

# Preface

## The Rembrandt Research Project: Past, Present, Future

This book differs from the previous volumes of *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, not for the mere sake of change, but rather as a result of art-historical and methodological developments in our approach to the issues involved. Indeed, it became increasingly evident that our original working procedures required revision.

At first sight, our statement of the problem would seem unchanged: which paintings in Rembrandt's style were painted by the master himself? In preparing previous volumes, however, it had become increasingly clear that our inquiry into the autograph Rembrandt oeuvre would be more effectively pursued by paying greater attention to the questions of when, where, and for what purpose the *non*-autograph paintings were done. Research on Rembrandt's workshop practice, the training of his pupils and the contribution to his production by these pupils and by assistants was therefore gradually intensified. Although this issue had already been explored in an essay in Volume II,<sup>1</sup> use of this knowledge in investigating authenticity was still germinal. In Volume III and in the catalogue of the exhibition *Rembrandt: The master and his workshop* held in Berlin, Amsterdam and London in 1991/2, Josua Bruyn published important essays outlining our growing insight into the structure of the workshop production.<sup>2</sup> During the latter exhibition, however, the application of this knowledge to the attribution issue still led to constructions that were only partly tenable. One of the central themes in this volume, but more especially in the forthcoming Volume V, is the relationship between the master's work and that of his pupils. We believe we have brought greater clarity into this problematic area. We are not primarily interested in connecting the names of pupils to non-Rembrandt paintings, but rather in discovering the conventions of seventeenth-century training- and workshop practices (which appear to have also existed in the workshops of, for example, Frans Hals, Jan Steen or Gerard Terborch).

This shift in approach affects the nature, organisation and magnitude of both this and the following volume. If the catalogue entries on disattributed paintings in previous volumes – the so-called C entries – are compared with our discussion in this and the next volume on paintings which we either suspect or are convinced are not by Rembrandt, these entries are often extensive, sometimes even more so than those on paintings we consider to be autograph Rembrandts.

The growing interest in the *raison d'être* of the putative non-Rembrandts, however, had other consequences as well. At the inception of the RRP in 1968, in order to define the field of investigation within workable limits, the point of departure was Abraham Bredius' 1935 canon of Rembrandt paintings. At that stage, the aim was to address all 611 paintings catalogued by Bredius (as

well as the Rembrandts discovered after 1935).<sup>3</sup> Whilst working on Volume I, however, it became obvious that the project could not be completed within the intended time. Accordingly, the decision was taken, beginning with Volume II, to use the substantially smaller canon of Horst Gerson published in 1968,<sup>4</sup> effectively reducing the number of paintings to be treated from 611 to 420 works. This was done on the assumption that Gerson had correctly filtered out many of the paintings on Bredius' list that simply could not be by Rembrandt. However, taking Gerson's list as a basis itself turned out to be problematic when it became apparent that he had disattributed a number of paintings which, in the view of the RRP, could well be by Rembrandt.<sup>5</sup> A more serious matter was that restricting the group of paintings to be discussed by almost 200 meant that the number of dubious or in-authentic works was drastically reduced. What had initially seemed to be a labour-saving decision resulted in an unjustifiable limitation of the field of investigation with the result that any patterns in the workshop production became less clearly discernible. In fact, it became clear that paintings *not* included by Gerson were of paramount importance in the research conducted for the present volume for some of the 'self-portraits' disattributed by Gerson shed surprising new light on the nature of production in Rembrandt's workshop. The new insights were possible only because we had *expanded* the group of works to be investigated to an extent approaching Bredius' canon and when necessary beyond it.

This expansion and the greater attention paid to the non-Rembrandts naturally affected the scope of the book and the time necessary for the project. The Volume IV originally intended had to be split into two separate volumes to avoid creating a single unwieldy tome. The reason these volumes are devoted to specific categories of paintings, viz. the self-portraits in this volume and what we have come to call the small-figured history pieces<sup>6</sup> and related paintings in Volume V, is elucidated later in this *Preface*. A significant and regrettable outcome of this division (decided at a relatively late stage) is that some of the introductory chapters also relevant to this volume will have to be included in the following one. This applies to an essay on aspects of workshop training that seemed applicable mainly to small-figured history pieces but which – as we later discovered – is also relevant to self-portraits. The essay on methodological issues related to connoisseurship is also reserved for Volume V. Accord-

1 See *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings* II, 1986, Chapter III, 'Problems of apprenticeship and studio collaboration', pp. 45-90 (E.v.d.W.).

2 See *Corpus* III, 1989, Chapter II, 'Studio practice and studio production', pp. 12-50; J. Bruyn, 'Rembrandt's workshop: functions & production', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt: The master and his workshop (Paintings)*, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie/Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum/London, National Gallery 1991-92, pp. 68-89.

3 A. Bredius, *Rembrandt schilderijen*, Utrecht 1935; *Corpus* I, 1982, *Preface*, p. XVII.

4 H. Gerson, *Rembrandt paintings*, Amsterdam 1968; *Corpus* II, *Preface*, p. X.

5 *The artist in oriental costume*, Paris, Musée du Petit Palais (I A 40); *The Apostle Peter*, Stockholm (II A 46); *Portrait of a 39-year old woman*, Nivaa (II A 62); *Bellona*, New York (II A 70); *Cupid*, Vaduz (II A 91).

6 With small-figured history paintings we mean those paintings with figures smaller than life-size and generally full-length. In such paintings, the space in which the figures occur is usually far more extensively defined than in the history pieces with life-size, virtually never full-length figures. For this reason the few landscapes from the period after 1642 are also included in this volume.

ingly, these two aspects are touched on only briefly in this *Preface*. The reader is asked to treat this *Preface* and the relevant essays in Volumes IV and V as relating to both books.

### **The history of the project in terms of the formulation of the questions and the choice of methods**

While Volume V will include a more exhaustive essay on methodological matters, particularly the significance of connoisseurship in relation to Rembrandt research, some comment is needed here, at the outset, on the way this aspect developed within the RRP. It will be necessary to examine some of the crucial episodes of the RRP's history, since mistaken views on this matter persistently recur, not only in the press but also in the writings of professional colleagues about the project. To give some idea of just how radically our ideas have had to change since 1968, it might be useful to quote a passage from a lecture in which Josua Bruyn, the first chairman of the research team, introduced the RRP to the community of Rembrandt specialists at a symposium entitled *Rembrandt After Three Hundred Years* held in Chicago in October 1969:

'I should like to emphasise that the majority of rejected pictures, which till now tended to be relegated more or less automatically to his [Rembrandt's] school, do not belong there. Even Dr. Gerson, in his recent edition of Bredius' catalogue, resorts too often, in my opinion, to attributions to Flinck, Van den Eeckhout and Jan Victors, even though, in other cases, he considers rejected Rembrandt pictures later copies or imitations. I think that in these latter cases he is generally right. I also think that these later imitations, whether they are innocent pastiches or conscious fakes, are responsible for many more mistaken attributions than the school-pieces. These imitations [...] present a formidable problem that has hardly been tackled at all. For the greater part, they have not yet been recognised, let alone grouped according to date and place. Some of them can boast fabulous pedigrees, going back to famous eighteenth-century collections, or were reproduced in eighteenth-century prints.'<sup>7</sup>

The advantage of this working hypothesis, no matter how untenable it later proved to be, was that it raised the expectation that scientific research could be an exceptionally useful tool for detecting these alleged later imitations. Materials and techniques would be encountered in such imitations and forgeries that would provide irrefutable evidence of a genesis beyond Rembrandt's time and circle.

The surprisingly strong *a priori* assumption that there would be many imitations and forgeries in circulation

was undoubtedly in part due to the Van Meegeren affair in 1945-7 involving fake 'Vermeers' and other forgeries.<sup>8</sup> Having traumatised both the art-historical and museum worlds, this affair engendered veritable paranoia regarding possible forgeries. Yet this scandal, and the role of the laboratory in resolving it, also generated great optimism regarding the potential of scientific research methods in art-historical investigation. Without the need for a full-fledged Vermeer investigation, research conducted at the Institut Royal du Patrimoine Artistique in Brussels (one of the few laboratories specializing in this area at the time) demonstrated that the painter Han van Meegeren's claim to be the author of the most admired of the Vermeer forgeries, the *Supper at Emmaus* in the Boymans Museum in Rotterdam (the present Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum) was in fact true. Nor should one overlook the impact of the Van Meegeren debacle on the RRP in its initial period. Bob Haak, the instigator of the RRP, began his career in 1950 as an assistant to the art dealer D.A. Hoogendijk, who, after the 'discovery' of the painting by Abraham Bredius in 1937,<sup>9</sup> had acted as the bona fide intermediary in its purchase by the Boymans Museum. Naturally, the Van Meegeren affair made a deep and lasting impression on Haak. Over years of discussing the question of authenticity with Daan Cevat (an art dealer and collector of works by Rembrandt and his school), the suspicion of the existence of many later Rembrandt imitations was a steadily recurring theme. It was this suspicion that influenced the RRP's approach at the start of the project.

