

Rembrandt's
Passion Series

Rembrandt's *Passion Series*

By

Simon McNamara

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



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This book first published 2015

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-7539-2

ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-7539-4

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following people and institutions who have contributed and assisted me during the course of this project.

Members of and those associated with the Department of Art History at the University of Auckland: Dr. Erin Griffey, Professor Elizabeth Rankin, Associate Professor Iain Buchannan, Associate Professor Len Bell, Dr. Caroline Vercoe, Dr. Robin Woodward, Dr. Mary Barker and Renisa Maki. Additionally, I would like to thank Rev. Dr. Mervyn Duffy at the Good Shepherd Theological College; Professor Tom Bishop and Associate Professor Ken Larsen (retired) in the Department of English at the University of Auckland. Very special thanks to Dr. Jeanne Guthrie for assistance in the revision process.

I would like to record my thanks to the staff of the following institutions: The Fine Arts Library of the University of Auckland, especially Victoria Passau; the Inter-loan service at the Library of the University of Auckland; the Rijksprentenkabinet Collection Amsterdam; the Library of the National Gallery London; the print rooms of the Albertina Museum Vienna; the Museum of Fine Arts Boston and the Library of the University of Michigan. Special thanks to Dr. Marcus Dekiert formerly of the Alte Pinakothek Munich. Additional thanks to Emeritus Professor Paul Sellin at U.C.L.A. and Professor Peter Davidson at the University of Aberdeen. Very special thanks to author and publisher Gary Schwartz.

Heartfelt thanks and gratitude to: Sam Baker, Amanda Millar, Sean Howley, Elfreda Crehan and others at Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their assistance in bringing this project to fruition.

Above all I would like to thank my family: my father T. J. McNamara, my late mother Claire, my sisters Jane and Kate, their families and my son and daughter Rory and Sophie.

INTRODUCTION

The *Passion Series* is a group of five works produced by Rembrandt van Rijn over a six-year period (1633-1639) for the official residence of Prince Frederick Hendrick (1584-1647), Stadholder of the United Dutch Provinces, at The Hague.¹ In what is now regarded as the chronological order of execution, the five works are: the *Descent from the Cross*, the *Raising of the Cross*, the *Ascension*, the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection*.² All are now in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich (figures 1-5). The paintings, in arch-shaped frames, are approximately all the same size (c.90 x c.70 cm), and all depict traditional scenes in pictorial cycles of the Passion of Christ. In this way they have come to be called Rembrandt's *Passion Series* although they were not commissioned at the same time and do not form a complete Passion Cycle. The format and subject matter of

¹ For a socio-historical study of the Dutch Republic in the age of Rembrandt, see Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches* (London: Fontana, 1987). The period is covered historically by Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its rise, greatness and fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). For an overview of the seventeenth-century Dutch milieu, see Arie van Deursen, *Plain Lives in a Golden Age: Popular culture, religion and society in seventeenth-century Holland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For an overview of seventeenth-century Dutch art, see Mariët Westermann, *A Worldly Art: The Dutch Republic 1585-1718* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

² The numbered identifications which append the labels that accompany the illustrations refer to Joshua Bruyn, Bob Haak, Simon Levie, Pieter van Theil and Ernst van de Wetering, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. I: 1625-1631, vol. II: 1631-1634 and vol. III: 1635-1642 (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982, 1986, 1989). The "A" designates a work authenticated by The Rembrandt Research Project authors of the *Corpus*. Also Abraham Bredius, *The Paintings of Rembrandt* (London: Phaidon, 1935) and Bredius revised by Horst Gerson, *The Paintings of Rembrandt* (London: Phaidon, 1969). The first three volumes of the *Corpus* were followed by: Ernst van de Wetering, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. IV: The self-portraits (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005); Ernst van de Wetering, Josua Bruyn, Michiel Franken, Karin Groen, Peter Klein, Jaap van der Veen and Marieke de Winkel, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. V: The small-scale history paintings (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011) and Ernst van de Wetering, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. VI: Rembrandt's paintings revisited-A complete survey (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014).

the works would suggest a narrow devotional function for the *Passion Series*. However, they appear to have been initially displayed in the Stadholder's gallery and therefore viewed by a broad, inter-confessional audience. Paradoxes such as this are one of the reasons the *Passion Series* has in the past fascinated scholars and continues to do so.

In 1968 Ernst Brochhagen opened his seminal article on the *Passion Series* by remarking: "The artistic criticism and evaluation of the five paintings of the Passion by Rembrandt in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich has always fluctuated".³ To illustrate the breadth of response the works have attracted, Brochhagen contrasts comments made by Wilhelm Bode in the late nineteenth century, who was quite dismissive of the paintings: "they give little pleasure to the student"; with Werner Weisbach's evaluation a quarter of a century later, for whom they were: "evidence of the highest artistic aspirations... the genuine essence of the whole work by Rembrandt which today only partly awakes in us any real sympathy".⁴ Brochhagen then comments that: "Art historians will certainly always be interested in this series of paintings because, for various reasons, they hold a special place in the *oeuvre* of the painter".⁵ Indeed they do. Those "various reasons" and that "special place" in Rembrandt's *oeuvre* that the *Passion Series* occupies are the focus of this book.

