REMBRANDT’S ETCHED SKETCHES

AND

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PRINT CULTURE

by

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For Caroline and Lucy
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For a history of printmaking class with Dr. Catherine B. Scallen, I chose a Rembrandt etching, a terrific impression of which is in the collection at the Cleveland Museum of Art, as the topic of a class paper. I was drawn to this etching because of the difference in its appearance from all other prints we had been studying that semester—religious and genre scenes, portraits, and landscapes—the categorization of which allows them to participate in a rich tradition of print scholarship. This etching, for me, prompted questions, about its possible functions and diverse techniques, and it seemed to beckon for more involvement from me, as the viewer. So began the story of this dissertation. For sparking a life-long interest in the study of prints through their outstanding collection and for their support in all ways of graduate students, I thank the former and current staff of the Department of Prints at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

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Rembrandt’s Etched Sketches and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture

Abstract

by

AMY REED FREDERICK

This dissertation examines nine etchings by seventeenth-century Dutch artist Rembrandt van Rijn that are characterized by their variety of finishes and disparate elements on the same plate, and, for some, the feature of rotation of the print required to view each element in its proper orientation. Despite the intensity of scholarly examination given to Rembrandt’s prints historically, these etched sketches have been treated in a cursory manner with little or no connection to other works in Rembrandt’s oeuvre, and they have certainly never been studied extensively as a group. This dissertation asserts that the etched sketches, while seemingly on the margins of Rembrandt’s oeuvre, should be viewed as dynamic objects through which Rembrandt brought together many of his most recognizable artistic motifs and techniques in new and challenging ways, essentially creating ambiguous images that simultaneously demonstrate his skill and provide opportunities for deeper engagement from viewers. The etched sketches provide access—through varied finishes, disparate elements on the same sheet, and the element of rotation—to how Rembrandt himself thought through their formation. With consideration of the etched sketches, the conception of Rembrandt as a printmaker becomes not only more provocative, but also more playful.
INTRODUCTION

Among Rembrandt’s many etchings of landscapes, mythological figures, religious scenes and portraits, there is a little print depicting the artist’s self-portrait surrounded by images of beggars. (fig. 1) The subject matter is familiar to Rembrandt scholars: His self-portrait recalls his various self-portrait studies from the early 1630s, and the beggars closely resemble beggars found in his other etchings from the same time period. The wide-ranging degrees of finish found in this print are also characteristic of Rembrandt’s work, and are representative of his remarkable skill with the etching needle. An unusual aspect of this tiny etching, approximately 10 x 10 cm., is that in order to see each of the figures in its proper orientation, the print needs to be rotated ninety degrees, three times. (figs. 1a-1c)

This little print, perhaps because of its modest size and puzzling combination of both familiar and atypical elements for Rembrandt, has been easily overlooked in his printed oeuvre. To do so is a mistake, however, because engagement with this small etching, and others like it, prompts a new understanding of Rembrandt as a printmaker. While the scholarship surrounding Rembrandt’s prints has been particularly thorough, it has also been predominantly straightforward, creating an impression of an extraordinarily skilled but fairly earnest or solemn etcher, one who made his reputation excelling at experimental techniques, but who did not necessarily participate in intellectual diversions as evidenced by his etchings. This characterization of Rembrandt as a printmaker, however, is too narrow, and through a close analysis of this etching and others like it, I
present a Rembrandt who is more cerebrally and artistically playful than previously thought.

Between the years of 1631 and 1651, Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) etched several prints that are characterized by their variety of finishes and disparate elements on the same plate, and, for some, the feature of rotation of the print required to view each element in its proper orientation. In this study I examine these nine prints together as a group, naming them the “etched sketches,” and assembling them because of their common facture, combination of imagery, and potential appeal for Rembrandt’s contemporaries. The nine etchings are (using Adam von Bartsch’s titles and numbers):

- Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads, c. 1630 (fig. 2, B. 366);
- Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads, c. 1630 (fig. 3, B. 374);
- Sheet of Studies with Head of Rembrandt and Beggar Couple, c. 1631 (fig. 1, B. 363);
- Studies of the Head of Saskia and Other Women, 1636 (fig. 4, B. 365);
- Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched, c. 1637 (fig. 5, B. 367);
- Three Heads of Women, One Asleep, 1637 (fig. 6, B. 368);
- Sheet of Studies with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, c. 1641-2 (fig. 7, B. 369);
- Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap, c. 1645 (fig. 8, B. 372); and
- Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child, c. 1651 (fig. 9, B. 370).1 For formal descriptions of these nine prints, in addition to relevant information about states, materials, and inscriptions, see the appendix at the end of the dissertation.

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1 There are other etchings by Rembrandt that exhibit some of these qualities, but not all of them. For example, Two Studies of Beggars from 1629 (B. 182) illustrates two men of different finishes, but has not always been attributed to Rembrandt. Bearded Old Man with High Forehead from 1630 (B. 314) and Bald Old Man with Short Beard from 1635 (B. 306) both contain hatched lines that seem unrelated to their representation, yet remain single figures on a sheet, unlike the multiple motifs that characterize the etched sketches.
Rembrandt’s etchings are among the most catalogued works of art in the world, with hundreds of publications dedicated to their study. In fact, the very first catalogue raisonné was devoted to Rembrandt’s etchings.2 Despite the increasing attention in recent years to Rembrandt’s achievements as an etcher, the nine prints that are the subject of this dissertation have generated comparatively little interest among art historians. From the earliest catalogues, where the etchings were relegated to the back of the books and categorized as “studies” or “griffonnements,” to more recent publications, where they have been treated in a cursory, one-dimensional manner or dismissed as “etched model sheets” with little or no connection to other works in Rembrandt’s oeuvre, the etched sketches have not garnered the intensity of scholarly examination that Rembrandt’s other prints have. They have certainly never been studied extensively as a group.

The exceptions to this rule are the important contributions of art historians Christopher White and Stacey Sell, whose work on multiple etched sketches by Rembrandt, rather than an isolated one or two, has influenced the multidisciplinary approach of this dissertation.3 In addition, some recent scholars have begun to focus on those works of art that are considered to be outside the boundaries of traditional art history, often with very stimulating results: dissertations by Veronica White and Alexandra Griest on Italian drawings are two such examples that informed this

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2 Edme-François Gersaint, Catalogue raisonné de toutes les pieces qui forment l’oeuvre de Rembrandt (Paris, 1751).

3 Please see Christopher White, Rembrandt as an Etcher: A Study of the Artist at Work, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999) and Stacey Sell, “‘Quicke to Invent & Copious to Expresse’: Rembrandt’s Sketch Plates.” The Unfinished Print, exh. cat. (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2001).
dissertation.\footnote{Veronica Maria White, “Serio Ludere: Baroque Invenzione and the Development of the Capriccio” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2009) and Alexandra Arvilla Greist, "Learning to draw, drawing to learn: Theory and practice in Italian printed drawing books, 1600—1700" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2011).} Finally, papers given at recent conferences and symposia also indicate growing interest in not only previously overlooked works, but specifically in the etched sketches.\footnote{Most notably, the talk given by Victoria Sancho Lobis, “Invention as Instruction: Rembrandt’s “Academic” Prints and Their Intended Audience” (lecture, the Rembrandt symposium organized by Catherine B. Scallen and Jon L. Seydl at the Cleveland Museum of Art in conjunction with the exhibition Rembrandt in America, April 15, 2012). Lobis argued that several of the etched sketches were in fact Rembrandt’s version of traditional academic prints, based on their similar dimensions and repeated motifs. I will argue against this proposal in the second chapter of this dissertation.} This dissertation engages with the nascent scholarly dialogue surrounding these types of images.

I argue in this study that the etched sketches, while seemingly on the margins of Rembrandt’s \textit{oeuvre}, should be viewed as dynamic objects through which Rembrandt brought together many of his most recognizable artistic motifs and techniques in new and provocative ways, essentially creating ambiguous images that simultaneously demonstrate his skill and provide opportunities for deeper engagement from viewers. The various subjects illustrated in each of the etched sketches closely relate to general themes found within his other etchings, drawings, and even paintings. These are themes that captured Rembrandt’s interest throughout his career. The etched sketches, which combine these disparate elements into individual images, act as literal connections between these themes that were significant for Rembrandt. In addition to bringing these subjects together, among the various degrees of finish seen in the etched sketches, several finishes are closer to those found in drawing, and connect the media of etching and drawing in Rembrandt’s \textit{oeuvre} in ways that no other objects do.\footnote{The question of finish will be further explored in chapter three of this dissertation.} These combinations of
motifs and finishes found in the etched sketches form more indeterminate, stimulating images than one has been led to expect from Rembrandt.

Finally, in part because of the indeterminancy Rembrandt created both in facture and subject, I contend that the etched sketches were likely highly valued by Rembrandt connoisseurs, particularly those four that exhibit the unusual element of rotation. The rotation of the plate necessary to view each of the elements in their proper orientation demands active involvement from the viewer, and Rembrandt prompted this high level of participation through the required rotation. Initially drawn in by motifs that were recognizably Rembrandt’s, and after admiring the varying levels of finish reflected in each print, the viewer needs to physically manipulate the etching to see each figure in its proper orientation, initiating an act similar to that done by the artist during the print’s creation, allowing the viewer a coveted “glimpse” into the artist’s mind. This arguably lively act would have appealed to audiences in the seventeenth century, as it still does today.

In order to broaden the perception of Rembrandt as a printmaker, I first delineate and then address the interpretations that have limited an understanding of the potential significance of the etched sketches. The first chapter of the dissertation will investigate chronologically how these etchings have been interpreted in Rembrandt print literature since the mid-eighteenth century, highlighting those instances where authors have contributed to a greater understanding of the technique, function or context of the etched sketches. These nine prints have appeared in nearly every catalogue of Rembrandt’s etchings, and their authorship has never been debated, yet they have rarely been the subjects of sustained inquiry. As the historiographic sources move from catalogue
raisonnés to exhibition catalogues, scholarly attention also shifts from the connoisseurship and collecting of the etched sketches to their technique and their relationship to other works in Rembrandt’s oeuvre. The first chapter ends with a discussion of the Rembrandt Research Project’s brief commentary on the etched sketches.

In chapter two, I address the primary past categorizations (as described in chapter one) of the etched sketches as pages from a model book or preparatory works. While drawn model books were a standard part of a painter’s workshop from late medieval times onward, printed drawing or model books first appeared in the Netherlands at the start of the seventeenth century. These drawing books formed an integral component in the transmission both of practical artistic skills, such as providing more permanent versions of drawings available for copying, and of Italian theoretical concerns to the north. The tenets of influential artists, architects and authors such as Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, Giovanni Battista Armenini, Leonardo da Vinci, Leon Battista Alberti, Cennino Cennini and Giorgio Vasari were disseminated through Dutch reprints of the model books of pupils of the Carracci, such as Odoardo Fialetti’s drawing manual of 1608. Although this dissertation will briefly consider these earlier Italian authors and drawing books for their possible influence on Dutch artists, including Rembrandt, it is an analysis of the Netherlander Abraham Bloemaert’s *Tekenboek* that is the most rewarding for this discussion. The first edition of Abraham Bloemaert’s *Tekenboek* was published in around 1650 by his son Frederick, and contained approximately 100 plates arranged in five sections, with the designs for the prints stemming from Abraham’s inventions. The analysis of Bloemaert and the role of drawing and printmaking in his career as an artist and teacher, as well as an examination of the types of images found in a publication like
the *Tekenboek*, will provide a contrast to Rembrandt’s group of etched sketches. While one of the etched sketches slightly resembles one of these typical pages from a model book, it will be immediately evident that the majority of them do not.

After questioning the idea that the etched sketches were produced as pages for a model book, the second chapter ends with an examination of the etched sketches as possible preparatory works. Much of earlier Rembrandt scholarship has focused on connecting figures from many of Rembrandt’s etchings, including the etched sketches, to more finished works, such as larger prints and paintings. After describing the proposed arguments for the etched sketches as preparatory, I contend that the etched sketches were not preparatory in any way, and in fact, viewing them as preparatory sublimates them to a lesser status among Rembrandt’s etchings. Instead, I assert that these prints occupy a status of their own within Rembrandt’s oeuvre, as the most generative of images. As Alexandra Griest’s dissertation illuminates, the scholarly definitions of these types of prints and drawings as definitively model sheets or certainly preparatory are becoming less fixed, and this chapter contributes to this newer, more fluid understanding.

The evidence presented in the third chapter of the dissertation also supports the conclusion that most of the etched sketches were not meant to function as study or preparatory material; in fact, unlike printed model sheets, they were published in large enough editions to be sold as single sheets on the open market or to private collectors. The chapter begins with an analysis of the editions of each of the etched sketches, as a method of determining which prints were meant for a larger audience. All but the least common etched sketches, *Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads* (fig. 2) and *Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads* (fig. 3), were printed in large enough editions to be sold to the public.
The chapter continues with an examination of the qualities of the etched sketches that would have appealed to collectors, namely the variety of finishes present in each print, for it appears that those meant for the market were valued by collectors primarily for their seeming lack of traditional finish. Erik Hinterding, the foremost scholar of Rembrandt’s watermarks, and others have asserted that in several of his prints, Rembrandt “translated” the idea of a sketchy finish usually esteemed in drawings into print media. Building upon Hinterding’s ground-breaking research on Rembrandt’s watermarks, the third chapter concludes with a discussion on this idea of translation between media, and how by attempting to mimic one medium with another, Rembrandt creates a sense of indeterminacy about the very nature of these objects. The etched sketches, then, can be seen as the most successful examples of Rembrandt’s goal in capturing the sketchiness valued by the market in a different medium.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation focuses on the notable consistency of subjects among the etched sketches. Although each motif individually was and is familiar to Rembrandt’s audiences, the combination of them within each etching encourages a lively sense of indistinctness and closer examination. The nine sheets include nearly fifty individual studies, which, when viewed together, are dominated by images of Rembrandt’s wife Saskia, tronies, sleeping women, beggars, and his self-

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7 Erik Hinterding, *Rembrandt Etchings from the Frits Lugt Collection*, 2 vols. (Bussum: Thoth Publishers, 2008), 603. In addition to Hinterding, several scholars have engaged with this topic, such as Ger Luijten. In the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition *Rembrandt the Printmaker*, Luijten wrote that several of Rembrandt’s etchings seemed to capture the immediacy of drawn sketches, including the etched sketches. (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2000), 11-22.
portraits. These subjects also reflect the chief intellectual concerns in Rembrandt’s overall oeuvre, as witnessed by their repeated appearance in his work throughout his career, in all three media of drawings, prints, and paintings.

In chapter four, the discussions take as their starting point the premise that given the attention paid to these subjects throughout Rembrandt’s oeuvre, the subject matter of the etched sketches was significant, and would have been familiar to Rembrandt’s audiences and thus readily associated with his other works. Rembrandt’s return again and again to these subjects throughout his career suggests once more that the etched sketches were not arbitrary experiments, but instead were part of a larger programmatic effort highlighting aspects of Rembrandt’s artistic process, and worked together to form puzzles intriguing for his viewers. The images of Rembrandt’s wife Saskia found in the etched sketches, for example, are analyzed in this chapter within the context of his drawings, paintings and other etchings of her to discern connections among several media and to hint at why her portrait was included among images of others. In this investigation, the shared pose of her head in her hand will be considered (fig. 5), and the question created by her appearance among tronies, or unidentified heads or busts that may illustrate specific facial expressions or costumes. It is noteworthy that Saskia was depicted among unidentified sitters, because the viewer is prompted to attempt to identify the figures, as

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8 In the seventeenth century in northern Europe, tronies were usually heads, busts, and even half-figures clothed in a variety of costumes, that sometimes served as physiognomic studies as well. As Marieke de Winkel has defined tronies, they represented “distinctive heads of different people.” Although usually unidentified, models were still used for depictions of tronies, at times even the artist himself. That is, self-portraits could function primarily as tronies, especially if a costume was associated with a specific connotation such as piety, youth, or transience, or if a feature such as the artist’s hair was altered significantly, causing uncertainty about the similarity. Please see Marieke de Winkel’s essay, “Costume in Rembrandt’s Self Portraits” in Rembrandt by Himself, exh. cat. (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1999), 60. De Winkel also discussed tronies in her book Fashion and Fancy: Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt’s Paintings (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).
either Saskia or not—a possible game in which many scholars have unknowingly participated. Similarly, I will delineate the connotations that beggars had in the seventeenth century, to illuminate Rembrandt’s unusual decision to include his own portrait among images of beggars. The combination of these elements demonstrate the capacity of the artist to combine the familiar in new and imaginative ways, a quality that like different degrees of finish, would have appealed to collectors of Rembrandt’s work.

The fifth chapter of the dissertation centers on the unusual element of rotation in four of the etched sketches, and how this quality expands the possibilities of viewing the four of them. Each of the prints necessitates a turn of the plate in order to consider each figure from its proper perspective: *Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc.* (fig. 1); *Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc.* (fig. 7); *Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap* (fig. 8); and *Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child* (fig. 9). Rather than merely exemplifying an efficient use of space, the element of rotation provides a cue for how to read these images by connecting them to a long tradition of visual diversions that demand engagement from the viewer.9 The chapter examines the element of rotation in the etched sketches through the lens of Dario Gamboni’s theory of “potential images,” as well as Alexander Nagel and Lorenzo Pericolo’s model of “subject as aporia,” among others.10 These authors note that the indeterminancy found in ambiguous images

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9 Throughout the dissertation, I use the terms “engage” and “engagement” to refer to a conscious act on the part of the viewer to become intellectually involved with an image.

demands active participation from the viewer to discern what is represented. The etched sketches demonstrate these theories as explicated through the concerns of the previous three chapters: some of them resemble model sheets, but not closely enough, and occur in too large of editions, to function as such; the various states of finish prompt close resemblance to works in other media; their combination of subjects is initially unclear, and yet connected to other works in Rembrandt’s oeuvre, and the element of rotation complicates notions of even the proper way to view them. In addition, this chapter notes that two of Rembrandt’s most influential predecessors, Albrecht Dürer and Jacques de Gheyn II, also produced several well-known indeterminate images in drawing and print, providing an early-modern context for Rembrandt’s etched sketches. In fact, the discussion in chapter five confirms that the appearance of the four etched sketches that necessitate rotation should not be understood as the product of mistakes or accidental musings, but as purposeful.

These nine etchings have been grouped together for the first time as the focus of this dissertation because of the varying degrees of finish and disparate elements that appear in each print, as well as the necessary rotation demonstrated by four of them. While each etched sketch displays these characteristics to a different extent, they all prompt active engagement from the viewer. Each one encourages the viewer to look closely, to physically handle it as the motifs are examined and the finishes are appraised, and as the prints are turned to see each of the images in their proper orientation. These etched sketches provide access to how Rembrandt himself thought through their formation. With consideration of these etched sketches, the conception of Rembrandt as a printmaker becomes not only more provocative, but also more playful.
CHAPTER ONE: HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE ETCHED SKETCHES

Introduction

As previously noted, while Rembrandt’s etchings are among the most catalogued works of art in history, discussions about these nine etched sketches have been mainly descriptive in nature, not analytical. The authorship of these nine prints has not been debated, and they have appeared in nearly every catalogue of Rembrandt’s etchings, yet they rarely have been the subjects of sustained inquiry. This chapter will investigate how these etchings have been interpreted in Rembrandt print literature since the mid-eighteenth century, however briefly, with those instances highlighted where past authors have contributed to a greater understanding of the technique, function or context of the etched sketches.

Seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century authors on Rembrandt: the classicist critique

Beginning shortly after his death, Rembrandt’s earliest biographers criticized him for imitating nature instead of adhering to the standards of ideal beauty as set forth by the tenets of classicism: he did not follow the rules of art and he did not imitate the antique. This type of condemnation was not surprising, as most of these artists and critics were writing in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when classicism, defined by clarity, structure and attention to the ideal, was on the rise, occurring simultaneously with the founding of art academies throughout Europe.1 It is apparent, however, that much of

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1 See J.A. Emmens, Rembrandt en de regels van de kunst (Amsterdam: G.A. van Oorschot, 1979) for further information about Rembrandt and the classicist critique.
this criticism was aimed at Rembrandt’s painting technique. His etchings, on the other hand, were nearly universally praised.

One of the first biographies of Rembrandt, however brief, appeared in Cornelis de Bie’s (1627-c. 1715) *Het Gulden Cabinet Van de Edel Vry Schilderconst*, published in 1662 (seven years before Rembrandt’s death).\(^2\) In his very brief entry on Rembrandt (only sixteen lines), the Antwerp-based notary and rhetorician praised Rembrandt’s ability with composition (*ordonnantien*), portraits (*conterfeytsels*), and etchings (or work on *copre plaet*). Most scholars have concluded that De Bie most likely did not base his opinion on visual examination of the works, as the painting he chose to praise (*The Wedding of Samson*, fig. 17) was precisely the one that Philips Angel singled out twenty years earlier in his Leiden address given on St. Luke’s Day.\(^3\)

The next biography was written by Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627-1678), Rembrandt’s former pupil, whose *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst, anders de Zichtbaere Werelt*, was published in Rotterdam in 1678. The book did not include traditional biographical details about Rembrandt; instead, Van Hoogstraten

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\(^2\) Cornelis de Bie, *Het Gulden Cabinet Van de Edel Vry Schilderconst*, intro. G. Lemmens (Doornspijk: Davaco Publishers, 1971). The *Gulden Cabinet* was most likely commissioned by the Antwerp artist and publisher Johannes Meyssens (1612-1670), in the tradition of Karel van Mander’s *Het Schilderboeck* of 1604.

\(^3\) Seymour Slive, *Rembrandt and His Critics: 1630-1730* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1953), 55. As part of a day of festivities to advocate for guild rights for Leiden painters, artist Philips Angel gave an influential speech defending painting as the highest of arts. Within the address, Angel praised Rembrandt’s *Wedding of Samson* for its historical detail and described the painting fully enough that others may have borrowed his language. Please see Eric Jan Sluijter’s essay, “In Praise of the Art of Painting: On Paintings by Gerrit Dou and a Treatise by Philips Angel in 1642,” originally published in Dutch in 1993, but translated into English as chapter four of Sluijter’s *Seductress of Sight: Studies of Dutch Art in the Golden Age*, trans. Jennifer Kilian and Katy Kist (Zwolle: Waanders, 2000) for a thorough discussion on the contemporary impact of Angel’s speech.
related stories about his time in Rembrandt’s studio. Throughout his treatise, Van Hoogstraten praised Rembrandt’s use of color and depiction of flesh, and cited his chiaroscuro as worthy of study for the new student. He did not devote much attention to Rembrandt as a printmaker.

Van Hoogstraten’s main complaint—that Rembrandt was to be emulated, but unfortunately he did not follow the rules—is similar to that of the following biographer, Joachim van Sandrart’s. Van Sandrart (1606-1688), a German painter, was the author of Teutsche Akademie der Edlen Bau-, Bild-, und Mahlerey-Künste, published between 1675 and 1680. It has been called the first encyclopedic history of art, including biographies of artists (many of whom he may have known personally from his time in Amsterdam in the 1630s and 1640s), theoretical treatises on the three primary arts, a paraphrasing of Ovid’s Metamorphosis taken from Karel van Mander, and a translation


6 Slive, *Rembrandt and His Critics*, 97. Van Hoogstraten did not write very much about Rembrandt as an etcher, although, as Celeste Brusati and Eric Jan Sluijter have discussed, it is evident that he was influenced by not only Rembrandt’s production as a painter, but as an etcher as well, specifically with Rembrandt’s etched self-portraits. See Brusati, *Artifice & Illusion*, 24-45, and Eric Jan Sluijter, *Rembrandt and the Female Nude* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007). In addition, Thijs Weststeijn placed Van Hoogstraten at the center of art theoretical dialogue in the mid-seventeenth century, arguing that these conversations began during his time in Rembrandt’s studio in *The Visible World: Samuel van Hoogstraten’s Art Theory and the Legitimation of Painting in the Dutch Golden Age*, trans. B. Jackson and L. Richards (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008). In 2010, Ernst van de Wetering and the Rembrandt Research Project published the fifth volume of the *Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, which included a detailed analysis of Rembrandt as an artist occupying an historical position between art theorists Karel van Mander and Samuel van Hoogstraten.

7 There is now a complete edition of *Teutsche Akademie* online, created by Sandrart.net and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. Please see the scholarly annotated online edition, edited by Thomas Kirchner, Alessandro Nova, Carsten Blüm, Anna Schreurs, and Thorsten Wübbena, 2008-2012. http://ta.sandrart.net/en/
into German of Vincenzo Cartari’s *Imagini degli dei degli antichi colla sposizione.*

In his historiographic survey of Rembrandt criticism, Seymour Slive provided a detailed analysis of Sandrart’s biography of Rembrandt. Slive noted that Sandrart, like Van Hoogstraten, praised Rembrandt’s use of chiaroscuro and color. According to Sandrart, Rembrandt was a good collector, but he associated with the wrong people—he did not know how to “keep his station,” and did not follow “our” rules of art. While Sandrart mentioned that Rembrandt was a printmaker, he wrote only that Rembrandt etched “very many and various things on copper plates,” without any critical comment.

In the early eighteenth century, the most influential Rembrandt biographer was Arnold Houbraken (1660-1719), a Dutch painter and printmaker who had been a student of Van Hoogstraten. Houbraken wrote *De groote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Konstschilders en Schilderessen,* the first comprehensive study of the lives of seventeenth-century Netherlandish artists, in 1718. Most of his information was garnered from living relatives and the pupils of the artists he discussed. Of the approximately 550 artists he included, Houbraken was most generous in his praise for

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8 Cartari’s *Images of the Gods of the Ancients* was first published in 1556 in Venice.

9 Slive, *Rembrandt and His Critics,* 83-103.


Rembrandt, whom he admired primarily for his ability to portray facial expressions, gestures, and costumes. He praised him for his attention to detail, and for not making his figures look alike. Houbraken, however, criticized Rembrandt’s lack of proper artistic process for painting by discussing him in the context of students who don’t spend enough time training. “. . . Rembrandt satisfied himself by copying what was right in front of him, and not making a single choice from it,” rather than exercising proper judgment when making artistic decisions.13

Houbraken admired and indeed collected Rembrandt’s etchings, reflecting the esteem in which they were held well after the artist’s lifetime.14 He stated that Rembrandt’s etchings alone “would be sufficient in themselves to maintain his fame” though he only knew of about 100 of Rembrandt’s etchings, which he characterized as “Histories, Figures, little Portraits and numerous heads.”15 Houbraken also remarked that Rembrandt had his own manner of preparing and etching plates, which he did not share with his students. Houbraken was the first biographer to write that Rembrandt had a “trick” of “making minor alterations” to his prints, “by means of which they could be resold as new designs”—a narrative that became an almost inextricable part of the narrative of Rembrandt’s working method for later writers.16

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14 In fact, Gersaint’s 1751 catalogue raisonné of Rembrandt’s prints was comprised largely of etchings from Arnold’s son Jacob Houbraken’s collection.


16 As Nadine Orenstein has stated, while many pupils of Rembrandt attempted to copy his painting and drawing styles, only Ferdinand Bol (1616-1680) tried to imitate his etching style, and somewhat unsuccessfully. Orenstein, “Scratches, ‘Scratches, Speckling, and Crooked Lettering: Rembrandt’s Messy Aesthetic,” *Georgia Museum of Art Bulletin* 21 (2001), 6.
These early biographers of Rembrandt, primarily interested in conforming to principles of classicism, were largely critical of Rembrandt’s lack of attention to these tenets in his painting. If they did praise Rembrandt, it was usually for his skill with the medium of etching, although their admiration was general, and not directed towards specific prints. The lack of scholarly attention given to the nine etched sketches over the next two centuries was in large part set by this late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century classicist bias, because these etchings are unusual images that certainly do not reflect classical ideals.

Filippo Baldinucci: Valuing Rembrandt as an Etcher

Even if etchings were mentioned in early biographies of Rembrandt, such as that by Houbraken, those authors discussed Rembrandt first and foremost as a painter. In 1686, Filippo Baldinucci (1624-1697), an Italian historian, was the first biographer to praise Rembrandt primarily as a printmaker. Baldinucci included Rembrandt in his *Cominciamento e Progresso dell’arte d’intagliare in rame colle vita de’piu eccellenti maestri della stessa professione*, the first extensive historical treatise on engraving and etching published in Italy.\(^{17}\) Baldinucci’s text included a series of biographies of the most renowned graphic artists—from Italy and across Europe—of his own time.\(^{18}\)

\[^{17}\] Florence, 1686.

Rembrandt had the distinction of being the only Netherlander of Baldinucci’s generation worthy of mention, and, conversely, Baldinucci was the first Italian who attempted to characterize the quality of Rembrandt’s etchings in print.

Baldinucci was the first author to write that etching—not painting—was how Rembrandt distinguished himself as an artist.19 Although he did not like Rembrandt’s “scratches of varying strength and irregular and isolated strokes,” Baldinucci admired the artist’s deep chiaroscuro. Baldinucci noted that Rembrandt gained “great riches” with his etchings, and stated that Rembrandt bought them back himself to increase their value, originating an anecdote that has reappeared often in Rembrandt scholarship.

Eighteenth-century catalogue raisonnés: Defining Rembrandt’s ōeuvre

Unlike seventeenth-century authors, most of whom were artists themselves and seemed to be interested in criticizing Rembrandt’s working method, mid to late eighteenth-century writers were mainly print dealers and collectors who were principally concerned with defining Rembrandt’s printed body of work. As a group, they established criteria for inclusion of specific etchings within the ōeuvre, based on the practice of connoisseurship, through stylistic comparison of all known prints to those traditionally accepted as by Rembrandt. They also focused on distinguishing between states. The first published catalogue raisonné—of any European artist, for any medium—was Edmé-François Gersaint’s (1694-1750) posthumous catalogue of Rembrandt’s etchings:

19 In fact, Baldinucci wrote that as a painter, Rembrandt was “much more highly esteemed than his worth.” He also believed that Rembrandt did not have as much “self-control” as other artists, because of his “mental make-up.” Filippo Baldinucci, Lives of Rembrandt by Joachim von Sandrart, Filippo Baldinucci, and Arnold Houbraken, trans. Charles Ford (London: Pallas Athene, 2007), 37-40.
Catalogue Raisonné de Toutes Les Pieces Qui forment l’oeuvre de Rembrandt, compose par feu M. Gersaint & mis au jour, avec les augmentations necessaries par les sieurs Helle and Glomy. 20  Gersaint was a Parisian art and luxury-goods dealer who was influential in the development of the art market. 21  Gersaint’s primary objective was to offer a description—not an analysis—of all of Rembrandt’s “known” etchings. He organized the catalogue by subject, which would prove to be extraordinarily influential for later authors.

Establishing a pattern followed by others, Gersaint’s entries about all nine of the etched sketches were very brief. He included them in his section entitled “Études de Têtes, & autres Griffonnemens,” or “Studies of Heads, and other Sketches.” 22  Gersaint was particularly interested in the sequence of execution and placement of each head or figure on the plate for each print: for example, in his entry on Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads (fig. 2), he described each figure’s location in the etching, and then the print’s subsequent fragmentation into five separate etchings. He also mentioned the multiple states of a print, if known to him, and the rarity of certain etchings, such as Sheet of

20 Edmé-François Gersaint, Catalogue raisonné de toutes les pieces qui forment l’oeuvre de Rembrandt (Paris, 1751).

21 Gersaint has been the subject of significant recent scholarship. In the 1990s, Andrew McClellan explored Gersaint’s role in both the eighteenth-century art market and his mutually beneficial business relationship with artist Jean-Antoine Watteau in “Watteau's Dealer: Edmé Gersaint and the Marketing of Art in Eighteenth-Century Paris,” The Art Bulletin 78 (1996): 439-53. More recently, with the advent of further analysis of art markets, the contributions of Gersaint have been studied more extensively in works such as Art Market and Connoisseurship, eds. Anna Tummers and Koenraad Jonckheere (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009). In 2002, Guillaume Glorieux published a monograph on Gersaint: À l’enseigne de Gersaint. Edmé-François Gersaint, marchand d’art sur le pont Notre-Dame (1694-1750), preface by D. Roche (Seyssel: Les éditions Champ Vallon, 2002).

22 Griffonnements is an all-encompassing term, and can refer to any image that appears study-like, usually narrative-free, and often with diverse elements rendered together. As a taxonomic designation, the term griffonnements deserves more scholarly attention. Since Gersaint, in catalogues organized by subject, the etched sketches have been categorized as studies.
Studies of Men’s Heads and Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads (fig. 3). Gersaint was inconsistent in his willingness to identify the subjects of the prints: for example, he refers to the central figure in Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others (fig. 4) as “Rembrandt’s wife,” although he does not identify the central figure in Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child as a self-portrait of Rembrandt.23 (fig. 9)

In 1796, Liverpool collector Daniel Daulby (d. 1797) published A Descriptive Catalogue of the Works of Rembrandt and of his Scholars, Bol, Livens, and Van Vliet, compiled from The Original Etchings and from The Catalogues of De Burgy, Gersaint, Helle and Glomy, Marcus, and Yver, which was written ostensibly to correct errors (mistakes in dimensions and descriptions) in earlier catalogues, and particularly in the English translations of them.24 He, too, was concerned with establishing Rembrandt’s printed oeuvre, as well as confirming the etchings as objects worthy of attention. For example, in the introduction to his catalogue, he noted that Rembrandt’s etchings had always been held in high esteem and had garnered significant prices.25 The etchings were so good, according to Daulby, that one hardly missed the color found in other media.26 Daulby noted that the variety of the impressions and the changes made to the plates

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23 Gersaint, nos. 331 and 337. (Daulby did identify this portrait as a self-portrait of Rembrandt).

24 Daniel Daulby, A Descriptive Catalogue of the Works of Rembrandt and of his Scholars, Bol, Livens, and Van Vliet, compiled from The Original Etchings and from The Catalogues of De Burgy, Gersaint, Helle and Glomy, Marcus, and Yver (London, 1796), xix. Extant today is Daulby’s annotated copy of Gersaint, with his own observations written in the margins. Daulby’s catalogue relied heavily on his own collection of Rembrandt etchings.

25 Daulby, A Descriptive Catalogue, xiv.

26 Ibid.
provided “sufficient amusement for his admirers.” While the introduction was effusive, the comments on individual etchings, most specifically the etched sketches, were exceedingly brief.

The influential Adam von Bartsch (1757-1821), Austrian scholar, artist and curator of the print collection of the Royal Court Library in Vienna, was the author of the first modern comprehensive catalogue of European prints, the 21-volume *Le peintre graveur*, published from 1803-21, in addition to the earlier *Catalogue Raisonné de toutes les estampes qui forment l’oeuvre de Rembrandt et ceux des principaux imitateurs* in 1797. Bartsch chose artists for this comprehensive catalogue (which included his previous work on Rembrandt) based on their originality and technical achievements, to demonstrate his view that printmaking was not merely a reproductive medium. He corrected and expanded the work of earlier print connoisseurs and cataloguers, supplying a new numbering and subject classification system. His cataloging method was intended to provide clear definitions for collectors, and has been so influential it is still the one employed today for most museum collections and by most print scholars. Like his predecessors, Bartsch, too, was extremely brief in his descriptions of Rembrandt’s nine etched sketches. For example, sometimes his analysis was so brief as to not include an identification of the figures in the etchings: For *Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill*

27 The idea that variety and change in Rembrandt’s etchings provided entertainment for an audience is a suggestion I make throughout this dissertation, specifically as it relates to the etched sketches.

