

The Rubenianum Quarterly

2012
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Latest Corpus volume presented in Paris

The Mobilier National in Paris is the proud owner of no less than five editions of the *Constantine* series, each with a varying number of tapestries, woven after the celebrated designs by Rubens; the series is the subject of Professor Brosens's *Corpus* volume, the latest to be published. As such the Director General, Bernard Schotter, and the Director of Collections, Arnauld Brejon de Lavergnée, were happy to invite our *Corpus* author to present his volume in the prestigious Galerie des Gobelins before an impressive gathering of dignitaries, scholars and collectors. The Centrum Rubenianum wishes to thank the Mobilier National for its hospitality.

A panel of specialists, formed by Koen Brosens, Arnauld Brejon de Lavergnée together with Professors Nadeije Laneyrie-Dagen, Jean Vittet and Arnout Balis, spoke with expert knowledge on related topics: the origins of the Manufacture des Gobelins, which were rooted in the Parisian workshops of Flemish expatriates, the genesis of Rubens's *Constantine* sketches which were ordered by these Flemish immigrants, the reception of the tapestries by the agents of the French Crown and the subsequent influence of the series.

Following the perfectly conducted and illuminating presentation of Professor Brosens's volume was a fine reception, made possible thanks to generous financial contributions from Bob Habeldt and Eric Turquin. The event was enhanced by the display of a selection of the *Constantine* tapestries designed by Rubens, as well as examples of the same subject designed by Giulio Romano, from the collection of the Mobilier National. These had been specially put on display for the occasion by the Gallery's Counselor Marc Bayard.

To conclude a very successful evening, the Belgian Ambassador Patrick Vercauteren Drubbel and his wife hosted a dinner for *Corpus* Rubenianum authors, members of the Rubenianum Fund and leading members of the Parisian cultural world at their



Residence, a stately 18th-century palace with fine period panelling in the immediate vicinity of the Palais de l'Élysée. Thomas Leysen, who had introduced the launch at the Gobelins earlier that evening, rose again to the occasion and eloquently thanked His Excellency for the fine dinner to which Patrick Vercauteren Drubbel responded with lively wit, paying tribute to his fellow diplomat Sir Peter Paul Rubens.

Michel Ceuterick

Thomas Leysen thanks the Belgian Ambassador at the dinner party in his Paris Residence.

Rubens researchers of the KMSKA now at the Rubenianum

As is gradually becoming known, the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten van Antwerpen in 'Antwerp South' is temporarily closed, but the museum's activities continue unabated. This means that the museum is dependent, more than ever, on cooperation with other institutions, not only for the organization of exhibitions, but also for the research that underlies such initiatives. For example, the Rubens Project, which commenced in 2007, is being carried on through intensified collaboration with the Rubenianum. This institution is close to my heart, and I'm sure that my colleagues who will be working there in the coming years feel the same way. I started out at the Rubenianum in 1973 as a Rubens researcher and worked in this capacity on the expansion of the documentation and centre of excellence. Several years later, when I gave up my position at the Rubenianum for a job at the Rubenshuis, I remained closely involved with the Rubens research, and this situation did not change when I started to work at the KMSKA fifteen years ago. I am convinced that the accommodation of the museum's Rubens researchers in the Rubenianum and the accompanying centralization of documentation will lead to fruitful collaboration. The Rubenianum will become even more of a meeting place for all those committed to the study of Rubens and his time. I am already looking forward to the forthcoming volumes of the Corpus Rubenianum.

Dr Paul Huvenne
General Director KMSKA

The Rubenianum library, treasury of art literature

The Rubenianum Quarterly's editors invited busy bee Ute Staes to describe her task as a librarian and sketch her plans and hopes for the future.

The roots of the collection are to be found in the handbooks gathered by the staff of the Rubens House in the 1950s. In 1962 these were joined by the extensively annotated books of Dr Ludwig Burchard. Ever since the founding of the Rubenianum as an institution of the city of Antwerp, now 50 years ago, the collection has been enriched with monographs, journals, exhibition and collection catalogues, arriving from all over the world.

