REMBRANDT’S ARTFUL USE OF STATUES AND CASTS: NEW INSIGHTS INTO HIS STUDIO PRACTICES AND WORKING METHODS

A Dissertation
Submitted to
the Temple University Graduate Board

in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by
Martha Gyllenhaal
May, 2008
ABSTRACT

Rembrandt’s Artful Use of Statues and Casts:
New Insights into His Studio Practices and Working Methods

Martha Gyllenhaal
Doctor of Philosophy
Temple University, 2008
Doctoral Advisory Committee Chair: Marcia B. Hall, PhD.

Although Rembrandt van Rijn owned over eighty pieces of sculpture, studies regarding his use of the collection are in short supply and tend to be either formal, tracing the few images of sculpture in Rembrandt’s oeuvre to those listed in his 1656 bankruptcy inventory, or else they refer to his use of classical sculpture in general terms as an inspiration for his history paintings.

This study shifts emphasis from formal and iconographic issues to Rembrandt’s studio practices and working methods. It examines his manipulation of the border between reality and illusion (what Ovid termed “the art that conceals art”): his effort to “incarnate” his sculptural sources by wrapping them in textiles and giving them the appearance of flesh.

Seventeenth-century theory provides the foundation for this hypothesis: artists/theorists such as Karl van Mander, Peter Paul Rubens, and Philips Angel promoted the judicious use of sculpture and encouraged artists to transform its marmoreal surface into pliant flesh; Van Mander advised painters to make the thin garments of classical statues more appropriate for Northern paintings by wrapping them in woolen cloth; he also encouraged artists to “steal arms, legs, hands, and feet” from works of art and synthesize them into new creations.
Esteemed precedents also support the hypothesis: recent studies of Cornelis Cornelius van Haarlem, Hendrick Goltzius, and Bartholomeus Spranger examined their use of Renaissance bronzes, an inexpensive and plentiful source that Rembrandt also seems to have tapped. Paragone, a popular debate in both Amsterdam and Leiden, is another facet of this study.

Empirical observations reveal patterns in Rembrandt’s use of sculpture: several etchings of his studio show busts adorned with hats or wrapped in fabric (a practice also described in a seventeenth-century poem about Rembrandt); a number of his head studies, genre, and history paintings suggest that he used busts of Roman emperors for models. The less subtle artistry of his students and his colleague Jan Lievens also exposes their use of clothed statues and thereby corroborates the hypothesis that Rembrandt’s reliance on sculpture for models was more prevalent and artful (in the sense of covert) than has previously been noted.
DEDICATION

In memory of

my mentor
Cynthia Lawrence

and

my mother
Ruth Davis Gyllenhaal
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all my colleagues at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church for their ongoing interest in my research. I am particularly grateful to Dean Charles W. Lindsay for his understanding of the pressures involved in teaching fulltime while working on a doctorate; to Michael H. Hogan and David Perry at the Swedenborg Library for their cheerful and prompt assistance; to Shawn B. Lawing for his help with translation; and to members of the Paul Carpenter Fund Committee, chaired by Presidents Dan W. Goodenough and Prescott A. Rogers, for their sustained financial support. I also appreciate the grants I received from Bryn Athyn College’s Professional Development Fund, administered by Dr. Kristin King, that enabled me to attend in Great Britain two informative conferences on plaster casts. Dr. Eckart Marchand and Dr. Rune Frederiksen ably organized these genial meetings, the first at the University of Reading and the second at Trinity College, Oxford, where I presented a portion of Chapter One.

Thanks is in order for my enthusiastic traveling companions Sandra J. Odhner and Siri Y. Hurst, who were willing to trek to numerous exhibits in both the United States and The Netherlands. I also benefited from Tina Long’s and Johanna Arrimour’s insights regarding Dutch culture and discussions about the meaning of Dutch words.

In Amsterdam, Dr. Jaap van der Veen, Director of the Rembrandt House Museum, and Dr. Fritz Scholten, Director of Sculpture at the Rijksmuseum, gave encouragement early on in my research. In Philadelphia, Dr. Lloyd de Witt, Assistant Curator of European Painting at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, gave me valuable insights into Jan Lievens toward the end of my research.
I am also indebted to my patient proofreaders, Brenna Synnestvedt, Dr. Greg Baker, and Dr. Robert Gladish, and to Christopher Nunez for his advice on formatting the text and images.

I could not have asked for a more supportive committee for my defense. I have greatly valued Dr. Therese Dolan’s kindness and encouragement throughout my years at Tyler School of Art, Temple University. Early in my research Dr. Tracy E. Cooper stressed the importance of grounding my empirical observations in seventeenth-century theory, constructive advice that strengthened my hypothesis. After Dr. Cynthia Lawrence’s retirement, Dr. Marcia B. Hall took me on as an advisee, even though her focus is the Italian Renaissance. I appreciated Dr. Hall’s thoughtful guidance, her confidence in my abilities, and her nudging me to present my findings at conferences. Her wise recommendation that I consult with Dr. Larry Silver at the University of Pennsylvania was a turning point in my Rembrandt studies. Discussions with Dr. Silver about Northern Baroque art were the highpoints of my graduate career. I have benefited immeasurably from his breadth and depth of knowledge, his generosity, his quick responses to my emails, and his attention to detail when reading my drafts.

Finally, a stimulating course on Rembrandt, taught by Dr. Cynthia Lawrence, inspired me to change my focus from nineteenth- to seventeenth-century studies. She was the first person to see the potential of what eventually became my dissertation topic. I am profoundly saddened that she did not live to see how the research unfolded. I thought of her every time I made a new discovery, for she assured me that patterns would emerge if my hypothesis was viable.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Statement</td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>xx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>xxviii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical Observation</td>
<td>xxviii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connoisseurship</td>
<td>xxxi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Theory</td>
<td>xxxi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Northern Concept of Working Naer Het Leven (From Life)</td>
<td>xxxiii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER

1. INCARNATED TRONIES............................................................................. 1
   A Death Mask of Prince Maurice: the Dissertation in Microcosm .......... 1
      A Reincarnation of the Prince?.............................................. 3
      Kenlijkheyt........................................................................... 7
      Paragone and the Reincarnation of a Death Mask ......................... 9
   The Rubens Precedent.................................................................... 10
   Unconvincing Student Tronies..................................................... 17
   A Bust of Nero............................................................................ 18

   Incarnations of Nero by Rembrandt........................................... 21
   Incarnations of Nero by Painters in Rembrandt’s Circle ............... 25
      Isaac Jouderville?............................................................... 26
      Jacob Adriaensz. Backer....................................................... 29
      Jacques des Rousseaux......................................................... 30
      Ferdinand Bol......................................................................... 32
      Jan Lievens........................................................................... 35

   Conclusion.................................................................................... 37
2. LIFE CASTS AND CLASSICAL SCULPTURE

“Head of a Moor Cast from Life” .............................................................. 39
Lievens and Rembrandt, Shared Casts ...................................................... 40
Rubens’s Uomini Illustri ......................................................................... 44
Galba ........................................................................................................... 47
Vitellius ...................................................................................................... 51
Heads on Shelves ...................................................................................... 55
Dancing Faun ............................................................................................ 62
Borghese Fisherman (Dying Seneca) ....................................................... 64

Rembrandt’s Circle ................................................................................... 70
Rembrandt .................................................................................................. 72
Peter and John at the Gate of the Temple .............................................. 73
Adam and Eve ............................................................................................ 75

Conclusion ............................................................................................... 78

3. REMBRANDT AND RENAISSANCE BRONZES

The “Dutch Canon” .................................................................................. 80
Giambologna, His Circle and Tetrode ...................................................... 81
Precedents for Incarnating Renaissance Bronzes ..................................... 83
Rembrandt’s Use of Renaissance Bronzes ............................................... 86

The Goldsmith ........................................................................................... 90
Stout Man in a Large Cape ....................................................................... 93
Rape of Proserpina ................................................................................... 97
Portions of the Samson Story ................................................................... 99

The Blinding of Samson .......................................................................... 106
Samson Posing a Riddle to the Wedding Guests ...................................... 106
Samson Threatening His Father-in-Law ................................................... 114

The Angel Stopping Abraham from Slaying Isaac .................................... 117

Conclusion ............................................................................................... 119

4. REMBRANDT AND PARAGONE ......................................................... 121

Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer ............................................... 121

Conclusion ............................................................................................... 132

5. CONCLUSION ....................................................................................... 133

Unresolved Issues .................................................................................... 133

The Broader Significance of My Research ............................................. 137

Authentication and Dating ........................................................................ 137
LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

Fig. 1  De Gheyn II, Jacques. Prince Maurice on his Deathbed. 1625. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
Fig. 2  Rembrandt van Rijn. Portrait of an old Man. 1651. Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth.
Fig. 3  Rembrandt van Rijn. Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis. 1661-2. National Museum, Stockholm.
Fig. 4  Lievens, Jan. Capuchin Monk. 1629. Marquess of Lothian, Monteviot.
Fig. 5  Rubens, Peter Paul. The Four Philosophers. 1611-12. Pitti Palace, Florence.
Fig. 6  Rubens, Peter Paul. Head of ‘Seneca’. before 1626. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Fig. 7  Rubens, Peter Paul. Heads of Seneca and Galba. ca 1618. Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.
Fig. 8  Rubens, Peter Paul. Bust of ‘Seneca’. before 1626. Museum Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp.
Fig. 9  Anonymous. Borghese Fisherman. 2nd century. Louvre Museum, Paris
Fig. 10 Rubens, Peter Paul. The Death of Seneca. 1612-13. Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Fig. 11 Rubens, Peter Paul. Emperor Sevius Sulpicius Galba. 1600. Private Collection.
Fig. 12 Rubens, Peter Paul. Bust of Julius Caesar. 1618. Jagdschloss Grunewald Museum, Berlin.
Fig. 13 a-c Rubens, Peter Paul. Uomini Illustri. before 1638.
  Fig. 13a  Democritus, engraving No. 111 by L. Vorsterman.
  Fig. 13b  Socrates, engraving No. 113 by P. Pontius.
  Fig. 13c  Hippocrates, engraving No. 118 by P. Pontius.
Fig. 14 Paudiss, Christoff. Portrait of a Man. 1661. Private Collection, Budapest.
Fig. 15 Anonymous. Evangelist Writing. ca. 1661. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Fig. 16a-d Anonymous. Bust of Emperor Nero. 2nd century AD. Capitoline Museum, Rome.
Fig. 17 Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens. Allegory of Sight. ca. 1618. Prado, Madrid.
Fig. 18 Rembrandt van Rijn. Portrait of a Man Holding His Hat. 1639. Armand Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.
Fig. 19 superimposed Fig. 16a Bust of Emperor Nero. onto Fig. 18 Portrait of a Man Holding His Hat.
Fig. 20 Jouderville, Isaac. Portrait of a Young Man Wearing a Turban. 1631. Royal Collection, Windsor Castle.
Fig. 21 Jouderville, Isaac. Portrait of a Man. 1632. Museum of Art, Cleveland.
Fig. 22 Backer, Jacob Adriaensz. Portrait of a Gentleman. T.B. Hooks Collection.
Fig. 23 Anonymous. Trajan. 108-117 AD. British Museum, London.
Fig. 24 Backer, Jacob Adriaensz. The Sense of Hearing. 1635. Magyar Szépművészeti Museum, Budapest.

xii
Fig. 25 des Rousseaux, Jacques. **Portrait of a Young Man in a Gorget.** 1630. Musée des Beaux-Artes, Tourcoing.

Fig. 26 Sweerts, Michael. **An Artist’s Studio.** 1652. Institute of Arts, Detroit.

Fig. 27 Sweerts, Michael. **Man Holding a Jug.** 1655-60. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Fig. 28 Anonymous. **Philip the Arabian.** 3rd century AD. Vatican Museum, Vatican.

Fig. 29 Bol, Ferdinand. **The Toper.** 1633. Wallace Collection, London.

Fig. 30 Lievens, Jan. **Young Man Wearing a Gorget.** 1627. Gemäldegalerie, Dresden.

Fig. 31 Lievens, Jan. **Young Man in a Yellow-brown Cloak.** 1629. Residenzgalerie, Salzburg.

Fig. 32 Lievens, Jan. **Young Man with a Red Beret.** ca.1640. Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena.

CHAPTER 2

Fig. 33 Rembrandt van Rijn. **The White Negress (B 357).** 1630. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 34 Rembrandt van Rijn. **Man Drawing from a Cast (B 130).**

Fig. 35 Anonymous. **A Young Ethiopian.** Capitoline Museum, Rome.

Fig. 36a-b Rembrandt van Rijn. **The Artist Drawing from the Model (Pygmalion) (B 192).** ca. 1639. Teylers Museum, Haarlem.

Fig. 37 Lievens, Jan. **Head of a Black Woman in Profile.** 1630. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 38 Lievens, Jan. **Head of a Man with Thick Lips (Holl. 88, B 308 as Rembrandt).** Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 39 Backer, Jacob Adrianenz. **Young Negro in Half-Length.** Kupferstichkabinett, Dresden.

Fig. 40 Dou, Gerrit. **Portrait of a Moor.** ca. 1631. Nierdersächsische Landesgalerie, Hannover.

Fig. 41 Rembrandt van Rijn. **Bust of an Old Man with a High Forehead.** ca. 1629. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 42 van Vliet, Jan. **Bust of a Man with High Forehead.** ca. 1631. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 43 Rembrandt van Rijn. **Bust of an Old Man with Flowing Beard and White Sleeve (B 291) 1635.**

Fig. 44 Rembrandt van Rijn. **Old Man with Flowing Beard (B 315).** 1631.

Fig. 45 Rembrandt van Rijn. **Saint Peter Repentant.** 1631. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

Fig. 46 Rembrandt van Rijn. **Belshazzar’s Feast.** 1636. National Gallery, London.

Fig. 47 Rembrandt van Rijn. **Bust of an Old Bearded Man, Looking Down, Three-Quarters Right (B 260).** 1631.

Fig. 48 Rembrandt van Rijn. **Old Man with Flowing Beard (B 309).** 1630.
Fig. 49 Rembrandt van Rijn. Bust of an Old Man with Flowing Beard, the Head Bowed Forward, the Left Shoulder Unshaded (B 325). 1630.
Fig. 50 Rembrandt van Rijn. Bust of Old Man in a Cap. 1631. Louvre Museum, Paris
Fig. 51 Rubens, Peter Paul. Portrait of Ludovicus Nonnius. 1627. National Gallery, London.
Fig. 52 Rembrandt van Rijn. St. Jerome. 1631. Kunsthalle, Bremen.
Fig. 53 Gyllenhal, Martha. tracing of Rubens’ Hippocrates. 2008.
Fig. 54 superimposed Fig. 52 Hippocrates onto Fig. 51 St. Jerome.
Fig. 55 Rembrandt van Rijn. Old Man in an Armchair, Hands Folded. 1631.
Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin.
Fig. 56 Rembrandt van Rijn. Old Man in an Armchair, Looking Left. 1631.
(whereabouts unknown)
Fig. 57 Rembrandt van Rijn. Old Man in an Armchair, Leaning Sideways. 1631.Teylers Museum, Haarlem
Fig. 58 Rembrandt van Rijn. Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem. 1630.
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
Fig. 59a-b Rembrandt van Rijn. Galba. Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin.
Fig. 60a-f Anonymous. Galba. ca. 69 AD. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.
Fig. 61 Rembrandt van Rijn. Old Man with a Short Beard (B 306). 1635.
Fig. 62 Rembrandt van Rijn. Bald-headed Man in Right Profile (B 292). 1630.
Fig. 63 Rembrandt van Rijn. Bald-headed Man in Right Profile: Small Bust (B 294). 1630.
Fig. 64 Lievens, Jan. Bald Old Man. 1627. National Gallery, Ireland.
Fig. 65 Lievens, Jan. The Tric Trac Players. 1624. Spier Collection, Amsterdam.
Fig. 66 Lievens, Jan. Old Woman Reading. 1626. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
Fig. 67a-b Anonymous. Vitellius. undated. Museo Archeologico, Venice.
Fig. 68 Rubens, Peter Paul(?). Head of ‘Vitellius’. undated. Albertina, Vienna.
Fig. 69 Sweerts, Michael. detail Boy Drawing Before the Bust of a Roman Emperor.
Institute of Art, Minneapolis.
Fig. 70 Lievens, Jan. Bald Man Singing. 1626. Agnes Etherington Art Center, Kingston.
Fig. 71 Rembrandt van Rijn. The Three Singers (Hearing). 1624-25. Private Collection.
Fig. 72 Anonymous Vespasian. Roman Imperial Period. Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.
Fig. 73Anonymous Vespasian. Roman Imperial Period. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen.
Fig. 74 Anonymous. Old Woman (Sibyl). Capitoline Museum, Rome.
Fig. 75 Rembrandt van Rijn. Man in Oriental Costume. 1635. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
Fig. 76 Rembrandt van Rijn. King Uzziah Stricken with Leprosy. 1635. Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth.
Fig. 77 Rembrandt van Rijn. Portrait of a Man in Oriental Costume. 1633. Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Fig. 78 Lievens, Jan. Bust of an Oriental to the Right (Holl. 30). 1631. Prentenkabinet, Leiden.
Fig. 79 Backer, Jacob Adriaensz.. Man with a Tall Cap in Half-Length. Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam.
Fig. 80 Rembrandt van Rijn. Portrait of an Elderly Man. 1667. Mauritshuis, The Hague.
Fig. 81 Lievens, Jan. Old Man Holding a Quill. 1626. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Pau.
Fig. 82 Rembrandt van Rijn. The Hundred Guilder Print (Christ Among the Sick Allowing the Children to Come Unto Him) (B 74). 1643-49.
Fig. 83a-d panel of four figures from page 325, The Rembrandt Book by Gary Schwartz. 2006. Abrams, New York.
Fig. 82a & c detail The Hundred Guilder Print.
Fig. 82b Anonymous. Socrates. 1st century. Louvre Museum, Paris.
Fig. 83d van Dyck, Anthonie. Desiderius Erasmus. ca. 1630. Mauquoy-Hendrickx 5.
Fig. 84 Rembrandt van Rijn. Christ Disputing with the Doctors: a Sketch (B 65). ca. 1652.
Fig. 85 Rembrandt van Rijn. Christ Seated Disputing with the Doctors (B 64). ca. 1654.
Fig. 86 Anonymous. Drawing from the Nude in Rembrandt’s Studio. ca. 1645-50. Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt.
Fig. 87 van Vliet, Jan. Lot and His Daughters. 1631. Rembrandthuis, Amsterdam.
Fig. 88 After Rembrandt van Rijn. Lot and His Daughters. British Museum, London.
Fig. 89 Anonymous. Dancing Faun. 3rd century. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
Fig. 90a-d Anonymous. Borghese Fisherman. 2nd century. Louvre Museum, Paris.
   Fig. 90a reversed Borghese Fisherman.
   Fig. 90b reversed Borghese Fisherman.
   Fig. 90c detail Borghese Fisherman.
   Fig. 90d plaster cast Borghese Fisherman.
Fig. 91a-c Rubens, Peter Paul. Borghese Fisherman. Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan.
   Fig. 91a reversed Borghese Fisherman.
   Fig. 91b detail Borghese Fisherman.
   Fig. 91c reversed detail Borghese Fisherman.
Fig. 92 after Rubens. Borghese Fisherman (No. 12). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.
Fig. 93 after Rubens. Borghese Fisherman (No. 10). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.
Fig. 94 Rubens, Peter Paul (?). Borghese Fisherman (No. 8). The Hermitage, St. Petersburg.
Fig. 95 Loth, Johann Carl. Seneca and Nero. Earl of Bradford, Weston Park.
Fig. 96 Loth, Johann Carl. Satyr Playing a Flute. Gedenkstätte & Historisches Museum, Köthen Anhalt.
Fig. 97 Loth, Johann Carl. Ancient Philosopher. Undated. Whereabouts unknown.
Fig. 98 Loth, Johann Carl. Apollo and Pan. Undated. Whereabouts unknown.
Fig. 99 Drost, Willem. Mercury and Argus. National Gallery, London.
Fig. 100 Rembrandt van Rijn. St. Peter. 1629. Kupferstichkabinett, Dresden.
Fig. 101 Rembrandt van Rijn. Peter and John at the Gate of the Temple (B 95). 1629.
Fig. 102 Rembrandt van Rijn. Copper plate of Peter and John Healing the Cripple at the Gate of the Temple (B 94). ca. 1659. Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig.
Fig. 103 Rembrandt van Rijn. Adam and Eve (B 28). 1638.
Fig. 104  Dürer, Albrecht. Adam and Eve. 1504.
Fig. 105  Raphael Sanzio. The Creation of Eve. Vatican Loggia, Vatican.

CHAPTER 3

Fig. 106a-c  van Tetrode, Willem. Hercules Pomarius. The Hearn Family Trust, New York.
Fig. 107  Goltzius, Hendrik. De Grote Hercules. 1589. The Hearn Family Trust, New York.
Fig. 108  Goltzius, Hendrik. Massacre of the Innocents. ca. 1587-89. The Hearn Family Trust, New York.
Fig. 109  Goltzius, Hendrik. detail Caius Muscius Scaevola. ca. 1586. The Hearn Family Trust, New York.
Fig. 110a-c  van Tetrode, Willem. Hercules and Antaeus. ca. 1570. The Hearn Family Trust, New York.
Fig. 111  Goltzius, Hendrik. Titus Manlius Torquatus. 1586. The Hearn Family Trust, New York.
Fig. 112  Susini, Antonio after Giambologna. Lion Attacking a Bull. 1600-1625. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.
Fig. 113a-c  Brueghel. Allegory of Sight: Venus and Cupid in a Picture Gallery. ca. 1660. Museum of Art, Philadelphia.
Fig. 114  Giambologna. Samson Slaying a Philistine. ca. 1566. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Fig. 115  Rembrandt van Rijn. The Goldsmith. ca. 1655.
Fig. 116a-b  Giambologna. Charity. 1578. University of Genoa, Genoa.
Fig. 117  Rembrandt van Rijn. A Woman and Child Descending a Staircase (B 313). ca. 1635-36. Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.
Fig. 118  Sweerts, Michael. Mother with Child. Private Collection, Milan.
Fig. 119  Rembrandt van Rijn. Stout Old Man in Large Cape. 1629. Louvre Museum, Paris.
Fig. 120  superimposed Fig. 113 Stout Old Man in Large Cape. onto Fig. 106a Pomarius.
Fig. 121  Rape of Proserpina. 1631. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.
Fig. 122  de Vries, Adriaen. reversed The Rape of a Sabine. ca. mid 17th century. Robert H. Smith Collection.
Fig. 123  Susini, Antonio. Paris Abducting Helen. 1627. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden.
Fig. 124  Giambologna. The Rape of the Sabine. 1581-83. Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence.
Fig. 125  Susini, Antonio. Lion Attacking a Stallion. early 17th century. Robert H. Smith Collection.
Fig. 126  Prieur, Barthélemy. reversed Lion Devouring a Doe. 16th century. Robert H. Smith Collection.
Fig. 127  Tacca, Ferdinando. Rearing Stallion. ca. 1650. Robert H. Smith Collection.
Fig. 128 Rembrandt van Rijn. The Blinding of Sampson. 1636. Städelisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt.
Fig. 129 Bandinelli, Baccio. Laocoön. 16th century copy of Hellenistic original. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
Fig. 130 Rembrandt van Rijn. The Beheading of John the Baptist. 1627. Louvre Museum, Paris.
Fig. 131 Rembrandt van Rijn. Samson and Delilah. ca. 1628. Staatliche Museen, Berlin.
Fig. 132 Lievens, Jan. Samson and Delilah. ca. 1628. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
Fig. 133 Antico. Hercules and Antaeus. ca. 1500-1510. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Fig. 134 Rembrandt van Rijn. Samson Posing a Riddle to the Wedding Guests. ca. 1638. Gemäldegalerie, Dresden.
Fig. 135 Susini, Antonio after Giambologna. Mars. mid 17th century. Robert H. Smith Collection.
Fig. 136 van Tetrode, Willem. Striding Warrior. 1562-65. J. Tomilson Hill, New York.
Fig. 137 Rembrandt van Rijn. Samson Threatening his Father-in-Law. 1635. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.
Fig. 138 Giambologna. The Medici Mercury. 1580. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.
Fig. 139a-c Giambologna. The Bird Catcher. 16th century. Robert H. Smith Collection.
Fig. 140 Rembrandt van Rijn. The Angel Stopping Abraham from Slaying Isaac. 1635. Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.
Fig. 141 van Tetrode, Willem. Theseus Slaying the Centaur Bienor. ca. 1573. Robert H. Smith Collection.

CHAPTER 4

Fig. 142 Rembrandt van Rijn. Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer. 1653. Metropolitan Museum, New York.
Fig. 143 Rembrandt van Rijn. Self-Portrait Leaning on a Stone Sill. (B 21). 1639.
Fig. 144 Rembrandt van Rijn. Self-Portrait. 1640. National Gallery, London.
Fig. 145 Rembrandt van Rijn. Portrait of Cornelis Anso and his Wife Aeltje Gerritsdr.. 1641. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.
Fig. 146 Dou, Gerrit. The Violinist. 1653. Vaduz Castle, Liechtenstein.
Fig. 147 Rembrandt van Rijn. Homer Dictating to a Scribe. 1662-63. Mauritshuis, The Hague.
Fig. 148 Anonymous. Aristotle. 2nd century AD. National Museum, Rome.
Fig. 149 Galle, Theodoor. Bust of Aristotle. Vatican Library, Rome.
CHAPTER 5

Fig. 150 Rembrandt van Rijn. *Daniel and King Cyrus Before the Idol*. 1633. Private Collection, England.
Fig. 151 Rembrandt circle. *Old Man in Prayer*. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Fig. 152 Rembrandt van Rijn. *Young Man with Gorget and Beret*. 1639. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
Fig. 153 Rembrandt van Rijn. *Titus at His Desk*. 1655. Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam.
Fig. 154 Rembrandt van Rijn. *Titus van Rijn in a Monk’s Habit*. 1660. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
INTRODUCTION

[It was Rembrandt’s nature that] through the entire city, on bridges and on corners, At the Nieuwe- and the Noordermarkt [he] most zealously went to seek Cuirasses, helmets, Japanese daggers, furs, And ruffled collars which he found picturesque And often fitted on the Roman bust of a Scipio, Or with which he overloaded the noble limbs of a Cyrus.¹

Andries Pels (1631-1681)

Thesis Statement

This study examines Rembrandt’s use of statues, busts and casts, building on recent literature that has focused on the practical function of the artist’s own large collection.² I argue that Rembrandt’s reliance on sculpture was more prevalent and artful (in the sense of covert) than has previously been noted. As my review of the literature on this topic shows, prior studies regarding his use of the collection are in short supply and tend to be either formal, tracing the few images of statues in Rembrandt’s oeuvre to those listed in his 1656 bankruptcy inventory, or else they refer to his use of classical busts in general terms as an inspiration for his history paintings.

Although I identify statues that have not been cited before, my approach shifts emphasis from formal and iconographic issues to Rembrandt’s studio practices and working methods. I am primarily interested in his manipulation of the border between reality and illusion (what Ovid termed “the art that conceals art”), his effort to “incarnate” his sculptural sources by wrapping them in exotic textiles and giving them the appearance of flesh. My hypothesis builds on recent scholarship that explores the processes he employed in the fabrication of his images, and focuses on the roles that costumed statues and casts played in creating the distinctive look of Rembrandt’s oeuvre. While his use of role-playing - using live actors to achieve life-like narratives - has been posited, I propose that he also used his collection of statues in a theatrical manner, artfully draping them and then animating their hard, white surfaces with his virtuoso manipulation of paint and ink. Because I believe this manner of working was a common practice in his studio, I also investigate the extent to which the less subtle artistry of his students exposes their use of clothed statues and thereby corroborates my hypothesis.

The practice of working directly from statues was certainly not unique to Rembrandt and his studio. Seventeenth-century Dutch treatises, like their Italian exemplars, promoted the practice of studying antique sculpture in order to become familiar with ideal forms. Lodovico Dolce’s Aretino of 1557 encouraged artists to bring

sculpture to life and maintained that creating the illusion of flesh was paramount.⁶
Rembrandt’s idol, Peter Paul Rubens, was also a strong advocate of working from
classical models, and he qualified his advice with the caveat, “before all avoid the effect
of stone.”⁷ I build a case for Rembrandt’s sustained and artful use of statues by placing
him in the seventeenth-century Northern tradition of working naer het leven (from life), a
term I explain more fully in the last section of this introduction. Although artists working
in this illusionistic manner tended to replicate the surface of objects, I argue that
Rembrandt was singular in his ability to transform inanimate stone and plaster into pliant
flesh, creating an astonishing sense of immediacy with figures who appear to breathe,
think, and feel.

Literature Review

A number of scholars have noted the influence of sculpture on Rembrandt’s work
from various periods, as was clearly shown in B.P.J. Broos’s Index to the Formal Sources
of Rembrandt’s Art.⁸ Early studies discussed sculpture Rembrandt would have seen in
public places and referred to his appropriation of poses, expressions or, in some cases, the
spirit portrayed in these three-dimensional art objects. In 1906, F. Schmidt-Degener
identified a series of bronze figures in the Amsterdam Town Hall (now in the
Rijksmuseum) designed by Jan van Eyck (ca.1385-1441) and cast by Jacques de Gérines
(1428-1462) that personify virtues as the source for the devout bearing, the hand

⁶ Mark W. Roskill, Dolce’s Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento (New York: CAA, 1968)
5-61.
⁷ Peter Paul Rubens, “De imitazone statuarum” Roger De Piles, Cours de peinture par principes (Paris:
1708).
⁸ B. P. J. Broos, Index to the Formal Sources of Rembrandt’s Art (Maarssen: Gary Schwartz, 1977).
positions, and in a few cases the headgear used by Rembrandt in some fifteen works, including Joseph’s wife in the painting Jacob Blessing his Grandchildren (Br. 525) (Gemäldegalerie, Cassel) and in the young woman in The Jewish Bride (Br. 416) (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). \(^9\) He even maintained that the figure of Compassion in this series, who is personified as Philippe le Bon holding a staff, was the inspiration for Rembrandt’s Self Portrait (Br. 50) (Frick Collection, New York). In 1944, Otto Benesch also cited the bronzes in the Town Hall as an important formal source and made a case for a wider “Gothic” influence on his work, seeing the piety of medieval art as the origin of the meditative demeanor in many of Rembrandt’s figures. \(^10\) He noted a similarity between a fifteenth-century statue of the Virgin and Rembrandt’s painting A Nun (Br. 397) (Èpinal, Musée Départemental d’Art Ancien et Comtemporain).

Although these studies were important for establishing Rembrandt’s interest in sculpture as a formal source, they did not extend beyond a general identification, nor did they explore how Rembrandt artfully worked from sculpture in the privacy of his studio to invent his images. \(^11\) In this regard, J.L.A.A.M. van Rijckevorsel’s 1932 dissertation, Rembrandt en de Traditie, was seminal. Though he dealt primarily with Rembrandt’s two-dimensional sources, he posed in the opening chapter the question of whether Rembrandt worked from plaster heads, hands and feet. Placing Rembrandt in the context of his contemporaries, van Rijckevorsel quoted a letter from the theorist-painter Gerard De Lairesse (ca.1640-1711) to Tideman (full name not given) in which he said: “Ik teeken de Tronie, handen en voeten correctelijk naar plaaster oft Leeven....”(I draw the

---


\(^11\) Studies of Rembrandt’s interest in engravings of sculpture have also been well documented.
head, hands and feet correctly from to plaster casts, made around living things). Van Rijckevorsel then cited instances where Rembrandt made similar constructions. In his discussion of Rembrandt’s painting *Ganymede* (B 471) (Gemäldegalerie, Dresden), van Rijckevorsel drew attention to awkward sections, which he attributed to Rembrandt’s combining of casts, model books, and his imagination. He also identified Rembrandt’s use of a plaster detail of the Christ Child taken from Michelangelo’s *Bruges Madonna* and a weeping putto cast from the Lievevrouwekerk in Bruges. In 1983 Joshua Bruyn maintained that Northern artists were less likely to observe an actual figure in motion than their Italian counterparts and created their work using drawings for patterns more in the medieval tradition. He connected the appearance of a crying child in Rembrandt’s works to his purchase of “1 houtkintgen” (wooden child) in 1635.

Although Rembrandt’s bust of Homer is most often cited when scholars discuss Rembrandt’s direct use of statues from his collection, the visual analysis tends to be vague or non-existent. In 1915 Schmidt-Degener stressed Rembrandt’s “adoration for” and “identification with” Homer, and in 1941 Emil Kieser said he depicted the bust in his 1653 painting *Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer* (B 478) (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) with “loyal awe and empathy as in no other painting.” Over a dozen other scholars throughout the twentieth century made similar, if less

---

effusive, observations. In 1966 Kenneth Clark said the bust touched Rembrandt’s imagination and was in his mind whenever he painted a blind protagonist.\textsuperscript{15}

In a 1909 study of Rembrandt’s 1662/63 painting, Homer Dictating to a Scribe (B 483) (Mauritshuis, The Hague), J. Kruse deduced from visual evidence that Rembrandt was “inspired by” an actual bust in his collection.\textsuperscript{16} Again, this early observation was followed by others that noted Homer’s likeness to an actual bust but did not discuss how Rembrandt clothed, positioned, lit, and used fluid brushwork and flesh tones to create the illusion that the viewer is looking at an actual person. Fritz Saxl’s 1957 article, “Rembrandt and Classical Antiquity,” was more to the point.\textsuperscript{17} He distinguished two different approaches Rembrandt took toward this bust. In the first instance, which Saxl termed “the archeological Aristotle” Rembrandt painted a faithful reproduction of the actual artifact from his collection in Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer.\textsuperscript{18} In the second, “antiquity brought to life,” he gave the bust of Homer flesh tones and added a dressed torso in Homer Dictating to a Scribe, thereby fabricating a convincing reality. Yet Saxl’s discussion of this direct use of the bust was limited to those two instances, and he did not elaborate on the pictorial means Rembrandt employed to bring Homer to life. Julius Held’s 1969 discussion of Rembrandt’s admiration for Homer had a parenthetical comment about the “various adaptations of the Homer physiognomy in other works.”\textsuperscript{19} However, he did not support his observation with

\textsuperscript{18} His use of an actual bust in this painting has also been discussed by Six in 1897, Bredius in 1906, Schmidt-Degener in 1906, Rijckevorsel in 1932, Einem in 1952, Held in 1966, 1969, and Gerson in 1969.
specific examples, nor discuss any other works in which Rembrandt adapted the faces of statues. In 2006, Schwartz identified the head of Socrates at Christ’s right in The Hundred Guilder Print (B 74), though he did not mention that Rembrandt had a bust of the ancient philosopher in his collection.20

In 1966, Clark maintained that antique reliefs had a profound effect on Rembrandt’s sense of design “and even his imagination.” 21 He also observed that Rembrandt’s busts provided “the likeness of the great actors on the stage of history, whose faces could be compared with their deeds.” Though he did not elaborate on exactly how Rembrandt used them, Clark noted: “All the sculpture in his work is disturbingly animated. His drawings of the heads of Roman emperors have an almost caricatural effect.” 22 Harry Berger’s publication, Fictions of the Pose: Rembrandt Against the Italian Renaissance (2000), challenged Clark’s insistence on Rembrandt’s debt to Italian prototypes by making a distinction between Rembrandt’s appropriation of formal sources and his parody of them.

This shift of emphasis is significant for the more nuanced investigation of Rembrandt’s working methods I intend to present. Berger characterized Rembrandt’s sitters, who are often layered with cumbersome fabrics, as collaborators in a theatrical ruse, and observed that they do not seem to be attending to either pose or painter. He maintained: “They are performers in Rembrandt’s theater of absorption.... They were

21 Clark 80.
22 Clark 77.
told to ignore the painter and think about something besides posing....” My study builds on Berger’s work, but suggest another reason for their introspective gazes: Rembrandt’s use of plaster casts as models.

Similar anomalies are repeatedly cited in the Rembrandt literature and are significant to my hypothesis because they show that Rembrandt’s manipulation of the borderline between reality and illusion is not always totally convincing. The following are a few examples.

1. Svetlana Alpers described his portrayal of hands as “almost prosthesis-like” and noted that they are rarely deployed in expressive gestures.  
2. Walter Liedtke commented on a “peculiar” arm that sticks out too far from a cloak, and noted other “awkwardly foreshortened” arms.  
3. Fritz Saxl observed that a figure had “wooden” arms. Otto Benesch also referred to the “wooden attitudes” of his figures, describing them as “inflexible as posts” with “heavy and clumsy” gestures.  
4. Perry Chapman described a figure as having a “rigid posture” and “expressionless face.”  
5. Benesch characterized a figure as having a “stone face.”  
6. J.M. Nash referred to the “blank faces” of Rembrandt’s late half-length portraits.

Many other scholars have noted Rembrandt’s blank stares, or commented on his obsession with blindness, observations that take on a new significance in light of my

---

26 Saxl 328.  
hypothesis. Other scholars obliquely refer to Rembrandt’s use of cast heads, hands, and feet.

1. Alpers observed that in the painting Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer “The right hand [of Aristotle] takes on the creamy color of the bust it probes.”

2. Seymour Slive remarked that one of Rembrandt’s Oriental tronies had “a more pronounced sculptural character than in most commissioned works.”

I argue that these and similar comments throughout the Rembrandt literature unwittingly betray his use of sculptural sources.

In the exhibition Rembrandt’s Treasures (1999), Roelf van Gelder and Jaap van der Veen took exception to R.W. Scheller’s interpretation (1969) of Rembrandt’s collection as a typical seventeenth-century kunst caemer, amassed primarily to promote the status of the collector. Their well-illustrated discussions juxtaposed details from Rembrandt’s paintings in this exhibit, with props in the 1656 inventory. Yet, although the authors put forth a convincing case for his practical use of the collection, and even showed instances where busts appear in his work, they did not address Rembrandt’s more subtle use of busts. My study investigates this phenomenon by focusing on his studio practices and working methods.

Finally, Marieke de Winkel cast doubt on the reliability of Andries Pels’s poem about Rembrandt, a portion of which I quoted at the head of this introduction. Pels

31 Alpers, Rembrandt’s Enterprise 25.
32 Tronies are fanciful head studies of anonymous models that artists produced for the open market. Because they were not working for a specific patron when they made these inexpensive and relatively small works, painters had more freedom and often fitted their models with exotic turbans or fanciful costumes. I discuss the genre more fully in Chapter 1.
34 ed. Bob van den Boogert, 8.
35 Marieke de Winkel, Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt’s Paintings (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University P, 2006) 192.
described Rembrandt as an artist who searched the streets of Amsterdam for collars and furs that he “… often fitted on the Roman bust of a Scipio, / or with which he overloaded the noble limbs of a Cyrus.” De Winkel questioned Pels’s motives and maintained that because he was a Classicist, he was trying to discredit Rembrandt by characterizing him as a rag picker who disregarded the ‘rules of painting’ and was capable of painting only lowly subjects naer het leven. Because her research found that many of Rembrandt’s costumes were fanciful inventions, based on prints, or fabricated from swaths of fabric, rather than painted from actual costumes, she played down the notion that he worked naer het leven. I argue that he often worked from life, and that the two are not mutually exclusive - working naer het leven from busts and statues necessitated precisely the type of inventive dress de Winkel identified in Rembrandt’s work.

Methodology

Empirical Observation

In 2002 Mariët Westermann summarized the key points of several idiosyncratic Netherlands scholars who dared to stray off the beaten path of traditional art historical methodology.36 She maintained that “the close descriptions sprinkled throughout these studies, so often alive to historical oddities, ought to embolden many a specialist to do some explicitly committed looking of his or her own.” 37 I take up her suggestion while remaining acutely aware of the fact that making empirical comparisons - “this looks like that” - can be a slippery methodology. However, my hypothesis arose out careful

37 Westermann 363.
scrutiny of particular oddities in Rembrandt’s work and gained momentum as I compared those works to the faces listed in the 1656 inventory. Search for confirmation in the often less adept work of the painters in his circle revealed underlying patterns in the types of statues they chose and the techniques they used to incarnate them.

Examination of a number of works by Rembrandt’s predecessors and contemporaries confirmed that the practice of incarnating statues was not limited to Rembrandt and his circle. As I discuss in chapter three, investigations into the three-dimensional sources of Hendrick Goltzius (1559-1617) have benefited from recent technological developments. Stephen H. Goddard and James A. Ganz used a computer to match digital photographs of Renaissance bronzes by the Delft sculptor Willem Danielsz van Tetrode (ca. 1525-1580) with Goltzius’s engravings to determine the sources of some of his figures in action poses. 38 Although I was unable to use this technology for my study, the findings of Goltzius scholars underscored that empirical investigations can shed light on some fundamental, but previously unnoticed, studio practices. This innovative manner of looking also confirmed the need to go beyond the immediately recognizable, one-to-one correspondences when identifying visual sources.

In recent investigations of seventeenth-century art, more traditional scholars have employed several methodologies that I also adopt to test my hypothesis that Rembrandt’s use of sculpture was more prevalent and artful than has previously been noted. The question of precisely how Rembrandt used statues and casts focuses on the studio

---

38 Stephen H. Goddard, James A. Ganz, Goltzius and the Third Dimension (Willamstown: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2001).
39 Goddard and Ganz 48.
practices he employed, as well as on aspects of seventeenth-century art theory pertaining to history painting.  

Technique

Ernst van de Wetering (1997) maintained that there has never been a comprehensive study of the pictorial means artists used to achieve their visual deceptions, although incidental hints are mentioned in treatises, and others can be discerned by careful visual analysis of empirical evidence. In his discussions of illusionism, which I consider more fully below (in the section explaining the term *naer het leven*), van de Wetering juxtaposed details from one of Rembrandt’s portraits with those of the contemporary painter, Nicolaes Eliasz. Pickenoy (1588-1655), to demonstrate that both artists used the stock-in-trade discoveries of their predecessors to make the facial components of portraits look astonishingly alive. This codified knowledge and quick handling of paint would have been especially helpful when confronting the blank, solid eyeballs of statues and plaster casts.

The use of *kenlijkheyt* (literally “perceptibility”) is a procedure Rembrandt used to establish a sense of convincing space by the manipulation of the physicality of the paint. I examine how this eye-catching practice helped Rembrandt to incarnate his sculptural models convincingly. By pulling the viewer’s gaze away from the face of his inanimate

---

39 Melion argued that the theme of seductive artifice in Goltzius’s works like *Pygmalion and the Ivory Statue* resonates within a vernacular poetic tradition, initiated in The Netherlands by Lucas de Heere. Melion, “Viae Dixisses virginis ora...” 153-176.


41 Van de Wetering, Rembrandt the Painter at Work, 179-190.
models and focusing it onto peripheral accessories, he established a highly convincing realism.

Another pictorial device common in Rembrandt’s work is his use of voluminous textured fabric that totally obscures the body of many of his figures. This aspect of the dissertation builds on de Winkel’s research and explores the function of dress in Rembrandt’s paintings that may have been done naer het leven from sculpture. Dress that obscures the body is significant to my hypothesis, especially when the subject of the work is a character whose likeness Rembrandt had in the form of a bodiless bust.

*Connoisseurship*

In 1975 Peter Schatborn suggested that the amazing degree of stereotype in the depiction of crying children in seventeenth-century Dutch art in general and in Rembrandt’s art in particular, could be accounted for by artists referring to a common sculptural model, that of a weeping putto on Hendrick de Keyser’s tomb for William the Silent.42 I examine this and other stereotypical depictions of heightened emotions in the work of Rembrandt and his contemporaries (such as drunkenness, agony and violence) and raise the question as to whether these poses (that would have been difficult for a model to sustain) may also have their origins in statues.

*Art Theory*

Certain aspects of seventeenth-century art theory also support my hypothesis. In his 1604 treatise, *Den Grondt der Edel Vry Schilder-Const*, Karl van Mander (1548-

---

1606) gives instructions on various ways to achieve an effective arrangement of figures: They should be arranged “like the stallholder who cunningly disposes his wares on high shelves down either side and across the bottom.” Rembrandt evidently took this advice to heart, for he often stacked and lined up secondary figures who were witnesses to the main event. These figures, often shown in bust length, frequently bear a resemblance to antique portrait busts listed in his collection. Careful scrutiny of works that employ this compositional device often shows a dependence on portrait busts as models. Drawings of Rembrandt’s studio showing busts lined up on shelves or placed on different levels by the use of pedestals provide a means to explore the logical transition from studio environment to historic scene in works such as The Hundred Guilder Print (B 74), Christ Seated Disputing with the Doctors (B 64 and 65), and Christ before Pilate (B 77) among others.

As I discuss below, seventeenth-century art treatises promoted the judicious and stealthy copying of images. Karl van Mander, Philips Angel (1616-ca. 1683) and Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627-1678) were among those who encouraged artists to take elements from a number of sources and reconfigure them into new works of art. In addition, advise on the proper use of casts and statues encouraged a process of visual deception. Artists were warned to avoid the rigid effect of stone and to make works based on sculpture appear natural and graceful. They were encouraged to transform marmoreal

---

surfaces into pliant flesh by employing fluid brushwork. Van Mander also advocated the draping of antique casts to make their sheer, Southern garments look more like those found in a Northern climate (see Chapter One).

Because of these attitudes, investigating the subtleties of intentionally disguised sources is not an easy or exact process. In Rembrandt’s case, the problem is compounded by his large oeuvre and penchant for what Julia Lloyd Williams termed recurring facial types. Yet, the above methodologies can raise intriguing questions as to the nature of his sources and working methods, and in some cases suggest plausible identification of his sculptural aids.

The Northern Concept of Working Naer Het Leven (From Life)

In her 1983 book The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century Svetlana Alpers challenged the contemporary scholarly discourse on the art of the Netherlands in the early modern era. An influential group of twentieth-century art historians, spearheaded by Jan Emmens and Eddy de Jongh, had been investigating seventeenth-century Dutch paintings in terms of their iconology, the methodology pioneered by Erwin Panofsky in his wider study of Northern Renaissance art.

Iconology seeks to understand paintings within their historical context and in relation to

---

45 de Piles/Rubens 1708.
46 Van Mander, ed. Miedema 244.
49 Erwin Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1953). De Jongh modified Panofsky’s concept of “disguised symbolism” by coining the phrase “apparent realism” to explain the essence of Dutch art. E. de Jongh, “Realisme en schijnrealisme in de Hollandse schilderkunst van de zeventiende eeuw,” Rembrandt en zijn tijd. (Brussels: Paleis voor Schone Kunsten, 1971) 143-94. The iconological approach to works of art was itself a reaction to an earlier methodology championed by Eugène Fromentin that focused on the formal elements of art works.
other cultural phenomenon and specific ideas. In de Jongh’s words: “…the work is conceived in an absolute sense as a reflection of a larger whole.” Based on their studies of contemporary texts, particularly emblem books from the Netherlands as well as other countries, de Jongh and his supporters came to believe that Dutch art was not merely the realistic mirror of everyday life that it appeared to be, but was instead, a multi-layered puzzle of literary and cultural allusions. What had been collectively-understood visual cues to familiar aphorisms in the seventeenth century, needed to be deciphered if twentieth-century viewers were to comprehend how a given work of art had originally functioned.

Alpers maintained that the increasing emphasis on the iconological approach to art works resulted in paintings’ being “read” rather than “viewed,” a curious development given the strong visual appeal of seventeenth-century Dutch art. In a groundbreaking study, she moved the focus away from searching for hidden meaning to looking at Dutch paintings as part of a progressive visual tradition. According to this tradition, artists took an ever-increasing delight in outdoing each other with their painstaking depictions

---


of objects in the phenomenal world. She saw this “art of describing” as quite distinct from the Italian model that emphasized the narrative aspects of art. Alpers traced the roots of this Northern tradition back to the work of fifteenth-century artists, such as Jan van Eyck (active 1422-1441), whose early discoveries of the luminosity of oil paint enabled him capture with amazing verisimilitude the illusion of various textures such as fur, glass, wool, feathers, metal and stone. No traces of brush strokes blemish the illusion of looking into a world filled with objects, each of which has its own distinctive form and surface texture.

A key point in Alpers’ argument, one that is fundamental to my study of Rembrandt’s use of statues and casts, revolves around the Dutch concept of artists working naer het leven (from life). She emphasized:

… unlike their Italian counterparts (and unlike the entire academic tradition that followed), the Dutch did not restrict naer het leven to the notion of drawing after the live model, but used it to denote drawing after anything in the world presented to the eyes.\(^53\)

An entry in Rembrandt’s 1656 bankruptcy inventory is an apt illustration of this mindset. No. 261 records “A book full of drawings of statues done from life” (naer het leven).\(^54\)

Another reference showing that working from statues also constituted working from life is van Mander’s statement about Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem (1562-1638):

\(^{53}\) Alpers 40.

\(^{54}\) Strauss, van der Meulen, et al. 377.
“Cornelis drew profusely and diligently after life, searching out the best, most beautiful, moving and lively antiquities, of which we have a sufficient number in our land….” 55

Rubens’s drawings and his theoretical viewpoints on the use of statues are fundamental to my study and I discuss them more fully in the main body of this dissertation. His Roman sketchbooks serve as prime examples of how a dedicated student of the antique could use statues to full advantage. Working naer het leven, he searched out new and lively poses from Classical sculpture by drawing them from a number of unusual vantage points.56 The resulting variations achieved the same life-like qualities as works by artists who drew from a human model, but had the added advantage of the sources being sanctioned as ideal figures.

In Dutch paintings as well, the practice of working naer het leven (as opposed to composing uyt den geest57 or from sketches, patterns or engraved images of other artists’ works) provided the opportunity to study the nuances of light as it defined forms and illuminated various surface textures. Working naer het leven also enabled painters to

---
55 This English translation is from Walter Melion, Shaping the Netherlandish Canon: Karel van Mander’s Schilder-Boeck (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991) 63. Miedema translated the passage slightly differently and speculated that van Mander was wittily referring to the beautiful people in the Netherlands: “meanwhile Cornelis greatly assisted his ambitious nature through drawing an exceptional amount diligently from the life- to which end he chose from the best and most beautiful living and breathing antique sculptures of which we have plenty in the country….“ Hessel Miedema Karel van Mander: The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painter, from the first edition of the Schilder-boeck (1603-1604). (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1994) 429. Van Thiel’s detailed examination of the original text convincingly demonstrated that van Mander was indeed referring to antique sculpture. Pieter J.J. van Thiel, Cornelis Cornelisz, van Haarlem 1562-1638. (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1999), 68. The inventory of Cornelisz’s estate corroborates this view, since it records a great number of casts and statues. See van Thiel 257, 270-272.
create a more convincing illusion of space within the painting, thereby creating a stronger sense of the presence of the object. When Gerard ter Borch (1617-1681), in his ca. 1660 painting Curiosity (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) juxtaposed the soft nap of a velvet cushion with the spotted fur of the dog who sat upon it, and the sleek sheen of a pleated satin skirt with the marmoreal column behind it, he provided a uniquely Northern type of heightened visual appeal that seduced his viewers and pulled them into a carefully crafted scene.58 The highly mimetic nature of each component within the painting captivates the viewer’s eye and makes the process of viewing the frivolous subject matter an awe-inspiring experience. The narrative seems secondary to the artist’s ability to deceive and delight the eye simultaneously.

The eye itself became more than one of many routine components aspiring young art students copied from exercise books.59 By means of careful observations naer het leven, artists developed stock procedures for making eyes appear more shiny and moist than the delicate skin surrounding them.60 What Lynn Federle Orr termed the “tactile differentiation” of surface textures brought an uncanny verisimilitude to Michael Sweerts’s (1618-1664) idealized portraits of children, such as his ca. 1655 Boy with a Hat (Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford).61 Many Dutch artists, including those in Rembrandt’s circle, took the illusion of sparkling eyes one step further by describing light as it passed through the side of a clear cornea, illuminating the colored iris.

---

59 In the often-reproduced engraving by Jan Baptist Collaert (15666-1628) after Johannes Stradanus (1523-1605) showing the various workstations of a studio, a young boy at the far right practices drawing eyes. A slightly older boy at the far left has graduated to drawing from a plaster cast.
60 See van de Wetering, Rembrandt the Painter at Work, 170-173.
underneath it. Jan Vermeer’s *Girl with the Pearl Earring* (Mauritshuis, The Hague), from the mid 1600’s, a work Federle discussed in relation to Sweerts’ precedent, is a well known example of this phenomenon.

Van de Wetering elucidated Alpers’ assertion that seventeenth-century Dutch art was part of a constantly evolving pictorial tradition.

The news of every discovery, small or large, which could lead to an even more convincing representation of reality would have spread swiftly with the result that this kind of innovation rapidly became part of the repertoire of painterly tricks that every artist had to have at his fingertips.\(^{62}\)

Once learned, these stock-in-trade tricks could be grafted onto objects the artist painted *naer het leven*, including plaster casts. Van de Wetering’s juxtaposition of the Rembrandt and Pickenoy portraits, briefly mentioned above, shows how both painters used the same formulae for capturing the illusion of lively facial features. Among other effects he notes:

\[
\ldots the \text{ appearance of a diffuse shadow cast by the eyeball, overlain by the upper eyelid with its barely discernable lashes, onto the skin beside it; the cast shadow under the nose beginning with a sharp outline and ending blurred; the use of a little red at the nostril on the side of the nose turned to the light, so as to suggest translucency of the nostril; and light paint on the upper lip brushed in the direction of the light.}^{63}\]

The comparison of these two portraits also shows the difference between Pickenoy’s *net* (neat or tight) manner of working and Rembrandt’s freer brushwork. Most northern artists working *naer het leven* tended to work in the *net* manner. This approach could have stunning results, but it also had limitations. As Alpers, and Panofsky before her, pointed out, the process of painstakingly examining and describing

---


\(^{63}\) Van de Wetering, 171
the surface of objects, particularly the human figure and face, tended to give them a stilled or arrested quality. It may at first seem ironic that in this regard working *naer het leven* from busts and statues had several potential advantages over actual faces. Plasters provided a blank surface without the distracting nuances of actual colored skin and would have made it easier for artists to graft various formulae onto their empirical observations. Casts also enabled artists to see integrated patterns of light on three-dimensional forms more clearly, patterns that lent plasticity to the painted image. Rembrandt’s oeuvre testifies to his increasing realization that, more than the Dutch tradition of meticulously copied surfaces, looser and rougher brush strokes (and in the case of etching freer use of the needle) had the potential for making skin appear pliant, facial features more expressive of inner emotions, and the finished image more plastic and monumental. My hypothesis examines how this realization went hand in hand with his incarnation of plaster casts.

The eyes in Rembrandt’s paintings are often less painstakingly described than those by Vermeer, but their lack of definition conveys a sense of thoughtful introspection, one that enables the viewer to identify with the humanity of the subject. The illusion that the viewer is engaging with a thoughtful human being is strengthened by Rembrandt’s carefully orchestrated light and shadow. As this dissertation demonstrates, he had the consummate ability to establish empathy between the viewer and his model, an illusion that was equally convincing whether he had worked from an actual person or a

---


plaster cast. Rembrandt’s penchant for old faces gave his images an added appeal, a sense of time-worn wisdom, but I show that their voluminous beards, disheveled hair and bulky, old dress sometimes had a more down-to-earth function; they conveniently disguised his sculptural sources.

Chapter One begins with a 1651 example of such a face painted *naer het leven* by the mature Rembrandt, from what I believe was a death mask, rather than an actual person. It continues with examples of various *tronies* painted by Rembrandt and his circle that are apparently based on the same bust, one that they draped in different fabrics and adorned with a variety of accessories. Chapters Two deals primarily with Rembrandt’s seminal Lieden period and his interchange with his colleague Jan Lievens. I examine some of their early etchings to determine the extent to which they relied on busts from the Classical canon as models for a number of their depictions of old men. I also examine some of their early genre paintings that are composed of tightly packed, bust-length figures, and then look at some related later works. Chapter Three examines Rembrandt’s use of Renaissance bronzes for paintings that depict multiple figures in action. The last chapter looks at Rembrandt’s *Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer* and his incarnation of the bust in *Homer Dictating to a Scribe*. I examine these later works in the context of *paragone*, the debate about the relative merits of the various arts.
[The garments on Classical sculpture]...look like nothing more than wet linen, and they hang like cords. For imitations sake, such figures ought to be draped in woolen cloth.\textsuperscript{66}

Karl van Mander (1548-1606)

A Death Mask of Prince Maurice: the Dissertation in Microcosm\textsuperscript{67}

Maurice of Nassau, Prince of Orange, and leader of the successful revolt against Spain, died in April 1625, when he was fifty-eight years old. A drawing by Jacques de Gheyn II (1565-1629), Prince Maurice on His Death Bed (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), shows him propped up on pillows and looking old and gaunt (Fig. 1). Unlike Adriaen van de Venne’s (1589-1662) more formal painting of the prince laid out in royal splendor for his funeral procession, the de Gheyn drawing has a palpable immediacy.\textsuperscript{68} The prince’s barely opened eyes and slack mouth, his distinctly sunken cheeks and frail shoulders clearly show his vulnerable condition. Item no. 188 in Rembrandt’s inventory, “A cast of Prince Maurice done after his death,” must have been made very shortly after de Gheyn’s drawing and would have had similar features. Although I have not been able to find any extant death masks of the prince, this drawing serves well as a model for what one would have looked like.

\textsuperscript{66} “... Dan van vat linnen, en hanghen als coorden, om vervolgh, sulcke Beelden wel behoorden, Als ghelakent te wesen bysonder, De slechtheyt heft menich ghegeven wonder.” Van Mander/Miedema 244.
\textsuperscript{67} Listed in Rembrandt’s 1656 inventory: item No. 188 “One cast head of Prince Maurice done after his death.” Strauss, van der Meulen, et al. 367.
\textsuperscript{68} For an overview of images of Prince Maurice and his court see the exhibit catalog Maurits Prins van Oranje ed. Kees Zandvliet (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2000).
When he acquired the cast, Rembrandt may have thought that such a plaster would be useful in his career as a history painter, for he could refer to it for a general likeness if he were commissioned to do any paintings of the prince’s military campaigns. He may also have thought it would be helpful if someone commissioned a portrait of the prince. (He actually owned two casts of the prince, though the second may not have been a death mask. Item No. 287 is listed as merely “a cast of Prince Maurice”).  

Although no work by Rembrandt has ever been associated with this death mask before, one painting in his oeuvre, when juxtaposed with the De Gheyn image, closely matches the prince’s features. If it is based on the death mask, it vividly brings him back to life. The 1651 Portrait of an Old Man (Chatsworth, Devonshire Collection), is my initial example of what I maintain was Rembrandt’s practice of incarnating his plaster casts (Fig. 2). The broader questions I raise in subsequent sections of this dissertation can be addressed in microcosm at the outset by examining this particular work. These issues include the nature of tronies (portrait-like heads or half-length representations of character types, often dramatically lit and draped with exotic fabrics and accessories), Rembrandt’s lack of anatomically viable figures, his novel creation of depth through his manipulation of kenlijkheyt (literally “perceptibility”), and the concept of paragone (the debate over the relative merits of the various art forms).

69 Strauss, van der Meulen, et al. 379. An inventory of sculpture and gems of the widow of the Duke of Buckingham compiled in 1635 lists a “head of the old Prince of Orange” among other busts made of brass, marble, and plaster. It has no descriptor to indicate whether it was a death mask or a cast from life. The staggering number of original and cast statues in her collection makes the document a good source for seeing what type of items were available in Northern collections. Many of the plasters in Rembrandt’s inventory also appear in the Duchess of Buckingham’s inventory. Oxford University, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson A 341, fol 35v-35r. The list is published in Marjon van der Meulen, Rubens Copies after the Antique vol I Text (London: Harvey Miller, 1994) 220-231.
A Reincarnation of the Prince?

The de Gheyn drawing, when juxtaposed with the 1651 Portrait of an Old Man, shows striking parallels: the general shape of the face that looks like an inverted triangle owing to the trimmed moustache and goatee; the sunken cheeks that create a distinct infraorbital triangle; the long nose with a slight bulge below the bridge; the old, thinning eyebrows; and the slightly opened mouth. In addition to the gaunt look caused by weight loss from terminal illnesses, death masks often have slight distortions of the features caused by the weight of the plaster during the making of the mould. In this painting the tightness of the skin over the left cheek bone and the flabby jowl on the right appear to be residual effects of such a procedure. If my supposition is correct, Rembrandt miraculously vivified the prince’s sickly features with warm skin tones, disguising the hard plaster source by means of soft, malleable brush strokes and, most remarkably, by replacing the closed lids with dark, lifelike eyes. Because the pupils are loosely painted and do not meet the viewer’s gaze, they lend a pensive air to the withered face. These transformations create the illusion of a sentient and imposing old man who was actually sitting before Rembrandt as he painted. Working naer het leven (in this case, directly from a plaster death mask under which he fabricated exotic attire) enabled Rembrandt to capture some of the same fragility that de Gheyn had seen when he was actually in the dying man’s presence. This touching vulnerability brings up several intriguing questions that call for a closer comparison of various images of the prince and the Devonshire painting, a work that has traditionally been considered a nameless tronie.70

70 Not all scholars agree that the work is by Rembrandt. Christian Tümpel placed it in the general category of “Rembrandt’s workshop.” Christian Tümpel, Rembrandt all the Paintings in Color (Antwerp: Fonds Mercator, 1993) 240. In answer to my query about authenticity (2007) the Keeper of Collections at
Tronies were immensely popular in the seventeenth-century Netherlands; they were inexpensive and often listed in estate inventories. The genre makes up a substantial percentage of the oeuvre of Rembrandt and his circle.\textsuperscript{71} Though the models appear to be actual humans beings, close scrutiny suggests that Rembrandt and the painters in his circle evidently made a number of them from draped and costumed busts.

Although Rembrandt may have painted Portrait of an Old Man directly from Prince Maurice’s death mask, he most likely did not intend the work to be an actual portrait. Since the painting’s provenance does not go back to the seventeenth century, the circumstances around its creation can only be surmised.\textsuperscript{72} I believe the Devonshire painting is an example of a common practice in Rembrandt’s studio, one that I examine using a variety of examples throughout this dissertation. The scholars mentioned in my introduction maintained that Rembrandt and his students consulted his casts of Greek and Roman portrait busts to achieve accurate likenesses of famous individuals when they were working on history paintings. I propose in addition that he frequently used these

\footnotesize{Chatsworth Devonshire adhered to the unpublished opinion of the Rembrandt Research Project that it is part of the Rembrandt canon.\textsuperscript{71} Jaap van der Veen’s 1997 discussion of tronies focused on Rembrandt’s studio, presenting statistics that show the ubiquity of tronies. “From about 1630 to 1700 a total of 315 references were recorded concerning paintings by or after Rembrandt, at least 95 of which were tronies. Thirty-one paintings ’by’, or ‘after Rembrandt (in Rembrandt’s style), including 15 tronies, are listed for the period 1628-40; 28 works, including 9 tronies, for 1641-50; 67, including 18 tronies, for 1651-60; and 49, including 12 tronies, for 1661-70. The figures for the last three decades of the seventeenth century are 77, 43 and 20, incorporating 23, 12 and 6 tronies respectively. Some of the unspecified conterfeytselfs (portraits) may also have been tronies, while the subjects of 21 paintings are not mentioned. The documents show that many tronies were the work of pupils. Approximately twenty-five per cent of them were identified as copies, virtually all in sources from before 1660.” Jaap van der Veen, “Faces from Life: Tronies and Portraits in Rembrandt’s Painted Oeuvre,” Rembrandt: A Genius and His Impact, ed. Blankert 71. \textsuperscript{72} The painting’s provenance goes back to the collection of Cardinal Mazarin, though it arrived in Paris after his death in 1661. It is described merely as a “Un portrait d’un vieillard de Rembrandt.” See Patrick Michel, Mazarin, prince des collectionneurs, Paris: Éditions de la réunion des Musées nationaux, 1999, pp. 250, 333, 343 n.179 and 330. For its provenance after Mazarin see Michiel Roscam Abbing, Rembrandt toont zij konst: bijdragen over Rembrandt-documenten uit de periode 1648-1756 (Leiden: Primavera Press 1999).}
convenient, three-dimensional sources (including death masks and faces cast from life) in a totally different way: he chose a given plaster primarily for its intriguing facial features. He then fabricated a torso or body beneath it and created a fanciful, highly engaging character type. As I demonstrate subsequently, his tronies sometimes retained allusions to the original character’s attributes (the bust of a thoughtful philosopher became a pensive disciple, or an emperor with stately robes became a sumptuously dressed character type), but more often, Rembrandt and his students chose a plaster chiefly for the interesting structure of its head and the expressive potential of its facial features. A white statue’s capacity for reflecting light enabled painters to work naer het leven to capture a sense of the three-dimensional presence of the model, and work from a “blank slate” that allowed endless possibilities for introducing a repertoire of painterly tricks.

For several reasons, this manner of working appears to be the case in the Devonshire painting. First, unlike traditional portraits of Prince Maurice, in which his full or three-quarter-length figure stands with shoulders at an angle to the viewer like Daniel van den Queborn’s 1589 or Michiel van Mierevelt’s 1613 portraits, Rembrandt painted his old man in half-length and placed his shoulders parallel to the picture plane. A few prints of Maurice as a young man depict him in half-length, though none shows him fully frontal. In the Devonshire painting, Rembrandt made the old man’s clothes quite generalized, although somewhat suggestive of a man of high status. He wears a white three-tiered fur (or perhaps some type of plush, gathered fabric) around

---

73 In the Arnemuiden Statehouse collection (Zandvliet, Fig. 17).
74 In the Kampen Statehouse collection (Zandvliet, Fig. 236).
75 See for example Jan Harmensz Muller’s portrait (circa 1590) in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (Zandvliet Fig. 9) or Conradus Goltzius’s 1590 portrait in the Gemeentemusea, Stedelijk Museum Het Prinsenhof, Delft (Zandvliet Fig. 23).
his neck and a red cape on his shoulders. Gold chains hold up his fanciful brocade or embroidered attire (perhaps loosely based on a cuirass from one of Rembrandt’s other plasters). This exotic attire is similar to that worn by the Druid Chieftain, Claudius Civilis in the 1661-1662 Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis (National Museum, Stockholm) Rembrandt’s rejected painting originally intended for the City Hall in Amsterdam, although instead of the high, cutwork headdress worn by the Druid, the old man’s hat is a common notched beret, an accessory Rembrandt used repeatedly in other works (Fig. 3). Notably, none of the items of clothing in the Devonshire painting is remotely like those found in existing portraits of the prince.\textsuperscript{76} These works typically show him in massive starched and ruffed collars, and large, colorful diagonal scarves. He never wears a cape. When compared to the dress conventions of Maurice’s court, the garments in Rembrandt’s painting take on the appearance of fantastic studio inventions.

Second, portraits made directly from death masks present an obvious problem; they do not show the subjects at their best. A literal representation of the prince, showing him as old and gaunt, would have repelled clients expecting a more vigorous image. However, Rembrandt’s affinity with old, time-worn faces is apparent in many of his works, so that it is not hard to imagine him seeing the potential for an expressive tronie in the death mask of the emaciated Prince Maurice. Adding various layers of fabric and accessories to the plaster would lend immediacy to the finished work, a life-like quality that only working directly from objects (including death-masks!) could impart.

\textsuperscript{76} See Maurits Prins van Oranje exhibit catalog for artifacts and art works that give a sense of the opulence of Maurice’s court.
The final reason for believing that Rembrandt intended the Devonshire painting to be a character type rather than a portrait is the precedent of his colleague Jan Lievens (1607-1674) who appears to have seen the potential in the emaciated death mask for paintings of ascetics. When his 1629 Capuchin Monk (Marquess of Lothian, Monteviot) is juxtaposed with the de Gheyn drawing, there are clear similarities: hollow cheeks, open mouth, long nose with a bump below the bridge, wrinkled brow and a scraggily beard that harks back to Maurice’s goatee (Fig. 4). If Lievens used the death mask, he must have tilted it slightly forward to give the illusion of a pious man in prayer. Further indications that this was the case are the large hands holding the rosary. They seem out of scale to the head of the monk. Their mismatched size brings to mind entries in Rembrandt’s inventory such as No. 316, “A large collection of hands and heads cast from life,” and No. 317, “Seventeen hands and arms, cast from life.” 77

Kenlijkheyt

The Devonshire painting provides a preview of Rembrandt’s reliance on kenlijkheyt (literally “perceptibility”), an innovative procedure that he developed early in his career in collaboration with Lievens.78 The process involves the manipulation of spatial perception by means of thickly built-up paint in contained, eye-catching passages. It went against the traditional Dutch practices that Rembrandt learned from his teacher Pieter Lastman and was the antithesis of the contemporary fijnschilders, who eliminated

77 Strauss, van der Meulen, et al 383.
78 For an explanation of kenlijkheyt, with details from Rembrandt’s The Night Watch (1642) that illustrate the concept particularly well (such as the tasseled lance and brocade dress of Ruytenburgh) see van de Wetering, Rembrandt the Painter at Work 85.
all traces of brushwork from their paintings. In his discussion of *kenlijkheyt*
Rembrandt’s student, Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627-1678), described the theory behind
the innovative procedure he had learned from Rembrandt:

…your piece of paper, however smooth it may appear, nevertheless has a
certain perceptible roughness, into which the eye can stare wheresoever
you choose, which is not possible in the even blue of the heavens….I
therefore maintain that perceptibility [*kenlijkheyt*] alone makes objects
appear close at hand, and conversely that smoothness [*egaelheyt*] makes
them withdraw, and I therefore desire that which is to appear in the
foreground, be painted roughly and briskly, and that that which is to
recede be painted the more neatly and purely the further back it lies.
Neither one colour or another will make your work seem to advance or
recede, but the perceptibility or imperceptibility [*kenlijkheyt of
onkenlijkheyt*] of the parts alone.

Unlike Hoogstraten and van der Wetering who saw it primarily as an innovative
means for establishing space in paintings, I maintain that *kenlijkheyt’s* real power lies in
its capacity to pull the viewer’s eye away from the face and anchor it on peripheral
details, such as shiny jewelry or textured brocade. This redirection of focus creates a
diversion that discourages careful examination of the face while simultaneously
establishing a convincing sense of verisimilitude for the entire image. This type of visual
distraction is common in the work of Rembrandt and his circle and seems to have been
especially helpful when they were trying to incarnate inanimate busts and masks.

---

79 See Astrid Tümpel and Peter Schatborn, Pieter Lastman: leermeester van Rembrandt. (Amsterdam:
Kunsthalle, 2006) and Peter Hecht, *De Hollandse fijnvorders: Van Gerard Dou tot Adriaen van der
Werff* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1989).
80 Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst: anders de zichthaere werelt,*
(Rotterdam, 1678) trans. Ernst van de Wetering “Rembrandt’s Method – technique in the service of
illusion,” in Christopher Brown, Jan Kelch and Pieter van Thiel, *Rembrandt: the Master and his
Workshop/Paintings* (New Haven/London: Yale UP 1991) 32-33. See also Celeste Brusati, *Artifice and

In Rembrandt’s *Portrait of an Old Man* the gold fastenings holding up the cuirase-like attire are painted in high relief, and they contrast with the more generalized and lighter, ermine-like garment behind them. Their sheen (white and ochre pigment set off by dark shadow), as well as the physicality of the paint in a contained area, act as a magnet that pulls the viewer’s eye down from the old man’s face to his chest area. This change of focus helps solidify the impression of an imposing figure.\(^1\)

*Paragone and the Reincarnation of a Death Mask*

If Rembrandt worked from a plaster death mask, successfully creating the illusion that an actual person sat before him as he painted the Devonshire *Portrait of an Old Man*, it must have been immensely satisfying. His artful reincarnation put color back into the prince’s frozen flesh and rekindled his spirit by means of the evocative, dark eyes. Inherent in this type of transformation is the notion of painting’s superiority over the hard, white, three-dimensional art form of sculpture. This discussion of the relative merits of the various arts was known as the *paragone* debate.\(^2\) Though it may seem like a trivial line of reasoning today, artists and their patrons in Rembrandt’s time took the debate quite seriously.\(^3\) They used it as a catalyst for discussions about art, particularly

---

\(^1\) By replicating the sheen of the gold on the fastenings, Rembrandt also adhered to the advice from van Mander who, in his writings regarding *reflexy-const* (the art of depicting reflections), particularly *glans* (polish), advised artists to heighten the illusion of reality by including shiny objects in their paintings. Van Mander 1604 fol 33v stanzas 53-54. For an explanation of reflexy-const and glans see Melion, *Shaping of the Netherlandish Canon* 70-77. I discuss Rembrandt’s use of this practice more fully in subsequent sections of the dissertation.


\(^3\) At the time Rembrandt was working on *Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer* the Amsterdam Guild of Saint Luke focused on *paragone*. See Hugo J. Postma and Marjo Blok, “Duidelijkheid over de Amsterdamse St. Lukasfeesten in 1653 and 1654.” *Oud Holland* 105 (1991): 32-38. I discuss a possible relationship between these to events in Chapter Three.
when trying to elevate the status of the visual arts to equal that of the liberal arts. In the prior century, Leonardo da Vinci had given painting pride of place over poetry and sculpture because poetry merely dealt with words, while painting dealt with facts. He saw sculpture as a manual and therefore a less intellectual art, and unlike painting, sculpture did not deal with the mathematical discipline of linear perspective or the subtleties of aerial perspective. Michelangelo, who was less interested in polarizing the painting and sculpture, said they came from the same faculty, though if difficulty of execution were one of the components used to assess the relative merits of painting and sculpture, the latter would win. As I discuss in Chapter Four, paragone continued to be a topic of conversation among the literati of Amsterdam in Rembrandt’s day and a catalyst for cultural exchange that had significant ramifications for Rembrandt’s artful incarnation of his sculpture collection.

The Rubens Precedent

Any consideration of Rembrandt’s incarnation of sculpture for his tronies must first review the precedent set by Peter Paul Rubens, whose illustrious accomplishments Rembrandt sought to emulate as well as rival. Unlike Rembrandt, the production of exotic tronies did not occupy a central position in Rubens’s studio; yet he made numerous studies and bust length portraits of Roman emperors based on his knowledge

---

of ancient sculpture, coins, and gems. The Dutchman’s oeuvre could not have evolved in the direction it did without the theoretical, iconographic, and artistic innovations of the Flemings.

Rubens’s images of the ancient Roman philosopher Seneca (ca. 4 BC–AD 65) provide a clear example of his thought process and working methods as he attempted to bring sculpture to life.\(^\text{87}\) He and his brother Philip were followers of the Neo-Stoic Justus Lipsius (1547-1606), whose 1584 *De Constantia* made the writings of Seneca popular throughout Europe.\(^\text{88}\) In his 1611-1612 painting, *The Four Philosophers* (Pitti Palace, Florence), Rubens shows Lipsius, one hand on a book the other gesturing, discussing Seneca’s ideas with the Rubens brothers and their colleague Jan van de Wouwere (Fig. 5). The ancient philosopher seems to preside over the conversation since his bust is prominently displayed in a niche above the men’s heads. Although it is clearly a statue (it has blank eyes, monotone color and a is cut off at mid-shoulder), its size, the three-quarter angle in which it is placed, and the manner in which it is lit all correspond to the figure of Lipsius. These parallels connect the two teachers and establish a vitality-by-association, even though Lipsius was painted posthumously.

Seneca’s likeness was based on an antique bust discovered by Fulvio Orsini (1529-1600), the librarian of the Farnese collection in Rome, who supposedly confirmed its identity by means of a labeled medal depicting the philosopher. Although the facial

---

\(^\text{87}\) See Rubens Cantoor: *een verzameling tekeningen ontstaan in Rubens’ atelier* (Antwepen: Rubenshuis 1993) and Van der Meulen, 1994 for Rubens’s drawings after Seneca.

