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Appreciating the Traces of an Artist's Hand

Edited by **Toshiharu Nakamura**

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Contents

Preface	1
Albrecht Dürer's <i>The Desperate Man</i> : Fleeting Images and the Creating Hand	3
Kayo Hirakawa	
Rubens and the History of the Oil Sketch	19
Toshiharu Nakamura	
The Hands of Rubens: On Copies and Their Reception	41
Nils Büttner	
Connection between Rough Brushstrokes and Vulgar Subjects in Seventeenth-Century Netherlandish Paintings	55
Michiko Fukaya	
Rembrandt in Kassel: The Relativity of Eighteenth-Century Connoisseurship	73
Gregor J. M. Weber	
Genius, Inspiration, and Hands: Pre-Romantic Image of Artists and Fantasy Figures by Fragonard	83
Tomoko Yoshida	
Originality, Spontaneity, and Sincerity: The Rise of the Sketch in France at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century	99
Nicole R. Myers	
“Full of vigour, & nature, fresh, original, warm from observation of nature, hasty, unpolished, untouched”: The Oil Sketches of John Constable	111
Mark Evans	
How Paul Cézanne Rejected the <i>Fini</i> Concept	133
Takanori Nagai	
The Authors	149

The Hands of Rubens: On Copies and Their Reception

Nils Büttner

Peter Paul Rubens had more than two hands. How else could he have created the enormous number of works still associated with his name? A survey of the existing paintings shows that almost all of his famous paintings exist in more than one version. It is notable that the copies of most of his paintings are very often contemporary, sometimes from his workshop. It is astounding even to see the enormous range of painterly qualities which they exhibit. The countless copies and replicas of his works contributed to increasing Rubens's fame and immortalizing his name. Not all paintings connected to his name, however, were well suited to do the inventor of the compositions any credit. This resulted in a problem of which already one of his first biographers, Roger de Piles, was aware: some of these productions "harmed his reputation (*fit du tort à sa réputation*)."¹ Joachim von Sandrart, a biographer who had met Rubens in person, on the other hand, saw the benefits of copying Rubens's style for the art production in Antwerp:² "Through his industriousness the City of Antwerp became an exceptional art school in which students achieved notable perfection."³

Accordingly, gaining one of the apprenticeships in Rubens's workshop was in great demand. Just how sought-after the workshop was is documented by a letter sent to the engraver Jacob de Bie and dated 11 May 1611. De Bie had recommended a young man who wanted to learn from the famous painter. Rubens answered him that he could honestly say, "without any exaggeration, that I have had to refuse over one hundred, even some of my own relatives or my wife's."⁴ How many pupils Rubens really had cannot be safely determined; as the court painter of the archdukes, he was relieved from the duty of reporting his pupils to the guild and no official records exist. There is, however, a large number of other sources, such as Rubens's correspondence or the lives of those painters whose biographers, in order to increase their fame, report them as apprentices, journeymen or employees of Rubens. These sources reveal the names of about hundred painters who were in any way associated with Rubens's workshop for a shorter or longer period of time.⁵ Nevertheless, opinions vary about the extent to which these many employees were involved in the painting production. This diversity of opinion has mainly to do with the fact that our contemporary notions of the nature of an artistic original can hardly be matched with a production practice in which the master only provided the design while the painting of the image was carried out by his assistants and employees. Thus art historical scholars were almost horrified to learn from a treatise published in 1808, that according to a family tradition—"une tradition courante dans la famille"—Rubens not only had his apprentices work on the paintings, but even on the preparatory modelli. These "*esquisses*" were based on his fast and loosely sketched compositions. According to this treatise, his own share in the process was almost exclusively limited to the final retouching, so that he ultimately would have painted only about two hundred smaller paintings on panel entirely by himself.⁶

A major problem in determining what part the assistants played in the production of Rubens's workshop lies in the fact that very little can be said about the specific characteristics of the assistants' painting—even in those cases in which these are known

by name. Not one painting is known by Willem Panneels, for instance, who managed Rubens's workshop while the latter was on diplomatic mission in England.⁷ Thus very little can be said about the artistic hand of even close assistants, not even whether they wanted to be distinguishable from Rubens at all.

Rubens himself expressed early on that he remained "always guarded against being confused with anyone, however great a man."⁸ Thus it seems paradoxical that especially his workshop took this explicit effort *ad absurdum*; for the products of Rubens's assistants had to be perceived as examples of his own style or at least his workshop's style, even in those paintings that were explicitly not by the master himself. The collective workshop style necessarily emerging from this practice was created by more or less anonymous painters, and it is the reason why distinguishing the individual hand of the workshop's master is so difficult. This difficulty is not new; it was already identified and expressed by Roger de Piles who stated in 1699 that "many pictures are attributed to him that were not of his doing."⁹

