

The Rubenianum Quarterly

2016

Special issue



RUBENIANUM FUND 2010–2020
Midterm Report

THE RUBENIANUM FUND

The Rubenianum Fund was created six years ago in order to secure the much-needed financial means for the completion of the publication of the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*. This massive art-historical endeavour, which was initiated in 1968 with the publication of the first volume, in 2010 was in danger of being stranded in midstream for lack of funds. Indeed, fewer than half of the more than fifty originally planned volumes had by then been published.

Created under the auspices of the King Baudouin Foundation, the Rubenianum Fund set out to gather the necessary funds to pay for a central editorial staff and to bear the other related expenses, such as image rights and translations, for the ensuing ten years. Thanks to the enthusiastic support of a number of foundations, corporations and individual art lovers, some 2 million euros were raised between 2010 and 2015, which allowed the operation quickly to kick into high gear. Quite a few important volumes have been published since, and the remaining 22 volumes are now all in various stages of preparation, with a clear path to publication by 2020.

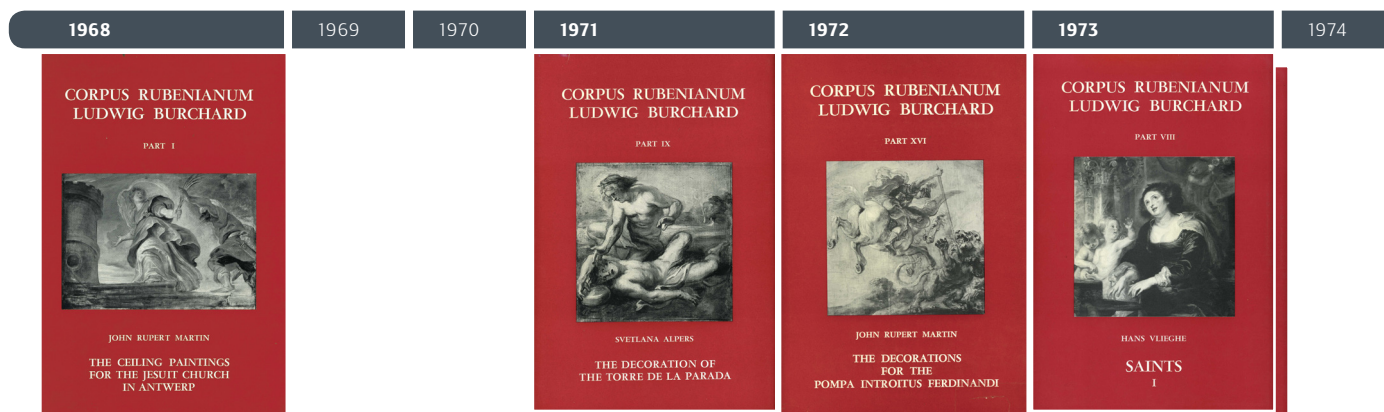
The Rubenianum Fund and the whole 'Rubens community' of scholars, curators, students, collectors and art lovers are extremely grateful to the more than eighty generous donors who made this possible.

Nevertheless, the present financial means are only sufficient to cover expenses till mid-2017. Therefore, a renewed fundraising appeal, setting out to collect another 1.5 million euros in the next twelve months, is hereby launched. This should allow us to attain our goal of finalizing this enormously challenging project by the target date of 2020.

This special edition of the *Rubenianum Quarterly* aims to give an overview of the project and what has been accomplished so far, but also looks ahead at the last stretch of the road. We hope we can count once more on the generosity of many, both existing and new supporters, to help us get there!

Thomas Leysen

Chairman Rubenianum Fund & King Baudouin Foundation



CORPUS RUBENIANUM LUDWIG BURCHARD

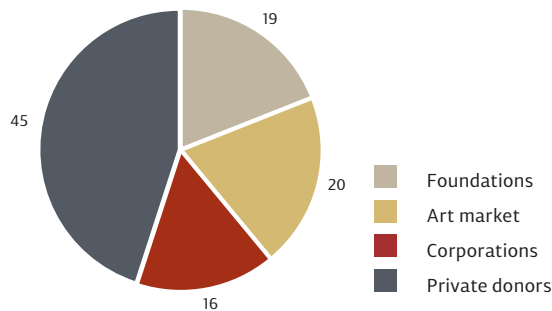
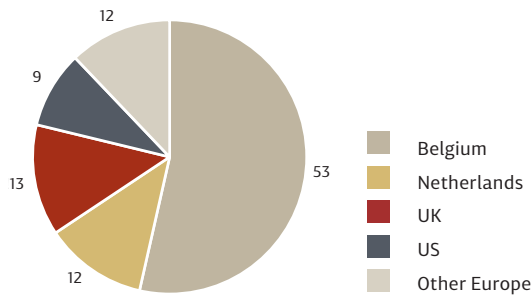
The *Corpus Rubenianum* holds a unique place within art history. It is arguably the most ambitious project ever set up and possibly the longest one as well. Both the massive scale and the sheer duration of this project fully correlate with the complexity of the oeuvre of Peter Paul Rubens himself. In every brushstroke he ever painted, the grand baroque master blended art with literature, art theory with theology, mythology with history, and so forth. Studying Rubens in this collaborative effort is much like studying the fundamentals of European civilization, for Rubens's oeuvre is a treasure trove of all the constituents of our society. Rubens's compositions are the most fascinating combinations of ideas, ranging from Kabbalah to Graeco-Roman mythology, from optics to image theology, from linguistics to archaeology or from politics to ethics – let alone aesthetics. Studying Peter Paul Rubens's oeuvre simply means that one has to master many research fields in order to enter the mind of the Baroque genius and to try and unravel the complexities of his work. Knowing that Rubens designed and made over 2500 compositions, most of which were copied a couple to a dozen times, one gets an impression of the endless intricacies of the study of his artistic output. One has to record, trace and understand every singular work on various levels. In order to do so, the many scholars and the editorial team working on the *Corpus Rubenianum* have to make themselves familiar with the latest insights in multiple academic disciplines and gain new understandings through a combination of technical, stylistic and iconological examinations. Such ambitions are daunting, even for well-established and highly esteemed scholars.

