

The Rubenianum Quarterly

2023
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Rubenianum Fund Field Trip to Scotland, 9–12 June 2023

Almost four years have passed before circumstances allowed us to resume our annual Field Trip programme which kicked off in 2010 in Madrid with twenty-five participants and has led us since with ever growing numbers of patrons to London/Boughton/Chatsworth; Vienna/Moravia; Lens/Paris; Genoa; Antwerp; New York; Rome; The Hague/Amsterdam; Milan/Mantua.

As this year's Scotland programme was fully booked within eight hours of sending out inscription forms, many new members joining the Fund in the last years would not have been able to participate. The number of attendees was therefore increased to a staggering sixty, despite a programme packed with visits to private collections, which luckily boasted dining rooms large enough to seat us all for lunch and dinner.

The National Gallery in Edinburgh being the most important repository of paintings and drawings by Rubens in Scotland, its Curator for Northern Paintings, Tico Seifert, kindly led us through the museum's off-site storage facility and its Print Room on Friday afternoon before offering us an after-hours tour of the galleries proper. This proved an excellent warm-up for connoisseur eyes, since Lord Wemyss expected us later that evening for dinner at Gosford House, much to Tico's joy, since for him, too, this was a unique chance to see the vast collection of Old Master paintings, built up during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by three generations of Earls of Wemyss and March. *(continued on page 2)*



Sunday-evening drinks on the front-door steps of Dumfries House.

Dear Friends of the Rubenianum,

In this issue you will find an extensive report on our Rubenianum Donors trip to Scotland. Indeed, we resumed the tradition of our annual expedition, temporarily interrupted by Covid. It was oversubscribed some forty-eight hours after the invitation was sent out – that, too, has become a tradition – but we made an effort to accommodate a maximum number of participants, pushing the total to over sixty!

It is always a pleasure to plan such a trip, and this year Michel Ceuterick put together a truly exceptional programme. The pictures in these pages are able to capture only some of the highlights. Once again, it was a great way to bring together our passionate and diverse donor community and to acknowledge their generosity.

Together, we have raised some 3,5 million euros for our project by now. This enables us to progress towards completion in a diligent way. The final Corpus volume is presently expected to roll off the presses in the first half of 2025. Thereafter, we will endeavour to keep the Corpus alive in a digital fashion.

We are also working on plans to keep our Donor and Benefactors community together after the completion of the Corpus. We will probably organize that under the wings of the Friends of the Rubenshuis. This passionate and generous community deserves to be kept together.

Thomas Leysen
Chairman of the Rubenianum Fund

Rubenianum Fund Field Trip to Scotland (continued from page 1)

The next day took us to glorious Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute. It was a special feeling to have our fellow tour participant, Anthony Crichton-Stuart, brother of the late 7th Marquess of Bute, lead us through the house he grew up in. Many of the precious Old Master paintings collected by his eighteenth-century ancestor, the 3rd Earl of Bute, were specially and generously taken out of storage for us to study and admire. Ferried back to the mainland that afternoon, we were hurried on to Broomhall House, to be welcomed by Lord Bruce and dine in the house built and furnished by his ancestor the 7th Earl of Elgin, of 'Elgin Marbles' fame. A visit to Sir Walter Scott's Abbotsford, a must to understand the origins of the nineteenth-century craze for the

Scottish baronial style, was aptly followed by Sunday lunch at Bowhill House, where his kinsman Richard Scott, Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, personally led us through his home and its impressive collections. It was a very special moment when keen-eyed Nils Büttner spotted in one of Bowhill's bookcases a set of folio leather bindings with Rubens's name embossed on the spines and the French royal arms on the covers. Much to the amazement of its owner, they proved to be the missing volumes of the oldest collection of Rubens-related prints, collected for Louis XIV. After a splendid drive through green, sheep-dotted rolling landscapes, on Sunday eve we reached Dumfries House, King Charles's favourite Scottish residence since 2007 when his Prince's

