

# The Rubenianum Quarterly

2021

## From limbo to Venice, then to London and the Rubenshuis



Rubens, *Portrait of a Lady Holding a Chain*, c. 1603–06. Canvas, 81.3 × 66 cm. The Klesch Collection

especially in the lady's dress, and the ground layers left uncovered along the edges of the painted surface suggest that it was left unfinished.

This unidentified lady, seen in three-quarter view, is among Rubens's most assertive sitters. Infused with character and charisma, she emerges from the dark background, commanding our attention with her wide-eyed, searching gaze. Her palpable presence is further enhanced by her glowing face – one can almost sense the blood pulsing beneath her skin – and prominent features. Although she seems sufficiently reserved to be an aristocrat, she is neither engaging nor aloof – her likeness lacks the *hauteur* characteristic of aristocratic portraits. Rather, she projects herself as an independent character, meeting the viewer as an equal. The sitter, whoever she was, evidently fascinated Rubens who, at the time, was still very much a young and emerging artist. The intensity with which he evokes the woman's personality testifies to his intelligence as a portraitist.

The fact that her style of dress – particularly the sleeve and the throne-like ruff rising to a point above and behind her head – is consistent with Spanish fashions of the early 1600s suggests the possibility that Rubens painted this portrait during his diplomatic mission to Spain for Vincenzo I Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, between April 1603 and January 1604. In letters written from Valladolid, the artist alludes to portraits of ladies of the court commissioned by Vincenzo for his gallery of beautiful women. Unfortunately, no such portraits survive, if indeed they ever existed. Alternatively, Rubens may have painted this portrait in Genoa, where he stayed from December 1605 until mid-1606. It was in that important harbour city open to Spanish influence that he revealed himself to be a brilliant and innovative portraitist.

This beautiful portrait will be on long-term loan to the Rubenshuis from 1 May. | Ben van Beneden

A highlight of the 2019 exhibition at the Palazzo Ducale in Venice ('From Titian to Rubens. Masterpieces from Flemish Collections'), this ravishing *Portrait of a Lady Holding a Chain* is arguably one of the most exciting Rubens discoveries of the past decade and perhaps the finest portrait by the artist remaining in private hands. The picture is datable to the beginning of Rubens's career, and was probably painted either during his short trip from Mantua to Spain (between April 1603 and January 1604), or not long afterwards in Genoa, where he resided from December 1605 until mid-

1606. The sketchy handling,

## Towards new premises

Word is out: in March, plans for a new building for the Rubens House and the Rubenianum, designed by Robbrecht & Daem architecten and located at Hopland 13, were presented to the world. The building will serve as visitor entrance to the entire site, and accommodate visitor facilities such as a bookshop, a café and an experience centre. The present absence of such facilities had led to an initial funding by Visit Flanders, which, in turn, incited the City of Antwerp to address all infrastructural needs on site. These include several structural challenges that the Rubenianum has faced for decades, such as the need for climate-controlled storage for the expanding research collections. The new building will have state-of-the-art storage rooms on four levels, as well as two library floors with study places, in a light and energy-efficient architecture. The public reading room on the second floor will be accessible to all visitors via an eye-catching spiral staircase, and will bring the Rubenianum collections within (visual and physical) reach of all, after their somewhat hidden life behind the garden wall. For the first time, more books and documentation boxes will be available in open shelves, with some space to showcase collection pieces. Study places will have a majestic outlook on Rubens's garden, which will receive a more historically underpinned baroque layout. The library on the third floor will offer more openshelf collections and quiet workspaces for staff, visiting and affiliated researchers.

Robbrecht & Daem architecten approached the design with a delicate respect and understanding of Rubens. The building, located on the spot where Rubens once owned a property that housed his own impressive collection of books, is conceived as a monumental bookcase with ceiling-high shelves on each floor. Completion of the building is planned for 2024. The seventeenth-century Kolveniershof will continue to be a place for learning, accommodating conferences, public lectures and educational workshops.

For me as a director, the opportunity to contribute to these exciting plans is a unique one, and this also applies to the parallel merger process of the Rubenianum and the Rubens House, which brings thrilling mutual opportunities. Our institution is tremendously grateful for Visit Flanders' financial support, as well as for the City of Antwerp's large and lasting commitment to Antwerp-based Rubens research. In the new premises, our ambitions to preserve the legacy and shape the future of the Corpus Rubenianum will thrive in equally durable and innovative ways.

