The Rubenianum Quarterly

2022 1

Rubens House's masterpiece by Van Ehrenberg on view in St. Louis Museum of Art

It was in the summer of 2015 that the Rubens House was first contacted by Dr Judith Mann, Curator of European Art to 1800 at the St. Louis Museum of Art, in connection with an exhibition project about paintings on stone produced between 1530 and 1800. The ambition was to present the first systematic examination of the pan-European practice of this unusual and little-studied artistic tradition. In such an exhibition, the Rubens House's painting by Wilhelm Schubert van Ehrenberg, *Interior of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp* (1668, oil on marble) was a fundamental loan.

After several years of intensive research, the exhibition, *Paintings on Stone: Science and the Sacred 1530–1580*, was scheduled to open in October of 2020. COVID ensured otherwise. The scholarly catalogue was published, but the exhibition was delayed until 20 February–15 May 2022. It was worth the wait: bringing together more than 70 examples by 58 artists, *Paintings on Stone* represents major centres of stone painting and features 34 different stones, nearly the full range that were used. In a short introductory video – in which 'our' Ehrenberg appears as the opening image – Judith Mann encapsulates the uniqueness of the exhibition: 'There has never been a show that addresses the breadth geographically and in numbers of stones, and it will never happen again.' *(continued on page 5)*



Wilhelm Schubert van Ehrenberg. Interior of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp, 1668. Oil on marble. Rubenshuis, Collectie Stad Antwerpen, RH.S.189. Photo: Michel Wuyts & Louis De Peuter.

Dear Friends of the Rubenianum

In early February a wall separating the garden of the Rubens House from the busy shopping street Hopland came down. This remnant of a 1906 warehouse closed off the museum site from its surroundings. Its removal is the first step in a major overhaul. The construction zone for a Robbrecht & Daem-designed addition has meanwhile been prepared and builders have drilled down 150 metres to harvest the geothermal energy that will power the future climate control system. The sound of machinery has permeated the solemn silence of the Rubenianum's reading room in the Kolveniersstraat. This temporary inconvenience is warranted, as we gear up to reinstall the library on the very spot where Rubens installed his in 1639.

With a new building, a redesigned garden, and a complete renovation of the house itself, the site will gradually be transformed in the coming years. As was the case in Rubens's day, construction work attracts the close attention of neighbours and local merchants, whose businesses have often already been heavily impacted by the pandemic. Taking a cue from the master, we have been communicating our plans in detail and we have worked together to mitigate nuisance. This exercise was a reminder of how central the Rubens House is to the social and economic fabric of the neighbourhood surrounding it.

The Rubenianum will continue its operations in the Kolveniersstraat until the end of 2023, when the collections will be moved into the new building. The museum itself will close its doors on 9 January 2023. Just like in Rubens's day, this magical place is supported not only by a local community but also by a much broader international one. As we have been doing on site for locals, we will keep you informed of progress on this transformative project through The Rubenianum Quarterly.

Bert Watteeuw, Director Rubenshuis & Rubenianum

Rachel Wise enlightens us on her research in the Rubenianum



I began my Rubenianum postdoctoral fellowship during the second spring of COVID. I was warmly welcomed by Rubenianum staff and researchers, and despite the necessary health restrictions, I was given the run of the library and archives. My fellowship was supported by the Belgian American Educational Foundation (BAEF), and at the Rubenianum I pursued research projects that grew out of my dissertation on the production of paintings, textiles, prints and medals during the first half of the Eighty Years' War (c. 1568–1609). I received my PhD in History of Art at the University of Pennsylvania in 2020, under the direction of Professors Larry Silver and Shira Brisman.

At the Rubenianum, my research centred on the religious paintings of Maerten de Vos (1532–1603), who deftly and successfully navigated the Antwerp art market during wartime. Despite being one of the most prolific painters in late sixteenth-century Antwerp, De Vos has been understudied and maligned as a derivative artist adhering to conservative painting practices, with the last major study of his paintings dating from 1980.