In this climate, too, the announcement that the RRP would make the greatest possible use of technical investigation was enthusiastically received. In the international press it was even suggested that, thanks to the application of these methods, the RRP would once and for all eliminate all doubts regarding the authenticity of paintings attributed to Rembrandt. As a result, the art historical world was under the impression that the members of the RRP held pretensions of writing the definitive Rembrandt catalogue, which quite understandably elicited very mixed feelings. After all, it was unlikely that all non-Rembrandts were later imitations or forgeries, since it was known that Rembrandt had had pupils who worked in his style. This, however, was an area of contention. The question was whether these pupils followed Rembrandt so closely that their work was indistinguishable from that of the master. The catalogue of Cevat's collection, for instance, had conjured up an image of the School of Rembrandt which seemed to preclude any confusion between the work of the master and that of his pupils.<sup>10</sup> The same would also apply to Sumowski's later publication, the monumental series *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler* (1983-1994). In his *Introduction*, Sumowski explicitly defended the idea that Rembrandt

7 *Rembrandt after three hundred years: A symposium*, Chicago 1973, p. 36.

8 See P.B. Coremans, *Van Meegeren's faked Vermeer's and De Hoogh's, a scientific examination*, Amsterdam 1949; and M. van den Brandhof, *Een vroege Vermeer uit 1937. Achtergronden van leven en werken van de schilder/vervalser Han van Meegeren*, dissertation, Amsterdam 1979.

9 A. Bredius, 'A new Vermeer', *Burlington Magazine* 71 (1937), pp. 210-211.

10 Exhib. cat. *Rondom Rembrandt. De verzameling Daan Cevat*, Stedelijk Museum 'De Lakenhal', Leiden 1968, with an *Introduction* by Bob Haak.

‘with a teacher’s unmistakable idealism, (had) tried to bring out the individuality of his pupils.’ According to Sumowski, the fact that despite their training in history painting some of his pupils later worked as genre or landscape painters ‘agrees completely with Rembrandt’s ideal of the individual. The Rembrandt imitators did not work in his spirit.’<sup>11</sup> Thus, at the project’s outset in 1968 it was possible for hundreds of paintings in the style of, but apparently not by Rembrandt, to be largely considered as either mala fide imitations or bona fide pastiches.

Whilst in theory it may sometimes be possible to prove that a painting is *not* by Rembrandt by means of technical investigation, the converse – using the same methods to prove conclusively that a painting *is* certainly by Rembrandt – is never possible. It may be redundant to labour the point that, on the one hand, historical works of art are complex man-made objects whose materials, manufacture, as well as style and quality can vary even when made by the same person, while on the other hand works that are closely related in just these respects could have been done by different painters, e.g. in Rembrandt’s immediate circle. If only for this reason, it seemed useless to search for some material or technical idiosyncrasy specific to Rembrandt that would provide the key to the authenticity problem. Moreover, such a search would not be possible in practice, as we soon discovered: Rembrandt’s oeuvre is accessible for this kind of research only to a very limited and varying degree. In their Diaspora, his paintings and those attributed to him have to some extent found their way into small museums, or private collections, where thorough investigation is scarcely feasible. For this reason alone, there is little likelihood of assembling the kind of corpus of comparative data that one might ideally wish. Collecting paint samples and samples of other materials from such valuable and important paintings, moreover, is also subject to great restrictions, depending on the museum or owner. Furthermore, the different material history of each painting may have introduced all kinds of changes and contaminations in the paintings, making any comparison of their material properties a very risky business.

The initially high hopes for the scientific research held by the project’s initiators were therefore already seriously dampened quite early on. In particular, a symposium organised by the RRP together with the then Central Research Laboratory for Objects of Art and Science in Amsterdam in 1969, on the limits and possibilities of such research, proved decisive in this respect. Attending this symposium were those with experience in Rembrandt research using X-ray and other radiographic methods, experts on the analysis of grounds and other paint samples, and the analysis of wood supports and canvas.<sup>12</sup> The discussions demonstrated that, so far, the

results of these research methods applied to Rembrandt had yielded little of significance for the determination of authenticity. For example, in so far as could be gathered, works by the early Jan Lievens appear to be identical in technical and material aspects to those by Rembrandt from the same period, while on the other hand, the striking incoherence of Kühn’s research results on the grounds created the impression that no materials and techniques specific to Rembrandt or his workshop could be distinguished.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the materials in question could have been used in Rembrandt’s time or subsequently, often even up to the present time.

Nevertheless, we did not abandon the idea that some advance could be made by collecting, combining and interpreting the already existing information together with comparable new information. And this decision was to turn out to be crucial. For instance, in the first 15 years of the project dendrochronology proved to be of inestimable value. The gradually growing body of dendrochronological data compelled a radical revision of the above-cited working hypothesis. No single oak panel came from any tree felled substantially later than the year to which the painting in question was dated on the basis of style or the date it bears. Moreover, the fact that it seemed possible to demonstrate that two or more panels came from the same trunk in relatively many instances indicated that there was a high degree of probability that the works concerned were painted in the same workshop.<sup>14</sup> For instance, we long considered The Hague *Bust of an old man in a cap* (I B 7) to be a later imitation. Its panel, however, turned out to have come from the same plank as the panels of the Hamburg *Simeon in the Temple* (I A 12) and the Berlin *Minerva* (I A 38). The Braunschweig *Portrait of a man* (II C 70) and *Portrait of a woman* (II C 71) were also initially considered as later imitations, but the panel of the woman proved to have come from the same tree as the centre plank of the Chicago *Man in a gorget and black cap* (I A 42). Something similar occurred in the research on the grounds. For example, when, at our request, Kühn repeated his work in the collections of Kassel and Dresden, a certain type of double ground often encountered in Rembrandt’s early paintings on canvas was also detected in paintings that the RRP had at first thought suspect.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, it had to be concluded that they were not later imitations. Our own research published in this volume has shown the value of studying grounds (see Chapter IV).

However, neither dendrochronological investigation nor the research on grounds (for which relatively easily

11 W. Sumowski, *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler I - VI*, Landau/Pfalz 1983 - 1994, see esp. Vol. I, p. 14.

12 *Symposium on technical aspects of Rembrandt paintings*, organised by the RRP and the Central Research Laboratory for Objects of Art and Science, Amsterdam, 22-24 September 1969. A summary of this symposium was written by Renate Keller, but not published.

13 H. Kühn, ‘Untersuchungen zu den Malgründen Rembrandts’, *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg* 2 (1965), pp. 189-210.

14 See *Corpus I*, pp. 683-85; *Corpus II*, pp. 865-66; *Corpus III*, pp. 783-87 and in the present volume *Table of dendrochronological data*, pp. 648-659.

15 H. Kühn, ‘Untersuchungen zu den Pigmenten und Malgründen Rembrandts, durchgeführt an den Gemälden der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Kassel’, *Maltechnik/Restauro* 82 (1976), pp. 25-33; H. Kühn, ‘Untersuchungen zu den Pigmenten und den Malgründen Rembrandts durchgeführt an den Gemälden der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden’, *Maltechnik/Restauro* 83 (1977), pp. 223-233. For our criticism of Kühn’s initial working method and results, see Vol. I, pp. 17-20.

acquired sample material was made available) yielded *direct* evidence either for or against an attribution to Rembrandt. The X-radiographs that were acquired in vast quantities also failed to provide decisive arguments for an attribution to Rembrandt. But they did contain a wealth of information on such aspects as the manufacture, genesis, the use of the materials and the material history of the paintings in question. These three techniques dendrochronology, research on grounds, and X-radiography (with the latter's potential for investigating the canvas) came to play the most important roles in the project. Not only did they often provide interesting information, but just as importantly, they could be implemented on a larger scale than other research techniques, such as the sophisticated and expensive neutron-activated autoradiography with which some thirty paintings attributed to Rembrandt were investigated in New York<sup>16</sup> and later in Berlin. Nor did this technique provide the decisive key to the question of authenticity. However, it did sharpen our understanding of certain aspects of the artist's working method and of certain stylistic characteristics.<sup>17</sup>

Once it had become apparent (thanks to the results of dendrochronological research and the study of the grounds) that paintings previously doubted on stylistic grounds could not be later imitations or forgeries, the project participants were forced to accept their reliance on a form of evaluation largely consistent with traditional connoisseurship. However, in contrast to the usual lapidary pronouncements on a painting's authenticity – or lack thereof – made by earlier experts, the members of the RRP attempted to voice their arguments as explicitly as possible. Another difference with our predecessors was that – as said – we continued our intensive use of scientific research, but primarily to gain insight into the genesis and into aspects of the painting technique and the material history of the paintings under investigation. The painting as 'object', therefore, received greater emphasis than previously. However, connoisseurship, particularly evaluating the *peinture*, played a decisive role in arriving at an opinion as to its authenticity. That the *peinture* can often be better discerned in the X-radiograph than on the paint surface, together with the fact that each painting was investigated *in situ*, gave us the feeling that we could see more than our predecessors and that, therefore, our judgements were better founded.

Our procedure was that, for each trip, two members of the team (in changing combinations) would travel to investigate paintings on the spot in a geographically determined group of museums and collections. Naturally, this meant that they could not be studied in chronological order and that no individual member saw all of the paintings. Given the current opportunities and means of travel, in practice each member saw more than the previous generations of Rembrandt experts. However,

16 M.W. Ainsworth e.a., 'Paintings by Van Dyck, Vermeer, and Rembrandt reconsidered through autoradiography', *Art and Autoradiography*, New York (The Metropolitan Museum of Art) 1982, pp. 9-99.