Véronique van de Kerckhof,  
Director of the Rubenianum

# Corpus Rubenianum

## *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, part XX/2*

*Study Heads* by Nico Van Hout

The latest volume of the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard* is devoted to a remarkable aspect of Rubens's painted production. It sets out to bring together, catalogue and discuss all the painted head studies (*tronies* in Middle Dutch) that are known for certain to have been used in a Rubens composition. It is essential to define the scope of the present volume more closely by drawing a sharper distinction between Rubens's head studies and his portraits. Portraits were (and still are) painted to capture for all time the appearance and identity of a sitter, usually someone powerful, rich and famous. In a *tronie* the model's identity is irrelevant. Or rather, it is, in fact, almost always unknown. Rubens's portraits conform to the formal conventions of his time. The initiative for a head study came from the artist or his assistants. These studies are not about who but about how; about the play of light and shadow on human skin, about the depiction of a head when seen from an unusual angle, looking up or down, from below or in lost profile. The pose and lighting of the model in the study are chosen according to their function in the painting, although it is clear from some oil sketches that Rubens and his assistants took account of existing head studies even when they began designing compositions.

The genesis of Rubens's head studies was inextricably connected with the artist's rapid success as a history painter after his return from Italy, and with the major commissions that he garnered in the early phase of his career. That is only logical, because every successful history painter needed a stock of head studies in order to work efficiently, without having to look repeatedly for models and have them pose for him. This stock allowed Rubens and his collaborators to exploit the same figures in many different contexts and create satisfying variety among the numerous characters involved in mythological, biblical or historical scenes.

In Rubens's work, study heads constitute an exceptional type of painting in that they were created not as autonomous works of art, but as a means to an end, an indispensable part of his artistic practice. Yet, even in this marginal category of work, Rubens achieves maximum artistic expression with an economy of means,

for example in the iconic *Four Studies of the Head of an African Man* in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels.

Many of the heads show charismatic old men with unruly hair or beards, but their facial expressions tend to be neutral, for they were designed to be used in different contexts. It was only in the finished painting that they might be given pronounced expressions. That is the reason why Rubens's head studies differ from the laughing or melancholic character heads that Dutch painters such as Hals, Lievens and Rembrandt began making from the middle of the 1620s onwards, and which developed into a genre of their own right.

Today most of the *tronies* by Rubens and his assistants present a single head, but there are also several with two, three or four heads. These are the product of one and the same posing session at which a head – or, more accurately, the shifting lights and shadows and colour gradations on a head – were painted from different angles. There are reasons to believe that Rubens originally painted more of these multiple-head studies. The saw marks on a considerable number of studies indicate that they have been cut down. Indeed, the majority of Rubens's *tronies* consist of a truncated original core panel with an

initial head, and one or more new planks attached so as to restore the core piece to more acceptable proportions. In most cases the sawn-off section with the other head (or heads) underwent the same treatment. The original appearance of many of such multiple-head studies has been documented in drawings. More or less reliable compilations, drawn in Rubens's workshop and elsewhere, reproduce various extant examples as well as now-separated heads. Auction catalogues of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries usually record single heads that are attributed to Rubens, but they also mention a considerable number of multiple studies. The present volume XX/2 aims to reconstruct as far as possible the original appearance of Rubens's *tronies*, aided by the evidence of copies and technical research on the works themselves.

The originals of the study heads remained together until the sale of Rubens's possessions at his death in 1640. It was only then that his head studies became desirable collectors' items. Over the centuries, many of Rubens's *tronies* have undergone transformation. Panels featuring several heads were cut up quite early on to be sold as separate pictures on the art market, and some *tronies* were converted by later artists into genre scenes by adding extra planks of wood and giving the heads distinctive clothes and attributes. |

Nico Van Hout



Peter Paul Rubens,  
*Head Study of a Man*  
(detail), National  
Gallery of Art, Dublin



# The Connoisseur's Tribune

## A New Acquisition for the Rubenshuis: *The Raising of Lazarus* by Arnout Vinckenborch

Bert Schepers

*While I am writing this contribution, the museum is still eagerly awaiting the arrival of its latest acquisition, scheduled to go on display this spring. As I have been taking a keen interest in the many lesser-known and almost forgotten followers of Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) for many years now, I volunteered to report on this new purchase while at the same time introducing three newly identified works by Arnout Vinckenborch (c. 1590–1620) in or from Antwerp collections.*

