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**Performing Touch in the Frick *Self-Portrait* (1658):
An Examination of the *Ruwe Manier* in Late Rembrandt**

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An Examination of the *Ruwe Manier* in Late Rembrandt**

by

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Thesis

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Dedication

To my parents, Zehava and Randy.

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Abstract

Performing Touch in the Frick *Self-Portrait* (1658): An Examination of the *Ruwe Manier* in Late Rembrandt

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Ruwe manier describes loose painting, characterized by visible brushwork that is casually or even crudely exposed. Although Rembrandt did not invent *ruwe manier*, his late style is practically synonymous with highly developed surface texture. The goal of this study is to help develop historical context for understanding Rembrandt's characteristic approach to thick paint, as well as to attempt to locate what is so distinctive about Rembrandt's expressive brushwork. The *ruwe manier* is particularly prominent in Rembrandt's 1658 *Self-Portrait* housed in the Frick Collection in New York City. The Frick *Self-Portrait* thus operates as a case study and as a point of departure from which to discuss notions of the rough manner in this period. Through detailed formal analysis and primary texts, I propose how the emotional impact of impasto, as understood in Rembrandt's time, might have served as motivation for Rembrandt's painting approach in his later years. In the last section, I apply these discussions about Rembrandt's *ruwe*

manier to a current neuroscience research about visual and tactile perception. This final, exploratory chapter is more of an inquiry of neuroaesthetic methodology than of Rembrandt's painting. I ultimately suggest that the assertion of self is manifest not only in the Rembrandt's presentation of himself as a subject, but also as it is imbued on a conscious and fundamental level—in the very tactility of the paint itself.

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Introduction

This investigation addresses a specific mode of paint handling within Rembrandt's late paintings—the “rough manner” (*ruwe manier* in seventeenth-century Dutch).¹ *Ruwe manier* describes loose painting, characterized by visible brushwork that is casually or even crudely exposed. As early as 1911, Holmes described Rembrandt's painting technique as “a rough, rugged aggregation of formless touches.”² Although Rembrandt did not invent *ruwe manier*, his late style is practically synonymous with highly developed surface texture. The goal of this study is to help develop historical context for understanding Rembrandt's characteristic approach to thick paint, as well as to attempt to locate what is so distinctive about Rembrandt's expressive brushwork.

Much has been said about the “mature style” of Rembrandt in the context of his biography. While it may be that events in his personal life—particularly his bankruptcy—had an impact on his painting style, these claims cannot be substantiated by the extant evidence. Instead, this study links formal analysis of Rembrandt's paintings with primary source readings from Rembrandt's *zeitgeist*. The *ruwe manier* is particularly prominent in Rembrandt's 1658 *Self-Portrait* (fig. 1) housed in the Frick Collection in New York City. The Frick *Self-Portrait* thus operates as a case study and as a point of departure from which to discuss notions of the rough manner in this period.

¹ *Ruwe* is also spelled as *ruw* and *rouw*.

² Charles John Holmes, *Notes on the Art of Rembrandt* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1908), 309.

Art historian Svetlana Alpers asks, “Don’t his paintings give of an effect of singularity, and of individuality—a sense of almost tangible or material human presence wrought in paint?”³ This idea of “human presence wrought in paint”—the emotional impetus of Rembrandt’s *ruwe manier*—is the primary locus of this study. Alas, any account can only ever attempt to convey the powerful effect of the object itself; any investigation will inevitably fall short of this tall order.

This primarily considers the expressive power of Rembrandt’s *ruwe manier*. Through detailed formal analysis and primary texts, I propose how the emotional impact of impasto, as understood in Rembrandt’s time, might have served as motivation for Rembrandt’s painting approach in his later years. I ultimately suggest that the assertion of self is manifest not only in the Rembrandt’s presentation of himself as a subject, but also as it is imbued on a conscious and fundamental level—in the very tactility of the paint itself. In the last section, I apply these discussions about Rembrandt’s *ruwe manier* to a current neuroscience research about visual and tactile perception. This final, exploratory chapter is more of an inquiry of neuroaesthetic methodology than of Rembrandt’s painting.

The first chapter provides background for the Frick *Self-Portrait* by situating it in an historical and social context of self-portraiture. The second chapter discusses the precedent for Rembrandt’s thickly painted texture by drawing on seventeenth-century Dutch texts about *ruwe manier*, particularly writings on Titian. The third chapter delves

³ Svetlana Alpers, *Rembrandt’s Enterprise* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 3.

into rhetorical theory in order to examine how touch and gesture generate emotion through the use of *ruwe manier*, reinforcing Rembrandt's conscious effort to engage the viewer. The final chapter employs current neuroscience research to help elucidate the mechanisms of emotional response elicited by Rembrandt's painted texture.

CLARIFICATION OF TERMINOLOGY

For the purpose of this thesis, I would like to delineate two types of painting that are typically described under the umbrella of the "rough manner." The first type is defined by a sculptural use of paint to bolster the goal of representation. The second use of the rough manner is characterized by thick paint that does not seem to serve a clear representational purpose.

In the first mode, the area of raised paint corresponds to the areas of the painting that are supposed to represent greater three-dimensionality. In effect, the painting takes on a sculptural role in representation. As a result, the purpose of this approach is to serve the goal of representation of the depicted world, echoed in the material depth of the painted surface. An iconic example of this technique is the painted left sleeve of the bride in *The Jewish Bride* (fig. 2) from 1667. The thick impasto of this passage corresponds directly with the protrusion of the bride's sleeve, orthogonally from the canvas into the viewer's space. The paint is used for a clear representational purpose—to demonstrate the material world. Another example of this mode is the chain across the body of Aristotle in the 1653 painting *Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer* (fig. 3). In this

case, the thickness of the paint helps to emphasize the physical thickness of the chain that seems to protrude outwards into the viewer's space.

There are further examples of this first mode in which thickly painted texture works to depict a mimetic effect. For instance, Aelbert Cuyp's cows (fig. 4) have a feathered surface texture on the canvas that is "descriptively imitative of the surfaces [of cows]." ⁴ The tactility of the paint echoes the surface of the cow's fur. The paint serves the rhetorical goal of conveying the texture of the subject's surface. In Rembrandt, often the faces—particularly of the elderly—are depicted with a thick impasto. David DeWitt argues that Rembrandt paints the faces of the elderly (including himself in several self-portraits) in a method that echoes with the roughness of aging skin. ⁵ Like Cuyp's cows, the faces assume the thick paint as an element of their presence. In this case, Rembrandt's rough manner was a means of better depicting the subject, through a sculptural buildup of paint.

The second mode of *ruwe manier* is characterized by thick paint that is a part of his working process in which Rembrandt seems to celebrate for its own ends. The elusive quality of Rembrandt's technique is in a sense the source of its visual interest. Rembrandt's passages of indexical brushwork echo a proto-modernist sense of expressive mark-making for its own sake, for the mere enjoyment of paint's materiality. Here, the

⁴ Alpers, *Rembrandt's Enterprise*, 16.

⁵ David A. de Witt, ". . . A Coarse Rugged Way of Painting' and Other Observations Relating to Rembrandt's *Head of An Old Man in a Cap in Kingston*," in *Rembrandt 2006: Essays*. (Leiden: Folior Publishers, 2006), 88.

paint seems to be part of the artistic process of painting that is transparently revealed on the canvas. The passages of the Frick *Self-Portrait* that are analyzed most extensively in this examination are categorized by this second described mode of *ruwe manier* painting, characterized by a indexical brushstroke that supersedes the goal of representation.

Chapter I: Context for the Frick Self-Portrait

SELF-PORTRAITURE IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY AMSTERDAM

One of the greatest changes of the sixteenth century was that artists increasingly worked for the open market instead of in guilds.⁶ Within the guild framework, the objective of an artist was in large part to execute a commission as requested. The final product was evaluated on the level of precision of representation, the quality of its materials and their use, as well as other technical points. Although individual artists were sometimes able to distinguish themselves through their exceptional talents—Van Eyck for instance—there was only a small margin for individuality to assert itself in the material presence of a work of art.

In response to the humanist spirit of the Renaissance, artists began to reevaluate and redefine their conception of their status and their value to society. This is manifest in the genre of the autonomous self-portrait, a Renaissance invention. Self-portraits operated as a vehicle for raising the social status of artists. The shift in self-representation occurred first in Italy, where artists worked to transfigure the role of artists from the realm of manual labor to that of creative artists.⁷ As a result, the revolution from a craftsman to the modern conception of an artist-creator began.

⁶ Joanna Woods-Mardsen, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture: The Visual Construction of Identity and the Social Status of the Artist*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 13-24.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Following the lead of the Italian Renaissance, artists in Amsterdam were beginning to find their individual voices. The change of priorities in self-representation is manifest in the work of Hendrick Goltzius and his circle. The pen and ink drawing *Goltzius' Right Hand* (fig. 5) typifies the goals of portraying a sense of artistic invention. By drawing his own right hand, he champions the power of his artist hand as the agency of his work in the most literal sense. Goltzius shows his burned and partially paralyzed hand, the result of a childhood accident. The anatomical deformities that he blatantly displays, coupled with the prominent signature beneath it, explain why it is even more a personal statement of self. In addition to this most blatant subject, his clever and virtuosic technique is a further means of proclaiming his creativity. He crafted the drawing to appear like a print by drawing illusory marks that look like they were made with a burin. This conflation of media playfully confuses the viewer's expectation and showcases both Goltzius' skill and cleverness. Although this work is not a conventional self-portrait, it serves as one through metonymy. He highlights his capacity for proportion, shading, and draftsmanship and literally displays the artist's hand—and his brain—as the primary appeal of his work.

Northern painters began to use the genre of self-portraiture itself to justify their rising social position. Just as Goltzius flaunted his technical and intellectual aplomb, self-portraiture was an apt means for artists to defend their own prestige. Artists often chose to depict themselves as a *pictor doctus*—a learned painter, asserting the claim that painting is an intellectual pursuit and a liberal art. Gerard van Honthorst's 1655 *Self-Portrait* (fig. 6) exemplifies how an artist defines himself through the action of his

vocation. Honthorst carries a silverpoint stylus and shows off one of his drawings. In the background, two model casts are visible for the viewer, implying the rigorous training and study of the artist.

Artists also portrayed themselves in aristocratic roles as a means of establishing credibility and confidence in their social position. This choice of representation is exemplified by Bartholomeus van der Helst's 1662 *Self-Portrait* (fig. 7). The seated portrait was a common mode of the portrait for aristocrats in this period. Van der Helst wears an extravagant blouse, drawing specific attention to the velvet on the right arm. The sumptuous billows of the sleeve highlight his material wealth and showcase his virtuosity as a painter through the depiction of the textured fabric. The nonchalance of his gesture—implied by the extended gesture of the right hand on his hip—suggests a sense of ease with what he projects as a refined and noble status. In Rubens's *Self-Portrait* (fig. 8) painted for King Charles I of England, he depicts himself as a courtly virtuoso, adorned with a chain and noble dress. By producing an idealized and elevated image of himself, he asserts his position as a member of high society. Rembrandt would have likely known of this self-portrait through Paulus Pontius's engraving in 1630 (fig. 9). Chapman argues that the gesture of the head and the hat in this work was appropriated by Rembrandt in his *Self-Portrait in a Soft Hat and Embroidered Cloak* (fig. 10).⁸

Textual evidence from this period also supports a conscious effort to elevate the artist. An early example is the decision of the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke, the artist's

⁸ H. Perry Chapman. *Rembrandt's Self-portraits: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Identity* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1990), 59.

guild of the city, to align with *Violieren*, the local chamber of rhetoric from 1480. Because chambers of rhetoric were closely linked with civic leaders and officials, these drama societies served as early forms of public relations for cities. The Guild of Saint Luke's association with *Violieren* therefore echoes this movement to elevate its social position. In Rembrandt's hometown of Leiden, painter Philips Angel delivered a speech to members of the Guild of St. Luke, the local painters' guild, on 18 October 1641, advocating the rising intellectual status of the painter.⁹ These ideas were later cemented in writing, in the chapter entitled "Praise of Painting" in his 1642 treatise, *Lof der schilder-konst*. Angel emphasizes the virtues of painting through the use of metaphors that position the artist in a figurative sense of power.¹⁰ For instance, Angel describes a painting as a battleground for the troops to overcome.¹¹ The title page shows the proud *Pictora*, armed with the tools of the trade (fig. 11).

Self-portraiture is a singular genre within the visual arts because of its inherent reflexivity. The analysis of self-portraits provides a unique opening to examine the priorities of artists. Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there is a marked shift towards a more emphatic and personal presentation of the artist in self-

⁹ Eric Jan Sluijter, "In Praise of the Art of Painting: On Paintings by Gerrit Dou and a Treatise by Philips Angel of 1642," in *Seductress of Sight: Studies in Dutch Art of the Golden Age* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2000).

¹⁰ Celeste Brusati, *Artifice and Illusion: The Art and Writing of Samuel van Hoogstraten* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 230; H. Perry Chapman, "A Hollandse Pictura: Observations on the Title Page of Philips Angel's 'Lof der schilder-konst.'" *Simiolus: Netherlandish Quarterly for the History of Art* 16 no. 4 (1986): 234-248.

¹¹ Brusati, *Artifice and Illusion*, 230.

portraiture. The climate of increasing artistic assertion is critical to understanding Rembrandt's use of the *ruwe manier* as a means of affirming his sense of pride as an artist, through the bold application of paint.

REMBRANDT'S SELF-PORTRAITURE

Rembrandt is perhaps the artist most closely associated with the self-portrait in the history of Western art. Over the course of his career, he pursued a critical and longitudinal self-study through portraiture. He completed some seventy-five distinct iterations of himself—in the form of paintings, prints, and drawings. This large body of works is the most demonstrative evidence that Rembrandt had interest in documenting his literal, material presence.

Rembrandt's earliest self-portrait is *The Artist in His Studio* from 1628-29 (fig. 12). This painting was completed in his Leiden years, while he was in his early twenties. He depicts himself as an artist standing by his easel. In the far right corner of his studio, he appears overwhelmed by the large canvas in the foreground. Holding a paintbrush in each hand, the artist's face expresses confusion. The candor of this unidealized facial expression reveals a sense of frustration and challenge as part of the act of painting. Rembrandt stares out of the canvas, perhaps towards his model. The artist is awkwardly distanced from the large canvas, dwarfed by its shadow. In this unusual composition, the focal point is not the artist but the large canvas on the right. The mysterious subject of the overwhelming canvas creates an enigmatic sense for the viewer, who can only ever see

its back side. Even in his early work, he seems to have been interested in displaying an authentic illustration of the painting process, including its mental or creative demands.

