

The Patronage of Rembrandt's Passion Series: Art, Politics, and Princely Display at the Court of Orange in the Seventeenth Century

Introduction

Between 1633 and 1646, Prince Frederik Hendrik of Orange (1584–1647) commissioned and purchased seven paintings by Rembrandt. Commonly known as the Passion Series, the paintings remain an intriguing puzzle in the world of Rembrandt studies. The Passion paintings do not, in fact, narrate the story of Christ's Passion. Two scenes from the childhood of Christ (the *Adoration of the Shepherds* and *Circumcision*) are included, while major events of the Passion (such as the Crucifixion) are omitted. Furthermore, the paintings are on different supports, in different styles, and were assembled in a piecemeal fashion at irregular intervals over more than 15 years. Yet the series remains the most prestigious commission in Rembrandt's career. Made for the premier patron of art in the Northern Netherlands, it was by any standards among the artist's most valuable (as well as lucrative) projects.

Seven paintings made up the Passion group in 1646; today, six survive, in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich. In chronological order of production, they are: the *Descent from the Cross* (1633); the *Raising of the Cross* (1633); the *Ascension* (1636); the *Entombment* (by 1639) and *Resurrection* (by 1639); and the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (1646). A *Circumcision* (1646) has been lost, though a copy of the composition may exist in the Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig.¹ There are two main reasons to think about these paintings as a group: the first is their common size and format (about 90 x 70 cm, with slight variations, all with semicircular arched tops and ebony frames). The second is the fact that they were all owned by Frederik Hendrik, *stadhouder* in the Northern Netherlands and Prince of Orange-Nassau.

The paintings have garnered relatively little sustained attention in Rembrandt scholarship, perhaps due to their visual oddity (a perception exacerbated by the sadly worn condition of the six remaining paintings). The scholarly focus has been on the artist, and on the seven letters in Rembrandt's own hand that survive regarding this commission. By contrast, the role of the

patron has been minimized. Most scholarship on the paintings simply states the fact that they were made for the Prince while discussing separate issues such as Rembrandt's stylistic development or biography.² In this article, I will focus on the patronage of these works, their location within a larger system of court display, and their reception and interpretation. As writers on patronage have pointed out, court art and architecture in the early modern period was invested with important functions and carried significant weight in a ruler's quest to define and solidify power.³ Since the Passion series was a court commission, re-establishing its courtly context (both in its physical setting and audience) provides a new understanding of the frame of reference within which the series operated.

Enter the Patron

Frederik Hendrik was the third son of the famous champion of Dutch independence, Willem van Orange-Nassau (also known as Willem de Zwijger, or 'the Taciturn'), and one of several military heroes and *stadhouders* from that aristocratic family. From youth he was groomed to serve the United Provinces and further the family interests. Frederik Hendrik learned military skills at the elbow of his elder half-brother Maurits van Orange, the renowned general and military strategist. Frederik Hendrik acquired diplomatic and social skills during service to his godfather King Henri IV of France, and from his well-connected French Huguenot mother, Louise de Coligny.

Like his father and brother, Frederik Hendrik served as *stadhouder* in the Northern Netherlands. The *stadhouder* (literally, 'city-holder,' or governor in today's terms) post derived from the nation's earlier history as a part of the Burgundian and Hapsburg empires. In those days, trusted local aristocrats were appointed by absent rulers to govern on their behalf. During the Republic, the *stadhouder* instead served the States-General, the sovereign governmental body made up of representatives from the regent class across the Netherlands. Despite this subservience, the *stadhouder* had significant power within the political and legal structure of the United Provinces, including administrative, diplomatic, and governing duties as well as military leadership of the nation.

In the morass surrounding questions of religion in the period, as well, Frederik Hendrik occupied a position of authority. Frederik Hendrik's ancestry included a long line of heroes and martyrs for the Protestant cause. As grandson of the Huguenot Admiral de Coligny, son of Willem de Zwijger, and current Prince of Orange, Frederik Hendrik embodied the struggle for religious freedom from Catholic domination even though he himself eschewed any active role in the religious debates in The Netherlands (unlike his half-brother Maurits). Thus Frederik Hendrik's heroic family history, his elevated aristocratic status, his access to the extensive Orange-Nassau wealth,

his fame as a general, his love of art and architecture, his flair for magnificent display at the court at The Hague, and his status as *stadhouder* were all factors that helped him become the most famous nobleman and the most significant art patron in The Netherlands in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Frederik Hendrik's model for art patronage derived from international sources. Crucial was his youthful exposure to the court of King Henri IV in Paris during 1598. Like Henri, Frederik Hendrik's earliest patronage activities were in the realm of architecture, and later expanded to include urban planning. In addition to his experience as a young man in France, Frederik Hendrik also made diplomatic visits to England in 1603 and 1613. During these visits he became intimate with Henry, the Prince of Wales, already a discerning patron and collector. In this period Frederik Hendrik began to acquire art. He focused on the visual arts that were signifiers of nobility, including tapestries, silver, porcelain, coins and medals, sculptures, and paintings. The acquisitions increased in scale after the death of Maurits in 1624, when Frederik Hendrik acceded to the position of Prince of Orange and was elected *stadhouder*.

An adroit politician who occupied an anomalous, contradictory, and often difficult position in the hierarchy of the United Provinces, Frederik Hendrik was an experienced patron, savvy to the purposes, and persuasive power, of art. His glamorous court, conspicuous display, and large-scale patronage of art and architecture were not just the idle indulgences of the aristocracy; rather, Frederik Hendrik's patronage suggests a strategic initiative, in which art, culture and the performance of nobility were harnessed to enhance and express the power of both the Orange-Nassau family and the Republic.⁴ It is within this social and political arena that Rembrandt's Passion series originated, and operated.

The Commission

Frederik Hendrik's purchase of the first works in the Passion Series (the *Descent from the Cross* and the pendant *Raising of the Cross*) in 1633 was only one in a sequence of acquisitions from the artist. In fact, Frederik Hendrik had already become an enthusiastic collector of Rembrandt's work. In his taste for the young artist the Prince may have been influenced by the erudite and sophisticated connoisseur Constantijn Huygens, who after 1625 served as the Prince's secretary and *de facto* artistic advisor. Around 1628 Huygens made a now-famous visit to the studio of Rembrandt and Jan Lievens; Huygens recorded his praise of these artists in his autobiography.⁵ The *stadhouder* clearly shared Huygen's appreciation for Rembrandt's skills in the realm of dramatic history painting: Frederik Hendrik owned several of the artist's early works in this genre, such as the 1631 *Rape of Proserpina* (Berlin).⁶ Yet in some areas, the Prince's patronage diverged from Huygens's

taste. For example, unlike Huygens and others, the Prince appears to have valued Rembrandt's skills as a portraitist.⁷ In 1632 the Prince gave Rembrandt a commission for a portrait of his wife, the Princess Amalia van Solms.⁸ One imagines Huygens, who preferred Lievens's ability to render likeness, would have turned up his nose at the result. Frederik Hendrik, though, continued to favour the artist.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the Prince of Orange's patronage for Rembrandt. Not only did Frederik Hendrik purchase and commission major works, but the Prince's ownership of Rembrandt's works also supplied an aura of success and courtly sanction to the young artist. This cachet may have contributed to Rembrandt's success as a painter to regent and *nouveau-riche* clients in Amsterdam. Even more valuable was the Prince's active promotion of the artist through gifts of paintings to foreign courts. Contemporary sources tell us the *stadhouder* presented two paintings attributed to Rembrandt to the English Ambassador Robert Kerr as a gift for the King of England, Charles I. There were two Rembrandt paintings in the royal collection by 1633.⁹

The *Descent from the Cross* (Figure 1) and the *Raising of the Cross* (Figure 2) made up the first stage of the Passion group commission. The *Descent* was begun during the course of 1632 and significantly revised in 1633. The *Raising* was executed in 1633.¹⁰ The related compositions, tonalities, and iconographies within the two paintings make it clear that they were intended to go together, perhaps as pendants. However, the *Descent* is on cedar panel, while the *Raising* (like all the other subsequent works in the series) is on canvas. Elke Kai Sass convincingly argued, based on the physical and stylistic evidence, that the *Descent* was produced on spec in 1632–33, while the *Raising* was commissioned as a pendant by Frederik Hendrik in 1633.¹¹

As the first of the group to be painted, the *Descent from the Cross* set the tone for the whole series. Though the painting has suffered from wear and retouching (as have all the Passion paintings), the sparkling surface textures, strong chiaroscuro, and dramatic emotional intensity of the *Descent* are in line with other works of Rembrandt's early period owned by Frederik Hendrik.¹² The *Descent* also makes explicit reference to the work of the Flemish master Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), incorporating several motifs from Lucas Vorsterman's 1620 engraving of Rubens's *Descent from the Cross* altarpiece from Antwerp (1612: Figure 3).¹³ The visual dialogue and competition with Rubens served the interests of both artist and patron. Indeed, it is likely that Rembrandt targeted the paintings to his patron's particular interests. Frederik Hendrik's taste for the work of Rubens was equal to that of many aristocrats around Europe, though his access to the Flemish master was restricted by the political realities of the ongoing Dutch war with Spain. In 1625, he purchased Rubens's pastoral piece *The Crowning of Diana* (with Frans Snyders, formerly Honselaarsdijk, now Potsdam), and several Rubens works entered the princely collection by purchase in later years.

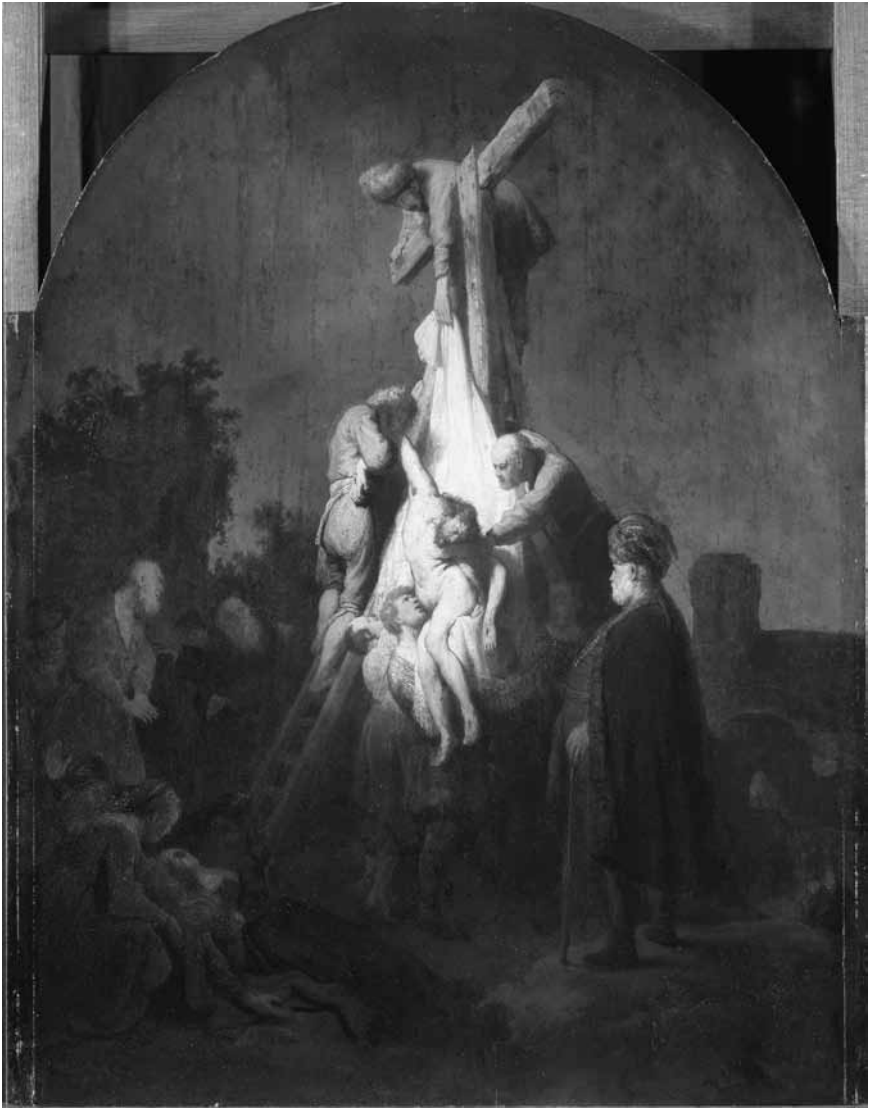


Figure 1 Rembrandt, *The Descent from the Cross*, ca. 1632–3, oil on cedar panel, 35¼ in. x 25½ in. (89.6 x 65 cm). Alte Pinakothek, Munich. Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY

In the *Descent*, Rembrandt set himself in direct competition with the Flemish master. The complexities of that competition are visible in the figure of Mary, found to the right of the cross in the underpainting of the Munich panel. Rembrandt's Mary is in the same position as Rubens's model, and similarly she reaches out to touch the arm of Christ with her right hand. Yet

Rembrandt modifies Rubens's complex intertwined composition in favour of simplicity: he separates the figures in space, and eliminates extraneous ones (such as the extra man on the cross). He incorporates the gesture of Rubens's Mary Magdalene into that of Mary, allowing her left hand to touch Christ's calf tenderly, and then removes the Magdalene entirely from the group. Later, the artist moved Mary to the left side of the composition, shown prostrate in the traditional swooning moment. Rembrandt also eschews the heroic muscularity, activity, and emotionalism of Rubens's version. Rather, his *Descent* emphasizes the frailty of Christ and the quiet contemplation of the onlookers at the scene. The end result is a composition that advertizes an alliance with the famous Rubens model while also revealing the independence, and creative innovations, of the artist.

