

1937.1.76 (76)

## Rembrandt van Rijn

### *Lucretia*

1664

Oil on canvas, 120 x 101 (47¼ x 39¼)

Andrew W. Mellon Collection

#### Inscriptions

At center left: *Rembrandt/1664*

**Technical Notes:** The original coarse, plain-weave fabric, composed of heavy, unevenly spun threads, has been lined. The top, right, and left edges are slightly trimmed, leaving worn and ragged edges. The bottom was at one time used as a tacking margin, but has now been returned to the picture plane. Slight cusping present along the top and sides, but not the bottom, suggests a reduction in that dimension.

The double ground consists of a thick, gray lower layer and a moderately thin, dark brown upper layer.<sup>1</sup> In the dark areas, particularly the background, the dark brown upper ground layer was incorporated into the design, and in the upper left and lower right quadrants the upper ground was deliberately scraped away to expose the gray lower ground layer as part of the composition. In the richly impasted details on the dress, paint was applied thickly and freely with broad brushwork. Paint was both blended wet into wet and scumbled with a dry brush to exploit the coarse canvas texture. Extensive use of the palette knife can be recognized in the proper left cuff and in the lower portion of the dress. Incisions with the butt end of the brush are found in the proper left cuff and on the neck.

Several pentimenti have become visible over time. The dagger was once 3.5 cm longer, and the proper white sleeve has been altered. Stray brushmarks cross the dress and white blouse at right, suggesting alterations to the neckline.

The paint is in good condition with few losses. Wide-aperture drying crackle has formed on either side of the head. Moderate abrasion has occurred in the darks, and the bottom tacking margin has been overpainted to incorporate it into the design. Conservation treatment was carried out in 1985 to remove an aged, discolored varnish layer and discolored repaints.

**Provenance:** M. Lapeyrière, Paris; (sale, Henry, Paris, 19 April 1825, no. 143). Lord Berwick; (sale, Phillips, London, 14–15 April 1826, no. 64). Michael M. Zachary, London; (sale, Phillips, London, 31 May 1828, no. 25). Sir T. Lawrence for Hugh A. J. Munro, Novar, Scotland, by 1832. Prince Paul Demidoff [1829–1885], San Donato, near Florence; (sale, Florence, 15 March 1880, no. 1146). Private collection, London; (sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 13 July 1889, no. 56). (Stephen and Gaspard Bourgeois, Paris). Léon Gauchez, Paris, by 1894. Matthew Chaloner Durfee Borden [1842–1912], New York, by 1906; (sale, American Art Association, New York, 13–14 February 1913, no. 28); (M. Knoedler & Co., New York and Paris); (Frederik Müller and Co., Amsterdam, 1913). August Janssen, Amsterdam. Hermann Heilbuth, Copenhagen, by 1918. (Ehrich Brothers, New York, 1921); (M. Knoedler & Co., New York and Paris); sold November 1921 to Andrew W. Mellon, Pittsburgh and

Washington; deeded 28 December 1934 to The A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Pittsburgh.

**Exhibited:** British Institution, London, 1832, no. 44.<sup>2</sup> New York 1909, no. 105. *A Collection of Paintings* [H. Heilbuth], Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, 1920, no. 63. Washington 1969, no. 23. *Rembrandt's Lucretias*, National Gallery of Art, Washington; Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1991–1992.

IN A MOMENT of inner anguish Lucretia stands, with arms outstretched, just prior to her act of suicide. Although her body faces the viewer, she looks down toward the sharply pointed dagger clenched in her right hand. She holds her left hand open at the same height as the right, as though part of her resists completing the destructive act. The tension surrounding that awful moment adds a human touch to the drama that transforms the mythology of a Roman heroine into an image of an actual woman caught in the moral dilemma of choosing between life and honor.

The tragedy of Lucretia's impending suicide is intensified in the contrast Rembrandt develops between her elegant attire and the poignancy of her gesture and expressions. Richly adorned with golden diadem, pearl earrings, pearl necklace, and a necklace with a golden pendant from which hangs a tear-shaped pearl, she is a regal figure. Her golden dress with its attached cape that falls over her outstretched arms adds to her splendor. Rembrandt, however, arranged her robes so as to emphasize her vulnerability. The clasps that hook her dress at the bodice hang unfastened. With her dress parted, her chest covered only by the white chemise that fits so gracefully, she awaits the thrust of the dagger.

