

Drawings Attributed to Carel Fabritius

When the drawings by Rembrandt, and by unknown pupils, from the Printroom of the Rijksmuseum were catalogued in 1985, a few were tentatively attributed to Carel Fabritius.¹ Some of these were listed in Otto Benesch's catalogue of Rembrandt's drawings but others were not.² For example, the *Messenger with the Crown of Saul before David* (fig. 1)³ was considered to be an autograph work, but *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 2)⁴ and *The Liberation of St. Peter from Prison* (fig. 3)⁵ were both omitted from the catalogue. The authenticity of the latter drawing had been questioned before by Von Seidlitz,⁶ while Valentiner thought it might be by a good pupil.⁷ Henkel suggested Ferdinand Bol as the maker,⁸ and Sumowski then adopted this attribution.⁹ A fourth drawing that is closely related to these three is *The Twelve-Year-Old Christ in the Temple*, in Winterthur (fig. 4). Both Benesch and Sumowski regarded this drawing as authentic, but Holm Bevers later described it as 'Carel Fabritius ?'¹⁰

¹ Attributed to Carel Fabritius, *Messenger with the Crown of Saul before David*, pen and brown ink, grey-brown wash, 169 x 193 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum.

² Attributed to Carel Fabritius, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, pen and brown ink, grey-brown and white wash, 130 x 128 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum.



Attributed to Carel Fabritius, *The Liberation of St. Peter from Prison*, pen and brown ink, grey-blue wash, 167 x 156 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum.



These four drawings share a number of important stylistic characteristics, most notably the bold contour lines, applied with a broad reed pen, which contrast with the finer, more sharply drawn lines within. Furthermore, a variety of distinctive hatching patterns can be found in all four drawings. The *Messenger with the Crown of Saul before David* and *The Adoration of the Shepherds* both have a grey-brown wash, which causes the pen lines to be fainter in places, whereas *The Liberation of St. Peter from Prison*, and *The Twelve-Year-Old Christ in the Temple* were finished with a grey-blue wash, a colour not used by Rembrandt in his drawings. A striking feature of these two images are the elaborate and rather sketchy lines used to articulate the space. In addition there is an abundance of narrow and broader hatching, including some funnel-shaped patterns. The effect of light and dark is created with the brush, rather than a particularly varied handling of lines. The eyes of some of the figures are indicated by dark dots, with a continuous line above, to suggest eyebrows. In some cases the mouth is also indicated by no more than a short line, while hands are shown simplified in outlined form.

In short, these drawings are characterised principally by an elaborate pattern of lines, made up of bold contours and sharply defined lines within and areas of hatching, to which a lively and broadly applied wash has been added. Rembrandt's drawings rarely display lines in such numbers, and there is usually more variation in his use of line. *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, a Rembrandt drawing in Haarlem believed to date from the early 1640s (fig. 5)¹¹, illustrates these differences, although there are also parallels with the group under discussion, such as the presence of heavy contours,



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Attributed to Carel Fabritius,
*The Twelve-Year-Old Christ in
the Temple*, pen and brown ink,
grey-blue and white wash, 220 x 295
mm, Winterthur, Sammlung Oskar
Reinhart 'Am Römerholz'.

and particular types of hatching patterns. The manipulation of the light and the varied handling of line give Rembrandt's figures a greater plasticity. The style of this kind of drawing – in particular the powerful reworking in pen – may have appealed to Fabritius and served as an example to him.

In the 1985 catalogue a connection was made between the group of drawings attributed here to Fabritius, and a particularly draughtsman-like motif in one of his paintings, *The Sentry*, in Schwerin (see p. 100, fig. 1).¹² Directly above the archway of the gate is represented the bottom half of a relief in *grisaille*, showing Saint Anthony and a pig (fig. 6). The underpainting here is grey-blue in colouring, just like the wash on two of the drawings under discussion. The outlines used for the relief are fine, but it looks as if there may originally have been some stronger contours, which were reduced in some parts to give a relief-effect to the figure. Particularly noticeable is the small patch of graphic hatching at the bottom of the pig's ear. The similarity between the right arm and hand of Saint Anthony, and the small seated figure bending over a book, in the bottom left corner of a drawing in Winterthur (fig. 7) is also striking: the sleeves of both figures are creased by a diagonal fold, while their fingers are indicated by means of short, sharp lines.

