



Minerva in Her Study

Rembrandt van Rijn
(Leiden 1606 – 1669 Amsterdam)

1635

oil on canvas

138 x 116.5 cm

signed and dated in dark paint, centered along
left edge: "Rembrandt. f 1635"

RR-107

Currently on view at: The National Museum of
China, Beijing



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In this imposing masterpiece, Minerva looks up from her large folio and gazes out toward the viewer as though some distraction has interrupted her quiet concentration on the text. Golden light illuminates her powerful face with wide-open eyes and alert expression, as well as the long, flowing blonde hair cascading onto her shoulder. Her regal appearance is enhanced by the laurel wreath crowning her head, her pearl necklace, and the heavily embroidered cloak draped over her shoulders. Beneath the cloak is an ample blue garment tied with a knotted blue sash over a light gray skirt and a white shirt. In the background are more volumes, a globe, a golden helmet on a draped piece of fabric, a spear, and a large shield with the Gorgon's head hanging from a column.

As one of the main Olympian deities, Minerva had various functions and attributes. She was the virgin goddess of war, but unlike her counterparts Mars or Bellona, she was neither belligerent nor cruel. Her inventive strategy led to victory and she was therefore, paradoxically, also the goddess of peace. She was also the goddess of wisdom, art, poetry, medicine and crafts, especially those of spinning and weaving. Rembrandt van Rijn was fascinated with biblical and mythological subjects such as Minerva, and he firmly believed that depictions of them and their stories comprised the most significant of all genres of painting. This principle, shared by collectors, theorists and painters alike, lay at the very core of Dutch humanistic traditions. Throughout his career, Rembrandt's history paintings stand apart from those of other Dutch artists because of his ability to convey human feelings and emotions to gods and goddesses, and mere mortals from the Bible and mythology. In the mid-1630s, shortly after Rembrandt moved to Amsterdam, he radically transformed the style and focus of his history paintings, executing works such as *Minerva in Her Study* at a scale and with a visual power unprecedented in the Netherlands. It is not certain what motivated him to paint in such an imposing manner after he left Leiden, but probably he sought to emulate and even compete with the achievements of Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1641), then universally recognized as the greatest history painter of the day.

As with Minerva, Rembrandt's goddesses and heroines of the 1630s share her statuesque appearance and have similarly full, blushing faces with heavy eyelids. It is not surprising that they were all at some time believed to portray Saskia van Uylenburgh, whom Rembrandt married in

Comparative Figures



Fig 1. Attributed to Ferdinand Bol, copy after Rembrandt's *Minerva in Her Study*, ca. 1636, pen and brush in gray ink, black chalk, 257 x 202 mm, Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-T-1975-85



Fig 2. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Flora (Saskia van Uylenburgh in Arcadian Costume)*, 1635, oil on canvas, 123.5 x 97.5 cm, National Gallery, London, Bought with contributions from The Art Fund, 1938, inv. NG4930, © National Gallery, London / Art Resource, NY

the summer of 1634. For example, when *Minerva in Her Study* was auctioned in London in 1924 it was titled *Saskia as Deborah* (see Provenance).^[1] It seems more probable, however, that Rembrandt here portrayed an idealized face; he used this type years before his marriage, when Saskia was still living in Friesland and therefore was unavailable to model for him extensively.

The painting has long led a secluded life, receiving relatively little attention from Rembrandt specialists and the general public until the beginning of the twenty-first century. The earliest records of its existence date to the first half of the eighteenth century, when it was in the possession of the earls of Somerville in Scotland. It remained in that family until it was auctioned in London in 1924 after the death of Lady Louisa Harriet Somerville (1835–1923).^[2] It then entered various private collections in Europe and Japan (see Provenance), making only rare appearances in Rembrandt exhibitions in Amsterdam (1956), Bordeaux (1960), and Japan (1992). This relative anonymity changed in 2001 when, after its inclusion in the exhibition *Greek Gods and Heroes in the Age of Rubens and Rembrandt* in Athens and Dordrecht,^[3] the painting was bought from its Japanese owner by Otto Naumann and Alfred Bader. After the removal of thick layers of yellowed varnish, *Minerva in Her Study* was presented at the Maastricht Art Fair in 2002.^[4] The Leiden Collection acquired the painting in 2008.

