

Holm Bevers, Jan Kelch, and Christian Tico Seifert, eds. *Rembrandt: Wissenschaft auf der Suche*.

Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen 51. Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2009. 168 pp. illus. \$165. ISBN: 978-3-7861-2563-1.

This volume of edited conference papers, published as a supplement to the *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, provides a partial view on the current state of Rembrandt scholarship. Traditional approaches, especially comparative stylistic analysis of Rembrandt's works with those of other artists, discussion of archival finds, and iconographical investigation are still strongly in evidence, but are used with greater subtlety or with an eye to a more sophisticated art-theoretical interpretation of meaning than was sometimes true in the past.

The emphasis on the object is a focus common to the clear majority of the essays, as would be appropriate to a symposium held in Berlin in connection with exhibitions of Rembrandt's paintings, prints, and drawings. Several contributions are based upon stylistic analysis, as in the essays by Rudi Ekkart and Dagmar Hirschfelder about Rembrandt's portraiture and innovation, Matthias Winner's

study of visual sources for Rembrandt's *Hundred Guilder Print*, and Amy Golahny's study of the impact made on Rembrandt's art by Caravaggio's *Madonna of the Rosary*. Similarly, Christian Tico Siefert traces Rembrandt's use of prints with related imagery in the artist's compositions for a subject new to the visual arts, *Samson's Wedding Feast*. Werner Busch reverses the question of influence in discussing Guercino's interest in Rembrandt's naturalistic art as revealed in several drawings by the Italian master.

Rembrandt's engagement with art theory serves as the framework for several essays. Martin Sonnabend focuses on issues of Rembrandt's creativity, mirroring, and the female model in his prints, while Eric Jan Sluiter argues that debates centered on the dichotomy of classicism and naturalism were already waged in the Dutch republic in the 1620s, not just after Rembrandt's death in 1669. Rudolf Preimesberger turns to models of rhetoric to help explain the poses and gestures found in Rembrandt's early paintings *The Raising of Lazarus* and *Judas in Repentance*. Thomas Ketelsen maintains that the *Circumcision of Christ*, a now-lost painting from the Passion series currently in Munich, provided the theological fulcrum for the entire series.

The methods of technical art history are applied to individual objects in two essays: first by Jeroen Giltaij, to help in a case of a problematic Rembrandt attribution; and second by Katja Kleinert and Claudia Laurenze-Landsberg, to reveal Rembrandt's creative process. The continuing relevance of connoisseurship for making attributions is stressed by Benjamin Binstock, who offers four (and possibly five) new attributions to Carel Fabritius in the years after his time in Rembrandt's workshop. Walter Liedtke presents intriguing new conclusions about several Rembrandt paintings at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, based on a variety of methodological approaches.

Ben Broos demonstrates the importance of another kind of object for understanding Rembrandt — the written document — through analysis of recent archival discoveries and reinterpretation of known documents and drawings about Rembrandt's wife Saskia van Uylenburgh and her family.

Four essays focus on Rembrandt's cultural milieu to help explain aspects of his art; three of these emphasize religion. David DeWitt suggests that the rise of tonal painting, a decrease in depictions of the female nude, and an upsurge in *vanitas* imagery and depictions of the elderly in the 1620s and early '30s reflected the "climate of caution" (23) that followed upon the success of the Counter-Remonstrants in the 1610s. Mirjam Alexander-Knotter hypothesizes that Rembrandt's mistakes when using Hebrew inscriptions suggest that, contrary to many scholars' belief, he did not have a Jewish advisor to assist him; Gary Schwartz then disputes the notion that Rembrandt was unusually sympathetic to seventeenth-century Jews and proposes that the Christian theologian and Hebrew scholar Johannes Maccovius could have been Rembrandt's advisor for Hebrew inscriptions. Finally, Marten Jan Bok and Tom van der Molen compare Rembrandt's productivity and choice of subject matter to some of his contemporary rivals in

Amsterdam, demonstrating that Rembrandt's career was unusual for the degree of inconsistency in production.

Despite differences in approaches, one overarching commonality can be found. Each author strives to provide a more nuanced view of Rembrandt and his art, in some cases by returning to well-known works with new questions, in others by looking closely at understudied objects or at Rembrandt's cultural milieu. The result is a collection of essays that offer polished, thoughtful contributions to the Rembrandt literature.

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