

# The Rubenianum Quarterly

2013  
3

## Rubens: a maverick artist. The master's theoretical notebook

*The Rubens House is organizing a small focus exhibition on a fascinating, hitherto little-known chapter in Rubens's career, namely his theoretical notebook. The exhibition will run from 19 October 2013 until 19 January 2014.*

As early as 1672 Rubens's first biographer, the critic Giovanni Bellori, mentioned the existence of an illustrated theoretical notebook, containing Rubens's remarks on optics, symmetry, proportions, anatomy, architecture and a study of the human passions.

Unfortunately, the original notebook was destroyed in a devastating fire at the Louvre in 1720 while in the possession of André-Charles Boulle, the famous cabinetmaker to the French king Louis XIV. It is some consolation that various fragmentary records of the book exist, from which we can partially reconstruct its content. Only a handful of original sheets survived the fire, most notably that in the Courtauld Institute in London depicting Rubens's geometric analysis of the *Farnese Hercules*. In addition to these sheets, four fragmentary records of the book exist, each different, but nevertheless invaluable for reconstructive purposes, particularly when studied together. One of these was certainly made during Rubens's lifetime: the so-called Chatsworth MS, which is probably the work of the young Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641). The 'Bordes MS' too, recently discovered in a private collection in Madrid, is likely to be directly derived from the original notebook. In the meantime a close study of this manuscript has shown that it contains a handful of drawings by Rubens's hand, that were probably stolen by the copyist from the original notebook. The two other manuscripts – the so-called Johnson MS and de Ganay MS (after its twentieth-century owner) are later seventeenth-century copies. The latter notebook was acquired by the King Baudouin Foundation at an auction in New York in January

2012 and given to the Rubens House as a permanent loan.

Rubens's theoretical notebook is not just a splendid compendium of visual motifs, it also reveals his highly idiosyncratic theory of the human form. For the first time all four manuscripts will be shown side by side. Rubens's theoretical notebook is the subject of the upcoming volume of the *Corpus Rubenianum*, to be published in 2014. This volume will be written by Arnout Balis and others. | *Ben van Beneden*



Page from the de Ganay MS.  
King Baudouin Foundation,  
on permanent loan to the Rubens House



Her Majesty Queen Mathilde in excellent company:  
Rubens and Bernini

## EDITORIAL

2013 is shaping up as a successful year for the Rubenianum Fund, as new donors from many countries have pledged their support. We have now commitments in place for an amount of 1.8 million euro, equalling three quarters of our total goal. The annual trip of our donors and benefactors was again a great success, and the fact that Her Majesty Queen Mathilde chose to let her visit to the Rubens exhibition at Louvre-Lens coincide with our Rubenianum Fund visit was especially gratifying. Her decision to invite a number of university students and young art historians to join her for a subsequent lunch discussion – which was moderated by Arnout Balis – also constituted a significant encouragement to Rubens studies.

For the Corpus Rubenianum itself, 2013 is a year of transition. It is now clear that no new volume will be published before the end of this year. However, a number of manuscripts are in their final stages, and 2014 should see various new volumes off the presses. In order to expedite and streamline the publication process and strengthen the relationship between management and the Corpus authors, we have decided to create and fund an additional position of Director of Publications for the Corpus. I am very pleased that Prof. Koenraad Jonckheere has accepted to take on this responsibility on a part-time basis. He will join the team on 1 November, and I am confident that his skills, energy and enthusiasm will give a further boost to our endeavour.

Thomas Leysen | Chairman Rubenianum Fund

### Bert Watteuw on his activities at the Rubenianum

I first came under the spell of Flemish baroque painting during classes taught by Katlijne Van der Stighelen and Hans Vlieghe at the University of Leuven. Initially I resisted their siren song, as I was reluctant to give in to the lure of Rubens, Van Dyck and their contemporaries. In a brief bout of insanity, I even intended to write a master's thesis on the concept of the abject in contemporary art. Luckily, I recovered from this youthful lapse with my health intact. When Professor Van der Stighelen subsequently confronted me with Van Dyck's haunting portrait of Jacomo de Cachiopin, this Antwerp art collector and friend of the artist became the subject of my master's thesis. Since then, I have never looked back. After obtaining a master's degree in art history I completed an advanced master's programme in social and cultural anthropology, which has given me a firm grasp of the socio-cultural context in which images function.

With my colleague Lieneke Nijkamp, who took the spotlight in an earlier issue of *The Rubenianum Quarterly*, I am responsible for the Rubenianum's documentation of artists from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. It consists of many thousands of photographs, handwritten notes, excerpts from sales and exhibition catalogues, letters and so on. For brevity's sake I'll focus on our Rubens documentation, the core of which was assembled by Ludwig Burchard. Since the Rubenianum's acquisition of Burchard's files in 1963, succeeding generations of scholars have continually added to them, making for what is surely the most extensive documentation ever assembled of a single artist. These exhaustive files form the basis for the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*.

