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THOMAS KAPLAN AND THE LEIDEN COLLECTION

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Thomas Kaplan, founder of the Leiden Collection, highlights the importance of Rembrandt, Vermeer & the Dutch Golden Age: Masterpieces from the Leiden Collection and the Musée du Louvre and emphasizes the significance of having such a seminal show at the Louvre Abu Dhabi. “My family considers Louvre Abu Dhabi to represent the single most important cultural initiative of our generation – and this exhibition of treasures from the Dutch Golden Age to be our greatest ‘passion project.’”

By bringing The Leiden Collection to Abu Dhabi in collaboration with the Musée du Louvre, we gratefully honour our deep relationship with France as well as our profound partnership with the Emirates, the shared values of which extend from wildlife conservation to preserving endangered cultural heritage. We also pay homage to the genius of Rembrandt and Vermeer, whose transcendent influence and illuminating insights continue to inspire artists and the public across the globe and right up to the present time. More than any other painter's legacy, we believe Rembrandt's ability to touch the soul represents a uniquely fitting expression of this visionary Franco-Emirati project seeking to promote tolerance and the common civilization of mankind."



New York, The Leiden Collection, Image courtesy of The Leiden Collection, New York.

Anastasia Nysten: Here we are at the Louvre Abu Dhabi. How do you feel and what does this exhibition bring or mean to your collection?

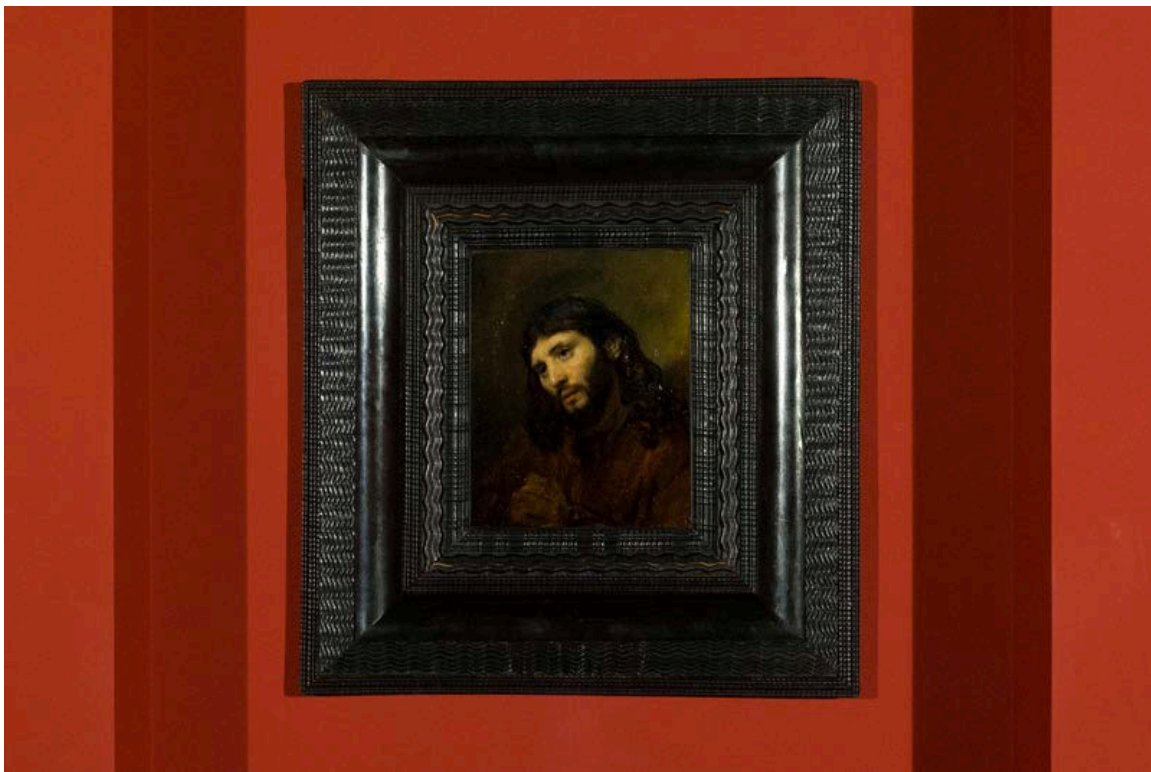
Thomas Kaplan: It is not so much what it means to our collection, the Louvre Abu Dhabi means so much for us personally. The collection has been incredibly received in Paris, Beijing, Chinghai, Moscow and Saint Petersburg, and I hope we have the same kind of warm reception that we had elsewhere. There is no place which has my heart in the same way as Abu Dhabi, even when we opened our first exhibition in Paris at the Louvre, I said my passion project is the one that we'll be doing at the Louvre Abu Dhabi.