Nevertheless, Rubens never tried to hide the fact that he produced his paintings with the help of his workshop.¹⁰ On the contrary, everything seems to point towards Rubens consciously presenting himself as an artist who practised art as a predominantly intellectual activity. While his work focussed on the invention and the idea of an image, his assistants were left with that part of the production that was related to work and effort. Compelling evidence for this is the travel report of the Hamburg-born student Otto Sperling who would make a career as the personal physician of the Danish king. His report is a vivid and highly important historical document giving insight into Rubens's house and workshop.¹¹ According to this report, Rubens had welcomed the company of travellers with whom Sperling was travelling, he conversed with his guests and afterwards had a servant take them all around his splendid palace,

and show us his antiquities and Greek and Roman statues which he had in large quantity. We also saw there a large hall which had no windows, but instead the light came from above from a big opening in the middle of the hall. In this hall sat many young painters who were all working on different pieces which Mr Rubens had previously sketched for them with chalk and on which he had added a blotch of colour here and there. These paintings the young associates had to work up fully in colour until finally Mr Rubens himself perfected everything used brushstrokes and colour to finish everything off. Thus it was all called Rubens's work, through which the man accumulated an enormous fortune and kings and princes showered him with gifts and jewels.¹²

There is reason to doubt the verity and accuracy of this description of daily routine and practice in Rubens's workshop, but the report undoubtedly shows how Rubens presented himself to the world. Both the self-portrayal and the work process, in which many assistants worked after the master's sketches, are also manifest in other documents.¹³ This work process is documented not only through the paintings themselves, but also through the underlying contracts, especially in the cases of the big commissions, such as those for the Jesuit church in Antwerp or the Medici Gallery. In the contract for the Medici Gallery which was set up in 1622, Rubens committed himself to personally paint all human figures.¹⁴ For the Jesuit church, for which the contract was signed on the 29 March 1620, Rubens only had to invent the paintings so that they "could be carried out and finished uniformly in the larger size by van Dyck and additionally by some other pupils as each of the paintings and their final location required."¹⁵

Furthermore, Rubens himself never tried to conceal that he had assistants helping him carry out the paintings and that he sought the help of specialists for specific subjects. In May 1618, for instance, he wrote to Sir Dudley Carleton that “according to my custom, I have employed a man competent in his field to finish the landscapes.”¹⁶ In another letter, sent to Wolfgang Wilhelm von Pfalz-Neuburg in October 1619, he admits that the Fall of the Rebel Angels was a beautiful if quite difficult subject which is why he doubted that he could find among his pupils anyone capable of doing the work, even after his own design. He adds, “in any case it will be necessary for me to retouch it well with my own hand.”¹⁷ Thus, even the most difficult subject did not require an execution entirely by his own hand, but only a careful retouching and finishing by the master. If Rubens’s own participation in the project was carefully regulated by contract then only because works by his own hand were more expensive than those by his workshop. As Rubens explained himself in a letter to William Trumbull, the price for a painting executed entirely by himself was double as high as one painted by his pupils or assistants. “For if I had done the entire work with my own hand”, he wrote, “it would be well worth twice as much.”¹⁸ This relatively moderate price difference is hardly imaginable considering our contemporary art market. Nowadays the work by any famous artist would probably realise a price hundred to thousand times as high as the work by a completely unknown pupil of said artist. Nevertheless, the price difference between a painting executed entirely by Rubens and that executed by one of his pupils was already commented upon in his time. This is why some customers stipulated that Rubens had to paint the whole of the painting or at least its relevant parts, such as the faces. At the same time, the participation of specialists or the cooperation with various renowned painters could increase the value of a work in some cases.¹⁹ All this has often been described and does not have to be repeated here. Rather, the following will address the problem of the ratio between the master’s share and that of his workshop in specific paintings. It will further ask how these can be distinguished and how this more or less visible cooperation was assessed in various times. It cannot be denied, however, that the following will certainly ask more questions than it will answer, as the few sources available simply do not allow a definitive conclusion.

When it comes to the question of a painting’s authorship, the key word *connoisseurship* is not far away. Traditionally, connoisseurship is considered a method of art history since the times of Max J. Friedländer.²⁰ In all fairness it must be admitted, however, that connoisseurship is less a method than a more or less consciously-driven application of a whole set of methods. Of these the most important are undoubtedly the comparisons of material, painterly techniques and the visible traces of the production process in the paintings.²¹ This can happen within one painting, but ideally it refers to a whole body of material which is both diverse and clearly defined.

To illustrate what this means, the depiction of the Drunken Hercules will serve as an example (fig. 1).²² This painting is now in Dresden where it has been documented since 1962. When Rubens died it was listed in the estate of the artist as no. 157 and described as “A drunken Hercules vpon bord”.²³ The painting was executed on a panel construction made of eight vertically glued boards of similar width, and it shows the characteristic layer build-up of the Rubens workshop. On a carefully smoothed chalk and glue ground is an imprimatura, partly visible through the top layers, and streakily applied with a wide brush. The basic composition was then loosely sketched on the dry imprimatura.²⁴ While some parts of the painting are left extremely open, the more densely painted flesh tones with their many layers draw the gaze of the viewer. Even more painterly effort was put into some parts of the painting which on first glance seem rather insignificant. The jug in the



Fig. 1 Peter Paul Rubens, *Drunken Hercules*, ca. 1613–1615, oil on panel, 220 x 200 cm, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden, inv. no. Gal.-Nr.987.



