.

To date, in the absence of anything better, the attribution to Hausdorff is usually maintained, but it had already

been called into question by the historian and antiquarian bookseller Ab van der Steur, who recently passed away. He listed the artist who drew the little portraits he had for sale (these are the etchings that came from the *Geschiedenis der Staatsregeling*) as anonymous, but he lived in hope that his identity would one day be discovered: 'It seems to me likely that one or more of the parliamentarians whose likenesses were drawn would have referred to this event and the making of the silhouette in correspondence, a journal or the like. Perhaps we will eventually find out who was responsible for this undertaking.'<sup>37</sup>

Van der Steur's hope has proved justified. As part of my research into the history of the National Assembly, I have searched various archives of members of this Assembly that had seldom if ever been studied before; I was looking first and foremost for references to the way matters played out in and around the assembly and how they were viewed by its members, but occasionally I also stumbled across an interesting find that was not directly related. In the Fries en Letterkundig Centrum Tresoar in Leeuwarden I consulted the archive of the aristocratic Frisian Van Beyma Thou Kingma family, which contained, among other things, the correspondences of Coert Lambertus and Eduard Marius van Beyma, two brothers who both sat in the first National Assembly in 1796 and 1797. I examine the conspicuous role these two brothers played in the first Dutch parliament in my doctoral thesis.







Fig. 8  
SIMON SCHAASBERG,  
*Silhouette Portrait  
of a Man*, c. 1795.  
Brush and black and  
grey ink, 103 x 90 mm.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum,  
inv. no. SK-A-4845;  
private gift.

What is primarily of importance here is a short letter addressed to Eduard van Beyma, dated 30 January 1799, the year Cornelis Rogge's *Geschiedenis der Staatsregeling* was published. It was written by Rogge's publisher, Johannes Allart. It emerges that this was a letter of introduction, in which Allart announced the publication of the *Geschiedenis* and explained his plan to include in this work the silhouette portraits of all the members of the first National Assembly. He already had most of the silhouettes, 'almost all drawn from life', but Van Beyma's was still missing. Allart consequently sent the 'citizen Schaasbergen', the bearer of the letter, to him and hoped that

Van Beyma would be so good as to allow him to make his silhouette at his convenience, but as soon as possible.<sup>38</sup>

The 'citizen Schaasbergen' was Simon Schaasberg (1753-1811), born in The Hague, about whom we know quite a bit, but who has never before been linked to the silhouette portraits of the members of the National Assembly. Like his father, Arent, Simon Schaasberg was a drawing master and specialized as an artist in miniatures and silhouettes; according to Staring, Schaasberg was 'known more particularly as a silhouettist'.<sup>39</sup> This is confirmed by three silhouette portraits that came into the Rijksmuseum's possession in 1987 (figs. 8-10).<sup>40</sup> They are of a







Fig. 9

SIMON SCHAASBERG,  
*Silhouette Portrait  
of a Boy*, c. 1795.  
Brush and black and  
grey ink, 103 x 90 mm.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum,  
inv. no. SK-A-4846;  
private gift.



man, a boy and a girl, possibly members of the same family; a printed label has been pasted on the back of two of the silhouettes. It reads: 'Simon, Schaasberg, junior/ Drawing master, Recommends himself for/ Silhouettes. Living at 't Hof-Spuy Naast De/ Utrechtse, Market Trader ...'.<sup>41</sup>

As well as these three portraits, the Rijksmuseum has another silhouette portrait of an unknown clergyman, likewise by Schaasberg (fig. 11). In a private collection there are a further four silhouette portraits that can certainly or almost certainly be attributed to him (figs. 12-15).<sup>42</sup> All





Fig. 10  
SIMON SCHAASBERG,  
*Silhouette Portrait  
of a Girl*, c. 1795.  
Brush and black and  
grey ink, 103 x 90 mm.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum,  
inv. no. SK-A-4847;  
private gift.

these portraits display distinct similarities to the portraits of the members of the National Assembly; the same eye for detail and use of different grey tones, giving not only the features but also the hair and clothes of each individual their own character.

The question arises as to why Schaasberg's name does not appear anywhere on the fold-out pages of Rogge's *Geschiedenis der Staatsregeling*, although it was customary to credit artists in publications at that time. One possible explanation is that the pragmatic publisher Johannes





Allart shrewdly calculated that the readers of the *Geschiedenis*, most of whom would certainly have belonged to the Batavian political camp, would be less than impressed with the involvement of Schaasberg, who had previously made money copying the official court portrait of Princess Wilhelmina of Prussia, made in 1791 on the occasion of her marriage to Prince William Frederick of Orange-Nassau, who

Fig. 11  
SIMON SCHAASBERG,  
*Silhouette Portrait  
of an Unknown  
Clergyman*, c. 1763-1811.  
Brush and black and  
grey ink, 95 x 78 mm.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum,  
inv. no. RP-T-1970-55A;  
gift from the Icono-  
grafisch Bureau.



