

1. Introduction and description

In some cases the history of the production of a painting by Rembrandt can be followed so closely that his artistic deliberations can be seen as it were. This is all the more the case in the Berlin *Susanna and the Elders*, since there are strong indications that Rembrandt worked on this painting on and off for nearly a decade. While this had already been suspected for a long time, the research conducted on this painting and described here adds to our knowledge and understanding of its genesis. With a reinterpretation of old information and the availability of new data, it is also possible to follow Rembrandt's artistic development between 1638 and 1647 as it manifested itself while he was working on this painting. The greater part of this entry, therefore, is devoted to the interpretation of the 'archaeological' data of which this painting is the 'site', and of the drawings and other works that play a role in the reconstruction of the evolution of this significant work.

In chronologically ordered surveys of Rembrandt's oeuvre, this painting is usually placed in 1647, the date inscribed on the painting. In this volume, however, we have opted to deal with it as the first catalogue text. The reason for this is that the painting was certainly already present in Rembrandt's workshop from as early as c. 1638, after which, and with intervals, Rembrandt worked on it up to 1647. In the case of other paintings that Rembrandt worked on with long interrupting intervals, we have placed them too according to the presumed first version of the image. This applies, for example, to the *Half length figure of Saskia van Uylenburgh* (II A 85), which developed in the years between c. 1633/34 and c. 1642. Another example is the *Danaë* (III A 119), which must have been completed in its first form in 1636, but which Rembrandt radically altered around 1643. We adopt this policy because a painting with a prolonged genesis can have influenced the production of pupils throughout the period of its presence in the workshop. Thus the *Danaë* in its first form was decisive for the *Isaac and Esau*, attributed to Ferdinand Bol (see III A 119 copy 1) which originated around 1640. In our view, the Berlin *Susanna* in an earlier stage served as the prototype for the *Bathsheba* in New York, dated to 1643 (V 2).

The subject of the painting is taken from the apocryphal story of Susanna in the Book of Daniel, which tells how Susanna, the wife of Joakim, having sent her two maid-servants to fetch some ointment and soap, is surprised while bathing in her garden by two Elders who had been spying on her for several days, and who threaten to accuse her of adultery should she refuse their advances (Daniel 13:15-21).

A pool of water occupies the area before an overgrown wall visible in the dusk, beyond which a large complex of buildings rises at the left. Susanna steps from a curved stone landing into the water. Bent forward and gazing out at the viewer, she has her right foot on a step in the water. She shields her breasts with her bent left arm and extends her left hand away from her torso in a gesture of either

alarm or defence. The drape, which only partially covers her naked body, is grasped by one of the Elders who has approached from behind, his right foot placed far to the fore. With his right hand raised in a possibly obscene gesture – fist balled and thumb raised – he bends his head towards her. He wears a soft tall cap, a richly decorated gown and a square-necked jerkin over a white shirt. Behind him at the right, the second, bearded Elder descends from an arched opening in a rock wall. He leans on a stone bannister with his right hand, and on a stick with his left. He wears a turban and a wide cloak fastened at his right shoulder over a dark costume. An open gate and a flowering bush indicate that the bathing scene is set in an enclosed garden. Susanna's red cloak is draped over a stone balustrade in the right foreground, at the base of which are her two red slippers.

On the other side of the water at the far left a peacock-like bird can be discerned on the wall which forms the division between the pool in the foreground, and a garden with trees extending beyond it near the buildings. The complex consists of a portal crowned by a balustrade with two shield-bearers, above which is a partially illuminated elevation with corner pilasters and a cornice, placed at a right angle to the picture plane. Rising behind this is an imposing, irregularly rounded structure from which extends a long, partially visible wing.

Working conditions

Examined in November 1968 (S.H.L., E.v.d.W.), in December 1988 (E.v.d.W.) and in June 1990 (M.F., V.M., E.v.d.W.): out of the frame and in good daylight and artificial light, with the aid of nine X-ray films, together covering the whole surface of the painting and with a stereomicroscope and infrared reflectography. Infrared photographs were received later. The painting is covered by a thick layer of yellowed varnish which impedes observation.

Support

Mahogany panel, grain horizontal, 76.6 x 92.8 cm. Thickness varies from 1.4 to 2.1 cm. Single plank. The surface of the back is very uneven, with clearly visible traces of transverse planing; the fairly regular bevelling on all four sides varies in width from 4.5 to 6.5 cm. Five holes are found along both the top and bottom edges – at the top spaced from 17 to 19 cm apart, and at the bottom from 16 to 18 cm. They begin on the back of the panel and extend into it without, however, continuing all the way through to the front. These holes show up in the X-radiograph as dark spots. A few horizontal cracks run from the left and right edges to a maximum length of 13 cm. The panel warps inwards near the cracks.

The type of wood was identified as *Swietenia mahagoni Jacq.*¹ In the mid-17th century, various types of South American wood were commonly used to make packing cases for sugar cones. The panel here was most probably originally part of such a crate.² This would identify the holes along the top and bottom edges of the panel as peg holes, necessary for the crate's construction.

Fig. 1. Panel 76.6 x 92.8 cm



Ground

The ground has hardly anywhere been left exposed, although it may shine through as a light tone in the areas to which a very thin, transparent brown glaze seems to have been applied, such as at the right near the head and in the costume of the Elder furthest back, and directly to the left of Susanna's head; at the left of the rock wall; and at the lower left in the water; in the trees in the garden; and in the shaded part of the buildings.

Paint layer

Condition: Good, with the exception of a few fissures caused by the cracks in the panel. The image appears to have been somewhat strengthened in places: in the water at the lower left along a crack, and in the dark areas of the architecture and the garden, where the paint layer is probably slightly abraded. That the painting has suffered some abrasion in areas is clear from a very accurate 18th-century reproductive print by R. Earlom (fig. 16; see 4. *Graphic reproductions*, 1). It shows two women in the dark garden – undoubtedly the two servant women dismissed by Susanna – who, due to the painting's present condition are now discernible only as faint apparitions. In addition, if we are to believe this 18th-century print, the hand with which Susanna presses the wrap into her lap was origin-

ally provided with a detailed indication of the fingers, now just barely visible.

Craquelure: The paint surface displays surprisingly little craquelure. Only locally, in the flesh tints of Susanna, and in a few other places, such as in the sky, a fine craquelure pattern can be detected.

The countless traces of the changes this painting underwent are manifested in a variety of ways: as differences in relief, in worn places, as uncovered remains of paint near new contours, and as impasto showing through transparent zones of the new forms. In 2. *Comments* these traces will be described and interpreted with the aid of X-radiographs, infrared photographs and related drawings. Here, a brief characterisation of the execution as it appears on the surface will suffice.

The execution of the Berlin *Susanna* is distinguished by an extraordinary – though never finicky – attention to detail, while simultaneously manifesting a remarkable grasp of the relationship of tone, colour and light in the composition as a whole. The brushstrokes are freely placed yet very clearly differentiated, both in the movement of the brush and in the way in which the paint itself is varied. Locally, such as in the body of Susanna, hardly any brushwork can be seen.

