

Rembrandt Conservation Histories

On the occasion of the research and treatment of the portraits of *Marten Soolmans* and *Oopjen Coppit* by Rembrandt van Rijn, jointly owned by the Rijksmuseum and the Louvre museum, the Rijksmuseum plans to host an international, two-day symposium on the history of conservation-restoration of paintings by Rembrandt. It will be the first in a series of conferences on the history of conservation-restoration. In the future similar conferences will be organised biennially on the treatment history of the paintings by Frans Hals, Johannes Vermeer and Jan Steen.

Date: 8-9 November 2018

Location: Auditorium Rijksmuseum

Important masterpieces in museum collections, such as the paintings by Rembrandt, often have the dubious honour to have undergone numerous conservation-restoration treatments in the past. Because of the significance of the paintings, these treatments are generally well documented. For instance, Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp* (Mauritshuis, The Hague) has undergone twenty-three documented treatments, while those of the *Night Watch* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) add up to twenty-five. Rembrandt's paintings are distributed all over the world throughout major collections. Sometimes his work has been in the same city or collection from early on, for example the *Night Watch* never left the city of Amsterdam apart from its peregrinations during World War II. But many paintings have travelled widely and changed ownership many times, ending up in museum collections all over Europe and the United States. Every country has its own traditions, developments and approaches to conservation-restoration. **The aim of this conference is to heighten awareness of how the appearance and condition of paintings by Rembrandt can (partly) be explained by their treatment history.**

Knowledge about past treatments is crucial for the future preservation of all paintings. Without it, it is impossible to make well-informed decisions about condition and appropriate treatment. It helps conservation scientists explain the results of analyses and art historians with the interpretation of appearance. A striking example is the foreground in the *Night Watch*. Here Rembrandt left the greyish-brown quartz ground exposed to function as a middle tone, but over time it has darkened due to impregnation of wax-resin from three lining campaigns. When comparing this area on the *Night Watch* with the contemporary copy by Gerrit Lundens, painted on panel and therefore never lined, it is obvious that the changes in tonal value are dramatic.



Rembrandt van Rijn, detail *Night Watch*, 1642



Gerrit Lundens, detail copy of the *Night Watch*, 1642-55

Organising committee:

Robert van Langh, Rijksmuseum
Petria Noble, Rijksmuseum
Esther van Duijn, Rijksmuseum
Gregor Weber, Rijksmuseum
Erma Hermens, Rijksmuseum
Michiel Franken, Netherlands Institute for Art History
Mireille te Marvelde, Frans Hals Museum
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Local organising committee:

Sandra Pastoor, Rijksmuseum
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