\(^\text{88}\) See Wolfram Prinz, “The Four Philosophers by Rubens and the Pseudo-Seneca in Seventeenth-Century painting.” *The Art Bulletin* 55, (1973): 410-428. Prinz stressed the political realities that led to the rise of Neo-Stoicism in the Netherlands. The southern Netherlands, under Spanish rule, was suffering severe hardship as a result of the war between Spain and the northern Netherlands. “Through Rubens Seneca became a visual reality corresponding to the spiritual reality in literature that had been recreated by Lipsius’s studies.” 418.
type is no longer considered as Seneca’s, Orsini’s publication of it in 1598 immediately established the philosopher’s iconography. Rubens acquired a replica of the bust when he was in Rome and brought it back to Antwerp, a work that became famous in its own right. His drawings such as Head of Seneca (before 1626, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) play up the philosopher’s unkempt hair with wispy strands, the softness of his skin, and fleshy neck (Fig. 6). Even though he retained the rounded bottom edge of the bust, his transformation of the blank eyes into sparkling pupils imparts a deeply human quality to the bust.

In 1619 when he was planning the altarpiece depicting the Miracle of Saint Ignatius Loyola for the Antwerp Jesuits, he made another drawing of his Seneca bust, a foreshortened view from below, and used it for one of the people in the crowd. In the ca. 1618 Heads of Seneca and Galba (Hermitage Museum, Moscow), the bottom edge of the Seneca bust has been completely eliminated (Fig. 7). Along with the undulating play of his furrowed skin, rendered in thick and thin lines, the life-like effect is totally convincing. Jaffé aptly described Ruben’s response to his three-dimensional sources: “The boundary for him between prying into art and into life was paper thin.” He “shatters the constraints of the marble,” a feat that causes viewers to “gasp at the power to recover humanity from within the stone.”

Rubens’s innovations are all the more astounding when compared to drawings of antique busts by his contemporary, Theodor (Dirk) Galle (1571-1633). These heads capture the illusion of three-dimensional form in an accurate, but monotonous line.

---

89 Michael Jaffé, Rubens and Italy (Oxford: Phaidon, 1977) 82.
However, even the best of them, such as his Bust of Aristotle in the Vatican Library that employs chiaroscuro and softens the philosopher’s skin and hair, lacks the dynamic power of the Rubens drawings. Their vitality seems trapped inside the stone.

In his undated painting, Bust of Seneca (Museum Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp), Rubens made Seneca seem even more alive by combining the Stoic’s head with a torso from another sculpture that he believed was the dying Seneca, the 2nd century, Roman copy of a Hellenistic original, known as the Borghese Fisherman (Louvre, Paris) (Figs. 8, 9). Since the late sixteenth-century, the unusual statue had been considered a depiction of the death of Seneca.\(^9\) It shows an old man in arrested action slightly crouching as he reaches out with both hands. Though Rubens’s Bust of Seneca shows only the upper torso, he managed to capture the dynamism, wiry manliness and intensity of the old man while eschewing the surface sheen of the dark stone. The complete figure appears in his 1612-13 painting, The Death of Seneca (Alte Pinakothek, Munich) (Fig. 10). When Rubens used his ingenium to create a new work of art from this synthesis of old images, he responded to Seneca’s famous metaphor about bees that take nectar from a variety of plants and turn it into honey. Miesel described this lack of pedantic devotion to archeological exactitude well:

He almost always transformed his prototypes freely and creatively. Even where the derivation of a motif is strikingly obvious it is so well integrated into the artist’s total scheme, so perfectly conceived in terms of the artist’s own style that it would seem Rubens were composing instinctively and without conscious effort.\(^9\)

---


Even before his Italian sojourn, where he made exhaustive studies of ancient sculpture, Rubens produced images based on busts of the Roman emperors. In his ca. 1600 study of *Emperor Servius Sulpicius Galba* (Private Collection) Rubens investigated character types based on della Porta’s 1586 *De humana physiognomia*, in which the author compared the structures of animal and human faces (Fig. 11). Galba is an example of the bovine type of face, a categorization that accounts for the protuberances above his eyebrows. This type of painting contributed to Rubens’s repertoire of oil sketches that he used later in his career. In this early work Rubens transformed his inanimate source by painting the face with modulated color and soft contours and by placing sparkling eyes in the marmoreal sockets. He alluded to such procedures in his essay *De Imitatione Statuarum*, advocating the “judicious” use of sculpture by distinguishing matter from form.

Rubens also made several series of Roman Emperors for sale. Some are now available only through contemporary copies, but Jaffé published a Nero portrait from a private collection in Paris that he believed Rubens made ca. 1599. Unlike Rembrandt’s paintings of Nero, which I discuss below, it does not appear to be based on the Capitoline bust, although Rubens adhered to the iconography of the notorious emperor: he is middle aged with short curly hair and bangs, a beard on the underside of his jaw and an aquiline nose. Some works in the series are primarily monotone and hover in the realm of a marble bust with touches of red to impart life. Others seem completely incarnated and

---

93 See *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard* Part XXIII vol. III plate 19.
96 Muller, 229-247.
have a piercing realism, such as his 1618 *Bust of Julius Caesar* (Jagdschloss Grunewald Museum, Berlin) commissioned by the Stadholder Frederik Hendrik as part of a series of Roman emperors made by various Northern artists (Fig. 12).

Rubens also contributed significantly to the iconography of Roman philosophers and statesmen through his study of antique coins, gems and sculpture. His familiarity with these media found its ultimate expression in a series of engraved heads of twelve *Uomini Illustri* from antiquity (completed in 1638) (Figs. 13a-c). He carefully oversaw the engraving of his drawings, often making corrections on the proofs. This series not only helped establish a shared iconography, but the remarkable diversity and vitality of the images, the careful rendering of different textures and their sheer beauty made the engravings an inspiration for artists as well as antiquarians. Rubens’s example would have presented Rembrandt with a challenging range of possibilities when he worked from his own collection of Roman busts.

These few examples of the various ways Rubens infused life into his busts of *uomini illustri* confirm that Rembrandt’s incarnation of his sculptural sources was certainly not without a prominent precedent. However, there is a fundamental difference in the intent of the two artists. Rubens’s references to his classical sources were more overt. His elite audience was interested in the likenesses of *uomini illustri* and the exemplary traits their lives represented. Even when he gave these heads new personas, such as when he used the head of Galba for the crying philosopher in the work

---

98 Van der Meulen vol. III 113-152.
99 In his review of Elizabeth Mc Grath, *Rubens: subjects from history*, Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard vol. 13 Part I, 2, vols (London: Harvey Miller, 1997), Jeffrey Muller commended Mc Grath for stressing in her introduction that the purpose of Rubens’s history paintings was not merely to tell what happened, but to present exemplary actions. The first chapter in her book establishes the literary and pictorial roots of this tradition. *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly of the History of Art* 27 1/2 (1999): 95-97
Democritus and Heraclitus (Museo Nacional de Escultura, Valladolid), or appropriated classical heroes for Christian narratives, there was an edifying purpose at the heart of each work. As I demonstrate below, Rembrandt deliberately disguised his sculptural sources, passing off his anonymous tronies as contemporary character types done naer het leven from actual people. They were not intended to be heroes from the past but intriguing characters from Rembrandt’s milieu, subjects that had market appeal for a wide variety of clients. (Tronies generally sold for the low cost of ten or twelve guilders each).\textsuperscript{100} Though some tronies have certain clothing or props that allude to the personas of the busts they were based on, they are morally neutral and were not intended to edify or inspire; indeed, as I show below, their personas are sometimes ironic or humorous.

There is also a fundamental difference in the way the two artists arrived at their images. Rubens was a connoisseur and archeologist who developed iconographies for his Uomini Illustri based on his study of coins, gems, and sculpture. In contrast, as I argue throughout this dissertation, Rembrandt often draped his busts in heavy fabrics and painted them naer het leven. In so doing, he extrapolated the working method Van Mander advocated for dealing with problems posed by the clothing of antique statues (partially quoted at the outset of this chapter): “They are no match for those of our time. They look like nothing more than wet linen, and they hang like cords. For imitation’s sake, such figures ought to be draped in woolen cloth.”\textsuperscript{101} Van Mander’s suggestion to drape statues in substantial cloth in order to impart a more contemporary, Northern look

\textsuperscript{100} Van der Veen, in ed. Boogert, 71.
\textsuperscript{101} Van Mander/Miedema vol. 1 244.
to figures would have applied equally well when artists wanted to give the abbreviated upper-bodies of antique busts a sense of appropriate and convincing form.

Although each artist had a different purpose and manner of working when using three-dimensional sources, the two great Northern Baroque artists have in common a complete mastery of their media, a drive to produce superbly crafted images, and a highly developed *ingenium*.

Unconvincing Student *Tronies*

Complete mastery is not always present in the work of Rembrandt’s students, but their lack of expertise can make the process of incarnating sculpture easier to detect. Christoff Paudiss (ca. 1618 - ca. 1667), who entered Rembrandt’s Amsterdam studio in 1642, unintentionally divulged his inanimate source when he painted his 1661 *Portrait of a Man* (Private Collection Budapest) (Fig. 14). The artificial nature of the image is obvious in the disturbing lack of shoulders and any substance in the chest area. The shirt and cloak appear to have been draped directly on a plaster bust without the aid of padding underneath them. As a result, they hang in a distinctly flaccid manner. Additional clues to the inanimate source of the *tronie* are the manner in which the hat sits on top of the head rather than securely on it and the peculiar, somewhat sleepy eyes.\(^{102}\)

Another work from Rembrandt’s workshop, the anonymous, ca. 1661 *Evangelist Writing* (Boston Museum of Fine Arts), shows a similar lack of shoulders in spite of the bulky cloth draped on one side of the torso (Fig. 15). Like the Paudiss image, there is no

---

\(^{102}\) The *tronies* in Paudiss’s oeuvre often have a disturbing lack of substance and anatomical viability. See for example, his undated *Bildnis eines Arztes* (Gemäldegalerie, Ehemals Danzig) and other examples in Werner Sumowski, *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler IV* (Landau: Pfalz 1983).
substance in the chest area, and the Evangelist’s face seems hard, rather than fleshy.

If these two tronies are cases where ineptness divulges one of Rembrandt’s covert studio practices, in many other works by painters in his circle mastery makes the secure detection of incarnated plasters much more difficult.

A Bust of Nero

In 1565, when the secretary of the Desolate Boedelskamer walked up the narrow stairs to the kunst caemer in Rembrandt’s impressive house on the Breestraat in Amsterdam to continue his inventory, he came upon a room filled with collectibles: books, pieces of armor, minerals, shells, globes, a cabinet of medals, hands and body parts cast from life, and over twenty busts of emperors, philosophers and assorted heads. Some were plaster casts, but others were apparently originals. The secretary’s meticulous record of the contents of the room is a fortuitous boon to art historians, for it confirms that Rembrandt’s casts of ancient statuary were similar to those typically found in seventeenth-century collections in the Low Countries. In a number of cases, by matching their names with existing statues in Italian museums, whose well-known

104 See R. W. Scheller, “Rembrandt en de encyclopedische kunstkamer.” Oud-Holland 84 (1969): 81-147 for the argument that Rembrandt’s collection was a typical gentleman’s collection, amassed to enhance his social status and Rembrandt’s Treasures, ed. Bob van den Boogert (Zwolle: Waanders 1999) for a well illustrated revision of Scheller’s position, showing the more practical use of the pieces in the collection as props for Rembrandt’s works. The inventory has been a valuable resource for the restoration of Rembrandt’s house in Amsterdam. See Fieke Tissink, The Rembrandt House Museum (Amsterdam-Ghent: Ludion, 2003).
collections would have been available for casting in the seventeenth-century, the list makes it possible to determine what these plasters would have looked like.\textsuperscript{105} The first of the antique busts I consider is inventory No. 156, a plaster cast of the Roman emperor Nero. Empirical evidence gleaned from the nine examples discussed below suggests that Rembrandt’s Nero was a cast from the \textit{Bust of Emperor Nero} (Capitoline Museum, Rome) (Fig. 16a-f). When an antique fragment of the notorious emperor’s face was restored in the early seventeenth century, a distinctive, long neck was added, and a base was attached at an oblique angle, causing Nero to look over his left shoulder. Rubens’s drawing of the emperor, engraved by Pontius in 1638 as one the twelve \textit{Uomini Illustri}, was probably not based on the Capitoline bust. By then he had his own bust of Nero that was part of a collection of antique sculpture given to him by Sir Dudley Carlton in 1618, in exchange for some paintings, and later sold to the Duke of Buckingham in 1625.\textsuperscript{106} His earlier collaborative painting with Jan I Brueghel’s 1617 \textit{Allegory of Sight} (Prado Museum, Madrid) shows a bust of Nero lined up on a shelf in the background of the painting that may have been based on a plaster cast of the Capitoline Nero, though it is too small to tell for sure. (Fig. 17)\textsuperscript{107} The seven examples of \textit{tronies} from Rembrandt and his circle which I discuss below all have the distinctive Capitoline traits, suggesting that Rembrandt shared his bust with his students, or that the Capitoline bust was a common prototype. Such a


\textsuperscript{107} Nero is on the middle shelf, second in from the left (to his right are two other recognizable heads of Vitellius and the Laocoön).
prominently displayed bust would have been quite renowned; the Capitoline Museum had been opened to the public since 1471, when Pope Sixtus IV donated a collection of important ancient sculpture to the people of Rome.

The Capitoline bust shows Nero in his prime. Defining features are the curly hair that extends down the back of his neck and forms S-curves in front of his ears, the curled bangs neatly combed down on the forehead in the fashion of the day, and a barely discernible moustache above the corners of the mouth. He has a beard that grows on the underside of his double chin, making his round chin boss (that has a slight cleft in the middle) seem quite prominent. Thin eyebrows terminate at the bridge of the nose with an upward slanting crease that turns into furrows on either side of the glabella. (Rubens’s drawing of the latter makes them quite pronounced). Nero has slightly parted lips with deep undercuts at the corners that give the illusion of teeth and the ends of his mouth curve up a bit. His earlobes have a distinct, button-like roundness. His long neck distinguishes him from other images of Nero.

Unlike the other busts in Rembrandt’s collection, which for the most part portrayed older philosophers, emperors and heroes, Nero’s youthful appearance and lack of copious facial hair would have made him an ideal “blank slate” for artists to work from. Figure 16 is a compilation of photographs of the statue taken from a variety of angles with different types of lighting that demonstrate the remarkable range of images a single statue can provide. Even slight adjustments in the angle and illumination of the bust can cause dramatically different images. When painters created exotic tronies from such a bust, the range of images would have been even greater. Their resourcefulness in the choice of costumes, props, and signature brushwork allowed for highly individual
works of art - images that are astoundingly life-like but amazingly diverse. The addition of color was the ultimate component that imparted the look of flesh and blood to the frozen, white model.

*Incarnations of Nero by Rembrandt*

In his 1639 Portrait of a Man Holding His Hat (Armand Hammer Museum, Los Angeles), Rembrandt created an imposing image of a prosperous middle-aged man (Fig. 18). The unnamed person wears a luxurious, taffeta jacket copiously trimmed with gold braid. A lace-trimmed collar sets off a noble face that is framed in long, soft curls. He holds a black hat in his hands. Though his body is in profile, he looks over his right shoulder, squarely engaging the viewer with his gaze.

Agreeing with Smith (1836), Valentiner (1908), Hofstede de Groot (1916) and Bauch (1966), the Rembrandt Research Project reaffirmed the authenticity of the work after Bredius’s 1935 influential catalog of Rembrandt’s work had rejected it, an opinion shared by Schwartz in 1984 and Tümpe in 1986.108 They compared the shadows in the clothing with those in other Rembrandt portraits, such as the Portrait of Marten Looten also in Los Angeles. They found other details that corresponded to those in the 1639 Portrait of a Young Woman (Maria Trip?) (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) and noted the similarities in the sleeve to that of Titian’s so called Portrait of ‘Ariosto’ (National Gallery, London), on which Rembrandt had based his 1640 Self-Portrait at the Age of Thirty-Four (National Gallery, London).

The veracity of the image makes it hard to fathom that this “portrait” may actually be a studio concoction, painted naer het leven from a costumed bust of the Capitoline Nero. The initial lack of recognition brings to mind Bernini’s statement, quoted in full at the beginning of Chapter Two, that people would not recognize even a close friend if he were somehow able to make himself completely white. Nonetheless, when the sculpture and painting are juxtaposed, the facial features closely correspond. The profile of the nose, the set of the mouth, the cleft in the chin, the shape of the jaw, the round, button-like earlobe and the shallow furrows of the glabella are nearly identical. When images of the bust and the painting are superimposed, the features align (Fig. 19).

Rembrandt’s enhancement of his Nero bust with such an impressive jacket brings to mind the comments of Crispijn van de Passe (ca. 1597-1670) in his discussion of the proper use of manikins. The engraver and writer maintained that they should not be used for proportion studies, but rather as surrogates for the live model. Clothes could be draped on them, not only to make it easier to retain the exact folds of the garments that Northern painters so meticulously rendered, but also to avoid long and costly poses by human models. He commented on the function of clothes in paintings. They were “usually employed for the purpose of the greatest ostentation, at the same time offering considerable adornment when worn by each person according to his rank, also providing a considerable amount of decorum in our art, both in the historia and in portraits.”

The aspects that make the “portrait” so life-like are the tactility of the young man’s curls, the luminosity of his eyes and the implied warmth of his skin. Rembrandt

---

109 “…meest tot de aldergrootste pronckerye ghebruycckt, ende zy geven oock een groote versieringe, alsmen die naer behooren yeder naer zijnen is dragende, en gaven oock eenen grooten welstant in onse konst soo wel in Historien, als in Conferlejtsels…” Crispijn van de Passe, Licht de teken en schilderkonst (The radiance of drawing and painting) (Amsterdam, 1643) ed. J. Bolten (Davaco: Soest, 1973).
apparently incarnated his plaster model with the same painterly tricks he routinely used to create life-like portraits from human sitters. The way Rembrandt painted the engaging eyes in the “portrait” of the young man follows the formula van der Wetering noticed when he compared Rembrandt’s Portrait of Haesje van Cleyburgh with Nicolaes Eliasz Pickconey’s Portrait of an Unknown Woman (see introduction). The same formulae Rembrandt and Pickconey used and grafted onto the faces of human sitters would have been even more helpful during the process of incarnating a statue with blank eyeballs.

Empirical evidence suggests that another common formula used by Rembrandt and his students to achieve an engaging veracity is visible in the eyes of Rembrandt’s Portrait of a Man Holding His Hat. The pigmentation just below the pupil is a lighter color than the rest of the iris. This crescent-shaped section creates the illusion of light passing through the lens of the eye and is set off by a bright highlight on the opposite side of the pupil that makes the eye appear moist. A sign of consummate skill is the way in which Rembrandt framed the formulaic eyes. In the left eye he apparently widened Nero’s lid slightly and with malleable oil paint transformed the inflexible plaster of the eye-cover-fold into loose skin. Its tiny bags spill over the eyelid, creating an amazingly convincing passage.

If Rembrandt did use the Nero bust, he converted Nero’s regular, scalloped bangs into more random, soft curls. His deft handling of the oil medium enables the viewer to see the forehead through the corkscrew wisps of hair. He added highlights on several strands to make the tresses seem shiny. He retained the S-shaped curls near Nero’s temples and over his ears but made them fuller. Likewise, the hair cascading down the neck of the Nero bust has its counterpart but is fluffed it up considerably in the painting.
Rembrandt appears to have covered up the distinctive beard under Nero’s chin with an impressive lace-trimmed collar though he alluded to facial hair by giving a cooler tonality to the underside of the chin. A final trick Rembrandt employed to establish the illusion that he worked from an actual person as he painted *Portrait of a Man Holding His Hat*, was the delicate handling of the moustache and eyebrows. In the Capitoline original Nero’s fine facial hair is suggested by means of low relief tooling on the marble’s surface, details that do not always show up in photographs of the bust. Rembrandt evidently followed the Classical sculptor’s attempt to suggest fine facial hair by painting it with a corresponding economy of means.

In his 1959 discussion of an acquisition by the Washington National Gallery of Art, another unknown man by Rembrandt (Bauch 379), Kurt Bauch stated that *tronies* done as studies for history paintings or character types can be distinguished from commissioned portraits, because in the latter case the social status of the sitter must be clearly represented. If *Portrait of a Man Holding His Hat* was indeed painted *naer het leven* from a bust of Nero, a third type of head painting emerges from Rembrandt’s oeuvre - the fictive portrait. Such a work may have served the function of showing off Rembrandt’s abilities as a portrait painter to prospective buyers. The uncanny realism of the eyes, hair and skin, in *Portrait of a Man Holding His Hat* and the convincing tactile qualities of the costume would have served that purpose brilliantly. On the other hand, like *tronies*, feigned portraits could have been readymade works for the market. The buyer could elevate his social standing by association, perhaps passing off the painting as a prominent relative or claiming it as a portrait bought at a prestigious estate sale.
Although Rembrandt appears to have rendered the cast of the Capitoline bust quite literally, he was so skilled at transforming it into a lively image, that his deception is thoroughly convincing. The following sections show that he effectively taught his students how to incarnate plasters, for at least a nine examples by painters in his circle seem to be based on the same Nero bust. The origin of their *tronies* has also gone unnoticed even though the less-adept student attempts are not always as breathtaking as their master’s. Even Rembrandt’s colleague, Jan Lievens, seems to have worked from the Nero bust on several occasions. If this is the case, the Capitoline Nero emerges as a basic model of *tronies* that depict men in the prime of life.

*Incarnations of Nero by Painters in Rembrandt’s Circle*

It is quite possible that Rembrandt acquired this plaster during his Leiden period nearly a quarter century before the secretary of the Desolate Boedelskamer recorded it in his inventory. Empirical evidence, gained from carefully analyzing the work of painters in his circle, suggests that quite a few of them worked from the Nero bust beginning around 1630. When one compares these works with Rembrandt’s *Portrait of a Man Holding His Hat*, the initial response is that they look nothing alike. Yet, if my analyses are correct, the remarkably disparate images these painters created from the “blank slate” of the colorless and mostly beardless Nero plaster testify to the rich potential afforded by working from costumed casts. Far from the tedium of copying an antique cast in order to learn about ideal form, adorning the Nero bust with clever trappings, positioning it in a variety of ways and lighting it from different perspectives gave painters free range for their powers of invention. Their individual painting styles added to the illusion that the
works were done from a variety of live models. The artful manner with which the
painters in Rembrandt’s circle appear to have disguised their inanimate models makes it
difficult to pin down their sources securely in all cases, but the recurrence of certain
features in a number of works raises the distinct possibility that they did indeed work
from the shared casts.

Isaac Jouderville?

The 1631 Portrait of a Young Man Wearing a Turban (Royal Collection, Windsor
Castle) is not secure in the Rembrandt canon (Fig. 20). On stylistic grounds, the
Rembrandt Research Project conjectured that it might be by Isaac Jouderville, one of
Rembrandt’s early students. If this is the case, it offers tantalizing evidence for verifying
the premise that working from costumed casts was a studio practice Rembrandt began
early on in his career.110 Like Rembrandt’s Portrait of a Man Holding His Hat, the
Portrait of a Young Man with Turban is positioned and lit in a manner similar to the
official Capitoline Museum photograph of Nero (though turned slightly more to the left),
and the facial features correspond. Yet, as lifelike as this tronie is, it lacks the vitality of
his master’s painting. The eyes appear somewhat sleepy in comparison. Although the
iris has a similar lighter pigmentation near the base of the pupil, there is no bright
highlight above the pupil to make the eye seem lively. The skin lacks the suppleness and
warmth of the Rembrandt’s tronies, an omission that brings to mind a comment Hubert

110 Windsor Castle still lists the work as a Rembrandt but states on their website “This painting was
probably painted in Leiden, shortly before Rembrandt moved to Amsterdam, as it bears the artist’s Leiden
monogram RHL (Rembrandt Harmenszoon Leidenensis). However, recently some scholars have
reattributed the work to Isaac Jouderville, who was a pupil of Rembrandt at the time.”
www.royalcollection.org.uk/egallery.
von Sonnenburg made in his broader discussion of the difference between the works by Rembrandt and his followers: “… one often encounters paler complexions in inauthentic pictures.” 111 If my hypothesis extends to the working methods of Rembrandt’s followers, this reoccurring phenomenon could stem from the inability of less accomplished painters to divorce themselves completely from the white casts from which they were working naer het leven.

As with the taffeta and linen attire in the previous example, the convincing realism in Portrait of a Young Man with Turban comes in large measure from the intertwining twists of brocade fabric in the headpiece and neck-scarf and in the sparkle of accessories like the gold chain that stands out in contrast to the dark cloak. Arnold Houbraken (1660-1719), one of Rembrandt’s biographers, recounts how Rembrandt could easily spend a day arranging a turban to his satisfaction. Although this may be somewhat of an exaggeration, spending long periods of time wrapping fabric on a live model would have been costly, not to mention annoying for the model. If Rembrandt used inanimate busts, the laborious process would have made more sense.

In Portrait of a Young Man with Turban, the use of kenlijkheyt occurs throughout the drapery and accessories and pulls the viewer’s eye away from the smoother area of the young man’s face. In addition to creating a realistic, though exotic image, the eye-catching turban (complete with lace tassel) covers the marmoreal bangs of the Nero model.

111 Hubert von Sonnenburg, Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Aspects of Connoisseurship. Vol. I Paintings:Problems and Issues, (New York: Harry Abrams, 1995) 118. Windsor Castle maintains “Although there is a pallor in the flesh tones and a lack of strong modeling in this portrait, there is no reason to classify it as a work of a pupil, rather than the master himself. The monogram and date appear to be genuine, although it could be argued that these were added by Rembrandt to give a studio replica authenticity.” www.royalcollection.org.uk/egallery.
The Capitoline Nero has none of these trappings, and therefore at first glance it looks nothing like the Portrait of a Young Man with Turban. Yet, when the individual features of *tronie* are compared with those of the Capitoline bust, the similarities are telling (Fig. 16a). The beard showing primarily on the bottom of the jaw and the negligible moustache are similar, although oil paint enabled Jouderville to create the first indications of an adolescent beard. The slight eyebrows and rounded chin with a hint of a cleft correspond and the nose is a similar size and shape. The manner in which the light falls on the lower lip and right side of the philtrum in both the photograph and the painting is a final detail that shows the common structure of the mouth area.

A second *tronie* painted the following year, Portrait of a Man (Cleveland Museum of Art) by Rembrandt or perhaps by Jouderville, is another case in point (Figs. 21, 16a). The more frontal “portrait” has a similar neck-scarf and chain. The manner in which the fabric is draped around the neck hints at the long jugular vein beneath. Although the turban has disappeared, the curly bangs extend across the forehead and, like those on the Nero bust, change direction at the same point above the left eye. The facial features correspond to the bust, though as in the previous examples the beard on the lower chin is only alluded to by shadows.

The artist has honed his ability to make eyes look lively by balancing the light pigmentation of the iris with the formulaic highlight on the opposite side of the pupil. As van Mander advocated, he created a touch of *glans* (polish or sheen) by adding of an

---

112 There are some problems with authenticating this work. On stylistic grounds, the Rembrandt Research Project considered it a work by Rembrandt from the early Leiden Period, but the 1632 date on the painting appears to be in Rembrandt’s hand. He may have added it later. The Cleveland Museum of Art’s website states: “Rembrandt’s work has been much debated recently. This portrait has been attributed to Isaak Jouderville, a Rembrandt pupil around 1630, but it seems much closer to Rembrandt himself.”. www.clevelandart.org.
earing to the man’s button-like earlobe. However, with all the improvements over the previous *tronie*, the man’s mouth, in spite of the highlight on the lip, looks somewhat stiff, perhaps a residual effect from its source in a hard plaster.

*Jacob Adriaensz. Backer*

The Dutch painter and biographer Arnold Houbraken (1660-1719) mistakenly identified Jacob Adriaensz. Backer (1606-1651) as one of Rembrandt’s students, and the misunderstanding has been perpetuated in the Rembrandt literature. Although Backer and his friend, Govaert Flinck, studied together in Leeuwarden with Lambert Jacobsz., when they moved to Amsterdam in 1633, only Flinck studied with Rembrandt. However, as a painter on what could be called the fringes of the Rembrandt circle, several of Backer’s *tronies* are worth examining for he also seems to have dressed and accessorized casts of Roman emperors. His undated *Portrait of a Gentleman* (Collection T. B. Hook) has the distinctive features of Emperor Trajan (such as the 108-117 AD bust of *Trajan*, British Museum, London), particularly the unusually long nose and short forehead covered by straight bangs (Figs. 22, 23). His almost completely horizontal mouth, the cleft in his chin, and turn of the head are also similar. The title of the painting is misleading, for the exotic attire puts this work into the *tronie*, rather than portrait, genre. The formulaic eyes impart a lively realism, but their shape parallels that of the Trajan

---

113 For an explanation of the various types of reflections see Melion 71-77.
bust quite closely, although Backer apparently made adjustments to the brow over the right eye.

Another Backer *tronie*, his 1635 *The Sense of Hearing* (Magyar Szépművészeti Museum, Budapest) shares features with the Capitoline Nero. The first impression is that it looks nothing like the static *tronies* by Jouderville (Figs. 24, 16b). The young man faces the opposite direction, and the tilted position in which Backer apparently placed the model accentuates the diagonals of the facial features and the curvature of the long neck. If he used a Nero bust for this image, he took liberty with the long hair cascading down the back of Nero’s neck by lengthening and adding volume to the curls and accentuating Nero’s parted lips, delineating the teeth that are merely suggested on the bust, to make the young man look as if he were singing. The basic components of the Capitoline Nero are all present in Backer’s painting however, especially the double chin with distinctive beard. The inclusion of a fiddle as the instrument to represent the sense of hearing is probably no coincidence, but rather a surreptitious reference to the source of the image - Emperor Nero who fiddled while Rome burned. If this is the case, that detail would no doubt have amused Backer’s colleagues.

*Jacques des Rousseaux*

In his biography of Rembrandt, Baldinucci mentioned the master’s generosity in lending props to his fellow artists.115 The 1630 *Portrait of a Young Man in a Gorget* (Musée des Beaux-Artes, Tourcoing) by Rembrandt’s student, Jacques des Rousseaux

115 F. Baldinucci, Cominciamento e progresso dell’arte dell’intagliare in rame,collevite di molti de’ più eccellenti maestri della stessa professione, (Florence, 1686), 80.
(1600-1638), appears to be a case when yet another student used the Nero bust from Rembrandt’s collection (Figs. 25, 16c). Like my other examples, this tronie has an individuality that belies its origin in what may have been a shared prop in Rembrandt’s circle, yet on close examination it appears to be a careful rendering of the Nero bust’s features, in this case turned to the right. The tightly controlled brushwork makes the young man’s skin seem hard, although des Rousseaux used a looser brush when he painted the hair a dark color. When juxtaposed to a similar view of the Capitoline Nero, a particularly telling detail is the S-shaped lock of hair by Nero’s temple, a feature also clearly delineated in Rubens’s drawing of Nero that he made for his Uomini Illustri series. Des Rousseaux made the curl seem like real hair by tapering it and making the end seem less dense. The straight line of the bangs is another telling feature, though as in the previous examples, des Rousseaux softened them. Other components - the beard under the chin (painted dark brown in contrast to the pale skin and presented as more kempt than the beard on the bust), the hair growing down the neck and the slight moustache - all correspond to the Capitoline Nero. In addition, the slightly opened mouth and the long arc of the neck muscle both match components of the plaster source.

If this tronie was done from a plaster cast, des Rousseaux did not heed Rubens’s warning to avoid the look of stone in the finished work. Des Rousseaux’s copying of Nero’s features sticks so closely to the look of the plaster model that the result is a stiff looking tronie; the skin tones attempt to bring the face to life, but the pale highlights make the flesh look burnished rather than pliant, a further indication that his source was probably a white plaster.
The des Rousseaux *tronie* demonstrates the early use of one of Rembrandt’s favorite accessories, a metal gorget with raised rivets and upturned rim. It lends a pseudo-military aura to the *tronie* that was evidently quite popular in Rembrandt’s day, but it also serves an aesthetic function.\footnote{For an examination of gorgets and military attire in seventeenth-century Dutch art see de Winkel, 139-141.} In his discussion of *reflexy-const* (the art of depicting reflections), van Mander advocated the inclusion of some shiny objects as a means of lending vivacity to a work of art.\footnote{Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-Boeck*. For a commentary and English translation of the main points in the book see Walter S. Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon: Karel van Mander’s Schilder-Boeck* (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1991).} The effective use of well-chosen accessories peripheral to the face, using them as objects to reflect light in ways that anchor the viewer’s eye, was a standard practice in Rembrandt’s studio, as I noted above.\footnote{For a well illustrated discussion of *kenlijkheyt* see van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work* 182-185.}

*Ferdinand Bol*

Michael Sweerts (1618-1664) was not one of Rembrandt’s students, but several of his works indicate that he had access to numerous plaster reproductions of the canonical works from antiquity, several of which were the same heads recorded in Rembrandt’s 1656 inventory. His paintings of studios show heaps of plaster casts piled on the floor, on tables and, in his 1652 painting, *An Artist’s Studio* (Institute of Art, Detroit), gathered up irreverently in the apron of a shop assistant (Fig. 26). That he dressed them and passed them off as *tronies* done from human models, has not been sufficiently
investigated. In their discussion of Sweerts’s ca. 1655-60 Man Holding a Jug (Fig. 27) (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) Jansen and Sutton noted:

Sweert’s drinker is much more decorous than many of his predecessors in this low-life tradition, but the fact that he is about to spill his drink and clutches the jug so amorously implies his tipsiness while reminding us of his iconographic lineage. He is also more highly individualized than most low-life drinkers in such genre scenes: Sweerts shows him staring at something to the right and beyond the pictorial space, which gives the image a psychological dimension exceptional for the tradition.¹¹⁹

These observations are significant, for when the man’s boorish face, with its stubbly beard and a nose that curves distinctly to one side, are juxtaposed with the third-century AD bust of Philip the Arabian (Vatican Museum, Rome) the similarities are significant and a plausible reason for his lack of raucous movement emerges – Sweerts’s use of an inert bust (Fig. 28). Philip’s incised pupils that stare off to his right, may well have been the inspiration for the atypical expression of Sweerts’s intoxicated man, who looks off in the opposite direction. The props, particularly the spilling glass and the tattered jacket topped by a wrinkled white collar, make the tronie seem remarkably real, as do the modulated skin tones.

Ferdinand Bol (1616-1680), who entered Rembrandt’s studio in 1633 also painted a drunk, The Toper (London, Wallace Collection), which appears to have been painted naer het leven, but from a more sumptuously draped bust (Fig. 29). Like Sweerts’s Man Holding a Jug, Bol’s 1650 painting has an intensity that is atypical in the raucous, or at least merry, Dutch genre of a person raising a glass in a toast. Frans Hals’s 1623 So Called Yonker Ramp and His Sweetheart (The Prodigal Son?) (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), Gerrit van Honhorst’s 1623 Merry Drinker (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam),

Jan Steen’s ca. 1663 ‘The young ones chirp as the old ones sing’ (Mauritshuis, The Hague), or even Rembrandt’s ca. 1635 Self Portrait with Saskia on His Lap (The Prodigal Son) (Dresden, Gemäldegalerie), all show the protagonists in high spirits.

The toper’s features suggest that Bol had access to a Nero bust, for he has the same distinct, regularly scalloped bangs and furrowed brow that are visible in a frontal view of the bust. Bol’s lighting arrangement accentuated the vertical creases at the root of the toper’s nose. The way in which the right eye cover fold forms a bag over the eyelid corresponds to the Capitoline Nero, and the nose and mouth are similar. The eyes follow the same formula Rembrandt used in his Portrait of a Man Holding His Hat: the light crescent of the iris and highlight that flanks it on either side.

Like the other tronies discussed above, Bol gave his toper a scruffy, unshaven look, and evidently departed a bit from the Nero bust; he downplayed the double chin and lengthened the hair. The higher shoulder on the left corresponds to the position of the shoulders on the bust. Bol’s marvelous use of sumptuous costuming, tactile velvets and gathered white linen, establish a strong scene of verisimilitude. The fob hanging around his neck and the metallic threads on the edging of his jacket follow van Mander’s advice to include details that catch the light in order to create an effective illusion. The glass of wine the toper offers to the viewer demonstrates another process van Mander advocated: weerglans, the way light is colored by the surface it strikes. As an example he used a glass of red wine that colors white linen when light passes through. The toper’s wine is light yellow and makes the portion of the red cape in back of it less intense. His engaging stare as he offers the glass to the viewer completes the deception, effectively banishing any sense of his having used a plaster model.
Jan Lievens

Under the hand of an emerging master like Jan Lievens, tronies made in the 1630’s posses an uncanny realism. The combination of sfumato and chiaroscuro, amazingly well developed procedures in such a young painter, give his nameless heads a compelling, enigmatic quality. He evidently used these techniques when he was working from plaster as well as live models, for the features of the Nero bust appear in several of his early works. Empirical evidence suggests that he turned the marmoreal into flesh by his virtuoso manipulation of shadows that convey emotion and of light that establishes verisimilitude, all with an economy of means lacking in the previous examples.

An astonishing sense of mental presence is conveyed in Lievens’s 1627 Young Man Wearing a Gorget (Gemäldegalerie, Dresden), yet the youthful appearance of the sitter (curly hair, scant beard on a double chin, slight moustache and rounded chin) all point to his use of a standard Nero bust, in this case turned in full profile (Fig. 30). Lievens’s fluid handling of the oil medium enabled him to make an astonishingly convincing image. If he did use the Nero bust, he successfully made the sculpted, curly hair seem frizzy and the hard beard like adolescent fuzz, a triumph for the mimetic abilities of the noble art of painting over its rival, sculpture.

Falling from the left of the image, the light accentuates the area around the earlobe and neck and then rakes across the left side of the face, picking up the round chin, straight nose, and a section of the forehead. Lievens retains the straight line of Nero’s bangs across the forehead but puts them in shadow and makes them look natural and soft.

The use of a gorget by such an accomplished painter as Lievens may have inspired des Rousseaux in his choice of accessories; yet Lievens with masterful restraint
highlighted the metal only in carefully selected areas: the upturned rim, the three rivets and the bottom edge. The lack of flamboyant accessories resulted in an image with monumentality and totally convincing realism.

