

A CORPUS OF  
**REMBRANDT**  
**PAINTINGS**

Stichting Foundation  
Rembrandt Research Project

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**IV**

**THE SELF-PORTRAITS**

Stichting Foundation  
Rembrandt Research Project

A CORPUS OF  
**REMBRANDT**  
**PAINTINGS**

ERNST VAN DE WETERING

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Frontispiece:

IV 19 *Self-portrait at the easel*, 1660  
Paris, Musée du Louvre



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# Preface

## The Rembrandt Research Project: Past, Present, Future

This book differs from the previous volumes of *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, not for the mere sake of change, but rather as a result of art-historical and methodological developments in our approach to the issues involved. Indeed, it became increasingly evident that our original working procedures required revision.

At first sight, our statement of the problem would seem unchanged: which paintings in Rembrandt's style were painted by the master himself? In preparing previous volumes, however, it had become increasingly clear that our inquiry into the autograph Rembrandt oeuvre would be more effectively pursued by paying greater attention to the questions of when, where, and for what purpose the *non*-autograph paintings were done. Research on Rembrandt's workshop practice, the training of his pupils and the contribution to his production by these pupils and by assistants was therefore gradually intensified. Although this issue had already been explored in an essay in Volume II,<sup>1</sup> use of this knowledge in investigating authenticity was still germinal. In Volume III and in the catalogue of the exhibition *Rembrandt: The master and his workshop* held in Berlin, Amsterdam and London in 1991/2, Josua Bruyn published important essays outlining our growing insight into the structure of the workshop production.<sup>2</sup> During the latter exhibition, however, the application of this knowledge to the attribution issue still led to constructions that were only partly tenable. One of the central themes in this volume, but more especially in the forthcoming Volume V, is the relationship between the master's work and that of his pupils. We believe we have brought greater clarity into this problematic area. We are not primarily interested in connecting the names of pupils to non-Rembrandt paintings, but rather in discovering the conventions of seventeenth-century training- and workshop practices (which appear to have also existed in the workshops of, for example, Frans Hals, Jan Steen or Gerard Terborch).

This shift in approach affects the nature, organisation and magnitude of both this and the following volume. If the catalogue entries on disattributed paintings in previous volumes – the so-called C entries – are compared with our discussion in this and the next volume on paintings which we either suspect or are convinced are not by Rembrandt, these entries are often extensive, sometimes even more so than those on paintings we consider to be autograph Rembrandts.

The growing interest in the *raison d'être* of the putative non-Rembrandts, however, had other consequences as well. At the inception of the RRP in 1968, in order to define the field of investigation within workable limits, the point of departure was Abraham Bredius' 1935 canon of Rembrandt paintings. At that stage, the aim was to address all 611 paintings catalogued by Bredius (as

well as the Rembrandts discovered after 1935).<sup>3</sup> Whilst working on Volume I, however, it became obvious that the project could not be completed within the intended time. Accordingly, the decision was taken, beginning with Volume II, to use the substantially smaller canon of Horst Gerson published in 1968,<sup>4</sup> effectively reducing the number of paintings to be treated from 611 to 420 works. This was done on the assumption that Gerson had correctly filtered out many of the paintings on Bredius' list that simply could not be by Rembrandt. However, taking Gerson's list as a basis itself turned out to be problematic when it became apparent that he had disattributed a number of paintings which, in the view of the RRP, could well be by Rembrandt.<sup>5</sup> A more serious matter was that restricting the group of paintings to be discussed by almost 200 meant that the number of dubious or in-authentic works was drastically reduced. What had initially seemed to be a labour-saving decision resulted in an unjustifiable limitation of the field of investigation with the result that any patterns in the workshop production became less clearly discernible. In fact, it became clear that paintings *not* included by Gerson were of paramount importance in the research conducted for the present volume for some of the 'self-portraits' disattributed by Gerson shed surprising new light on the nature of production in Rembrandt's workshop. The new insights were possible only because we had *expanded* the group of works to be investigated to an extent approaching Bredius' canon and when necessary beyond it.

This expansion and the greater attention paid to the non-Rembrandts naturally affected the scope of the book and the time necessary for the project. The Volume IV originally intended had to be split into two separate volumes to avoid creating a single unwieldy tome. The reason these volumes are devoted to specific categories of paintings, viz. the self-portraits in this volume and what we have come to call the small-figured history pieces<sup>6</sup> and related paintings in Volume V, is elucidated later in this *Preface*. A significant and regrettable outcome of this division (decided at a relatively late stage) is that some of the introductory chapters also relevant to this volume will have to be included in the following one. This applies to an essay on aspects of workshop training that seemed applicable mainly to small-figured history pieces but which – as we later discovered – is also relevant to self-portraits. The essay on methodological issues related to connoisseurship is also reserved for Volume V. Accord-

1 See *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings* II, 1986, Chapter III, 'Problems of apprenticeship and studio collaboration', pp. 45-90 (E.v.d.W.).

2 See *Corpus* III, 1989, Chapter II, 'Studio practice and studio production', pp. 12-50; J. Bruyn, 'Rembrandt's workshop: functions & production', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt: The master and his workshop (Paintings)*, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie/Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum/London, National Gallery 1991-92, pp. 68-89.

3 A. Bredius, *Rembrandt schilderijen*, Utrecht 1935; *Corpus* I, 1982, *Preface*, p. XVII.

4 H. Gerson, *Rembrandt paintings*, Amsterdam 1968; *Corpus* II, *Preface*, p. X.

5 *The artist in oriental costume*, Paris, Musée du Petit Palais (I A 40); *The Apostle Peter*, Stockholm (II A 46); *Portrait of a 39-year old woman*, Nivaa (II A 62); *Bellona*, New York (II A 70); *Cupid*, Vaduz (II A 91).

6 With small-figured history paintings we mean those paintings with figures smaller than life-size and generally full-length. In such paintings, the space in which the figures occur is usually far more extensively defined than in the history pieces with life-size, virtually never full-length figures. For this reason the few landscapes from the period after 1642 are also included in this volume.

ingly, these two aspects are touched on only briefly in this *Preface*. The reader is asked to treat this *Preface* and the relevant essays in Volumes IV and V as relating to both books.

### **The history of the project in terms of the formulation of the questions and the choice of methods**

While Volume V will include a more exhaustive essay on methodological matters, particularly the significance of connoisseurship in relation to Rembrandt research, some comment is needed here, at the outset, on the way this aspect developed within the RRP. It will be necessary to examine some of the crucial episodes of the RRP's history, since mistaken views on this matter persistently recur, not only in the press but also in the writings of professional colleagues about the project. To give some idea of just how radically our ideas have had to change since 1968, it might be useful to quote a passage from a lecture in which Josua Bruyn, the first chairman of the research team, introduced the RRP to the community of Rembrandt specialists at a symposium entitled *Rembrandt After Three Hundred Years* held in Chicago in October 1969:

'I should like to emphasise that the majority of rejected pictures, which till now tended to be relegated more or less automatically to his [Rembrandt's] school, do not belong there. Even Dr. Gerson, in his recent edition of Bredius' catalogue, resorts too often, in my opinion, to attributions to Flinck, Van den Eeckhout and Jan Victors, even though, in other cases, he considers rejected Rembrandt pictures later copies or imitations. I think that in these latter cases he is generally right. I also think that these later imitations, whether they are innocent pastiches or conscious fakes, are responsible for many more mistaken attributions than the school-pieces. These imitations [...] present a formidable problem that has hardly been tackled at all. For the greater part, they have not yet been recognised, let alone grouped according to date and place. Some of them can boast fabulous pedigrees, going back to famous eighteenth-century collections, or were reproduced in eighteenth-century prints.'<sup>7</sup>

The advantage of this working hypothesis, no matter how untenable it later proved to be, was that it raised the expectation that scientific research could be an exceptionally useful tool for detecting these alleged later imitations. Materials and techniques would be encountered in such imitations and forgeries that would provide irrefutable evidence of a genesis beyond Rembrandt's time and circle.

The surprisingly strong *a priori* assumption that there would be many imitations and forgeries in circulation

was undoubtedly in part due to the Van Meegeren affair in 1945-7 involving fake 'Vermeers' and other forgeries.<sup>8</sup> Having traumatised both the art-historical and museum worlds, this affair engendered veritable paranoia regarding possible forgeries. Yet this scandal, and the role of the laboratory in resolving it, also generated great optimism regarding the potential of scientific research methods in art-historical investigation. Without the need for a full-fledged Vermeer investigation, research conducted at the Institut Royal du Patrimoine Artistique in Brussels (one of the few laboratories specializing in this area at the time) demonstrated that the painter Han van Meegeren's claim to be the author of the most admired of the Vermeer forgeries, the *Supper at Emmaus* in the Boymans Museum in Rotterdam (the present Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum) was in fact true. Nor should one overlook the impact of the Van Meegeren debacle on the RRP in its initial period. Bob Haak, the instigator of the RRP, began his career in 1950 as an assistant to the art dealer D.A. Hoogendijk, who, after the 'discovery' of the painting by Abraham Bredius in 1937,<sup>9</sup> had acted as the bona fide intermediary in its purchase by the Boymans Museum. Naturally, the Van Meegeren affair made a deep and lasting impression on Haak. Over years of discussing the question of authenticity with Daan Cevat (an art dealer and collector of works by Rembrandt and his school), the suspicion of the existence of many later Rembrandt imitations was a steadily recurring theme. It was this suspicion that influenced the RRP's approach at the start of the project.

In this climate, too, the announcement that the RRP would make the greatest possible use of technical investigation was enthusiastically received. In the international press it was even suggested that, thanks to the application of these methods, the RRP would once and for all eliminate all doubts regarding the authenticity of paintings attributed to Rembrandt. As a result, the art historical world was under the impression that the members of the RRP held pretensions of writing the definitive Rembrandt catalogue, which quite understandably elicited very mixed feelings. After all, it was unlikely that all non-Rembrandts were later imitations or forgeries, since it was known that Rembrandt had had pupils who worked in his style. This, however, was an area of contention. The question was whether these pupils followed Rembrandt so closely that their work was indistinguishable from that of the master. The catalogue of Cevat's collection, for instance, had conjured up an image of the School of Rembrandt which seemed to preclude any confusion between the work of the master and that of his pupils.<sup>10</sup> The same would also apply to Sumowski's later publication, the monumental series *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler* (1983-1994). In his *Introduction*, Sumowski explicitly defended the idea that Rembrandt

<sup>7</sup> *Rembrandt after three hundred years: A symposium*, Chicago 1973, p. 36.

<sup>8</sup> See P.B. Coremans, *Van Meegeren's faked Vermeer's and De Hoogh's, a scientific examination*, Amsterdam 1949; and M. van den Brandhof, *Een vroege Vermeer uit 1937. Achtergronden van leven en werken van de schilder/vervalsers Han van Meegeren*, dissertation, Amsterdam 1979.

<sup>9</sup> A. Bredius, 'A new Vermeer', *Burlington Magazine* 71 (1937), pp. 210-211.

<sup>10</sup> Exhib. cat. *Rondom Rembrandt. De verzameling Daan Cevat*, Stedelijk Museum 'De Lakenhal', Leiden 1968, with an *Introduction* by Bob Haak.

‘with a teacher’s unmistakable idealism, (had) tried to bring out the individuality of his pupils.’ According to Sumowski, the fact that despite their training in history painting some of his pupils later worked as genre or landscape painters ‘agrees completely with Rembrandt’s ideal of the individual. The Rembrandt imitators did not work in his spirit.’<sup>11</sup> Thus, at the project’s outset in 1968 it was possible for hundreds of paintings in the style of, but apparently not by Rembrandt, to be largely considered as either mala fide imitations or bona fide pastiches.

Whilst in theory it may sometimes be possible to prove that a painting is *not* by Rembrandt by means of technical investigation, the converse – using the same methods to prove conclusively that a painting *is* certainly by Rembrandt – is never possible. It may be redundant to labour the point that, on the one hand, historical works of art are complex man-made objects whose materials, manufacture, as well as style and quality can vary even when made by the same person, while on the other hand works that are closely related in just these respects could have been done by different painters, e.g. in Rembrandt’s immediate circle. If only for this reason, it seemed useless to search for some material or technical idiosyncrasy specific to Rembrandt that would provide the key to the authenticity problem. Moreover, such a search would not be possible in practice, as we soon discovered: Rembrandt’s oeuvre is accessible for this kind of research only to a very limited and varying degree. In their Diaspora, his paintings and those attributed to him have to some extent found their way into small museums, or private collections, where thorough investigation is scarcely feasible. For this reason alone, there is little likelihood of assembling the kind of corpus of comparative data that one might ideally wish. Collecting paint samples and samples of other materials from such valuable and important paintings, moreover, is also subject to great restrictions, depending on the museum or owner. Furthermore, the different material history of each painting may have introduced all kinds of changes and contaminations in the paintings, making any comparison of their material properties a very risky business.

The initially high hopes for the scientific research held by the project’s initiators were therefore already seriously dampened quite early on. In particular, a symposium organised by the RRP together with the then Central Research Laboratory for Objects of Art and Science in Amsterdam in 1969, on the limits and possibilities of such research, proved decisive in this respect. Attending this symposium were those with experience in Rembrandt research using X-ray and other radiographic methods, experts on the analysis of grounds and other paint samples, and the analysis of wood supports and canvas.<sup>12</sup> The discussions demonstrated that, so far, the

results of these research methods applied to Rembrandt had yielded little of significance for the determination of authenticity. For example, in so far as could be gathered, works by the early Jan Lievens appear to be identical in technical and material aspects to those by Rembrandt from the same period, while on the other hand, the striking incoherence of Kühn’s research results on the grounds created the impression that no materials and techniques specific to Rembrandt or his workshop could be distinguished.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the materials in question could have been used in Rembrandt’s time or subsequently, often even up to the present time.

Nevertheless, we did not abandon the idea that some advance could be made by collecting, combining and interpreting the already existing information together with comparable new information. And this decision was to turn out to be crucial. For instance, in the first 15 years of the project dendrochronology proved to be of inestimable value. The gradually growing body of dendrochronological data compelled a radical revision of the above-cited working hypothesis. No single oak panel came from any tree felled substantially later than the year to which the painting in question was dated on the basis of style or the date it bears. Moreover, the fact that it seemed possible to demonstrate that two or more panels came from the same trunk in relatively many instances indicated that there was a high degree of probability that the works concerned were painted in the same workshop.<sup>14</sup> For instance, we long considered *The Hague Bust of an old man in a cap* (I B 7) to be a later imitation. Its panel, however, turned out to have come from the same plank as the panels of the Hamburg *Simeon in the Temple* (I A 12) and the Berlin *Minerva* (I A 38). The Braunschweig *Portrait of a man* (II C 70) and *Portrait of a woman* (II C 71) were also initially considered as later imitations, but the panel of the woman proved to have come from the same tree as the centre plank of the Chicago *Man in a gorget and black cap* (I A 42). Something similar occurred in the research on the grounds. For example, when, at our request, Kühn repeated his work in the collections of Kassel and Dresden, a certain type of double ground often encountered in Rembrandt’s early paintings on canvas was also detected in paintings that the RRP had at first thought suspect.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, it had to be concluded that they were not later imitations. Our own research published in this volume has shown the value of studying grounds (see Chapter IV).

However, neither dendrochronological investigation nor the research on grounds (for which relatively easily

11 W. Sumowski, *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler I - VI*, Landau/Pfalz 1983 - 1994, see esp. Vol. I, p. 14.

12 *Symposium on technical aspects of Rembrandt paintings*, organised by the RRP and the Central Research Laboratory for Objects of Art and Science, Amsterdam, 22-24 September 1969. A summary of this symposium was written by Renate Keller, but not published.

13 H. Kühn, ‘Untersuchungen zu den Malgründen Rembrandts’, *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg* 2 (1965), pp. 189-210.

14 See *Corpus I*, pp. 683-85; *Corpus II*, pp. 865-66; *Corpus III*, pp. 783-87 and in the present volume *Table of dendrochronological data*, pp. 648-659.

15 H. Kühn, ‘Untersuchungen zu den Pigmenten und Malgründen Rembrandts, durchgeführt an den Gemälden der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Kassel’, *Maltechnik/Restaur* 82 (1976), pp. 25-33; H. Kühn, ‘Untersuchungen zu den Pigmenten und den Malgründen Rembrandts durchgeführt an den Gemälden der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden’, *Maltechnik/Restaur* 83 (1977), pp. 223-233. For our criticism of Kühn’s initial working method and results, see Vol. I, pp. 17-20.

acquired sample material was made available) yielded *direct* evidence either for or against an attribution to Rembrandt. The X-radiographs that were acquired in vast quantities also failed to provide decisive arguments for an attribution to Rembrandt. But they did contain a wealth of information on such aspects as the manufacture, genesis, the use of the materials and the material history of the paintings in question. These three techniques dendrochronology, research on grounds, and X-radiography (with the latter's potential for investigating the canvas) came to play the most important roles in the project. Not only did they often provide interesting information, but just as importantly, they could be implemented on a larger scale than other research techniques, such as the sophisticated and expensive neutron-activated autoradiography with which some thirty paintings attributed to Rembrandt were investigated in New York<sup>16</sup> and later in Berlin. Nor did this technique provide the decisive key to the question of authenticity. However, it did sharpen our understanding of certain aspects of the artist's working method and of certain stylistic characteristics.<sup>17</sup>

Once it had become apparent (thanks to the results of dendrochronological research and the study of the grounds) that paintings previously doubted on stylistic grounds could not be later imitations or forgeries, the project participants were forced to accept their reliance on a form of evaluation largely consistent with traditional connoisseurship. However, in contrast to the usual lapidary pronouncements on a painting's authenticity – or lack thereof – made by earlier experts, the members of the RRP attempted to voice their arguments as explicitly as possible. Another difference with our predecessors was that – as said – we continued our intensive use of scientific research, but primarily to gain insight into the genesis and into aspects of the painting technique and the material history of the paintings under investigation. The painting as 'object', therefore, received greater emphasis than previously. However, connoisseurship, particularly evaluating the *peinture*, played a decisive role in arriving at an opinion as to its authenticity. That the *peinture* can often be better discerned in the X-radiograph than on the paint surface, together with the fact that each painting was investigated *in situ*, gave us the feeling that we could see more than our predecessors and that, therefore, our judgements were better founded.

Our procedure was that, for each trip, two members of the team (in changing combinations) would travel to investigate paintings on the spot in a geographically determined group of museums and collections. Naturally, this meant that they could not be studied in chronological order and that no individual member saw all of the paintings. Given the current opportunities and means of travel, in practice each member saw more than the previous generations of Rembrandt experts. However,

like those experts, as a rule we had to have recourse to photographs and reproductions for an overview of the oeuvre as a whole (or, in practice, to investigate a relevant group of Rembrandtesque paintings in their interrelationship). For Volumes I – III, in addition to the detailed descriptions we made while investigating each of the paintings, we relied on black and white photographs and – to varying degrees – colour slides of details in the paintings. We only began making systematic use of colour transparencies while preparing this and the following volume.

At an early stage the question was raised by the RRP's critics whether a 'collective expertise' was in fact possible. However, the late 1960s and 70s was a time of great belief in teamwork generally, although it gradually became clear that actual sharing of visual experiences – let alone communicating them – is virtually impossible. As research in the past years has shown, memory – also visual memory – is not a particularly reliable instrument. Memories, thus also the images stored in the visual memory, are radically altered by a variety of factors. One might think that nowadays the ready availability of excellent photographic material would circumvent 'the unreliability of mental images', i.e. the tendency to distort mental images, but in fact working with photographs proved riskier than we initially thought, if only because it is well-nigh impossible to maintain awareness of the often large differences in scale in the visual material. Moreover, the technical characteristics of photographs from different sources differ significantly.

Connoisseurship nevertheless continued to be highly rated by the majority of the team members, particularly because the consensus in the opinions reached was often surprisingly strong. In the conscious pursuit of consensus, however, we scarcely realised the unnoticed role that group dynamics must have played.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the fact that a set of unconscious *a priori* assumptions implicitly and significantly affected our considerations was for a long time not fully understood. These assumptions concerned the limits of the variability of personal style, the gradual nature and regularity of an artist's development, and the (assumed limited) degree to which – in the case of Rembrandt – more than one hand would have worked on a painting. These aspects are addressed in greater detail in our essays in Volume V, which are devoted to the methodological implications of connoisseurship and the question of the participation of more than one hand in Rembrandt's production.<sup>19</sup>

The *a priori* assumptions of the relative constancy of

16 M.W. Ainsworth e.a., 'Paintings by Van Dyck, Vermeer, and Rembrandt reconsidered through autoradiography', *Art and Autoradiography*, New York (The Metropolitan Museum of Art) 1982, pp. 9-99.