The tragic story of Lucretia, recounted by Livy, occurred during the reign of the tyrannical ruler Tarquinius Superbus in Rome in the sixth century B.C. While away during the siege of Ardea, Lucretia's husband, Collatinus, boasted that her loyalty and virtue were greater than that of his compatriots' wives. Taking the challenge, the men at camp rode immediately to Rome where they discovered Lucretia alone with her handmaidens spinning wool while other wives were idly enjoying their leisure. Lucretia's very virtue, however, enflamed the desire of Tarquinius' son, Sextus Tarquinius, who returned without Collatinus' knowledge a few days later. Having been received as an honored guest, he later stole secretly to Lucretia's chamber, drew his sword, and threatened to kill her if she did not yield to him. She resisted, but, when Sextus Tarquinius threatened to kill his own slave as well and place their naked bodies together to give the appearance



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Lucretia*, 1664



Fig. 1. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Lucretia*, 1666, oil on canvas, Minneapolis Institute of Arts

that they had been killed in the act of adultery, she yielded to his demands rather than die in such disgrace.

The next day Lucretia summoned her father and husband to her side and related what happened, stressing that only her body had been violated, not her heart. Nevertheless, despite their protestations of her innocence, she was determined to take her punishment, saying: "Never shall Lucretia provide a precedent for unchaste women to escape what they deserve." Livy then relates that with these words Lucretia drew a knife from under her robe, drove it into her heart, and fell forward, dead.<sup>3</sup>

Overwhelmed by grief, the father, husband, and two accompanying friends swore to avenge her death. Lucretia's death helped raise the anger of the populace against the tyrannical rule of Tarquinius Superbus who then left in exile. Sextus Tarquinius, who was also driven from Rome, was shortly thereafter assassinated. In Livy's account Lucretia embodied chastity, but her tragedy assumed wider political dimensions because she was also considered a metaphor for Rome itself. Lucretia's rape came to symbolize the tyrannical subjugation of the city by

Tarquinius Superbus and his family.<sup>4</sup> Her rape triggered the revolt that led to the overthrow of tyranny and the creation of political freedom in the form of republican government.

Rembrandt painted at least three images of Lucretia in his later years. The earliest of these is known only through an inventory of the possessions of Abraham Wijs and Sara de Potter, made on 1 March 1658. The inventory lists: "A large painting of *Lucretia*, by R: Van Rijn."<sup>5</sup> The two extant images date from the last decade of Rembrandt's life, the Washington *Lucretia*, 1664, and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts' *Lucretia*, 1666 (fig. 1). In the Gallery's haunting image, Rembrandt has evoked both Lucretia's profound sadness and her resignation to the fate forced upon her. In the Minneapolis version, Rembrandt has portrayed Lucretia just after she has stabbed herself, her chemise already stained by blood from the mortal wound in her side. The two images complement each other, not only because their compositions and painterly qualities are similar, but also because they explore Lucretia's emotions as she readies herself prior to her self-sacrifice and then responds to the consequences of her action. Nevertheless, they do not seem to have been conceived as a pair. The models Rembrandt used are different and their robes and jewelry, though similar in type, are not identical.<sup>6</sup>

As Stechow has demonstrated, three traditions exist for the representation of the Lucretia story: "narrative combinations of various scenes pertaining to the legend; dramatic scenes concentrating entirely on Tarquinius' misdeed; and single figures of Lucretia stabbing herself."<sup>7</sup> Rembrandt's image belongs to the last. He certainly knew a number of earlier representations of Lucretia through prints and engravings, although only one has been suggested as a prototype for the Washington painting: Marcantonio Raimondi's engraving after a Raphael design (fig. 2).<sup>8</sup> The essential transformation of the idealized statuesque figure into the emotionally evocative image of Rembrandt's *Lucretia*, however, argues that the relationship is more superficial than real. Far closer in spirit to Rembrandt, however, are half-length depictions of Lucretia by Titian and his school that represent the heroine dressed in loose-fitting robes and poised at the moment before she thrusts the dagger into her heart.<sup>9</sup> Rembrandt, who was profoundly influenced by Venetian art during his later years, may have known of such depictions of Lucretia; for a number of such paintings ascribed to Titian or Paolo Veronese were in Archduke Leopold Wilhelm's collection in Brussels during the