17 E. van de Wetering, *Rembrandt. The painter at work*, Amsterdam 1997, Chapter IV.

like those experts, as a rule we had to have recourse to photographs and reproductions for an overview of the oeuvre as a whole (or, in practice, to investigate a relevant group of Rembrandtesque paintings in their interrelationship). For Volumes I – III, in addition to the detailed descriptions we made while investigating each of the paintings, we relied on black and white photographs and – to varying degrees – colour slides of details in the paintings. We only began making systematic use of colour transparencies while preparing this and the following volume.

At an early stage the question was raised by the RRP's critics whether a 'collective expertise' was in fact possible. However, the late 1960s and 70s was a time of great belief in teamwork generally, although it gradually became clear that actual sharing of visual experiences – let alone communicating them – is virtually impossible. As research in the past years has shown, memory – also visual memory – is not a particularly reliable instrument. Memories, thus also the images stored in the visual memory, are radically altered by a variety of factors. One might think that nowadays the ready availability of excellent photographic material would circumvent 'the unreliability of mental images', i.e. the tendency to distort mental images, but in fact working with photographs proved riskier than we initially thought, if only because it is well-nigh impossible to maintain awareness of the often large differences in scale in the visual material. Moreover, the technical characteristics of photographs from different sources differ significantly.

Connoisseurship nevertheless continued to be highly rated by the majority of the team members, particularly because the consensus in the opinions reached was often surprisingly strong. In the conscious pursuit of consensus, however, we scarcely realised the unnoticed role that group dynamics must have played.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the fact that a set of unconscious *a priori* assumptions implicitly and significantly affected our considerations was for a long time not fully understood. These assumptions concerned the limits of the variability of personal style, the gradual nature and regularity of an artist's development, and the (assumed limited) degree to which – in the case of Rembrandt – more than one hand would have worked on a painting. These aspects are addressed in greater detail in our essays in Volume V, which are devoted to the methodological implications of connoisseurship and the question of the participation of more than one hand in Rembrandt's production.<sup>19</sup>

The *a priori* assumptions of the relative constancy of

18 A briefer discussion of the problematic side of working in a group may be found in the section 'Some reflections on method' (E.v.d.W.) in: the *Preface to Corpus I*, pp. XIII – XXVII, esp. p. XVII; see also the comment by Haak, cited in: A. Bailey, *Responses to Rembrandt*, New York 1994, p. 61: 'You are prepared to take risks when you have a companion. If you are riding a bike alone and you come to a red light, you stop. But when you have a friend riding with you, you may give each other the necessary daring to ride through.'

19 See also E. van de Wetering, 'Delimiting Rembrandt's autograph oeuvre – an insoluble problem?', in: exhib. cat. *The mystery of the young Rembrandt*, Kassel, Staatliche Museen / Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis 2001/02, pp. 58-81.

Rembrandt's style and the gradual nature of its development seemed to be justified as long as there was a certain 'density' of paintings well suited for comparison, existed in Rembrandt's oeuvre. This seemed certainly to be the case for the period 1625-42. Stylistic characteristics discerned in clusters of related paintings from a relatively brief period were extrapolated to the subsequent brief period. In the process, deviations from the period norm could either lead to disattribution or be 'tolerated' if they could be explained, whether on the basis of stylistic and technical developments or because the painting in question was assumed to have a particular function, for example, when it was unusually sketchy. At this point, since the results of technical investigation carried hardly any weight in attribution and disattribution, this strictly inductive stylistic approach was the only way forward. The need to underpin our views with thorough and solid arguments often led to rationalisations of these views that were as useful as they were dangerous. They were useful because the reader of *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings* could follow, or have the sense of being able to follow, the process by which an opinion about a painting originated. Yet they were dangerous because specifying a set of explicit criteria in fact meant excluding the implicit, intuitively applied criteria. It was precisely in this twilight zone that *a priori* assumptions and other unconsciously introduced arguments could so insidiously influence the decision-making process. As one of the project's critics put it in conversation, the rational argumentation might, in fact, conceal underlying, more intuitive decision-making processes without the members of the RRP being aware of it.

In fact, in this phase of the project the members put so much faith in connoisseurship, precisely because of their efforts to provide a rational basis for their views, that objective data pointing in a different direction were sometimes 'reasoned away'. Salient examples of this are the *Head of an old man* (I C 22) and the *Bust of a laughing man in a gorget* (I B 6). Both works were disattributed by the majority of the team despite the fact that J.C. van Vliet made prints of them shortly after their genesis with an inscription by Van Vliet stating that Rembrandt was the 'inventor' of the painting in question. This commitment to the strict application of stylistic criteria led to the historical evidence being overruled. It was in instances such as these that consensus within the team was breached. In the case of I B 6 constantly recurring discussions led to a compromise: the painting was included in the B-category (*Paintings Rembrandt's authorship of which cannot be positively either accepted or rejected*). For I C 22 the author of this *Preface* incorporated a minority opinion, setting a precedent that was occasionally followed in subsequent volumes, where the dissenting opinion might concern either attribution or disattribution by the majority of the team.<sup>20</sup>

Public disclosure of differing viewpoints in this way was not merely intended to make known the fact that

members disagreed. It was more importantly a deliberate demonstration that in historical research, where countless imponderable factors are involved, consensus among a group of researchers does not necessarily imply the correctness of their common judgement. More seriously, as the above examples of disagreement showed, differing 'Rembrandt images' had begun to emerge. At this point, Max Friedländer's remark in his *Von Kunst und Kennerchaft* of 1946 came to mind: 'One should gather up the courage to say "I do not know" and remember that he who attributes a painting incorrectly displays unfamiliarity with two masters, namely of the author, whom he does not recognise and of the painter, whose name he announces.'<sup>21</sup>

In the meantime, the team members began to realise that the working method adopted for the first three volumes of *A Corpus* could not be employed as such for the segment of Rembrandt's painted oeuvre from the 1640s and early 50s, because Rembrandt's presumptive oeuvre from this period – and its coherence – is surprisingly limited. A reassessment of the methodology, and perhaps a radical revision of the working method were clearly called for. This and other factors led to the decision to terminate the project with the publication of Volume III.

When financial support was requested in 1968 from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) – then still the Netherlands Organisation for Pure Scientific Research (ZWO) – it was assumed that the entire project would take no more than ten years. Since this term would be exceeded by twelve years with the publication of Volume III, it was not expected that further funds would be provided. Another reason for terminating the project was that three of the five members of the team were decreasingly able to participate in the actual conduct of the research and in writing the texts for the *Corpus*. This of course increased the workload for the remaining two members, all the more so because of growing disagreement over the epistemological question: that is, with what degree of certainty our judgements of authenticity could be stated. But the most important reason for ending the project was that four of the five team members had reached an age when they were also retiring from their other positions.

In April 1993, the four older members of the RRP, Josua Bruyn, Bob Haak, Simon Levie and Pieter van Thiel, announced in a letter to the editor of *The Burlington Magazine* that they had withdrawn from the project.<sup>22</sup> Their departure was scheduled to take place at the closing of the Rembrandt exhibition held in Berlin, Amsterdam and London in 1991-1992, in which several members of the RRP were involved. While working on Volume III, the author of this *Preface* had already been faced with the dilemma of whether or not to continue the

20 See *Corpus* Vol. I A 22, C 22, C 26; Vol. II B 8, C 70, C 71; Vol. III C 103.

21 M.J. Friedländer, *Von Kunst und Kennerchaft*, Oxford/Zürich 1946, p. 158: 'Man soll den Mut aufbringen, "ich weiss nicht" zu sagen und daran denken, dass wer ein Bild falsch bestimmt, damit die Unkenntnis zweier Meister offenbart, nämlich des Autors, den er nicht erkennt, und des Malers, dessen Namen er verkündet.'

22 J. Bruyn, B. Haak, S. H. Levie and P. J. J. van Thiel, 'Letter to the Editor', *The Burlington Magazine* 135 (1993), p. 279.

project once the four older members had retired, and had stated his desire to do so, although only on the condition that he could embark on a new course: one that at that moment was certainly not yet entirely clear. By the time of completion of Volume III in 1989, changes in the working method were already being tested, with Josua Bruyn the only older member of the original team, actively – albeit sceptically – participating in these experiments up to his retirement in 1993. That the four older members of the team, the founding fathers of the project, should have permitted their much younger colleague (who at the outset of the project had worked as an assistant, and only joined the team officially in 1971) to continue the project, was highly magnanimous. They could have simply decided with their departure to discontinue their legacy, the title and concept of the project. In their letter to *The Burlington Magazine* of April 1993, however, they expressed the view that while certain changes suggested by the author of this *Preface* had ‘received a sympathetic hearing from the other team members’ these changes had ‘failed to generate the enthusiasm necessary for a concerted change of course’. This prescient formulation was certainly correct in so far that developing a new approach, partly with new team members, did indeed prove to be a turbulent process.

