



Head and Hands: Arthur van Schendel and Henricus Mertens, and Their Unique Role in the Development of the Rijksmuseum's Paintings Restoration Studio (1930-70)

• ESTHER VAN DUIJN* •

In 1930, Henricus Hubertus Mertens (1905-1981), a young artist and art teacher, started work at the Rijksmuseum as a paintings restorer: (figs. 1, 2).¹ At that time, the restoration of paintings as a profession was still in its infancy in the museum.² Restorers were skilled craftsmen at best; they worked with their hands and were employed as technical staff members. The person responsible for their work was the supervisor; in the nineteen-thirties, this was director Frederik Schmidt-Degener (1881-1941). Later this role would be taken up by the

< Fig. 1
Henricus Mertens
removing varnish
from *The Night
Watch*, 1946 or 1947.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
RMA-SSA-F-06616-1.

museum curators. Three years after Mertens had entered the museum, another young and enthusiastic staff member joined – the art historian Arthur François Emile van Schendel (1910-1979) (fig. 3).³ No one then had any idea that the combination of Mertens and Van Schendel would turn out to be such a successful one for the restoration department.

The two men could not have been more different. Mertens was an introvert and a skilled technician, who loved working with his hands in the quiet of the studio; Van Schendel was outgoing,



< Fig. 2
Portrait of Henricus
Hubertus Mertens,
year unknown.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
HA-0023504.

> Fig. 3
Portrait of
Arthur François
Emile van Schendel,
year unknown.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
HA-0023496-00.



energetic, enthusiastic and a skilful diplomat. They had in common their love of the field of restoration and technical research into paintings – a perfect combination of hands (Mertens's craftsmanship) and head (Van Schendel's academic skills). Their relationship was described by the American restorer Louis Pomerantz (1919-1988), who had worked as a student in the restoration studio in 1950 and 1951: '[Mertens] was a man who was very shy; he didn't like the publicity so he always stepped back, and Van Schendel was the one who did all the writing and talking ... about the work that was done in the conservation lab. He was the 'scholar' you might say. Mr Mertens never appreciated the importance of using TV and publicity.'⁴ This article will describe the course and mutual influence of their respective careers and their roles in the development of the paintings restoration department of the Rijksmuseum.

Formative Years

Mertens started work at the museum on 15 September 1930.⁵ He was a young artist, who had come to Amsterdam in 1927 from Roermond in the south of the Netherlands. In 1930, he had just finished his studies at the Rijksinstituut tot Opleiding van Teekenleeraren (State School for Drawing Teachers), which was actually situated in the Rijksmuseum, when he applied for the position of restorer. However, we do not know when or where he received his training in restoration. He may have had previous experience, but he could also have been taught on the job, most notably by his colleague, the liner Christiaan Hendrik Jenner (1896-1977).⁶ As a liner, Jenner was responsible for the structural treatment of paintings, such as lining or relining paintings on canvas or cradling panel paintings. It is important to bear in mind that Jenner was not allowed to remove varnish layers or retouch



paintings, as he lacked an artist's training, which Mertens had had. For these aspects of treatment, Mertens may actually have been instructed by the director himself. Schmidt-Degener supervised the studio, and in that capacity maintained close contact with its restorers.⁷

Mertens had been chosen from a number of candidates and after a probation period, the director wrote to the Minister of Education, Art and Science: 'I repeatedly admired his taste, insight and diligence in carrying out the restorations assigned to him [Mertens], so I would see his presence in the Rijksmuseum as an asset.'⁸ He referred to Mertens's art degrees, but did not mention any prior experience in restoration. He also stated that both Jenner and Mertens were fit and strong – an important consideration, given the

Fig. 4
A museum room during the reorganization of the Rijksmuseum's Marine History Department, February 1931. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RMA-SSA-F-00474-1.

number of paintings that needed to be rehung. This was a reference to the large-scale reorganization Schmidt-Degener had initiated when he took up his post as director in 1922; most paintings were rehung, revealing the need for many treatments.⁹ Between 1930 and 1937 the last phase of the reorganization focused on the Museum for Dutch History; the Marine History Department was finished in 1931 and the 'Land History' was finished in 1937 (fig. 4).¹⁰ From the Rijksmuseum annual reports over this period, it is clear that restoration work by Mertens and Jenner included the treatment of very large paintings for these departments.¹¹

One restoration undertaken in this period merits particular attention, because it brought the normally highly secluded work of a restorer temporarily into the spotlight. On 17 February 1931 a visitor to the Rijksmuseum slashed Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson of Dr Deyman* with an axe.¹² The painting, already a fragment of the original due to a fire in 1723, was seriously damaged by the axe blows, five of which tore

through the canvas support (fig. 5). The attack attracted considerable press attention. As the painting was owned by the City of Amsterdam, the Committee of Supervision and Advice for the Paintings of the City of Amsterdam (hereafter referred to as the Committee of Supervision), was involved in the subsequent treatment. Although there was some debate in the Committee as to whether Jenner was skilled enough to carry out such a complex lining, he nonetheless got the assignment.¹³ Mertens's involvement in the treatment of the painting was never a subject of discussion, even though he had only been working at the museum for six months. In the annual report of the Committee of Supervision, both Jenner and Mertens were praised for their work: 'The lining of the Anatomy Lesson of Dr Deyman by Rembrandt, after the damage, has been carried out in an excellent manner by Mr Jenner, the Rijksmuseum's restorer. The inpainting done by the Rijksmuseum's new restorer, Mr Mertens, was also excellent' (fig. 6).¹⁴



Fig. 5
The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Deyman by Rembrandt after the axe attack on 17 February 1931. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

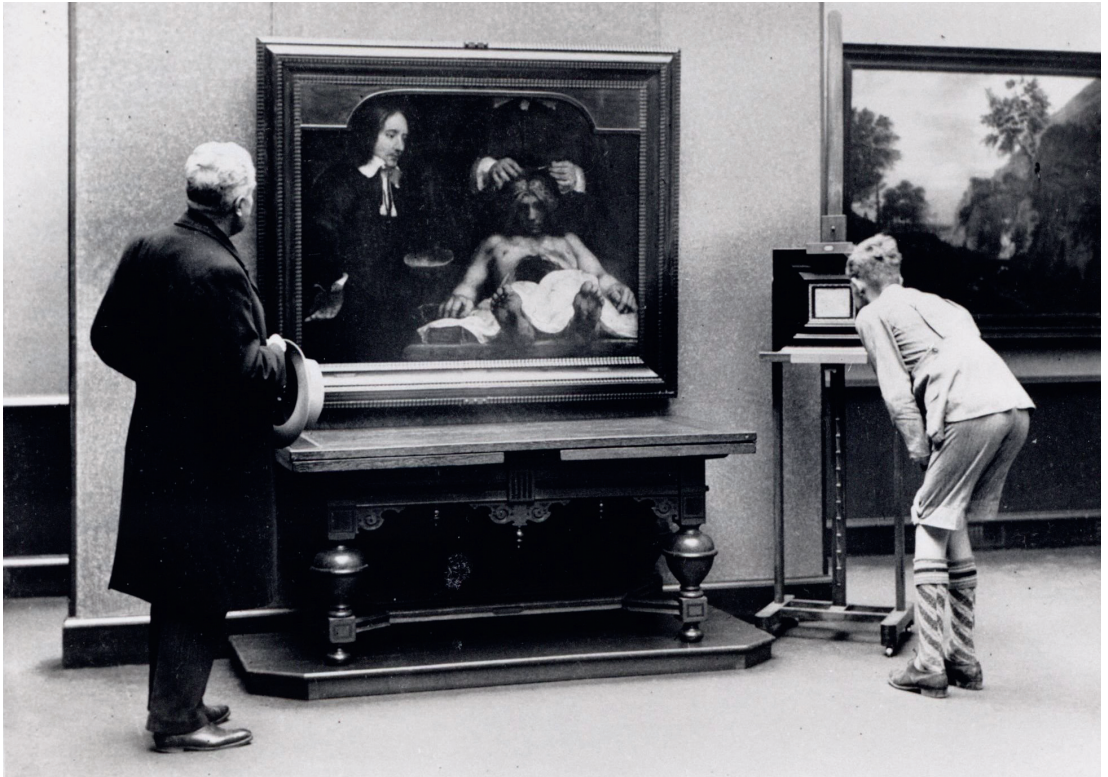


Fig. 6
The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Deyman
 exhibited after
 restoration, 1931.
 Amsterdam,
 Amsterdam City
 Archives, image no.
 010003016373.

