

# Books

**Rembrandt. The New Hollstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450–1700.** By Erik Hinterding and Jaco Rutgers. 7 vols. 2,210 pp. incl. numerous col. + b. & w. ills. (Sound and Vision Publishers, Ouderkerk aan den IJssel, 2013), €465 per volume. ISBN 978-94-91539-01-5/02-2/03-9/04-6/05-3/06-0/07-7.

Reviewed by NADINE ORENSTEIN

REMBRANDT'S CONTEMPORARIES WERE well aware of the artist's habit of repeatedly reworking his printing plates. Arnold Houbraken's biography of Rembrandt (1718) recounts that collectors attempted to assemble his prints in the various states identifiable by specific changes, for example the *Medea: or the Marriage of Jason and Creusa* without and with the crown (NH 241). The artist's unveiling of his working process through the many states that he produced still holds a certain fascination for scholars because it provides some insight into the artist's thought process that is not as accessible in the same way through his paintings or drawings. The market also pays close attention to which states were created during the artist's lifetime and which ones may have been created after. Rembrandt's contemporaries must have consulted lists of his prints, but it was not until 1751 that the first catalogue of the etched work was compiled by Edmé-François Gersaint. Since then students of Rembrandt's prints, among them Adam Bartsch (1797), Dimitri A. Rovinski (1890), Arthur M. Hind (1912) and Ludwig Münz (1952), have carried on the quest to perfect the listing of the printed *œuvre* by refining its parameters and the identification of states. In 1969 Christopher White and Karel Boon produced a catalogue as volumes XVIII and XIX in the Hollstein series that has served as the primary reference tool for almost five decades. Their catalogue was the first to list systematically individual impressions and identify which ones were printed on special supports such as japan paper or vellum, as well as which ones were printed with a significant amount of tone. In order to publish the books during the anniversary celebrations of Rembrandt's three-hundredth birthday in 1969, their catalogue was produced in some haste and an improved version has long been a desiderata among print scholars.

Erik Hinterding and Jaco Rutgers took on that task, and their long-awaited catalogue in the *New Hollstein* series is welcome. It is a

massive undertaking and the broadest and most detailed survey of the artist's prints to date, comprising seven volumes (two text, three of plates, and two with plates of copies). The authors of the *New Hollstein* took full advantage of the array of technological advances available to present-day scholars – the relative facility of travel and the ability to produce high-quality digital images of prints and X-radiographs of watermarks. They looked at works together and apart, sharing large digital images that revealed changes difficult if not impossible to identify with the naked eye or a magnifying glass.

Their methods and findings are described in the introduction to the first volume. A second essay, in the first volume of plates illustrating the copies after the prints, surveys the many forms that these have taken. The catalogue describes all the prints and copies, cites the locations of all the impressions examined and their particularities, and describes in detail all the changes made in each state, along with the corresponding state numbers from White's and Boon's catalogue. In addition, the entries are accompanied by the mention of relevant watermarks and small photographs of details illustrating state differences.

During their research for the catalogue, Hinterding and Rutgers examined prints in many more collections than any of their predecessors: fifty-two in all, including print-rooms in Eastern Europe and the United States. As a result, they discovered an enormous number of previously unrecognised states. Since White and Boon did not describe the changes to posthumous editions in any detail, a good number of the new states they describe are later ones. However, they also found many among the artist's earliest etchings of 1629–31, often in unique impressions. Some of these state changes are minor, a few touches added here or there or the plate edges filed down (White and Boon did not count the latter as a state change), but through these early, often messy impressions we can witness the halting steps of a creative young printmaker making his way in a new medium. This is wonderfully illustrated in the plate volumes where an image of each state of every one of his prints is shown. In his early etchings he rarely worked from a



