

# The Rubenianum Quarterly

2015  
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## The great tradition of Antwerp landscape painting

It is often forgotten that after the early sixteenth-century panoramic landscapes of Joachim Patinir (c. 1478–1524) and many others, the genre continued to evolve. Up to the first quarter of the seventeenth century, several exquisite landscape painters active in the Antwerp region enjoyed international success. Though pushed to the background by the roaring baroque of Rubens and the marvellous portraiture of Van Dyck, these landscapists rarely get the attention they deserve. That is why the Rubenianum, with generous private support, has invested in research on early seventeenth-century landscape, and will continue to do so in 2016.

A first goal of the 2015 project was to increase the online presence of Antwerp painters like David Vinckboons (1576–1629), Pieter Stevens (c. 1567–c. 1630), Kerstiaen de Keuninck (1551–c. 1635) and Abraham Govaerts (1589–1626) by including a selection of their work in *RKDimages*. Second, the project included a research campaign on the rather unknown Marten Ryckaert (Antwerp 1587–1631 Antwerp), who lived and worked in Antwerp during that flourishing period of Antwerp art. An active member of the Guild of St Luke, Ryckaert was inscribed in the *Liggeren* as 'Merten Rijckaert, scilder met eenen erm'. The fact that he only had one arm does not seem to have influenced his activity as a painter, for a large number of his works – either signed or attributed – can be found in museums and on the art market. Stylistically, Ryckaert's oeuvre recalls the great tradition of a century of landscape painting. As an apprentice of Tobias Verhaecht (1561–1631), he was a master in the portrayal of panoramic landscapes featuring grotesque rock formations and rivers meandering into the distance. After his journey to Italy around 1605–10, he combined this typical Flemish perspective and detail with the Italian ruins and pastoral scenes seen in the work of Paul Bril (1553/54–1626). In addition, his meticulous depiction of architecture and of identifiable plants in the foreground and the marvellous 'pontillistic' rendering of the foliage testify to his outstanding skills as an artist. A paper on Marten Ryckaert's life and work will be presented during a study day devoted to landscape painting at the Rubenianum. In order to make our survey of Ryckaert's oeuvre as comprehensive as possible, all information about his paintings in lesser-known (private) collections will be greatly appreciated. We kindly invite our readers to inform us via [rubenianum@stad.antwerpen.be](mailto:rubenianum@stad.antwerpen.be).

The 2016 project will investigate the highly original and influential landscape art of Gillis van Coninxloo II (1544–1606), particularly during his Antwerp and Frankenthal periods.

*Elise Boutsen*

## Baroque

After several cultural city projects – including 'Van Dyck 99', 'Mode 2001: Landed/Geland', 'Antwerp World Book Capital ABC2004', 'Rubens 2004' and 'Happy Birthday Dear Academie' – in 2018 Antwerp will once again develop a theme throughout the city. 'Barok2018' (working title) starts from the premise that baroque is inherently present in the identity and the DNA of the city and its inhabitants. The starting point of this project is the historical baroque, established in Antwerp by Rubens, through his house and his art and through the city's churches. But the idea is to connect the baroque explicitly to the present day by establishing links between the past, present and future, through the intermediaries of art, culture and history.

Baroque, after all, transcends history.

Reflecting on today's art and society, 'Barok2018' aspires to be more than an art-historical project.

The programme and the clear links to contemporary art extend the project's scope, making it meaningful for the widest possible audience. By bringing together very diverse disciplines in the fields of arts and heritage, it demonstrates that baroque has a more prominent presence than we might expect. The result is a broader cultural 'festival' that highlights all the aspects of the 'baroque lifestyle', from various perspectives. At the same time, it also focuses on durability and the future: 'Barok2018' wants to make sure that, after the festival year, baroque becomes a permanently relevant art movement and lifestyle again. And it should put Antwerp on the map again as the birthplace and breeding ground for the baroque in the Low Countries.

'Barok2018' is a programme of exhibitions, presentations and performances, music, theatre, philosophy, debate, literature and everything else it may inspire. The Rubenianum and the Rubenshuis are partners in the project and take the intellectual and organizational lead in it. The project will also be taken as an opportunity to restyle both institutions with a view to improving their infrastructure, collections and accessibility by 2019.

Carl Depauw  
General Manager Art Museums Antwerp

Marten Ryckaert, *Landscape Inspired by Tivoli with Hunters in the Foreground*. Oil on copper, 43.5 × 66 cm. [Galerie De Jonckheere, Paris, 2014]



## Interview with 2015–16 Rubenianum Fellow Jamie Richardson

My doctoral dissertation, advised by Professor Christiane Hertel at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, examines Frans Francken II's development of the Flemish 'gallery painting' genre within the aesthetic and intellectual context of early modern curiosity culture. Highly specialized and born of the specific artistic, intellectual and economic conditions of Antwerp in the first half of the seventeenth century, works of this genre are inherently interactive cabinet paintings intended for the very sort of locations and modes of display portrayed. By applying to these objects a methodological approach based in the history of concepts, I hope to gain insight into this complex genre by analysing its ontological source.

