The Munich Rembrandt Forgeries Reconsidered: A New Technical Approach to the Investigation of Drawings

Konrad Renger and Andreas Burmester

In studying old master drawings the question frequently arises whether certain parts, such as signatures, monograms or even details of the composition, have been added later. These questions are mostly resolved subjectively, and the result is not always free of prejudice and often influenced by the current point of view. Conclusions are also difficult to arrive at, due to the fact that the additions generally simulate the medium and color tone of the original drawing.

The Dürer scholars, for instance, debate whether a certain monogram, the so-called tossed (geschleudert) Dürer monogram in a group of earlier drawings, was added later or is original. The majority of scholars, in particular Friedrich Winkler, believed these peculiar monograms to be later additions by a collector. Lisa Oehler, on the other hand, considered them homogeneous with the drawings and attributed the entire group to Hans von Kulmbach.1

As far as Rembrandt scholarship is concerned, a century-old argument about the Munich drawings has still not been settled. The debate revolves around the question of whether the signatures on several sheets were added later or whether the drawings are complete forgeries. In order to approach this problem (which does not immediately raise the question of Rembrandt’s authorship), it was imperative to seek supplemental, and, if necessary, scientific methods of examination that permit an objective judgment. Scientific methods of the examination of drawings have been applied only in exceptional cases and consequently few methodical proposals have been made. In all these examinations, the safety of the processes applied was of supreme concern since, in our opinion, the removal of a sample from
drawings is not permissible. The detection of separate elements is possible, however, by a physical-optical method devised by the Doerner Institute. The Rembrandt drawings at the Graphische Sammlung in Munich, with their largely homogeneous phenomena, were especially suitable for implementing this process. Two methods of examination, diffuse reflectance near-infrared spectroscopy and infrared reflectography with special filtering lenses were applied here for the first time, as far as type and scope are concerned, to drawings.

The technical details of this process have already been fully discussed in "Maltechnik/Restauro", while the art-historical aspect and the question of the provenance of the drawings were set forth in the exhibition catalogue "Zeichnungen aus der Sammlung des Kurfürsten Carl Theodor." An English summary of the literature on the Munich forgeries, as well as a critical stylistic assessment of several examples of the sheets we examined, will be given here.

First of all, the technical side of the process applied, of which the most important part proved to be diffuse reflectance near-infrared spectroscopy, must be explained briefly. Its principle is based on the phenomenon that, although surfaces partially absorb incident light, they also reflect it, albeit in our case, in a much smaller amount. This reflection can be specular—that is, only in a certain direction—or diffuse. Areas of diffusely reflected light can be tracked in all wave length zones by appropriate detectors. Our eyes act as such in the "visible" sphere with well-known inaccuracy: each pair of eyes sees things slightly differently and the result is not objectively.

An objective perception of reflected light particles is possible with the aid of diffuse reflectance near-infrared spectroscopy. It is frequently used in industry, for example, for color control, but has found thus far only very limited application to problems of cultural history. Most of the latter applications have been confined to the visible range of the electromagnetic spectrum ("light"), while use beyond the visible sphere has remained the exception.

In our examinations, it was not the visible range (between 350 and 750 nanometers), but rather the near-infrared area bordering on the visible range, that was suitable. The wave length range between 830 and 1750 nanometers proved especially informative.

A specific characteristic of drawings must be taken into account, namely, that the application of the drawing medium and the paper beneath it are apprehended by our eye, as by any other measuring device, in relation to the nature and concentration of the medium used. In addition to this problem, one must also reckon with the delicacy of the strokes, the washes, and the soiling of the sheet.

The diffuse reflectance near-infrared spectroscopy photometer at our disposal (Beckman DK2A with an integrating sphere and a table that allows the spectrometer to move in three directions) permitted a wave length dispersive measurement of selected points on the drawing. This means that the selected points in the wave length range described above are read by a monochromatic light beam. The resulting measurements are translated into a measuring curve which, according to our experience, requires conscientious evaluation.

The measurement of numerous points on a whole series of the Munich Rembrandt sheets indicated a typology of measuring curves which, for the sake of differentiation, have been called Type A, B, C, etc. An interpretation of the curve independent of the intensity of the application of the medium was made possible; the weakest as well as the strongest stroke was perceived as the same type. Our observations, on one hand, could be logically explained and, on the other, understood with the aid of mathematical models that considerably facilitated an interpretation of the results. It was shown that the original components, as a rule, were executed in Type A and the additions (which shall be discussed later) in Type B. However, these results do not yet permit further conclusions.

