THE LEIDEN COLLECTION



Stone Operation (Allegory of Touch)

Rembrandt van Rijn
(Leiden 1606 – 1669 Amsterdam)

ca. 1624–25
oil on panel
21.5 x 17.7 cm
RR-102

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How to cite

Libby, Alexandra, Ilona van Tuinen, and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. “Allegory of Hearing, Allegory of Smell, Allegory of Touch, from The Series of the Five Senses” (2017). In *The Leiden Collection Catalogue*, 4th ed. Edited by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Elizabeth Nogrady with Caroline Van Cauwenberge. New York, 2023–. https://theleidencollection.com/artwork/stone-operation/ (accessed November 28, 2026).

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On 22 September 2015, one of the most surprising and exciting recent discoveries in Dutch art transpired in the auction house Nye & Company in Bloomfield, NJ: the appearance of one of Rembrandt van Rijn's earliest paintings, *Unconscious Patient*.[1] After surfacing in the collection of a New Jersey family, it was catalogued as "Continental School, Nineteenth Century" and garnered little attention during the viewing period.[2] At the auction, however, it became obvious that two international phone bidders had understood the importance of this painting, and as their bidding intensified way beyond the pre-sale estimate so did the atmosphere in the auction house sales room. By the time the hammer came down in favor of the Parisian dealer Talabardon & Gautier, the puzzled auction-goers were on the edges of their seats. When the auctioneer announced that the newly sold painting was thought to be an early Rembrandt (which the under bidder revealed upon bowing out), the room burst into cheers and applause. Almost immediately, this discovery was featured in newspapers around the globe.[3]

It is not entirely surprising that the connection between the painting and the most celebrated seventeenth-century Dutch artist had not been made earlier, and by more people. The little panel depicting an elderly man and woman attending an unconscious patient, does not feature the strong chiaroscuro effects, subdued palette, and complex psychological tension normally associated with Rembrandt's works. The painting was also covered in layers of yellow varnish and dirt, concealing many of the subtleties of the composition. Moreover, compounding the difficulty of recognizing Rembrandt's hand was the fact that his panel had been inserted into a larger panel, and that the composition had been extended on all sides by a later hand **(fig 1)**.

Once the association with Rembrandt had been made, it became clear to all those familiar with Rembrandt's early *oeuvre* that *Unconscious Patient* depicted the *Allegory of Smell*, part of a series of *Five Senses* that Rembrandt painted in Leiden around 1625, when he was but a teenager. Three other panels from this series still survive, all of which surfaced in different private collections in the first half of the twentieth century. Just when this series was dispersed is not known, but probably not before the early eighteenth century, at which time, it seems, all of these compositions were expanded after Rembrandt's original panels had been set into larger ones.[4]

Among the three other extant works from this series of the *Five Senses* are two in The Leiden Collection: *Three Musicians* (*Allegory of Hearing*)[5] **(fig 2)** and *Stone Operation* (*Allegory of Touch*) **(fig 3)**.[6] The other painting, *Spectacles Seller* (*Allegory of Sight*), **(fig 4)**, is in Museum De Lakenhal in Leiden.[7] Still unaccounted for is *Allegory of Taste.*

Soon after the acquisition of the *Allegory of Smell* in September 2015, Rembrandt's

Comparative Figures

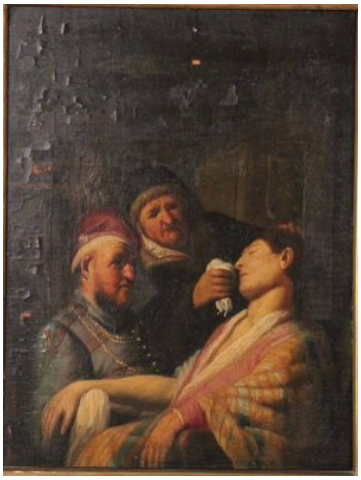


Fig 1. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Unconscious Patient (Allegory of Smell)* (panel with eighteenth-century additions before restoration), ca. 1624–25, oil on panel, 31.8 x 25.4 cm, The Leiden Collection, New York, inv. no. RR-111.



Fig 2. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Three Musicians (Allegory of Hearing)*, ca. 1624–25, oil on panel, 21.5 x 17.7 cm, The Leiden Collection, New York, inv. no. RR-105.

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monogram, RHF, was discovered on a drawing of a man wearing a *tabard* and fur hat attached to the wooden cupboard at the upper right **(fig 5)**, making it the earliest signed painting in the master's oeuvre.[8] When *Allegory of Smell* was restored and its surface stripped of the yellow varnish that had suppressed the brilliance of Rembrandt's color, the visual connections to the other known panels from Rembrandt's series became ever more evident **(fig 6)**. Unlike decisions made when other paintings from this series were restored, in this case it was decided not to remove the early eighteenth-century addition, thus retaining this panel's composite character **(fig 7)**.

Each of the three panel paintings in Rembrandt's series of *Five Senses* in The Leiden Collection feature three tightly-cropped figures who focus on a shared experience in a dark, undefined space. Rembrandt robed his figures in bright pink and light blue attire, which, lit by artificial light sources seen and unseen, provide splashes of color that greatly enliven the images. These surgeons, patients, and singers—young, old, male, female, crude and refined—are unforgettably expressive characters involved in activities that connect the senses of smell, touch and hearing in ways both humorous and empathetic, whether reviving a fainted patient, undertaking a surgical operation, or singing from an open songbook.

Allegory of Smell **(fig 6)** features a young man wearing a colorful, loosely-draped housecoat, who has fainted and is slumped in a chair. An extremely worried old woman wearing a fur-trimmed hooded mantle tries to revive him by holding a white handkerchief to his nose, presumably one containing smelling salts.[9] An equally old man, his right hand covered by a white cloth, holds the youth's bare right forearm and anxiously awaits to see if the woman's efforts succeed. His colorful wardrobe, earring and gold chains, as well as the knives, scissors, razors and lotions displayed in a large wooden cupboard, identify him as a barber-surgeon, a profession renowned for its quacks.[10] The position of the young man's exposed forearm indicates that before the youth fainted, the quack was preparing to draw blood from one of the large veins in the patient's arm, a practice called bloodletting.[11] The quack would have used his white cloth to wipe up the blood after completing his procedure.

