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Portrait of a Young Woman ("The Middendorf Rembrandt")

Rembrandt van Rijn
(Leiden 1606 – 1669 Amsterdam)

1633
oil on oval panel
62.4 x 50.4 cm
signed and dated at lower left: "Rembrant f. / 1633"
RR-126

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The young woman in this bust-length portrait captivates the beholder with her beguiling gaze and unassuming smile. Her wide, engaging eyes, creamy complexion, and flushed cheeks suggest a gentle, reserved demeanor. Light falling from the upper left illuminates her face, the lace-trimmed coif adorning her hair, and her gold necklace, which glistens as it rests atop her millstone ruff collar.

Rembrandt van Rijn depicted his sitter with great care and sensitivity using well-blended, assured brushstrokes to define her cheekbones, small chin, round nose, and wide forehead. A cool, even light falls across the composition, and shadows along the left side of her face have been rendered with areas of gray applied thinly over underlying flesh tones. Rembrandt applied white highlights to the bridge of her nose and eyes, and he used long, thin strokes as well as short dabs of white to define the individual pleats of her collar. He left a brownish-yellow underpainting visible in some of the lobes of the collar, revealing the black costume beneath it and evoking a sense of plasticity and depth. The illusionistic "see-through" effect of the woman's cap, though likely overemphasized on the right as a result of abrasion from a previous restoration, has been rendered with sketchier gray brushwork to create translucency in the lace coif.[1] For the depiction of the trim, Rembrandt employed a new technique of applying black paint over white. He also used various tones of gray and short, quick highlights to animate the intricate pattern of lace fabric.[2]

Rembrandt executed this striking portrait in 1633, shortly after having settled in Amsterdam to head up the workshop of the art dealer Hendrick Uylenburgh (1584/89–ca. 1660).[3] The Dutch Republic's role on the global stage through trade and seafaring brought significant wealth to the provinces and contributed to the flourishing art market in Amsterdam, particularly for portraiture.[4] From 1632 to 1635, Rembrandt oversaw the activities of Uylenburgh's bustling studio. Because of the dynamic manner in which he captured the physical and psychological individuality of each of his sitters, he quickly rose to become one of the leading portraitists in the city.[5] Rembrandt received dozens of portrait commissions in the 1630s, including *Portrait of a Man in a Red Coat* (1633), *Portrait of Petronella Buys* (1635) **(fig 1)**, and *Portrait of Antonie Coopal* (1635) in The Leiden Collection. Although the identity of this sitter is unknown, her conservative black dress, coupled with its attractive and fashionable adornments, indicates that she belonged to one of the well-to-do families who patronized Rembrandt in this decade.[6]

Portrait of a Young Woman is consistent with Rembrandt's portraits of other female sitters from 1633, including *Portrait of Maertgen van Bilderbeecq* in Frankfurt **(fig 2)** and *Portrait of a Woman* in Braunschweig **(fig 3)**.[7] In each of these works, Rembrandt illuminated the figure with bright, even lighting, and he modeled the

Comparative Figures



Fig 1. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of Petronella Buys*, 1635, oil on oval panel, 79.5 x 59.3 cm, The Leiden Collection, New York, inv. no. RR-115.



Fig 2. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of Maertgen van Bilderbeecq*, 1633, oil on oval panel, 67.4 x 55.2 cm, Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, inv. no. 912, © bpk Bildagentur / Art Resource, NY.

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subjects' features with comparably smooth, controlled brushstrokes. Both the plump, ruddy-cheeked Van Bilderbeecq and the more restrained woman in the Braunschweig painting are turned to the left in three-quarter view and wear large ruff collars and translucent caps with lace-trimmed edges. The sitter in the latter painting also has a gold-chained necklace that she wears tight to her neck, and, as in *Portrait of a Young Woman*, the thickly painted gold links give the necklace an appealing texture and weight **(fig 4)**.

