

List of arguments of the present painting

Congruence of the elements of pertinence for an attribution:

The way in which certain pertinent elements bear a congruent relationship with Rembrandt's known oeuvre allows us to call into question the misleading impressions that derive from the fact that the painting has a different composition to Vliet's etching, and the clumsy passages which are due to previous poorly executed restorations on movement zone of the boards at the exception of Philip's realignment face lines (considered conformed with state-of-the-art restoration by Michel van de Laar). The arguments are grouped into ten categories.



The painting before final restoration

Fondation Custodia

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Constat d'état peinture/ *painting condition report*

Exposition 1 : « West meets East in the Work of Rembrandt and his dutch contemporaries », Kunstmuseum Basel, 31/10/2020-14/2/2021.
Exposition 2 : Museum Barberini, Postdam, 13/3/2021-27/6/2021.

Description

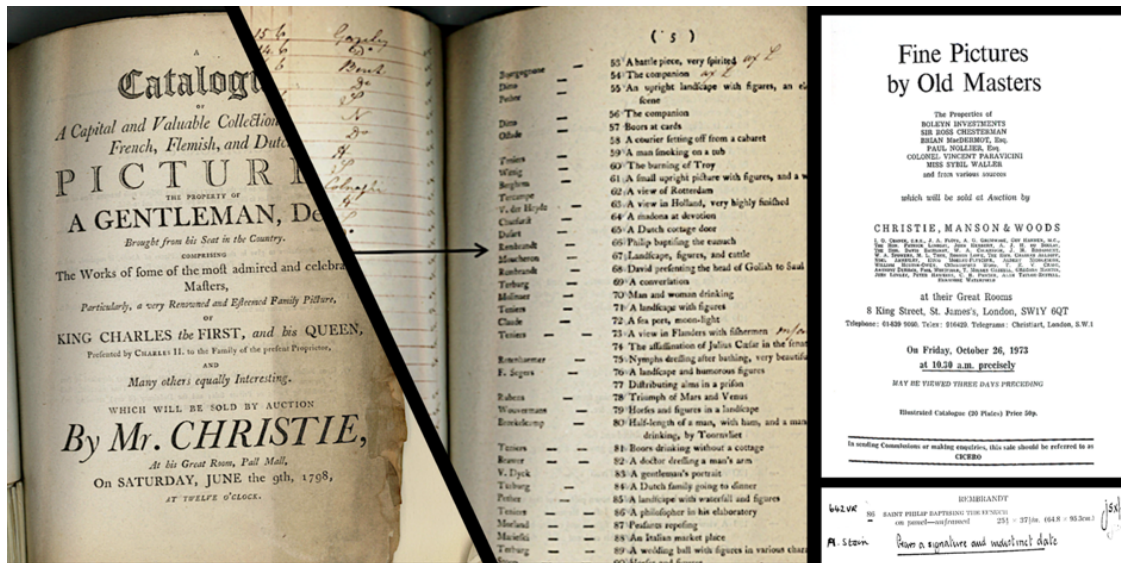
Description	
Artiste/artist /	Rembrandt (attribué)
Titre/title :	The Baptism of the Eunuch
N°Inv./ number:	Collection privée
Dimensions/size	
Dim.cadre/frame size	
Technique:	huile/oil
Support:	panel



Traces of past restorers that have been sources of confusion with a hypothetical assistant participation of which there is no trace.

The condition report of Fondation Custodia for Basel exhibition extract, “West meets the East in the work of Rembrandt and his Dutch contemporaries” and the margin notes that shows the painting condition in detail and explains the current confusions between Rembrandt’s hand and the traces of the past restorers.

1. The documentary value of Christies' catalogues: *Philip Baptizing the Eunuch* was sold twice with the inscription 'made by Rembrandt':



Auctions, 1798 Christie's catalogue, mentioning Rembrandt painting of *Philip baptizing the eunuch* and *David presenting the head of Goliath to Saul* 1973 Christie's catalogue, mentioning the present painting's dimensions 64.8 x 95.3 cm id. 642VR.

- June 9th, 1798, London, at twelve o'clock lot 66, *Philip baptizing the eunuch*, a scan of the catalogue pages concerning the painting were sent to us by Christie's. The Utrecht painting never travelled out of Holland (RKD)
- October 26th, 1973, London, lot 86 the present painting with certainty: the n° 642 VR of the lot and the dimensions correspond.

Observation: Documentations given and published by Christie's show that the painting was never lost and was already considered to be an artwork made by Rembrandt's single hand and sold as such.

2. The documentary value of Johannes Gillis van Vliet's print copy (*Inscribed RH v. Rijn inv. JG.v. Vliet fec. 1631*):

- It is an exceptionally ambitious reproduction print of a painting made by Johannes Gillis van Vliet. There are other drawn, engraved or painted traces of the same painting as Visscher's print made in the same format, but it does not detract from Rembrandt's status as the detract from Rembrandt's status as 'inventor' of the image.



Vliet's print 1631, Johannes Gillis van Vliet after Rembrandt, the *Baptism of the eunuch* Inscribed RH v. Rijn inv. JG.v. Vliet fec. 1631. 59.2 x 49.1 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-33.38

- The appearance of Vliet's engraving could be deceptive. It includes details which are not evident at first sight, but which suggest that Rembrandt's model had a different composition. However, Vliet's prints after Rembrandt's paintings are all in a vertical format. This could give a clue to series of anomalies:

The squinting characters in the half top of the engraving:

There is not just one squinting character in this part, but five, which suggests that it is not an accident but a systemic configuration.



All these figures display nonsensical gazes, and no one looks at the eunuch which are supposed to protect:



Wild, staring eyes for all the members of the eunuch's entourage; none of them look at Philip or the eunuch with no np comparison with the expressiveness of the ones of the present painting.

It seems that Vliet made a recasting of the features of the present painting in a vertical composition with the possible indication of an intermediary drawing by Rembrandt (or a similar one made by assistants) whose faces of the characters are not designed.