44. *The three trees*, by Captain William E. Baillie after Rembrandt. 1758. Etching with plate tone; third state of six, 21.5 by 28.5 cm. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

brief sketch to a finished piece but more often merely adjusted the shading or removed excess background lines. It is clear that some of the reworkings of his early plates were carried out by others in the studio, among them the Leiden printmaker Jan van Vliet, known for having reproduced some of Rembrandt's paintings in print. Several anonymous printmakers appear to have also had a hand in reworking light sketches produced by the master around 1630 and 1631. The authors were able to perceive these underlying sketches thanks to enlarged digital details; such prints, extensively re-etched by another hand, are identified by a 'w' for workshop after the catalogue number. In most of the other entries for which early states by Rembrandt do exist, the authors have introduced in the entries a horizontal line that divides the state changes made by Rembrandt from those created by another hand. This clear demarcation, which in many instances indicates which impressions were printed during the artist's lifetime and which were not, is sure to cause a stir among dealers and auction houses because the division between the two categories has never been so definitively pronounced. Perhaps the most interesting find among the early prints is that the authors were able to demonstrate that Rembrandt cut up large, unsuccessful printing plates in order to re-use them for small, unrelated etchings. They did so by matching areas of stray hatching visible in the first states of two early prints, *Ragged peasant with his hands behind him, holding a stick* and *Peasant with his hands behind his back* (NH 17 and 23), with the very same marks that appear in the large *St Jerome kneeling: large plate* (NH 3), an image that the artist must have decided to abandon early on. The number of similar areas of unrelated hatching observable among the early small prints suggest that there must have been other plates cut down in this way and no doubt other pieces of these puzzles will be identified.

Better photography of the posthumous impressions has revealed that many more plates than was previously thought were reworked with a mezzotint rocker, a clear indication that the reworking took place after Rembrandt's lifetime and most probably during the first half of the eighteenth century. Enlarged details in the introduction illustrate the marks created by the serrated and smooth rockers, which are just visible in the prints if one knows what to look for. The authors have also identified more prints that carry the 'two dot' marking first identified by Krzysztof Kruzel, which appears to have been added by a later publisher in order to subtly indicate the states that he produced.

The two final volumes compile the known copies, as many as the authors could identify, although they admit that there are no doubt more to discover. Captain William Baillie's addition of two lightning bolts to his own version of the *Three trees* is well known (NH 214 copy a); we can add here another state in which a single bolt of

lightning is visible in the sky, between the catalogue's state II and III (MMA inv. no.2011.521.3; Fig.44). While many of the copies are exact reproductions in the same direction or reverse, some 'improve' on Rembrandt's original, for instance the mezzotint after *Jan Uytenbogaert* ('*The Goldweigher*') by Jan van der Bruggen, who added a monkey eating from a fruit basket in the foreground (NH 172 copy a).

Hinterding and Rutgers have chosen to organise the prints chronologically, in contrast to White and Boon who organised them by subject following the tradition derived from Bartsch set in the original Hollstein volumes. They are not the first to order the prints in this way: Hind, among others, also organised his catalogue chronologically. In this case, the wealth of illustrations allows one to fully appreciate the artist's development as a printmaker. The chronological arrangement makes clear that certain characteristics that we associate with the mature Rembrandt, such as working on an image through many states or a somewhat messy technique of stray scratches and marks, were part of his process right from the start. In certain instances, evidence of watermarks has prompted a change in the dating, for instance *Cottages and farm buildings with a man sketching* (NH 201) has been moved from 1645 to 1641 on the basis of its watermark. While the chronological arrangement offers great insight into the artist's development, it can also be a source of frustration when consulting the book. Whatever their scholarly contributions may be, the Hollstein volumes are first and foremost reference books which should, above all, be easy to use. If one is looking for a specific print, but does not have its date or a specific reference number from an earlier catalogue with which to consult the concordances, this publication is cumbersome to use. Even armed with an earlier reference number, one may have to consult as many as four of the seven volumes in order to locate a particular work and assemble all the related information and illustrations. An organisation by subject, which does not require scholarly knowledge on the part of the user to find a work, along with thumbnail images next to each text entry, would have made the volumes easier to consult.

I pass these comments on to future compilers of Rembrandt's etchings because, while these volumes now seem like the *ne plus ultra* of Rembrandt catalogues, given the history of the print literature so far, no doubt there will be more to come. Hopefully there will be online versions, so that users can enlarge the digital photographs themselves rather than rely on the printed black-and-white images that are sometimes difficult to read. Nevertheless, this excellent catalogue, which delves deeply into Rembrandt's printed *œuvre* and offers many new insights, is *the* one for our generation. It sets a high standard for research and provides a model for the cataloguing of early modern printmakers.

