NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ONLINE EDITIONS
Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century

Rembrandt van Rijn
Dutch, 1606 - 1669

The Mill

1645/1648

oil on canvas
overall: 87.6 x 105.6 cm (34 1/2 x 41 9/16 in.)
framed: 121 x 138.4 cm (47 5/8 x 54 1/2 in.)
Widener Collection 1942.9.62

ENTRY

Of all the paintings by Rembrandt in the National Gallery of Art, none has provoked stronger feelings over the years than has *The Mill.* The enormous fame accorded it in the nineteenth century, when it was admired by artists and critics alike, culminated when it was sold in London in 1911 for the extraordinary sum of £ 100,000.[1] The purchaser was Peter A. B. Widener, the millionaire collector from Philadelphia. Before *The Mill* left England, it was brought to the National Gallery in London to be put on public exhibition for two brief days. Newspaper reports indicate that some eleven thousand people visited the painting each day [fig. 1]. Somewhat later, Wilhelm von Bode, director of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin, and the greatest Rembrandt scholar of his day, visited Widener's son at his residence in Philadelphia, Lynnewood Hall, and pronounced the painting "the greatest picture in the world. The greatest picture by any artist."[2] The prominent status of the painting at Lynnewood Hall was upheld at the National Gallery of Art after the Widener bequest of 1942. It has always been viewed as the most important Rembrandt painting in the collection. When John Walker retired as director of the Gallery in 1969, he posed for photographers in front of *The Mill.*

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Despite the painting's renown, which can be traced back to the eighteenth century when it was in the collection of the Duc d'Orléans, and the enthusiastic endorsement of Bode, the attribution of *The Mill* has been a matter of great dispute throughout the twentieth century. The expert who seems to have first questioned the attribution was Woldemar von Seidlitz. Although Seidlitz had raised the question in newspaper articles since 1902, his first serious analysis of the stylistic problems concerning the attribution of *The Mill* appeared in the art journal *Kunst und Künstler* just after the sale of *The Mill*.[3] Seidlitz objected that the concept of this painting was different from other Rembrandt landscapes, that its low horizon, its lack of multiplicity, and above all, the strong contrasts of light and dark were uncharacteristic of Rembrandt. Seidlitz suggested that Aert de Gelder (1645–1727) might be considered as the artist, seeing that De Gelder preferred the warm transparent colors found in *The Mill.* Seidlitz, however, also admitted that landscapes by De Gelder were not known.

Almost simultaneously with the appearance of Seidlitz's article were newspaper reports that a recent cleaning of *The Mill* had uncovered the signature of Hercules Seghers (Dutch, c. 1590 - c. 1638), an account that encouraged further speculation about the attribution.[4] Subsequent clarification of these reports revealed that the painting in question was not *The Mill* but another landscape. The associations between Seghers and *The Mill,* however, remained strong for many years.[5] As a result of these attacks on the attribution of *The Mill* (including the quite unfeasible idea that the painting was a nineteenth-century English forgery), Wilhelm von Bode, Abraham Bredius, Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, Woldemar von Seidlitz, and Jan Veth wrote a series of short essays on *The Mill* in the October 1912 issue of *Kunst und Künstler*.[6] Bode, Bredius, Hofstede de Groot, and Veth all emphatically defended the Rembrandt attribution and rejected the arguments advanced by Seidlitz in his previous article. Seidlitz agreed that *The Mill* could not have been painted by Seghers but continued to question the attribution to Rembrandt.

After the flurry of excitement in 1911 about the sale of *The Mill* and the issues of attribution, the painting, interestingly enough, was not again seriously discussed in the literature for more than sixty years. Although the painting continued to be admired in the United States and was accepted as a Rembrandt by scholars working in this country, primarily Jakob Rosenberg and Wolfgang Stechow, a number of important Rembrandt scholars working in Europe quietly eliminated the painting from the artist's accepted oeuvre.[7] Bredius, after having defended the attribution of *The Mill* in 1911, omitted it in 1935 from his corpus of Rembrandt

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paintings. Neither Kurt Bauch (in 1966) nor Horst Gerson (in 1969) included the painting in his catalog of the oeuvre.[8]

Interest in *The Mill,* however, peaked once again in 1977 when the decision was made at the National Gallery of Art to conserve the painting. *The Mill* was found to be structurally unsound, reason enough for the proposed conservation treatment, but an added incentive was the issue of attribution. Only by removing the heavy layers of discolored varnish that had come to obscure the surface of the painting could anything be learned about the existing color tonalities and painting techniques—information, it was hoped, that could help determine whether or not the image had been executed by Rembrandt.[9]

The decision to treat *The Mill,* however, unleashed a storm of controversy in the United States that eventually even threatened the existence of the conservation program at the National Gallery of Art.[10] The main point of contention for those who believed in the Rembrandt attribution was that the removal of the varnish would alter irreparably the emotional impact of the image.[11] What became clear during the controversy was the unique position this work occupied among Rembrandt's paintings. *The Mill* was greatly admired for its inherent drama, while, at the same time, its darkly brooding character was central to the mythology surrounding Rembrandt's life. At issue was not just concern about the appearance of the painting but also the way changes in its appearance would threaten fundamental beliefs about the artist.