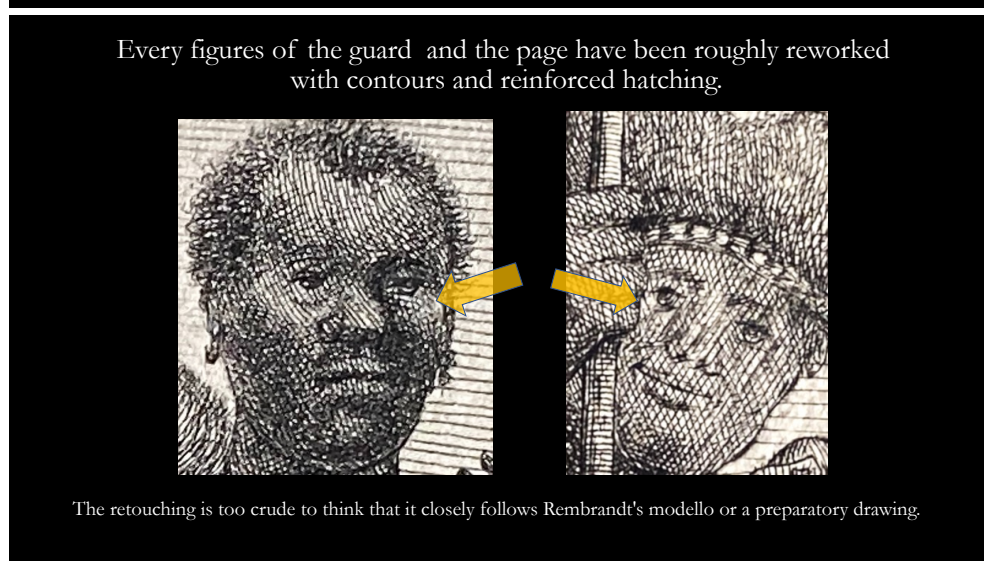
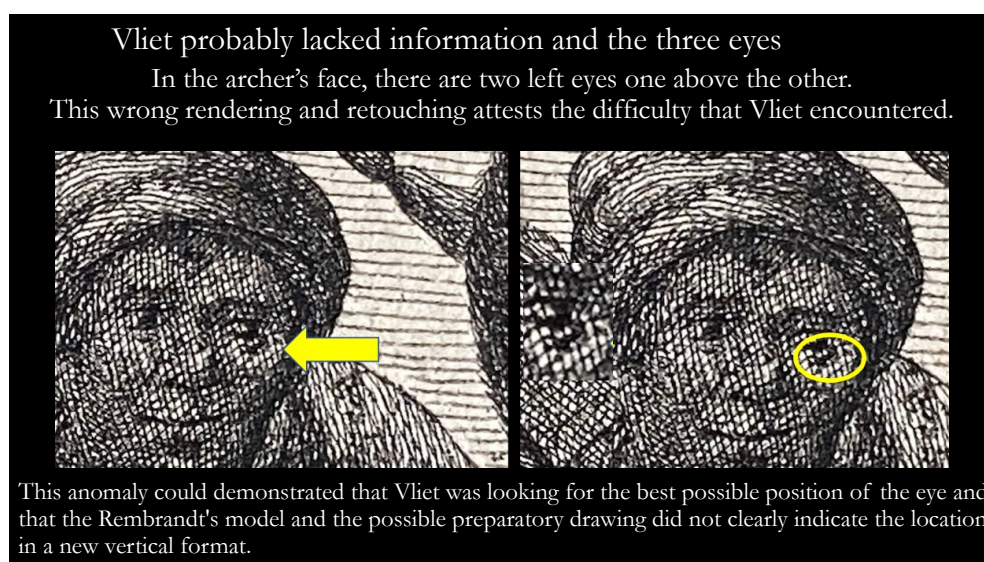


Rembrandt's drawing, Black chalk on paper, 19.2 x 21.1 cm, Munich, Graphische Sammlung, *The baptism of the eunuch*, ca. 1630.



Simulation of plausible copying process from the painting to the plate.

The visible reworking of the eyes are another proof of the composition's change: Every figures of the eunuch's entourage and the page have been roughly reworked with contours and reinforced hatching. It seems that the first state of the copperplates was first etched with the original eye's directions of the painting designed for a horizontal composition in earlier stage but were considered unsatisfactory and unfit for publication because all the gazes were turned to the left, vertically into the wide. In the second state, it was possibly coarsely reworked with outlines and hatchings strengthened. As for *The Leper* ('*Lazarus Klep*'), probably etched in 1629. Jaco Rutgers wrote in *Jan van Vliet and Rembrandt van Rijn: Their Collaboration Reassessed* (p.293) "the retouchings are generally thought to be too crude to attribute them to Rembrandt himself. Jan van Vliet seems a plausible candidate to have done the job for him." It seems that the retouchings are similar for his first engravings after Rembrandt.



Composition: Anomalies of the eyes in all directions and some incongruities (horse's genital touching Philip's head) are a strong

indication that a transfer was made from and horizontal modello and directly related to the compositional indications of an intermediate drawing. It is unlikely that such repeated aberrations were invented by Rembrandt himself. Rembrandt's modello could not be vertical whatever the alternative reality, background, and theories.



Horse's genitals in contact with St. Philip's head.

Measurement of the painting and van Vliet's print reveals that the figures have exactly the same size, wrote Gary Schwartz in his book, *A new Baptism of the Eunuch*, 2010.

It means that van Vliet could have traced them for his reworked composition. (The unusually large size of the print is explained by this assumption.) That feature has a striking correlative in the prints. "This possibility is enhanced by a peculiarity of his print – that the auxiliary figures are all looking in the wrong direction. The gazes of the rider and the rest of the entourage make perfect sense in the horizontal painting and perfect nonsense in van Vliet's vertical print. In tracing the figures, he would have copied the heads and poses as he found them, without taking account of the change in the relative position of Philip and the eunuch to the eunuch's company.

- The rough cutting along the righthand side is the same of the present painting.



The coarse cutting in the present painting, in Vliet and Visscher's prints.

Observation: The present painting is the model for van Vliet's print.

3. The documentary value of Visscher's print:

- Visscher borrowed the figures from Van Vliet (themselves borrowed from the present painting), the composition from the present painting and most important differentiation, the baptism act is different of Vliet's and the present painting.
- Visscher's print is the mirror image (including the rough cutting along the righthand side) of the present painting, with the same composition and same coherent direction of gazes.

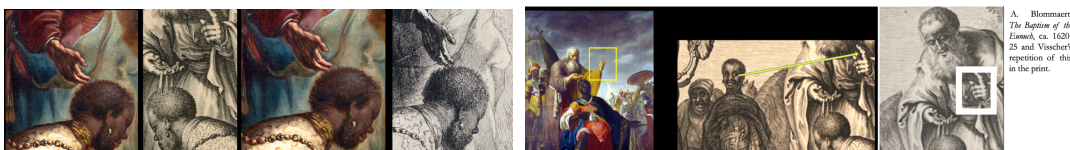


- The present painting is the modello for Visscher's print according to Gary Schwartz, Ger Luijten, and Christiaan Vogelaar and not the contrary.



Same orientation of the eunuch's gazes in Visscher and in the present painting.

