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CONTENTS AND ABSTRACTS:

An Exceptional Commission: Conservation History, Treatment and Painting Technique of Rembrandt's Marten and Oopjen, 1634
PETRIA NOBLE, ESTHER VAN DUIJN, ERMA HERMENS, KATRIEN KEUNE, ANNELIES VAN LOON, SUSAN SMELT, GWEN TAUBER AND ROBERT ERDMANN

This article focuses on the conservation history and recent treatment (2016-2018) of the newly acquired pendant portraits of Marten Soolmans and Oopjen Coppit painted by Rembrandt in 1634. Much new information is brought to light about the nineteen-fifties treatments by William Suhr in New York and Henricus Hubertus Mertens in Amsterdam, particularly their varnishing methods. An impressive array of scientific analyses gave insight into the nature of the old varnish layers that were found on top of Rembrandt's paint layers. The recent treatment, carried out in the paintings conservation studio of the Rijksmuseum, restored much of the stunning detail and original colour contrasts in the two portraits. This consisted of removal of the 1950s varnish layers, along with (partial) reduction of a degraded and discoloured egg-white varnish. Scientific and computational analyses carried out as part of the conservation process also led to important new insights regarding the genesis of the portraits and Rembrandt's early painting technique. Macro-x-ray fluorescence (xrf) imaging showed significant changes in the composition of the backgrounds that Rembrandt later painted over with a curtain. Novel data gained from forensic imaging analysis of the canvas supports indicate that Marten and Oopjen are painted on two lengths of canvas that were cut from the same roll; however, more research is needed to conclude whether the portraits were initially intended as one composition. High resolution imaging and scientific analyses also reveal Rembrandt's extraordinary skill and inventiveness, for instance in painting bobbin lace using black on top of white, and his mastery in creating subtle modulations of light and tone through unusual additions of pigments.

The Restoration of Rembrandt's Syndics: A Nineteen-Thirties Cleaning Controversy
ESTHER VAN DUIJN

This article focuses on the reason why a cleaning controversy about the restoration of Rembrandt's Syndics broke out nearly two and a half years after the work was completed in 1929 and how Rijksmuseum director Frederik Schmidt-Degener dealt with the challenges. Initiated by local artists from the Amsterdam artist society Arti et Amicitiae, the controversy was fuelled by provocative questionnaires circulated among artists and restorers by the daily De Telegraaf. A vindictive letter by Rijksmuseum restorer Pieter Bakker, who restored The Syndics in 1929, but left

the museum on mental health grounds in 1930, fanned the flames still further, even though it was not published in the end. This cleaning controversy was not unique; arguments about the supposed dangers of cleaning paintings were fought out in public in European countries throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After a cleaning controversy about Frans Hals paintings in Haarlem – which dragged on between 1909 and 1927 – The Syndics cleaning controversy was the second in the Netherlands. It was also the last. This previously unexplored episode in the Rijksmuseum's conservation history carries a lesson in open communication regarding the restoration of cultural heritage. A lesson that is still valid today.

The Self-Promotion of a Libertine Bad Boy: Hadriaan Beverland's Portrait with a Prostitute in the Rijksmuseum
JOYCE ZELEN

The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam owns one of the most curious portraits ever made in the seventeenth century – the likeness of the Dutch classical scholar and notorious erotomaniac Hadriaan Beverland (1650-1716), who was banished from the Dutch Republic in 1679 because of his scandalous publications. In the portrait – a brunaille – the libertine rake sits at a table with a prostitute; a provocative scene. Why did this young humanist promote such a confrontational image of himself? In this article the author analyses the portrait and explores Beverland's motives for his remarkable manner of self-promotion, going on to argue that it was the starting point for a calculated campaign of portraits. Over the years Beverland commissioned at least four more portraits of himself, including one in which he is shown drawing the naked back of a statue of Venus. Each of his portraits was conceived with a view to giving his changeable reputation a push in the right direction. They attest to a remarkable and extraordinarily self-assured expression of identity seldom encountered in seventeenth-century portraiture.

Acquisitions: Old Master Drawings
ROBERT-JAN TE RIJDT, ALICE ANNE TOD AND JANE SHOAF TURNER

Reference:
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