17 E. van de Wetering, *Rembrandt. The painter at work*, Amsterdam 1997, Chapter IV.

18 A briefer discussion of the problematic side of working in a group may be found in the section 'Some reflections on method' (E.v.d.W.) in: the *Preface* to *Corpus* I, pp. XIII – XXVII, esp. p. XVII; see also the comment by Haak, cited in: A. Bailey, *Responses to Rembrandt*, New York 1994, p. 61: 'You are prepared to take risks when you have a companion. If you are riding a bike alone and you come to a red light, you stop. But when you have a friend riding with you, you may give each other the necessary daring to ride through.'

19 See also E. van de Wetering, 'Delimiting Rembrandt's autograph oeuvre – an insoluble problem?', in: exhib. cat. *The mystery of the young Rembrandt*, Kassel, Staatliche Museen / Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis 2001/02, pp. 58-81.

Rembrandt's style and the gradual nature of its development seemed to be justified as long as there was a certain 'density' of paintings well suited for comparison, existed in Rembrandt's oeuvre. This seemed certainly to be the case for the period 1625-42. Stylistic characteristics discerned in clusters of related paintings from a relatively brief period were extrapolated to the subsequent brief period. In the process, deviations from the period norm could either lead to disattribution or be 'tolerated' if they could be explained, whether on the basis of stylistic and technical developments or because the painting in question was assumed to have a particular function, for example, when it was unusually sketchy. At this point, since the results of technical investigation carried hardly any weight in attribution and disattribution, this strictly inductive stylistic approach was the only way forward. The need to underpin our views with thorough and solid arguments often led to rationalisations of these views that were as useful as they were dangerous. They were useful because the reader of *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings* could follow, or have the sense of being able to follow, the process by which an opinion about a painting originated. Yet they were dangerous because specifying a set of explicit criteria in fact meant excluding the implicit, intuitively applied criteria. It was precisely in this twilight zone that *a priori* assumptions and other unconsciously introduced arguments could so insidiously influence the decision-making process. As one of the project's critics put it in conversation, the rational argumentation might, in fact, conceal underlying, more intuitive decision-making processes without the members of the RRP being aware of it.

In fact, in this phase of the project the members put so much faith in connoisseurship, precisely because of their efforts to provide a rational basis for their views, that objective data pointing in a different direction were sometimes 'reasoned away'. Salient examples of this are the *Head of an old man* (I C 22) and the *Bust of a laughing man in a gorget* (I B 6). Both works were disattributed by the majority of the team despite the fact that J.C. van Vliet made prints of them shortly after their genesis with an inscription by Van Vliet stating that Rembrandt was the 'inventor' of the painting in question. This commitment to the strict application of stylistic criteria led to the historical evidence being overruled. It was in instances such as these that consensus within the team was breached. In the case of I B 6 constantly recurring discussions led to a compromise: the painting was included in the B-category (*Paintings Rembrandt's authorship of which cannot be positively either accepted or rejected*). For I C 22 the author of this *Preface* incorporated a minority opinion, setting a precedent that was occasionally followed in subsequent volumes, where the dissenting opinion might concern either attribution or disattribution by the majority of the team.<sup>20</sup>

Public disclosure of differing viewpoints in this way was not merely intended to make known the fact that

members disagreed. It was more importantly a deliberate demonstration that in historical research, where countless imponderable factors are involved, consensus among a group of researchers does not necessarily imply the correctness of their common judgement. More seriously, as the above examples of disagreement showed, differing 'Rembrandt images' had begun to emerge. At this point, Max Friedländer's remark in his *Von Kunst und Kennerschaft* of 1946 came to mind: 'One should gather up the courage to say "I do not know" and remember that he who attributes a painting incorrectly displays unfamiliarity with two masters, namely of the author, whom he does not recognise and of the painter, whose name he announces.'<sup>21</sup>

In the meantime, the team members began to realise that the working method adopted for the first three volumes of *A Corpus* could not be employed as such for the segment of Rembrandt's painted oeuvre from the 1640s and early 50s, because Rembrandt's presumptive oeuvre from this period – and its coherence – is surprisingly limited. A reassessment of the methodology, and perhaps a radical revision of the working method were clearly called for. This and other factors led to the decision to terminate the project with the publication of Volume III.

When financial support was requested in 1968 from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) – then still the Netherlands Organisation for Pure Scientific Research (ZWO) – it was assumed that the entire project would take no more than ten years. Since this term would be exceeded by twelve years with the publication of Volume III, it was not expected that further funds would be provided. Another reason for terminating the project was that three of the five members of the team were decreasingly able to participate in the actual conduct of the research and in writing the texts for the *Corpus*. This of course increased the workload for the remaining two members, all the more so because of growing disagreement over the epistemological question: that is, with what degree of certainty our judgements of authenticity could be stated. But the most important reason for ending the project was that four of the five team members had reached an age when they were also retiring from their other positions.

In April 1993, the four older members of the RRP, Josua Bruyn, Bob Haak, Simon Levie and Pieter van Thiel, announced in a letter to the editor of *The Burlington Magazine* that they had withdrawn from the project.<sup>22</sup> Their departure was scheduled to take place at the closing of the Rembrandt exhibition held in Berlin, Amsterdam and London in 1991-1992, in which several members of the RRP were involved. While working on Volume III, the author of this *Preface* had already been faced with the dilemma of whether or not to continue the

20 See *Corpus* Vol. I A 22, C 22, C 26; Vol. II B 8, C 70, C 71; Vol. III C 103.

21 M.J. Friedländer, *Von Kunst und Kennerschaft*, Oxford/Zürich 1946, p. 158: 'Man soll den Mut aufbringen, "ich weiss nicht" zu sagen und daran denken, dass wer ein Bild falsch bestimmt, damit die Unkenntnis zweier Meister offenbart, nämlich des Autors, den er nicht erkennt, und des Malers, dessen Namen er verkündet.'

22 J. Bruyn, B. Haak, S. H. Levie and P. J. J. van Thiel, 'Letter to the Editor', *The Burlington Magazine* 135 (1993), p. 279.

project once the four older members had retired, and had stated his desire to do so, although only on the condition that he could embark on a new course: one that at that moment was certainly not yet entirely clear. By the time of completion of Volume III in 1989, changes in the working method were already being tested, with Josua Bruyn the only older member of the original team, actively – albeit sceptically – participating in these experiments up to his retirement in 1993. That the four older members of the team, the founding fathers of the project, should have permitted their much younger colleague (who at the outset of the project had worked as an assistant, and only joined the team officially in 1971) to continue the project, was highly magnanimous. They could have simply decided with their departure to discontinue their legacy, the title and concept of the project. In their letter to *The Burlington Magazine* of April 1993, however, they expressed the view that while certain changes suggested by the author of this *Preface* had ‘received a sympathetic hearing from the other team members’ these changes had ‘failed to generate the enthusiasm necessary for a concerted change of course’. This prescient formulation was certainly correct in so far that developing a new approach, partly with new team members, did indeed prove to be a turbulent process.

Continuation of the RRP was made possible by the renewal of generous support from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), which had funded the project since 1968 and from the University of Amsterdam (UvA), which adopted the RRP in 1999. The UvA supported the project from the beginning by making work time available for Josua Bruyn and (from 1987 onward) Ernst van de Wetering and by providing the structural facilities, such as housing, etc.<sup>23</sup> The latter was not the only member of the research team to remain. Lideke Peese Binkhorst, the secretary of the team up till then, who had also conducted research on provenances and reproductive engravings as of 1969 and played a crucial role in the production of the published volumes of the *Corpus*, decided to continue working on the project in its new form. In addition, Michiel Franken and Paul Broekhoff, the two research assistants affiliated to the project since 1989 and 1991 respectively, both continued their activities. The plan was to form a research group partly consisting of researchers from other disciplines – with whom we had worked closely in the past – and to attract a few new specialists, as well as several new members for the Foundation’s board. The new team and the new board members were introduced in a *Letter to the Editor* of *The Burlington Magazine* in November 1993.<sup>24</sup> (The way the new team was assembled is described in

greater detail below.) The same letter to *The Burlington Magazine* also announced that the owners and managers of the paintings to be investigated would be able to consult our catalogue entries well before their publication, so that they could react to the information they contained and to our views on the authenticity of their paintings. We also pledged that their corrections and additions would be incorporated and that their views and arguments, where they differed from ours, would be represented whenever possible in our texts. In retrospect, both intentions turned out to be problematic. Splitting our treatment of the paintings to be investigated (as described below) between catalogue texts – containing the more objective information – and the essay, *Rembrandt’s self-portraits: Problems of authenticity and function* (Chapter III), on which work continued under considerable pressure up to the last minute, led to the owners being sent only the catalogue texts, while the decisive discussion often occurred in the chapter. Besides, although it was perfectly possible to react to the texts that were sent to them, this was seldom done.

In the first years following the renewal of the team and working procedure, several new members withdrew because – as with the previous team – the energy and dedication required for the work of the project proved difficult to combine with the demands of their professional positions. There were also disagreements over the work itself, while further friction associated with the question of intellectual property also played a part, a complex issue which is sometimes impossible to avoid when working as a team. The anticipated advances in interdisciplinary collaboration, however, were not wholly realized. Once again, it appeared that those who finally wrote and edited the texts (art historians with an affinity for particular auxiliary disciplines), largely had the task of interpreting the auxiliary specialist information in a wider context and editing it into the text. The initiatives for much of the more general research came from questions put by those overseeing the project as a whole, viz. the authorial members of the team.

Revision of both methods and core aims of the project was effected on various fronts. As early as 1975 it had already become clear that research on more general aspects of the production of paintings in the seventeenth century would be required to answer the many questions raised by the material investigated. Given the effort and, more pressingly, the time required for such research, it was initially thought that such ‘supplementary’ work might detract from the ‘real’ work because it rarely contributed directly to the central issue of authenticity. In fact, however, it often contributed considerably to the ‘transparency’ of the works under investigation and led to deeper insight into both workshop practice and into seventeenth-century ideas on certain pictorial aspects which, consciously or unconsciously certainly played a role in our assessment of paintings with an eye to their authenticity.

In reconsidering the RRP’s goals and working methods, this supplementary research was increasingly integrated into the project.<sup>25</sup> Within the framework of

23 From 1968 to 1985, the project was housed in the Art History Institute of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) at 2 Johannes Vermeerstraat. In 1985, in connection with the retirement of Josua Bruyn, the project was accommodated at the Central Research Laboratory for Objects of Art and Science, 8 Gabriel Metsustraat in Amsterdam. In 1994 we returned to the Art History Institute of the UvA, which in the meantime had moved to 286 Herengracht in Amsterdam.

24 E. van de Wetering, ‘Letter to the Editor’, *The Burlington Magazine* 135 (1993), pp. 764-765.

the RRP intensive research was carried out on the manufacture and use of canvas, as well as on the production and trade of panels and the standard sizes and formats of such supports.<sup>26</sup> In addition, seventeenth-century practice was investigated with regard to the composition of grounds and their application to panel and canvas in specialized workshops.<sup>27</sup> The long-pressing question of the nature of Rembrandt's binding mediums was also addressed.<sup>28</sup> A chapter on Rembrandt's method of working in the *Nightwatch* and his late paintings is included in the present author's book *Rembrandt: The painter at work* (see note 25).

Concerning the more artistic and art-theoretical aspects of Rembrandt's art, research was aimed at clarifying his possible views on the conception of a painting,<sup>29</sup> the function of underdrawing and underpainting,<sup>30</sup> the role of the coloured ground in the initial stage of the work processes,<sup>31</sup> the sequence in which areas were worked out,<sup>32</sup> the use of the palette,<sup>33</sup> notions of colour, light and tone and their interrelationship and their function in the depiction of space, illusionism and composition.<sup>34</sup> Seventeenth-century ideas concerning the 'rough and the fine manner' were also studied.<sup>35</sup> Attention was given to the place of the pupils in the workshop and educational methods in the painter's workshop,<sup>36</sup> and to the issue of

seventeenth-century ideas on autography.<sup>37</sup> While our insight into the choice and significance of costumes in paintings by Rembrandt and his circle grew,<sup>38</sup> attempts were also made to deepen the (art-) historical context of works such as oil sketches<sup>39</sup> and 'tronies'.<sup>40</sup> The function and meaning of Rembrandt's self-portraits were subject to further investigation,<sup>41</sup> changes in Rembrandt's paintings due to ageing processes were set in the context of the aesthetic and art-theoretical considerations,<sup>42</sup> and factors that could have had a bearing on the development of Rembrandt's fame and the place of 'art lovers' in the appreciation of the master in the seventeenth century were also examined.<sup>43</sup> Patrons and buyers were subject to

25 Some of the results of this research was (re-)published in E. van de Wetering, *Rembrandt. The painter at work*, Amsterdam 1997.

26 With respect to the panels, see *Corpus I*, pp. 11-17; J. Bruyn, 'Een onderzoek naar 17<sup>de</sup>-eeuwse schilderijformaten, voornamelijk in Noord-Nederland', *O.H.* 93 (1979), pp. 96-115; E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 11-17. With respect to the canvas support, see *Corpus II*, pp. 15-44; E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 91-130.

27 *Corpus II*, pp. 17-20; C.M. Groen, 'Schildertechnische aspecten van Rembrandts vroegste schilderijen, microscopische observaties en de analyse van verfromsters', *O.H.* 91 (1977), pp. 66-74; H. Kühn conducted an analysis of grounds at the request of the RRP (see note 15); E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 23-24; 95-128; in this volume, see Chapter IV and the *Table of Grounds* by C.M. Groen, pp. 660-677.

28 E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 224-243; C.M. Groen, 'An investigation of the use of binding medium by Rembrandt. Chemical Analyses and Rheology', *Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung* 11 (1997) Heft II, pp. 207-227.

29 E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 75-89.

30 *Corpus I*, pp. 20-24; E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 23-32, 203-211.

31 E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 22-23, 211-215; see Chapter IV and the *Table of Grounds* by C.M. Groen in the present volume.

32 *Corpus I*, pp. 25-31; E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 32-44; 193-222.

33 E. van de Wetering, 'De paletten van Rembrandt en Jozef Israëls, een onderzoek naar de relatie tussen stijl en schildertechniek', *O.H.* 107 (1993), pp. 137-151. In an edited form it appeared as: 'Reflections on the relation between technique and style: the use of the palette by the seventeenth-century painter', in: A. Wallert, E. Hermens, M. Peek (eds), *Historical painting techniques, materials and studio practice. Preprints of a symposium*, Leiden, 26-29 June 1995, pp. 196-201; E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 133-152.

34 E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 149-152, 179-190, 251-257.

35 E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's brushwork and illusion; an art-theoretical approach', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt: The master and his workshop* (Paintings), Berlin/Amsterdam/London 1991-92, pp. 12-39; E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 155-169.

36 *Corpus II*, pp. 45-46, see note 2; K. Bauch (*Rembrandt Gemälde*, Berlin 1966, pp. 47-49) suggested an attribution to Flinck in three cases and in one considered an attribution to J. A. Backer. In his revised edition of A. Bredius, *Rembrandt*, London 1935/1969, H. Gerson mentions G. Flinck as the (possible) author of twelve paintings; E. van de Wetering, 'Isaac Jouderville, a pupil of Rembrandt' in: exhib. cat. *The impact of a genius; Rembrandt, his pupils and followers in the seventeenth century*, Amsterdam/

Groningen 1983, pp. 59-69; E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 47-72; M. Franken, "'Aen stoelen en bancken leren gaen". Leerzame vormen van navolging in Rembrandts werkplaats', in: P. van den Brink en L. Helmus, *Album Discipulorum J.R.J. van Asperen de Boer*, Zwolle 1997, pp. 66-73; the forthcoming *Corpus V*, Chapter II; M. Franken, 'Variants within the painting production in Rembrandt's workshop'.

37 *Corpus II*, pp. 48-51; E. van de Wetering, 'The question of authenticity: an anachronism? (A Summary)', in: *Rembrandt and his pupils*, Nationalmusei Skriftserie n.s. 13, Stockholm 1993, pp. 9-13. Also published in *Künstlerischer Austausch / Artistic Exchange*, Akten des 28. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte Berlin 15.-20. July 1992 (ed. Th. W. Gaehtgens) 1993, Vol. II, pp. 627-630; in the present volume, Chapter I; J.A. van der Veen, 'By his own hand. The valuation of autograph paintings in the seventeenth century'.

38 M. de Winkel, "'Eene der deftigsten dragten", The iconography of the *tabbaard* and the sense of tradition in Dutch seventeenth-century portraiture', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 46 (1995), pp. 145-166; M. de Winkel, "'Eene onbedenkelyke verandering van dragten, en vremde toestellingen omtrent de bekleedingen...". Het kostuum in het werk van Arent de Gelder' in: exhib. cat. *Arent de Gelder, Rembrandts laatste leerling*, Dordrecht, Dordrechts Museum / Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum 1998, pp. 87-98; M. de Winkel, 'Costume in Rembrandt's self-portraits' in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt by himself*, London, National Gallery/The Hague, Mauritshuis 1999/2000, pp. 58-74; M. de Winkel, *Fashion and Fancy: Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt's Paintings*, Amsterdam 2005.

39 E. van de Wetering, 'Remarks on Rembrandt's oil-sketches for etchings', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt the Printmaker*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum/London, The British Museum 2000, pp. 36-63.

40 J.A. van der Veen, 'Faces from life: Tronies and portraits in Rembrandt's painted oeuvre', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. A genius and his impact*, A. Blankert (ed.), Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria/Canberra, National Gallery of Australia 1997/98, pp. 69-81; N. van Eck, *Jongemannen-Tronies*, master's thesis University of Amsterdam 2000; contributed to the symposium 'Tronies' in de Italiaanse, Vlaamse en Nederlandse schilderkunst van de 16<sup>de</sup> en 17<sup>de</sup> eeuw, The Hague, 19/20 October 2000.

41 In exhib. cat. *Rembrandt by himself*, London/The Hague 1999/2000: E. van de Wetering, 'The multiple functions of Rembrandt's self portraits', pp. 8-37; V. Manuth, 'Rembrandt and the artist's self portrait: tradition and reception', pp. 38-57; M. de Winkel, 'Costume in Rembrandt's self portraits', op.cit.<sup>38</sup>, pp. 58-74; see esp. M. de Winkel's Chapter II and E. van de Wetering's Chapter III in the present volume.

42 E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 245-263; E. van de Wetering, 'The aged painting and the necessities and possibilities to know its original appearance', in: *Conservare necesse est, Festschrift til Leif Einar Plaher*, IIC Nordic Group, Oslo 1999, pp. 259-264; this article also appeared in: H. Cantz (ed.) *Horizons. Essays on art and art research. 50 Years Swiss Institute for Art Research*, Zürich 2001, pp. 399-406.

43 E. van de Wetering, 'The miracle of our age: Rembrandt through the eyes of his contemporaries', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. A genius and his impact*, A. Blankert (ed.), Melbourne/Canberra 1997/1998, pp. 58-68; E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's "Satire on art criticism" reconsidered', in: *Shop talk. Studies in honor of Seymour Slive*, (eds. Cynthia P. Schneider, William W. Robinson, Alice I. Davies e.a.) Cambridge, Mass. 1995, pp. 264-270.

further investigation,<sup>44</sup> as were connoisseurship and aspects of human perception.<sup>45</sup>

While we were initially inclined to consider the publications resulting from such research as spin-offs of the project, it became increasingly clear that the knowledge so developed contributed directly or indirectly to the arguments bearing on the question of authenticity. The expansion of our knowledge of workshop practice and of the supply of materials, for example, or the ideas informing the genesis of paintings, helped us better to weigh the significance of particular observations and the results of scientific research. Hypotheses could be developed and tested. More than stylistic arguments alone could be brought to bear in arriving at a judgement of a painting's possible authenticity.

The model that took shape in our thinking was that of a (more or less marked) convergence of evidence from various different areas. In the catalogue entries in this volume, the reader will encounter an approach which, by probing the weight and significance of the data, by correlating this information in various combinations and progressively, step by step, following the inferences to be drawn from these correlations, is aimed at answering the following questions. Can the painting be seventeenth-century? If so, are there indications that it could come from Rembrandt's workshop? If that is the case, are there indications that it is a copy, or does the work betray a genesis which would suggest that the maker was also the person who developed the conception of the work? If the answer to the latter question is yes, can it be the work of Rembrandt himself, or of a pupil or an assistant, or was it executed by several people? The role of the signature also received more attention, though provisionally it carried weight only in the (re)consideration of paintings from the period up to 1642 (on this, see also below). Only when all the 'objective' data have been weighed are arguments regarding style and quality introduced.

