REMBRANDT’S “LITTLE SWIMMERS” IN CONTEXT

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In an etching of 1651, Rembrandt depicts a group of men swimming in a forest glade. His treatment of the theme is unconventional not only in the starkly unidealized rendering of the figures but also in their mood of pensive isolation. This essay situates Rembrandt’s etching within a surprisingly complex visual tradition, revealing associations with social class, masculinity, and the struggle of man against nature. Artists who contributed to this tradition included Italian and Northern masters represented in Rembrandt’s print collection as well as contemporaries active in his own circle. DOI: 10.18277/makf.2015.05

For the festchrift in 2011 honoring our distinguished colleague Eric Jan Sluijter, Alison Kettering contributed an insightful essay on representations of the male nude by Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669). Rembrandt’s female nudes have attracted critical notice since his own time, but much less attention has been paid to depictions of the male body either in his work or in Dutch art more generally. As co-editor of the Sluijter festschrift, I had the pleasure of discussing this topic with Alison, and of puzzling together over a small etching completed by Rembrandt in 1651 (fig. 1). Modern cataloguers usually entitle it The Bathers, the title I will retain here, but its nickname among seventeenth-century collectors was De zwemmetjes, or “The Little Swimmers.” Significantly, this title is first recorded in the estate inventory of the print-seller Clement de Jonghe, whose portrait Rembrandt etched in 1651, the same year as The Bathers. Rembrandt produced only a single state of the plate, but watermark evidence indicates that he reprinted it several times, occasionally (as in fig. 1) using the oriental paper he reserved for special impressions. The loose, sketchy handling of the figures and their surroundings led early cataloguers such as Gersaint and Daulby to describe the print as “lightly” or “slightly” etched. More recently, it has been suggested that Rembrandt may have captured the motif outdoors by sketching directly onto the copperplate. Descriptions of the scene as “sun-drenched” imply a rationale for the open line work, but seem incongruous with the wooded setting and with the pensive mood conveyed by the hunched and isolated figures. Charles Blanc (1859) observed that one appears to be shivering.

The Bathers is one of the most enigmatic etchings in Rembrandt’s oeuvre, difficult to reconcile either with his academic figure studies of the 1640s or with the pleasant, pastoral themes its bucolic setting might suggest. As Kettering wrote, Rembrandt here “chose human expressiveness over observation of actual bodies” and “claimed, once again, a legitimate place for the crude and ungainly in art.” She rightly observes that Rembrandt’s treatment of the theme is unexpected, but the motif of male bathers turns out to be surprisingly common among his contemporaries. The present article explores this pictorial tradition in order to contextualize Rembrandt’s etching and to build on Kettering’s important contribution to the still-scarce literature on the male nude in Dutch art.
What prompted Rembrandt, in 1651, to take up this theme? One possibility is that he found stimulating examples in his extensive collection of prints and drawings. Rembrandt's works, especially his etchings, are replete with evidence that he carefully studied prints by predecessors and contemporaries such as Dürer, Mantegna, Lucas van Leyden, and Jacques Callot. The inventory recorded at the time of his bankruptcy in 1656 contains no specific reference to bathers, but he owned prints by a number of artists who addressed this motif.

Rembrandt’s incisive naturalism has been interpreted as a polemical statement against the academic tradition, yet his acquisitions as a collector suggest that he admired the work of artists, from Raphael to Guido Reni, who today are associated with the classical ideal. One of these artists, as I have discussed elsewhere, was Annibale Carracci (1560–1609). Etchings by the Bolognese master may have inspired several of Rembrandt's prints, including the sensual Jupiter and Antiope of 1659. By then, Rembrandt must have had to rely on memories of the art collection he had forfeited to satisfy his creditors in 1656. However, there is evidence that he resumed collecting as soon as he was able and that he retained a taste for Italian works on paper. On December 6, 1663, Constantijn Huygens the Younger (whose father had been one of Rembrandt's earliest supporters) wrote to his brother Christiaan asking him to visit the French collector and art dealer Everard Jabach in Paris. Constantijn wanted to find out how a landscape by Annibale in Jabach's collection "with a lot of water and small figures bathing" was related to a similar sheet in Rembrandt's collection. The composition may be recorded in a drawing last catalogued in an English private collection in 1963 (fig. 2). It seems unlikely that Rembrandt already owned this drawing by 1651 when he etched The Bathers and somehow managed to retain it after his bankruptcy. Nevertheless, the document shows that images of this theme were familiar in his milieu.