### Hendrick Goltzius, *The New Hollstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450–1700*.

Compiled by Marjolein Leesberg. Edited by Huigen Leeflang. 4 vols. 1,482 pp. incl. 79 col. + 1,203 b. & w. ills. (Sound and Vision Publishers, Ouderkerk aan den IJssel, in collaboration with the Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, 2012), €1,860. ISBN 978-90-77551-95-0/96-7/97-4/98-1.

Reviewed by JAN PIET FILEDT KOK

IN HIS LIFETIME the fame of Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617) was based largely on his prints, which were distributed all over Europe and even to Asia. Only after 1600 did he also turn to painting, although this did little for his posthumous reputation. A renewed appreciation of his work in the second half of the twentieth century resulted in major museum acquisitions, exhibitions and publications. His printed *œuvre* is now catalogued in the four *New Hollstein* volumes under review here. The first two include all the prints engraved by Goltzius himself (380), while the third and fourth volumes catalogue those by other printmakers after his designs (more than four hundred, including doubtful and rejected prints). Both catalogues are arranged iconographically, as is traditional in the Hollstein publications. Those interested in Goltzius's stylistic development thus need to turn to the introduction, which discusses chronology and other aspects of Goltzius's print production, including many new discoveries.

Goltzius was trained in 1574/75 by the engraver and humanist Dirck Volckertsz

Coornhert (1522–90), both as printmaker and designer. He designed and engraved for Coornhert several series that embodied the humanist's moral and ethical philosophy. Between 1577 and 1581 he engraved some ninety copperplates, partly after his own designs, for the Antwerp print publishers Philips Galle and Aux Quatre Vents. Another aspect of his early work is the many (mostly small) portraits engraved in silver and gold as medallions and in copper for printing. Only a few of the medallions have survived, whose impressions show the inscription in reverse. The copperplate for a *Portrait of a man facing right* was recently acquired by the Rijksmuseum (Fig.45).

With the publication in 1582 of a few prints under his name as '*gedrukt te Haerlem*' ('printed in Haarlem'), Goltzius became the first in the Northern Netherlands to publish prints for an international audience, which subsequently put an end to the quasi-monopoly of Antwerp, moving the centre of the printmaking business to Holland. Between 1582 and 1601 he published some four hundred more showing an innovative iconography in a new style and engraving technique. They form the core of Goltzius's *œuvre* and are mainly after his own designs, although there are also prints after designs by Anthonie Blocklandt, Bartholomeus Spranger, Cornelis van Haarlem and others.<sup>1</sup> Although Goltzius's engravings for Antwerp publishers hardly differ in style and composition from those by his Antwerp colleagues, for his Haarlem prints he developed a new, more virtuoso engraving style reflecting the idealised idiom of Spranger, his most important source of inspiration in the later 1580s. He included erotic nudes in his mythological subjects and profane allegories on a scale unprecedented in Northern printmaking.

Among the best-known and most widely distributed and copied Goltzius prints are *The Roman heroes* of 1586, *The wedding of Cupid and Psyche* after Spranger of 1587, *The large Hercules* (or '*Knollenman*') of 1589, *The birth and early life of Christ* of 1593/94 and the *Pietà* of 1596. Shortly after 1598 Goltzius must have decided to stop his engraving and publishing activities and leave his business to his stepson, Jacob Matham.

In the first years after 1582 Goltzius still did most of the engraving himself, but he started to train pupils and assistants to turn his designs into prints using a similar engraving style; they were increasingly responsible for the prints issued under Goltzius's name. Through them he was able to build over a relative short period of time a stock of prints, mainly designed by himself (about three hundred) but also after other Northern artists, to which were added, after the trips to Italy by Goltzius (1591) and Matham (1593–96), a number of reproductive prints after Italian masters.

Goltzius's stepson, Jacob Matham (1571–1631), Jacques de Gheyn II (1565–1617) and Jan Muller (1571–1628) must have been trained in Goltzius's workshop in Haarlem between 1585 and 1588. De



45. Medallion with a portrait of a man, by Hendrick Goltzius. 1581–85. Engraved copper plate for NH 276, 9.8 by 7.3 cm. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; acquired in 2014).