Lievens may have used the Nero bust again in 1629. His Young Man In a Yellow-brown Cloak (Residenzgalerie, Salzburg) is another tronie with an uncanny presence, which, nonetheless, has the prototypical features of the Capitoline Nero (Fig. 31). The accessories are even more restrained than in Young Man Wearing a Gorget. The impasto handling of a simple, white collar is an early example of kenlijkheyt. The eye-catching wrinkles on the collar serve the same purpose as the rivets on the gorget - singular details painted naer het leven to establish a sense of verisimilitude.

Lievens’s later works did not always achieve the monumentality and compelling immediacy of these two early tronies. This change was probably a result of his move to Antwerp and his coming under the spell of Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641). There Lievens eschewed the kind of natural and commonplace forms he had pursued while working along side Rembrandt, for a more refined art.120 A case in point is his ca. 1640 Young Man with a Red Beret (Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena) (Fig. 32). This head may also be based on a Nero bust, since it has the familiar characteristics: the cleft in the chin, the beard under the jaw line, the slight moustache and beard, and curly hair, in this case made to look long and frizzy. The prominent neck muscle is a striking feature that also corresponds to the bust, but unlike the earlier tronies, the head is set off by lavish brocade and lace, and the slanting shoulders of the model make the image look elegantly

---

attenuated. While the beaded, velvet hat and plume enchant the eye, the increased
distance between the viewer and the tronie, the tightness of the Lievens’s brush, and the
lack of mysterious shadows negate the emotional depth of the two earlier works. Even
though Young Man with a Red Beret has some of the same subtleties as Lievens’s former
tronies - such as the adolescent fuzz and softly rendered hair - the painting’s source in a
studio plaster is easier to envision. The face seems hard, and although the eye has a
highlight that makes it seem moist, it looks lifeless.

Conclusion

The death mask of Prince Maurice serves as an initial example of how Rembrandt
(re)incarnated one of the casts listed in his inventory, using fabric and accessories to
create the illusion that he worked from an actual person. In discussing the Portrait of an
Old Man, I briefly introduce key concepts that appear throughout the dissertation, such as
the nature of tronies, the concept of kenlijkheyt as a technique to establish verisimilitude,
and the notion of paragone as a cultural context for some of Rembrandt’s creations.
Rembrandt’s working methods would not have developed without the example of
Rubens. During his long sojourn in Italy, the Fleming was prodigious in his study of
sculpture. Jaffé’s characterization of him shattering the constraints of the marble and
recovering humanity from within the stone presages Rembrandt’s working methods.
However, as van Mander advocated in the citation at the beginning of the chapter,
Northern artists had to adjust classical sources to fit their needs. The nine examples of
tronies that I maintain were painted naer het leven from a draped bust of the Capitoline
Nero, show the richly diverse images this working method provided for painters in the Rembrandt circle.
If a man whitened his hair, beard, eyebrows, and—were it possible—his eyeballs and lips, and presented himself in this state to those very persons that see him every day, he would hardly be recognized by them…

Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680)

Examining the work from Rembrandt’s seminal Leiden period makes it clear that the years between 1624 and 1632 were a time of experimentation and rapid development. Scholarly opinion differs on whether Rembrandt shared a studio with his friend Jan Lievens: yet the way in which the two prodigies exchanged ideas, experimented with technical innovations, and used each other as models has been the topic of fruitful research. As my literature review demonstrated, missing from the discussions of their early Leiden period is any consideration of the use of sculpture by the two painters or their students, a curious omission, since working from three-dimensional sources was standard practice for aspiring artists; after copying two-dimensional sources, such as engravings, students went on to master three-dimensional form by studying the

---

123 Particularly helpful in this regard is the chronological juxtaposition of their early works in von Straten, 2005, also see van de Wettering *Mystery of the Young Rembrandt* 49.
nuances of light and shadow as they fell on sculpture.  

This was a compulsory exercise before they moved on to working from live models. Items No. 251 in the 1656 inventory “A packet of drawings from the antique by Rembrandt,” No. 261 “One book full of drawings of statues by Rembrandt done naer het leven,” and No. 262 “One ditto as above” indicate that Rembrandt was no exception to this sequence. He most likely made these drawings when he studied with Jacob van Swanenburgh (1571-1638) in Leiden or Pieter Lastman (1583-1633) in Amsterdam before he set up his own studio in Leiden. Some of these drawings may have also been studies done from engravings; No. 226 records “A book filled with copper plates engravings of statues.” Since I contend that Rembrandt’s artful use of draped casts was a life-long practice, it is instructive to look for early evidence of this working method in the Leiden oeuvre of Rembrandt and Lievens.

“Head of a Moor Cast from Life”

Their early experiments with etchings present some compelling examples. Rembrandt’s 1630 head study, titled The White Negress (B 357), is a curious bust-length study of a young woman (Fig. 33). The etching is not an idealized beauty but, like many of Rembrandt’s self-portraits, is an unapologetic rendering of bulbous features; the woman has a double chin, protruding jaw, and fleshy lips. Yet, there is something odd.

---

126 Strauss, van der Meulen et al, 371.
127 Strauss, van der Meulen et al, 365.
about her eyes; her cursorily drawn pupils look in two different directions, one up and one straight forward. This lack of focus makes her look as if she were blind. Rembrandt often depicted blind people, and several authors have testified to his near obsession with the idea of the loss of sight.\textsuperscript{128} However, close examination of the image suggests another explanation for this blank stare: his use of a plaster head in which the eyes were opaque. This supposition is supported by several other anomalies in the work. First, the placement of the horizontal mass in the foreground of the picture plane leaves no space for an arm, nor is there any indication of a rounded limb under the large flaccid sleeve; the woman appears to be draped rather than clothed. Second, the general slump of the costume and the single, bare breast poking out of it in a non-conforming way are not only odd, but also anatomically unconvincing. A 1641 etching, \textit{Man Drawing from a Cast} (B 130), shows what may well be the origin of these latter peculiarities (Fig. 34). Rembrandt’s plasters that did not have an attached base, such as those cast from life or partial casting of classical statues, needed to be secured by means of a flexible support. He evidently had a rounded pillow, or more likely a sandbag, that he used for this purpose. In \textit{Man Drawing from a Cast} such a support is clearly visible, set upon a large book to elevate the cast to the eye level of the person drawing it. When seen from the side, its rounded fullness and seam resemble a breast with a nipple. The truncated arm of a cast like this one would account for the flaccid look of the sleeve when a costume was draped around it. The unforgiving firmness of a plaster would explain why the fabric does not quite fasten in the front of \textit{The White Negress}.

Although it has gone unnoticed until now, the plaster bust in *Man Drawing from a Cast* bears a close resemblance to the head of a composite sculpture, *A Young Ethiopian* (Capitoline Museum, Rome) (Fig. 35). A catalog description of this work reads, “Head of a young Ethiopian with corkscrew curls and full lips fixed to a Hellenistic statuette of a nude, young man holding a strigil, a sponge and various bath implements.” The profiles of the head in *Man Drawing from a Cast* and the Capitoline sculpture are nearly identical, as are the bare shoulders. Rembrandt placed a Dutch cap on his cast of the Ethiopian, thereby covering up the corkscrew curls.

Although she looks somewhat older, Rembrandt could conceivably have rendered the *White Negress naer het leven* from the Capitoline Ethiopian. This discrepancy could be the result of Rembrandt’s enhancing her facial features, although No. 161 in Rembrandt’s inventory, “One head of a Moor cast from life,” may also have been his source. Valentiner mentioned that in 1711 Uffenbach saw a figure of this description in an Amsterdam studio. The owner prized it highly because tradition maintained it was cast from life by Rembrandt. Van der Veen and van Gelder raised the question of whether the dark bust in the background of Rembrandt’s ca. 1639 *Artist Drawing from a Model (Pygmalion)* (B 192) might be the head of the Moor referred to in the inventory, but its generalized features make their query difficult to answer with certainty (Fig. 36).

Although it is possible that all three etchings shared the same source (the plump facial features are not dissimilar), I believe Rembrandt had access to several Moors’

129 Head of a Young Ethiopian: Capitoline Museum, Artstor ID #15523 Image Gallery.
131 ed. Bob van den Boogert, 81.
heads of different ages. The unspecific nature of several entries in the inventory, such as No. 5 “One head in plaster”, and No. 334 “Another four heads”, makes this kind of supposition well within the realm of possibility, as does the long gap in time between the 1630s, when the etchings were made, and 1656, when the inventory was taken. This was a period when numerous purchases, sales, and exchanges with colleagues would have been made by the avid collector.

Man Drawing from a Cast gives insight into the makeshift nature of Rembrandt’s studio set-ups. Behind the stacked-up configuration with the bust are two square pedestals, both supporting stacks of books and papers. The base of a bust is visible on top of one pile, suggesting precarious storage practices. The cluttered look of the studio is also apparent in Rembrandt’s etching, A Painter Drawing from a Model (Pygmalion), in which the painter is surrounded with props and various supports. The bust in the background of this print serves as a clear example of Rembrandt’s wrapping his plasters in fabric; a long piece of striped fabric forms a turban that hangs down the back of the pedestal on which the bust is placed.

When working from dressed busts, such as The White Negress, Rembrandt strengthened the illusion that he worked from an actual person by lavishing attention on details peripheral to the face, particularly headpieces. Using the finely pointed etching needle, he rendered the Negress’s plumed cap, made of twisted, striped material, in minute detail. These eye-catching elements are the equivalent in etching to kenlijkeyt in painting: they give the viewer’s eye an anchor and help confirm the illusion that the image was made naer het leven. However, it is telling that, although it is placed far back on the head, the cap does not slip off the motionless plaster.
Traditionally, art historians have maintained that the ironic title, *The White Negress*, refers to the pervading light that floods most of the *tronie* and eliminates the range of values that normally indicate dark pigmentation.\footnote{See for example Van Straten, 152.} However, if the source was a cast, the title could refer to the color of the plaster. Casts would have reduced all racial types to a base level of pure white, a characteristic that may well have amused Rembrandt and his students and given rise to humorous titles, such as *The White Negress*.\footnote{None of the literature, non any documents about *The White Negress* mention when the use of this title began.}

**Lievens and Rembrandt, Shared Casts**

Lievens and Rembrandt shared an etching press, if not a painting studio, and their production of paintings dwindled in 1630 when they were engrossed in experimenting with the new medium. In 1635 Rembrandt copied four of Lievens’s 1631, etched *tronies* by tracing them onto a prepared etching plate and reworking them. Vestiges of this process are visible in a print in the Amsterdam, Rijkspentkabinet.\footnote{Van Straten did not specify which print. His juxtaposition of four etchings by Lievens and Rembrandt clearly shows the process. Van Straten, 181-184.} Empirical evidence also points to their sharing of plaster casts. The woman in Lievens’s ca. 1630 *Head of a Black Woman in Profile* (Holl. 66) has been identified as the same model Rembrandt used in *The White Negress*, though their use of a plaster cast for the images has never been posited (Fig. 37).\footnote{This supposition may have ramifications for the dating of the Lievens’s print (and the six other prints in a series he apparently made for publication). Rembrandt’s *The White Negress* is used to date Lievens’s series. The assumption is that a black woman posed for them at approximately the same time. If she however was a plaster cast, she would have been around the studio for an indefinite mount of time.} Even though Lievens heightened the illusion of reality by actually rendering the tonality of her dark skin and by using the pointed etching
needle to create tight, little curls, the shape of the nose, lips and chin all match those in Rembrandt’s etching.

Lievens’s etching is apparently part of a series of seven heads that he made for sale. This series has another head that matches Rembrandt’s etching even more closely than his Head of a Black Woman in Profile. If it was done from a shared cast, it serves as an example of how malleable and adjustable casts could be, perfect props for seemingly endless variations, depending on the lighting, angle, and dress artists chose to use. In Lievens’s Head of a Man with Thick Lips (Holl. 88, B. 308 as Rembrandt), the facial features and left facing profile are nearly identical to those in Rembrandt’s etching, The White Negress (Fig. 38). The placement of the hat (minus the feather) on the back of the head also corresponds, yet a totally different image emerges from what may have been a shared plaster. For his image Lievens apparently wrapped a scarf around the neck of the cast and placed a fur-trimmed tabard around its shoulders. He rendered the fur by means of a repeated, circular motion of the sharply pointed etching needle. Finally, with remarkable ingenuity, he changed the gender of the cast by adding a beard, using even tighter circles to mimic the look of facial hair. The cross-gendering of sources was not exclusively a practice in the Rembrandt circle. In his discussion of Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem ‘s tronies, van Thiel explained: “It is typical of Cornelis’s working method

---

136 Van Straten 152-156.
137 Pieter J. J. Van Thiel, Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem 1562-1638: A Monograph and Catalog Raisonné. (Davaco: Doornspijk 1999) 106. Even though an inventory of Cornelisz van Haarlem’s estate shows he owned a large number of casts, Van Thiel does not explore his use of the collection as models. This omission was noted in a review of the book, Dorothy Limouze, Historians of Netherlandish Art 1999, 1- 4. It seems likely that the reference is to a statue since it says “a head of a screaming man” not a screaming man. As I will discuss later, statues were particularly convenient when artists were rendering poses, such as a wide-open mouth, that would have been difficult for a human model to hold.
that he could take the head of a screaming man and effortlessly change it into a woman’s head while executing his painting.”

An undated drawing by Jacob Adrianensz. Backer, *Young Negro in Half-Length* (Kupferstichkabinett, Dresden), indicates that he also had access to a cast of a Moor’s head (Fig. 39). The base of his image terminates at a level just under the armpits, closely corresponding to the bust in Rembrandt’s *Boy Drawing from a Cast*. Although the lips are not as full, the rest of the features match those in Rembrandt’s and Lievens’s etchings of Moors, raising the possibility that all these images were made from the same, or perhaps a similar type of cast. The Backer *tronie* has no accessories, and therefore it provides an unencumbered view of what his plaster model may have looked like.

Evidently, it was quite androgynous, a characteristic that would account for the opposite genders Rembrandt and Lievens gave their images. Baldinucci’s recounting of Rembrandt’s generosity with his studio props, makes it seem possible that Backer, whose friend, Govaert Flinck, was a pupil of Rembrandt, could have borrowed the cast from him.

The ca. 1631 painting *Portrait of a Moor* (Niedersächsische Landesgalerie, Hannover) has often been attributed to Lievens, as well as Gerrit Dou, one of Rembrandt’s early students in Leiden (Fig. 40). It may also have been painted *naer het leven* from the *Young Ethiopian*, for it has the same innocent gaze and smooth, young facial features. The turban and exotic costume are typical of the attire Rembrandt’s

---

138 Van Thiel 106.
139 F. Baldinucci, *Cominciamento e progresso dell’arte dell’intagliare in rame, collevite di molti de’ più eccellenti maestri della stessa professione* (Florence, 1686) 80.
students apparently wrapped around the Nero bust during the period in which Dou studied with Rembrandt.

Rubens’s *Uomini Illustri*

Rembrandt’s and Lievens’s apparent use of a plaster model in the 1630’s raises the question of whether this practice was confined to a few experiments while they were establishing their careers and teaching their first students, or whether it was a more extensive phenomenon. It is telling that quite a few of their early etchings bear a likeness to the canonical busts of well-known Greek and Roman personalities. In a few cases computerized overlays of Rembrandt’s early etchings indicate that he worked from Rubens’s series of twelve *Uomini Illustri* (a prolonged project, executed by a number of engravers and completed in 1638). The general shape, pinched facial proportions, and some interior lines of Rembrandt’s ca. 1629 etching, *Bust of An Old Man with a High Forehead* (B 314 state I), closely conform to Rubens’s image of the Greek philosopher Democritus (No. 111) engraved by Lucas Vorsterman (1595-1675) (Figs. 41, 13a). Ed de Heer noted that the rarity of this first state indicates that Rembrandt did not intend it for issue, whereas a ca. 1631 edition of a reworked image (B 314 state II), by his collaborator, Jan van Vliet (ca. 1600-1668) probably was intended as such (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) (Fig. 42). Van der Wetering observed: “Given the relatively large numbers of extant impressions, we may conclude that there must have been quite keen interest in this sort of work among collectors.”

---

140 Van de Wetering and Schnackenburg 289.
Two other Rembrandt etchings appear to be based on the Vorsterman engraving: the 1635 Bust of An Old Man with Flowing Beard and White Sleeve (B 290), and the 1631 Old Man with Flowing Beard (B 315) (Figs. 43, 44). If a transparency of the former is slid a bit clockwise, which makes the head seem delightfully cocked to one side, the features align with the latter, but in this case, with five more years of etching experience, any tentativeness on Rembrandt’s part has vanished. He built up the structure of the face in dramatic chiaroscuro and captured a sense of the image’s having been done *naer het leven* by means of the many fine lines that capture the look of disheveled hair. The latter print has the familiar pinched face, high forehead and baldness, though the head faces the other direction. One can imagine Rembrandt doing an etching from Rubens’s engraving, then a second image from the resulting print. By reversing the face and reworking the shadows, he created a totally new image for eager collectors.

Van Straten rightly pointed out that Rembrandt’s interest in these 1630-1631 studies is on “the head of the man: the wrinkled face, the unkempt hair, and the wild mustache and beard.” 141 None has a focus on the eyes of the model; they are always in shadow, except for an occasional crest of light on a lowered eyelid. They are studies of undulating light and shadow on a static form, the kind of study perfectly suited to the use of a plaster model.

Two biblical paintings of old men may also incorporate variations on the Democritus engraving. In 1631, when Rembrandt painted his *Saint Peter Repentant* (Israel Museum, Jerusalem), Democritus’s animated features, especially his open mouth,

---

141 Van Straten 164.
would have served well as a model for those of the moaning saint (Fig. 45). Five years later, in his Belshazzar’s Feast (National Gallery, London) Rembrandt apparently used the engraving of the open-mouth philosopher for one of the awe-struck revelers, inserting his bodiless head at the left of the composition and giving him a pearl and gold-trimmed beret (Fig. 46). De Winkel maintained that Belshazzar’s opulent attire was also imaginary, clothing Rembrandt would have based on a long tradition of how Orientals should be depicted.

The image of Democritus’s laughing face apparently became a prototype for Rembrandt, for when he painted his ill-fated commission for the Amsterdam Town Hall in 1661-2, The Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis (Stockholm, National Museum) among the men who raise their swords and glasses in a solemn oath, is a laughing compatriot who has had too much to drink. Sitting at the far right of the banquet table next to a large goblet, his facial features closely conform to those in the Vorsterman engraving. (Fig. 3)

It is possible that other etched tronies, positioned in the same three-quarter view but with slightly different facial proportions, are also variations of Vorsterman’s Democritus, or perhaps of the busts of other elderly uomini illustri in Rubens’s series, such as Paulus Pontius’s (1603-1658) Socrates, which is an image that also has a high forehead, bald pate and long beard (Fig. 13b). These tronies might include the ca. 1631 Bust of An Old Bearded Man, Looking Down, Three-Quarters Right (B 260), whose curls generally follow those of Socrates; the 1630 Old Man with Flowing Beard (B 309) who has the same distinctive bump over his right eye, and the same divided beard as Socrates; and the 1630 Bust of an Old Man with a Flowing Beard, the Head Bowed Forward, the Left Shoulder Unshaded (B 325) (Figs. 47, 48, 49).
Rembrandt appears to have worked from another of Rubens’s *uomini illustri* in 1631, for when a transparency of his nearly-profile drawing, *Bust of Old Man in a Cap*, is superimposed on Pontius’s engraving of Hippocrates (slid a few degrees counterclockwise), the distinctive angular tip of his nose, the serpentine locks of his beard, and other interior shapes line up (Fig. 50). Muller juxtaposed Pontius’s engraving with a bust of Hippocrates that appears in the background of Rubens’s 1627 *Portrait of Ludovicus Nonnus* (National Gallery, London) (Fig. 51). Although the lighting is more dramatic in the painting, the source is unmistakable. In his 1631 drawing of *Saint Jerome* Rembrandt also appears to have worked from Pontius’s engraving, for when a transparency of the drawing is superimposed on the engraving and slid a few degrees to the right, the lighting and profiles of the physician and saint align (Figs. 52, 53, 54). The hands of the saint, resting on a skull, might have been drawn from plaster casts, for the 1656 inventory records a large number of cast hands.

Some of Rembrandt’s works from 1631 also appear to combine two and three-dimensional sources. Three drawings of old men sitting in chairs, at first glance, seem to be drawn *naer het leven* from a living model, although the cursorily drawn, limp legs of his *Old Man In an Armchair, Hands Folded* (Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin), his disjoined right arm, and the resemblance of his head and facial features to those of the Democritus engraving, raise the question of whether Rembrandt fabricated this image from two-and-three dimensional sources, perhaps stuffing a robe with some of his plaster limbs and superimposing a head from an engraving (Fig. 55). It may not be coincidental that the second of the three drawings, *Old Man in an Arm Chair Looking Left* (whereabouts

---

142 Van der Meulen, Plates 206, 207.
unknown), has a profile like Pontius’s Hippocrates, and that the third, Old Man in an Arm Chair, Leaning Sideways, has features like those of his Socrates’s (Figs. 56, 57). These drawings of solitary, pensive, full-figured men wearing tabards seem related to Rembrandt’s 1630 painting, Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) (Fig. 58). It may be that in working from Rubens’s engravings, Rembrandt was envisioning a series of Christian Saints based on the likenesses of ancient *uomini illustri* from antiquity.

Galba

Although Rembrandt relied in some cases on engravings of busts, a number of etched heads in his oeuvre look like the Greek and Roman busts listed in the 1656 inventory, suggesting the practice of working from draped plaster casts may have been an integral part of his studio practice in the Leiden years. These convenient models would have helped Rembrandt and Lievens in their experiments with dramatic lighting in their new-found printmaking medium, but would also have been convenient props to dress and position for more complex images in paint as well.

In addition to the bust of Homer in his 1653 painting Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer (mentioned in my introduction and discussed in full in Chapter Four), three drawings are extant in which Rembrandt isolates a bust and makes a study of it as a bust, complete with its stand.¹⁴³ Two of the sketches are unlabeled; Strauss identified both as Emperor Augustus and referred to No. 147 in Rembrandt’s inventory. Rembrandt developed a third sketch more fully and clearly recorded the inscription, “Galba,” on its

base in his undated drawing Bust of Emperor Galba (Kuferstichkabinette, Berlin) (Fig. 59). This bust may not have been a plaster reproduction, but an original Roman sculpture, for tradition maintains that the ca. 69 AD bust of the emperor Galba (Nationalmuseum, Stockholm) once belonged to Rembrandt and was brought to Stockholm by the avid collector, Queen Christina (1626-1689) (Fig. 60a-f). The flat pate on the Stockholm head lacks the indentation of the suture between the frontal and parietal bone that Rembrandt records so emphatically in his drawing, but a distinctly lighter section of stone at the top of the Stockholm head indicates that it may have been reworked after it left Rembrandt’s possession, possibly smoothed down and rounded. The facial features of the drawing and the bust correspond: a straight nose that is flattened at the tip, firmly set lips that make the face look quite severe, and a deep cavity under a prominent cheekbone. The Stockholm bust is mounted on an un-inscribed pedestal, but the seam at mid-neck may indicate that it was severed from what appears to have been quite a large base when Rembrandt owned it, one that included the upper portion of a toga.

The features of a small 1635 etching by Rembrandt, Old Man with a Short Beard (B 306), are nearly identical to those in Rembrandt’s drawing, most notably the distinctive furrowed contour of the man’s pate, and the straight nose with the flattened tip (Fig. 61). Instead of a toga, Rembrandt’s bald old man wears a bulky tabard and a fur wrapped closely around his neck. This augmentation of the fine folds in ancient Greek

---

145 Rembrandt may have made up the base, for it is unusual to see the name of the emperor on a piece. It is also possible that heads, especially plaster ones, were footed at the bottom allowing them to be interchanged on a sturdy support. The square footing on the Nero plaster suggests such a structure.
clothing is precisely what van Mander advocated, although the generalized rendering of the tabard in Bald Old Man with a Short Beard and the manner in which its folds echo those of Galba’s toga may indicate that Rembrandt made up the more Northern-looking attire rather than actually draping his Galba bust in bulky material and drawing it naer het leven. De Winkel maintained that Rembrandt often worked in this imaginative manner when he was fashioning clothing for his subjects.146

It is possible that Rembrandt based two other etchings from 1630 on his Galba statue. Bald-Headed Man in Right Profile [The Artists Father?] (B 292) has the same distinctive head shape as his drawing of Galba, although a less pointed nose, whereas Bald-Headed Man in Right Profile small bust [The Artists Father?] (B 293) has a similar nose, but a less emphatic depression between the frontal and parietal bones (Figs. 62, 63). Both men’s attire is reminiscent of the clothing in Bald Old Man with a Short Beard, raising the possibility that all three were studies made from Galba. Parenthetically, Schwartz rightly noted: “None of the suggested identifications of Rembrandt’s father in etchings, drawings or paintings rests on reliable evidence.” 147

Lievens’s hauntingly skull-like 1627 tronie, Bald Old Man (National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin), may be a case in which Rembrandt’s colleague followed van Mander’s advice more literally (Fig. 64). The old man’s attire looks less like a tabard than a heavy, woolen fabric turned back at the edge and wrapped so that it crosses over his chest. The distinct contour of the man’s head, his straight nose, firmly set lips, and hollow cheeks generally align with the features in Rembrandt’s drawing of Galba. Perhaps this image is

146 De Winkel 2006.
an early example of Lievens working *naer het leven* from a draped bust. Though the old man leans forward, his neck seems stiff; he looks as if he were tipped forward rather than bending his head on his own volition. When Rembrandt’s drawing of Galba is juxtaposed with Lievens’s old man, the reason for the stiffness - that is, his use of a rigid bust - becomes even more plausible.

Van Straten went so far as to call the time around late 1625 to early 1626 Lievens’s “tilted heads” period.\(^{148}\) He noted the odd diagonal axis of the heads in crowd scenes such as in his *The Stoning of Saint Stephen* (British Museum, London) and in his *Mucius Scaevola before Porsena* (Prentenkabinet, Leiden), and in the genre scenes such as *The Tric Trac Players* (Spier Collection, Netherlands) and *Christ at the Whipping-post* (Foundation Aetas Aurea). Although the phenomenon occurs most regularly in 1625-1626, it is noticeable at other times in Lievens’s work as well. The heads in a number of his large half-lengths and *tronies* exhibit a strong diagonal. He may have found this type of axis aesthetically pleasing, but the phenomenon could also stem from his use of unyielding statues; in order to impart a sense of movement and vitality, he tilted them at various angles, and in doing so, did not always compensate for their inherent lack of suppleness. His ca. 1624 *The Tric Trac Players* (Spier Collection, Netherlands) has a severe-looking, bald man with his head looking down at the game board (Fig. 65). It is conceivable that a titled bust of Galba again served as Lievens’s model. Also the rather masculine and stiff-looking *Old Woman Reading* (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) has Galba’s hooked nose and severely straight lips, suggesting that this may be another instance of the cross-gendering of sources (Fig. 66).

\(^{148}\) Van Straten 32-37.
Vitellius

One of the most common and easily recognizable busts in paintings of studios and collections is the corpulent man thought to be Emperor Vitellius. The original bust from which these plasters were cast appears to be the ‘Vitellius’ in the Venice Museo Archeologico, a bust discovered in Rome in 1505 and taken to Venice in 1523 by the greatest collector of antiquities in the sixteenth century, Cardinal Grimani (Fig. 67). Rubens was the first Northern collector to own an original bust of this Vitellius type (Fig. 68).¹⁴⁹ In his collaborative painting with Brueghel, the 1617 Allegory of Sight (Prado Museum, Madrid), it appears on a shelf between the head of the Laocoön and a bust of Nero (Fig. 16a-d). Van der Meulen published two drawings of the Emperor, with a tentative attribution to Rubens, and Jaffé documented several series of twelve bust-length paintings of Roman emperors by Rubens, that included “Vitellius,” made before his Roman sojourn.¹⁵⁰ Although they survive primarily in replicas by Rubens’s students, Burchard identified the painting of “Vitellius” as an original Rubens.¹⁵¹ Cornelisz van Haarlem’s inventory includes a plaster head of Vitellius, as does the 1635 inventory of the widow of the Duke of Buckingham.¹⁵² In a work attributed to Sweerts, Boy Drawing Before the Bust of a Roman Emperor (The Institute of Art, Minneapolis), a young boy sits face-to-face drawing Vitellius’s large head (Fig. 69).

Evidently, both Rembrandt and Lievens had access to the corpulent bust. Vitellius is listed twice in Rembrandt’s 1656 inventory, and in Lievens’s 1630-1635

---

¹⁴⁹ Van der Meulen, 143.
¹⁵¹ E. Haverkamp-Begemann and Ludwig Burchard, Olieverfschetsen van Rubens (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans, 1953).
¹⁵² Van Thiel 271.
painting, *Young Draftsman* (Louvre Museum, Paris), his large head is visible on a table behind a cast of the young Jesus from Michelangelo’s *Bruges Madonna.* Rembrandt’s student Gerrit Dou included a Vitellius cast in the foreground of his ca. 1630-1632 painting, *Artist in His Studio,* (Colnaghi, London). These examples suggest that the emperor’s bust was a central prop in the Rembrandt circle during that period.

Some early genre scenes by Rembrandt and Lievens representing the Five Senses are worth examining on the assumption that they were done from a dressed cast of Vitellius. In Lievens’s 1626 representation of Hearing, *Bald Man Singing* (Agnes Etherington Art Center, Kingston), the waist-length protagonist beats time to some music with his right hand (Fig. 70). Dramatic light and shadow highlight the different textures in the composition: old skin, fur collar, satin tunic, and wrinkled pages of a musical score. These mimetic passages convince the viewer that Lievens worked from an actual performer, capturing him in the act of singing. However, the musician’s sagging, triple chin and head cocked to one side are also typical features of Vitellius. When compared to the Vitellius bust in Sweert’s *Boy Drawing from a Cast,* the two heads are nearly identical. Even the round neckline of the musician’s outer garment has its counterpart in the rounded rim of the bust, which lacks a proper pedestal. If Lievens used a plaster cast of Vitellius as the model for the singer, he eliminated the curly hair (the white portion on top of the Vitellius bust in the *Young Draftsman* looks as if his plaster curls were actually chiseled off in places) and adjusted the mouth slightly, parting the lips to make the man appear to be singing. As Goddard and Ganz demonstrated, such adjustments have a

---

153 Lievens scholars have come to doubt his authorship of this work and believe it dates to the late seventeenth-century. Lloyd De Witt, personal interview 14 March 2008. However, who made the bust is irrelevant for showing the ubiquity of Vitellius busts.
precedent in Goltzius’s prints based on Renaissance bronzes, where he, for example, removed the beard from Hercules (in Tetrode’s Hercules and Antaeus) (Hearn Family Trust) to create Caius (in Caius Muscius Scaevola) (Hearn Family Trust), and where he closed the open mouth of a warrior (in Tetrode’s Nude Warrior/Diety) (Hearn Family Trust) to create Publius Horatius (Hearn Family Trust).\textsuperscript{154}

Rembrandt may also have used the bust of Vitellius for the old man in his ca. 1624-1625 painting, The Three Singers (Hearing) (Private Collection), although the deeply incised lines on the forehead that tend to sculpt the brow, are features typically found in portrait busts of the hefty Vespasian, an emperor listed twice in Rembrandt’s inventory (Figs. 71, 72, 73). Although the facial features of Rembrandt’s singer are more generalized than those in Lievens’s Bald Old Man Singing, the two are clearly related: both are waist-length portrayals of balding, rotund musicians; both raise their right hand to beat time to the music; and both show the singer with a large, open book.

In Rembrandt’s painting the added presence of a young boy and an old woman form a musical trio. The woman also seems to have been based on a cast, since her features closely resemble those of another sculpture from the Capitoline Museum, the Roman copy of a Hellenistic original known as the Old Woman (Sibyl) (Fig. 74). This work was evidently a common studio prop, for a cast of her distinctive face is visible in three of Sweert’s paintings of studios: in the foreground on the floor of his ca. 1650 The School Room (Berkley Castle, Gloucestershire); on a table in his 1652 An Artist’s Studio (Detroit Institute of Art); and in a heap of heads on the floor in his ca. 1648-1650 A

\textsuperscript{154} Goddard and Ganz, Figs. 48, 49, 50, 51.
Painter’s Studio (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum). No. 329 in Rembrandt’s inventory lists “One Antique Sibyl.”

The Capitoline Old Woman (Sibyl) has an open mouth, making her a fitting model for a singer. Other features that link her to Rembrandt’s female singer are the pronounced, double creases of her nasolabial furrow and the rightward turn of her head. Unlike the plaster model, Rembrandt’s old woman has closed eyes and wears a full turban instead of a headscarf, but as Goltzius’s work suggests, this type of departure from the original plaster was a standard practice for artists.

Several works painted by Rembrandt in the 1630’s may also have been painted naer het leven from a clothed Vitellius bust. Rembrandt’s 1635 Man in Oriental Costume (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) and his 1635 King Uzziah Stricken with Leprosy (Chatsworth, Devonshire) resemble the Venetian Vitellius and Rubens’s drawing of the character type: not only is the hefty fleshiness of their faces analogous; both have the same scruffy, brushed down eyebrows, a nose with a bump in the middle, and pronounced creases at the root of the nose (Figs. 75, 76). The rotation of their heads, forty-five degrees from their front-facing chests, also matches the prototype. Rembrandt’s treatment of their eyes, wherein soft skin folds encircle the eyeball, brings to mind Rubens’s advice to avoid the look of stone when copying statues. The eyes of the Man in Oriental Costume are done according to the formula van der Wettering

---

155 Orr, Plates VII, XII, XV.
155 Van de Wetering, 170.
156 Stauss and van der Meulen 383.
158 Rubens/Piles 1708.
identified (see Introduction), whereas in *King Uzziah Stricken with Leprosy* they are more undefined and placed in shadow, yet are equally engaging.\(^{159}\)

Slive described another Rembrandt half-length of an old man with a double chin, from 1633, *Portrait of a Man in Oriental Costume* (Alte Pinakothek, Munich), as having a “more pronounced sculptural character than in most commissioned works” (Fig. 77).\(^{160}\) This comment may inadvertently testify to Rembrandt’s working from a well-lit bust to make an exotic character. The profile view and oval format of the tronie recall a classical metal or coin, although the man’s exotic clothing implies that Rembrandt did not envision him as a classical character. Rembrandt’s 1631 etching, *Bust of an Oriental to the Right* (B 263), also seems to be part of this series of corpulent men who may have originated in a draped bust of Vitellius (Fig. 78).

Backer’s quick sketch from the mid 1630’s, *Man with a Tall Cap in Half-Length* (Museum Boymans-van Beuningen Rotterdam), could be related to Rembrandt’s exotic fat men from the same period, for they have common facial features: multiple chins with a rounded, cleft-chin in front; a nose with a bulge, hooked tip, and creases at the root; and a head turning to the side (Fig. 79). Supporting evidence for Baker’s use of a Vitellius bust is his figure of Hippocrates in the undated painting, *Hippocrates Visiting Democritus* (Collection Dr. Alfred and Isabel Bader, Milwaukee). The rotund philosopher’s face resembles Vitellius’s, and he wears a shirt with a rounded neckline, reminiscent of the circular rim on the Vitellius bust in Sweerts’s painting.\(^{161}\) The features of a Backer’s tronie, *Old Man in Ecclesial Vestments* (Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg), also

\(^{159}\) De Wetering 171.
\(^{160}\) Slive 63.
generally conform to the Vitellius facial type, and his low, rounded neckline, that exposes the upper-most part of his chest, corresponds to the fleshy Vitellius bust with its rounded rim.

It is tempting to associate an entry in the 1652 Haarlem inventory of Theodorus Schrevelius (1572-1652) with the bust of Vitellius. It mentions “a small panel in an ebony frame, being a fat tronie by Rembrandt of Leiden, famous painter.” 162 Although no painting of this description dated before 1652 survives, a 1667 painting of an unnamed, portly, old man is extant. It is possible, although by no means certain, that Rembrandt used a bust of Vitellius for this 1667 Portrait of an Elderly Man (Mauritshuis, The Hague) (Fig. 80). Although it is now considered one of Rembrandt’s canonical works, the authenticity of the painting has been a matter of debate. 163 Opinions as to whom the painting portrays also vary. The assumption, based on inventories - that it was either Admiral Maarten Harpertsz. Tromp or his son, Admiral Cornelis Tromp - was challenged by Brown, who noted that the men did not bear any resemblance to Rembrandt’s Old Man. 164

The manner in which the old man is dressed makes him look somewhat disheveled, raising the question of why a person of high standing would have his portrait painted while in such disarray. More typically, portraits flatter and establish the sitter’s status. In his examination of precedents, Blankert cited Rembrandt’s 1639 Portrait of Jan Six (B 281) in which the subject also has an opened collar with dangling ties. However, unlike the more randomly-falling, ties of the old man’s collar, Six’s hang perfectly

162 Van Straten, 2005, 77. Van Straten does not cite the provenance of this inventory.  
163 Blankert 184.  
164 Noted in Blankert 187.
straight, visually connecting his slender face with the book in which he is absorbed. The intent of the two works seems antithetical: the etching portrays the studied nonchalance of the cultured young man, while the painting captures the whimsy of a portly elder who no long concerns himself with such trifles.

