

Karel van der Pluym (1625–1672) to Heyman Dullaert (1636–1684), none is convincing.<sup>17</sup> Whether or not *Portrait of Rembrandt* is by the same unknown artist as the Berlin picture is another puzzle yet to be solved.

#### Notes

1. Pigment analyses of paint and ground layers are available in the Scientific Research department (see reports 6 July 1981, 18 August 1981, 20 October 1981, and 14 May 1991).

2. Technical examination and pigment analysis by Ashok Roy and David Bomford, National Gallery, London, May 1988, confirmed the use of smalt as an extender in impasted areas of red and yellow paint.

3. Since the provenance for this painting is not known prior to the mention in the Énard Collection, it is not known whether the identification was based on an even older tradition. For an image of Tromp from the early 1650s, see Jan Lievens' *Portrait of the Vice-Admiral*, Maerten Harpertz Tromp (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. no. A 838).

4. Sébastien Énard sale, Paris, 23 April 1832, no. 119, 136–137:

Des traits mâles, une contenance assurée, de la noblesse unie à beaucoup de simplicité, donnent une grande expression à ce beau portrait. Dans la demi-teinte qui l'enveloppe et qui va si bien à sa gravité, on pourrait voir une pensée philosophique, une allusion dont Rembrandt était bien capable. Martin Tromp, indifférent pour les titres, honorifiques, pour les chose d'apparat, modeste au plus haut point, ne dut trouver du plaisir à se montrer que quand il était en présence des ennemis de sa nation. Au surplus, quelqu'ait été l'intention du peintre, cette ombre répandue sur la figure d'un tel homme sied bien à son caractère.

5. Smith 1829–1842, 7: 86–87, no. 211, was the first to correctly identify the painting as a portrait of Rembrandt.

6. Bode 1897–1906, 5: 15.

7. Valentiner 1931, introduction.

8. Rosenberg 1948, 1: 28.

9. Pinder 1950, 81–82.

10. Goldscheider 1960, 174, cat. 65.

11. Goldscheider 1960, 174, cat. 65, considered it “one of the finest portraits ever painted.”

12. Gerson/Bredius 1969, 550, cat. 39. The reaction can be judged by the fact that Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann 1971, 93–94, listed this work first among what he considered Gerson's “five or six spectacular ‘dis-attributions’ of well-known and admired paintings, in some cases never previously doubted.” Haverkamp-Begemann noted that he continues to believe in the attribution to Rembrandt (personal communication, 1993).

13. I would like to thank Barbara A. Miller, former conservation scientist at the National Gallery of Art, who first analyzed the painting in 1981, Michael Palmer, and Melanie Gifford for their help in interpreting the technical data.

14. Its form can also be seen with the naked eye.

15. The restoration was undertaken in 1992–1993.

16. For an excellent discussion of this work, including information about its restoration, see Kelch et al. 1986.

17. The attribution of this painting to Karel van der Pluym was made by Adams 1984, 427–441. Grimm 1982–1983, 242–250, attributed the painting to Heyman Dullaert.

#### References

- 1829–1842 Smith, 7 (1836): 86–87, no. 211.  
 1854–1857 Waagen, 2 (1854): 281.  
 1893 Michel: 558 (also 1894 English trans., 2: 237).  
 1897–1906 Bode, 5 (1901): 15, 102, no. 346, repro.  
 1899 Bell: 81, 150–151 (also 1907 ed.: 78, 129).  
 1906 Rosenberg: 260, repro., 401, no. 260 (also 1908 ed.: 319, repro., 559; 1909 ed.: 319, repro., 559; and 1921 English ed.: 319, repro.).  
 1907 Brown: 256–257.  
 1907–1927 HdG, 6 (1916): 281–282, no. 574.  
 1909 New York: no. 94.  
 1909–1910 Cox: 178–184.  
 1913–1916 Widener, 1 (1913): unpaginated, intro., no. 33, repro.  
 1914 Valentiner: 247, no. 58.  
 1923 Widener: unpaginated, repro.  
 1923 Meldrum: 196, 262, repro.  
 1928 Glück: 317–328.  
 1930b Valentiner: 3–4, repro.  
 1931 Widener: 88, repro.  
 1931 Valentiner: unpaginated, intro., no. 105, repro.  
 1935 Bredius: 3, 39, repro. (also 1936 English ed.: 3, 39, repro.).  
 1937 Goldscheider: 43, no. 199, repro.  
 1938 Waldmann: 334–343.  
 1942 Widener: 6, no. 666.  
 1948 Rosenberg, 1: 27–28; 2: no. 37, repro. (also 1964 rev. ed.: 42–44, repro.).  
 1948 Widener: 40, no. 666, repro.  
 1950 Pinder: 78, repro., 81–82.  
 1960 Goldscheider: 174, no. 65, repro.  
 1965 NGA: 111, no. 666.  
 1966 Bauch: 17, no. 321, repro.  
 1968 NGA: 97, repro.  
 1969 Gerson/Bredius: 35, repro., 555, no. 39.  
 1969 Washington: no. 10.  
 1971 Haverkamp-Begemann: 88–104.  
 1975 NGA: 290–291, repro.  
 1975 Walker: no. 360, color repro.  
 1976 Bolten and Bolten-Rempt: 193, no. 378, repro.  
 1982 Wright: 29–30, 43, no. 38, fig. 73.  
 1985 NGA: 333, repro.  
 1988 Alpers: 121, repro.