Arthur van Schendel started work at the museum on 17 June 1933.¹⁵ Between 1920 and 1930 he lived in Italy because of his mother's health, attending an Italian *gymnasium*. Between 1930 and 1933 he studied art history at the Sorbonne in Paris.¹⁶ These international sojourns strengthened his language skills, which would benefit him throughout his career. In 1932 he started a Ph.D. on Lombardian drawings, which he finished in 1938.¹⁷ By then he had already been working at the Rijksmuseum for five years. Between 1933 and 1935 he worked as a volunteer in the paintings department, where he contributed to the reorganization of the so-called *kunsthistorisch apparaat*, the large collection of reproductions necessary for art historical research.¹⁸ He soon became involved in other curatorial tasks. In 1935, for example, he assisted Schmidt-Degener with the international Rembrandt

exhibition as a member of the organizing and press committees.¹⁹ On 1 January 1936, he became a permanent employee as a *wetenschappelijk assistent*, the equivalent of assistant curator, in the paintings department.²⁰

We do not know exactly when or how Van Schendel's interest in restoration and technical research was kindled, but it may have predated the war.²¹ In his new role as assistant curator, Van Schendel was undoubtedly in contact with the restoration department. The war may have further developed Van Schendel's gravitation towards this field.²² If he had not already been in close contact with the restoration department before, he definitely would have been after August 1939. The frenzy of activity that followed the pre-mobilization on 24 August 1939 brought the Rijksmuseum staff together for a single purpose: to pack and transport as many art objects as possible to pre-

determined temporary locations in the province of Noord-Holland (fig. 7).²³ Van Schendel and Mertens, both part of the paintings department, worked together for the two months it took to evacuate the 3,500 paintings from the museum. Over the following six years, the paintings collection was transported between and stored in various shelters, first in several bunkers in the dunes, then, from 1942 onwards, the collection was divided between bunkers in Maastricht and Paasloo.

The frequent transports under difficult circumstances and their stays in various shelters were hard on the paintings, especially during the first two years. The annual reports of 1940 and 1941 indicate that much of Mertens's and Jenner's time was spent treating the evacuated panels that had suffered from the poor climate conditions in some of the initial temporary shelters: '... numerous joints had to be re-attached, blisters fixed and more flaking of paint prevented.'²⁴ And although the

paintings on canvas were described as being in remarkably good condition in 1940, by 1941 it was clear that they too were suffering: 'Some canvases showed signs of mould and had to be treated immediately.'²⁵ The various bunkers in the dunes, as well as those in Maastricht and Paasloo were built specifically as art shelters with state-of-the-art climate control. After their arrival there, although the paintings collection still needed regular monitoring and care, the condition problems of the first two years consequently did not repeat themselves.²⁶

Reaching a Tipping Point

After the war, two occurrences seem to have been especially influential in Van Schendel's interest in the field of restoration and technical research: the treatment of Rembrandt's *Night Watch* by Jenner and Mertens and the use of technical research in the Van Meegeren trial. The Belgian chemist and so-called Monuments Man, Paul Coremans

Fig. 7
Mertens (on chair, left) supervising the evacuation of paintings from the museum, September 1939. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RMA-SSA-F-05157-1.

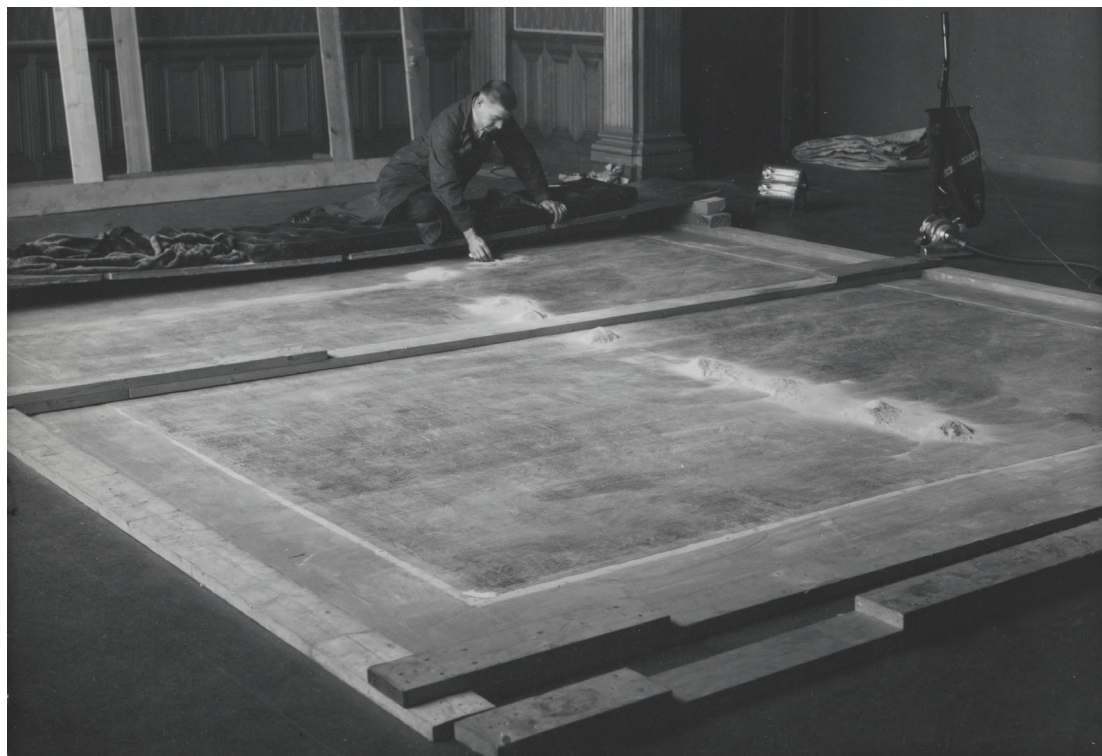


(1908-1965), played a crucial role in both instances.²⁷ Coremans and Van Schendel may already have been in contact with each other in preparation for Coremans's publication on climate control in various European art shelters during the war, in which the Dutch bunkers were specifically praised for their effective systems.²⁸ The first known correspondence between them is about two exhibitions: an overview of Belgian art in Amsterdam and one on Dutch art in Brussels, the latter having been curated by Van Schendel.²⁹ Coremans organized the process of taking detail photos – referred to as macro photos – of the Dutch paintings in Brussels.³⁰ Six months later, in June 1946, Coremans was appointed as one of the three technical experts in the Van Meegeren trial, together with chemist and restorer Martin de Wild (1899-1969) and forensic expert

Wiebo Froentjes (1909-2006).³¹ The artist Han van Meegeren (1889-1947) had been arrested shortly after the liberation of the country in May 1945, because the provenance of a painting allegedly by Vermeer, owned by Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring (1893-1946), led to Van Meegeren. He was charged with high treason for collaborating with the Nazis. In self-defence, he stated that he had actually forged the painting by Vermeer, as well as several others.³² Since some of his other Vermeer forgeries had become part of Dutch collections, his confessions shook the art world.³³ In the summer of 1946, Coremans, together with his assistant Louis Loose (1908-1986), visited the Rijksmuseum, where a temporary studio had been set up to study the Van Meegeren forgeries (fig. 8). It was Van Schendel's friendship with

Fig. 8
Paul Coremans
(sitting on the chair)
and Louis Loose
(standing behind
the table on the
right, just outside
the photograph)
examining the
Vermeer forgeries by
Han van Meegeren,
summer of 1946.
Photo: © KIK-IRPA,
Brussels.





