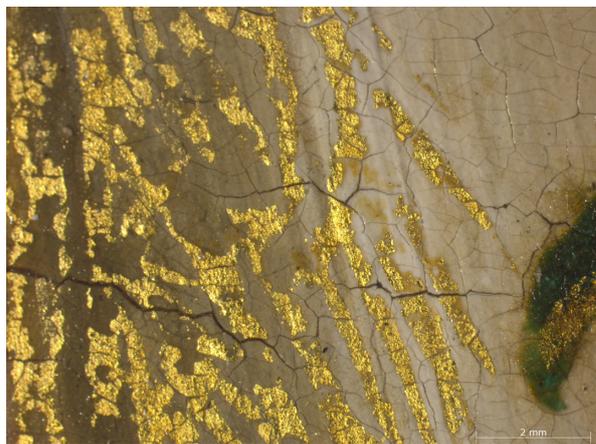
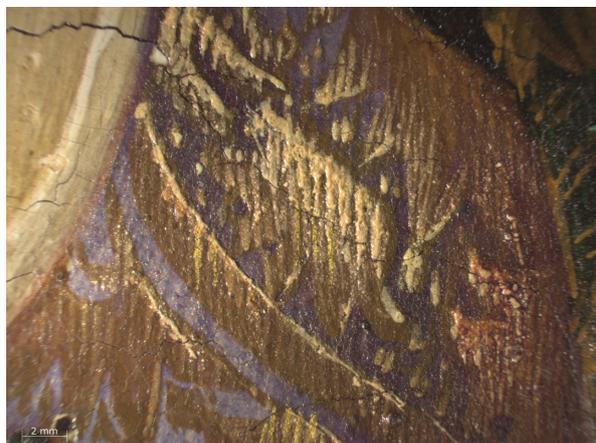


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Editor Rebecca McKie
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Picture research Karolina Majewska and Suzanne Bosman
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FRONT COVER

Andrea del Verrocchio, *The Virgin and Child with Two Angels*,
NG 296, detail of fig. 18, page 16

TITLE PAGE

Andrea del Verrocchio, *The Virgin and Child with Two Angels*,
NG 296, photomicrographs (see page 17 for details)

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Rembrandt's Portrait(s?) of Frederik Rihel

MARJORIE E. WIESEMAN

In 2008, a full X-radiograph was recorded of Rembrandt's *Portrait of Frederik Rihel on Horseback* (NG 6300) for the first time (FIGS 1 and 2). The X-radiograph assembly revealed another, apparently unrelated composition beneath the grand equestrian portrait now visible: a full-length figure of a man, orientated with the canvas turned 90 degrees anticlockwise. He holds a staff (?) in his right hand, and appears to be standing in a landscape with some trees to the left. The discovery was quite unexpected, as the visible image gave no evidence of masking an earlier design, and the painting has been well studied since its acquisition by the National Gallery in 1960.¹ The radical difference between the two compositions suggested the pragmatic reuse of the large canvas support. This practice was not uncommon in the Rembrandt studio: several of his works are known to have been painted on canvases or panels that had been used previously, including roughly a quarter of his self portraits.² However, the National Gallery's painting is by far the largest example discovered to date, and appears to be the only instance in which Rembrandt (or any member of his studio) adopted this practice for a commissioned portrait.

The subject of the picture, Rembrandt's only equestrian portrait, was first identified as the Amsterdam merchant Frederik Rihel by the noted Rembrandt expert and collector Abraham Bredius (1855–1946), based on an item in the inventory of Rihel's property drawn up after his death in 1681: 'Het conterfijtsel van de overledene te paert door Rembrandt' ('The portrait of the deceased on horseback by Rembrandt').³ Rihel was born in Strasbourg in 1621. His father, a paper manufacturer, sent him to Amsterdam in 1642 for a five-year term of employment with Guillelmo Bartolotti, one of the most powerful merchants in Amsterdam. Rihel retained close business and personal ties with the Bartolotti family long after his apprenticeship was

concluded. He became director of the family firm after Guillelmo's death in 1658, and was appointed guardian of the young Bartolotti children after the death of Guillelmo's widow, Jacoba, in 1664.⁴ Rihel also managed two profitable businesses of his own, one in partnership with Guillelmo's son. Documentary evidence suggests that he was an ardent horseman.⁵ He never married, and apparently never owned a house in Amsterdam. He did, however, become a citizen of the city on 5 April 1662, very likely in order to fulfil the prerequisite to becoming a member of the city's civic guard. In 1677, aged about 56, Rihel was appointed to the prestigious post of ensign, or standard bearer (*vaandrig*), in the militia for a period of one year. He died in Amsterdam on 6 January 1681.

The commission to portray Rihel might have come about through Rembrandt's long-standing association with the Trips, another of the leading merchant-industrialist families in the Netherlands. Rembrandt had painted two members of the Trip family in 1639 (Aletta Adriaensdr. and Maria Trip, widow and daughter respectively of Elias Trip),⁶ and in 1661 he painted the stately portraits of the aged Jacob Trip (Elias's brother) and his wife Margaretha de Geer which are now also in the National Gallery (NG 1674 and NG 1675). The portraits of Trip and de Geer were probably ordered by their son Hendrick Trip to adorn his magnificent new house on the Kloveniersburgwal in Amsterdam, completed in 1662. Trip's close neighbours on the Kloveniersburgwal were Rihel's patrons and business associates the Bartolottis, who also had extensive business ties with the Trips. Although no specific and direct links between Rihel and the Trips have been established, he must certainly have known them. In this context, it is worth noting that seven years after the forced dissolution of the Trip-de Geer monopoly on the import of arms from Sweden in 1662, this



FIG. 1 Rembrandt, *Portrait of Frederick Rihel on Horseback* (NG 6300), probably 1663. Oil on canvas, 294.5 × 241 cm.



FIG. 2 NG 6300, X-radiograph mosaic. The composite image has been digitally processed to reduce the effects of the stretcher bars.

lucrative trade was quietly taken over by the Rihel-Bartolotti firm.⁷

It is plausibly assumed that Rembrandt's portrait, dated 1663, was made to commemorate Rihel's participation in the honour guard that provided a ceremonial escort for Mary Stuart and the young Prince William III of Orange on their entry into Amsterdam on 15 June 1660. The architecture dimly visible on the left has been identified as the Heiligewegspoort (since destroyed); the riders in the coach at left the prestigious visitors.⁸ It is a highly unusual portrait for Rembrandt to have painted: not only is it one of the very few of his paintings which make reference to a contemporary event, but it is also his only equestrian portrait – indeed one of just two life-sized, or near life-sized, equestrian portraits of ordinary citizens (that is, not stadholders or members of the nobility) known to have been painted in the

Netherlands in the seventeenth century.

