

PRESS RELEASE

REMBRANDT IN AMSTERDAM: CREATIVITY AND COMPETITION

6 OCTOBER 2021 TO 30 JANUARY 2022

Exhibition Annex

Press preview: 5 October 2021, 11 am

Frankfurt am Main, 9 September 2021. This autumn the Städel Museum is celebrating the work of the greatest of Dutch artists of the 17th century: Rembrandt van Rijn. The exhibition “Rembrandt in Amsterdam: Creativity and Competition” is the first to trace Rembrandt’s rise from a young, ambitious artist from Leiden to a famed master in Amsterdam. The story is told through 60 of Rembrandt’s artworks placed in direct dialogue with paintings by other artists of his time. The exhibition combines the important Frankfurt holdings of Rembrandt’s work, including *The Blinding of Samson* (1636), with a string of stellar loans from major museums in Europe and North America. Around 140 paintings, prints, and drawings by Rembrandt and his contemporaries – loaned from the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Gemäldegalerie Berlin, the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden, the National Gallery in London, the Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington – reveal the artist’s impressive rise, breakthrough, and market domination in the 1630s to the mid-1650s.

As a painter, Rembrandt produced an astonishingly rich and varied oeuvre made up of landscapes, genre scenes, and still lifes, but he is best known for his dramatic history paintings and realistic portraits. His interaction and exchange with other painters shaped both his development as an artist and his entrepreneurial ambitions. Amid the rivalry and competition that characterized the inspiring atmosphere of Amsterdam at the time, where many talented artists were courting the favour of the wealthy bourgeoisie, Rembrandt developed his uniquely expressive visual vernacular, which ultimately allowed him to rise to the top of this fiercely contested art market.

The exhibition is supported by the ING Deutschland bank, Dagmar-Westberg-Stiftung, and the Städtelscher Museums-Verein e.V.

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“With ‘Rembrandt in Amsterdam’, the Städel Museum takes a close look at one of the most celebrated figures in the history of art. Through more than 40 works from our own collection and 94 important international loans, we retrace the decisive years of Rembrandt’s career and follow him on his path to success and mastery – over his rivals and in his art. Two years after ‘Making Van Gogh’, our Rembrandt exhibition also signals a new start for Frankfurt – we wish to thank the supporters of this exceptional project, as well as the local citizens, partners, foundations, and companies whose overwhelming solidarity has kept us going over the past months, more than ever before,” states **Philipp Demandt**, director of the Städel Museum.

“Rembrandt went his own way – with inspiration and innovation, a keen sense of the importance of networking and collaboration, but also with a stubborn streak and a good dose of willpower and drive. These attributes are still what determine the fate of projects in today’s world. We believe in the power of art to inspire innovation and change. At ING Deutschland, with headquarters in Frankfurt and strong ties to Amsterdam, we are therefore thrilled to support this extraordinary exhibition at the Städel Museum and help retrace Rembrandt’s path”, is how **Nick Jue**, CEO of ING Deutschland, describes the company’s support to the exhibition.

“The Städtelscher Museums-Verein has been supporting the Städel’s museum work for over 120 years, so we are delighted to lend our support to this new exhibition venture. When we think of Rembrandt, we not only think of the most innovative artist of his time, but also of the spectacular acquisition of his large history painting *The Blinding of Samson* for the Städel Museum’s collection. It was thanks in part to our engagement that this exciting work was acquired in 1905. It is therefore no coincidence that it holds a special place in the exhibition. Its story is even told in that most modern of formats: the podcast, with four episodes all to itself,” explains **Sylvia von Metzler**, president of the Städtelscher Museums-Verein e.V.

“Today the name Rembrandt is still an international brand, and his artworks are coveted ‘blue chips’. That said, during his lifetime he had to make a name for himself on the Amsterdam art market, where competition among artists reached unparalleled heights. Rembrandt’s exceptional ability to convincingly penetrate the psychology of the figures he portrayed is his enduring trademark. The exhibition examines the work of Rembrandt and his competitors, colleagues, and pupils in the febrile artistic milieu of mid-17th century Amsterdam,” explains **Jochen Sander**, the exhibition’s curator, vice director, and curator of Dutch, Flemish, and German paintings before 1800 at the Städel Museum.