The refined character of *Portrait of a Young Woman* earned it admiration among early scholars and collectors. In 1836, the English dealer John Smith (1781–1855)—who owned the portrait himself not long thereafter—praised the work as "a carefully finished picture" by the master.[8] Nearly a century later, in 1923, Otto Hirschmann exclaimed how, "in a stroke," Rembrandt had surpassed "the older generation of Amsterdam portrait painters . . . with the unpretentious self-assurance with which he portrayed this girl, as if there were no difficulties of representation to overcome."[9] The painting's distinguished provenance likewise reflects the high regard in which it has been held. Among its notable nineteenth- and twentieth-century owners were Thomas Turton (1780–1864), the Bishop of Ely; Sir John Poynder Dickson-Poynder (1866–1914), the first Lord Islington, who kept the painting at Hilmarton Manor in Wiltshire; and the New York collector Frederick Brown, whose acquisition of the portrait in 1925 was heralded in newspapers along the East Coast.[10]

In 1986, however, the Rembrandt Research Project (RRP) brought into question the traditional attribution of *Portrait of a Young Woman* to Rembrandt and argued that it was likely executed by an assistant in the master's studio.[11] The RRP concluded that certain aspects of the painting's handling, including what they described as its "undifferentiated" and smooth manner of execution, differed from Rembrandt's technique.[12] Nevertheless, and somewhat inconsistently, the RRP closely associated *Portrait of a Young Woman* with *Portrait of Maertgen van Bilderbeecq*, also dated 1633, which it fully attributed to Rembrandt. Describing similarities in the use of motifs, the application of paint in the lace and the ruff, including in the preparatory stage, and the distribution of light and shade across the sitters' faces, the RRP's authors judged the works to be "so alike that one has to conclude that there is some direct link between [them] and that they were probably produced in the same workshop."[13]

Rembrandt painted many portraits completely by himself in the early 1630s, but he also worked closely with assistants when producing others. There is no stylistic or technical reason to believe that *Portrait of a Young Woman* is this kind of collaborative work, however, and the full attribution to Rembrandt is entirely



Fig 3. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1633, oil on oval panel, 63 x 48 cm, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig, inv. no. GG 233, © bpk Bildagentur / photo: Ursula Edelmann / Art Resource, NY.

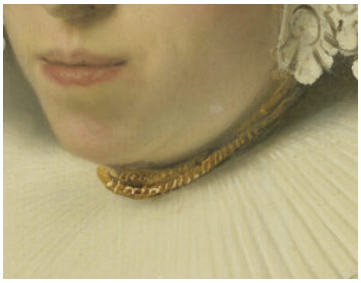


Fig 4. Rembrandt van Rijn, detail of *Portrait of a Woman*, 1633, oil on oval panel, 63 x 48 cm, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig, inv. no. GG 233, © bpk Bildagentur / photo: Ursula Edelmann / Art Resource, NY.



Fig 5. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of a Man in a Red Coat*, 1633, oil on oval panel, 63.7 x 50.8 cm, The Leiden Collection, New York, inv. no. RR-108.

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convincing. Just how Uylenburgh's workshop functioned in this period remains a matter of dispute.[14] During the years that Rembrandt oversaw Uylenburgh's studio, it focused on the production of portraits, and Rembrandt occasionally enlisted some level of assistance because of the high demand. In keeping with the practices of Dutch and Flemish workshops, assistants familiar with Rembrandt's manner of working would have contributed to elements such as the sitter's costume or hands.[15] Nevertheless, little is known about those who assisted Rembrandt with his portrait commissions. Beyond the portrait painter Dirk Santvoort (1610/11–80), and Isaac de Jouderville (ca. 1612–48), a pupil of Rembrandt's in Leiden who likely accompanied the master when he moved to Amsterdam, no other names have been proposed.[16] S.A.C. Dudok van Heel has recently argued that "there was only one master painter [Rembrandt] working in the [Uylenburgh] studio," and "fifty years of Rembrandt research has not revealed any new names of possible Uylenburgh employees. . . . Thus there is no 'Circle of Rembrandt.'"[17]

The evolving views on Rembrandt's workshop practice have prompted renewed reflections on a number of portraits from the early 1630s, as well as a less narrowly defined idea of Rembrandt's manner of working.[18] Although the reservations expressed by the RRP about the attribution of *Portrait of a Young Woman* to Rembrandt have not been further discussed in the literature, when the painting was included in the *Young Rembrandt* exhibition in 2019, it was once again fully attributed to Rembrandt.[19] Indeed, since 1986, a number of scholars, including Ernst van de Wetering, one of the authors of the RRP's commentary on this painting, have developed a more nuanced perspective on Rembrandt's approach to portraiture in this period, particularly with his depiction of female sitters.[20] They have cited various factors that contributed to a portrait's handling and character, including the master's relationship to his sitters and their personalities, backgrounds, and gender. Other intangibles, such as the speed in which the commissions were executed, even with pendant portraits, likewise need to be considered.[21]