The *Portrait of Frederik Rihel on Horseback* is painted on three pieces of canvas sewn together, each with apparently the same or similar weave characteristics.⁹ The upper seam runs horizontally through the horse's bit and the pommel of the sword just below Rihel's elbow; the lower seam runs horizontally from between the bottom of the horse's right front hoof and the top of its left front hoof. The canvas is prepared with a dark brown 'quartz'-type ground composed of silica with a little brown ochre, similar to that used in Rembrandt's *Portrait of Hendrickje Stoffels* of about 1654–6 (NG 6432) and *Self Portrait at the Age of 63* of 1669 (NG 221). Rembrandt began using coarsely textured 'quartz' grounds after about 1640, and this method of preparation seems to have been unique to him and the artists in his immediate circle.¹⁰ It is not clear whether



FIG. 3 NG 6300, infrared photograph.

the choice was made for economic reasons (the 'quartz' grounds used cheaper materials than the more common double grounds) or aesthetic ones (the rougher surface of the 'quartz' grounds may have provided better tooth for building up thick layers of impasto).

Infrared photographs taken during cleaning and restoration of the painting in 1960 show that the figure and horse, as well as details in the foreground and background of the composition, were boldly under-drawn with broad strokes of blackish paint applied with a brush (FIG. 3). Similar preliminary sketches in

dark paint can be seen, for example, in the torso of Rembrandt's unfinished *Portrait of a Boy* of about 1655–60 in the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena (FIG. 4), or the right arm of the *Man with a Magnifying Glass* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a work of the early 1660s.¹¹ The infrared photograph shows several changes made as the equestrian portrait evolved: most notably, Rihel's hat was originally taller in the crown and wider at the brim; this alteration is faintly visible on the surface of the painting in available light. The infrared image also discloses changes to the

outline of the horse's head and the position of its legs, and reveals features in the background of the painting – such as the carriage with figures to the left of the mounted figure, the architecture beyond, and the additional rider(s) to the right – with greater clarity than is now possible in available light, because the paint layers have become more transparent over time and the dark brown ground more prominent.

Before 2008, X-radiographs had only been made of a few discrete areas of the painting, such as the head of the rider and areas around the horse's forelegs and the rider's stirrup. The selection of these areas for imaging was probably intended to clarify or amplify the changes evident in the infrared photograph. Yet some odd features, clearly visible in these X-ray images, seem to have gone unremarked. In the detail X-radiograph of the stirrup taken in 1960 (FIG. 5), light horizontal streaks with a knobbed terminus, unrelated to the visible image, extend from the right edge of the image. In the context of the full X-ray image, we now understand these marks as corresponding to the tasselled ties of the underlying figure's collar, rendered with swift strokes of X-ray-absorbent paint. Yet there is no evidence that these curiously well-defined marks were investigated further in 1960 or subsequently, perhaps because the stretcher



FIG. 4 Rembrandt, *Portrait of a Boy*, 1655–60. Oil on canvas, 64.8 × 55.9 cm. Pasadena, California, The Norton Simon Foundation, inv. F.1965.2.P.

bar (showing light in the earlier X-ray image) largely obscured the points of the collar that might have provided an suggestive identifying 'context' for the marks.

Several paint samples were taken from the painting in 1975 and 1988. Rembrandt used a rather more varied palette than was customary, undoubtedly because the scale and subject matter of a grand equestrian portrait required a greater range of colours than his usual compositions with an indoor setting. One of the more unusual pigments identified is brazilwood lake, found in the underlayers below the rider's coat (see FIG. 7). Smalt is used extensively throughout the painting, for both colouristic and textural effect. The grey-blue of the sky, for example, is constructed of two underlayers of smalt mixed with lead white (the lower incorporating a little red lake), glazed with smalt; for the dull green foliage, smalt is mixed with yellow pigments. More coarsely ground particles of smalt are used to 'bulk up' the paint and build texture in areas of heavy impasto. It is also likely that Rembrandt incorporated smalt into paint mixtures and glazes for its siccative properties.

When viewed in cross-section, some of the samples appeared particularly complex. In a sample taken from the lower right corner of the yellow skirt of the rider's coat, a translucent blue-grey layer containing a high degree of smalt was observed beneath the layer of opaque yellow paint (FIG. 6); it was conjectured that the projecting edge of the skirt had been painted over the blue-grey of the background sky.¹² Another sample, taken from the fold in the skirt just below the rider's left wrist, was found to have dark underlayers containing smalt and red lake (FIG. 7), whilst beneath the light grey of the horse's chest is a thick layer of faintly greenish dark-brown paint with a second dull brown-green layer below (FIG. 8). The complex layer structure of these and other samples taken from the central portion of the canvas, with lower layers quite different from the layers directly related to the visible design, would seem to suggest a superimposition of forms deriving from compositional changes or other modifications made by the artist. Without a sense of an overall design, however, there was no way to connect these isolated pieces of information.

More definitive evidence of a modification to the design was discovered in the area of the sky at upper right. A sample taken from near the right edge of the canvas at the level of the brim of the rider's hat consisted of a thick layer of paint containing smalt and lead



FIG. 5 NG 6300, detail X-radiograph taken in 1960, showing Rihel's stirrup and traces of an underlying image at right.

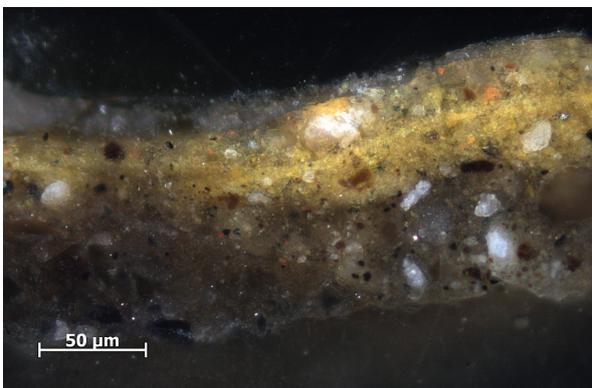


FIG. 6 NG 6300, paint cross-section from the lower right corner of the yellow skirt of the rider's coat. A translucent blue-grey layer containing a high degree of smalt can be seen below a layer of opaque yellow paint consisting mainly of yellow ochre and lead white.

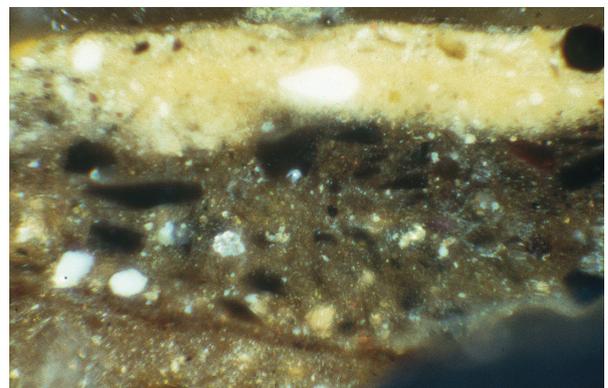


FIG. 7 NG 6300, paint cross-section from the fold in the skirt just below the rider's left wrist. The dark underlayers contain smalt and red lake (incorporating cochineal and brazilwood dyestuffs) with other pigments. The brown 'quartz' ground is visible at the base of the sample.

