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The Familiar Face: Portrait Prints by Rembrandt

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Pasadena, CA—The Norton Simon Museum presents *The Familiar Face: Portrait Prints by Rembrandt*, an exhibition of 15 etchings by Dutch master Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669). Rembrandt’s prominence as a painter of portraits, particularly those of the merchants and burghers of Amsterdam, is well known. But the artist’s etched prints also have a place and purpose in recording the visages of his contemporaries. A skilled, innovative printmaker, Rembrandt embraced etching as a means of expression and experimentation. The artworks in *The Familiar Face* illustrate the artist’s keen power of observation as well as his gift for drama and humor.

Culled from the Norton Simon’s extensive collection of Rembrandt prints, the artworks on view offer a window to some of the personalities of Rembrandt’s age. Although 17th-century Holland had an active trade in the portraits of politicians, heroes and renowned scholars, the majority of portrait prints made by Rembrandt were not intended for such a market. We know this because his prints do not bear the characteristic etched captions identifying the name and public role of the subject.



Rembrandt’s portrait of Petrus Sylvius in all likelihood was commissioned as a memento for Sylvius’s friends and family in Amsterdam. Sylvius, a newly ordained preacher, was about to depart for his first ministry in Friesland, in the northern Netherlands. Another work, an etching of Jan Uytenbogaert, “The Goldweigher,” is presumed to have been produced by the artist as an act of gratitude. Uytenbogaert, the Receiver-General (or tax accountant) for the province of Holland, was a collector of prints and drawings, and he hosted many painters and poets in his Amsterdam house. In 1639, he assisted Rembrandt in receiving payment for paintings the artist had completed for Frederick Henry, the Prince of Orange. Perhaps not coincidentally, Uytenbogaert’s portrait etching bears the date 1639.

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Several etched examples of Rembrandt's self-portraits are also included in the exhibition. A composition from 1636 depicts a confident 30-year-old Rembrandt drawing, with his wife, Saskia, alongside him. Twelve years later, he portrayed himself again at work, but more reflectively, sitting in a shadow-filled interior illuminated only by an open window.



Together, the 15 works presented in *The Familiar Face* shed light on Rembrandt's world and introduce us to some of his friends, family members and contemporaries. The exhibition addresses the function of these portrait prints, whether they were commissioned, created at the artist's initiative, or perhaps done as a meditation on the visage of a loved one. Biographies of the sitters are included when known.

The Familiar Face, organized by Gloria Williams Sander, Curator at the Norton Simon Museum, is one of several exhibitions held this winter to celebrate the wealth of Rembrandt's works in Southern California museum collections. Rembrandt exhibitions are also being presented by the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Timkin Museum of Art, the San Diego Museum of Art and the Hammer Museum at UCLA. More information can be found at rembrandtinsocal.org.

About the Norton Simon Museum

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, 20th-century industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of South and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum's collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Three temporary exhibition galleries feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

Location: The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 West Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Blvd. in Pasadena, California, at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit www.nortonsimon.org. Hours: The Museum is open every day except Tuesday, from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., and 12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Friday. Admission: General admission is \$8.00 for adults and \$4.00 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. Parking: Parking is free and no reservations are necessary. Public Transportation: The City of Pasadena provides a shuttle bus to transport passengers through the Pasadena Playhouse district, the Lake Avenue shopping district and Old Pasadena. A shuttle stop is located in front of the Museum. Please visit www.cityofpasadena.net/artsbus for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 East Holly Street at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit www.metro.net for schedules.