Rembrandt's dialogue with Rubens continues in his 1633 etching of the *Descent*, which follows an early stage of the Munich composition.¹⁴ The print is quite large in scale and ambitious in scope. It is clearly meant to be equivalent to the popular reproductive prints after major altarpieces that were made in Rubens's workshop and disseminated across Europe. Like Rubens's, Rembrandt's print is inscribed prominently with the painter's signature, date, and the designation of copyright ('*Rembrandt f. cum pryvli. 1633*') at the base.¹⁵ This print asserts in the public arena that Rembrandt is a major competitor of Rubens; it shows his individualistic style and mastery of etching, and sets up Rembrandt as an artist who rivals – even surpasses – the famous Fleming.

The *Raising of the Cross*, also painted in 1633, makes a pair with the *Descent*. Both contain a similar compositional formula, employing pyramidal forms around the cross punctuated by vertical counterpoints in the watching turbaned figures. Both utilize a set of common visual techniques: strong light and dark contrasts (especially around the spotlighted body of Christ on the cross), indeterminate backgrounds, and meticulous attention to varied textures such as shiny metal, embroidered cloth, tousled hair, taut skin, and dripping blood. Both paintings combine passages in a finer technique with areas of thicker and more plastic handling; such a combination was a herald of the virtuoso artist's early style.¹⁶ Although the action of the *Raising* is more dynamic than that of the *Descent*, the overall mood of the paintings remains quiet and contemplative. The small scale of the figures, the fineness of the detail, and the brilliant light of the paintings invite, even require, intimate viewing and close attention. A youthful self-portrait placed at the narrative crux of the *Raising*, in the figure of one of the executioners of Christ, may play into Rembrandt's marketing of himself at that stage in his career. Such images of the artist were successful on the art market, and with prestigious collectors. One of the two Rembrandt paintings Frederik Hendrik gave to Charles I of England was, in fact, the artist's self-portrait.¹⁷

Sometime between late 1633 and January of 1636 Prince Frederik Hendrik ordered three more paintings from Rembrandt. These were of the same

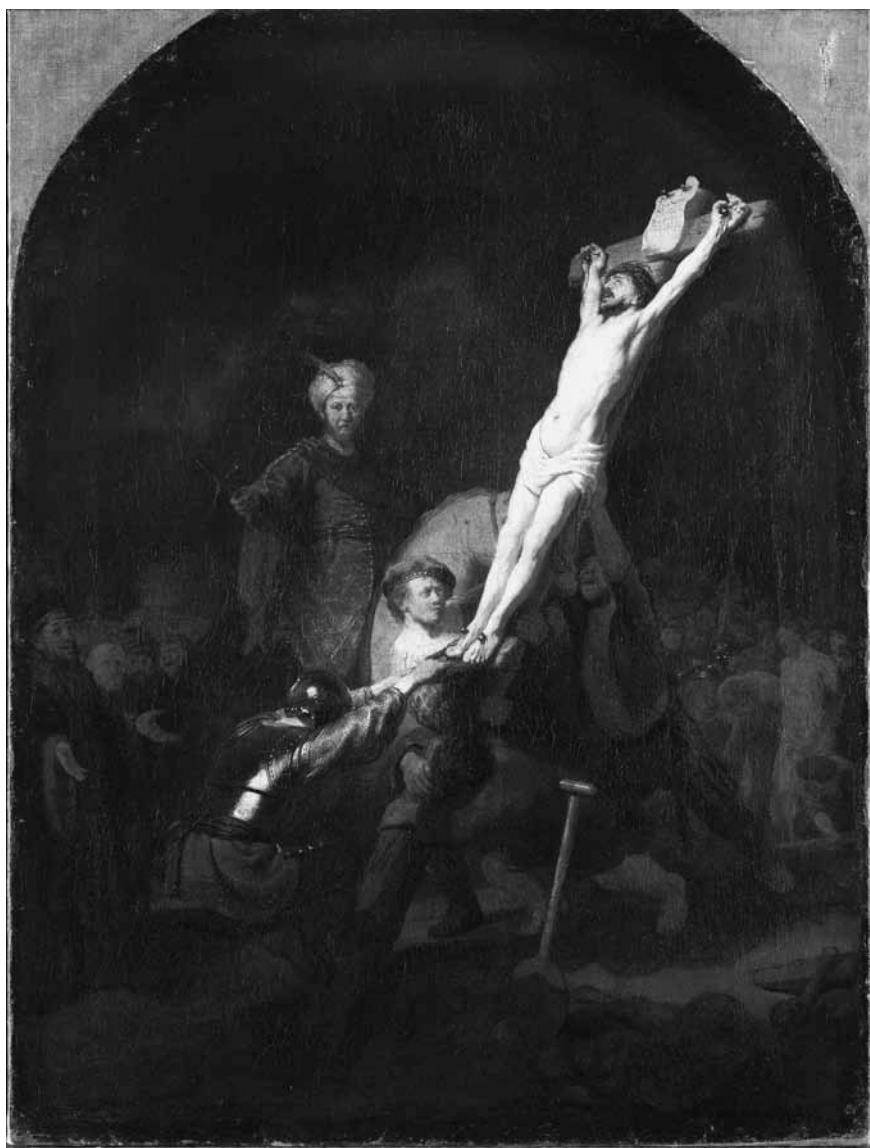


Figure 2 Rembrandt, *The Raising of the Cross*, 1633, oil on canvas, 37 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. x 28 $\frac{2}{5}$ in. (95.7 x 72.2 cm). Alte Pinakothek, Munich. Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY



Figure 3 Lucas Vorsterman (after Peter Paul Rubens), *The Descent from the Cross*, 1620, engraving, 23 x 17 in. (58.2 x 43.1 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Harvey D. Parker Collection. Photograph © 2010 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

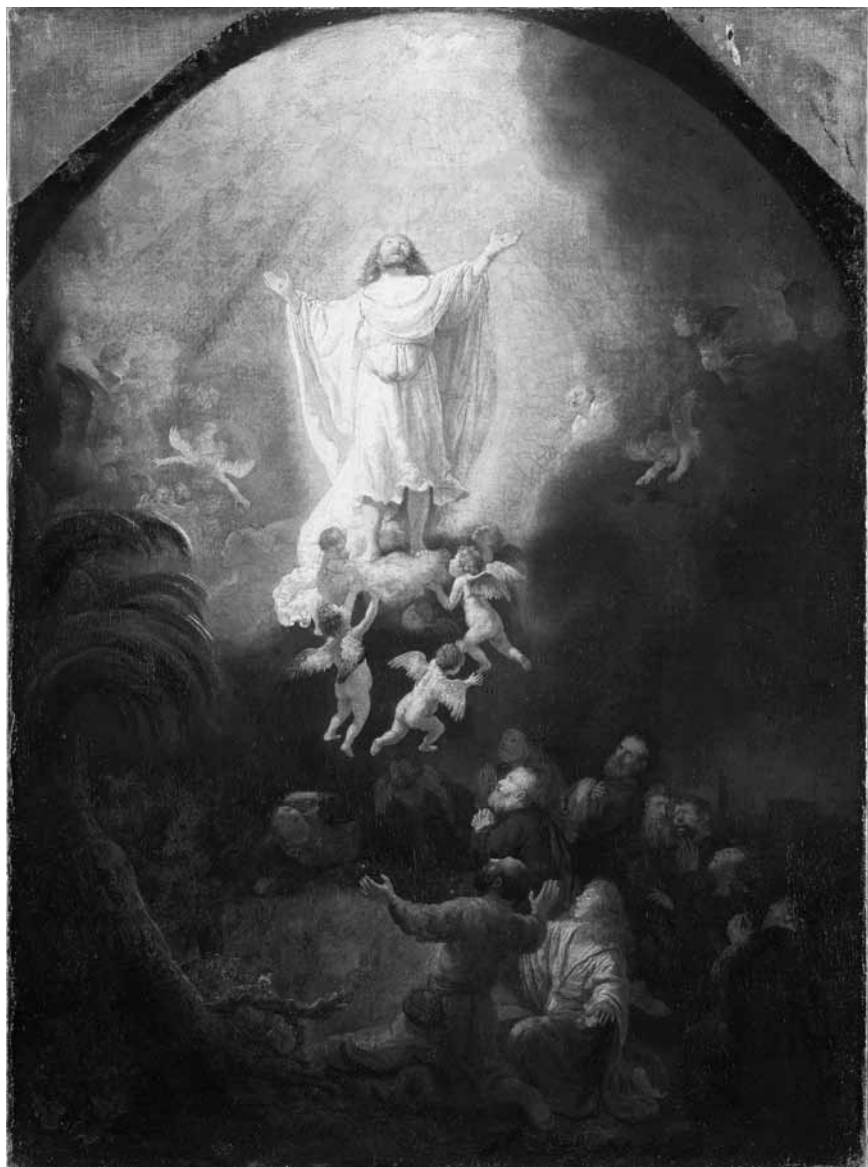


Figure 4 Rembrandt, *The Ascension*, 1636, oil on canvas, 36 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. x 27 in. (93 x 68.7 cm). Alte Pinakothek, Munich. Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY

size and in the same arched format of the previous two. They depicted the *Ascension of Christ* (Figure 4), the *Entombment* (Figure 5), and the *Resurrection* (Figure 6). With this commission, the pendant pair of the *Descent* and *Raising* became a proper series, with five canvases on topics that, though idiosyncratic in narrative, conformed in outline to a Protestant iconography for the Passion.¹⁸ The focus in the series is on the human body of Christ, presented in a range of emotionally compelling circumstances; remarkably, the Crucifixion itself is missing, as are all the scenes prior to the elevation of the cross.¹⁹

The *Ascension*, delivered in 1636, continues the successful visual mode Rembrandt established in the first two works, employing the same small scale figures, intense emotions, and dramatic light contrasts. The lighter palette, deeper space, and sense of movement in the composition are typical of Rembrandt's style in the late 1630s. These can also be found in the solemn *Entombment* and the boisterous *Resurrection*, which were delivered in 1639. In the *Ascension*, the artist once again made reference to an acknowledged masterpiece of European art, Titian's *Assumption of the Virgin* (1516–18, Frari, Venice).²⁰ In addition to the clear compositional references and figural borrowings, Titian's iconography may also be registered here. X-rays tell us Rembrandt originally included a head of God the Father at the apex of his composition, but later painted it out in favour of a dove.²¹ The change in iconography suggests that Rembrandt was careful to keep this very stirring image of Christ's entrance into Heaven within proper bounds for Protestant imagery.²²

Sometime before 1646, Frederik Hendrik commissioned two final works for his group. The *Circumcision* (lost) and the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (Figure 7) were delivered by November of that year. The addition of two subjects changed the 'Passion' group into a 'Life of Christ' group. Visually, the effect of the group was maintained. All the paintings were the same size, with the same lighting, figural scale, and arched top. All were framed in black ebony, provided by the artist. In the *Adoration* Rembrandt shows off the looser handling of his later style, which to modern eyes appears a jarring contrast with the earlier works in the series. However, the *Adoration* ties into the series by repeating costumes and poses of figures, as well as props (such as lanterns), and by referencing the colour scheme of red, blue and brown found in the earlier works. The painting also features the climate of intimacy and rapt attention established so effectively in 1633 in the *Descent*. All the Passion scenes tell the sacred story in terms that enhance its contemplative aspect; each highlights the role of subsidiary figures who stand in for the viewer, and who provide models of looking and contemplating.

