

REMBRANDT IN THE GOLDEN AGE

Rembrandt is the best-known and most iconic figure of the Dutch 17th century, and although his "The Night Watch" is admired with almost religious devotion at the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum, the artist is far from representing the typical figure of a Golden-Age artist.

The Dutch Golden Age spanned from 1581-1672. During this era, Dutch trade, science, military and art were at their peak in the world. Artists focused on scenes of everyday life.

Rembrandt showed a striking individuality and freedom, presenting himself as an unconventional rebel artist, very early on signing his works with just his given name, like the Italian Masters. In his paintings, he focused on historical and religious subjects and on portraiture, not "giving in" to the flourishing of genres that attracted the public at large. Instead, it was the public who adapted to his style of making art.



"The Night Watch" by Rembrandt, 1642, oil on canvas

EXHIBITION AND VISITOR INFORMATION

"Rembrandt: The Sign and the Light," features an exceptional selection of 59 etchings, offering a variety of subjects detailing a panorama of Rembrandt's etching activity during his 35-year career. Some of them include religious figures and scenes, genre scenes, portraits, figure studies and the famous beggars.

Gallery Hours: Tuesdays to Fridays: 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays: Noon-4 p.m.
Closed Mondays and Nov. 11 (Veterans Day)

Admission is free.

NO PHOTOGRAPHY PERMITTED WITH OR WITHOUT FLASH (Media must receive prior permission to do photography or videography of any kind).

Please see DavidMcCuneGallery.org for COVID-19 safety guidelines.

DAVID McCUNE GALLERY CELEBRATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY

"My husband and I have been supporters of the David McCune International Art Gallery since its conception by Professor Silvana Foti, who viewed it as a necessary addition to the William Bethune Arts Center. Upon its completion, the McCune Gallery was a beautiful space, but was devoid of the amenities and special equipment required for bringing in premiere exhibitions. Throughout the next 10 years, under the direction of Professor Foti, support from the University, the dedication and hard work of fellow Advisory Board members and the remarkable generosity of community donors and sponsors, the McCune Gallery met the criteria of the American Alliance of Museums for acquiring premiere exhibitions such as Picasso, Rodin and now Rembrandt! This unique collaboration between Methodist University and the community at large has served to enrich the lives of all who have entered this special place."

Naoma W. Ellison
Immediate Past Gallery Advisory Board Chair

"I have been on the Advisory Board for the Gallery almost from the beginning, and served as Chair of the Board for five years. It has been exciting to see the gallery bring in world-class shows by artists such as Picasso, Rodin, Chagall, Warhol, and now, as the gallery celebrates its 10th anniversary, the Rembrandt exhibition. Silvana Foti, as the Executive Director, has done an excellent job of enhancing the education of Methodist University's students and enriching the lives of the Methodist University community, as well as the many people from across the state and beyond, who have visited the gallery."

Mark A. Sternlicht
Past Gallery Advisory Board Chair

"Dear friends, thank you for Celebrating our 10th Anniversary! The McCune Gallery, Methodist University and the Gallery Advisory Board Members have worked hard to connect art and people while encouraging educational, creative experiences and human interactions. Our selected exhibits have allowed one to choose their own adventures from: temporary art installations by art students and artists of our region amidst their international counterparts. These experiences would not have been possible except for the passion, generosity, and financial assistance from our University, Gallery Advisory Board and our community. Thank you!

Silvana Foti
Executive Director, David McCune International Art Gallery



Mick Jagger, 1975



Grace Kelly, 1984



Annie Oakley, 1986

"Gallery Goes Pop: Warhol" Exhibition, 2019

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Organized by The Art Company
Pesaro, Italy

Made possible with a grant from
an Anonymous Fund of the
Cumberland Community Foundation, Inc.

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Rembrandt

THE SIGN AND THE LIGHT
ETCHINGS



"Self-Portrait with Saskia," 1636, etching by Rembrandt
Photo courtesy of The Art Company

September 11 - November 18, 2020

METHODIST UNIVERSITY
DAVID McCUNE INTERNATIONAL ART GALLERY

REMBRANDT'S LIFE & ART



Rembrandt at age 24
"Self-Portrait in a Cap, Open-Mouthed"
by Rembrandt, 1630, etching and burin

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-69) was born in Leiden, Netherlands. His father was a miller and his mother was the daughter of a baker. As a boy, Rembrandt was sent to Leiden Latin school in 1615, but quit his studies in 1619 to follow his artistic ambitions.