The expenditure of time and the trouble of measuring point-by-point with diffuse reflectance near-infrared spectroscopy and the theoretical deliberations supported by our experimental observations suggested the additional application of infrared reflectography. This process was developed through the investigation of under-drawing in paintings, but has been only infrequently employed in examining graphic works. The use of the infrared camera with a bandpass filter (Schott RG 1000)—and this is an innovation—proved to be decisive. This filter blocks out reflected light under 1,000 nanometers. The integral, energy dispersive wave length range in this experimental arrangement, together with

[ 527 ]
the use of the infrared camera (Grundig TV Camera FA 76S with Hamamatsu tube N 241–06) has a span from 1000 up to approximately 2150 nanometers. It could also be established experimentally that the application of the medium, on account of its aforementioned typified reflection behavior, appears vaguely much “weakened,” resulting in visibly differentiated gray values on the camera’s monitor and therefore on the black-and-white photographs taken by it.

We examined primarily drawings executed in liquid media. Experiments with dry media, such as chalk, showed a promising start, but could not yet be applied to the Munich Rembrandt holdings.

Prior to discussing the results in detail, a few words on the provenance of the drawings and on the debate regarding the Munich forgeries may be added. Carl Theodor, the Elector Palatine, had a cabinet of drawings installed in his Mannheim palace in 1758. The collection of drawings he assembled before and after that date included German, French, and Italian masters, as well as a large number of Netherlandish, particularly Dutch, artists. In 1777 Carl Theodor inherited the title of Elector of Bavaria and moved to Munich. The collection, however, was transferred there only in 1794. As far as is known, no further acquisitions were made by him after that date.

The first known inventory, compiled in 1802–1804 in Munich, included approximately 9,600 drawings, among them almost 400 under Rembrandt’s name. The Munich Rembrandt collection was then considered one of the greatest. But here, as in other early collections, fewer and fewer sheets attributed to the great masters could withstand critical examination by scholars. The number of no longer tenable attributions in Munich, however, was disproportionately large. Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, in his critical catalogue of 1906—the first on Rembrandt drawings—accepted only 54 of the almost 400 sheets, and expressed skepticism concerning some he had included. Otto Benesch, in his corpus of the Rembrandt drawings, still attributed 70 sheets to the master in 1954–57. In the revised, second edition, published in 1973, Eva Benesch accepted the same drawings, disregarding the arguments stated in the reviews of the first edition, especially those by Jakob Rosenberg, J. G. van Gelder, and Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann. Wolfgang Wegner, who published his catalogue of the Netherlandish drawings in the Munich Graphische Sammlung in the very same year (1973), 11 recognized only nineteen sheets as authentic (W.1992–1110). Other drawings he designated questionable (W.1111–1150), copies (W.1151–1191), school followers (W.1192–1234), circle and “influence” (W.1235–1321) and forgeries (W.1322–1370). But as Wegner himself states, the boundaries between the individual groups are “not always unambiguous and clear” (p. 152). He catalogued some drawings formerly attributed to Rembrandt as the works of pupils.