28 *Catalogue raisonné de toutes les estampes qui forment l’oeuvre de Rembrandt et ceux de ses principaux imitateurs composé par les sieurs Gersaint, Helle, Glomy et P. Yver* (Vienna, 1797) and *Le peintre graveur* (Vienna, 1803-21). Bartsch based his Rembrandt catalogue primarily on the lists and annotations made by Pierre Jean Mariette (1694-1774), the son of Parisian art dealer Jean Mariette, who had catalogued the print collection of Prince Eugene of Savoy in Vienna in the 1720s.
in Bed, etc. (fig. 7), he did not identify the woman in the bed as Saskia, nor did he acknowledge the partial head in Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap (fig. 8) as a self-portrait of Rembrandt.

Bartsch expanded the size of Rembrandt’s printed oeuvre, from Gersaint’s and Daulby’s 342 etchings to 375 in all. Although these three cataloguers lacked the access or resources of later authors, they nonetheless provided a strong foundation for the further discussion of Rembrandt’s etchings. The nine etched sketches, as noted, were included in each of their catalogues, and their authenticity never doubted.

States and collections: Expanding knowledge of Rembrandt prints in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

As the nineteenth century progressed, the development of the academic field of art history brought significant changes to how artists and their work were considered. The oeuvres of artists such as Rembrandt benefitted from the consideration brought to them by the new discipline. Refinement of methods of connoisseurship, a revival of the etching medium, and a rising sense of nationalism throughout Europe, specifically as it applied to the forming of national art collections, garnered expanded attention for certain aspects of Rembrandt’s printed oeuvre. Scholars—both amateur and professional alike—became increasingly interested in accumulating information about all known prints by Rembrandt. Catalogue writers, who were often collectors and sometimes printmakers, recommended their own trustworthiness because of their capacity to travel to see etchings

29 Bartsch, Le peintre graveur, 297-300.
in both public and private collections, and paid great attention to the often minute distinctions between impressions and states.

Authors also debated the best arrangement for a catalogue raisonné, either by subject (which had been the standard practice from Gersaint forward) or chronologically—which, it was argued, better allowed the reader to distinguish between prints by Rembrandt and his pupils. Noting and describing the differences between states of Rembrandt’s etchings, as well as opining on the period to which certain etchings belonged, became the marks of the true connoisseur, and accumulating those various states became the measure of an excellent collection, and a great source of pride for a national museum or a private collector. Rembrandt was likewise held in high esteem by those involved in the etching revival across Europe, such as the artists of the Barbizon School, where an association with a great master was thought to help enhance the popularity of contemporary etchers.30

Early in the nineteenth century, the work of both I.J de Claussin (1824) and Thomas Wilson (1835) reflected several of these typically nineteenth-century goals. For example, Wilson noted in the preface to his catalogue that just as the publications by Bartsch and De Claussin brought “credibility” to their countries of Germany and France respectively, so too would his catalogue, updating Daulby’s, bring the same to England. Wilson’s publication, A Descriptive Catalogue of the prints of Rembrandt, by an amateur

30 Rembrandt’s landscape etchings were especially appreciated by these artists, namely for his ability to capture light contrasts and his seemingly spontaneous technique. For more information about the influence of Rembrandt’s etchings on French printmakers in the nineteenth century, please see Alison McQueen, The Rise of the Cult of Rembrandt: Reinventing an Old Master in Nineteenth-Century France (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 160-173.
was derived from his own collection of Rembrandt etchings. In the chapter on “Studies of Heads and Sketches,” Wilson included all nine of the etched sketches. His commentary expanded slightly upon that by Daulby; for example, he gave Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist wearing a Velvet Cap (fig. 8) a lengthier description, yet shied away from identifying the partial self-portrait as Rembrandt. De Claussin’s catalogue, *Catalogue Raisonné de toutes les estampes qui forment l’oeuvre de Rembrandt*, however, was an unmodified version of Bartsch’s catalogue, with the exception that De Claussin reproduced some of Rembrandt’s etchings himself for inclusion within the catalogue.

Charles Blanc’s (1813-1882) catalogue raisonné in 1859 provided more detailed descriptions of each etching than his predecessors, in addition to comments on the work of previous authors. Blanc, often called France’s first art historian, was a printmaker, art writer and critic, as well as founder and the first editor of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*. While Blanc continued to follow Gersaint’s organization of the etchings by subject, he attempted to make these distinctions clearer by sorting them into fewer groups. Blanc

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32 I.J. De Claussin, *Catalogue Raisonné de toutes les estampes qui forment l’oeuvre de Rembrandt et des principales pièces de ses élèves . . .* (Paris, 1824). De Claussin made copies of five of the etched sketches: *Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads* (B. 374); *Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others* (B. 365); *Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched* (B. 367); *Three Heads of Women, One Asleep* (B. 368); *Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child* (B. 370).

33 This catalogue of Rembrandt’s etchings, *L’oeuvre complet de Rembrandt* (Paris, 1859), was actually the second Rembrandt catalogue by Blanc: the first was published in 1853 under the same title, and included eighty-seven etchings and photographs. Blanc republished the catalogue, which was in a smaller, two-volume format, so that he could first include all of Rembrandt’s known etchings, with forty-four etched illustrations, and further disseminate knowledge of them. The folio-size of the first edition was too costly to reprint. The 1859 edition is the one in most public collections today.
maintained that because so few of Rembrandt’s etchings were dated, a chronological arrangement would be unsound. He placed the nine etched sketches across three categories in his catalogue: “Portraits,” “Paysages et Animaux,” and “Allégories et Fantaisies.” His descriptions of them remained relatively brief, yet Blanc maintained a concern for accuracy, including the order of execution of the plate. For example, while Bartsch had divided the impressions of Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads (fig. 2) into two states separated by the burnishing, Blanc wrote that it was possible the burnishing happened before printing.34

The professionalization of art history combined with the invention and increasing utility of photography led to a proliferation of catalogues of Rembrandt’s etchings that featured a significant debate developing about the best way to organize his oeuvre. In 1868, Dutch lawyer and author Carel Vosmaer (1826-1888) published Rembrandt, sa vie et ses œuvres, in which he included a catalogue of Rembrandt’s etchings and paintings.35 Vosmaer was the first author to argue for a chronological organization for the etchings; he wrote that he wanted to create a “historical succession” for the work of Rembrandt, so that his style across a year or a period would be evident.36

This chronological impetus was continued with great success by Sir Francis Seymour Haden (1818-1910), a British surgeon, collector and printmaker, who advocated for the complete abandonment of subject classification of Rembrandt’s etchings, to be

34 Blanc, L’oeuvre complet, 175.

35 Carel Vosmaer, Rembrandt, sa vie et ses œuvres (The Hague, 1868).

36 Ibid., vi.
replaced by a chronological order because one could then see “development” in Rembrandt’s oeuvre. He firmly stated that a subject-driven organization “confused the sense, perverted the judgment, and rendered critical examination and comparison impossible.”37 He also maintained that a chronological ordering would make it easier to detect forgeries or a pupil’s work, because it would highlight those prints that did not fall precisely into any period of Rembrandt’s work. He wanted to create a “Natural History” of Rembrandt’s etchings, one that made it possible to “read” the images through the events of his life, reflecting the positivist approach of much art historical scholarship in the later nineteenth century.38

Haden demonstrated his ideas with an exhibition sponsored by the Burlington Arts Club in 1877. For the exhibition and its accompanying catalogue, Haden divided Rembrandt’s oeuvre into three distinct periods: 1628-39 or the “primitive” period; 1640-1649; and 1650-1661. Unlike his predecessors and those that would follow him, Haden was not as concerned with distinguishing between states as he was with questions of authenticity. He not only questioned traditional attributions to Rembrandt, but if he deemed a work not to be authentic, he then assigned it to a specific pupil or colleague of Rembrandt. Haden included five of the etched sketches in the exhibition, yet provided only very brief comments if any at all.

37 Francis Seymour Haden, Catalogue of the etched work of Rembrandt, selected for exhibition at the Burlington fine arts club (London, 1877), 6.

38 Ibid., 7. This positivist approach to Rembrandt’s etchings was reflective of what had become the prevailing theory applied to understanding Rembrandt’s paintings. The scholar that expressed this methodology most concretely was Wilhelm Bode (1845-1929). Bode, and other proponents of a positivist interpretation of Rembrandt’s oeuvre divided the artist’s career into three distinct phases, which were then connected to specific events in Rembrandt’s life. Please see Catherine B. Scallen, Rembrandt, Reputation, and the Practice of Connoisseurship (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 44-51, for more information.
In his *Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Rembrandt van Rhyn* from 1878, the Rev. Charles Henry Middleton-Wake (1828-1915) continued the use of a chronological organization of Rembrandt’s prints. He mentioned the work of both Vosmaer and Haden, and praised the Burlington Arts Club exhibition for allowing Haden to visually “test” his ideas about the chronology of Rembrandt’s etchings. Middleton-Wake balanced this desire for a chronological overlook with the amateur’s need to find a print quickly, and so organized the etchings chronologically within four groups. It was while researching the chronology of the prints that Middleton-Wake wrote he became aware of how Rembrandt used his monogram and signature: he was the first author to suggest that the monogram was not used after around 1632 on the etchings, a subject that has caused debate specifically for *Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child*.\(^{39}\) (fig. 9)

Middleton-Wake’s primary focus remained on investigating the states of Rembrandt’s etchings. He wrote in his introductory essay that he wanted to offer an “index to the larger public collections” of Rembrandt’s prints, which included those in Berlin, Vienna, Paris, London, Haarlem and Amsterdam.\(^{40}\) He emphasized that he personally visited all public collections that he referenced in addition to many private collections in England and on the continent. Middleton-Wake’s discussion of *Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads* (fig. 2) is an example of how he attempted to explore the various

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\(^{39}\) Since Middleton-Wake, many scholars have noted that Rembrandt stopped using a monogram after the 1630s, preferring only to use his full name in signatures. Therefore, the signature “RL 1651” on *Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child* is controversial and has been questioned. See the appendix of this dissertation, fn 28.

states of the etchings thoroughly. He argued that the central figure of the print is of a later date than the others, stating that he believed the first sketches were executed on the plate without printing, and then only later when the plate was taken up again was the three-quarter figure added in the center. Middleton-Wake’s chief contribution to the Rembrandt literature was his focus on these differences in states.

In his *L’oeuvre complet de Rembrandt*, French art dealer Eugène Dutuit (1807-1886) returned to a catalogue organized by subject. Published in two volumes in 1883 and 1885, Dutuit wanted to draw further attention to Rembrandt’s etchings because he felt the paintings were already well-known. His catalogue represented an instructive example of how nineteenth-century authors of catalogue raisonnés built upon one another’s knowledge—in each entry, Dutuit would thoroughly list the numbers, states, and comments given by previous authors. Following Gersaint, Bartsch, and others, Dutuit categorized the nine etched sketches under the subject heading of “Études de têtes et griffonnements,” with descriptive titles but little else.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Dmitri Rovinski (1824-1895), a Russian lawyer, collector and cataloguer, had similar interests to Middleton-Wake’s: he personally viewed as many different states of each of Rembrandt’s etchings as he possibly could, from his own collection of almost 600 impressions to those in Berlin, Vienna, Paris, London, Haarlem and Amsterdam. In his *L’oeuvre gravé de Rembrandt* from 1890, he plainly noted those etchings he had been able to see in person, and those

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41 Ibid., 73.
43 Dmitri Rovinski, *L’oeuvre gravé de Rembrandt: reproduction des planches originales dans tous leurs états successifs* (St. Petersburg, 1890). Rovinski’s collection formed the basis of the print collection of the
he had not. For example, in his description of *Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads* (fig. 2), he wrote that the sixth head that Bartsch mentioned was burnished out in the two proofs in the Albertina and in Paris, but that he had not seen impressions in other collections.

Rovinski used as many tools as were available to him to be as detailed as possible with his research: he reproduced for the first time nearly 1,000 phototypes of the various states, and listed titles (which he acknowledged were from Bartsch) in three languages to reach a wide international audience.

In 1894, Woldemar von Seidlitz (1850-1922), the director of the Gemaldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden, published the *Kritische Verzeichnis der Radierungen Rembrandts*, another chronologically-organized catalogue raisonné. It is appropriate to end the section on nineteenth-century criticism of Rembrandt with Von Seidlitz because in each catalogue entry he addressed those authors that had gone before him. For example, in the description of *Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched* (fig. 5), Von Seidlitz noted that both Vosmaer and Blanc recognized Saskia in the topmost head, while Middleton-Wake argued against that identification, urging that it was the representation of someone younger. Von Seidlitz’s catalogue remained an influential resource for museum professionals at the turn of the twentieth century, because of the thoroughness of the information he chose to include.

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State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg when he bequeathed it to the museum in 1897. Please see Roman Grigoryev, *Rembrandt’s Prints from the Dmitry Rovinski’s Collection in the State Hermitage*, exh. cat. (St. Petersburg: State Hermitage, 2012) for more information.


45 Ibid., 249.
Interest in technique and process in the twentieth century

In the twentieth century, scholars focused in greater analytical detail on the technique and possible function of the etched sketches, and how they might relate to other works by Rembrandt, both painted and drawn. In addition, advances in technology and more scientific approaches to art as objects led to significant observations about the papers Rembrandt used and his printing process.

Arthur M. Hind (1880-1957), keeper of the Department of Prints at the British Museum, published the first twentieth-century catalogue raisonné of Rembrandt’s etchings. In his *Rembrandt’s etchings: an essay and catalogue* of 1912, Hind continued the use of a chronological arrangement, largely influenced by Von Seidlitz’s catalogue, which had served as the basis for the organization of the collection in the British Museum.46 States or prints not owned by the British Museum were indicated by asterisks. Hind’s comments on the nine etched sketches are very brief: the most extensive one concerns the issue of the date for *Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child*.47 (fig. 9)

Ludwig Münz (1889-1957), professor of art history at the Vienna Academy and director of its gallery, was among the first to discuss the “experimental” aspects of Rembrandt’s etchings in his 1952 *Rembrandt’s etchings: reproductions of the whole*

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46 Arthur M. Hind, *Rembrandt’s etchings: an essay and catalogue* (New York: Scribner, 1912). Hind’s catalogue was based in large part on Sir Sidney Colvin’s (predecessor to Hind at the British Museum) guide to the 1899 Rembrandt Exhibition at the Royal Academy, and included all impressions owned by the British Museum. Hind was clear to note those etchings that the Museum did not own, and even included a plea for someone to “fill up the gaps.” Hind, *Rembrandt’s etchings*, 18.

47 While Hind’s publication and numbering system is used in some museum printrooms today, it did not replace the use of Bartsch on a large scale.
original etched work.\textsuperscript{48} From his introductory essay, it was apparent that Münz was most interested in the technical innovations of Rembrandt as an etcher. His comment in the essay on \textit{Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads} (fig. 3) illustrates this interest in Rembrandt’s technique: Münz stated that this etched sketch is an example of a work that did not go further than what he called the “experimental stage”—that is, it was meant to be a technical exercise. He compared it to a drawn sheet, where Rembrandt sketched with a needle on the plate just as he drew with a pen on paper.\textsuperscript{49} Although Münz did not address all nine etched sketches in his introductory essay, he characterized those he did mention as “sketchy” and “fresh,” emphasizing Rembrandt’s technique.\textsuperscript{50}

In 1969, Christopher White, former director of the Ashmolean Museum and Rembrandt scholar, and Karel G. Boon, former director of the Rijksprentenkabinet, published \textit{Rembrandt’s etchings: an illustrated critical catalogue}, the XVIII and XIX volumes of F.W. H. Hollstein’s \textit{Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts}, a series begun in 1949 by Hollstein, a former dealer of prints and drawings.\textsuperscript{51} Soon after its publication, this catalogue became the primary resource for Rembrandt’s etchings in


\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 11.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 11-14.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Rembrandt’s etchings: an illustrated critical catalogue}, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Van Gendt & Co., 1969). Hollstein, a refugee from Berlin during World War II, was given access to the collection at the Rijksprentenkabinet in Amsterdam after he fled Germany. He completed fourteen volumes of the series before his death in 1957. Karel Boon and Christopher White then assumed responsibility for the remainder of the series, which totaled thirty-six volumes. Publication of an updated catalogue of Rembrandt’s etchings has commenced in 2013 as part of the New Hollstein series. Written by Erik Hinterding and Jaco Rutgers, the new seven-volume catalogue will offer clearer and larger illustrations, and more information about states and copies of Rembrandt’s etchings. It will also be organized chronologically instead of thematically, as the 1969 volumes were.
modern printrooms. Boon and White’s focus on various states and impressions of the etchings, as well as knowledge of which major printrooms owned these prints, proved to be remarkably useful to print scholars for the next forty years. The catalogue was organized thematically, and while the information was cursory, their attention to accuracy was without parallel among the previous cataloguers, thus ensuring the significance of these volumes for Rembrandt scholars.

Christopher White, former director of the Ashmolean Museum and Rembrandt scholar, also focused on technical concerns—with specific attention to how Rembrandt’s etchings related to other works in different media—in his 1969 Rembrandt as an Etcher: A Study of the Artist at Work, revised in 1999.⁵² Although admittedly more interested in the “experimental” aspects of Rembrandt’s etchings, characteristics that all of these etched sketches portray, White discussed only five (Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads, Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others, Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched, Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc., and Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child), and then only briefly, and usually to compare them to more well-known and well-studied works. At the same time, however briefly they are mentioned, he added to the discussion surrounding the relationship between Rembrandt’s drawings and etchings more than almost any other scholar to date, citing specific examples of visual similarities between these prints and drawings in Rembrandt’s oeuvre.

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For example, in his chapter on portraiture, White discussed two of the etchings (Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others (fig. 4) and Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched (fig. 5)) that feature a likeness of Rembrandt’s wife, Saskia. He first mentioned Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others, comparing the portrait of Saskia in the etched sketch with the Self-Portrait with Saskia (B. 19, fig. 18) of the same year, which he had previously analyzed at length in his text. He then discussed the Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched, pointing out that in the first state, the image was an undated study of Saskia alone with her hand held up to her head. (fig. 16) White then stated that the print “recalls the charming engagement portrait in silverpoint of 1633 (fig. 19), in which she gazed out at the spectator in a very similar manner.” He noted that Saskia’s mood has changed from the silverpoint to the study, becoming a more pensive look expressed through Saskia’s bent, stiff fingers.

White next discussed the differences among the three states of the etching, as revealing Rembrandt’s method of execution. The head on the left, which is lightly sketched, he understood as illustrating the first “laying-in” of a subject, while the more finished head on the right is surrounded by a pattern of cross-hatching, a technique, White stated, that Rembrandt used to emphasize “the figure in relation to its background.” He then compared the style of the etching with a drawn sheet of studies in Rotterdam. (fig. 20) White concluded that the studies in the drawing and etching were

53 The central figure in Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others is nearly universally seen as a representation of Saskia, while the identification of any of the three women in Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched as Saskia is still debated. See the discussion of this print in the appendix of this dissertation.

54 White, Rembrandt as an Etcher, 131.

55 Ibid., 132.
“subconsciously” grouped together, and that Rembrandt has successfully retained the sketchiness in the etching, drawing on the copperplate in the same way as he sketched studies on paper, a topic that is discussed in chapter three.

Late twentieth-century exhibition catalogues and the etched sketches

Beginning in the 1990s and continuing through the first decade of the twenty-first century, Rembrandt scholars and curators at museums with large collections of Rembrandt prints continued to study Rembrandt’s etchings, now drawing attention to particular subsets of Rembrandt’s etchings most often by contextualizing them within his larger oeuvre. Within the contexts of multi-thematic or multi-media exhibitions and their accompanying catalogues, the etched sketches have received greater scholarly attention in the past two decades than at any other time in their history.

The first of these exhibitions was Rembrandt: The Master & His Workshop from 1991-2, coordinated by the Kupferstichkabinett and the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and the National Gallery in London. Comprised of two distinct parts and two catalogues, the exhibition was one of the most comprehensive on Rembrandt’s art in the three media of painting, drawing and etching. The etchings portion of the two-volume catalogue, as introduced by Holm Bevers, chief curator for Dutch and Flemish prints and drawings, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, focused on the inclusion of as many representative etchings by Rembrandt as possible. He noted that Rembrandt’s etchings had been left out of several other major Rembrandt exhibitions

of the twentieth century, and that the prints overall had not been subject to the same scrutiny and study as the paintings and drawings.\(^{57}\) He urged future scholarship to concentrate on technical aspects of the etchings, such as states and watermarks, and on more detailed analysis of the themes and/or function of Rembrandt’s etchings.

In this exhibition catalogue, two etched sketches have their own entries (Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, a Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc. (fig. 1) and Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched (fig. 5)) while a third (Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc. (fig. 7)) is mentioned in the discussion of another print. They are called “special cases” among Rembrandt’s prints, as Bevers stated they resemble model sheets and, simultaneously, seem to have been executed like drawn study sheets.\(^{58}\) Notably, Bevers was the first author in 240 years to attempt to define exactly what type of sheets the etched sketches represent. For example, in the entry on Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc. (fig. 1, cat. 5) Bevers wrote that the impression the print leaves is that of a “freely executed sheet with sketches from life.”\(^{59}\) For Bevers, its disparate and unfinished figures, in addition to the experimental scratching (and spotting in the first state), seem to indicate that this was merely a hasty exercise for Rembrandt. Although noting its similarity in execution to a quickly engraved model sheet, Bevers stated that Rembrandt’s etched sketch is different in that its motifs are completely dissimilar, instead of showing the same figure or body part from a variety of angles, for example, as a

\(^{57}\) Bevers, “Rembrandt as an Etcher,” Rembrandt: The Master & His Workshop, 168.

\(^{58}\) Rembrandt: Master and his Workshop, cat. no. 5, 180.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.
typical model sheet might have done. Bevers asserted that this etching was instead made in the tradition of drawn study sheets, in which “an apparently chance collection of disparate figures and motifs was intentional,” like those by Rembrandt’s contemporary, Jacques de Gheyn II.60

The second of these influential exhibitions was Rembrandt by Himself, mounted by the National Gallery in London and the Royal Cabinet of Paintings, Mauritshuis in The Hague in 1999.61 The purpose of the exhibition, as stated by its organizers, was to bring together the images of Rembrandt in different media as he presented himself, in his varied guises, for comparison and analysis.62 Another stated aim was to attempt to answer the question of why this particular artist chose to depict himself more than any other artist in western art history. Through eighty-six self-portraits by Rembrandt, and an additional nine by his pupils, the exhibition provided the most recent technological research on Rembrandt’s works, as well as the most recent analysis of attributions from the Rembrandt Research Project.63

Each of the three etched sketches involving a self-portrait received an entry in this exhibition catalogue, reaffirming their status as autograph works by Rembrandt. The entry on Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, a Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman (fig. 1, cat. 31) is the lengthiest of the three entries. Typical of the literature

60 Ibid. These definitions for the etched sketches will be explored in greater detail in chapter two of this dissertation.


62 Ibid., 6.

63 The contributions of the RRP within Rembrandt print literature will be discussed at the end of this chapter.
surrounding this print, however, the entry lacks the insights of imaginative investigation. The entry is mainly descriptive, pointing out the ninety-degree turn of the plate necessary to see all of the images and the lack of an etched beret, although the author maintained that space was left for one. The author also claimed that the print was used like a drawn model sheet, to provide a variety of motifs on the same page for Rembrandt’s students to copy and for knowledgeable collectors to enjoy. Because this was etched, however, and not simply drawn, the author posited that perhaps Rembrandt may have hoped to sell these as well.

In 2000, the British Museum in London and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam joined together for the exhibition *Rembrandt the Printmaker*. This exhibition brought together impressions from two of the largest collections of Rembrandt prints in the world, notable for both their depth and breadth. The exhibition was informed by new research from Erik Hinterding on the papers for Rembrandt’s prints, which has led to provocative suppositions about the states and the chronology of and market for some of Rembrandt’s etchings. Three of the etched sketches were included in this exhibition: *Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, a Beggar Couple, Heads of and Old Man and Old Woman* (fig. 1); *Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched* (fig. 5); and *Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc.* (fig. 7)

The entry for *Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, a Beggar Couple, Heads of and Old Man and Old Woman* (cat. 16) is characteristic of the analysis in this catalogue and is

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64 *Rembrandt by Himself*, cat. no. 31, 141-2. All of the entries were written by Edwin Buijsen, Peter Schatborn, or Ben Broos, but they did not sign them individually.

one of the most comprehensive discussions about the etching to date. In it, author Ger Luijten, Director of the Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris, challenged some widely-held assumptions about the creation of the etching. For example, after noting that Rembrandt rotated the plate by ninety degrees three times to find space for the assorted figures, Luijten commented on the varying degree of finish of the images.\(^6\) Rembrandt left the smaller figures and the head studies only lightly finished, while the self-portrait, which by definition needed more specificity, was more complete. Luijten asserted that Rembrandt most likely would have started with the beggars and then added his own portrait—with no space left for a beret or other headgear—as other scholars have claimed.\(^7\) Luijten maintained, instead, that if there were meant to be a hat in this etching, the hat (not the beggars or self-portrait) would have been delineated first, as in *Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap.* (fig. 8) This type of debate is significant for a thorough historiography of the etched sketch and emphasizes certain aspects of Rembrandt’s working method, but is also characteristic of the literature surrounding these prints. Whether or not a beret was intended for this space—I believe it was—does not draw attention to the more unusual features of this etching: its combination of disparate motifs, different finishes, and element of rotation.

Luijten turned next to watermark research on the print, one of the great contributions of this exhibition. The first state of the etched sketch, with the acid spots,

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\(^6\) Luijten, *Rembrandt the Printmaker*, 117.

\(^7\) Ibid. For example, the authors of the previous exhibition catalog, *Rembrandt by Himself*, argued that Rembrandt left space for a beret.
only exists in three impressions today, two of which are on paper bearing the Strasbourg lily watermark with the initial L. The only other instance of this paper in Rembrandt’s oeuvre is an impression of the first state of the Portrait of Cornelis Claesz. Anslo from 1641, which suggested to Luijten that it was years after the plate was cut that the first known impressions were pulled from it.68 (fig. 21) For the second state, the traces of biting were burnished out, and the plate was later cut, perhaps, but not certainly, by Rembrandt. The few impressions of the second state that have a watermark point to the use of paper from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.69 This evidence led Luijten to conclude that not only do we lack knowledge of when this etching was made (although he suggested sometime in the 1630s, but not as early as 1631), but that the etching was not intended for a large audience. He wrote: “... the artist may well have regarded this etching, that we esteem so highly today, as a mere experiment.”70

Another significant exhibition was Rembrandt’s Women from 2001, organized by the National Gallery of Scotland and the Royal Academy of Arts, London.71 This exhibition was the first to address how Rembrandt painted, drew and etched images of women. The objects included in the show range from large-scale history paintings to the very small etched sketches, arranged somewhat chronologically. The four etched sketches depicting figures of women and Saskia appear in the exhibition catalogue. The

68 Ibid., 118.

69 Ibid. Most of the extant impressions do not contain a watermark, which makes conclusions about the publication of editions uncertain.

70 Ibid. I refute this assertion—that these etchings were “experiments”—throughout this dissertation. Potential audiences for the etched sketches will be discussed in chapter five.

entry accompanying *Three Heads of Women, One Asleep* (fig. 6) is one of the more interesting analyses of this etched sketch.

Julia Williams, author of the catalogue and curator at the National Gallery of Scotland, stated that *Three Heads of Women, One Asleep* can illuminate how the three etched sketches that depict heads of women were interrelated. The head of the woman at the bottom of the sheet mirrors the woman at the bottom right of *Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched* (fig. 5), and resembles the very lightly sketched profile in between the two heads at the bottom of *Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others.* (fig. 4) While not completely identical, they look similar enough, according to Williams, that Rembrandt may have used the same tronie in all three etchings. Williams further asserted that this connection—that is, if Rembrandt did use the same model or motif in all three etchings—provides evidence to categorize these prints as “model sheets,” because of the repetition of subject.72

The final exhibition discussed here is *The Unfinished Print,* curated in 2001 by Peter Parshall, Stacey Sell, and Judith Brodie at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The exhibition explored the issue of resolution in prints from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries, and the possible functions of “unfinished” prints. In her catalogue essay, “ ‘Quicke to Invent & Copious to Expresse’: Rembrandt’s Sketch Plates,” Sell, then assistant curator of Old Master drawings at the National Gallery of Art, successfully argued that the function of the etched sketches may have differed from plate

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72 Julia Lloyd Williams, *Rembrandt’s Women,* 145. This interpretation of the etched sketches will be disputed in chapter two. Whether or not the same model is used in these three etchings, traditional model sheets involve the same model repeated several times in an individual image, not the same model across three different images.
to plate. For example, the earlier ones such as *Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads* (fig. 2) or *Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads* (fig. 3) may have been primarily experimental in nature allowing Rembrandt to practice the technique of etching. Including *Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, a Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc.* (fig. 1) in this group, Sell asserted that this use of copper plates was expensive, but practical in function, because Rembrandt as a young artist would have benefited from working through the technical flaws that are evident in so many of his earliest etchings.

By the period of the next group of sheets of women and Saskia—*Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others* (fig. 4), *Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched* (fig. 5), and *Three Heads of Women, One Asleep* (fig. 6)—Sell asserted that Rembrandt was a more experienced printmaker, and no longer needed as much practice on the plate. Sell pointed out that he signed all three of these sheets with his first name only, a gesture that “proclaimed his standing among the great masters of the past.” These etchings, Sell observed, are closest in appearance of all the etched sketches to prints found in model books, although they differ from typical model book pages in their specificity. Like Holm Bevers previously, Sell used such terms in her discussion without providing adequate definitions for them. Sell wrote that the personal character of these sheets (referring to the inclusion of portraits of Saskia) along with their combination of

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74 Ibid., 57.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid., 57-62. This issue will be addressed in later chapters in this dissertation.
meticulous finish and summary roughness, recalled pages from a sketchbook, instead of model book pages.\textsuperscript{78} She concluded that these etchings were made for seventeenth-century collectors, who would have appreciated a quick sketch from the artist’s hand. I argue in the next chapter that the differences in finish and the specificity of the images in fact negate the possibility that these etched sketches represented model book pages or pages from a sketchbook. Instead, they, too, should be seen as intellectual activities, much like how Sell categorized the following two etched sketches.

Sell discussed the two etched sketches from c. 1639-42 together (\textit{Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc.} (fig. 7), and \textit{Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap} (fig. 8)), as they both necessitate the viewer to rotate the sheet to see the various, disparate images. Although similar in format to the earlier \textit{Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, a Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc.}, Sell asserted that in the later print with the woman in bed, “the motifs interrelate in a way that suggests their placement was deliberate and that, informal as the sheet appears, Rembrandt conceived of it as a whole.”\textsuperscript{79} She stated that the later self-portrait sheet with the tree exhibits the same characteristics: in the process of rotating the plate from the landscape to the partial self portrait to the strange eye, the viewer is put in the position of trying to discern what Rembrandt’s process and intentions were. Therefore, Sell argued that the subject of these prints is the intellectual activity of the artist, which Rembrandt prioritized here to the

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 62.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 62.
exclusion of both traditional subject matter and careful craftsmanship.\textsuperscript{80} Sell neglected, however, to appreciate that the lack of traditional subject matter or careful craftsmanship can be seen in fact as part of Rembrandt’s intellectual activity, as methods that he used to create indeterminancy in these ambiguous images.

Sell maintained that the final etched sketch, \textit{Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, a Beggar Man, Woman and Child} (fig. 9), is significant because of the time period in which it was created. During the 1650s, Rembrandt was attempting to engage with the artistic tradition of past masters, according to Sell, and this etching, with its sketchiness and rougher manner, was Rembrandt’s reflection of art theoretical concerns, such as those held by Giorgio Vasari and Karel Van Mander, who advocated that artists create from the imagination. Sell wrote that it was exactly Rembrandt’s lack of meticulous preparation for his etchings that was deemed an admirable practice, a sign of his skill that aligned him with great masters like Titian.\textsuperscript{81} This final etched sketch with a self-portrait was evidence of this ambition. Sell concluded that “as public versions of his drawings, [Rembrandt’s] sketch sheets were both a deliberate attempt to disseminate his style of draftsmanship and a statement about the kind of artist he believed himself to be.”\textsuperscript{82}

Overall, although the sharp divisions constructed between the etched sketches seem arbitrary and inconsistent, Sell’s article provided a valuable foundation as the first essay

\textsuperscript{80} I argue throughout this dissertation that all of the etched sketches demonstrate some type of “intellectual activity” for Rembrandt.

\textsuperscript{81} Sell, “‘Quicke to Invent,’” 65.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 68.
to examine these etched sketches together, and as works of art worthy of independent study.

The Rembrandt Research Project turns to etchings

In 2005, Ernst van de Wetering and the re-constituted Rembrandt Research Project published vol. IV of the Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings. Unlike the first three chronologically organized volumes, this tome was thematically based, addressing the subject of Rembrandt’s self-portraits. Also unlike the first three volumes, Rembrandt’s etchings received a great deal of attention in this volume. In one chapter (which he dubbed a “book within the book”), Van de Wetering argued that the three etched sketches with self-portraits (figs. 1, 8 and 9) do not represent typical study sheets. He noted that both the preparation of the plate and the act of pulling impressions from it are time-consuming acts, more elaborate than taking a pen to a piece of paper. He then compared them to other etched self-portraits by Rembrandt, stating that Rembrandt usually began these etchings with the depiction of the head. Van de Wetering asserted that this would follow conventional seventeenth-century practice for the representation of portraits in print—the most well-known example being the portraits from Anthony van Dyck’s Iconography. (fig. 22)

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83 *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings IV. The Self-Portraits*, ed. Ernst Van de Wetering (Dordrecht: Springer Verlag, 2005). For a history of the RRP and their decisions about this volume, please see the Preface and Summary in the fourth volume.


85 Van de Wetering is in disagreement with Ger Luijten on this point, who believes that Rembrandt started with the beggars and then added the self portrait later. Luijten, *Rembrandt the Printmaker*, 115-8.
Van de Wetering stated that these etchings represent aborted projects that should have resulted in more typical self-portraits by Rembrandt.\textsuperscript{86} That is, each of the three etched sketches was intended as a traditional etched self-portrait by Rembrandt, but for reasons of misbiting, or perhaps because of problems with the likeness or placement of the figure, they were abandoned, with the remains of the self-portraits as supports for further sketches.\textsuperscript{87}

Van de Wetering believed that these aborted projects became collector’s items because the contemporary and later connoisseurs would want to own a self-portrait by Rembrandt. This discussion is part of his larger argument in the \textit{Corpus}—that the large numbers of self-portraits by Rembrandt were a product of external pressure, a demand from the market, as opposed to the more internal pressure for self-discovery as claimed by H. Perry Chapman.\textsuperscript{88} Van de Wetering’s argument becomes circular here, as the privileging of the self-portrait in these etched sketches leads to the reason for their reception, and vice versa. In my reconsideration of this issue, I assert that Van de Wetering’s supposition is provocative, but should be understood as a possible beginning to an analysis of the etched sketches, not the conclusion. Rembrandt did not abandon these prints, whether or not they were initially intended for different configurations.