Fig. 2. X-Ray



Fig. 3. Copy 1. A pupil of Rembrandt, before 1647 (possibly around 1643). Pen and brown ink, brown and grey washes, red chalk, 17.8 x 23.8 cm. Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum

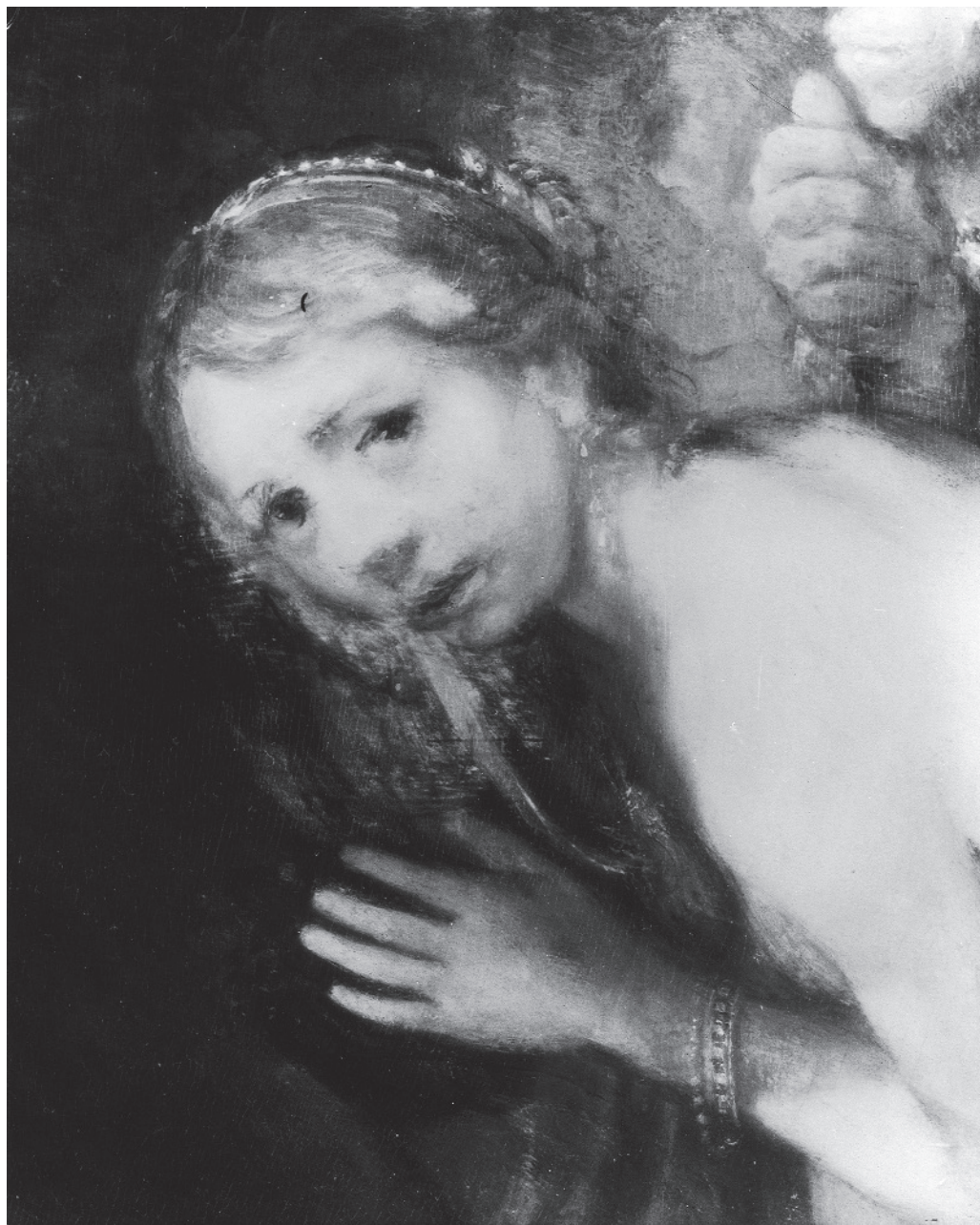




Rembrandt f. 67



Fig. 6. Infrared photograph, detail (1:1)



A strong light falls on Susanna and the Elder nearest her. The gradation of the intensity of the light within their figures is carefully modulated. In the nude Susanna, this results in an astonishing range of flesh tints, and in thoughtfully differentiated contours – from sharp outlines in the arm to more blurred ones in the legs – and a great richness in the treatment of the paint in which the texture of underlying differently shaped passages plays a role. Despite their loose execution, the faces have distinct individual expressions and that of Susanna (like her body) shows subtle reflected lights.

The impression the painting makes is largely determined by the deliberation with which the architectonic setting of the scene has been thought through. Faintly lit, the architectural elements are varied in tone and melt into the deep shadows permeating the entire pictorial space. However, the clarity of form and the detail of the visible

built structures are not affected – from the landing from which Susanna steps into the water, to the impressive edifices in the background. The way in which the building in the background, done in opaque greys, forms a tonal and coloristic unity with the lead-grey sky is striking. The treatment of Susanna's red cloak with a limited range of shades of vivid red is undoubtedly determined by the fact that an earlier version of this cloak had to be covered, whereby the great attention to the folds and reflections of light is noticeable. Transparent sections through which the ground is visible, as noted in *Ground*, occur only in a few areas, such as in the trees in the garden and the rock wall before which the scene is enacted and in and around the Elder to the right, areas from the first stage of the painting that were left untouched.

Fig. 7. Infrared photograph, detail (1:2)



Radiography

The X-radiograph shows a number of phenomena associated with the support (see *Support*). In addition to the dark shadows of the row of five peg holes along the top

and bottom edges of the image, the cracks and a wax seal at the far left, the X-radiograph also reveals a number of bright light spots at the upper left and right sides and at the lower left, which can be interpreted as lacunae in the wood filled with priming. These fillings do not seem to be

Fig. 8. Detail with signature (1:1)



restored damages of a later date, but were probably done before Rembrandt began to paint.

The most important elements of the painted image are clearly recognizable in the X-radiograph. Many deviations of the forms also show up. These deviations can be partially observed in the actual paint surface; in the X-radiograph they manifest themselves as either reserves or as elements showing up light.

Susanna's hair appears as a dark reserve in the somewhat radioabsorbent background. It should be noted that this reserve is far larger to the left of the head than the hair in the final version. The shape of this reserve suggests that Susanna was initially depicted with her hair hanging down. Also, differences in the light forms of the radiographic image of Susanna relative to the final result can be noted in the higher placement of her left shoulder; changes in the position of her left hand and a different shape for the white drape, which originally had tighter contours and entirely covered the buttocks, flowing approximately to the place where now the ankle meets the surface of the water.

A reserve for the left hand of the forward Elder is discernible in the white drape. Formerly, however, this was conceived differently: another arm is visible in the X-radiograph above the present position of the left arm, rendered with a few vigorous brushstrokes, extending across the Elder's chest and continuing across Susanna's back. In this stage, the upper body of this Elder must have been placed more in profile than it is now. A strip running parallel to the present left shoulder and upper arm is somewhat darker than the background in the X-radiograph, which seems to indicate that this figure previously had another contour. Moreover, a slightly darker reserve for his right hand shows that it was initially placed somewhat higher and in front of the nose. The shape of this reserve is also visible in the paint surface. The reserve for the headdress shows it to have been completely different: it was much taller, while the lower part had a more turban-like form. Executed in radioabsorbent paint, the headdress probably corresponds with the largely painted-over area of yellowish paint still evident in the paint surface.

A number of deviations in the right foreground are visible in the radiographic image. For example, the reserve for the landing is situated further to the left. Showing up in the area of the red cloak and in a zone above it are robust brushstrokes in radioabsorbent paint, in which a reserve has been left for the collar. In the radiographic image, the hanging sashes occupy more space. A reserve for the sashes, which is more to the right and extends further up, as well as one for one of the little ties hanging from the collar, were left in the drape, which is done in highly radioabsorbent paint and probably extended down to the water basin. A jet of liquid shows up somewhat to the left of Susanna, and in the pool, a swan taking flight. To the right above the head of the second Elder are a number of light brushstrokes, which may indicate vegetation. Above this Elder's head and to the left can be detected the arched form of the passage. A shape can be distinguished on the little wall at the left consisting of a few light strokes, probably a bird. With respect to the group of buildings, a reserve was left in the fairly pronounced sky only for the low structures at the left. A dark reserve, reminiscent of the crown of a tall tree, was left in the area in the painting under the imposing, wide tower-like structure.

A few areas in the X-radiograph are more difficult to identify. Among them is a light stroke of paint to the right of the open gate, and an area behind the elbow of the left Elder and above the collar and a portion of Susanna's cloak. Here too the paint surface shows an uninterpretable shape covered by dark paint.

The infrared photographs confirm in part the observations of the painted surface made with the naked eye and of the X-radiographs. Visible at the left between Susanna's head and hand is a lighter spot in the place where the X-radiograph shows a dark area of a reserve for hanging hair (figs. 5 and 6). It is also clear how the arch in front of which the rightmost Elder stands has been altered. The infrared photograph reveals dark lines, which indicate the architectural forms of a passage and which are far less clear in the paint surface (fig. 7).

Signature

At the lower right on the vertical edge of the receding step on which rest the slippers, in black <Rembrandt.f.[1]647.> (fig. 8). The inscription shows the letters and the numbers in perspective. Some of the letters appear to have *pentimenti* in an ochrish yellow colour. Above the numbers is a black line, also in perspective; the three legible figures seem to have been slightly strengthened. The unusual degree of care with which the signature has been executed could signify the importance that this painting may have had for its maker.

2. Comments

Although the question of attribution is not one of the problems associated with the Berlin *Susanna and the Elders* – no doubts have ever been expressed and rightly so – its exact place within Rembrandt's authentic oeuvre is not

Fig. 9. Pupil of Rembrandt or belonging to the Munich and Dresden group of Rembrandt imitations, pen and bistre, 19.7 x 17 cm (Ben. 536). Dresden, Kupferstichkabinett



altogether clear. This is owed to the fact that the painting's genesis complicates its stylistic interpretation. The curved arrangement of the figures, for example, is a solution more characteristic of Rembrandt in the 1620s and 30s than in the 1640s. The archway through which the second Elder emerges, just behind him to the left, once contributed greatly to this effect. From the X-radiographs and infrared photographs, and primarily from a drawn copy of an earlier stage of the composition, which will be discussed below (see fig. 3), it appears that Rembrandt during his work radically toned down the prominence of this archway as a compositional element and thereby entirely changed the structure of the composition.

In addition to the change just mentioned, there are other significant alterations in the painting, several of which have been addressed by previous authors. Kauffmann was the first to note in 1924 that certain over-painted elements showed up in the paint surface.³ Subsequently, Burroughs in 1931, indicated the traces of another lay-out which he, however, incorrectly considered as part of the underpainting.⁴ He relied on a (partial) X-radiograph of the painting.

Kauffmann connected his observations concerning the changes in the painting with several drawings. He proposed a reconstruction of the genesis of the painting, in which the present visible version was preceded by only one earlier. As he convincingly demonstrated, that earlier stage was faithfully copied in a drawing now in Budapest (fig. 3).⁵ This drawing has been attributed to Barend Fabritius and dated *c.* 1646 by Wegner.⁶ The stage in the development of the painting documented by this drawing, however, was placed much earlier by Kauffmann, namely

before the *Susanna at the bath* in The Hague (see fig. 13; III A 117), which he considered to have been painted in 1637. He arrived at a hypothetical dating of *c.* 1635 for the earlier stage of the Berlin *Susanna* as recorded in the Budapest drawing, henceforth called the 'Budapest stage'. While many followed Kauffmann in this view, not everyone agreed with him. For example, Benesch⁷ and Sumowski believed that the Budapest stage was reached shortly before the completion of the painting in 1647.

In themselves, radical changes do not necessarily indicate a long working process. However, there is an archival document that Hofstede de Groot had already connected to the Berlin *Susanna*,⁸ which implies that the painting was considered to be completed in or before 1642. In this document of 1659, a certain Adriaen Banck states that in 1647 he bought from Rembrandt 'een stuck schilderije van Susanna' (a painting of Susanna) (see 3. *Documents and sources*, 1). This statement was made at the request of Titus' guardian, Louys Crayers, in connection with determining Titus' share of his mother's inheritance. While the document of 1659 bears on the sale of a painting in 1647, it can be concluded from the reason for making the statement that the painting already existed at the time of Saskia's death in 1642. Otherwise, it would not have been included as property in determining the extent of her inheritance. The other statements of 1659 in this inheritance matter (including one dealing with the *Night watch*, III A 146) all appear to concern works already completed by 1642, that is, the year of Saskia's death.⁹ From 1642 and earlier years, however, no painting with Susanna other than the Hague *Susanna at the bath* dated by us to 1636 is known (III A 117), for which, given its small size, a price of 500 guilders is not likely. The mention in the document may thus concern the Berlin *Susanna* which, after all, is provided with the date 1647 – the year in which Banck bought his 'stuck schilderije van Susanna' (a painting of Susanna). In short, the document provides a strong argument in favour of Kauffmann's hypothesis that the Berlin *Susanna* must have been completed in one form or another long before 1647; at the latest in 1642. That the painting had reached the stage in which it was copied in the Budapest drawing well before 1647 – possibly around 1643 –, is also evident from, the influence it exercised in this form on a painting from Rembrandt's workshop, the 1643 *Bathsheba* (V 2) in New York, a connection which will be discussed in more detail below.

A drawing in Dresden (fig. 9; Ben. 536) played a role in relation to Kauffmann's dating of 1635 for the earlier stage of the painting. According to Kauffmann, this drawing (which, incidentally, he had rejected in an earlier article,¹⁰ but which upon reconsideration he nonetheless included in Rembrandt's oeuvre) could on stylistic grounds only be dated to the mid-1630s. This dating of the drawing, which Kauffmann considered as a preparatory study for the first version of the painting, thus provided him with an indication for the point in time when Rembrandt would have begun the painting. Benesch (see note 7) on the other hand, dated the drawing to the mid-1640s. Partly based on this dating, he believed that the earlier stage of the painting must have been done shortly

before the final version. Apart from the problems of dating and attribution associated with this drawing, already advanced in the first publication on it by Burchard,¹¹ in our view the drawing does not appear useful in analysing the transformations of the Berlin painting. It corresponds only in a general sense with the painting: neither the composition as a whole, nor specific details closely coincide with any stage in the painting's genesis. Christian Dittich, in the 2004 catalogue of the Rembrandt drawings in Dresden, even rejected the drawing altogether, suggesting that it belonged to the Munich and Dresden group of Rembrandt imitations.¹²

The genesis of the painting was more complex than supposed by either Kauffmann, Burroughs, or the other authors who had to rely on the evidence they could collect with the means at their disposal. The earlier appearance of the composition will be discussed later in this argument. First, the changes after the Budapest stage will be analysed, as they most clearly demonstrate that through this intervention the painting not only experienced fundamental changes in form and composition, but also in colour – an aspect that until now has been neglected in the literature on this painting.

To gain an idea of the earlier appearance of the painting in terms of colour, it is necessary to seek traces of underlying paint in worn areas and along the final contours. Thus, it is highly likely that the colour of the clothing of the leftmost Elder in the previous stage deviated from what is now seen. Red paint shows through the smoothly applied black paint in the dark jerkin and in the shaded side of his left sleeve. In addition to red, the earlier stage also contained blue and yellow elements. This is indicated by a yellowish spot with some blue and a smudge of red in the background just to the right of the head of the Elder, in the area of the originally higher shoulder (see also *Radiography*). Evidently these traces are the remains of an earlier stage. Furthermore, some blue vaguely shines through on the chest, possibly corresponding to the transparent blue extant in the right sleeve, and to traces of blue that are partially covered by blackish paint at the left near Susanna's red cloak. Where now the garments of the Elder nearest Susanna are dominated by colours of black and brown, previously a combination of blue and red must have played a role in the clothing of this figure. It is also possible to get an impression of the earlier colour scheme of the headdress of this Elder, which (according to the drawing in Budapest) was lower. So, while the cap now is of a black fabric with a red shimmer, partly painted-out ochre strokes with a blue accent indicate that the cap matched the earlier version of the Elder's clothing, and was thus more colourful than it is now.

