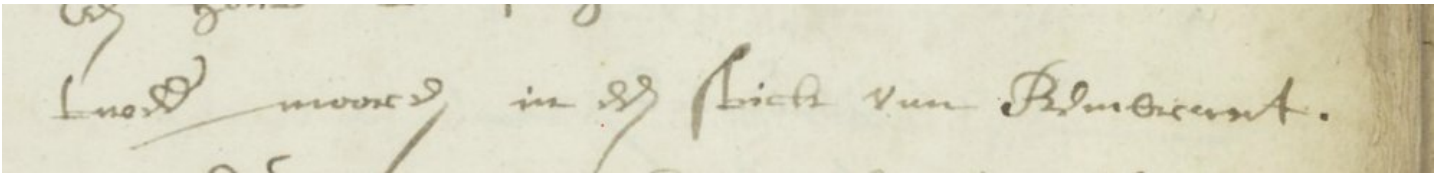
Twitter Thread by Mark Ponte

Mark Ponte
@voetnoot

We will likely never be able to establish with certainty the identity of the two Black men painted by Rembrandt. There are no documents found, linking the painting to individuals. But we can make a reasoned guess. #BlackHistoryMonth #day20 #rembrandt #identification

First there is the problem of the date. The inventory with a reference to 'two Moors in one painting' was drawn up in 1656 in what is now the @Rembrandthuis; however, the painting that hangs in the @Mauritshuis bears not only Rembrandt's signature but also the year 1661.



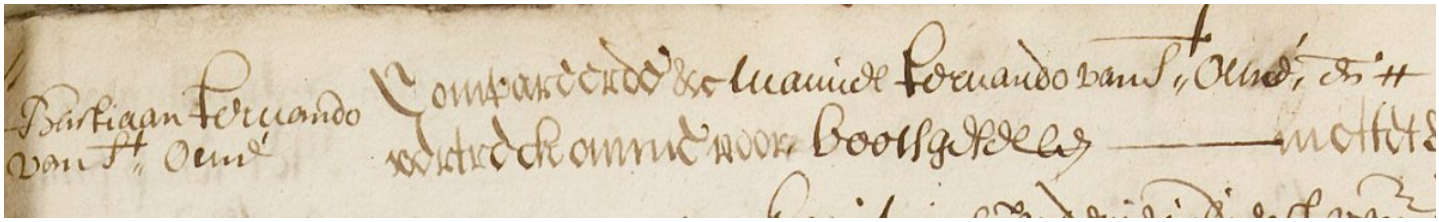
Was the painting made in 1656 while Rembrandt was still living and working in Jodenbreestraat, and not signed and sold until 1661, when he had moved to the Jordaan district? The 1656 estate inventory suggests this.

On the other hand, it is of course possible that Rembrandt painted several pictures featuring two black men. Nevertheless, supposing that it is one and the same
painting, then we can assume that the two men
were in the studio in Jodenbreestraat to be portrayed in or before 1656.

Of course there still are dozens of candidates, since there was a small Black community in the area. However, it is striking, and exceptional, that two men are portrayed instead of one, as was customary in this genre.

