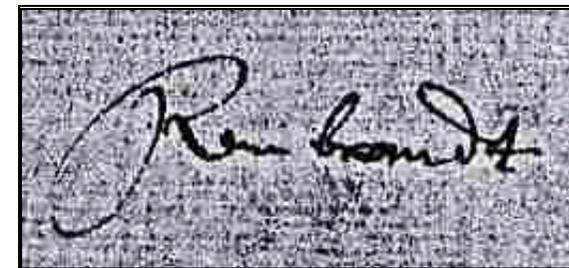
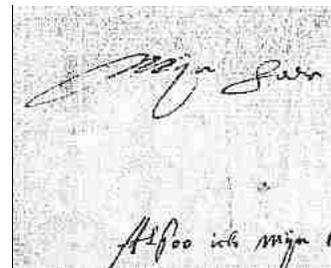
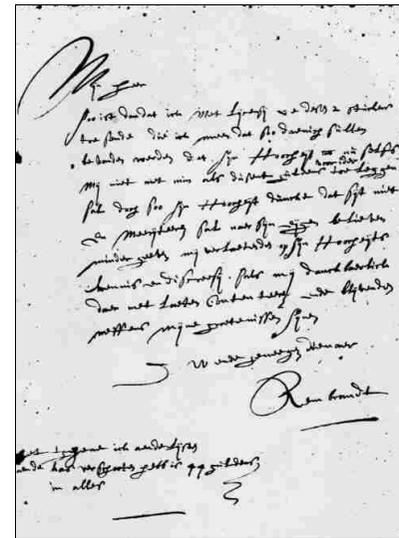


GRAPHOLOGY

Accompanied by a graphologist, I once examined the two business letters written by Rembrandt to Constantijn Huygens preserved at the Custodia Foundation in Paris. I regret to say that I was so enthralled that I forgot to take notes.

What the graphologist said about the signature confirmed what we knew about the person, yet it was on this occasion that the symbolic significance of Rembrandt's initial "R" hit home. More than just a calligraphic flourish, it can be seen as a symbol of the interaction between the inner and outer worlds in the creative process: thought realized by action, rendered visible by the *doing* of it (see entry 44). This active aspect was underscored by Rembrandt's habitual use of abbreviations for "*fecit*" ("has done") together with his definitive signature starting in 1633 (see entry 28).

A signature, which is the written or graphic form of a name, its self-portrait, marks the threshold where word and image meet. Its forms exhibit a quality that may be called meaningful or *expressive*. Even signatures by the same person vary in appearance according to circumstances or age (see entry 20). However we choose to interpret this variation, there is no doubt that it is psychologically relevant. At the very least, our signature has an aesthetic component: we like our signature because it looks good, whether we are aware of what we like about it or not. For an artist the form and aesthetic dimension of a signature can take on more weight; its design will be that much more deliberate and fraught with significance. This will surely be the case for an artist with a highly developed sense of self.



Reproduced are a letter by Rembrandt (left) and a fake letter from the 1906 *Urkunde* hoax (right, with details below). The fake letter is dated 1627, but presents a signature in the "Rembrandt" form; an obvious anachronism.