



Fernando García-García, Professor of the Department of Drawing in the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Seville, is the principal investigator for the project entitled: *RESEARCH, STUDY, AND INTERPRETATION OF DRAWING MODELS FROM THE WORK OF REMBRANDT FOR THE REINTEGRATION OF SIGNIFICANT LOSSES IN A PAINTING OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY*, managed by FIUS (Foundation for Research at the University of Seville), and provides the conclusion of this project with following report:

During the research process a study of the drawing traces in the painting *The Baptism of the Eunuch*, owned by Mr. Bernard Allien and dated around 1630, was carried out, with the aim of providing a reintegration of the fragments lost by the deterioration of the painting's support, which were found mainly in the areas of union between the three boards that make up the painting. For this reconstruction, paintings, engravings and drawings contemporary to the aforementioned painting were studied, which were made by Rembrandt on the same theme, along with models that are repeated in different works, in order to make a reconstruction proposal based on the traces marked by the original brushstrokes that are preserved without alteration in the painting.


A thorough comparison of the original preserved parts of the face of the character of St. Philip has been made with the existing engravings of the same subject made by Van Vliet and Visscher, and with paintings and drawings of the same model, noting that these traces coincide to a large extent with the brushstrokes from the same hand of the model portrayed in the painting *Head of an Old Man in a Cap*, by Rembrandt ca. 1630. Therefore, this reference has been used for the reconstruction of the lost parts, finding significant coincidences in the wrinkles of the forehead and the lower part of the face.¹

In addition to this obvious coincidence found in the reintegration of the face, as a result of this study there are several indications that invite us to conclude that the painting studied is the model for the aforementioned engravings by Visscher and Vliet, and not vice versa:

1. In the engravings we find the image of a soldier in the group of riders observing the scene which has been cut longitudinally. This longitudinal cut is rare in pre-photographic compositions; however, it is found in both engravings, which suggests they were copied from a model that had been

¹ Rembrandt *Head of an old man in a cap*AC. 1630 Panel, 24.3 x 20.3 cm, Kingston, Ontario, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 46-031

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similarly cut. In the painting we studied, there is a cut made in the wood (validated by the restorer of the wood panel of the painting Jonathan Graindorge Lamour) which cuts the same soldier in the same direction. The painting was cut after it was painted, and the engravings reproduce the cut because they were made later.

2. In the engravings, negligent disproportions can be observed in the secondary characters and in the horses which are partially obscured by elements such as "the chariot". This is a common mistake when copying elements from an image to a drawing without awareness of the entire scene. The image is copied part by part without consideration of the invisible elements. The engravers have neglected these proportions, and deformations can be observed in the layout of the horses and half-hidden riders that do not exist in the painting, since the painter of the painting was aware of the totality of the scene. This suggests that the groups of the painting are original since they show a correct drawing in which the hidden elements properly correspond to the visible ones, while in the engravings there are obvious confusions, in the proportions of these hidden elements. There is even a lack of coincidence between the legs of the horses that do not correspond harmoniously with their upper parts. The engravers confused the legs with empty spaces because they only attended to the copy of the limits when moving the drawing of the groups. This also confirms that the engravings are copies of the painting, and not the other way around, since it is absurd to think that a copy could improve the proportions observed by the reference model.
3. It is also absurd that in a copy regrets (pentimenti) like those we observe in the branches of the tree in the painting should be found, since if it is a copy there is no "trial and error", but clear and immobile outlines. The freshness and ease of the brushstrokes, with characters sketched with masterful and agile brushstrokes, also give the impression that they belong to an original painting "a la prima", something which is very difficult to imitate in a copy. In addition, the expressiveness of these brushstrokes and the vividness of the the characters' expressions is superior to the that of the same characters in the engravings.
4. There are also indications that the painting served as a model for the two engravings which are evidenced by the consequences of a "recomposition" in order to convert the original horizontal composition into a vertical one for Vliet's engraving. We can deduce this from the interplay of the gazes of

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the characters in the group of riders. In the painting the gazes of the characters are coherent, looking at the main scene and the viewer. However, in the engravings the gazes are divergent and meaningless, and this is a result of the engraver having copied the group in a different position from the original due to the requirements of the change of composition. Rembrandt's c. 1630 drawing of Munich may have been used as a sketch to indicate to the engraver the "recomposition" from the painting.

In conclusion, we can state categorically that, in general, the painting is homogeneous and coherent, to a greater extent even than the engravings, which indicates a superior quality in the execution of the whole. However, the joints between the boards have undergone unfortunate restorations during the material history of the work. Some of the details of these restorations have remained because they do not affect the reading of the painting: they coincide with insignificant parts and have been treated with less expertise by the restorers compared to the clearly original parts of high pictorial quality. There are therefore parts of lower quality in the work, but there is no evidence that these are original, since they coincide with areas affected by successive restorations. In the recent intervention advised by our project, the previously restored parts that do not affect significant areas have been maintained, but changes have been proposed in the areas affected by the deterioration that distorted the vision of the whole, such as the head of Saint Philip or the parts of the horse's head that had been deformed by previous poorly executed restorations.

Furthermore, in the course of this process, the above-mentioned evidence was observed with regard to the certainty that this painting appears to be technically in the same hand as that of the *Old Man in a Cap* by Rembrandt and that it is the model for the engravings rather than a copy of them. This evidence is fully consistent with the inscriptions on the engravings *RH v. Rijn inv. JG.v. Vliet fec. 1631, Rembrandt invent. and CIViſcher Excudebat.*

For the record, this report was signed in Seville on January 23, 2023.

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