The myths that so integrally linked this painting to Rembrandt's life grew in the romantic era, when the dramatic lighting and stark silhouette of the mill against the stormy sky struck a particularly responsive chord.[12] An old tradition that the painting represented the mill of Rembrandt's father added a personal aspect to the work that appealed to nineteenth-century sensibilities.[13] A number of descriptions of the painting interpreted the foreboding mood of the stormy sky as an indication of the personal traumas many believed Rembrandt experienced late in his life. One writer saw in the "dark, forbidding clouds . . . the symbols of his financial worries, social stress, and personal bereavements."[14] Another critic wrote: "Dating from the late 1650's, when Rembrandt had drunk to the dregs the cup of sorrow, *The Mill* is by general consent, alike in conception and treatment, the most profoundly impressive landscape in Western art."[15]

Such interpretative assessments of *The Mill* were encouraged by the layers of discolored and darkened varnish that had accumulated on the painting. These

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thick layers of varnish, which had given the painting a golden tone, also obscured many landscape details, allowing for a more generalized effect. The chiaroscuro effects so admired by nineteenth-century critics were enhanced in 1911 when *The Mill* was cleaned selectively to bring out the contrast of the dark mill against the light sky.[16]

Just how distorted this image had become over time is evident by comparing the painting as it appeared before its restoration with an etching of it in reverse in the 1786 catalog of the Duc d'Orléans' collection [fig. 2]. Whereas in the print the mill is the dominant motif, other elements, including the surrounding buildings, little figures on the hillside and near the water, the cows on the far shore, and the church steeple beyond the dense profile of the distant trees, are clearly articulated. In the accompanying description, *The Mill* is found to be picturesque rather than dramatic:

> This painting, as all those of this master, is of a vigourous and animated effect which has the principal interest of a site copied faithfully after nature. This simple composition does not owe to Rembrandt any other richness than that of harmony, and the magical effect which nourishes and revives everything. He possessed to an eminent degree this portion of picturesque genius, above all so essential in the genre of landscape [painting] where nature herself dictates the disposition of the scene, in determining the planes, the masses, and creates the borders that the fire of enthusiasm is unable to go beyond without risking to disfigure it.[17]

Neither the description nor the engraving emphasizes the effects of light and dark—the deep brooding, almost mysterious mood—so admired throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In 1793 the painting was acquired for £500 by William Smith, a prominent politician from Norwich and friend of the artist Joseph Mallord William Turner (British, 1775 - 1851).[18] Its subsequent impact on English art and aesthetics was enormous. By 1806 *The Mill* was included in an exhibition of old master paintings at the British Institution. It was also among those works selected from the exhibition for artists to copy, as is evident in a drawing by Alfred Edward Chalon (1780–1860), which depicts three artists copying *The Mill* [fig. 3].[19] The artist wearing a top hat in this drawing is none other than Benjamin West (American, 1738 - 1820).

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The numerous copies, variants, and descriptions of *The Mill* in the early to mid-nineteenth century provide further information about its appearance during these years. A watercolor copy probably made between 1806 and 1811 by William Marshall Craig (British, active 1788/1828) emphasizes, as does the Duc d'Orléans catalog, the picturesque qualities of the scene.[20] The blue sky in Craig's watercolor, as well as the vividly blue sky in a free derivation of *The Mill* painted byJames Ward (British, 1769 - 1859) around 1806, *Ashbourne Mill* (on loan to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts), also demonstrates how different the color tonalities were before the accumulation of discolored and perhaps tinted varnish, affected the appearance of the painting.

It is with Turner that the first truly romantic interpretation of *The Mill* is to be found. His notes on Rembrandt's "celebrated" picture stress Rembrandt's forceful use of extreme contrasts of light and shade in the painting rather than its picturesque qualities: "But the sails of the mill are touched with the incalculable(?) ray, while all below is lost in inestimable(?) gloom without the value of reflected light, which even the sky demands, and the ray upon the Mill insists upon."[21] The strikingly different appreciation of the painting may have to do with Turner's mindset, but the actual appearance of *The Mill* was also changing as the result of discolored or tinted varnish. In 1834 the painting was described by C. J. Nieuwenhuys in the following manner: "It is toward the approach of evening, when the remaining light of day illumines the horizon, and with the reflection of the water, throws the surrounding scenery into solemn gloom. The mysterious tone of the whole conveys to the mind a poetical effect."[22] By midcentury writers had begun to attribute much of the poetic charm of the painting to its rich golden tone, a legacy that continued unabated for 130 years.[23]

Not surprisingly, the conservation treatment of 1977–1979 revealed that much of the painting's somber mood was the result of darkened varnish.[24] The most dramatic changes were in the sky, where the golden tonalities had been so prominent. The sky is now blue on the right and steel gray on the left and along the top edge. White clouds swirl across the sky behind the mill, creating a sweep of movement that adds drama to the setting. The water in the lower right is gray and blue, reflecting the color of the sky.

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The land changed as well, although the transformations were not as dramatic as in the other areas. Instead of a large undifferentiated mass of brown in the foreground, a rich range of earth tones and blacks articulates the ground, the foliage, and the bricks that form the wall of the bulwark. The figures have emerged from the darkness, in particular a man climbing the hill on the left, who was virtually indistinguishable in the painting's former state. On the far shore are two cows and what appears to be a herd of sheep. The reflections in the distant water are soft and lucid and add to the greatly enhanced feeling of depth that the painting now has.

Finally, the appearance of the classic post-mill itself changed: it does not appear as massive as it formerly did. It is painted in a wide range of earth tones that culminate in a soft salmon color at the ends of the sunlit sails. The mill, moreover, is clearly not situated in the foreground plane, but in the middle ground, behind the bulwark rising above the water. Just below the mill, fences help integrate its architectural character with the surrounding landscape.

