

# PRESS RELEASE

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## 'Radioactive' Rembrandts from Berlin added to The Rembrandt Database

Five years on, the unique collaboration between the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin and the RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History has reached an important milestone. The museum has undertaken extensive art-historical and technical research into its collection of Rembrandt paintings. As of today a wealth of information about these 26 works can be viewed online in The Rembrandt Database <http://www.rembrandtdatabase.org/Rembrandt>.

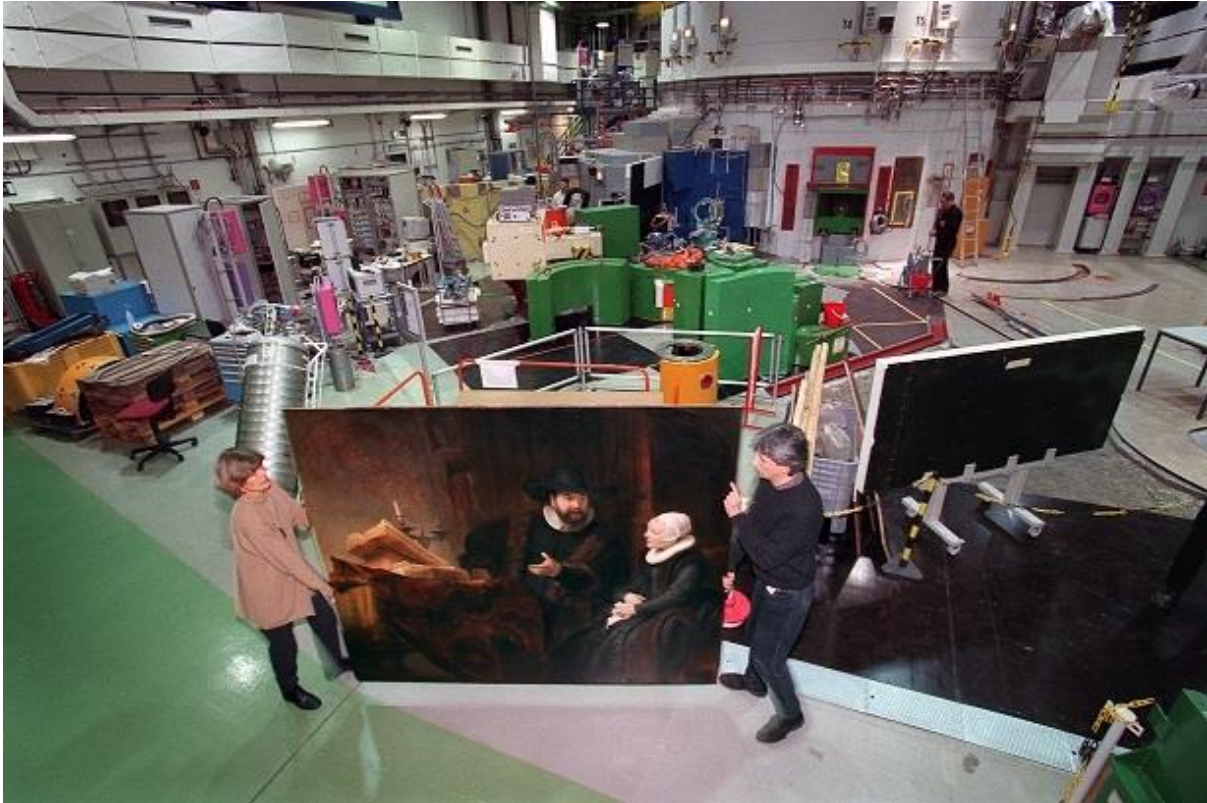
The Rembrandt Database is an English-language platform which enables Dutch and international museums and research institutions to share information and research data about paintings by Rembrandt. More than 12,000 documents relating to 215 paintings in 25 institutions, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, are now accessible online. The RKD coordinates the project, which is being made possible by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York. The database is under constant development. By 2017 the website will feature over 500 paintings.

The Gemäldegalerie in Berlin is the the only museum in the world able to make consistent and systematic use of neutron-activation autoradiography in the examination of paintings. Using this technique paintings are temporarily made radioactive in a nuclear reactor so that individual elements in the paint layers become visible. The results help us to understand the painting technique of the artist. One of the discoveries the museum was thus able to make is that a large part of *Susanna harassed by the Elders*, dating from 1635-1647, was overpainted by the eighteenth-century English artist Sir Joshua Reynolds.

In this day and age, art-historical investigations cannot progress without wide-ranging technical research and analysis of the materials used by artists. The RKD focuses on a range of different research methods including dendrochronology, infrared reflectography and 'thread counting', a means of assessing the quality of a canvas.

This year the University of Amsterdam is running a new course which focuses on the technical analysis of materials. In November, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Rijksmuseum are jointly dedicating a symposium to this subject, titled *Science4Arts*. All the research results will be published in the online databases of the RKD.

The paintings from the Gemäldegalerie in The Rembrandt Database can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/hktpzc2>



The Double portrait of the Mennonite preacher Cornelis Claesz. Anslo and his wife Aeltje Gerritsdr. Schouten in the nuclear reactor at the Helmholtz Zentrum Berlin

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