



Rembrandt's Apostles

TIMKEN MUSEUM OF ART

Rembrandt's Apostles

ARTHUR K. WHEELOCK JR.

ANNE T. WOOLLETT

PETER C. SUTTON

TIMKEN MUSEUM OF ART • SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

This catalogue accompanies the exhibition of the same name, presented at the Timken Museum of Art, October 1, 2005–January 15, 2006.

Copyright © 2005 by the Putnam Foundation, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any other information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Rembrandt's Apostles is excerpted from *Rembrandt's Late Religious Portraits* (ISBN 0-226-89443-6), authored by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. with Volker Manuth, Peter C. Sutton, and Anne T. Woollett. Published by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in association with The University of Chicago Press, *Rembrandt's Late Religious Portraits* accompanied an exhibition of the same title, presented at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, in 2005.

Excerpted text © 2005 used with the kind permission of the Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Printed in Korea through Overseas Printing, San Francisco

COVER: Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Apostle Bartholomew* (detail), p. 22

Contents

- iv* Lenders to the Exhibition
- v* Contributors to the Exhibition
- vi* Introduction

- 1 Rembrandt's Apostles***
 - 1*** Rembrandt's Life
 - 13*** The Apostle Paul
 - 23*** The Apostle Bartholomew
 - 29*** The Apostle Bartholomew
 - 35*** The Apostle James the Major
 - 41*** The Apostle James the Minor (?)
 - 46*** The Apostles and Evangelists
 - 49*** Bibliography
 - 52*** Exhibitions



The Apostle Bartholomew, 1657
oil on canvas, 48³/₈ x 39¹/₄ in. (122.7 x 99.7 cm)
The Putnam Foundation, Timken Museum of Art,
San Diego, 51.001

The Apostle Bartholomew

THE SAINT LEANS FORWARD in a low-backed chair, his gaze averted to the viewer's left, eyebrow cocked, and mouth slightly open, as if listening intently. Strong light brilliantly illuminates the right side of his face, revealing its hollow cheek and furrowed brow, and highlighting the curling texture of his short hair and beard. He is dressed in a plain brown robe over a white shirt, the cuff of which shows radiantly at the wrist; a heavier, buff-colored cloak covers the chair. In this proscribed composition, the glittering blade of the knife he holds with quiet equanimity has the effect of a more ostentatious gesture.

Little is known about the life of Bartholomew, who is mentioned only briefly in the New Testament as one of the Twelve Apostles.¹ The name Bartholomaios is Hebrew, meaning son of Talmi, which suggests that the apostle may have been of Hebrew descent. According to later medieval accounts, he traveled extensively through Asia, preaching the Gospel and converting the heathen in India and Armenia, where he is said to have been flayed alive and then beheaded.

While Rembrandt painted very few narrative scenes of martyrdom, he was preoccupied with the dramatic possibilities offered by the singularly horrific manner of Saint Bartholomew's death. In a small number of images of the saint, the artist explored the way in which an evocative attribute, the knife, served to amplify his characterization of Bartholomew, the emotional manifestations of the apostle's faith and anticipation of his corporeal fate. Rembrandt's depictions of the saint are all half-length in format, and together they show the powerful shift from the artist's early interest in conveying intense expression to later descriptions of psychological density. In *The Apostle Bartholomew*, c. 1633 (fig. 1), now attributed to Rembrandt and almost certainly produced in his studio, Bartholomew ostentatiously holds his traditional attribute almost under his chin, where the curved blade resonates with the troubled intensity of his stare. In later depictions, however, the knife decreases in prominence while Bartholomew's gaze becomes more powerful and enigmatic. In two paintings executed only four years apart, this large and



FIG. 1
 Attributed to Rembrandt van Rijn
The Apostle Bartholomew
 c. 1633, oil on panel, Worcester Art Museum,
 Charlotte E. Buffington Fund

arresting image and *The Apostle Bartholomew* (p. 28), Rembrandt posits two opposing emotional states for the apostle: the active proselytizer and the sage burdened by the implications of commitment to the Christian faith.