Continuation of the RRP was made possible by the renewal of generous support from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), which had funded the project since 1968 and from the University of Amsterdam (UvA), which adopted the RRP in 1999. The UvA supported the project from the beginning by making work time available for Josua Bruyn and (from 1987 onward) Ernst van de Wetering and by providing the structural facilities, such as housing, etc.<sup>23</sup> The latter was not the only member of the research team to remain. Lideke Peese Binkhorst, the secretary of the team up till then, who had also conducted research on provenances and reproductive engravings as of 1969 and played a crucial role in the production of the published volumes of the *Corpus*, decided to continue working on the project in its new form. In addition, Michiel Franken and Paul Broekhoff, the two research assistants affiliated to the project since 1989 and 1991 respectively, both continued their activities. The plan was to form a research group partly consisting of researchers from other disciplines – with whom we had worked closely in the past – and to attract a few new specialists, as well as several new members for the Foundation’s board. The new team and the new board members were introduced in a *Letter to the Editor* of *The Burlington Magazine* in November 1993.<sup>24</sup> (The way the new team was assembled is described in

greater detail below.) The same letter to *The Burlington Magazine* also announced that the owners and managers of the paintings to be investigated would be able to consult our catalogue entries well before their publication, so that they could react to the information they contained and to our views on the authenticity of their paintings. We also pledged that their corrections and additions would be incorporated and that their views and arguments, where they differed from ours, would be represented whenever possible in our texts. In retrospect, both intentions turned out to be problematic. Splitting our treatment of the paintings to be investigated (as described below) between catalogue texts – containing the more objective information – and the essay, *Rembrandt’s self-portraits: Problems of authenticity and function* (Chapter III), on which work continued under considerable pressure up to the last minute, led to the owners being sent only the catalogue texts, while the decisive discussion often occurred in the chapter. Besides, although it was perfectly possible to react to the texts that were sent to them, this was seldom done.

In the first years following the renewal of the team and working procedure, several new members withdrew because – as with the previous team – the energy and dedication required for the work of the project proved difficult to combine with the demands of their professional positions. There were also disagreements over the work itself, while further friction associated with the question of intellectual property also played a part, a complex issue which is sometimes impossible to avoid when working as a team. The anticipated advances in interdisciplinary collaboration, however, were not wholly realized. Once again, it appeared that those who finally wrote and edited the texts (art historians with an affinity for particular auxiliary disciplines), largely had the task of interpreting the auxiliary specialist information in a wider context and editing it into the text. The initiatives for much of the more general research came from questions put by those overseeing the project as a whole, viz. the authorial members of the team.

Revision of both methods and core aims of the project was effected on various fronts. As early as 1975 it had already become clear that research on more general aspects of the production of paintings in the seventeenth century would be required to answer the many questions raised by the material investigated. Given the effort and, more pressingly, the time required for such research, it was initially thought that such ‘supplementary’ work might detract from the ‘real’ work because it rarely contributed directly to the central issue of authenticity. In fact, however, it often contributed considerably to the ‘transparency’ of the works under investigation and led to deeper insight into both workshop practice and into seventeenth-century ideas on certain pictorial aspects which, consciously or unconsciously certainly played a role in our assessment of paintings with an eye to their authenticity.

In reconsidering the RRP’s goals and working methods, this supplementary research was increasingly integrated into the project.<sup>25</sup> Within the framework of

23 From 1968 to 1985, the project was housed in the Art History Institute of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) at 2 Johannes Vermeerstraat. In 1985, in connection with the retirement of Josua Bruyn, the project was accommodated at the Central Research Laboratory for Objects of Art and Science, 8 Gabriël Metsustraat in Amsterdam. In 1994 we returned to the Art History Institute of the UvA, which in the meantime had moved to 286 Herengracht in Amsterdam.

24 E. van de Wetering, ‘Letter to the Editor’, *The Burlington Magazine* 135 (1993), pp. 764-765.

the RRP intensive research was carried out on the manufacture and use of canvas, as well as on the production and trade of panels and the standard sizes and formats of such supports.<sup>26</sup> In addition, seventeenth-century practice was investigated with regard to the composition of grounds and their application to panel and canvas in specialized workshops.<sup>27</sup> The long-pressing question of the nature of Rembrandt's binding mediums was also addressed.<sup>28</sup> A chapter on Rembrandt's method of working in the *Nightwatch* and his late paintings is included in the present author's book *Rembrandt: The painter at work* (see note 25).

Concerning the more artistic and art-theoretical aspects of Rembrandt's art, research was aimed at clarifying his possible views on the conception of a painting,<sup>29</sup> the function of underdrawing and underpainting,<sup>30</sup> the role of the coloured ground in the initial stage of the work processes,<sup>31</sup> the sequence in which areas were worked out,<sup>32</sup> the use of the palette,<sup>33</sup> notions of colour, light and tone and their interrelationship and their function in the depiction of space, illusionism and composition.<sup>34</sup> Seventeenth-century ideas concerning the 'rough and the fine manner' were also studied.<sup>35</sup> Attention was given to the place of the pupils in the workshop and educational methods in the painter's workshop,<sup>36</sup> and to the issue of

seventeenth-century ideas on autography.<sup>37</sup> While our insight into the choice and significance of costumes in paintings by Rembrandt and his circle grew,<sup>38</sup> attempts were also made to deepen the (art-) historical context of works such as oil sketches<sup>39</sup> and 'tronies'.<sup>40</sup> The function and meaning of Rembrandt's self-portraits were subject to further investigation;<sup>41</sup> changes in Rembrandt's paintings due to ageing processes were set in the context of the aesthetic and art-theoretical considerations,<sup>42</sup> and factors that could have had a bearing on the development of Rembrandt's fame and the place of 'art lovers' in the appreciation of the master in the seventeenth century were also examined.<sup>43</sup> Patrons and buyers were subject to

25 Some of the results of this research was (re-)published in E. van de Wetering, *Rembrandt. The painter at work*, Amsterdam 1997.

26 With respect to the panels, see *Corpus I*, pp. 11-17; J. Bruyn, 'Een onderzoek naar 17<sup>de</sup>-eeuwse schilderijformaten, voornamelijk in Noord-Nederland', *O.H.* 93 (1979), pp. 96-115; E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 11-17. With respect to the canvas support, see *Corpus II*, pp. 15-44; E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 91-130.

27 *Corpus II*, pp. 17-20; C.M. Groen, 'Schildertechnische aspecten van Rembrandts vroegste schilderijen, microscopische observaties en de analyse van verfmonsters', *O.H.* 91 (1977), pp. 66-74; H. Kühn conducted an analysis of grounds at the request of the RRP (see note 15); E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 23-24; 95-128; in this volume, see Chapter IV and the *Table of Grounds* by C.M. Groen, pp. 660-677.

28 E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 224-243; C.M. Groen, 'An investigation of the use of binding medium by Rembrandt. Chemical Analyses and Rheology', *Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung* 11 (1997) Heft II, pp. 207-227.

29 E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 75-89.

30 *Corpus I*, pp. 20-24; E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 23-32, 203-211.

31 E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 22-23, 211-215; see Chapter IV and the *Table of Grounds* by C.M. Groen in the present volume.

32 *Corpus I*, pp. 25-31; E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 32-44; 193-222.

33 E. van de Wetering, 'De paletten van Rembrandt en Jozef Israëls, een onderzoek naar de relatie tussen stijl en schildertechniek', *O.H.* 107 (1993), pp. 137-151. In an edited form it appeared as: 'Reflections on the relation between technique and style: the use of the palette by the seventeenth-century painter', in: A. Wallert, E. Hermens, M. Peck (eds), *Historical painting techniques, materials and studio practice. Preprints of a symposium*, Leiden, 26-29 June 1995, pp. 196-201; E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 133-152.

34 E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 149-152, 179-190, 251-257.

35 E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's brushwork and illusion; an art-theoretical approach', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt: The master and his workshop* (Paintings), Berlin/Amsterdam/London 1991-92, pp. 12-39; E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 155-169.

36 *Corpus II*, pp. 45-46, see note 2; K. Bauch (*Rembrandt Gemälde*, Berlin 1966, pp. 47-49) suggested an attribution to Flinck in three cases and in one considered an attribution to J. A. Backer. In his revised edition of A. Bredius, *Rembrandt*, London 1935/1969, H. Gerson mentions G. Flinck as the (possible) author of twelve paintings; E. van de Wetering, 'Isaac Jouderville, a pupil of Rembrandt' in: exhib. cat. *The impact of a genius; Rembrandt, his pupils and followers in the seventeenth century*, Amsterdam/

Groningen 1983, pp. 59-69; E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 47-72; M. Franken, "'Aen stoelen en bancken leren gaen". Leerzame vormen van navolging in Rembrandts werkplaats', in: P. van den Brink en L. Helmus, *Album Discipulorum J.R.J. van Asperen de Boer*, Zwolle 1997, pp. 66-73; the forthcoming *Corpus V*, Chapter II: M. Franken, 'Variants within the painting production in Rembrandt's workshop'.

37 *Corpus II*, pp. 48-51; E. van de Wetering, 'The question of authenticity: an anachronism? (A Summary)', in: *Rembrandt and his pupils*, Nationalmuseum Skriftserie n.s. 13, Stockholm 1993, pp. 9-13. Also published in *Künstlerischer Austausch / Artistic Exchange*, Akten des 28. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte Berlin 15.-20. July 1992 (ed. Th. W. Gaehtgens) 1993, Vol. II, pp. 627-630; in the present volume, Chapter I: J.A. van der Veen, 'By his own hand. The valuation of autograph paintings in the seventeenth century'.