\textsuperscript{86} Claiming that these were preparatory for other printed self portraits, Van de Wetering “matched” each of the three etched sketches with a well-studied self portrait by Rembrandt. For example, he argued that B. 363 may have been the first attempt to realize \textit{Self Portrait in a Soft Hat} (B. 7), while B. 370 may be preparatory for \textit{Self Portrait Drawing at a Window} (B. 22).

\textsuperscript{87} Throughout the remainder of this dissertation, the question of whether or not these were “abandoned” will be addressed.

\textsuperscript{88} Chapman’s and Van de Wetering’s debate will be further explored in chapter four of this dissertation. Chapman, \textit{Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Identity} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). While Chapman argued that Rembrandt created, cultivated and romanticized the myth of himself, Van de Wetering claimed that idea is ahistorical.
Instead, he turned them into unusual compositions that defy easy categorization and explanation.

**Conclusion**

This brief survey of the historiographic material relevant to a study of Rembrandt’s etched sketches has revealed that these nine prints were always included in every major catalogue or exhibition of his etchings. However, although their attribution has not been questioned, the scholarship surrounding them has been cursory. The early authors addressed in this chapter provided necessary, factual information about the etched sketches: identification of figures, numbers of states and impressions, and elements of technique. The later authors considered here began to connect these prints to other works by Rembrandt and to question the function of these etched sketches, but still in only abbreviated discussions. This review of literature revealed several paths for inquiry, which this dissertation will follow. The first issue to be addressed in chapter two is the categorization of the etched sketches as “study sheets,” “model sheets,” or as preparatory for another work. By naming them as such, they have been interpreted as less significant to Rembrandt’s overall oeuvre by scholars. After clarifying what is meant by such terms in the next chapter, I argue that while two of them may resemble traditional model sheets, the etched sketches do not represent pages from a model book or sketchbook. It becomes evident that because of their disparate finishes and motifs, as well as the element of rotation, the etched sketches demanded consideration far beyond the act of copying in a workshop or studio.
CHAPTER TWO: TAXONOMY OF THE ETCHED SKETCHES

Introduction

In print catalogues and scholarly literature, Rembrandt’s nine etched sketches have most often been described as sheets of studies, pages from a model book, or preparatory studies.¹ Their seemingly unfinished appearance and repetition of elements on the plate are the primary traits that have evoked these comparisons. These classifications of the etched sketches are significant, because such designations have differing implications for their presumed function and reception. For example, the identification of an etching as a “model sheet” implies a didacticism that is not necessarily connoted by a drawn sheet of sketches or a preparatory work. Complicating this discussion is the inconsistency of the definitions of terms such as sheet of studies or model sheet, which historically have not been defined decisively or precisely. This chapter will discuss the etched sketches in relation to these terms, moving from the most general to the specific; that is, from the study sheet, which is the most vague term in use and concept, to the model sheet, and finally, to the preparatory work, the most explicit in both use and origin.² Through comparison to seventeenth-century objects that fall

¹ All nine of the etched sketches have been described as resembling pages from a “model book,” a “drawing book,” or a “sketch book” (which are, in fact, different entities) beginning with Gersaint’s categorization of them in his section entitled “Études de têtes et autre Griffonemens.” Münz and White noted several times that with the etched sketches, Rembrandt treated the etching plate as a piece of paper to record studies from nature, specifically B. 374, B. 365, B. 367 and B. 369. In catalogue entries in Rembrandt the Printmaker, Ger Luijten has written that B. 367 was made in the “tradition of model sheets” but that Rembrandt wanted to capture the immediacy of the drawn sketch, not the “rigidity” of drawn prints. Rembrandt the Printmaker, 154-156. These distinctions will be explored here.

² While these terms are indeterminate, all of these types of objects—sheet of studies, model sheets and preparatory works—were employed within the early modern workshop, either by the master exclusively or by his pupils.
securely within these categories, I will assert that the etched sketches were not sheets of studies, model sheets or preparatory in any way.

The etched sketches as sheets of studies, or pages from a sketchbook

In the seventeenth century, the term “sheet of studies” was not a critical designation, nor theoretically codified. In fact, drawings were discussed in very few seventeenth-century texts until Willem Goeree’s *Introduction to the General Art of Drawing (Inleydinge tot de Alghemeene Teycken-Konst)* in 1668. Terms such as *schizzo*, *schets*, and *bozzetto* were so variously employed throughout the century—and in art-historical study since—as to be rendered useless. In the broadest sense, a “sheet of studies” seems to refer to a drawing that an artist has used to either record an image from life, or to work out compositional or figural details for a finished work in another medium, such as painting or etching. Therefore, works that have been characterized as “studies” are as diverse as landscapes to sketches from the nude—reflecting nearly every artistic genre found in the seventeenth century. The resulting ambiguity characterizing this terminology has inflected the subsequent scholarship surrounding Rembrandt’s etched sketches, and the etchings have been given designations that have not been fully analyzed for their suitability. In addition, the term “sheet of studies” has in practice referred consistently to a *drawn* work, not a printed one—a significant distinction that will be discussed later in the chapter.
Terms such as schizzo, schets, and bozzetto (among others) began to be circulated in the sixteenth century. In 1550, Giorgio Vasari published his seminal Le Vite delle più eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architettori. In this first attempt at creating a history of art through 142 biographies of admired artists, Vasari elevated the practice of drawing by likening it to art theory itself. Vasari codified what would become very influential categories of drawings—schizzi, disegni, and cartoni—through which he explicated the artistic process. The artist would begin with the schizzo, which would represent a rough draft of the artist’s compositional idea, usually from memory. Vasari compounded Leonardo’s valuation of the “first sketch” and appreciated these schizzi as permanent records of creative inspiration. The artist would then produce the disegno, which was a drawing that was properly modeled with relief, created with diligence, and characterized by a general resolution of compositional ideas. The final stage was signified by the full-size cartone, which comprised the exactly calibrated composition to be used for the final working surface of a painting. Vasari’s writings reflected a shift in the reception of art where various types of drawings were now valued, especially those that illustrated the earliest signs of “creative furor.”

3 Please see Carmen Bambach, Drawing and Painting in the Italian Renaissance Workshop: Theory and Practice, 1300-1600 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 33-80 for more information about the categorization of Italian drawings.


5 Bambach, Drawing and Painting in the Italian Renaissance Workshop, 272.

6 It should be noted that this definition of the object disegno was different than Vasari’s discussion of the process of disegno, which was defined as the process of drawing through which the artist realized his inner vision.

By the start of the seventeenth century, art writers in northern Europe also advocated for the use of sketching and study sheets as integral components to the artist’s working process. For example, in his *Het schilder-boeck* of 1604, Karel Van Mander (1548-1606) dubbed drawing “the father of painting.” Van Mander’s study represented the first history of Netherlandish painting of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the first elaborated theory of northern European painting, drawing and printmaking. Like Vasari, Van Mander’s book was hugely influential—subsequent writers on northern art through the eighteenth century looked to the *Schilder-boeck* for information or to update what Van Mander had written. Van Mander’s lexicon of painters, printmakers and draftsmen was fundamental to later artists and theoreticians in northern Europe. A brief examination of how he discussed drawing is useful for an understanding of how these taxonomic terms may have been employed in the seventeenth century in the north.

Part One of the *schilder-boeck*, *Den Grondt der edel vry schilder-const*, consists of fourteen chapters. Three of the chapters have been noted by scholars as “key” to the interpretation of Van Mander’s theory: those on drawing, light and lighting, and painting in color. It is clear from Van Mander’s second chapter that the act of drawing holds the most elevated position in the artistic process, and that painting would not be able to thrive without drawing. Van Mander called for a new primer about the principles of art, and then outlined the steps of an appropriate artistic education: 1) find a proper master—learn drafting, execution, outlining, modeling, placement of light and shadow; 2) draw

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with charcoal, then chalk or pen; 3) learn through copying—prints and plaster casts are good; and 4) draw from life; which represented the highest level of draftsmanship. Van Mander was unambiguous in his assertion that artistic success was rooted in the medium of drawing; he seemed to understand drawing as an irreplaceable exercise, a means of maintaining a practice and advocated for continuous drawing as a method of learning the craft—albeit without consistent terminology to denote various types of drawings. Van Mander’s use of the term *teycken-const* seems similar to Vasari’s use of *disegno* as a process.

Young artists made countless drawings as part of their appropriate education, and as Vasari noted, masters continued to draw, often to work through compositional or technical concerns, culling inspiration from nature, other works of art, and their imaginations. Some of these drawings were single sheets, here called “sheets of studies,” and others were found in bound books, here named “pages from a sketchbook.” The etched sketches have been said to resemble both, indicating that they recall works in progress. While some contemporary scholars have asserted that sketchbooks were more systematic in conception than individual drawings—for example, Francis Ames-Lewis wrote that the sketchbook represented a cumulative document of artistic activity, reflecting drawing as exploratory practice rather than documentary recording—this claim is too rigid in its definition, as there are single sheets that could be characterized as exploratory, as well as sketchbooks used for recording purposes. For example, Jan van Goyen’s (1596-1656) numerous sketchbooks survive today (although few of them are

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complete) and exemplify this point. Van Goyen, a landscape painter, executed nearly 800 drawings during his lifetime, and filled many sketchbooks with direct studies from nature on his travels through the Netherlands and Germany. His sketchbooks have been used to recreate a typical journey of a Northern artist, as well as to demonstrate how a seventeenth-century artist may have used a sketchbook, thereby serving both recording and exploratory purposes.

While Van Goyen’s drawings provide a model for the characteristically bound seventeenth-century sketchbook, there is no evidence that Rembrandt’s etched sketches were meant to be bound together. Therefore, a closer comparison is found in the drawings of one of Rembrandt’s predecessors, Jacques de Gheyn II (1565-1629). De Gheyn was a typical, yet prolific seventeenth-century artist in his execution of drawn sheets of sketches or studies. A draughtsman, etcher and engraver, and painter of botanical illustrations, De Gheyn drew over 1,500 drawings in his lifetime, from anatomical studies to portraits to scientific illustrations to landscapes to imaginative scenes. Most of these today are single sheets, many of which—noteworthy as comparanda for Rembrandt’s etched sketches—combine disparate elements on the same sheet. For example, De Gheyn would often bring together a highly detailed example of his interest in scientific naturalism with a fantastical image. In *Study of Hermit Crab and Witchcraft* from 1602-3 (fig. 23), De Gheyn drew the crab meticulously in watercolor while the figures behind it were hastily sketched in pen and ink. Claudia Swan noted that

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10 Rembrandt was aware of the work of Jacob de Gheyn II, most likely through De Gheyn’s work for members of the House of Orange at The Hague, and evidenced by Rembrandt’s portrait of his son, Jacob de Gheyn III. (Oil on panel; 1632; 29.9 x 24.9 cm; Dulwich Picture Gallery, Br. 162)

11 It is unknown how many of these sheets may have once been part of a bound book.
the incongruity in size between the crab and witches, as well as the varying levels of finish were reflective of De Gheyn’s interest in joining the naturalistic with the fantastic.\textsuperscript{12} She related the dual modes of representation to Van Mander’s distinction in the \textit{Schilder-boeck} between works of art made \textit{naer het leven} (from the life) and those made \textit{uyt den gheest} (from the mind or spirit).\textsuperscript{13}

Within his own \textit{oeuvre}, Rembrandt executed individual sheets that have been categorized as sheets of studies, which may be useful to compare to the etched sketches. The Rembrandt scholar and former director of the Albertina Otto Benesch (1896-1964) once classified as many as 100 Rembrandt drawings as “sheets of studies.”\textsuperscript{14} These drawings reflected a wide range of images. For example, some are certainly preparatory for other works in print or paint, such as those that represent figure studies for the etching of \textit{Christ Healing the Sick} or \textit{Hundred Guilder Print} (B. 74), or those that relate to figures in the grisaille of \textit{John the Baptist Preaching} (Br. 555).\textsuperscript{15} (fig. 24) Other sheets of studies are potentially preparatory for etchings or paintings, but do not have as strong of a connection to a more finished work. For example, the (possible) self-portrait in the sheet of sketches today in the Pierpont Morgan, \textit{Head of Man in Fur Hat and Self Portrait} from ca. 1636, has been connected—but not securely—to the painted self-

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\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{14} Not all of these are attributed to Rembrandt today. Otto Benesch, \textit{The drawings of Rembrandt}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., ed. Eva Benesch. 6 vols. (London: Phaidon Press, 1973).
\textsuperscript{15} See for example: Ben. 140 and Ben. 141 (both in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Kupferstichkabinett), and Ben. 142 (Chatsworth, Devonshire Collection). These drawings are accepted studies for \textit{St. John the Baptist preaching}, 1634/5, oil on canvas, 62.7 x 81.1 cm., Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Gemäldegalerie, Br. 555.
\end{flushright}
portrait from 1636-38 now in the Norton-Simon Museum in Pasadena.\(^\text{16}\) (figs. 25-26)

Benesch also linked the old man on the right side of the drawing with the central figure of the group in the foreground of the previously mentioned 1634/5 *Sermon of St. John.*\(^\text{17}\)

Finally, some of the drawings categorized by Benesch as sheets of studies do not seem to be linked (at least iconographically) to any other composition at all, thereby demonstrating that even within one artist’s work, the term “sheet of studies” can imply drawings with various functions. These sheets sometimes contain only one or two figures, illustrated either once or several times each; others contain multiple figures from various viewpoints. In Rembrandt’s drawn *oeuvre*, less than ten of these drawings combine elements on one sheet that are seemingly unrelated to one another or to any specific comprehensive composition. One such example is a drawing on prepared vellum in the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam, the *Sheet of Studies with Five Heads*, from about 1637.\(^\text{18}\) (fig. 27) At the top left of the sheet is a sketch of a man with a beard and bonnet, seen partly from behind. The figure to the right of this man has been identified at various times as either a man or a woman. In the center of the sheet is a woman in half-length, with wide sleeves and a hat, wide enough to cast her face in shadow.\(^\text{19}\) To the right of her is a man in profile, with a tall hat, and at the bottom of the

\(^{16}\) *Head of Man in Fur Hat and Self Portrait*, c. 1636, pen and brown ink, 10.5 x 9.6 cm., The Morgan Library and Museum, New York (Ben. 336) and *Self-portrait*, 1636-1638, oil on canvas, 63.2 x 50.2 cm., The Norton Simon Foundation (Br. 32)

\(^{17}\) Benesch, *The Drawings of Rembrandt*, 79.

\(^{18}\) *Sheet of Studies with Five Heads*, silverpoint on prepared vellum, 13 x 8 cm., Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (Ben. 341). On the verso of this drawing is a silverpoint drawing of two cottages.

\(^{19}\) In 1956, Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann identified this figure as Saskia, but not many scholars have concurred. *Museum Boymans. Vijf Eeuwen Tekenkunst* (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans, 1956).
sheet is a male figure with a plumed hat, perhaps leaning on a table. Jeroen Giltaij wrote about this drawing that although the composition seems arbitrary, it actually was the product of careful consideration, with the figures grouped efficiently. He then asserted, in a statement that applies equally as well to the etched sketches: “Thus these works are probably not sheets of sketches in the sense of practice material, but a separate current category of drawings.” Much like Giltaij’s interpretation of this drawing, the etched sketches do not fit securely into a prescribed—however inexact—category.

A well-known drawn sheet of sketches in Rembrandt’s oeuvre is the Model Sheet with male heads and three sketches of a woman with a child in Birmingham (UK) from the mid-1630s. (fig. 28) At the top of the sheet is the bust and hand of a large man wearing a coat with a fur collar and a plumed hat. Below him are two sketches of a man’s head from different positions, while in the upper left corner are two small studies, one incomplete, of turbaned men. At the very bottom of the sheet is a less finished drawing of a man wearing a fur-trimmed hat. This figure is executed primarily in red chalk, while the others are in pen or pen and wash. On the right side of the sheet are three depictions of a seated, bare-breasted woman holding a sleeping baby, another sleeping baby against a woman’s breasts, and a third study of an infant sleeping in a woman’s arms.

20 Jeroen Giltaij, Drawings by Rembrandt and his School in the Museum Boymans-Beuningen Rotterdam (London: Thames & Hudson, 1988), 52. Seymour Slive agreed that this drawing was most likely not for instructional material, as the materials (vellum, silverpoint) would have been too costly for such an exercise, in his Rembrandt Drawings (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2009), 46.

21 Model Sheet with male heads and three sketches of a woman with a child, pen and brown ink, brown wash and red chalk, 22 x 23.3 cm. (Ben. 340).
Like the etched sketches, the drawing depicts various heads and figures on the same sheet. The drawing also illustrates diverse degrees of finishes, captured by the use of a mixture of materials, both pen and brown ink and red chalk on the same sheet.\textsuperscript{22} The combination of disparate elements here purposefully placed on the sheet has been interpreted as serving a didactic function, to give Rembrandt’s students the opportunity to draw after these models. But when compared with contemporary images from printed model books for students, such as pages from the seventeenth-century model book by Abraham Bloemaert (discussed later in this chapter), the varied finishes of Rembrandt’s drawing do not resemble the more polished approach of Bloemaert or others. Instead, this drawing (and others like it in Rembrandt’s oeuvre) whose conventional title as “model sheet” creates a certain set of unproven assumptions about its function should be considered as something comparable to the drawn sheets of sketches by De Gheyn or Van Goyen: exhibiting the dual functions of exploratory and recording purposes.

Similar conclusions can be reached about the earliest of the etched sketches: the \textit{Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads} (fig. 2), which most closely resembles the Birmingham drawing, or a sheet of sketches. The etching, in its original state, is comprised of six male figures, of various degrees of finish and in divergent positions. As mentioned in chapter one, several scholars compared this etching to a drawn sheet of sketches. For example, Ludwig Münz stated that it is an example of an “experimental” print, where Rembrandt sketched with a needle on the plate just as he drew with a pen on paper.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{22} Another sheet of sketches by Rembrandt in Amsterdam exhibits a combination of materials on the same sheet. See the \textit{Sheet of Sketches of Lamenting Marys} (Ben. 152), ca. 1637, for which Rembrandt used red chalk and pen and brown ink.

\textsuperscript{23} See p. 30-1 of this dissertation.
Christopher White essentially agreed with Münz and suggested that the *Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads* is an example of how Rembrandt treated the etching plate as a piece of paper to record studies from nature. He pointed out that the sheet contains several studies that are both freely etched and completely unrelated to one another, and which vary dramatically in their degree of finish. White asserted that Rembrandt drew the sketches quickly, and he may have bitten them separately as he went. He then stated that the diversity of finish would have made the plate impossible to keep as a single entity, and that is the reason Rembrandt himself eventually cut the plate to print the figures individually. Indeed, *Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads* is the closest in execution to a traditional sheet of studies, combining several motifs, all in a similar orientation, on the same sheet. The medium of etching, however, complicates the interpretation of this print as a quick sketch, no matter how rapidly Rembrandt may have etched the studies.

Drawing was the ideal medium for creating an object—a sheet of studies—that functioned in both an exploratory and documentary manner. Perhaps the greatest difficulty with identifying the etched sketches as sheets of studies or pages from a sketchbook is that these purposes do not translate as well to the more meticulous medium of etching. Etching is indeed the printmaking method most often compared with drawing, formally, and both etching and drypoint are closer to drawing or painting in manual control than engraving. The needle is held like a pen or a brush, with the artist “drawing” on the copper plate through the ground as he would a piece of paper (in engraving, pressure is applied to the burin with the palm of the hand). However, etching is more laborious than drawing, and unlike drawing, where there is “no material obstacle to instant realization,” etching must rely on both the artist’s experience and imagination.
to visualize the final result. In technique, etching is more removed from drawing than engraving, because of the additional step of the acid bath. Each stage in the etching process is another opportunity to guess, to suppose, to risk a mistake, because the end result is essentially deferred by the process itself. In artistic theory, etching is ranked beneath drawing and painting because etchings can never represent the inspired first thoughts of the artist, given the extra steps needed to make etchings.

Therefore, although drawn sheets of sketches may combine disparate elements and dissimilar finishes on the same sheet like the etched sketches, for these technical reasons the etched sketches cannot be understood through the use of these terms. Rembrandt made in etching graphic works that may have visually recalled drawings, but the methods of their production prevent them from completely functioning as such.

**The etched sketches as pages from a model book**

The question of medium is not as significant for a comparison of the etched sketches to pages from a model book that was printed. Several scholars have noted that the etched sketches may have been created in the tradition of such a printed, usually engraved, model book. In fact, in the eighteenth century, connoisseur and collector Antoine-Joseph Dézalier d’Argenville (1680-1765) mentioned a model book of etchings by Rembrandt: “son livre à dessiner est de dix à douze feuilles,” although no evidence of such a book exists. With indeterminacy similar to the “sheet of studies” it is telling that

24 White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, 3.

25 A.-J. Dezallier d’Argenville, *Abrégé de la vie des plus fameux peintres*, 3 vols., (Paris, 1745-52) in Emmens, *Rembrandt en de regels*, 155-8. Subsequent scholars have suggested that etchings of heads and figures, male nudes and some of the etched sketches may have been a part of this book, but there is no proof of this supposition.
the term “model book” cannot be found in today’s Grove Dictionary of Art, the most common reference available today. In it one is directed to see “pattern book,” where a pattern book is defined as “a term for books usually designed to teach the beginner how to construct a plausible image of the human figure, of animals, trees, etc., by providing examples to be copied and simple diagrams to be memorized.” The entry states that these types of books followed in the tradition of medieval pattern books, such as the extant one by Villard de Honnecourt, which included diagrams of simplified figures to be copied and circulated between locations and workshops. From this type of medieval pattern book came the late Gothic model book, which was typically a collection of individual forms or motifs that were intended as a stock of examples to be reproduced in finished works. Like the medieval pattern book, they were made of fine materials such as parchment or vellum, metal foil and vivid inks, and were meant to be long-lasting.

As Francis Ames-Lewis has noted, closer to the Renaissance era model books became more rigid and less creative, far more precise, and began to show more limited fields of artistic activity than the earlier pattern-books. For example, the images were rarely copied from life anymore; rather, they were usually copied from other drawings. With the advent of printmaking, model books were first engraved and eventually etched, resulting in wider circulation for individual model books. The primary characteristics

28 The Grove Dictionary of Art (s.v.) also calls them drawing books, further complicating any attempt to distinguish between definitions.
29 Ames-Lewis, Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy, 64.
30 The first printed pattern or model book is usually considered to be that by Heinrich Vogtherr (1538), which contained pages of heads, hands, feet, weapons, and ornaments. Vogtherr published his
of a page from model book were these: whether drawn or printed, a model-book page was meant to be copied by a pupil, so the images were clearly distinguished from one another and easy to follow. Because of the need to transmit these motifs to artists who may have had no knowledge of the original work, designs were placed with great care on the page, “with conscientious avoidance of overlap so that no detail should be obscured.” The model book was meant to contain definitive studies which would be useful to the later generations of artists who inherited the artist’s workshop, and was venerated not only as a reservoir of motifs but also as a measure of the workshop’s tradition.

The definition of a model book became more convoluted during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as demonstrated by Ernst Gombrich in his history of “drawing books” (his term). Gombrich’s definition of a “drawing book” is closer to that previously associated with a pattern book or model book—a bound book that included patterns for copying various parts of the body. The increasing professionalization of the artist caused the term model book—at times used interchangeably with sketchbook and drawing book, arguably terms connoting completely different objects—to become altered in meaning. Gombrich was one of the earliest scholars to undertake the study of these types of books as part of the process of the education of the artist. According to Gombrich, most

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31 Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy*, 68.
32 Ibid., 64.
sixteenth-century drawing books were too advanced for beginners, so at the start of the seventeenth century, Odoardo Fialetti’s book, *Il vero modo et ordine per disegnar tutte le parti et membra del corpo humano*, was published to offer a step-by-step manual for the beginning artist.\(^{34}\) Fialetti’s book consisted of forty-three pages, thirty-seven of which were devoted to illustrations of various parts of the human body, such as eyes, ears, noses, mouths, and arms. These pages were laid out methodically, providing students with illustrations of these anatomical details from different perspectives.\(^{35}\) Fialetti’s model book became an influential example for later Italian and northern European model books.

Jaap Bolten has been one of the few scholars to focus exclusively on northern “drawing books” (his term). In his influential work on seventeenth-century northern drawing books, *Method and Practice: Dutch and Flemish Drawing Books 1600-1750*, Bolten asserted that by the seventeenth century, drawing books were used for instructional purposes, while model books were merely “storehouses” of iconographic and formal elements.\(^{36}\) According to Bolten, drawing books were defined not by their structure or “physical form” (they could be either bound publications or a series of separate prints) but by their didacticism. Drawing books can be said to have given contemporary artists a specific way of constructing an image, usually based on the

\(^{34}\) Fialetti’s book was published in Venice in 1608.


originating artist’s particular style. Model books, conversely, offered a more general way of drawing, and did not rely on the copyist reproducing the (sometimes unknown) artist’s style. In addition, Bolten distinguished model books from drawing books by what was copied: drawing books included more traditional anatomical examples, while model books included more genre-like elements. While Bolten’s desire to come to a more precise definition of terms is commendable, evidence from the seventeenth century indicates that he has constructed a false dichotomy, much like Ames-Lewis’s definition of sketchbook mentioned earlier in the chapter. For the purposes of this dissertation, the term model book will be used to refer to any type of bound book that contains images, either anatomical examples or genre elements, whose primary function is to be copied.

Just as Fialetti’s book was the archetypal example of an Italian model book, the following examples illustrate how printed model books were used in the seventeenth-century Netherlands. Crispijn van de Passe the Younger’s ‘t Licht der teken en schilder konst of 1643 was both the most ambitiously conceived and also the most complete of the Dutch and Flemish model books. His book was a manual for painters in five parts, published in Amsterdam by Johannes Janssonius. It was dedicated to the people, city and

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37 In her essay on seventeenth-century Italian drawing books, Chittima Amornpichetkul generally followed Bolten’s and Scheller’s definitions of “drawing book.” She wrote that drawing books were “how-to-draw” manuals for beginners, while model books were for “advanced or professional artists.” She asserted that drawing books were usually divided into two parts: the first part containing anatomical examples, and the second part heads of men and women of different ages. However, this statement that can also be made about seventeenth-century model books as well. Again, the attempt to distinguish between these terms leads to a false separation of their function.

38 Published in Amsterdam, 1643. The book consisted of six gatherings of ten leaves each; one gathering of eight leaves; twenty gatherings of six leaves each; and three gatherings of four leaves. Van de Passe is most likely the sole author; he uses first person throughout the book.
province of Utrecht, where Van de Passe lived during the 1630s, and most of the plates were engraved by Van de Passe himself.

What differentiates this drawing book from others before and after it is the amount of text.\textsuperscript{39} There are 220 leaves with texts in Italian, Dutch, French and German, most of which are theoretical writings previously published in other model books or treatises. Part one is devoted to the study of proportions; part two to drawings from the male nude; part three to drawings from the female nude; part four to copies after figure studies by famous contemporary masters; and part five to studies of animals after Roelandt Saverij (1576-1639) and other artists.\textsuperscript{40} As several authors have noted, Van de Passe’s greatest contribution may be that his model book brought together theoretical and practical approaches to drawing for the first time in the Netherlands.

The publication of Van de Passe’s model book may have prompted successful Utrecht artist Abraham Bloemaert (1564-1651) to publish his own; Bloemaert scholar Marcel Roethlisberger commented that the first editions of both books are organized similarly.\textsuperscript{41} The resulting volume, the Bloemaert \textit{Tekenboek}, was perhaps the most significant northern European model book from the seventeenth century. The very rare first edition with 100 plates, published in 1650, was engraved and published by Frederick

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{39} Bolten discusses this in greater depth in the commentary with the English translation of the introduction to \textit{t Licht} (Doornspijk: Davaco Publishers, 1973).
\item\textsuperscript{40} For a more detailed discussion of the five sections, please see Ilja M. Veldman, \textit{Profit and Pleasure: Print Books by Cripijn de Passe}, trans. Michael Hoyle (Rotterdam: Sound and Vision Publishers, 2001), 338.
\item\textsuperscript{41} Marcel Roethlisberger, \textit{Abraham Bloemaert and His Sons: Paintings and Prints} (Doornspijk: Davaco Publishers, 1993), 389. Roethlisberger goes farther to suggest a hypothetical schedule of publication between the two drawing books: Van de Passe would have published parts 1-3 in 1643-44; the first edition (120 plates) of Bloemaert’s \textit{Tekenboek} published next in 1650-56; Van de Passe would have published part 4 (including twenty-one plates by Bloemaert) and part 5 by 1660, 390.
\end{itemize}
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Bloemaert after his father’s drawings, most of which are still extant today. The second edition was edited by Bernard Picart and published in 1740 by R. & J. Ottens in Amsterdam. This edition contains eight parts, with a total of 166 plates in a different arrangement than the first edition.

It has been difficult for scholars to ascertain the extent to which Abraham Bloemaert planned the *Tekenboek*. Most believe that the drawings spanned Abraham’s career, beginning in the 1620’s. The initial drawings may have been completed from 1625 to 1635, with Frederick completing the plates by 1650. It is unclear how many of the initial drawings were made with a project of this type in mind, although Roethlisberger believed that: “Taken as a whole, the drawings show a striking uniformity of style of execution, despite different treatments and techniques. There can be no doubt that the whole volume was drawn within a limited period by a single hand for the purpose of publication.”

After 1635, Abraham had essentially ceased to design engravings, so much of the *Tekenboek* is based on drawings from the 1630s. Bolten and Roethlisberger have both analyzed the relationship between the *Tekenboek*, the Cambridge drawings, and the so-called Cambridge album today in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, England (PD167-1963) contains most of the original model drawings for the engravings in the *Tekenboek*. There are 160 sheets, most pen and ink drawings; all but eighteen are in reverse for the prints. Roethlisberger was originally inclined to think the drawings in Cambridge were done by Frederick, but by the time his catalogue raisonné was published, believed that they were by Abraham (Roethlisberger, *Abraham Bloemaert and His Sons*, 390.)

This volume contains 120 plates and 7 chiaroscuros.

Bolten notes that after his father’s death, Frederick must have published one or more sub-editions, with 120 plates in six parts. The copperplates and what was considered the publication rights for the subsequent editions were then acquired by Nicolaes Visscher. Jaap Bolten, “Abraham Bloemaert (1564-1651) and his *Tekenboek,*” *Delineavit et Sculpsit* No. 9 (1993): 2.


Ibid., 391.
and Bloemaert’s other works. Bolten’s discussion of the pages of nudes provides a good example of how the various parts may have related to one another: In the 1740 edition, there are ten pages of nudes—six of them have corresponding drawings in the Cambridge album, one is in the Amsterdam Rijksprentenkabinet, and one in the Nationalmuseum in Göteborg.47 The remaining two have been lost. Other existing Bloemaert drawings are numbered and marked in the same way, but do not have an engraved counterpart in the Tekenboek. Scholars have made connections between these engravings and figures or motifs in Bloemaert’s paintings.48 It is apparent that Bloemaert (and other artists after him) actually used these images as records and as models.

The Tekenboek is different from Bloemaert’s other print series in its breadth and obvious didactic intention.49 There are seventy-four pages of details of human body (as in earlier Italian drawing books); sixty plates with entire figures (genre, religious and classical); thirteen compositions; and twelve plates with domestic animals. (fig. 29) There are no landscape prints. Unlike Crispijn Van de Passe’s earlier book, the Tekenboek does not include text and does not seem to set out a program of instruction; rather, it reflects Bloemaert’s non-academic approach to art.50 Its primary goal was to provide a set of images from the master for the pupils in his workshop to copy.51

47 Bolten, “Abraham Bloemaert and his Tekenboek,” 4-6.

48 See, for example, catalog entries in the 1973 Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition Abraham Bloemaert (1564-1651): prints and drawings; the 2001 Abraham Bloemaert and his time, Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, FL; and the most recent 2012 exhibition at the Centraal Museum in Utrecht: The Bloemaert Effect: Colour and composition in the Golden Age.

49 Roethlisberger, Abraham Bloemaert and His Sons, 389.


51 While Bloemaert’s Tekenboek is the most significant northern model book of the seventeenth century, a second model book, Stefano Della Bella’s Livre pour apprendre à dessiner (Paris, 1645-1650), would be
Although Rembrandt’s workshop was nearly as large as Bloemaert’s, it is unclear if his etched sketches served such an academic purpose for his pupils, or even if Rembrandt used model books in this way at all. Approximately forty pupils can be definitively associated with Rembrandt’s workshop, some of whom became particularly successful artists of their own.\textsuperscript{52} From extant drawings as well as the writings of pupils such as Samuel van Hoogstraten, it is believed that Rembrandt’s students experienced similar educational training as that found in other seventeenth-century workshops. There are multiple drawings by his pupils which he corrected on the sheet, as well as three etchings of the male nude that have related drawings by his pupils from the same modeling session, so that it is reasonable to state that Rembrandt encouraged his students to draw from life in the studio.\textsuperscript{53} He most likely also taught them to draw from casts, as evidenced by his small etching from around 1641, \textit{Man Drawing from a Cast}.\textsuperscript{54} (fig. 30) It illustrates a man sitting at a desk, surrounded by the objects of a scholar or artist, drawing a bust in a sketchbook by candlelight. In addition, from his 1656 inventory, it is evident that Rembrandt kept his own drawings in large, encyclopedic albums. There is worthy of extended study and contextualization. The mutual influence exhibited between Rembrandt and Della Bella throughout their careers deserves further investigation, specifically as related to unusual images such as the etched sketches.

\textsuperscript{52}Numerous exhibitions and publications have been devoted to the study of Rembrandt and his pupils, one of the most recent was Holm Bevers, Lee Hendrix, William W. Robinson and Peter Schatborn, \textit{Drawings by Rembrandt and his Pupils: Telling the Difference}, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010). The Rembrandthuis in Amsterdam, the museum in Rembrandt’s former home and studio, states in all of their publications that Rembrandt had approximately forty pupils over his lifetime.

\textsuperscript{53} Please see a drawing now attributed to Constantijn Daniel van Renesse, a student of Rembrandt’s in the late 1640s, \textit{Rembrandt and His Pupils Drawing from a Nude Model}, c. 1650, pen and brush in brown wash with chalk, 18 x 26.6 cm., Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt. This drawing is often cited as evidence that Rembrandt’s pupils indeed drew from life.

\textsuperscript{54} Rembrandt, \textit{Man Drawing from a Cast}, c. 1641, etching, 9.4 x 6.4 cm., first state (B. 130), The British Museum, London, 1843,0607.86.
no evidence, however, to prove that these albums—or any sort of model book—were used in his workshop.