Patients being bled were generally portrayed with their lower arm exposed, exactly as in the image of another bloodletting **(fig 8)**.[12] Once pricked with a lancet (a two-edged surgical knife or blade with a sharp point), the blood would drip into a bowl often held by an assistant. Occasionally patients would faint at the end of a bloodletting, a condition deemed to indicate the treatment's success. Here, however, one sees neither wound nor blood, neither bandage nor bowl, which means that the young man has not fainted in reaction to such a session, but in anticipation of it. Rembrandt's image, indeed, not only mocks the elderly woman's excessive concern



Fig 3. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Stone Operation (Allegory of Touch)*, ca. 1624–25, oil on panel, 21.5 x 17.7 cm, The Leiden Collection, New York, inv. no. RR-102.



Fig 4. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Spectacles Seller* (*Allegory of Sight*), ca. 1624, oil on panel 21 x 17.8 cm, Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden, inv. no. S 5697



Fig 5. Signature detail, Rembrandt van Rijn, *Unconscious Patient (Allegory of Smell)*, ca. 1624–25, oil on panel, 21.5 x 17.7 cm, The Leiden Collection, New York, inv. no. RR-111.

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about the patient's condition and the quack's profession, but also the young man's lack of inner fortitude.

Stone Operation (*Allegory of Touch*) **(fig 3)** is an equally humorous depiction of one of the five senses. In a darkened room that hardly suggests a professional atmosphere, a barber-surgeon wields a scalpel to remove a stone from the head of his patient, who clenches his fists and teeth in pain. The only light illuminating the scene is the candle held by an intense elderly woman with a wrinkled face and clenched jaw. *Allegory of Touch* belongs to a tradition of images hearkening back to the early sixteenth century, in which traveling quacks were shown performing "stone operations" that purportedly cured stupidity by removing the stone of folly.[13] One of the most important of these images is an engraving made by Lucas van Leyden (1494–1533) that was widely copied and imitated **(fig 9)**.[14] Rembrandt's figures, with their old-fashioned dress, bulbous hooked noses, gruesome teeth and deeply wrinkled faces, fit firmly within this tradition. Although such surgeries were, in fact, not performed, the phrase "to have a stone removed from one's head" was part of the popular vernacular and was used to ridicule those considered to be foolish or easily duped.[15]

Three Musicians (*Allegory of Hearing*) **(fig 2)** similarly depicts an evening scene, but in this instance one illuminated by an unseen light source. In this joyful image, two elderly singers, one male and one female, are joined by a young man who peers down over their shoulders at the large open music book. The bald man, with pronouncedly wrinkled forehead and eyeglasses balanced on the tip of his nose, guides their song with the beat of his raised hand as the old woman, with an equally wrinkled face, leans forward enthusiastically to join him in song.[16] The comedy here resides in the advanced age of the two primary singers, for generally images of *Allegory of Hearing* **(fig 10)** depict young lovers singing and playing instruments together. Even at their advanced age, however, the couple's full engagement in the music seems to allude to the ideals of living a balanced and harmonious life. The man's fur-lined tabard and the woman's colorful turban are not contemporary attire, and help indicate the allegorical character of the scene.[17]

Just how Rembrandt devised the various scenes in his series of the *Five Senses*, and the sequence in which he intended them to be viewed, is not known. Nevertheless, it is clear that with the exception of *Allegory of Smell*, the young master loosely followed long-established iconographic traditions for his compositional inventions. For example, a number of sixteenth-century artists based their depictions of the *Allegory of Touch* on Lucas van Leyden's *The Stone Operation*.[18] As discussed above, *Allegory of Hearing* often showed young lovers playing musical instruments. There is no precedent, however, for connecting *Allegory of Smell* to bloodletting. Quite to the contrary, artists like Hendrick Goltzius depicted *The Sense of Smell* in a



Fig 6. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Unconscious Patient (Allegory of Smell)*, without eighteenth-century additions (after restoration), ca. 1624–25, oil on panel, 21.5 x 17.7 cm, The Leiden Collection, New York, inv. no. RR-111.



Fig 7. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Unconscious Patient (Allegory of Smell)*, with eighteenth-century additions (after restoration), ca. 1624–25, oil on panel, 31.8 x 25.4 cm, The Leiden Collection, New York, inv. no. RR-111.



Fig 8. Egbert van Heemskerck, *Portrait of the Barber Jacob Fransz*

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series of *The Five Senses* as young lovers smelling a rose **(fig 11)**. One thus wonders why Rembrandt chose to depict this unusual subject. It is likely that his inspiration was connected to the devastating plague that hit the Netherlands, and in particular Leiden, in 1624, the very year in which he executed *The Five Senses.* Significantly, the many ailments that bloodletting was thought to cure included the plague.[19]

The excitement surrounding the appearance of an unknown early Rembrandt at the auction in 2015, and the enthusiastic reactions to this small panel in the art world, contrasts remarkably with the reservations about the other three panels from Rembrandt's series of *Five Senses* expressed throughout most of the latter half of the twentieth century. Indeed, the evolution of our understanding of Rembrandt's work is fascinating, for it has proceeded in fits and starts. One of the most contentious areas in Rembrandt studies concerns the budding master's early works in Leiden, during the period of his career when he was forging his artistic identity in a boldly aggressive fashion, and when his style evolved with remarkable rapidity. This critical ambivalence is nowhere more evident than in the ongoing critical reactions to *Allegory of Hearing* and *Allegory of Touch* after they were discovered and published in the 1930s.