This approach, which might occasionally seem pedantic, was adopted in order to avoid the risk of resorting to an *a priori* conception of Rembrandt's style, as sometimes occurred in Volumes I-III. These arguments do not all carry the same weight. However, in many instances they all point to the same likely solution which, depending on the strength and conformity of the constituent arguments, can be more or less probable. This is in no way altered by the fact that none of the constituent arguments are decisive in themselves, the point is the mutual cohesion of the arguments. Moreover, the arguments differ in nature, addressing not only the brushwork or the kind of pentimenti, but various aspects of the painting, such as: the support, format, composition

and colour of the ground, the type of underpainting, the procedure regarding the order of working, the relation between foreground and background, the character and types of changes or sketchiness during the genesis of the work, physiognomic indications in the case of the self-portraits, the relationship with other works – which may or may not be by Rembrandt (for instance old copies of or prints after the work in question) – and any connection with seventeenth-century documents in which the work is mentioned. As for the support and ground, the scientific evidence can afford certainty, for instance in establishing a limiting date of origin, while in other aspects X-radiography and other kinds of radiography play an important role in clarifying the relationship to a possible prototype, for instance in the case of what appears to be a free workshop copy or variant (see for further discussion Chapter III, *The Bayesian approach*, pp. 108-109).

The process of discovery in a research project such as that of the RRP, may alter the entire calculus of probability. As will become clear in this volume, new information on a previously unimagined aspect of Rembrandt's workshop practice can revise the probabilities and shift the balance of the entire structure of convergent argument such that the earlier conclusion, developed from an assessment of the evidence previously amassed, now has to give way to a different solution (see IV 17, the Stuttgart *'Self-portrait'*, and Chapter III, pp. 117-132). Ultimately, of course, no conclusive evidence or proof can be provided, only degrees of probability, which may nonetheless be very high. The case of the Stuttgart *'Self-portrait'* also demonstrates that arguments based on style and quality can lead to very different judgements. In that particular case, the new assessment could – at least in part – be plausibly supported by the same set of arguments that had earlier suggested a diametrically opposite view of the painting's authenticity. Supplementary research (i.e. not directly applied to the problems of authenticity) was and remains crucial to a project like this (see notes 25 – 45).

### Organisation of Volumes IV – V

The grouping of the paintings in Volume IV and V differs from the earlier volumes. The arrangement of Volumes I-III was based on the belief that proceeding strictly chronologically would be the best way of following Rembrandt's stylistic development. In view of the large number of stylistically related paintings produced by Rembrandt (and in his workshop) between 1625 and 1642, this seemed to be the obvious approach.

In the 1640s and early 1650s Rembrandt's output of paintings was so small and at the same time so diverse that no coherence can be found in the work of any one year. Certainly with the later Rembrandt, there are steadily fewer instances of formulae being followed in the production of a painting, so that a comparison of paintings on the basis of similar elements (eyes, nose, mouth, cap, turban etc.) is of little help in assessing them. Moreover, it is not always clear how long Rembrandt continued to work on certain paintings, hence the value

44 *Corpus* II, Chapter IV: J. Bruyn, 'Patrons and early owners', pp. 91-98; J.A. van der Veen, 'Schilderijencollecties in de Republiek ten tijde van Frederik Hendrik en Amalia', in: exhib. cat. *Vorstelijk Verzameld. De kunstcollectie van Frederik Hendrik en Amalia*, The Hague, Mauritshuis 1997, pp. 87-96; also published in English; J.A. van der Veen, three articles in: *De Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* 1998 pp. 14-31, 1999 pp. 24-40 and 2003 pp. 46-60.

45 Forthcoming *Corpus* V, Chapter I: E. van de Wetering with the assistance of E. Gordenker, 'Reflections on method'.



of the dates on them is limited when it comes to locating them within the production of a particular period.

With the growing understanding of Rembrandt's workshop practice, moreover, it became obvious that each category of paintings had developed in its own way and made specific demands on the painter, if only because it was rooted in a specific tradition.

This insight had consequences for our art-historical, stylistic and technical determinations. In the introductory essays in the first three volumes the paintings were already considered in groups, but generally, for understandable reasons, only after the catalogue entries had been written (cf. *Corpus* I: 'The Stylistic Development'; *Corpus* II: 'Stylistic Features of the 1630s: The Portraits'; and in *Corpus* III: 'Stylistic Features of the 1630s: The History Paintings'). Work on these essays generated unforeseen refinements of our understanding of Rembrandt's pictorial ideas and methods which as a rule could only be incorporated summarily in the catalogue entries, if only to avoid repetition. This meant that the catalogue entries could contain no more than *part* of the stylistic arguments relating to the authenticity of the painting in question. As a result of this experience it was decided that, beginning with the present volume, stylistic arguments and matters relating to pictorial quality that might be important in assessing authenticity would be addressed in a separate essay (in the case of this volume, Chapter III titled: *Rembrandt's self-portraits: problems of authenticity and function*). Thus, these essays differ from those in Volumes I-III in that the criteria that are set out are applied to the discussions of authenticity and of individual paintings in the essay itself.

Consequently, the arguments concerning authenticity or lack thereof are introduced both in the catalogue entries (with the more 'objective' arguments) and in the chapter on style and quality. As a rule the conclusions of the corresponding texts are briefly summarised in both.

Where possible, the point of departure was those works from the relevant category of paintings that are so documented that they can be considered autograph. In the case of the small-figured history scenes, they are so distributed over the chronology of Rembrandt's production that they provide a range of – in our view – significant criteria of authenticity for the period 1640-1669. As appears in Chapter III in the present volume, this was possible to a far more limited degree for the self-portraits. In the light of the nature of workshop production by Rembrandt and his pupils, which began to emerge during our research, the value of written documents is relatively limited. The documents in question must be buttressed with evidence from other areas, for instance a genesis characteristic for Rembrandt to be deduced from the X-radiograph (and sometimes, especially for the history pieces, the existence of preparatory and interim sketches).

By dealing with limited categories of paintings (self-portraits, small-figured history pieces) produced over a long stretch of time, there was the risk that the range of criteria of authenticity used would be too limited. However, as will be evident from the relevant essays, it was

precisely this restriction that allowed the possibility of not only grasping characteristics specific to this category, but also of gaining a clearer picture of Rembrandt's pictorial views and certain features of his artistic temperament.

We had earlier decided to avoid the risk of following a working approach whose basis would be too narrow. To this end, activities were developed covering a large part of Rembrandt's painted oeuvre. While preparing Volumes I-III we had been dealing with a gradually shifting 'front' in the chronology, and looked for comparative material chiefly in the earlier work that we had accepted. In our new approach, large parts of Rembrandt's later work are dealt with. The problematic field of the 1640s was approached in this fashion, i.e. both from the preceding period as well as retrospectively from the 1650s and 60s. This occurred on the more theoretical front<sup>46</sup> and in the writing of the so-called core texts, in which our observations, technical data, the documentation and literature are worked up to such a level that the detailed knowledge of large groups of paintings could continually inform work on the individual catalogue entries.

As already mentioned, this volume is devoted to the self-portraits (i.e. works, of whatever intended function, produced in front of the mirror and works by others, based on Rembrandt's own production in this field) and the forthcoming Volume V to the small-figured history paintings including the painted landscapes. Each volume covers the period *c.* 1640 to 1669. The catalogue section of this volume, however, will be preceded by a recapitulation of the paintings of the same categories that were painted between the early Leiden period and 1642. In this recapitulation the developments in our own views of the individual paintings will be given special emphasis. Newly discovered paintings from the period before *c.* 1640 are also discussed in the same context, but will be dealt with in more detail in catalogue texts under *Corrigenda et Addenda*.

Of course, to some extent this grouping, like all others, is to some extent artificial. Thus the line dividing self-portraits from 'tronies' is not always clear, nor is the distinction we make in Volume V between what we call small-scale and large-scale history pieces. In practice, however, the arrangement followed here has worked well. As is evident from our essay on the self-portraits, concentrating on physiognomy, for example, produced additional criteria. In the small-scale history pieces, the fact that the figures are in a much more elaborate setting than in the history pieces with life-size figures (as a rule half-length figures) proves to be important in the analysis of Rembrandt's painting techniques, particularly in relation to the rendering of space. Valuable attribution criteria can be developed from this, which will then also be applied to the few landscapes dated after 1642 treated in the same volume. We have decided to devote catalogue entries to lost paintings, as far as we know

46 E. van de Wetering op. cit. <sup>25</sup>, pp. 155-190; E. van de Wetering, lecture: 'The unfinished in Rembrandt's work', Symposium Melbourne, 4 October 1997.

them from painted or drawn copies or reproduction prints (see in this volume IV 10).

### Abandoning the ABC system

One of the most distinctive differences between Volumes IV-V and Volumes I-III is that we have abandoned the widely discussed ABC system.

In the earlier volumes, the A-paintings (*Paintings by Rembrandt*), the B-paintings (*Paintings Rembrandt's authorship of which cannot be positively either accepted or rejected*) and the C-paintings (*Paintings Rembrandt's authorship of which cannot be accepted*) in the earlier volumes were treated in successive sections of each volume. The principal reason for relinquishing this system was that in many cases no indisputable answer can be given to the question of authenticity. In Volumes I-III the B-category should perhaps have been the largest rather than the smallest. It is important to stress that the team's classification of a painting in one of the three categories was emphatically presented as a matter of *opinion*. The inclination to keep the B-category as small as possible was not so much an expression of great self-confidence in attributing or dis-attributing paintings, but rather an unconscious response to the social need for the greatest possible clarity relating to the art-historical, museological or financial value of a work of art. However, the *Corpus* volumes are not primarily intended to facilitate the unequivocal labelling of paintings in museums. Neither are they written for use in such matters as estate divisions, art investments, the art trade and so forth. The concern of the *Corpus* is research on Rembrandt's painted oeuvre, on the production in his workshop and the related methodological problems. The intention of Volumes IV and V is to report on that research and the considerations that played a role therein and not, as was still somewhat the case in the previous volumes, to serve as a reasoned list of authentic and inauthentic (and a number of doubtful) Rembrandts. The aim of our statements on the question of authenticity in this and successive volumes is to go no further than can be justified. Since, as stated earlier, arguments are employed in our discussions that inevitably imply various kinds of *a priori* assumptions, it is all the more imperative that the reader should think and decide along with us, as it were. This is why in each case we try to convey the full extent of our doubts. The same considerations led to the decision to present the paintings we believe to be authentic together with those we consider doubtful in the catalogue in chronological order (as determined by stylistic features and the dates found on the works).

Relinquishing the ABC system also means that the paintings we believe to be workshop variants on Rembrandt's works and which in the past were classified in the C-category, can now be considered together with Rembrandt's presumed prototypes. This underscores the point discussed above that along with authenticity the broader question of the production of Rembrandt's workshop has been given high priority.

These changes, however, do not mean – and this should be emphasised again – that we have renounced

the RRP's original intention of making the question of authenticity its central concern. We do not share the view, held by some, that the entire production of Rembrandt's workshop, including his own oeuvre, should be seen as a single body of works in which differentiating between hands ceases to be relevant.<sup>47</sup> On the contrary, we are convinced that certain patterns in the workshop production as a whole will become visible and comprehensible only if we persevere in the attempt to isolate Rembrandt's own work from the large body of Rembrandtesque paintings. That is why we do not hesitate to express our own opinions as to the authenticity of the paintings dealt with.

The last, but certainly not the least important reason for abandoning the ABC arrangement was that it became increasingly clear that workshop practice in the production of paintings in Rembrandt's studio was even more complicated than we had thought. In particular, there is the possibility that conception and execution might have been in different hands, or that more than one hand might have been involved in the painting of a single work.

Relinquishing the ABC system, however, unfortunately means that the continuity of the original numbering is broken. As of this volume, a painting will be indicated by the number of the relevant volume and a serial number per volume, beginning with no. 1. In referring to paintings in previous volumes, we decided to add the number of the relevant volume (for instance, I A 12 or III B 10) for the sake of convenience. We apologise for this and other unavoidable breaks in the continuity. This also applies both to the minor and more major changes in the organisation of the entries discussed in the following section.

### The organisation of the entries

The entries in Volumes IV-V have not been structured in quite the same way as in previous volumes. There were several reasons for this, all primarily relating to methodological concerns. In the first place, the strict distinction between description and interpretation in the old structure could no longer be justified. It implied a degree of objectivity in the descriptive sections that cannot, in fact, be substantiated. The illusionistic reality created in a work by painterly means cannot be adequately described as a true reality, as was done in the section headed 2. *Description of subject* in the first three volumes. On the other hand, for the same reason there is little point in describing it as a collection of brushstrokes and colours in a flat plane as we tended to do under 3. *Observations and technical information, Paint layer*.

In the past, for the sake of consistency, the description of the subject included aspects that also could be seen at a glance in the illustration of the painting and thus

47 E. H. Gombrich, 'Rembrandt new', *The New York Review of Books*, March 1970: 'Rembrandt's studio had the nature of a collective body of artists working under the supervision of the master'; A. Blankert, *Ferdinand Bol (1616-1680). Rembrandt's pupil*, Doornspijk 1982, pp. 18-19.

needed no description. Where other relevant aspects are concerned, it is often impossible to do justice to them in words. Of course, the description of the subject is a necessary discipline, which helps to make one aware of what is depicted. We remain fully persuaded that the work, even when well reproduced, does not entirely speak for itself. We also believe, however, that readers can see for themselves whether a figure is shown half or full-length, or turned to the left or the right, or gazes at the viewer, or is lit from the left or the top right, etc. Consequently, we no longer systematically provide this kind of information. We are now more concerned with drawing the reader's attention to those aspects that are or may be important in the interpretation of the painting, or are unclear or require explanation. This means that in our descriptions we no longer necessarily aspire to comprehensiveness, and therefore we decided that they would no longer be presented under a separate heading. Our observations on the subject are incorporated in the section *Introduction and description*. The first lines of this section are used to outline for the reader the problems presented by the painting in question, so that the main points in our discussion of the work will be clear from the outset.

In presenting observations, data and interpretations under the headings *Support*, *Ground* and *Paint layer*, we have abandoned the division into DESCRIPTION on the one hand and SCIENTIFIC DATA on the other, normally used in Volumes I-III. Experience had taught us that there was no point in making a sharp distinction between the two kinds of information. The significance and relevance of scientific data can vary greatly, especially in the case of paint samples. We have therefore now incorporated these data in the texts at those points where they serve a useful function.

Abandoning the rigid structure of the catalogue texts in the interest of greater flexibility in the presentation of information and interpretation makes this volume to some extent less easily accessible than previous ones. On the other hand, in the new form the relevance of information and the weight given to it are more readily apparent. The fact that this obliges the user to read the whole text may be seen as a drawback, but we have done our best to make our texts as readable as possible. Assessment of the various arguments is assigned to the *Comments* in the catalogue texts and in Chapter III in the case of the present volume.

Our very sparing treatment of the signature when present requires further explanation. In the section *Signature* we limit ourselves in this and the following volume to a transcription, and where necessary a summary description of the inscriptions encountered on the painting in question. While Volumes II and III were in preparation, cooperation had begun with a team of researchers led by Prof. W. Froentjes at the Forensic Laboratory of the Dutch Ministry of Justice in Rijswijk with the purpose of investigating the authenticity of signatures. The RRP contributed detail photographs of signatures on paintings dating from 1632 to 1642, which were analysed by the team using comparative handwriting analysis of those

signatures with Rembrandt's name written out in full.<sup>48</sup> The aim of this pilot project was to determine whether comparative analysis as used by forensic handwriting experts could produce significant results in the study of signatures on old paintings.<sup>49</sup> This project proved so promising that it was decided to cooperate regularly with the researchers at the Forensic Laboratory, in a sub-project involving the analysis of *all* signatures on paintings dating from 1642 to 1669, since this is the only way of establishing a hypothetical core of original signatures. The results of this research, however, could not be incorporated in Volumes IV-V. While the earlier signatures as a rule are better preserved because the majority were applied to panels, generally speaking the later signatures (primarily on canvas) are so badly preserved – and often reinforced by later hands – that they could only safely be investigated with comparative handwriting analysis after material investigation. Not only was the late Rembrandt signature easier to imitate; the subsequent overwhelming interest in his later work also meant that these signatures suffered more at the hands of cleaners and restorers and were more susceptible to forgery, making it far more difficult to isolate a core of reliable signatures for the period after 1642. However, the question of whether forensic handwriting analysis can simply be applied to Rembrandt's painted signatures, however, will have to be subjected once again to fundamental investigation: in daily life Rembrandt used Gothic writing. Signatures in Italian cursive or a derivation thereof were applied only a few times a year by the apparently far less productive later Rembrandt. One cannot therefore rely on the premise – essential for handwriting analysis – that Rembrandt's painted signatures were routine inscriptions. The question will have to be reconsidered whether handwriting analysis for Rembrandt after 1642 can yield reliable results. Under *Addenda* nos. 1 and 2 in this volume, the signatures do, however, play a role in our deliberations. In the period when these paintings in question originated (between c. 1632 and 1634), Rembrandt's monogram (and later his signature) evolved such that their shape in relation to the style of the paintings in question is far more significant. It certainly cannot be assumed that potential later imitators had specific knowledge of the stylistic evolution of Rembrandt's work in relation to the evolution of his signature. Moreover, in both cases it could be proven that the inscriptions were written immediately upon completion of the paintings. Nevertheless, there is in theory always room for doubt over an apparently original monogram or signature since it is not clear to what extent members

48 The choice of signatures on paintings dating from 1632 and later was based on the assumption that the monograms of 1625 to 1631 and the 'RHL van Rijn' signatures would provide insufficient evidence for producing a meaningful result.

49 W. Froentjes, H.J.J. Hardy and R. ter Kuile-Haller, 'Een schriftkundig onderzoek van Rembrandt signaturen', *Oud Holland* 105 (1991), pp. 185-204 (with an extensive English summary); idem, *A comparative handwriting examination of Rembrandt signatures*. Published in the proceedings of the XXVIIIth International Congress of the History of Art, Berlin 15-20 July 1992. Proceedings published by Akademie Verlag, 1993, pp. 595-606.

of Rembrandt's workshop were allowed to mark paintings in his manner.

The changes in the organization of the entries described above are reflected in the way in which illustrations are used. In Volumes I-III, as a rule illustrations of details of individual paintings were located in the catalogue entries, so that readers wishing to make comparisons had to leaf through the book in search of comparative material. In the essays on style and authenticity in Volumes IV-V, however, we have brought together as far as possible illustrations of those elements which we believe lend themselves to comparison. Colour illustrations are included where this is feasible and useful.

As with previous volumes, those seeking to use our book as a source for complete bibliographies of the individual paintings will be disappointed. In the case of Rembrandt little is to be gained by pursuing comprehensiveness in this regard. Anyone browsing through the files compiled by some museums containing *all* the texts in which the paintings in question are discussed or mentioned will despair at the sea of irrelevant occasional writing devoted to the artist. It is perhaps surprising to have to conclude that, in the case of a considerable number of Rembrandt's paintings, not a single text has ever been written that adds significantly to the purely visual knowledge of the work. We cite only those books, catalogues and articles that in our view make a contribution worth endorsing or contesting. Naturally, we also build on the knowledge gathered by others and on the insights provided by our predecessors and contemporaries, and we aim to use all of the historical sources available that can shed light on the RRP's central concerns. Nevertheless, the project's most important objective continues to be to extract as much information as possible from the paintings, as sources by themselves, and to establish the context from which they originated. We hope that, like us, the reader will be struck by the wealth of previously undiscovered aspects of these paintings that clarify the question of their authenticity and deepen our understanding of Rembrandt as an artist.

With this account of the modified design of the entries, the *Notes to the Catalogue* that were published in Volumes I-III (which there preceded the catalogue section) are now dispensed with.