Portrait of a Young Woman should be understood within this framework. Rembrandt's smooth handling of his sitter complements her quietly confident demeanor, one that may have been impacted by the formality of the commission.[22] At a point when he was just starting out in Amsterdam, Rembrandt preferred a more restrained approach in his depiction of young women, often in contrast to the broader execution that characterizes their male counterparts.[23] This approach is evident in *Portrait of a Woman* in Braunschweig **(fig 3)**, whose attribution was also questioned by the RRP in 1986. Reattributing the portrait to Rembrandt in 2014, Ernst van de Wetering wrote that "the highly detailed and smooth execution" of the woman's portrait had previously been seen as "incompatible with the idea of Rembrandt's manner of painting to which the RRP was [then] committed."[24] Whether

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Rembrandt’s approach in these female portraits can be explained by his reticence to introduce too much personality in his sitters, or an effort to meet the needs of a new clientele, his subtle manner of painting in The Leiden Collection’s *Portrait of a Young Woman* captures the sitter’s sensitive and curious nature with great assurance.[25] This approach, together with the pictorial—and somewhat experimental—treatment of the lace, makes this portrait a compelling example of Rembrandt’s entrée onto the Amsterdam market.[26]

One unresolved question is whether *Portrait of a Young Woman* had a male pendant. In 1930, Wilhelm Valentiner suggested that this work may have served as the companion to *Portrait of a Man in a Red Coat*, now in The Leiden Collection **(fig 5)**.[27] Although the sitters in these two paintings, which have the same date and nearly identical dimensions, turn toward one another, this proposal is unlikely. As the authors of the *Corpus* first pointed out, the differences in the original shape of the panels (*Portrait of a Man in a Red Coat* was only later cut into an oval), as well the structure of the wood used, make the pairing unlikely.[28] Moreover, the notable differences in the sitters’ appearance and style of dress argue against it: the hairstyle and the red braided doublet worn by the male sitter indicate that he was either a foreigner or a member of the military, an unlikely match for the conservatively dressed Dutch sitter in *Portrait of a Young Woman*.[29]

Nevertheless, the two portraits have crossed paths at various points in their histories. In 1930, when held in separate American private collections, both were exhibited at *The Thirteenth Loan Exhibition of Old Master Paintings by Rembrandt* at the Detroit Institute of Arts, which was one of the first Rembrandt exhibitions in the United States.[30] The paintings later appeared in the same auction at Sotheby’s in 1998, after which *Portrait of a Young Woman* entered the collection of Ambassador J. William Middendorf II.[31] A former United States Ambassador to the Netherlands (1969–73) and Secretary of the Navy (1974–77), Middendorf has been a passionate collector of Dutch and Flemish paintings, including several Rembrandts, for more than five decades.[32] In honor of his many inspiring contributions to both the nation and the history of collecting, the present collector has aptly named *Portrait of a Young Woman* the “Middendorf Rembrandt.” The painting’s acquisition by The Leiden Collection thus not only deepens its representation of this dynamic decade of Rembrandt’s career in Amsterdam, but it also reflects a rich tradition of collecting Dutch art.[33]

- Lara Yeager-Crasselt, 2021; revised 2022

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Endnotes

1. A similar effect of translucency in the lace coif appears in the *Portrait of Maertgen van Bilderbeecq* in Frankfurt (fig. 2), as well as in the *Portrait of a Woman* in Braunschweig (fig. 3), both dated 1633 and discussed below. In these works, Rembrandt used long gray brushstrokes to make the back of the sitter's collar and cap visible through the fabric. In *Portrait of a Young Woman*, these areas of gray are diminished on the right side, leaving the back of the woman's head and collar overexposed. This is likely the result of abrasion from an earlier restoration, but further technical examination is needed to investigate this condition. The left side of the cap is more indicative of the original appearance of the cap.
2. For Rembrandt's approach to depicting lace in the early 1630s, see Petria Noble et al., "An Exceptional Commission: Conservation History, Treatment and Painting Technique of Rembrandt's Marten and Oopjen, 1634," *Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 66, no. 4 (2018): 334–37. For further discussion on Rembrandt's treatment of lace in The Leiden Collection, see the entries on *Portrait of Petronella Buys* by Lara Yeager-Crasselt and *Portrait of Antonie Coopal* by David de Witt and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. in this catalogue.
3. The painting is signed and dated "Rembrant f. / 1633." In most published references, it is incorrectly noted as "Rembrandt." I would like to thank Michiel Franken for pointing out the distinctions in this spelling. The appearance of the signature and date is consistent with Rembrandt's manner of signing his works in 1633, but the authors of the *Corpus* have expressed doubt about the authenticity of the signature, which they describe as "clumsily shaped, and quite different from those of authentic Rembrandt signatures." They do, however, believe that the signature is contemporary to the painting and was likely added with Rembrandt's approval by a member of the studio. See Josua Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 2, *1631–1634*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 1986), 826. Further technical investigation of the signature is forthcoming.

