

The Rubenianum Quarterly

2014
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In Rubens's Footsteps: Erasmus Quellinus

In the small town of Cassel in the north of France, the charming Musée de Flandre, formerly the Hôtel de la Noble Court, hosts an interesting exhibition. Erasmus Quellinus the Younger (Antwerp 1607–1678), the prolific and erudite Rubens pupil and collaborator, played a major part in the artistic life of his hometown. His intellectual curiosity, taste for philosophy, interest in the arts – especially sculpture – and his meticulous style meant that he was an altogether atypical artist. Although several of his works show the influence of the Baroque idiom of his master, over time a growing restraint in the gestures of his figures, a stronger monumentality of the architectural settings and the emergence of bright, sparkling colours hint at a new stylistic direction. Quellinus may therefore be considered one of the precursors of Classicism in Flemish painting.

In presenting fifty or so of his most emblematic works, this first retrospective exhibition sets out to restore Erasmus Quellinus to his rightful place in the fascinating history of painting in the seventeenth century, transcended by the overwhelming art of Rubens. The exhibition lasts until 7 September. For opening hours see www.museedeflandre.lenord.fr.

Erasmus Quellinus
the Younger,
Portrait of a Young Woman.
Private collection, Antwerp



EDITORIAL

An editorial in *The Burlington Magazine* of March 2004 called on museums to put greater efforts into cataloguing the works by Rubens in their own collections. This gave the starting signal for an intensification of Rubens research at the KMSKA. We were already on the right track with the restoration of Rubens's *Prodigal Son* and the input that this provided on the artist's materials and techniques. The non-profit association Arcobaleno was responsible at the time for the systematic recording of infrared reflectographies. It was funding from the Getty Foundation, however, that enabled us to set up a real Rubens project in the Museum, and to contract Arnout Balis to the KMSKA for two years. A lot could be achieved thanks to the sponsorship route from the KMSKA's own equity fund, which in turn smoothed the way for the Rubenianum Fund.

The close collaboration with the Rubenianum has since become even more intense. No fewer than five museum staff members are Corpus authors working on their volumes. This Rubens team found a permanent home in the Kolveniersstraat. More than ever we try to join forces wherever possible. With publications such as the two-volume *Rubens Unveiled*, the *Rubensbulletin* and the 2008 yearbook *On Dead Colour*, the results speak for themselves. We have had a series of Rubens exhibitions at the museum: remember the special thematic exhibitions 'Copyright Rubens', 'Heads on Shoulders' and the fantastic display of altarpieces in Antwerp Cathedral. Abroad there were the shows in Norway, Japan and Germany, and at the time of writing Rubens, Van Dyck and Jordaens are conquering the Netherlands (Rijksmuseum Enschede). Very soon the restored Holy Family with the Parrot will be exhibited in full splendour at the Rockoxhuis. The icing on the cake is of course 'Sensation and Sensuality: Rubens and his Legacy', this autumn at Bozar, Brussels, and later at London's Royal Academy of Arts. The current renovation programme of the KMSKA has required this project, originally planned for Antwerp, to be diverted to Brussels. I should mention in passing that the renovation work is proceeding to schedule, and we are already looking forward to the installation of the Rubens Room at the reopening and a related exhibition on Rubens and sculpture.

In all this I will no longer be involved in my current position: as director of the museum, I will pass on the torch on 1 August. However, I am convinced that my successors will keep the Rubens fire burning. As for myself, I will concentrate on my own part of the Corpus, which I am writing with Koen Bulckens.

Dr Paul Huvenne, Administrator-General KMSKA

Koenraad Jonckheere, the Corpus's new Director of Publications, on a work in progress

Since you all know the Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, there is no need to introduce this ambitious, longstanding and complex project. However, it might be a good idea to look at its history anew in order to understand its current challenges.



