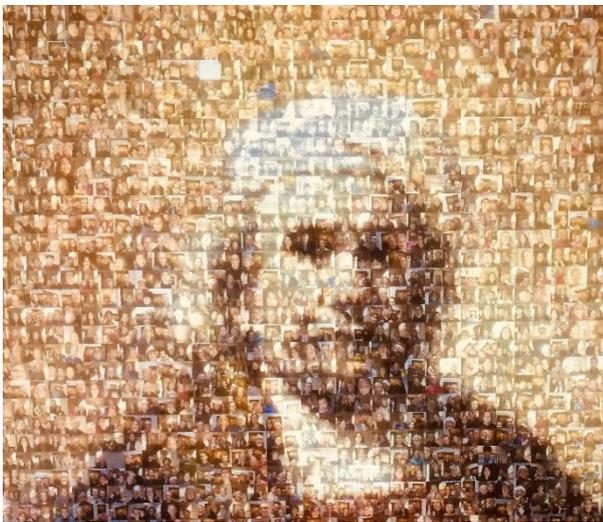




Newsletter 123 – December 2019

REMBRANDT #nofilter EXHIBITION



#nofilter digital photomosaic

This edition is largely dedicated to our Rembrandt 350th anniversary events which continued this autumn following the loan in April of Kenwood's great Rembrandt self-portrait to the Gagosian Gallery in Mayfair for six weeks.

This autumn's proceedings started off on 4 October with the opening of our temporary exhibition *Rembrandt #nofilter*, which the Friends were able to sponsor thanks to a large private donation and support from lighting supplier TM Lighting.

"We've called the exhibition #nofilter because we are trying to say that Rembrandt, an artist famous for his self-portraits, was showing himself with no filter, just as some people take selfies with no make-up," Senior Curator Wendy Monkhouse explained.

We were delighted that our curators Esmé Whittaker and Louise Cooling, aided by Wendy Monkhouse, worked with the various lighting, software and graphics partners to deliver an excellent result on time and on budget.

Please see Louise's Curatorial Report below for more details on the take-up of the exhibition, which runs until 12 January. Be sure to go and see this thought-provoking 'in focus' examination of Kenwood's famous self-portrait if you haven't already been.

LECTURE BY PROFESSOR JAMES WELU

Friends gathered on a damp autumn evening at Kenwood House to hear Professor James Welu, former Director of the Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts, lecture on *Maps in 17th century Dutch Painting – a look at and beyond Rembrandt's Circles*.

Rembrandt painted more self-portraits than any artist (10% of his oeuvre) and our own magnificent late self-portrait was painted when personal and professional setbacks had made him something of a loner, his artist's gold chain, so prominent in earlier self-portraits, now all but hidden beneath his tunic.

Large wall maps were important status objects in 17th century Dutch interiors and Professor Welu has through prodigious research been able to identify many of the maps depicted in paintings of the period, by artists such as Buytewech, Dirk Hals, Molenaer, Verspronck, van Brekelenkam, Vermeer and others.



Professor Welu, Peter Barber FoK

Although the two circles in our Rembrandt are not dissimilar in shape to those appearing in double-hemisphere world maps of the period, Professor Welu was of the opinion that, when extended out, the resulting map would at 6ft x 4ft be too large to represent a wall map. He also considered if the circles might represent Rembrandt's ability to draw a perfect circle free-hand. This refers to the tradition from antiquity that the greatest artists had this skill. However, they are not complete circles.

Rembrandt stood out from many contemporaries in not painting in detailed background artefacts or furnishings and so the circles could be more of a simple compositional device. To us they represent an endless talking point and are one of the reasons we never tire of looking at the picture.

Many thanks to Professor Welu for a scholarly and entertaining lecture, to Peter Barber for organising the lecture, to Searcys for sponsoring the copious and excellent wine and canapés, and to English Heritage and volunteers for opening and presenting the house so beautifully.