Two examples help to demonstrate the differences between the etched sketches and images found in model books. The second chronologically of the etched sketches, *Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads* (fig. 3), is the etched sketch that most closely resembles a page from a model book, as defined by the terms discussed in this chapter. Rembrandt has executed three heads here, seemingly of the same man, so there is a repetition of the same element from different angles. The three heads exhibit three different degrees of finish, as the most lightly sketched head on the left progresses toward the most finished head at the top of the sheet. This last head has been loosely connected with two drawings by Rembrandt: *Old Man with Long Beard and Flat Cap* (fig. 31), as well as *Three Studies for a Bust of an Old Man (Disciple at Emmaus?)*, which illustrates three drawings of the same figure.\(^{55}\) (fig. 32) *Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads* also recalls the technique of Rembrandt’s early etchings, specifically the *tronies*. Thomas Rassieur has related this etched sketch specifically to two etchings that were once identified as Rembrandt’s father: B. 292 (fig. 33) and B. 304.\(^{56}\) (fig. 34) Both illustrate an older man with a cap.

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\(^{55}\) Rembrandt, *Old Man with Long Beard and Flat Cap*, c. 1630, pen and brown ink with grey wash, 8.4 x 7.9 cm., Louvre Museum, Paris, 197 D.R. (Ben. 50) and Rembrandt, *Three Studies of the Bust of an Old Man*, c. 1638, pen and brown ink, 17.4 x 16 cm., Fondation Custodia, Frits Lugt Collection, Paris, 1922 (Ben. 87).

\(^{56}\) Today, the drawing inscribed Harman. Gerrits in the Ashmolean Museum (Ben. 56) is considered the only probable portrait of Rembrandt’s father. Thomas Rassieur, et al., *Rembrandt’s Journey: Painter, Draftsman, Etcher*, exh. cat. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2003), 94-95.
What this etching does not manifest is the purposeful distribution of the elements across the page, and the physical space between each of the heads that is so obviously part of the illustrations in both Van de Passe’s and Bloemaert’s model books. In the etched sketch, Rembrandt has connected the three heads by hatched and overlapping lines. This etching would not be as easy to copy as one would assume a page from a model book would be, thus thwarting any instructional purpose.

Ger Luijten connected two of the etched sketches that feature a portrait of Saskia (fig. 4 and fig. 5) with model sheets that depicted a variety of women’s headgear, such as one from Heinrich Vogtherr’s *Kunstbüchlein* of 1572.57 (fig. 35) Although Luijten asserted that Rembrandt’s etchings captured the immediacy of drawn sketches rather than recalling Vogtherr’s more rigidly executed woodcuts, he did not elaborate on how this aesthetic difference would change an interpretation of the function of these etchings, an issue that is remedied by this dissertation.58 It is the combination of the portrait of Saskia with the immediacy of finish found in these etched sketches that specifically prevents these prints from acting as merely a catalogue of women’s headdresses. If didactic in function, the various examples of headgear would not be as lightly rendered, nor would the headdress itself be eclipsed by the woman wearing it.

The etched sketches as preparatory works

Several of the etched sketches—such as the *Sheet of Studies with Woman in Bed* (fig. 7) and two of the etched sketches with self-portraits, *Sheet of Studies: Head of the

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57 Ger Luijten, *Rembrandt the Printmaker*, cat. no. 29, 155-156.

58 Ibid.
Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc. (fig. 1) and Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, a Beggar Man, Woman and Child (fig. 9)—have been discussed as preparatory works for other etchings. What is unusual about this designation is that Rembrandt did not make etchings that were preparatory for other works—etchings were considered to be and functioned as finished works within his oeuvre. It is thus worthwhile to examine Rembrandt’s actual use of preparatory works in his art to investigate whether these etched sketches are preliminary in any way.

It was common in the seventeenth century for artists to make multiple drawings in preparation for a finished work. Close study of these preparatory drawings often reveals the working process from beginning to end. Such preparatory drawings included initial studies of figures or body parts (as mentioned above), and objects drawn from life, to detailed, smaller versions of the entire composition. Preparatory drawings were executed in a variety of materials, from pen and ink to pastel to watercolor. It has been noted that Rembrandt did not use preparatory drawings within his working process as often as some of his contemporaries did; he instead typically chose to work directly on the plate or canvas. Among the limited number of his preparatory works are drawings used to work through the composition or figures of a painting, as well as approximately five drawings that were indented for transfer to a copper plate.

Martin Royalton-Kisch has been one of the few scholars to try to describe the preparatory relationship—specifically between Rembrandt’s drawings and prints—in a

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59 Please see Barbara Wenzel in Rembrandt: the Master and his Workshop, cat. 14, 203-4, and Ernst van de Wetering in A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings IV: Self-Portraits, 89-317.

60 Martin Royalton-Kisch and Peter Schatborn, among others, have written that Rembrandt’s drawings did not seem to act as subservient material to his works in etching and painting, but stood on their own as independent images.
systematic way. In his 1993 essay, “Rembrandt’s Drawings for his Prints: some observations,” Royalton-Kisch discussed those drawings (twenty-four in all) that he considered to be specifically preparatory for Rembrandt’s etchings.61 Royalton-Kisch made clear in his essay that Rembrandt’s drawings were not by and large preliminary works that moved toward a finished end in painting or printmaking, and that most of his etchings were made directly on the plate without any drawn preparations.62 He stated that direct correlations between Rembrandt’s drawings, etchings and paintings are exceptional, but it is still useful to search for connections between works in different media.63 As this is one of the few instances of a scholar analyzing the relationship between a group of Rembrandt’s drawings and prints, it is useful to briefly look at one example of how he characterized this relationship. I employ Royalton-Kisch’s methodology to uncover whether the etched sketches were in fact preparatory in any way, or if they represented examples of another model used by Rembrandt to make connections between works in different media.

Royalton-Kisch presented an unusual case from the study in the British Museum (fig. 36) for the etching Artist drawing from the Model (fig. 37).64 Well-known today, the

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61 Martin Royalton-Kisch, “Rembrandt’s Drawings for his Prints: some observations,” ed. Görel Cavalli-Björkman, Rembrandt and his pupils (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1993), 173-192. Royalton-Kisch included these drawings in his essay, among others: Ben. 21; Ben. 292; Ben. 423; Ben. 758; Ben. 762a/763; Ben. 768; Ben. 886; Ben. 1227; Ben. 1259; RRP A89.


63 Ibid., 189.

64 Rembrandt, The Artist Drawing from the Model, c. 1639, pen and brown ink with brown wash and touched with white, on paper washed brown, 18.8 x 16.4 cm., The British Museum, London, Gg.2.248 (Ben. 423) and Rembrandt, The Artist Drawing from the Model, c. 1639, etching, drypoint and burin, 23.2 x 18.4 cm., second state (B. 192), The British Museum, London, 1843,0607.121
etching was never finished by Rembrandt and exists in two states. In the second state, parts of the print have been added to and elaborated, such as the upper area of the etching and the sculpture itself. The object in the center (perhaps a linen press) has been eliminated in the second state, and the center has been covered with hatching. Royalton-Kisch noted that the related drawing is unusual in that it shows fewer pentimenti than Rembrandt’s other preparatory drawings and a more complex design than even the second state of the etching. Because the drawing was not indented for transfer to the copper plate, Royalton-Kisch asserted that it was not intended to be a preliminary sketch in the traditional sense; rather, it was made during the process of the etching’s completion.65 It was perhaps executed even after the second state of the etching.

Royalton-Kisch’s proposal contradicted other scholarly arguments that the etching was left unfinished intentionally, in order to either provide compositional instruction to Rembrandt’s pupils or to emphasize the act of drawing itself. Instead, Royalton-Kisch suggested that the drawing in the British Museum indicates that the print was meant to be finished, but that the plate was abandoned for other reasons, such as the problematic lighting in the background or the height of the platform and model’s legs (which Rembrandt changed in the states and drawing).66 Royalton-Kisch ended his discussion of this print by noting that although the association between this drawing and etching is unusual, the scenario was not atypical in Rembrandt’s oeuvre as a whole: the Rembrandt Research Project demonstrated that Rembrandt sometimes turned to paper only after he

65 Ibid., 182.

66 Ibid. In fact, the etching was not completely abandoned. Hinterding noted that several impressions were made in around 1640, and then the plate (still technically unfinished) was brought back in around 1652, when several more impressions were taken. Hinterding, Rembrandt the Printmaker, 177-9.
had begun to paint. Royalten-Kisch’s discussion indicated that within Rembrandt’s work, a “preparatory work” is not a linear or securely defined proposition. The relationship between works—in different media—can be reciprocal and more complicated, such as that represented by the association between the etched sketches and those etchings for which they are said to be preparatory.

Barbara Wenzel has argued that *Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc.* (fig. 7) could be viewed as a preliminary work for Rembrandt’s large *Death of the Virgin* etching and drypoint from ca. 1639 (fig. 38)—as if the etched sketch were a step along a path from a non-specific drawing of a woman in a bed to the finished *Death of the Virgin*. As Wenzel wrote, though the etched sketch should not be understood as specifically preparatory for the etching, “it is probable that observations made from the model left their mark on Rembrandt’s treatment of the scene, giving the figure of the Virgin as authentic an appearance as possible.” This is a limited view of the possible function of the etched sketch, which should be understood as an independent work, with multiple functions, and not subordinate to the larger *Death of the Virgin*.

Rembrandt’s *Death of the Virgin* print is comprised of a large group of mourners, surrounding the bed on which the Virgin Mary lays dying. It has been noted that Rembrandt differentiated between the earthly and heavenly realms with his technique, exhibiting great detail for the humans below and a bolder, sketchier style to illuminate the

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67 Ibid.

68 Authors beginning with Middleton made this comparison with the *Death of the Virgin* etching. Rembrandt, *The Death of the Virgin*, 1639, etching, 41 x 31.5 cm., second state (B. 99) The British Museum, London, 1855,0609.24

angels above, which in turn strengthens the division of space. Those scholars who assert that *Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc.* was preparatory in some way for the *Death of the Virgin* claim that it is exactly the considerable number of figures in the composition that seem to crowd the beds of the women in the etched sketch and the Virgin in her death scene, as well as the diversity in finish on both plates, that demonstrate this relationship.

This discussion, however, restricts other interpretations of this etched sketch. The fact that this etching contains two women in bed does not provide any stronger argument for it being a preparatory work than any other work by Rembrandt of women in bed, of which there are many, both drawn and etched (a topic which is explored in this dissertation). In addition, the figures in the etched sketch do not surround the beds as the disciples do in the *Death of the Virgin* print; the additional figures in *Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc.* represent entirely separate individuals, rendered in different sizes and finishes from the women in bed. In fact, most of these figures are not illustrated in the same orientation as the women in bed, causing the viewer to rotate the print to see them correctly. Therefore, although this etched sketch does belong to a larger group of images of women in bed within Rembrandt’s *oeuvre*, it does not seem specifically preparatory, or explicitly related, to the etching of the *Death of the Virgin*.

In the Rembrandt Research Project’s fourth volume, on Rembrandt’s self-portraits, Ernst van de Wetering emphasized that the etched sketches B. 363 (fig. 1), B. 372 (fig. 8), and B. 370 (fig. 9) were “aborted projects” that “should have resulted in full-fledged ‘portraits of Rembrandt by himself.’”70 Claiming that specifically B. 363 and B.

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370 were preparatory works for other printed self-portraits, Van de Wetering “matched”
two of the etched sketches with a well-studied self portrait by Rembrandt. For example,
he argued that Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old
Man and Old Woman, etc. (fig. 1) may have been the first attempt to realize Self Portrait
in a Soft Hat (fig. 39), while Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man,
Woman and Child (fig. 9) may have been preparatory for Self Portrait Drawing at a
Window (fig. 40). That is, each of these was originally intended as a traditional etched
self-portrait by Rembrandt, but for reasons of misbiting, or perhaps because of problems
with the likeness or placement of the figure, they were abandoned. (figs. 41 and 42)

What Van de Wetering’s interpretation of these two etched sketches assumed is
that the self-portrait in these prints is meant to be privileged, an assertion (noted in
chapter one of this dissertation) that not every Rembrandt scholar agrees with in regard to
these etchings. If a beggar were etched before the self-portrait on these plates, Van de
Wetering’s analysis of these works as somehow preparatory for finished self-portraits
becomes problematic. In addition, as with Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in
Bed, etc. (fig. 7), the element of rotation of these plates confuses an interpretation of the
privileged self-portrait, for when the viewer engages in the act of turning the plate or
print, and the self-portrait is no longer in its correct orientation, it allows for an
examination of aspects of these etchings that call for a different reading, as will be
offered throughout the remainder of this dissertation.

71 Rembrandt, Self-Portrait in a Soft Hat and Embroidered Cloak, 1631, etching and drypoint, 14.7 x 13
cm., tenth state (B. 7) The British Museum, London, F,4.9 and Rembrandt, Self-portrait drawing at a
window, 1648, etching, drypoint and burin, 16 x 13 cm., fifth state (B. 22) The British Museum, London,
F,4.35
Conclusion

This chapter has examined the etched sketches in relationship to definitions that previous authors have assigned to them. The etched sketches do not fit securely into any of the categories outlined in this chapter; they do not function as sheets of studies, model sheets or preparatory works. It is not only their indeterminate function, however, that makes them complicated: They occur in larger editions than one would reasonably expect with works assigned to any category of support material. The next chapter, then, will examine the numbers of impressions for the etched sketches to demonstrate that nearly all of them were printed to be sold on the open market or to private patrons. The second part of the chapter will consider the appeal of their varying degrees of finish, one reason why they were appreciated by a broad audience of collectors.
CHAPTER THREE:
THE EDITIONS, AUDIENCES AND DEGREES OF FINISH
OF THE ETCHED SKETCHES

Introduction

In this chapter, I consider which of the etched sketches were likely meant for public consumption—I contend not all nine of them were—and discuss the methods by which Rembrandt’s etchings were collected in the seventeenth century. My conclusions here are based in part on Erik Hinterding’s research on Rembrandt’s watermarks, which he has published in both Rembrandt as an Etcher: Studies in Prints and Printmaking and his catalogue raisonné of the Rembrandt prints in the Frits Lugt collection. The limitations to his research—noted by himself and others—including: the knowledge that Rembrandt’s plates were regularly reprinted; the inability to ascertain how many impressions of any etching have been lost over time; and the number of impressions pulled from a plate could vary from print to print and from session to session. Small prints, such as the etched sketches, often lack watermarks, presenting an obstacle to discovering if they were printed on the same paper and belonged to the same edition.¹ The chapter will conclude with an examination of the technical qualities of the etched sketches that appealed specifically to print collectors, for it appears that their seeming lack of traditional finish was a primary factor in their desirability to collectors. Erik Hinterding, Ger Luijten, and others have asserted that in several of his prints, Rembrandt

¹ Based on several examples, such as The Three Trees (B. 212) and The Good Samaritan (B. 90), Hinterding affirmed that Rembrandt printed an average of twenty-five to fifty impressions per edition.
“translated” the idea of a sketchy finish usually esteemed in drawings into printed form.² Building upon Hinterding’s research, this chapter will offer further thoughts about this idea of translation between media to determine Rembrandt’s goal in capturing the sketchiness valued by the market in a different medium.

The Editions

Evidence suggests that many of the etched sketches were created for audiences outside of Rembrandt’s studio, with the exception of the rarest of the etched sketches. The least common etched sketches are Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads (fig. 2) and Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads (fig. 3). The Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads only occurs as a whole in three extant impressions, while the Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads was called “unobtainable” by Nowell-Usticke.³ When examined as part of the larger group of etched sketches, these sheets are visually set apart because they more closely—although not securely—resemble a traditional sheet of studies (B. 366) and a page from a model book (B. 374), as noted in chapter two. They contain individual figures, which are repeated (B. 374) or arranged separately across the plate (B. 366), with no seeming spatial or iconographic connection between them. The state of finish across these images is more uniform as well, particularly with Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads, perhaps

² Erik Hinterding, Rembrandt Etchings from the Frits Lugt Collection, 2 vols. (Bussum: Thoth Publishers, 2008), 603. Throughout the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition Rembrandt the Printmaker (2000), Ger Luijten wrote that several of Rembrandt’s etchings seemed to capture the immediacy of drawn sketches, including the etched sketches.

allowing them to be copied more readily within the studio. These characteristics indicate that B. 366 and B. 374 were not likely meant to be sold on the market or to print collectors.

As previously mentioned, the plate for B. 366 did not survive intact as it was cut into pieces during Rembrandt’s lifetime, providing an explanation for why first-state impressions of the etching are today so rare. Perhaps the etching as a whole had a function for a short period of time within Rembrandt’s workshop. When it was cut into five separate prints (figs. 10-14), however, the resulting impressions occur in far greater numbers, as they were reworked several times during Rembrandt’s lifetime and then posthumously as well. The collector and scholar Frits Lugt (1884-1970) owned three of these prints in various states, indicating their greater availability. These include an early impression of the second state (of five) of *Old man seen from behind* (B. 143, fig. 10); four states (of five, the first being the original whole etching) of *Man crying out, three-quarters left, bust* (B. 300, fig. 11); and three states (of a possible seven) of *Old man in a fur coat and high cap* (B. 333, fig. 13). Although Nowell-Usticke called these etchings “rare,” Lugt was able to collect all of the states of B. 300 (fig. 11) and several of B. 333

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4 As argued in chapter two, this image would be more difficult to copy than traditional seventeenth-century pages from a model book. Again, there is no evidence that the etched sketches were copied by Rembrandt’s pupils. By their very nature, student copies would most likely not have been preserved.

5 As with many of Rembrandt etchings, there has been some disagreement among scholars about what constitutes different states for these etchings, and after which state Rembrandt stopped working on the plates himself. In the catalogue raisonné of Lugt’s collection, Hinterding generally followed the most accepted numbers of states, and tended to assert that only the first few states of each print (if that) were executed by Rembrandt.
(fig. 13), so these were not nearly as rare as an impression of the entire sheet and were evidently printed to reach a wide audience.  

A third etched sketch is less common than the majority of the group of nine, but not as rare as the previous two: the etched sketch traditionally called *Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap* (fig. 8). Unlike *Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads* or *Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads*, this print does not resemble a traditional sheet of sketches or a page from a model book in any way. As described earlier, there are disparate elements on the same sheet—a partial self-portrait, a beret, and a small figure in a tiny landscape—that would be very unusual on a page from a model book, which calls for the images to be clearly rendered as they are meant for didactic purposes. In fact, it could be argued that this etched sketch most closely resembles the previously mentioned *Study of Hermit Crab and Witchcraft* drawing by Jacques de Gheyn II (fig. 23), with differing motifs and finishes, but for one characteristic. This print also necessitates a turn of the sheet to view the elements in their proper orientation, and thus resembles several of the etched sketches that were produced in greater numbers. Hinterding stated that it is “doubtful” this print ever went into traditional production because impressions of it are rare, and no watermarks have been found on impressions of the print to date, making both information about editions and secure dating more difficult. While he may be correct in asserting that this etching may not have gone into production in large numbers for an open market, in chapter five I

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argue that the etched sketches that necessitate rotation—including this one—may have been printed for a small group of collectors that would have welcomed and appreciated the level of engagement necessary to view these prints.

Three of the etched sketches are not rare, but were apparently printed in small editions, with between fifty and seventy-five extant impressions.\(^8\) Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc. (fig. 1) exists in two states. The first state has ink spotting along the top edge, which was burnished out for the second state. Erik Hinterding contends that only a few impressions of the first state of etching were pulled, and then not even until nearly a decade later, around 1641, when impressions of the second state were also pulled.\(^9\) The other four editions of this etched sketch were posthumously printed, according to Hinterding’s watermark research.\(^10\)

There is only one state of Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc. (fig. 7). However, Hinterding has identified four editions of this etching, based on watermarks, one from 1646. Hinterding noted that although there is evidence it was printed at four different times, the plate was etched lightly, which would preclude many impressions from being pulled.\(^11\)

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\(^8\) Nowell-Usticke, *Rembrandt’s Etchings: States and Values*, unpaginated.


\(^11\) Ibid., 611-613.
There is also only one state of *Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child* (fig. 9). Several editions were published during Rembrandt’s lifetime, with no fewer than two editions occurring in 1648 alone.\(^{12}\) Hinterding’s research problematizes the previously proposed dates for this etching, of 1631 or 1651, based on how one read the monogram.\(^{13}\) (Hinterding dated the etching to around 1648.)\(^{14}\) All three of these etched sketches—B. 363, B. 369 and B. 370—necessitate a turn of the sheet to view motifs that were etched at right angles to one another, an unusual characteristic discussed in chapter five.

The three etched sketches that occur in the largest numbers are those including images of women that have at times been identified as Saskia—*Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others, 1636* (fig. 4); *Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched*, c. 1637 (fig. 5); and *Three Heads of Women, One Asleep, 1637* (fig. 6). These three prints today have 100-200 extant impressions each. There is only one state of *Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others*. Hinterding noted that at least two editions of this etching were printed as early as the 1630s, and another was certainly printed around 1645 based on watermark research.\(^{15}\)

The three known states of *Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched* make it the etched sketch with the greatest number of states made by Rembrandt. The first state contains only the head of Saskia (fig. 16), the second has the other two heads added with

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\(^{12}\) Ibid., 613-615. Hinterding believes that the Lugt impression is from one of these 1648 editions.

\(^{13}\) See the appendix of this dissertation for a thorough discussion of this issue.

\(^{14}\) Hinterding, *Rembrandt Etchings from the Frits Lugt Collection*, 613-615.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 607.
a signature, and the third has the signature burnished out. The first and second states are considered extremely rare (of the first state, about five impressions are known; of the second state, only three are known), and the third state is the most common. To date, two editions have been securely identified of the third state, one from 1638 and one from 1652, but Hinterding sees it as “unlikely” that these were the sole editions of this print.¹⁶ Unlike some of the other etched sketches, no posthumous impressions of this print are known.

Although *Three Heads of Women, One Asleep* exists in only one state, it may occur in the largest numbers of all the etched sketches; Nowell-Usticke categorized this print as “fairly common.”¹⁷ Hinterding concurred, identifying at least four editions printed between 1637 and 1652.¹⁸

The various sizes of the editions of the etched sketches indicate that they served different functions. The earliest two etched sketches, *Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads* (in its entirety) and *Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads*, are so rare that the reasonable conclusion is that they were not widely circulated outside Rembrandt’s studio. Once separated, the individual parts of the *Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads* were reworked and printed in larger numbers for the market.¹⁹ In addition, six of the remaining etched sketches were printed in numbers great enough to imply that they were meant to be sold

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¹⁶ Ibid., 609.


¹⁸ Hinterding, *Rembrandt Etchings from the Frits Lugt Collection*, 609-610. The copper plate still exists for this print. The impression in the Lugt collection seems to be from the seventeenth century.

¹⁹ The prints after separation are, however, outside the scope of this dissertation.
on the open market as well as to a small group of connoisseurs. Although rare, *Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap* can be considered with the other three etched sketches that necessitate rotation, a quality that would have appealed to Rembrandt’s circle of collectors, and will be discussed in chapter five.

The Audiences

The potential audiences for the etched sketches were as wide-ranging as the editions. Within the past two decades, scholars have begun to rethink and even reconstruct probable audiences for Rembrandt’s work. It is now believed that Rembrandt’s paintings and etchings catered to and were collected by a variety of viewers. Unlike the more circumscribed commercial transactions of his predecessors, Rembrandt’s world was not as simple as a patronage model versus an open market model; in fact, it is now understood that he fully participated in transactions that represent both paradigms, particularly with regard to the sale of his etchings.\footnote{Rembrandt is no longer understood as the painter who had only troubled relationships with his patrons, as asserted by Gary Schwartz in his *Rembrandt: His Life, His Paintings* (New York: Viking Press, 1985), or as focused on manipulating the marketplace as Svetlana Alpers argued in *Rembrandt’s Enterprise: The Studio and the Market* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). Alpers especially considered Rembrandt’s etchings suitable for appealing to the market, calling his techniques, with the multiple states and reworkings, a “remarkably successful marketing operation,” and his “most successful mode of production,” 100-101. It is clear that, in some instances, Rembrandt printed each state of an etching for circulation in the market. To say, however, that this was true of each print with multiple states would be to overstate Rembrandt’s intention.} Erik Hinterding’s research on watermarks seems to confirm that Rembrandt came to focus his production on two
groups of print collectors or markets: the highly discriminating collector and the more anonymous buyer.\textsuperscript{21}

Both the discerning client and the ordinary consumer could purchase Rembrandt’s prints in the same ways during the seventeenth century in the Dutch Republic.\textsuperscript{22} Prints were purchased from artists themselves, at auctions, and from a growing number of art dealers, such as Jan Pietersz. Zomer (1641-1724), an Amsterdam art appraiser and dealer.\textsuperscript{23} These multiple venues provided impressions for a growing number of print connoisseurs to establish very large collections, of which Rembrandt’s etchings were inevitably a part.\textsuperscript{24} Prints of all kinds were collected during the early modern era as a

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\textsuperscript{22}To date, most scholarly research on art markets has focused on paintings, but there are several accepted conclusions about the buying of prints as well. Beginning in the late 1990s, scholars such as Neil de Marchi and Hans van Miegroet, Elizabeth Honig and Michael North, among others, began to publish their findings on art markets in Europe in the early modern era. Please see Michael North, \textit{Art and Commerce in the Dutch Golden Age}, trans. Catherine Hill (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Elizabeth Alice Honig, \textit{Painting and the Art Market in Early Modern Antwerp} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); N. de Marchi and H. Van Miegroet, \textit{Mapping Markets for Paintings in Europe, 1450-1750} (Studies in European Urban History (1100-1800)), (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2006) and \textit{Art Market and Connoisseurship: A Closer Look at Paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens, and Their Contemporaries}, Amsterdam Studies in the Dutch Golden Age, ed. Anna Tummers and Koenraad Jonckheere (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

\textsuperscript{23}Zomer had his own collection of 428 Rembrandt etchings, which he formed over a period of nearly fifty years. Zomer’s contributions to the seventeenth-century Dutch art market have been discussed by Klaske Muizelaar and Derek Phillips in \textit{Picturing Men and Women in the Dutch Golden Age: Paintings and People in Historical Perspective} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003) and in \textit{Art Market and Connoisseurship: A Closer Look at Paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens, and Their Contemporaries}, Amsterdam Studies in the Dutch Golden Age, ed. Anna Tummers and Koenraad Jonckheere (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

\textsuperscript{24}The largest collection of Rembrandt’s etchings during his lifetime was that of Michel de Marolles (1600-1681), Abbot of Villeloin, which was sold to King Louis XIV in 1667 and eventually become the basis of the Cabinet des Estampes of the Bibliothèque national de France. De Marolles’s collection—except for its size—was typical of a seventeenth-century print connoisseur. He most likely purchased many of his thousands of prints from private auctions, or from Parisian art dealers that sold Dutch works such as both Pierre Mariettes (father and son) and François Langlois Ciartres. A complete reconstruction of de Marolles’s album of Rembrandt prints is now nearly impossible, as it was separated in the eighteenth century, with only a brief inventory, noting prints by subject, such as religious or portrait prints. There is no evidence that de Marolles owned the etched sketches. Please see Ingrid R. Vermeulen, “Michel de
chief mode of collecting and sharing information.\textsuperscript{25} Prints were considered part of the educational process; collected by artists for inspiration; and mounted in albums, hung on walls, and stacked in drawers or cabinets.\textsuperscript{26} There were several acceptable methods for the organization of a collection of prints, the most popular being organization by subject.\textsuperscript{27}

Another method by which Rembrandt’s prints were acquired by well-connected and knowledgeable patrons was through receiving them as gifts from Rembrandt or from dealers. The ritual exchange of gifts was pervasive in early modern Europe, and vibrant gift economies existed alongside and interacted with commercial markets.\textsuperscript{28} For Marolle’s album of Rembrandt prints and the reception of Dutch art in France,” *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 34, no. 3-4 (2009-2010): 155-182.


\textsuperscript{26} See *Rembrandt’s Treasures*, ed. Bob van den Boogert (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1999), 11-32, for more information on how works on paper were collected in the seventeenth century. Roelef van Gelder and Jaap van der Veen wrote that the average number of sheets per collector’s album was most likely around 100. Rembrandt, too, amassed a significant collection. See *Rembrandt’s Treasures*, 33-90, as well as R.W. Scheller’s “Rembrandt en de encyclopedische kunstkamer,” *Oud Holland* 84 (1969): 81-147.

\textsuperscript{27} This categorization by subject was popular with collectors until the late seventeenth/early eighteenth century, when the standard became organizing by school and artist. Many seventeenth-century collectors emulated the famous sixteenth-century collections of Ferdinand II or Samuel Quicelberg, who approached collecting prints as one part of amassing large, encyclopedic collections in an effort to re-create a microcosm of the known world. The etched sketches were often categorized as “studies” or “sketches” by early collectors.

example, as Genevieve Warwick has discussed in her work on the artist Sebastiano Resta (1635-1714), gift-giving was often about an emphasis on friendship: “In this circle of trade, drawings and information were exchanged for like goods and friendship, not money or patronage … Through gift-giving Resta used the drawing as a medium for expressing social bonds between men.”29

In the late 1640s and 1650s in particular, Rembrandt created a number of distinctive works for Amsterdam collectors and liefhebbers that appear to have been designed to function within a context of gift exchange. Gift-giving has been discussed primarily by scholars as a method to bring honor and continued patronage to the artist; in Rembrandt’s career, the best example of this type of gift were his gifts of paintings to Constantijn Huygens, secretary to the stadhouder Frederik Hendrik. This relationship has been highlighted by scholars because Rembrandt’s letters to Huygens regarding these works represent some of the only known writings from Rembrandt. However, Rembrandt did not just offer paintings as gifts. For instance, Nicola Courtright has studied the gift presentation of Rembrandt’s drawings. After noting that his drawings do not fit into the rigid categories preferred by Italian art theory because they are not obviously linked to other media, Courtright asserted that the drawings Rembrandt created for his patron Jan Six exhibit the “appearance of completeness and simultaneous incompleteness.”30 She further stated that Rembrandt’s choice of style for these drawings—which she called “sketchy”—was an end in itself, instead of the means to


30 Courtright, “Origins and Meanings of Rembrandt’s Late Drawing Style,” 488.
develop a work of art in a different form, as with a preparatory work; thus, the choice of style had significance.\textsuperscript{31}

Courtright wrote that according to sixteenth-century art theory sketchiness revealed two aspects of the artist’s creative personality: sketchy marks on the page implied the direct path from the creative brain to the artist’s hand, and sketchiness was understood to reveal the artist’s innermost imaginings.\textsuperscript{32} She noted that the union of technical sketchiness with pictorial completeness is a technique found also in some of his paintings and etchings that can seem simultaneously complete and incomplete in their final states.\textsuperscript{33} Courtright argued that the viewer’s attraction to Rembrandt’s drawings was not only related to the issue of finish but to the fact that Rembrandt also exhibited change within his work, and as a recipient of a gift drawing, one could experience seeing forms evolve spontaneously across the page.\textsuperscript{34}

We also know that Rembrandt offered his etchings as gifts. In fact, Michael Zell argued that the gifts Rembrandt offered Huygens in a letter of 1636 may have been etchings.\textsuperscript{35} Zell (and others) have noted that informal inscriptions by Rembrandt on a few prints seem to confirm that some impressions were presented to an inner circle of connoisseurs. On the back of an impression of \textit{Christ Presented to the People} on Japanese paper in the Lugt collection (fig. 43), for example, Rembrandt wrote in red

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\item Ibid., 490. \textsuperscript{31}
\item Ibid., 491. \textsuperscript{32}
\item Ibid. \textsuperscript{33}
\item Ibid., 493. \textsuperscript{34}
\item Zell, “The Gift among Friends,” 178. \textsuperscript{35}
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chalk: “Kattenburgh,” referring either to the Amsterdam art dealer Dirck van Kattenburgh or his brother Otto.36

Michael Zell maintained that Rembrandt cultivated this type of select and discerning audience for the early, experimental states of his etchings.37 Zell distinguished between exclusive impressions of early states, with varied amounts of surface tone and often printed on more expensive Japanese paper or vellum, which would have been available only to a small network of admirers, and those etchings that were reprinted as relatively uniform editions on standard European paper for a broader market. As Thomas Rassieur has noted, these early impressions encouraged viewers to “look over his shoulder,” as witnesses to the creative process.38 The example that Zell elucidated in his article is the well-known Hundred Guilder Print.39 (fig. 44) On the verso of a first-state impression on Japanese paper in the Rijksmuseum is a Dutch inscription referring to the print as being traded by “my special friend” Rembrandt for an impression of Marcantonio Raimondi’s The Plague (La Pesta).40 A French inscription, dating from the eighteenth century, attributes the rarity of the Hundred Guilder Print to Rembrandt’s distribution of only a limited number of impressions among his friends, noting that not one was sold on

36 Zell, “Rembrandt’s Gifts,” unpaginated. Rembrandt, Christ presented to the people (Ecce Homo), 1655, etching and drypoint, 35.8 x 44.5 cm., fourth state (B. 76) The British Museum, London, 1868,0822.665

37 Ibid.


39 Rembrandt, Christ Healing the Sick (The Hundred Guilder Print), c. 1648, etching, 28.1 x 38.8 cm., first state (B. 74) The British Museum, London, F.4.154

the market in Rembrandt’s time. As Zell pointed out, the print’s title, which refers to its exceptionally high market value of 100 guilders (a fact already acknowledged in Rembrandt’s lifetime as extraordinary, if not excessive), has diverted attention away from an important part of its original, very different circumstances of exchange.

Zell asserted that the medium of etching, with its reproducibility and relatively modest price compared to painting, was ideally suited for gift giving, and Rembrandt’s ability to create deluxe, individuated impressions and technically unusual prints undoubtedly enhanced the appeal of receiving one of his gift presentations. Zell even argued that the lack of inscriptions on some of Rembrandt’s printed portraits likely indicate that they were presented as gifts, and that the absence of text reflects the familiarity with the originally conceived beholder. According to Zell, the recipient or beholder of such prints, then, becomes a member of the sitter’s network of like-minded art lovers. Rembrandt, whose artistry serves as the admired object being exchanged, is also implied as a participant in this informal and familiar encounter.

This argument recalls Stephanie Dickey’s contention that Rembrandt was aware of the promotional value created by graphic likenesses, and especially how portrait

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41 Cited by Zell, inscription transcribed by Martin Royalton-Kisch, Rembrandt the Printmaker, 253-8.