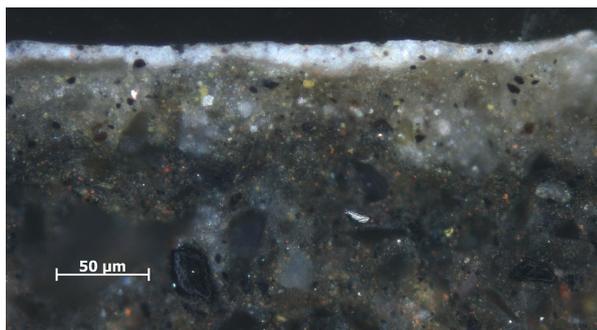


FIG. 8 NG 6300, paint cross-section from the horse's chest. Beneath the light grey layer is a thick layer of dark greenish-brown paint containing primarily smalt, earth pigments and black, with a second dull brown-green layer below.

white, glazed over with smalt, which concealed two earlier layers of green and yellow-green paint (FIG. 9). This suggested that Rembrandt had first laid in thickly painted foliage in this area, then obliterated it with a layer of sky, also thickly painted. In the context of the visible design, the green underlayers were accounted for by supposing a more densely foliated background to the equestrian portrait, which Rembrandt subsequently 'lightened' with the introduction of a patch of smoky grey-blue sky.

The discovery via full X-radiograph assembly of an earlier composition beneath the *Portrait of Frederik Rihel on Horseback* allows some of the puzzling details encountered in isolated X-radiographs and paint cross-sections to become part of a more coherent picture. Yet many questions remain, particularly as regards Rembrandt's apparently anomalous use of a previously used support

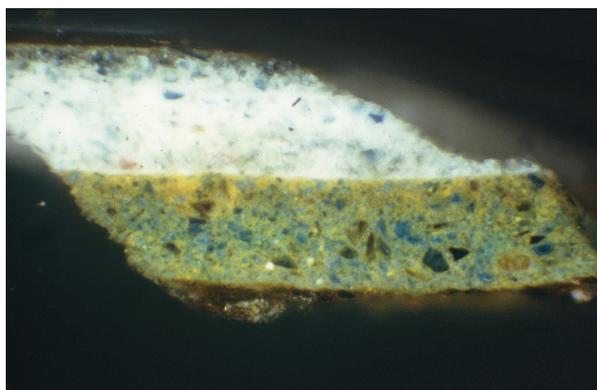


FIG. 9 NG 6300, paint cross-section from greyish-blue sky at upper right, taken from near the right edge of the canvas at the level of the rider's hat-brim. Several layers of smalt and lead white, with a final glaze of smalt, conceal two earlier layers of yellow-green foliage paint containing yellow ochre, smalt and azurite. The lowermost layer of the sky incorporates a little red lake pigment.



FIG. 10 NG 6300, X-radiograph detail showing the whole figure.

for what was surely an important portrait commission.

The X-radiograph assembly shows a man standing at full length, positioned just to the right of the centre of the canvas in its horizontal orientation (FIG. 2).¹³ The figure is posed frontally, with his proper left foot slightly forward of his right and his head turned three-quarters to the left; he holds a stick or staff in his right hand and his left hand is propped on his hip (FIGS 10 and 11). The features of his garments visible in the X-ray image suggest that he is wearing riding costume, consisting of a sleeveless thigh-length *kazak*, or riding coat, worn over



FIG. 11 NG 6300, X-radiograph detail of the head.



FIG. 12 School of Thomas de Keyser, *Equestrian Portrait of Johan Wolfert van Brederode*, c. 1650. Oil on canvas, 104.5 × 90 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. SK-A-3972.



FIG. 13 NG 6300, X-radiograph detail of lower right of the underlying image.

a doublet with sleeves decorated with light bands (probably indicating gold braid) and full knee-length breeches. An extension at the outer contour of his proper left calf suggests a decorative ribbon garter or flared boot-top. The relatively small flat collar and the overall silhouette of the figure suggest a date of about 1650–5; a very similar costume is depicted in an equestrian portrait of Johan Wolfert van Brederode, painted in about 1650 (FIG. 12).¹⁴

The clarity of the figure in the X-radiograph suggests that the abandoned first composition was neither painted over nor scraped out before Rembrandt painted the equestrian portrait of Rihel over it. The figure seems fairly well developed, constructed with broad, vigorous brushstrokes not unlike those used to provisionally describe forms in other late paintings by Rembrandt.

Other elements of the underlying composition are less legible, however, and may not have been as ‘finished’ when the painting was set aside. Broad undulating contours appearing light and dark in the X-radiograph extend from the left side of the composition, suggesting a landscape setting. At the left are two trees, with what appears to be a third tree – or the stump of one – just to the right. Although a shadowy extension of the ‘stump’ runs vertically approximately to the level of Rihel’s shoulder, a broad continuous stroke of the light paint that defines the landscape contour passes over this extension. The horizontal landscape contours appear to continue to the right of the figure; the dark vertical mass to the right of his elbow is an anomaly resulting from the matching of individual X-radiographs in the assembly. An area of light radioabsorbent paint surrounds

