

The Rubenianum Quarterly

2017
4

Competition design
for the Rubens site,
seen from the inner
courtyard.



A master plan for the Rubens site

The cultural festival year 'Antwerp Baroque 2018' offers the opportunity to design improved reception facilities for the Rubens House to be realized by 2020, with the support of Toerisme Vlaanderen. The city of Antwerp seized this opportunity to carry out a study for a long-term vision for all the functions on the Rubens site through an architectural competition. We are particularly pleased with the design proposal by the renowned architectural firm of Robbrecht & Daem. Their plan fully takes advantage of the original lines of sight, the garden and the historic architecture. With a keen sense of Rubens's artistic vision it offers an answer to the needs of both users and collections of the Rubenshuis and Rubenianum. Currently under study is the preparation of the initial construction phase: a visitor's centre with reception facilities at the Ganzenweide diagonally behind Rubens's garden. A second phase, for which funding must still be raised, comprises a new high-rise building for the research collections, users and staff of the Rubenianum, which will thus be situated close to the historic location of Rubens's own book collection. In a third phase the Kolveniershof will be enhanced and a state-of-the-art exhibition space and museum storage for the Rubenshuis will replace the present Rubenianum building. After its completion, the architectural setting will provide more visual calm and quality in the existing urban fabric around Rubens's house and garden.

We are resolutely looking to the future with this master plan. It will allow visitors to the Rubens House and the Rubenianum to experience the place more intensely and, partly thanks to a new bookshop and dining facilities, allow a pleasant and educational half-day at the Rubens site. For the first time, there will also be a physical interface between visitors to the Rubens House and the academic superstructure that the Rubenianum will then literally have become. Shortage of space will be solved in the long term and user needs, such as the provision of more open-stack library space, will finally be feasible. Advanced and sustainable technology will ensure improved climate control in all the buildings. The visitors' centre will allow the layered and interactive discovery and in-depth knowledge of Rubens's life and work in Antwerp and the world.

In short, a master plan worthy of the Master. We are particularly looking forward to putting our backs into the plans and preparations in the months to come.

Véronique Van de Kerckhof, Director Rubenianum

Enduring appeal

Rubens is flavour of the month again, with major shows running simultaneously in Paris at the Palais du Luxembourg ('Rubens: Portraits Princiers', until 14 January) and in Vienna at the Kunsthistorisches Museum ('Rubens: The Power of Transformation', until 21 January, then at the Städel, Frankfurt, 8 February–21 May). And there is more to come. One of the exhibitions I am most looking forward to seeing in 2018 is 'Rubens: The Oil Sketches', at the Museo del Prado in Madrid, which opens on 10 April. It is in his rapidly executed oil sketches that Rubens is at his most exciting, so to see more than seventy of them together is an opportunity not to be missed. Jointly organized by the Prado and the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, the exhibition will travel to Rotterdam in early autumn.

In 2019 the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto are organizing the first major North American loan exhibition devoted to the early career of Rubens in Antwerp. Finally, at least as far as the current decade is concerned, in 2020 the Rubenshuis will mount an international exhibition on Rubens's little-known designs for ivory statuettes and for decorative objects in ivory and silver. Much anticipated, and never before attempted, this exhibition will assemble some fifty masterpieces – drawings, oil sketches and paintings, as well as superlative ivories, bronzes and other exquisite objets d'art – which have never before been shown together. The succession of these shows not only confirms Rubens's enduring appeal (and bankability), but also attests to the inexhaustible richness of his oeuvre, a richness that is unique in the annals of art. There is really a lot to look forward to!