THE EXHIBITION

“Rembrandt in Amsterdam: Creativity and Competition” follows a thematically structured route. The architecture of the galleries allows Rembrandt’s work to enter into a free dialogue with that of his contemporaries.

When Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn arrived in Amsterdam in the early 1630s, he was far from unknown. In the global trading capital of Amsterdam, the art-buying public was not limited to the wealthy mercantile class but included artisans and mariners as well. Seeking to distinguish himself from his competitors through more than just style, Rembrandt began signing his works with merely his first name shortly after setting up in Amsterdam. This has become one of his most distinctive trademarks. His inventiveness soon impressed the local bourgeoisie whose commissions initially made him a sought-after portraitist. As demonstrated by the exhibited *Portrait of Andries de Graeff* from 1639 (Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Museumslandschaft Hessen, Kassel), Rembrandt had to the power to capture the vivid, immediate expression of the sitter. This becomes particularly evident when juxtaposed with portraits by his Amsterdam rivals, such as Nicolaes Eliasz. Pickenoy’s stately, life-size *Portrait of a Man* (1628, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe).

In addition to commissioned portraits, Rembrandt painted self-portraits throughout his life. Studying his own face – whether in paintings, drawings, or etchings – allowed Rembrandt to explore the expression of every imaginable feeling and emotional state. Rembrandt also used his self-portraits and head studies as a calling card to promote himself and his artistic abilities. They too became a kind of signature as he incorporated his own facial features into character sketches called *tronies*. The painting *Tronie of a Man with a Feathered Beret* (c. 1635–1640, Mauritshuis, The Hague) is a particularly impressive example of this.

Soon after settling in Amsterdam, Rembrandt joined the Guild of Saint Luke in 1634. As a member of the professional association of artists, Rembrandt was now able to establish his own workshop, achieve independence as a businessman, and teach paying pupils. At least 40 young artists went through his workshop in Amsterdam. Through their work, every student actively contributed to building the reputation of the Rembrandt brand. Yet Rembrandt encouraged his pupils to develop their own creative variations rather than merely copy his work. The creative exchange with other talented artists therefore exerted a consistent influence on his art and that of this workshop assistants.

Rembrandt was a master of several painting genres: portraits and *tronies*, narrative histories, landscapes, still lifes, and genre scenes. Among his contemporaries, Rembrandt was considered a universal artist. Through his masterful handling of light and chromatic effects, he was able to render precious materials on canvas, as evidenced by his mysterious *Heroine from the Old Testament* (1632/1633, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa). Rembrandt was without peer in his ability to heighten the intensity of his pictures by condensing the narrative into a single decisive scene. His histories depict stirring moments with the power to move, unsettle, and even alarm the spectator. But despite this, Rembrandt's figures are nuanced and convey ambiguity and doubt, particularly in their facial expressions, as exemplified by the figure of King Saul in the picture *David Playing the Harp for Saul* (c. 1630–1631, Städel Museum).

Occasionally Rembrandt's work also reveals a coarse and humorous streak. His sense of graphic detail and irony is manifested in *The Abduction of Ganymede* (1635, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister): rather than depicting Ganymede as an attractive boy in the iconographic tradition of Michelangelo's famous drawing, which was very popular at the time, Rembrandt paints him as a plump toddler.

Rembrandt's representations of nature – such as the etching *The Three Trees* (1643, Städel Museum) or *Landscape with a Stone Bridge* (c. 1638, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) – reveal how he used visual effects in an attempt to tangibly render light and weather phenomena and movement in nature. At the time, his work represented a startling alternative to that of other painters who specialized in southern landscapes bathed in Italian light which were an easy sell on the art market.

