

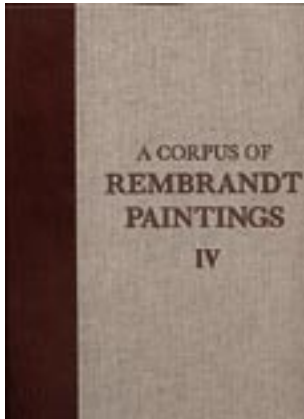
# A CORPUS OF **REMBRANDT PAINTINGS**

## Volume IV – Self-Portraits

Ernst van de Wetering with contributions by  
Karin Groen, Peter Klein, Jaap van der Veen, Marieke de Winkel  
The Rembrandt Research Project

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# A CORPUS OF REMBRANDT PAINTINGS Volume IV – Self-Portraits

**Ernst van de Wetering**

with contributions by **Karin Groen, Peter Klein, Jaap van der Veen, Marieke de Winkel**  
The Rembrandt Research Project, Amsterdam,  
The Netherlands

After the publication of Volume III the approach of the first three volumes needed to be revised. It had become clear that the strictly chronological method employed in those books would not be effective for the final period, covering 1642 until 1669 (the year that Rembrandt died). The project group therefore chose for a method in which larger groups of pictorially interconnected works were studied, such as the self-portraits, portraits, history paintings etc. Rembrandt's workshop practice was scrutinised more closely as well.

In Volume IV the focus lies on Rembrandt's self-portraits. During this research it became obvious that matters of authenticity cannot be viewed separately from questions relating to the original function and meaning of these works. Rembrandt's intriguing life-long practice of portraying himself in front of a mirror is examined in depth in this volume. As a result, not only has the group of approximately forty painted self-portraits gained transparency, but also new insights have been developed regarding Rembrandt's drawn and etched self-portraits. The problems of authenticity relating to a substantial amount of self-portraits which in the past were attributed to Rembrandt in this volume receive an unexpected nuance: through a combination of technical and stylistic research it is demonstrated that some of Rembrandt's self-portraits were in fact painted by others in his workshop.

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**Discusses problems of authenticity, function and technique  
of Rembrandt's painted, etched and drawn self-portraits**

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In clear and accessible explanatory texts the different paintings are discussed. Among the many illustrations are life-size colour reproductions of the faces of the self-portraits under discussion. Details are shown where possible, as well as the results of modern day technical imaging like X-radiography.

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Ernst van de Wetering
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Figs. 23 and 24. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait*, 1669, canvas 86 x 70.5 cm. London, The National Gallery (IV 27). Detail and corresponding X-Ray. A lead white-containing underpainting shows up strongly.



combination with other arguments – as, for instance, in the above-cited case of the London *Self-portrait* of 1640 (see p. 92–93). Indeed, as became evident above, the presence of a repentir in combination with other arguments can be significant in identifying a painting as a workshop-variant (see for instance IV 11, 12, 17).



The volume contains an – in several respects eye-opening – essay by the head of the Rembrandt Research Project, Ernst van de Wetering, on the problems of authenticity

and function of Rembrandt's self-portraits. In addition, the book includes groundbreaking contributions by Marieke de Winkel on the meaning of dress and costume in Rembrandt's self-portraits, by Karin Groen on the use of grounds in Rembrandt's workshop and in paintings by his contemporaries, and a study by Jaap van der Veen concerning 17th-century ideas about authenticity in art.

This work of art history and art research should be part of every serious art historical institute, university or museum. The enigma of Rembrandt's self-portraits, one of the most compelling phenomena in art history has been unravelled by Ernst van de Wetering with unprecedented thoroughness.

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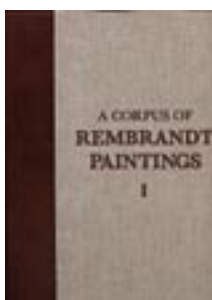
# A CORPUS OF REMBRANDT PAINTINGS



Discusses the  
paintings in clear  
and accessible  
explanatory texts

Since the second half of the last century art historians, realizing that the image of Rembrandt's work had become blurred with time, have attempted to redefine the artist's significance both as a source of inspiration to other artists and as a great artist in his own right. In order to carry on the work started by previous generations, a group of leading Dutch art historians from the academic and museum world joined forces in the late 1960s in order to study afresh the paintings usually ascribed to Rembrandt. The researchers came together in the Rembrandt Research Project which was established to provide the art world with a new standard reference work which would serve the community of art historians in both the near and distant future.