Three Musicians (*Allegory of Hearing*) was the first of these paintings to be introduced in the Rembrandt literature. In 1933 Vitale Block published *Three Musicians* after H. Schneider had discovered it in the collection of the dealer N. Katz in Dieren.[20] Block not only attributed the painting to Rembrandt, but he also dated it to about 1626, or shortly before. He noted that the painting had been enlarged on all sides at a later date, recognized that the panel represented *Allegory of Hearing*, and postulated that it belonged to a lost series of the five senses. By the time of Block's publication, the painting had already been acquired by the Dutch industrialist and collector Dr. C.J.K. van Aalst who, later that decade, also purchased *Stone Operation* (*Allegory of Touch*).

When Van Aalst's collection was published in 1939, Willem Valentiner, who wrote the introduction to the catalogue, reiterated many of Vitale Bloch's conclusions, particularly that the two panel paintings, which had been similarly enlarged and were the same size, belonged to a hitherto unknown series of *Five Senses*.[21] Unlike Bloch, however, Valentiner asserted that Rembrandt had also painted the additions. As Bloch and Valentiner recognized, the paintings' vibrant colors share qualities found in other early works by the young Rembrandt, among them *The Baptism of the Eunuch* and *Balaam and the Ass*, both executed in 1626.[22] Similarly, the broad, rough brushwork and thick application of paint in the clothing and furrowed brows of the elderly figures are reminiscent of Rembrandt's *Christ Driving the Money-Changers from the Temple*, also 1626 **(fig 12)**. Nevertheless, as they rightly perceived, *Stone Operation*

Hercules and his Family in his Barbershop, 1669, oil on canvas, 70 x 59 cm, Amsterdam Museum, Amsterdam, inv. no. SA 2121.



Fig 9. Lucas van Leyden, *The Surgeon*, 1524, etching, 117 x 76 mm, National Gallery of Art, Gift of the Estate of Leo Steinberg, inv. no. 2011.139.35



Fig 10. Jan Saenredam after Hendrick Goltzius, *The Sense of Hearing*, ca. 1595, engraving, 173 x 123 mm, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., Rosenwald Collection, inv. no. 1943.3.4640.

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and *Three Musicians* probably date slightly earlier than Rembrandt's works of 1626.

The awkward characteristics of *Stone Operation* (*Allegory of Touch*) and *Three Musicians* (*Allegory of Hearing*) troubled many later scholars, and the attribution of these works to Rembrandt was a matter of much dispute until the early 1980s. For example, in 1956, Knuttel rejected the attribution to Rembrandt, and Rosenberg concluded that the paintings were "odd copies after Rembrandt."[23] Bauch proposed that they were the work of a young Gerrit Dou (1613–75).[24] Although in 1968 Wurfbain and Haak renewed the attribution of these paintings to Rembrandt and believed them to be contemporaneous with *Christ Driving the Money-Changers from the Temple,* Gerson, in his 1969 revision of Bredius, felt that an attribution to Rembrandt was unlikely because of the heavy and dry brushwork.[25] In that same year, however, the paintings were exhibited in Montreal and Toronto as by Rembrandt, an attribution with which Held, in his review of the exhibition, agreed. Held proposed a date of execution of around 1622/23.[26] In 1976 the two paintings were exhibited in Leiden with an attribution to Rembrandt, this time dated ca. 1624/25.[27] In 1982, however, the Rembrandt Research Project relegated the works to the "B" list, meaning that Rembrandt's authorship could not be positively accepted or rejected.[28]

In 1987–88 *Stone Operation* (*Allegory of Touch*) and *Three Musicians* (*Allegory of Hearing*) underwent a radical conservation treatment in which their added panel surrounds were removed.[29] By that time, dendrochronological examinations had demonstrated that Rembrandt's original core images were painted on oak panels datable to the early seventeenth century, but that the added panels were much later in date.[30] Moreover, pigment analysis had determined that the overpainting on the extension and original panel of Rembrandt's *Three Musicians* (*Allegory of Hearing*) contained an eighteenth-century pigment.[31] The decision was thus made to remove the painted extensions as well as the extensive overpainting on Rembrandt's original panels.[32] The paintings improved markedly in appearance, and doubts about their attribution to Rembrandt subsided. In volume 4 of *Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, published in 2005, Ernst van de Wetering declared that the restoration of the paintings had removed any doubt of their authenticity.[33] The paintings have, henceforth, been accepted as an integral part of Rembrandt's corpus.

In 2006 Bernhard Schnackenburg revisited the hypothesis that the paintings should date to the early 1620s rather than the period after his six-month apprenticeship in 1626 with Pieter Lastman (1583–1633). Schnackenburg noted that the paintings reflect an unrestrained artistic personality, "one in need of practice but willing to take a risk."[34] Van Straten similarly published them as an example of Rembrandt's pre-



Fig 11. Jan Saenredam after Hendrick Goltzius, *The Sense of Smell*, ca. 1595, engraving, 173 x 123 mm, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., Rosenwald Collection, inv. no. 1943.3.4640.



Fig 12. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Christ Driving the Money-Changers from the Temple*, 1626, oil on panel, 44 x 33 cm, Pushkin Museum, Moscow, inv. no. F-1900.



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Lastman era, executed around 1624/25, solidifying the works' place as among the earliest works executed by the young master.[35]

As many authors have noted, these early paintings are rendered with strong chiaroscuro light effects and striking palette of pinks and light blues that relate stylistically to the innovations of Gerrit van Honthorst (1592–1656).[36] Benesch, however, also saw in Rembrandt's figures the experience of "cruel reality" not evident in the more charming images of the Utrecht Caravaggisti.[37] The most likely source for the transmission of Van Honthorst's manner of painting to Rembrandt is Jan Lievens (1607–74), with whom Rembrandt's early career is deeply entwined.