Initiated in the 1960s, the *Corpus Rubenianum* set itself the goal of publishing the catalogue raisonné of the oeuvre of the esteemed painter Peter Paul Rubens, based on the materials assembled by the eminent connoisseur, the late Ludwig Burchard. This project was supported by the City of Antwerp and had a great start. Some of the most renowned and talented scholars joined forces and swiftly published a series of cutting-edge CRLB volumes, immediately setting a very high standard. However, the project proved to be more complex than expected, causing the Centrum Rubenianum to temporize in later decades. Now, in the last couple of years, and mainly through the support of the Rubenianum Fund, this ambitious research project has gained new momentum and set itself the goal of publishing the remaining volumes in the years to come.

The mere fact that fifty years on and a plethora of distinguished scholars later the work of the Antwerp omnivorous Rubens is still not mapped indicates the density and complexity of the project. As with many a great artist, Rubens's oeuvre and personality remain highly enigmatic, and with every solution comes a series of new questions. However, according to St Augustine, the best scholars are those who cherish the question

rather than the answer. It was with this important lesson in mind that I took up the challenge of joining the staff of the Centrum Rubenianum some eight months ago, combining the post of director of publications with my position as Professor of Northern Renaissance and Baroque at Ghent University.

Indeed, if the ambitious project of writing the catalogue raisonné of Rubens's oeuvre has taught art history one thing, it is the importance of clearly plotting the status quaestionis, allowing future scholars to phrase new hypotheses and answers instead of claiming the ultimate truth. Tempting as it might be to pinpoint the genius of the artist, it is at least as important to let the virtuoso be a virtuoso and get the questions right, instead of blindly seeking definite answers. Rubens himself, who grew up in a culture imbued with classical rhetoric and dialectic, must have known that, since the *quaestio* was considered to be vital by many a rhetorician or dialectician in his time. It was his indefatigable quest for innovation and improvement that turned him into one of the most important artists of all time, but it never stopped him from producing an immense oeuvre. Moreover, Rubens as an artist was always ready to reconsider, reframe, and rephrase. His oil sketches are telling examples of his never-ending search. Such an attitude can only be the result of a deep appreciation of the questions and uncertainties.

The one and foremost objective of the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard* must be the publication of the complete works, keeping in mind the fact that answers are not always clearly apprehensible. The history of the project teaches us both the limitations of scholarly research and the (sometimes literally) indescribable qualities of Rubens's work. Over 20 volumes still need to be published over the next six years, a daunting task, but not impossible. As long as we are humble enough to understand that not all the answers are necessarily to be given in our own lifetime, we can focus on the one thing that is truly important: a state-of-the-art status quaestionis of Rubens's vast legacy. Rubens's own diligence and his relentless readiness to reassess his own inventions ought to be the guideline.

Thanks to the work of many scholars and the talented staff of the Centrum Rubenianum and with the support of the Rubenianum Fund, the seeds have been sown. It is now time to harvest. In the next couple of months and

over the coming years many new additions to the catalogue raisonné of Rubens's oeuvre will see the light of day. As we speak, the print proofs of volume V, dealing with *The Life of Christ before the Passion*, are being corrected by the authors, Hans Vlieghe and Hans Devisscher. The book will appear in late autumn this year. Next year, the volume on Rubens's collaboration with Jan Brueghel by Christine Van Mulders, Rubens's work on the tapestry series of Decius Mus by Guy Delmarcel and Reinhold Baumstark and the first volume of Rubens's interpretations of mythological themes will follow. This book will be the first in a series of three, published under the supervision of Elizabeth McGrath. If all goes well, the complex volume on the puzzling theoretical notebook by Arnout Balis will go into print in 2015 as well. Some three or four volumes are due to appear in 2016, mainly those dealing with Rubens's architectural endeavours, i.e. the Rubens House, the Antwerp Jesuit church and the designs for altars and epitaphs. Volumes on *The Henry IV Series* and Rubens's portrait copies after existing prototypes, among others, are set for 2017. The future looks bright, but a long road still lies ahead of us.

