1907–1927 HdG, 6 (1916): 177, no. 299.
1909 Dacier: unpaginated, no. 17.
1923 Meldrum: 197, no. 285.
1923 Weiner (German ed.): 140, repro.
1925 Conway: 162.
1935 Bredius: 16, 378, repro. (also 1936 English ed.: 16, 378, repro.).
1943 Benesch: 20–33, fig. 6, repro. (reprinted in Benesch 1970, 1: 140–146, fig. 113, repro.).
1948 Rosenberg, 1: 52–53; 2: fig. 80, repro. (also 1964 rev. ed.: 93, 95, repro. 92).
1949 Mellon: 82, no. 74, repro.
1960 Baird: 42, repro. cover.
1965 NGA: 109, no. 74.
1966 Bauch: 15, no. 270.
1968 Gerson: 499, no. 284, fig. 284, repro. 368.
1968 NGA: 98, fig. 74, repro.
1968 Stuffmann: 11–143, repro.
1969 Gerson/Bredius: 580, no. 378, repro. 295.
1969 Washington: no. 11.
1972 Roberts: 353.
1975 Koslow: 418–432, fig. 29, repro. 431.
1975 NGA: 284, no. 74, repro.
1976 Von Sonnenburg: 9–24, repro.
1976 Walker: 273, no. 361, repro.
1984/1985 Schwartz: 244, no. 270, repro. (also 1985 English ed.: 244, no. 270, repro.).
1985 NGA: 329, repro.
1986 Tümpel: 426, repro. 263.
1992 Liedtke: 829–830, repro.
1992 Stockholm: no. 83.
1993 Wheelock: 142–155, repro.

1942.9.70 (666)

Rembrandt Workshop

Portrait of Rembrandt

1650
Oil on canvas, 92 x 75.5 (36¼ x 29¾)
Widener Collection

Inscriptions
At center right: *Rembrandt f. / 1650*

Technical Notes: The original support, a plain-woven fabric composed of tightly spun, irregular, fine threads, has been lined with the left and right tacking margins trimmed. The bottom and top tacking margins, which contain original selvages, have been opened flat and incorporated into the picture plane. Most likely, a large piece of canvas with full selvage-to-selvage width was primed on a stretching frame then cut to size. Original ground layers extend onto both tacking margins. Cusping is pronounced along the top and bottom edges, slight along the right edge, and absent at the left, suggesting that the present dimensions are slightly enlarged lengthwise and slightly reduced widthwise.

The double ground layer consists of a thick, red lower layer covered with a thin, dark gray upper layer.[1] The ground layer is not incorporated as a mid-tone in the painting. Paint is applied thinly in broad, fluidly blended brushstrokes, with impasto in the beret and skullcap and the white and dark trim of the costume.[2] Layering is complex, resulting in some wide-aperture crackle, especially in the dark trim where dark paint was applied over thick, lighter-colored under layers. The proper left hand is unfinished. The background consists of a light paint layer overlaid with thin glazes.

Several artist's changes are found in the x-radiograph (fig. 1). The skullcap once continued farther beyond the rear of the head, and the hair farther outward on the left. The beret appears to have been repositioned several times, or perhaps reshaped. The x-radiograph also shows an area of confusing brushwork to the front of the beret, and sharp-edged marks that may be scrapings of a former lining adhesive.

A small loss is found in the upper right background, and slight abrasion in thin, dark passages such as the lower jacket. The painting was treated in 1992 to remove a discolored surface coating and retouchings, including a later black overglaze.

Provenance: Chevalier Sébastien Érard [1752–1831], Château de la Muette, Passy; (sale, Lebrun, Paris, 23 April 1832, no. 119, as Martin-Kappertz-Tromp). William Williams Hope, Rushton Hall, Northamptonshire, by 1836; (sale, Christie & Manson, London, 14 June 1849, no. 116, as a Portrait of Admiral Van Tromp); Anthony de Rothschild, London; by inheritance to Lady Anthony de Rothschild, by 1899, London; (Thomas Agnew & Sons, London); sold 13 May 1908 to Peter A. B. Widener, Lynnewood Hall, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania; inheritance from Estate of Peter A. B. Widener by gift through power of appointment of Joseph E. Widener, Elkins Park.

Exhibited: *Exhibition of Works by Rembrandt*, Royal Academy, London, 1899, no. 18. New York 1909, no. 94. Washington 1969, no. 10.