At the time that Rembrandt executed The Leiden Collection's panels, Lievens had been painting independently in Leiden for nearly four years. Jan Orlers, who knew Lievens well, records that the young artist returned from his apprenticeship with Pieter Lastman in 1621. Nevertheless, Lievens probably continued his training in Utrecht, since his paintings from 1622–24 fully reflect the latest artistic achievements of Van Honthorst and the other Utrecht Caravaggisti.[38] Rembrandt completed his own three-year apprenticeship with Jacob Isaacsz van Swanenburgh (1571–1638) in 1624, but there is no information about what he subsequently did to advance his artistic career.[39] It is entirely possible, even probable, that in 1625 Rembrandt studied with his Leiden compatriot Jan Lievens, perhaps even sharing a studio with his friend before continuing his tutelage under Lastman in 1626.[40] Significantly, the model for the youngest member of the group in Rembrandt's *Three Musicians* (*Allegory of Hearing*) is Lievens himself **(fig 13)**.[41]

In theme and execution, these paintings are remarkably similar to Lievens's work from the first half of the 1620s. Much as with Lievens's *Allegory of Five Senses* of ca. 1622 **(fig 14)**, they feature tightly cropped, half-length figures in brightly colored dress. The tight pyramidal groupings, flattened backgrounds, and strong chiaroscuro light effects are also similar to those in Lievens's *Tric Trac Players* of 1624/25 **(fig 15**). Rembrandt's bold brushwork, which endows the compositions with a sense of immediacy, also resembles that in Lievens's early paintings.

Though Lievens was an important influence on Rembrandt at this stage of his career, *Unconscious Patient* (*Allegory of Smell*), *Stone Operation* (*Allegory of Touch*) and *Three Musicians* (*Allegory of Hearing*) also demonstrate Rembrandt's own inventive personality. Lievens worked on a large scale, which embues his figures with both grandeur and gravitas. Rembrandt's works, on the other hand, are relatively small, and anticipate the scale of painting that he would gravitate toward in the late 1620s. Writing around 1628–29, Constantijn Huygens reflected on the two artists' different manners of painting:

Fig 13. Lucas Vorsterman, after Sir Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of Jan Lievens*, ca. 1632, engraving, 241 x 158 mm., from the *Iconography*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., inv. no. 1990.125.1.59.



Fig 14. Jan Lievens, *Allegory of the Five Senses*, ca. 1622, oil on panel, 78.2 x 124.4 cm, private collection.



Fig 15. Jan Lievens, *Tric Trac Players*, 1624/25, oil on panel, 98 x 106 cm, Spier Collection, London.



Fig 16. Eighteenth-century addition, formerly for Rembrandt van Rijn, *Three Musicians (Allegory of Hearing)*, ca. 1624–25, oil on panel, 21.5 x 17.7 cm, The Leiden Collection, New York, inv. no. RR-105.

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> So off-hand I would venture to suggest that in precision and liveliness, Rembrandt is the superior of Lievens. Conversely the latter wins through grandeur in conception and in the daring of subjects and forms. Everything this young spirit strives for must be majestic and exalted. Rather than conforming to the true size of what he depicts, he gives his painting a larger stature. Rembrandt, on the other hand, would rather concentrate totally on a small painting and achieves a result on a small scale that one looks for in vain in the largest paintings of others.[42]

One important and particularly intriguing question is whether, as has been generally assumed, these tightly cropped images reflect Rembrandt's original intent. Could it be that the eighteenth-century additions actually reflect, and even replicate, Rembrandt's original painted compositions? This question is certainly pertinent after the discovery of *Allegory of Smell*, where the eighteenth-century addition to the panel has remained intact. The tight cropping of the main figure is so illogical—the tips of his fingers and the back of his head are both cut by the edge of the panel—that one doubts the cropping represents Rembrandt's intent. Moreover, the pictorial elements in the addition are so closely integrated with those in Rembrandt's original design that it seems hard to believe they were a later invention. It is difficult to identify the location of the surgeon-barber's tools without further knowledge of the chest that holds them, as revealed by the chest on the addition. Finally and most tellingly, the spout of the rounded alembic (glass distillation vessel) painted on the extension behind the surgeon-barber extends onto Rembrandt's original.

Similar arguments can be made with *Allegory of Hearing*, the only other instance where the eighteenth-century addition is still preserved, although separated from Rembrandt's original panel.[43] Strikingly, the extended hand of the young singer and the candle lighting the scene are both found on the painted extension **(fig 16)**. Candle-lit scenes in Dutch art from this period virtually always include the actual candle, albeit sometimes with the flame visible and sometimes with it hidden. The extended hand of the third singer over the candle is also quite logical for Rembrandt's composition.

One of the fascinating phenomena in Leiden paintings over the course of the seventeenth century is that a number of artists did expand their compositions by inserting panels into larger ones. Generally, when these expansions were made, the core panel was set into a customized, shallow opening in the larger panel, so that the reverse of the larger panel showed no evidence that this procedure had occurred. The reasons for this composite panel structure are not known, but it is remarkable how often one finds it in works by such artists as Gerrit Dou and Frans van Mieris the

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Elder (1635-81).[44] Sometimes these extensions seem to have been conceived and executed at the time that the work was created, and sometimes paintings were enlarged at a later date by the original artist. Occasionally, panels were inserted into larger panels by later artists, who then also expanded upon the original compositions of their predecessors.

The question remains as to whether Rembrandt also worked in this manner when painting the series of *Five Senses.* One solid bit of evidence that supports this hypothesis is related to Rembrandt's painting of 1626, *Christ Driving the Money-Changers from the Temple*, which is signed RHF, exactly as is *Unconscious Patient* (*Allegory of Smell*). This work was also expanded by being inset into a larger panel. Although this extension was removed in 1930 and is now lost, an old photograph of the enlarged composition suggests that the extension was painted by Rembrandt, or at least based on his original composition.[45]

Should Rembrandt have conceived his depictions of the five senses in such a composite manner, then the question remains: what happened to these original extensions that persuaded some eighteenth-century restorer/artist/dealer/owner to remove and replace them? Did the larger panel develop splits or warp? Did the paint not adhere properly to the ground so that it was flaking or otherwise unstable? Unfortunately, there is apparently no way to know what might have occurred that necessitated such a radical reworking of the paintings in this series.