Rembrandt would not paint himself again in the role of an artist for another twenty years. In the interim, however, he continued to use self-portraiture to proclaim his artistic puissance. Through costume, pose, and composition, he pronounces himself as a rightful heir to the tradition of the great Old Masters. Raphael's *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione* (fig. 13) was auctioned in Amsterdam in 1639 before it was acquired by Alfonso Lopez, agent for Louis XIII, King of France. Rembrandt's sketch after Raphael's painting (fig. 14) is now located in the Albertina in Vienna. In the same year, Rembrandt already references Raphael's painting in his own self-portrait etching. His 1640 painting *Self-Portrait at the Age of 34* (fig. 15), in the National Gallery of London, appropriates Raphael's composition and utilizes a similar approach to the sitter's posture. Rembrandt stares deeply and directly at the viewer, assuming the same confident air of Raphael's Castiglione. Wearing an extravagant Renaissance costume from the previous century, he makes direct and deliberate allusion to famous artistic predecessors. Rembrandt seems to suggest that he, like Titian and Raphael, is also worthy of admiration and reverence. In x-ray imaging of this painting, conservators found a *pentimento* that reveals an important aspect of Rembrandt's priorities in self-representation. Originally, Rembrandt had shown himself carrying paintbrushes; however, he then opted to paint over the tools of his

trade.¹² By leaving the hand empty, he refocuses the viewer's attention to the face and its intense gaze. The decision to remove the brushes suggests a paradoxical point that by distancing himself from the vestiges of painterly practice—most literally the brush and palette—he was better able to establish his intellectual presence as a painter. The gaping negative space created by the removal of the painterly tools reinforces the idea that Rembrandt does not need to tools of his trade to assert his identity.

When Rembrandt finally returns to presenting himself as an artist in 1648, he does so with full commitment to the role. In the etching of *Rembrandt Drawing from a Window* (fig. 16), Rembrandt places himself in the context of his studio. Seated at his working desk with pen in hand, he stares directly at the viewer with a sense of dignity. He wears a modest cloak of an artist at work, abandoning the fanciful costume of earlier self-portraits, such as the 1631 *Self-Portrait in a Soft Hat and Embroidered Cloak* (fig. 10). Working in these humble clothes and with the tools of his trade, Rembrandt seems to have found a sense of pride in the act of his occupation. The interest in conveying the reality of his artistic practice is important to understanding the role of the *ruwe manier* in later of his works.

Around this time, Rembrandt faced intense challenges, both financially and personally. After a series of debt problems beginning in 1653, he was finally forced to apply for a *cessio bonorum*—a voluntary ceding of goods to the state to be sold for his creditors in July of 1656. Over the course of two years, a large body of his possession

¹² David Bomford et al., *Art in the Making* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 118.

was sold at public auctions. These included his paintings, prints, and other art objects that were staple visual material in his working studio.¹³ These items are all listed in the inventory prepared under the *Desolate Boedelskamer* “Chamber of Insolvent Estate,” which documents his extensive collection. This period is also marked by a dramatic period in his personal life. His relation with mistress Geertge Dircx deteriorated so dramatically that he institutionalized her to a center for morally delinquent women, the *Spinhuis* in Gouda.¹⁴ This decision was considered problematic even then, and there was litigation over this matter until her death in 1656. In the same period, his new woman, Henrickje Stoffles was humiliated by public confessions for “fornication with Rembrandt, and gravely punished for it, admonished to penitence, and excluded from the Lord’s Supper.”¹⁵ Much has been made of Rembrandt's hardships in light of his artistic practice, but most these arguments seem unconvincing. Despite these personal setbacks, this period is marked by seemingly unbounded creativity in his work.

The *Self-Portrait* from 1652 in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (fig. 17) emits the same confrontational posture that we will see in the Frick *Self-Portrait*. Although here he is standing instead of sitting, Rembrandt showcases a similar bravado, evidenced by the assertive placement of his hands on his hips. With a sense of poise, he gazes directly and confidently at the viewer. Rembrandt wears a brown smock that seems

¹³ Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits*, 55.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

to be casual working clothing, just as in the etching of *Rembrandt Drawing from a Window* (1648).

Despite Rembrandt's large corpus of earlier self-portraits, none of these works appears as a readily identifiable prototype for the Frick *Self-Portrait* from 1658. This work projects a sense of confidence, poise, and dignity. Rembrandt dons an exotic costume of an archaic gold-yellow tunic, a crimson Oriental-style sash, and a black beret. His figure is pushed up against the front picture plane so that it fills the entire composition. The strong, dark background has an assertive presence of its own that seems to further project Rembrandt's torso forward into the viewer's space. He is not depicted as artist with a palette, easel, and mahlstick but instead, he carries only a long pole, which seems to rest easily between the loose fingers of his left hand. In conjunction with the magisterial posture and expression, it seems that he is a king holding a scepter or a staff. The object is reminiscent of a mahlstick, which was one of the most common attributes for artists in self-portraits of this period. There is considerable speculation about what this object is.¹⁶ I believe that this ambiguity is itself important because through the conflation of the mahlstick and scepter, Rembrandt depicts himself as the "Prince of

¹⁶ There is some degree of debate about what this object represents. Colin Bailey calls it a vertical rattan cane because there is no other artist tools—brushes or palette, see Colin Bailey, *Rembrandt and His School: Masterworks from the Frick and Lugt Collection* (New York: The Frick Collection, 2011), 121. It is also argued that it is the same object that appears in the 1661 Portrait of Jacob Trip from the National Gallery of London, see Bomford, *Art in the Making*, 167-71.

Painting.”¹⁷ His gaze confronts the viewer; his eyes probe outwards, directly through the canvas. He exemplifies an elevated social and intellectual position, through an implied sense of pride of his vocation as an artist.

The most compelling compositional predecessor to the Frick painting is Anthony van Dyck’s portrait of *The Landscape Painter Martin Ryckaert* (fig. 18). Ryckaert sits in a large chair with a similar posture evoked in the fully frontal positioning of Rembrandt’s torso in Frick *Self-Portrait*. Like Rembrandt, Ryckaert also wears an elaborate, regal costume. The intensity of his position and gaze evokes a gravitas that is also present in the Frick portrait. However, it is impossible to know if and how Rembrandt would have encountered van Dyck’s portrait. Chapman notes that Rembrandt might have known of it through an engraving by Jacobus Neeffs that was commissioned by Gillis Hendricx for the 1646 posthumous edition of *Iconography* (fig. 19).¹⁸ Rembrandt’s inventory from the 1656 bankruptcy notes a “large book with portraits by van Dyck, Rubens, and others,” so Chapman speculated that the Neeffs engraving might have been in this volume.¹⁹ Although the Neeffs engraving shows Ryckaert sitting frontally in a chair in fanciful costume like the Frick *Self-Portrait*, the intensity of the sitter was not retained from the original portrait.

This Frick *Self-Portrait* marks the apex of Rembrandt’s originality as a painter. The largest of Rembrandt’s self-portraits, it bears a level of distinction even in scale. In

¹⁷ Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits*, 92.

¹⁸ Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits*, 93.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Perry Chapman's encyclopedic review of Rembrandt's self-portrait oeuvre, she distinguishes the Frick Self-Portrait as revolutionary by suggesting that prior works by Rembrandt "in no way prepare us for. . . [this] monumental painting."²⁰ As recently as 2012, *New Yorker* art critic Peter Schjeldahl even proposed that it might even be the best painting in the New York City.²¹ Certainly, there is something ineffably captivating about this work that has seized the public attention.

This section describes how Rembrandt's mode of self-representation evolved over the course of his late career. Until the Frick *Self-Portrait*, Rembrandt depicts himself either as an artist or as an aristocratic intellectual. The Frick *Self-Portrait*, however, marks a conflation of these two roles. As a "Prince of Painting," Rembrandt alludes simultaneously to an idealized social status and the artistic occupation. The next two chapters reflect how the conception of *ruwe manier* in Rembrandt's period supports both aspects of this newfound hybrid representation of the Frick *Self-Portrait*. The following chapter discusses how the *ruwe manier* supports an elevated intellectual and social position, and the third chapter outlines how the *ruwe manier* emphasizes artistic power through painterly presence.

²⁰ Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self-portraits*, 88.

²¹ Peter Schjeldahl, "Dutch Treat," *The New Yorker*, 30 April 2011, 14.

Chapter II: Historiography of the Ruwe Manier

EARLY ORIGINS OF THE ROUGH/SMOOTH DEBATE

The debate between *disegno* and *colorito* was one of the most prominent loci of discussion for artists, theorists, and critics in Renaissance Italy. The result was two distinct artistic approaches to technical execution, formal aesthetic and theoretical conception. *Disegno*, translated as “drawing” or “design,” was championed in Florence. This school valued strict planning and subtlety of detailed linear sketches, particularly in the early stages of conceiving the work. In this case, composition is dictated by the precision of linear outlines. By contrast, the Venetian *colorito*, translated as “coloring,” refers to the application of color, used to create vivid and spirited paintings. In this mode, color is the substance of a composition, giving both form and life to a painting. These two styles stood in stark contrast, and a debate between these viewpoints centered on aesthetic as well as theoretical concerns among artists, theorists, and philosophers alike.

Giorgio Vasari was a Florentine artist, architect and writer who was a formative figure of art history as a practice. He authored *Le Vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani*, known as the “*Vite*,” which was published first in 1550 and again in an expanded edition in 1568. The *Vite* is the first known critical history and theory of Western art is structured using a series of artist biographies. Vasari comments on *disegno* and *colorito*. He advocates for *disegno* as the foundation for the visual arts over Venetian

colorito, describing it as “the animating principle of all creative processes.”²² This preference reflects both a sense of regional pride in the Florentine style and champions the work and style of his teacher, Michelangelo.

By the early seventeenth century, the debate between *disegno* and *colorito* was well-entrenched, even beyond Italy’s borders. Dutch art theory perpetuated this delineation between the two schools of painting. Gerard de Lairesse, a Dutch painter and theorist whom Rembrandt once portrayed, describes the difference in his *Groot Schilderboek* from 1707, “the handling of the Brush is of two kinds, very different from each other, for one is fluid, and tender or smooth; the second is robust and quick, and bold.”²³ These two described styles are precipitates of the Vasari’s discussion. The debate assumed Dutch terminology: the *ruwe manier* and the *net manier*: the “rough” and “smooth manner”.

The primary Dutch text about art in this period was *Het Schilderboek* by Karel van Mander. Published in 1604, this art treatise was the most widely circulated resource about artists of this period and their practice in the Dutch language.²⁴ As a Northern European counterpart to Giorgio Vasari’s “*Vite*,” van Mander brought an early sense of

²² Jean Sorabella. "Venetian Color and Florentine Design," (online, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, October 2002), in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, <http://www.metmuseum.org> (accessed 20 March 2013).

²³ Thijs Weststeijn, *The Visible World: Samuel van Hoogstraten’s Art Theory and the Legitimation of Painting in the Dutch Golden Age* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 223.

²⁴ Amy Golahny, “Insights into the Dutch Vasari: Carel van Mander’s ‘Life of Titian’,” *Canadian Journal of Netherlandish Studies* (2001), 8-17.

art historical consciousness to the Dutch intellectual climate. The book is in large part a translation of Vasari's text into Dutch, and as a result, has often been dismissed as unoriginal writing that is not worthy of independent study. It is not until fairly recently that it has been critically analyzed as a text on its own terms, as in Miedema's edition of van Mander and in the work of Amy Golahny.²⁵

Van Mander's *Den Grondt der edel vry schilderconst* of 1604 was intended as a guide for amateur artists. Van Mander describes the terms *net* and *fijn*, "smooth" and "fine", versus *ruw* and *los* "rough" and "loose." The "looseness" refers to the visible brushstrokes, and "roughness" more specifically identifies the thickness of paint layers. These terms are in effect derivatives of Vasari's discussion of *disegno* and *colorito*. In addition to this most simple delineation between the two approaches other subtleties helped to differentiate conceptions of painterly style. Van Mander used several other terms to describe the rough style: *Teyckenconst*²⁶ refers to drawing and design; whereas, *Poeselijckheyt*²⁷ conveyed the pliancy of the paint surface marked by the brush, and *gheesticheydt* described spirited brushwork.²⁸ The expanding degree technical terminology is indicative of the extent of this theoretical debate. In the twelfth chapter of

²⁵ Karel Van Mander, *Lives*, ed. Hessel Miedma (Doornspijk: Davaco Spring, 1994); Amy Golahny, *Rembrandt's Reading: The Artist's Bookshelf on Ancient Poetry and History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003).

²⁶ Walter Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon: Karel van Mander's Schilder-boek* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 105.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

Den Grondt, “On the Painting of an Artist or Coloring,” van Mander suggests that a young artist should select one of these artistic modes. He says that selection of either the rough or smooth manner depends on the artist’s talent but also his spirit and personality. The use of the word spirit implies a sense of personality that is imperative to understanding the rough manner in particular.²⁹

The notion of “rough” and “smooth” seem to have been at the forefront of artistic consciousness in Rembrandt’s period. It seems reasonable to propose that Rembrandt would have been cognizant of the theoretical demarcation between the two schools, and as a result, his adoption of the *ruwe manier* was a deliberate choice. The following section outlines how the role of Titian became associated with the Dutch *ruwe manier* and how this in turn may have influenced Rembrandt’s late painting style.

TITIAN AND THE DUTCH RUWE MANIER

Titian’s reputation was critical to establishing this precedent for the rough manner in Dutch art. According to Golahny, van Mander’s *Life of Titian* reveals “particularly heavy editorializing” of Vasari’s original text.³⁰ In several instances he elaborates on the original Italian text, sometimes drawing independent conclusions. Van Mander uses Vasari’s *Vite* as a springboard to reconstruct the *disegno* versus *colortio* debate on his terms. Instead of directly translating Vasari’s text which championed the Florentine-style

²⁹ Karel van Mander. *The Foundation of the Noble Free Art of Painting*, trans. Elizabeth Honig, (Berkeley: University of California, 1982), 72.

³⁰ Golahny, “Insights into the Dutch Vasari,” 9.

disegno, van Mander modified the text to reflect a celebration of the Venetian-style *colorito*. He does this through a laudatory description of Titian's late style. Titian was perhaps the first prominent painter to use a looser, painterly technique. Vasari describes Titian's process as "pittura di macchia", translated as "painting with marks."³¹ The visibility of these marks—sometimes also translated as "splotches"—reveals the rougher manner in which Titian applied paint. Van Mander builds on Titian's status as a canonized artist in order to establish Dutch artists who he deems as stylistic successors to Titian's rough style.

Van Mander clearly articulates an appreciation Titian's rough technique in *Den Grondt*. The twelfth chapter is entitled "Painting of an Artist or Coloring", suggesting a direct connection to Vasari's *colorito*. Van Mander describes how Titian's paintings have the appearance of being painted easily but was in fact were the result of great effort. By outlining the challenge of this approach as a means of indirectly admiring the skill required for this technique. He also writes here about how Titian's thick paint creates a sense of animation that "one takes for almost life":

This manner of Titian's execution—from this especially good understanding and judgment—were considered wonderfully beautiful and pleasing. In this as Vasari says, is the Work hidden under the Art, and such painting one takes for almost life, as it is said, his paintings appear to be brushed-in (executed) with lightness and are certainly painted with effort.³²

Van Mander further asserts his admiration for Titian in *Den Grondt* when he relays how

³¹ Ernst van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 162.

³² Van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work*, 71.

the artist Hendrick Goltzius documented Titian during his travels from Haarlem to Italy. Van Mander writes that Goltzius' accounts describe the masterful Titian's selective distribution of colored lights. By choosing to include an anecdote about Goltzius memorizing Titian, he secures the place Titian's canonical status as an Italian master.³³

In *Het Schilderboek*, Van Mander injects implicit praise for Titian in biographical texts about Dutch artists. The entry about artist Jan van Calcker describes how Titian was a major influence in his work. Van Mander praises van Calcker for his "indistinguishable" emulation of Titian's work. Van Mander then proceeds by explicitly articulating that these ties to Titian bolster the image of Netherlandish painters:

One of the highest marks of honor . . . is being accepted, as a Netherlandish painter, by one of the great Italian masters. The most illustrious example of this is Dirck Barendsz, whom the great Titian himself treated as one of the family.³⁴

Barendsz went to Italy for seven years, and in van Mander's words, "nursed at Titian's bosom."³⁵ According to van Mander, the ability to emulate Titian places Calcker within the tradition of Italian painters even—he adds—as a Netherlandish artist. By marking his work as indistinguishable from those of Titian, he suggests that Calcker is able to cross into the esteemed territory of Italian artists. In van Mander's estimation, a clear connection to the Italian tradition of painting is one of the highest honors an artist can

³³ Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 105.

³⁴ Van Mander, *Lives*, 112.

³⁵ "Dirck Barentsen, die Schilder geboren wesende, noch daerenboven des grooten Titiaens boesem heeft ghenoten," (online; *Digitale bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse letteren*), www.dbnl.org (accessed 26 March 2013).

have.³⁶

Through the extensive scope of laudatory remarks about Titian, van Mander sanctions the Venetian master painter as the predecessor to Netherlandish art. He insinuates this role by drawing connections between Titian and Northern masters. As a consequence, he intimates a sense of lineage between Titian's *colorito* and Northern *gheesticheydt*—a more spirited and visceral use of paint. Samuel van Hoogstraten, one of Rembrandt's students, wrote a treatise on painting entitled *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderconst: anders de zichtbaere werelt* in 1678. In the *Inleyding*, van Hoogstraten confirms van Mander's appraisal of Titian. He describes Titian as an artist who "leaves unassimilated the broad brushstrokes on the panel, which . . . has all the greater [suggestive] force."³⁷

As we have seen, the *ruwe manier* is directly associated with Titian's style in Dutch writings. In contrast to Vasari's preference for *disegno*, the texts about Titian suggest the favorability of roughness—Vasari's *colorito*. Rembrandt may have latched onto these affirmative descriptions of Titian and emulated his technical approach as a means of establishing his position as a master painter, as well as demarcating a sense of "mature style."

³⁶ Van Mander, *Lives*, 67.

³⁷ "De redder daar van is dat deze . . . Beeltenissen zodanig doorwrocht en gelykvormig met de menschelyke gedaantens over een kwaamen, dat zy niet als geschilderd, maar vleesch en bloed, ja als beweegende beelden, vertoonden." In Thijs Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 236.

TITIAN AS A MODEL FOR REMBRANDT'S LATE STYLE

Just as aristocracy has descendants, so does the tradition of great artists. Rembrandt therefore worked to establish his artistic ancestry. Rembrandt seems to have been interested in establishing a direct lineage to historical masters as a means of asserting his artistic identity and legacy. He first utilized this strategy in his early career by aligning himself with Rubens. Rembrandt's 1636 painting *The Blinding of Samson* (fig. 20) embodies many characteristics that would have been identified as Rubenesque. The strong shadows and sharp diagonals recall a work by Rubens of the same subject that was completed thirty years prior, *Samson Taken By the Philistines* (fig. 21). Rembrandt modeled the formal appearance of this work in a precocious effort to supersede Rubens, in order to prove his own worth as an artist. The sharp *chiaroscuro* and the contorted gestures of the figures are virtuosic features that Rembrandt used in order to show that he could paint in a way that was characteristically Rubens, but do it better. The massive scale of this work—almost ten by eight feet—invokes a sense of grandeur and extravagance in the most literal sense.³⁸ Indeed, the work was completed as a “token” of appreciation for Constantijn Huygens, who arranged for the Stadhouder's commission of a passion series of paintings by Rembrandt.³⁹

Rubens carefully studied Titian—particularly during his years in Italy and Spain

³⁸ The dimensions of the painting are 302 x 236 cm.

³⁹ Constantijn Huygens, *Rembrandt's Letters* (1629-31), trans. Benjamin Binstock, excerpted in *Rembrandt's Letters to Huygens*. Primary Source Reading 30 for Columbia University Online, <http://www.learn.columbia.edu> (accessed February 26, 2013).

from 1600 to 1608. In his later life, Rembrandt, too, turned to Titian as an artistic model. It may be possible that Rembrandt was aware of the artistic relationship between Rubens and Titian; therefore, by emulating Titian, Rembrandt doubly secured his lineage—in the footsteps of both Titian, and by extension, of Rubens.

By associating with Titian, Rembrandt aligns himself with the Italian painting tradition as a means to asserting his role as a master painter. With the aim of emulating him and perhaps even of superseding Titian, Rembrandt seems to be cognizant of Titian's legacy in Amsterdam that is expressed in van Mander. Rembrandt builds on Titian's established position within the historical canon as a means to securing his position and legacy.

Although Rembrandt never traveled to Italy, several key links suggest his familiarity with Titian. It has been argued that Titian's work was directly influential for Rembrandt's rough manner, yet there is only tenuous evidence that could indicate that Rembrandt even saw any of Titian's late pictures in person. The most probable work by Titian that Rembrandt might have seen was his "Ariosto Portrait", *Man with a Quilted Sleeve* (1510), which was documented to have been in a collection in Amsterdam between 1637 and November 1641.⁴⁰ However this is an early portrait was not completed in Titian's "second style" that is characterized by looser paint handling.

Rembrandt's inventory, compiled after his 1656 bankruptcy, notes a "large book" of Titian, which is presumably of engravings and woodcuts. Although these prints may

⁴⁰ Bomford, *Art in the Making*, 118.

have been an important influence for Rembrandt, the print medium would have flattened the texture of the rough paint. It is most likely that the engravings in this book were by the Flemish artist, Cornelius Cort.⁴¹ A work such Cort's *The Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* after Titian's 1571 painting does not do justice to the sense of *colorito* from the paint medium in Titian's work (fig. 22). As a printmaker himself, Rembrandt may have responded to the lines and marks in the prints as shorthand for rough paint. The lines are supple, particularly in the depiction of billowing smoke, but even so there is no way to sense the extent of thick texture of the painting itself. Looking at a print after Titian simply does not give the same quality information about the painterly process, particularly about the thick impasto on the surface that is described more comprehensively in texts.

Instead of direct inspiration from firsthand exposure Titian's paintings, Rembrandt seems to have been influenced more generally by myth of Titian, as perpetuated and celebrated in contemporary Dutch art treatises. Rembrandt's use of the rough manner summons the cultural consciousness of Titian. Therefore, instead of emphasizing these tenuous connections between Rembrandt and Titian, it seems more fruitful to understand the ways in which Rembrandt would have known of Titian's mature style—a looser, painterly technique that was in many respects the earliest form of the rough manner. Although Van Mander's *Het Schilderboek* is notably absent from

⁴¹ Paul Crenshaw, *Rembrandt's Bankruptcy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 99-101.

Rembrandt's inventory, Golahny suggests that the text may still have been in his library.⁴² It is hard to imagine that he was not familiar with this text, or at the least, the notions from it that were echoed in other art theoretical treatises from the period. Indeed, a sort of "literacy" would have informed his training with Jacob van Swanenburgh and Pieter Lastman—both of whom received training influenced by the Italian tradition.⁴³ Even if he was not directly exposed to Van Mander's work, the writing reflects a taste surrounding Titian.

The work of Spanish Jesuit Balthasar Gracian, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* (1647), was translated into Dutch and widely read in Amsterdam. In a section quoted by Arnold Houbraken (1660-1719), he writes that "an ingenious painter saw that Titian had gone before him . . . He started to *pintar a lo valenton*, "paint with rough brushstrokes". People asked him why he did not paint *a lo suave y pulido* (with a smooth and polish manner) so that he could emulate Titian, and he wittily replied that he would rather be first in roughness than second in delicacy."⁴⁴

Despite Gracian's explanation, the emulation of Titian's work is no small feat. In *Den Grondt*, van Mander describes how artists tried to emulate Titian's second style, but with little success:

Various masters wanted to follow (imitate) this is execution (design?) but they have brought only a part to something ardently (?) good up to today. They wanted to equal the well-skilled and to have come to [arrived at] this noble

⁴² Golahny, *Rembrandt's Reading*, 232.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 59-71.

⁴⁴ Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 236.

belief themselves; since they believed that his work was done without effort, to which, however, the power of art with exceptional trouble was brought...”⁴⁵

The implication of this statement is that it is not easy to follow in the footsteps of Titian.

The mature style of Titian is not something that can easily be copied or transcended.

This does not deter Rembrandt. In the Frick *Self-Portrait*, he paints with a roughness of stroke that seems to fit the descriptions of Titian’s work. In the upper portion of his blouse, the fabric is depicted through thick vertical striations of paint. The viewer is able to read Rembrandt’s brushstroke as a downward gesture. At the initiation of the stroke at the top of the shirt, the paint is more fluid, but as more pressure was applied to the canvas and the brush’s paint was exhausted, the individual bristles dragged with paint create a surface of rough drybrush. These individual brushstrokes widen as the bristles pull apart as with the intensity of the stroke. The top of the blouse is also more thickly layered, as the concentration of paint was greater at the initiation point of the brush on the canvas, right after the paint was applied.

Ernst van de Wetering suggests that Rembrandt modeled his artistic biography after Titian’s in order to establish his position as a master painter.⁴⁶ Rembrandt’s use of the rough manner seems to be a means of cultivating the sense of a “mature style.” The rough manner was a way to model “mature style,” and Rembrandt used it as a means of

⁴⁵ Van Mander, *Den Grondt*, 23-24.

⁴⁶ Hubert von Sonnenburg, ed., *Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 78.

materially delineating the culmination of his own artistic biography.⁴⁷ Rembrandt establishes Titian as a reference point by establishing a similarity in formal approach. In this way, he aligns himself as part of a tradition of famous artists, and more specifically, as a direct descendent of Titian's style. Rembrandt also may have been interested in establishing a link to Titian as a means of asserting "mature style" within the cycle of his artistic life.

Titian also served as an archetype for the artist's life cycle. In *Den Grondt*, Van Mander describes the evolution of Titian's style from a smooth to a rough manner, from detailed execution—as described in number 22—to the second style, marked with "spots and coarse pencilstrokes":

22. We know of the great Titian (from the writings of Vasari which are so useful to us) that in the prime of his youth he took care to execute his art works with incredibly diligence and neatness. One could neither censure nor belittle these; rather they were pleasing to everyone, whether one stood at a distance or close to."

23. But finally, he executed his works differently, with spots and coarse pencilstrokes; these were then very natural when one stood somewhat distanced from them, because one was not allowed to examine them from nearby⁴⁸

In the "Life of Titian" from *Het Schilderboek*, van Mander again describes Titian's stylistic shift: "[Titian] first made his works completely crisply . . . and in his latest [years] he worked with brushstrokes that were bold and uneven and patch."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Van de Wetering, *The Painter at Work*, 162-63.

⁴⁸ Van Mander, *Den Grondt*, 71.

⁴⁹ Golahny, "Insights into the Dutch Vasari," 14.

Rembrandt, like Titian, began his painting career with *netticheydt*.⁵⁰ As a founding member of the Leiden *Feinmaler* School, his early works typically exemplify a tight linear style—typified by Gerard Dou. The shift to the rough manner in late life is implied in both Vasari and Van Mander’s texts to be a culmination the master artist’s career. By placing himself as the successor to Titian’s style, Rembrandt seems to have consciously envisioned his place in history. This strategy was apparently successful, as realized early in the historiography of Rembrandt. In 1702, Wybrand de Geest used artists such as early Titian and Jan van Eyck to describe the smooth style; however, instead of using late Titian to describe the rough manner as van Mander did in his texts, he uses Rembrandt to explicate the rough manner: “But now one may also see a rough style of painting, as that of Rembrandt, and others like him.”⁵¹ Citing Rembrandt in lieu of Titian clearly signifies the sense of artistic continuity and lineage of the Rough manner, through from the Venetian Renaissance to the Dutch Baroque. De Piles, De Geest, and Felibien, among other theorists, framed their admiration for Rembrandt’s style as an extension of their appreciation for Titian.

Rembrandt’s utilization of the *ruwe manier* allowed him to link his technical practice with that of Titian. Through this association, Rembrandt was able to elevate his status and secure a position as a master painter. The employment of the *ruwe manier* also

⁵⁰ *Nettichyedt* is a term used by van Mander in chapter 12 of *Den Grondt* to refer to the panels of Dürer, Lucas, Bruegel, and Jan van Eyck. See Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 60.

⁵¹ Golahny, “Insights into the Dutch Vasari,” 14.

helped to delineated Rembrandt's late style, as the technique was acknowledged even in Vasari's writing as a mode for the mature artist. As discussed in the first section of this chapter, the Frick *Self-Portrait* presents an amalgam of positions of a royal prince and of an artist. This section describes how the *ruwe manier* is a vehicle for establishing the princely role, specifically, as an artistic heir to Titian. The next chapter analyzes how the *ruwe manier* also supports the second element—Rembrandt as a captivating and compelling artist through his mastery of materials.

Chapter III: Rhetorical Theory of the *Ruwe Manier*

THE PRESENCE OF MATERIAL PROCESS

In a discussion of the Frick *Self-Portrait*, Peter Schjedahl asks, “Are we sitting in Rembrandt’s lap?”⁵² Although in this statement Schjedahl refers to the perspective of Rembrandt’s legs that almost seem to protrude into the viewer’s space, the statement also is true of the way that Rembrandt invites the viewer to experience the physicality of his painting process. The most recent conservation of this portrait, we can see that Rembrandt originally positioned himself at an angle. The underpainting that is now visible through x-ray shows the edge of the chair tilted to the side (fig. 23).⁵³ As a result, Rembrandt’s torso was somewhat to the left, in accordance with the portraiture tradition in this period. However, as he was working, he shifted away from the more conventional three-quarters view to a fully frontal one. The result is a striking departure from the norms of portraiture in this period. He is so forward in the picture plane that the tips of his knees and hand almost seem to extend into the viewers’ space.

Compounded by the bold facial expression and the exotic costume, Rembrandt depicts himself in a position of power. Placed “embarrassingly close to the foreground of

⁵² Peter Schjedahl, “Dutch Treat,” 14.

⁵³ Colin Bailey, *Rembrandt and His School*, 24.

the picture plane,”⁵⁴ his body crowds the composition. The viewer is confronted with Rembrandt’s presence, and he leaves no place for the eye to wander. The viewer cannot see the details of the chair except for the left curve of the molding of the left arm; however, because of the insistently upright posture, it is hard to conceive it is anything but a throne. He draws on the tradition of artist as aristocrat, a pattern in Dutch art.