1942.9.61 (657)

### Rembrandt Workshop (probably Constantijn van Renesse)

#### *The Descent from the Cross*

1650/1652

Oil on canvas, 142 x 110.9 (55 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 43 $\frac{5}{8}$ )

Widener Collection

**Technical Notes:** The support, a medium-weight, plain-woven fabric consisting of two pieces seamed vertically to the left of center through the Christ figure, has been lined with the tacking margins trimmed. Slight cusping is visible along

the top and right edges, but none at the left or bottom. A set of tacking holes and crease marks along all four edges within the picture plane indicate that they were once turned over a smaller stretcher and returned to plane at the time of lining. The seam and creases protrude slightly. Scattered small tears are visible in the x-radiograph, notably along the top edge at center and in the background right of center.

Paint was applied over a double ground composed of a thick, light gray lower layer followed by a thin, brown gray upper layer.<sup>1</sup> A black underpaint layer is present in most areas. Paint handling varies from rich opaque layers to thin glazes, with complex layering and dramatic brushmarking in light passages. The x-radiograph (see fig. 3) shows artist's changes to the figures supporting Christ's body, the legs of which were once bent farther backward. Initially a young man stood where the older man with a torch is placed. Two profiled figures, visible just below the younger figure's head, were also painted out. Upon removal of later repaint (1992), the turbaned foreground figure was found to have been painted over another figure that had been intentionally scraped down. It is unknown when and why this change was made.

Numerous small losses are scattered overall, and abrasion is light, save in the turbaned figure. The painting underwent treatment in 1991–1992 to remove discolored overpaint and later repaints.

**Provenance:** Viscountess Hampden, Harriot Burton [1751–1829], London; (sale, Christie & Manson, London, 18 April 1834, no. 83); Fuller John A. Beaver, Green Heys, Lancashire; (sale, Christie & Manson, London, 20 June 1840, no. 87). E. W. Parker, Skirwith Abbey, Cumberland; (sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 2 July 1909, no. 99); (F. Kleinberger & Co., Paris); F. Gans, Frankfurt-on-Main. (Bachstitz, The Hague, in 1921); inheritance from Estate of Peter A. B. Widener by gift through power of appointment of Joseph E. Widener, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania; after purchase by funds of the Estate.

**Exhibited:** Washington 1969, no. 12.

AFTER SPIRITED BIDDING between Mr. Lesser of New Bond Street and the Parisian dealer F. Kleinberger on 2 July 1909, Kleinberger paid 7,800 guineas for *The Descent from the Cross*. Although the painting had not been cited in the literature and was unknown to Rembrandt scholars until just before the sale, the price was a record for a Rembrandt painting sold in a London auction house. Aside from the excitement surrounding the discovery of a new Rembrandt, the high price was undoubtedly influenced as well by the positive opinion given about its authenticity the previous week by the leading Rembrandt authority of the day, Dr. Wilhelm von Bode.<sup>2</sup>

The painting, then signed and dated 1651, was recognized by Bode and, subsequently, by other scholars as a free variant of Rembrandt's earlier representations of *The Descent from the Cross*, his 1633 painting for the Passion series that was intended for Prince Frederik Hendrik (fig. 1), and, more specifi-

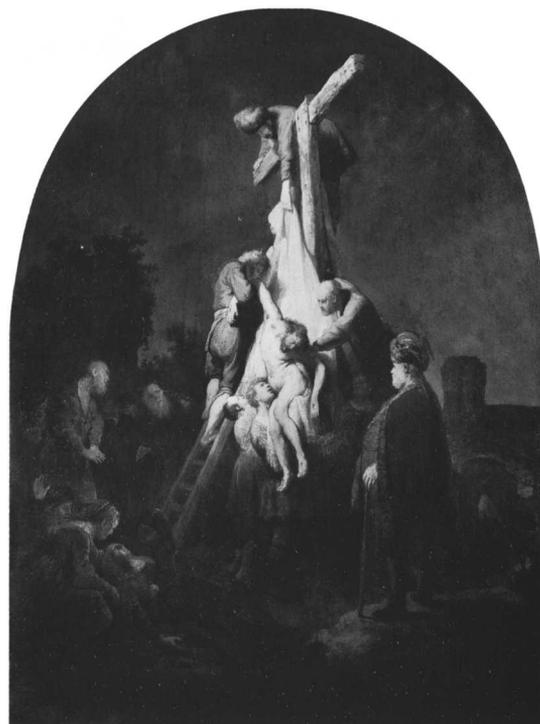


Fig. 1. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Descent from the Cross*, 1633, oil on panel, Munich, Alte Pinakothek