In the San Diego canvas, Rembrandt portrays the apostle as a fierce Christian protagonist. While the dynamic, tensile position of the figure, three-quarter length with his head averted, is formally analogous to Counter-Reformation examples (fig. 2), Rembrandt's portrayal of a relatively youthful man with rugged features reflects his own vision of biblical figures as unidealized, real people. Otto Benesch noted that the same model was used for *A Bearded Man* (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin), though the correspondence between the two is not particularly close.²

The effect of animation in *The Apostle Bartholomew* is all the more remarkable for the particularly limited range of Rembrandt's palette. The combination of vigorous, sculpting brushwork in the face contrasts with the broader, planar application in the cuff and hand, while the roughly indicated bulk of the figure serves as a rich foil for these two descriptive elements. At one time *The Apostle Paul* (p. 12), which shares a similarly large format, was thought to have been a complementary pendant to the San Diego canvas, offering a contrast of the active and contemplative states, but evidence that *The Apostle Paul* may have originally had an oval format calls this hypothesis into question (see p. 18).³



FIG. 2
 Johannes Sadeler I after Maarten de Vos,
The Apostle Bartholomew (VI)
 1585–1590, engraving,
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
 Harris Brisbane Dick Fund

Both the Timken and the Getty paintings were in London during the second half of the eighteenth century, owned by members of the Society of Dilettanti, who were enthusiastic collectors of Rembrandt's work. William Fauquier, a governor of the Bank of England and secretary and treasurer of the Society from 1771 to 1774, purchased *The Apostle Bartholomew* (as *Man with a Knife*) from the artist and collector Jonathan Richardson. Sir Joshua Reynolds, who possessed a highly significant group of works by Rembrandt, provided the earliest identification of the subject as *The Apostle Bartholomew*.⁴ The Getty painting eventually passed from the collection of the collector and dealer John Blackwood to the famous antiquarian collector Richard Payne Knight, who joined the Society in 1781. There is some evidence that the paintings of Saint Bartholomew were thought to be distasteful. The Timken painting reverted to its early descriptive title, *Man with a Knife*, while the Getty's *Apostle Bartholomew* was known by various fanciful titles. Dislike of the subject may account for the overpainting, presumably carried out during the nineteenth century, of the knife with a book, which was subsequently removed about 1912.⁵

ANNE T. WOOLLETT

NOTES

1. See Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14.
2. Benesch 1956, 338. For the Berlin painting, also see Bredius/Gerson 1969, 571, no. 284.
3. Wheelock 1995, 244–245.
4. Broun 1987, 45–47.
5. Hofstede de Groot 1907–1927, 6 (1916): 120; Mongan and Mongan 1983, 70.

INSCRIPTION

Signed and dated, center left: *Rembrandt f. 1657*

PROVENANCE

Jonathan Richardson, London (sale, London, 3 March 1747, lot 49) to William Fauquier; Dr. Robert Bragge (sale Prestage, London, 9 February 1757, lot 48) to Sir Joshua Reynolds, London; Jean Charles François (Ivan Stepanovich) de Laval de la Loubrierie, Count Laval; his daughter, Ekaterina Ivanova, Countess Laval; her daughter, Elisaveta Sergeevna Davydoff, Princess Troubetskaia; her grandson, Vassili Vassilievich Davydoff; Thos. Agnew & Sons, London, and Duveen Brothers, New York; Henry Goldman, New York; acquired by the Putnam Foundation, 1952

EXHIBITIONS

Detroit 1925, no. 22; Detroit 1930, no. 59; New York 1950, no. 18; Toronto 1951, no. 10; Melbourne and Canberra 1997, no. 17

LITERATURE

von Bode 1912, 505–508; Hofstede de Groot 1907–1927, 6 (1916): 120, no. 169; Valentiner 1920/1921, 89; Weisbach 1926, 577–578, 626; Benesch 1956, 338, fig. 1; Rosenberg 1964, 118, no. 106; Bauch 1966, 12, no. 217; Gerson 1968, 379, no. 296; Bredius/Gerson 1969, 613, no. 613; Mongan and Mongan 1983, 66–67, 122–123, no. 23; New Haven 1983, 113; Schwartz 1985, 310, no. 352; Tümpel 1986a, 399, no. 80; Broun 1987, 45–47, no. 4; New York 1995, 2: 31; Wheelock 1995, 244; Timken 1996, 90–94, no. 16

The Apostle Bartholomew (detail, p. 22)



The Apostle Bartholomew

A SEATED MAN WITH CRAGGY FEATURES, depicted half-length and facing forward, contemplates profound matters with grave, mournful solemnity. He rests his elbow on a stone table and firmly grasps his chin with his left hand. In his right, he grips a short knife, which provides the clue to his identity. Strong light falls across his body, throwing the deep creases of his brow, cavernous eye sockets, and wrinkled hand into relief. His smooth, dark hair, cut short above the ears, contrasts with his wiry mustache. He is dressed in a gray-brown high-collared tunic laced at the midriff and a shirred white shirt; a russet cloak rests on his shoulders and falls over the front of the table. On the wall behind him, a cupboard or window has been roughly indicated.

