

The Rubenianum Quarterly

2019
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Rubenianum Fund field trip to Mantua



The Chamber of Cupid and Psyche
at the Palazzo del Te

To launch our tenth edition of study forays in the footsteps of Rubens, we gathered for dinner at the grandest private residence in Milan, Casa Crespi, where we were received by Giulia Maria Crespi, founder of FAI. None of us were prepared for the stunning collection of exceptional old master paintings and interiors. The next morning we travelled to the walled town of Sabbioneta, which is still preserved as built by Vespasiano Gonzaga at the end of the sixteenth century. Professor Francesca Cappelletti, our leading guide for this trip, expertly brought to life the enchanting frescoes at the Palazzo del Giardino and the architectural stage at the Teatro all'Antica.

We arrived in time for lunch in nearby Mantua at Palazzo Castiglioni, residence of the *Conti* Castiglioni, and only had to cross the town square to visit the stunning Andrea

Mantegna *Camera Pietà* and the commendable Giulio Romano drawings exhibition at the Palazzo Ducale. Quite a spectacular announcement awaited us as we gathered in front of the *Gonzaga Family in Adoration*, painted by Rubens for his first major patron in 1605: Arnout Balis proudly explained how a self-portrait of the artist, once part of this large canvas, very recently resurfaced and will soon be displayed at the Rubenshuis. The private performance at the Antegnati organ, dating from 1565, in the nearby Cappella Palatina proved to be a fitting tribute to this feat. At walking distance Mario and Gloria Levoni opened their architecturally surprising residence for a genial reception with Mantuan culinary specialities.

The next morning Marchesa Maria Giuseppina Sordi welcomed us in her marvellous Palazzo, built for her family in 1680 by the Flemish architect Frans Geffels and adorned with outstanding stucco decoration. An addition came in the form of our visit to Palazzo del Te with Giulio Romano's grandiose architecture, frescoes and oil paintings. *Ingegnier* Paolo Corbellani welcomed us to a delicious lunch at his Giulio Romano-designed house. From there we walked a short distance to the 1769 architectural gem of Teatro Bibiena, famous for young Mozart's recital and now also for Dora Janssen's impromptu tune on the stage's piano. The day concluded with a private visit to Palazzo d'Arco, followed by dinner with all of our Mantuan hosts at Il Cigno.

Our last morning in Mantua was devoted to the State Archives, where we could closely examine and read Rubens's letters to Duke Vincenzo I Gonzaga, hinting at a sometimes strained relationship between the artist and his patron. The bewildering Santuario della Beata Vergine Maria delle Grazie, at the outskirts of town and crammed with life-size ex-voto figures, dressed in clothes or armour, formed a dramatic end to our astounding tenth Field Trip edition, but not without a delicious lunch at the local and colourful Locanda delle Grazie.

With sincere thanks to Stefano Aluffi Pentini, Lieve Vandeputte and our Milanese and Mantuan hosts. | *Michel Ceuterick*

Dear Friends of the Rubenianum,

2019 has once again been a very intense year for the Rubenianum, with the publication of three new important volumes of the Corpus. This has only been possible thanks to the strenuous and painstaking efforts of the authors Valerie Herremans, Reinhold Baumstark, Guy Delmarcel and Nils Büttner, and of our Centrum team led by Arnout Balis and his colleagues Bert Schepers, Isabelle Van Tichelen and Brecht Vanoppen. The whole Rubens community, consisting of scholars, art-world professionals, students as well as enlightened amateurs, owe them warm thanks for their sustained commitment to this massive project.

At the time of creation of the Rubenianum Fund, we set the ambitious target to complete the entire Corpus by 2020. Despite a significantly enhanced publication rhythm (ten volumes in the last four years, as compared to thirty-one in the preceding forty-five years), it will not be possible to get there by the end of this year. Twelve volumes still remain to be published. Many manuscripts are in an advanced state of preparation, and we expect to publish another three volumes in 2020. At the current pace, the completion of the Corpus Rubenianum in 2023 seems realistic.