Whatever the historical circumstances surrounding the dramatic structural changes that occurred in the early eighteenth century with *Unconscious Patient* (*Allegory of Smell*), *Stone Operation* (*Allegory of Touch*) and *Three Musicians* (*Allegory of Hearing*), these works offer special insights about Rembrandt's artistic beginnings. In these paintings one sees how he, as a young man, experimented with the colors and brushwork that would so define his later work, and how he began to manipulate light and shade in a manner that became a trademark of his art. Above all, the three paintings reveal Rembrandt to have been, from the outset, impressionable yet independent, influenced yet innovative. In other words, they show the makings of the master.

- Alexandra Libby, Ilona van Tuinen, and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., 2017

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Endnotes

1. Portions of this text are adapted from Ilona van Tuinen's discussion of *Unconscious Patient* (*Allegory of Smell*) in *Jordaens Rembrandt: Two New Early Works*, Paris, 2016, 20–36. The entry has also benefited enormously from editorial comments made by Henriette Rahusen.
2. The painting was consigned by three brothers, Nathaniel, Roger, and Steven Landau, who had inherited it after their parents' death. Their grandfather, Philip Rappoport, who lived in Paterson, New Jersey, probably acquired the painting from a dealer or auction house in the New York area in the 1930s.
3. Notable examples are Paul Jeromack, "Has a long-lost painting by a teenaged Rembrandt been discovered in New Jersey?" *The Art Newspaper,* 23 September 2015; Alanna Martinez, "Mystery Painting Sold in NJ Auction May Be a Long-Lost Early Rembrandt," *Observer*, 23 September 2015, and Gary Schwartz, "Rembrandt's fourth sense: a quick reaction," *The Schwartzlist*, column no. 342, 24 September 2015 (with additional remarks on 25 and 26 September).
4. With the exception of *Unconscious Patient* (*Allegory of Smell*), these later additions have been removed. Only one of these larger added panels has been preserved, the one that once surrounded *Allegory of Hearing (*see figure 16). It is in The Leiden Collection along with Rembrandt's original panel painting (see figure 2).
5. Though traditionally referred to as *Three Musicians*, this painting depicts three individuals in the act of singing, rather than playing instruments.
6. The paintings, which entered the collection of the Dutch industrialist and collector Dr. C.J.K. van Aalst in the 1930s, remained there until 1965 when they went to The Hague on consignment to the art dealer Hans Cramer. Cramer had them for many years, their attribution to Rembrandt very much in limbo. Eventually, in 1984 the paintings were sold to two separate private collectors: *Three Musicians* (*Allegory of Hearing*) to Baron Willem van Dedem and *Stone Operation* (*Allegory of Touch*) to a private collection in the Netherlands. The paintings remained apart until 2007 when they were reunited at The Leiden Collection.
7. *Spectacles Seller* (*Allegory of Sight*), which was in an English collection around 1900, was first published in Josua Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 1: *1625–1631,* Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 1982), 1:410-415, no. B3. At that time it was in the D.H. Cevat Collection in Guernsey. It subsequently went to a private collection in Leiden before being acquired by Museum De Lakenhal in 2012. This acquisition was published by Volker Manuth in the *Vereniging Rembrandt Bulletin* 22/2 (2012): 16–21.
8. This monogram was discovered by Ambrose Naumann.
9. The use of smelling salts or some sort of ammonia-based compound was (and remains) a method for reviving unconscious people that can be traced back to Roman antiquity. In Rembrandt's time, several handbooks and apothecary manuals existed with instructions on how to make *sal armoniacum*, and it is

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likely that smelling salts with this penetrating smell were widely available. It is even reasonable to suppose that painters would have had it on hand, since it was a key ingredient to generate certain colors.

10. His was a multi-dimensional profession. Patients would not only come to barber-surgeons for bloodletting, but also for tooth pulling, haircuts and cosmetic procedures.

11. This interpretation differs from that presented in Ilona van Tuinen, *Jordaens Rembrandt: Two New Early Works*, Paris, 2016, 26, where it is suggested that the patient has fainted after the bloodletting had occurred.

12. This posture can be seen, for instance, in *A Young Woman Being Bled*, a black chalk drawing that Willem Buytwech executed in 1616 (Teylers Museum, Haarlem, inv. O* 23). It also appears in Egbert van Heemskerck's painting *Portrait of the Barber Jacob Fransz Hercules and his Family in his Barbershop*, 1669, oil on canvas, 70 x 59 cm, Amsterdam Museum, Amsterdam, inv. SA 2121 (figure 8).

13. See Ger Luijten, cat. entry for Constantijn Daniel van Renesse, *The Quack,* 1651, in *Mirror of Everyday Life: Genreprints in the Netherlands, 1550–1700*, ed. Eddy de Jongh and Ger Luijten, trans Michael Hoyle (Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (Ghent, 1997), no. 60, 295–298.

14. Lucas van Leyden, *The Surgeon*, 1524, engraving, 11.7 x 7.6 cm (clipped impression), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. See Ger Luijten, cat. entry for Constantijn Daniel van Renesse, *The Quack,* 1651, in *Mirror of Everyday Life: Genreprints in the Netherlands, 1550–1700*, ed. Eddy de Jongh and Ger Luijten, trans. Michael Hoyle (Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (Ghent, 1997), no. 60, 295.

15. Cynthia Kortenhorst-von Bogendorf Rupprath, in *Judith Leyster: A Dutch Master and Her World*, ed. Pieter Biesboer and James A. Welu (Exh. cat. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum; Worcester, Worcester Art Museum) (New Haven, 1993), 310. Nevertheless, as noted by Henriette Rahusen, the Dutch word for "stone" is "steen," and even today the Dutch describe a boil with pus as a "steenpuist." Thus, it is possible that "stone operations" also removed such unwanted protrusions.