Featuring a sumptuous array of exotic *naturalia* and luxurious *artificialia*, including miniature depictions of well-known artworks examined by nobly dressed connoisseurs, gallery paintings appealed to the intellectual preoccupations of potential buyers, especially the *liefhebbers der schilderyen* who were officially recognized by Antwerp's Guild of St Luke in 1602. In the *constcamers* and *rariteitenkabinetten* of renowned collectors such as Nicolaas Rockox and Cornelis van der Geest, gallery paintings often functioned as social tests of connoisseurship, solidifying communal as well as artistic and epistemological networks of connection. Today they remain visual playgrounds for those familiar with Flemish art; for instance, in the earliest securely dated example of the genre, Francken's *Constcamer with Debating Scholars* (1612), we immediately recognize copied miniatures of works by Otto van Veen, David Teniers I, Hendrick van Balen I, Adriaen van Stalbempt, Joos de Momper II and Gillis van Coninxloo, in addition to likely contributions by Jan Brueghel I.

Despite its near exclusivity to Antwerp, the gallery painting genre explicitly depicts the pan-European phenomenon of 'curiosity culture' that united artists with collectors and natural historians, all seeking to understand the world around them by way of discovering,

recording and possessing its wonders. By propelling such proto-scientific investigations, early modern curiosity culture catalysed the gradual secularization of art and natural philosophy in European thought, provoking a shift in curiosity's own conception from the uncontrolled desire associated with biblical Eve to the disinterested empiricism of the Enlightenment. The genre therefore visualizes a semantic hinge: the early modern pursuit of knowledge through material evidence ran in tandem with the pursuit of luxurious and exotic material objects, themselves considered to be curiosities just as those who collected them were called curious. That this ambiguous essence of enquiry is both an object and a subject, an activity and an identity, a state of mind as well as a categorical attribute blurring the boundaries between the material and the abstract, renders the visual manifestation of curiosity through pictorial representations of collections, paintings of so-called 'curiosity cabinets', especially intriguing.

The temporal and regional specificity of the gallery painting genre and especially Francken's production presents the possibility of checking theoretical claims against material data in order to evaluate the extent to which gallery paintings reflect, prescribe or even replace Flemish collection practice with 'curated' pictorial representations thereof. The most prolific member of the Antwerp-based Francken studio, Frans II (1581–1642), originated the gallery painting genre around 1609 and is the only practitioner to have produced examples of all four of the genre's subtypes: 'portraits' of verifiable collections, imaginary collections, allegorical collections, and encyclopedic still life. By analysing Francken's painterly inventions (including and beyond his gallery painting oeuvre) within the context of early modern curiosity's conceptual shift from a medieval vice correlated with forbidden knowledge to the indispensable quality of an enlightened intellectual, my dissertation seeks to establish the significance of this distinctly Flemish artistic genre to the Western canon at large.

It is difficult to overstate what an honour and privilege it is to be named the 2015–16 Rubenianum Fellow. By the time I arrived in Antwerp in September to begin this fellowship, generously co-sponsored by the Belgian–American Educational Foundation and the Rubenianum Fund (managed by the King Baudouin Foundation), I had long relied upon the vast and rigorous scholarship of the institution's eminent staff and associated researchers. My initial foray into Flemish art of the seventeenth century was Hans Vlieghe's unimpeachable survey, and when studying for my doctoral qualifying exams, the digitized *Corpus Rubenianum* was utterly indispensable. That my own introduction to the gallery painting genre was the catalogue for the 2009–10 Rubenshuis/Mauritshuis exhibition, 'A Room for Art in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp' (co-produced by Ariane van Suchtelen and Ben van Beneden), is especially serendipitous. Even the renovation and closure of the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten is a disguised blessing in that it has occasioned Rockoxhuis' 'Het Gulden Cabinet' exhibition, a rare reconstruction of the *constcamer* experience that features not one but two of Francken's gallery paintings. I cannot fully express the delight of finally viewing these objects in person after reading and pondering about them for so long from afar; it is akin to running into Francken experts Ursula Härting and Natasja Peeters in the Rubenianum's peerless library: star-struck elation and scholarly fascination along with a deep sense of gratitude to the Rubenianum for making possible these encounters.