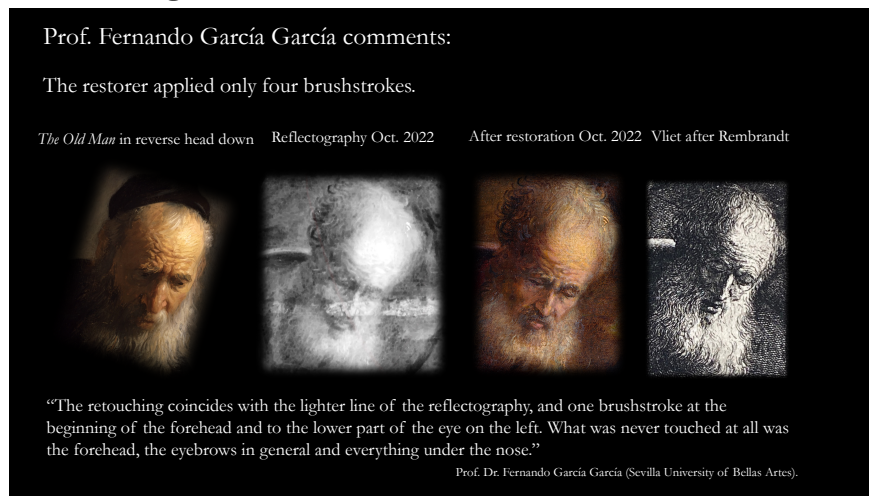
4. However, Visscher's print differs radically from the painting for the most important element of the act of baptism, Philip used blessed water and he is pointing upwards, with his left index finger. Visscher borrowed this features directly by Abraham Blommaert, ca. 1620-1625. This definitely excludes the hypothesis that the painting could be a copy of the engraving.



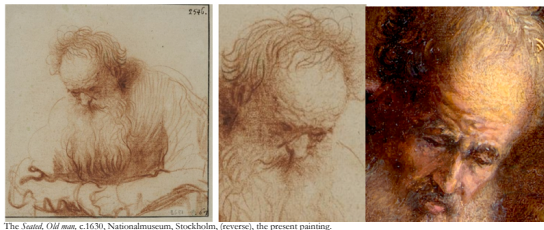
A. Blommaert, *The Baptism of the Eunuch*, ca. 1620-25 and Visscher's repetition of this in the print.

5. The documentary value of the *Head of an Old Man in a Cap* c. 1630 by Rembrandt is the tronie for Philip. The painting put in the same way as the old man shows evident similitudes despite the restoration of a minimal portion of Philip's face in the painting. On his

condition reports of 1Aug. 2022, Michel van de Laar wrote: “the retouches of the last restoration were carried out skillfully, carefully and with the finest precision. [...] has recuperated old retouching on a fill in the reintegration of her reconstruction of the face.”

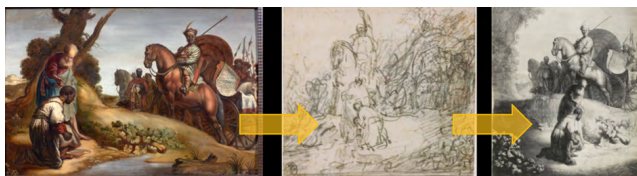


- 6. Similarities of the present painting with Rembrandt's drawings of the Seated Old man, c.1630, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, extract in reverse, and Philip's head in the present painting.**



- 7. The documentary value of the drawing, *The Baptism of the Eunuch*, by Rembrandt c. 1630, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München:**

This drawing is part of the 2019 Rembrandt drawings corpus. However, it could not have been used for Rembrandt's 1641 engraving, as the latter is horizontal like the present painting and the commanding horseman is not above Philip's head like in the drawing, but instead beside it. It seems more likely that the drawing was used by Van Vliet for his compositional transfer from a horizontal to a vertical format.



It seems reasonable as Gary Schwartz said that this drawing was probably made around 1630-1631. It takes on its full meaning as a preparatory document for Vliet's etching.

7. Physical properties typical of Rembrandt:

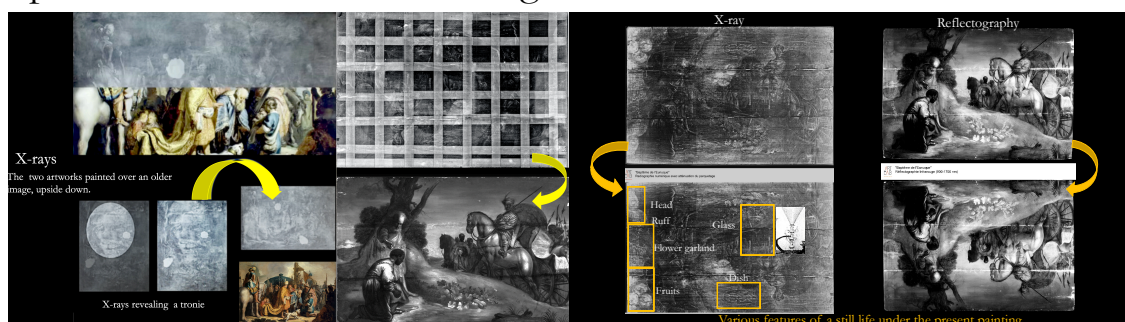
- Dendrochronology analysis made by Professor Peter Klein dates the oak panel to 1631 which is compatible with the creation date of *Old Man in a Cap* 1630, *drawing of Munich* c. 1631 by Rembrandt, the print copies by Vliet 1631 and Visscher 1631-1632.

The specialists state that a natural drying takes a week or more. There is the time to execute the present picture before the end of 1631.

Since the Renaissance, painters know how to dry the painting quickly if necessary. There is a natural (by heat) or a chemical (by a siccative) process to dry the previous paints on which painters would use to paint without delay. Gary Schwartz is right to place the date of creation of this painting in 1631, as suggested by Peter Klein dendrochronological analysis. This date corresponds to other tangible elements proving that this painting precedes the print of Vliet (1631) and as well as Visscher's and is the modello of them (the many interdependent iconographic anomalies due to the transfer of composition, the disproportions of riders and horses, the rough cut of the panel on the right reproduced exactly by the two engravers etc.).

➔ Michel van de Laar also said that it doesn't matter if there is a still life underneath executed in the same year because Rembrandt easily used siccative to dry the underlying paintings. It didn't take more than a week, a week and a half to paint over it after the drying process.

- The double use of the panel “so typical of Rembrandt”: multispectral analysis and X-ray and reflectography images from *Rad'Art Institute* in Geneva (2013) and *Art in Lab* (26 Oct. 2022) reveal an artwork painted upside down over an older image.



