



# Rembrandt and the Female Nude (Amsterdam Studies in the Dutch Golden Age)

By Eric Jan Sluijter

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Rembrandt's extraordinary paintings of female nudes—*Andromeda*, *Susanna*, *Diana and her Nymphs*, *Danaë*, *Bathsheba*—as well as his etchings of nude women, have fascinated many generations of art lovers and art historians. But they also elicited vehement criticism when first shown, described as against-the-grain, anticlassical—even ugly and unpleasant. However, Rembrandt chose conventional subjects, kept close to time-honored pictorial schemes, and was well aware of the high prestige accorded to the depiction of the naked female body. Why, then, do these works deviate so radically from the depictions of nude women by other artists? To answer this question Eric Jan Sluijter, in *Rembrandt and the Female Nude*, examines Rembrandt's paintings and etchings against the background of established pictorial traditions in the Netherlands and Italy. Exploring Rembrandt's intense dialogue with the works of predecessors and peers, Sluijter demonstrates that, more than any other artist, Rembrandt set out to incite the greatest possible empathy in the viewer, an approach that had far-reaching consequences for the moral and erotic implications of the subjects Rembrandt chose to depict.

In this richly illustrated study, Sluijter presents an innovative approach to Rembrandt's views on the art of painting, his attitude towards antiquity and Italian art of the Renaissance, his sustained rivalry with the works of other artists, his handling of the moral and erotic issues inherent in subjects with female nudes, and the nature of his artistic choices.

## **Rembrandt and the Female Nude (Amsterdam Studies in the Dutch Golden Age) By Eric Jan Sluijter Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #2518754 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Amsterdam University Press
- Published on: 2007-03-21
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 1.10" w x 6.13" l, 4.33 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 448 pages

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"A comprehensive, sensitive examination of a compelling topic in Rembrandt studies. Essential."  
(*Choice*)

"Rembrandt is revealed as an artist who drew heavily upon the visual tradition and its iconography, but also consulted text and used his own imagination to evolve a distinctive approach to the female nude. Sluijter's excellent book will be a classic on this subject for many decades to come. . . . It offers new ways of defining what is meant by 'realism' in Rembrandt's art."  
(Shirley Perlove *Historians of Netherlandish Art*)

#### About the Author

**Eric Jan Sluijter** is professor of the history of Renaissance and early modern art at the University of Amsterdam. Currently he is visiting professor at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.

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