cally, his large-scale depiction of this subject, signed and dated 1634, in the Hermitage, Saint Petersburg (fig. 2). Hofstede de Groot, Stechow, and Rosenberg, among others, noted how Rembrandt had in this work reduced the number of compositional elements that had appeared in the earlier examples. They also wrote movingly about how the changes had enhanced the scene's pictorial expression and emotional content.<sup>3</sup> Scholars also identified the 1651 *Descent from the Cross* as one of the two paintings of this subject listed in the inventory of Rembrandt's possessions in 1656.<sup>4</sup>

The positive assessment given to the painting for the sixty years after it appeared at auction in London in 1909, however, came abruptly to an end in 1969 when Horst Gerson wrote that the painting was the work of a pupil. As far as he was concerned, "the gestures are lame, the expression sentimental and the composition as a whole lacks concentration." He suggested that the painting may have been executed by a "pupil like B. Fabritius or S. van Hoogstraten."<sup>5</sup> Since Gerson's publication no Rembrandt authority has accepted the work as autograph. In 1984, the attribution of the painting at the National Gallery was changed to "After Rembrandt van Rijn." The Rembrandt Research Project later listed *The Descent*

from *the Cross* as a copy of the Hermitage painting, the attribution of which they also reject.<sup>6</sup> The RRP suggested that the National Gallery's painting "may very well have been produced in his circle." It further allowed that Rembrandt may have permitted "variants done by pupils to be included in the 1656 inventory of his belongings as being his own work...."<sup>7</sup> Finally, Sumowski placed the painting among those executed by anonymous members of the Rembrandt school.<sup>8</sup>

Heavily discolored varnish and extensive repainting (fig. 3) have profoundly affected assessments of the emotional content of the work and even its attribution, including that of the RRP.<sup>9</sup> To try to come to a clearer understanding of the place of this work within Rembrandt's workshop, removal of the overpaint was undertaken in 1991–1992.<sup>10</sup> While this conservation treatment has helped resolve some of

the questions about the complex genesis of this work that were first raised when the painting underwent technical examination in 1978, many questions still remain.<sup>11</sup> It is evident, for example, that the composition was entirely reworked in the seventeenth century. The following text will try to determine when the extensive seventeenth-century revisions were made, when the underlying version was painted, and how it looked. Finally it will examine the attribution of the work and its place within Rembrandt's workshop.

The compositional connections between the painting and *The Descent from the Cross* in the Hermitage, which have been noted ever since the time of Bode, are even closer than one would assume from looking at the surface. X-radiographs (fig. 4), which are admittedly difficult to read because of the unusual striations across the image caused by an un-



Fig. 2. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Descent from the Cross*, 1634, oil on canvas, Saint Petersburg, Hermitage



Rembrandt Workshop (probably Constantijn van Renesse), *The Descent from the Cross* 1942.9.61



Fig. 3. 1942.9.61 prior to treatment

even application of ground,<sup>12</sup> nevertheless do reveal much about changes in both design and the shape of the canvas. While slight distortions in thread patterns in the canvas at the top and right indicate that these edges have been only slightly trimmed, no such scalloping pattern is evident along the left or the bottom, a clear indication that the canvas has been reduced along these edges. Also evident in the x-radiographs is a vertical seam beneath the figure of Christ where two canvases have been joined.<sup>13</sup> If one hypothesizes that this unusually situated seam originally marked the central axis of the painting, then it is clear that two-thirds of the left half of the original image have been eliminated. The original format thus would have been comparable to that of the Hermitage painting in that Christ was centrally placed in the composition. It is also probable that the proportions of the two compositions would have been comparable. The Washington painting would then have been substantially larger than the Hermitage version (the Hermitage painting measures 159.3 x 116.4 cm; the proposed width of the Gallery painting would have been approximately 80 cm x 2, or 160 cm, and the height about 248 cm).<sup>14</sup>

The hypothesis that the Washington painting was once a larger-scale version of the Hermitage painting is reinforced by the character of the design changes evident on the x-radiograph. The clearest of these is the change in the position of the man on the ladder who holds the torch that illuminates the scene. This middle-aged man (fig. 5) has been painted over a younger figure whose head, in a position identical to that in the Hermitage painting, can be seen in the x-radiograph at about his chest level (fig. 6). Although the image of Christ is difficult to read because of the density of the lead white paint, earlier legs are visible that were bent back in a position comparable to that in the 1634 composition. Also vaguely visible in the x-radiograph are the profiles of two figures found in the Hermitage painting that have been eliminated from the Washington version, that of the bearded man standing just below the youth with the candle and that of one of the male onlookers crowded to his right. Finally, the arm of the Virgin was originally illuminated as it is in the Hermitage painting.