Frans Hals (1582/83-1666), Portrait of Samuel Ampzing, 1630.
Oil on copper, New York, The Leiden Collection. Courtesy of The Leiden Collection, New York.

AN: The way you describe it is just beautiful.

TK: Thank you, that's from the heart. I truly do believe that this is the most important cultural initiative of our generation, and to be able to support it by coming here after having shown and reaffirmed in some of the most beautiful museums in the world is something of a triumph. Two years ago, we were looking at 30 paintings, not the 60 or so that we have here. We had 80 in Russia, and people would say you must be so proud. Pride has nothing to do with it, I didn't paint them, if I painted them I would be very proud and that's when I said you know flippantly, it doesn't take a genius to buy Rembrandt, it takes a genius to be Rembrandt. We want people to understand the significance of Rembrandt, to use Rembrandt as a way to build bridges and tear down the walls.



Rembrandt van Rijn, Head of a young man, with clasped hands: Study of the Figure of Christ, ca. 1648-56, ca. 1648-56, Oil and oak panel, 25.5 x 20.1 cm © Louvre Abu Dhabi / Photo by Seeing Things – Ismail Noor.

AN: Is it art or is it particularly Rembrandt?

TK: It's both. I think art in general, beauty, creates an immediate empathy but intellectually to sustain significance and relevance you really need to have added a

dimension on the arc of art history. I think Rembrandt was the most influential painter of all time because he was a revolutionary in his own time. It's not to say that he was deliberately revolutionary, he didn't wear a red beret, but he was just being himself and being accepted. He was a celebrity breaking the rules and he's a contemporary artist. He changed the whole narrative, so it's not just Rembrandt Dutch Golden Age artist, it's Rembrandt by whom [Francisco] Goya was most influenced or [Eugène] Delacroix or Vincent van Gogh, Turner, Picasso, Rodin, Francis Bacon.



Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675), *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*, ca. 1670-72, Oil on canvas, New York, The Leiden Collection. Image courtesy of The Leiden Collection, New York.

When you look at it that way and look at all these artists who were so influential in so many circles, they all one way or the other come back to Rembrandt as being an inspiration, in some cases the key inspiration. Van Gogh and Picasso were obsessed by him. Now, when we started in Paris, obviously France is the home of universal values and they're very partial to me so they indulged that and they embraced it in a way that was astonishing. Then the Chinese embraced it, which is hugely important, for the next 4000 years of Rembrandt relevance, that China accepts Rembrandt as being something that is universal, that there are artists who acknowledged the great influence he had on them. That is huge in terms of posterity.



Jan Lievens (1607-1674), Self-Portrait, ca. 1629-30, Oil on panel.
New York, The Leiden Collection. Image courtesy of The Leiden Collection, New York.

AN: You see this as a constant collection that will not be settling anytime soon, your aim for it is to be constantly out there and exhibited.

TK: We're going to take a little bit of a rest because the paintings need to relax. If anything, we've pushed the envelope, but you know when you have momentum, you take it and the fact that nothing has been damaged is consequence of the fact that we have a great team and so we haven't had the warrant. But still we owe it to the paintings to give them a rest, two years plus of being on tour is maybe unprecedented. Give it a rest and then we'll start again.



Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), Young Lion Resting, ca. 1638-42. Black chalk, white chalk heightening and grey wash, on brown laid paper, New York, The Leiden Collection. Courtesy of The Leiden Collection, New York.

AN: That's very exciting.

TK: A lot. I mean we're invited to go all over the world. We've hit I think the most important places in terms of the first leg where we really wanted to have an impact. I mean it is obviously Western Europe and North America, but a lot of the places where we

really saw a leverage of the impact that we could have would be in – I don't want to call it developing world – but outside of Western Europe and North America. We're pushing that envelope because we see that this is the greatest contribution we can make to the artist by giving back, and we'll continue to do it. We'll do it until the people say we're bored and that hasn't happened yet.

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