1650s.<sup>10</sup> The painting of this compositional type that Rembrandt certainly knew, and used as a basis for other paintings in the 1640s and 1650s, was Titian's *Flora* (fig. 3), which was auctioned in Amsterdam in 1639.<sup>11</sup> The similarities in the general disposition of Lucretia's head in the Washington painting and that of *Flora* suggest that this work continued to exert its influence on Rembrandt into the mid-1660s. Even supposing such antecedents could have helped provide the visual vocabulary for the rich pictorial effects and iconic composition of Rembrandt's painting, the psychological characterization of Lucretia's emotional state is entirely personal.

No record of commissions exist for these works, nor other information concerning Rembrandt's motivation for painting them. It is possible, as Schwartz has suggested, that the paintings have political overtones.<sup>12</sup> Because Lucretia's suicide precipitated the revolt that helped institute the Roman republic, she had traditionally been viewed, among her other qualities, as a symbol of patriotism. That such an attribute was associated with her in Rembrandt's time is clear from a poem Schwartz quotes written by Jan Vos in 1660 about a *Lucretia* painted by Govaert Flinck in the collection of Joan Huydecoper, one of the most influential patrons of

Fig. 2. Marcantonio Raimondi after Raphael, *Lucretia*, c. 1511–1512, engraving, Harvey D. Parker Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Fig. 3. Titian, *Portrait of a Woman, called "Flora,"* c. 1520–1522, oil on canvas, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

the day: "In the red ink [of her blood] she writes a definition of freedom." Lucretia, thus, just as Claudius Civilis, may well have assumed particular allegorical importance in the parallels that were being drawn around 1660 between the foundations of the Roman and Dutch republics.<sup>13</sup>

The forceful impact of Rembrandt's paintings of Lucretia, however, seems also to have resulted from personal associations the artist made between experiences in his life and the emotional traumas that he projected onto Lucretia at the time of her suicide. Only thus can we explain the essential transformation of the pictorial traditions for portraying this legendary Roman heroine that occurs in these two majestic paintings.

Lucretia, in maintaining her honor through death, had, to a great extent, come to be revered as a symbol of chastity, honor, and faithfulness. Knuttel speculated that the 1664 *Lucretia* may have served as a psychological catharsis for Rembrandt after the death of Hendrickje the previous year. Indeed, parallels can be found between Lucretia's faithfulness and self-sacrifice and the indignities suffered by Hendrickje as a result of her commitment to Rembrandt.<sup>14</sup>

The mythology surrounding Lucretia, however, was complex. While she was honored for her faithfulness she was also criticized by later Christians for





Fig. 4. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Jewish Bride*, c. 1666, oil on canvas, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

having taken her own life, which was seen as a greater evil than adultery and a life of shame. As Garrard has written: "In Roman terms, Lucretia killed herself not out of guilt, but out of shame, concerned for her reputation and for the precedent of pardon that she might set for voluntary adulterers. Christian writers, schooled in a religion that placed the highest premium on the innocence of one's personal conscience, regarded such values as excessively concerned with appearances and the opinion of others."<sup>15</sup> Rembrandt, as he so often did, fused here the pagan and Christian worlds to create an exceptionally profound image of the psychological moment just prior to Lucretia's fatal decision to thrust the knife into her heart. With her arms raised in a gesture that echoes that of Christ on the cross, she looks down toward the weapon of her destruction with an expression of one who in her decision to commit suicide must weigh issues never described by Livy. Rembrandt's Lucretia is not the assured tragic heroine who has determined her punishment and dies for honor, but one who hesitates at that crucial moment because of an awareness of the moral dilemma that she faces.