38 M. de Winkel, "'Eene der deftigsten dragten", The iconography of the *tabbaard* and the sense of tradition in Dutch seventeenth-century portraiture', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 46 (1995), pp. 145-166; M. de Winkel, "'Eene onbedenkelyke verandering van dragten, en vremde toestellingen omtrent de bekleedingen...". Het kostuum in het werk van Arent de Gelder' in: exhib. cat. *Arent de Gelder, Rembrandts laatste leerling*, Dordrecht, Dordrechts Museum / Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum 1998, pp. 87-98; M. de Winkel, 'Costume in Rembrandts self-portraits' in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt by himself*, London, National Gallery/The Hague, Mauritshuis 1999/2000, pp. 58-74; M. de Winkel, *Fashion and Fancy: Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt's Paintings*, Amsterdam 2005.

39 E. van de Wetering, 'Remarks on Rembrandt's oil-sketches for etchings', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt the Printmaker*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum/London, The British Museum 2000, pp. 36-63.

40 J.A. van der Veen, 'Faces from life: Tronies and portraits in Rembrandt's painted oeuvre', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. A genius and his impact*, A. Blankert (ed.), Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria/Canberra, National Gallery of Australia 1997/98, pp. 69-81; N. van Eck, *Jongemannen-Tronies*, master's thesis University of Amsterdam 2000; contributed to the symposium 'Tronies' in *de Italiaanse, Vlaamse en Nederlandse schilderkunst van de 16<sup>de</sup> en 17<sup>de</sup> eeuw*, The Hague, 19/20 October 2000.

41 In exhib. cat. *Rembrandt by himself*, London/The Hague 1999/2000: E. van de Wetering, 'The multiple functions of Rembrandt's self portraits', pp. 8-37; V. Manuth, 'Rembrandt and the artist's self portrait: tradition and reception', pp. 38-57; M. de Winkel, 'Costume in Rembrandt's self portraits', op.cit.<sup>38</sup>, pp. 58-74; see esp. M. de Winkel's Chapter II and E. van de Wetering's Chapter III in the present volume.

42 E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 245-263; E. van de Wetering, 'The aged painting and the necessities and possibilities to know its original appearance', in: *Conservare necesse est, Festschrift til Leif Einar Plahter*, IIC Nordic Group, Oslo 1999, pp. 259-264; this article also appeared in: H. Cantz (ed.) *Horizons. Essays on art and art research. 50 Years Swiss Institute for Art Research*, Zürich 2001, pp. 399-406.

43 E. van de Wetering, 'The miracle of our age: Rembrandt through the eyes of his contemporaries', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. A genius and his impact*, A. Blankert (ed.), Melbourne/Canberra 1997/1998, pp. 58-68; E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's "Satire on art criticism" reconsidered', in: *Shop talk. Studies in honor of Seymour Slive*, (eds. Cynthia P. Schneider, William W. Robinson, Alice I. Davies e.a.) Cambridge, Mass. 1995, pp. 264-270.

further investigation,<sup>44</sup> as were connoisseurship and aspects of human perception.<sup>45</sup>

While we were initially inclined to consider the publications resulting from such research as spin-offs of the project, it became increasingly clear that the knowledge so developed contributed directly or indirectly to the arguments bearing on the question of authenticity. The expansion of our knowledge of workshop practice and of the supply of materials, for example, or the ideas informing the genesis of paintings, helped us better to weigh the significance of particular observations and the results of scientific research. Hypotheses could be developed and tested. More than stylistic arguments alone could be brought to bear in arriving at a judgement of a painting's possible authenticity.

The model that took shape in our thinking was that of a (more or less marked) convergence of evidence from various different areas. In the catalogue entries in this volume, the reader will encounter an approach which, by probing the weight and significance of the data, by correlating this information in various combinations and progressively, step by step, following the inferences to be drawn from these correlations, is aimed at answering the following questions. Can the painting be seventeenth-century? If so, are there indications that it could come from Rembrandt's workshop? If that is the case, are there indications that it is a copy, or does the work betray a genesis which would suggest that the maker was also the person who developed the conception of the work? If the answer to the latter question is yes, can it be the work of Rembrandt himself, or of a pupil or an assistant, or was it executed by several people? The role of the signature also received more attention, though provisionally it carried weight only in the (re)consideration of paintings from the period up to 1642 (on this, see also below). Only when all the 'objective' data have been weighed are arguments regarding style and quality introduced.

This approach, which might occasionally seem pedantic, was adopted in order to avoid the risk of resorting to an *a priori* conception of Rembrandt's style, as sometimes occurred in Volumes I-III. These arguments do not all carry the same weight. However, in many instances they all point to the same likely solution which, depending on the strength and conformity of the constituent arguments, can be more or less probable. This is in no way altered by the fact that none of the constituent arguments are decisive in themselves, the point is the mutual cohesion of the arguments. Moreover, the arguments differ in nature, addressing not only the brushwork or the kind of pentimenti, but various aspects of the painting, such as: the support, format, composition

and colour of the ground, the type of underpainting, the procedure regarding the order of working, the relation between foreground and background, the character and types of changes or sketchiness during the genesis of the work, physiognomic indications in the case of the self-portraits, the relationship with other works – which may or may not be by Rembrandt (for instance old copies of or prints after the work in question) – and any connection with seventeenth-century documents in which the work is mentioned. As for the support and ground, the scientific evidence can afford certainty, for instance in establishing a limiting date of origin, while in other aspects X-radiography and other kinds of radiography play an important role in clarifying the relationship to a possible prototype, for instance in the case of what appears to be a free workshop copy or variant (see for further discussion Chapter III, *The Bayesian approach*, pp. 108-109).

The process of discovery in a research project such as that of the RRP, may alter the entire calculus of probability. As will become clear in this volume, new information on a previously unimagined aspect of Rembrandt's workshop practice can revise the probabilities and shift the balance of the entire structure of convergent argument such that the earlier conclusion, developed from an assessment of the evidence previously amassed, now has to give way to a different solution (see IV 17, the Stuttgart 'Self-portrait', and Chapter III, pp. 117-132). Ultimately, of course, no conclusive evidence or proof can be provided, only degrees of probability, which may nonetheless be very high. The case of the Stuttgart 'Self-portrait' also demonstrates that arguments based on style and quality can lead to very different judgements. In that particular case, the new assessment could – at least in part – be plausibly supported by the same set of arguments that had earlier suggested a diametrically opposite view of the painting's authenticity. Supplementary research (i.e. not directly applied to the problems of authenticity) was and remains crucial to a project like this (see notes 25 – 45).

### Organisation of Volumes IV – V

The grouping of the paintings in Volume IV and V differs from the earlier volumes. The arrangement of Volumes I-III was based on the belief that proceeding strictly chronologically would be the best way of following Rembrandt's stylistic development. In view of the large number of stylistically related paintings produced by Rembrandt (and in his workshop) between 1625 and 1642, this seemed to be the obvious approach.

In the 1640s and early 1650s Rembrandt's output of paintings was so small and at the same time so diverse that no coherence can be found in the work of any one year. Certainly with the later Rembrandt, there are steadily fewer instances of formulae being followed in the production of a painting, so that a comparison of paintings on the basis of similar elements (eyes, nose, mouth, cap, turban etc.) is of little help in assessing them. Moreover, it is not always clear how long Rembrandt continued to work on certain paintings, hence the value

44 *Corpus* II, Chapter IV: J. Bruyn, 'Patrons and early owners', pp. 91-98; J.A. van der Veen, 'Schilderijencollecties in de Republiek ten tijde van Frederik Hendrik en Amalia', in: exhib. cat. *Vorstelijk Verzameld. De kunstcollectie van Frederik Hendrik en Amalia*, The Hague, Mauritshuis 1997, pp. 87-96; also published in English; J.A. van der Veen, three articles in: *De Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* 1998 pp. 14-31, 1999 pp. 24-40 and 2003 pp. 46-60.

45 Forthcoming *Corpus* V, Chapter I: E. van de Wetering with the assistance of E. Gordenker, 'Reflections on method'.



of the dates on them is limited when it comes to locating them within the production of a particular period.

With the growing understanding of Rembrandt's workshop practice, moreover, it became obvious that each category of paintings had developed in its own way and made specific demands on the painter, if only because it was rooted in a specific tradition.

This insight had consequences for our art-historical, stylistic and technical determinations. In the introductory essays in the first three volumes the paintings were already considered in groups, but generally, for understandable reasons, only after the catalogue entries had been written (cf. *Corpus* I: 'The Stylistic Development'; *Corpus* II: 'Stylistic Features of the 1630s: The Portraits'; and in *Corpus* III: 'Stylistic Features of the 1630s: The History Paintings'). Work on these essays generated unforeseen refinements of our understanding of Rembrandt's pictorial ideas and methods which as a rule could only be incorporated summarily in the catalogue entries, if only to avoid repetition. This meant that the catalogue entries could contain no more than *part* of the stylistic arguments relating to the authenticity of the painting in question. As a result of this experience it was decided that, beginning with the present volume, stylistic arguments and matters relating to pictorial quality that might be important in assessing authenticity would be addressed in a separate essay (in the case of this volume, Chapter III titled: *Rembrandt's self-portraits: problems of authenticity and function*). Thus, these essays differ from those in Volumes I-III in that the criteria that are set out are applied to the discussions of authenticity and of individual paintings in the essay itself.

Consequently, the arguments concerning authenticity or lack thereof are introduced both in the catalogue entries (with the more 'objective' arguments) and in the chapter on style and quality. As a rule the conclusions of the corresponding texts are briefly summarised in both.