### The staff and financing of the RRP

Following a phase of preliminary research prior to the project's official commencement on 1 January 1968, the original team consisted of six members. Josua Bruyn, professor of art history at the University of Amsterdam, had previously worked on stylistic problems related to Rembrandt, and became the chairman. Bob Haak, chief curator and later director of the Amsterdam Historical Museum was responsible for initiating the project. He had been closely involved with the Rembrandt Exhibition in 1956 and since then had been intensively concerned with issues of authenticity surrounding Rembrandt. As author of the groundbreaking book *Rembrandt en de regels van de kunst* (1964), Jan Emmens, professor of art theory and iconology at the University of Utrecht was particularly concerned with iconographic and iconological issues. Jan G.

van Gelder, (emeritus) professor at the University of Utrecht, the Nestor of the group, had been the teacher of Bruyn and Emmens, and had previously worked on Rembrandt's early oeuvre. Furthermore, Simon H. Levie, director of the Amsterdam Historical Museum, and later of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and Pieter J. J. van Thiel, chief curator, and later director of the department of paintings at the Rijksmuseum, also joined the team.

Jan Emmens died in 1970. Attempts to fill his position as specialist in iconology were unsuccessful. At the beginning of the project Ernst van de Wetering, the author of this *Preface*, and chairman since 1993, worked as an assistant. When Jan van Gelder fell ill in May 1968, he stepped in during the first research trip and remained involved with the research of the paintings, formally joining the team in 1971. Though not a scientist, his appointment in 1969 as staff member of the Central Research Laboratory for Objects of Art and Science in Amsterdam allowed him to maintain ties with the world of scientific investigation. In 1979, Jan van Gelder decided to end his involvement with the project once Volume I had appeared – it finally appeared in 1982 – but in 1980 he deceased.

The degree to which the members of the original team contributed to the activities varied greatly. This was only partly related to the demands made by their professional positions in museums and universities. Another reason was the differences that emerged between the team members' views of the desirable extent of scientific and other research in the project.

Lideke Peese Binkhorst had headed the secretariat since 1969<sup>50</sup> and, as indicated above, she became increasingly involved with other aspects of the project, such as pursuing the provenances of the paintings and reproductive engravings. Over the years, she was also closely involved in preparing the volumes for publication. In the course of the years she served as an indispensable link between the active members of the team, and between the past and present activities connected with the project. In 1984 Jacques Vis was recruited as an assistant and co-author for a number of the catalogue entries. He was succeeded in 1989 by Michiel Franken, who had earlier been Van de Wetering's assistant in the Central Research Laboratory between 1981 and 1983, assisting with the investigation of artists' canvas. During that period he had been introduced to various aspects of the project. He was to be occupied mainly with the preparation of the material for the planned volumes which resulted in 'core entries' (see above). He also worked on the entries on the small-figured history pieces for Volume V, which includes an essay by him on the artistic and educational-theoretical background of the workshop variant.

Paul Broekhoff, originally a student at the University of Amsterdam who had taken part in seminars related to the RRP, was affiliated with the project between 1991 and 1997. He first served as an administrative assistant. As a scholarly assistant he later worked chiefly on the present volume, contributing to the research on the paintings themselves and the provenance of the self-portraits and related copies and reproductive engravings, among others.

Whereas the original RRP team consisted of a group of like-minded art historians who invited outside experts to conduct additional research when necessary, the intention following the departure of the four older members in 1993 was that the new team should be interdisciplinary.

The nature of the collaboration with various specialists in the past had already resulted in their being considered as members of the team. This certainly applied to Karin Groen

<sup>50</sup> This position was held by Truus Duisenberg from 1968 to 1969.

who, as a staff member of the Central Research Laboratory of Objects of Art and Science (now ICN) in Amsterdam, later of the Hamilton Kerr Institute in Cambridge, was cooperating with the project in the scientific study of Rembrandt's grounds and paints and media since 1973. From 1991 to 1998 she was able to participate even more actively in the project thanks to the Dutch chemical concern DSM, which made it possible for her to be given a half-time appointment in the RRP during this period. She contributed to most catalogue entries and wrote Chapter IV on the grounds in Rembrandt's workshop.

The cooperation, initiated in 1969, with the Ordinariat für Holzbiologie at the University of Hamburg was also continued and intensified. In the early years the dendrochronological examinations of panels were carried out by the wood biologists Prof. Dr. J. Bauch and Prof. Dr. D. Eckstein, followed by Prof. Dr. P. Klein, who specialized in the dating of panels and other wooden objects of art-historical significance. Both Karin Groen and Peter Klein were invited officially to join the RRP team.

Huub Hardy, forensic handwriting expert of the Forensic Laboratory of the Dutch Ministry of Justice, was invited into the team to examine the signatures with colleagues at his laboratory.

Costume research, which was covered rather superficially in earlier volumes, became the concern of Marieke de Winkel. Recent developments in costume research justify giving the discipline a more significant place within the RRP. Marieke de Winkel became associated with the project in 1993 when she began writing her Master's Thesis, and later her Doctoral Dissertation, on the iconology of costume in Rembrandt's work. In 1996, she accepted a temporary post with the RRP which lasted until 1998, in which context she primarily worked on preparing the section on the large-figured history pieces from the period 1642-1669. However, she became increasingly involved in conducting research on and writing the relevant passages in the entries for this and the following volume. This volume also contains her essay on costume in Rembrandt's self-portraits (Chapter II).

Although a great deal of archival research relating to Rembrandt has been undertaken since the nineteenth century, new developments in this field meant that a historian with special expertise in archival research would be a valuable addition to the team. Through his work on a dissertation dealing with the circles in which Rembrandt was active, Jaap van der Veen became increasingly involved in the project. Like Marieke de Winkel, in 1996 he accepted a temporary post with the RRP. He was primarily responsible for preparing the section on the portraits between 1642 and 1669. He also contributed an essay on seventeenth-century views on the authenticity of paintings (Chapter I in this volume) and he compiled the relevant biographical data (pp. 335-349), for the period 1643-1669 and the *Appendix* to Chapter III.

Peter Schatborn (former head of the Print Room in Amsterdam) and Volker Manuth (from the Free University of Berlin and now Radboud University, Nijmegen) were invited to assist the project with respect to the drawings related to the paintings, and iconographic problems respectively. Since their responsibilities elsewhere precluded active involvement in the research, their share was limited to occasionally providing information or reporting opinions in their fields. This also applied to Ben Broos, who was invited into the team to shed light on the provenances of the paintings. However, his views on the function – within the framework of the *Corpus* – of the provenance of the paintings diverged so markedly from the project's aims that further collaboration was discontinued.

Interns were occasionally involved with aspects of the research for a limited period. In 1994 Emily Gordenker carried

out literature research for the chapter on methodological questions to be published in Volume V, and gave valuable assistance in the writing of it. In 1999/2000 Natasja van Eck helped prepare the material for the 'tronies' and helped organise a symposium on this subject initiated by the RRP. Her research on the 'tronies of young men' by Rembrandt and his workshop represents a valuable contribution to our understanding of this category of paintings. In 1999/2000 Thijs Weststeijn investigated the landscapes to be treated in Volume V, and conducted art-theoretical research which relates to this category of paintings.

Lideke Peese Binkhorst officially retired from the project in November of 1995, but since then has assisted in the production of this and the next volume on a freelance basis. Adrienne Quarles van Ufford, her successor as a secretary, left in 1997 and was succeeded by Cynthia van der Leden and later by Margaret Oomen.<sup>51</sup>

Egbert Haverkamp Begemann and Peter Schatborn were part of the editorial board together with Lideke Peese Binkhorst and with Ernst van de Wetering, who wrote the greater part of the Volumes IV and V. The editors also constitute, together with Rudi Ekkart of the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD) in The Hague, the board of the Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project.

The translator of Volumes I-III, Derry Cook-Radmore, was succeeded by Jennifer Kilian and Katy Kist, with the assistance of John Rudge. At a later stage, Murray Pearson translated this Preface, the Summary, Chapters III and IV and Corrigenda et Addenda, and contributed invaluable editorial work.

The photographer René Gerritsen, specialized in various kinds of photography and radiographic investigation of paintings, contributed in many ways to the project.

In 1998, the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) decided to discontinue financing the project, a full thirty years after it began rather than the projected ten.<sup>52</sup> The translation and publication costs of Volumes IV and V will continue to be financed by NWO. From 1998 until 2003, the University of Amsterdam (UvA) covered our expenses. Until 2006 the project will be financed by donations.

The RRP's files and archives eventually will be transferred to the RKD. It will function as an independent archive in the interest of Rembrandt research to be managed and possibly expanded and interpreted by Michiel Franken.

### The future of the project

It should be clear from the above that the Rembrandt Research Project does not end with the publication of Volume V. There are still three categories of paintings from the period 1642-1669 to be dealt with: the portraits, (what we refer to as) the large-figured history pieces, and the paintings now usually referred to by the seventeenth-century term 'tronies', single figures in historicising or imaginary costumes with various, often obscure connotations.

51 Over the years, the following individuals assisted in the secretariat: Jacqueline Boreel, Marianne Buikstra, Doris Dhuygelaere, Els Gutter, Emilie Kaub, Philine Schierenberg, and Rik van Wegen.

52 In 1998, Marieke de Winkel and Jaap van der Veen's appointments were converted into temporary grants of NWO allowing them to complete their dissertations. In 1999, Michiel Franken's appointment came to an end and he accepted a position at the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD) in The Hague. He is still involved with the completion of Volume V.

A great deal of preparatory work on these three groups of paintings was already carried out during our study trips and much of the information has been processed in the years since 1988, following the completion of the manuscript for Volume III. The RRP's *raison d'être* obviously requires that these basic entries be amplified with discussion of the question as to whether or not they are autograph Rembrandts. Thanks to the work undertaken between 1988 and 1998, many entries were completed in a first or even a second version. However, a substantial number of paintings still require a great deal of work. Hence, it is not at all certain that completion of the project with entries in the customary extensive format is feasible. The limits of what is physically possible loom large here – in all probability the solution will be to opt for a more abridged form. This solution is defensible. After all, much has changed since the inception of the project in 1968 and research on the material aspects of the paintings has been increasingly assumed by the museums. This is due in part to the emergence of a new generation of restorers for whom material research with (partly) art-historical approach of the questions has become more common-place. Another reason for conducting the remaining work of the RRP in a more succinct form can be justified on the basis of the results of the research to date.

As outlined at the beginning of this *Preface*, it had already become clear during work on the first volume that the original working hypothesis (see above p. x) is no longer tenable: there were hardly any later imitations. The group of shop works in the style of Rembrandt that have come down to us was evidently so large that it amply satisfied market demands for 'real' Rembrandts. As a rule, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century copies of certain Rembrandts can be easily distinguished from Rembrandt workshop products on the basis of features visible to the naked eye. Hence, we are now primarily concerned with distinguishing Rembrandt's autograph work from that of his workshop. Our implicit working hypothesis since may be formulated as follows.

Paintings in the style of Rembrandt and with the aspect of a seventeenth-century painting, which on the basis of style and quality can scarcely be considered as works by Rembrandt himself, in virtually all instances originated in Rembrandt's workshop. Their relation to the work of the master can vary from a literal copy to variants which in invention are ever further removed from a given (or lost) prototype. Production in the workshop of free inventions in the manner of Rembrandt must also be taken into account. Works in which more hands are involved are encountered only rarely in Rembrandt's hypothetical oeuvre.

One could maintain that with the publication of Volumes IV and V, the RRP will have achieved its primary goal: a structure has now been revealed in the workshop production for a number of categories within the mass of paintings that have at some time been – or still are – attributed to Rembrandt. This structure can be extrapolated *mutatis mutandis* to the categories not yet treated by us.

Reviewing the three past decades, it is evident that this project – as with every project attempting to chart a complex phenomenon – is not only a path to resolving the problems involved, but also a learning process. The present volume, both in form and content, bears the traces of this learning process. Our work will have been futile if the results of that process do not have a broader significance. We hope that the results of this work, not only in the volumes of *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings* but also in other publications, exhibition catalogues, lectures, filmed documentaries, etc., dealing with authenticity and many other problems relating to Rembrandt have deepened insight into the history of seventeenth-century Dutch art (and sometimes non-Dutch art of that period) and that our work will contribute to the methodological arsenal of art-historical scholarship.

Ernst van de Wetering  
December 2004

### Acknowledgements

The work on this volume began in the early nineties, although seen in its widest context, one should say that the work has been going on since 1968, the year in which we had the opportunity to study our first Rembrandt self-portraits under ideal circumstances, thanks to the hospitality of the staffs of the first museums and the first private owners we visited.

From the very beginning, we have collaborated with so many extremely pleasant people; we have enjoyed the help, support and encouragement of so many; we have benefited from so much advice, information and research data, photographic and other essential material, and we have had so many fruitful conversations that it would be impossible to acknowledge all these constructive gestures without being certain that, somewhere along the line, we had omitted to give someone their due credit.

For this reason, we have to be satisfied here with the expression of our extreme gratitude to all those who have helped and supported us and followed our work – although sometimes with growing impatience – with sympathetic interest.

# Summary

## The genesis of this volume and a survey of its contents

Having decided to adopt a thematic approach, as described in the above *Preface*, and to concentrate on the self-portraits exclusively, a complicated process of writing and continually altering and extending this volume began. In the course of that lengthy process, the third chapter titled 'Rembrandt's self-portraits: problems of authenticity and function', gradually came to assume the proportions of a book within a book.

It is hardly surprising that the examination of Rembrandt's self-portraits should become so complex. We were, after all, tackling one of the most intriguing problems in the history of art: why did Rembrandt place himself before the mirror so extraordinarily often in order to represent himself in numerous paintings and etchings as well as in a lesser number of drawings? And following on this question: why should problems of authenticity arise in such apparently personal works, and how are such problems to be resolved in the face of a virtual absence of any contemporary document concerning Rembrandt's self-portraits?

What follows is a summary of the results of our work. The reader will find the arguments that underpin our hypotheses and our discoveries in the volume itself: the relevant passages can easily be found using the references in the footnotes accompanying this summary. It is annotated in such a way that the user of this book will be able to find quickly the most important passages and reproductions in this volume.\*

By using this summary, others who do not have immediate access to Volume IV of *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings* can familiarize themselves with the results of our research set out in that volume. An off-print or digital version of the following text will accordingly also be made available for purposes of informing the press and other interested parties. Therefore the notes also refer to the most commonly used surveys in which all the paintings, drawings and etchings dealt with by us are reproduced. These surveys are referred to here by the abbreviations Br., Ben. and B. together with the relevant numbers.

Br.: A. Bredius, *Rembrandt Paintings*, 1935/69

Ben.: O. Benesch, *The drawings of Rembrandt*, 1954/73

B.: A. Bartsch, *Catalogue raisonné*, 1797; this time honoured numbering system of the etchings is used for instance by Chr. White and K.G. Boon, *Rembrandt's etchings*, 1969; W. von Seidlitz, *Die Radierungen Rembrandts*, Leipzig 1922; G. Schwartz, *Rembrandt: all the etchings reproduced in true size*, 1977.

\* Where paintings, etchings or drawings are mentioned in the notes accompanying this text, reference is provided not only to the figure numbers and catalogue numbers in the present and earlier volumes but also, for those whose access to the text is via off-prints, to the Bredius (Br.), Benesch (Ben.) and Bartsch (B.)-numbers.

1 Cat. nos. IV 1 - 29.

2 See pp. 89 - 132.

3 *Corpus* I nos. A 14 (see Br. 1), 19 (Br. 2), 20 (Br. 8), 21 (Br. 6), 22 (see Br. 3), 33 (Br. 12), 40 (Br. 16), B 5 (11), C 34 (Br. 5), 35 (Br. 4), 36 (Br. 7), 37 (Br. 9), 38 (Br. 10), 40 (Br. 14); II nos. A 58 (Br. 17), 71 (Br. 18), 72 (Br. 19), 96 (Br. 21), 97 (Br. 22), C 56 (Br. 23); III nos. A 139 (Br. 34), B 10 (Br. 29), C 92 (Br. 25), 93 (Br. 33), 94 (see Br. 33), 96 (Br. 27), 97 (Br. 32), 99 (Br. 26).

4 Chapter III, pp. 202-206 and 207-211, IV *Addenda* 1 and 2.

But first a brief account should be given of the background to the slow and laborious genesis of this volume.

### The genesis of this volume

The initial question we had to cope with was the authenticity of the 30 or so painted self-portraits from the period 1642 to 1669.<sup>1</sup> This is why our methodical considerations were aimed at this group of paintings alone.<sup>2</sup> After all, the paintings bearing Rembrandt's effigy from before 1642 had already been dealt with in Volumes I – III of the *Corpus*.<sup>3</sup> Yet the growing sense that our view of a number of these earlier self-portraits needed revision, as well as our altered opinions as to their authenticity, led inexorably to the realization that the paintings from this earlier period would simply have to be dealt with once again. A re-examination of all the painted self-portraits from before 1642 also offered the incidental advantage that two more self-portraits (from 1632 and 1634), newly attributed to Rembrandt by us, could be discussed in this context.<sup>4</sup> As to the attribution problems with those paintings bearing Rembrandt's effigy from the period 1625-1642, several changes in our views should be noted. Two paintings previously accepted as works by Rembrandt are now disattributed.<sup>5</sup> In two cases, paintings that had first been listed as copies were recognized as works by Rembrandt himself, whereas the corresponding works, initially accepted by us as authentic, were relegated to the category of copies.<sup>6</sup> Two paintings, in the earlier volumes not accepted as authentic, are now reattributed to Rembrandt.<sup>7</sup> In the case of two paintings that were partly overpainted at an early stage – one of which had originally been rejected by us altogether,<sup>8</sup> the other questioned but not rejected<sup>9</sup> – the initial versions of these paintings are now attributed to Rembrandt. One painting from the B-category in Vol. I (paintings whose origin from Rembrandt's hand can be neither positively accepted nor rejected) is now firmly accepted as an autograph Rembrandt.<sup>10</sup> In the case of 16 of the 22 paintings dealt with in this volume from before *c.* 1642, our opinions remained unaltered.<sup>11</sup>

During the course of working on the painted self-portraits to be catalogued in this volume, the need also arose to understand the *function and meaning* of these works. This question had barely been addressed in the previous volumes of *A Corpus*, but when one approaches Rembrandt's self-portraits as a phenomenon by itself it becomes an unavoidable issue. One has to realize that, until quite recently, the interpretation of Rembrandt's

5 IV *Corrigenda* I A 33 (Br. 12), II A 97 (Br. 22).

6 IV *Corrigenda* I A 21 (Br. 6) and I A 22 (see Br. 3).

7 IV *Corrigenda* III C 96 (Br. 27) and III C 97 (Br. 32).

8 II C 56 (Br. 23).

9 III B 10 (Br. 29).

10 I B 5 (Br. 11).

11 I A 14 (see Br. 1), 19 (Br. 2), 20 (Br. 8), 40 (Br. 16), C 34 (Br. 5), 36 (Br. 7); II A 58 (Br. 17), 71 (Br. 18), 72 (Br. 19), 96 (Br. 21); III A 111 (Br. 30), 139 (Br. 34), C 92 (Br. 25), 93 (Br. 33), 94 (see Br. 33), IV *Addendum* 1 (see Br. 157).

work in front of the mirror knew little constraint: every author felt free to follow his or her own imagination. To quote a number of examples: in 1906, in his book on Rembrandt, the Dutch art historian Frederik Schmidt-Degener wrote that

‘it was Rembrandt’s cult of his own personality that at first made him produce his self-portraits’.

Schmidt-Degener continued,

‘Rembrandt then became the grave man who expressed everything in his self-portraits, including his unhappiness and his loneliness; but he also expressed his self-confidence, pride and triumph as an artist.’<sup>12</sup>

Jakob Rosenberg, in his monograph on Rembrandt of 1948, spoke of the

‘ceaseless and unsparing observation which Rembrandt’s self-portraits reflect, showing a gradual change from outward description and characterization to the most penetrating self-analysis and self-contemplation ... Rembrandt seems to have felt that he had to know himself if he wished to penetrate the problem of man’s inner life.’<sup>13</sup>

In 1985 Pascal Bonafoux asserted with great confidence that

‘Self-portraiture with him [Rembrandt] was self-communing and prayer: it begins in 1625 and ends in 1669.’<sup>14</sup>

In Perry Chapman’s book published in 1990, the most ambitious monograph on Rembrandt’s self-portraits so far, the author suggested that Rembrandt’s self-portraits ‘represent in a truly modern sense an on-going quest for his own identity’

and that in his self-portraiture

‘he remained motivated by the impulse to self-investigation to the end of his life.’<sup>15</sup>

In one crucial respect there appears to have been little change between 1906 and 1990: Schmidt-Degener, Rosenberg, Bonafoux and Chapman all assume that Rembrandt’s many self-portraits – certainly those from his Amsterdam years (i.e. after 1632) – are highly personal creations ‘generated by internal pressure’, as Chapman put it. Implicit in all these views is the idea that Rembrandt’s sequential self-portraits were private, intimate works, an idea which is still widely held.