Alpers writes that “if Rembrandt’s manner of painting hardly outlived his presence, the isolate self that he invented in paint did.”⁵⁵ Through the material statement of Rembrandt’s painted gesture, he infused himself in the very process of the painting itself. The strokes serve as a type of iconographic marker, signifying Rembrandt’s distinctive hand. In effect, Rembrandt’s characteristic rough manner transfigures any work into a self-portrait of sorts, highlighting the motions of the artist’s hand. The ready availability of technical information on the painting process, such as individual brushstrokes, gives the viewer of the painter a clear representation of the artist’s hand. As viewers, we are aware of Rembrandt as the agent of artistic action and a testament to the creator of the painting—a celebration of the artist’s hand.⁵⁶ Houbraken tells us Frans Hals laid his portraits “thickly and impasted” and that “now we must put in the master’s

⁵⁴ Ernst van de Wetering, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings, Vol. 4: The Self-Portraits* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 465.

⁵⁵ Alpers, *Rembrandt’s Enterprise*, 33.

⁵⁶ This notion is most closely associated with Albrecht Durer. See Joseph Koerner, *Durer’s Hands* (New York: The Frick Collection, 2006), 24.

touch.”⁵⁷ Amsterdam enjoyed a thriving art market, in which artists were driven by the market to assert individual creativity. Empowered by their sense of financial autonomy, “branding” oneself through unique style became imbued with commercial incentive. There was an increased celebration of “self” in art, brought forth by this new consciousness as driven by these social and economic factors. The art market engendered a commercial incentive for artistic originality, as well as a need for an artist to demonstrate his virtuosity. The *ruwe manier* was a means to both of these goals.

In a journal entry dated November 3, 1850, Eugene Delacroix wrote:

“Titian probably never knew how he was going to finish a picture. Rembrandt must often have been in the same state of mind. His extravagantly vigorous brushstrokes were less the result of planned execution than of feeling his way with repeated touches.”⁵⁸

Delacroix’s observations on both Titian and Rembrandt describe the working process of the artist as a direct communion with the canvas, “feeling his way . . . [through] touches” as opposed to a “planned execution.” As a painter himself, Delacroix was in a position to envision the vantage point of the painter, as he can relate himself directly to the technique. He responded to the “vigorous brushstrokes” as the result of an “unmediated” state; Rembrandt seems to be engaged directly with the paint. Delacroix identifies Rembrandt’s painting as the result of a stream-of-consciousness communion with the canvas.

⁵⁷ Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 236.

⁵⁸ Eugene Delacroix, *The Journal of Eugene Delacroix*, trans. Walter Pach (New York: Crown Publishers, 1948), 249.

THE BOLDNESS OF IMPROVISATION

The degree of planning of a painting has historical precedence in the *disegno/colorito* debate, as relayed by van Mander. In *Het Schilderboek*, he delineates the difference between Michelangelo and Titian by contrasting the degree of planning involved in the work. Michelangelo uses sketches [cartoons] to meticulously plan and trace his compositions. The result is a premeditated scheme with a sense of the final product before the painting even begins. The execution of prefatory drawings was a way to realize the artist's *voornemen*, "idea," before painting.⁵⁹ Michelangelo stages his compositions by drawing a finished sketch before taking up the brush. Van Mander describes Michelangelo's process in two passages, the first from *Het Schilderboek* and the second from *Den Grondt*:

Whether they conceive their things for walls or panels, [they] devise their studied cartoons alertly and diligently from sketched inventions. . . . But while the wall is still soft, they impress the cartoon upon it, as has been said, In order to paint in fresco with a learned hand.⁶⁰

Our modern ancestors . . . used cartoons which they transferred to this smooth white [ground], on which they were to trace them after they had blacked the verso with chalk or graphite, and then they traced the whole thing delicately.⁶¹

On the other hand, Van Mander writes that Titian worked out his compositions directly on the canvas in his late life, sidestepping the processes of planning and drawing. He

⁵⁹ "The idea, imagine, or thought [*voornemen*] must be ripe before it can be executed." In van de Wetering, *The Painter at Work*, 88.

⁶⁰ Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 106

⁶¹ Van Mander, *Den Grondt*, 70.

writes a favorable review of this technique:

Of the great Titian we note in Vasari's profitable text how . . . he executed his last works with patches and rough strokes. . . As one sees, these things have been covered with layers of color, and there is imponderably much effort in them. This manner of work, proceeding as it does from Titian's good judgment and understanding, is esteemed for its astonishing beauty and pleasing aspects.⁶²

By applying paint directly on the canvas creates not only a different aesthetic, but also carries a deeper theoretical implication. In the *Inleyding*, van Hoogstraten describes the loose manner as the way that the artist mixes paint directly and immediately on the canvas instead of on the palette, allowing the paint to remain unmixed on the surface: "Then take with liberty brushes, so many as can be held in one hand, and let each stroke be single, leaving the colors almost unmixed in many places."⁶³ He wrote that the artist must use a "lively mode of handling as to smoothly express the different planes or surfaces . . . a playful freedom, without even proceeding to polishing or blending . . . paint thickly as you please, smoothness will, by subsequent operations, creep in of itself."⁶⁴ By emphasizing the lack of polishing or blending, van Hoogstraten sanctions the rough manner as a desirable pictorial mode.

This improvisatory sense of composition—a more free-flowing approach instead of a rigorously planned one—was associated with a sense of boldness. This boldness likely refers to the willingness to be vulnerable and direct in expression with paint,

⁶² Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 107.

⁶³ Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 230.

⁶⁴ Bomford, *Art in the Making*, 33.

without a mediated and clear *voornemen*, “idea.” Gerard Lairesse wrote that the bulk of the painting task is the “working up” of the picture.⁶⁵ Indeed, Rembrandt's process could be summed up as an organic “working up” of several factors at once: color, composition, and texture, but also the “working up” of the gusto and emotion. The thickness of the *ruwe manier* supports this notion of “worked up” paint and supports the improvisatory sense of composition.

It seems possible that his ability to work in this proto-impressionistic manner might be due to his extensive background as a draftsman. Rembrandt’s 1640 study of Cornelis Anslo in the British Museum (fig. 24) demonstrates a roughness that is characteristic of the medium. In drawings, by definition, an artist works up the texture through the buildup of composition and line. Here, Rembrandt uses sketchy lines to block the composition and form that would later become a print. The process of drawing is integral in the planning phases of prints. In his late period, Rembrandt did not make any prints. Perhaps he sublimated the freedom of drawing technique into his painting practice.

Rembrandt’s *ruwe manier* also underscores the theoretical notion of *sprezzatura*. The term *sprezzatura* was first coined by Baldassare Castiglione’s *Courtier’s Manual* to describe feigned carelessness.⁶⁶ Castiglione proposes that human action is artifice and must be concealed. In terms of painting, *sprezzatura* was a means of creating the illusion of technical composure. Artists often used *sprezzatura* to flaunt their virtuosity

⁶⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁶⁶ Incidentally, Baldassare Castiglione was depicted in the portrait by Titian that was in Amsterdam in Rembrandt’s time.

by crafting a sense of naturalness and ease—even if a painting was in fact quite difficult to execute. Anthony van Dyck utilized this technique to demonstrate an air of effortless in the portraiture of noble English gentlemen, famously of King Charles I.

The formal result in paintings is a sense of ease, sometimes resulting in a rough and unfinished canvas. The word *lichtveerdicheydt* serves as the Dutch counterpart to Castiglione’s *sprezzatura*. It describes when the brush seems to move quickly, lightly and securely to create the illusion of facile execution.⁶⁷ Another word, *ghemackelikcheydt*, describes the chaos of paint. However, van Mander discusses how *sprezzatura* in painting is not as simple as it appears:

*For, as Vasari says, there art conceals art, and one fancies such pleasing to be life itself, and through it is said that such things seem facile, they have been done with pain.*⁶⁸

Van Hoogstraten echoes this sentiment in *Inelyding*, “there is much more difficulty in it than one would think. . . .The labor is concealed by Great Art; things appear effortless, which were done painstakingly.”⁶⁹ The use of *sprezzatura*, which is sometimes manifest as *ruwe manier*, is also a means of demonstrating virtuosity.

In the Frick *Self-Portrait*, Rembrandt utilizes *ruwe manier* to showcase a sense of *sprezzatura* in what appears as an unrehearsed process. In the portrait, he wears crimson sash that leashes the billowing folds of the blouse. The vertical striations of the shirt are bunched towards a central gathering that falls right above the sash. Naturally, the sash is

⁶⁷ Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 105.

⁶⁸ Van de Wetering, *The Painter at Work*, 107.

⁶⁹ Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 237.

intended to tie over the shirt. However, when looking closely at the top of the sash, there is a bizarre smudge (fig. 25). The ochre paint of the shirt seems to encroach on the sash. In departure from the vertical rhythm of brushstrokes, this mark is at the horizontal angle of the sash. It seems to be painted over the sash, even though the blouse is beneath it. Similarly, in the area beneath the sash, there is a swift dry-brush mark of the blouse color that runs over the edge of the sash. These inverted overlap of the bottom layer of clothing on top of the outer one creates an optical confusion if taken as a literal depiction of the clothing.

It appears that Rembrandt did not have a clear plan in terms of the execution of this work. Because the sash would be a layer of clothing above the blouse, one would expect the red paint to supersede the ochre tone of the shirt. If Rembrandt had made prefatory drawings for this work, one would presume that he would have taken care of the final layers of the shirt before proceeding to paint the red sash. Instead, it seems that he completed the sash and then returned to the ochre shade of the shirt. Perhaps he narrowed the width of the sash and he painted over the edges in order to do so? Or perhaps, he returned to the color in order to touch up some detail in the shirt and became carried away with the color?

Although we will never know the answers to these questions, what is clear is the fact that Rembrandt left these ochre marks on the canvas visible to the viewer. Since this is a self-portrait rather than a commissioned work, Rembrandt may have felt greater liberty to confuse the layers of paint and what they represent. The notion of working out

the composition on the canvas is critical to understanding Rembrandt's use of the *ruwe manier*. The sense of transparency of the artistic process suggests that the work itself may reveal the way that it is made.

THE TASTE FOR TRANSPARENCY AND KUNSTWOLLEN: VISIBLE PENTIMENTI AND THE *RUWE MANIER*

There is a shift of artistic ideals among some masters in this period from imitative illusionism as to a style that exposed the material process of painting. This change in priorities is highlighted by the interest in unfinished works. In particular, there was purportedly a high demand for incomplete works by Titian. Jacopo Almo Viovan (1544-1628), one of Titian's last pupils, noted that "the most discerning connoisseurs" bought unfinished paintings which Titian left in his studio with the intention of finishing at a later point.⁷⁰ This fact is intriguing because it not only demonstrates the strong interest in Titian as extensively discussed in the former, but also an interest in the formal "roughness" of unfinished work. In an unfinished work, sketchy brushwork from the early layers is exposed in plain view. The result is that some of the more preparatory sections from early technical stages are shown openly for the viewer. These inner sections reveal different layers of the artistic process in a way that made the process of the artist more transparent. To see through to the more fundamental stages of a painting is to be able to examine the scaffolding of a partially completed building. Incomplete

⁷⁰ Van de Wetering, *The Painter at Work*, 164.

works, therefore, engage the viewer in a challenging manner.

Van Hoogstraten also advocates a rough and unfinished appearance “playful movement to the brush, without ever causing colors to melt into each other or to gradually diminish.”⁷¹ An interest in unfinished work reveals an implicit interest with the process of painting. This is particularly true with regard to painters in the tradition of Titian, such as Rembrandt, who utilized an improvisatory process in painting without premeditated compositional planning and sketches. As a result, the under layers are more dynamic and mutable, at the discretion of the artist’s whim. The result is an ambiguity and tension regarding the state of finish. Some parts seem to be more worked up than others. A viewer can easily see the ground, and there is exposed brushwork. By leaving crudely exposed marks, Rembrandt demonstrate a sense of artistic fervor and urgency during his painting. Italian Painter Gian Paolo Lomazzo (1538-1592) wrote that [they] “derive[d] such extreme delight from invention that they do not have the patience to finish any work they begin.”⁷²

Houbraken writes about the uncertain state of finish in Rembrandt’s work.⁷³ Indeed, according to Houbraken, Rembrandt was open about the degree of finish of a work. He describes paintings in which “some parts were worked up in great detail, while the remainder was smeared as if by a coarse tarbrush, without considering the drawing ... He was not to be dissuaded from this practise, saying in justification that a work was

⁷¹ Bomford, *Art in the Making*, 33.

⁷² Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 236.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

finished when the master achieved his intention in it.”⁷⁴

The visibility of *pentimenti* also echoes the ambiguity of the completeness of a painting. Before this period, it was expected that “mistakes” would be concealed in the final layers of fine-tuning. The roughness of exposed *pentimenti* suggests a sense that the painting is incomplete. Karel van Mander wrote in *Den Grondt* that those “who are fertile in invention do as the bold do, improving a fault here and there.”⁷⁵ By calling artists that make changes directly on the canvas “bold” and “fertile in invention,” van Mander implies an admiration for this directness. Rembrandt’s visible *pentimento* here is all the bolder, as he does not even make an effort to mask it.

In the portrait, the sash doubles over Rembrandt’s torso. One of the strands of the ribbon drops below, weighed down by the heaviness of the rich fabric. It curves downwards into the crevice of his overcoat. Then, in the bottom left, it reemerges, as Rembrandt paints this terminal decorative tassel. This piece rests on his right knee, molding its solid shape. To the left of this fabric is a large smear of the same distinctive crimson as the sash. It seems that when Rembrandt changed the position of the sash angle at the bottom. This rugged passage is unblended; the viewer can still see the crude brushwork sweeping across the ochre fabric of his shirt. Rembrandt makes a cursory effort to cover up the extraneous fabric segment, but the paint was still wet. Instead, he drags the light color over it, creating wet-into-wet. As a result, the red paint is dragged

⁷⁴ Van de Wetering, *The Painter at Work*, 164.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 166.

from underneath, smudged into the lighter color of the shirt. He seems to have been unconcerned with disguising his decision to shift the final piece of the sash.

This passage of the painting embodies an important aspect of Rembrandt's practice. By leaving this *pentimento* unabashedly visible, he invites the viewer to partake in the inner workings of his creative practice. The viewer can easily see where the sash was initially situated and then where it was relocated. Instead of trying to disguise his paint as a representational illusion, he exposes the inner workings of the painting practice. Rembrandt unabashedly celebrates that he was indeed working with paint.

