

Norton Simon Museum For Immediate Release

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Norton Simon Museum Presents an Installation of Rembrandt's 'Self Portrait at the Age of 34' on loan from The National Gallery, London

This captivating self-portrait arrives in the U.S. for the first time.

Dec. 8, 2017–March 5, 2018

Pasadena, CA—The Norton Simon Museum presents an installation of Rembrandt's striking self-portrait from 1640, on loan from The National Gallery, London this winter season. Titled *Self Portrait at the Age of 34*, the painting captures the image of the artist in his middle age: affluent, self-confident and wise. Its installation at the Norton Simon Museum marks the first time the painting has been on view in the U.S. and is part of a loan exchange program between the Norton Simon Museum and the National Gallery that began earlier this year, with the London installation of the Museum's *The Repentant Magdalene*, after 1660, by Guido Cagnacci. *Self Portrait at the Age of 34* will be installed in the Museum's 17th-century art galleries, alongside the Simon's own collection of Rembrandt paintings: *Portrait of a Bearded Man in a Wide-Brimmed Hat* from 1633, *Portrait of a Boy*, ca. 1655–60, and the artist's *Self-Portrait*, ca. 1636–38, executed only a few years earlier than the National Gallery's. The painting is on view from Dec. 8, 2017, through March 5, 2018.



Rembrandt, *Self Portrait at the Age of 34*,
© The National Gallery, London

About 'Self Portrait at the Age of 34'

The age-old tradition of self-portraiture was enthusiastically embraced by Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669). Indeed, he was his own favorite model. Astonishingly, he recorded his own image roughly 100 times altogether in his paintings, prints and drawings, posing himself for formal portraits, but also capturing himself grimacing or smiling and even depicting himself as a saint. His youthful self-portraits of the 1620s divulge some mild self-examination, as well as a budding self-awareness as an artist; those produced during the 1630s reveal both a jaunty flamboyance and later a self-confident-but-world-wise painter who becomes more soulful as the decade progresses; and those produced in the last two decades of his life treat age with raw honesty and deep introspection.

Rembrandt's *Self Portrait at the Age of 34* captures the ambitious artist at the height of his talents and fame, but also as a man who has endured the highs and lows of life. By 1639, he was living in the luxurious comfort of his new home in the Breestraat, and was commanding the attention of aristocratic patrons. He had also felt the loss of several family members, including three infant children in the span of five years. He would lose his wife, Saskia, only two years later. In the London painting, Rembrandt's self-assurance is reinforced by his steady gaze and comfortable pose, with his right arm leaning on the parapet, declaring his possession of not only that ledge, but his rightful place as one of the most sought-after artists of the moment. The pose would be imitated by many of his Dutch students and colleagues, perhaps unaware of the various precedents that had inspired Rembrandt himself.

Rembrandt's Inspiration

The presence of Raphael's stunning 1515 *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione* (now at the Louvre) in the April 1639 sale of property owned by the wealthy Flemish merchant Lucas van Uffelen was certainly not the first instance of a work by an Italian master in the Netherlands. Rembrandt himself came to own artworks attributed to Jacopo Bassano, Annibale Carracci, Giorgione, Michelangelo, Palma Vecchio and Raphael. But the Van Uffelen sale is notable as being one of the most well-attended auctions in the first half of the 17th century, drawing locals and foreigners alike to bid exceptionally high prices for the high-quality contents of the auction. We assume that it was on this occasion that Rembrandt made his now-famous sketch of Raphael's *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione* that was on the auction block, annotating his drawing with not only the record price at which the painting was eventually sold (3,500 guilders), but also the enormous sum for the total proceeds of the estate sale (59,456 guilders). By this date, the highest figure paid to Rembrandt for one of his single-figure pictures was about 600 guilders, so witnessing the sale of a 125-year-old

painting by one of the most treasured Italian Renaissance artists must have made an impression on the already-successful 33-year-old. His attention to this sale, and the Raphael portrait in it, is one of several instances that show that he was looking back to classical roots and seeking out the successful formulas of his predecessors.

As a native of Holland who never travelled outside his homeland, Rembrandt had nonetheless found a connection with Italian art from the previous century. His simple, quick sketch of Raphael's *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione* (now at the Albertina in Vienna) is an important key to understanding the genesis of Rembrandt's *Self Portrait at the Age of 34*, signed and dated 1640. By this time, the artist had gained tremendous fame and had already received the commission to paint the colossal scene of the *Night Watch* (for which he would be paid 1,600 guilders). His lively sketch of the Castiglione portrait would lead to the creation of an etching in the same year, and ultimately a painting in the next, but rather than repeat the image of Castiglione, the figure morphs into Rembrandt's own visage — he depicted himself as a distinguished and flourishing artist at the peak of his career, dressed in 16th-century garb.

About the Installation

During its residency at the Norton Simon Museum, *Self Portrait at the Age of 34* will be viewed from the vantage point of Rembrandt's works executed between 1630 and 1640 from the Simon collection. Hanging alongside earlier and later examples of Rembrandt's paintings, as well as a number of his students' works, the breadth of the artist's painterly technique even within this decade can be examined.

Such is the case of the *Portrait of a Bearded Man in a Wide-Brimmed Hat* from 1633, now thought to depict Pieter Sijen (1592–1652), a wealthy Mennonite merchant. This is a pure portrait, not a *tronie* (or anonymous figure/type), but one depicting the stark, undecorated rigors of this religious group. The bearded man's kindly stare and regard for the artist/viewer is consistent with Rembrandt's other male portraits of the period, most of them directly addressing the viewer and revealing the depth of the sitter's personality. Compare this with the Simon's *tronie* by Jan Lievens, Rembrandt's studio partner in Leiden: *Young Man with Red Beret*, ca. 1629–1630, is a character study that is magical and mysterious, underscored by the feather and the exotic, diaphanous shawl draped over his shoulders. But the Lievens is clearly not meant to be a pure portrait and is set apart from the mature, soul-searching meditations that Rembrandt produces in the later 1630s.

The London *Self Portrait at the Age of 34*, as well as the Simon's own *Self Portrait* from around 1636–1638, mark the artist's full development in a personal as well as a professional sense. His growth during the portentous years 1630–1640 can be traced by the new frown line on his brow, his distinguished clothing and the keen, almost melancholic eyes that he himself saw as he gazed into a mirror.

To complement the installation, the Museum is organizing a series of related events, including tours, family programs and two lectures by foremost experts on the history and conservation of Rembrandt's oeuvre: Anne Woollett, Curator of Paintings at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, and Larry Keith, Head of Conservation and Keeper at The National Gallery, London. In addition, the Museum is organizing a small installation of examples from the extensive Simon collection of Rembrandt prints that were executed in the same decade as this special loan. This display, titled *Rembrandt: Prints "of a Particular Spirit,"* will contain several self-portraits by Rembrandt from this period, including the etching and drypoint from 1639 that served as a prelude to the London *Self Portrait at the Age of 34*.

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, 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. Two temporary exhibition spaces feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

Location: The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., 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 Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from noon to 5 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is closed on Tuesday. **Admission:** General admission is \$12 for adults and \$9 for seniors (increases to \$15 for adults and \$12 for seniors on 1/1/2018). 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 5 to 8 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free with admission. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free, and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** Pasadena Transit stops directly in front of the Museum. Please visit <http://pasadenatransit.net> 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 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit www.metro.net for schedules.

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