As a visiting scholar unaccustomed to having such an immense and comprehensive treasure trove of resources at my fingertips, from paintings, archives and manuscripts to formerly elusive library books as well as unpublished scholarship and technical reports, I cannot imagine a more inspiring place to begin my fieldwork. Even when travelling to view Francken's work in collections abroad (such as easy journeys from Antwerp's central location!), the Rubenianum's renown grants me instantaneous access to the curators and conservators of public and private collections alike. These past three months have been among the most intellectually challenging and productive of my career, and I look forward to more of the same in 2016: from participating in symposia and receiving insightful feedback from the most learned people in the field to practising my Dutch through daily interactions with my fabulous colleagues. I am so grateful to the Rubenianum for this opportunity to be part of an extended community (dare I say fellowship?) of *liefhebbers der schilderyen*, both in their seventeenth-century and modern-day manifestations.



## Some important new acquisitions for the Rubenshuis

Ben van Beneden

*The Rubenshuis has continued to fare well in 2015. In the spring the museum organized its most successful exhibition to date. 'Rubens in Private: The Master Portrays his Family' (28 March–28 June) quickly became the 'hot ticket' in the city, breaking all attendance records to the museum.*

The excitement generated by the show makes it easy to lose sight of the museum's continuing efforts to strengthen and enrich its permanent collection. Our acquisitions policy aims to close gaps and to add characteristic works either by Rubens or by significant masters from his circle.

Despite the fact that the Old Masters have recently been labelled 'a market in decline',\* it has become prohibitively expensive for Belgian museums to buy their work. In an effort to deal with this deadlock by finding alternative ways to enrich its collection, the Rubenshuis has set up an active loan policy, whereby it seeks to borrow works from public and private collections alike. These loans now form an essential part of the museum's permanent display. It is certainly not a new concept for museums to work together and exchange pieces from their collections, or to acquire works on loan from private collectors – at least not for museums in the United States, Great Britain and the Netherlands. The leading international museums have been doing this for years.

Thanks to the support of increasing numbers of faithful friends, the Rubenshuis has been able to add important new works to the collection. Recent acquisitions include paintings by Rubens, Van Dyck and Van Utrecht. In September we were delighted to report that *Clara Serena Rubens, the Artist's Daughter* (fig. 1) – one of the highlights of 'Rubens in Private' – would be staying at the museum on a long-term loan basis. We are confident that many people will want to see the portrait in its natural habitat. A couple of months later the Rubenshuis was in the news again because of another important acquisition. Fascinated by Roman antiquity, Rubens made – early in his career – portraits of Roman emperors, in which he attempted to capture their personalities. The portrait of Galba, Nero's successor, is a prime example (fig. 2). With his threatening look, prominent chin and remarkably stocky neck, he is portrayed as a terrifying figure. Galba was a promising young politician and soldier, but his vindictive rule as emperor soon made him unpopular. His reign lasted seven months, ending with his murder. This portrait is particularly relevant for the Rubenshuis, because it displays close similarities to a drawing in Rubens's *Theoretical Notebook*, where Galba's head is compared to that of a bull. Recently, the generous support of

the King Baudouin Foundation made it possible for the Rubenshuis to acquire one of the four known contemporary copies of Rubens's lost original notebook. The long-term loan of *Galba* enables us to display the drawing and the portrait side by side.

The most talked-about acquisition was undoubtedly *Study for the Head of a Brussels Magistrate* by Anthony van Dyck (fig. 3). This recently rediscovered painting, which surfaced on the BBC's *Antiques Roadshow* in July 2013, is an exceptionally

fresh and powerful example of Van Dyck's *ad vivum* technique. Like other such studies by the artist, the composition was 'completed' by another hand, probably in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. This overpainting was removed during recent conservation treatment, revealing once again Van Dyck's brilliantly fresh and vibrant conception. His portraits are celebrated for their bravura brushwork and psychological astuteness – qualities which are exemplified in the present work. The head study was executed as a preparatory work for Van Dyck's important group portrait *The Magistrates of Brussels Assembled around the Personification of Justice*, painted for the Brussels Town Hall during Van Dyck's



Fig. 1 Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), *Clara Serena Rubens, the Artist's Daughter*. Oil on panel, 35.6 × 26 cm. Private collection, London



Fig. 2 Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), *Emperor Servius Sulpicius Galba* (3 BCE–69 CE). Oil on panel, 66.7 × 52.2 cm. The Phoebus Foundation

