



REMBRANDT

The Master

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Publications and Promotions

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, a name that evokes images of 17th century figures in minute detail portrayed dramatically in a play of light and shadow. This year sees the 400th anniversary of Van Rijn's birth on 15 July 1606 and as the magnificent artwork of this Dutch Master has made an indelible impact on artists and lovers of art over centuries, this article affords an opportunity to reflect upon his life and art.

Although Rembrandt was enrolled at Leiden University at the age of fourteen, he managed to convince his father, a miller belonging to the middle class, that he wanted to train as a painter, a history painter - the highest possible position that could be achieved in painting at the time. After a three-year apprenticeship at Leiden master painter Jacob van Swanenburgh's studio, Rembrandt continued his training in Amsterdam. Van Rijn returned to Leiden in 1625 and created his first history paintings in a studio he shared with his good friend and painter Jan Lievens. His fame as painter grew and in 1631 he left Leiden to settle in Amsterdam permanently.

There he married Saskia Uylenburgh, the cousin of the Amsterdam art dealer Hendrick Uylenburgh in 1634. Rembrandt was well off financially and in 1639 bought a

prominent house in Sint-Anthonisbreestraat, now The Rembrandt House Museum. Saskia died in 1642, when Titus, the youngest of their four children and the only one to live past childhood, was only nine months old. Subsequently Rembrandt engaged in an extra-marital affair with Geertje Dircx, the nanny of Titus. When their affair ended, Van Rijn fell in love with his 22-year-younger housekeeper Hendrickje Stoffels with whom he had a daughter Cornelia in 1654.

Rembrandt's lifestyle lost him favour with the middle classes and he had financial difficulties, in spite of many commissions, a steady income from his etchings and the fees his apprentices paid. He was declared bankrupt in 1656 and his house was put on auction, the proceeds of which did not cover his debts.

In 1660 Rembrandt and Hendrickje, Titus and Cornelia moved to a smaller house. Hendrickje and Titus set up an art store and employed Rembrandt in an effort to ensure that Rembrandt stayed out of the hands of his creditors. In 1663 Hendrickje died of the plague and was followed by Titus five years later. Rembrandt van Rijn died on 4 October 1669 and was buried in an obscure rented grave of the Westerkerk Church.

Fortunately the brilliant work of Rembrandt van Rijn has survived and the Central Film and Video Collection of the Library Service has several productions available highlighting his life and work.

Civilisation: a personal view by Kenneth Clark. Part 8, The light of experience / producers, Michael Gill and Peter Montagnon; director, Michael Gill.

The stunning canvasses of the 17th century Dutch painters dominate this film. The Dutch were the first to grasp the revolutionary change in thought that replaced divine authority with experience, experiment and observation. Parallel with this fascination with light and the careful observation of human nature - what Descartes calls the natural light of the mind - this period was also the great age of scientific instruments. Kenneth Clark travels from the Holland of Frans Hals, Rembrandt, Vermeer and Saenredam to the London of Isaac Newton and Christopher Wren, mathematician turned architect. The spirit of free enterprise - modern capitalism - begins to make itself felt through these thoroughly modern men.

Honderd meesterwerke. Selfportrette.

'n Program in 'n reeks van twintig, waarin verskillende kunskeners 'n honderd bekende skilderwerke bespreek. Elke

400

program bestaan uit vyf dele met 'n gemeenskaplike tema en elke deel handel oor een spesifieke kunswerk wat deur die betrokke kritikus ontleed en in konteks geplaas word. Die skilderye wat hier onder die soeklig kom is *Selfportret* deur Albrecht Dürer (Alistair Smith), *Selfportret* deur Rembrandt (David Piper), *Selfportret met haar dogter* deur Madame Vigée-Lebrun (Anita Brookner), *Selfportret* deur Vincent van Gogh (David Piper) en *Selfportret met maskers* deur James Ensor (Edwin Mullins).

Honderd meesterwerke. Aanraking.