Coremans that probably cemented Van Schendel's interest in the field of restoration and technical research.³⁴

In January 1947 Coremans helped Van Schendel and Mertens by sending Loose to the Rijksmuseum to take infrared photographs and X-radiography details of *The Night Watch*.³⁵ This painting had been one of the first to come back to the museum in June 1945. It was part of the exhibition *Return of the Old Masters* held until October 1945. As had already been anticipated during the war, treatment began after this exhibition closed.³⁶ The first three months, from October to December 1945, were devoted to the application of a new wax-resin lining. This was done by Jenner, assisted by his son (fig. 9).³⁷ From January 1946 to the summer of 1947, Mertens carried out the rest of the treatment, focusing on removing most of the numerous old varnish layers (fig. 1).³⁸ The treatment was overseen by Van Schendel and a sub-committee

of the Amsterdam Committee of Supervision.³⁹ This restoration was a turning point in Mertens's career, bringing him into the spotlight. At several points, journalists were invited to the museum to witness the progress of the treatment (fig. 10). Equally significant was the article that Van Schendel wrote with Mertens on three aspects of *The Night Watch*: its restoration history, its post-war treatment and the painting technique Rembrandt had used.⁴⁰ Although Van Schendel may have written the article, the fact that a restorer was acknowledged as co-author was ground-breaking, not only for the museum itself, but for the Netherlands in general.

In the last section of the article by Van Schendel and Mertens, the X-radiograph and infrared images made by Loose with his own equipment in January 1947 and discussed with Coremans in March, formed a significant part of the discussion.⁴¹

Fig. 9
Christiaan Jenner removing the old wax-resin mixture during his relining of *The Night Watch*, 1945. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RMA-SSA-F-06615-1.



Fig. 10
Mertens working on
The Night Watch,
while being filmed
for the documentary
*Rembrandt in
de schuilkelder*
by filmmaker
Gerard Rutten, 1946.
© The Hague,
National Archives
of the Netherlands,
NL-HANA_2.24.14.02_
o_254-2353.

The value of technical research both during the Van Meegeren trial and the treatment of *The Night Watch* prompted Van Schendel and Mertens to get their own 'small laboratory': an X-radiograph tube, infrared equipment and a microscope.⁴² It was probably Van Schendel who initiated this: in the summer of 1947 he had visited London and Brussels to learn about the X-radiography technique.⁴³ According to the notes kept on each X-radiograph taken in the studio, the first one using the museum's newly-acquired tube was made on 14 October 1947; it was a panel painting of a forest landscape by Jacob van Geel (figs. 11-13).⁴⁴ It is important to note that in this field the Rijksmuseum lagged behind other major European museums, many of

which had already set up a museum laboratory for technical research before the war.⁴⁵ The only piece of technical equipment the Rijksmuseum had in the nineteen-thirties was a quartz or UV lamp.⁴⁶ There was a lot of catching-up to do.

The Post-War Studio

And catch up they did: looking at the notes they made, X-radiographs were taken on a weekly basis. In the first year, for example, from 14 October 1947 to 15 October 1948, one hundred and forty-four X-radiographs of eighty-five paintings were made. Mertens and Van Schendel were both capable of operating the tube.⁴⁷ Although most paintings were from the Rijksmuseum collection, X-radiographs were also

Fig. 11

JACOB VAN GEEL,
Wooded Landscape,
 c. 1633.
 Oil on panel,
 49 x 73.9 cm.
 Amsterdam,
 Rijksmuseum,
 inv. no. SK-A-3968.
 The red box indicates
 the area of the
 painting that was
 X-rayed (fig. 12).



Fig. 12

The first X-radiography
 that was made with
 the Rijksmuseum's
 own tube, of
Wooded Landscape,
 14 October 1947 (fig. 11).
 Amsterdam,
 Rijksmuseum.

Fig. 13

Handwritten note of
 the first X-radiograph
 (fig. 12).
 Amsterdam,
 Rijksmuseum.



RIJKSMUSEUM AMSTERDAM

BESCHRIJVINGSKAART RÖNTGENOPNAMEN (I)

Nummer: 1 Datum: 19-10-'47

Voorwerp: Schilderij
 (materiaal, dikte): Tafel 49,5 x 74.

Naam kunstenaar: Jacob van Geel

Titel: Boslandschap

Verzameling, cat. nr.: Slijding Oud. Kunstleir
R.O.

Detail: Linkerhoek touwen A3968 ?

Focustafstand: 70

IV: 50

mA: 2.2

Belichtingstijd: 45"

Film (merk, maten): Orway 30 x 40

Ontwikkelaar: Z. O. Z.



< Fig. 14
Example of a treatment photo – of Rembrandt's *Portrait of Oopjen Coppit* – on a cardboard sheet with handwritten text underneath. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

made upon request. As the Rijksmuseum annual reports record, in the first few years, between 1948 to 1952, many paintings from the Mauritshuis were examined using X-radiography.⁴⁸ Interestingly, X-radiography was also carried out on loans in temporary exhibitions, including the exhibitions *Masterpieces from the Alte Pinakothek in Munich* in 1948, *120 Famous Paintings from the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum in Berlin* in 1950 and *Rembrandt in 1956*.⁴⁹ It is less clear how often infrared photography or the microscope were used in the museum after 1948. No notes were kept on microscopy and, apart from one early reference, we have no way of knowing if Mertens used it.⁵⁰ Later sources suggest that it was not commonly used in the studio in the nineteen-fifties and sixties.⁵¹ Infrared photographs frequently turn up among the so-called 'technical photographs' taken by the photographic department; these are overviews or details of paintings, made before, during or, very rarely, after treatment.⁵²

These technical photographs can be viewed as the first restoration documen-

tation that we have from Mertens and his studio. They not only include the infrared photos and X-radiographs, but also treatment photography. They were a clear result of the profuse photography that had been carried out for *The Night Watch*.⁵³ Even though there was no formal procedure for photographic documentation in place, it was better than the total lack of documentation before the war. Mertens would take prints of these photos and mount them on cardboard sheets, adding a few words underneath about the treatment or condition of the painting (fig. 14). At the same time, a system of written treatment documentation was developed, possibly influenced by what Van Schendel had witnessed in other institutions: two pre-printed pages that could be filled out by hand. They were used a few times (fig. 15), but were later abandoned for unknown reasons. For the rest of Mertens's career, the technical photographs with a few handwritten words at the bottom remained the only form of documentation that he kept.

Mertens was awarded a knighthood in the Order of Orange-Nassau for

> Fig. 15
The two pages of the new form for treatment documentation filled in for Manet's *Mlle Isabelle Lemonnier* of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen, June 1949. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

RUKSMUSEUM AMSTERDAM
 Datum onderzoek: Juni 1949
 Jaar behandeling: 1950
 Paraaf: *Arts*
 Volgnr.:
 Kunstenari: *Edouard Manet*
 Titel: *Portret van Mlle Isabelle Lemonnier*
 Verzameling, inventaris en catalogus nr.: *Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, København, Collectie R. van Marrewijk and Catalogus Zw. N. 1912*
 Afmetingen: *64 x 88 cm.*
 Datering: *1879-82*
 Material en structuur: *Fijn linnen, geprepareerd met lijn*
 Voegere behandelingen: *geen?*
 Huidge toestand: *Het gehele deel normaal. Blijfsom van de eigenaars is het deel in Nov. 1949 door de behoeftendroomt geworden, speciaal te hoogte van het drogen is het deel gekrommen en niet zij had opent. Twee kleine tinnen krommen en niet zij had opent. Twee kleine tinnen krommen en niet zij had opent. Twee kleine tinnen krommen en niet zij had opent.*
 II Planuraalag
 Material en structuur: *lym*
 Voegere behandelingen:
 Huidge toestand: *nie boven*
 III Verlaag *grote laag*
 Material en structuur: *oliepant, zeer dun geschilderd met 1 en palettemes. Hier en daar tot op de de met het mes afgeschaapt.*
 Voegere behandelingen:
 Huidge toestand: *Op de plaat (op kleine verpield duwen).*
 IV Vernislaag *Coating*
 Material en structuur: *zeer dunne mantel?*
 Voegere behandelingen:
 Huidge toestand:

