

WHAT BERNHARD SCHNACKENBURG SAID

"No artist's name has been used so often to give fakes a clean bill of health or to doctor the signatures of less marketable artists than that of Rembrandt. No name has been so passionately discussed in connection with so many pictures..."

Bernhard Schnackenburg
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung
(trans. jmc), June 12, 2004

These words introduce a full-page newspaper article by Bernhard Schnackenburg, former director of the Wilhelmshöhe Gallery in Cassel, which has a princely collection of Rembrandt paintings. In this article, he argues in some detail for the attribution to Rembrandt of a picture at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lille that has been traditionally ascribed to Peter Codde (Amsterdam 1599-1678). Notice how the author harps on the fact of Rembrandt's name and its use, or abuse. The name's the thing, we know by now, but who is immune to its spell? The picture in question, a quite masterful Student with a pipe, once bore a monogram ("CP") that practically vanished in the course of subsequent restorations. This proves that it was added posthumously, says Schnackenburg: indeed a strange twist for a "Rembrandt" of such high quality. The picture used to be dated around 1630-33, but on the strength of analogies with a dated painting by Jan Davidsz. van Heem, the author dates the ex-Codde piece to around 1628, at a time when certain artists working in Leiden seem to have been constantly looking over each others' shoulders. Herr Schnackenburg claims that it is too good to be a Codde. Considering the date, I would say that it is much too good to be a Rembrandt. And if the subject is boredom, as the author claims, it is not the boredom of prolonged study, but that of having to sit so long for a painter

