

## Florida Exhibition Reveals a Glimpse Into the Art and Life of Rembrandt

The U.S. debut of the Leiden Collection—which includes the only painting by Johannes Vermeer in private hands—is on view at the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach.



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Minerva in Her Study* (1635). The Leiden Collection, New York.

**Annikka Olsen** • November 30, 2025 • [Share This Article](#)

Few artists from history have cast as long of a shadow as Rembrandt van Rijn. He is still a household name centuries after his death and has been a perennial source of inspiration for artists even through today.

Part of the largest private collection of Rembrandt paintings is on view at the Norton Museum of Art—less than a two-hour train ride from Miami if you're in town for the fairs—in “Art and Life in Rembrandt’s Time: Masterpieces from the Leiden Collection.”

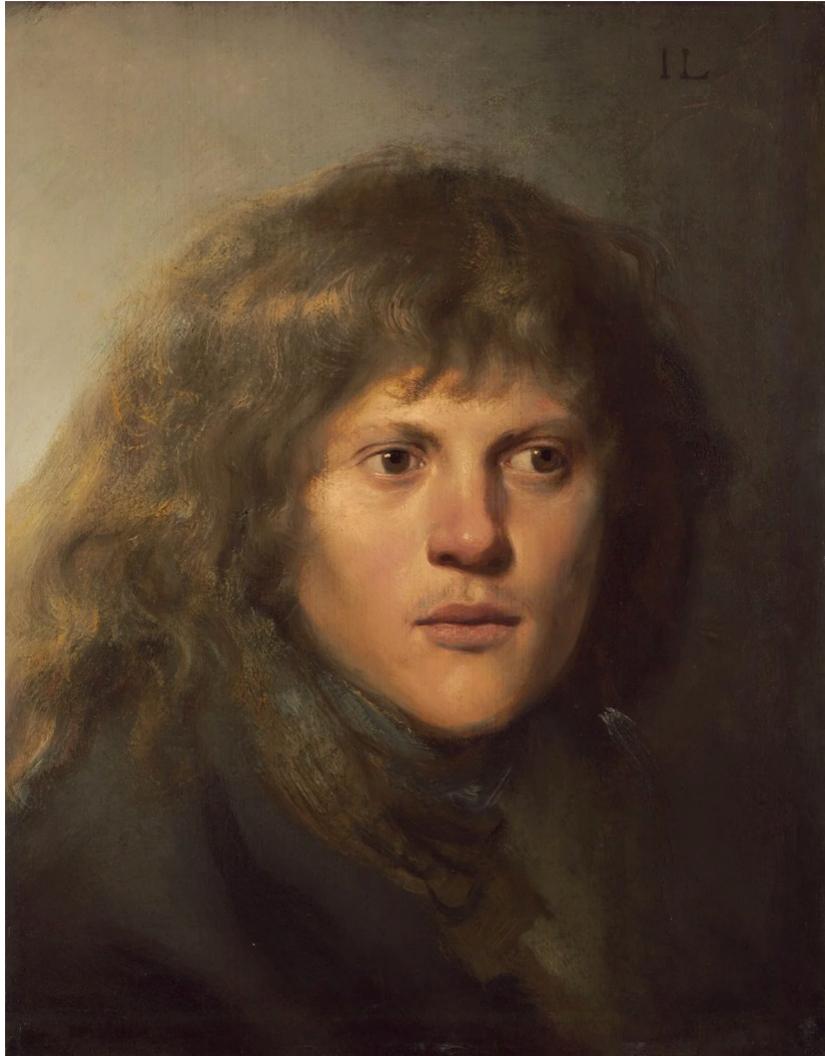
The Leiden Collection, which was recently reported on for its potential to be fractionalized and launched as an IPO, contains the largest number of Rembrandt paintings in the world with 17 in private hands (the largest collection is held by the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam with 22), complemented by over 200 more paintings and drawings by other Dutch Golden Age artists like Frans Hals, Carel Fabritius, and Johannes Vermeer.



Installation view of “Art and Life in Rembrandt’s Time: Masterpieces from the Leiden Collection” (2025).  
Courtesy of the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach.

There are a few factors contributing to the monumentality of the show: it marks the first major exhibition of Rembrandt paintings in Florida; it is the largest exhibition of Dutch 17th-century paintings from a private collection in the United States; and the exhibition features the one and only Vermeer painting held in a private collection. The show was also timed to coincide with the 400th anniversary of the founding of New Amsterdam, now Manhattan, by the Dutch (though its debut in the U.S. being in Florida versus New York on that count is a bit of a head scratcher).

The Dutch Golden Age, which spanned roughly a century from the late 16th century to the late 17th century, often conjures images of lush bouquets of tulips and opulent still lifes. The Leiden Collection, however, takes a distinct focus on figuration. Portraits, self-portraits, genre paintings, and religious scenes reign supreme, highlighting an overarching conceptual focus on humanness.



Jan Lievens, Self-Portrait (ca. 1629–30). The Leiden Collection, New York.