Striving to finish this project in 2020, both the editorial team and the authors bear a huge responsibility. We do that, not only for Rubens's own sake or even the sake of art history, but also on account of the simple fact that it is too important to fail.

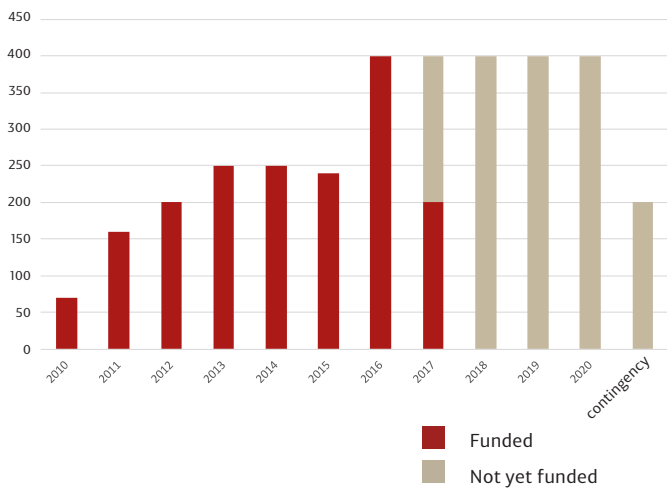
In order to guarantee the success of this enterprise, new organizational structures have been set up in recent years. Instead of working with a team of research assistants, we now work with a senior editor (Bert Schepers), a coordinator (Isabelle Van Tichelen) and a photo editor (Brecht Vanoppen), supplemented with one or more temporary assistants, depending on the needs of both the editorial team and the authors. This approach provides more flexibility and allows us to cater for the specific requirements of the authors. Moreover, it creates the opportunity for young and talented PhDs to collaborate on one of the most amazing art-historical efforts ever and taste the addictive multifariousness of Rubens research. In doing so, we also create a new community of young researchers with a special interest in the Northern Baroque and try to safeguard Rubens research for the decades to come.



The Rubenianum Fund's Finances



Contributions by the Rubenianum Fund to the Corpus



The Rubenianum Fund has raised some 2 million euros to date. More than 90 per cent has gone directly to the Centrum Rubenianum in the form of annual grants, determined on the basis of a detailed budget proposal. This has allowed the Centrum to hire the required professional staff to support the various Corpus authors in the preparation of their respective volumes, as well as pay for the costs of translations and photographic material. The balance has been used to fund the digitization of the already-published Corpus volumes, to establish a Rubenianum Fellowship for young American scholars (together with the Belgian American Educational Foundation), and for general administrative costs. The breakdown of the donors by country of origin and by type is shown in the graphs opposite.

A budgeting exercise has been carried out for the remaining years and shows a further rise in the annual financial needs. This reflects the fact that from now on, on average, four volumes per year are to be published. The manuscripts of various volumes scheduled for publication in 2016 and 2017 are already finalized; others are at an advanced stage of preparation. This allows for a fairly precise calculation of the costs involved, whilst the estimates for the years 2018 to 2020 are based on an extrapolation. A contingency reserve is added for unforeseen costs, but also to support further digitization.

All this implies that another 1.5 million euros needs to be raised by the Rubenianum Fund. While negotiations with leading foundations are under way and deliberations with private individuals are being conducted, it is hoped that some of the initial donors will be prepared to make another contribution. To date, the average contribution per donor has been around 25,000 euros. This implies that some sixty additional donors would need to be identified in the coming years.

All donors will receive the highly appreciated *Rubenianum Quarterly* and will be given the opportunity to participate in an exclusive annual field trip in the company of Rubens scholars.