The most significant change, however, was in the colour scheme of Susanna's cloak and slippers. These are now painted in a strong red. In the X-ray image both the folds in the cloak, applied with bold strokes of radioabsorbent paint, as well as the hanging sash deviate from what can be discerned in the paint surface. Moreover, the earlier shape of the cloak as such was different. The folds visible in the X-radiograph clearly correspond with the folds and

the sash in the Budapest drawing. On the basis of the pale grey-yellow locally shining through the paint surface of the red garment, the brownish tints below the dark hanging part, and the fine points of yellow and white impastoed paint piercing through the red paint layer, it can be assumed that the garment in this earlier stage was intended to be a yellowish, probably gold brocade-like fabric. The earlier version of the cloak appears to have been left uncovered above the collar, where yellow-white strokes of paint can be detected, and in the brownish area below the collar. Also Susanna's slippers were executed in yellow and brownish tints. The only reddish accent in this part of the earlier phase of the painting was provided by the sash, which was done in an opaque pink red, and was somewhat wider, as evidenced by the traces of wearing to the right of the present sash.

Before discussing the consequences of these drastic changes in the colour scheme, it is necessary to point out changes in the colour and the *peinture* in the skin of Susanna; traces of an underlying, somewhat more yellow flesh-coloured paint layer in the hollow of the knee, in the breast, and in the shoulder at the right near the contour probably belong to the same earlier stage in the evolution of the painting as do the other changes in the colour scheme described above. In contrast to the smoothly applied flesh colour in the final version of Susanna, the brushstrokes of the more yellow flesh tints exhibit plainly visible relief.

Envisaging the painting in its earlier appearance, it is striking that the light yellowish tonality of Susanna's skin and the cloak behind her constitute a compositional cluster of brightness. Similar solutions are found in a number of Rembrandt's works from the second half of the 1630s and early 1640s, for instance in the *Night watch* (III A 146). The impression of the colour being outshone by the light must originally have been strengthened by the rugged, light scattering paint surface. In similar earlier conceptions, red functions primarily as a repoussoir, generally glowing along the rims of dark figures and forms (cf. the man holding a partizan in the *Blinding of Samson* in Frankfurt, III A 116, or the musketeer loading his musket at the left in the *Night watch*). Broadly stated, it can be postulated that Rembrandt subordinated colour to light and three-dimensionality until the early 1640s. This changed in the 1640s; while the handling of light remains equally convincing, local colour – particularly the red – was allowed a greater role. The 1645 *Holy Family* in St Petersburg (V 4) is an early and telling example of this new tendency, for instance with the very powerful and practically uniform red of the blanket in the cradle. Thus, the covering of the yellowish cloak and the yellow-brown slippers with intense, even reds in the *Susanna* can be considered as an almost programmatic act in Rembrandt's development as a colourist.

The remains of colour below the present dark tones of the garment of the foremost Elder suggest that initially this figure was the only colourful element in the painting, with the exception of the sash trailing from Susanna's cloak. The rose colour of the sash, however, appears to indicate that this colourful element also had a part in the

effect of being outshone by strong light. The reduction of the colourfulness of the Elder nearest Susanna in turn lends an ivory quality to the skin of her upper body (now smoothly executed), which appears to be entirely modelled by the light. The usual juxtaposition in the Berlin museum of Rembrandt's *Susanna* with the one by his teacher Lastman (see fig. 14), makes it abundantly clear that Rembrandt was intent on giving an entirely convincing luminosity to the light playing upon a given element in the painting, reinforced by the inclusion of deep shadows and even by setting the scene in the dark, an aspect that, as will appear, runs counter to the biblical story.

Like the changes in the colour, the changes in the figures and the elimination of elements suggesting forceful movement can be seen as typical of Rembrandt's evolution in the 1630s and 40s. The latter was an aspect that had prompted Kauffmann to argue in favour of a date of 1635 for the inception of the painting. To start with, in the drawing in Budapest, the approaching Elder reaches around Susanna and grasps at her breast with his left hand; in the drawing (fig. 3), his arm was placed somewhat higher than in the painting now. Not only do streaks of paint which show up in the X-radiograph agree with this placement of the arm: which show the contour of this Elder's back and shoulder is higher and runs further to the right, both in the X-radiograph and the Budapest drawing, indicating that in this earlier stage his upper body was turned more in profile. In addition, the correspondence between the drawing and a few strokes showing up faintly in the X-radiograph in the area of the left leg of the Elder nearest Susanna, indicates that the now invisible leg was, in fact, visible in the early stage even if its original position is not entirely clear.

One can argue whether by literally curtailing the Elder's assaultive movement of the arm and allowing his left leg to merge into the shadow behind Susanna, a few elements of action, if not unrest, were consciously eliminated. This is certainly the case in several other areas in the painting. For instance, in the Budapest stage the foremost Elder overturns a jar with his extended front leg, spilling its contents. This small stream of some liquid is visible in the X-radiograph and it also shows through the paint surface locally. One other 'agitated' element that is eliminated is a large swan to the left of Susanna, which is apparently startled by the events taking place on the bank. This bird is visible in both the X-ray image and in the paint relief. Stereomicroscopic investigation shows the swan to have been done in greyish browns. A number of smaller birds taking flight to the left of the swan can be seen only in the drawing.

Susanna herself may also have made a more agitated impression in the earlier stage. Studying the drawing in Budapest, it appears that her upper body probably had a somewhat different position: the shoulder and the upper arm were slightly higher and more to the left, with the arm less pressed into her torso than now. It is difficult to discern this earlier position of the shoulder and the upper arm in the X-radiograph because it interferes with the final, as well as a still earlier version of this area, which

Fig. 10. Rembrandt, *Study of one of the Elders*, c. 1638, pen and gall-nut ink on light yellow prepared paper, 17.3 x 13.5 cm (Ben. 157). Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria



was executed in a fairly strong radioabsorbent paint. That the left arm was moved more to the front can be inferred from the X-radiographs, in which two different versions of Susanna's hand show up to the left of the hand now visible. The hair hanging free at the left of the head, as well as the somewhat altered position of the head and slightly different expression, both visible primarily in the Budapest drawing, contribute to the impression that Susanna's alarmed torsion was suggested more strongly in this earlier stage.

Furthermore, the drape enveloping Susanna's body was more agitated. In this stage, more of the white drape was visible. From the X-ray image, from covered traces in the paint surface, and from the drawing in Budapest it can be concluded that the folds in the drape at the left under Susanna's arm were originally more active. The only suggestion of this earlier movement in the figure of Susanna now present is her earring dangling at an angle, Rembrandt's way of suggesting the sudden movement of a head. The fact that this detail is not seen in the Budapest drawing would seem to indicate that it was added in the final stage.¹³

Another question is whether the place occupied by the curved stone steps in the Budapest drawing is the same relative to the figure of Susanna as in the earlier version of the painting. A reserve, visible as a dark form in the X-ray film, indicates that the landing extended a bit higher and more to the left in the earlier version. In the drawing, this part of the landing functions more as a repoussoir than is now the case. A repoussoir as a rule heightens the dynamic quality of a composition; elimination of the corner

of the landing should, therefore, be counted among the measures taken by Rembrandt to eliminate the agitation in this painting. This change could also be related to the fact that below Susanna's right foot is flesh-coloured paint, which can be interpreted not only as a reflection of the leg, but, given the form, could also indicate an earlier, lower position of the foot. This lower position in the earlier stage of the painting is also evident in the drawing in Budapest, where it seems as if the foot in the water is actually on the landing. One other change in the landing should be mentioned. In the Budapest drawing, the step on which the slippers rest is missing. From this could be concluded that this step was inserted, along with the signature, only in the final version – even though this change cannot be directly inferred from the X-radiograph. Finally, where in the present painting a dark shadow is found in the tall tower-like building, in the Budapest drawing a tall tree fills the area. This tree corresponds with a dark form, to be read as a reserve in the X-radiograph, so that it would seem obvious to assume that a tree indeed originally occupied this place in the painting.¹⁴

As mentioned above, certain peculiarities can be detected in the paint surface and especially in the X-radiograph (namely in the Elder nearest Susanna, in her figure and in the left background) that do not coincide with the changes between the stage documented in the Budapest drawing and the image now visible. In short, there must have been yet another stage, one that, as will appear, precedes the one discussed above.

