

**Michèle-Caroline Heck (ed.): Le Rubénisme en Europe aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles, Turnhout: Brepols Publishers NV 2005, VIII + 216 S., ISBN 2-503-51689-0, EUR 65,00**

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The sixteen contributions are grouped along three topics, namely "The Reception of Rubens's Art in the 17th- and 18th Centuries"; "Visual Perception, Copies, and Interpretations"; and the "Theoretical Aspects in the Dispute between Colorist Theory and Rubenism".

The topics of the colloquium reflect the Rubens and Rubens related exhibitions that took place at the same time in Northern France in 2004. The aim was to investigate the influence of Rubens's art in France during the 17th- and 18th centuries. In the process one hoped to better define the evolution of the taste for Rubens. Alexis Merle du Bourg, who more than anyone else has investigated Rubens's influence in France in the 17th century, begins with a list of the artist's works (paintings, cartoons, oil sketches) available in the country at the time. He supplemented it with an appendix that enumerates all the works by, after, or in the manner of Rubens mentioned in documents from about 1632-35 until 1716.

This is followed by a contribution from Patrick Michel that discusses French eighteenth-century collectors of Rubens's art. Michel shows that the French taste for Rubens diminished during the century from 138 paintings mentioned in public auctions between 1730-50 to 46 paintings between 1760-70. Far more admired was the work of David Teniers, whose 608 paintings referred to in sales were almost double the number of works by Rubens (387). Rembrandt came out a distant third with 246 listings. Michel also discusses prices paid for Rubens paintings, singling out the exorbitant sum of 20,050 pounds the Prussian King paid in 1756 for *Saint Cecilia* (today in the SMPK, Berlin). The finest collection of Rubens and Rubens related drawings was created by Pierre Crozat, totaling some 335 items. At that time prices for Rubens drawings ranged between 15 and 50 pounds up to 150 and 367 pounds for more finished drawings and colored sheets. Pierre-Jean Mariette purchased sixty-two of the finest examples for his own collection at the 1741 auction of Crozat's collection. Mariette also assembled one of the finest holdings of prints after Rubens. By the second half of the 18th century artists like Teniers, Wouwerman, Gerard Dou, Schalcken, Van der Werff and Berchem were more appreciated in France than Rubens and his followers.

Nadia Harabasz discusses the influence of Rubens art thanks to the distribution of the many prints after his works. At that very time the first

two catalogues of the prints after Rubens appeared by Robert Hecquet (1751) and by Pierre-François Basan (1762). Rubens, with 172 engravings, figures behind David Teniers and Philips Wouwerman. The author illustrates in a diagram the percentage of prints the various engravers made after Rubens's works, with S. a Bolswert at the top (13 %), while the work of Galle, Pontius, and Vorsterman only amounted to four percent each; the majority contributed a mere one or two percent.

Gaëtane Maës follows the reception of Rubens in France during the 18th century based on the writings of Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville's *Abrégé de la vie des plus fameux peintres* of 1745-52 and *La vie des peintres flamands, allemands et hollandais* by Jean-Baptiste Decamps that appeared between 1753 and 1763. The image of Rubens is two-fold: the critics find that his color lacks verity and that his allegories are too complex; however, thanks to the above mentioned catalogues his work becomes better known and Rubens is praised for the dramatic power of his paintings and the subtleness of his expressions. In 1792 Watelet and Lévêque consider him in their *Dictionnaire des arts de peinture* as the true founder of art in Flanders. Renewed interest in the artist's work begins in 1794, when French troops bring the looted Flemish altarpieces to Paris.

The response by travelers and a Dominican monk to Rubens's high altar in the Antwerp Dominican church of 1618-20 is traced by Jeffrey Martin Muller. The altarpiece represents a vision by St. Dominic, surrounded by many saints, that the founder of the order experienced in Rome (today in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon). Beginning with the visit of the French savant Balthasar de Monconys in 1662, the author proceeds to the German Calvinist Friedrich Lucä, who saw the altar in 1665 and to the Swedish court architect Nicodemus Tessin, who visited the church in 1687. All experience the altar in their own way in accordance with their different religious and intellectual backgrounds. As expected, the most fervent response came from the monk, who fell to his knees. Muller ends with a discussion of the first written guide book (published only in 1910) to the Antwerp churches by the Dutch, Catholic painter Jacob de Wit, an ardent admirer of Rubens and most important exponent of the artist's style in Northern as well as Southern Netherlands in the eighteenth century.

In section 2, *Regards, copies et interprétations*, Emmanuelle Delapierre focuses on the discussions about *coloris* held at the Academy between 1685 and 1715, thereby quoting Philippe de Champaigne, Charles Le Brun, and Antoine Coypel. The author shows that Le Brun as painter and as educator, for example, followed two distinctly separate directions.

While Pascal-François Bertrand discusses Rubens's tapestries, Marion Boudon-Machuel establishes that Theodoor van Kessel's four engravings of mythological subjects, crediting Rubens with their invention, actually are based on reliefs by Gerard van Opstal. She further discusses the influence of the sculptures and reliefs by the slightly older François du

Quesnoy, the subject of her 2005 dissertation.