This comes with all good wishes for the New Year from all of us at the Rubenshuis and Rubenianum,

Ben van Beneden
Director Rubenshuis

Alexis Merle du Bourg introduces his Corpus volume on Rubens's Henri IV series

On 26 February 1622, in Paris, Rubens entered into a contractual agreement to execute two series of paintings, 'by his own hand', intended to decorate the two parallel galleries of the Parisian palace – the so-called Luxembourg Palace – of Maria de' Medici, widow of Henri IV and mother of Louis XIII. Completed in 1625, the twenty-four monumental paintings of the western gallery exalting the life of the Queen Mother form a universally admired ensemble, on display at the Musée du Louvre for the last two centuries. However, the second part of this grand project, envisioned for the eastern gallery of the palace, was abandoned in 1630. The suspension and then premature termination of the project after the Queen Mother's exile in July 1631 have deprived us of a work that would have been unique, both in its magnitude and in the artistic means Rubens deployed to glorify the royal couple. The Galerie Henri IV, planned as a commemoration of the king's military victories and a celebration of his triumphs 'in the manner of the triumphs of the Romans' (as the contract has it), remains a puzzle whose missing pieces are more numerous than what is preserved. Still, some fifteen works – preparatory oil sketches on panel and large canvases, more or less completed – have survived. It is above all through the study of these works that this volume aims to arrive at a better understanding of the context, the iconography and the political significance of the Galerie Henri IV. Despite the frustration (for us, as for Rubens himself) of its abandonment, the unfinished project remains an extraordinary feat of Baroque encomium, and perhaps one of the artist's greatest masterpieces.

Significantly, this aborted commission was rarely discussed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With the exception of a few well-informed writers and amateurs – such as Mariette, who found Richelieu's letter to Maria de' Medici written in April 1629 proposing the ousting of Rubens in favour of Cavaliere d'Arpino – the decoration of the second Luxembourg gallery recounting the life of Henri IV became an unverifiable rumour for many writers. The public display of two of Rubens's monumental paintings for the series at the Uffizi in Florence, from the 1770s or 1780s onward, proved incapable of reversing this trend. Nor were matters helped by Lorenzini's reproduction of the two Uffizi paintings or by Martenasie's reproductions sometime before 1767 of the preparatory oil sketches for the *Birth of Henri* and the *Union of the King and Maria de' Medici*. Identification of the various scenes also remained a muddle. Beyond the worthy efforts of the dealer and historian John Smith, who

mentioned some of the series' compositions in the second volume of his *Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the most Eminent Dutch and Flemish Painters* (1830, with a Supplement in 1842), it was Max Rooses in the third volume of his monumental Rubens catalogue raisonné and Charles-Louis Ruelens, the brilliant publisher of the *Codex diplomaticus Rubenianus* (1887–1909), who truly brought the issue of the second Luxembourg gallery into the field of art history. During the next century, although scholars were certainly not disdainful of this project, it had the major disadvantage of having been abandoned by the artist, its state of incompleteness offering something of a deterrent to study. Literature dealing specifically with the second gallery is strikingly scarce. The major milestones are as follows: Ingrid Jost's fundamental article of 1964 ('Bemerkungen zur Heinrichsgalerie des P. P. Rubens', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*); Julius Held's 1980 catalogue of Rubens's oil sketches, which discussed the preparatory sketches in detail; above all Nico Van Hout's article ('Henry IV valait bien une Galerie! Rubens' unfinished Luxembourg project'), which is as stimulating as it is innovative in its approach to the unfinished decorative programme, published in 2001 in a critical collection of essays that appeared on the occasion of the major restoration of the two large paintings in the Uffizi Gallery; and finally Sara Galletti's 2008 article ('Rubens et la galerie de Henri IV au palais du Luxembourg (1628–1630)', *Bulletin Monumental*), which published the only surviving drawing indicating the planned layout of the gallery. The limited number of these studies, even including those whose discussions of the Henri IV Gallery are incidental to their principal subject, is that

much more striking when compared with the large number of texts devoted to the Medici Gallery. We should here mention a deep-seated misconception. Rightly considered to be one of the pinnacles of Rubens's art and the pride of the Louvre, the Medici Gallery has generally been regarded as an autonomous work, gloriously self-sufficient thanks to its author's inexhaustible inventiveness. Yet it constitutes only half of a grand design. To borrow an expression from Jacques Foucart, the Henri IV Gallery would have been the pendant and above all the 'true justification' for the Medici Gallery.