The first two works in the series, the *Descent* and the *Raising*, were commissioned around 1631/2, during Rembrandt's late Leiden period.⁶ They were apparently delivered in 1633 as they are not listed on a 1632

³ Ernst Brochhagen, "Beobachtungen an den Passionbildern Rembrandts in München", *Munuscula Discipulorum...Hans Kaufmann zum 70. Geburtstag 1966* (1968): 37-44. See also Ernst Brochhagen and Brigitte Knüttel, *Kat III: Holländische Malerei des 17 (Jahhunderts: Munich, 1967)*, 58-72.

Brochhagen, "Passionbildern Rembrandts in München", 37. "Die kunstlerische Beurteilung und Wertschätzung der funfumlaut Passionsbilder Rembrandts in der Alten Pinakothek in München ist immer schwankend gewesen".

⁴ Brochhagen, "Passionbildern Rembrandts in München", 37. Original publications: Wilhelm Bode and Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *The Complete Work of Rembrandt* (Paris: Charles Sedemeyer, 1897), 15; Werner Weisbach, *Rembrandt* (Berlin-Leipzig: Propyläen, 1926), 150.

⁵ Brochhagen, "Passionbildern Rembrandts in München", 37. "Des kunsthistorischen Interesses konnte sich diese Bilderreihe jedoch immer sicher sein, nimmt sie doch in *Oeuvre* des Künstlers aus verschiedenen Gründen einen ganz besonderen Platz ein".

⁶ The paintings are very similar stylistically to other works produced in Leiden dated to 1631. For a summary of those works see Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. 1, 280.

inventory of the Stadholder's residence.⁷ The inventory shows that the Stadholder already owned several works by Rembrandt. These included a prestigious court portrait commission early in his career, a profile portrait of Frederick Hendrick's wife, Amalia van Solms (1602-1675) of 1632. The work was modelled after Gerard van Honthorst's (1590-1656) portrait of the Stadholder painted the year before.⁸ The inventory also shows that by 1632 Frederick Hendrick and Amalia, as they sought to identify themselves with the royal courts of Europe, had amassed an art collection of considerable size and quality, including six works by the famous Flemish (and Catholic) artist Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640). However, Frederick Hendrick and Amalia were not royalty as such. Although uncontestedly the most important man in The Hague, Frederick Hendrick was not Count of Holland, the traditional meaning of the title: Stadholder.⁹ Rather his role as Stadholder was to oversee the administration of justice in all its forms, a primarily military role as the newly formed Republic was constantly engaged in conflicts with the Catholic south. Therefore, certainly for political if not private reasons, Frederick Hendrick was keen to be seen as a practicing member of the official state church, the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church.¹⁰ For guidance in improving his perceived image the Stadholder had to look no further than his secretary, Constantijn Huygens (1596-1687). Huygens, a polymath, was both a connoisseur of the arts and a renowned poet.¹¹ The initial Rembrandt commission was in all likelihood arranged through his agency. Huygens had earlier praised the talents of both Rembrandt and his contemporary Jan Lievens (1607-1674) in his youthful autobiography (in Latin) of c.1630. He noted particularly the portrayal, in Rembrandt's *The Repentant Judas Returning the Thirty Pieces of Silver* of 1629, of the figure of Judas, whom he saw as

⁷ The full inventory, "Inventaris van het Stadhoudelijk Kwartier en het Huis in het Noordeinde (Oude Hof)", is published in S. W. A. Drossaers and Th. H. Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen van de Inboedels in de Verblijuen de Oranges en Daarmede Gelijk te Stellen Stricken*, vol. I (The Hague: Rijks Geschiedkundige, 1974-78), 181-237.

⁸ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #s 186 and 219 at 189 and 191.

⁹ For the institution of the Stadholderate see Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 300-06.

¹⁰ For John Calvin's (1509-1564) seminal treatise see *John Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* [several editions 1539-59] 1559 edition edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: SCM Press 1960). The Dutch Reformed Church became the official state church in the aftermath of the Synod of Dort, 1618-19.

¹¹ See Paul Sellin, "John Donne and the Huygens Family", *Dutch Quarterly Review* 12 (1982/3): 193-204.

both the embodiment of the penitent in general and a portrayal of the repentance of one man.¹²