Trust took over the house from the late 7th Marquess of Bute, styled Earl of Dumfries before 1993. Many of the paintings there (on long-term loan from the Bute Family Trust to which they still belong) beautifully complement the exceptional collection of furniture designed by Thomas Chippendale. In tune with Scottish custom, a piper led us to dinner in the house's dining room before all retired for the night to a lodge on the estate. Our last port of call, on Monday, was Drumlanrig Castle, where Scott Macdonald, head of collections for the Buccleuch Living Heritage Trust, welcomed us for a tour of the House and we aptly celebrated the end of our 2023 Field Trip with lunch in the castle's dining room. | *Michel Ceuterick*

Michel de Marolles's Collection of Prints after Rubens

Nils Büttner

On 11 June 2023 the Rubenianum Fund field trip took us to Bowhill House, where we were warmly welcomed by the duke of Buccleuch. Guided for some time by the Duke himself, we saw the garden, the house and the rich collection. Among the impressive rooms, the so-called smoking room has been open to the public only since summer 2016 and is furnished according to the fashions of the nineteenth century. The shelves are lined with leather-bound folio volumes, six of which immediately caught my eye with their magnificent dark-red Morocco bindings. The labels on their spines in bright red announced their content as 'Flemish, Dutch & German Schools'. In addition, imprinted below in gold on dark green leather, was the name 'RUBENS' and a numbering from 'VOL. IV' to 'VOL. IX' (Fig. 1). Below that appeared the crowned monogram of Elizabeth Scott, Duchess of Buccleuch (1743-1827). The direct connection of this monogram with the English titles of the volumes suggests that the labels were applied by this eighteenth-century collector. The bindings, however, are obviously older and the spine of each book is emblazoned seven times with another initial, bordered by fleurs-de-lis: this is the crowned double L, the monogram of the Sun King, Louis XIV of France (1638-1715) (Fig. 2). It was immediately clear to me that this could be a real sensation for the Rubens world. When, at my request, a volume was taken from the shelf and placed on one of the tables, my hope became certainty. The French king's mark of ownership, his *supralibros*, decorated the cover (Fig. 2). The first volume in the series, Volume IV

according to the numbering on the spine, opened after a seventeenth-century marbled paper not with the blank pages I had expected, but with a number of prints that had obviously been pasted onto the blank endpapers sometime after the compilation of the volume. These additions included, for example, a mezzotint after Rubens made in 1790 by John Dean (1754-1798).¹ There followed in the volume proper an excellent collection of early prints after Rubens, the mounting of which clearly pointed to the creator of the album, one of the greatest print collectors of all time, Michel de Marolles (1600-1681), Abbé of Baugerais and Villeloin. It was in 1644 that de Marolles began to assemble what probably became the largest private collection of graphic prints that ever existed.² Born in 1600 into one of the most illustrious families in Touraine, he inherited a fortune after the death of his parents, which he devoted (plus his earnings) to increasing his collection of prints and to publishing books. By 1666, he owned about 125,000 sheets by some 6,000 different masters, all perfectly ordered and catalogued.³ This collection, worthy of a royal library (in de Marolles's own estimation), was in fact bought for Louis XIV.⁴ Between 11 and 15 March 1667, the bound volumes were taken from the abbé's house to the royal library on the rue Vivienne.⁵ Their former owner was then asked to reorganize the prints and compile them into new volumes, which were then bound in the splendid red morocco covers described above.⁶ A first inventory of the royal print collection was made in 1684 by the librarian Nicolas Clément (1647-1712),

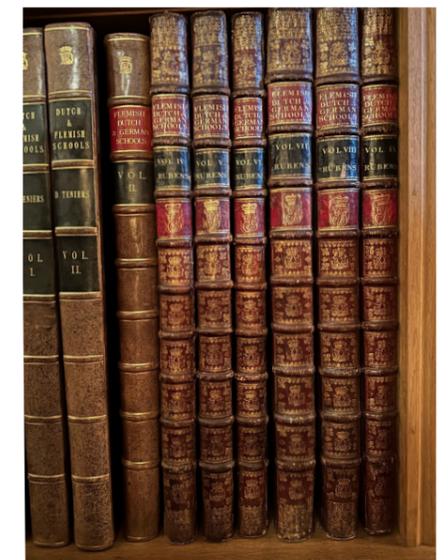


Fig. 1 The bookshelf in the smoking room at Bowhill House.