The way in which the two spaces would have functioned together and the countless correspondences that could have been woven from one painting to another doubtless partly escape us. Yet what was not lost is the principal message delivered by an arrangement that would have comprised forty-eight (or forty-six?) monumental paintings, constituting an absolutely extraordinary machine of propaganda. Reduced to its essence, the subject and its perhaps somewhat offensive character hardly leaves one in any doubt. It sought to offer contemporaries and posterity an image of an incomparable royal couple, drawing barely sublimated parallels between the king and queen and the Olympian gods. While the two galleries would above all have promoted the legitimacy of the Queen Mother's claim to keep a place at the summit of the state, they would also have cast the reigning couple in an unfavourable light when compared to their predecessors: Louis XIII's life would have appeared decidedly banal and unheroic compared to that of his father, and Anne of Austria – against whom Maria de' Medici had stubbornly competed until her exile – had remained hopelessly infertile even fifteen years into her marriage...



On 20 December the Centrum Rubenianum proudly presented its brand-new Corpus volume on Rubens's Henri IV series in the Palais du Luxembourg, home to the French Senate. From left to right: Thomas Leysen, Arnout Balis, Koenraad Jonckheere, Bert Scheepers, Alexis Merle du Bourg, Isabelle Van Tichelen, Abigail Newman and Brecht Vanoppen.

Van Dyck, Rubens, Hillewerde and the Amazons

Bert Schepers

Every now and then I treat myself to a couple of days in Paris to enjoy the city, indulge in art and broaden my horizons. Last February, I was lucky enough to catch three blockbuster exhibitions that had just opened at the Louvre, ahead of the flood, and topped this off with a visit to the Hôtel Turgot, home to the Fondation Custodia, to work my way through two more shows: first 'Drawings for Paintings in the Age of Rembrandt' and then 'Reading Traces: Three Centuries of Drawing in Germany'. The latter brought together highlights of the drawings collection of the German art historian Dr Hinrich Sieveking. At the very end of the show – I almost walked past it – there was a small selection of works from other schools, including a pen-and-ink

drawing by Anthony van Dyck, which I didn't recall ever having seen before (fig. 1). The label read: 'A Horseman Tumbling off his Rearing Horse'. Trimmed along the edges, it appears to be only a fragment of a larger composition. How much of it is missing is hard to tell. The drawing shows no traces of inscriptions or collector's marks. Turning to the catalogue, prepared for an earlier showing in Hamburg, I quickly learned that this work was a recent discovery, and that Stijn Alsteens, the expert on Van Dyck drawings (among other things), had written the catalogue entry for it. On the verso, not on view, were several more figure studies for an equestrian battle with a near-naked foot soldier in front, fleeing with his back turned to the viewer (fig. 2). Nothing

is known of the sheet's provenance other than that it had been owned by the Hamburg collector Dr Karl Sieveking (1787–1847) and has remained in his family's possession up to the present owner. Tellingly, in a handwritten catalogue of the collection of about 1830, the drawing was attributed to Rubens.

Alsteens convincingly argued that it is without doubt an early Van Dyck drawing, dating from the time the gifted young artist was attached to the studio of Rubens, who called him his best student ('meglior mio discepolo') in a much-quoted letter of 1618: Van Dyck was by then already assisting Rubens in the realization of several major commissions. The subject and purpose of these 'crabbellinghen' – as such rapid pen



Figs. 1-2 Anthony van Dyck, *Figure studies for an equestrian battle*, c. 1618–21. Pen and brown ink, framing lines (recto) in pen and black ink, 100 × 87 mm. Private collection. Reproduced (actual size) with kind permission of the owner.



Fig. 3 Peter Paul Rubens, *The Battle of the Amazons*, c. 1600–03. Pen and brown ink over traces of graphite or black chalk, 251 × 428 mm. The British Museum, London.



Fig. 4 Attributed to Anthony van Dyck, *Study of the neck of one of the 'Horses of Monte Cavallo'*, c. 1616–17. Pen and brown ink, 210 × 160 mm, fol. 66v of the 'Chatsworth Manuscript', The Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth.

sketches were called in seventeenth-century Antwerp – remains unclear, as there is no corresponding work in Van Dyck's known oeuvre. In terms of style and execution, Alsteens compares this exciting new addition to the corpus of Van Dyck drawings of horses and horsemen, to an animated design for a martyrdom of St Catherine (École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Paris) and a sheet of studies of a horse's head and an armed rider (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), both dating from c. 1618–21. He also points out the proximity to some of Rubens's dazzling (battle) paintings of the 1610s: *The Conversion of Saul* (The Courtauld Gallery), *The Defeat of Sennacherib* and *The Battle of the Amazons* (both Alte Pinakothek).