After a three year gap, Rembrandt dispatched the *Ascension* to The Hague in 1636, followed a further three years later by the last two works, the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection*. The history of this second half of the commission, which seems to have been driven by the Stadholder himself, is partially documented in a series of letters written by Rembrandt to Huygens that have survived, though unfortunately Huygens' replies have been lost.¹³ The letters are an extraordinary resource for scholars as they contain detailed and, in fact, the only comments by Rembrandt on his craft. As such they have become integral to any discussion of the *Passion Series* and are a key primary source for this book. In the 1640s, when the Stadholder ordered two further paintings of similar size and in similar frames from Rembrandt to hang alongside the Passion works, the subject matter was not from the Passion but from the Nativity. They can be seen as related subjects, as they refer to the dual nature of Christ on earth, the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 6) is now also in Munich, in which Christ is first recognised as divine and the *Circumcision*, in which by bleeding, His humanity is revealed. The *Circumcision* is now lost, but is known by way of a seemingly faithful copy in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig (fig. 7). In a later section of this book, I present an argument as to why these two paintings, of seemingly unrelated subjects, were added to the "*Passion Series*". However, initially, I will focus on the

¹² Huygens' autobiography was not published until the late nineteenth century, in Latin with a Dutch translation, by Johannes Worp as "Constantyn Huygens over de Schilders van zijn tijd". *Oud Holland* XI (1891): 106-136; and the complete text as "Autobiographie van Constantijn Huygens", *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap XVIII* (1897): 1-122. It was translated into Dutch by A. H. Kan, *De Jeugd van Constantijn Huygens door Hemzelf Beschreven* (Rotterdam: Donker, 1946); for a good English translation of the section in which Huygens discusses Rembrandt and Lievens see Loekie and Gary Schwartz in, Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt: His life, his paintings* (New York: Viking, 1985), 73-4. See also the commentary by Seymour Slive, *Rembrandt and his Critics* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1953), 8-26. Also, Walter Strauss and Marjon van der Meulen, *The Rembrandt Documents* (New York: Arabin, 1979), 1630/5, 68-72.

¹³ The first scholarly discussion of the letters was by Jan van Rijckevorsel, "Rembrandts Schilderijen voor Prins Frederik Hendrik", *Historia Maandschrift voor Geschiedenis en Kuntsgeschiedenis* 4 (1938): 221-226. The letters were edited by Horst Gerson and published in an English translation in 1961. Horst Gerson ed., *Seven Letters by Rembrandt*, transcribed by Isabella van Eeghen; translated by Yola Ovink (The Hague: Boucher, 1961). See also Strauss and van der Muelen, *Documents*, 1636/1 and 2 at 128-133; 1639/2-6 at 160-173.

five paintings that directly depict events from the Passion of Christ and are therefore generally referred to as the *Passion Series*.

The paintings in the *Passion Series* are first recorded in an inventory dated 20 March 1668 of Amalia van Solms, then widow of Frederick Hendrick. It records among “the paintings in the Court in the Noordeinde”: “[1240] Seven paintings made by Rembrandt, all with black frames, oval at the top with gilt leaves all round”.¹⁴ The paintings are not mentioned in the “Depositions Book” of Amalia van Solms of 1673 or in the deed of the division her estate dated 1676.¹⁵ I suggest that this indicates that they may have already been gifted to one of Amalia’s daughters, perhaps Maria (1642-88) who, in 1666 married a German prince Louis Henry (1640-74), later Count Palatine of Simmeron-Kaiserlautern. Three other daughters also married German princes. Although there is no documented evidence to support this supposition it would explain how and when they came to be in Düsseldorf in 1719, when all seven paintings appear again in the inventory of the collection of the Elector Palatine Johann Wilhelm von der Pfalz (1658-1717).¹⁶ Once in Düsseldorf the paintings were thrice removed from the city: in 1758 to Mannheim in the face of a bombardment by the Prussian army, in 1794 to Gluckstadt as French troops approached and in 1805 to Kirchheimbolanden before the Duchy of Berg was ceded to France. Eventually, they arrived in Munich where they have been housed ever since.¹⁷

Initially however, the paintings were not hung in the Noordeinde palace as the 1668 inventory states but, as scholars have now shown, they must have been removed there by Frederick Hendrick’s widow after his

¹⁴ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, 238-292 at 285. [1240] “Seven stucken schilderije bij Rembrandt gemaect, alle met swarte lijsten, boven ovaelsgewijse ende rontom vergulde gesnede feuillages”.

¹⁵ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, 317-322 and 325-377. A “Depositions Book” is a record of possessions made when moving to different accommodation.

¹⁶ Gerhard Joseph Karsch, *Grundliche specification derer vortrefflichen und unschatzbaren Gemhlen...*, *In der Gallerie der Churfurstl. Residentz zu Düsseldorf...*, [1719]: “Diese sieben folgende Stuck *representiren* die *passion* unseres HERN *Jesus Christi*, seynd gemahlet von dem berühmten Mahler *Rembrandt*“. (“The connected seven pictures *representing* the *passion* of Our Lord *Jesus Christ*, are painted by the famous Master painter *Rembrandt*”). Note that here seven paintings are mentioned. This catalogue was reprinted by Jan van Gool (1685-1763), *De Nieuwe Schouburg der Nederlantsche Kunstschilders en Schilderessen*, 2 vols (The Hague: 1750-51), vol. II, 531-67. Available on Google Books.

