**Rembrandt**

Rembrandt HARMENSZOON VAN RIJN (b. July 15, 1606, Leiden, Neth.--d. Oct. 4, 1669, Amsterdam), Dutch painter, draftsman, and etcher of the 17th century, a giant in the history of art. His paintings are characterized by luxuriant brushwork, rich colour, and a mastery of chiaroscuro. Numerous portraits and self-portraits exhibit a profound penetration of character. His drawings constitute a vivid record of contemporary Amsterdam life. The greatest artist of the Dutch school, he was a master of light and shadow whose paintings, drawings, and etchings made him a giant in the history of art.

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn was born on July 15, 1606, in Leiden, the Netherlands. His father was a miller who wanted the boy to follow a learned profession, but Rembrandt left the University of Leiden to study painting. His early work was devoted to showing the lines, light and shade, and color of the people he saw about him. He was influenced by the work of Caravaggio and was fascinated by the work of many other Italian artists. When Rembrandt became established as a painter, he began to teach and continued teaching art throughout his life.

In 1631, when Rembrandt's work had become well known and his studio in Leiden was flourishing, he moved to Amsterdam. He became the leading portrait painter in Holland and received many commissions for portraits as well as for paintings of religious subjects. He lived the life of a wealthy, respected citizen and met the beautiful Saskia van Uylenburgh, whom he married in 1634. She was the model for many of his paintings and drawings. Rembrandt's works from this period are characterized by strong lighting effects. In addition to portraits, Rembrandt attained fame for his landscapes, while as an etcher he ranks among the foremost of all time. When he had no other model, he painted or sketched his own image. It is estimated that he painted between 50 and 60 self-portraits.

In 1636 Rembrandt began to depict quieter, more contemplative scenes with a new warmth in color. During the next few years three of his four children died in infancy, and in 1642 his wife died. In the 1630s and 1640s he made many landscape drawings and etchings. His landscape paintings are imaginative, rich portrayals of the land around him. Rembrandt was at his most inventive in the work popularly known as The Night Watch, painted in 1642. It depicts a group of city guardsmen awaiting the command to fall in line. Each man is painted with the care that Rembrandt gave to single portraits, yet the composition is such that the separate figures are second in interest to the effect of the whole. The canvas is brilliant with color, movement, and light. In the foreground are two men, one in bright yellow, the other in black. The shadow of one color tones down the lightness of the other. In the center of the painting is a little girl dressed in yellow.

Rembrandt had become accustomed to living comfortably. From the time he could afford to, he bought many paintings by other artists. By the mid-1650s he was living so far beyond his means that his house and his goods had to be auctioned to pay some of his debts. He had fewer commissions in the 1640s and 1650s, but his financial circumstances were not unbearable. For today's student of art, Rembrandt remains, as the Dutch painter Jozef Israels said, "the true type of artist, free, untrammeled by traditions."

The number of works attributed to Rembrandt varies. He produced approximately 600 paintings, 300 etchings, and 1,400 drawings. Some of his works are: St. Paul in Prison (1627); Supper at Emmaus (1630); The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp (1632); Young Girl at an Open Half-Door (1645); The Mill (1650); Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer (1653); The Return of the Prodigal Son (after 1660); The Syndics of the Drapers' Guild (1662); and many portraits.