Peter Paul Rubens, *Henry IV at the Battle of Ivry*, detail (CRLB XIV/2). The Rubens House, Antwerp



1990

1991

1992

1993

1994

1995

1996

1997

1998

1999

CORPUS RUBENIANUM
LUDWIG BURCHARD
PART XXIII



MARION VAN DER MEULEN
COPIES AFTER THE ANTIQUE
VOLUME ONE

CORPUS RUBENIANUM
LUDWIG BURCHARD
PART XIII



ELIZABETH McGRATH
1 - SUBJECTS FROM HISTORY
VOLUME ONE

Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Elder,
Adam and Eve in Paradise, detail (CRLB xvii). Mauritshuis, The Hague



2000

2001

2002

2003

2004

2005

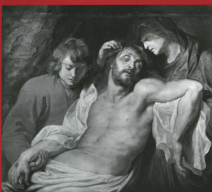
2006

2007

2008

CORPUS RUBENIANUM
 LUDWIG BURCHARD

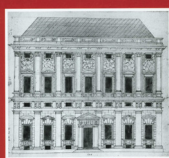
PART VI



J. RICHARD JUDSON
 THE PASSION OF CHRIST

CORPUS RUBENIANUM
 LUDWIG BURCHARD

PART XXII



HERBERT W. ROTT
 PALAZZI DI GENOVA
 ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS AND ENGRAVINGS
 VOLUME ONE

CORPUS RUBENIANUM
 LUDWIG BURCHARD

PART XV



GREGORY MARTIN
 THE CEILING DECORATION OF
 THE BANQUETING HALL
 VOLUME ONE

AUTHORS' FORUM



← Arnout Balis

CRLB XXV THE THEORETICAL NOTEBOOK

In 1986, Arnout Balis authored an acclaimed CRLB volume on Rubens's hunting scenes. Ever since, as chairman of the Centrum Rubenianum, he has worked tirelessly with CRLB authors on the publication of the series, reviewing countless manuscripts and overseeing the editorial process from first drafts to published books. Three decades on, the emeritus professor has returned to the role of author, taking on a thorny issue within Rubens's oeuvre: the so-called *Theoretical Notebook*, in which the artist set out his ideas on anatomy, proportion, optics, physiognomy and architecture.

If it weren't for a fire in the Paris workshop of royal ébéniste André-Charles Boulle, your work on the Notebook would have been much easier.

Absolutely. As fire ravaged Boulle's furniture workshop early on the morning of 30 August 1720, the flames engulfed his stock of fine exotic woods, his art collection and – much to my dismay – an autograph manuscript by Rubens. The illustrated manuscript was mentioned in some detail by Rubens's first biographer Giovanni Bellori in 1672 and was soon after acquired by the influential art critic and *Rubéniste* Roger de Piles. Its distinguished early provenance was cut short in the blaze in Boulle's workshop and, for my reconstruction of its contents, I have had to turn to four partial copies. Two of these copies were taken directly from the original: the *Bordes Manuscript* was recently acquired by the Museo

del Prado, and the *Chatsworth Manuscript* resides in the Devonshire Collection at Chatsworth House. Two further copies derive from the former: the *Johnson Manuscript*, now at The Courtauld Gallery, and the *de Ganay Manuscript*, purchased by the King Baudouin Foundation in 2012 and on permanent loan to the Rubens House Museum.

What relevance does the Notebook have to our understanding of Rubens's oeuvre? Is it a key to his work?

Not really. Establishing links between his painted work and the contents of the lost manuscript is problematic. Nonetheless, it is a telling testament to his early intellectual interests and gives us a unique insight into what occupied his mind early on in his career. He began work on the manuscript before he left for Italy in 1600, adding to it throughout his stay south of the Alps and in the years shortly after his return in 1608. In a sense, the manuscript can perhaps be seen as a youthful lapse of judgement. It relies heavily on esoteric and hermetic traditions, with Kabalistic theories, neo-Pythagoreanism and alchemy, making for a heady and often confusing mix.

How do you look at this tradition? Was this serious scholarship or a hobby for the idle?

With the benefit of hindsight, it is all too easy for us to dismiss such occult theories as utter nonsense. We should keep in mind that older intellectual traditions co-existed with newer rationalist and empiricist approaches to science in the early seventeenth century. That Rubens copied Quinten Metsys's portrait of the Renaissance philosopher, physician and astrologer Paracelsus in about 1615 attests to the esteem in which practitioners of occult learning were still held at the time. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scholars like Max Rooses, steeped in a positivist view of art history, considered the *Theoretical Notebook* to be entirely apocryphal. The positivist vision of Rubens didn't allow for his early experiments with the occult. Ludwig Burchard knew the *Chatsworth* and the *Johnson* manuscripts but initially there was no intent to devote a CRLB volume to the *Theoretical Notebook*. Michael Jaffé deserves much credit for his 1966 reassessment of the *Chatsworth Manuscript*.

Although its authorship remains debated – you will have to wait for the published CRLB volume to learn my opinion – Jaffé convincingly situated it very close to Rubens himself.

In his 1604 Schilder-Boeck, Karel van Mander advises aspiring artists not to get embroiled in philosophers' disputes and to steer clear of labyrinthine theories of proportion, stating that those who try to measure all, get stuck measuring while producing nothing of value. Was the young and ambitious Rubens perhaps tempted to emulate Vitruvius or Dürer?