Simultaneously and with the generous support of the Kress Foundation, the staff of the Rubenianum have started to digitize the older CRLB volumes, taking them into the twenty-first century. These volumes have been updated and are enriched through links with *RKDImages* and hyperlinks. | Koenraad Jonckheere

The Rubenianum Lectures

Next lecture: Sunday, 28 September 2014, 11 am:

ABIGAIL NEWMAN
Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

The Spanish Taste for Flemish Paintings. Immigrant Painters and their Audiences in Seventeenth-Century Madrid

From Isabel of Castile onwards, Spanish monarchs, ecclesiastics and nobles hungered for Flemish paintings. The Spanish court summoned painters from the Low Countries to serve them in Spain, ordered shipments of paintings from enterprising artists and dealers, and sent Spanish artists to train in Flanders. Addressing a late chapter in Spain and Flanders' centuries-long exchange, this lecture will examine the experiences of some of the lesser-known Flemish immigrant painters who travelled to Madrid and the Spanish art theorists, collectors and painters who responded to their paintings.

The lecture is in English and will take place at the Rubenianum.

Justus van Egmont at the Rubenshuis

Prisca Valkeneers

The joyous event of the arrival of Justus van Egmont's oil sketch of the Reconciliation between Romans and Sabines at the Rubenshuis was not only celebrated with bubbles on Sunday 30 March. I had the great honour of presenting both the painting and the painter to the public in a lecture, based on my research over the past few years.

Justus van Egmont (1602–1674) was born in Leiden and received his first training in the workshop of Kaspar van den Hoecke (c. 1585–1641/48) in Antwerp around 1616. His mother had come back to her native town Antwerp after the death of her husband. Like so many others, she must have felt encouraged to 'reimmigrate' by the relative welfare of the city during the Twelve Years' Truce (1609–21). The contacts between Justus van Egmont and the young Van Dyck will have served as a stepping stone to Rubens's workshop. He contributed to the latter's illustrious *Medici Cycle* in the Luxembourg Palace in Paris in 1625. The problem of attribution and distinguishing between the different hands in the series remains a tricky one to this day.

The major part of Van Egmont's oeuvre consists of portraits he painted for the nobility and landed gentry of France. As of 1635 he is listed in notarial deeds as *Peintre du Roi*. 'Juste', as he was nicknamed in French records, was also involved in the creation of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, which was formally established in 1648. Probably in 1649 he left Paris for Brussels and from the mid-1650s, we find him in Antwerp. He made designs for large tapestry series, including the *History of Mark Antony and Cleopatra*, the *Life of Caesar Augustus* and the *History of Zenobia*.

From 1650 onwards he signed some of his paintings and documents with 'Justus Verus d'Egmont'. This can be connected with his claim to nobility as a descendant of the famous house of Egmont. A general trend in the early modern period was the upward social mobility of the bourgeoisie, whose ultimate aspiration was to be raised to peerage. A position in royal service was also a sure way to move upward, 'Omdat den Constgeern bij den ryckdom is' (Because art covets the company of wealth), as Karel van Mander had written. Some artists cleverly used their networks to climb the social ladder, and the embodiment of this phenomenon was right in front of Van Egmont, who obviously wanted to compete with Rubens, both in the social and the artistic field. Although Van Egmont is documented in the Leiden archives as the son of a carpenter, he is known to have amassed a sizeable capital invested in real estate in



Justus van Egmont, *The Reconciliation between Romans and Sabines*. Rubenshuis, Antwerp



Rubens, *The Reconciliation between Romans and Sabines*. Alte Pinakothek, Munich

the course of his career. He died in 1674 and was buried in Antwerp's glorious St James's Church.

In spite of the fact that the early historiographers tend to praise the artist in the highest terms, relatively little is known nowadays about this once so renowned painter and especially about his oeuvre. During my research, I quickly came to the conclusion that Van Egmont's work has been used in the past as a repository for works related to the Franco-Flemish style of the mid-seventeenth century, which were therefore all too carelessly attributed to him.