It may be, as Held has remarked, that Rembrandt drew upon a theatrical tradition to give added poignancy to the moment; for Lucretia, whose mouth is partially open, seems to address the dagger as though giving the closing monologue of this tragic

drama.<sup>16</sup> Shakespeare did exactly that in his *Rape of Lucretia* when she asks:

Poor hand, why guiver'st thou in this decree?  
Honour thyself to rid me in this shame;  
For if I die, my honour lives in thee,  
But if I live, thou livest in my defame.<sup>17</sup>

Rembrandt's late paintings, whether portraits, biblical, or mythological stories, often take on an almost sacramental character in the way that the artist confronts the viewer with his images. His broad execution, rich colors, impressive use of chiaroscuro, and iconic compositional structure give these works unparalleled forcefulness. In *Lucretia*, all of these elements of his late style are evident. Particularly remarkable in this painting is his use of chiaroscuro to transform an essentially symmetrical and static pose into an active one. Lucretia is lit not from the front but from the left. Light thus strikes her head, right arm, and shoulder. The dagger blade glistens against her white cuff. Although her left arm is thrown into shadow, her outstretched left hand catches the light. Through these subtle means of emphasis, which until recently had been hidden by thick discolored layers of varnish, Rembrandt heightened the drama by reinforcing the psychological and physical tension of the scene.<sup>18</sup>

Rembrandt painted this image using a broad

range of techniques. He modeled the face quite densely by applying a sequence of paint layers. Some layers, such as the soft lavenders that model the shaded portions of the lower cheeks and chin, are quite smooth. Others, such as the pinks and oranges that highlight the cheekbones and the yellowish-whitish areas on the nose and forehead, are brushed on more vigorously. The eyes, nose, and mouth are broadly rendered. Specifics of eyebrows, eyelids, pupils of the eyes, nostrils, and lips were of little concern; instead he heightened and accented them with deft touches of rust-colored paint. One particularly bold stroke of ocher paint defines the upper left edge of the top lip.

Rembrandt varied his painting techniques in Lucretia's cape and dress according to the play of light falling across her figure. Where light hits her right arm, Rembrandt casts a golden tone with a rich mixture of yellow, white, red, and salmon-colored paints. Under the lightest areas of the shoulder, he first laid in a light gray layer to give an added luminosity to the paints. On the shaded left sleeve, the paint is much less dense. A deep brown and reddish brown layer covering the ground in this area forms the basis for the sleeve's tonality. Over it, Rembrandt, often with a dry brush, has applied yellow, greenish yellow, red, and white highlights. In certain instances, for example, in a series of black strokes that shade part of the sleeve, he clearly used a palette knife as well as a brush.

Rembrandt utilized the palette knife even more frequently in the white of the left sleeve. Here he applied a rather dry paint onto the underlying brown layer to suggest the material's transparency. More extensive use of the palette knife is seen in the dress near Lucretia's waist. Here he spread broader areas of light ocher paint with the knife to suggest the luminous character of the fabric. In general, the treatment of this area of the dress resembles that of the left sleeve where the underlying dark brown paint becomes an important ingredient in the overall color tonality. The one area with thick highlights in the dress is the belt, but even here Rembrandt did not really overlap paints. The accents of yellow, orange, and white are loosely applied and do not define the belt to any great degree.<sup>19</sup>

Stylistically, this painting resembles the so-called *Jewish Bride* in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (fig. 4). The head of Lucretia (fig. 5) is extremely close in type and in concept to that of the bride; both are built up in a comparable fashion. Remarkably similar are the ways in which the features are modeled with dense and somewhat roughly brushed strokes of paint. The similarities extend to the technique for

the modeling of the pearls and even for indicating the gold diadem in the back of the hair. While most of the robes in the *Jewish Bride* are more densely painted than those of *Lucretia* and are almost exclusively built up with a palette knife, in the shaded area under the collar of the man, Rembrandt used a modeling technique very similar to that seen in *Lucretia's* left arm. Here he also used a brownish imprimatura layer for the base collar of the robe and accented it lightly with a series of thin strokes of red paint applied with a palette knife.<sup>20</sup>