When I started work at the Rubenianum a considerable backlog of documentation had built up due to years of understaffing. I was asked to coordinate the process of working through this backlog and of integrating several other bodies of Rubens documentation, for example Roger A. d'Hulst's documentation of Rubens's drawings and the large collection of excerpts gathered by Pierre de Séjournet. In true Soviet style I subjected my colleagues to a campaign of collective filing days. Thanks to their strenuous efforts, we have now succeeded in working through the backlog, for which I explicitly want to thank Prisca, Marieke, Lieneke and Bert. All this work is now resulting in a unified Rubens documentation, which, for the very first time, is gradually being made accessible to external researchers. A related project I am overseeing is the digitization of the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*. Thanks to a generous grant from the Digital Resources Grants Program of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation and matching funds provided by the City of Antwerp, the Rubenianum

will shortly be offering 22 fully searchable volumes of the *Corpus* on its website. The same grant allows us to hire a cataloguer who will create Rubens records in the RKDimages database; in the process, she will be updating the bibliography and provenance information for the entries in four early *Corpus* volumes in the same database. Making this transition from a strictly print publishing environment to a digital world is challenging and exciting.

A confession: Van Dyck was my first love. Rubens is more of an acquired taste for me. His oeuvre is so extensive that substantial exposure to his work and a certain maturity are needed to appreciate the master fully. Inevitably, my admiration for Rubens has steadily grown since I started work here. However, I do enjoy my time with Anthony, for example when going through the archive of the esteemed Van Dyck specialist Horst Vey, which is being reorganized and is nearly ready to be made accessible to the public. Such personal archives of art historians are the life-blood of the Rubenianum. The information they contain has been painstakingly collected throughout an entire career, and going through them gives you the wonderful sensation of looking over a scholar's shoulder. Acquiring such archives remains important to us, and I am glad to say that Anne-Marie Logan has graciously agreed to donate her documentation of Rubens's drawings. As a first, this archive also contains a large number of digital images. More on this in the next issue.

Besides 'the big three', Rubens, Van Dyck and Jordaens, the Rubenianum documents the work of many lesser-known Flemish painters. Every two weeks my colleagues and I peruse all incoming auction catalogues. During peak season, sales tend to come in quick succession, leading to bumper crops of Flemish paintings for me to document. Staying on top of this is at once demanding and stimulating, as it proves that the interest in Flemish painting remains strong. The same lively interest is evident from the many queries the Rubenianum receives from researchers from both the museum and the academic world, art dealers, collectors and the occasional treasure hunter. The invaluable Nelly Verreydt, a Rubenianum stalwart and a personal muse of mine, makes sure that every single enquiry is answered. Being able to fill in a painting's provenance history, or to identify an obscure iconographic theme or even an artist is very gratifying indeed. As you can imagine, this also involves disappointing hopeful owners of a previously unknown 'Rubens'.

Obviously the Rubenianum is much more than a depository of books, documentation and archives. It's the home of a dedicated team. Being able to pick the brains and see through the eyes of the likes of Arnout Balis, Hans Vlieghe, Nora De Poorter and



Carl Van de Velde is incredibly enriching. With *Corpus* authors and other scholars of Flemish art passing through on a regular basis, we have a vibrant community. Every year Lieneke and I introduce new generations of art-history students to the resources held at the Rubenianum. Through internships and summer jobs we are able to involve students actively in training, and their work greatly adds to the success of often labour-intensive projects, as does the involvement of a group of highly motivated volunteers. Since last year we also invite PhD candidates and postdocs from foreign universities to spend a period of six months in the Rubenianum. Last year we welcomed Adam Eaker, a student from Columbia University who was introduced to our readers in a previous issue. This year a student from Princeton University and two students from the Universität Bern will join the Rubenianum ranks. The ensuing exchange of knowledge and ideas between art historians in all stages of their careers is a reward in itself.

Further aspects of my job include assisting during conferences held at the Kolveniershof. Recently I also delivered a talk in our own series of Rubenianum Lectures. Though often pressed for time, I still present research papers at international conferences, occasionally teach and publish the odd article. I'm also working on a dissertation on the culture of portraiture in seventeenth-century Flanders, which I hope to defend in 2014. Another current project is a conference on Rubens and dress, organized in close collaboration with Leuven University and to be held at the Rubenianum in May 2014. I'm contributing an essay and catalogue entries to an exhibition on Rubens's family portraits to be staged in the Rubens House Museum in 2015. Being a keen gardener, it is a great pleasure to look out of my office's windows onto Rubens's garden. When crossing the garden and stepping into the museum, I'm always drawn to Willem van Haecht's *Cabinet of Cornelis van der Geest*. Jacomo de Cachiopin, the subject of my master's thesis, is among the art aficionados depicted by Van Haecht. The painting never ceases to amaze me. It is at once an exhilarating and a humbling reminder of Antwerp's long tradition of documenting its artistic past. Adding to that tradition, however modestly, is an honour and a privilege.

