Patrick Bade | Rembrandt, Part 1

- Well, welcome everybody. We get to the greatest Dutch artist of Rembrandt, and you can see him aged 23 on the left and aged 63 in the last year of his life on the right. Now, we know far more about Rembrandt than we do about any other painter of the Dutch golden age, and that's partly because he was very celebrated in his lifetime, but also he has left, in the form of his paintings, drawings, and etchings, an extraordinary, you could describe it as a visual autobiography or journal, with over 80 self-portraits.

Visuals are displayed throughout the presentation.

No artist before him had made so many self-portraits and no artist for a very long time after him either. So he's born in 1606, in the middle of the gruelling Eighty Year War of Dutch independence. And the worst atrocities were over by the time he was born, but they would've been very vivid in people's memory. On screen, you have the notorious Spanish fury of 1776, when the inhabitants of Antwerp were massacred and a poignant image on the right-hand side of a Dutchman sifting through the ashes of his wife, who has been burnt alive for heresy by the Spanish occupiers.

So this war finished sort of midway through Rembrandt's life in 1648, the end of the Thirty Years' War, the Treaty of Munster, which finally recognised Dutch independence. You see the signing of the treaty and a map of Holland represented as a kind of triumphant lion. What is so, I think, extraordinary about the Dutch is what they learned from this terrible experience. And what they learned was the value of tolerance and inclusiveness. So Holland was undoubtedly the most liberal and the most tolerant place, was certainly the best place for Jews to be in Europe in the 17th century.

And this is the splendid Portuguese synagogue that was built in Amsterdam around about 1680. Even if you were a Catholic, it wasn't so terrible. They had a kind of don't ask, don't tell policy. As long as people didn't make a show of their faith, they were allowed to practise it in private. This is a painting by Vermeer, who was a Catholic. It's one of his largest pictures, and it's a declaration of his Catholic faith. It's called the "Allegory of Faith." But the country had officially become a Calvinist, and the Calvinists were very strict about any kind of idolatry. Of course, they're following the Jewish Bible in this.

So the mediaeval Catholic churches were stripped of their stained glass and their altar pieces and their statues, and they whitewashed, as you see in this image. So it's kind of strange that Rembrandt should have become, I think, the greatest religious artist of the 17th century. His paintings were not painted for churches, and with rare exceptions, they weren't commissioned. They were painted for private, devotional purposes, pictures such as this wonderfully tender nativity scene. And so, although there was a court, the Prince of Orange, stadtholder of Holland, had a court and was effectively king, certainly the later part of the century. And it was some kind of aristocracy, but the collectors of pictures were wealthy, middle class people, or even quite

well-off farmers. When John Evelyn went to Holland in 1641, he was absolutely astonished to see that wealthy farmers collected pictures.

So here you see a rather splendid house, presumably in Amsterdam, a sort of town palace, and you can see the pictures on the wall. But even in the houses of the richest in Amsterdam, of course, space was at a premium. And so 17th century Dutch pictures tend to be on a relatively small scale. When you are walking through a great museum of old masters, you walk through the Renaissance rooms and the Baroque rooms, you see all these huge altar pieces, huge mythological pictures, and then you walk into the Dutch room and all the pictures are on a rather more intimate scale. So Rembrandt was born in the town of Leiden, and of course, like other Dutch towns, it's flat and crisscrossed with canals.

In fact, it hasn't changed very much. I think if Rembrandt came back, he would be able to find his way around the streets and canals of Leiden quite easily. He was born into comfortable circumstances, despite the fact that his father had nine children. He was a fairly prosperous miller, and traditionally these two people were identified as Rembrandt's father and mother. Certainly that cannot be Rembrandt's mother. I mean he would've been in his early twenties when he painted that picture. She couldn't theoretically, I suppose, be his grandmother, but she was somebody he knew very well because he painted her again and again. He had three teachers. And the most important was an artist called Pieter Lastman, who was based in Amsterdam. So Rembrandt had to go to Amsterdam for six months as an apprentice to Pieter Lastman. Pieter Lastman was an Italianate artist.

He'd actually been to Italy, and to some extent he was influenced either directly by Caravaggio or by the Dutch Caravaggisti. This is by Pieter Lastman, and it's Ruth and Naomi. So it's a biblical subject. And so we can see, of course, biblical subjects are going to form a very important part of Rembrandt's work, but it was something he would already have, sort of, been interested in from the time of his apprenticeship with Lastman. In fact, Rembrandt's earliest pictures are very, very close to Lastman, indeed. Possibly the earliest picture to survive is, again, a biblical subject. It's "Balaam and His Ass," which you see on the left-hand side. It's a very small picture. That is in the little Musee Cognacq-Jay in the Marais in Paris. And I imagine there will be some people listening in today who may have come with me on a day trip to Paris from the London Jewish Cultural Centre.

