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The Rubenshuis receives a long-term loan from the Rijksmuseum

A subject from the literature of classical antiquity that Rubens portrayed more than once is that of Cimon and Pero, or *Caritas Romana* (Roman Charity). He treated this theme, which he painted at least five times, more than any other subject from ancient history. Rubens kept a version in his own collection, possibly even the painting now in the Rijksmuseum, although this is not entirely certain. At the end of September, this work will be sent from Amsterdam to the Rubenshuis as a long-term loan.

The story of Cimon and Pero goes back to the Roman historian Valerius Maximus (c. 20 BCE–c. 50 CE). In his *Dicta et facta*, V.iv.7: *De pietate in parentes* (On piety towards parents), a volume of historical anecdotes arranged according to the virtues and vices they are thought to illustrate, the author tells of a certain Cimon, who has been sentenced to death by starvation. Cimon's daughter, Pero, who is allowed to visit him, keeps her father alive by secretly giving him her breast. She is discovered, but her exceptional act of filial piety makes such an impression on the jailers that they free her father. The theme appealed to Rubens and other humanists as an *exemplum pietatis*, but it also had an unmistakable erotic charge that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists exploited to the full.

In the surviving versions by Rubens, the story is situated in a bare prison cell, its crudeness accentuated by the roughly hewn stone (*rustica*) to which the semi-nude Cimon is chained. In both the earliest-known version in the Hermitage, which is dated to around 1612, and the work soon to be received on loan, only father and daughter are in the cell. In the third painting, in Siegen, which is nearly identical to the Amsterdam painting, a naked child, sleeping, has been added. The two latter versions, both dating from the 1630s, also feature two soldiers, spying on Cimon and Pero through the barred window, thus adding a touch of voyeuristic tension.

This painting can be seen either as seventeenth-century porn, masquerading as respectably classical subject-matter, or as a scene of filial piety: a dutiful daughter helping her father in the only way she can. In any case, it is a controversial subject whose interpretation depends on the viewer's inclinations. *Ben van Beneden*



Rubens's *Cimon and Pero* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) on extended loan to the Rubenshuis starting September 2020.

Living in a ghost town

Who would ever have imagined that a vibrant city like Antwerp could suddenly come to a halt and become a haunted town? Fortunately, we are better off today than our fellow citizens some 400 years ago, when the Black Death ravaged Europe. The people of Antwerp knew about its high mortality but had no means to contain the disease. Some religious orders built pesthouses for the sick and their contaminated dwellings were sealed or burned. Our Lady of Antwerp led an army of saints that the desperate population invoked for relief. Well-to-do citizens fled to the countryside.

In Rubens's time Antwerp was a dirty city, an open sewer where rats and cats, dogs and pigs crawled in the mud and rubbish of the streets, among a crowd of people in rags. It would take another two and a half centuries before basic concepts of hygiene and waste management were understood.

Rubens's family was not spared from the plague. His first wife Isabella Brant probably died of it, as well as his 12-year-old daughter Clara Serena. Anthony van Dyck also had his share. On his arrival in Palermo in 1624, there was an outbreak of the bubonic plague and the city went into lockdown – for a year.

The 2020 confinement had a great impact on the townsfolk.

Walking for hours in Antwerp's deserted streets in the past few months was sheer surrealism. Without the noisy traffic, nasty fumes and hordes of tourists, one suddenly came to realize how comforting silence could be. One could hear numerous birds singing and the skies were immensely wide and blue. I rediscovered the Botanical Garden and spent whole afternoons there, reading under a blooming magnolia tree and chatting with people I didn't know. I was one among many who took much pleasure in the smallest things. Now that Antwerp is crowded again with rowdy swarms of shoppers, every so often I am filled with nostalgia for those very special lockdown days.

Cécile Kruyfhoft

The Rubens House receives the international Europa Nostra Award for the conservation of its garden screen and pavilion by Ben van Beneden

Anyone entering the Rubenshuis today cannot help but be impressed by the sight of the garden screen that forms the impressive passageway from the inner courtyard to the garden, and of the eye-catching pavilion, visible through the central arch, which Rubens designed with the aim of creating a sensational garden prospect. Both structures – the only parts of Rubens's original house to survive nearly intact – were designed by the artist in the 1610s; they mark the introduction, north of the Alps, of a new kind of architecture inspired by Italian examples. In the last century, the garden screen and pavilion suffered severe damage from both natural weathering and ill-advised restorations. After much-needed restoration work lasting nearly two years, both structures emerged from the scaffolding in the spring of 2019. In June of this year, the completed project was crowned with the prestigious Europa Nostra Award.

