

KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PRESENT PAINTING

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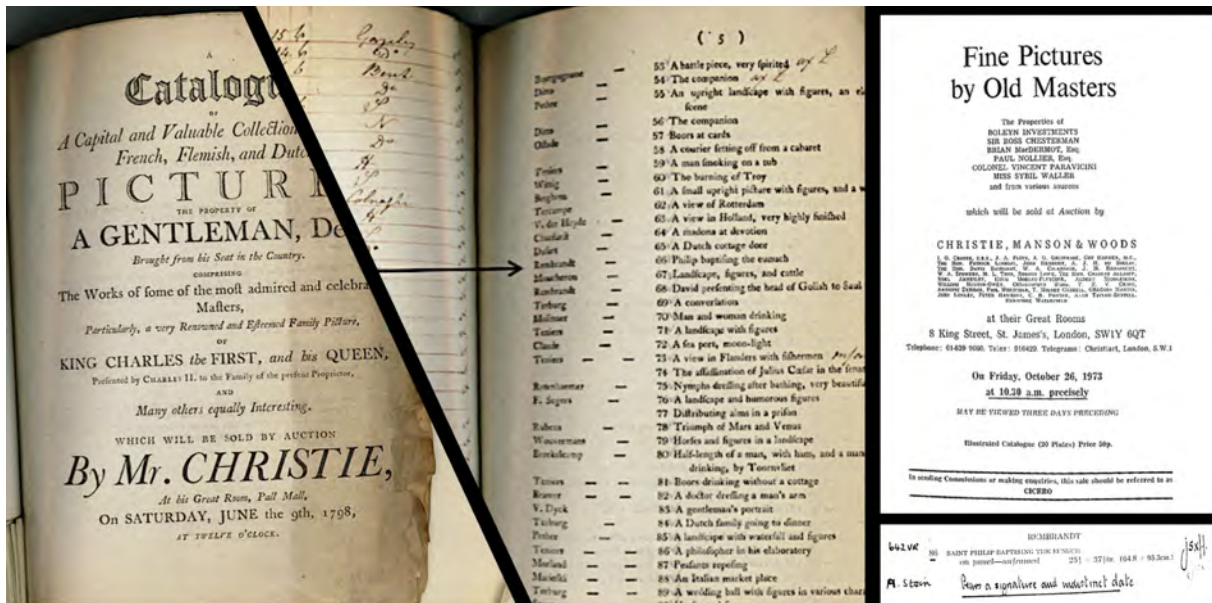
1 *Baptizing the Eunuch* by Rembrandt around 1631:

1.1 What are the documentary elements proving the existence of *St. Philip baptizing the Eunuch* by Rembrandt around 1631?

Yes, this painting exists! The existence of a modello of this artwork is mentioned at the bottom of two reproductive engravings testifying that Rembrandt is the inventor (one vertical made by Jan Van Vliet and the other one horizontal by Claes Jansz Visscher) and in several auction catalogues from 1695 to 1973.¹ There are two London Christie's catalogues: on June 9th, 1798, lot 66 and on October the 26th, 1973, lot 86 in which the present painting appears with its exact measurements.² A series of anonymous vertical and horizontal printed or painted copies of poor quality are also known.



The present painting bearing a signature, Vliet and Visscher's prints in which is inscribed Rembrandt as inventor.



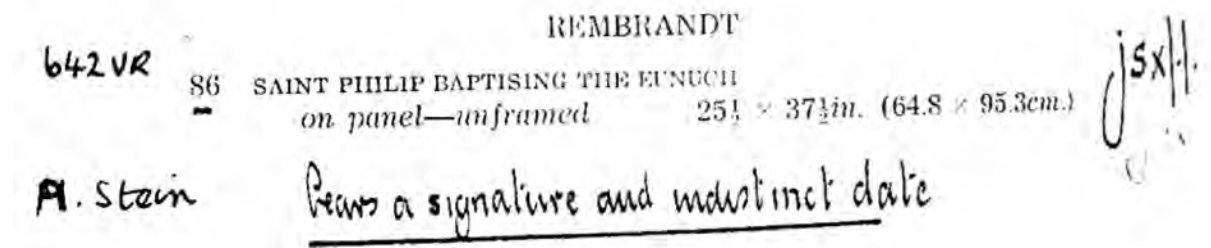
Auctions, 1798 Christie's catalogue, mentioning Rembrandt painting of *Philip baptizing the eunuch* and *David presenting the head of Goliath to Saul*. 1973 Christie's catalogue, mentioning the present painting's dimensions 64.8 x 95.3 cm id. 642VR.

1.2 Do the London Christie's catalogues mention this painting with certainty?

¹MetadatLocation: Nijmegen, Universiteitsbibliotheek Archivetype: MagazijnCBAAccess number:Authormame: GerardHoet (catalogiseerder/samensteller/cataloguer/compiler) Object name: Catalogus of naamlyst van schilderyen, met derzelver pryzen zedert een langen reeks van jaeren zoo in Holland als op andere plaatzen in het openbaar verkogt, 2 vols, ed. Pieter Gerard van Baalen, The Hague 1752 Inventory number: OD397c113Folionumber: Vol.1Folio side: Pagenummer: p.22-24;p.24RD: Urk. 371 NRD Literature: Lugt155; GPILot0048[Hoet]fromSaleCatalogN-A9 Provenance: Permanent link: document/remdoc/e14050

² Anon. Sale, *Christie's London, 26 October 1973, lot 86, as Rembrandt*, bought by H. Cardelin, Toulouse." Acquired 19 November 1973 Mr. and Mrs. Marty of Toulouse, who sold it in June 1982 to Dr. Léon Coriat, Toulouse. Purchased from the latter in 1991 by Bernard Allien, Paris.

There can be no confusion with the painting of Utrecht 1626 because according to the RKD, this painting never left the Netherlands never had a copy either in drawing, engraving, or painting and never appeared in catalogs before its acquisition around 1900-1930 before Defoer 'discovered' it in 1975 in Nijmegen. It is likely that the present painting is the one mentioned in the London Christie's catalogue on June 9th, 1798, lot 66, and it is confirmed that it is the one that appears in the London Christie's catalogue on October the 26th, 1973, lot 86, the present painting appears with the Christie's code 642VR (printed on the cradle of the present painting) as Rembrandt, it "bears a signature and an indistinct date".

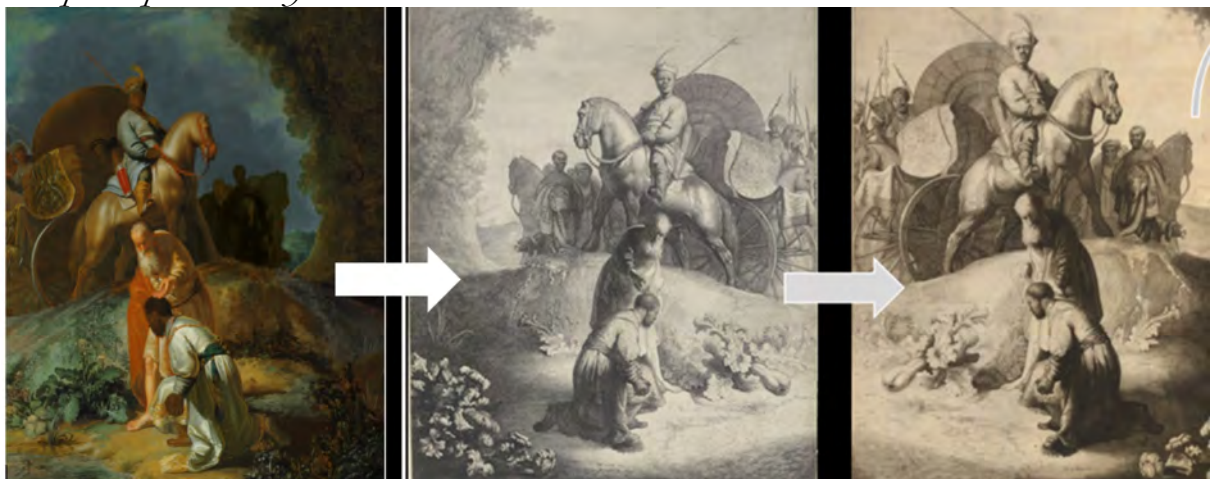


Auctioneers handwriting on Christie's catalogue 1973.

1.3 Would Vliet's printed model be hidden under the pictorial layer of the Kremer painting?

It is a real attempting to tamper to pass off an underpainted oiled sketch of the Kremer painting which borrows most of elements from an anonymous print made after Vliet as the Rembrandt's modello on the pretext that this oiled sketch would be the mirror image of Vliet's print known as the copy of Rembrandt's invention of the Baptism of the Eunuch. Rembrandt's specialists were not fooled by this attempt based on false resemblance of print copies.

The palimpsest theory:



The Kremer painting used for the palimpsest theory, Vliet's etching, and the anonymous print after Vliet.

Careful observation of the sketch beneath the surface seems to contradict the statement that this underlying image revealed by XRF corresponds in detail to Jan Gillisz van Vliet's print (1631), after a design by Rembrandt. On the contrary, it is immediately obvious that from top to bottom, the Kremer painting and the sketch below do not display a detailed correspondence with Vliet's print. Gary Schwartz and Ger Luijten stated in that the artwork much more closely resembles an etched

copy after van Vliet, made by an anonymous artist and arranged in the same vertical composition as the Kremer painting, and which may well have provided a model for it.



The present painting, Vliet's print copy, anonymous print after Vliet, the Kremer painting after anonymous print after Vliet.

a) *The most obvious divergence between the Kremer painting and Vliet's print consists in the observation of the gazes' orientation of the entourage of the eunuch. In Vliet's print the members of the eunuch's entourage do not look at the main scene below, but do not look up at the commanding horseman above either. In the Kremer painting, they clearly look at commanding rider. This shows that the painter of Kremer observed in Vliet's copy that the eyes were disoriented and that he was looking for a more appropriate solution. He sought a better solution to Vliet's iconographic anomalies. This is a clear and redhibitory evidence that the Kremer painting is not the exact reproduction of Vliet's engraving. This observation shows that the painting could not precede Vliet and Visscher's prints which have complete figures and could not be their model.*



Jeu de regards of the Kremer painting.



Vliet's print « jeu des regards ».
No one looks at Philip and the eunuch.
No one looks at the commander.

b) *One missing soldier and half of another, the head of the white horse in Kremer's painting etc. Vliet's print and the present painting show this figures. A simulation based on the present painting shows how it should have been.*



Reconstruction of the missing elements in the Kremer painting: a soldier and a horse's head etc.

c) *The genitals against Philip's head are not in the present painting. In Vliet's print the horse's sex is against Philip's temple, in the Kremer painting, the painter reduced it. It is unlikely that Rembrandt would have made this strange juxtaposition (One of the "Sex Pistols"!!!). In Vliet's engraving it is the mechanical consequence of a change. The anonymous painter of the Kremer work reproduced with slight differences the inappropriate details of the print after Vliet.*



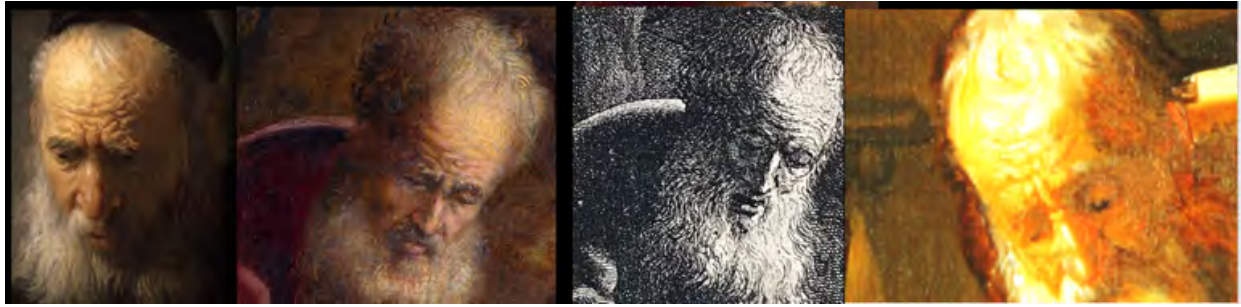
Philip's head with horse's genitals in Vliet's and anonymous print after Vliet and in Kremer painting.



The clear distance between Philip's head in the present painting and in Visscher's print.

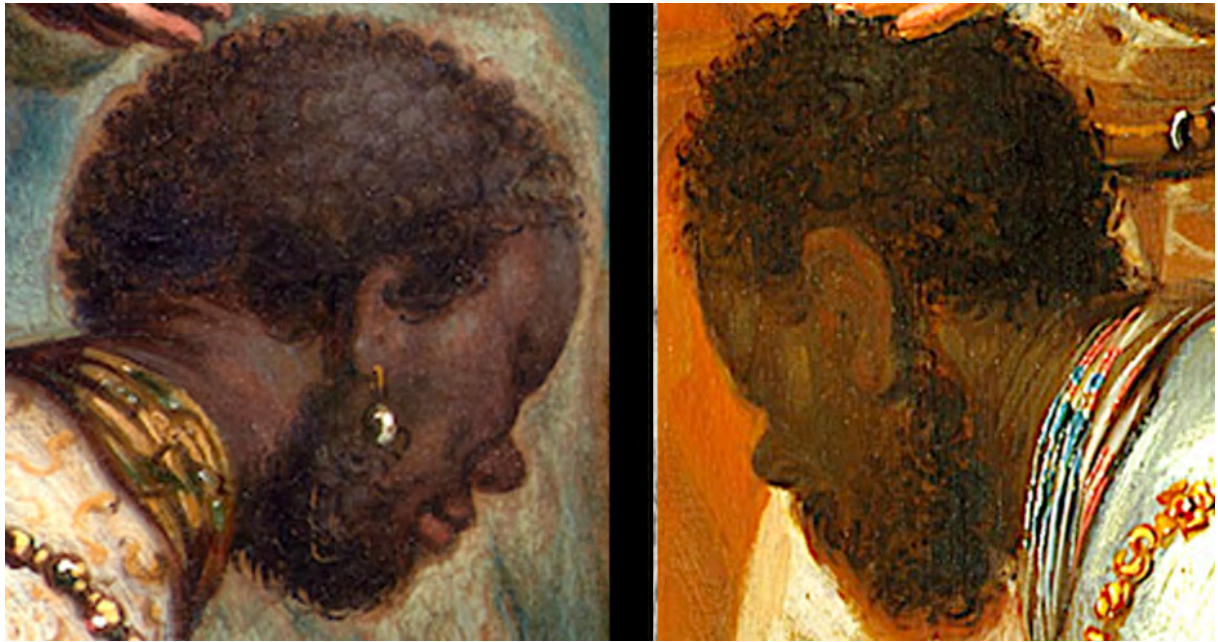
There is no possible graphic connection between Philip of the Kremer painting and the ones of the Old Man, Philip of the present painting and Vliet's print. The Kremer's Philip seems to be a caricature of the one in

Vliet's engraving. The brushstrokes of Kremer's painting are not comparable to those of Rembrandt or those of his workshop.



The old man 1630 and Philip in the present painting, in Vliet's print and in Kremer painting.

c) *There is no patch of light on the eunuch's head.*



The eunuch in the present painting and Kremer painting with no patch of light.

d) *The Kremer painting shows a baptism radically different from that of Vliet's print and of the present painting. It is another type of ritual. In Kremer's painting, Philip baptizes with his left hand while on Vliet's print, it is the opposite, and it is oriented very differently. In Kremer's painting, Philip pours water over the eunuch's head while in Vliet's print there is no visible water. **Contrarily to what is claimed, on the most important element of the subject, the very act of baptism, there is no correspondence between Kremer's painting and Vliet's print.***



Philip's hand in the present painting, in Vliet's print and in the Kremer painting.

e) *The peculiar colour scheme of the painting does not look at all like the more earthy tones that Rembrandt employed around 1630. This suggests that the Kremer painting was made after a print, leaving the artist free to colour*

it as he wished. There is no evidence that Rembrandt would have allowed his assistants to use such colours.

f) *No convincing XRF*: Experts who were invited to see the XRF of the Kremer painting, were not convinced by the palimpsest theory. They saw a false resemblance to Vliet's engraving and a stronger resemblance to the anonymous engraving after Vliet's. A plausible order of succession of copies, from Vliet's print to the Kremer painting could be as shown below.

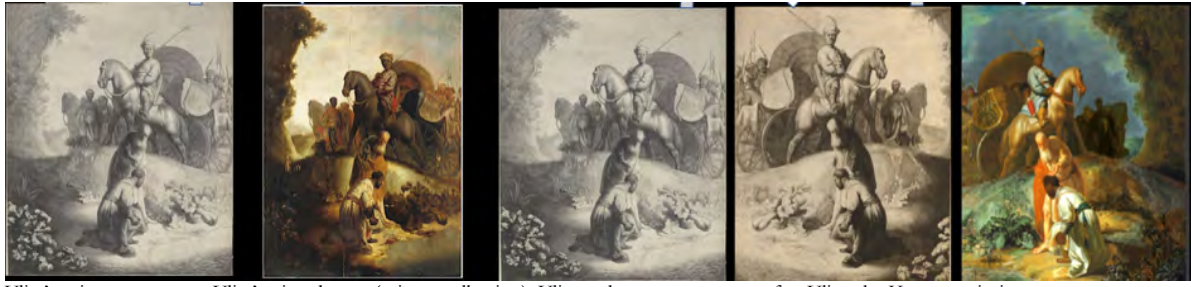
*Observation: Contrary to what is claimed, neither the sketch underneath nor the pictorial layer show a real correspondence with Vliet's engraving. All these collected items listed above enhance the likelihood that the Kremer painting originated beyond Rembrandt's circle. The Kremer painting and its ghostly oiled sketch could not be the original of Vliet's print. It is a real tampering to pass off this underpainted oiled sketch of the Kremer painting for the lost painting. The manipulation consisted in using the precept that Rembrandt's original has been lost, the fact that the oiled sketch is not visible to the naked eye (only through XRF) and a relative resemblance to Vliet's print, it was then possible to establish and claim a theory of a Rembrandt's palimpsest, the very model of Vliet's print. The simple possibility that Rembrandt's model would actually be horizontal would irrevocably ruin this attempt. It is easy to understand why the present painting interferes so much and why it is harshly denigrated by few observers who cannot or want-not to imagine a model other than vertical and lose themselves in specious and contradictory judgements instead of a seriously lead study. This attempt was already active in the exhibition catalogue *Young Rembrandt - Rising Star* in Museum De Lakenhal in Leiden (Nov. 2019) and in the review of Oud Holland about the book of Gary Schwartz *A new baptism of the eunuch* (June 2021). It explains why since 2013, there is a smear campaign going on discussions and mails to specialists to persuade that the present painting is not the lost painting whatever the evidence. It bothers deals objectives of well-known persons who already have attracted media attention for a so-called rediscovery of a Rembrandt painting.¹⁻²*

1.4 Why are there no conceivable vertical copies of Rembrandt's model of the baptism of the eunuch to this day?

*Because Rembrandt's model might never be vertical, and those presented as such, or ~~its~~ their copies are pastiches. They are several derivative copies. All the vertical engravings yellowish brown and colorful paintings or underpainted monochrome sketches of *the Baptism of the Eunuch* suffer of the same anomalies, clumsiness, and singular disproportions of Vliet's print 1631.*

¹ Russel Shorto: Rembrandt in the Blood *New York Times Magazine* February 27, 2019 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/27/magazine/rembrandt-jan-six.html>

² After the review of Elmer Kolfin, in Oud Holland on 'A Rembrandt invention (June 2021): *A new baptism of the eunuch* by G. Schwartz.



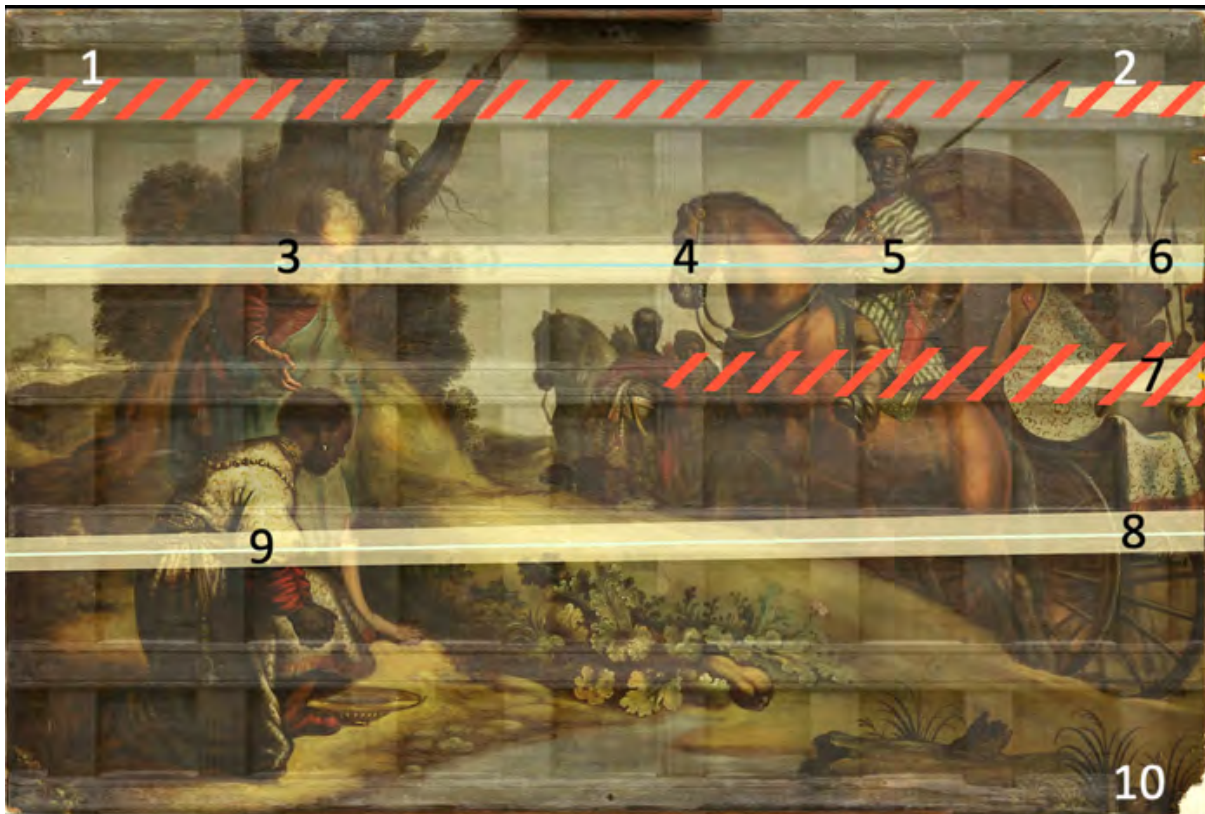
Vliet's print, anonymous Vliet' painted copy (private collection), Vliet and anonymous copy after Vliet, the Kremer painting.

A plausible order for the succession of copies could be formed as follows, from Vliet's print to the Kremer painting: Vliet's print, an anonymous painted copy after the latter, and again Vliet's print and an anonymous print made after Vliet's, and the Kremer painting with borrowed elements from the anonymous painted copy after Vliet's.

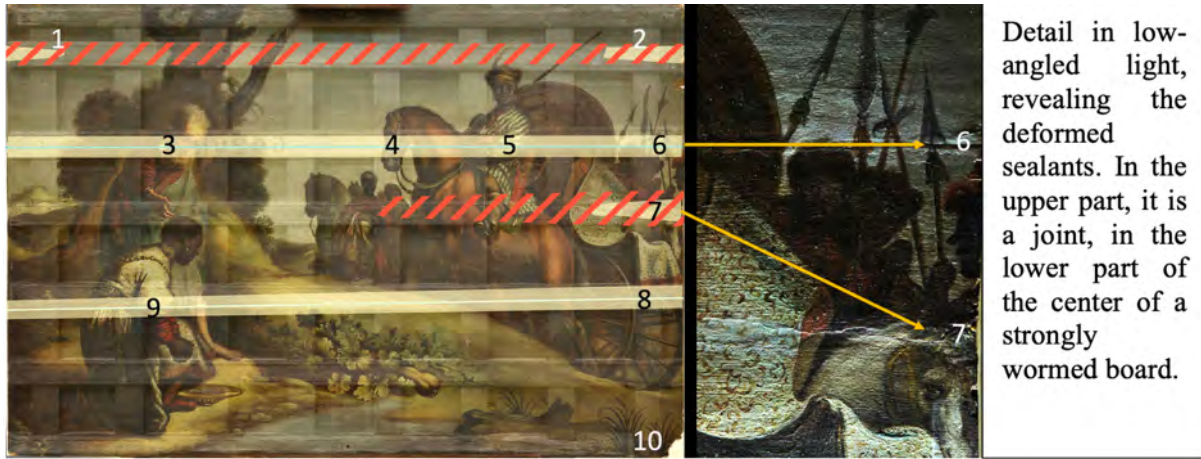
2 Questions concerning the state of conservation of the present painting and the characteristic features of Vliet's engraving:

2.1 What are the damages that contribute to a blurred perception of the picture?

These damages disturbed a balanced perception of the work. 10 main damages of the painting have been more or less well repaired that explain the hesitation of some scholars and serve as arguments to reject an attribution. Some observers confuse these damages and do not perceive the clumsy hand of restorers and construct false and contradictory theories.



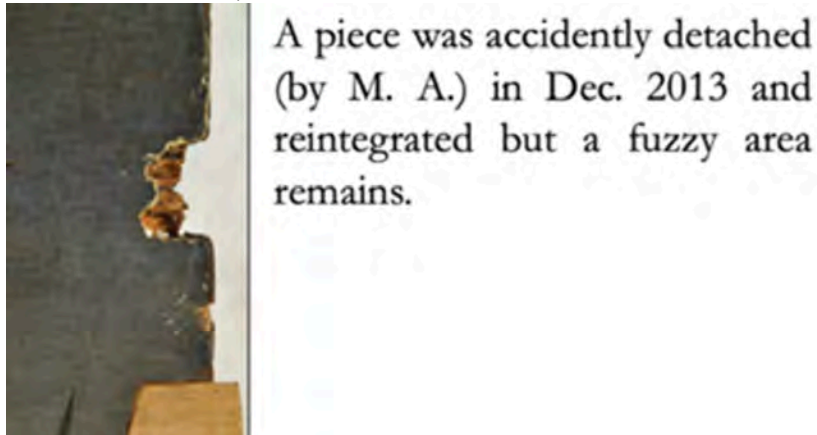
Damages on the wooden support: deformed sealants.



Some areas of movements of the boards crosses the painting from side to side.



Zone of boards movements, restoration on N°3-4-5-



2.2 What is the impact on the connoisseurs of the damages of the wooden support and of the poor retouching to cover them?

