



Erasmus University Rotterdam  
Faculty of History and Arts

# **Peter Paul Rubens – Cultural Entrepreneur *avant la lettre***

A case study in the economic history of the  
arts

Thesis for the M.A. degree in Art & Cultural Studies  
Cultural Economics & Cultural Entrepreneurship

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# Abstract

This thesis is an interdisciplinary research that connects (cultural) economics with history of art through a case study of the great Baroque master Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640). Rubens has always been a significant icon in history; probably because of his versatile roles during his life. Besides being a genuine artist he was a humanistic scholar and a pacifying diplomat. And as the title of this thesis suggests, Rubens's extraordinary awareness and ability towards the business of art is the main focus in this thesis, as he epitomizes the notion of a 'cultural entrepreneur' in the seventeenth century.

Using economic theories we can identify Rubens's entrepreneurial mind and activities through the way of producing, organizing, transmitting and distributing art. Historical evidence shows that Rubens was indeed very familiar with certain economic concepts, such as division of labor, quality control, market segregation and even customer relationship management. The structure of this thesis can thus be divided into three parts: a literature review on the economic history of the arts, background introduction of Rubens and his time, and finally an economic interpretation of his artistic activities.

The main findings of the thesis will be demonstrated in three parts, being the supply, the demand, and the price level of Rubens's art, respectively. Firstly, on the supply of Rubens's art, there was a very clear division of labor within and outside his workshop, which took the forms of both vertical and horizontal collaborations. Vertical collaboration signifies the hierarchy within Rubens's prolific workshop, which produced more than three thousands oil paintings and reproductive prints throughout his lifetime. Moreover, Rubens also used horizontal collaboration; that means he sub-contracted certain parts of the paintings to other masters specialized in other genres. Secondly, on the demand for Rubens's art, the findings suggest that the market demand can be divided into different categories (market segregation). A crucial thing then is to recognize the fact that Rubens was a 'superstar' or even a popular 'brand' at his time, even though these terms were not yet coined in his times. Finally, a brief discussion of the price level of Rubens's artworks will be presented. Despite the fact that Rubens had his own concept of the price-setting criteria, the findings show that there is no big difference in prices between the 'authentic' Rubens paintings and the studio works painted mainly by his assistants.

**Keywords:** Peter Paul Rubens, Southern Netherlandish art in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, economic history of the arts, Baroque art, art for the Counter-Reformation

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Research Background

This thesis is an interdisciplinary research that connects the economic history, history of art and (cultural) economics. My motivation for doing a research on the economic history of the arts was fostered by several different studies on the history of art markets in Europe that cover a wide range of time periods and different areas throughout Europe. These studies have increased both my knowledge and curiosity of the production, distribution and consumption of artworks in the past, in a twofold manner, i.e. from the economic perspective as well as the of art historical observation. Thus, by doing a case study on the great master Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), I intend to present and discuss one prime example of a ‘cultural entrepreneur’ that already existed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Antwerp.

Rubens has always been a significant icon in art history, particularly because of his versatile roles: pacifying diplomat, great manager and businessman for his art, humanistic scholar, and finally and foremost, a genuine artist. He was indeed a very successful entrepreneur, which stood in total and shining opposition of the image of the poor starving and idealistic artists. He established a prolific workshop, which created an immense output of more than three thousand paintings and reproductive prints in a period of around thirty years (Alpers, 1995).

From an economic perspective, Rubens’s workshop was already characterized through division of labor and product specialization. Usually, he drew the oil sketches on panels, the so-called *modelli*, and his apprentices applied the designs onto the canvases.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes he even sub-contracted certain parts of a painting to his contemporaries, and he only worked on the so-called ‘finishing touch’ in the final stage (Belkin, 1998). This practice of considering a painting, which is not completely done by the artist’s hands, as an original, is somehow conflicting with our modern perception of the originality and ingenuity of artistic creations. As will be shown in detail throughout my thesis, Rubens was not only good in managing a big workshop, but also alert to create marketing strategies and identifying market segregations – in short he was also a successful (cultural) entrepreneur.