43 Ibid.

44 Ibid. Michael Zell’s study of both gift-giving and now Actor-Network-Theory has implications for those works that cannot be securely identified as gifts, or may not have even been designated as gifts by Rembrandt, such as the etched sketches. The possibility that objects can serve as embodiments of social activity, that is, they can be seen “to reflect, reinforce, objectify, symbolize, or reify what are considered to be more concrete realities, such as power relations, social hierarchies, social or cultural power, or gender relations” enables even those works that do not at first appear to be part of these circles, like the etched sketches, to hold currency based on interpretations of their editions, their finish, and the technique with which they were rendered.
etchings were able to deepen the relationships between artists and patrons or collectors.45 Dickey asserted that portrait prints link the patron, the artist, and his colleagues in their shared interest in the visual arts, and in using portraiture to commemorate certain achievements. The lack of inscriptions on many of Rembrandt’s portrait prints could suggest, according to Dickey, that his depictions served two constituencies: those who knew the sitter well enough to recognize him or her on sight, and collectors who appreciated their aesthetic qualities irrespective of content; that is, as Zell argued, connoisseurs would often pay less attention to the identification of the sitter than to an idiosyncratic handling of the medium.46

The three etched sketches that feature Saskia served as Dickey’s evidence of that appeal to this second constituency: “Saskia’s recognizable presence contributes to the content of both etchings and painting in which she appears, yet the primary function of her likeness is to certify Rembrandt’s naturalism, virtuosity, and insight into human expression: in other words, not to honor Saskia herself (as a conventional portrait would) so much as to promote Rembrandt’s artistic authority.”47 Rembrandt used technique in the etched sketches (and in prints like the ‘Great Jewish Bride’ (fig. 45) and Saskia as St. Catherine (fig. 46) to mediate between more formal portraiture, and another, more loosely defined category of imaginative portraiture, similar to the tronies—blending


46 Ibid., 16.

reality and imagination. Yet Dickey added that the specificity of Saskia’s visage complicates an understanding of these as studies valued solely for technique. The presence of Saskia confounds the traditionally generic status of the artist’s model. Dickey maintained that: “... these etched heads ... should be seen as subversive commentaries on that tradition (artist’s model books) rather than forthright contributions to it. What sets these plates apart ... is the inescapable sense that the characters depicted are complex individuals rather than generic types.” Dickey’s argument surrounding the etched sketches with images of Saskia contributes to a goal of this dissertation: to demonstrate that the etched sketches are multi-layered in function and meaning, with characteristics such as their technique and subjects complicating secure interpretations of them. The indeterminancy created by not only disparate motifs, including the image of the artist’s wife, but also by the differing finishes found in the etched sketches held great appeal for the seventeenth-century collector.

The State of Finish

As mentioned previously, a significant reason these prints may have been valued by seventeenth-century audiences is their finish, or apparent lack of it. As noted previously, Nicola Courtright stated that this conflation of finishes on a single image (albeit in drawing in the case of her study) appealed to collectors. In fact, the variety of


finishes in a single image is one way in which Rembrandt’s works were linked together—the etched sketches to one another, and his drawings, prints and paintings to each other.

The scholarly dialogue about finish in drawings is thorough and more extensive than that for etchings, and provides a useful point of departure for this discussion. In his influential essay on the early appreciation of drawings, Julius Held asserted that sketchy drawings, which were the closest efforts to the artist’s unadulterated creative mind, became highly valued during the early modern period precisely for their lack of finish. Held traced these types of comments to the writings of Leonardo da Vinci, who stressed that the ability of drawings to capture the freedom, boldness, imagination, and capriciousness of the artist were the medium’s most valuable qualities. Held noted that this idea of drawing as the closest to an artist’s initial stages of inspiration was not original to the Renaissance; first-century author Pliny the Elder wrote about how essential the first drawings from an artist’s hand and mind were, more so than paintings, and valued both a drawing’s linear economy and speedy execution. Held then delineated what several sixteenth- and seventeenth-century authors wrote about the idea of a “first” drawing in their criticism. For example, Italian painter and writer Giorgio Vasari asserted that works left unfinished should be valued more than finished works because one can see traces of design and thoughts of the artists, and that creative furor flags if the execution of a work requires prolonged effort.

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51 Ibid., 85.

52 Ibid., 86.
This idea was still supported in art writing at the end of the seventeenth century. The art theorist Roger de Piles wrote that he valued Rembrandt’s drawings more than his etchings, because overall, they carried more esprit.\textsuperscript{53} Held acknowledged that although de Piles argued that sketches stimulate the beholder’s imagination, he also still believed that the appreciation of a drawing is proportionate to the degree of finish (which is why de Piles often dismisses those works by Rembrandt that seem the most “unfinished.”)\textsuperscript{54}

With the etched sketches, Rembrandt made etchings that capture the sketchiness and difference in finish that is typically found—and valued—in drawings. The idea that Rembrandt used the etching plate as he would a piece of paper has proven to be popular with Rembrandt scholars, with the etched sketches serving as the most obvious examples. Yet etching in this manner was not at all accidental, and it is clear Rembrandt was not only trying to capture the world around him. First of all, as discussed previously, the etching process is a demanding one. Making any etching, especially one with several levels of finish on a single plate, is not the same process as drawing in a sketchbook, no matter the appearance of the final product. Secondly, the placement of the lines also indicates that this was not done haphazardly: in many of the etched sketches, Rembrandt created more than one figure with shared lines, exhibiting great control over the definition of the line and calling to mind the economy of execution in drawing held in such esteem by Pliny.

\textsuperscript{53} De Piles, \textit{Abregé de la vie des peintres} …. (Paris, 1699), 425, and Held, “The Early Appreciation of Drawings,” 88. De Piles was among the first writers on drawings to treat them as aesthetic and historical objects.

\textsuperscript{54} Held, “The Early Appreciation of Drawings,” 90.
It is important to note that although the finish of the etched sketches has been described as “sketchy,” they are not truly “unfinished.” Several of Rembrandt’s predecessors, such as Albrecht Dürer and Hendrick Goltzius had previously executed unfinished engravings, as did a few of Rembrandt’s contemporaries, such as Claude Lorrain, who printed several of his sketches, and Stefano della Bella, who printed incomplete anatomical studies.55 Catherine B. Scallen recognized the distinction between these types of works and Rembrandt’s etchings in her article on Rembrandt’s St. Jerome reading in an Italian landscape (fig. 47).56 Scallen wrote that Rembrandt seemed to believe that the preservation of his process in print was valuable in itself, noting that it is not the unfinished nature or “sketchiness” of the St. Jerome image, but the range of finish that can be represented in one work that is remarkable.57 This same observation can be made about several of the etched sketches, such as Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads (fig. 3), Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched (fig. 5), and Three Heads of Women, One Asleep. (fig. 6) These prints, with diverse finishes represented in a single image (difficult to do in the medium of etching), simultaneously demonstrate Rembrandt’s skill and activate the collector’s interest.

55 Dürer not only left engravings, but watercolors and paintings unfinished as well. (See Fall of Man, 1504, engraving, second state, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.) Goltzius’s unfinished engravings were published posthumously; although not published by the artist himself, their publication soon after his death still indicated a market for them. (See, for example, Adoration of the Shepherds, 1598-1600, engraving, first state, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.) For Claude’s etchings, see Lino Mannocci, The Etchings of Claude Lorrain (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), and for Della Bella’s, Alexandre De Vesme and Phyllis Dearborn Massar, Stefano Della Bella: Catalogue Raisonné (New York: Collectors Edition, 1971).


57 Ibid., 4-5.
Scallen argued that Rembrandt’s group of sophisticated print collectors would appreciate the more experimental qualities of his prints; they would vie for etchings in various states and with various finishes. She also asserted, as Charles Blanc did, that the wide range of finish in Rembrandt’s prints, from unfinished to various finishes allows the viewer “to participate in the work by finishing it in the mind’s eye,” much like the rough style of painting did in the work of Titian (c. 1488-1576). Rembrandt was the most well-known Northern painter of this style, which was characterized by irregularities, and Scallen posited that perhaps these varying finishes in his etchings are a reflection of the rough painting style. The range of finish found in his etchings, she wrote, can then be seen as an advertisement of Rembrandt’s technical skill. Scallen concluded that the reception of both unfinished works and those lacking finish depends upon the viewer’s active participation in the completion of the works. Again, the positive consideration of these objects implies a visually sophisticated audience. The etched sketches—by virtue of their disparate subjects, varying finishes and element of rotation—were best appreciated by such an audience with the kind of high level of engagement assumed of erudite viewers, which is discussed in chapter five.

Finally, the finish of the etched sketches was significant not only as it appealed to collectors, but for what it can reflect about Rembrandt’s engagement with seventeenth-

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58 Ibid., 6.
59 Ibid., 2. Blanc, L’oeuvre complet, 1859.
60 Ibid., 6.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., 7. The St. Jerome etching may have been intended as a gift for Jan Six.
century art theory, as well as the art of his northern predecessors. In this dissertation, I have noted similarities between the etched sketches and several drawings by Jacques de Gheyn II (c. 1565-1629). Holm Bevers has stated that the irregular grouping of subjects found in Rembrandt’s etchings recalled De Gheyn’s sketches, and argued that Rembrandt reproduced in print a type of highly-valued drawing—that of the *crabbelinge* or *griffonnemert*, a rough sketch or scribble.\(^{63}\) De Gheyn’s drawings recall the etched sketches in that they bring together dissimilar elements and differing levels of finish. As discussed in chapter two, Claudia Swan related de Gheyn’s dual modes of representation to Karel Van Mander’s distinction between works of art made *naer het leven* (from the life) and those made *uyt den gheest* (from the mind or spirit).\(^{64}\)

The various yet coexisting finishes on the etched sketches evoke this dual mode of representation as outlined by Van Mander. Stephanie Dickey has commented, when referring to *Sheet of Studies with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc.* (fig. 7), that this print might demonstrate Rembrandt’s mastery in “drawing” both *naer het leven* (Saskia in bed) and *uyt den gheest* (caricatures from habit and imagination, denoting the beggars here).\(^{65}\) Indeed, it is not just the subject matter that provokes this interpretation: the various finishes that Rembrandt executed on a single plate can be viewed as reflective of different modes. If we accept this proposition, different conclusions may be drawn about the etched sketches. For example, in *Sheet of Studies with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc.*, two of the beggars are rendered in greater detail than the images of Saskia in bed,

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\(^{63}\) Bevers, *Rembrandt: The Master & His Workshop, Drawings and Etchings*, cat. no. 5, 180.

\(^{64}\) Swan, *Art, Science and Witchcraft*, 4.

\(^{65}\) Dickey, “Rembrandt and Saskia,” 23.
prompting the viewer to wonder if the beggars were etched *naar het leven*, while Saskia was quickly executed *uyt den gheest*. In one of the most provocative instances of this assertion that Rembrandt combined modes in single prints, the figure of Saskia in Rembrandt’s etching *Self-Portrait with Saskia* (fig. 18) is rendered far less “finished” than the artist next to her. Rembrandt executed his self-portrait in great detail, while Saskia nearly floats behind him, with less definitive lines, perhaps reflecting through actual technique that she is etched *uyt den gheest*. In another etched sketch, *Sheet of Studies with Head of Rembrandt and Beggar Couple*, c. 1631 (fig. 1), Rembrandt etched his self-portrait with much greater finish than several of the beggars that surround his face, again indicating that his self-portrait was drawn on the plate *naar het leven*, while the beggars may not have been.

Even those etched sketches with comparatively even finish demonstrate Rembrandt’s attempts to capture different technical effects and to draw the viewer into his working process. In *Studies of the Head of Saskia and Other Women* (fig. 4), all of the women are etched with approximately the same degree of finish. What is remarkable in this print is the shared use of line between the woman in profile at the bottom, and the three images of women that surround her. The woman in profile seems to emerge from the etched lines delineating the edges of the other three, a manner of depiction similar to what De Gheyn and other artists did in their drawings. Likewise, in *Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child* (fig. 9), the curls of Rembrandt’s hair become the wrinkles in the coat of the beggar next to him. The planning that an artist would need to exhibit to create these effects in etching, rather than
drawing, supports my assertion that the etched sketches were extraordinarily purposeful in execution.

Conclusion

Most of the etched sketches were printed in large enough numbers to be collected. Some of them may have been purchased on the open market and by a sophisticated group of connoisseurs, who would have been interested in their qualities such as varying degrees of finish. The characteristics distinctive to the etched sketches within Rembrandt’s *oeuvre* and unusual within seventeenth-century printmaking encouraged the differing audiences for the prints to look closely and to engage with the etched sketches in innovative ways. In addition to the different degrees of finish prompting more active viewing, as a collector attempted to discern exactly what type of object the etched sketch was, the consistency of subjects, combined in unfamiliar ways, would also have drawn in those acquainted with Rembrandt’s works. These subjects—images of Saskia, *tronies*, beggars, and self-portraits—reflect the chief visual concerns in Rembrandt’s overall *oeuvre*, as witnessed by their repeated appearance in his work throughout his career, in all three media. Therefore, playing with these subjects by bringing them together in unusual arrangements represented another method by which Rembrandt provoked the viewer to engage with the etched sketches.
CHAPTER FOUR: SUBJECTS OF THE ETCHED SKETCHES

Introduction

The nine sheets of etched sketches include over fifty individual studies, which cumulatively demonstrate a notable consistency of subjects, dominated by images of Rembrandt’s wife Saskia, sleeping women, tronies, beggars, and self-portraits. These themes make up nearly all of the distinct images in the etched sketches.\(^1\) This chapter explores Rembrandt’s representations of these recurring themes in his general artistic practice in order to understand their role in the specific context of the etched sketches.

Given the prevalence of these subjects throughout Rembrandt’s oeuvre, the subject matter of the etched sketches was significant and would have been familiar to Rembrandt’s audiences through associations with his other works. Because of their frequent occurrence in Rembrandt’s work, these motifs act as points of access to otherwise ambiguous images. Each of the subjects found in the etched sketches will be examined in turn, placing the representations of Saskia, tronies, beggars, and Rembrandt’s self-portraits at the center of a larger web of connective threads that link these subjects to the artist’s larger oeuvre and, when appropriate, to the visual conventions of seventeenth-century art and long-established traditions of northern art history. The subjects of the etched sketches were not arbitrary, but instead were part of a larger effort to create purposefully ambiguous images that allowed for glimpses into Rembrandt’s working methods and amusing diversions for the sophisticated viewer.

\(^1\) There is also a small landscape detail in Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap (B. 372).
The etched sketches and Saskia

Four of the etched sketches contain images that have been identified as Saskia: *Studies of the Head of Saskia and Other Women* (fig. 4); *Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched* (fig. 5); *Three Heads of Women, One Asleep* (fig. 6); and *Sheet of Studies with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc.* (fig. 7). Saskia is represented in these etchings in different positions, with varying degrees of finish and fluctuating certainty about her identification. The questions, however, raised by these four prints are indicative of those raised by other works by Rembrandt that represent Saskia, in etching as well as in paintings and drawings.

By 1632, Rembrandt was living in the home of Hendrick van Uylenburgh, a prominent art dealer in Amsterdam, who offered studio or living space to young artists in exchange for the right to act as a sort of agent, most often bringing together portrait sitters and painters.² It was likely in Van Uylenburgh’s house that Rembrandt met Saskia van Uylenburgh, Hendrick’s niece from Friesland, who would become Rembrandt’s wife. They became engaged in 1633, and were married in 1634 in the Reformed Church. In 1635, they moved to a house on the River Amstel, and in 1639, they purchased what is known today as the Rembrandthuis on the Jodenbreestraat. Saskia gave birth to four children with Rembrandt from 1635-1641, although only the fourth, Titus, survived to

² Please see Friso Lammertse, *Uylenburgh & Son: Art and Commerce from Rembrandt to De Lairesse, 1625-1675* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2007), for more information about the Van Uylenburgh family and its relationship to the Dutch art market. Indeed, Van Uylenburgh proved to be helpful for establishing Rembrandt’s early career as a portrait painter in Amsterdam, most likely making the introductions between Rembrandt and prominent Amsterdam residents.
adulthood. She died in 1642, seven months after the birth of Titus, leaving Rembrandt in possession of her property and effects until the occasion of his remarriage or death.

Over their nearly ten-year relationship, Rembrandt depicted Saskia repeatedly in drawing, painting and etching. The first securely identifiable image of her was the intimate silverpoint drawing that recorded their engagement in 1633. (fig. 19) Under her image, Rembrandt inscribed, “This is drawn after my wife, when she was 21 years old, the third day after we were betrothed – 8 June 1633.” Because of this written identification, the drawing became the standard against which all other images deemed to be of Saskia have been judged. As many as twelve figures on four of the etched sketches have been identified as Saskia.

Although he depicted Saskia in all three media, Rembrandt depicted her somewhat differently in paint than in drawing or etching. Many of the paintings that have been associated with Saskia are now categorized as tronies, noncommissioned images that display a certain facial expression or type of costume, leaving the interpretation of such images as indeterminate and vague. In the seventeenth century, these figures were usually depicted in bust- or half-length, and they may have been based

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3 Silverpoint on parchment, 18.5 x 10.7 cm, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Ben. 427.

4 The central figure in Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others has been identified as Saskia since Gersaint’s 1751 catalogue (no. 331), however Blanc was not certain of this identification (L’oeuvre complet, 127), while Middleton-Wake wrote that all of the figures in the print resembled Saskia (Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Rembrandt van Rhyn, 111-112). The debate was even more contentious over the identification of the women in Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched: Gersaint (no. 333), Daulby (A Descriptive Catalogue of the Works of Rembrandt, 217), and Bartsch (Catalogue raisonné, 295) did not name any of the three figures as Saskia, while Blanc stated that the topmost woman was indeed Rembrandt’s wife (L’oeuvre complet, 128). Hind (no. 153) and later Bevers (Rembrandt, The Master and His Workshop, 198-99) believed that all three of the figures were modeled after Saskia. In Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc., the women in the beds were identified as Saskia by Hind (no. 163) (among others), and although not universally accepted, scholars such as Ger Luijten still name these figures Saskia today (Rembrandt the Printmaker, 181-2).
on studies from life or the features of actual sitters. For example, Julia Williams has argued that *A Bust of a Young Woman Smiling (Saskia van Uylenburgh?)* from 1633 was intended not as a conventional portrait, but as a *tronie* based on Saskia’s features, with her smile closely following Van Mander’s description of mirth.⁵ (fig. 48)

Similarly, three paintings of the mythological figure of Flora are generally held to reflect features of Saskia, but were not intended to be actual portraits of the artist’s wife.⁶ (fig. 49) While the characteristics of each of these women may be too vague to identify the paintings as true portraits, this very ambiguity and the historiographic interest in securely identifying these *tronies* as portraits of Saskia has created a dialogue with Rembrandt’s other depictions of her. The potential that these paintings represent Saskia places them within a specialized category that indicates not only its presumed significance for Rembrandt himself, but also its desirability in the marketplace. Recalling Stephanie Dickey’s argument in the previous chapter on the etched sketches that feature Saskia, viewers of paintings such as these, as well as prints such as the etched sketches, participated in an intellectual guessing game of sorts, where questions about the identification of the sitter are posed by Rembrandt’s inexact approach to portraiture.

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⁵ Williams, *Rembrandt’s Women*, 92. Oil on panel, 52.4 × 44 cm.; Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden (Br. 97).

⁶ Oil on canvas, 1634, State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Br. 102; oil on canvas, 1635, National Gallery, London, Br. 103; oil on canvas, 1641, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden, Br. 108. Most recently, the Rembrandt Research Project did not believe these paintings represent portraits of Saskia (*Corpus*, v. 2, 500) while Leonard J. Slatkes accepted them as representations of Saskia as Flora. (As cited by Williams, *Rembrandt’s Women*, 104.) In the *Rembrandt’s Women* exhibition catalogue, Julia Williams stated that while the features of the Hermitage Flora seemed closer to those of Saskia, the features of the figure in the London painting are “too generalised” to be a portrait of Saskia, “though ultimately inspired by her face,” *Rembrandt’s Women*, 116.
Two paintings that are more securely identified as portraits of Saskia are the *Half-Length Figure of Saskia van Uylenburgh* from c. 1634-1642 (fig. 50) and the double portrait *Prodigal Son* of ca. 1637.\(^7\) (fig. 51) The profile portrait of Saskia alone in sixteenth-century dress is the only portrait securely identified as Saskia by the Rembrandt Research Project, based on the physical similarity between this figure and the earlier silverpoint drawing. While that portrait can be understood more traditionally, the *Prodigal Son* has been read as both portrait and narrative: it shows Rembrandt and Saskia as actors recreating a familiar biblical parable.\(^8\) Although identifiable as Saskia, this depiction’s dual significance makes available multiple, simultaneous readings for the potential viewer. For example, in her book *Rembrandt*, Mariët Westermann noted that interpretation of this painting ranges from a young Rembrandt showing off his wealth and new bride, to a more subtle admission that he shares in the original sin of all humans and thus can be redeemed by penitence, to a reflection about his “ambivalence” toward religion and its relationship to his rise in artistic status.\(^9\) Again, through technique and now subject matter, it is evident that this multiplicity of possible meanings is characteristic of Rembrandt’s pictorial practice.

In contrast to the generalized appearance of Saskia in his paintings, in Rembrandt’s drawings, the figures usually identified as Saskia—often through

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\(^7\) Oil on panel; 99.5 x 78.8 cm.; Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Kassel; Br. 101 and oil on canvas; 161 x 131 cm.; Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden; Br. 30.

\(^8\) The Rembrandt Research Project wrote that the features of the two figures are only “loosely based” on those of Rembrandt and Saskia. (*Corpus*, v. 3, 146) Gary Schwartz suggested this is the work that was listed as a “portrait of Rembrandt and his wife” in the inventory of Louys Crayers, Titus’s guardian. Schwartz, *Rembrandt: His Life, His Paintings* (New York: Viking Press, 1985), 192-3.

comparison with the well-known silverpoint drawing—are more intimately rendered. For example, the red-chalk *Woman Seated in an Armchair* from around 1633-34, or the black-chalk *Woman Seated in an Armchair with a Letter in her Left Hand*, 1633-35 (fig. 52), each depict a woman with features similar to that of Saskia in the silverpoint drawing, who looks out at the viewer with a small smile on her face. They seem to be seated in an unremarkable interior, and the technique in the drawings is comparable.

Other drawn images of women performing daily actions have also been identified as Saskia, such as *Saskia Leaning out of a Window* (fig. 53), and *Young Woman at her Toilet*. Finally, many of the women Rembrandt drew in bed, such as *A Woman Sitting up in Bed* (fig. 54) and *An Interior with Woman in Bed* (fig. 55) have been identified as Saskia, an identification supported by the intimacy of their portrayal. The drawing of two studies of a woman asleep in the Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum demonstrates the kind of immediacy that has led to almost universal acceptance of this type of figure’s identity as the artist’s wife. (fig. 56) In it Rembrandt illustrated the physical process of falling asleep, as if the sketches were made moments apart.

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11 Rembrandt, *Saskia Leaning out of a Window*, 1634-35, pen and brown ink with brown wash, 24 x 18 cm., Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (Ben. 250) and *A Young Woman at her Toilet*, c. 1634, pen and brown ink with brown and grey wash, 23.4 x 18 cm., Graphische Sammlung, Albertina, Vienna (Ben. 395).

12 Rembrandt, *A Woman Sitting Up in Bed*, c. 1635, pen and brown ink, 14.8 x 19.1 cm., Groninger Museum, Groningen (Ben. 282) and Rembrandt, *An Interior with a Woman in Bed*, 1640-1, pen and brush and brown ink with grey wash, 14.1 x 17.6 cm., Collection Frits Lugt, Paris (Ben. 426).

13 Rembrandt, *Two Studies of Saskia Asleep*, c. 1635-7, pen and brown ink and brown wash, 13 x 17.1 cm., The Morgan Library and Museum, New York (Ben. 289).
Rembrandt would repeatedly revisit this subject over the coming decade in many drawings and etchings of sleeping women, perhaps because of Saskia’s repeated confinement to bed from about 1635-1641 with her apparently difficult pregnancies.

In etching, few female figures have been identified as Saskia, but those that have include more generalized as well as intimate images, reflecting both manners of depicting Saskia in the other two media as described above. For example, the small and personal *Saskia with Pearls in her Hair* from 1634 (fig. 57) is thought to represent Saskia in the year of her marriage to Rembrandt, although her features are more generalized than one would expect for a portrait likeness. As previously mentioned, the ‘Great Jewish Bride’ (fig. 45) has been called “Saskia-like,” although not by the earliest cataloguers who thought that the figure might have been a portrait of the daughter of the Portuguese Jewish doctor, Ephraim Buenos. The later *A Sick Woman with a Large White Headdress* (fig. 58), from about 1641-2, is also thought to possibly represent Saskia in the last months of her life, in a tiny, poignant print.

The etched sketches should be significant in any discussion of Rembrandt’s representations of Saskia because they represent the greatest number of depictions of Saskia in the fewest number of prints. One etched sketch, *Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others* (fig. 4), possibly contains several images of Saskia in a single etching. In the etched sketches, Saskia’s visage is more recognizable than is typically true of a *tronie*, and also more publicly available than Saskia shown in a drawing, because the etched sketches that contain her image were printed in some of the largest editions among the

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14 Rembrandt, *Saskia with pearls in her hair*, 1634, etching, 8.7 x 6.8 cm., only state (B. 347) The British Museum, London, F,6.117.

group. In these four etchings, Saskia is represented as lying in bed, in profile, facing frontally, and with her head leaning on her hand. It is this last pose, which occurs frequently in Rembrandt’s art as well as in early modern northern art generally, which is discussed in the next section.

Images of Saskia: the pose with the head in the hand, or melancholia

In three of the etched sketches, a solitary woman sits with her head leaning on her hand. In *Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched*, Saskia herself appears in this position.\(^\text{16}\) In *Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others*, the woman to the right of the figure of Saskia is also depicted in this pose, and in *Three Heads of Women, One Asleep*, the sleeping woman rests her head on her hand in slumber. This position has traditionally been identified as recalling melancholia and occurs in numerous drawings by Rembrandt.\(^\text{17}\) (figs. 59 and 20) It is important, therefore, to suggest what this pose may have meant to Rembrandt and his audiences in the seventeenth century, and to consider that this pose may have functioned in similar ways to the varying finishes and disparate subjects in the etched sketches. It is possible that Rembrandt is implicitly asking the viewer to not only identify the sitter in these prints, but to discern the possible connotations of her position.

\(^\text{16}\) Christopher White, Holm Bevers and Ger Luijten have all noted the “brooding” nature of this pose for the figure of Saskia. See White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, 131; Bevers, *Rembrandt, The Master and His Workshop*, 198; and Luijten, *Rembrandt the Printmaker*, 155.

\(^\text{17}\) See drawings by Rembrandt such as: *Two Studies of a Woman*, c. 1635-40, Courtauld Institute Gallery, London (Ben. 280c); and *A Sheet of Four Studies of Women*, c. 1636, Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam (Ben. 360), both pictured. In addition, see *A Woman in Bed with a Nurse*, c. 1635, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich (Ben. 405); *A Woman Lying Awake in Bed*, c. 1635-40, British Museum, London (Ben. 286); and paintings such as *The Kitchen Maid*, 1651, oil on canvas, 78 x 64 cm, National Museum, Stockholm, for additional examples of the melancholic pose in his *oeuvre*.
The gesture denoting melancholy of the head resting on the hand has a long and rich representational history in northern art. The most well-known and influential example in the early modern era was Albrecht Dürer’s 1514 engraving of *Melencolia I*. Erwin Panofsky famously dubbed this print Dürer’s “spiritual self portrait,” and wrote that it reflected the anxieties and vanities of the artist. This engraving did not depict an artist actively engaged in producing a work of art, but one weighed down by his thoughts, dejected and disheartened, exhibiting the temperament of melancholy, reserved for those possessing creative genius who are also more susceptible to despair. In their book *Saturn and Melancholy*, Panofsky, Raymond Klibansky and Fritz Saxl posited that Dürer’s *Melencolia* represented the culmination of a long philosophical tradition.

According to authors in antiquity (namely Plato, Aristotle and Galen), the four humors—with the four qualities of hot, cold, wet and dry and the four elements of fire, air, water, and earth—combined in various ways to determine the four human temperaments. An imbalance of black bile—cold, dry, thick and centered in the spleen—caused melancholy, considered the worst of the temperaments. When afflicted, melancholics were greedy, malicious, thin, swarthy, irreverent, drowsy, forgetful, lazy, sluggish, and shunned the company of other people. In antiquity, these people were usually seen as misanthropes, the suicidal, and prone to criminal activities. Only rarely, according to Aristotle, did an overabundance of black bile result in a fury of inspiration and high artistic achievement.

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In the Renaissance and early modern eras, however, melancholy came to have a more positive association with creativity.

Dürer’s engraving can be used as a foil for Rembrandt’s exploration of the theme of melancholy in the etched sketches. While Dürer’s figure is thought to constitute an allegorical self-portrait of the artist, Rembrandt’s melancholic figures remain necessarily distinct from the artist as they are female, yet connected to him because they represent his wife, or a figure he placed in close proximity to her.\(^{21}\) Regarding the figure of Saskia in *Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched* (fig. 4), Christopher White wrote that while her demeanor in the silverpoint drawing (fig. 19), where her head is also resting on her head, is happy and carefree, in the etched sketch, her countenance has turned “introspective” and “brooding.”\(^{22}\) He noted that in the drawing her fingers remained relaxed, and in the etching, they are taut and bent against her head.

In the seventeenth century, the trope of melancholy enjoyed a lively literary discourse, and specifically as it related to women. The publication of Oxford clergyman Robert Burton’s encyclopedic *Anatomy of Melancholy* in 1621 represented the culmination of these ideas.\(^{23}\) The *Anatomy* was enormously popular, revised and re-published five times between 1621 and Burton’s death in 1640. In approximately 1400 pages, Burton dissected every way that melancholy has been presented and discussed

\(^{21}\) Dürer’s figure of *Melencolia* is also identified as a female figure, but an emblematic one, not one in relationship with the artist himself. Therefore, Dürer’s *Melencolia* can be collapsed into the identity of the artist in a way that images of Rembrandt’s wife cannot.

\(^{22}\) White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, 131.

from antiquity forward (a task that he compared to combating a “many-headed beast”). Burton believed that melancholy was an inevitable and universal condition (a sentiment with which Julia Kristeva agreed in her 1987 essay “On the Melancholic Imaginary”). Burton’s text is split into three sections: the causes and symptoms of melancholy; the cures for melancholy, and lastly, the most complex forms of melancholy: love-melancholy and religious-melancholy. The *Anatomy* is interdisciplinary, convoluted and extravagant—and became the definitive text on the subject for his time.

Over the past two decades, scholarship across disciplines has contributed to a continually expanding, subtler and more sophisticated understanding of the meaning of melancholy in the early modern period. In the seventeenth century, the predominant attitude seemed to be that the more an artist suffered (if male), the more of a genius he was. Melancholy was a sign of exceptionality, a depression for “qualified” men—a desirable state, yet only if it led to artistic or intellectual inspiration. Contemporary scholars have noted the fluid boundaries between types of melancholia, the tenuous border between good and bad melancholy that characterized the disease in the early seventeenth century. Therefore, especially for those of higher socio-economic classes, this ambivalence was pervasive—melancholy was sought out, but only if it stopped just short of madness.

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25 There have been several conferences on melancholia in the previous decade, spanning disciplines from the humanities to medicine. For a recent art historical publication, please see Laurinda S. Dixon, “Privileged Piety: Melancholia and the Herbal Tradition,” *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 1, no. 2 (2009), unpaginated. In November 2013, Dixon will publish *The Dark Side of Genius: The Melancholic Persona in Art, ca. 1500-1700* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013).
Exploration of the relationship between gender and melancholia forms part of the recent scholarship. For instance, as Juliana Schiesari has pointed out in her book *The Gendering of Melancholia*, the melancholic male is feminized by this female figure serving as a metaphor for his sorrow.26 Through images such as Dürer’s, men in the early modern time appropriated “feminine” sorrow and, while melancholic women were seen as devoid of intellectual credibility, melancholic men were understood as artistically inspired.

In the 1628 edition of Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Burton added a chapter specifically addressing women’s melancholy. According to Burton, women’s melancholy was caused by sexual deprivation, as regular sexual intercourse was needed for women’s health, which is why widows suffered from melancholy so greatly. Melancholy for women thus occurred not in the mind, but in the body and was always associated with irrational and uncontrollable behavior. For example, the cure for virgins with melancholy was to get married, although childbirth, according to Burton, could cause vapors to go to the brain inducing melancholy.

When stating that Saskia exhibits a melancholic pose, contemporary scholars are quick to note her lengthy stays in bed from complications of childbirth as the cause for her sadness—which would correspond with Burton’s emphasis on the corporeal aspects of specifically female melancholy.27 Whether or not Saskia specifically suffered from melancholy is beyond our capacity to know; yet this elucidation of this pose would have been uppermost in the minds of Rembrandt’s audiences. It is the repeated melancholic


pose itself—enacted by Saskia and others—found in the etched sketches and other works that is significant. The trope of a woman with her head in her hand was clearly a generative one for Rembrandt, as evidenced by the number of works where this image appeared. The motif, found in both traditional images and more ambiguous images like the etched sketches, can serve as an entrance into otherwise puzzling works, and prompts further engagement from a viewer.

The etched sketches and beggars

Three of the nine etched sketches contain images of beggars: Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc. (B. 363, fig. 1), Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc. (B. 369, fig. 7), and Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child (B. 370, fig. 9). The beggars are not central to the overall composition of the plates; rather, they seem to make up the margins of each one, in various ways. For example, in B. 363 and B. 370, the images of beggar men, women and children surround Rembrandt’s self-portrait. In B. 363, the beggars are placed in similar spatial intervals from the self-portrait but at different orientations around the plate, necessitating rotation of the print to be viewed from the correct perspective. In B. 370, while rotation is also necessary, the beggars are not kept apart from the self-portrait; in fact, some of the etched lines connecting them seem to overlap. In B. 369, the beggars fill every space around the two women in the beds, again in different orientations, prompting rotation of the image.

The beggars in these three etched sketches represent various types of conventional beggar imagery, long established by the seventeenth century. Beginning as early as the
late 1620s, and continuing throughout the 1650s, Rembrandt made a large number of images—mainly etchings—of beggars, street musicians, and other vagabonds. The three etched sketches mentioned above belong within this fairly large group of images, some of which have become well-known and often-cited works within his oeuvre. In the seventeenth century, beggars, like a depiction of the artist’s wife in a melancholic pose, would have prompted engagement from viewers of Rembrandt’s work. Not only would beggars in the etched sketches have brought to mind other works within Rembrandt’s oeuvre for the connoisseur, they also would have inspired ambivalent reactions—outlined below—from a seventeenth-century audience.

In the early 1630s, Rembrandt etched several images similar to Beggar with a wooden leg (fig. 61)—a single figure, usually an older man, dressed in tattered clothes, with his face downturned. These works are usually small, with no indication of setting. For some scholars, the culmination of these beggars is the Beggar sitting on mound (fig. 62) from around 1630, whose features resemble Rembrandt’s own in the etched Self Portrait, open-mouthed (fig. 63), also from 1630. In both etchings, the forehead is wrinkled as if frowning, the mouth is open, revealing some teeth, and the hand is outstretched, as if begging.

28 Unlike the subject of Saskia, whom Rembrandt portrayed in all three media, the beggar was not depicted in paint by the artist. Please see drawings such as Man standing with a stick (Ben. 30), black chalk with brush in white, 290 x 170 mm, Rijksmuseum, Rijkspentenkabinet, Amsterdam for a typical beggar drawing by Rembrandt from the 1620s.