16. In Dutch, the phrase "keeping time" (de maat slaan) was etymologically related to "temperance" (matigheid). See: Jane R. Stevens, "Hands, Music, and Meaning in Some Seventeenth-Century Dutch Paintings," *Imago Musicae* 1 (1984): 75–102; Pieter J. J. van Thiel, "Marriage Symbolism in a Musical Party by Jan Miense Molenaer," *Simiolus* 2 (1967/68): 91–99.

17. Peter C. Sutton, *Dutch and Flemish Paintings: The Collection of Willem Baron van Dedem* (London, 2002), 199. See also Jane R. Stevens, "Hands, Music, and Meaning in Some Seventeenth-Century Dutch Paintings," *Imago Musicae* 1 (1984): 75–102; Pieter J. J. van Thiel, "Marriage Symbolism in a Musical Party by Jan Miense Molenaer," *Simiolus* 2 (1967/68): 91–99

18. One also finds depictions of lovers embracing or figures fighting.

19. Daniel R. Curtis, "Was Plague an Exclusively Urban Phenomenon? Plague Mortality in the Seventeenth-Century Low Countries," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 47, no. 2 (2016): 139–70.

20. Vitale Bloch, "Zum frühen Rembrandt." *Oud Holland* 50 (1933): 97–102. The information about Schneider is found in Abraham Bredius and Horst Gerson, *Rembrandt: The Complete Edition of the*

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Paintings (London, 1969), 587, no. 421.

21. Wilhelm R. Valentiner, "Introduction," in *Dutch and Flemish Old Masters in the Collection of Dr. C. J .K. van Aalst, Huis te Hoevelaken*, ed. Joachim Wolfgang von Moltke (Verona, 1939), x. See also in this catalogue pp. 266 and 330, plates 64 and 78.

22. *The Baptism of the Eunuch*, 1626, oil on panel, 64 x 47.5 cm, Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht; *Balaam and the Ass*, 1626, oil on panel, 63 x 47 cm, Musée Cognacq-Jay, Paris.

23. Gerard Knuttel, *Rembrandt: De Meester en Zijn Werk*. Amsterdam, 1956, 240; Jacob Rosenberg, "Die Rembrandt Austellungen in Holland," *Kunstkronik* 9 (1956): 346.

24. Kurt Bauch, *Der frühe Rembrandt und sein Zeit: Studien zur geschichtlichen Bedeutung seines Frühstils* (Berlin, 1960), 227–29; Kurt Bauch, *Rembrandt: Gemälde* (Berlin, 1966), 48.

25. Maarten L .Wurfbain and Bob Haak, eds., *Rondom Rembrandt de verzameling Daan Cevat* (Exh. cat. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal) (Leiden, 1968), 26–27. Abraham Bredius and Horst Gerson, *Rembrandt: The Complete Edition of the Paintings* (London, 1969), 587, nos. 421, 421A.

26. *Rembrandt and His Pupils: A Loan Exhibition* (Exh. cat. Montreal, Museum of Fine Arts; Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, 1969) (Montreal, 1969), nos. 2, 3. Julius Held, "Die Ausstellung 'Rembrandt and His Pupils' in Montreal und Toronto," *Pantheon* 27 (1969): 387.

27. Rudolf E. O. Ekkart and Maarten L. Wurfbain, eds., Geschildert tot Leyden anno 1626 (Exh. cat. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal) (Leiden, 1976), 70–71, nos. S28A and S28B.

28. Josua Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 1: *1625–1631*, Stichting Foundation: Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 1982),1: 399–404, 405–11, nos. B1 and B2. For diagrams of the overpainted areas on these paintings, see figure 4 in each entry.

29. The conservation report by the Dutch restorer, Menno Dooijes, is on file at The Leiden Collection.

30. In 1986 Pieter Klein undertook dendrochronological examination of the two paintings and determined that the core panels of *Stone Operation* (*Allegory of Touch*) and *Three Musicians* (*Allegory of Hearing*) came from the same tree. He noted that the latest growth rings dated to 1597, and postulated a felling date of about 1612. He also determined that the added panels came from the same tree and the youngest growth rings were from 1657. He postulated a felling date of about 1674. His report is on file at The Leiden Collection.

    Dendrochronological examination by Ian Tyers undertaken in October 2016, after the acquisition of *Allegory of Smell*, added more specifics and revised the dating of the added panel surrounding *Allegory of Hearing* (unfortunately, the added panel surrounding *Allegory of Touch* has, in the interim, been lost). Tyers concluded that the core panels used for *Allegory of Hearing* and *Allegory of Touch* came from the same oak tree originating in the eastern Baltic region. As with Klein, he determined that the latest growth ring present on the two panels was 1597, but he concluded that they came from a tree that was felled after ca. 1605.

    The results of Tyers' examinations of the added panels of *Allegory of Hearing* and *Allegory of Smell*

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indicate that they came also from the same tree. The latest growth ring Tyers found was 1705, and he concluded that the outer boards of *Allegory of Hearing* and *Allegory of Smell* came from a tree that was felled after ca. 1713. Since Klein had determined that the added panels on *Allegory of Hearing* and *Allegory of Touch* were from the same tree, it can be safely assumed that the extensions on all three panels were done at the same time.

31. Pigment analysis carried out in 1987–88 by J.A. Mosk at the Centraal Laboratorium voor Voorwerpen van Kunst en Wetenschap in Amsterdam revealed that the extensions and overpainted areas of *Three Musicians* (*Allegory of Hearing*) contained the pigment Berlin blue, which was not commonly used until about 1720 (report on file in The Leiden Collection).

32. A comparable decision to remove the surrounding addition had been made in the early 1930s with the restoration of *Spectacles Seller* (*Allegory of Sight*) by Fa. Schuuring in The Hague (information from the conservation report by Menno Dooijes, on file at The Leiden Collection). For diagrams of the overpainted areas on *Allegory of Hearing* and *Allegory of Smell* prior to their restoration in the late 1980s, see: Josua Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 1: *1625–1631*, Stichting Foundation: Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 1982), 1: 399–404, 405–11, nos. B1 and B2.