The changes that occur after a painting has been cleaned are often dramatic. In this instance, they carried even added weight. Few paintings have been revered in the way that *The Mill* has for qualities that were derived from darkened varnish. Many feared that the impact this painting created would be destroyed if the varnish were removed, that it somehow could lose its sense of mystery. Fortunately, that fear was groundless, and the painting continues to impress the viewer with the profundity of its conception. The drama is still present, only it is richer, more varied, and less somber. The appearance is now quite comparable to that found in early nineteenth-century copies and variants of *The Mill,* although it is probable that viewers then were able to see even more detail in the landscape than is presently possible.[25] These areas of relatively thin paint may well have darkened over time as a result of linings that affected the color and texture of the support and ground.

Although the 1977–1979 conservation treatment of *The Mill* did much to correct the misinterpretations of the mood of the scene, it did not immediately solve the controversy about the attribution. While this author and Cynthia Schneider firmly supported the attribution to Rembrandt, neither Gary Schwartz nor Christian Tümpel included the painting in their monographs on Rembrandt, and Josua Bruyn, in an essay for the Rembrandt Research Project, attempted to attribute *The Mill* to Rembrandt's pupil Ferdinand Bol.[26] Over time, however, a broad consensus has arisen that the attribution to Rembrandt is correct, with Ernst van de Wetering writing about the painting in 2006 in words that echo the enthusiasm of Wilhelm

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von Bode.[27]

The problem of attribution was partly due to the fact that *The Mill* departs from other Rembrandt landscape paintings. It focuses quite dramatically on a single motif, rather than integrating a number of smaller elements as do both his fantasy landscapes of the late 1630s and his small *Winter Landscape* of 1646 (Gemäldegalerie, Kassel).[28] Furthermore, *The Mill* is painted on canvas rather than on wood, Rembrandt's normal support for his landscapes. Nevertheless, neither of these differences is reason to exclude the landscape from Rembrandt's oeuvre. The use of a canvas support here is related to the painting's large size, larger than that of other Rembrandt landscapes. The paint is applied more thickly in *The Mill* than in Rembrandt's panel painting *Landscape with a Castle,* c. 1640–1642 (Louvre, Paris),[29] for example, but in a manner that is consistent with his paintings on canvas. Rembrandt invariably painted quite fluidly and thinly on panel, using glazes to create translucent effects. He utilized a canvas support differently, particularly by dragging a fully loaded brush across its rough surface to create variety in his textures. This technique is used effectively in *The Mill* where Rembrandt's loosely painted water left the black sketch visible [see Sketching], suggesting the broken ripples circling out from where the woman is washing her clothes at the water's edge. Despite this fundamental difference of paint application, the two paintings share other techniques. The sequence of brown and then black painted sketches in the bulwark below the mill is comparable to Rembrandt's definition of the dark architectural forms in *Landscape with a Castle.* [30]

Although *The Mill* was consistently dated in the 1650s by earlier scholars, particularly those who wanted to associate the somber character of the image with Rembrandt's hardships during that decade, the color tonalities that emerged after the restoration are more consistent with his work in the 1640s. Compositionally, moreover, the combination of dramatic elements (swirling clouds and silhouetted mill) with prosaic ones (figures washing clothes at the water's edge) has its closest parallel in Rembrandt's etching *The Three Trees* of 1643 [fig. 4], in which a multitude of figures go about their daily lives within a landscape threatened by dramatic storm clouds. Also reminiscent of Rembrandt's work of the 1640s are the Adam Elsheimer–like qualities of the reflections of trees and animals along the distant shore, effects that Rembrandt developed most explicitly in his *Rest on the Flight into Egypt,* 1647 [fig. 5].[31] Comparable as well in the two paintings are the blocky, somewhat generalized forms of the staffage figures. The figure types in

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The Mill are the same as those found in Rembrandt's drawings from the mid-1640s. The old man walking along the path is similar to his *Three Studies of an Old Man,* c. 1643–1644 (British Museum, London), while the man rowing the boat is reminiscent of *Two Men Rowing* from the Szépmüvészeti Múzeum, Budapest [fig. 6].[32]

The painting as we see it today is not how it was originally conceived. In an initial stage of the painting (revealed by X-radiography) a landscape mass rose behind the mill and a stone bridge on large piers spanned the water before the bulwark [fig. 7].[33] The reflection of the bridge can even be seen in the calm water below. The information gained from the X-radiographs provides a number of clues about the nature of this image. To begin with, the changes in composition required that the artist paint over the right part of the sky as well as the distant landscape and water above the level of the boat, reworkings that added to the dense quality of paint in these areas.

The X-radiographs have also revealed that no thread distortions in the weave of the canvas exist along either side or the top of the painting, an indication that the support may have been trimmed in these areas, but particularly along the top and left edges (see Technical Summary). Ernst van de Wetering has examined the proportional relationships of width to height in Rembrandt's other landscapes and has convincingly proposed that *The Mill*''s original dimensions may have been approximately 90 by 120 centimeters. He rightfully notes that the mill would then have been more to the right of center and that the drama of the light and dark contrasts in the sky would have had an even greater visual and emotional impact than it has today.[34] Just how much time elapsed before the changes were made cannot be said with certainty, but distortions to the underlying paint layers suggest it was not long, and it may well be that Rembrandt himself reduced the size of the painting (see Technical Summary).

