

- 1906 Rosenberg: 320, 403, repro. (also 1908 3rd rev. ed.: 440, 563, repro.).
- 1907 Kann, 1: iv, 76, no. 75, repro.
- 1907–1928 HdG, 6 (1916): 255, 258, nos. 508, 518.
- 1913–1916 Widener: no. 36, repro.
- 1914 Valentiner: 248, no. 74.
- 1923 Widener: unpaginated, repro.
- 1923 Meldrum: 178, 201, no. 383A.
- 1931 Valentiner: no. 131, repro.
- 1931 Widener: 52–53, repro.
- 1935 Bredius: 17, 392, repro. (also 1936 English ed.: 16, 392, repro.).
- 1942 Widener: 6, no. 660.
- 1948 Widener: 42, repro.
- 1957 Duveen: 234.
- 1959 Widener: 42, no. 660, repro.
- 1963 Walker: 313, 342, repro.
- 1965 NGA: 110, no. 660.
- 1966 Bauch: 15, no. 273, repro.
- 1968 NGA: 98, no. 660, repro.
- 1969 Gerson/Bredius: 301, 581, no. 392, repro.
- 1969 Washington: no. 8.
- 1975 NGA: 288–289, no. 660, repro.
- 1976 Fowles: 52, 205.
- 1985 NGA: 334, repro.

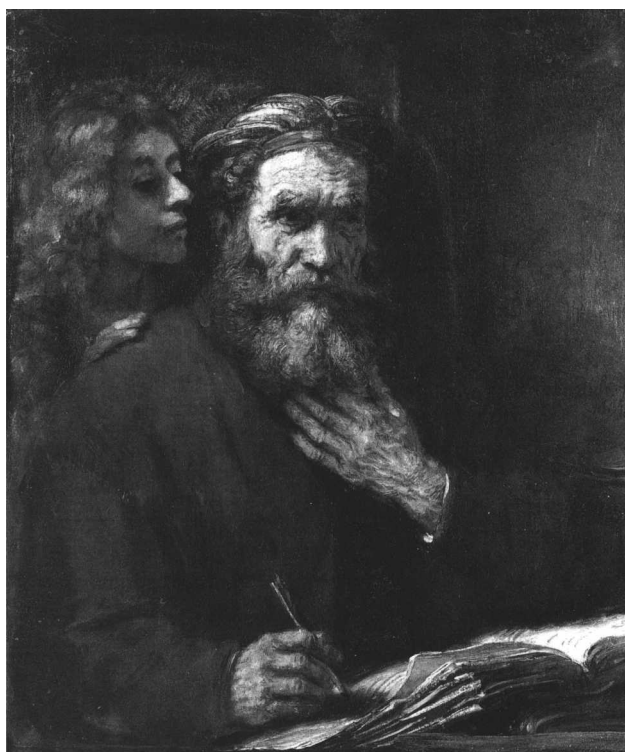


Fig. 1. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Saint Matthew and the Angel*, 1661, oil on canvas, Paris, Louvre, © Photo R.M.N.

1942.9.58 (654)

Follower of Rembrandt van Rijn

Head of Saint Matthew

date uncertain

Oil on oak, 25 x 19.5 (9 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{3}{4}$)

Widener Collection

Technical Notes: The support is a vertically grained, thin, oak panel beveled on the back on all sides. It is not quarter sawn, resulting in an irregular grain pattern, and contains no sapwood, precluding the dating of the panel by dendrochronology.¹ Paint is applied over a granular gray priming in an impasted paint in the head and in thin glazes in the background, with many areas worked wet into wet. Pigment analysis indicates that the paints are consistent with those found in seventeenth-century studio practice.² The painting, which is in excellent condition, was restored in 1994.

Provenance: Alfred Buckley, New Hall, England, by 1882.³ Rodolphe Kann [d. 1905], Paris, probably after c. 1893;⁴ (Duveen Brothers, London, in 1907); (F. Kleinberger & Co., Paris, in 1909); Léonardus Nardus [1868–1930], Suresnes, France.⁵ Peter A. B. Widener, Lynnewood Hall, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, by 1911; inheritance from Estate of Peter A. B. Widener by gift through power of appointment of Joseph E. Widener, Elkins Park.