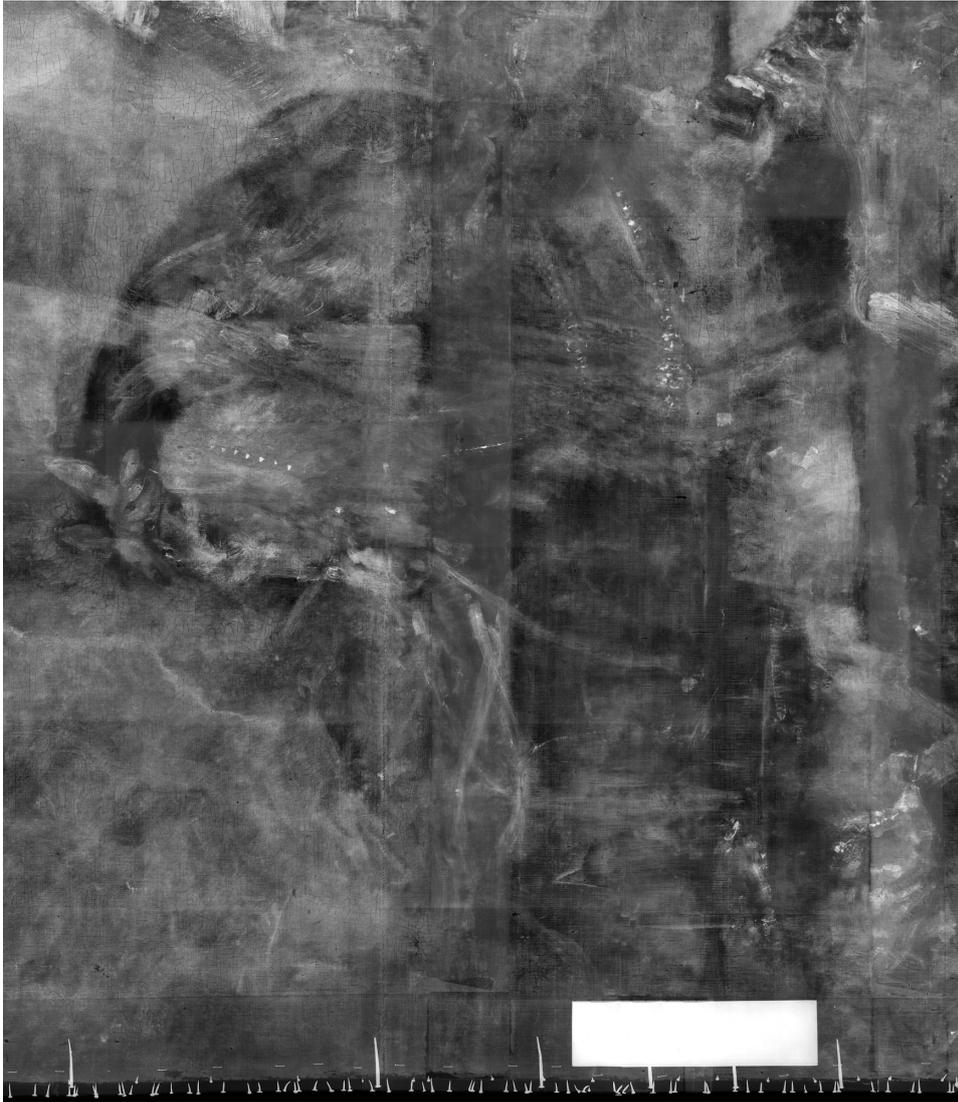


FIG. 14 NG 6300, X-radiograph detail of the centre of the lower half of the painting, to the left of the figure.

the lower half of the figure, possibly applied to help distinguish it from the surrounding landscape setting. At lower right is a light-coloured shape, possibly cylindrical, with narrow dark horizontal bands. In the dark area just to the left of this form (below the left foreleg of Rihel's horse, clearly visible in the X-radiograph) is a distinct but unidentifiable motif in light radioabsorbent paint (FIG. 13). Reading the shadowy form to the left of the figure is complicated by the superimposition of the head, chest and forelegs of Rihel's horse in this area (FIG. 14). The positioning of the standing figure slightly to the right of centre would suggest the inclusion of a fairly substantial compositional element here. The light paint of the background landscape stops short of the horizontal stretcher bar (just below the nose of Rihel's horse), and continues again to the left of the standing

figure, suggesting an area left in reserve. Possibly related to this elusive form are several long, sweeping strokes of radioabsorbent paint near the lower edge of the composition, including a horizontal stroke extending from near the mouth of Rihel's horse, and two more vertical marks that cross, then angle back.

Guided by the image revealed in the X-radiograph assembly, in 2009 additional paint samples were taken with two specific goals: to determine whether the composition of the ground layer was consistent throughout all three pieces of canvas; and to obtain as much additional information as possible about the underlying composition. Where the layer structure of the sample was complete, a single brown 'quartz'-type ground was present in each of the three canvas pieces (FIG. 15). This would indicate that the entire canvas assemblage was

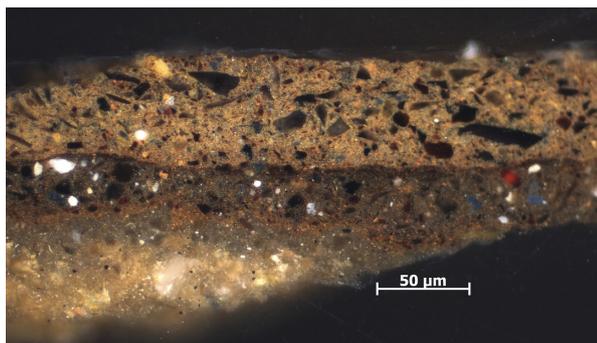


FIG. 15 NG 6300, paint cross-section from the foreground, lower left corner. The lowest layer is the single brown 'quartz' ground; over that are three layers of paint: a thin warm brown consisting of earth pigments and some red lake; a greenish brown layer comprising earths, red lake, azurite and smalt; and a thick upper layer of a lighter greenish brown, similar in composition to that immediately below, containing much coarse smalt.

almost certainly primed at the same time and, if it is accepted that the 'quartz' ground is unique to Rembrandt's studio, that the entire prepared canvas must have originated there.¹⁵ It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that the underlying painting of a man standing in a landscape also originated in Rembrandt's studio, and that its dimensions were roughly equivalent to those of the present canvas.

Unfortunately, attempts to learn more about the composition beneath the visible image – specifically the figure and the shadowy forms flanking him – by cross-section analysis were less successful, as the condition of the paint surface yielded no appropriate areas for sampling in the immediate area of the underlying figure. But with the X-radiograph assembly as a guide, it was possible to reassess samples taken close to this area in earlier campaigns, paying particular attention to the lower layers of the cross-sections possibly corresponding to the earlier design. The translucent blue-grey layer observed beneath the thick layer of yellow in the sample taken from the skirt of Rihel's coat (FIG. 6) probably relates to a patch of sky to the left of the standing figure. The sample from the horse's chest (FIG. 8) was taken close to the vertical of the staff held by the standing figure, and the dull greenish-brown lower layers may relate to this or to the rather amorphous larger form, which might (very tentatively) be read as a mass of foliage. The sample from the sky at the upper right of the equestrian portrait was taken from the area between the two tree trunks; the two thick layers of green and yellow-green paint visible beneath the lighter layer

containing smalt and lead white (FIG. 9) undoubtedly relate to foliage from these trees.

As noted, the painting over which Rembrandt painted the *Portrait of Frederik Rihel on Horseback* seems to have been fairly well advanced but in all likelihood uncompleted. The bold brushwork used to describe the figure, most apparent in areas of radioabsorbent white paint, may represent an initial laying-in of forms, although such details as the dangling collar ties would suggest a greater degree of finish. None of the samples studied in cross-section gave evidence of containing an intermediary varnish layer, which might suggest that the underlying painting was fully completed when the portrait of Rihel was begun. Nor was evidence found in any of the cross-sections analysed to indicate that Rembrandt applied an intermediary paint layer over all or part of the first painting before embarking on the equestrian portrait. It would therefore appear that the underdrawn sketch in black paint for the equestrian portrait, which can be seen in the infrared photograph (FIG. 3), was done directly on the earlier painting. Far from obliterating the original image, in fact, Rembrandt appears to have salvaged a fragment of the underlying figure – the gold bands of the sleeve and doublet at his right shoulder – and incorporated it

