

## **Rembrandt Millennium Impressions – Article 3**

(Please read *Millennium Impressions Article #1* and *Article #2* before this one.)



# **Park West and the *Millennium Impressions/Edition***

or

*“You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.”*

*(attributed to Abraham Lincoln)*

Park West responded to articles #1 and #2 in this series by building a whole new website in which they confess, after all these years, when they had no way out of it, that they have owned the eight copper plates which had been used to print the *Millennium Impressions* and Park West’s later version, the Millennium edition all along. The question is, why have they pretended otherwise about this for so long? Why are they now, for the first time, calling them the “Millennium Impressions” after spending so much time and effort to change the name to Millennium editions (another point made in the earlier articles)? There are other questions...

by David Phillips

### **Introduction**

Very soon after we published [Millennium Impressions Article #1 The Millennium Impressions – Recent Posthumous Etchings Made from Eight Rembrandt Copper Plates](#) and [Article # 2 Park West Gallery Buys Eight Rembrandt Copper Plates and Conceals their Ownership. Why the Secrecy?](#) Park West Gallery put up an entire website devoted to the Rembrandt etchings which they sell. On this new website, for the first time, they admitted that they own the copper plates from which the etchings are pulled. Not much choice there – after all, we published documents which proved it. However, it produced quite a reaction amongst auctioneers who had been told

for years that the plates were not owned by Park West Gallery who then passed this information on to auction attendees as part of their sales pitch.

Park West also quickly changed the name from Millennium edition, which is what they have been using since 2003, to *Millennium Impressions*, the trademark coined by Intaglio Etchings Ltd. when Intaglio Etchings Ltd. began marketing and selling the eight Rembrandt etchings in 1998.

While they may think that this neatly ties up all the loose ends and leaves Park West smelling like a rose, there are some very obvious questions which have been studiously ignored, and some less pleasant odors left hanging about in the air.

Lest anyone is coming in late on the scene and has missed some of the background, we thought it only fair to ask those questions here.

**Question 1 – Why did Park West take such pains to hush up their purchase of the plates in 2003, to conceal and obscure their ownership for all the intervening five and a half years, and only admit that they own the plates now, in 2009, when they had no alternative?**

To recap:

Around August 2003, Park West bought the eight copper plates from which the *Millennium Impression* Rembrandt etchings had been printed up to that point. There was no announcement of the purchase of the plates and those parties involved were bound by confidentiality agreements.

A 15 February 2004 document signed by Park West executive Bill Smith confirms that the eight copper plates are the property of Park West. We have other documents attesting to this fact.

In February 2004 a company by the name of Master Etching Plates Co. was incorporated in Nevada. Its sole officer was Nicolette Yanke, HR Director of Park West Gallery and stepdaughter of Albert Scaglione. Later in the year we see an agreement between Master Etching Plates and John McLaurin setting out prices. We have reports that Bill Smith of Park West persuaded John McLaurin to act as the “publisher” of the prints, keep his website open and inform representatives of the cruise lines and Park West customers that Intaglio was the publisher of the etchings and that Intaglio, as publisher and source of the etchings, sold the Millennium edition etchings to Park West. This is the opposite of what actually occurred.

Ex-auctioneers from Park West have explained what they were told about the Millennium edition Rembrandt etchings in their training and how they were instructed to represent these to the art auction going public aboard the cruise ships and wherever they were being sold.

Here is a report from one auctioneer:

*You asked about the Rembrandt Millennium Impressions, I think they changed the name to "Edition" after they bought them. We were taught to never call them the Millennium Impressions, but to use the term "Edition".*

*We were taught by Lane Conner in our class that:*

*A team of etching experts and Marjorie Van Dyke were hired by the North Carolina Museum that housed the copper plates to create 2500 of each of the 8 plates they housed. This was to finish the work of the gentleman who became ill [Emiliano Sorini]. They were creating the Millennium IMPRESSIONS. The plates were returned to the Institute immediately upon the completion of the printing, never to be printed from again (to prevent the wearing down of the plates) as they were very old originals of Rembrandt's.*