   Based on the sapwood statistic for Eastern Europe, dendrochronological examination by Peter Klein in 2013 has shown that the earliest possible felling date for this panel is 1628. With a minimum seasoning time of two years, the earliest date for the execution of this portrait is 1630, thus in keeping with the execution date of 1633, as indicated in the signature. See Peter Klein's report kept in the archives of The Leiden Collection. In the early literature on the painting, a date of 1631 is given (as well as an age of about thirty-three years for the sitter) without further explanation. Wilhelm Valentiner was the first scholar to provide the date of 1633. Wilhelm R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt: Wiedergefundene Gemälde (1910–1920) in 120 Abbildungen*, Klassiker der Kunst in Gesamtgaben (Stuttgart, 1921), 27: nos. 31, 28.
4. See Jasper Hillegers, "Rembrandt and the Amsterdam Art Market," in *Rembrandt in Amsterdam: Creativity and Competition*, ed. Stephanie S. Dickey and Jochen Sander (Exh. cat. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada; Frankfurt am Main, Städel Museum) (New Haven, 2020), 99–102; and, more broadly, Norbert Middelkoop, ed., *Rembrandt and Amsterdam Portraiture, 1590–1670* (Exh. cat. Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza) (Madrid, 2020).

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5. See Jaap van der Veen, "Hendrick Uylenburgh's Art Business: Production and Trade between 1625 and 1655," in *Uylenburgh & Son: Art and Commerce from Rembrandt to De Lairesse, 1625–1675*, ed. Friso Lammertse and Jaap van der Veen (Exh. cat. London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; Amsterdam, Rembrandt House Museum) (Zwolle, 2006), 117–205, especially 126–60. For an excellent overview of portrait painting in Amsterdam before Rembrandt's arrival, as well as during the early 1630s, see the recent contributions by S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, "Rembrandt's Surprising Start as a Portrait Painter: Hendrick Uylenburgh's Role in the Production of Portraits in Amsterdam," in *Rembrandt and Amsterdam Portraiture, 1590–1670*, ed. Norbert Middelkoop (Exh. cat. Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza) (Madrid, 2020), 129–51; Stephanie Dickey, "Portraits of Prosperity," in *Rembrandt in Amsterdam: Creativity and Competition*, ed. Stephanie S. Dickey and Jochen Sander (Exh. cat. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada; Frankfurt am Main, Städel Museum) (New Haven, 2020), 153–87. Dudok van Heel argues that Rembrandt had his start in portraiture not only in Amsterdam, but also through commissions in The Hague, Leiden, and Rotterdam in the first half of the 1630s.

6. Many of Rembrandt's clients came from Uylenburgh's network. S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, "Rembrandt's Surprising Start as a Portrait Painter: Hendrick Uylenburgh's Role in the Production of Portraits in Amsterdam," in *Rembrandt and Amsterdam Portraiture, 1590–1670*, ed. Norbert Middelkoop (Exh. cat. Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza) (Madrid, 2020), 60–61; and Jaap van der Veen, "Hendrick Uylenburgh's Art Business: Production and Trade between 1625 and 1655," in *Uylenburgh & Son: Art and Commerce from Rembrandt to De Lairesse, 1625–1675*, ed. Friso Lammertse and Jaap van der Veen (Exh. cat. London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; Amsterdam, Rembrandt House Museum) (Zwolle, 2006), 127–29.

