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Has a long-lost painting by a teenaged Rembrandt been discovered in New Jersey?

The small oil on board sold for \$870,000—1,000 times its high estimate—and is suspected to be part of the artist's earliest series on the Five Senses, made while he was still a student

by PAUL JEROMACK | 23 September 2015



Oil on Board, Triple Portrait with Lady Fainting (detail), sold for \$870,000 (est \$500-\$800) at Nye & Company Auctions in Bloomfield, New Jersey

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A painting catalogued simply as “Oil on Board, Triple Portrait with Lady Fainting” sold today, 22 September for \$870,000 at Nye & Company Auctions in Bloomfield, New Jersey, against an estimate of \$500-\$800. The sleeper hit (lot 216), is believed to be a long-lost panel by a teenaged Rembrandt.

The 12.5in x 10in panel was described by the auction house as “Continental School, 19thC, appears unsigned”, and potential buyers were advised that the condition included “paint loss, some restoration to paint, wood cracks”. The painting shows an unconscious young woman with a handkerchief (presumably holding smelling salts) held to her nose by an older figure, while a man (perhaps her husband) looks on.



The sleeper hit (lot 216), is believed to be a previously unknown panel by a teenage Rembrandt

The painting had been noticed by some in the trade and is suspected to be a depiction of “Smell” by a young Rembrandt from his series on the Five Senses. Dating from around 1625, the pictures are considered to be the very first paintings made by the Old Master, possibly done while still a student in the studio of the Dutch painter Pieter Lastman.

Three others from the series are known: The Operation, The Sense of Touch and Three Singers, the Sense of Hearing are owned by the New York collector Tom Kaplan of the Leiden Gallery, New York, while The Spectacle

Seller, The Sense of Sight is in the Museum de Lakenhal in Leiden.

At the time of posting, the buyer was not identified, although the underbidder was a British dealer.