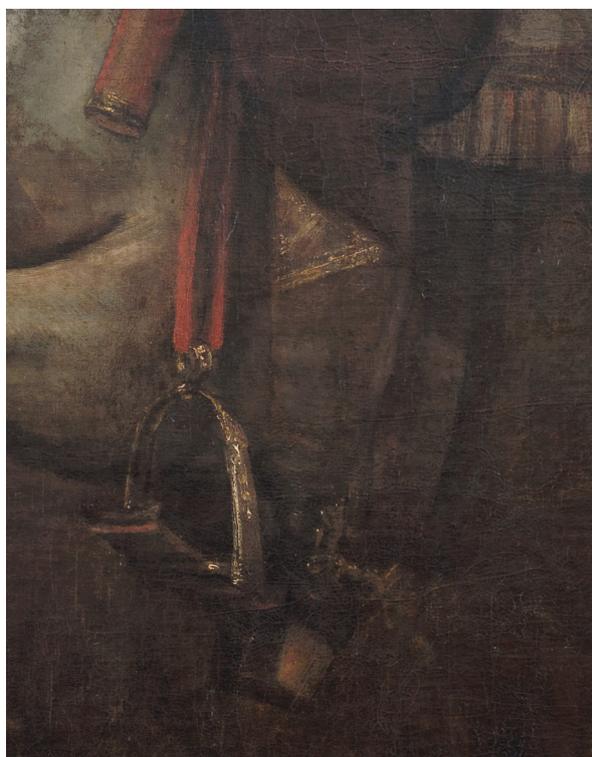


FIG. 16 NG 6300, detail showing decorative motif on Rihel's boot.

as a fanciful decorative motif on Rihel's boot (FIG. 16).

It is risky to venture an attribution for the underlying painting based solely on the style and quality of the X-ray image. Allowing for the inherent differences between X-radiographs of finished and unfinished paintings, the free and assured laying-in of the underlying figure nonetheless seems reasonably compatible with X-radiographs of paintings by Rembrandt himself.¹⁶ Dry, scumbled strokes, such as those delineating the collar ties, find parallel in several presumably unfinished paintings by Rembrandt from the 1650s and 60s, such as the *Portrait of a Boy in Pasadena* (FIG. 4), or the slightly more finished *Portrait of an Elderly Man* of 1667 in the Mauritshuis. If the underlying painting is by Rembrandt, the representation of a full-length, near life-sized figure in an expansive landscape setting would appear to be unique in his oeuvre. Only two examples of individual full-length standing portraits of men by Rembrandt are known, both from the 1630s (*Portrait of Maerten Soolmans*, dated 1634, and *Portrait of Andries de Graeff*, dated 1639 [FIG. 17]),¹⁷ and after the completion of *The Night Watch* in 1642, he did not paint another portrait of a full-length standing figure. If the underlying painting is not by Rembrandt, a possible author might be sought among the pupils active in Rembrandt's studio in the years in which (based on the costume) the underlying portrait was presumably painted. Abraham van Dijck, Willem Drost, Heyman Dullaert, Jacobus Leveck, Nicolaes Maes and Constantijn van Renesse were all working with Rembrandt during the early to mid 1650s, but none is known to have painted this type of large-scale portrait composition.¹⁸ It is unlikely, moreover, that such a large canvas (and presumably prestigious commission) would have been entrusted to a pupil or assistant, no matter how advanced. In addition, Rembrandt's decision to incorporate a snippet of the underlying figure into the new composition suggests a degree of proprietary pragmatism that lends weight to the argument in favour of his also having painted the earlier work.

If proposing an attribution for the underlying painting based solely on the appearance of an X-ray image is risky, attempting an identification of the figure itself would be downright foolhardy. The man appears to have a moustache similar to that affected by Rihel, and possibly a small goatee (which Rihel apparently did not, in 1663), but beyond that the X-radiograph



FIG. 17 Rembrandt, *Portrait of Andries de Graeff*, 1639. Oil on canvas, 200 × 124.2 cm. Kassel, Staatliche Museen, inv. GK 239.

simply does not provide enough information for any useful form of facial recognition.¹⁹

Whether the underlying painting was by Rembrandt or by a member of his studio, it would seem that any work left abandoned or unfinished in the Rembrandt atelier was a viable target for reclamation. Approximately two dozen works from the Rembrandt studio have been identified as having been painted over a reused support; for convenience these have been termed 'palimpsests'.²⁰ Just over half (thirteen) of the 'palimpsests' are self-portraits, representing more than a quarter of the total number of portraits of Rembrandt painted either by himself or by pupils or workshop assistants.²¹ 'Palimpsests' are far rarer in the case of Rembrandt's 'tronies' and subject pieces; most of these concern small works from either the artist's Leiden period, or his early years in Amsterdam.²² Apart from a few self-portraits, only three 'palimpsests' from the 1650s (and none from the 1660s) have hitherto been

recorded: the version of *Joseph accused by Potiphar's Wife* in the Staatliche Museum, Berlin, dated 1655, is painted over the unfinished figure of an old man seated; the *Man in Armour* in Glasgow, dated 1655, is painted over a figure of an elderly bearded man, perhaps part of an unfinished composition; and a *Portrait of a Young Man* in the Louvre, (falsely) signed and dated 1658, is painted over a scene of a woman bending over a cradle.²³ Another example of a 'palimpsest' by a follower of Rembrandt is the National Gallery's *Seated Man with a Stick* of about 1650–60 (NG 51), which is painted over a depiction of the crucified Christ (FIG. 18).²⁴

Evaluating the known examples, Ernst van de

Wetering concluded that most of the 'palimpsests' issuing from the Rembrandt studio concerned paintings that were not made on commission,²⁵ although this did not necessarily mean that Rembrandt did not intend to sell these works. Indeed, one of his 'palimpsest' paintings was owned by Frederik Hendrik, stadholder of the Netherlands, and two others, given by the stadholder to the Earl of Ancram, eventually found their way to the collection of Charles I before 1639.²⁶ Van de Wetering also observed that so far as was known, there was not a single case of a portrait made over a rejected painting,²⁷ although the subsequent discovery of another painting beneath the *Portrait of Frederik*



FIG. 18 Follower of Rembrandt, *Seated Man with a Stick* (NG 51), c. 1650–60, X-radiograph mosaic showing underlying painting of crucified Christ.

Rihel on Horseback would appear to contradict this.

There seems to have been no consistent pattern to Rembrandt's technique in approaching a 'palimpsest'. The majority would seem to have been made from unfinished or abandoned canvases and panels lying about the studio, although at least one or two 'palimpsests' were made from paintings probably not originating in the Rembrandt workshop.²⁸ Some of the underlying images show evidence of having been at least partially scraped or wiped away.²⁹ In some instances Rembrandt appears to have painted directly on top of the underlying image without applying an intermediary layer;³⁰ in others, an intermediary layer was indeed added to cover all or part of the underlying image.³¹

As the present painting is in all likelihood the only known 'palimpsest' portrait by Rembrandt or any member of his studio, it is worth considering how or why this might have come about. Documentary evidence indicates that portrait painters acquired the supports for commissioned works in various ways. A patron could deliver an agreed support to the artist or could opt to have the artist supply the support; the price of the support was often calculated separately from the price of actually painting the likeness.³² No specific information concerning a contract to paint the *Portrait of Frederik Rihel on Horseback* has survived, but it would appear that either Rembrandt or Rihel must have ventured the unusual proposal to use a previously painted canvas for this monumental portrait.