Despite what we today perceive as the idiosyncratic narrative of the series, its unusual iconography, and the disparate handling of paint, contemporary documents attest that the paintings functioned as a group. In addition to the visual evidence aligning the paintings together, the paintings were conceived of as a discrete set by everyone involved: the artist wrote about them as a

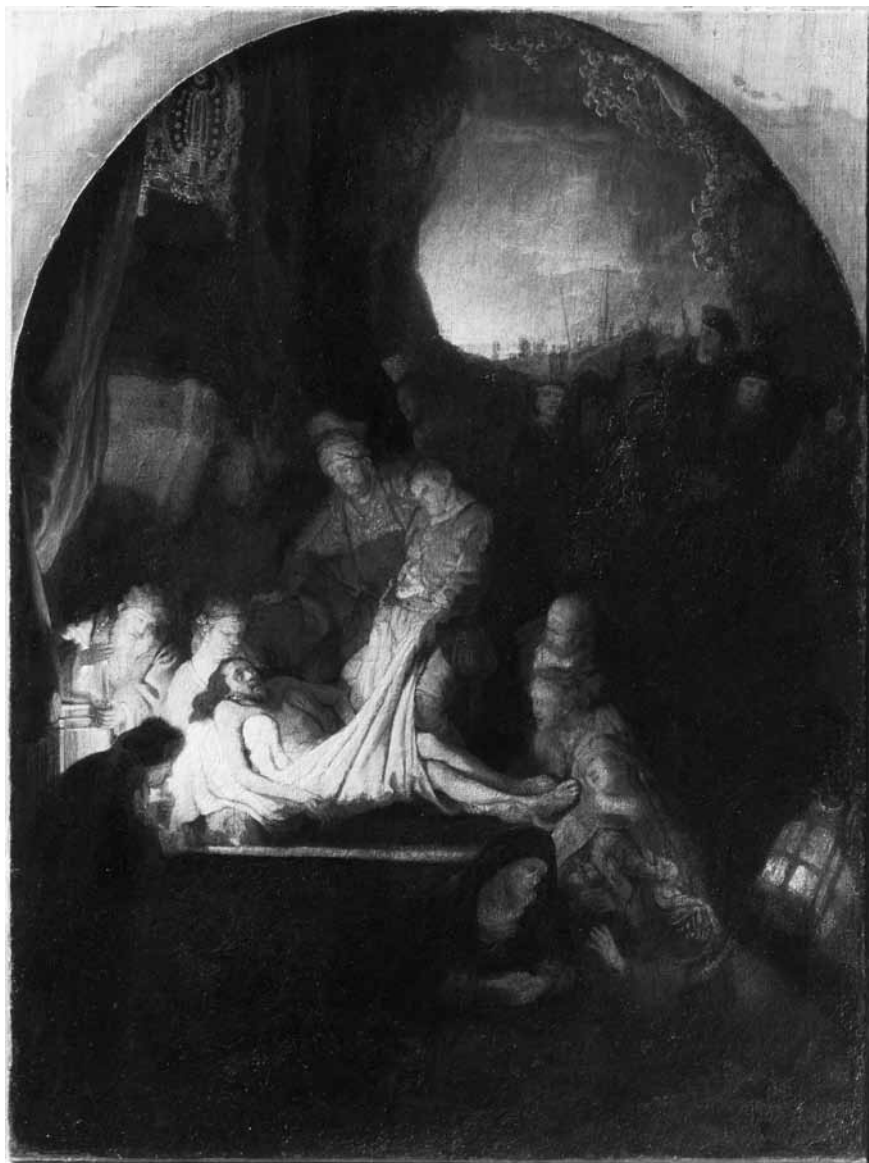


Figure 5 Rembrandt, *The Entombment*, by 1639, oil on canvas, 36½ in. x 27⅞ in. (92.6 x 68.9 cm). Alte Pinakothek, Munich. Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY



Figure 6 Rembrandt, *The Resurrection*, by 1639, oil on canvas, $36\frac{1}{8}$ in. x $26\frac{3}{8}$ in. (91.9 x 67 cm). Alte Pinakothek, Munich. Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY



Figure 7 Rembrandt, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1646, oil on canvas, 38½ in. x 28 in. (97 x 71.3 cm). Alte Pinakothek, Munich. Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/ Art Resource, NY

group, and the Prince hung them all together in his gallery. Even the Prince's descendants agreed: thirty years later, in an Orange-Nassau inventory of 1668, the paintings were still hanging together in narrative sequence, and were described as a group under a single inventory number.²³

Examination of the documentary evidence allows a further opportunity to examine the agendas and concerns of the artist and the patron in this commission. Rembrandt's letters regarding the series preserve rare opinions by the artist about his own art, and have been studied for insights into the artist's personal development and artistic concerns. They also illuminate the nature of the project itself, by throwing valuable light upon the expectations of both artist and patron. Rembrandt writes specifically about the key questions of this (and any) commission: time frame, price, and style. Most importantly for this study, in the letters Rembrandt confirms Frederik Hendrik's central role in the commissioning of the Passion series and discusses the intended location of the works.

Rembrandt Speaks

The seven letters by Rembrandt are addressed to the Prince's secretary and artistic advisor, Constantijn Huygens. The first two letters, dated to early 1636, concern the delivery of the *Ascension*. The other five letters, from January and February of 1639, tell of the completion of the *Entombment* and *Resurrection* and Rembrandt's attempts to obtain payment in a timely manner.

The Prince is a weighty, though voiceless, presence throughout these letters. In Rembrandt's first letter to Huygens, from February of 1636, Rembrandt specifies that the commission for the *Ascension*, *Entombment*, and *Resurrection* came directly from the Prince (*die sijn excellensij mij selfs heft geordijneert*).²⁴ Huygens acted as intermediary between patron and artist through the course of the transaction. For example, in the third letter Rembrandt mentions that, as requested, he had delivered the Passion paintings to Huygens rather than directly to the Prince.²⁵ This does not mean the Prince was out of the loop – rather, the delivery accords entirely with Frederik Hendrik's customary patronage practices.

The procedure Rembrandt outlines in his letters was standard for the Prince's commissioned projects: the Prince gave the commission, personally handled approval of the design and the final work, and set the pricing. Since Frederik Hendrik was often in the field at war or busy with politics and diplomacy, trusted personal representatives were essential to oversee his ongoing projects. Huygens filled that role admirably. He handled the logistics, arranging for delivery, payment, and installation of art, vetting artists, and managing the agents in foreign markets who kept their eyes open for artists and objects of interest to the Prince. The artists themselves recognized

Huygens's central position, and plied him with (and for) favours.²⁶ Rembrandt sent an enormous and apparently unwelcome painting to Huygens as a gift, in thanks for facilitating the Passion commission.²⁷ Yet at no point did the Prince cede control over the process, or the final result, of any of his commissions, whether for buildings, art, gardens, objects, furniture, jewelry, or fabric décor. Indeed, the Prince was an active participant in many of his projects, as letters by Huygens and other agents testify, taking time out from the battlefield to draw plans, design architectural details, and review samples.

Timing

The primary topic in Rembrandt's letters is delivery of the paintings. He opens the first letter with a request: for Huygens to tell the Prince that Rembrandt has been working very diligently (*'seer naerstich'*) on his project. Many suppose that the emphasis on his own diligence suggests that Rembrandt was behind schedule – and later difficulties with deadlines for other clients might support such a reading. But the phrase may not refer to a guilty conscience. It could well show Rembrandt celebrating his famous assiduousness (noted by Huygens in the *Autobiography*) on behalf of this valued patron.²⁸ The letter continues: Rembrandt states that the *Entombment* and *Resurrection* are more than half way finished (*'ruym half gedaen'*), while the *Ascension* is completed (*'opgemaect'*). The question at hand is whether the Prince would like the *Ascension* immediately, or whether he would prefer to wait for all three works to be completed. Huygens's reply (now lost) must have been for the first option, because Rembrandt's second letter indicates that the *Ascension* painting had been delivered in the intervening month.²⁹ One concludes that the Prince was eager for the work; unfortunately he had to wait three years for the others to be completed. From 1636 to 1639 the *Descent*, *Raising*, and *Ascension* hung together.

In the third letter, dated 12 January 1639, Rembrandt strikes a more overtly defensive tone. He rationalizes the three-year delay in the delivery of the *Entombment* and *Resurrection* by alluding to the zeal (*'stuijdoise vlijt'*) he has put into them and the care he has taken with the rendering of emotions (*'beweegelijkheid'*).³⁰ In essence, he argues that the high quality of the two works justifies the length of time they have taken to complete. Again, Huygens is asked how he would like the paintings: Huygens must have requested delivery right away, since the fourth letter accompanied the two paintings to The Hague within two weeks. Though we might expect the patron to have become impatient with the delays of the artist and perhaps find another provider, the reverse appears to be true: rather than being annoyed, Frederik Hendrik granted another commission to Rembrandt, for two more paintings, sometime between 1639 and 1646. Clearly, the time frame was not Frederik Hendrik's first concern. Rather, for the patron, Rembrandt's authorship was an essential component in the project.

Price

Pricing for the paintings was another of Rembrandt's main concerns. The letters show him attempting to maximize his profit on this commission; he suggests a healthy price for the *Ascension* (200 pounds *arfois*, or about 1200 guilders) in 1636, but settles for 600 guilders. Ever hopeful, in 1639 Rembrandt asks again for 1200 guilders for both the *Resurrection* and the *Entombment* – but quickly settles for half that amount. Though these were hefty prices, they were not exceptional for the Prince. He commonly paid this much for stand-alone paintings hung in his palaces: indeed, 600 guilders was the standard per-piece price used in the Oranjezaal commission.³¹ Only when the work involved large-scale decorative wall paintings did his prices rise.³²

External pressures may account for Rembrandt's willingness to reduce his prices. Rembrandt had finalized his purchase of a grand new house on the Jodenbreestraat in Amsterdam on January 5, 1639. The need to begin payments on the house put the artist in a financial crunch through the early months of 1639.³³ Rather than holding out for the maximum return on his work, in letters five, six and seven (from January and early February 1639) Rembrandt pushes for quick and expedient payment. Though this was a virtue for which the Prince was not widely known, for Rembrandt strings were pulled. A payment order was sent to the tax collector Johannes Uytenbogaert on 17 February 1639.³⁴

On 29 November 1646, the Prince's account books (Nassause Domeinraad Ordonnantieboeken) tell us that Rembrandt had delivered two more works (the *Adoration of the Shepherds*, and a *Circumcision*), for which he received the sum of 1200 guilders each.³⁵ Finally, after ten years, Rembrandt received the amount he wanted. At that price, the two paintings were among the most expensive works in Frederik Hendrik's collection. One wonders why the Prince decided to double the payment. It may be that Rembrandt's reputation, which had soared after the public triumph of the *Nightwatch* commission, made his works more valuable to the Prince. Whatever the rationale, the documents indicate that in 1646 Rembrandt was worth a lot in Frederik Hendrik's collection.³⁶ One wonders if further commissions may have been forthcoming – but Frederik Hendrik died in 1647, ending the longstanding relationship between the *stadhouder* and Rembrandt.

Unity

Given our modern perception of the Passion series as an incoherent group, perhaps the most startling aspect of Rembrandt's letters is the concern he shows for the unity of the various canvases. In the first letter he makes it clear that all the works go together: '*De selvijsge ackoordeeren met opdoening en afdoeningen vant Chruijs Christij*' (these same [paintings: the *Resurrection*, *Ascension*, and *Entombment*] harmonize with Christ's

raising and removal from the Cross [the *Descent* and *Raising* of 1633]).³⁷ In the service of this effect, the painter went so far as to make a special trip to The Hague to examine the works *in situ* at the request of the patron. In the second letter Rembrandt responds that he will be happy to visit the site to see how the *Ascension* fits in with the others ('*soo ist dat ick goet vinden dat ick cortz volgen sal om to besien hoe dat het stucken met de rest voucht*').³⁸ This confirms that Rembrandt travelled at least once to the court in The Hague. The letter also shows that from the early stages of the commission Rembrandt was personally acquainted with the physical location of his series.

The idea that there was a problem with the stylistic integrity of the group is not confirmed by the evidence.³⁹ While Gary Schwartz's reading of the second letter assumes that Rembrandt was being hauled onto the carpet by his irate patron, the text can be read in a more benign manner. It simply records Rembrandt's agreement to go, without commentary or inflection. If Rembrandt was indeed being censured, one might expect a more defensive tone (as found in the later, and more hostile, correspondence with Don Antonio Ruffo and others).⁴⁰ The matter-of-fact statement in the letter suggests that Huygens and/or the Prince had asked the painter to The Hague for what would have been a fairly routine visit: to scout out the site, and perhaps to make minor modifications, as artists often did when *in-situ* works were installed.⁴¹ Additionally, if the Prince's commission for another set of paintings was already under discussion, a visit to the group's location would also have been extremely useful to the painter as he began the next canvases.

As we have seen, the paintings in the Passion group were consistent in light, tone, scale, and intimacy despite their disparate dates. Their common format, framing, and hanging visually underscored the uniformity of the group, an effect clearly of interest to the patron. That priority was shared by the artist, who thought (and wrote) of them as a group throughout the long commission.

Location

Rembrandt's second letter to Huygens also provides evidence that the painter was intimately familiar with the intended location of the works, and knew the chambers of the Prince well. In his delivery note sent with the *Ascension*, Rembrandt tells Huygens to hang the painting in the gallery of the Prince: '*op de galdeerij van s. exc. salt best toonenen sijn alsoo daer een starck licht is*' (in the gallery of His Excellency it will show to the best advantage since there is a strong light there).⁴² In 1636 the *Raising* and *Descent* hung there already. Soon thereafter, as we have seen, the painter travelled to The Hague to see the *Descent*, *Raising*, and *Ascension* as a complete group *in situ*.

Rembrandt's words make it clear that both patron and artist knew from at least early 1636 (and probably before) where the works were intended

to hang. That approach was consistent with Frederik Hendrik's patronage patterns: at his various palaces (Honselaarsdijk, Huis Ter Nieuburch at Rijswijk, and the Oude Hof at Noordeinde were all redecorated in the 1630s and 1640s) the Prince commonly gave commissions that were part of a known architectural project. Indeed, the bulk of Frederik Hendrik's commissions in this period were specific to certain buildings and locations. For example, in the mid 1630s Frederik Hendrik commissioned several large paintings depicting scenes of the goddesses Diana and Venus, which were installed within the decorative framework of the new stairwell in Honselaarsdijk. These works were literally part of the fabric of the wall, as was Pieter de Grebber's illusionistic painting of musicians behind a balustrade, which was painted onto the surface of the cove vault in the great hall.⁴³ Similar ensemble approaches to decoration were used at Frederik Hendrik's residences at Ter Nieuburch and Buren. De Grebber wrote in his rules for young artists that painters should always take the intended lighting and spatial location of their work into consideration when composing a piece.⁴⁴ Rembrandt's later work may reflect this approach: Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann has persuasively argued that the composition and lighting of the *Nightwatch* was tailored to the particular setting of the Kloveniersdoelen chamber.⁴⁵ Rembrandt's letters provide valuable evidence supporting the idea of the Passion paintings as an equally intentional commission, created for a particular location.