Three workshops – Rubens's, Van Dyck's and Van Egmont's own studio – are essential in understanding Van Egmont's work. Rubens's workshop, where he was active from 1623 to 1628, served as a model for his own studio in Paris. Within the mass production of portraits and replicas leaving that workshop, determining Van Egmont's own hand is crucial, as his children – both sons and daughters – assisted their father.

The influence of and relationship with Van Dyck is an equally significant factor. This can be seen in the expressive freedom of the smooth brushwork and rough texture,

features which are also to be found in Van Egmont's later works. Notably popular were his Vandyckian-type portraits, with the sitter caught in 'arrested movement'.

The core of Van Egmont's oeuvre amounts to some eighty works – paintings, sketches and drawings – and five large tapestry series. He was a talented draughtsman, who could make do with a few scratches and striking lines to set up a composition. Typical of his *crabbelinghen* are the angularity of the facial features of his main figures and the multitude of lines. More elaborate drawings show a less nervous style. It looks as if his *prima idea* was elusive and had to be put down on paper forthwith.

Justus van Egmont built up a large network of key relationships in his career, not least with his clients. His sitters do not seem to have taken issue with the fact that he regularly portrayed adherents of opposing political factions.

Preliminary studies for portraits have not been found so far. From the correspondence between Béatrix de Cusance and Constantijn Huygens, however, we know that he painted from life, in different sessions. The business of replica portraits flourished. Pictures served as gifts and were frequently copied. Although portraiture was considered a lower genre, it proved to be a very profitable niche for Van Egmont.

Even though the quality of the works that left his studio was not always impressive, Van Egmont managed to acquire a unique selling proposition among the bourgeoisie and lower nobility and at the court. Self-representation was an important part of aristocratic life. Justus van Egmont mastered this cultural code of noble communications, and through his portraits managed to define not only the sitter's but also his own place within the social hierarchy.

In the 1640s Van Egmont further developed his studio through an extensive printmaking activity. He had several engravers working for him and succeeded in obtaining a royal privilege. In addition to a good income, these prints were a means of spreading his reputation. Keen to show their loyalty to the royal family, his clients ordered their portraits in the form of replicas and prints.

Next to being a court painter and academician, Van Egmont was also renowned in the Cercle des Précieuses in Paris, a most famous company inspired by Madame de Rambouillet. The court culture influenced by Baldassare Castiglione's (1478–1529) *Il Cortegiano*, which Maria de' Medici had brought with her, certainly was a determining factor. The fancy *galanteries* and whimsical *badinages* in these salons were practised by illustrious members such as Mesdames de Sévigné, Scudéry and Longueville. Famous beauties, some of them painted by Van Egmont, were praised in poetic descriptions by the ladies. This symbiosis of



Justus van Egmont, *Zenobia Surrounded by Mounted Soldiers*. The Art Institute of Chicago

portraiture and literature was not entirely new. The *paragone* debate on the respective merits of literature and portraiture was based on the well-known classical principle *Ut pictura poesis*. The fashion of the literary portrait in France lasted from approximately 1640 to 1680. Influenced by the *Précieuses*, Van Egmont himself praised the numerous qualities of *La Belle de Normanville* (Musée de Chartres) on the reverse of the panel.

With his very large portrait series commissioned by Gaston d'Orléans and painted for the Palais du Luxembourg in the early 1650s – now in the Château de Balleroy (Calvados) – Van Egmont once again refers to his illustrious master.

In spite of the overwhelming importance of portraiture in his oeuvre, Van Egmont occasionally also painted altarpieces (*Ecclesia with Charlemagne and Saint Louis*, Bundeskapelle Brunnen, Switzerland) and mythological subjects (*Venus and the Graces*, Hohenbuchau Collection, Vienna). In these disciplines too he was very much indebted to Rubens. The beautiful oil sketch of the *Reconciliation between Romans and Sabines* combines important aspects of Van Egmont's oeuvre. Not only does it show the stylistic and compositional relationship with the work of his renowned teacher, but it also hints at the importance of a highly profitable and popular art form of the seventeenth century: the art of tapestry.