The garden screen is a good example of the then-common ambition to use architectural forms of antiquity, which were considered timeless and perfect, and adapt them to contemporary needs and possibilities. Here, in fact, Rubens applied the basic blueprint of a Roman triumphal arch. In sixteenth-century Italy, this motif was frequently used for town gates and similar structures, such as impressive garden gates; it also featured in the inner courtyards of *palazzi*, where antique statues were displayed. Both of these uses are combined in the garden screen of Rubens's house. The screen's uniqueness, however, is mainly due to the use of unexpected architectural details that were based on inventions of Michelangelo and several of his Italian contemporaries. For example, the form of the central arch derives directly from the Porta Pia (1563), Michelangelo's famous city gate on the Quirinale in Rome, while the massive bands of rustication with which the Doric columns are fastened to the stone wall behind them are reminiscent of the architecture of Giulio Romano. The most striking details of Michelangelo's papal gate were the tripartite segmental arch and the broken pediment. Like Michelangelo, Rubens used these inventive architectonic details as a powerful means of heightening the *dignità* of the garden screen, thus lending expression to the lofty ideals that the structure was meant to proclaim. The *serliana*, too – an architectural element that Rubens used in the façade of his garden pavilion – was still a feature of true distinctiveness in the early seventeenth century and was generally reserved for exceptional commissions.

Rubens's house more or less retained its original appearance until the mid-eighteenth century, but after that it underwent sweeping

renovations. The only seventeenth-century elements that survived were the garden screen and the pavilion. After the city of Antwerp bought the property in 1937, the house and studio were historically reconstructed from 1937 to 1946 under the supervision of the city architect Emiel Van Averbeke. Once the museum had opened in 1946, however, problems soon surfaced with regard to the conservation of the garden screen and pavilion. The stone used for the garden screen – chiefly types of sandstone and Belgian bluestone – displayed increasing deterioration, as well as cracks and fractures. This damage was the result of years of exposure to rain and the infiltration of water. Since the restoration work of the 1930s and 1940s, rainwater had evidently been able to penetrate deep into the structure through a seam extending along the entire length of the balustrade. The restoration architect had, moreover, stripped the garden screen of its protective paint layers and removed the original coat of plaster from the pavilion. The repairs carried out in 1969–70 only exacerbated the damage to the original sculpture work decorating these structures. To prevent further decay and material loss, a wooden roof covered with slate was placed over the garden screen in 1996, and architectural-historical and structural research was begun.

In 2009 the museum set up a Belgian–Dutch restoration advisory committee,¹ which gave fresh impetus to the scientific research. The findings of this committee formed the scientific foundation of the restoration concept.²

The objective of the conservation work was to preserve and protect to the utmost the original material and to offer today's visitors the same experience as that enjoyed by the early viewers of these structures. The interventions also had to be reversible. This approach to the restoration completely ruled out any reconstruction, which would have caused even more loss of the original materials. Two options were considered that would allow us to preserve the garden screen in situ: to repaint it in line with historical tradition or to take protective measures. In the seventeenth century it was common to give outside stone walls a colour-wash in the same hue as the stone; this paint layer had a protective function and also served to bring the building material nearer to perfection. But not a trace of seventeenth-century paint could be found on the garden screen. The oldest remains of paint dated from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Older paint layers might have been burned off in previous restorations, but no proof of this was found. It was partly for this reason that we opted for conservative restoration, combined with a protective roof.

Light cleaning mitigated large differences in colour and produced a more tranquil effect, in which the architecture could again come to the fore. The outside walls have retained their historical patina. Otherwise the interventions on both structures were confined to the consolidation of the damaged stone, the correction of the pointing, and the structural

(continued on page 7)



Remembering Matthias Jacque

Bert Watteuw

Introduction: Tracing a footnote to the history of portraiture

A decade ago, I stumbled on a black-and-white photograph of an exceptional portrait in the treasure trove that is the photographic library of the Royal Institute for Art History in Brussels. I was immediately struck by this highly unusual portrait. Who was this footless man whose name – Matthias Jacque – and place of residence – Liège – are inscribed above his likeness, dated 1654? Why is he represented in such a way that his condition seems to be the very subject of the portrait? Surely this ‘unflattering’ and documentary approach must be intentional, for the artist could easily have opted for a half-length format? And why is the portrait held in the Liège State Archives?