¹⁷ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 287.

death in 1647.¹⁸ The Noordeinde had been brought and renovated by the States of Holland in 1595 as a residence for Louise de Coligny (1555-1620), widow of William the Silent (1533-84).¹⁹ After her death, it was not re-occupied until required for Amalia.²⁰ In a post-script to his Second Letter to Huygens, Rembrandt suggests that “the best place to show it (the *Ascension*) is in the gallery of His Excellency”.²¹ This strongly implies that during Fredrick Hendrick’s life-time the *Passion Series* hung in the Stadholder’s gallery in the Binnenhof at The Hague. The gallery was a long room north-facing with ample wall space ideal for hanging pictures, the content and organization of which are suggested in the 1632 inventory. The gallery functioned as both a public and private space, in that it acted as both a waiting room for official visitors and petitioners and also provided a pleasant salon for Fredrick Hendrick and his family to converse with friends. As a room in almost constant use by a large and diverse audience, Rembrandt’s paintings would have been viewed by people from a wide range of confessional identities. The visual impact the works would have had in the gallery at the time is considerably diminished today, due to the regrettable condition of the paint surfaces.

In their discussion of the works in the *Corpus*, the Rembrandt Research Project describes each of the *Passion Series* paintings as being “poorly preserved”.²² It is thought that the works suffered quite severe damage in the mid-eighteenth century, the cause of which is unknown. Gary Schwartz has suggested that the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection* may have been dispatched to The Hague in haste with the top layer of paint applied over an existing layer that was insufficiently dry.²³ He states that in a few patches of the works where the original colour can be retrieved reveal unexpectedly bright pastel tones very different from the extreme light-and-dark colour contrasts that the paintings now exhibit.²⁴ The only

¹⁸ Peter van der Ploeg and Carola Vermeeren, eds., *Princely Patrons: The collection of Frederick Henry of Orange and Amalia van Solms in The Hague* (The Hague and Zwolle; Mauritshuis and Waanders, 1997), 193.

¹⁹ See Peter van der Ploeg and Carla Vermeeren, “From the ‘Sea Princes’ Monies: The Stadholder’s art collection”, in *Princely Patrons*, edited by van der Ploeg and Vermeeren, 34-60.

²⁰ van der Ploeg and Vermeeren, “From the ‘Sea Princes’ Monies”, 38.

²¹ Rembrandt, Second Letter, “op de galdeerij van S exc salt best te toonen sijn”. In Gerson ed., *Letters*, 26 and 30 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1636/2 at 132-33.

²² Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 278, 361 and Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. III, 204, 271 and 281.

²³ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 117.

²⁴ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 114.

precise information on the condition of the works when they arrived in Germany is provided by Phillip Hieronymus Brinckmann (1709-1761), court painter to Carl Theodor, Elector Palatine in Mannheim. In a letter Brinckmann states that he undertook, what is now known to have been extensive, restoration work on all “six” Rembrandts.²⁵ Brinckmann therefore suggests that the *Circumcision* was lost some time between 1719 and 1756 or perhaps it was simply not worth saving. Brinckmann wrote boastfully about his achievements, even to the point of inscribing the back of the *Resurrection*, with the remark: “Rembrandt created me; P. H. Brinckmann brought me back to life”.²⁶ However, nowhere does Brinckmann mention making major stylistic additions as was once first thought.²⁷ Due to their poor condition, the painterly aspects of the works have hitherto attracted only brief comment. Rather, scholars have approached the *Passion Series* along alternative avenues of inquiry.

One way in which Rembrandt's *Passion Series* has been discussed is in terms of thematic analogies between the paintings and contemporary devotional poetry, especially as Huygens who was involved in the commissioning process was a notable poet himself.²⁸ Indeed this book was initially inspired by a comment made by Schwartz, which sparked my interest, in a footnote to his discussion of the *Passion Series* in his 1985 monograph of Rembrandt.²⁹ In it, he comments on the relationship between Rembrandt's patron Huygens and the English poet and cleric John Donne (1573-1631).³⁰ Although indisputably Brochhagen's radiographic findings and Kurt Bauch's seminal investigations laid the foundations for what is an ever growing corpus of literature relating to the *Passion Series*, scholars have begun increasingly to explore avenues of inquiry that like Schwartz place the works in a wider context.³¹ A context that, prioritises patronage and location, explores the broader artistic circles

²⁵ Brinckmann, letter to Carl Hendrick von Heinechen, 30th March 1756, in Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 287.

²⁶ The inscription is in Latin: “Rembrand Creavit me/ PHBrinckmann ressuscutavit Te/1755”, in Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 287.

²⁷ Brochhagen, “Passionbildern Rembrandts in München”, 43.

²⁸ For a discussion of Huygens' poetry which situates his work in a broader European context specifically in relation to the work of English devotional poets see Rosie Colie, *Some Thankfulness to Constantine: A study of English influence upon the works of Constantijn Huygens* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966).

²⁹ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 118.