Like Rembrandt and others in his circle (including the Huygens brothers), the Carracci drew outdoors from nature, and Annibale may also have recorded his swimmers from life. Yet, the subject of male bathers already had a long pictorial history. In fifteenth- and sixteenth-century paintings and prints, groups of male bathers can be found as secondary motifs in a range of subjects. Well-known Italian antecedents include several prints depicting figures from the lost cartoon for The Battle of Cascina by Michelangelo (1475–1564). Here we see a group of swimming soldiers who have been summoned to battle and are hastily pulling on their clothes (fig. 3). Given the international trade in prints, these images must have circulated in the Netherlands as well. Meanwhile, more familiar themes such as the Baptism of Christ were common both in Italy and the North; male bathers figure prominently in several versions by Jan van Scorel (1495–1562, fig. 4). Among Northern graphic antecedents, The Men's Bathhouse by Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) is perhaps the most famous and enigmatic example (fig. 5). The sexual suggestiveness of Dürer’s image has led to associations with homoerotic desire. This is a recurring feature in modern interpretations of scenes in which male figures consort in the nude, especially those where no corresponding female figures are present. Artists from Dürer to Michiel 3 Sweerts and Thomas Eakins to Paul Cezanne have not escaped the suggestion that their proclivities are reflected in such imagery. Apart from nudity itself, common triggers for such an interpretation include erotically charged communication by touch or glance between figures and tactile description of the body that enhances its sensuous appeal. None of these features are present in Rembrandt's image: the figures are separated, even
self-absorbed, and the sketchy rendering of their unidealized bodies is more denotative than descriptive or appealing. Yet, this print shares with Dürer’s a mood of dark humor that suggests deeper implications.

Figure 3. Anonymous engraver after Agostino Veneziano (after Michelangelo), “The Climbers,” Figure Group Taken from Michelangelo’s Battle of Cascina, engraving on laid paper, 1524, 324 x 434 mm. London, British Museum, inv. no. 1890,0415.6 (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 4. Jan van Scorel, Baptism of Christ in the Jordan River, ca. 1530, oil on panel, 120.5 x 156.5 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum, inv. no. I-312 (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 5. Albrecht Dürer, The Men’s Bathhouse, 1496/97, woodcut on cream laid paper, 392 x 283 mm. Art Institute of Chicago, The Amanda S. Johnson and Marion J. Livingston Fund, inv. no. 2009.133 (artwork in the public domain)

Although the term “bather” has become ubiquitous, a distinction can in some cases be made between the hygienic act of bathing and the sport of swimming. The more common term, bathing, references a broad set of conventions for depicting the nude body in proximity to water. So-called bathers are rarely shown actually cleaning themselves. More often they are soaking in the water, disrobing, or simply in repose. In Northern as well as Italian tradition, venerable subjects such as Diana and her nymphs and the Fountain of Youth offered justification for depictions of bathers both male and female. However, neither Annibale’s sketch nor Rembrandt’s etching lends itself to these elevating associations. Instead, they appear to depict unguarded moments of physical recreation. Annibale’s figures are explicitly engaged in swimming. Some figures are visible only as heads bobbing in the water, but one leans forward in a crawl stroke. Rembrandt’s figures might more accurately be described as “recently having swum”: one man in the foreground is climbing out of the water onto the riverbank, while another at far right reaches for his clothes. It is possible that they have been washing themselves outdoors, but contemporaries who referred to this print as De zwemmetjes understood swimming to be their activity. Either way, the print can be situated within an established tradition of genre and landscape imagery.
Michelangelo’s figural group came to be appreciated more as a study in the mastery of complex poses than for its specific content, yet his soldiers are the descendants of a chivalric tradition in which swimming was one of the skills required of a well-trained knight. In this context, swimming can suggest action, bravery, and physical prowess as well as leisure. By the seventeenth century, swimming was becoming popular as a form of recreation and exercise. A number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century instructional manuals describe strokes, such as the crawl, that are similar to those still in use today. For obvious reasons of decorum, swimming in public view was primarily a masculine pastime. This is one practical reason why groups of bathers depicted in genre or landscape painting are most often male.