Saint Bartholomew, like Saint Paul, was one of the few subjects in the late group of saints repeated by Rembrandt, revealing his interest in the apostle who suffered his martyrdom by being skinned alive. The San Diego *Apostle Bartholomew*, painted four years earlier, is larger and depicts the saint in a more agitated mode. While the Getty *Apostle Bartholomew* appears contained and reserved by comparison, it is one of Rembrandt's most arresting treatments of the late apostles, in which the portrait and historical subject lie in uneasy resolution. The saint was painted directly from a model without translation into a type, as in the San Diego canvas. His distinctive features have been retained, from the slightly round, dark eyes, to the expressively raised brow and protruding ears. The vividness with which Rembrandt has portrayed Bartholomew's lined forehead and slightly sagging features conveys a remarkable immediacy that forges a connection with the viewer.

Rembrandt had used similar frontal placements of the figure increasingly throughout the 1650s, utilizing the structural effect of broad brushwork and a muted palette to underscore the monumental solidity of his subjects. The apostle's strict frontal position may result from Rembrandt's work on several canvases during 1661 and the desire for a variety of poses among related compositions. Bartholomew's



The Apostle Bartholomew, 1661
oil on canvas, 34 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 29 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (86.7 x 75.6 cm)
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 71.PA.15



FIG. 1
Rembrandt van Rijn
Titus at His Writing Desk
1655, oil on canvas, Museum Boijmans Van
Beuningen, Rotterdam

short hair, for example, though not unusual, appears particularly severe from this vantage. The pose in the Getty canvas, however, seems intended to present Bartholomew the man without impediment, and in particular to offer his face and hand for scrutiny. The chin-in-hand gesture, with its connotations of contemplation and even melancholy, had long been employed by the artist, beginning with the early *Saint Paul in Prison*, 1627 (see fig. 1, p. 14), where the saint's uncertain ruminations are supported by the thorough description of an intellectual's paraphernalia. A number of drawings from the 1630s, for example *Portrait of a Young Man in a Flat Cap*, appear to be rendered from life, and the gesture recurs in later compositions, such as the *Portrait of a Young Man Resting His Chin on His Hand (Titus, the Artist's Son)*, 1660 (The Baltimore Museum of Art), but received its most sensitive treatment in *Titus at His Writing Desk* (fig. 1).¹

As in *The Evangelist Matthew and the Angel* (fig. 2) and *The Apostle James the Major* (p. 34), Rembrandt used a range of brushwork to convey the solemn profundity of his subject. Bartholomew's torso is remarkable for the relatively thin application of paint. While the short, thick, impasted strokes that sculpt the face of Bartholomew are perhaps most similar to those in the face of Matthew, the broken,



FIG. 2
Rembrandt van Rijn
The Evangelist Matthew and the Angel
1661, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris

unblended brushwork is not duplicated among others in the group (fig. 3). The left hand, though textured, is less densely painted than the face. Here, the skin has a looser quality that, combined with its drab tonality, hints at advanced age or even death. The centrality of the hand and the compelling description of the skin, therefore, allude to the saint's ultimate sacrifice by flaying. By contrast, the right hand, which holds the knife, is merely indicated with patchy strokes of red and ochre.

While the frankness of Rembrandt's portrayal has appealed to the modern sensibilities of succeeding periods, it has also served to obscure the subject. The painting was treated as a genre piece when it was engraved in the eighteenth century, first by Richard Houston while part of the holdings of the collector and occasional marchand-amateur John Blackwood, under the title *Rembrandt's Cook*, 1757, and later by Charles Phillips, as *The Assassin*.² Richard Payne Knight, an enthusiastic collector of Rembrandt's work who also owned the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* and the then-famous *Holy Family*, both now considered studio works, probably displayed the Getty *Apostle Bartholomew* in the Adams interior of his Shropshire residence, Downton Castle. Whether he recognized its subject or knew the painting of the same subject owned by Sir Joshua Reynolds (p. 22) is unknown. *The*