Thanks to a generous donation that was swiftly managed by the Friends of the

Rubenshuis at the King Baudouin Foundation, *The Raising of Lazarus* (fig. 1) was acquired in December 2020 from the Munich dealers Daxer and Marschall, who had consigned it from a private collection. The painting was first published and attributed to the artist by Hans Vlieghe in his seminal article, 'Rubens' beginnende invloed: Arnout Vinckenborch en het probleem van Jordaens' vroegste tekeningen' (The beginnings of Rubens's influence: Arnout Vinckenborch and the problem of Jordaens's earliest drawings), which appeared in the *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* (1987).<sup>1</sup> A note on the

back of a photograph in the Rubenianum stated that it was in a private collection in Germany at the time. Sadly, no earlier provenance is known. In 1995 the painting showed up in a small auction in Meerbusch-Büderich, near Düsseldorf. There it was mistaken for a work by Pieter van Mol (1599–1650), relying on a certificate by the late Justus Müller Hofstede, who at the time of writing (1988) clearly was not *au courant* with Vlieghe's important study.<sup>2</sup> In 2007 the painting once again came to auction, in Vienna, where Müller Hofstede's incorrect assessment was simply repeated.<sup>3</sup> In 2009 its new-found owner lent the painting to the Angermuseum in Erfurt (Thüringen), where it remained until 2019. It was during this time that it came to be recognized again as by Vinckenborch.

In the autumn of 2020, while I was editing Nico Van Hout's CRLB volume on *Study Heads* (see p. 2), it came to my attention that the *Raising of Lazarus* had surfaced again on the art market.<sup>4</sup> As we had already decided to reproduce it in the introduction to the catalogue (text ill. 17), I quietly suggested to Ben van Beneden that this would make a fitting addition to the collection of the Rubenshuis, as this beautifully preserved painting is a major work and one of the most ambitious compositions by this still rather obscure artist, who is believed to have worked for some time as an assistant in Rubens's early studio, although there is no archival evidence to verify this. As Vinckenborch died in 1620 at the age of just 30 in his house in the Minderbroedersstraat, it follows that his oeuvre as an independent artist must have been relatively small, resulting in only a very limited number of works extant today, so this came as a welcome opportunity.

Born around 1590 in Alkmaar in the Northern Netherlands, the son of a cheese merchant, Vinckenborch moved with his parents to Antwerp shortly before 1614. Not all that much is known about his life and short career as a painter, but the presence in his works of so many elements clearly inspired by Rubens indicates that he was indeed an (early) assistant in Rubens's studio at some point. Vinckenborch seems to have painted almost exclusively religious scenes, executed on a large format, for churches and religious institutions in and around Antwerp, as well as for the open market – apart from smaller devotional works on private commission. He took to painting biblical subjects and especially scenes from the public life of Christ. But so far not a single signed and/or dated work by him has come to light.



Fig. 1 Arnout Vinckenborch, *The Raising of Lazarus*. Panel, 106 × 148 cm. Rubenshuis, Antwerp, inv. RH.s.266



Fig. 2 Peter Paul Rubens, *Head Studies of Two Men*. Panel, 66.5 × 51.5 cm. Gregory Callimanopolus Collection, New York



Fig. 3 Studio of Peter Paul Rubens, *The Raising of Lazarus*. Canvas, 177 × 160 cm. Musei Reali di Torino, Galleria Sabauda, Turin, inv. 263





Fig. 4 Peter Paul Rubens, *The 'Great' Last Judgement*, detail of the figure in the bottom left corner. Canvas, 608.5 × 463.5 cm. Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, Munich, inv. 890



Fig. 5 Arnout Vinckenborch, *Bathsheba Bathing*. Canvas, 117.5 × 157.5 cm. Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Kassel, inv. GK 1134