The Rembrandt Research Project has examined the originals of all works attributed to Rembrandt, taking full advantage of today's sophisticated techniques including radiography, neutron activation autoradiography, dendrochronology and paint sample analysis – thereby gaining valuable insight into the genesis and condition of the paintings. The result of this meticulous research is laid down chronologically in the following volumes:



► **Volume I,**  
which deals with works from Rembrandt's  
Leiden years (1625–1631),  
published in 1982.

► **Volume II,**  
covering his first years in Amsterdam  
(1631–1634), published in 1986.

► **Volume III,**  
published in 1989, covering the period from  
1635 until 1642, the year in which the  
*Nightwatch* was finished.

► **Volume V,** (forthcoming)  
this last volume will deal with the 'small scale'  
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## Sample Texts

Fig. 9. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait with shaded eyes*, 1634, panel 91 x 55.1 cm, detail. Las Vegas, U.S.A., The Wynn collection (IV *Addenda* 2)

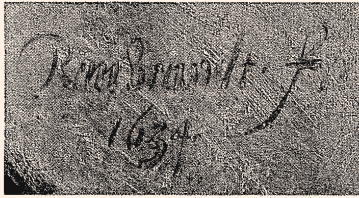


Fig. 12. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait*, 1642, panel 69.9 x 58.4 cm, detail. Windsor Castle, H.M. Queen Elizabeth II (IV 1)



Fig. 10. Rembrandt, *Large self-portrait*, 1652, canvas 112.1 x 81 cm, detail. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (IV 8)



Fig. 13. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait*, 165[7/9], canvas 52.7 x 42.7, detail. Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland, on loan from the Duke of Sutherland (IV 15)

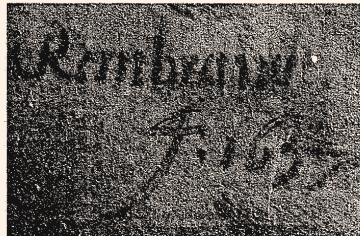


Fig. 11. Rembrandt, *Small self-portrait*, c. 1655, panel 48.9 x 40.2 cm, detail. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (IV 13)

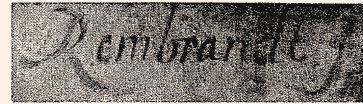
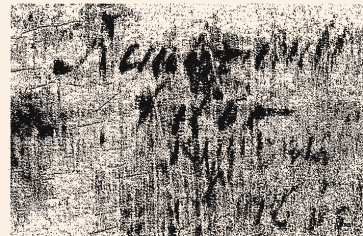


Fig. 14. Rembrandt workshop, *'Self-portrait'*, 1660, canvas 75.6 x 61.1 cm, detail. Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria (IV 21)



### – Signatures

As is particularly evident in the case of several of the early self-portraits discussed in this book, the study of signatures plays an increasingly greater role in our attempts to define Rembrandt's autograph oeuvre.<sup>17</sup>

strated that they were applied to an original paint layer that was not yet dry (see for instance IV *Addenda* 1 and 2; fig. 9, and IV *Corrigenda* I A 22). But even then their authenticity – and with it the authenticity of the painting concerned – cannot automatically be taken for granted.