The X-ray film reveals that a reserve was left for the gesticulating right hand of the Elder nearest Susanna, indicating that the hand was placed somewhat higher, before the nose rather than before the mouth. This higher position of the hand is also visible in the paint surface of the background. With a microscope flesh colour can be discerned in this area showing through the grey of the paint surface of the background. This means that at one time not only was a reserve for the hand left in the background, but that this hand was actually executed. The shape of the Elder's headdress was also different in this stage. In the X-ray film, a dark form indicates a reserve for a tall headdress. In the paint surface, a few light strokes of paint of this headdress are visible along the upper contour of this reserve.

Moreover, Susanna's pose in this stage was different from her final appearance and from the one documented in the drawing in Budapest. The X-radiograph shows that her left shoulder, painted in fairly strong radioabsorbent paint, was closer to her chin, as is also the case in the *Susanna at the bath* in The Hague (see fig. 13; III A 117) of 1636. And judging from the presence of light radioabsorbent strokes, her white drape hung down to the water surface. The areas showing up in the X-ray film, furthermore, give reason to surmise that changes were made in the head of Susanna, even though there are too few clear indications to allow a reconstruction of the head's earlier bearing.

Finally, the radically altered area in the left background must be discussed. An even, radioabsorbent sky shows up

Fig. 11. Rembrandt, *Adam and Eve*, 1638, etching (plate image) (B. 28 II)



in this region in the X-radiograph, in which the low buildings at the left, the tall tree and an erratic contour of the wall at the right can be seen as dark reserves. From this can be assumed that the tall, grey tower-like structure was not envisioned in the first stage of the composition. In addition, on the basis of the presence of blue paint in the region of the tower and the grey sky, visible under a stereomicroscope, the sky in this stage appears to have been a bright blue, which has iconographic consequences.

We have no document comparable to the drawing in Budapest that would give us a coherent view of these features in the stage of the painting just mentioned. Yet, based on the nature of these features, it can be established that they precede the Budapest stage and thus constitute a first stage. This is indicated by the fact that the deviating parts of the composition – the tree, the buildings, the rock wall, the raised right hand and tall headdress of the Elder nearest Susanna – appear mostly as reserves in the sky or other areas executed in radioabsorbent paint.

Kauffmann's arguments for dating the Budapest stage (our second) around 1635 are not convincing. However, there are compelling reasons for dating the stage preceding the Budapest one to 1638. This can be inferred from a drawing of the grasping Elder by Rembrandt in Melbourne (fig. 10; Ben. 157), whose authenticity has never been doubted. The pose of this figure, with the hand before the nose and a high headdress, is identical with the earliest version we found of the Elder in the

Fig. 12. Rembrandt, *Seated female nude*, study of Susanna, c. 1647, black chalk heightened with white, 20.4 x 16.4 cm (Ben. 590). Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett



Fig. 13. Rembrandt, *Susanna at the bath*, 1636. The Hague, Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen, Mauritshuis (III A 117)



painting. The drawing can be dated to c. 1638 not only on the basis of style, but especially through the use of iron-gall ink and light yellow prepared paper, which Rembrandt also used in a few other drawings from the same time.¹⁵ It seems to have been intended as a sketch for the complicated pose of the Elder at the left. The bold slanting line cutting through the wrist of his left hand and representing the outline of Susanna's back, and the diagonal stroke at the lower right near his left leg at the height of her cloak, indicate that the drawing was made when the composition of the painting had been more or less determined. Thus, what we are dealing with here is not a preparatory study but, as was more often the case with Rembrandt, a sketch meant to help him change or refine some aspect of the composition. The probability of c. 1638 as the date when Rembrandt began to work on this painting is strengthened by the fact that the placement of Susanna's legs, the right one almost stretched out, the left one bent, agrees with the pose of Adam in the etching *Adam and Eve*, dated 1638 (fig. 11; B. 28).

The sketchy treatment of the rightmost Elder, one of the few remaining elements of the first stage, displays some affinity with the figures of this period, and specifically with the figure of Tobit in *The angel Raphael leaving Tobit* of 1637 in Paris (III A 121), which is also on panel.

As alluded to above, the *Bathsheba* in New York (V 2) provides an important clue for determining when the Berlin painting was altered from the first to the second, i.e. the Budapest stage. In the New York painting dated 1643, which in composition and colour scheme recalls the first stage of the *Susanna*, an important change is found in the

background identical to the one made in the Berlin *Susanna*. Initially both paintings had substantially more sky at the left, which was subsequently partly covered over by buildings in a second stage. Moreover, in both pictures the sky was originally bright blue. Assuming that the change in the New York painting was inspired by a parallel one in the Berlin *Susanna*, then the date of 1643 inscribed on the finished version of the New York *Bathsheba* provides a plausible date for the alterations from the first to the second stage of the Berlin painting. The yellowish cloak in the *Bathsheba* then also affords an idea of the role Susanna's cloak must have played at the outset in the Berlin painting.

In connection with the last change – the one that resulted in the present appearance of the Berlin *Susanna* – we have an important document, again in the form of a drawing, this time a black chalk study of a *Seated female nude* in Berlin (fig. 12; Ben. 590). There is a striking similarity between the definitive pose of Susanna in the Berlin painting and the woman in the Berlin drawing with respect to the pose and the placement of the shadows in the upper arm. Given the alteration the painting underwent in the last stage, one can assume that this study of a seated female nude, dated around 1647 on stylistic grounds¹⁶, was done with the final pose of Susanna in mind. Thus, it seems that work on the painting ceased for some time between 1643 and 1647 and that subsequently, after a substantial pause, it was thoroughly reworked. [One is reminded here of the genesis of the *Danae* in St Petersburg (III A 119)]. It can be concluded that large parts of the *Susanna* as they now appear are datable to 1647 – the year in which the painting was actually sold.