Vinckenborch's limited oeuvre has been largely reconstructed on stylistic grounds around two of his works in the Dominican church (today St Paul's Church), namely *The Resurrection of Christ* (panel, 216 × 154 cm) and *The Crowning of the Virgin* (panel, 217 × 160 cm; fig. 11). These he painted as part of the *Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary*, a cycle of paintings commissioned by Joannes Boucquet, the monastery prior, around 1616 and installed along the north aisle of the church in 1618. The cycle was executed by an array of Antwerp artists, spearheaded by Rubens.<sup>5</sup> Some of Vinckenborch's other works have been identified in churches in and outside Flanders, even as far away as Poland (e.g. *The Adoration of the Magi* in Skalmierz, canvas, 176 × 200 cm). Others have found their way to private collections and museums over time. Two paintings, *The Incredulity of St Thomas* (panel, 137 × 190 cm) and *Moses Striking the Rock* (panel, 128 × 227 cm), are today in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (inv. WA 1845.7–8, both

bequeathed by Rev. Dr John King to the Bodleian Library in 1739), but sadly not on display due to condition issues. Another work, *Bathsheba Bathing* (fig. 5), which Vlieghe identified in 1991 as by Vinckenborch, belongs to the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Kassel (inv. GK 1134, acquired by Wilhelm VIII, Landgrave of Hessen-Kassel, before 1749). The acquisition of the *Raising of Lazarus* by the Rubenshuis thus constitutes an important new addition.

As an assistant in Rubens's early studio, Vinckenborch seems to have relied heavily on the large stock of head studies, or *tronies*, that must have been readily available to him, recycling them (sometimes quite literally) in works he made on his own account. In his newly published CRLB volume, Nico Van Hout demonstrates that the heads of the two witnesses in the upper left corner of *The Raising of Lazarus* are derived from one of Rubens's double head studies, today in a private collection in New York (fig. 2), which he dates to c. 1609 (pp. 86–88, no. 8).

Vinckenborch's *Lazarus* may be described as an isocephalic composition, as it essentially consists of a frieze-like line-up of heads, all on approximately the same level, which are incorporated into a narrative scene, in this case an episode from Christ's public ministry, recounted only in the gospel of John (11:1–44). Most of the heads he also used in his other paintings, albeit with some variation or seen from different perspectives. So, just like Rubens, he exploited a stock of *tronies*, sometimes even conceiving compositions with historical subjects on the basis of them. But compared to Rubens, his compositions appear rather static and not so well integrated. As Van Hout put it (p. 59): 'His panels look like processions of figures with glazed-eyed expressions who are modelled on Rubens's prototypes ... The repetitive insertion of *tronies* gives those paintings the look of stencilled images. Van Dyck, with his *Entry into Jerusalem* (Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, IN, c. 1617), demonstrated how more gifted artists were capable of giving such frieze-like compositions a livelier and more dynamic character.' The monumental Michelangesque figure types with their oversized and roughly shaped hands and feet are, however, a common feature shared with the early Van Dyck.

It has so far been overlooked that a *Raising of Lazarus* in Turin (fig. 3), which is believed to have been conceived in the early Rubens studio c. 1611–14 but was probably the work of several unidentified assistants,<sup>6</sup> seems to have provided the model for the figure of Christ and the old man with downcast eyes (one of the apostles) lifting the shroud. Other figures and heads Vinckenborch adapted or replaced with new ones of his own devising. On the other hand, the pose of Lazarus, as he is raised from his tomb, has been compared to a figure in the



Fig. 6 Arnout Vinckenborch, *The Tribute Money*. Canvas, 116.5 × 191 cm. Convent of the Black Sisters of Overijse-Mechelen, Overijse. Photo KIK-IRPA, Brussels (KN001993)





Fig. 7 Peter Paul Rubens, *The Conversion of St Bavo (St Bavo Received by SS Amand and Floribert)*, detail of the kneeling figure in the central scene. Panel, 106.7 × 82.1 cm. The National Gallery, London, inv. NG 57.1



Fig. 8 Arnout Vinckenborch, detail of *The Raising of Lazarus* (Fig. 1)



Fig. 9 Arnout Vinckenborch (here attributed to), *The Crucifixion on Mount Calvary*. Panel, 173 × 129.5 cm. Maagdenhuismuseum, Antwerp, inv. 310. Photo KIK-IRPA, Brussels (X003059)



Fig. 10 Arnout Vinckenborch (here attributed to), *The Immaculate Conception*. Canvas, 107.4 × 77.1 cm. Present whereabouts unknown. Photo KIK-IRPA, Brussels (KM009131)



