

PETER SCHATBORN, *Tekeningen van Rembrandt, zijn onbekende leerlingen en navolgers/Drawings by Rembrandt, his anonymous pupils and followers. (Catalogus van de Nederlandse Tekeningen in het Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, IV)*. The Hague, Staatsuitgeverij 1985. 264 pages. 281 illustrations, 16 in color.
(with four illustrations)

While the publication of the first two volumes of the *Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings* has provoked a vigorous controversy over the authorship of the master's works in oil, a similarly radical revision of Rembrandt's *œuvre* as a draftsman has gone virtually unnoticed. There are, of course, perfectly good reasons for this: drawings are rarely exhibited and the public is less aware of them than of paintings on permanent display, the layman is easily mystified by the discourse about drawings and about the notorious connoisseurship problems they present, and the recent debate over Rembrandt's work has, at least until the appearance of the volume under review, been confined to the specialist literature. Here, however, for the first time in a publication intended for a wider audience, Peter Schatborn, Keeper of Drawings at the Rijksprentenkabinet and the principal exponent of the new Rembrandt connoisseurship, brings his impressive expertise to bear upon the task of cataloguing a large and heterogeneous collection. *Tekeningen van Rembrandt, zijn onbekende leerlingen en navolgers* is a milestone in Rembrandt scholarship. It incorporates significant new information and insights that not only shed light on the holdings of the Rijksprentenkabinet, but contribute profoundly to our general understanding of the drawings of Rembrandt and his followers.

The publication of the catalogue — volume IV in the series of catalogues of drawings in the Rijksprentenkabinet — provided the occasion for an exhibition of the sixty works Schatborn attributes to Rembrandt himself, forty-seven he gives to unidentified pupils and imitators, and nine ascribed tentatively to Carel Fabritius (cat. nos. 61–66), Aert de Gelder (cat. nos 67, 68), and Johannes Raven (cat. no 69). The full texts of the extensive entries on these 116 drawings and of the Introduction are given in both Dutch and English.

All sheets, including many versos, are reproduced, sixteen in color, and most entries incorporate one or two comparative illustrations. Beta radiographs of forty-five watermarks are reproduced (not always actual size). There are indices of subjects, former owners, and — especially useful — of drawings in other collections mentioned in the text, as well as a concordance with the catalogues of Hofstede de Groot, Henkel, and Benesch.

A short, but informative, Introduction dealing with the history of the Rembrandt drawings in the Rijksprentenkabinet and with the history of Rembrandt attributions precedes the catalogue entries. The national museum of Rembrandt's native land possesses neither the largest nor the most representative collection of his drawings: the holdings of the British Museum, the Kupferstichkabinett in West Berlin, and the Cabinet des Dessins of the Louvre are older and more comprehensive. The first Rembrandt drawings entered the Rijksmuseum as late as 1883, when sixty-six sheets ascribed to the master and twenty to his school were purchased at the sale of Jacob de Vos. A mere seven of these eighty-six works are given to Rembrandt in the present catalogue. Four

drawings came in 1895 from the Pitcairn Knowles sale. In 1906, the great art historian Cornelis Hofstede de Groot — briefly director of the Rijksprentenkabinet — made an important donation with life interest of sixty-five sheets attributed to Rembrandt. Thirty-three of the sixty drawings accepted by Schatborn eventually came from Hofstede de Groot's collection, although some were acquired at sales after his death. Mr. and Mrs. I. de Bruijn-van der Leeuw bequeathed eight sheets in 1961, while individual purchases took place in 1913, 1969, 1981, and 1984.

