

The Rubenianum Quarterly

2014
4

The Rubenianum Fund field trip to Genoa

The fifth edition of our field trip brought our participating patrons quite literally 'in the footsteps of Rubens' to the north Italian port city of Genoa. Soon were we to discover how deservedly this city is nicknamed 'La Superba' during a weekend-long breathtaking tour of its palaces.

Professor Arnout Balis first brushed a vivid account of Rubens's visit to and infatuation with this city state and its mansions (see page 4 for an account of his lecture). Bolstered by Arnout's discourse, we set off on a city walk and visit to the Chiesa del Gesù and the San Donato, led by Professor Maria Galassi of the University of Genoa. The most impressively decorated Gesù boasts no fewer than two major altarpieces by Rubens, both painted for this Jesuit church, as well as masterpieces by Simon Vouet and Guido Reni among others. A wonderful example of a much earlier patronage of Flemish artists by Genovesi can still be seen in the beautifully preserved triptych by Joos van Cleve at the Chiesa di San Donato.

Later that afternoon Principe Domenico Pallavicino kindly welcomed us at his private residence. With Rubens's publication on the Palazzi di Genova at hand, it was easy to verify how the palace entrance hall and majestic staircase were still preserved as they had been published in 1622. The day was concluded with the visit to another hidden gem, a palazzo beautifully restored by Giacomo and Emanuela Cattaneo Adorno and hung with an impressive combination of old master paintings and contemporary art.

On Saturday morning Piero Boccardo, director of the Musei di Strada Nuova, guided us personally through the Palazzo Bianco and Palazzo Rosso, both gifted to the city of Genoa by Maria Brignole Sale, Duchess of Galliera, in 1889. As the municipal collections own several impressive Genovese portraits by Anthony van Dyck, this was a most appropriate time for Ben van Beneden to present the participants with an address on Van Dyck in Genoa. A résumé can be found on page 5.

What better setting for lunch than the magnificent dining room at the Palazzo Giambattista e Andrea Spinola, where we were the guests of Professor Pallestrini at Circolo Tunnel, the private club that occupies this palace on the Strada Nuova.

All this extraordinary architecture, however, did little to prepare us for the magnificence we were to discover that afternoon as guests of Marchesa Sandra Cattaneo Adorno at the Palazzo Durazzo Pallavicini. A jaw-dropping staircase led us to a *piano nobile* in every sense of the word. It won't be only the delicate child portraits by Van Dyck that will have left a lasting impression on all those present in this magnificent picture gallery. The day was concluded with dinner at the sixteenth-century Palazzo della Meridiana, adorned with dazzling ceiling frescoes.

Sunday morning we were welcomed by Signora Elena Bruzzo in her private apartments and stunning gardens of the Palazzo Nicolosio Lomellino, a rare survival of garden architecture dating back to around 1600.

We concluded our awe-inspiring 'quest for Rubens' at the Palazzo Angelo Giovanni Spinola with a visit to the *piano nobile*, followed by a lunch in its stately dining room.

Our sincere thanks go out to Lieve Vandeputte who, after perfectly organized visits to Vienna, Madrid, Paris and London in previous years, managed to outdo herself once again. | *Michel Ceuterick*

Dear Friends of the Rubenianum,

In this issue of the Rubenianum Quarterly, we are delighted to report on a splendid trip for our donors and benefactors which took us in the footsteps of Peter Paul Rubens into a series of stunning and atmospheric 'Palazzi di Genova'. Once again, this field trip proved an unforgettable experience, in no small measure thanks to the tireless efforts and diplomatic skills of our coordinator, Lieve Vandeputte.

We are equally indebted to Cécile Kruyshoof. This year, she once more conceived four splendid RQs, which continue to be eagerly awaited by our members and by art enthusiasts around the world.

2015 brings many new exciting prospects. We expect to publish three and hopefully four new volumes of the Corpus Rubenianum. Indeed, thanks to the support of the Rubenianum Fund, we are now making real progress towards completing the whole Corpus by 2020.

We will also be able to visit an exceptional exhibition in the Rubenshuis, which will bring together many of Rubens's tender and moving family portraits. Literally, they will be coming back home. Therefore we actually decided to organize our next field trip in June 2015 to Antwerp. We hope to welcome as many as possible of you at that time!