What are the “Munich forgeries” and what gave them their dubious reputation in Rembrandt scholarship? In 1893 Wilhelm Schmidt, then director of the collection, was the first—as far as we can determine—to call attention to the problem. Probably under the influence of Hofstede de Groot, he summarised that there might be some forgeries among the many Munich drawings, but failed to mention specific sheets. 12 Hofstede de Groot, in the appendix to his catalogue, also expressed some doubts about the Munich drawings and cited as examples Joseph and Potiphar’s Wife (HdG 365; W.1356), The Adoration of the Magi (HdG 380; W.1358), The Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis (HdG 410; W.1363 and HdG 411; W.1215). After having described the drawings at first in the respective catalogue entries as “questionable” or “not unquestionable,” he is more explicit in the appendix and mentions “the possible forger of the eighteenth century who might be traced to the court of the princely collector or be one of its purveyors” (p. 117). Two years later, in 1908, Fritz Saxl specifically writes of forgeries and the forger whom he simply calls the “man” (p. 531). 13 Thus, the Munich forgeries and the Munich forger were born. Hans Kauffmann and Wilhelm R. Valentiner mentioned, as a foregone conclusion, the forgeries and the forger, respectively. 14 J. G. van Gelder, in his review of Benesch in 1961, believed he had identified the perpetrator as a certain Giovanni de W olan, who carelessly had written his name on one of the sheets (W.1378), and whose sojourn at the Mannheim court Wegner had documented. 15 Other authors did not commit themselves as unequivocally and spoke of “imitations” or “Rembrandt-
esque variations of the eighteenth century.” In 1964, Benesch rejected the entire forgery hypothesis, since he felt challenged in his old age to stubbornly defend many of his youthful attributions as Rembrandt originals against the onus of forgery. Benesch’s attributions consist of a group of drawings that Hofstede de Groot had not included in his catalogue of 1906, but which Benesch had “discovered” as Rembrandt originals in 1935, particularly three studies for The Adoration of the Magi (W.1375, 1358, 1144) and two drawings for The Baptism of the Eunuch (W.1378, 1379). Most of these sheets (not W.1358 and 1378) bear the signature Rembrandt—which, in any case, is exceptional for him. These strange signatures are, however, an important characteristic of the Munich drawings and a key to their evaluation, a fact that had already been recognized by Hofstede de Groot: “Why is it that so many Munich drawings are falsely signed with the false name of Rembrandt in the exact same medium as that used in their execution, namely chalk or pointed or broad pen? The answer can only be that whoever tried to imitate Rembrandt’s signature also forged the drawings” (p. 117 f.).

If the signatures, on the other hand, had been executed in a different ink, they could have been later additions and the drawings therefore not forgeries, but rather sheets that had been tampered with. Benesch had to explain the signatures as later additions in order to defend the authenticity of the drawings. Rosenberg, however, who considered them to be forgeries, thought that the signatures were executed in the same ink as the drawings. Both scholars relied on their visual appearance. The appearance of the inscriptions would certainly prove Benesch right in most cases, which, however, would have to be examined objectively (and would on no account justify his attributions to Rembrandt).

These Munich signatures are of a peculiar, very significant nature. In most cases, the name has been written with a broad brush. Afterwards, several letters have been gone over with a thinner brush in darker ink, reinforcing them and perhaps imitating a pen line. On occasion, a Remf or only an R, also partly executed in double lines, can be found. The signatures executed in single broad brushstrokes also differ fundamentally from the usual inscriptions with which collectors recorded the artist’s name (for instance in Munich: W.1132, 1169, 1199, 1212). In a few cases, the signature has been reserved within a dark wash.

It may be stated beforehand that our measurements revealed that the signatures—with one exception—were added later in Type B ink and were executed in a medium differing from the original one. Only with regard to The Adoration of the Magi (W.1375), where measurements yielded approximately the same result in drawing and signature, no conclusion could be drawn. In this case, the limits of our method were reached.

Not only signatures, but also hatchings and even parts of compositions have been added. Looking at the Munich sheets as a group, typical features of these additions can be detected. As early as 1908 Saxl (p. 513) pointed out the added hatchings, which later scholarship only observed in those sheets where Rembrandt’s authorship of the original drawing was discussed. These hatchings were no longer noticed or mentioned in connection with sheets always considered apocryphal and of the most inferior quality. Wegner only incompletely recorded the additions, although his omissions cannot be corrected here. We have selected a few particularly characteristic examples to show what the original drawings were like and how the later hand “improved” them.

The additions, partly in deceptively similar, partly in different colored inks (brown, purple, gray; irregular fading, due to the aging process, is not to be excluded in these inks of varying types), can be found not only on the questionable and apocryphal drawings, but also on the undisputed authentic sheets (W.1099, 1101). Spaces were filled with “geistlosem Gekritzel” (Saxl p. 535, sub Hdg 489) and the ground indicated in the same manner. Two main groups, varying in drawing style, can be distinguished: one shows angular, energetic, zigzag hatchings in ink (or brush)—e.g., W.283, 1105, 1125, 1268—the other soft and curvilinear strokes executed with brushes of varying thickness, e.g., W.674, 675, 1096, 1099, 1101, 1115, 1251, 1329, 1339, 1345, 1359, 1372, 1379.

As mentioned above, even important compositional parts were added to many drawings. In most cases, these were first recognized as augmentations on the basis of our investigations. An especially instructive example is A Group of Figures (W.1181; Fig. 1), which Wegner classified as a copy and linked with the Hundred Guilder

[ 529 ]
Print. Signature, base line, and the indication of a wall on the right proved to be later additions. Among the figures themselves, three on the right are essentially later additions, several original lines and scribblings having been used as points of departure.