From the very beginning, the Rubenianum has worked with a very strict collection profile, outlining what fits in our library and what does not. The joint effort of my predecessors Nora De Poorter, Marc Vandenvan and Henk Vanstappen and members of the Centrum Rubenianum now results in a highly specialized library collection to support scientific research. We have monographs on famous and lesser-known artists from all over Europe, but we also have a smaller collection on literature, history, religion and folklore, with relevance for art-historical research.

In other words: we collect everything that could be needed to study the broad scale, scope and intellectual underpinnings of Flemish art of the 16th and 17th centuries. The library contains almost 50,000 titles and 90 current periodicals, as well as an extensive collection of auction catalogues.

Librarian

Since I mainly work behind the scenes, not many readers are familiar with who I am, nor with the exact extent of what I do. Apart from that, I've noticed that my name – Ute Staes – does not always ring a bell: I'm constantly addressed as 'Dear sir', or 'Beste Heer Staes' in email correspondence. So let me take this opportunity to briefly introduce myself. As you may have noticed in the picture, the Rubenianum has indeed a female librarian. *Enchantée*. I was appointed head of the library in October 2008, after a three months' internship at the Erfgoedbibliotheek Hendrik Conscience, where I first experienced from the inside how a scientific library functions. The Rubenianum library is extremely specialized and small in comparison to this heritage library, but this also means that those who work here have to be some kind of 'three-in-one shampoo'. My colleagues and I combine several functions in one job.

What do I do? In short this sounds like 'supporting and supervising the library processes'. I make sure a publication ends up in our shelves, by coordinating and executing the acquisition and cataloguing

processes. I also maintain the website www.rubenianum.be, supervise the management of digital documents, and take up a role as contact for more technical questions. But you might also recognize me as the lady pouring the drinks after the Rubenianum Lectures!

Putting it in another way: I'm always busy, and never done. And I love my job for all that. But I know one thing for sure: if you love to read books, don't become a librarian. Visit our reading room instead!

Cooperation

For my job, I like to work closely together with fellow art librarians. This has proven to be an ideal way to work out solutions for typical library affairs. Although the electronic catalogue was introduced in the Rubenianum as early as 1988, it brings to mind the 'Law of the handicap of a headstart'. Indeed it proved to be quite a challenge to bring this database online. To accomplish that, I joined the colleagues of the city of Antwerp in 2010 in the search for a common system for library automation. Last year our catalogue was the pilot project for conversion to Brocade, the system developed by the University of Antwerp. As a result I dedicated a large part of my time in 2011 to this technical switchover. Thanks to the endless efforts of the Brocade team at the University, we can now celebrate our 50th anniversary with an online catalogue! You may want to visit us at: <http://anet.ua.ac.be/env/desktopubr>

Teamwork

As the art of the 16th and 17th centuries is a much-studied domain, it takes a lot of work to keep track of all the new information that is published. To keep the library up to date I skim a lot of newsletters, websites, publishers' leaflets and book reviews in journals. The suggestions and hints coming from the colleagues of the Rubenianum, Centrum



Ute Staes with a copy of the *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi Austriaci ...*, Antwerp 1642, from the Burchard collection.

Rubenianum and Rubens House are welcome additions to these searches. We also gather every month for a 'purchasing committee', looking through a selection of titles and deciding whether or not a book will be bought. Later on I send them – and the interested readers – a list of the new titles in our holdings.

Plans

Access to information remains our primary concern. I would like to put forward three special projects: – About 2500 library items belonging to the large documentation of Pierre de Séjournet are on their way to our shelves. With the help of a motivated team of job students, interns and volunteers we selected the titles that could enrich our collection. Many of them are French versions of books in our holdings, others contain new information on e.g. Flemish works of art in Poland.

– Subsequently we will start with the incorporation of the specialist reference library that used to belong to the Museum Smidt van Gelder. This will enrich our holdings for the decorative arts and make them accessible to a broader public.

