



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe

Lefapha la Bomotho

Rembrandt or Not?

A case study in art historical enquiry from the J.A. van Tilburg Collection

Presenters:

Gerard de Kamper and Isabelle McGinn

Gerard de Kamper is the Chief Curator of the University of Pretoria Art Collection. With over 15 years' experience in working with the UP Collections and its associated Art Archive, he is currently pursuing his Master's in History, with a dissertation on the *History of Collecting Collections at the University of Pretoria*.

Isabelle McGinn is the Museum Conservator at the UP Museums, Department of UP Arts and oversees both the preventive conservation and interventive conservation on the UP Collections. In this capacity, she is also serving as course developer and coordinator for a new Master's programme in Tangible Heritage Conservation, proposed for rollout at UP in 2019.

Date: Friday, 18 May 2018

Time: 13:00 - 14:30

Venue: Plant Science Auditorium, Hatfield Campus,
University of Pretoria

RSVP by: 10 May 2018 to marinda.maree@up.ac.za

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One of the J.A. van Tilburg Collection's key pieces donated in 1976 to the University of Pretoria is a small oil on panel titled "Portrait of a Rabbi". The artwork has always been controversial because of its unverified attribution to the famous Dutch master Rembrandt van Rijn (1606 -1669). An authentic Rembrandt in a small university museum in Africa would indeed cause a stir in the art world. To prove it a work by the artist was something the UP Museums have been unable to do in the past due to limited resources.

For the last four decades, attribution of "Portrait of a Rabbi" to Rembrandt remained unchallenged, although advances in authentication were attempted where possible, including dendrochronological testing of the panel. It is however only after 2010 that correct attribution was prioritized, applying a blend of provenance research and technical art analysis techniques, including UV light examination, X-radiography and X-ray fluorescence. New scientific findings and tentative results have begun to unravel the mystery this artwork's creation and authorship. The UP Museums and the Department of UP Arts now proudly present the preliminary results of this quest and expose the potential avenues for art historical research in South Africa through the presentation of this fascinating case study.