Probably because it was so rarely on view before 2002, *Minerva in Her Study* played a relatively modest role in earlier publications on Rembrandt. Its attribution to Rembrandt was sometimes doubted, and it was even proposed that the painting was the result of a collaboration between Rembrandt and his pupil Ferdinand Bol (1616–80).^[5] The latter suggestion was based on the existence of a faithfully drawn copy of the composition signed “F. Bol” (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) (**fig 1**). Although the signature is probably false, Bol likely made this copy shortly after he entered Rembrandt’s studio in 1636.^[6] Comparable albeit more skillfully drawn copies attributed to Bol also exist of the Rembrandt’s *Flora* (*Saskia van Uylenburgh in Arcadian Costume*) of 1635 (National Gallery, London) (**fig 2**) and his *Standard-Bearer* of 1636 (private collection, Paris).^[7] The production of drawn copies after the works of the master was a common workshop practice. Rembrandt, according to a handwritten note of ca. 1636, sold painted copies of a *Flora*, *Abraham [’s Sacrifice]*, and a



Fig 3. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Bellona*, 1633 oil on canvas, 126 x 96.5 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Friedsam Collection, Bequest of Michael Friedsam, 1931, 32.100.23, www.metmuseum.org



Fig 4. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Artemisia (or Sophonisba?)*, [also known as *Judith at the Banquet of Holofernes*], 1634, oil on canvas, 143 x 154.7 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid, inv. P02132



Fig 5. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of Saskia in the Guise of Flora*, 1635, oil on canvas, 123.5 x 97.5 cm, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Scala /

Standard-Bearer by Bol and two fellow pupils.^[8]

Questions about the painting's attribution ended in 1989 when the Rembrandt Research Project asserted that the painting was a "wholly autograph work from 1635."^[9] In making its determination, the Project's authors noted the signature, "Rembrandt. f. /1635," is similar to those in Rembrandt's *Ganymede* (Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden) of the same year and the *Standard-Bearer* of 1636.^[10] Examination of the canvas support, moreover, confirmed that *Minerva in Her Study* was painted on the same bolt of linen as other paintings executed in Rembrandt's studio in the mid-1630s. For example, the structure of the weave of its canvas and a weaving fault (about 20 cm to the left of the right edge) are identical to those of the canvas used for *Belshazzar's Feast* of ca. 1635 (National Gallery, London) and a workshop version of *Abraham's Sacrifice*, dated 1636 (Alte Pinakothek, Munich). Although this observation does not confirm that *Minerva in Her Study* was executed by Rembrandt himself, it firmly places the painting within the master's workshop.^[11]

Stylistically, the painting relates to a group of single-figure, nearly life-size history paintings of goddesses or heroines from antiquity that Rembrandt made between 1633 and 1635, which, with the exception of *Minerva in Her Study*, are all in public collections. These include the war goddess *Bellona*, 1633 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) (**fig 3**),^[12] *Artemisia* (or *Sophonisba*?), 1634 (Museo del Prado, Madrid) (**fig 4**),^[18] *Flora* (*Goddess of Spring and Flowers*), 1635 (Hermitage, St. Petersburg) (**fig 5**), and *Flora* (*Saskia van Uylenburgh in Arcadian Costume*), 1635 (National Gallery, London).^[19] These exceptional three-quarter-length figures show Rembrandt's particular interest in creating strong three-dimensional effects during the mid-1630s. He achieved plasticity by contrasting a brightly illuminated figure against a dark background, by juxtaposing contrasting textures such as soft fur or hair with shiny metal or embroidery, and by opposing cool and warm colors.^[20]

The evolution of Rembrandt's approach in these works is revealing. The figure of *Bellona* is somewhat formidable in appearance and shows weaknesses in execution, but it is the first instance in which Rembrandt developed this interest in strong three-dimensional effects.^[16] *Flora* (*Saskia van Uylenburgh in Arcadian Costume*) of 1635 is more successful as a work of art as Rembrandt executed it with assured brushstrokes and