Based on this link between a motif appearing in both a painting by Fabritius and a drawing, an attempt was made to find other similarities between paintings and drawings. The paintings that lend themselves in particular to this kind of comparison are those containing graphic elements. One such painting is *Mercury, Argus and Io*, in the Los Angeles County Museum (see p. 76, fig. 1).¹³ At the bottom left, Fabritius made a few diagonal brushstrokes, applied like pen lines, to close off the corner of the image

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Rembrandt, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, pen and brown ink, brown and white wash, 191 x 227 mm. Haarlem, Teylers Museum.



(fig. 8), just as in the drawing of *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 2). Above these, a small group of hatched lines indicates the structure of the soil, a feature that appears repeatedly in several places in the four drawings. The use of such a graphic device is rare in a painting. Another patch of short hatchings can be found on the wood block to the left of the straw hat, and on the black sheep underneath the head of the dark cow. In addition, the fabric of Argus's sleeve is rendered by a number of short, parallel lines. The painting clearly shows Fabritius's preference to use hatching in his work.

A few of the outlines of the figure of Argus and folds in his clothing are represented by dark, brown-black lines which also distinguish other paintings, for example the *Self-Portrait* in Rotterdam (fig. 9)¹⁴ and the figure of *The Sentry* in Schwerin (see

6
Relief with Saint Anthony. Detail of Carel Fabritius, *The Sentry* (p. 100, fig. 1).



7
Scribe with book. Detail of fig. 4





8
Detail of Carel Fabritius, *Mercury, Argus and Io* (p. 76, fig. 1).



9
Detail of Carel Fabritius, *Self-Portrait* (p. 87, fig. 19).

p. 100, fig. 1).¹⁵ This way of suggesting and defining shapes – which is not particularly Rembrandtesque – is very characteristic of the sheets under discussion. Scratches made with the wooden end of the brush, such as those seen in Argus's beard, and in several other paintings by Fabritius, also appear on the shoulder of the kneeling shepherd in the drawing of *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 2).

Another element in the Los Angeles painting reminiscent of drawings is the palm tree, top left (see p. 76, fig. 1). The parallel brushstrokes here again form a linear element. The wings of the angel in *Hagar and the Angel* in Salzburg are painted in a similar manner: dark and lighter brushstrokes are used side by side to represent the feathers, with scratches of the brush-handle in between (fig. 10).¹⁶

The handling of light in the drawings is also comparable to that in Fabritius's early history paintings: he uses darker tones surrounding a brightly lit focal section. This is particularly noticeable in *The Raising of Lazarus* (see p. 94, fig. 1)¹⁷, and *The Twelve-Year-Old Christ in the Temple* (fig. 4), although in the latter drawing there are additional light sources besides those around the figure of Christ. The same effect can be seen in the paintings *Mercury, Argus and Io* (see p. 76, fig. 1) and *Mercury and Aglaurus* (see p. 80, fig. 7).¹⁸ 'In each of these three canvases we encounter a typical Rembrandtesque composition with figures that stand out brightly against a darker background.'¹⁹

Further connections between paintings and drawings emerge from infrared photographs of several of the paintings, in particular *Mercury, Argus and Io* and *Hagar and the Angel*. An infrared photograph of the angel in the latter painting in Salzburg (fig. 11), for example, reveals even more clearly than the painting itself a pattern of 'drawn' lines for the wings, as well as a few on the halo, which is typical of Fabritius's drawings.²⁰ Furthermore, there is a remarkable similarity between the rendering of the space at the top of *The Raising of Lazarus* (fig. 12) and that of a few drawings. The extensive use of dark, broad lines structuring the background motives can be found



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Detail of Carel Fabritius, *Hagar and the Angel* (p. 81, fig. 10).

