

The Rubenianum Quarterly

2011
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Reflections on completing part XXVI of the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*

It's interesting to reflect on the three-quarters of a million words that make up my contribution to the *Corpus Rubenianum*. How did I manage to write so much and was it necessary? The first volume in the series, published in 1968, is a model of elegant concision by comparison. I'm sure that its author, John Rupert Martin, would – were he still alive – find my approach excessive and he could well be right. Martin would still recognize the *Corpus* that he launched in 1968, and yet the academic world that it now inhabits is a very different one, and this is not just because the Rubens literature has grown at a frightening rate. If I look back to some admired 'complete catalogues' published in the 1950s and 1960s they no longer seem to solve the problems of attribution that they address and are more like anthologies of the authors' favourite works. In those innocent decades, nobody needed to explain what they were doing because it was thought to be self-evident.

I recently had an interesting email conversation with a distinguished Rubens scholar who said that, to her mind, the attribution of an artist's work comes first and it's only afterwards that the history of connoisseurship and criticism needs to be considered. I differ. I think attributions aren't made in a historical or critical vacuum. Because of this, my *Corpus* entries are more focused on the early literature and the descriptions found in the first sale catalogues than has been usual in previous volumes. I find that early opinions on authorship are often refreshingly unexpected, and I think the language used in these texts is itself informative. Of course, from the outset *Corpus* authors have taken the early literature of connoisseurship into account, reflecting Burchard's own meticulous respect for the sources. J. R. Martin, for example, made use of 18th-century texts on his topic, but he wasn't much interested in the Rubens literature before Rooses (1886–92).

By a strange coincidence, the Rembrandt Research Project was set up in the same year as Martin's publication, 1968. Although the RRP was better funded, and in some ways far more adventurous in its methodology, it has foundered, while the Rubens *Corpus* is set fair to reach completion. It seems that the model of the single-authored monograph has proved more durable than the team. Nevertheless, the

exhaustive approach of the RRP – although ultimately self-defeating – has set new standards in cataloguing to which the *Corpus* must surely respond. Credit must be given to the RRP for reassessing the questions that need to be asked in such an enterprise, and, indeed, what it can hope to achieve.

Jeremy Wood

Rubens after Michelangelo,
Night, drawing. Paris, Fondation
Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt



What's in a name?

It all began in 1959: in order to promote the study of the Flemish art of the age of Bruegel to Rubens, the initiative was taken to found a specialized study centre, which was first called the Nationaal Centrum voor de Plastische Kunsten van de 16e en de 17e Eeuw, and later changed to Centrum voor de Vlaamse Kunst van de 16e en de 17e Eeuw. Though shorter, the name remained such an unwieldy mouthful that everyone simply referred to the 'Centrum'.

From the beginning the 'Centrum' resided in the Rubenianum, the art history library and documentation centre of the City of Antwerp, and naturally the two organizations worked in close collaboration. This was especially the case when, in 1963, the City acquired the rich documentation of Ludwig Burchard and the 'Centrum' took it upon itself to publish the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*. But the name continued to be somewhat of a problem. While we refer to ourselves as the 'Centrum', to the rest of the world we are simply 'those at the Rubenianum'. With the recent creation of the Rubenianum Fund, the R-word acquired a new, assertive buzz, all the more so since the 'Centrum' and the Rubenianum joined forces to produce the Rubenianum Quarterly and establish the very successful Rubenianum Lectures. So, to be in tune with the rest of the R-world, we too decided to rename our centre, and call it the 'Centrum Rubenianum'. As a foundation, with members and a board, our legal status is different from that of the Rubenianum proper, which is administered by the City of Antwerp. So in-house we will continue to refer to ourselves as the 'Centrum', but do please go on calling us 'those at the Rubenianum'.

