

**British Museum acquires  
Rembrandt drawing *A baby  
sleeping in a cradle* thanks to  
Arts Council**

Images: <http://bit.ly/47vDRiL>

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**LONDON, 11 January:** The British Museum has expanded its collection of Rembrandt's drawings with the acquisition of a black chalk sketch of *A baby in a cap sleeping in a cradle*, which has been transferred to the nation in lieu of an inheritance tax bill.

This fitting acquisition, made possible through the Arts Council Acceptance in Lieu scheme, adds to the Museum's collection of Rembrandt's works on paper, with over 1,000 prints and 72 drawings by the artist himself, and over 300 drawings by his pupils. The public will have the chance to see the drawing and Rembrandt's gift for depicting children in the spring in a display of his work at the Museum.

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606–1669) is considered one of the greatest artists in the history of art. He was known for his sensitive observations of human life, and his experimental approach to painting and printmaking.

The newly acquired work, *A baby in a cap sleeping in a cradle* was drawn from life, and Rembrandt used it as a study for the Christ child in his painting of the *Holy Family* (signed and dated 1645, Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg). This is characteristic of the artist, who drew inspiration from the domestic sphere, and interpreted biblical stories in a touchingly human way – which contributes to his enduring popularity. The drawing was long thought to depict Rembrandt's son Titus, although he was born in 1641 and therefore older than the depicted child.

The drawing has a long and distinguished provenance and has been in private collections in Britain for over 200 years. This reflects the passion for Rembrandt in Britain in the eighteenth century. British collectors were drawn to Rembrandt's expressive style. This inspired not only the fanatical collecting of works by the Dutch master, but it also influenced the direction of contemporary British art, as seen in the work of Sir Joshua Reynolds - himself an avid collector of Rembrandt.

The early reception of Rembrandt in Britain is integrally connected to the history of the collection at the British Museum. The newly acquired drawing was owned by some of the most important British collectors, including the Victorian painter, Sir Frederic Leighton. It is therefore significant to the broader history of British tastes and collecting, and to the reception of Rembrandt in Britain.

**Hugo Chapman, Simon Sainsbury Keeper of Prints and Drawings**, said: 'We are delighted to have acquired this drawing with the generous support from Arts Council. This tender drawing is a wonderful addition to our collection of images of childhood by Rembrandt.'

**Michael Clarke CBE, Chair, Acceptance in Lieu Panel**, said: 'Thanks to the Acceptance in Lieu scheme, this small, tender drawing of a sleeping baby has been acquired for the nation. It is done in black chalk and is typical of Rembrandt's quick sketches made from life. Its acquisition was announced in the Cultural Gifts Scheme and Acceptance in Lieu Annual Report 2023.'

## Notes to editors

This drawing was acquired through the Acceptance in Lieu scheme from the estate of Nancy Rae-Smith and allocated to the British Museum. Its acceptance settled £1,406,250 of tax.

Details of the work are as follows:

REMBRANDT HARMENSZOOM VAN RIJN

(1606-1669) [1]

A baby sleeping in a cradle, traditionally said to be the artist's son, Titus,  
black chalk on paper with no watermark visible,  
75mm x 112mm.

The Acceptance in Lieu (AIL) scheme is administered by Arts Council England. The Acceptance in Lieu Panel, chaired by Michael Clarke CBE, advises on whether property offered in lieu is of suitable importance and offered at a value which is fair to both nation and taxpayer. AIL allows those who have a bill to Inheritance Tax to pay the tax by transferring important cultural, scientific or historic objects to the nation. Material accepted under the scheme is allocated to public collections and is available for all.

The acquisition is included in the Arts Council's Cultural Gifts Scheme and Acceptance in Lieu Report 2023. The report details 48 varied and remarkable objects of cultural significance, worth over £52 million, which have been accepted for the nation and allocated to museums across the UK for the public to enjoy.



### Further information:

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