*Park West purchased the entire set of the Millennium Impressions etchings, but the plates were not purchased.*

*(2500 X 8 = 20,000 etchings I assumed).*

*They changed the name to Millennium EDITIONS to signify the works were Park West works and were housed in a vault in Miami Lakes where they are framed when sold. The etching plates were immediately returned to the Museum's vault for safe keeping.*

*Interesting question was raised by a student in class:*

***Why are they not numbered?***

*Answer, Etchings are rarely numbered, especially ones this old.*

***Boy, that must have really cost a lot of money?***

*Answer, Yes, several million. But at about \$3000 a piece, it creates a lot of revenue too.*

*We did the math in our heads really quick (20,000 X \$3000 = \$60,000,000! ) Not bad for a several million dollar investment (\$2-3 million).*

*When I was told that they own the plates I was stunned. I was totally unaware that Park West owned those plates. It angers me that they own those plates. We were told that the plates were passed over a 400 year period from this person to this person to this person to this person and somehow they ended up, however many there were [80+] all in one person's possession for many, many years. When he passed away he had four heirs; they ended up in a Raleigh, North Carolina art museum. As a celebration of Rembrandt's 400th anniversary in the year 2000 Park West put a team together including a lady named Marjorie Van Dyke and, with her in charge, took Rembrandt's plates that were in the museum in North Carolina and instructed the team to use Rembrandt's original plates to create works off those eight plates and they were only going to use them to make 2500 from each copper plate and then those plates were returned to that institution in North Carolina, where they were sealed up never to be used again.*

*This information was imparted to us by Lane Conner who was the teacher. Stephen Weiss, the head of compliance, sat in the room while he told us. The information was validated by Morris Shapiro.*

*They never told anybody it was Park West that bought the plates.*

*Am I correct that if they own those plates they can print as many as they want to and say they're only running so many?*

*We were told that they printed them all in the year 2000, that they printed the entire run and then the prints were sold to Park West, that Park West bought the entire collection and they have not printed any since the year 2000.*

*They stated that this was all done in 2000 and they never printed off those plates again and Park West bought all 2500 of each of the eight etchings and that's how they got the inventory.*

*The value was because there were only so many done in the millennium year, it was a celebration of the millennium, and they will never do it again, and that's why you need to buy it right now.*

*That's the whole pitch as we were taught it.*

#### **[A Note on the Math**

Reportedly Park West paid \$2 million for eight plates and about 1,350 unsold etchings. They pay Marjorie Van Dyke between \$15 and \$25 per print to print them (informed guestimate based on reports). Perhaps 3,500 etchings had been sold when Park West bought the plates (generous estimate). Even if they limit the edition to the stipulated and promised 2500 of each, that gives a total of 20,000 minus 3,500 equals 16,500 etchings for Park West to sell. \$2 million plus 15,000 x \$25 (for the printing) equals \$2,375,000 outlay divided by 16,500 equals about \$143 per etching. Here are some of the Park West prices currently listed on their website:

Artist's Mother	\$7,200
Golf Player	\$5,500
Landscape with cow	\$6,950
Card Player	\$5,500

Prices have changed over the years of course and they sell some wholesale. *The Raising of Lazarus* has reportedly sold out but was selling for \$7,000 plus.

Let's be generous and say the average price for an etching is \$5,000. That would be total revenues of \$5,000 x 16,500 equals \$82,250,000.

Of course there is the framing and the commissions and the marketing to add in. But even so....]

The following is from another auctioneer.