Arnout Balis
Chairman of the Centrum Rubenianum

Interview with Bert Schepers and Prisca Valkeneers, editorial assistants

In our very first issue of the *Rubenianum Quarterly* of July last year there was an interview with Jeremy Wood about his lifetime achievement: the publication in 3 volumes of the *Corpus Rubenianum* series' *Copies and Adaptations from Renaissance and Later Artists: Italian Artists*. In hardly one year's time, this most prolific *Corpus* author managed to round off 'Rubens and the Italians', but this titanic work could never have been achieved so successfully without the help of two devoted editorial assistants: Bert and Prisca. As they were appointed together in September 2010, it's time they shared with us the ups and downs, pitfalls and snares in their copy-editing work. They form a well-adjusted team: Bert is the text editor while Prisca is in charge of the image editing. Their office is next to the prestigious Kolveniershof and from its windows they can contemplate the inspiring and romantic garden and residence of their 'Commander in Chief': Sir Peter Paul Rubens.

So here they come, the enthusiastic youngsters of the Centrum Rubenianum, prepared to answer some tricky and sharp questions by Cécile Kruyfhoft.



Bert, can you tell us about yourself in a nutshell?

I studied art history at Leuven University and my first working experience was in a four-year research project on mythological scenes in Flemish art – already devoting much attention to Rubens – here in the *Rubenianum*. After that I stepped into the Rubens research project at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Brussels and collaborated on the 2007 exhibition 'Rubens. A genius at work'. Then I went on to organize and manage the vast documentation of the project and set up a database. The lure of the *Rubenianum* was simply too strong to resist when I was asked to step into the revitalized *Corpus Rubenianum*, following the launch of the *Rubenianum* Fund. During my early days at the *Rubenianum*, I was already involved with Gregory Martin's volume on *The Ceiling Decoration of the Banqueting Hall* (2005), and while working in Brussels I was a sparring partner to Jeremy Wood, collecting his very first drafts and putting together the initial manuscript.

Prisca, your turn now.

Art history is my second degree but my first passion. At the time I was working in Brussels

and I decided to combine my challenging job as a nurse for the Ministry of Defence with the study of art history at Brussels University, where I was trained by Arnout Balis. I took a sabbatical year to finish my master's degree. In December 2007, I started on a part-time basis as an editorial assistant to Carl Van de Velde, here at the Centrum Rubenianum. My first experience with the editorial world came with Kristin Belkin's volume on *Rubens after Northern Artists* and steadily I learned more about Rubens. I enjoyed this so much that I decided to study one of Rubens's pupils, Justus van Egmont, as my PhD subject. Meanwhile, I took on a part-time job as an assistant to Paul Huvenne, general director of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp.

Well, besides making excellent coffee, what are your main tasks here?

BERT: Our editorial tasks range widely but are well defined. In general we provide assistance in all stages of the publication, in close communication with the authors and the printer.

PRISCA: I mainly concentrate on the illustrations and layout while Bert is in charge of the text, and all this under the guidance of Carl Van de Velde. When compiling the indexes the three of us join forces. Gradually we were given more and more responsibilities. Apart from our editing duties, we also maintain, organize and update the Burchard documentation, and resolve any queries that come our way. As a matter of fact, most of the time we are multitasking.

Do you get enough sleep, then? How do you proceed when the texts come in?

PRISCA: Before the manuscript is handed over we have already done thorough preliminary work. Most important is the sorting out of the list of illustrations, gathering photos from the Burchard documentation and the *Rubenianum* picture library, ordering new ones, and handling copyright. In this early stage we can already define the layout, the outlines of which are decided in agreement

with the author. When the final manuscript is submitted, publication fever is definitely rising. We have to stick to strict timetables with the printers and work to tight deadlines, so time management is essential.

BERT: A *Corpus* volume generally takes between four to six months to produce, depending on its contents. Some manuscripts need to be translated, which means planning in advance.

We first review the text, track down any inconsistencies, safeguard its conformity to the house style and editorial policy, ensure that illustrations are correctly captioned and mark up the copy for the typesetter. Then we go through a series of galley and page proofs.

What about the communication with the authors?

BERT: Recently a *Corpus* coordinator was appointed. Fiona Healy follows every author closely and fosters the *esprit de corps* among them [see *Rubenianum Quarterly* 2011/1, page 2].

She takes excellent care of the general communication on *Corpus* matters while we have a direct line with the author when it comes to specific editorial issues.