Maerten de Vos's own biography registers the religious disarray of late sixteenth-century Antwerp. A convert to Lutheranism, De Vos lived through the religious changes of his own city and converted again to Catholicism after the Fall of Antwerp in 1585. During his career, De Vos took commissions from moneyed local merchants, decorated the castle chapel for the Lutheran Duke Wilhelm von Braunschweig-Lüneburg,

and painted large-scale altarpieces for Catholic churches affected by the Iconoclastic Fury. My project investigates how De Vos astutely negotiated the religiously diverse art market of late sixteenth-century Antwerp and articulates the range of doctrinal and political arguments he put forward for his clients. By studying De Vos's religious oeuvre, my project animates painting as a key agent in shaping the theological discourse of late sixteenth-century Antwerp.

There is no better place to study Maerten de Vos than the city of Antwerp. Most importantly, many of his religious works are housed in local collections, including Antwerp Cathedral, the Maagdenhuis Museum, St James's Church, St Andrew's Church, and the Royal Museum of Fine Arts. At the Rubenianum, all publications (even of the rarest sort) on Maerten de Vos were at my fingertips as well as bibliographic documentation files. I spent my first months reading all the secondary literature on De Vos, sorting through the image files, and visiting his publicly accessible paintings throughout Belgium.

My research quickly became focused on his dining room cycle for Gillis Hooftman, a well-connected and affluent merchant of maritime trade, who lived nearby Het Steen. Painted around 1568, the dining cycle was made and commissioned at the start of the Eighty Years' War, and the panels depict scenes from the apostolic mission of St Paul. With the three extant paintings in three separate collections, I traversed Belgium and France to examine and analyse the works in person. With the war just commencing, the iconographical programme is a complex thesis on Pauline doctrine intended as a backdrop for dinner conversation about the contemporary events of war and religious division.

As a corollary to these early De Vos paintings, I also focused on his late 1601 Minter's Triptych, executed at the end of his career for St Andrew's Church, though today the main panels are in the collection of Antwerp's Royal Museum of Fine Arts. The altarpiece is centred around monetary themes, with the central panel portraying Christ, telling the Pharisees to 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' With its assembly of erudite and symbolically complex panels, my research has focused on the intersection of taxation, moneyers and De Vos's representation of currency from the Bible.

My interest in De Vos's dining cycle complemented a secondary research project on damask linen napkins and tablecloths I pursued while in Antwerp. These everyday textiles were woven in Kortrijk and Haarlem with patterns often inspired by the Bible, mythology, history and contemporary events. Examining the patterns, I analysed how the linens' narrative imagery facilitated a converging of politics, education and dining rituals at the dinner table. The Texture Museum in Kortrijk graciously opened their collections to me. I also examined painted representations of narrative tablecloths at the Museum Mayer van den Bergh and in collections in Bruges and Stratford-upon-Avon. In October, I had the pleasure of presenting my findings at the Abegg-Stiftung's colloquium 'Linen Damask in its Historical Context' in Riggisberg, Switzerland, the proceedings of which will be published this year.

My research also centred upon a late sixteenth-century embroidery with an unusual and captivating iconography from the Phoebus Foundation, featuring an allegorical representation of the Low Countries under assault by foreign soldiers. Despite its fragile condition, the Phoebus Foundation gave me the opportunity to study the embroidery in person and up close, which allowed me to understand the technique of how it was made. The embroidery holds many mysteries that have propelled me into the archives and pages of heraldic books to connect the textile with a noble Flemish family. I also visited the collections of the National Museum of the Renaissance in Écouen, France, where I was delighted to find late sixteenthcentury domestic embroideries of the same technique. I look forward to presenting my research findings at the Historians of Netherlandish Art conference this June.

These diverse research projects have allowed me to explore art collections and archives throughout Belgium, and brought me into a network of curators and researchers of textiles and paintings. I'm grateful to all those who have opened their collections and shared their knowledge with me. With the Rubenianum as a home base, I have been fortunate to have both a comprehensive library and experts on Antwerp painting close at hand. Even with teleworking and the inevitable cancellations of events at the Rubenianum during the pandemic, it has been a true pleasure to be part of the Rubenianum community and to get to know the staff and researchers professionally and also personally.