– In 2012 we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the oldest book in our library, a precious post-incunabulum edition of the famous *Legenda Aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine. Our wonderful collection of *raria* was primarily assembled by Ludwig Burchard. More than 450 books dating from the 16th to the 18th century will be described soon according to the strict rules of cataloguing old books.

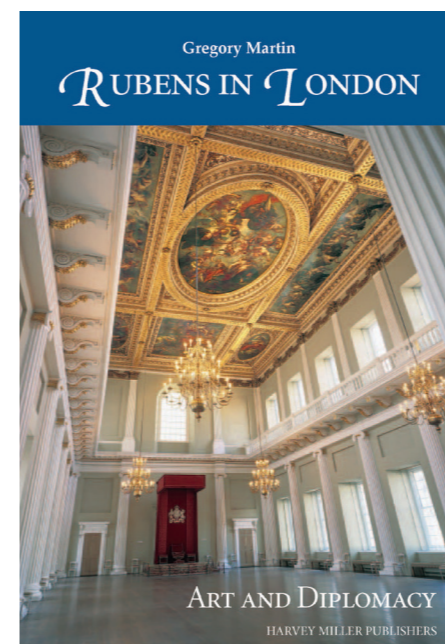
Our strength

We often think of the quality of our holdings as our main strength. I tend to think of a knowledge centre as a team of people, working with the collections of books and other resources. This is a more anthropocentric view, but there's an undeniable truth in it: without the expertise of people, any collection would be doomed.

I am convinced that the secret of the Rubenianum is its motivated and dedicated team, in which everyone has a certain domain of expertise and knowledge needed to fulfil our goals. I am very happy to be part of it!

Rubens in London

Elizabeth McGrath interviews Gregory Martin on his latest book



The Banqueting House in Whitehall is an extraordinary survival in London, and its ceiling paintings by Rubens even more so, given the history of the place in the Commonwealth period and the treatment the pictures have endured over the centuries, not least at the hands of well-intentioned restorers. But when did you first become aware of Rubens's Ceiling?

It was when I was a schoolboy; then the Banqueting Hall was officially described as the Museum of the United Services Institute. The hall was cluttered with crummy reconstructions of battlefields and dusty models of battleships; tatty, massed military ensigns – attached to the balcony – obscured the view of the canvases which anyway were not properly arranged, so as to make it difficult to appreciate them. The occasion was in fact rather a non-event so far as I was concerned.

Only later was I struck by how cruelly ironic it was that in January 1649, not much more than a decade after Rubens's paintings had been installed, Charles I, who had commissioned the ceiling to glorify the exemplary reign of his father, was made to walk out from beneath it to his execution on a scaffold directly in front of the building. It was amazing to me that a place of such political and artistic significance was so unvisited and its decorations by one of the greatest of European artists were so little regarded.

Rubens, and especially his work in London, seems to have been a central theme in your scholarly life. How did you come to focus on Rubens as an art historian? For I know it was history, not art history, that you studied at university before you were appointed as a junior Assistant Keeper at the National Gallery.

Sometime in early June 1629 Rubens arrived in London, on a mission from Spain to try to effect a peace treaty. He spent almost a year in England, mostly staying with another, much less distinguished, Dutch-speaking artist-diplomat, Balthasar Gerbier, and had various meetings with King Charles I. The results of Rubens's diplomatic efforts were positive, but short-lived; the lasting benefit of his visit was a group of magnificent paintings on political themes. By good fortune all of these works remain in or have returned to London. One of them is the *Allegory of Peace and War* in the National Gallery, which Rubens presented to Charles I (Gerbier's children in fact feature in it). Another is the series of pictures celebrating the reign of Charles's father, James I of Great Britain, which decorates the ceiling of the Banqueting House in Whitehall. The nine giant canvases were executed after Rubens's return to Antwerp from designs the artist made, or agreed on, in London. The complex story of the genesis, execution and subsequent fate of this work was treated in illuminating detail in Gregory Martin's two-volume contribution to the *Corpus Rubenianum*, published in 2007. Gregory devoted much attention there to the concepts of monarchy and peaceable rule that Rubens was evidently expected to promote through the language of allegory, in which he was particularly fluent. But writing that book prompted Gregory to rethink the place of the Whitehall Ceiling, still too little appreciated, within the social and political context of Stuart Britain, and to plot the course of the artist's stay, as well as the extent of his artistic production while in London. *Rubens in London: Art and Diplomacy*, published at the end of last year by Harvey Miller, is the result.

