



Rembrandt's Late Religious Portraits

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

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One of the most fascinating aspects of Rembrandt's extraordinary artistic career is his suite of brooding half-length portraits of religious figures from the late 1650s and early 1660s. Painted during a difficult time in the artist's life—when he no longer enjoyed a ready market for his works and may have turned to his deep religious convictions for solace—these images are among the most evocative Rembrandt created. For years scholars have debated whether these paintings were intended as a series, yet until now these works have, unbelievably, never been shown together.

An exhibition by the National Gallery of Art and this accompanying catalog assemble seventeen of the paintings for the first time, finally giving the powerful images their due. Many of these subtle and wondrous paintings have been identified as images of apostles and evangelists, but among them are also representations of Christ, the Virgin, and still-unidentified saints and monks. In Rembrandt's typical fashion, the men and women in these portraits peer out of the dark recesses of dimly lit interiors as though burdened by the weight of their spiritual and emotional concerns. Yet recent archival research has raised questions about their attribution, the relationships among the paintings, and, in a broader sense, Rembrandt's life and career—issues addressed by the contributors to this volume. With its lavish color images and state-of-the-field research, *Rembrandt's Late Religious Portraits* will make a profound contribution to the understanding of this unique and provocative body of work.

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