7. For the Frankfurt and Braunschweig portraits, see Josua Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 2, *1631–1634*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 1986), A 82, C 71. In *Corpus* VI, Ernst van de Wetering reattributed the Braunschweig portrait to Rembrandt. See Ernst van de Wetering et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 6, *Rembrandt's Paintings Revisited: A Complete Survey*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (Dordrecht, 2014), 524, under nos. 87a and 87b. The attribution of the Braunschweig portrait to Rembrandt is upheld most recently in Volker Manuth, Marieke de Winkel, and Rudie van Leeuwen, *Rembrandt: The Complete Paintings* (Cologne, 2019), no. 228.

8. John Smith, *Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish and French Painters* (London, 1836), 7: 160, no. 496. The painting appears to have passed through the hands of John Smith's son, John Mountjoy Smith (1805–69), following the 1864 sale of the collection of Thomas Turton, Bishop of Ely. See Provenance.

9. "Mit einem Schlage erscheinen die tüchtigen Leistungen der ältern Amsterdamer Bildnismaler, etwa eines Nicolaes Elias, befangen und unfrei neben der anspruchslosen Selbstverständlichkeit, mit der Rembrandt dieses Mädchen porträtierte, als ob es keine Schwierigkeiten der Darstellung zu überwinden gäbe." Otto Hirschmann, "Die Sammlung A. Preyer in Haag," *Der Cicerone* 15 (February 1923): 126. Hirschmann knew the painting when it was with the art dealer A. Preyer in The Hague.

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10. See Provenance. Brown's acquisition of the painting was reported in the *Evening Star*, Washington, DC (26 September 1925), *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, New York (26 September 1925), *Morning Call*, Allentown, Pennsylvania (27 September 1925), *Philadelphia Inquirer* (26 September 1925), and *Art News* 24 (10 October 1925): pl. 1. I am grateful to April Smitley from the Art Reference Library at the North Carolina Museum of Art for her kind assistance in locating these newspaper articles.

11. The authors of the second volume of the *Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, Josua Bruyn, Bob Haak, and Ernst van de Wetering, do not suggest an identity for the assistant who may have executed this work, which is consistent with their approach at that time. They raise similar criticisms for a number of Rembrandt's female portraits from this early period. See Josua Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 2, *1631–1634*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 1986), C 81.

12. The authors also observed a lack of "pictorial liveliness and the resulting suggestion of plasticity and depth that is typical of Rembrandt's portrait heads." Josua Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 2, *1631–1634*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 1986), 827.

13. Again somewhat inconsistently, however, in their concluding summary to the entry on this work the authors state that "there is no doubt that it was produced in Rembrandt's workshop in or about 1633." Josua Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 2, *1631–1634*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 1986), 827.

14. See Ernst van de Wetering, "Problems of Apprenticeship and Studio Collaboration," in Josua Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 2, *1631–1634*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 1986), 45–90; Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Issues of Attribution in the Rembrandt Workshop," in *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*, NGA Online Editions (Washington, D.C., 2014), http://purl.org/nga/collection/catalogue/17th-century-dutch-paintings; Walter Liedtke, "Rembrandt's Workshop Revisited," *Oud Holland* 117 (2004): 48–73; Jaap van der Veen, "Hendrick Uylenburgh's Art Business: Production and Trade between 1625 and 1655," in *Uylenburgh & Son: Art and Commerce from Rembrandt to De Lairesse, 1625–1675,* ed. Friso Lammertse and Jaap van der Veen (Exh. cat. London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; Amsterdam, Rembrandt House Museum) (Zwolle, 2006), 117–205.

15. This kind of collaboration with workshop assistants was probably a function of price as well as time—that is, an autograph work by a master's hand would typically cost more than a work made with assistance. Michiel van Miereveld (1566–1641) in Delft had a large-scale workshop to keep up with the high number of portraits he produced in the early seventeenth century, as did one of Rembrandt's predecessors in Amsterdam, the painter Cornelis van der Voort (1576–1624). In Antwerp, in the Southern Netherlands, Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) and Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641) also operated workshops with assistants. There is evidence to indicate that Rembrandt worked this way on at least one occasion: in his 1633 *Portrait of Johannes Uyttenbogaert*, Rembrandt employed an assistant in the execution of the sitter's hands. See Wouter Th. Koek and Guido M.C. Jansen, *Rembrandt in a New*

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Light: Presentation of Seven Restored Paintings by Rembrandt (Amsterdam, 1993); Jaap van der Veen, "Hendrick Uylenburgh's Art Business: Production and Trade between 1625 and 1655," in *Uylenburgh & Son: Art and Commerce from Rembrandt to De Lairesse, 1625–1675,* ed. Friso Lammertse and Jaap van der Veen (Exh. cat. London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; Amsterdam, Rembrandt House Museum) (Zwolle, 2006), 136. For a discussion of the possibilities of this kind of workshop collaboration in The Leiden Collection, see the entry on *Portrait of Antonie Coopal* by David de Witt and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. in this catalogue.