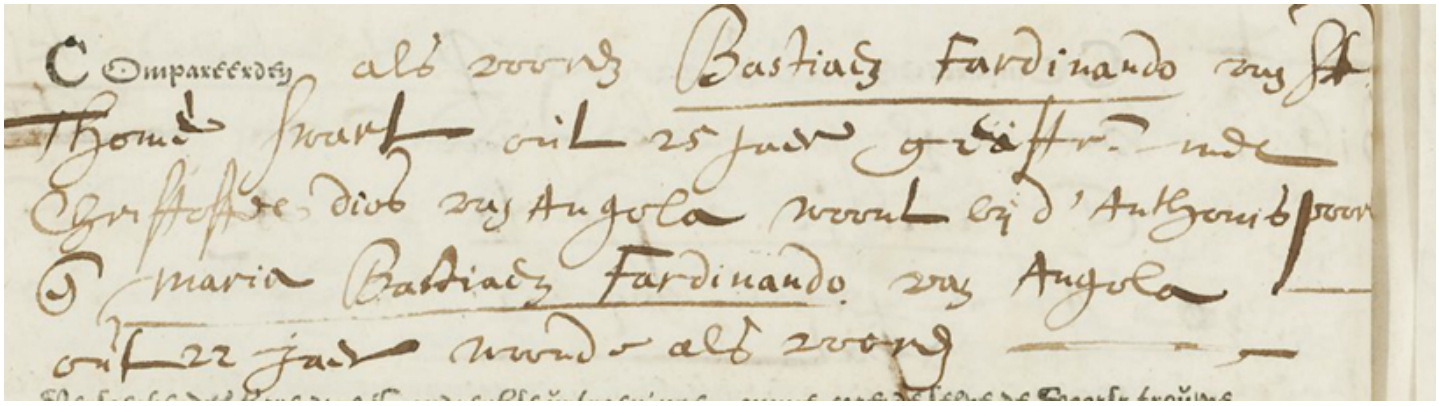
Against that background, two candidates stand out. The two men in the painting radiate a certain intimacy, from which might be deduced that they are brothers, or at least closely acquainted.

And at the time, two brothers were living in the area: Bastiaan and Manuel Fernando, two brothers hailing from the island of São Tomé who appeared before a notary on 19 April 1656. #BlackHistoryMonth #Rembrandt



These men, who brought along Jan Sanders of Guinea as a witness, hired themselves out to the Admiralty (the Amsterdam Navy) as sailors.

In 1657, the 25-year-old Bastiaan married Maria from Angola. The couple gave their address as Sint Antoniespoort (3), at the end of Jodenbreestraat, a few hundred meters from Rembrandt's studio (7).

