

29. Bode 1895, 13–19, 70–76, does not explicitly mention visiting Widener, but he does write that he went to Philadelphia. Since he was actively visiting museums and collectors, however, it hardly seems possible that he and Widener did not meet. Widener had been collecting Dutch paintings prior to 1893, but only in 1894 did he begin to acquire major examples (Rembrandt's *Saskia*, for example, from Sedelmeyer in Paris, the dealer who would publish Bode's corpus on Rembrandt). In that same year he also bought a number of

other important Dutch pictures, including Meindert Hobbema's *The Travelers* (1942.9.31), Pieter de Hooch's *The Bedroom* (1942.9.33), and Aelbert Cuyp's *Lady and Gentleman on Horseback* (1942.9.15). At about this time he also began to sell minor works from his earlier collection.

30. We have also benefited enormously from discussions with colleagues from other institutions, in particular Ashok Roy, David Bomford, Ernst van de Wetering, and Karen Groen.

1942.9.71 (667)

## Rembrandt van Rijn

### *Saskia van Uylenburgh, the Wife of the Artist*

probably begun 1634/1635 and completed 1638/1640  
Oil on poplar, 60.5 x 49 (23¾ x 19¼)  
Widener Collection

**Technical Notes:** The cradled wood support consists of a single poplar board with a vertical grain, with a 2.1 cm L-shaped wood strip added along the left and bottom edges, and a 5.1 cm square insert at the lower right.<sup>1</sup> The frame hides the added strip. A thin chalk and lead white ground covers the surface.<sup>2</sup> A preliminary sketch in black paint is visible under the features.

Paint was applied fluidly in the background and figure, with slight impasto in the chain and collar. The x-radiograph shows changes in the design, some of which are visible with the naked eye (see fig. 4). The white collar and dark neckline were originally lower, exposing more of the neck. The dress was slightly fuller, as were the chin and cheek profile. The paint is in good condition, with little inpainting or abrasion.

The date of cradling is not known, nor is the date of the attachment of the L-shaped strip. The painting was cleaned in 1930. In 1976, the painting again underwent treatment. A lower natural resin layer was left in place, along with a hardened, pigmented natural resin layer on the dress.

**Provenance:** Bouchier Cleeve [d. 1760], Foots Cray Place, Kent; Sir George Yonge, Bart.; (sale, London, 24–25 March 1806, no. 79). William Wells, Redleaf, Kent; (sale, Christie & Manson, London, 12–13 May 1848, no. 67). (Sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 10 and 12 May 1890, no. 93); (P. & D. Colnaghi & Co., London); H. Bingham Mildmay, Devon; (sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 24 June 1893, no. 58). (Charles Sedelmeyer, Paris); Peter A. B. Widener, Lynnewood Hall, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, in 1894; inheritance from Estate of Peter A. B. Widener by gift through power of appointment of Joseph E. Widener, Elkins Park.

**Exhibited:** British Institution, London, 1831, no. 85. *100 Paintings of Old Masters*, Sedelmeyer Gallery, Paris, 1894, no. 31. New York 1909, no. 81. Washington 1969, no. 2.

SASKIA VAN UYLENBURGH, baptized on 12 August 1612, was raised in Leeuwarden, the principle city of the Province of Friesland. Her family members were leading patricians of that Frisian city, and her father, Rombertus Rommertsz. van Uylenburgh, served as burgomaster of Leeuwarden. Two of Saskia's cousins, Aaltje Pietersdr. van Uylenburgh and Hendrik van Uylenburgh, lived in Amsterdam, and it was presumably on a visit there that Saskia met Rembrandt, who had moved from Leiden to live in the house of Hendrik van Uylenburgh in 1632. Van Uylenburgh was a painter and flourishing art dealer, and Rembrandt, who as early as 1631 invested in the business, lived there and worked with Van Uylenburgh until 1635.<sup>3</sup>

Rembrandt and Saskia were betrothed on 8 June 1633. Married a year later on 22 June 1634, they lived together for nine years before her death on 14 June 1642. The couple had four children, but only one, Titus, born in 1641, survived infancy.

The image of Saskia that has been preserved for us through Rembrandt's many drawings, etchings, and paintings is incredibly varied. One sees through them her warmth and tenderness (fig. 1), but also a certain haughtiness; her robust energy and zest for life, but also the debilitating illnesses that frequently weakened her after the mid-1630s. One senses that a strong bond existed between Rembrandt and Saskia, but that, at the same time, her conservative upbringing and character seem to have made it difficult for her to fully accord to the kind of life she was expected to lead as the wife, and occasional model, of this extraordinary painter.