The attribution of Rembrandt drawings is notoriously problematic. In his Introduction, Schatborn rehearses the various factors that have contributed to the difficulties and evaluates the methods devised by connoisseurs to attack the problems. With rare exceptions, such as the thirty-three drawings acquired from Nicolaes Flinck by the third Duke of Devonshire in 1723 or the twelve etched by Matthys Pool sometime after 1700, an early provenance is no guarantee of authenticity. As Schatborn has shown elsewhere, we know from the De Piles-Crozat group at Stockholm that drawings by pupils were erroneously ascribed to Rembrandt as early as c. 1700 („Van Rembrandt tot Crozat. Vroege verzamelingen met tekeningen van Rembrandt,” *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 32, 1981). Eighteenth-century trade and collecting practices compounded an already complicated situation. Dealers frequently sold drawings in albums composed, for the occasion, of works of assorted quality. The typical eighteenth-century *Konvolut* of trade material now at Munich, for example, consists of originals, school pieces, and numerous cursory sketches, probably by Rembrandt pupils, that were „finished” by the dealers to enhance their commercial value (cf. K. Renger and A. Burmester, „The Munich Forgeries Reconsidered: A New Technical Approach to the Investigation of Drawings,” *Master Drawings*, XXIII—XXIV, no. 4, 1985—86). No wonder eighteenth-century sale catalogues already betray acute doubts about authorship. Some of them, as Schatborn notes, even list drawings „in the manner of Rembrandt.”

Since provenance is an unreliable index of authenticity, the art historian must, in most cases, depend upon the evidence provided by the drawings themselves. Thousands must be taken into account. Otto Benesch ascribed about 1,450 works to Rembrandt, and Werner Sumowski's multi-volume *Drawings of the Rembrandt School* will eventually include some 3,000 sheets. We know more than fifty Rembrandt pupils and followers by name, and many imitated his style with such skill that their drawings are still confused with those of the master.

The rare sheets that bear legitimate signatures or inscriptions in Rembrandt's hand and those that served as studies for his paintings or prints constitute the invaluable nucleus of authentic works and the point of departure for further attributions. Seidlitz (1894) and Hofstede de Groot (1906) established the principle of assembling Rembrandt's *œuvre* and constructing a chronology around this core of documented drawings, and most cataloguers have at least paid lip service to their method. In practice, however, it is sometimes difficult to adhere strictly to these criteria. Fewer than forty sheets are signed or inscribed by the master and even some of those annotated by him may have been executed by pupils. As several of these belong to categories uncharacteristic of Rembrandt's output as a whole — copies after other works of art, portrait drawings, red chalk figure studies of the early 1630s — they are not always useful in establishing new

attributions. In addition, due to the peculiar function of drawings in Rembrandt's art, the number of studies directly related to paintings or prints is also very small in comparison with his total *œuvre*, so that one can rarely substantiate an attribution by close comparison with a secure work. Nevertheless, building on his knowledge of the authentic sheets, the connoisseur eventually develops concepts of Rembrandt's technique and stylistic development, and of the quality and function of the drawings. New attributions can be tested against this framework. This is essentially the procedure followed by Otto Benesch when he compiled *The Drawings of Rembrandt* (1955–57; revised edition, 1973).

While endorsing the method, Schatborn rightly criticizes Benesch for accepting far too many drawings and for the authoritarian tone of his terse arguments. Because of the problematic nature of the material, determination of the authorship of Rembrandt drawings inevitably involves at least a partially subjective judgment, but Benesch often presented as incontestable facts attributions that he should have proposed as hypotheses. Schatborn maintains that the subjective element can be reduced by applying more rigorously the criteria described above, taking into account every relevant scrap of information, and turning into explicit statements many of the arguments left unspoken by earlier scholars. As every page of the catalogue attests, Schatborn commands a profound knowledge of the materials, technique, style, and function of drawings by Rembrandt and his followers. His proposals affecting the authorship, dating, and purpose of the drawings are always sustained by informed reasoning and a deep sensitivity to artistic quality. The catalogue entries are greatly enriched by apposite references to drawing practices and traditions in the Netherlands and to the early literature, particularly to the treatise by Rembrandt's pupil Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst*, 1678. For me, at least, Schatborn's conclusions are almost always convincing.