Nog 'n program in die *Honderd meesterwerke*-reeks van twintig, waarin verskillende kunstenaars 'n honderd bekende skilderye bespreek. Die skilderye wat hier onder die soeklig kom is *Die blinde man* deur Duccio (Alistair Smith), *Ariadne, Bacchus en Venus* deur Tintoretto (Alistair Smith), *Josef se droom* deur Georges de La Tour (Edwin Mullins), *Die Joodse bruid* deur Rembrandt (Edwin Mullins) en *La vie* deur Pablo Picasso (Milton Brown).

Le Christ de Rembrandt / producer and director; Anthony M Roland.

Though to the general public they are less well known than his paintings, Rembrandt's drawings are amongst his most remarkable accomplishments. For this film the director has selected 160 out of some 1 400 drawings scattered around the world, concentrating on those depicting the life of Christ.

Through them, he covers the story from the Annunciation to the Crucifixion, alternating close-ups of details with overall views. Other drawings depicting the towns and landscapes of 17th century Holland are intercut to illustrate how Rembrandt's interpretation of the Bible was based on his background in his own culture. There is no narration.

The National Gallery: a private view / producer; Robert Angell; director; Henry Lewes.

The National Gallery in London was founded in 1824 and relocated to its present site on Trafalgar Square in 1838. It houses Britain's national collection of European

paintings and spans a period of almost seven hundred years, from the solemn religious works of the Middle Ages, to the 19th century experiments that were to lead to the development of modern art. The first programme in this 12-part series provides an introduction to the National Gallery and its holdings, relating how its collection of over 2000 works of art was built up over the years and discussing the acquisition of a number of individual paintings. Thereafter each programme focuses on a specific period, highlighting key works and explaining their significance. Programme 8 is entitled *The age of Rembrandt*. The commentary was written and is narrated by art critic/historian Edward Mullins.

Past and present preserved. The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam / producer and director; Willy Lindwer.

A programme in a thirteen-part series that provides an introduction to a variety of Dutch museums. Holland's national museum, the Rijksmuseum, is a monumental building that opened its doors to the public in 1885. It houses some of the country's most celebrated paintings, as well as a large selection of sculptures, graphic art, porcelain, pottery, et cetera.

The film offers a brief introduction to the building and some of its exhibits, including its collection of 17th century Dutch paintings, amongst them works by Rembrandt and Vermeer.

The real Rembrandt: the search for genius / producer; Jet Willers; director; Kees van Langeraad.

'Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn (1606-69) was one of the greatest painters of all time. However, considerable controversy has grown up around the body of work that can unequivocally be attributed to him. When Cornelis Hofstede de Groot published his pioneering catalogue of 1913, he numbered Rembrandt's oeuvre at 988, but the Rembrandt Research Project, founded in 1968, has now whittled the tally down to less than 150. In this programme the latest techniques of authentication are applied to works said to be by the master. His painting

and etching techniques are appraised and analysed, using on-screen diagrammes and comparisons with the works of other artists in order to highlight Rembrandt's own methods and determine the work of apprentices or copyists. The skills of graphologists are also employed to identify the supposed hallmark of authenticity, the signature, sometimes with unexpected results. Perceptions of Rembrandt have changed over the centuries, and alongside the more technical examination of his work, the various views of the artist himself throughout the years are also appraised. As well as being a fascinating study of modern scientific techniques, the film presents a comprehensive art-historical view of Rembrandt's work and a reaffirmation of his genius.'

Librarians can join the world-wide quartercentennial celebrations of the birth of this Dutch painter by displaying books and videos featuring his paintings and life. Budding artists and art lovers in your community will appreciate your efforts to enrich their lives by exposure to this kind of information. There might even be a member of the community who will be inspired to become a modern-day Rembrandt!

Reference

www.holland.com/rembrandt400/consumer/gb/rembrandt/lifeof/remleiden.html

Note: Reviews by Freddy Ogterop, Film/Video/DVD Selector of the Western Cape Provincial Library Service.



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