Cross-sections have provided corroborating evidence that the paint layers are quite complex and that colors underlying the surface paint are similar

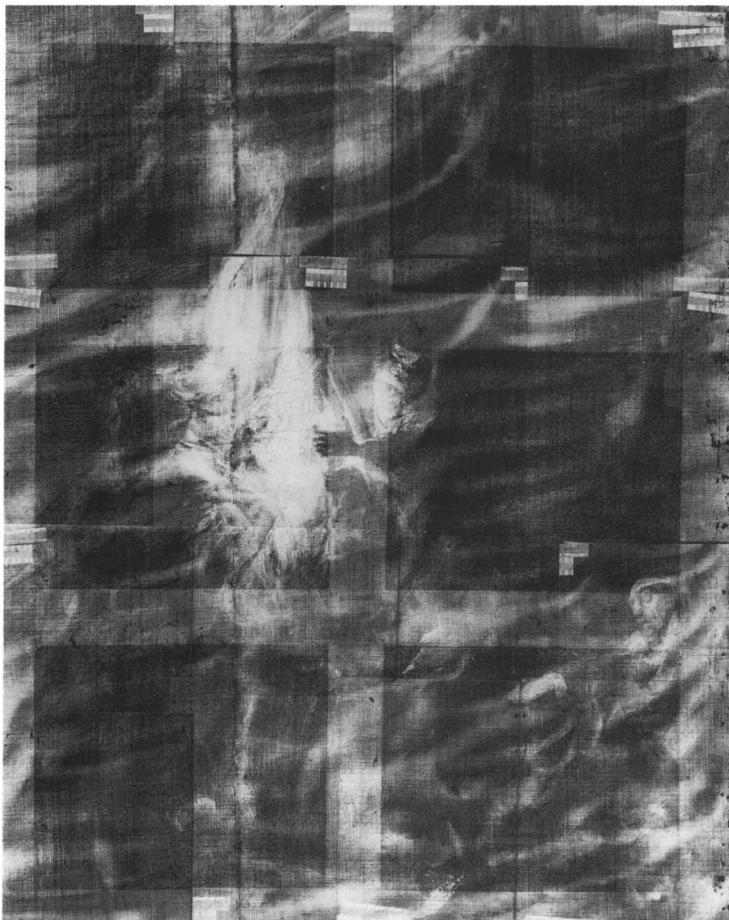


Fig. 4. X-radiograph of 1942.9.61



Fig. 5. Detail of head of middle-aged man in 1942.9.61

to those one would expect from the colors found in the Hermitage painting. The most striking instance is that a bright orange can be found in exactly the same area one finds the bright orange costume to the right of the turbaned man in the foreground of the Hermitage painting. The cross-sections also suggest that the extensive changes were made only after the first composition had been blocked out with a thin, dark layer of paint. This layer has been found in every cross-section with the exception of the neck of the Virgin. Indeed, the head of the Virgin does seem to be the only part of a figure in the painting not extensively reworked, although the broadly executed highlights on her face may have been added to the preexisting form to tie in to the handling of the other figures. Interestingly, associated with this pervasive layer of dark paint is an unpigmented layer. While this layer generally appears to lie on top of the dark layer, sometimes it seems to pass through it and sometimes to lie below it.<sup>15</sup> The layer is almost certainly varnish, which may indicate that a short lapse of time existed between the execution of the underlying image and final composition.

If *The Descent from the Cross* was once larger, it has also been somewhat smaller than its present dimen-

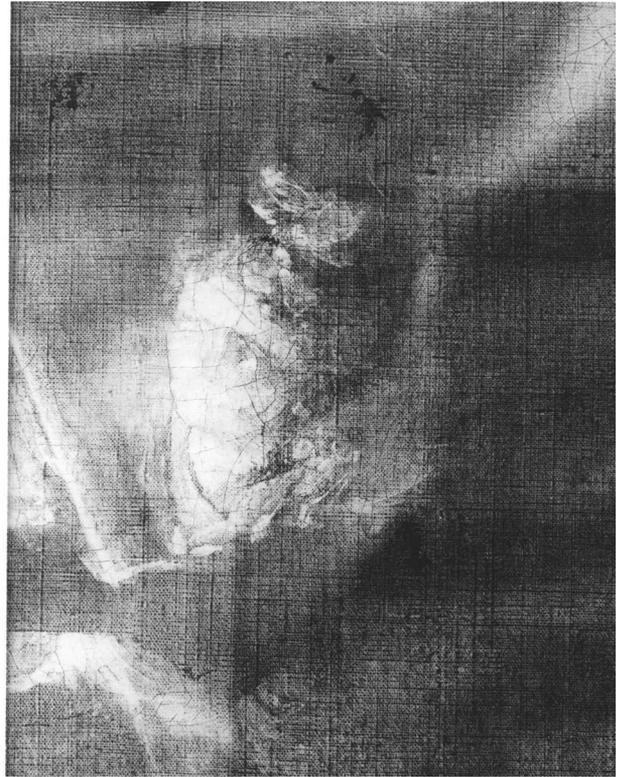


Fig. 6. X-radiograph of head in 1942.9.61

sions. A pattern of losses from tack holes along the four edges of the canvas, evident in x-radiographs, provides evidence that the canvas was once turned over a smaller stretcher. This smaller dimension may well have been the one decided upon in the Rembrandt workshop.

