

The Rubenianum Quarterly

2016
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Summer Course for the Study of the Arts in Flanders 2016: The Age of Rubens in Context

For the first time in sixty years Antwerp has offered a summer course on baroque art of the Southern Netherlands to a selected group of promising art historians in the early stages of their research careers. From 19 to 29 June eighteen researchers from seven countries participated in an intensive programme that immersed them in the rich artistic heritage of Rubens and his contemporaries. The group visited twenty-eight locations, including eleven museums, seven churches and a number of research institutes, conservation studios, libraries and archives. In all, thirty-eight speakers contributed with lectures or guided tours. Among the many highlights might be mentioned a pilgrimage to Scherpenhevel, an evening lecture in the attractive portrait gallery of the Museum Mayer van den Bergh, a privileged visit to a private collection and close inspections of important baroque paintings in the conservation workshops of the KIK-IRPA in Brussels and the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp. But each participant undoubtedly will have marked different classes, excursions or city walks as their favourite ones.

In addition to the wealth of visits and interdisciplinary content, the opportunity for discussion and exchange with professors, colleagues and peers certainly added to the participants' learning experience. From a touchstone in an advanced state of one's project to a decisive orienting aid in another's choice of research topic: all have benefited from the ample opportunities for interaction throughout the programme. Many, certainly including those who were in Belgium for the first time, will also profit from the thorough introduction to the research institutes and other resources available for scholars of early modern Flemish art.

Having waved the group members goodbye only just days ago, we, as organizing staff, will fondly remember the lively interest, the active participation and the warm friendship of this remarkable group, with whom we are confident to maintain enduring ties in the years ahead.

With this successful second event, coordinated jointly by the Rubenianum, the Royal Museum of Fine Arts and the Flemish Art Collection, the new, collaborative Summer Course series has certainly gained momentum. Our special thanks go to the Flemish Government, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation and KBC for their financial support. While already looking forward to collaborating on the 2019 event on 'The Age of Bruegel in Context', we wish our colleagues from M Leuven successful preparations for their summer course on Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Sculpture, coming up in June 2017. | *Véronique Van de Kerckhof*



*Dear friends, colleagues
and benefactors,*

You will have recently received under separate cover the Rubenianum Fund 2010–2020 Midterm Report. Indeed, it has already been more than five years since the Fund was set up, and so we have passed the midway mark to the target date for completion of the Corpus Rubenianum, which we set out at that time. The Rubenianum Fund, thanks to the generosity of almost one hundred donors from Europe and the United States, has raised more than 2 million euros so far. This has allowed us, for the past five years, to fund a fully-fledged editorial team in Antwerp and to support costs related to photographic material and translations for the Corpus. The momentum in the publication of the Corpus was re-established, and there is now a clear path to completion. However, additional funds are needed to keep the effort going till 2020 – some 1.5m euros to be precise. The Midterm Report served as a basis to launch a new fund-raising drive. The first responses have been encouraging, with a number of existing donors doubling their initial contributions, and some new benefactors coming in. Please reflect on how you could further help us, by also contributing and by spreading the word to other potential donors and supporters. If you require additional support material, including information on tax-deductibility, please do not hesitate to contact me. The ultimate goal is in sight, but now we need some extra tail winds to get us there in time!

*Thomas Leysen
Chairman Rubenianum Fund*

Short-term editorial assistant Marlise Rijks helped prepare forthcoming CRLB volume
Portraits after Existing Prototypes

While the weather seemed to change continuously this spring – from thunderstorms and pouring rain to bright sunshine – in the blink of an eye, it has been a dynamic time for the *Corpus Rubenianum* Ludwig Burchard too. No less than four volumes were planned for publication this year, of which the first one, *Mythological Subjects*, was presented just when I started work at the Centrum Rubenianum. In mid-April 2016 I joined the task force to work on volume XIX/4, *Portraits after Existing Prototypes*, by Koenraad Jonckheere. As short-term editorial assistant (three months), I have been responsible for a range of editorial tasks: from sorting out footnotes and compiling the bibliography, to checking literature and provenances. It has proven a pleasure to be part of the great editorial team and to work on such an eminent book series.

For me personally, the last few months have been a period of continuous change as well. Between 2012 and 2016 I was a PhD researcher at Ghent University. I worked on collections in early seventeenth-century Antwerp and the imaginative genre of the gallery picture. In particular, I looked at artists and artisans, of whom many followed Rubens's example and amassed impressive collections. The objects of art and knowledge in their houses were indicative of their social, economic, intellectual and artistic ambitions. Also, the particular culture of collecting in Counter-Reformation Antwerp may be understood in relation to larger shifts taking place in the arts and sciences and in relation to the understanding of material objects and the material world. After taking my PhD in March, the editorial job at the Centrum Rubenianum was a great opportunity to continue scholarly work, while at the same time it allowed me to distance myself somewhat from my own research after the intense final months of my dissertation.

