

REMBRANDT AND HIS CIRCLE AT NATIONAL GALLERY

An exhibition that includes some works by one of the world's greatest etchers, Rembrandt van Rijn, is on display at the National Gallery until October 12. The display, called "Rembrandt and his Circle", comprises about 75 prints, drawings and paintings by the master and some of his associates, pupils and followers.

Rembrandt is represented by more than 30 etchings, most of them executed in the 1640s and 1650s, when he was at the peak of his powers. "With Rembrandt, you can understand what the term 'original print' means," says Pamela Osler, acting curator of prints, who organized the exhibition. "He handled his etchings with tremendous creative freedom, experimented with line ink and paper so that no two impressions of a print are ever the same; it is as if they were drawings."

The exhibition, one of several being held this year in Canada and the United States in honor of the tercentenary of Rembrandt's death, is the only one in Canada to illustrate his genius as an etcher. He was the first artist to exploit the medium fully. All the Rembrandt works in the permanent collections of the National Gallery are included in the exhibition.

Rembrandt is also shown in relation to his contemporaries by the inclusion in the exhibition of a



The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Faust in his Study Watching a Magic Disk



The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

St. Jerome Beside a Pollard Willow.

Van Dyck print that illustrates the difference in the approach of the two great portraitists: Van Dyck unsurpassed in depicting physical traits, Rembrandt unrivalled in his revelation of the inner man. The ebullience of Rubens, the great exponent of Flemish baroque, is demonstrated by a single print. Two works by Jacques Callot are included; Miss Osler says that Rembrandt must have been aware of the work of this fellow pioneer in etching because of the similarity of the beggar figures drawn by the two artists.

Rembrandt as a landscapist is seen in relation to other Netherlands artists of the period, such as Jan van de Velde, van Ruisdael and Waterloo; and as a genre artist in relation to Cornelis Dusart and Adrian van Ostade. The work of some of the pupils – Constantyn Renesse, for instance, Ferdinand Bol and Jan Victoors – is very like that of the master.

As a draughtsman, Rembrandt is shown in the company of such contemporaries as Jan Lievens, Leonard Bramer, Roelandt Roghman and Simon de Vlieger.

There are also three of Rembrandt's paintings: "Esther Preparing to Intercede with Ahasueras", "The Tribute Money", and a self-portrait.