On a sunny spring day in Norfolk, when he should really have been out in his boat, Gregory was persuaded to sit down for long enough to tackle a few questions about his new book and his long engagement with Rubens.

Yes, I joined the Gallery with no academic credentials as an art historian, something that was not out of the ordinary in those days, as the Gallery liked to train its own staff. Soon I found that I had inherited the task of cataloguing the Flemish 17th-century pictures. At Oxford as a history student I had had to come to terms with the controversy then raging in its early stages about the causes of the English civil war. At that time, it was between the Marxists, like Christopher Hill, and the more traditional Oxford historians such as Hugh Trevor-Roper. So when I came to catalogue the National Gallery *Peace and War*, I found myself treading on ground that I had touched on as an undergraduate.

Well, even if the restrained format of National Gallery catalogues offered little scope for historical polemic, you set in your Flemish School: 1600–1900 of 1970 a new scholarly standard for the analysis of the works of Rubens and his contemporaries ... But which of the Gallery's pictures did you embark on first? Did you plunge straight into Rubens and the Peace and War?

I did start with Rubens, but not *Peace and War*; before that I tackled the sketch for the *Allegory of the Duke of Buckingham*, in which, with much help from gods and personifications, the Duke attains the Temple of Virtue and Honour. I found a contemporary poem which showed that it was not, as had been thought, a posthumous apotheosis, made after his assassination in 1628, but had been executed while the sitter, the notorious favourite of Charles I, was still alive. The Duke was as

vain as he was cultivated, and was evidently not embarrassed to commission a self-celebration, which he would have seen as a self-justification as well.

And your first encounter with the Rubenianum?

It was through working on the Gallery's catalogue that I first came into contact with it, as Ludwig Burchard, who had had a special affection for his adoptive country, had stipulated that his notes on National Gallery pictures should be made available to any Gallery cataloguer. Thus I was one of the few outsiders allowed into the Burchard Documentation. That is how I first met Hans Vlieghe and Carl Van de Velde. Rather boringly, my memory of the week or so I spent at the Rubenianum – then housed in the Museum Smidt van Gelder – is essentially of a hard-working stint rather than a ball of fun; the Belgiëlei was essentially untouched by the 'swinging 60s', and Antwerp was not then the prosperous, extrovert place it is today. Burchard's notes were, however, very useful, especially as in those days the Rubens literature was far more limited than it is today.

But how did you come to write your volume for the Corpus?

I stayed only intermittently in touch with the Rubenianum during the years when I worked at Christie's. But I was overjoyed when, out of the blue, Roger d'Hulst rang me in, I think, 1992 to ask if I would take on the *Corpus* volume on the Whitehall Ceiling. Up to that moment, this had been assigned to the distinguished and knowledgeable

Sir Oliver Millar; however, as Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, Oliver had huge other commitments and he generously surrendered the commission he had received many years previously.

... And in fact one of the last things this great scholar wrote was a glowing review of your Corpus book in The Burlington Magazine ...

Yes, here too he was characteristically generous. But returning to d'Hulst and the commission, his proposal changed my life. I remain very grateful to him for engineering my return to the Rubens fold as embodied in the Centrum Rubenianum.

One of the things that has always intrigued me about the Whitehall Ceiling is the extent to which Rubens was responsible for devising the iconography. I remember the excitement I felt the day (was it in 1993?) you showed me the plans which had been discovered in the British Museum of two projected layouts for the decorative scheme drawn up by someone at court. This revealed that the central theme was initially to be the Union of the Crowns of England and Scotland, a subject of some topical relevance today.

