

VII. REMBRANDT VAN RIJN (1606-69)

Biographical and background information

1. Rembrandt born in Leiden, son of a prosperous miller; settled in Amsterdam in 1632.
2. Married Saskia van Uylenburgh in 1634, who died in 1642; living with Hendrickje Stoffels by 1649.
3. Declaration of bankruptcy in 1656 and auctions of his property in 1657 and 1658; survived Hendrickje (d. 1663) and his son Titus (1641-68).
4. Dutch cultural and political background: war of liberation from Catholic Spain (1568-1648) and Protestant dominance; Dutch commerce and maritime empire.
5. Oil medium: impasto, glazes, canvas support, chiaroscuro and color.

Selected works

6. Religious subjects
 - a. *Supper at Emmaus*, c. 1628-30 (oil on panel, 1'3" x 1'5", Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris)
 - b. *Blinding of Samson*, 1636 (oil on canvas, 7'9" x 9'11", Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt-am-Main)
 - c. *Supper at Emmaus*, 1648 (oil on panel, 2'3" x 2'2", Louvre Museum, Paris)
 - d. *Return of the Prodigal Son*, c. 1668-69 (oil on canvas, 8'7" x 2'7", The Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg)
7. Self-Portraits—appearance, identity, image of the artist
 - a. *Self-portrait*, 1629 (oil on panel, 9 1/4" x 6 3/4", Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Kassel)
 - b. *Self-portrait*, c. 1634 (oil on panel, 26 1/2" x 21 1/4", Uffizi Gallery, Florence)
 - c. *Self-portrait Leaning on a Stone Sill*, 1639 (etching, 8" x 6 1/2")
 - d. *Self-portrait*, 1640 (oil on panel, 1'10" x 1'7", National Gallery, London)
 - i. Comparisons
 1. Raphael, *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione*, c. 1514-15 (oil on canvas, 2'8" x 2'2", Louvre Museum, Paris)
 2. Titian, *Portrait of a Man* (Ludovico Ariosto?), c. 1511-15 (oil on canvas, 2'8" x 2'2"), The National Gallery, London
 - e. *Self-portrait*, 1658 (oil on canvas, 4'4" x 3'4", Frick)
 - f. *Self-portrait*, 1660 (oil on canvas, 2'8" x 2'2", MMA)
 - g. *Self-portrait with Two Circles*, 1665-69 (oil on canvas, 2'8" x 2'1", Kenwood House, London)
 - h. *Self-portrait with Saskia* ("*The Prodigal Son in the Tavern*"), c. 1635 (oil on canvas, 5'3" x 4'4", Gemäldegalerie, Dresden)

8. Portraits

- a. *Portrait of Nicolaes Ruts*, 1631 (oil on panel, 46" x 34", Frick)
- b. *Portrait of Saskia van Uylenbergh ("Saskia in a Red Hat")*, c. 1634 (oil panel, 3'3" x 2'7", Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Kassel)
- c. *Portrait of Jan Six*, 1654 (oil on canvas, 44" x 40", Six Foundation, Amsterdam)
- d. *Portrait of Hendrickje Stoffels at an Open Door*, 1659 (oil on canvas, 2'10" x 2'2", Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin)

9. Group portraits

- a. *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, 1632 (oil on canvas, 5'5" x 7'2", Maurithuis, The Hague)
- b. *The Militia Company of Captain Frans Banning Cocq ("The Night Watch")*, 1642 (oil on canvas, 11'9" x 14'3", Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)
- c. *The Syndics of the Cloth Drapers Guild*, 1662 (oil on canvas, 6'1" x 9', Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

10. Historical and mythological subjects

- a. *Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer*, 1653 (oil canvas, 4'8" x 4'6", MMA)
- b. *Susanna and the Elders*, 1647 (oil on panel, 2'6" x 2'11", Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin)
- c. *Bathsheba with King David's Letter ("Bathsheba at Her Bath")*, 1654 (oil on canvas, 4'8" x 4'8", Louvre Museum, Paris)

11. Prints (MMA has both series in its Prints and Drawings collection)

- a. *Christ Presented to the People*, fifth state (1655) and eighth state (1655) (etching, 14.1" x 17.9")
- b. *Christ Crucified Between Two Thieves ("The Three Crosses")*, second state (1653) and fourth state (1660) (etching and drypoint, 15.1" x 17.9")

12. Problems of attribution

- a. *The Polish Rider*, c. 1655(?) (oil on canvas, 3'10" x 4'5", Frick)
- b. *Man with a Gilt Helmet*, c. 1650(?) (oil on canvas, 2'2 3/8" x 1'7 5/8", Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin)

Readings and web resources

Primary Source Reader:

Constantijn Huygens, excerpts from the *Autobiography*

Letters from Rembrandt to Huygens

Samuel van Hoogstraten, "On the Nightwatch"

Jeremy de Dekker, "In Praise of Rembrandt"

Readings on Butler Reserve

Svetlana Alpers, *Rembrandt's Enterprise: the Studio and the Market* (Chicago, 1988), chapter 1: "The Master's Touch"

Horst Gerson, *Rembrandt Paintings* (New York, 1978)

Julius S. Held, *Rembrandt's "Aristotle" and other Rembrandt Studies* (Princeton, 1969; revised paperback edition retitled *Rembrandt Studies* [1991]), chapter 1: "Rembrandt's 'Aristotle'," and chapter 2: "The 'Polish Rider.'"
Jakob Rosenberg, *Rembrandt: Life and Work* (Ithaca, 1980), especially chapter 1: "Rembrandt's Life," and chapter 2: "Portraiture"
Christopher White, *Rembrandt* (London-New York, 1984)

Web resources

Rijksmuseum's website on Rembrandt and works in their collection at http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/aria/aria_artists/00016943?lang=en
MMA's "Timeline of Art History" page on Rembrandt's paintings at http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/rmbt/hd_rmbt.htm
Jonathan Janson's comprehensive website at <http://www.rembrandtpainting.net>

Local museum resources

The MMA and Frick have many paintings by Rembrandt not included in Art Humanities database; search their websites for details.