

Press Release  
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# REMBRANDT:

THE CONSUMMATE ETCHER AND OTHER 17TH CENTURY PRINTMAKERS  
At the Arkell Museum at Canajoharie March 1, 2016 – May 29, 2016



REMBRANDT HARMENSZ VAN RIJN  
The Pancake Woman, 1635, SUART Galleries



JAN DIRKSZ BOTH Dutch 1610-1652  
Landscape with woman on a donkey, c1645

(Canajoharie, NY) The Arkell Museum at Canajoharie reopens on March 1, 2016 with the special exhibition ***Rembrandt: The Consummate Etcher and Other 17<sup>th</sup> Century Printmakers***. This exhibition, organized by the Syracuse University Art Galleries, brings together the printed work of Rembrandt and fifteen of his contemporaries.

Rembrandt is generally considered one of the most important figures in western art history. This ranking has been remarkably stable in the three hundred years since his death and is due, in part, to his virtuoso style, the wide range of subject matter he dealt with in his work, and his prolific output. Typically, it is his painting that garners the most attention with the public, but his etchings demonstrate the same genius, variety of subjects, and vitality, that he generated with his brush. The prints in this exhibition are arranged in thematic groups, landscapes, genre, portraits, and religious subjects, so that visitors may discover how different artists approached these themes and adapted their media to the subjects.

During the 17th century engravings and etchings were the most common form of prints created. The woodcut had fallen out of favor, mezzotints were introduced late in the century, and lithography was not yet invented. Book production had increased dramatically in Europe and the need for quality reproductions that could be made by the thousands had helped establish the engraver as an important craftsman. Very talented people entered the trade and the technology of making graphic facsimiles improved throughout the century.

In general, engraving was the medium of choice for the reproduction of paintings, drawings, and sculpture. Artists could hire engravers to copy their paintings and then circulate these prints throughout Europe, thus increasing their fame and commissions. Several artists had very active print programs including Peter Paul Rubens, who employed numerous engravers to reproduce many of his paintings.

Those painter/printmakers who wished to make original designs in print often preferred etching because they did not need a craftsman to interpret their work. The prepared plate was treated like a piece of paper and the artist had the opportunity to draw his design directly on the plate with great freedom. Rembrandt took full advantage of this feature and created nearly 300 original etchings during his career. He often experimented with the medium and attempted to achieve surface characteristics that would enhance his images. If the desired effects were not achieved to his satisfaction Rembrandt would continue to manipulate the plate to fit his needs. He would often make alterations to the image and to determine if the changes improved the design, 'state' impressions were printed. Many of the etchings went through numerous states, as many as ten, before he was satisfied with the results. Rembrandt was also very selective about the paper used for the editions of his prints; sometimes he used expensive Japanese papers that had been imported to Holland. Rembrandt's command of the medium combined with his ability to convey emotion, either personal or interpretative, which gave him special rank in the 17th century and keeps him distinctive today.

In addition to special changing exhibitions, the Arkell Museum's permanent collection is always on view in the original Canajoharie Gallery. Paintings in this permanent exhibition include remarkable works by Winslow Homer, George Inness, American Impressionists and members of The Eight. The original gallery also features a full-scale replica of Rembrandt's so-called *Night Watch* which was commissioned by Bartlett Arkell for the not-yet-built Canajoharie Gallery. The director of Holland's Rijksmuseum (the owner of the original painting) recommended the Amsterdam artist, Martin Kopershoek, as a copyist because of his fidelity and ability to capture the spirit of the original works he copied. Kopershoek's copy was well received when the Canajoharie Gallery opened in 1928—and the unique painting has been on constant display in this space since that time.

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The Arkell Museum is open (March 1, 2016 – December 30, 2016) on Monday – Friday 10:00 am – 5:00 pm and on weekends from noon to 5:00 pm. For more information visit the website [www.arkellmuseum.org](http://www.arkellmuseum.org)

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