who had been responsible for the 'Service des Estampes' since 1670.⁷ But he recorded only three volumes of Rubens prints. These are now in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris. Evidently the six volumes in Bowhill House had somehow left Paris by the time the inventory was compiled. How this could have happened unnoticed is beyond explanation, as is the fact that the existence of these volumes went unnoticed by scholars later on. The complete set of nine volumes was the first attempt to compile an oeuvre catalogue of Rubens. In the understanding of the time, the term 'oeuvre' referred to printed reproductions of an artist's works.⁸



Tico Seifert and Nils Büttner discussing Rubens's *Feast of Herod* at the National Gallery, Edinburgh.



Gosford House dinner: Thomas Leysen thanking Lord Wemyss for his hospitality.

> Dinner at Broomhall House. In the background (standing), Lord Bruce, in the foreground: Nils Büttner, Bénédicte Hannecart and Eijk de Mol van Otterloo.



>> The Duke of Buccleuch welcoming us at Bowhill House.

>>> Entering Drumlanrig Castle.



Fig. 2 Red morocco binding with the coat-of-arms of France.



Fig. 3 Counter-proof of an etching, published by Abraham van Hooft (active c. 1630), before 1630; 406 x 460 mm.

The nine-volume Rubens compilation was made long before the first published catalogue of Rubens's prints, the *Catalogue des estampes gravées d'après Rubens* by Robert Hecquet (1693–1775) of 1751. This book was thoroughly updated and revised by Pierre-François Basan (1723–1797) and published in 1767 as the third volume of the *Dictionnaire des graveurs anciens et modernes*, which became the basis of later research. Apart from the three volumes in Paris, the collection compiled by the Abbé de Marolles was unknown to these authors and has remained so until now.

The nine volumes of Rubens prints are of extraordinary importance not only as the first attempt at a catalogue raisonné, but also because their great collector succeeded in bringing together

prints of incomparable quality, as well as proof prints and counter-proofs of the engravings (Fig. 3) – some of them unique specimens not found in any major print collection.⁹ Further trips to Scotland and Paris are expected to bring new results, which will be reported on in more detail in due course. At the same time, it is hoped that a digitization of all nine volumes and their virtual availability can be realized, bringing a wealth of new material for scholars and lovers of prints.

- 1 John Dean after Rubens, *The Infant Christ and St John with Two Angels*, 1790, mezzotint, 455 × 528 mm (V.S. p.149, no. 102).
- 2 W. Weisbach, 'Die Memoiren des Abbé de Marolles', *Deutsche Rundschau*, CCXXI, 1929, p. 143.
- 3 M. de Marolles, *Catalogue de livres d'estampes et de figures en taille douce*, [Paris] 1666.

Peace and War by Erasmus Quellinus II (1607–1678)

Nils Büttner



Fig. 1 Here attributed to Erasmus Quellinus II, *Peace and War*, 1648, oil on panel, 50.8 × 62.9 cm, Mount Stuart Trust, on permanent loan to Dumfries House.

Fig. 3 Thomas Leysen with Eijk and Rose-Marie de Mol van Otterloo inspecting the Quellinus painting.

