

West Palm's Norton Museum to host the country's largest Rembrandt exhibition

WLRN Public Media | By [Wilkie Brutus](#)

Published October 16, 2025 at 6:00 AM EDT



Rembrandt Van Rijn

Rembrandt's "The Unconscious Patient (Allegory of Smell)" is one of his earliest paintings, created around 1624–1625 when he was a teenager. It portrays a fainted young man being revived with smelling salts by an elderly woman, revealing Rembrandt's early knack for blending humor and human emotion.

A rare art experience featuring the work of legendary Dutch painter Rembrandt van Rijn will bring the Dutch Golden Age to West Palm Beach.

It's billed as the largest exhibition of privately held Dutch 17th-century paintings ever organized in the United States.

The portrait exhibition "Art and Life in Rembrandt's Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection," breathes new life into an old world depicting bustling market scenes and slowed-down, intimate moments of everyday people, even during times of war.

"What you'll see is portraits and scenes and settings of people in their life in a very realistic and natural way," Rachel Gustafson, the Norton Museums Chief Curatorial Officer, told WLRN.

"I think for audiences today, that's going to be relevant for people who maybe get stuck on the idea of abstraction or get stuck on the idea of more gestural paint in paintings."

She calls Dutch painting in the early 1600s a "literal translation" between the world that they existed in and the way they depicted it on canvas.

"The reality is, we still gather, we still break bread together and I think those ideas cross time," Gustafson said. "What art does is it pauses those moments and it lets you think about them."

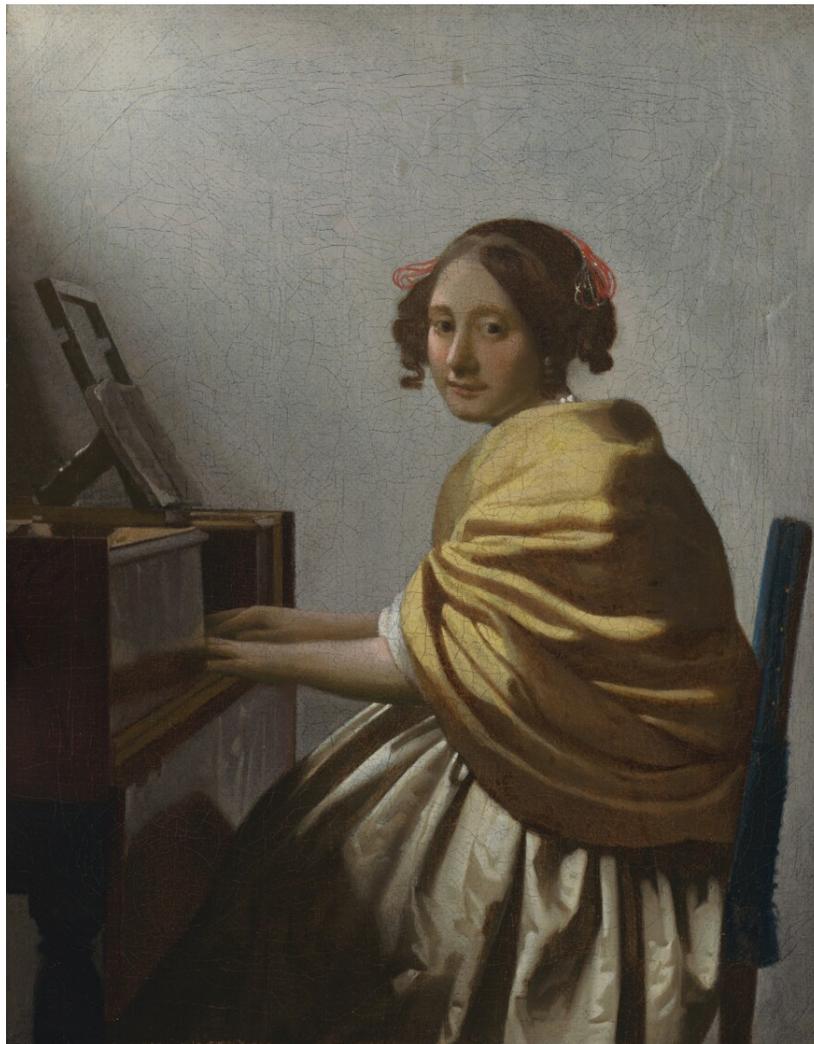
The show features more than 70 works by over two dozen artists. And it offers a sweeping view of 17th-century Dutch paintings never before seen at this scale in the U.S.

Running from Oct. 25, 2025 through April 5, 2026, the exhibition also coincides with the 850th anniversary of Amsterdam's founding – and the 400th anniversary of "New Amsterdam," which is present-day Manhattan.

The exhibition represents a time when painting more commonly reflected the full range of human experience, said Tom Kaplan, the founder of The Leiden Collection, one of the world's top-tier private collections of 17th century Dutch art.

Kaplan told WLRN unlike Spanish and Italian Baroque art movements that focused on Catholic themes and classical beauty, the Dutch were more drawn to subjects that reflected their Protestant values and emerging society.

"The Dutch threw that off," Kaplan said. "And they started to paint subjects that other people really had never gone deep into, and that was everyday life."



Rijksmuseum Carola Van Wijk

Opnamedatum: 2022-05-27; visible light; cross polarisation; Filter lens: Hasselblad mc-circular polarizer; filter lamp: folie lineair polarisatiefilter; STITCH PTG; R01-C01 t/m R09C05; resolution 5,15 micron / 4932 PPI

One of the standout, rare pieces in the exhibition also includes Johannes Vermeer's *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*, which shows a Dutch woman playing a musical instrument.

Paintings from the Dutch Golden Age Dutch illustrate authenticity and emotional pull, and that's why it continues to captivate audiences around the world.

The Leiden Collection has been shown in some of the world's top museums, like the Louvre, the Hermitage, the Pushkin, the National Museum of China and Louvre Abu Dhabi.

Rembrandt's *The Unconscious Patient (Allegory of Smell)*, which is featured in the collection, is one of his earliest paintings, created around 1624–1625 when he was a teenager.

It portrays a fainted young man being revived with smelling salts by an elderly woman, revealing Rembrandt's early knack for blending humor and human emotion. The Dutch legend is also known for his craftsmanship, playing with the use of light and dark contrast.

Rembrandt has always been a popular draw for art aficionados. In the 1600s, Rembrandt was a renowned contemporary artist whose work was regarded as a status symbol in elite Dutch society.

"Having a Rembrandt on your wall was like having a Basquiat or an Andy Warhol or a Monet," Kaplan said. "Everybody knew what it was. And basically it was a statement that you were sufficiently prosperous, that you could own a Rembrandt."

IF YOU GO

What: Art and Life in Rembrandt's Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection

When: Runs from October 25th to April 5th, 2026.

Where: Norton Museum of Art: 1450 S Dixie Hwy, West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Learn more details [here](#)