There are some intersections between the subject of my dissertation and that of the forthcoming *CRLB* volume, including Jan Brueghel the Elder's *Allegory of Sight and Smell* – an imaginative collection of art and objects of knowledge. One of the paintings depicted by Brueghel is a portrait after an existing prototype discussed in the *CRLB* volume, namely Rubens's portrait of *Charles the Bold*. Jan Brueghel the Younger would later also include the portrait in his *Allegory of Painting*. Gallery pictures such as those by Brueghel the Elder and Younger have long been interpreted as so-called meta-pictures – reflections on art, art theory and collecting. The inclusion of Rubens's portrait in these works raises all sorts of questions on the position of portraits and portrait copies in Antwerp collections, art theory



Peter Paul Rubens, *Charles the Bold*, c. 1618. Oil on panel, 118.5 x 102 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

and portraiture, the copying of old masters, the imitation of nature, and ideas about physiognomy – all of them central issues in the forthcoming *CRLB* volume.

The portrait of *Charles the Bold* may have been in Rubens's own collection when he died, as we know from a partially survived inventory. Rubens was one of Antwerp's most prominent collectors and stands alone among his fellow painters: no other Antwerp master had a collection as rich and diverse, with such towering social, economic, artistic and intellectual aspirations. It has been argued that his collection was first and foremost a showcase of his own art. And portrait copies, exemplifying what art is and what it should be, played a prominent role in this context.

As many other portraits discussed in the forthcoming *CRLB* volume, the portrait of *Charles the Bold* was more than a portrait and more than a copy. The physiognomy of Charles the Bold (1433–1477), Duke of Burgundy, was loosely based on earlier 'prototypes', the most famous of which was Rogier van der Weyden's portrait from about 1460. But far from merely following his predecessors, Rubens's portrait copies also represent an idea, a theory of art. They reflect Rubens's artistic endeavours to integrate the imitation of old masters, nature, and ideas from antiquity with his own invention into sublime new works of art.

Faces fascinated Rubens. So he studied physiognomy, the widespread pseudo-science claiming that a person's character could be read from their face. Rubens made countless physiognomic studies, such as the ones of Emperor Galba or Hercules in his 'Theoretical Notebook'. In addition, he was given to

adapting the facial features of historical figures when he acquired new information on their character. It was probably after reading Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* that he adapted the physiognomy of some Roman emperors (compared to his earlier depictions). What is more, in the *Double Portrait of Seneca and Nero* Rubens contrasted the characters and faces of the stoical Seneca and the tyrannical Nero, who together formed a classic example of the dichotomy between virtuous restraint (*constantia*) and hedonistic excess.

Faces fascinated other Antwerp collectors too. Balthasar Moretus, for instance, commissioned two portrait series from his old friend Rubens. The commissions included portraits of the Plantin-Moretus dynasty, but also 'intellectual forefathers' from antiquity and Renaissance humanist learning. Some of these portraits were transformed oil sketches, such as the so-called *Plato*, now in the Metropolitan Museum. Rubens's extensive use of oil sketches and their adaptation into works of art in their own right – appreciated by collectors such as Moretus – is a fascinating part of the master's oeuvre, linked to early modern ideas on portraiture and style.

Faces continue to fascinate us. As the deadline for the first proof is quickly approaching, we can start looking forward to the finished book. I can also start looking back on a delightful time at the Centrum Rubenianum. And I am confident that, just like me, the readers of the forthcoming *CRLB* volume will be drawn into Rubens's captivating portraits and the stories behind them. | Marlise Rijks

The Rubenianum Lectures

Sunday, 25 September 2016, 11 am

Prof. Koenraad Jonckheere
Ghent University | Publications Director
of the Centrum Rubenianum

Primus inter pares.
Rubens and the Great Masters

Rubens copied and reworked several hundreds of old masters' works. He re-created iconic images and constructed faces based on literary portraits. Antique sculpture, medieval miniatures or literature: all information sources he came across served him in the construction of images. In this lecture, Jonckheere will explore Rubens's ideas on the human face as a crucial link between Plato's philosophy and Photoshop.

Michel Ceuterick



The participants admiring the collection of Italian gold-ground and early Renaissance painting at Richard Feigen's private residence.



Adam Eaker sharing his thoughts on the Van Dyck exhibition at the Frick.