Starting in the middle of the 17th century, the artists in Amsterdam, much like their French counterparts before them, began turning to the rules of classical antiquity for inspiration: light colours and clear structures gained in popularity. This new classicism was radically different from Rembrandt's painting style. Nowhere is this more evident than in the juxtaposition of Rembrandt's painting *Diana and Her Nymphs bathing, with the Stories of Actaeon and Callisto* (1634, Sammlung der Fürsten zu Salm-Salm, Wasserburg Anholt, Isselburg) and Jacob van Loos's *Diana and Her Nymphs* (1654, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen). In fact, Rembrandt moved further and further away from contemporary taste in his later work, employing a dark palette and thick impasto from the mid-1650s onwards. As a result, his dominant position on the Amsterdam art market already came to an end during his lifetime.

The exhibition is organized by the Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, and the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

List of artists featured in the exhibition:

Jacob Backer (1608–1651), Gerrit Adriaensz. Berckheyde (1638–1698), Job Adriaensz. Berckheyde (1630–1693), Joan Blaeu (1596–1673), Ferdinand Bol (1616–1680), Bartholomeus Breenbergh (1598–1657), Pieter Codde (1599–1678), Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641), Gerbrand van den Eeckhout (1621–1674), Barent Fabritius (1624–1673), Carel Fabritius (1622–1654), Govaert Flinck (1615–1660), Bartholomeus van der Helst (c. 1613–1670), François van den Hoeye (1590/91–1636), Cornelis Holsteijn (1618–1658), Gerard van Honthorst (1592–1656), Pieter de Hooch (1629–1679), Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627–1678), Thomas de Keyser (c. 1596–1667), Philips Koninck (1619–1688), Salomon Koninck (1609–1656), Pieter Lastman (1583–1633), Jan Lievens (1607–1674), Jacob van Loo (1614–1670), Nicolaes Maes (1634–1693), Theodor Matham (1605/06–1676), Jan Miense Molenaer (1609/10–1668), Aert van der Neer (1603/04–1677), Reinier Nooms (called Zeeman; c. 1623/24–1664), Nicolaes Eliasz. Pickenoy (1588–1650/56), Marcantonio Raimondi (c. 1470/80–1527), Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606–1669), Jacob van Ruisdael (1628/29–1683), Joachim von Sandrart (1606–1688), Dirck van Santvoort (1609–1680), Salomon Savery (1593/94–1683); Hercules Segers (1589/90–1633/40), Wallerant Vaillant (1623–1677), Jan Victors (1619–1676/77), Cornelis Visscher (1628/29–1658), Jan Baptist Weenix (1621–1659)

REMBRANDT IN AMSTERDAM: CREATIVITY AND COMPETITION

Curator: Prof. Dr. Jochen Sander (vice Director and Head of Dutch, Flemish, and German Painting before 1800, Städel Museum)

Curatorial assistance: Dr. Friederike Schütt (Department of Dutch, Flemish, and German Painting before 1800, Städel Museum)

Exhibition dates: 6 October 2021 until 30 January 2022

Press preview: Tuesday, 5 October 2021, 11 am

Location: Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main.

Information: www.staedelmuseum.de/en

Visitor Services: phone: +49(0)69-605098-200, email: info@staedelmuseum.de, or use contact form at: www.staedelmuseum.de/en/contact

Opening hours: Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun + public holidays 10 am–6 pm, Thurs 10 am–9 pm

Special opening hours: Current information on special opening times, such as at Christmas or New Year, are posted on: www.staedelmuseum.de/en

Tickets and admission: Tickets can be booked online at: shop.staedelmuseum.de/en. Tue–Fri: 16€, reduced 14€, Sat, Sun, and public holidays: 18€, reduced 16€; free admission for children under 12; groups of 10 or more (non-concession adults): 14€ per person, however 16€ per person on weekends. All groups are required to book their visit in advance by contacting us at +49(0)69-605098-200 or info@staedelmuseum.de.