Restoration of the image seems to have taken place in two separate campaigns, one of which probably occurred when *The Descent from the Cross* was restretched on its present stretcher. The signature and date must have been added at that time, which is understandable. More difficult is trying to determine why the head, shoulders, and turban of the figure in the foreground were entirely repainted. When these later additions were removed during the treatment of 1991–1992, it was revealed that the paint surface in that area was badly abraded. The various underlying layers of paint are difficult to interpret with certainty. It appears that the turbaned figure in the foreground covered a comparable figure that seems to have been scraped down. Beneath that figure, however, was yet another one: remnants of his black, flat-shaped hat still exist in an underlying paint layer. When the head and shoulders of the turbaned figure were scraped away by the later re-

restorer, he apparently concluded that so few remnants of the earlier head with the flat-shaped hat existed that it behooved him to repaint the turbaned figure he had just removed.

One further compositional change that was made by a later restorer was the shape of Joseph of Arimathea's red coat. The restorer must have felt that this aged man's body should have been much more massive than it had been painted, and consequently he added significantly to its bulk. With this tempera repaint removed, the rigid angularity of the seventeenth-century image is now visible.

Without the reworkings it has become more apparent than ever that the seventeenth-century changes to *The Descent from the Cross* were undertaken with a great deal of sensitivity. Indeed, a comparison of the Hermitage painting and this work demonstrates the profound differences between the two works despite their apparent similarities. The Gallery's composition is far more focused than is the Hermitage version. Not only is the cross brought forward and the figures given greater prominence, but light is concentrated on only two major areas of activity: that surrounding the lowering of Christ's body by the aged Joseph of Arimathea and the swooning figure of the Virgin. Other hidden light sources that were included in the Hermitage version have here been eliminated. Light is also given a broader focus on the central figure group by having the figure holding the torch stand higher on the ladder and by having Christ's legs brought forward. These changes also reduce the diagonal thrust seen in the Hermitage composition, for the disposition of forms is more balanced, and gestures, including the arm holding Christ's waist, have a predominantly horizontal emphasis.

The feeling that is evoked by the Washington painting is more reverential than that in the Hermitage version. Christ seems to be held out and presented to the viewer by Joseph of Arimathea while the figures below quietly wait to assist. In the Hermitage painting, on the other hand, Joseph of Arimathea struggles with the weight of Christ's body as others labor to pull out the nail that secures Christ's left hand to the cross. The emphasis on the physical activity of removing Christ's body from the cross is reinforced by the angular gestures, the strong diagonal shadows on the white shroud, the ungainly position of Christ's body, and the press of the crowd around the foot of the cross.

This total rethinking of the composition speaks strongly for the participation of Rembrandt in the process, particularly because the emotional content of the work is so sympathetic with his approach to

religious imagery during the 1650s. The execution, however, while Rembrandtesque, is certainly not that of the master. Heavy impastos on the face of the man holding the torch, for example, are coarsely applied, while the white sheet wrapped around Christ is painted in flat planes of color that only superficially suggest folds in the material. Many questions thus remain: what was the date of the original composition of the Washington *Descent from the Cross*; who painted it; how and why were the later reworkings undertaken; and who was the artist responsible?

Dating the underlying image is quite difficult. Technical evidence gained from examinations of the canvas or paints used has not yet provided precise correlations with other works.<sup>16</sup> On the basis of the compositional similarities with the Hermitage *Descent*, it would seem logical to assume that the Washington version would have been executed at approximately the same period of time. Just when that was, however, is a matter of some dispute. While the Hermitage *Descent* is signed and dated 1634 and was apparently painted on the same type of canvas as that used for Rembrandt's *Flora*, 1634, also in the Hermitage, the RRP has not only rejected the attribution to Rembrandt but has also argued on stylistic grounds that the painting was executed in Rembrandt's workshop around 1640. Nevertheless, the existence of the date, the evidence of the canvas weave, and the close compositional similarity to the 1633 *Descent from the Cross* from the Passion series make it seem most probable that the Hermitage *Descent* was conceived in the mid-1630s. It was during these years that Rembrandt was particularly fascinated with the drama and emotional intensity of this story, something he explored in comparable ways in oil sketches, prints, and drawings. It seems unlikely that in the 1640s he would have entrusted a student in his workshop to re-create a composition that resonated so distinctly a compositional idea first developed in 1633.