While we were working on this volume, an exhibition on Rembrandt’s self-portraits was held in London and The Hague (National Gallery, London 9 June-5 September 1999; Mauritshuis, The Hague 25 September 1999-9 January 2000). We were involved in the choice of the paintings exhibited and in the writing of the essays for the catalogue. Furthermore, we made available the draft catalogue texts for the present book and other information. The exhibition catalogue, however, should

not be considered a summary of the present book. Our ideas had already developed further by the time the exhibition opened. The exhibition itself moreover was an extremely valuable opportunity to study the works confronted with each other. This volume should therefore be considered as a next step in assessing the phenomenon of Rembrandt’s self-portraits.

Our involvement in this exhibition had forced us to confront the question of function and meaning as the most urgent of all the problems surrounding Rembrandt’s self-portraits. It became clear that our proposed answers – summarized below – to this latter question would have a bearing on the way we dealt with questions of authenticity.

However, addressing the question of function and meaning solely in relation to the painted self-portraits would make little sense without considering within the same context the issue of Rembrandt’s self-portraits in its entirety. The need to study the *etched* self-portraits as well became especially urgent as some etchings seemed to contradict our ideas about the different functions of Rembrandt’s painted self-portraits. Specifically, there were three etchings in which Rembrandt had included – either wholly or in part – renderings of his own face among a number of exercises and scribbles.<sup>16</sup> This would appear at first sight to confirm the old idea that Rembrandt was driven by ‘internal pressure’ to an almost obsessive, private preoccupation with his own image and identity.

The hunt for the significance of these study sheets (in which Erik Hinterding also participated) eventually led to an entirely new – and we believe coherent – outlook on the 31 etchings, finished and unfinished, that had hitherto been considered as more or less equivalent self-portraits.<sup>17</sup>

The *drawn* self-portraits were also investigated for their authenticity and function. Several had already been dealt with in our catalogue entries because it had been suggested in the past – incorrectly, in our view – that they were preliminary studies for painted or etched self-portraits. A new vision of the various functions of the drawn self-portraits emerged.<sup>18</sup>

Slowly the volume had grown to assume the character of a monograph on Rembrandt’s self-portraits, but it could not develop into a classic monograph with claims to completeness. Many of our successive, supplementary revisions were added after the manuscript had largely been typeset, making such substantial re-organization of the kind one might have wished no longer possible. This was also true of the illustrations, as the reader will observe. We believe, however, that precisely because of this slow and often all-too-visible process of growth of our ideas, we developed an understanding of Rembrandt’s self-portraits which, in many respects, suggested that both the artist and the person should be seen with new eyes. In our view, the most important outcome of our work is

12 F. Schmidt-Degener, *Rembrandt. Een beschrijving van zijn leven en zijn werk*, Amsterdam 1906, p. 9.

13 J. Rosenberg, *Rembrandt. Life and work*, London 1964, p. 37.

14 P. Bonafoux, *Rembrandt, autoportrait*, Genève 1985, p. 8.

15 H.P. Chapman, *Rembrandt’s self-portraits. A study in seventeenth-century identity*, Princeton N.J. 1990, p. 131.

16 Chapter III, figs. 171 (B. 363 I), 175 (B. 372), 177 (B. 370).

17 See pp. 190-199.

18 See pp. 145-157.



to have provided another stimulus, following the groundbreaking studies by Raupp, Woods Marsden and Marschke,<sup>19</sup> for the development of a new contextual framework within which the general phenomenon of the self-portrait can be further investigated.

### Why so many self-portraits and for whom?

Current surveys of Rembrandt's self-portraits usually include some 90 works. The number varies because different authors hold different views on the authenticity of some of them. Separated according to the different media, Rembrandt's output of self-portraits was long thought to comprise *c.* 50 paintings, *c.* 30 etchings and 5 to 10 drawings. Among the painted and drawn self-portraits considerable differences of opinion exist as to their authenticity, although scarcely any disagreement has been registered where the etchings are concerned.

Around 10% of Rembrandt's painted and etched oeuvre thus appear to consist of works in which he represents himself. Only the drawn self-portraits constitute a relatively small percentage of works in that medium. In the majority of all self-portraits – paintings, etchings and drawings – Rembrandt must have studied himself closely in the mirror time and again and 'copied' this reflected image. This is evident from analysis of the ageing process visible in Rembrandt's face in these works. We thus have to imagine that Rembrandt spent a substantial part of his working life painting, etching and drawing before the mirror. As explained earlier, so long as the persistent assumption reigned – that he did so because of an 'internal pressure' – this led to the idea that Rembrandt must have been preoccupied with his 'self' in a manner unique for painters in the age in which he lived.

The alternative view presented here, developed on the basis of circumstantial evidence from various sources, is that Rembrandt's activities before the mirror should be seen in large measure in the context of a growing demand for 'portraits of Rembrandt done by himself' (contrefeitsel[s] van Rembrandt door hem selffs gedaen)<sup>20</sup> as self-portraits were referred to in the 17th century, the term 'self-portrait' only occurring much later. This market for self-portraits – or for portraits of artists otherwise produced – has to be seen in the context of a strongly developing interest in artists and their works in the 16th and 17th centuries on the part of a select and steadily growing community of 'art-lovers'. The interest of this group was increasingly focused on particular painters and on their specific style, whereas the actual subject matter of the painting was of secondary importance.<sup>21</sup>

19 H.-J. Raupp, *Untersuchungen zu Künstlerbildnis und Künstlerdarstellung in den Niederlanden im 17. Jahrhundert*, Hildesheim 1984; J. Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance self-portraiture. The visual construction of identity and the social status of the artist*, New Haven 1998; S. Marschke, *Künstlerbildnisse und Selbstporträts. Studien zu ihren Funktionen von der Antike bis zur Renaissance*, Weimar 1998.

20 Amsterdam, Gemeentearchief, PA 234, inv. no. 309, dated 9 September 1685.

21 See E. van de Wetering, 'The multiple functions of Rembrandt's self-portraits', in exhib. cat. *Rembrandt by himself*, 1999/2000, pp. 8-37, esp. 25-27.

Of course, there was also a great demand in Rembrandt's time for painted images in general, or prints of these images, that was primarily concerned with the subject matter. The 'art-lovers' directed their attention to exceptionally talented artists like Rembrandt. The situation in painting *then* might be compared with that of photography *now*. On the one hand images serving a great variety of purposes were mass produced, while on the other, well-known artists created interesting works for connoisseurs and collectors. In 17th-century art circles, the concept of 'name buyers' already existed (see note 21).

As a consequence of this growth of interest in the artists themselves and their resulting fame, a corresponding need developed for images of these famous figures (as was also the case with famous scholars, philosophers, nobility and military figures, etc.) Giorgio Vasari was the first to circulate portraits of artists on a large scale, by including them in the second (1568) edition of his *Vite*. These *'Lives'* of Italian artists were often preceded by their portraits printed from woodcuts made specifically for this purpose.

It becomes increasingly clear that Rembrandt, even as a young artist and subsequently throughout his life, must have enjoyed remarkable international fame. His activities as the creator of easily distributed and highly intriguing etchings must have made a significant contribution to that fame. The old story that Rembrandt died poor and forgotten belongs to the realm of myth and is increasingly recognized as such nowadays. Rather, it seems that Rembrandt's international fame among the 17th-century art-lovers continued to rise, and this, we believe, helps to explain the growing demand for his self-portraits. Among 17th-century Dutch artists, two others who were internationally famous among art-lovers in their own time, Gerard Dou and Frans van Mieris the Elder, also produced a relatively large number of self-portraits.<sup>22</sup>

The inescapable question which then arises is why other, even more famous artists such as Rubens, did not produce self-portraits in equal or even greater numbers. Rubens, however, produced no more than seven painted self-portraits, after one of these an exceptionally elaborate engraving was made by Paul Pontius. The impressions from this plate must have served as substitutes for painted self-portraits.<sup>23</sup> Something of the sort was also true, for instance, in the case of the painter of seascapes, Ludolf Backhuysen (1630-1708), who was famous in his own time. Rubens and Backhuysen, however, can be considered as specialists in particular areas: Rubens as the painter of history pieces and allegories (whether produced singly or as part of ambitious cycles) and Back-

22 See pp. 137-143.

23 *Paul Pontius*. Engraving (1630) after Rubens' self-portrait of 1623 in the British Royal Collection, Windsor Castle (see H. Vlieghe, *Rubens portraits of identified sitters, painted in Antwerp*, CRLB XIX-II (cat. no. 135) New York 1987; N. Büttner, "'Herr, Pietro Paulo Rubens, Ritter". Anmerkungen zur Biographie', exhib. cat. *Peter Paul Rubens. Barocke Leidenschaften*, Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, 2004, pp. 13-27.

huyzen as a seascape painter.<sup>24</sup> Their fame was based on such specialized works. On the other hand, it could be said that the *raison d'être* of the works of Rembrandt, Gerard Dou (1613-1675) and Frans van Mieris (1635-1681) was the exceptional technique and the illusion achieved through that technique, quite apart from the subject matter.<sup>25</sup> Whoever bought a self-portrait from one of these painters (or in the case of Dou and Van Mieris, for instance, a genre piece into which they had inserted their own portrait) not only owned a work typical of the artist's style and technique, but also acquired a portrait of its famous author.

What is now required is a thorough investigation of the dissemination of (self-) portraits of 17th-century Dutch artists in relation both to the subject matter in their oeuvre and to the esteem in which these artists were held by art-lovers. With the appearance of Sandrart's *Teutsche Academie der Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste* in 1675, which contains many portraits of European – including Dutch – artists and, as far as exclusively Dutch painters are concerned, Arnold Houbraken's *Groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschielders en schilderessen* in 1718 – 21, the effigies of the painters of the Dutch Golden Age were as widely disseminated as Vasari had done for the Italian painters discussed in his *Lives*.

### Other functions of Rembrandt's works before the mirror

Self-portraits were painted sporadically through the 15th and 16th centuries mainly as *memoriae*. As a rule, they originated out of a deep-rooted desire on the artist's part to be 'immortalized', and they often bear references to mortality.

The fact that in Rembrandt's self-portraits one has in the first place – in the words of Luigi Lanzi (1732-1810) – 'a depiction of the artist and at the same time a particular example of his style' does not mean, however, that all the works currently regarded as self-portraits of Rembrandt are also in fact 'portraits of Rembrandt by himself'. In this volume, it is argued with varying degrees of cogency, that such is the case only for 33 paintings, 4 etchings and 2 or 3 drawings.<sup>26</sup> This, of course, is considerably less than half of the number of works hitherto usually regarded as self-portraits of Rembrandt.

This is not to say, however, that some of the others were not also produced by Rembrandt in front of the mirror. In those cases it mostly was with other objectives in view. A group of 5 etchings from c.1630 have long been seen as studies of various facial expressions in which

Rembrandt used himself as a model.<sup>27</sup> The artist in front of the mirror is simply the most patient and compliant of all models. Apart from these five studies of facial expression another ten etchings of Rembrandt's face from his first years as an etcher have also been preserved,<sup>28</sup> most of which have survived as single impressions, or in very few only. Even in these very early etchings, while he was still mastering his graphic technique, Rembrandt was evidently his own patient model. These studies further provided an ideal opportunity to practise what would later preoccupy him most as an etcher: the representation of the human figure.

As a painter the young Rembrandt was also using his own face in his efforts to solve certain artistic problems. Thus, in his early Leiden years he painted several studies in oils<sup>29</sup>. He also made a few drawn studies<sup>30</sup> before the mirror apparently with the aim of exploring and practising certain effects.

We suspect that Rembrandt also used himself as a model in the production of works that belong to that very loose category of paintings and etchings of half-figures, so popular in the 17th century, for which nowadays the term *tronies* has been reserved.<sup>31</sup> *Tronies* were not regarded as (self-)portraits, even though models (or the mirror) might have been employed in their production. It was rather their dress and their age and attitude that lent to these figures their particular significance (of religious sentiment, of bravery, or mortality, a reference to distant lands, and so on; 'character studies' and religious types are also counted within the category of *tronies*). The young Rembrandt used himself as a model, we believe, for three or more painted<sup>32</sup> and three etched *tronies*.<sup>33</sup> Sooner or later, of course, these became considered as self-portraits in the strict sense.

*Paintings.* Of the *painted* self-portraits done after Rembrandt's move to Amsterdam it may be assumed that virtually all of them were intended to be 'portraits of Rembrandt painted by himself', done for art-lovers who visited his studio. If so, they must have been produced on Rembrandt's own initiative and held in stock ready for sale. This would explain why X-radiographic investigations so often reveal that they were painted on previously used panels and canvases.<sup>34</sup> It would seem that in

24 See Chapter III, note 112.

25 Chapter III, figs. 70, 71, 87, 88.

26 See Chapter III, paintings: figs. 120 (Br. 2), 129 (Br. 11), 145 (Br. 16), 183 (Br. 17), 185 (IV *Addendum* 1, see Br. 157), 193 (Br. 18), 194 (Br. 19), 197 (IV *Addendum* 2), 198 (Br. 21), 203 (Br. 23, transformed into a *tronie*), 207 (Br. 30), 231 (Br. 27), 245 (Br. 29), 242 (Br. 34), 235 (Br. 32), 246 (Br. 37), 244 (Br. 36), 254 (Br. 38), 266 (Br. 42), 267 (Br. 43), 271 (Br. 49), 272 (Br. 50), 288 (Br. 48), 289 (Br. 51), 290 (Br. 58), 298 (Br. 53), 299 (Br. 54), 300 (Br. 59), 301 (Br. 61), 319 (Br. 52), 320 (Br. 55), 321 (Br. 60), 322 (Br. 62); etchings: figs. 149 (Br. 7), 150 (Br. 19), 151 (Br. 21), 152 (Br. 22); drawings: figs. 97 (Ben. 1177), 108 (Ben. 1176), 110 (Ben. 432, pupil's work?).

27 See Chapter III, figs. 126 (B. 316), 131 (B. 13), 132 (B. 10), 133 (B. 320), 134 (B. 174).

28 See Chapter III, figs. 96 (B. 338), 115 (B. 5), 116 (B. 9), 117 (B. 27), 118 (B. 12), and B. 1, 4, 15, 19, 24.

29 Chapter III, figs. 119 (see Br. 1), 123 (Br. 3).

30 Chapter III, figs. 91 (Ben. 437), 93 (Ben. 53), 95 (Ben. 54).

31 *Tronie* literally meant 'face' in seventeenth-century Holland. See D. Hirschfelder, 'Portrait or character head? The term *tronie* and its meaning in the seventeenth century', in exhib. cat. *The mystery of the young Rembrandt*, 2001/02, pp. 82-90; see also D. Hirschfelder, H.-J. Raupp, "'Tronies'" in de Italiaanse, Vlaamse en Nederlandse schilderkunst van de 16de en 17de eeuw.' Symposium. The Hague, Royal Library, in *Kunstchronik* 54 (2001), no. 5, pp. 197-202.

32 Chapter III, figs. 135 (see Br. 6), 137 (Br. 7), 138 (Br. 8).

33 Chapter III, figs. 90 (B. 17), 158 (B. 18), 159 (B. 20).

34 I A 20 (Br. 8), IV *Corrigenda* I A 21 (Br. 6), A 33 (Br. 12), II A 58 (Br. 17), III B 10 (Br. 29), C 96 (Br. 27), IV 1 (Br. 37), 5 (Br. 38), 9 (Br. 43), 10 version 2 (Br. 47), 11 (Br. 44), 12 (Br. 45).

the early Amsterdam years Rembrandt was somewhat over-optimistic in building up this stock: in later years two of these self-portraits were, we believe, transformed by workshop assistants into *tronies*, apparently to make them once more saleable. Two other early self-portraits were later repainted or altered to keep pace with Rembrandt's own ageing process. It would seem that any potential purchaser who wanted to acquire a self-portrait would have been able to see the self-portrait and its model side by side in Rembrandt's studio, and would naturally have expected a sufficiently accurate correspondence between the effigy and the man himself.<sup>35</sup>

It is striking that, among the later self-portraits – that is, those produced from roughly 1652 onward – we increasingly find rather large paintings. At the same time, we discovered that after 1655 – precisely the period in which Rembrandt encountered financial difficulties – no self-portraits were painted on previously used supports (Rembrandt worked almost exclusively on canvases in this period). Consequently, because it was usual for the patron to pay for the support separately, we infer that Rembrandt painted more self-portraits on commission during this period.<sup>36</sup> At this time, Rembrandt's international fame was on the increase. There are also indications, supported by a number of documents, that collectors from the nobility (and being a member of the higher nobility necessarily implied being a collector) were adding Rembrandt self-portraits to their collections.<sup>37</sup>

*Etchings.* Instead of the 31 etchings usually referred to as self-portraits<sup>38</sup> there are perhaps only four that were considered by Rembrandt himself as 'official' portraits of himself intended for wider dissemination. These originated in 1631, '36, '39 and '48.<sup>39</sup> Among the other 27, we believe we can point to seven or eight that were prematurely abandoned for various reasons – apparently as projects in self-portraiture that Rembrandt seems to have judged unsuccessful,<sup>40</sup> some of which immediately preceded the four successful etched self-portraits just mentioned.<sup>41</sup> Among these aborted works are the three 'study sheets' mentioned above.<sup>42</sup> In these three cases, after the intended self-portraits had miscarried (in two cases evidently through faults in the etching process)<sup>43</sup> the pieces of copper plate bearing the head were cut off and preserved to be used subsequently as a support for studies or for etching practice. Rembrandt's head (or sometimes only part of the head) is represented in quite some detail in these unfinished or aborted etchings, an observation

that may be explained by Rembrandt's habit of beginning his etched self-portraits with the head.<sup>44</sup>

To summarize briefly, beside these four 'real' self-portraits and the seven or eight prematurely aborted efforts there remain the ten early studies in etching technique, mentioned above, the five studies in expression and two, possibly three, etched *tronies* bearing the artist's features.<sup>45</sup> This categorization has the virtue of bringing a certain order to the material, but to complicate the matter we should add that the etched *tronies* and some of the unfinished self-portraits were published in rather large editions and were apparently acquired by both contemporary and later art-lovers as real self-portraits because they bore Rembrandt's features. Rembrandt's tendency to leave works unfinished (two of the painted self-portraits also remained unfinished)<sup>46</sup> and the fact that his works were often characterized by fantastic, historicizing or orientaling costume must also have contributed to the way in which the unfinished works and *tronies* bearing Rembrandt's facial features seem to have been quickly regarded as characteristic 'portraits of Rembrandt by himself'. The fact that the above rather cut-and-dried sub-divisions have nonetheless been employed may be seen as an attempt to clarify Rembrandt's *own* view of the functions of the 31 etchings that in our time have usually been indiscriminately labeled 'self-portraits'.

There is a tendency to consider the paintings as the most important self-portraits. However, it struck us that the four 'official' etched self-portraits all pre-dated the related categories of painted self-portraits<sup>47</sup> (in fashionable costume,<sup>48</sup> as double portrait with the artist's wife,<sup>49</sup> in historical costume possibly referring to major predecessors<sup>50</sup> and in working dress<sup>51</sup>).

*Drawings.* The functions of the drawn self-portraits are various. Only the most obvious and most frequently cited function should be excluded – that of a preliminary study for painted or etched self-portraits. Rembrandt's practice was to prepare his compositions 'in his head' and subsequently to work them out in a rather sketchy fashion directly on the support.<sup>52</sup> This would also have been the case with his self-portraits, which as a rule, after all, have an extremely simple composition. As already stated, we suspect that several of the drawings served as studies of particular effects, for example the complicated effects of light.<sup>53</sup> In one case, a drawn portrait may well have been done for an *album amicorum*.<sup>54</sup> The most interesting category fits into an already established tradition, the practise of fellow artists painting or drawing each other, often

35 See Chapter III, pp. 139-143, figs. 73-84 (Br. -, 23, 29, 37).

36 See Chapter III, p. 97 notes 23, 24.

37 Chapter III *Appendix* nos. 1, 6, 12, 25.

38 The etched self-portraits counted here are those included in the exhib. cat. *Rembrandt by himself* 1999/2000.

39 Chapter III, figs. 149 (B. 7), 150 (B. 19), 151 (B. 21), 152 (B. 22).

40 Chapter III, pp. 190-199, figs. 167 (B. 8), 169 (B. 16), 171 (B. 363), 175 (B. 372), 177 (B. 370), 180 (B. 2), 181 (B. 26).