The Mauritshuis description of the work notes the slump in the man’s body, which I believe could be a result of the jacket’s being stuffed rather than containing an actual torso and limbs. His head seems too large for his body, his shoulders oddly narrow, and his arms too short. Unusual proportions do not necessarily confirm that Rembrandt worked from inanimate constructions. A glaring lack of correct proportions sometimes occurred in his portraits of well-known individuals like the ca. 1647 Portrait of Ephraim Bueno (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). Bueno has such tiny arms that he looks dwarf-like. His body looks as if it were added after the head was painted, and the arms were squeezed in to fit the size of the canvas. However, in Rembrandt’s Portrait of an Elderly Man, the position of the hat also looks awkward; it does not sit securely on his head, but rather hovers above it, the possible result of an unforgiving plaster head and a studio prop too small for the bust on which it was placed. The basic structure of the old man’s face conforms to the corpulent Vitellius prototype, although the unkempt grey hair makes the man seem to be a contemporary of Rembrandt’s. The liveliness of the work stems in large measure from Rembrandt’s use of kenlijkheyt, particularly in the white collar and tassels that contrast with his dark coat. As with his etchings, free

---

165 www.mauritshuis.nl.
166 Blankert compared its awkward position to Frans Hal’s even more askew hat in his ca. 1660 Portrait of a Man (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge). Blankert 1997. That rakish tilt totally defies gravity and brings up the wider issue of whether Hals may have sometimes worked from inanimate models.
flowing hair adds a sense of immediacy. Its softness was easy to simulate in painting as well as etching.

Lievens’s *tronie*, *Old Man Holding a Quill* (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Pau), painted in 1626 could also be a *tronie* based on a bust of Vitellius (Fig. 81). Like the bust it has a sagging triple chin and short hair, and appears to be draped in two types of fabric rather than clothed. The man’s enormous hand seems out of scale with his face, raising the possibility that in addition to a plaster bust, Lievens’s used plaster prostheses, like those listed in Rembrandt’s inventory.\footnote{167}

Heads on Shelves

In 1905 Valentiner suggested that the bust of Socrates mentioned in the 1656 inventory was the model for Saint Peter in Rembrandt’s 1643-1649 etching, *The Hundred Guilder Print (Christ among the sick allowing the children to come unto him)*, (B. 74) (Fig. 82, 83a-d).\footnote{168} In 2006, Gary Schwartz made the same observation, also identifying the man in a tall hat behind Saint Peter as Desiderius Erasmus (ca. 1466-1536), an image Rembrandt could have known from engravings.\footnote{169} Schmidt-Degener, Boon, and Slatkes noted the presence of Homer’s head in the far left of the scene, another bust listed in the inventory and pictured in Rembrandt’s 1653 painting *Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer* (Metropolitan Museum, New York).\footnote{170} Schwartz explained the presence of these *uomini illustri*. “They not only illustrate the timelessness of Christ’s guidance, but also

---

\footnote{167} Strauss, van der Meulen, et al. 383 (Nos. 315, 317).
\footnote{168} Valentiner 1905.
\footnote{169} Schwartz credited Theo and Frans Laurentius with the discovery. Schwartz, 325.
that the most critical thinkers of the ages are respectful of him. Their presence marks
Christ as a teacher and leader of mankind.”

Their presence may also illustrate a studio practice in which classical busts were
used as surrogates for Christian characters. Another Rembrandt composition that shows
men gathered around Christ also includes recognizable heads from antiquity and the
Renaissance. In his ca. 1652 Christ Disputing Among the Doctors (B 65), a full-figured
man with a Dante-like face and hat stands behind Christ, while half-lengths of men who
resemble Homer and Socrates are grouped near a ledge on the right (Fig. 84). A head of
a Moor is visible above them. The different levels of steps, plinths, and benches may
indicate that Rembrandt positioned human models for some of the full-bodied figures, but
also assembled plaster casts on various levels for the half or bust-length figures. It is
possible that he consulted two-dimensional sources as well.

The composition of his Christ Seated Disputing with the Doctors (B 64) is
reminiscent of a sketch showing the layout of Rembrandt’s studio, the anonymous, ca.
1645-1650, Drawing from the Nude in Rembrandt’s Studio (Hessisches Landesmuseum,
Darmstadt) (Figs. 85, 86). In it six of Rembrandt’s students draw from a model
positioned on a platform in a corner. Above her, four busts are stored on a shelf that is
draped with a cloth quite like the ledge in Christ Disputing Preaching. It is not far-
 fetched to envision Rembrandt working from the same kind of setup when he composed
the etching. As I briefly mentioned in the Introduction, this manner of working follows
van Mander’s advice, which bears fuller citing here:

171 Schwartz 324.
There are also stories which are more easily ordered, and in these one sets to work like the stallholder who cunningly disposes his wares on high shelves, down either side, and across the bottom. Thus it is that one introduces the witnesses of an event, on hills, in trees, on stone stairways, or clinging to pillars of a building together with others, in the foreground, on the ground below.\textsuperscript{172}

Van Mander framed his advice in the context of history paintings, but inherent in this recommendation is the treatment of human figures and heads as still-life objects, self-contained units that can be moved around as the artist wishes. Zirka Zaremba Filipczak discussed the manner in which seventeenth-century still-life painters composed with real objects and showed how it radically changed the initial stages of production:

As quickly as a hand can move objects around in relation to each other was how quickly artists could try out a new composition without making a single mark on a paper or panel. Only the roughest preparatory drawings or underdrawings could be faster, but they yielded just the general schema. Working with an arrangement of objects on a table instead of a preparatory drawing or underdrawing enabled the artist to take into account the nuances of texture and light, and the subtest play of cool and warm tones right at the planning stage.\textsuperscript{173}

The same could be said of arrangements on a slightly larger scale in the studio, using shelves, plinths, and boxes. This use of statues, responding to them as still-life objects, may in part account for the lack of preparatory drawings in Rembrandt’s work.

\textbf{Dancing Faun}

Around 1630, Rembrandt painted the Biblical story of \textit{Lot and his Daughters}, a work that has since been lost, but is known through a 1631 engraving by Jan van Vliet (Holl. I) and by an undated, anonymous drawing after Rembrandt (British Museum, 1631).

\textsuperscript{172} Van Mander/Miedema 1973, 34-35.
London) (Figs. 87, 88). These images may be another instance from the Leiden period when Rembrandt used a statue for his model, since his figure of Lot is an improbably stiff depiction of a drunkard. It is also an atypical figure for Rembrandt’s Leiden period, for it is a full figure unobstructed by tables, other figures, cumbersome props, or excessively bulky clothes. The old man sits on the ground, leaning back with his legs apart as he raises his right hand to show the inside of his empty goblet. The extended, off-balance pose would have been difficult for any model to hold, let alone an elderly one, whereas working from a statue would have made the process more manageable. Several features in the scene indicate that this might have been the case. The placement of two round objects, a goblet and a jug on either side of Lot’s body, one at the level of his head, the other at his waist, has its counterpart in a statue of a third-century reveler, the Dancing Faun (Uffizi Gallery, Florence), who holds cymbals in nearly the same position (Fig. 89). The form of Lot’s goblet, a wide rim with a concave bowl, also resembles the Faun’s symbols. The position of his legs, one bent and one ramrod straight, is quite like the Faun’s, and the extension of the torso on the side of the raised hand and its contraction on the opposite side also correspond.

According to Haskell and Penny, the most famous version of the statue (now in the Uffizi Gallery) was first recorded by Rubens’s son Albert in a book of Roman costumes in 1665. However, a 1556 description of a work in the collection of Euriaro Silvestri (whose collection later passed to the Medici), which reads, “a nude, standing Faun who looks as if he is dancing,” indicates that the work was known well before

---

174 Haskell and Penny 205.
then.\textsuperscript{175} Two versions of the statue were also excavated in Rome in ca. 1630 and were highly regarded.

Rembrandt could have known the work through a ca. 1610-1615 bronze version of the \textit{Dancing Faun} by Adriaen de Vries (J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles) although his image of Lot seems to conform more to the Uffizi version: the bands of intercostal muscles above the Faun’s abdomen have their counterpart in the folds of fabric that pull across Lot’s upper body, and the strap of the faun’s sandal that runs diagonally across the top of his foot has its counterpart in the diagonal, top edge of Lot’s slipper.

Most reproductions of the Faun show him standing, whereas I believe Rembrandt, like Rubens and Goltzius before him, viewed his inanimate source from a less typical angle, tilting it ninety degrees backwards to simulate a slouching position. This adjustment caused the legs of the Faun to look as if they were sprawling and presented a more direct view of the down-turned cymbals and face, creating a pose well suited for the inebriated Lot. Transforming the high-spirited expression of the Faun onto the intoxicated countenance of Lot would have been a logical choice, while adding a disheveled beard and balding head would have easily turned the classical youth into a Biblical patriarch.

Another observation that raises the possibility of Rembrandt’s working from statues is the odd juxtaposition of Lot and his daughters. Unlike the 1576 woodcut by Tobias Stimmer (1538-1584) which Tümpel maintained was Rembrandt’s source for the overall image, the figures are not integrated into a believable space.\textsuperscript{176} In the Stimmer,

\textsuperscript{175} Haskell and Penny 205.
Lot sits on his daughter’s knee and wraps his hand around her waist as he kisses her. In the Rembrandt, the two bodies seem to hold preexisting poses that, although placed next to each other, do not convincingly interact. The position of the kneeling daughter seems too high in the picture plane, so that she appears to be looking past Lot, in spite of her holding the jug in front of him. This awkward juxtaposition is even more evident in the drawing, in which there is no space for Lot’s second arm, which Rembrandt entirely eliminated. Like Lot, the daughter in the background seems to be tilted, rather than bending on her own volition. The arm held across her abdomen, and the circular definition of her breasts are reminiscent of a statue of Venus rather than of a human model.

Returning to the Lot story in 1633, Rembrandt made the single-figured drawing *Lot Drunk* (Städelisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main), one of the few drawings signed with his full name.\(^\text{177}\) It does not seem to be based on the *Dancing Faun*, for Rembrandt replaced the revelry of the earlier work with what Ed de Her called a blank stare, a statement that raises the possibility of Rembrandt’s second attempt at portraying Lot as based on another inert plaster.\(^\text{178}\)

**Borghese Fisherman (Dying Seneca)**

According to Philips Angel (1616-1683) one of the qualities required of a painter was a thorough knowledge of human anatomy. In his 1642 *In Praise of Painting*, he bemoaned the lack of a place for dissection in Leiden, but he offered an alternative: “…in

\(^{177}\) De Heer noted that the signature was added a few years after Rembrandt made the drawing. Van der Wetering and Schnackenburg 244.

\(^{178}\) Van der Wetering, Schnackenburg 244. Also see Joshua Bruyn, et al. *A Corpus of Rembrandt, Paintings* vol. 1 36.
lack of it I refer you to the anatomies of Master Hendrick and Master Cornelis van Haarlem, who have left you flayed plaster casts for want of anything else, from which you will gain some knowledge of the nude, which is most serviceable to us.” 179 Some antique statues in which the muscles were clearly articulated would have been equally valuable to artists. Such a work is the **Borghese Fisherman** (Louvre Museum, Paris), or the **Dying Seneca** as it was known in Rembrandt’s day (Figs. 90, 91, 92, 93, 94).

Haskell and Nicholas Penny maintained that the **Borghese Fisherman**, was probably the “Seneca di marmo nero” that Vacca recalled in 1594 as having been found along with some other ancient fragments on an estate in Rome. 180 It was mentioned in a poem about the Borghese collection as early as 1613. This Roman copy of an ancient Greek sculpture depicts a nude old man in an animated pose: he is slightly crouching, with his arms reaching forward; he looks alert, ready to spring to action; and has arresting, inlaid enamel eyes that contrast with the dark marble he is made of. An early restoration added the arms, an alabaster belt, and a thigh to the damaged original.

Haskell and Penny stated: “Although there were many prints of the statue, it does not seem to have been copied at least on a large scale .... It was obviously no more suitable than a decapitated saint as an ornament for the dining room or a pleasure garden, at least in the eighteenth century.” 181 Their comparison of the **Borghese Fisherman** to a decapitated Saint stems from the incompleteness of the work, since the man’s legs terminate abruptly at mid-calf. This unusual feature caused Orsini to identify the figure as the dying Seneca, since he thought the figure must have originally been standing in

---

180 Haskell and Penny 303.
181 Haskell and Penny 303.
some sort of basin. The statue was subsequently reconstructed and placed in a marble basin, smooth and reddened on the surface to look like the water that had caught Seneca’s suicidal blood.

Although collectors may have been put off by its resemblance to a “criminal who has long been kept in a dungeon” or the “abject expression of the face and stiff inclination of the body,” artists seemed to have found fascinating the lively pose, well-articulated musculature, and animated face. As noted in Chapter One, Rubens’s allegiance to Seneca’s Stoic teachings made the statue’s iconography a prime attraction for him, and he used studies of it as a basis for his paintings of Seneca. The delicacy with which he rendered the taut pose of the wiry old man shows that he was equally intrigued with the form of the statue. The muscles on the ancient marble are almost as articulated as those of an écorché, and he rendered them with great care. The way Rubens drew the body from various perspectives in order to highlight different muscle groups is reminiscent of his absorption in the musculature of works, such as the Laocoön or Willem van Tetrode’s (1525-1580) écorché figures. For the purpose of my argument, his sketches provide useful records of atypical views of the ancient fisherman, ones from which Rembrandt and his students may have also viewed the statue in order to achieve dynamic poses in their history paintings.

---

182 Haskell and Penny 303.
183 See Chapter Four.
Rembrandt’s Circle

Johann Carl Loth (1632-1698), a German artist who studied in Venice under Rembrandt’s former student, Willem Drost (1630 - ca. 1680), could have made studies of the Borghese Fisherman when he was in Rome,\(^{184}\) but it is also possible that he owned a replica of what was commonly thought to be a statue of Seneca, for the old men in several of his works, who are painted from a number of different perspectives and in different lighting situations, all resemble the Fisherman. It would have been a logical decision to use the Borghese Fisherman in paintings of Seneca. The Stoic philosopher in Loth’s undated painting, Seneca and Nero (Earl of Bradford, Weston Park), is a case in point (Fig. 95). He appears to be a clothed, accessorized, and dramatically lit version of the sculpture. The raised position of his left hand and the structure of his face correspond. An almost identically posed figure with a bare torso, Satyr Playing a Flute (Bach-Gedenkstätte & Historisches Museum, Köthen Anhalt), may be a more literal rendition of the nude fisherman (Fig. 96).

The unidentified philosopher in Loth’s undated painting, Ancient Philosopher (present whereabouts unknown), has the facial features of the fisherman, including the open mouth and a raised muscular forearm, suggesting that Loth may have used the traditionally-accepted statue of Seneca as his model for both philosophers (Fig. 97).

The bare torso and slightly crouched pose of the fisherman are also present in reverse in Loth’s painting of the elderly sun god in Apollo and Pan (present whereabouts unknown) (Fig. 98). The manner in which one hand is raised and the other lowered but

\(^{184}\) The literature on Drost often maintains that he studied under Loth. Jonathan Bikker demonstrated that it was the other way around. Jonathan Bikker, Willem Drost (1633-1659): A Rembrandt Pupil in Amsterdam and Venice (New Haven and London: Yale UP 2005) 44-47.
held out from the body, his opened mouth, straight nose, and bare forehead, and particularly the creased abdominal muscles and the veining in the arms and neck, all correspond to the statue.

In his discussion of the painting mentioned above, Bikker included three other paintings of half-length, muscular old men. Their faces are nearly identical, but they are depicted in a variety of lighting conditions and perspectives. The position of their arms and hands varies slightly, but it is possible that all are variations of the Fisherman. Bikker believed they were all done from the same model, but he did not consider whether that model could have been a statue.

Bikker related Drost’s *Mercury and Argus* (National Gallery, London) to Loth’s series of old men and assumed both artists used the same human model (Fig. 99). Although Argus is not in exactly the same pose as the *Borghese Fisherman* (both of his arms rest on his knees), the old man has the same forward-leaning stance, and his sagging flesh, especially under the breasts, is almost identical to the Rubens drawing of the statue, as are the protruding nipples. The twisted piece of fabric around Argus’s loins is also reminiscent of the Fisherman’s belt. Sumowski attributed to Drost another work, a wash-drawing of a sitting old man, because of its similarity to the model in the paintings. Although Bikker disagrees with the attribution, the drawing, regardless of its author, could be a variation on the *Borghese Fisherman*. The old man is sitting and leaning forward, and the bottom edge of the picture plane cuts his legs off at mid-calf. His twisted loincloth and the sagging abdominal muscles are other prototypical components

---

185 Bikker 104.
of the ancient sculpture. Bikker argued that paintings of semi-nude old men ultimately refer back to the works of Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652). Although it is beyond the scope of my study to scrutinize his images thoroughly, a cursory look at their extended poses reveals similarities to the Borghese Fisherman and to écorchés, dynamic sculpture in action poses that could act as surrogates for humans and spare elderly models the pain of holding such a pose for an extended period of time.\textsuperscript{187}

If the expressive Borghese Fisherman was used by Loth and Drost in the series of paintings Bikker compared, their adaptation of a three-dimensional source and their use of hats, capes, profuse beards and chiaroscuro lighting may reflect the working methods Drost learned when he was in Rembrandt’s studio.

\textit{Rembrandt}

It is possible that Rembrandt owned a three dimensional replica of the Borghese Fisherman, for a number of figures in his oeuvre are oddly cut off at mid-calf and have the same hunched posture and out-reaching arms as the fisherman. The 1656 inventory lists No. 332 “One Seneca,” among the items in a bin located in the small studio of Rembrandt’s house.\textsuperscript{188} Busts of the Stoic philosopher were common items in inventories and depictions of collections, but the exact form of Rembrandt’s Seneca is unclear. The bin had a large assortment of objects: antlers, weapons, textiles, musical instruments, gourds, and casts. Some of the latter are described as heads, some as statues, and some, like the Seneca, with no classifications. A few items in the bin appear to have been full-

\textsuperscript{187} See de Ribera’s 1634 Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew (National Gallery, Washington D. C.) for an almost identical pose to Tetrode’s écorché. I discuss Tetrode’s influence in Chapter Three.

\textsuperscript{188} Strauss, van der Meulen, et al. 385
figured works such as No. 145 “A statue of an Empress” or No. 323 “A statue of a Greek antique”. No. 129 “An antique Laocoön” could have been either the head of the agonized father or a small replica of the whole, three-figured sculpture, since both versions of the famous piece were ubiquitous. Given the mix in Rembrandt’s bin, it is possible that his Seneca was not merely a bust but was a small replica of the Borghese Fisherman.

Rembrandt may also have used engravings of the fisherman in some instances, although the earliest print of the statue I found was not published until 1680, well after Rembrandt’s death.189 However, as in Loth’s paintings, the variety of angles he employed, the manner in which his figures are draped, and the different light patterns in each work suggest that prints were not his only means of knowing the Hellenistic work.

Peter and John at the Gate of the Temple

Case in point are his ca. 1629 chalk drawing, Saint Peter (Kupferstichkabinett, Dresden), and the subsequent etching made the same year, Peter and John at the Gate of the Temple (B 95) (Figs. 100, 101). The drawing very clearly shows the legs of the old man truncated at mid-calf. His posture is stooped, and his hands reach out, but he looks somewhat off-balance, a figure tipped forward rather than bending on its own volition. As de Heer noted, in the etching, Peter’s stoop is slightly more pronounced.190 This adjustment may reflect Rembrandt’s realization that working too literally from a tipped statue could make a figure look precarious. By lowering Peter’s head and covering the

---

189 See the engraving by R. Collins in Joachim Sandart, Sculpture Verertis Admiranda (Nuremberg, 1680) also reproduced in Haskell and Penny 22.
190 De Heer in van de Wetering, Schnackenburg 260.
area of the lower legs with a dark garment (a decision that also eliminated any problems caused by truncated legs), he made Peter seem more stable.

Peter’s face is rendered in more detail than in the preliminary drawing, and his straight nose, opened mouth, and bald pate correspond more closely to those of the fisherman, although Peter has a full beard and tousled hair. As earlier examples in my study show, Rembrandt was a master at improvising these kinds of embellishments.

Ger Luijten noted a general precedent for Rembrandt’s etching in a ca. 1585 engraving of the same subject by an anonymous artist after Maarten de Vos (ca.1532-1603). Luijten maintained that Rembrandt worked from human models in comparable poses. Although this explanation could account for the fact that the angle of Peter’s head is more frontal and that the garments show more gravity than those in the weightless Mannerist engraving, it does not address the issue of the truncated legs. An explanation that accounts for the similarities as well as the differences among the de Vos and the two Rembrandts is that both artists worked from a three-dimensional model of the dynamic Borghese Fisherman, de Vos adding feet below the long garment on his image of Peter, and Rembrandt sketching the statue more literally in his drawing and then compensating for the lack of lower legs in his etching by placing the summarily-drawn lower garment in shadow.

Both men may have used as well the Borghese Fisherman for the cripple in Peter and John at the Gate of the Temple. When Rubens’s drawings of the statue are juxtaposed with de Vos and Rembrandt’s figures, the hand positions and lack of lower

---

legs (or in the case of the right leg on de Vos’s cripple, an impossible bend) correspond. If this is the case, both artists increased the bend of the body so that the figure would appear to be sitting.

When Rembrandt returned to the theme of Peter in his ca. 1659 etching Peter and John Healing the Cripple at the Gate of the Temple, he may again have looked to the Borghese Fisherman as a model. The copper plate for the engraving (Herzog Anton Ulrich- Museum, Braunschweig) is still extant and clearly shows Peter with oddly truncated proportions - his lower legs seem almost non-existent (Fig. 102). The way his mantle stretches across his raised arms makes him looked draped rather than properly clothed.

Ad*am and Eve*

Clifford S. Ackley stressed the importance of gesture and body language in Rembrandt’s oeuvre as a means of expressing emotion. Although he was a master at facial expression, even Rembrandt’s contemporaries commented on the powerful way the movement of his figures conveyed feeling. Constantijn Huygens’s often quoted comparison of Lievens and Rembrandt singled out the latter for his poignant portrayal of the kneeling Judas in the 1629 Judas Returning the Pieces of Silver (Private Collection, England).

Ackley used Rembrandt’s 1638 etching, Adam and Eve (B 28), to illustrate his thesis, contrasting the idealized, open poses and fluid gestures of Albrecht Dürer’s Adam

---

192 Ackley, “Rembrandt as Actor and Dramatist,” 34-38.
and Eve to Rembrandt’s hunched over couple whose awkward hand positions lend an atmosphere of tension to the scene (Figs. 103, 104). To the extent that body language was a concern of Rembrandt, an animated sculpture like the Borghese Fisherman would have been a very useful prop. Its nudity, particularly the exposed genitals, would have made it especially fitting for images of Adam, as in Rembrandt’s 1638 etching, Adam and Eve (B 28).

David Smith saw Raphael’s fresco, The Creation of Eve (Vatican Loggia, Rome), as a more plausible source for Rembrandt’s image of Adam than Valentinier’s supposition that the source was Raphael’s Fall of Man (Stanza della Segnatura, Rome), or Adolfer’s theory that it was a print by Munz (Fig. 105).194 As context for his argument, Smith rightly pointed out the multiple instances in which Rembrandt used Raphael’s work as a source for his imagery, but admitted that the prehistoric, simian nature of Rembrandt’s couple was unprecedented. Although features in both works are similar, such as the position of Rembrandt’s Eve in the middle of the composition, the rock behind Adam, and the way a shadow falls across his bent leg, Raphael’s languid pose of the idealized Adam is the antithesis of Rembrandt’s nervous and uncomely character. Though Rembrandt’s fertile imagination could account for these innovations, he may have worked from a three-dimensional source, especially since several art historians have pointed out the similarity of Eve to classical renditions of the Venus Pudica and have noted “a newly classical sense of form and contour in Rembrandt’s definition of the nude

Such a development may have been aided by his working near het leven from the Borghese Fisherman.

Three-quarter views of the Borghese Fisherman that match the angle of Rembrandt’s Adam are hard to come by, but a drawing of the sculpture after two lost studies by Rubens, Borghese Fisherman (Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen), provides an approximation (Figs. 92, 93). The overall configuration is like Adam’s: a nude figure in a pose of arrested action whose body is tense, wiry and contracted. Specific details also match: the veins on the elbow, the knobbiness of the knees, the bulging of the muscles and, with some adjustments, the position of the hands and fingers. The light on Adam’s right side extends down to his upper calf, ending at the same juncture where the fisherman’s leg terminates. Ackley’s observation that “Eve is definitely the sturdier, more resolute figure” results from the lack of stability in Adam’s body. His weight does not seem to be squarely placed on either foot, nor is it grounded on the ledge behind him, anomalies that may betray Rembrandt’s use of a statue that did not have lower legs and needed to be propped into place.

Several of Rembrandt’s sketches for the print, though schematic, also seem to relate to the fisherman, for neither has feet, both have nearly the same arm position, and one has the same rounded shoulder.

---

195 Smith maintained it was Raphael’s influence that caused this change. The observation came originally from Christopher White, who did not make that specific connection.
Conclusion

Rembrandt’s and Lievens’s early experiments with etching provide insights into their working methods, particularly the nature of their models. Although some of their _tronies_ were undoubtedly made using human models, others are variations on counterprints (from their own or each other’s work), or are enhanced tracings of Rubens’s _Uomini Illustri_. More central to my hypothesis is the observation that they also worked from draped and accessorized busts, responding to van Mander’s advice (quoted in Chapter One) to cover the thin clothes of classical statuary with heavier cloth. Comparisons of the antique busts from Rembrandt’s 1656 inventory that have striking characteristics, such as the obese Vitellius, the open-mouthed Sibyl or the hooked-nose Galba, with _tronies_ and heads in the two artists’ early oeuvre, shows that casts of Classical sculpture were sources for Lievens as well as Rembrandt. Sweerts’s penchant for including busts in a number of his paintings helps identify the specific versions of these classical busts that were available to Northern artists. The large head of an emperor in his _Boy Drawing Before the Bust of a Roman Emperor_ corresponds closely to Lievens’s musician in _Bald Old Man Singing_, and the head of the _Old Woman (Sibyl) _visible in several of Sweerts’s paintings, clearly matches the woman in Rembrandt’s _The Three Singers (Hearing)_. The young Leiden colleagues imbued Classical busts with such life that their early experiments in incarnating busts have gone completely undetected.

A few scholars have noted Rembrandt’s use of busts a bit later in his career in _The Hundred Guilder Print_, but they did not investigate his working methods. His technique for arranging figures in crowd scenes follows Van Mander’s advice to treat figures like a stallholder who cunningly disposes his wares on shelves. Inherent in this notion of
composition is the treating of human heads and figures like moveable, still-life objects. By comparing a drawing of Rembrandt’s studio with his etching Christ Preaching (both of which have a shelf with heads at the right side of the composition), I extrapolated the manner in which he combed inert busts and human figures for his multi-figured compositions.

Finally, empirical observations indicate that Rembrandt may have used replicas of Classical sculpture for poses that were difficult for human models to hold. Versions of well-known Roman sculpture were available through casts, wax reductions, or through reduced variants in the form of Renaissance bronzes. (The latter are the focus of Chapter Three). Rembrandt may have shared Rubens’s interest in the Borghese Fisherman as a source for tensed, hunched-over poses. The well-articulated muscles of this Hellenistic nude would have made it an apt model for Adam and may partially account for the tension in Rembrandt’s etching of Adam and Eve.

Broos’s Index to the Formal Sources of Rembrandt’s Art identified Rembrandt’s frequent use of prints for his images, and the literature on his sources since its publication in 1977, has perpetuated that train of thought. Theory, precedent, and the practice of his peers suggest that he also worked naer het leven from draped sculpture. Chapters One and Two demonstrated that casts from life and Classical sculpture were fertile sources for the imagery of Rembrandt and the artists in his circle, but one that art historians have largely overlooked.
CHAPTER 3
REMBRANDT AND RENAISSANCE BRONZES

Steal arms legs torsos hands and feet
“Tis not forbidden here: those who will
Must play Rapiamus’ personage
Well-cooked rape makes good pottage
Karel van Mander (1548-1606)

In Karel van Mander’s poetic advice to artists he holds up Rapiamus, the
personification of greed, as a role model. The well-cooked rape (a pun on the word for
turnip) is a work in which the artist has stolen elements from a variety of sources and
synthesized them into a new work of art.

The first two chapters of this dissertation dealt with Rembrandt’s use of plaster
casts and original sculpture for tronies or bust-length genre scenes, and they addressed
the advantages of using surrogates for human models. Chapter Three looks at
Rembrandt’s appropriation of sections from full-figured and multi-figured sculptural
sources in action poses as the basis for some of his most dramatic history paintings.
Since human models cannot sustain a dynamic pose for more than a few minutes, three-
dimensional sources depicting action would have been especially helpful for artists who
wanted to capture a sense of working naer het leven. They could rotate, tilt, combine or
eliminate various components, then light the statues to achieve the desired effect.

Capturing a sense of lively movement within his work was paramount for
Rembrandt. In a rare written statement about his art, he informed Constantijn Huygens,

196 Van Mander/Miedema, Grondt, Fol 5r stanza 46: “Steel hebzuchtig armen, benen, rompen, handen,
voeten. Het is hier niet verboden; wie willen die moeten wel de rol van Rapiamus spelen. Goed gekookte
rapen is goede soep.”
secretary to Prince Frederick Hendrik, that he had finally finished two commissions and explained “I have tried to achieve the greatest and most natural effect of movement, which is also the main reason it has been so long in the making.” 197

The “Dutch Canon”

John Michael Montias observed that, unlike two-dimensional art, Delft inventories typically listed sculpture by a descriptive title, occasionally also mentioning the medium, but rarely the artist. 198 He recalled only one exception, the inventory of the silversmith Thomas Cruse, which recorded the names of five sculptors. Montias attributed this pattern to the relatively low price of sculpture: though well-off, Delft households typically owned two or three pieces of sculpture, valued at only two or three gulden and comprising less than ten percent of the value of most people’s collections.

The inclusion of five sculptors’ names in Cruse’s records is an important piece of information that helps expand our knowledge of the type of casts that were available in Rembrandt’s day. Cruse owned one plaster by Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), 199 but all his other casts were by Northern artists: eight pieces by Hendrick de Keyser

197 Strauss, van der Meulen, et al. 1639, 2.
198 J. Michael Montias, Artists and Artisan of Delft: A Socio-Economic Study of the Seventeenth-Century (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982) 228. Zirka Zaremba Filipczak observed the same pattern in Antwerp inventories. They did not include the sculptor’s name until after the mid-seventeenth century. Zirka Zaremba Filipczak, Picturing Art in Antwerp 1550-1700 (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987). In this regard Rembrandt’s inventory seems typical. Only three of the nearly eighty casts and sculpture listed in Rembrandt’s 1656 inventory include the name of artist who made them: No. 296; “One plaster of Diana Bathing by Adrian van Vianen” and No. 308; “A bowl modeled in plaster by Adrian van Vianen.” No. 345. A little child by Michelangelo Buonarotti.” Strauss, van der Meulen, et al. 1656, 12. Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem’s inventory adheres to this pattern with two exceptions, both works by Michelangelo. English inventories seem to also follow this pattern. The extensive 1635 inventory of the widow of the Duke of Buckingham lists no sculptors by name. See van der Meulen, Corpus Rubenianum vol. 1, 220-224.
199 Plaster reductions of his work, such as the times of the day from the Medici Tomb, are visible in paintings of collections. A plaster of the Christ child from the Bruges Madonna appears in its actual size in Jan Lievens’s (?) 1630-1635 Boy Drawing from a Cast in the Louvre.
(1565-1621); twelve pieces by Willem van Tetrode of Delft (1525-1580); one by Arent van Bolten (ca. 1573-1624/26); and ten others by the Flemish-Italian, Giovanni da Bologna (1529-1608), better known as Giambologna.

Citing inventories and depictions of collections, Frits Scholten underscored the popularity of plaster reproductions of sixteenth-century Italian and Northern sculpture, as well as the standard classical reproductions in the Netherlands around 1600. He noted the work of the founder, Caspar von Türlkelstein of Brussels, who made cast bronze compositions that included the work of Tetrode, de Keyser, and Giambologna. The similarity of Cruse’s and von Türlkelstein’s lists led Scholten to envision “some kind of Dutch canon of taste in which de Keyser, Tetrode, and Giambologna were rated the highest.”

This latter entry is significant to my study of Rembrandt’s artful use of casts, for although Giambologna’s name does not appear in the 1656 Amsterdam inventory, there is compelling empirical evidence that a number of works by him and his followers, especially Tetrode, were of particular interest to Rembrandt when he was composing paintings that included groups of figures in action. As Broos’s Index to the Formal Sources of Rembrandt’s Art demonstrates, there is a wealth of information on Rembrandt’s reliance on two-dimensional works, particularly prints for his sources, but very little about his sculptural sources. I want to expand the picture to include his use of the ubiquitous reproductive sculpture from the sixteenth century that circulated all over

---

Europe, much the same way prints did.201 The images of studios and elite picture
galleries that I discuss below confirm that these bronze and plaster statuettes were typical
components of collections. They were easy to obtain, inexpensive and, in the studio,
marvelous surrogates for live models who could not hold dynamic poses.202

Giambologna, His Circle and Tetrode

Giambologna trained in Flanders but made a sojourn to Italy in 1550. His visit
became a sustained residence after he came under the patronage of the Medici in
Florence.203 By 1570 he had become the most influential sculptor in Europe. He was
known for statue groups in marble but particularly in bronze, that depicted struggles and
violence, often incorporating twisting figures with extended gestures. Although his
monumental works were in prominent collections and in public places, such as his
fountain of Neptune in Bologna, familiarity with his dynamic style was spread
throughout Europe by means of numerous small bronzes. Anthony Radcliffe noted that
no sculptor was reproduced as much as Giambologna. His works were often given as
diplomatic presents and could be ordered from his shop or bought directly from him in
Florence by travelers and art dealers.204 These statuettes were not merely reduced

work in the context of his followers see Anthony Radcliffe and Nicholas Penny, The Robert H. Smith
Collection: Art of The Renaissance Bronze, 1500-1650 (London: Philip Wilson, 2004). For facets of
Giambologna’s career not usually covered in the literature see Mary Weitzel Gibbons, Giambologna:
202 See Scholten 86. For a summary of the range of prices of casts and original sculpture see, Van der
Veen, 51.
203 Charles Avery, Anthony Radcliffe, Giambologna 1529-1608: Sculptor to the Medici (Arts Council of
204 Radcliffe, Giambologna Sculptor to the Medici, 9. The well-established routes for shipping artwork from
Florence to Northern Europe are described in detail by Gabriel Kaltemarckt in his report to Christian Duke
variants of his monumental works but were often smaller items made especially for multiple castings. Variations on his themes were also produced with the aid of his assistants, and his followers made works that looked much like his originals.

A highly developed expertise in the art of bronze casting enabled Giambologna and his assistants to reconfigure components from one work into multiple variations on a theme and to create new subjects from stock parts. A market in plaster casts of these bronzes seems to have been quite active. Though he continued to work in Italy throughout his career, Giambologna’s ties to Northern artists and collectors remained strong, and his work was immensely popular in the Low Countries. Radcliffe related how young sculptors from all over Northern Europe came to study with Giambologna in Florence. When they eventually re-crossed the Alps, they brought back their own interpretations of his style. These men included Hans Mont (ca. 1545-ca.1582) from Ghent, Adrien de Vries (1545-1626) from the Hague, Hubert Gerhard (ca. 140-1620) from ‘s Hertogenbosch, and Pierre Francheville (1553-1615) from Cambrai, all of whom spent time working in influential court circles of Northern Europe.

Small bronzes and plaster copies by Giambologna and his followers are often visible in paintings of elite collections, and craftsmen making copies of his larger works appear in scenes of sculptors’ studios. Since paintings of collections and studios are often embellished, they cannot always be taken as literal records of what collectors and

---


206 Radcliffe, Giambologna Sculptor to the Medici, 9.
artists actually owned, but since both Montias and Filipczak mention written inventories in which Giambologna’s name is listed as the sculptor of some of the works, the contents of such paintings are based on an actual phenomenon. Several examples illustrate the ubiquity of Renaissance statuettes. In Willem van Haecht’s The Art Gallery of Cornelis van der Geest (1628) (Antwerp, Rubenshuis) five statuettes are displayed on a table in the frontal plane of the painting: Sleeping Nymph with Satyr (mid 1570); Hercules and the Centaur (ca. 1590); Bull (ca. 1573), Nessus and Deianira (ca. 1576); and Prancing Stallion (ca. 1581). The anonymous Cognoscenti in a Room Filled with Paintings (ca. 1620) (National Gallery, London) also shows a table with six statuettes. Four have whitish hues that indicate they are plaster casts and thus suggest some works were even more affordable than their bronze prototypes. In Pieter Codde’s Conversation about Art (ca 1630) (Collection F. Lught, Paris), a plaster cast reduction of Giambologn’s Samson Slaying the Philistine (1561-1562) is prominently displayed on the floor. Two other Giambologna-like plasters are on the table. Among them are Giambologna’s Crouching Bather (ca. 1584) and his Nessus and Deianira (ca. 1567). A large version of Samson Slaying the Philistine appears in the background of the 1647 Self-Portrait by Gerrit Dou, Rembrandt’s first student. Other paintings that include Giambologna-type statuettes are Jan Brueghel the Younger’s Sight (Philadelphia Museum of Art) and Cornelis de Baellieuer’s the so called Cabinet of Rubens (Florence, Palazzo Pitti). Some examples of paintings that show Giambologna’s life-size statues are Pieter Angillis, A Sculptor’s Studio (National Museum, Stockholm), Gerard Thomas, A Painter’s Studio and A Sculptor’s Studio (Brussels Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts).
Statuettes crafted by Willem van Tetrode, who was born in Delft ca. 1525, were also immensely popular in the North. He studied in Italy under Benvenuto Cellini in Florence between 1545-1549, worked in Guglielmo della Porta’s workshop in Rome after 1551, and later returned to work in Delft. Like Giambologna and his followers, Tetrode’s statuettes are visible in paintings of art galleries and studios, such as Gonzales Coques’s Interior with Figures before a Picture Collection (1667-1672), Michael Sweerts’s A Painter’s Studio (ca. 1648-1650) (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), and Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portrait (ca. 1665) (Private Collection Boston), all of which show his écorché on tables.