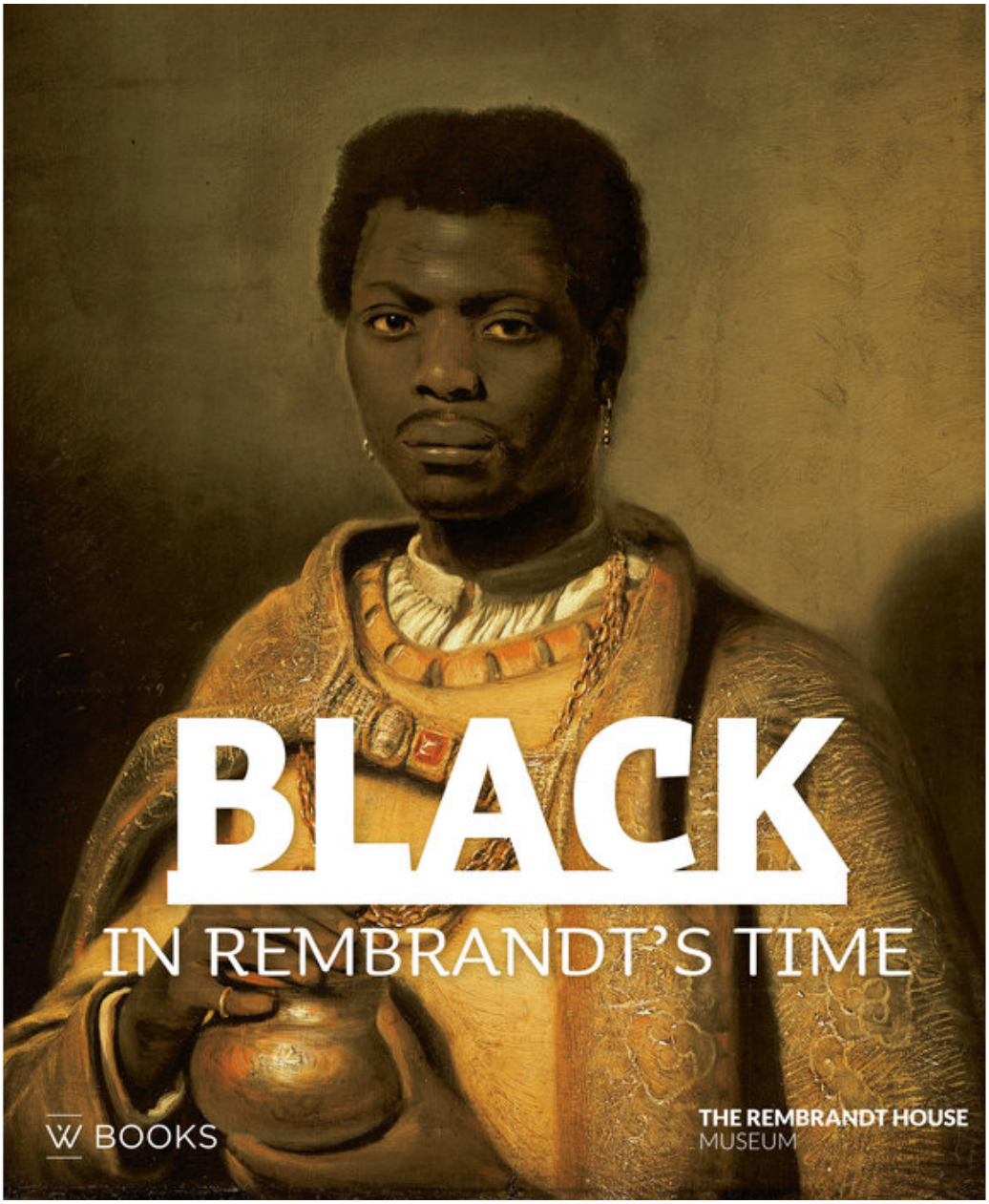


Naturally this is far from conclusive evidence, but for the time being I don't think we can get any closer to an identification at this point.

Parenthetically, the 1656 deed states that Bastiaan and Manuel served under captain 'Corderie'. Corderie is a name that does not occur elsewhere, however Joris (de) Caullerij does. As coincidence would have it Rembrandt portrayed this Joris de Caullerij 24 years earlier in 1632.



This thread is an excerpt from my eassay 'Black in Amsterdam around 1650', in the catalogue Black in Rembrandt's TIme. Get in at the @Rembrandthuis or your local bookstore. https://t.co/VPJLRrggv6



Here an older thread about my research into the Afro-Atlantic Community in 17th Amsterdam: https://t.co/VuJsUy4jiK

> Today my article \u2018Al de swarten die hier ter stede comen\u2019 - about an Afro-Atlantic community in seventeenth century Amsterdam - was published #openaccess in @_tseg. The article is in Dutch, so I\u2019ll do a short introduction in #thread here. https://t.co/ABrNrHTT5C #twitterhistorian pic.twitter.com/CVTEWCFEiW
>
> — Mark Ponte (@voetnoot) March 12, 2019

And one about mixed marriages https://t.co/49hX12L7UW

> Mixed marriages have been part of European cultures for centuries. In 1593 Bastiaen Pieters from the kingdom of Manicongo in Africa maried the widow Trijn Pieters from Amsterdam. #migrantcity #blackamsterdam https://t.co/khqV0rgOmo pic.twitter.com/b9tlHIjdp2
>
> — Mark Ponte (@voetnoot) December 24, 2019

For people who read #portuguese, please check out the story about Juliana from #Brasil (1656) @FBN https://t.co/IOlciDnDWp

> 'A afro-brasileira Juliana em Amsterd\xe3', I'm happy that the important story of Juliana and the Black community in 17th century Amsterdam is now available in Portuguese. #historiasdanovaholanda https://t.co/RjHq5YPni9 https://t.co/L8TEJAP0mO
>
> — Mark Ponte (@voetnoot) December 17, 2020

And of course some stories at my blog https://t.co/aqrp5BY22v

During #BlackHistoryMonth everyday a tweet about Amsterdam’s Black History. This was tweet/thread #20 https://t.co/AfkoEIRq8a

> During #BlackHistoryMonth everyday a tweet about Amsterdam's Black History. Read some stories on my blog: https://t.co/aqrp5BY22v pic.twitter.com/sWVx8WGeZa
>
> — Mark Ponte (@voetnoot) February 2, 2021