- Stratigraphy analysis made by Dr. Herman Kühn. He finds pigments and the palette corresponding to those used XVII^e century and in particular by Rembrandt and his entourage. The restorers have employed other pigments in the joint zones of the boards.

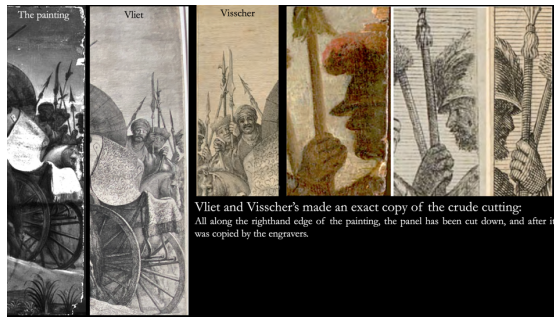
Dr. Hermann Kuhn The scientifically analyzed samples are of pigments used in 17th century Dutch painting and particularly same or similar of the Rembrandt workshop.

Tous les échantillons examinés contiennent des pigments déjà connus ou utilisés au 17^{ème} siècle. Les gros aggrégats de blanc de plomb, l'utilisation du carbonate de calcium comme une charge aussi bien que le médium à base d'huile avec addition de résine sont tout à fait courants au 17^{ème} siècle. Le graphique de distribution des éléments-traces concorde également avec celui des peintures hollandaises ; l'analyse scientifique de la peinture néanmoins seule, ne donne pas de résultats qui permettent d'attribuer ce tableau à un artiste spécifique ou à une école.

Sy/naus

- Rough cutting along right edge. According Jonathan Graindorge Lamour, curator and wood restorer. “...the panel has been cut because the edge has an irregular cut with numerous accidents and splinters that have been caused during the cutting process.” He restored in a such efficient way that today the edge looks regular, and the cutting is almost visible only in the picture abrupt interruption. The Technical report written by prof. Fernando Garcia-Garcia, January 2023, shows the visual evidence of

the cutting preceding the execution of Vliet and Visscher's prints in which the rough cutting is repeated.



7. Stylistic properties:

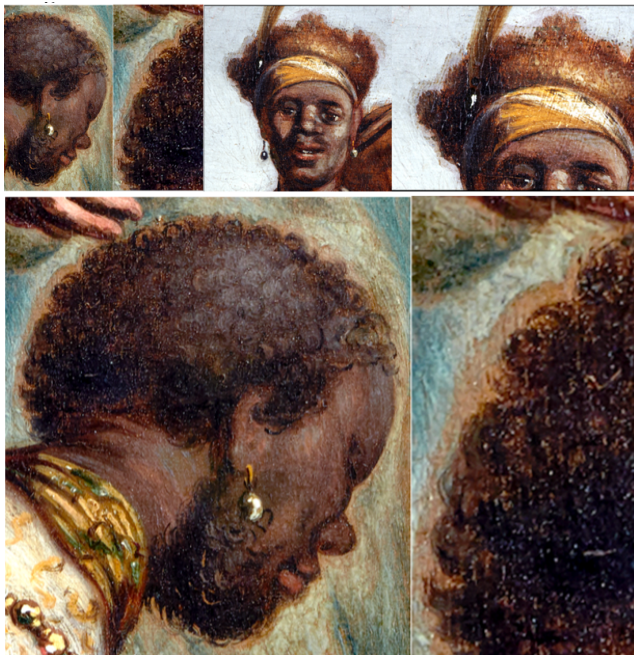
- The various *pentimenti* showing compositional changes made during the painting's creation prove that it is not a copy.



The lance was painted over after it was begun, to be replaced by another one in a parallel position.



- The reserves around the heads of the eunuch and the commanding horseman in the present painting are common features in Rembrandt's work.



Detail of the reserve around the eunuch's head with a hounding effect from Philip's tunic.

- The source of light, from the righthand side in the present painting, is the same as in the Utrecht painting and in other Rembrandt paintings *David with the head of Goliath before Saul*, from 1627 and other works (1635-1638).

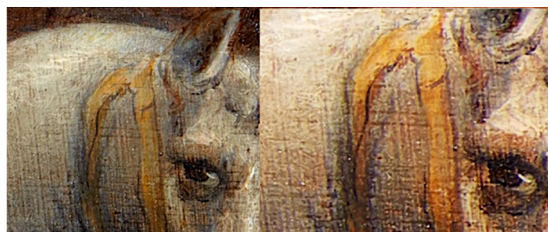


Various source of light: the ray of light on the eunuch's head, the servant, the archer, the riders in the painting and the two figures in *Balaam and the ass*, 1626, Musée Cognac-Jay, Paris.



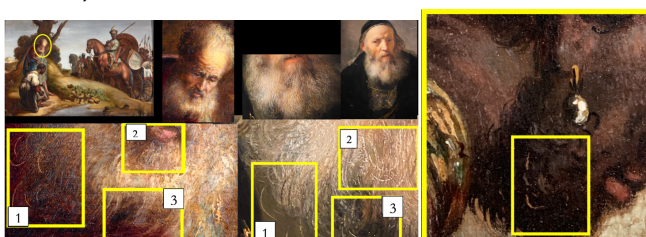
David presenting David's head, *Belshazzar's feast*, 1635-38, *Ecce Homo* 1634 NG of London with light coming from the right.

- The typical mixture of painting and drawing with the brush in the background for the horsemen in the shadow and the bridle of the white horse and its leg in the present painting.

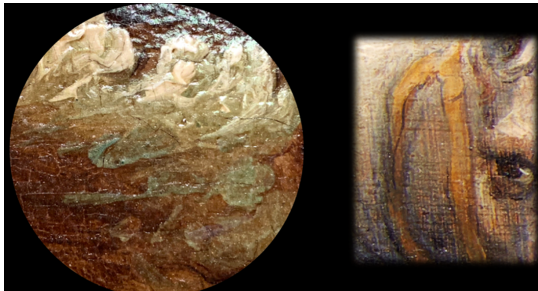
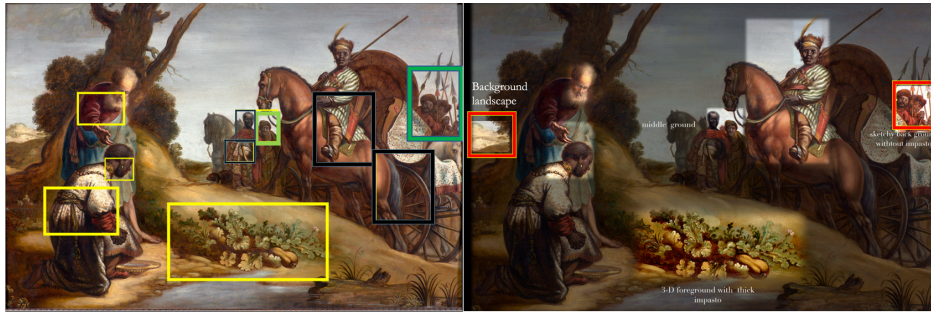


The painted drawing of the white horse showing an extraordinary glance.