³⁰ For an informative biography of John Donne see Paul Carey, *John Donne: Life, mind and art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

³¹ See Kurt Bauch, “Rembrandt's *Christus am Kreuz*”. *Pantheon* XX: 3 (1962):137-144.

in which Rembrandt moved and one that probes questions such as: why is there no crucifixion scene in the *Passion Series*, why are the self-images so prominent in the earliest works and how do the latter two paintings from the 1640s relate to the earlier five? I suggest that our ability to answer these and other intriguing questions that the *Passion Series* poses is contingent on an attempt to unify the series as a whole. This book presents a series of unifying factors both stylistically and thematically for the works that allows the *Passion Series* to be properly, and finally, called a “series”.

This book is divided into six interpretative chapters followed by a conclusion and accompanied by seven catalogue entries for each of five *Passion Series* works (in chronological order of execution), the later *Adoration* and the copy of the now lost *Circumcision*. The key topics of patronage and the original location of the *Passion Series* are the focus of chapter one. The second chapter considers Rembrandt’s depiction of Christ, traditional presentations of Passion Cycles and the complex and often contradictory religious *milieu* in which the paintings were conceived and executed. In chapter three, Huygens’ autobiography and the seven letters Rembrandt wrote to Huygens, the two major pieces of primary documentation that inform discussion of the *Passion Series*, are examined. The fourth chapter discusses the strong connections, both personally and artistically, between Huygens and Donne and the creative influence their poetry may have had on Rembrandt. Chapter five presents an analysis of the unmistakable self-images Rembrandt incorporates into the first two *Passion Series* works; also considered are further possible self-images in the *Entombment* and in the wider *oeuvre*. The final chapter discusses a three-fold “legacy” of the *Passion Series*: the two further paintings from the 1640s, the two great dry-points of Passion events from the 1650s and the influence of the *Passion Series* on the work Rembrandt’s pupils. After the catalogue entries are illustrations of the key works referred to in this book. Illustrating all the works referred to in this book, executed by Rembrandt and others, was simply not possible; therefore, in addition to an index of names, I have provided an index with full details of all the works by Rembrandt mentioned in the text.

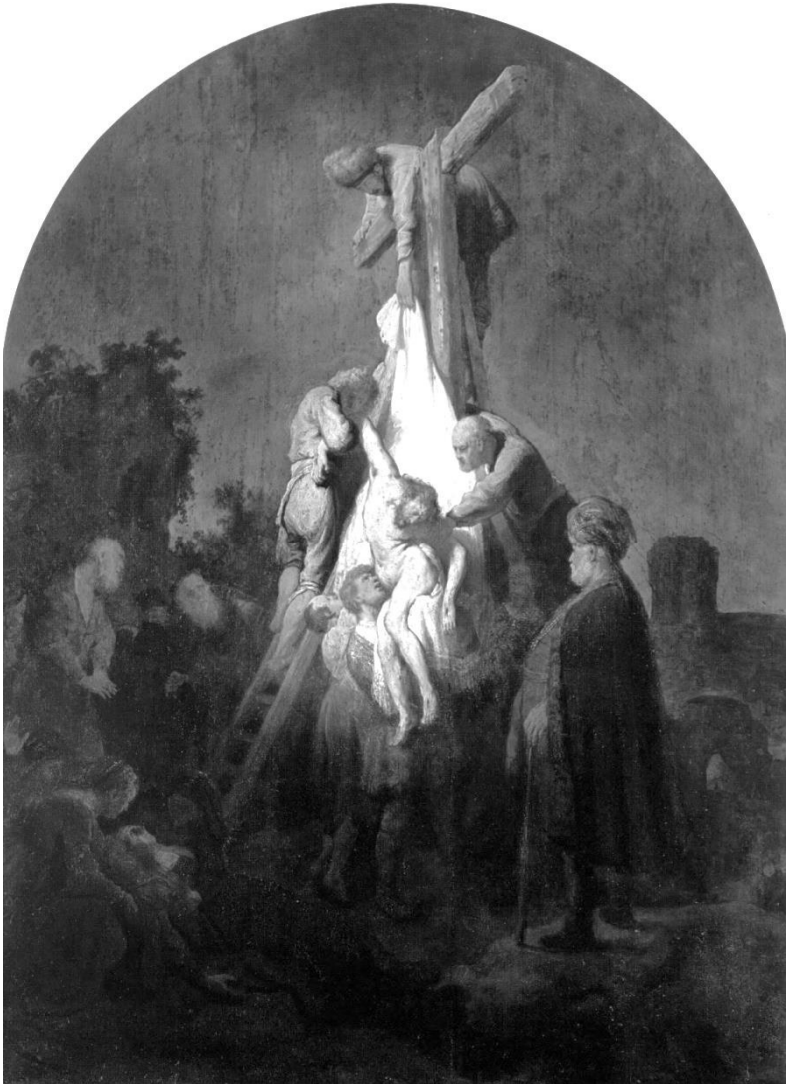


Figure Intro-1: Rembrandt, *The Descent from the Cross*, c.1633, oil on panel, 89.4 x 65.2 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