Exhibited: *Exhibition of Old Masters, and by Deceased Masters of the British School...*, (Winter Exhibition) Royal Academy, London, 1882, no. 99. Washington 1969, no. 9.

THIS freely brushed sketch of a bearded old man wearing a beret is one of four oil studies on panel that depict the same model.⁶ Traditionally these works have been considered autograph sketches that Rembrandt made in preparation for his painting of *Saint Matthew and the Angel*, 1661, now in the Louvre, Paris (fig. 1).⁷ In recent years, however, only one of these sketches, in a private English collection, has been accepted as by Rembrandt.⁸

The broad, impressionistic handling of the paint of the *Head of Saint Matthew* was considered a hallmark of Rembrandt's late style when this sketch first entered the Rembrandt literature in the 1880s. Indeed, during the last years of the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth century, a large number of sketches attributed to Rembrandt's later years were added to his oeuvre, particularly by Wilhelm von Bode and Wilhelm Valentiner. Scholars now recognize that many of these works, including this one, lack the structure of form that underlies Rembrandt's own creations. An x-radiograph of the painting (fig. 2) confirms that the Rembrandtesque characteristics of the image derive from broad brushstrokes across the surface of the image and that



Fig. 2. X-radiograph of 1942.9.58

the head lacks the firm modeling so typical of Rembrandt's works.

The first scholar to reject the attribution to Rembrandt in print was Bauch in 1966.⁹ Van Regteren Altena concluded that the broad handling had characteristics of nineteenth-century imitations of Rembrandt.¹⁰ Gerson agreed that this work was "an imitation of a later period."¹¹ Subsequent authors have not discussed the painting.

Dating such studies can be extremely difficult, because followers of Rembrandt from his own time through the nineteenth century have emulated his work with little variation in style. In this instance examinations of the paints and panel have not yielded information that helps provide a specific chronological framework for the painting. While the character of the paints is consistent with seventeenth-century studio practice, similar materials are also found on later paintings. The only unusual feature for Rembrandt is the presence of verdigris under the beard, but verdigris is found in seventeenth-century paintings. Although dendrochronology could not date the oak panel, the irregular beveling is similar to that found in seventeenth-century paintings. There thus are no technical grounds

for questioning the work's seventeenth-century origin.

Because of differences in the figure's expression and in the character of the beret, it is unlikely that this study is a copy of the head of Saint Matthew from *Saint Matthew and the Angel*. It seems more probable that it and the other *tronies* depicting this figure were made by pupils or followers of Rembrandt while he was occupied with the Louvre painting.¹² From the evidence of drawings it is known that as part of his teaching process Rembrandt encouraged his students to work from live models. This painting could have been such a study piece, executed by an unidentified student of Rembrandt around 1661. Arguing against this hypothesis, however, is the lack of structure evident in the x-radiograph, which would seem to indicate that the artist was not seated before an actual model. The study could thus have been painted by a later follower who sought to create a Rembrandtesque effect with broad brushwork.

Notes

1. See the dendrochronology report by Dr. Joseph Bauch, Universität Hamburg, 29 November 1977, in the conservation files.

2. Reports of the analyses of pigments are available in the Scientific Research department (29 June 1994 and 1 August 1994).

3. Graves 1914, 3: 1011, states that the picture was lent by Buckley to the 1882 Royal Academy Winter Exhibition.

4. Michel 1893, 432–433, lists the picture as still in the possession of Buckley.

5. HdG 1907–1927, 6: 100, no. 174, cites this owner.

6. The other three studies are: *Head of an Old Man*, panel, 25 x 22 cm, Musée Bonnat, Bayonne (Bredius 1935, 303); *Head of an Old Man*, panel 24.5 x 20 cm, private collection, England (Bredius 1935, 304); *Head of an Old Man*, panel 27 x 22 cm, formerly William McAneeny, Detroit (Bredius 1935, 305). Another study of the same man, also attributed to Rembrandt, is in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires (oil on paper set down on panel, 22 x 16 cm).