We went to the museum and we saw that picture, and it's a day that is very vivid in my memory, because after we left the museum, we went to look at the exterior of the very beautiful Art Nouveau synagogue, and Rue Pavee also in the Marais, which I'd long to get into, you know, for decades. But it's a very orthodox Hasidic sect, and it's normally impossible to get into. But we had a very charming lady with us, and she was able to charm a rather crusty elderly gentleman. He got us in to see the interior of this beautiful building. So, many biblical subjects from the start. This is Anna and Tobit. At this stage, he's still working in Leiden. He hasn't gone to am Amsterdam to live yet, apart from his six month apprenticeship.

And you can see he's working. It's a very tight style, very, very finely painted with a lot of detail and a rather smooth surface. Here are two of the paintings painted from this elderly lady who was once thought to be his mother. The one on the right-hand side, it belongs to the queen. So I imagine it's probably going to be in this show at the Queen's Gallery at the moment of the highlights of the Queen's Collection. It's a mesmerising picture. I last saw it in a show at the National Gallery in the Sainsbury Wing. And I'll never forget standing behind two old ladies who are looking at it, absolutely fascinated. And I heard one say to the other, "Yeah, Rembrandt, he's good at faces." And I thought, "You are so right, madam. He really is." Let's get a little closer and see how he explores this face. He maps the face, all the little wrinkles, and all the little cavities, wrinkles.

Every little detail in that face is lovingly, lovingly explored. And this is quite... He was working at the time with another Leiden artist called Gerrit Dou. And their work is very close. They sometimes actually collaborated on pictures together. And it's close enough that, as we say, Rubens and van Dyck, that pictures have gone backwards and forwards between the two. And Gerrit Dou was clearly also painting from same elderly lady, and it's Dou in the middle here. And there's two small images either side of, by Rembrandt. I think you could, when you make that comparison, well, I don't think you actually have to be the world's greatest art expert to be able to tell the difference, that somehow, Dou is completely outclassed by Rembrandt.

This is a picture in the National Gallery. Again, it's the story of Anna and Tobit, and this is now thought to be a joint effort between the two artists, Dou and Rembrandt. So when Rembrandt, he moves on to Amsterdam, and he has another, you know, 35 years of career or more in Amsterdam. Dou stays behind in Leiden, had a very, very successful career. His style doesn't change, it's in aspect. He practises this extremely fine, smooth, detail style throughout his career. He was very popular, certainly, at some points in the 17th century, more popular and fetching higher prices than Rembrandt.

Rembrandt moves on, not just geographically, but artistically. And we'll see, he's an artist like Picasso. There's an enormous development, enormous change in his style over the next decades. And throughout that period, he's always taking in apprenticeships. He's taking in assistants who work in his studio and they adopt whatever style he is working in, early period, middle period, late period. His assistants will work in that style, and it's a huge problem. Or maybe you can say it's actually an opportunity for art historians. There's a whole industry of attributing, re-attributing paintings, attributing them to Rembrandt. And then you had the Rembrandt commission coming along and it took great many of them away and gave them to various assistants.

And now many of those paintings, which were the Rembrandt, commission de-Rembrandted are being re-Rembrandted. And I would say probably the most notorious example of that is the Wallace Collection in London, which at one point had 13 Rembrandts. And when the Rembrandt commission had finished their work, there was only one left, but three or four of those 13 have now been reattributed to Rembrandt. So I'm sure this is going to be an ongoing saga. So here is

Rembrandt as a very young man in Leiden in his studio, which you can see is quite a simple and humble one.

And he shows himself in, well, they're, in a way, quite splendid, but I think they probably are his working clothes. And he's showing himself with a pallet, and with the brushes, and a mahl stick. You see the long stick, the little ball on the end of it, that's a stick that he's able to rest that on the canvas to steady his hand while he's painting. And so these self-portraits, I think I mentioned the other day that Rembrandt, as a young man, must have spent an awful lot of time in front of the mirror. And he's very typical of the 17th century, of the Baroque age, in being interested in emotional states and how they show on the face. So he's trying out all sorts of different emotions, scorn, laughter, anger, surprise, shock.

You can see all these different expressions being tried out on his face. And the he painting on the right-hand side, I think he's experimenting with light and shade in a way that might not have been possible for him in a commissioned portrait. I think he might also, I mean, Rembrandt is usually a very, he's the most honest of painters. And there are only a few self-portraits where you can say, "Yes, he's being kind to himself. He's flattering himself." Maybe this is one of them. He had a very broad face and a very fat nose. And I suppose by dividing the face in light and shade in this way, it was a way of disguising the coarseness of his features. Just to remind you again, of this Baroque interest in pulling faces and expressing emotion.

These are sculptures by Bernini, which he made after his own face. The "David" on the left-hand side and the soul burning in whole hell. He's supposed to have put his foot in a fire and looks himself in the mirror to see what that would do to his facial expression. And here are some more of these amazing... Actually the one on the right-hand side, if you want it, it's an etching. You can have one. An advertisement popped up on my screen a couple of days ago from Sotheby's for a sale coming up, and they actually have a copy of this print coming up for sale later this month. So there are pen and ink drawings, and etchings, and oil paintings. This little one on the right-hand side, I really love this.