To judge by the almost immediate oversubscription following the dispatch of this year's programme, our annual field trips have become an eagerly awaited cultural and social event for our benefactors and donors. Access to private collections, exclusive visits after hours to blockbuster fine art shows under the guidance of their curators, and the camaraderie among participants suffice to explain this ever-increasing success. Richard Feigen, doyen of New York art dealers, was the first on Friday morning, 13 May, to open his private residence on Fifth Avenue and share with us his personal collection, including stories of a lifetime of passionate collecting. In it, an amazing collection of Italian gold-ground and early Renaissance paintings compete for space with an eclectic but careful selection of paintings from the ensuing 500 years, running up to the

present day. Lunch was kindly offered by Otto Naumann at his Gallery, a mere three blocks up the road. International scholars and museum curators specializing in Northern painting, attending the Symposium at the nearby Frick Collection on the Art of Flanders in the United States, joined us at the Gallery where a trove of Dutch Golden Age paintings, spiced with a few Italian and Flemish masters, proved a captivating backdrop to a well-provided banquet.

The first part of the afternoon took us to The Cloisters, an all too easily overlooked part of the Metropolitan Museum, since it is situated at some distance to the north in Manhattan. Prof. Arnout Balis guided us through a choice collection of European medieval art, including an amazing array of Flemish tapestries and the famous Merode triptych. It was the treasure room with



View from Hester Diamond's penthouse across Central Park, looking east.



Gathering at the Met Breuer for the 'Unfinished' exhibition with Luc Tuymans's *Untitled (Still life)* (2002) as backdrop.

its extraordinary artefacts, however, that impressed most of all.

Hester Diamond and her husband welcomed us in the early evening at their penthouse overlooking Central Park from the West side, allowing us to admire a glowing view of Manhattan, basking in the setting sun. Although a formidable dealer during all of her professional career in modern artists such as Mondrian, Matisse, Brancusi, Léger, she turned into an aficionado of Flemish painting of circa 1500 as well as a collector of outstanding Italian and Northern sculpture. The latter passion even brought her to found VISTAS, which subsidizes the publication of new scholarship on European sculpture and has an amazing website www.vistasvisuals.org, well worth exploring. Saturday morning we gathered well before opening hours at the Met Breuer, the latest



Arnout Balis discussing Rubens's *Wolf and Fox Hunt* at the Metropolitan Museum.



The Belgian Ambassador welcoming the Fund members.

expansion of the Metropolitan Museum, which brought new life to this icon of Brutalist architecture that had been vacated by the Whitney Museum. Welcomed by Andrea Bayer, curator of the recently opened blockbuster show 'Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible', we were offered a private tour of a tantalizing array of paintings ranging over 600 years of Western art, supplemented with sculpture from the last century. Needless to say that 'our' *Saint Barbara*, Jan van Eyck's little gem in metalpoint and brush from 1437 and lent by our own KMSKA, as well as Luc Tuymans's *Untitled (Still Life)* from 2002 took pride of place in this mesmerizing exhibition. Crowds pouring into the show as we exited for our next appointment, reminded us of a privileged moment in the company of many great works.

Arnout Balis happily embarked all on a quick visit to St Thomas Church on Fifth Avenue, where a little-known but rather excellent *Adoration of the Magi* by the Rubens workshop, a painting he had 'discovered' in his student years, hangs in a far too dark stairwell.

Next port of call was an excellent lunch offered by the directors of the Old Master Paintings department of Sotheby's at their company's boardroom on York Avenue, hung for the occasion with paintings in their forthcoming auction.

The first part of Saturday afternoon was devoted to the closing session of the two-

day Symposium on the Art of Flanders in the United States, held at the Frick. Our Fund Chairman, Thomas Leysen, shared his views on collecting in a public conversation with Arthur Wheelock, Curator of Northern Baroque Painting at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. The subsequent reception in the Frick courtyard enabled collectors and curators from North America and Europe to meet informally.

Next came the after-closing-time visit to the Frick landmark exhibition 'Van Dyck, the Anatomy of Portraiture', guided by its two curators, Stijn Alsteens and Adam Eaker, the latter a former Rubenianum Fellowship recipient (see page 5). Offering a comprehensive survey of portrait drawings, paintings and prints by one of the most celebrated portraitists of all time, both curators shared passion and even a whiff of Van Dyckian elegance.

The evening was concluded at the nearby private residence of the Belgian Consul-General with a reception and dinner, generously offered by Ambassador and Mrs Marc Calcoen. Their residence, located on the 10th floor on Fifth Avenue and overlooking Central Park from the East side, offered the added benefit of one more golden sunset over Manhattan.

Sunday morning, yet another amazing private collection of Dutch and Flemish baroque paintings and drawings, rare sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sculpture

and Belgian Symbolists awaited us at the residence of Mr Charles Hack, looking out over Manhattan's East River and Queensboro Bridge. Despite the eclectic nature, quality in this collection is tantamount to its owner and is evidence of a keen connoisseur's eye. It was refreshing to see how, notwithstanding the obvious difference in scale, both these intimate quarters and the grand interior of the Metropolitan Museum – the location of our next visit – found their own way to display great art. Adam Eaker, newly appointed Assistant Curator to the Department of European Paintings at the Met, guided us with occasional interventions by Arnout Balis through the Flemish art galleries. Lunch at a nearby Italian restaurant was the perfect setting for a most convivial meal and heartfelt words of thanks spoken by Leon Seynaeve on behalf of all to Thomas Leysen and to those who made this trip such a wonderful one, in particular Martine Menten, private secretary to Thomas, who took her cue from Lieve Vandeputte.