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Fig 6. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Minerva in Her Study*, ca. 1631, oil on panel, 60.5 x 49 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. 828c, © Foto: Gemäldegalerie der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Fotograf/in: Jörg P. Anders



Fig 7. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Minerva in Her Study*, 1652, pen and brown ink, brown and white wash, 190 x 140 mm, Six Collection, Amsterdam

a subdued palette of cooler and warmer tints. Moreover, in that work he placed the brightly illuminated figure against a dark background to create a strong suggestion of depth. Most comparable to *Minerva in Her Study* is *Artemisia* of 1634. Both paintings depict an opulently dressed blonde woman seated at a table and looking up from the book she is reading. Both of these dramatically lit figures are set off against a dark background and share a similar subtle color scheme of creams and grays and a relatively bold handling of paint.

In depicting Minerva reading in her study with her arms and armor literally cast aside, Rembrandt focused on her role as goddess of wisdom and patron of the arts.^[17] Already in 1631 he had used this unusual iconography in a small panel painting *Minerva in Her Study* (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) (fig 6).^[18] Here she is likewise represented in a cloak, her blonde hair crowned with laurels, and seated at a table with attributes of erudition and music: books, a globe, and a lute. Arms and armor, a shield, and a helmet hang on the wall in the background. This painting was listed as early as 1632 in the collection of the stadholder Frederik Hendrik in The Hague.^[19] The subject of the painting was apparently unclear to the compiler of the inventory, as he believed it to represent “Melancholy, in the form of a woman sitting on a chair at a table on which are books, a lute and other instruments.”^[20] As in the Leiden Collection painting of 1635, the seated woman must represent Minerva because of the presence of the shield with the Gorgon’s head in the background.

Closely related, both in composition and iconography, are two works of around the same date, one by an unknown pupil (Mauritshuis, The Hague),^[21] and one attributed to Isaac de Jouderville (ca. 1612–48) (Denver Art Museum).^[22] It appears that Rembrandt’s painting in Berlin served as the iconographical prototype for variations made by members of his Leiden studio. When Rembrandt revisited the subject in 1635, he followed this same iconographical schema but made significant changes to the composition. First of all, he enhanced Minerva’s physical presence by depicting her close to the picture plane and greatly enhanced the painting’s monumental effect with its large scale. In the illuminated foreground he depicted embroideries and other objects in great detail compared to those in the dark background, which he executed more cursorily. Instead of a red robe, he dressed the goddess in cooler

monochrome blues and grays that further enhance the strong three-dimensional effect of the image.

Minerva's long, flowing hair points to her virgin state; the fact that she is crowned with a laurel wreath, however, is unusual. Traditionally, Minerva's attribute was an olive branch. Laurel was the plant dedicated to her half-brother, Apollo, and laurel wreaths were generally attributes of poets ("laureates") or victorious conquerors. It is feasible that by gracing Minerva with a laurel wreath of victory and by dressing her in rich clothing with her arms and armor cast aside Rembrandt intended to show her foremost as a goddess of erudition and peace. Only peace will provide the stability and prosperity under which scholarship and the arts can flourish.^[23]

Rembrandt's choice to revisit the theme of the peaceful Minerva might have been related to the political situation of the Dutch Republic at that time. In 1635, the same year that Rembrandt completed this painting, the States General, under the leadership of Frederik Hendrik, decided that the Dutch Republic should join forces with France and invade the Southern Netherlands as part of its ongoing revolt against Spain. Amsterdam regents, however, objected strongly to this military intervention, since such an invasion could have led to the reopening of the River Scheldt, which would have greatly benefited Antwerp's economic situation at Amsterdam's expense. It seems probable that Rembrandt's depiction of Minerva as the goddess of war who turns away from her arms and armor to focus on peaceful and scholarly pursuits would have appealed to Amsterdam's regents.^[24] Alternatively, Rembrandt may have had in mind as a possible buyer one of the city's erudite regents who had founded the "Athenaeum Illustre," or the Illustrious School, in 1632.^[25]

The general popularity of this goddess of wisdom within the circle of learned Amsterdam regents is demonstrated by the pen and wash drawing Rembrandt made of Minerva in her study in 1652 for the *album amicorum* (friendship album) of the classically cultivated connoisseur Jan Six (1618–1700) (**fig 7**).^[26] Rembrandt, who knew this merchant, poet and burgomaster as a friend and business partner, depicted Minerva seated at a desk before a window in her study, decorated with draped curtains and a bust. He represented her in the act of writing and, just as in his painting of 1635, depicted her shield with its Gorgon's head. Her lance and helmet



hang on the wall next to her desk. For the learned humanist Jan Six, thus, Rembrandt also chose to emphasize the peaceful character of Minerva.

Rembrandt's *Minerva* places the artist decisively among those who turned to the humanist ideal. His unconventional depiction of a friendly, erudite, and peaceful Minerva can be viewed in the context of Amsterdam's culture and politics of the 1630s, and is a powerful expression of a painter with learned ambitions.

-Volker Manuth

Endnotes

1. Bredius also believed that Saskia was the model for the Minerva; Abraham Bredius, *Rembrandt Schilderijen* (Utrecht, 1935), no. 469.
2. Already in 1818 and 1819, John Southey, Lord of Somerville (1765–1819), brought the painting to auction three times without it being sold; see Provenance.
3. Peter Schoon and Sander Paarlberg, eds., *Greek Gods and Heroes in the Age of Rubens and Rembrandt* (Exh. cat. Athens, National Gallery/Alexandros Soutzos Museum; Dordrecht, Dordrechts Museum) (Dordrecht, 2000), no. 61.
4. On this occasion a detailed discussion of the painting's provenance and iconography was published; see Volker Manuth and Marieke de Winkel, *Rembrandt's "Minerva in Her Study" of 1635: The Splendor and Wisdom of a Goddess* (New York, 2002).
5. Horst Gerson, *Rembrandt Paintings* (Amsterdam, 1968), no. 94. Jan G. van Gelder, "Rembrandts vroegste ontwikkeling," *Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen* 16, no. 5 (1953): 296; Werner Sumowski, "Nachträge zum Rembrandtjahr 1956," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (Gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe)* 7 (1957–58): 224, 253.
6. Werner Sumowski, *Drawings of the Rembrandt School*, 10 vols. (New York, 1979–92), 1:276, no. 126x.
7. For the documents he signed as a witness in Dordrecht in December 1635, see Albert Blankert, *Ferdinand Bol: Rembrandt's Pupil* (Doornspijk, 1982), 17, 71. As has been remarked in Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 3, 1635–1642, ed. Josua Bruyn et al. (Dordrecht, Boston, and London, 1989), 14, the relatively clumsy execution of the drawn copy of the Minerva is "just as one might expect from a newcomer" such as Bol.
8. According to a note in Rembrandt's handwriting on the back of one of his drawings in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin (Benesch 448) of around 1636–38. For the drawing see also Holm Bevers, *Rembrandt: Die Zeichnungen im Berliner Kupferstichkabinett—Kritischer Katalog* (Ostfildern, 2006), no. 18 ill. For a discussion of the document see Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 2, 1631–1634, ed. Josua Bruyn et al. (Dordrecht, Boston, and Lancaster, 1986), A 83 (the London *Flora*).
9. Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 3, 1635–1642, ed. Josua Bruyn et al. (Dordrecht, Boston, and London, 1989), A 114, 174.
10. See the essay on Rembrandt's signatures of the period in Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 3, 1635–1642, ed. Josua Bruyn et

