

The Times [London (UK)] 15 Oct 1997: 21.

Bleak House has come to the Clyde. A wrangle over a will as complex as the legal dispute in Dickens's novel has divided Glasgow's burghers and is fascinating the wider art world. Julian Spalding, the imaginative and populist Director of Glasgow's Museums, is attempting to override the last wishes of one of the city's most generous benefactors. The shipping magnate, Sir William Burrell, left his magnificent art collection to Glasgow on condition that its contents were never transported overseas, but Mr Spalding believes that the passage of time has rendered Sir William's fears redundant. He wants to lend items from the Burrell Collection to other galleries in order that Sir William's works enjoy a wider audience and Glasgow's citizens might, in turn, enjoy reciprocal loans. In an echo of *Jarndyce v Jarndyce*, Mr Spalding is opposed by those closest to him, his own trustees. Their respect for Sir William's wishes shows admirable piety but they should not elevate the fears of one Glaswegian, however great, over the benefits to art lovers everywhere.

Yesterday the parliamentary commission which will decide the matter heard from the Director of the National Gallery, Neil MacGregor. He declined to take sides, but marshalled powerful arguments for Mr Spalding. Mr MacGregor pointed out that the lending and borrowing anticipated by Mr Spalding has, in other instances, "increased public attendance, both through the local population's visiting the temporary exhibition at the borrowing museum and through increased exposure for the lending collection further afield".

Sir William's fears about the dangers of transporting his works by sea are torpedoed by Mr MacGregor, who claims that he is aware of "no risk differential between domestic and overseas lending". Even were there to be a risk, Mr Spalding should be within his rights to disregard it. As Mr MacGregor pointed out, under Section 5(3) of the 1992 Museums and Galleries Act, a trust's provisions on lending from a national gallery can be overridden after 50 years. If Liverpool's art galleries can be considered national, and they have, can those of the Empire's Second City be denied that dignity?

Mr Spalding's opponents fear that the flouting of Sir William's wishes may make it more difficult to tempt benefactors to leave their collections to British museums in the future. Patrons, they believe, may be inclined to bequeath their treasures to foreign jurisdictions where their wishes will be respected in perpetuity. If these fears are justified then that is a matter for Parliament, not Mr Spalding, who is acting, as the law allows, in Glasgow's best interests. In practice, however, it would be a remarkably eccentric benefactor who allowed his prejudice against a potential temporary loan to overcome the feelings which would prompt him to leave a memorial in the city to which he was sentimentally attached.

**Art experts lose face in Rembrandt mix-up: [4M Edition]
Alberge, Dalya. The Times [London (UK)] 11 Feb 1999.**

A PAINTING of Rembrandt was always praised by experts as a masterpiece among his self-portraits. The fact that it was not quite in his usual style was said to add to its importance.

At the same time, a somewhat rougher painting in another gallery was held to be just a copy. But not any more.

Yesterday the more famous painting was declared to be the copy, while the rougher version emerged as the true work of the master. The switch in attitude by scholars was reported by Neil MacGregor, the Director of the National Gallery, which is planning to include both images in its exhibition of Rembrandt self-portraits this summer. The demoted painting from 1629 comes from the Mauritshuis in The Hague. He said: "It was long regarded as one of the supreme early portraits. It is almost certainly a copy." Doubts were first raised in 1991 by a German scholar, Claus Grimm, but his view was discounted as the painting was considered so fine. David Bomford, the National Gallery's senior restorer of paintings, recalled how "everybody said, 'What a quaint idea'." The quality of the painting "seduced people", he said. The style was not entirely in keeping with Rembrandt's hand, but experts felt it was a masterpiece that "stands alone" among his works.

In retrospect, Mr Bomford said, scholars should have questioned its uniqueness further. The other picture, in the Germanisches National Museum in Nuremberg, was regarded as "a rough copy, interesting but not terribly important", although the rough, granular handling of the paint was more typical of Rembrandt. What clinched the Grimm theory was scientific analysis - infra-red reflectography, conducted by the Mauritshuis - and bringing together the two versions for the first time in Nuremberg. Tests on the Mauritshuis portrait revealed underdrawing that a copyist would do if setting down a composition. Dr Bomford said that the Mauritshuis was "not in the least bit dismayed", but Nuremberg is "extremely pleased".

Peter van der Ploeg, a senior curator at the Mauritshuis, said they were now researching who painted their picture. Among the contenders are artists who worked in Rembrandt's studio, such as Gerard Dou or Jan Lievens. They are considered masters in their own right. Rembrandt used to get his pupils to copy his self-portraits as exercises.

The exhibition from June 9 to September 5 is jointly organised by the National Gallery and the Mauritshuis.

The National Gallery has urged Parliament to push through legislation allowing the Burrell Collection to lend a Rembrandt to the Mauritshuis, where the exhibition will be shown from September. Burrell's will stipulated there be no loans abroad.

Illustration