Similarities in painting technique also exist between this figure of Lucretia and that in Minneapolis, even though the latter work was painted two years later, in 1666. As is appropriate to its starker concept, Rembrandt applied his paints in a more angular fashion in the Minneapolis version than he did in the Washington painting. Still, the modeling of the facial features is once again comparable. One notices in particular the way the top lip is defined with a bold stroke of flesh-colored paint along its upper edge. Also similar is the use of an imprimatura layer as a base color of the left sleeve, and finally, the structure of the hand holding the dagger.

Fig. 5. Detail of head in 1937.1.76



## Notes

1. Reports are available in the Scientific Research department on ground composition (8 May 1985).
2. In 1833 Alfred Joseph Woolmer (1805–1892) painted a fanciful view of the exhibition of 1832 in which *Lucretia* can be seen hanging prominently to the right of an arched doorway (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, inv. no. B 1981.25.694). See Fox 1992, 447, repro. no. 383.
3. Livy 1973, 1: 59, 99.
4. Donaldson 1982, 9, stresses the political significance of this point.
5. Strauss and Van der Meulen 1979, doc. 1658/8, 418. "In 't Voorhuis Een groot stuck schilderij van Lucretia van R: Van Rijn."
6. The features in the Washington *Lucretia* resemble Hendrickje, as she is seen in Rembrandt's paintings from the mid-1650s (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, inv. no. 828B). Hendrickje, who appears much older in the portrait of 1660 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, had died in July 1663. The model Rembrandt used for the Minneapolis *Lucretia* is not found in other of Rembrandt's paintings.
7. Stechow 1951, 114.
8. First suggested by N. Beets (see Beets 1914, 1). Northern prints and paintings of *Lucretia* have a quite different character and do not seem to have influenced Rembrandt in his depictions of *Lucretia*; for the prints see Veldman 1986, 113–127.
9. The most profound sixteenth-century images of *Lucretia* were created in Venice. In two memorable paintings, *Tarquin and Lucretia*, Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna; and *Tarquin and Lucretia*, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Titian focused on the dramatic confrontation between Tarquin and *Lucretia*, capturing the animal energy of Tarquin blindly driven by lust.
10. For paintings attributed to Titian see Wethey 1975, 3: 215, cat. x-24, 219, cat. x-33. For Veronese's *Lucretia* see Vienna 1965, 169, cat. 750.
11. Wethey 1975, 3: 154–155, cat. 17.
12. Schwartz 1985/1985, 330. It seems unlikely, however, that there is any pro-Orange or anti-Orange sentiment implied in these works, as Schwartz suggests.
13. For the parallels drawn between the story of Claudius Civilis and the foundation of the Dutch republic as seen in the decorations of the Town Hall in Amsterdam see Van de Waal 1974, 28–43.
14. The resemblance of *Lucretia* to Hendrickje (see note 6 above) seems to reinforce this hypothesis. Rembrandt's self-identification with a historic figure can be found in his *Self-Portrait as the Apostle Paul* of 1661 (see p. 242, fig. 2), in which the sword of Paul's martyrdom protrudes from Rembrandt's chest.
15. Garrard 1989, 219.
16. Held 1973, 123. The theatrical character of the image is reinforced by the suggestion of curtains hanging behind *Lucretia*. These may have been more apparent before the paint darkened and the background suffered from abrasion. *Lucretia's* theatricality, however, has not always met with favor. Bode 1883, 524, found the theatricality unconvincing given the portrait-like character of the image. The art dealer René Gimpel was more outspoken. When *Lucretia* was on the market in 1921 he wrote: "She is stabbing herself in her terror, with a ridiculous gesture. Neither realism nor idealism. A terrible lack of taste" (Gimpel 1966, 161).
17. This quotation was first associated with Rembrandt's

1664 *Lucretia* by Veth 1914, 25.

18. The discolored varnish also had the effect of flattening the three-dimensional character of the image, which reduced the emotional impact of the scene by making the spatial relationships more difficult to decipher. One such critique against the painting was levied by Gold 1921, 93.