- Rembrandt's brushwork, as observed by Regina Costa Pinto (Louvre restorer of Rembrandt and by Fernando García García, is to be found in the present painting: the underpaintings, the scratches, the passages executed at high speed, the rough manner, and peculiarities of the colour scheme. The eunuch, the commanding horseman are "so typical of Rembrandt" according to Gary Schwartz (*A Rembrandt invention* 2020).



- The nature and function of the ground with the order of working from back to front with the typical synchronic treatment between the background (sketchy manner), the middle ground with light impasto and the foreground (3D with thick impasto).



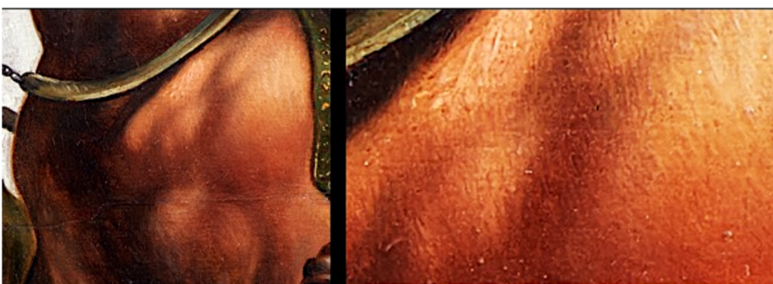
Painted drawing without thickness in the background (on the right) and three-D vegetables with thick impasto in the fore ground (on the left).

Sketchy figures and a landscape in the background (green), black horsemen, the servant and animal in the middle ground, the 3D vegetables, and main characters in the foreground (yellow).

- The occurrence of this elongated Lastmanian horizontal format, is not unusual in Rembrandt's artwork, from the *Stoning of St. Stephan* 1625, (89 x123 cm), *David Presenting the Head of Goliath* 1627 to the *Abduction of Europe* (1632) and *Susanna and the Elders* 1647, (76.6 cm x 92.8 cm) as well as many subsequent drawings (some direct copies from Lastman and paintings).

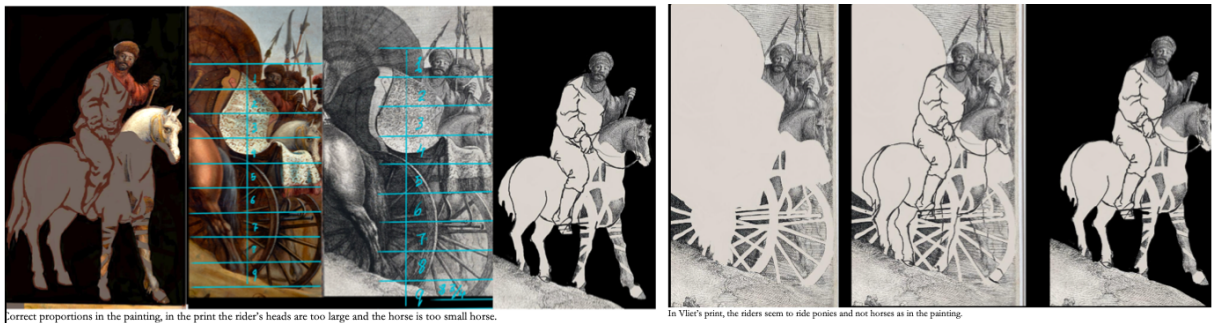


- The typical texture of the chestnut horse.



Detail of the fur, showing how the 3D effect is produced in the middle ground.

- The proportions of the men, animals and objects in the present painting are like other Rembrandt paintings (1626), drawings (1638-1640) and an etching (1641) made by Rembrandt, for baptisms of the eunuch and for other themes. The riders and their mounts are totally disproportionated in Vliet's and Visccher's prints.



- Presence of recurrent clumsy details typical of Rembrandt:
 - The bad foreshortening of Philip's arm is very similar to that of Christ in *Christ Appearing to Magdalena* etc.



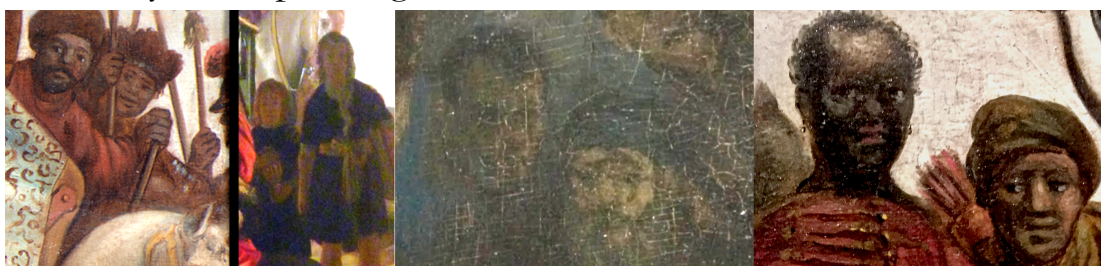
Clumsy foreshortening: Philip's arm in the present painting and in the *Christ Appearing to Magdalena* at the tomb, 1638, Royal collection of United Kingdom.

- Hands: The sketched hand of the servant holding the turban in the present painting is found worse in Rembrandt engraving of 1641 and in *David and Jonathan* (1642), *Tobit and Ana* (1656) and in many other paintings etc.



The eunuch's turban and the coat holds by the page, with some similarity in the textile in mirror image.

- Figures in shadow: the archer on the left side of the commanding horseman and the three lancers on his right-hand side of the present painting are like the two figures in the background of *Balaam and the Ass*, and of *the Raising of Lazarus* (detail), ca. 1630-32 and many other paintings.



Rembrandt, *Balaam and the Ass*, 1627, Musée Cognacq-Jay *the Raising of Lazarus* (detail), ca. 1630-32 Oil on panel, 94.8 x 81.3cm Los Angeles, LACMA, (M.72.67.2)

8. Resemblances between the present painting and artworks attributed to Rembrandt:

The *Head of an Old Man in a Cap* c. 1630 by Rembrandt is the tronie for Philip and the *Study for the lost Baptism of the eunuch* according to Ernst van de Wetering. He pointed out the alternance or cohabitation between the fine and coarse style. The perfect example of both styles with Jeremy's portrait, a full-length portrait, executed in a 'soft' manner and the *Old Man in a Cap* of Kingston painted in the coarse style. The resemblance with the *Old Man* extends to the facial structure according to Gary Schwartz. Stylistic similarities exist with Rembrandt's idiosyncratic rough manner of painting.