We can see he's looking at himself with a kind of shock, astonishment, open mouth, a kind of expression that he could use in a subject painting. But of course in a commission portrait, he would never be able to give somebody an expression like this. And the other thing, I think he uses these paintings also to experiment with technique. And he's here experimenting with a technique, that was also used by Rubens, I pointed out to you before, where he's painting wet into wet and then reversing the brush to draw through the wet paint. You can see that in the curls of the hair, where actually there's a lighter underlayer of a sort of lighter, warmer brown, and a darker burnt brown over the top, and then he's drawing through the top layer to create these little curls. So, more of these.

Oh, you can see him doing the same here on the left-hand side and another self-portrait with a very quirky expression on the right-hand side. So all the way through his life, Rembrandt has a reverence for age, and he loves painting old people. And he loves the way a long life leaves its

traces on the face. Here are two Old Testament prophets. This very mournful picture on the right-hand side is Jeremiah lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem. And you have to bring a little closer here. And this marvellous painting of textures, you could say that's also a very Baroque thing. Of course, we've seen it with Rubens, we've seen it with Van Dyck, that Baroque painting can be very, very tactile. So you've got the glistening material, the fur, the shimmer of the metal work. And he's also, I think, he's a great master of light.

And you could say that it's light and shade, which are his principle expressive means. And I think he can be a wonderful colorist, but colour is not his primary mode of expression. Uses colour very discreetly and in a very limited way. This is again, a biblical scene, but this is New Testament. This is the Christian Bible, and this is Judas repenting of his betrayal of Christ and trying to return the 30 pieces of silver. And you can see how Rembrandt, he thinks through the whole drama. This is a scene of a play or an opera, and facial expressions, body language, gesture, very important.

And this wonderful, wonderful cinematic, theatrical use of light and shade. Another very dramatic picture. This is also in Paris. And I think some of you have been with me to see this picture in another small museum in Paris, the Jacquemart-Andre. And this is again, New Testament, and it's "The Supper at Emmaus," where Christ meets up with... Usually there are two of his disciples. Here there's just one. And they do not initially recognise who he is, but he reveals himself to them halfway through the meal. And again, this is very Baroque. You choose the high point of the drama. This is the very moment where the man realises that he's sitting there with a man who has risen from the dead.

You can see this picture is almost monochromatic. There's very little colour in it. It's all earth colours, brown colours. It's light that creates the drama. And he's, you'll think, yes, Caravaggio, and ultimately that there is an influence of Caravaggio, but it comes via the Dutch Utrecht artist, Caravaggisti. This particular device of the hidden light source and the candle that's lighting this picture is behind Christ. So he's silhouetted against it and it gives him an almost sort of supernatural halo. This is a very typically Dutch device. Here we see it in a profane setting. This is a brothel scene by Gerrit van Honthorst, man who went to Italy and became known there as Gherardo delle Notti, Gerard of the Nights.

And this is a particular feature of his early work. This use of the hidden light source. This is, again, a Honthorst, where actually we're not quite sure where the light comes from here. It's almost as if it's emanating from the Christ child. So Rembrandt would've been very familiar with these Utrecht artists. And you can see, I'm sorry, again, the difference. I mean this is a lovely picture, looks a bit like a Christmas card. This one is so much more real, so much more moving. I love the depiction of these very humble shepherds on left-hand side, their expression of awe and reverence, and a very unglamorous painting of the virgin on the right-hand side. So he moves to Amsterdam, and the 1630s is his best decade from a financial point of view. He becomes the most fashionable portraitist in Amsterdam.

And there's plenty of wealth and plenty of people wanting portraits. This painting, I'm sure those of you in England will know this, because this is at the Dulwich Picture Gallery. I've lost count the number of times it's been stolen. It has a reputation for being one of the most stolen pictures in the world. I think it's like four or five times. It's very small and very tempting, I can imagine, for a lot of people just to wrench it off the wall. So again, it's very finely painted. It's a man called Jacob de Gheyn or Jacob de Gheyn. Well, despite his sober clothes, black clothes were actually very expensive. He's clearly a wealthy man.

And although it's quite a restrained painting, it still has this Baroque quality, that you feel that you are in conversation with him. You can see his lips are parted because he's just said something or he's about to say something. And this is a feature of Baroque portraiture. My next talk will be about Frans Hals. This is Frans Hals on the left, again, a picture familiar to many of you 'cause it's in Hampstead in Kenwood House. So Hals is just that little bit more overt, a little bit more exaggerated, more and more lively movement. But in both of these, they could be having conversation with one another, these two men, if you face the two pictures. And so another thing about Baroque painting is the illusionism.

They want you to feel this is real. This is van der Helst on the left-hand side, who was a rival to Rembrandt, and very highly considered. It's really only in the mid to late 19th century that Rembrandt's star rises so far above artists like van der Helst. So it's van der Helst on the left-hand side, and "Agatha Bas" on the right-hand side. That's another picture that belongs to the queen. I know this picture is in the current exhibition. And so both of these women look like they're coming out of the picture space, into your space.

