

Rembrandt of atelier van Rembrandt

Oude man in een interieur met wenteltrap

niet gespecificeerd

2014-11

J.-M. Clarke 1990 / 1

Note: This is a translation of the article I published in the *Revue du Louvre et des Musées de France* in 1990 (3), pp. 190-200. Written at the request of the Chief Curator of Dutch and Flemish Painting at the Louvre, Jacques Foucart, it analyzes the opinion of the Rembrandt Research Project (1986), describes the painting's formal qualities and execution, and provides arguments in favor of the continued attribution to Rembrandt. The English translation, completed in 2014, presents only necessary corrections and editing for the sake of clarity. I have resisted the temptation to introduce changes reflecting more recent research and ideas. For additional information on this painting see my Wikipedia articles (in Eng. and Fr.) from 2010. Copyright for the English text © J.-M. Clarke Contact: artistorian@yahoo.com

The *Philosophe en méditation* in the Louvre:
a painting signed "RHL van Rijn" and dated "1632"

Jean-Marie Clarke

This painting (fig. 1) has been in the collection of the Louvre since the museum's foundation. It is known to have been in French collections since the mid-18th century,¹ already associated with a companion piece (fig. 2) that is no longer attributed to Rembrandt.² The traditional title, *Philosophe en méditation* ("Meditating Philosopher"), is not justified in strict iconographic terms, but has inspired a wealth of literature³ that draws on a "mythical" image of Rembrandt's subject-matter and artistic personality. As such, the Louvre's title and related interpretation have become cultural artifacts in their own right. Since iconographic indeterminacy is one of the features of this painting, and because this title is part of the painting's history, I have decided to use it throughout.

The shadow of a doubt

Before the publication in 1986 of the second volume of the *Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings* established by the Rembrandt Research Project (RRP)⁴, which categorically rejected the attribution to Rembrandt, the authorship of this painting had been questioned only by John C. Van Dyke.⁵ This American art historian was iconoclastic enough to reduce the master's work to fifty paintings, mostly portraits, only two of which were self-portraits. Considering the fact that Hofstede de Groot's catalogue (1915) tallied no less than 988 paintings and Bredius still counted 613 works in 1935, Van Dyke appears to have been a pioneer in the deflationary trend that prevails today in the effort to establish a reasonable catalogue of Rembrandt's paintings.

Van Dyke's work may be said to have anticipated that of the RRP in several respects. He is the first to have seriously dealt with the problem of Rembrandt's students and followers, as the title of his 1923 catalogue indicates: *Rembrandt and His School*.

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Kunstwerk

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Rembrandt of atelier van Rembrandt , Oude man in een interieur met wenteltrap, 1632 gedateerd Parijs Musée du Louvre inv./cat. nr. 1740

Kunstenaar

Rembrandt of atelier van Rembrandt

Titel

Oude man in een interieur met wenteltrap

Datering

1632 gedateerd

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Musée du Louvre

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RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis

Prins Willem-Alexanderhof 5

(KB-complex)

2595 BE Den Haag

Nederland

Openingstijden

Maandag t/m vrijdag van 10.00 tot 17.00 uur

Contact

T: 070 3339777

E: info@rkd.nl

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