You know, it was a chance phone call to the Department of Manuscripts that alerted me – which shows how good it is to have humans at the end of a phone! An assistant keeper told me about documents that had just been found and how as yet no sense could be made of them, though they seemed relevant to the Ceiling. The two documents are in fact at present on view at Tate Britain in a display that Karen Hearn has organized to highlight the Rubens oil sketch for the ceiling that the Gallery acquired in 2008 (see fig.). This crucial sketch, published by Oliver Millar in 1956, shows Rubens's first ideas for the principal part of the ceiling after he had absorbed and then edited the English plans.

The sketch surely shows that the change of the central theme to the Apotheosis of King James can be attributed to Rubens. For we see how much the artist was inspired for this feature – and for subsidiary elements too on the panel – by his study of the allegorical ceiling paintings of Veronese.

It is true that the second of the two programmes talks of James being depicted as carried up to Heaven by 'divers Angells', but it must indeed have been Rubens who revised the concept as a classical apotheosis, relying on his knowledge of ancient iconography as well as Italian secular decoration.

Patience is not perhaps your most outstanding virtue, Gregory, and I know that after your busy life at Christie's, with its strict deadlines for catalogues, you sometimes found the slow pace of academic publication baffling and frustrating ...

... and I suppose I showed this too when for a time the finished draft of my book lay unattended at the then very understaffed Rubenianum (the situation a decade ago was certainly very different from that at today's well-populated and revitalized Centrum!). But then Arnout Balis took the matter in hand, and the waiting turned out to be worth it, as he proved to be an inspired and inspiring editor.

... as I know too from my experience as the author of the volume on Subjects from History. But, having just completed the immense project of the Corpus volume, what prompted you to embark on another book with the Whitehall Ceiling as its subject?

I wanted to write *Rubens in London* to put the Whitehall Ceiling into the wider context of the culture of the reign of Charles I and his court. In Britain the attitudes in the years leading up to the civil war are always illustrated by Van Dyck's portraits. What I wanted to show is that Rubens expressed the political philosophy of the King in these magnificent canvases, which are still *in situ*. It is typical of English historians that they have managed largely to ignore it, choosing to study the faces of the protagonists as presented by Van Dyck rather than the allegorized concepts as depicted by Rubens. His canvases were designed to express ideas of universal and uncontroversial appeal as seen from the King's point of view.



Rubens, *The Apotheosis of James I and Other Studies*, sketch for the Banqueting House Ceiling, Whitehall. Tate Britain

One of the great sources for Rubens's stay in England which you were able to draw on is of course his own correspondence.

Yes, he was required to write detailed despatches by Olivares, his political master in Madrid. These are fascinating accounts of the British court and demonstrate the artist's great literary ability as well as his skill as a diplomat. Indeed he was offered a permanent diplomatic post after his return to Antwerp. Luckily for us he turned it down, preferring family life and painting. Still, his young wife might have taken to the diplomatic life; her second husband was a successful courtier and man of affairs.

But now that his work in London is so well presented in both words and images, what are you planning to do for Rubens next?

Elly Miller has certainly designed a beautiful book with some amazing colour details, and unless something extraordinary happens, I think I have said my last word on the subject. But now, along with you and the rest of the team gathered for the project, I am busy with Rubens's mythological subjects for the *Corpus*: not long to go either before the deadline for Part I!

Yes, let's get back to the topic of Diana and her companions....

Rubeniana



Page from the De Ganay manuscript showing Rubens's ideas on physiognomy. Coll. King Baudouin Foundation © Sotheby's

Dominique Allard, Director of the King Baudouin Foundation, admiring the manuscript in the company of Thomas Leysen, Arnout Balis and Ben van Beneden

both wearing a mural crown. Near the base of the trophy-mast is a winged Fame blowing her trumpet and crouching next to it in submissive postures are the inevitable prisoners of war: French and Dutch captives. The two women standing on the raised platform aft are Valour and Fortune, and two winged Victories stand on either side of the great trophy.

For this design Rubens was presented with a cask of *vin de Paris*, valued at 84 guilders!

