

REMBRANDT HARMENSZ. VAN RIJN

Dutch school, 1606 - 1669

Rembrandt was born in Leyden on July 15, 1606, the son of a miller, ^{Harmen} Harmen Gerritz. van Rijn. The family name van Rijn came from the Rijn-mill, near which they lived. He attended the Leyden Grammar School for seven years, then enrolled in the University of Leyden in May 1620. His parents recognized his artistic bent and allowed him to give up his university studies. While his first teacher has not been identified, his second was Jacob Isaacz van Swanenburgh, a local painter of architectural views. He was sent to Amsterdam to study for six months with Pieter Lastman. He returned to Leyden around 1624-25 and set himself up as an independent master. His earliest dated work is the Stoning of Saint Stephen of 1625 in the Lyons Museum. He aspired during his Leyden period to be a history painter and did not execute a portrait commission until about 1631. At the end of 1631 or early in 1632 he moved to Amsterdam, and would remain there for the rest of his life. He married in 1634 Saskia van Uylenburgh, and her inherited wealth enabled him to buy a handsome house in 1639 and form an extensive art collection. He occupied an exalted social position in Amsterdam, and the commission of 1632 to paint the Anatomy Lesson of Doctor Tulp appears to have established his reputation immediately. He received commissions for further group portraits and during the 1630s was also commissioned to do a series of Passion pictures for the Prince of Orange. He continued to do self-portraits, also Biblical and mythological pictures and, from the mid 1630s, on, landscapes. Saskia died in 1642, leaving a year-old son, Titus, and changes in taste in Amsterdam led to a gradual waning of the artist's popularity. Around 1645 Hendrickje Stoffels joined his household, first as nurse to Titus and later as Rembrandt's mistress --in effect his wife, though the relationship was never legalized. Financial troubles forced the artist to buy a smaller house in 1655, and he was soon declared insolvent. He received permission to liquidate his property, to avoid bankruptcy, and an inventory of his estate was taken in July 1656, followed by two public auctions in 1657 and 1658. After the sale of the larger house,

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he moved to one of the poorer districts of Amsterdam, and his last years were lonely and troubled ones. Of the two large commissions that he received at the beginning of the 1660s, the Syndics of the Drapers' Guild may have had some success, but the Conspiracy of Julius Civilis for the Amsterdam Town Hall apparently did not meet with favor and was cut up. Hendrickje fell ill and died in 1663, and Titus, who was also sickly, died soon after his marriage in 1668. Rembrandt, his economic situation still unrelieved, died himself on October 4, 1669.

Portrait of an Old Man in a Fur Capoil on panel, $9\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ ins.Condition

Retouched in the area of shadow at the right of the hat. Earlier photographs, such as the one in the Frick Art Reference Lib., suggest that there were additional strips at the sides and along the top which have since been removed.⁽¹⁾

Provenance

V.H.Crosby, London ; Mrs H.H.Hallahan, London ; Dowdeswell, London ; Baron Leopold Hirsch, London (by 1909) ; Hirsch sale, Christie's, May 11, 1934, no.126 ; Ehrich-Newhouse Galleries, New York (1935). Acquired by Dr Clowes in 1955.

Literature

W.von Bode - C.Hofstede de Groot, The Complete Work of Rembrandt, 8 vols., Paris, 1897-1906, VIII, 1906, p.136, no.587, ill. ; H.Posse, Die Gemäldegalerie des Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, vollständiger beschreibender Katalog...., 2 vols., Berlin, 1911, II, p.186, under no.828J ; C.Hofstede de Groot, A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century, tr. E.G.Hawke (also in German), 8 vols., London, 1907-27, VI, 1916, p.217, no.400 ; W.R.Valentiner, Rembrandt, des Meisters Gemälde, 3rd ed., Stuttgart, 1909, p.436 ; 1921 ed., p.127 ; 1923 ed., p.125 ; D.S.Meldrum, Rembrandt's Paintings with an Essay on his Life and Work, London, 1923, pp.179, 199, ill. p.354 ; Museum Dahlem, Berlin, Verzeichnis der ausgestellten Gemälde des 13 bis 18 Jahrhunderts, Berlin, 1961, p.73, under no.828 I ; 1964 ed., p.97.