The paper trail was flimsy and an initial search in Liège only revealed that the portrait was a piece of evidence in a lawsuit held before the highest court of appeal in the Holy Roman Empire, the *Reichskammergericht* in Speyer. The plot having thickened in such an intriguing manner, and the story now promising all the dirt and drama of high-stakes litigation, I embarked on a more thorough probe with the help of the Liège archivists, who were as keen to rediscover the portrait as I was. Our efforts proved fruitless and it was assumed that the portrait went up in flames with large chunks of the Liège archives during the bombing of the city by the *Luftwaffe* on the eve of Christmas 1944. Irritatingly overzealous, I then discovered that the photograph I had initially seen in Brussels had in fact been taken during the 1950s. With renewed vigour, I returned to Liège for a few more wild and increasingly frustrated stabs at the archive. I made a big fuss over the loss of the portrait, but it seemed that Matthias Jacque had simply disappeared without a trace.

I have since sieved through thousands and thousands of portraits but never again did I come across anything even resembling the elusive Liège portrait. All serious art historians have ‘phantom paintings’ in their heads: masterpieces whose current whereabouts are unknown, paintings with a unique iconography that were stolen from a local church, pictures destroyed during disasters, man-made or natural. Such works are often only known through precious photographic records and these can become firmly imprinted in the art historian’s mind. For years, the portrait of Matthias Jacque would haunt me in this way.

In 2018, thanks to the generous support of the Baillet-Latour Fund, a conservation campaign was initiated to save the remaining fire- and water-damaged archives of the Imperial Chamber held in Liège. The project, led by Dr Laetizia Puccio, resulted in a book, published in 2019 by the State Archives of Belgium. It caught my eye – primed in the



Fig.1 Anonymous, *Portrait of Matthias Jacque*, 1654. Body colour on paper, 41.5 × 52 cm. State Archives, Liège.

manner described above – in the most violent manner. On its cover was a full-colour image of the portrait of Matthias Jacque. My heart jumped but after having frantically torn off the plastic wrapper and having searched manically for more on Matthias, it became clear that while the rediscovered portrait graced its cover, the book mysteriously didn’t disclose anything about it or its extraordinary sitter. When I contacted Laetizia, she revealed that my search had been remembered (perhaps because of the fuss I had made) but that my name had not. Pleased to have finally connected, she told me in a touching spirit of collegiality that while Matthias Jacque had become an unexpected poster-boy for the Liège State Archives, the portrait – and the case – were mine to explore.

I first came eye to eye with the portrait in the rue du Chéra on a day so scorching hot that the Liège State Archives, perched on a steep hill above the city’s spectacular Calatrava-designed railway station, were forced to close the public reading room to those visitors brave enough to face the climb in the heatwave. It was an emotional moment. Settling into an office provided and equipped

with a fan by Laetizia to piece together Matthias Jacque’s story from more than a thousand pages of archival material, nearly all of it in Latin, I had no idea where our serendipitous meeting would lead.

‘In secundis et amputandis lignis’ – A felled family tree

On 29 October 1624, Leonard Jacque and his wife Margareta Devaux held their newborn son in baptism above the famous font that gave the baptismal church of Notre-Dame-aux-Fonts its name. Nestled against the southern flank of St Lambert’s Cathedral, the building, and the more imposing neighbour against which it leant, were destroyed during the Liège revolution. The font luckily survives in the capitular church of St Barthélemy. Leonard and Margareta had a girl, Maria, baptized above the same font three years earlier. Three further siblings would follow suit: Catharina, Margaretha and Leonard jr. Both the Jacque and Devaux families had been active in the timber trade for generations, amassing small fortunes in the business of drying and trading construction wood. A 1553 view of

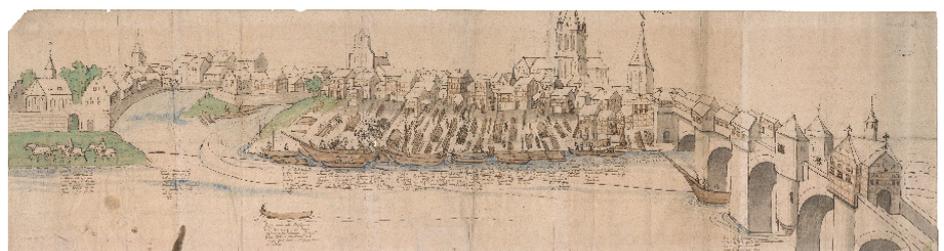


Fig.2 Anonymous, *View of the Quai sur Meuse* (detail), 1553. Pen and ink and watercolour on paper, 130 × 34 cm. State Archives, Liège.