16. For the proposal that Jouderville accompanied Rembrandt to Amsterdam in the early 1630s, see Jaap van der Veen, "Hendrick Uylenburgh's Art Business: Production and Trade between 1625 and 1655," in *Uylenburgh & Son: Art and Commerce from Rembrandt to De Lairesse, 1625–1675,* ed. Friso Lammertse and Jaap van der Veen (Exh. cat. London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; Amsterdam, Rembrandt House Museum) (Zwolle, 2006), 136, 183.

    Two other fully trained artists who worked in Rembrandt's orbit in the first half of the 1630s were Jacob Backer (1609–51) and Govaert Flinck (1615–60), who had each come from the workshop of Lambert Jacobsz (ca. 1598–1636) in Leeuwarden. Backer probably arrived in Amsterdam around 1633. Flinck, who arrived around 1634, likely collaborated with Rembrandt on portrait commissions in this period. Upon Rembrandt's departure from Uylenburgh's workshop in 1635, Flinck assumed the position of overseeing the studio. The broader handling characteristic of Backer's and Flinck's styles makes their involvement in this portrait unlikely, however.

17. Dudok van Heel makes an exception for Jouderville, who, he believes, did assist Rembrandt in Amsterdam. See S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, "Rembrandt's Surprising Start as a Portrait Painter: Hendrick Uylenburgh's Role in the Production of Portraits in Amsterdam," in *Rembrandt and Amsterdam Portraiture, 1590–1670*, ed. Norbert Middelkoop (Exh. cat. Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza) (Madrid, 2020), 142. Dudok van Heel has proposed elsewhere, however, that Santvoort also served as one of the assistants in Uylenburgh's workshop: S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, "Rembrandt and Frans Hals painting in the workshop of Hendrick Uylenburgh," in *Rembrandt and his Circle: Insights and Discoveries*, ed. Stephanie S. Dickey (Amsterdam, 2017), 36.

18. For example, see Ernst van de Wetering et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 6, *Rembrandt's Paintings Revisited: A Complete Survey*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (Dordrecht, 2014), nos. 87a and 87b, 118b. For an overview of the current attributions on Rembrandt's portraits from the early 1630s, see Volker Manuth, Marieke de Winkel, and Rudie van Leeuwen, *Rembrandt: The Complete Paintings* (Cologne, 2019), 651–64.

19. Following the 1986 publication, most scholars similarly rejected the attribution to Rembrandt, with the exception of Leonard Slatkes, *Rembrandt: Catalogo complete dei dipinti* (Florence, 1992), 283, no. 184. The portrait was mentioned briefly in Jaap van der Veen, "Hendrick Uylenburgh's Art Business: Production and Trade between 1625 and 1655," in *Uylenburgh & Son: Art and Commerce from Rembrandt to De Lairesse, 1625–1675*, ed. Friso Lammertse and Jaap van der Veen (Exh. cat. London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; Amsterdam, Rembrandt House Museum) (Zwolle, 2006), 145, 147, fig. 90,

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but only to the extent of repeating the view of the RRP. The painting's exhibition in 2019 was the first time that it was shown to the public in nearly eighty years. Christopher Brown, An Van Camp, and Christiaan Vogelaar, eds., *Young Rembrandt* (Exh. cat. Leiden, Museum De Lakenhal; Oxford, Ashmolean Museum) (Oxford, 2019), 280, no. 146.

20. See discussion below, and Ernst van de Wetering et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 6, *Rembrandt's Paintings Revisited: A Complete Survey*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (Dordrecht, 2014), 524, under nos. 87a and 87b; Volker Manuth, Marieke de Winkel, and Rudie van Leeuwen, *Rembrandt: The Complete Paintings* (Cologne, 2019), 84, nos. 223, 224, 228, and the entry on *Portrait of Petronella Buys* by Lara Yeager-Crasselt in this catalogue. Van de Wetering did not include *Portrait of a Young Woman* in volume 6 of the *Corpus*, nor, interestingly, *Portrait of Maertgen van Bilderbeecq* (fig 2).