The Drawings of Peter Paul Rubens: A Critical Catalogue, Volume One (1590–1608)

An interview with Anne-Marie Logan and Kristin Lohse Belkin

While volumes of the Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard – authored by a multitude of scholars – have steadily come off the presses since 1968, a parallel and equally daunting project was led by a single author. Anne-Marie Logan has published broadly on Rubens's drawings, but her magnum opus is undoubtedly this critical catalogue of the artist's drawings, the first volume of which was recently published. Spanning the formative period 1590–1608, Rubens's early years in Antwerp and the eight years he subsequently spent in Italy, the catalogue presents us with a draughtsman gearing up for greatness. (See also TRQ 2013.4.)

Anne-Marie, you are the uncontested doyenne in this field. How does it feel to have the first volume of the catalogue out and how did this monumental project come into being?

It's a relief! With the remaining two volumes well under way, I feel that my life's work is coming to fruition. I started work on Rubens's drawings at Yale in 1972, after assisting Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann on the 1970 Catalogue of European Drawings and Watercolours in the Yale University Art Gallery. While Egbert and Roger d'Hulst, to whom the catalogue is dedicated, initiated the Rubens drawings project, I ended up taking the lead. Many female curators and art historians of my generation found opportunities through research on drawings collections. From the very start, I was aware that I was in it for the long haul. As a polyglot European, speaking German, French, English, Spanish, Italian and Dutch, I was wellequipped for the task at hand. I've travelled extensively to see all the drawings. Today, I cannot but think of Russia, which I visited long before glasnost. It was highly unusual to travel to Russia in the early 1970s, let alone as a woman by herself. My husband

was worried but it was wonderful to see the drawings at the Hermitage and the Pushkin Museum. In the fifty years since I embarked on this project the world has changed, the technologies we use for communication, research, and the production of books, too, have changed, but among those interested in the subject the love of drawings has been and remains quite similar everywhere. Meeting like-minded people, such as George Goldner, first at the Getty, later at the Metropolitan Museum, and authors working on the Corpus Rubenianum, has been one of the great joys of this project. I very much hope that the catalogue will inspire a new generation of scholars to engage with drawings.

Kristin, you have taken on the role of editor. As the author of two volumes in the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*, how would you describe the relation between both cataloguing projects?

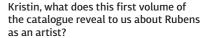
The Corpus volumes I wrote, The Costume Book (XXIV) and Copies and Adaptations from German and Netherlandish Artists (XXVI.1) both concerned drawings, so I was very familiar with the subject. Other Corpus Rubenianum volumes, such as those on Copies after the Antique by Marjon van der Meulen (XXIII), on Book Illustrations and Title Pages by Richard Judson and Carl Van de Velde (xxi), and on Copies and Adaptations after Italian Masters by Jeremy Wood (xxvi 2.1-2.3), all shed light on important aspects of Rubens's activities as a draughtsman. A wealth of drawings are discussed in most other volumes. While the Corpus Rubenianum will eventually include all the drawings listed by Anne-Marie, due to its thematic arrangement it frustratingly doesn't allow for a ready overview. For the first time, Anne-Marie allows us to see all the drawings in order. Rubens's development as a draughtsman is suddenly made apparent simply by leafing

Bert Watteeuw

through the plates of the catalogue, which is revelatory. While Anne-Marie has single-mindedly compiled the catalogue, I have assisted her in writing the entries, modelled on those in the *Corpus Rubenianum*. The exercise made me appreciate her deep connoisseurship, and it allowed me to review some of my earlier work. It is a privilege to work on such exquisite material, so I look forward to expanding my role in the two volumes to come.

Anne-Marie, a critical catalogue implies countless rejections. These have not been listed in the book?

No. I've decided against listing them as this would weigh down the books and add little. Their omission speaks for itself. Some are referenced in a footnote if they relate to an autograph work. Nonetheless, rejecting drawings is inherent to this type of undertaking, to such an extent in fact that I have been called - endearingly, I have been assured - the butcher of New Haven. While authorship was a rather fuzzy concept in the seventeenth century, I have aimed to restrict myself to pure Rubens, which is more easily achieved in drawings than in paintings. Copies have likewise been restricted to a minimum. Sheets from Willem Panneels's large set of drawings after Rubens in Copenhagen, the so-called Cantoor, are, for example, only included when an original by Rubens is still extant. Without such hygiene the goal of providing the reader with a clear oversight of Rubens's development would have been undermined. For the Theoretical Notebook (xxv), a Corpus volume that was to be authored by the late Arnout Balis, only two original sheets are included. A third one was discovered recently and will be included in volume three. Arnout's last posthumous publication concerned this very drawing. The completion of his work will form an important complement to our knowledge of Rubens's activities as a draughtsman.