Precedents for Incarnating Renaissance Bronzes

Rembrandt was by no means the first artist to see the advantages of the lively statue groups. His illustrious predecessor, Hendrick Goltzius (1558-1617) clearly used Tetrode’s bronzes, sometimes appropriating their subjects along with their dynamic forms, but often adapting the plasticity of the figures for new subjects as well. In a perceptive and technically innovative study, Goltzius and the Third Dimension, Goddard and Ganz scrutinized the artful ways Goltzius worked naer het leven from statues. By rotating Tetrode’s bronzes on a turntable and feeding digital images into a computer, they were able to identify angles of view from which the bronzes most closely corresponded to the figures in Goltzius’s prints. They realized, as had few authors before them, that they

---

208 The exact nature of a Northern academy that van Mander, Goltzius, and Cornelis Cornelisz. founded in Haarlem is unclear, but Goltzius would certainly have been aware of van Mander’s advocacy of appropriating elements from other artists’ works.
209 Ganz explained the way in which they obtained such compelling examples. “Our method of examination was to place each of the bronzes on a rotating platform and, with the aid of a digital camera connected to a computer, identify angles of view from which the sculpture most closely correspond to the figures in Goltzius’s prints. The digital captures served as the models for the reproductions in this catalog.” Goddard and Ganz 73.
needed to take into account “his method of selection, alteration, improvement, and synthesis and look beyond immediately recognizable, one to one correspondences in confirming visual sources in the bronzes of Tetrode.” Their study cited the initial observation by Leeuwenberg and Halsema-Kubes that Tetrode’s Hercules Pomarius (The Hearn Family Trust) was the source of Goltzius’s 1587 engraving De Grote Hercules (The Hearn Family Trust) (Figs. 106a–c, 107). They also built on Radcliffe’s supposition that when Tetrode moved to Cologne in 1574, he left behind him in Delft a substantial group of highly original bronzes, at least some of which became known to Goltzius. Radcliffe went so far as to hypothesize that “their discovery might well have triggered off a new phase in Goltzius’ work which we can note at about this time.”

In recreating Goltzius’s studio practices, Goddard and Ganz juxtaposed unusual angles, such as a left side view of Tetrode’s Hercules Pomarius with a figure from Goltzius’s Massacre of the Innocents (The Hearn Family Trust) or a right side view of Tetrode’s Hercules and Antaeus (The Hearn Family Trust) with Goltzius’s Titus Manlius Torquatus (The Hearn Family Trust) (Figs. 108, 109, 110, 111). Their results showed the rich possibilities Renaissance statuettes provided for artists. Goltzius retained the form and even the light patterns on the muscles of Tetrode’s bronze nudes but transformed the look of the final figures. In the first case, he added long, flowing hair, removed the apples from Hercules’s hand and opened his fingers; in the second he clothed the nude figure in warrior’s attire and eliminated the diagonal body of Antaeus entirely.

210 Goltzius and the Third Dimension 48.
211 Radcliffe, 105.
Giambologna’s superb mastery of dynamic form, the relationship of limbs, heads and torsos in his multi-figured as well as single-figured works, seems to have been a revelation for artists. Radcliffe’s observation, that access to Giambologna’s statuettes ushered in a new phase in Goltzius’s work, is repeated by several authors in their discussion of other painters. James Thompson mentioned a turning point for Nicholas Poussin (1594-1665) when he worked on a painting based on Giambologna’s Rape of the Sabine:

_The Rape of the Sabine Women_ marks a new peak in Poussin’s study and use of sculpture. Not only was he influenced by major three-dimensional creations of his predecessors and contemporaries, but he also began a personal practice of making small clay and wax models, which he placed on a miniature theatrical stage. There Poussin worked out the complicated rhythms and relationships of his painted composition.\(^{212}\)

Conrad Oberhuber maintained that Adriaen de Vries, a collaborator with Giambologna in the 1580’s in Florence, brought his style to the court of Rudolf II, who was a great admirer of the renowned Flemish-Italian sculptor. There de Vries’s sculpture played a pivotal role in the new conception of the human figure visible in the paintings of Bartholomeus Spranger (1546-1611).\(^{213}\)

Van Thiel’s discussions of Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem use of bronzes were less categorical, but still made the point that he used Renaissance bronzes for some of his nude figures. In his undated painting, _Sleeping Diana with Nymphs_ (formerly in the H. Hübner collection, Würzburg), he worked _naer het leven_ from a statuette by Adriaen de

---

Vries’s *Diana Sleeping*, copying the figure quite literally but giving it flesh tones.\textsuperscript{214} Van Thiel also identified a male figure in the 1590 *Fortune Distributing Her Gifts* (L. Bazanger Collection, Geneva) as an exact copy of the antique *Marsyas* that exists in Renaissance bronze versions.\textsuperscript{215} In his discussion of Cornelisz. van Haarlem’s multi-figured works he noted that the nudes are often in situations of extreme danger, misery and disaster, their bodies and faces distorted by pain and agony. This observation brings to mind Giambologna-type imagery. Van Thiel stressed the notion that working *naer het leven* included working from Renaissance bronzes. He described Cornelis’s working methods in his multi-figured paintings:

One therefore must conceive of such figures as being assembled like parts of a machine: the torso, the legs, the feet, the arms, the hands and the head, this last part sometimes really done after a living model: a very effective artifice (the inclusion of such a head looking like the real thing) to heighten the naturalistic effect of the scene.\textsuperscript{216}

David Jaffé pointed out that Rubens drew more studies of Tetrode’s écorché, *The Horse Trainer* (1562-67), than any of the antique sculpture he studied so assiduously in Rome.\textsuperscript{217} In twelve studies, some of which have multiple figures, he painstakingly recorded the dynamic muscles and sinews of the twisting figure. Like Goltzius, he tilted and rotated the statuette to achieve unusual perspectives. Tetrode designed the écorché with several pairs of arms that fit into a uniform torso, allowing for an even greater range of forms. Jaffé noted that:

\textsuperscript{214} See Adriaen de Vries (*Augsburg Glanz, Europas Ruhm*, 2000) 245.

\textsuperscript{215} Pieter J.J. van Thiel, “Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem as a Draughtsman” *Master Drawings* 1965,129.


This jointed doll could play different roles, depending on the angle it was viewed from, and variations of it were used to show power or despair, aggression or defense, joyful dancing and lamentation. Rubens never sought to hide his source, indeed he was proud of it: the figure of Tetrode’s écorché, complete with bald head, is given a prominent position in his Antwerp Raising of the Cross. 218

Rubens typically did not work *naer het leven* from statues when he painted but preferred to use the drawings he had done as intermediaries. Since many of his drawing still exist, this working method makes his use of three-dimensional sources easier to detect than Rembrandt’s.

**Rembrandt’s Use of Renaissance Bronzes**

When examining Rembrandt’s oeuvre for evidence of his use of Renaissance bronzes, one needs keen visual analysis. As Goltzius did with his prints, Rembrandt selected, altered, improved, and synthesized his sculptural sources. Unlike Rubens, he did not flaunt his sources. The luminosity and chiaroscuro in his compositions, the modulated color, facile brushwork, and penetrating facial expressions give his works a persuasiveness that effectively banishes any sense that he worked from inanimate sources.

More like Rubens than Goltzius, Rembrandt appropriated the characters from one narrative to use in another. This type of swapping appears to have been something he advocated that his students should practice also. Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627-1678), whose writings were no doubt derived from attitudes he had learned under his master’s tutelage, articulated a theoretical basis for borrowing from previous sources:

---

218 Jaffé, McGrath, Ede, 106-107.
Nevertheless, it is permitted, when you are confronted with a well-composed piece by someone else, to borrow the manner of harmony - that is the pleasant grouping and placing of elements at different levels within the composition. Just as a poet who writes a new song on a well-known melody. There is no disgrace in writing a few verses to a well-known tune that everyone loves. But in doing so one must take care to deal with another subject: and so is the painter applauded who is able to bring the same artistic strength to his painting of Achilles as was earlier admired in the Alexander by Apelles. Virgil is thus honored as the prince of Latin poets because, while he followed Homer’s wandering Odysseus with his own wandering Aeneas, he was in no way inferior to his predecessor.²¹⁹

This line of reasoning, and the ancient poets it uses as examples, reflects a wider dialog found in Italian Renaissance texts on imitation that are based on classical principles of rhetoric.²²⁰ The Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus (ca. 1466-1536) was a Northern voice who argued against Italian proponents of the slavish imitation of Ciceronian style. He maintained that matter was more important than form. Although none of Erasmus’s works is listed in Rembrandt’s inventory, he would most likely have been aware of the ideas of his widely-read countryman.²²¹

The Amsterdam to which Rembrandt moved in 1632 was a bustling center for trading art works in all the various media. The household where he first stayed would have immediately put him in the thick of this business, for his host, Hendrick Uylenburgh (1684 or 89-1660), was a respected art dealer. In addition there were regular auctions supervised by the Guild of Saint Luke and frequent estate sales. Rembrandt’s attendance

²¹⁹ Van Hoogstraten 1678, 192-193.
²²¹ For a summary of literary theory and painting in Rembrandt’s day see Amy Golahny, Rembrandt’s Reading (Amsterdam: Amsterdam P, 2003) 42-48.
at these is well documented. He became friends with a number of art dealers, including Hendrick Scholten (1617-1679), who traded with Italy.

Although Giambologna’s name is not mentioned in Rembrandt’s inventory, there is an item that in all probability refers to one of his works: No. 189 “One lion and a bull modeled from life.” Giambologna, as well as other Northern sculptors, fashioned individual animals including lions and bulls. These are often visible in paintings of collections or studios such as in Jan Steen’s 1665 The Drawing Lesson (J. Paul Getty Museum), in which one is visible on a studio shelf. But Giambologna and his circle were particularly known for statuettes of animal pairs, usually in vicious struggles, such as his ca. 1580 bronze Lion Attacking a Bull, made in collaboration with his assistant Antonio Susini (1580-1624) (Fig. 112). The statue is graphically violent, with the talons and teeth of the lion tearing into the flesh of the agonized, half collapsed bull. Such a piece might have been well described by the secretary of the Chamber of Insolvency as “modeled from life.” A variation on this theme is visible on a shelf in Jan Brueghel the Younger’s ca. 1660 Allegory of Sight: Picture Gallery (Philadelphia Museum of Art), along with four other Giambologna-type statuettes of struggling animals or humans (Fig. 113a-c). Their dynamism is in marked contrast to the restrained classical busts and statues displayed along with them.

Another plaster that Rembrandt purchased in 1637 could have been a statuette from Giambologna or his circle. The collection of the recently deceased Jan Basse came up for sale in Amsterdam in March of that year. During the three-week event, Rembrandt

---

222 Records of his purchases exist from 1635, 1637, 1642, 1646, 1660. Strauss, Van der Meulen, et al.
223 For a useful compendium of the network of collectors and dealers around Rembrandt see Van der Veen Rembrandt’s Treasures, 141-145.
224 The version in the Museo di Palazzo Venezia is 20.4 cm high.
bought multiple lots on nine different days. Most of his purchases were prints and
drawings, but toward the end of the sale he bought several pieces of sculpture, two males
in plaster and one Samson in plaster. As in inventories, when sculpture is included in
sales records, the artist is not usually listed, making it difficult to identify the pieces
precisely. The Samson could have been a derivative cast of Michelangelo’s Samson and
the Philistine, although Michelangelo is the one sculptor whose name is actually
mentioned in inventories. The lack of his name would indicate that more likely the
plaster was a cast taken from a statuette by Giambologna or a follower. His Samson and
the Philistine, in which Samson’s arm is raised high as he prepares to smite the Philistine
with the jaw of an ass, was regularly reproduced (Fig. 114). If Hoogstraten’s advice to
change the subject when borrowing sources reflects his master’s philosophy, Rembrandt
would have used the cast for a number of different characters. The second entry with the
more general description of “two males” could refer to a single piece and have been one
of Giambologna’s or Tetrode’s sculptures of fighting males, such as his Hercules and
Antaeus or Hercules and Lichas, although individual male figures such as Hercules,
Mars, and Neptune also appear in their oeuvre.

The Goldsmith

A third Giambologna-like piece is visible in Rembrandt’s 1632 small etching, The
Goldsmith (Fig. 115). In 1579 Luca Grimaldi commissioned Giambologna to make a

---

225 Straus and van der Meulen, Rembrandt Documents 1637/2. This may have been cast from a bronze
model after Michelangelo’s Samson and the Philistines ca. 1550-60 such as the one in the Berlin-Dahlem,
Staatliche Museen.
226 Timothy Clifford noted the popularity of Giambologna’s Samson and the Philistine, Rape of the Sabines
series of personifications of Faith, Hope, Charity, Temperance, and Fortitude as meditation aids for his chapel in the church of San Francesco, Genoa (Fig. 116a-b).\textsuperscript{227}

The sculptor based his image of Charity (University of Genoa, Genoa) on an earlier stucco version he had made to go above the doorway of the retro-choir in Santissima Annunziata, Florence. His bronze version shows a woman caring for two naked children. One child, standing at the side of Charity, looks up as he offers her an apple. She and the other child she holds at her side look down at him, creating a touching sense of benevolence. In the stucco version both children look down while the mother looks up.

Variants of this Christian theme were also made into small bronzes, such as Barthélemy Prieur’s (1536-1611) version.\textsuperscript{228} Although no reductions by Giambologna are extant, Scholten raised the possibility that de Vries, who was Giambologna’s assistant for the chapel commission, may have had a hand in the full-sized Grimaldi Charity.\textsuperscript{229} This partnership between two Northerner artists would have made a reduced version of the sculpture doubly appealing to collectors in their native lands. Rembrandt’s etching, The Goldsmith, shows a craftsman putting the finishing touches on what appears to be such a variant. Linda A. Stone-Ferrier pointed out the uniqueness of Rembrandt’s depiction of the relationship of the sculptor to his work:

\textit{…the contemplative atmosphere of the Rembrandt etching presents more than a mundane description of a man at work…. Rembrandt shows a closer interaction between the smith and his creation by means of the}  


\textsuperscript{228} The literature on Giambologna frequently mentions the ubiquity of his small bronzes that were often variations on a popular mythological, Christian, or genre theme. Multiple variants made by his assistants render a catalog raisonné problematic, and so statuettes are often referred to in general terms. In a few cases, bronze statuettes are apparently unique. For a summary of the problems in cataloging, tracing and identifying his works see Avery 133-146.

\textsuperscript{229} Scholten \textit{de Vries} 15.
embracing gesture and by emphasizing the large, skilled hands of the craftsman. Ger Luijten noted the similarity of this statue group to a monumental personification of Charity above the entrance to the Bolsward town hall in the Netherlands. Yet the figures in that statue group all look directly out at the viewer, unlike the Giambologna and Rembrandt images, where eye contact among the figures heightens the sense of tenderness. Luijten raised the possibility that Rembrandt may have owned a small personification of Charity, citing item No. 180 in the 1565 inventory as “een beelt sijnde de antieckse liefde” (a statue representing antique love). If this was the case, a figurine from the circle of Giambologna would have been a likely prototype. Although Rembrandt’s figure has a simple scarf on her head instead of an iconic headband, and although the proportions of the figures are not identical, the poses are generally the same as those described above. Telling details, such as the leg position of the standing child (one knee bent the other straight) and the outstretched fingers on the mother’s hand also correspond. It was not uncommon for Giambologna’s small bronzes to be gilt, a circumstance that would have made the use of such a statue in Rembrandt’s etching, The Goldsmith, a logical choice.

231 Luijten. Prior to the sixteenth century, Charity was represented by a burning heart. Changes in theology resulted in charity being identified with love of the neighbor, and therefore it took on the more human visage of a woman with children. See Eddy de Jongh, Tot leerring en vermaak (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1976) 41. Other examples are Hendrick de Keyser’s statue on top of the grave monument of Eric Soop, and the gateway to Saint John’s church in s’Hertogenbosch, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. See De zeventiende eeuwse beeldhouwkunst in de Noordelijke Nederlanden: Hendrick de Keyser, Artus Quellinus, Rombout Verhulst en tijdgenooten, (Amsterdam: J.M. Meulenhoff, 1948).
232 Strauss and Clark translate this as an antique cupid.
233 Ackley maintained that there were no gold statues the size of the Goldsmith in Rembrandt’s day. He may have overlooked gilt bronzes. Clifford S. Ackley, Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts: 1981) 200 n. 1.
A pen and ink drawing by Rembrandt adds credence to the supposition that Rembrandt had access to such a statuette. *Woman with a Child Descending a Staircase* ca. 1630-40 (Ben. 313) (Pierpont Morgan Library, New York) has previously been seen as a study of actual people (Fig. 117). In his discussion of the drawing, Schatborn surmised that Rembrandt’s nieces and nephews could have been the inspiration for his images of children, and that this particular drawing was probably done from memory. Yet a significant feature in the drawing, the placement of the woman’s feet on two different levels of a staircase, relates it to Giambologna’s *Charity*. Giambologna often incorporated a small riser in his statues of women in order to lift one knee and thus heighten their contrapuntal pose. His statue of Charity fits this convention. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Rembrandt’s drawing also shows the woman on a set of steps with one knee bent. In real life, a woman’s posing as if walking down steps, while holding a child would have been precarious at best, especially when wearing such a long skirt. A high-waisted garment flowing on the ground lends a sense of gracefulness to both the statue and the drawing, but in real life its length would have been a liability. A Giambologna variant, *Christ Child Blessing*, made by Susini using components from *Charity*, shows Mary holding the Christ Child in a position comparable, though not identical, to Rembrandt’s *Woman with a Child Descending a Staircase*. 

The combination of three figures that includes a mother holding a baby in one arm with a reaching-up child at her side appears in other artists’ works as well, suggesting a

---


235 Susini also made a statuette of *Irene and Pluto* where Irene’s hand is placed beneath the infant Plutos buddock closer to the position in Rembrandt’s drawing. Collection of Antony Embden, Mareuil-sur-Arnon. Avery and Fisher Fig. 188.
wide spread familiarity with Giambologna variants, for example, Michael Sweerts’s
decidedly statuesque painting, *Mother with Children* (Private Collection, Milan), (Fig.
118) and Adam Elsheimer’s undated drawing, *Mothers and Men Approaching a
Distinguished Man* (Louvre Museum, Paris). Drost maintained that Rembrandt knew the
latter through an engraving by Hendrick Goudt (1583-1648) and based his drawing,
*Roman Woman Approaching Coriolanus*, on it.236

*Stout Man in a Large Cape*

A fourth example that suggests Rembrandt’s use of a Renaissance bronze is his
1629 drawing *Stout Old Man in Large Cape* (Louvre, Paris) (Fig. 119). The study has a
charming immediacy: its sketchy lines make it seem like Rembrandt’s quick record of a
paunchy human model. However, the stance of the man and his earnest profile closely
resemble those of Tetrode’s *Hercules Pomarius* (Robert H. Smith Collection, New York)
made in Delft around 1568-1580.237 When superimposed, the two images closely align;
the only discrepancy is the length of the legs, caused by Rembrandt’s viewing his model
from a slightly higher vantage point than the photograph of Hercules I use in this
comparison (Fig. 120).238

Tetrode’s muscular hero exists in four versions and was reproduced in multiple
castings. The 1624 inventory of the Delft goldsmith Thomas Cruse indicates that moulds

---

236 Willi Drost, Adam Elsheimer Als Zeichner: Goudts Nachahmungen und Elsheimers Weiterleben bei
Rembrandt. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer 1957) 190-91.
237 Goltzius and Cornelis Cornelisz. based a number of works on this distinctive sculpture. See Anthony
Radcliffe, “Schaardt, Tetrode and some possible sculptural sources for Goltzius” and Pieter J.J. van Thiel
“Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem-his first ten years as a painter, 1582-1592” in Netherlandish Mannerism,
238 The image is from Radcliffe 136, 137, 129.
for Hercules were still extant thirty-six years after Tetrode’s death, information
suggesting that casts of it were quite common. The statuette shows the stocky, nude
Hercules with an exceedingly muscular build, brandishing a club in his right hand and in
the other holding behind his back the three Apples of the Hesperides. His head, on a
short thick neck, turns to the left and looks slightly downward.

The manner in which Rembrandt draped his model seems fairly straightforward.
The cloak appears to have been a piece of cloth folded at the edge and draped over the
arms: it has no ties to keep it in place. He could have filled in the undergarment from his
imagination, but the way it wraps over itself on the man’s chest suggests it was an actual
piece of fabric, pulled around the figure and secured with a tie. It would have been
logical then to pull the fabric out a bit to make it look looser and more natural. This
adjustment would have transformed Hercules’s tight, although proudly forward thrusting,
abdomen into a sagging paunch.

In transforming the mighty Hercules into a paunchy man with a crumpled hat and
common cloak, Rembrandt demonstrated the working methods Hoogstraten later
espoused: he modified a familiar subject to create a new one. In this case the ironic
transformation could well have evoked a humorous response among Rembrandt’s
colleagues. Other subjects that Rembrandt based on Tetrode’s hero are less ironic, and I
consider them below.

---

239 See Radcliffe, 136
Rape of Proserpina

The desperate emotions portrayed in Rembrandt’s 1631 Rape of Proserpina (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) (Fig. 121) are reminiscent of the kind of violence found in a number of works by Giambologna and his circle. A Roman relief was the ultimate source for the iconography of the subject, and engravings like those in Pietro Santi Bartoli’s (1635-1700) Admiranda romanarum antiquitatum, first published in 1642, would have familiarized artists with the image. Colin Campbell believed Rembrandt worked from an engraving of Neptune and Theophane, unlike Rubens, who used a Proserpina image, but the consensus is that Rembrandt was indebted to Rubens for the general composition. A now-lost painting by the Antwerp master would have been available to Rembrandt through an engraving by Pieter Soutman (1580-1657), issued the same year

240 Pietro Santi Bartoli, Admiranda romanarum antiquitatum ac veteris sculpturae vestigia anaglyphico opere elaborata, ex marmoreis exemplaribus quae Romanae adhuc extant, in Capitolio, aedibus, hortisque virorum principum ad antiquam elegantiam a Petro Sancti Bartolo delineata incisa, in quibus plurimae ac praecarrisima ad romanam historiam ac veteres mores dignoscendos ob oculos ponuntur, notis (Rome-loanne Iacobo de Rubeis, 1693).
that Rembrandt was working on the piece.\textsuperscript{243} Von Straten conjectured that it was given to him by Huygens via Jacques de Gheyn III.\textsuperscript{244}

The Rembrandt Research Project noted that the iconography of Rembrandt’s painting closely parallels the descriptions in \textit{De Raptu Proserpinae}, a poem by the classical poet Claudianus (d. 404 AD) that was widely read in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{245} Golahny pointed out that although Rubens’s image conforms to the description in \textit{De Raptu Proserpinae} (Minerva and Venus are present rather than Ceres), Rembrandt found all the Claudian passages he needed in Scaliger’s \textit{Poetics libri septem}, the textbook he most likely used in the Latin school in Leiden.\textsuperscript{246}

Although the composition of the two works is similar, Rubens’s Proserpina seems inspired by the gracefully arched body, extended arms and long flowing hair of Bernini’s Daphne from his 1622-25 \textit{tour de force} marble sculpture, \textit{Apollo and Daphne} (Borghese Gallery, Rome). Rembrandt’s Proserpina, on the other hand, is reminiscent of Giambologna’s more unruly depictions of rape. The brutal and unseemly way Pluto grabs under his victim’s thigh and forcibly lifts her leg is a leitmotif in the work of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[243] In addition to the Rubens/Soutman precedent, suggestions for possible two-dimensional sources for this work are numerous. For the similarity of the dragging cloak of Proserpina to that of Fortuna in Adam Elsheimer’s \textit{Contesto} see N. Restorff, “Elements of a composition of Elsheimer’s traced in a Painting by Rembrandt”, \textit{Burlington Magazine} 12, (1907-08) 105 and K. Andrews, \textit{Adam Elsheimer. Il Contesto}, Edinburgh, 1917, 21. For the similarity of the landscape to an Elsheimer see Held, 1973, 49-66. For the parallels of the diagonal composition to a painting by Lambert Sustris, engraved by Raphael Sadeler the Younger see P. Frankl, “Die Persephone-Bilder von Lambert Sustris, Rubens and Rembrandt.” \textit{Oud Holland}, 55(1938) 156-171. The similarity of the composition to an ancient relief carving as also been posited in Held, 1973, 49-66. See for example C. Robert \textit{Die Antike Sarkophagreliefs}, Berlin 1919, no. 359 pl CXIX. RRP also noted that the iconography of the painting closely parallels the descriptions in \textit{De Raptu Proserpinae}, a poem by the late classical poet Claudianus (d. 404 AD) that was well known in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
\item[244] Von Straten, 217.
\item[246] Golahny 99-104.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Giambologna and his followers. In the classical relief, Pluto merely places his hand on Proserpina’s thigh.

In another work by Bernini, *Rape of Proserpina* (1621-22), Pluto grabs under his victim’s thigh, but she remains decorously upright, unlike a second leitmotif in Giambologna’s circle, the dramatically flung-back body of the victim. This position also has a classical precedent, although Proserpina exhibits studied pathos, rather than unbridled desperation, in the Roman relief. Her nearly horizontal position in Rembrandt’s painting makes her seem more victimized than in the prototype and in Rubens’s version of the myth. Statuettes by Giambologna and his followers often show female victims in comparable positions, straining backward to extricate themselves from the assailant’s powerful grip. In the *Rape of a Sabine* (such as de Vries ’s version, Robert H. Smith Collection) the victim’s hand pushes on the rapist’s face, as does Rembrandt’s Proserpina. *Nessus and Deianira, Paris Abducting Helen* (such as Antonio Susini’s 1626 version, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden), and the *Rape of Europa* could all have provided Rembrandt with prototypes for agonized, flailing victims (Figs. 122, 123). Furthermore, Susini’s statuette, *Paris Abducting Helen*, has a female figure, positioned below a struggling couple, reaching up in desperate protest, her mouth opened in a scream quite like Proserpina’s attendants in Rembrandt’s painting.

Three-dimensional images of various rapes, a recurring theme in the circle of Giambologna, would have been logical models for paintings of such violent scenes. They were available in bronze, plaster, and wax. Around 1593-1595, the Amsterdam engraver, Jan Muller (1571-1628), made engravings of a statue of the *Rape of a Sabine* from three different viewpoints. They are labeled as being done from a wax model by de
Vries. De Vries was active in Giambologna’s Florentine workshop from 1581-1586; thus he would have witnessed him making the great marble version of The Rape of the Sabine (1581-83) (Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence) (Fig. 124). Although engravings of Renaissance bronzes helped spread awareness of Giambologna-inspired images among Northern artists, wax statuettes based on his work would have provided artists with another way to work naer het leven from a more versatile source.

If Rembrandt worked from small Renaissance statuettes when he was painting The Rape of Proserpina, he extrapolated van Mander’s advice on the proper use of classical sources: artists should not slavishly copy the original but use their ingenium when developing images. Clark imagined Rembrandt’s creative thought process as he worked on the placement of Proserpina’s hands that, unlike their bronze counterparts, do not flail in the air but grab at their assailant: “What in fact would a decent young Dutch girl do in the situation? Kick and scratch: scratch his eyes out. This Proserpine is doing, so effectively that the swarthy, oriental Pluto has turned away his head in alarm.” In these details Rembrandt surpasses even Giambologna’s attention to detail in his depiction of rape scenes although de Vries’s 1621 Rape of the Sabine shows a victim desperately grasping at the rapist’s hair.

---

247 Radcliffe and Penny, 249.
248 Although none of the sculpture in Rembrandt’s inventory is described as being in wax, out of the 69 pieces of sculpture in Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem’s inventory 13 were wax. Ridolfi mentions that Tintoretto worked from wax figurines that he placed in small sets. Ridolfi, C. Vite dei Tintoretto : da le Maraviglie dell’arte, overo, Le vite degli illustri pittori veneti e dello Stato / (1648) ; introduzione di Antonio Manno. (Venezia : Filippi, c1994). Poussin also worked in this manner. See Hugh Brigstocke “Poussin” The Dictionary of Art Vol 25 (Grove: Oxford UP 1996) 385-397.
249 De Piles/Rubens 139. See Muller for a discussion of how Rubens based his views on those of Quintilian and Agucchi.
250 Clark, 10.
Gombrich noted certain parallels among Rembrandt’s, Antonio Tempesta’s (1555-1630) and Claes Cornelisz. Moeyaert’s (ca. 1591-1655) versions of The Rape of Proserpina.\textsuperscript{251} Although the two main characters along with the chariot and horses have a diagonal orientation in all three works, the relationship of these two-dimensional images can only be a general one: Moeyaert’s Proserpina falls backward into the picture; Tempesta’s stays in the middle ground; and Rembrandt’s falls out toward the viewer.\textsuperscript{252} Their shared characteristics more plausibly originate from all three artists working with similar Giambologna-like statuettes that they viewed from different angles. In the Moeyaert, the way Pluto’s arm stretches across Proserpina’s abdomen corresponds to the configuration of the protagonists in Susini’s Nessus and Deianira (after an earlier model by Giambologna). The centaur’s hindquarters, with windblown tail, match those of the horse in Tempesta’s engraving. Proserpina’s bent leg and her outstretched arms with their splayed fingers in the Tempesta and the Moeyaert recall a number of female figures in Giambologna’s oeuvre.

The animals in Rembrandt’s painting also are reminiscent of bronzes from Giambolyna’s circle. The creature-chariot conjures up the fierceness of their attacking lions. Its sharp fangs may arise from statues like Susini’s late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century Lion Attacking a Stallion (Robert H. Smith Collection) or Barthélemy Prieur’s sixteenth century Lion Devouring a Doe (Robert H. Smith Collection) in which the pressure of the lions’ jaws leave spiky creases in the flesh of their prey (Figs. 125, 126). The chariot could also be based on a panther from a statuette,


\textsuperscript{252} Frankl attributed the diagonal composition to a painting by Lambert Sustris, engraved by Raphael Sadeler the Younger. See P. Frankl, “Die Persephone-Bilder von Lambert Sustris, Rubens and Rembrandt,” Oud Holland, 55(1938) 156-171.
like anonymous late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century *Bacchus with a Panther* (Robert Smith Collection) that exists in many versions and was reproduced over a considerable period of time.²⁵³ It is visible on the table with other figures from the circle of Giambologna in an anonymous ca. 1620 painting from Antwerp, *Cognoscenti in a Room Filled with Paintings* (National Gallery, London).²⁵⁴ Whatever the specific source, the dappled highlights on the surface of the animal-chariot mimic the polished patina of metal sculpture. If Rembrandt used a Giambologna animal as his visual source for the chariot, he may well have noticed its similarities to a written description of Pluto cited in Scaliger:

Pluto is like a lion when he has seized a heifer, the pride of the … herd, and has torn with his claws the defenseless flesh, and has sated his fury on all its limbs. He stands befouled with clotted blood and shakes his tangled mane, and scorns the shepherd’s feeble rage.

Golahny cited this passage in her discussion of Rembrandt’s *Rape of Proserpina* and pointed out that Rembrandt alluded to it by the ferocious chariot.²⁵⁵

The fleeing stallions pulling the group back to the underworld could also have been based on statuettes. Although engravings of reliefs presented seventeenth-century artists with multiple versions of horses in action, they tended toward the schematic or exhibited a classical restraint. The breath-taking swiftness of Rembrandt’s steeds surpasses even Hellenistic prototypes. The various positions used in dressage or mentioned in Italian equestrian manuals were popular subjects for statuettes in the

---

²⁵³ Radcliffe 156-7. This example is French.
²⁵⁴ Filipczak, Fig. 36.
²⁵⁵ Golahny, 101-103.
Giambologna circle. The ca. 1620 Rearing Stallion (Robert Smith Collection), by Ferdinando Tacca, shows a horse rearing, with its hind legs extended, in the corvetta position (Fig. 127). Giambologna depicted the horse with its head turned slightly and his mane and tail free-flying. The horse in Rembrandt’s painting follows this precedent quite closely. Giambologna conceived his Horse Leaping as a pendant to his Rearing Stallion. This second steed is in the posata position, a pose that also shows action but without the back legs extended or the head turned as decidedly. The second horse in Rembrandt’s painting, though almost entirely blocked by the first horse, does not appear to have any extended hind legs, and its head faces forward in a posture fairly close to a standard posata position.

Rembrandt’s appropriation of Northern sculpture in the Rape of Proserpina may have stemmed from more than formal considerations, since the painting was evidently made for Prince Frederick Hendrik of Orange (1584-1647). A 1632 inventory of the Dutch stadholder’s collections identifies his Rape of Proserpina as a work by Lievens, but scholars agree that the entry refers to this particular Rembrandt. If the painting had been a commission from such a prestigious patron, Rembrandt would likely have tried to

---

257 Radcliffe and Penny 183.
258 For positions codified by dressage, see Walter A. Liedtke, The Royal Horse and Rider: Painting, Sculpture and Horsemanship 1500-1800 (New York: Abaris Books, 1989). Although this dissertation is not the venue to add in depth research to the debate surrounding the formal precedents, subject and author of The Polish Rider, it interesting to note that the sinewy legs of that horse are in a position almost identical to Giambologna’s ca. 1587, Flayed Horse, and the open mouth also corresponds. Not only does this raise the possibility that the painter used a bronze for a model, van de Wetering’s description of the rider as “too unsubstantial and vibrating in the unreal gleam” may unwittingly refer to the shine of a bronze figure. Moreover, exotic Turkish riders were not uncommon in bronzes in the Giambologna circle. The transformation into a Polish horsemen would have been a matter of adjusting the costume. See Giambologna Sculpture to the Medici, 184-5.
appeal to his taste (or more directly to that of his secretary and advisor in matters of art, Constantine Huygens [1596-1687], with whom Rembrandt dealt) by basing the violent action on well-known works by Northern artists. 260 Unlike most other wealthy patrons, Frederik and his wife Amalia von Solms (1602-1675) did not collect Italian art but focused exclusively on Northern artists. 261 The dynamic works of Rubens were favorites of the Prince, but in Rembrandt’s mind, The Rape of Proserpina may also have had the advantage of quoting three-dimensional works from the “Dutch canon” of sculptors.

Portions of the Samson Story

The Blinding of Samson

Rembrandt’s desire to please a well situated patron has been the topic of considerable discussion surrounding his large, 1636 work, The Blinding of Samson (Städelisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt), a gift he sent to Constantine Huygens which the secretary nonetheless returned to him (Fig. 128). 262 The reasons for the refusal are not completely clear. Other than the gift’s being perceived as an inappropriate way to establish a good rapport with the influential connoisseur, the changing taste of the period

---


261 Paintings and ceramics were their favorite media. There seems to have been a dearth of sculpture in their collections. Only two statuettes of Hercules and Plato are mentioned, but these would have been quite small for they were silver and stored in an art cabinet. However, the couple must have been familiar with bronzes by Northern artists as inventories and paintings of collections show that these kinds of statuettes were common. Gilt bronzes, such as those in Brueghel’s Venus and Cupid in an Art Cabinet, would have been particularly appropriate for collections of the nobility.

has been posited as one explanation. The rise of classicism in the North sway collectors’ preferences away from Old Testament subjects and the Baroque sensibilities of dramatic, diagonal action and chiaroscuro lighting towards a more restrained subject matter and style. Huygens’s refusal of Rembrandt’s theatrical and gruesome rendition of the biblical subject may have reflected this shift, one that Rembrandt either was not aware of or did not care to follow.

Slive maintained that in The Blinding of Samson Rembrandt consciously included stylistic references to works of art that Huygens had previously liked, including his own earlier works, those of the Utrecht Caravaggists and Rubens. Campbell argued that Rembrandt was consciously vying with Rubens by taking up the theme of the capture of Samson. Rubens’s 1609-1610 painting, Samson and Delilah, (National Gallery, London), was designed to hang over the fireplace in the house of his esteemed patron, Nicolaas Rockox, and Rembrandt’s letter accompanying his gift to Huygens implies that he envisioned the same kind of honor for his work, hoping it would be “worthy of Milord’s house.”

Although Huygens’s new house was built to embody classical principles, Rembrandt’s assessment of Huygens’s taste in paintings was understandable. He wrote about his philosophy of art, thoughts he could well have discussed with Rembrandt, since

---

263 Montias documented the steady decline. Old Testament themes as a percentage of all subjects fell from 15% in the decade 1620-9 to 8% in that of 1640-90. Montias 238-246.
264 The relegation of tapestries from the life of Samson to the attic may be indicative of this change in taste to which Rembrandt may have been oblivious. See Lawrence, 16.
266 Campbell, 56. For studies of and versions of Ruben’s Samson and Delilah see Jaffé and McGrath, 2006, 160-169.
they knew each other for over a decade. In his praise of Rubens’s gruesome painting of the severed head of Medusa, he noted the “life-likeness and the beauty with which this terrible subject is portrayed.” If Rembrandt deliberately included horrific images in the blinding of Samson for the pleasure of his influential client in The Blinding of Samson, the extent to which he may have referred to sculpture from the “Dutch canon,” especially those based on Giambologna, is worth examining.

In tracing the precedents for images in The Blinding of Samson Volker Manuth’s 1993 discussion focused on two-dimensional sources from Northern and Southern artists. Campbell cited the agonized father in the Hellenistic statue group, The Laocoön, as the prototype for Rembrandt’s tormented figure of Samson (Uffizi Gallery, Florence) (Fig. 129). Certainly, inventories and images of Northern collections confirm that reproductions of this three-figured group, in a variety of sizes, were common in the North, and the isolated head of the father, flung back and contorted in pain, is often visible in paintings of collections. No 329 in Rembrandt’s inventory lists “One antique Laocoön,” but it is unclear whether the entry refers to the whole work or merely the father’s head. Some of the adjacent pieces are described as heads, but not all of them.

For centuries the Laocoön has been the inspiration for artists who wanted to portray agonized victims, and it would have been an obvious choice for Rembrandt when he was composing The Blinding of Samson. The unorthodox angle from which he

268 For a discussion of Huygens’s memoirs and how they relate to Rembrandt see Ernst van de Wetering, Quest for Genius (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers 2006) 100-102 and Horst Gerson, Seven Letters by Rembrandt (The Hague:L. J. C. Boucher 1961).
269 Van de Wetering, 102.
271 Strauss, Van der Meulen, et al. 385.
painted the renowned model, tilting it backward and out toward the picture plane, apes Rubens’s use of the same source in his in 1621-2 Saint Michael Striking Down the Rebellious Angels (perhaps another ploy to make the painting worthy of Huygens’s house). However, no reference to Rembrandt’s use of Northern sculptural sources for the other figures in the work has been considered previously. Given the extreme violence of the work, it is also instructive to investigate whether sculptural sources from the circle of Giambologna played a part in Rembrandt’s conception and execution of the theme.