*Thomas Leysen
Chairman, Rubenianum Fund*



Principe Domenico Pallavicino and Margrave Alfonso Pallavicini welcoming the Rubenianum Fund at the Palazzo Pallavicini

Karen De Meyst on her activities at the Rubenianum



I studied Art History at Ghent University and obtained my master's degree with a thesis on Catharina Backer (1689–1766). Female artists, their education, and the context in which they deployed their professional activities were at the core of my research. During my studies I also completed an internship in the Rubenshuis, where I assisted the staff during the preparations for the 'Palazzo Rubens' exhibition by sending out loan requests and by carrying out bibliographic research for the catalogue. As the Rubenshuis was the very first museum I visited as a child – my father and I vividly remember how my pointing finger triggered an alarm – I was glad to be able to gain my first professional experience there. I then jumped the garden wall and worked as a volunteer at the Rubenianum from November 2012 to June 2013. Under the guidance of Lieneke Nijkamp, I partially inventoried the Van Herck collection, answered queries on Flemish paintings from private owners and museums, and took part in the day-to-day activities of the Rubenianum.

When the project 'Digitizing the Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard' was awarded a digital resources grant from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, my earlier commitment as an intern and later as a volunteer was rewarded, as I was asked to become project associate in November 2013. I happily obliged. Primary goal of the project is to offer downloadable and fully searchable PDF files of the CRLB volumes published prior to 2000 online. These have been made available on the Rubenianum

website. In the coming years, further volumes will become available. In January for example, part VI, *The Passion of Christ* by J. Richard Judson, will be added. Rather than simply offering the books online, we wanted to improve on them where possible. Through our collaboration with the RKD (Netherlands Institute for Art History) I create image-records in our shared database which I then link to the PDF files. These image-records allow me to update bibliography and provenance since print publication, as well as to add colour illustrations. They also allow me to add images of copies which were mentioned in the CRLB but not illustrated.

During the first phase of the project, running to April 2014, I created 1175 online image-records for the first three parts of the CRLB (I. *The Ceiling Paintings for the Jesuit Church*; II. *The Eucharist Series*; III. *The Old Testament*). This involved a lot of online image research: scouring museum websites and databases to obtain good colour images of Rubens's work. For images of copies mentioned but not illustrated in the CRLB, I make scans from the extensive photographic documentation held at the Rubenianum. A renewed grant from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation and matching funds provided by the City of Antwerp allowed me to embark on a second project phase from May 2014, running to April 2015. This phase is more ambitious in scope, with seven parts in ten volumes up for digitization. I have now completed 2111 records and am glad to report that we are on schedule and will meet our target

by April 2015. I hope to continue work on the project during a third and final project phase, from May 2015 to April 2016. A grant proposal has been submitted but the decision is still pending.

You may think that my job is all about solitary endurance but in fact I am rarely working alone. I can count on students on summer jobs, volunteers and interns to assist me with online image research. Maja Neerman, Eurydice Van Durme, Marie Grappasonni and Jos Beerens's contributions have allowed me to work faster and more efficiently. Though my physical workplace is here in Antwerp, I am in constant contact with the RKD in The Hague, where Willem ter Velde and Erik Löffler are always available to settle technical problems or to resolve a glitch in the network. I share an office with my Antwerp colleagues Lieneke Nijkamp, Ute Staes and Bert Watteeuw, so I'm seldom toiling away in solitude. I also work closely with Dirk Buelens, introduced in the previous issue of the *Rubenianum Quarterly*. As Dirk is completing the repackaging of the Rubens documentation, it is crucially important for us to coordinate workflows so I can easily harvest data from our paper files for digital publication. Besides, conferences, seminars, viewings and other events held at the Rubenianum regularly drag me away from the computer screens to which I am glued most of the time.

I am much enjoying my work here as this project allows me to familiarize myself with Rubens's impressive output in a systematic way. I've always been interested in Rubens, but only now can I truly gauge the breadth and depth of his oeuvre, from designs for massive tapestries and ceiling paintings to intimate sketches and drawings. When abstract bits and bytes, technical issues or the tracking down of images in obscure collections weigh me down, a quick glance over my shoulder into Rubens's garden reminds me that all the images I am adding to the database were in fact produced very close to where I am sitting. A comforting thought. These are challenging times for art historians, who are operating in a hybrid environment where paper documentation, published books and digital resources complement each other. The growing importance of digital resources for art historians is pushing institutes like the Rubenianum to revise and adapt old policies. Playing my role in that shifting landscape is exciting, as is increasing Rubens's online presence.