Without positive identification of the underlying figure, it is unclear whether the *Portrait of Frederik Rihel on Horseback* represents pentiment or 'palimpsest': a dramatic reworking of a single portrait of Rihel that was first envisaged as a standing figure in a landscape, or the appropriation of a canvas previously used for an unrelated (and unfinished) depiction of an unknown sitter (or sitters). The costume would suggest that the first portrait was conceived about a decade earlier than the equestrian portrait completed in 1663. There is no documentary evidence for or against Rihel having commissioned a portrait from Rembrandt at this earlier date, although there would have been less immediate reason for him to have done so. Furthermore, to leave a commissioned portrait unfinished in the studio for several years would not only be impractical, but would very likely have prompted some legal action on Rihel's

part.³³ If, however, the underlying figure does represent Rihel, his rising civic status in the early years of the 1660s may well have prompted artist or patron to propose a change from an impressive yet informal likeness depicting the subject in a landscape setting (possibly surrounded by attributes/accessories of the hunt?) to a grand and manifestly imposing equestrian portrait.

The *Portrait of Frederik Rihel on Horseback* was an audacious undertaking for both artist and patron. Apart from a dozen or so images of various stadholders, life-sized equestrian portraits are exceedingly rare in seventeenth-century Dutch painting.³⁴ Only one other of a civilian is known, Paulus Potter's *Equestrian Portrait of Dirck Tulp* of 1653 (Six Collection, Amsterdam). While Tulp was a member of Amsterdam's elite regent class with legitimate pretensions to 'nobility', Rihel was a relatively recent transplant, possessing wealth and business acumen but lacking established familial lineage, making the adoption of this princely format even more remarkable. Significantly, while the costume worn by the standing figure connotes the aristocratic pursuits of riding and the hunt, Rihel's buff leather coat (*kolder*) – as well as his sword, pistol, bandolier and fringed sash – had more specifically military connotations.³⁵ If the current format of the *Portrait of Frederik Rihel on Horseback* indeed represents such a radical re-presentation of the subject's likeness, the transformation can be interpreted as a bid to proclaim not only Rihel's wealth and equestrian pretensions, but his recently enhanced civic status, achieved in part through his participation in the prestigious procession welcoming the young prince of Orange and his mother to Amsterdam, and as a proud new citizen of the capital city.