Especially instructive are the discussions of the function and of the materials and techniques of the Rembrandt drawings. For instance, Schatborn emphasizes that Rembrandt rarely made conventional preparatory studies for his paintings. Most of the rare drawings related to pictures were executed during work on the canvas or panel to help resolve a difficult pose or a change in the composition. The studies associated with *Judas Returning the Thirty Pieces of Silver* (cat. no. 5), *The Concord of the State* (cat. no. 20), and *The Syndics* (cat. no. 56) exemplify these two applications. Schatborn precisely characterizes the unusual purpose of the vigorous pen-and-ink sketch of a man mounting his horse for *The Concord of the State* (cat. no. 20) as an effort to seek the appropriate pose during the act of drawing, not from a model, but from memory. Similar in function is the sheet with two studies of the sick woman in *The Hundred Guilder Print* (cat. no. 21). (The function of this and several other drawings related to Rembrandt prints are the subject of a recent article by Schatborn, „Tekeningen van Rembrandt in verband met zijn etsen,” *De Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis*, 38, 1986, no. 1).

The glory of the Rijksmuseum's collection are the independent sketches of biblical subjects, most of them dating from the late 1640s and early 1650s (cat. no. 17, 24, 25, 39–44, 46; here *Abb. 2, 3*). Rembrandt made most of these drawings for practice and for educational purposes, using them to stimulate his faculties of invention and

expression as well as to build up a stock of compositional ideas for himself and models for the instruction of his pupils. Autonomous studies of historical themes constitute one of the largest categories of drawings executed by Rembrandt and his students, and their function is unusual, if not unique to the Rembrandt School. Rembrandt made studies of the same theme, sometimes in quick succession and sometimes after a hiatus of several years, in which he varied the design and the expression of emotion (cat. no. 17 and fig. 17a, cat. no. 40 and figs. 40a, 40b, cat. no. 46 and fig. 46b). Hoogstraten exhorted novice artists to form the habit of making such drawings, and his advice must reflect the training he received in Rembrandt's studio: „The way to become certain and assured in composition is that one should become accustomed to making many sketches and drawing many histories on paper...” (Hoogstraten, *Inleyding...*, p. 191).

Rembrandt's pupils learned the master's style and compositional principles both by copying his inventions and by using them as the point of departure for their own studies of the same themes (cat. no. 86 and fig. 86b). Schatborn stresses the educational aspect of Rembrandt's use of these drawings. His explanation for the existence of obviously related variants of many compositions is characteristically clear and straightforward: „Rembrandt and his pupils drew the same subjects, both together and independently, at various periods. A work by Rembrandt was often taken as a model and Rembrandt also drew the subject again, thus creating a new model. This procedure explains both the existence of related compositions in a Rembrandtesque style and the existence of drawings by Rembrandt in a style which is later than that of his model” (p. 182). This method of instruction is also recommended by Hoogstraten: „I advise masters, when they look over the drawings of their pupils, that they improve them by making studies of the same subjects” (Hoogstraten, p. 192). That pupils submitted their designs for Rembrandt's judgment is confirmed by the several school drawings reworked by him and by Constantijn van Renesse's *Daniel in the Lions' Den*, which derives loosely from the master's study in the Rijksmuseum (cat. no. 24). Renesse annotated the sheet: „The first drawing shown to Rembrandt in the year 1649 the first of october/ it was the second time that I went to Rembrandt.”

The entries include additional insights into the relationship of Rembrandt's drawings to those of his pupils. Careful analysis of the studies of female nudes (cat. no. 55, 67, 69) and lions (cat. no. 53) reveals that Rembrandt and his students often drew these subjects together, sketching the same model in the same position from a slightly different angle. Schatborn carefully documents the numerous copies and closely related variants of the Rijksmuseum drawings, compiling a fascinating picture of the fundamental role of drawings in the lively artistic exchange between Rembrandt and his pupils and among the pupils themselves.