30 Rembrandt, Self-portrait, open-mouthed, 1630, etching, 8.3 x 7.2 cm., third state, The British Museum, London, 1845.0205.1 (B. 13) and Rembrandt, Beggar (self-portrait?) seated on a bank, 1630, etching, 11.6 x 7.1 cm., second state, The British Museum, London, F.5.127 (B. 174). Scholars continue to debate whether or not Rembrandt purposefully depicted himself as a beggar, or merely transferred his physiognomy to the figure of a beggar.
In 1632, Rembrandt etched one of his earliest genre prints: The Rat Catcher (fig. 64). The Rat Catcher combines three figures into a narrative scene, each of which recalls the individual beggars of Rembrandt’s first beggar etchings. For example, the man leaning on his open front door resembles Rembrandt’s early tronies and perhaps even the figures of Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads of the etched sketches, while the rat catcher with all of his equipment is reminiscent of the central figure in Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads (fig. 2), as well as of an etching of a Man with his hands behind his back (fig. 65), and of the beggar with the long stick in Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc. (fig. 1)

Many of Rembrandt’s beggar etchings recall the work of earlier and nearly contemporary printmakers, providing him the opportunity to insert himself into the northern artistic tradition through a repeated interest in this subject. For example, the gesture of the begging hand and the open mouth found in the Beggar sitting on mound etching (fig. 62) most likely derive from an image by French printmaker Jacques Callot (c. 1592-1635). In 1622, shortly before Rembrandt etched his early beggars, Callot published a series of twenty-five images of beggars, Les Gueux. (fig. 66) With this connection acknowledged as early as Gersaint, various authors have written that


32 Rembrandt, A man with hands behind his back, 1631, etching, 6 x 5.1 cm., fourth state, The British Museum, London, 1843,0607.92 (B. 135).

33 Jacques Callot, Man in rags from Les Gueux, c. 1622-3, etching, 13.7 x 8.4 cm., The British Museum, London, 1861,0713.931. Of the nearly 1400 prints Callot executed during his lifetime, the beggar series was among the most popular. There are at least twelve sets of copies of the series, printed by Callot during his lifetime. For further information on Callot’s beggars, see H. Diane Russell, Jacques Callot: Prints and Related Drawings, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1975).
Rembrandt seemed technically influenced by Callot’s emphasis on a single figure against a bare background with contrasts of lighter and more shaded passages, created through vertical hatching.

The rocky bank in the *Beggar sitting on mound* etching may have been derived from a print by a still earlier influential northern printmaker: Lucas van Leyden (1494-1533). In Lucas’s engraving *Beggars* from around 1510 (fig. 67), a family of vagabonds stops to sit in a rocky landscape.34 The subject of this print was identified not by didactic text, but instead by their attire and surrounding objects. The figures wear tattered clothes, have bare or bandaged feet, and carry walking sticks and purses or packs. As several scholars have noted, the seated man may represent a cobbler because of the awl pinned to his hat, which has been interpreted as a symbol of the dissolute life or sloth.35 The woman with her hand on her chest carries erotic connotations with the open vessel between her legs, which refers to a harsh comment by St. Jerome, who wrote that the whore, “lays down the pitcher” and “opens her feet to everyone that passeth by.”36 Lucas returned to the theme of beggars in the print titled *Family of Beggars* from 1520, an impression of which Rembrandt purchased in 1642, and which may have then influenced his later interpretation of beggar images.37 (fig. 68)

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35 Please see the informative exhibition catalogue by Ellen S. Jacobwitz and Stephanie Stepanek on the *Prints of Lucas van Leyden and his Contemporaries* for more information about Lucas’s prints (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1983).


37 Lucas van Leyden, *Family of Beggars*, 1520, engraving and etching, 17.5 x 14 cm., The British Museum, London, 1849,1027.79
Rembrandt’s beggars have generated significant scholarly attention. The primary interests of this literature tend to be motivated by one, if not both, of the following two critical concerns: whether or not Rembrandt’s representations of beggars should be understood as sympathetic, and whether his beggars might be connected to his biography. The presentation of these interests in Rembrandt scholarship has linked them to one another. That is, the stronger the interest in Rembrandt’s life as an element in interpretation, the more sympathetic—when compared with his predecessors—the beggars are perceived to be. From this perspective, Rembrandt is construed to have been personally invested in the representation of beggars. This claim lays the foundation for an expanded iconographic exploration of the significance of Rembrandt’s beggars, and how they may have been interpreted by a seventeenth-century audience.

Before engaging with this literature, however, it must be acknowledged that this approach constructs an artificial narrative. It implicitly maintains that Rembrandt’s depiction of beggars was inherently different from those of his predecessors or contemporaries, instead of understanding his representation of beggars as participating within an established tradition of beggar images in northern printmaking. Interpretations of this tradition itself have been marked by divisive discourse, making further analysis that much thornier. My goal here is not to ascribe additional iconographic or meta-biographical interpretation to Rembrandt’s beggars, but to illustrate how Rembrandt may have used this specific subject matter, here understood as inherently neither sympathetic nor unsympathetic, to visually mark his participation in a larger artistic conversation. I

38 For example, see the well-known discussion between Svetlana Alpers and Hessel Miedema on the representation of festive peasants, argued in the pages of Simiolus from 1972-1979.
would not categorize this as a biographical investment, but a creative one, with the beggars serving a significant role in the invention of some of his most appealing and dynamic images, such as the etched sketches.

In the appendix to her 1981 dissertation, “The representation of the beggar as rogue in Dutch seventeenth-century art,” Lucinda Reinold asserted that the etching *Beggar sitting on a mound* (fig. 62), which she called *Self-Portrait as a Beggar*, irrefutably signified that the beggar figure held deep meaning for the artist. Although Reinold acknowledged Rembrandt’s debt to Jacques Callot in the format of the individual prints and in some figural and gestural poses, she stated that Rembrandt individualized his beggars and gave each of them a “unique presence.” She asserted that there was “duality” in Rembrandt’s conception of the beggar: “the beggar is a miserable wretch and a sinner, but he is also free, not bound by social propriety.” She indicated that this idea of freedom reflected Rembrandt’s desire to be free from the worldly concerns of his bourgeois surroundings. Essentially, Reinold argued that Rembrandt’s challenge to his overly strict society was to concentrate on the beggars’ humanity, indicating his promotion of the universal human condition.

In 1984, Julius Held became the first scholar to include the three etched sketches that contain beggar imagery in a lengthy analysis of Rembrandt’s beggars. Held

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40 Ibid., 182.

41 Ibid., 183.

credited Rembrandt’s many beggar etchings with revealing an “unexpected psychological aspect of the master’s personality,” and exhibiting a new sympathy that did not appear in the beggar images of his predecessors or contemporaries: Rembrandt was thus the “first” artist to see beggars as unfortunate fellow human beings. For example, Held wrote that while Rembrandt was indebted to Callot’s imagery, Callot’s prints were “only Bosch brought up to date.”

Held referred here to the two drawn sheets of beggars that were attributed to Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450-1516), today in Vienna. (fig. 69) As Tom Nichols has noted, Bosch’s drawings of beggars lack identifiable settings, such that the artist seemed to encourage the viewer’s unmediated attention to the beggars themselves. Bosch’s drawings were contemporary with the publication of the so-called beggar index, the anonymous Liber vagatorum. Published between 1500 and 1510, the Liber vagatorum was the first of the so-called “beggar books,” and included a catalogue of twenty-eight different types of beggars. While beggars had been depicted earlier, it was only in the sixteenth century that their depiction became established as a conventional artistic subject.

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43 Ibid., 153.

44 Ibid., 155-6.

45 Hieronymus Bosch (?), Studies of Beggars, c. 1500, pen and brown ink, 28.5 x 20.8 cm., The Albertina, Vienna.

46 Tom Nichols, The Art of Poverty (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 64.

47 Ibid., 2. Woodcuts from early sixteenth-century satires such as Sebastian Brant’s Das Narrenschiff helped to establish this visual tradition.
lay outside of the context of the church.48 By the middle of the sixteenth century, many towns across Europe had passed laws against begging. Some scholars credit this to an increase in poverty resulting from far-reaching famine and plague in the fifteenth century.49 Beggars were viewed increasingly as a social and economic problem as impoverished people in the country moved to the cities to beg. Instead of arousing sympathy, they were met with judgment. These images of beggars—like Bosch’s and those in the Liber vagatorum—began to emphasize the responsibility the beggars held for their own predicament. Sixteenth-century figures of beggars commonly exhibited stunted bodies and distorted physiognomies as physical manifestations of their culpability for their plight. Julius Held characterized Bosch’s drawings (and those similar to his) as “clinically precise,” and stated that the beggars were drawn “coldly” and with an attitude that was “emotionally indifferent.”50

Held turned to the three etched sketches as the highest examples of Rembrandt’s self-identification with beggars. He questioned whether or not it could be “accidental” and hence “meaningless” for Rembrandt to have added images of poverty-stricken people to these three etchings, which he stated were linked to Rembrandt by the self-portraits and images of Saskia.51 Held asserted that neither their poverty nor their pictorial appeal alone attracted Rembrandt’s interest: he claimed that through this highly personal


49 Laurinda Dixon, Bosch (New York: Phaidon Press, 2003), 92.

50 Held, “Rembrandt’s Interest in Beggars,” 156.

51 Ibid., 160-161.
approach to a traditional subject, Rembrandt may have understood the beggars’ social
estrangement as a reflection of his own mental state (an assertion with which I
disagree).\(^5\)

However, while Reinold and Held have argued that Rembrandt’s attitude toward
beggars should be understood as inherently sympathetic based upon the presumption of
his religious affiliation, other writers have asserted that Rembrandt’s beggars were not
more sympathetic than sixteenth-century or early seventeenth-century depictions of them.
For instance, William H. Halewood stated that, because of prevailing religious attitudes
that were slow to change, “there is reason to doubt that the ‘dregs of society’ would have
been more charitably or affectionately regarded by Rembrandt than by other artists of the
time.”\(^5\) Suzanne Stratton rejected the notion that in his early work Rembrandt responded
more “sensitively” to the plight of the beggars than other artists of his time, such as Jan
van Vliet (1622-1666), Adriaen van de Venne, and Pieter Quast (1606-1647), whose
images demonstrate “a satirical flavor, and a moralizing tone” about beggars.\(^5\) Although
she does write that late sixteenth-century humanists such as Dirck Coornhert (1522-1590)
introduced a kinder attitude toward the poor, she stated that these writings seemed to
have little influence on the depiction of beggars by Rembrandt and his contemporaries.
“A reluctance to identify Rembrandt’s etchings of beggars of c. 1630 with the cruder
ones of Pieter Quast, or the bitingly comic ones of van de Venne has resulted in a falsely

\(^5\) Ibid.
rosy view of the master’s work.”⁵⁵ Although the beggars in the etched sketches are neither overly sympathetic or overtly satirical, it is important to note for this dissertation the diversity of opinion toward beggars that may have existed among Rembrandt’s audience.

Stratton asserted that there was a change in how Rembrandt depicted beggars from the 1630s to the *Beggar receiving alms* from 1648.⁵⁶ (fig. 70) Stratton claimed that in this later print Rembrandt gave the figures individualized expressions (when visible), instead of hiding their faces in shadows, as in his earlier beggar etchings. She also noted that he left out steps leading into the house in the etching, so that the donor and family are standing on the same level, emphasizing “their equality in the eyes of God.”⁵⁷ She argued that while the print falls within the tradition of images of hurdy-gurdy players, Rembrandt transformed the image to incorporate changing social and religious attitudes toward beggars, reflecting more positive attitudes in Dutch society as a whole around the mid-seventeenth century, as seen in contemporary writings and practices of the Reformed Church.⁵⁸

A larger group of scholars has maintained that Rembrandt’s beggars were typically treated in a more sympathetic manner than those of his predecessors or contemporaries, interpreting them through seventeenth-century religious writings. Robert

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⁵⁵ Ibid.
⁵⁷ Ibid.
⁵⁸ Ibid.
Baldwin compared Rembrandt’s large number of beggar etchings and drawings from the early 1630s—approximately twenty-four prints and sixteen drawings—to the equally large number (twenty-seven) of etched self-portraits from those years.\(^5^9\) In addition to the etchings of beggars serving as experiments in facial expressions for the artist, Baldwin also asserted that Rembrandt purposefully showed them as sympathetic and fully human figures. He attributed Rembrandt’s seeming desire to portray the beggars as individuals to the prevailing attitude toward beggars in seventeenth-century Holland. Baldwin described a Protestant attitude toward beggars, which frequently used the language of poverty as a metaphor for the human condition, as being in opposition to the Roman Catholic stance in the seventeenth century, which emphasized the wretched condition of the beggar as a warning to its followers.\(^6^0\) Christ as a beggar on earth had been a favorite image for both Calvin and Luther, and, Baldwin supposed, Rembrandt might have been looking to emulate this idea of Christ among the poor in his beggar etchings and drawings. He wrote that the beggar prints and drawings can even be seen “in part as studies for a Protestant imagery of Christ,” of which perhaps the *Hundred Guilder Print* is the culmination.\(^6^1\) (fig. 44) Baldwin believed that within Rembrandt’s complete *oeuvre*, the beggar images helped Rembrandt explore “the human condition as he knew it, fallen in sin yet graced inexplicably with God’s love.”\(^6^2\)

\(^{5^9}\) Robert W. Baldwin, ““On earth we are beggars, as Christ himself was”: The Protestant Background of Rembrandt’s Imagery of Poverty, Disability, and Begging,” *Konsthistorisk-Tidsskrift* 54, no. 3 (1985): 122-35.

\(^{6^0}\) Ibid., 125.

\(^{6^1}\) Ibid., 128.

\(^{6^2}\) Ibid., 130.
In his essay, Baldwin asserted that sometimes Rembrandt’s religious subjects are all but indistinguishable from his beggar figures. Gary Schwartz expanded this idea in an essay for the exhibition *Sordid and Sacred: the Beggars in Rembrandt’s Etchings* and in his 2006 monograph, the *Rembrandt Book*.63 Schwartz stated that the first homeless people in Rembrandt’s *oeuvre* appear in a very different context than typical beggars: the Holy Family in his etching of the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* from around 1626 (B. 59).64 Schwartz argued that in the multiple images that Rembrandt made of this narrative Joseph specifically resembles Rembrandt’s male beggars with walking sticks, and even shares features with Rembrandt himself.65 This blurring of boundaries between sacred and street life, Schwartz claimed, is fundamental to how Rembrandt viewed himself: “The way he imagined the beggar is inextricable from the way he imagined himself, the way he imagined Christ, the way he conceived of imagery itself.” Schwartz is clearly overstating his argument here, and the visual comparison is not compelling, yet it illustrates the contemporary scholarly tendency to conflate Rembrandt’s images with his person. This propensity distracts from close readings and concentrated study of Rembrandt’s works themselves, which is the motivation behind this dissertation. If prints such as the etched sketches are examined independently from Rembrandt’s personality, they can offer different insights into Rembrandt’s artistic process.


Rembrandt was obviously invested in the portrayal of beggars because he returned to their images repeatedly over the course of his career. The scholarly emphasis on answering the question of whether or not his depictions of beggars were sympathetic, however, has obscured all other investigations into these images. I believe that like many of Rembrandt’s images, his images of beggars are not concretely or wholly sympathetic or the opposite. Whether or not Rembrandt was consistent in his representation of beggars, their repeated depiction throughout his career caused them to be some of his most recognizable images, and therefore, images that would engender further viewer involvement. Their multiple appearances in the etched sketches fulfill this function, contributing to the dynamism of these etchings.

The etched sketches and Rembrandt’s self portraits

Three of the etched sketches contain Rembrandt’s self-portrait—Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc. (fig. 1), Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap (fig. 8), and Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child (fig. 9)—connecting these prints to the many other self-portraits that Rembrandt drew, etched, and painted over his lifetime. In addition to being “portraits of Rembrandt by Rembrandt,” Rembrandt’s self-portraits fulfilled a variety of functions.66 For example, some of his earliest self-portrait etchings and drawings are examples of different facial expressions, which have been interpreted as studies of emotion.

encouraged during an artist’s training by most scholars. In fact, Ernst Van de Wetering and Marieke de Winkel have argued that some of these self-portraits should be regarded as tronies, where the primary function was as a vehicle for expression and the secondary function was as a portrait of Rembrandt. Other early self-portraits emphasize Rembrandt’s technical skill, as in the early Self-Portrait as a Young Man in Amsterdam (fig. 72), where Rembrandt has accented the curls of his hair by scratching into the wet paint, strategically exposing the ground layer where he needed it to catch the most light. Likewise, in a singular self-portrait etching of 1629 (fig. 73), Rembrandt used a quill or reed pen to etch the plate instead of a needle, resulting in a double line. Near the end of his career, the many layers of paint that created the complex structure of the Self Portrait in the Frick Collection continued to underscore his technical ability. (fig. 74) Other self-portraits demonstrated Rembrandt’s skill with costumes, and simultaneously signified his desire to insert himself in artistic tradition.

Rembrandt’s self-portraits emerged within a rich, well-established tradition of portraiture, with independent self-portraiture on the rise since the fifteenth century in

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67 Please see B. 320, B. 10, B. 316, B. 13; Ben. 53-54.


69 Rembrandt, Self-Portrait as a Young Man, ca. 1628, oil on panel, 22.5 x 18.6 cm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.


71 Rembrandt, Self-Portrait, 1658, oil on canvas, 133.7 x 103.8 cm., The Frick Collection, New York (Br. 50).

72 This aptitude is most readily exemplified by works such as the etched Self-Portrait Leaning on a Stone Wall from 1639 (B. 21) or the painted Self Portrait in the National Gallery from 1640 (Br. 34), where Rembrandt depicted himself in poses derived from Dürer’s Self-Portrait (1498), Titian’s Portrait of a Man (1512) and Raphael’s Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione (c. 1516).
both Northern and Southern Europe. Notably, at the turn of the sixteenth century, Albrecht Dürer depicted himself in both drawing and paint in several self-portraits. In the pen-and-brown-ink drawing of himself from c. 1490 today in Erlangen, Dürer drew himself with his head on his hand, the melancholic pose that was discussed earlier in this chapter.73 (fig. 75)

With nearly eighty self-portraits in three media, Rembrandt explored his own likeness more often than any artist before him. The number of Rembrandt’s self-portraits has allowed scholars to use these images in analyses of Rembrandt’s self-identity. Perhaps the foremost advocate of this approach is H. Perry Chapman, whose Rembrandt’s Self Portraits: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Identity advanced an almost exclusively psycho-biographical analysis of the subject.74 In an attempt to answer the question, “why did he portray himself so many times and in so many different ways?” Chapman asserted that Rembrandt’s self-portraits traced his growing sense of a unique identity, which mirrored the seventeenth-century rise of the sense of the individual.75 Even within this new culture of egoism, Chapman put forth, Rembrandt stands out for his prodigious output.

Chapman examined Rembrandt’s early self-portrait etchings as attempts by the artist to depict the depths of his own psyche. Chapman cited examples such as Self-Portrait with High, Curly Hair (fig. 72) and Self-Portrait, Bareheaded (fig. 73) as

73 Albrecht Dürer, Self-Portrait, 1493, pen and dark brown ink, 20.2 x 20.4 cm., Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen.


75 Chapman, Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits, xvii.
evidence of Rembrandt’s desire to express his inner temperament. She argued that he achieved this through etching techniques such as extreme and subtle shading, bolder, more informal lines, and dramatic, deep shadows.76 Chapman went further: in consistently shading his eyes in these early etchings, Rembrandt was “responding to the reiterated challenge to paint the inner man or the soul, [portraying] himself as a man of melancholic temperament.”77

The culmination of a prolonged sense of melancholy, Chapman asserted, was madness, idleness and isolation, conditions that could reduce the artist to the status of a beggar.78 Chapman highlighted the importance of Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc. (fig. 1) for her argument by including it near the end of her discussion of melancholic prints. Chapman wrote that the etched sketch reflected Rembrandt’s fear of ending up as a beggar: “. . . what better way to admit defeat and confess the fear of failure than to picture oneself among the end results of carelessness and idleness?”79 Rembrandt was aware of this possibility, according to Chapman, culminating in his depiction of himself as a beggar in the etching mentioned earlier in the chapter, Beggar sitting on a mound of 1630. (fig. 62)

This print conflates two repeated subjects within Rembrandt’s oeuvre: the beggar and the self-portrait. In combining two of the subjects most often explored throughout Rembrandt’s career (and in the present chapter), this etching has born the weight of a

76 Ibid., 22-23.
77 Ibid., 25.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., 33.
significant body of critical scholarship. It has been employed to lay the foundations for those interpretations, such as Chapman’s, that assert a biographical link between Rembrandt’s beggars and his self-identity.

The second etched sketch that Chapman mentioned in her book is *Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap.* (fig. 8) She briefly referenced this print in her chapter on “the self-fashioned,” where she focused on Rembrandt’s use of costume in his self-portraits. Chapman delineated the various modes of dress that characterized the artist’s self-portraits, from old-fashioned armor in paintings such as *Self-Portrait with Gorget* to more elegant and fashionable garb.80 (fig. 76) Chapman pointed out that Rembrandt’s costume helps to “separate him from his everyday world” and, at the same time, enhanced his identity as an artist. The article of clothing that did this more than any other was the beret. Rembrandt painted himself with the beret on several occasions, including self-portraits from 1640, 1652, and 1658. Chapman also noted that Rembrandt painted himself with a beret when he included his figure within larger history paintings, such as *The Raising of the Cross.*81 She stated that although this type of beret was no longer in fashion during Rembrandt’s time, his decision to wear it was because of its association to his artistic activity. She

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80 Rembrandt, *Self-portrait with Gorget*, c. 1629, oil on panel, 37.9 x 28.9 cm., Mauritshuis, The Hague (This version is noted as the “copy” in the *Rembrandt by Himself* catalogue, while the Nuremberg painting is considered the original. Chapman argues the opposite.)

81 Ibid., 48. Rembrandt, *Raising of the Cross*, c. 1632, oil on panel, 95.7 x 72.2 cm., Alte Pinakothek, Munich (Br. 548).
further claimed that this etched sketch achieved this goal as well as any other image created by Rembrandt, because he left the beret as the primary clue to his identity.82

Ernst van de Wetering has asserted several times that Rembrandt’s self-portraits were not exercises in such self-analysis.83 He wrote that even the term “self-portrait” was anachronistic; in the seventeenth century, these images would have been understood as a “portrait of Rembrandt” by Rembrandt and that the subject, or Rembrandt’s specific physiognomy, may not have been the most important aspect of them for some collectors.84 Although Van de Wetering argued for a more diverse understanding of potential “categories” of Rembrandt’s self-portraits, he maintained that one of Rembrandt’s most significant motives for the output of his self-portraits, specifically the etchings, must have been to garner fame.85 He concluded that Rembrandt’s self-portraits served at least two functions: they provided portraits of a celebrated artist and served as demonstrations of his technique.86 Van de Wetering’s emphasis on the multiple functions of Rembrandt’s self-portraits offers support for how this dissertation approaches the study of the etched sketches, which is to advocate for a broadening of the definition and categorization of these works.

82 Marieke de Winkel, in her essay in the fourth volume of the Rembrandt Research Project’s Corpus, disagreed with Chapman about the meaning of this headpiece. She argued that the bonnet (as she called the beret) was worn by more people than artists, from all classes, and that it could denote age and learning. Bonnets were not found in seventeenth-century studio inventories, but once Rembrandt began to use the bonnet in a new way with his self-portraits, it was “immediately imitated” by artists such as Gerard Dou. Marieke de Winkel, “Rembrandt’s Clothes—Dress and Meaning in his self-portraits,” A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings IV (Dordrecht: Springer Verlag, 2005), 45-87.


84 Ibid., 21.

85 Ibid., 28.

86 Ibid., 30.
Van de Wetering continued this emphasis on Rembrandt’s technique in the most innovative approach to date to the interpretation of the three etched sketches with self-portraits. In the fourth volume of the *Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, published in 2005, Van de Wetering credited *Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc.* (fig. 1), *Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap* (fig. 8), and *Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child* (fig. 9) with leading the members of the Rembrandt Research Project to new interpretations of Rembrandt’s etched self-portraits as a whole. He wrote: “The hunt for the significance of these study sheets . . . eventually led to an entirely new—and we believe coherent—outlook on the thirty-one etchings, finished and unfinished, that had hitherto been considered as more or less equivalent self-portraits.”87 Van de Wetering rightly argued that these do not represent typical sheets of studies. He noted that both the preparation of the etching plate and the act of pulling impressions from it were time-consuming acts, more elaborate than taking a pen to a piece of paper. As noted previously, he then compared these sheets to “more complete” etched self-portraits by Rembrandt, stating that Rembrandt usually began these etchings with the depiction of the head. Van de Wetering asserted that these etched sketches represent “aborting projects” that “should have resulted in full-fledged ‘portraits of Rembrandt by himself’.”88 That is, each of the etched sketches was initially intended as a traditional etched self-portrait by Rembrandt.

88 Van de Wetering, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits: Problems of Authenticity and Function*, *Corpus* 4, 193. Ger Luijten, however, has disagreed with Van de Wetering. Luijten believed that Rembrandt started with
To support his claim that these were preparatory for other printed self-portraits, Van de Wetering provided another etched image for comparison, comparing Rembrandt’s face in *Self-Portrait in a Soft Hat and Embroidered Cloak* (B. 7) with that in *Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc.* (B. 363), and his face in *Self-Portrait drawing at the window* (B. 22) with that in *Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child* (B. 370). He contends that both of these etchings were Rembrandt’s first attempts at depicting himself in certain positions that eventually culminated in B. 7 and B. 22. (figs. 41-2) However, either because of misbiting, as in the cases of B. 363 and *Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap* (B. 372) or perhaps because of problems with the likeness or placement of the figure, as in B. 370, they were abandoned, with “those parts with remains of the self-portraits as supports for sketches for whatever purpose.”

While Van de Wetering’s argument is provocative, dismissing the resulting etched sketches as merely “aborted” projects limits their function to an ostensible preparatory nature. Finally, Van de Wetering suggested that these aborted projects became collector’s items, for contemporary buyers and later connoisseurs would have wanted to own a self-portrait by Rembrandt. This discussion is part of his larger argument in the fourth volume of the *Corpus*—that the great number of Rembrandt’s self-portraits reflected an external pressure, a demand from the market, as

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opposed to the more internal pressure for self-discovery as maintained by Perry Chapman.

Conclusion

In his thorough and stimulating discussion in the Corpus, Van de Wetering still categorized the etched sketches as “preparatory,” and noted that they would have been collected as “mistakes,” by a connoisseur who wanted to own every self-portrait created by Rembrandt. His interpretation, however, neglected an acknowledgment of the other subjects in the prints; even if these prints were initially intended for other compositions, the fact remained that Rembrandt did not abandon these plates, he imaginatively transformed them into new entities entirely. What this chapter has emphasized instead is that the inclusion of these significant, recognizable subjects—images of Saskia, tronies, beggars and self-portraits—and their combination in the etched sketches denotes meaning, as they participate in and contribute to Rembrandt’s repeated treatment of these themes over the course of his career.

Rembrandt combined these disparate yet familiar elements in the etched sketches to create indeterminancy that would necessarily further involve any viewer of these prints. Upon first glance, a seventeenth-century collector might have recognized the beggars, the artist’s wife and certainly the self-portraits that were delineated across the etched sketches, all of which connoted ideas and concepts that were outlined in this chapter. With closer inspection, a viewer became more involved in the images, as the
recognizable motifs are combined in innovative ways, and when united with diverse finishes, created more curious and less straight-forward prints than expected. Perhaps instead of interpreting Rembrandt’s *oeuvre* as a linear evolution, within which the etched sketches must find a place, the etched sketches should be interpreted as generative, bringing together the various subjects that occupied Rembrandt’s imagination during his career. The meaning of these subjects is consistently multi-layered, identifying the etched sketches as capable of holding multiple, simultaneous signification; they are not finite or closed compositions, but ones that allowed the artist to engage with a sophisticated viewer in playful and undetermined ways. In addition to the varied finishes and regroupings of subjects, I address in the next chapter a final characteristic of four of the etched sketches that supports my assertion that they were purposefully executed as potential intellectual diversions: the element of rotation.
CHAPTER FIVE:

ROTATION AND RECEPTION OF THE ETCHED SKETCHES

Introduction

In the previous chapters, the etched sketches were discussed in terms of their editions, audiences, varied finishes, and the repetition of recognizable subjects found in them. This chapter will expand upon conceptualizing the audiences for the etched sketches by exploring the possibilities of how four of them were viewed. The four prints that are the subject of this chapter are those that necessitate a turn of the plate in order to consider each figure from its proper perspective: Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc. (B. 363, fig. 1); Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc. (B. 369, fig. 7); Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap (B. 372, fig. 8); and Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child (B. 370, fig. 9). Rather than simply exemplifying an efficient use of space, the element of rotation provides a cue for how to read these images by connecting them to a long tradition of visual diversions that demand engagement from the viewer. The etched sketches belong to a group of prints that broadly includes grotesques and capricci among others that recent scholarship has focused on for their ambiguous nature.1 Because all of

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these images are indeterminate in some way, they prompt active involvement from the viewer, as the viewer tries to discern meaning from multiple possibilities.

The interpretive model of distinguishing multiple meanings and foregrounding the role of the viewer for the creation of meaning stems from writings in literary theory dating to the 1960s and 1970s. Following Hans-Robert Jauss’s work in reader-response criticism, Terry Eagleton asserted that processes of signification materialized only in the actual practice of reading. That is, as one reads (or views) a work, the reader makes inferences or assumptions. As Eagleton wrote, “The text itself is really no more than a series of ‘cues’ to the reader, invitations to construct a piece of language into meaning.”

Any work, therefore, is full of indeterminacies, or elements which depend for their effect upon the reader’s—or viewer’s—interpretation, and which can be interpreted in a number of different, perhaps mutually conflicting ways. As a consequence, the more information a text or image supplies, the more indeterminate it becomes.

Art historians such as Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey, Mieke Bal, and James Elkins have explored the idea of images dependent upon an imaginative response from a variety of perspectives. The historian of nineteenth-century

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2 Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 64.
3 Ibid., 66.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Please see the volumes edited by Bryson, Holly and Moxey, such as *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1994); Mieke Bal, *Reading Rembrandt: Beyond the Word-Image Opposition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and James Elkins, *Why are our Pictures Puzzles? On the Modern Origins of Pictorial Complexity* (London: Routledge, 1999) for more information. For example, Bal argued that the viewer should “read” Rembrandt’s paintings in more interactive ways, beyond constructing a pure narrative.
art Dario Gamboni has written extensively about a specific type of indeterminate image, which he called the “potential image,” or a work that relied greatly on imaginative response. While the etched sketches do not correspond directly with Gamboni’s description of potential images, the prints do belong to other categories of images that he described in his introductory chapters on the history of such images. Gamboni argued that ambiguity in works of art is “the ‘character of what is susceptible to several interpretations’: it can also be said to express the character of ‘what belongs to two categories’ and of ‘what lacks precision and disturbs.’” We have seen that Rembrandt seemed to purposefully blur definitions with the varied finishes on the etched sketches, which resemble drawings though they are printed, thus “belonging” to two categories. In addition, the combination of portraits, tronies, beggars and self-portraits in individual images also defied categorization. Indeterminate images, according to Gamboni, are those that are “dependent on the beholder for their realization, and their property is to make the beholder aware—either painfully or enjoyably—of the active, subjective nature of seeing.” This quality of prompted consumption on the part of the viewer of the etched sketches—specifically through the act of rotation—is the focus of this chapter.

Gamboni traced the development of the “potential image” to antiquity, but concentrated on its theoretical application during the Renaissance and later. As he cited from Leon Battista Alberti’s treatise, *De statua*:

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9 Ibid., 18.
The art of those who tried to reproduce in their works the image and likeness (effigies et simulacra) of bodies created by nature came about, in my opinion, in the following way. By examining a tree-trunk, a clump of earth and other similar objects, they must one day have noticed certain features which, slightly transformed, could be made to resemble completely real natural shapes. After observing this, they then made attempts, with the necessary care, to see if they could complete, by addition or removal, what seemed to be lacking for the true likeness of a particular shape. So, insofar as the object itself indicated, by correcting and perfecting its lines and surfaces, they arrived at their aim, and not without pleasure.\textsuperscript{10}

In this passage, Alberti has acknowledged the ability of the artist to merge visual stimuli and create new entities, in a pleasurable way. Leonardo then expanded upon the theory of the potential image. As mentioned earlier in the dissertation, Leonardo da Vinci was well-known for his writings on what he called accidental images. He wrote, in what would later be called his \textit{Trattato della pittura}:

\begin{quote}
I shall not fail to include among these precepts a new discovery, an aid to reflection, which, although it seems a small thing and almost laughable, nevertheless is very useful in stimulating the mind to various discoveries. This is: look at walls splashed with a number of stains or stones of various mixed colours. If you have to invent some scene, you can see there resemblances (similitudine) to a number of landscapes, adorned in various ways with mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, plains, wide valleys and hills. Moreover, you can see various battles, the rapid actions of figures, strange expressions on faces, costumes, and an infinite number of things, which you can reduce to good, integrated form. This happens thus on walls and varicoloured stones, as in the sound of bells, in whose pealing you can find every word and name you can imagine.\textsuperscript{11}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 27.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 29.
In this early attempt to theorize the idea of indeterminate images, Leonardo placed the origin of accidental images in the mind of the artist/ beholder.

The interest in ambiguous images was not limited to the Italian Renaissance. As Gamboni noted, the imaginative side of perception and its manipulation in art were not limited to the Italian Renaissance but found even clearer visual expression in the art of Northern Europe.\(^\text{12}\) To illustrate this point, Gamboni specifically referred to a self-portrait drawing at age 22 by Albrecht Dürer, today in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, which shows on the recto, *Self Portrait with Studies of Hand and Pillow*, and on the verso, *Six Pillows*.\(^\text{13}\) (figs. 78-79) Joseph Koerner, in his seminal study of Dürer’s self-portraiture, wrote that this drawing is an example of how Dürer approached the problem of self-portraiture: he treated the depiction of his own face like a formal problem to be solved as he would formally study the folds of a pillow.\(^\text{14}\) For Dürer, the drawing of the pillows exhibited his goal of “apprehension of the pure object,” moving away from the object’s context, and reducing it to purer outline and modeling.\(^\text{15}\) However, as is widely accepted by scholars today, the six pillows were not merely objects; faces have been seen in their folds.\(^\text{16}\) For example, a spiral on the left edge of the pillow at left center acted as an eye for both the faces below and above it. As Koerner

\(^\text{12}\) Ibid., 31.