## Walking with Royalty

### The Rubenianum Fund Trip to Lens and Paris

Michel Ceuterick

Participants in the previous, highly successful Rubenianum Fund trips, bound respectively for Madrid, London and Vienna, were in for quite a surprise when discovering that this year's field trip to Lens and Paris, albeit well-charted terrain to all, proved to be the most exquisite so far.

Her Majesty Queen Mathilde honoured the Rubenianum Fund Donors by joining in our visit to the 'L'Europe de Rubens' show at the Louvre-Lens Museum. Guided by the curator of the exhibition, Blaise Ducos,

one of our *Corpus Rubenianum* authors, and provided with further insightful comments by Arnout Balis and Ben van Beneden, director of the Rubens House and a lender to the exhibition, all those present were given the rare opportunity to sample the ongoing lively debate on attribution between Rubens scholars. Her Majesty Queen Mathilde, keen to support the arts in all their facets, had expressed the wish to meet with young students on this day. Thus the Fund invited one art-history student

from each of the Belgian universities to join the patrons and lunch with Her Majesty at the table of honour in the 'Atelier de Marc Meurin'. The chef with two Michelin stars treated us all to a scrumptious meal with 'Le saint pierre aux dés de boudin noir, guacamole, émulsion anisée, melba à l'olive noire'.

After a smooth transfer to Paris, we were welcomed at the enchanting Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, located in the Marais, for a nocturnal visit, cocktails



In the hall of the Louvre-Lens Museum. Thomas Leysen and Her Majesty Queen Mathilde with Catherine Ferrar and Xavier Dectot, general manager and director of the museum respectively.



Blaise Ducos and Her Majesty the Queen admiring Rubens's *Borghese Entombment*. In the background Thomas Leysen and Mrs Paula d'Hulst.



Everhard Jabach exhibition. This German banker had amassed an extraordinary collection of drawings and paintings, which was sold to Louis XIV in 1671 and forms one of the pillars of the present-day museum holdings.

The evening and this year's field trip ended on a high note with a delicious buffet in the Salons du Louvre, overlooking I.M. Pei's brightly lit pyramid. It made us feel as if we were on top of the world.

At the Musée du Louvre, Everhard Jabach, the German banker and collector, portrayed by Van Dyck, was the highlight of a wonderful Northern drawings exhibition. From left to right: Ben van Beneden, Thomas Leysen, Cliff Schorer, Nancy Leysen, Olivia Savatier and Blaise Ducos.

in this private Foundation's garden, and ensuing dinner in its club rooms. The two endearing panel paintings representing Diana and her nymphs amid the hunting dogs of the kennel of Archduchess Isabella, executed jointly by Rubens and Jan Brueghel, form undoubtedly the highlights of that interesting collection.

The following morning we were welcomed at the Fondation Custodia by its director Ger Luijten and curator Hans Buijs, who gave an insight into the ongoing activities of the Foundation and introduced us to the breathtaking Dutch and Flemish paintings and drawings collection brought together by its founder Frits Lugt.

The Saturday afternoon was devoted to a private viewing of the drawings collection at the Louvre in the company of the curator of Northern drawings Olivia Savatier, who showed us some of Rubens's best drawings. This was followed by a visit under the guidance of curator Blaise Ducos to the Galerie Médicis with Rubens's largest extant cycle of paintings, devoted to Marie de' Medici.

The Louvre being the world's most important museum with 8.5 million visitors last year, a private visit in the evening after closing time is quite an experience: we wandered at leisure through its vast rooms, void of throngs of people, on our way to a tour of the



Lively interaction between Her Majesty Queen Mathilde and a select group of Belgian art-history students.

Some of the participants in the trip admiring Rubens's famous painting cycle in the Louvre's Galerie Médicis.



## Rubeniana

### Say it with flowers – An insight into Marie-Louise Hairs's archive

In 2013 the Rubenianum was given the opportunity to increase its staff's expertise by hosting a trainee through the Leonardo da Vinci Programme. Ana Sofia Magalhães graduated in Library Science and Archival Studies at the University of Lisbon in 2013. Sofia was given the assignment she herself describes as: 'fulfilling a professional dream' – the handling and organization of a personal archive.

Marie-Louise Hairs was a well-known scholar and author of books focusing on seventeenth-century Flemish art, of which *Dans le sillage de Rubens* (1977) is a fine example. Her most well-known publication, however, remains *Les peintres flamands de fleurs au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1st ed. 1955), reflecting her utmost interest in flowers in Flemish painting and affirming her as the first Belgian specialist of the flower still life.