An Evening with Rembrandt: Saturday, 16 October from 7 pm to midnight, free admission to the exhibition; tickets are bookable from 6 October via the online shop at: shop.staedelmuseum.de/en.

Programme: The exhibition will be accompanied by a broad programme of events and learning resources, some of them online as an ideal way to prepare for the museum visit and some of them in-person with a pandemic-compliant selection of guided tours. For a current overview of scheduled activities as of 6 October 2021, visit: www.staedelmuseum.de.

General guided tours of the exhibition (in German): From 6 Oct to 28 Nov 2021: Tue 1 pm / Wed 1 pm / Thurs 7 pm / Fri 3 pm / Sat 10:15 am and 4 pm / Sun 10:15 am and 4 pm
From 30 Nov 2021 to 30 Jan 2022: Tue 1 pm and 4 pm / Wed 1 pm and 4 pm / Thurs 4 pm and 7 pm / Fri 3 pm and 4 pm / Sat 10:15 am, 11 am, and 4 pm / Sun 10:15 am, 11 am, and 4 pm
Tickets for the general guided tours are available exclusively via the online shop at: shop.staedelmuseum.de/en. Current listings for guided tours, special offerings on public holidays, and opening hours are posted on: www.staedelmuseum.de.

Museum at home – live Rembrandt programme: *Rembrandt Online Tour* from 22 Sept 2021 to 30 Jan 2022 every Wed at 12 pm and Sun at 2 pm (tickets available at: shop.staedelmuseum.de). *Online Sessions* for online exhibition visits – every second and fourth Sunday of the month at 7 pm (tickets available at: shop.staedelmuseum.de).

Current Covid information: An overview of the current regulatory requirements applying to individual visitors and groups can be found at: www.staedelmuseum.de/en/covid-info. We advise you to check for updates immediately prior to your visit.

Digitorial®: The Digitorial® for the exhibition was developed by the Städel Museum, Frankfurt, in association with the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. It is available in German, English, and French at: rembrandt.staedelmuseum.de.

The Digitorial® is a registered trademark of the SCHIRN, Städel, and Liebieghaus, conceived, realized, and continually updated with new editions by the three Frankfurt museums as a digital learning resource.

Audio-guide app: The tour features individual audio clips on artworks shown in the exhibition and guides the listener through Amsterdam's art market in the 1600s. The German version of the tour is narrated by Dirk Nowitzki, former professional basketball player and ING brand ambassador. In the clips Nowitzki has a personal encounter with Rembrandt and bounces back and forth between the past and present with many stories of his own. Available from Apple's App Store and Google Play from 28 September. The tour is available as a free app for both iOS and Android operating systems and can be downloaded to a smartphone from the comfort of your home or on the day of your visit using the Städel's Wi-Fi network. The audio-guide is also available in the museum via hireable handhelds, at a fee of 5€ (or 8€ for two).

Podcast: A blind date with a masterpiece in four episodes: Journalist Michel Abdollahi, known for his gentlemanly manner, gets to grip with Rembrandt's painting *The Blinding of Samson*. And he discusses some important questions about the human condition along the way. Streamable and downloadable from October, via all usual podcast platforms. The podcast was supported by the Städel Club of the Städtelscher Museums-Vereins e.V.

Catalogue: A catalogue accompanying the exhibition will be published by Hirmer Verlag, edited by Stephanie S. Dickey and Jochen Sander. The book features a preface by Nick Jue and a foreword by Philipp Demandt and Sasha Suda, with contributions by Jonathan Bikker, Jan Blanc, Sonia Del Re, Stephanie S. Dickey, Rudi Ekkart, Claire van den Donk, Robert Fucci, Jasper Hillegers, Maarten Prak, Jochen Sander, Friederike Schütt, and Martin Sonnabend. Available in a German or English edition. The English edition, titled *Rembrandt in Amsterdam: Creativity and Competition 1630–1655*, features 384 pages, and is purchasable for 39.90€ (on sale at museum gift shop; external retail prices may vary).

Booklet: An accompanying booklet will be published in German, priced 9.50€.

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