Such major compositional changes demonstrate that Rembrandt was not attempting to paint a topographically accurate view, although he may well have been inspired by windmills situated on bulwarks outside of Amsterdam or Leiden. The shape and isolated character of the mill in this painting call to mind the bastion "Het Blauwhoofd" on the outskirts of Amsterdam, a site Rembrandt drew frequently in the 1640s and early 1650s.[35] Another possible visual source is the Pelikaansbolwerk in Leiden. As is seen in a 1649 drawing byJan de Bisschop (Dutch, 1628 - 1671) [fig. 8], a stone bridge supported on arched piers joined the bulwark with the tree-lined far shore, much as it appeared in the initial stage of

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The Mill. The mill on the Pelikaansbolwerk was, in fact, the mill of Rembrandt's father, thus Smith's romantic associations may well have more validity than one might expect.[36]

Whether or not his father's mill was one of Rembrandt's sources of inspiration, the compositional changes he brought about during the course of the painting's evolution served to give the mill an imposing grandeur. As it stands by itself on a rise just beyond the walled bastion, the mill becomes an almost iconic image, imbued with symbolic significance. In this respect, as well as for the compositional reasons mentioned above, *The Mill* is comparable to the etching *The Three Trees,* which almost certainly is a symbolically conceived landscape.[37] Whereas the symbolism traditionally associated with *The Mill* has been personal to Rembrandt and seen as a reflection of the tragedies that so affected his life in the 1650s, a closer examination of the painting in its cleaned state makes it clear that the symbolism is positive rather than negative.[38] The storm clouds have passed, and the salmon-colored sails face clear skies. Beneath the mill's reassuring presence, a male figure leans over the bastion's wall to gaze at the water and pastoral landscape beyond while others meander along the path in the foreground or go about their daily tasks on and near the water.

As Hans Kauffmann has persuasively argued, the windmill had numerous associations in Dutch literary traditions, ranging from temperance to religious imagery. Zacharias Heyns, for example, in his emblem book of 1625, draws a parallel between the mill, which turns only when the wind blows, and man, who is dead in his heart until the spirit gives him life and makes him whole.[39] Another emblematic interpretation of the windmill that Kauffmann does not mention, however, may have more direct relevance to *The Mill*. Roemer Visscher, in his extremely important emblem book *Zinne-poppen,* published in Amsterdam in 1614, gave political, rather than religious, symbolism to the mill. His emblem "Ut emergant" (That they may rise up) depicts a post-mill quite similar to the one in Rembrandt's painting [fig. 9]. His text compares a windmill, which endures the onslaught of winds and harnesses them to remove the water from the land to make it viable for the populace, to a good prince who works tirelessly for the greater good of his people.[40] One cannot help but sense that Rembrandt's painting conveys something of this same sentiment. Whether or not he associated the mill with Prince Frederik Hendrik or, in a broader sense, with a strong, watchful government cannot be said, but the mill does seem to act symbolically as a guardian. Silhouetted dramatically in the evening light, it faces a calm sky and still

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waters as storms threaten the landscape behind it. With its image comes a reassurance that peace and prosperity are at hand, and people can go about their daily lives without fear of war or uncertainty.

Political associations are often found in Rembrandt's work, most explicitly so in his allegorical painting *The Concord of the State* (Museum Boymans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam), which he probably completed in the early 1640s.[41] Although the exact meaning of that painting is not understood, the issues of unity and concord that he addressed there are related to the same underlying concerns for peace and prosperity evident in *The Mill.* These concerns were of particular interest in the 1640s as efforts were being made to finalize a treaty with Spain. Indeed, the years in and around the Treaty of Münster of 1648 saw a great number of paintings by Dutch landscape artists that seemed to celebrate their cultural and political heritage.[42] *The Mill,* in its imaginative re-creation of a characteristic Dutch landscape feature, is one of the most profound of all of these works.

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

April 24, 2014

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COMPARATIVE FIGURES

fig. 1 *The Illustrated London News*, vol. 274, March 25, 1911

fig. 2 Etching in reverse of *The Mill*, from the 1786 catalog of the Duc d'Orléans Collection

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fig. 3 Alfred Edward Chalon, *Study at the British Institution*, 1806, pen and ink and wash, British Museum, London. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum

fig. 4 Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Three Trees*, 1643, etching, with drypoint and burin, on japan paper, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of R. Horace Gallatin, 1949.1.39

fig. 5 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, 1647, oil on panel, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. Photo © National Gallery of Ireland

fig. 6 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Two Men Rowing*, c. 1645, pen and ink, Szépmüvészeti Múzeum, Budapest, inv. 1871

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fig. 7 X-radiograph composite, Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Mill*, 1645/1648, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection, 1942.9.62

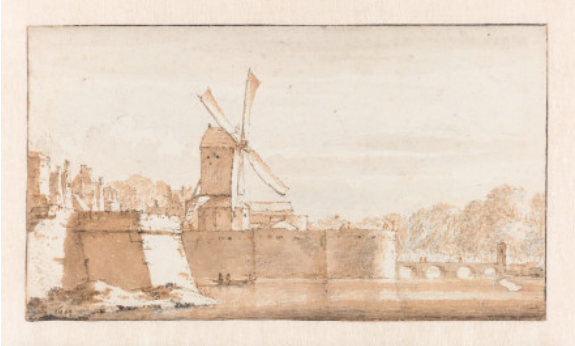

fig. 8 Jan de Bisschop, *Pelikaansbolwerk, Leiden*, 1649, pen and ink, Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam. Photo © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

40 HET EERSTE SCHOCK

XL

Vt emergant.

EEn Prince die zijn ampt wel bedient, doet alle vlijt ende neerstigheyd dat zijn onderdanen ende burghers welvaren, ende goede neeringhe hebben: overleggende dagh en nacht in zijn herte, om alle hinder en ongheluck af te wenden, met den meestē oorboor en minste schade: ghelijck de Watermeulen lijdt den aenstoot van alle winden, om deur kracht van dien het water met zijn schepraden uyt te werpen, met het woordt *ut emergant*, (dat is:) op datse op komen te wetē, de landen die sonder behulp van dien, onder water souden blyven gantsch vruchteloos ligghen.