PRISCA: Furthermore, all authors have their individual coach – a senior scholar – guiding them through the research and writing process. Questions of content are thus tackled at an early stage in agreement with the editorial board, which ensures the high standard of the series and facilitates the publication process.

You both are enthusiastic and happy people. Is the Centrum Rubenianum that enthusing?

BERT and PRISCA *unisono*: Yes, it really is!!! We feel privileged to work here. The Centrum has everything. Not only does it bring together academics, curators, collectors, researchers, students and other species of art lover, we also have direct access to the first-class reference library and unique photo documentation of the *Rubenianum* and we are surrounded by highly skilled specialists on Rubens and Flemish art.

Is there a life after Rubens?

BERT: Hardly! (*smiles*) To have a break from Rubens's highly erudite oeuvre, I chose a more amusing subject for my PhD, which is the study of the comic genre of anthropomorphic monkey masquerades (so-called *singeries*) as a genre in 16th- and 17th-century Flemish art and culture. I hope to finish this in the not too distant future.

PRISCA: My life will drastically change soon. From July on, I will be on maternity leave. I will be replaced for six months by a promising young art historian, already familiar with the house, Marieke D'Hooghe. Needless to say I am looking forward to taking care of my very first own little 'Corpus' whom I will of course tell all about Rubens!

A late Rubens drawing from the Burchard Collection for the Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels

Joost Vander Auwera and Stefaan Hautekeete

The Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium are proud to announce their recent acquisition of a late, double-sided drawing (figs. 1–2) by Rubens, purchased at auction from Christie's in New York on 26 January 2011. It comes from the estate of Ludwig Burchard (see comments on this sale by Anne-Marie Logan in the previous issue of the *Rubenianum Quarterly*). The drawing's prestigious provenance and the fact that it is directly related to a number of paintings in the museum's permanent collection were more than sufficient to justify the acquisition. Though founded by Napoleon in 1802 and taken over by the Belgian state from the city of Brussels in 1843, the museum did not possess a single drawing by Rubens. Research conducted in preparation for the exhibition 'Rubens. A genius at work' (14 September 2007–27 January 2008) shed light on the reasons behind this unusual and longstanding state of affairs. In the 19th century, the Antwerp and Brussels museums had no qualms about competing for acquisitions. After the fall of Napoleon in 1815, for example, each city tried to secure from the French as many confiscated Rubens works as possible for its own museum. In the 20th century, however, the directors of the Brussels museum began to feel that Antwerp – as Rubens city *par excellence* – had priority in acquiring any Rubens on the market. Because it is a preparatory drawing, the present acquisition is related not only to major works in the permanent collection but also to the theme of the aforementioned Rubens exhibition in Brussels, which highlighted the creative process of the master and his workshop.

Careful study of the drawing itself and the published literature associated with it allows us to formulate the following hypothesis with respect to the various moments at which the four groups of sketches, which are distributed over both sides of the sheet, were created.

The first group was probably created shortly after November 1634, when Rubens received the commission for a *Carrying of the Cross* for the main altar of the Benedictine abbey in Affligem (now in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium). Rubens had treated the subject before, and when he set down the group of twelve figures at the left of the sheet, he borrowed Christ's pose – supporting himself with one hand on the ground and looking directly at the viewer – from one of these earlier compositions, among which is the oil sketch now in Berkeley at the University of California Art Museum. The executioner pulling Christ by the hair, summarily sketched in the upper left corner



Figs. 1–2 Peter Paul Rubens, *The Carrying of the Cross and Christ presented to the people* (recto) and *Hippodamia seized by the centaur Eurytus and Hercules and the bull* (verso)

of the drawing, is also visible in the Berkeley sketch. The placement of the cross, by contrast, is entirely new. It no longer rests on Christ's back, but is held by two men, an innovation repeated in subsequent studies (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, and Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst) as well as the finished altarpiece itself. Rubens also introduces a more coherent grouping of the women and children of Jerusalem. Mary and St John the Evangelist form the keystone of this tightly knit group in which each figure contributes to the upward dynamic that leads the eye from the lower left to the upper right. The head study

at the lower right is probably a variant of Veronica or one of the women of Jerusalem, and was drawn in the same session as the figures already discussed.