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Notes

- 1 D. Bomford, A. Roy, and C. Brown, with contributions from J. Kirby and R. White, *Art in the Making: Rembrandt*, National Gallery, London, 1988, pp. 134–9; N. Maclaren, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Dutch School 1600–1900*, rev. edn. by C. Brown, 2 vols., London 1991, vol. 1, pp. 358–62; and D. Bomford, J. Kirby, A. Roy, A. Rüger, and R. White, *Art in the Making: Rembrandt*, rev. edn., National Gallery, London 2006, pp. 184–9. The current study is indebted to the research presented in these publications.
- 2 E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's Self Portraits: Problems of Authenticity and Function', in E. van de Wetering, with contributions by K. Groen, P. Klein, J. van der Veen and M. de Winkel, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings* (hereafter *Corpus*), vol. 4, Dordrecht 2005, p. 96.
- 3 A. Bredius, 'Rembrandtiana, I: Rembrandt's zoogenaamd portret van Turenne bij Lord Cowper te Panshanger', *Oud Holland* 28, 1910, pp. 193–5; for biographical details see also I. H. van Eeghen, 'Frederick Rihel een 17de eeuwse zakenman en paardenliefhebber', *Maandblad Amstelodamum* 45, April 1958, pp. 73–81; N.H. Schneeloch, *Aktionäre der Westindischen Compagnie von 1674. Die Verschmelzung der alten Kapitalgebergruppen zu einer neuen Aktiengesellschaft*, Stuttgart 1982, pp. 297–301 et passim; and Maclaren and Brown 1991 (as in note 1), pp. 358–62. The only writer to argue against the identification of the rider as Rihel was R. van Luttervelt in 'De Grote Ruiter van Rembrandt', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 8, 1957, pp. 185–210, who suggested that the subject was Jacob de Graeff (1642–90).
- 4 G. Leonhardt, *Het Huis Bartolotti en zijn bewoners*, Amsterdam 1978, p. 91 et passim.
- 5 Van Eeghen 1958 (as in note 3), pp. 78–81; see also Maclaren and Brown 1991 (as in note 1), pp. 359–60, for a more detailed list of the equestrian trappings described in Rihel's inventory.
- 6 Rembrandt, *Portrait of Aletta Adriaensdr.*, oil on oak, 65.5 × 55.5 cm, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen (Stichting Willem van der Vorm); and *Portrait of Maria Trip*, 1639, oil on poplar, 107 × 82 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (on loan from the Familie van Weede Stichting).
- 7 P.W. Klein, *De Trippen in de 17de eeuw: Een studie over het ondernemersgedrag op de hollandse stapelmarkt*, Assen 1965, pp. 455–6; also G. Schwartz, *Rembrandt: His Life, His Paintings*, New York 1985, pp. 337 and 340.
- 8 R. van Luttervelt (as in note 3) was the first to suggest that Rembrandt's portrait commemorated this historic event. The identification of the Heiligewegspoort is not entirely convincing; a quite different structure is seen in Jan Abrahamz. Beerstraaten's drawing of *The Heiligewegspoort on the Heiligewegsburgwal*, 1662 (Amsterdam, Stadsarchief; Collectie tekeningen Van Eeghen) and other contemporary images.
- 9 Unless otherwise noted, technical information in the following passage is derived from London 2006 (as in note 1), pp. 184–9.
- 10 H. Kühn, in 'Untersuchungen zu den Malgründen Rembrandts', *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg* 2, 1965, pp. 189–210, was the first to identify Rembrandt's use of a 'quartz' ground and to suggest that the practice might be restricted to Rembrandt's studio. Further research at the National Gallery and elsewhere corroborated his findings (see London 1988, as in note 1, esp. pp. 27–31). No use of a brown 'quartz' ground has yet been identified outside Rembrandt's immediate circle. The most complete discussion of Rembrandt's use of grounds is: C.M.[K.] Groen, 'Grounds in Rembrandt's Workshop and in Paintings by his Contemporaries', in *Corpus* vol. 4 (Dordrecht 2005), pp. 318–34. Recently, Groen demonstrated in 'Earth Matters: the origin of the material used for the preparation of the *Night Watch* and many other canvases in Rembrandt's workshop after 1640', *Art Matters: Netherlands Technical Studies in Art* 3, 2005, pp. 138–54, that Rembrandt used specifically a fluvial clay, similar to that used in the manufacture of bricks and tiles and as raw material in the manufacture of pottery.
- 11 Rembrandt, *Portrait of a Boy*, (oil on canvas, 64.8 × 55.9 cm, The Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena, inv. F.1965.2.P); and *Man with a Magnifying Glass*, (oil on canvas, 91.4 × 74.3 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. 14.40.621).
- 12 Technical report by J. Plesters, dated 31 October 1985, in the Scientific Department dossier.
- 13 In descriptions of the underlying image, all directional indications are given as with the canvas in its horizontal position, with the *Portrait of Frederik Rihel on Horseback* turned 90 degrees anticlockwise. In the X-ray mosaic, the individual plates have been digitally joined and processed to reduce the effects of the stretcher bars. The white rectangles at the top and bottom of the image are the metal plates bracing the hinged stretcher construction.
- 14 School of Thomas de Keyser, *Portrait of Johan Wolfert van Brederode*, c.1650 (oil on canvas, 104.5 × 90 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. SK-A-3972); and also the anonymous (Dutch?) drawing of a *Hunting Accident*, c. 1655, illustrated in M. de Winkel, *Fashion and Fancy: Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt's Paintings*, Amsterdam 2006, fig. 48. In addition to the examples of similar dress worn by men in a hunting context cited by de Winkel, compare Govaert Flinck's *Portrait of a Gentleman*, 1642, (oil on canvas, 124 × 98.5 cm, Amiens, Musée de Picardie), and, for an earlier example of this type of costume, Thomas de Keyser's portrait of Constantijn Huygens of 1627 in the National Gallery (NG 212).
- 15 Summary of analysis by A. Roy, 18 December 2009; see also note 9.
- 16 Compare the X-radiograph of Aristotle's sleeve in Rembrandt's *Aristotle contemplating the Bust of Homer*, dated 1653 (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art), illustrated by H. von Sonnenburg in *Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt in The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Aspects of Connoisseurship*, vol. 1, *Paintings: Problems and Issues*, exh. cat., New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995, p. 34, fig. 26.
- 17 Rembrandt, *Portrait of Maerten Soolmans*, 1634 (oil on canvas, 207 × 192.8 cm, Paris, private collection); and *Portrait of Andries de Graeff*, 1639 (oil on canvas, 200 × 124.2 cm, Kassel, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, inv. GK 239).
- 18 Also among those assumed to have studied with Rembrandt in the late 1650s is his son Titus van Rijn; Bruyn's suggestion that Titus might have been responsible for painting Rihel's admittedly rather stiff horse has not found acceptance (J. Bruyn, 'An unknown assistant in Rembrandt's workshop in the early 1660s', *Burlington Magazine* 132, October 1990, pp. 715–8).
- 19 Two other portraits of Rihel are listed in the 1681 inventory (neither of which are known today), including 'een conterfijtsel daer hij te voet gaet' (another portrait [of the deceased] in which he is walking), which could well describe a full-length portrait in a landscape. Both this and the equestrian portrait were listed as hanging in the 'zaal', presumably the largest and most important room in Rihel's home. J. van der Veen (in correspondence with the author) has questioned whether the composition visible in the X-radiograph of the National Gallery painting might not have begun as a copy after this now-lost portrait.
- 20 Van de Wetering 2005 (as in note 2), p. 96.
- 21 'Palimpsest' portraits of Rembrandt described in the *Corpus* include the following works; titles and dates are those used in the *Corpus*: 'Tronie' with *Rembrandt's Features*, 1629 (oil on panel, 89.5 × 73.5 cm, Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 20), painted over a larger, more broadly-based figure; 'Tronie' with *Rembrandt's Features*, c. 1629 (oil on panel, 38 × 30.9 cm; Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 21 copy 1 and vol. 4, p. 597); Rembrandt Workshop (Isack de Jouderville?), 'Tronie' with *Rembrandt's Features*, 1630/1 (oil on panel, 69.7 × 57 cm; Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 33), painted over a full-length standing figure; *Self Portrait*, 1632 (oil on oak, 64.4 × 47.6 cm; Glasgow, The Burrell Collection, *Corpus* vol. 2, no. A 58), a portrait of a man with the head placed rather higher up is visible in X-radiograph, with some elements visible on the surface of the painting; studio of Rembrandt, *Bust of Rembrandt with an Architectural Background*, 1637 (oil on oak, 80 × 62 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. B 10),