An indication of Rembrandt’s creative process lies in the menacing figure in the foreground who stands with feet far apart, lance in hand, aiming it at Samson’s still intact left eye. His firm stance, and the dark tonalities Rembrandt used to make him a foil for the brightly lit Samson, bring to mind the Tetrode’s Hercules Pomarius. Although Rembrandt’s sturdy lancer turns his head in the opposite direction of Hercules, his hunched shoulders form an equally squat neck.\textsuperscript{272} The facial profile of the lancer is decidedly different; a turned up Northern nose replaces the aquiline Roman profile. Nonetheless, the parallels are striking when looking at Rembrandt’s strongman.\textsuperscript{273}

Rembrandt’s use of the statue is further indicated by the shape of the lancer’s clothes, which mimic Hercules’s bulging muscles: the way in which the full pants swell out as they are tucked into the boots corresponds to Hercules’s massive calves; the shine on the bronze muscles forms striations that have their counterpart in the striped pants; the leopard skin wrapped around the lancer’s torso terminates in a paw-like mass like the


\textsuperscript{273} See Godard and Ganz Fig. 50 and 51 for Goltzius’s precedent in changing in facial features.
mass formed by Hercules’s fist as it grasps the apples; the furrows on the full sleeves echo the bulging muscle on his upper arm. Rembrandt’s use of such inventive attire corroborates de Winkel’s assessment of Rembrandt’s working methods: he often invented the dress of his figures by appropriating elements from previous artists’ works.  

A 1627 drawing by Rembrandt may indicate his early use of Tetrode’s Hercules Pomarius in the figure of another assailant (Fig. 130). It is a ca.1627 quick study for The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist (Louvre Museum. Paris), but one in which Rembrandt’s thought process and use of an inanimate model are clearly visible. He draws the right arm of the executioner twice, raising it substantially in the final, more firmly drawn, position. The figure is summarily drawn, but his parted legs and particularly the swell of the calf on the right one, the thick neck, a bent left arm and a few quick lines to indicate a furled brow are all indications that he was using Hercules Pomarius (turned slightly to the right) as the springboard for his creative process. The inanimate model is less noticeable in the collaborative etching based on the drawing that Rembrandt and Jan van Vliet (1600/10-1668) produced (B 93). The severed head of John was certainly not done from a live model but more likely from one of Rembrandt’s many plaster heads. 

Since Samson and Hercules are often associated (the former a Christian equivalent of the latter), choosing one strongman to subdue the other was perhaps a logical choice on narrative as well as stylistic grounds. Rembrandt apparently associated the two heroes even earlier in his career when he illustrated a prior segment of

---

274 De Winkel, 191-270.
the Samson story. In his ca. 1629 painting, Samson and Delilah (Staatliche Museen, Berlin), Samson is asleep in Delilah’s lap and unaware of her imminent betrayal. Her accomplice surreptitiously enters from the background of the scene (Fig. 131). Like Tetrode’s dark bronze of Hercules Pomarius (turned a few degrees to the left) the dark figure stands with his feet far apart, shoulders hunched, weapon in an extended right hand with the other arm bent. Even the sinews on his left arm correspond to those on the bronze statuette. In his ca. 1628 grisaille version of the same story (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), Lievens also appears to have used Tetrode’s Hercules for the accomplice, turning the statue so that the face looks out at the viewer (Fig. 132). His almost comical expression (certainly not the intention of the artist) belies the use of the intense Tetrode image, but the hunched shoulders, arm position and stride are familiar. As in Rembrandt’s adaptation, there are allusions to the source: the clothing mimics the light patterns on the bronze in the area of the knee, the arm and even the abdomen.

In The Blinding of Samson, another peculiarity that could be accounted for by Rembrandt’s use of the Tetrode statuette is the lancer’s rather unimpressive size compared to Samson’s, even though he is in the frontal plane of the painting. This inconsistency in scale is reminiscent of oddities in some of Rembrandt’s works from the Leiden years in which he used sculptural sources (discussed in Chapter Two). Perhaps a comparable juxtaposition of actual casts of different sizes, the Laocoön turned ninety degrees to the right and the dark Hercules placed in front, enabled Rembrandt to study their forms in space and envision the potential for chiaroscuro lighting in a large work, a
practice that also had the disadvantage of slightly distorting the figures’ proportions in
relation to each other.\textsuperscript{276}

The lancer’s origin in the ancient prototype for masculine strength, suggests
Rembrandt’s possible use of additional images of Hercules for the rest of Samson’s
assailants. Although his captors are reminiscent of the rather indistinct assailants in
Rubens’s paintings of Samson, they have a volume equal to that of Samson and the lancer
in the foreground. Bronzes of the twelve labors of Hercules would have presented
Rembrandt with variations on the theme of a strongman in a number of action poses.
Giambologna, Susini, and Ferdinando Tacca all made versions of the labors.\textsuperscript{277} Their
popularity is confirmed by their frequent representation in paintings of collections.\textsuperscript{278} In
several statuettes Hercules wields a club above his head, as does the assailant in the upper
right section of The Blinding of Samson. In another bronze, both his arms extend in front
of his body as his hands seize a lion’s jaws, much like the poses of Samson’s other
assailants, one of whom is tightening a chain around Samson’s wrist, while the other
plunges the dagger in his eye. As with the lancer, Rembrandt may have alluded to the
shine of the original bronzes in the attire of the attackers, in this case by the flash of their
armor.

The relationship of the weakened Samson to the attacker underneath him (who
clenches his hands together to keep the writhing victim in place) brings to mind images

\textsuperscript{276} If this was the case, the cast Rembrandt used would have been made from the 1525 copy of the
Hellenistic original by Baccio Bandinelli (1488-1560) for the Medici family. His version has an extended
the right arm.

\textsuperscript{277} Related poses such as Adriaen de Vries’s Cain and Able, inspired by Giambolonga’s work, could also
have provided such an action pose. See Avery and Finn, 231.

\textsuperscript{278} For example, the anonymous, Flemish work Cognoscenti in a Room Hung With Pictures ca. 1620, and
the Willem van Haecht’s The Art Gallery of Cornelis van der Geest, 1628.
of the classical tale of Hercules and Antaeus. Because Antaeus was a giant whose invincibility depended on his body’s maintaining contact with the earth, the mighty Hercules held him up in the air until he weakened and died. The parallels to Samson’s demise would have made images of the classical pair likely sources for Rembrandt when he was planning *The Blinding of Samson*. Such images were readily available in bronzes by Giambologna and his followers. In most of these statuettes the muscular bodies of the struggling men face each other. A bronze by Antico (Pier Jacopo Alari-Bonacolsi ca. 1460-1528) is an exception: in it Hercules lifts Antaeus from behind (Fig. 133). Although Antico’s statuette is quite stiff in comparison to Rembrandt’s Samson and his captor, it is possible that Rembrandt had access to a more dynamic image of the struggling pair in which the two men faced the same direction.

Finally, in *The Blinding of Samson* Delilah’s pose is reminiscent of the female victims in Giambologna’s bronzes, such as his *Nessus and Deianira* and *Europa and the Bull* or in Susini’s 1626 *Paris Abducting Helen*. Delilah, however, is no victim; she is a quick-witted perpetrator. Her hurried flight, with head turned back to assess the situation, her outstretched arms and hair steaming in the wind (hers as well as Samson’s!), parallel the iconography of Daphne as she flees from Apollo. The underlying theme of the ultimate triumph of a female over a male also corresponds: as the resourceful Daphne thwarted Apollo’s advances by hurriedly asking Zeus to turn her into a tree, the fleeing Delilah, with equal resourcefulness, swiftly whisks away the source of Samson’s strength.\(^{279}\) Images of Daphne would have been available to Rembrandt through

\(^{279}\) De Jongh discusses several iconological interpretations for the Apollo and Daphne myth in Dutch culture, but they do not seem relevant to Rembrandt’s use of Daphne for Delilah. De Jongh, *Questions of Meaning*, 237-239.
sixteenth-century engravings, such those by Cherubino Alberti (1553-1615), Jacopo Ripando (ca. 1490-1520), or Virgil Solis 1514-1562). If Rembrandt did refer to an engraving for this section of the painting, he gave his “pottage” depth of flavor by incorporating sources from several media.

_Samson Posing a Riddle to the Wedding Guests_

A third Rembrandt painting involving Samson, _Samson Posing a Riddle to the Wedding Guests_ (Gemaldegalerie, Dresden), made in 1640, also has some telling details that suggest his use of statuettes (Fig. 134). The work shows Samson leaning forward, head turned to the left, as, on the fingers of his left hand, he enumerates the parts of a riddle he poses to his guests. Along with quite a few two-dimensional sources, Leonardo da Vinci’s _Last Supper_ has been cited as the basis for the composition. While Schmidt-Degener proposed that Rembrandt based Samson’s wife on a statue by Jacques de Gérines, Samson’s earnest pose has previously not been adequately explained. I believe it is another case in which the work of Giambologna is involved. In his spirited statue of _Mars_ striding forward and looking over his left shoulder, a work much replicated by Susini, such as the ca.1575-1653 _Mars_ (Robert Smith Collection), the fingers on the war god’s left hand are in the same unusual position (thumb, pointer and index finger widely splayed and extended with the ring finger and little finger tucked back) as Samson’s, although the wrist is rotated a full hundred and eighty degrees (Fig.

---

280 Precedents in Otto van Veen, Galle, Heemskerck, or Carracci are repeatedly cited. See Broos, 53.

281 Schmidt-Deneger, 1906.

282 Radcliffe, “Schardt, Tetrode and some possible sculptural sources for Goltzius”, 76.

114
The profiles of both men are similar, as are their intense gazes and taut jugular veins. Samson’s short curly beard is also comparable, although Rembrandt understandably gave him long flowing locks that are absent in the statue of Mars. In this regard the statue is reminiscent of Tetrode’s ca. 1562 *Striding Warrior* (Mr. and Mrs. J. Thompson, New York) (Fig. 136a-c). Turning a standing figure into a sitting one would have called for some adjustments on Rembrandt’s part. It is perhaps not surprising that the relationship of Samson’s torso to his sideways leg seems fudged, an awkward departure from the statue Rembrandt was observing *naer het leven* for the upper body.

**Samson Threatening His Father-in-Law**

In 1635 Rembrandt painted another rarely illustrated incident from the life of Samson, *Samson Threatening His Father-in-Law* (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) (Fig. 137). It shows the furious strongman shaking his fist at his father-in-law, who had given away his wife to another man. In his discussion of the work van de Wetering pointed out:

In Rembrandt’s source of iconographic inspiration, a print by Cornelis Massys, all the motifs in the story - like the closed door or the kid that Samson has brought for his wife – are depicted *in extenso*, but as a sort of sum of the parts rather than a developing epic. Rembrandt, in contrast, concentrates the story into a small pictorial space and brings the conflict much more vividly to life. The mighty Samson, overcome with rage, stands with his back to the locked, iron-barred door, and with raised, clenched fist threatens his father-in-law, who has locked himself in his house and fearfully opened the shutters to look out.

---

283 Giambologna’s original may have held a severed head in a variant statuette by Massimiliano Soldani Benzi (1656-1740) titled *The Executioner*. See Avery 1978, 101

284 Some versions of Tetrode’s comparable statue the *Nude Warrior/Diety* have long flowing locks, the same confident stride and splayed fingers although the last two are not tucked back. Ganz convincingly demonstrated that Goltzius made adjustments in the position of the fingers to suit a particular narrative.

Closely working *naer het leven* from a statuette would have provided exactly this type of more intimate space, and there are a number of works in the Giambologna circle that could have provided a furious protagonist. The often-reproduced *Samson Slaying a Philistine* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London) shows the volatile-tempered Samson with his right arm held high above his head, his fist clenched around the jawbone of an ass (Fig. 114). By rotating and making adjustments, such as the elimination of the weapon and lowering of the arm, one depiction of rage could have easily been transformed into another.

However, if Rembrandt consistently gave a new identity to his sculptural sources, the most commonly reproduced statuette from the circle of Giambologna, *Mercury* (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence) could have supplied an upraised arm (Fig. 138). Though Mercury’s fingers are typically apart with his index finger pointing upward, some versions have the fingers curved in. His mouth is typically open, a further detail that would have made him an appropriate model for the yelling Samson. If Rembrandt did use Mercury as a model, such as Tetrode’s ca. 1560 version (Museo Civico, Bologna), the messenger god’s shallow helmet could account for Samson’s flattened pate. One of Giambologna’s genre figures, *The Bird Catcher* (Fig. 139), would also have been a source for a person who had a tunic with pushed-up sleeves like Samson’s and comparable facial features, such as an upward looking face, short mustache, and slightly opened mouth. Although the exact model is not clear, an inanimate statue would have been much more convenient than posing an actual person in such an intense pose.
Campbell pointed out that in certain respects Rembrandt followed the pictorial traditions of sixteenth-century engravings when he painted his 1635 *The Angel Stopping Abraham from Slaying Isaac* (Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg) (Fig. 140). The landscape in the background depicts the Mountains of Moab mentioned in the Biblical text, an element not always included in seventeenth-century renditions of the story.\(^{286}\) The angel entering the scene from the upper left hand corner also has sixteenth-century precedents. Campbell maintained that the posture of Abraham is so close to the figure of Saint Bartholomew in Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment* in the Sistine chapel (based on the ancient Belvedere torso) that it cannot not be a coincidence. In both, a frontally faced figure turns to look up over his right shoulder. Rembrandt would have known this image from engravings. This is apparently another case in which Rembrandt alluded to the iconography of the source he appropriated, since Bartholomew holds his skin that was flayed with a knife, and Abraham is about to kill his own son with a similar weapon.

Campbell’s identification of Michelangelo’s Bartholomew as the source for Rembrandt’s Abraham stops short of proposing one of his bound slaves as a prototype for the figure of Isaac. The victim’s position, arms bound behind, and head thrust back, is quite close to the *Bound Slave* now housed in the Louvre. The presence of small plaster versions of Michelangelo’s *Bound Slave* in seventeenth-century paintings of collections, such as Rubens’s and Brueghel’s 1617 *Allegory of Sight* (Prado Museum, Madrid) indicates that Rembrandt could have painted this particular image *naer het leven*. If this

\(^{286}\) Campbell, 53.
was the case, he tilted the slave to a nearly horizontal angle as he did the following year with the Laocoön in the Blinding of Samson.

Although the two Michelangelo images may account for the position of the figures in Rembrandt’s painting, their mere juxtaposition would not have produced such an intense image. Campbell saw the influence of Rubens in this regard:

But in the magnitude of the figures, their positioning on the frontal plane and their powerful and urgent movements Rembrandt’s painting reveals the dominant influence of Rubens. Those features that are nowhere to be found to the same degree in contemporary north Netherlandish paintings, nor in engravings from either the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, are so strongly reminiscent of Rubens that we are here forced to disregard the fact that Andries Stock’s engraving after the Berlin [now in William Rockhill Nelson Gallery and Atkin Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri City] picture of c. 1611/1612 is dated three years after Rembrandt’s picture. The probability is that the artist in this case either knew the original by Rubens itself, a drawing after it, or a derivative school work or a similar, lost work by the Flemish painter.287

Compared to the forceful way Rembrandt’s Abraham holds down his helpless son, Rubens’s patriarch looks relatively harmless. Compared to Rembrandt’s Isaac, Rubens’s young man looks only mildly annoyed. If no two-dimensional art could supply prototypes for such graphic violence, Renaissance bronzes would have been perfect resources. Though apparently not observed naer het leven from one fixed view of a bronze, Rembrandt’s The Angel Stopping Abraham from Sacrificing Isaac (Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg) has striking parallels in its various components to Tetrode’s ca. 1573 Theseus Slaying the Centaur Bienor (Robert H. Smith Collection) (Fig. 141). The diagonally placed victim, stripped to the waist with head thrust back, and the perpendicular juxtaposition of an assailant form an unusual and dynamic, V-shaped

287 Campbell, 53.
composition in both works. In each work the assailant holds the victim down by wedging his knee on his hip. In the bronze this detail illustrates Ovid’s description of the struggle between Theseus and Bienor. Its presence in Rembrandt’s painting is probably no coincidence, but rather lingering evidence of his sculptural source. The shape of the centaur’s large, left hand as it pushes emphatically against Theseus’s chest corresponds to Abraham’s equally emphatic hand that muzzles Isaac. Minus the object it holds, the centaur’s right hand also matches Abraham’s right hand. Such moving around of components has its precedent in Goltzius’s work and illustrates another facet of Rembrandt’s ingenium. A similar modification may have occurred in Abraham’s face. It is not exactly like Theseus’s, because the surprised Abraham was thwarted in his attempt to sacrifice Isaac, but the arched nose, curly beard and hair, and the opened mouth covered by a bushy moustache are quite similar to those of Tetrode’s furious hero.

Conclusion

Unlike the tronies and genre scenes that I examined in the first two chapters, where the faces can be matched to their sculptural sources with the help of the 1656 inventory, it is more difficult to determine whether Rembrandt worked directly from any particular Renaissance statuette in his dynamic history paintings. Turning and tilting multi-figured statuettes while working on a painting, perhaps placing them in front of a mirror to reverse certain poses would have provided endless variations on their familiar frontal position, but such a process makes Rembrandt’s sculptural sources more difficult to identify. Giambologna’s practice of switching out components and creating multiple

---

288 Ovid’s Metamorphoses, XII, pp. 345-354 cited in Radcliffe and Penny, 130 (edition not given).
versions of subjects that were in turn modified by his followers adds to the complexity of tracing sources. However, precedents in Goltzius’s creative use of some of the same statues Rembrandt apparently used (Hercules Pomarius, Hercules and Antaeus, Warrior Striding Forward and Mercury) bear out my hypothesis that the use of Renaissance statues was more common than most of the literature on seventeenth-century artists’ sources acknowledges.

As surrogates for human models, the vigorous poses that statuettes provided would have been tremendously helpful. The ubiquity and low cost of small bronzes and plasters casts made them convenient as well as economical models. The use of sculpture by Northern artists had the added advantage of endorsing works from the “Dutch Canon” and therefore displaying regional pride. Theoretical treatises provided a rationale for borrowing Classical themes and alluding to their pagan iconography: in studio practices, there were esteemed precedents in the working methods of Rubens, Goltzius, Cornelius van Haarlem, Spranger, and Poussin. By working with Renaissance statuettes, Rembrandt was able to produce a wide range of highly animated images that ranged from powerfully moving Christian narratives to delightful genre scenes.
CHAPTER 4
REMBRANDT AND PARAGONE

[Painting, as opposed to sculpture] banishes dull drabness, … green unnaturalness, … cruel stoniness, and instead of these … gives a naturalness that is highly regarded, namely a fleshy and skinlike color, which imparts a sembliness to our art in the eyes of art-loving devotees.²⁸⁹
Phillips Angel (1616-1683)

Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer

Any study of Rembrandt’s use of sculpture would be incomplete without a discussion of his bust of Homer, the most well-known piece from his inventory because of its prominence in one of his most famous works, the 1653 Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer (Metropolitan Museum, New York) (Fig. 142). The title is recent, given to Rembrandt’s painting in 1918, after Godefridus Joannes Hoogewerff connected it to documents in the inventories of Rembrandt’s Neapolitan patron, Don Antonio Ruffo. Ruffo refers to the painting as “A half length figure of a philosopher made in Amsterdam by the painter named Rembrandt (it appears to be Aristotle or Albertus Magnus).”²⁹⁰

Nowhere in the Ruffo or Rembrandt documents are there letters stipulating that Rembrandt paint a philosopher. Scholars agree that more likely, as was the case with his commissions of Italian artists, Ruffo gave Rembrandt the freedom to choose his own subject.

The uncertainty regarding Rembrandt’s intended subject led Paul Crenshaw to re-examine the work within the wider context of contemporary events in Amsterdam and

²⁸⁹ Angel, 54/25.
²⁹⁰ Strauss, van der Meulen, et al. 315.
offer an alternative subject for the painting.\textsuperscript{291} Departing from the traditional reading of the work, published most fully by Julius Held, he argued that the central figure is more likely Alexander’s court painter Apelles and that Rembrandt’s portrayal of the legendary artist is a type of self-portrait.\textsuperscript{292} In support of this revised interpretation, Crenshaw placed the genesis of the painting in the framework of the \textit{paragone} debate, a topic much in vogue in the 1650’s when Rembrandt was working on the piece. This debate acknowledged the sympathetic parallels between painting and poetry, while establishing a rivalry between painting and sculpture, and raised the question of which could more effectively capture the illusion of reality and thereby outdo nature.

Influential on Rembrandt’s invention may have been the celebration held in Amsterdam on October 20, 1653, that brought together members of the Guild of Saint Luke and many of the city’s poets to celebrate the alliance of Apelles and Apollo, the models of good painting and poetry respectively.\textsuperscript{293}

Crenshaw saw Rembrandt’s so-called \textit{Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer} as an illustration of this alliance, with the ancient poet Homer replacing the god Apollo. Though he found no visual precedent for the coupling of these two personalities (nor any for Aristotle and Homer), contemporary literary sources show that they were indeed linked in discussions of \textit{paragone}.

Independently of Crenshaw, I have also come to believe that the painting deals with \textit{paragone} though, in the context of my hypothesis, I see it not as an illustration of the harmony between poetry and painting, but as a \textit{demonstration} of the superiority of painting over sculpture. By placing a piece of sculpture prominently in his composition,

\textsuperscript{291} Crenshaw 228-238.
\textsuperscript{293} Crenshaw, 231.
Rembrandt flaunted painting’s ability to ape sculpture, a feat sculpture cannot reciprocate. That Homer and the plaster bust itself are both “blind” made the contrast all the more pointed.

In a footnote to his discussion, Crenshaw supplied a context for my assertion by mentioning that in 1654 the Guild of Saint Luke repeated the *paragone* celebration, changing the focus from the relationship of poetry and painting to the rivalry between painting and sculpture.\(^{294}\) The climate fostered by these on-going discussions among Amsterdam’s artists and literati would have engendered rich possibilities for subject matter. The debate was just as lively in Rembrandt’s native city of Leiden, where Phillips Angel, in his 1642 treatise, *Praise of Painting*, enumerated various points that elevated painting to the summit of the artistic hierarchy.\(^{295}\) Before examining Rembrandt’s *Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer* in detail, some background about the general topic of Rembrandt and *paragone* is in order.

Rembrandt’s awareness of the *paragone* debate emerged rather early in his career. De Jongh maintained that his 1639 etched *Self Portrait Leaning on a Stone Sill* (B 21) pointedly asserts the dignity of the painter’s profession, and is a specific response to Titian’s ca. 1512 *Portrait of A Man*, the so called portrait of the great Renaissance poet, Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533) (Fig. 143).\(^{296}\) Rembrandt emulated the poet’s haughty bearing and dressed himself in even more elegant clothes to illustrate the rivalry between the two art forms. By taking the same pose in his 1640 painted *Self-Portrait* (National

\(^{294}\) Crenshaw, 231.

\(^{295}\) Angel/Miedema 207-248.

\(^{296}\) Eddy de Jongh, “The Spur of Wit: Rembrandt’s Response to the Italian Challenge,” *Delta* XII (1969):49-67. Raphael’s ca. 1515 *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione*, a work Rembrandt sketched when it was up for sale in Amsterdam, has also been cited as a source for Rembrandt’s self-portrait.
Gallery, London), Rembrandt demonstrated his intent to surpass the accomplishments of Titian as well (Fig. 144). De Jongh also discussed Rembrandt’s 1641 Portrait of Cornelis Ansl and his Wife Aeltje Gerritsdr. (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) in the context of paragone and maintained that the depiction of Ansl’s skilled oratory (his mouth is opened, his hand is extended, and he leans forward) and its reception by his wife (her head is cocked in thoughtful reflection) was in response to a criticism that Joost van den Vondel leveled at Rembrandt’s earlier, less dynamic study of Ansl (Fig. 145). On the verso of the study appears van den Vondel’s quatrain:

O Rembrandt, paint Cornelis’s voice,
The visible part is the least of him:
The invisible can only be known through the ears.
Who Ansl wants to know must hear him.297

De Jongh argued that when Rembrandt was provoked into competition with a poet, he responded with a visual statement flaunting painting’s ability to capture the effect of a person’s voice as well as his appearance.

The conversation about the superiority of painting over the other arts appears to have been an ongoing discussion in Rembrandt’s studio, for his student Gerrit Dou repeatedly used the paragone debate as a basis for subtle and sophisticated themes that had great appeal to his cultured patrons. Hecht showed how a number of Dou’s paintings, including his 1653 painting, The Violinist (Vaduz Castle, Liechtenstein), have the format of a person framed by a stone niche leaning on a sill that is decorated with a

sculptural relief by François Duquesnoy (1597-1643) (Fig. 146). The reason for the enigmatic juxtaposition of highly mimetic objects (in the case of The Violinist, a bird in a cage, a perfectly painted instrument, a variety of textured fabrics, an oriental rug, and the relief) puzzled art historians until Hecht showed that they illustrated a multi-layered form of paragone. He maintained that the violinist tries to deceive a bird with his song while a putto in the Duquesnoy relief below him, holds up a mask to frighten a goat:

The paragone aspect already implied in the painting of a piece of sculpture as just one of the many things a painter can imitate to the point of deception, would then be present in the rest of the picture’s iconography as well – an iconography of teasing nature into believing that art is real. Given the unheard-of quality of Dou’s powers of imitation (and one need only look at the woolen carpet or the violinist’s music book to see how great they were), it is decidedly funny that sculpture can do no better than child-play with a mask, whereas painting can not only represent all things, but even suggest what music does to nature. The rivalry of the arts measured by their effect on nature would thus be the main concern of Dou’s Violinist…

Focusing on the multi-layered potential of paragone conversations in conjunction with an even closer examination of Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer suggests that Rembrandt’s painting also embodies the paragone debate in several deliberate, but quite subtle ways and that these methods are firmly grounded in seventeenth-century art theory.

I have noted earlier that Rembrandt and his contemporaries were keenly aware of the aesthetic principles advocated by van Mander in his Schilder-Boeck. Examining the painting within the context of van Mander’s directives clearly exposes some of the principles Rembrandt utilized when he was composing the work. In chapter six of the

---

299 Hecht 191.
Schilder-Boeck van Mander stressed the importance of a lively depiction of the affecten (passions). He advised painters to pay particular attention to the eyes, emphasizing their motion as they look at something within the painting. He maintained that this trajectory lends vitality to a work and that it should be accentuated by corresponding gestures. Rembrandt faithfully carried out these directives in Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer: the protagonist’s outstretched arm touches the bust of Homer with a gesture that parallels the action of his eyes as they gaze past the bust, lost in introspective melancholy.

Awareness of the expressive potential of a furrowed brow and articulated facial muscles is further strategy that van Mander advocated for depicting the passions. Again, Rembrandt followed this advice with great effect in the face of Aristotle/Apelles, and further demonstrated the superiority of painting by juxtaposing rich skin-tones with a monochrome statue. In his discussion of reflexy-const (the art of depicting reflections) van Mander advocated the inclusion of some shiny objects as another means of lending vivacity to a work. The impressive gold chain draped across Aristotle/Apelles’ torso fulfills this directive in a most breath-taking manner.

The image of Alexander the Great on the pendant hanging from the impressive, gold chain brings to mind a significant point in the paragone debate put forth by Lodovico Dolce (1508-1568) in his 1557 Aretino. When discussing the merits of the

---

300 Van Mander ed. Miedema Chapter 6. For a summary of van Mander’s notion of how the trajectory of the eyes, portays the affecten see Melion 656-69.
301 Melion 67-68.
302 Van Mander Chapter 7.
303 Held mentioned that Rembrandt loved to paint shiny objects, but added that indulging his delight is a superficial explanation for why he included the chain. Yet Held’s lengthy explanation of the work and his reverence for its perceived message stresses, what Alpers would characterize as, the reading of the painting rather than the looking at it. Held, 47.
various arts, Dolce maintained that jewelry and gold “are praised the more if their
makeup includes some engraving or work from the hand of a skilled master, or if they
take the form of human or animal figures or anything else which possesses design and
gracefulness.” 304 These additions make metalwork more like painting or sculpture and
therefore move it up a notch in the artistic hierarchy. By including a piece of repoussé
jewelry in the work, Rembrandt showed that his chosen medium was capable of
replicating relief sculpture, another example of painting’s supremacy in the hierarchy of
genres.

Yet there are certain aspects of the painting where Rembrandt did not follow the
advice of theorists. When discussing paragone, van Mander warned against the thick
application of paint, a transgression that would push painting perilously close to its rival,
sculpture, by appealing to the sense of “blind touch.” 305 Van Mander stressed the need
for paintings to act as spieghels (mirrors) that reflect the world, not as tafereelen (panels)
on which images of the world are painted. In order for this illusion to work, he urged
painters to be net (neat) and eliminate any trace of brushstrokes. Indeed, the perfectly
smooth surfaces of the Netherlandish fijnschilders, like Dou, who followed van Mander’s
directives, made it possible for painters to replicate objects with uncanny realism. Yet,
this highly controlled technique was not as successful in capturing the subtleties of
human flesh, a major asset when demonstrating painting’s superior ability to mimic
nature. Rembrandt’s early net style gradually evolved and became more in line with the

304 Dolce/Roskill
305 Melion, 62.
Venetian tradition, which employed loose brushwork and deliberately sought a more tactile surface, one especially suited to the depiction of flesh.

Van de Wetering’s comparison of the Pickenoy and Rembrandt portraits mentioned in my introduction, clearly shows the results of the different painting styles.306 The net handling of the former renders an accurate likeness, but makes the face appear hard and the eyes like glass, while the loose brushwork of the latter causes the skin to appear supple and the eyes slightly watery. In his quest to demonstrate the superiority of painting over sculpture, Rembrandt evidently realized the limitations of van Mander’s advice on this aspect of illusionism.

These theoretical directives and practical formulas would have been strategic weapons in the paragone battle. They allowed artists to paint protagonists, whose emotions and thoughts were reflected in the subtleties of their countenance, thereby proving that painting could replicate nature far more effectively than sculpture. If Rembrandt’s intent was to comment on painting’s superiority over its rival sculpture (and highlight its alliance with poetry) when he painted Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer, then it is instructive to look for what is perhaps the most stunning demonstration of painting’s supremacy: its ability to give dead, white sculpture modulated color and texture that bring it to life. It is quite possible that Rembrandt not only reproduced a piece of sculpture in the bust of Homer, but also incarnated a second piece in the figure of Aristotle/Apelles.

Several writers have noticed anomalies in the figure of Aristotle/Apelles. As I mentioned in my introduction, in her discussion of the ways Rembrandt depicted touch,

Alpers noted that “The right hand [of Aristotle] takes on the creamy color of the bust it probes.” 307 This remark brings up the question of whether the hand was also one of Rembrandt’s plaster casts. It does not actually “probe” the bust, as Alpers maintained, but more accurately lies squarely on top of it; the plaster bust props up the plaster hand. The left hand then, also warrants careful scrutiny. Alpers noted its “ruddier appearance of flesh,” and, significantly, described it as “oversized.” This use of mismatched hands conjures up images of Rembrandt rummaging through his boxes of cast body parts for an appropriately posed specimen, at the expense of exactly matching the size of the right hand.

As with the right hand, a heavy, plaster left hand would have needed support. Rembrandt would have had to tie it into the costume in some manner. Traces of two such supports appear in the painting. First, in several places Rembrandt evidently tied the gathered sleeves around what could conceivably be a plaster arm. He then pulled out the white material to create the eye-catching, voluptuous folds. The double bands around the torso could also have been anchor points for the ties. Second, the gold chain conveniently slips between two fingers enabling the pointer finger to rest on its upper edge. The weight of the hand pulls the chain down slightly. A third detail in this area of the painting is noteworthy. The ring on the larger hand has been slipped on only as far as the first joint. Although rings were sometimes worn on parts of the finger other than the base, it is also plausible that Rembrandt was able to push an actual ring on a plaster finger only so far before it met the resistance of a hard, plaster knuckle.

307 Alpers, Rembrandt’s Enterprise, 25.
When examining the rest of the figure, Aristotle/Apelles is swathed in a yards of gathered, white, fabric, hardly resembling a toga. Rembrandt further obscures any contours of the torso with a black, apron-like garment. De Winkel maintained that the overlaid apron kept the white “toga” within the Northern constraints of decorum, for Greek togas looked like contemporary Northern underwear.308 The resulting image may have been more palatable for Northern tastes, but the attire is ungainly, an effect that did not go unnoticed among Rembrandt’s contemporaries. Held noted that:

…Abraham Breughel, in a letter to Rembrandt’s patron Ruffo, dated January 24, 1670, most assuredly had Rembrandt’s Aristotle in mind when he wrote that a truly great artist paints beautiful nude bodies, whereas an ignorant one tries to hide them in darkness and ridiculous gowns.309 Yet, at issue is not Rembrandt’s lack of knowledge, but his artful strategies for fabricating a convincing reality, perhaps using plaster body parts and stuffed fabric.

Scrutiny of Aristotle/Apelles’s hands and torso leads finally to an examination of the head and face that convey such a poignant sense of humanity. I would argue that a painter’s ability to portray convincing affecten does not necessarily presuppose the use of a human model with an expressive face. Van de Wetering’s explanation of how pictorial formula were “projected” onto the various faces of Rembrandt’s human models recounts a method equally suited to animating plaster busts. With his manipulation of light and shadow, his facile brushwork and formulaic knowledge, Rembrandt was a master at transforming hard surfaces into convincing flesh. This is clearly the case in another painting where he used his Homer bust, the 1662/63 Homer Dictating to a Scribe

---

308 De Winkel 216.
309 Held, 30.
(Mauritshuis, The Hague) a work that conveys a soulfulness equal to that of his Aristotle/Apelles (Fig. 147). It is certainly painted *naer het leven* from his bust of Homer and as such confirms that incarnating sculpture was a working method Rembrandt practiced throughout his long career.

If the figure of Aristotle/Apelles was actually fabricated in the studio, one cannot help contemplating what particular bust Rembrandt would have used in this aggregate body. No. 164 in the inventory mentions “One Aristotle” among the antique heads, but it is unclear which version of the often-depicted philosopher this entry refers to. Extant, antique statues typically show him with a short, thick beard that grows up onto his cheeks, a high steep forehead, and an aquiline nose. These busts include the second-century Roman copy of a ca. 325 BC, Greek original in the National Museum, Rome and a less well preserved version in the Palermo Museum (Fig. 148). Theodoor Galle’s (1571-1633) undated drawing, *Bust of Aristotle* (Vatican Library, Vatican), also has these characteristics and may indicate the type of bust that was available to Northern collectors (Fig. 149). Although Rembrandt’s Aristotle/Apelles has similar facial features, a secure match is difficult to determine. Much of the face in *Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer* is covered with facial hair, in shadow, or painted with free brushwork, elements that set a pensive mood, but obscure Rembrandt’s source. Crenshaw’s hypothesis, that the figure is Apelles, further complicates any certain identification of Rembrandt’s model. However, given Rembrandt’s ability to incarnate casts and the internal information I mention above, Rembrandt could have fabricated his Aristotle/Apelles from any number of his numerous busts.
Conclusion

Determining the identity of the central figure in Rembrandt’s Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer did not hold the fascination in Rembrandt’s time that it does today. Ruffo’s attitude, that the painting depicts some sort of philosopher, indicates that the generic subject of a melancholy genius, quite common in the seventeenth century, should suffice. Certainly for my hypothesis, the identity of the protagonist is not a central concern. A more productive line of inquiry examines what contemporary discussions of paragone may have prompted the genesis of the work. By focusing on the deliberations between the painters and poets of Amsterdam, Crenshaw provided a rich cultural context for Rembrandt’s Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer. This line of reasoning led me to examine contemporary Netherlandish art theory and conclude that Rembrandt both followed and departed from its principles when he painted this important commission.

I suggest that his studio practices and working methods were consistent with those discussed throughout this dissertation, and that, in addition to his inclusion of the bust of Homer in Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer, he may have incarnated the bust of Aristotle from his collection for the figure of Aristotle/Apelles. If this was the case, his singular ability enabled him to create a masterpiece from a few mundane studio props.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

Unresolved Issues

In a study such as this one, some issues cannot be satisfactorily resolved. Some entries in the 1656 inventory are too general to trace, such as No. 327 “One satyr’s head, with horns,” No. 341 “A giant’s head,” or No. 333 “Three or four antique heads of women.” Some of the Roman emperors on the list are commemorated in multiple types of busts and statues, making it difficult to determine which versions Rembrandt owned. No. 326 “A head of Christ, a study from life,” is a startling entry, but one with intriguing implications. Art historians have traditionally assumed the entry refers to a two-dimensional work, but this notion may be incorrect, for the piece was in one of the five bins in Rembrandt’s studio that contained three-dimensional props. It was stashed among some twenty other heads including emperors, the antique Sibyl, the Laocoön and the Seneca, although the jumble also included props such as No. 318 “A quantity of antlers,” and No. 321 “Nine gourds and bottles.” Only the last two items listed in the bin were two-dimensional works, No. 338 “Two small paintings by Rembrandt,” and they were

---


probably on the top of the more bulky items or tucked in the side if the bins were open at the front, as they are in the reconstruction of Rembrandt’s studio. \(^{312}\)

If the head of Christ was a three-dimensional study from life (perhaps in clay), the assumption that Rembrandt used a young man from the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam (an area near his house in the Breestraat) for the model in his paintings of Christ needs rethinking. There could have been an interim step: his use of a sculpted head of a Jew. \(^{313}\) Using such a head would have saved paying for a live model. This notion fits in with Wheelock’s observation that Rembrandt’s portrayals of Christ, in spite being “imbued with Rembrandt’s spirit” have a certain convention. \(^{314}\) They closely conform to a description of Jesus published in a 1678 treatise on painting by van Hoogstraten, who based his type on the ancient writer Publius Lentulus. \(^{315}\) As with the formulaic facial features van de Wetering identified, pre-existing conventions could be grafted onto sculptural as well as human models. Working from an inert piece of sculpture may partially account for the consistently benign look in Rembrandt’s depictions of Jesus.

