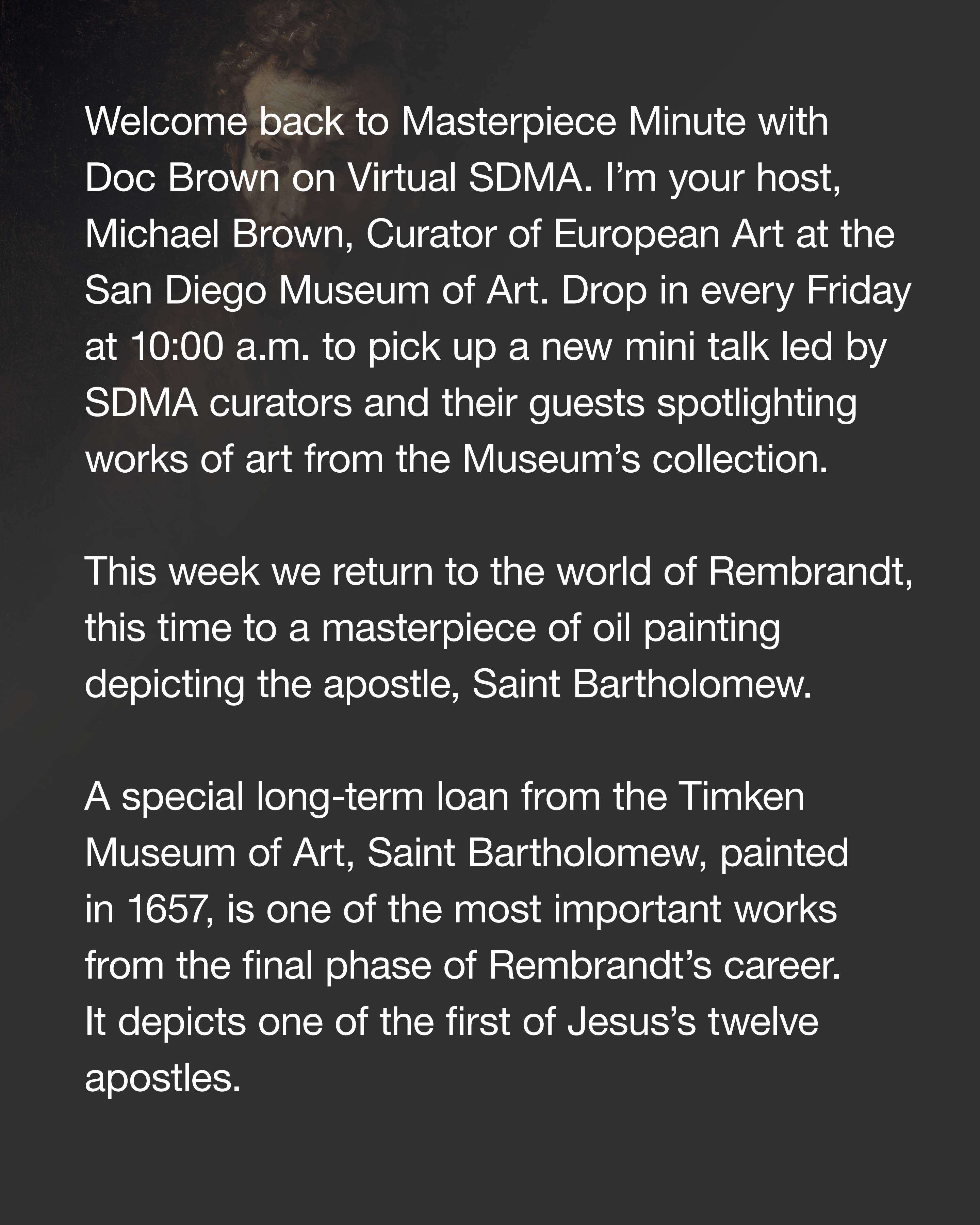


CM MASTERPIECE
MINUTE





Welcome back to Masterpiece Minute with Doc Brown on Virtual SDMA. I'm your host, Michael Brown, Curator of European Art at the San Diego Museum of Art. Drop in every Friday at 10:00 a.m. to pick up a new mini talk led by SDMA curators and their guests spotlighting works of art from the Museum's collection.