A tradition in printmaking depicting activities associated with the months or seasons of the year came to feature swimming or bathing as a pleasure afforded by the warming weather of spring or summer. Quite often, the setting is urban, as in several etchings by Jacques Callot (1592–1635). The disposition of lively, quickly sketched figures in his study of bathers by the Ponte Vecchio in Florence, etched around 1621, has affinities with both Annibale’s drawing and Rembrandt’s print (fig. 6). And in a Dutch print from 1650, Herman Saftleven (1609–1685) depicts spring (Ver) as a time when the renewed warmth of sun and water encourages young men to wash away winter’s cares along with accumulated grime (fig. 7). This connotation may superficially relate to Rembrandt’s etching but seems incongruous with its meditative aspect.

Figure 6. Jacques Callot, Side View of the Ponte Vecchio in Florence with Men Bathing in the River, ca. 1621, etching on laid paper, 55 x 77 mm, from Capricci di varie figure di Jacopo Callot. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet, inv. no. RP-P-OB-21.043 (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 7. Herman Saftleven II, Ver (Spring), 1650, etching on ivory laid paper, 133 x 134 mm. Art Institute of Chicago, The Wallace L. DeWolf and Joseph Brooks Fair Collections, inv. no. 1920.2415 (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 8. Pieter van Laer, Roman Country Life, after 1626, oil on oak panel, 55.9 x 84.3 cm. Bremen, Kunsthalle, Bequest of Johann Heinrich Albers 1856, inv. no. 69-1856/99 (artwork in the public domain)
The motif of male bathers in a contemporary setting seems first to have appeared in Dutch paintings by Pieter van Laer (1599–ca. 1642) around 1640. In a painting now in Bremen, a group of workmen have stripped to bathe near a ford, in full view of a shepherd and two travelers watching from a bridge (fig. 8). As in Saftleven's etching, where men not only bathe but also urinate in public view, there is a distinctly indecorous and even lower-class character to the figures caught exposing themselves in this way. The tiny standing figure in the background of Rembrandt's etching also seems to be "making water"). Van Laer's bathers appear to attract ridicule from the bystanders on the bridge. Rembrandt affords his swimmers a measure of privacy by placing them in a secluded, sylvan location. Yet, the association with plebian activity may go some way toward explaining their lumpen physiques and bent postures.

In the second half of the century, male bathers became common in landscape paintings by a variety of Dutch artists. Perhaps most curious is a painting by Gabriel Metsu (1629–1667), in which the artist portrays himself as a nude hunter resting by a riverbank. An intriguing example that can be placed in Rembrandt's orbit is Landscape with the Ruins of Huis Kostverloren (fig. 9), painted around 1660 by Jacob van Ruisdael (1628/9–1682). The picturesque castle a few miles south of Amsterdam, nicknamed Kostverloren ("money lost") as early as 1525 for its continual drain on the owner's resources, was a favorite motif for local artists, including Rembrandt, who sketched the site at least six times. Some of Rembrandt's drawings focus on the building, while others record the surrounding terrain along the river Amstel, but none are populated with figures. Van Ruisdael depicts the ruined structure undergoing restoration, indicated by the ladder in the foreground leaning against a fresh coat of plaster. Several figures, possibly workmen, stand beside the tower, while in the lower right, a group of nude men bathes in the river. These, too, may be laborers, seeking respite from their hot, dusty work. In describing the painting, Pieter Biesboer detected a vanitas theme in the juxtaposition of these heedlessly playful figures with the crumbling ruins, but Seymour Slive observed that Van Ruisdael's allusion to the reconstruction of the building suggests "the resuscitation of an identifiable structure, not its inevitable demise." The water where Rembrandt's zwemmers take their dip is too generic to be identified with the Amstel, but it is noteworthy that his drawings of Kostverloren have been stylistically dated to the early 1650s, around the same time that he etched The Bathers.