21. This point is evident in the pendant portraits of Petronella Buys and Philips Lucasz, in which Rembrandt painted Philips with quicker, short brushstrokes and Petronella with a more subtle and refined technique. Other examples are the portraits of Dirck Jansz Pesser (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) and Haesje van Cleyburg (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), from 1634. See further discussion in the entries for the *Portrait of Petronella Buys* by Lara Yeager Crasselt and *Portrait of a Man in a Red Coat* by Volker Manuth in this catalogue.

22. Some of the differences in execution between *Portrait of a Young Woman* and the *Portrait of Maertgen van Bilderbeecq* (fig 2) may be accounted for by Rembrandt's personal relationship with the latter sitter. Van Bilderbeecq also came from Leiden and was related to Rembrandt's mother. The families were both part of the community of bakers and millers of the city. S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, "Rembrandt's Surprising Start as a Portrait Painter: Hendrick Uylenburgh's Role in the Production of Portraits in Amsterdam," in *Rembrandt and Amsterdam Portraiture, 1590–1670*, ed. Norbert Middelkoop (Exh. cat. Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza) (Madrid, 2020), 140; Jasper Hillegers, "Rembrandt and the Amsterdam Art Market," in *Rembrandt in Amsterdam: Creativity and Competition*, ed. Stephanie S. Dickey and Jochen Sander (Exh. cat. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada; Frankfurt am Main, Städel Museum) (New Haven, 2020), 102.

23. See note 21. Other examples include *Portrait of a Seated Young Woman*, 1632 (Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna), and *Portrait of a Woman*, 1634 (Speed Art Museum, Louisville).

24. Ernst van de Wetering et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 6, *Rembrandt's Paintings Revisited: A Complete Survey*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (Dordrecht, 2014), 524, under nos. 87a and 87b.

25. I would like to thank Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. for suggesting that Rembrandt may have been reticent in his approach to his female sitters.

26. The close similarities in the costume elements, as well as the structure and execution of the collars in *Portrait of a Young Woman* and *Portrait of Maertgen van Bilderbeecq* (fig 2) also support the attribution to Rembrandt. It would have been contrary to the nature of workshop collaboration for Rembrandt to

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have executed the collars, but not the heads and faces of his sitters. I would like to thank Stephanie Dickey for her observations on the treatment of lace.

27. Wilhelm R. Valentiner, "Rediscovered Rembrandt Paintings," *Burlington Magazine* 57 (1930): 265.

28. *Portrait of a Young Woman* consists of three planks of oak with a vertical grain; the panel has been cradled. Personal correspondence between George Bisacca and Michael Heidelberg, recently accessed at the RKD, has shown that the panel may have been cut down from a rectangle into an oval (Letter from George Bisacca to Michael Heidelberg, 10 April 1998, Rembrandt Research Project Archives, RKD, The Hague). Bisacca, who examined the panel in 1998, indicated that it showed a remnant of the original bevel at the bottom edge, which traces a horizontal demarcation. However, brushwork in the upper areas of the painting follows an oval shape and there is an indication of a painted oval border in the upper right. Thus the panel may have been originally rectangular (or even possibly octagonal), but the painted composition appears to have always been oval. This approach is consistent with other paintings by Rembrandt, including *Portrait of a Man in a Red Coat*. This information is supported by the treatment report written by Michael Heidelberg, 22 May 1998, kept on file in the Rembrandt Research Project Archives, RKD, The Hague. I would like to thank Caroline Van Cauwenberge for kindly researching this correspondence (March 2022). Further technical investigation is needed to clarify these questions about the original shape of the panel.

    Although it has previously been pointed out that the type of wood used for this work was different from that used for *Portrait of a Man in a Red Coat*, this observation seems to have been made in error; both panels are oak and derived from the Baltic/Polish region (see note 3 for further comments). It is also important to note that the RRP's questioning of the pendant relationship was related to their doubts, at the time, regarding the female portrait's attribution. See the discussion in the entry for *Portrait of a Man in a Red Coat*, and Josua Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 2, *1631–1634*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 1986), 827; Ernst van de Wetering et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 4, *Self-Portraits*, ed. Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (Dordrecht, 2005), Addendum IV 4, 645.

