

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-67109-6 - Rembrandt's Bankruptcy: The Artist, His Patrons, and the Art Market in
Seventeenth-Century Netherlands

Paul Crenshaw

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

REMBRANDT'S BANKRUPTCY



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.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-67109-6 - Rembrandt's Bankruptcy: The Artist, His Patrons, and the Art Market in
Seventeenth-Century Netherlands

Paul Crenshaw

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-67109-6 - Rembrandt's Bankruptcy: The Artist, His Patrons, and the Art Market in
Seventeenth-Century Netherlands

Paul Crenshaw

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

REMBRANDT'S BANKRUPTCY

THE ARTIST, HIS PATRONS,
AND THE ART MARKET
IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY
NETHERLANDS



PAUL CRENSHAW

Washington University in St. Louis



Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-67109-6 - Rembrandt's Bankruptcy: The Artist, His Patrons, and the Art Market in
Seventeenth-Century Netherlands

Paul Crenshaw

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107671096

© Paul Crenshaw 2006

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2006

Reprinted 2012

First paperback edition 2014

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Crenshaw, Paul.

Rembrandt's bankruptcy : the artist, his patrons, and the art market in seventeenth-century
Netherlands / Paul Crenshaw.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-521-85825-0 (hardback)

ISBN-10: 0-521-85825-9 (hardback)

1. Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, 1606-1669 - Finance, Personal. 2. Bankruptcy -
Netherlands. 3. Art - Economic aspects - Netherlands - History - 17th century.

I. Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, 1606-1669. II. Title.

N6953.R4C74 2006

759.9492 - dc22 2005029337

ISBN 978-0-521-85825-0 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-67109-6 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of
URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication
and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate
or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-67109-6 - Rembrandt's Bankruptcy: The Artist, His Patrons, and the Art Market in
Seventeenth-Century Netherlands

Paul Crenshaw

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

For Mara, Gello, and Lucas
In Memory of John Michael Montias

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-67109-6 - Rembrandt's Bankruptcy: The Artist, His Patrons, and the Art Market in
Seventeenth-Century Netherlands

Paul Crenshaw

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS



<i>List of Illustrations</i>	page ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
<i>Notes to the Reader</i>	xiii
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: <i>Cessio Bonorum</i>	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
<i>Notes</i>	159
<i>Bibliography</i>	195
<i>Index</i>	211

ILLUSTRATIONS



1	Artus Quellijn, <i>Portrait of Cornelis Witsen</i> , c. 1658.	page 9
2	Rembrandt, <i>Satire on Art Criticism</i> , 1644.	35
3	Rembrandt's house on the Sint Antonisbreestraat.	45
4	Rembrandt, <i>View of Saxenburg, Bloemendaal</i> ("The Goldweigher's Field"), 1651.	49
5	Rembrandt, <i>Portrait of Jan Six</i> , c. 1647.	54
6	Rembrandt, <i>Portrait of Jan Six</i> , 1654.	55
7	Govaert Flinck. <i>Portrait of Margaretha Tulp</i> , 1656.	59
8	Rembrandt, <i>Portrait of Arnout Tholincx</i> , 1656.	61
9	Rembrandt, <i>Portrait of Pieter Haringh</i> , 1655.	63
10	Rembrandt, <i>Portrait of Thomas Jacobsz Haringh</i> , c. 1656.	65
11	Rembrandt, <i>Portrait of Abraham Francen</i> , c. 1656–1658.	67
12	First page of Rembrandt's bankruptcy inventory, 25 and 26 July 1656.	71
13	Rembrandt, <i>Danäe</i> , c. 1636.	73
14	Advertisement for the sale of Rembrandt's Graphics, 1658.	77
15	Rembrandt, <i>The Shell</i> , 1650.	95
16	Lucas van Leyden, <i>Het Ulenspiegelken</i> ("The Owlglass").	96
17	Rembrandt, <i>Portrait of Jan Wtenbogaert</i> ("The Goldweigher"), 1639.	97
18	Rembrandt, <i>Christ Preaching</i> ("La petite Tombe"), c. 1652.	101
19	Raphael, <i>Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione</i> .	102
20	Rembrandt, <i>Sketch after Raphael's Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione</i> , 1639.	103
21	Rembrandt, <i>Self-Portrait at Age 34</i> , 1640.	104
22	Rembrandt, <i>Christ Healing the Sick</i> ("The Hundred Guilder Print"), c. 1647.	105
23	Rembrandt, <i>Portrait of a Man</i> (Andries de Graeff), c. 1639.	113
24	Nicolaes Eliasz Pickenoy, <i>Portrait of Cornelis de Graeff</i> , 1634.	114
25	Artus Quellijn, <i>Portrait of Andries de Graeff</i> , 1661.	115
26	Rembrandt, <i>Oath of the Batavians</i> (Claudius Civilis), c. 1661–1663.	119

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-67109-6 - Rembrandt's Bankruptcy: The Artist, His Patrons, and the Art Market in
Seventeenth-Century Netherlands

Paul Crenshaw

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ILLUSTRATIONS

27	Rembrandt, <i>Aristotle (or Apelles) Contemplating the Bust of Homer</i> , 1653.	126
28	Rembrandt, <i>Alexander the Great</i> , c. 1655–1661.	127
29	Rembrandt, <i>Homer Dictating to a Scribe</i> , c. 1661–1663.	129
30	Rembrandt, <i>Bathsheba</i> , 1654.	138
31	Rembrandt, <i>Woman Bathing in a Stream (Callisto)</i> , 1654.	139
32	Rembrandt, <i>Three Crosses</i> , 1653.	140
33	Rembrandt, <i>Ecce Homo</i> , 1655.	141
34	Rembrandt, <i>Portrait of Jeremias de Decker</i> , c. 1656–1660.	143
35	Rembrandt, <i>The Polish Rider</i> , c. 1655.	145
36	Giovanni Brittono, after Titian, <i>Self-Portrait</i> .	149
37	Rembrandt, <i>Calumny of Apelles</i> , c.1653.	151
38	Rembrandt, <i>The Phoenix</i> , 1658.	153
39	Rembrandt, <i>Self-Portrait</i> , 1658.	154

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-67109-6 - Rembrandt's Bankruptcy: The Artist, His Patrons, and the Art Market in
Seventeenth-Century Netherlands

Paul Crenshaw

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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.),

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-67109-6 - Rembrandt's Bankruptcy: The Artist, His Patrons, and the Art Market in
Seventeenth-Century Netherlands

Paul Crenshaw

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

NOTES TO THE READER

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 daelder) = 2 1/2 guilders

1 rijksdaelder (or daelder) = 1 scudo (romano) = 1 ducat

1 schelling = 6 stuivers

1 groot = 1/2 stuiver (i.e. 40 groot = 1 guilder)

8 duits = 1 stuiver