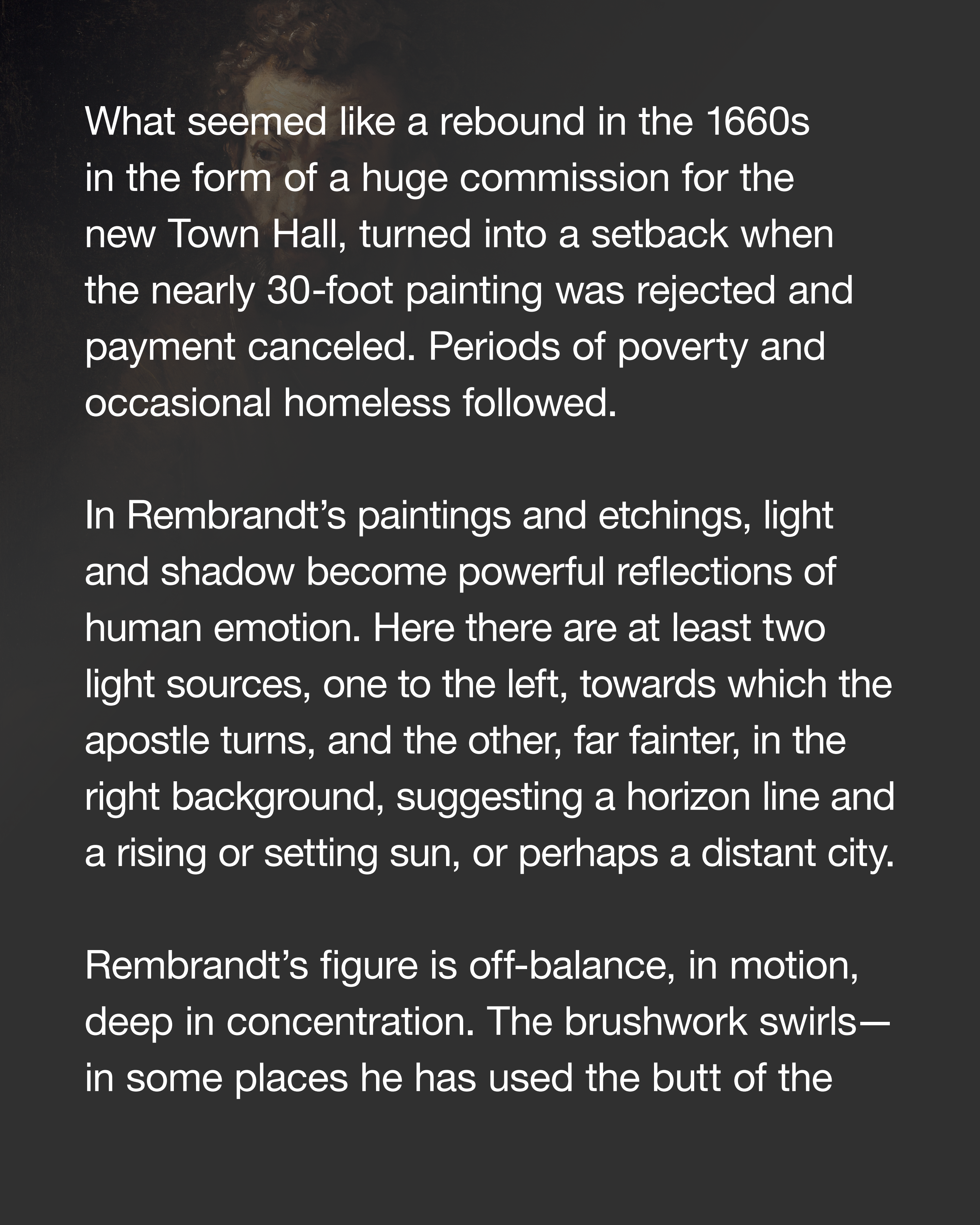
This week we return to the world of Rembrandt, this time to a masterpiece of oil painting depicting the apostle, Saint Bartholomew.

A special long-term loan from the Timken Museum of Art, Saint Bartholomew, painted in 1657, is one of the most important works from the final phase of Rembrandt's career. It depicts one of the first of Jesus's twelve apostles.



As we heard in Episode 24, Rembrandt never left the Netherlands, though he was a worldly artist who collected work from all over the world and who valued his international reputation and patronage. He used his etchings, which feature in a current exhibition at SDMA, to promote his art throughout Europe.