FOR AN ARTIST whose face is so well known through his numerous painted, drawn, and etched self-portraits, it is quite remarkable that early nineteenth-century critics did not recognize Rembrandt's image in this painting. While it was in the possession of Chevalier Érard and William Williams Hope, two important and discerning collectors, the sitter was thought to be Maerten Harpertsz. Tromp (1597–1653). One wonders what prompted this unexpected belief since Tromp's known portraits look totally different.[3] To judge from the commentary in the Érard catalogue, the theory seems to have been partially based on the outmoded costume: the pleated white shirt, the dark overdress with its rich impastos bordering the front and slashed purple sleeves lined with yellow, and the jaunty angle of the brown beret worn over the elaborate yellow and red skullcap. The theory that the portrait depicted an admiral was reinforced by the gold-handled staff upon which the sitter rests his hand. But primarily, it seems, the depiction of the sitter's character fit

Rembrandt Workshop, *Portrait of Rembrandt*, 1942.9.70

Fig. 1. X-radiograph of 1942.9.70

what was thought to be Tromp's assured, noble, and philosophical nature.[4]

While the sitter's expression, created through subtle effects of lighting on the face as well as the unusual, sidelong glance, has continued to intrigue writers, entirely different interpretations of its character have been advanced by critics who recognized that the painting represented Rembrandt.[5] Bode found little evidence of a philosophical mind in the image. He wrote that the "somewhat leering expression, half weary, half watchful,... is by no means favourable to his appearance."[6] Valentiner, on the other hand, saw in the face "a forehead already deeply lined, melancholy, almost despondent of aspect, indicating how early he had experienced the tragic side of life."[7] While Rosenberg described the same expression as "critical and deeply questioning,"[8] Pinder, reflecting more closely the sentiments of Valentiner, felt that the portrait expressed the cares and worries that were beginning to beset Rembrandt.[9] Contrary to these interpretations of the image as representing a despondent and questioning individual was that of Goldscheider who described the Rembrandt portrayed here as "a handsome, distinguished adventurer without the slightest resemblance to a humble Mennonite."[10]

While the reading of the emotional impact of the image may have varied markedly among these and other authors, they had in common a conviction that this painting was an exceptional work by the master.[11] Thus the shock that greeted Horst Gerson's 1969 pronouncement that the painting was an "18th- or 19th-century imitation, combining light effects typical of Rembrandt's early work with a composition and mood characteristic of the later period," was felt throughout the world of Rembrandt scholarship.[12] With that statement Gerson altered once again the way the painting has been viewed. For just as nineteenth-century critics had to reassess their interpretations of the figure's mood when the identification of the sitter changed, it is necessary to raise the more fundamental question as to whether the expressive character of the painting is, after all, consistent with Rembrandt, and even with seventeenth-century sensibilities.

Technical analyses have shown that Gerson's assertion that the painting is a later imitation is wrong. The character of the paint mixtures, the types of pigments used, and the presence of a double ground, a red lower ground covered by a dark gray upper layer, are all totally consistent with Rembrandt's workshop practices (see Technical Notes).[13] There also appears to be nothing unusual in the canvas used or in the buildup of the image. The initial blocking-in of the form, which can be seen in the waist and unfinished right hand, is also consistent with Rembrandt's manner of painting. Finally, x-radiographs reveal that modifications to the shape of the hat were made during the execution of the painting (fig. 1), a phenomenon that is commonly found in Rembrandt's own paintings (see his *Self-Portrait*, 1937.1.72). Originally, the plaid-patterned skullcap under the beret extended out behind the head more than it presently does.[14]

The restoration of the painting in 1993, however, has revealed that Gerson was correct in his intuition that the execution was somehow at variance with that found in Rembrandt's own works around 1650.[15] While the general disposition of the figure, standing at an angle to the picture plane and looking quizzically at the viewer over his near shoulder, is consistent with Rembrandt self-portraits (see *Self-Portrait as the Apostle Paul*, 1942.9.59, fig. 2), the brushwork used to model the figure lacks both Rembrandt's sensitivity and vigor. The most obvious instance where the modeling is at variance with Rembrandt's style is the hand resting on the staff. Its superficially rendered form has nothing to do with his manner of modeling hands.