In the award-winning Corpus volume on historical subjects, Elizabeth McGrath, together with Arnout Balis, linked the Rubenshuis oil sketch to Van Egmont's typical style. The dramatic tapestries of his later years are dominated by open gestures, sturdy figures and decorative draperies. This can be seen in both the sketch and the final tapestry. Or in the words of Cornelis de Bie: '*Door de edelen Pinceelen van Egmont soo in't groot als cleyen is uytghewerckt*' (worked out by Egmont's noble brushes on a large and a small scale alike).

The composition itself is a quote from Rubens's painting of the same subject in the Alte Pinakothek. Van Egmont had seen this picture in the 1620s in Rubens's studio and perhaps again when it was

auctioned in Antwerp in the 1650s. Van Egmont's version is not a slavish copy, for there are notable differences in the colour scheme, the characters and the gestures. Some overpainting has been observed under ultraviolet light, while infrared reflectography has revealed a *pentimento* in the hoof of the horse. Characteristic of Van Egmont is the flat profile of the female protagonists. The *modello* can be dated to the 1650s.

The sketch has a good pedigree. It comes from the collection of the Earl of Jersey, Radier Manor, where it remained probably for about 320 years. Around 1690–1700 it was purchased by Sir Francis Child, an enthusiastic collector, although it was only mentioned for the first time in a family inventory in 1782. It was exhibited as Rubens in 1952.

The depicted subject is the poignant episode from the legend of the Sabine women, the 'sequel' of the Rape, when the women intervene to reconcile the rival tribes of Romans and Sabines. As a ruse to remedy the shortage of women they needed to found families, the early Romans organized a festival where they looted the Sabines and abducted their girls and women. When after some time – nine months would be a minimum – the Sabines retaliated and assailed the city of Rome, the Sabine women, who had become very attached to their offspring and new family situation, managed to end the conflict.

Justus van Egmont's oeuvre is severely under-represented in public collections in Belgium. His arrival at the Rubenshuis feels like bringing him home.

This contribution is a much-shortened version of the lecture given on Sunday, 30 March 2014 at the Rubenianum in Antwerp. Further reading:

P. Valkeneers, 'Van timmermanszoon tot schilder aan het hof. De adellijke ambities van Justus van Egmont (Leiden 1601/2–Antwerpen 1674)', *De zeventiende eeuw: cultuur in de Nederlanden in interdisciplinair perspectief* 27, no. 2 (Deventer 2011), pp. 270–99.

P. Valkeneers, 'Justus van Egmont (1602–1674) and his workshop. A family of painters in Paris?', in *Family Ties, Art Production and Kinship Patterns in the Early Modern Low Countries*, Turnhout 2012, pp. 171–85.



Jordaens's *Neptune and Amphitrite Restored*

Although Jacob Jordaens (1593–1678) is known to the general public mainly for his jovial interpretations of ‘The king drinks!’ and ‘As the old sing, so twitter the young’, he was primarily a history painter whose repertoire included biblical and mythological scenes. To the latter category – in which the gods of antiquity play starring roles – belongs *Neptune and Amphitrite* in the Rubenshuis. Neptune was the god who ruled the sea and could bring about earthquakes. To the Greeks (who called him Poseidon) he was also the god of horses. His attribute was the trident, a three-pronged fork with which he could conjure up storms and split rocks in two. Neptune was married to the sea nymph Amphitrite.

The painting in the Rubenshuis shows Neptune on a cockle shell drawn by a dolphin. At the left, Amphitrite emerges from the sea. Between the two, a Cupid blows on a conch shell. In the foreground appear several Tritons, Neptune’s constant companions. At the top, four child’s heads blow the four winds. The dispersing clouds and the rainbow indicate that the storm has subsided.