Perhaps. Evidently, he did not get stuck! From his correspondence it is clear that by 1615 Rubens had matured considerably, turning elsewhere for intellectual sustenance. He may have paid homage to Paracelsus, but it is the likes of Galileo, Descartes and other proto-Enlightenment scholars who would come to define his thinking. Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc was a major catalyst in this process, and the correspondence between the artist and the antiquarian illustrates how drastically Rubens changed his intellectual orientation. Tellingly, it seems that Rubens in later life distanced himself from his earlier experiments, giving away the *Notebook* before his death, probably – and perhaps surprisingly, given its heretical content – to the Antwerp canon Antonio de Tassis.

This volume is rather atypical and stands in contrast to your earlier volume on Rubens's hunting scenes and to many of the other volumes in which you were heavily involved. How have you managed your immersion in the world of Kabalistic texts, hermetic knowledge and the esoteric without the sheer visual pleasure of paintings to catalogue?

Luckily, I am philosophically inclined. There is quite a bit of visual material in the four known copies; a few of the drawings in the *Bordes Manuscript* are by Rubens's own hand, probably taken from the original by a copyist. Still, these are interesting not so much because of an intrinsic aesthetic value but rather because they are direct visualizations of Rubens's ideas. They reveal his thinking at an early stage of his career. In a sense, I'm accessing Rubens's mind much more directly than I ever could through paintings, and that is perfectly satisfactory to me.

2009

CORPUS RUBENIANUM
LUDWIG BURCHARD

PART XXVI



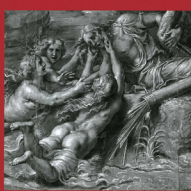
KRISTIN LOHSE BELKIN

COPIES AND ADAPTATIONS FROM
RENAISSANCE AND LATER ARTISTS
GERMAN AND NETHERLANDISH ARTISTS
VOLUME ONE

2010

CORPUS RUBENIANUM
LUDWIG BURCHARD

PART XXVII



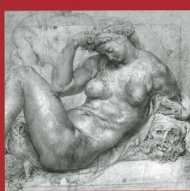
JEREMY WOOD

COPIES AND ADAPTATIONS FROM
RENAISSANCE AND LATER ARTISTS
ITALIAN ARTISTS
LUDWIG AND HIS SCHOOL
VOLUME ONE

2011

CORPUS RUBENIANUM
LUDWIG BURCHARD

PART XXVIII



JEREMY WOOD

COPIES AND ADAPTATIONS FROM
RENAISSANCE AND LATER ARTISTS
ITALIAN ARTISTS
BY ADRIAN BROWNE IN THE NETHERLANDS AND FRANCE
VOLUME ONE

2012

2013

2014

2015

CORPUS RUBENIANUM
LUDWIG BURCHARD

PART XIII



KOENRAAD BROENS

SUBJECTS FROM HISTORY
3 - THE CONSTANTINE SERIES

CORPUS RUBENIANUM
LUDWIG BURCHARD

PART V



HANS DEVISSCHER
HANS Vlieghe

THE LIFE OF CHRIST BEFORE THE PASSION
1 - THE YOUTH OF CHRIST
VOLUME ONE



☞ Anne Woollett

CRLB XXVII/2 WORKS IN COLLABORATION: OTHER MASTERS

Having curated landmark exhibitions on Rubens at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, one on his collaborations with Jan Brueghel in 2006 and another on his tapestry designs for the Triumph of the Eucharist series in 2014, both travelling to or from European venues, curator Anne Woollett is exceptionally well qualified to author the CRLB volume on Rubens's collaborations with other masters.

When and how did you catch the Rubens bug? Was it love at first sight or more of an acquired taste?

Initially, I was much drawn to late sixteenth-century English painting. As immigrants from the Low Countries played no small part in the development of Tudor painting, I soon developed an interest in Dutch and Flemish painting. I enrolled in a course at the Courtauld Institute of Art on The Golden Ages of Antwerp and Amsterdam, taught by Joanna Woodall, and soon discovered that there was a rich history to be explored and better understood. A lot of literature on Dutch painting was at hand, much less so on Flemish art, and most of that was not available in English. This indicated good research opportunities, and I realized that my personal affinity was for Flemish painting. Its red-blooded, vigorous energy really appealed to me. I was lucky enough to be a research assistant to Peter Sutton for

the 1993 exhibition 'The Age of Rubens' at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, which gave me the chance to do in-depth work on the catalogue. So it took me some time to approach the towering figure of Rubens and to find a personal connection, but I believe a longer courtship makes for a more gratifying and richer experience.

Christine Van Mulders's CRLB volume on Rubens's collaborations with Jan Brueghel is forthcoming. Who are the 'Other Masters' you are investigating?

The relationship between Rubens and Brueghel was professional and personal, a true 'working friendship'. Rubens may have considered Brueghel an equal but such true partnership was rare. Lesser artists such as Jan Wildens, Paul de Vos and Cornelis Saftleven are better characterized as odd contributors. The main figure in my volume is the specialist still-life and animal painter Frans Snyders, an accomplished artist whose expressive style was clearly complementary to Rubens's idiom and whose lush cascades of vegetables and fruit much amplified Rubens's baroque visions. I have the interesting task of assessing the nature of their professional liaison, charting its evolution through time in an attempt to better understand it.