The modeling of the face, likewise, lacks firmness and conviction. While the play of light across the features is sensitively rendered, the restrained brushstrokes only vaguely suggest the underlying form, whether it be the shape of the eyelids or the contour of the nose. The weakness of character conveyed through Rembrandt's questioning expression is also the result of the irresolute contours defining his features.

Another unusual aspect of this painting is that the costume is executed quite differently than is the face. While the features are modeled with a delicately nuanced manner of painting, the costume is indicated with a variety of bold techniques. Broad, flat planes of purple and yellow enliven the surface of the split sleeve; thick impastos, mixed with a variety of bright colors and then toned with a dark brown glaze, create the appearance of an embroidered frontispiece across the chest; and, finally, the plaid pattern of the skullcap is painted with vigorous, and quite specific, strokes of red and yellow. The attribution problems raised here are threefold. First, Rembrandt generally did not use such markedly different techniques in the face and costume of a portrait. Secondly, by the 1650s, he had developed a manner of painting that would allow him to suggest a wide range of textures in materials without significantly altering the techniques that he used to depict them. Finally, his paint always worked toward creating structure. In this costume, most of the accents of color, as for example on the sleeve or in the skullcap, do not work effectively to convey the nature of the material. This problem is also particularly evident in the superficial black strokes that define the collar of the costume.

While these stylistic considerations are sufficient to remove the painting from Rembrandt's own oeuvre, the identity of the artist who actually executed this portrait cannot be determined. The signature and date, while apparently not written by Rembrandt, appear to be integral to the surface and probably indicate that the painting was executed by a member of the workshop at about 1650 to be sold on the open market. It may well be that Rembrandt, after having posed for this painting, approved its concept and manner of execution before allowing its sale. To judge from the number of self-portraits Rembrandt painted and etched, and from the numerous portraits of him painted by members of his workshop, there must have been a ready market for images of the artist.

None of the painters known to have been in Rembrandt's workshop around 1650, Willem Drost (active 1650s), Jacobus Leveck (1634–1675), Nicolaes Maes (q.v.), and Constantijn van Renesse (1626–1680), can be convincingly associated with this work. The differences in the handling of the paint in the head and the costume are so pronounced in this work that I have wondered whether two artists might have executed the painting. No technical evidence, however, suggests that the painting was a collaborative effort. The stylistic discrepancies are probably the result of a workshop assistant basing his style for modeling the head on Rembrandt's work of the mid-1630s and his manner of painting drapery on Rembrandt's style of the early 1650s. Close stylistic comparison can be made to *Man with a Gilded Helmet* (fig. 2), an unsigned and undated work from the Rembrandt workshop that is datable to the early 1650s.[16] In this work as well, the face and costume are rendered in strikingly different manners. In the Berlin painting a marked contrast exists between the relatively delicate modeling of the face and the thick impastos in the helmet, a contrast in techniques quite similar to that found in the *Portrait of Rembrandt*. While various attributions have been suggested for *Man with a Gilded Helmet*, ranging from

Fig. 2. Rembrandt school, *Man with a Gilded Helmet*, early 1650s, oil on canvas, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie

Karel van der Pluym (1625–1672) to Heyman Dullaert (1636–1684), none is convincing.[17] Whether or not *Portrait of Rembrandt* is by the same unknown artist as the Berlin picture is another puzzle yet to be solved.

Notes

1. Pigment analyses of paint and ground layers are available in the Scientific Research department (see reports 6 July 1981, 18 August 1981, 20 October 1981, and 14 May 1991).

2. Technical examination and pigment analysis by Ashok Roy and David Bomford, National Gallery, London, May 1988, confirmed the use of smalt as an extender in impasted areas of red and yellow paint.

3. Since the provenance for this painting is not known prior to the mention in the Érard Collection, it is not known whether the identification was based on an even older tradition. For an image of Tromp from the early 1650s, see Jan Lievens' *Portrait of the Vice-Admiral*, Maerten Harpertsz Tromp (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. no. A 838).

4. Sébastien Érard sale, Paris, 23 April 1832, no. 119, 136–137:

> Des traits mâles, une contenance assurée, de la noblesse unie à beaucoup de simplicité, donnent une grande expression à ce beau portrait. Dans la demi-teinte qui l'enveloppe et qui va si bien à sa gravité, on pourrait voir une pensée philosophique, une allusion dont Rembrandt était bien capable. Martin Tromp, indifférent pour les titres, honorifiques, pour les chose d'apparat, modeste au plus haut point, ne dut trouver du plaisir à se montrer que quand il était en présence des ennemis de sa nation. Au surplus, quelqu'ait été l'intention du peintre, cette ombre répandue sur la figure d'un tel homme sied bien à son caractère.