In 2019 we were able to count once again on the generosity of many donors – both new and existing. My heartfelt thanks to all of them! Also, the City of Antwerp has committed to additional funding, which is highly appreciated. Thanks to all this, the financial basis for the project is now almost fully secured for the coming two years. A final fundraising push to get us to completion will be launched later this year.

It looks as if the realization of the vision comes finally into sight as we start out on the sixth decade of this impressive scholarly adventure.

Thomas Leysen
Chairman, Rubenianum Fund

Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, part XIII.2

Subjects from History: The Decius Mus Series by Reinhold Baumstark and Guy Delmarcel



The two authors, Guy Delmarcel and Reinhold Baumstark, in front of one of Rubens's Decius Mus paintings.

It doesn't often happen that we can officially present a new *Corpus Rubenianum* publication right in front of its actual subject. Yet this was the case on 11 November 2019, when the new volume devoted to the tapestry cycle about the Roman consul Decius Mus was introduced to the public in the Rubens Gallery of the Liechtenstein Gartenpalais in Vienna, in the presence of the reigning Prince Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein – since 2009 the distinguished patron of our *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard* (CRLB).

The tapestry series was commissioned from Rubens in 1616 by a consortium consisting of two Flemish tapestry weavers and entrepreneurs and a Genoese gentleman. This was Rubens's first foray into the field of tapestry (many more such commissions would soon follow), and the artist made the spectacular full-scale paintings that provided models for the weavers, and which since 1692 have been part of the Liechtenstein Princely Collections.

Given the nature of the Decius series, at once a product of the textile arts and

a painterly enterprise characterized by Rubens's richness of invention and formal virtuosity, two authors were needed for a definitive study. We were fortunate indeed to find these authors in Reinhold Baumstark, a Rubens scholar *pur sang*, and Guy Delmarcel, the foremost specialist on Flemish tapestry.

Baumstark was for many years curator of the Princely Collections, and thus had the Decius Mus paintings, so to speak, within arm's reach, and he had already published extensively on the subject. For him, therefore, working on the present publication was evidently like coming home, indeed the crowning achievement of a lifetime. What Baumstark has now achieved with his contribution to the *Corpus Rubenianum* is not just a synthesis of his previous studies. Rather he set out to rethink his topic from all angles. One was the new technical study of the paintings, which helped him to formulate new hypotheses as to the division of labour within Rubens's workshop (including the question of the participation of Anthony van Dyck and of Jacques Jordaens). Another theme of his analysis, documented with a profusion of references to sources, visual as well as literary, has been how Rubens went about re-creating the world of the ancient Romans, paying attention to costume and armour, and to particular social customs

and religious rituals, while succinctly capturing the drama of a narrative of heroic grandeur.

Although the paintings in the Liechtenstein Princely Collections are works of art in their own right to which Rubens will have attributed an autonomous status, they were, as already noted, always intended to serve as models for tapestries. As Guy Delmarcel's study has revealed with a wealth of new material, they were notably successful in this respect, and were worked on looms not only in Brussels (where the first editions were created) but also in other cities, including Antwerp, Oudenaarde and Delft. For some scenes of this cycle more than twenty weavings can be counted.

Delmarcel ended his talk with a reminder to the audience that 11 November is St Martin's Day, in some regions of Flanders a children's feast day not unlike that of St Nicholas, commemorating the charity of the saint who divided his cloak in half to share it with a beggar. This prompted a further reminder to the audience – of the generosity of the sponsors of the Rubenianum Fund, without whose unstinting support we would not be publishing the *Corpus Rubenianum*, that unique sequence of more than fifty volumes devoted to the oeuvre of a single artist. | *Arnout Balis, Chairman, Centrum Rubenianum*



The audience listening to the authors' presentation: Prince Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein, in the centre, is flanked on the left by Thomas Leysen, Chairman of the Rubenianum Fund, and Koen Haverbeke, Representative of the Flemish Government, and on the right by Belgian Ambassador Ghislain D'hoop.

