

# Rembrandt's Women



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Rembrandt famously had three women in his life: Saskia, the burgomaster's daughter, who died at 30; Geertje Dircks, the housekeeper with whom he had a bitter quarrel; and Hendrickje Stoffels, the servant girl who bore him a child and loyally stood by him in bankruptcy. Part of the mystique of his art, fueled by its emotional depth, is that his female figures are portraits of members of his household. The truth of the matter is more cloudy, though, since no documented portraits of the two servants exist. But scholars are interested in many other aspects of Rembrandt's women, as this exceptional book explains in six lively essays and detailed discussions of 140 works. They range from major paintings (Susanna and the Elders, Danae) to intimate etchings and drawings of women in domestic settings.

The essays explore a variety of issues, ranging from the 17th-century Dutch notion of female beauty (was flab more attractive then?) to the significance of handkerchiefs held by women in portraits of the era. A key theme in these pages is the way Rembrandt's transformation of traditional mythological and biblical scenes featuring nude women created a new level of erotic immediacy. Scholars have unearthed some interesting answers to questions like, What sort of woman in 17th-century Amsterdam would allow herself to be portrayed nude in a work of art?

Published to coincide with an exhibition of the same name organized by the National Gallery of Scotland--on view at the Royal Academy of Arts, London through December 16, 2001--Rembrandt's Women offers an abundance of color and black-and-white reproductions in an attractive format. The fresh and far-ranging approach to the artist's life and times make the book a must for every Rembrandt lover's bookshelf. --Cathy Curtis

作者介绍:

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