If the Hermitage *Descent* was first conceived in the mid-1630s, it then seems likely that the Washington painting was as well. Perhaps both large-scale works were made in anticipation of forthcoming commissions that never materialized. An added incentive may have been Rembrandt's desire to compete with Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640). Rembrandt, who based his 1633 *Descent from the Cross* for the Passion series on Lucas Vorsterman's reproductive engraving after Rubens' altarpiece *The Descent from the Cross*, now in the Antwerp Cathedral, may have decided to emulate not only Rubens' composition, but also the large scale in which Rubens worked. Although the

degree to which Rembrandt was involved in the execution of either of these works cannot be determined, he may well have blocked in the composition for at least one of them. The final execution may then have been left to a student or students. In any event, there seems no stylistic or technical evidence by which to conclude that one of these works was a direct copy of the other.

Although the signature and date 1651 on the Washington *Descent* were determined to be later additions and removed during treatment in 1991–1992, the date is not inconsistent with the style of the figures painted over the earlier composition. As mentioned above, moreover, the artistic concept is also consistent with Rembrandt's work from this period. Again no documents provide information that help explain why such extensive reworkings were undertaken at this time. The reason may once again have been the hope that a commission for such a scene would materialize. Rembrandt may also have decided that the very large size of the original composition made the work particularly difficult to sell. He may also have felt that the original composition provided the foundation for a particularly fascinating challenge, and thus he reconceived a dramatic story by changing subtly the positions of the figures, the lighting effects, and even the moment depicted to create an entirely different mood and emotional effect.

While Rembrandt was undoubtedly closely involved in the rethinking of this composition and may well have blocked in forms to serve as a compositional guide, no evidence of his own brushwork exists in the final image. Just who may have been responsible for the execution had been difficult to judge before the recent restoration because of the extensive reworking and the accumulation of discolored varnish. The issue is still a matter of some speculation. Nevertheless, sufficient stylistic connections can be found between this work and paintings and drawings attributed to Constantijn van Renesse (1626–1680) to make a tentative attribution to this fascinating Rembrandt student.

Renesse, about whom very little is known, seems to have been with Rembrandt between 1649 and 1652.<sup>17</sup> Rembrandt must have taken a great deal of interest in his work, if one is to judge from the drawings by Renesse that he corrected.<sup>18</sup> Renesse had a preference for biblical scenes, many of which focused on the life of Christ.<sup>19</sup> Stylistically, Renesse's figures compare closely to those in the Washington *Descent*. In his drawing of *Doubting Thomas* (Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich), Christ has the same elongated proportions and anatomical



Fig. 7. Constantijn van Renesse, *The Good Samaritan*, 1648, oil on canvas, Paris, Louvre, © Photo R.M.N.

structure as Christ in the *Descent*.<sup>20</sup> Similar figure types also occur in paintings convincingly attributed to Renesse. In his *The Good Samaritan* (fig. 7), for example, the crossed legs of the wounded man have much the same structure as do those of Christ.<sup>21</sup> Finally, Renesse's painting technique combines the smooth, flat planes of color and rough impastos found in *The Descent from the Cross*. This combination of techniques is particularly evident in his *Conviviality near the Inn* in the Corcoran Gallery of Art (fig. 8). Although this painting is not signed, the close compositional similarity between this work and Renesse's etching, signed and dated 1651, confirms the attribution.<sup>22</sup> Despite the different nature of the subject, the manner in which a number of figures in this work have been executed has distinct parallels in *The Descent from the Cross* (see fig. 4).

This painting thus is a fascinating document about the complexities that sometimes exist with works produced in Rembrandt's workshop. The evidence suggests that it was initially painted in a much larger size, with a composition that resembled that of the Hermitage *Descent from the Cross*. The exact date of the first period of execution cannot be precisely determined, but it probably was during the mid-1630s. Around 1650, or shortly thereafter, it was severely cropped at the left and bottom, and virtually the entire composition was reworked. Although Rembrandt was probably involved in the rethinking of the composition, he does not seem to