Do you have favourites? Is there a painting resulting from Rubens's partnership with Snyders that you think exemplifies the master's ability to harness the talent of his colleague?

It's hard to choose among such riches! The *Recognition of Philopoemen* (c.1609) in the Museo del Prado is an early example of their successful teamwork. *Prometheus Bound* (c.1611–18) in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, in which a giant eagle painted by Snyders tears at the Titan's liver, is another – haunting – illustration of how the artists' distinct skills became increasingly well integrated. *Pythagoras Advocating Vegetarianism* (c.1618–30) in the Royal Collection shows what a visual feast the pair were able to achieve with experience.

Collaboration is the topic of your volume and the CRLB itself is very much a collaborative project. How are you experiencing the transatlantic teamwork?

It's incredibly fun and delightful! I'm far away but my Antwerp colleagues are very supportive, and this is truly a team effort, another set of 'working friendships', if you will. It's extremely valuable to speak

with colleagues like Arnout Balis, Fiona Healy, Liz McGrath and Carl Van de Velde in person, tapping into their long-term experience with the documentation and archival resources kept at the Rubenianum. With younger staff at the Rubenianum, electronic communication runs smoothly, so distance and time-zones aren't much of an issue. Work on the CRLB series has been so important to the field and completion of the series is vital. The project is an amazing contribution to Netherlandish art history, and I am very glad to be a part of that.

How relevant have Ludwig Burchard's documentation and the rest of the material kept at the Rubenianum proven to you? Is everything you need available in California or do your visits here allow for new discoveries?

I'm fortunate that both institutes manage complementary sets of resources. At the Getty I can benefit from a long tradition of provenance research; I can look into the archives of important Rubens scholars like Julius Held; and I can delve into a wealth of art dealers' archives. But that doesn't cover the ground completely. Ludwig Burchard's vast and fundamental documentation on Rubens kept at the Rubenianum is simply indispensable for my research, particularly as it has been reviewed and added to by generations of Rubens scholars. During my last visit, curator of research collections Lieneke Nijkamp introduced me to Burchard's meticulously kept diaries, in which he noted what he saw where, when and with whom. The diaries offer an interesting window onto his work in the 1930s, a period in which many paintings changed hands in often chaotic and generally poorly documented circumstances. They contain important clues on provenance and are just one example of how much there is to learn from early twentieth-century research into Rubens at the Rubenianum. At the same time, these are very personal records which humanize the eminent scholar by offering lighter notes, for example where Burchard documents good restaurants and chocolate shops on his travels.

Any plans for translating your research for the CRLB into an exhibition?

Hard to say at this point, but it's an interesting possibility. A diptych to the exhibition on Rubens and Brueghel I curated in 2006 is an intriguing idea, but first things first: for now my focus is on my CRLB volume.

2016			2017		
<p>CORPUS RUBENIANUM LUDWIG BURCHARD</p> <p>PART XI</p> <p>Elizabeth McGrath · Gregory Martin · Fiona Healy Bert Sijpesteijn · Carl Van de Velde Karelou De Clippel</p> <p>MYTHOLOGICAL SUBJECTS 1 - Achilles to The Graces</p> <p>VOLUME ONE</p>	<p>CORPUS RUBENIANUM LUDWIG BURCHARD</p> <p>PART XXVII</p> <p>CHRISTINE VAN MULDER'S WORKS IN COLLABORATION: JAN BRUEGHEL I & II</p>	<p>CORPUS RUBENIANUM LUDWIG BURCHARD</p> <p>PART XIII/2</p> <p>BAUMSTARK & DELMARCEL SUBJECTS FROM HISTORY: THE DECIUS MUS SERIES</p>	<p>CORPUS RUBENIANUM LUDWIG BURCHARD</p> <p>PART XIX/4</p> <p>JONCKHEERE PORTRAITS AFTER EXISTING PROTOTYPES</p>	<p>CORPUS RUBENIANUM LUDWIG BURCHARD</p> <p>PART XIV/2</p> <p>MERLE DU BOURG THE HENRY IV SERIES</p>	<p>CORPUS RUBENIANUM LUDWIG BURCHARD</p> <p>PART XIII/2</p> <p>HUVENNE & BULCKENS THE LIFE OF CHRIST BEFORE THE PASSION: MINISTRY OF CHRIST</p>



☛ **Nils Büttner**

CRLB XII ALLEGORIES AND SUBJECTS FROM LITERATURE

You have published on early landscape painting, on Hieronymus Bosch, Vermeer and Rembrandt, but it is Rubens to whom you seem to return time after time. What sets the master apart?

My interest in Rubens was sparked in the first semester of my undergraduate studies when I gave my first presentation on the *Four Philosophers*. Since then, my interest in Rubens's life and work has only grown. By pure chance, I discovered a document about a financial transaction by Rubens in the city archives of Antwerp while doing research for my dissertation on the relationship between landscape painting and cartography. Surprised that it had not been published, I began to look systematically for unpublished documents about Rubens and actually found quite a lot. This research then became the foundation for my habilitation published as *'Herr P. P. Rubens'*, while the transcripts of those documents were published online. The material from this research was also the basis for my monograph of 2015. And still, with Rubens there seems to be so much left to discover.