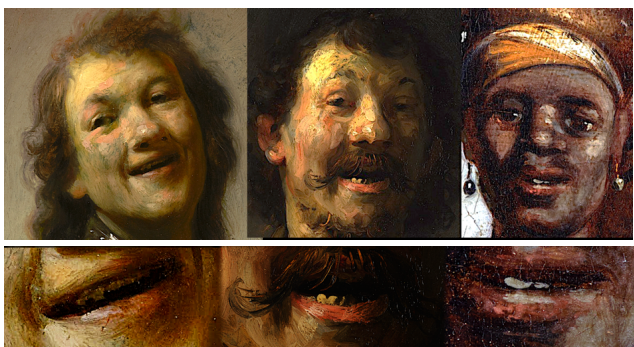
Ed.W., Rembrandt: *A Life in 180 Paintings*, 2008.



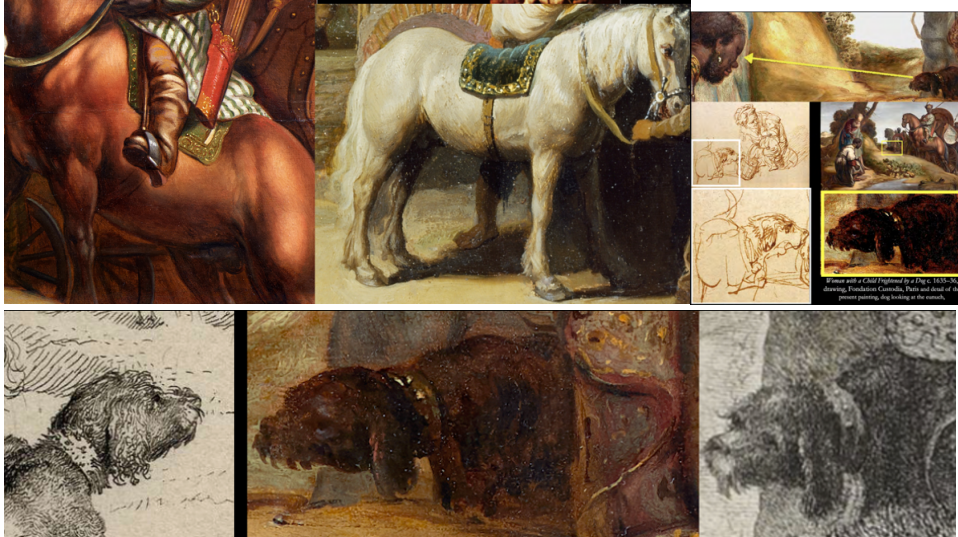
- Same pose for Philip's arms and hands in *Peter and John Healing a lame beggar at the Golden Gate* (etching 1627-1631).



- 'Morelian' details of the mouth, open to show the teeth, for the commanding horseman and *The Laughing soldier* c. 1629.

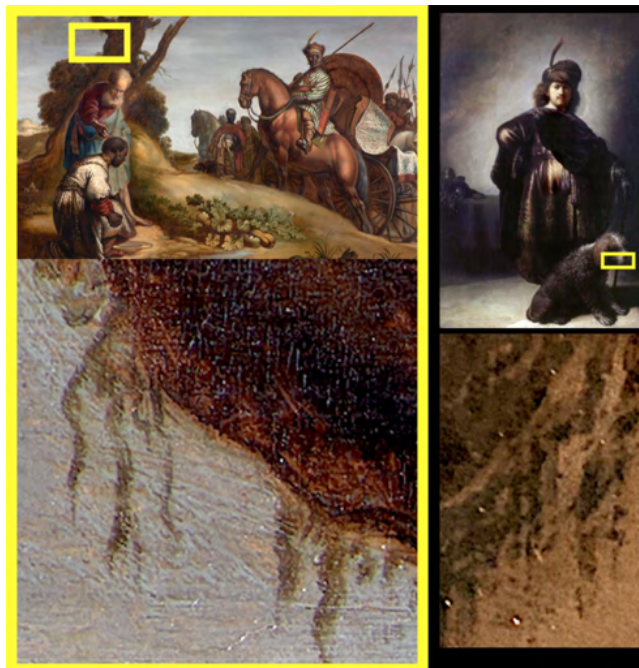


- The same saddle blanket with the same colour; the bridle and the horse's head in the present painting and in Rembrandt's *Good Samaritan* c. 1633. The character of the dog is the same in the present painting and in the *Good Samaritan* and is repeated exactly by Vliet and Visscher in their prints or the dog threatening the child in the drawing of a *Woman with a Child Frightened by a Dog* c. 1635–36



The dog threatening the child in the drawing of a *Woman with a Child Frightened by a Dog* c. 1635–36. *Good Samaritan* c. 1633.

- Same brushstrokes for two very different subjects: foliage on the left-hand side of the tree in the present painting and the dog's beard of *Self-portrait in Oriental Attire*, 1631.

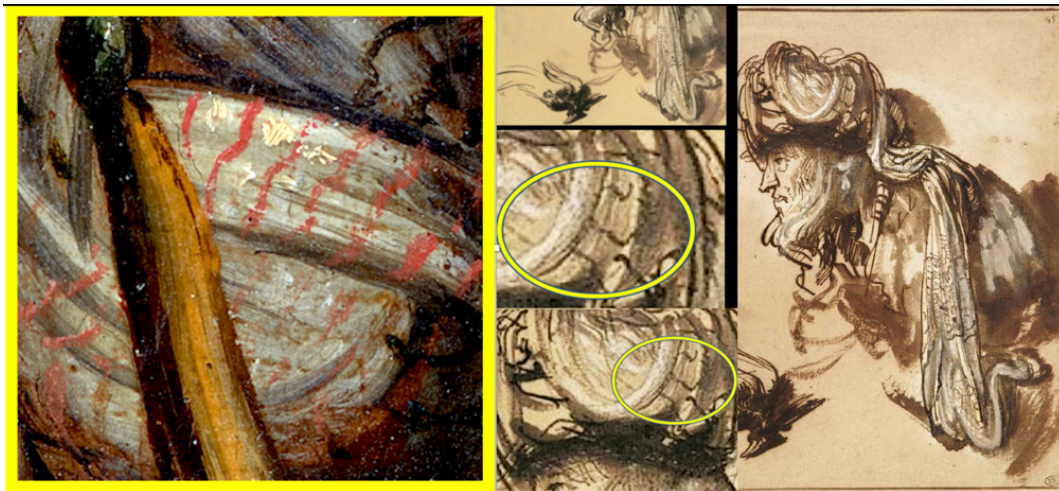


Foliage falling in the present painting, 1631, like Rembrandt's dog in the *self-portrait in Oriental Attire*, 1631, Petit Palais.