19. While I find the painting techniques described here characteristic for Rembrandt, Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann (personal communication, 1993) is quite critical of the manner in which these areas are executed. He feels that the "paint has an abstract, unfunctional quality, and makes the impression of a method applied without regard for its reason." He rejects the attribution to Rembrandt and notes that the painting has "strong similarities with works by Aert de Gelder."

20. The similarities in technique in this area have become even more evident since the 1993 restoration of the *Jewish Bride*.

## References

- 1829–1842 Smith, 7 (1836): 192.  
1854–1857 Waagen, 2 (1854): 137, no. 1.  
1860 Waagen, 2: 345.  
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1873 Blanc, 2: 435.  
1879 Mollett: 95.  
1883 Bode: 524, 608–609, no. 375.  
1885 Dutuit: 60, 70, repro.  
1886 Michel: 97, repro., 99.  
1892 Müntz: 196–211.  
1893 Michel, 2: 170–171 (also 1894 English ed., 2: 170–171).  
1897–1906 Bode, 8 (1906): 152, no. 595, repro.  
1899 Bell: xvi, 86, 157.  
1905 Veth: 79–90.  
1906b Michel: 110–111.  
1906b Veth: 231–242.  
1906 Rosenberg (first cited 1908 ed., 564, no. 467).  
1907–1927 HdG, 6 (1916): 143–144, no. 218.  
1909 New York: no. 105.  
1910 Waldmann: 73–85, repro. 76.  
1911 Valentiner, 1: 11, 44, no. 7, repro. opp. 44.  
1914 Beets: 1.  
1914 Knuttel: 139–144, repro.  
1914 Veth: 116–126.  
1915 Havelaar: 154–155.  
1920 Hirschmann: 17–26, 69–75.  
1920 Madsen: 108–111, fig. 63, repro.  
1921 Gold: 89–93, repro. 91.  
1923 Meldrum: 203, no. 444, pl. 444, repro.  
1926 Weisbach: 571, fig. 192, repro.  
1931 Valentiner: no. 164, repro.  
1932 Van Rijckevorsel: 222.  
1935 Bredius: 484, repro. (also 1936 English ed.: 484, repro.).  
1941/1942 Kieser: 142.  
1941 NGA: 165, no. 76.  
1943 Benesch: 20–33, fig. 14, repro., 33. (Reprinted in Benesch 1970, 1: 140–146, fig. 119, repro.)  
1948 Rosenberg, 1: 170; 2: unpaginated, fig. 245 (also 1964 rev. ed.: 286, 360, no. 245, note 33a, repro. 286).  
1949 Mellon: 84, no. 76, repro.  
1950 Stechow: 252–255.  
1951 Stechow: 114–124, note 46.  
1959 Benesch: 308–333.

- 1963 Walker: 314, repro.  
 1965 NGA: 109, no. 76.  
 1966 Bauch: 15, no. 284, repro.  
 1966 Gimpel: 161.  
 1966 Rosenberg, Slive, and Ter Kuile: 74.  
 1967 Livermore: 240–245, fig. 9.  
 1968 Gerson: 430, 503, no. 373, repro. 431.  
 1968 NGA: 97, no. 76, repro.  
 1969 Gerson/Bredius: 596, no. 484, repro. 394.  
 1969 Haak: 313, no. 531, color repro.  
 1969 Held: 95, fig. 3, repro.  
 1969 Washington: no. 23.  
 1973 Held: 111–125, repro. 78.  
 1975 NGA: 284, no. 76.  
 1976 Von Sonnenburg: 14.  
 1976 Walker: 283, no. 375.  
 1977 Broos: 49–50.  
 1979 Strauss and Van der Meulen: 418.  
 1984/1985 Schwartz: 330, no. 382, repro. (also 1985 English ed.: 330, no. 382, repro.).  
 1985 NGA: 329, repro.  
 1986 Sutton: 313.  
 1986 Guillaud and Guillaud: 371, color repro.  
 1986 Tümpel: 403, no. 114, repro. 349.  
 1989 Garrard: 237–239, no. 203, repro. 239.  
 1990 Buijsen, in *The Hague*: 60–77, repro. 69.  
 1991 Bal: 64–74, 102, 105, 122, 140, 169, 245, 362, 448 note 45, repro. 2.1.  
 1991–1992 Washington.