Rembrandt's *ruwe manier* has been dismissed as a vehicle for creating painted effects that register when standing at a great distance. I argue instead that Rembrandt invites the viewer to stand close and revel in his painterly practice. Several texts discuss the relationship between rough paint and the viewer's distance from the canvas, but these writings are often cited out of context. Indeed, the distance of a viewer from the canvas affects the perception of the surface texture; from a further vantage point, the texture of a painting can dissolve, due to a sort of optical mixing. Van Mander writes that the later paintings by Titian in a rough style "seemed natural from afar, but could not abide close viewing."⁷⁶ In one of Rembrandt's only writings about art, he also reflects this sentiment. His letter to Contantijn Huygens from 27 January 1639 advises his patron to hang a gift painting at a great distance: "My lord, hang this piece in a strong light and where one can

⁷⁶ Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 107.

stand at a distance, so it will sparkle at its best.”⁷⁷ The sentiment of this statement is confirmed in an anecdote documented by Arnold Houbraken, that Rembrandt “tugged people away who peered too closely at his pictures when visiting his studio, saying ‘The smell of paint would bother you.’”⁷⁸

Collectively, these statements have been taken to suggest that Rembrandt prefers his rough paintings to be viewed from a distance.⁷⁹ However, these statements must be considered within a more specific context. Rembrandt’s letter to Huygens is presumably with regard to *The Blinding of Samson* in Frankfurt (Städel Museum), which was completed as a gift for Huygens in the same year. The style of this painting is smoother, and the need for distance seems more to reflect the need to stand back from such a large-scale canvas in order to make sense of its entirety. Van de Wetering notes that classical literature also speaks to the subject of distance from a painting as a means of appreciating it. Horace wrote “A poem is like a picture: one strikes your fancy more, the nearer you stand; another, the farther away.” This statement suggests that the scale affects the way that we can appreciate the details of the work.⁸⁰ Horace identifies the need to assess which distance “strikes your fancy more.” In Rembrandt’s *The Artist in His Studio* in Boston, the painter stands far back from the easel, to examine the painting and possibly the unseen model in the studio. This painting helps to define his early method as opposed

⁷⁷ Van de Wetering, *The Painter at Work*, 251.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁷⁹ Alpers, *Rembrandt’s Enterprise*, 17.

⁸⁰ Van de Wetering, *The Painter at Work*, 164.

to that in the late 1650s. It is not sensible to apply this preference for distant viewing for Rembrandt's late works because the Frick Self-Portrait has several passages of rough texture that protrude so much from the canvas that they are visible even from a great distance. Instead of utilizing texture as a means of creating pictorial effects at a distance, Rembrandt asserts the roughness of texture as a means of demonstrating virtuosity and conveying the emotional impetus of the work. Even at a great distance, the painterly strokes clearly protrude from the Frick portrait's surface. Rembrandt seems to consciously elucidate the *ruwe manier* such that it is still readily visible, even with distance from the canvas.

In his later career, even Rembrandt's technique shifted to facilitate the *ruwe manier* more readily. In the mid-1640s, Rembrandt began to experiment with a new material for the ground of the canvas. Instead of using the traditional, multi-step procedure, Rembrandt implemented a new technique that could be prepared in house and significantly more cheaply. This new process utilized a single layer of sieved quartz that was brushed onto the canvas.⁸¹ This practice is unique to Rembrandt and a small circle of his pupils. Although Rembrandt may have used this new ground material purely because it was much simpler and economical—particularly at a time of severe financial struggle—this change in ground also created a different formal effect. The tooth of the sieved quartz enabled a greater buildup of impasto than with the more traditional

⁸¹ Bomford, *Art in the Making*, 28.

ground.⁸²

The use of the *ruwe manier* was a means for Rembrandt to brandish his artistic virtuosity and shape a dynamic engagement of the viewer with the practice of painting. Vasari wrote—and van Mander reiterated in his translation—that young artists needed detailed technical training before they could move to a rougher and looser style.⁸³ At first it may seem counterintuitive that a rough style would take longer to develop than the finer one; however, an artist must first thoroughly understand the mechanics of paint, and brushwork, in order to have liberty with it. In this sense, Vasari recognizes this degree of sophistication associated with the technical mode of the rough manner; there is therefore an implied difficulty to the proper execution of the rough manner, which implies years of rigorous formal training. Rembrandt's usage of the rough manner, therefore, reflects an interest in representing expertise and assurance of his technique.

PERFORMATIVE QUALITY OF THE ROUGH MANNER

With a rougher style, Rembrandt conveys the performative aspect of his artist's process due to the readily available information—through textured brushstrokes—present on the plane of the canvas. Alois Riegl coined the term *Kunstwollen* as the “will to [create] art.” He elaborates that *Kunstwollen* “would overcome technical limitations--

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Van de Wetering, *The Painter at Work*, 165.

technique was a ‘coefficient of friction.’⁸⁴ This notion of *Kunstwollen* implies a sense of artistic conviction that supersedes the technical obstacles involved with producing a work of art. In the moment of creation, the artist utilizes whatever means to convey the emotional impetus of the work. In Riegl’s view, *Kunstwollen* is not—as it is often misconstrued—a broad and sweeping instinct to create art. Instead, the “aesthetic urge” is channeled in specific directions, such as “the specific way in which man wants things to be shaped or colored.”⁸⁵ In other words, the creative volition is channeled into a “pre-structured system of taxonomy,” with specificity to its period.⁸⁶

There is rhetorical value of the struggle of a work, visible in the effort to actualize the *Kunstwollen*. Van Hoogstraten writes extensively about how a rough approach to paint holds greater expressive capability. Van Hoogstraten seems to be generally interested in preserving the sense artistic urgency—*Kunstwollen*. He argues that the choice for the rough or smooth manner is a function of the artist’s character. The rough manner signifies an “alert” nature, and working in a style of “stiff smoothness” is a side-effect of the “sleepiness that comes with a lack for creative urge.”⁸⁷ He also instructs artists not to get caught up with intricate details, lest they lose the sense of urgency. Van Hoogstraten writes “one drives the grace out of one’s work if one paints over it too

⁸⁴ Ibid., 136.

⁸⁵ Wolfgang Kemp, “Introduction,” in *Alois Riegl’s The Group Portraiture of Holland*. (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute: 1999), 3.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 234.

often.”⁸⁸ He also dismisses paintings by artists such as Gerard van Honthorst and Gerard Dou, who paint in a much finer style, expressing that the paintings by Protogenes “were marred by their neatness.”⁸⁹ The implication here is that works that are too fine do not have much emotional substance. He emphasizes this point even further by criticizing works that were “made lightly without great toil . . . without much racking of brains.”⁹⁰

In this way, the creative energy exceeds the technical parameters of the artistic process. The result is a free flow of energy between the artist and the act of creating. This dynamic communion is an unmediated performance. Like the blind man, he feels his way through the painting. Justus Lipsius (1547-1606) wrote “*fundo, non scribo*,” “I pour my heart out, I do not write.”⁹¹ The rhetorical excess is marked by the sense of urgency that is visible in the work so championed by van Hoogstraten. Through this “racking of brains,” an artist is able to achieve the most effective emotional impetus.

As noted by Thijs Weststeijn, the lexical center of the word “handling” has a strong bearing on its meaning in Dutch practice. In Dutch, *handeling* holds a wider meaning than the English word “handling.”⁹² The Dutch word signifies an “act” or “action”, as in the various acts—*Handelingen*—of a play. The discussion of *handeling* therefore is a performative vehicle; painting is thus transfigured into a performative art.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 236.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 132.

⁹¹ Ibid., 234.

⁹² Ibid.

In Dutch rhetorical theory, Gerardus Vossius (1577-1649) describes *handeling* as the orator's ability to involve his audience in his argument by appealing to all of his senses.⁹³ In painting, the *handelsmark* is the specific trademark of an individual painter. The theoretical implication, therefore, of individual brushmarks indicates a performative act—through iterations of paint.

Rembrandt performs the Frick *Self-Portrait* through his singular *handelmark*. For Rembrandt, the act of painting was inextricably linked to the work itself. The sweeps of gestures over the surface of the canvas are left exposed for the viewer as a means of establishing the grounds of painting as a performative art. The aggressive presence of paint in the Frick portrait marks the vigorous spirit of Rembrandt's emotional impetus.

Vasari wrote that Titian in his later life used his fingers to paint more than the paintbrush. By forming direct contact between the artist and the canvas, Titian removed the intermediary tool of the artist—the brush. He was documented to have worked directly through a sense of touch and immediacy. The use of the body itself as a vehicle for painting was a means of breaking down the barrier of technique, described as a “coefficient of friction” of *Kunstwollen*. Along these lines, van Hoogstraten wrote that Cornelis Ketel could paint with his fingers and feet “to demonstrate that the master, not the brush, is the painter.” Ketel was clearly an important artist for van Hoogstraten, who places his portrait on the title page of the chapter devoted to color (fig. 26).

Rembrandt's working process is experimental and reaching. Curious about the

⁹³ Ibid.

material quality of paint itself, he sometimes mixed the paint with sand and used the backside (butt) of brushes to scrape away surfaces. The paint handling is not only a theoretical concept in the artist's thoughts, but deeply rooted in his body. The corporeality of his painting is evident in the visibility of sweeping gestures. He seems to have been interested in the materiality of paint itself as a substance and how it relates to his body. Rembrandt also uses his bodily gestures as a direct means of communion with the canvas. Like Titian, he uses his fingerprints in his work. In an x-ray of the Frick *Self-Portrait*, conservators have found evidence of this process. On the shadow side of his face, while shaping the hollow of his cheek, Rembrandt used his thumb to partially remove the lead white.⁹⁴ Even though this detail is not visible with the naked eye, it provides compelling evidence for the expressive impetus of this work. In this view, the *ruwe manier* was a natural consequence of this unmediated communion between Rembrandt and the canvas.

TEXTURE, TOUCH, AND BLINDNESS

In *Den Grondt*, Van Mander describes the *ruwe manier* as a protrusion of the thickly painted surface that creates a sculptural relief, "Today, one can touch the work from either side as would a blind man. For today the colors lie so unevenly and rough that one can take them for reliefs carved in hard stone."⁹⁵ This reference to blindness in a

⁹⁴ Conversation with Dorothy Mahon (conservator), March 13, 2013.

⁹⁵ Van Mander, *Den Grondt*, 71.

description of the *ruwe manier* is perhaps the key to understanding what Rembrandt hoped to achieve through the use of the *ruwe manier*.

The theme of blindness was a preoccupation in Rembrandt's work. Kenneth Clark wrote that Rembrandt "turned again and again to the theme of blindness."⁹⁶ One would expect a painter to emphasize the acuity of the ocular apparatus, but instead, Rembrandt emphasizes the essence of his work through its tactility. Ironically, the blind man who sees the world through touch is the ideal model for Rembrandt because he inverts the values of sight and touch. This analysis demonstrates how the use of *ruwe manier* allows Rembrandt to sculpt the painted surface as a blind man—through his hands instead of his eyes.

Painting one's own hands in a self-portrait must be a peculiar task for any artist. This is particularly true in the act of painting one's primary painting hand. Unlike the rest of a portrait which can be executed from sight, this hand cannot simultaneously work and pose. Rembrandt makes the most of this predicament by emphasizing these hands as the showcase of the exhibition. Pushed against the front of the picture plane are Rembrandt's two hands. They appear disproportionately large, even when their close perspective is taken into consideration. The hands rest with authority and nonchalance off the edge of his large chair.

If the role of the hands does not seem prominent enough, Rembrandt takes an additional step to assert their importance. The placement of his signature is right below

⁹⁶ Kenneth Clark, *Rembrandt and the Italian Renaissance* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968), 78.

his right hand. By electing to place the signature here, he asserts his active agency in the creation of the painting. This positioning of the signature is unique for Rembrandt's self-portraits. The *Self-Portrait* from 1660 in the Metropolitan Museum has a signature in the negative space to the right of the torso. In fact, many of the portraits from his later life do not have a visible/prominent signature at all, such as the *Self-Portrait* from 1669 in the National Gallery in London.

The right hand is the brightest feature of the composition. Bright light emanating from an object is a trope in Northern Europe in this period for holiness. In Matthias Stomer's *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 27), the baby Jesus is depicted with a strong glow. The light from his body is the source of light for the entire composition. Rembrandt also utilized this iconographic method to represent Jesus as a holy figure. In his 1627 painting *Flight into Egypt* (fig. 28), Rembrandt encircles Christ's head with an accentuated halo that highlights his divinity. The bright rays emanate from the top of the head, invoking a sacral quality that transcends earthly representation.

Just as halos encircle holy figures to highlight their divinity, the light on Rembrandt's hands emphasizes their sacral quality. Rembrandt uses light to demonstrate a sense of pride and reverence for his hands. In particular, light emanates prominently from this right hand—Rembrandt's working hand as a painter. The hand is Rembrandt's agency for his work as an artist, emphasizing the role of touch.

The thickest painting also seems to fall on the hands. The protrusion of the paint from the surface helps to emphasize their foreshortened extension into the viewer's

space. The bold impasto on the hands, however, also echoes the tactile quality of the paint itself. By localizing the thickest impasto on the hands, he mirrors the gesture of the hands themselves. He asserts his agency as a painter by not only depicting his hands, but also the searching quality of the brushwork--the movement of those very hands in the execution of the painting. In a sense, Rembrandt's rough texture on the hands is a means of doubly asserting the role of touch for his painterly process.

The left hand that holds the staff has several brushstrokes that seem indexical. At the first knuckle joint of the forefinger, Rembrandt painted a round section of slightly redder flesh color. This circular mark breaks up the visible brushstroke that moves laterally across the finger in a lighter, more yellow tone. Slightly to the right, there is another pinkish speck that mimics the color of the dot on the knuckle. This small splash of paint may be the excess from the first mark, dabbled over the rest of the hand in the intensity of painting. This pinkish tone is then echoed a third time, on the upper tip of the middle finger. Rembrandt seems to use it here as a means of representing the shadow, but the modeling does not follow expectations and the color is somewhat jarring there.

Instead of placing visual emphasis on his eyes, Rembrandt consciously puts the hands at the forefront of the composition. This inversion of the senses is an important tenant in this period. There are many writings about which sense was superior between touch and sight. In *La Diapotrique* (1637) Descartes attempts to describe the ocular mechanism. Rods in the air, he argued, affected the eye, just as a hand is affected when

touched by a stick (fig. 29).⁹⁷ In a sense, he argues that the way that we see is through the means of touch. Rembrandt uses touch to represent sight, where “seeing is done with hands instead of with Descartes’ sticks.”⁹⁸

The painting *Jacob Blessing the Sons of Joseph* (1656) is another work that features blindness. Painted in the rough manner with “a sculptural surface,”⁹⁹ the painting depicts the moment in the biblical narrative when Jacob blesses his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. In the story, Jacob crosses his arms and blesses his younger son Ephraim instead of the older Manasseh. Joseph, who observes this action, tries to correct Jacob in his blessing, but Jacob replied that this was a deliberate decision. He says, “I know it, my son, I know it.” Although Rembrandt does not depict the crossed arms, he highlights the dignity and wisdom of the aging and blind Jacob. Jacob knows through feel, and although he is blind, he is wise.

Rembrandt completed *Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer* in 1653, just a few years apart from the Frick portrait. Unlike the Frick *Self-Portrait*, this painting was a commission, by Don Antonio Ruffo of Sicily. As in the Frick portrait, hands are a key point of emphasis in this painting. The two hands are oversized and not proportional to the figures. The billowing sleeves of Aristotle’s massive coat accent the gestures of the hands. The activity of the hands is critical to an understanding of this work. According to

⁹⁷ Alpers, *Rembrandt’s Enterprise*, 19.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁹⁹ Amy Crawford, “An Interview with Stephanie Dickey, Author of ‘Rembrandt at 400’,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, 12 Dec. 2012, www.smithsonianmag.com (accessed 24 Feb. 2013).