*We were told that someone owned the plates. Not them (PWG). I never inspected the etchings closely enough to see plate markings.*

*I am looking at my PWG Rembrandt manual right now. To paraphrase it says:*

*Pieter de Hann to*

*Pierre Fouquet to*

*Claude Henri Watelet to*

*Pierre Basan to*

*Henri Basan to*

*August Jean to*

*August Bernard to*

*Alvin Beaumont to*

*Robert Lee Humber to*

*North Carolina Museum (loan)*

*And then the last part of article says:*

*paraphrasing... "plates remained at NC museum until 1993. Humber's death in 1970 to his heirs. In 1993 plates were sold to collectors and museums."*

*quoting the summation sentence in the final paragraph..... "Rembrandts eight copper etching plates from which these impressions were pulled, at the time they were purchased remained protected by the layer of ink and varnish applied by Alvin Beaumont in 1916."*

*It does not say who the plates were sold to or who owns the plates.*

This manual was published well after Park West bought the plates.

The following is from another Park West auctioneer:

*When we were first introduced to the Rembrandt etchings I certainly was told that the plates were 'borrowed' from the Raleigh museum in North Carolina. The edition was always very ambiguous as to the size etc.*

*My sales tack was always that the plates were now back in the safe hands of the Museum and that was that.*

*Once again we have individual 'auctioneers' making up their own stories to suit the sale. This game of 'Chinese whispers' has been the bane of Park West and not to sound too defensive about PW there was always going to be this axe hanging over them. They did try at conferences etc. to curb the loose cannons out there. But these guys had egos the size of Texas and smelled the money on board the ships. Albert created these monsters by effectively paying them too much and allowing their egos and inflated sense of importance and self worth to spin out of control.*

*The logistics for PW to monitor their auctioneers was limited to auction videos and the odd mystery shopper. Most of the big sales were closed out of earshot of PW or the cruise line.*

*These ex-casino, shoppies, dancers and whoever else was recruited on the ships all told potential customers what they wanted to hear. Again, a lot of them were telling them what PW had told them to say, as well as what they picked up during their time as Associates where they would be heavily influenced by what the head auctioneer used to say during their auctions – learned responses – a lot of these newbies held their 'trainer' in high regard, especially the likes of Stoney Goldstein who was PW's poster child for success.*

*But back to the plates.*

*I was not under any illusion as to who owned the plates and it was not PW. It seems I was deceived.*

*I cannot remember who it was that actually gave us the heads up on the plates; however it was done at our conference so it was either Morris Shapiro, Bill Smith or Albert Scaglione or the combo.*

And yet another auctioneer, who wrote the following on finding out that Park West had owned the eight copper plates all along:

*Subject: Now I'm Pissed!!!*

*I have just read your great story on the Millennium Rembrandts. I can tell you for certain the following:*

*In conference 2007, we were told that PWG DID NOT OWN THE PLATES! We were also told nothing of the history of the impressions, or that this was in fact, a Second Millennium edition to be printed. In fact, we were almost told to tell customers that PWG didn't own the plates (covering their tracks I guess). We were also told that there were only 2500 of these in existence.*

*PWG maintained to us that the re-working was done in an earlier impression and that the plates "were only re-bitten to make sure that these were the best pull from the plates".*

*All of these facts were told to us by Morris Shapiro himself.*

It seems very clear. From the time they bought the plates in August 2003, Park West have been misinforming and misleading their own auctioneers, and through them their customers, about the provenance of the Rembrandt Millennium etchings. After our articles on the *Millennium Impressions* were published in early April of this year in which the purchase of the plates by Park West Gallery in 2003 was revealed, Park West tried to cover their tracks by admitting that they bought and own the copper plates. This, however, is unlikely to sit very well with the auctioneers and the public whom they have been misleading for all these years.

How many customers have bought Park West's Rembrandt Millennium edition etchings since 2003? How many auctioneers and other employees have been told point blank by Park West that the copper plates were owned by someone else? How many of the cruise lines have been erroneously led to believe that Intaglio and not Park West was the publisher of the Rembrandt etchings?

These are questions that are very likely to come up as soon as word gets out, which it inevitably will.


## Question 2 – Why did Park West change the name of the Rembrandt etchings from Millennium Impressions to Millennium edition, and why are they now changing it back?

The facts are quite plain.


Here is the name of the edition of etchings as originally used by Intaglio Etchings Ltd. from the start.

The following is taken from the original Intaglio Etchings website where the Millennium Impressions were offered for sale.

Gallery



CHRIST AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA:  
AMONG RUINS (R. 71)



THE RAISING OF LAZARUS:  
THE LARGER PLATE (R. 73)

The Millennium Impressions have been printed using only the finest quality ink and Arches laid paper from France, and a very old printing press by two expert master printers - Marjorie Van Dyke and the late Emiliano Sorini of the Sorini Studio in New York (which previously printed a five image set of Goya's famous "Los Capriccios"). No expense or effort was spared in printing the Millennium Impressions. Before a single etching was printed and without reworking the copper plates, Emiliano Sorini carefully removed the layers of varnish and congealed ink remaining on Rembrandt's copper etching plates from prior centuries. Due to this careful and painstaking year-long effort by Emiliano, the Millennium Impressions are of a finer and higher quality than impressions printed in earlier centuries.

To confirm what we are told by the auctioneers who were specifically briefed not to use the name "Millennium Impressions" but instead to refer to "Millennium edition", here is a copy of a Park West certificate of authenticity issued with the etchings. The first page is shown here. It talks about the 'Millennium' edition.



# Certificate of Authenticity

According to the terms of the guarantee on the verso of this certificate, we guarantee the authorship of the following work of art:

Registration No. 131337.2168

Rembrandt Van Rijn

Christ and the Woman of Samaria: Among Ruins

1634

B., Holl. 71; H. 122; BB 34-L

4 11/16 x 4 3/16" plate size (the plate is slightly irregular)

12 7/8" x 9 3/4" sheet size

Etching on Ingres d'Arches off-white laid paper

(watermark) with large margins. Signed and dated in the

plate (upper right). The second state according to

Bjorklund, the fourth state according to Nowell-Eusticke.

A 20th Century impression printed by Marjorie Van Dyke.

From the 'Millennium' edition limited to 2500 examples.

This superbly printed etching with strong contrasts,

*(Continued on next page)*

ALBERT SCAGLIONE

Director



29469 Northwestern • Southfield, Michigan 48034 • (800) 521-9654 • Fax (248) 354-0387

And this is from the existing Park West website – highlight added.

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## Rembrandt Van Rijn

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### Artist's Mother with her

**Rembrandt Van Rijn**

131339 Rembrandt Van Rijn The Artist's Mother with her Hand on her Chest: Small Bust 1631 B.349; H.50; BB. 31-9 3 5/8" x 2 1/2" plate size 12 7/8" x 9 3/4" sheet size Etching on Ingres d'Arches off-white laid paper (watermark) with large margins. Initialed in the plate ("RL") and dated "1631." The second state according to Bjorklund, the seventh state according to Nowell-Eusticke. A 20th Century Impression printed by Marjorie Van Dyke. From the 'Millennium' edition limited to 2500 examples. This superbly printed etching with fine detail, strong contrast and delicate line work was pulled from the original plate as created by Rembrandt in 1631. The plate, formerly in the collection of Dr. Robert Lee Humber (along with 77 other original Rembrandt etching plates) had been on loan to the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, N.C. since the early 1960's. Upon Dr. Humber's death in 1970, his heirs sold the collection of plates to museums throughout the world, and a select group of private collectors in 1993. The late master printer, Emiliano Sorini spent two years proofing the plate for this etching and along with Marjorie Van Dyke carefully studied various states and proofs of the etchings created from the plate of "The Artist's Mother with her Hand on her Chest: Small Bust." This experience provided Ms. Van Dyke, who eventually took over the project, the knowledge and insight to create impressions from the copper plate and gave her direct observation of the dry-point and burin lines, burrs and subtle nuances of the copper plates that Rembrandt had etched. In creating this impression, Ms. Van Dyke commented, "Because of Rembrandt's mastery of the chiaroscuro technique imparted to him by the work of Caravaggio, careful attention has been paid to the lights and darks of the copper plates to avoid any over-wiping which may render the images more stark than Rembrandt intended.... I feel as though we have been granted an opportunity to conduct a dialog with Rembrandt, and have adhered faithfully to Rembrandt's intent, vision and printing technique." Consequently, as a result of the expertise and delicate and painstaking work of Ms. Van Dyke and Emiliano Sorini, this impression surpasses in richness, quality and subtlety the impressions pulled from the plate in the last two centuries by the previous owners. In this poignant portrait, Rembrandt captures

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And yet, on the new Rembrandt website put up by Park West shortly after Millennium Impressions Articles #1 and #2 were published, we see a shift in terminology.