In the figure of the tall man with a hat, which is largely a later addition, the upper curve of the hat—strangely enough—is original. The short line may have induced the later draughtsman to draw the hat and the figure wearing it. The head at upper right consisted only of a three-quarter circle with indications of a face. Most of the face and the hat are later additions. Of the head directly below only the arc of the skull and a few loose strokes are original, while the face was formed by the additions. The vertical line next to it at right was broken at first, not continuous; the fragments seem to have inspired the later draughtsman to draw a wall behind which the faces executed in Type B ink emerge.

This analysis of the drawing as to original and added components was made possible by the measurements with diffuse reflectance near-infrared spectroscopy. The result completely agreed with the image that had been obtained by infrared reflectography, although the latter showed less contrast (Fig. 2).

The sheet proved to be a typical example of the kind of drawing that was bought and prepared for Carl Theodore. Originally, only a small part of the composition existed. Later, adjoining, disconnected strokes and dots were transformed by additions into new figures, the quality of which is inferior to that of the original drawing. The completely imprecise augmentations prove to be “pseudo figures” with spongy garments and inadequate facial indications.

A similar relationship between original design and added parts is evident in the Study of Two Apostles (W.1146; Ben.1081; Fig. 3). Benesch already realized that the greater part of the sheet, the seated oriental on the left, was a later addition. He believed he could recognize in the shadowy faces on the right two frightened apostles from a Last Supper. Wegner still classified the sheet among the doubtful drawings. Our investigation showed that very little of these two figures had been executed in Type A ink, so that very little belonged to the original state of the drawing. It is unclear what pose the figures were supposed to strike and what subject was originally to be depicted.

The “apostle” on the right was simply an oval shape, while his shoulders and hair are later additions. The “apostle” on the left was originally outlined in the manner in which he now appears. The two hands placed in front of his chest were present in the first sketch and can be seen next to each other as a double pentimento. The hands were separated as a result of the change caused by the addition: the upper hand became that of the original
Infrared reflectography proved to be the only method of examining a sheet executed completely in wash, such as Joseph Making Himself Known to his Brothers (W. 1317; Fig. 3). The measurements of the diffuse reflectance near-infrared spectroscopy only indicated that the signature at lower right was executed in Type B ink and consequently was an addition. Infrared reflectography (Fig. 6), however, showed not only, as was expected, that the wash in Type B had been added, but also that several lines in the seated figure on the left and the group on the right had been reinforced, which had hardly any effect on the original and was not visible there. The major parts of the figures had been laid out in Type A and only some lines were reinforced in Type B. The drawing was originally one in which the handwriting and the structure of the figures showed the influence of Rembrandt; the later, dark washes and additions, with their dramatic chiaroscuro contrasts, were to enhance the effect of the sheet according to eighteenth-century notions of Rembrandt's style.
of the child are drawn on a piece of paper that was pasted down and cut diagonally at the corners (31 x 39 mm); nor did he observe the additions to the whole sheet. In infrared reflectography (Fig. 8) shades of light to medium gray to black are visible while some thin lines clearly discernible in the original do not show up at all. These observations suggest that the gray values indicate the original parts and the black lines the later additions.

The measurements of the diffuse reflectance near-infrared spectroscopy, however, differentiated two types within the observed gray values. The gray color visible only faintly or not at all in reflectography—appearing somewhat porous on the sheet—proved to be Type A, the darker gray shade Type B. The values of those lines of the original to be classified as clearly black (Type C) ranged very close to, yet were still separable from, the middle gray shades (Type B) in the measurements of the diffuse reflectance near-infrared spectroscopy.

Summarizing these observations (Fig. 9), only the woman on the left was largely executed in Type A ink. The woman in the center with the child on her lap still lacked many details in the upper body and in the entire area at lower right, which could be regarded as her left knee. Of the woman on the right, who seems to carry a child on her back, there had been only a few scribbles indicating her head and the child. An attempt was made, with the additions, to form complete figures with these loose strokes.

The examination did not show whether Type C ink is part of the original or an addition to the drawing. But as the reinforced lines in Type C are superimposed on the original parts as well as on the additions, it can be concluded that they belong to a very late, final reworking of the entire sheet. The imprecise, curving, and shaky strokes exactly correspond with those of the additions to the drawing and with the additions to other Munich sheets. There is, therefore, no reason to separate this drawing from the Rembrandt apocrypha or to classify it as by a Maes follower, since it shows characteristics typical of the group.