It depends on the precision of the observation. Some of the observers do not perceive these damages because they confuse the wrong retouching of the restorers with the original brushstrokes even when the lacunae are obvious to the naked eye. These are often those who have not seen the compositional anomalies, the severe strabismus of the six members of the eunuch's entourage in Vliet's print. Either they do not know how to technically look at a painting, or they are blinded by their preconceived ideas, including that of always looking for or waiting for a vertical model and not admitting the possibility of

an original composition of horizontal format. For example, the sleeve of the eunuch located in the movement of the boards which is badly restored is used for inappropriate comparisons. This what did E. Kolfin in his review of *A new baptism of the eunuch* by G. Schwartz in Oud Holland. It is unfortunate that this specialist of the image of Black in the Western Art has so badly treated the eunuch especially after his edifying essay, *Black in Rembrandt's Time* with a brilliant contribution (like the one of Marieke de Winkel who never misses a silky fold on a seventeenth-century garment 😊).¹ He could not have made this confusion if he had been able to study the painting closely without the frame. He confused the blurring of the eunuch's sleeve folds due to the movement of the boards and the bad restoration on the junction with original brushstrokes. Defoer also regularly confused the restorer's hands with the one of the painter and attributes these wrong retouching to an anonymous painter. They did not even see the three lines of movements of the boards that fracture the painting. It is a simple lack of observation mixed with a preconceived idea that favors the Kremer painting palimpsest theory as the lost painting of Eunuch's Baptism 1631!

An evident misinterpretation:



Picture on p. 2 of the book: *A new Baptism of the eunuch* invented by Rembrandt Gary Schwartz. Edit. Primavera Pers, Leiden 2020.¹

The area of movement of the boards was clearly perceptible. It may have been apropos to see the painting before writing inappropriate considerations.

¹ *Black in Rembrandt's Time* by E. Kolfin Published March 5th, 2020, by W Books

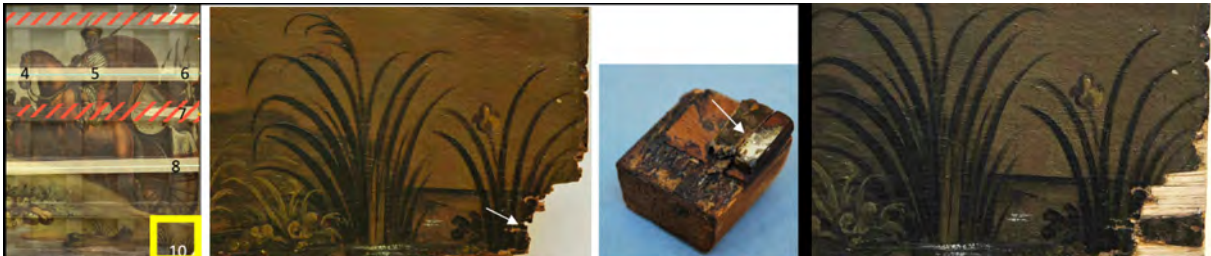


Blur zone with white lines, three-dimensions extract in the yellow circle.



Demarcated area of the awkward restoration that breaks the three-dimensional effect created above and beyond the movement zone of the boards.

A similar misjudgment was made on the vegetation on the lower right angle of the panel depicted “à la manière du Douanier Rousseau”. In fact, the lower right angle of the panel was cut and damaged. A broken and detached part of the panel, about 4 cm², was kept and reintegrated. This angle including the tree trunk is a mix of restoration and original brushstrokes.



The broken and detached part of the panel, about 4 cm².

2.3 How to judge the relevance of the restorations in the areas of movement of the boards such as those of Philip's head and the eunuch's sleeve?

Rembrandt's use of academic symmetry makes it easier to establish the original trajectory of the shapes and provide the model by means of which we can redraw the corresponding missing portion of a line, in order to recover the original alignment, which was distorted by the movement of the boards. Rembrandt habitually respected these geometric rules, and therefore inductive symmetry has worked perfectly for the redrawing of Philip's facial lines. It was easy to recapture the exact location of the missing minuscule fragments of the eye, the nostril, and the upper lip on the face's righthand side. This realignment was derived directly from the position of remaining pigments and a simple implementation of the

rules for drawing which had already been defined in Euclid's Elements.¹ The cleaning of the damaged tiny part of Philip's face lines, helped us to better understand the original physiognomy of the face, to do greater justice to the painting and to the painter intentions. We have deliberately chosen to give up the too conservative principles of the Louvre (that consists of maintaining the last restoration even if it is far from the original) and to privilege the truth of the painting with the risk to find paint losses (which finally were easily controlled). The restoration of Philip's head is relevant and concords with Vliet's engraving. Previous restorations were mediocre because it was a mix of harsh cleaning and a superposition of multiple retouching of successive restorers that does not allow to get a correct perception of the figure. A new restoration took place and was based on the advice of Michiel Franken. It was proceeded with confidence to a drastic but cautious cleaning until the finding of the original brushstrokes interrupted by few paint losses in few millimeters easy to retrace with the iconographical reference of Vliet's print. This made it possible to understand the painting's anatomy, its history and the structure that suffered from cradle pressures on the board junctions. The apparent loss of tridimensionality in these vulnerable areas can be read in the light of this mechanical cause. As Jaco Rutgers and Erik Hinterding highlight in their respective literature, Vliet shows a great loyalty to Rembrandt in his reproductions. They are reliable references to perceive how were the details of original figures by Rembrandt. They allow to see how the restoration of the paint losses are relevant. This is more consistent when "the figures exactly concord in size (or and proportions), meaning that van Vliet could have traced them for his reworked composition" wrote Gary Schwartz.² This assumption is reinforced by Prof. Fernando García García in his demonstration *How to draw to understand* January 2022 (in the PowerPoint: *To draw to understand*'.

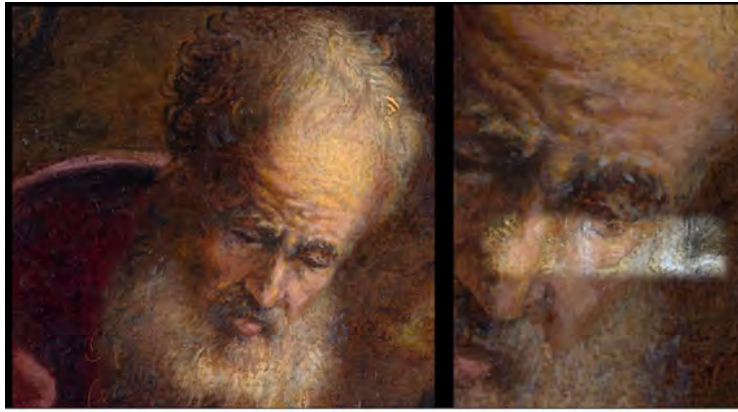


Transparency on indistinct face lines due to the disjointed boards for realignment and restored face lines without retouching the main traits, the contour, and the volume.

¹ An Essay on 17th century art, part of The Geometry Project. Drs. Theo M. Elsing, 2019. Euclid had been known in Western Europe since the Latin translations by Abelard of Bath (1080-1152) and Campanus of Novara (1220-1296).

A Rembrandt invention, a new Baptism of the Eunuch, Primavera Pres. Jan. 2020.

² A new *Baptism of the eunuch* invented by Rembrandt Gary Schwartz. Edit. Primavera Pers, Leiden 2020 p. 67.



Philip's head, the last restoration was limited to the eyebrows and realignment of the eyes and a nostril in the joint zone of the boards. Visible on inspection lamp, it was made in five brushstrokes respecting the original facial lines and leaving intact the rest of the face and the head contour.



Similar brushstrokes on the forehead of the *Old mMan in a Cap head* c. 1630 and unrestored parts of Philip's head of the present painting 1631.

Despite the natural difference between the brushstrokes and the lines of the engraving, there is a great concordance between the painting and the copy of Vliet. Fernando García García's hypothesis suggested that Vliet could have used an oiled paper to reproduce the figures of Rembrandt's original.



Philip's head of the present painting matched in transparency with Vliet's print and Vliet's print alone by Vliet and in transparency from Vliet's print to the present painting

Objective of restoration of the eunuch's sleeve: a cautious cleaning, the preservation of the painted traced and the concordance with Vliet's print.

The previous bad restorations of the eunuch' sleeve are not yet corrected. It was decided to leave them apparent so that historians could see how the area of movement of the boards distorted the original forms. Unfortunately, these blurred areas were not perceived and understood as

they are. Misinterpreted by a few historians, they have been the subject of inadequate comments to affirm that they were the work of Rembrandt's assistants or artists outside the studio. This two of observers have confused the hands of restorers with others which never existed.

Here is the new project of restoration of the eunuch' sleeve in relation original traces in concordance with Vliet's print.



The eunuch's sleeve of the present painting matched with Vliet's printed lines and Vliet's print.

Observation: Vliet's engraving shows how these areas were originally before the damage of the painting due to the movement of the joints and how to restore them correctly between the painted traces and the indications from the engraving.

2.4 What is the physical property that most demonstrates that the present painting is undoubtedly the model of the engravings of Vliet and Visscher?

The physical visible element that demonstrates that the painting present is the model of the two engravings is the coarse cut of the panel on the right edge. A comparison of the expertly cut left edge of the panel and the crudely sawed-off right edge shows this clearly. This will have been done not by the panelmaker, but by the painter, apparently after the painting was completed. That seems more likely, considering that the painting is now cut off through the figure of a soldier. "That feature has a striking correlative in the prints. Their compositions too are cut off at just the same point. [...] we can only assume that it came into being because both prints were copied after this particular painting," wrote Gary Schwartz.¹ It is also evident that the brutal interruption of the depicted figures on the right edge were painted entirety before being cut.

¹ A new *Baptism of the eunuch* invented by Rembrandt, p. 67.



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

2.5 To what extent can we know if the paint has been cut from top to bottom?

According to Jonathan Graindorge Lamour, specialist of the wooden support, 'restorer du patrimoine', who restored the damaged wood panel of the present painting: "...the panel has been cut on the sinister side because the edge has an irregular cut with numerous accidents and splinters that may have been caused during the cutting process."¹ The painting is clearly damaged and clearly cut off possibly by the painter himself to a usual size, just after its execution in any event before a natural drying, less than one year.² If it is hard to know precisely how much the panel was cut. However, Jonathan Graindorge Lamour, stated that "the cut of one centimeter maximum is quite likely."³ One centimeter is sufficient to get a complete picture.

¹ It must be reported that an art dealer (M.A...) has severely broken the painting by dropping it and has detached a piece the panel during an inspection in Holland 11 December 2013 Alkmaar. The piece of wood was quickly pasted by a restorer.

² Present painting size: 64, 8 x 95,3 cm, *The Abduction of Europa*, 1632: 64, 6 x 78, 7 cm, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1647, 76.6 cm x 92.8 cm etc.

³ Jonathan Graindorge Lamour, restorer du patrimoine., curator, support for panel paintings Museo del Prado, Madrid. Panel Paintings Initiatives, Getty Project Structural conservation: six paintings, Eucharist series, painted by Peter P. Rubens, El Calvario, Rogier van der Weyden. Museo del Prado, Madrid.



A simulation of the missing part based on a previous painting (*David Presenting Goliath's Head*, 1627) and on the existent traces at the right edge of the painting. The same lances seem to be used.

Observation: This question was unfounded because the author referred only to the photo of the cutting in G. Schwartz's book (p. 68) which shows only the upper part with the cutting of the soldier's head.¹ If he had taken up the honest effort to observe the painting without the frame, he could have avoided a mistake and found that the painting was sawn up and down in the same way causing the same type of accidents all along. He would not have written that the painting is not "clearly damaged" from top to bottom. This insinuation without proof adds to the others denote a bad faith.²

2.6 Why would a painting reproduce the cut of Vliet's engraving by sawing the wooden support at exactly the same place?

It is easier and safer to paint the exact picture without needing to cut the wood panel which will be perilous and without sufficient precision. It is almost impossible to saw a wood panel at the exact limit of the cut to reproduce the one of the printed pictures and it makes no sense to do so.

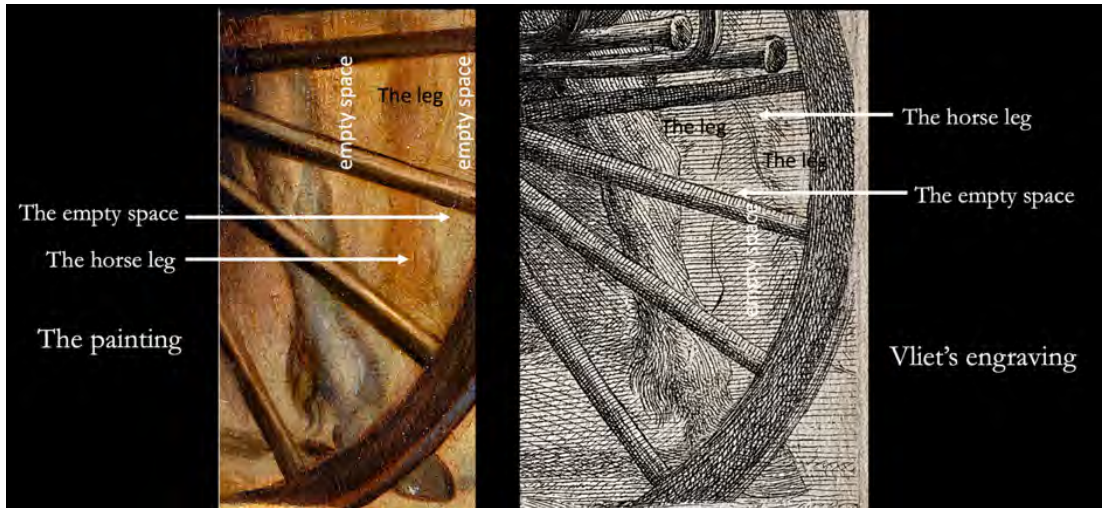


¹ Mentioned in Kolfin's review of Oud Holland on the Gary Schwartz's book "A new baptism of the eunuch" (2020)

Moreover, it is indisputable that the painting shows a profile of the soldier on the right slightly wider than that of Vliet and Visscher's engraving. The interruption of the image comes from the painter and not from the engravings. No doubt, the cutting precedes the engravings. It seems that there is no painter, no art historians, or restorers on earth silly enough to saw what would exceed. However, this hypothesis has been put forward by two obscure observers who were trying to show that the Kremer painting is Rembrandt's model.

2.7 What is the most significant evidence that Vliet's print is a copy of this painting in particular and not another?

According to Professor Fernando García García of the University Bellas Artes of Sevilla (Drawing Department), in the painting the proportions of the figures are consistent, because the artist has a complete mental idea of each item whatever the superpositions. Even if the painter knew that he was going to put a carriage in front of the horses, he draw the horses first then the carriage. To copy the partly hidden second horse, Vliet only has the elements that protrude from the carriage. He does not see what is behind the cart as the painter does. The problem is that by working in a fragmentary manner, the relationships between the hidden parts are lost. The visible elements are not enough substantial to suggest clearly the complete original image. Inconsistencies and disproportions usually occur because the engraver does not have the overall image in mind. It remains virtual for a large part. His copying process is done in an additional and repetitive way, fragment by fragment from what he sees. This is what we find when we analyze the "internal" drawing of the non-visible parts of the painting and compare them with those of the Vliet and Visscher's prints. The invisible connections between the parts of the figures (riders and horses) have largely disappeared in the engravings and this can be seen in the disproportions turning war horses into donkeys. Furthermore, we can assume that the disproportion of the hidden horse is aggravated because of a confusion made by Vliet when transferring the figures of the painting from his drawing to the engraving. The engraver confused a leg of the second horse partly hidden by the chariot with a void, which gives a front leg too high and too short. This confusion accentuates the pony's stature and does not follow the correct proportions of the horse of the painting. This error can only come from a real and specific detail of this particular painting. Vliet mistook the full for the empty space but maintains the chiaroscuro relationship of the painting (dark leg and light double empty space) like in a game of "double".

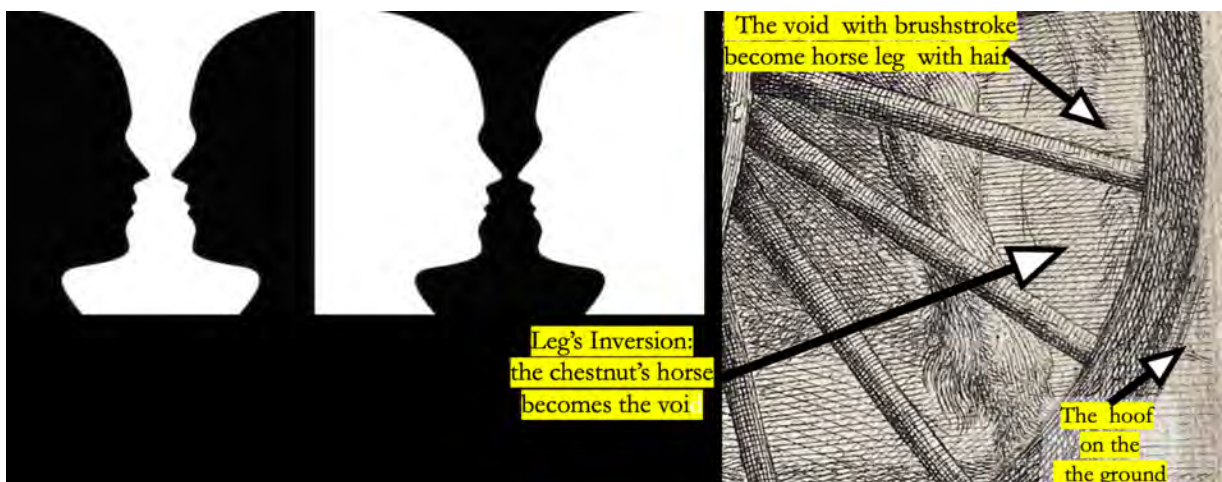


The chestnut horse's leg becomes the void in the etching.

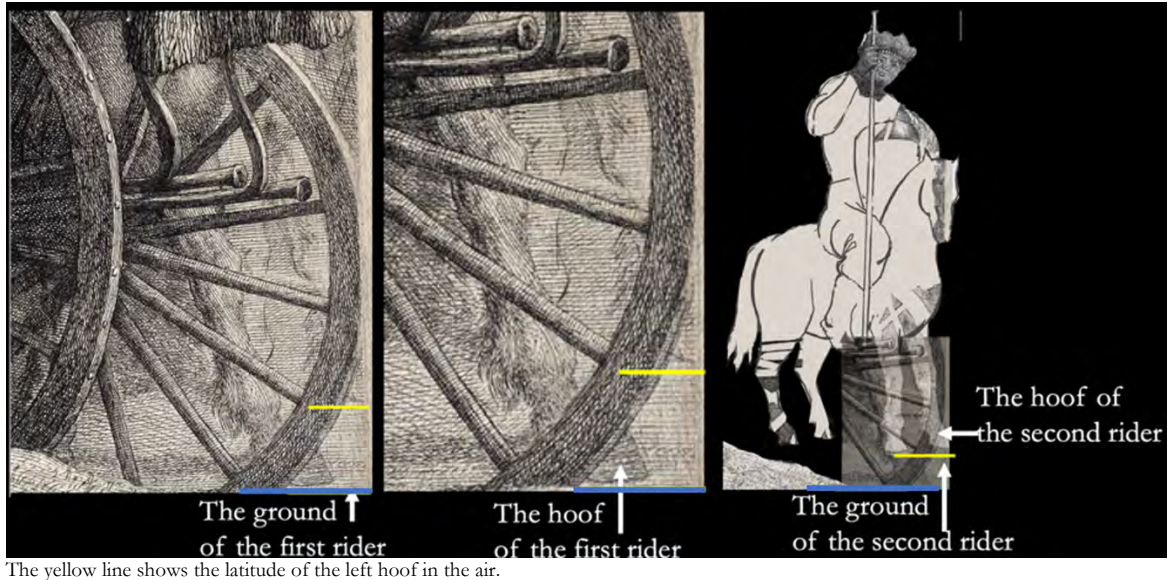
In Vliet's print, the chestnut horse's leg of the painting becomes, an empty space. The horse of the second rider does not touch the ground. And since Visscher copied the figures of Vliet, it is a major clumsiness that we can find in both prints.



There are occasional confusions between negative and positive space as demonstrated in the famous Rubin cup. Unfortunately, Vliet design the horse's leg as if he saw "two white faces instead of a black cup".



It results that the hooves of the horse do not touch the ground; the rider is suspended in the air.



Observation: The consequence of this graphic confusion of space on such a specific detail of a horse's leg shows not only a disproportion and a horse that no longer touches the ground, but above all, it suggests by diversion that the present painting is the model for the engraving.

3 Elements that raise hesitations about an attribution to Rembrandt.

3.1 What is the original clumsy detail that might argue against an attribution of Rembrandt, but rather helps to identify it?

The most characteristic clumsy element of the painting is the bad shortening of Philip's arm. This detail can be seen in Vliet and Visscher's engravings and other Rembrandt's paintings. The most similar and worse one is that of the painting, *The Risen Christ Appearing to Mary Magdalena* by Rembrandt, 1638. Clumsiness is prolonged to the hand of Christ. Philip's arm is slightly worse in Vliet's print because the engraver omitted a fold of the sleeve existing in the present painting.



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.



The same clumsy foreshortening in the painting and Vliet's print with a slight difference and in the painting the *Christ Appearing to Magdalena* 1638.

Ten years later, in 1641, Rembrandt made numerous changes to his image of the baptism, but he did not make much progress in his rendering of Philip's arm.



Rembrandt reproduced the same Philip's gesture and bad foreshortening ten years later in 1641.

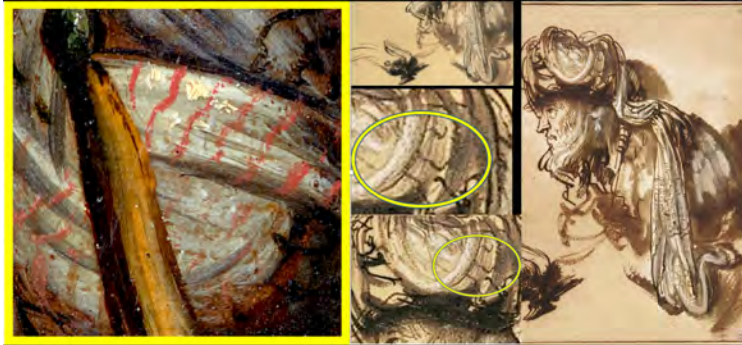
3.2 Is it not the mark of a participation of the students in the execution of the painting to notice unfinished figures and other imprecise details?

*Unlike the conscientious and laborious work of the students, there are many unfinished elements. These uncompleted features are common in Rembrandt drawings and paintings. The attention of the painter is focused more keenly on the attitude of the figure in a particular situation than in a detailed reproduction of reality. There is a parallelism of forms between the dog who attentively watches his master from the middle ground of the present painting and the dog who threatens the child in the drawing of a *Woman with a Child Frightened by a Dog* c. 1635–36. Despite the unfinished legs, one can feel the tension expressed by the dogs (perhaps the same dog, five years later) in both representations.*



Unfinished dog's legs
*Woman with Child
Frightened by a Dog* c.
1635–36, Custodia and
in the painting.

Regardless of whether the artist is using ink or paint, altered pen strokes or brushstrokes, we see the same confidence and speed in rendering the same fabric no matter how precise it is.



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

The apparent pentimenti (branches at the top left and the lances on the right side) which attract attention and hinder the fluid perception of the image. They show that the painter explores possibilities and opts for solutions that favor the clarity and legibility of the narrative. It is a purification process. There are other pentimenti that are mutations of shapes or simple anatomical corrections previously mentioned.



3.3 If the present painting is the model, why is Vliet's engraving executed in the same direction?

In keeping the original design in the same way, Van Vliet avoid several problems that Kremer's painter has produced: the principal figures left-handed, thus St. Philip baptizes with the left hand, the commanding rider has his quiver of arrows on the wrong side and holds the reins in the wrong hand etc. It was preferable for the engraver to maintain the logic of Rembrandt's invention that Vliet has respected.

3.4 How would the engraver have proceeded to execute the engraving in the same direction as the painted model?

It is a common practice from the Renaissance to use a transparent or oiled paper to keep in an engraving the same orientation of a painted original. According to prof. Fernando García García, to make a mechanical transfer of composition from the horizontal format to a vertical one, Vliet had to make two drawings, one for the left part of the painting (Philip and the eunuch) which became the lower part of the engraving and a second one for the right part (the entourage of the eunuch men and animals) which became the upper part of the engraving.



From the painting to the preparatory drawing on oiled paper to the plate and to the etching.

In order to transfer the inverted drawing to the etching plate, it is usual to use a transparent paper or to apply oil to the drawing to make it transparent. As the engraver had drawings at its disposal, it was easy to keep the original orientation to transfer the reversed drawing to the engraving plate.

3.5 Why in this painting does the light come from the "verkeerde dagh", the wrong side?

Even if, according to Dutch technical parlance of the seventeenth century, the daylight from the right side is considered as the "wrong side," this practice did not stop Rembrandt from using it several times including for his self-portrait of 1659 NG of Washington. Rembrandt's paintings with a source of light on the right include the earlier *Baptism of the eunuch* (1626), *David presenting the head of Goliath to Saul* (1627) and *Belshazzar's feast* of the early 1630s, *Portrait of Jacques de Gheyn III*, 1632, *Ecce-Homo* 1634 etc. The use of light from the right has not been a curse for Italian painters. This is the case for many paintings as the *Calling of St. Mathew* of Caravaggio and for instance, in the inner space of *The Flagellation of Christ* by Piero della Francesca (c. 1468–1470) where one of the sources of light comes from the right to which Jesus looks. As in the *Flagellation*, there are various sources of light in the present painting. Thereupon the most amazing is the opposition of the vertical trajectory of the ray of light from St Philip's right shoulder, along his right sleeve and hand, onto the point of attraction (the patch of light on the eunuch's head) and the 'houding' effect around it on one side, and on other, in the right side of the auxiliary figures (the three riders) remain in the dark (as it is the case in two figures in *Balaam and the ass*, 1626).



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 Cognacq-Jay, Paris.



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

3.6 Why is Philip's head not executed in the same way as the *Old Man in a Cap*?

In a painting, it would have been strange to baptize with the left hand. In the present painting the Holy Spirit zenithal light comes from the right and Philip is baptizing the

eunuch with his right hand. At the end, the ray of light is reflected from the left to the eunuch's head which is considered the good sense of light in the Dutch tradition. As most of storytelling, the picture goes from the left to the right.



The route of this narration is set according to the western tradition from the left to the right, the way in which we read our texts (on the same line). *Philip Baptizing the Ethiopian Eunuch* was conceived as many other mythological or biblical storytelling by *The Abduction of Proserpine* and the one of Europe, etc.



The light coming from left to right is reversed to read the stories from the left to the right as fairy tales and the baptism is depicted in the same way.

3.7 Why does the eunuch's entourage observe the scene from afar?

This distance is essential to avoid promiscuity during the sacrament of baptism between the different social categories of human (The apostle, the queen's envoy, his servant, the soldiers, and the animals). After the journey, the human and the animal entourage of the eunuch must be dusty, noisy, and smelly, these are not appropriate dispositions to attend too closely the solemn ceremony of the master. A space of separation between the two groups was established for reasons of both practicality and security.



The eunuch's entourage is looking from a distance Philip and the master with attention.