Where possible, the point of departure was those works from the relevant category of paintings that are so documented that they can be considered autograph. In the case of the small-figured history scenes, they are so distributed over the chronology of Rembrandt's production that they provide a range of – in our view – significant criteria of authenticity for the period 1640-1669. As appears in Chapter III in the present volume, this was possible to a far more limited degree for the self-portraits. In the light of the nature of workshop production by Rembrandt and his pupils, which began to emerge during our research, the value of written documents is relatively limited. The documents in question must be buttressed with evidence from other areas, for instance a genesis characteristic for Rembrandt to be deduced from the X-radiograph (and sometimes, especially for the history pieces, the existence of preparatory and interim sketches).

By dealing with limited categories of paintings (self-portraits, small-figured history pieces) produced over a long stretch of time, there was the risk that the range of criteria of authenticity used would be too limited. However, as will be evident from the relevant essays, it was

precisely this restriction that allowed the possibility of not only grasping characteristics specific to this category, but also of gaining a clearer picture of Rembrandt's pictorial views and certain features of his artistic temperament.

We had earlier decided to avoid the risk of following a working approach whose basis would be too narrow. To this end, activities were developed covering a large part of Rembrandt's painted oeuvre. While preparing Volumes I-III we had been dealing with a gradually shifting 'front' in the chronology, and looked for comparative material chiefly in the earlier work that we had accepted. In our new approach, large parts of Rembrandt's later work are dealt with. The problematic field of the 1640s was approached in this fashion, i.e. both from the preceding period as well as retrospectively from the 1650s and 60s. This occurred on the more theoretical front<sup>46</sup> and in the writing of the so-called core texts, in which our observations, technical data, the documentation and literature are worked up to such a level that the detailed knowledge of large groups of paintings could continually inform work on the individual catalogue entries.

As already mentioned, this volume is devoted to the self-portraits (i.e. works, of whatever intended function, produced in front of the mirror and works by others, based on Rembrandt's own production in this field) and the forthcoming Volume V to the small-figured history paintings including the painted landscapes. Each volume covers the period *c.* 1640 to 1669. The catalogue section of this volume, however, will be preceded by a recapitulation of the paintings of the same categories that were painted between the early Leiden period and 1642. In this recapitulation the developments in our own views of the individual paintings will be given special emphasis. Newly discovered paintings from the period before *c.* 1640 are also discussed in the same context, but will be dealt with in more detail in catalogue texts under *Corrigenda et Addenda*.

Of course, to some extent this grouping, like all others, is to some extent artificial. Thus the line dividing self-portraits from 'tronies' is not always clear, nor is the distinction we make in Volume V between what we call small-scale and large-scale history pieces. In practice, however, the arrangement followed here has worked well. As is evident from our essay on the self-portraits, concentrating on physiognomy, for example, produced additional criteria. In the small-scale history pieces, the fact that the figures are in a much more elaborate setting than in the history pieces with life-size figures (as a rule half-length figures) proves to be important in the analysis of Rembrandt's painting techniques, particularly in relation to the rendering of space. Valuable attribution criteria can be developed from this, which will then also be applied to the few landscapes dated after 1642 treated in the same volume. We have decided to devote catalogue entries to lost paintings, as far as we know

46 E. van de Wetering op. cit.<sup>25</sup>, pp. 155-190; E. van de Wetering, lecture: 'The unfinished in Rembrandt's work', Symposium Melbourne, 4 October 1997.

them from painted or drawn copies or reproduction prints (see in this volume IV 10).

### Abandoning the ABC system

One of the most distinctive differences between Volumes IV-V and Volumes I-III is that we have abandoned the widely discussed ABC system.

In the earlier volumes, the A-paintings (*Paintings by Rembrandt*), the B-paintings (*Paintings Rembrandt's authorship of which cannot be positively either accepted or rejected*) and the C-paintings (*Paintings Rembrandt's authorship of which cannot be accepted*) in the earlier volumes were treated in successive sections of each volume. The principal reason for relinquishing this system was that in many cases no indisputable answer can be given to the question of authenticity. In Volumes I-III the B-category should perhaps have been the largest rather than the smallest. It is important to stress that the team's classification of a painting in one of the three categories was emphatically presented as a matter of *opinion*. The inclination to keep the B-category as small as possible was not so much an expression of great self-confidence in attributing or dis-attributing paintings, but rather an unconscious response to the social need for the greatest possible clarity relating to the art-historical, museological or financial value of a work of art. However, the *Corpus* volumes are not primarily intended to facilitate the unequivocal labelling of paintings in museums. Neither are they written for use in such matters as estate divisions, art investments, the art trade and so forth. The concern of the *Corpus* is research on Rembrandt's painted oeuvre, on the production in his workshop and the related methodological problems. The intention of Volumes IV and V is to report on that research and the considerations that played a role therein and not, as was still somewhat the case in the previous volumes, to serve as a reasoned list of authentic and inauthentic (and a number of doubtful) Rembrandts. The aim of our statements on the question of authenticity in this and successive volumes is to go no further than can be justified. Since, as stated earlier, arguments are employed in our discussions that inevitably imply various kinds of *a priori* assumptions, it is all the more imperative that the reader should think and decide along with us, as it were. This is why in each case we try to convey the full extent of our doubts. The same considerations led to the decision to present the paintings we believe to be authentic together with those we consider doubtful in the catalogue in chronological order (as determined by stylistic features and the dates found on the works).

Relinquishing the ABC system also means that the paintings we believe to be workshop variants on Rembrandt's works and which in the past were classified in the C-category, can now be considered together with Rembrandt's presumed prototypes. This underscores the point discussed above that along with authenticity the broader question of the production of Rembrandt's workshop has been given high priority.

These changes, however, do not mean – and this should be emphasised again – that we have renounced

the RRP's original intention of making the question of authenticity its central concern. We do not share the view, held by some, that the entire production of Rembrandt's workshop, including his own oeuvre, should be seen as a single body of works in which differentiating between hands ceases to be relevant.<sup>47</sup> On the contrary, we are convinced that certain patterns in the workshop production as a whole will become visible and comprehensible only if we persevere in the attempt to isolate Rembrandt's own work from the large body of Rembrandtesque paintings. That is why we do not hesitate to express our own opinions as to the authenticity of the paintings dealt with.

The last, but certainly not the least important reason for abandoning the ABC arrangement was that it became increasingly clear that workshop practice in the production of paintings in Rembrandt's studio was even more complicated than we had thought. In particular, there is the possibility that conception and execution might have been in different hands, or that more than one hand might have been involved in the painting of a single work.

Relinquishing the ABC system, however, unfortunately means that the continuity of the original numbering is broken. As of this volume, a painting will be indicated by the number of the relevant volume and a serial number per volume, beginning with no. 1. In referring to paintings in previous volumes, we decided to add the number of the relevant volume (for instance, I A 12 or III B 10) for the sake of convenience. We apologise for this and other unavoidable breaks in the continuity. This also applies both to the minor and more major changes in the organisation of the entries discussed in the following section.

### The organisation of the entries

The entries in Volumes IV-V have not been structured in quite the same way as in previous volumes. There were several reasons for this, all primarily relating to methodological concerns. In the first place, the strict distinction between description and interpretation in the old structure could no longer be justified. It implied a degree of objectivity in the descriptive sections that cannot, in fact, be substantiated. The illusionistic reality created in a work by painterly means cannot be adequately described as a true reality, as was done in the section headed 2. *Description of subject* in the first three volumes. On the other hand, for the same reason there is little point in describing it as a collection of brushstrokes and colours in a flat plane as we tended to do under 3. *Observations and technical information, Paint layer*.

In the past, for the sake of consistency, the description of the subject included aspects that also could be seen at a glance in the illustration of the painting and thus

<sup>47</sup> E. H. Gombrich, 'Rembrandt new', *The New York Review of Books*, March 1970: 'Rembrandt's studio had the nature of a collective body of artists working under the supervision of the master'; A. Blankert, *Ferdinand Bol (1616-1680). Rembrandt's pupil*, Doornspijk 1982, pp. 18-19.

needed no description. Where other relevant aspects are concerned, it is often impossible to do justice to them in words. Of course, the description of the subject is a necessary discipline, which helps to make one aware of what is depicted. We remain fully persuaded that the work, even when well reproduced, does not entirely speak for itself. We also believe, however, that readers can see for themselves whether a figure is shown half or full-length, or turned to the left or the right, or gazes at the viewer, or is lit from the left or the top right, etc. Consequently, we no longer systematically provide this kind of information. We are now more concerned with drawing the reader's attention to those aspects that are or may be important in the interpretation of the painting, or are unclear or require explanation. This means that in our descriptions we no longer necessarily aspire to comprehensiveness, and therefore we decided that they would no longer be presented under a separate heading. Our observations on the subject are incorporated in the section *Introduction and description*. The first lines of this section are used to outline for the reader the problems presented by the painting in question, so that the main points in our discussion of the work will be clear from the outset.

In presenting observations, data and interpretations under the headings *Support*, *Ground* and *Paint layer*, we have abandoned the division into DESCRIPTION on the one hand and SCIENTIFIC DATA on the other, normally used in Volumes I-III. Experience had taught us that there was no point in making a sharp distinction between the two kinds of information. The significance and relevance of scientific data can vary greatly, especially in the case of paint samples. We have therefore now incorporated these data in the texts at those points where they serve a useful function.

