

Rembrandt *Late Religious Portraits*

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PREMIERE PRESENTATION

**EXHIBITION BRINGS TOGETHER REMBRANDT'S POWERFUL RELIGIOUS
PORTRAITS FROM AROUND THE WORLD FOR THE FIRST TIME**

Rembrandt's Late Religious Portraits
At the Getty Center, June 7–August 28, 2005

LOS ANGELES—The Getty's summer 2005 Premiere Presentation, one of the most important exhibitions of the year, is *Rembrandt's Late Religious Portraits*, on view at the Getty Center, June 7–August 28, 2005. It brings together, for the first time, many of Rembrandt's powerful religious portraits that were created towards the end of his life during a time of personal turmoil. The exhibition is the first to focus on this phase of the artist's career, and considers the relationship between Rembrandt's religious convictions and his creative impulses.

The international loan exhibition features 16 paintings from collections around the world, including works from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the National Gallery in London, and museums in Rotterdam, Helsinki, Zurich, Munich, and Amsterdam. Among the works on view are dramatic life-size, half-length images of saints and apostles, including the Getty's *Apostle Bartholomew* (1661), representations of Christ and the Virgin, and a self-portrait of the artist as the Apostle Paul. The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., in association with the J. Paul Getty Museum, and is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council for the Arts and Humanities.

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The works in the exhibition were produced between the late 1650s and early 1660s, when Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669) entered a phase of increased productivity despite adverse circumstances. The reason for the existence of the group of portraits is shrouded in some mystery—there is no documentation to shed light on who commissioned them or Rembrandt's reason for executing them. Moreover, portraits of this type were uncommon in largely Protestant Holland, where images of saints did not play a devotional role in religious life. Some speculate that Rembrandt's personal struggles—marked by the death of his wife and his financial burdens—led him to create these paintings of biblical subjects. For over 80 years, scholars have wondered if the works were part of a series. This exhibition finally offers the opportunity to see a large number of these paintings side by side to assess their stylistic and thematic relationships and possibly to answer some of these questions.

In this late phase of his career, Rembrandt developed a bold style of somber color and vigorous brushwork that contrasted with the smooth, precise style and higher-keyed palette of his earlier works. With expressive strokes of paint, Rembrandt was able to impart a spiritual and emotional intensity through a remarkable, glowing palette. The men and women seem to peer out of the dark recesses of dimly lit interiors, burdened by the weight of their spiritual and emotional concerns. These paintings are among the Dutch master's most insightful works.

Rembrandt's religious portraits possess a powerful humanistic quality. He based most of them on studies painted from life, adapting physical and emotional characteristics of models to convey spiritual qualities he associated with these figures. Some appear to be portraits of his contemporaries posed in the guise of religious figures. Among the most remarkable examples of such historicized portraits are his *Self Portrait as the Apostle Paul* (1661), in which he stares directly at the viewer, and *Apostle Bartholomew* (1661), now in the Getty Museum's collection. One of Rembrandt's neighbors may have served as the model for the saint, made just eight years before the artist's death. The saint appears pensive, almost melancholy in mood.

Rembrandt's Late Religious Portraits will make its only West Coast appearance at the Getty Center, which is the exhibition's second and final stop. It

arrives in Los Angeles from the nation's capital where it was shown to great acclaim at the National Gallery of Art.

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Note to editors: Images available on request.

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