You will be taking on CRLB XII, Allegories and Subjects from Literature. Can you tell us more about this aspect of Rubens's oeuvre and why it is so interesting to you?

Rubens's allegorical images are at the centre of his oeuvre, and many of these – often series – are discussed in other CRLB volumes.

My volume will cover about fifty works, produced in various phases of the artist's life and for a great variety of contexts. What I find most captivating about these images has already been observed by one of Rubens's first biographers in 1699. Roger de Piles wrote that no other painter had ever depicted allegorical subjects in such a learned manner and with such clarity as Rubens. I am fascinated by the way in which he uses his skills as a painter – both in form and content – to visually communicate comprehensible messages. Even when dealing with literary topics, he is always interested in more than merely illustrating a story. It is the re-telling and re-interpreting of a literary subject with the specific means of painting that he finds compelling. Making this visible in both my publications and my work as a professor of art history is what drives me.

I know that you are a passionate Latinist and bibliophile, and I take it that these interests have been helpful in tracing Rubens's source material.

Already as a student, I began to collect books of which we know that Rubens owned a copy in order to understand him better. The reconstruction of Rubens's library by Prosper Arents is a tremendous help in this. I am eager to discover not only what Rubens read and what he was interested in, but also what he apparently did *not* find interesting. It seems, for instance, that he possessed only a very small number of emblem books. Neither Alciati's *Emblematum liber* nor Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* were to be found in his library. And even though it does not follow from this that he didn't know these books, I find it remarkable all the same.

Can you share with us some early insights from your research?

There are some new discoveries, some bigger than others. I always rejoice if I find the sources for iconographic details in Rubens's images in books that were in his library. I also cherish those moments when, with the help of museum colleagues and the latest developments in the technology of art, you close in on the question of which version of a painting might be the original. There are, for instance, more than forty versions of the *Old Woman and Boy with Candles* in The Hague: only a handful of these will have been produced in the Rubens workshop and only one actually by his hand. In this process I also get excited whenever I succeed in locating

unknown early copies or paintings whose whereabouts were previously unknown.

How important or useful have Ludwig Burchard's notes, the documentation and the library at the Rubenianum been to you?

I am the dwarf standing on the shoulder of giants. This kind of work would not be possible without the almost unimaginably diligent preliminary work of Ludwig Burchard or without the Rubenianum and its documentation. This project requires the help of many, be they colleagues at the Rubenianum, most of all Bert Schepers, or in museums and libraries all over the world. And I would particularly like to thank Carl Van de Velde, who provided me with all the material he collected over the years. Nevertheless, the Rubenianum is and remains the epicentre of research on Rubens.

Have you been leaning much on earlier volumes in the CRLB series?

As I said, a couple of volumes are so close thematically that I keep them ready at hand at all times. Moreover, the volumes on the *Copies* by Marjon van der Meulen, Kristin Lohse Belkin and Jeremy Wood are invaluable if you want to understand how Rubens developed compositions from certain models. Especially the latest volumes in the series serve me as models and stimulate me to try and meet their high standards. To be on a par with Liz McGrath's *Subjects from History* or with all the other authors whose books I use on a regular basis would make me both proud and happy.

How do you feel about the CRLB momentum and the new impetus given by the Rubenianum Fund?

The atmosphere is contagious, and I find it wonderful to work together with people who are headed in the same direction. There is no place in the world where my colleagues have not been before me; for me this is a sign that Rubens research has become more visible – to the public but also to the colleagues in the museums that contribute in such significant ways to our work. There is, however, a downside to all of this: when you exchange late-night mails with colleagues just as exhausted as yourself, you realize that the pressure of demands and deadlines takes a lot of effort from each one of us. And yet, it is the scholarly community surrounding the Rubenianum – and our common goal, to be sure – that keeps me going.

2018					
CORPUS RUBENIANUM LUDWIG BURCHARD	CORPUS RUBENIANUM LUDWIG BURCHARD	CORPUS RUBENIANUM LUDWIG BURCHARD	CORPUS RUBENIANUM LUDWIG BURCHARD	CORPUS RUBENIANUM LUDWIG BURCHARD	CORPUS RUBENIANUM LUDWIG BURCHARD
PART XII	PART XXII/3	PART XXV	PART XXII/4	PART XX	PART XXII/5
BÜTTNER ALLEGORIES AND SUBJECTS FROM LITERATURE	LOMBAERDE & FABRI ARCHITECTURE AND ARCHITECTURAL SCULPTURE: THE JESUIT CHURCH	BALIS & JAFFÉ THE THEORETICAL NOTEBOOK	HERREMANS ARCHITECTURAL SCULPTURE	VAN HOUT STUDY HEADS	VAN BENEDEN ARCHITECTURE AND ARCHITECTURAL SCULPTURE: SCULPTURE AND DESIGNS FOR DECORATIVE ART



Valerie Herremans

CRLB XXII/4 ARCHITECTURAL SCULPTURE

With curators Nico Van Hout, Christine Van Mulders and Valerie Herremans authoring volumes, the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp, set to reopen after extensive renovations in 2019, is deeply involved in the CRLB project. While the museum is being transformed – its Rubenszaal to be restored to its former glory as the nucleus of much-expanded gallery spaces – Valerie Herremans is one of a team of authors working on Rubens's designs for architecture and architectural sculpture.