On the basis of these measurements and observations, the Rembrandt material at the Graphische Sammlung can be newly evaluated and reclassified. Since the signatures were clearly added later, the Rembrandt apocrypha are not to be regarded as forgeries, but rather as alterations, which does not make any difference in terms of
Fig. 7 Woman and Child. Munich, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung.

Fig. 8 Infrared reflectogram of Fig. 7.
criminal law, for even according to eighteenth-century ideas, painters falsified “when they put names of foreign and other reputed painters on their pictures and fraudulently passed them off as their work.” In the case of

Fig. 9 Reconstruction of original state of Fig. 7.

the Munich sheets, the culprit put the signatures not on sheets of his own production, but on those by other hands. This knowledge is important for the history of collecting, since we no longer have to search for the Munich forger or an entire workshop that operated in the eighteenth century in a Mannheim cellar exclusively for Carl Theodor. Rather, we should look in the back room of a Mannheim dealer or in the Netherlands, where entire sheaves of minor figure studies and compositional sketches—probably purchased at bargain prices—were “finished” and “improved.” The additions, always executed in a uniformly amateurish manner, were inflicted not only on weak drawings by Rembrandt followers, but, as already mentioned, also on original Rembrandt drawings, which reveals all the more the stupidity of the person or persons responsible. The uniformity of the reworking suggests one person or two at the most.

As to the holdings of genuine drawings—that is, prior to the additions—they included, besides full-length figure studies in pen, brush or chalk (the latter are not discussed here) and fragments of figures, also compositional designs. The question of the origin of these composition studies—which were in part variants of or copies after Rembrandt paintings or drawings—must still be answered. It is no longer posed with reference to a forger—as Hofstede de Groot believed (p. 117)—but rather with regard to the drawings’ relationship to Rembrandt’s workshop: are they the products of amateurish disciples or are they imitations—far removed from him—mostly executed in the seventeenth or occasionally also in the eighteenth century?

The best-known examples of such compositional variants are three drawings for The Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis. They are derived from the undisputed large Munich drawing (W.1097; HdG 409; Ben. 1058).
Hofstede de Groot had already expressed doubt regarding these three sheets, and their place within the working process has been the subject of a partly controversial discussion. They are generally rejected today, and only Benesch, in the second edition of his book, still considered them original (W.1235; Ben. 1058; W.1236; Ben. 1060; W.1263; Ben. 1059).

Our examination, which was successful only in the case of W.1363 (Fig. 10), showed, as is evident in the infrared reflectogram (Fig. 11), that the outer border, the vaults above and the curves, the smoke, and particularly the initial R at lower right are later additions. The original drawing is, however, so unclear and interspersed with so many misunderstandings and bowdlerizations of Rembrandt's original composition that one can scarcely imagine it had originated under his eyes. An artist's name might be found only for very few of the weak Munich sheets.

The provenance of the Munich apocrypha must be traced to the contemporary location of the respective Rembrandt models. Their relationship to each other is strictly a question of style criticism that cannot be discussed here.

Our method was appropriate to disprove definitively the legend of the Munich forger. In many instances, the measurements taken confirm only the visible evidence, which, however, as stated before, is deceiving or subjectively interpreted. Yet, it should be made clear that definite conclusions with regard to various inks are permissible only where the measurements differ. If they are identical, different kinds of ink, which by chance have the same remissive quality, may have been used.

Diffuse reflectance near-infrared spectroscopy, which has been tested on the Munich Rembrandt holdings, was also applied to a Dürer drawing in Munich (inv. no. 37933; Winkler 193). The monogram turned out to be a later addition, which confirmed the judgment of the majority of Dürer scholars, and contradicted that of Lisa Oehler. Further investigations on drawings of other periods are planned, so the methodology might be further developed and refined.
AUTHOR'S NOTE: Hanns Swarzenski in memoriam.


3. This method was first used by Frank Preussler on a few sheets. The measurements taken in the visible range, however, could not be completed and systematically evaluated.

4. As to the various other examinations, see our article in Maltechnik / Restaurio, p. 32.

5. The modifications required for our needs were carried out by the Fellenerm firm, Munich. Special mention ought to be made of the table (Koordintensteller) which permits the measuring beam to be directed toward the drawing. In addition, an easel was used that permitted the movement of the sheet in any desired direction.