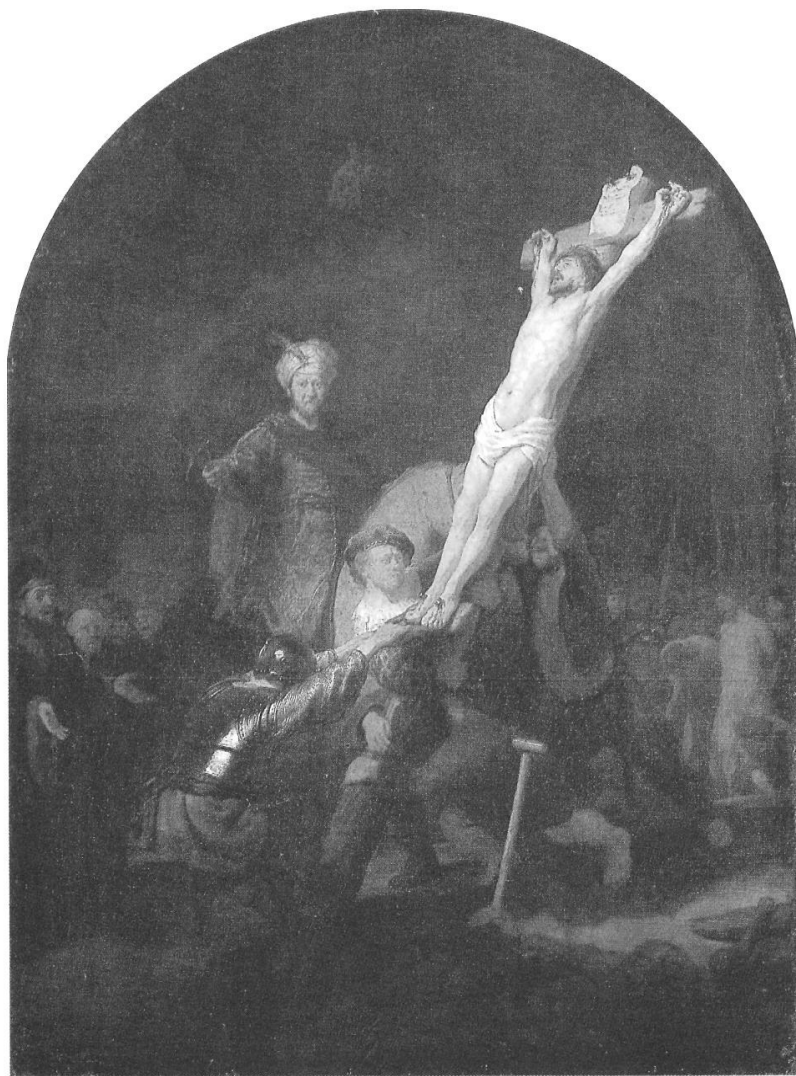


Figure Intro-2: Rembrandt, *The Raising of the Cross*, c.1633, oil on canvas, 95.7 x 72.2 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.



Figure Intro-3: Rembrandt, *The Ascension*, 1636, oil on canvas, 92.7 x 68.3 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.



Figure Intro-4: Rembrandt, *The Entombment*, 1639, oil on canvas, 92.5 x 68.9 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.



Figure Intro-5: Rembrandt, *The Resurrection*, 1639, oil on canvas (later transferred to panel), 91.9 x 67 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.



Figure Intro-6: Rembrandt, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1646, oil on canvas, 97 x 71.3 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.



Figure Intro-7: Copy after Rembrandt, *The Circumcision*, c.1646, oil on canvas, 98 x 73 cm, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PATRONAGE OF THE *PASSION SERIES*

The Patron

In this chapter I situate Rembrandt's five *Passion Series* paintings in the space for which they were commissioned: Stadholder Frederick Hendrick's gallery in the Binnenhof at The Hague. By the early 1630s, Frederick Hendrick and his consort Amalia van Solms were already well advanced in establishing a court at The Hague in the manner of the royal courts of Europe.¹ Hendrick had first-hand experience of the role that the building of palaces and the accumulation of an extensive art collection played in projecting dynastic sovereignty. The education of the future Stadholder had begun in 1591 under the guidance of Reformed clergyman Johannes Wtenbogaert (1557-1646) who was appointed by concerned authorities to counter-balance the influence of his French mother Louise de Coligny (1555-1620).² Louise had given her son a distinctly French upbringing from birth, culminating in 1598, at the age of fourteen, with a year in residence at the French court of his godfather King Henri IV. The extended visit to Paris made a lasting impression on the young man, as did

¹ This book is informed by two exhibition catalogues that revived interest in the court and collections of Frederick Hendrick and Amalia van Solms at The Hague: Marika Koblusek and Jori Zijlmans, eds., *Princely Display: The Court of Frederick Hendrick and Amalia van Solms* (The Hague and Zwolle: Historical Museum and Waanders, 1997) and Van der Ploeg and Vermeeren, eds., *Princely Patrons: The Collection of Frederick Henry of Orange and Amalia van Solms in The Hague*. See also Todd Magreta, "The Development of Orange-Nassau Princely Artistic Activity, 1618-1632", Doctoral Thesis. New York: The City University of New York, 2008.