When and how did Rubens cross your path?

Quite by accident I have had one eye on Rubens from the very start. As a junior student under Prof. Guy Delmarcel, I studied Pieter Valckx, who in the late 1770s sculpted the main altar of St John's Church in his native Mechelen, providing an updated late baroque setting for Rubens's 1617 *Adoration* triptych. I have been investigating the architectural and sculptural frames that enshrined Rubens's altarpieces ever since. By its very nature, my approach to Rubens is peripheral. To me, the architectural framing and sculptural decorations for his altarpieces have stories to tell that are entirely their own.

How does your volume fit into the CRLB series?

The increased publication pace of the CRLB has embedded me in a large team working on Rubens, both within and outside the museum. Along with Rubens's coherent

study of the *Palazzi di Genova* issued in the CRLB series in 2002, his work on the Rubens House, the Jesuit Church, and his designs for sculpture and decorative art are all currently being researched by CRLB authors Nora De Poorter, Piet Lombaerde, Ria Fabri and Ben van Beneden. Having the luxury of comparing notes on a complicated issue is an advantage, especially as we face fast-approaching deadlines.

Why a complicated issue?

The extent of Rubens's involvement in architectural projects has been much debated. In part, the problem is one of definition: where does ornament end and architecture begin? On that broad spectrum, my own research into Rubens's designs for altarpieces – his architectural sculpture – is focused on those areas where sculpture is being integrated with architectural elements, often in a playful, mannerist, Michelangelesque way. This was very much an area of collaborative effort and craftsmanship, so teaming up with my fellow authors to investigate Rubens's architectural ventures seemed appropriate in that sense too. Several disciplines and methodologies are involved, and establishing a shared vision is crucial to the coherence of the volumes on architecture and architectural sculpture.

As a sculptor, is Rubens perhaps even more elusive than as an architect?

Sculpture in general has not attracted the sort of scholarly scrutiny lavished on painting and architecture. Rubens is perhaps better known as a collector of sculpture, yet several sketches attest to his own active pursuit of sculptural design. A striking example of an attempt to control the architectural and sculptural setting of his paintings can be found in a letter to Archduke Albert of 19 March 1614. In it, the artist laments the failure of successive bishops to make Rubens's integrated vision for the high altar of Ghent cathedral a reality. Rubens had clearly conceived of a master plan, taking in hand *'tutta l'opera tanto per l'ornamento di marmo quanto per la pittura'*. The gestation of such multimedia projects could be long and eventful, with plenty of opportunities for competitors to plead for revisions and modifications. In this case, a fourth version was finally installed by a fourth bishop, only to be replaced in the early eighteenth century. The vagaries of these seemingly immobile sculptural and

architectural ensembles are remarkable, and archival research often proves crucial in uncovering their exact origins.

Where should the avid Rubens aficionado go to see some of these ensembles?

The Antwerp Jesuit Church is an obvious first stop but two more surprising locations spring to mind. First, the church of Saint-Josse-ten-Noode near Brussels. Its main altar was originally in the Brussels church of Our Lady of the Chapel, while one of its portico altars comes from the capital's convent of Elisabeth-on-Mount-Sion. One was certainly designed by Rubens, the other in all probability. Second, the village church of Zundert, north of Antwerp and just across the border with the Netherlands, now holds the sculptural framework and several more than life-size sculptures intended for Rubens's *Adoration* in the Antwerp abbey of St Michael. The painting, stripped of its sculptural decorations, is one of the masterpieces in the Antwerp Museum of Fine Arts.

Who were the sculptors executing Rubens's designs and what was Rubens's role in the history of sculpture in the seventeenth century?

Characteristically, sculptors in the early seventeenth century did not produce their own designs. Very few two-dimensional studies by sculptors survive for this period. It seems they did not have the capacity for such designs themselves, turning instead to suppliers like Rubens for ideas. By the end of the century, this had changed radically. Sculptors' workshops like the one run by the Verbruggen family became highly organized, managing large projects from concept to execution. Unfortunately, we are poorly informed on earlier working methods, and it remains unclear who took the initiative in Rubens's collaborative undertakings in this field. Father and son Van Mildert certainly made use of designs by Rubens throughout their careers, reusing them as 'workshop capital' in different settings without an apparent intellectual claim by their conceiver. Charting Rubens's place in the murky process of the professionalization and emancipation of the sculptor's trade is part of the challenge of this project for me. Rubens in that sense is a transitional figure: we're not quite yet in the age of the late baroque *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but his ambitions are fast propelling us in that direction.

