

Marieke de Winkel. *Fashion and Fancy: Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt's Paintings*.

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Marieke de Winkel's *Fashion and Fancy: Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt's Paintings* is a beautifully produced volume replete with lavish images and extensive documentation of specialized sources, including useful appendices of inventories. The author's many insightful observations based on meticulous research contribute significantly to our knowledge of Dutch seventeenth-century dress, and offer an invaluable perspective on the role of clothing in Rembrandt's paintings. De Winkel's discussion of fashion and fantasy authoritatively establishes the norms of seventeenth-century clothing in portraiture before evaluating Rembrandt's imaginative treatment of dress in the self-portraits and histories, but this division tends to undervalue the role of Rembrandt's pictorial imagination in the earlier chapters. Nonetheless, the book (especially the last two chapters) enriches our appreciation of Rembrandt as an artist whose interest in actual fashion is more than matched by his powers of invention. The imagination and visual memory evident

in Rembrandt's transformation of his eclectic sources — his ability to “boil the turnips well to make good soup” (204) in De Winkel's apt quotation from Van Mander — especially evokes the “inventive richness” praised by his contemporaries.

The first three chapters of *Fashion and Fancy* focus on fashion and examine examples of contemporary apparel in Rembrandt's painting. For the most part these chapters reconstruct the historical connotations of particular garments and the circumstances in which they were worn. Chapter 1 analyzes the significance of the *tabbaard*, an old-fashioned article of clothing encountered in portraits of elderly men, scholars, and ecclesiastics. De Winkel provides a comprehensive overview based on historic sources, but also touches on allegorical meanings and political allusions that sharpen our appreciation of the meaning of this garment for the culture generally, and in Rembrandt's work particularly. “Frivolous and Vain: Assessing Fashion Accessories in Rembrandt's Portraits” (chapter 2) examines the conventions, context, and connotations of accessories. This chapter is rich in anecdote and information drawn from inventories and literary sources. Such material conveys nuanced associations consistent with the age, religion, and social position of the sitter. The author argues convincingly for viewing attributes as status symbols, but provides a less compelling case against understanding such details as part of a more nuanced “visual etiquette.” Dress is even more central to meaning in chapter 3, “The Man in a Grey Riding Coat: Dress in Rembrandt's Portrait of Jan Six,” which explores in some detail the connotations of Six's clothing in relation to contemporary country life. Though De Winkel notes Six's many social and cultural interests — including his enthusiasm for Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* — emphasis on Six's clothing with less notice of Rembrandt's ability to convey the inner man colors her interpretation. Her conclusion that the 1654 portrait emphasizes the *vita activa* even as it alludes to the gentleman's retreat into the countryside would benefit from a more considered view of David R. Smith's treatment of the portrait as a meditation on the “interval” between the public and private self (David Smith, “I Janus,” *Art History* 1988).

The last two chapters of the book examine “Rembrandt's Clothes and Costume” and “Clothes in Rembrandt's History Paintings.” Here fancy comes into play and De Winkel examines the fuller complexity of Rembrandt's artistic vision. This more dynamic interpretative model, evident in her discussion of the slippery relationship between Rembrandt's self-portraits and *tronies*, her discussion of prints as sources, and in her brief acknowledgment of Rembrandt's role in establishing a type and a market, is even more to the fore in the last chapter, “Adorned with Manifold Garments,” in which the artist's pictorial concerns and use of prints become a major theme. De Winkel's expertise in tracking down sources, whether existing garments, studio props, or theatrical costume is evident throughout the chapter. When such material is not to be found or is inadequate to explain the paintings, she finds his inspiration in prints, costume books, and the work of other artists. Here, De Winkel conveys Rembrandt's “eclectic mix of

fantasy and reality” in a discussion that does full justice to his extraordinary imagination and inventive skills.

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