Vt emergant.

fig. 9 Roemer Visscher, "Ut emergant," emblem from *Zinne-poppen*, Amsterdam, 1614

NOTES

[1] The National Gallery of Art curatorial files contain seventy pages of typed excerpts from English newspapers and magazines from the period of its sale

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in 1911.

[2] Peter A. B. Widener, *Without Drums* (New York, 1940), 55–56, as quoted by John Walker, *National Gallery of Art, Washington* (New York, 1963; French, German, and Spanish eds., 1964), 274.

[3] Woldemar von Seidlitz, "Rembrandts Mühle," *Kunst und Künstler* 9, no. 10 (July 1911): 550–552.

[4] Arthur J. Sulley, the dealer who bought *The Mill* for Widener, alluded to such reports in London newspapers in a letter dated July 24, 1911 (National Gallery of Art curatorial files), which he wrote to A. Hauser, the restorer who cleaned *The Mill* in 1911.

[5] Ellis K. Waterhouse, "Mr. Hind on Rembrandt," *Burlington Magazine* 61, no. 356 (November 1932): 238–239, notes: “the sight of *The Mill* has always given me a Hercules Seghers feeling, and I think Mr. Hind seems also to have wondered.”

[6] Wilhelm Bode, Abraham Bredius, Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, Woldemar van Seidlitz, and Jan Veth, “Rembrandts Mühle,” *Kunst und Künstler* 10, no. 1 (October 1912): 21–27.

[7] Jakob Rosenberg, *Rembrandt* (Cambridge, MA, 1948), 30–31; reprint, *Rembrandt: Life and Work*, 2 vols. (Greenwich, CT, 1964), 1:978; and Wolfgang Stechow, *Dutch Landscape Painting of the Seventeenth Century*, National Gallery of Art Kress Foundation Studies in the History of European Art (London, 1966), 137.

[8] Kurt Bauch, *Rembrandt Gemälde* (Berlin, 1966); Abraham Bredius, *Rembrandt: The Complete Edition of the Paintings*, rev. ed. by Horst Gerson (London, 1969). Although the attribution of *The Mill* was not questioned in the 1969 exhibition of Rembrandt paintings at the National Gallery of Art (*Rembrandt in the National Gallery of Art [Commemorating the Tercentenary of the Artist’s Death]*, exh. cat. [Washington, DC, 1969], no. 6), Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann, who curated that exhibition, has indicated to me (personal communication, 1993) that he did not believe in the attribution of the painting to Rembrandt at that time. He said that he did not express this opinion in the catalog because he “was a guest of the National Gallery (Kress Professor).” He did, however, admit to a reporter from *Newsweek* (March 10, 1969) that “chances are remote that ‘The Mill’ is a Rembrandt” (p. 88).

[9] Prior to the restoration, I also had serious doubts about the attribution of *The Mill* to Rembrandt.

[10] The controversy about the restoration of *The Mill* lasted about two years and involved a large number of museum directors, curators, and conservators. Indeed, the issues were quite complex emotionally, philosophically, and politically, but neither the extent of the controversy nor

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its level of intensity would have existed had another painting been at issue. For Paul Mellon's recollections of the controversy see Paul Mellon, with John Baskett, *Reflections in a Silver Spoon: A Memoir* (New York, 1992), 311–313.

[11] An article on the restoration in the *Washington Post* (September 16, 1977) by Paul Richard, for example, had as a heading: "The Mystery of 'The Mill': Is It a Rembrandt? And When They Clean It, Will the Mood Go Along with the Varnish?" John Walker, *National Gallery of Art, Washington*, rev. ed. (New York, 1984), 274, wrote a postscript on *The Mill* after the restoration: "In my opinion, it has gained in colorfulness but has lost in sublimity. The patina of time often adds to the beauty of a work of art, but how this painting looked when Rembrandt finished it we shall never know."

[12] For a fuller treatment of this subject than offered in this entry see Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "De Geschiedenis en Bekoring van 'De Molen,'" *De Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* 29 (1977): 20–32.

[13] William Buchanan, *Memoirs of Painting*, 2 vols. (London, 1824), 1:195, seems to have been the first to write that Rembrandt had depicted "a view of his Father's Mill on the banks of the Rhine." John Smith, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish and French Painters*, 9 vols. (London, 1829–1842), 7:189, no. 601, gave the painting the title *Rembrandt's Mill*. Smith (7:xiii) placed special significance on the mill in Rembrandt's training, writing: "having acquired a knowledge of the rules of art, he retired to his father's mill, and from the somber interior of this mill, he is supposed to have first caught the hint of that powerful opposition of light and shade, which he subsequently carried to such high perfection in his works, and hence he may be said to have created a new Era of painting."

[14] Lucking Taverner, "Rembrandt's 'The Mill,'" *Christian Life*, April 1911.

[15] "100,000 Rembrandt. Huge Offer for 'The Mill'" to Lord Lansdowne. National Gallery's Position," *London Daily News*, March 1, 1911.

[16] On April 8, 1911, Arthur Sulley, the dealer who had bought *The Mill* for Widener, sent a letter to Dr. Bode in Berlin to inform him that he had just sent *The Mill* by special messenger to Berlin to have the painting examined by Professor Hauser, Bode's restorer. He asked Bode to consult with Hauser as to whether the picture should be cleaned. He wrote, in a manner that mirrors the concerns expressed during the conservation controversy of 1977–1979: "I have the feeling that if it is cleaned right down that the picture may lose some of the poetic charm which it has, and which is perhaps intensified by the old and discoloured varnish." Bode, however, was in Italy at the time, so the decision about the nature and extent of the cleaning was left entirely in the hands of Professor Hauser. He telegrammed Sulley on April 10: "it would spoil the picture to clean off all the varnish. It is enough to remove the yellow patches on the right side of the sky and water to

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heighten the effect." Sulley telegrammed his permission for partial cleaning that same day. As Sulley wrote to Widener on April 11, he felt that Hauser knew "more about the cleaning of Rembrandt pictures, and of Rembrandt's manner of painting, than everyone else put together." (This correspondence is in National Gallery of Art curatorial files.)