41 Chapter III, figs. 167/166 (B. 8), 169/168 (B. 16), 171/170 (B. 7), possibly preceding 173 (B. 7) and 177/176 (B. 370) preceding 152/178 (B. 22).

42 See note 16.

43 Chapter III, figs. 171 (B. 363), 175 (B. 372).

44 Chapter III, figs. 166 (B. 8 I), 172 (B. 7 I-IV).

45 See notes 28, 27 and 33.

46 Cat. nos. IV 16 and 26 (Br. 58 and 52).

47 Chapter III, pp. 184-190.

48 Chapter III, figs. 149 (B. 7) and 183 (Br. 17).

49 Chapter III, fig. 150 (B. 19) and *Appendix* no. 9.

50 Chapter III, figs. 151 (B. 21) and 242 (Br. 34).

51 Chapter III, figs. 152 (B. 22) and 266 (Br. 42).

52 Van de Wetering 1997, pp. 74-89.

53 See note 30.

54 Chapter III, fig. 97 (Ben. 1177).

with an eye to the practical utility that such exercises may have had with regard to other projects.<sup>55</sup> But such mutual exercises or studies could later have assumed another role – that of friendship portraits, or served as souvenirs of memorable times in the studio.<sup>56</sup> A specific example of this latter, in our view, is the famous drawing of the full length depiction of Rembrandt which bears the inscription in 17th-century handwriting: ‘Drawn by Rembrandt van Rijn after his own image / as he was attired in his studio’. Until now, this drawing has been thought to be an autograph self-portrait of Rembrandt. We believe there are sufficient indications to be able to conclude that we are in fact dealing with a composite copy based on two of Rembrandt’s self-portraits.<sup>57</sup>

### Non-autograph self-portraits

Rembrandt must have sometimes had his pupils copy his self-portraits, probably as exercises, in view of the common teaching practice, but also, as Samuel van Hoogstraten put it, ‘to make his [the master’s] art better known’.<sup>58</sup> Some of these copies were made after studies or ‘*tronies*’ Rembrandt had done using his own features.<sup>59</sup> It will be obvious that this practice of copying has given rise to problems of authenticity that have long troubled both purchasers and scholars. Several times in the last 40 years, copies have been mistaken for originals while the actual originals, assumed to be copies, led a bleak existence on the art market or hidden in some museum depot.<sup>60</sup> In other cases copies assumed the place of their prototypes when the latter disappeared.<sup>61</sup>

In the investigation of such problems, X-radiography and infra-red photography often play an important part. These techniques allow one to a certain extent to reconstruct the genesis of a painting and, in doing so, they may allow one to distinguish originals from copies. And yet it sometimes appeared that such reconstructions of a painting’s genesis were not consistent with considerations of style and quality. In these cases, where technical analyses seemed to exclude the possibility that the painting could be a copy, doubts nevertheless persisted as to the authenticity of the self-portrait in question. The further investigation of this conundrum led to one of the surprises resulting from the work on this volume; for it appears that pupils or assistants produced ‘self-portraits’ of Rembrandt.<sup>62</sup>

In this context, it is important to point out that Rembrandt, as far as is known, did not take on beginners

as apprentices, but only youths or young men who already had a period of training with some other painter behind them, and whose aim was to learn to paint in Rembrandt’s style. This was achieved through copying works by Rembrandt and – possibly in a further stage – by producing free variants after his works. There can be little doubt that such paintings were sold in the trade. Up to now we have always thought this was mainly a question of copies (and partial copies) and variants of Rembrandt’s history pieces, but we are now certain that free variants after Rembrandt’s self-portraits were also produced by pupils (and in all likelihood sold by Rembrandt in the trade). This discovery is based on the fact that several paintings bearing Rembrandt’s effigy, which simply cannot be accepted as works by Rembrandt, nevertheless certainly originated in his studio. These studio products turned out to have been painted on canvases that had been prepared with a so-called quartz ground (a mixture of clay and ground sand in an oily binding medium). Karin Groen, an account of whose work is to be found in Chapter IV of this volume, has shown that canvases with a quartz ground did not occur in the Netherlands until they first appear in works by Rembrandt or in his style from 1640 on, beginning with the canvas for the *Nightwatch*. Roughly half such works painted between 1640 and 1669 have quartz grounds, whereas this type of ground has been found in the work of no other painter during the same period.<sup>63</sup> For this reason, we can say with virtual certainty of any 17th-century Rembrandtesque painting on canvas, even if an obviously non-autograph ‘self-portrait’, that if it was painted on a quartz ground it must have originated in Rembrandt’s studio. Consequently, we can now infer with similar confidence that several of the members of Rembrandt’s studio – most probably advanced pupils – were painting free variants after self-portraits of their master, works which subsequently circulated as autograph self-portraits of Rembrandt until well into the 20th century.<sup>64</sup> In turn, this discovery contributed to our conviction that Rembrandt painted his self-portraits not for himself but rather for a ‘market’ mainly consisting of art-lovers and collectors.<sup>65</sup>

What we find especially surprising here is that some buyers were apparently prepared to purchase, or were enticed into acquiring, *non*-autograph ‘self-portraits’. In the first chapter of this volume, Jaap van der Veen has shown on the basis of abundant archival evidence that the desire of the buyer to acquire a work by the master himself rather than by one of his pupils or assistants – was becoming a factor of considerable importance in the 17th century. At the same time, however, these archival sources also show that there was confusion on this point. It would appear that the old workshop practice still existed whereby, as part of their training and as a matter of course, apprentices and assistants contributed to the production of the master; but that this tradition in-

55 Marschke, *op. cit.*<sup>19</sup>.

56 See note 55 and Chapter III, figs. 101 (Ben. 1171), 104-107, 108 (Ben. 1176), 109, 110 (Ben. 432).

57 Chapter III, pp. 151-154, figs. 101-103 (Ben. 1171, Br. 42, B. 22).

58 ‘zijn konst openbaer te maken’, S. van Hoogstraeten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst*, Rotterdam 1678, pp. 195-197.

59 See notes 29 and 32.

60 Chapter III, figs. 119 (prototype for Br. 1), 123 (Br. 3), 124 (copy after Br. 3), 135 (prototype for Br. 6), 136 (Br. 6).

61 Chapter III, figs. 137 (Br. 7), 29-31 (Br. 46, 47 and Br.-Gerson 47A).

62 See Chapter III, pp. [29-44], esp. 129 Table D and figs. 243, 253, 269, 268, 59, 60, 57 (Br. 35, 40, 44, 45, 56, 57, Bauch 337), and fig. 1 of cat. no. IV 23 (Br. –).

63 See Chapter IV and Table IV.

64 See note 62.

65 See Chapter III, pp. 132-144.

creasingly came into conflict with the new trend of 'buying names' i.e. acquiring the work of the master himself.

### Variations in style and consequent problems over authenticity

If the self-portraits that we believe are autograph works are once again compared with each other, one cannot but be struck by how great the differences in style between them can be, even when such works originated in the same year.<sup>66</sup> It would seem – and this is true not only of the painted self-portraits but also of the etchings and drawings – as though each project was for Rembrandt himself a new challenge. Each of his works, and especially the self-portraits, gives the impression that Rembrandt was an exploratory, questing artist, someone who never resorted to ready-made solutions but each time re-thought the means and the possibilities available to him – not only in relation to technical and stylistic aspects, but also in the way he 'directs' his figures and in the representation of light, volume and texture. This exploratory attitude is still in evidence in the very last self-portraits. Perhaps this is the only way to account for the dizzying development – certainly neither a smooth nor a consistent trajectory – of Rembrandt's art.

The exceptionally broad range of the changing characteristics of his works (including the self-portraits) meant that resolving questions of authenticity was particularly difficult. For this reason, part of Chapter III is devoted to the search for the most objective criteria,<sup>67</sup> and although this quest can hardly be said to have led to directly applicable tests, in an indirect sense it yielded numerous insights that were useful in forming our opinions of the authenticity of particular paintings. In addition, our research into the genesis of each painting and the development of insights into later alterations, including mutilation, that some of Rembrandt's self-portraits have endured, provided a basis on which we could gradually build up our opinion as to the authenticity of the paintings. Wherever possible in these investigations we made use of various research methods: dendrochronology, canvas research, X-radiography and infrared photography, chemical analysis of the grounds and paint layers, microscopic investigation of the paint surface and cross sections of paint samples. As a result of the application of these methods we developed a certain degree of familiarity with each of these paintings. It sharpened our eye for characteristics of style and quality, which played varying roles in forming our opinions. These opinions on authenticity are as a rule put forward with considerable reservation; we constantly tried to weigh the value of different arguments as objectively as possible. The paintings our predecessors had removed from Rembrandt's oeuvre were also carefully re-investigated and, in a number of cases, their attribution to

Rembrandt restored.<sup>68</sup> By investigation of paintings that had long been generally rejected we succeeded in acquiring better insights into the activities of others in Rembrandt's studio.

### Likeness and expression

Apart from the surprising differences in style among the self-portraits that we consider to be autograph works, we were equally struck by another phenomenon. Rembrandt apparently had difficulty in achieving a convincing likeness in his self-portraits. That he may have had problems in achieving a good likeness was already evident from two contemporary documents regarding his portraits of other sitters.<sup>69</sup>

Remarkable differences in physiognomy exist among the various self-portraits that we consider to be autograph;<sup>70</sup> in particular there are major differences in the way the eyes are painted – larger or smaller, wider apart or closer together. The shape of the face, too, can vary – in some paintings the face is longer and narrower while in others it has a more rounded shape – and so, too, can the way the various facial features are characterized. And yet Rembrandt seems to have studied his features each time with equal thoroughness, as can be seen, for example, from the fact that particular asymmetric facial features (particularly the eyelids and furrows of the forehead) are almost always carefully represented. These asymmetric features occasionally played a part in the investigation of authenticity. Thanks to these asymmetries we knew, for example, that the 'self-portraits' painted by pupils were not portraits for which Rembrandt himself had posed, because had that been the case these asymmetric features would not be represented as mirror-imaged in the way that they inevitably are in a self-portrait that originated in front of the mirror or in a copy of a self-portrait. We think that Rembrandt himself posed for only one drawn self-portrait.<sup>71</sup>

A strong tendency (still) exists to read Rembrandt's states of mind and even his (assumed) thoughts into his self-portraits. This tendency has contributed to the persistent myth that Rembrandt – in the words of Schmidt-Degener quoted in the opening lines of this summary – 'confided everything in his (late) self-portraits, including his unhappiness and loneliness; but... also his self-confidence and his pride and triumph as an artist.' As is well known, the history of cinematography has taught us that one is capable of reading all sorts of emotions and thoughts in an immobile face, depending on the context in which it is seen. Schmidt-Degener's words provide abundant evidence that, in the case of Rembrandt, it is not so much a question of reading emotions but rather the projection of 'knowledge', in the case of Schmidt-Degener, of elements of the Rembrandt myth anno 1906, into Rembrandt's face shown in repose.

66 See Chapter III, pp. 109-117; compare for instance figs. 193 (Br. 18), 194 (Br. 19) or IV 19 (Br. 53) and IV 20 (Br. 54).

67 Chapter III, pp. 116-117.

68 See Chapter III, p. 110 Tables A and B.

69 See Strauss *Doc.*, 1633/1 and 1654/4.

70 See Chapter III, pp. 96, 211, 290.

71 See Chapter III, fig. 110 (Ben. 432).

### Aspects of Rembrandt's theoretical ideas on art

It becomes increasingly clear that Rembrandt was not only preoccupied with his personal pictorial problems, but with problems which can be seen in a much wider context of art history and art theory. It was undoubtedly his ambition to belong to the illustrious group of great artists in the history of painting. This is already fairly evident from the fact that, in his works, he often appears to want to measure himself against such great 15th and 16th-century artists as Leonardo da Vinci and Titian, Albrecht Dürer and Lucas van Leyden, and against older contemporaries such as the Caravaggists and Rubens. In Chapter II, Marieke de Winkel demonstrates that Rembrandt, especially after 1640, referred to his great predecessors of the 15th and 16th centuries by means of his costuming. Moreover, in reference to the emancipation of the art of painting, he made 'statements' concerning its dignity, for instance by depicting himself in working clothes. Apparently he 'communicated' on these matters through the costuming in his self-portraits.<sup>72</sup>

Contrary to strong doubts on this point in the past,<sup>73</sup> Rembrandt must also have developed his own theory of art. During the discussion of the painted self-portraits in this volume, several aspects of his theory are briefly referred to, particularly by reference to texts of his pupil, Samuel van Hoogstraten. In these texts from Van Hoogstraten's book on the art of painting (see note 58), one finds echoes of his teacher's ideas on the art of painting. Thus, Chapter III of this volume discusses Rembrandt's early application of different styles in relation to different subject matter, an art historical problem also known as the 'modus issue in painting'.<sup>74</sup> Another concern that must have engaged Rembrandt throughout his life is compositional unity ('*eenweezigheid*'), with its associated hierarchical treatment of light.<sup>75</sup> Rembrandt's affair with *chance*, an Aristotelian theme that must have been much discussed in the 17th century, is also dealt with.<sup>76</sup> Rembrandt's presumed theories concerning a sketchy manner of painting and his use of relief in the paint surface, especially in the skin, are demonstrated with examples taken from Rembrandt's painted self-portraits dealt with in this volume.<sup>77</sup>

### In conclusion

The case summarized above, *contra* Rembrandt's self-portraits constituting a kind of autobiographical search for his own identity(ies), can be taken to an extreme. One might then conclude that Rembrandt's self-portraits were in his own eyes no more than commodities produced for

a particular sector of the art market. Were then such masterpieces as the self-portraits from 1640 and '69 in London, the *Large Vienna self-portrait*, or those from the Frick collection, Paris or Kenwood,<sup>78</sup> merely intended to serve as commodities? Did these works say nothing about the way Rembrandt saw himself? To think so would surely be a mistake.

The history of art as conceived by Rembrandt and his contemporaries, from classical antiquity and from the Renaissance, was a history of great artists who were so admired that all cultivated Europeans – including kings and emperors – knew or were required to know their names. All the evidence indicates that Rembrandt saw himself in this great tradition and considered himself the equal of the great masters of the history of the art of painting. Many of Rembrandt's contemporaries must also have seen him so. When one places Rembrandt in this context, it is obvious that both the creation and the acquisition of his self-portraits must have been freighted with significance.

On the other hand, we know that Rembrandt must have regarded the world of art lovers and connoisseurs of his time with a certain scepticism. If the present author's interpretation of Rembrandt's drawing of c. 1644, the so-called 'Satire on Art Criticism', is correct, Rembrandt must have had mixed feelings about his public.<sup>79</sup> Is it possible that those self-portraits, produced by pupils or other members of his workshop, especially in the decades of the 1640s and '50s, should have been intended for indiscriminating 'naemkoopers' ('name-buyers') who were blind enough to see masterworks in the spurious and second-rate? If this were the case, one of the puzzles that our research has brought to light would be solved, viz. the puzzle of the non-autograph, free variants based on Rembrandt's self-portraits that were produced in Rembrandt's workshop.

Our aim in this volume has been to place those works that have usually been referred to as Rembrandt's self-portraits in a new and coherent context. We hope that we have managed to do this convincingly. We also hope that our revisions of the limits of Rembrandt's autograph oeuvre, and our attempts to situate those works whose attribution to Rembrandt we can no longer accept will meet with the reader's approval. Although readers may be shocked by several unexpected disattributions, some may well find that we have been considerably more restrained in our exclusion of certain works from Rembrandt's oeuvre than our more recent predecessors.<sup>80</sup> We hope, finally, that our suggested revisions will in the long run contribute to a solid foundation from which to explore further the phenomenon of Rembrandt's art.

72 See Chapter II; see also M. de Winkel, 'Costume in Rembrandt's Self Portraits', in exhib. cat. *Rembrandt by himself*, 1999/2000; M. de Winkel, *Fashion and Fancy: Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt's Paintings*, Amsterdam 2005.

73 J.A. Emmens *Rembrandt en de regels van de kunst*, rev. edn. Amsterdam 1979.

74 See Chapter III, pp. 166-171.

75 See Chapter III, pp. 290-291.

76 See Chapter III, pp. 272-273.

77 See Chapter III, pp. 303-311.

78 See Chapter III, fig. 242 (Br. 34), IV 8 (Br. 42), IV 14 (Br. 50), IV 19 (Br. 53) and IV 26 (Br. 52).

79 Ben. IV no. A 35a; see E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's "Satire on Art Criticism" reconsidered', in: *Shop Talk. Studies in Honor of Seymour Slive*, (eds. Cynthia P. Schneider, William W. Robinson, Alice I. Davies e.a.) Cambridge, Mass. 1995, pp. 264-270.

80 See Chapter III, p. 110 Table A and B.

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- , The Wallace Collection: Chapter III figs. 231, 232; IV Corr. III C 96 fig.
- LYON, Musée des Beaux-Arts: Chapter III fig. 125
- MAASTRICHT, Noortman Master Paintings: IV Add. 4 figs. 1, 5
- , – (photo Otto Naumann Ltd. New York): IV Add. 4 figs. 2, 3, 4
- MADRID, Museum Thyssen-Bornemisza: Chapter III figs. 244, 248; IV 2 figs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
- MARSEILLE, Musée des Beaux Arts (photo Jean Bernard Aix-en-Provence): Chapter III fig. 89
- MELBOURNE, National Gallery of Victoria: Chapter III figs. 14, 20, 59, 62, 64; IV 21 figs. 1, 2, 3, 7
- MILWAUKEE, Coll. Alfred and Isabel Bader: Chapter III figs. 33, 38, 43; IV 10 version 5 fig. 8; IV Corr. I C 22 fig.
- , – (photo A. Dingjan The Hague): Chapter III fig. 47
- MUNICH, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek: IV 8 fig. 7
- , Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek: Chapter III fig. 120; IV 11 fig. 4
- NAPLES, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte (photo Gabinetto fotografico Soprintendenza alle Gallerie Napoli): IV 28 fig. 5
- NEW YORK, The Frick Collection: Chapter II fig. 33; Chapter III figs. 272, 286, 287, 296, 297; IV 14 figs. 1, 2, 3, 4
- , The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913: Chapter III figs. 67, 299, 306, 311, 313, 326, 327; IV 20 figs. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6
- , – (photo Brookhaven, Laboratory Upton, New York Photography Division): IV 20 fig. 3
- , –, Bequest of Mrs. H.O. Havemeyer (photo Malcolm Varon): Chapter III fig. 250
- , –, Gift of Archer M. Huntington, 1926: Chapter III figs. 63, 64; IV 20 fig. 7, IV 21 fig. 4
- , –, Robert Lehman Collection, 1975: Chapter III fig. 112
- NUREMBERG, Germanisches Nationalmuseum: Chapter II fig. 3; Chapter III figs. 2, 135; IV Corr. I A 21 fig.
- ORLÉANS, Musée des Beaux-Arts: Chapter III fig. 211
- PARIS, Bibliothèque Nationale: Chapter I fig. 9, Chapter III figs. 50, 85, 166; IV 9 fig. 7, IV 15 fig. 5, IV 19 fig. 6; IV Add. 4 fig. 6, IV Corr. II C 61 fig. 9
- , Fondation Custodia (coll. F. Lugt), Institut Néerlandais: Chapter II fig. 14
- , Musée du Louvre: Chapter III figs. 79, 99, 196, 308; IV 19 fig. 1
- , – (photo Agraci Paris): Chapter III figs. 302, 307; IV 19 fig. 3, IV 21 fig. 6; IV Corr. III B 10 fig.
- , – (photo LRMF): Chapter III fig. 80; IV 19 fig. 2
- , – (photo RMN Daniel Arnaudet/Jean Schormans): Chapter III fig. 205
- , – (photo RMN/Hervé Lewandowski): Frontispiece; Chapter III figs. 61, 98, 193, 194, 201, 245, 252, 298, 310; IV 19 fig. 1
- , Musée du Petit Palais (photo PMVP): Chapter III fig. 88
- , – (photo PMVP/Cliché Pierrain): Chapter III fig. 145
- , – (photo Rijksmuseum Amsterdam): Chapter III fig. 148
- PASADENA, Cal., Norton Simon Museum of Art: Chapter III figs. 235, 236, 277; IV Corr. III C 97 figs. 1, 3
- PASADENA, Cal., Norton Simon Museum (photo Los Angeles County Museum of Art): IV Corr. III C 97 fig. 2
- PRIVATE COLLECTION: Chapter III figs. 224, 234; IV Corr. I B 1-3 figs.
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- (photo Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft Zürich): Chapter III fig. 147
- (photo Speelman London): Chapter II fig. 15
- ROTTERDAM, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen: Chapter III figs. 104, 108, 153, 160, 258, 323A; IV 16 fig. 8
- SALZBURG, Salzburger Landessammlungen – Residenzgalerie (© Fotostudio Ulrich Ghezzi, Oberalm): Chapter III fig. 130
- SAN FRANCISCO, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Roscoe and Margaret Oakes Collection: Chapter III figs. 30, 36, 41, 270, 284; IV 10 version 2 figs. 2, 3
- SARASOTA, John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art: Chapter III fig. 264; IV 6 figs. 6, 7
- ST. LOUIS, Missouri, The Saint Louis Art Museum: Chapter III fig. 309
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- , Nationalmuseum (photo Åsa Lundén): Chapter III figs. 129, 318
- STUTTGART, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart: Chapter II fig. 10; Chapter III figs. 57, 58, 291, 294, 295; IV 17 figs. 1, 3, 4, 5, IV 24 fig. 4
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- , – (photo M. Knoedler & Co. New York): Chapter III fig. 8
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### 1. Introduction and description

Ever since Gerson questioned this painting's authenticity in 1968 it has been omitted from surveys of Rembrandt's oeuvre.<sup>1</sup> In the 1990 catalogue of the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection it is listed as a work from Rembrandt's studio.<sup>2</sup> Account should, however, be taken of the painting's extremely poor condition. Moreover, the panel was most likely reduced with the ensuing consequences for the composition. Our evaluation of the work's genesis, its technical, stylistic and qualitative characteristics as well as observations with respect to Rembrandt's facial features lead to the conviction that there are more arguments in favour of its autograph nature than against it.