The Millennium Impressions | The Plates 5/13/09 10:55 AM

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## Background of the Millennium Impression Copper Plates

In 1993 the estate of Dr. Robert Lee Humber sold the 78 original Rembrandt copper plates that had been owned by Dr. Humber. The sale took place in London and was arranged thorough Artemis International. Within two months almost all were sold to a large number of private collectors, dealers and museums including six Dutch museums, and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

The plates had previously been on loan to the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh. Dr. Humber had acquired the plates in 1938 from Alvin Beaumont who had last printed a "recueil," or "collection" of etchings from the plates in 1906. Beaumont preserved the plates in frames, and placed them on loan to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and attempted to negotiate a sale to the museum. Failing to do so, he finally sold them to Humber. Humber died in 1970 and his estate decided after some 23 years to sell the collection of original Rembrandt copper plates; a very historic event indeed.

Eight of the plates from the Humber collection were sold in 1993 by Artemis International of London to Robert Light a noted Rembrandt expert and art dealer in New York. In 1994 Robert Light sold the plates to Howard Berger, who was to form Millennium Impressions. In 2003 Park West Gallery purchased Millennium Impressions and the plates.

At the inception of the work by Emiliano Sorini and Marjorie Van Dyke, the plates were placed in a bank vault in New York under the supervision and control of Sorini and Van Dyke. The plates were only removed from the vault during the time periods of printing, and were immediately returned after each printing session. The printing process took 10 years and Marjorie Van Dyke has certified that only 2500 impressions were printed from each plate. The plates remain in the bank vault in New York today.

[View Ms. Van Dyke's certification.](#)

Park West Gallery certifies that upon taking possession of the plates they were inspected by Erik Hinterding, expert and author of *The History of Rembrandt's Copperplates*, who certified that they were in the same condition as when sold to Dr. Berger. Park West further certifies that since the time it has owned the plates, only Marjorie Van Dyke has printed them.

Millennium Impressions: Over a ten year period Emiliano Sorini and Marjorie Van Dyke created the limited editions of 2,500 etchings from each of the plates.

For more information on the history and lineage of owners of Rembrandt's

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etching plates see [Provenance of Rembrandt's Copper Etching Plates](#).

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The Millennium Impressions Images**

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2343.**

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Park West Gallery.

Why the change? That's a question for Park West to answer. But the point was made in the earlier articles that there is a distinction between the Millennium Impressions, published and sold by Intaglio Etchings, Ltd., each one of which was accompanied by a numbered and signed (by the printer) certificate of authenticity, and Park West's Millennium edition, where there is no numbering or signed certificate, just the Park West template-based certificate of authenticity signed by Albert Scaglione or Morris Shapiro.

That distinction still exists, very clearly, and changing the name back to Millennium Impressions is not going to dispel it.

As a further note, the certificate of authenticity and the website description of the Millennium edition etchings both claim that these are "A 20<sup>th</sup> Century impression printed by Marjorie Van Dyke..." This is impossible and is negated in Park West's own new website where they now explain that Marjorie Van Dyke printed these etchings over a ten-year period. The majority of the etchings were printed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, not the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

### **Question 3 – What about the photomechanical reproductions of the Millennium edition reportedly offered for sale by Park West Gallery as etchings?**

We received the following report from a Park West employee regarding the Millennium edition Rembrandt etchings for sale at cruise ship auctions. This was not the typical sales person untrained in art but someone well versed in the subject.