The term "court" when referring to the Binnenhof complex is used sparingly, as although for all intents and purposes the rooms functioned in a manner similar to other European courts, as already noted, Frederick Hendrick and Amalia van Solms were not royalty.

² See Simon Groenveld, "Frederick Hendrick: A brief political biography", in Ploeg and Vermeeren, eds., *Princely Patrons*, 18-33.

two diplomatic visits to England in 1603 and 1613. During these visits, Fredrick Hendrick became close friends with Henry, Prince of Wales, already a discerning patron and collector. As Stadholder, Frederick Hendrick occupied a challenging and often contradictory executive position in the United Provinces. By the time of his appointment in 1625 at age forty one, he had become a discerning patron well aware of the persuasive power of art to project the power of both the Orange-Nassau lineage and the newly formed Dutch Republic.

Just weeks before his appointment to succeed his dying half-brother Maurits (1567-1625) as Stadholder, Frederick Hendrick honoured his death-bed wish by marrying Amalia van Solms, lady-in-waiting to the Winter Queen of Bohemia (1596-1662). In 1626 after a year of marriage the couple moved into apartments in the Stadholder's Quarters, which were part of the Binnenhof building complex in the centre of The Hague. The Binnenhof was the administrative hub of the United Provinces. Governing bodies such as the States of Holland and the Hof van Holland were based there, while the States General convened in the Binnenhof's Great Hall. Both Maurits and Frederick Hendrick used the Binnenhof as a visual signifier of the power and prestige of the Stadholder and therefore both renovated the medieval complex. The Stadholder's Quarters were in the northwest corner of the Binnenhof, located in the Mauritstoren, which was built between 1592 and 1598, and in a wing of nine bays facing the Buitenhof dating from 1621. Frederick Hendrick's apartments were on the first floor, Amalia's on the second. The layout of the apartments has been plausibly reconstructed by Koen Ottenheim.³ The apartments each had two ante-rooms, a large audience chamber, a wardrobe, a cabinet, and on the side that borders the Binnenhof, each had a long rectangular north-facing gallery that housed a significant portion of the couple's burgeoning painting collection.

Although the layout of the Stadholder's Quarters was therefore broadly based on the Burgundian model, Rosalys Coope has shown that the gallery as a distinct space used for display was a concept that emerged in European palace architecture after Henry VIII's London model in the Whitehall Palace dating from c.1530.⁴ At Whitehall the gallery physically linked the Privy Chamber with the Privy Lodgings, creating an intermediary space

³ Koen Ottenheim, "Possessed by such a Passion for Building: Frederick Hendrick and architecture", in Keblusek and Zijlmans, eds., *Princely Display*, 105-125.

⁴ Rosalys Coope, "The Long Gallery: It's origins, development, use and decoration", *Architectural History*, 29 (1986): 43-84. See also Simon Thurley, *The Whitehall Palace: An architectural history of the royal apartments, 1240-1698* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

between the public and private spheres. A remarkably clear sense of the furnishing and decorative layout of the Binnenhof apartments emerges from documented evidence. With an extension completed around 1632, the Stadholder's Quarters were enlarged with a three-storied addition to the Mauritstoren. At this point an inventory of the contents of the Quarters was taken by the so-called *contrerolleur*, whose name is recorded as Jan 'sHerwouters.⁵ As this is the first extant Orange-Nassau inventory, there are no guidelines as to the exact arrangement of the rooms or the nature of the painting collection prior to this date. The inventory methodically and meticulously describes the contents of each room; this enables us to both reconstruct their decorative arrangement and to gain an impression of Frederick Hendrick and Amalia's collection of paintings, especially since the majority of the works are attributed to a particular artist. The collection has hitherto been afforded little scholarly attention. Peter van der Ploeg and Carla Vermeeren in an article in their 1997 exhibition catalogue began to address this deficiency.⁶ Building on their work, Rebecca Tucker in a 2010 article discussed the *Passion Series* within the context of the collection.⁷

Frederick Hendrick's Gallery and Painting Collection

The 1632 inventory lists 134 paintings, the largest percentage of which were in the two galleries, with fifty-five in Frederick Hendrick's and forty-six in Amalia's. Building on Ottenheyn's plausible reconstruction of the layout of the Stadholder's Quarters, we can envisage how Frederick Hendrick's gallery space functioned. The gallery, the central room in the Quarters, was thirty meters long with seven windows on the Binnenhof side, while the opposite side had two doors and a window at each end. The inventory indicates that the gallery contained only sparse furniture: a single table, a desk, a suite of six chairs and notably no sculpture; therefore painting was the focus in the space. With fifty-five paintings in 1632, supplemented shortly after by the *Passion Series*, the walls seemingly must have been crammed with pictures although we don't know the exact sizes of each work.

⁵ Inventaris van het Stadhoudelijk Kwartier en het Huis in het Noordeinde (Oude Hof), 1632. Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, 181-237.