Julius Held's rigorous analysis of the painting, the imaginary encounter seems to be a comparison between two "sets of values." In one hand, Aristotle places his hand on the thick gold chain and his medallion, bestowed to him by Alexander the Great. This left hand seems to emphasize worldly things. However, the other hand is resting on Homer's head, representing his "unequaled diction and thought."¹⁰⁰

The dichotomy between the two hands contrasts the sense of feeling through touch and intellectualizing through visualization. The writings in the large stack of books behind the bust are illegible and cast to the background of the composition. Instead, the primary source of Aristotle's inspiration is through touch, not through reading. This point is further emphasized by the fact that Aristotle's eyes do not look at the bust, but instead appear to be glazed and introspective. He does not use his eyes but instead gains insight from the direct sensation of touch. Aristotle himself wrote that the way that we see is through touch.¹⁰¹ The eyes do not seem to forge a point of contact as concretely. Aristotle gazes, but with a cloudy expression which seems to turn introspectively, unfocused on the material world. Instead, the two characters interact through the contact point of Aristotle's hand on the bust's head. The two hands appear in different colors. The relationship between the two characters is established primarily through this touch. In this period, the roughness of Homer's rhetorical style was considered to be the hallmark of his performance. The fact that Homer was blind places him in the position of

¹⁰⁰ Julius Held, *Rembrandt's "Aristotle" and Other Rembrandt Studies*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

¹⁰¹ Alpers, *Rembrandt's Enterprise*, 70.

the “blind seer”—a trope derived from biblical and classical texts. Like the aging Jacob or Homer, Rembrandt feels his way through painting. Instead of using his vision to execute a composition, he uses using thick textures to find a sense of the world.

Chapter IV: Neuroaesthetics—A New Methodology for Understanding the *Ruwe Manier*

This section is intended to serve as an exploratory investigation of the field of “neuroaesthetics.” The burgeoning field of “neuroaesthetics” offers the exciting prospect of novel methodologies for researching and understanding art. Coined by the neuroscientist Semir Zeki in *Inner Vision*¹⁰², the term refers to the intersection of two distinct academic fields: cognitive neuroscience and art theory. Art Historian John Onians fashioned a similar term, “neuro art history” to describe this cross-disciplinary effort. Because the field is in such a nascent stage, there is not yet a clear consensus about the parameters and goals for this work.¹⁰³

While there is a rapidly increasing body of neuroaesthetic literature, most of it is broad and overly generalized about the tenants of “art.” This characterizes the writings on both sides, such as of both John Onians, one of the first to write in this vein from the art historical side, and Semir Zeki, who came to art writing from a background in visual neuroscience. For example, Zeki’s book *A Vision of the Brain* published in 1993

¹⁰² Semir Zeki, *Inner Vision: An Exploration of Art and the Brain* (London: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹⁰³ Marcos Nadal and Marcus T. Pearce, “The Copenhagen Neuroaesthetics Conference September 24-26, 2009: Prospects and Pitfalls for an Emerging Field,” *Brain Cognition* 76 no. 1 (2011), 172-83.

discusses the physiology of the ocular mechanism in the brain extensively.¹⁰⁴ However, in his work to bridge these findings into art, the analysis falls short. He does not have the capacity to conduct skilled formal analysis of art. His discussion of Vermeer's use of light in *Inner Vision* falls short because of its failure to recognize the context of the painting, to situate it in its cultural conditions, or to examine the manner of its technical execution. Zeki treats Monet, Vermeer, Malevich, and Mondrian with the same sensibility in his analysis, reflecting a lack of awareness of the artistic context. The arguments and connections, therefore, that he draws in his work seem forced and do not achieve convincing traction. He is ill-equipped to draw crucial conclusions about art even though he is considered to be the chief pioneer of the field.

As of yet, most of the scholarship in this new field has suffered from this same shortcoming—a tendency towards oversimplification and generalization. This problem is largely due to the inability of a scholar to adroitly negotiate the subtleties of two distinct fields—of neuroscience and of art history—to the same intellectual level. In order to reach substantive conclusion, both sides must be understood to a great degree of depth.

Because of the nature of this cross-disciplinary endeavor, the most successful means for forging cross-disciplinary connections is via collaborative initiatives of cognitive neuroscientists and art historians. In this way, the level of inquiry can begin on a much higher level, yielding a more fruitful and vigorous overlap. This seems to be the most natural way to sidestep a potential flattening of a multi-faceted research area.

¹⁰⁴ Semir Zeki, *Vision of the Brain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

Therefore, the most compelling neuroaesthetics research seems to be the result of collaboration between neuroscientist Vittorio Gallese and art historian David Freedberg. Their jointly-authored 2007 paper marks a good starting point for further inquiry into the field.¹⁰⁵ Using findings from neuroscience, this paper is an extension of Freedberg's central theme in his pivotal work *The Power of Images*.¹⁰⁶ In it, they explore the means in which the visual perception of gesture may work to trigger emotional response from a spectator.

The central basis for this paper is the notion of "mirror neurons". In the 1980s and 1990s, neurophysiologist Giacomo Rizzolatti placed electrodes on the brain of macaque monkeys in order to study the neurons for action. At first, they tracked which neurons would be activated for isolated actions of the monkeys. Over the course of the experiment, they noticed that the brain would also become activated when the monkey *observed* certain motions. In figure 30, a monkey imitates the gesture it sees in the human, as an indirect consequence of an activated motor neurons.¹⁰⁷

In subsequent years, the theory of mirror neurons expanded to the human brain as well. Using brain imaging techniques such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), researchers have been able to view activation sites in the brain when seeing

¹⁰⁵ David Freedberg and Vittorio Gallese, "Motion, Emotion, and Empathy in Esthetic Experience," *Trends in Cognitive Neuroscience* 11 no.5 (2007), 197-203.

¹⁰⁶ David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory or Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

¹⁰⁷ Giacomo Rizzolatti et al., "Premotor cortex and the recognition of motor actions," *Cognitive Brain Research* 3 (1996), 131-141.

touch and gesture. In 2005 Blakemore and colleagues extended these findings by describing a possible system for visually-stimulated activation.¹⁰⁸ This study was the first to suggest that visual stimuli can activate somatosensory cortex. The somatosensory cortex is a center in the brain that processes sensation. It has both primary and secondary parts, called SI and SII respectively. What has been found in subsequent studies of this phenomenon is that the perceived touch typically activates SII, except in rare cases and with visuo-tactile synesthetes, where SI is also activated.¹⁰⁹ The results of this study helped to establish a region of the brain associated with the mirror neuron system (MNS), and therefore show how the visual perception of touch can evoke tactile sensation.

Gallese and Freedberg's paper marks an important first step towards tying these ideas of mirror neurons to art. The paper outlines how the visual perception of gesture might be involved in the viewer's understanding and response to a work of art. Through "embodied simulation," the brain models actions "as if" they are happening to them.¹¹⁰ This in turn creates a sense of tactile empathy from gesture. The paper outlines two types of perceivable gesture in a work of art: firstly, the gesture that is represented in the painting such as a sweeping gesture of the Virgin in a Pietà, and secondly, the felt effect of particularly gestures involved in producing a work of art, explained as "the feeling of

¹⁰⁸S. J. Blakemore et al., "Somatosensory Activations during the Touch and a Case of Vision Touch Synesthesia," *Brain* 125 (2005), 1571-1583.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., Also see Pihko et al., "Observing Touch Activates Human Primary Somatosensory Cortex," *European Journal of Neuroscience* 10 (2010), 1836-43.

¹¹⁰ Freedberg and Gallese, "Motion, Emotion and Empathy," 2011.

movement behind the mark.”¹¹¹ The viewer’s visualization of gesture may create a concrete link between touch, motion and emotion.

Although the study marks a positive step in the right direction, it, too, tends towards sweeping generalizations about the meaning of gesture in art—without regard for the type of gesture or its social or historical context. The examples of art cited in this study span from works by Michelangelo and Caravaggio, to Goya, and then all the way to Jackson Pollack and the slashed canvases of Lucio Fontana. In a critical review of this study by Roberto Casati and Alessandro Pignocchi, they suggest that the wide range of examples dilutes the content of the argument. Instead, they advocate for “mid-level hypothesis that are both aesthetically specific . . . and are functionally interfaced with psychological findings.”¹¹²

In light of this suggestion, my goal is to try to reconcile the latest findings in this area of visuo-tactile perception to an understanding of Rembrandt’s rough manner. In his important study of Rembrandt, Julius Held wrote that “The entire means of Rembrandt’s painting is . . . reduced to the . . . notion that touch is the means by which we apprehend the world.”¹¹³ What Held describes here is critical to understanding the way in which Rembrandt utilizes paint, creating a link between sensation and Rembrandt studies. Through a discussion of Rembrandt’s visible brushstroke, it may be possible to better

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Roberto Casati and Alessandro Pignocchi, “Mirror and Canonical Neurons are not Constitutive of Aesthetic Response,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 11 no. 10 (2007), 410.

¹¹³ Held, *Rembrandt Studies*, 193.

understand the emotional impact of his the *Self-Portrait* from the Frick on the viewer. Through the use of a narrower research focus, it may be possible to more comprehensively probe the suggestions put forth by Freedberg and Gallese in a more critical approach. I also incorporate recent neuroscientific findings published subsequent to the 2007 paper. Most importantly, it is my hope that that this exploratory chapter demonstrates the need for continued specific research in this field.

The idea that the gestures of a painting evoke a certain emotional response in a painting is not a new concept. Dutch poet Joachim Oudaen (1628-1692) wrote a poem entitled *On a Storm*. In it, he describes how the movement of his mind was stirred by the commotion of the painting:

*The very sight
Seems, in the storm (so vivid is the art)
To enmesh us too;
The misty light,
The cloud-shrouded sun, sown at its thinnest,
Seems to agitate us,
With inward fear, and heartache.*¹¹⁴

Several art historians, too, have discussed the idea of empathy and gesture in varying capacities. In 1873 Robert Vischer emphasized one of the earliest discussions of empathy in aesthetics.¹¹⁵ Through *Einfühlung*—literally translated as “feeling-in”—Vischer described how specific gestures and forms evoked a particular response from

¹¹⁴ Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 246.

¹¹⁵ Lauren Wispé, “History of the Concept of Emathy,” in *Empathy and Its Development*, ed. Nancy Eisenberg and Janet Stayer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 18-20.

viewers. These ideas were elaborated and developed by art theorists in the early twentieth century. Aby Warburg, wrote of the *Pathosformel*, which describes the representation of gestures that represent inner emotion.¹¹⁶ Theodor Lipps developed the views on relationship between aesthetic enjoyment and bodily enjoyment with space.¹¹⁷ The notion of gesture is also discussed in terms of the artist's process. Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggested that the spectator felt the implied action of the artist, particularly with regard to paintings of Cézanne.¹¹⁸ David Rosand has also devoted attention the viewer's engagement with artistic process by suggesting the emotional impact of hand movements in Italian renaissance drawings.¹¹⁹ All of these writers discuss physical and emotional involvement in a work as the source of its emotional impetus.

The most recent neuroscience literature suggests that the activation of the somatosensory cortex from a stimulus has specificity, in terms of both the location of activation in the brain as well as type of experience. In other words, the observation of gesture generates different responses in the brain, which are dependent on how and where the viewer sees it.

¹¹⁶ Ernst Hans Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual History* (London: Phaidron Press, 1986), 186.

¹¹⁷ Theodor Lipps, "Einfühlung, innere Nachahmung, und Organ Empfindungen," *Archiv für die gesammte Psychologie* 1 (1903), 185–204.

¹¹⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Classics, 2012), 174.

¹¹⁹ David Rosand, *Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

By utilizing subjects with visuo-tactile synesthesia, researchers were able in a concentrated way to study the way that visual perception of touch can evoke tactile sensation. For visuo-tactile synesthetes, the experience of seeing another person being touched generates a strong sense of “synthetic” or “vicarious” touch. In 2007, Banissy and his colleagues examined the neural mechanisms of vision-touch synesthetes in order to better understand the mechanisms that connect visual and tactile sensations.¹²⁰ While subjects watched videos of faces being touched on cheeks, they were simultaneously touched on their cheeks themselves. The goal of the experiment was to determine whether tactile or visual stimulation elicits greater sensation for subjects. They were asked to report where they felt they were touched—left cheek, right cheek, or neither—while ignoring the observed touch on the video. The results demonstrated a conflation between the actual perceived location of touch and the vicariously observed one. The vicarious sensation was surprisingly powerful, often overriding the actually felt sensation. In this special case of synesthetes, observed touch registered to be a powerfully perceived sensation.

While synesthetes provide a most direct and pronounced example of the visuo-tactile connection, normal subjects also show signs of the visuo-tactile link with strong degrees of specificity. Several studies have demonstrated that these cross-modal

¹²⁰Michael Banissy and Jamie Ward, “Mirror-touch Synesthesia is linked with Empathy,” *Nature Neuroscience* 10 no. 7 (2007), 315-316.

activations are content specific.¹²¹ In 2010, Osborn and Derbyshire focused their study specifically on the sensation of pain, as perceived from visual stimuli. Subjects were presented with video clips or pictures of images.¹²² One third of these subjects felt the pain as if it were located in their body. The fMRI scans of their brains in this time indicated that both their SI and SII were activated in the regions associated with the corresponding images. In a sense, these subjects were experiencing the localized vicarious pain of the injured shown in the footage. The other two thirds also reported a sense of pain, but without the specific connection to the somatic pain. Regardless, the subjects' response demonstrates how the visualization of pain can create powerful empathetic feelings through embodied response, visible in the activation of the brain.

Although this study provides a compelling case for intensity of empathetic feeling when viewing sensation, the response to pain is only one aspect of visuo-tactile system. When discussing Rembrandt's brushstrokes, we must consider the delineation between painful and non-painful touch. The second part of the Osborn and Derbyshire study employs the use of video clips of paintbrushes on hands. The connections to perceived touch were much less powerful. They suggest that "different aspects of empathy could depend on different neural substrates."¹²³ Alas, the research that deals with non-painful touch is less straightforward. It is possible that this is because pain is a more primal

¹²¹ Kaspar Meyer et al., "Seeing Touch is correlated with Content-Specific Activity in Primary Somatosensory Cortex," *Cerebral Cortex* 21 no. 9 (2011), 2113-2121.

¹²² J. Osborn and S.W.G. Derbyshire, "Pain Sensation Evoked by Observing Injury in Others," *Pain* 148 (2010), 268-274.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 270.

mechanism, but the perception of other touch—such as the gesture of a paintbrush—is dependent on top-down modulation. In other words, there are greater levels of cognition that factor into these areas.

Kaspar Meyer and his associates found that cross-modal activations—the visual stimuli that imply touch that activate the somatosensory cortex—may be content specific.¹²⁴ Subjects watched videos of hands doing a variety of everyday activities, such as holding a tennis ball. Working backwards from the fMRI data and multivariate pattern analysis (MVPA) captured during the viewing, researchers were able to predict with a reasonable degree of accuracy which activity had been seen.¹²⁵ This study suggests a degree of specificity involved in touch. In the conclusion, the researchers suggest that even further delineations are needed between the observation of transitive actions and the observation of touch itself.¹²⁶ This study identifies the need for more content-specificity with regards to the idea of touch.