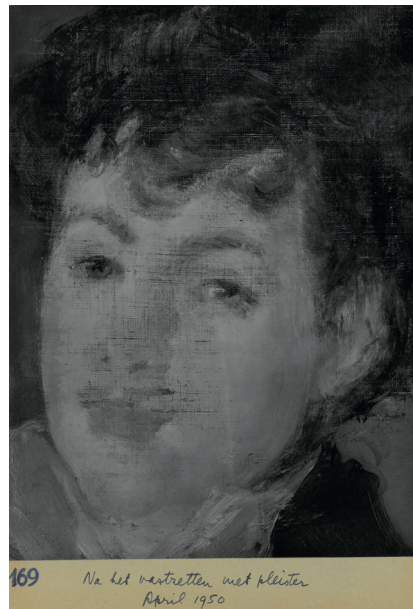


Documentatie (to dossier Nr.:)
 Foto's Nos.: *M 0 - M 8*
 Infraroodfoto's Nos.: *1949 - 372 A*
 U. V. foto's Nos.:
 Bevestiging: *Langste onderzoek*
 I. Infrarood:
 I. U. V.:
 I. Microscopie:
 Beschrijving van het portret:
 Motivering behandeling: *Net probleem is niet alleen het deel te verwijderen en de scherven te diepsten, maar dat het stond te vengen onder dat er veel meer blijft bestaan. Alle vol en spanne is niet uit de vanden het moet dus eerst roffel worden gemaakt waarna getakt moet worden de vanden der scherven zoveel mogelijk bij elkaar te brengen en vast te zetten. Is dit bereikt dan kan beschaafte volgen.*
 Proefingen:
 Beschrijving behandeling van:
 I (aanvang: 22-3-50 einde: *Apr. 1950*)
 Het de vanden scherven veel mogelijk opzijde en met opzet met cellophaneband. Na de reining vanden vanden met getakt dat een tekent 50 minuten geprepareerd was, het vol vanden met gelid licht, van vanden te vanden. *Handeling met wassering vanden. De vanden met de handen, met vanden van 4-4 als constant hand.*
 II (aanvang: *Apr. 50* einde:)
 Gaten van scherven opgevuld met bodent plannum
 III (aanvang: *Apr. 50* einde:)
 Plannumplekken ingeschilderd met dunne temperetrouche, geplaccerd met olievaf
 IV (aanvang: *Apr. 50* einde: *hei 50*)
 lichte mantel vanden op gelid.
 Opmerkingen:
Behandeling door Mertens, geholpen door P. Lagge en Bloeveraad.
 Veroygblad Nr.:



< Fig. 16
 ÉDOUARD MANET,
 Mlle Isabelle
 Lemonnier, 1879-82.
 Oil on canvas,
 86.5 x 63.5 cm.
 Copenhagen, Ny
 Carlsberg Glyptotek,
 inv. no. MIN 1912.

> Fig. 17
 One of the seven
 'technical photographs'
 or treatment
 photographs of
 Mlle Isabelle
 Lemonnier (fig. 16),
 showing a detail
 of her face.
 Amsterdam,
 Rijksmuseum.



169 Na het ventretten met pleister
 April 1950

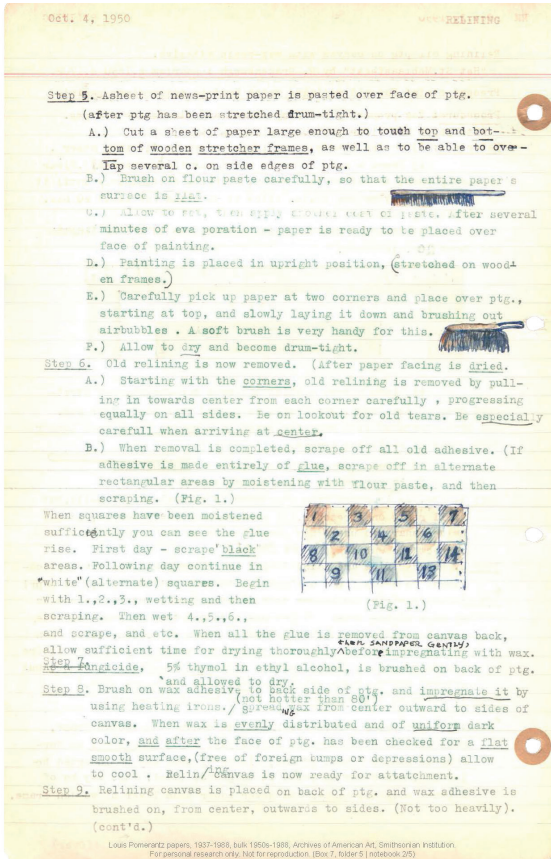
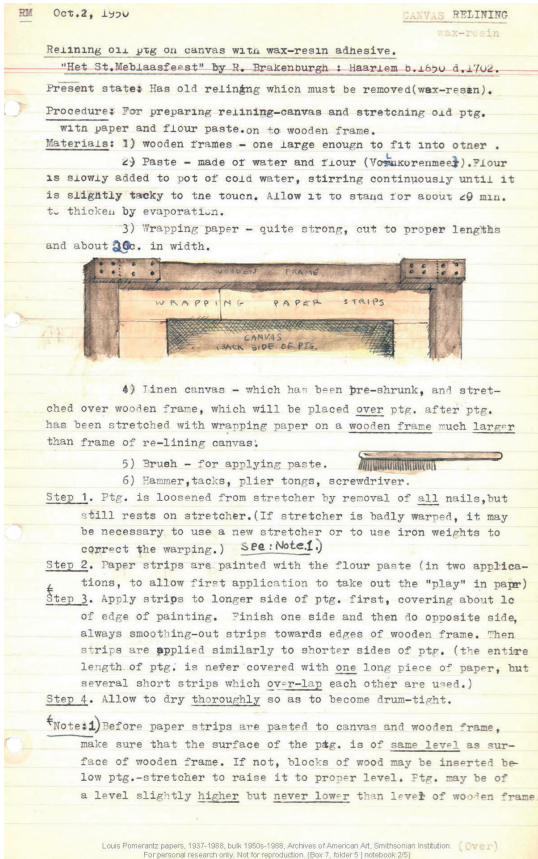
his work on *The Night Watch*.⁵⁴ The treatment secured his reputation at an international level, making him *the* specialist restorer of Rembrandt paintings. By the end of his career he had treated all the Rembrandt paintings in the museum, some of them twice.⁵⁵ He also treated several Rembrandt paintings from other collections: for example *Portrait of a Family* from the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum in Brunswick in 1949 and the *Portraits of Marten Soolmans and Oopjen Coppit* owned by the Rothschild family in 1956.⁵⁶ Paintings by other artists also found their way to the studio; one notable example is Édouard Manet's *Mlle Isabelle Lemonnier* from the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen (fig. 16).⁵⁷ Water damage to Manet's painting had caused tears and other deformations in the canvas, and neither the National Gallery in London, nor the Louvre in

Paris had apparently dared take on the commission. Mertens successfully brought the edges of the tears together and carried out a wax-resin lining and further treatment of the painting, although it cost him 'headaches, a lot of patience and much manual dexterity' (fig. 17).⁵⁸

The post-war studio grew in size. In 1948 a third restorer started. Hendrik Plagge (1905-1998) was a trained artist, so was allowed, like Mertens himself, to work on the varnish and paint layers (fig. 18). Jenner remained responsible for structural treatments. It is uncertain what exactly transpired between Mertens and Jenner, but it is clear that over time their relationship soured; Jenner was forced to leave the museum in 1950.⁵⁹ He was succeeded by other liners: Albertus Jacobus Hermanus Vorrink (1931-2004), from 1950 to an unknown date, Dirk Middelhoek (1926-2006) from 1955 to 1964 and

Fig. 18
Plagge (on the right)
working in the studio,
1950.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
RMA-SSA-F-05114-1.