Rubens then marked off the rest of the sheet with a vertical chalk line and drew – probably around the same period – *Christ presented to the people*. All of the figures are depicted full length, and on a slightly larger scale than in the previous study. Pilate, with his arms spread out before him; Christ with his crown of thorns, bound at the wrists and holding a bundle of reeds; the helmeted soldier removing Christ's royal mantle – all these are repeated in



Fig. 3 Alfonso Chacon's *Historia utriusque* (Rome, 1576): *Trajan's sacrifice in a port city* (engraving after Trajan's column in Rome)

the oil sketch by Rubens now in the Cramer collection (The Hague) and the engraving by Nicolaas Lauwers. The bearded man between Christ and Pilate also appears in both works, though without the bundle of rods and not in profile, as in the drawing. It is possible that the Cramer sketch was a study for a lost altarpiece, known only through a copy that was previously in the cathedral of Nivelles. At the bottom of the sheet Rubens has roughly indicated two figures seen from behind in black chalk: perhaps an initial idea of how the group of priests and senators would appear in the oil sketch. Under the principal scene at the lower right, he has added a small sketch of Pilate seated on his throne, attended by a servant. The white highlight on Christ's thigh and the softly hatched areas of chalk on his mantle and loincloth evoke fragments of light and shadow. It reveals how Rubens subtly manipulated his drawing materials in a number of nuances in order to articulate the figures in all their three-dimensional plasticity.

After this study Rubens must have put the sheet away for a time. He probably took it up again in 1636 when he was charged with devising a series of paintings to decorate the hunting lodge of Philip IV of Spain, the Torre de la Parada. For one of the compositions, *Hippodamia seized by the centaur Eurytus*, he made an initial sketch on the reverse of the sheet – not in pen and ink, as he usually did in such cases, but in red chalk. He probably started with the largest group in the centre of the sheet, perhaps with the action figure storming into the scene from the left, which strongly recalls the figure of the executioner pulling on Christ's hair in the *Carrying of the Cross* on the front side of the sheet. In his right hand he holds a club, the attribute of Hercules, and although this Greek hero was also present at the wedding of Pirithous,

king of the Lapiths, and Hippodamia, it was Theseus who first rushed to the bride's aid. In this sketch he attempts to pry her loose from the grip of the centaur, who gallops towards the right while turning back with his upper body, Hippodamia firmly grasped in his right arm. Alpers (1971) already noted that Rubens took over the motif from an engraving of the same subject by Antonio Tempesta, but he may also have drawn inspiration from the example of the *Drunken Silenus with a faun and a maenad*, one of the bacchic scenes on the neo-Attic Borghese Vase (Paris, Musée du Louvre), which he copied during his second stay in Rome (1605/06–08). At the lower right a figure seems to clamp onto one of the centaur's hooves, and towards the centre a falling woman, seen from behind, holds fast to Hippodamia's dress. This figure is a reworking of Tempesta's soldier lying on the ground in the aforementioned engraving. While the figure of Eurytus adopts the same pose in the oil sketch of the same theme (now in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium), the attitude of Hippodamia is better indicated in the group at the upper right of the drawing. She thrusts both arms desperately in the air, a gesture Rubens may have borrowed from the depiction of Persephone seized by Hades on ancient Greek vases. Perhaps Rubens had already tried this path in the small sketch at the far left. Above it, he has tried out another solution that was not retained – with the exception of the figure that thrusts a spear towards Eurytus as he gallops off to the right with Hippodamia under his arm. Alpers (1971) and Held (1980) already noted that Rubens used this motif in reverse in his painting of the *Rape of the Sabine women* (c. 1635–37, London, National Gallery). The soldier with a dagger at the far left of the painting also recalls the figure of the executioner with a club in the *Carrying of the Cross*, a figure that also turns up in the *Bull Hunt* (Gerona, on loan from the Prado, Madrid), as Balis (1986) has pointed out. We may also add that King Romulus, seated on a throne at the far right, who appears in profile in the *Rape of the Sabine women*, is clearly based on the sketch of Pilate on his throne in *Christ presented to the people*.