Fig. 2 Peter Paul Rubens, *Drunken Hercules*, 1613–1615, oil on canvas, 204 x 225 cm, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden, inv. no. Gal.-Nr.957.

hand of Hercules, for instance, and the overturned basket on the left hand side of the floor are rendered in such a detailed and pastose way that they stand out from the rest of the painting. Considering the time and effort that was spent on these minute depictions, it stands to reason to see a different hand at work in these parts, most probably the hand of an assistant. While the attribution of the whole composition to Rubens is easily made, especially if comparing the layer build-up of the painting to the rapid *alla prima* oil sketches, it is in contrast quite difficult to write him off completely as the artist of the more insignificant parts of the painting. Mainly because the assumption that he had not painted these parts himself is more a question of the socio-historical context rather than that of style. Why should the master waste time on the parerga of a painting if he could assign this time-consuming task to an assistant? The very same, both plausible and unprovable, argument is nowadays generally used when the various versions of a composition on canvas are attributed not to Rubens himself but to his workshop. Today it is almost a given that the version of the *Drunken Hercules* on canvas is made by the workshop (fig. 2).²⁵ It is rather astonishing then, to find out that until the beginning of the twentieth century this version in horizontal format was in much higher esteem than that on panel in vertical format, then attributed to Jordaens and considered to be of poorer quality. It was Erwin Hensler then, in an article published in 1926, who revealed that the painting on canvas was the workshop version that drew on the original on panel.²⁶ This observation had an enormous impact mainly because the version of the *Drunken Hercules* on panel, then considered to be the copy, had been given to the Saxon Royal Family in 1924 in the course of the restitution payments to the Princes in the Weimar Republic, the *Fürstenabfindung*. After this error was discovered in the museum, the painting was returned and the Society Haus Wettin, Albertinische Linie e.V. was compensated with five entirely different paintings.²⁷

A comparison of both paintings reveals that the level of finish in the canvas version is evenly distributed throughout the painting. The painted surface appears more uniform, which is why the painting looks more coherent and completed. In addition to that the

colours are more saturated. Also the jug in the hand of the drunken hero in the canvas version does not stand out in the same way from the chest of the faun as in the panel version; instead it is rendered in the same detail as in the rest of the painting. It may have been this greater uniformity in the finish and the greater intensity, created by the effective handling of colours and shading, which made this painting on canvas a better *Rubens* for the historical art public. Furthermore, the painting had an attested provenance from Mantua, where the painting was bought in 1749.²⁸ In the beginning of the twentieth century this origin gave reason to see it as a work from Rubens's time at the court of Mantua, which at the time meant a first-class provenance.

Nowadays it is surmised that the prototype and the replica, which was painted shortly afterwards by the workshop, were made in the years after Rubens's return from Italy, between 1613 and 1615. At the same time, the uniformly closed paint layer of the canvas version is taken as an argument that it had not been painted by Rubens himself. Especially the juxtaposition of, on the one hand, completely open and thinly painted parts and, on the other hand, the more elaborate and more densely painted parts within one and the same painting is seen as a painterly characteristic of Rubens. This can also be observed in his studies and sketches which is taken as corroborating the argument. Moreover, it seems that Rubens preferred painting on panel whenever he had the choice and was not hampered by the necessities of transport. However, even this last observation cannot solve all problems of attribution to the master or his workshop.

The painting of a statue of Ceres in a niche surrounded by putti, for instance, exists in eight versions on panel of almost the same size. A painting today in the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg is considered their prototype (fig. 3).²⁹ Its provenance only reaches back to the year 1760 when it was auctioned in The Hague, and consequently reached Russia after a series of detours.³⁰ The other versions have no better provenance, although they can be all dated to seventeenth-century Antwerp according to the technique and the way they are painted: they all show more or less clearly the same layer build-up and paint handling as described above. The replica that looks to be of the best quality is currently kept in a Swiss private collection (fig. 4).³¹ One of these paintings was listed 1635 in the Buckingham collection where it was described as showing "Children Tying up Fruitage about a Statue."³² Whether this painting is the one auctioned in The Hague in 1760 or maybe the one from Switzerland which was in the possession of the Compte de Caylus in 1773 is entirely unclear because the wooden support mentioned in the auction catalogue of the latter is common to both the prototype and all full copies.³³ The term *copy*, which was traditionally used by the Rubens workshop for all reproductions of an image, is in relation to the Ceres pictures problematic: there are several marked differences between the version in St Petersburg and the one in the Swiss private collection. On the latter, the figure of Ceres is shown with pupils in her eyes, while the modelling clearly shows her as made of stone. In contrast to this statuary depiction, the Ceres in the prototype is painted without the pupils, but with a more animated and dynamic garment. Moreover, the two versions differ in some minor details. This includes, for instance, the mounting of the garland: in the St Petersburg version it is mounted with a long ribbon whose tassel is hanging down. This detail is missing in the otherwise minutely copied replicas. Instead they show a keystone almost hidden by the garland above the head of the goddesses statue. These details are visible not only on the painting belonging to the Swiss collection, but also on the version which was previously in the collection Philippi and on an engraving by Philipp Galle.³⁴ Both versions definitively precede the engraving, which was made in 1625.