MELVYN BRAGG INTRODUCES SIMON SCHAMA ON REMBRANDT



© EH, Lucy Millson-Watkins

Our final event marking the 350th anniversary of Rembrandt's death was at King's Place on 4 November. At this London cultural venue, our Ambassador, Lord Melvyn Bragg introduced Sir Simon Schama who delivered an hour's virtuoso talk on his most admired artist.

In an intense hour, Schama argued that Rembrandt depicts hands as an indicator of the subject's internal state of mind, the worldly confidence in the *Portrait of Jan Six* providing a marked contrast to the tragic *Rape of Lucretia*. Faces and bodies too - contrasting Rubens' *Crucifixion* (c1618-1620) with Rembrandt's of 1631, Schama highlighted the difference between two different gospel interpretations: St Luke's 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' in the case of Rubens, against St Matthew's and St Mark's 'My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me' for the anguish conveyed by Rembrandt. In this way Schama

illustrated how Rembrandt saw the human body, male and female, and how his interpretation of it represented a radical step-change in the art of the 17th century.

But it was not just through depictions of others that Rembrandt sought to capture what we now call the psyche: Schama highlighted the exquisite small painting Rembrandt made of himself in his studio (currently part of the Dulwich Picture Gallery's excellent exhibition *Rembrandt's Light*) – as ever, we were left with the elusive question: who was Rembrandt? The artist toggled up in studio props, the overly confident, debonair self-portrait in a 1631 etching to rival Rubens' own self-portrait, the agonised face of Christ/Rembrandt, or the glowering face in the Kenwood self-portrait which Schama began with, and which he rightly identified as being intimidating at the very least.

Schama encapsulated his theme by choosing *The Jewish Bride* as one of his favourites – extraordinary hands, faces, bodies, and ground-breaking use of painting materials.

As the Jewish Chronicle reported of this event: "The large audience was certainly appreciative of Sir Simon's unscripted insights into Rembrandt's genius. It's 20 years since he published *Rembrandt's Eyes*, and he remains certain that the Dutch master's position at the summit of the premier league of great artists is secure."

What is equally clear is that it was our privilege to listen to a phenomenal tour de force by Simon Schama, with the return to the stage of Melvyn Bragg questioning his great friend on aspects of Rembrandt's life and art. Our grateful thanks to Lord Bragg and Sir Simon for their tremendous kindness in participating in this captivating evening, which helped raise the profile of Kenwood and its outstanding art collection far beyond the Northern Heights.



© EH, Lucy Millson-Watkins

Sally Doganis FoK, Simon Schama, Anna Eavis EH,
Melvyn Bragg and Helen Payne FoK



RETIREMENT OF OUR CHAIRWOMAN CHRISTINE MATHEZ-DAVEY

It is with great sadness that we are saying good-bye to Christine Mathez-Davey who is retiring from the Chair of the Friends of Kenwood in April 2020.

In twelve eventful years, Christine's responsible leadership, sheer hard work and diplomatic skills have raised the profile of the Friends. Her achievements are too numerous to include here, but among the stand-out annual evening events for the Friends were the 80th and 90th anniversary celebrations in 2008 and 2018. Christine's extensive knowledge of Kenwood's history and collection made her a forceful advocate on Kenwood's behalf. She master-minded the highly successful fund-raising campaign to raise funds as part of the 'Caring for Kenwood' project in 2012-13 which paid for the Entrance Hall restoration and more recently led the Friends' support for the many Rembrandt events this year. Christine will be much missed by Friends and Council colleagues. We wish her very well in her retirement and fervently hope we shall continue to see her at Friends events in the future.

We are delighted that Dame Jenny Abramsky, DBE, has agreed to take over the Chair and she will be formally appointed at the Annual General Meeting of the Friends on 19 April 2020. We shall introduce Dame Jenny fully in our next Newsletter.

CURATORIAL REPORT

Rembrandt #nofilter opened to the public on the 350th anniversary of Rembrandt's death on Friday 4 October following two well-attended breakfast previews. The display has received media coverage in *The Times*, *Ham & High*, *Town and Country* and *The Lady*, as well as listings on the Londonist, Art Fund and CODART websites, in addition to pieces in the EH Member's Magazine and e-newsletter. There has also been favourable coverage on both the National and Regional EH social media channels, including an Instagram story featuring Louise (4 October).