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<sup>1</sup> Initially the use of ‘modelli’ began first in Italy and they served as primary models for artists to demonstrate their designs to their patrons before getting the final approvals of them.

Moreover, Rubens was able to keep excellent relationships with his patrons and customers; a rare talent that also contributed significantly to his successful career. Thanks to the high social and cultural capital Rubens attained from his family, he was able to speak several languages, and thus could gain access to numerous dynasties in Europe with a certain degree of ease. Combining Rubens's unconventional human capital with his learning and working experience in Italy, the great artist successfully positioned himself as a trendsetter of an international style of art, which was later recognized by art historians as the famous Baroque style.

A brief comparison of the artistic career of Rubens and Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) shows how outstanding an entrepreneur Rubens was, in contrast to the case of Rembrandt. Rembrandt was also once rich and famous in his lifetime, but the fact that he went bankrupt and died in poverty is also obvious and well known today. There were in fact several reasons that contributed to the different destinies of the two artists. Firstly, Rubens was highly versatile in changing and adapting his artistic style and expression to the market demands, while Rembrandt was keen in working only on the subjects he preferred. Secondly, Rubens showed extraordinary abilities in customer relationship, whilst Rembrandt is documented as stubborn and little-educated, as having great difficulty in communicating with his patrons. Finally, taking external factors into consideration, Rubens lived at a time when Antwerp was at once embracing peace and economic revival. On the contrary, Rembrandt's bankruptcy occurred largely due to the two Anglo-Dutch wars in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Bok, 2004).

My central research question is:

***What are the underlying reasons that made Rubens a successful cultural entrepreneur?***

To answer this question, one needs also to take into consideration the institutional settings of Rubens's times, i.e. the external factors such as patronage and market power. These institutional settings of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe were completely different from today's prevailing categories, and the question at stake is then: how did these factors relate to the supply and demand of Rubens's art, so to say, to his 'internal' skills?

## 1.2 Cultural entrepreneurship: the notion

In order to discuss the question whether Rubens was a cultural entrepreneur *avant la lettre* or not, we need to be familiar with the definition of the term itself. The Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter was the first scholar, who largely popularized the term 'entrepreneur' in his famous book *Capitalism, socialism and Democracy* (1975). What is most famous now about Schumpeter's theory of entrepreneurship is what he dubbed as 'creative destruction' across the market and industries, a process, which at the same time is creating new products and business models so as to boost economic development. According to Schumpeter, an entrepreneur is a 'man of action' (*Mann der Tat*) and he says 'there is always and everywhere a richness of ideas and plans, but what really matters is to carry these through and to realize them (Swedberg, 2006, pp. 246)'.

So, what are the special characteristics of entrepreneurs? Many answers can be given to this broad question, and normally adjectives like risk-taking, courageous, alert, innovative etc. are attached to notions of entrepreneurship. There is an overlapping between the terms of leadership and entrepreneurs, and sometimes it is hard to specify clearly which characteristic falls under which category. But most of the time, entrepreneurs are thought to have different traits compared to general business managers and administrators who are considered to be less risk-taking

The American sociologist Paul DiMaggio initially introduces the term "cultural entrepreneurship" in his paper *Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston* (1982), using examples from the foundation process of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Museum of Fine Arts. DiMaggio first uses the term 'cultural capitalists' and describes them as having the following characteristics '1) successful in business 2) interested in the arts and 3) willing to assume responsibility and put their money where their mouth is' (Klamer, 2006, pp. 4). However, DiMaggio then stresses the differences between cultural capitalists and cultural entrepreneurs as the latter have more organizational power to realize their vision (Klamer, 2006). Here he brings out an important notion for the understanding of cultural entrepreneurs, as they have to take action by persuading people and spreading ideas to crowds they intend to influence.

