The reopening of the collections of paintings and the exhibition of Netherlands paintings of the seventeenth century at The Metropolitan Museum of Art will speak to the entire world. It bears witness to the firm belief of the American people that the time has come when attention can again be paid to cultural life. At this moment we look beyond the war to a future in which art and science will again be able to flourish, free from the oppressive limitations of the war. This is admissible at the moment, when even the nations that are now still in subjection are no longer fighting for their lives, but for victory. That, by holding an exhibition of the seventeenth-century art of painting of the Netherlands nation, the management of this museum has desired to express this confidence in a future in which art will again be able to occupy its rightful place fills us with pride and gratitude.

A keen critic concluded his extensive study of the history of the Netherlands culture of the seventeenth century with one striking sentence, when he said: “Java and Rembrandt’s ‘Sindics of the Cloth Hall’ are our best letters of recommendation.” He meant that in that century the foundation of our East Indies Realm and the creations of the Dutch school of painters constituted the highest achievements of the Netherlands people. The former, our overseas realm, we shall still have to reconstruct with American aid; the second, our art of painting, speaks to us here today. Art is both national and universal. How national are our genre painters; how universal is Rembrandt, whose greatness confronts you in the museums of almost all the capitals of the world! Have universal human suffering and resignation, but also the conquest of this suffering, ever been depicted better than in the portraits he painted in his old age?

The Metropolitan Museum of Art accords the Netherlands people the honor of expressing confidence in the revival of art, in this period of victory, through Dutch seventeenth-century painting. This distinction gives us courage to make one observation. We Netherlanders are not merely a nation of the past. Take cognizance of what our country did and was in the years previous to the invasion. There was life, growth, energy, confidence in every field of life: in our overseas work, in our technology, in our spiritual and social movements, in our science, in our art. If you Americans come to the aid of our country, you are drawing closer to a nation which in every domain has shown itself to be worthy of its renewed independence. And that, too, by its stubborn opposition in the years of its abasement.

I firmly believe, also, that the smaller nations will have an important task in the new world of the future, in the different fields of human life; that the existence of the smaller nations

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is necessary to the whole of the people's organization of the world. And these smaller nations are the equals of the greater in the domain of culture; they may demonstrate by their achievements that art is not merely an ornament of life but one of its essentials. Who will deny it at the moment, seeing around him in this museum these marvelous paintings, again brought together here—in the confidence of the coming victory!

By HER ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCESS JULIANA OF THE NETHERLANDS

This impressive ceremony has for all of us, here and elsewhere, more than a single significance. When these immortal and priceless works of art which have given the Metropolitan Museum its world-wide fame were removed that step was taken for the sake of safety because the possibility of direct danger was regarded as existing. Now, with their return, we are justified in assuming that this danger is behind us. The uncertainty of the first dark years of war has been followed by the radiant certainty of the coming victory.

This act, the return of the masterpieces to their former places in their former surroundings is, not only for all those who are here present, but for the entire world, a proof of the unassailable and unwavering confidence in the future on the part of the American people and the American Government.

I trust that I may be permitted in this connection to call attention for a moment to the conditions of the museums and collections in the countries occupied by Germany. The shameless rapacity of the usurper has here proved to be abominable. Many of the most important objects of the museums and libraries of the Netherlands, Belgium, and France—to mention only a few of the occupied countries—have been stolen and transferred to Germany, where they adorn the walls and bookcases of vandals. It is to be hoped that these irreplaceable works of art are for the moment receiving some care, but one never knows what the enemy plans to do when he knows that his cause is irrevocably lost. In any event, the rediscovery, the recovery, and the return of these hallmarks of civilization constitutes one of the problems of the peace. In this task the scientific aid of American art authorities and experts, who are among the best in the world, will be earnestly solicited and highly prized.

May I also be permitted to attach special significance to the fact that among the grand works of art which, after a brief absence, again impart to this museum much of its beauty and value, are many which reflect the genius of the people of the Netherlands.

In all modesty we may be proud of the fact that the Netherlands is the country that was chosen to present to humanity the eternal values of Rembrandt, Vermeer, Hals, and so many others of the great masters.

In my native land everyone has been conscious of the fact that art, even if it displays such strong national traits as ours does, nevertheless has an effective influence and a significance which pass far beyond the national boundaries. If we limit ourselves to Rembrandt, we must recognize that Rembrandt is unimaginable without the Amsterdam of his time, without the exuberance of the Holland of that period, yet there is nothing in his work, however Dutch in many respects, that is not accessible and comprehensible for all of humanity.

I trust that I may also ascribe to Rembrandt's work a symbolic value. In my opinion it indicates very clearly the great Ideal which animated my fatherland as of old and still animates it even now. And in accordance with this Idea we strive to serve the world by being ourselves. Or, in other words, we accentuate our national characteristics in order to be able to fulfill an international role.

We wish always to maintain a strong character, because we know that strong characters are respected and because strong characters will be needed in the great community of the free nations which will build the future, safeguard civilization, and preserve peace throughout the world.

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