Having catalogued all the Amazon Battles by or associated with Rubens in the first of three projected volumes of the *Corpus Rubenianum* devoted to Mythological Subjects (Part XI.1: *Achilles to the Graces*, published in May 2016), I would like to present in this small contribution some additional observations that I believe may shed more light on the context in which this drawing should be considered. It seems to me that the tumbling 'horseman' must be a female rider. She falls backwards, trying to cling onto her horse with one hand, while holding aloft a large shield with the other. Her arms and hands are much exaggerated, a distinct feature of early Van Dyck drawings. The figure above, looking down on the unfortunate rider, is also somewhat ambiguous in appearance, but is probably a male warrior. The rearing horse clearly stands out. Much attention is paid to its head and muscular neck, while the horse's hind legs are rendered in multiple positions, adding turbulence and drama to the scene.

The horse's imposing appearance closely resembles the central horse in Rubens's drawing *The Battle of the Amazons* in the British Museum (my cat. 6), which the artist made in Italy around 1600–03, but will have brought with him to Antwerp in 1608 (fig. 3). Van Dyck must have laid eyes on it in Rubens's studio. Another point of comparison is a study, in a manuscript in the Devonshire Collection at Chatsworth, reproducing the neck of one of the 'Horses of Monte Cavallo' in Rome (fig. 4). The 'Chatsworth Manuscript' is one of four known transcripts of parts of Rubens's lost theoretical notebook. The most inspired of the four, it has been attributed to the young Van Dyck, copying directly from the original while under Rubens's wing. (In 1966 Michael Jaffé published the manuscript as 'Van Dyck's Antwerp Sketchbook'.) Opinions on its authorship are, however, divided: there are believers and non-believers. Arnout Balis, author of the forthcoming CRLB volume dealing with Rubens's lost notebook, is a believer and proposes a date of around 1616–17. Comparison of the Monte Cavallo study with the new drawing reveals a striking similarity in style and execution,

which adds weight to the attribution of the Chatsworth Manuscript. Note especially the cross-hatchings in the horse's neck, the heavy contours and pointed ears.

The fleeing figure on the verso is another borrowing. He turns out to be lifted from the *Battle of Constantine against Maxentius*, the famous fresco in the Vatican Sala di Costantino, painted by Raphael and his studio in about 1520–24. This fresco was an important visual repository for Rubens's earliest *Battle of the Amazons*, painted around 1597–98, which I have argued is presumably lost but known from several copies; the painting in Potsdam is probably a second version (cat. 5 and 5a). Van Dyck will have studied records of Raphael's battle scene in or outside Rubens's studio, be it through a print, study drawings or even perhaps painted copies. It should be recalled that Van Dyck is also associated with a preparatory design (at Christ Church, Oxford) for Lucas Vorsterman's exceptionally large engraving of 1623 after Rubens's *Battle of the Amazons* of c. 1618, now in Munich (cat. 8 and 8a). However, the attribution of the design remains much debated, as a scholars' meeting organized on the occasion of the 'Young Van Dyck' exhibition in the Prado (2012) clearly showed. Several studio hands must have been at work on this print design, resulting in its very uneven quality.