The contribution of Aline Magnien consists primarily of quotes that support her topic of finding Rubenism in sculpture. A welcome addition is the investigation by Sophie Raux that brings together for the first time all the known drawn copies Jean-Honoré Fragonard made after works by Rubens that he encountered not so much in Paris but abroad. Fragonard was copying while traveling in Italy with the Abbé de Saint-Non (1760-61) and with Bergeret (1773-74) in Italy, Austria, and Germany, in addition to trips on his own to The Netherlands, North and South. Some thirty drawings by Fragonard after Rubens are known, drawn over a span of thirteen years. Fragonard apparently copied so diligently after Rubens because the latter inspired him the most. Mme Raux dedicated her article to the late Marianne Roland-Michel.

The third part, *Les enjeux théoriques de la Querelle du coloris et du rubénisme*, begins with Lykle de Vries' investigations of who actually determined the program of Rubens's Medici cycle. Pointing out the carelessness about the unities of place and time in the cycle, De Vries concludes that the final result actually reflects Marie de' Medici's original concept diluted through the gradually increasing influence of her advisors, who had to deal with pressures from the court of her son, Louis XIII. Even Rubens himself appears to have interfered in the process. De Vries' case in point is the canvas with the *Felicity of Maria's Reign* that disrupts the narrative of the series. With others he points out that the Medici cycle should be read as an epic, as a living allegory (known in Italy as *pittura mista*). Based on the theories expressed by the Dutch painter Gerard de Lairese in his *Groot Schilderboek* (1707 and 1740), the facts from both the life of Marie de' Medici and of Henry IV's were used as instructive moral examples about politics and government, war, and peace. *Pitture miste*, according to Lairese became moral allegories (*moraale tafereelen*) that took on a special meaning (*zin-beteekende beelden*) which he then called hieroglyphic compositions (*hieroglifische tafereelen*).

In his question whether there was a dispute of *Rubénisme* at the Royal Academy of Sculpture, Christian Michel retraces the sources that the first authors investigating this dispute used, beginning with Philippe de Chennevières, Pierre Marcel, André Fonatine, Louis Hourticq and their followers. Michel singles out the discourses by Antoine Coypel and Guillet de Saint-Georges given at the Paris Academy in 1670s as the most significant ones.

Thomas Puttfarken explains why Roger de Piles put Rubens above Titian even though de Piles must have known that this seemed to be wrong. The author further discusses the function and presumed origin of the *grappe de raisin*, which embodies the formal order of *clair-obscur* and *coloris*, in other words, the coherence of the object. Puttfarken mentions several Rubens paintings where this *grappe de raisin* is evident such as the *Drunken Silenus* or the *Lion Hunt*. No such examples are found in Titian, however. (The concept apparently does not exist in Italian

literature.) De Piles seems to have chosen Rubens over Titian because the latter lacked the Fleming's active temperament and fiery genius ('Genie tout de feu'.)

Sandrart's biography of Rubens in his *Teutsche Academie* (1675) is based primarily on Rubens's works that he could see in Germany, as Michèle-Caroline Heck points out. Sandrart first encountered Rubens's work in Rome, where he saw the latter's altars in the Chiesa Nuova and Santa Croce in Gerusalemme. In Germany he would study Rubens's large altarpieces commissioned in 1617 by Wolfgang-Wilhelm of Pfalz-Neuburg (today in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich and partly also in the Staatsgalerie, Neuburg) as well as the hunts that Maximilian I of Bavaria had ordered in 1616 for Schleissheim. According to M-C. Heck Rubens's art, however, is reflected more in Sandrart's writings than in his oeuvre. Only Sandrart's paintings between 1644 and 1648, especially the ones with religious subject matter, seem to show Rubensian traits. Rubens's oil sketches were of primary importance for Sandrart since they merged drawing and color during the invention of the work of art in the opinion of M-C. Heck.

Thomas W. Gaehtgens discusses the letters that the little known German Johann Jakob Wilhelm Heinse (1746-1803) wrote in 1776-77 to the German poet Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim (1719-1803) which include his impressions of the Rubens paintings that he saw in the princely galleries of the Elector Johann Wilhelm at Düsseldorf. In these letters Heinse initiated a theory of art, a Neo-Baroque that contrasted with the Neo-Classicism as taught by Winckelmann or Mengs. His image of Rubens reflected the *Sturm und Drang* of his time pointing to the ensuing Romanticism. Moreover, at that very moment, 1775, the protagonists of a Düsseldorf Academy prevailed and Lambert Krahe, the director of the princely gallery was chosen to also lead the Academy.

The publication ends with a discussion of Franz Anton Maulbertsch and the dispute of the *coloris* in central Europe at the end of the 18th century. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann (Princeton) bases his contribution on a chapter in his publication on the artist that appeared in 2005.

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