Rubens was not a precocious child prodigy like Anthony van Dyck. From the series of copies after Holbein's Images of Death (fig. 1), drawn at or around the age of thirteen, to the end of the Italian years, he produced an astonishing amount of copies. It is quite easy to forget that the volume spans an eighteenyear period. Throughout these years, copying remains central to Rubens's artistic practice. He does it with unusual devotion. One gets the feeling that he is building a stockpile of images, building confidence, an artist very much in learning mode. It is quite surprising how few original compositional drawings he made, almost all of them dating from the last years in Italy. Only a handful of portraits are known. Clearly, and this is evident from the technique of the drawings themselves, copying after the Antique and after Italian masters was what Rubens had come to do in Italy. The Sistine Chapel (fig. 2), the *Laocoön* (fig. 3) and the Torso Belvedere (fig. 4), for example,



Fig. 1 Rubens after Hans Holbein the Younger. The Duchess and Death. Museum Plantin-Moretus, Stedelijk Prentenkabinet, Antwerp.

Fig. 2 Rubens after Michelangelo. *The Prophet Isaiah*. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques.





are studied in great detail. Other series, such as the anatomical drawings (fig. 5), testify to the same academic mindset. Nonetheless, despite their faintly pedagogical nature, the drawings possess a rare vitality that hints at what was to come when Rubens left Italy for Antwerp. At age thirty-one, his education was completed. His drawing practice would change dramatically.

What are we to expect from the next volumes?

AML In a nutshell: an evolution from copying to invention in volume two and a blossoming into total freedom and mastery in volume three. Rubens took his time to develop as a draughtsman but he never ran out of steam and kept expanding his use of the medium. He develops a total surety of hand, experiments with technique and is as quick as he is accurate and versatile. Volume two (1609–1620) starts with his return to Antwerp and the establishment of an incredibly productive workshop. Drawing played a huge part in that. Rubens no longer copies or draws after the Antique. Instead, he draws after



Fig. 5 Rubens. Écorché Nude Lunging to the Left. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (on long-term loan from the Ken Thomson collection).

Fig. 3 Rubens after the Antique. Laocoön and His Sons in Three-Quarter View Facing Left. Biblioteca Ambrosiana. Milan.

Fig. 4 Rubens after the Antique. The Torso Belvedere, Seen from the Front, Three-Quarter to the Right. Rubenshuis, Antwerp.

live models and collects antiquities himself. Beautiful sheets attest to the presence of nude male models in the studio, some posing as antique sculptures. The living, moving body becomes central to Rubens's artistic practice. It's as if the sculptures of Rome have sprung to life in Antwerp. To populate the paintings that emerge from the workshop at great speed, a catalogue of figure studies is built up. Compositional drawings become far more important and new types emerge, such as designs for book illustrations and title pages. KLB Volume three (1621–1640) shows Rubens at his very best. The volume contains the great portraits, in his inimitable trois crayons technique. The beautiful likenesses of his wives Isabella Brant and Helena Fourment and their children are perhaps best known, and rightly so. His antiquarian interests continue, for example, in studies of gems. The last decade of his life is marked by his love of Helena Fourment and the drawings produced in this period, such as the drapery studies for *The Garden of Love*, testify to his infatuation. Similarly attractive are his landscape drawings, a genre to which he gravitated after his acquisition of a country estate in 1635. One of the very last drawings to be included in the catalogue shows a couple embracing, on the verso of the selfportrait at Windsor. It's a fitting conclusion, I feel. Like love and procreation itself, creation was an urge for Rubens, and drawings were the fastest medium to express himself and his love for his *dolcissima professione*. How lucky we are to have so many products of that lifelong entanglement to enjoy.