Fig. 12  
ATTRIBUTED TO  
SIMON SCHAASBERG,  
*Portrait of Jan  
Everard Reuvens*  
(1763-1816),  
c. 1775-99.  
Brush and black and  
grey ink, 122 x 96 mm.  
Private collection.  
Photo: Netherlands  
Institute for Art  
History, 1800090178.





Fig. 13

ATTRIBUTED TO  
SIMON SCHAASBERG,  
*Silhouette Portrait of  
Jan Everard Reuvens  
(1763-1816), c. 1775-99.*  
Brush and black and  
grey ink, 122 x 96 mm.  
Private collection.  
Photo: Netherlands  
Institute for Art  
History, 1800090178.



Fig. 14

ATTRIBUTED TO  
SIMON SCHAASBERG,  
*Silhouette Portrait of  
Elisabeth Goverts  
(1749-1829), c. 1800-24.*  
Brush and black and  
grey ink, 102 x 78 mm  
(internal dimensions).  
Private collection.  
Photo: Netherlands  
Institute for Art  
History, 180011806.



Fig. 15

ATTRIBUTED TO  
SIMON SCHAASBERG,  
*Silhouette Portrait of  
Jan van Heukelom  
(1784-1847), c. 1800-24.*  
Brush and black and  
grey ink, 103 x 79 mm  
(internal dimensions).  
Private collection.  
Photo: Netherlands  
Institute for Art  
History, 180011807.







later became King William I (fig. 16). Around 1795 he also made the silhouette portrait of Catharina Rebecca Woesthoven, the wife of the fervently Orangist poet Willem Bilderdijk, who went into exile on the outbreak of the Batavian Revolution (fig. 17).<sup>43</sup> Although this does not necessarily mean that Schaasberg himself was a supporter of the stadholder, Allart probably preferred not to take the risk, and Schaasberg is unlikely to have refused such a large commission even if his name was not mentioned.

### Conclusion

On 13 April 2013 the Rijksmuseum reopened after a decade-long renovation with a completely new layout and approach. The museum is now organized chronologically and tells the story of Dutch history through works of art and historical objects. The result is a permanent exhibition in the spirit of former curator Remmet van Luttervelt, who in the nineteen-fifties and early sixties was already envisioning an arrangement in which the chronological historical account was key and as many 'authentic' objects as possible should be deployed in its telling.<sup>44</sup>

One element that certainly cannot be neglected in the account of Dutch history is the Netherlands' first democratic parliament, the National Assembly of the Batavian Republic. It is therefore cause for pleasure that in the new Rijksmuseum layout space has been found for two exceptional objects relating to this parliament. The first is one of the ribbons, printed with the word 'representative', that the members

Fig. 16  
SIMON SCHAASBERG,  
Portrait of Wilhelmina  
of Prussia, 1791 or 1792.  
From *De Haagsche  
Princelyke en Koning-  
lyke almanach voor*

*het schrikkel-jaar  
MDCXCII*, The Hague  
1792, after p. 6.  
The Hague, City  
Archives, Hgst 8542.





Fig. 17  
SIMON SCHAASBERG,  
*Silhouette Portrait of  
Catharina Rebecca  
Woesthoven, 1795.*  
From W. Bilderdijk  
(ed. and transl.),  
*Treuzang van Ibn  
Doreid*, The Hague  
1795, on the  
dedication page.  
Amsterdam,  
University of  
Amsterdam,  
Special Collections,  
Kunzst. U IV 4 (2).

of parliament wore in the chamber; this one belonged to the member from Gouda, Jan Couperus, and had been in the Rijksmuseum's collection for some time. The second object, a recent loan from a private collection, is the painted portrait of Leonardus van de Voort, member of parliament for the district of Heusden in 1796-97, who was portrayed in his capacity as a member of the National Assembly by the artist J.B. Scheffer, who included Van der Voort's ribbon and the draft constitution drawn up by the Assembly.