What was the original location of the Passion series? Rembrandt tells us that it was a gallery belonging to the Prince, with strong light. Where would that gallery have been? The first mention of the paintings in the Orange family archives occurs in 1668, when the paintings are listed among the possessions of Amalia van Solms gathered together in the family home on the Noordeinde, usually called the Oude Hof.⁴⁶ Following upon the statement of Horst Gerson in 1961, most writers have assumed that the paintings were intended for the Noordeinde residence.⁴⁷ However, extensive study of the archival record, the *stadhouder's* residences, and his building projects, supports the suggestion of Gary Schwartz and the authors of the 1997 *Mauritshuis* catalogue. They placed the Passion series in Frederik Hendrik's Binnenhof apartments at the centre of The Hague.⁴⁸ The Binnenhof apartments contained both the type of gallery Rembrandt describes, and the appropriate setting for a major commission such as the Passion Series.

The Binnenhof, the administrative complex at the centre of The Hague, was Frederik Hendrik's official residence for most of his adult life, including his entire career as *stadhouder*. After being elected *stadhouder* and becoming Prince of Orange in 1625, Frederik Hendrik embarked on a major renovation of the *stadhouder's* chambers. He may have intended to give these rooms a grandeur and size appropriate to his new status: from his years of training in Paris, and many diplomatic visits to London and elsewhere, the new Prince was well aware of the standards of opulence achieved in major European courts by aristocrats of his equivalent rank, as well as the new fashions in

courtly protocol. At the Binnenhof the rituals of court life were performed and the business of the *stadhouder* enacted; there, as well, were found many of the Prince's finest works of art, including tapestries, rich furniture, exotic objects, silver, and many paintings. The Passion paintings would have been a worthy addition to this kind of décor.

The Binnenhof also matches Rembrandt's description of the original location of the Passion paintings. The apartments of the *stadhouder* in the early seventeenth century were located in the northwest corner of the governmental complex. Frederik Hendrik's rooms were on the first floor of the wing stretching north-south from the tower on the Vijver over the main western gate into the complex (known as the *Stadhouderspoort*).⁴⁹ The renovated apartments of the *stadhouder* featured new antechambers, bigger reception rooms, and a long, wide east-facing gallery with large windows. In these rooms one would find the strong light that Rembrandt himself noted when he wrote to Huygens about the original hanging of the works. All the documentary, physical, and functional evidence points to the Binnenhof gallery of the *stadhouder* as the original and intended location of Rembrandt's Passion series.

The Binnenhof Apartments

The Binnenhof complex in 1632 was the seat of the States General, the republican government of the United Provinces, as well as the official home of the *stadhouder*. The buildings were the most prominent architectural authority symbol in the Netherlands at the time. Of medieval origin, the Binnenhof was built as the seat of the Counts of Holland. Though the complex grew over the centuries, the Binnenhof retained its unity and integrity, being surrounded by the Hofvijver lake to the north and a canal serving as a moat on the other sides.⁵⁰ When the Count of Holland became part of the Burgundian, and later Habsburg, families in the fifteenth century, the Binnenhof became the residence of the *stadhouder*. In the seventeenth century, the Binnenhof functioned primarily as a place for civic governmental functions. Important local and regional governing institutions, such as the Hof van Holland and the States of Holland, met in the complex, while the States General met in the 'Grote Zaal' (Great Hall). The *stadhouder's* residence remained in the northwest corner of the Binnenhof, flanking the public *plein* of the Buitenhof.

Willem I of Orange, who was both *stadhouder* and leader of the Revolt against the repudiated Hapsburg king, Philip II, never occupied these chambers. His son Maurits took up residence there after being elected *stadhouder* of Holland and Zeeland in 1585. Maurits's occupancy allowed him to appropriate the aura of authority attached to those buildings. In his time in office, Maurits transformed the *stadhouder's* quarters into a unified residence with all the trappings of respectable nobility.⁵¹ In 1592, he had the five-story tower on the northwest corner of the building constructed,

thereafter known as the *Mauritstoren* (Maurits's tower). The tower provided needed space, but most importantly gave the *stadhouder's* side of the complex a marker of nobility evident to all.⁵² In 1620 Maurits constructed a long wing of nine bays above the *Stadhouderspoort*, where Frederik Hendrik's chambers were later located. These architectural revisions emphasized the *stadhouder's* residence within the Binnenhof complex, and provided a visible frame for the *stadhouder's* power.

Both Maurits and Frederik Hendrik used the Binnenhof as a visual signifier of the *stadhouder*. With the Binnenhof as backdrop, they staged parades, entrances, triumphs, and a popular local fair on the Buitenhof *plein*. The *stadhouder's* wing of the Binnenhof was frequently featured in artwork made for the court.⁵³ Political prints made use of the *stadhouder's* quarters as an emblem of authority: an allegorical print commemorating Frederik Hendrik's conquest of Bois-le Duc, printed in 1629, shows a chariot containing the prince heading toward a temporary triumphal arch constructed on the Buitenhof – the *stadhouder's* quarters are visible behind it.⁵⁴ The interior side of the Binnenhof is featured in Denis van Akersloot's portrait print of Frederik Hendrik (1628, Figure 8), which shows the Prince at full length holding the standard symbols of military prowess (armour, sword, and helmet). In his left hand, Frederik Hendrik grasps the sign for republican unity (the entwined coats of arms of the seven provinces topped by bundled arrows). Behind him is the courtyard of the Binnenhof, shown bustling with civic activity. The *stadhouder's* quarters are prominently visible on the left, while the *Groote Zaal* (seat of the States General) frames the composition on the right. The print ties the symbolic performance of authority in the portrait, with its messages of military might and unifying leadership, to the location of governmental authority, the Binnenhof.

The Binnenhof apartments were unique in several ways among Frederik Hendrik's princely residences. As we have seen, they were the *stadhouder's* permanent home, and carried prestigious civic and aristocratic associations known to the entire Dutch population. The building itself was the property of the States, and the States paid for the remodellings Frederik Hendrik requested to the physical fabric of the building. However, the contents of the building, including the wall décor, furniture, art, and other decorations, were supplied by the *stadhouder*, who controlled the spaces as his own primary living quarters.⁵⁵ When, in 1625, as new *stadhouder*, Frederik Hendrik addressed the decoration of the Binnenhof, he approached his visual environment as he had in his other palaces – as a location for significant display. Frederik Hendrik's sophisticated approach to the rhetoric of display is an unusual example of patronage in the Netherlands, given the middle-class domestic patterns of ownership most often found in Holland at the time.⁵⁶ Such an awareness of the power of the visual environment is, however, entirely typical for court patronage throughout Europe in the early modern period.⁵⁷ In the Binnenhof, the Prince's official residence, a unified,



Figure 8 Denis Akersloot, *Frederik Hendrik before the Binnenhof, with the gathered coats of arms of the States*, 1628, engraving, 8 in x 6½ in. (20.5 x 16.3 cm). Gemeentearchief, The Hague

thoughtful, high quality visual display was essential. The layout and décor of the apartments, and the collection within them, formed the setting where Frederik Hendrik enacted his role as *stadhouder* and played out the social and political manoeuvring necessary to that position. In the consistent pattern of remodelling and renovation, and the careful attention to his visual environ-

ment, Frederik Hendrik's awareness of European standards of noble living is evident.

The Prince's chambers were reorganized during the 1625–32 renovation to match European models for noble apartments; his contained a wardrobe, two antechambers, an audience chamber, a cabinet, and a gallery. With this new apartment arrangement, Frederik Hendrik's official home rivalled in layout those of high European nobles, where the Burgundian model for court ceremonials remained dominant.⁵⁸ Reconstruction of the exact proportions of some of these rooms is difficult, given the changes to the building in subsequent years. However, Koen Ottenheim's reconstruction of the apartments shows a very plausible layout of the official chambers.⁵⁹ Entrance to the apartment was gained through a grand staircase in the northwest corner of the Binnenhof, which opened into a foyer. The foyer provided access to either the gallery, which ran along the whole east side of the building, or to the official rooms, which were arranged in an enfilade along the western side of the building. Visitors could exit from the cabinet directly into the gallery, at its southern end.

The *stadhouder's* apartments were a busy place. As a military base, a thriving court, and a diplomatic centre, many different people partook in the day to day life of the *stadhouder's* official quarters. The *stadhouder's* nobles were required to attend him every day; they presented themselves at the midday and evening meals, which were served with careful attention to hierarchy and splendour.⁶⁰ In addition, representatives from the States General and other regents frequented the apartments for meetings and consultations.⁶¹ They also appeared there for States social functions: in December 1636 Frederik Hendrik welcomed all the representatives in his gallery.⁶² Ambassadors and visitors of status made a mandatory stop at the *stadhouder's* quarters, since the Prince was both the head of Dutch military policy and the highest-ranking man in the country. Often, they went there even before attending the session of the States representatives on the first floor.⁶³

The audience in the gallery included wealthy Dutch merchants and businessmen, members of the regent class, who served as functionaries in the government structure and as official bureaucrats in the service of the States General. These were sophisticated men, educated, worldly, and powerful, including many who had gained significant fortunes from mercantile endeavour. Though the regents enjoyed high standing in towns throughout the Republic, almost none were noble – a fact which engendered much derision from outsiders, and much embarrassment for States diplomats.⁶⁴ By far the majority of the Dutch viewers in this room would have been Protestant, of both the Remonstrant and Calvinist persuasions. The other main audience for the Binnenhof collection encompassed the foreign visitors to The Hague, including the emissaries from foreign governments and their courtiers. These were aristocrats from the surrounding monarchies – England, France, and principalities and dukedoms in Italy and Germany. Most were of a Catholic

background, and would have brought along entourages of various sizes. These visitors were expected and welcomed in the apartments of Frederik Hendrik, where they rubbed shoulders in the garderobe, antechamber, and gallery.

The coming-and-going and confusion in the apartments must have been intense at times. In 1637 Frederik Hendrik officially codified the post of *Edelman van de Camer*, a gentleman specifically responsible for overseeing the outer rooms of the apartment. The *Edelman* was required to keep order among the assembled visitors and courtiers, to supervise the pages, halberdiers, and lackeys, and maintain the protocols that ensured the dignity and honour of the household. The *Edelman* also recorded the visits of ambassadors and dignitaries, as well as their business, ensuring that the matters raised could be dealt with 'with the greatest possible politeness and speed'.⁶⁵ All visitors, whether Dutch or foreign, regent or nobleman, gathered first in the outer chambers (the foyer and the garderobe). Only important visitors and their most intimate associates proceeded into the antechamber, or beyond into the audience chamber. The rest, including minor officials and members of courtly retinues, remained in the outer chambers, which often could become quite crowded. Many of these lower-ranking courtiers and associates would have been ushered into the gallery, which played an important role in crowd control at the Binnenhof. As in English houses, the gallery provided space in which extra guests could be accommodated, conversations could be held, and aesthetic diversion could be provided, while also allowing for the practical needs of egress and passage.⁶⁶ The gallery thus was the most public part of the *stadhouder's* quarters, available to and occupied by a wide range of visitors to the Prince.

Display strategies in the Binnenhof gallery

Essential for our understanding of the appearance of the Binnenhof apartments is the 1632 inventory of the *stadhouder's* quarters made by court functionary Jan s'Herwouters. In it s'Herwouters details the individual rooms in the *stadhouder's* apartments, and describes with a high degree of meticulousness the wall coverings, furniture, textiles, decorative pieces, and paintings.⁶⁷ From s'Herwouters's account, one can construct a reliable image of the rich interior appearance of the *stadhouder's* apartments.

Frederik Hendrik's rooms consistently displayed not only markers of wealth but the very latest fashions in luxurious interior décor. Following French style, chairs, beds, wall hangings, and table coverings were installed *en suite*, using the same colour scheme, fabrics, and trimmings to create the effect of a complete ensemble.⁶⁸ Rich furniture, exotic objects, and tapestries were common throughout these rooms.

The gallery was a central room in the *stadhouder's* apartments. At 80 *roede* (about thirty metres) long, the gallery was a grand space. The gallery curtains, the studded upholstered chairs, and the table coverings used green, silver,

and gold fabrics, with matching fringes (the colour scheme was echoed in the uniforms of the court pages). Tall candelabras were set on pedestals along the length of the room. Rather than fine furniture, art was the focus here: besides the single table, a desk and a suite of six chairs, this room contained only paintings. In fact, the bulk of the *stadhouder's* paintings at the Binnenhof were found in his gallery, which in 1632 contained fifty-five works. Most of these must have hung on the western wall, lit by the east-facing windows opposite. The Prince's cabinet contained six works, while four paintings hung in the other rooms of the apartment.

Frederik Hendrik's collection was extensive, as the inventory shows, but its nature has puzzled writers for many years. F. W. Hudig first addressed the question of the scope and purpose of Frederik Hendrik's art collecting in 1928, highlighting its unusual focus on Dutch artists.⁶⁹ More recently, the Mauritshuis's *Princely Patrons* exhibition of 1997 reconstructed all the possessions of the princely couple in an attempt to rehabilitate the collectors as connoisseurs (along the lines of the famous art-mad kings Charles I and Philip IV).⁷⁰ Yet the 'collection' appeared there as a motley assortment of objects of varying quality, and the argument for a clear collecting agenda and visual aesthetic was hard to maintain. The removal of the objects in the 'collection' from their original settings (most of which are destroyed) has left a central piece of the puzzle unexplored. Yet throughout his lifetime, by far the bulk of Frederik Hendrik's commissions, purchases, and acquisitions were tied to specific buildings, and even to individual spaces within buildings. The sites themselves were distinguished from one another: in each of the Prince's principal houses, a different set of paintings hung, distinct in subject, style, scale, and hanging from those found elsewhere. Thus, individual collections were formed in each location. Different display techniques were used to enhance the experience of the spaces, and different themes were expressed, in each space. The themes were keyed to the patron's needs, whether to enhance the dynastic network of clientage (Rijkswijk), celebrate the *stadhouder's* military victories (Buren), or provide an aristocratic landed seat and pastoral setting for the Prince (Honselaarsdijk).