the *Quai de Meuse* shows where the *mairniers* or timber traders conducted their business, on a wharf adjacent to the *Pont des Arches* (fig. 2). Liège's geographic position at the confluence of the Meuse, Ourthe and Vesdre rivers meant that the city served as an excellent logistics hub. Trees felled in the densely wooded upstream valleys of the Ardennes were chained together to be driven to the wharf, where their bark was removed and the logs were cured and sawn into posts and beams by the *mairniers*. The Meuse provided those working in this rough business with access to a huge market in the lower-lying river delta. With its jumble of timber-framed riverside houses, the 1553 view clearly indicates how important this industry was to the fabric of early modern cities. Business was good and at times logs would be driven down in such quantities that they would block all passage under the *Pont des Arches*.

The Thirty Years' War didn't spare Liège, precariously situated where the French and Imperial spheres of influence met. In the mid-1630s, troop movements and mercenaries brought down the combined scourges of war and pestilence on the city, and the children of Leonard and Margareta were orphaned in 1636. Matthias was 12 years old, Maria 15, Catharina 11, Margaretha 8 and Leonard 4. Matthias, Catharina and Margaretha were taken in by their maternal grandfather, Leonard Devaux, while Maria and Leonard moved into the riverside home of their paternal uncle, Paul Jacque.

'tenella aetate' –

Teen spirit in early modern Liège

Due to his advanced age, Leonard Devaux lacked the physical strength to discipline the disobedient grandson entrusted to his care. After a theft from a servant, it was decided that Matthias would join his older sister and younger brother in Paul Jacque's home.

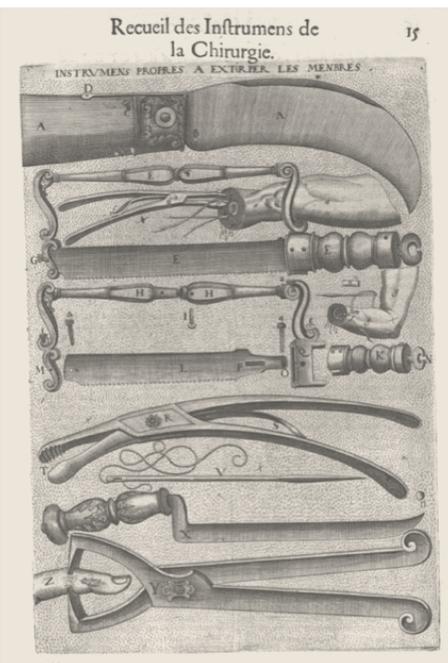


Fig. 3 *Instrumens propres a extirper les membres*, from Jacques Guillemeau, *La Chirurgie française*, Paris 1594.

The house faced *Sur Meuse*, an important commercial artery in the city, on one end, and the bank of the river on the other. Maria was put in charge of the household of her unmarried uncle and the care of young Leonard, while Matthias was to toil on the wharf. Witnesses testified that the boy worked hard from a tender age, pulling logs out of the water in all weathers, sometimes appearing blackened beyond recognition from the dirty and strenuous work of scraping bark off tree trunks. While some of the allegations later put against Matthias Jacque were false and in part based on the (visual) discourse on disability of the period, it can be established without a doubt that his adolescence was eventful. By drinking, smoking, running away from home, keeping bad company in disreputable taverns, and stealing from his uncle, Matthias twice drove Paul to have the boy confined in the municipal prison by Liège's gaoler: for ten days in February 1639 and for nearly a month during the summer of the same year, Matthias was locked away. The second term ended with a spectacular rooftop escape.

'au quell temps il faisoit extremement froid' – Christmas 1639

Exasperated by Matthias's antics, which he feared damaged his reputation, Paul decided, after once again retrieving his drunk charge from an inn, to take matters into his own hands. Matthias's ankles were shackled and the 15-year-old boy was locked into the cellar of his uncle's riverside home for eleven days and nights over the Christmas period of 1639. He had no blanket and wasn't dressed for the arctic cold that seeped into the damp cellar as hail and sleet settled on the frozen river. Matthias's pleas for liberation went unanswered, even as the icy metal fetters bit into his flesh. When reproved for this harsh punishment by worried neighbours, who also testified that the children were treated like servants and that they weren't fed properly, Paul answered that they should mind their own business and that he was teaching the recalcitrant boy a valuable lesson. When it became clear that Matthias was in serious pain and that his condition was worsening, the boy was taken up into the kitchen, where he was to warm his feet, now chained to a trammel hook in the fireplace. As medical treatises of the period state, such sudden heating only aggravated the situation. The festering blisters and wounds started spreading a horrible smell through the kitchen as Matthias's feet went numb and blackened. When a doctor was finally called upon, the flesh of one foot had already partly let go and the offensive extremities, still chained together, were hidden from sight under a linen napkin.