Apparently overlooked in all literature on Van Dyck (and Rubens) is the following information, jotted down in the account books of one of Antwerp's most prominent dealers in Rubens's time, Matthijs Musson: 'Menheer Hillewerf den kanunick is debit 6 jannewary 1662 een schildery de Amasoene van Van Dyck, schoustick met een fraey vergulde lijst Fl. 300-00' So, a certain canon Hillewerf owed Musson a considerable amount of money for having purchased from him an overmantel painting by Van Dyck, showing the Amazons. Given its description, attribution and selling price, this painting must have been quite large and of high quality. Sadly, I have found no further trace of the work. Was it a copy after Rubens's painting now in Munich perhaps, or a work derived from it, or an independent composition? We can only guess. However, if it was a copy, would Musson, himself a painter, not have failed to mention this? And who is this Hillewerf? Two candidates present themselves: Hendrik Hillewerf and his brother Frans. Both collected art and were appointed canon: Hendrik at St Jacob's Church, Frans at Our Lady's Church. The latter is best known from a legal dispute filed in 1660–61 concerning the authenticity of a series of thirteen paintings of the Apostles and Christ as the Salvator Mundi, claimed to be by Van Dyck. Jan Denucé, who first published (parts of) Musson's account books, identifies Hillewerf, 'den geestelijk Heer', who was a regular customer in the 1650s and

'60s, as Hendrik.³ We cannot be absolutely sure, but it is probably him who bought the Amazons painting from Musson. After the death of his wife in 1657, Hendrik had entered the priesthood (1661) and would soon become an important patron of St Jacob's Church. He also held the title of Lord of Zemst and Weerde, which included Elewijt, where Rubens had had his country retreat, Het Steen. In 1675 Hendrik was ennobled and shortly later created protonotary apostolic. His youngest sister Cornelia had married the wealthy merchant Jacomo van Eycke, who in 1660 had bought Rubens's house on the Wapper from the painter's heirs. After Jacomo's death, in 1680, Cornelia sold the house to Hendrik, who in 1684 and 1692 commissioned two etchings from Jacob Harrewijn, reproducing the exterior of Rubens's former house and gardens, then called 'Maison Hillewerf'.

That a canon, let alone a priest, should buy a large Amazons painting, which obviously implies a display of violence and much female nudity (or near nudity), would today surely raise a few eyebrows, but this was evidently not considered so peculiar in Hillewerf's art-loving circle. The obvious place to hang such a work is a private picture gallery. According to an eyewitness account by the Brussels friar Franciscus Desiderius de Sevin, Hillewerf had refurbished the interior of Rubens's house with many exquisite paintings. In 1682 Hendrik donated the property to Cornelia, on the condition that she (and her family) would occupy the spacious house and not sell it during his lifetime. His private quarters were to be kept at his (and his servant's) disposal at all times. Interestingly, the 1692 print includes (as an inset) a view of Hendrik's bedroom, showing several large paintings on the walls. If Hendrik indeed bought the Amazons painting from Musson and held onto it thereafter, it is likely that he kept it in his private quarters, hidden from uninvited viewers. But it is perhaps best not to pursue this intriguing and entertaining thought. Nor do I want to go so far as to claim that this new Van Dyck drawing was made preparatory to an Amazons painting, let alone the one acquired by Hillewerf. But, all things considered, Van Dyck surely had this particular subject in mind when he made the pen sketch recently revealed to the public in Paris.

1 *Spurenlese. Zeichnungen und Aquarelle aus drei Jahrhunderten*, eds. P. Prange and A. Stolzenburg (Hamburger Kunsthalle), Munich 2016, no. 105.

2 Entry in Journal IV, fol. 92v. E. Duverger, 'Nieuwe gegevens betreffende de kunsthandel van Matthijs Musson en Maria Fourmenois te Antwerpen tussen 1633 en 1681', *Gentse bijdragen tot de kunstgeschiedenis en de oudheidkunde*, xxxi, 1968, p. 116.

3 J. Denucé, *Na Peter Pauwel Rubens. Documenten uit den kunsthandel te Antwerpen in de XVIIe eeuw van Matthijs Musson (Bronnen voor de geschiedenis van de Vlaamsche kunst, V)*, Antwerp/The Hague 1949, pp. LXVII–LXVIII.

Study Day: 'The Quellinus Dynasty' *Rubenianum, 15 March 2018*

Since 2014 the Rubenianum has been acquiring the extensive research archive of art historian Dr Jean-Pierre De Bruyn on Erasmus Quellinus II. In 2018, the digital inventory will be fully accessible. This completion seems to be the perfect occasion to present a *status quaestionis* as well as address new questions on the Quellinus family – a booming business in seventeenth-century Antwerp – and their designs for various artistic disciplines, such as sculpture, book illustrations and applied art.