If we return to the study for Hippodamia, we notice that the figure group at the far right is difficult to identify: two men, one of whom is depicted from behind. Have they come to rescue Hippodamia? In the past, the man raising his arms to the side was interpreted as a Lapith trying to hurl a stone at Eurytus. At any rate, he is a stone thrower, because the figure is borrowed from a drawing of *The Stoning of St Stephen* (Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum) by Pieter Coecke van Aelst, which Rubens retouched. The same motif moreover appears in the composition for *Christ presented to the people* on the other side of the present sheet, between the legs of the helmeted figure at Christ's side.

Stylistically there is a difference between the two sides of the sheet: the earlier sketches are more controlled and betray

a later stage in the creative process than the *Battle between the Lapiths and Centaurs*. In the later sketches we find a more intense search for the right interaction between the protagonists as well as their proper place within the composition. This creative discharge is coupled with a rudimentary drawing style of highly mobile contour lines, sometimes very angular, sometimes highly elastic without striving for anatomical detail but nevertheless unusually confident. These characteristics also hold for the sketch of Hercules that fills the lower right corner, and it is difficult to say whether it was executed at the same time as the Hippodamia studies. Balis (1986) has argued that Philip IV commissioned eight hunting scenes and eight paintings of Hercules for the decoration of the Alcázar, referred to in a letter of 22 June 1639, which would suggest that the sketch was executed later. Because the Alcázar was destroyed by fire in 1734, only a copy of Hercules and the bull survives, painted by Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo (London, Apsley House) and a drawing by a pupil of Rubens in the collection of the Courtauld (London). In these compositions Hercules holds the bull by both horns and subdues the animal with the help of his right leg, which is slung over the beast's head, while in the sketch only his right knee presses down on the bull's neck. Hercules's body is shown more in profile, and seems to be borrowed in reverse from the figure of the servant who holds a ram under the horns in Raphael's *Sacrifice at Lystra*, a tapestry cartoon (now in London, Victoria and Albert Museum) which Rubens had copied at an earlier date. In the same composition there is also a bull, frontal and foreshortened in emulation of the legendary painting by the ancient Greek painter Pausias, as reported by Pliny the Elder. In this case Rubens probably drew inspiration from antique scenes depicting the sacrifice of oxen, with which he was thoroughly familiar – as Ulrich Heinen has recently shown (2010). These models include *Trajan's sacrifice in a port city*, engraved after Trajan's column in Rome and reproduced in Alfonso Chacon's *Historia utriusque* (Rome, 1576; fig. 3). Rubens, however, emphasizes the exertion of Hercules's athletic body and muscled torso to a greater extent than either Raphael or the ancients.

Thanks to the presence of numerous borrowings from antique and Renaissance sources and their subsequent reuse as motifs in various other works, the present sheet shows how Rubens fell back on such carefully preserved drawings in the creation of new compositions in a marvellous interaction with his astonishing visual memory.

In September of this year, the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium will present this newly acquired drawing in a succinct exhibition of related works from the permanent collection in the main Rubens rooms.

Rubeniana

Palazzo Rubens. The Master as Architect

In his day Rubens was considered not only the most important European painter, but also a connoisseur of both ancient and contemporary Italian architecture. He never had an independent architectural practice, but it is known that he participated actively in several building projects. However, these were all on a small scale and did not involve designs for complete buildings. His most ambitious architectural undertaking was undoubtedly his plan for the radical renovation of his own house in Antwerp.

In 1610, two years after his return from Italy, Rubens and his first wife Isabella Brant bought a house and grounds on the Wapper, one of Antwerp's most exclusive streets. From 1616 to 1621, Rubens had his property extended by building a domed, semi-circular sculpture gallery, a studio, a screen fashioned like a triumphal arch, and a garden pavilion with a façade in the form of a *serliana*. The screen closes off the courtyard by connecting the old, 16th-century dwelling with the newly built painter's studio, the 'schilderhuys', which Rubens designed in the style of an Italian palazzo. Only two parts of the 17th-century building complex have survived almost intact: the screen which forms an imposing entrance to the garden, and the garden pavilion, which functions as a *point de vue* through the screen's central arch.

