

Rembrandt's Stunning Sketch of a Lion Will Be Sold at Auction to Fund Wildlife Conservation Efforts

"Young Lion Resting" is among dozens of Dutch Golden Age artworks from the Leiden Collection that are now on view at the H'ART Museum in Amsterdam



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Young Lion Resting, Rembrandt van Rijn, circa 1638-42 The Leiden Collection

A new exhibition in Amsterdam brings together 75 paintings from the [Leiden Collection](#), a stunning assortment of art from the [Dutch Golden Age](#). Highlights of the show include 18 artworks by [Rembrandt van Rijn](#), including a drawing of a lion that will be sold to fund wildlife conservation efforts.

The H'ART Museum's "[From Rembrandt to Vermeer, Masterpieces From the Leiden Collection](#)" marks the first time that so many works from the Leiden Collection—including all 18 of its Rembrandts—have been publicly displayed in the Netherlands. Owned by collectors [Thomas and Daphne Kaplan](#), the more than 200 paintings and drawings represent one of the world's largest private collections of 17th-century Dutch art, according to a [statement](#).

"The idea was born to bring all the Rembrandts from this remarkable collection to the Dutch capital in celebration of Amsterdam's 750th anniversary," Annabelle Birnie, the H'ART Museum's general director, tells [DutchNews](#)' Senay Boztas. "It is thanks to this special partnership [with the Leiden Collection] that we are able to share these masterpieces with the city and the Netherlands."



Study of a Woman in a White Cap, Rembrandt van Rijn, circa 1640 The Leiden Collection

Born in the Dutch city of Leiden in 1606, Rembrandt developed a reputation as one of the Netherlands' most famous artists during his lifetime. He's known for his [dramatic treatment](#) of light and shadows, particularly in group portraits like [The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp](#) (1632) and [The Night Watch](#) (1642).

"The character and spirit of the Dutch people, as seen through portraiture, constitutes a major component of this exhibition," says the museum in the statement. "One continually senses the indomitable spirit of the Dutch people as one walks through the show, not only when marveling at Rembrandt's formal portraits of wealthy [burgers](#), but also when viewing his expressive [tronies](#) (character studies) of men and women from a range of social classes."

Rembrandt is also famous for his extensive collection of self-portraits, which were coveted by many collectors of his day. As Thomas Kaplan tells [DutchNews](#), the Dutch master "painted probably more self-portraits than any other artist."



Self-Portrait with Shaded Eyes, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1634 The Leiden Collection

“It’s not because he was an egomaniac. It’s because he was a celebrity, and his portraits sold well,” Kaplan adds. “If you had a self-portrait of Rembrandt on your wall, it was as iconic to someone from the Netherlands as having an Andy Warhol *Campbell’s Soup Can*, or a Cy Twombly.”

However, Rembrandt didn’t only draw portraits—and sometimes he even drew animals. *Young Lion Resting* (1638-42), which is now on display at the H’ART, depicts a big cat lying down, wearing a leash around its neck. Its front paws are crossed, and its wide eyes face forward.

Young Lion Resting was the first Rembrandt work Kaplan purchased. Its subject is especially significant to the collector, who co-founded Panthera, an organization dedicated to preserving seven species of big cats, in 2006. Next year, he plans to sell *Young Lion Resting* at auction and donate the proceeds to the organization.



Young Woman Seated at a Virginal, Johannes Vermeer, circa 1670-75 The Leiden Collection

“Wildlife conservation is the one passion I have which surpasses Rembrandt—and I want to attract more people to that cause,” he tells the *Art Newspaper*’s Martin Bailey.

Rembrandt likely observed the lion at an Amsterdam menagerie—a traveling exhibition of animals brought from North Africa to the Netherlands on trading ships of the Dutch East India Company. Per the *Art Newspaper*, the artist may have later used the animal’s likeness in portraits of St. Jerome, who is often depicted alongside a lion (as he supposedly removed a thorn from its paw).

As Kaplan tells the *Art Newspaper*, Rembrandt “gives a greater interior life to a cat than most artists can to a human.”

“From Rembrandt to Vermeer, Masterpieces From the Leiden Collection” will be on view at the H’ART Museum in Amsterdam through August 24, 2025.