Fig. 11 Arnout Vinckenborch, *The Crowning of the Virgin*. Panel, 217 × 160 cm. St Paul's Church, Antwerp. Photo KIK-IRPA, Brussels (X046973)



bottom left corner of Rubens's *'Great' Last Judgement* (fig. 4) of c. 1617, the huge canvas commissioned by Wolfgang Wilhelm, Count of Pfalz-Neuburg and Duke of Jülich, for the high altar of the Hofkirche in Neuburg an der Donau. Interestingly, Vinckenborch seems to have also used the body and pose of Lazarus for that of the female protagonist in *Bathsheba Bathing* (fig. 5), at least as far as the position of her legs is concerned. For her torso and the positioning of her arms, Rubens's *Jupiter and Callisto* of 1613 (also in Kassel, inv. GK 86) will have been at the back of his mind.<sup>7</sup> It looks as if Vinckenborch simply added breasts to Lazarus's chest and replaced his grim-looking head in profile with that of an attractive young woman with a red blush on her cheeks, addressing the viewer with her penetrating gaze. But as the chronology of his works remains unclear, it could well be the other way round, with *Bathsheba* preceding *Lazarus*.

The figure of Christ and some of the other heads show up again in Vinckenborch's *Tribute Money* (fig. 6) in Overijse, while the young boy standing behind Christ in the upper right corner also features in the *Crowning of the Virgin* (fig. 11), here as an organ player seen from the back. The head of the kneeling young woman (one of his two sisters) helping Lazarus to step out of his tomb resembles that of the fair-haired woman in his recently identified *Moses and the Israelites Resting on the Shore while Pharaoh's Army Drowns in the Red Sea* (panel, 168 x 199 cm) in the Church of Saint-Martin d'Esquermes in Lille,<sup>8</sup> which is probably the picture recorded in a Brussels auction in 1764.<sup>9</sup> Vlieghe related the semi-nude kneeling man seen from the back on the left to a chalk study of a male nude (Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt), part of a substantial group of drawings made *naer het leven* (other sheets are in the Stiftung Museum Kunstpalast – Sammlung Kunstakademie, Düsseldorf), which he tentatively attributed to Vinckenborch. Others, including the late Roger d'Hulst, Michael Jaffé and more recently Nico Van Hout (in the catalogue of the 'Jordaens and the Antique' exhibition in Brussels and Kassel, 2012–13), believe(d) these to be by the early Jordaens, c. 1616–18. But, as has recently been observed, this kneeling figure in the *Lazarus* painting (fig. 8) in fact looks very much like the figure of the beggar in the foreground of Rubens's modello for the *Conversion of St Bavo* (fig. 7), an oil sketch made in preparation of the high altarpiece for St Bavo's Cathedral in Ghent, which was commissioned by Bishop Maes around 1611.

### Three newly identified works

In February 2017, on a visit to the Maagdenhuismuseum, which houses the collection of Antwerp's social welfare centre (OCMW), a large *Crucifixion* (fig. 9) caught my undivided attention. The painting hangs in the first room, next to the reception desk. From the label I learned that it was regarded as the work of an anonymous seventeenth-century



Fig. 12 Arnout Vinckenborch (here attributed to), *St John the Baptist*. Panel, measurements unknown. Private collection, Antwerp

Flemish artist, but much to my surprise, I recognized the hand of Vinckenborch in the figures at eye level. Daniel Christiaens, the curator in charge, confirmed that the artist was still unidentified. Apparently the painting came from the former *godshuis* 'Onse Vrouwen Convent' (abolished in 1887) on the Schoenmarkt and was described in the 1872 inventory as by Simon de Vos (1603–76). When I showed Hans Vlieghe the images, he was optimistic and soon after headed over to the museum to see the painting. Much to my relief, he confirmed that I was spot on. This just goes to show how sometimes pictures lay hidden in plain sight, like silent sleepers waiting to be awakened.

A second work that I want to draw attention to and attribute here to Vinckenborch is *The Immaculate Conception* (fig. 10), which surfaced at auction in Antwerp in 1998, where it was mistaken for a work by Artus de Bruyn (c. 1590–1632).<sup>10</sup> It was consigned as part of a collection of paintings from the Antwerp Jesuit College (or College of Our Lady) on Frankrijklei and formerly believed to be a work by Cornelis Schut (1597–1655). The Virgin, shown as a young girl seated on a crescent moon and raised between her parents Joachim and Anna, instantly recalls how she is depicted in the *Crowning of the Virgin* in St Paul's Church (fig. 11). The head of Joachim is almost an exact but reversed repetition of the second head from the left in the *Raising of Lazarus* (fig. 1) (he also shows up in the upper right corner of *Moses Striking the Rock* in Oxford), while the face of the upward-looking angel in the right margin matches that of the mourning Mary Magdalen kneeling in the lower right corner of the Maagdenhuis *Crucifixion* (fig. 9).