- al. (Dordrecht, Boston, and London, 1989), 51–56, esp. 52. Compare nos. A 113 and A 120.
11. Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 3, 1635–1642, ed. Josua Bruyn et al. (Dordrecht, Boston, and London, 1989), A 114, A 110, and A 108, copies 2. See also Ernst van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work* (Amsterdam, 1997), 101, fig. 129, and 105, 107, 124.
 12. Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 2, 1631–1634, ed. Josua Bruyn et al. (Dordrecht, Boston, and Lancaster, 1986), A 70; see more recently, on the Bellona, Walter Liedtke, *Dutch Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 2 vols. (New Haven and London, 2007), 2:596–604, no. 147 ill.
 13. Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 3, 1635–1642, ed. Josua Bruyn et al. (Dordrecht, Boston, and London, 1989), A 114; see recently Teresa Posada Kubissa, *Pintura Holandesa en el Museo Nacional del Prado. Catálogo Razonado*, (Madrid 2009), 115–25, no. 46 (as “Judit en el banquete de Holofernes” [sic]).
 14. Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 3, 1635–42, ed. Josua Bruyn et al. (Dordrecht, Boston, and London, 1989), A 112.
 15. For a discussion of these effects in the three-quarter-length figures, see Josua Bruyn and Ernst van de Wetering in Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 3, 1635–1642, ed. Josua Bruyn et al. (Dordrecht, Boston, and London, 1989), 8–11.
 16. According to the authors of the Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 2, 1631–1634, ed. Josua Bruyn et al. (Dordrecht, Boston, and Lancaster, 1986), A 70, 330–31.
 17. For the general iconography of Minerva (Pallas Athena), see Stefan Grohé, “Rembrandt and Classical Mythology,” in *Greek Gods and Heroes in the Age of Rubens and Rembrandt*, ed. Peter Schoon and Sander Paarlberg (Exh. cat. Athens, National Gallery/Alexandros Soutzos Museum; Dordrecht, Dordrechts Museum) (Dordrecht, 2000), 87–105, no. 61.
 18. Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 1, 1625–1631, ed. Josua Bruyn et al. (The Hague, Boston, and London, 1982), A 3.8.
 19. Here the painting is attributed to Jan Lievens. In this inventory, however, works by Rembrandt and Lievens are often confused. For a discussion see Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 1, 1625–1631, ed. Josua Bruyn et al. (The Hague, Boston, and London, 1982), A 38, 362.
 20. Extract from the Inventory of His Excellency the Prince of Orange at the stadholder’s quarters and the house Het Noordeynde, The Hague, ARA. Nass. Dom. Hingman, 2e supplement, no. 96 (16 August 1632), 51, in Walter L. Strauss and Marjon van der Meulen, *The Rembrandt Documents* (New York, 1979), 87, Doc. 1632/3.

21. See Abraham B. de Vries et al., *Rembrandt in the Mauritshuis* (Alphen aan de Rijn, 1978), 195–99 (as Circle of Rembrandt), ca. 1630.
22. Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 1, *1625–1631*, ed. Josua Bruyn et al. (The Hague, Boston, and London, 1982), C 9. The painting is dated by the authors of the *Corpus* to “in or soon after 1631.”
23. For a more elaborate discussion of the iconography of the victorious, peaceful Minerva, see Volker Manuth and Marieke de Winkel, *Rembrandt’s Minerva in Her Study of 1635: The Splendor and Wisdom of A Goddess* (New York, 2002), 10–14.
24. Volker Manuth and Marieke de Winkel, *Rembrandt’s “Minerva in Her Study” of 1635: The Splendor and Wisdom of a Goddess* (New York, 2002), 14.
25. On possible patrons or buyers of the Minerva, see Volker Manuth and Marieke de Winkel, *Rembrandt’s “Minerva in Her Study” of 1635: The Splendor and Wisdom of a Goddess* (New York, 2002), 14–16.
26. The *album amicorum*, entitled “Pandora” by Jan Six, is still in the possession of his descendants in Amsterdam; see Peter Schatborn in *Rembrandt: The Master and His Workshop, Drawings and Etchings*, ed. Holm Bevers, Peter Schatborn, and Barbara Welzel (Exh. cat. Berlin, Altes Museum; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum; London, National Gallery [etchings only]), (New Haven and London, 1991), 109, no. 31(B).