The men and animals of the eunuch's entourage have recently arrived from Jerusalem, and the cliffs, winding dirt roads and bridges can be seen in the distance. We can imagine that the company would only be dirt and smells of riders and animals. Moreover, the warhorse is a thoroughbred and seems fierce and nervous. It looks at Philip with a hostile expression. The tension is palpable. It is a clear and understandable separation between the spiritual and the profane.

For spiritual reasons, the solemn sacrament of the baptismal ceremony avoids any indiscriminate association with the eunuch's profane, prosaic, and armed entourage. It would be inappropriate for the company to come any closer. In the present painting, Rembrandt follows the example of Pieter Lastman in his *Abraham on the Road to Canaan* 1614. In Lastman's painting there is also a space of separation between the sacred and the secular, the spiritual (always oriented towards heaven) and the prosaic (always placed horizontally on the earth). The appearance of the Holy Spirit with its spreading rays of light suggests that the divine light is separated by an infinite horizontal vanishing point from Abraham, his wife, the other humans and from the donkey and the goat. The present painting is consistent with this tradition, following the example of Lastman's paintings.¹

¹ P. Lastman: *The Angel Raphael Takes Leave of Old Tobit and his Son Tobias* 1618, National Gallery of Denmark. Rembrandt: *The Raising of Lazarus* c. 1630-1632. Rembrandt: *Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Abduction of Europa* (1632) J. Paul Getty Museum, *Diana bathing with her nymphs with the stories of Actaeon and Calisto*. C. 1635, Museum Walsenburg Anhol, *The angel appearing to the shepherds* 1634, Jacob's dream ca. 1644 etc.



Abraham on the Road of Canaan, by Lastman, 1614, Hermitage, Petersburg, with suggested divine light and



The present painting showing a similar separation of the sacramental from the profane. The present painting shows such distance as *The Raising of Lazarus* c. 1630-1632. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, *The Abduction of Europa* (1632) J. Paul Getty Museum, *Diana bathing with her nymphs with the stories of Actaeon and Calisto*. C. 1635, *The angel appearing to the shepherds* etching 1634.





The Raising of Lazarus c. 1630-1632. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, *The Abduction of Europa* (1632) J. Paul Getty Museum, *Diana bathing with her nymphs with the stories of Actaeon and Calisto*. C. 1635, Museum Walsenburg Anhol, *The angel appearing to the shepherds* etching 1634.

The theory that Rembrandt does not create distance between the protagonist and his entourage is anachronistic in relation to the reality of his work.

3.8 Why is the Munich drawing not the preparatory sketch for Rembrandt's 1641 engraving?

The respective images show that they do not match at all! The drawing shows how three figures can be aligned on the same column and engraving shows how Rembrandt separated them into a horizontal composition. If the confirmation of the attribution of the Munich drawing to Rembrandt is finally confirmed, its function and date remain doubtful.¹ The hypothesis that the Munich drawing would be a preparatory sketch for Rembrandt's engraving of 1641 has no basis. Certainly, the commanding horseman seems to violate the sacramental space to look defiantly at the eunuch and the young page has approached his master, but there is a space of separation well marked. The characters on top of each other as it is on the Munich drawing.



¹ *Rembrandt the Complete Drawings and Etchings*, Cologne, Taschen, 2019, Peter Schatborn and Erik Hinterding. D66 p. 70, E40 p.511.

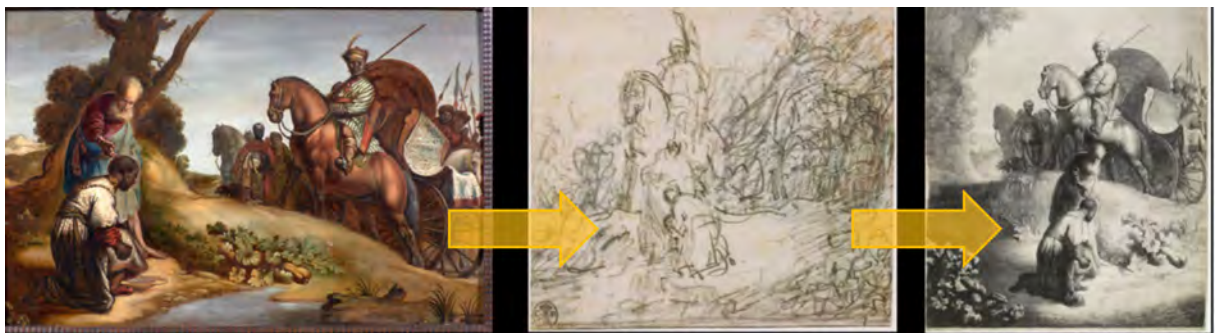
The Munich drawing c. 1630, Rembrandt's etching 1641

The drawing of the Louvre of 1640 in continuity with the present painting seems to be, the preparatory sketch of the engraving of 1641.



The present painting, drawing of the Louvre, 1640, engraving 1641.

On the other hand, the same vertical alignment of these three figures suggested by the Munich drawing is found prominently in Van Vliet's engraving of 1631.



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.

4 Questions about how the present painting fits in and differs from the pictorial tradition.

4.1 What are the oldest motifs of the pictorial tradition that Rembrandt used in the present painting?

The look of the horse seems to be part of the pictorial tradition at least since the 10th century. Rembrandt is a free, exploratory, and integrative artist. The most typical and oldest known representation of 'the baptism of the eunuch' is probably the horizontal composition of the Menologium Basilii II sec. X where we recognize the narration in the direction of reading from left to right, the carriage pulled by imbricated horses, one on the right side looks at the viewer insistently.



Horse's glance looking at the viewer straight in the eye since at least the Menologium Basilii II sec. X, Vorsterman and present painting



Through successive transmissions, Rembrandt delves into the pictorial tradition from the most ancient Scriptures, the representations of 'the baptism of the eunuch', the Roman and Italian references brought back by an artistic constellation in which we find indirectly and in syncretical ways the traces of Titian, Raphael Caravaggio and Dürer.

4.2 Which painters did Rembrandt draw inspiration from for the present painting?

From another theme, this painting is also in continuity with Peter Paul Rubens for the *Adoration of the Magi* 1617-18 (MBA de Lyon) through Vorsterman etching 1621, Kunstmuseum Basel. The same stripes and fold can be observed on the tunic of a black servant and of the commanding horseman but also the lances, the kneeling of the eunuch etc.



The Baptism of the Eunuch, Abraham Blommaert, ca. 1620-25, Museum Catharijneconvent Utrecht. The intertwined. Rubens' spears and the Blommaert's parasol with almost the same design. *The Baptism of the Eunuch*, Abraham Blommaert above and the present painting.



Peter Paul Rubens's *Adoration of the Magi* 1617-18 (MBA de Lyon) detail through Vorsterman etching 1621, Kunstmuseum Basel, the present painting the lances.

This borrowing initiative is the result of a reflection and a choice that seems to be the initiative of Rembrandt and not of these students. Rembrandt's first master, Jacob Isaacsz Swanrenburg has inspired him to a lesser extent. Rembrandt studied with him in Leiden for about three years before coming to Amsterdam. Here he met a more challenging master, Pieter Lastman, with whom he spent less time 'so he might be further and better taught and educated by him'.



Jacob Isaacsz Swanrenburg, *The siege of Bethulia*, ca. 1615, Museum Lakenhal. *The Baptism of the Eunuch* by P. Lastman of the Foundation Custodia, 1615-1620 (63.5 x 98.8 cm), the present painting (64, 8 x 95,3 cm).

Observation: There is no rigidity and no irreversibility in Rembrandt's œuvre about the influences he received from pictorial traditions conveyed by Maerten van Heemskerck, Abraham Bloemaert and P. Lastman's and, mainly through them, from regions of Europe and from the East. 'Philip baptizing the eunuch' was represented by several painters. "Other Dutch history and landscape painters, from Esaias van de Velde to Leonaert Bramer, repeatedly portrayed it as well," wrote Odilia Bonebakker.¹ Rembrandt kept going back and forth between his various sources. Rembrandt probably saw some of the illustrations of the theme and others he may have used in the drawings, engravings, and paintings of his predecessors and in his own period. The horse's gaze seems to be borrowed from Vorsterman's engraving after Rubens Adoration of Magi, Rubens 1624.

4.3 What is the most decisive element of differentiation in the pictorial tradition compared to the predecessors of the baptism of the eunuch?

Rembrandt cultivated his difference from his predecessors in style, but also from his interpretations of the themes. He explores and often seeks a characteristic differentiation within the pictorial translation of the great biblical themes. Here invents a unique and unprecedented means of baptism, with light instead of water. Usually, previous artists had treated the theme by concentrating on the best-known part of the story: Philip baptizes the eunuch by pouring clear water, whether directly from his hand or using a shell, over the eunuch's head. Here the painter replaces the traditional baptismal water with the light that reflects a distinct patch of light on the head of the eunuch. The picture is unique in its focus on this emotionally charged instant, the climactic point of divine manifestation, revealing St Philip and the eunuch in introspective attitudes consistent with a complete state of grace while his entourage is mesmerized. This had never been seen before in any representation of the theme. As Simon Schama has remarked, 'Rembrandt's entire career was a dialogue between outward and inward vision'.

¹ Odilia Magdalena Bonebakker, "Denomination and iconography: the *Baptism of the eunuch* in Netherlandish art, 1520-1750," M.A. thesis, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, December 1998.

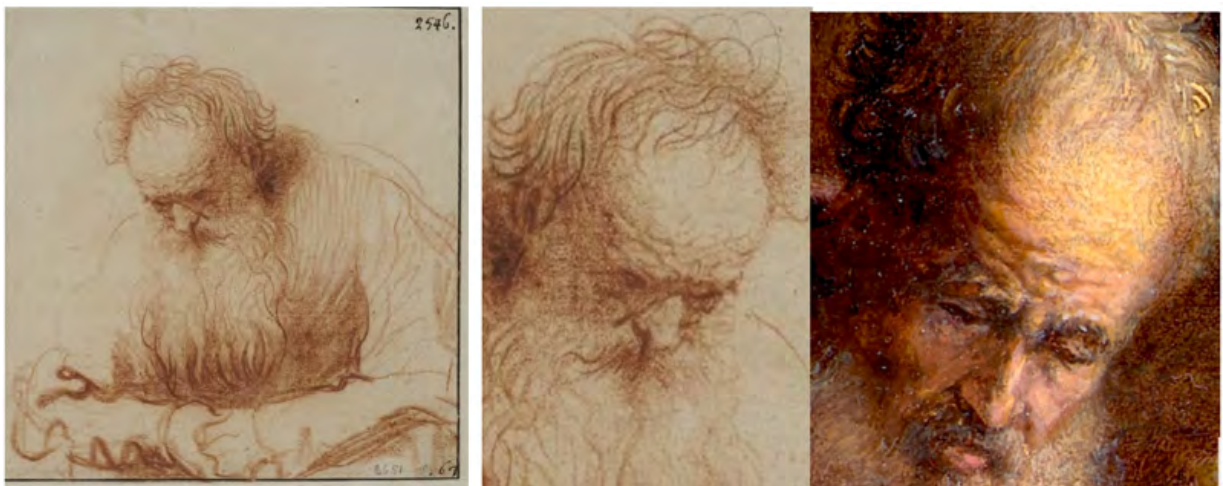


The realistic 3-D texture of the Ethiopian's hair and the white patch of light made in around fifteen brushstrokes.

4.4 Wouldn't it be a simple nebulous visual stimulus that we see meaningless?

This is not a pareidolia. There are about fifteen rounded white brushstrokes which together make an almost circular white tridimensional mark in the axis of light refraction from the irradiated Philip's palm hand. During the restoration, after the cleaning of the varnish, this attracting point of the painting was most apparent and distinct. Traditionally, the baptismal water is transparent and leaves no ghost of a trace upon the eunuch's black skin and hair. Here we have a trace that indicates that baptism is performed. It is so new in the pictorial tradition that some experts have not seen it or do not dare to consider as a new Rembrandt's revelation to be added to paintings showing miracles or take it for a secondary element, while it is a baptismal mark more perceptible than water.

4.5 In what continuity is the present painting in Rembrandt's works that precede it?



The *Seated, Old man*, c.1630, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, (reverse), the present painting.



Drawing of Old man with outspread arms 1628-1629 and etching Sts. Peter and John healing a cripple c.1629.

There are obvious resemblances that can be observed in Rembrandt's Leiden period artworks: The Seated, Old Man, c.1630, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, the drawing of Old Man with Outspread Arms 1628-1629 and the etching Sts. Peter and John Healing a Cripple c.1629. The closest is the tronie of The Old Man in a Cap c. 1630 for Philip's head of the present painting and of Vliet's print.



The Old Man, Philip of the present painting and Philip of Vliet's print with a light perhaps coming from a candle

4.6 Is the old lastmanian composition of the present painting inconceivable for Rembrandt in the late 20s?

We can safely say the exact contrary of Defoer's imperative judgement because it is totally baseless. The lastmanian composition is more than conceivable by the end of the 1620s few years before and a fortiori after, Rembrandt has not abandoned the Lastmanian format. This observation baseless, Rembrandt does not seem to have at all abandoned horizontal Lastmanian format he learnt from his master from the beginning to the late 20s and after his death 1633 up until 1650. Since the four baptisms of the eunuch by Pieter Lastman, Rembrandt has never ceased to be inspired by his master. Especially in the late 20s, he produced, among other works, the perfect Lastmanian composition of "David presenting the head of Goliath" in 1627 which was partly used for the painting present.



David presenting the head of Goliath by Rembrandt 1627, Basel Kunstmuseum and the present painting in a same composition and light treatment.

From 1630, many Rembrandt's paintings and prints were executed in the same horizontal format. In a way this painting of 1631 prefigured by ten years the most obvious example, 1641 Rembrandt's engraving of *the Baptism of the Eunuch*.

Observation: This statement about "the lastmanian composition" (qualified "old fashioned") is as inappropriate as the one according to Odilia Bonebakker's notes when he claimed that Rembrandt illustrated "the central tenets of Calvinism" in this so-called early version.¹

4.7 What is the relationship between *the Old Man in a Cap* by Rembrandt and Philip's head?

There is a direct relationship between the *Old Man* and the head of Philip about the likeness of the face and the style. It seems reasonable to consider that the head of an *Old Man in a Cap* served as the 'tronie' for Philip. The technique used is highly comparable despite the great differences in scale and context. As did Ernst van de Wetering, Gary Schwartz emphasizes the direct relationship between the *Old Man* and Philip, "Philip has all the appearance of being painted from the same model who sat for the head of an *Old Man in a Cap* from the same period. [...] The resemblance goes further than the outer appearance of the model. It extends to the facial structure and the means used by the artist to depict it."

4.8 What explains such a difference in style during the same period around 1630 between *Jeremiah deploring the destruction of Jerusalem* and the *Old Man in a Cap* and Philip's head of the present painting?

The comparison with Jeremiah is inadequate! There is no discontinuity in style, there are different styles related to specific purposes. We will not be mixing like with like. Jeremiah is a kind of full-length portrait; the head of Old Man in a Cap is more roughly painted, as a tronie related to specific contexts as the one of Philip located in a biblical landscape. Philip is embedded in a landscape in a much smaller scale. Philip must be seen from a distance with sharper features.

¹The article on the painting includes a description of the condition, the placement of the painting within Rembrandt's oeuvre, formal and iconographic sources, and a brief excursus on the meaning of the subject in religious context. Henri Defoer 1977, pp. 2-26 contradicted by Odilia Bonebakker, (Research scholar at Harvard University, UC-Berkeley, curator) in her thesis Denomination and iconography: *The Baptism of the Eunuch* in Netherlandish art, 1520-1750, Queen's University Kingston, Ontario, Canada December 1998.



Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem, by Rembrandt 1630, oil on panel. Rijksmuseum, *Head of an old man in a cap*, ca. 1630, Panel, 24.3 x 20.3 cm, Kingston, Ontario, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 46-031, and Philip's head.

It is dictated by the purpose it fulfils. It is commonplace and a wayside to note that Rembrandt's *Head of the Old Man in a Cap* c. 1630 and Philip's head appear coarse compared to the delicacy of Jeremiah made in the 'fine style' in the same year.¹ Philip's head of the present painting 1631 is in continuity with the etching of Sts. Peter and John healing a cripple c.1629. Jeremiah is lamenting alone, on the forefront in a radical different context, while Philip is baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch with an entourage of six humans, several horses, and a dog in the landscape. Rembrandt's style and technique are adaptative. According to Fernando García García: *The execution of Philip's head in smaller size in a landscape with this scale requires more complex hand control with less ample brushstrokes than for the tronie itself.* To a typology context, size and format corresponds often a typology of style executed by the same hand.



Jeremiah detail, The Old Man, the tronie of Philip's head embedded in a reverse biblical landscape.

Observation: Even if the techniques are different, Vliet's engraving confirms the coarse style used by Rembrandt for the paintings of the Old man and the Baptism of the Eunuch 1631. It seems hasty from some observers to have made a comparison between the Old Man in a Cap and Philip of the present painting with the head of "Jeremiah" which has been executed in such a different style even if the heads derive from the same human model.

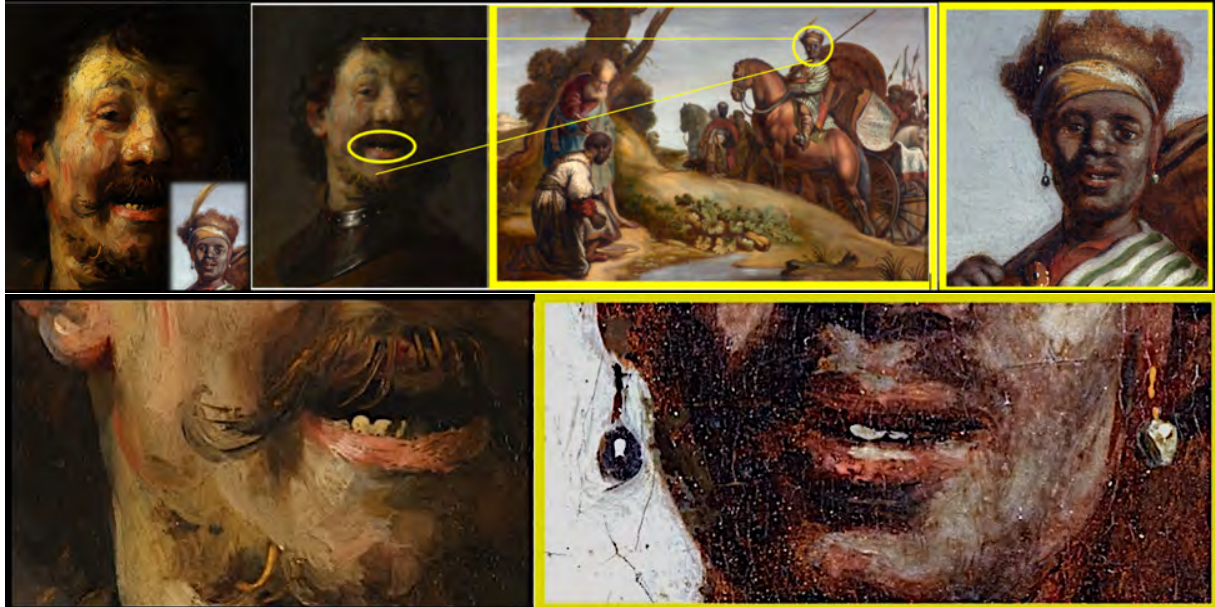
4.9 Is there a continuity in style used for the present painting with other Rembrandt's paintings?

There is a clear continuity in style used for the present painting with several Rembrandt's paintings. The example for entirely different facial morphologies and different attitudes

¹ Kingston, Ontario, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, *Head of an old man in a cap*, ca. 1630, Panel, 24.3 x 20.3 cm.

² Ernst van de Wetering, "Rembrandt's Beginnings: An Essay," *The Mystery of the Young Rembrandt*, Staatliche Museen Kassel and Museum het Rembrandthuis, 2001 *Essays on Rembrandt's Religious Images*, Seeing the Light, Rembrandt's religion, The Ethiopian's Baptism, published 6.2.15, p.12.

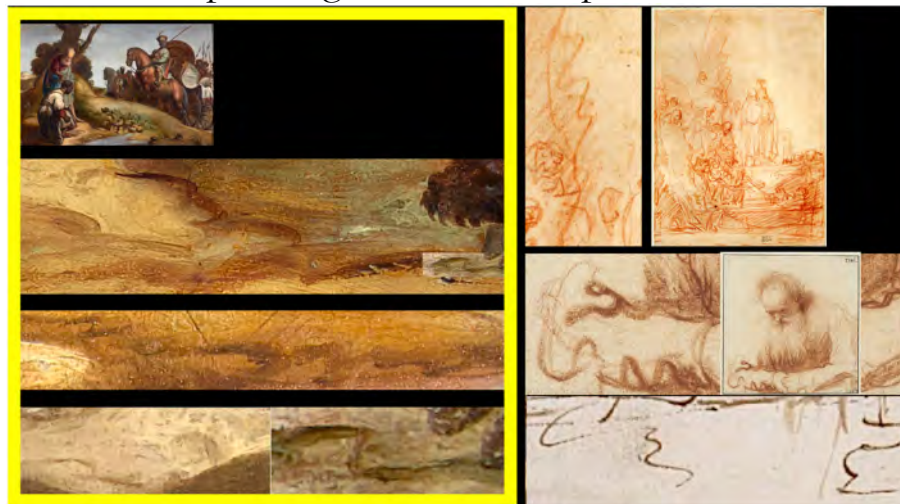
painted in the same coarse style and comparable brushstrokes for 'The Laughing man', c. 1629-1630 (15,3 cm x 12,2 cm) like the head of the commanding horseman of the Baptism of the Eunuch 1630-1631 (2 cm x 1,5cm). The paintings show figures in entirely different attitudes, but they are painted with a similar technique. These characters are also located on different planes; however, the brushstrokes are very similar.



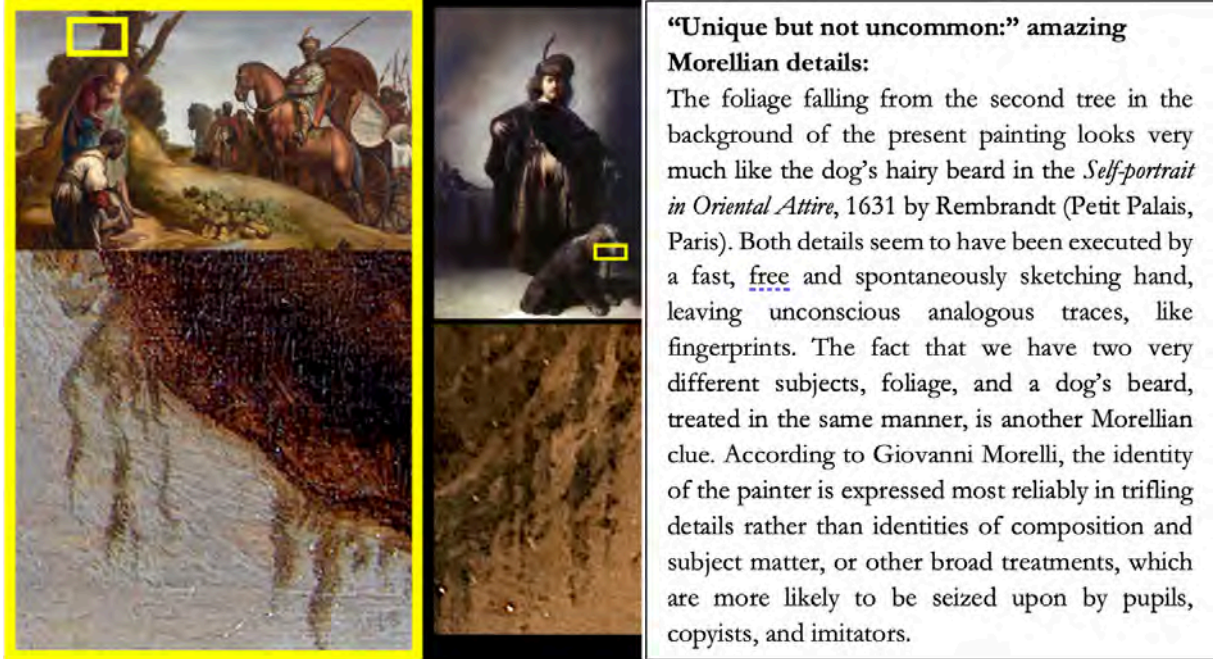
The Laughing man by Rembrandt 1629-1630, Mauritshuis Royal Picture Gallery, (15.3 cm x 12.2 cm), on copper plate covered in gold leaf and the present painting c.a. 1631, commanding horseman's head (2cm x 1cm). Close resemblance of the mouths despite their different expressions, sizes and supports. Details of mouths and teeth, on different scales: *The Laughing Man, 1629-1630* (2,04 cm) and the horseman from the present painting 1631 ca. (1cm).

4.10 Are there spontaneous brushstrokes without possibility of mind control in this painting that would reveal Rembrandt's hand?

Yes, there are in this painting, many marks of a spontaneous, fluid and forms of writing uncontrolled by the mind. It is a sort of automatic graphic writing as a painter's fingerprint. Repetition of the same wavy lines in different Rembrandt artworks, expressing variations in space and volume.



Automatic writing in the space, detail of present painting and typical spiral line used by Rembrandt in drawings or etchings, the present Painting and the *Seated, Old Man*, c. 1630, National Museum, Stockholm, the *entombment of the Christ over the raising of Lazarus*, 1630 British Museum.



Foliage falling in the present painting, 1631, similar to Rembrandt’s dog in the *Self-portrait in Oriental Attire*, 1631, Petit Palais.

Observation: The similarity between the mouths of the Laughing Man by Rembrandt and that of the horseman in command in the present painting, in spite of their different sizes and the fact that they are painted on different supports and convey very different expressions, are typical examples of Rembrandt’s visual vocabulary, and of his way of reusing features from other paintings and ‘tronies’. The same can be said of the falling foliage in the present painting and the dog’s shedding beard in the Self-portrait in Oriental Attire, 1631: they express the specificity of Morelli’s theory. These apparently insignificant details from four paintings made in 1630-31 constitute complementary arguments to recognize the painting of the Baptism of the Eunuch as Rembrandt’s original.

Similar brushstrokes whatever the techniques used:

The same fabric design is reused in different contexts, for example, this turban, which Rembrandt may have bought for his personal collection.



