

## REMBRANT VAN RYN FE.



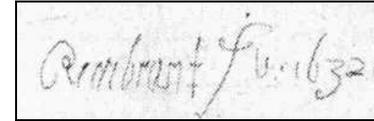
The only instance I know of a "Rembrant / van.Ryn fe." signature occurs on the etching representing Jacob mourning the loss of Joseph (B 38). Since it is generally dated 1633, it fits well in the development of Rembrandt's signature and is a valuable document of his efforts toward a definitive formulation (see entry 50). The form of the "b" is midway between the first and the final form (see entries 6 and 36). Interestingly, the only work that includes both Rembrandt's first name and patronymic depicts the episode of a father's loss of his "chosen" son—the one with the "coat of many colors." Noteworthy too that, when Rembrandt finally decided to drop the reference to his late father (d. 1630) in the patronymic, he felt the need to add a letter to his first name, thus turning it into a sort of last name. Was it a deliberate move or just a slip that happened to look good?



I would point out that, among the few slips of the needle that resulted in a "Rembrant" signature long after the "Rembrandt" form had been established, two are to be found on depictions of father/son subjects that recur in his work: Abraham and Isaac (1645, B 34) and Joseph telling his dreams (1638, B 37). This type of slip—reverting to the "Rembrant" form—persisted much longer in the etchings than in the paintings.

I already suggested that etching may have been a laboratory for Rembrandt's changes of graphic identity (see entry 6), just as it was the medium that gave his name the broadest dissemination. He seems to have been very much aware of his handwriting when he signed, whether with pen, brush or needle. For example, his penned "b" and "d" differ from those inscribed on his etchings and paintings. More often than not he distinguished between the initials for "Rembrandt" and

for "Rijn" (there are a few exceptions; see also entries 50 and 51). The "b" in what are presumably his first "Rembrant" and "Rembrandt" signatures on paintings and etchings in late 1632 and early 1633 has a different shape than in the definitive form: see the signatures of the etchings St. Jerome B 101 (right top and bottom of page); see entries 6 and 26, and the signature on the Descent from the Cross B 81 (left), which was signed "Rembrant" in its first state.



Although using an Italic script for his name, in his paintings and etchings starting in 1633, he consistently wrote his "b" in a Gothic script called "Dutch Civilité" by Ann J. Adams (see entry 21), as in The Good Samaritan B 90 (right, see entry 42). In purely practical terms, this may have reduced the risk of inadvertently substituting a "d" for a "b" when he signed his plates (i.e. backwards). Yet, as we can see from the occasional reversed signature (B 118, B 151, B 290, B 338, B 342) and numerals (B 121, B 152, both dated 1632), or holdovers ("Rembrant" appearing later than 1634, as in B 34, B 37, B 84, B 209), there was always a certain margin for mix-ups in the etchings.