In this painting the personal nature of Rembrandt's representation is enhanced by Saskia's pose. Glancing over her right shoulder she looks out at the viewer. With her head tilted slightly forward she has a gentle yet engaging appearance. Nevertheless, one senses even in this appealing portrait the duality of Saskia's nature. While she wears a fashionable, albeit



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Saskia van Uylenburgh, the Wife of the Artist*, 1642.9.71



Fig. 1. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Saskia van Uylenburgh*, 1633, silverpoint, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett

conservative dress appropriate to her upbringing, the diaphanous shawl that covers her head and falls gently over her shoulders was not customary for a woman of her stature. Its associations are arcadian and similar veils are seen in representations of shepherdesses.<sup>4</sup> Rembrandt almost certainly provided Saskia with the veil to suggest a softer, more intimate portrayal than could have been possible with a conventional bonnet.

This painting, which is neither signed nor dated, was probably begun by Rembrandt around 1634–1635, shortly after his marriage to Saskia. The idealization of Saskia's features, which derived from Rembrandt's conscious attempt to impart an arcadian quality to the portrait, makes it difficult to date this work precisely by comparing her features to securely dated portraits of her.<sup>5</sup> She is decidedly more attractive than she appears in other paintings, as is evident in a comparison with Rembrandt's portrait of Saskia in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, signed and dated 1633 (fig. 2). In the Gallery's painting Rembrandt has minimized Saskia's double chin and softened her features. A close comparison, however,

can be made between her features in this work and in the double portrait with Rembrandt, which was almost certainly executed in about 1635 (fig. 3). In both paintings Saskia looks out at the viewer in such a way that the similarities in the shapes of her wide eyes and fully rounded nose are particularly evident.

The techniques Rembrandt used to convey different textures in this painting are also difficult to date precisely. They are remarkably varied. The paint on the highlighted portion of the face is applied in a dense, enamel-like fashion with diagonal strokes of the brush. Underlying this dense layer is a thinner layer of a slightly darker flesh color, visible on the shaded side of her face, that must have defined, almost as an imprimatura layer, the form of Saskia's head. Over this layer Rembrandt placed freely executed strands of hair and the diaphanous shawl, which he highlighted with strokes of green, yellow, and orange. The shawl also overlays the elaborate form of Saskia's collar, the diamond-shaped design of which was created with a rich variety of strokes executed wet on wet. Finally, Rembrandt indicated

Fig. 2. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Saskia van Uylenburgh*, 1633, oil on panel, Amsterdam Rijksmuseum



the gold chain she wears with a succession of rapid angular strokes that were deftly applied to suggest both the shapes of the links and the light reflecting off them.

The surety of the execution is characteristic of Rembrandt, particularly the sensitivity to the various effects of light as it illuminates the face, passes through the translucent veil, and reflects off the gold chain. Despite the painting's qualities, its attribution to Rembrandt has been disputed by the Rembrandt Research Project (RRP), which considers the painting to be the work of a pupil in the workshop from around 1640.<sup>6</sup> Because of the late date ascribed to the work, the RRP has also concluded that the figure does not represent Saskia. The RRP therefore identified the painting as a *Bust of a Young Woman*. The RRP has buttressed its arguments for a late date for this work by comparing the technique involved with that in other paintings dated between 1639 and 1641. At the same time, the RRP pointed out differences in technique between this work and paintings from around 1640 to justify its rejection of the Rembrandt attribution.

The circular nature of these arguments is difficult to counter, in part because the extremely rigid interpretation of Rembrandt's oeuvre found in the first volumes of the RRP has eliminated so many works from this period that seem acceptable within the parameters of his style. The RRP, for example, has rejected all bust-length portraits from Rembrandt's oeuvre between 1635 and 1639 that might have served as points of comparison for an earlier dating. The one bit of technical evidence that might reinforce a date around 1640 is that the wood support is poplar rather than oak; Rembrandt painted a few other paintings on poplar between 1639 and 1641.<sup>7</sup> If, however, one studies the pattern of his use of other exceptional woods, including walnut and mahogany, it is clear that he used them over an extended period of time.

