

THE DUTCH STATE TO ACQUIRE REMBRANDT'S HISTORIC MASTERPIECE "THE STANDARD BEARER" FOR THE NATION

The Dutch State today announced its intention to purchase Rembrandt's *The Standard Bearer* (1636) for the national collection, with the support of the Rembrandt Association and the Rijksmuseum Fund.

For centuries, the masterpiece has been owned by private collectors, including England's King George IV and, since 1844, the Rothschild family. The Dutch State has now signed a letter of intent with the seller. A proposal to amend the budget of OCW (Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science) to make the purchase possible was sent to the House of Representatives today.

The Standard Bearer is one of Rembrandt's masterpieces and is inextricably linked to the history of the Netherlands. Standard-bearers were positioned in the front line in battle in the Eighty Years' War, the War of Independence which led to the birth of the Netherlands in 1648. In this large self-portrait, Rembrandt paints himself looking rebellious and full of bravado. It was this artistic breakthrough that would lead to *The Night Watch*.

If the acquisition is successful, *The Standard Bearer* will tour the Netherlands and go on public display in each of the provinces. It will eventually be given a place in the Rijksmuseum's Gallery of Honour.

Minister Van Engelshoven said: *With this joint acquisition, we are making one of Rembrandt's most beautiful works accessible to everyone. After hundreds of years, the work will now come in public hands, so everyone can enjoy this painting of enormous cultural and historical significance. After a journey of centuries, The Standard Bearer will now returning home for good.*

Fusien Bijl de Vroe, Director of the Rembrandt Association, said: *A purchase like this is important both today and for generations to come. The Rembrandt Association has been helping to realise dream purchases for 138 years. This will be a pinnacle of its achievements, with the highest contribution ever pledged. We thank all our members. The joint effort between the State, the Rijksmuseum and the Rembrandt Association has enabled us to reach to this point. Exceptional purchases such as this are only possible in partnership.*

Taco Dibbits, General Director of the Rijksmuseum said: *Returning The Standard Bearer to our country has been a dream for many generations. Now that the opportunity presents itself, we are joining forces to acquire this Rembrandt for the Netherlands for eternity. The quality of the painting and the fact that it marks Rembrandt's artistic breakthrough makes it an unparalleled work by the master: it is when Rembrandt became Rembrandt! We are grateful to the Dutch State, the Rembrandt Association, the VriendenLoterij and many private benefactors for making this possible.*

Finance

The purchase of *The Standard Bearer* will be achieved through a combination of public and private financing. The Rembrandt Association will contribute €15 million, in addition to the

contribution of the Rijksmuseum Fund of €10 million. The Dutch State will make up the remainder of €150 million, of which €19 million will come from the Museum Purchase Fund.

The Standard Bearer (1636)

Rembrandt was thirty years old when he painted *The Standard Bearer*. He painted himself in the portrait in the most beautiful historical clothing. He consciously places himself in the northern tradition of portraits of standard-bearers by famous artists such as Albrecht Dürer, Lucas van Leyden and Hendrick Goltzius.

Standard-bearers had a dangerous task in the militia of the 17th century: on the battlefield they went ahead of the troops in shiny clothing and brandishing flags. The militia had an essential role in the Eighty Years' War, the revolt against Spanish rule, which resulted in the birth of an independent Netherlands in 1648. At the same time, *The Standard Bearer* shows Rembrandt's ambition to paint a group portrait for the Amsterdam militia, at the time the most valued commission a painter could be awarded. Rembrandt succeeded six years later when he was commissioned to paint *The Night Watch*.

Rembrandt in the Netherlands

Rembrandt made about 340 paintings. Most of these are in foreign museums and private collections. There are 44 paintings by Rembrandt in the Netherlands, 22 of which are in the Rijksmuseum. The collection in the Netherlands, from his early self-portrait as a young man to his late self-portrait in the Mauritshuis in The Hague, provides an overview of his life. *The Standard Bearer* is one of the first paintings that Rembrandt made after he established himself as an independent artist in Amsterdam, and has so far been the missing link in this overview.

The Standard Bearer was last seen in 2019 at the Rembrandt-Velázquez exhibition in the Rijksmuseum.

Details:

The Standard Bearer, 1636

Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669)

Oil on canvas, 118.8 x 96.8 cm

Notes to Editors

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