Announcing project Collection Ludwig Burchard II

We are pleased to announce that through a generous donation the Rubenianum will be able to dedicate another project to Ludwig Burchard’s scholarly legacy. The project entails two main components, both building on previous undertakings that have been carried out to preserve the Rubenianum’s core collection and at the same time ensure enhanced accessibility to the scholarly community of the wealth of Rubens documentation.

Digitizing the Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, launched in 2013 and successfully extended until May 2016, will be continued for all Corpus volumes published before 2003, abiding by the moving wall of 15 years, that was agreed upon with Brepols Publishers, for the years 2016–18.

The second and larger component of the project builds on the enterprise titled A treasure trove of study material. Disclosure and valorization of the Collection Ludwig Burchard, successfully executed in 2014–15. An archival description of Rubenianum objects originating from Burchard’s library and documentation has since allowed for a virtual reconstruction of the expert’s scholarly legacy. Much emphasis was placed on the Rubens files during this project, while the collection contains many other resources that are of considerable importance to Rubens research. For instance, Burchard frequently scribbled his thoughts on attribution in the margins of his own catalogues while scrutinizing a painting on site. His notebooks and appointment diaries reveal carefully planned travel details. Burchard’s correspondence attests to his international network of scholars and art dealers. Each and every one of these objects makes for a unique resource on Rubens research, but has only been roughly inventoried so far. This present project includes a more detailed description of these archival documents, which will allow the research community, and Corpus authors specifically, to delve further into the archive and benefit from Burchard’s accurate observations. Another part of the project involves the conservation and description of engraved reproductions and original drawings, some dating back to the 17th century, that form an interesting part of Burchard’s Rubens files.

This announcement does not allow me to describe all the separate parts of the project, dubbed Project Collection Ludwig Burchard II, but interim results will be published regularly through the Rubenianum’s newsletter and website. Close collaboration with the RKD and Illuminare will ensure a fruitful exchange of expertise. The project’s final results should be presented at a conference devoted to archival best practices that the Rubenianum is planning for 2018.

Lieneke Nijkamp

Dear friends, colleagues and benefactors,

I have the pleasure to inform you of the imminent publication of the first part of the mythology volumes in the Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard. The two volumes are going to press as we speak and will be truly impressive. Consisting of nearly 1000 pages and over 400 images, they will be a monumental addition to our ever-growing catalogue raisonné of Rubens’s oeuvre and constitute a wonderful Easter present.

In the meantime, volume XIX, 4 on Peter Paul Rubens’s many portrait copies, the volume on the famous Decius Mus series (XIII, 2) and volume XVII on his collaborations with Jan Brueghel have been translated and are in the process of being edited. The photo editing advances diligently as well. We expect all of these volumes to come out before the end of this year. In sum, we are proceeding at cruising speed now and have the ambition to keep up this pace until this gigantic project is finished in 2020.

The Corpus Rubenianum has proven to be an Odyssey – to stay on topic – but Ithaca is in sight.

Let me also take this occasion to warmly thank the two team members who have recently left us, Marike and Prisca. They both played a crucial role in the publication of several volumes in the past years.

Koen Jonckheere
Director of Publications

Rubensken

New staff member archival and documentary collections
Elise Gacoms introduces herself and her activities at the Rubenianum

Rien au monde ne me vaudrait l’immense plaisir d’avoir pu toucher du doigt et examiner de tout près ces magnifiques couleurs de couleur pleines d’esprit et de cœur, des couleurs de brosse magiques, envirant autant de gouttes d’or et de rose. Letons de peinture que j’ai reçues de ma vie … c’est aussi ma plus grande joieusance … In his discourse leçons de peinture que j’ai reçues de ma vie …

Elizabeth McGrath interviewed by Gregory Martin

You must be glad that the first Mythology volume is soon to be out; can you say what were your trials and tribulations as editor? Mythology 1 is unlike any previous Corpus volume in that it is not, as sixty-six, in fact, ourselves included – so this has led to interesting complications; that’s the phrase I was going to use. Apart from the tribulations: At an early stage we decided that it was best not to attempt to impose a uniform style but to allow variations of emphasis within the established Corpus structure. One of the problems we had to try to stop the timetable from slipping too much – quite difficult given the other commitments that we had. So I think that the way that I was writing the Introduction to the book before I had seen many of the entries. So I made my essay more of an introduction to the subject, suggesting something of what classical mythology meant to educated people of the time, as well as outlining how the ancient gods and their stories were depicted, both as they are by him. I think all our texts benefited from your editing – you are a ‘natural’ with a blue pencil. One way or another I have had quite a lot of experience of editing, especially as an editor of the Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes. And besides, I was greatly helped by our brilliant and resourceful ‘editorial team’ at the Rubenianum.

The book’s subtitle is Achilleis to The Graces, and you had the pleasure of writing about the Prado Three Graces, as well as Boreas and Orithya and Clio and Gaia, while also allotted to me were the many compositions of Diana, including the touching Diana and Callisto in the Prado. What about some of the other highlights? Bert Schepers has elucidated the whole series of 181 paintings of the little-known works from the artist’s earliest years of activity. And there are the pictures on the theme of the rescue of the Median Cassandra catalogued by Fiona Healy, who also, among other works, writes about the splendid Liechtenstein Discovery of Erichthonius and introduces alongside it a hitherto unknown composition of this subject. Carl van den Broecke deals with the early Annoes Departing from Troy in the Louvre as well as that museum’s Death of Thoas. This impressive late painting is less appreciated than it should be, as perhaps too is the astonishing Hermitage Bacchus on a Barret analysed by Karenne De Clijper. As you can see just from this selection, our volumes cover very nearly every aspect of Rubens’ style too.