Fig. 3 Peter Paul Rubens, *The Homage to Ceres*, ca. 1612–1615, oil on panel, 90.3 x 65.5 cm, The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, inv. no. ГЭ-504.



Fig. 4 Peter Paul Rubens, *The Homage to Ceres*, oil on panel, 91 x 66 cm, Beyeler Collection, Pratteln (Switzerland).

In these cases, the wooden support cannot be used to infer the authorship of these paintings. The open painting technique is also no indicator as it is characteristic of at least two versions, the Swiss version and the one in St Petersburg. The other typical characteristic of Rubens's painting technique, the juxtaposition of extremely open and very dense areas, can also be observed in both paintings equally and is thus of no help. Accordingly, they have been exhibited together in St Petersburg under the title "Two Original Versions." But would Rubens really have made a copy of a painting himself? With an eye on the socio-historical context this is highly unlikely. Rubens was an exceedingly busy man, who in all probability would not have stooped to producing a copy if that could have been made by an assistant. This again leads to the same unprovable socio-historical argument.

Moreover it should not be forgotten that there were excellent painters among his assistants. Between 1617 and 1620 the young Anthony van Dyck worked in Rubens's workshop. But also Jacob Jordaens, Jan Wildens, Frans Sniijders, Jan Brueghel and many others cooperated more or less regularly with Rubens in those years. The workforce was enlarged once more between 1615 and 1620 coinciding with the consolidation of his studio: the development and renovation of the building on the Wapper where the Rubenshuis attracts tourists to this day. Why should not these painters have been capable of reproducing a high-quality painting? Especially if they could practice the painterly ductus of Rubens via the copying. In the case of the Ceres replica, however, there is a telling argument for the version in the private collection being a copy. The architecture in the image from St Petersburg is painted wet-on-wet; modelled from the coloured imprimatura, it is virtually constructed during the painting process almost like built architecture. The architrave and the entablature of the pediment above the niche spill over into a horizontal

meander border on the wall. On the version in the Swiss collection the right hand part of this meander border is missing. The copyist simply forgot to include it—a typical error if motifs are copied instead of constructed. The painting, which appears to be sketchily open in many areas, is despite its own high quality and despite the seemingly effortless execution a copy. This, however, says nothing about who painted it. Is it possible that Rubens repeated himself after all? Would he have made such a copying error?

In other cases such explicit hints indicating which version preceded the other are missing. In the case of the image of a military leader with his squire the versions match even in details, and nothing seems to be forgotten by the copyist. Thus it needs to remain open which of the two versions of the image, and only two of it are known to exist, is the copy. One version is in the Detroit Institute of Arts (fig. 5) while the other is in a private collection (fig. 6).³⁵ Once again the provenance only reaches back into the eighteenth century so that closure is not to be expected from this angle of investigation. There is, however, visual proof for the fact that one version was part of a prominent seventeenth-century collection in Antwerp. For it can be seen as an image within an image on the wall of the famous *Picture Gallery of Cornelis van der Geest*, painted by Willem van Haecht (fig. 7).³⁶ The only problem, however, is the fact that the armed man in the painting of van der Geest's gallery rests his commander's baton on a table which is missing in both extant versions. Nevertheless, in the Detroit version the hair curl above the ear of the young man carrying the helmet shows the same twist as in the image depicted in the *Picture Gallery*. The same kind of hair curl can be seen on a study of a head painted by Rubens, which was probably made in Italy. The curl also appears on a drawing after a painting which once belonged to the collection of Phillippe II duc d'Orléans (1674–1723) in Paris.³⁷ Is the painting in Detroit the one from van der Geest's collection or did he own a third version that is lost to us? Was the image from Detroit part of the d'Orléans collection? And is this



Fig. 5 Peter Paul Rubens, *A Warrior Accompanied by Two Pages*, ca. 1615–1617, oil on panel, 119.7 x 98.7 cm, Institute of Arts, Detroit, inv. no. 79.16.

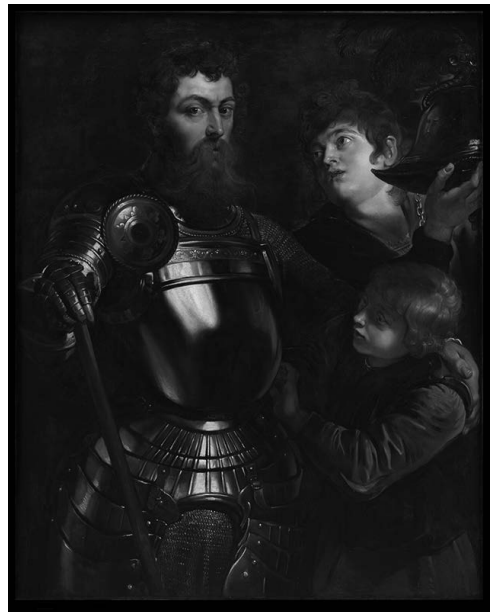


Fig. 6 Peter Paul Rubens, *A Warrior Accompanied by Two Pages*, ca. 1615–1617, oil on panel, 122.6 x 98.2 cm, Private Collection, New York.