Fig. 14. P. Lastman, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1614, panel 42 x 58 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie



There are further questions that need to be raised, one of them being the relationship of the Berlin painting to the Hague *Susanna at the bath* (fig. 13; III A 117). Accepting a date of 1638 for the commencement of work on the Berlin painting, then the first stage of that painting does not precede – as Kauffmann and many authors following him supposed – but rather follows the Hague *Susanna*. This dating, however, does not necessarily imply that the far smaller Hague painting of 1636,¹⁷ should be considered a preparatory study for the Berlin painting, as Gerson suggested,¹⁸ even though the similarities in the pose of Susanna are irrefutable. A series of correspondences between the two paintings can certainly be indicated. For example, the colour scheme of Susanna's clothing in the first version of the Berlin painting, with a modest accent of opaque rose-red in the dangling sashes near the cloak painted predominantly in white, grey and yellow tints, is similar to that in the Hague *Susanna*, where the burgundy robe plays a subsidiary role in relation to the white shirt. Also, in both paintings Susanna looks straight out at the viewer – a feature possibly derived from a 1620 print of Susanna by Lucas Vorsterman after Rubens.¹⁹ Moreover, the pose of the Berlin *Susanna* in the first stage of the painting, with her shoulders tucked into her chin, is identical to that in the Hague *Susanna*. Rembrandt appears to have derived Susanna's pose, covering her pudenda with one hand and extending the other from her body as she raises her arm to cover her breast, from Lastman's *Susanna and the Elders* of 1614 in Berlin (fig. 14), in which Susanna makes the same gesture, though in reverse, as both of Rembrandt's Susannas. In this connection, it can be noted that in the drawing in which he copied and paraphrased Lastman's composition (fig. 15; Ben. 448), Rembrandt was clearly seeking alternative positions for Susanna's arms.²⁰

Despite these similarities, there are significant differences between Rembrandt's two Susanna paintings with regard to the episode depicted, and especially with regard to the approach to the subject. In terms of iconography alone there is an essential difference. The painting in The Hague depicts a relatively rarely illustrated scene of the Elders spying on Susanna (compare, among other examples, Rubens' *Susanna* in Munich²¹), while the Berlin paint-

Fig. 15. Rembrandt, *Susanna and the Elders*, c. 1635, red chalk, pencil in grey, 23.5 x 36.4 cm (Ben. 448). Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett



ing shows the far more frequently illustrated later episode, in which the Elders reveal themselves and threaten her. In the Hague painting, by manipulating the lighting and limiting detail, Rembrandt focused all attention on the nude Susanna, whereby even the spying Elders, who are essential to identifying the exact subject, can only be discerned in the bushes with difficulty.²² This reductive treatment differs greatly from the first version of the Berlin painting, in which all sorts of details serve not only to emphasise the dramatic character of the scene, but also to indicate the time of day when the episode depicted transpires. The women visible only faintly (probably a result of abrasion) in the garden at the left, can be viewed as an indication of when the scene takes place. According to the story, the two Elders made their appearance only after Susanna had sent away her two maid servants. And the blue sky in the first phase of the painting – quite exceptional for Rembrandt – can also be explained as an indication of the time of day when the narrative occurs, namely mid-day. The drama of the rude intrusion – as described above, underscored by the Elder grabbing for Susanna's breast in these first versions – is even further reinforced by the birds taking flight and the liquid spilling from the overturned jar. These two iconographic details, eliminated from the final version, must have had a bearing on the subject of the scene. Traditionally, the swan was a symbol of beauty and purity.²³ The swan taking flight may refer to the imminent threat to Susanna's virtue. The same is true for the overturned jar spilling its contents.²⁴

With this emphasis on the assault, an explanation of the grasping Elder's gesture – right hand balled into a fist with raised thumb held in front of the nose or the mouth – as *manu fico* seems more likely than the suggestion that it was intended as an incitement to silence.²⁵ Also arguing against the latter explanation is the fact that the hand is held slightly away from the face.

A similar approach to the depiction of a narrative subject as in the early stage of the *Susanna* can be found in another picture of the late 1630s, the London *Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene* signed and dated 1638 (III A 124). In this picture the time of Christ's first appearance to Mary Magdalene as given in the Bible is indicated by a

yellow, early morning light coming just above the horizon. In the pose of one of the protagonists, Mary Magdalene, this painting reveals a comparable emphasis on the suddenness of the event taking place. That Rembrandt abandoned this approach to narrative representations during the 1640s appears not only from the definitive version of the *Susanna*, in which the blue sky and dramatic accents have been eliminated, but also from the *Noli me tangere* in Braunschweig of 1651 (V 18). In comparison to the London painting, here too Rembrandt opted for less dramatic poses of the figures and a darker sky.

For a long time, the many changes in pictorial and narrative style that have been analyzed in this entry were explained exclusively in terms of Rembrandt's highly personal evolution. This explanation, however, may be inadequate. Developments such as the rise of Classicism may also have affected these changes. Until now, the cliché of Rembrandt as anti-classicist has hindered research on this possible influence, one which might explain much of what emerges in his works of the 1640s.²⁶ It has been argued elsewhere that the changes in the present painting could be related to Rembrandt's changing ideas on the representation of moving figures in the scenes he depicted (see note 13). (For further discussion see Chapter IV, pp. 294–300)

Additional remarks

After completion of the above text in 1998 the Berlin *Susanna* was exhaustively analysed in 2006 by Eric Jan Sluijter in his particularly rich book, *Rembrandt and the female nude*.²⁷ In several respects, and particularly on the genesis of this painting, he expresses views that differ from our own. We shall therefore turn to consider briefly his ideas.

Sluijter proposes that the history of the origin of this painting begins considerably earlier than we assume. Where we consider it extremely probable that Rembrandt began to work on this painting in *c.* 1638 (see our arguments for this view in *Comments*), Sluijter argues that its first version could possibly have already been painted on the Berlin panel in 1635. In this connection he speaks of an 'exercise (by a pupil) to elaborate upon Lastman's composition [with the same subject] with the help of Rembrandt's drawing [*c.* 1635] after his master's painting'²⁸ (see figs. 14 and 15). Sluijter suspects that the Berlin *Susanna* initially belonged to the type of pupils' work that we refer to as 'satellites', in this case a 'free variant' on a given prototype (see Chapter III). One consequence of this line of thinking is that Rembrandt's *Susanna* in the Mauritshuis would then have been begun after an unknown pupil of Rembrandt had realised the Berlin *Susanna* in its first form. Sluijter has radical ideas about the original conception of the painting that he links to this hypothesis; he suggests that the pupil concerned may have followed Lastman's conception so closely that he depicted Susanna in the sitting position. Sluijter believes he can support this hypothesis by demonstrating the – in his view – incorrect anatomy of the Susanna in its original form. These defects would have been the consequence of persisting with parts of Susanna in the woman's original sitting position that Sluijter presumes. Having pointed out that the position of Susanna's legs is remarkably similar to that of Adam in

Rembrandt's etching *Adam and Eve*, dated 1638 (see fig. 11), he writes of 'the awkward proportions of Susanna: her legs are curiously short (most notably her thighs, especially the thigh of her right leg), possibly as a consequence of leaving certain parts unchanged while altering others. The construction of the anatomy as a whole has become peculiar too. How the right leg could ever join with the torso is totally unclear, while the left leg is strangely twisted, the thigh is parallel to the picture plane while the lower leg is turned inward (and her foot outward) in an impossible stance'.²⁹

Apart from his remarks about the anatomy of Susanna, which will be dealt with below, Sluijter's hypothesis that a pupil could have begun the work would seem to be difficult to maintain for several reasons. Firstly, it should be pointed out that the painting has a remarkably hefty format for a small-scale history piece with only three figures. Then there is the choice of support, a strikingly large plank of mahogany, in one piece, which indicates that the Berlin *Susanna* must be seen as a highly ambitious project. According to our analysis of prototypes and their free variants executed by pupils, these variants are relatively modest in format, whereas the Berlin *Susanna*, compared with Rembrandt's small-scale history pieces, is a relatively monumental work.

Where Sluijter proposes that Rembrandt entirely over-painted the first version – putatively by a pupil – in two stages, we are of the opinion that a large proportion of the earliest version has been preserved in its first form, viz. the Elder with the turban painted directly on to the yellow ground, such that this ground shows through in thin transparent passages in the clothing and to the right of this figure in the background.

Turning to the suggestion that Susanna was initially sitting, it should be pointed out that there is nothing to be seen in either the X-radiograph or in the infrared image that might indicate this. The passage between Susanna's thigh and the garment laid over the architecture shows no radio-absorbency, indicating that the original situation here has very probably remained unchanged. If Sluijter's suspicions are correct, by comparison with the sitting position of the Susanna in the Mauritshuis, one would expect traces of the object on which Susanna had been sitting, as also in Lastman's *Susanna* (see figs. 13 and 14).