\(^\text{13}\) Albrecht Dürer, *Self-Portrait, Study of Hand, and a Pillow* (recto); *Six Studies of Pillows* (verso), pen and brown ink, 27.8 x 20.2 cm., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York


\(^\text{15}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{16}\) Gamboni also wrote about Dürer’s drawings in *Potential Images*, 32.
noted, this “game” can be played indefinitely—by both artist and viewer—with more and more faces becoming clear. But, he continued, the faces were unstable, for as the viewer finds one, he loses another, as our eyes change focus from one to the next.17

Koerner asserted that the folds in the punched pillows and the calligraphic lines that made them are signs of Albrecht Dürer as maker.18 It is appropriate, then, that the opposite side of the drawing illustrated a self-portrait. Koerner argued that the artist’s likeness here is displayed as one thing among other objects, yet, simultaneously, those objects have been invested with faces and characters that can potentially be read.19 “Once themselves endowed with faces, and therefore with character and subjectivity, the pillows change their appearance and orientation, twisting, turning, and grimacing according to the individual viewer’s fancy. The pillows are subjected to our thought, appropriated by our desire to find meaning in them by rendering them homologous to ourselves”—that is, we search for ways to make them anthropomorphic.20 Koerner suggested that the pillows may have represented for Dürer anxiety about coupling with his new wife; but however they reflected Dürer’s mental state, they are prosopopoeias, argued Koerner, literally conferments of a face onto something else.21 Nearly all self-portraiture involves a negotiation between subject and object, according to Koerner, and self-portraiture elicits

17 Koerner, _The Moment of Self-Portraiture_, 28.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., 31. These pillows have been linked to events in Dürer’s life around 1493, namely his engagement and marriage to Agnes Frey.

21 Ibid., 32.
a mode of interpretation that will always move from image to person, so that the moment of transition from object to subject is the moment of self-portraiture.22

Gamboni noted that Dürer may not have initially intended for these pillows to have human features; however, even if these images were drawn by “chance,” Dürer nonetheless immediately grasped the meaning and importance of what he had done, and the date, the monogram and even the self-portrait itself are perhaps there as an expression of this recognition.”23 This observation can be applied to the etched sketches as well. Even if Rembrandt did not have the finished product fully envisioned as he started etching, the addition of partial self-portraits and sometimes signatures indicated that he recognized the opportunity to create and publish indeterminate and curious images that were indelibly marked as his own.

Albrecht Dürer was not Rembrandt’s only northern predecessor to generate images that played with ambiguity. Jacques de Gheyn II also drew, engraved, and etched works that defy straightforward definitions, and have prompted various interpretations. In previous chapters, I discussed De Gheyn’s Study of Hermit and Witchcraft as an example of a drawing with various degrees of finish. (fig. 23) The crab and witches drawing, however, is not the only one where De Gheyn combined dissimilar elements from various imaginative modes on the same sheet, creating an indeterminate image. In a drawing now in the Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum, De Gheyn combined three

22 Ibid.
23 Gamboni, Potential Images, 32. This represents a similar argument to the one I made regarding Ernst van de Wetering’s interpretation of the etched sketches that include self-portraits in the last chapter. That is, that even if the plates began as mistakes, they become something new entirely. (It should be noted here that scholars have debated whether or not Dürer’s monogram is contemporary or posthumous.)
grotesque heads that seem to emerge from three clumps of sod with a bust of an old woman.24 (fig. 80) This drawing manifests many of Gamboni’s claims about ambiguous images, including the concept that the drawing necessitates an interpretive act involving the imagination of the viewer and an acceptance of indeterminancy. Claudia Swan wrote that the clumps of sod first create a sense perception (of stones and moss, for example) for the viewer, and then they lead the viewer through the process of creative generation or fantasia. She noted that scholars have often suggested that De Gheyn used nature as the inspiration in creating his imaginary creatures, but few have discussed the intellectual and artistic conditions of the recombinations De Gheyn produced so frequently, where the material world becomes the fantastic.25

De Gheyn’s drawing was later etched by another contemporary of Rembrandt’s who sometimes engaged in images that can be termed indeterminate: Stefano della Bella (1610-1664), one of the most prolific printmakers of the seventeenth century. In fact, Della Bella, De Gheyn, and Rembrandt mutually exhibited knowledge of each other’s work throughout their careers. For instance, the scholar I. Q. Van Regteren Altena attributed an etching to Della Bella that was influenced by a drawing by De Gheyn’s son, Jacques de Gheyn III, after his father’s drawing of the three clumps of sod.26 Likewise the influence of Rembrandt’s prints, and specifically the etched sketches, on Della Bella has been recognized by several scholars, from Julius Held to a recent doctoral student at

24 Jacques de Gheyn II, The Head of an Old Woman and Three Clumps of Sod, pen and brown ink and watercolor, 19.6 x 17 cm., The Morgan Library and Museum, New York

25 Swan, Art, Science and Witchcraft, 54.

Columbia University, Veronica White.\textsuperscript{27} In her dissertation chapter on Della Bella, White stated the connection between Della Bella and Rembrandt by noting that an expressive head from the \textit{Diverses figures} by Della Bella revealed the influence of Rembrandt’s sketch plates, but that Della Bella took his experimentation even further, allowing games of free-association to take place; an example of this is the depiction of an oblong shape which he repeated to form a grotesque face, a decorative helmet, and a satyr’s head.\textsuperscript{28}

Indeed, Della Bella and Rembrandt shared an even greater similarity in their works, a characteristic that De Gheyn’s drawings do not share. Even with his most haphazard combinations, De Gheyn’s drawings do not involve any physical manipulation of the sheet, as the etched sketches do. It is this quality—the necessity to rotate the image to see each motif in its proper orientation—that distinguishes Rembrandt’s etched sketches from De Gheyn’s drawings. Della Bella was the only artist contemporary to Rembrandt to have included the need for rotation in his work. In one small etching (fig. 81), Della Bella has rendered a head of a soldier, in profile, facing the head of an old man.\textsuperscript{29} In order to see the face of the old man from its proper perspective, the viewer must turn the etching ninety degrees to the right. In another, a covered head of a woman is depicted facing to the right. Turning the print ninety degrees, another two figures—

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{28} White, “\textit{Serio Ludere},” 107-8.
\item\textsuperscript{29} Stefano Della Bella, \textit{Study of Two Heads from Recueil de divers griffonements et preuves d’eau forte}, etching, 4 x 9.8 cm., The British Museum, London, 1871,0513.202.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
facing in opposite directions—and the sketch of a foot become visible in their correct orientation on the plate.30 (fig. 82) In a third, the head of a young man in profile faces left, and, turning the print ninety degrees to the right, a leg is etched.31 (fig. 83) These three small etchings by Della Bella, however, do not exhibit the intentional execution of Rembrandt’s rotated etched sketches; they more closely resemble the traditional sheets of studies discussed in chapter two. The figures on them are unconnected in subject or technique, and remain entirely separate in the etching. Their placement on the plate appears haphazard—too close to the edge, for example. Rembrandt’s etchings, through their disparate finishes and necessary rotation, are exceptional in their appeal to the viewer to look closely, to handle them as they are turned to see each of the images in their proper orientation.

While the subjects (beggars, Saskia sleeping, and self-portraits) found in these etched sketches are intimately related to Rembrandt’s drawings, the element of rotation further sets the etchings apart from other works in his own oeuvre. In his own drawings—at least the ones that are extant—Rembrandt does not seem to have engaged in rotation of the sheet. The drawing that seems closest to demanding a physical manipulation of the sheet is the verso of Ben. 194 (a drawing that has questionable attribution to Rembrandt today), where Rembrandt (?) has drawn a study of a girl sleeping combined with a turbaned profile of a man. For the viewer to see the sleeping

30 Stefano Della Bella, *Four Studies from Recueil de divers griffonements et preuves d’eau forte*, c. 1646, etching, 6.0 x 7.3 cm., The British Museum, London, 1871,0513.226.

31 Stefano Della Bella, *Study of a Head and a Leg from Recueil de divers griffonements et preuves d’eau forte*, c. 1646, etching, 2.2 x 8.5 cm., The British Museum, London, 1871,0513.229.
girl in her correct orientation, the paper must be turned ninety degrees from the direction of the figure of the man.

The element of rotation has complicated one of the most recent and most thought-provoking interpretations of the etched sketches that contain a self-portrait: B. 363, B. 372, and B. 370. As previously outlined, Van de Wetering asserted that the etched sketches that contained partial self-portraits represent “aborted projects” that should have resulted in more traditional self-portraits of Rembrandt.32 After they were abandoned, most likely for technical reasons (according to Van de Wetering), they then became collector’s items for the contemporary and later connoisseur who wanted to own a self-portrait by Rembrandt. What Van de Wetering’s interpretation lacks is further discussion of why Rembrandt turned these mistakes into such curious prints, ones that capture attention through their inimitability. Van de Wetering’s assumption that the self-portrait in these three prints is meant to be privileged prevents any other explanation for their unusual appearance. The element of rotation of these plates should not be read as arbitrary, however, and in fact, can be understood as purposeful. Van de Wetering’s argument has the unexpected effect of strengthening this assertion—if the etched sketches were truly mistakes, Rembrandt could have dismissed them, or turned them into traditional works that resembled his other etchings. But he did not, and when the viewer engages in the act of turning the plate or print, where the self-portrait is no longer in its correct orientation, an examination of aspects of these etchings calls for a different reading.

For example, no matter what the initial intentions for these prints, the placement of the figures in the etched sketches is purposeful, and necessitates rotation through the imagery in a sequential manner. In *Sheet of Studies with Head of Rembrandt and Beggar Couple*, c. 1631 (B. 363, fig. 1), the elements have been evenly distributed across the surface of the plate—the space in between them is regular and fixed, not random or subjective. In fact, although not touching, the images here relate to one another in different ways. The man’s head on the bottom right is centered with the feet of the beggar couple next to him. The headdress of the old woman above this beggar couple seems to frame the head of the old man. As the viewer studies the faintly-etched man in the upper corner, and turns the print, the man leads the viewer’s eye to the self-portrait. This is the only print of the four to necessitate four turns of the sheet to see all of the figures in their correct orientation, and their postures lead the viewer’s eye from one to another as the sheet is turned. The even distribution of space between them is then an organizational element as well—it is precisely what draws the viewer’s eye through each turn of the sheet.

The *Sheet of Studies with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed*, c. 1641-2 (B. 369, fig. 7) reflects both this technical concern with space and adds another element that enhances an interpretation of these images as unusual entities: shared lines, which direct the viewer toward the rotation of this print. This etched sketch only involves one rotation—there are two ways to view it, each with one of the women in bed in the correct orientation. The beggar images seem to almost create a border for the print, as they lie along the edges with the women in bed near the center. Although dissimilar in technique, the orientation
of their profiles calls attention to the women. The woman staring out at the viewer is connected to the very lightly sketched head below her arm by the shared line that creates the woman’s forearm and the hat of the woman below. In addition, short hatched lines serve as both texture for the woman’s clothing and shadow for the woman’s hat. They are inextricably intertwined, creating mutual awareness of one another, as well as strengthening the viewer’s desire to turn the sheet to see the other images.

In Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap, c. 1645 (B. 372, fig. 8), the varying lengths of the branches of the tree seem to follow the contours of Rembrandt’s beret, prompting the viewer to rotate the print from the self-portrait to see the tree in proper orientation and back again. In addition, the misbiting nearly merges into part of the landscape below the tree, as the lines leading to the base of the tree result from that error. The misbiting, then, is transformed from a mistake to part of the image itself. The very small, lightly etched face underneath the tree is almost entirely hidden, except for one disembodied eye that calls the viewer’s eye to Rembrandt’s single eye in his unfinished self-portrait on the right.

In Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child, c. 1651 (B. 370, fig. 9), Rembrandt’s self-portrait, of the same finish as the figures around it, seems to emerge from the print. The lines here overlap one another continuously—from the hatching under his chin darkening the back of the beggar woman’s robe to the wavy lines of his hair melting into the garment of the beggar on the left. Here, instead of bordering the image, the elements are brought together in the
center, with nearly blank space surrounding them. It is extraordinarily difficult to discern what was etched first on this plate, as the images are so entangled. Here it is precisely the overlapping lines that drives the need to rotate the print: the state of finish encourages the viewer to turn the image to discern the individual figures surrounding Rembrandt’s face.

One of the most interesting aspects of the element of rotation in any image, but specifically in the etched sketches, is that rotation necessitates a closer looking on the part of the viewer to distinguish what exactly is being seen. This prompt recalls Peter Parshall’s discussion on viewing prints in the catalog that accompanied the exhibition *The Darker Side of Light: Arts of Privacy, 1850-1900*: he wrote that because collectors had so many methods of storing art, encountering a work of art was not a random event but a determined activity. That is, connoisseurs chose to engage with a work of art. I assert that the element of rotation and the higher level of involvement that rotation prompts is a quality that through disruption creates a playful or humorous visual game for the viewer, functioning much like the marginalia of medieval manuscripts or Renaissance grotesque heads that emerge from cartouches and inanimate objects. Beginning in the sixteenth century, prints proved to be ideally suited for such games because of their relatively small size and manageability, and provided a new mode of participation in amusing visual games that had a rich context in northern art.

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As we know, during Rembrandt’s time, prints were not only kept in albums or framed to hang on walls—they were handled more intimately by collectors and the members of their circles.34 In his recent work on viewing the printed image in late medieval Europe, David S. Areford reminded us that prints existed in variety of contexts.35 Although Areford’s study focused on early woodcuts, many of his characterizations and conclusions about print culture add to an understanding of seventeenth-century visual culture as well. Early prints, Areford argued, were marked by a materiality that reinforced their singularity; viewing these images was not a passive act. It often involved manipulating the image in some way.36 Although Areford focused on acts such as adding or deleting text to these early religious woodcuts, the notion that viewing prints was meant to be an active endeavor resonates with the rotation found in the etched sketches. In fact, this treatment of prints can be traced back in northern art, for example, to the fifteenth-century usage of manuscripts.

In his article on the viewer and the *Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, Bret Rothstein discussed how art historians can overlook the visual and intellectual acumen of artists and viewers: “. . . we spill so much scholarly ink over developing authorial self-consciousness that we risk missing the fact that such details presume the attention of a similarly clever audience. (The game is not worth playing that offers no opponent.)


36 Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image*, 16.
Moreover, most such sophistication seems dedicated to close and largely unsupervised observation."  

Rothstein argued that instead of interpreting manuscripts primarily as religious objects or as catering to a taste for luxury and the pleasure of consumerism, we should acknowledge that manuscripts could be witty, providing not only aesthetic, but also intellectual rewards for an attentive fifteenth-century viewer.  

For the seventeenth-century viewer, the seemingly simple act of rotating an etched sketch could deliver the same cerebral reward. One follows the creative paths of the artist through the turning of the sheet, and the mental tracing of certain lines and motifs in the etching, which act similarly to the ornaments in the Hours of Mary of Burgundy manuscript.

Rothstein noted that the ornament and marginalia found in the manuscript moved the viewer’s eye from illumination to text and back (creating movement, like a version of the element of rotation), but that was not its only function. Ornament in the manuscript fosters intellectual engagement because it begs to be made intelligible.  

For Rothstein, imaginative agility was not simply rapid recall, but involved an ability to recognize points of contact among disparate visual stimuli, resulting in contact between both the stimuli and their referents.  

Similarly, several elements—such as portraits of Saskia, tronies, images of beggar figures, and Rembrandt’s self-portraits—serve as the “points of

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39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., 258-259.
contact” for the etched sketches, and help to create those bridges between stimuli and referents.

This level of participation is not reserved just for imagery in the manuscript, but is also required when reading the text of the Hours. Rothstein wrote that the viewer “activates” the unity of diverse words through vigorous meditational reading.41 The manuscript contained both the frivolity of the ornament and the responsibility of reminding the viewer of the moral task at hand—paradoxes that defy easy categorization.42 With the contiguous and continuous combination of the frivolous and serious in one document, a manuscript such as the Hours of Mary of Burgundy was meant for only the “visually attentive.”43 This ability to be interpreted as simultaneously playful and solemn describes the etched sketches as outlined throughout this dissertation: the coexisting themes of melancholia and shared lines that create emerging faces, the disconcerting juxtaposition of self-portraits with beggars, and the puzzle of a finely etched beret with a little figure next to a tree can be seen as blending traditionally high and low elements in one space.

In the sixteenth century, as painting became a more common medium in the north, artists often incorporated play or games to engage with more philosophical topics. Todd M. Richardson has argued that the presentation of a serious philosophical or religious discussion within the context of game is an exercise with a long history.44 Richardson

41 Ibid., 264.
42 Ibid., 267.
43 Ibid., 270.
maintained that while many scholars have studied Bruegel’s engraving *Festival of Fools* to illuminate his metaphors of deception and blindness, none have also demonstrated that Bruegel played “games” within the engraving.\(^{45}\) (fig. 84) For example, we should note the odd buildings found in the background of *Festival of Fools*, which do not resemble actual buildings, but instead seem to be combinations of several types of architecture. Richardson suggested that Bruegel’s obvious disregard for representing these buildings with any perspectival or stylistic accuracy, and with multiple, even conflicting views, could reflect the foolish activities for which they serve as a backdrop.\(^{46}\) As a result, Richardson wrote, the play with, or thematizing of, perspective stages the ability of the viewer to consider the design of the buildings as a pun on foolishness.”\(^{47}\)

The etched sketches do not contain any explicit moral imperatives or metaphors for deception as these earlier examples, yet the individual elements in each print are somewhat somber in appearance. However, the ideas that a work of art can prompt active viewing by the juxtaposition of disparate images, that an engaged viewer can assimilate those dissimilar images together in a meaningful way, and that an artist may have used visual motifs to add an element of “play” to a work are all applicable to Rembrandt’s etched sketches, and especially the ones that involve the element of rotation.

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\(^{45}\) Pieter Bruegel the Elder (after), *The Festival of Fools*, 1570-85, engraving, 32.2 x 43 cm. The British Museum, London, 1870,0625.658.

\(^{46}\) Richardson, “To See Yourself,” 291.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., 304.
It is the combination of these characteristics that has the capacity to amuse the viewer by activating the imagination.

The characteristic of rotation in these etchings calls forth a playful sense of indeterminacy, which provokes more dynamic participation from a viewer. This multivalence, if interpreted through methods described in Alexander Nagel and Lorenzo Pericolo’s recent study, is reflective of larger artistic concerns, specifically in the early modern era. Nagel and Pericolo described the notion of *aporia* (loosely translated as “bafflement”) as related to the visual arts: works whose subjects are not readily identifiable, or too readily associated with more than one subject at the same time; works that concentrate on the marginal instead of the central episode; works that intentionally throw different iconographic systems together; and works that introduce elements of the preparatory phase into the finished work characterize *aporia*.

Nagel and Pericolo argued that between 1400 and 1700, new formats of art, new genres, new subjects, and new techniques, as well as new venues for viewing art made the emergence of aporetic works of art, and of *aporia* as a challenge in art, a structural inevitability. “The works studied in this volume become aporetic by extending, forcing, or simply slowing down and dwelling on the usual procedures for making works of art.” The goal, according to the authors, is to understand how a work of art’s contradictions participate in its identity, even as they render a fixed identity questionable.


49 Nagel and Pericolo, *Subject as Aporia*, 2.

50 Ibid., 10.

51 Ibid.
For example, in his essay on early-sixteenth-century Italian painting, Nagel discussed a new tendency for recombination within sixteenth-century drawings. He noted that around 1500, drawings lent themselves to recombination because they were “naturally underdetermined.” While the artist’s first sketch was defined (by Leonardo) as ill-defined and changeable, study sheets were used for the development of figures that comprised a wide range of subjects, sometimes combined in various ways. However, Nagel asserted, “when the “drawing condition” begins to penetrate the realm of finished works, as it did in the cases of Leonardo and Giorgione, when paintings participate in the combinatorial processes native to drawing, making rhetorical use of drawing’s natural indeterminacy, then this model is radically shifted.” For example, Nagel argued that Giorgione’s painting Three Philosophers (fig. 85) demonstrated an early-sixteenth-century preference for paintings meant to call attention to the preliminary phase of creation, and “thus to encourage reflection on the conditions under which subject matter is produced.” According to Nagel, it is in the absence of any obvious subject that viewers are faced with an aporia, a blocking of the path to identification. When that path is blocked, he continued, viewers are prompted to reach for visual associations, thus

53 Ibid., 26.
54 Ibid., 27.
55 Ibid., 29. Giorgione, The Three Philosophers, 1508-9, oil on canvas, 123.8 x 144.5 cm., Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
56 Ibid., 36.
the process itself generates meaning. An aporia was thus not just created by the painting’s process of creation or appearance, but by the painting’s subject as well.

Nagel’s argument affirms the discussion about the subjects of the etched sketches, as outlined in the last chapter. The combination of dissimilar motifs in each sketch creates the “block” to secure identification that Nagel describes. Viewers are then encouraged to generate their own associations. The diverse finishes and the element of rotation also contribute to this “blocking” of identification, and further produce the sense of indeterminancy that characterizes the etched sketches.

Conclusion

The etched sketches, as indeterminate images, participate in this early-modern definition of aporia. As a group, they exhibit several of Nagel and Pericolo’s characteristics of aporetic art: they do not have a clear subject, and in fact, could have more than one subject; they include different iconographic systems; and they call into question their very facture by exhibiting a variety of finishes, some of which resemble works in another medium. These complications, or “blocks to identification,” have contributed to the historical lack of scholarly attention to them. Instead of relegating them to an undefined category of “studies,” however, I have proposed here that these prints are among Rembrandt’s most stimulating to study. They are purposeful printed puzzles, and if accepted as such, they force us to reorient our concept of Rembrandt as a printmaker. These etchings, through their disparate states of finish and necessary rotation, encourage the viewer to look closely, to physically handle them in order to see

57 Ibid., 36-37.
each of the images in their proper orientation. Viewers, initially drawn in by recognizable images and diverse finishes, remain involved because the rotation of the prints gives them access to “games” that were typically found only in drawings, and only in an artist’s studio or workshop. Through these etchings, Rembrandt becomes not only a provocative, but also a more playful printmaker.
CONCLUSION

Throughout this dissertation I have insisted on the need to be wary of an overly strict categorization of images that can limit our understanding of Rembrandt as a printmaker and an artist, and to shift focus instead to the instances in Rembrandt’s art, and in early modern art generally, where subjects are unclear and where function and technique take precedence over taxonomy. It is in these indeterminate images, specifically those that are repeated throughout an artist’s career, where sustained analysis can illuminate how these objects may have served certain artistic goals. A close study of the etched sketches provided a fluid, interpretive model for the examination of Rembrandt’s prints, which has the potential to open up new ways of seeing Rembrandt’s work as a printmaker.

In chapter one, several established modes of discussion of these prints, namely the categorization of the etched sketches and elements of their facture, were identified through the review of literature. In the second chapter, I argued against the categorization of the etched sketches as sheets of sketches, model sheets, or as preparatory for other works in Rembrandt’s oeuvre. I asserted that this classification of the etched sketches has been misleading, because such designations have implications for their presumed function and reception that I believe are incorrect. After examining the etched sketches within the context of the most well-known seventeenth-century model sheets, and comparing them to works securely identified as drawn sketches and preparatory works within Rembrandt’s oeuvre, I concluded that the etched sketches do not fit securely, or at least solely, into any of the categories outlined in chapter two.
In chapter three, I considered which of the etched sketches were meant for public consumption, which included all but the earliest two. I discussed the methods by which Rembrandt’s etchings were collected in the seventeenth century, and examined the formal qualities of the etched sketches that would have appealed to collectors, above all the diversity of finishes within one print. I concurred in this chapter with scholars such as Erik Hinterding, who have asserted that in several of his prints, Rembrandt “translated” the idea of a sketchy finish usually esteemed in drawings into print. Further, I argued that the etched sketches are perhaps the most convincing examples of Rembrandt’s objective in capturing the sketchiness valued by the market in a different medium, and that these varied finishes prompted active engagement from the viewer.

In chapter four, I maintained that the etched sketches should not be dismissed as “accidental” given their participation in a collection of subjects that Rembrandt revisited over and over again in his career. The subject matter of the etched sketches is significant, and would have been familiar to Rembrandt’s audiences and thus readily associated with his other works. Each of the subjects found in the etched sketches was examined, placing the representations of Saskia, tronies, beggars, and Rembrandt’s self-portraits at the center of a larger web of connective threads that link these subjects to the artist’s larger oeuvre and, when appropriate, to the visual conventions of seventeenth-century art and long-established traditions of northern art. This analysis emphasized the connotations of these subjects for seventeenth-century viewers. Rembrandt’s repeated return to these subjects throughout his career suggests his awareness that these were recognizable for his audiences, and that he used their interesting recombinations to again draw in the viewer.
In addition to being valued by Rembrandt connoisseurs for their variety of finishes in single images, and their disparate motifs on the same plate, the etched sketches were also appreciated for the element of rotation exhibited by four of them: *Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc.* (B. 363); *Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc.* (B. 369); *Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap* (B. 372); and *Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child* (B. 370). The rotation of the print necessary to view each of the elements in their proper orientation demands active engagement from the viewer. In chapter five, rather than see this rotation as merely exemplifying an efficient use of space, I suggested that the element of rotation provided a cue for how contemporary viewers could read these images by connecting them to a long tradition of visual diversions, such as grotesques and *capricci*, that prompt audience involvement, as the viewer tries to discern meaning from multiple possibilities. By interpreting the etched sketches as indeterminate images (as defined by Dario Gamboni) and then as aporetic (as explicated by Alexander Nagel and Lorenzo Pericolo), I demonstrated that these prints are to be understood as prompting curiosity from the contemporary audience.

The element of rotation caused a viewer to have to physically manipulate the sheet in order to view each subject in its proper orientation, an arguably tactile endeavor. Therefore, further research into how the etched sketches are related to contemporary theory about the sense of touch is warranted, and would broaden the contributions of this dissertation. From Aristotle forward, the sense of touch fell last in the hierarchy of
senses, following sight, hearing, smell and taste.\footnote{Recently, scholarship has flourished on the five senses specifically as related to early modern art. See Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture, ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), and Sense and the Senses in Early Modern Art and Cultural Practice, Visual Culture in Early Modernity, eds. Alice E. Sanger and Siv Tove Kulbrandstad Walker (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2012).} Senses were considered the keys to knowledge, yet were also not trustworthy because of their connection to the body (particularly the sense of touch). Several seventeenth-century artists depicted the five senses as a series of paintings, including Rembrandt, where the figures within the paintings act as moral deterrents for the viewer.\footnote{Noël Schiller, “‘To See Ourselves Greatly Misled’: The Laughing Deceptions of Jan Miense Molenaer’s Five Senses (1637),” About and Around Rembrandt: special issue of the Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies 28 (2007): 76-103.} The sense of touch, however, was simultaneously valued as a way to engage with a work of art. For example, as Geraldine A. Johnson has argued, small-scale sculptures produced for elite connoisseurs in early modern Italy were meant to be viewed intimately and turned in the hand, to be fully appreciated.\footnote{Geraldine A. Johnson, “In the Hand of the Beholder: Isabella d’Este and the Sensual Allure of Sculpture,” Sense and the Senses, 183.} In fact, in two etchings of the 1650s, Rembrandt illustrated this suggestion of the tactile nature of viewing.\footnote{Rembrandt, The goldsmith (the artist at work on a figure of mother and children), 1655, etching and drypoint, 7.7 x 5.5 cm., first state, The British Museum, London, 1843,0607.81 (B. 123) and Rembrandt, Portrait of Jan Lutma, goldsmith, 1656, etching, drypoint and burin, 19.7 x 15 cm., second state, The British Museum, London, F.6.47 (B. 276).} In The Goldsmith from 1655 (fig. 86), Rembrandt depicted the goldsmith as holding his small sculpture of a mother and child in a gentle way, while leaning his head toward the sculpture. In his portrait of Jan Lutma from the following year, Rembrandt etched the aging silversmith as holding a sample of his work in his head. (fig. 87) Although the etched sketches are only comprised of two
dimensions and not three, Johnson’s supposition that works of art for the early modern collector were only “very rarely seen by an immobile beholder standing in a fixed location” strengthens the notion that viewing the etched sketches was a tactile, sensory experience, and this path of inquiry deserves further study.\textsuperscript{5}

A second investigation to expand the impact of this dissertation would be to further examine prints by Rembrandt’s predecessors and contemporaries, in an effort to reinsert Rembrandt as an artist into an early-modern European context. For example, although the influence on Rembrandt by the works of Albrecht Dürer has been noted in this dissertation, a closer reading of one of Dürer’s earliest etchings would be helpful. In the Studies of Five Figures (or The Desperate Man) from around 1515, Dürer brought together five seemingly unrelated figures with a variety of finishes, perhaps providing a notable precedent for the etched sketches. In addition to the mutual influence exhibited between Rembrandt and Stefano Della Bella already mentioned in the dissertation, Italian artists Agostino, Annibale and Ludovico Carracci engraved and etched tiny sketches along the borders and backs of their larger plates and then printed them several times. Closer investigation into the Carracci’s method of self-fashioning about theory through practice, and how this relationship might have impacted Rembrandt’s approach to his own etching process could be especially gratifying. Seventeenth-century artists such as Claude Lorrain (1600-1682) and Jusepe di Ribera (1591-1652) also printed what have been called “study sheets.” Jonathan Brown has noted that Ribera approached his etchings “as a draftsman, not as a printmaker,” due to varying degrees of finish and

\textsuperscript{5} Johnson, “In the Hand of the Beholder,” 190.
diverse subject matter. Brown argued, too, that one of Ribera’s etchings served dual functions: the *Studies of Ears* from 1622 was to first demonstrate how to draw an ear from various points of view, and then secondarily to demonstrate Ribera’s etching technique. Examining the potential relationships between these early-modern prints that, although dramatically different in appearance, have all been categorized at one time as “study sheets” would be a worthwhile extension of this dissertation.

Thirdly, I would like to consider the reception of the etched sketches not by collectors, but by other artists. The etched sketches have been among Rembrandt’s most copied images, particularly by nineteenth- and twentieth-century artists. There are several anonymous copies of various states of the etched sketches, today held in the collections of major art museums throughout the world. I.J. de Claussin copied several of the etched sketches for his 1824 work, *Catalogue Raisonné de toutes les estampes qui forment l’oeuvre de Rembrandt*, and as did Léopold Flameng to illustrate Charles Blanc’s 1859 *L’oeuvre complet* de Rembrandt. Neither of these artists copied all of Rembrandt’s etchings for their publications, so it would be worthwhile to examine their decision to include the etched sketches. Later artists also emulated the etched sketches and further study of those patterns would deepen an understanding of the artistic significance of these prints. In the 1930s Picasso etched a *Study Sheet with three profiles of Marie-Thérèse* that has often been compared to the etched sketch *Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched* (B. 367). Again in 1967, Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) drew a series of images of

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8 October 31, 1933, etching and drypoint, 278 x 197 mm (Geiser/Baer 377/111)
musketeers’ heads, two of which emulated two of the etched sketches: *Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc.* (B. 363), and *Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child* (B. 370). One scholar even noted that the two musketeer drawings demonstrated that Picasso was attracted to Rembrandt’s “playfulness” with seventeenth-century conventions of portraiture, a theme emphasized throughout this dissertation. It is evident from Picasso’s etching and drawings the characteristics that drew him to Rembrandt’s work: he attempted to replicate Rembrandt’s hatched lines, tonal values, organization of motifs, and combination of disparate elements placed in various orientations across the sheets—all traits illustrated in the etched sketches.

A goal of this dissertation has been to illuminate unusual aspects of nine etchings by Rembrandt so that the understanding of him as an artist could take on more dimensions, namely that he could begin to be seen as an intellectually perceptive participant in contemporary visual games, and one that created indeterminancy in the etched sketches as a part of that sense of play. Most scholarly attention to humor in the seventeenth century has been devoted to bold painters such as Jan Steen, who are known for their depictions of obviously dissolute households. This dissertation has offered a quieter, smaller alternative to those louder depictions of comedy, and we end by picturing a collector calmly turning his etched sketch to enjoy the finishes, the subjects and the

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9 Please see *Head of a Musketeer and other studies*, June 5, 8, 1967, pen and wash, 605 x 495 mm (Zervos XXVII, 9), Paris, Galerie Louise Leiris; and *Sheet of Studies with three heads and two standing figures*, July 4, 1967, pen and wash, 370 x 525 mm (Zervos XXVII, 53), Madrid, La Colección de arte de Telefónica.

tactile sensation of rotation, trying to discern the meaning from this unusual print, all the while imagining that he is glimpsing Rembrandt at work.
APPENDIX A:

Formal descriptions of the etched sketches

The nine etched sketches will be described through a brief formal analysis of each print, beginning with the earliest from about 1630. The titles used for the etched sketches throughout the dissertation are those given by Karel G. Boon and Christopher White in their updated catalogue of Adam von Bartsch’s seminal work.\(^1\) Although these titles define the prints in ways that I do not fully accept, they remain the most accessible for the reader.

Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads, around 1630:

The earliest of the etched sketches (B. 366, 9.6 x 12.0 cm., fig. 2) is commonly called Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads. The sheet is comprised of six male figures, executed in various degrees of finish and in disparate and separate positions. The central figure is the most fully realized, shown from his hat to the top of his legs. He is depicted in profile, with his hands clasped in front of him, wearing loose, ragged clothing. A lightly-sketched, hissing cat peers around his back, leading the viewer’s eye to the man on the left, who is etched just to his shoulders. This figure is more finely etched than the central figure, and the tight cross-hatching of his cap and his coat give them a sense of

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\(^1\) The titles listed here are those found in Karel G. Boon and Christopher White’s edition of F. W. Hollstein’s catalogue raisonné, the most recently updated version of Adam von Bartsch’s eighteenth-century publication—still the most widely-used numbering system of Rembrandt’s etchings. These titles—or some variation of them—have been how the etched sketches have been named for the past 350 years. See Hollstein’s Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings, and woodcuts, ca. 1450-1700, compiled by Karel G. Boon and Christopher White, vol. XIX (Amsterdam: Van Gendt & Company, 1969).
texture lacking in the other figures. His face is also more finished than the others, and his
downcast, unfocused eyes connote a melancholic expression.

Just above this figure’s hat, the profile of a third man is lightly etched. As with
the sheet’s central image, he is oriented to the right. Bearded, and with a very lightly
outlined hat, this man’s facial expression—with his raised eyebrows and sneering
mouth—suggests a disgruntled attitude. Just to the right of this image is another, smaller
face, produced by a very few lines. Rembrandt attempted, unsuccessfully, to burnish it
off of the plate before printing—a fact that constitutes one of the most debated aspects of
this etching. On the right side of the etching, the person depicted at the top of the page
is also in profile facing right, and is etched similarly to the central man—that is, neither
as finished nor as lightly sketched as either of the two figures on the left. Hatched lines
indicate a shadow behind him, and his expression is devoid of emotion. The figure just
below him, however, reflects strong feelings through his gaping mouth and narrowed
eyes. This man’s face is thoroughly detailed, although his attire is more lightly drawn.

The plate was signed “RHL” in reverse at the center right.

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2 The timing of the burnishing of this face, and the appearance of a blot resembling what some scholars call
a “pistol” seen in between the two figures on the right, have helped to determine how scholars have defined
the states of this etching. Some believed the face was burnished before the printing of the etching, others
felt it was burnished later, following Adam von Bartsch’s description of an earlier state before the head was
burnished, although there is no such impression today. Arthur M. Hind, for example, in his 1912 catalogue
of Rembrandt’s etchings, wrote that the impression in Vienna must be earlier than those in Paris and
London because of this pistol-shaped mark (Arthur M. Hind, *Rembrandt, with a complete list of his
etchings* (London: W. Heinemann, 1912)). (George Biörklund agreed with Hind in 1955 in his
Rembrandt’s etchings, true and false: a summary catalogue in a distinctive chronological order and
completely illustrated (Stockholm: Esselte AB, 1955.)) Boon and White remained uncertain: They wrote
that “The impression in Vienna is usually described as a first state, but the pistol-shaped mark, which can
be seen in the London and Paris impressions, has been intentionally scraped away from the paper,”
implying that the London and Paris prints were earlier than the impression in Vienna. Boon and White,
Hollstein, 160.