It was Van Luttervelt who oversaw the acquisition of the silhouette portraits in 1958, recognizing the historic

importance of this period at a time when there was generally little interest in the history of the Batavian era. It is perhaps fitting that in 2013, fifty years after Van Luttervelt's premature death put an end to his plans and ambitions, his vision should be acknowledged in the new arrangement of 'his' Rijksmuseum, and that we now also have the 'further proofs' that Van Luttervelt hoped for in his search for the silhouette portraits. As an enthusiastic proponent of scholarly research into museum collections, he would have thoroughly enjoyed the fact that this evidence pointed in a direction other than the one he expected.<sup>45</sup>





## NOTES

- \* My thanks to Niek van Sas for suggesting that I should write this article and to Frans Grijzenhout, Eveline Sint Nicolaas and Erik Hinterding for their help and suggestions.
- 1 C. Rogge, *Geschiedenis der Staatsregeling voor het Bataafsche volk*, Amsterdam 1799. For more information on Cornelis Rogge see S. Vuyk, *De verdraagzame gemeente van vrije christenen. Remonstranten op de bres voor de Bataafse Republiek (1780-1800)*, Amsterdam 1995, pp. 43-49, 58-75.
  - 2 C. Rogge, *Tafereel van de geschiedenis der jongste omwenteling in de Vereenigde Nederlanden*, Amsterdam 1796.
  - 3 Rogge, op. cit. (note 1), p. 26.
  - 4 *Algemeene Vaderlandsche Letter-oefeningen* 40 (1800), no. 1, p. 110.
  - 5 See for example P. Geyl, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse stam*, revised version, 3 vols., Amsterdam/Antwerp 1948-59 (can be consulted via [www.dbnl.org](http://www.dbnl.org)); A.M. Elias and P.C.M. Schölvincq with H. Boels, *Volksrepresentanten en wetgevers. De politieke elite in de Bataafs-Franse tijd, 1796-1810* (Amsterdam 1991); Biografisch Portaal van Nederland ([www.biografischportaal.nl](http://www.biografischportaal.nl)); Parlement & Politiek ([www.parlement.com](http://www.parlement.com)); Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland: 1780-1830 ([www.historici.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/BWN\\_1780tot1830](http://www.historici.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/BWN_1780tot1830)).
  - 6 See 'Aanwinsten: 1 januari-1 oktober 1958', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 6 (1958), no. 2, p. 46.
  - 7 For the National Assembly see also J. Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld. Het eerste parlement van Nederland 1796-1798*, Nijmegen 2012.
  - 8 On the Patriot era see S.R.E. Klein, *Patriots republikenisme. Politieke cultuur in Nederland (1766-1787)*, Amsterdam 1995; N.C.F. van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750-1900*, Amsterdam 2004; W.R.E. Velema, *Republicans: Essays on Eighteenth-Century Dutch Political Thought*, Leiden/Boston 2007.
  - 9 On this assembly see A. Castaldo, *Les méthodes de travail de la constituante. Les techniques délibératives de l'Assemblée Nationale, 1789-1791*, Paris 1989; T. Tackett, *Becoming a Revolutionary: The Deputies of the French National Assembly and the Emergence of a Revolutionary Culture (1789-1790)*, Princeton 1996. On the Dutch in French exile see J. Rosendaal, *Bataven! Nederlandse vluchtelingen in Frankrijk, 1787-1795*, Nijmegen 2003.
  - 10 Oddens, op. cit. (note 7), pp. 74-82.
  - 11 *Ibid.*, chapter 6.
  - 12 On the party relationships in the National Assembly see Oddens, op. cit. (note 7), chapter 5; J. Oddens, 'Menistenstreken in het strijdperk. Het eerste parlement van Nederland en de mythe van de Moderate middenpartij', *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen*, new series, 35/36 (2009-10), pp. 337-62.
  - 13 For the *Draft Constitution* see 'Ontwerp van Constitutie voor het Bataafsche Volk, door de Nationale Vergadering ter goed- of afkeuring aan het zelve volk voorgedragen', in L. de Gou (ed.), *Het Ontwerp van Constitutie. De behandeling van het Plan van Constitutie in de Nationale Vergadering*, vol. 3: *Indices, concordanties e.d. en facsimile van het Ontwerp van Constitutie*, The Hague 1985. For the first Dutch constitution see 'Staatsregeling voor het Bataafsche volk', in J. Rosendaal (ed.), *Staatsregeling voor het Bataafsche volk. De eerste grondwet van Nederland 1798*, Nijmegen 2005, pp. 51-158.
  - 14 Rogge was also the author of an influential plea for the separation of Church and State that he dedicated to the National Assembly, which had yet to be convened at that moment: *De godsdienst afgezonderd van de staat, of proeve over de noodzaakelijkheid der vernietiging van de heerschappij van den godsdienst in eene vrije burgermaatschappij. Opgedragen aan de aanstaande nationale conventie der Nederlandsche Republiek, door een vriend van vrijheid, gelijkheid en godsdienst*, Leiden 1795.
  - 15 'De keuze der afbeeldingen vertrouwd ik, dat volkomen gebillikt zal worden. Inzonderheid verwacht ik, dat het de natie niet onaangenaam zal zijn, aan het hoofd dezes werks de *schaduwbeelden* te zien prijken van de meeste leden der Nationale Vergadering. Niemand toch zal twijfelen, dat het de eerste Nationale Vergadering geweest is ... die over alle de delen van de *Staatsregeling* en haare grondslagen zulk een helder licht ontstoken heeft ... dat men haar slegts regt doet, met op deze wijze de verdiensten haarer leden ... te vereeuwigen.' Rogge, op. cit. (note 1), pp. III-IV.
  - 16 J.C. Lavater, *Over de physiognomie*, 4 vols., Amsterdam 1780-83, vol. 2, p. 128.
  - 17 J.C. Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente zur beförderung der Menschenkenntniß und Menschenliebe*, 4 vols., Leipzig etc. 1775-78.
  - 18 Lavater, op. cit. (note 16). P. den Hengst published another version at around the same time: *Verhandeling over de physiognomie of gelaatkunde*, Amsterdam 1781.