'Je suis plus accoustumé de soijer que vous' – The surgical procedure

The wars that ravaged early modern European cities and bodies were also the drivers of advances in surgery that were disseminated in a swelling tide of illustrated medical treatises. Procedures for amputations were established through battlefield medicine in the sixteenth

century by surgeons such as Hans von Gersdorff and Ambroise Paré. By 1640, François Blavier, the Liège surgeon who was to amputate Matthias's feet, had access to both specialist literature by the likes of Wilhelm Fabricius von Hilden and Jacques Guillemeau, some of which was quoted in the lawsuit, and to a set of specialist instruments. Blavier's deadpan deposition is at once the most gruesome and the most comical material that I have ever come across in an archive. Upon lifting the linen napkin, he at once realized that swift action was required if the boy's life was to be saved, as gangrene would quickly spread up his legs and poison him to death. It still took Blavier a few days to convince Paul Jacque of the necessity of the operation. When confronted with the stark choice between life and death, Paul reportedly agreed to the expensive procedure by saying: *'Ha'il vaut mieux qu'il soit sans pieds que sans ame'*. Without going into too much detail, I feel that I cannot spare you this excerpt from Blavier's surreal situation sketch: *'Paul Jacque, oncle dudit Mathias, lequel tenoit les iambes dudit Mathias son nepueux pendant que le deposant luij soyijt, et come le deposant avoit de la peine de luij soijer en prennant sur la bon os, icelluij Paulus Jacque dit au deposant ça ça Mre France, ie suis plus accoustumé de soijer que vous, ie feraij mieux que vous, sur quoiij le deposant repartiit ouij bien Monsr. a soijer bois, mais non pas a cette affaire icij, et continuat le deposant à soijer les iambes du dit Mathias le quel avoit grand couraige disant le deposant que ne fusse cela se fusse un ieunehomme mort.'*

'Lites spirae spirant, non expirant' –

The legal proceedings

While the intense drama of the surgical procedure is incisive and brief, the road to recovery and justice proves long and winding. After remaining in the home of Paul Jacque for a further year, where he required extensive medical care, Matthias was taken back in by his mother's family. It was with his maternal uncle, Gaspard Devaux, that from 1647 on he would sue the heirs of Paul Jacque, who had by then married and died. Paul's widow had meanwhile remarried and it is this couple, Anna Doupeye and Baudouin de Roulloux – entirely unrelated to Matthias Jacque but now in control of a large share of the Jacque inheritance – whom Matthias and Gaspard claim compensation from for the loss of Matthias's feet. The case was tried in a local Liège court twice, and Roulloux was ordered to cover all Jacque's medical expenses and to compensate him for the loss of income he had suffered due to his reduced condition. Roulloux denied all liability given that he married Paul Jacque's widow long after the events of Christmas 1639, and that she hadn't yet been present in the household then either. A long legal battle ensued to establish both the degree of Matthias Jacque's incapacity, and to agree on an appropriate compensation. The episcopal court of Cologne was involved, it became unclear which court was competent for the dispute, and the case wound up before the highest court of appeal in the Holy Roman Empire, the *Reichskammergericht* in Speyer. The court was famous for the snail-like pace at

which it reached its verdicts, and it was said that cases tried in Speyer just spiralled and never expired. Here too, litigation started in 1652 petered out in 1687 and no verdict was reached.

'Incapax' – A clean cut between ability and disability?