The motif of male bathers appears in a number of works by artists in Rembrandt's circle. A painting by Gerbrand van den Eeckhout (1621–1674), possibly dated close to Rembrandt's etching, situates a group of men resting by a river at the foot of a tall precipice (fig. 10). Attributes of hunting, the rifle and the hound at right, confirm the association with athletic, masculine leisure. While the gun is a modern accouterment, the dramatic terrain is clearly not Dutch, and the central figure in red wears his cloak like a toga. These features lend an air of timelessness to the scene, recalling Rembrandt's etching in its sylvan isolation. The figure climbing out of the water at left is especially close to one in the print. A similar motif is picked up in a drawing long considered to be by Rembrandt but recently assigned to Constantin Daniel van Renesse (1626–80, fig. 11), in which a single dripping figure dominates the foreground. His weary pose is balanced by more playful action in the background, where one man is jumping out of a boat, while another appears to be climbing back in.
Figure 10. Gerbrand van den Eeckhout, Landscape with Men Bathing, ca. 1650–55, oil on panel, 45.5 x 33 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-A-1612 (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 11. Attributed to Constantin Daniel van Renesse, Landscape on the Amstel with Bathers, ca. 1650–60, reed pen and brown ink with brown wash, heightened with white, on laid paper, 146 x 273 cm. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, inv. no. KdZ5212 (Photo: bpc Berlin / Art Resource, NY) (artwork in the public domain)

These works situate Rembrandt’s etching within a newly popular landscape convention. Yet none of them share its curiously dour mood. While the best explanation offered so far may be to relate it to the vanitas implications suggested for Van Ruisdael’s painting, it is instructive to turn again to Carracesque sources. A sense of drama, discomfort, and even danger characterizes several early landscape paintings populated with nude male figures from the Carracci circle. In one composition, several men, their muscular physiques and poses borrowed from Michelangelo, are swimming off a boat moored amid mountainous terrain; a clothed female figure gesturing rhythmically in the foreground suggests symbolic intent. A version attributed to Antonio Carracci (ca. 1583–1618) is now in Boston (fig. 12). An even darker and more dramatic theme is the deluge described in the book of Genesis, depicted in 1616 by Antonio Carracci in a fresco for the Quirinal Palace and reprised in a canvas now in the Louvre. The theme of struggle against the elements, and specifically the perils of swimming, also recalls the mythological story of Leander crossing the Hellespont to visit his beloved Hero. Significantly, a painting of this subject by Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) created something of a sensation in Rembrandt’s milieu; this was more likely the small canvas now in the Yale University Art Gallery than the monumental version in Berlin. Rembrandt himself owned the painting from 1637 to 1644, when he sold it for a profit to the art dealer Lodewijk van Ludick. It was later owned by Jan Six’s brother Pieter and celebrated in an ekphrasis penned by Jan Vos in Jan Six’s album amicorum, to which Rembrandt also contributed. Rubens’s painting also inspired a variant by Joachim von Sandrart (1606–1688), recorded in a print by Renier van Persijn. And in 1651, the year Rembrandt etched The Bathers, Vos’s poem was published in the anthology Verscheyde Nederduytsche Gedichten. The dramatic tenor of these scenes far exceeds that of Rembrandt’s etching, but this heroic tradition, no less than the rise of male bathers as a genre motif, should be considered as a source for his interest in the subject.

