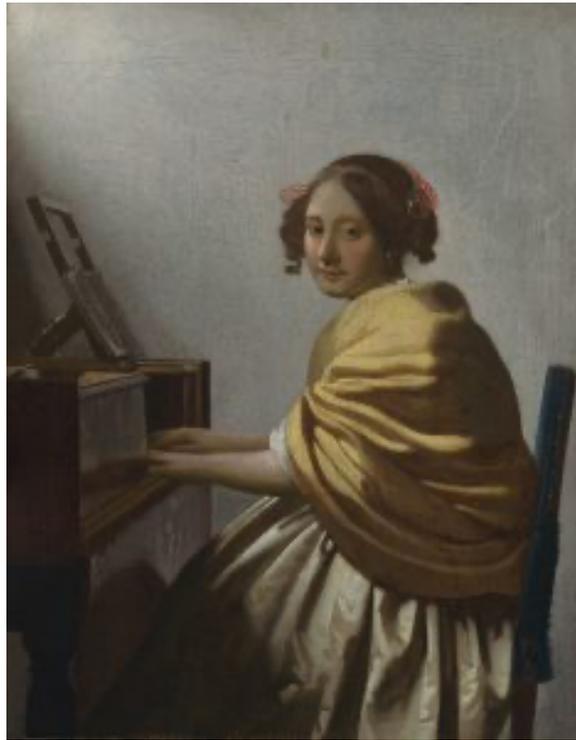


## Major exhibition of 17th-century Dutch art enriches Norton

November 13, 2025 By Jan Engoren



*Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* (c. 1670-75), by Johannes Vermeer. (The Leiden Collection, New York/Courtesy Norton Museum of Art)

The largest show of privately held Dutch 17th-century paintings in the United States, *Art and Life in Rembrandt's Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection*, an exhibit of more than 70 works of art by Rembrandt and 26 other artists is on display at the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach through March 29.

The exhibition coincides with the 400th anniversary of the Dutch founding of New Amsterdam, now New York City. It draws from the Leiden Collection, a privately held trove of more than 220 paintings and drawings assembled by French-American collector Thomas S. Kaplan and his wife, Daphne Recanati Kaplan.

Named for Rembrandt's birthplace, the collection was conceived as a "lending library of Old Masters," and is now considered one of the most significant holdings of 17th-century Dutch art in private hands.

With a mission to build bridges through art, The Leiden Collection, founded in 2003, has traveled the world to the Louvre in both Paris and Abu Dhabi, the Pushkin and Hermitage museums in Russia and the National Museum of China before arriving at the Norton in October. "We are thrilled to be the first to share Rembrandt and Vermeer with my home state of Florida," Kaplan, who spent part of his childhood in Fort Lauderdale, said in a prepared statement.

"Displaying our collection is deeply meaningful to my wife, Daphne, and me," he said. "These works are all part of the cultural heritage of mankind, and it brings us tremendous joy to be in the privileged position of making them so widely available."



***Prayer Before the Meal* (1660), by Jan Steen. (The Leiden Collection, New York/Courtesy Norton Museum of Art)**

Coming back to South Florida is a "full-circle" moment for him, he said, and "a wonderful opportunity to express my gratitude to the broader South Florida community which has played an important role in my life."

Beyond the art world, Kaplan is also the founder of Panthera, a conservation organization dedicated to preserving 40 species of big and small wild cats around the world.

He calls his art collection “the humbling practice of privately collecting for the public good.”

Echoing Kaplan’s commitment to public engagement, the Norton’s director is equally excited to bring this rare collection to South Florida audiences.

“An exhibition like ‘Art and Life in Rembrandt’s Time’ has never been seen before in our region,” says Ghislain d’Humières, CEO of the Norton Museum of Art. “We’re thrilled to host this exhibit – the first of its kind in North America – and viewers will be enthralled not only by the artistry of Rembrandt, but also the depth of talent of other 17th-century Dutch artists.”

Organized by themes such as “Faith and Devotion,” “From Market to Kitchen” and “Leisure Pursuits,” the exhibit highlights the quotidian life of Dutch citizens of that era.

