



Rembrandt's Mother

Myth and Reality

Christiaan Vogelaar

Gerbrand Korevaar

Contributions by Anouk Janssen

Contributions by Volker Manuth

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About half of the work Rembrandt did in Leiden consisted of paintings, etchings and drawings showing older people. In these works an old woman is frequently portrayed who has traditionally been held to be Rembrandt's mother, Neeltje Willemsdr. van Zuijdtbroek. Whether Rembrandt really depicted her or whether this is a myth which has persisted for centuries is still not clear. This book discusses the creation of this myth, which although not firmly based on facts, has been an essential part of Rembrandt's image for centuries. The works for which Rembrandt's mother was the model and which are reproduced in this book give an idea of the young artist's iconographic interests. For instance, Rembrandt depicted her as a prophetess, attentively reading a book. Sometimes she plays an active role in religious or allegorical pictures. A similar model can also be recognised in paintings by Rembrandt's friend Jan Lievens and his first pupil, Gerrit Dou. By showing the paintings of these young masters the book examines the artistic relationships between them. It offers a unique opportunity to compare early, closely related works and to gain a clearer picture of the collaboration among these artists.