Visitor feedback from volunteers has been overwhelmingly positive and the digital photomosaic element has proved popular with a wide audience, necessitating the shrinking of the image size in order to allow for more images to be added. As of Monday 4 November, the mosaic has been completed and will now loop through as new images are added. This means that approximately 4,000 people have participated in the artwork and taken their own self-portrait.

A cohort of Kenwood's dedicated team of volunteers has been delivering twice weekly 'spotlight talks' on the themes of the display, alongside curatorial talks and tours. Additionally, there will be a number of learning events for primary and secondary school classes held in late November.

An evergreen digital article exploring Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait with Two Circles*, written by Louise, was launched on the Kenwood webpages to coincide with the opening of #nofilter. Wendy Monkhouse delivered a podcast on the English Heritage podcast channel (Episode 29, 10 October), downloaded over 2000 times to date.

Finally, the **Rembrandt 350th events programme** culminated in the Friends of Kenwood's events including the James Welu lecture and Melvyn Bragg/Simon Schama event at King's Place. The display will run until 12 January 2020, on which date the Dining Room display will be reinstated and we will do a final assessment of the whole experience.

The following outward **loans** have been approved by the English Heritage Acquisitions, Disposals and Loans Committee:

Frans Hals' portrait of *Pieter van den Broecke* to *Frans Hals: The Male Portraits* at The Wallace Collection, London from September 2021 to January 2022. This is the first exhibition to focus solely on Frans Hals portraits of men posing alone and will explore his innovative approach to the subject from his early career in the 1610s until his death in 1666. The exhibition will bring together fifteen of Hals' finest male portraits, displayed chronologically alongside his most famous work, *The Laughing Cavalier*, to reveal how the artist's innovative use of pose and technique revolutionised male portraiture. As no reciprocal loan is possible from The Wallace Collection, the painting will be backfilled by a work from the English Heritage collections.

Louise couriered *Two Girls Dressing a Kitten by Candlelight* by **Joseph Wright of Derby** on its return journey from the Fondation de l'Hermitage, Lausanne, where the painting had been on display since June as part of *Ombres, de la Renaissance à nos jours* (Shadows: From The Renaissance To The Present Day). The painting was reinstalled in Lord Mansfield's Dressing Room on Tuesday 5 November.

Following approval of the loan of two paintings from Kenwood by **Angelica Kauffman** to a forthcoming retrospective at the Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf and Royal Academy, London in 2020, the RA has agreed to provide two reciprocal loans for the duration of the exhibition. The paintings – Henry Raeburn's *Boy with a Rabbit* (1814) and *Boy with a Kitten* by William Owen (1807) – will form part of an interpretive trail at Kenwood exploring the theme of children with animals in British art of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Curated by Louise, the trail will involve a limited rehang in the Breakfast Room to allow Reynolds' *The Young Shepherdess* to be displayed for the first time since it was presented to Kenwood in 2003 by the heirs of Lord Iveagh via the Art Fund. Spread across several key rooms at Kenwood, the trail, working title *Children with Animals in British Art*, will include interpretive panels exploring this popular sub-genre of British art and its evident appeal to Edward Cecil Guinness, 1st Earl of Iveagh.

It is hoped that the on-site interpretation will also be accompanied by evergreen digital content on the Kenwood webpages, as well as social media coverage and learning

activities. The trail will be in situ from mid-January to early October 2020.

Lottery 25th Anniversary Celebrations

This year the National Lottery is celebrating its 25th anniversary. A recipient of money via the Lottery Fund (formerly HLF), Kenwood will be featured in a national advertising campaign marking the anniversary, the only English Heritage site to be included. Additionally, Louise and a team of Kenwood volunteers will be hosting four free events, including special 'highlights for the stores' sessions for the public between the 23 November and 2 December. These will be booked in advance and attendees must present a lottery ticket on arrival.