FIG. 3
Rembrandt van Rijn
The Apostle Bartholomew
brushwork, left eye (detail, p.28)

Apostle Bartholomew was exhibited in the late nineteenth century by Payne Knight's descendants with the title *Rembrandt's Cook or Man with a Knife*, before Adolf Rosenberg's tentative identification as *Saint Bartholomew (?)*.³ Wilhelm von Bode, recognizing the interplay of portrait and historical subject in this canvas, reasoned "that Rembrandt . . . intended to characterize his sitter as the Apostle, St. Bartholomew, by the knife in his hand seems to me improbable, in view of the pronounced portrait-like character of the sitter."⁴ After the 1929 London exhibition, Sir Joseph Duveen, who had tried unsuccessfully to acquire the picture from the Boughton-Knight family some years earlier, described it as "'Rembrandt St. Bartholomew' . . . painted in Rembrandt's best year, namely 1661, but most depressing in colour being almost of a monochrome brownish grey colour, and the subject is also objectionable."⁵ The identification of the subject as Saint Bartholomew was not firmly established until the Rembrandt exhibition of 1956.⁶

Rembrandt's awareness of and familiarity with Mennonite values may explain the artist's conception of the saint. Thieleman Jansz van Braght's *Martyrs' Mirror*, which appeared in 1660, offers a vivid description of the saint's life, emphasizing his preaching in faraway heathen lands, his conversion of leading figures, and his resolute acceptance of his fate. The tenets of the Mennonite faith included a tradition of directness and appeal to the common man, and an appreciation of ordinary individuals of extraordinary faith. Here, Rembrandt achieved a unique elision of the everyday with the spiritual, creating, in effect, a new exemplar.

ANNE T. WOOLLETT

NOTES

1. For the Baltimore painting, see Melbourne and Canberra 1997, 146–149, no. 18.
2. New Haven 1983, 49.
3. Rosenberg 1909, 456.
4. von Bode/Hofstede de Groot, 7 (1902): 10.
5. Extract of a letter from Paris to New York, 29 January 1929. Series II, Papers and Correspondence, Box 277, folder 8. Duveen Brothers Records, 1876–1981, bulk 1909–1964, Getty Research Institute, Research Library, acc. no. 960015.
6. Amsterdam and Rotterdam 1956, I: 178–179, no. 87.

INSCRIPTION

Signed and dated, lower right:
Rembrandt. f. 1661

PROVENANCE

John Blackwood, London, by 1757; Richard Payne Knight [1751–1824], Downton Castle, Hereford, probably by c. 1809; by inheritance to his brother, Thomas Andrew Knight [1759–1838], Downton Castle; by descent to his daughter, Charlotte Rouse-Boughton; inherited by her son, Andrew Johnes Rouse-Boughton-Knight [1826–1909], Downton Castle, 1856; by descent to his son, Charles Andrew Rouse-Boughton-Knight, 1909; inherited by his grandson, Major William Mandeville Peareth Kincaid-Lennox, Downton Castle; (sale, Sotheby's, London, 27 June 1962, no. 10) to J. Paul Getty, Sutton Place, Surrey; gift to the museum, 1971

EXHIBITIONS

London 1882, no. 234; London 1899, no. 99; London 1912, no. 52; London 1929, no. 52; Birmingham 1934, no. 152; London 1948, no. 3; Amsterdam and Rotterdam 1956, I: no. 87; Minneapolis 1972, no. 43

LITERATURE

Smith 1829–1842, 7 (1836): 128, no. 359; Vosmaer 1877, 361, 562; von Bode 1883, 581, no. 154; Dutuit 1885, 43, no. 434; Michel 1893, 482–483; von Bode/Hofstede de Groot 1897–1906, 6 (1901): 10, 78, no. 508; Rosenberg 1909, 456; Hofstede de Groot 1907–1927, 6 (1916): 119–120, no. 168; Valentiner 1920/1921, 221; Benesch 1956, 345–346, no. 10; Slive 1962, 486–487; Getty 1965, 31, 113–119; Bauch 1966, 13, no. 235; Lee 1967, 299, 301; Gerson 1968, 427, no. 366; Bredius/Gerson 1969, 613, no. 615; Haak 1969, 298; Fredericksen 1972, 88–89, no. 117; New Haven 1983, 49, 113, no. 113; Schwartz 1985, 313, no. 359; Tümpel 1986a, 399, no. 83; Melbourne and Canberra 1997, 144–145