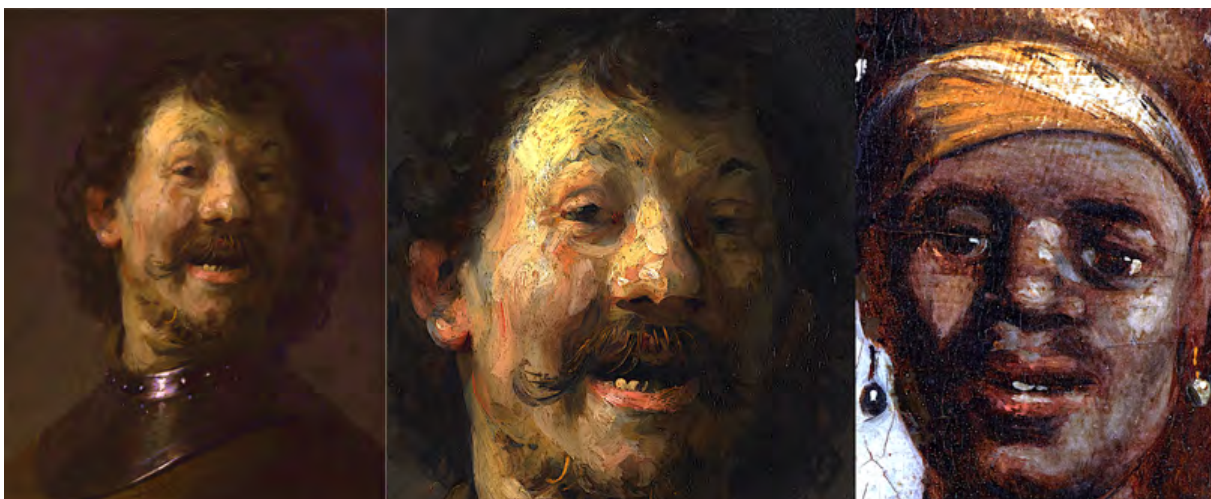
Details of *Head of an Oriental in a Turban and a Dead Bird of Paradise* c.a. 1637, 179 x 169 mm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Benesch 158.



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

4.11 Where is the visible resemblance in the brush marks between Rembrandt's paintings and drawings?

*They are expressing radically different attitudes and considerable differences of scale and support: The Laughing Man's eyes are shining, and his teeth are crooked. He is laughing heartily. The horseman, on the other hand, fixes the viewer with an intent and penetrating gaze. The portrait of the Laughing Man is a character study that Rembrandt painted while he was living in Leiden. It displays the smooth style that suited his purpose. The brushstrokes that make up the head are incredibly supple and roughly done, and the artist used this technique again afterwards for his portrait, *Head of an Old Man in a Cap*, for Philip in the foreground of the present painting and for the commanding horseman in its middle ground (this figure has not been restored). It should be noted that the rough style used for Philip in the foreground resembles that used for the *Old Man*, while in the case of the commanding horseman in the middle ground, the technique is closer to the one used for the *Laughing Man*.*



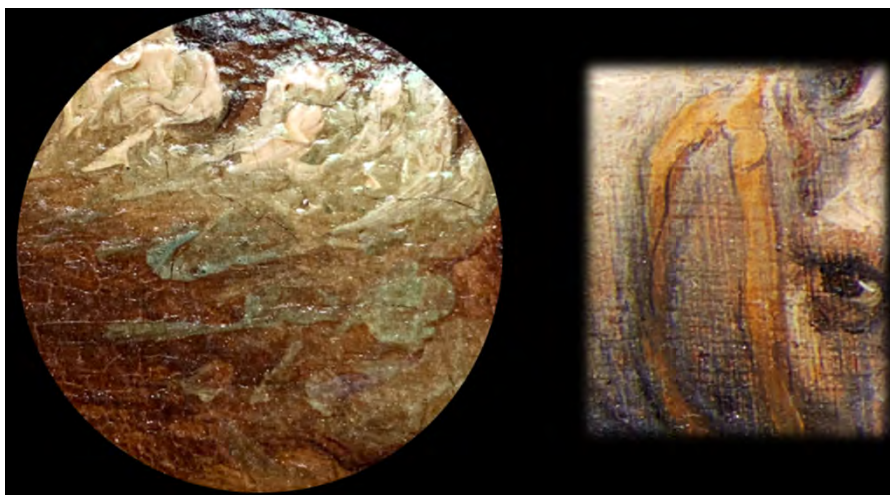
The laughing man portrait 5,2 x 12,2 cm (detail) in strong contrast and the commanding horseman.

4.12 What is the order of the composition and style progression that corresponds to that of Rembrandt?

We find the typical Rembrandt's order of working from back to front. The nature and function of the ground with the order of working from back to front noticed by the restorer Regina Costa Pinto and by Prof. Fernando García García. According to Ernst van de Wetering, this process of painted layers order is observed in many Rembrandt's artworks. From the sketchily done shapes with persuasive expressions and a landscape in the background, to the eunuch's entourage in the middle ground to main stage (Philip and the eunuch) and 3D effects in the foreground.



From the 3D effect on the foreground (yellow square) to the sketchy manner with a persuasive expression (green square):



From the painted drawing without thickness in the background to three-D vegetables with thick impasto in the foreground.

4.13 What are the different types of three-dimensionality?

There is a strong 3-D effect in the foreground, made with a thick impasto. Thick brushstrokes, applied onto a wooden support with a consistent volume, produce substantial surface reliefs. Rembrandt used the typical colours and pigments of his era, including several white lead-based pigments and organic materials (mainly linseed oil). The surface relief, 3D effect, is possibly also due to a plumbonacrite ingredient.¹



Leaves made with thick impasto.

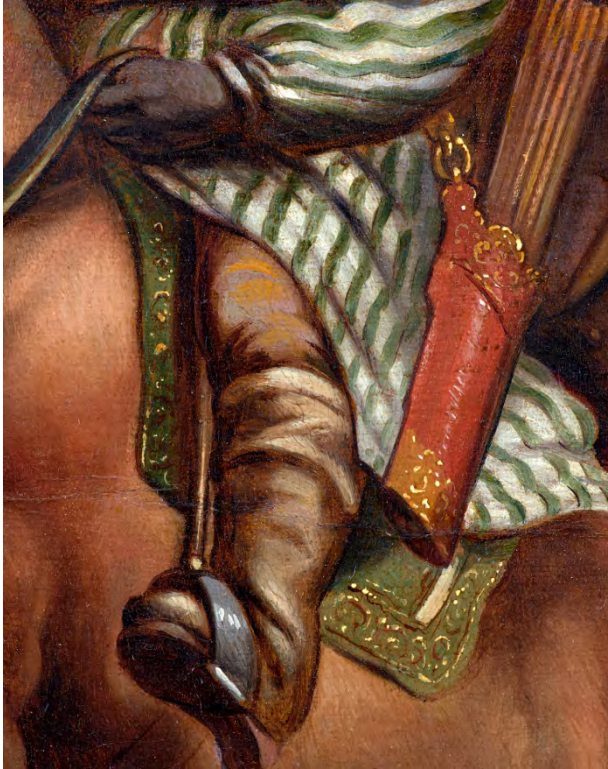
The leaves and the golden chain of the eunuch are almost of sculptured to give the illusion of a reality. Once again, the manner of painting is linked to the objective the artist has set himself. Here, the vegetation represented by the artist is not a naïve and redundant addition but has an important symbolic significance. The gourd pictured among them symbolizes the growth of love and faith, according to Scripture.

A sculptural effect for the treatment of gold details:



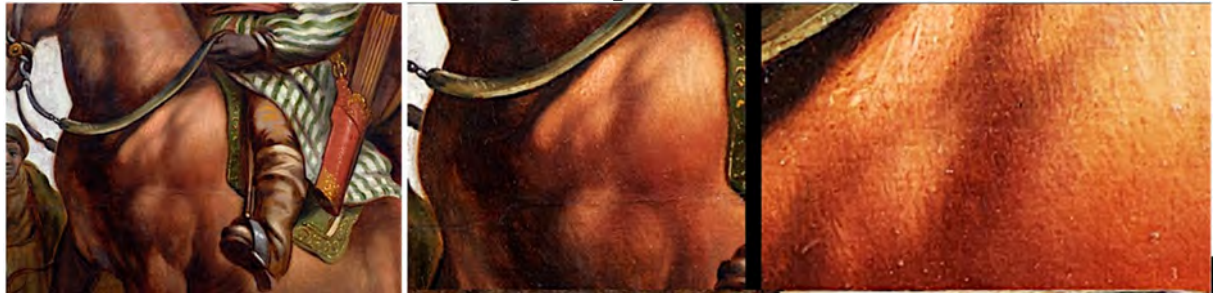
¹ The usage of “plumbonacrite” (a mixture of hydrocerussite $Pb_3(CO_3)_2 \cdot (OH)_2$ and cerussite $PbCO_3$) is not a random effect.

The golden chain of the eunuch shows a visible surface relief and seems almost sculpted.



The quiver in red leather with gilded frieze and light with 'houding' around the stirrup and the heel of the commanding horseman's boot, giving the illusion of a space between.

There is also 3-D effect with light impasto on the fore and middle front:



The color modulation and texture of the horse showing a powerful muscularity.

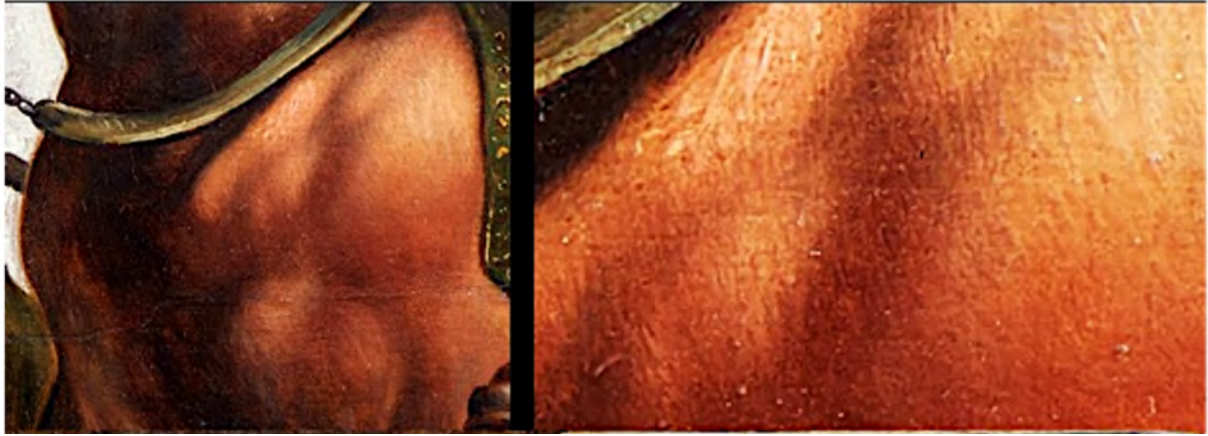
4.14 What are the typical texture variations in Rembrandt that would be found in the present painting?

The typical texture variations are for instance the long fur with a touch of light in the background...



lightly done brush strokes, with light playing over them.

... powerful expression of the horse musculature through a smooth fur in the middle ground...



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

...and a sketchy painted drawing, with the penetrating gaze of the white horse, over the apparent variable 'striae' of the wooden support in the background.



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

4.15 Is there a continuity of Philip's head of the present painting with that of the Utrecht painting?

Fortunately, there is no stylistic continuity between Philip of the Utrecht painting and the present painting as in no other work by Rembrandt.¹ The present painting is documented by Vliet and Visscher's print (which both specify a Rembrandt's invention) and later as an inception of Rembrandt's engraving of 1641. The Utrecht painting as none. Ernst van de Wetering noted: "Above all else the central figure (Philip) in the Utrecht painting argued against the attribution. Philip, who is baptizing the Moorish eunuch, looked like a wooden puppet with a head that could not have been from Rembrandt's hand," [...].² Philip, the main protagonist of the Utrecht painting is entirely fake as a typical pastiche element.³

¹ There is also no real continuity between *the Stoning of St. Stephan* 1625 and *the Balaam and the Donkey* 1626 or *the Music Party* 1627 with the Utrecht painting.

² Ernst van de Wetering, "Rembrandt's Beginnings: An Essay," *The Mystery of the Young Rembrandt*, Staatliche Museen Kassel and Museum het Rembrandthuis, 2001 *Essays on Rembrandt's Religious Images*, Seeing the Light, Rembrandt's religion, The Ethiopian's Baptism, published 6.2.15, p.12 "Rembrandt's Beginnings: An Essay," *The Mystery of the Young Rembrandt* Staatliche Museen Kassel and Museum het Rembrandthuis, 2001. p.10

³ What is paradoxical in Defoer's subjective criticism is that he denounces in the present painting exactly what one should do with Utrecht's painting, that is, the style and appearance of a pastiche. His answer boils down to saying, we have not finished exploring the style of the young Rembrandt. If you reject attribution, it is because you do not understand the technique of the young Rembrandt. The members of the RRP Corpus has rejected it before Defoer convince them.



Philip of Utrecht painting and in the present painting, in Vliet's print.

The Utrecht's eunuch shows no resemblance with the one of the present painting and Vliet's print or with other known Rembrandt's representation of black men. He squints outrageously.



The eunuch divergent eyes in Utrecht painting, the same attitude of piety in the present painting 1631 and in Vliet's print 1631.

Observation: If the two protagonists are not from Rembrandt's hand, can the painting be legitimately attributed to Rembrandt? The Utrecht painting and the Baptism of the Eunuch 1631 are in the same way and the light is coming from the East. Even though, the Utrecht painting appears stylistically in discontinuity between The Stoning of St. Stephen (1625) and The Music Party (1627) and Vliet's print 1631. It seems to be a strange mix of Lastman's baptism of Karlsrube and Vliet's.

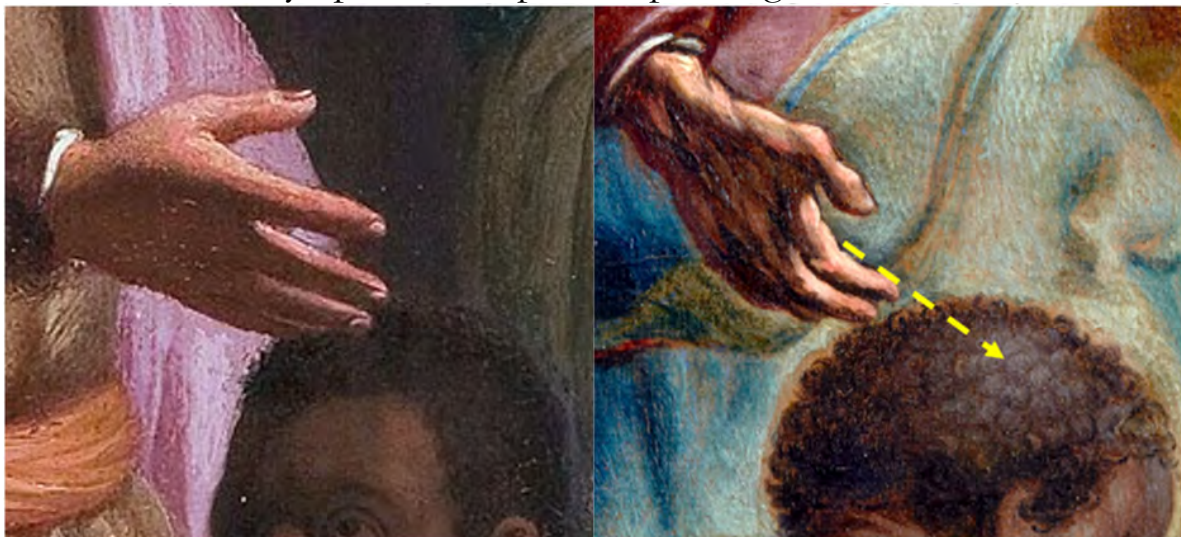
4.16 Is there not a similarity in the gesture of Philip's hand between the Utrecht painting and that of the present painting?

Philip's gesture of baptism in the Utrecht painting is the same under the light is coming from the right. However, the hand is stiff as a "wooden puppet" as Ernest van de Wetering wrote about Philip's head, and it doesn't show Rembrandt's characteristic reflection on light as the patch of light on the eunuch's hair. The position of the hand does not allow to baptize the eunuch. As the Holy Spirit light does not appear, the baptism must be performed by the baptismal water. The water drops will fall to the

ground. The painter has missed the singular mark of an exceptional baptism which makes a drastic difference to Rembrandt's predecessors dealing with the same theme, while the present painting of 1631 shows this miraculous mark. This hand's gesture seems to be made by the painter without him understanding why it is executed in this way.



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



There is no reflection of light from Philip's hand on the eunuch's head in the Utrecht painting as if it were a clumsy pastiche of the present painting whose artist's intention is lost.

4.17 What makes conceivable the perception of the light of the Holy Spirit on the head of the eunuch?

What confirms the existence of this trace, and this unique interpretation of the Eunuch's Baptism by Rembrandt is the faithful engraved reproduction of this essential element by Van Vliet. The engraver respects the original Rembrandt's invention by inscribing at the bottom of his print: RH v. Rijn inv. JG.v. Vliet fec. 1631. As the Utrecht painting, Visscher's print, and the Kremer painting have missed this essential detail that differentiates Rembrandt from his. The disappearance of the three-D effect found in the present painting has disappeared with the intermediary drawing or the printing process.



The source of the patch of light is coming from the left. This observation validated by the detail repetition by Vliet's print.

4.18 Why is the symbolic meaning of the Holy Spirit light so important?

*This light configuration represents the metaphoric whitening of the soul of a man with unbleachable black skin. The white mark on the eunuch's hair seems to be the point of entry for a penetration of his entire being. His attitude leads him to grace that he seems to feel. The Erasmus' text seems to have influenced the painters rather than the *Acts of the Apostles* itself, but Rembrandt sought the more creative interpretation, Philip's hand lays a white mark on his head. As wrote Odile Bonebakker "the eunuch is no more a eunuch, no more and Ethiopian but a "new creation".¹ Such an unorthodox representation was permissible due to the ecumenical spirit of the time. And we see evidence*

¹ Erasmus 1524, p. 63. Desiderius Erasmus, *Paraphrase on the Acts of the Apostles*, edited by John J. Bateman, translated and annotated by Robert D. Sider, Toronto, Buffalo and London (University of Toronto Press) 1995, pp. 61-63. These passages cited by Odilia Magdalena Bonebakker, "Denomination and iconography: the Baptism of the eunuch in Netherlandish art, 1520-1750," M.A. thesis, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, 1998, p. 42.

of this in Rembrandt's treatment of the theme, in which he distances himself in an intriguing manner from the earlier pictorial tradition. One is symbolic, supranatural and vertical. It comes from the Holy Spirit that touches Philip's shoulder and the hand that baptizes the eunuch. The source of the patch of light on the eunuch's head by refraction from Philip's hand comes from the left. Finally, the baptism is performed with Dutch «good light».

4.19 What is the symbolism of this mark of light on the head of the eunuch?

We know that allegorically “[...] the rising sun is related to the East. So, since Christ is the ‘light of the world’ (Jn 8, 12) the person of Christ and direction of east is closely related. [...] This turn to East, according to Origen: “symbolizes the soul looking toward when the true light rises. “For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” (Mathew 24:27)¹

In the present painting, the invisible deity manifests his presence by means of a divine, inexplicable ray of light, which falls from the left on Philip's incandescent hand and rebounds from it onto the eunuch's head, to perform the act of baptism. The eunuch's brigade stands motionless. Nothing stirs not the sky, the air, nor even the dog. The momentousness of the event they are witnessing is conveyed solely by means of a ray of light. A hand receives the invisible beam and deflects it in the form of a bright halo around the eunuch's head. Instead of showing a baptism done the usual way, with drops of water, Rembrandt offers us the visual experience of a divine encounter with God, in which His unexpected presence is revealed. At this numinous moment, the eunuch's entourage is filled with awe and the viewer kept at bay by the imperious commanding horseman. A hand is also given a preeminent role in Rembrandt's *Sacrifice of Isaac*, 1635. Joanna Sheers Seidenstein analyzes the significance of this raised hand in her “Divine Encounter, Rembrandt's *Abraham and the Angels*”.² She has noted that Rembrandt did not use the Dutch “good light” for some of the biblical stories as well as portraits including one of his last and important self-portraits.

4.20 What does this voluminous vegetation do in the middle of the foreground?

Vegetation is often at the forefront of Rembrandt's biblical or mythological landscapes. In this painting, he placed it in the middle of the foreground to emphasize its symbolic force in accordance with the fledging faith of the eunuch recently converted. There is

¹ *The divine light comes from the East*, Fr. Antony Alancherry (https://dukhrana.in/theology-of-facing-the-east/#_ftn2)

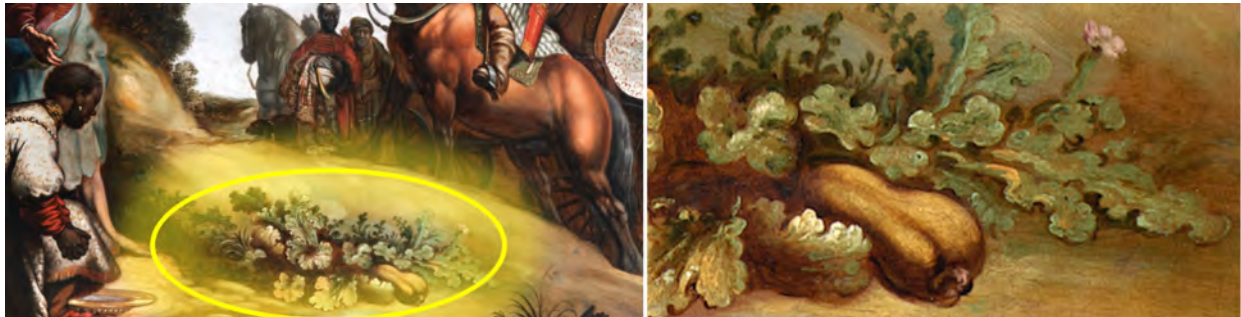
² *Divine Encounter, Rembrandt's Abraham, and the Angels* Joanna Sheers Seidenstein is the 2015–17 Anne L. Poulet Curatorial Fellow at The Frick Collection, New York. Published by The Frick Collection Michaelyn Mitchell, Editor in Chief Hilary Becker, Assistant Editor e Frick Collection, New York in association with D Giles Limited, London, (June 6, 2017).

exactly the same placing, at the lower centre of the two pictures, for the basket of fruits, in the painting of *Odysseus and Nausicaa* by Lastman, and for the group of vegetables in the present painting. This positioning in the lower centre is not coincidental. It has a symbolic value, for the fruits in Lastman's painting are a sign of abundance, emphasizing Odysseus's hunger and thirst after the sinking of his boat. In the present painting the vegetation and the gourd represent the eunuch's flourishing faith.



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 symbolic luminescence of the gourd and its leaves is not decorative but fully meaningful, and therefore cannot be taken to be the result of an overly naïve and laborious addition by one of Rembrandt's pupils.

The provisional attribution to "Rembrandt and studio" does not consider the true nature of Rembrandt's rough manner of painting, which is characteristically fast, free, and spontaneously sketchy, and which in Rembrandt's work expresses a dazzling significance. Certain apparently clumsy renderings are in fact carefully considered. They are as much a part of Rembrandt's idiosyncratic style as any more obvious stylistic resemblances.

5 Questions about the continuity after the present painting:

5.1 Is there a continuity in Rembrandt's oeuvre after the present painting?

The continuity of the present painting is Rembrandt's engraving of 1641. They are in the same horizontal composition, in mirror image with the same main characters: Philip, the eunuch, the page and the commander, and animals.

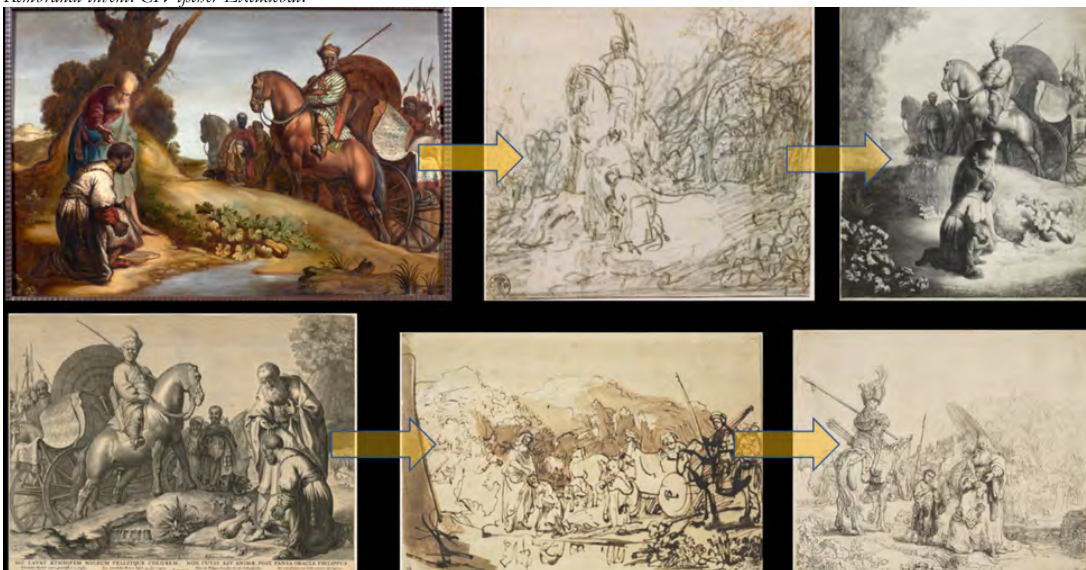


The continuity in evolution from 1631 to 1641, a kind of a mirror image with movements of some characters in the engraving.

There is a clear continuity between the present painting and Visscher's print, which reintroduced the graphic lines of figures from Vliet's print and the horizontal composition as well as the same gaze orientation from the present painting.



Fig. 3 In mirror image: *The Baptism of the Eunuch* ca.1630, oil on panel, 64,8 x 96,3 cm, private collection on loan at the Fondation Custodia, Claes Jansz Visscher after Rembrandt, *The Baptism of the Eunuch*, 1631-1633, Engraving, 37.9 x 51.5 cm. Vienna, Albertina, HB76.4, fol. 76 Inscription Rembrandt invent. CIViſcher Exceudebat.



Example of continuum in 6 artworks of the *Baptism of the Eunuch*.

There is a continuum with different composition from the present painting to the intermediary drawing of Munich (Rembrandt's indication to change the format), the

etched copy of Vliet (British Museum), in the same horizontal composition as Visscher's print, the Louvre drawing 1640 and Rembrandt's engraving of 1641.

5.2 Is there a horizontal "Lastmanian composition" in Rembrandt's œuvre after the present painting?

Yes, this composition is one of Rembrandt's favorites. Defoer not only forgot the numerous Lastmanian compositions by Rembrandt that came before the end of the 20's but also long after 1630: Susana and the Elders 1647 is a direct copy of Peter Lastman's version of 1614 with genuine nuances. Among many other paintings, it is an illustration of typical Rembrandt's horizontal storytelling inspired directly from Lastman.



Susanna and the Elders P. Lastman's painting 1614, Rembrandt painting 1647, (76.6 cm x 92.8 cm), Staatlichen Museen, Berlin.

Wolfgang Stechow wrote: “We are still a long way from realizing the full impact of Lastman's art on Rembrandt's; and this not so much with regard to the years during and immediately after Rembrandt's short apprenticeship with the Amsterdam master as with regard to Lastman's continued or rather renewed influence on Rembrandt after the latter's removal to Amsterdam. In this paper I shall place my main emphasis on the importance of Lastman for Rembrandt's art of the 1630's and even later [...]”.¹ Defoer seems to be far away from realizing the impact of Lastman's art on Rembrandt's in the different periods of his life. It definitively shows that these horizontal compositions, found in Lastman's paintings and adapted by Rembrandt in the late 1620's and for a long time after 1631, are not to be considered “old-fashioned”. The present painting marks a milestone between Leiden period and the future of Rembrandt's œuvre. Just before his move to Amsterdam (1631), Rembrandt showed a revival of interest in Lastman's use of proportion and composition. He continued to do so after 1633, the year that Rembrandt's master died. Lastman's sketchbooks, which Rembrandt acquired, probably played a role in his ongoing reference to Lastman, functioning at least as a reminder.