- painted over both an earlier version of the visible bust portrait and, turned through 180 degrees, a small-figured scene possibly related to Rembrandt's etching of *Christ and the Woman of Samaria* of 1634; *A Dead Bittern held High by a Hunter*, c. 1639 (oil on oak, 120.7 × 88.3 cm; Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, *Corpus* vol. 3, no. A 133), apparently painted over an unfinished figure seen almost to knee length, wearing a cap or turban; studio of Rembrandt?, *Rembrandt in a Black Cap*, c. 1637 (oil on oak, 64 × 49 cm; London, The Wallace Collection, *Corpus* vol. 3, no. C 96 and vol. 4, p. 604), painted over an uncompleted portrait of a woman; *Self Portrait in a Flat Cap*, 1642 (oil on oak, 69.9 × 58.4 cm, Windsor Castle, HM Queen Elizabeth II, *Corpus* vol. 4, no. 1), underlying portrait is possibly also a self portrait, from about 1633, painted in the Rembrandt workshop but not necessarily by Rembrandt, with evidence of a possible third painting beneath; *Self Portrait*, c. 1645/8 (oil on oak, 73.5 × 59.6 cm, Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle, *Corpus* vol. 4, no. 5), painted over a portrait of a man, probably not from the Rembrandt workshop; *Self Portrait*, 1654 (oil on canvas, 72 × 58.5 cm, Kassel, Staatliche Museen Kassel, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, *Corpus* vol. 4, no. 9), painted over an unfinished portrait of a woman in millstone ruff, possibly a work of the 1640s, by a pupil or assistant of Rembrandt; *Self Portrait with Sketchbook*, c. 1655 (oil on canvas, oval, 74.5 × 61 cm, San Francisco, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, *Corpus* vol. 4, no. 10 version 2), copy after a lost original by Rembrandt, painted over an unfinished painting of an unidentified subject; *Self Portrait*, 1655 (oil on oak, 64.3 × 50.8 cm, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, *Corpus* vol. 4, no. 11), painted over a sketch of a seated female nude, possibly derived from Rembrandt's *Bathsheba* of 1654, although the brushwork is not reminiscent of his manner; and *Self Portrait*, c. 1655 (oil on canvas, 69 × 59 cm, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, *Corpus* vol. 4, no. 12), with an open book discernible at lower right, possibly from a still life and probably not originating in Rembrandt's studio. None of the 'palimpsest' self portraits date after about 1655. Van de Wetering has suggested that the absence of later 'palimpsest' self portraits may reflect the fact that while the earlier self portraits were made on the artist's own initiative, the later ones are more likely to have been done on commission; see van de Wetering 2005 (as in note 2), p. 97.
- 22 Ibid.; examples noted in the *Corpus* are: *Spectacles Pedlar (Sight)*, c. 1624–5 (oil on panel, 27 × 17.8 cm, private collection, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. B 3), painted over a seated nude figure; *Foot Operation* (oil on oak, 31.8 × 24.4 cm, Switzerland, private collection, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. C 11), X-radiograph shows unclear indications of brushwork not associated with known paint layers; *Bust of a Man in Gorget and Cap*, c. 1626/7 (oil on oak, 40 × 29.4 cm, private collection, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 8), painted over the head of an old man at a significantly larger scale; *David with the Head of Goliath before Saul*, 1627 (oil on oak, 27.2 × 39.6 cm, Basel, Oeffentliche Kunstsammlung, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 9), painted over a head, turned 90 degrees clockwise; circle of Rembrandt, *Bust of an Old Woman*, c. 1628? (oil on panel, 35.4 × 28.9 cm; Essen, collection H. von Bohlen und Halbach, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. C 42), possibly post-seventeenth century, underlying painting of a half-length figure; *Bust of an Old Man with a Turban*, c. 1627–8 (oil on oak, 26.5 × 20 cm, collection Foundation Aetas Aurea, *Corpus* vol. 4, addendum no. 3); *Interior with Figures ('La main chaude')*, c. 1627–9 (oil on panel, 21 × 27 cm, Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland), painted over a bust-length portrait of a man, turned 90 degrees clockwise; *An Artist in his Studio*, c. 1629 (oil on panel, 25.1 × 31.9 cm; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 18), possibly painted over another painting; *Minerva in her Study*, 1631 (oil on oak, 60.5 × 49 cm, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 38), a standing figure with a headdress and other, less legible, forms are visible in X-radiograph; and *Man with a Gorget and Plumed Cap*, c. 1630–1 (oil on panel, 65 × 51 cm; Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. B 4), painted over an earlier picture: a half-length figure of a young man, turned through 180 degrees.
- 23 *Joseph accused by Potiphar's Wife* 1655, (oil on canvas, 113.5 × 90 cm, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. 828H) *Man in Armour*, 1655 (oil on canvas, 137.5 × 104.4 cm, Glasgow, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, inv. 601) and *Portrait of a Young Man*, 1658 (oil on canvas, 75 × 60.5 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. 1749 (as 'Studio of Rembrandt')). On the Berlin painting, see most recently: J. Kelch, in *Rembrandt: ein Genie auf der Suche*, exh. cat. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2006, pp. 366–9; on the Glasgow picture, C. Brown and A. Roy, 'Rembrandt's "Alexander the Great"', *The Burlington Magazine* 134, 1992, esp. p. 290 and figs 3 and 13.
- 24 London 2006 (as in note 1), pp. 214–7. Though not strictly a 'palimpsest', *Saskia van Uylenburgh in Arcadian Costume* (NG 4930) is 'drastically altered' from an underlying depiction of *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, partially covered with an intermediate grey layer; see London 2006, esp. pp. 93–4.
- 25 Van de Wetering 2005 (as in note 2), p. 97.
- 26 Respectively: *Minerva in her Study*, 1631, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (*Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 38); *Bust of an Old Woman*, currently given to Jan Lievens, at Windsor Castle (*Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 32); and 'Tronie' with Rembrandt's Features, 1630/1, Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery (*Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 33).
- 27 Van de Wetering 2005 (as in note 2), p. 97.
- 28 The *Self Portrait* of about 1645/8 in Karlsruhe (*Corpus* vol. 4, no. 5) and the *Self Portrait* of about 1655 in Florence (*Corpus* vol. 4, no. 12). See note 21 above.
- 29 *David with the Head of Goliath before Saul*, 1627 (Basel, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 9), panel probably partially scraped smooth before starting the new image; Rembrandt workshop (Isack de Jouderville?), 'Tronie' with Rembrandt's Features, 1630/1 (Liverpool, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 33), underlying image scraped away before the new image was begun; *Minerva in her Study*, 1631 (Berlin, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 38), portions of the underlying composition may have been wiped away while the paint was still wet; and *Self Portrait in a Flat Cap*, 1642 (Windsor Castle, *Corpus*, vol. 4, no. 1), underlying portrait partially scraped away. See notes 21 and 22 above.
- 30 For example, *Bust of a Man in Gorget and Cap*, c. 1626/7 (*Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 8), *Joseph accused by Potiphar's Wife*, 1655 (Berlin), and *Self Portrait* (Karlsruhe, *Corpus* vol. 4, no. 5). See *Corpus* vol. 4, p. 423.
- 31 For example, the *Bust of an Old Woman* at Windsor Castle (*Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 32); in the case of the *David with the Head of Goliath before Saul*, 1627 (Basel, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. A 9), the partially scraped panel was possibly covered with a yellow brown ground before starting the new image; a light intermediary layer may have been applied to the panel support of *Bust of Rembrandt with an Architectural Background* before the final painting (1637, Paris, *Corpus* vol. 1, no. B 10); and the portrait underlying the *Self Portrait*, 1654 (Kassel, *Corpus* vol. 4, no. 9) was partially covered with a flesh-coloured layer, applied locally. See *Corpus* vol. 4, p. 423.
- 32 J. Bruyn, 'Patrons and Early Owners', in J. Bruyn, B. Haak, S. H. Levie, P. J. J. van Thiel and E. van de Wetering, *Corpus* vol. 2 (1986), p. 91.
- 33 Filippo Baldinucci (and others) remarked upon Rembrandt's slow working methods, which sometimes required two or three months to complete a portrait (F. Baldinucci, *Cominciamento e progresso dell'arte dell'intagliare in rame colle vite di molti de' più eccellenti maestri della stessa professione*, Florence 1686, p. 79). Rembrandt also occasionally left commissioned paintings unfinished, completing them only when pressed by the patron or by economic need. One notable example is the series of paintings of the Passion for Frederik Hendrik, stadholder of the Netherlands, begun in 1632, with the last painting delivered only in 1646. On Rembrandt's legal disputes with patrons, see P. Crenshaw, *Rembrandt's Bankruptcy: The Artist, His Patrons, and the Art Market in Seventeenth-Century Netherlands*, Cambridge 2006, esp. pp. 110–35.
- 34 See *In het zadel: Het Nederlands ruitersportret van 1550 tot 1900*, exh. cat., Leeuwarden, 's-Hertogenbosch and Assen, 1979–80, pp. 99ff.
- 35 On the history of the *kolder* and its connotations, see E. Sint Nicolaas and H. Stevens, 'Kolders. Van modieuze militair kledingstuk tot slagveldreliëf', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 54, 2006, pp. 266–89; and de Winkel (cited in note 14), pp. 108–9.