- 19 'geen meerder zeker en onwederlegbaar bewijs van haare objectieve waarheid [had] dan de schaduwbeelden.' Lavater, op. cit. (note 16), vol. 2, p. 131. Cf. C. Siegrist, "Letters of the divine alphabet". Lavater's concept of physiognomy', in E. Shookman (ed.), *The Faces of Physiognomy: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Johann Caspar Lavater, Columbia 1993*, p. 33; K. Hart, 'Physiognomy and the Art of Caricature', in *ibid.*, p. 129.
- 20 J. and J.P. Verhave, *Geschiedenis van de papierknipkunst in Nederland*, Zutphen 2008, pp. 106-09.
- 21 A. Staring, 'De silhouette in Nederland', in *ibid.*, *Kunsthistorische verkenningen*, The Hague 1948 (enlarged reissue of the original article of 1933), pp. 121-23; E. Rutherford, *Silhouette: The Art of the Shadow*, New York 2009, pp. 36, 54-55, 113; A. de Haas, 'Silhouetten maken de mens', *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman* 35 (2012), no. 2, pp. 119-20; Hart, op. cit. (note 19), p. 129.
- 22 G. Paape, *Beknopt en duidelijk onderwijs in het silhouëtteren*, Dordrecht [c. 1792], pp. 3-4. The booklet was reprinted in 1798. Paape himself was a fanatical silhouettist. On him see P. Altena, *Gerrit Paape (1752-1803). Levens en werken*, Nijmegen 2012.
- 23 'Op de gemakkelijkste wijze zich de schaduwgedaante van zijn vriend of vriendin te bezorgen; met een opslag van het oog hen te herkennen, en, in groot of klein formaat, het zij in een lijstje of zelf in een ring met zig te kunnen draagen, verschaft zekerlijk een zonderling genoegen' Paape, op. cit. (note 22), p. 1.
- 24 See esp. Rutherford, op. cit. (note 21); de Haas, op. cit. (note 21); G. Vigarello, *La silhouette du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle à nos jours. Naissance d'un défi*, Paris 2012.
- 25 Staring, op. cit. (note 21). On Adolphe Staring see C.J. de Bruijn Kops, 'Keuze uit de aanwinsten. Portretminiaturen uit de verzameling Mr. A. Staring', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 30 (1982), no. 4, pp. 192-205. Also J. Schwencke, *Portretten in silhouetten*, Zaltbommel 1966, but this deals primarily with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
- 26 'de minst bekwame graveur ... in korten tijd een silhouette in plaat [kon] brengen'; 'ééndags-celebriteiten, waarbij de uitgever zich moest haasten zijn waar aan de markt te brengen, vóór de roem van den geportretteerde weer was verbleekt, en dus een bewerkelijke en lange voorbereiding eischende kopergravure niet geschikt was'. Staring, op. cit. (note 21), p. 130.
- 27 'telkens veranderenden regeeringsvorm der Bataafsche Republiek'; Staring, op. cit. (note 21), p. 130.
- 28 They are the portraits of the following representatives: Aufmorth, Austen, Van Bennekom, Teding van Berkhout, De Beveren, Bicker, Boellaard, Blok, Bosch, Bosveld, Brands, Breekpot, Cambier, Cau, Colmschate, De Crane, Evers, Gevers, Gorter, Greve, Van Gulick, Guljé, Van Haersolte, Hahn, Halbes, Van Hamelsveld, Hartog, Van Hellenberg, Horbag, Janssen, Van de Kastelee, De Kempnaer, Kock, Krieger, De Leeuw, Van Leeuwen, Van Lokhorst, Luyken, Midderigh, Molengraaff, Nieuhoff, Okhuysen, Pasteur, Pertat, Pompe van Meerdervoort, Proot, Queysen, Quesnel, Rabinel, Reyens, Schonegevel, Siderius, Stoffenberg, Tip, Nuhout van der Veen, Verhees, Verheyen, Verhoysen, Visscher, Vonk, Van der Voort, J.A. de Vos van Steenwijk, Witbols, Wildrik, Van Zonsbeek. The spelling of the names of these and the other representatives referred to hereafter is in line with Oddens, op. cit. (note 7), pp. 396-404, and differs from the spelling in the Rijksmuseum's itemized descriptions.
- 29 E. Sint Nicolaas, 'Koffers vol gedachten. De opvattingen van Remmet van Lutervelt (1916-1963) over historische musea', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 50 (2002), no. 4, pp. 485-87.
- 30 Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inventory card for inventory number NG-402 (Van Lutervelt).
- 31 These are the portraits of representatives Aaninck, Branger, Van Castrop, Van Wickevoort Crommelin, Hoogewal, Van Hoorn, Lespinasse, Meyer, Schimmelpenninck, Van Staphorst, Verster and Zubli.
- 32 These are the portraits of representatives Bacot, Ten Berge, Van der Borgh, Borgrink, Ten Cate, De la Court, Van Eck, Floh, Havermans, Helmich, Hoffman, Van Hooff, Hubert, Hulshoff, Jordens, Koene, Kuiken, De Lange, Van Langen, Lestevenon, Van Manen, Nolet, Schermer, De Sitter, Sypkens, Tonckens, Trip, C. de Vos van Steenwijk, Vreede and De Wit.
- 33 P. van Oldenborgh, *De belegering en verdediging van de Willemstad in maart MDCCXCIII*, Dordrecht/Amsterdam 1793.
- 34 Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inventory card NG-402; 'Aanwinsten', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 6 (1958), no. 2, p. 46.
- 35 Staring, op. cit. (note 21), p. 130.
- 36 'verdere bewijzen van deze stelling ... vooralsnog nog gezocht [dienden] te worden'. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inventory card NG-402.