Fig. 7 Willem van Haecht, *The Gallery of Cornelis van der Geest*, oil on panel, 100 x 130 cm, Rubenshuis, Antwerpen, inv. no. 171.

version then the original? The extant images do not seem to be trimmed. Could one of them be the original? The answer to this is yes. The fact that one of the paintings was part of the van der Geest collection is in itself not proof of Rubens's authorship. And a painting of a different provenance, could at the same time be by Rubens himself. Still, I hold on to the socio-historical argument, as the notion that Rubens would paint two entirely identical versions of the same image seems unlikely. Nevertheless, it is noticeable that the version in Detroit seems more homogeneous in the paint handling, its colours more saturated. Indeed, even Julius Held had compared these paintings in 1982 and concluded that

the work of art itself [...] furnishes the decisive evidence about its historical classification. It is only a careful and unprejudiced examination of both paintings with the aim of finding out which of them is "the better"—in other words, more worthy of Rubens' brush—that can lead to a decision as to which is the original. Yet, as the differences of opinion show, even this approach does not guarantee unanimity. This was, in fact, succinctly demonstrated in one of Michael Jaffe's letters (December 6, 1978; museum files), in which he stated that the Detroit picture (then still at Julius Weitzner's in London), "in my view is of distinctly better quality than the Althorp picture." Yet, he also mentioned in the same letter "that there are some who prefer the Althorp Version".³⁸

One reason that Julius Held gave for his preference of the latter was the fact that one link of the chain around the neck of the squire was not closed in the Detroit version. The same sort of copying error as shown in the Ceres version of the Swiss collection.

It is also my opinion that the version which today is in a private collection is superior to the Detroit version. For on this image the chain of the squire is complete. That this is indeed the first version is also suggested by the x-ray image. Upon that the characteristic streaks in the painted imprimatura are visible, thus pointing towards the Rubens workshop.



Fig. 8 Peter Paul Rubens, *Head Study*, ca. 1615–1617, oil on panel, 44.5 x 29.4 cm, Institute of Arts, Detroit, inv. no. 79.15.

But what can also be discerned is the shadow of a face just next to the head of the lower page. Obviously the head of the page had been originally planned to be further to the left and was only moved in the course of the painting. Further changes that occurred during the painting process can be seen, like one on top of the helmet, indicating a deviation from the original plan. These are indications that this is indeed the prototype, even though this might not be the painting that hung in the collections of either van der Geest or the Duc d'Orléans. The question remains whether it was only Rubens's hand who had painted the picture. Isn't it conceivable that a talented assistant painted such a composition with, for instance, the help of a study of a head? The answer to this question is and remains complicated. Especially as the head for the main figure on this painting also exists on another, separate panel which is also in Detroit (fig. 8).³⁹ Is this panel a copy after the larger painting or is it the preceding study of a head made by Rubens himself? An argument for the latter is the fact that underneath the visible study of a head is another visible head, rotated 180 degrees. Julius Held has described this reuse of a painting, turned upside down, as a typical characteristic for other oil sketches by Rubens. He also raised concerns over the fact—another socio-historical argument—that probably no assistant would have dared to simply paint over a sketch by the master. In my eyes this is a strong argument for the attribution of the sketch to Rubens, and to see it as a preparation for the painting in the private collection.

According to the present-day criteria after which a painting is attributed to a master, neither the Hercules on canvas, nor the Ceres from Switzerland or the warrior with his squire from Detroit are *a Rubens*. Although there is no doubt whatsoever that all these paintings were produced in the Rubens workshop and were seen and marketed as *a Rubens* in the seventeenth century. The Rubens workshop used division of labour, and the assistants imitated the style of the master in a way approaching mimicry. What they could not provide was added by him in the last retouching and revision. The result was *a Rubens*. Notwithstanding the great importance attributed to the connoisseur's opinion especially in relation to the pricing of those paintings on the free market today, the question begs to be asked: what use is there to force our understanding of what an original is on paintings that were not produced on this premise? Especially when we consider the latest research on workshop practice in seventeenth-century Antwerp. With this workshop practice, as implemented by Rubens, Jordaens and other painters, an additional mechanism of the early modern art market can be discerned. If a painter had found a way to occupy a market segment through an easily recognizable specialty that was of interest to customers and collectors, then he could supply this market with works which he did not have to produce himself. As the subject of a painting was the primary concern for a customer, it was necessary to define and maintain a particular standard. It was merely important to emerge with an easily recognizable specific, making the paintings into distinctive products.

All in all analysing the historical conditions of the production and the reception of works of fine art has shown that the conception of the artistic *original* is anything but a historical constant. In order to grasp the mechanisms of the early modern art market and the resulting production conditions for the artists, we need to first give up the nineteenth-century art-historical criteria which were used to describe artistic values and from which resulted the veneration of the *Old Masters*. It is instead necessary to apply those standards that were relevant during the production of a work.