If the lack of the retaliatory clean cut of a clear verdict is frustrating to us today, how disheartening must it have been to Matthias himself. He was made to display, and humiliate, himself repeatedly before the Liège court to establish the exact nature of his condition. He was even accused of having caught a disease off prostitutes that caused the loss of his feet. All the prejudice of contemporary moralizing discourse on disability, in which physical defects were equated with moral shortcomings, was held against him by the lawyer for the defence. Early on, Matthias, who had learnt to ride on horseback to increase his mobility, had threatened his uncle with pistols and he had later also confronted witnesses who were to testify for the defence. His anger and resentment are palpable throughout the case, but so are his resilience and grit. He trained to become a professional embroiderer but his stumps healed slowly and he was plagued with pain when sitting up for long periods on end. As blood vessels in the stumps were particularly sensitive, he needed to lie down at regular intervals to relieve the pressure and remained in need of continuing medical care. Nonetheless, Matthias lived independently, assisted by a servant who helped him to get on and off his horse and a maid who did his shopping and prepared his food.

The reams of documents produced during the lawsuit form a rare lengthy articulation of what it meant to be 'disabled' in the early modern period. The plaintiffs state that Matthias is excluded from all honest or lucrative secular and religious job opportunities due to his condition. Embroidery is poorly rewarded hard work so it cannot make up for the loss of income. The defence on the other hand claims that Matthias is not poor at all, and hence has no need for compensation. They claim that he is perfectly capable of learning a liberal art, but that he is simply too lazy to do so. What transpires very clearly from the case is that disability is not just a medical condition, but a social one too that is negotiated in human interaction. In that sense, historian Irina Metzler distinguishes physical impairment, a bodily condition, from disability, a cultural construct.

'The history of being on display' – Imagining dis/ability

Representations of people with a disability with which art historians are more familiar, tend to be the products of that cultural construct, as Henri-Jacques Stiker has shown in a trailblazing 1982 study. They show people with a disability as amusing decorations in the margins of illuminated manuscripts or as crooks who fake a limp or a hump to fool unwitting citizens into handing out alms.



Fig. 4 Master of Alkmaar, *The Seven Works of Mercy, Feeding the Hungry* (detail), 1504. Oil on panel, 101 x 54 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

These charlatans are avoiding the straight and narrow road of moral rectitude, their deviant bodies are the vessels of devious minds. In other cases, those who need support are reduced to a supporting role, a marginalized group included at the edge of a composition as a foil to the virtue and beauty of protagonists who are more centrally positioned (fig. 4). In religious painting, their condition is presented as a hindrance to be miraculously overcome, to be cured in faith. In yet other cases, images of people with a disability are collected merely for their novelty value as records of 'monstrous births' or 'natural curiosities'. In short, disability was generally defined by able-bodied persons, who often equated it with destitution, laziness, vice and dependency. While its depiction tends to avoid individuality, it often testifies to a morbid and voyeuristic fascination for the specifics of differing medical conditions. As Rosemarie Garland-Thomas, one of the foremost historians of disability, noted in 2001: 'The history of disabled people in the western world is in part the history of being on display, of being visually conspicuous while being politically and socially erased.'

Despite this apt observation, art historians have been slow to engage with the burgeoning field of disability studies. While the growing body of work published by social, cultural and medical historians is indeed eye-opening, often these studies are sparsely, poorly and repetitively illustrated. Art historians have

a unique contribution to make by calling attention to a broad and diverse visual discourse on disability and to an admittedly smaller yet important group of historic representations of and by individual people with a disability. Moreover, by tracing the careers of artists with a disability, they can shift attention from disability to ability. Rudi Ekkart's 2014 exhibition *Deaf, Dumb & Brilliant. Johannes Thopas, Master Draughtsman* added a Dutch name to a growing list of rehabilitated artists such as the calligrapher Thomas Schweiker



Fig. 5 Sarah Biffen, *Self-Portrait*, c.1821. Watercolour and body colour on ivory, 124 x 103 mm. Sotheby's London, 5 December 2019, lot 365.



Fig. 6 Anthony van Dyck, *Antoine de Tassis*, c. 1629–34. Oil on canvas, 126 × 90 cm. Liechtenstein Princely Collections, Vaduz.