33. Ernst van de Wetering et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol 4: *Self-Portraits*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project, 4: 627, nos. I B1 and I B2.

34. Bernhard Schnackenburg, "Young Rembrandt's 'Rough Manner': A Painting Style and Its Sources," in *The Mystery of the Young Rembrandt*, ed. Ernst van de Wetering and Bernhard Schnackenburg (Exh. cat. Kassel, Museum Schloss Wilhelmshöhe, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister; Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis) (Wolfratshausen, 2001), 100.

35. See Roelof van Straten, *Rembrandts Leidse Tijd 1606–1632* (Leiden, 2005), 29–30

36. Wilhelm R. Valentiner, "Foreword," in *Dutch and Flemish Old Masters in the Collection of Dr. C. J. K. van Aalst, Huis-te-Hoevelaken*, ed. Joachim Wilhelm von Moltke (Verona, 1939), xi; Otto Benesch, "An Early Group Portrait Drawing by Rembrandt," *Art Quarterly* 3 (1940): 10; Otto Benesch, *Collected Writings*, ed. Eva Benesch, 4 vols. (London, 1970), 1: 177; Bob van de Boogert, in *The Mystery of the Young Rembrandt*, ed. Ernst van de Wetering and Bernhard Schnackenburg (Exh. cat. Kassel, Museum Schloss Wilhelmshöhe, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister; Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis) (Wolfratshausen, 2001), 152; Christiaan Vogelaar, in *Rembrandt's Mother: Myth and Reality*, ed. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar (Exh. cat. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal) (Zwolle, 2005), 14.

37. Otto Benesch, "An Early Group Portrait Drawing by Rembrandt," *Art Quarterly* 3 (1940): 10. Benesch qualified the influence of Van Honthorst's Caravaggism on Rembrandt generally as filtered through the work of Jacques Callot, who had produced candlelight scenes. Van Straten notes that Rembrandt could have seen Callot's work during the annual Leiden Fair. See Roelof van Straten, *Rembrandts Leidse Tijd 1606–1632* (Leiden, 2005), 27.

38. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Jan Lievens: Bringing New Light to an Old Master," in *Jan Lievens: A Dutch*

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Master Revisited, ed. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. (Exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art; Milwaukee, Milwaukee Art Museum; Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis) (New Haven, 2008), 6.

39. On Rembrandt's apprenticeship with Van Swanenburg, see Ernst van de Wetering and Bernhard Schnackenburg, eds., *The Mystery of the Young Rembrandt* (Exh. cat. Kassel, Museum Schloss Wilhelmshöhe, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister; Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis) (Wolfratshausen, 2001) (Wolfratshausen, 2001), 32–37.

40. Ernst van de Wetering and Bernhard Schnackenburg, eds., *The Mystery of the Young Rembrandt* (Exh. cat. Kassel, Museumslandschaft Hessen; Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis) (Wolfratshausen, 2001), 39. Rembrandt and Lievens are even often presumed to have jointly occupied a studio in the late 1620s owing to the great, and sometimes confusing, similarities of their work at the time. (See S. W. A Drossaers and Th. H. Lusingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen van de inboedels in de verblijven de Oranjes en daarmede gelijke stellen stukken, 1567–1795*, 3 vols. [The Hague, 1974–76], 1:186). There is no direct evidence, however, to support the notion that they shared a studio. As Wheelock has argued, neither Jan Orlers nor Constantijn Huygens, from whom we derive most information on the two artists' early careers, mention anything about a joint space, and their accounts strongly suggest that the painters worked independently. See Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Jan Lievens: Bringing New Light to an Old Master," in *Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master Revisited*, ed. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. (Exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art; Milwaukee, Milwaukee Art Museum; Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis) (New Haven, 2008), 11.

41. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Jan Lievens: Bringing New Light to an Old Master," in *Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master Revisited*, ed. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. (Exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art; Milwaukee, Milwaukee Art Museum; Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis) (New Haven, 2008), 11

42. Constantijn Huygens, *Constantijn Huygens, Mijn jeugd*, ed. Chris L. Heesakkers (Amsterdam, 1987), 70–90. Quoted in Ernst van de Wetering, "Rembrandt's Beginnings: An Essay," in *The Mystery of the Young Rembrandt*, ed. Ernst van de Wetering and Bernhard Schnackenburg (Exh. cat. Kassel, Museumslandschaft Hessen; Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis) (Wolfratshausen, 2001), 26.

43. The appearance of *Stone Operation* (*Allegory of Touch*) and *Spectacles Seller* (*Allegory of Sight*) before the removal of the painted additions can be seen in Josua Bruyn et al. *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 1: *1625–1631*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 1982), 1: 406 and 410. In *Spectacles Seller* a tall curtain appeared on the left and a mirror on the right, and in *Stone Operation* the cupboard on the left extended onto the addition, much as in *Unconscious Patient*.

44. Quentin Buvelot and Otto Naumann, "Format Changes by Frans van Mieris the Elder," *Burlington Magazine* 150 (February 2008): 102–4.

45. See Josua Bruyn et al. *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 1: *1625–1631*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 1982), 1: 92.

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Provenance

- Private collection, England.
- Dr. Cornelis Johannes Karel van Aalst (1866–1939), Hoevelaken, by 1939, by descent to his son Nicolaas Johannes van Aalst, Hoevelaken and Breda [on consignment with G. Cramer Oude Kunst Gallery, The Hague, 1965–79].
- Willem van Aalst, The Netherlands, bought from the descendants of Nicolaas Johannes van Aalst, 1984.
- Private collection, Switzerland (sale, Christie's, London, 7 July 1995, no. 57 [for £386,500]).
- Edgar James Swaab (b. 1958), The Netherlands, until 2007.
- From whom acquired by the present owner.