Schatborn's keen eye for the media and techniques of Rembrandt drawings has enabled him to reach noteworthy conclusions about the bearing of a work's physical constitution on its authenticity and date. A sketch in black chalk or graphite beneath a composition drawn with the pen signals to Schatborn that the work is likely to be a copy, because Rembrandt did not require fastidiously drawn guidelines to help with the execution of a design dashed off in the heat of inspiration (e. g., Ben. 11; see sub cat. no 87, note 3). During the second half of the 1630s Rembrandt occasionally utilized

irongall ink, a medium he does not seem to have employed at any other time (cat. nos. 9, 10, 13, 14, and 15). Similarly, his use of papers tinted with a light brown wash was apparently confined either to the Leiden period, when he drew on such grounds with red chalk, or to the late 1630s and early 1640s, when he used them for pen drawings (cat. nos. 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 18). (Cat. no. 92 and a drawing attributed by Schatborn to Eeckhout — fig. 4 in his *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* article [see below] — attest that Rembrandt's pupils occasionally used both prepared paper and irongall ink). Finally, Schatborn never fails to distinguish the later additions, especially of gray wash, that disfigure many of the drawings (cat. nos. 10, 30, 31, 33, 36, 38, 60, 113, 116).

Some of the drawings executed with irongall ink, which Schatborn places in the late 1630s, were dated in the early thirties by Benesch (cat. no. 15, and Ben. nos. 218, 219, 223). These are not the only instances where Schatborn revises dates assigned to drawings by Benesch and other previous cataloguers (cat. nos. 25, 27, 29, 35, 36, 38, 50, 81, 92).

For all its other laudable qualities, the catalogue's greatest contribution lies in the author's innovative approach to the attribution of Rembrandt drawings. In his Introduction — as noted above — Schatborn criticizes Benesch for accepting far too many drawings, and he demonstrates in his catalogue entries how a more informed and incisive approach to Rembrandt connoisseurship disqualifies many of the works confidently endorsed in the earlier literature. Of the fifty-six drawings catalogued here as anonymous Rembrandt school or tentatively ascribed to identified pupils, twenty-seven are fully accepted by Benesch as works by the master (twenty-nine, if we count cat. no. 12 verso and cat. no. 20 verso which were accepted by Benesch, but are rejected by Schatborn). In the catalogue entries Schatborn reattributes, rejects or questions some fifty more drawings, in other collections, given to Rembrandt in Benesch's book. To be sure, some of these sheets had been doubted or assigned to pupils by Sumowski and other specialists. Although Schatborn is deliberately reticent about the magnitude of the revision to Rembrandt's *œuvre* implied in these changes of attribution, the diligent reader will come away with the impression that he would reduce by at least one quarter the number of drawings accepted in Benesch's volumes.

Within certain categories of drawings Schatborn's demotions not only diminish the extent of the master's work, but may necessitate a substantial adjustment in our conception of his draftsmanship and of the work of his pupils. Consider, for example, the studies of nude models. Benesch catalogued under Rembrandt's name a group of thirty-one pen-and-wash drawings of female nudes, which he dated to the 1650s and 1660s. Schatborn accepts only four of these (Ben. nos. 1122, 1123, 1137, and 1142; see cat. nos. 52, 55, and sub. cat. no. 69, as well as Schatborn's „Rembrandt's Late Drawings of Female Nudes,” in *Drawings Defined*, Walter Strauss and Tracie Felker, eds., New York, 1988, pp. 307—319). In addition, he rejects (p. 66) all five studies of male nudes accepted by Benesch, although he allows the possibility that Benesch 709 and 710 might have been corrected by Rembrandt (He does not explicitly mention Benesch 710a). The biblical compositions of the 1640s, to judge from the number rejected in these pages (Ben. nos. 500, 506—10, 537, 543, 571, 578—80, 619, and 634), also appear particularly vulnerable to demotion.

Included in the exhibition, but not in the catalogue, were several sheets newly attributed to Rembrandt's pupils Ferdinand Bol, Gerbrand van den Eeckhout, Abraham van Dyck, Willem Drost, Constantijn van Renesse, Anthonie van Borssom, and Aert de Gelder. These works were the subject of an article in the *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* (Jaargang 33, no. 2, 1985) published at the time of the show. (All drawings by identified Rembrandt pupils in the collection will be discussed in future volumes in the series of catalogues of the Rijksprentenkabinet.) Of the sixteen drawings newly assigned to Drost (including figs. 13—22; fig. 12 is a copy after Drost), seven were accepted by Benesch as works by Rembrandt (Ben. nos. 389, 573, 650a, 896, 1097, 1158, 1164), as were a sheet attributed by Schatborn to Bol (Ben. no. 537), and a work given in a footnote to Eeckhout (Ben. no. 86).