Saved for the Nation: The King Baudouin Foundation acquires a Notebook

At a recent auction in New York, the King Baudouin Foundation successfully acquired a notebook with Rubens's theoretical notes on the art of drawing. Known as the De Ganay Manuscript, it is one of four known copies after the original autograph notebook, that was lost in a fire in 1720. In the course of next year the volume will receive a permanent place in the Rubens House, as a permanent loan.

The De Ganay Manuscript was made in the 17th century, shortly after Rubens's death. It is probably a copy by someone from the immediate circle of Rubens. The book shows that Rubens was not only a great and erudite artist, but also an ambitious and original theoretician.

The book contains seventeen pages of text and forty-nine pages of drawings. Most of these are in pen and brown ink, some in black or black and red chalk, their Latin and Dutch inscriptions relating to the texts. It illustrates Rubens's ideas on perspective, anatomy, proportion and symmetry. In the studies of human emotions, Rubens compared the art of painting with literature.

We refer our readers to TRQ 2011/1 (pp. 3–4) where Arnout Balis briefly discussed the four existing copies after the lost original.

Rubens's theoretical notebook is the subject of the upcoming volume of the *Corpus Rubenianum*, to be published in the beginning of 2013. This volume will be written by Arnout Balis and David Jaffé.

Rubens's Chariot of Kallo in the spotlight

While the Antwerp Royal Museum of Fine Arts is closed for renovation, the Rockox House is playing host to a number of paintings of great significance to the old burgomaster's residence.

Rubens's oil sketch representing the *Chariot of Kallo* is the centrepiece of the small

'Triumph on Wheels' exhibition at the Rockox House until 13 May 2012.

In June 1638, Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand defeated the Dutch near Kallo (on the left bank of the river Scheldt in Antwerp) and, a few days later, he brought the French to their knees at St Omaars (now Saint-Omer). In commemoration of these events, Antwerp's city council decided to add a festive float to the annual Antwerp *Ommegang*, a procession dating back to the 14th century in which saints' relics were carried around the church and through the streets. Initially, religious themes took pride of place in the *Ommegang*, but secular themes gradually gained in importance. The commission for the design of a triumphal chariot was given to Rubens, that great admirer of Antiquity.

Rubens set the allegory on the victory at Kallo on a triumphal chariot in the shape of a ship, replacing the mast by an enormous trophy with armour, standards and banners, taken as spoils from the enemy. Kneeling on a platform behind August Providence are the personifications of Antwerp and Saint-Omer,



Rubens, *The Chariot of Kallo* (detail). Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp. © Lukas – Art in Flanders & KMSKA

The Rubenianum Lectures

Please note the date of our next Rubenianum Lecture on 24 June 2012, 11 am

Dr TIMOTHY DE PAEPE
'Twee susters syn versaemt'. *The unity of painting and theatre in the Grand Painters' Hall of the Antwerp Guild of Saint-Luke (1664–1762)*

In 2011, Timothy De Paepe obtained his PhD on the history of theatre in Antwerp in the 17th and 18th centuries. For his talk in the Rubenianum Lectures series, he will focus on the Grand Painters' Hall of the Guild of Saint-Luke, a location shared by painters and rhetoricians – some artists were both – where paintings formed the prestigious and symbolical backdrop of plays. This painterly decorum will be visualized in a simulation of the hanging of the guild's collection.

The Rubenianum Lectures are organized with the support of the Inbev-Baillet Latour Fund.

Conference 'Rubens and the Thirty Years War', 10–11 May 2012

The Rubenianum is happy to host a conference on a fascinating aspect of Rubens, organized by the Society for Court Studies and Universiteit Antwerpen with the support of the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO). Using the career of Peter Paul Rubens as an organizing thread, this conference will examine the complex relationships between diplomacy, dynastic politics and the visual arts during the early part of the Thirty Years War. Both art historians and historians from the United States, Europe and New Zealand will enlighten various aspects of this interdisciplinary topic. All information on concept and programme is to be found on the Rubenianum's home page. To register, please write to steven.thiry@ua.ac.be

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