Rubenianum Fund Field trip to Mantua



Arnout Balis in front of Rubens's 1605 portrait of the *Gonzaga Family in Adoration* at the Palazzo Ducale, Mantua



Francesca Cappelletti guiding at the Palazzo del Giardino, Sabbioneta



Examining Rubens's letters held at the Archivio di Stato



Mario and Gloria Levoni welcoming the Rubenianum Fund members at their residence



Marchesa Sordi, art historian and author of a thesis on her family home, welcoming us in the courtyard of her city palace



Ingegnere Paolo Corbellani presiding at the lunch in his residence



The Teatro Bibiena with its architectural interior dating from 1769

The Connoisseurs' Tribune

A painting by Gillis Mostaert identified in the *Picture Gallery of Cornelis van der Geest*

Elise Boutsen*

A masterpiece from the Rubens House collection, *The Picture Gallery of Cornelis van der Geest* (fig.1), is currently undergoing restoration at the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA) in Brussels. This is an appropriate moment, therefore, for a new contribution on Willem van Haecht's (1593–1637) celebrated painting. The work illustrates the high-level visit of Archduke Albert (1559–1621) and the Infanta Isabella (1566–1633) to the home of the spice merchant and patron of the arts Cornelis van der Geest (1577–1638) some time between 15 and 27 August 1615. It was only some thirteen years later, however, in 1628, that the painter commemorated the event on panel.

Most of the paintings in the gallery are well known to us. We can, for example, pick out the *Virgin and Child* by Quinten Metsys (1465/66–1530) in the left foreground and Rubens's *Battle of the Amazons* against the rear wall. Yet there are others too which we have so far been unable to identify precisely. In some cases the originals might have been lost, with the result that we no longer recognize them; others remained below the radar for many years, so that we did not even know they existed. The catalogue for the 2009 exhibition 'Room for Art' attributed the colourful little landscape displayed to the upper left of the door, next to the garlands and the busts of Nero and Seneca (fig. 2), to the landscape painter Gillis Mostaert (1528–1598). Precisely which work it was could not, however, be determined, as Mostaert painted many apocalyptic scenes of this kind.

A very similar hellish landscape was auctioned at Sotheby's in London on 8 December 2016. In the right foreground, it shows Lot and his daughters fleeing the burning city of Gomorrah with the help of two angels (Genesis 19:1–29) (fig. 3). The work is signed with the monogram 'GM' and dated 1593. The fierce orange and yellow in the sky contrasts with the bright shades of blue and green, while dark plumes of smoke set off the intense colours. The yellow sky, lit up by flames, is reflected in the water. We find all of these elements in the miniature scene shown in the *Picture Gallery of Cornelis van der Geest*. The miniature and the signed landscape by Gillis Mostaert match down to the smallest detail, from the bends in the river to the way the smoke curls in the sky. It would appear, therefore, that Cornelis van der Geest owned this signed and dated panel with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

This landscape by one of Pieter Bruegel's contemporaries would not have been out of place in an art collection as prestigious as this, given that Mostaert's paintings were much sought-after in the early part of the seventeenth century. A *Peasant*



Fig. 1. Willem van Haecht, *The Picture Gallery of Cornelis van der Geest*, 1628, oil on panel, 102.5 × 137.5 cm. Rubenshuis, Antwerp, RHS 171

Kermis by Mostaert belonging to a certain Nicolaes Cornelis Cheeus, for instance, was valued at 250 florins in a 1614 inventory, compared to just 18 florins for a landscape by Gillis van Coninxloo (1544–1606/07) and 40 for one by Joos de Momper (1564–1635). Nevertheless, we cannot be entirely certain that this work belonged to Van der Geest's collection. The inventory of his estate has proved untraceable in the archives and so no written record of the collection has survived. What's more, the verisimilitude of picture gallery paintings like this has to be taken with a pinch of salt, given that prestige took precedence over documentary value. It is reasonable to assume, however, that the

work was circulating in Antwerp in 1628 and that it belonged to the artistic *crème de la crème* of the period.