*Regarding the Rembrandt etchings, when they've been printed from the plate it's obviously going to leave an imprint on the paper so when you hold the piece up you'll see an imprint from the plate on the paper around the etching. This is the case with any etching.*

*A few times I noticed Rembrandts [represented as etchings] where the paper was flat. On at least two occasions I had a Rembrandt aboard my ship where it was flat. There was no*

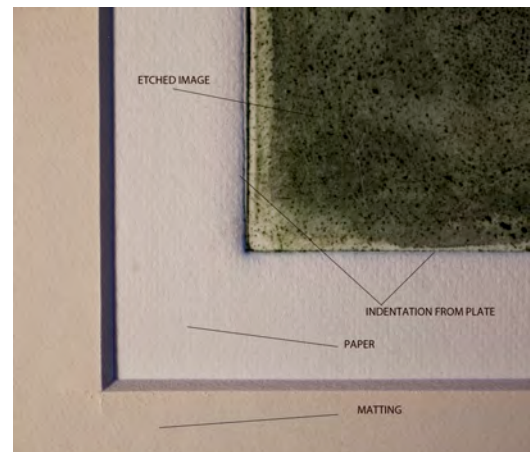
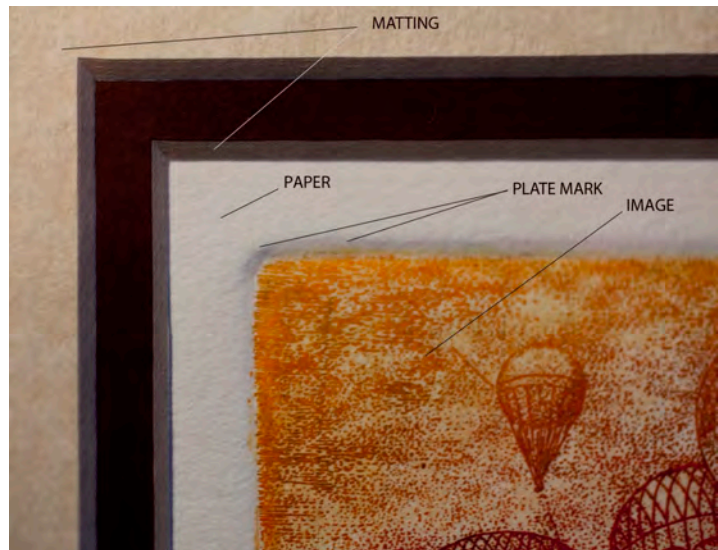
*imprint into the paper. It's impossible to have an etching and not have an imprint from the plate into the paper.*

*One time I didn't notice it but a customer did! He approached me holding a Rembrandt Millennium Edition. It was in a frame and he turned around, held it up and he said, "How can this not have the imprint?" I looked at it and was amazed. What could I say?*

*I sent an email off to the gallery and they emailed back, "Please offload this work at the end of the cruise." I emailed my Fleet Manager but often it would be Morris Shapiro asking for the work to be returned.*

As a note. Every genuine etching has a plate mark on the paper. This is simply the result of the process for printing etchings, where a metal plate is pressed firmly into the moistened paper and the pressure involved leaves this mark. It is possible, and has certainly been done, to create a false plate mark on a photomechanical reproduction to make people think it is a genuine etching. The rules are therefore:

1. A genuine etching always leaves a plate mark in the paper, all around the etched image. The image area is slightly sunken into the surrounding paper.
2. Not every print that has a plate mark is a genuine etching, since it is possible to take a photomechanical image and create a "plate mark" around the image by pressing a flat sheet of metal into the paper.



*Examples of the plate marks on etchings.*

#### **Question 4 – What are you buying or what did you buy and what is it worth?**

In answer to the many, many questions we have had about the market value of the *Millennium Impressions* from Intaglio Etchings Ltd., and the Millennium edition from Park West, we will be publishing a full length article on this aspect of the Rembrandt etchings. It will be Millennium Impressions Article #4 and is well under way and will follow shortly.

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