In designing the extension to his house, Rubens sought inspiration from contemporary Italian masters well grounded in both painting and the principles of Vitruvian architecture, especially Giulio Romano and Michelangelo. The treatises of such great Italian architectural theorists as Serlio and Vignola were another source of inspiration. Rubens's antique and Italian borrowings are apparent from the unusual design of the façades of both screen and studio. In order to accentuate the function of his house, Rubens placed life-size statues of the Olympian gods Mercury and Minerva on the central pedestals of the screen's balustrade. They were chosen as the tutelary deities because they were associated, more than any of the other gods, with wisdom and the arts. Thus Rubens pointedly portrayed Mercury as the god of painters, holding a palette and brushes and, instead of his *caduceus*, a mahlstick. To this duo Rubens added a statue of the demigod Hercules, the paragon of virtue, which was installed in the garden pavilion. Together these deities proclaimed that his house was dedicated to art, wisdom and virtue.

As a whole and in its individual parts, the complex formed a virtuosic and highly imaginative blend of architectural inventions that the painter had seen and studied in various places in Italy,



Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of Isabella Brant* National Gallery of Art, Washington

especially Rome. Rubens's splendid town-mansion with its modern Roman forms and decorations based on ancient models was considered an exemplar of the new classical architecture, which was unlike anything else in the Netherlands. Rubens's architectural masterpiece was greatly admired throughout the 17th century.

'Palazzo Rubens. The Master as Architect' (10 September–11 December 2011) is the first-ever exhibition to explore the architecture of the Rubens House and the models, ancient and modern, from which Rubens took his inspiration.

Ben van Beneden

The Rubenianum acquires the rich Pierre de Séjournet documentation

Thanks to the generous support of the Cultural Heritage Fund of the King Baudouin Foundation, the Rubenianum has recently acquired Pierre de Séjournet's art-historical documentation. This collection, with its thousands of photographs and its specialized reference library, is a particularly rich source of information on Flemish and Dutch painting of the 16th to 18th centuries. It is complementary to the holdings of the Rubenianum since it contains detailed information not only on the great masters but especially on lesser-known artists.

Pierre de Séjournet de Rameignies (1933–2010) studied and practised law, but his great passion was the art of the Low Countries. Around 1970 he decided to devote his talent and efforts entirely to the study of painting. By reading the literature, following the art market, and paying countless visits to public and private collections both large and small,

he steadily built up a unique library and photographic documentation. He became an expert in attributing and reattributing paintings that originated in the shadow of the 'great names' in art history.

Throughout his years of study, Pierre de Séjournet was a regular visitor to the Rubenianum's reading room for documentary research. Every staff member who had the privilege to meet him or assist him in any way, has fond memories of this passionate and ever-friendly art lover.

Pierre de Séjournet's documentation comprises no fewer than 3,600 artists' files, preserved in sixteen cabinets. His library contains more than seventy metres of books, including catalogues of museums, exhibitions and auctions, as well as monographs and reference works.

Incorporating the thousands of files, photographs, books and catalogues into our system will take quite some time. The Rubenianum is preparing an online inventory of this collection, and will report on its progress in the bimonthly acquisition newsletter. In the years to come, our readers and researchers will, with increasing frequency, be handling the carefully mounted and annotated photographs bearing the familiar stamp 'Documentation P. de Séjournet'.

Véronique Van de Kerckhof

The Rubenianum Lectures

We warmly invite you to a lecture by

BEN VAN BENEDEN
Curator of the Rubenshuis

Maggior dignità e rilievo.
Rubens and Architecture
Rubenianum, 25 September, 11 am

In this lecture Ben van Beneden will focus on Rubens's interpretation of architecture and on the examples, antique and modern, that inspired him for the building of his house in Antwerp. Admission is free; please notify your attendance via rubenianum@stad.antwerpen.be

We look forward to meeting you on 25 September!

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