Provenance

- James, 13th Lord Somerville (1698–1765), Drum House, Scotland; by descent to his grandson John Southey, 15th Lord Somerville (1765–1819) (possibly sale, European Museum, London, March 1818, no. 166, unsold); sale, European Museum, London, June 1818, no. 166, unsold; sale, European Museum, London, March 1819, no. 166, unsold); by descent to Louisa Harriet Somerville Henry (1835–1923), The Pavilion, Melrose, Roxburghshire, and of Malborough Buildings, Bath (her sale, Christie’s, London, 21 November 1924, no. 123 [6,200 guineas to Lewis & Simmons or 6,200 or 6,510 guineas to Smith; Lewis & Simmons, New York, 1925–26; Lord Joseph Duveen, New York, by 1929].
- Jules Semon Bache (1861–1944), New York, 1929 [Duveen Brothers, Inc., New York & Paris, £18,000 to Marczell von Nemes, October 1929].
- Baron Marczell von Nemes (1866–1930), Munich (his sale, Munich, Mensing & Fils, F. Muller, P. Cassirer, H. Helbing, 16–19 June 1931, no. 59 [80,000 marks to Mensing & Zoon, Amsterdam, or to an unknown American buyer]).
- Dr. Axel L. Wenner-Gren (1881–1961), Stockholm, by 1935 (his sale, London, Sotheby’s, 24 March 1965, no. 21 [£125,000 to Julius Weitzner, London, and Hallsborough Galleries,

London; probably to Antenor Patiño, Paris]).

- Probably Antenor Patiño collection, Paris (sale, Palais Galliera, Paris, 6 June 1975, no. 27, to Baron Marcel Bich).
- Baron Marcel Bich (1914–94), Neuilly-sur-Seine, Paris, France.
- Private collection, Japan, by 1988 [Alfred Bader Fine Arts, Milwaukee, and Otto Naumann, Ltd., New York, 2001].
- From whom acquired by the present owner in 2008.

Exhibition History

- Karlstad, Sweden, Värmlands Museum, “Old Master Paintings from the Collection of Axel Wenner-Gren,” 2 April–16 October 1940, no. 2 [lent by Axel L. Wenner-Gren, Stockholm].
- Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, “Rembrandt,” 21 January–15 April 1956, no. 16 [lent by Axel L. Wenner-Gren, Stockholm].
- Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, “Rembrandt Tentoonstelling ter Herdenking van de Geboorte van Rembrandt op 15 juli 1606,” 18 May–5 August 1956; Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, 8 August–21 October 1956, no. 28 [lent by Axel L. Wenner-Gren, Stockholm].
- Bordeaux, Musées de Bordeaux, “L’Europe et la découverte du monde,” 20 May–31 July 1960, no. 30 [lent by Axel L. Wenner-Gren, Stockholm].
- Tokyo, Bridgestone Art Museum (Ishibashi Foundation), 21 September 1988–21 May 2001, on loan with the permanent collection, [lent by a private collection, Japan].
- Tokyo, Bunkamura Museum of Art, “Rembrandt: His Teachers and His Pupils,” 15 April–7 June 1992; Chiba, Kawamura Memorial Museum of Art, 13 June–2 August 1992; Yamaguchi, Yamaguchi Prefectural Museum of Art, 7 August–16 September 1992, no. 6 [lent by a private collection, Japan].
- Athens, National Gallery/Alexandros Soutzos Museum, “Greek Gods and Heroes in the Age of Rubens and Rembrandt,” 28 September 2000–8 January 2001; Dordrecht, Dordrechts Museum, 3 February–8 May 2001, no. 61 [lent by a private collection, Japan].
- Houston, Museum of Fine Arts, 13 May 2002–15 January 2003, on loan with the permanent collection [lent by Alfred Bader and Otto Naumann Ltd.].
- Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 27 February–12 September 2004, on loan with the permanent collection in gallery 258 [lent by Alfred Bader and Otto Naumann Ltd.].
- Stockholm, Åmells Konsthandel, 25 September–22 October 2004 [lent by Alfred Bader and Otto Naumann Ltd.].
- Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis, 15 June 2005–31 March 2006, on loan with the

permanent collection [lent by Alfred Bader and Otto Naumann Ltd.].

- Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis, “Rembrandt: Quest of a Genius,” 1 April–2 July 2006; Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 4 August–5 November 2006, no. 18 [lent by Alfred Bader and Otto Naumann Ltd.].
- Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis, November 2006–11 September 2008, on loan with the permanent collection [no number, lent by Alfred Bader and Otto Naumann Ltd.].
- Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, “Historias de Rembrandt / Rembrandt, Painter of Stories,” 15 October 2008–6 January 2009, no. 20 [lent by the present owner].
- New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, January 2009–March 2011, on loan with the permanent collection [lent by the present owner].
- Tokyo, National Museum of Western Art, “Rembrandt: The Quest for Chiaroscuro,” 12 March–12 June 2011; Nagoya, Nagoya City Art Museum, 25 June–4 September 2011, no. 91 [lent by the present owner].
- Raleigh, North Carolina Museum of Art, “Rembrandt in America: Collecting and Connoisseurship,” 30 October 2011–22 January 2012; Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art, 19 February–28 May 2012; Minneapolis, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 24 June–16 September 2012, no. 40 [lent by the present owner].
- Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, on loan with the permanent collection, April 2013–October 2014 [lent by the present owner].
- Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum, “Rembrandt and the Dutch Golden Age,” 30 October 2014–15 February 2015, no. 99 [lent by the present owner].
- Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, on loan with the permanent collection, May 2015–April 2016 [lent by the present owner].
- Paris, Musée du Louvre, “Masterpieces of The Leiden Collection: The Age of Rembrandt,” 22 February–22 May 2017 [lent by the present owner].
- Beijing, National Museum of China, “Rembrandt and His Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 17 June–3 September 2017 [lent by the present owner].

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Versions

Drawing

1. Ferdinand Bol (attributed to), copy after Rembrandt’s *Minerva in Her Study*, ca. 1636, pen and brush in gray ink, black chalk, 257 x 202 mm, Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-T-1975-85.

Versions Notes

Technical Summary

The support, a medium-weight, plain-weave, rectangular fabric, has been lined. The left tacking margins have been turned out and the composition extended and the remaining tacking margins

have been removed. Cusping along the outer edges indicates the support dimensions have not been significantly altered. Paper tape, which has been toned dark, extends into the face of the painting, and two small canvas inserts are located along the lower portion of the brown tablecloth.^[1] There is an embossed liner stamp, one canvas stamp, five paper labels, and various numerical inscriptions, but no wax seals or stencils along the stretcher or lining reverse.

“In ca. 1989 the Rembrandt Research Project examined the painting . . . and suspected the fabric supports of Rembrandt’s *Belshazzar’s Feast* from the National Gallery in London and *Abraham’s Sacrifice* from the State Hermitage [Museum], St. Petersburg, are from the same canvas bolt.”^[2]

A light-colored ground has been thinly and evenly applied overall followed by paint applied smoothly in opaque layers of rich paste through the flesh tones, drapery, and open book pages and with areas of low impasto through the pearls, drapery folds, and the figure’s bodice. The paint has been thinly applied with a broad wet brush allowing the light-colored ground to show through along the upper half of the composition, including the background in the upper left quadrant, the shield along the upper right quadrant, and, to a lesser extent, the tablecloth along the lower right quadrant.

No underdrawing or compositional changes are readily apparent in infrared images captured at 780–1000 nanometers or in the X-radiograph.

The painting is signed and dated in dark paint along the center of the left edge.

The painting was cleaned and restored in 2001 and remains in a good state of preservation.

Technical Summary Endnotes

1. Approximately 13 cm up from the lower edge, 42 cm apart.

2. According to the RR-107 research memo provided by Sara Smith, collections manager. It is possible the Thread Count Automation Project (TCAP) codirectors, C. Richard Johnson Jr. (Cornell University) and Don H. Johnson (Rice University) could determine weave matches that link the supports of the three paintings.