H.M. Koene (1904-?), from 1964 until his retirement in 1969.⁶⁰ Cornelis Bloemraad (1890-?), a restorer of wooden and metal objects from the department of Dutch History, also seems to have stepped in as a liner in those years.⁶¹ He retired in 1955. We do not know how often he actually worked for Mertens; he may have acted as second or assistant liner, possibly under Jenner.⁶² It is clear that the division between structural treatment and the work of artist-restorers like Mertens and Plagge remained prevalent until Mertens's retirement in 1970. It would only change under his successor Luitsen Kuiper (1936-1989).⁶³

From 1950 onwards the studio attracted national and international students.⁶⁴ Helped by Mertens's outstanding reputation and Van Schendel's international contacts, the restoration

studio became a highly sought-after place to study.⁶⁵ One of these students, the American Louis Pomerantz, previously mentioned in the introduction, stands out. Not only was he praised for his amiable character, diligence and skills, but he also kept copious notes that provide us, more than any other source, with key information about the materials and methods used in the studio in 1950 and 1951 (fig. 19).⁶⁶ After 1951, Pomerantz and his Dutch wife often visited the Netherlands and kept in touch with Mertens, his wife and Van Schendel.⁶⁷

Later Decades

The expansion of the studio was matched by Van Schendel's own developments in the field of restoration and technical research. His successes are described in Filedt Kok's article about

Fig. 19
Two pages from the Pomerantz notebook, describing and illustrating a wax-resin lining, 2 and 4 October 1950. Washington, DC, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, © Louis Pomerantz Papers, 1937-88.

his friendship with Coremans, even though the Belgian chemist was not the only influencing factor on his career.⁶⁸ Van Schendel and Coremans were part of a core group of people that was very active internationally. Van Schendel was involved in the founding and the early decades of the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC), the ICOM Commission on the Care of Paintings (and its successor ICOM-CC), and the International Conservation Centre Rome (ICCRUM). He attended his first two international meetings in this field in 1948: a preparatory meeting for the IIC in September and the first meeting of the ICOM Commission on the Care of Paintings in December, when he was appointed secretary (fig. 20).⁶⁹ The Rijksmuseum's annual reports between 1948 and his retirement in 1975 show that Van Schendel never missed a meeting of the Care of Paintings Commission, which was held annually between 1948 and 1952, and bi-annually after 1952; from 1955 onwards it was held in combination with the ICOM Committee for Museum Laboratories.⁷⁰ These gave Van Schendel the opportunity to expand his network and to travel; he often combined meetings with visits to international studios and laboratories.⁷¹ In 1950 he was asked to join the international advisory board for the treatment of the *Ghent Altarpiece* in Brussels, an honour that demonstrated how much his expertise was valued (fig. 21).⁷² In 1979 Van Schendel posthumously received the ICCROM award for his activities for the Institute, which was founded in 1959.⁷³ One of his fellow members, Paul Philipot (1925-2016), remembered his Dutch colleague: 'Van Schendel was an extremely useful person at the beginning of the Council, especially due to his capacity to mediate and his juridical spirit. Smoking his pipe, he solved all the problems with great calm, and without ever being agitated.'⁷⁴



Mertens played little part in these international travels. We know of only one trip Mertens took: in September 1954 he spent six weeks in Italy visiting various restoration studios in a cultural exchange programme between Italy and the Netherlands.⁷⁵ Three years later he attended the joint meeting of the two ICOM Commissions (Care of Paintings and Museum Laboratories) from 19 to 25 September 1957, because it took place in the Rijksmuseum itself. One of the main themes of the conference was the restoration of paintings on canvas.⁷⁶ Mertens gave demonstrations in the treatment of canvas – undoubtedly discussing the 'Dutch method', or wax-resin linings – and helped set up a small, informative exhibition on this theme.⁷⁷ After this, no annual reports

Fig. 20
Van Schendel
(back row, second
from the right)
and Coremans
(centre) at the
preparatory meeting
of IIC in Brussels,
September 1948.

refer to travels on his part outside of those taken for restoration treatments. However, that does not necessarily mean that these activities did not take place; in 1957 Pomerantz wrote to Van Schendel about an upcoming work-related trip by Mertens to London, which is not mentioned in the annual report for that year.⁷⁸

While Van Schendel's career was thriving – he was promoted director of the paintings department in 1950 and became general director in 1959 – Mertens had his own promotions. 'Restorer' was not a recognised job title in the Dutch civil service; restorers were generally grouped under the heading of 'technical staff' with the accompanying low salary. In 1950 Mertens was promoted from Technical Assistant A to Paintings Restorer A, a position that was especially created in 1948.⁷⁹ However, Mertens's salary was still not commensurate with his responsibilities and reputation. In 1957 the director, David Roëll (1894-1961), wrote to the minister to ask for another raise; Mertens's work was praised extensively and he was called 'one of the best six restorers in the world'.⁸⁰ Roëll expressed his

concern that Mertens would leave the museum to pursue a much more profitable career as a private restorer. Ten months later the minister promoted Mertens to head restorer, with an accompanying increase in salary.⁸¹ Remarkably, this was not specifically noted in the annual report for that year. In fact, Mertens had already been called 'chief' in the annual report for 1954.⁸²

These actions may not have been enough for Mertens, however. Increasing discontent seems to have been part of the reason behind the stagnation in the development of the studio after the golden years between 1945 and 1957.⁸³ As a result of Van Schendel's growing responsibilities, his relationship with Mertens became more distant. Bob Haak (1926-2005) was appointed assistant curator to take Van Schendel's place in the daily supervision of the studio between 1954 and 1963.⁸⁴ But Haak was at the start of his career and still lacked Van Schendel's expertise, international network, and possibly also his diplomatic skills. In 1963 a long-cherished dream of Van Schendel was finally realized: the founding of the Central Research Laboratory of

Fig. 21
Van Schendel and Philip Hendy, director of the National Gallery in London, during one of the meetings of the international advisory board for the *Ghent Altarpiece*, 1950. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, HA-0023607.



Dear Louis,

Many thanks for your letter. So you have seen Abraham as the Dutch people say when you are 50 years.

It is not so very difficult to study the care and treatment of art on paper. But here on the Rijksmuseum there is nobody any more. There was a German girl, but it was terrible what she made of it. The passepartouts are now made by private persons. I don't think that you will learn any thing there. The municipal Museum makes only passepartouts. It is all a matter of money, that there is no restorer for prints. The best way for you is to go to the British Museum. Dr. Werner is a very kind person, and I think that you can learn there something. I have done it myself, but it paid not much.

Next June I am 65 years and so I leave the Museum. They asked me to stay some months longer, but I have refused. The last years on the Rijksmuseum were horrible: no assistants and rebuilding after rebuilding! I think it will not be ready over 10 years. It is a great rotzooi! So I am very glad to go away. I will hope to get a small farm in the country, and do also some private work. Ans will finish the letter and so: many, many greetings for Else, Carrie and Lonneke and for yourself all the best wishes and till this summer

Objects for Art and Science.⁸⁵ As far as we know, Mertens had no part in it. In a letter to Pomerantz he wrote on 4 December 1969: 'Next June I am 65 years and so I leave the museum. They asked me to stay some months longer, but I have refused. The last years on [sic] the Rijksmuseum were horrible: no assistants and rebuilding after rebuilding! I think it will not be ready over 10 years. It is a great rotzooi! So I am very glad to go away' (fig. 22).⁸⁶ Allegedly when Mertens retired, he took with him the notebooks in which he had kept treatment details, and burnt them out of dissatisfaction with the museum. This story has neither been confirmed nor denied by sources, but is indicative of his state of mind when he left.⁸⁷

Conclusion

Looking at the developments that the paintings department restoration studio underwent during the near parallel careers of the restorer Henricus Hubertus Mertens and the curator, and later director, Arthur van Schendel, it is clear that post-war changes were driven by the enthusiasm and energy that Van Schendel had for the field and the synergy he and

Mertens had together. The Rijksmuseum restoration studio lagged behind other major museums in Europe during the nineteen-thirties, but their first decade together was formative in the careers of both Mertens and Van Schendel as they gained experience as restorer and art historian, respectively. The war years were hard, not only on the staff, but also on the paintings collection, which was frequently relocated under less than ideal circumstances. The temporary shelters of the first two years, in particular, created a great deal of extra restoration work.