While the catalogue is a milestone, a fascinating introductory essay sheds light on the historiography of this field. Why this reflective stance, Kristin?

Anne-Marie has published insightful essays on Rubens's use of drawings elsewhere, for example in the catalogue accompanying the brilliant exhibitions held at the Albertina in Vienna and the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Julius Held has likewise dealt with Rubens as a draughtsman. It seemed superfluous to repeat their findings here. Instead, we opted for an original reflection on the history of scholarship in this field. To a large extent, imaging technologies have dictated the pace and form of earlier studies. Max Rooses' 1892 volume in his L'Œuvre de P.P. Rubens. Histoire et description de ses tableaux et dessins, for example, heavily gravitates towards designs for prints. It is no coincidence that Rooses was highly dependent on engravings for his research. Gustav Glück and Franz Martin Haberditzl's 1928 Die Handzeichnungen von Peter Paul Rubens featured black-andwhite photographic reproductions. This technological advance makes Rubens's mastership and versatility much more evident. In Europe, Ludwig Burchard and Roger d'Hulst produced an important catalogue in 1963, based on a 1956 exhibition. In the United States, Julius Held published



Rubens: Selected Drawings in 1959. Since then, drawings unknown to these authors have been discovered and through the progress of the Corpus Rubenianum much scholarship on Rubens as a draughtsman has been generated, albeit in a more dispersed manner. A wealth of collection catalogues, exhibition catalogues and scholarly articles have shed further light on this aspect of Rubens's artistic practice. Anne-Marie has contributed disproportionately to this expanding bibliography, while remaining well aware of the efforts and merits of those scholars that preceded her. I think this essay captures that humble attitude well. Encouragingly, new drawings have been discovered during the process of writing and more will be found after publication. Nonetheless, I daresay this catalogue will remain a landmark in Rubens studies for a long time to come.

Anne-Marie, surely the catalogue will inspire a new generation of scholars to study Rubens's drawings. What would be your advice to them?

I would advise readers to study and enjoy these drawings in person. Technology was and is indeed a driving force in this field. At Yale and the Getty, I was an early proponent of computerized art history. Digital images in high resolution have made it much easier to study and reproduce drawings. While I am immensely grateful to Veronika Korbei for assembling all the images and to Paul van Calster for the handsome layout of the book, nothing beats seeing these exquisite works of art up close. Some impress by their outstanding size, with huge sheets of paper somehow underlining the scale of Rubens's engagement with the medium. Their physicality and directness bring one breathtakingly close to the artist. We can sense how Rubens formulated a picture with spontaneity, with corrections - quite literally figuring it out. Viewing such works offers us an intimate and privileged exchange that simply cannot be replicated.

Anne Marie Logan and Kristin Lohse Belkin (ed.), The Drawings of Peter Paul Rubens, A Critical Catalogue, Volume One (1590-1608), (Pictura Nova: Studies in 16th and 17th Century Flemish Painting and Drawing 22, ed. Katlijne Van der Stighelen and Hans Vlieghe), Turnhout: Brepols, 2021. Volume in two parts: Text and Plates, 264 + 264 pp., 260 colour ill.

Rubeniana

(continued from page 1)

The pandemic combined with the unusual material of the support of the Rubens House's loan - a Vlaams Topstuk (governmentally recognized Flemish masterpiece) - posed particular challenges. The expertise of not only a paintings conservator but also a stone conservator was required to carry out extensive research ranging from the painting's potential risk of breaking, to its specific packing, transport and installation demands. The physical accompanying of the painting during its transport was - due to the pandemic - necessarily replaced by a tracker, which provided location and climatological data in real time; a digital meeting allowed Rubens

House staff members to oversee its packing and installation.