Born in Liège in 1912, she studied art history at the Université de Liège and took her doctoral degree in 1952 with a dissertation on *La fleur dans la peinture flamande du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, under the supervision of Professor Leo van Puyvelde. She continued to work at the university until her retirement in 1994, first as assistant

professor and later as head of research and lecturer.

The Rubenianum acquired her documentation through her close friend Pierre de Séjournet (whose library and documentation were donated to the Rubenianum in 2011). The archive is divided into books, articles, lectures, studies, correspondence, notebooks and miscellaneous documentation.

Hairs's archive sheds light on an active female academic and well-organized scholar. She dedicated her life to the study of Flemish painters, with a special focus on flowers. Her correspondence testifies to her authority in flower painting, as she received enquiries from all over the world and issued countless certificates of authenticity.

The documentation now organized and accessible covers the research she did for her publications, ranging from handwritten notes and exquisite hand-traced drawings of paintings to photographs and the drafts of her books. Articles and lectures reflecting her professional life at Liège University, some of them possibly never published, are also included.

The material has been inventoried, repacked and organized, as much as possible, respecting the original order. The archive – some ten linear metres of shelving – consists of textual and photographic documents, stored in about 70 boxes now fully accessible to reading-room visitors of the Rubenianum.



Daniel Seghers, *Flowers in a Vase*.  
Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp.  
© Collectiebeleid Musea Stad Antwerpen

### 6–7 December 2013: Rubenianum Fiftieth Anniversary

On 23 November 1963, the late Dr Ludwig Burchard's vast documentation, library and archive, which had been donated to the City of Antwerp, crossed a stormy North Sea to arrive safely in the port of Antwerp. With the long-expected arrival of its key collection, the even longer wished-for centre of expertise on Rubens and the arts of his time became reality at last. Burchard's papers were provisionally stored in the Museum Smidt van Gelder, where a public reading room was installed, along with offices for the scholarly staff that would immediately start preparing the publication of the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*.

Fifty years later, the Rubenianum proudly invites you to join us in celebrating our first half century of art-historical activity. Highlight of the celebration will be the international study day *Picturing Ludwig Burchard*, which will explore the art-historical practice, network and legacy of one of our founding fathers, and thus touch on the very origins and identity of our institute. Papers included are:

- *Welcome and introduction* VÉRONIQUE VAN DE KERCKHOF
- *On the record(s). Burchard's material legacy* LIENEKE NIJKAMP
- *Rubens and Rubensforschung* HANS Vlieghe

*A brief history of the catalogue raisonné*  
KOEN BULCKENS

- *Allies and Axis. Burchard's network during WWII* PRISCA VALKENEERS
- *The Rubens Exhibition at Wildenstein's in London in 1950* CHRISTOPHER WHITE
- *The eye of the connoisseur* ANNA TUMMERS
- *'Empathy and deep understanding'. Fritz Grossmann's Bruegel Archive at the Rubenianum* HILDE CUVÉLIER
- *'Good old Max': the German art historian Max J. Friedländer (1867–1958), contemporary of Ludwig Burchard (1886–1960)* SUZANNE LAEMERS
- *'Aufmerksam nicht immer gleichmäßig'. The scholar as schoolboy* BERT WATTEUW

The sessions will be chaired by Arnout Balis and Rudi Ekkart, and enlivened by audio as well as video fragments. The festive study day will be concluded by an official reception with speeches in Antwerp City Hall. On Saturday 7 December, the public is welcome to bring their painting or drawing to the Rubenianum, where both our in-house and guest experts will enlighten them on the author, iconography or dating of their treasure.

For registration and full details on the festive programme, please consult our website [www.rubenianum.be](http://www.rubenianum.be).

### The Rubenianum Lectures

Next lecture: 15 December 2013, 11 am:

DR VALÉRIE HERREMANS  
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

*'Eenen geaffectioneerden weldoener'. Nicolaas Rockox and the Antwerp Franciscan Convent*

The final lecture in our programme for 2013 once more prominently features a close collaboration of various Antwerp heritage partners, in this case the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, the Rockoxhuis and the Rubenianum. Based on her extensive research on the topic, Valérie Herremans will clarify the deeper meaning and function of two iconic Rubens paintings, ordered by Nicolaas Rockox for the now-lost Franciscan church: the *Triptych with the Incredulity of Thomas* and the *Coup de Lance*, both in the Royal Museum. Her story offers a fascinating insight into what appears to have been a grand commemorative project for Rockox and his wife Adriana Perez.

The lecture is in Dutch and will take place at the Rubenianum. Please confirm your presence at [rubenianum@stad.antwerpen.be](mailto:rubenianum@stad.antwerpen.be).

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

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