The Rubenianum Fund on the move Field trips to Madrid, Chatsworth, Vienna, Lens & Paris and Genoa



2010: Madrid. Rubens's *Samson and the Lion*, one of the highlights of Mr Juan Miguel Villar Mir's collection



2011: Chatsworth



2012: Vienna



2013: Louvre – Lens. Blaise Ducos and Her Majesty the Queen admiring Rubens's *Borghese Entombment*.

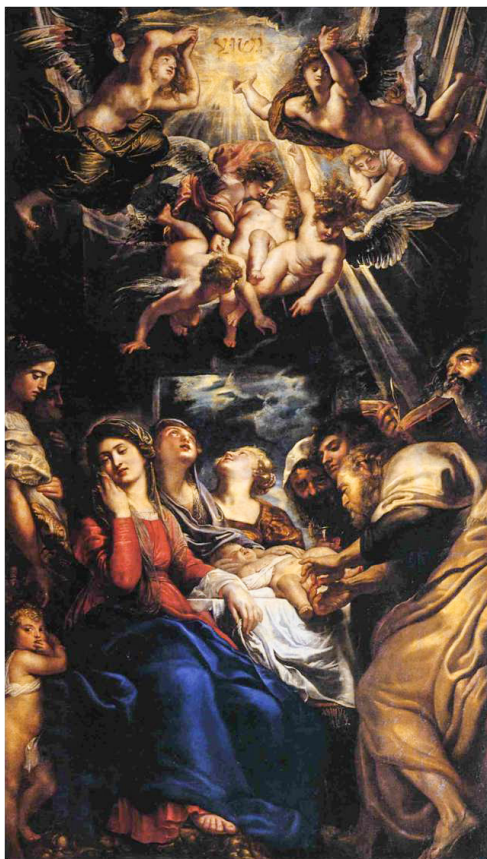


2014: Genoa, the participants at the Palazzo della Meridiana

Rubens and Genoa

Arnout Balis

Peter Paul Rubens will always be associated with the proud city of Genoa, thanks to the lavish publication he dedicated to the magnificent palaces he had so admired there: *Palazzi di Genova* (1622). Some thirty-five buildings were presented to the public by way of engravings. The drawings on which those engravings were based were not made by Rubens himself. He must have acquired them while in Genoa or through his contacts there. One suspects a cultural ideology behind this endeavour. Rubens makes this clear in his preface. He urges his compatriots to abandon the 'Barbaric or Gothic' ways of building, and to embrace the 'true symmetry of that which conforms to the rules of the ancients, Greeks and Romans'. These he found in the Genoese palaces, but what added to his fervour to promote those, was that these buildings were suitable to 'private gentlemen', rather than princes. Rubens himself built his own private palace in Antwerp, and it could be argued that it was there that some of these ideals did find their expression. But: look around in Antwerp. Nothing there, in the architecture of the seventeenth century, can be compared, either in style or in scale, to the Genoese palaces.