With regard to Sluijter's remarks on the anatomy of Susanna: from the line of her backbone one can infer that Rembrandt wanted to depict Susanna such that her upper body was turned to the right relative to the lower body, which is slightly turned toward the viewer. When this observation is taken into account, the relation between her right thigh and the invisible right hip will be seen to be not so impossible as Sluijter suggests. Moreover, in the posture which we suggest here, if one compares the length of the right leg with the length of the upper body and head, the midpoint of Rembrandt's figure of Susanna lies in the pelvic region, in accord for instance with the description of 'een matigh Wijf' (an average woman) in: *Beschrijvinghe van Albrecht Durer. Van de Menschelijcke Proportion*, 1527 published in Dutch in 1622 (p. 76) of which Rembrandt owned and demonstrably consulted a copy (see Chapter I, pp. 38–48).

Fig. 16. Mezzotint by R. Earlom, 1769



This is not to say, however, that the anatomy of Susanna is entirely satisfactory. It seems as though the distance between her waist and the contour of her buttock visible beneath the drapery is too long. It would have been more logical to place her left thigh in a slightly more vertical position. But one finds the same anomaly in the Adam in the print mentioned above (see fig. 11), which originated during the same period in which we situate the beginning of the work on the present painting. In addition, the execution of the Elder descending on the right, which in our

Fig. 18a. Copy 5. Rembrandt workshop, panel 22.2 x 18.4 cm. Bayonne, Musée Bonnat (Br. 372)



Fig. 17. Copy 4. Rembrandt workshop, panel 62.9 x 47.6 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (Br. 518)



Fig. 18b. Rotating fig. 18a such that the grain of the panel is running in vertical direction



view belongs to the first stage, is technically and stylistically similar to passages in paintings on panel from the second half of the 1630s, such as the Paris *Angel leaving Tobit and his family* (III A 121). This suggests that this part of the painting, representing the first stage, was done around 1638 rather than 1635. The superior execution of the descending Elder does not tally with an attribution of this stage to a pupil as Sluijter suggests.

Comparison of the X-radiograph with the final painting leads to the inference that the massive building in the background was most probably not originally planned. The reserve in the (originally blue) sky is limited to the architectural element across which falls a sharp shadow at the extreme left, and the crown of a tree. This tree is somewhat similar to the tree which now partially obscures the massive building, a later addition.

Such colossal buildings – with a usually polygonal, blunt tower-like structure – only appear in Rembrandt's paintings of the period around 1640 and subsequently (e.g. in the *Visitation* from 1640 in Detroit, III A 138/Br. 562; the *David and Jonathan* from 1642 in St Petersburg, Br. 511; the *Louvre Landscape* around 1645, Br. 450; the *Nocturnal landscape with the Holy Family* of 1647 in Dublin, V 13/Br. 576; and *The Polish Rider*, c. 1655 in New York, V 20/Br. 279).

Peter Schatborn has suggested the possibility that the appearance of such buildings in Rembrandt's paintings may be correlated with three detailed drawings of English monumental buildings: St. Albans Cathedral (Ben. 785); Windsor Castle (Ben. 786), and St. Paul's Cathedral in London (Ben. 787). Two of these (Ben. 786 and 787) are signed 'Rembrandt' and dated 1640. The question of the authenticity of these drawings has long been a matter of debate, but Schatborn is strongly inclined to attribute them to Rembrandt. He also points out the possibility that the addition of the large, polygonal structural element and the correlated buildings in the Berlin *Susanna and the Elders* was inspired by Rembrandt's work on these drawings. That could be taken as an indication that this and other changes in the present painting were introduced in or after 1640.

3. Documents and sources

1. Among the total of 11 depositions made in 1659 at the request of the guardian of Rembrandt's son Titus van Rijn to determine the size of the latter's inheritance from his mother Saskia van Uylenburch who died in 1642, there is one by Adriaen Banck in which he stated 'dat hij attestant int jaer 1647 van Rembrandt van Rhijn, vader van deselve Titus gekocht heeft een stuck schilderije van Susanna, daervoor hij attestant alsdoen aen hem heeft betaelt gehadt de somme van vijffhondert guldens in gelde ...' (that in the year 1647 he, the deponent, had purchased from Rembrandt van Rhijn, the father of Titus, a painting of Susanna for which he paid the sum of 500 guilders in cash...) (Strauss *Doc.*, 1659/17).

2. The painting is mentioned again on 31 August 1660, together with a portrait of Adriaen Banck and a sketch, both of which are also stated to be by Rembrandt, in the transfer document of moveable property of Adriaen Banck to Adriaen Maen, who happened to be his brother-in-law: 'In de Zijdel Caamer: Een stuck van Rembrandt de Historij van Susanna

Fig. 19. Copy 2. Rembrandt workshop, 27 x 21 cm. Formerly Paris, coll. Bisschoffsheim (Br. 248)



f 560:--' (In the Antechamber: A painting by Rembrandt the History of Susanna 560 guilders) (Strauss *Doc.*, 1660/13).

4. Graphic reproductions

1. Mezzotint by R. Earlom (London 1742/43-1822), inscribed: *Rembrandt pinxit – John Boydell excudit, 1769 – R. Earlom fecit / Susanna and the Elders. / From the Original Picture Painted by Rembrandt in the Collection of Sr. Josa. Reynolds. / ... of the Picture ... by 3... in Length – publish'd June 12. 1769 by J. Boydell, Engraver in Cheapside London* (fig. 16).

5. Copies

1. Drawing, pen and brown ink, brown and grey washes, red chalk, 17.8 x 23.8 cm; Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum (fig. 3; see note 5). Accurately depicts an earlier stage of the painting (see 2. *Comments*).

2. Oak panel, grain vertical, 27 x 21 cm (measured in the frame); formerly coll. Bisschoffsheim, Paris; Coll. Madame Perone (de Noailles), Hôtel de Pompadour, Fontainebleau; Examined 22-4-1971 (J.B., S.H.L.). Painted partial copy of the head of the Elder at the left (fig. 19; Br. 248).

3. Panel 18.7 x 23.3 cm; formerly coll. M. von Nemes, Budapest, 1913; Caretto Gallerie, Turin, 1991. Another partial copy of the same detail as copy 2.

4. Oak panel, grain vertical, 62.9 x 47.6 cm, two planks; Paris, Musée du Louvre. Examined in September 1968 (S.H.L., E.v.d.W.). Painted partial copy of Susanna (fig. 17; Br. 518). As is usual for partial copies, there are deviations in details from the Berlin *Susanna*. Some of these deviations, however, correspond with an earlier stage of the prototype, such as her hair hanging down and the wrap entirely covering Susanna's buttocks. The

upper part of this wrap corresponds with the final version, in which the Elder lifts it up but does not reach for her breast. These are indications of an origin in Rembrandt's studio during the working process on the prototype between the Budapest stage and the final result. This dating is also entirely in keeping with the results of the dendrochronological analysis: the earliest possible felling date is 1642.

5. Oak panel, diagonal grain, oval 22.2 x 18.4 cm, thickness c. 1 cm; Bayonne, Musée Bonnat. Examined 10-3-1972 (B.H., P.v.Th.). Painted partial copy of Susanna (figs. 18a+b; Br. 372). The position of Susanna's head and shoulders is tilted in relation to the prototype. The wood grain in the oval panel runs diagonally. Turning the panel so that the wood grain is vertical, Susanna's position corresponds with that of the Berlin *Susanna*. From this and from the absence of bevelling in the relatively thick panel can be concluded that the painting was later cut down to its oval format such that the figure of Susanna was turned in relation to the original.

6. Provenance

– Probably bought from Rembrandt by Adriaen Banck in 1647 (see 3. *Documents and sources*, 1).