Notes

1 Roger de Piles, *Abrégé de la vie des peintres, avec des réflexions sur leurs ouvrages*, Paris, 1699, pp. 396–397: “*La réputation de Rubens s’étenduë par toute l’Europe, il n’y eût pas un Peintre qui ne voulût avoir un morceau de sa main; & comme il étoit extrêmement sollicité de toutes parts, il fit faire sur ses Dessesins coloriéz, & par d’habiles Disciples un grand nombre de Tableaux, qu’il retouchoit ensuite avec des yeux frais, avec un intelligence vive, & avec une promptitude de main qui y répandoit entièrement son Esprit, ce qui luy aquit beaucoup de biens en peu de tems: mais la différence de ces fortes de Tableaux, qui passoient pour être de luy, d’avec ceux qui étoient véritablement de sa main, fit du tort à sa réputation; car ils étoient la plûpart mal dessinez, & légèrement peints.*”

2 For Rubens and Sandrart see Nils Büttner, “Peter Paul Rubens/ Mahler von Antorf’: Joachim von Sandrarts Entwurf eines idealen Lebensbildes”, S. Meurer, A. Schreurs and L. Simonato (ed.), *Aus aller Herren Länder: Die Künstler der ‚Teutschen Academie‘ von Joachim von Sandrart*, Turnhout, 2015, pp. 221–233.

3 Kristin Belkin, in: J. Wood, *The Lives of Rubens, by Giovanni Baglione, Joachim von Sandrart, Roger de Piles*, London, 2005, p. 45; J. von Sandrart, *L’Academia todesca oder der teutsche Academie*, Nuremberg, 1679, II, p. 292 (<http://ta.sandrart.net/515>): “*und die Stadt Antorf durch seinen Fleiß eine ungemene Kunst-Schule wurde/ worinnen die Lernende zu merklicher Perfection gestiegen.*”

4 R.S. Magurn, *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens*, Cambridge, Mass., 1955, p. 55; Max Rooses and Charles Ruelens, *Correspondance de Rubens et Documents Epistolaires concernant sa Vie et*

ses Œuvres Publiées. Codex Diplomaticus Rubenianus (further quoted as CDR), 6 vols., Antwerpen 1887–1909, here: II, p. 35: “Voorts mach ic segghen met der waerheyt, sonder eenich hyperbole, dat ic over die hondert hebben moeten refuseren.”

5 See for this the ground breaking research by Arnout Balis, “Fatto da un mio discepolo’: Rubens’s Studio Practices Reviewed”, Toshiharu Nakamura (ed.), exh. cat. *Rubens and His Workshop: The Flight of Lot and His Family from Sodom*, The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo, 1993, pp. 97–127; *id.*, “Rubens en zijn atelier: een probleemstelling”, *Rubens: Een genie aan het werk*, Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België, Tiel, 2007, pp. 30–51. See also T. Nakamura, *Peter Paul Rubens between Art and Politics* (中村俊春『ペーテル・パウル・ルーベンス—絵画と政治の間で』), Tokyo, 2006, and the essays of Natasja Peeters and Hélène Dubois, *Rubens: Een genie aan het werk* (as above), pp. 156–163. Furthermore: Peter Cannon-Brookes, “Sir Peter Paul Rubens & Co”, *Papers Presented at the International Rubens Symposium, April 14–16, 1982, The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art: The Ringling Museum of Art Journal*, 1983, pp. 124–129.

6 François Xavier Burtin, *Traité théorique et pratique des connoissances qui sont nécessaires à tout Amateur de Tableaux, et à tous ceux qui veulent apprendre à juger, apprécier et conserver les productions de la Peinture*, 2 vols., Brussels, 1808, here: I, p. 157: “après en avoir composé les croquis, il en faire, par ses disciples les esquisses, auxquelles il faisoit quelquefois des changemens; après quoi il en confioit, aux mêmes disciples, l’exécution dans les grandeurs requises, surveillant leur travail, [$\frac{1}{4}$] et y mettant la dernière main par ses touches de maître.”

7 Nils Büttner, *Herr P.P. Rubens: Von der Kunst, berühmt zu werden*, Göttingen, 2006, pp. 107–108.

8 Magurn, *op. cit.* (note 4), p. 33; CDR (note 4), I, p. 145: “che mai patirò avendo avuto sempre per raccomandato il confondermi con nessuno qual si voglia grand huomo.” That this was not really the case is shown by his nephew, who stated in a letter to Roger de Piles in 1676 that Rubens’s first works “avoient quelque ressemblance avec ceux d’Octave van Veen, son maistre.” Charles Ruelens, “La vie de Rubens par Roger de Piles”, *Rubens-Bulletijn*, II, 1883, p. 166.

9 De Piles, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 407: “Comme il avoit plusieurs Disciples qui exécutoient ses Dessesins, on luy attribuë souvent plusieurs choses qu’il n’a jamais faites”, translation in Wood, *op. cit.* (note 3), p. 94.