- Repetition of the same wavy lines in various Rembrandt artworks, to express variations of space and volume, like a kind of automatic writing: *Seated, Old Man*, c. 1630, *the Raising of Lazarus* 1630.



- Same fabric design reused in different contexts, like the turban in *Head of an Oriental in a Turban* and *a Dead Bird of Paradise* c.a. 1637.

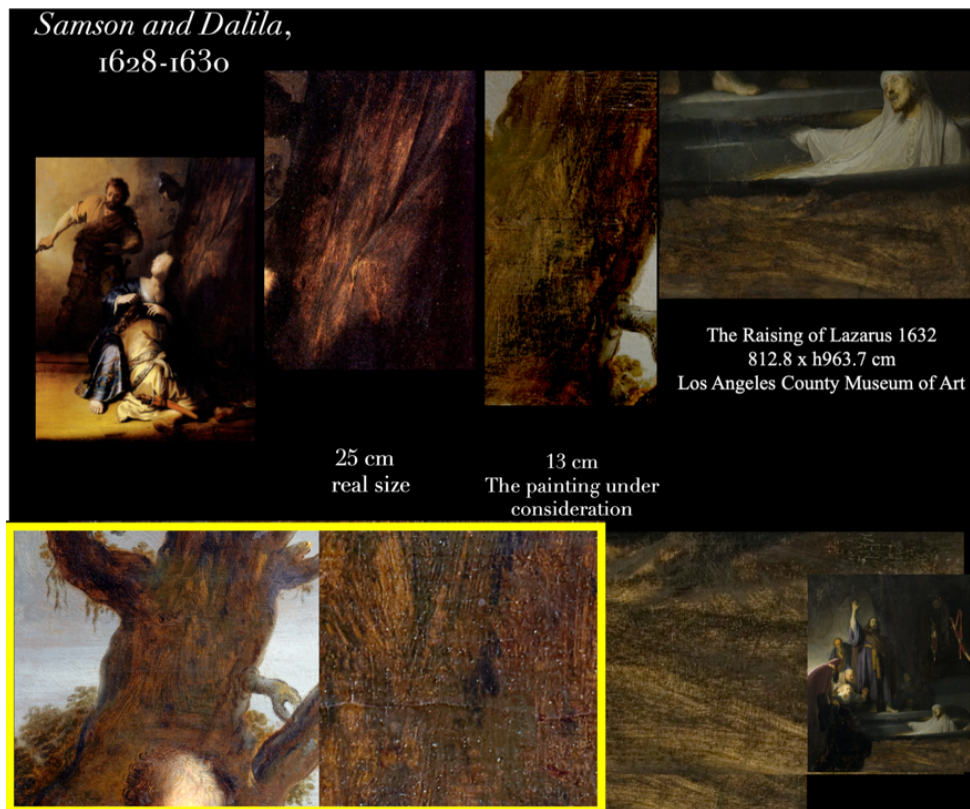


Details of *Head of an Oriental in a Turban* and *a Dead Bird of Paradise* c.a. 1637, 179 x 169 mm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Benesch 158.

- Similar brushwork to represent:
 - The plumes on the turbans: *David and Jonathan*, Rembrandt 1642.



- Brushstrokes for the wood rendition:



Wood details, present painting and *Samson and Dalila*, 1628-1630

- The branches of the tree, with scratch marks, and the foliage with white flowers are similar to those in the *landscape with a Stone Bridge*, c. 1638.



Trees with very similar brushstrokes and white flowers, the present painting and a *landscape with a Stone Bridge*, ca. 1638 by Rembrandt, Rijksmuseum.

- The flowers in the background of the present painting and *Flora* 1654, MET, NYC



- The gold works in general particularly for the quiver of the commanding horseman.



Fig. 185 Three-dimensionality, texture, diversity and variation in the thickness of the paint.



- The pleats of the boots of the commanding horseman in the present painting are very similar to those for the character in the white costume in the foreground of *The Night Watch* 1646, and the sleeves of *Ana in Tobit and Ana*, 1626, oil on panel, 39.5 × 30cm, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 272 The present painting: details of boots and sleeves, compared to Rembrandt, *Tobit and Ana*, 1626, oil on panel, 39.5 × 30cm, Rijksmuseum, *the Night Watch* 1646.

9. Particularities of the present painting in continuity with Rembrandt's work:

- A baptism by the Holy Spirit ray not by water: a patch of light onto Eunuch's head and no more of the shell and water drops like in the *Baptism of the Eunuch* of A. Bloemaert.



The same source of light from the East for Utrecht painting and from the East and the Holy Spirit in the present painting.



- The white horse's eye is a graphic ricordi from Rembrandt's apprenticeship with Jacob van Swanenburgh and Peter Lastman.



28 White horse detail in *The Siege of Bethulia* by Jacob Isaacz van Swanenburgh, in the present painting, *Odysseus and Nausicaa*, and etching detail of *Triumph of Martochai* c.1641 by Rembrandt, Rijksmuseum.

- The dreamlike landscape with tiny silhouettes on the left-hand side of the present painting background reproduced by Vliet in 1631 and again by Rembrandt's etching in 1641 shows Rembrandt's process of creation.



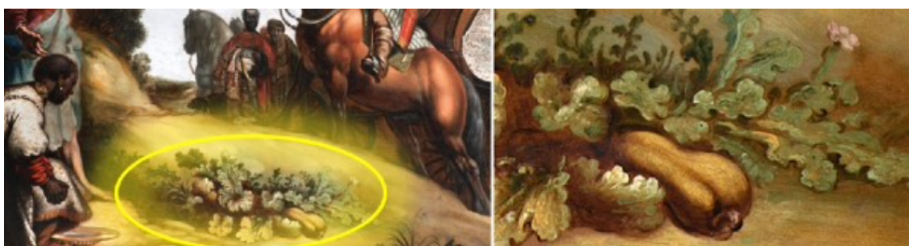
Details of the same features in the present painting, Vliet's print and Rembrandt's etching of 1641, a man seated the angel with sort of wings slightly open.

