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## Rembrandt's *Titus* Makes a Return Visit to the National Gallery of Art, Launching a Series of Exchanges with the Norton Simon Foundations



Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669)

*Portrait of a Boy in Fancy Dress, "Titus", c. 1655*

oil on canvas, 65 x 56 cm (25 1/2 x 22 in.)

The Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena, California

Washington, DC—More than forty years after Rembrandt's painting *Portrait of a Boy in Fancy Dress* (c. 1655), or *Titus*, made its first Washington appearance, it will return to the National Gallery of Art from May 11, 2007 through September 4, 2007, as part of a new series of loan exchanges between the Gallery and the Norton Simon Foundations,

in Pasadena, California. The masterpiece, traditionally identified as the artist's son, Titus, will be installed in the West Building Rembrandt galleries, close to the artist's *Self-Portrait* (1659).

## **The Exchange**

The loan of *Portrait of a Boy in Fancy Dress* is the first in a series of exchanges between the two institutions. Additional loans have not been finalized. The Norton Simon typically does not loan its works of art to other institutions, making this exchange all the more noteworthy.

"This is an exciting opportunity for two great American art institutions to share national treasures across the continent," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "New audiences will have the opportunity to discover masterworks they otherwise might not see."

"This is the beginning of what we anticipate will be a very special long-term relationship, allowing both institutions a chance to share some of their greatest artworks with audiences on the opposite coast," said Walter W. Timoshuk, president, Norton Simon Museum. "In a year in which we mark Norton Simon's 100th birthday, we can think of no better way to celebrate than to begin this creative collaboration with the National Gallery of Art, where *Titus* stopped off briefly on his way to Los Angeles after Mr. Simon's eventful purchase in London in 1965."

## **The Collector**

Norton Simon (1907—1993) was a man of boundless energy and extensive wealth who became one of the great collectors of his time. He established the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena in 1975 to allow public access to the artistic treasures he had assembled. Simon's collecting interests were remarkably diverse, ranging from 10th-century Indian bronzes to late 19th-century pastels by Edgar Degas. At the core of his collection was an extensive and outstanding group of old master paintings.

Norton Simon's acquisition of *Portrait of a Boy in Fancy Dress* signaled to the world that he was a serious art collector. The purchase, after a legendary bidding war at

Christie's in London in 1965, was so significant that the painting was featured on the June 4th cover of *Time* magazine and later became a focal point at the Norton Simon Museum. On its way to California, the portrait was displayed from May 17 through December 6, 1965 at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, where it was seen by more than 300,000 visitors. From the nation's capital, it went to Los Angeles and toured major cities throughout the United States, as well as Amsterdam and London, before going on view in the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena in 1975.

## **The Painting**

The boy in the painting has often been identified as Rembrandt's son, Titus, because his face is rendered in sensitive, intimate detail, as if depicting a beloved family member. Although research suggests otherwise, the painting is still often called *Titus*.

A mysterious animal, perhaps a pet, sits on the boy's shoulder. Some experts identify it as a parrot, others, a monkey. According to Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., National Gallery of Art curator of northern baroque painting, it may be that the unfinished, cut-down painting is related to an anecdote described by the Dutch theorist Arnold Houbraken in his early 18th-century biography of Rembrandt: The artist, while painting a group portrait of a husband, his wife, and their children, decided to include an image of his pet monkey because it had just died and he had no other canvas on which to paint it. The family objected and the group portrait was left unfinished. Although Houbraken's anecdotes may not be entirely accurate, this one may account for the curious animal on the boy's shoulder and the unfinished character of this remarkable image.

The boy's pose and costume, in fact, are reminiscent of Hans Holbein the Younger's *Edward VI as a Child*, 1539, one of the National Gallery of Art's own masterpieces, and a work that Rembrandt could have seen in Amsterdam in the mid-1640s.

## **Rembrandt's Paintings at the National Gallery of Art**

The National Gallery of Art has one of the largest collections of Rembrandt's paintings in the United States. His penetrating *Self-Portrait* depicts the artist late in life, at a time when he was suffering through the cruel indignity of failure after so many years of success. The Rembrandt galleries also include the artist's exotic *Polish Nobleman*

(1637); his austere *Old Lady with a Book* (1637); one of the artist's rare landscapes, *The Mill* (1645/1648), which is famous for its forceful chiaroscuro effects; as well as two of Rembrandt's most moving religious and mythological images, *The Circumcision* (1661) and *Philemon and Baucis* (1658).

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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) (<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](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) and on [Twitter](http://twitter.com/ngadc) at [twitter.com/ngadc](http://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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