Peter Paul Rubens, *The Circumcision*. Chiesa del Gesù, Genoa

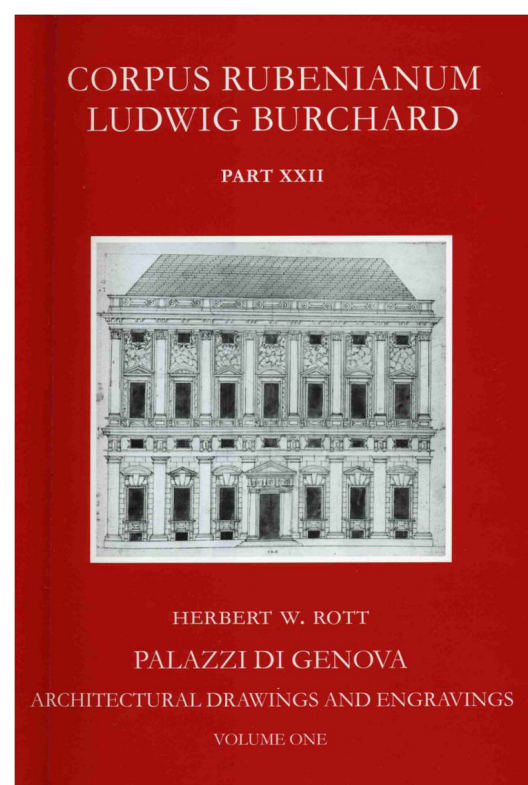
What do we know about Rubens's stay(s) in Genoa? Not much, so it appears. We know that he was in Italy between 1600 and 1608, the best documented locations being Mantua and Rome. None of his letters appear to have been written from Genoa. But we do have his own words, written some twenty years after his return to Antwerp, that 'I have been several times in Genoa and remain on very intimate terms with several eminent personages in that republic.' Bellori, one of his first biographers (1672), even claims that Rubens stayed there longer than in any other Italian town. Oh yes, he certainly visited that proud city, and maybe several times. But when?

Rubens, it is sometimes argued, might have started his Italian career in Genoa upon his arrival from Antwerp (1600), but there is nothing to substantiate this. Apparently, on his way back from a journey to Spain, he landed in Genoa, early in 1604, where Nicolò Pallavicino, one of the bankers of Federigo Gonzaga (Rubens's Mantuan boss at that time), gave him the commission for an important altarpiece with *The Circumcision* (which still figures in the former Jesuit church as the high altar). And his presence in Genoa is best documented for the years 1606 and 1607, when he painted quite a few portraits of the highest strata of Genoese society. It may be claimed that these portraits (the females in opulent dress, the one male, Giancarlo Doria, on his high horse) did set new standards for the portraiture of the conspicuously rich and mighty. Rubens thus certainly left his mark in Genoa.

When he left Italy (1608), he no longer had the opportunity to visit the Genoese friends in the palaces he seems to have frequented before. But even back in Antwerp, there were a lot of contacts between the painter and the Genoese.

Rubens wrote in 1618 that the designs he had made for a tapestry series devoted to the life of the Roman general Decius Mus had been commissioned by 'certain Genoese gentlemen', and shortly before 1620 Marcello Pallavicino (brother of the aforementioned Nicolò) paid for a second altarpiece by Rubens for the Jesuit church in Genoa, depicting *The Miracles of Ignatius of Loyola*. It is clear that the Genoese had not forgotten Rubens.

In Brussels Rubens was in close contact with another very important Genoese nobleman, Ambrogio Spinola, who was the commander in chief of the Spanish troops in the Southern Netherlands and trusted



adviser of the Infanta Isabella. Both, the painter and the general, assisted Isabella in her endeavour to establish peace in the Netherlands. Rubens wrote: 'He is the most prudent and sagacious man I have ever known, very cautious in all his plans.' In 1630, receiving notice of his decease, he concluded: 'In him, I have lost one of the greatest friends and patrons I had in the world – as I can prove by a hundred letters from him' (none of which have come down to us). Their relationship did not include artistic matters: 'He [Spinola] has no taste for painting, and understands no more about it than a street-porter.'

Even some twenty years after Rubens had left Italy forever, Genoa was still on his mind and he was very well informed about what happened there. Regarding a populist revolution in 1630 he wrote: 'The Genoa conspiracy was terrible... The discontent of those people is certainly justified, as many Genoese gentlemen of the most moderate opinions have confessed to me, and it will never come to an end, except by the transformation or the ruin of that republic. The nobility has, in fact, assumed a tyrannical domination...', after which words follows a lucid analysis of the social tensions in that proud city that he had clearly come to love. Rubens did not forget Genoa, and Genoa has never forgotten this great *fiammingo*.

Anthony van Dyck in Genoa

Ben van Beneden

On 3 October 1621 the young Anthony van Dyck left his native Antwerp on horseback for Genoa, where he arrived by 20 November. He was fortunate to settle in this harbour city at a time when the Ligurian Republic was the foremost centre of European finance. With its luxury-loving aristocracy and 'new nobility', it provided a rich mine of patronage for any artist. Less than twenty years before, Rubens had created a *furor* in the same city as a history painter and portraitist, despite having painted very few portraits in Antwerp. The most prodigiously imaginative and powerful portraits of Van Dyck's career originated in Italy, particularly in Genoa, and it was here that he was first confronted with Rubens's exceptional qualities as a portraitist. Rubens's Genoese portraits presented him with a true artistic challenge, one he fervently embraced.