Louise Cooling – Assistant Curator, Kenwood

LANDSCAPE MATTERS

A new Head Gardener will start at the beginning of December and a new gardener will join the two existing gardeners at the end of November. The garden team has operated at 50% all summer, covering the whole Estate! Despite this, the Kenwood Kitchen Garden won a London in Bloom Gold Award for the best walled garden, and the beds outside Mansion Cottage have looked stunning all summer (see photo). So, congratulations to the two-man garden team and congratulations to Heath Hands who have given English Heritage crucial help over a very busy growing season.



The meeting arranged for the post-summer event feedback was attended by local residents and some Friends of Kenwood, and English Heritage have assured us that they will take comments on all outdoor summer events into consideration. The June 2020 Newsletter will not be published until the next series of events are about to begin, so please keep checking our regular emails and website for updates.

We have asked English Heritage that before the next summer event season the South Terrace will have been resurfaced with a dust-free surface. All readers will have noticed the orange dust against the white façade of the House (see photo), this has been a problem for some years and is being closely monitored by English Heritage because they are concerned about the detrimental effect to the interiors of Kenwood and the priceless art collection.



If you are interested in recent developments on Hampstead Heath, you can visit the City of London's Hampstead Heath page on its website:

www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath.

KENWOOD ESTATE AUTUMN WALK

10 October 2019

Friends turned out in force on this sunny morning for our autumn walk, and we were very fortunate to be led by the City of London Trees Management Officer David Humphries, pending the appointment of a new Head Gardener for Kenwood.

We started our walk to the north of the house and arborist David explained that tree management was largely about managing the effect on trees of people and animals, especially excessive footfall, which causes damage to roots and soil compaction, which prevents moisture and nutrients reaching the roots.

Another current problem faced by arborists is to control the oak processionary moth, whose caterpillar leaves behind toxic hairs which can lead to rashes and respiratory problems in humans and animals. The good news is that it doesn't kill trees and no oak trees have been lost at Kenwood.

We stopped to admire a fast-growing Sweet Chestnut near Hampstead Lane and David explained that each large root is connected to a single large branch ('line of life'), which is how the tree manages water and nutrient uptake.

Moving down to the lake, we admired several Liquidambar whose leaves are starting to turn brilliant red and orange, David explaining that trees derive most of their energy from photosynthesis in late spring/early summer. Several *Taxodium distichum*, which are deciduous conifers, are among the oldest on the estate but suffered some damage in the St Jude's Day Storm of October 2013.



Friends dwarfed by a Zelkova

We finished the walk in the South Wood, which is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest ('triple-SI'), David explaining how the orthodoxy over leaving dead trees in situ has changed over the last twenty years. Standing trunks provide a habitat for woodpeckers and other animals requiring a drier environment and horizontal logs become the home of invertebrates.

David pointed out several Wild Service trees, an indigenous species which was used to flavour mead and beer before the advent of hops. He is encouraging the planting of more of this relatively rare species.

Friends showed their gratitude to David for a fascinating and information-packed walk. We felt we had only started to tap into David's deep knowledge of trees and the estate and we hope very much to welcome him back.

VISIT TO SOUTHSIDE HOUSE

16 July 2019



A glorious summer day saw a group of us meet on the edge of Wimbledon Common at this treat of a Jacobean farmhouse with Georgian and later additions. The house was the home of shipping and cotton heiress Hilda Pennington-Munthe, who moved to England from Biarritz in 1934, after the family business was ruined in the 1929 Wall Street Crash. The estranged wife of Axel Munthe, Hilda brought much of her Biarritz furniture, art and chattels to Southside House and to her only other remaining property, Hellens in Herefordshire.

She had two sons - Peter, an unsung but accomplished artist and Malcolm, also gifted in design, but a career soldier. Malcolm's service in WWII was terrifying: he was a member of SOE in Norway, was hunted by the Gestapo and Swedish secret police, finally escaped back to England, only to be sent to Anzio and Monte Cassino on intelligence work where he was seriously injured. His post-war reconstruction of Southside House provided him with a form of therapy, his PTSD only too apparent in the doodle under his Corona typewriter in his library, bearing the words "heaven is for fools, hell is for angels".

