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## X-Ray Analysis Reveals Joshua Reynolds Repainted Rembrandt Masterpiece

Henri Neuendorf, Thursday, March 5, 2015



Rembrandt *Susanna and the Elders* (1647)  
Photo: Web Gallery of Art via Wikimedia Commons

Berlin's Gemäldegalerie announced they've made a shocking discovery about the museum's Rembrandt masterpiece *Susanna and the Elders*(1647), [Focus](#) reports. An

X-ray analysis of the oil painting has revealed that it had at one time undergone extensive alterations.

According to the daily *Berliner Morgenpost* art restorer Claudia Laurenze-Landsberg, who conducted the analysis, noticed tiny pigments on the canvas that didn't exist in the 17th century. What's more, some parts of the painting were in a style that she didn't recognize as Rembrandt's (see [\\$50 Million Rembrandt Selfie Authenticated](#)). She found out that in the 18th century large parts of the painting were simply painted over, and entire sections were washed out using solvents and re-painted in a more modern, light shade.

The culprit is believed to be the English painter and collector Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) who collected Rembrandt and had a soft spot for old painting techniques. According to researchers at the Gemäldegalerie, Reynolds, who was known to frequently alter paintings in his possession, owned *Susanna* at the time that the alteration occurred. This assertion was supported by the Reynolds Research Project in the UK.



The altered areas of the painting are represented in green  
Photo: Claudia Laurenze-Landsberg via Berliner Morgenpost

According to museum director Bern Lindemann, “This was a pretty radical alteration. Only the figures correspond to the version of the painting that Rembrandt finished.” One can only speculate on what Reynold's motives might have been. “Clearly he thought the painting was in need of quite an improvement,” Lindemann said. It isn't the only one (see [Smithsonian X-Rays Iconic George Washington Portrait](#)).