10 Büttner, *op. cit.* (note 7), pp. 109–127.

11 Copenhagen, Det kongelige Bibliotek, Gl. kgl. Samling 3094, 4°, p. 28f. I thank Birgit Ulrike Münch, Bonn, for providing me with a copy of this unique document. We are planning its publication.

12 Copenhagen, Det kongelige Bibliotek, Gl. kgl. Samling 3094 4°, pp. 28–29: “vberall in seinem herrlichen Palatio herumb führen, vnd vns zeigen seine antiquiteten vnd Griechische vnd Romanische statuen, die er in großer Menge hatte. Wir sahen da auch einen großen Saal, welcher keine fenstern hatte, sondern daß Liecht fiel von oben drein Mitten im Saal durch ein großes loch. In diesem Saal sassen viel junge Schilder, welche alle arbeiteten an Vnterschiedlichen Stücken, welche zuvor von dem h. Rubbens ihnen mit Kreydt wahren vorgerißen, vnd hie vnd da ein Plack mit Farben hinzugesetzt. diese Schildereyen musten die jungen gesellen mit Farben vollends außarbeiten, biß zu lezt der herr Rübbers selber alles mit strichen vnd farben perfectionirte. so hieß eß dann daß alles Rübbers Werck wahr, Wodurch der Mann vberauß großen Reichthumb gesamlet vnd von königen vnd fürsten, mit großen Geschenken vnd Jowelen ist begabet worden.” I am grateful to Elizabeth McGrath for checking the translation.

13 Nils Büttner, “Die Firma Rubens”, Bettina Baumgärtel (ed.), exh. cat. *Himmlich–Herrlich–Höfisch: Peter Paul Rubens, Jan Wellem und Anna Maria de’ Medici*, Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf, 2008, pp. 62–65.

14 “*parfaire et peindre de sa propre main toutes et chacune des figures des tableaux et cadres.*” New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Sig. MA 386. Max Rooses, “Les contrats passés entre Rubens et Marie de Médicis concernant les deux galeries du Luxembourg”, *Rubens-Bulletijn—Bulletin Rubens*, 5, 1910, pp. 216–217.

15 F. J. van den Branden, *Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche Schilderschool*, Antwerpen 1883, p. 521: “[...] *door van Dijck, mitsgaders sommige andere, sijne discipelen, soo in ’t groot te doen opwercken ende volmaecken als den eysch van de stucken ende van de plaetsen.*”

16 Magurn, *op. cit.* (note 4), p. 65; CDR (note 4), II, p. 170: “*Ho preso secondo il mio solito un valentuomo nel suo mestiere a finire li paesaggi.*”

17 Magurn, *op. cit.* (note 4), p. 72; CDR (note 4), II, p. 227: “[...] *egli e bellissimo e difficillimo e perciò mi dubito che difficilmente si trovare fra li mei discepoli alcun sufficiente di metterlo bene in opera ancorche col mio disegno; in ogni modo sara necessario chio lo retocchi ben bene di mia mano propria.*”

18 Magurn, *op. cit.* (note 4), p. 76; CDR (note 4), II, p. 273: “[...] *car si j’eusse fait tout l’ouvrage de ma main propre, elle vaudroit bien le double.*”

19 See Büttner, *op. cit.* (note 7), pp. 118–119.

20 Max J. Friedländer, *Von Kunst und Kennerschaft*, Oxford, 1946.

21 De Piles, *op. cit.* (note 1), Chapitre XXVIII, ‘De la connaissance des tableaux’, pp. 93–106.

22 Peter Paul Rubens, *Drunken Hercules*, ca. 1613–1615; oil on panel; 220 x 200 cm; Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister. Inv. no. Gal.-Nr:987. See Uta Neidhardt, in: Harald Marx (ed.), coll. cat. *Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, vol. 1: Die ausgestellten Werke, vol. 2: Illustriertes Gesamtverzeichnis*, Cologne, 2005; 2nd ed. 2007, I, pp. 465–466; *ibid.* II, p. 453, no. 1567, repr.

23 J.M. Muller, *Rubens: The Artist as Collector*, Princeton, N.J., 1989, p. 122, no. 157 (“*Vn Hercule enyuré sur fond de bois*”); see also E. Duverger, *Antwerpse kunstinventarissen uit de zeventiende eeuw*, I–XIV, Brussels, 1984–2009, here: IV, p. 305, and p. 313, no. 157; and *ibid.*, p. 296, no. 157 (“*Een Hercules zat gedronken op pineel*”); Kristin Lohse Belkin and Fiona Healy, exh. cat. *A House of Art: Rubens as Collector*, Rubenshuis, Antwerp, 2004, p. 330, no. 157.

24 For Rubens’s *Imprimitura* see A. Boersma, A. van Loon, and, J. Boon, “Rubens’ Oil Sketches for the Achilles Series: A Focus on the *Imprimitura* Layer and Drawing Material”, *Art Matters: Netherlands Technical Studies in Art*, IV, 2007, pp. 82–89.