2019

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GENRE SCENES



☛ Alexis Merle du Bourg

CRLB XIV/2 THE HENRY IV SERIES

Alexis Merle du Bourg has curated important Paris exhibitions on Anthony van Dyck (Musée Jacquemart-André, 2008–09) and Jacob Jordaens (Petit Palais, 2013–14). With a CRLB volume on the uncompleted Henry IV series, he is turning to Rubens, whose critical reception in France has been at the heart of his scholarly interests.

Your fellow CRLB author Blaise Ducos will be discussing the Marie de' Medici Series, which was installed in the Palais du Luxembourg and can now be seen intact in the Louvre. You, on the other hand, are studying the Henry IV series, intended for the same location but never completed. How does this complicate your research?

It's somewhat of a euphemism to say that the incompleteness of the series has complicated my task. On 26 February 1622, Rubens engaged himself by contract to deliver the paintings for two parallel galleries in the Paris palace of Marie de' Medici, to be painted 'de sa propre main'. Completed in 1625, the 24 paintings for the west gallery, glorifying the life of the Queen Mother, now form an ensemble that is universally admired. The project for the east wing collapsed in 1630, depriving us of a double series that would have been unique in its amplitude and richness. The Henry IV gallery, conceived as a celebration of the king's military victories, remains a puzzle for which more pieces are missing than present. Much to our – and Rubens's – frustration, it remains his unfinished masterpiece.

How many extant works can you relate to the series? Perhaps you have been able to add new material to this body?

We have to make do with some fifteen paintings and preparatory sketches. Some of the sketches relate to the same composition, with no less than four sketches for the *Triumph of Henry IV* at the Uffizi in Florence. The appearance of new works connected to the Luxembourg galleries is alas as rare as passages of Halley's Comet. Rubens began work on six large paintings for the second Luxembourg gallery, five of which are known to us. We have no clue as to how many sketches were produced for the commission in all and not a single drawing survives. This may seem surprising, but the Marie de' Medici Series is no less sparingly documented in this regard.

The unfinished status of the project perhaps allows us to catch a glimpse of Rubens at work? Are you able to reconstruct the artist's working process from the available sources?

The five more or less accomplished paintings for the cycle do in fact offer us a remarkable view over the shoulders of Rubens and his collaborators while at work. For example, the middle and upper sections of *The Battle at Arques* (Alte Pinakothek, Munich) and *The Siege of Amiens* (Konstmuseum, Göteborg) reveal the participation of specialist battle-scene and topographical painters. By 1655, the name of the Antwerp painter Pieter Snayers was associated with the series, but it is clear that others were involved, too.

As the series was commissioned in 1622, twelve years after the king's murder, it is Marie de' Medici who placed the order. What was she trying to achieve?

We should keep in mind that women in France were barred from holding positions with actual power at the apex of the state, except during a regency rule. The series is Marie's way of assuring her political survival after her regency reign on behalf of her minor son Louis XIII from 1610 to 1614. After her regency, extended to 1617, she devised a strategy of legitimization by image and turned to Rubens to shape that image. In the Marie de' Medici series, the queen is presented as a woman gifted with the virtues of men, capable of wielding power like a king. The second gallery, exalting the glories of her dead husband's reign, did not detract from that position; rather it shored up her ambitions and legitimized them. In the end, her scheme did not bring the hoped-for results.

It seems that Cardinal Richelieu was not very keen on the project, apparently attempting to replace Rubens with an Italian artist. Can Richelieu – who had Marie de' Medici banished from court in 1630 – be blamed for the failure of the project?

As I have shown in my book *Rubens et la France*, Rubens's hostile diplomatic activities were well known in French diplomatic circles. As a result, Richelieu and the Queen Mother herself increasingly tried to distance themselves from the painter. Nonetheless, the commission was never officially withdrawn. It's the violent breach between Richelieu and Marie de' Medici on the *Journée des Dupes* in November 1630 which finally sank the project for the Henry IV gallery, destroyed Marie de' Medici's political viability and caused her exile.

As with the Henry IV Series itself, the production of your CRLB volume is a tale of two cities. How have you experienced this collaboration?

I have much benefited from Ludwig Burchard's documentation and from the unwavering support of the Rubenianum staff in Antwerp. I would in particular like to thank Priscilla Valkeneers for her precious help. The international character of the project befits a cosmopolitan painter like Rubens, who in a letter to a French correspondent characterizes himself as a global citizen: 'j'estime tout le monde pour ma patrie'.

In his portraits, Henry IV seems quite a jovial monarch. Perhaps because of this sympathetic iconographic tradition and the well-known quote 'Paris vaut bien une messe' attributed to him, he remains popular to this day. Do you think the pronounced martial character of Rubens's series might have changed his reputation as 'le bon roi Henri'?

His persistent popularity in France stems from impressive military acumen, atypical clemency in an age of extreme cruelty and a certain *bonhomie*. In combination, these qualities make for an endearing leader. Without ever having met the man, Rubens played no small part in immortalizing his image. Henry is always immediately recognizable with Rubens. When showing the king in action in his most spontaneous sketches, he still captures both the heroic and the debonair in his character. In that sense, despite never completing the monumental Henry IV Series, Rubens nonetheless contributed in no small measure to the legend of 'good king Henry'.

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