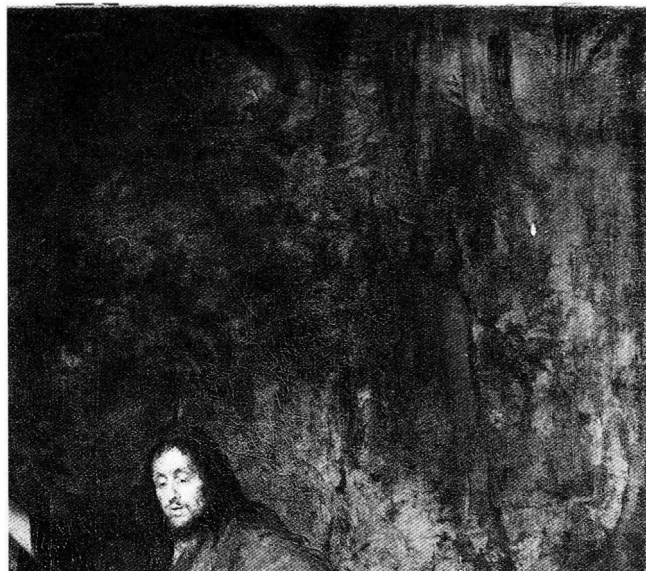
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Computer assembly of infrared images showing a detail of Carel Fabritius's *Hagar and the Angel* (p. 81, fig. 10).

on several drawings, for example *Messenger with the Crown of Saul before David* (fig. 1), *The Liberation of St. Peter from Prison* (fig. 3) and *The Twelve-Year-Old Christ in the Temple* (fig. 4).

There is another detail which appears in both a drawing and a painting: the small ruff with curving, black outlines in the *Self-Portrait* in Rotterdam (fig. 9), is drawn in the same way in the clothing of the scribe sitting in the bottom left corner of the Winterthur drawing (fig. 7). In the self-portrait both the contours and the inner lines of the clothing are again rendered with dark, graphic lines.

The infrared reflectogram assembly of the *View in Delft* in London shows a full underdrawing of the composition with carefully drawn outlines.²¹ Since Fabritius probably worked after a model of some sort here, this scene cannot really be compared to the drawings, except that, here too, contours play an important role just as in the compositions from imagination. Not surprisingly, to the group of drawings under discussion various other attributions have been added over the years. In the 1985 catalogue referred to above, three further drawings were attributed to Fabritius.²² Some of the more recent attributions to Fabritius are still listed as by Rembrandt in the third volume of Bencsch's oeuvre catalogue.²³ However, there were no 'decisive' examples among these: naturally, a preliminary study for one of the paintings in the same style as the drawings of the group would help to make the attributions more convincing. Yet, on the basis of general similarity and parallels of manner and style between these drawings and painted works by Fabritius, it is reasonable to assume that the sheets are by Carel Fabritius.

A drawing that has been attributed to Fabritius since the publication of the 1985 catalogue is *Tobias with the Fish and the Angel*, in the Ossolineum, Wrocław (fig. 13).²⁴ The figure in the drawing has the same unusual elongated lower half as the angel in the painting in Salzburg (see p. 81, fig. 10), while the swiftly outlined hand of the angel is very close to that of the sleeping guardsman on the right in *The Liberation of St. Peter*



from *Prison* (fig. 3). Then, the partial shadowing of Tobias's face by means of hatched lines, and his beady eyes and straight little mouth can be compared with the man standing centrally in the background of the *Messenger with the Crown of Saul before David* (fig. 1). The rather wild execution of the trees to the right in this drawing is also reminiscent of the way the foliage is painted to the left in *Mercury, Argus and Io* (see p. 76, fig. 1).

Other drawings that can be attributed to Fabritius were earlier regarded as by Rembrandt or by anonymous artists and these were already dated in the 1640s, when Fabritius worked with Rembrandt. One of these is the life-study of a *Male Nude Standing* in Vienna (fig. 14), which closely matches the style of the drawings this article ascribes to Fabritius.²⁵ For a start, the figure is described with the same dark outlines, except where the light falls upon the shoulder and arms. The broad wash has been applied more subtly on the youth than in the figures in the biblical compositions, since the artist was here working from the model and could render the fall of the light precisely. Around the figure, however, this wash is applied with the same broad strokes seen in the other drawings. The use of a few freely placed brushstrokes of varying strength, to give a sense of space and plasticity, is very distinctive and links





the drawing to *The Liberation of St. Peter from Prison* (fig. 3), and the *Messenger with the Crown of Saul and David* (fig. 1). The short parallel lines to the right of the youth's left leg are characteristic of Fabritius's drawing style, while the dark pupils are typical of both his painted and drawn figures.