- The symbolic importance of the vegetation in the lower centre of the painting, representing a flourishing faith but also find in Lastman painting *Odysseus and Nausicaa*, 1619.



Same location of fruits and foods in *Odysseus and Nausicaa* by Lastman and vegetables in the present painting

The proportions and placing of the groups of fruits and vegetables are related to their symbolic importance in both pictures.



Details of the symbolic dimension of the vegetables.

- The influence of Rembrandt's master, Pieter Lastman, *the Baptism of the eunuch* Foundation Custodia Paris, 1615-1620

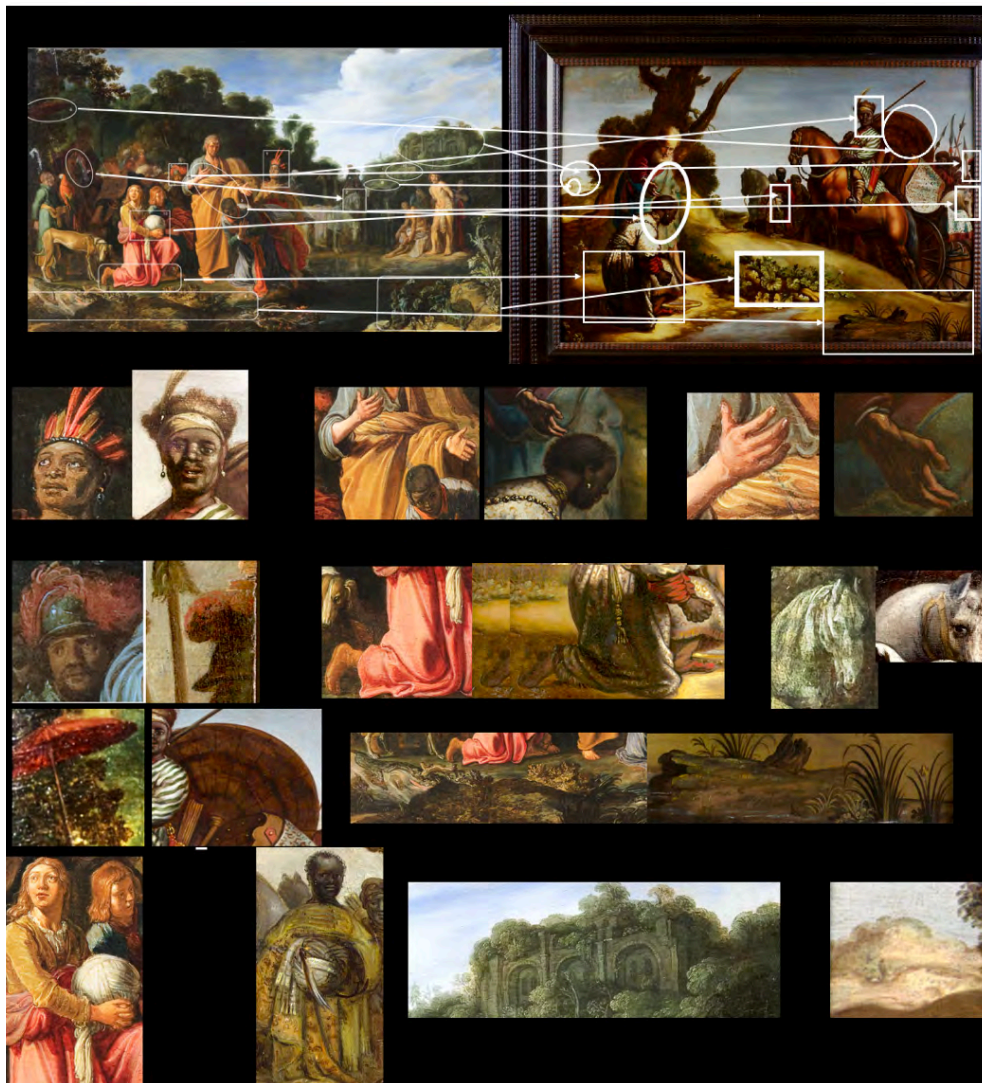


fig. 25 Examples of 10 correspondences between Lastman's version of Custodia Foundation and the present painting

Fig. 23 *The Baptism of the Eunuch* by P. Lastman of the Foundation Custodia, 1615-1620 (63.5 x 98.8 cm).

10- The expressiveness of the faces of those of the secondary characters:

Would the three riders in the background be made by the workshop? “Among other things, for the expressiveness of the faces of those of the secondary characters, there is that expressiveness made with such minimal elements, [...], typical of a maestro. It has nothing to see with expressiveness that appears in the engravings, that can be well reproduced, but these do not have nothing to do with that freshness. In addition to be made *a la prima*, this cannot never be the case for a copy, it is the result of a direct intervention of the painter and a painter with a great agility, with great knowledge and with great expressiveness when treating faces. The secondary characters as the three horsemen in the background are made with such great

economy of means, that they can only be performed by a master endowed with agility.” (Prof. F. Garcia-Garcia, interview February 1st, 2023).



- Rembrandt borrowed motifs from Peter Paul Rubens' *Adoration of the Magi* 1617-18 (MBA de Lyon). From the same Rubens's painting translated by Lucas Vorsterman's engraving 1621, Rembrandt has also borrowed for the present painting the same horizontal composition, characters, the horse's gaze and several features and gestures (kneeling, lances, fabric design,) and the black man bearing a treasure chest with a very similar striped blouse.





and the black man bearing a treasure chest with a very similar striped blouse and the same pearl earring.

Observation:

Applied to the present painting, and taken together, these considerations constitute a mutually reinforcing, coherent web of converging arguments. Considering the absence of visible traces of any other hand, except for previous restorations, or any visible disruption in the style or in the brushwork, they reduce or minimize the possibility of a contribution by Rembrandt's pupils, of which there is no evidence.

The principle of truth predominated this study, which is why the clumsy details of the restorers, those of the painter, as well as the unsightly pentimenti were left apparent. This has been a source of confusions and contradictions among observers. H. Defoer, who cannot stand the comparison between the old version of which he was the discoverer and the present painting, M. Bijl who restored the cartoon-like painting with the uncommon dimensions of the unrembrandtesque dark oiled sketch underneath of Kremer collection, and their entourages, including E. Kolfin, who in his review of Gary Schwartz's book takes up in a rather deplorable way their counter-arguments, which are so weak or so false that it is useless to reply to them (however, the Q&A report does so point by point). These few people who have not closely observed the picture show the lack of independent judgement linked to their own interests. Far from alternative realities, most serious Rembrandt' scholars could accept what has been objectively observed in the various studies and research carried out by specialists over the last ten years.