1937.1.74 (74)

## Rembrandt Workshop (possibly Carel Fabritius)

### *A Girl with a Broom*

probably begun 1646/1648 and completed 1651  
 Oil on canvas, 107 x 91 (42 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 36)  
 Andrew W. Mellon Collection

#### Inscriptions

At lower left: *Rembrandt f. 1651*

**Technical Notes:** The original support is a fine, tightly woven, plain-weave fabric, lined with the tacking margins removed. Lining has exaggerated the canvas texture in the paint layer. Cusping on all edges indicates that the dimensions have not been reduced. There are long vertical tears in the lower left of the fence and at bottom center to the right of the broom.

The double ground consists of an orange red lower layer and a thick, whitish translucent upper layer.<sup>1</sup> The upper ground is not employed as a mid-tone compositionally. Paint in the figure was applied thickly in broad, short strokes with vigorous brushwork and low impasto, while thin washes define the background. At least two distinct design layers of paint are apparent, with variations in handling. Underneath the present composition, as seen in the x-radiograph and raking-light examination, is a head, placed directly under

the girl's head, looking upward (see figs. 3 and 4). The x-radiograph also shows minor changes in the girl's sleeves. Her proper left thumb is visible in the x-radiograph under the broom handle. (For a further discussion of these changes see the entry.)

The upper paint layer was applied within a short time of the first, before the underlying paint had fully dried and without intermediate varnish application. An excess of medium and an improper drying of the paint layers have caused pronounced wrinkling in the upper paint layers, especially in the face and hands.

The paint has suffered abrasion throughout, and many of the glazes in the face, particularly the right eye, have been lost. The painting was treated in 1991–1992 to remove discolored varnish and retouchings.

**Provenance:** Almost certainly Herman Becker [c. 1617–1678], Amsterdam.<sup>2</sup> Pierre Crozat [1665–1740], Paris, before 1740; by inheritance to his nephew Louis-François Crozat, Marquis du Châtel [1691–1750], Paris; by inheritance to his brother Louis-Antoine Crozat, Baron de Thiers [1699–1770], Paris; sold by estate in 1772 to Catherine II, empress of Russia [1729–1796]; Imperial Hermitage Gallery, Saint Petersburg; sold February 1931 through (Matthiesen Gallery, Berlin; P. & D. Colnaghi & Co., London; and M. Knoedler & Co., New York) to Andrew W. Mellon, Pittsburgh and Washington; deeded 1 May 1937 to The A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Pittsburgh.

**Exhibited:** Washington 1969, no. 11 (as Rembrandt). *Rembrandt Och Hans Tid*, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, 1992–1993, no. 83 (as Carel Fabritius and Rembrandt Workshop).

AS SHE LEANS over the gate of a wooden fence a young girl stares directly at the viewer. In her left hand is a broom. The fence appears to surround a well, whose dark, round form is visible in the foreground. The well is flanked by a large, overturned bucket on the right and a dark object, perhaps a trough, on the left. While the girl's form is strongly lit from the left, the dark background, and even the area around the well, remain relatively undefined and obscured in shadow.<sup>3</sup>

*A Girl with a Broom*, in large part because of the appealing features of the young girl and the genre-like character of the subject, has long been admired as one of Rembrandt's most sensitive depictions of figures from his immediate environs. This attractive model has been repeatedly identified as a young servant girl who had come to help Hendrickje after she entered Rembrandt's household at the end of the 1640s.<sup>4</sup> The extremely close physical resemblance between this figure and that in Rembrandt's *Girl at the Window*, 1645 (fig. 1), however, indicates that the same model was used. Both girls have comparable hairstyles; they have relatively broad faces with widely separated eyes and low, flat eyebrows; their noses, the tips of which have a slightly bulbous