If the attribution given here is correct, it illustrates the collaboration with Samuel van Hoogstraten, who records Fabritius as his fellow apprentice with Rembrandt.²⁶ A drawing by Hoogstraten in the Louvre, Paris,²⁷ shows the same model in an identical posture, while Rembrandt's etching *Nude Man Seated and Another Standing*, made at the same time, shows the model in reverse.²⁸ These works are normally dated to about 1646 on the basis that there is another etching by Rembrandt bearing that date and featuring a similar male model.²⁹ The attribution to Fabritius of the drawing in Vienna, by far the strongest of the group done from this model,³⁰ suggests that Fabritius was working with Rembrandt in the mid-1640s.³¹ In all likelihood Hoogstraten was back in Dordrecht by 1647 for on 19 January 1648 one of his poems was published there.³² A Rembrandt-like painting attributed to Fabritius in Toronto, *Portrait of an Unknown Woman* (see p. 141, fig. 2)³³, is dated circa 1644 and therefore must have been painted during Fabritius's time with Rembrandt, as must the two Rembrandtesque portraits attributed to Fabritius in the collection of the Duke of Westminster.³⁴

Although there is no absolutely certain ground on which the drawings discussed here can be attributed to Fabritius, there are various aspects, in particular stylistic features, which make the attributions plausible.

