ECE 4960 Spring 2016
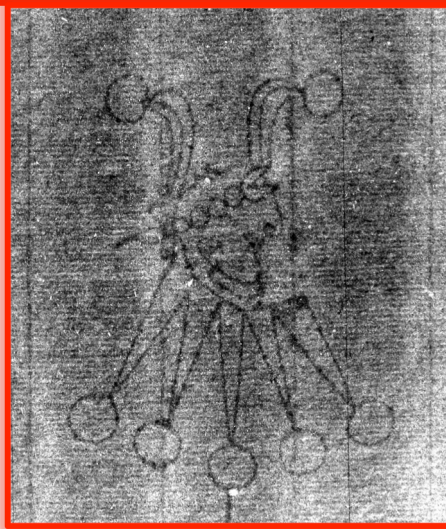# Watermark Identification in Rembrandt's Etchings

Wednesdays, 2:30–4:25
Johnson Museum of Art

Instructors:
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Credits: variable 2 or 3
Open to all disciplines;
permission of instructor required;
for ECE students, ECE 4210 or similar
recommended*

Rembrandt, *Self-portrait Leaning on a Stone Sill*, 1639, etching, H.F. Johnson Museum of Art, 57.123

Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669) is well known for his innovations in the etching medium and the range of his human expression and storytelling. But the crucial role played by the paper on which Rembrandt's images are printed has only more recently been studied. This course will provide students familiarity with the processes and characteristics of Rembrandt's prints and papers, including chain lines and watermarks. Students will add to an important ongoing research project designed to identify and date watermarks and establish a printing chronology of Rembrandt's etchings. The course will culminate in a team-curated, focused study exhibition at the Johnson Museum, enhanced by student-developed technology designed to interpret the problem for museum visitors.

Using the Johnson Museum's holdings of Rembrandt prints, we will explore topics including:

❖ Rembrandt as master printmaker, and his reprinting of his plates throughout his career
❖ technologies of 17th century papermaking and the visual identification of paper types
❖ history of the study of watermarks, and exploring watermark databases and research procedures
❖ computer-based image forensics data collection and analysis used to match paper characteristics
❖ art handling techniques and exhibition writing strategies
❖ methods for incorporating technical information about paper into an exhibition
❖ matching papers among Rembrandt's prints using watermarks and other imprints of the paper mold
❖ testing and revising a "decision tree" approach to the differentiation of Rembrandt's watermarks
❖ observation of printmaking and papermaking processes and exhibitions

*Programming will be required only of those who already hold the skills. While every student will participate in every aspect of the course, programming will be more heavily weighted for engineering students, research/written expression for non-engineers.