And he paints these. These are big pictures. These are full-length pictures. Again, very, very wealthy Amsterdam merchants, again, despite their black clothes, this is the latest in fashion, extremely expensive clothes. I mentioned that Rembrandt has very distinct phases, early, middle, late. And nowadays I think we think he gets better and better. I mean, there was a wonderful exhibition just a few years ago of late Rembrandt at the National Gallery. I'll be dealing with that next week. And that's where I think most people today are most moved, by the late pictures. But in the 18th and 19th century, it was these early pictures that are so highly finished that were particularly prized.

And here I'm once again making a comparison of the Hals on the right-hand side. In fact, that's the only full-length life size portrait that Hals ever painted. It's at Munich in the Alte Pinakothek. So you can see both these men extremely fashionable. Hals looking a little bit arrogant. They can be dated 'cause fashion changes. So Hals is still in the 1620s, where you have these big elaborate ruffs. And they are abandoned in favour of these flat lace collars in the 1630s. This is a picture in the National Gallery, which I particularly love. As I said, I think old age often brings out the best in Rembrandt. So you can see this is dated 1634. You can see Rembrandt F. F is for fecit, which means painted it or made it, and the date.

But we don't know who the lady is. So this is still tightly painted, but as you can see from the

detail on the right-hand side, it's not smoothly painted. Now Rembrandt was a prolific artist. People very, very often ask me... One of the questions you get asked all the time is, and I've been asked it recently, is how long did the artist take over these pictures? And my guess is that Rembrandt was probably, you know, to some extent, a fast worker. He had to be, to paint the number of pictures he painted in a lifetime. But it's not a technique like Frans Hals, where you think that, you know, wham bam. Thank you, ma'am. You know, you think how Frans Hals, you know, could knock off a painting very quickly.

This is a very, very elaborate technique. 'Cause I want you to look at that nose, and highlight on the nose, and you've got a sort of like a crust of paint. And that is achieved by many, many touches of quite dense paint. It's not a fluid. It's not a diluted paint. He has to build up that crust of little touches of paint. And here, oh, I love these details. That is so amazing, as if you were really in her eye. And you can see every touch of the brush that's been applied, it's almost like a relief sculpture. So this is 1633. And this is, I think, a heartwarming drawing of his wife, Saskia. She was the daughter of quite a wealthy picture dealer.

And this drawing, the inscription on it, it says in Rembrandt's hand, it says, "Drawn after my beloved wife when she was 21 years old, the third day after our betrothal, the 8th of June, 1633." And there on the right-hand side you can see the bands of Rembrandt's wedding to Saskia. As far as we can see, in the paintings and the drawing, actually the drawings, above all, that give us the evidence. I think it was a very, very happy marriage. So you've already heard me say, probably more than once, that it's not usually a good idea to marry an artist. They don't make very good spouse material. There's a famous quote from George Bernard Shaw, where he says, "There's no fight in life more bitter than the fight between an artist's vocation and domesticity." I'll come back to that in a minute.

This portrait is probably a painting that he made to celebrate the wedding to Saskia. And you might think, "Oh, it's a little bit raunchy." People in the 17th century would've recognised this as a prodigal son picture. It was a subject that was very, very popular in the 17th century. When you see a man with a woman on his lap and he's carousing, this is the prodigal son going to the bad. And you might think, "Well, that's a very odd choice of subject to celebrate your wedding." It's likely that he knew Rubens' very famous portrait, painted at the time of his wedding, two decades earlier. Here's Rubens with his first wife, Isabella Brant. 'Cause Rubens is much more polite and he's dressed as a courtier and he's…

Well, they're both got swords, haven't they? But this elegant way that Rubens rests his hand on sword and that there's something very courtly and very refined about this image. And you know, it has been suggested that Rembrandt was doing a little bit of piss-taking here, of Rubens. He's not the only one to paint himself with his wife in an apparently compromising situation. Many people think, although there's no absolute evidence for it, that this Vermeer shows Vermeer himself on the left, again raising a glass. And even odder, the woman on the right is almost certainly his wife because she appears in so many of his paintings. Very odd to celebrate your wedding by showing a mate fondling your wife's breast and dropping a coin into her hand.

And of course it's always been a very famous picture. And this is the German artist, Lovis Corinth, who's taking it a step further, painting himself with his wife Charlotte, in the early 20th century. Yes, I would say, giving you this George Bernard Shaw quote about this irreconcilable struggle between a man's creativity and a woman's domesticity. I think it's probably not the case with Rembrandt because I think Rembrandt loved domesticity. He was not one of those artists who would have locked away his children and told them to keep quiet. I think they were probably noisily playing all over the place. Here are two drawings, which seem to be of Saskia. One on the right, obviously with a baby.