Rembrandt, seen to just above the waist, holds his balled right hand before his chest. Over a white shirt finished with a narrow collar he wears a black doublet, fashionable in the 15th century, with a high rounded neckline and trimmed with fur around the collar, along the front fastening and at the cuff. Two gold chains hang around his shoulders and a black cap tops his ear-length hair.

#### *Working conditions*

Examined on 28 October 1971 (B.H., E.v.d.W.), during the restoration in 1975 (K.G., E.v.d.W.), in 1988 (E.v.d.W., with I. Gaskell) and on 9 May 1995 (E.v.d.W.). Out of the frame, in good artificial light and with the aid of six X-ray films covering the entire painting, a binocular microscope and infrared reflectography. During the investigation in 1975 a number of paint samples were taken and analysed (K.G.).

#### *Support*

Oak panel, grain vertical, 72.2 x 58.3 cm. One piece. Back planed to a thickness of app. 0.7 cm and cradled. In the cap at the left is a knothole into which is inserted (possibly later) a rectangular piece of wood (see fig. 2).

The plank is a radial board sawed tangentially near the core of the trunk. The panel has been subjected to dendrochronological investigation by Dr P. Klein (May 1994). It contains 205 growth rings. With the master chronology of the Baltic/Polish region the rings could be dated between the years 1584 and 1380. This panel and those of four other paintings come from the same tree: *John the Baptist preaching* (III A 106), the *Portrait of Herman Doomer* (III A 140), *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* (Br. 566) and the *Portrait of Aletta Adriaensdr.* (III A 132). The latter painting has 206 growth rings including seven sapwood rings: 1621 – 1416. Therefore, the youngest heartwood ring of the tree from which these five panels stem was formed in the year 1614. Regarding the sapwood statistic of Eastern Europe, an earliest felling date can be derived for the year 1623, although a more probable felling date lies between 1627..1629....1633. With a minimum storage time of two years, the painting may have been created at the earliest from 1625 on. Assuming a median of 15 sapwood rings and a minimum seasoning time of two years, a date of creation is plausible from 1631 on.

The fact that the panel is planed along both sides, and that the resulting edges are thicker than usual for a 17th-century bevelled panel favours the assumption that it was originally larger. Other arguments for this assumption are the interruption of some visual elements at the top and bottom, the manner in which the paint layers along the edges have splintered off and, with the necessary caution, a print by J.N. Muxel (see 4. *Graphic reproductions*, 1; fig.7). For a discussion of the painting's original format, see 2. *Comments*.

#### *Ground*

While nowhere visible in the surface, the ground does shine through slightly in the transparent passages in the hair. Microscopic examination of cross-sections, X-ray diffraction analysis and SEM-EDX indicate that the ground consists of two layers: the bottom one is a chalk-glue priming, and the top one is an admixture of 50% lead white and 50% chalk (volume percentages) with the addition of a feriferous brown pigment, probably umber. Given this mixture of white and brown of the top layer, the ground must be a light yellow brown. In the 17th century, lead white mixed with chalk was called ceruse. It is also encountered in the light underpainting in the *Night watch* (III A 146).

#### *Paint layer*

Condition: Extensive (restored) paint loss is found in the lit part of the face in vertical patches following the wood grain, showing up dark in the X-ray image (see *Radio-graphy*). The paint layer has been touched up at the left in the cap where a piece of wood was inserted into a knothole (see *Support*). The technical investigation conducted during the 1975 restoration of the painting revealed that in large parts of the face the top paint layer fills the cracks in an underlying layer, and that this top layer extends over old priming fillings and lacunas in the original paint layer. From this it could be concluded that these areas (the area surrounding the eye at the left, the forehead and the shaded parts of the right half of the face) were overpainted. The background is entirely overpainted, as is clear from the fact that in numerous places the topmost paint layer of the background has flowed into the fine shrinkage cracks of the underlying paint layer. Analysis of the paint samples also point in this direction. A cross-section of a paint sample taken from the background at the right of the head shows that the ground is covered by a relatively thick, grey-brown paint layer that displays traces of abrasion. This is undoubtedly the original background. Over this are one or two dark layers in what appears to be a varnish-like binding medium; this dark paint must be considered a later overpainting. The abrasion of the original background explains why no varnish layer was encountered between the paint in the background and the overpainting; evidently, shortly after being abraded, apparently in an effort to remove the varnish, the painting was overpainted in places where this was deemed to be optically necessary. This reconstruction of the painting's fate is supported by the fact that the paint of the overpainted background exactly borders the con-

Fig. 1. Panel 72.2 x 58.3 cm. For a colour reproduction of a detail (1:1) showing the face see Chapter III fig. 248



Fig. 2. X-Ray

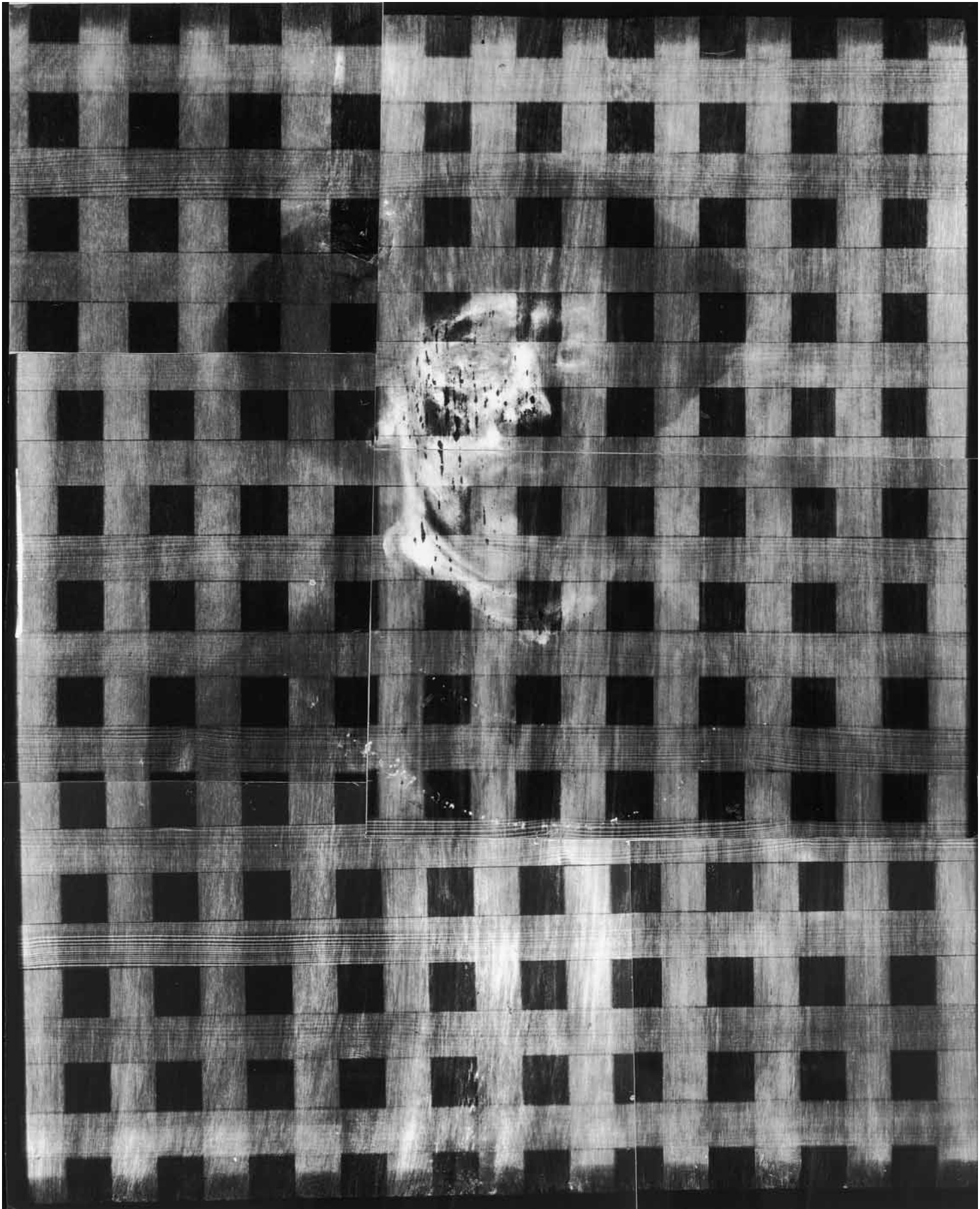
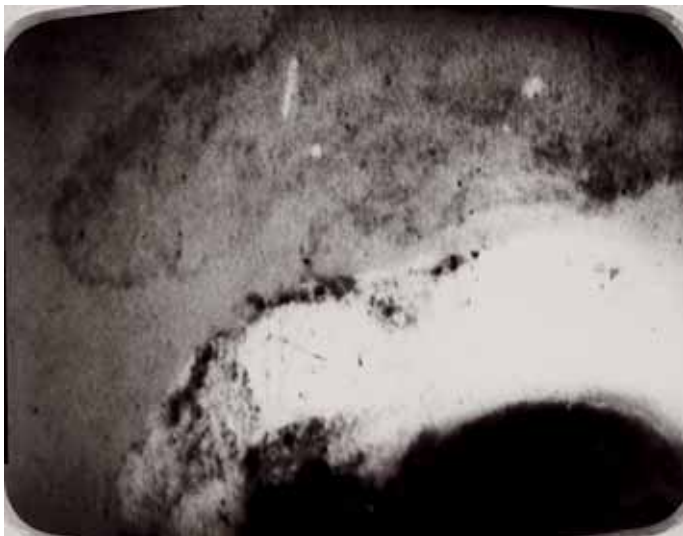


Fig. 3. Infrared-reflectogram, detail of feather above the cap



tours of the head and the body, while one would expect the paint of the figure to slightly overlap the background. Infrared-reflectography reveals a feather above the cap (fig. 3). This feather, which is also present in a copy of the painting (see 5. *Copies*, 1; fig. 8), appears to have been covered by the same layer described above as overpainting. The samples that were taken in the area of the feather display a complex layering. However, it is not possible to determine when the overpainting was carried out. Given that the copy does not make the impression of having been painted in Rembrandt's workshop, it appears plausible that subsequent to the strong abrasion of the painting the feather was abandoned and covered with the new dark background. At this time, then, the cap – partially covered by the feather and its clasp – must also have been partly or even entirely overpainted.

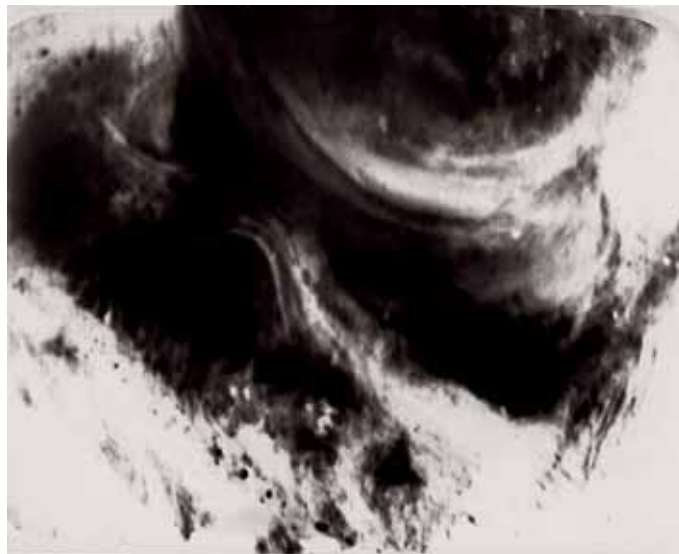
Kühn detected Naples yellow in a paint sample taken from the fur trim along the doublet confirming the suspicion that this area was locally overpainted.<sup>3</sup> Although Naples yellow existed in the 17th century, it was most frequently used in the 18th century. To date, Naples yellow has yet to be found in paintings by Rembrandt or his circle.

Gaskell established that the hand was concealed under a layer of paint until *c.* 1935, and observed 'cupping in the area of the hand (very unusual on a panel support) and the eruption of the ground through the craquelure' and assumed that 'cleaning of this area with an aqueous solution (...) exacerbated the activity of the thick ground to the detriment of the paint layers.'<sup>4</sup>

He also noted that 'the original definition of the torso has been disturbed by extensive abrasion.' This, and the degree to which large portions of the painting were overpainted, provide additional indications that in the past the entire picture must have been severely overcleaned with resulting abrasion of the paint surface. Moreover, comparison of X-radiographs of the head taken in 1956 and in 1975 betray an alarming increase of paint loss in the face in this period (figs. 5 and 6).

Craquelure: various types of craquelure can be observed in the lit sections of the face (in the condition of

Fig. 4. Infrared-reflectogram, detail of collar



1988): a predominantly vertical and horizontal pattern connected to the working of the wood (the countless lacunae in the ground and paint layer correspond with this pattern), and an uneven pattern of cupping with raised rims displaying crumbling corners. The latter aspect is comparable to what was observed in the hand. In many places, the original paint of the background shows fine shrinkage cracks which are also manifest in the X-ray image. In turn, the overpainting in the background displays its own pattern of shrinkage cracks.

A number of pentimenti can be seen in raking light, a few of which are also visible with infrared reflectography. In addition to the above-mentioned painted out feather and its clasp and the originally differently shaped collar (fig. 4), in the paint relief can be seen an originally higher contour of the left shoulder. Also the course of the right part of the longer chain as well as the contour of the cap appear to have been altered.

X-ray diffraction analysis of a paint sample from the longer chain established the presence of lead-tin yellow. This pigment is found primarily in Northern European paintings and fell into disuse around 1750.

A characterisation of the painting manner is foregone in this section of the entry as the overpaintings and abrasion make it impossible to gain a reliable impression. Relevant observations are incorporated in 2. *Comments*.

#### *Radiography*

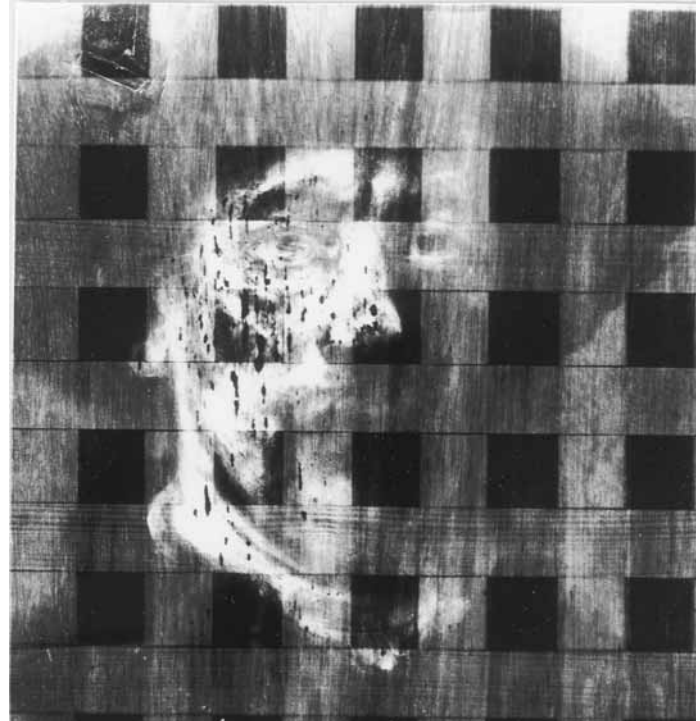
Although disturbed by the cradling, the X-ray image remains reasonably legible. The paint loss detected in the surface, primarily in the lit half of the face, shows up very clearly as a series of black, vertically oriented slender spots (see also figs. 5 and 6).

The division of light and dark in the radiographic image of the head agrees with what one would expect from the paint surface. The lightest areas showing up are the highest lights on the nose and on the neck. Traces of brushwork are not visible everywhere resulting in a somewhat blurred image. This may be a consequence of the serious abrasion of the paint surface.

Fig. 5. X-Ray, detail (1956)



Fig. 6. X-Ray, detail (1975)



Infrared reflectography of the fur collar at the left revealed a deftly painted, flowing line that does not correspond with the final form and is apparently part of the underpainting (fig. 4). An indication of a large feather arching from right to left was also observed which, as argued in *Paint layer Condition*, was probably painted out by a later hand. The feather is transected by the top edge of the painting.

#### *Signature*

None. A possible originally present signature could have vanished as a result of abrasion and overpainting of the background, and possibly also as a consequence of – as we suspect – the panel having been cut down.

## 2. Comments

The painting's authenticity had been accepted without reservation in the Rembrandt literature until 1968, when Gerson was the first to publish his doubts and even question whether the painting could have originated in Rembrandt's time (see note 1). Subsequent authors, such as Schwartz<sup>5</sup> and Tümpel<sup>6</sup> did not include it in their surveys of Rembrandt's oeuvre. Wright, on the other hand, considered Gerson's judgement too harsh and argued in favour of the painting.<sup>7</sup> When the RRP first examined the painting in 1971, our opinion was negative. This view was chiefly based on an assessment of the painting's pictorial quality. Its execution was seen as poor given the lack of three-dimensionality and texture and the absence of the diversity and variation in the thickness of the paint typical of a work by Rembrandt. The prevailing impression was that the execution was hesitant and missed Rembrandt's typical brushwork which contributes to the plasticity of the depicted forms.

Moreover, the composition and character of the contours were perceived as being flaccid. In 1975 the painting was subjected to scientific examination. Materially, nothing was found to contradict a 17th-century origin or possible production in Rembrandt's studio. However, the objections relating to the above-cited pictorial properties were not dispelled.

The first published analysis of the problems related to this work was authored by Gaskell and appeared in 1990 (see note 2). From his assessment of the data, observations and opinions, Gaskell (who communicated with the RRP while conducting his research) concluded that the painting could have been by a painter in Rembrandt's studio or a follower. He adduced that the results of scientific examinations (1975 and 1988) countered Gerson's assertion that the painting was produced in a later period (see note 4). Gaskell referred to the fact that lead-tin yellow in the chain provides a terminus ante quem of around 1750 and that dendrochronological investigation had revealed that the tree from which the panel was taken, was cut between 1621 and 1633.<sup>8</sup> Gaskell, however, also remarked on the peculiarity of what he took to be a single white ground layer detected during earlier examinations.

Gaskell's most important arguments for rejecting an attribution to Rembrandt himself were related to the pictorial quality and the painting technique. He stated that 'the nature of the application of the paint in the surviving areas of the face is inconsistent with what is known of Rembrandt's own technique. The surface is characterised by imprecision in detail, an intermixture of paints rather than a subtle layering and a lack of confidence in the progressive application of paints' (see note 4). Given the fact that changes were found in the costume, but not in the face, Gaskell reasoned that the

painter was one of Rembrandt's studio assistants who relied on a lost self-portrait for the face and invented the rest.