- 37 'Het lijkt mij waarschijnlijk dat een of meer van de uitgetekende volksvertegenwoordigers in correspondentie, dagboek of iets dergelijks een verwijzing heeft gemaakt naar dit uittekenen en silhouetteren. Wellicht zullen wij dus ooit nog eens te weten komen wie voor deze onderneming verantwoordelijk was.' Antiquariaat A.G. van der Steur, 'Gedrukte silhouetportretten van leden van de Nationale Vergadering van 1796-1797', [www.vandersteur.nl/prenten/oth\\_silhouet.htm](http://www.vandersteur.nl/prenten/oth_silhouet.htm) (consulted 2 June 2013).
- 38 Tresoar Fries en Letterkundig Centrum, *FA Van Beyma Thoe Kingma*, inv. no. 277, letter from J. Allart to E.M. van Beyma, 30 January 1799.
- 39 Database *RKDartists*&, <http://website.rkd.nl/Databases/rkdartists> (consulted 3 June 2013); Staring, op. cit. (note 21), p. 126. Staring made no connection between Schaasberg and the silhouette portraits of the members of the National Assembly.
- 40 'Keuze uit de aanwinsten', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 35 (1987), no. 2, pp. 110-11, 115.
- 41 'Simon, Schaasberg, junior / Teekenmeester, Recommandeerd zig voor / Silhouettes. Woond op 't Hof-Spuy Naast De / Utregtse, Markt-Schipper ...' *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 115.
- 42 These are silhouette portraits of J.E. Reuvens, J. van Heukelom Sr, E. Goverts and J. van Heukelom Jr: database *RKDartists*&, <http://website.rkd.nl/Databases/RKDartists> (consulted 3 June 2013).
- 43 That this is a silhouette portrait by Schaasberg is explained in M. Mathijsen (ed.), *W. Bilderdijk, Liefde en ballingschap. Brieven 1795-1797*, Amsterdam/Antwerp 1997, p. 56.
- 44 Sint Nicolaas, op. cit. (note 29); E. Sint Nicolaas, 'Het Vaderland voorbij. De totstandkoming van de presentatie van de afdeling Nederlandse Geschiedenis van het Rijksmuseum in de jaren zestig en begin jaren zeventig', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 45 (1997), no. 4, pp. 310-54.
- 45 Sint Nicolaas, op. cit. (note 29), p. 504.



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