There is still speculation as to why this mechanism may exist. Banissy suggests that humans rely on “shared affective neuronal systems” where “common brain areas are activated.”¹²⁷ The “intentional attunement hypothesis” proposes that the mapping of neurons provides a means of creating empathy, “we don’t just see action, we mime the

¹²⁴ Meyer, “Seeing touch,” 2113.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 2117.

¹²⁷ Michael Banissy, “Prevalence, Characteristics, and a Neurocognitive Model of Mirror-synesthesia,” *Experimental Brain Research* 198 no.2-3 (2009), 261-272.

simulated experience ‘as if.’”¹²⁸ In this way, viewers are able to simulate the sense of experience as a means of cultivating an empathetic sense. By mirroring others’ gestures and experiences through embodied simulation, it is better possible to relate to them and hence to understand them.

The part of the body that is most readily identifiable with the sense of touch is the hands.¹²⁹ These regions account for the bulk of the surface area on the somatosensory cortex—the area of the brain that is responsible that is responsible for the perception of touch. The sensory homunculus is a pictorial representation of the anatomical divisions along the somatosensory cortex as they correspond to different parts of the body. First conceived by Walter Penfield, the homunculus is a way to represent the “body of the brain,” as represented as a series of neural connections (fig. 31). The somatosensory homunculus shows the proportion of cortical area devoted to each body part represented, by the amount of surface area designated for it. The result is a somewhat distorted anthropomorphic form that sketches the areas that are most attuned to reception of tactile information. The most striking feature of this odd figure is bulky hands, which demonstrate how much of the brain is dedicated to receiving sensory information from the hands.

¹²⁸ Vittorio Gallese. “Motor Abstraction: A Neuroscientific Account of How Action Goals and Intentions are Mapped and Understood,” *Psychological Research* 74 no. 4 (2009), 494.

¹²⁹ Banissy and Ward, “Mirror-touch Synesthesia,” 815.

Rembrandt's large hands in the Frick *Self-Portrait* echo the skewed proportions of this homunculus representation. His choice to emphasize the hands in terms of the scale and the rough manner are a means of championing his ability to toy with the emotions of the viewer. Rembrandt exhibits the world in his hands in the Frick self-portrait. He wears his emotion on his sleeve, in the most literal sense. Clearly, Rembrandt predated the current neuroscience research that allows for a deeper understanding of vision and its relationship to emotion than was available in the seventeenth century. However, without the contemporary fMRI technology, Rembrandt seemingly intuited principles of optical neuroscience that are just now being "discovered."

The importance of the eye-hand connection was also visible in theoretical writings by Samuel van Hoogstraten. Here, he writes about the ways of achieving a good painting:

Whether the mind acquired the ability to form immediately the desired image, or whether the eye picks out single forms in rough sketches of chance objects, as we do when we sit at the hearth gazing into the fire; or whether the hand makes something by habit, more or less as when we write . . . as the mind and the eyes were placed in his hand.¹³⁰

By placing the "mind and the eyes in the hand," van Hoogstraten suggests—as Rembrandt shows—that the hands are the nexus of visuo-tactile connection.

In his important study of Rembrandt, Julius Held wrote that "The entire means of Rembrandt's painting is . . . reduced to the . . . notion that touch is the means by which we

¹³⁰ Van de Wetering, *The Painter at Work*, 886.

apprehend the world.¹³¹ What Held describes here is critical to understanding the way in which Rembrandt utilizes paint. The viewer's visualization of gesture may create a concrete link between touch, motion and emotion. Through a discussion of Rembrandt's visible brushstroke, it may be possible to better understand the emotional impact of his the *Self-Portrait* from the Frick on the viewer.

What is so engaging about Rembrandt is his ability to tease the viewer's understanding of his artistic process. It seems transparent when a viewer first looks at a few brushstrokes, but the deeper the examination, the more that the complexity begins to overtake. For example, an effort to trace the individual brushstrokes in the background that form the vague outline of the chair is futile (fig. 32). The visual ambiguity of Rembrandt's gesture with the paintbrush is a key tenant to the engagement with the viewer. Rembrandt gives the viewer enough visual information to follow brushstrokes and have a sense of the process, but not enough to completely understand it. The elusiveness tease of visual information is what accounts for why late Rembrandt is so visually captivating. About his painting *The Jewish Bride*, Ernst van de Wetering comically writes that "the paint [in Rembrandt] is so thickly layered that it looks like the outcome of some geological process rather than paint. . . the paint raises from the surface in clots and flakes, reflecting the light. It is a mystery how such a surface structure was

¹³¹ Held, *Rembrandt Studies*, 193.

achieved.”¹³² The mystery of the process is precisely what makes it so engaging for subjects.

Simon Schama writes about the way that texture works on an observer in Rembrandt:

The rough surface engages with, and stimulates, the activity of the eye far more powerfully than a smooth surface. Rough and smooth surfaces, in fact, presuppose quite different relationships between artist and spectator. The unequivocally complete, clear and polished work of art is an act of authority, presented to the spectator like a gift or dedication. The roughly finished painting, on the other hand, is more akin to an initiated conversation, a posed question, demanding an engaged response from the beholder. Rough artists deliberately expose the working process of composition as a way of pulling the spectator further into the image.¹³³

By leaving the brushwork crudely exposed on the canvas, Rembrandt exposes the scaffolding of his painting process. The viewer is able to follow the gesture of Rembrandt’s hand in a way that is fairly direct. The large swaths of drybrush, such as downward brushstrokes of ochre on the blouse, echo the rapid motion of the artist’s hand. The speed suggests a sense of affirmation in the artist’s motion: the fluidity is an assertion of his process.

Ultimately, however, the singularity of individual experience is a critical component to any understanding of any art. There is a degree of plasticity in the workings of mirror mechanisms, and it is important to account for the range of responses of a

¹³² Van de Wetering, *The Painter at Work*, 161.

¹³³ Simon Schama, *Rembrandt’s Eyes*, (New York: Knopf, 1999), 654.

viewer.¹³⁴ This examination serves as a testament to the phenomenological experience of Rembrandt's thickly textured paint. The purpose of this chapter is merely to call attention to the need to acknowledge and incorporate emotional response as a component of art historical inquiry—in contrast to the disembodied and politicizing work that has dominated the academic forefront in recent years. In Pierre LeBrun's treatise from 1635 he asked, "how is it possible for a brush to produce so much sweetness with such rough strokes, and with such crude colors?"¹³⁵ Almost four hundred years later, in light of these neuroscientific findings, the answer seems—paradoxically—even further away.

¹³⁴ Gallese, "Motor Abstraction," 494.

¹³⁵ Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 238.

Appendix: Images



Fig. 1 Rembrandt, Self-Portrait, 1658, oil on canvas (lined), 133.7 x 103.8 cm. The Frick Collection, New York. Source: Artstor



Fig. 2 Rembrandt, Jewish Bride (detail of left sleeve), oil on canvas, 121.5 x 166.5 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Source: Artstor

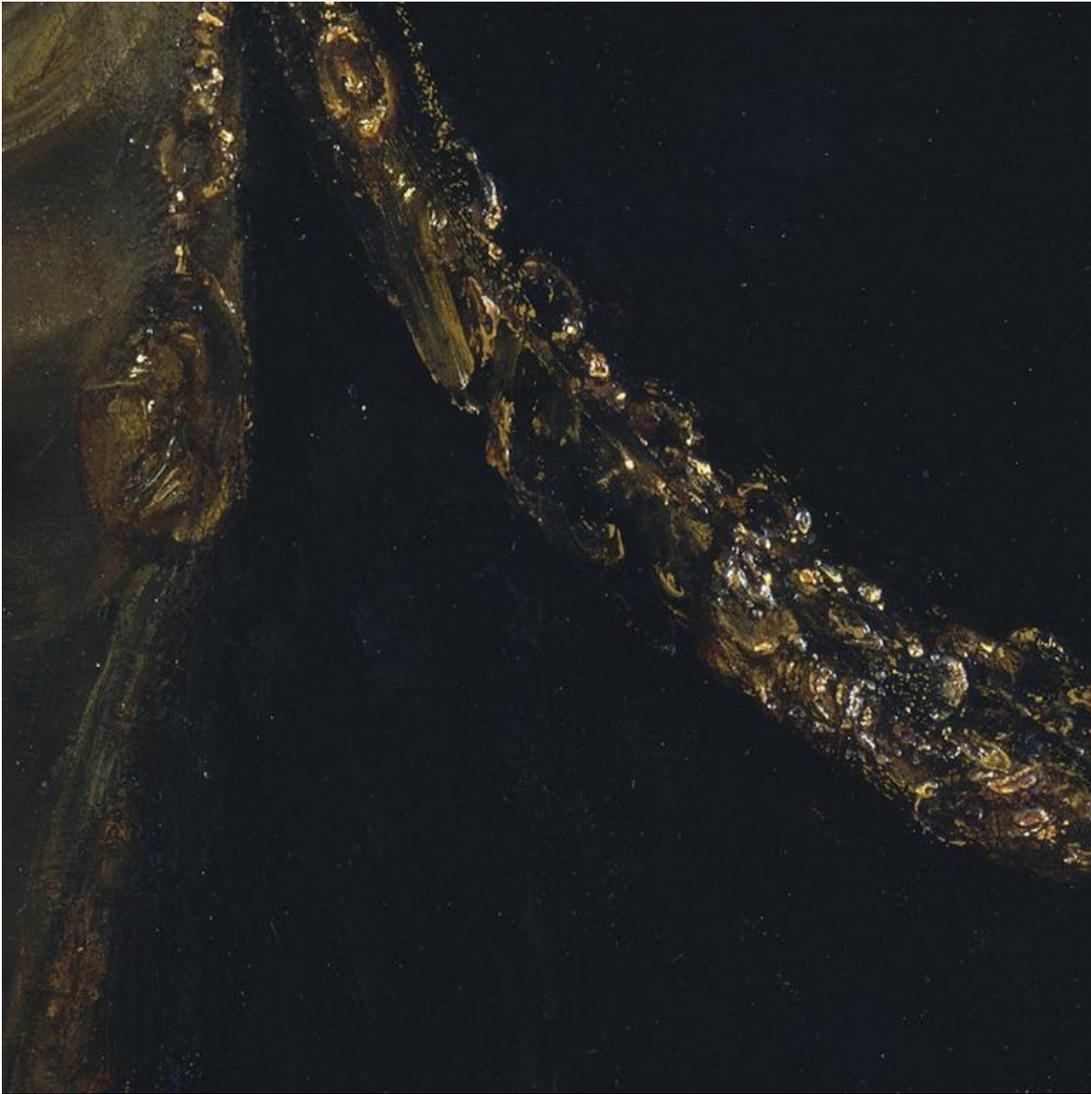


Fig. 3 Rembrandt, Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer (detail), 1653, oil on canvas, 143.5 x 136.5. Metropolitan Museum, New York. Source: Artstor



Fig. 4 Aelbert Cuyp (1620-1691), Cows and Herdsman by a River, oil on oak panel, 50.2 x 74.3 cm. The Frick Collection, New York. Source: Artstor

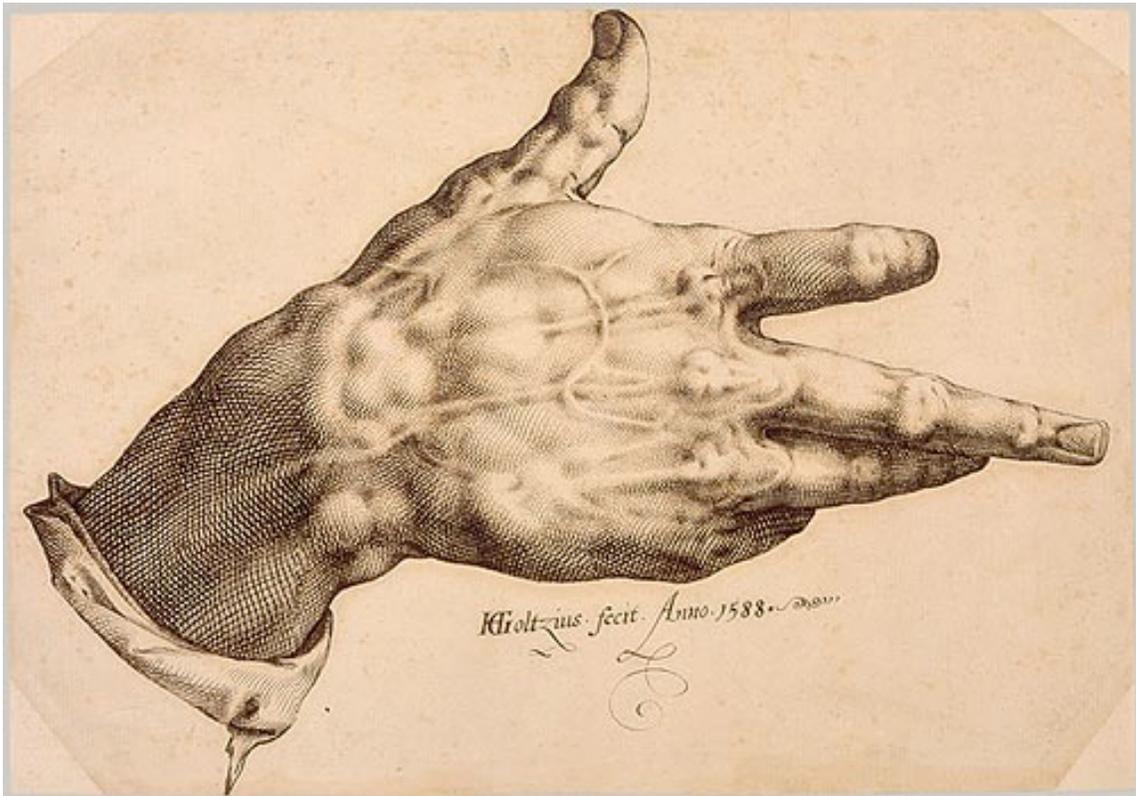


Fig. 5 Hendrick Goltzius, Goltzius's Right Hand, 1588, pen and brown ink, 23 x 32.2 cm. Teylers Museum, Haarlem. Source: www.metmuseum.org



Fig. 6 Gerrit van Honthorst, Self-Portrait, 1655, oil on canvas, 116 x 93.5 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Source: DASE Image Database



Fig. 7 Bartholomeus van der Helst, Self-portrait, 1662. Kunsthalle, Hamburg. Source: DASE Image Database



Fig. 8 Peter Paul Rubens, Self-Portrait, 1623-25, oil on panel, 85 x 61 cm. Galleria delgi Uffizi, Florence. Inv. 1890 n. 1884. Source: Artstor

