



# Editorial

## An Ambitious Couple

**1** February 2016 was a unique moment in museum history: the French and Dutch states together acquired the full-length portraits of Marten Soolmans and Oopjen Coppit painted by Rembrandt in 1634. It was agreed by treaty that the couple would never be separated, and would be shown alternately in the Louvre and the Rijksmuseum. In Amsterdam we see them at home and in Paris they are shown in an international context. It was the best solution to a much-discussed dilemma, not only because it enables the public to see this stunning pair together in both national museums, but also because this cooperative undertaking has made the already excellent relationship between the two museums even stronger.

Marten and Oopjen, as they have affectionately come to be known since the acquisition, breathe ambition. They are two of only three life-size, standing full-length portraits by Rembrandt, a format usually reserved for royalty and the aristocracy of Europe. The young but highly sought-after artist painted these exceedingly ambitious works shortly after he settled in Amsterdam. He was only twenty-eight at the time, and his sitters were even younger: Marten was twenty-one and Oopjen twenty-three. The couple had married a year earlier. Though Oopjen came from a well-established and affluent Amsterdam family, Marten did not; his father had immigrated from Flanders to the booming Dutch metropolis, where he set up a very successful sugar refinery. Rembrandt's portraits show the newlyweds as aspiring members of the city's burgeoning elite, fabulously wealthy and dressed to the nines. While Oopjen is pregnant with the first child of the next generation, the rather self-satisfied Marten is brimming with the unbridled promise of youth.

Yet Marten's luck would soon run out. He died only a few years later in 1641, when he was twenty-eight. Six years after his death, his widow remarried; her second husband was Captain Maerten Pietersz Daey. Eventually she moved to Alkmaar, where her son from her second marriage had settled. He inherited the portraits after Oopjen's death in 1689 and they remained in the Daey family for more than a century. In 1798 they were sold to an art dealer and finally ended up in Pieter van Winter's renowned collection, passing to his daughter, Anna Louisa Agatha van Loon-van Winter. In 1877 her heirs sold the paintings to Gustave, Baron de Rothschild, in whose family they remained until 2016.

In the 380 years leading up to their acquisition by France and the Netherlands, Marten and Oopjen were rarely seen outside of their owners' homes, so to celebrate the couple's permanent entry into the public domain the Rijksmuseum organized a welcome party in the form of the exhibition *High Society*. This debutante ball introduced the young Dutch couple to their peers, some of the most famous full-length portraits of all time. In preparation for their debut Marten and Oopjen were treated in the Rijksmuseum's paintings conservation studio in collaboration with the Louvre and the Centre for Research and Restoration of the Museums of France (C2RMF). The results of the research into materials and techniques and the conservation treatment – made possible by the Irma Theodora Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds, Philips and the Cevat Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds – published in this edition of the Bulletin are timely, since 2019 will mark the 350th anniversary of Rembrandt's death.

The joint acquisition of Marten Soolmans and Oopjen Coppit by the Dutch and French states has secured them for the public domain and provided a tremendous stimulus for new research and future exhibitions. The ambitious portraits that were made to impress still do today and will continue to do so tomorrow.

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