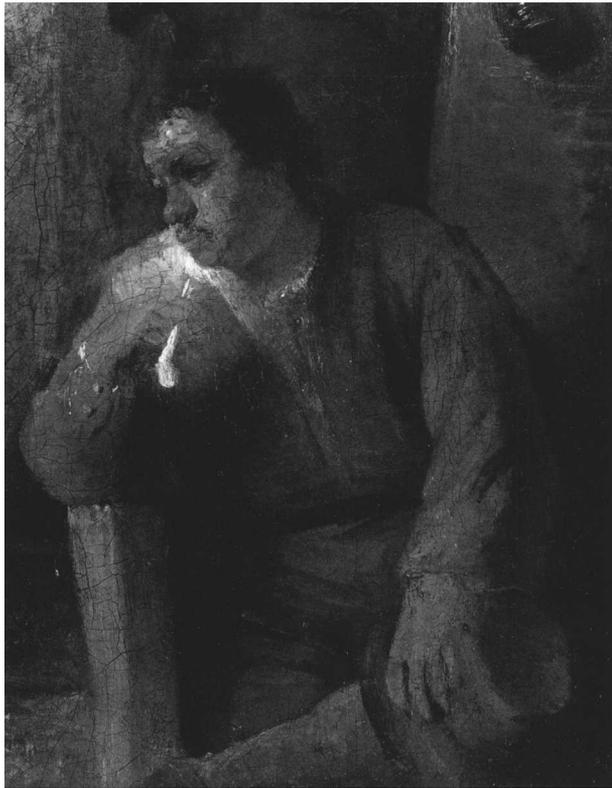


Fig. 8. Constantijn van Renesse, detail of seated figure at right in *Conviviality near the Inn*, n.d., oil on canvas, Washington, Collection of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, William A. Clark Collection

have had any part in the execution. Stylistic evidence suggests that the artist responsible was Constantijn van Renesse. If this hypothesis is correct, one could then argue that Renesse was a far more central figure in Rembrandt's workshop in the early 1650s than has hitherto been believed. It may well be that he was involved in a number of other large-scale religious paintings from this period that were produced by unidentified members of Rembrandt's workshop.<sup>23</sup>

#### Notes

1. Reports of the analyses of pigments and mediums in paint and ground layers are available in the Scientific Research department (July 1978, 8 July 1991, 10 August 1991, 14 August 1991, 8 October 1991, 15 November 1991, 2 December 1991, plus undated cross-section studies, 1991).

2. This information is taken from a clipping from an unidentified English newspaper, dated 3 July 1909, on file at the RKD. The title of the article was: "7,800Gs. For a Rembrandt." The commentator's response to the high price is also worth noting: "The explanation is simple enough, the ordeal by auction is not necessary to resolve the value of a great Rembrandt. If an owner wishes to release a famous master-

piece nowadays he knows dealers ready to give him his price straightway."

3. HdG 1907–1927, 6: 102, finds the differences between this painting and the Hermitage version so extensive that he considers the work to be a new representation of the same subject. Stechow 1929, 229, places the painting within the broad tradition of Rembrandt's paintings, drawings, and etchings. Rosenberg 1948, 1: 134–135 (also 1964, 220–221), emphasizes that while the action has been reduced, the emotional content has been enriched through the stability of the composition and the breadth and vigor of the paint handling.

4. The inventory of Rembrandt's possessions taken on 25–26 July 1656 is listed as document 1656/12 in Strauss and Van der Meulen 1979, 353, no. 37 ("A large 'Descent from the Cross' by Rembrandt, with a handsome gold frame by the same"); 379, no. 293 ("The 'Descent from the Cross' by Rembrandt"). It has also been assumed that one of these paintings is the 1634 version in the Hermitage.

5. Gerson/Bredius 1969, 610, no. 684.

6. *Corpus* 1982–, 2: 617–627, C49. The authors of the *Corpus* emphasize the complexities of the problems of attribution associated with this work. Despite the date on the painting and the use of a canvas available in 1634 they have concluded that the work could only have been painted around 1640 in Rembrandt's workshop. They discount the possibility that Rembrandt may have laid in the composition in about 1634 and that the work was completed later by another hand. Such a theory, however, seems quite plausible, particularly given the fact that a number of changes do exist between the x-radiograph and the final image (for example, the head of a man is visible in the x-radiograph between Christ's right arm and leg that does not appear in the final painting). The only member of Rembrandt's workshop that they mention as the possible artist is Ferdinand Bol (1616–1680).

7. *Corpus* 1982–, 3: 628–630, C49, copy 2.

8. Sumowski 1983, 4: 2961, cat. 1972.

9. While Rosenberg 1948, 1: 135, admired the painting's "colouristic warmth," which had largely resulted from the accumulation of discolored varnish, Gerson/Bredius 1969, 610, no. 584, responded with surprise that Bauch 1966, 6, 84, supposed (rightly) that the turbaned figure in the foreground of the painting was overpainted. Indeed, this figure must have been a later addition. Not only did the paint on the turban cover existing craquelure, it contained antimony, an element found in Naples yellow, a pigment not commonly used before the mid-eighteenth century. Another major change was the overpainting of the red cloak of Joseph of Arimathea, which substantially altered the shape of the figure's body. The overpaint must have resulted from a different restoration since it was executed in tempera. The RRP's assessment of the painting, *Corpus* 1982–, 3: 628–630, C49, is quite flawed. The information the RRP relates about the painting being transferred onto a new canvas in Russia in 1854 is false. The RRP also criticizes the attribution most severely precisely in areas that have been overpainted without recognizing that these areas are overpainted. Finally, the RRP never examined the x-radiographs and did not discuss the extensive compositional changes they reveal.