The same approach can be detected at the Binnenhof quarters, where easel paintings were featured. The collection of paintings documented in these rooms in 1632, and amplified shortly thereafter by Rembrandt's Passion series, reveals an agenda tied to the inherently political setting of the Binnenhof. The collection was a crucial part of the visual construct of the apartments, in the choice of objects, the method of their display, and the themes introduced by that display. Analysis of the paintings in Frederik Hendrik's apartments in the Binnenhof illuminates the larger setting of Rembrandt's Passion series, and provides vital information for interpreting the commission, and the series.

A collection of paintings

The 1632 inventory made by Jan s'Herwouters is our only glimpse of the original setting of the Passion paintings. No other inventory of the Binnenhof apartments survives from Frederik Hendrik's lifetime. Fortunately, this inventory is remarkably complete in terms of art. S'Herwouters included both the name of the artist and the subject depicted in his list of paintings, and often provided subsidiary information (such as the framing or the home town of the artist). S'Herwouters's method in the inventory is consistent: he details for each room the wall coverings (tapestries, gilded leather, etc.), the furniture, and then the paintings. He usually begins his list with the painting set over the mantel ('*schoorsteenstuk*'), in the place of honour. The list of the other paintings follows, in what one assumes would have been sequential order (though no directionals are given). The paintings in the inventory would have been hanging in the gallery when Rembrandt's series arrived among them, beginning with the *Descent from the Cross* and the *Raising of the Cross* in 1633. S'Herwouters's inventory, then, gives us a fairly complete picture of the setting for the Passion series. It also reveals the larger rationale and agenda of the collection.

Analysis of the collection in Frederik Hendrik's chambers at the Binnenhof reveals four important trends in the Prince's patronage and display there.⁷¹ First, Frederik Hendrik concentrated in this collection on a select group of well-known modern masters. Of the sixty-four paintings in the nine chambers of the apartment, only fifteen were unattributed; twenty-six artists contributed the remaining forty-nine works. A few artists were represented in multiple canvases: Gerard van Honthorst contributed four works, while there were seven of Cornelis van Poelenburch's paintings and five by Anthony van Dyck, who worked at the court of Frederik Hendrik briefly in 1632.⁷² Only three paintings by deceased artists were included (a *Magdalene* by Hendrick Goltzius, a history painting by Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem, and a peasant painting attributed to either Pieter Aertsen or Joachim Bueckelaer).

Second, the collection overwhelmingly favoured Netherlandish artists. Of the 27 named artists, sixteen were of Dutch origin, while eight were Flemish.⁷³ Only two hailed from outside the Netherlands (Hans Rottenhamer, a German active in Rome, Venice and at the court in Augsburg, and Francesco di Cristofano, known as Franciabigio, a Florentine). These Dutchmen were no provincial painters. Over 60% of them had travelled abroad. Several, such as Roelant Savery, Cornelis Poelenburgh, and Jan ('Velvet') Bruegel, among others, had worked for other major courts in Europe, and had international reputations. The collection in Frederik Hendrik's apartments functioned as a showcase of art by famous, modern, and Netherlandish masters.

Collecting works by contemporary Dutch and Flemish artists was a significant departure from the standard model for aristocrats in the seventeenth

century. While the connoisseur kings Charles I of England or Philip IV of Spain (and their followers) spent liberally to build painting collections rich in works by Italians and old masters, Frederik Hendrik focused on local artists, and modern works. The rationale for this unusual focus has been debated. However, the discussion to date has focused on the Prince's failure to uphold the famous royal model. Money problems, restricted access to good artists during wartime, and a lack of artistic knowledge on Frederik Hendrik's part have all been blamed for his inability to compete with rival collectors of old master and Italian art. None of these points are tenable: Frederik Hendrik was the richest man in all of the Netherlands, he had a thriving international art market on his doorstep in Amsterdam, and was closely attuned to the latest fashions in art and architecture. In addition, he maintained a large international network of artists, agents, and advisors. The rationale for Frederik Hendrik's unusual collection lies, rather, in the patron's attention to the function objects had within this political space, and the message they conveyed. The single-minded focus on Dutch and Flemish (Netherlandish) artists in this collection appears to celebrate local talents, and thereby, the local culture. Indeed, by choosing famous artists from the region, especially those known in international collecting circles, the Prince explicitly trumped the old masters-focused collecting practice of other aristocrats. The Binnenhof collection makes a radical point – that Dutch painters were (at least) equivalent to the Titians, Raphaels, and Leonardos languishing in palaces elsewhere in Europe. Constantijn Huygens reiterates the point in the context of his praise of Rembrandt and Lievens. In his view, expressed in his autobiography, the two young Dutchmen not only rival the great artists of the classical and Italian tradition, but they embody the very vitality of Dutch culture.⁷⁴ Implicit in Huygens's statement is a conception of the Dutch as identifiable and independent, not only in their artistic style and culture but also as a nation with a specific identity. This kind of national sentiment – though elastic, layered with local and regional affiliations – permeates political treatises, literature, art theoretical texts, and visual culture of the United Provinces from the time of the Revolt.⁷⁵ In the *stadhouder's* Binnenhof collection, the same national pride and patriotism echoes.

A third important point about Frederik Hendrik's collection is its representative nature; the artists in the collection hailed from locations that were broadly dispersed throughout the Netherlands. This point was important enough for the origin of each artist to be recorded in the S'Herwouters inventory. The largest number of artists in this collection came from Antwerp, while Utrecht, Haarlem, and The Hague were well represented. Artists from Leiden, Amsterdam, and Brussels were also included, making the Binnenhof gallery something of a sampler of trends in current Netherlandish painting. This broad national basis is unlike the collections at Frederik Hendrik's other houses, such as at Honselaarsdijk, where the focus was primarily on Utrecht painters working in classicizing styles. Historians point out Frederik

Hendrik's desire to be *stadhouder* of all seven provinces of the Northern Netherlands, as his father had been. Not until 1640 did Frederik Hendrik acquire governorship of Drenthe and Groningen; Friesland remained out of reach.⁷⁶ The representative collection suggests the stadhouder's awareness of local as well as national issues.

The inclusion of Flemish artists in the group was not merely a bow to international taste, or a set of token foreigners. Rather, Rubens and van Dyck could also be perceived as artists from home territory. Although the regions were divided by the ongoing war, many (including the Prince) considered the southern provinces still historically, culturally, and economically a part of the Netherlands.⁷⁷ Between 1632 and 1638, Frederik Hendrik's primary military objective was unification of the Northern and Southern Netherlands. The Dutch army embarked on several large-scale attempts to recapture the southern Netherlands from Spain, with notable victories at Maastricht and Breda, the Orange-Nassau ancestral home. Politically, as well, and despite the resistance of some factions within the States General, reunification remained an important goal for the *stadhouder*.⁷⁸ That position is reflected in the collection, which featured Flemings and Brabant artists alongside painters from Utrecht and Holland. In the Binnenhof quarters, if not in reality, the Netherlands appeared as a unified entity.

Lastly, the paintings in Frederik Hendrik's collection also ranged over a wide variety of subjects. Portraits, those staples of noble galleries, were minimized: only four (of Frederik Hendrik's parents, his wife, and his friend Elisabeth Stuart, the exiled Queen of Bohemia) were included here. Instead, secular genres (made famous by Dutch masters) were featured, including landscapes (15 works), still life (2), architectural scenes (2) and images of peasants (1). The collection also included many classical stories and military histories (25 scenes), common subjects in noble collections. Remarkably, there were also a high number of religious paintings (17). The disparate nature of the objects was entirely typical of Dutch collections, which commonly showed several categories of paintings together, in an intermingled hanging.⁷⁹ However, none of the decorative objects (such as mirrors) that commonly appear in such houses are found in this gallery. As a space devoted solely to the display of art and the control of visitors, the Prince's gallery operated very differently from the domestic settings on which scholars have focused.

The amount of New Testament and devotional images within this group is unexpected, especially for the leader of the Protestant United Provinces. In 1632 the Binnenhof gallery contained nine scenes of New Testament stories, including four devotional images of the Virgin and Child, and two of saints (Martin and Mary Magdalene). In 1636, with the five paintings from Rembrandt's Passion Series installed, the number of New Testament scenes would have risen to fourteen. Religious subjects were not confined to the gallery or other public spaces of the apartment; Frederik Hendrik's private cabinet was almost entirely decorated with New Testament images (five out

of six images), including two devotional *Crucifixions*, an *Adoration of the Shepherds* by Honthorst, a *Nativity*, and Rembrandt's *Simeon in the Temple*. Such a preponderance of Biblical and religious scenes requires explanation.

In its openness to religious and devotional works, the Binnenhof collection registers the *stadhouder's* policy of openness and toleration of faiths. The number of religious works was far greater than typically found in Dutch houses. While landscapes, still lifes, and genre scenes were common in Dutch households, John Michael Montias has shown that only overtly Catholic homes contained the high proportion of New Testament and devotional scenes found at the Binnenhof.⁸⁰ Though New Testament scenes appeared in some Protestant homes, such owners overwhelmingly favoured scenes and figures from the Old Testament, and devotional scenes were very rarely encountered.⁸¹ Alongside his New Testament and devotional works, Frederik Hendrik owned three scenes of Old Testament subjects (a Pieter Lastman *Finding of Moses*, a scene of Tobias in a landscape by Poelenburgh, and Lievens's *Samson and Delilah*). Thus, the collection runs the gamut of possibilities for religious scenes. Both Catholic and Protestant viewers would have found imagery acceptable to their faith in Frederik Hendrik's apartments; for neither, however, does the collection signal any allegiance. In this secular space, the religious orientation of the collection allowed for multiple responses and interpretations. An even-handed, individual approach was, in fact, typical of Frederik Hendrik's treatment of the heated issue of religion in the Northern Netherlands.

While religion had been a central issue in Maurits's struggles with Johan Oldenbarnevelt over state, church, and civic power, Frederik Hendrik's attitude toward religion was one of insistent neutrality. In both political and military decisions Frederik Hendrik advocated repeatedly religious toleration, striving for a common middle ground for all.⁸² Though Frederik Hendrik allowed Johan Uytenbogaert (his former boyhood tutor and a leader of the Remonstrant faction ousted by Maurits) to return from exile in France, he refused to meet face to face in order to show no favouritism.⁸³ Even contemporary observers could detect no deep-seated religious convictions in Frederik Hendrik's actions or policies, often to their dismay. Frederik Hendrik's collection at the Binnenhof (as with his religious policy) walked a carefully inclusive, and eminently political, 'middle way'.⁸⁴

This analysis has shown how the collection in the *stadhouder's* Binnenhof apartments made visible the patron's agenda. Each of the ideas manifested in the gallery (Netherlandish identity, international fame, religious openness) can be tied to political initiatives high among the *stadhouder's* priorities in the 1630s. The Binnenhof apartments enhanced visitors' perceptions of the Dutch Republic, through their opulence and high-fashion décor. The scale, quality, local focus, and religious inclusiveness of the *stadhouder's* collection performed a similar function. As we have seen, the Binnenhof setting was charged with political meaning in its placement and functioning. The same

holds true for its decoration. Politics invested those spaces, and informed the art collection gathered and displayed there by Frederik Hendrik; politics also dictated the audience for the collection, and for Rembrandt's Passion series.

Rembrandt's Passion Series at the Binnenhof

I have argued that the combination of archival evidence, Rembrandt's own letters, and architectural history shows that the Passion Series was originally intended for the *stadhouder's* gallery at the Binnenhof. By reconstructing that original environment, the paintings can now be considered in their original context. Within the decorative construct of the apartments, alongside a unique collection of paintings, and viewed by a specific audience, the Passion paintings carry new meanings and associations. Indeed, in this context there are new possibilities for understanding the series.

The success of Rembrandt's series – shown by the continuation of the commission on three separate occasions, over many years – indicates that the works fulfilled the patron's needs. Indeed, those concerns should be seen as intrinsic to the paintings. Borrowing from Michael Baxandall's patronage schema, we can characterize the patron's brief as the need for a large-scale commission that would advertize the vitality of Netherlandish culture, its international renown, and its religious openness.⁸⁵ These issues became the explicit and implicit charge for the artist, who engaged with the patron's needs successfully in the series.

As we have seen, national orientation was important within the Prince's collection at the Binnenhof. The Passion series were by a well-known Dutch master. From the outset of the series Rembrandt's signature style is explicitly advertized. In the scenes of the *Descent from the Cross* and the *Raising of the Cross*, meticulous detailing of emotional expression as well as the distinctive lighting and luscious surface treatments are all featured, using both a fine and 'rough' manner.⁸⁶ These were the precise stylistic aspects that helped create Rembrandt's early reputation in Holland and abroad. One might argue that the stylistic variety shown throughout the series also had an advertising component: throughout, the artist signals his virtuoso treatment and handling of paint. The inclusion of a self-portrait in the 1633 *Raising* canvas certainly functions, as writers on this topic have asserted, as a form of visual signature, asserting this artist's personal contribution to the work.⁸⁷ For both the patron and the artist, broadcasting the series as paintings by Rembrandt was important. Frederik Hendrik could show that he owned a major work by an acknowledged modern Dutch master, and Rembrandt was able to extend his marketing of himself to a large (and wealthy) international audience.