Tracing No. 322 in the inventory, “Two sculpted heads of Barthold Been and his Wife,” did not yield any results. \(^{316}\) Because it is the only entry in the inventory described as sculpted, rather than cast, it was most likely an original work in stone, wood or possibly clay. Wurzbach thought this entry referred to the engraver G. van Been, active

\(^{312}\) Fieke Tissink, The Rembrandt House Museum Amsterdam (Amsterdam: Ludion 2003)

\(^{313}\) Rembrandt’s use of Jewish models and his portrait of unnamed Jews came under scrutiny in the exhibition The ‘Jewish’ Rembrandt, Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam, Nov. 10, 2006-Feb. 4 2007. The exhibit demonstrated that many of the so-called Jews in Rembrandt’s works could not be confirmed as such, because the identity of his models had been merely based on stereotypes.


\(^{315}\) Clark 208.

\(^{316}\) Strauss, van der Meulen, et al. 383.
in Holland in the mid-seventeenth century, but Kenneth Clark, more plausibly, read it as Barthel Beham, a well-respected German engraver and painter who studied with Albrecht Dürer. The handwriting is difficult to decipher, but looks as if the name is spelled \textit{B E E N}. One can imagine Rembrandt mumbling the first name and dropping the last syllable of the last name so that the secretary from the Chamber of Insolvent Estates spelled it phonetically as \textit{B A R T O L D B E E N}.

A sixteenth-century portrait engraving of Beham is not a reliable source for determining what he actually looked like because it is an adaptation from Hieronymus Cock’s 1572 engraved portrait of Bernard van Orley. In another sixteenth-century engraving and a small portrait medallion of Beham, the features are too conventional to allow for meaningful comparisons with any of the faces in Rembrandt oeuvre.

The exact identity of the Cyrus and Scipio statues mentioned in Pels’s poem (quoted at the beginning of this dissertation) were also difficult to determine with certainty. Sculpted images of Cyrus the Great typically use Eastern conventions for portraying people and are in low relief. I found nothing like this type of sculpture listed in inventories or depictions of studios. When Rembrandt painted Cyrus in his 1633 \textit{Daniel and King Cyrus Before the Idol} (Getty Museum, Los Angemos) he used more natural, Western conventions (Fig. 150). His rendition brings to mind Otto Benesch’s observation: “The Baroque Rembrandt of the 1630’s understood the representation of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[320] See Löcher 1999.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
history mainly as the drastic reality of heavy, bulging, bolstered forms with wavy compact outlines, imposing in appearance and exotic in adjustment.” 321 Like Rembrandt’s drawing of the Stout Man in a Large Cloak (Fig. 119), the commanding stance of Cyrus may be based on Tetrode’s Hercules Pomarius. This prototype for masculine strength could well have been the model that inspired Pels to describe Rembrandt’s “Cyrus” as having “noble limbs.”

Scipio is typically depicted as bald, except for a few fine hairs at the back of his head. The sculpture most commonly purported to be him, a bronze from Herculaneum, was not discovered until after Rembrandt’s death. Other extant busts are similar to Rubens’s engraving of Scipio from the Uomini Illustri series in which he has a slender nose, sad eyes (due to the pronounced diagonal slant of his brow), and a bald head. However, I could not securely identify Rembrandt’s use a Scipio bust. Perhaps a painter from Rembrandt’s circle used the Roman general for his undated, bald and pensive tronie, Old Man In Prayer (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) (Fig. 151). The features generally comply with those of Scipio, and his attire conforms to Pels’s description of how Rembrandt fitted a fur on his bust.

The 1656 inventory lists a number of unidentified faces cast from life: No. 241, “One East Indian basket full of casts and heads”, No. 316, “A large collection of hands and heads cast from life”, and No. 178, “Eight large pieces of plaster work cast from life.” I propose that some of these were cast from Rembrandt’s own face, and from the

---

people in his immediate surroundings, a theory that could have broader implications for the field of Rembrandt studies.

The Broader Significance of My Research

In addition to helping identify some of Rembrandt’s nameless sitters and giving insights into his working methods, my hypothesis that Rembrandt worked *naer het leven* from draped statues and casts could answer some perplexing questions in the wider field of Rembrandt studies.

*Authentication and Dating*

The Rembrandt Research Project initially questioned the authenticity of Rembrandt’s ca. 1639 *Young Man with Gorget and Beret* (Uffizi Gallery, Florence) (Fig. 152). In a review of the exhibition, *Rembrandt By Himself*, Michael Podro explained “…they were troubled by the discrepancy between the apparent age of the young man and the Project’s stylistic dating.” They also noted the “unusual oblique set of the head.” Yet, they agreed that the subtlety of the drawing could hardly be attributed to a student. If one of Rembrandt’s boxes of heads, hands, and feet included a cast of his own face, both the age and the unusual angle of the head could be accounted for: he could have continued to work from the cast for years after it was made. Rembrandt apparently played with the notion of his own portrait bust in his 1633 etching, *The Ship of Fools* (B

---

111), for the double-headed herm in the background of the bizarre scene bears his likeness.

Questions about dating also surround Rembrandt’s 1655 painting of his son, Titus at His Desk (Museum Boymans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam) (Fig. 153). Ackley observed that Titus, who would have been thirteen at the time, looks quite young. This discrepancy had led some to question the identity of the musing boy. Ackley defended the identification by saying: “…it must be acknowledged that teenage boys often make the transition from child to man with startling rapidity.” However, an etching of Titus done the following year still shows him as a very young boy. If Rembrandt had a plaster cast of Titus’s face, he could have used it as a model even after his son had reached maturity. It would have also solved the problem of keeping the child still while he posed.

Rembrandt’s 1660 painting, Titus van Rijn in a Monk’s Habit (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) portrays him as older than he is in Titus at His Desk (Fig. 154). Rembrandt’s decision to paint his son in the guise of a Capuchin monk is reminiscent of Lievens’ Capuchin Monk, an image, as I suggest in Chapter One, he made from a death mask of Prince Maurice. The bulky attire of the Capuchins, with its deep hood and cowl that can cover up all but the front portion of a monk’s face, would have lent itself to being stuffed with padding and casts. Rembrandt’s elimination of all but the frontal plane of Titus’s face could imply that he used a life mask, a choice that indicates he was still using the working methods of his Leiden colleague, even when he was already well established in Amsterdam.

Professional Models

Theories about the use of professional peripatetic models could also be revised if my hypothesis is taken into account. The appearance of the same faces in a number of Northern, seventeenth-century works may reflect the use of professional models in some cases, but the ubiquity of plaster casts suggests they were also another source that would account for the same faces appearing in a variety of artists’ works.

Rembrandt’s Teaching Methods

My hypothesis also provides insights into Rembrandt in the role of a teacher. The notion of his unprecedented respect for the individuality of his students may need some revising. The concept is partially based on a statement by Houbraken, who recounted how the master “rented a warehouse on the Bloemgracht where, in order to be able to paint from life without disturbing each other, his pupils made cubicles, each one for himself, by setting up partitions of paper and oil cloth.” 324 Haverkamp-Begemann noted: “These cubicles seem to be without precedent in the history of art instruction. It is more likely that Rembrandt wanted his students to concentrate better and develop their own talents, rather than exercise stiffer control.” 325 Such a cubicle is visible in Rembrandt’s etching, Man Drawing from a Cast, (B 130), where stacks of books and some plinths enclose a small area. Partitioning off their workplace may indeed have bolstered his pupils’ sense of self, but a more practical reason would have been their need to control the lighting conditions of the various projects they were working on. Working from

324 Arnold Houbraken quoted in Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann, “Rembrandt as Teacher” in Rembrandt After Three Hundred Years: An Exhibit of Rembrandt and His Followers (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago 1969) 27.
325 Haverkamp-Begemann 27.
statues provided artists with the ability to see clearly patterns of light and shadow on three-dimensional forms when a candle was placed nearby. *Man Drawing from a Cast* shows such a light source beside a plaster head. For full effect, ambient light from adjacent artists working in the same manner needed to be blocked. Partitions would have served this purpose. Their importance to Rembrandt’s way of teaching is verified in a 1658 document drawn up when he sold his house, for he was allowed to take items that were essential for his work. These included “several partitions in the attic placed there for his apprentices.” 326

And finally, one of the great advantages of studying with Rembrandt would have been his zealously amassed collection of studio props, including his huge collection of casts and statues. Rembrandt’s students tended to be older artists who had studied the basics of their art with other masters. They would not have used his collection of busts for the mandatory drawing exercises typically practiced by beginners, but the extensive resource would have been immensely helpful when they were faced with inventing a life-like tronie or fabricating convincing figures for their history paintings. Van der Veen discussed a somewhat ambiguous statement from around 1720 that may testify to the importance of such a resource. The biography of Adriaen van der Werff, (who was a protégée of Rembrandt’s student, Cornelis Brouwer) quotes him as saying that he was often unable to find suitable models and that this was why the apostles depicted in one of his history pieces were “not as lively and natural’ as Rembrandt’s.” 327 Van der Veen assumed that the statement referred to human models. Yet, as I demonstrate in Chapter

326 Strauss, van der Meulen, et al. 412
327 Van der Veen, *Genius and His Impact* ed. Blankert 73.
Three, quite a few of Rembrandt’s most lively poses appear to be based on Renaissance bronzes. “Suitable models” could refer to these types of props or to the wide variety of facial types that were available to his students.

The last part of van der Werff’s statement is a bit ambiguous, but is reminiscent of Rembrandt’s tronies that I discussed in my first two chapters. “For Rembrandt,” the biographer continued, “lived at a time when men generally wore beards,” and he “turned the picturesque tronies 328 in the Joode Breestraat [where he lived] 329 to good advantage.” 330 Rembrandt scholars have assumed that this statement refers to the picturesque Jews from the quarter near where Rembrandt lived, 331 but it could also refer to the variety of heads he had in his house on the Joode Breestraat. These picturesque heads could be turned to good advantage. By softening their marmoreal facial hair and skin, Rembrandt could incarnate them and give them new personas that were highly saleable. Inventories confirm what is surely no coincidence: Rembrandt’s students were some of the largest collectors of sculpture in the seventeenth century. The manner of using sculpture that they learned while studying with Rembrandt was evidently one they continued when they were independent masters.

328 Tronies literally mean “heads.”
329 Van der Veen’s insert. Genius and His Impact 73.
330 “men nog al veel gewent was baarden te draagen... de schilderagtige tronien op de Joode Breestraet...wel...tot zijn voordeel te verkiesen.” Barbara Gaehgns, Adriaen van der Weff 1659-1722 (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag 1987) 438. This passage translated into English in A Genius and His Impact, 73.
331 Jaap van der Veen, personal interview, May 2006.
Summary

Readers of this dissertation may not agree with all my comparisons of paintings and sculpture, for close scrutiny of Rembrandt’s images may have sometimes led me to see what I was looking for rather than what was actually there. The most persuasive examples occur when a piece of sculpture listed in the 1656 inventory has unique features or when the angles and lighting conditions of the images made by Rembrandt and the painters in his circle closely correspond to those in photographs of what, I maintain, were their sculptural models. The opened-mouth Sibyl in Rembrandt’s The Three Singers (Hearing) or the fat Vitellius in Lievens’s Bald Man Singing are compelling examples (Figs. 71, 70). In most cases, these types of parallels were difficult to obtain; determining what version of an emperor or philosopher Rembrandt owned was often problematic. For the pieces that did seem to be done from identifiable sculpture, plaster casts were often not available for me to photograph in the same pose. Finally, the originals are dispersed throughout a large number of collections, making it unfeasible to photograph all of them under ideal conditions. For the most part, I had to rely on preexisting photographs of Ancient and Renaissance sculpture. Although the Internet facilitated the search for such material, identical vantage points and lighting were still rarely available. The problem was compounded by the fact that Rembrandt did not slavishly copy his models, but deliberately used brushwork and trappings that disguised them. A comparable mastery of media and highly developed ingenium were rarely present in the work of his colleagues, so casting a wider net by looking at their work provided some obvious examples of botched attempts to incarnate sculpture. Paudiss’s draping a cloth directly on his bust instead of padding it to give the illusion of shoulders is an obvious example (Fig. 14).
Empirical comparisons were not my only methodology, however. It was necessary to support my observations with precedent and theory. Citing examples by artists that Rembrandt held in high regard clearly demonstrated that incarnating sculpture was not solely an innovation of the Rembrandt circle. Goddard’s and Ganz’s study of Goltzius’s prints confirmed his repeated use of Renaissance bronzes as models. They stressed the need for viewers to look beyond the immediately recognizable, an approach that I followed in my discussions of Rembrandt’s working methods. Scholten’s analysis of seventeenth-century Dutch collections and his resulting notion that there was a Northern canon in which the works of Tetrode, Giambologna, and de Vries were supreme, lent credence to my supposition that several Rembrandt documents allude to his ownership of such statuettes.

Rubens studies were another precedent that helped show the flexibility provided by sculptural models, such as Warnke’s observation that he turned the Dying Seneca (Borghese Fisherman) upside-down for his model for the Crucifixion of Peter, or Jaffé’s assertion that he made more studies of Tetrode’s échorché than any other work.

Seventeenth-century art treatises provided a firm foundation for my hypothesis. Van Mander, de Lairesse, Rubens, Angels, and van Hoogstarten all repeatedly spoke to various aspects of incarnating sculpture, advocating the draping of sculpture in cloth, the use of prostheses, the transforming of its hard surface into pliant skin. They also warned against the slavish copying of sculptural sources.

The paragone debate provided another fertile perspective from which to look at the phenomenon of bringing sculpture to life. Painting’s superior capacity to reproduce
its arch-rival, sculpture, within a two-dimensional format gave painters the ability to play
with a fertile range of illusions, capturing the various stages of bringing sculpture to life.

Although all my examples may not convince all my readers, there is ample
evidence in precedent, theory, the paragone debate, and particularly in the work of
Rembrandt and the artists in his circle, that the reliance on sculpture was more prevalent
and artful (in the sense of covert) than has previously been noted.
Fig. 1 De Gheyn II, Jacques. Prince Maurice on his Deathbed. 1625. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 2 Rembrandt van Rijn. Portrait of an Old Man. 1651. Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth.
Fig. 3 Rembrandt van Rijn. *Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis*. 1661-2. National Museum, Stockholm.
Fig. 1 reversed Prince Maurice on his Deathbed.

Fig. 4 Lievens, Jan. Capuchin Monk. 1629. Marquess of Lothian, Monteviot.
Fig. 5  Rubens, Peter Paul. The Four Philosophers. 1611-12. Pitti Palace, Florence.

Fig. 6  Rubens, Peter Paul. Head of ‘Seneca’. before 1626. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Fig. 7 Rubens, Peter Paul. Heads of Seneca and Galba. ca 1618. Hermitage Museum, St.

Fig. 8 Rubens, Peter Paul. Bust of ‘Seneca’. before 1626. Museum Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp.
Fig. 9 Anonymous. Borghese Fisherman. 2nd century. Louvre Museum, Paris.

Fig. 10 Rubens, Peter Paul. The Death of Seneca. 1612-13. Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Fig. 11 Rubens, Peter Paul. Emperor Sevius Sulpicius Galba. before 1600. Private Collection.

Fig. 12 Rubens, Peter Paul. Bust of Julius Caesar. 1618. Jagdschloss Grunewald Museum, Berlin.
Fig. 13a Democrates. engraving
No. 111 by L. Vorsterman.

Fig. 13b Socrates. engraving No.
118 by P. Pontius.

Fig. 13c Hippocrates. engraving
No. 113 by P. Pontius.

Fig. 13 a-c  Rubens, Peter Paul. Uomini Illustri. before 1638.
Fig. 14 Paudiss, Christoff. Portrait of a Man. 1661. Private Collection, Budapest.

Fig. 15 Anonymous. Evangelist Writing. ca. 1661. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Fig. 16a-d  Anonymous. *Bust of Emperor Nero*. 2nd century AD. Capitoline Museum, Rome.
Fig. 17 Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens. Allegory of Sight. ca. 1618. Prado, Madrid.
Fig. 18  Rembrandt van Rijn. Portrait of a Man Holding His Hat. 1639. Armand Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.

Fig. 16a  Bust of Emperor Nero.

Fig. 19  superimposed Fig. 16a Bust of Emperor Nero onto Fig. 18 Portrait of a Man Holding His Hat.
Fig. 20  Jouderville, Isaac. Portrait of a Young Man Wearing a Turban. 1631. Royal Collection, Windsor Castle.

Fig. 16a  Bust of Emperor Nero.
Fig. 16a  Bust of Emperor Nero.

Fig. 21  Jouderville, Isaac (Rembrandt?). Portrait of a Man. 1632. Museum of Art, Cleveland.
Fig. 22 Backer, Jacob Adriaensz.. Portrait of a Gentleman. T.B. Hooks Collection.

Fig. 23 Anonymous. reversed Trajan. 108-117 AD. British Museum, London.
Fig. 24 Backer, Jacob Adriaensz.. The Sense of Hearing. 1635. Magyar Szépművészeti Museum, Budapest.

Fig. 16b Bust of Emperor Nero.
Fig. 25 des Rousseaux, Jacques. Portrait of a Young Man in a Gorget. 1630. Musée des Beaux-Artes, Tourcoing.

Fig. 16c  Bust of Emperor Nero.
Fig. 26 Sweerts, Michael. *An Artist’s Studio*. 1652. Institute of Arts, Detroit.
Fig. 27 Sweerts, Michael. *Man Holding a Jug*. 1655-60. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Fig. 28 Anonymous. *Philip the Arabian*. 3rd century AD. Vatican Museum, Vatican.
Fig. 16d  Bust of Emperor Nero.

Fig. 29  Bol, Ferdinand. The Toper. 1633. Wallace Collection, London.
Fig. 30 Lievens, Jan. Young Man Wearing a Gorget. 1627. Gemäldegalerie, Dresden.

Fig. 16c Bust of Emperor Nero.
Fig. 16c  Bust of Emperor Nero.

Fig. 31 Lievens, Jan. Young Man in a Yellow-brown Cloak. 1629. Residenzgalerie, Salzburg.
Fig. 32 Lievens, Jan. Young Man with a Red Beret. ca.1640. Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena.

Fig. 16c reversed Bust of Emperor Nero.
Fig. 33 Rembrandt van Rijn. The White Negress (B 357). 1630. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 34 Rembrandt van Rijn. Man Drawing from a Cast (B 130).

Fig. 35 Anonymous. A Young Ethiopian right side. Capitoline Museum, Rome. ARTstor Collections, Image Gallery. 15523
Fig. 36a  Rembrandt van Rijn. The Artist Drawing from the Model (Pygmalion) (B 192). ca. 1639. Teylers Museum, Haarlem.

Fig. 36b  detail The Artist Drawing from the Model (Pygmalion) (B 192).
Fig. 33 The White Negress.

Fig. 37 Lievens, Jan. Head of a Black Woman in Profile.

Fig. 35 reversed A Young Ethiopian left side.
Fig. 33 The White Negress.

Fig. 38 Lievens, Jan. Head of a Man with Thick Lips (Holl. 88, B 308 as Rembrandt).
Fig. 39 Backer, Jacob Adrianensz.. Young Negro in Half-Length. Kupferstichkabinett, Dresden.

Fig. 35 reversed A Young Ethiopian.
Fig. 40  Dou, Gerrit. Portrait of a Moor. Nierdersächsische Landesgalerie, Hannover.

Fig. 35 reversed  A Young Ethiopian.

Fig. 33  The White Negress.
Fig. 41 Rembrandt van Rijn. *Bust of an Old Man with a High Forehead*. ca. 1629. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 13a reversed *Democritus*.

Fig. 42 van Vliet, Jan. reversed *Bust of a Man with High Forehead*. ca. 1631.
Fig. 43 Rembrandt van Rijn. Bust of an Old Man with Flowing Beard and White Sleeve (B 291) 1635.

Fig. 13a Democritus. also reversed

Fig. 44 Rembrandt van Rijn. Old Man with Flowing Beard (B 315). 1631.
Fig. 13a Democritus.

Fig. 45 Rembrandt van Rijn. Saint Peter Repentant. 1631. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.
Fig. 46  Rembrandt van Rijn. Belshazzar’s Feast. 1636. National Gallery, London.

Fig. 13a reversed Democritus.
Fig. 3  Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis.
Fig. 13a reversed Democritus.

Fig. 48 Rembrandt van Rijn. Old Man with Flowing Beard (B 309). 1630.

Fig. 13b Socrates.

Fig. 49 Rembrandt van Rijn. Bust of an Old Man with Flowing Beard, the Head Bowed Forward, the Left Shoulder Unshaded (B 325). 1630.

Fig. 47 Rembrandt van Rijn. Bust of an Old Bearded Man, Looking Down, Three-Quarters Right (B 260). 1631.
Fig. 50 Rembrandt van Rijn. Bust of Old Man in a Cap. 1631.

Fig. 13c Hippocrates.
Fig. 51 Rubens, Peter Paul. Portrait of Ludovicus Nonnius. 1627. National Gallery, London.

Fig. 52 Rembrandt van Rijn. St. Jerome. 1631. Kunsthalle, Bremen.
Fig. 52 St. Jerome.

Fig. 54 superimposed Fig. 53 Hippocrates onto Fig. 52 St. Jerome.

Fig. 53 Gyllenhaal, Martha. tracing of Ruben’s Hippocrates. 2008.
Fig. 55 Rembrandt van Rijn. Old Man in an Armchair, Hands Folded. 1631. Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin. Inset: Fig. 13a Democritus.

Fig. 56 Rembrandt van Rijn. Old Man in an Armchair, Looking Left. 1631. Inset: Fig. 13c Hippocrates.

Fig. 57 Rembrandt van Rijn. Old Man in an Armchair, Leaning Sideways. 1631. Inset: Fig. 13b Socrates.
Fig. 58  Rembrandt van Rijn. Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem. 1630. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Inset: Fig. 13a Democritus.

Inset: Fig. 13b reversed Socrates.

Inset: Fig. 13a Democritus.
Fig. 60a Anonymous. *Galba*. ca. 69 AD. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

Fig. 60b Anonymous. *Galba*. ca. 69 AD. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

Fig. 59a Rembrandt van Rijn. *Galba*. Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin.
Fig. 61 Rembrandt van Rijn. *Old Man with a Short Beard* (B 306). 1635.

Fig. 59b reversed Galba.
Fig. 62  Rembrandt van Rijn. Bald-headed Man in Right Profile (B 292). 1630.

Fig. 63  Rembrandt van Rijn. Bald-headed Man in Right Profile: Small Bust (B 294). 1630.
Fig. 64  Lievens, Jan. Bald Old Man.  
1627. National Gallery, Ireland.

Fig. 59a  Galba.

Fig. 60e  Galba.
Fig. 60f  Galba.

Fig. 65  Lievens, Jan. The Tric Trac Players. 1624. Spier Collection, Amsterdam.
Fig. 66 Lievens, Jan. **Old Woman Reading**. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
Fig. 67a Anonymous. *Vitellius*, undated. Museo Archeologico, Venice. Inset: Fig. 67b reversed *Vitellius*.

Fig. 68 Rubens, Peter Paul(?). *Head of 'Vitellius'*., undated. Albertina, Vienna.
Fig. 70 Lievens, Jan. Bald Man Singing. 1626. Agnes Etherington Art Center,

Fig. 69 Sweerts, Michael. detail Boy Drawing Before the Bust of a Roman Emperor. Institute of Art, Minneapolis.
Fig. 74 Anonymous. *Old Woman (Sibyl)*. Capitoline Museum, Rome.

Fig. 71 Rembrandt van Rijn. *The Three Singers (Hearing)*. 1624-25. Private Collection.

Fig. 73 Anonymous. *Vespasian*. Roman Imperial Period. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

Fig. 72 Anonymous. *Vespasian*. Roman Imperial Period. Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen
Fig. 75 Rembrandt van Rijn. *Man in Oriental Costume*. 1635. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 68 Head of ‘Vitellius’.

Fig. 67a Vitellius.
Fig. 68  Head of ‘Vitellius’.

Fig. 76  Rembrandt van Rijn, *King Uzziah Stricken with Leprosy*. 1635. Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth.

Fig. 67a  Vitellius.
Fig. 67b  Vitellius.

Fig. 77  Rembrandt van Rijn. Portrait of a Man in Oriental Costume. 1633. Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Fig. 78 Lievens, Jan. Bust of an Oriental to the Right (Holl. 30). 1631. Prentenkabinet, Leiden.
Fig. 68  Head of ‘Vitellius’.

Fig. 67a  Vitellius.

Fig. 78  Backer, Jacob Adriaensz.. Man with a Tall Cap in Half-Length. Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam.
Fig. 80  Rembrandt van Rijn. Portrait of an Elderly Man. 1667. Mauritshuis, The Hague.

Fig. 68 reversed
Head of ‘Vitellius’.

Fig. 67a reversed
Vitellius.
Fig. 67a  Vitellius.

Fig. 81  Lievens, Jan. Old Man Holding a Quill. 1626. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Pau.
Fig. 82 Rembrandt van Rijn. The Hundred Guilder Print (Christ Among the Sick Allowing the Children to Come Unto Him) (B 74). 1643-49.

Inset: Fig. 83a-d panel of four figures from page 325, The Rembrandt Book by Gary Schwartz. 2006. Abrams, New York.

Fig. 83a & c detail The Hundred Guilder Print.

Fig. 83b Anonymous. Socrates. 1st century. Louvre Museum, Paris.

Fig. 83d van Dyck, Anthonie. Desiderius Erasmus. ca. 1630. Mauquoy-Hendrickx 5.
Fig. 86  Anonymous. Drawing from the Nude in Rembrandt’s Studio. ca. 1645-50.

Fig. 85  Rembrandt van Rijn. Christ Seated Disputing with the Doctors (B 64). 1654.

Fig. 84  Rembrandt van Rijn. Christ Disputing with the Doctors: a Sketch (B 65). ca. 1652.
Fig. 87 van Vliet, Jan. Lot and His Daughters. 1631. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 88 After Rembrandt van Rijn. Lot and His Daughters. British Museum, London.

Fig. 89 Anonymous. Dancing Faun. 3rd century. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
Fig. 90a-d Anonymous. **Borghese Fisherman.** 2nd century. Louvre Museum, Paris.

Fig. 90a reversed **Borghese Fisherman.**

Fig. 90b reversed **Borghese Fisherman.**

Fig. 90c detail **Borghese Fisherman.**

Fig. 90d plaster cast **Borghese Fisherman.**
Fig. 91a  reversed Borghese Fisherman.

Fig. 91b  detail Borghese Fisherman.

Fig. 91c  reversed detail Borghese Fisherman.

Fig. 91a-c  Rubens, Peter Paul, Borghese Fisherman. Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan.
Fig. 92 after Rubens. Borghese Fisherman (No. 12). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

Fig. 93 after Rubens. Borghese Fisherman (No. 10). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

Fig. 94 Rubens, Peter Paul (?). Borghese Fisherman (No. 8). The Hermitage, St. Petersburg.
Fig. 90d plaster cast Borghese Fisherman.

Fig. 95 Loth, Johann Carl. Seneca and Nero. Earl of Bradford, Weston Park.

207
Fig. 92 Borghese Fisherman (No. 12).

Fig. 91b detail Borghese Fisherman.

Fig. 93 reversed Borghese Fisherman (No. 10).

Fig. 96 Loth, Johann Carl. Satyr Playing a Flute. Gedenkstätte & Historisches Museum, Köthen Anhalt.

Fig. 97 Loth, Johann Carl. Ancient Philosopher. undated. whereabouts unknown.

Fig. 98 Loth, Johann Carl. Apollo and Pan. undated. whereabouts unknown.
Fig. 99 Drost, Willem. *Mercury and Argus*. National Gallery, London.

Fig. 90d plaster cast Borghese Fisherman.

Fig. 91a reversed Borghese Fisherman.

Fig. 94 Borghese Fisherman (No. 8).
Fig. 101 Rembrandt van Rijn. Peter and John Healing the Cripple at the Gate of the Temple (B 94). 1659. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 90a reversed Borghese Fisherman.

Fig. 90c detail Borghese Fisherman.

Fig. 100 Rembrandt van Rijn. St. Peter (B 12). 1629. Kupferstichkabinett, Dresden.
Fig. 102 Rembrandt van Rijn. copper plate of Peter and John Healing the Cripple at the Gate of the Temple (B 94). ca. 1659.

Fig. 90a reversed Borghese Fisherman.
Fig. 103  Rembrandt van Rijn. Adam and Eve (B 28). 1638.

Fig. 104  Dürer, Albrecht. Adam and Eve. 1504.

Fig. 105  Raphael Sanzio. The Creation of Eve. Vatican Loggia, Rome.
Fig. 103  Adam and Eve.

Fig. 90b  reversed Borghese Fisherman.

Fig. 93 reversed Borghese Fisherman (No. 10).

Fig. 91c reversed detail Borghese Fisherman.

Fig. 92  Borghese Fisherman (No. 12).

Fig. 103  Adam and Eve.
Fig. 106a & b  van Tetrode, Willem. Hercules Pomarius. 1562-67. The Hearn Family Trust, New York.
Fig. 107 Goltzius, Hendrik. De Grote Hercules. 1589. The Hearn Family Trust, New York.

Fig. 108 Goltzius, Hendrik. Massacre of the Innocents. ca. 1587-89. The Hearn Family Trust, New York.
Fig. 108  detail Massacre of the Innocents.

Fig. 106c  detail Hercules Pomarius.
Fig. 110b  detail Hercules and Antaeus. Fig. 109  Goltzius, Hendrik. detail Caius Muscius Scaevola. ca. 1586. The Hearn Family Trust, New York.

Fig. 110a  van Tetrode, Willem. Hercules and Antaeus. ca. 1570. The Hearn Family Trust, New York.

Fig. 110b  detail Hercules and Antaeus.
Fig. 110c  
detail Hercules and Antaeus.

Fig. 111  Goltzius, Hendrik. detail Titus Manlius Torquatus. 1586. The Hearn Family Trust, New York.
Fig. 113a  Brueghel, Jan I. *Venus and Cupid in an Art Cabinet*. ca. 1660. Museum of Art, Philadelphia.

Fig. 112  Susini, Antonio after Giambologna. *Lion Attacking a Bull*. 1600-1625. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.
Fig. 112 Susini, Antonio after Giambologna. Lion Attacking a Bull. 1600-1625. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

Fig. 113b detail Venus and Cupid in an Art Cabinet.

Fig. 113c detail Venus and Cupid in an Art Cabinet.
Fig. 114 Giambologna. Samson Slaying a Philistine. ca. 1566. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Fig. 115 Rembrandt van Rijn. The Goldsmith (B 123). ca. 1655.

Fig. 116a & b Giambologna. Charity. 1578. University of Genoa, Genoa.
Fig. 117

Fig. 116b Giambologna. Charity.
Fig. 118 Sweerts, Michael. Mother with Child. Private Collection, Milan.

Fig. 116b Giambologna. Charity.
Fig. 106a
Hercules Pomarius.

Fig. 120  superimposed Fig. 119 Stout Old Man in Large Cape onto Fig 106a Pomarius.

Fig. 119
Fig. 121 Rembrandt van Rijn. *Rape of Proserpina*. 1631. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

Fig. 122 de Vries, Adriaen. reversed *The Rape of a Sabine*. Robert H. Smith Collection.
Fig. 123  Susini, Antonio. Paris Abducting Helen. 1627. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden.

Fig. 124  Giambologna. The Rape of the Sabine. 1581-83. Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence.
Fig. 125 Susini, Antonio. Lion Attacking a Stallion. early 17th century. Robert H. Smith Collection.

Fig. 126 Prieur, Barthélemy. reversed Lion Devouring a Dog. 16th century. Robert H. Smith Collection.

Fig. 127 Tacca, Ferdinando. Rearing Stallion. ca. 1650. Robert H. Smith Collection.

Fig. 121 detail Rape of Proserpina.
Fig. 128
Fig. 129
Fig. 130 Rembrandt van Rijn. The Beheading of John the Baptist, 1627. Louvre Museum, Paris.
Fig. 131 Rembrandt van Rijn. Samson and Dalila. ca. 1628. Staatliche Museen, Berlin.
Fig. 132 Lievens, Jan. Samson and Delilah. ca. 1628. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
Fig. 133 Antico. Hercules and Antaeus. 1500-10. Victoria & Albert Museum, London.
Fig. 134 Rembrandt van Rijn. *Samson Posing a Riddle to the Wedding Guests* (B 507). ca. 1638. Gemäldegalerie, Dresden.
Fig. 135 Susini, Antonio after Gaimbologna. Mars, mid 17th century. Robert H. Smith Collection.

Fig. 136a-c van Tetrode, Willem. *Striding Warrior*. 1562-65. J. Tomilson Hill, New York.
Fig. 137 Rembrandt van Rijn. *Samson Threatening his Father-in-Law* (B 499). 1635. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

Fig. 114 Giambologna. *Samson Slaying a Philistine*. ca. 1566. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Fig. 138 Giambologna. *The Medici Mercury*. 1580. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.
Fig. 137 Rembrandt van Rijn. *Samson Threatening his Father-in-Law* (B 499). 1635. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

Fig. 139a Giambologna. *The Bird Catcher*. 16th century. Robert H. Smith Collection.

Fig. 139b *The Bird Catcher*.

Fig. 139c *The Bird Catcher*. 

238
Fig. 140 Rembrandt van Rijn. The Angel Stopping Abraham from Sacrificing Isaac (B 498). 1635. Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.
Fig. 141 van Tetrode, Willem. Theseus Slaying the Centaur Bienor. ca. 1573. Robert H. Smith Collection.
Fig. 142 Rembrandt van Rijn. Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer. 1653. Metropolitan Museum, New York.
Fig. 143 Rembrandt van Rijn. Self-Portrait Leaning on a Stone Sill. (B 21). 1639.

Fig. 144 Rembrandt van Rijn. Self-Portrait. 1640. National Gallery, London.

242
Fig. 145 Rembrandt van Rijn. Portrait of Cornelis Anslo and his Wife Aeltje Gerritsdr., 1641. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.
Fig. 146  Dou, Gerrit. The Violinist. 1653. Vaduz Castle, Liechtenstein.
Fig. 147 Rembrandt van Rijn. Homer Dictating to a Scribe. 1662-63. Mauritshuis, The Hague.
Fig. 148 Anonymous. Aristotle. 2nd century AD.
National Museum, Rome.

Fig. 149 Galle, Theodoor. Bust of Aristotle.
Vatican Library, Rome.
Fig. 150 Rembrandt van Rijn. Daniel and King Cyrus Before the Idol. 1633. Private Collection, England.
Fig. 151 Rembrandt circle. 
Old Man in Prayer.  
Museum of Fine Arts, 
Boston.
Fig. 153 Rembrandt van Rijn. Young Man with Gorget and Beret. 1639. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
Fig. 154 Rembrandt van Rijn. Titus at His Desk. 1655. Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

Fig. 155 Rembrandt van Rijn. Titus van Rijn in a Monk’s Habit. 1660. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
WORKS CITED


Balduinucci, F. *Cominciamento e progresso dell’arte dell’intagliare in rame, collevite di molti de’ più eccellent maestri della stessa professione*. Florence, 1686.


257


Sandart, Joachim. Sculpture Verertis Admiraanda. Nuremberg: 1680


Schmidt-Degener, F. Rembrandt. Een beschrijving van zijn leven en zijn werk. Amsterdam 1906.


262


www.royalcollection.org.uk/egallery.


APPENDIX A

Records of Rembrandt’s Sculpture

1628
From the sale of the Christaen Porrett estate:
Among the objects listed in the sale were *Twee Indiaensche Poppen van eerde ghebacken / ende groen gevers* (two Indian dolls, baked in clay and colored green). “Rembrandt refers to two such dolls in autograph inscriptions on two drawings, now lost, but formerly in the collection of the Duke of Saxe-Weimar …. Hofstede de Groot thought … they had been sketched after wooden models, but the listing in Porrett’s sale may be the answer to what has heretofore puzzled scholars.” Strauss and Meulen, 60.

1635
From the sale of the van Someren collection:

1 *houtkintgen* (wooden child)  
fl 2.14.-

1637
From the sale of the Jan Basse collection:

2 plaster friezes  
1 Samson in plaster  
fl 1.14.-  
fl 5.15.-

1646
From a sale conducted by Jacques Breyel

Marble statues paid for to the account of Mr. Jacques Breyel in Antwerp: from Rembrandt van Ryn  
fl 186.10.-

1656
From the inventory of Rembrandt’s estate:

6. A head in plaster
7. Two naked children
8. A sleeping child in plaster
110. Three antique statues
142. A urinating child
145. A sculpture of an Empress
146. A sculpture of the Emperor Augustus
149. A sculpture of Tiberius
151. A head of Casius
153. A Caligula
154. A Heraclitus
155. Two porcelain figurines
157. A Nero
160. A Roman emperor
161. A moor’s head cast from life
162. A Socrates
163. A Homer
164. An Aristotle
165. A burnished antique head
166. A Faustina
168. An emperor Galba
169. Ditto Otto
170. A ditto Vitellius
171. A ditto Vespasian
172. A Titus Vespasian
173. A ditto Vespasian
174. A ditto Silius Brutus
178. Eight plaster casts from life
180. A figure of an antique Cupid
187. Two completely nude figures
188. A death-mask of Prince Maurice, cast from his own face
189. A lion and a bull modeled from life
241. A Chinese basket full of portrait casts
287. A plaster cast of Prince Maurice
295. A death’s head painted over by Rembrandt
296. A “Diana Bathing” by Adam van Vianen
316. A large quantity of hands and heads cast from life
317. 17 hands and arms, cast from life
322. 2 sculpted heads of Barthold Beham and his wife
323. A plaster cast of a Greek antique
324. A statue of Emperor Agrippa
325. Ditto of the Emperor Aurelius
326. A head of Christ, a study from life
327. A satyr’s head with horns
328. An antique Sibyl
329. An antique Laocoön
331. A Vitellius
332. A Seneca
333. 3 or 4 antique heads of women
334. Another 4 different heads
341. A giant’s head