The 'golden years' of the studio began with the treatment of *The Night Watch*. It became an exemplary treatment, in the way it was carried out by Mertens, the technical examinations conducted by Loose and Coremans, the open press policy during treatment and the publications that followed shortly afterwards. The setup of the small laboratory in 1948 was another key step in advancement. Helped by his friendship with Paul Coremans, Van Schendel quickly expanded his knowledge and international network in the field of restoration and research. With the close

Fig. 22
Letter from Mertens to Pomerantz dated 4 December 1969. Washington, DC, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, © Louis Pomerantz Papers, 1937-88.

collaboration between Van Schendel, acting as the head, and Mertens, acting as the hands, the studio thrived. They not only complemented, but strengthened each other on a professional level. A new documentation system was set up; the photographic documentation that had been so important for *The Night Watch* became more common, although it was not yet a standard part of treatment documentation. National and international students applied to train under Mertens as specialist restorer and problematic paintings from other collections were successfully entrusted to his care.

When Van Schendel had increasingly less time for the studio, progress stopped. Head and hands grew apart. Some innovations were kept, X-raying was regularly carried out and photography remained important, but other improvements, like the written treatment

reports, were abandoned. What remained was Van Schendel's international work in the field, which he carried out until his retirement, as well as Mertens's tremendous skill as a restorer. They left their legacies through the dissemination of their knowledge – for Van Schendel by way of the ICOM-CC, IIC and ICROM, and for Mertens through the paintings he left behind and his students. Pomerantz put it like this: 'My one year of training with Mr Mertens in 1950 was not only one of my most influential experiences, but also one of the most enjoyable.'⁸⁸ And while Mertens's legacy is more modest and perhaps more elusive than Van Schendel's, it would be a mistake for us to disregard it.

ABSTRACT

The unique character of a present-day conservator lies in the rare combination of working at an academic level with your head and at a craftsman level with your hands. This has not always been the case. Historically the role of a restorer was that of a technician, craftsman and artist, while that of the museum curator was that of a thinker, writer and academic. This article focuses on the relationship between the curator and later director, Arthur François Emile van Schendel, and the paintings restorer Henricus Hubertus Mertens. Both started their careers in the museum in the early nineteen-thirties. Van Schendel's interest in restoration and technical research may have been kindled at that time, but was fanned during the war, when he worked with the museum's two paintings restorers – Mertens and his colleague Christiaan Jenner – to preserve the paintings collection under difficult circumstances. After the war, Van Schendel continued to develop in this field and quickly became an internationally recognised authority. He was closely involved in the treatment of Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, carried out by Mertens in 1946 and 1947. It brought the museum international acclaim and Mertens became known as the specialist in the restoration of Rembrandt paintings. Although the relationship between Mertens and Van Schendel became more distant as the decades progressed, the post-war paintings restoration studio grew into a renowned department with three permanent restorers and many national and international students. While Van Schendel was a key figure in the international field of restoration and technical research, for example as one of the founders of IIC, ICOM Care of Paintings and ICCROM, Mertens played a more modest role. His legacy was the paintings he left behind. His expertise was disseminated at a national and international level through his students. And so both Van Schendel and Mertens played their own unique role in bringing the restoration department of the museum internationally into view.

- * This article could not have been written without the valuable help of Professor Emeritus Jan Piet Filedt Kok, who envisioned it more than a decade ago. In 2007 he supervised a three-month research project by Mandy Prins, examining the life of Arthur van Schendel and his role in the field of conservation. Unfortunately, this research was never published; it did, though, form the foundations of the current article. Between 2015 and 2018, Esther van Duijn carried out a full-time study of the conservation history of the Rijksmuseum, financed by the Lucca Fund. During this time, she received the first draft of Prins's article, for which the author extends her gratitude. Over time, the focus of her article shifted away from Van Schendel to include Mertens as an equal protagonist, highlighting their professional relationship and their mutual roles in the development of the restoration studio. Additionally, the author would like to thank the following people: Robert van Langh (RM), Petria Noble (RM), Chun (Tracy) Liu (RM), all my other colleagues in the paintings conservation studio of the Rijksmuseum and Professor Joyce Hill Stoner (University of Delaware).
- 1 In this article, the term 'restorer' will be used throughout instead of the currently more common 'conservator', because 'restorer' is historically more accurate. The term 'conservator' will only be used for modern professionals with academic training in conservation. In the Dutch language, the division between the terms 'restorer' and 'conservator' is reflected in a similar fashion with the terms 'restaurateur' and 'restaurator', in which 'restaurator' is best translated as 'conservator'. See also: <http://www.icom-cc.org/242/about/terminology-for-conservation/#.Xp74UJoaRZ1>, consulted 21 April 2020.
 - 2 Esther van Duijn, 'Changing Views, Altering Practices. A Brief Overview of Nearly Two Hundred Years of Painting Conservation at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam', in Janet Bridgland (ed.), *ICOM-CC 18th Triennial Conference Preprints, Copenhagen, 4-8 September 2017*, Paris 2017, art. 1910, pp. 1-7.
 - 3 Van Schendel's father, Arthur François Emile van Schendel Sr. (1874-1946), was a well-known Dutch writer. The career and personality of the younger Van Schendel (called Sjeu by family and close friends) are well described in the sources. K.G. Boon, 'Arthur van Schendel en zijn Rijksmuseum', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 23 (1975), no. 2, pp. 52-55, esp. p. 52; S. Levie, 'Ter nagedachtenis aan dr. A.F.E. van Schendel', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 27 (1979), no. 1, pp. 3-6, esp. p. 4; A.B. de Vries, 'Obituary Arthur van Schendel (1910-1979)', *The Burlington Magazine* 121 (1979), no. 915, pp. 379-80, esp. p. 379. Sources on Henricus Mertens are less direct and come from annual reports, archival sources and oral history.
 - 4 Interview conducted with Louis Pomerantz by Joyce Hill Stoner in 1977. The interview is archived in the FAIC Oral History file at the Winterthur Museum, Library, and Archives in Winterthur (DE). See also Esther van Duijn, 'An American in Amsterdam: The Relevance of the Louis Pomerantz Papers for the Conservation History of the Paintings Collection at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam', *A1C Paintings Specialty Group Postprints of the A1C's 46th Annual Meeting Material Matters, 29 May-2 June 2018*, 2019, pp. 109-25, esp. p. 116.
 - 5 Mertens's personnel file is kept in a small archive of the paintings conservation studio in the Rijksmuseum's Ateliergebouw (room K2|I1).
 - 6 Christiaan Jenner had begun work at the Rijksmuseum as a carpenter in 1923 and was trained as a liner by his predecessor Willem Fredrik Cornelis Greebe, whom he succeeded in 1930, the year Mertens started.
 - 7 Frederik Schmidt-Degener's knowledge of the various aspects of restoration is evident in his account of wax-resin lining in 1932: 'Wax Relining of Picture Canvases', *Museums Journal* 32 (1932), no. 2, pp. 86-87. His expertise is also clear from the minutes of the annual meetings of the Committee of Supervision and Advice for the Paintings of the City of Amsterdam. Amsterdam City Archives, Archief van de Commissie van Toezicht en Advies voor de Schilderijen der Gemeente Amsterdam, acc. no. 459. We know for certain that Mertens was *not* trained by his predecessor, the artist and restorer Pieter Nicolaas Bakker, who had left the museum on 1 August 1930. For more on Bakker and the last problematic years of his career at the museum, see Esther van Duijn, 'The Restoration of Rembrandt's *Syndics*: A Nineteen-Thirties Cleaning Controversy', *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 66 (2018), no. 4, pp. 346-61.
 - 8 'By de hem opgedragen restauraties in het Ryksmuseum kon ik herhaaldelijk zyn