The field trip to Scotland also provided the opportunity to study a painting from the Bute Collection which features contrasting imagery of war and of peace and is traditionally attributed to Rubens. An engraving (497 × 616 mm) in mirror image executed by George Bickham (c. 1706–1771) credits the Antwerp master with the invention. But the



Fig. 2 Erasmus Quellinus II, *Stage design for the Proclamation of the Peace Treaty of Münster in 1648*. Private collection.

picture was not planned for an engraving, where the design would appear inverted. The placing of war on the right and peace on the left corresponds to the traditional iconography of the Last Judgement, where the left side (Christ's right side) is reserved for the good. The architectural frame to the contrasting landscapes shows, on the right, two terminal figures symbolising war. These are personifications of Discord and Strife, in unfriendly disaccord and supporting on their heads a basket of snakes. The terms on the left are Pax and Concord, both holding their bound bundle of arrows. The trophies and all other elements can likewise be interpreted in terms of war and peace. In fact, both terms and trophies reproduce almost exactly features on the Temple of Janus for the entry of the Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand to Antwerp in 1635.

Ludwig Burchard attributed the Bute painting to Rubens and related it to the

- 4 S. Brakensiek, *Vom 'Theatrum mundi' zum 'Cabinet des Estampes'*, Hildesheim 2003, pp.17–39.
- 5 Ibid., p.21.
- 6 On 14 April 1674, the bookbinders Latour and Merias were paid 700 livres for the production of the new bindings, see G. Duplessis, 'Michel de Marolles', *Gazette des beaux-arts*, (2. Pér.) 1, 1869, pp. 529–30 n. 4.
- 7 N. Clément, 'Inventaire des recueils d'estampes', in *Recueil. Mémoire des pièces trouvées dans la Bibliothèque du Roi en 1684*, Paris 1684; see Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Documents d'archives et manuscrits, Sig. RESERVE YE-4-PET FOL. For Clément, see Brakensiek 2003 (note 4), p.23.
- 8 A. Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel, contenant généralement tous les mots françois tant vieux que modernes*, The Hague/Rotterdam 1690, II, unpaginated: 'À l'égard des Peintres & Graveurs, on appelle l'œuvre d'un Maître, le recueil de toutes les pièces gravées qu'on en trouve'. See also G. Bonne, 'Panoramic Ambitions: Collecting Rubens's Oeuvre in Reproduction, 1877–1927', *History of Photography* 46 (2022), pp. 31–41; DOI: 10.1080/03087298.2023.2178745 (accessed: 15.07.2023).
- 9 An example is a counter-proof of an etching, published by Abraham van Hoorn (active c. 1630), before 1630; 406 × 460 mm; see N. Büttner, *Allegories and Subjects from Literature* (Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, XII), London/Turnhout 2018, I, p.190, under no.18.



allegorical designs for the *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi* (1635). John Rupert Martin argued convincingly against this in his *Corpus volume* of 1972. Although the strange structure framing the distant view includes motifs also found in paintings by Rubens, the static scene, with its stark combination of near and far, is remote from his pictorial language. The artist was obviously a painter from Rubens's circle. The painterly execution speaks just as much for an attribution to Erasmus Quellinus II as does the iconography. The design relates to the stage designed by Quellinus for the proclamation of the Peace Treaty of Münster in 1648, commissioned from the artist by the Antwerp Senate. Since the work was considered a Rubens by Burchard, it will find its place in the *Corpus Rubenianum*, albeit with its new attribution in the *Addenda and Corrigenda*.

Rubeniana

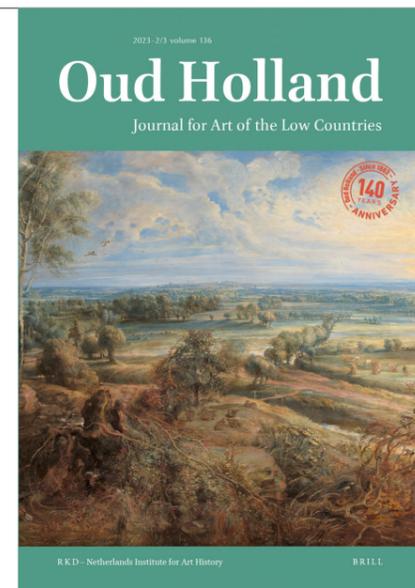
Oud Holland celebrates its 140th birthday with... Rubens!