And finally, a viewing in the Rubenianum in February 2019 revealed yet another work by Vinckenborch, sitting quietly in an Antwerp private collection: a *St John the*



Fig. 13 Peter Paul Rubens, *The Incredulity of St Thomas*, central scene of the *Rockox Triptych*. Panel, 143 x 123 cm. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp, inv. 307

*Baptist* (fig. 12), which had long been associated with Rubens and his circle but still awaited proper identification. The figure of the saint, shown in profile to the right, at bust length and with his left arm raised, could well be a fragment of a larger composition. The Baptist's appearance turns out to be derived from that of Christ in Rubens's *Incredulity of St Thomas* (fig. 13), better known as the *Rockox Triptych*, which he painted between 1613 and 1615 for his good friend the burgomaster of Antwerp, Nicolaas Rockox.

- 1 *The Raising of Lazarus* is discussed on p. 391, fig. 10.
- 2 *Weltkunst*, LXII (November 1995), p. 33621.
- 3 Dorotheum, 11 December 2007, lot 147.
- 4 <<https://daxermarschall.com/en/portfolio-view/arnout-vinckenborch-2>>. Text by Wolfram Morath-Vogel, who dates the painting to c. 1617–20. See also the catalogue to their selling exhibition, *Sir Anthony van Dyck and his Contemporaries. Artistic Exchange between the Spanish Netherlands and the Dutch Republic*, Munich, 11–27 October 2019, no. 1.
- 5 Nico Van Hout, 'Schilderkunstige kanttekeningen bij de Rozenkransreeks in de Sint-Pauluskerk te Antwerpen', in Katlijne Van der Stighelen, ed., *Munuscula Amicorum: Contributions on Rubens and his Colleagues in Honour of Hans Vlieghe* (Pictura Nova: Studies in 16th and 17th Century Flemish Painting and Drawing, x), 2 vols., Turnhout 2006, II, pp. 443–77 (463–66 and 471–72 for Vinckenborch). For the cycle, see also Adam Sammut's upcoming book: *Rubens and the Dominican Church in Antwerp: Art and Political Economy in an Age of Religious Conflict*, to be published in Brill's Studies on Art, Art History, and Intellectual History series. Adam was a visiting researcher at the Rubenianum in spring 2019 and has in the meantime successfully completed his PhD dissertation at the University of York.
- 6 Koen Bulckens, with an introduction by Paul Huvenne, *The Ministry of Christ* (Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, V.2), London and Turnhout 2017, pp. 147–49, no. 32, fig. 151.
- 7 Justus Lange, 'Original – Werkstatt – Kopie. Zur Verbreitung des Werkes von Peter Paul Rubens – ein Blick auf die Kasselers Sammlung', in Christoph Stiegemann, ed., *Peter Paul Rubens und der Barock im Norden* (exh. cat. Erzbischöfliches Diözesanmuseum, Paderborn), Petersberg 2020, pp. 76–78, figs. 2–3.
- 8 Reproduced in *Album Amicorum: Oeuvres choisies pour Arnauld Brefon de Lavergnée*, eds. Valérie Lavergne-Durey and Christian Volle, Paris 2012.
- 9 Collection of Guillaume Antoine Charliers, 'Avocat au Conseil Souverain de Brabant', sold by his widow at auction in Brussels, 14–17 June 1764, lot 77: 'Le Passage de la Mer rouge par le Peuple de Dieu peint sur bois, de 6 pieds de haut sur 7 pieds de large, par Vinckenborgh'.
- 10 Bernaerts, 30 March 1998, lot 41.

### The Rubenshuis acquires two terracotta sculptures by Lucas Faydherbe



Lucas Faydherbe, *Bust of a Bacchante* (left) and *The Drunken Silenus Supported by Two Satyrs*

The Covid-19 pandemic has taken an enormous toll on art museums worldwide. Nevertheless, thanks to a donation from a private collector, the Rubenshuis managed to strengthen its collection in 2020 with a number of carefully chosen acquisitions. These include a hitherto unknown head study – *Head of a Bearded Man* – by Jacob Jordaens, a sumptuously decorated five-door cupboard (both featured in *The Rubenianum Quarterly* 2020, no. 4), as well as a religious composition by Arnout Vinckenborch, a painter from Alkmaar in North Holland, who must have worked in Rubens's studio in the 1610s. (On Vinckenborch, see Bert Schepers's contribution in this issue, pp. 3–6.)