It is important to emphasize that not all of Schatborn's proposed changes of attribution are demotions. At least fourteen drawings catalogued here or mentioned in the text are either given to Rembrandt for the first time or restored to him after having been rejected by Benesch, Sumowski or other specialists: cat. no. 48 (attributed by Sumowski to Maes); Ben. 977 (attributed by Sumowski to Maes); Ben. 959 (attributed by Sumowski to Maes); Ben. 1052 (attributed by Sumowski to Maes); Ben. 1202 (rejected by Broos); Ben. A3 (doubted by Benesch, Sumowski, Van Gelder, and Henkel); Ben. 682 (attributed by Sumowski to Doomer); Benesch C41 (rejected as a copy by Benesch); cat. no. 13 (previously unpublished); *Copy of an Indian Miniature* (here *Abb. 4a*, see below); cat. no. 28 and two related chalk drawings in West Berlin, inv. nos 1148 and 5790 (none of these in Benesch); Sumowski 1753XX (attributed by Sumowski to Lievens).

Although an absolute consensus on the attribution of Rembrandt drawings is probably an unattainable goal, Schatborn's catalogue is the brilliant first step toward a more restrictive, but more accurate, understanding of Rembrandt's *œuvre* as a draftsman. In addition, Schatborn's methodical approach and thoughtfully expressed arguments have raised the discourse about Rembrandt's drawings to a higher, more rational standard. One can only hope that it will inspire similarly conscientious reevaluations of the holdings of the other major collections and that Schatborn himself will undertake a new *catalogue raisonne*.

The following are comments on individual drawings or groups of works discussed in these two publications:

Cat. nos. 13, 14, 26, 28. The entries on these works constitute an exemplary demonstration of Schatborn's method of basing an attribution on the identification of stylistic and technical characteristics peculiar to Rembrandt's draftsmanship, rather than judging a sheet solely on the basis of its apparent quality. One of these drawings (cat. no. 13) is assigned to Rembrandt for the first time, while the others are restored to him after having been dismissed in earlier literature. In all four instances Schatborn singles out features typical of Rembrandt's hand that convince us of his attributions, although it still comes as a shock to realize that Rembrandt may have executed cat. no. 26, which has been rejected by the majority of scholars and most recently ascribed by Sumowski to Lambert Doomer.

Cat. no. 25. This impressive drawing (*Abb. 2*) presents a dating problem, because it combines details typical of the 1640s, such as the looping fold of drapery over Christ's

knee, with characteristics usually identified with the 1650s, such as the monumental figures, drawn with assured, angular strokes, standing at the right. Earlier scholars have dated the sheet anywhere from c. 1653 to c. 1660, so Schatborn was the first to recognize the problem. However, by placing it squarely in the 1640s, has he dated it too early? Perhaps a date of c. 1650 is most appropriate for this drawing. It seems closer in style to *Homer Reciting* of 1652 (Ben. 913) than to works datable in the 1640s.

Cat. no. 36. All earlier writers (except Hans Kauffmann) associated this drawing with the painting *Susanna and the Elders* of 1647. Schatborn demonstrates that, rather than having served as a study for the picture, it was more likely an independent invention — a variant, in reverse, of the composition of the oil. His dating in the 1650s is convincing.

Cat. no. 37. There is a nineteenth(?)-century inscription in graphite, *Rembrandt van Ryn*, lower left.

Cat. no. 41. Raguel's wife was Edna, not Anna.

Cat. no. 57—60. We often wonder about the survival rate of old master drawings. Regarding Rembrandt's studies after Mogol miniatures, it is noteworthy that, of the twenty-five sheets recorded in 1747 in the collection of Jonathan Richardson, Sr., twenty-one have come to light, as Schatborn notes on pp. 128—29. Although we do not know how many copies after Mogol miniatures Rembrandt actually made, it is encouraging that so many from Richardson's collection have come down to us. One of these sheets emerged as recently as 1984, when it appeared in a Drouot sale (24 April, lot 6, as „attributed to Rembrandt”). It was purchased by Richard Day, and is now in the collection of Mrs. Christian Aall, New York. While Schatborn notes this information on p. 129, and the drawing was reproduced in the sale catalogue, it has not otherwise been published, and I take the opportunity to reproduce it here. (*Abb. 4a*. Pen and brown ink on Japanese paper; 97 x 76 mm. Provenance: Jonathan Richardson, Sr.; Sir Joshua Reynolds).