For years Jordaens’s monumental composition was concealed by a badly yellowed layer of varnish, which caused the loss of most of the colour nuances and diminished the feeling of depth. The painting’s appearance was also marred by old retouches and the gesso used to fill lacunae during previous restorations. When the varnish was removed, the original paint layer proved to consist of bright, cool hues. The restoration yielded other surprises too: at the right, an eye-catching *pentimento* – a correction made during the painting process – became visible: a Triton blowing on a whelk shell. When the restoration is completed in September, the painting will be on display again. | *Ben van Beneden*

Jacob Jordaens, *Neptune and Amphitrite*, canvas, 220 x 308 cm (enlarged on both sides); signed and dated I. JORDAENS / 164[?]. Rubenshuis, Antwerp (photo taken before restoration)

Frans Francken ... and his Milieu. Old Paths, New Roads

The symposium, organized by Dr Natasja Peeters and Prof. Ann Diels on 23 May 2014, united specialists in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century art, under the auspices of the Vrije Universiteit Brussels and the Rubenianum. Chairs were Ann Diels and Arnout Balis. Introductory remarks were made by Natasja Peeters and Ann Diels. Speakers were Ria Fabri, Petra Maclot, David Lainé, Didier Martens, Ralph Dekoninck, Katharina van Cauteren, Ursula Härting, Nathalie de Brézé, Ben van Beneden and Joost Vander Auwera, and concluding remarks were presented by Hans Vlieghe.

The morning session focused on the Antwerp artist Frans Francken the Elder (c. 1542–1616), his house, his library and the restoration of his masterpiece, the *Schoolmasters’ and Soapboilers’ Altarpiece*. During the afternoon session, attention shifted to the often complex oeuvre of some of his contemporaries. How did Hendrik de Clerck, Ambrosius Francken, Frans Francken II, Abraham Janssen, Otto van Veen respond artistically to the changing religious ideas and iconographical tastes of their patrons? The revival of Gothic, multisensoriality, and many more issues were discussed and helped pull the life and work of Frans Francken and his artistic colleagues out of the shadow of Brueghel and Rubens.

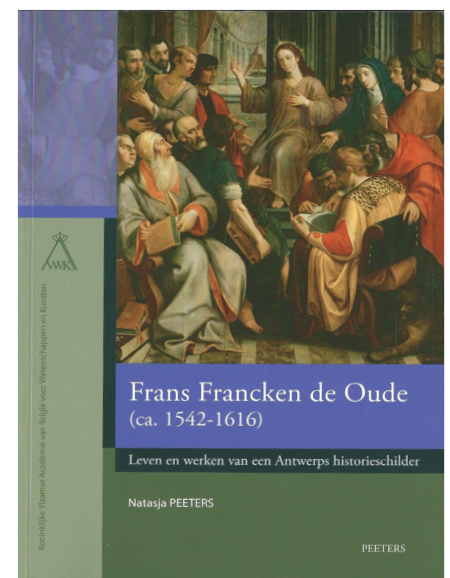
A reception in the sunlit garden of the Rubenshuis, the presentation of the first copy of the Frans Francken monograph to Carl Van de Velde, and a poem on the Franckens delivered by Bart Stouten (Klara) ended the day.

Undressing Rubens

On 8 and 9 May nearly two hundred guests, smartly dressed for the occasion, flocked to the historic Kolveniershof to attend the international conference ‘(Un)dressing Rubens. Fashion and Painting in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp’. The event, jointly organized by the Rubenianum and the KU Leuven, brought together art historians, historians of dress and curators of costume collections, all of whom directed their attention to dress in Rubens’s oeuvre and in that of his Antwerp contemporaries or followers. The rich programme included four sessions and a total of twenty-two talks, with subjects ranging from archaeological costume finds from Antwerp to extant items of seventeenth-century dress and archival records to hairstyles at the Caroline court. The conference made it clear that the seemingly superficial subject of dress is in fact a very revealing angle from which to approach seventeenth-century Flemish painting. The conference proceedings will be published by Harvey Miller.



Peter Paul Rubens, *Albert and Nicolaas Rubens* (detail), c. 1626–27. Liechtenstein, The Princely Collections, Vaduz–Vienna



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