25 Peter Paul Rubens, *Drunken Hercules*; oil on canvas, 204 x 225 cm; Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Inv. no. Gal.-Nr:957. U. Neidhardt, in: Marx, *op. cit.* (note 22), I, pp. 465, 467; *ibid.* II, p. 454, no. 1572, repr.

26 E. Hensler, “Das Urbild des ‘Trunkenen Herkules’ von Rubens aufgefunden”, *Kunstchronik*, LIX, 1925/1926, pp. 662–663.

27 URL: http://www.badv.bund.de/DE/OffeneVermoegensfragen/Provenienzrecherche/Provenienzen/Daten/4000_4999/4920.html (09.12.2016).

28 See K.H. von Heineken, *Recueil d’estampes d’après les plus célèbres tableaux de la galerie royale de Dresde*, I–II, Dresden, 1753–1757, here: II, p. XXX; K. Woermann, *Katalog der Königlichen Gemäldegalerie zu Dresden, Große Ausgabe*, Dresden, 1887, p. 315, no. 957.

29 Peter Paul Rubens: *The Homage to Ceres*, ca. 1612–1615; oil on panel; 90.3 x 65.5 cm; St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum. Inv. no. ГЭ-504. N. Gritsay, in: N. Gritsay and N. Babina, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century, Flemish Painting: State Hermitage Museum Catalogue, St Petersburg*, New Haven, 2008, pp. 230–233, no. 300.

30 Gerard Hoet the Younger (1648–1733); his sale, The Hague, 25 August 1760, lot 30 (bought by Pierre De Doncker, or Donckers from Brussels); Pierre De Doncker (1722–before 1780), sale, Brussels, 22 August 1764, lot ?; Charles-Philippe-Jean, Count of Cobenzl (1712–1770), Brussels, from whom acquired by Empress Catherine II of Russia in 1768.

31 Peter Paul Rubens: *The Homage to Ceres*; oil on panel, 91 x 66 cm; Pratteln (Switzerland), Beyeler Collection. See R. Bellini, N. Gritsay (ed.), exh. cat. *Церера Рубенса. Две оригинальные версии—Rubens's Ceres: Two Original Versions*, St Petersburg, Hermitage, 2007, esp. pp. 85–93.

32 *Catalogue of the Collection of Pictures and Models of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham*, 1649 (Ms. in British Museum, London). See S. Jervis, "Furniture for the First Duke of Buckingham", *Furniture History*, XXXIII, 1997, pp. 47–74, here: p. 58.

33 P. Rémy, *Catalogué des tableaux, miniatures, bronzes, vases de marbre, figures de la chine, et porcellaines du cabinet de M. 999[le duc de Caylus]*, Paris, 1773, p. 3, no. 7.

34 Engraving, by Cornelis Galle I, published by Herman de Neyt, partial copy, showing a Madonna instead of Ceres; 555 x 407 mm; before December 1640; lettered in lower margin in eight verses Latin "*Quam bene Virgo parens [...] dat arbor opes*", underneath three lines of dedication to Nicolas Roxcoy by Herman de Neyt publisher, below left "*P.P. Rubens inventor*", right "*Corn. Galle sculpsit. Cum Privilegio*". See F.W.H. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, ca. 1450–1700*, I–LXXII, Amsterdam, 1949–2010, here: VII, p. 54, no. 106.

35 Peter Paul Rubens, *A Warrior Accompanied by Two Pages*, ca. 1615–1617; oil on panel, 119.7 x 98.7 cm; Detroit, Institute of Arts. Inv. no. 79.16; Julius S. Held, coll. cat. *Flemish and German Paintings of the 17th Century: The Detroit Institute of Arts*, Detroit, 1982, pp. 84–85, pl. VIII. Peter Paul Rubens, *A Warrior Accompanied by Two Pages*, ca. 1615–1617; oil on panel; 122.6 x 98.2 cm. New York, Private Collection; *ibid.*, pp. 84–85, 94–102.

36 See Willem van Haecht, *The Gallery of Cornelis van der Geest*, oil on panel, 100 x 130 cm. Antwerpen, Rubenshuis, Inv. no. 171. A. van Suchtelen and B. van Beneden, exh. cat. *Kamers vol kunst in zeventiende-eeuws Antwerpen*, Rubenshuis, Antwerp and Mauritshuis, The Hague, 2009–2010, p. 123, no. 10, with further literature.

37 Anonymus drawing, black chalk, grey pen, washed in grey, 340 x 430 mm; Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, collections Jacques Doucet, Inv. no. Ms 691(2); LIT.: J. Müller Hofstede, "Rubens und Tizian: Das Bild Karls V", *Münchner Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst*, III.F, XVIII, 1967, pp. 33–96, pp. 64, 70, 93, n. 151, fig. 33.

38 Held, *op. cit.* (note 35), p. 102.

39 Peter Paul Rubens, *Head study*, ca. 1615–1617; Oil on panel, 44.5 x 29.4 cm; Detroit, Institute of Arts. Inv. no. 79.15. Held, *op. cit.* (note 35), pp. 84–85.

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Figs. 1–8 (Archive of the author).

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