⁶ Van der Ploeg and Vermeeren, "The 'Sea Princes' Monies", 34-60.

⁷ Tucker, "The Patronage of Rembrandt's *Passion Series*: Art, politics, and princely display at the Court of Orange in the seventeenth century", *The Seventeenth Century* 25:1 (2010), 75-116.

The function of the Stadholder's gallery varied from the English model, which simply served to connect the two sections of the Whitehall Palace. First, entrance to the apartments was gained through a grand staircase in the northwest corner of the building that opened into a foyer. The foyer then provided access to either the gallery or to the official rooms. Visitors would later have exited directly through the gallery at the southern end. While allowing for practical egress and passage the gallery therefore also played a role in audience management. Although important visitors would have proceeded directly through the ante-chamber to the audience chamber, many others would have been ushered into the gallery for aesthetic diversion.⁸ The apartments were a busy place: Hendrick's nobles attended him at meal times which were served with careful attention to hierarchy, representatives from the States General were called there for meetings and ambassadors and visitors of status made a mandatory courtesy stop. All of these people mingled with the numerous members of the Dutch regent class who served as functionaries and bureaucrats in the service of the state.⁹ Additionally, as the largest room in the Binnenhof complex, the gallery would have been regularly utilized for official engagements. Thus it was the most public space in the Stadholder's Quarters at the Binnenhof.

Functioning therefore as not only a military base but also as thriving court, diplomatic and administrative centre, in addition to being a residence, the traffic through Frederick Hendrick's apartments was considerable. To oversee the crowds in the outer rooms, Hendrick in 1637 created a new post, *Edelman van de Camer*.¹⁰ Although the emissaries of foreign governments and their not inconsiderable entourages would have embraced a wide range of confessional identities, the majority of the Dutch audience in the gallery would have been Protestant, of both the Calvinist and Remonstrant persuasions. These were wealthy, educated, worldly personages, well attuned to the role that art played in projecting power and status on whom the political and religious implications of the paintings displayed would not have been lost.

The paintings in the Stadholder's collection seem to reflect, more than the conventional concerns of authority and lineage as expected in a royal collection, Frederick Hendrick's broader political agenda. Coupled with a

⁸ See Olaf Morke, "The Orange Court as Centre of Political and Social Life during the Republic", in Keblusek and Zijlmans, eds., *Princely Display*, 58-104.

⁹ See Jori Zijlmans, "Life at the Court at The Hague", in Keblusek and Zijlmans, eds., *Princely Display*, 30-46, 32.

¹⁰ Marie-Ange Delen, "The Genesis of the Court at The Hague", in Keblusek and Zijlmans, eds., *Princely Display*, 18-28, 24.

natural ambition to be Stadholder of all seven of the Northern Provinces as his father had been, Frederick Hendrick's greater political aim was the reunification of the Southern and Northern Netherlands. As commander-in-chief of the combined Dutch forces in their conflict with the Spanish-ruled Catholic south, Hendrick actively pursued this aim. Herbert Rowan concurs with other historians in positing that Frederick Hendrick was the last of the Orange-Nassau rulers to realistically harbour this hope of reunification; his art collection reflects this aspiration.¹¹ The most remarkable aspect of the inventory, and a significant departure from the standard court model as exemplified by the great connoisseur kings, Charles I and Phillip IV, is the lack of diversity in the nationalities of the artists represented.¹² Frederick Hendrick does however seem to have shared an interest with these royal connoisseurs in mythological subject matter, as evidenced by the extraordinary number of depictions of Venus in the collection.¹³

An examination of the collection by nationality reveals that a series of anonymous portraits of twelve French Kings and their consorts were, along with an unidentified equestrian portrait of Henri IV, the only French paintings Frederick Hendrick and Amalia owned.¹⁴ These works are clearly linked to Frederick Hendrick's French lineage and his aforementioned year-long residence in the French court. The couple owned only one work by a German artist, Hans Rottenhammer (1564-1625), who lived and worked in Italy and only one by an Italian.¹⁵ In addition, the inventory lists only one Dutch work executed prior to 1600, a *Hoboken Fair* by Pieter Aertsen (1509-1575) or Joachim Beuckelaer (c.1530-1573).¹⁶ Thus the vast majority of the collection consisted of works by contemporary artists

¹¹ Herbert Rowan, *The Princes of Orange: The Stadholders in the Dutch Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 63-7.

¹² For an overview of princely modes of collecting see Richard Lightbown, "Charles I and the Tradition of European Princely Collecting", in *The Late King's Goods: Collections, possession and patronage of Charles I in light of the Commonwealth sale inventories*, edited by Arthur MacGregor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 53-72. For the painting collection of Charles I see Francis Haskell, "Charles I's Collection of Pictures", in MacGregor, *The Late King's Goods*, 203-31.

¹³ The number of paintings in the Binnenhof collection with "Venus" as the subject reaches well into double figures.

¹⁴ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 245 and 219 at 192 and 191.

¹⁵ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 73 and 120 at 184 and 186.

¹⁶ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, # 142 at 187.