This Dutch painter quickly established himself as one of the greatest storytellers in the history of art, with an unbelievable ability to render people in his work.

Since the 17th century, Rembrandt scholars have tried to identify what it is in his works that goes beyond the colors, the line, and the forms: a message about the human condition and a reflection about the world. What is usually most striking in Rembrandt's work is his gaze, his way of capturing the subjects and putting them onstage, creating a constant tension between the irreducible uniqueness of the subject and the constant search

for universally human qualities as a manifestation of life. In his works, we find scenes in inns and on the streets, we meet up with charlatans, beggars, vagabonds and other members of the underworld. Other scenes show men and women engaged in artistic or intellectual activities. Finally, more than any other painter before him, Rembrandt dedicated himself to recording the many facets of a child's life in the first years of existence. Rembrandt used various techniques to probe every act, every situation, and find the best artistic rendering of it. However, the search for what the scholar calls universal identification has the price of sacrificing the individual in a sort of distant detachment.

Rembrandt stands out for his psychological penetration of the characters, intimately tied up with the temporal character of his works. In fact, in Rembrandt, the physiognomies examine the subject's vital process, a synthesis that in the work's present moment contains the entire life, as if a single word could already reveal its existence. In this sense, the figures, moved by a profound vitality, appear more familiar to us, open and able to communicate the uniqueness of each individual's destiny, revealing the psychic and vital tension.

Rembrandt approaches "real" life through its theatrical transposition. The idea of the works' theatricality can be perceived in the different way of using models in the studio. Rembrandt relied on his observation of the attitudes and poses assumed by his models, almost as if they were on a stage.

The numerous self-portraits executed, like the physiognomic studies done at the start of his career, provided Rembrandt with a huge repertoire to use in his pictures.

Like an actor, he mimed before a mirror the most varied states of mind: amazement, scepticism, irritation, anger, melancholy and joy.

Another element that heightens the drama in Rembrandt's works is the almost constant presence of actors playing peripheral roles.

These figures generate variety; they expand the narrative, and emphasize the emotional drama of the scene, or they act as surrogates.

In "Adoration of the Shepherds: With the Lamp" (in this exhibition), the peasant family peering into the stable represents an earthly reflection of the Holy Family. In many biblical prints, secondary figures of Jews seem to represent scepticism and to indicate the intransigence of whoever doubts Jesus's message. Striking examples can be found in "Christ Seated Disputing with the Doctors" and "The Tribute Money," both in this exhibition.



"Adoration of the Shepherds: With the Lamp"
by Rembrandt, 1654, etching



(Top Left) "Christ Seated Disputing with the Doctors" 1654, etching; (Bottom Left) "The Tribute Money," 1635, etching; (Right) "Joseph's Coat Brought to Jacob," 1633, etching and drypoint.

Finally, the mournful expression of Jacob's wife as she leans against her stricken husband in the etching of "Joseph's Coat Brought to Jacob," (in this exhibition) seems to magnify the patriarch's sorrow.

It is clear that Rembrandt is an innovator in the representation of religious subjects. It is a religiosity that does not spring from the figures' faith, but rather from their experience of religion as a daily fact of life. Rembrandt makes sure that the extraordinary and the everyday interpenetrate, blurring the borders between genre scenes and holy scenes in keeping with the Nordic tradition.

He chooses to humanize the divine, representing religious figures as individuals transported into his own time. Christ and the saints are his contemporaries: the figures are far from the classical canons, their faces express human, familiar emotions.

REMBRANDT'S PRINTMAKING PROCESSES

The **etching** process is relatively simple: the artist coats the copperplate with a layer of material resistant to Ferric-chloride etching solution. The drawing is scored into this layer using special tips and then the plate is given a bath with Ferric-chloride etching solution. Where the plate was scored, the Ferric-chloride etching solution bites into it, leaving unique grooves. The plate is cleaned (the Ferric-chloride etching solution-resistant substance is removed) and then inked all over. It is cleaned again so that the ink remains only in the grooves. Then it is run through the press in contact with the sheet of paper that will receive the image.

