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NORTH CAROLINA MUSEUM OF ART



Rembrandt in America

By Lynne Brandon

RALEIGH, NC – It's not every day one gets the rare opportunity to see the largest collection of Rembrandt painting ever shown in America's history. Recently, North Carolinians from all 100 counties, visitors from across the United States and 41 countries were able to view the first major exhibition of the renowned artist's work at the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA). It was the only east coast venue for Rembrandt in America, a 5-year project that was viewed by more than 130,000 visitors before the exhibit ended last week.

Modern technology enabled visitors to revel at the past with the help of audio tours or online streaming. Old fashioned guide books still worked well for others. Rembrandt paintings by American collectors in turn fueled critical connoisseurship and research about the artist's work. The exhibition presented more than 30 autograph paintings by the Dutch master on loan from private collections and more than two dozen American art museums. Collectors included industry giants, Henry Eastman, founder of Kodak and business magnate, Charles Schwab, among others.

Rembrandt's primary artistic concern was to show the human spirit as seen in his portrayal of his contemporaries of the day and biblical figures. In his quest for an understanding of mankind the artist examined himself first and foremost, and more than any other visual artist took up the cause of Socrates to "know thyself." In his total collection of 2,300, approximately 90 paintings were self portraits, flaws and all.

The exhibition contained almost 50 paintings - including Lucretia (1666), Flora, circa 1654, Young Man with a Sword, circa 1633-1645, and the internationally recognized 1659 Self-Portrait. The collection contained authenticated painting as well as others once attributed to Rembrandt that historians and scholars have since attributed to other artists due to lack of artistic consistencies associated with the master Dutch painter.

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Rembrandt van Rijn,
Self-Portrait, 1659, oil on
canvas, 33 1/4 x 26 in.,
National Gallery of Art,
Andrew W. Mellon Collection,
1937.1.72



Flora, circa 1654, oil on
canvas, 39 3/8 x 36 1/8 in.,
Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Gift of Archer M. Huntington,
in memory of his father,
Collis Potter Huntington,
1926 (26.101.10), © 2010
The Metropolitan Museum of
Art/Art Resource, New York



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Lucretia*, 1666, oil on canvas, 43 3/8 x 36 5/16 in., Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The William Hood Dunwoody Fund, 34.19

The painting, *Lucretia* drew emotion from art lovers who burst into tears while gazing at the stunning representation of the young woman in the throes of physical and emotional agony. A portrait of Antoine Coopler, the artist's brother-in-law showcased the master at his best. The richly textured canvas encased in gleaming mahogany wood makes a dramatic and one-of-a-kind artistic statement rarely seen in the art world

"This exhibition was a visual treat of some of Rembrandt's finest paintings now residing in American collections," N.C. Museum of Art Curator Dennis P. Weller said. *"The show also offered a rare opportunity for visitors to follow the evolving opinions of scholars regarding what makes for an authentic painting by Rembrandt."*

The North Carolina Museum of Art's permanent collection spans more than 5,000 years, from ancient Egypt to the present, making the institution one of the premier art museums in the Southeast.

In other museum news, the Museum of Natural Sciences extended its limited run exhibit, *Genghis Khan: The Exhibition*, the largest collection ever assembled of the treasures of the Mongolian ruler's empire.

These exhibits demonstrate why Raleigh has earned the designation as the "Smithsonian of the South," and it was never more evident than when one of the most famous painters in the world came to rest on the walls of the North Carolina Museum of Art. ncartmuseum.org



Young Man with a Sword, circa 1633–1645, oil on canvas, 46 1/2 x 38 in., North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation