

JOANNA CZERNICHOWSKA

Ph.D., Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw

REGINA DMOWSKA

The Royal Castle, Warsaw

ANNA NOWICKA

Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw

*Two paintings by Rembrandt: “Girl in a picture frame” and “Scholar at his writing table” from the collection of the Royal Castle in Warsaw – history, examination and conservation*

In 1994, the Warsaw Royal Castle was honoured with an unequalled artistic and historically valuable art collection in Poland – a donation from the Lanckoroński Family<sup>1</sup> – including two paintings attributed to Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606–1660): *Girl in a picture frame*<sup>2</sup> and *Scholar at his writing table*<sup>3</sup> (ill. I, II). The most precious of the Polish eighteenth century royal collection pieces were considered lost for about fifty years and that is why Rembrandt’s authorship was put into doubt, mostly as far as the Girl’s portrait is concerned. New research for an up-to-date attribution of both pictures became the main focus for the Warsaw Royal Castle team: between 2004 and 2006 the paintings were examined, treated and reattributed as a result of the cooperation of Polish

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<sup>1</sup> Karolina Lanckorońska, historian, PhD at Jan Kazimierz University in Lwow (until 1939), 1976–1993 Head of the Polish Historical Institute in Rome, established a donation to the free Republic of Poland. Both Polish Royal Castles were endowed: Royal Castle in Warsaw received a part of the family collection: 15 paintings from the former Stanislaus Augustus Gallery (northern schools’ paintings), Lanckoroński and Rzewuski family portraits and furniture; Wawel Royal Castle has gained about 76 Italian schools paintings.

<sup>2</sup> *Girl in a picture frame*, oil on panel, 104,5 (105,1) × 76,1 (76,0) cm, signed on the lower left side of the background: *Rembrandt//1641*, Royal Castle in Warsaw, inv. ZKW/3906 (King’s gallery no. 207).

<sup>3</sup> *Scholar at his writing table*, oil on panel, 104,5 (105,1) × 76,0 (76,1) cm, signed on the right side of the desk: *Rembrandt//1641*, Royal Castle in Warsaw, inv. ZKW/3905 (King’s gallery no. 208).

scientists, conservators and art historians – under guidance of professor Ernst van de Wetering, the head of the Rembrandt Research Project<sup>4</sup>.

The two pictures are not typical portraits – they are depictions of unknown persons referred to by the Dutch term *tronie*. Both models are picturesquely depicted in historical costumes, a frequent Rembrandt feature.

*The Girl* is shown from the front, resting her hands on the low bar of the painted frame surrounding the whole image. She wears a dark red dress lined with fur, gold necklaces and a wide rich belt. Her young idealized face is deeply shadowed by a black, soft beret from which long red, untied hair hangs freely. The background behind her is green and nondescript, with a poorly shaped column in the right corner, filling the upper space. The artist's name and a date are placed in a shadow between the black frame and the model's right arm. In this painting, Rembrandt achieved the highest degree of illusionism while avoiding typical *trompe l'oeil* devices – at that time he was interested in such effects (*Nightwatch*, 1642, *Portrait of Maria Trip*, 1939, both from the Rijksmuseum). He allowed parts of the painted scene to appear to project beyond the pictorial plane and he suggested a very subtle movement: the girl is in the process of laying her right hand on the illusionist picture frame, her thumb – reflected in the dark wood – already touches the frame, while the fingers are only approaching it. This movement comes from the girl's arms and is expressed in their uneven level and the sleeve's cloth. It reaches the right earring also<sup>5</sup>.

*The Scholar* as an old, bearded man shown in *three quarters* sitting at a table with a writing desk with an open book on it. Wearing a dark fur coat and soft black beret, he looks ahead with nostalgia – he probably stopped for a moment while writing, as he holds a quill pen. His rather philosophical attitude is reinforced by the gold necklace and ring. The manuscript – like an open book's pages has just been turned and a strong light shines through them as they are falling down – this representation giving the illusion of the book crossing the picture's physical surface. Books painted in a similar manner but not so illusionist can be observed on the *Anslo portrait*, in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, also dated at 1641<sup>6</sup>. The scholar's writing desk, decorated with a carved lion's head and sea creatures, features red tassels contrasting with the green tablecloth. On its side is visible a very legible signature of the artist. The thickly humanistic mood is enhanced by the delicate and indefinite green background. The painting is executed in a free manner, with thick impasto mostly reserved for the book and a masterful rendition of the quill pen, half-painted and half-drawn with fresh paint with the brush's shank. The exceptional place of both pictures in Rembrandt's *oeuvre*, particularly the *Girl in a picture frame*

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<sup>4</sup> Royal Castle in Warsaw was awarded with *Sybilla 2006 – The Museum Event of the Year* for the conservation project of both painting. See: J. Czernichowska, R. Dmowska, *Dwa obrazy Rembrandta z Zamku Królewskiego w Warszawie – ich przeszłość w służbie przyszłości* [w:] *Wobec zabytku... Tradycje i perspektywy postaw. Studia dedykowane pamięci prof. Jerzego Remera*, red. E. Pilecka, J. Raczkowski, Toruń 2010, p. 201–220.

<sup>5</sup> E. van de Wetering, *Rembrandt as a searching artist* [in:] *Rembrandt. Quest of a Genius*, p. 115, ex. cat., ed. B. van den Boogert, Amsterdam 2006 (Exhibition: *Rembrandt: The Quest of a Genius*, The Rembrandt House Museum, Amsterdam, 1 April–2 June 2006).

<sup>6</sup> *Portrait of Corneliss Claesz. Anslo and her wife Aeltje Gerritsdr. Schouten*, 1641, oil on canvas, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

as a absolute *trompe l'oeil* was emphasized by professor Ernst van de Wetering in his expert's opinion regarding the authorship<sup>7</sup>.

The interdisciplinary project undertaken to reattribute the pictures undertook to analyze their technical construction and state of preservation, as well as their history and the numerous copies attesting past interventions.

There are no records regarding the paintings' early history. They possibly belonged to J. van Lennep's Amsterdam collection (inventory from 1711)<sup>8</sup> or to the Polish King Jan III Sobieski, according to the King's inventory from 1696<sup>9</sup>. Probably from this period originates the copy of *The Young woman with her hands on the picture frame* from the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen<sup>10</sup>. It was executed on a landscape painting (possibly during a renovation of the original), and its dimensions and proportions differ from the original (narrower but wider), thus affecting the composition: there are no upper frame moldings, the model is positioned higher, its arms are shorter and the hands are set wider apart. Despite these alterations, this copy is among the closest to the original.

The first records mentioning both panels as *pendants* date from 1769, when they were part of Kamecke's collection in Berlin. In reality the pictures are not *pendants* despite the fact they were considered to constitute a pair for most of their history. In Rembrandt's *pendants*, men's portraits are always the left piece and both models face one each other; their scale is the same and sometimes they are similarly framed (ie.: *Portrait of Agata Baas* from the Quinn's Gallery in London and the *Portrait of Nicolaes Bambeck* from the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique in Brussels). The Warsaw pictures do not meet these criteria. Most likely they were linked together by given titles – *Jewish Bride* and *Father of Jewish Bride* – and by cutting panels to similar size for economical reasons – picture pairs were always more appreciated on the art market than single works.

The presence of the paintings in the Kamecke Family collection is also documented with two etchings by Georg Friedrich Schmidt executed in 1769 and 1770: *Jewish bride* and *The bride's father saves the dowry*<sup>11</sup>, provided with an inscription by the artist: *G.F. Schmidt fec. 1769* reading: *La fiancée Juive, grave d'après le tableau original de Rembrandt tiré du cabinet de Mr. Le Comte de Kamke et dédié au dit Seigneur etc.*, *G.F. Schmidt fec. Auqua forti 1770*, inscribed: *Le Père de la Fiancée réglant sa dot, d'après le tableau original de Rembrandt tiré du cabinet de Mr. Le Comte de Kamke. Rembrandt pinx. 1641.*

<sup>7</sup> E. van de Wetering, *Rembrandt as a searching artist* [in:] *Rembrandt. Quest of a Genius*, ex. cat., ed. B. van den Boogert, Amsterdam 2006, p. 115.

<sup>8</sup> D. Juszczak, H. Malachowicz, *Malarstwo do 1900. Katalog zbiorów, Zamek Królewski w Warszawie*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 408–415, no. 9, 262, 263.

<sup>9</sup> W. Drecka, *Na tropach obrazów ze zbiorów Jana III, „Studia Wilanowskie”*, Warszawa 1997, vol. I, pp. 130–132, ill. 2.

<sup>10</sup> *The Young woman with her hands on the picture frame*, oil on canvas, 97,2 × 81 cm, inv. KMSsp406, artist unknown.

<sup>11</sup> G.K. Nagler, *Neues allgemeines Kunstler – Lexikon*, 1845, vol. 15, p. 323, no. 156, 157; National Library of Ukraine, Kiev, Ukraine: Rkp 5919, Galerie Royale et Electoral a Dresde 1772, 2 vol.b, p. 403b, 405, no. 42, 55. Both graphics are in the collection of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco: inv. 1093.30.33949 and 1093.30.33950; dimensions respectively: 23,1 × 18,3 cm and 23,3 × 18,3 cm. The nineteenth-century print of the *Girl's* portrait is stored in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, print signed *Rembrandt pinx. G.F. Schmidt fec. 1769 / R. Schuster / Berlin 1881*; paper, mezzotint, 23,5 × 18,5 cm.

Both etchings are reversed in relation to the original paintings, they depict notably well in graphic techniques the pictorial value of both paintings.

In 1777 the last Polish king, Stanisław II August, bought Rembrandt's *pendants* for the Warsaw Royal collection. The royal miniaturist Vincent Lesseur executed two miniatures, now belonging to the Polish Museum in Rapperswil in Switzerland<sup>12</sup>: The *Portrait of young woman with his hands on the parapet*, signed on the right: *W. L. /1797*<sup>13</sup>; *Scholar at his writing table*, signed on the side of the table on the right: *W. L. /1797*<sup>14</sup>. On the *Girl's* portrait, Lesseur depicted the column in the background, but placed his signature on the opposite side of Rembrandt's, while in the *Scholar's* portrait he followed the artist's signature positioning.

Probably more recent is another pair of copies of the two portraits by an unknown artist, most likely from Bacciarelli's *Malarnia*. It is a Sapieha family deposit from their collections in Krasiczyn, now belonging to the Wawel Castle Museum in Cracow and stored in its branch museum at the Pieskowa Skała Castle<sup>15</sup>. In spite of the fact that the appearance of both copies has been altered by an old extensive restoration, they seem to be relatively close to the originals.

After the abdication of Stanisław II August, in 1815 the paintings were sold to the Polish aristocrat Kazimierz Rzewuski (1751–1820) and moved to Austria, later to be inherited by Karol Lanckoroński (1848–1933), a Polish landowner, politician, Viennese civil servant and famous art collector.

In the nineteenth century both pictures were copied several times – the *Girl's* picture more often with copies in two others Polish museums: the Museum Palace in Wilanów and the Łańcut Castle Museum. In the Wilanów copy<sup>16</sup>, the girl rests her hands on an armchair, not on the frame, but the picture seems to be heavily repainted. It is probably a nineteenth century copy – probably executed after an earlier one mentioned in King Jan III Sobieski's inventory and ordered by him in 1687 for his residence in Żółkiew (presently Ukraine)<sup>17</sup>. The Łańcut copy comes from the Potocki family collection or, possibly, duchess Lubomirska<sup>18</sup>. It is the weakest copy, but also heavily overpainted. The model is depicted without hands and is surrounded by a painted oval. The other pair of copies of both *tronies* come from the Lubomirski Museum in Lviv (existing until 1939), now in the collection of the Lviv Art Gallery, Ukraine – currently on display at Złoczów

<sup>12</sup> *Miniatury Wincentego Lesseura i Walerii Tarnowskiej z dawnej kolekcji Tarnowskich z Dzikowa w zbiorach Muzeum Polskiego w Rapperswilu, Zamek Królewski w Warszawie i Muzeum Polskie w Rapperswilu*, exh. cat., ed. H. Kamińska-Krassowska, Warszawa 1994, p. 5, no. 50, 51.

<sup>13</sup> Watercolor, gouache on ivory, 124 × 84 mm, inv. 701; on the back there are the subtitles: *61 / La Juive de la/ Collection du Roy/ de Pologne/ de Rembrandt/ VII5/104/ N. 93*.

<sup>14</sup> Watercolor, gouache on ivory, 125 × 93 mm, inv. 702; on the back there are the subtitles: *60/ VII3/102 Nr 91/ Żyd czytający/z Rembrandta N. 92*.

<sup>15</sup> Inv. PZS na Wawelu: dep. 161 and dep. 162, dimensions of both paintings: 89,5 × 71 cm. Recently another *Girl's* copy was on the sale at the London Christie's auction (4/13/2011, Lot.34/Sale 6025), considered to be the eighteenth-century.

<sup>16</sup> XIX (?), oil on canvas and panel, 87 × 71 cm, inv. Wil.1656.

<sup>17</sup> W. Drecka, *op.cit.*

<sup>18</sup> Oil on canvas, 91 × 75 cm, inv. S 234 ML. See J. Piotrowski, *Zamek w Łańcutie. Zwięzły opis dziejów i zbiorów*, Lwów 1935; *Katalog Zabytków Sztuki w Polsce*, vol. III, no. 5, „Łańcut i okolice”, ed. J. Sito, Warszawa 1994.

Castle<sup>19</sup>. It is difficult to estimate their artistic value due to their bad condition and old restoration, but generally they seem to be quite close to the originals, like copies from the Pieskowa Skała Castle.

A pair of etchings executed around 1876 in Vienna by William Unger are considered to be the most recent copies of the Warsaw Rembrandt panels<sup>20</sup>. Judging by the etching of the *Girl's* portrait, they are a relatively free interpretation of Rembrandt's originals.

Most of those eight copies of the *Girl's* and five of the *Scholar's* portrait are executed in oil; they are relatively similar in size, most depict the models in the same scale. The major differences, also occurring in other techniques, concern the copies of the *Girl*: her arms are shorter. Does this mean that all the authors of the copies have made the same alteration to Rembrandt's composition? Or did they all follow a first copy which already had this alteration? In addition, some of the copies differ in the depiction of the frame and the signature, which might constitute an evidence of changes in the original painting's appearance.

During the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century, Rembrandt's literature recognized both paintings – *The Girl in a picture frame* and *The Scholar at his writing table* – as the artist's original works<sup>21</sup>. Since 1902 the Rembrandt paintings, part of the Karol Lanckoroński's well recognized collection, were met with great success while displayed to the public in his Vienna palace (ill. 1).

After World War I, when Poland regained its independence after 123 years of partitions, the owner planned to move his collection to his native land. Unfortunately, World War II began and the whole collection was plundered by the Nazis and hidden near Salzburg, with other art objects stolen from Europe. However, a part of the collection survived and in 1947 it was recovered by its owners; the family once again made plans to remove the collection from Austria, but temporarily it was impounded in the Hohenems Castle near the Lichtenstein border, where in 1950 it was partially destroyed by a fire. After that, the most valuable works of art – the Rembrandts among them – were secretly moved to Switzerland. Both panels were considered to be lost until 1994 (the year of the Lanckoroński family donation)<sup>22</sup>. As they were no longer available for research after 1950, their authorship was questioned in 1969 by Horst Gerson, who knew the pictures only from photographs and never examined them<sup>23</sup>. For this reason they were neither

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<sup>19</sup> The first half of the nineteenth century (?), oil on canvas; dimensions of both paintings: 102,5 × 78 cm, inv. Ž 1735 and Z 1736.

<sup>20</sup> M.Ch. Le Blanc, *Manuel de l'amateur d'estampes contenant le dictionnaire des graveurs de tout nations...*, vol. 4, Paris 1890, no. 28, 29.

<sup>21</sup> A. Ziemia, *Dwa obrazy z kolekcji Lanckorońskich: Rembrandt i Bol*, „Ikonotheka”, 1998, p. 11–26. Autor presents subject literature: W. Bode, C. Hofstede de Groot, 1901; W.R. Valentiner, 1921; C. Hofstede de Groot, 1925; A. Bredius, 1935.

<sup>22</sup> The history of Lanckoroński's collection has been described in the source publications by Joanna Winiewicz-Wolska. See. ie.: J. Winiewicz-Wolska, *Karol Lanckoroński i jego wiedeńskie zbiory*, Kraków 2010; *eadem*, *Wiedeńskie zbiory Karola Lanckorońskiego sprzed stu laty*, „Folia Historiae Artium”, 2002–2003, vol. VIII–IX, p. 107–160; *eadem*, *Dzieje kolekcji Lanckorońskich w latach 1939–1946*, „Rocznik Historii Sztuki”, 2003, vol. XXVIII, p. 19–45.

<sup>23</sup> A. Bredius, *Rembrandt: The Complete Edition of the Paintings*, revised by H. Gerson, London 1969.





III. 1. Lanckoroński Pallais, Holländischer Saal – 20<sup>th</sup> c. postcard, the Royal Castle, Warsaw

studied nor described in the third volume of the most recent Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings concerning the years 1635–1642 issued just a few years before their reappearance<sup>24</sup>.

Since the 1994 Lanckoroński family donation, Rembrandt's paintings were on display in the Warsaw Royal Castle, whose museum undertook a project concerning their thorough examination focusing on confirmation of their attribution to Rembrandt.

Technical examinations of both paintings were carried out in Cracow<sup>25</sup> and in Warsaw<sup>26</sup>. Experience resulting from the conservation treatment of Rembrandt's *Landscape with the Merciful Samaritan* from the Czartoryski Museum in Cracow was helpful to the Warsaw conservation project, as did the support from Martin Bijl, a restorer of Rembrandt's paintings, a collaborator of the Rembrandt Research Project and former Head of the Conservation Department at the Rijksmuseum. An interpretation of the technical

<sup>24</sup> E. van de Wetering, J. Bruyn, B. Haak, S.H. Levie, P.J.J. van Thiel, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, 1989, vol. 3.

<sup>25</sup> The beginning examination was carried out by Maria Rogóż, PhD in technical sciences, and Małgorzata Walczak, MA, Faculty of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art, Academy of Fine Art in Cracow: *The cross-section and examinations of pigments, fillers and binders of samples taken from Portrait of young woman ("Jewish Bride"), and from Portrait of Scholar ("Father of Jewish Bride"), Rembrandt van Rijn from Royal Castle in Warsaw*, typescript 2005.

<sup>26</sup> The main examination was carried out by A. Nowicka, MA and I. Zadrozna, PhD in technical sciences. See A. Nowicka, I. Zadrozna, *Analiza pigmentów i spoiw warstw malarskich obrazów Rembrandta van Rijn Uczony przy pulpicy i Dziewczyna w ramie obrazu ze zbiorów Zamku Królewskiego w Warszawie*, „Ochrona zabytków”, 2009, no. 3, p. 5–13.

examinations results was consulted with Karin Groen from the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage, another collaborator of the R.R.P.

The following types of examinations were carried out: observation in visible (day) light; normal, raking, reflected light and macro photography; IR examination; UV – induced luminescence of paint layers; X-ray examination<sup>27</sup>; identification of wooden panels<sup>28</sup>; stratigraphic analysis and examination of pigments, fillers and binders in samples from the paintings; microscopic and micro chemical analysis; analysis on cross-sections with a LMA 10 laser microspectral analyzer with a ruby laser<sup>29</sup>; microscopic and micro-chemical analysis realization of scans and spectra images with the SEM-EDS method; examination of paint layer binders with GC-MS and FT-IR as a complementary technique IR absorption spectrophotometry and gas chromatography in connection with gas spectrography<sup>30</sup>.

Both Rembrandt's paintings are executed on poplar panels. This kind of wood is not typical for Rembrandt, who mostly painted on oak boards with some exceptions (i.e. oriental types of wood). The Rembrandt Research Project records three Rembrandt paintings on poplar panels of similar size and within the same period of time: *Marie Trip's portrait*, 1639, 107 × 82 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; *A girl in a veil*, c. 1640 (or 1643), 62,2 × 48,9 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington; and *Portrait of Anna Wijmer*, 1641, 99,5 × 81,5 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, the Warsaw paintings are two of the five painted on poplar panels. It is possible that ca 1639 or 1640, while fascinated with contemporary and earlier Venetian portraits, the painter bought poplar panels for new portrait compositions.

Both panels are single-piece poplar boards (*Populus sp.*) The manner of the boards' preparation shows that the wood was cut radially near the core. The wood comes from fast-growing trees, whose annual growth reaches 10 mm. The dimensions of the board point to a tree of a diameter of ca 90–100 cm and at least 60 years of age. These species of tree do not allow dendrochronological dating.

The grain of both boards runs vertically and their backs are beveled on all four sides; thickness varies from 20 to 16 mm (*Girl*) and 14 to 19 mm (*Scholar*).

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<sup>27</sup> Photographic documentation and physical examination were performed by: Warsaw Royal Castle, Photographic Agency *Orleća*, M. Bronarski, P. Kobek, Photographic Studio AR, A. Ring, B. Tropilo (1995, 2005–2006), J. Rutkowski PhD, Faculty of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art, Academy of Fine Art in Cracow (1995–1997), P. Rudniewski MA and photograph R. Stasiuk, Faculty of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art, Academy of Fine Art in Warsaw (1995–1997, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> T. Ważny PhD, Faculty of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art, Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw.

<sup>29</sup> M. Rogóż, *op.cit.*; A. Nowicka, I. Zadrożna, *op.cit.*

<sup>30</sup> The instrumental analysis – binder analysis was performed using (GC-MS) and (FTIR) as a complementary technique: I. Zadrożna PhD, Faculty of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art, Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and Faculty of Chemistry of Warsaw University of Technology; SEM-EDS (scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive system): M. Wróbel MA, Institute of Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology, Warsaw University.

<sup>31</sup> Rembrandt Research Project constitutes the next two examples but defining the kinds of wood is not clear. See also D. Juszczak, H. Malachowicz, *op.cit.*, p. 413–414.

The fronts and backs of the panels were minimally prepared: they are uneven and rough – the manner of cutting and traces of tools are clearly visible. The backs of the panels are stained.

The poplar supports are particularly well preserved, considering that they are unitary boards, a rather rare occurrence in case of such large dimensions. They are only slightly warped. The boards reveal no traces of major damage resulting from wood movement or mechanical action, with the exception of a small crack in the right lower corner of the *Scholar's* portrait. There are a few visible dried out knots with splits and minor radial cracks around them. Some small dents on the faces and numerous traces of framing are observed. A few seals, numbers and inscription on the reverse of the panels are quite well preserved.

The supports are sized and grounded. The *Girl's portrait* was executed on a quite thick ground consisting of two smoothly finished layers: the lower layer is much thicker than the upper one. In total, the ground layers are 148 micrometers thick (0,148 mm). Complementing instrumental analysis with microscopic observation of the sample indicated the use of an emulsion binder based on animal (protein) glue and oil (unspecified). The upper layer has a more oily nature. The first leveling ground layer contains chalk as a filler and the second, thinner one, consists mainly of lead white with a small amount of chalk. The ground was covered with an ochre-colored *imprimatura* (ill. III). A thick layer of ground thoroughly covers the wood panel's rough surface.

The *Scholar's* board was covered with a very thin ground layer (rubbed into the board, thicker only in hollows of the wood structure), with a maximum thickness of 40 micrometers (0,040 mm). The examination of the ground's binder revealed the presence of animal glue with the addition of walnut oil. The ground layer contains mainly lead white and a small addition of calcium carbonate (probably chalk). The texture of the wood is visible through the thin layer of ground and paint. A thin ochre-colored *imprimatura* layer was laid over the ground layer and is visible with the naked eye but is practically imperceptible in most of the cross-section.

There are no drawings or preliminary sketches prior to the present *tronies*.

Close observations of the painting's surface have allowed to trace the portraits' execution. The paint was sometimes applied wet-on-wet with the paint of the background, sometimes a little time elapsed before the next application (application in half-dried layers). This enabled the artist, among other things, to paint on wet paint, i.e.: the shape of the quill pen. The yellow ochre color of the *imprimatura* shows through the upper layers and is visible in fractures of the paintings. The paint layers are relatively thin with low impasto. Locally, the highest impasto, is mainly on the parts of lights and details of decoration, i.e. on jewels, dress pieces or on the parts of the open manuscript in *Scholar's panel*.

The paint on the *Girl's* portrait is applied more thickly than *Scholar's* portrait.

The signature on the *Scholar* is solid, executed in wet paint, on the *Girl* it was most likely added later and is partially damaged<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> K. Groen, during consultation the examinations indicated that the signature was not applied wet-in-wet with the paint of the background, but that a certain time had past before its application and it is not possible to say how much time had passed.

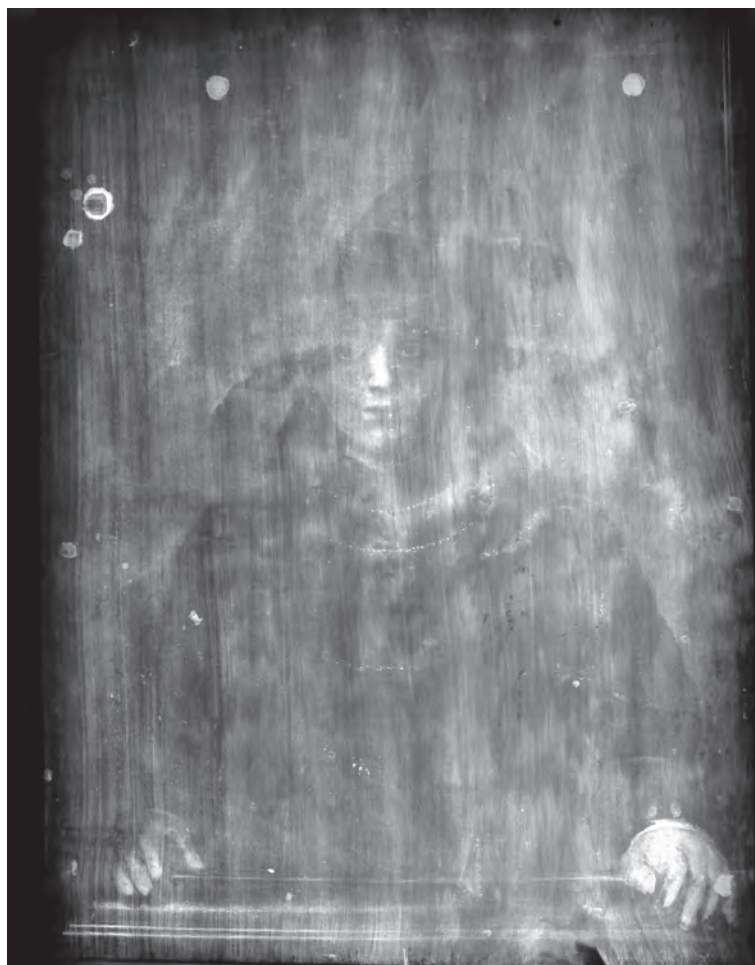




Ill. 2. *Girl in a picture frame*. IR image – visible *pentiment* of the previous woman's portrait – the oval shape around *Girl* had and dark color sketch on her breast. Photo R. Stasiuk

An examination of the paint layer in the described areas of the composition of the *Girl in a picture frame* identified following pigments:

- flesh tone: lead white with addition of chalk, yellow ochre, vermilion or mineral cinnabar
- dress: red lake (on aluminum hydroxide), vermilion or cinnabar, lead white, bone black, chalk
- black parts: bone black, additive of lead white and bituminous brown



Ill. 3. *Girl in a picture frame*. X-ray – visible *pentiment* of the previous woman's portrait (differently composed, highly posed, three quarter view, possibly in a white ruff and coif) lightest fragment of the flesh paints, wood structure and seal on the panel's back (bright spots). Photo J. Rutkowski

- background: green earth, lead white, bone black, bituminous brown, calcium carbonate. The painter used walnut and linseed oil medium. No original varnish was observed in the samples collected.

Examination of the structure of paint layers (also IR as well as X-ray examination) revealed the first (a previous) unfinished portrait lying underneath the present image. It is a sketch of another, differently composed portrait of a woman, displayed in a three-quarters view, possibly shown in a white ruff and coif. Its silhouette is quite well visible in IR as lighter forms in the background, around the Girl's head, and the dark brushstrokes in her dress (ill. 2). In X-rays, the outlines of the sketch show up in the opposite way, as darker forms, while the high points of the present portrait – i.e. the flesh tones and the jewelry highlights – executed with a high lead content paint, stand out significantly, as

does the structure of the panel (ill. 3). The outline of this sketch was even slightly visible to the naked eye before treatment as a result of a naturally increased transparency of the upper paint layers.

The examination of the paint layer in the described areas of the composition of the *Scholar at his writing table* identified following pigments:

- grey-green background: green earth, bituminous brown, bone black, lead white, small amount of red lake and chalk and trace amount of smalt, added as siccativ
- green table cloth: in bottom layer smalt mixed with lead-tin yellow, in top layer – natural malachite with addition of yellow ochre; both layers contain small amounts of chalk
- red table napkin: red ochre and red lake
- brown dress: bone black, bituminous brown, red lake and small addition of copper pigments and smalt (probably as a siccativ)
- black hat: bone black, bituminous brown, lead white, small addition of green copper pigment.

In that picture only one type of binder was identified – walnut oil. The original varnish has not been observed.

IR examination did not reveal the existence of any drawing or preliminary draft of the composition on the *imprimatura*, nor any major changes in the composition. There are only minor *pentimenti* visible in the lower part of the outline of the head cover and below – along the right profile of the figure (head, and a fragment of a shoulder). Local overpainting is indicated within the figure by intensely dark areas. Also noteworthy is the intensity of the craquelures. X-rays mainly reveal the support (the structure of the panel) and the grain of the wood. Only the high points of the paint layer executed with a high lead content are noticeable – the painting's composition is nearly invisible.

The composition of the paint in both panels is dominated by lead white, earth pigments, bone black, red lake and bituminous brown. An admixture of chalk added to the lead white often occurs to enhance its transparency, and to the colour pigments in order to increase both their transparency and the volume of impasto; practically, in each sample containing lead white, calcium carbonate is also found.

It was not possible to determine whether cinnabar, or its artificial equivalent vermilion, were used. Neither the appearance of microscopic particles, nor elemental composition preclude an occurrence of mineral pigments, but owing to the addition of chalk, this is difficult to ascertain.

The pigments, ground components, binding mediums and the painter's working methods revealed during the examinations and the treatment process are typical for Rembrandt – they show numerous technical and technological similarities with other Rembrandt paintings described in literature; also, these materials were commonly used in seventeenth century artists' practice.

From the paintings' earliest period they were restored many a time – possibly original varnishes were removed and replaced, as it was common practice, even during Rembrandt's lifetime. Also, their frequent replacement (between owners), framing and format change had to cause damages, which required subsequent renovations. It can be assumed that over the last fifty years the panels have not been renovated.

The appearance of the paintings was determined by yellowed varnishes and changed retouching, as they had not been treated for many decades. The paintings' surfaces, coated with heavy layers of badly discoloured varnish and surface grime, resulted in the paintings' marred appearance. The varnishes, already partially blanched, presented poor saturation in the dark areas. The portraits' paint layers were well preserved for the most part, with the exception of the red dress in the *Girl* portrait. There, the paint layer developed a prominent, raised craquelure. In many fragments it was poorly attached to the panel, creating some tents of paint, some of them flaking off. In the past – to stop this process – the painting was coated with thick layers of varnish to literally bond the loose paint. There were also some small losses, a few dents and scratches.

The main conservation task was to clean the painting's surface progressively obscured by dirt, darkened varnishes and discoloured retouching (ill. IV). Furthermore, the woman's portrait evidently needed structural treatment within the red dress area, consolidation and reinforcing of the flaking and fragile paint layers.

UV examination of both pictures confirmed the presence of retouching and small overpaints together with an uppermost, non-original varnish layer. The cleaning of the paintings gradually revealed that this varnish was applied over the surface grime, another numerous retouching, overpaints and the older varnish layer – also not original. During the treatment, large-scale overpaints lying underneath were recovered; some of these overpaints were difficult to distinguish in UV luminescence. Those two varnish layers with old retouching and some overpaints were removed from both panels.

In the case the *Girl in a picture frame* this varnish removal process was combined with a local consolidation of the red dress' cupping and cleavage area – the varnish which had been lying underneath the blisters had to be removed in order to be replaced by a consolidant (ill. V). The removal of the upper varnish layer revealed extensive repaints on the figure, its robe, the background and on the frame. Most likely, the repeated reappearance of the first, abandoned sketch was the reason for the later overpaintings, restorations and damages. Repainting on the robe masked considerable damage to the original and earlier repairs. They formed a kind of separate, brown-green dress with a belt finished with tassels (ill. VI). The light green background was also repainted entirely from the top and a shapeless column was added, probably with the intention of concealing the *pentimenti* and damages just above the head. The repainting of the background imposed an overall adjustment of the frame. Yet, over time and to a great extent, these layers lost their masking properties, thus both losses and *pentimenti* became legible once again. Large scale overpaintings on the upper background were removed: the added column, also very extensive overpaintings on the dress and on the frame, as well as smaller ones on the hat, the face, the ears and the right ear-ring, hair, necklaces, belt and hands. Some overpaintings had to be left due to damage of the original paint layers or due to the impossibility to distinguish it during removal.

The removal of the upper varnish layer and the small areas of overpaintings in the case of *Scholar at his writing table* revealed the existence of an earlier, also non-original varnish (resin – oil, equally yellowed as the first one) (ill. VII, VIII, IX). Between the varnish layers was an extensive and discoloured overpaint and sloppy fills obscuring large fragments of the original – mainly near the upper right edge of the painting. Underneath, another overpainting was found on the beret and on the background. The over-

paint was applied because of the partially overcleaned original and other damages to the paint layer. New layers were often placed directly on the original; most of them were removed in this treatment.

On both paintings, damages to the original paint layers mainly resulted from overcleaning, and an improper handling of the paintings during storage and framing. The original paint layers – except for the robe of the *Girl* – did not suffer any major damage, and in the portrait of the *Scholar* they stand out because of an almost perfect cohesion and adhesion.

In both paintings, groups of small, pea-like losses can be observed, probably due to the formation of lead soaps in the presence of lead white and an oil-based binder. It appears that during historical restorations, the so-called *craters* that occurred in the paint layers have been “evened” and “restored” by wild overpainting.

Treatment process confirmed the results from examinations, namely that the *Scholar's* signature – executed in wet paint – is very reliable, but the *Girl's* signature – not well preserved and partially placed on the damaged background – most likely was added later.

Both portraits were considered lost for about fifty years and thus Rembrandt's authorship was questioned, mostly as far as the *Girl* portrait is concerned. The complete examination and conservation project described above allowed art historians to confirm Rembrandt authorship, further authenticated by Prof. Ernst van de Wetering in 2006<sup>33</sup>. As a result, it was possible to exhibit both paintings during two venues of the 2006 Rembrandt's Year exhibition: *Rembrandt. Quest of Genius* in the Rembrandthuis in Amsterdam and *Rembrandt. Genie auf der Suche* in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin. The *Girl in a picture frame* was labeled as the highest point of Rembrandt's *trompe L'oeil*. The painting was chosen for the Dutch venue catalogue cover and was given the title *Mona Lisa of Warsaw*. Within the following years they received a wide public attention during subsequent exhibitions: *Treasures of Poland. Rembrandt and the Precious Royal Collection*, 29.08.2010–12.01.2011 in Japan, Tokyo Fuji Art Museum (29.08–26.09), Suntory Museum Osaka (6.10–31.10), Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art (10.11–5.12), Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum (15.12–15.01); *L'Aigle Blanc. Stanislas Auguste, dernier roi de Pologne, collectionneur et mécène au siècle des Lumières*, Palais Impérial de Compiègne, France (8.04–18.07.2011); *The golden age of Poland* (1.06–4.09.2011), Palacco Real, Madrid, Spain; *Rembrandt i inni. Królewska kolekcja obrazów Stanisława Augusta* (19.07–16.10.2011), Muzeum Łazienki Królewskie, Warsaw, Poland. Back at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, they enjoy a new permanent display in the Galeria Lanckorońskich – Obrazy Rembrandta.

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<sup>33</sup> Some discussion still continues concerning the *Girl's* authorship among Rembrandtologists. Exhibition in Berlin was accompanied by *The Rembrandt symposium* in October 2006, where Walter Liedke from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York suggested Samuel van Hoogstraten as an author of the *Girl's* portrait. *Magazine*, CXLIX, February 2007; E. van de Wetering in his article *Connoisseurship and Rembrandt's paintings*, “The Burlington Magazine”, CL, February 2008 answers with his arguments. See also: A. Ziemia, *Nowa wizja osobowości i twórczości Rembrandta: dwie wystawy roku rembrandtowskiego (i jeden obraz polski)*, „Rocznik Historii Sztuki”, 2008, vol. XXXIII, p. 32. Volume entirely devoted to Rembrandt.



## STRESZCZENIE

*Dwa obrazy Rembrandta „Dziewczyna w ramie obrazu” i „Uczony przy pulpicie” z kolekcji Zamku Królewskiego w Warszawie – historia, badania i konserwacja*

W latach 2004–2006 w Zamku Królewskim w Warszawie przeprowadzono badania i konserwację dwóch obrazów Rembrandta van Rijn (1606–1669): *Dziewczyna w ramie obrazu* i *Uczony przy pulpicie*, namalowanych w technice olejnej na podłożach drewnianych, około 105,5 × 76,5 cm, sygnowanych i datowanych na rok 1641. Są to tzw. tronie – wizerunki nieznanymi osobami, w późniejszym czasie połączone w pendant tytułami i wymiarami.

Do zbiorów polskich obrazy trafiły z berlińskiej kolekcji hrabiów Kamecke, kupione w roku 1777 przez Stanisława Augusta Poniatowskiego. W 1815 roku obrazy zostały sprzedane Kazimierzowi Rzewuskiemu, a następnie były dziedziczone przez rodzinę Lanckorońskich. Od roku 1902 były one publicznie udostępniane w wiedeńskim pałacu Karola Lanckorońskiego i pozostawały w jego kolekcji do czasu II wojny światowej. Po roku 1950 odzyskane przez spadkobierców kolekcjonera po hitlerowskiej grabieży zostały uznane za zaginione i tym samym – stały się niedostępne dla badaczy. W roku 1969 na podstawie fotografii autorstwo Rembrandta zakwestionował Horst Gerson. Jako niedostępne nie mogły też być uwzględnione w trzecim tomie *Corpus of Rembrandt paintings*, obejmującym lata 1635–1642. W roku 1994 w darze profesor Karoliny Lanckorońskiej dla demokratycznej Polski oba dzieła – wcześniej utajnione przez właścicieli – zostały przekazane do Zamku Królewskiego w Warszawie.

W przeszłości cieszące się dużym uznaniem obrazy były wielokrotnie kopiowane. Przedstawiają je grafiki G.F. Schmidta z 1769 i 1770 roku oraz W. Ungera z 1876 roku, miniatury W. Lesseura z 1797 roku, anonimowe olejne kopie na podłożu płóciennym w zamkach na Wawelu i w Złoczowie (Ukraina); olejne kopie portretu kobiecego znajdują się też w muzeach w Kopenhadze, Wilanowie i Łańcucie. Najbliższe oryginałom są grafiki G.F. Schmidta, a portretowi *Dziewczyny* – kopia kopenhaska.

Zwraca uwagę fakt, że w kopiach *Dziewczyny* częściej występują różnice w stosunku do oryginału, np. krótsze ręce, odmienne opracowania sukni i tła oraz różne umiejscowienie sygnatury bądź jej brak, co częściowo dokumentuje zmiany, jakim podlegał oryginał.

Po pozyskaniu obrazów Zamek Królewski w Warszawie rozpoczął badania dzieł z udziałem profesora Ernsta van de Weteringa, przewodniczącego Rembrandt Research Project, opracowującego *Corpus of Rembrandt paintings*. Konserwacja wraz z interdyscyplinarnymi badaniami, w tym także budowy technicznej i technologicznej obrazów, przeprowadzonymi na Wydziałach Konserwacji i Restauracji Dzieł Sztuki ASP w Warszawie i ASP w Krakowie oraz Politechnice Warszawskiej i Uniwersytecie Warszawskim (m.in. UV, IR, RTG, analizy mikroskopowe, mikrochemiczne, stratygraficzne, SEM-EDS, FTIR, GC-MS), została zakończona reatrybucją obu dzieł Rembrandta, ogłoszoną przez profesora Ernsta van de Weteringa.

Badania określiły budowę techniczną i technologiczną obrazów. Topolowe podobrazia nie są typowe dla Rembrandta, ale w latach 40. XVII wieku kilkakrotnie zostały przez niego zastosowane. Grunty z bielą ołowiową i kredą, ugrów imprimitury, brak rysunków wstępnych kompozycji, występujące w olejnych (olej lniany i orzechowy) warstwach malarskich pigmenty i wypełniacze (także w mieszaninach: biel ołowiowa, żółcień cynowo-ołowiowa,

smalta, ziemia zielona, ochra żółta, cynober [lub vermilion], ochra czerwona, czerwień organiczna, żółte i brązowe związki żelaza, brąz bitumiczny [kasselski?], czerń kostna) oraz sposób opracowywania warstw malarskich są charakterystyczne dla artysty. Sygnatura w *Uczonym przy pulpicie* jest wzorcowa, w *Dziewczynie w ramie obrazu* – niepewna, poprawiana.

Przed konserwacją oba obrazy były ogólnie dobrze zachowane, jednak ich artystyczny wyraz – znacznie zubożony zbrudzonymi i mocno pożółkłymi werniksami, przebarwionymi retuszami oraz rozległymi przemalowaniami. W szczególnie złym stanie była suknia *Dziewczyny*, z licznymi ubytkami i odspojeniami warstw malarskich, podtrzymywanymi grubymi werniksami. Wokół głowy modelki i na jej torsie uwidocznił się też – poprzez uszkodzenia i rosnącą w czasie transparencję warstw wierzchnich – wykonany czarną farbą szkic rozpoczętego wcześniej innego portretu kobiecego (wykazany w ww. badaniach). Wzmagający się z czasem ślad szkicu stał się przyczyną późniejszych uszkodzeń i zasadniczych przemalowań tła portretu z kolumną oraz sukni modelki i iluzjonistycznej ramy. W trakcie konserwacji obrazu usunięto warstwy wtórnych werniksów, podklejając jednocześnie łuszczącą się warstwę malarską; usunięto rozległe retusze i część przemalowań. W portrecie *Uczonego* usunięto wtórne werniksy, retusze i znaczne przemalowania w tle portretu.

Projekt badawczo-konserwatorski, nagrodzony *Sybillą 2006*, zakończył się uznaniem autorstwa Rembrandta obu obrazów; portret *Dziewczyny* został wyróżniony jako jedyne pełne *trompe l'oeil* w jego twórczości.

W konsekwencji obrazy były eksponowane na najważniejszej wystawie *Roku Rembrandta 2006: Rembrandt. Quest of a genius* w Rembrandthuis, Amsterdam (z *Dziewczyną* na okładce katalogu) i w Gemäldegalerie, Berlin. Obrazy, ostatnio wystawiane w Japonii, Francji i Hiszpanii, powróciły w listopadzie 2011 roku do nowej Galerii Lanckorońskich w Zamku Królewskim w Warszawie.

*Ilustracje barwne (colour illustrations)*

Joanna Czernichowska, Regina Dmowska, Anna Nowicka

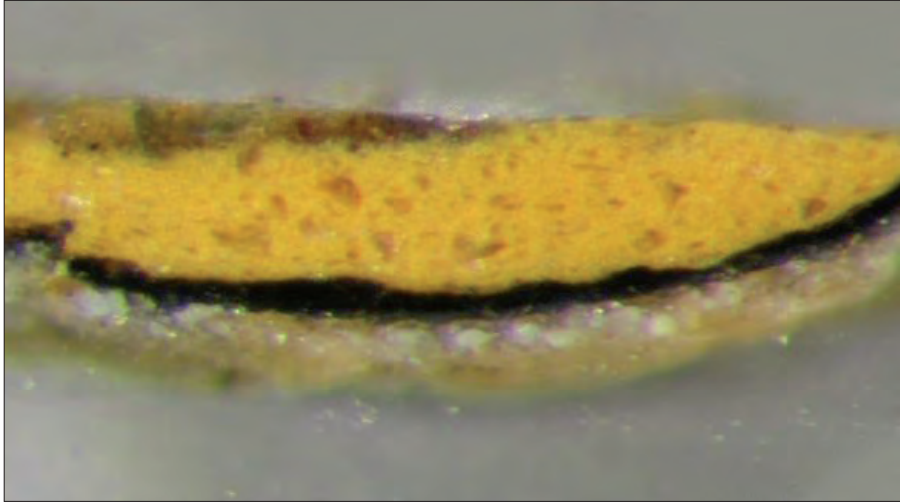


Ill. I. *Girl in a picture frame*, Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, 1641, oil on panel, the Royal Castle in Warsaw, inv. ZKW/3906 – painting after treatment. Photo A. Ring

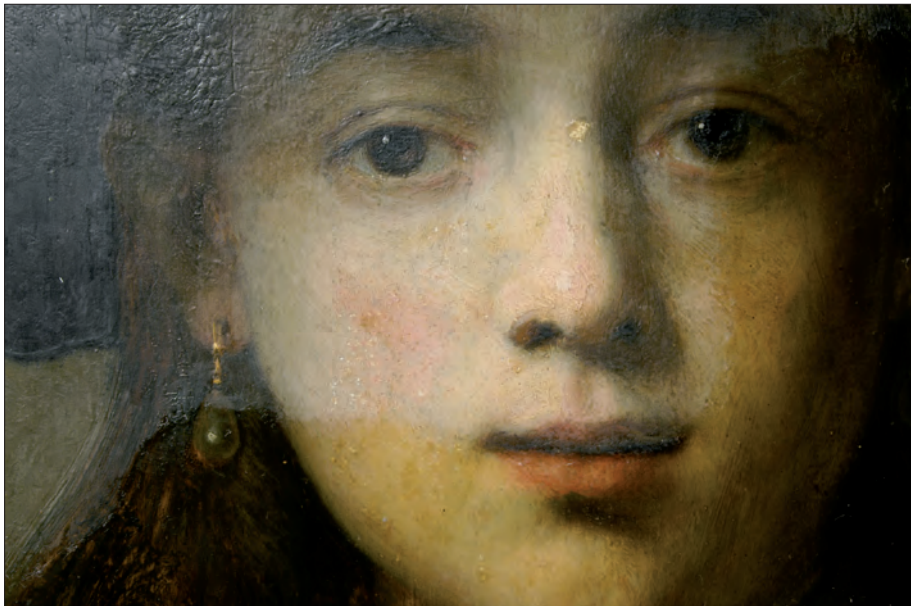


Ill. II. *Scholar at his writing desk*, Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, 1641, oil on panel, the Royal Castle in Warsaw, inv. ZKW/3905 – painting after treatment. Photo A. Ring





III. III. *Girl in a picture frame*. The cross-section of the golden belt's paint layer sample, enlargement:  $\times 160$  – visible two ground layers, thin imprimatur, black underlayer and yellow top layer. Photo A. Nowicka



III. IV. *Girl in a picture frame*, fragment – yellowed varnish removal. Photo A. Ring





Ill. V. *Girl in a picture frame*, fragment – varnish removal and the consolidation of the right sleeve's paint layer. Photo B. Tropilo



Ill. VI. *Girl in a picture frame*, fragment – thick overpaints of the dress damaged original paint layer. Photo B. Tropilo

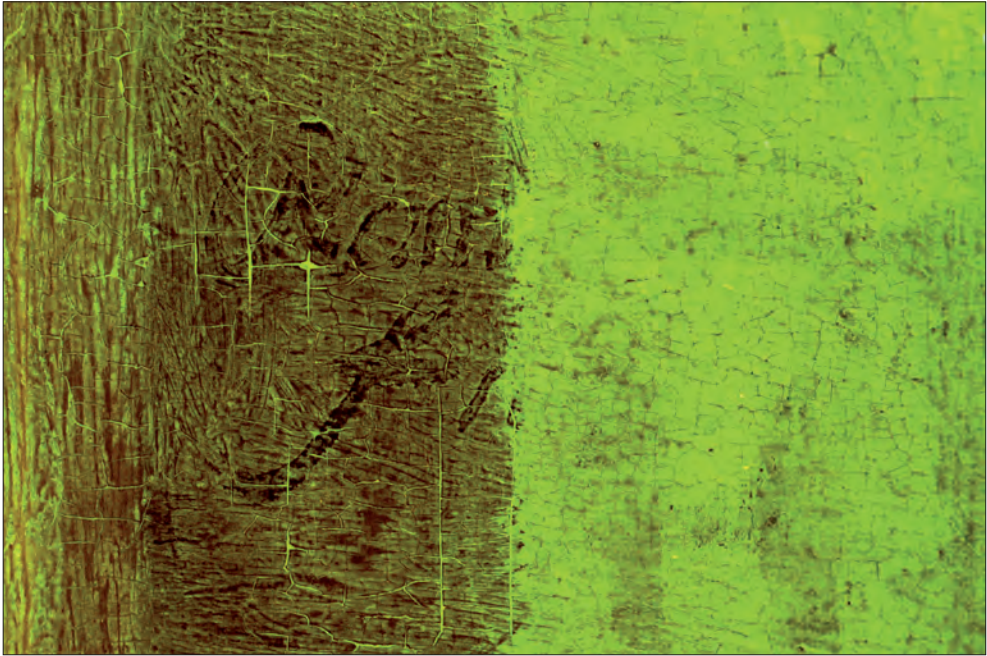


III. VII. *Scholar at his writing desk*. UV luminescence – paint layers during varnishes removal; retouching and overpaints visible as dark areas. Photo A. Ring



III. VIII. *Scholar at his writing desk*, fragment – yellowed varnish removal. Photo A. Ring





Ill. IX. *Scholar at his writing desk*, fragment. UV luminescence – yellowed varnishes removal on the signature. Photo A. Ring