Fig. 95. Rembrandt, *Study in the mirror*, c. 1628/29, pen and brown ink, brush and grey paint, 12.7 x 9.4 cm (1:1) (Ben. 54). Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet

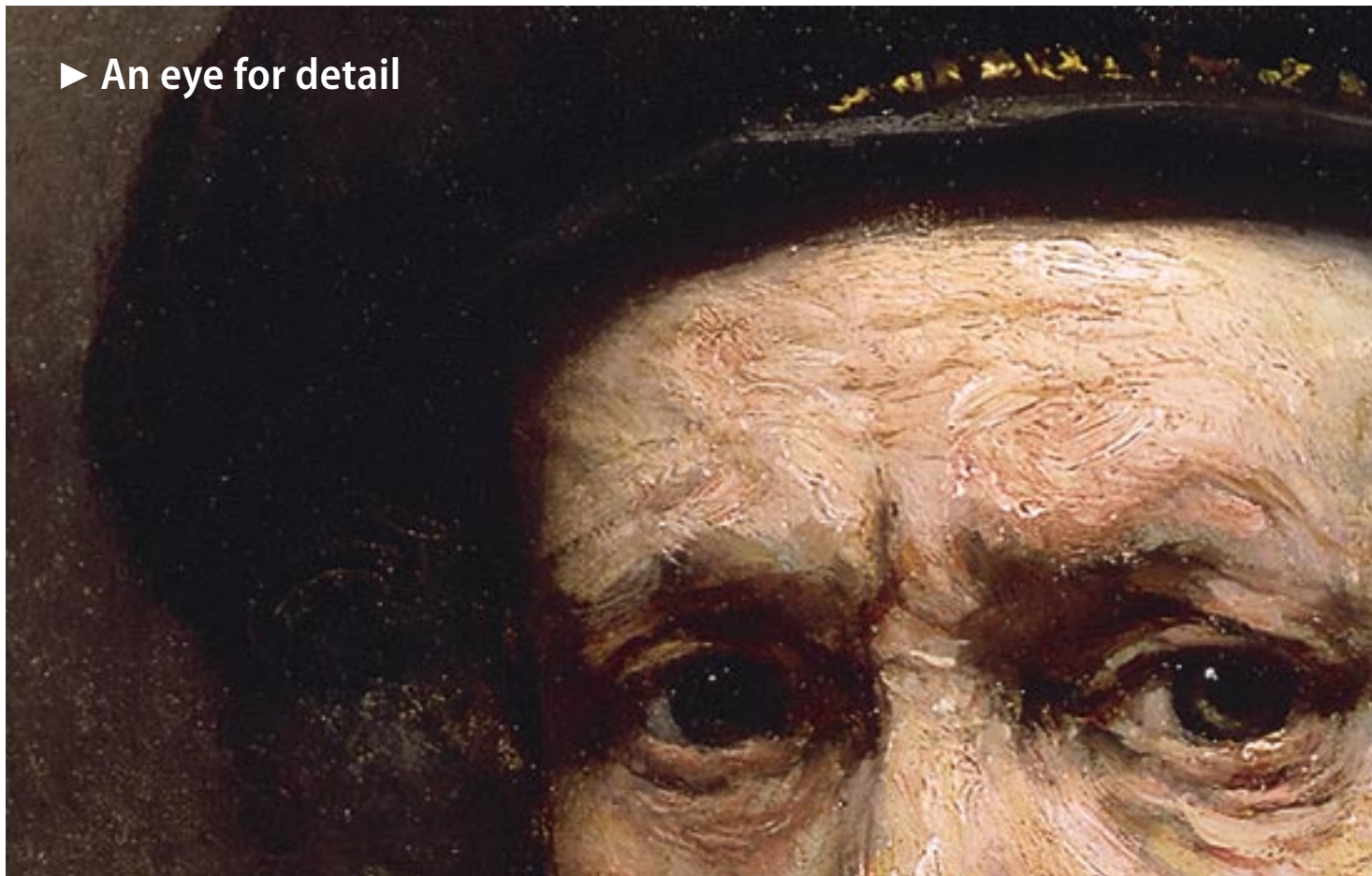


Fig. 96. Rembrandt, *Study in the mirror*, 1629, etching, 17.4 x 15.5 cm (slightly reduced) (B. 338) (reproduced in reverse)



Once again, one cannot avoid noting the way that, in the world of Rembrandt research, the splitting of the oeuvre according to techniques – into paintings, etchings and drawings – and of scholarship into specialisms based on them hampers an integrated understanding of his work as a whole.<sup>143</sup> The fact too that the drawn self-portraits are treated here in a separate section is a manifestation of this over-specialization according to medium.

## ► An eye for detail



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ISBN: 978-1-4020-3280-6