The x-radiograph provides interesting information about the genesis of this work that has not previously been sufficiently analyzed (fig. 4). It demonstrates that Saskia initially resembled much more than she now does the image in the Rijksmuseum painting (fig. 2). Not only did she originally have a pronounced double chin, she also had a bare neck, which was illuminated by a strong light below her hair, and a wide white collar that extends below the present edge of her black clothing. The background in the lower right was built up with lead white, and the contour between the background and the dress was different than it is now. It would thus seem that Rembrandt substantially revised this image by re-



Fig. 3. Detail of Rembrandt van Rijn, *Rembrandt and Saskia*, c. 1635, oil on canvas, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen

working the face, changing the collar, and adding the veil.<sup>8</sup>

The complex genesis of this painting helps explain some of the anomalies of this image that raised doubts about its attribution. While the character of the image clearly relates to images of Saskia from 1633 to 1635, the diversity of painting techniques evident in the final image is admittedly unusual for that period. Nevertheless, definite comparisons can be made between certain techniques found in this work and those in other of Rembrandt's paintings from around 1635, in particular the use of white and pink accents for highlighting the nose and a strong black line to articulate the opening of the mouth. These comparisons, as well as the physiognomical relationship to images of Saskia around 1633 to 1635, place the initial execution of this work in the mid-1630s. Rembrandt's reworking of the image may well have occurred toward the end of the 1630s to judge from the freely executed veil, which has parallels in other works by him from about 1640.<sup>9</sup> The style of her collar, moreover, relates to that found on



Fig. 4. X-radiograph of 1942.9.71

the *Bust of Rembrandt*, signed and dated 163[8], in the Norton Simon Collection, Pasadena.<sup>10</sup> A similar lozenge-shaped pattern on the collar can be found in Rembrandt's etched *Self-Portrait* of 1638.<sup>11</sup>

This painting is of particular interest within the Gallery's collection because it was the first Rembrandt acquired by P. A. B. Widener. He purchased it from Charles Sedelmeyer in 1894, perhaps at the recommendation of Wilhelm von Bode. The provenance of the painting has been confused with another portrait of Saskia in the earlier literature.<sup>12</sup> The earliest owner of this painting to be identified is Bouchier Cleeve of Foots Cray Place, Kent, who died in 1760.

#### Notes

1. Dendrochronology cannot be used to date poplar panels. Report by Dr. Joseph Bauch, Universität Hamburg, 29 November 1977.

2. Pigment and media analysis of ground and paint layers is available in the Scientific Research department (various dates, 1976).

3. Strauss and Van der Meulen 1979, 75, doc. 1631/4.

4. Louttit 1973, 317–326. A surprising number of portraits of Saskia throughout the 1630s by Rembrandt and his school depict Saskia in arcadian guise (Bredius 1935, nos. 92, 93, 94, 98, 104, 105, 106, 108, 634).

5. Nevertheless, with the exception of the RRP, which rejects the painting and believes that it was executed about 1640 (see *Corpus* 1982–, 3: 651–656, C103), all significant Rembrandt scholars have dated this work about 1633–1634. Grimm 1991, 57, who accepts *Saskia* as entirely by Rembrandt's hand, dates the painting about 1638 to 1640.

6. *Corpus* 1982–, 3: 651–656, C103.

7. Bauch and Eckstein 1981: 251–263.

8. The veil covers freely executed strokes representing strands of Saskia's hair. These are visible above the ribbons from which the pearl hangs.

9. See the arguments defending the Rembrandt attribution by Ernst van de Wetering in *Corpus* 1982–, 3: 656.

10. This comparison is also made in *Corpus* 1982–, 3:

655. The RRP has, unconvincingly to my mind, proposed that the painting was executed by Carel Fabritius (c. 1622–1654) rather than Rembrandt himself. See *Corpus* 1982–, 3: 617–624, C97. The RRP rejects the authenticity of the signature and date, which read “Rembrandt f/ 163[8],” and dates the painting about 1641, the year of Fabritius’ arrival in Rembrandt’s workshop.

11. B. 1797, 20.

12. HdG 1907–1927, 6: 297, no. 615, includes in his provenance for this painting three sales that refer to a lost painting, Smith 1829–1842, 7: no. 502. The sales are: De Gaignat, Paris, 1768; De Calonne, Paris, 1788; De Choiseul-Praslin, Paris, 1793.