An international orientation was also part of the patron's brief. In several of the Passion compositions, as we have seen, Rembrandt responded to paint-

ings by famous Flemish and Italian artists. That process allowed the artist to assert his place in the international art world. By entering into a visual competition with acknowledged masterpieces by Rubens (in the *Descent*) and Titian (in the *Ascension*), Rembrandt appears to be arguing for his own inclusion in that elevated company. The foreign aristocrats and sophisticated regents in The Hague who made up the audience for the Passion series were well-versed in these masters, and would have been aware of the artistic dialogue in which Rembrandt was engaged. Clearly, the style of the Passion paintings, and also their form, appears explicitly tailored to the patron's needs.

While writers have struggled with the quirky iconography of the Passion series, understanding the requirements and expectations embedded within the original context of the paintings, and their role for specific audiences may help elucidate the problem.⁸⁸ Though the focused scope of the present analysis does not allow a complete iconographic study of the series, an audience-based approach to interpreting the series helps reveal the religious and political associations in the paintings.

The series is, as we have seen, unusual in the choice of scenes. The paintings do not tell a logical narrative, as most Passion illustrations do, and several key scenes are missing, including the Crucifixion itself and all the events leading up from the Last Supper, such as the Flagellation, the *Ecce Homo*, and the Carrying of the Cross. These moments in the Passion narrative had been traditionally depicted, and in many printed Passion series those scenes were essential for the devotional purpose of the series.⁸⁹ Rembrandt's series eschews any kind of standardized religious practice. Clearly, these scenes were never intended to function in the devotional manner traditionally associated with Passion imagery. Instead, the series includes several of the events occurring after the Crucifixion, and then brackets the whole with two scenes from Christ's infancy (the Adoration of the Shepherds and the Circumcision). No precedent for such a grouping exists.

It is possible that Frederik Hendrik's drive for religious openness in his collection can be detected in the choice of scenes, as well as in Rembrandt's treatment of them. Rembrandt's series features New Testament scenes common among Catholic audiences and certainly acceptable to his foreign audiences. Yet the avoidance of moments in the narrative that served devotional purposes (such as the Crucifixion) may signal the patron's awareness of Protestant concerns regarding the role of the visual in religious practice. The scenes do show a consistent theme of attention to Christ's human body, from birth through rebirth. Yet without a Last Supper, the paintings do not reference Catholic dogma such as the veneration of the Eucharist or the doctrine of transubstantiation. Rather, the iconography and the visual expression suggest a theme of revelation for the series, which would have been acceptable to all Christian viewers. In each work, the body of Christ (whether child or man, alive, dead, or spirit) is revealed to the viewer in shafts of brilliant light, while onlookers react in attitudes of amazement, sorrow, meditation, etc. The

varied emotions featured among the onlookers provide a range of appropriate responses to the miraculous figure spotlighted at the centre.

Several scholars have seen the focus on Christ's pathetic body, the emphatic human emotion of the assistants around the cross, and the contemplative mood of the painting, as signals of a Protestant Reformed mentality.⁹⁰ As we have seen, Rembrandt's revisions to the Rubens and Titian models made the iconography of the scenes appropriate for their Protestant patron. The presence of at least one self-portrait in the series has also influenced the interpretation of the paintings. Writers have explored Protestant ideas of viewer identification and guilt raised by the artist's placement of his own face on that of an executioner.⁹¹ Whether the same personal interpretation would have applied to the later works in the series (which have no self-portraits) remains unclear. Rather than examine the paintings as an expression of Rembrandt's personal religious beliefs, this study suggests that Rembrandt's paintings intentionally allowed a variety of religious interpretations, a stance which furthered the patron's political agenda.

The paintings were accessible to viewers from Catholic as well as different Protestant backgrounds. Catholic viewers might have responded in standard sympathetic, sorrowful, and ecstatic modes to the spotlighted form of Christ and the meticulous detailing of Christ's tortured and transcendent bodies in the scenes. But the paintings also feature groups of onlookers. In each scene, there are regular folks, usually emerging from the murky shadows, who serve several roles that align with Protestant ideas concerning the function of imagery. Some are guides to behaviour: note the standing figures in the *Descent* and *Raising*, who watch and learn, and the figures in attitudes of prayer and attention in the *Adoration* and the *Entombment*. The turbaned man at left of the cross in the *Raising* looks out of the scene, underscoring the importance of attention and recognition of divinity on the part of the viewer. Other figures not only amplify the narrative of the scene, but model typical actions and responses with which the audience can identify (the stunned soldiers in the *Resurrection*, the amazed apostles in the *Ascension*, the hardworking but oblivious soldiers in the *Raising*, and the concerned helpers in the *Descent*). In each scene, the composition is structured to invite the viewer into the circle of onlookers by providing an open space, often framed by backlit figures. In combination with the intimate viewing required by the small-scale figures of the scenes, this compositional device involves the viewer directly in the narrative pictured. Protestant reformers had argued that, rather than serving as objects of devotion themselves, paintings could serve religious faith by teaching Biblical stories, and allowing for personal contemplation of those narratives. Rembrandt's series does just that, making the scenes accessible to a wide variety of viewers.

Over the course of more than fifteen years, Rembrandt and the Prince worked together successfully. Rembrandt's abilities at producing visually luxurious, emotionally compelling, and multivalent images were perfect

for the kind of discourse structured by Frederik Hendrik in the Binnenhof gallery. For the artist, the Prince's commission provided several exceptional opportunities: to take on a large-scale public commission, to depict important religious subjects (which many Dutch artists avoided), and to set himself competitively in dialogue with great artists. As we have seen, Rembrandt's series departs both iconographically and visually from the Catholic precedents. Those deviations show the artist's range and abilities, not only with respect to the great works of the past, but in grappling with the problem of how to make New Testament images in a Protestant manner. This was a central concern for the Prince, who used Rembrandt's images in their Binnenhof setting to help define the nation he represented. The Passion Series, then, should be seen as an ideal commission for both the artist and the patron. The artist took the patron's needs and locations into account, and embraced the challenge of the commission. In return, the patron valued the artist and treated him with respect and (especially at the end) generosity.

Conclusion

The Passion series registers the development of a long-standing and mutually satisfactory patronage relationship between Frederik Hendrik and Rembrandt. Rather than read the paintings solely as expression of Rembrandt's own faith or personality, this analysis has suggested that knowledge of the patron, and location, for the works can provide additional layers of meaning. The visual environment constructed in the *stadhouder's* Binnenhof apartments reflected the actual dialogues taking place there, about power, influence, and authority. The mix of religions and politics implicit in the Passion series, and the placement of the paintings in the stronghold of the new Dutch nation, created a potent cocktail of national pride for at least part of the audience. For the other viewers, the series could have served as a compelling demonstration of Dutch cultural power, and of the *stadhouder's* key policies of unification and toleration.

Rembrandt's paintings were strong performers in the opulent and magnificent stage of the Prince's Binnenhof gallery. The series enhanced the political discourse taking place there in ways structured by, and amenable to, the patron. Indeed, the history of the Passion series commission and its functioning at the Binnenhof reveals Frederik Hendrik's awareness of the importance of art and visual culture to the enactment of power. Acting on an international stage, and working with gifted artists like Rembrandt, the Prince created strategic, multi-valent assemblages of works of art keyed to promote the agenda and status of the Prince of Orange, the *stadhouder*, and the United Provinces. In that context, Rembrandt's Passion series was a showpiece heralding the prowess and abilities of not only the artist, but also the patron and the Dutch Republic.

Notes

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- 1 Horst Gerson, *Rembrandt Paintings* (New York, Reynal, 1968), p. 92; Herzog Anton-Ulrich-Museum, *De Holländischen Gemälde*, ed. Rüdiger Klessman (Braunschweig, Das Museum, 1983), #241, p. 172.
- 2 For summaries of the literature on the series, see Josua Bruyn *et al.*, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, II (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), pp. 276–88 (hereafter, *Corpus*) and *Corpus*, III (1989), pp. 202–8, 271–9; Peter van der Ploeg and Carola Vermeeren (eds), *Princely Patrons: The Collection of Frederick Henry and Amalia of Solms in The Hague* (The Hague, Waanders, 1997), pp. 192–7. For discussions of the series, see Ernst Brochhagen, 'Beobachten an den Passionsbildern Rembrandt in München', *Munuscula Discipulorum. Hans Kauffmann zum 70. Geburtstag 1966* (Berlin, B. Hessling, 1968), pp. 37–44; Else Kai Sass, *Comments on Rembrandt's Passion Paintings and Constantijn Huygens' Iconography* (Copenhagen, Munksgaard, 1971). For interpretations focusing on style and biography, see Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt: His Life, His Paintings* (New York, Viking, 1985), pp. 106–18; Cynthia Lawrence, "'Worthy of Milord's House": Rembrandt, Huygens and Dutch Classicism', *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift*, 54 (1985), 16–26.
- 3 See, among others, Alice Jarrard, *Architecture as Performance in Seventeenth-Century Europe: Court Ritual in Modena, Rome, and Paris* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003); Alan Ellenius (ed.), *Iconography, Propaganda, and Legitimation* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998); Stephen J. Campbell, 'Mantegna's Triumph: The Cultural Politics of Imitation 'all'antica' at the Court of Mantua, 1490–1530', in Stephen J. Campbell (ed.), *Artists at Court: Image-making and Identity, 1300–1550* (Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2004), pp. 91–105; F. W. Kent, *Lorenzo de' Medici and the Art of Magnificence* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).
- 4 Rebecca Tucker, "'His Excellency at Home": Frederik Hendrik and the Noble Life at Huis Honselaarsdijk', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 51 (2000), 83–101.
- 5 The text was begun in 1629 but remained unpublished in Huygens's lifetime. The sections pertaining to Rembrandt and Lievens have been variously dated to 1630–1631. That text is transcribed and translated in Alan Chong (ed.), *Rembrandt Creates Rembrandt: Art and Ambition in Leiden 1629–31* (Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2000), pp. 134–6.
- 6 The *stadhouder* owned several history paintings by Rembrandt: *The Rape of Proserpina* (1631, Berlin), a *Simeon in the Temple* (possibly the version of c.1628 in Hamburg), and a *Minerva* (1631, Berlin). He also owned several works by Lievens, including a *Samson and Delilah* and a *Fortune Teller* (1631, Berlin). In the inventories of the *stadhouder's* collection, the attributions to the two painters are fluid, indicating the close connection between the two artists at the time. The inventories are collected in S. W. A. Drossaers and Th. Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen van de Inboedels in de Verblijven van de Oranjes 1567–1795*, Rijks

- Geschiedkundige Publicatiën, Grote Serie #147–149, 3 vols (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1974–76). On attribution confusion between Rembrandt and Lievens, see Christiaan Vogelaar (ed.), *Rembrandt & Lievens in Leiden* (Zwolle, Waanders, 1991), pp. 118–21. On Huygens and Rembrandt, see Seymour Slive, *Rembrandt and his Critics* (New York, Hacker, 1988), pp. 8–26; and R. E. O. Ekkart, ‘Rembrandt, Lievens en Constantijn Huygens’, in Vogelaar (ed.), *Rembrandt & Lievens in Leiden*, pp. 48–59.
- 7 Paul Crenshaw, *Rembrandt’s Bankruptcy: The Artist, his Patrons, and the Art Market in Seventeenth-Century Netherlands* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 112.
 - 8 1632, Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris. Possibly a pendant to Honthorst’s image of Frederik Hendrik in profile (1631, Huis ten Bosch, The Hague), which shares the same painted oval surround; they are described in the 1632 inventory of the Stadhouders’s quarters at the Binnenhof. Confusion about the relationship of this work to a later oval portrait of Amalia by Honthorst (also Huis ten Bosch) prevails: however, the Honthorst deviates in so many details from the 1631 portrait of Frederik Hendrik that it was likely made for a different purpose, perhaps to take part in a ‘gallery of beauties’ as suggested by Ploeg and Vermeeren (eds), *Princely Patrons*, p. 138 or in a series with the Winter King as suggested by R. Ekkart. The princess was much in favour of images of herself, and owning two portraits by acclaimed artists must have been desirable despite the perceived confusion vis à vis the pendant of the Prince. In 1632 the Rembrandt portrait of Amalia hung in her cabinet, while Honthorst’s portrait of Frederik Hendrik, hung in her garderrobe. Drossaers and Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, #186 and #219. Horst Gerson, ‘Rembrandt’s Portret van Amalia van Solms’, *Oud Holland*, 84 (1969), 244–9; *Corpus*, II (#A61), pp. 249–55; Ploeg and Vermeeren (eds), *Princely Patrons*, pp. 134–41; J. Richard Judson and R. E. D. Ekkart, *Gerrit van Honthorst 1592–1656* (Doornspijk, Davaco, 1999), pp. 31–2 and cat. #308.
 - 9 J. J. Orlers, *Beschrijvinge der Stadt Leyden* (Leiden, 1642), p. 377; Christopher White and Quentin Buvelot (eds), *Rembrandt by Himself* (London and The Hague, National Gallery and Royal Cabinet of Paintings Mauritshuis, 1999), p. 132; Michael Zell, ‘The Gift Among Friends: Rembrandt in the Network of his Patronal and Social Relations’, in Alan Chong and Michael Zell (eds), *Rethinking Rembrandt* (Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2002), p. 181.
 - 10 *Corpus*, II (#A65), pp. 283 and 288. The authors give as a *terminus ante quem* the year 1633, when the two etchings based upon a working version of the painting were produced.
 - 11 *Corpus*, II (#A65), p. 283, follows Sass, *Comments*, pp. 37–38; this scenario is also accepted in Christopher Brown (*et al.*), *Rembrandt: The Master and His Workshop. Paintings* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1991), p. 158. Benesch first suggested the *Descent* was made separately from the later series. Otto Benesch, *Rembrandt. Werk und Forschung* (Vienna, Gilhofer & Ranschburg, 1935), p. 13.
 - 12 For condition, see *Corpus*, II (#A65), p. 278. I am grateful to Michiel Dekiert of the Alte Pinakothek for generously sharing his expertise on the paintings and the technical reports on the *Adoration of the Magi*.
 - 13 Rembrandt carried on an extensive dialogue with Rubens in his early works. On the relationship in this painting, see Wolfgang Stechow, ‘Rembrandts Darstellungen der Kreuzabnahme’, *Jahrbuch des Preussischen Kunstgeschichte*, 50 (1929), 217–32;