¹ *Some Observations on Rembrandt and Lastman*. Oud Holland. Vol. 84, No 2/3 (1969) pp. 148-162 (15 pages) Published by Brill



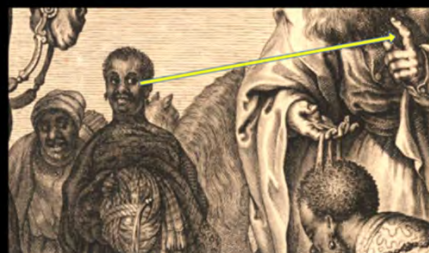
Joseph Distributing Corn in Egypt, by P. Lastman, 1612, 57.6 x 88.2 cm, National Gallery of Ireland, copy by Rembrandt, drawing, c. 1637, 31,3 x 46, 2 cm.

Observation: As many approximative comments of Defoeer about the baptisms of the eunuch, the one of 1626 and particularly this one of 1631, is totally opposed to Rembrandt's reality. Part of Utrecht painting, there will never be another vertical composition. The horizontal conception of the present painting continues up until ten years later and after.

5.3 Is it possible that the present painting is based on Visscher's print rather than inspiring it?

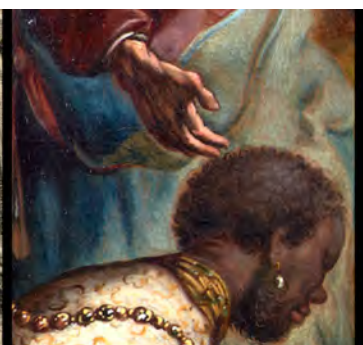
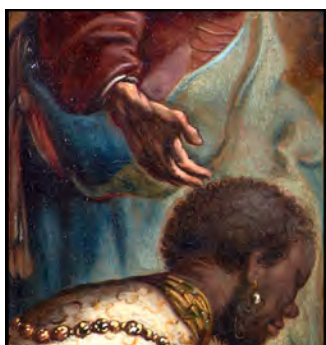
This hypothesis is part of the "alternate reality" and an unrealistic scenario! This is presumed in the review in Oud Holland on the Gary Schwartz's book "A new baptism of the eunuch" (2020). This opinion is entirely contradicted by an objective study. Visscher's engraving could not have inspired the present painting, but the opposite is true because:

1) *The gesture to baptize is from another ritual. This is an entirely different baptism. Visscher interprets the theme very differently. He borrowed the gesture from the baptism of Abraham Blommaert, *The Baptism of the Eunuch*, ca. 1620-1625.*



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

2) *The patch of light on the eunuch's head no longer comes from the hand as it is the present painting and in Vliet's print. The subtle light refraction has disappeared. Instead of light, the right-hand pours water over the head of the eunuch which is not the case in the painting and in Vliet's print.*



In Visscher's print, the left-hand finger is raised while the right-hand pours water on the eunuch's head, in the painting and Vliet's print, the baptism is performed in a very different way.

3) *Typical indication by the disproportions of copying process: the rider's head are oversized in the print.*



4) *The disproportions of the riders and horses are obvious. It doesn't take long to discover the disproportions for humans and animals and inclusion of new elements in Visscher's print to recognize that present painting has none.*



It is enough to connect the visible details of the two horses that protrude from the carriage to see the ridiculous representation of these figures. Based on the reconstitution of the shape from visible details, the supposedly horse in Visscher's print is as short as a mule. This is an evident mark of copying that the present painting does not show.



Disproportion of the horses in Visscher's print.



The same riders on the present painting with correct proportions and in Visscher's print with oversized riders on their mounts too small.

5) *The eunuch's page are dwarfs and the two horses, ponies.*

The eunuch's page and the archer are no longer correct, and thus both look like dwarfs. For publishing constraints, Visscher has narrowed the space between them and Philip.

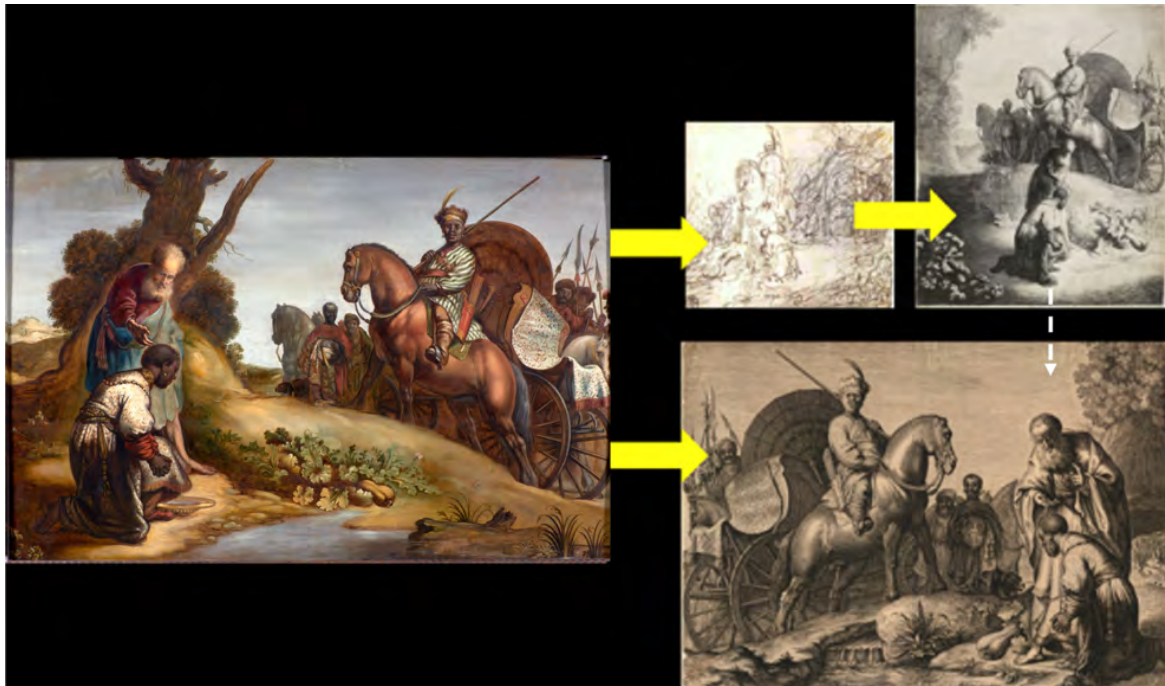


6) *Visscher pursues another goal related to a different interpretation of Scripture and specific publication including that of Bibles and albums.* He respected the specific publication constraints.



The present painting by Rembrandt above, with its Visscher's copy displayed below, at the Exhibition *Young Rembrandt, Rising Star* 2 Nov. 2019, Lakenhal Museum, Leiden.

While Visscher shows a radically different ritual of the baptism of the eunuch, it doesn't take long to discover that the engraver has copied the figures from Vliet's print and the composition and the 'jeu des regards' from the present painting and shows several types of iconographical anomalies due to the copying process. Since Vliet's print shows traces of a change from horizontal composition to a vertical in direct relation to the present painting, and since Visscher's print is not the modello of the painting, but its copy for the composition and the gazes, and Vliet's for the figures without the anomalies, the painting can therefore be considered the most likely modello for both prints. These borrowings from Vliet and from the painting may have been sufficient for him to feel justified in writing: "Rembrandt invent". If it were only a full copy of Vliet's print, Visscher might not have dared to put this inscription if there was no reason. If Visscher had only been inspired by Vliet's engraving, he would have inscribed: "After Vliet" or nothing. It is safe to think that Visscher is not the inventor of this composition. Without this horizontal composition and this *jeu des regards* treatment of a relative complexity, there would have been no legitimate reference to a Rembrandt invention. "He will also have felt confident that Rembrandt would not object to being credited with the invention of the composition," wrote Gary Schwartz.¹ Considering the series of arguments of Rembrandt formal vocabulary, the physical properties, and the concordances of the painting with Vliet and Visscher's prints, the hypothesis of seeing in the present work a copy of the engravings is a baseless hypothesis.²



The present painting is the model of Vliet, Visscher's prints and perhaps of the Munich drawing.

¹ A new *Baptism of the eunuch* invented by Rembrandt Gary Schwartz. Edit. Primavera Pers, Leiden 2020 p. 65.

² The hypothesis that engraving would have inspired present painting is naïve and lacks careful observation. There is series of clear evidence that indicate the opposite. All these elements analyzed one after the other demonstrates that the present painting is Rembrandt's model that precedes its reproductions made by Vliet and Visscher which bear the typical default of the copies. Those who have raised the possibility that engraving is the model of painting pursue other goals than truth in art history. They want to prove that there is only one vertical model of Vliet's engraving. One attempts to pass the Kremer painting off as Rembrandt's original model. Which is hopeless regardless of the XRF.

Observation: All these elements analyzed one after the other demonstrates that the present painting is the model that precedes made by Vliet and Visscher which bear the typical default of the copies. The hypothesis that Visscher's engraving would have inspired the present painting lacks careful observation.

*Those who have raised the possibility that engraving is the model of painting pursue other goals. Those who keep as precept the vertical composition as being the first and only early composition of Rembrandt's *Baptism of the Eunuch* have other goals in mind than truth in art history. Understanding the "physical" state of the present painting and the process of the poor restorations over time will fade away the first hesitations.*

What shows the evidence of the model is Rembrandt's intention, the "cosa mentale". It is expressed by the creation of an attracting point (the miraculous light impact on the eunuch's head), the role playing of the eunuch's entourage and the commanding rider who looks straight in the eyes of the viewer to mentally involve him into the scene. Rembrandt empathizes the viewer who becomes actor.

5.4 How Rembrandt involves the viewer into scene?

The painter's intention is to turn the viewer into one of the silent characters in the story he tells. What we see is a narrative linked to a subtle "jeu de regards". First of all, we take in the principal scene, in the foreground, without perhaps noticing a relatively discreet light mark on the head of the eunuch. We then notice the oblique and furtive glances of the men and animals in the eunuch's entourage, in the middle and background of the picture. But what do they look at that is so striking?



Simulation of possible eye trajectory of the viewer.

Then we consider the imperious gaze of the horseman, directed at us. *We may have missed something...* Finally, we follow the oblique gazes of the characters to look again at Philip and the eunuch, and at this point we focus on the irradiated Philip's hand, we discover the supernatural event, represented by a tiny surface of white light on the eunuch's hair: the event which is the reason for the characters' bewilderment but which they are unable to observe themselves by virtue of their topographic positions. This impossibility to see exactly what happens, holds them breathless, is the object of curiosity and of attention. That is the viewer's moment when he or she becomes a new character of the picture, and we enter the scene under the eyes of the empathetic and suspicious gaze of the commanding horseman. This immersion in the painting is not delivered so easily, it requires an inclusive look.

6 Questions about the physical properties typical of Rembrandt:

6.1 What is the most likely creation date?

The 22 August 2012 report, Prof. Dr. Peter Klein of Hamburg University should not be questioned. He wrote that the youngest heartwood ring was formed out in the year 1622. An earliest felling date can be derived for the year 1629. With a minimum of 2 years for seasoning the earliest creation of the painting is possible from 1631, the year inscribed with the mention *RH v. Rijn inv. JG.v. Vliet fec. 1631* at the bottom of Vliet's print. It is safe to accept this year for the present painting especially if we consider that it is the model of Vliet's engraving of 1631.

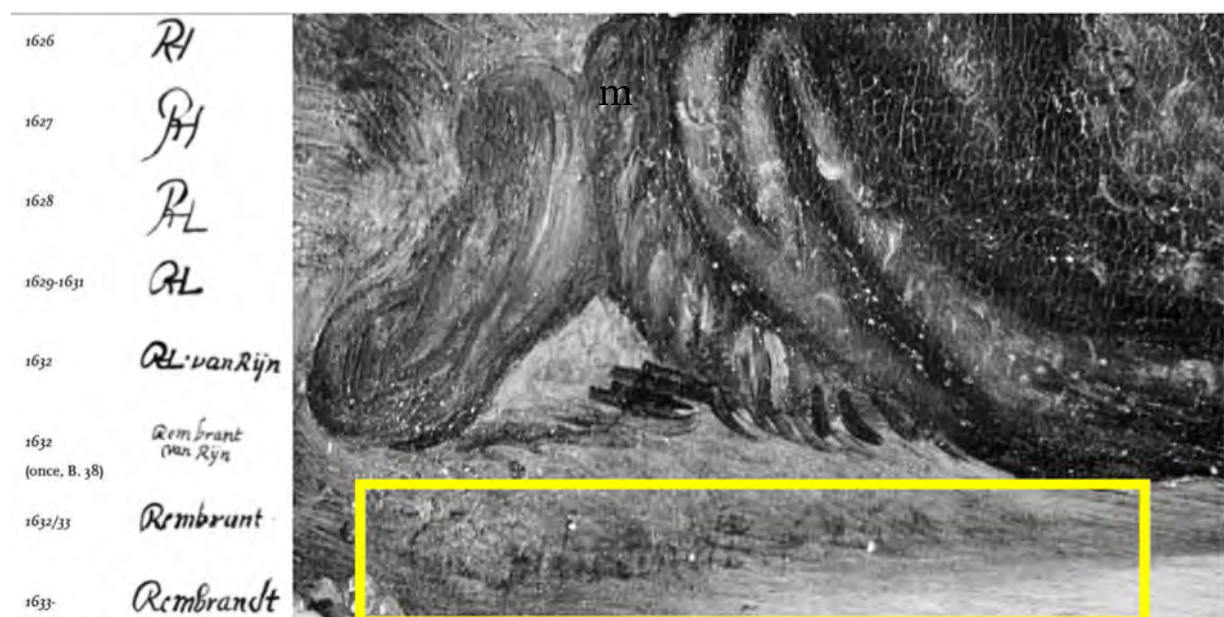
6.2 Does the fact that the Baptism of the Eunuch is painted on another work automatically set the creation date after 1631?

Rembrandt made some thirty paintings on top of other painting! The fact that the Baptism of the Eunuch is painted on another work is not surprising, it is a common practice used by Rembrandt like other artists of his time. The specialists state that a natural drying takes less than one year. 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 siccativ) 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 the dendrochronological analysis by Dr. Peter Klein. This date corresponds to other tangible elements (that will be presented later) 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.).

6.3 Was it unusual for Rembrandt to sign a work that had already been completed a few years later?

*It is not unusual for Rembrandt to sign a finished work later. He did this several times. What the RRP Rembrandt Corpus IV chapter I stated: "During the course of 1632 Rembrandt began adding 'f' for 'fecit' to his signatures. Rembrandt originally wrote his name with 't', but some time in 1633 it became 'dt'. Judging from surviving paintings, it seems that he almost always signed his work."*¹ An earlier painting, *Simeon in the Temple*, was made by Rembrandt in 1628 and signed in 1633, using the same inscription found in the present painting: "The undated *Simeon in the Temple* is inscribed lower right, 'Rembrandt, f.' Rembrandt did not begin to use this form of his signature until 1633 and so it seems probable that this inscription was added later as other of his works. *Simeon in the Temple* must closely follow *The Apostle in Prison*, so was presumably painted in 1628." There are other examples: *The Self-portrait in Oriental Attire* by Rembrandt was made in 1631 and signed "Rembrant" between 1632 and 1633 after modifications (addition of the andalu dog hiding Rembrandt's legs). Dr. Herman Kühn who supervised the stratigraphical analysis, and Regina Costa Pinto, who partly restored the present painting, found as it had been presumed an "old signature with a date" added a few years after the execution of the painting as several Rembrandt's paintings.



6.4 How to understand the date?

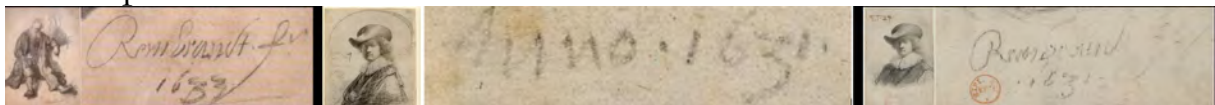
¹ Corpus IV, Chapter I, By his own hand, the valuation of autograph paintings in the 17th century. p. 27.

A transparency made of the signature and date of the *Old Man Seated*, made in 1631 and signed in 1633, overlaid with those of the present painting, shows that the two coincide. The signatures correspond almost exactly, as if made freely by the same hand, as do the first two numbers, **1** and **6** of the date. The upper, S-shaped portion of the two last numbers is sufficiently clearly traced to imply the numbers **3** and **1**. The signature and date seem to have been made freely and at the same time, showing no evidence of hesitation. The inscription of the date 1633 or 1631, with an unprecise shape of the numbers “33” or “31” is usual in Rembrandt’s work. In some of the paintings, however, these two last numbers are unreadable or missing perhaps because after writing the signature and the swooping f of ‘fecit’ Rembrandt’s brush was running out of its single load of paint. We see this alteration of the final numbers several times, for example, in the *Portrait of Johannes Wtenbogaert* by Rembrandt, 1633, Rijksmuseum and several other paintings made in later years.

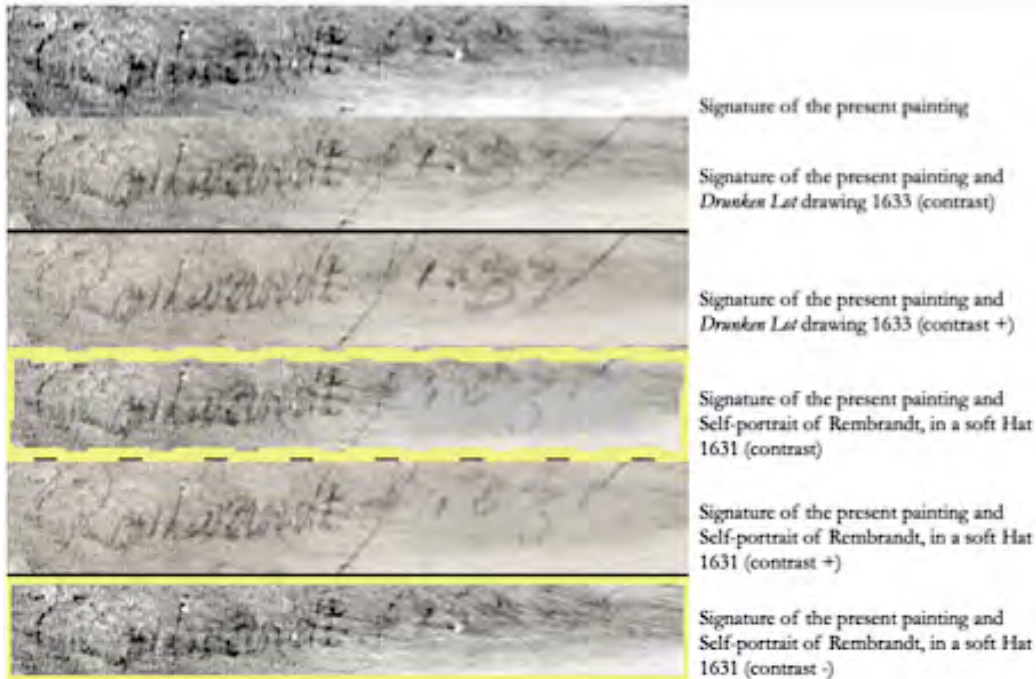


Portrait of Johannes Wtenbogaert by Rembrandt, 1633, Rijksmuseum.

However, in the drawing of *Drunken Lot*, they are more distinct numbers because Rembrandt was using charcoal rather than paint. It helps to guess the shape of 33.



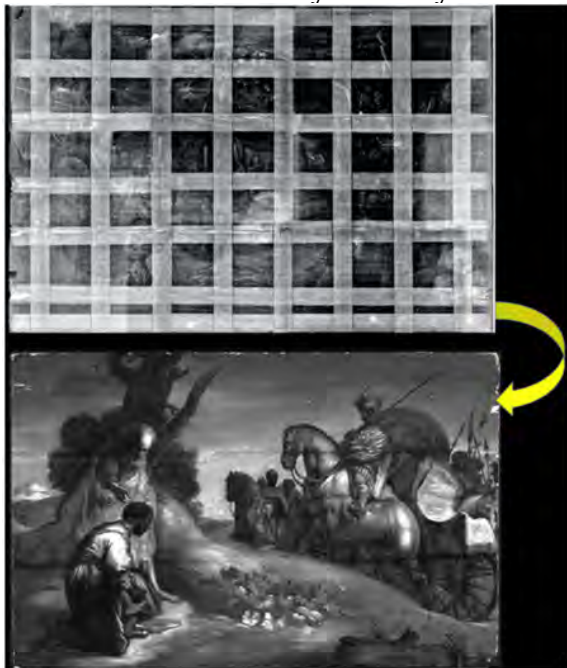
Drunken Lot drawing made c. 1631, Rembrandt but signed 1633. Self-portrait of Rembrandt, in a soft Hat. 1631. British Museum, 1842,0806.134, the date “1631” similar Rba Etching, drawing, completed in black chalk and touched in pen and brown ink, 1633-1634. Martin Royalton-Kisch, 'Catalogue of drawings by Rembrandt and his school', 2010, Rembrandt, cat. no.7a. Rembrandt, Self-Portrait in a Soft Hat and Patterned Cloak, etching, made 1631 corrected in black chalk 1633-1634.



Comparison, similarities and mix of the signature on the left between the present painting and the drawing by Rembrandt 1633, *Lot and his daughters*, and *Old Man Seated* and *Self-Portrait in a Soft Hat and Patterned Cloak*, made 1631 corrected in black chalk in 1633-1634 and the present painting.

Observation: The signature and date of the present painting can be compared to those of Self-portrait in a Soft Hat of Rembrandt, 1631 (British Museum, Lot and his daughters and Rembrandt, Self-Portrait in a Soft Hat and Patterned Cloak, made 1631 corrected in black chalk in 1633-1634. They merge correctly.

6.5 What does X-rays analysis reveal?



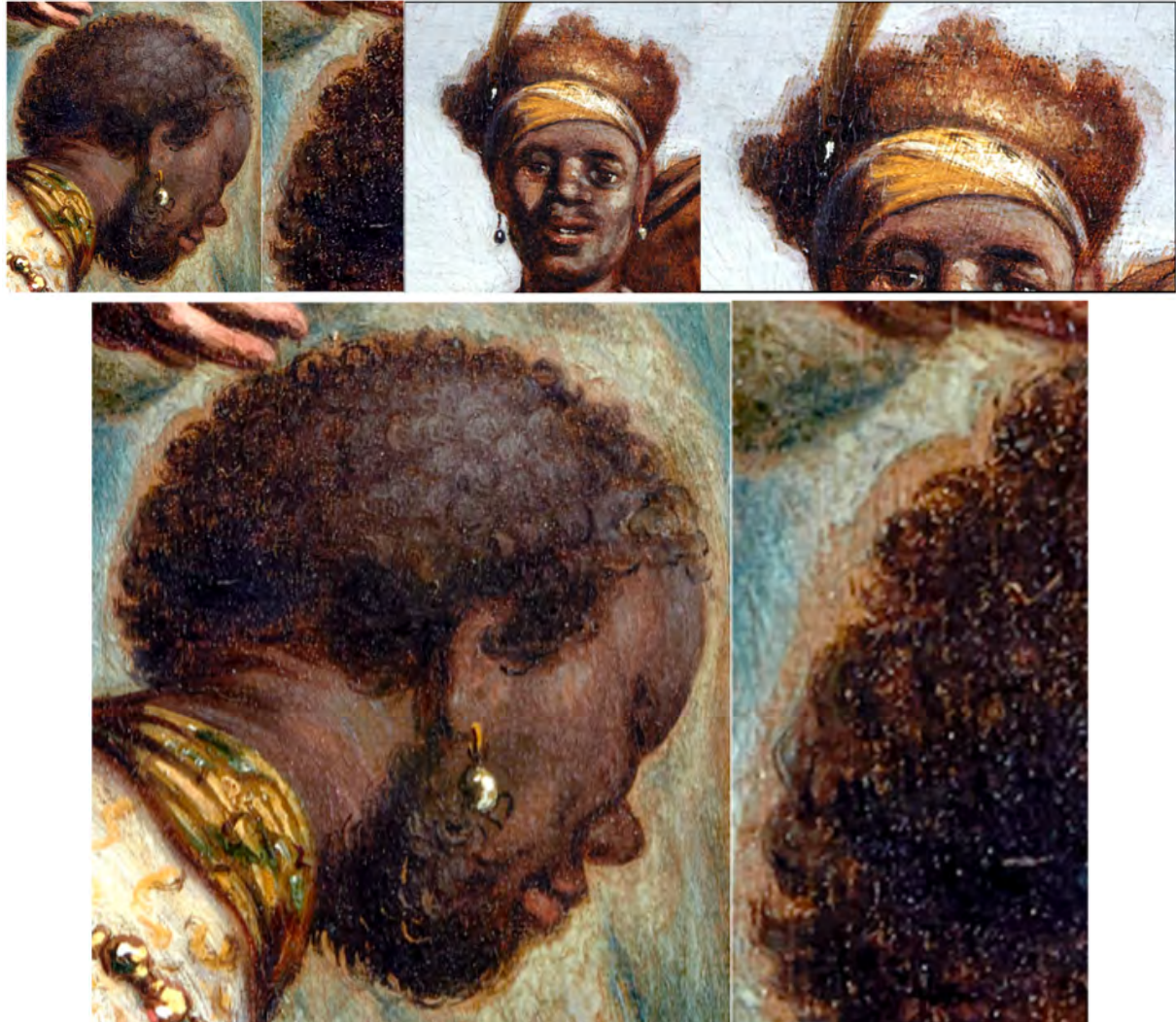
First, the artwork is upside down and painted over an older image of a still life. What is typical of Rembrandt is that the X-rays shows a freely mode of execution with traces of earlier shapes and research of a better composition (branches, lances, anatomic corrections etc.

6.6 What does it mean to have the reserve spaces around the main characters?

Usually, reserves do not appear in copies. It is easier to copy the definitive form by removing them. Finding them shows once again that the present painting is an original. "The reserves left open when the composition was first laid down, such as those around the heads of the eunuch and the horseman, ... are another

type of proof that the painting was an original and not a copy.” Gary Schwartz.

The reserve around the eunuch’s head plays a role in the “houding” effect. This halo of colour and light around his head gives the impression of an empty space between Philip’s tunic and the eunuch’s body and enhances the supernatural dimension of the saint and the person with whom he is interacting.

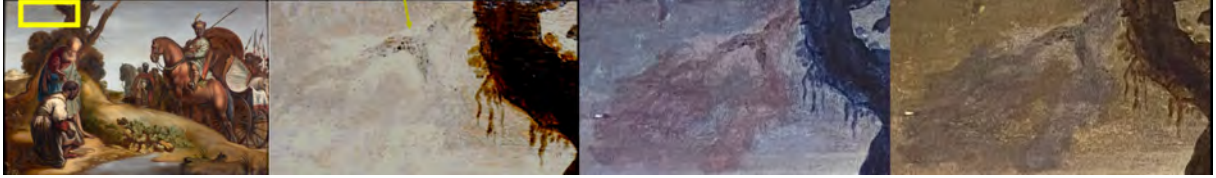


Detail of the reserve around the eunuch’s head with a houding effect from Philip’s tunic.

