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Rembrandt's Prints and Drawings are Focus of National Gallery of Art Exhibition Celebrating the 400th Anniversary of the Artist's Birth November 19, 2006–March 18, 2007



Rembrandt van Rijn (1606 - 1669), *Self-Portrait*, c. 1637
red chalk on European paper
Rosenwald Collection, 1943

Washington, DC—Renowned for his paintings, Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) is equally regarded for his extraordinary accomplishment as a graphic artist. In his own time, his fame derived from his etchings as much as from his paintings. In celebration of the 400th anniversary of Rembrandt's birth, the National Gallery of Art is presenting **Strokes of Genius: Rembrandt's Prints and Drawings**. The exhibition of approximately 190 masterworks from the Gallery's collection is on view in the West Building November 19 through March 18, 2007.

"The National Gallery of Art holds one of the greatest collections in the United States of Rembrandt's works on paper, including 300 etchings and nearly two dozen drawings, and we are pleased to present such a comprehensive exhibition on this occasion," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "The intimate scale of these prints and drawings, as well as their frequently personal subjects, makes them very approachable."

Strokes of Genius: Rembrandt's Prints and Drawings is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

The Artist

Throughout his career, from the mid-1620s to the late 1660s, Rembrandt explored a wide range of human experiences in his paintings, drawings and etchings. These included self-portraits, scenes of his family and depictions of daily life. A master of light and shadow, Rembrandt created fresh visions of landscapes; portraits of friends and dignitaries; and touchingly human reinterpretations of religious stories.

The Exhibition

Strokes of Genius: Rembrandt's Prints and Drawings is rich in impressions of Rembrandt's finest etchings, including multiple impressions of the same print that show his distinctive approach. The artist frequently reworked his copper etching plates and altered the emphasis in his images by varying the ink or the paper, thereby making many one-of-a-kind works of art.

Today, 82 of Rembrandt's original copper plates are known to survive. They are worn by repeated printings and many have been reworked by other artists over the centuries. One of the exhibition's highlights is a unique copper plate acquired by the Gallery in 1997. This plate, for *Abraham Entertaining the Angels*, is in pristine condition after being hidden for some 350 years on the back of a landscape painting by a little-known, 17th-century Flemish artist. The etched and drypoint lines in the plate, unworked and unworn, still reveal traces of ink that Rembrandt himself used when printing the etching.

The exhibition is divided, mostly chronologically, into five rooms. The first gallery has

two sections: *In the Street* and *In the Studio*. *In the Street* shows Rembrandt's reaction to daily life and includes etchings and drawings of people and animals that he regularly encountered in and around his Amsterdam neighborhood. Works featured are the red-chalk drawing *Seated Old Man* (1630) and an etching of *The Hog* (1643). *In the Studio* contains studies of nudes, including three versions (each printed on a different kind of paper) of *Nude Seated on a Bench with a Pillow* (1658).

The second gallery, *The People that Rembrandt Knew*, displays formal and informal prints and drawings of the artist's family and friends, along with self-portraits. This section includes etchings of Rembrandt's mother, his wife Saskia, his print seller and other local painters. The self-portraits show him experimenting with a variety of facial expressions, as he explored human attitudes and emotions.

Country Walks around Amsterdam has rich portrayals of the Dutch countryside, including several of Rembrandt's delicate drawings produced on his walks, his most famous landscape etching *The Three Trees* (1643) and three different impressions of *Landscape with Trees, Farm Buildings and a Tower* (c. 1650), in which Rembrandt varies the amounts of ink on the copper plate to create different moods and atmosphere.

The fourth gallery presents *Histories and Figures in the Bible*. These prints and drawings depict scenes from the Old and New Testaments, and skillfully portray human figures and emotions. A superb impression of the etching *Abraham Entertaining the Angels* (1656) complements the original copper plate for this print. This section shows three different versions, made over an 18-year period, of the relationship between Abraham and Isaac; a number of variants of Rembrandt's majestic, brilliantly lit scenes from the 1650s; and all four early states of his masterpiece, *The Three Crosses* (1653).

The final gallery, *What Makes One Rembrandt Better than Another?* addresses issues of connoisseurship. With side-by-side comparisons, visitors will learn about different impressions of a single print and alterations to the etching plates, and will be able to evaluate the role of condition in judging qualities such as depth, flatness, and clarity.

Exhibition Curators

The main curator of the exhibition is Andrew Robison, senior curator of prints and drawings, together with a team of Gallery curators and interns that includes Gregory Jecmen, assistant curator of old master prints; Peter Parshall, curator of old master prints; Stacey Sell, assistant curator of old master drawings; and Arthur Wheelock, curator of northern baroque paintings. Robison has organized numerous exhibitions for the National Gallery, including **The Poetry of Light: Venetian Drawings from the National Gallery of Art** (2006); **Six Centuries of Prints and Drawings: Recent Acquisitions** (2004-2005); and **A Century of Drawing: Works on Paper from Degas to LeWitt** (2001-2002).

On November 19, a concert of music by 17th-century Dutch composers will feature countertenor Peter de Groot and harpsichordist Stephen Ackert, head of the Gallery's music department. The concert will be held in the West Building Lecture Hall at 6:30 p.m.; seating is first-come, first-served a half hour before the concert starts. The Sixth Street entrance will remain open until 6:30 p.m. For more information, call (202) 842-6941 or visit www.nga.gov/programs/music/index.shtm (<http://www.nga.gov/programs/music/index.shtm>) .

One-hour gallery talks will be held at noon on December 20, 24, 26 and 28. Meet in the West Building Rotunda. More information about the exhibition and links to related activities can be found on the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov/exhibitions/geniusinfo.htm (<http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/geniusinfo.htm>) .

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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