Our co-authors are a mixture of the old, like us, and the early-middle-aged, do you think there are enough younger Angsts taking up the Rubens challenge? Rubens seems to be an acquired taste for many people, even in his homeland. But the Centrum Rubenianum has played a crucial role, especially in recent years in introducing some very gifted young scholars to Rubens and the artists in his entourage. So the future looks promising for Rubens research.

The Centrum Rubenianum – as it has come to be called – can only have been born in the eyes of Roger d’Hulst and Frans Baudouin when you were young; I wonder how you first became aware of it? Well, in my childhood home in the west of Scotland, we had a book about art: The House of Beautiful Things, which my father had acquired by collecting cigarette coupons. In it there was only Rubens, the National Gallery Susanna Fourment. I liked this lady. When I was about twelve, I saw her again on the cover of a booklet on a shell in our local newsagent. The shopkeeper refused to let me undo the wrapper to peer inside, but I decided it was just right as a birthday present for my father. I was distinctly embarrassed when I found reproductions inside of lots of naked and near-naked women – The Three Graces, the goddesses in the Prado Judgment of Paris. Diana and Clio and Medea and Fourment in a For Wrap. My father seemed happy enough with the book, however. Later it migrated to my bookshelf. After all, the author was Julius Held.

But I think it was when you were at university that you had your first contact with Rubens? I think all our texts benefited from your editing – you are a ‘natural’ with a blue pencil.

You earned your living working in, and then running, the Photographic Collection of the Warburg Institute in London, where you also taught; I wonder what brought you there in the first place? My peculiar degree in ancient Greek and the history of art qualified me for the Warburg, and for little else, and besides I had visited its library some years earlier. The Warburg Institute’s Journal and admired the editor Ernst Gombrich, whose Story of Art had been a revelation to me. He took me on to write a thesis on Rubens’ decorations for the Cardinal Infante Ferdinand’s newly furnished Antwerp. Julius Held happened to be around the day I was interviewed and Gombrich asked me if I was interested in having my PhD about Rubens. I was.

The move to the Kolveniershof in 1981 marked a transformation … It certainly was important in symbolic as well as practical ways, making the library a public resource and linking the Rubenianum to the Rubenianus, as had always been the intention of Baudouin and Driuht. Since then the corpus went through some lean times when funding and morale were low. But now, thanks to the Rubenianum Fund, the place is a hive of activity, and the vast trunkload of catalogues is available to scholars for my generation as well as for the young. Your reputation as a scholar has taken you for conferences, so I think it was in the mid 1990’s that you stepped centre stage in the Rubens world … That is going a bit far, but certainly the 1977 exhibition in the Koninklijk Museum
Rubenshuis acquires a modello by Jan Boeckhorst

The Rubenshuis recently acquired a modello for Achilles among the Daughters of Lycomedes by Jan Boeckhorst (c. 1604-1668), a German-born painter who was a pupil and assistant of Rubens. The modello, which fits superbly into the collection of the Rubenshuis, was acquired with funding from the Friends of the Rubenshuis.

The discovery of Achilles, disguised as a woman, among the daughters of King Lycomedes was regularly depicted in paintings. Rubens and Van Dyck, for example, both treated this Homeric theme. According to an ancient legend, Achilles’ mother, knowing that her son would die if he fought in the Trojan War, entrusted him to Lycomedes’ household, where he lived among the king’s daughters in his palace on the island of Scyros. When war threatened, Odysseus and other Greek chieftains were sent to fetch Achilles, knowing they had to trick him into revealing himself. They cunningly deposited a heap of feminine gifts before the women – jewellery, clothes and other finery – as well as some weaponry. When time had come to select a gift, Achilles instinctively grabbed the weapons, thus betraying his true identity.

The sketch served as a modello for the painting of the same name (c. 1653-55) at the Staatsgalerie in Schleissheim. Boeckhorst’s modello will be displayed alongside similar examples by Justus van Eeghem and Jan van den Hoecke.

Open for registration

From book to byte. Art publications in transition

On 21 April 2016 the Rubenianum organizes a study day in conclusion of the project ‘Digitizing the Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard’. This day will be devoted to the transition from printed volumes to web-based art-historical publications, presenting case studies from the Low Countries, parallel to online museum catalogues that have recently been published under the umbrella of the Getty Foundation’s Online Scholarly Catalogue Initiative. A variety of projects will be discussed, illustrating challenges as well as success stories and covering workshops from museums, libraries and publishers alike. The study day includes contributions by the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Flemish Art Collection, IRPA, KIK Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage, and Brepols Publishers. Participants receive free access to the Rubenshuis museum, and can also sign up for a brief behind-the-scenes tour of the Rubenianum.

All lectures are in Dutch. Registration is mandatory and open until 30 April. For registration and programme details, please consult our website http://www.rubenianum.be.nl/actie/en-Van-Boeckhorst-modello

The lecture is in English and coincides with the start of the Summer Course for the Study of the Arts in Flanders. The Age of Rubens in Context, 19-29June 2016.

Climbing out soon

New Corpus volume

The Centrum Rubenianum is proud to announce the publication of the first of three volumes on Rubens’s mythological subjects. The book will be presented at the Rubens House in early May.
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