Founded in 1883, *Oud Holland – Journal for Art of the Low Countries* is the oldest surviving art-historical periodical in the world. To mark its almost uninterrupted run and to celebrate a rare feat of longevity and scholarly stamina, a themed issue is published this autumn. Contributions by Susanna Avery-Quash, Lucy Davis, Nils Büttner, Corina Kleinert, Elizabeth McGrath and Bert Watteeuw focus on Rubens's landscapes. What better way to acknowledge a milestone birthday than to salute Rubens's timeless paintings?

In first draft these essays were presented at the symposium 'Rubens: Reuniting the Great Landscapes' held at the Wallace Collection in 2021, on the

occasion of the spectacular reunion of Rubens's *Landscape with Het Steen* and *The Rainbow Landscape*. With summer turning into autumn and days shortening, this festive issue and the mellow glow of Rubens's panoramas will surely make the prospect of retreating inside more alluring. Congratulations to the *Oud Holland* editorial team, and onwards and upwards to the bicentenary!

For the occasion the entire issue, edited by Lucy Davis and Nils Büttner, is published in open access: <https://brill.com/view/journals/oh/oh-overview.xml> and <https://oudholland.rkd.nl/BertWatteeuw>



Instroom Academy

All through July, the eerily empty rooms of the Rubenshuis were invaded by chef Seppe Nobels and his 'multicultural' brigade of Instroom Academy. The 2,178 guests enjoyed cooking of the highest standard in the unique setting of Rubens's former home, savouring a succession of dishes inspired by the master. Scents, colours and an atmosphere of conviviality animated the house. Dance performances, concerts, and poetry readings attracted a further 3,000 visitors to Rubens's splendid courtyard. Many thanks to our diners and guests for sharing this unique experience with us.



Town & Country: historic archive from Rubens's country estate acquired by Rubenshuis

When Visit Flanders bought Rubens's former country estate 'Het Steen' in the summer of 2019, the last private owner of the castle donated a laundry basket filled with documents to a local history circle. Changing his mind, he later revoked the gift. This caused alarm, as it threatened to separate for ever the historic archive from the locale it documented. Through the intervention of the Rubenshuis and the Flemish Government, the archive has now been acquired for the Rubenshuis. Our conservation team will clean and repackage the documents, which will be stored in new storage facilities and made available to researchers in our reading rooms.

The archive consists of 155 documents on paper and parchment, the oldest from 1602 and the most recent from 1791. Four iconographic documents from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries complement the archive. The collection charts two centuries of the estate's history – from the tenure of Maria Christina van Egmont (1555–1622), daughter of the famously decapitated Lamoral, Count of Egmont, to the flight of Laurent-Benoît Dewez (1731–1812), court architect to the governor of the Austrian Netherlands Charles of Lorraine, who left the castle to be plundered by French revolutionaries while escaping to Prague.

The Rubenianum Lectures

Sunday, 14 January 2024, 11 am

DR. NICO VAN HOUT
Head of Collections, Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp

Turning Heads

Early modern artists were obsessed with the human face. They explored its morphology, the way light defined its features, and its expressive powers. The exhibition *Krasse Koppen / Turning Heads* at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts links Dutch tronies by Hals, Lievens, Rembrandt and Vermeer with the earlier head studies, produced in the workshops of Flemish history painters, such as Rubens, Van Dyck and Jordaens. In this lecture, Nico Van Hout will focus on several paintings in the exhibition.

The lecture is in Dutch

Most important is a small yet revelatory group of documents relating to Rubens's five years as Lord of Het Steen (1635–40) and to the thirty-eight years during which his second wife, Helena Fourment, used the castle as a country retreat (1635–73). They record further acquisitions of land beyond the initial sale in 1635, show an active engagement in landscape management, and prove beyond a doubt Helena's involvement in the management of the estate. Beyond its intrinsic value, the archive holds useful leads which have prompted successful further searches on which we will report in a later issue of the *Rubenianum Quarterly*. | Bert Watteeuw

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