* I would like to refer to the recent article by Alexander Marr in the *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 69 (2019) ('Ingenuity and discernment in *The cabinet of Cornelis van der Geest* [1628]'). Independently, we both recognized Gillis Mostaert's painting in Cornelis van der Geest's *kunstkammer*. Unfortunately, I only became aware of Marr's publication during the final stages of editing. Marr pays more attention to the interpretation and links Netherlandish 'fire paintings' to the 'fire of ingenuity', a consummate demonstration of pictorial wit.



Fig. 2. Detail from fig. 1



Fig. 3. Gillis Mostaert, *Lot and His Daughters Guided by Angels, the Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah beyond*, auctioned at Sotheby's, London, 8 December 2016, lot 119

Introducing Dr Marina Daiman, Rubenianum Fellow 2019–20



I am honoured to serve as the Rubenianum/ Belgian-American Educational Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow. My current project at the Rubenianum is devoted to the practice of self-repetition in the work of Rubens, set against the foil of early-modern art theory. It builds on material first explored in my dissertation.

While some aspects of repetition in early-modern art, such as imitation

The Rubenianum Lectures

Sunday, 22 March 2020, 11 am

AN VAN CAMP

Curator of Northern European Art at the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Oxford

Drawing after Antiquity. Flemish Artists in Italy

This talk will focus on the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century phenomenon of Flemish artists travelling to Italy to learn and draw inspiration from their Italian counterparts and the traces of antiquity there. Starting from a drawing at the Ashmolean by Jan Brueghel the Elder, *View of the Baths at Baiae*, this lecture will explore the practice of making drawings after antiquity and how they were subsequently used and distributed to a wider audience.

The lecture is in Dutch and takes place at the Rubenianum.

of and borrowing from other artists, have received sustained attention, the issue of *self*-replication deserves greater study. Both widespread and well documented, this phenomenon ranges from the re-use of specific motifs to the production of replicas of entire compositions; many instances of recycled motifs as well as all known replicas are meticulously catalogued in the *Corpus Rubenianum*.

My project is concerned with theoretical and philosophical considerations of the practice. In its broadest sense, it queries the nature of art and creative endeavour. It does so by approaching the issue in two ways: first, by training a close-up lens on Rubens's oeuvre to examine the artist's methods of recycling motifs as well as his practice of producing replicas; and second, by taking a wide-angle lens to investigate the written output of the era on the issue of invention and self-reproduction.

We have it on Rubens's own authority that he was concerned about self-repetition. In 1608 he wrote to the secretary of Vincenzo Gonzaga, the Duke of Mantua: 'I do not ... consider it fitting to my reputation that there should be in Rome two identical pictures by my hand.' The artist's solution was to sell one of the two paintings to Mantua; in this case his reputation would apparently remain unharmed. In view of the extensive practice of replication in Rubens's workshop, the artist's apprehension may come as a surprise. Yet it was, I argue, a persistent concern that was common for particularly self-conscious artists, including Artemisia Gentileschi or Nicolas Poussin. I recover attitudes to self-repetition from a variety of written sources ranging from art treatises to artists' correspondence and even poetry, while finding further confirmation in Rubens's artistic practice and his approach to recycling his own motifs.

Thus my larger interest lies in uncovering the tensions between the early-modern ideas of originality and reproduction. Did invention have to be novel and to what extent? What was the range of attitudes among

artists to the issue? Did patrons or viewers remark on it? What was the origin of these attitudes? Through a close analysis of works of art and related writings, I intend to contribute to a better understanding of Rubens's creative process and early-modern ideas of replication and originality, which have long been hindered by both modern concepts of uniqueness of artistic expression and postmodern biases for reproduction and derivation. As a fellow at the Rubenianum, I am grateful to have access to some of the best resources in this field, and especially delighted to further explore these questions with the support and encouragement of distinguished experts that are my remarkable colleagues.

Bert Watteeuw taking his PhD

On 28 October 2019, Rubenianum colleague Bert Watteeuw, who is Project Leader for our Masterplan, successfully defended his dissertation *Capita Selecta. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Culture of the Portrait in Early Modern Flanders* at KU Leuven. A festive moment and a (first) laurel on many years of advanced, original portrait studies.



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