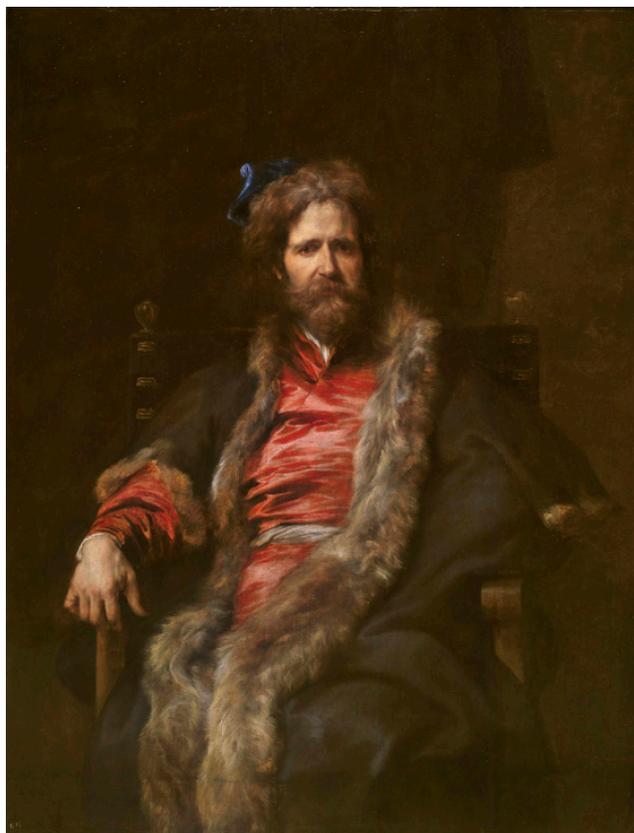


Fig. 7 Anthony van Dyck, *Marten Ryckaert*, c. 1630. Oil on canvas, 148 × 113 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

and the micrographer and performer Matthias Buchinger, to whom a thrilling exhibition was devoted in the Metropolitan Museum in 2016. Other recent projects have focused on the print collection of London's Royal College of Physicians or on a single portrait of a severely disabled man in Schloss Ambras. A further exhibition at Bremen's Haus der Wissenschaft was the result of a research project led by Dr Cordula Nolte. These projects are often the fruit of a collaborative effort involving academics, curators and community activists. Though perhaps not suited for a blockbuster show, these often modestly-sized images prove the continuing relevance of art of the early modern period to contemporary audiences. They, and the stories they hold, can touch our visitors in ways a masterpiece perhaps could not.

In December 2019, a self-portrait by the miniaturist Sarah Biffen sold at auction for £137,500, way above its estimate of £1,200–1,800 (fig. 5). The ongoing reappraisal clearly reflects changes in society. The museum is one of the arenas in which debates on inclusion and representation are publicly played out. We can only hope that efforts to increase physical accessibility through universal design will soon be matched by equal efforts to remedy the underrepresentation of people with a disability in museum galleries by means of acquisitions, loans and exhibitions. A rich spectrum of strategies of display can be teased out of the corpus of portraits of people with a disability. Even the most attentive museum visitor might not notice that Antoine de Tassis, as portrayed by

Anthony van Dyck, in fact missed his left arm (fig. 6). By contrast, Van Dyck's colleague, the landscape painter Marten Ryckaert, opted to emphatically display the same defect in a portrait by the same artist (fig. 7). On a print after the portrait, Ryckaert is advertised as an '*unimanus Pictor*', a one-handed painter. Similar impairments were in many cases milked and marketed by artists, who in a sense displayed themselves as curiosities, an effective strategy for survival of many talented people with disabilities in the early modern period throughout Europe. Sarah Biffen's self-portrait offers a titillating reversal, as it is the artist who is looking at us, sitting behind her easel, a brush pinned to her sleeve, ready to capture our miniaturized likeness. It is our way of looking/gazing/staring at her that is put on display here. She is firmly in control of the situation, of her own image, and of that of her clients. Her self-portrait of about 1821 is a testament not to incapacitation but to ability.

In conclusion: Phantom limbs

The 1654 portrait of Matthias Jacque is an important addition to this complicated history of display. Its maker remains anonymous and its artistic value is admittedly limited, but it is a significant historic document nonetheless. Matthias Jacque is presented as a gentleman in fashionable attire; even his soled kneepads are stylish. His pose is almost classical, calling to mind portraits of kneeling donors. Without the lower half, the likeness would honour all the conventions of secular portraiture, including the cocky 'Renaissance elbow' that

is so typical of male portraiture of the early modern period. The artist took care to include a gold band set with a diamond on the little finger of Jacque's left hand. This is no destitute man, not a beggar, a supporting act or a foil for someone else's virtue or beauty. He might be on display but he is so by choice and he is looking his intended viewer, a judge at the highest court in the Holy Roman Empire, straight in the eye. This self-sufficient, strong characterization in itself makes the portrait rare. What makes it even more special is that it in fact served as a mobility aid, a prosthetic that travelled to Speyer in Jacque's stead. This singular portrait is not just a representation of a footless man, it legitimately represented him and it formed an integral part of his well-documented legal struggle for compensation. The case is a poignant reminder of how crucial issues of visual representation are to the emancipatory struggles of minority groups.