29. A more likely pendant for *Portrait of a Man in a Red Coat* is Rembrandt's *Portrait of a Woman* in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, whose French-style dress is more in keeping with the costume worn by the male sitter. See the entry by Volker Manuth in this catalogue.

30. Wilhelm Valentiner, *The Thirteenth Loan Exhibition of Old Masters: Paintings by Rembrandt* (Exh. cat. Detroit, Detroit Institute of Art, 1930) (New York, 1930), nos. 15 and 23, respectively. For the significance of the Detroit exhibition in the context of Rembrandt scholarship, see Catherine B. Scallen, *Rembrandt, Reputation, and the Practice of Connoisseurship* (Amsterdam, 20004), 310–13.

31. Sale, Sotheby's, New York, 30 January 1998, nos. 31 and 18, respectively. *Portrait of a Man in a Red Coat* entered several private collections before being acquired by The Leiden Collection in 2008. I would like to express my gratitude to Ambassador John William Middendorf II and Frances Middendorf for kindly sharing information about the painting with The Leiden Collection.

32. Middendorf's long and distinguished career of public service has also included posts as United States

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Ambassador to the European Union and Ambassador to the Organization of American States. Among the paintings by Rembrandt that he has owned in the past are *Portrait of a Man Holding a Black Hat*, ca. 1639/40 (Armand Hammer Museum, Los Angeles) and *Juno*, ca. 1660 (Armand Hammer Museum, Los Angeles). In addition to his collecting, Middendorf is a well-regarded artist and composer.

33. *Portrait of a Young Woman* follows Gabriel Metsu’s *Young Woman Seated in an Interior, Reading a Letter* as the second painting in The Leiden Collection to have come from the collection of Ambassador Middendorf.

Provenance

- M. De la Hante Collection, Paris, by 1836.
- [John Smith (1781–1855), London, until 1850 (to Thomas Turton for £150).]
- Thomas Turton (1780–1864), Bishop of Ely (his sale, London, 14 April 1864, no. 28 [to John Mountjoy Smith for 13 guineas, 13 shillings]).
- [John Mountjoy Smith (1805–69), London (to Thomas Henry Allen Poynder).]
- Thomas Henry Allen Poynder (1814–73), Hilmarton Manor, Wiltshire, by 1864; by descent to his nephew, Sir John Poynder Dickson-Poynder (1866–1936), 1st Baron Islington, Hilmarton Manor, Wiltshire.
- [Abraham Preyer, Paris and The Hague, by 1921 (to John Levy Galleries).][1]
- [John Levy Galleries, New York (to Frederick Brown for $100,000).]
- Frederick Brown, New York, by 1925 until 1939.
- Leo M. Flesh, Piqua, Ohio, by 1939.
- [John Levy Galleries, New York, until 1942 (to Jacqueline W. Bernstein).]
- Jacqueline W. Bernstein, New York; by descent (sale, Sotheby’s, New York, 30 January 1998, no. 31).
- Ambassador John William Middendorf II (private sale, Christie’s, New York, 2021).[2]
- From whom acquired by present owner in 2021.

Provenance Notes

1. Jan Steen’s *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, now in The Leiden Collection, was also formerly with the art dealer Abraham Preyer.
2. Gabriel Metsu’s *Young Woman Seated in an Interior, Reading a Letter*, now in The Leiden Collection, was also formerly in the collection of Ambassador John William Middendorf II.

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Exhibition History

- Detroit, Detroit Institute of Art, "The Thirteenth Loan Exhibition of Old Masters: Paintings by Rembrandt," 2–31 May 1930, no. 15 [lent by Frederick Brown].
- San Francisco, Palace of Fine Arts, "Golden Gate International Exposition," 1939–40, 15, no. 195 [lent by Leo M. Flesh].
- Amsterdam, Rembrandthuis, "Rembrandt en Uylenburgh, handel in Amsterdam," 16 September–10 December 2006 [lent by Ambassador John William Middendorf II].
- Leiden, Museum de Lakenhal, "Young Rembrandt," 2 November 2019–9 February 2020; Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 27 February 2020–1 November 2020, no. 146 [lent by Ambassador John William Middendorf II].
- Amsterdam, H'ART Museum, "From Rembrandt to Vermeer: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection," 9 April–24 August, 2025 [lent by the present owner].
- West Palm Beach, Norton Museum of Art, "Art and Life in Rembrandt's Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection," 25 October 2025–29 March, 2026 [lent by the present owner].

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