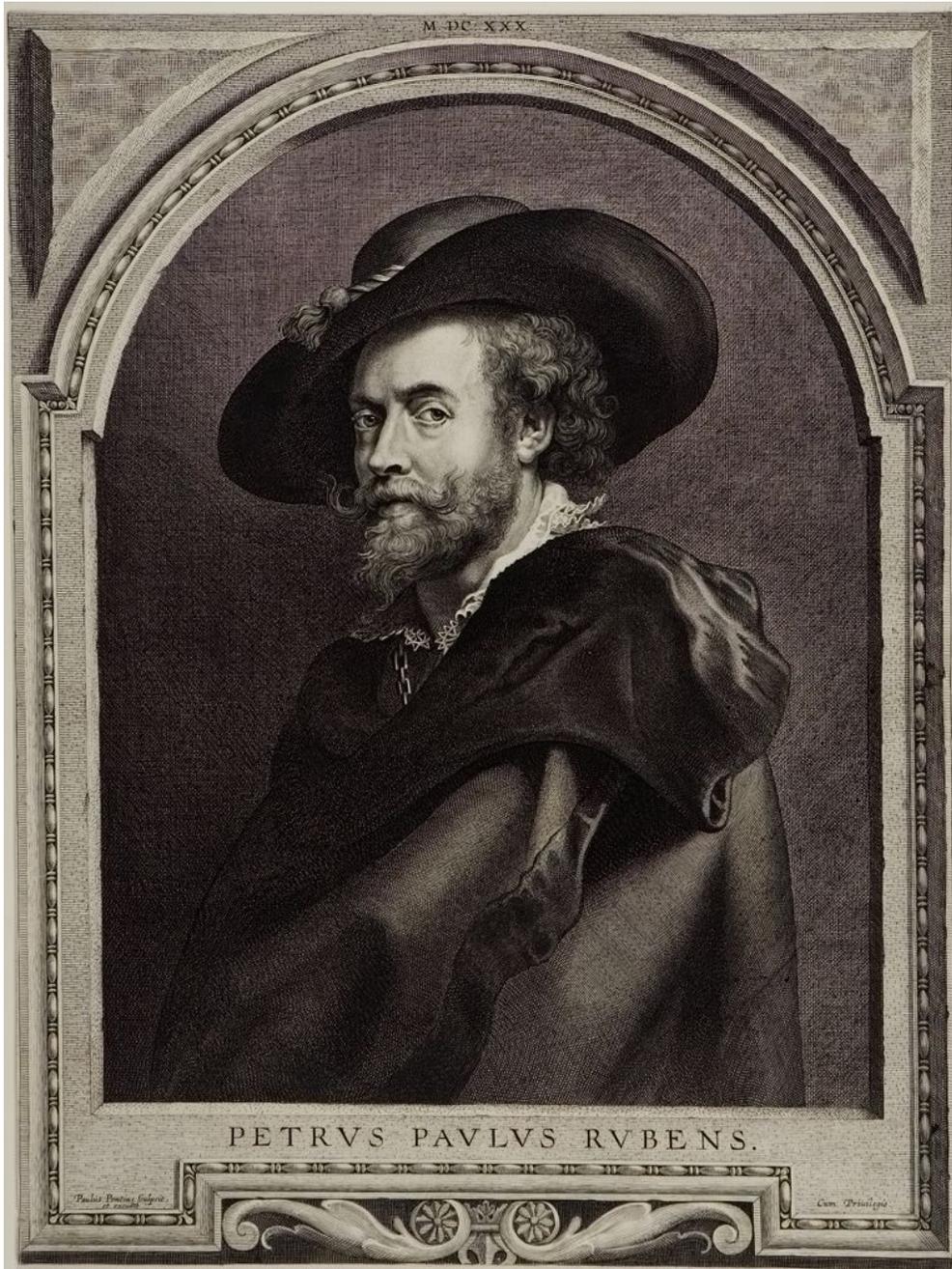


Fig. 9 Paulus Pontius, Engraving After Peter Paul Rubens, 1630, engraving. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Cambridge. Source: <http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/art/277203>



Fig. 10 Rembrandt, Self-Portrait in a Soft Hat and Embroidered Cloak, 1631, etching, 14.8 x 13.2 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Source: Artstor

PHILIPS ANGELS
L O F
D E R
SCHILDER-KONST.



TOT LEYDEN,

Ghedrukt by *Willem Christiaens*, woonende by de Academie. ANNO 1642.

KABINET

APPRENTEN enz.

te LEYDEN

Fig. 11 Anonymous, Title page of Philips Angel (fl. 1637–1664) *Lof der schilder-konst*, 1642, Leiden. Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Angel_Lof_der_Schilder-Konst_01.jpg



Fig. 12 Rembrandt, Artist in His Studio, 1628-29, oil on Panel, 24.8 x 31.7 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Source: Artstor



Fig. 13 Raphael, Count Badassare Castiglione, 1514-15, oil on canvas, 82 x 97 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Inv. 611. Source: Artstor



HdG 1430
Benesch 451

Fig. 14 Rembrandt, Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione, sketch after a work by Raphael, 1639, pen and bistre with some white body color, 16.3 x 20.7 cm. Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna. Source: Artstor.



Fig. 15 Rembrandt, Self-Portrait at the Age of 34, 1640, oil on canvas, 92 x 76 cm. National Gallery of London, London. Source: DASE Image Database



Fig. 16 Rembrandt, Self-Portrait Drawing at a Window, 1648, etching, drypoint and burin, 15.7 x 12.9 cm (image). Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, San Francisco. Source: Artstor



Fig. 17 Rembrandt, Self-Portrait, 1652, oil on canvas, 112.1 x 81 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Source: Artstor



Fig. 18 Anthony van Dyck, *The Landscape Painter Martin Ryckaert*, c.1630, oil on canvas, 138 × 114 cm (54.3 × 44.9 in). Museo del Prado, Madrid. Source: Artstor

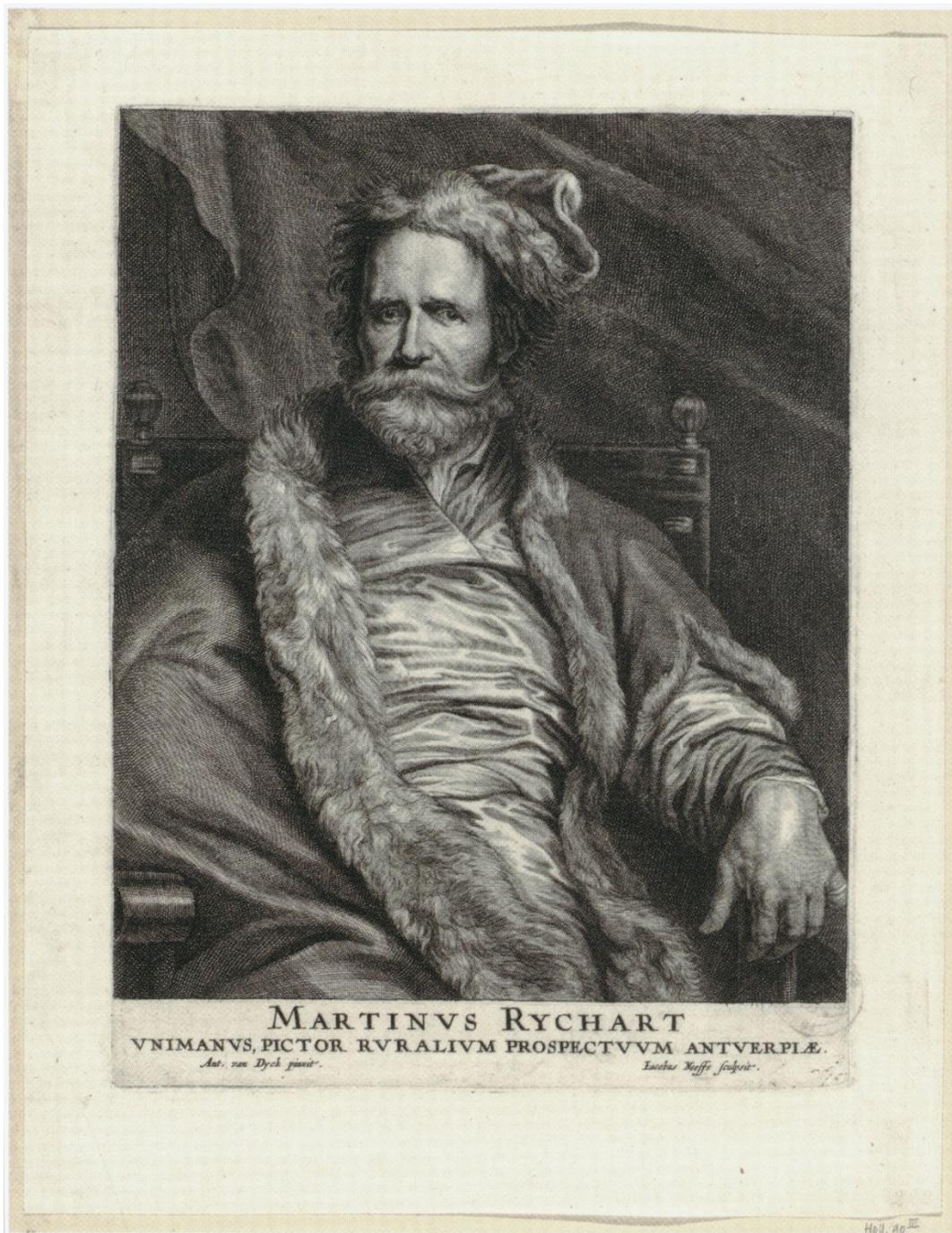


Fig. 19 Jacobus Neeffs, After Anthony van Dyck, 1630-45, engraving, 24.2 x 15.7 cm. Rijksprentenkabinet (Rijksmuseum), Amsterdam. Source: DASE Image Database



Fig. 20 Rembrandt, *Blinding of Samson*, 1636, oil on canvas, 205 x 272 cm. Stadelches Kunstinstitut und Stadtische Galerie, Frankfurt. Source: DASE Image Database



Fig. 21 Peter Paul Rubens, *Samson Taken By the Philistines*, 1609-10, oil sketch, 50.3 x 66.5 cm. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. Source: DASE Image Database



Fig. 22 Cornelis Cort, The Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence after Titian, engraving, 494 x 346 mm. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Source: Artstor



Fig. 23 X-radiograph of Frick Self-Portrait (1658). From: Bailey, Colin B., Rembrandt and his School, Masterworks from the Frick and Lugt Collections, Exhib., 2011. Source: DASE Image Database



Fig. 24 Rembrandt, Cornelis Claesz Anslo, c. 1659-60, drawing, 157 x 144 mm. British Museum, London. Source: Artstor



Fig. 25 Rembrandt, Self-Portrait (detail), 1658. The Frick Collection, New York.



Fig. 26 Title Page to *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst, anders de Zichtbaere Werelt* (Academy of Painting; or, The Visible World), 1678. Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (Netherlands Institute for Art History), Hague. Source: DASE



Fig. 27 Matthias Stomer, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1633-39, oil, 124.5 x 175.5 cm. Temple Newsam House, Leeds. Source: Bridgeman Art Library.



Fig. 28 Rembrandt, Flight into Egypt, 1627, oil on panel, 26 x 24 cm. Tours, Musée des Beaux-Arts. Source: DASE

prenent leur origine. Car cette situation se changeant tant soit peu, à chaque fois que se change celle des membres, où ces nerfs sont inserés, est instituée de la nature, pour faire, non seulement que l'ame cognoisse, en quel endroit est chaque partie du cors qu'elle anime, au respect de toutes les autres; mais aussi qu'elle puisse transferer de là son attention, à tous les lieux contenus dans les lignes droites, qu'on peut imaginer estre tirées de l'extremité de chacune de ces parties, & prolongées à l'infini. Comme lors que l'Aueugle, dont nous auons desia tant parlé cy dessus, tourne sa main A, vers E, ou C, aussi vers E, les nerfs



inserés en cette main, causent vn certain changement en son cerueau, qui donne moyen à son ame de connoistre, non seulement le lieu A, ou C, mais aussi tous les autres qui sont en la ligne droite AE, ou CE, en sorte qu'elle peut porter son attention iusques aux obiets B & D, & déterminer les lieux où ils sont, sans connoistre pour cela ny penser aucunement à ceux où sont ses deux mains. Et ainsi lors que nostre œil, ou nostre teste, se tournent vers quelque costé, nostre ame en est auertie par le changement, que les nerfs inserés dans les muscles, qui seruent à ces mouuemens, causent en nostre cerueau. Comme icy en l'œil RST, il faut penser que la situation, du petit filet du nerf optique, qui est au point R, ou S, ou T; est suiuite d'une autre certaine situation, de la partie du cerueau 7, ou 8, ou 9, qui fait que l'ame peut
connoistre

Fig. 29 René Descartes. La Dioptrique: A Man Seeing With Sticks from Discours de la Methode et les Essais (Discourse on the Method, with Essays), 1637. The Bancroft Library, Berkeley. Source: DASE Image Database



Fig. 30 Demonstration of mirror neurons: a newborn macaque imitates tongue protrusion. From: Gross, "Evolution of Neonatal Imitation," *Public Library of Science Biology* Vol. 4/9/2006. E311

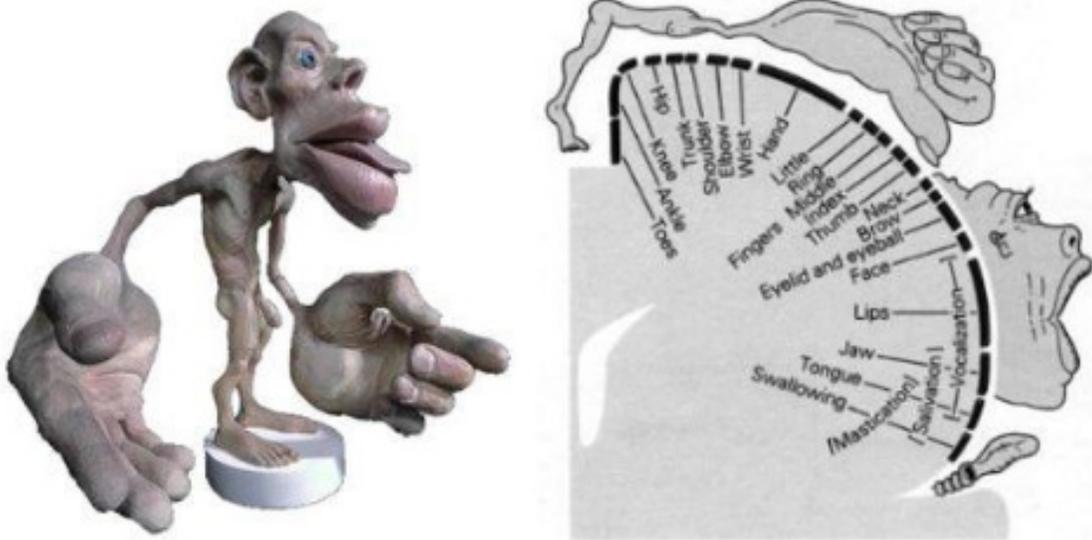


Fig. 31 Representations of the motor homunculus, figural (left) and cortical (right). Source: <http://sciblogs.co.nz> Accessed March 27, 2013



Fig. 32 Rembrandt, Self-Portrait (detail), The Frick Collection, New York.

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