

Authentication - Is this Rembrandt real?

Around 300 Prints have been attributed to Rembrandt. That's far fewer authentic prints than was once believed. Careful research and cataloging have provided tools for curators, collectors, and art dealers to authenticate prints they believe might be by Rembrandt - to prove if they are **states** (different stages or versions of an authentic print), **fakes** (copies), or **restrikes** (prints pulled from Rembrandt's printing plates after his death).

By comparing such things as size, paper, images, light and dark areas, heaviness of line and shading, and the presence or absence of certain details that may have been added or removed, it is possible to tell not only if a print was made by Rembrandt, but when it was made, which state or version it is, how many others exist, and where they might be now. All of these factors help determine the rarity and value of a print.


Subject Print:

Self Portrait in a Flat Cap and Embroidered Dress
Original printing date 1642

Catalogues raisonnés numbers:
H157 BB38-1 NU/B 156 B26

Read the entries below for this print from three authoritative catalogues raisonnés and note qualitative differences in description.




Hind, published 1912 and 1923

REMBRANDT IN A FLAT CAP, AND EMBROIDERED DRESS.	
B 26	H 157 BB 38-1
(BARTSCH) (SEIDLITZ)	REMBRANDT AUX CHEVEUX COURTS ET FRISES. SELBSTBILDNIS MIT DER FLACHEN KAPPE.
C 2 —	A common, attractive small portrait.
	
	Signed, Rembrandt f. and trace of date — very faint.
	Plate in existence PARIS.
1ST. STATE.	(R i - H i) There is a very faint signature & date in the Upper L. corner.
(e)	Impression sharp & clear, a few horizontal scratches in the background. Signature just visible. 500.00
(i)	Impression sharp & clear. Signature almost invisible.
Colln.	AMST. (Jap.) N-U. 450.00
(l)	Impression rather light & clear. Signature no longer visible. 300.00
2ND. STATE.	(R - H ii) Signature now plain, scratched in, in double outline.
(e)	Clear sharp impression.
	P. F. BASAN. Before short line at right angles to the top line of the diagonal L-R shading at the left, 1/4" to left of cap.
Colln.	N-U. 225.00
(i)	BASAN. The above short line quite plain. There is a diagonal R-L slipt stroke starting up from L. eyebrow. Signature clear.
Colln.	N-U. 150.00
(l)	JEAN. The short line almost worn out. Signature weak. Shading to L. of nose much worn. 100.00
3RD. STATE.	Plate coarsely rebitten; the worn spots to L. of nose, and upper R. forehead reworked. Slipt stroke still visible. Signature appears retouched.
(e)	BERNARD. Strong Impression. 50.00
(l)	BERNARD (late). No trace of slipt stroke. 30.00
	BEAUMONT. Not seen.
	Copies. s.d. one. rev. two.