7. The opinion was most recently expressed by Rosenberg and Slive 1966, 78.

8. Gerson/Bredius 1969, 573, no. 304.

9. Bauch 1966, 48, suggested that this sketch was based on Bredius 1935, 304, rather than on the painting of *Saint Matthew and the Angel* in the Louvre.

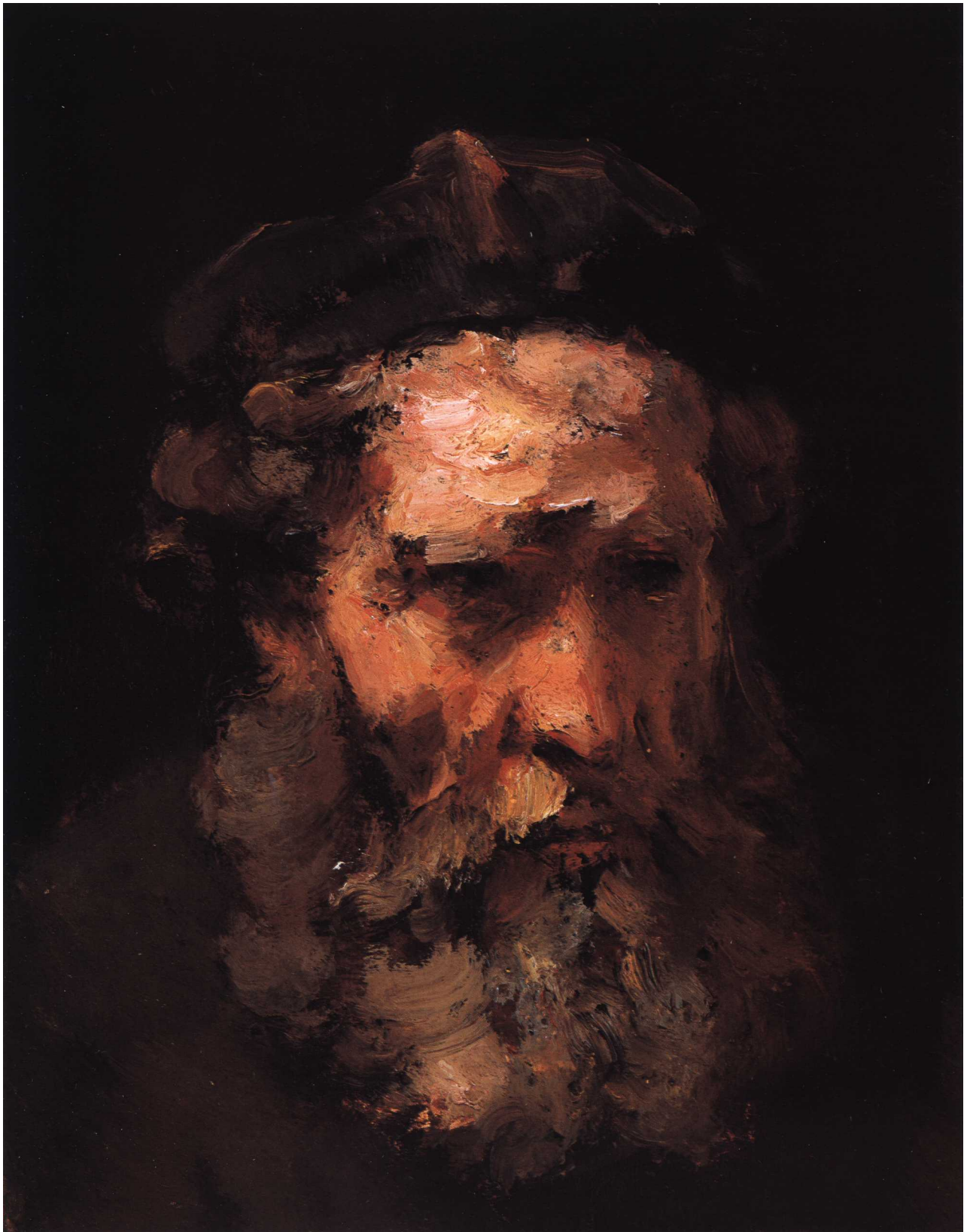
10. Van Regteren Altena 1967, 70–71.