6.7 What are the most descriptive pentimenti that show Rembrandt’s thought in process on a subject such as the baptism of the eunuch?

There are pentimenti that show early forms, changes in composition, subtle transformations, or “mutazioni”. They are the result of incessant exploration for perfection and organic purity.

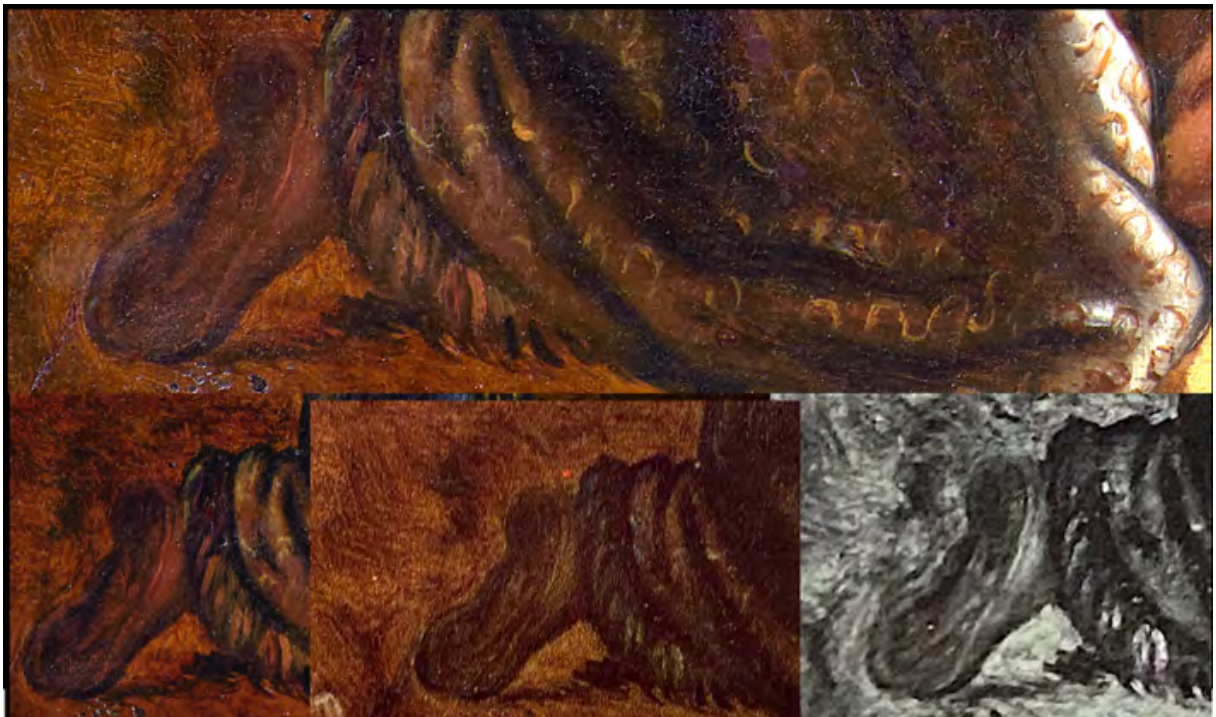
Some pentimenti show the typical quest of Rembrandt for better options that he finally abandoned to make the image graphically the most uncluttered. The painter overpainted the branches because they covered a too large space in the sky.



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



There are anatomical corrections:

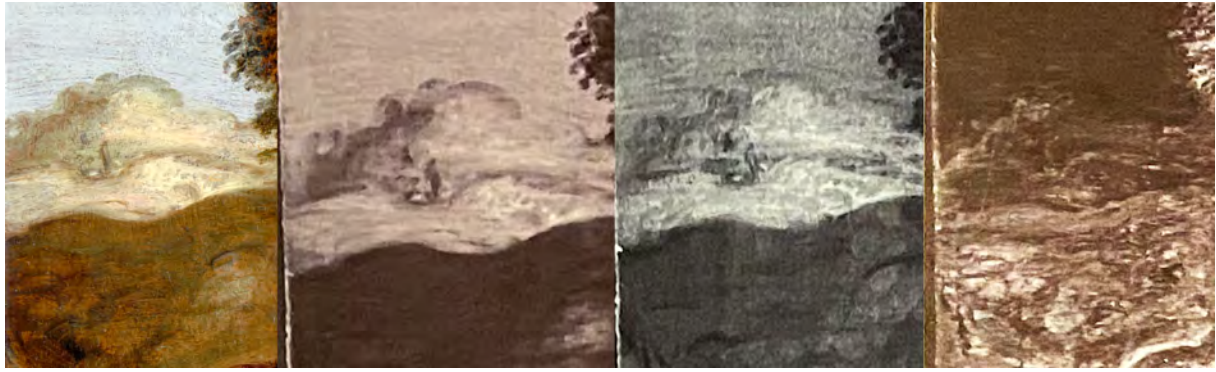


The eunuch's foot was too far.



Tunic fringes represented in Visscher and Vliet's print and recovered in the present painting

Rediscovery of motifs that zealous restorers have changed or overpainted original elements we see in printing: tunic fringes overpainted and traces in multispectral analysis or architectures melted in a mountainous landscape.



Architectures or mountains, the pictorial layer and IR from multispectral analysis.

One of the most drastic and significant changes of an original work is the pentimento that concerns the harness of the warhorse ridden by the commander of the company. While he was working, the painter realized that the harness he had drawn was suitable for a draft horse and not for a warhorse.¹ So he painted over the first, inappropriate harness, which in case of a rapid offensive movement could have cause "strangulation," and substituted it with one suitable for a warhorse.



Interestingly, a year later, Rembrandt used properly the harness of draft horses for *the Abduction of Europa*, Rembrandt, 1632, Getty Museum.



Multispectral and x-rays reveal a formal harness similar to the ones of the draft horses of *the Abduction of Europa*, Rembrandt, 1632, Getty Museum.

Observation: considering the various type of pentimenti, the present painting cannot be a copy of Vliet or Visscher's engravings.

Observation: *While the discovery of pentimenti and reserves is obviously not specific to Rembrandt (at the exception of compositional ones), on the other hand, the study in details of the modifications made by the painter himself, shows us the development of his thought and of his ongoing evolution.* These changes were made to the composition in the course of the work and show the free and fast manner of working which is so typical of Rembrandt. Using the multispectral analysis of the matrix, we find the whole history of changes of ideas from

¹ Rembrandt will use the harness for draft horse in the abduction of Europe 1632, JP Getty Museum.

the early phase to the final composition of the pictorial execution, and we possibly can induce the flow of thoughts and the trajectory in both conception and action of the master.

7 Questions about the relationship between the present painting and Vliet's print:

7.1 How are the present painting and Vliet's engraving related?

What is striking is the great resemblance of the characters in those works. This likeness goes as far as to find the same clumsiness showing the great loyalty of Vliet to Rembrandt. However, an accurate observation makes it possible to note the dissimilarity and to determine in an obvious way which is the model and what is the copy. For instance, the eunuch's entourage has a high-level concordance in the design characters, but these differ drastically in their eyes, looks and attitudes.



A similar eunuch's entourage.



The present painting 1631 and Vliet's print 1631.

7.2 What are the limits of similarities between the painting and Vliet's engraving?

Vliet's print shows a slight dissimilarity in the similarity. The clumsiness of the arm is worse than that of the painting because the engraver forgot to replicate a fold of the sleeve.



The same clumsy foreshortening in the painting and Vliet's print

7.3 What does this slight difference reveal?

Added to the series of visible anomalies, this tiny detail suggests that the present painting could be the original of the engraving. Why would a copy present more details than an original? It goes with other traces of the copying system as the disproportions of anatomical elements.

7.4 How can we conceive that Vliet's engraving is the copy of the present painting with such a difference in composition?

This may be counter-intuitive, but Vliet's engraving is very faithful to the present painting in the representation of the two main characters Philip and the eunuch and the profiles of all the other characters. It contains many systemic traces of a mechanical transfer from a horizontal composition, the one of the painting, and the typical disproportions of the figures (riders and horses on the right side) usually shown by even the most faithful copies (these disproportions are not present in the painting). "The arguments for regarding the present painting as van Vliet's model are not to be denied", wrote Gary Schwartz.¹ Visscher's print is also a copy of the painting for the composition and the expressions of the figures, the logic of the gazes without displaying Vliet's compositional anomalies. At the same time, Visscher print's disproportions are the result in part of copying the characters from Vliet's engraving because it is always easier for an engraver

¹ *A Rembrandt invention: A new Baptism of the Eunuch*, 69. Edit. Primavera Pers Leiden 2020.

to reproduce lines already traced than brushstrokes as Jan van der Waal suggested.

7.5 It is known that Van Vliet deviates very little from Rembrandt's models, would the present painting be an exception?

No, apart from the apparent difference the present painting is an illustration of this principle of van Vliet's fidelity. The engravers' specialists claim that the engraver never deviated so radically from his models. This is exactly the case with the present painting. After a thorough examination of the painting and the engraving, we know that, despite appearances, Vliet did not make any radical changes from the present painting. The modification is limited to a vertical realignment of the three main characters, and this crude and simple move has generated the compositional anomalies visible with the naked eye and that Visscher noticed and did not reproduce. The lower part of the engraving shows no change to the three main figures, Philip and the eunuch. For the upper part, Vliet has only made a direct mechanical transfer to align the figures vertically. The entourage of the eunuch has simply been moved in one go above Philip's head. These figures bear the scars of this coarse shift. The attempt to correct them seems to have been made a posteriori. In fact, Vliet did not depart from his model, he was too faithful in his first reproductive engraving of a Rembrandt painting. In the end, it could be admitted that since no painted and printed copies of a convincing vertical model appeared because they show the same defaults as Vliet's engraving, one could conceive that there never was any vertical one by Rembrandt.

8 Evidence of physical and mental abnormalities of six characters in Vliet's print:

8.1 Why not think that Visscher's engraving is a copy of the painting and that Vliet's has a vertical model?

It would be logical that a horizontal model corresponds to a horizontal engraving like that of Visscher and that a vertical model corresponds to a vertical engraving like that of Vliet. The present painting is horizontal and is probably the model of Visscher's print while we have never found a credible vertical model for Vliet's engraving. Observing the iconographical and compositional anomalies of the latter and considering a preparatory drawing such as that of Munich (or another similar one with the same function), it is conceivable to think that the present painting is the model of Vliet's print before being that of Visscher.

8.2 How to characterize these anomalies found in so many characters that prove that the present painting is the model of Vliet's print?

There are interrelated anomalies that strongly induce a change in composition and others which are usually generated by the copying process. Added to this is a graphic

misinterpretation of a model's detail and another of physical nature which is related to a brutal treatment of the wood panel before the engraved reproductions were made. All anomalies are visible and converge towards the hypothesis that Vliet's and Visscher's prints should have the same horizontal Rembrandt's original. Apart from the bad foreshortening of Philip's sleeve mentioned above which is autograph, there are several apparent stylistic clumsiness in the painting which come from the repeated bad retouching of the restorers on several movement zones of the boards often confused with non-autograph hands.

8.3 What are the anomalies that allow to reveal a change in composition from the painting to Vliet's print?

*Absent in the present painting, we can see anomalies of compositional nature that have the characteristic of showing manifest morphological irregularities in Vliet's engraving, others display only an illogical directional axis. They concern the eyes, the gazes, and inconsistent attitudes with the dramaturgy of the baptism of the eunuch. What is most characteristic among the anomalies is the severe *strabismus*, an eye disease, suffered by five characters in the eunuch's entourage. Professor Hoang Xuan Thanh, ophthalmologist at the American Hospital in Paris. He has rarely seen patients affected by such severe strabismus as he observed in Vliet's print.*



Strabismus variations in Vliet's print.

8.4 What kind of strabismus the eunuch's entourage would suffer in real life?

*The specialist determined the visual disease of each character: the archer is affected by an **exotropia**, (one eye turns out), the page bearing the eunuch's turban by an **hypotropia** (one eye turns in), the rider on the right side of the commander by **hypertropia** (one eye turns up), the second rider by an **esotropia** (one turns down while another out).¹ According to the specialist, in real life most of these personages would be permanently disabled and would need a technical and social assistance as a white cane or a guide dog.*

8.5 What consequences would the characters' handicaps have in Vliet's engraving?

Physically, in the engraving, the characters affected by this heavy disability cannot follow the baptism of their master. This is in addition to the fact that they also cannot lower the eyes nor the heads. It is different in the painting where they have normal eyes and look coherently to the main scene as it is in most depictions of Rembrandt's "entourages" following mythological or biblical scenes. In a horizontal composition, the characters could easily attend the ceremony as seen in Visscher's print in mirror image of the painting.

8.6 How does this set of anomalies change drastically the intelligibility of the subject treated by Rembrandt's original?

Mentally, these ocular deficiencies of the escort's members seem to go hand in hand with an inappropriate psychological attitude to the situation in which they were supposed to interact. Even if their heads were tilted, they seem to be so mentally and physically disabled that they would not be emotionally involved in the baptism ceremony. We can only feel compassion for these wretched people.



Characters with apparent mentally and physical disability.

¹ "Those who do not see this strabismus should definitely consult a specialist or they are in bad faith!" declared Pr. Hoang Xuan Thanh.

8.7 How does this handicap and the topographical position in the landscape not allow the eunuch's entourage to follow his baptism?

An armed escort should generally suggest force and deterrence. This is not how you feel when you look at the eunuch's entourage. Mental wandering consists of thoughts that are not related to the task or of lack attentional control over the action that takes place below. This behavior is acceptable in situations where vigilance is low, but it is unexpected here. Vigilance must be at the highest because the eunuch is in a position of vulnerability and the function of these horsemen is precisely dedicated to the protection of the eunuch, a high dignitary sent by the Candace Queen of Ethiopia. They are amorphous. Rembrandt would never have painted a team of incapable people to accompany a very important person.



Wretches faces of the page and the commanding horseman.

8.8 What appropriate attitude should be expected of the protagonists' entourage in Rembrandt biblical scenes?

The eunuch's entourage must be astonished by what is happening. The members must empathize with their master. In Vliet's engraving they seem indifferent while in Visscher's print and in the present painting, they are attentive and mesmerized by the ceremony before their eyes. This is most probably what Rembrandt wanted to represent as he did in many other Biblical stories.

8.9 Why would the commanding horseman not look at his master during his baptism ceremony?

He is on alert and looks straight into the eyes of the 'viewer/intruder' that we feel like we are in the painting while in the print, he seems lost, worried, and unhappy. He has lost his look of admonition that we have in the painting. The observation we can draw is that the entourage of the eunuch transposed by Vliet vertically is no longer a warrior entourage but a weak one. The engraver has transformed Rembrandt's valiant warriors into poor wretches.



The commanding horseman looks at the viewer. The eunuch's entourage looks intensely the baptism in the present painting, not in Vliet's print.

8.10 In some of Rembrandt's early paintings, it happens to see a figure looking into the distance, why should this be considered a mistake in Van Vliet's engraving?

Because it is not a single character who looks into the distance, but all the members of the escort who do not look at their master. It is not uncommon to see one character looking into a far distance or lost in thoughts in Rembrandt's paintings but in the other hand, we have never seen an entire armed entourage consisting of disabled people to defend 'a very important person' who look elsewhere. It is well known that Rembrandt depicts the poor and the disadvantaged but here is a nonsense. The whole entourage of the eunuch show inconsistent and senseless gazes, in the true sense of the word! Personages looking in all directions above or in front the main stage without seeing it, is unusual and unlikely in Rembrandt's biblical landscapes. It is understandable that the engraver copied too faithfully the characters that were in a horizontal composition and that by moving them as they are, their looks must be adapted to follow what happens to their master. Vliet did his best but failed. This is the source of the anomalies.



Simple-minded characters

8.11 Wouldn't this visual dispositive be voluntary built by Vliet himself?

This type of 'strabismic' dispositive is sometimes faithful to that of a real personage. Here, it is unlikely that Vliet will represent six people forming a guard with such severe strabismus. Here, Vliet does not reproduce the glances that Rembrandt

depicted in his original with figures that squint or diverge. Vliet tries to avoid a greater inconsistency than these anomalies we see: a total disjunction between the upper part of the engraving and the scene of the baptism.

8.12 Couldn't it be that Vliet's visual anomalies are in fact a ploy to catch the eye of the viewer, as some Renaissance painters did?

The paintings that deliberately destabilize the viewer by forcing him to search for his distance, his place in front of the work he is looking at, show other well-thought-out stratagems that Vliet does not use. He has no ploy like Jan van Eyck who had developed one for the *Portrait of a Man in a Red Turban* 1433 (NG London) or Petrus Christus for the *Portrait of a Young Woman* ca 1470 (Gemäldegalerie Staatliche Museen zu Berlin). They show the subject in concrete spatial surroundings, which adds a great deal to the immediacy of their appearance. Not a single character in Vliet's print looks at either the viewer or the baptism scene. The engraver only sanctuarized the gazes inside the image.

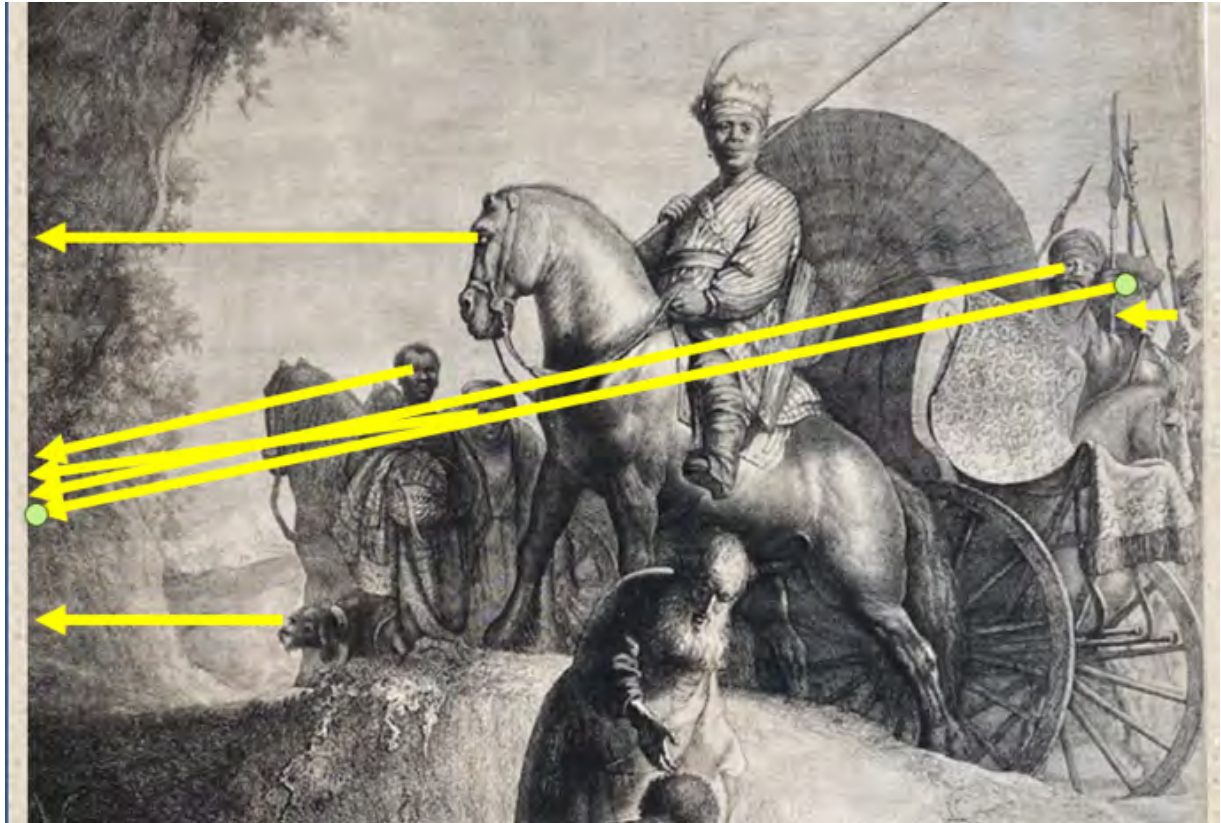


Portrait of a Man in a Red Turban 1433, *Portrait of a Young Woman* ca 1470, the servant and the archer in Vliet's print.

8.13 Why did Vliet make these imperfect corrections in the eyes of the eunuch's entourage?

According Jaco Rutgers, "Rembrandt was by far the better draughtsman and the more creative personality, and Van Vliet's abilities seem to have been limited overall." In his first Rembrandt's reproductive engraving, his goal was to opt of the "least of all evils." He managed to avoid univocal visual tropism of the entire eunuch's entourage from the right to the left side. In moving the glances as they are in the painting to the top of the print, the picture would inevitably lose the consistency of the picture mainly because the figures would look into the void.

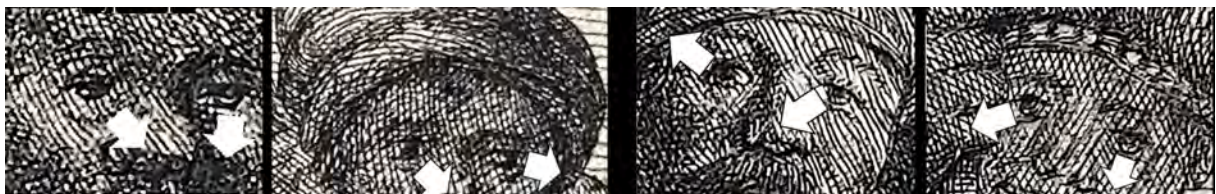
¹ Jan van Vliet and Rembrandt van Rijn: Their Collaboration Reassessed, *Jaco Rutgers*, Stephanie S. Dickey (ed.), *Rembrandt and his Circle. Insights and Discoveries*. Amsterdam University Press, 2017. P. 287. doi: 10.5117/9789462984004/ch15



The initial direct copy state before Vliet's corrections: 'Tropism of glances to the left.'

8.14 Is there any reason why Vliet displays this range of divergent strabismus?

Yes, in correcting every eye of each figure, Vliet followed a minimal logic to redirect the original eye directions. They are all turned towards the center of the picture. The sum of the corrections constitutes a system of interrelated ocular deficiencies and clumsy gazes, but it is conceived in a certain order. Therefore, on each side of the commanding horseman, the eye correction differs in relation with the position of the characters. There are two directions inside the image space, one towards the right for the servant and the archer and another towards the left for the three riders.



Strabismus variations in Vliet's print.

Some observers have noted these characterized strabismus, some in bad faith do not want to see them as anomalies and reject the logical deduction of the common cause. Because it all calls into question the traditional theory of a vertical model considered as the ultimate composition. Henceforth, this can no longer continue even if it is at the detriment of

their writings or interests. It has become a truism to note that the reality of an artwork imposes its truth much to the dismay of the “art-sophists.”



Vliet redirected the gazes inside the frame even if it is not satisfactory.

8.15 What is the common cause of the anomalies in Vliet's engraving?

The type of correction of the inappropriate eye direction entourage made by Vliet reveals one system based on the interrelationship of these anomalies. It suggests that the engraver proceeded to a mechanical change of composition from a horizontal model without the necessary adaptation to the new format. It is likely that the engraver first copied the figures as they are with the glances in their original direction from the right to the left. Moving the eunuch's entourage in one fell swoop might seem easy at first.



A simulation of the possible mechanical transfer made by van Vliet.

It turned out to be more complicated to correct the inevitable tropism of glances from due to the horizontal composition. As they were conceived on a horizontal plan, placed vertically, at the half top of the print, the characters were all looking to the left into the void. It would have been absurd to keep the glances that way. It is the reason why Vliet try to correct them.



At the origin, the gazes were turned to the main stage (left). Simulation of Vliet try to redirect them inside the engraving. The present painting, a possible Vliet's drawing, and the print without his corrections.

Failing, he attempted to make them less nonsensical whatever the poor result he obtained. With his corrections, the attitudes of the eunuch's entourage are not as bad as if the personages were investigating out of the frame as it was probably the case in his previous sketches. The system of anomalies after Vliet's corrections demonstrates that there has been a change in composition from a horizontal image such as that of the painting to a vertical picture such as Vliet's copy. The conclusion drawn from this observation is that Vliet copied Rembrandt's models with great fidelity, but that he was not able to make appropriate changes that require

initiative and a creative capacity. He should not only have changed the direction of the eyes, but rather changed the position of the heads of the eunuch's entourage by lowering them towards the baptism scene. That was another exercise.

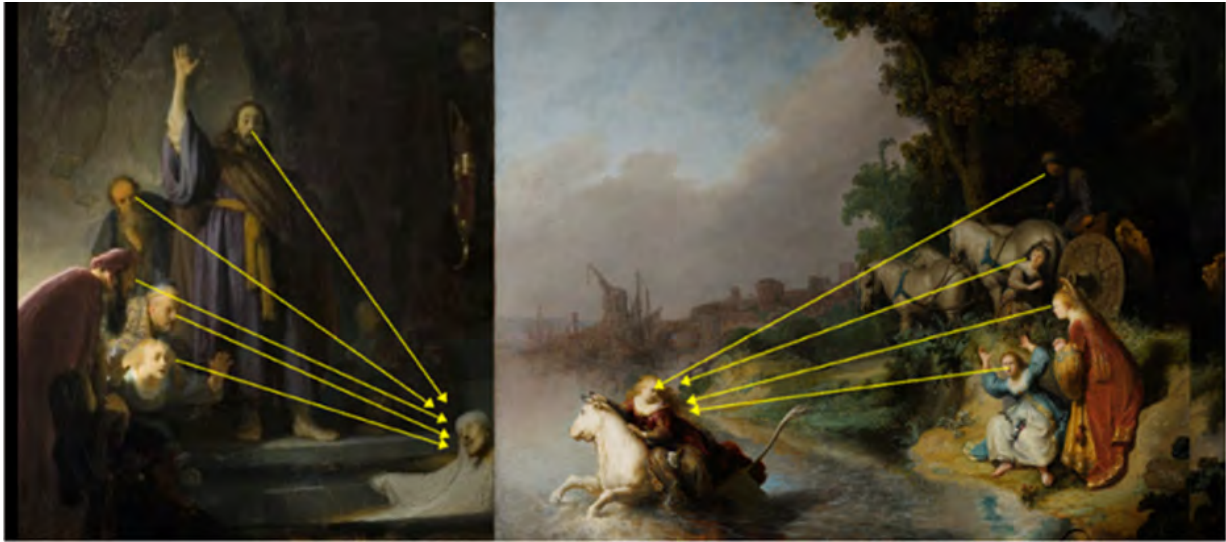
8.16 How does this discursive play of gazes in Vliet's print hinder Rembrandt's understanding of biblical history?