The house itself is not large, but a bit of a tardis. The Garden Room is the entrance, with a number of 19th century paintings, including a willowy *Adversity* by James Sant, and a dark Sargent landscape. Straight on through an obscure corridor with 17th century portraits by Van Dyck's assistant, Theodore Roussel, to more intimate family rooms. Then there are grander additions, the most striking being the extended dining room which now houses double-hung three-quarter length 17th and 18th century portraits, ranging from that of the first Lord and Lady Wharton by van Ravestyn (early 17th century) to Hogarth's portrait of Charles Tynte, MP. Malcolm also conceived a hallway which would not be out of place in a Dutch 17th century interior, much of it created out of papier mâché. A complete contrast is the French neo-classical Music Room, giving onto the delightful garden with surprises at every turn.

Our knowledgeable guide lives in the house, curates it, and has archived everything he has managed to discover about it, including a cache of dynamite and guns in a hidden cellar. A real eye-opener of a morning for north Londoners – our thanks to Angela Cox, as always, for organising the visit.

VISIT TO ING ART COLLECTION

3 October 2019

There's nothing like a glass of wine to start a visit! Moreover, we were served in a room containing a mouth-watering wine collection, though the Petrus bottles were purely for show. On the walls were exquisite landscapes which have some connection with wine, by artists such as Lucien Pissarro and Augustus John.

Thus began a whistle-stop tour of a fabulous collection of British art from the late 18th century, begun by the Barings Bank, and continued now by ING. It is particularly rich in British landscape watercolours that we saw in perfect light conditions. Then we ascended to the top floor (stunning night-time view from the terrace) with meeting rooms and corridors hung with paintings. The collection is particularly rich in art of the first half of the 20th century. There are gorgeous paintings by Charles Ginner, Carel Weight, John and Paul Nash, Stanley Spencer and Ceri Richards. The principle behind the display is to show works by a single artist assembled together, or to group works by artists who knew each other. ING maintains the tradition of collecting contemporary art through the sponsorship of the ING Discerning Eye Exhibition in the UK, including work by Jeremy Gardiner, Neil Canning and James Lloyd.

LECTURES AND VISITS JANUARY TO JUNE 2019

Lectures

Lectures begin at 11.00 am in the Lecture Room.

The lecture on **19 April** begins at 11.30 am, following the AGM.

Seating is limited in the Lecture Room due to fire regulations. The Lecture Room is open from 10.30am.

Sunday 12 January, **How Gauguin re-made the portrait**
Christopher Riopelle

Sunday 16 February, **'A Godley Household': the
Jacobean family portrait of Sir Thomas Lucy**
Angela Cox

Sunday 22 March, **Aubrey Beardsley**
Caroline Corbeau-Parsons

Sunday 19 April, (at **11.30am** following AGM)
'Venus Chiding Cupid' by Joshua Reynolds:
technical research and conservation
Alexandra Gent

Sunday 17 May, **The Art of the Hero: Commemorating
Scott of the Antarctic**
Max Jones

Sunday 21 June, **Projecting Personality: Mrs Carl Meyer
and John Singer Sargent, 1896**
Tessa Murdoch

Visits

Tuesday 11 February, **The Charterhouse**

Charterhouse Square, Barbican, London EC1M 6AN at
14.00 pm

Friday 24 April, **The National Portrait Gallery**

St. Martin's Place, Charing Cross, London, WC2H 0HE at
10.45 am

**FOR FULL DETAILS OF LECTURES AND
EVENTS SEE THE EVENTS SHEET AND
WEBSITE**

SPRING ESTATE WALK



Wednesday 29 April, 10.30 am, **Subject to be Announced**

A walk with Kenwood's Head Gardener. Meet at North
Front of Kenwood House.

This walk is free for Friends of Kenwood; non-members
£5.00.

