

Annotated Bibliography

Bamford, D. et al. (2006) *Art in the making: Rembrandt*. London: National Gallery Company Limited.

Published for the 400th anniversary of the artist's birth, this book examines Rembrandt's paintings and those of his followers and imitators that are kept at the National Gallery in London. It provides information on different studio practices and the ways artists were trained. It also offers scientific exploration of Rembrandt's techniques and materials. It has charts that detail many of the technical aspects of the paintings in question, specifically mount, ground, sketch materials, imprimaturas, pigments and mediums. Many of the Rembrandt paintings at the National Gallery are from his later period and this book is invaluable for anyone interested in their technical aspect.

Courtright, N. (1996) 'Origins and meanings of Rembrandt's late drawing style', *The Art Bulletin*, 78(3), pp. 485–510.

The article explores Rembrandt's adoption of a cruder manner of drawing in the latter part of his life and career. That style is characterised by straight or angular lines that form blocky figures and rely on simplicity. The piece argues that Rembrandt was avoiding standard ideas of beauty in order to get closer to nature and truth in his work. This new drawing style is surprising and unfamiliar for the period and runs parallel to the emergence of roughness in his late paintings.

Golahny, A. (2003) *Rembrandt's reading: The artist's bookshelf of ancient poetry and history*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Based on a 1656 inventory of Rembrandt's possession, this book explores the artist's library and the ways it informed and moulded his work. It is clear that Rembrandt had profound knowledge of the Bible, but he has often been regarded as unschooled in

other matters. Here, the author argues that Rembrandt was well-versed in history, myths and poetry, all of which can be seen reflected in his paintings. That knowledge was important for Rembrandt in all periods of his life, who desired to achieve historical accuracy in the costumes and settings in his paintings.

Nadler, S. (2003) *Rembrandt's Jews*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

This book explores Rembrandt's relationship to the Jewish community in Amsterdam of his time; it also paints a vivid picture of that community and the productive cooperation between Jewish and Dutch cultures. Although the book is sometimes too broad and more about Jewish history in the Netherlands in general than about Rembrandt, it helps us understand important aspects of the artist's work. Many of his paintings were portraits of Amsterdam Jews or scenes from the Hebrew Bible. Unlike other artists from his and earlier periods, Rembrandt's rendition of Jewish faces was warm and sympathetic. This relationship with the local Jewish community made him closer to the Old Testament, which imbued his late work with profound religious insight.

Pliny (1857) *The natural history of Pliny*. Vol. VI. Translated from Latin by Bostock, J. and Riley, H. London: Henry G. Bohn.

This monumental work is the largest surviving complete text from ancient Rome. It strives to provide encyclopaedic knowledge in all areas of nature and human experience. Book XXXV, contained in vol. VI of the edition listed here, is entitled "An Account of Painting and Colours". It is an essential reading for anyone who wants to understand Rembrandt's late style because the text had a profound influence on the master's work. The book covers pigments and their preparation and argues that good painters manage to create superior works with limited means and materials. It explores the works and lives of ancient Greek painters, above all those of Apelles,

who was considered to be the greatest painter of all time. Pliny claims that Apelles used only four colours: yellow ochre, red, white and black. This is the palette that Rembrandt adopted later in his life. The author also stresses the importance of not overworking the paintings and talks about how the late pictures of Apelles and other ancient artists remained unfinished, but were often praised above their completed ones, which is exactly what Rembrandt achieved in his later years.

Suthor, N. (2018) *Rembrandt's roughness*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

This text aims at exploring Rembrandt's late style of painting that is characterised by rough bravura brushstrokes, relative incompleteness of painted subjects and, in some cases, brightness of colour. It does not try to provide cultural context for the artworks, and it treats Rembrandt's paint not as a material, but as a medium for expression and communication. Despite the author's maybe excessive reliance on viewer's impression, the book offers a valuable approach to Rembrandt's late works. It examines his dramatic use of shadows in both his paintings and etchings and posits that the way he treated the paint contributes to the meaning and narratives in his works, mainly through the contrast between the textures or lack thereof of his impastos and imprimaturas. The author argues that Rembrandt's roughness is not to be associated with lack of sophistication, but with truthfulness. The book also touches on the influence that Apelles had on Rembrandt, which affected the colours he used later in his life, as well as on the surprising dominance of red in some of his late paintings, such as *The Jewish Bride* and *The Return of the Prodigal Son*.

van de Wetering, E. et al. (2015) *A corpus of Rembrandt paintings*. Six vols. Dordrecht: Springer.

This book in six volumes is an indispensable source to anyone studying Rembrandt. A project started in the late 1960s with the aim of separating Rembrandt's works from

those of his apprentices, followers and imitators, it grew into a massive collection dedicated to his paintings. Apart from great reproductions and X-ray photographs, it offers insightful essays by leading scholars and art historians on Rembrandt's life, influences and environment. It compares his works from different periods, as well as to those of other artists. The pages that compare details from his paintings such as eyes and hands are particularly revealing. The first three volumes take chronological approach; volume III covers his later years; volume IV is about his self-portraits; volume VI is a good overview of his whole career.

van de Wetering, E. (2000) *Rembrandt: The painter at work*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Describing the activities in artists' studios in the Netherlands of the time, this book provides us with detailed insight into the ways Rembrandt and his contemporaries worked. The many X-ray photographs of paintings and their chemical analysis are helpful in understanding the different stages of the way the master created his paintings. Above all, it gives a detailed analysis of how Rembrandt's process developed over the years, showing not only the aesthetic contrast between his early and late works, but also that in his craft.