6. See our article in Maltechnik / Restaurio.


14. Hans Kauffmann, "Über die Literatur betreffende Niederländische Kunst," Oud Holland, 43, 1926, p. 244: "... es handelt sich um hässliche Fälschungen, in denen der Spätsstill des grossen Zeichners zerfetzt oder schwammig verunklärt erscheint." (We are dealing here with ugly falsifications in which the late style of the great draughtsman is plucked to pieces and appears "spongy" and confused); W. R. Valentiner, Rembrandt, Des Meisters Handzeichnungen (Klassiker der Kunst), vol. II, Berlin/ Stuttgart, 1934, p. 405: "Nachahmungen des Fälschers der Münchner Zeichnungen, dessen Tätigkeit vor allem darin bestand, aus einem Entwurf mehrere ähnliche herzustellen." (Imitations by the forger of the Munich drawings whose activity consisted above all of producing several similar ones out of a single design).


22. See catalogue, Carl Theodor, nos. 72, 73.
Unrecognized Studies for Van Dyck’s Iconography in the Hermitage

Joaneath Spicer

The famous assemblage of engraved and etched portraits known as Van Dyck’s Iconography has recently attracted attention in the context of research into the seventeenth-century conception of the function and expressive possibilities of portraiture, especially as a facet of artistic self-awareness. The fascination of these arguments veils the disconcerting fact that a great deal remains to be established concerning the creative responsibility for the series and its physical make-up and preparation. These issues must figure in any assessment of the artist’s intention. After all, the authorship of a work partially affects our assumptions about it.

The introduction of three unrecognized modelli for these prints, found among the substantial holdings of Netherlandish drawings in the Hermitage, enriches our perception of these issues.

The Iconography is most succinctly described on the title page printed by the Antwerp publisher Gillis Hendrickx in 1645: One Hundred Portraits of Princes, Men of Letters, Painters, Printmakers, Sculptors As Well As Amateurs Of The Pictorial Arts Done From Life By Anthony van Dyck, Painter. And Engraved at his Expense In Copper. Antwerp. Published by Gillis Hendrickx. 1645. The prints are overwhelmingly, but not exclusively, derived from Van Dyck’s paintings. Aside from the title page, Hendrickx printed 113 separate plates bearing his initials; among these, eighty were printed previously (but not necessarily as a unit or at the same time) by Marten van den Enden and were reworked by Hendrickx. To what extent, or even whether, these portraits were published or sold together as a series of a hundred plates in 1645—has been assumed in the literature—cannot be established. In any case, the Iconography was subsequently assembled in various versions from an ever-increasing pool of portrait prints, some of very indifferent quality. It is almost certain that no extant selection reflects the intentions of Van Dyck.

Van Dyck had begun working on the project by the winter of 1631–32, as we know from a reference by Constantyn Huygens. He was still working on it in England in 1636, by which time most, if not all, of Van Dyck’s own preparatory models—drawings, etchings, and oil studies—had probably been made. At least some of the engravings were completed by then as well. Nevertheless, in my view, the project cannot have been considered complete by the time of Van Dyck’s death in 1641, nor was it finished by 1645–46. While there are many factors, the simplest and most compelling one is that a series celebrating the great princes and art lovers of the day, which did not include Van Dyck’s patron Charles I, was unthinkable. While the printed portraits pay homage to a range of famous contemporary men and women on the Continent and in England, it is Van Dyck’s fellow artists—among them Pieter Brueghel the Younger, Cornelis Schut, and Theodor Rombouts, the subjects of the Hermitage studies—who are characterized with the most verve.

Van Dyck’s preparatory drawings for the Iconography, of which over fifty can be identified, were all executed in black chalk on cream paper, in contrast to the drawings from life for the painted portraits, which emphasize the pose and are sketched in black and white chalk on blue-gray or (rarely) brown paper. At least fourteen were then washed by the artist in warm browns or browns and gray. Some of these count among Van Dyck’s most beautiful drawings.

The magnificent chiaroscuro study in the Hermitage of the Antwerp history painter Cornelis Schut (Pl. 22) has lain unconsidered and uncatalogued as an anonymous copy after Van Dyck, but is indeed one of the artist’s finest portrait studies. The initial black chalk drawing is subtly brushed in deep brown wash, with a