One of the first portraits Van Dyck painted in Genoa is an elegant but rather conventional three-quarter view of a Genoese lady (fig. 1). Its most striking aspect is the speed and bravura with which it was executed. Stimulated by the example of Rubens, Van Dyck quickly developed into an exceptionally inventive portraitist with a virtuoso technique, psychological insight and unerring empathy. In Venice and Rome he painted portraits that are among the absolute highlights of seventeenth-century portraiture, such as the incredibly dynamic, three-quarter-length portrait of the merchant and collector *Lucas van Uffel* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and the life-size likeness of *Cardinal Guido Bentivoglio* (Palazzo Pitti, Florence). His most enduring and influential innovations, however, can be seen in the full-length works he made for Genoese patrons. In 1623 Van Dyck painted the portrait of *Marchesa Elena Grimaldi Cattaneo*, one of the most brilliant and accomplished inventions of his Italian period (fig. 2). Even though the portrait is manifestly indebted to sixteenth-century Venetian examples, Paolo Veronese in particular, Ludwig Burchard was the first to point out that *Elena Grimaldi* was directly inspired by Rubens's portrait of *Brigida Spinola Doria* (National Gallery of Art, Washington), painted in Genoa in 1606. Rubens's masterpiece was originally a full-length portrait in an architectural setting, with a view to a distant landscape at the left. However, when the painting was cut down on all four sides, at some point after 1848, an important architectural element – a terrace balustrade – was lost. Even so, the striking similarities between



Fig. 1 Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of an Unknown Lady*. Private collection, USA



Fig. 2 Anthony van Dyck, *Marchesa Elena Grimaldi Cattaneo*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection 1942.9.91

the two paintings leave no room for doubt that Van Dyck painted *Elena Grimaldi* in direct competition with Rubens's painting, which he attempted to surpass in the spirit of artistic emulation. Van Dyck's picture was innovative in that it successfully conveyed a sense of graceful forward movement, giving the scene an extraordinary spontaneity that was unprecedented in Western portraiture.

Although the harbour city of Genoa remained Van Dyck's base during his six-year stay in Italy, he also travelled extensively.

In a sketchbook – a real 'pocket book' that he carried around with him – he recorded everything that caught his eye: street scenes and strange costumes in Rome, the courtesans of Venice and a witch ('una striga') in Palermo. He was also eager to copy compositions by the leading Italian artists, and these copies reveal a distinct preference for Venetian painters, in particular Titian. He was only moderately interested, however, in the monumental ruins of ancient Rome that Rubens had copied so enthusiastically during his years in Italy.

In the spring of 1624, Van Dyck travelled to Palermo, where he received one of his most important Italian commissions: *The Madonna of the Rosary* (Oratorio del SS. Rosario di San Domenico, Palermo). This magnificent altarpiece – in which the Virgin Mary is portrayed as mediatrix in the battle against the plague – was executed almost wholly in Genoa, however, for soon after Van Dyck's arrival in the Sicilian capital, the city was hit by one of Italy's most devastating plague epidemics of the seventeenth century. The Spanish viceroy Emanuele Filiberto, Duke of Savoy and ruler of Sicily, was one of the plague's most prominent victims. He died on 3 August 1624, shortly after Van Dyck had painted his portrait (Dulwich Picture Gallery, London).

During his stay in Palermo, Van Dyck also paid a visit to the ninety-six-year-old painter Sofonisba Anguissola, who was renowned in her day. His Italian sketchbook (British Museum, London) contains her portrait, accompanied by numerous notes. He listened in fascination to the advice she gave him, and heeded her request not to take the light too high when sketching her portrait, so that the shadows in her wrinkles would not be too strong.

Van Dyck probably managed in the autumn of 1625 to return to Genoa, where he continued to work for the wealthy local aristocracy. Because his Italian patrons preferred portraits, Van Dyck seems to have painted relatively few religious subjects while he was there. Most of them are small canvases for personal devotion, such as the *Man of Sorrows*, an image of profound sadness and humility based on a composition by Titian (Barber Institute of Arts, Birmingham).