On display is humanity in all facets from formal portraits known as “tronies” and character studies to genre and allegorical scenes to historical subjects. With 17 original Rembrandt van Rijn paintings in three galleries, the exhibit spotlights the artist’s ability to capture human expression and emotion and shows the evolution in Rembrandt’s style from precision to looser, more free-flowing, expressive brushstrokes in later works.



*Minerva in Her Study* (1635), by Rembrandt van Rijn. (The Leiden Collection, New York/Courtesy Norton Museum of Art)

Complementing Rembrandt works are paintings from his contemporaries in Leiden and Amsterdam, including his teacher, Pieter Lastman, students Jan Lievens, Govert Flinck, Ferdinand Bol, Arent de Gelder and Gerard Dou, Rembrandt's first student.

Paintings such as Lastman's history painting, *David gives Uriah a Letter for Joab*, circa 1619; de Gelder's *Old Testament Figure (Probably King Solomon)*, circa 1685; or Frans von Mieris's *Elderly Couple in an Interior*, circa 1650, showcase the day-to-day activities of Dutch life in the 17th century, their customs, ideas, mores and spirituality.

"In that era there was an explosion of innovation," says Elizabeth Nogrady, curator of The Leiden Collection.

She says even though Rembrandt and his peers were depicting the everyday life of four centuries ago, viewers today can still feel a connection to the ordinary people of the 17th century and their lives.

She points to one of the highlights of the show, Rembrandt's 1635 painting, *Minerva in Her Study*, one of the most important Rembrandt history paintings in the collection. During Rembrandt's time, history paintings were considered as the most noble and prestigious art form. Despite being a goddess in Roman mythology, she is depicted as an ordinary woman of her time, with facial features resembling those of his wife, Saskia.

Another masterpiece, *Young Girl in a Gold-Trimmed Cloak* (1632) illustrates the dress of the day and Rembrandt's subtle rendering of skin tones, his mastery of light and dark, his blended brushstrokes on her face using a looser brush technique to render her hair.

What is the expression Rembrandt captures on her face? Is it anger, curiosity, resignation, amusement or acceptance? That's up to the viewer to decide.



***Portrait of Samuel Ampzing* (1630), by Frans Hals. (The Leiden Collection, New York/Courtesy Norton Museum of Art)**

On view in the "Faith and Devotion" section is Carel Fabritius's *Hagar and the Angel*, (1645) the only one of his 13 known paintings to remain in private hands.

Fabritius was Rembrandt's greatest pupil and the inspiration for novelist Donna Tartt's 2013 Pulitzer-prize winning novel, *The Goldfinch*. Another highlight is Johannes Vermeer's *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*, (circa 1670–75) and the sole example of the artist's work in private hands.

Noting that there are only 34 known Vermeers in the world, curator Nogrady says, "It's extremely rare, and we are so excited to have it here at the Norton so people can come and see it."

Additional highlights include Lievens' *Boy in a Cape and Turban*, circa 1631; Gabriel Metsu's *Woman Selling Game from a Stall* (c. 1653-54); van Mieris' *Traveler at Rest*, circa 1657; and works by Jan Steen including his *Self-Portrait with a Lute* (1664) and *Prayer Before the Meal* (1660), of a pious family breaking bread.



***Self-Portrait with Magic Scene (1635-37), by Pieter van Laer. (The Leiden Collection, New York /Courtesy Norton Museum of Art)***

Despite the passage of more than 400 years, Nogrady says these works are still timely and relevant to today's viewers.

"One of the most remarkable facts about Rembrandt and his circle is that their artworks continue to connect with audiences, hundreds of years after they were painted," says Nogrady.

The artists, she says, possess an "uncanny ability" to tap into the continuity of human experience and make their work resonate with contemporary audiences.

As these centuries-old canvases show, we find not just artistry, but echoes of our own lives and humanity.

**If you go**

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

**When:** Through Sunday, March 29, 2026

**Where:** Norton Museum of Art, 1450 S. Dixie Highway, West Palm Beach

**Cost:** Free for members. General admission \$18; seniors \$15; students \$5. Free for children under 12.

For more information: Visit the Museum's website at [Norton.org](https://www.norton.org) or connect on Instagram and Facebook.