

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.

Self-Portrait

oil on panel, 17 x 13 ins.

signed bottom right with Leyden monogram, RHL.

Provenance

(?) Pieter Locquet sale, Amsterdam, Sept. 22, 1783, no. 325⁽¹⁾; Prince Georges Lubomirski, Lemberg (1898)⁽²⁾; Newhouse Galleries, New York. Acquired by Dr Clowes in 1951.

Literature

A. Bredius, "Kritische Bemerkungen zur Amsterdamer Rembrandt-Austellung", Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst, NF 10, 1898-99, p.167; M. Nicolle, "L'Exposition Rembrandt à Amsterdam" Revue de L'Art, 2, 1898, pp.424ff.; C. Hofstede de Groot, L'Exposition Rembrandt à Amsterdam, Amsterdam, [1899], no. 9⁽³⁾; M. Bell, Rembrandt van Rijn, London, 1901, p.118; E. Moes, Iconographia Batava, 2 vols., Amsterdam, 1897-1905, II, no. 6693.11; W. von Bode - C. Hofstede de Groot, The Complete Works of Rembrandt, 8 vols., Paris, 1897-1906, VIII, 1906, p.54, no. 546; F. Schmidt-Degener, "Le Troisième Centenaire de Rembrandt en Hollande", Gazette des Beaux Arts, 36, 1906, p.276; J. Veth, "Rembrandtiana, V, L'Exposition en honneur de Rembrandt à la Halle au Drap de Leyde", L'Art Flamand, 6, 1906, p.88, ill.;

Literature, cont.

(also in trans., Onze Kunst, 5, 1906, p.84) ; W.R.Valentiner, Rembrandt, des Meisters Gemälde, 3rd ed., Stuttgart, 1909, pp.29, 550, 567 ; A.von Wurzbach, Niederländisches Künstler-Lexikon, 3 vols., Vienna-Leipzig, 1906-11, II, 1910, p.401 ; 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.272, no.549 ; D.S.Meldrum, Rembrandt's Paintings with an Essay on his Life and Work, London, 1923, p.20, no.91 ; K.Bauch, Die Kunst des Jungen Rembrandt, Heidelberg, 1933, pl.207 and p.209 ; A.Bredius, The Paintings of Rembrandt, Vienna (Phaidon Press), 1936, no.3, ill. ; P.L.Grigaut, "Rembrandt and his Pupils in North Carolina", Art Quarterly, 19, 1956, p.106 ; H.van Hall, Portretten van Nederlandse Beeldende Kunstenaars, Amsterdam, 1963, no. 1743.6⁽⁶⁾ ; K.Bauch, Rembrandt: Gemälde, Berlin, 1966, no.289.

Exhibited

Rembrandt, collection des œuvres du maître réunies à l'occasion de l'inauguration de S-M la Reine Wilhelmine, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Sept.-Oct.1898, no.9 ; Fêtes de Rembrandt à Leyde, Catalogue de l'exposition de tableaux et de dessins de Rembrandt et d'autres maîtres de Leyde, du dix-septième siècle, Stedelijk Museum, Leyden, Jul.-Sept. 1906, no.53c ; Dutch Paintings, The Golden Age, Metropolitan Museum, New York, Toledo Museum of Art and Art Gallery of Toronto, 1954-55, no.60, ill. ; Rembrandt van Rijn, Marion Koogler McNay Art Institute, San Antonio, Texas, Oct.(?) 1956, (no cat.) ; Rembrandt and his Pupils, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, Nov.-Dec. 1956, no.3, ill. ; The Young Rembrandt and his Times, John Herron Art Museum, Indianapolis and Fine Arts Gallery, San Diego, Feb.-May 1958, no.2, ill. (entry by D.G.Catter) ; Ind., 1959, no.47.

Versions

Copies of this work include the following ⁽⁵⁾:

1. Formerly in colln. of E.Warneck, Paris ; sold 1926 Previously in Pacully colln., Paris. 45.5 x 39 cm. (Hofstede de Groot, no. 549.2 ; M.Rooses, "Die Verzameling Pacully te Paris",

Versions (cont.)

Onze Kunst, 2, 1903, p.125, ill.)

2. Gatchina Palace, Russia (1908) (Hofstede de Groot no.549.3).

This painting, known from an engraving recorded by Bartsch,^(c) but presumed lost, was rediscovered by Bredius at the end of the nineteenth century in the family collection of Prince Lubomirski. It represents one of Rembrandt's earliest self-portraits. The artist wears a beret and scarf as in the Gardner Museum Self-Portrait of 1629⁽²⁾, and a steel collar as in the "auritshuis Self-Portrait of about 1629-30^(s). The facial features are very similar to those in the Cassel Self-Portrait^(s), which is probably the earliest one known ; and the expression of the eyes and open mouth are features which are equally found in early etched self-portraits.⁽¹⁰⁾ It is generally agreed, on these grounds, that this portrait is to be dated around 1628-29.^(u)

Notes.

1. According to Hofstede de Groot (1916) it was probably this work, sold to "Yver" for 350 florins.

2. See ^{above} below for the rediscovery. The portrait had evidently been with the family for some time, but for how long remains unverified.

3. See also La Nouvelle Revue, Paris, 1898, p.481 (V.de Swarte) ; Deutsche Rundschau, Oct.1898 -Mar.1899, p.436 (O.Selax).

4. The Clowes painting is not recognized there as being the Lubomirski one. and is therefore listed as a copy of it.

5. Valentiner (1956 cat.) mentions a copy in a private colln. in Sweden.

6. A.Bartsch, Catalogue "raisonné de Toutes les Estampes qui

Notes, cont.

Forment L'Oeuvre de Rembrandt et ceux de ses Princiyeaux Imitateurs,
2 vols., Vienna, 1797, II, p.171, no.87.

7. Bauch, 1966, no.292.

8. Ibid. no.295

9. Ibid. no.288 ; cf. also no.287 there.

10. A.M.Hind, A Catalogue of Rembrandt's Etchings, 2 vols. , London,
2nd ed., 1923, nos.31-32, 34.

11. This dating was first proposed by Valentiner (1909). Bauch (1966) noted, with a question mark, the existence here of a date, 1628, accompanying the monogram ; but there is no visible evidence of this. Bauch had earlier (1933) taken the Clowes version to be a copy, and the Pacully version probably the original, but in his later book he changed his mind and accepted the otherwise universally held opinion that the present work is the original.