The grooves obtained by means of the Ferric-chloride etching solution "bite" are different from those made using the **burin (byoor-in)**, a steel tool used for engraving mechanically without the use of etching solution. They are never sharply defined, but are characterized by the fluidity of the design, and for the effects of smoothness and mellowness in the light tones as well as in the darker ones. The tips used to score the drawing into the Ferric-chloride etching solution-resistant surface can vary widely, depending on the expressive requirements.

The most delicate moment of the process is certainly the "biting," when the Ferric-chloride etching solution substance comes into contact with the parts left exposed by the scoring. There are many variations in this procedure, to obtain different effects. For example, multiple bitings make it possible to vary the **chiaroscuro (kee-aa-ruh-skoo-roh)** tones (the use of strong contrast between light and shade in drawing and painting), conferring different depths to the grooves.

REMBRANDT AND THE ETCHING

While Rembrandt is principally known for his paintings and drawings, it is in his etchings that he most profoundly changed the course of art history. Rembrandt kept the three artistic techniques he used almost completely separate from one another: drawing, painting and etching. The latter remained his most intimate territory, his private haven. It is safe to say that Rembrandt achieved his own, unmistakable etching style, which was imitated by artists throughout Europe.



(Left) "Old Beggar Woman with a Gourd," 1630, etching; and "Beggar with a Wooden Leg," 1630, etching

In his first etchings, in which he has already developed pronounced chiaroscuro effects, he makes mostly small-format works focusing on biblical subjects or scenes of poverty. The artist repeatedly portrayed figures of beggars. In these works, two of which are shown in this exhibition ("Old Beggar Woman with a Gourd," 1630, and "Beggar with a Wooden Leg," 1630), the artist focuses on the movement between light and dark: indigent figures draped in rags, moving freely, they exalt the alternation of light-filled areas with dark ones. From 1639, Rembrandt began using **drypoint** (a diamond-point needle in which an image is incised into a copper plate without etching solution), eventually executing such works as "The Death of the Virgin" (in this exhibition) almost exclusively in this technique.

The artist also experimented with different qualities of ink and paper. For example, until the start of the 1640s, in keeping with the usual procedure, Rembrandt removed all the excess ink from the plate to obtain uniform and well-defined images. Later, he changed strategies, leaving a thin film of ink in such a way as to obtain, in addition to the lines, tonal-like effects in the work, or in part of it. These devices allowed Rembrandt to achieve an exceptional variety of pictorial effects.

The artist intentionally alternated "finished" incisions with "half-finished" ones and "barely sketched" others. This variety demonstrates Rembrandt's skill at using a vast repertoire of technical and stylistic devices to generate a surprisingly diverse corpus of works. In some cases, the artist intervened, often using drypoint, to increase the intensity of the shadows. In other cases, he actually replaced entire figures. In the 1640s, Rembrandt's prints seem to reflect two contrasting approaches to etching.

On the one hand, we find a linear style similar to drawing, as in the work shown in this exhibition "Abraham and Isaac (1645);" on the other hand, he pursues markedly more pictorial atmospheres, as in the work, also present in this show, "The Rest on the Flight: A Night Piece (1644)." In the 1650s, his style changes noticeably, with more compact compositions, figures distributed in planes parallel to the surface, and a hatching that no longer shapes the figures, but runs across forms and objects.

Exhibition visitors will notice how Rembrandt was able to exploit the quasi-mystic power of black ink on paper. The paper is the source of the light, whether in the more worked-on areas or in the sketchier or even arid ones. The effect is like suddenly being torn from the ordinary conditions of sensory life, which in painting, instead, find room, at least somewhat, through the colors. Light and shade seem to beckon to one another in a two-way conversation, an ambiguous mingling, without forgetting that everything seems to be dictated by the light, natural in defining objects according to the "laws" of perspective and "shading," and supernatural for its strange intensity, which seems to conjure up confused images in the observer.



(Left) "Abraham and Isaac," 1645, etching and burin; and "The Rest on the Flight: A Night Piece," 1644, etching and burin