3 Of the five heads, this face most closely resembles other etchings by Rembrandt in the 1630s, including
most famously his *Beggar on a Mound* etching of ca. 1630 (B. 174) or the *Self Portrait, Bare-headed and
Open-mouthed* (B. 13). This sheet can be placed within a larger group of etchings of beggars, tramps,
The unidentified men depicted in this etched sketch fall securely within the category of *tronies*, as do several of the figures in the etched sketches. The men in this etching obviously do not represent Rembrandt himself.

The plate for this etched sketch was subsequently cut into five separate parts, most likely during Rembrandt’s lifetime, resulting in five new etchings. (fig. 10/B. 143, fig. 11/B. 300, fig. 12/B. 303, fig. 13/B. 333 and fig. 14/B. 334) Each print was reworked individually, by an artist or artists other than Rembrandt. This sheet represents the rarest etched sketch, as there are only three known extant impressions of the etching as a whole. Although this etched sketch was most likely not intended for the market, the separate fragments occur in larger numbers of impressions, perhaps published by other artists.

*Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads*, around 1630:

The etched sketch typically called *Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads* (B. 374, 10.5 x 8.4 cm., fig. 3) displays three heads of men with the one on the lower left the most lightly etched, his face and hair composed of only a few hastily sketched lines. The figure on the right, whose shoulders and upper torso are delineated, is more finished in execution than the head on the left, but less so than the man in the upper left-hand corner.

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4 There are only three known impressions of this etching from the uncut plate: in the British Museum, London (which is most likely a late impression); the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; and the Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.

5 All of the early cataloguers discussed in chapter one, as well as current Rembrandt print scholars such as Erik Hinterding, believed that most of the reworking after the plate was cut up was done by artists other than Rembrandt.
This larger figure wears a cap, which covers his lightly delineated hair. The hair of the man in the upper left corner, by contrast, is carefully rendered, with texture indicated by the etched curls and wisps. He wears a full beard above the collar of his shirt. All three of the heads—specifically the noses and appearance of the downcast eyes—are sufficiently similar to one another that it is possible they represent the same man. The three heads are joined by intersecting lines (between the two heads on the left) and by hatched lines between the lower two heads.

This is the only state of this etching. This is one of the rarest of the etched sketches: Nowell-Usticke called it “unobtainable.”

Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc., around 1631:

If viewed from a certain direction, Rembrandt’s portrait lies in the upper right-hand corner of this sheet, known as Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc. (B. 363, 10.0 x 10.5 cm., fig. 1). His face is in shadow beneath a line that seems to have been the beginning of a cap or beret, which casts shadows over the right side of his head and eyes. Turning the print ninety

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6 However, most cataloguers discussed in chapter one—from Gersaint forward—were reluctant to assert with confidence that the three men were the same figure. They used words such as “attempts at the same person” (Daulby, 221; Bartsch, 301) or “appears to be the same model” (Charles Blanc, 171) in their catalogue entries.


8 There has been some scholarly disagreement about whether this line indicates that Rembrandt meant to etch a head covering: as early as Gersaint (and supported by several other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors, including Daulby, Bartsch, Blanc and Charles Henry Middleton-Wake), it was suggested that the etched lines here delineate a cap or beret, similar to that found in contemporary drawings and etchings by Rembrandt, such as the no longer accepted self-portrait drawing in the Louvre (Ben. 18A).
degrees, directly below the face of Rembrandt are an old beggar man and woman, facing away from each other; the woman is leaning on a cane while the man carries a staff. Near the heads of the beggar couple is a sketch of an old woman’s head oriented in the same direction, her face cast in deep shadow by what appears to be the hood of her cloak. Turning the plate another ninety degrees, directly next to the portrait of Rembrandt, there is a very tiny, very light sketch of the upper torso of a beggar man wearing a tall kolpak, or tall, Slavic hat.9 Completing the 360-degree rotation is the bust of an old man, with a cap that shadows his eyes. The five groups of figures do not overlap or interconnect on the plate.

The print exists in two states; the first has ink spotting along the top edge (fig. 15), which was burnished out for the second state. This print was categorized as rare by Nowell-Usticke, with perhaps between fifty and seventy-five prints still extant.10 Erik Hinterding asserted that it seems that the five identified editions of this etching were posthumously printed, and although he has dated at least one edition to 1641 through watermark research, he assumed that very few additional impressions were taken during Rembrandt’s lifetime. Regarding the definition of an edition of Rembrandt’s etchings, Hinterding has noted that it is not always possible to distinguish between posthumous and contemporary watermarks with absolute certainty, making it difficult to securely determine the size of his editions. Hinterding concluded that if several impressions of the

More recently, Ger Luijten claimed that Rembrandt usually began an etching with the headgear, and therefore would not have left a space for it. Rather, the space was left from a spot of varnish that covered the hair that had already been etched. (Rembrandt the Printmaker, 117).

9 De Winkel, Fashion and Fancy, 185.

10 Nowell-Usticke, Rembrandt’s Etchings: States and Values, unpaginated.
same print have the same watermark, as well as the appearance of offsets on the backs of many of Rembrandt’s etchings, usually of the same image as on the folio, these impressions were made from the same plate at a single time, connoting an edition.\textsuperscript{11}

\textit{Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others, 1636:}

The fourth etched sketch, \textit{Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others} (B. 365, 15.1 x 12.6 cm., fig. 4), is the earliest to depict Saskia, Rembrandt’s wife from 1634 until her death in 1642. The etching is comprised of six heads of various figures, mostly women, with the face of Saskia in the center. Hers is the most finished in technique and the only securely identifiable figure.\textsuperscript{12} Saskia looks out of the print to the right, shoulder-length curls of hair framing her face. Cross-hatching shadows her chin and the top of her dress, and fine lines delineate a veil hanging from the top of her head down her back. To the left of Saskia, a figure commonly called a “Turk” in three-quarter profile looks to the right, a headdress covering all but the deep-set eyes and bulbous nose. Rembrandt created age lines in this face, with a few scratches on the plate.\textsuperscript{13}


\textsuperscript{12} Hinterding wrote that five of the figures in this etching depict Saskia, from different angles with various headdresses. \textit{Rembrandt Etchings in the Frits Lugt Collection}, 606.

\textsuperscript{13} The gender of this figure has been debated in the Rembrandt literature. In the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, Gersaint (147), Daulby (216) and Bartsch (293), as well as Middleton-Wake (111-2), von Seidlitz (249) and others identified this figure as a “Turk” (presumably male). In the twentieth century, Münz (73) recognized this figure as an old woman with a turban. Most recently, Erik Hinterding (\textit{Rembrandt Etchings in the Frits Lugt Collection}, 606) has identified the figure (the only one he did not identify as Saskia in the etching) as an old woman, while Ger Luijten has written (\textit{Rembrandt the Printmaker}, 156), and Alison Kettering and Shelley Perlove have stated verbally during a discussion following my talk at the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference in October 2010, that the figure indeed appears to be male. Some cataloguers and scholars have avoided the issue entirely by identifying the print as \textit{Head of Saskia and Five Others}. I believe this figure to be a woman, reminiscent of Rembrandt’s
To the right of Saskia, a lightly etched figure of a woman looks off to the right. Her hair is also covered, and her left hand is placed against her mouth, in an anxious or pensive pose. The position of her hand causes a shadow to fall across the bottom of her profile. Below Saskia are three additional faces, which seem to flow together in a continuous line across the bottom of the page. The face on the far left is youthful and round, and she wears a stylish hat and stares directly out at the viewer. Tendrils of hair hang down on either side of her head, and her hat ties under her chin. There is no separation between her face and that of the woman in the bottom center, who is in profile with her eyes closed. This central figure is larger than those on either side—her face is the same height as their heads and shoulders together. Her hair is etched with a few lines, while her profile merges directly into the woman on the right, who is looking out to the right. She wears no headdress, although her hair is pulled back from her face. The right side of her face is shown in slight shadow, and the top of her garment is slightly etched.

There is only one state of this print. Although this etching falls into Nowell-Usticke’s “uncommon” category, there are between 125 and 225 extant impressions of this print. Hinterding noted that at least two editions of the etching were printed in the 1630s alone, with another printed around 1645, based on watermark research.\textsuperscript{14}

\textit{Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched, c. 1637:}

\textsuperscript{14} Hinterding, \textit{Rembrandt Etchings from the Frits Lugt Collection}, 607.
In *Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched* (B. 367, 12.7 x 10.3 cm., fig. 5), there are three women etched in various states of finish; the central figure looking directly out at the viewer is generally interpreted as representing Saskia. She sits at the apex of a triangular composition, with the other two female busts forming the base beneath her. She leans on her right hand, with her fingers bent and pressing against her forehead. The figure in the lower right stares down with lowered eyes, and her face is depicted almost completely in shadow. In the lower left, Rembrandt etched another woman, whose eyes are the only part of her face to be defined. She looks off to the left. The three figures are so close together as to be part of the same formation, yet their boundaries are distinct and they do not seem to share specific lines.

There are three known states of this print: the first with only the head of Saskia etched (fig. 16) and hatching lines that were most likely left from an earlier use of the plate, the second with the other two heads and a signature added (the signature is so lightly etched that it does not appear in reproductions), and the third with the previous scratches and signature burnished out. The first and second states are considered extremely rare (of the second state, only three impressions are known), but the third state is more common, with at least two editions known.

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15 The earliest cataloguers did not recognize this figure as Saskia. Beginning with Charles Blanc in the nineteenth century, most scholars identified her as Saskia, and in the twentieth century, several scholars (such as Christopher White) based this identification on the figure’s resemblance to the engagement drawing in silverpoint by Rembrandt of 1633, today in Berlin. (Ben. 427)

16 The signature was most likely polished off with the hatching lines as the plate was prepared for the printing of the third state, which was a larger edition.

17 Hinterding, *Rembrandt Etchings from the Frits Lugt Collection*, p. 608-9. Although he only noted editions from 1638 and 1652 to date, Hinterding wrote that it seemed “unlikely” that these were the only two editions of this etching. Hinterding did not explicate further, but it seemed his conclusion is based on the number of extant impressions.
Three Heads of Women: one asleep, 1637:

The sixth etched sketch (B. 368, 14.3 x 9.7 cm., fig. 6), from 1637, is similar in composition to Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched, but inverted—the apex of the triangle is the head at the bottom of the print. The print, sometimes called Three Heads of Women, One Asleep, is also similar to the previous etched sketch in that the heads display different levels of finish, although without as much variation as found in the previous etching. The woman in the upper left lends the etching its descriptive title: she places her head on her palm, eyes closed, as if sleeping. Extensive cross-hatching around her face demarcates her head covering, the shadow created by her nose, and the shadows that define the space between her and the figure next to her. The figure on the top right is staring out to the left, her hair falling down past her shoulders, beneath her hat. The woman at the bottom of the page also has lowered eyes, as if gazing down or close to sleep. Her face has been much more fully developed than her clothing, which is defined by just a few etched lines.

The print exists in only one state. Nowell-Usticke categorized this print as “fairly common.” Hinterding concurred, identifying at least four editions printed between 1637 and 1652, indicating that it was most likely prepared to sell on the market.

Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc., ca. 1639-42:

[18 Julia Williams, in the catalogue that accompanied the 2001 Rembrandt’s Women exhibition, stated that this figure at the bottom of the print was the mirror image of a figure found in both Studies of the Head of Saskia and Others and Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched. (Rembrandt’s Women, 145).

[19] Hinterding, Rembrandt Etchings from the Frits Lugt Collection, 609-610.
The seventh etched sketch, *Sheet of Studies, with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, etc.*, combines compositional elements as seen in the earlier etchings, such as beggars and images of Saskia (B. 369, 15.1 x 13.6 cm., fig. 7). Beggars surround two images of a woman in bed, and the placement of the figures is such that the plate must be rotated in order to view them all—a characteristic shared by the three etched sketches with Rembrandt’s self-portrait. The woman lies with her head on a pillow and her face turned toward the viewer, her arms on top of the bed cover pulled up to her chest.\(^{20}\) The fabric of the canopy frames the bed, above it and to the right, behind her head. She is lightly etched, with most attention given to the modeling of her forearm, resting on top of the blanket. Just below her elbow on this arm is a faintly etched, disembodied face that looks out from the print. These two images seem linked by an ambiguous area beneath the arm of the woman in bed that could act as either a continuation of the bedclothes, or as the back of the headdress of the lightly etched woman. To the left of the woman in bed is a beggar couple; above the head of the old woman in the pair is a second beggar couple, much smaller and also lightly etched. These two are shown nearly full length, each carrying a walking stick. Turning the plate ninety degrees counterclockwise, directly above the small beggar couple, there is another woman lying on a bed. (fig. 7a) Also very lightly etched, she looks not directly out at the viewer, but downward as if asleep with her arms resting on her torso. At the top left corner of the plate (when viewed in this

\(^{20}\) Catalogue authors and later scholars have debated over whether either woman in bed in this etching this represents Rembrandt’s wife Saskia. Gersaint (335), Biörklund (78) and von Seidlitz (250) securely identified both women as Saskia; Münz tentatively so (74), and several authors merely called them “two women.” Most twenty-first century scholars, such as Ger Luijten (*Rembrandt the Printmaker*, 181) and Julia Williams (*Rembrandt’s Women*, 174) identified the figures as Saskia and asserted that the etched sketch illustrates Rembrandt’s ability to draw from life.
orientation) is a single figure of an older beggar woman. She holds her cloak closed around her, and looks off to the right.  

There is one state of this print. As with *Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc*, Nowell-Usticke identified this etching as rare, with possibly between fifty and seventy-five extant impressions. Hinterding noted that although there is evidence it was printed at four different times, the plate was etched lightly, which did not allow for many impressions.

*Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap, ca. 1642-5:*

In the very small *Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap* (B. 372; 7.8 x 6.9 cm., fig. 8), Rembrandt etched a partial self portrait—only the upper right part of his face is etched, including one eye, the bridge of his nose, and a few wisps of hair—under a very heavily etched beret.  

Turning the plate ninety degrees, Rembrandt etched a small landscape, representing the first time he combined the elements of landscape and portraiture in a single print. (fig. 8a) 

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21 The date of this etching has been disputed in the Rembrandt literature. Several scholars, including von Seidlitz, Hind, Börklund, White, and Luijten, argued for a date of 1639, which corresponded to the same period as several Rembrandt drawings of women in bed, and would allow for an interpretation that this etching is preparatory for Rembrandt’s *Death of a Virgin* etching from ca. 1639 (B. 99). Münz, Williams and Hinterding asserted a date of 1641-42, because they argued the women in the etched sketch resemble Rembrandt’s etching of a *Sick Woman with Large White Headdress* (B. 359).


23 Several authors, although not nearly the majority, did not identify this figure as Rembrandt, including Daniel Daulby (220) and Charles Blanc (230). W. Martin, followed then by Arthur M. Hind (no. 155), asserted that the head of the artist may recall a head found in the background of Rembrandt’s painting *The Company of Frans Banning Cocq and Willem van Ruytenburgh (the Night Watch)* of 1642. (Br. 410)
A diminutive man stands below a tall tree, his head appearing to be bent back slightly to look up at the tree. A rocky hill is behind him, and grasses and plants are scattered on the hill and on the ground around the base of the tree. In between the tree and the top of Rembrandt’s beret is a disembodied eye, and some closely etched lines covered by the tree. To the right of the tree is another isolated, seemingly random group of lines.\textsuperscript{24}

There is only one state of this print. Along with Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads and Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads (the earliest two etched sketches), this etching is among the most rare of the group. Hinterding stated that it is “doubtful” this print ever went into production.\textsuperscript{25}

\textit{Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, a Beggar Man, Woman and Child, 1651:}

The final etched sketch (B. 370, 11.1 x 9.2 cm, fig. 9) is the third to include a self-portrait, and the fourth to necessitate the rotation of the plate to see the images in their correct orientation. In this sheet, usually named Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child, the central image of Rembrandt’s face is the largest study in the etching. His portrait is not as heavily etched as the earlier self-portrait etched sketches, and unlike the other etched sketches, the entire print maintains

\textsuperscript{24} The order with which these elements were etched onto the plate has been a repeated concern for cataloguers and scholars. Most recently, Peter Schatborn and Ernst van de Wetering (\textit{Corpus}, v. 4) wrote that print began as a self-portrait, perhaps on a larger plate, and the other elements followed. Middleton-Wake (131) and Arthur M. Hind (no. 155) thought the motifs may have been etched at entirely different times.

\textsuperscript{25} Hinterding, \textit{Rembrandt Etchings from the Frits Lugt Collection}, 616-617. In addition, the date of this etched sketch has been disputed. For most scholars, the assigned date seemed to correspond to the date of the works they believe to be related to this etched sketch. For example, Peter Schatborn associated the tree in this etching with those found in the \textit{Omval} and the \textit{Boat House} etchings, both from 1645. (B. 209 and B. 231) Hinterding agreed with Schatborn, although he also noted that no watermarks have been found in any impressions of this etching to date.
the same level of sketchy finish for each image. Rembrandt’s more aged visage reflects the twenty years that separated *Sheet of Studies: Head of the Artist, A Beggar Couple, Heads of an Old Man and Old Woman, etc.* (fig. 1) from this etching, suggested by the scant lines defining the thinning hair on his hatless head. Similar to the etched sketches illustrating Saskia, the lines between Rembrandt’s self-portrait and the beggars that tightly surround him overlap, as one image seems to flow into the next. To the left of his face is a beggar man in typical dress with outstretched hands holding a bowl, and below the self-portrait, turning the plate ninety degrees, are a beggar woman and child, whose length is approximately the width of Rembrandt’s portrait. Immediately beneath these figures is Rembrandt’s signature, “RL 1651.”

There is only one state of this print. This etched sketch is rarer than the etchings of women, but not as rare as *Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap* (fig. 8), with at least two editions occurring during Rembrandt’s lifetime.

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26 The dating of this print has proven problematic. Many scholars have noted that Rembrandt stopped using a monogram and only used his full name in signatures after the 1630s. Indeed, even the identification of the monogram itself has been disputed: Gersaint (1751) identified it as “Rt” in reverse, which was accepted until Carel Vosmaer’s *Rembrandt van Rijn: sa vie et ses oeuvres* (1868), after which cataloguers and scholars identified the signature as “RHL” and not “Rt.” Hinterding, among others, identified this monogram today as “RL.” Because of the monogram, at times, specifically in nineteenth-century catalogues, the date was read as “1631.” An earlier date led to some confusion about the identity of the portrait, which then could not be Rembrandt in the early 1630s. Some suggested that it was a portrait of Rembrandt’s father (August Sträter) or brother (Wilhelm von Bode). Most catalogue authors, however, have accepted the unusual use of the monogram and identified the portrait as Rembrandt himself.

APPENDIX B: IMAGES
Figure 1. Rembrandt, *Sheet of Studies with Head of Rembrandt and Beggar Couple*, c. 1631, etching, 10 x 10.5 cm., second state (B. 363) The British Museum, London, F.6.127
Figure 1 a, rotated ninety degrees to the left.
Figure 1 b, rotated 180 degrees.
Figure 1 c, rotated ninety degrees to the right.
Figure 2. Rembrandt, *Sheet of Studies of Men’s Heads*, c. 1630, etching, 9.6 x 12 cm., only state (B. 366)
The Albertina, Vienna
Figure 3. Rembrandt, *Three Studies of Old Men’s Heads*, c. 1630, etching, 10.5 x 8.4 cm., only state (B. 374) The British Museum, London, 1848, 0911.193
Figure 4. Rembrandt, *Studies of the Head of Saskia and Other Women*, 1636, etching, 15.1 x 12.6 cm., signed and dated *Rembrandt f 1636*, only state (B. 365) The British Museum, London, F.6.129.
Figure 5. Rembrandt, *Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched*, c. 1637, etching, 12.7 x 10.3 cm., signed in second state only Rembrandt, III/III (B. 367) The British Museum, London, F.6.130
Figure 6. Rembrandt, *Three Heads of Women, One Asleep*, 1637, etching, 14.3 x 9.7 cm., signed and dated Rembrandt f 1637, only state (B. 368) The British Museum, London, 1843.0607.228
Figure 7. Rembrandt, Sheet of Studies with a Woman Lying Ill in Bed, c. 1641-2, etching, 15.1 x 13.6 cm., only state (B. 369) The British Museum, London, F.6.132
Figure 7 a, rotated ninety degrees
Figure 8. Rembrandt, *Sheet with Two Studies: A Tree, and the Upper Part of a Head of the Artist Wearing a Velvet Cap*, c. 1645, etching, 7.8 x 6.9 cm., only state (B. 372) The British Museum, London, 1836,0412.2
Figure 8 a, rotated ninety degrees to the left.
Figure 8 b, rotated ninety degrees to the right.
Figure 9. Rembrandt, *Sheet of Studies with the Head of the Artist, A Beggar Man, Woman and Child*, c. 1651, etching, 11.1 x 9.2 cm., signed and dated *RL 1651*, only state (B. 370) The British Museum, London, F.6.133
Figure 9 a, rotated ninety degrees to the right.
Figure 10. Rembrandt, *Old man seen from behind, half-figure with clasped hands*, c. 1630–1, etching, 7.3 x 4.2 cm., third state (B. 143) The British Museum, London, 1829.0415.10
Figure 11. Rembrandt, *Man crying out, bust directed three-quarter to the left*, c. 1630-1, etching, 3.9 x 3.4 cm., third state (B. 300) The British Museum, London, 1829.0415.33
Figure 12. Rembrandt, Head of a man in a square cap, c. 1630-1, etching, 3.7 x 2.4 cm., second state (B. 303)
The British Museum, London, 1848,0911.159
Figure 13. Rembrandt, *Old Man in fur coat and high cap, three-quarter profile to right with downcast eyes*, c. 1630-1, etching, 3.6 x 2.9 cm., second state (B. 333) The British Museum, London, F.6.136
Figure 14. Rembrandt, *Old bearded man, nearly in profile to the right*, c. 1630-1, etching, 3.6 x 2.8 cm., third state (B. 334) The British Museum, London, 1843,0607.233
Figure 15. Rembrandt, *Sheet of Studies with Head of Rembrandt and Beggar Couple*, c. 1631, etching, 10 x 10.5 cm., first state (B. 363) The British Museum, London, 1848.0911.187
Figure 16. Rembrandt, *Three Heads of Women, One Lightly Etched*, c. 1637, etching, 12.7 x 10.3 cm., signed in second state only *Rembrandt*, first state (B. 367) The British Museum, London, 1848,0911.189
Figure 17. Rembrandt, *Samson Posing the Riddle at His Wedding*, 1638, oil on canvas, 126 x 175 cm., Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden
Figure 18. Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait with Saskia*, 1636, etching, 10.5 x 9.5 cm., signed and dated *Rembrandt f. 1636*, second state (B. 19) The British Museum, London, 1868,0822.655
Figure 19. Rembrandt, *The artist’s bride of three days*, 1633, silverpoint on prepared vellum, 18.5 x 10.7 cm., Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 427)
Figure 20. Rembrandt, *A Sheet of Four Studies of Women*, c. 1636; pen and brush and brown ink, with grey wash, touched with white, 20 x 15 cm., Boijmans van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam (Ben. 360)
Figure 21. Rembrandt, *Cornelis Claesz. Anslo*, 1641, etching and drypoint, 18.8 x 15.8 cm., second state (B. 271) The British Museum, London, F.6.25
Figure 22. Anthony van Dyck, *Self-portrait*, etching, 24.5 x 15.7 cm., first state The British Museum, London, R.1b.47
Figure 23. Jacques de Gheyn II, *Study of Hermit Crab and Witchcraft*, 1602-3, pen, ink, and watercolor, 18.5 x 24.5 cm., Städelsches Kunstinstitut Frankfurt
Figure 24. Rembrandt, *John the Baptist Preaching*, c. 1635, grisaille on canvas, 62 x 80 cm., Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Br. 555)
Figure 25. Rembrandt, *Head of Man in Fur Hat and Self Portrait*, c. 1636, pen and brown ink, The Morgan Library and Museum, New York
Figure 26. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait*, 1636-38, oil on panel, 63.2 x 50.2 cm., The Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, CA
Figure 27. Rembrandt, *Sheet of Studies with Five Heads*, silverpoint on prepared vellum, 13 x 8 cm., Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (Ben. 341)
Figure 28. Rembrandt, *Model Sheet with Male Heads and Sketches of Figures*, pen and brown ink, brown wash, red chalk, 22 x 23.3 cm., Birmingham, The Barber Institute of Fine Arts (Ben. 340)
Figure 29. Frederik Bloemaert after Abraham Bloemaert, *Studies of eyes, ears and faces in profile (L)* and *Studies of ears, and eye, and several faces* (R), Plates 2 and 3 in *Het Tekenboek*, engraving, each is 19 x 14.8 cm.
Figure 30. Rembrandt, *Man Drawing from a Cast*, c. 1641, etching, 9.4 x 6.4 cm., first state (B. 130) The British Museum, London, 1843,0607.86
Figure 31. Rembrandt, *Old Man with Long Beard and Flat Cap*, c. 1630, pen and brown ink with grey wash, 8.4 x 7.9 cm., Louvre Museum, Paris (Ben. 50)
Figure 32. Rembrandt, *Three Studies of the Bust of an Old Man*, c. 1638, pen and brown ink, 17.4 x 16 cm., Fondation Custodia, Frits Lugt Collection, Paris (Ben. 87).
Figure 33. Rembrandt, *Bald-headed man in profile to right, the artist’s father (?)*, 1630, etching, 11.8 x 9.7 cm., second state (B. 292) The British Museum, London, 1855.0414.272
Figure 34. Rembrandt, *Man wearing a close cap, bust (the artist’s father?),* 1630, etching, 7.7 x 5.9 cm., third state (B. 304) The British Museum, London, F.6.86
Figure 35. Heinrich Vogtherr, *Ein fremdes und wunderbares kunstbüchlein*, 1538, woodcut, 18.8 x 14.5 cm., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 19.62.2
Figure 36. Rembrandt, *The Artist Drawing from the Model*, c. 1639, pen and brown ink with brown wash and touched with white, on paper washed brown, 18.8 x 16.4 cm., The British Museum, London, Gg.2.248 (Ben. 423)
Figure 37. Rembrandt, *The Artist Drawing from the Model*, c. 1639, etching, drypoint and burin, 23.2 x 18.4 cm., second state (B. 192)
The British Museum, London, 1843.0607.121
Figure 38. Rembrandt, *The Death of the Virgin*, 1639, etching, 41 x 31.5 cm., second state (B. 99) The British Museum, London, 1855,0609,24
Figure 39. Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait in a Soft Hat and Embroidered Cloak*, 1631, etching and drypoint, 14.7 x 13 cm., tenth state (B. 7) The British Museum, London
F.4.9
Figure 40. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait drawing at a window*, 1648, etching, drypoint and burin, 16 x 13 cm., fifth state (B. 22) The British Museum, London, F.4.35
Figure 41. Ernst van de Wetering’s reconstruction of the relationship between B. 363 and B. 7 from the fourth volume of *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*. 
Figure 42. Ernst van de Wetering’s reconstruction of the relationship between B. 370 and B. 22 in the fourth volume of *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*.
Figure 43. Rembrandt, Christ presented to the people (Ecce Homo), 1655, etching and drypoint, 35.8 x 44.5 cm., fourth state (B. 76) The British Museum, London, 1868,0822.665
Figure 44. Rembrandt, *Christ Healing the Sick (The Hundred Guilder Print)*, c. 1648, etching, 28.1 x 38.8 cm., first state (B. 74) The British Museum, London, F.4.154
Figure 45. Rembrandt, *The Great Jewish Bride,* 1635, etching with drypoint and burin, 21.9 x 16.8 cm., first state (B. 340) The British Museum, London, 1969.0111.4
Figure 46. Rembrandt, *The Little Jewish Bride* (Saint Catherine), 1638, etching, 11 x 7 cm., only state (B. 342)
The British Museum, London, F.6.112
Figure 47. Rembrandt, *St. Jerome reading in an Italian landscape*, c. 1653, etching, burin and drypoint, 26 x 20.9 cm., second state (B. 104)
The British Museum, London, 1868.0822.669
Figure 48. Rembrandt, *Bust of a Young Woman Smiling (Saskia van Uylenburgh?)*, 1633, oil on panel, 52.5 x 44 cm., Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden
Figure 49. Rembrandt, *Saskia as Flora?*, 1635, oil on canvas, 123.5 x 97.5 cm., The National Gallery, London
Figure 50. Rembrandt, *Saskia van Uylenburgh*, c. 1633-42, oil on panel, 99.5 x 78.8 cm., Staailiche Kunstsammlungen, Schloss Wilhelmshohe, Kassel
Figure 51. Rembrandt, *Prodigal Son in the Tavern (Self-portrait with Saskia)*, c. 1635, oil on canvas, 161 x 131 cm., Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden
Figure 52. Rembrandt, *A Woman Seated in an Armchair with a Letter in her Left Hand*, c. 1633-35, black chalk with white heightening, 26.5 x 19 cm., Kupferstichkabinett, Hamburger Kunsthalle (Ben. 428)
Figure 53. Rembrandt, *Saskia Leaning out of a Window*, 1634–35, pen and brown ink with brown wash, 24 x 18 cm., Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (Ben. 250)
Figure 54. Rembrandt, *A Woman Sitting Up in Bed*, c. 1635, pen and brown ink, 14.8 x 19.1 cm., Groninger Museum, Groningen (Ben. 282)
Figure 55. Rembrandt, *An Interior with a Woman in Bed*, 1640-1, pen and brush and brown ink with grey wash, 14.1 x 17.6 cm., Collection Frits Lugt, Paris (Ben. 426)
Figure 56. Rembrandt, *Two Studies of Saskia Asleep*, c. 1635-7, pen and brown ink and brown wash, 13 x 17.1 cm., The Morgan Library and Museum, New York (Ben. 289)
Figure 57. Rembrandt, Saskia with pearls in her hair, 1634, etching, 8.7 x 6.8 cm., only state (B. 347) The British Museum, London, F.6.117
Figure 58. Rembrandt, *Sick woman with a large white headdress (Saskia?)*, c. 1641-2, etching, 6.1 x 5.1 cm., only state (B. 359) The British Museum, London, 1842,0806.152
Figure 59. Rembrandt, *Two Studies of a Woman*, c. 1635-40, red chalk, 15.5 x 13.7 cm., Courtauld Institute Gallery, London (Ben. 280c)
Figure 60. Albrecht Dürer, *Melencolia I*, 1514, engraving, 24.5 x 19.2 cm. The British Museum, London, 1910,0212.303
Figure 61. Rembrandt, *Beggar with a wooden leg*, c. 1630, etching, 11.5 x 6.7 cm., first state (B. 179) The British Museum, London, F.5.134
Figure 63. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait, open-mouthed*, 1630, etching, 8.3 x 7.2 cm., third state, (B. 13) The British Museum, London, 1845.0205.1
Figure 64. Rembrandt, *The rat-catcher*, 1632, etching, 14 x 12.6 cm., third state (B. 121) The British Museum, London, F.5.63
Figure 65. Rembrandt, *A man with hands behind his back*, 1631, etching, 6 x 5.1 cm., fourth state, (B. 135) The British Museum, London, 1843.0607.92
Figure 66. Jacques Callot, *Man in rags from Les Gueux*, c. 1622-3, etching, 13.7 x 8.4 cm., The British Museum, London, 1861,0713.931
Figure 67. Lucas van Leyden, *The Beggars*, c. 1508, engraving, 11 x 7.8 cm. The British Museum, London, 1849,1027.74
Figure 68. Lucas van Leyden, *Family of Beggars*, 1520, engraving and etching, 17.5 x 14 cm., The British Museum, London, 1849,1027.79
Figure 69. Hieronymus Bosch (?), *Studies of Beggars*, c. 1500, pen and brown ink, 28.5 x 20.8 cm., The Albertina, Vienna.
Figure 70. Rembrandt, *Beggars receiving alms at the door of a house*, 1648, etching, burin and drypoint, 16.5 x 12.8 cm., third state (B. 176)
The British Museum, London, F.5.131
Figure 71. Rembrandt, *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, c. 1626, etching, 21.2 x 16.3 cm., (B. 59) The British Museum, London, 1925.0615.24)
Figure 72. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait*, 1628-9, oil on panel, 22.6 x 18.7 cm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Figure 73. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait, bare-headed*, 1629, etching, 18.2 x 15.6 cm., only state, (B. 338) The British Museum, London, 1848.0911.19
Figure 74. Rembrandt, Self-Portrait, 1658, oil on canvas, 133.7 x 103.8 cm., The Frick Collection, New York.
Figure 75. Albrecht Dürer, *Self-Portrait*, 1493, pen and dark brown ink, 20.2 x 20.4 cm., Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen
Figure 76. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait with Gorget*, c. 1629, oil on panel, 37.9 x 28.9 cm., Mauritshuis, The Hague
Figure 77. Rembrandt, *Raising of the Cross*, c. 1632, oil on panel, 95.7 x 72.2 cm., Alte Pinakothek, Munich
Figure 78-9. Albrecht Dürer, Self-Portrait, Study of Hand, and a Pillow (recto); Six Studies of Pillows (verso), pen and brown ink, (27.8 x 20.2 cm), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Figure 80. Jacques de Gheyn II, *The Head of an Old Woman and Three Clumps of Soil*, pen and brown ink and watercolor, 19.6 x 17 cm., The Morgan Library and Museum, New York
Figure 81. Stefano Della Bella, *Study of Two Heads from Recueil de divers griffonements et preuves d’eau forte*, c. 1646, etching, 4 x 9.8 cm., The British Museum, London, 1871.0513.202
Figure 82. Stefano Della Bella, *Four Studies from Recueil de divers griffonements et preuves d’eau forte*, c. 1646, etching, 6.0 x 7.3 cm., The British Museum, London, 1871.0513.226
Figure 83. Stefano Della Bella, *Study of a Head and a Leg from Recueil de divers griffonements et preuves d’eau forte*, c. 1646, etching, 2.2 x 8.5 cm., The British Museum, London, 1871.0513.229
Figure 84. Pieter Bruegel the Elder (after), *The Festival of Fools*, 1570-85, engraving, 32.2 x 43 cm. The British Museum, London, 1870,0625,658
Figure 85. Giorgione, *The Three Philosophers*, 1508-9, oil on canvas, 123.8 x 144.5 cm., Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Figure 86. Rembrandt, *The goldsmith (the artist at work on a figure of mother and children)*, 1655, etching and drypoint, 7.7 x 5.5 cm., first state, (B. 123) The British Museum, London, 1843,0607,81
Figure 87. Rembrandt, *Portrait of Jan Lutma, goldsmith*, 1656, etching, drypoint and burin, 19.7 x 15 cm., second state, (B. 276)
The British Museum, London, F.6.47


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