- Gerson, *Rembrandt Paintings*, pp. 45–6; Sass, *Comments*, pp. 8–12; *Corpus*, II (#A65), pp. 280–2; Simon Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes* (New York, Knopf, 1999), pp. 242–94. For another example of Rembrandt's reliance on engravings after Rubens in paintings owned by the *stadhouder*, see Amy Golahny, 'Rembrandt's *Abduction of Proserpina*', in Roland E. Fleischer and Susan Scott Munshower (eds), *The Age of Rembrandt: Studies in Seventeenth-century Dutch Painting* (University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University, 1988), pp. 28–38.
- 14 Bartsch 81 II; Hollstein XVIII, 45. An earlier version of the etching (Bartsch 81 I) was a technical failure. Both etchings reveal differences with the finished painting, which enabled Brochhagen to establish their sequence. Brochhagen, *Beobachten*, pp. 39–40. Martin Royalton Kisch suggested that the *Descent* etching may have been done with the collaboration of a professional reproductive printmaker, perhaps Jan van Vliet. Martin Royalton Kisch, 'Rembrandt: Two Passion Prints Reconsidered', *Apollo*, 119 (1984), 130–2.
 - 15 1633, etching. Bartsch 81 (II). Jaap van der Veen points out that the third state of this etching includes the name of Hendrik Uylenburgh as publisher, and suggests that Uylenburgh may have acted as agent for Rembrandt's graphic and reproductive prints. Jaap van der Veen and Friso Lammertse, *Uylenburgh & Son: Art and Commerce from Rembrandt to de Lairese 1625–1675* (Zwolle, Waanders, 2006), p. 151.
 - 16 Bernard Schnackenburg, 'Young Rembrandt's "Rough Manner": a Painting Style and its Sources', in Ernst van de Wetering and Bernard Schnackenburg (eds), *The Mystery of the Young Rembrandt* (Wolfratshausen, Minerva, 2001), pp. 92–121; Christopher White, 'Rembrandt's Technique during the Leiden Years', in Chong (ed.), *Rembrandt Creates Rembrandt*, pp. 53–6.
 - 17 On Rembrandt's use of self-portraiture see H. Perry Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self Portraits* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990), especially pp. 105–14; Ernst van de Wetering, 'The Multiple Functions of Rembrandt's Self Portraits', in White and Buvelot (eds), *Rembrandt by Himself*, pp. 8–37; *Corpus*, IV (Ernst van de Wetering, et al., *The Self-Portraits* (Dordrecht, Springer, 2005)), pp. 89–317; Arthur Wheelock, 'Rembrandt Inventing Himself', in Chong (ed.), *Rembrandt Creates Rembrandt*, pp. 13–23. On Charles I's collection of artist self-portraits, see Volker Manuth, 'Rembrandt and the Artist's Self-Portrait: Tradition and Reception', in White and Buvelot (eds) *Rembrandt by Himself*, pp. 46–51.
 - 18 This sort of sequence was most commonly found in altarpieces. Such images generally disappeared from large-scale public paintings after the Calvinists came to power in the Netherlands. The standard Catholic version of the Passion ended with the Crucifixion; occasionally the events immediately after the Crucifixion (*Descent from the Cross*, *Entombment*, etc.) were included. Only among Protestant writers were the Resurrection and Ascension included as part of the Passion narrative. Tümpel, *Rembrandt*, p. 135; Valerie Hedquist, 'The Passion of Christ in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting' (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Kansas, 1990), p. 124; for the traditional texts and images see James Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance* (Kortrijk, Van Ghemmert, 1979).
 - 19 Unlike precedents such as Dürer's printed Passions, the Rembrandt series omits all of the preliminary events (include key moments such as the Last Supper, the Carrying of the Cross, and the Ecce Homo), as well as the Crucifixion itself.

- Some believe that Rembrandt's 1631 *Christ on the Cross* (discovered in 1962 in the parish church in Le Mas d'Agenais) served as a competition or trial piece for this commission. First published by Kurt Bauch, 'Rembrandts "Christus am Kreuz"', *Pantheon*, 16 (1962), 137–44; M. Hours, 'La Crucifixion du Mas-d'Agenais par Rembrandt', *Revue du Louvre et des Musées de France*, 19 (1969), 157–60; Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, pp. 86–90; Hedquist, 'The Passion of Christ', p. 82; Mariët Westermann, *Rembrandt* (London, Phaidon, 2000), p. 101; Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, pp. 283–90. However, the painting never entered the *stadhouder's* collection, and not enough evidence has yet been found to supplant Sass's reading of the *Descent* as the first piece in the series. Most likely the Crucifixion functioned as an independent prelude to, or inspiration for, the series. For this reading, see Jacques Foucart, *Le Siècle de Rembrandt* (Paris, Petit Palais, 1970/71), #170; *Corpus*, I (#A35), p. 344; Vogelaar, *Rembrandt and Lievens in Leiden*, pp. 114–17.
- 20 Stechow postulated that Rembrandt knew the composition through copies or drawings of this famous work. Rembrandt's interest in the artist is attested by entry #216 in the inventory of the artist's possessions made for his bankruptcy filing in 1656; it lists a dossier (album book) of 'all the works of Titian' (probably prints and engravings). Walter Strauss and Marjon van der Meulen, *The Rembrandt Documents* (New York, Abaris, 1979), 1656/#12; Wolfgang Stechow, 'Rembrandt and Titian', *Art Quarterly*, 5 (1942), 135–47.
- 21 First noted by Brochhagen, 'Beobachtungen', 40–1; the Rembrandt Research Project authors point out that the position of the head of God the Father, directly above and behind that of Christ, suggests Rembrandt was also referring to scenes of the Trinity. *Corpus*, III (#A118), pp. 202–8.
- 22 The removal of the figure of God conformed to Calvinist proscriptions against images of the deity. Christian Tümpel, *Rembrandt* (Antwerp, Fonds Mercator, 1993), p. 137.
- 23 The 1668 Noordeinde inventory lists all the paintings under a single inventory number (#1240), with the heading '*seven stucken schilderije bij Rembrandt gemaect*' (seven paintings made by Rembrandt) and describes the frames as '*swarte lijsten, boven ovaelsgewijse ende rontom vergulde gesnede feuillages*' (black frames, oval above with gilded carved foliage all around); the gilded decorations must have been added in the intervening period. Drossaers and Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, 285.
- 24 Harvard College Libraries, Cambridge, MA. Horst Gerson dates it to February 1636. Horst Gerson, *Seven Letters by Rembrandt* (The Hague, Boucher, 1961), pp. 17–24; Strauss, *Documents*, 1636/#1.
- 25 Koninklijk Huisarchief, The Hague; Gerson, *Seven Letters*, pp. 34–40; Strauss, *Documents*, 1636/#3.
- 26 On Huygens's role, see Peter van der Ploeg and Carola Vermeeren, 'From the "Sea Prince's" Monies: the Stadholder's Art Collection', in Ploeg and Vermeeren (eds), *Princely Patrons*, pp. 59–60; Zell, 'The Gift Among Friends', pp. 176–83; H. A. Hofman, *Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687)* (Utrecht, HES, 1983).
- 27 Based on the dimensions (ten feet by eight feet) mentioned in Rembrandt's third letter, the piece could be either the Frankfurt *Blinding of Samson* (1636, Städel) or the *Danaë* (1636, St Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum).
- 28 Huygens extolled the industry of the young Rembrandt and Lievens, who appeared to be working themselves through 'tireless diligence' into ill health, in

- his *Autobiography* of c.1630–31. Text transcribed and translated in Chong (ed.), *Rembrandt Creates Rembrandt*, pp. 134–6.
- 29 British Museum, London, Add. Ms. #21514, fo. 35; Gerson, *Seven Letters*, pp. 25–31; Strauss, *Documents*, 1636/#2.
- 30 *Ibid.* On the meaning of ‘*bewechgelijkheit*’, see John Gage, ‘A Note on Rembrandt’s ‘meeste ende die naetureereelste beweechgelijkheit’, *Burlington Magazine*, 111 (1969), 381.
- 31 Christiaan Couwenbergh received 400 guilders for a painting of Venus and 300 for one of Venus and Adonis, both delivered to Rijswijk in 1643. Nationaal Archief, The Hague: Nassause Domeinraad Ordonnantieboeken, #992 (1637–41), fo. 238v. In the Huisarchief (The Hague), a document by Jacob van Campen dated 10 May 1649 (#2497c) lists the positions of paintings in the Oranjezaal, and their prices. Quentin Buvelot *et al.* (eds), *Jacob van Campen: het Klassieke Ideaal in de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam, Architecture & Natura, 1995), p. 135, ill. 103.
- 32 In 1638, during the redecoration of the suburban villa of Honselaarsdijk, the Prince paid 800 pounds *artois* each for two ‘*grootte*’ painted works by Christiaan Couwenbergh, and 400 pounds *artois* for a painting of Venus by Paulus Bor. Nationaal Archief, The Hague: Nassause Domeinraad Ordonnantieboeken, #992 (1637–41), fos 189 and 191. In contrast with Rembrandt’s, these were large-scale decorative works, each painted directly onto the architectural fabric of the house.
- 33 S. A. C. Dudok van Heel, ‘Rembrandt Doet in 1639 een Miskoop: De gescheidenis van Rembrandts Huis’, *Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis*, (1997), 2–13; Crenshaw, *Rembrandt’s Bankruptcy*, pp. 44–88.
- 34 Though many contractors and tradesmen waited years for their money, Rembrandt was indeed paid rapidly – the account book of the Prince registers a request for payment of 1244 guilders on 17 February 1639 (Nationaal Archief, The Hague: Nassause Domeinraad Ordonnantieboeken, #992 [1637–41], fo. 242).
- 35 29 September 1646. Nationaal Archief, The Hague: Nassause Domeinraad Ordonnantieboeken, #993 (1641–47), fo. 442.
- 36 Crenshaw, *Rembrandt’s Bankruptcy*, p. 32, points out that prices for Rembrandt’s work on the market actually fell in the late 1640s. However, since there were few venues for this kind of large-scale public commission in The Netherlands, demonstrated success at this kind of work would certainly affect the artist’s ability to command high prices. Similarly, it may be significant that the Prince’s first commission to Rembrandt came in 1632, after the *Anatomy of Dr Tulp* had been completed. I am grateful to Paul Crenshaw for insights onto this point.
- 37 See note 24.
- 38 See note 29.
- 39 Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, p. 107; he refers to Strauss, *Documents*, 1639/#2.
- 40 For the Ruffo correspondence, see Strauss, 1662/#11. For analysis of the disputes with Ruffo and other patrons, see Crenshaw, *Rembrandt’s Bankruptcy*, pp. 110–35.
- 41 The practice is found in Rubens’s first major commission, for the Chiesa Nuova altarpiece, as well as frequently thereafter. See Filip Vermeylen, ‘Antwerp Beckons: The Reason for Rubens’s Return to the Netherlands in 1608’, *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 55 (2004), 26.
- 42 *Corpus*, III (#A118), p. 206; Gerson, *Seven Letters*, pp. 26–30; Strauss, *Documents*, 1639/#2.