Erasmus Quellinus II and Jan Fijt,
Boy with falcon and two dogs, c. 1650–55.
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp



Theodor Boeyermans, *Antwerp Nourishing the Painters*, 1663–65 (detail).
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

The Rubenianum Lectures

Sunday, 11 March 2018, 11 am

SUZANNE DUFF

Brown University & Rubenianum Fellow 2017–18

Art and good government.

The Antwerp Saint Luke's guild and the founding of the Academy

By mid-seventeenth century, the Antwerp Saint Luke's guild was already working to revive the local art market to heights experienced just a century before. 1648 marked a difficult turn after the blockade of the Schelde, and with the foundation of the Paris Académie that same year, the guild needed to act.

This lecture will explore the actions taken by the guild to found the Royal Academy for Painting and Sculpture in 1663. What

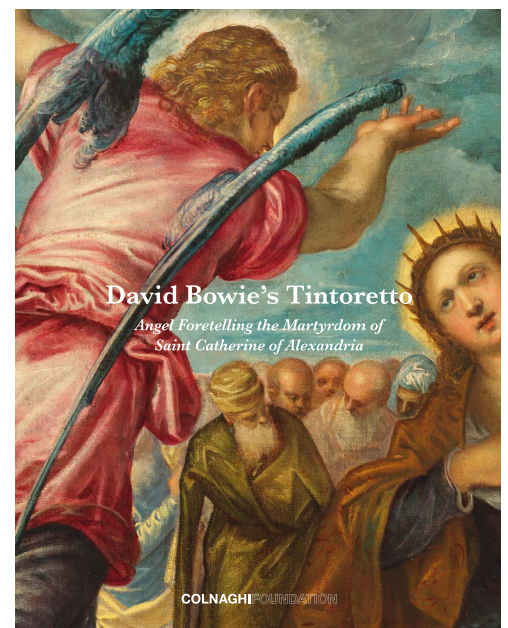
was the guild's intention and how did it accomplish the academy's founding? And how did its artisans respond to the school, including the emphasis on drawing from life, the foundation of contemporary Italian artistic theory? Works donated to the guild at this time by Jacob Jordaens, Theodor Boeyermans, Artus Quellinus I and others will be essential for exploring these and other questions about the impact of the guild on the place of art and its production in the city.

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

David Bowie's Tintoretto

Just over a year ago – on 10 November 2016 – a small altarpiece catalogued as 'The Angel foretelling Saint Catherine of Alexandria of her Martyrdom' by Jacopo Tintoretto (1518–1584) went under the hammer at Sotheby's London. It was sold as part of the eclectic collection of the legendary musician, actor and icon David Bowie (1947–2016), who had acquired the painting in the mid-1980s from the renowned London art dealers Colnaghi & Co. Ltd. The early history of the painting is well known. Commissioned in the 1560s by members of the Scuola di Santa Caterina for the Church of San Geminiano on the Piazza San Marco in Venice, it was displayed in situ, along with an altarpiece by Giovanni Bellini and works by Paolo Veronese, until 1807, when the church was

destroyed under Napoleon to make way for the new wing of the Procuratie. Last year it was acquired by a private collector, who generously lent – appropriately, considering Rubens's debt to his Venetian peer – the altarpiece to the Rubenshuis. The temporary acquisition of *Saint Catherine* was the main impetus behind a scholarly and lavishly illustrated book, published by the Colnaghi Foundation. It includes essays by Stijn Alsteens, Christina Currie, Riccardo Lattuada, Maja Neerman, Xavier F. Salomon, Gregory Howard and Ben van Beneden, as well as contributions on David Bowie 'the man and collector' by contemporary critics, including Bowie's friend Serge Simonart. The foreword was written by the eminent historian of Venice, John Julius Norwich. *David Bowie's Tintoretto* will be exclusively on sale at the museum's bookshop from February 2018.



David Bowie's Tintoretto

Angel Foretelling the Martyrdom of Saint Catherine of Alexandria

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