[17] Abbé de Fontenai (Louis-Abel de Bonafons), *Galérie du Palais Royal gravée d'après les tableaux des differentes écoles qui la composent: Avec un abrégé de la Vie des Peintres & une description historique de chaque tableau*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1786), 1: unpaginated repro: "Ce tableau, comme tous ceux de ce Maître, est d'un effet vigoureux et piquant qui fait le principal interêt d'un Site copié fidelement d'après Nature. Cette composition simple ne doit à Rembrandt d'autre richesse que celle de l'harmonie, et la Magie d'effet qui feconde et vivifie tout. Il possedoit à un dégré eminent cette portion de génie Pitoresque, si essentielle surtout, dans le genre du Paysage où la Nature dicte elle même l'Ordonnance de la Scêne, en détermine les Plans, les Masses, et pose des bornes que le feu de l'enthousiasme, ne peut franchir sans risquer de la défigurer."

[18] The Duc d'Orléans sold his Dutch, Flemish, and German paintings to an English speculator, T. M. Slade, in 1792 in the midst of the French Revolution. The selling price was 350,000 francs. Slade, who secreted the paintings out of France, exhibited them for sale the following spring at the Old Academy Rooms in Pall Mall. *The Mill* was bought by Smith at this exhibition.

[19] I would like to thank Ernst van de Wetering for bringing this drawing to my attention.

[20] The watercolor, which measures 27.2 by 32.4 centimeters, is in the Boston Athenaeum. Craig, who in 1812 was appointed Water-Colour Painter to Queen Charlotte, frequently exhibited at the British Institution. This watercolor was made as part of an ambitious attempt to publish a series of books containing engraved reproductions of Old Master paintings then in England. Only one volume was completed *(Tresham's British Gallery of Pictures,* London, 1818), in which *The Mill* was not included. This information was kindly provided to me by Harry Katz, Art Department, Library of the Boston Athenaeum (letter, July 15, 1983, in National Gallery of Art curatorial files).

[21] As quoted in John Gage, *Color in Turner: Poetry and Truth* (New York and Washington, DC, 1969), 198–199. See also David H. Solkin, ed., *Turner and the Masters* (London, 2009), 162. Solkin quotes Turner's admiration for Rembrandt's ability to create "that veil of matchless colour, that lucid interval of Morning dawn and dewy light on which the Eye dwells so completely enthrall'd, [that] it seeks not for its liberty, but as it were, thinks it a sacrilege

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to pierce the mystic shell of colour in search of form."

[22] Charles J. Nieuwenhuys, *A Review of the Lives and Works of Some of the Most Eminent Painters* (London, 1834), 12.

[23] Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain: Being an Account of the Chief Collections of Paintings, Drawings, Sculptures, and Illuminated Mss*., trans. Lady Eastlake, 3 vols. (London, 1854–1857), 3:158, wrote: "The contrast between the warm gleams of the setting sun, with the deep, golden, transparent tones of the foreground, the luminous evening sky, and dark rain-clouds are as finely conceived as they are splendidly executed." John Walker, *National Gallery of Art, Washington*, rev. ed. (New York, 1984), 274, wrote: "And this melancholy sentiment, this mood of sublime sadness, which Rembrandt conveys through the stark simplicity of a windmill silhouetted in the fading light against the mist-filled sky, is indescribably moving."

[24] The painting was conserved once again in 2001 because the varnish was no longer sufficiently saturating the paint. The changes in the painting's appearance after that treatment, however, were minimal compared to those that occurred in 1977–1979.

[25] The amount of detail described in *The Mill,* however, may also have been exaggerated as a result of the aesthetic of the picturesque that was current in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

[26] Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "De Restauratie van 'De Molen'," *De Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* 31, no. 1 (1979): 9–13, repro.; Cynthia P Schneider, *Rembrandt's Landscapes* (New Haven, 1990), 44–46, no. 6, 183–190. Seymour Slive (personal communication, 1993) also accepts the attribution of *The Mill* to Rembrandt. Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt: His Life, His Paintings* (New York, 1985), and Christian Tümpel, *Rembrandt*, trans. Jacques and Jean Duvernet, Léon Karlson, and Patrick Grilli (Paris, 1986), omit *The Mill* from their oeuvre catalogs. Josua Bruyn, in *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 3, *1635–1642*, ed. Josua Bruyn et al. (Dordrecht, Boston, and London, 1989), 3:49, attributes *The Mill* to Bol and dates it around 1650. Bruyn's primary point of comparison, Bol's only known landscape painting, *River Landscape with Cattle* (art market, 1992), is not convincing. Albert Blankert, the author of the Bol monograph, also does not believe Bol painted *The Mill.* (He expressed this opinion at the Rembrandt Symposium in Amsterdam in 1992. Blankert, however, also doubts the Rembrandt attribution for this painting.) In 1993, Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann (personal communication) remained emphatic in his belief that *The Mill* was not by Rembrandt (see note 8 above).

[27] Ernst van de Wetering, "The Mill," in *Rembrandt's Landscapes*, ed. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gregor J. M. Weber (Leiden, 2006), 75–90. On Bode, see note 6 above.

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[28] See inventory no. 242, from the Gemäldegalerie, Kassel.

[29] See inventory no. R.F. 1948–35, from the Musée du Louvre, Paris.