In their woodland setting, Rembrandt’s swimmers are bereft not only of their clothes but of all reference to civilization. Their isolation turns a simple genre scene into a meditation on the human condition. This does not prevent the possibility that a bit of wry humor factors into Rembrandt’s treatment of these soggy characters. In closing I am tempted to speculate on what all this might have meant for the artist himself. If followers such as Eeckhout, Maes, and Renesse were taking up the subject of male bathers at about the same time or perhaps ahead of him, Rembrandt’s gruff treatment may offer a subtle critique of their interpretations. It had been his practice, throughout his career, to encourage students to create independent versions of shared themes. This practice is widely evidenced in drawings and paintings of biblical narratives from his circle but also in the group of drawings and etchings from the late 1640s that show Rembrandt and his followers gathering to draw together from the male nude. By 1651, many of his former students had established successful studios of their own, and some of them were gaining in popularity and material success just as his own market was contracting. Athletic activity has always been a source of “male bonding,” and a sense of shared enjoyment enlivens most depictions of swimmers together, yet Rembrandt’s pensive figures are set apart from one another. Recalling the truism that “every painter paints himself,” something of the
The motif of the female nude has come to occupy a central role in both the European pictorial tradition and its theoretical interpretation. Yet, the male figure, too, has its own complex history. We have traced the motif of men bathing or swimming from the context of heroic and historical subjects to the popular imagery of everyday life. Most scholars of Dutch seventeenth-century art have dismissed it as a reference to the lighthearted pleasures of summer. Yet, this brief examination has uncovered deeper associations of class, sexuality, and the struggle of man against the elements. These implications cut across boundaries of time and nationality. As an intimate slice of life, Annibale Carracci’s drawing (and variants of it) would have resonated with the “modern” treatment of the theme by Dutch artists. At the same time, both the Carracci and Rubens approached the theme of male swimmers with sensitivity to its more dramatic implications. It is this imbricated tradition, rich with associations, that lies behind Rembrandt’s still enigmatic etching of “little swimmers” from 1651.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. Rembrandt, The Bathers, 1651, etching printed with plate tone on oriental paper, 109 x 135 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet, inv. no. RP-P-OPB-253 (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 2. Annibale Carracci, Landscape with Swimmers, ca. 1590–1605, pen and brown ink, on laid paper, 200 x 288 mm. Current whereabouts unknown (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 3. Anonymous engraver after Agostino Veneziano (after Michelangelo), “The Climbers,” Figure Group Taken from Michelangelo’s Battle of Cascina, engraving on laid paper, 1524, 324 x 434 mm. London, British Museum, inv. no. 1890,0415.6 (artwork in the public domain)

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Figure 6. Jacques Callot, *Side View of the Ponte Vecchio in Florence with Men Bathing in the River*, ca. 1621, etching on laid paper, 55 x 77 mm, from *Capricci di varie figure di Jacopo Callot*. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinett, inv. no. RP-P-OB-21.043 (artwork in the public domain)

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Figure 9. Jacob van Ruisdael, *Huis Kostverloren on the Amstel*, ca. 1660–64, oil on canvas, 63 x 75.5 cm. Amsterdam Museum, inv. no. SA 38217 (artwork in the public domain)

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Figure 12. Attributed to Antonio Carracci, *Landscape with Bathers*, ca. 1583–1618, oil on canvas, 40.3 x 61.2 cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 42.490, Museum purchase with funds by exchange from Bequest of Ernest Wadsworth Longfellow, Bequest of Nathaniel T. Kidder, The Henry C. Angeli and Martha B. Angeli Collection, William Sturgis Bigelow Collection, Gift of Dr. Harold W. Dana, and funds donated by contribution (artwork in the public domain)

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


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2 The most important recent study is Eric Jan Sluijter, *Rembrandt and the Female Nude* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

3 Although the date of *The Bathers* was originally inscribed as 1631, this is a mistake in penmanship that Rembrandt later corrected. The blunt style of the line work is consistent with his etchings of the 1650s. Charles Middleton, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Rembrandt van Rhyn* (London, 1878), cat. no. 292, was the first to note that the date had been corrected to 1651. The new standard reference is Erik Hinterding and Jaco Rutgers, *Rembrandt van Rijn*, The New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450–1700 (Oudekerk-aan -der-Ijssel: Sound and Vision Publishers, 2013), 2:190–91, no. 258, citing the reference in De Jonghe’s inventory.

4 Hinterding and Rutgers, *Rembrandt van Rijn*, no. 258, describe three states, identifying the second and third as posthumous, and listing for the first state European paper with five different watermarks dating to Rembrandt’s lifetime. Another impression on Japanese paper is in London (British Museum, inv. no. F.5.145).


8 For a good introduction, see Bob van den Boogert and Jaap van der Veen, *Rembrandt’s Treasures* (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 2000), with a transcription of the inventory, and their more recent exhibition catalogue, *Dat kan beter! Rembrandt en de oude meesters* (Amsterdam: Museum het Rembrandthuis, 2013).