Exhibition History

- Leiden, Museum De Lakenhal, "Rembrandt als Leermeester," 1 June–1 September 1956, no. 3 [lent by Mr. Nicolaas Johannes van Aalst, Hoevelaken].
- Montreal, Museum of Fine Arts, "Rembrandt and His Pupils: A Loan Exhibition of Paintings Commemorating the 500th Anniversary of Rembrandt," 9 January–23 February 1969; Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, 14 March–27 April 1969, no. 3 [lent by G. Cramer Oude Kunst Gallery, The Hague].
- Delft, Prinsenhof, "25e Oude Kunst- En Antiekbeurs: Der Vereeniging van Handelaren in Oude Kunst in Nederland," 30 August–19 September 1973, no. 64 [lent by G. Cramer Oude Kunst Gallery, The Hague].
- Leiden, Museum De Lakenhal, "Geschildert tot Leyden anno 1626," 7 December 1976–9 January 1977, no. S28B [lent by G. Cramer Oude Kunst Gallery, The Hague].
- Yokohama, Sogo Museum of Art, "Rembrandt and the Bible," 31 October–23 December 1986; Fukuoka, Fukuoka Art Museum, 6 January–1 February 1987; Kyoto, Kyoto National Museum of Modern Art, 7 February–22 March 1987, no. 2 [lent by Willem van Aalst, The Netherlands].
- Stockholm, National Museum, "Rembrandt och hans tid: Människan i Centrum/Rembrandt and His Age: Focus on Man," 2 October 1992–6 January 1993, no. 47 [lent by Willem van Aalst, The Netherlands].
- Leiden, Museum De Lakenhal, on loan with the permanent collection ("Rembrandtjaar"), 2006, no. B146 [lent by Edgar James Swaab, the Netherlands].
- 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 [lent by present owner].

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- Raleigh, North Carolina Museum of Art, “Rembrandt in America,” 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 [lent by the present owner].
- Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, on loan with the permanent collection, December 2012–December 2013 [lent by the present owner].
- Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum, “Emotions: Pain and Pleasure in Dutch Painting of the Golden Age,” 11 October 2012–15 February 2015, no. 24 [lent by the present owner].
- Worcester, Worcester Art Museum, on loan with the permanent collection, 15 February 2015–1 February 2016 [lent by the present owner].
- Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum, “The Promise of Youth: Rembrandt’s ‘Senses’ Rediscovered,” 11 May–28 August 2016 [lent by the present owner].
- Oxford, University of Oxford, Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, on loan with the permanent collection, 1 September–30 November 2016 [lent by the present owner].
- Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis, “Rembrandt’s First Paintings: The Four Senses,” 12 December 2016–2 February 2017 [lent by the present owner].
- Paris, Museé 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].
- Shanghai, Long Museum, West Bund, “Rembrandt, Vermeer and Hals in the Dutch Golden Age: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 23 September 2017–25 February 2018 [lent by the present owner].
- Moscow, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, “The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer: Masterpieces of The Leiden Collection,” 28 March 2018–22 July 2018 [lent by the present owner].
- St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, “The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer: Masterpieces of The Leiden Collection,” 5 September 2018–13 January 2019 [lent by the present owner].
- Abu Dhabi, Louvre Abu Dhabi, “Rembrandt, Vermeer and the Dutch Golden Age. Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection and the Musée du Louvre,” 14 February–18 May 2019 [lent by the present owner].
- Leiden, Museum De Lakenhal, on loan with the permanent collection, January 2024– [lent by the present owner].
- 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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North Carolina Museum of Art; Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art; Minneapolis, Minneapolis Institute of Arts. New York, 2011.

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Technical Summary

The support, a single plank of vertically grained, rectangular-shaped Baltic oak with no bevels, has been thinned. Narrow vertically grained wood shims glued to all four sides have been toned black along the front surface and obscure the panel edges. Animal glue residue along the reverse indicates the panel was previously adhered to an auxiliary support. There are no wax seals, import stamps, stencils, labels or panel maker's marks along the reverse.

This panel was previously set into a four-sided, rectangular, frame-shaped wood addition, on which the painted composition had been extended. This extension, which measured 31.7 x 25.3 cm., included the cupboard, the rear wall, the back of the figure with the candle, and the patient's lower leg. The sides of the enlargement were unequal in width, measuring, respectively, at the lower, upper, left, and right edges: 1.4 cm, 8.6 cm, 3.6 cm, and 3.6 cm. In 1987–88 the added panel surround was removed when the painting was restored.[1] By that time, dendrochronological examinations undertaken by Pieter Klein had demonstrated that the core image was painted on an oak panel datable to the early seventeenth century and that the added panel was much later in date, likely from the late seventeenth-century.[2] Unfortunately, the removed panel is now lost.

The oak panel support is covered by a thin ground, presumably natural chalk, i.e., calcium carbonate. A brown imprimatur layer, visible in the background of the image, was subsequently applied with wide horizontal strokes. The figures and foreground elements are executed in opaque layers of paint. No underdrawing is readily apparent in infrared images captured at 780–1000 nanometers.

The x-radiograph reveals two minor compositional changes. The angle of the fingers of the figure holding the candle were originally diagonally oriented rather than horizontally as seen now. In addition, the upper contour of the patient's head has been shifted downward slightly, or the figure's forearm resting over the patient's head was previously light-colored. The figures and the paint in the background are well preserved. The painting, which is unsigned and undated, has not undergone conservation treatment since its acquisition in 2007.

Further technical information about this artwork is available in The Rembrandt Database.

Technical Summary Endnotes

1. The conservation report by the Dutch restorer, Menno Dooijes, is on file at the Leiden Collection.
2. Klein's report is on file at The Leiden Collection. A comparable decision to remove the surrounding

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addition had been made in the early 1930s with the restoration of *Spectacles Seller* (*Allegory of Sight*) by Fa. Schuuring in The Hague (information from the conservation report by Menno Dooijes, on file at The Leiden Collection). For an image of the painting's appearance and a diagram of the overpainted areas prior to its restoration in the late 1980s, see: Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 1, *1625–1631*, ed. J. Bruyn et al. (The Hague, 1982), 1:399–404, no. B1.

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