5. Smith 1829–1842, 7: 86–87, no. 211, was the first to correctly identify the painting as a portrait of Rembrandt.

6. Bode 1897–1906, 5: 15.

7. Valentiner 1931, introduction.

8. Rosenberg 1948, 1: 28.

9. Pinder 1950, 81–82.

10. Goldscheider 1960, 174, cat. 65.

11. Goldscheider 1960, 174, cat. 65, considered it "one of the finest portraits ever painted."

12. Gerson/Bredius 1969, 550, cat. 39. The reaction can be judged by the fact that Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann 1971, 93–94, listed this work first among what he considered Gerson's "five or six spectacular 'dis-attributions' of well-known and admired paintings, in some cases never previously doubted." Haverkamp-Begemann noted that he continues to believe in the attribution to Rembrandt (personal communication, 1993).

13. I would like to thank Barbara A. Miller, former conservation scientist at the National Gallery of Art, who first analyzed the painting in 1981, Michael Palmer, and Melanie Gifford for their help in interpreting the technical data.

14. Its form can also be seen with the naked eye.

15. The restoration was undertaken in 1992–1993.

16. For an excellent discussion of this work, including information about its restoration, see Kelch et al. 1986.

17. The attribution of this painting to Karel van der Pluym was made by Adams 1984, 427–441. Grimm 1982–1983, 242–250, attributed the painting to Heyman Dullaert.

References

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1854–1857 Waagen, 2 (1854): 281.
1893 Michel: 558 (also 1894 English trans., 2: 237).
1897–1906 Bode, 5 (1901): 15, 102, no. 346, repro.
1899 Bell: 81, 150–151 (also 1907 ed.: 78, 129).
1906 Rosenberg: 260, repro., 401, no. 260 (also 1908 ed.: 319, repro., 559; 1909 ed.: 319, repro., 559; and 1921 English ed.: 319, repro.).
1907 Brown: 256–257.
1907–1927 HdG, 6 (1916): 281–282, no. 574.
1909 New York: no. 94.
1909–1910 Cox: 178–184.
1913–1916 Widener, 1 (1913): unpaginated, intro., no. 33, repro.
1914 Valentiner: 247, no. 58.
1923 Widener: unpaginated, repro.
1923 Meldrum: 196, 262, repro.
1928 Glück: 317–328.
1930b Valentiner: 3–4, repro.
1931 Widener: 88, repro.
1931 Valentiner: unpaginated, intro., no. 105, repro.
1935 Bredius: 3, 39, repro. (also 1936 English ed.: 3, 39, repro.).
1937 Goldscheider: 43, no. 199, repro.
1938 Waldmann: 334–343.
1942 Widener: 6, no. 666.
1948 Rosenberg, 1: 27–28; 2: no. 37, repro. (also 1964 rev. ed.: 42–44, repro.).
1948 Widener: 40, no. 666, repro.
1950 Pinder: 78, repro., 81–82.
1960 Goldscheider: 174, no. 65, repro.
1965 NGA: 111, no. 666.
1966 Bauch: 17, no. 321, repro.
1968 NGA: 97, repro.
1969 Gerson/Bredius: 35, repro., 555, no. 39.
1969 Washington: no. 10.
1971 Haverkamp-Begemann: 88–104.
1975 NGA: 290–291, repro.
1975 Walker: no. 360, color repro.
1976 Bolten and Bolten-Rempt: 193, no. 378, repro.
1982 Wright: 29–30, 43, no. 38, fig. 73.
1985 NGA: 333, repro.
1988 Alpers: 121, repro.

1942.9.61 (657)

Rembrandt Workshop (probably Constantijn van Renesse)

The Descent from the Cross

1650/1652
Oil on canvas, 142 x 110.9 (55⅞ x 43⅝)
Widener Collection

Technical Notes: The support, a medium-weight, plain-woven fabric consisting of two pieces seamed vertically to the left of center through the Christ figure, has been lined with the tacking margins trimmed. Slight cusping is visible along