[30] On Rembrandt's use of brown and black painted sketches in the landscapes, see E. Melanie Gifford, "Evocation and Representation: Rembrandt's Landscape Painting Technique," in *Rembrandt's Landscapes*, ed. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gregor J. M. Weber (Leiden, 2006), 120–143.

[31] The relationship of the color tonalities in these two paintings is particularly close.

[32] The London drawing is illustrated in Otto Benesch, *The Drawings of Rembrandt: A Critical and Chronological Catalogue*, 6 vols. (London, 1954–1957), 4: no. 668. Benesch (2: no. 361) dates the Budapest drawing "about 1637." In my opinion, however, his date is too early. The blocky forms of the figures are more consistent with those of the early to mid-1640s (see Benesch, 4: no. 659).

[33] The shape of the hill was also revealed by Infrared Reflectography at 1.2 to 2.5 microns. A cross-section taken through the sky area in front of the bulwark has shown that a layer of blackish painted sketch once defined the shape of the bridge (see report dated May 9, 1979, in National Gallery of Art Conservation department files).

[34] See Ernst van de Wetering, "The Mill," in *Rembrandt's Landscapes*, ed. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gregor J. M. Weber (Leiden, 2006), 83–84. In another, less convincing reconstruction, which postulates that Rembrandt would have used the full width of the canvas support, Van de Wetering has also suggested that the composition originally could have been much larger, measuring 105 by 140 centimeters. He also argues that the painting was irregularly cut to fit on a stretcher and that the image is therefore slightly tilted to the right.

[35] See Cynthia P. Schneider, *Rembrandt's Landscapes* (New Haven, 1990), 91–92, no. 10. Boudewijn Bakker, "An Amsterdam Windmill in Washington," in *Rembrandt 2006: Essays*, ed. M. Roscam Abbing (Leiden, 2006), 74–84, fig. 5a, as by Rembrandt(?), argues that the Blauwhoofd bulwark remains the prime candidate as *The Mill*'s model, but concedes that Rembrandt's childhood memories of his father's mill on the Pelikaans bulwark in Leiden "undoubtedly play[ed] a role in his artistic imagination" (p. 83).

[36] For information on Rembrandt's family in Leiden, see P. J. M. de Baar and Ingrid W. L. Moerman, "Rembrandt van Rijn en Jan Lievens, inwoners van Leiden," in *Rembrandt & Lievens in Leiden*, ed. Christiaan Vogelaar (Leiden, 1991), 24–38. Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann (personal communication, 1993) has brought to my attention the fact that De Bisschop's drawing *Rembrandt's Mill* was reproduced by means of an etching by Flameng (as *Le vrai moulin de Rembrandt*) in Charles Blanc*, L'oeuvre complet de*

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Rembrandt, 2 vols. (Paris, 1859–1861), 1:15.

[37] For a discussion of the religious symbolism of *The Three Trees,* see Cynthia P. Schneider, *Rembrandt's Landscapes* (New Haven, 1990), 240–242, no. 75.

[38] Hans Kauffmann, "Jacob van Ruisdael: 'Die Mühle von Wijk bij Duurstede,'" in *Festschrift für Otto von Simson zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Lucius Grisebach and Konrad Renger (Frankfurt, Berlin, and Vienna, 1977), 382, is the only author to interpret the scene in a positive manner: "Eine Komposition, die die Mühle himmelan hebt, aufsehenerregend, als hätte der Maler Jugenderinnerungen verklären und glorifizieren wollen."

[39] Zacharias Heyns, *Emblemata, Emblemes Chrestienes et Morales* (Rotterdam, 1625): "De mensch is doot in syn gemoet/Den Geest verquict en leven doet."

[40] Roemer Visscher, *Zinne-poppen* (Amsterdam, 1614), emblem XL: "Een Prince die zijn ampt wel bedient, doet alle vlijt ende neerstigheyd dat zijn onderdanen ende burghers welvaren, ende goed neeringhe hebben: overleggende dagh en nacht in zijn herte, om alle hinder en ongheluck af te wenden, met den meesten oorboor en minste schade: ghelijck de Watermeulen lijdt den aenstoot van alle winden, om deur kracht van dien het water met zijn schepraden uyt te werpen."

[41] See inventory no. 1717, from Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. Abraham Bredius, *Rembrandt: The Complete Edition of the Paintings*, rev. ed. by Horst Gerson (London, 1969), 593, no. 476, repro.

[42] For a discussion of this issue see Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "History, Politics, and the Portrait of a City: Vermeer's *View of Delft*," in *Urban Life in the Renaissance*, ed. Susan Zimmerman and Ronald F. E. Weissman (Cranbury, NJ, 1989), 165–184.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The original support is a fine-weight, tightly woven, plain-weave fabric, lined with the tacking margins trimmed. Cusping, which extends 7 cm into the painting, is present along the bottom edge, indicating that it is original. No cusping exists along the top or sides of the painting, which could indicate that these edges have been cut. The right edge, however, has a puzzling characteristic: the paint ends approximately 1 cm short of the edge, although the ground extends until the edge. The abrupt edge of the paint along the right side of the painting probably indicates that it is the original edge despite the fact that no cusping exists along the right

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side of the canvas support.[1]

The canvas was prepared with a double ground consisting of a reddish brown lower layer followed by a yellowish gray upper layer.[2] The composition was laid out first with a brown painted sketch under both landscape and sky and then further developed in a broadly handled black painted sketch. Black strokes, some from a wide, splayed-out brush, can be seen with infrared reflectography at 1.2 to 2.5 microns[3] where they laid out landscape forms, the figures and the mill, and the concentric ripples in the water. In the mill this sketch is also visible with the naked eye.[4] The paint was applied in two stages: the bright colors of a brush-marked first stage were muted by more restrained colors and smooth-textured paint in the final stage.[5]

Numerous changes and reworkings by the artist are evident. The painted sketch originally placed the mill between a hill on the left and, on the right, a bridge crossing from the promontory to the edge of the composition and reflected in the water below.[6] Reserves visible in the X-radiographs show that the sky and water first were painted up to these sketched forms. Soon after, the profile of the hill was lowered and the bridge and its reflection were eliminated; the sky, the shore, and the water were reworked. Disruptions to the underlying paint indicate that the revisions were made soon after the first image was laid out. At the same time a large standing figure on the promontory was replaced by the small figure leaning over the wall and the boat with oarsman was introduced.