10. New technical examinations, including the taking of cross-sections, were made at that time with Carol Christensen, Michael Palmer, and Karen Groen.

11. The examinations in 1976 were undertaken with the assistance of Kay Silberfeld and Barbara Miller. A report on their findings was written by Cynthia P. Schneider, who was

at the Gallery then as a summer intern. The problems of the genesis of the painting as understood at that time were published in Wheelock 1988, 218–220.

12. Similar effects are found in the x-radiographs of Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait with Saskia*, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden. See the illustration in *Corpus* 1982–, 3: cat. A 111, page 134.

13. The piece to the left is approximately 37.9 cm wide and that to the right approximately 73 cm wide.

14. This calculation is based on the existing width of the righthand piece of canvas (about 73 cm) with an addition of about 7 cm for the apparent reduction along the right edge. This reduction is calculated by noting that, with the exception of his left hand, the man who supports Mary in the Hermitage painting was eliminated in the Gallery *Descent* when the canvas was cut.

15. In one instance it seems as though the unpigmented layer fills cracks in the dark layer.

16. See Technical Notes.

17. For Renesse's life, see Vermeeren 1978, 3–23, and Sumowski 1983, 4: 2469–2470. Renesse was born on 17 September 1626, in Maarssen, near Utrecht. His father, Ludovicus (Lodewijk) Gerardus van Renesse, was a preacher. After his father moved to Breda in 1638, Constantijn entered the University of Leiden, where he was inscribed for literary studies, although he later, in 1642, changed to philosophical studies. He may well have begun his artistic studies in Leiden, although nothing is known about his apprenticeship. An inscription on the back of a drawing of *Daniel in the Lion's Den* in the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam (inv. no. MB 200), indicates that he had made the drawing in 1649, "the second time that he had been with Rembrandt." His artistic career was short-lived, presumably ending by 1654 when he was named secretary of the city of Eindhoven. In the same year he married a daughter of the burgomaster of Breda. He died on 12 September 1680.

18. See Falck 1924, 191–200.

19. Particularly interesting in relation to the Washington *Descent from the Cross* is his drawing of the *Lamentation of Christ on the Cross*. Sumowski 1979–1992, 9: no. 2166a. Although executed around 1650, this scene is likewise a free adaptation of a Rembrandt composition from the mid-1630s, his grisaille oil sketch of c. 1635 (National Gallery, London, inv. no. 43). The main conceptual difference is that while Rembrandt depicted the dead Christ lying prone in the Virgin's lap so that he could emphasize the profound emotional reactions of the Virgin and the various bystanders to Christ's death, Renesse raised up the body of Christ so that the viewer focuses upon Christ himself. In so doing Renesse not only changed the arrangement of the main figure group, he also cropped the scene dramatically. It is exactly the same thought process that occurs in the Washington *Descent from the Cross*.

20. Illustrated in Sumowski 1979–1992, 9: no. 2188<sup>xx</sup>.

21. See Foucart 1988, 108–113; Sumowski 1983, 4: no. 1658a.

22. For a reproduction see Hollstein 1949–, 20: 12, no. 5.

23. One such painting is the life-size *Lamentation* in the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, inv. no. SN252, which is signed "Rembrandt f. 1650." The composition of this work resembles that of Renesse's drawing of the same subject (see note 19). The figure of Christ, as well as the old woman at his feet, is reminiscent of comparable figures in *The Descent from the Cross*. For a discussion of this painting, see Robinson and Wilson 1980, cat. 116.

## References

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1909b Bode: 1–9, repro. no. 4.  
1909 Hofstede de Groot: 173–183, repro. no. 6.  
1921 *Bachstitz Gallery*, 1: 5, pl. 31.  
1921b Valentiner: xxii, no. 72, reprints. 71–72.  
1922 Neumann, 1: 205–206, repro.  
1923 Meldrum: 64, note 2, 198.  
1923 Widener: unpaginated, repro.  
1929 Stechow: 217–232, repro. no. 11.  
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1975 NGA: 286–287, repro.  
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1982– *Corpus*, 2 (1986): 628–630, figs. 8–9.  
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1942.9.66 (662)

## Rembrandt Workshop (possibly Willem Drost)

### *The Philosopher*

c. 1653

Oil on walnut (oak extension and strips), 61.5 x 49.5  
(24¼ x 19½)

Widener Collection

**Technical Notes:** The cradled panel support is composed of two vertically grained boards of wood joined horizontally through the hands. The join is 5.5 cm from the bottom edge. The main board is walnut, and the lower extension is oak. Edging strips have been added to the top and sides.<sup>1</sup>

A thin white or beige ground layer is present on both upper and lower panel boards, with variations in composi-