- ¹ P. Scharborn, *Tekeningen van Rembrandt, zijn onbekende leerlingen en navolgers / Drawings by Rembrandt, his Anonymous Pupils and Followers* (*Catalogus van de Nederlandse tekeningen in het Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam*, IV) The Hague, 1985, pp. 132-139, nos. 61-63. Discussion here is limited to three of the six Amsterdam drawings attributed to Fabritius in 1985; see note 22.
- ² O. Benesch, *The Drawings of Rembrandt*, 6 vols., London/New York 1973; enlarged and edited by Eva Benesch, of the 1954-1957 publication.
- ³ Benesch 1973 (note 2), vol. III, no. 506, fig. 630; Scharborn 1985 (note 1), no. 61.
- ⁴ Scharborn 1985 (note 1), no. 62.
- ⁵ Scharborn 1985 (note 1), no. 63.
- ⁶ W. von Seidlitz, 'Die Sammlung von Rembrandt-zeichnungen von Dr. C. Hofstede de Groot im Haag', *Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst* NF 28 (1917), p. 253.
- ⁷ W.R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt. Des Meisters Handzeichnungen*, vol. 2, *Klassiker der Kunst*, 32, Stuttgart/Berlin 1934, p. 104, no. 546 and p. 397.
- ⁸ M.D. Henkel, *Catalogus van de Nederlandsche Teekeningen in het Rijksmuseum te Amsterdam, I. Teekeningen van Rembrandt en zijn school*, The Hague 1942, p. 48, no. 97, pl. 74.
- ⁹ W. Sumowski, *Drawings of the Rembrandt School*, 10 vols., New York 1979-1992, vol. 1, no. 220.
- ¹⁰ Benesch 1973 (note 2), vol. 3, no. 500, fig. 660; W. Sumowski, *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler*, 6 vols. Landau/Pfalz 1983-1994, vol. 3, p. 1644, under no. 1094; M. Reinhard-Felice (ed.), *Gesamtkatalog Sammlung Oskar Reinhart 'Am Römerholz' Winterthur*, Basle 2003, pp. 214-216, no. 33 (entry by H. Bevers); F.J. Duparc, G. Seelig, A. van Suchtelen, exhib. cat. *Carel Fabritius, 1622-1654*, The Hague (Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen Mauritshuis)/Schwerin (Staatliches Museum) 2004-2005, p. 68 and fig. 62.
- ¹¹ Benesch 1973 (note 2), vol. 3, no. 519, fig. 685.
- ¹² The Hague/Schwerin 2004-2005 (note 10), pp. 141-146, no. 12. I am very grateful to Jutta Michels and the Conservation Department in Schwerin for their hospitality and for information provided when I came to study the painting.
- ¹³ The Hague/Schwerin 2004-2005 (note 10), pp. 100-105, no. 5. I would like to thank Stephanie Schrader and Virginia Rasmussen for their help when studying the painting in Los Angeles.
- ¹⁴ The Hague/Schwerin 2004-2005 (note 10), pp. 111-115, no. 7.
- ¹⁵ See note 12.
- ¹⁶ The Hague/Schwerin 2004-2005 (note 10), pp. 85-90, no. 2.
- ¹⁷ The Hague/Schwerin 2004-2005 (note 10), pp. 80-84, no. 1. I thank Grzegorz Janczarski and Maciej Monkiewicz from the Museum Narodowe, Warsaw, for the photograph of a detail of the painting illustrated in fig. 12.
- ¹⁸ The Hague/Schwerin 2004-2005 (note 10), pp. 106-110, no. 6.
- ¹⁹ F.J. Duparc in the introductory essay to *The Hague/Schwerin 2004-2005* (note 10), p. 31.
- ²⁰ For technical data of the infrared examination see article by Duparc, p. 89, note 3.
- ²¹ See *The Hague/Schwerin 2004-2005* (note 10), p. 126, fig. 9d (infrared reflectogram mosaic by Rachel Billinge, The National Gallery, London, 1993). For technical data of the infrared examination see *ibid.*, p. 128, note 25.
- ²² Scharborn 1985 (note 1), pp. 140-145, nos. 64-66.
- ²³ See note 2.
- ²⁴ Benesch 1973 (note 2), vol. 3, no. 497, fig. 654; S. Kozak, *Rembrandt i niderlandzcy mistrzowie rysunku (XV-XVII w.)*, Wrocław 1998, no. 14.
- ²⁵ Benesch 1973 (note 2), vol. 4, no. 709, fig. 900.
- ²⁶ S. van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderconst*, Rotterdam 1678, Book I, p. 11.
- ²⁷ Benesch 1973 (note 2), vol. 4, no. A 55, fig. 1122; Sumowski 1979-1992 (note 9), vol. 5, no. 1253*.
- ²⁸ F.W.H. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and woodcuts, c. 1450 - 1700*, vols. 28-29 (ed. Chr. White, K.G. Boon), Amsterdam/London/New York 1969, no. 194.
- ²⁹ Hollstein 1969 (note 28), no. 196.
- ³⁰ In addition to the drawings in Vienna and Paris there is a third drawing after the same model in the British Museum, London; Benesch 1973 (note 2), vol. 4, no. 710, fig. 901.
- ³¹ For the biography see *The Hague/Schwerin 2004-2005* (note 10), p. 13 ff. It has been generally assumed that Fabritius moved to Amsterdam to join Rembrandt's workshop shortly after his wedding on 22 September 1641. On 29 March 1643 his child was baptised in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam, followed almost immediately by his wife's death; the inventory of her estate drawn up on 24 April 1643 cites Fabritius as living in the Runstraat. His name subsequently appears on the new list of members of the Reformed Congregation in Middenbeemster, dated 1 June 1643. On 27 August of that same year his daughter Aeltje is buried there. Finally, Fabritius is recorded in Middenbeemster on 29 April 1646, acting as godfather. It seems likely, however, that he continued to live and work in Amsterdam for most of the time in these years (thanks to S.A.C. Dudok van Heel). See also the article by G. Seelig (pp. 93-98), according to whom Fabritius arrived at an earlier date in Rembrandt's workshop.
- ³² M. Roscam Abbing, with a contribution from P. Thissen, *De schilder & schrijver Samuel van Hoogstraten 1627-1678. Eigentijdse bronnen & oeuvre van gesigneerde schilderijen*, Leiden 1993, p. 36.
- ³³ *The Hague/Schwerin 2004-2005* (note 10), pp. 38-40, fig. 31. On the attribution of this portrait to Fabritius see also the articles by W. Liedtke (pp. 121, 126) and Chr. Brown (p. 141-142).
- ³⁴ *The Hague/Schwerin 2004-2005* (note 10), pp. 37-38, figs. 27 and 28.