She had four children by Rembrandt, only one of whom survived infancy, Titus, who we'll see later. And these, they're so tender, such joyous drawings, very, very rapid, made in a space of minutes. Pen and ink, it's a very rapid technique, a very difficult technique to control. So this is one of his children having a terrible temper tantrum on the right-hand side and on the left, this drawing, it just touches me so much. It's so perfectly observed, isn't it? You've got this friendly, rather curious dog, which is approaching a little child who's not so sure about it. The child is needing to be reassured that the dog is not going to harm him or her. And what about this one? I reckon this was drawn in two minutes with red chalk, and these are the first steps of one of Rembrandt's children. An absolute masterpiece of economy.

And other drawings that show him enjoying the daily life of the household. His wife having her hair done, one of her illnesses on the right-hand side. And here she is, as painted as a very unconvincing Greek goddess. She's goddess Flora. We saw goddess Flora painted by Poussin last week, very different from this image. She's a comely, plump, Dutch house friar. It's got a certain coarseness and clumsiness. Drawings of the hands are not totally convincing, but this is the National Gallery. So those of you in London, we are out of a strict lockdown now. I'm going to the National Gallery tomorrow, you need to book, but you can go. I sort of whetted my own appetite, actually. I can't wait to get back to the Louvre and look more closely at some of these pictures I've been talking about.

I think I'll have a good look at this one tomorrow. And this is her hair. And again, you can see all sorts of interesting things being done with the brush reversed and drawing through a wet layer of pale brown golden paint to reveal the dark underneath. And here you can see an impasto of quite thick touches of paint on her bodice, showing the texture of this richly embroidered material. And a perfect example above the sleeve here on the left of a scumble where you drag dryish paint over a slightly bumpy underlayer and it goes on in a rough, bumpy way. And the details of flowers that she's holding.

So now a trick, which I always used to get my students to doing it, such an easy trick and it's so revealing, is when you're in a museum, of course usually the lighting is from above. So if you put your head down and you get the picture at an angle, you'll get it so that the light it's reflected off the surface. So I mean, normally if you were taking a photograph like this, you'd be cross when you saw it 'cause you think, "Oh, that isn't a very good way to get the colour of a picture." No,

not the colour, but the paint texture. Yes, and you can learn so much. You can see if there's damage, if the canvas has been repaired.

If it's on a panel, you can see if the wood has cracked and where the joins are. And here we can see very, very clearly how Rembrandt has worked on this man's face. And you can see he's really heavily worked the right-hand side. All the area around the contour of the face has really built up that tone around the mouth, around the chin. As I said, you can learn an awful lot about how the paint surface was built up by doing this trick. So he loves double portraits. A lot of Baroque artists love double portraits. Van Dyck, we've already seen, enjoyed painting them because you can then turn it into a little drama.

And in fact, there are three, to misquote Diana, there are three people in this double portrait because this is "The Shipbuilder," this is another picture that belongs to the queen. And you can see currently at Buckingham Palace in the Queen's Collection. So the ship builder is having an intense conversation with the viewer, that's you and me. And this conversation has been interrupted by his wife, who comes in with what is presumably a very important message. So we've got a kind of three way drama going on in this picture. This is a very Baroque device, a portrait on the left-hand side by an artist who had been a very popular portraitist in Amsterdam but was eclipsed by the rise of Rembrandt. This is Thomas de Keyser, and it's a portrait of the scientist and courtier, Constantijn Huygens, for whom Rembrandt painted one of his most famous pictures that I think I'll be talking about next week.

But again, it's the same idea and you get in a lot of Dutch genre paintings as well, of somebody sitting in a room and somebody coming in to deliver a letter. And that creates a little element of drama in the picture. Got drama here. This is, I love this picture too. It's the preacher Anslo and, I suspect, his long-suffering wife on the right-hand side. You can see he's in mid-flow. His hand is held out in a very rhetorical gesture as he's emphasising some point he's making. You can see the Bible on the table and she's looking very dutiful, if a little down trodden. I'm sure that's an expression that many wives were aware when they listened to their husband banging on about something that they've heard a hundred times before. So the group portrait is a very Dutch thing.

And group portraits in Holland were paid for by everybody who was included. And they would pay according to how important a place they had in the picture. This is the famous "Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp." And my strong feeling about this picture is that Rembrandt was persuaded. Rembrandt was known to be very interested in money. I suppose there's nothing wrong with that. Why not? And my feeling is that, originally, the composition was just the one, two, three, four, five, five figures to the immediate right of Dr. Tulp making his point. And that two other people thought, "Hmm, I want to get in on this act." So the guy at the top and the guy on that extreme left seemed, to me, surplus to purpose for the overall composition.

Again, it's turned into a drama with particularly the... You've got the second guy in, of course he's slightly distracted because he's looking at us as we observe the scene. But the three, and

also the guy at the top that... Well, the two guys behind, but three guys in the middle are very fascinated and very concentrated on what Dr. Tulp is saying. This is, of course, Rembrandt's most famous group portrait. It's "The Military Company of Captain Banninck." That is the official title of this picture. It's always popularly known as "The Night Watch." But cleaning in the 20th century revealed that it's actually not a night scene, even though it's quite a dark picture. And the traditional story is that the painting was misunderstood at the time and that people were very disgruntled because certain people included in the picture were not given a prominent enough position. And that this had very adverse impact on Rembrandt's reputation.