The painting is in excellent condition, with only minor flake losses along the edges and a small loss and abrasion in the upper left corner. Dark gray stains in the sky may be due to the discoloration of the pigment smalt.

In 1976 a small slit in the lower left corner was repaired. Treatment was carried out in 1977–1979 to consolidate flaking paint, remove the old lining and replace it, and remove discolored varnish and retouching. The painting was treated again in 2001, at which time the 1979 varnish was removed because it was no longer saturating the dark paint.

[1] See Ernst van de Wetering, "The Mill," in Rembrandt's Landscapes, ed. Christiaan Vogelaar (Leiden, 2006), 83.

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[2] The paint and ground layers were analyzed by the Scientific Research department using cross-sections and polarized light microscopy (see reports dated September 26, 1978, and May 9, 1979 in NGA Conservation department files).

[3] Infrared reflectography was performed with a Mitsubishi M600 PtSi focal plane array camera.

[4] For a similar handling of brown and black painted sketches, see the probably unfinished Landscape with a Castle (Louvre, Paris). On both paintings see E. Melanie Gifford, "Evocation and Representation: Rembrandt's Landscape Painting Technique," in Rembrandt's Landscapes, ed. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gregor J. M. Weber. Exh. cat. Staatliche Museen Kassel, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Kassel; Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden. (Zwolle, 2006), 120-143.

[5] E. Melanie Gifford, "Evocation and Representation: Rembrandt's Landscape Painting Technique," in Rembrandt's Landscapes, ed. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gregor J. M. Weber. Exh. cat. Staatliche Museen Kassel, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Kassel; Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden. (Zwolle, 2006), 120–143.

[6] The use of the painted sketch in these areas was confirmed by microscopic examination, cross-sections, and infrared reflectography at 1.2 to 2.5 microns. The infrared reflectogaphy was performed using a Mitsubishi M600 PtSi focal plane array camera.

PROVENANCE

Philippe II, duc d'Orléans [1674-1723], Paris; by inheritance to his son, Louis, duc d'Orléans [1703-1752], Paris; by inheritance to his son, Louis Philippe, duc d'Orléans [1725-1785], Paris; by inheritance to his son, Louis Philippe Joseph, duc d'Orléans [1747-1793], Paris; acquired 1792 with the Dutch, German, and Flemish paintings of the Orléans collection by Thomas Moore Slade, London, for an English syndicate;[1] (exhibition and sale [by private contract], The Great Rooms, Pall Mall, London, April-June 1793, no. 91); William Smith, M.P. [1756-1835], until at least 1815;[2] Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, 3rd marquess of Lansdowne [1780-1863], Bowood House, Wiltshire, by 1824;[3] by inheritance to his son, Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, 4th marquess of Lansdowne [1816-1866], Bowood House; by inheritance to his son, Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice, 5th marquess of Lansdowne [1845-1927], Bowood House; sold April 1911 through (Arthur J. Sulley & Co., London) to Peter

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A.B. Widener, Lynnewood Hall, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania; inheritance from Estate of Peter A.B. Widener by gift through power of appointment of Joseph E. Widener, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania; gift 1942 to NGA.

[1] For the story of the dispersal of the Orléans collection in the 1790s, see William Buchanan, *Memoirs of Painting*, 2 vols., London, 1824: 1:9-216, and Denys Sutton, "Aspects of British Collecting, Part III: XIII The Orléans Collection," *Apollo* 119 (May 1984): 357-372.

[2] Smith lent the painting to an exhibition at the British Institution in 1815.

[3] Buchanan 1824, 1:195, 196.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

1793 The Orleans Gallery, The Great Rooms, Pall Mall, London, 1793, no. 91, as Landscape with a mill (twilight).

1806 British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom, London, 1806, no catalogue (special exhibition of paintings displayed for copyists).

1815 British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom, London, 1815, no. 37.

1864 British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom, London, 1864, no. 112.

1878 Exhibition of Works by the Old Masters and by Deceased Masters of the British School. Winter Exhibition, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1878, no. 172.

1888 Exhibition of Works by the Old Masters and by Deceased Masters of the British School. Winter Exhibition, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1888, no. 74.

1899 Exhibition of Works by Rembrandt. Winter Exhibition, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1899, no. 40.

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1969 Rembrandt in the National Gallery of Art [Commemorating the Tercentenary of the Artist's Death], National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1969, no. 6, repro.

2006 Rembrandts Landschaften [Rembrandt's Landscapes], Schloss Wilhelmshöhe, Staatliche Museen Kassel; Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden, 2006-2007, no. 5, repro.

2009 Turner and the Masters, Tate, London; Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris; Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, 2009- 2010, no 58 (London and Madrid), no. 70 (Paris), repro.

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Account of the Chief Collections of Paintings, Drawings, Sculptures, Illuminated Mss.. 3 vols. Translated by Elizabeth Rigby Eastlake. London, 1854: 2:501-502, no. 5; 3:156-158.

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