Samuel Van Hoogstraten,
On The Nightwatch

EXCERPT FROM **INLEYDING TOT DE HOOGE SCHOOLS DER SCHILDERKONST, 1672.**

Samuel van Hoogstraten was Rembrandt's pupil at the time he painted The Nightwatch and when this was installed in the Kloveniersdoelen, the guildhall of the riflemen's militia of Amsterdam. Hoogstraten's subsequent testimony in his "Great School of the Art of Painting" of 1672 directly contradicts the assertion, made by all postwar commentators, that the supposed controversy surrounding The Nightwatch at the time of its reception is a "Romantic myth." Clearly, contemporary criticism did not simply involve dissatisfaction on the part of the individuals portrayed but more generally a conflict between Rembrandt's artistic aims on the one hand and the needs and ideals of the guild, the other artists involved, and the society at large on the other. Similar antagonisms are already at work in Rembrandt's Passion series for the Prince's gallery and his Blinding of Samson for Constantijn Huygens, and eventually culminate in the rejection of Rembrandt's Oath of the Batavians of 1661, commissioned for the new Town Hall of Amsterdam.

It is not enough for a painter to place his portraits next to one another in a row, as one can see all too often here in Holland in the militia halls[. . .] Rembrandt has observed this rule very well in his piece for the militia hall in Amsterdam, although many feel too well, making more work of the large picture of his choice than the particular portions he was commissioned to execute. Nevertheless, the same work, no matter how much it deserves criticism, will outlast all its competitors, in my opinion, being so painterly in thought, so dashing in arrangement, and so powerful, that in the opinion of some, all the other pieces in the hall stand beside it like playing cards. Still, I would have preferred him to put more light into it.