*The disconnected characters no longer constitute an entourage. In Vliet's print, the eunuch's entourage is a little troop located above the two protagonists. Not one of its members sees Philip or the eunuch or involved in the dramaturgy of the action. They are blinded. In most of this type of Rembrandt's landscapes, the main action is related to an entourage by a *jeu de regards*, exactly as it is depicted in the present painting in which the entourage is totally engaged. What is unrembrandtesque consists of the uselessness of this eunuch's entourage out of context.*



In the painting, at the exception of the commander, the entire eunuch's entourage is looking on the left to follow the baptism.

A similar theatrical glance mechanism of involvement is used in Rembrandt's mythological or biblical landscapes whatever the format. For example, in the vertical composition of the *Raising of Lazarus* 1630-1632, the entire entourage is mesmerized by the resurrection of Lazarus. The same set of glances is used in the *Abduction of Europa* 1632 (horizontal) and in many paintings and engravings etc. where all those around them are surprised and have their eyes attracted to what they can see or not from a distance.



The Raising of Lazarus 1630-1632, the Abduction of Europa 1632.

9 Unusual animal positions related to the change of composition:

9.1 What are the inappropriate positions of the animals that corroborate the horizontal conception of Rembrandt's model?

There are compositional anomalies without morphological deformities which are characterized by inappropriate behaviors. They do not need visual corrections. They were simply moved as they were originally in a vertical latitude. They concern two animals that seem strange because they have lost their original function. This inadequacy of the posture is due to the mechanical transfer of composition. The subject that the horse and the dog were looking at in the painting disappeared in Vliet's print. As they are secondary figures and they show their entire profile, Vliet did not have to correct the eyes or the glance, he just moved them as they were in the painted model losing the meaning of their behaviors.

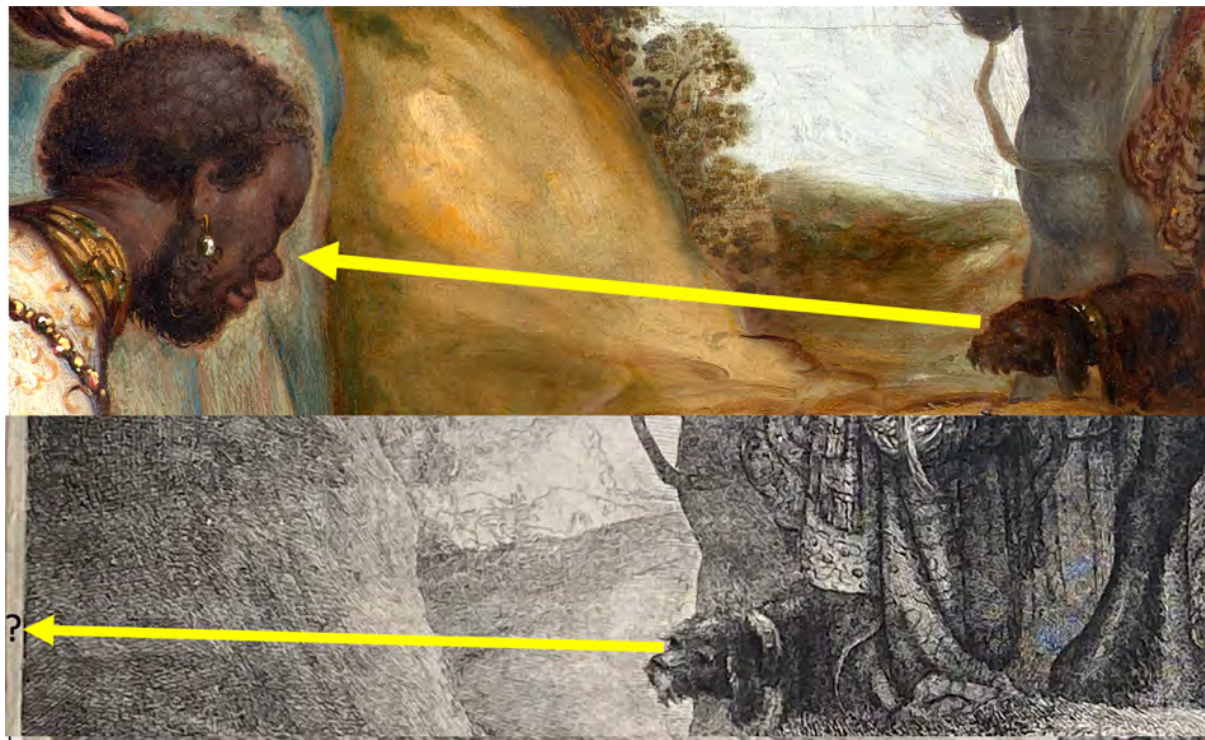
9.2 Why the position of the warhorse is inappropriate in the print?

In the print the warhorse is useless, it desperately looks into the void while in the present painting it stares in the same direction, but his look is meaningful and appropriate to the situation.



The horse increases the dramaturgy of the scene before it. It looks at Philippe with a suspicious eye and seems to be tracking his suspect or unexpected gestures. It is ready to attack him.

9.3 Why the position of the dog is inappropriate in the print?



In the print, the dog plays no role. Like the warhorse, the dog looks into the void. It is useless! In the painting, the *Andalusian water dog*, neck outstretched, and head lowered, chin to the ground, keeps completely still, thus joining the silence of the companions who witness the act of baptism, and the unique pairing of St Philip and the eunuch, transfused with grace and faith. The dog in the painting is not there for decoration. It has a personality, an instinct, an attitude, and a way of behaving whose function is to guide the viewer even in the smallest detail.

9.4 What is the iconographic anomaly that Rembrandt would never have allowed himself for his biblical landscapes?

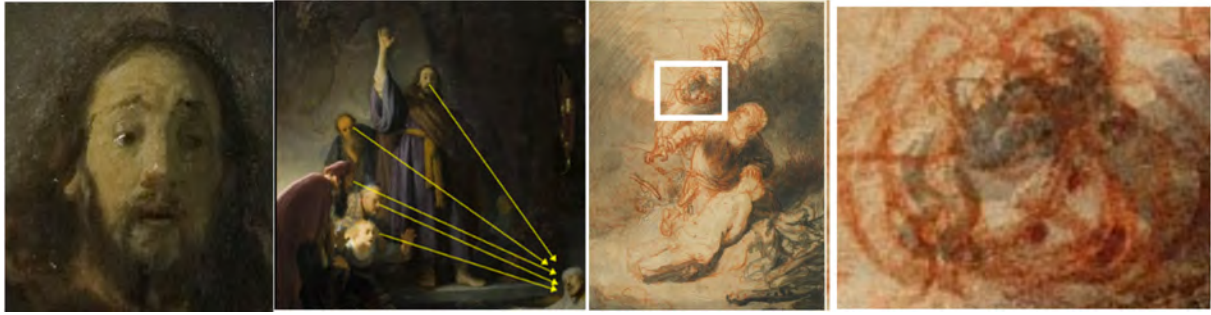
It is still a compositional anomaly with an unexpected juxtaposition, an incongruity that only the engraving presents: the genitals of the warhorse seem to touch the head of St. Philip. This is typical collateral damage of **the** reproductive engraving process. It supports the reality of a coarse change of composition and its perverse effects. It's hard to imagine Rembrandt doing this and ridiculing somewhat the dramaturgy of his interpretation of the baptism of the eunuch.



The horse's genitals of the commander touch the head of St. Philip.

9.5 What would Rembrandt have done to avoid all this Vliet's clumsy composition?

*When he copied the figures directly, Vliet did not make the necessary and sufficient adjustments. Instead of imperfectly retouching the eyes to maintain the gazes inside the picture, he should have achieved a more drastic transformation, by lowering the heads of the entourage down where Philip baptizes the eunuch. By modifying his original composition vertically, Rembrandt would have easily lowered the eyes or tilted the heads of the whole entourage towards the baptism scene. He did so in different ways with the *Raising of Lazarus* or in *The Angel Preventing Abraham from Sacrificing his Son*.*

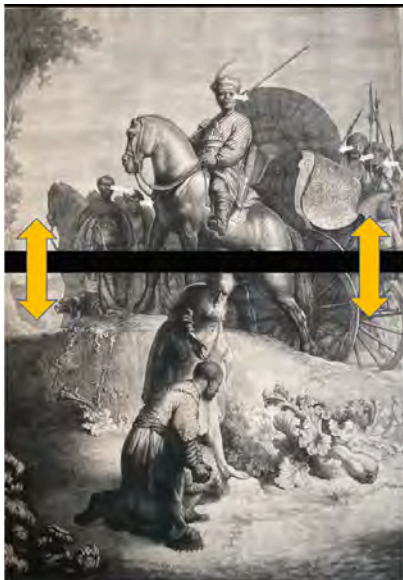


The Raising of Lazarus 1638, The Angel Preventing Abraham from Sacrificing his Son, Rembrandt 1634-1635. BM,

10 What undeniably shows that Vliet's print is a copy of this painting?

10.1 What in Vliet's engraving seems undeniably incompatible with Rembrandt's conception?

*What seems incompatible with a Rembrandt conception is the obvious dissociation of the image between its upper part and the baptism below. Seen from a distance, this break is not very noticeable and becomes a source of confusion. One must get very close to see it. When one approaches, the observers easily sees that all the members of the eunuch's entourage have their eyes awkwardly placed and that their gazes are scattered. In this condition, the entire eunuch's entourage cannot see the exceptional scene taking place below. By making *strabismic* looks, Vliet made his engraving acceptable when viewed from a distance.*



The entourage of the eunuch does not communicate with his master at all.

The top part of the print is dissociated from the scene of the baptism of the eunuch.

10.2 Why cannot this iconographical aberration be seen at first glance?

From a distance, it requires a minimum of attention to determine where the entourage's eyes are looking. However, without the need of magnifying glass, the evidence imposes itself on the viewers. Despite the efforts of the engraver, all the anomalies unequivocally indicate a rough mechanical transfer from a horizontal composition. As these features were designed for a horizontal plane, they cannot lower their heads to see their master is being baptized

when placed on a vertical one. In Vliet's print we get two dissociated pictures, two juxtaposed engravings, separated without any relationship.



10.3 What can we conclude from Vliet's mistake?

*It is inconceivable that Rembrandt painted an entourage of mentally and physically disabled personages to protect the high dignitary of the Queen of Ethiopia. On the contrary, one can imagine that in the painted model, the same characters looked at the main scene as is usually the case in the mythological or biblical story of Rembrandt. If we take the example of the present painting of *the Baptism of the Eunuch* at the exception of the commanding horseman and the white horse who look straight in the eye of the viewer, all the members of the entourage (humans and animals) look to the left with astonishment and great concern, where the baptism ceremony is taking place.*

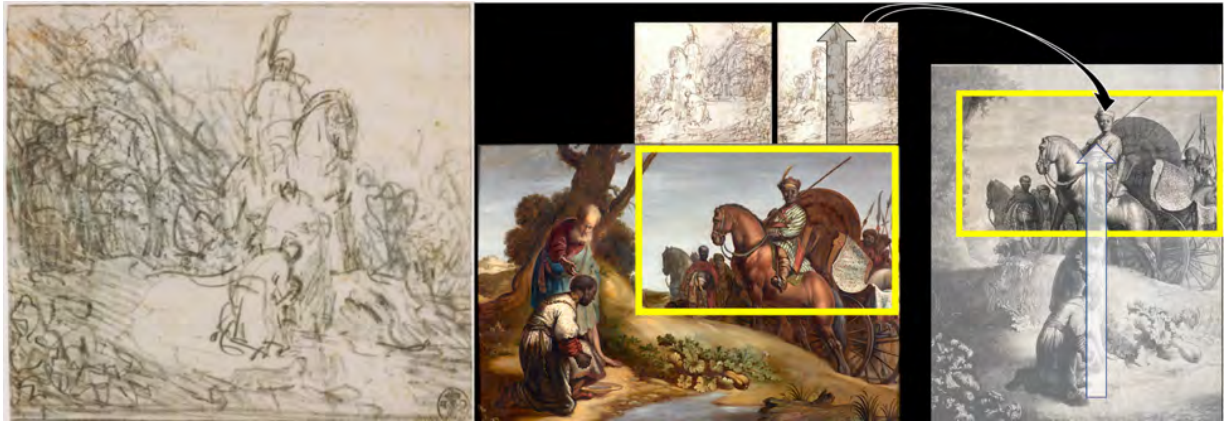


The entourage set of logical glances as it usually the case in Rembrandt's biblical landscape.

10.4 How the existence of the Munich drawing strongly suggests that the present painting that Rembrandt's original is horizontal?

The elements that corroborate the hypothesis of the change in composition from the horizontal painting to the vertical Vliet's reproductive engravings could be the hypothetical preparatory drawing of Munich. There is the hypothetic existence of the preparatory drawing of Munich or a similar one that would have been provided by Rembrandt to Van Vliet. It would have served as an indication only for the transfer of composition without suggesting a change in the

orientation of the heads of the eunuch's entourage in guidance with the move.



The present painting, Munich drawing C. 1630 and Vliet's print 1631.

10.5 Is the engraving of Visscher's the direct copy of the present painting?

*No! It is obvious that the engraving is in reverse of the present painting, the eyes and the gaze's directions of the eunuch's entourage are similar to those in the present painting, although their expressions differ in part. It is also obvious that Visscher copied the figures in Vliet's engraving but refrained from reproducing the terrible squint and their strange expressions. However, it would not be pertinent to say that the differences in composition make the painting inconceivable as a model. Visscher simply did it his way and followed his own interpretation of the biblical text which he inserted at the bottom of his engraving. This engraving is a significant for the original format but limited representation of the present painting. These borrowings from Vliet and from the painting may have been sufficient for him to feel justified in writing: "Rembrandt invent". If it were only a direct copy of Vliet's print, Visscher might not have dared to put this inscription, which is not an unequivocal proof. Gary Schwartz wrote that it is "worth at least a consideration that the model for the prints was not a hypothetical lost original by Rembrandt, but the existing painting here presented. In that case the adaptation from one format to the other would not have been performed by Visscher, from vertical to horizontal, but by van Vliet, the other way around."*¹

10.6 Is it conceivable that the present painting could have been before Visscher's eyes in 1650?

The chances that in 1650 Visscher had before him a painting from 1630 are small but the early production dates given by the museum curators is 1631, the same year of the creation of the present painting and Vliet's print. As Jan van der Waal suggested, it is likely that Visscher copied Vliet's engraving for the motifs and as Ger Luijten suggested, he could have asked one of his assistants to make a preparatory drawing in front of the present painting to copy the composition. Thus, Visscher easily copied

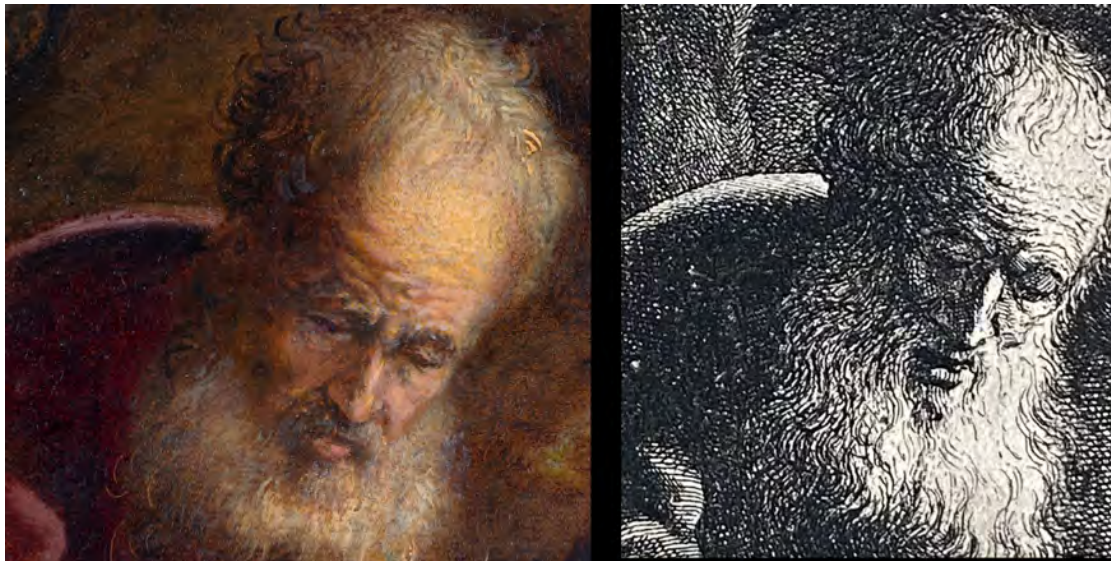
¹ A new *Baptism of the eunuch* invented by Rembrandt, p. 67.

the eunuch's entourage without repeating the morphological errors made by Vliet by copying the looks of the present painting. As the painting was created in 1631, it is reasonable to think that Rembrandt took the present painting with the other ones in Amsterdam and at the end of 1632, Visscher was able to execute his engraving of *the Baptism of the Eunuch*.

11 Questions about the change of composition:

11.1 How is the painted model of Vliet's print described by Ernst van de Wetering?

The head of the present painting corresponds coherently to the Old Man in a Cap and to Vliet's print as Ernst van de Wetering described: "There is probably other trace of the same painting: a rapidly painted head, done in broad strokes, of an old man bending forward."¹ By capillarity, the "Old Man in a Cap", whose authenticity is beyond doubt, is undeniably the model for Philip's head. The Old Man and Philip's head in the present painting and in Van Vliet's print, whose Rembrandt's invention is also not in doubt, look alike. The consistency in coarse style is obvious and noticeable even in Vliet's picture.



Philip's head in the present painting and in Vliet's print 1631.

Despite the print technique constraint, the engraver has faithfully reproduced Philip's head in the style of the present painting as it will do for the thirteen other paintings by Rembrandt. The change of style from "fine" to "coarse" is not arbitrary. It is linked to a different Rembrandt's purpose.

11.2 Doesn't the vertical composition seem more sophisticated and more in the manner of Rembrandt?

It seems not that sophisticated in comparison of Rembrandt's complex theatrical architecture. Vliet is attempting an aesthetic experiment, but this effort fails primarily because he depicts at least six ugly figures with an entirely inappropriate attitude. Each

¹ Ernst van de Wetering, *Rembrandt, A Life in 180 paintings*, Edit. Local World. Amsterdam. April 2008 p. 46.

composition has a different function. The existence of the more graphically sophisticated engraving does not tell the same story than the painting of a simpler composition. However, the horizontal told a story, and the vertical showed a more aesthetic representation at the expense of narrative quality. Rembrandt knew how to combine the narrative dimension with the aesthetic dimension, not Vliet. However, the relationship between the two Leiden based artist does not end to this first experience and this engraving of *the Baptism of the Eunuch* has contributed to spread his fame, whatever defaults it contains. Even today, hasty observers do not pay attention to the coherence of the story and Vliet's iconographical anomalies, remain admiring in front of this graphic spiral (yet interrupted) and do not imagine a horizontal model of Rembrandt as this engraving has become almost iconic of the relationship between Rembrandt and Van Vliet. "The collaboration lasted for about five years and resulted in at least eleven (probably thirteen) etchings by Van Vliet after Rembrandt," wrote Jaco Rutgers.¹ It should be noted that after *the Baptism of the Eunuch* all the models of Rembrandt chosen were strictly vertical.

Observation: The enthusiasm for a so-called "sophisticated spiral" composition falls back on the clumsiness that one would like not to see and that Visscher has seen and corrected thanks to the present painting. The vertical composition makes the narrative unintelligible. The eunuch's entourage no longer carries out its mission of protecting the master, as we see in the present painting or Visscher's engraving. As suggested by the Munich drawing or a similar one, the unique interest of this vertical composition is the alignment of the three characters in a single column, but this arrangement has led to unsightly anomalies, of which the most scandalous is the shocking juxtaposition of the sex of the warhorse against the head of St. Philip. Rembrandt would never sacrifice for a more graphical composition the understanding of a mythological or biblical story that is part of the pictorial tradition.

11.3 What nuance could be brought to Jan van der Waals' analysis that any visscher print is always copied from another engraving?

As and Jaco Rutgers pointed out, it seems that Visscher was copying by Vliet's figures such as Philip, the Eunuch and those of his entourage. However, in the case of the latter, Visscher was careful to avoid copying the strabismus and the nonsensical looks of Vliet's engraving, not shown in the painting. It is more complicated to reproduce brushstrokes than to lines of an existent engraving. Visscher used two references, one from Vliet's print for the lines and a horizontal model for the composition. It is evident to see that Visscher had not reproduced Vliet's compositional anomalies. He has avoided them because he had (or

¹ Jaco Rutgers, "Jan van Vliet and Rembrandt van Rijn: their collaboration reassessed," in: Stephanie Dickey, ed., *Rembrandt and his circle: insights and discoveries*, Amsterdam (Amsterdam University Press) 2017, pp. 285-304, pp. 296, 298.

one of his assistants) before him the visual reference of a horizontal model such as the present painting.



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

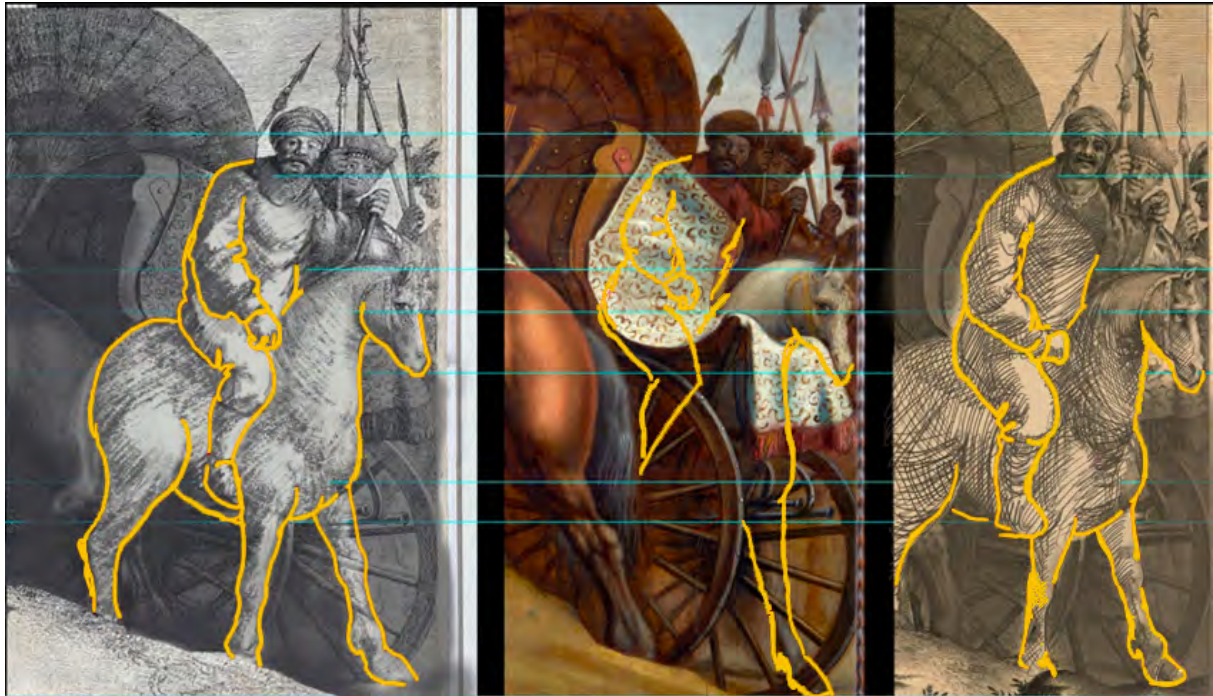
11.4 What would allow to assert with confidence that the present painting is this model?

In addition to the iconographical anomalies due to the change of composition made by Vliet, what makes it possible to affirm that the present painting is the model of Van Vliet's engraving are the set of visual traces of the copying process made from the painting. These are indisputable and revealing details. If we connect the visible traces of details coming from the horses hidden by the carriage in Vliet's engraving, we no longer obtain horses in Vliet and Visscher's prints, but ponies while in the painting the horses are in the right proportions. In the engraving, the riders have heads and bodies oversized compared to the horses, as a result, the latter become ridiculous; in the painting the heads and bodies are well proportioned, and the ratio of size riders/frames are right. It can be concluded that in the engraving, there are evident problems of proportions: riders have oversized heads in relation to their body and mount. These disproportions are one of the most well-known features produced by the copies.

11.5 What graphically shows that the present painting is both the model of Vliet and Visscher's prints?

Among many element, the disproportions easily prove that the current painting is the model of the two engravings. reconnecting the visible

details of the two horses and riders we obtain the real disproportions of these figures. In Vliet and Visscher's prints, the horses are too short appearing as donkeys with wrong proportions to their riders.



Vliet's print, the present painting and Visscher's print.

11.6 Why would the disproportions in Visscher's print come from Vliet's engraving?

As Jan van der Waals wrote, Visscher used to copy engravings is partially true and that is why we found the same disproportions of Vliet riders and their mounts, but worse. It is enough to connect the visible details of the two horses that protrude from the carriage to see the ridiculous representation of these figures.

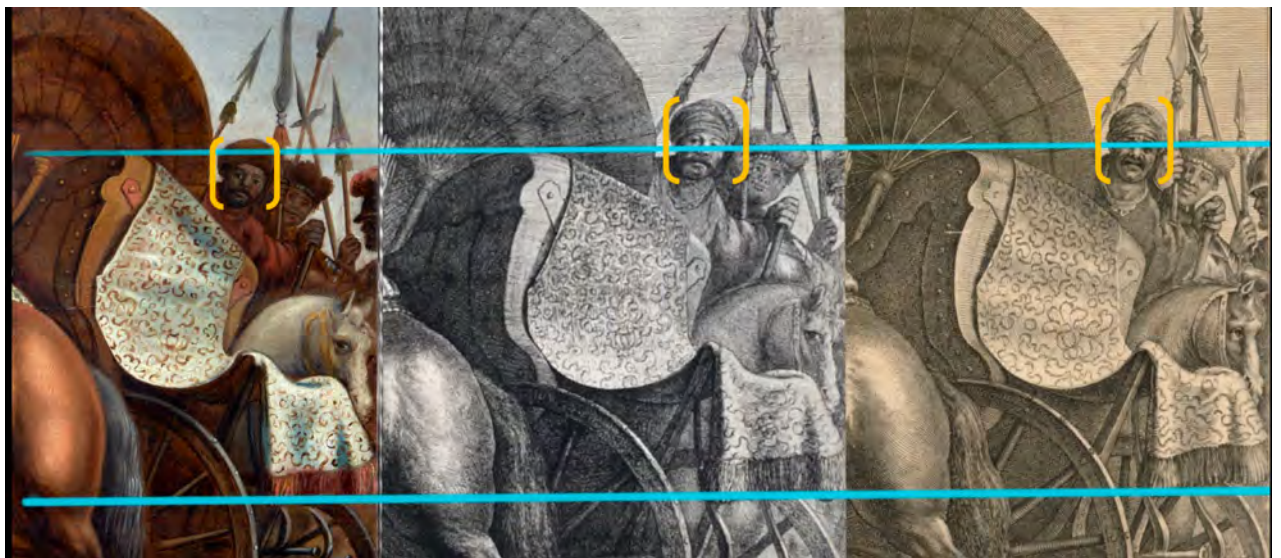


The disproportions for the second horse have the same cause and are poorer. Vliet did not have the global representation of the original to get the correct measurements and Visscher who copies the same figures (without strabismus) increases the disproportion of the fragmentary details. It reproduces the same confusion of Vliet on the emptiness and the full of the leg. The result of this error is that the horse does not have its feet on the ground. It's a levitating horse!