Abandoning the rigid structure of the catalogue texts in the interest of greater flexibility in the presentation of information and interpretation makes this volume to some extent less easily accessible than previous ones. On the other hand, in the new form the relevance of information and the weight given to it are more readily apparent. The fact that this obliges the user to read the whole text may be seen as a drawback, but we have done our best to make our texts as readable as possible. Assessment of the various arguments is assigned to the *Comments* in the catalogue texts and in Chapter III in the case of the present volume.

Our very sparing treatment of the signature when present requires further explanation. In the section *Signature* we limit ourselves in this and the following volume to a transcription, and where necessary a summary description of the inscriptions encountered on the painting in question. While Volumes II and III were in preparation, cooperation had begun with a team of researchers led by Prof. W. Froentjes at the Forensic Laboratory of the Dutch Ministry of Justice in Rijswijk with the purpose of investigating the authenticity of signatures. The RRP contributed detail photographs of signatures on paintings dating from 1632 to 1642, which were analysed by the team using comparative handwriting analysis of those

signatures with Rembrandt's name written out in full.<sup>48</sup> The aim of this pilot project was to determine whether comparative analysis as used by forensic handwriting experts could produce significant results in the study of signatures on old paintings.<sup>49</sup> This project proved so promising that it was decided to cooperate regularly with the researchers at the Forensic Laboratory, in a sub-project involving the analysis of *all* signatures on paintings dating from 1642 to 1669, since this is the only way of establishing a hypothetical core of original signatures. The results of this research, however, could not be incorporated in Volumes IV-V. While the earlier signatures as a rule are better preserved because the majority were applied to panels, generally speaking the later signatures (primarily on canvas) are so badly preserved – and often reinforced by later hands – that they could only safely be investigated with comparative handwriting analysis after material investigation. Not only was the late Rembrandt signature easier to imitate; the subsequent overwhelming interest in his later work also meant that these signatures suffered more at the hands of cleaners and restorers and were more susceptible to forgery, making it far more difficult to isolate a core of reliable signatures for the period after 1642. However, the question of whether forensic handwriting analysis can simply be applied to Rembrandt's painted signatures, however, will have to be subjected once again to fundamental investigation: in daily life Rembrandt used Gothic writing. Signatures in Italian cursive or a derivation thereof were applied only a few times a year by the apparently far less productive later Rembrandt. One cannot therefore rely on the premise – essential for handwriting analysis – that Rembrandt's painted signatures were routine inscriptions. The question will have to be reconsidered whether handwriting analysis for Rembrandt after 1642 can yield reliable results. Under *Addenda* nos. 1 and 2 in this volume, the signatures do, however, play a role in our deliberations. In the period when these paintings in question originated (between *c.* 1632 and 1634), Rembrandt's monogram (and later his signature) evolved such that their shape in relation to the style of the paintings in question is far more significant. It certainly cannot be assumed that potential later imitators had specific knowledge of the stylistic evolution of Rembrandt's work in relation to the evolution of his signature. Moreover, in both cases it could be proven that the inscriptions were written immediately upon completion of the paintings. Nevertheless, there is in theory always room for doubt over an apparently original monogram or signature since it is not clear to what extent members

48 The choice of signatures on paintings dating from 1632 and later was based on the assumption that the monograms of 1625 to 1631 and the 'RHL van Rijn' signatures would provide insufficient evidence for producing a meaningful result.

49 W. Froentjes, H.J.J. Hardy and R. ter Kuile-Haller, 'Een schriftkundig onderzoek van Rembrandt signaturen', *Oud Holland* 105 (1991), pp. 185-204 (with an extensive English summary); idem, *A comparative handwriting examination of Rembrandt signatures*. Published in the proceedings of the XXVIIIth International Congress of the History of Art, Berlin 15-20 July 1992. Proceedings published by Akademie Verlag, 1993, pp. 595-606.

of Rembrandt's workshop were allowed to mark paintings in his manner.

The changes in the organization of the entries described above are reflected in the way in which illustrations are used. In Volumes I-III, as a rule illustrations of details of individual paintings were located in the catalogue entries, so that readers wishing to make comparisons had to leaf through the book in search of comparative material. In the essays on style and authenticity in Volumes IV-V, however, we have brought together as far as possible illustrations of those elements which we believe lend themselves to comparison. Colour illustrations are included where this is feasible and useful.

As with previous volumes, those seeking to use our book as a source for complete bibliographies of the individual paintings will be disappointed. In the case of Rembrandt little is to be gained by pursuing comprehensiveness in this regard. Anyone browsing through the files compiled by some museums containing *all* the texts in which the paintings in question are discussed or mentioned will despair at the sea of irrelevant occasional writing devoted to the artist. It is perhaps surprising to have to conclude that, in the case of a considerable number of Rembrandt's paintings, not a single text has ever been written that adds significantly to the purely visual knowledge of the work. We cite only those books, catalogues and articles that in our view make a contribution worth endorsing or contesting. Naturally, we also build on the knowledge gathered by others and on the insights provided by our predecessors and contemporaries, and we aim to use all of the historical sources available that can shed light on the RRP's central concerns. Nevertheless, the project's most important objective continues to be to extract as much information as possible from the paintings, as sources by themselves, and to establish the context from which they originated. We hope that, like us, the reader will be struck by the wealth of previously undiscovered aspects of these paintings that clarify the question of their authenticity and deepen our understanding of Rembrandt as an artist.

With this account of the modified design of the entries, the *Notes to the Catalogue* that were published in Volumes I-III (which there preceded the catalogue section) are now dispensed with.

### The staff and financing of the RRP

Following a phase of preliminary research prior to the project's official commencement on 1 January 1968, the original team consisted of six members. Josua Bruyn, professor of art history at the University of Amsterdam, had previously worked on stylistic problems related to Rembrandt, and became the chairman. Bob Haak, chief curator and later director of the Amsterdam Historical Museum was responsible for initiating the project. He had been closely involved with the Rembrandt Exhibition in 1956 and since then had been intensively concerned with issues of authenticity surrounding Rembrandt. As author of the groundbreaking book *Rembrandt en de regels van de kunst* (1964), Jan Emmens, professor of art theory and iconology at the University of Utrecht was particularly concerned with iconographic and iconological issues. Jan G.

van Gelder, (emeritus) professor at the University of Utrecht, the Nestor of the group, had been the teacher of Bruyn and Emmens, and had previously worked on Rembrandt's early oeuvre. Furthermore, Simon H. Levie, director of the Amsterdam Historical Museum, and later of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and Pieter J. J. van Thiel, chief curator, and later director of the department of paintings at the Rijksmuseum, also joined the team.

Jan Emmens died in 1971. Attempts to fill his position as specialist in iconology were unsuccessful. At the beginning of the project Ernst van de Wetering, the author of this *Preface*, and chairman since 1993, worked as an assistant. When Jan van Gelder fell ill in May 1968, he stepped in during the first research trip and remained involved with the research of the paintings, formally joining the team in 1971. Though not a scientist, his appointment in 1969 as staff member of the Central Research Laboratory for Objects of Art and Science in Amsterdam allowed him to maintain ties with the world of scientific investigation. In 1979, Jan van Gelder decided to end his involvement with the project once Volume I had appeared – it finally appeared in 1982 – but in 1980 he deceased.

The degree to which the members of the original team contributed to the activities varied greatly. This was only partly related to the demands made by their professional positions in museums and universities. Another reason was the differences that emerged between the team members' views of the desirable extent of scientific and other research in the project.

Lideke Peese Binkhorst had headed the secretariat since 1969<sup>50</sup> and, as indicated above, she became increasingly involved with other aspects of the project, such as pursuing the provenances of the paintings and reproductive engravings. Over the years, she was also closely involved in preparing the volumes for publication. In the course of the years she served as an indispensable link between the active members of the team, and between the past and present activities connected with the project. In 1984 Jacques Vis was recruited as an assistant and co-author for a number of the catalogue entries. He was succeeded in 1989 by Michiel Franken, who had earlier been Van de Wetering's assistant in the Central Research Laboratory between 1981 and 1983, assisting with the investigation of artists' canvas. During that period he had been introduced to various aspects of the project. He was to be occupied mainly with the preparation of the material for the planned volumes which resulted in 'core entries' (see above). He also worked on the entries on the small-figured history pieces for Volume V, which includes an essay by him on the artistic and educational-theoretical background of the workshop variant.

Paul Broekhoff, originally a student at the University of Amsterdam who had taken part in seminars related to the RRP, was affiliated with the project between 1991 and 1997. He first served as an administrative assistant. As a scholarly assistant he later worked chiefly on the present volume, contributing to the research on the paintings themselves and the provenance of the self-portraits and related copies and reproductive engravings, among others.

Whereas the original RRP team consisted of a group of like-minded art historians who invited outside experts to conduct additional research when necessary, the intention following the departure of the four older members in 1993 was that the new team should be interdisciplinary.

The nature of the collaboration with various specialists in the past had already resulted in their being considered as members of the team. This certainly applied to Karin Groen

50 This position was held by Truus Duisenberg from 1968 to 1969.

who, as a staff member of the Central Research Laboratory of Objects of Art and Science (now ICN) in Amsterdam, later of the Hamilton Kerr Institute in Cambridge, was cooperating with the project in the scientific study of Rembrandt's grounds and paints and media since 1973. From 1991 to 1998 she was able to participate even more actively in the project thanks to the Dutch chemical concern DSM, which made it possible for her to be given a half-time appointment in the RRP during this period. She contributed to most catalogue entries and wrote Chapter IV on the grounds in Rembrandt's workshop.