Please contact Elizabeth Inglis on 020 8450 8802 or via
email efinglis@dsl.pipex.com

BREW HOUSE AND STEWARD'S ROOM CAFES

A major redesign and redecoration will take place over the winter to improve the catering facilities at Kenwood. The Brew House Café, The Steward's Room and the historic Old Kitchen will close on 6 January and will re-open in spring 2020.

The redesign and redecoration will modernise the Brew House Café with new furniture and fittings and provide English Heritage with the opportunity to enhance the menu of hot and cold meals and snacks, with a firm focus on seasonal and local produce.

While the café spaces are closed there will be alternative catering arrangements on a temporary basis, so please search them out and continue to enjoy your customary breakfast, coffee, lunch and tea at Kenwood!

GiveAsYouLive

Sign up to GiveAsYouLive and choose the Friends of Kenwood as a beneficiary of your online shopping!

Have you noticed every Newsletter includes this reminder? If you possibly can, please sign up to Give As You Live. It is a platform through which you can access most of the UK's retailers online. You just have to register, nominate FOK as your charity, and then every time you buy something online, we receive a small percentage from the retailer. It is beneficial to all: the retailers belong to this scheme as part of their own social philanthropy programmes and we get a few pennies for each purchase.

Register at www.giveasyoulive.com/join/kenwoodfriends

To date, we have received nearly £400 in these small donations, so it's worth doing!

MEMBERSHIP

It's never too late to renew your membership!

You can pay in several different ways: by bank transfer, by PayPal, or by cheque.

For payment by bank transfer, you can find our bank details on the renewal form on the membership page of our website, friendsofkenwood.org.uk

If you would like to pay by PayPal, please go to the website and follow the simple instructions to pay online. Between the beginning of April and the end of August each year, you can also pay by direct debit, please note this option is only available through our website and by setting up the direct debit facility through GoCardless.

You can support us even more generously by becoming a Rembrandt Friend for £300 p.a. or a Vermeer Friend for £750 p.a.

We really need lots of support, so please encourage your friends to become Friends too!

Why not buy a subscription as a Christmas present?

SUPPORTING THE FRIENDS OF KENWOOD

We rely on your support to maintain our high profile at Kenwood House, and your donations are welcome in increasingly challenging times. Kenwood is under the care of The English Heritage Trust which has to be self-funding by 2023. Our aim at the Friends of Kenwood is to keep Kenwood a top priority.

A further benefit of leaving a gift to Friends of Kenwood, or any other qualifying charity, is that this amount will not be subject to Inheritance Tax. In addition, if total charitable bequests amount to at least 10% of the taxable estate, then the Inheritance Tax chargeable on the balance is reduced from 40% to 36%.

We have recently received a substantial donation from a member which has been used to set up a separate Curatorial Fund to be used towards funding small, effective exhibitions in order to raise the profile of Kenwood.

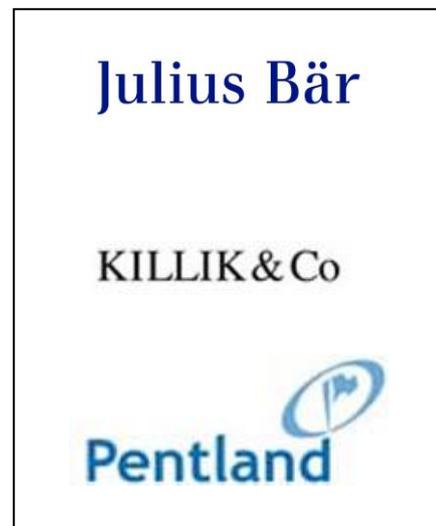
VERMEER AND REMBRANDT FRIENDS

The Friends would like to extend grateful thanks to the following for their continuing support:

Vermeer Friends: Chris Carter, David Pears
Rembrandt Friends: Elizabeth Meek, Kip Meek

CORPORATE BENEFACTORS

The Friends would like to extend grateful thanks to the following for supporting us as Corporate Benefactors:



We are grateful to Assistant Curator Louise Cooling for permission to print the following short article by way of postscript to our Rembrandt celebrations:

REMBRANDT'S SELF-PORTRAIT

Rembrandt is one of the most celebrated artists in history. Over the course of his forty-year career, he scrutinised his changing appearance before a mirror, painting, drawing and etching more than 80 self-portraits. The painting in the Iveagh Bequest at Kenwood is one of his last. It was begun around 1665 when Rembrandt was 59. Among the largest and most imposing of all Rembrandt's self-portraits, it is celebrated for its technical brilliance and ruthless honesty, offering one of the most distinctive and defining images of the artist.

An innovative and prolific painter, draughtsman and etcher, Rembrandt van Rijn was one of the greatest artists of the 17th century Dutch 'Golden Age'. Born in 1606 at the beginning of a period of great wealth and cultural achievement in the Netherlands, Rembrandt worked first in his home town of Leiden before moving to Amsterdam, a thriving commercial and artistic centre where he lived and worked for almost forty years.

Rembrandt made far more self-portraits than any of his contemporaries or predecessors. Numbering around 40 paintings, 31 etchings and 7 drawings, these self-portraits record Rembrandt's changing features from youth to old age, tracing his life and career from ambitious young artist, through the confident and successful painter of the 1630s and 1640s, to the elderly troubled master of his late years.

Unlike many of his earlier self-portraits, in which Rembrandt depicted himself artificially posed or acting out a part in an elaborate costume, *Self-Portrait with Two Circles* shows him simply as a painter in his studio. He is plainly dressed in working clothes with a fur-lined tabard, traditionally worn by painters since the 16th century, along with a simple white linen cap. In his left hand he holds the tools of his trade – a wooden palette, brushes, and a long mahlstick used as a rest to steady his hand while painting. To the right can be seen the edge of the canvas on which he is working but rather than showing himself in the act of painting, Rembrandt stares directly at us with one hand on his hip.

X-rays taken of *Self-Portrait with Two Circles* reveal that Rembrandt dramatically altered the composition of the painting and in doing so, changed the way in which he presented himself. Originally, Rembrandt had painted himself at work. The x-ray shows him turned further to the right, with his left hand raised in the act of painting. His artist's tools - palette, brushes and mahlstick are held in his right hand. We know from other self-portraits that Rembrandt did not paint with his left-hand. The error presumably happened because Rembrandt was precisely copying his reversed reflection in a mirror - a surprising mistake for an artist who painted so many self-portraits

before this one. He therefore altered the composition, transferring his tools into his left hand, realigning his body with the front of the picture plane, and hiding his now empty right hand in the folds of his painter's tabard. In doing so, Rembrandt transformed the painting from an image of an artist at work, captured in the act of creating a painting, to the image of an artist in his studio. The focus is no longer on the action of painting but on Rembrandt's likeness.

From highly finished areas to more rapidly applied brushwork, *Self-Portrait with Two Circles* demonstrates the breadth of Rembrandt's techniques, developed over a forty-year career. The face shows the highest degree of finish, with a complex range of techniques used to model the features - the whole is painted with rather dry-brush strokes, with a sequence of patches of paint making up the puffy skin on his drooping cheeks. Rembrandt uses dabs of thick impasto paint to highlight the nose and curls of hair, while scratches scored into the wet paint with the butt end of the brush suggest his moustache. Rembrandt had first begun to use this technique as a young artist and it is evident in many of his earliest self-portraits. In contrast to the rich modelling of the flesh, Rembrandt has painted his eyes using thin glazes of semi-transparent paint. X-rays reveal that no opaque lead white was used, so that the eyes appear as empty sockets. The result is an intense, penetrating gaze, made all the more ambiguous because one of his eyes is in shadow. An immediate contrast is created by the hat, which has been roughly painted with a few strokes of a loaded brush, leaving a dark outline still visible. Rembrandt used a technique called scumbling to create a soft-focus effect for his fur-lined tabard. This involves loosely applying very thin layers of paint with a dry brush, allowing some of the paint underneath to show through.

Passages of paint like the white studio cap, hair, skin, fur and cloth demonstrate Rembrandt's mastery by revealing both his vision as an artist and his ability to create the illusion of reality, while also displaying the materiality of his medium – the paint itself.