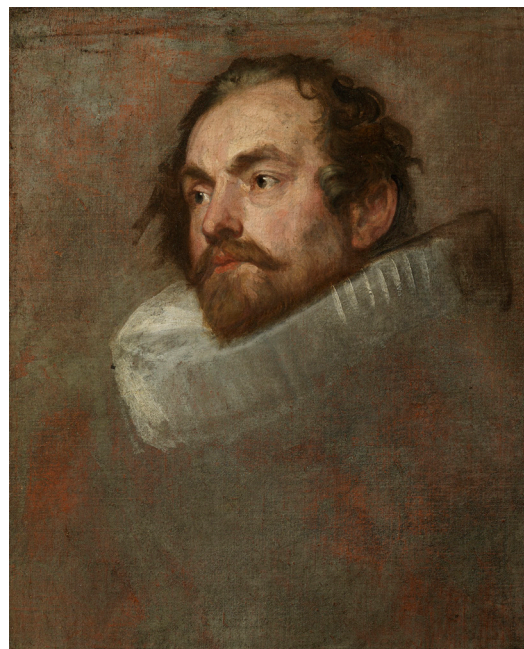


Fig. 3 Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641), *Study for the Head of a Brussels Magistrate*. Oil on canvas, 55.3 × 45.1 cm. Private collection, Grand Duchy of Luxemburg

sojourn in the Southern Netherlands in 1634–35. Although that painting was destroyed during the French bombardment of Brussels in 1695, the composition is preserved in a *modello* (Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Paris). In addition to the present work, three other head studies for this important commission survive. Two are in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and a third is in a private collection in the United States.

The exceptionally fine *Still Life with Vegetables* by the Antwerp still-life painter Adriaen van Utrecht – a pupil of Frans Snyders, who in turn was a friend and collaborator of Rubens – strikes an entirely different chord (fig. 4). The composition features an extraordinary

display of vegetables, placed against a dark background. This exciting, almost dramatic, still life – one of Van Utrecht’s best – is thought to date from his Italian period. The painting fits superbly into the Rubenshuis collection, owing to its bold technique, attractive composition and excellent state of preservation. The acquisition of this picture means that Van Utrecht’s prowess as a painter can now be properly presented for the first time in a Flemish public art collection. Van Utrecht also collaborated on a regular basis with Antwerp figure painters. A fine example of such a painting *à quatre mains* is the recently restored *Fish Market* in the Rubenshuis, on which Van Utrecht collaborated with Maarten Pepijn.

The Rubenshuis is brimming with initiatives and has more surprises in store. Future acquisitions will include an important and hitherto unknown mythological painting by Rubens’s great predecessor Marten de Vos, as well as an equally unknown, late self-portrait by Anthony van Dyck. Now, at the start of a new year, it is time to express our heartfelt gratitude to the lenders – old and new friends alike – for their generous and invaluable support of the museum. We need them more than ever and will do our best not to disappoint them.

1 ‘Long winter for Old Masters’, *Financial Times Weekend*, 12/13 December 2015, p. 17.



Fig. 4 Adriaen van Utrecht (1592–1652). *Still Life of Vegetables*. Oil on canvas, 75.9 × 119.4 cm. Private collection, Grand Duchy of Luxemburg

### Clara Peeters (1594–after 1657?): A Flower of a Lady

Lecture by Leen Huet at the Rockox House,  
Sunday 20 March, 11 am

Clara Peeters was an outsider – one of the few female fine artists in the early seventeenth century, not to mention a pioneer in the development of still life as a genre. Art historian Leen Huet has long been curious about overlooked female inspiration in the past and about the obstacles women had to overcome to develop their artistic skills. In her lecture, she will shed light on the hidden life of Clara Peeters and will describe the forthcoming exhibition of her work at the Rockox House (17 June–2 October 2016).

The lecture is in Dutch, max. 55 people.  
Entrance is free (museum ticket required)



Clara Peeters, *Still Life with Fish*, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp.  
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#### The Rubenianum Lectures

Next lecture: Sunday,  
13 March 2016, 11 am.

DR HANNELORE MAGNUS  
(KU Leuven)

#### *The Antwerp à la mode painter Hieronymus Janssens (1624–1693) and the representation of dance and fashion in seventeenth-century genre painting*

In seventeenth-century Antwerp the urban elite, often consisting of merchants with manifest aristocratic ambitions, had a taste for recognizable symbols of the 'noble' lifestyle. The Antwerp painter Hieronymus Janssens specialized in depicting such outward symbols of behaviour by depicting the latest fashion styles in dress and accessories and by emphasizing the elegant dancing positions of his figures. Based on Hannelore Magnus's recently finished PhD dissertation, this lecture will introduce this rather unknown painter and his elegant company pictures.

The lecture is in Dutch and will take place  
at the Rubenianum.



Hieronymus Janssens, *Merry Company on a Palace Terrace*, c. 1668–70. Private collection

#### SAVE THE DATE

#### 'Art Publications in Transition' Study day, 21 April 2016

In conclusion of the 'Digitizing the Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard' project, the Rubenianum is organizing a study day which will focus on how heritage institutions in the Low Countries attempt to follow in the ambitious footsteps of the Online

Scholarly Catalogue Initiative, as developed by the Getty Foundation. A variety of projects will be presented as a basis for discussion about the difficulties and opportunities of the transition from printed volumes to online dynamic publications.

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