The acquisitions also include two important terracottas, *Bust of a Bacchante* and *The Drunken Silenus Supported by Two Satyrs*, by Lucas Faydherbe, a young artist with whom Rubens felt a special, almost fatherly bond at the end of his life.

Born into a family of sculptors in Mechelen in 1617, Faydherbe first trained under his stepfather, Maximilian Labbé, after which he spent more than three years as the protégé of Rubens, a period that may be regarded as an apprenticeship. When Rubens died in 1640, Faydherbe returned to his native Mechelen, where he joined the Guild of St Luke and lived until his death in 1697.

A distinctive voice within the Southern-Netherlandish Baroque, Faydherbe gained recognition for his work as both a sculptor and an architect, mainly working for ecclesiastical clients. His masterpieces include the *Mater Dolorosa* in Rubens's funerary chapel in St James's Church in Antwerp (the marble statue was given

a place in the *aedicula* of the altar architecture), the high altar and the funerary monument to Archbishop Andreas Cruesen in St Rumbold's Cathedral in Mechelen, as well as the *modelli* for a pair of reliefs with the *Adoration of the Shepherds* and *Christ Carrying the Cross* for the cupola of Our Lady of Hanswijk in Mechelen, a church he himself designed. These two *modelli* of superior artistic quality, recently acquired by the Flemish Community, rank among the highlights of seventeenth-century sculpture in the Southern Netherlands. The exquisitely intimate *Virgin and Child*, which draws on an invention by Rubens in the Snyders & Rockox House in Antwerp (the slightly smaller terracotta *modello* is in the British Museum, London), was probably made for a private chapel in a church or a patrician house.

In Rubens's studio, Faydherbe – like Georg Petel (c. 1601/02–1634) before him – must primarily have made ivory sculptures (mostly of secular subjects) after designs by the master. Even though there is still insufficient clarity about Faydherbe's production of statuettes, a number of his ivories can be identified on the basis of the so-called *Specification*, the list, drawn up after Rubens's death, of works of art from his collection that were destined for sale. The most virtuosic item is the ivory relief – signed with the monogram 'FL' by the sculptor – of dancing putti in the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. The composition of this splendid relief stems from a passage in Rubens's *Feast of Venus* in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Moreover, Faydherbe repeated the composition in a somewhat

larger and more elaborate terracotta relief (Art & History Museum, Brussels). It is quite possible that the recently acquired relief depicting the drunken Silenus, likewise derived from a composition by Rubens, may be placed in the same context. Despite the 'bronzed' nature of the surface (terracotta can be given a variety of surface finishes), it is tempting to believe that this vividly modelled relief may also be connected with Faydherbe's ivory work after compositions by Rubens. Rubens's designs for small ivory sculptures and decorative objects, and his fascinating collaboration with young sculptors of exceptional talent, are the subject of the *Corpus* volume I am currently preparing (CRLB xxii, 3, forthcoming).

The *Bust of a Bacchante*, a terracotta of a rich orange colour, hollowed at the back, presumably also originated in Rubens's orbit or was inspired by him. It is possible that this dissolute maenad originally formed a pair, together with a terracotta bust of *Bacchus*, now in the Museum Hof van Busleyden in Mechelen. This is not at all certain, however, since she is portrayed on a slightly smaller scale than her counterpart. | *Ben van Beneden*

### Rubenianum library acquisitions 2020–21

In early 2021, the Rubenianum had the privilege to enrich its library holdings with a valuable set of reference works on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century precious metalwork from the library of a renowned, Antwerp-based researcher in that field: Mrs Godelieve van Hemeldonck.

In her research, Van Hemeldonck focused on thirteenth- to nineteenth-century Antwerp artists, silver- and goldsmiths and jewellers. She compiled the results of her extensive archival research in four unpublished volumes, totalling over 2000 pages of archival excerpts on Antwerp artists and their networks. Of these volumes, completed between 1999 and 2008, we have now been donated printed copies, annotated and interleaved by the author. Both the books and the unpublished sources are available for consultation in our reading room.

Besides this important acquisition, the Rubenianum has continued to expand its resources throughout the pandemic. Discover the Collection Van Hemeldonck and all other new titles via our website ([www.rubenianum.be](http://www.rubenianum.be)). | *Véronique van de Kerckhof*



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