As a last treat and to remind us of the special generosity bestowed upon us by so many throughout this weekend, Stijn Alsteens took us on Sunday afternoon into the Old Master drawings department of the Metropolitan Museum, to show us a selection of the impressive Flemish drawings holdings which he has been instrumental in expanding.



Stijn Alsteens showing some of his recent acquisitions for the Met drawings department.



The participants posing under Van Dyck's portraits at the Frick.

Rubeniana

Divine Interiors: experience churches in the age of Rubens

Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp, 17 June–16 October 2016



Sebastian Vrancx (1573–1647), *Interior of the Church of St James* (detail). Private collection, California

This summer, Museum Mayer van den Bergh (Antwerp) features a unique exhibition of architectural paintings leading visitors into the sacred interiors of Antwerp churches from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. When the Iconoclastic Fury took Antwerp by storm in 1566, the city's churches were stripped of their former opulence. King Philip II of Spain sent the Duke of Alva to restore order with an iron fist. A number of artists fled during this violent period of religious war to Germany where, under the influence of Hans Vredeman de Vries, they devoted themselves to a new genre: architectural painting. This new painting style gained many passionate

adherents in Antwerp who painted thousands of church interiors as well as some secular interiors.

The exhibition *Divine Interiors* offers a unique opportunity to view and study several hitherto unknown works, as more than half of the exhibits come from private collections. They are accompanied by important pieces from museums in Belgium and abroad, enabling us to present an excellent survey of the output of the Antwerp school.

On Monday, 10 October, an international colloquium in the Rubenianum will be devoted to architectural painting. Save the date! Info: www.museummayervandenbergh.be

A charming old woman in the Rubenshuis

She slipped silently into the permanent display of the Rubenshuis: Jacob Jordaens's depiction of a toothless old woman wearing a white cap. This vivid and touching likeness is not a portrait but a vigorously painted, early head study, datable to around 1615–17. The same woman also posed for Rubens. Both masters incorporated her likeness in a number of compositions. A double head study of her by Jordaens is preserved in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nancy, while a study of her by Rubens is in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. Moreover, the Museum Plantin-Moretus in Antwerp has a drawing by Jordaens that is a frontal head study, presumably of the same woman. Head studies, or *tronies*, were used as models for the countless figures in biblical and mythological scenes. They formed a pool of supporting actors whom the artist could call upon at will. The traditional Italian studio practice of painting head studies, probably introduced in Antwerp by Frans Floris (1516–70), was reinvigorated by Rubens and his studio in the early seventeenth century. Jordaens's *Head Study of an Old Woman*, therefore, could not have found a more suitable setting than the Rubenshuis, where the production of head studies was of great importance. This wonderful *tronie* dates from the time when Jordaens was working as a young painter in Rubens's studio, sparring with another great talent: Anthony van Dyck. | *Ben van Beneden*



Jacob Jordaens, *Head Study of an Old Woman*, c. 1615–17. Oil on paper, laid down on panel, 33.5 × 27.5 cm. Private collection, Antwerp, on long-term loan to the Rubenshuis.

Congrats to our former visiting researchers!

This spring two of the Rubenianum's former visiting researchers – Adam Eaker and Abigail Newman – took their doctoral degrees at Columbia University and Princeton University, respectively.

Adam worked at the Rubenianum in 2012–13 as a BAEF fellow while researching his dissertation, entitled 'Lore of the Studio: Van Dyck, Rubens, and the Status of Portraiture'. After his Antwerp sojourn, Adam held a position at the Frick Collection as an Anne L. Poulet Curatorial Fellow and Guest Curator (where he co-curated the successful exhibition *Van Dyck: The Anatomy of Portraiture*) before being appointed Assistant Curator at the Metropolitan Museum's Department of European Paintings.

Abigail arrived in Antwerp in 2013 on a Fulbright grant and thanks to subsequent BAEF and Mellon Council for European Studies fellowships was able to continue researching and writing in the city of Rubens her dissertation, entitled 'Flanders Abroad: The Flemish Artistic Presence in 17th-Century Madrid'. Having fallen in love with the *Koekenstad*, she returned to Flanders immediately after obtaining her doctoral degree to take up several projects, including co-editing the Rubenianum conference proceedings of *(Un)dressing Rubens* with Rubenianum Curator of Research Collections Lieneke Nijkamp.

We wish both Adam and Abigail the best of luck in their promising careers and hope to hear and see much more of them and their work!

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