

The Leiden Collection Acquires its 18th Rembrandt Painting

Out of public view for over a century, Saint John on Patmos joins other masterpieces by Rembrandt in the Collection — and its “lending library” of paintings available for loans to institutions worldwide

Depicting the artist’s own son, Titus, as the exiled evangelist, the work adds an important dimension to more fully understanding the master’s creative genius

NEW YORK, September 28, 2026—The Leiden Collection, one of the world’s largest and most important private collections of 17th-century Dutch art, today announced a major milestone in its mission to preserve and disseminate Rembrandt’s legacy, adding an eighteenth painting by the iconic Old Master to its holdings: *Saint John on Patmos* depicting the artist’s son, Titus, as the exiled evangelist. A [scholarly essay](#) about the work and its significance — authored by Dr. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., Senior Advisor to The Leiden Collection — was published on the Collection’s website to accompany the announcement.

“From an emotional and spiritual standpoint, as well as from a scholarly perspective, *Saint John on Patmos* is a revelation,” Dr. Wheelock said. “Its stylistic proximity to the famous *Apostles and Evangelists* cycle of 1661 allows us to see Rembrandt working at the apogee of his expressive powers. The technical evidence revealed during cleaning — especially the vigorous wet-in-wet underpainting — reaffirms the artist’s unmatched ability to imbue sacred subjects with striking humanity. This masterpiece adds an important new dimension in our continued efforts to understand the fullness of Rembrandt’s creative genius.”

Dr. Thomas S. Kaplan, co-founder of The Leiden Collection, said: “To acquire an eighteenth Rembrandt painting for the Collection — an exceedingly rare late Rembrandt that has been tucked away from the public eye for over a century, at that — is a unique privilege. Just as exceptional is the depiction of the artist’s own son, Titus, which sheds captivating light onto their deeply affectionate relationship. This remarkable addition significantly strengthens the overarching narrative that The Leiden Collection traces, from the artist’s earliest signed works in Leiden to his final years in Amsterdam. We look forward to having this most serenely moving masterpiece travel as part of our continuing world tour, bringing ‘the Universal Artist’, Rembrandt, and his school to broad and diverse audiences.”

Executed late in Rembrandt’s life, when he was producing some of the most emotionally charged and technically daring paintings of his career, *Saint John on Patmos* (ca. 1661) has been out of public view for more than 100 years. The meditative work portrays the evangelist John during his exile on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, when he experiences the visions that would become *The Revelation to John* — the last book of the New Testament. Rembrandt captures the young Evangelist after recording these profound events as he reflects on the enormity of the message he has just received.

Rembrandt’s work was previously known to specialists through a grainy black-and-white photograph from the 1920s, at which time it was identified as a portrait of Titus, Rembrandt’s

son. The painting's actual subject was only fully revealed in 2025 because of technical examinations and conservation treatment prior to being auctioned at Sotheby's London in 2025. It was discovered that Rembrandt had depicted in the painting's background a palm tree (inferring the setting of Patmos) and the profile of an eagle (the traditional emblem of the Evangelist), indicating that he had portrayed Titus in the guise of Saint John.

Rembrandt likely chose Titus to model for *Saint John on Patmos* because he recognized that his son's tender and thoughtful demeanor would allow him to capture the essence of this spiritual moment. Saint John was traditionally depicted as a young and beautiful male with long curly hair — a physical attribute of Titus, which Rembrandt emphasized with broad, flowing brushstrokes. *Saint John on Patmos*, thus, is not only a spiritual painting, but it is also an extremely personal image where Rembrandt captured the powerful emotional bond he shared with his only son.

Dr. Kaplan also shared: "As someone profoundly steeped in the study of history, I find the provenance of this picture to be unusually compelling. While Second World War-era lineages have always piqued my curiosity — and we possess multiple paintings that were restituted to their Jewish owners after being stolen by Hitler and Göring — the prior ownership of this work is particularly evocative for me. The complicated personal journey of Fritz Thyssen, an avowed Nazi who turned dissident after Kristallnacht and the outbreak of war with Poland, constitutes a fascinating yet little known vignette from the worst period in modern Jewish history. We could not be more grateful for the dedication and supreme professionalism of Johnny Van Haeften, Otto Naumann, and Ben Hall in enabling this exquisite acquisition to come about."

Out of the Shadows and into the Public Domain

The provenance of *Saint John on Patmos*, which can be traced back to the mid-18th century, is as distinguished as its artistry. The earliest known reference to Rembrandt's painting occurred in 1760, when it appeared in the posthumous sale of the collection of Gerard Hoet II in The Hague. By 1768, it entered the celebrated collection of Gottfried Winckler in Leipzig, where it was documented as one of ten works by Rembrandt in Winckler's holdings. Around 1800, *Saint John on Patmos* appeared in a watercolor that depicted the hanging arrangement of works in Winckler's esteemed gallery. At that time, the painting had an arched format.

Following the dispersal of the Winckler collection, the painting moved through several hands in London and New York and in the early 20th century it was wrongly attributed to Rembrandt-pupil Carel Fabritius. In 1913, Wilhelm Valentiner, the renowned Rembrandt scholar who was then a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, acquired the painting for himself after recognizing that the master had executed the work and that he had depicted his son Titus. Shortly thereafter Valentiner returned to Germany, where he subsequently sold the painting to the collector Dr. Karl Lanz in Mannheim.

In 1926 *Saint John on Patmos* was acquired by Friedrich Thyssen, heir of the prominent mining and steelmaking company, and an important art collector. A German nationalist, Thyssen actively supported the rise of Adolf Hitler, whose career, and the Nazi cause, he helped advance

throughout most of the 1930s. After 1935 Thyssen, a devout Catholic, increasingly fell out with the Nazi Party — first because of its persecution of German Christians, and later in protest of the Kristallnacht pogroms of November 1938. Following Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939, he broke definitively with Hitler and fled to Switzerland. Thyssen was expelled from the Nazi Party and the Reichstag, and his company was nationalized. In February 1940, his German citizenship was revoked. While trying to flee to Argentina, via France, he was arrested by the French secret police and handed over to the German Gestapo. Thyssen was then imprisoned in different concentration camps for the remainder of the war. The painting remained in the family until it was sold at auction at Sotheby's London in 2025 and soon thereafter entered The Leiden Collection.

ABOUT THE LEIDEN COLLECTION

The Leiden Collection, founded in 2003 by Franco-American collector Dr. Thomas S. Kaplan and his wife, Daphne Recanati Kaplan, comprises some 220 paintings and drawings and represents one of the largest and most important assemblages of 17th-century Dutch paintings in private hands. The Collection is named after Rembrandt's native city, in honor of the artist's transcendence. With a core group of 18 paintings by the master himself, it focuses on the works of Rembrandt and his followers — illuminating the personalities and themes that helped unleash one of the greatest surges of artistic creativity in history. To learn more, please visit www.theleidencollection.com, home to an extensive online catalogue and scholarly resource that features detailed entries on each painting, biographies of artists, and essays by leading scholars.

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