## **Creative Context**

Rembrandt was a prodigious artist, executing hundreds of paintings and hundreds more etchings and drawings. The impact of his colossal oeuvre is compounded by his influence teaching, as his workshop trained dozens of students across his multi-decade career. Some of his most notable students include Ferdinand Bol and Arent de Gelder, both of whom have works included in the collection and show. Also showcased are works by a peer, Jan Lievens, who studied alongside Rembrandt under Pieter Lastman, another inclusion in the exhibition.

Organized thematically rather than by artist, Rembrandt's work intermingled with his contemporaries illuminates the creative context that Rembrandt lived and worked in. The approaches to figuration, technical execution, and composition between each artist's work offers a glimpse into how each forwarded their own practices and ultimately the evolution of Western art.



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Young Girl in a Gold Trimmed Cloak* (1632). The Leiden Collection, New York.

## Details of an Age

The view into Rembrandt's creative context is broadened with works by other significant artists working during the Dutch Golden Age. The curatorial sections of "Art and Life in Rembrandt's Time" reveal insights into the customs, dress, and prevailing attitudes of the 17th century in the Dutch Republic.

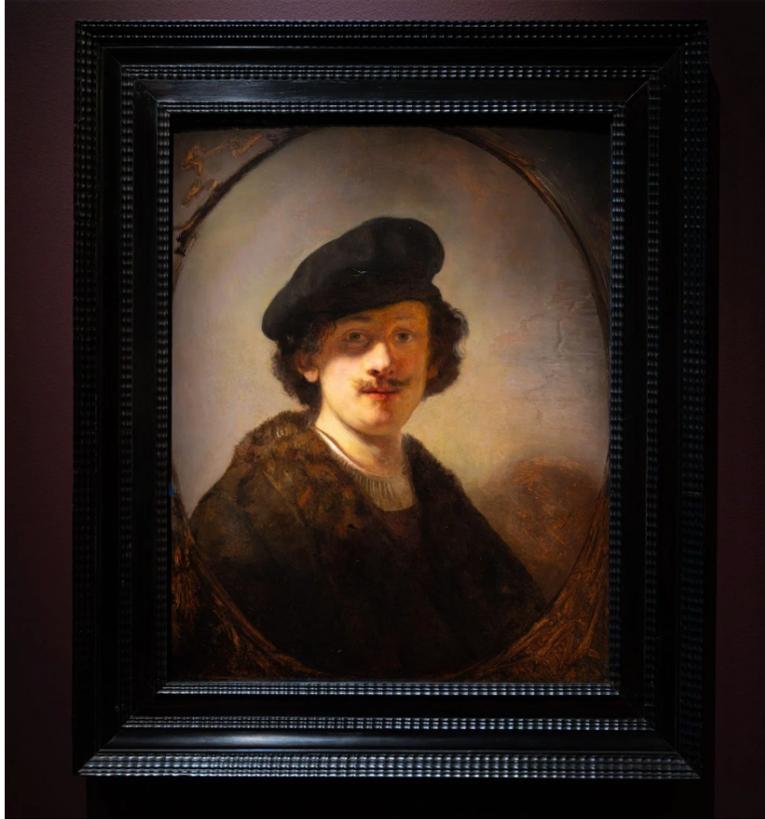
Depictions of people like *Portrait of Samuel Ampzing* (1630) by Frans Hals or Rembrandt's radiant *Young Girl in a Gold Trimmed Cloak* (1632) illustrate the distinctive way modesty and wealth were balanced. In both works, their dress is subdued and minimally decorated, reflecting the virtues of modesty and humility championed by Calvinism. But the details, gold trim, pleated ruff, gold and pearl earrings, allude to the wealth and prosperity of the wearers.



Pieter van Laer, *Self-Portrait with Magic Scene* (ca. 1635–37). The Leiden Collection, New York.

The prevalence and preoccupation with religious themes can be traced into arguably the most fantastical painting on view, Pieter van Laer's *Self-Portrait with Magic Scene* (ca. 1635–1637). Capturing a moment of horror and fear, claws from a demonic creature unseen by the viewer reach toward the artist.

Though not a still life, the items depicted before him tap into the symbolic vernacular that was popular at the time as memento mori—a skull, a recently snuffed candle. An open book shows a series of occult symbols and markings, the type of publication that would have been prohibited in the time.



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait with Shaded Eyes* (1632). The Leiden Collection.

## Rembrandt Revisited

Within the context of the show, as in art historical canon, Rembrandt is a throughline.

Best known for his self-portraits, of which there are several within the show, these often more modest works are intensified when in dialogue with some of his lesser known but considerably more compositionally lavish works, like the imposing *Minerva in Her Study* (1635) or *Unconscious Patient (Allegory of Smell)* (ca. 1624–25). The sheer range of his practice—from restrained paintings of himself to multi-figure genre works—interspersed with the work of his contemporaries brings to light an entire artistic ecosystem that changed the course of art history.

“Art and Life in Rembrandt’s Time” complicates and contextualizes the Old Master’s work rather than presenting its historical importance as a forgone conclusion. His significance both at the time and in following centuries is less that it was anomalous than a singular synthesis and reflection of all the innovations and advancements in artmaking during the Dutch Golden Age.

*“Art and Life in Rembrandt’s Time: Masterpieces from the Leiden Collection” is on view at the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, through March 29, 2026.*