Exhibited

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National Loan Exhibition, Grafton Gallery, London, Oct. 1909 - Jan. 1910, no.41 ; Dutch Paintings, Etchings, Drawings, Delftware of the Seventeenth Century, John Herron Art Museum, Indianapolis, Feb.-Apr. 1937, no.59 ; Ind., 1959, no.46.

Versions

1. Staatlichen Museen, Berlin. Old Man in an Armchair; oil on canvas, 20 \times 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins. (Hofstede de Groot, no.363 ; A.Bredius, The Paintings of Rembrandt, Vienna, 1931, no.269 ; K.Bauch, Rembrandt : Gemälde, Berlin, 1966, no.203). The figure here is shown full length, seated in a chair with a stick. He has the same face, beard and hat as in the Clowes painting and is similarly dressed, but does not have buttons down the front of his costume.

2. Formerly in the Cook colln., Richmond (no.314). Sold Sotheby's, Jun.25, 1958, no.112. Old Man in an Armchair ; oil on canvas, 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ \times 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins. (Hofstede de Groot, no.450 ; Von Bode-Hofstede de Groot, V, no.390, ill.) Full-length, but with the feet cut off. Corresponds generally in its imagery to the Berlin version ; but includes curtains to the rear, and the head, looking off to the left, is turned at exactly the same angle as in the Clowes version.

This small half-length figure study was catalogued by Hofstede de Groot (1906) ~~1910~~ as by Rembrandt. He identified the model as the same old man as ⁱⁿ the Berlin and Cook Collection paintings (see above) and suggested that all three works were painted at the same period, around 1654. In the 1911 Berlin catalogue the same identification of the model was repeated. The Cook version has been excluded from the work of Rembrandt by subsequent writers. The Clowes version was acquired with certificates attributing it to Rembrandt from W.Suida, who dated it around 1655 ; von Bode, who dated it 1656-58 ; Hofstede de Groot (1929) ; and W.R.Valentiner (1940 and 1951), who had previously doubted it could be by Rembrandt (1909)⁽²⁾ and had subsequently considered it to be probably a studio copy (1921), but who now accepted it, dating it first around 1650, and then, as originally, around 1654.⁽³⁾

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According to a suggestion of Hofstede de Groot's, the Berlin painting --which has been generally accepted as a work of Rembrandt's --is to be taken as a study from the life for a painting of Jacob telling Joseph his Dream.⁽⁴⁾ In the 1964 Berlin catalogue, the present work is referred to as a detail study for the Berlin painting. In the opinion of S. Slive, however⁽⁵⁾ --with which the compiler concurs -- the Cook painting is to be taken as a later pastiche ; the Clowes version as a school piece . The generally reddish coloring of this painting suggests that it might be by Aert de Gelder (1645-1727), a follower of Rembrandt's who adopted the characteristics of the master's late style ; but this can only be a hypothesis.⁽⁶⁾

Notes.

1. Cf. here the illustration in von Bode-Hofstede de Groot, 1906 (see below). The dimensions given in Hofstede de Groot's 1916 volume are correspondingly somewhat larger in both directions : $11\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ ins. (29 x 24.5 cm.). The 1910 Grafton Gallery cat. gives the dimensions as 11×19 ins. (27.9 x 48.3 cm.), but this would seem to be a mistake.
2. NOISE SPACE On the basis of a photograph
3. Suida and von Bode, undated docs. ; Hofstede de Groot, doc. of Apr. 1929 ; Valentiner, docs. of Oct. 11, 1940 and Jun. 5, 1951 (Clowes archives).
4. See Bauch, 1966, under no. 203 ; he draws attention to the Rembrandt drawing of this subject in the Albertina, Vienna, which has a comparable figure in it (O. Benesch, The Drawings of Rembrandt, 6 vols., London, 1954-57, III, no. 526).
5. Oral communication to the compiler, 1967
6. For this artist's work, see K. Lillienfeld, Arent de Gelder, seine Leben und seine Kunst, The Hague, 1914 (out of date and with poor reproductions).

A portrait of an old man of similar type, which poses

Notes, cont.

analogous problems as to which follower of Rembrandt's it might be
by^b is the so-called Portrait of an Architect in the Cassel
Gemäldegalerie (1958 cat., no.246, as school of Rembrandt). Aert
de Gelder has been suggested in that case ; but also Drost,
Fabritius and Nicholas Maes.