The cooperation, initiated in 1969, with the Ordinariat für Holzbiologie at the University of Hamburg was also continued and intensified. In the early years the dendrochronological examinations of panels were carried out by the wood biologists Prof. Dr. J. Bauch and Prof. Dr. D. Eckstein, followed by Prof. Dr. P. Klein, who specialized in the dating of panels and other wooden objects of art-historical significance. Both Karin Groen and Peter Klein were invited officially to join the RRP team.

Huub Hardy, forensic handwriting expert of the Forensic Laboratory of the Dutch Ministry of Justice, was invited into the team to examine the signatures with colleagues at his laboratory.

Costume research, which was covered rather superficially in earlier volumes, became the concern of Marieke de Winkel. Recent developments in costume research justify giving the discipline a more significant place within the RRP. Marieke de Winkel became associated with the project in 1993 when she began writing her Master's Thesis, and later her Doctoral Dissertation, on the iconology of costume in Rembrandt's work. In 1996, she accepted a temporary post with the RRP which lasted until 1998, in which context she primarily worked on preparing the section on the large-figured history pieces from the period 1642-1669. However, she became increasingly involved in conducting research on and writing the relevant passages in the entries for this and the following volume. This volume also contains her essay on costume in Rembrandt's self-portraits (Chapter II).

Although a great deal of archival research relating to Rembrandt has been undertaken since the nineteenth century, new developments in this field meant that a historian with special expertise in archival research would be a valuable addition to the team. Through his work on a dissertation dealing with the circles in which Rembrandt was active, Jaap van der Veen became increasingly involved in the project. Like Marieke de Winkel, in 1996 he accepted a temporary post with the RRP. He was primarily responsible for preparing the section on the portraits between 1642 and 1669. He also contributed an essay on seventeenth-century views on the authenticity of paintings (Chapter I in this volume) and he compiled the relevant biographical data (pp. 335-349), for the period 1643-1669 and the *Appendix* to Chapter III.

Peter Schatborn (former head of the Print Room in Amsterdam) and Volker Manuth (from the Free University of Berlin and now Radboud University, Nijmegen) were invited to assist the project with respect to the drawings related to the paintings, and iconographic problems respectively. Since their responsibilities elsewhere precluded active involvement in the research, their share was limited to occasionally providing information or reporting opinions in their fields. This also applied to Ben Broos, who was invited into the team to shed light on the provenances of the paintings. However, his views on the function – within the framework of the *Corpus* – of the provenance of the paintings diverged so markedly from the project's aims that further collaboration was discontinued.

Interns were occasionally involved with aspects of the research for a limited period. In 1994 Emily Gordenker carried

out literature research for the chapter on methodological questions to be published in Volume V, and gave valuable assistance in the writing of it. In 1999/2000 Natasja van Eck helped prepare the material for the 'tronies' and helped organise a symposium on this subject initiated by the RRP. Her research on the 'tronies of young men' by Rembrandt and his workshop represents a valuable contribution to our understanding of this category of paintings. In 1999/2000 Thijs Weststeijn investigated the landscapes to be treated in Volume V, and conducted art-theoretical research which relates to this category of paintings.

Lideke Peese Binkhorst officially retired from the project in November of 1995, but since then has assisted in the production of this and the next volume on a freelance basis. Adrienne Quarles van Ufford, her successor as a secretary, left in 1997 and was succeeded by Cynthia van der Leden and later by Margaret Oomen.<sup>51</sup>

Egbert Haverkamp Begemann and Peter Schatborn were part of the editorial board together with Lideke Peese Binkhorst and with Ernst van de Wetering, who wrote the greater part of the Volumes IV and V. The editors also constitute, together with Rudi Ekkart of the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD) in The Hague, the board of the Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project.

The translator of Volumes I-III, Derry Cook-Radmore, was succeeded by Jennifer Kilian and Katy Kist, with the assistance of John Rudge. At a later stage, Murray Pearson translated this Preface, the Summary, Chapters III and IV and Corrigenda et Addenda, and contributed invaluable editorial work.

The photographer René Gerritsen, specialized in various kinds of photography and radiographic investigation of paintings, contributed in many ways to the project.

In 1998, the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) decided to discontinue financing the project, a full thirty years after it began rather than the projected ten.<sup>52</sup> The translation and publication costs of Volumes IV and V will continue to be financed by NWO. From 1998 until 2003, the University of Amsterdam (UvA) covered our expenses. Until 2006 the project will be financed by donations.

The RRP's files and archives eventually will be transferred to the RKD. It will function as an independent archive in the interest of Rembrandt research to be managed and possibly expanded and interpreted by Michiel Franken.

### The future of the project

It should be clear from the above that the Rembrandt Research Project does not end with the publication of Volume V. There are still three categories of paintings from the period 1642-1669 to be dealt with: the portraits, (what we refer to as) the large-figured history pieces, and the paintings now usually referred to by the seventeenth-century term 'tronies', single figures in historicising or imaginary costumes with various, often obscure connotations.

51 Over the years, the following individuals assisted in the secretariat: Jacqueline Boreel, Marianne Buikstra, Doris Dhuygelaere, Els Gutter, Emilie Kaub, Philine Schierenberg, and Rik van Wegen.

52 In 1998, Marieke de Winkel and Jaap van der Veen's appointments were converted into temporary grants of NWO allowing them to complete their dissertations. In 1999, Michiel Franken's appointment came to an end and he accepted a position at the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD) in The Hague. He is still involved with the completion of Volume V.

A great deal of preparatory work on these three groups of paintings was already carried out during our study trips and much of the information has been processed in the years since 1988, following the completion of the manuscript for Volume III. The RRP's *raison d'être* obviously requires that these basic entries be amplified with discussion of the question as to whether or not they are autograph Rembrandts. Thanks to the work undertaken between 1988 and 1998, many entries were completed in a first or even a second version. However, a substantial number of paintings still require a great deal of work. Hence, it is not at all certain that completion of the project with entries in the customary extensive format is feasible. The limits of what is physically possible loom large here – in all probability the solution will be to opt for a more abridged form. This solution is defensible. After all, much has changed since the inception of the project in 1968 and research on the material aspects of the paintings has been increasingly assumed by the museums. This is due in part to the emergence of a new generation of restorers for whom material research with (partly) art-historical approach of the questions has become more common-place. Another reason for conducting the remaining work of the RRP in a more succinct form can be justified on the basis of the results of the research to date.

As outlined at the beginning of this *Preface*, it had already become clear during work on the first volume that the original working hypothesis (see above p. x) is no longer tenable: there were hardly any later imitations. The group of shop works in the style of Rembrandt that have come down to us was evidently so large that it amply satisfied market demands for 'real' Rembrandts. As a rule, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century copies of certain Rembrandts can be easily distinguished from Rembrandt workshop products on the basis of features visible to the naked eye. Hence, we are now primarily concerned with distinguishing Rembrandt's autograph work from that of his workshop. Our implicit working hypothesis since may be formulated as follows.

Paintings in the style of Rembrandt and with the aspect of a seventeenth-century painting, which on the basis of style and quality can scarcely be considered as works by Rembrandt himself, in virtually all instances originated in Rembrandt's workshop. Their relation to the work of the master can vary from a literal copy to variants which in invention are ever further removed from a given (or lost) prototype. Production in the workshop of free inventions in the manner of Rembrandt must also be taken into account. Works in which more hands are involved are encountered only rarely in Rembrandt's hypothetical oeuvre.

One could maintain that with the publication of Volumes IV and V, the RRP will have achieved its primary goal: a structure has now been revealed in the workshop production for a number of categories within the mass of paintings that have at some time been – or still are – attributed to Rembrandt. This structure can be extrapolated *mutatis mutandis* to the categories not yet treated by us.

Reviewing the three past decades, it is evident that this project – as with every project attempting to chart a complex phenomenon – is not only a path to resolving the problems involved, but also a learning process. The present volume, both in form and content, bears the traces of this learning process. Our work will have been futile if the results of that process do not have a broader significance. We hope that the results of this work, not only in the volumes of *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings* but also in other publications, exhibition catalogues, lectures, filmed documentaries, etc., dealing with authenticity and many other problems relating to Rembrandt have deepened insight into the history of seventeenth-century Dutch art (and sometimes non-Dutch art of that period) and that our work will contribute to the methodological arsenal of art-historical scholarship.

Ernst van de Wetering  
December 2004

### Acknowledgements

The work on this volume began in the early nineties, although seen in its widest context, one should say that the work has been going on since 1968, the year in which we had the opportunity to study our first Rembrandt self-portraits under ideal circumstances, thanks to the hospitality of the staffs of the first museums and the first private owners we visited.

From the very beginning, we have collaborated with so many extremely pleasant people; we have enjoyed the help, support and encouragement of so many; we have benefited from so much advice, information and research data, photographic and other essential material, and we have had so many fruitful conversations that it would be impossible to acknowledge all these constructive gestures without being certain that, somewhere along the line, we had omitted to give someone their due credit.

For this reason, we have to be satisfied here with the expression of our extreme gratitude to all those who have helped and supported us and followed our work – although sometimes with growing impatience – with sympathetic interest.