In the catalogue of Paintings on Stone, Nadia Groeneveld-Baadi lauds the artistic qualities of Van Ehrenberg's church interior on marble and delves deeper into its multifaceted history in her entry and in her essay 'Stone Surfaces and Materialities of Marble in 17th-Century Flemish Painting'. 'The painting represents a material departure: measuring nearly 1 x 1 m in size, it is painted on a hefty slab of white Carrara marble, the same material from which the church was constructed between 1614 and 1621.' Ehrenberg painted the church numerous times both on panel and on canvas. In this extraordinary version on marble, he left the white stone with light-grey striations showing through in

several areas, such as the portico, columns and floor. The choice of this ground is, according to Groeneveld-Baadi, not only to emphasize the exceptionally innovative character of the so-called 'marble temple' of the Jesuit church. Through the use of marble, 'the artist creates tension between painting and architecture, between image and object, and between representation and referent'. Moreover, in Groeneveld-Baadj's view, the painting can be considered 'a novel kind of image made to replace, defend and reassert the status of images destroyed by iconoclasm. Along with its more obvious references to the Jesuits and the Catholic Church, van Ehrenberg's architectural painting on stone reflects on the artistic traditions of Antwerp, specifically the processes and import of making paintings.' Martine Maris

Restoration of a house altar

This opulent baroque house altar was recently added to the museum's permanent display. Deemed unfit for display for many years due to its less-than-optimal condition, it was recently restored to its former glory by Martiin Breunesse and Marc Leenaerts.

The central scene represents the Virgin and Child in the company of Saints Anne and Joachim, Mary's parents. It is a miniature copy of a painting by Rubens from c. 1630, now in the collection of the Prado in Madrid. This decorative showpiece beautifully illustrates how Rubens's artistic output also inspired Antwerp's luxury industry. Framed with thirtyone agates mounted in gilt copper, the painting served as the devotional focus of the altar. The precious materials used in this valuable piece of furniture underscore the religious status of the painted figures and the social position of its owners.

House altar, Antwerp, c. 1660. Oak veneered in ebony, set with tortoiseshell and agate, with gilt copper ornaments, framing a central oil painting on copper.

The metal, which had become dark and dull due to corrosion, has regained its former lustre, while the missing black ebony mouldings have been replaced. The fragile, dark-red tortoiseshell was damaged and it, too, had lost its shiny appeal. This exotic material was highly prized for its rarity in the seventeenth century. The precious shell was filed down to the desired thickness, polished and glued with an adhesive mixed with red pigment. Since tortoises are a protected species today, the lacunae were filled with acrylic imitation. The little panel was also cleaned, and previous retouchings were removed to reveal the detailed original brushstrokes. | Martine Maris

Going once, going twice... Sold!

Most works of art that are auctioned at art sales stem from private collections. Afterwards, they often disappear again behind the walls of private galleries. The auction catalogues that are published on the occasion of these sales therefore provide a unique opportunity later on to catch a glimpse of exceptional works of art. As they are essential to provenance research, these sales catalogues are an essential part of the research collections of the Rubenianum.

In the past six years, we have devoted extra attention to these often beautifully illustrated publications, by cataloguing them one by one in the collection catalogue. The enormous task was carried out by a project associate (2015-18), our

library team and a devoted volunteer. The project reached its conclusion on 6 March 2022: all 28,000 catalogues are now retrievable through title, author and auction details via our collection catalogue and international platforms such as Worldcat.org.

Our efforts have already been very rewarding: in the past years, we have been contacted by countless interested parties from New York to Amsterdam, who wanted to consult rare catalogues they could only find in our collection in Antwerp. It is safe to say that, as long as the beauty of the Old Masters continues to enchant the art market, art sales catalogues will remain an essential cornerstone of our acquisitions policy. | *Ute Staes*



The Rubenianum Lectures

Zondag, 19 juni 2022, 11.00 u

PROF. DR. NILS BÜTTNER

Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Stuttgart

Rubens Recto/Verso. Werken aan het Corpusdeel over Rubens' Medicireeks

Na zijn indrukwekkende Corpusdelen over Rubens' allegorieën en genrestukken, legt Nils Büttner de laatste hand aan het deel over de monumentale cyclus die Rubens schilderde voor Maria de' Medici, vandaag in het Louvre. In zijn lezing deelt Büttner enkele nieuwe inzichten over een van Rubens' belangrijkste reeksen. Bovendien zal hij stilstaan bij zijn werkwijze voor zo'n omvangrijke studie. Een unieke inkijk in de interne keuken van het Corpus Rubenianum!

Met de steun van het Fonds Baillet Latour.

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