Initially, Gaskell's solution appears elegant. Nevertheless, it may be useful to subject his arguments to closer scrutiny. As to his argument that the painting was executed on a white ground, it appeared from a re-examination of the paint-cross sections, that this white underlayer is covered by a yellow-brown *primuersel*. Thus, the ground is of a type commonly found on 17th-century paintings on panel in general and certainly on the panels used by Rembrandt and his studio. As for Gaskell's suggestion that the head is a copy, it should be mentioned that pentimenti rarely if ever occur in the heads of Rembrandt's painted self-portraits. Pentimenti like those in the collar and in the course of the contours are not unusual for Rembrandt's paintings, including his self-portraits.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, it is noteworthy that the division of radioabsorbent paint in the face, and especially its measured application, is distinctly similar to what is commonly found in Rembrandt's autograph self-portraits. Examples of possibly significant concentrations of lead white are the pastose strokes in the transition from the neck to the shoulder, on the cheekbone, on the upper lip to the left under the wing of the nose, and near the base of the nose. Perhaps equally significant is the drastic reduction in radioabsorbency from the cheekbone to the chin and in parts of the face in shadow. This is also true of the (virtually total) absence of radioabsorbency in the eyebrows, along the wing of the nose, in the moustache and the mouth. Comparing the head in these respects with obvious copies, the X-radiograph actually argues in favour of the painting's authenticity. The X-ray image, however, deviates from comparable X-radiographs (for example, the London III A 139 and Windsor Castle IV 1) in its smooth appearance, which is due to the fact that hardly any individual brushstrokes show up. In the analysis of the X-ray image in *Radiography* this phenomenon was connected to the harsh abrasion that this presumably fairly thinly painted work was subjected to.

Turning to the matter of physiognomy, the Thyssen painting displays no feature that would militate against its being a possible autograph self-portrait. The phase in the ageing of Rembrandt's face can be placed between 1640, the *Self-portrait* in London (III A 139), and 1645, the *Self-portrait* in Karlsruhe (IV 5). The double chin, and the lower half of the face are somewhat fuller in comparison with the London *Self-portrait*. None of the existing self-portraits display this particular phase in the gradual transformation of Rembrandt's face. It is important to ascertain that the asymmetry in the area of the eyes is comparable to the characteristic sagging fold of the eye lid at the right as observed in generally accepted authentic self-portraits (see pp. 94-96). The positioning of the vertical furrow(s) above the base of the nose is not as asymmetrically placed to the left as is usually the case. Then again, greater symmetry in this respect also occurs in the authentic *Large self-portrait* in Vienna (IV 8). The wrinkles at the base of the nose as indicated in the self-

portraits around 1640 also appear in the Thyssen painting. Thus, physiognomically the head is acceptable, and even contains 'concealed' features. It also reveals an approach to form, especially a certain 'firmness' – difficult to express in analytical terms – that supports an attribution to Rembrandt. This impression may in part be determined by what is described in Vol. II, p. 12 as characteristic of Rembrandt's notions on how to achieve plasticity in portrait heads, namely '(...) that gradual transitions are more important than contrasts, and that the continuity of form takes precedence over its interruption by linear elements.'

The composition of the Thyssen painting is characterised by what could be called a striking simplicity; compared to the self-portraits in London and Karlsruhe mentioned above, the presence of the figure is even dull. The body and head are turned in virtually the same direction, the disposition of the clothing, the course of the contours, the shape of the cap and the silhouette of the lit part of the head display a remarkably rudimentary definition of form. The extent to which this is due to overcleaning can no longer be determined with any certainty: lost due to abrasion are fine details that may otherwise have lent the image a greater sense of space and liveliness. The reproductive print by Muxel discussed below creates the impression that the cap and the cloak were more detailed (see fig. 7). Other factors as well could have decisively influenced the appearance of the painting as a whole. Paint samples indicate that before being overpainted, the background was somewhat lighter which may explain why the sitter now hardly stands out from the present, dark background. Moreover, the contours are largely determined by the total overpainting of the background whereby certain subtle distinctions in their progression could have disappeared.

The fact that the format of the painting was most likely altered also negatively affects the image. As noted in *Support*, the way in which the panel was planed along the sides makes it entirely plausible that it was wider. The manner in which the hand has been cut off could point to a reduction at the lower edge. Moreover, the panel also appears to have been sawed off along the upper edge: infrared examination revealed that a feather in the cap is cut off by the upper edge. Serious splintering of the ground and paint layer along the upper and lower edges confirm that the panel was sawed off. The paint has also splintered along the planed edges at the left and right. On the basis of these findings, originally the panel was most likely both wider and taller. Given our knowledge of 17th-century standard formats it is worth speculating whether the size of the panel was identical to what Bruyn identified as a '12 stuivers' size, or app. 84 cm high and app. 62 cm wide (the present dimensions are 72.2 x 58.3 cm).<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, the panel would have been app. 12 cm higher and app. 4 cm wider. Thus, not only would the painting have been larger, but the proportions of the figure would have been more extenuated. The present format of the painting approximates the standard format of a group of panels that Bruyn identified as being what in the 17th century was described as 'grote tronie maat'



Fig. 7. Etching by J.N. Muxel



(large tronie size), or app. 73 x 50 to 60 cm. The panel might have been reduced in order to fit a frame intended for the latter panel type.

The only known reproductive print of the painting also provides strong arguments in favour of an originally larger format. It was made by Muxel and included in the catalogue of the Duke of Leuchtenberg's collection published in 1851 (see 4. *Graphic reproductions*, 1, fig. 7 and 6. *Provenance*). The print presents an image of the painting in which the figure is, indeed, set in a larger picture plane. At first sight, the print, which reproduces the painting in a simple line etching (an *Umriss*), appears to be a free interpretation of the original. However, upon closer scrutiny it proves to be a highly reliable document in many respects. Within the limits of this graphic medium, all of the still visible details in the painting have been

reproduced with the utmost fidelity: for example, compare the links in the chain, the overlapping of the shirt by the fur collar, and the course of the contours of the cap. The absence of the hand in the print, as noted by Gaskell, agrees with what is seen in old photographs as well as with Hofstede de Groot's 1915 description with the explicit mention that it was 'ohne Hände' (without hands).<sup>11</sup> The genesis of the print also speaks for its reliability. Muxel was no run-of-the-mill engraver. He was a Munich painter who, after having been a drawing instructor to the family of the then owner of the painting, the Duke of Leuchtenberg, was appointed in 1824 as *Inspektor* of the duke's rather extensive collection of paintings. Nagler, his fellow townsman and the compiler of the *Neues allgemeines Künstlerlexicon* published in 1841, mentions that between 1835 and 1840 Muxel, on his own initiative, made etched

*Umrisse* of nearly all of the duke's paintings; incidentally, he also commissioned a few of the etchings from other artists.<sup>12</sup> The prints, published shortly thereafter, reveal Muxel as a highly intelligent observer with a sharp eye for stylistic features specific to the various schools as well as individual artists. Like his faithful rendering of detail, Muxel's evident need to differentiate the various artists and their styles (within the limits of the medium he used) speaks for the reliability of his reproductions. That Muxel did not use mechanical means for transferring the images is evident from small differences in proportions. The most important question here is whether there were typographical pre-conditions affecting the framing of his scene. Were this so, it could explain the larger picture plane with the accompanying changes in the lay-out of the present painting. However, this is not the case. The etching plates he used were substantially larger than the representations that are individually framed with an etched rectangle. Thus, Muxel could adjust the proportions of the frame to reflect those of the individual paintings. Seen together, his prints make clear that he paid close attention to the matter of framing and in no way sacrificed the verisimilitude of the etched copy to typographical uniformity. In the present case, therefore, the differences in framing between the print and the painting are significant.

From the above it could be concluded that the painting was reduced sometime after Muxel had produced his print between 1835 and 1840. The fact that the painting found its way to Russia at some unknown point, although almost certainly after 1852, where it may have received a new frame could explain its being cut down. There is a complication, however. In the various catalogues of the Leuchtenberg collection from 1825 to 1851 the dimensions of the frame are given as 2'3" x 1'10". When converted – even using the largest German unit of measurement, the Rhineland foot – they are slightly smaller than the present measurements (see 6. *Provenance*). This notwithstanding, we are inclined to maintain the theory that the painting was cut down after Muxel made his print, and assume that the above-mentioned dimensions are, as can be the case with old measurements, extremely imprecise. On the basis of Muxel's print it can be concluded that the original image differed substantially from the present one. The figure, with more space around it and shown almost to the hips, initially exuded a certain monumentality. The pervading stiffness of the painting in its present form is nowhere evident in the print with the flowing progression of the cloak to the lower edge. Momentarily setting aside the question of authenticity (discussed below), when considered in its original form, the Thyssen *Self-portrait* assumes an exceptional place among Rembrandt's self-portraits.

The theory that the Thyssen painting was initially larger rules out Gudlaugsson's hypothesis, published by Gerson (see note 1), that it was the pendant of the so-called posthumous portrait of *Saskia* in Berlin (Br. 109). That these two paintings were pendants is also unlikely because the *Saskia* is painted on a heavy mahogany panel while the Thyssen painting is on oak.

The costume is not without importance for the interpretation of the painting. The doublet, in which Rembrandt also depicted himself in the London *Self-portrait* of 1669 (IV 27) is of the same type worn by 15th-century artists, including Dirck Bouts and Rogier van der Weyden, in the series of prints by Hieronymus Cock, which this engraver assembled together with the humanist Domenicus Lampsonius and published under the title *Pictorum aliquot celebrium Germaniae Inferioris effigies* in Antwerp in 1572.<sup>13</sup> While Rembrandt seems to have primarily used 16th-century prototypes for his self-portraits, the relationship of this painting and the one in London with the portraits of Dirck Bouts and Rogier van der Weyden point to a role that the Flemish Primitives could have played in Rembrandt's notion of the fundamentals of his profession (see Chapter II).

The conception of the *Self-portrait* as conveyed in Muxel's print raises the question of whether the hand was, indeed, part of the artist's intended final result. As mentioned above, an illustration of the painting in which the hand is visible only first appeared in the catalogue of the Rembrandt exhibition held in Amsterdam in 1935.<sup>14</sup> A legitimate question here is whether an original pentimento may have been stripped away when the paint of the hand was uncovered. Perhaps the hand was still only in an underpainted state, which would explain its strikingly coarse execution.<sup>15</sup> The exposure of the hand and the possible application of the dark cast shadow to the right interrupted the flowing course of the fur trim – as it is seen in the print – and what remained is the somewhat stiff-looking straight cloak fastening, which contributes to the present awkwardness of the composition. Important in this respect is that in the above-mentioned prints by Hieronymus Cock the right hand of the painters is depicted.

Assessing the *peinture* of the painting is without a doubt the most difficult task. The implicit norm, as upheld by Gaskell, namely that the painting technique in such a head – should it be by Rembrandt – would be characterised by 'subtle layering', is no longer viable (see note 4). In fact, we know relatively little about the painting technique in the faces of Rembrandt's (self-) portraits of the early 1640s and virtually nothing at all about the extent to which the conscious application of layering played a definite role in these paintings. In this respect, investigation of cross-sections was possible only of heads in the *Night watch* (III A 146), whose layering proved to be remarkably simple.<sup>16</sup> The gradation of the flesh tones was realised as a system of strokes in a single paint layer. That, as in this painting, additional highlights and dark shadows were applied goes without saying. Another feature that may not be used to gauge authenticity (as Gaskell does in his entry on the painting) is the degree of precision in detail in the heads. In this case, he notes that details in the Thyssen painting are less meticulous than in Rembrandt's autograph heads. This suggestion of elaborate details relies on an illusion that is only dispelled when the painting is analysed from close by. Quite essential to Rembrandt's painting technique is the conscious blurring of details determined by inner contours, which reinforces the

Fig. 8. Copy 1. Canvas 62 x 49 cm. Present whereabouts unknown



plastic effect of volume and creates a sense of atmosphere that leads the viewer to suppose that he nonetheless sees crisp details (see Vol. II, p. 12). A more important question could be whether certain patterns in the directions of the brushstrokes might be significant in their relation to light effects and plasticity. However, no clear deviations from Rembrandt's manner can be detected in that respect.

Another argument for initially rejecting the painting mentioned in connection with the criticism within the RRP is that the with Rembrandt usual differences in the thickness of the paint are barely noticeable in this picture. This impression could partly be a result of abrasion of the brushwork. The X-radiograph does display significant differences in radioabsorbency in the passages containing lead white, thus indicating variations in thickness. On the other hand, less distinct paint relief is found in (self-) portraits from around 1640 than in the period before and after. It is important to realise that traces of the brushwork could have been eliminated by heavy-handed cleaning which, as Marijnissen found in old cleaning recipes, was sometimes done with an abrasive sand, a mixture of water and ground pumice stone, or a mixture of water and smalt or ash.<sup>17</sup>

One other argument related to the painting technique that could be used to reject the painting under discussion is that passages which are transparently executed in the (self-) portraits, such as eye sockets, seem to have been opaquely painted in the Thyssen painting. Apart from the question of whether overpainting plays a role here, it must be noted that in the 1640s Rembrandt used transparency in the shadows far less consistently than

previously, for example, compare the *Portrait of Herman Doomer* in New York (see Chapter III fig. 250) which is also on panel.

The fact that a new dendrochronological investigation of the wood showed that the panel on which the Thyssen *Self-portrait* is painted comes from the same tree as four paintings whose attribution to Rembrandt is generally accepted (see *Support*), places the painting squarely in the studio of Rembrandt and adds fresh impetus to the question of its authenticity. Nevertheless, this and the above-mentioned considerations do not yield a definitive conclusion as to the painting's autograph nature. It does, however, allow the possibility of reconsidering the generally accepted rejection of the painting. In our opinion, the new information presented here argues strongly in favour of the painting's authenticity.

For further discussion of this painting see Chapter III, pp. 247-248.

### 3. Documents and sources

None.

### 4. Graphic reproductions

1. Etching by Johann Nepomuk Muxel (Munich 1790 - Landshut 1870), inscribed: *N Muxel aqua f. / Rembrandt.* (fig. 7), in: J.D. Passavant, *Gemälde-Sammlung des Herzogs von Leuchtenberg*, Frankfurt-am-Main 1851, no. 147 and described on p. 29: '*Rembrandt's eigenes Bildnis* fast von vorn gesehen, in schwarzer mit Pelz besetzten Kleidung und einer Mütze auf dem Kopf. Eine doppelte, mit Edelsteinen besetzte Goldkette hängt über seine Brust. Dieses schöne Bild von sattem Ton gehört seiner zweiten Manier an. Lebensgross. / Holz. hoch 2'3", breit 1'10".' The print must have been made between 1835 and 1840 when Muxel made prints of the Duke of Leuchtenberg's collection (see 2. *Comments*). Within the graphic medium used, it is an accurate reproduction of the painting. It shows the painting in the same direction as the original with the most notable differences being that the hand – visible in the painting only since c. 1935 – is not depicted (see 2. *Comments*), and that the picture plane at all four sides – yet primarily at the bottom – is larger, which correlates with other indications that the painting must have been cut down in the past.

### 5. Copies

1. Canvas 62 x 49 cm (according to the owner), present whereabouts unknown (fig. 8). We know the painting only from a (poor) photographic reproduction. This copy is important for gaining insight into the genesis, or the material history of the original. The sitter's cap in the copy has a feather curving to the left and the cap's shape differs from that in the Thyssen painting in its present form: at the upper left the cap has a somewhat undulating contour while at the right it is substantially higher. Comparing the copy with the infrared reflectogram of the Thyssen *Self-portrait* (see *Radiography*) it appears that both the shape of the cap and of the feather correspond with the painted out shapes in the Thyssen painting. As this copy with its extremely detailed execution and the evidently strongly blurred modelling does not make the impression of having originated in Rembrandt's workshop, but rather of stemming from the 18th century, it would appear that the Thyssen painting was radically altered by later hands.

Other differences between the original and the copy: namely the depiction in the copy of but a single chain with an ornament on the chest; the addition of a gold chain around the edge of the cap; the V-shaped fur collar at the neck, and the different framing of the image must all be considered examples of artistic freedom on the part of the copyist.

2. Panel, dimensions unknown, present whereabouts unknown. This painting, too, is known by us only from a photograph (The Hague, RKD). Bust. In the area of the chest just below the longer chain is depicted a (gloved) hand. Unfortunately, on the basis of the available photograph it is not possible to date this copy with any precision: this could be important in further determining when the hand in the prototype was uncovered.

### 6. Provenance

- Coll. Eugène, vicomte de Beauharnais, prince de Venise, grand duc de Francfort, Herzog von Leuchtenberg and Fürst von Eichstätt (stepson of Emperor Napoleon I), Munich (d. 1824). *Catalogue des tableaux de la galerie de feu son altesse royale Monseigneur Le Prince Eugene Duc de Leuchtenberg a Munich*, Munich 1825, no. 133: 'Rembrandt, Paul, Van Rhijn né à Leyde en 1606, mort en 1674. Portrait d'un personnage, portant au col une double chaîne d'or ornée de pierreries; il est vêtu de noir et sa tête est couverte d'un Bonnet noir. Sur bois. H. II.3 L. 1.10 [Bavarian foot = 65.6 x 53.2 cm].' In ed. 1841, no. 151; ed. 1845, no. 151 and 1851 no. 147 (see also 4. *Graphic reproductions*, 1) the dimensions of the painting remain the same.
- Inherited by his second son Maximilian (d. 1852), who moved the collection to St Petersburg.
- By descent to his son Nikolai Maximilianovich, Prince Romanowski (d. 1891), by whom lent (with other works) to the Gallery of the Imperial Academy of Fine Art, St Petersburg, from 1886.
- Inherited by his elder natural son Nikolai Nikolaievich (d. 1928).
- Dealer Th. Lawrie & Co., London.
- Coll. Herbert S. Terell, New York (1902). Hofstede de Groot described the painting in 1915 as still in the Terell collection (see note 11). Valentiner makes no mention of it in his 1931 book in which he illustrated all of the paintings by Rembrandt in the United States.<sup>18</sup> At the time, the painting was probably already in the Buckley collection.
- Coll. Mrs Bertha Wilfred Buckley (younger daughter of

previous owner), Basingstoke, Berkshire, sale London (Sotheby's) 23 June 1937, no. 128 (£ 11.500 by Hess).

- Possibly coll. Mrs Collins Smith.
- Coll. Edward Partington (d. 1943), Westwood Park, Droitwich, sale London (Sotheby's) 8 November 1950, no. 128 (£ 21.000 by K. Hermsen).
- Dealer Kees Hermsen, The Hague.
- Coll. R.W. Hoos, Wassenaar (from 1950). Sale London (Sotheby's) 21 March 1973, no. 14 (bought in).
- Dealer P. de Boer, Amsterdam (1975).
- Galerie Geiger, Basel (1976); when acquired.

### NOTES

1. Gerson 240.
2. I. Gaskell, *The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection. Seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish painting*, London 1990, pp. 134-139.
3. Letter from H. Kühn dated 17 November 1987 to E. Bosshard, Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection.
4. Gaskell, op. cit.<sup>2</sup>, p. 138.
5. Schwartz 1984.
6. Tümpel 1986.
7. C. Wright, *Rembrandt: Self-Portraits*, London 1982, p. 42.
8. Gaskell based himself on the dendrochronological investigation conducted by J.A. Brongers and J. Bauch. In 1994, thus after the publication of Gaskell's book, new dendrochronological analysis by P. Klein revealed that the panel came from the same tree as four paintings by Rembrandt (see Support).
9. This includes changes in the collar (compare, for example, I A 41 and II *Corrigenda et Addenda*, p. 847, II A 80, III A 139) and corrections in the course of the contours (I A 20, A 22, A 40, II A 48, A 51, A 52).
10. J. Bruyn, 'Een onderzoek naar 17de-eeuwse schilderijformaten, voorname-lijk in Noord-Nederland', *O.H.* 93 (1979), pp. 96-115.
11. HdG 565.
12. G.K. Nagler, *Neues allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon*, 3rd ed., vol. 11, Leipzig 1835-52, pp. 179-180.
13. D. Lampsonius and H. Cock, *Pictorum aliquot celeberrima Germaniae inferioris effigies*, Antwerp 1572, nos. 4 and 5.
14. Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt tentoonstelling*, Amsterdam 1935, fig. 11.
15. Because the hand lies over a black layer, the impression is made that it was only subsequently applied - namely after the clothing had received the finishing touches - only then perhaps to be rejected later.
16. E. van de Wetering, C.M. Groen and J.A. Mosk, 'Summary report on the results of the technical examination of Rembrandt's Night watch', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 24 (1976), pp. 68-98, esp. 91-93.
17. R.H. Marijnissen, *Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l'oeuvre d'art*, Brussels 1967, Vol. I, pp. 67-72.
18. W.R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt paintings in America*, New York 1931.