11. Gerson/Bredius 1969, no. 305.

12. The only other instance where a number of studies from the same model by Rembrandt and his workshop exist is *Head of a Young Jew* from the 1640s (Bredius 1935, 620–627).

References

- 1883 Bode: 590, no. 248.
- 1885 Dutuit: 43, 64, 69, no. 418.
- 1893 Michel: 432–433, 559 (also 1894 English ed., 2: 114, 235).



Follower of Rembrandt, *Head of Saint Matthew*, 1942.9.58

- 1897–1906 Bode, 7 (1902): 15, 106, no. 522, repro.; 8 (1906): 378.
 1906 Rosenberg: 362, 405, repro. (also 1908 ed.: 455, 563 repro., and 1909 ed.).
 1907 *Kann*, 1: iv, no. 73.
 1907–1927 HdG, 6 (1916): 100, no. 174.
 1912 Hofstede de Groot: 173–188, 187–188.
 1913–1916 Widener, 1 (1913): intro., no. 39, repro.
 1914 Valentiner: 249, no. 85.
 1923 Widener: unpaginated, repro.
 1931 Widener: 48, 49.
 1923 Meldrum: 202, no. 416A.
 1931 Valentiner: no. 155, repro.
 1935 Bredius: 13, 302 repro. (also 1936 English ed.: 13, 302, repro.).
 1938 Waldmann: 342.
 1942 Widener: 6.
 1948 Widener: 43, repro.
 1957 Duveen: 234.
 1963 Walker: 314, 342, repro.
 1965 NGA: 110.
 1966 Bauch: 48.
 1966 Rosenberg, Slive, and Ter Kuile: 78, repro.
 1967 Van Regteren Altena: 70–71.
 1968 NGA: 98, repro.
 1969 Gerson/Bredius: 230, 573, no. 302, repro.
 1969 Washington: no. 9.
 1975 NGA: 286–287, repro.
 1976 Fowles: 52.
 1985 NGA: 334, repro.

1942.9.63 (659)

Follower of Rembrandt van Rijn

Study of an Old Man

probably late 17th century
 Oil on oak, 28 x 21.5 (11 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$)
 Widener Collection

Technical Notes: The support is a vertically grained oak panel composed of a single beveled board fitted with its original strips of wood to square off the beveled edges. Dendrochronology gives the panel a felling date of 1666.¹ A small vertical check in the bottom edge has been repaired. A thin off-white ground, consisting primarily of lead white bound in oil, is visible through thinly painted passages.²

The x-radiograph reveals the presence of another portrait, turned 180 degrees, lying below the present portrait (fig. 1). The earlier portrait is partially visible through the sketchy unfinished beard. Raking light reveals the outlines of the image, a head with a cap, smaller in size than in the current portrait. Cross-sections show no intermediate ground layer between the two paintings.

Paint in the present portrait is applied thinly, with impasted highlights, and hair curls incised with the butt end of a brush. The background was painted first with a reserve left for the head. Paint loss is minimal: retouching is confined to the edges and abrasion is minor. A moderately discolored varnish is present. No conservation has been carried out since acquisition.

Provenance: (Dowdeswell and Dowdeswell, London); sold 1905 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: Washington 1969, 18, no. 7.

THIS STUDY of an old bearded man with a sad, forlorn expression was acquired as a Rembrandt by Peter A. B. Widener from the London art market in 1905. When Wilhelm Valentiner catalogued Widener's paintings in 1913, he dated it about 1645 and emphasized the painting's "broad, powerful brushwork and deep thoughtful expression which characterize the artist's later style."³ Ensuing assessments, however, have been less enthusiastic. In most subsequent catalogues of Rembrandt's paintings the picture has been doubted, rejected, or omitted entirely. Martin questioned the attribution as early as 1921, and, while Bredius included the picture in his 1935 catalogue, he expressed his doubts in a note: "The



Fig. 1. X-radiograph of 1942.9.63, here shown upside down