- 43 The Honselaarsdijk palace was destroyed in 1815. D. P. Snoep, 'Honselaarsdijk: Restauraties op Papier', *Oud Holland*, 84 (1969), 270–94; R. Meischke, 'De Grote Trap van het Huis Honselaarsdijk 1633–39', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 31 (1981), 86–103; and R. Meischke, 'De Modernisering van de Twee Grote Zalen van het Huis Honselaarsdijk in 1637 door Jacob van Campen', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 33 (1983), 191–206.
- 44 P. J. J. van Thiel, 'De Grebbers Regels van de Kunst', *Oud Holland*, 80 (1965), 126–31; Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann, *Rembrandt: the Nightwatch* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 58, n. 24.
- 45 Haverkamp-Begemann, *Rembrandt: the Nightwatch*, pp. 51–63.
- 46 Before 1625 the house was called the 'Civil Residence' ('*gemeene Landtsbuysinge*') to distinguish its role as the Orange-Nassau family home and residence of Louise de Coligny. It was also known during Louise's lifetime as 'the Residency of France' – a reference to Louise's foreign background. After 1625 the house carried the label of the Old Court ('*Oude Hof*'), to distinguish it from the official court of the Prince at the Binnenhof. Paul den Boer, *Het Huis in 't Noordeinde: Het Koninklijke Paleis Noordeinde Historisch Gezien* (Zutphen, De Walburg Pers, 1986), pp. 22–3; Drossaers and Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, 180 and n. 5.
- 47 Gerson placed the paintings at Noordeinde, based on an inventory of 1662 (without citation). Gerson, *Seven Letters*, p. 11. However, no such inventory exists. In all likelihood, Gerson was referring to the 1654–68 inventory of Amalia's possessions, which included objects at the Huis ten Bosch, Turnhout, and Noordeinde. Drossaers and Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, 239–96. Almost all later writers on the series follow Gerson's lead regarding the location.
- 48 Ploeg and Vermeeren (eds), *Princely Patrons*, p. 193; Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, p. 109.
- 49 The ground floor was not part of the *stadhouder's* residence. It was reserved for civic and States functions. Amalia's chambers were upstairs, on the second floor.
- 50 In 1248 Count Willem II built a palace on this spot on the occasion of his accession to the imperial crown; several decades later, a large hall ('*de Groote Zaal*') was built at the centre of the complex, probably by his son Floris. On the archaeological remains of the early castle, see C. de Wit, 'Het Ontstaan van het Haagse Binnenhof', *Bulletin KNOB*, 6de serie, 7 (1954), 1–22. The most detailed account of the early history is G. G. Calkoen, 'Het Binnenhof van 1247–1747', *Die Hage Bijdragen en Mededelingen* (The Hague, Mouton, 1902), 35–184; more recent is H. M. Brokken, 'Het Hof in Den Haag: Grafelijke Residentie en Centrum van Bestuur', in R. J. van Pelt and M. E. Tiethoff-Splietthoff (eds), *Het Binnenhof: van Grafelijke Residentie tot Regeringscentrum* (Dieren, De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1984), pp. 13–20.
- 51 Maurits commissioned plans for an Italianate palace on the spot from the Florentine architect Constantino de Servi, but the project came to nothing. Koen Ottenheim, "Possessed by Such a Passion for Building". Frederik Hendrik and Architecture', in Marika Keblusek and Jori Zijlmans (eds), *Princely Display: The Court of Frederik Hendrik of Orange and Amalia van Solms in The Hague* (Zwolle, Waanders, 1997), p. 109 and n. 25.
- 52 On the history and characteristics of aristocratic architectural features such as towers and moats, See H. L. Janssen, *et al.* (eds), *1000 Jaar Kastelen in Nederland* (Utrecht, Matrijs, 1996).
- 53 An example is Hendrick Pacx, *The Nassau Princes on the Buitenhof, with the Binnenhof Behind*, c.1621. Mauritshuis, The Hague.

- 54 Anonymous, *'Ob debellatos hostes, civesque servatos': Allegory of Frederik Hendrik's Entry into The Hague*, 1629. Engraving, Gemeentearchief, The Hague.
- 55 The remodelling was paid for by the States from the sale of land around the *plein* east of the Binnenhof. After a fire in 1635, the remodellings continued under the direction of Pieter Post through 1636. See J. J. Terwen and Koen Ottenheim, *Pieter Post 1608–1669* (Zutphen, De Walburg Pers, 1993), pp. 35–38. During the *stadhouderless* period (1652–72) the apartments suffered from neglect; the spaces were diminished and many of the fittings dispersed. During this time the Vijver wing of the *stadhouder's* quarters was taken over by the States General, which constructed a new meeting chamber in the south end of the former apartments of the *stadhouder* and his entourage. D. J. Jansen, 'Het Stadhoudelijk Kwartier in de 17de eeuw', in van Pelt and Tiethoff-Spliethoff (eds), *Het Binnenhof*, pp. 68–9.
- 56 John Loughman and John Michael Montias, *Public and Private Spaces: Works of Art in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Houses* (Zwolle, Waanders, 2000).
- 57 The collecting and hanging of works of art into impressive and thematic ensembles occurred throughout Europe, beginning with personal cabinets and culminating in enormous environments. Another room hung to make a political as well as social point in the 1630s is the Hall of Realms in the Buen Retiro palace, decorated by Diego Velázquez, Francisco Zurbarán, and others for King Philip IV of Spain. Jonathan Brown and J. H. Elliott, *A Palace for a King: The Buen Retiro and the Court of Philip IV*, rev. ed. (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 149–202. For an overview of princely modes of collecting, see Ronald Lightbown, 'Charles I and the Tradition of European Princely Collecting', in Arthur MacGregor (ed.), *The Late King's Goods: Collections, Possession and Patronage of Charles I in light of the Commonwealth Sale Inventories* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 53–72.
- 58 These examples have been established in the work of Hugh M. Baillie, 'Étiquette and the planning of the state apartments in Baroque palaces', *Archaeologia*, 101 (1967), 169–99; Bertrand Jestaz, 'Étiquette et distribution intérieure dans les maisons royales de la Renaissance', *Bulletin Monumental*, 146 (1988), 109–20; and Jean Guillaume (ed.), *Architecture et vie sociale: l'organisation intérieure des grandes demeures à la fin du Moyen Age et à la Renaissance* (Paris, Picard, 1994).
- 59 Ottenheim, 'Possessed', p. 109, fig. 93.
- 60 Jori Zijlmans, 'Life at the Hague Court', in Zijlmans and Keblusek (eds), *Princely Display*, p. 32; Marie-Ange Delen, 'The Genesis of the Court at The Hague', in Zijlmans and Keblusek (eds), *Princely Display*, pp. 18–28.
- 61 The *Secreet Besogne* (Secret Committee) was formed from States members by Frederik Hendrik, and met in his territory. Groenveld, 'Frederick Henry and his Entourage', p. 27; Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, p. 66; Poelhekke, *Frederik Hendrik*, pp. 324–9.
- 62 Terwen and Ottenheim, *Pieter Post*, p. 36 and n. 149; Poelhekke, *Frederik Hendrik*, p. 474.
- 63 Olaf Mörke, 'The Orange Court as Center of Political and Social Life During the Republic', in Zijlmans and Keblusek (eds), *Princely Display*, p. 71.
- 64 Mörke, 'The Orange Court', pp. 70–1; Heinz Schilling, 'The Orange Court: The Configuration of the Court in an Old European Republic', in Ronald Asch and Adolf Birke (eds), *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 450.

- 65 Nationaal Archief, The Hague, Nassause Domeinraad, Inv. #562, fos. 17–19. Delen, ‘The Genesis of the Court’, p. 24.
- 66 Rosalys Coope, ‘The Gallery in England and its Relationship to the Principal Rooms (1520–1600)’, in Guillaume (ed.), *Architecture et vie sociale*, p. 246; Rosalys Coope, ‘The Long Gallery; its origins, development, use, and decoration’, *Architectural History*, 29 (1986), 43–72, 74–84.
- 67 Drossaers and Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, 179–237.
- 68 The technique first appears in French apartments around 1625. See Peter Thornton, *Seventeenth-Century Interior Decoration in England, France, and Holland* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978); C. Willemijn Fock, ‘The Apartments of Frederik Henry and Amalia of Solms: Princely Splendour and the Triumph of Porcelain’, in Ploeg and Vermeeren (eds), *Princely Patrons*, pp. 76–7.
- 69 F. W. Hudig, *Frederik Hendrik en de Kunst van Zijn Tijd* (Amsterdam, Menno Hertzberger, 1928).
- 70 Ploeg and Vermeeren, ‘From the “Sea Prince’s” Monies’, pp. 34–60.
- 71 A complete analysis and reconstruction of the collection in the *stadhouder’s* quarters is part of my book on courtly patronage under Frederik Hendrik, currently in preparation.
- 72 On Van Dyck at the court of Frederik Hendrik see J. G. van Gelder, ‘Antonie van Dyck in Holland in de seventiende eeuw’, *Bulletin Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique*, 1–2 (1959), 43–86; Amy Walsh, ‘Van Dyck at the Court of Frederik Hendrik’, in Susan Barnes and Arthur Wheelock (eds), *Van Dyck 350* (Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art, 1994), pp. 223–44.
- 73 There are also two paintings by an artist of unknown nationality listed simply as Briel (#62, 63). It is possible that these two landscapes are by Paul Brill, a specialist in that genre who won much international favour in the early decades of the seventeenth century. Brill, who lived in Rome, was a Fleming; he is known to have collaborated with Rottenhammer, whose paintings were also in the *stadhouder’s* collection.
- 74 Speaking of the painting *Judas Returning the 30 Pieces of Silver*, Huygens exclaims: ‘For I myself say that these things did not occur to Protogenes, or to Apelles, or to Parrhasios, and if even these men were to return today, they would not be able to conceive these same things – I am astounded again – which a young man, a Dutchman, a miller, a beardless boy, has brought together in a single figure and depicted completely. Glory to you my Rembrandt. Carrying all those people of Troy and all of Asia to Italy was not so great as carrying the highest praises of Greece and Italy to the Dutch, praises for a Dutchman...’ See note 5.
- 75 The question of Dutch national identity has been long debated by historians. For a summary of the issues involved and an argument for a political reading of early seventeenth-century visual culture, see H. Perry Chapman, ‘Propagandist Prints, Reaffirming Paintings: Art and Community during the Twelve Years’ Truce’, in Arthur Wheelock (ed.), *The Public and Private in Dutch Culture of the Golden Age* (Newark, NJ, University of Delaware Press, 2000), pp. 43–63.
- 76 Since the assassination of William of Orange in 1584, the provinces of Friesland, Groningen, and Drenthe had traditionally appointed members of the House of Nassau (a cadet branch of the Nassau-Orange family) as their *stadhouders*. Though administratively independent, these *stadhouders* served in the military under the control of the Prince of Orange, who was both *stadhouder* of the more

- powerful provinces (Utrecht, Holland, Zeeland, Overijsel) and head of the family. Hendrik Casimir of Nassau died in battle in 1640; Drenthe and Groningen subsequently elected Frederik Hendrik to their *stadhouderships*, but Friesland chose Willem Frederik of Nassau, denying Frederik Hendrik the chance to represent the entire United Provinces. Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, pp. 34, 70–1.
- 77 The Prince devoted much of his military efforts in the mid-1640s to capturing Antwerp, signing a treaty with France to assist him in 1646. J. J. Poelhekke, 'Een gefrustreerd Antwerpenaar: Frederik Hendrik, Prins van Orange', in *Met Pen, Tongriem en Rapiër* (Amsterdam, Holland Universiteits Pers, 1977), pp. 47–56; Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 515–16.
- 78 H. H. Rowen, *The Princes of Orange* (New York and London, Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 62–3.
- 79 Loughman and Montias, *Public and Private Spaces*, pp. 40–50.
- 80 *Ibid.*, pp. 48–9; Michael Montias, 'Works of Art in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam', in David Freedberg and Jan de Vries (eds), *Art in History / History in Art* (Santa Monica, Getty Center, 1991), pp. 337–40 and tables 6 and 6a.
- 81 *Ibid.*
- 82 Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, pp. 64–5; Poelhekke, *Frederik Hendrik*, pp. 182–3; Israel, *Dutch Republic*, p. 515 discusses the promise of Catholic toleration offered to the population of the Southern Netherlands in support of an uprising.
- 83 Israel, *Dutch Republic*, pp. 490–1; P. J. Blok, *Frederik Hendrik, Prins van Oranje* (Amsterdam, Meulenhoff, 1924), p. 80.
- 84 Israel, *Dutch Republic*, p. 491.
- 85 Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 12–40.
- 86 Schnackenburg, 'Young Rembrandt's "Rough Manner"', pp. 92–100.
- 87 See note 17.
- 88 For interpretations based on audience response, see David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989). For reception theory in art history, see Hans Robert Raupp, 'History of Art and Pragmatic History', in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, transl. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. 46–75. James Elkins offers an intriguing discussion of intentionally multivalent Western images in 'On Monstrously Ambiguous Paintings', *History and Theory*, 32 (1993), 227–47, while Padma Kaimal explores how layers of meaning were framed in Indian imagery: Padma Kaimal, 'Shiva Nataraja: Shifting Meanings of an Icon', *Art Bulletin*, 81 (1999), 390–419.
- 89 Peter Parshall, 'The Art of Memory and the Passion', *Art Bulletin*, 81 (1999), 456–72; Angela Hass, 'Two Devotional Manuals by Albrecht Dürer: The Small Passion and the Engraved Passion. Iconography, Context and Spirituality', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 63 (2000), 169–230. Unfortunately, no accounts by contemporary viewers of the Passion series *in situ* have yet been found.
- 90 Tümpel, *Rembrandt*, pp. 135–9; Westermann, *Rembrandt*, pp. 105–7.
- 91 Several writers quote poets such as Jacobus Revius and Paul Gerhard, who express a Protestant sense of identification and personal guilt in verses about the Crucifixion. Such attitudes may explain the 'self-accusatory stance' that Rembrandt appears to take in this self-portrait as an executioner. Westermann, *Rembrandt*,

p. 107; Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits*, pp. 11–14; Brown, *Rembrandt: the Master and his Workshop*, p. 160; Tümpel, *Rembrandt*, p. 136. On Rembrandt's position within the religious environment of Holland, see S. A. C. Dudok van Heel, *De Jonge Rembrandt onder Tijdgenoten: Godsdienst en Schilderkunst in Leiden en Amsterdam* (Rotterdam, Veenman, 2006).

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