## References

- 1836 Passavant, 2: 71–72.  
 1829–1842 Smith, 7 (1836): 183, no. 576.  
 1885–1900 Widener, 2: 241, repro.  
 1894 Paris: 38, no. 31, repro.  
 1897–1906 Bode, 3 (1899): 6, 50, no. 153, repro.  
 1899 Bell: 185 (also 1907 ed.: 156).  
 1906 Rosenberg: 98, repro. (also 1908 ed.: 129, repro.; and 1909 ed.: 129, repro.).  
 1913–1916 Widener, 2: intro., no. 31, repro.  
 1914 Valentiner: 244, no. 24.  
 1907–1927 HdG, 6 (1916): 297, no. 615.  
 1909 New York: no. 81.  
 1921b Valentiner: 129, repro.  
 1923 Widener: no. 27, repro.  
 1923 Van Dyck: 124.  
 1923 Meldrum: 41, 67, pl. 167.  
 1930b Valentiner: 3.  
 1931 Valentiner: intro., no. 51, pl. 30.  
 1931 Widener: 60, repro.  
 1935 Bredius: no. 96, repro. (also 1936 English ed.: 96, repro.).  
 1938 Waldmann: 335–342.  
 1942 Widener: 6, no. 667.  
 1948 Widener: 36, no. 667, repro.  
 1965 NGA: 111, no. 667.  
 1966 Bauch: no. 488, repro.  
 1968 NGA: 96, no. 667, repro.  
 1968 Gerson: 292, 495, no. 174, repro.  
 1969 Haak: 92, no. 134, repro.  
 1969 Gerson/Bredius: 85, repro.  
 1973 Louttit: 317–326, repro. no. 76.  
 1975 NGA: 290–291, no. 667, repro.  
 1977 Bolten and Bolten-Rempt: 180, no. 166.  
 1977 Kettering: 19–44.  
 1981 Janson: 6–21.  
 1981 Miller: 23–33.  
 1982– *Corpus*, 3 (1989): 651–656, 3 repros.  
 1984/1985 Schwartz: 189–190, repro. (also 1985 English ed.: 190, repro.).  
 1985 NGA: 333, repro.  
 1986 Guillaud and Guillaud: no. 331, repro.  
 1986 Sutton: 312, repro. no. 467.  
 1986 Tümpel: 114, repro., 410, no. 183.  
 1991 Grimm: 61, fig. 105, 72, color repro. 36 (detail).

1940.1.13 (499)

## Rembrandt van Rijn and Workshop (probably Govaert Flinck)

### *Man in Oriental Costume*

c. 1635

Oil on canvas, 98.5 x 74.5 (38<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 29<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>)

Andrew W. Mellon Collection

## Inscriptions

Center left: [R]embrandt ft

**Technical Notes:** The original support is a fine-weight, tightly and plain-woven linen fabric that has been lined to two fabrics at separate intervals. The original tacking margins have been trimmed, and 1 cm of the original support and design layers has been turned over the stretcher edges. Cusping is absent along the right and bottom edges and slightly visible on the top and left edge, indicating that the painting’s dimensions have been reduced more extensively at the top and bottom than along the sides. In any event, the *R* from the signature has been cropped along the left edge. The x-radiograph shows a long horizontal tear in the background in the upper right.

The double ground is oil-bound with a thin, red-earth lower layer and a thicker, light gray upper layer composed largely of lead white. The x-radiograph indicates that the gray layer was smoothed with a broad sharp-edged tool in diagonal strokes. The thin, sketchy underpainting, applied with a wide brush in short strokes, is visible in the unfinished lower third of the painting and between the wide brushstrokes of the finished area.

Paint was applied wet into wet in layers of moderate thickness with impasto in the turban. The medium has been identified as oil and the pigment mixtures are complex.<sup>1</sup> Paint in the turban was intentionally scraped away in areas to expose the gray ground before design details were added, and lines in the feather were incised with the butt end of a brush. The hands are painted with a thin, semi-transparent layer over the gray ground, and, like the lower half of the costume, are unfinished. Long, thin, broken lines of losses occur on either side of the head, in the background and turban, and below the proper left hand. Numerous small areas of abrasion are scattered overall.

The painting was cleaned in 1987, at which time disfiguring overpaint was removed. Remnants of an aged discolored oil coating remain on the light background, and sections of the upper paint layer of the drapery have blanched.

**Provenance:** Johan Ernst Gotskowsky, Berlin, before 1756;<sup>2</sup> acquired 1764 by Catherine II, empress of Russia [1729–1796];<sup>3</sup> Imperial Hermitage Gallery, Saint Petersburg; sold through (Matthiesen Gallery, Berlin; P. & D. Colnaghi & Co., London; and M. Knoedler & Co., New York) to Andrew W. Mellon, Pittsburgh and Washington; deeded 8 March 1938 to The A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Pittsburgh.

**Exhibited:** *Rembrandt Tentoonstelling*, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. 1932, no. 5. *Art Treasures*, Christie’s, London, 1932, no.