It was in Genoa that Van Dyck's seminal contributions to the history of portraiture took shape. As his first biographer, Gian Pietro Bellori, wrote in 1672: 'Travelling in other parts of Italy, he [Van Dyck] always came back to Genoa as if it were his own country, where he was known and loved by everyone' ('... dove era amato e reputato da ciascuno').

The Rubenianum Fund in Genoa



Lieve Vandeputte and Thomas Leysen.



Arnout Balis discussing with Jan Huyghebaert whilst Stéphane Holvoet, Bob Habeldt and Eric Turquin are examining Rubens's *Venus and Mars* at Palazzo Bianco.

Tijo van Marle in conversation with Ben van Beneden, Dominique Holvoet, Thomas, Sabine and Nancy Leysen, Damien Wigny and Michel Ceuterick as guests of Principe Domenico Pallavicino.



Lecture by Ben van Beneden for the Rubenianum Fund patrons at the Palazzo Rosso.



Lunch at the private club Circolo Tunnel in the Palazzo Giambattista and Andrea Spinola.



Bénédicte Hannecart, Nancy Leysen and Dominique Holvoet enjoying the view of Genoa from the stunning gardens at the Palazzo Nicolosio Lomellino, as guests of Signora Elena Bruzzo.

Rubeniana

Rubens's family portraits reunited at the Rubens House

Although Rubens never developed a particular fondness for portraiture, he was one of the best portraitists of his time. His most beautiful and most surprising portraits are of his immediate family; he valued works of this type very highly indeed. Nearly four hundred years after they were painted, Rubens's family portraits are still full of life. 'Rubens in Private: The Master Portrays His Family' (28 March–28 June 2015) brings together some fifty first-rate pieces from museums around the world.

Rubens documentation disclosed

Monday 5 January 2015 is a historic day for the Rubenianum. The extended Rubens documentation – including original documents by Ludwig Burchard (1886–1960) – has, with the support of the Flemish government, finally been reorganized, inventoried and repacked, and may be viewed in the Rubenianum reading room.

The donation of the library and papers of Rubens scholar Ludwig Burchard in 1962 jump-started the Rubenianum collections and has remained the core collection ever since. The German scholar had amassed a vast amount of documentation on European art in the course of his extensive research on Rubens, resulting in folders filled with photographs, newspaper clippings, correspondence and scrap notes. His Rubens files in particular still serve as a primary source for Rubens research. Moreover, with thanks to the ongoing research for the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard* the Rubens documentation has been enriched and doubled in size over the last fifty years.

The reorganization of the Rubens documentation is a work in progress. Files with regard to Rubens works that still await publication in forthcoming CRLB volumes, will gradually be reorganized following the publication schedule. Meanwhile, a large part of all Rubens documentation is already available for on-site research. Users will be able to easily navigate this collection using the extensive searchable index. Our reading room staff are on hand to help. | *Lieneke Nijkamp*



Peter Paul Rubens, *Clara Serena Rubens* (detail). © Liechtenstein. The Princely Collections, Vaduz-Vienna

The Rubenianum Lectures

Next lecture: Sunday, 29 March 2015, 11 am.

DR NICO VAN HOUT
Royal Museum of Fine Arts
Antwerp

Rubens, Rembrandt and Watteau

Dr Van Hout is curator of the exhibition 'Rubens and his Legacy' in Bozar, Brussels, and The Royal Academy of Arts, London. In his lecture, he will explore the different ways in which Rembrandt and Watteau emulated Rubens's work.

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

Art Evaluation Day

On 5 December last, the Rubenianum organized its second evaluation day for works of art. Thirty-one owners of sixty-eight paintings, drawings, statuettes and engravings had their collection items viewed by a team of experts, including colleagues from the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, the Antwerp Print Room and several *Corpus* authors. This event is an exceptional occasion for the local public to get acquainted with the expertise present in

our institute, but it has a wider relevance too: some attendees travelled from The Netherlands, the United Kingdom and even Spain to obtain an opinion on their paintings. The works presented included some very fine pieces, some of which could be situated in a specific school or even workshop. An agreeable meeting of people, art and knowledge, this young tradition clearly meets the need for information from an art-loving public and will therefore be continued in 2015. | *Véronique Van de Kerckhof*



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