Nowell-Usticke, using Bartsch's numbers (NU/B), published 1967

REMBRANDT'S ETCHINGS	
152. THREE HEADS OF WOMEN, ONE ASLEEP.	G., Da. 334.—B., R., S. 368.—Cl. 358.—W. 362.—Bl. 251.—M. 130.—Du. 356.
[142 × 97.] Signed and dated: <i>Rembrandt f.</i> 1637.	
I. Partly failed in the biting. BRITISH MUSEUM.	
II. Reworked in the spots that failed; a slipped stroke across the plate below.	
Modern, reworked: BASAN—BERNARD.	
153. THREE HEADS OF WOMEN, ONE LIGHTLY ETCHED.	G., Da. 333.—B., R., S. 367.—Cl. 357.—W. 361.—Bl. 250.—M. 115.—Du. 355.
[127 × 102.] About 1637.	
I. With the upper head (portrait of Saskia) only.	
II. The other two heads added.	
	The central study, if not the two others, is certainly taken from Saskia.
154. STUDY OF SASKIA AS S. CATHERINE (THE 'LITTLE JEWISH BRIDE').	G., Da. 312.—B., R., S. 342.—Cl. 332.—W. 338.—Bl. 200.—M. 135.—Du. 331.
[110 × 78.] Signed and dated (in reverse): <i>Rembrandt f.</i> 1638.	
155. SHEET WITH TWO STUDIES: A TREE, AND THE UPPER PART OF A HEAD OF REMBRANDT WEARING A VELVET CAP.	G., Da. 339 and ? 230.*—B., R., S. 372.—Cl. 362.—W. 366.—Bl. 349.—M. 154.—Du. 360.
[78 × 67.] The head about 1642; the tree possibly later.	
	Prof. W. Martin has noted that a similar head of Rembrandt occurs in the <i>Night-Watch</i> of 1642, behind and to the r. of the standard-bearer.
156. REMBRANDT IN VELVET CAP AND PLUME, WITH AN EMBROIDERED DRESS: BUST.	G., Da. 25.—B., Cl., W., Du., R., S. 20.—Bl. 233.—M. 134.
[134 × 103.] Signed and dated: <i>Rembrandt f.</i> 1638.	
Modern: BASAN—BERNARD.	
	Rovinski makes a unique first state of a falsified impression in Berlin.
157. REMBRANDT IN A FLAT CAP WITH A SHAWL ABOUT HIS SHOULDERS.	G., Da. 12* and 293.—B., Cl., W., Du., R., S. 26.—Bl. 216.—M. 133.
[93 × 62.] About 1638.	
I. The signature <i>Rembrandt f.</i> , and illegible traces of a date, etched in the master's hand. (N.B.—The signature faintly seen on the BRITISH MUSEUM impression, is apparently not decipherable on all impressions before II.)	
II. The signature <i>Rembrandt</i> re-etched by another hand.	
Modern, reworked: BASAN—BERNARD.	
	The style of execution would seem to place this etching about 1638, though as a portrait it might well be ten years later. There is a certain dryness in the work, which may have caused Vosmaer's doubts as to its authenticity.

Biorklund and Barnard, published 1968

BB 38-1	REMBRANDT IN FLAT CAP AND EMBROIDERED DRESS	H-157 · B-26 · Bl.-216
		
	Date assumed: 1638.	
	I. Lightly signed: Rembrandt f. near upper l. corner. This signature was often missed in the inking of the plate and is practically invisible in many impressions.	
	II. The signature is strengthened, probably by another hand. The lines are doubled in many places. Modern: Basan, etc. (No rework in the first edition of the <i>Recueil</i>).	
	This copper plate had earlier been used for another etching and polished for the present one. The faint signature may have belonged to the first etching on the plate.	
	COPY s.d. 86 × 68, subject 64 × 58, by Cumano. rev. 81 × 70 by Deuchar. rev., head only, 40 × 35 by Deuchar. rev. 98 × 64, signed: E. B. W. Zoho 1820. Middleton mentions a reversed copy by Hazard.	
BB 38-2	WOMAN LYING ILL IN BED, etc.	H-163 · B-369 · Bl.-122
		
	Date assumed: 1638.	
	One state only. BM, BN, RPK, CAM.	
	COMPARE: Drawing rev. in the BM, of 1638/39 (HdG-935, KdK-692, Benesch-432). Drawing rev. ex coll. Heseltine, of 1634/35 (HdG-995, KdK-691).	
BB 38-3	OLD MAN SHADING HIS EYES WITH HIS HAND	H-169 · B-259 · Bl.-268
		
	Date assumed: 1638.	
	One state only.	
	Several compilers describe a second state where the pupil of the l. eye is better defined than in earlier impressions. A printseller in Berlin (Tribbe) bought the plate about 1770 and employed G. F. Schmidt to add a body and later a background.	
	COPY s.d. 137 × 110 (cut) by Bretherton. There are in this copy three long scratches to the r. of the cap, which are nearly straight in the copy but curved in the original. s.d. 139 × 112 by James Hazard, signed Rt f. 1639. rev. 73 × 57, oval, signed: D. f. 1744.	