This study examines the causes, circumstances, and effects of the 1656 bankruptcy by Rembrandt van Rijn. Following a highly successful early career, Rembrandt's idiosyncratic art and lifestyle came to dominate his reputation. His evasion of responsibility to his creditors was so socially disreputable that laws in Amsterdam were quickly altered. The poor management of his finances magnified other difficulties that he had with family, paramours, friends, neighbors, and patrons. Collectively, Rembrandt's economic and social exigencies affected his living and working environment, his public station, and his art. This study examines all of these aspects of Rembrandt's bankruptcy, including his marketing practices, the appreciation of his work, and his relations with patrons, in addition to the details of the bankruptcy itself. Several patterns of short-sighted decision making emerge as Rembrandt conducted his affairs within a constantly changing framework of relationships, a shifting set of obligations, and evolving artistic pursuits.

Paul Crenshaw is assistant professor of art history and archaeology at Washington University in St. Louis.
For Mara, Gello, and Lucas
In Memory of John Michael Montias
CONTENTS

List of Illustrations xi
Acknowledgments xiii
Notes to the Reader ix

INTRODUCTION: THE CRUX OF REMBRANDT’S BANKRUPTCY 1

ONE: BANKRUPTCY AND REMBRANDT’S CRITICAL FORTUNE 5
- Introduction: Wealth and Social Station 5
- Archival Corrections 8
- Recent Research 11
- Conclusion 14

TWO: THE PERILS OF THE DUTCH ART MARKET 17
- Introduction: Tales of Misfortune 17
- Causes of Penury 20
- Consequences of Ruin 22
- Conclusion 27

THREE: THE FOUNDATION OF REMBRANDT’S FINANCIAL PROBLEMS 28
- Introduction: The Decline of Rembrandt’s Wealth 28
- Income and Marketing Practices 29
- Economic Conditions 37
- Private and Social Relationships 40
- Conclusion 43

FOUR: REMBRANDT’S HOUSE ON THE BREESTRAAT 44
- Introduction: Rembrandt’s Primary Liability 44
- The Purchase 44
CONTENTS

Rembrandt, Christoffel Thijs, and Daniel Pinto 48
Rembrandt’s Loans 51
Rembrandt’s Maneuvers in 1653–1654 56
1655–1656: A Contract for a New House 62
1656: Cessio Bonorum 69
The Sales of Rembrandt’s Possessions 75
Aftermath 79
Summary and Conclusion 86

FIVE: REMBRANDT’S COLLECTING HABIT 89
Introduction: Baldinucci’s Comments 89
Rembrandt’s Art Purchases 92
Mentality and Character 108
Conclusion 109

SIX: REMBRANDT’S DISPUTES WITH HIS PATRONS 110
Introduction: Autonomy and Judgment 110
Rembrandt v. Andries de Graeff 111
Rembrandt v. Diego D’Andrade 120
Rembrandt v. Antonio Ruffo 125
Conclusion 133

SEVEN: THE EFFECTS OF REMBRANDT’S FINANCIAL PROBLEMS 136
Introduction: The Nexus between Art and Life 136
Changes in Rembrandt’s Workshop and Production 140
Themes of Patronage and Perseverance 148
Conclusion 155

CONCLUSION: REMBRANDT’S LEGACY 156

Notes 159
Bibliography 195
Index 211

Rembrandt, *Satire on Art Criticism*, 1644.

Rembrandt’s house on the Sint Antonisbreestraat.


First page of Rembrandt’s bankruptcy inventory, 25 and 26 July 1656.

Rembrandt, *Danèae*, c. 1636.

Advertisement for the sale of Rembrandt’s Graphics, 1658.


Lucas van Leyden, *Het Urenspegelkeu (“The Owlglass”).


Raphael, *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione*.

Rembrandt, *Sketch after Raphael’s Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione*, 1639.

Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait at Age 34*, 1640.

Rembrandt, *Christ Healing the Sick (“The Hundred Guilder Print”),* c. 1647.

Rembrandt, *Portrait of a Man (Andries de Graeff)*, c. 1639.


Rembrandt, *Oath of the Batavians (Claudius Civilis),* c. 1661–1663.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustration Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rembrandt, <em>Aristotle (or Apelles) Contemplating the Bust of Homer</em>, 1653.</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembrandt, <em>Homer Dictating to a Scribe</em>, c. 1661–1663.</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembrandt, <em>Bathsheba</em>, 1654.</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembrandt, <em>Woman Bathing in a Stream (Callisto)</em>, 1654.</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembrandt, <em>Three Crosses</em>, 1653.</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembrandt, <em>Ecce Homo</em>, 1655.</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembrandt, <em>The Polish Rider</em>, c. 1655.</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giovanni Brittano, after Titian, <em>Self-Portrait</em>.</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembrandt, <em>Calumny of Apelles</em>, c. 1653.</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembrandt, <em>The Phoenix</em>, 1658.</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembrandt, <em>Self-Portrait</em>, 1658.</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the course of researching and writing this study, I have accumulated many debts, although not the kind that lead to bankruptcy. The people mentioned here have enriched my knowledge, sharpened my skills, and enabled the completion of this volume.