9 See Dickey, “Contentione perfectus.” The inventory of 1656 lists an album containing prints by Annibale, Agostino, and Ludovico Carracci; the fact that Rembrandt, who probably helped with the inventory, took the trouble to mention all three artists suggests a sustained interest in their work.


14 The breaststroke, crawl, and other standard strokes were already in use by this time, as described in early treatises; see, for example, Nikolaus Wynmann, *Colymbetes siue de arte natandi…* (1538), German ed., *Der Schwimmer oder ein Zweigespräch der Schwimmkunst* (1578), edited by Hans Reichardt (Berlin: Weidmann, 1937); Everard Digby, *De arte natandi* (London, 1587), with woodcut illustrations; Nicholas Orme, *Early British Swimming 55 BC–AD 1719,*

15 Jacques Callot, View of Rome with the Ponte Vecchio from Capricci di varie figure di Iacopo Callot, the series of fifty prints known as the Nancy Set; Jules Lieure, Jacques Callot, 8 vols. (repr., New York: Collectors Editions, 1969), no. 434. See also François Collignon after Jacques Callot, etching from Diverse vedute designate in Fiorenza (Lieuze, Callot, no. 270–2[3]), ca. 1628–35. Prints like these may have been included in the album of architectural views by Callot listed as no. 255 in Rembrandt’s inventory of 1656.

16 Rassieux in Rembrandt’s Journey, 271, also mentions a print from a series of the Seasons by Romeyn de Hooghe.


18 Gabriel Metsu, Resting Hunter, New York, private collection; Adriaan E. Waiboer, et al., Gabriel Metsu, exh. cat. (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland / New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 142–45, cat. no. 35. Kettering, "Rembrandt and the Male Nude," 262, n. 46, considers Cornelis Poelenburgh’s pendants of Men Bathing and Women Bathing, ca. 1650, in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, to be part of an idealizing tradition that Rembrandt explicitly rejected. For male bathers in Dutch landscape painting, see also, inter alia, Jacob van Ruisdael, Le Coup de Soleil, 1670s, Paris, Musée du Louvre; Philips Wouwerman, Landscape with Bathers, ca. 1650–55, Vaduz, Leichtenstein Collection; Willem van de Velde, Dutch Vessels Close Inshore at Low Tide, 1661, London, National Gallery; and Johannes Lingelbach, Riverbank with Bathers beside an Italian City, ca. 1650, Basel, Kunstmuseum (Levine and Mai, Bamboccianti, 214–16, cat. no. 21.2).

19 For example, Ruins of Kostverloren, pen and brown ink with wash and white bodycolor, 104 x 173 mm, Art Institute of Chicago (Otto Benesch, The Drawings of Rembrandt [London: Phaidon, 1973], no. 1270); Bend in the Amstel (with the tower of the house just visible through the trees), pen and brown ink on paper prepared with a thin brown wash, 145 x 213 mm, London, British Museum, inv. no. 1984,1110.9 (Benesch, no. 1266; and Martin Royalton-Kisch, Catalogue of Drawings by Rembrandt and His School in the British Museum [London: British Museum, 2010], no. 67, on-line at www.britishmuseum.org).


21 Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-A-1612 (Werner Sumowski, Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler [Landau and Pfalz: Pfälzische Verlagsanstalt, 1983], 2,753, no. 544, dates it to ca. 1651 and associates it with Rembrandt’s etching. See also Bianca Du Mortier in Waiboer, Metsu, 143–44).


23 Antonio Carracci, Landscape with Bathers, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 42.490, based on a painting by Agostino Carracci of ca. 1599 in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence.

25 Peter Paul Rubens, *Hero and Leander*, oil on canvas, 96 x 117 cm, New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery, and the larger version, oil on canvas, 128 x 217 cm, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, both datable to ca. 1605.


27 Kettering, “Rembrandt and the Male Nude,” 258, writes that Rembrandt’s figures “are true to no formula, even his own. They are true to human experience.”

28 See Kettering, “Rembrandt and the Male Nude,” passim, with further references.


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