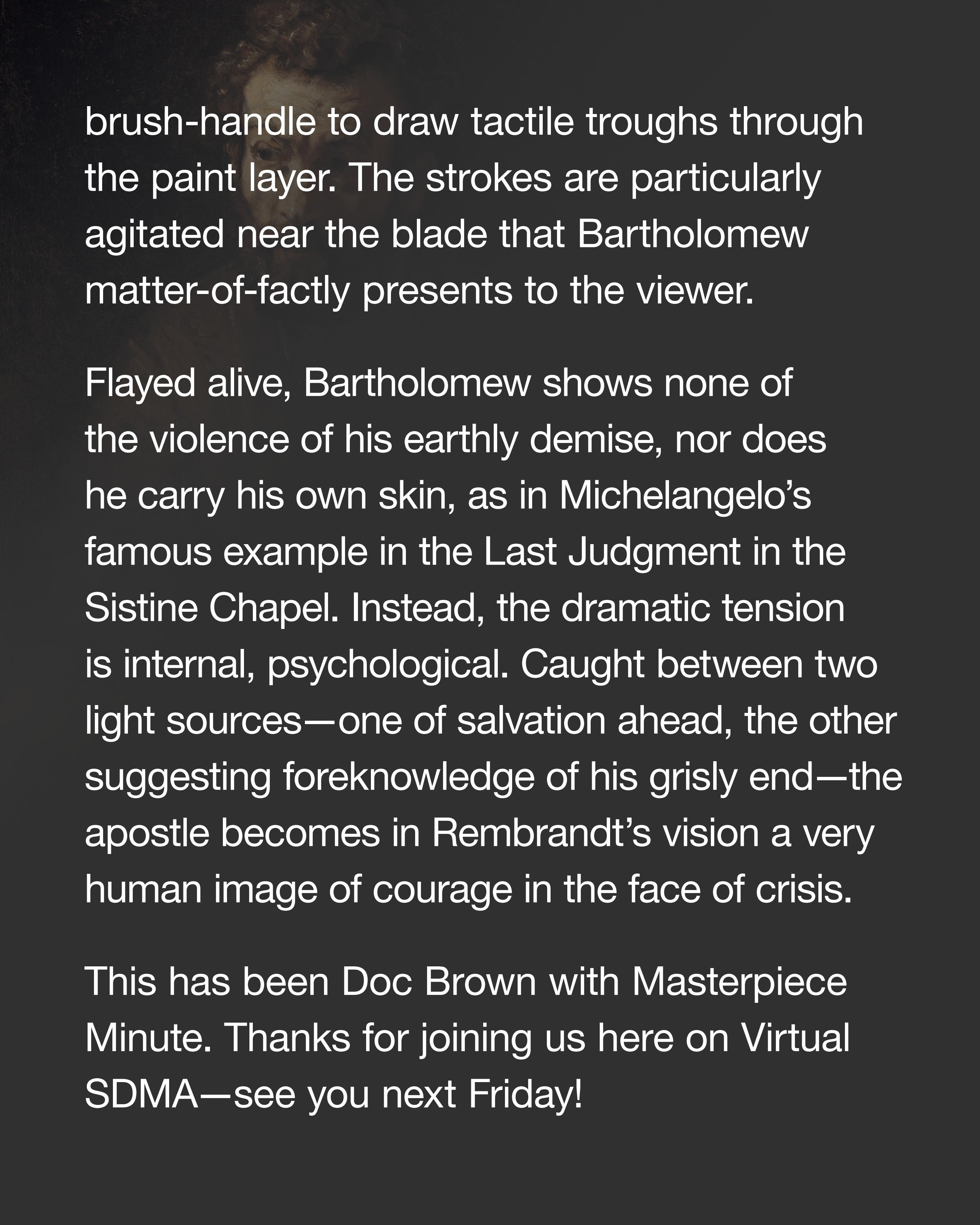
After leaving his hometown of Leiden as a young artist, Rembrandt worked in Amsterdam until his death in 1669. After a period of sustained commercial success, his all-consuming art collecting, his ill-advised investments, and lavish lifestyle led to his financial downfall in the late 1650s.



What seemed like a rebound in the 1660s in the form of a huge commission for the new Town Hall, turned into a setback when the nearly 30-foot painting was rejected and payment canceled. Periods of poverty and occasional homelessness followed.

In Rembrandt's paintings and etchings, light and shadow become powerful reflections of human emotion. Here there are at least two light sources, one to the left, towards which the apostle turns, and the other, far fainter, in the right background, suggesting a horizon line and a rising or setting sun, or perhaps a distant city.

Rembrandt's figure is off-balance, in motion, deep in concentration. The brushwork swirls—in some places he has used the butt of the



brush-handle to draw tactile troughs through the paint layer. The strokes are particularly agitated near the blade that Bartholomew matter-of-factly presents to the viewer.

Flayed alive, Bartholomew shows none of the violence of his earthly demise, nor does he carry his own skin, as in Michelangelo's famous example in the Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel. Instead, the dramatic tension is internal, psychological. Caught between two light sources—one of salvation ahead, the other suggesting foreknowledge of his grisly end—the apostle becomes in Rembrandt's vision a very human image of courage in the face of crisis.

This has been Doc Brown with Masterpiece Minute. Thanks for joining us here on Virtual SDMA—see you next Friday!

BALBOA PARK

THE SAN DIEGO
MUSEUM OF ART