I have been most fortunate to study with Professor Egbert Haverkamp Begemann at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. His generosity is unparalleled. He has shared with me his time, perceptions, ideas, and resources.

John Michael Montias, who passed away during the production of this volume, was especially helpful to the completion of this study. His attention to detail and accuracy vastly improved its quality. The methodology employed by Professor Montias, an analytical and comprehensive approach to documentary material, has informed my work. Also invaluable to my research has been the database of information on auctions, inventories, artists, and merchants in Amsterdam compiled by Professor Montias. The Montias database is available for consultation at the Frick Art Reference Library, New York.

I have made special use of the resources of the Frick Art Reference Library, the Stephen Chan Library of Fine Arts at the IFA, the Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library, the Watson Library at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the New York Public Library. I frequently consulted online resources provided by the Getty Research Institute. In The Netherlands, I examined materials primarily at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek and the RKD in The Hague, and the Bibliotheek van de Universiteit van Amsterdam. The staff of the art and architecture library and the visual resources collection of Washington University in St. Louis have been helpful, particularly Betha Whitlow.

To the staff of the Gemeente Archief Amsterdam and principally to SAC Dudok van Heel I am especially obligated. This study would not have been possible had he not generously offered his time and shared his rare perspective on this archival material. Dudok van Heel's research into Rembrandt's milieu and his characterization of the artist have been my primary model.

Remarkably willing to share impulsive thoughts and transform them into useful material have been Tom Rassieur and Jan Leja. A number of other
colleagues have contributed to this study through conversations and correspondence: Marten Jan Bok, H. Perry Chapman, Alan Chong, Francesca Herndon Consagra, Stephanie Dickey, Wayne Franits, Amy Golahny, Alison Kettering, Judith Mann, Jeffrey Muller, Shelley Perlove, Inge Reist, Nanette Salomon, Simon Schama, Gary Schwartz, Larry Silver, Rebecca Tucker, Jaap van der Veen, William E. Wallace, Mark S. Weil, Phoebe Weil, Mariët Westermann, Ernst van de Wetering, Louisa Wood-Ruby, and Michael Zell.

The early years of my research were supported by fellowships from the IFA, The Alfred Bader Fellowship, and The Robert Lehman Foundation. More recently, I have benefited from a faculty research grant and other funds generously made available by Washington University in St. Louis.

To the staff of Cambridge University Press, especially Beatrice Rehl, and to the anonymous reviewers who provided useful feedback to the manuscript I am also indebted.

This book is dedicated to my wife Mara L. Hermano and to my children Angela Francesca, and Lucas Alexander, without whom my life would be truly impoverished.
NOTES TO THE READER

Names and Dates

Dutch names in the seventeenth century were commonly spelled in variant forms. Spellings of proper names have been retained in quotations from documents and texts, but in the main body of this study a modern usage has been applied. In the parenthetical dates accompanying historical figures, the abbreviation “act.” means active in the year mentioned (primarily used for artists), whereas “doc.” means documented in that year. These terms are used when the birth and death dates are not known to the author.

Abbreviations Used in the Text and Notes

The notes to this study regularly cite the two main published compendia of Rembrandt documentation. Primary consideration for citation is given to The Rembrandt Documents by Walter Strauss and Marjon van der Meulen et al., of 1979, abbreviated in the notes as Documents. For items not in Documents, such as a wealth of relevant Rembrandt material from the time of his death to the early eighteenth century, Die Urkunden über Rembrandt by Cornelis Hofstede de Groot of 1906, referred to as Urkunden, is cited if applicable. The author has not pointed out the specific archival reference for items included in these works. For other published and unpublished material, an attempt has been made to include the archival reference if possible. The archival records refer to the Gemeente Archief Amsterdam (hereafter “GAA”) unless otherwise noted. Within these records, “DBK” stands for the records of the Desolate Boedelskamer, or Chamber of Insolvent Estates; “WK” stands for the Weeskamer, or Orphans Chamber; and “DTB” stands for doop-, trouw-, en begraafregisters, or registers of baptisms, weddings, and burials. Many documents are also cited here with reference to the “Montias Database,” compiled by John Michael Montias and available for consultation at the Frick Art Reference Library in New York. Paintings by Rembrandt that are not illustrated are referred to by Bredius number (Br.), drawings by Benesch number (Ben.).
and prints by Bartsch number (B.). The full references to these catalogues may be consulted in the bibliography.

**Currencies**

The most common unit of currency in the Northern Netherlands in the seventeenth century was the guilder, also known as a Carolus guilder or a florin. One guilder (fl.) consisted of 20 stuivers (st.) or 320 penningen (p.).

This study incorporates several documents and written sources that mention other currencies. The rates of exchange for international currencies listed here should be used as a general guide only. Despite the fact that inflation was generally low, the exchange rates between currencies did shift in the seventeenth century.

1 Flemish pound = 6 guilders
1 rijksdaelder (or daalder) = 2 1/2 guilders
1 rijksdaelder (or daalder) = 1 scudo (romano) = 1 ducat
1 schelling = 6 stuivers
1 groot = 1/2 stuiver (i.e. 40 groot = 1 guilder)
8 duits = 1 stuiver