I mean, if you know the old Charles Laughton film, that really promotes this idea that the picture was sort of scandalous and very badly received. That is no longer, I think, accepted by art historians. But it is perfectly true that after he painted this in the early 1640s, Rembrandt gradually fell out of fashion. But it's not clear that this painting had an important role in that. I mentioned, well I showed you it briefly the other day in comparison with the Velazquez, "The Surrender of Breda," which shows, of course, the other side of this conflict. Holland was, when this is painted, still in the Thirty Years' War and still in the final years of the Eighty Years' War of Independence for Holland.

Holland was a small, flat country, tiny country with no natural defences. The only natural defence they had was to flood the country in times of invasion, and it was constant. You could make comparisons really with Israel in many ways. It was a country that was surrounded by enemies that wanted to completely destroy the country. In the earlier 17th century, that was Spain. And in the latest 17th century, that was France, Louis XIV, and sometimes England, once the maritime rivalry got going between Holland and England. So it was a country that needed desperately to defend itself. So they had all these military companies, which were really the 17th century equivalent of the Home Guard.

And so I mentioned the other day that Rembrandt's approach to this is to turn it into a cinematic scene. He uses light, you know, to highlight the most important people and to create a sense of drama. And it's a tremendous sense of movement and activity. And again, just to remind you of this picture painted in the same decade by Gerard ter Borch, of the signing of the treaty that ends the Thirty Years' War and the Eighty Years' War. This is the Treaty of Munster. And as I said, this is, you know, how dull this is compared to the Rembrandt. R

embrandt does not want the school photo effect. And here is Frans Hals, of course he painted... Rembrandt only painted the one military company picture, and Frans Hals painted a whole series of them, including this one, in which there seems to be a lot of jollity, a lot of carousing going on. And I think, yes, that's my last picture for today. So I'm going to end a little bit early. I've got a lot more of Rembrandt to talk about, but I'll carry on with him on Sunday. So I'm going to stop the share, and perhaps we can have some questions and discussion. So do I need to go into chat or will the questions come up?

- [Judi] Patrick they're in the Q and A. There are questions.

- Yeah. Good.

- [Judi] So can you see the Q and A button?

- Q and A, yes I can.

- Okay. So if you could read the questions out before you answer them it'd be great.

Q&A and Comments:

Q: Well, the story of Anna and Tobit.

A: Oh this, there are two. I wish I knew this better. It's a bit vague. There are two stories that are told in those pictures. One is, I think, is it Tobit accusing Anna of stealing his goat? And the other one concerns Tobit's blindness. They're so much than books 'cause the light, the... Yes, Rembrandt is such a supreme master of light. He uses it so dramatically, so effectively. Is it not curious that Rembrandt painted subjects from books of the apocryphal book of to... Oh, well somebody who knows more about it than I do. Book of Tobit, since those books were not part of the Protestant Bible, although they're included in the Catholic Bible. Yes, that is really interesting. Very interesting. I think he loves these stories for their... He's interested in human nature. He's interested in the human side of it. He's probably not too fussy about whether they're properly accepted in the Protestant Bible. But that is a very interesting idea and I need to follow that up a bit.

Q: How long did it take to paint Rembrandt's portraits?

A: Well actually, and I always used to say to my students, standing in front of a Rembrandt, especially the later ones, I think probably the later ones, they're certainly more freely painted, more quickly painted. But I don't think Rembrandt was ever... He's not a flashy artist. And I think it, or just the technique, suggests to me that it took quite a long time to build up the layers of paint.

So, anymore? Do I need to scroll down or... Yes, I do. I can see. I'm not sure I understand this. Are self-portraits done from a mirror horizontally inverted? I'm not sure what you mean by that, actually. I mean, they're usually done from a mirror and so if they're done in a mirror, you can usually tell because the eyes will meet yours. And often there's a very intense expression of observation because the artist is observing themselves in the act of observing. And so, I mean, very often when you get, you go to a country house or something and you'll see a portrait and the guide will say, especially with a self-portrait, "Well, if you walk up and down the room, the eyes will follow you." Yes, they will. Any painting where the eyes meet your eyes, the eyes will follow you as you walk up and down.

Q: Could you comment on the technique of mixing colours and skin tones?

A: Yes, I'll be able to talk about that better next time 'cause I'm going to really show you some blown up details, especially in Rembrandt's later work, where it's quite a distinctive technique. I mean, what I suggest again, going to the National Gallery and looking at the face, and particular the hands, of the portrait of "Margarita Trip." It's so amazing when you get close to it. It's hundreds and hundreds of little touches of, I mean, all the colour is quite, quite closely related. There are no very strong colours. They're all kind of earthy colours, and you'll see blueish, yellowish, greenish, pinkish.