- smak, inzicht en werklust waardeeren, zoodat ik zyn tegenwoordigheid aan het Ryksmuseum als een aanwinst zou beschouwen'. Mertens's personnel file (note 5), letter of 15 November 1930.
- 9 Gijs van der Ham, *200 jaar Rijksmuseum. Geschiedenis van een nationaal symbool*, Zwolle/Amsterdam 2000, pp. 247-54.
 - 10 Ibid., p. 253; *Verslagen omtrent 's Rijks verzamelingen van geschiedenis en kunst 1931*, The Hague 1932, pp. 12, 26; *Verslagen omtrent 's Rijks verzamelingen van geschiedenis en kunst 1937*, The Hague 1938, p. 16. In subsequent notes these will be referred to as 'annual report'.
 - 11 Annual report 1931, pp. 12, 26; 1932, pp. 10, 26.
 - 12 Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief (hereafter referred to as NHA), 476. Rijksmuseum en rechtsvoorgangers te Amsterdam 1807-1945, inv. no. 399; annual report 1931, p. 12.
 - 13 NHA (note 12), inv. no. 399, minutes of the committee meeting of 11 February 1931.
 - 14 'De verdoeking van de Anatomische les van Dr. Deyman door Rembrandt werd, na de beschadiging, uitstekend gedaan door den Heer Jenner, restaurateur van 't Ryksmuseum. Het byschilderen werd eveneens uitstekend volbracht door den nieuwen restaurateur van 't Ryksmuseum den Heer Mertens.' NHA (note 12), inv. no. 451, annual report of the Committee of Supervision of 10 June 1931, no. 289 K.1931.
 - 15 Annual report 1933, p. 24.
 - 16 Levie 1979 (note 3), p. 4.
 - 17 Arthur van Schendel, *Le dessin en Lombardie jusqu'à la fin du xve siècle*, Brussels 1938.
 - 18 Annual report 1933, pp. 15, 28.
 - 19 Annual report 1935, p. 7.
 - 20 Ibid., p. 46.
 - 21 Boon 1975 (note 3), p. 52.
 - 22 In 1945, Van Schendel gave a lecture on painting techniques and the restoration of paintings. Annual report 1944-45, p. 177.
 - 23 H.P. Baard, *Kunst in schuilkelders. De odyssee der nationale kunstschaten in oorlog, 1939-1945*, The Hague 1946; annual report 1939, pp. 5, 8. On the preparations leading up to the evacuation, see Stina Ekelund and Esther van Duijn, 'Red, White or Blue – An Evacuation Priority Marking System on Paintings in Dutch Museums and Its Applicability in Conservation and Research Today', in Bridgland 2017 (note 2), art. 1903, pp. 1-7. On the evacuation and war-time period of *The Night Watch*, see Esther van Duijn and Jan Piet Filedt Kok, 'The Art of Conservation III: The Restorations of Rembrandt's "Night Watch"', *The Burlington Magazine* 158 (2016), no. 1355, pp. 117-28, esp. pp. 118-19.
 - 24 Annual report 1940, p. 23, and 1941, p. 22. '... tal van naden moesten worden gedicht, blazen gezet en verdere bladdering van de verf worden voorkomen.'
 - 25 Annual report 1941, p. 22. 'Een aantal doeken, die schimmelvlekken vertoonden, werden onmiddellijk onderhanden genomen.'
 - 26 Paul Coremans, *De wetenschappelijke bescherming der kunstwerken in oorlogstijd. Europa's ervaring gedurende de jaren 1939 tot 1945*, Brussels 1946, esp. pp. 10-12 (also published in French). Annual report 1942, p. 6 and 1943, p. 4.
 - 27 In a recent publication devoted to Coremans, several articles deal with the relation between Coremans and the Netherlands: Arjan de Koomen, 'D.G. van Beuningen's Crusade against Paul Coremans', pp. 179-201; Arie Wallert and Michel van der Laar, 'Expertise in the Van Meegeren Case: The Contributions by Coremans, Froentjes and De Wild', pp. 203-14; R.F.E.D. Hartmann, 'The Amsterdam X-Rays for Coremans and Van Schendel', pp. 217-29; and Jan Piet Filedt Kok, 'Arthur van Schendel: Friend and Companion in the World of Museums and Conservation', pp. 253-67, in D. Deneffe and D. Vanwijnsberghe (eds.), *A Man of Vision: Paul Coremans and the Preservation of Cultural Heritage Worldwide*, Brussels 2018.
 - 28 Coremans 1946 (note 26), pp. 10-12.
 - 29 *Van Jan van Eyck tot Rubens* (23 March-19 May 1946, Amsterdam); *De Hollandsche schilderkunst van Jeroen Bosch tot Rembrandt* (2 March-28 April 1946, Brussels). Coremans sent Van Schendel photographs of the paintings for the Amsterdam exhibition for the catalogue. Filedt Kok 2018 (note 27), p. 254.
 - 30 They inspired a subsequent publication by Van Schendel titled *Oog in oog met meesterwerken der Hollandse schilderkunst*, Amsterdam 1948 (also published in French in 1948 and English in 1949).
 - 31 Wallert and Van der Laar 2018 (note 27).
 - 32 Ibid.
 - 33 De Koomen 2018 (note 27).
 - 34 Filedt Kok 2018 (note 27).
 - 35 Van Duijn and Filedt Kok 2016 (note 23), p. 124. These were not the first X-radiographs to have been made in the museum. Aside from the X-radiographs for the Van Meegeren research mentioned above, Martin de Wild had already made thirty X-radiographs for the American art historian Alan Burroughs, using his own