Visscher's partly hidden horse with horse toy proportions.

As the same causes have led to the same effects, we have also the rider's head decidedly oversized.



Normal head in the painting and oversized heads in Vliet and Visscher's prints.

11.7 Why the general assumption that there should be a vertical model of Vliet's engraving?

*To deduce that if the copy is vertical the model should be too, is a natural logic. But if we notice many anomalies related to each other as a system and that these are of compositional origin and that in addition, there is another engraving in a horizontal format without compositional anomalies also bearing the inscription "invented by Rembrandt", it might be worth to explore the possibility that there is possibly an original in horizontal composition. The fact that there are vertical versions engraved or painted altered that bear the same anomalies as those of Vliet's engraving suggest that they are altered copies of Vliet's engraving, reinforces the questioning of a vertical original. Then, a new hypothesis emerges, if the model of Vliet's engraving was vertical, the print would not show such obvious nonsensical compositional anomalies, nor an entourage made of disabled horsemen nor such disproportions of figures in the half top of the picture. While one should not doubt the inscriptions on Rembrandt's invention written at the bottom of the two engravings of different formats, it is appropriate on the other hand to think that the freedom of interpretation and execution taken by Vliet and Visscher from Rembrandt's original are different. None of the known painted copies can seriously claim to precede Vliet's engraving, and therefore none of them can be reasonably identified as the model made by the master. And this brings us to conclude that there just might not be any vertical modello. Taking seriously the inscription *Rembrandt invent*, the painting here presented is the most likely candidate to be the model Vliet and Visscher's engravings and Rembrandt's original.*

11.8 How would a vertical modello by Rembrandt be?

According to some historians, what bothers Defoer with the present painting is that Utrecht painting cannot be its model. His concern is since generally Rembrandt's early versions influence the following ones and show only evolutions as is the case of the engraving of 1641 compared to the present painting. This is not the case, Utrecht painting displays a too big difference, because the motifs are too far from his painting (as the one of Vliet's print) and especially the composition. With the same big differences in the motifs, Vliet's picture was only an engraving at least in the same format. He might have found acceptable, the present painting in vertical format. The appearance of this painting as a model calls into question the doubts that his painting is a pastiche as the RRP experts had originally thought.

11.9 What would a clever pastiche painter do to make a more credible model than the present painting compared to Vliet's engraving?

*He would have simply painted the present painting in a vertical composition as clumsily attempted the artist of the Kremer's painting. But Rembrandt has preferred to tell the story of *the Baptism of the Eunuch* as a fairy tale that can be read from left to right. He seems to have given Vliet the opportunity to make an aesthetically vertical composition.*



This painting would be different than a simple motifs move. A simple rearrangement of them in a vertical format as Vliet's print did would not be convincing. Rembrandt would never have executed it that way. He would have proceeded to a drastic adjustment to maintain a clear junction between the eunuch's entourage and the baptism that takes place under him. The eyes and heads would have been bent and turned to the solemn ceremony.

The image displayed is a simulation.

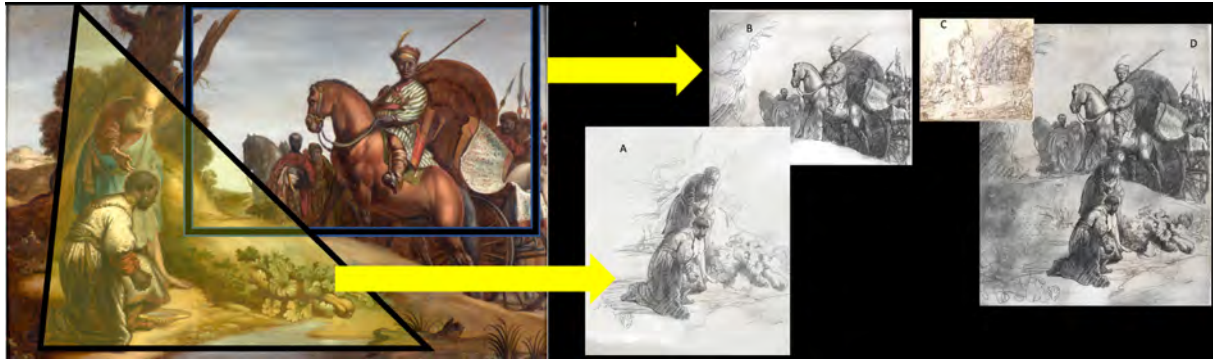
However, in reverse, a horizontal painting does exist and obviously corresponds to Visscher's engraving in more details and to 1641 Rembrandt 1641 in its natural extension.



Present painting 1631, Visscher print 1631-1635, Rembrandt's engraving 1641.

11.10 How did Vliet switch from intermediate drawing to achieve his vertical print?

Prof. Fernando García García thinks that to obtain the final engraved representation, Vliet used Rembrandt's drawing and made two drawings by himself one corresponding to Philip, the eunuch, another concerns the entourage of the latter that he superimposes one on top of the other in correct alignment. It results an apparent sophisticated representation of the image. However, Vliet sacrifices the narrative logic of the theme to this so-called spiral architecture, which provides an ambiguous representation of the theme, while in a horizontal composition, the biblical narrative can be read easily from left to right.



The Munich drawing could have been used by Vliet to transfer the composition from the painting. Superposition of both drawings in one.

First, Vliet did not act alone. Based on an indicative drawing provide by Rembrandt, Vliet followed the suggestions, but he needed more assistance for his first engraving.



While copying exactly as Philip and the eunuch are represented in the painting and move them to the bottom of the print was an easy process, it was a more challenging to place the eunuch's entourage above Philip without making mistakes.

For the lower part of the print, the two figures of Philip and the eunuch have only been moved horizontally without need of correction. They are not affected in their expression but the move of the eunuch's entourage to the top of the picture without prior adaptation of eyes and glances was a perilous operation for Vliet.

11.11 How were Rembrandt and Vliet able to collaborate on *the Baptism of the Eunuch* 1631?

“Indeed, Rembrandt was by far the better draughtsman and the more creative personality, and Van Vliet’s abilities seem to have been limited overall,” wrote Jaco Rutgers.¹ *It is therefore logical to understand that Vliet could have asked Rembrandt for help with his first engraving.* J. Rutgers states: “Rembrandt was closely involved and possibly provided Van Vliet with drawings”. The Munich drawing by Rembrandt or a similar one could play the role of an intermediary work that indicates how the engraver could modify the original composition to make an interesting vertical print based on his invention. J. Rutgers reiterates its view: “I do not assume that Van Vliet changed Rembrandt's picture considerably.” Van Vliet exercises very little freedom of interpretation by following the specifications on the drawing. The engraver did not take the initiative to create six bowed heads that could look at the main stage. He remains meticulously faithful to Rembrandt's original motifs as they are in the painting to the point of

¹ Jaco Rutgers, “Jan van Vliet and Rembrandt van Rijn: their collaboration reassessed,” in: Stephanie Dickey, ed., *Rembrandt, and his circle: insights and discoveries*, Amsterdam (Amsterdam University Press) 2017, pp. 287.

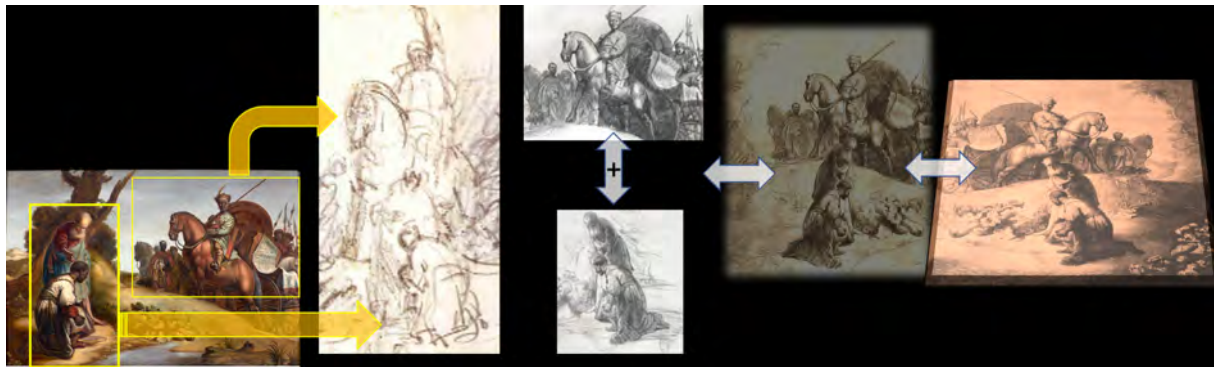
copying his typical clumsiness (the wrong foreshortening of Philip's arm) and generates iconographical anomalies.



The Baptism of the Eunuch c. 1630 by Rembrandt, Munich.

11.12 How did the Munich drawing or a similar drawing fit into the print design process?

The Munich drawing function of the Baptism of the Eunuch c. 1630 by Rembrandt concerns a change of composition. It could have been dedicated to Rembrandt's pupils or to Vliet himself. Whether it is this drawing or another similar, the engraver followed the indication by arranging the three main characters in a single column.¹ It shows once again that the freedom of the engraver remained limited. Vliet only moved two groups of the original image and placed them on top of each other to form a vertical composition.

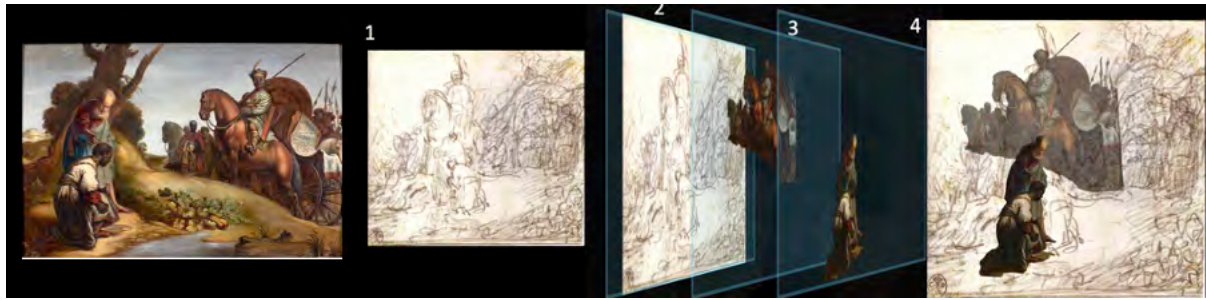


Simulation of plausible copying process from the painting to the plate.

11.13 How would this intermediate drawing serve as an authentication argument?

The existence of this drawing (or a similar one) and the articulation it suggests that Rembrandt's original was in a horizontal composition. It shows the research process of a change in composition: vertical format. This makes the statement at the bottom of the engraving 'invented by Rembrandt and made by Vliet' more explicit. This execution consisted of a change in composition.

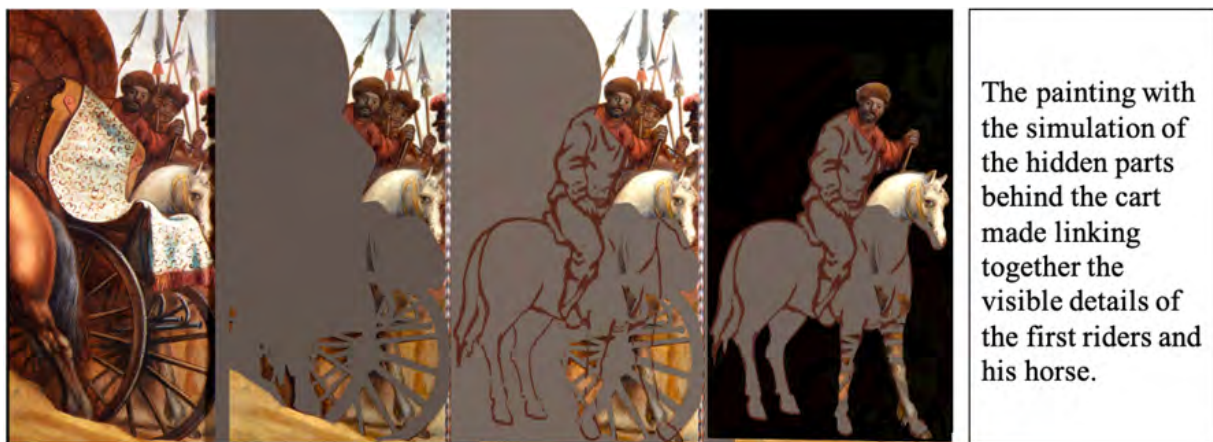
¹ In Rembrandt's engraving of 1641, there is a radically different arrangement: instead of a vertical column lining up the three figures, in the drawing there is a space separating Philip and the eunuch from the commanding horseman, as is also the case in the present painting.



12 Questions concerning the disproportions that help to identify the model of the engravings:

12.1 How is it possible to connect the hidden parts of the image to get an idea of the proportions?

The original artist is the one who elaborates the scene, composing the relationship between all of its parts. On the basis of the painting, the coherence between the visible parts and those that are not seen allow a possible hidden scene to be recreated. Simulations of the drawn silhouettes are based on visible details considered as graphic references. They are significant enough and in numbers to safely determine the original proportions from the painting and the prints. The “internal” drawing of the non-visible parts is not magical but a graphic projection from the visible. It allows to “read between the lines”.



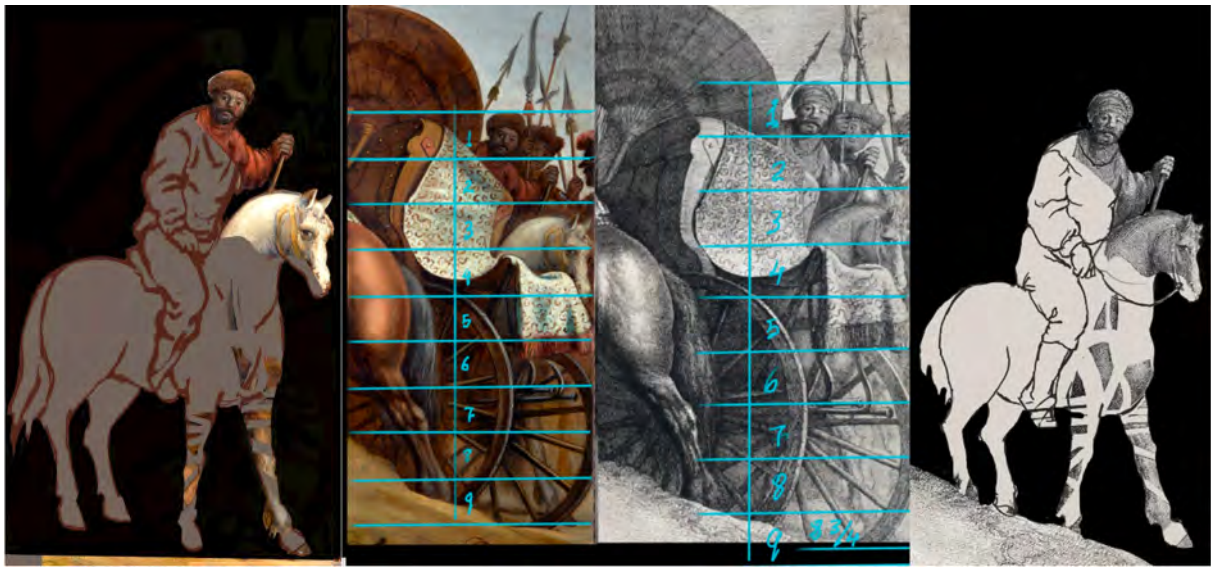
The painting with the simulation of the hidden parts behind the cart made linking together the visible details of the first riders and his horse.

12.2 Why the riders and the horses show disproportions?

The engraver has only a fragmentary perception of the original image. What is visible only in scattered details (a part of a horse's leg, the face of the riders etc.) does not give a precise idea of the holistic vision nor figures and their articulations between them. The engraver only reproduced what is visible without knowing the background partly hidden by the middle and foreground (the cart and the fabric). To make the image credible, the reproductive engraver needs a global knowledge of the elements that can be seen as well as of the parts that remain hidden. He needs to compose the relationship between all of its parts without the hidden parts of the picture to position the characters in space, as did the inventor of the image. This mental exercise is more complex for the artist who reproduced an image, and we know that Vliet has not such a great creative capacity.

12.3 Why reproducing a picture fragment by fragment often generates disproportions?

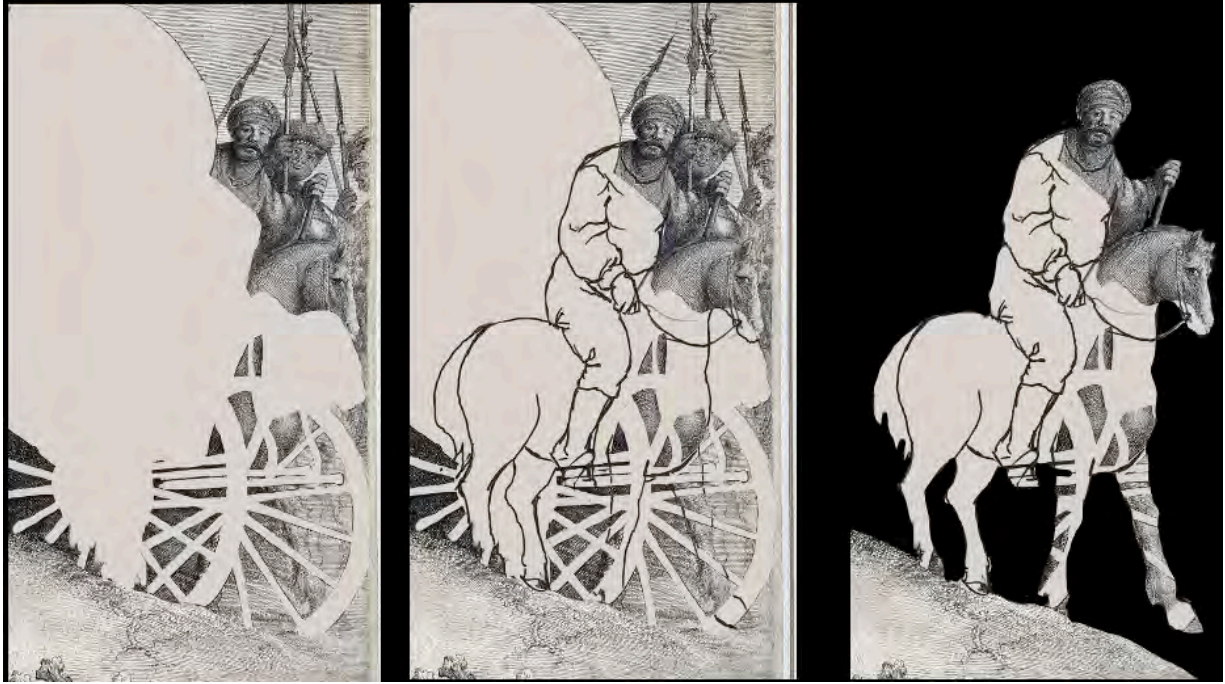
It was possible to connect the visual elements of the riders and horses between them to find the original matrix of the painting and to compare with the similar details that we see in the engravings. Making the front parts (horse and cart) a similar size, we find that the characters' heads are larger in the engravings than in the painting. If we make simulations based on the proportions of the painting (9 units from the rider's head to the white horse's leg) we find that the simulations are consistent in the painting. But if we compare the proportion of the model of the head in the engravings, we find that it is different and then we can observe and understand the disproportions.



Correct proportions in the painting, in the print the rider's heads are too large and the horse is too small horse.

12.4 What is the cause of these disproportions?

The disproportionate of the figures are evidently linked to a fragmentary process of reconstruction made by the engraver. This is typical of copies when the foreground partly hides the shapes of the figures in the background. The engraver copied fragment by fragment without having the original image in mind as designed by the painter. Vliet did not have the whole vision of the three riders and mounts in the background. They are largely hidden by the cart on the foreground. These disproportions are the proofs of which characterize the reproductive engraving and the correct proportions indicates the modello.



In Vliet's print, the riders seem to ride ponies and not horses as in the painting.

12.5 What makes the difference between a globally thought image and its reproduction?

To make the image credible, the artist needs a global knowledge of the elements that can be seen as well as of the parts that remain hidden. This is a fundamental difference between the conception of a “new” image and a recreation from an already given image. Mental composition of a scene without a previous image requires that the artist conceives in his mind a kind of “model” or three-dimensional diorama where he positions the characters in space, and that is why his vision is coherent.

12.6 Do you think it possible that Rembrandt could have made a horizontal model and a vertical model on the Baptism of the Eunuch and that both would be lost?

When Gary Schwartz wrote that “the arguments for regarding the present painting as van Vliet’s model are not to be denied” (p. 69). This conclusion is related to series of concrete documentations and observations. About the model for van Vliet being lost, the engraver made eighteen prints after paintings, fourteen by Rembrandt and four by Joris van Schoten, Jan Lievens and perhaps Pieter Fransz de Grebber. Even though van Vliet’s prints were well known and collected widely, all four paintings by the other masters are lost, as well as six (or now, five if we are right) of the Rembrandts. So, in theory, a researcher would have no reason to doubt that a Rembrandt served as a model for van Vliet and that, like most of van Vliet’s models, it has been lost.

13 Where does the hesitation about attributing to Rembrandt come from?

13.1 What is the origin of this hesitation?

It comes from two individuals who manipulated Ernst van de Wetering for their own converging interests. EvdW was finalizing the last volume of the RRP Corpus at the time of the inspection in December 2013. Too busy, he discreetly delegated it to Sancho Panza, a restorer from Alkmaar and Don Quixote from Utrecht. The former had no interest in recognizing the painting as a Rembrandt because he was working on another 'Baptism of the Eunuch' of the K collection, for which he claims that an oil sketch under the paint layer is Rembrandt's model for Van Vliet's etching. The other from Utrecht, being the glorious discoverer the so-called early 1626 version 'baptism of the eunuch', (which was doubtful from the beginning including for EvdW) did not want recognized the 1631 'baptism', which was known to have been lost, that could overshadow his reputation and call into question the attribution of his painting that is undocumented. What is frustrating is that the 1631 version is well documented by a preparatory drawing by Rembrandt before a change of composition for a vertical copy, two engravings of different sizes and is continued by a famous Rembrandt engraving from 1641. Both have launched a relentless smear campaign against the present painting. Historians have been approached personally, or indirectly, or by e-mail. Photos of the painting in its worst condition were attached to the letters showing parts of the joints not restored without filler and others covered with bad retouching. The intention was to suggest that the retouching was the work of the students. Naturally the text highlighted the difference in composition, problems of style and suggested that the present painting is a copy of Vliet's engraving.¹ EvdW wrote the report on these elements before seeing the image, based solely on the recommendations of Sancho and Quixote. He insisted on asking the owner for a photo before the live inspection because he could not mention the stolen images by Sancho.² However, EvdW changed his mind about the painting, but too late, he was too sick to write a complete report, he wrote a small line in an email to express his opinion, and asked the owner to show the complete study to Sancho who used this opportunity to assist him in all his last attribution queries (no comment about the cynicism). The historian died. The Cervantine controversy of the picaresque couple Sancho and Don Quixote shows the visual deficiency in front of the facts (e.g. the non-recognition of Vliet's iconographic anomalies) and the systematic malice against the painting.

¹ A copy of an email addressed to a very known historian is at disposal.

² A copy of this photo is available, the original of the RPP is still in possession of the restorer.

This attack can be easily neutralized by the convergence of strong and relevant arguments in favor of a full attribution to Rembrandt. *It should be possible to find agreement among three or four Rembrandt specialists in the face of objective observation (that will differentiate Rembrandt's hand from the bad restorers) to free the others from underhanded manipulation and indirect intimidation. The pictorial and scientific reality linked to academic publications (and other media) will anyway overcome this subterfuge of the two burlesque protagonists and will finally allow the rediscovery of Rembrandt's Baptism of the Eunuch of 1631.*

13.2 Where would be the traces of Rembrandt's studio?

There is none! With meticulous observation, the presumed participation of Rembrandt's workshop gives way to the traces left by the most and least experienced restorers. It is easy to identify the zone where brushstrokes of different hands were active. This requires sustained observation to dissociate them. There are all without exception located in the repair areas at the joints of the boards and all are from the restorers. Apart from Rembrandt's hand there is no trace of the known assistants or the workshop. We were chasing them without result. It is very common to confuse between crude restoration work and the hand of a pupil in Rembrandt's workshop. In the case of the present painting, paint losses have led some experts to declare that it must have been made partly by the workshop; however, our research has allowed us to understand that its weak areas are the very same areas in which the joints between the boards had moved and disrupted the image. These are traces accumulated by restorers who have succeeded one another over time with more or less good skills to palliate the consequences of the movement of the boards. The presumed brushstrokes of the workshop sound without any doubt possible to be those of mediocre successive restorers.

13.3 Was the option to attribute this work to Rembrandt and the workshop legitimate as "provisional conclusion"?

The option to attribute this work to Rembrandt and the workshop was legitimate as "provisional conclusion" in relation with the damages impacts on the wooden support not perceived as such and not well repaired and restored and with the absence of in-depth research as has just been realized. The new insights allow us to evolve towards a conclusion that this painting was rapidly executed by Rembrandt himself without the participation of the studio. This restrictive attribution is dispelled in the light of the understanding of the compositional anomalies and disproportions found in Vliet's engraving and the discovery of the main point of attraction such as the patch of baptismal light on the head of the eunuch and the original inscription of this work in the pictorial tradition of the theme throughout the centuries.

*Observation: Gary Schwartz wrote: “Nothing in the painting suggests that it was made by more than one hand. Regina Costa Pinto detects Rembrandt’s brushwork in the painting [...]”*¹

13.4 Why the theory that the present painting would be executed by Rembrandt and his workshop is no longer appropriate?

The number of elements who play on the style are less substantial than it seems and the arguments in favor of an attribution are more tangible. Gary Schwartz: “There is indeed a good chance that the painting was done by Rembrandt”. However, it just inspires hesitation to some researchers in its current state with the multiple uncorrected restoration’s mistakes, the apparent pentimenti and the panel injuries. Their detection and specification require time that only a full-time person can provide in one or two months. This fuzzy impressions and the hesitations are overcome and compensated by the many interwoven objective arguments. By the end the specialist(s) armed with the new insights will have the satisfaction “to be the discoverer a lost painting that all the world would accept with few minor exceptions”. The theories of Kremer palimpsest and the ones that the present painting would be a copy of Vliet's print or of Visscher's prints are proven baseless. Theories are biodegradable under the effect of plural discoveries. It is that controversies, far from being vices, are necessary for the progress of sciences and arts. I am grateful for the contradictory comments of the artists-sophists, and the wise judgments of the Rembrandt scholars that allowed me to find the path of truth for this interesting painting.

¹ Gary Schwartz, *A Rembrandt Invention: a new Baptism of the Eunuch*. p.77. Primavera Per, Leiden 2020