But it's all kind of slightly earthy colour, very closely related. Hundreds and hundreds of little touches, and as I said, it creates almost like a crust of paint on the surface. And the hands of "Margarita Trip" are just one of the most amazing things. And whenever I look at that picture, I think of Sergeant as saying that when he went to a gallery and looked at the work of Frans Hals, it made him want to rush back to his studio and take up his brush. But when he looked at like something like that by Rembrandt, he said it was enough to make him give up. When I saw "The Night Watch" many years ago, the museum guide alleged the painting had been trimmed. Yes, that is true. It was cut down and it is a fate of many pictures.

You know, people weren't so reverential towards pictures in the past and presumably it's position was changed from one to another where it needed to be cut down. No, I didn't include that picture and I don't think it can have been one of his daughters 'cause I don't think any of them lived to that age.

- Patrick.

- Yes.

- Sorry, when you answer the questions, would you mind reading out the questions? So that-

- Yes, yes, yes. This one was-

- Thank you.

Q: Did you mention the picture of the young girl looking out the window? That's a very lovely picture at Dulwich, and is it one of his daughters?

A: No, I don't think it's one of his daughters because all the children except for Titus died in infancy.

Q: What was the bane of the museum in Marais?

A: I don't know. I don't understand the question. I'm sorry, that particular question. The bane of

the museum in Marais, I don't know what that means. Oh, yes, I know, I mean, I always advise people if you can, is that when going to galleries it's often hard to see the painting in detail. So, I mean, I do look. I spend an awful lot of time, I can tell you, before these lectures, searching. Well, sometimes I take my own details and nowadays, happily, in most museums, including the National Gallery, you can, and also I like to take pictures at funny angles to get the light bumping off the surface. But if you do search on the internet some, you know, you put in an artist and details, sometimes very high quality details will come up.

But it's always useful, you know, with a painting, to look at it very close and then walk away and see it from a distance. But you have to be, of course, very, very careful. Guards can can be quite stroppy if they think you're getting too close. And what you want, if you are getting close to a picture, do please make sure that there is nobody standing directly behind you. 'Cause that can very easily happen, that you are leaning towards a picture and somebody leans into you and you fall into the picture.

Oh, the German artist with his wife that is Lovis Corinth. I think, in this country, a hugely underrated artist. He's a wonderful artist. A very, very fascinating artist. And it's an interesting story because after he died, he was exploited by the Nazis. He was one of the main exhibits in the Degenerate Art exhibition, because halfway through his career he had a stroke and he started to paint, he moved towards expressionism.

And that is more evident in his work after the stroke. And the Nazis said, "Well, he painted realistically when he was well, and he painted as an expressionist after he had a stroke. Therefore, expressionism is sick." Did he use tenebrism and/or chiaroscuro? The two things, tenebrism means shadowy and yes, he certainly does. You know, next week I'm going to show you some pictures he did, creating how he imagined the interior of Solomon's temple, and wonderful examples of tenebrism.

And of course chiaroscuro means light and shade. So the two things are not mutually exclusive. You can have both tenebrism and chiaroscuro in the same picture. Landscapes. There aren't very many painted landscapes by Rembrandt. And in fact, I hadn't included any of the oil landscapes, but I am going to talk about drawings he did, wonderful on the spot drawings from nature. And they're also wonderful landscape etchings. Who got to keep the group portrait? Well I suppose they were... That's interesting. I think they were probably painted for public. I think they were painted for public spaces. So I don't think any individual got to keep the group portrait.

Q: In "The Night Watch," is that Rembrandt's wife, and isn't she tiny?

A: I don't think it is Rembrandt's wife. I don't think it is. And I think it is probably meant to be a young girl. Reverse the brush. What do you mean he reversed the brush? That means he took the brush, and he turned it round, and he used the wrong end of the brush to scrape through the wet paint. You bet "The Jewish Bride" is coming up. It's one of my favourite paintings in the world. It's going to be the grand climax of next week. How much will that... I didn't check how

much the paint print would go at. So you could just go online and check into Sotheby's, and see the sale coming up and see what the estimate is. I don't really know how much. Ii will go for a lot, a hell of a lot, I'm sure, but I don't strictly know how much Rembrandt prints go for. How can you identify what the picture is about?

For example, the painting of Ruth and her mother-in-law. It didn't look biblical. No, well look, none of these paintings, well he was... None of these paintings look biblical 'til you get to the 19th century 'cause nobody really knew what the Bible looked like. That is, we've talked about this of course, last week, in connection with Poussin. Rembrandt does, as we shall see next week, 'cause I'm going to talk about his biblical paintings next week. Rembrandt does make an effort. I mean he doesn't really know what architecture looks like or the costume. He gives people very exotic costumes, you know, like turbans and very exotic cloaks. And you'll see how fascinating and extraordinary his imagining of the interior of Solomon's temple is. Of course, all he's got to go on is what it says about it in the Bible. His wonderful texture, his crumbles of so many layers.

Q: What other artist compares? Who was his teacher?