Cat. no. 61—66. Here, Schatborn assembles a group of six drawings that he attributes to the same artist and another sheet (cat. no. 64) that he identifies as a copy after this hand. Three of these were included in Benesch's corpus as works by Rembrandt: cat. no. 61 (Ben. 506), fig. 63a (Ben. 500), and cat. no. 65 (Ben. 412). Schatborn advances tentatively the daring suggestion that the draftsman was Carel Fabritius, to whom no drawings have been securely ascribed. The technical similarity between microscopic details in one of the drawings and the execution of an analogous passage in one of Fabritius' rare paintings constitutes the very slim basis for the attribution. The tenuousness of the connection does not imply that Schatborn's research is deficient. Rather, it underscores the scarcity of evidence in this field, which often makes the attribution of drawings to Rembrandt and his pupils so problematic. That Schatborn noticed the connection at all was an outstanding feat of connoisseurship, and the group is a coherent one, which in itself is a notable discovery. Fabritius' authorship is a plausible hypothesis, but no more.

Cat. no. 67—69. Benesch ascribed to Rembrandt thirty-one studies of female nudes datable to the late 1650s and early 1660s. Schatborn has shown that only four of these have a good claim to a place in the master's *œuvre*. The remainder he divides into three

groups tentatively assigned to Aert de Gelder (Ben. 1118 [here cat. no. 67], Ben. 1117 [cat. no. 68], Ben. 1107, 1116, 1121, 1127, 1128), Johannes Raven (Ben. 1146 [here cat. no. 69], Ben. 1143, 1145, and 1147), and the so-called Munich Forger. Here, too, while the studies ascribed to De Gelder are plausibly by one hand, the attribution remains speculative. Only one drawing — a composition study with several figures — is securely by De Gelder, and, although Sumowski and Schatborn himself have assembled others around this sheet, none shows a really close stylistic connection with the female nudes. We are on somewhat firmer ground with Raven, whose only signed drawing is a study of a male nude that exhibits some — although not completely compelling — similarities with cat. no. 69 and the other works Schatborn correctly groups with it.

Cat. no. 103. A sheet of studies with two men and a woman teaching a child to walk may be by the same hand as cat. no. 103 and the drawings Schatborn relates to it. This study sheet, which is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has been ascribed both to Rembrandt (Ben. 200) and to Nicolaes Maes (Sumowski, 8, no, 1970X), but neither attribution is convincing.

The drawings newly assigned to Rembrandt pupils in Schatborn's article in the *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* are distinguished from those ascribed in the catalogue to Fabritius, De Gelder, and Raven by a greater degree of certainty in the attribution. The unexpected, but perfectly credible, attribution to Abraham van Dyck of a view of the Zaagmolenpoort outside Amsterdam rests in part upon the similarity of the inscription on the verso (*Abb. 4b*) to the monogram and date on a portrait drawing by the artist.

A *Self-Portrait, Drawing* ascribed by Schatborn to Aert de Gelder is, like the female nudes given to him in the catalogue, difficult to accept or reject due to the lack of immediately comparable works certainly by De Gelder.

By adding sixteen new sheets from the Rijksprentenkabinet alone to the work of Willem Drost, Schatborn demonstrates that, building on the foundations laid by Sumowski in his *Drawings of the Rembrandt School*, scholars are making substantial progress in constructing the *œuvres* of Rembrandt pupils who, until very recently, were scarcely known as draughtsmen. In addition to the works in the Rijksprentenkabinet, Schatborn convincingly attributes to Drost several drawings from a large group of figure studies given by Sumowski and others to Maes. More drawings by Drost await discovery in other collections.

William W. Robinson

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