– Probably included in the inventory of goods transferred to Adriaen Maen bij Adriaen Banck to settle a debt in 1660 (see 3. *Documents and sources*, 2).

– Coll. Baron Schonborn, sale Amsterdam 16 April 1738 (Lugt 482), no. 67: 'Susanna met de Boeven, door Rembrand van Rhyn, uytmuntenet konstig, hoog 2v. 8d. breed 3v. 2d. [= 77.18 x 90.07 cm]' (Hoet I, p. 511, no. 66: 700 guilders).

– Coll. J.A.J. Aved, sale Paris 24ff November 1766 (Lugt 1563), no. 31: 'Rembrandt Van Ryn. Susanne au bain; cette vertueuse femme est inclinée & debout, un pied dans l'eau & l'autre sur une marche de pierre; elle semble faire un effort pour échapper des mains d'un vieillard qui la retient par sa chemise, dont elle s'est en partie couverte. Le second vieillard est sur un plan un peu plus élevé, la main droite appuyée sur une rampe d'escalier; une belle robe d'écarlate avec agrément d'or, est posée sur un pied d'estal, au bas duquel sont des pantoufles de même couleur; des édifices & de l'architecture sont en plus grande partie le fond de ce Tableau, qui est peint sur bois; il porte 28 pouces de haut, sur 34 de large [= 75.6 x 91.8 cm]. Une intelligence parfaite, une touche ferme & le bel effet du clair obscur distinguent infiniment ce morceau, & le mettent au rang des plus importants de ce Maître: on lui reproche néanmoins que la figure de Susanne n'est pas d'un beau choix; mais qui ne sait pas que Rembrandt n'a jamais brillé dans la partie du dessein, lorsque les sujets l'ont obligé de représenter des femmes nues?' (2360 francs).

– Probably coll. Edmund Burke. On 1 May 1769, John Boydell announced the forthcoming publication of Earlom's mezzotint after the painting of *Susanna and the Elders* in the collection of 'Birk, Esq.:',³⁰ identified as Edmund Burke in Hofstede de Groot (see note 8).

– Coll. Sir Joshua Reynolds. According to the second state of Earlom's mezzotint, published on 12 June 1769, the picture was in the possession of Sir Joshua Reynolds; in 1792 by inheritance Lady Inchiquin, a niece of the painter;³¹ sale London (Christie's) 11-14 March 1795, remise 13-17, 4th day (Lugt 5284), no. 82: 'Ditto [Rembrandt] – Susanna and the Elders. One of his elaborate and finished pictures, producing a surprising effect, in point of colouring a valuable study of art.' Bought back by her heirs via Wilson for 156 guineas; sold to Charles Offley, London 22 March 1795 (for 120 guineas).

– In 1796 coll. Joseph Berwick, whose daughter Mary was married to Anthony Lechmere. By inheritance coll. Sir E.A.H. Lechmere in The Rhydd (until 1883).

– Dealer Ch. Sedelmeyer, Paris 1883 (*Catalogue of 300 paintings*, 1898, no. 135).

– Acquired for the Königliche Gemäldegalerie, Berlin 1883.

NOTES

1. J. Bauch and D. Eckstein, 'Woodbiological investigations on panels of Rembrandt paintings', *Wood Science and Technology* 15 (1981), pp. 251-263, esp. 255. See also *Corpus* IV, p. 657.
2. P. Klein, 'Hat Rembrandt auf Zuckerkistenholz gemalt?', *Zuckerhistorische Beiträge aus der Alten und Neuen Welt*, Schriften aus dem Zucker-Museum, Heft 25, Berlin 1988, pp. 37-43, esp. 40-41.
3. H. Kauffmann, 'Rembrandts Berliner Susanna', *Jb. d. Pr. Künsts.* 45 (1924), pp. 72-80.
4. A. Burroughs, 'New illustrations of Rembrandt's style', *Burl. Mag.* 59 (1931), pp. 3-10, esp. 9 and Plate I C.
5. Sumowski *Drawings* IV, no. 823^x.
6. W. Wegner, 'Bemerkungen zu Zeichnungen der Rembrandtschule im Museum der bildenden Künste in Budapest und zum Problem der Rembrandtwerkstatt', *Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts* 34-35 (1970), pp. 103-110, esp. 106-108, fig. 75.
7. O. Benesch, *Rembrandt. Werk und Forschung*, Vienna 1935, pp. 38-39, esp. 38.
8. HdG 55.
9. Strauss *Doc.*, 1659/16, 1659/18, 1659/19, 1659/21.
10. H. Kauffmann, 'Eine Vorzeichnung Rembrandts zur Dresdener Saskia von 1641', *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 41 (1919), pp. 34-56, esp. 45, note 26a.
11. L. Burchard, 'Eine neue Rembrandtzeichnung', *Jb. d. Pr. Künsts.* 33 (1912), pp. 173-175.
12. C. Dittrich, Th. Ketelsen, *Rembrandt. Die Dresdener Zeichnungen*, Cologne 2004, cat. no. 87.
13. Rembrandt's changing conception of movement in painting over the course of the 1640's and subsequent years are elaborated in more detail in: E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt as a searching artist', in: *Rembrandt. Quest of a genius*, Amsterdam 2006, pp. 108-115.
14. Curiously, this motif of a tall tree before a tower is also found in a painting of *Bathsheba*, present whereabouts Utrecht, Rijksmuseum Het Catharijneconvent (Sumowski *Gemälde* VI, no. 2503). See also V 2 fig. 16.
15. P. Schatborn in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Drawings and Etchings*, 1991/92, cat. no. 24.
16. See note 15; H. Bevers, *Rembrandt. Die Zeichnungen im Berliner Kupferstichkabinett*, Berlin 2006, cat. no. 27.
17. P. Noble, A. van Loon, 'New insights into Rembrandt's Susanna', in: *Art Matters. Netherlands Technical Studies in Art*, 2 (2005), pp. 76-97, esp. 78.
18. Gerson 221.
19. Hollst. XLIII, no. 4; see P. van Thiel in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, cat. no. 25.
20. B. Broos in: exhib. cat. *De Rembrandt à Vermeer. Les peintres hollandais au Mauritshuis de La Haye*, Paris (Grand Palais) 1986, cat. no. 41; Bevers, op.cit.¹⁶, cat. no. 18.
21. Panel 77 x 110 cm; Munich, Alte Pinakothek, inv. no. 317.
22. For an interesting study of the Hague *Susanna* and the representation of the female nude, see: E.J. Sluijter, 'Rembrandt's early paintings of the female nude: *Andromeda* and *Susanna*', in: G. Cavalli-Björkman (ed.), *Rembrandt and his pupils; papers given at a Symposium in Nationalmuseum Stockholm, 2-3 October 1992*, Stockholm 1993, pp. 31-54.
23. A. Henkel and A. Schöne (eds.), *Emblemata-Handbuch zur Simblikunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart 1967, cols. 814-818.
24. The overturned jar near a pair of slippers is also found in a print of a comparable subject by Hendrik Goltzius from c. 1578 of *The rape of Lucretia* (B. 106).
25. Tümpel 1986, p. 250.
26. A. Blankert, 'Classicism in Dutch history painting', in: exhib. cat. *Dutch Classicism in seventeenth-century painting*, Rotterdam/Frankfurt 1999-2000, pp. 12-33.
27. E.J. Sluijter, *Rembrandt and the female nude*, Amsterdam 2006.
28. Sluijter, op.cit.²⁷, p. 132.
29. Sluijter, op.cit.²⁷, p. 135.
30. Chr. White in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt in 18th Century England*, [New Haven] Yale Center for British Art 1983, cat. no. 5.
31. F. Broun, 'Rembrandts in the collection of Sir Joshua Reynolds', unpublished typescript 1984, no. 2; J. Kelch in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, no. 37.