- equipment, in 1929 or 1930. Petria Noble and Ige Verslype, 'X-rays and Vermeer', in C.R. Johnson Jr. (ed.), *Counting Vermeer: Using Weave Maps to Study Vermeer's Canvases*, RKD Studies, The Hague 2017, § 2.2, <http://countingvermeer.rkdmonographs.nl/chapter-2-the-use-of-x-radiographs-in-the-study-of-paintings/x-rays-and-vermeer>.
- 36 Lining canvas had been set aside during the war. NHA (note 12), inv. no. 297, letters of 4 August 1943, 19 October 1943 and 9 February 1944; inv. no. 281, letter of 7 February 1944.
- 37 Jenner had one son: Hermanus Willem Jenner (1923-?). It is unclear if he assisted his father during Rijksmuseum treatments on other occasions.
- 38 Esther van Duijn, "As Much As is Necessary for the Harmony of the Picture Not to Be Disturbed" – The Materials and Methods Used During the 1945/47 Treatment of The Night Watch by Rembrandt', in Janet Bridgland (ed.), *ICOM-CC 19th Triennial Conference Preprints, Beijing, 14-18 September 2020*, Paris, forthcoming (accepted for publication).
- 39 Van Duijn and Filedt Kok 2016 (note 23), pp. 118-19, 122.
- 40 A. van Schendel and H.H. Mertens, 'De restauraties van Rembrandt's Nachtwacht', *Oud Holland* 62 (1947), pp. 1-52. Ton Koot, *Rembrandt's Nachtwacht in Nieuwen Luister*, Amsterdam 1947, was a publication for the general audience. It was written in collaboration with Van Schendel and Mertens. For a close comparison of both publications, see Van Duijn forthcoming (note 38).
- 41 Van Duijn and Filedt Kok 2016 (note 23), p. 124.
- 42 Annual report 1948, p. 16.
- 43 Annual report 1947, p. 8.
- 44 The first painting was *Wooded Landscape* by Jacob van Geel, inv. no. SK-A-3968. These notebooks are in the paintings conservation department (Ateliergebouw, room E3|L1). See also Nadja Garthoff, 'The Early Use of X-Radiography in the Rijksmuseum of Paintings by Rembrandt', *RKD Bulletin* 2 (2017), pp. 25-31.
- 45 Geert Vanpaemel, 'Early Museum Laboratories and the Pursuit of Objectivity', in Deneffe and Vanwijnsberghe 2018 (note 27), pp. 15-25.
- 46 Annual report 1948, pp. 16, 58. The quartz lamp and Mertens himself briefly feature in the 1937 movie *Het Rijksmuseum* by Otto van Neijenhoff and Willy Mulens (Amsterdam, Eye Filmmuseum, identification no. FLM57186).
- 47 Annual report 1948, pp. 16, 58. Mertens and photographers working for the museum received training in Brussels. The X-radiography notes (note 44) show at least two sets of handwriting.
- 48 Annual report 1948, p. 58; 1950, p. 12; 1951, pp. 80, 81; 1952, p. 96. These are confirmed by the X-radiography notes (note 44).
- 49 Garthoff 2017 (note 44).
- 50 Annual report 1949, p. 14.
- 51 Interviews with Hélène Kat with Hendrik Plagge (January 1995), Dirk Middelhoek (January 1995) and Bob Haak (January 1998).
- 52 Confirmed by the annual reports of 1951 (p. 71) and 1954 (p. 64).
- 53 Van Duijn forthcoming 2020 (note 38).
- 54 Annual report 1948, p. 56.
- 55 *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Deyman* (SK-C-85; now in the Amsterdam Museum collection) in 1931 and 1954; *Self-Portrait as the Apostle Paul* (SK-A-4050) in 1936 and 1969; *Still Life with Peacocks* (SK-A-3981) in 1937 and 1954; *Titus in a Monk's Habit* (SK-A-3138) in 1950 and 1966; *The Sampling Officials of the Amsterdam Drapers' Guild*, known as 'The Syndics' (SK-C-6) in 1955; *The Jewish Bride* (SK-C-216) in 1960; *Young Woman in Fantasy Costume* (SK-A-4057) in 1961; *The Denial of St Peter* (SK-A-3137) in 1963; *Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem* (SK-A-3276) in 1964 and *The Holy Family at Night* (SK-A-4119, no longer attributed to Rembrandt) in 1965. See the respective annual reports, as well as relevant treatment documentation.
- 56 Annual report 1949, pp. 8, 49. Petria Noble et al., 'An Exceptional Commission: Conservation History, Treatment and Technique of Rembrandt's Marten and Oopjen, 1634', *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 66 (2018), no. 4, pp. 308-44. Other paintings were: *A Franciscan Monk Reading* (Ateneum, Helsinki) in 1956-57; *Portrait of Jan Six* (Six Collection, Amsterdam) in 1957; *Finding Moses* (Johnson Collection, Philadelphia) in 1961.
- 57 Annual report 1950, p. 8; NHA (note 12), inv. no. 3087 and the treatment documentation at the Rijksmuseum.
- 58 'Hoofdbreken, veel geduld en vingervaardigheid.' Annual report 1950, p. 8. See also conservation documentation on the painting.
- 59 Interview with Plagge (note 51).
- 60 Much of this information comes from the interviews with Plagge and Middelhoek (note 51), although both are coloured by their own experiences with Mertens and/or the

- museum. See also Esther van Duijn, 'Ruzie in het Atelier', *kM* (autumn 2019), no. 111, pp. 34-36. We know little about Koene; not even his first and middle names are certain, although they were probably Hendricus Martinus, born 30 September 1904.
- 61 Annual report 1940, p. 27.
- 62 Middelhoek in his interview remembers that he succeeded Kees (Cornelis) Bloemraad.
- 63 Van Duijn 2017 (note 2), pp. 5-6.
- 64 In the annual reports we find P.F.J.M. Hermesdorf (1923-1991), the Netherlands (in 1950); Louis Pomerantz (1919-1988), United States (in 1950-51); Maud Bennel, Sweden (in 1952); Niilo Suihko, Finland (in 1953); Jiri Yelatcha, (former) Yugoslavia (in 1954); Leo Marchant, the Netherlands (in 1954-55); Chris van Voorst (1918-2006), the Netherlands (in 1954-55); F. Benko, (former) Yugoslavia (in 1955); Mary Schenck, United States (in 1958).
- 65 The annual report of 1953, p. 20, comments on the additional strain this put on the studio. After 1958 there is no further mention of students.
- 66 Annual report 1951, p. 7; Van Duijn 2019 (note 4). The notebook is part of the Louis Pomerantz Papers (hereafter referred to as LPP), 1937-1988, bulk 1950s-1988. Washington, DC, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art.
- 67 LPP (note 66), box 2, folder 53; box 3, folder 38 and box 4, folder 16.
- 68 Filedt Kok 2018 (note 27) and the articles mentioned in note 3.
- 69 Annual report 1948, p. 7. Hero Boothroyd-Brooks, *A Short History of IIC: Foundation and Development*, London 2000, pp. 15-20. The IIC was officially founded on 27 April 1950.
- 70 Apart from his involvement in the Care of Paintings Commission, Van Schendel was also active in ICOM itself, between 1965 and 1971 as director. When the two commissions, Care of Paintings and Museum Laboratories, merged into the current ICOM-CC in 1967, he became a member of the Board of Directors until his retirement in 1975. Janet Bridgland and Joan M. Reifsnnyder, *ICOM-CC International Committee for Conservation 1967-2017*, Paris 2017.
- 71 Between 1948 and 1952, his visits for ICOM were funded by the Nederlandse Museum Vereniging; he represented all Dutch museums. See annual reports 1948, p. 7; 1949, p. 3; 1950, p. 8; 1951, p. 7 and 1952, p. 15; the meetings took place in London, Rome, Paris, Brussels and Lisbon respectively.
- 72 Filedt Kok 2018 (note 27), pp. 256-59.
- 73 Jukka Jokilehto, *ICCROM and the Conservation of Cultural Heritage: A History of the Organization's First 50 Years, 1959-2009*, Rome 2011, p. 67.
- 74 *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- 75 Mertens's personnel file (note 5): letters of 8 and 23 October 1953; 17 December 1953; 9 August 1954 and 6 September 1954. Annual report 1954, pp. 11-12.
- 76 The other was climate conditioning in museums.
- 77 Annual report 1957, pp. 13-14.
- 78 LPP (note 66), box 3, folder 38, letter of 22 July 1957.
- 79 The promotion was granted retroactively from 1 January 1948. Annual report 1950, p. 67. Mertens's personnel file (note 5): letters of 25 November 1949, 2 December 1949 and 12 January 1950.
- 80 Mertens's personnel file (note 5), letter of 21 January 1957.
- 81 *Ibid.*, letter of 29 October 1957.
- 82 Annual report 1954, p. 12.
- 83 See the interviews by Kat (note 51) and Van Duijn 2019 (note 60). Kat wrote about Mertens in the newsletter of the ICOM-CC Working Group *Theory and History* (January 1999), no. 4: '[Mertens] had become very frustrated by the hierarchy and finally left with all his records. He probably burnt them. In addition, during his career, he refused to attend meetings and he chased one of his colleagues with an axe through the museum!'
- 84 Interview with Haak (note 51).
- 85 Filedt Kok 2018 (note 27), p. 263.
- 87 LPP (note 66), box 3, folder 38. Mertens wrote to Pomerantz in English, but left the word 'rotzooi' in Dutch. It can be translated as 'mess'.
- 87 Kat 1999 (note 83), p. 4. In his interview with Kat, Haak confirmed that he saw Mertens write in notebooks.
- 88 LPP (note 66), box 3, folder 38, letter to Van Schendel of 13 November 1969.