Matthias Jacque died in 1662 without leaving behind a will. His younger brother Leonard was his only remaining close relation. I discovered many more portraits of people with a disability while researching the case, hidden in storage, sometimes unpublished, like the invisible phantom limbs of portraiture. It is by patiently locating, identifying and studying these images that we can add further faces and voices to the emerging (art) history of early modern disability. In sharing these stories with museum audiences we can retrieve what was erased to rewrite an often painful and uncomfortable 'history of being on display'. This, to me, seems to be the only effective way of remembering Matthias Jacque.

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interventions necessary for short- and long-term conservation. The wooden, slate-covered roof over the garden screen has been replaced by a self-supporting butterfly canopy of glass, which makes it possible, once again, to experience this structure in its authentic dimensions and lighting conditions.

The conservation problems posed by the pavilion involved the tactility of the finish. Disturbing elements included the thick layer of plaster applied in 1969 to the back wall and façade, and the poorly integrated finishing coat on the statue of Bacchus, both of which detracted significantly from its appearance. The layer of plaster was removed and replaced by a thin plaster coating based on seventeenth-century examples; the protective coating on the Bacchus was removed, as a result of which the stone statues once again present themselves as a group. The same approach was thus used in the restoration of both the garden pavilion and the garden screen: conservation, consolidation and the recovery of their historical appearance. It is, in particular, this sensitive and conservative approach to the restoration that earned the praise of the international jury.

- 1 The scientific research was carried out by TNO (The Netherlands Organisation for applied technical research), TU Delft (Technical University Delft) and KIK/IRPA (Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage, Brussels), who were members of the Advisory Committee.
- 2 The restoration concept was developed and executed by MAAT_WERK Architects, in collaboration with Lode De Clercq.



Step by Step: Visualizing and Asserting Power in Netherlandish Joyous Entries

A Study Day scheduled originally for 17 April 2020, the 385th anniversary of the Joyous Entry of Cardinal-Infant Ferdinand of Spain into Antwerp, will focus on these ephemeral, spectacular and artistically ingenious events that shaped and transformed the early modern cities of the Spanish Netherlands. The decorations for the *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi* in 1635 were designed by Peter Paul Rubens. The event brings together the leading scholars of this field of art and ritual history whose contributions have made it possible to gain a deeper understanding

of the early modern festivities held in the Netherlands to assert and negotiate power between the ruler and his subjects. Together with (young) colleagues and specialists from adjacent disciplines, we aim to discuss the challenges and opportunities of studying such significant moments in history.

This Study Day, held at the Rubenianum, is postponed to early December 2020 due to the current travel restrictions. Further information will follow as soon as possible. Current ticket holders will be contacted via email.



Monogrammist MHVH, *Joyous Entry of the Duke of Anjou in Antwerp on 19 February 1582*. Oil on panel, 61.5 x 82.5 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, SK-A-4867.

Coronavirus COVID-19 update

The Rubenianum was temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The reading room reopened Monday 11 May.

“RUBENIANUM READING ROOM REOPENED 11 MAY. The Rubenianum takes responsibility in preventing the further spread of the coronavirus COVID-19. That is why our research institute was closed until 10 May 2020. The reading room of the Rubenianum has reopened on Monday 11 May, under stricter conditions: “You are welcome from Monday to Friday, between 9 and 12 a.m. and 1 and 4 p.m. Reservation is mandatory since seats are limited. Reserve your seat via mail before 3 p.m. of the previous workday. Please wait until our colleagues confirm your reservation. “Order all books and documentation you want to consult in advance through the collection catalogue, no later than 8 a.m. of the same day. “The use of a face mask is mandatory. Please bring your own. “The Rubenianum is organizing a digital library service to meet your research needs. Do not hesitate to contact us via rubenianum@antwerpen.be”

The Rubenianum Lectures

Sunday, 20 September 2020, 11 a.m.

Prof. Filip Vermeylen
Erasmus Universiteit, Rotterdam

*The art of working together:
artistic partnerships in Antwerp in
the 16th and 17th centuries*

In this period Antwerp seemed to have a patent on thorough collaboration among artists. Famous examples include the artistic dialogues that Rubens engaged in with such famous painters as Frans Snijders and Jan Brueghel I, but these practices were already in fashion at the beginning of the 16th century.

The lecture is in Dutch and takes place at the Rubenianum

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