A: Well Lastman was his teacher, but Lastman doesn't actually do any of those things. That is something that Rembrandt developed for himself. Although, I mean, Amsterdam was the most important centre of the art market. So he could, for instance, I'm going to talk a little bit next week about the influence of Italian painting, Venetian painting. And there's a very good book by Kenneth Clark, "Rembrandt and the Italian Renaissance." And Clark shows that Rembrandt was really quite familiar with a lot of Italian renaissance art. Workshop and apprentices input, when it's his school, as opposed to, yeah.

This is so complicated with Rembrandt. It's unbelievably complicated. And so, you know, there are endless, endless disputes between experts. One of the thing, something just to explain the definitions, I suggest that you acquire a catalogue, either Christie's or Sotheby's old Master painting sale. And you'll find at the front, there'll be definitions. There is, you know, if you have the full name of the artist, that means that the auction house thinks it's entirely by the artist. And then you have all these different things, studio of, circle of, after, they all mean different things.

Q: Would he paint a number of works concurrently?

A: My guess is that he would paint a number of works concurrently. I think that's a more practical way to work. What else?

Q: Was he religious in practise?

A: Yes, he was. He was, indeed. He was a very religious man, and he belonged to a particular sect, Mennonites, a little bit similar to Quakers. The Jewish connection I'm going to discuss in the next lecture 'cause it's in the 1640s that he moves to the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam and

forms important friendships with Jews and uses them very frequently as models for his paintings.

Q: How did Rembrandt know so deeply The Old Testament?

A: Well, in Protestant countries, of course there were vernacular translations of the Bible. Well, they were discouraged in Catholic countries. So you know, the Bible was there for him to read and I'm sure he read it very, very carefully.

- Patrick, I'm going to jump in and say that, you know, just to thank you for the presentation. I want to give you the opportunity to go and get a glass of water.

- I've got one here, don't worry. Are we running out of time? Do you want me to stop?

- No. How many more questions are there? I've got time.

- I don't know, I think there are quite a few. I noticed that one or two full body portraits, the feet have been cut off. I'm sorry. That's my fault, or at least it's the fault of Zoom because you are getting the pictures cropped, you're not getting the whole picture. I'll try and see if I can shrink the pictures next week so that that doesn't happen so much. Oil paint takes days to dry, weeks, years. When it's really thick, it takes a long time to dry. Is it like mirror writing, i.e., the left side appears on the right and the vice versa? I'm not quite sure what you are referring to there. Do you know about Claesz Anslo? Not a lot about him, no. Did Rembrandt have help in his studio or do it all himself?

No, he certainly had help in his studio and there are, you know, people went to to learn from him. They were apprenticed to him, but they were also helping him. Can we talk about Rembrandt's interest in Jewish people? Yes, I will. Next time. That is a large part of my next lecture. Yes, somebody's saying I... Yes, it's not intentional. It's just where I am that the light. It's more sort of Caravaggio-esque. I know the lighting.

Q: Did Rembrandt do the whole of a painting himself?

A: Sometimes, yes. I mean there are pictures, or I mentioned the fact that he collaborated with Gerrit Dou early in his career, and I'm sure that there are other paintings where he collaborated with artists. I have an etching dated 1641, but believed to be a copy. Now the thing about, I will talk about etchings next week. That's also part of next week's lecture. I hope I haven't put too much into the second half. But it's very complicated with etchings because strictly speaking, I don't know what you mean by a copy, 'cause they're all copies.

An etching is done on a copper plate and you will have an addition taken in one go. But the copper plates, I'll talk about this next time. I think I need to. I will talk about that next time. The new museum is in the Marais. Oh, the museum in the Marais is the Cognacq, as in the drink,

Jay, Cognacq-Jay. It's a small... It's one of my favourite museums in the world. It's very small. You can see it an hour or so. It's absolutely adorable. You speak? Yes. Next week I'll be talking, the last part of my lecture next week is when I will talk, of course, about "The Jewish Bride." I'll be talking about his late work, but I will talk about his development as an artist.

Q: Is Rembrandt's painting, "The Storm on the The Sea of Galilee," still missing?

A: Yes, it is still missing from the Isabella Stewart Garden Museum. Oh, somebody enlightened. That's very nice. Yeah. Let me see. Lived very close to the synagogue. Rembrandt lived very close to synagogue. Do I know? Do I do I know if he knew? Not for sure, but I think it's very likely. Rembrandt died in 1669 age 63. Because he had lost his fortune, he was given a funeral that was customary for the poor. He was buried in an unknown grave owned by the church. He's not an atheist. He's definitely not an atheist. I'm afraid you've got that one wrong. His remains were later dug up and destroyed. Was he really an atheist? No, he wasn't. And I think that's it.

- Thank you very much, Patrick.

- Yeah.

- So to everybody we'll say, "See you on Sunday."

- Yes.

- To be continued.

- Thank you, Wendy.

- Thank you. Good night, everybody.

- Yeah.

- Enjoy the rest of the day, for those of you in America. Take care. Bye.

- Bye-bye.

- Thank you, Judi.

- Thank you, Judi, too.

- [Judi] No problem. You as well.