Rick van der Ploeg, the former state secretary for the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, says in his interpretation of cultural entrepreneurs that they

should combine two preeminent qualities: '1) knowledge of and sensitivity towards the arts and creative processes, possibly combined with the ability to spot creative talents and 2) knowledge and comprehension of the potential public and marketing techniques (Klamer, 2006, pp. 5)'. In other words, the cultural entrepreneur wants to combine economic values and artistic ones, and moreover he encourages the artists to be self-relying without too much support from the government.

But cultural entrepreneurship should go beyond the narrow business models of supply, demand, or transactions; otherwise it can be simply referred to as normal (commercial) entrepreneurship. Klamer (2006) indicates therefore distinctive characteristics of cultural entrepreneurs, including many definitions taken from other (cultural) economists as well. The article has one central question: what makes the cultural entrepreneur different from other arts and cultural related jobs, such as artists, arts managers and gatekeepers. Klamer answers this question by stating that the important achievements carried out by cultural entrepreneurs are the social and cultural values they deliver. 'Someone who sees in cultural trade a way of adding profit, becomes a suspect as cultural is his instrument and not his mission. He is rather a businessman (Klamer 2006, pp. 12)'.

Klamer (2006, pp. 13) gives five characteristics of 'good cultural entrepreneurs' as presented in below:

1. They are alert to opportunities.
2. They are creative in terms of the artistic content but also of the way of organizing the conversation and arranging the finances.
3. Their artistic content is their passion and commitment; everything else, including the economics, is subsidiary.
4. They are persuasive in the sense that are able to convince good artists to work with them, bring about interest in the arts, get people involved (e.g. volunteers).
5. They have vision, courage, hope and faith.

What we can conclude from all the abovementioned definitions is that cultural entrepreneurs are people who have economic and foremost cultural capital and devote themselves to the artistic and cultural activities through the way of producing, organizing, transmitting and distributing cultural and social values. It is very important

to note here, that an entrepreneurial action doesn't come along solely, that's why cultural entrepreneurs need to persuade more people to participate in the action; and entrepreneurial action is always located in different institutional settings, which also shape the very outcomes; hence the external environment (i.e. societal and cultural background) must also be taken into consideration.

### 1.3 Research structure

This thesis begins with a literature review on the economic history of the arts in Chapter 2; each section covers various topics on the supply and demand of art. These aspects may serve as starting points to answer the question on Rubens's role as a cultural entrepreneur.

Chapter 3 is an introductory chapter on Rubens and his time. In this chapter I will firstly present in brief terms the history of the Antwerp art market, as this serves as the background information on our issue. Subsequently, I will focus on Rubens's social-economic background and his early artistic training. Compared to contemporary artists of his times, Rubens had unusually high social and cultural capital, which predominantly came from his family. And Rubens further reinforced his 'human capital' by staying in Italy for eight years. During his stay he became a court painter for the Duke of Mantua; this position helped him further on to deal with the aristocracy. And he studied diligently the classical sculptures and many Renaissance masterpieces in Italy, which supported greatly his development of an international style of painting.

In Chapter 4 and 5 I will dwell on the supply and the demand of Rubens's art, respectively. Rubens was able to meet the high demand for his artworks because he had a well-organized workshop. Even though we don't know for sure how he instructed his pupils and also the exact hierarchy within his workshop is somewhat a mystery. Still, in the production of art itself, Rubens imposed a strict division of labor, which can be categorized as vertical and horizontal collaboration. Through these two patterns of collaboration, we may discover how Rubens has separated the concepts of design from their actual execution. And Rubens had strict measurement in controlling the quality of his studio products, both in oil paintings and reproductive prints.

From the demand side of Rubens's art, two points will be discussed here. One is to recognize how Rubens produced his artworks for different target groups. The

demand can be divided into three categories: public commissions, private commissions from the Antwerp elite circle and commissions from the aristocracy. The other important aspect is to explain how Rubens can be regarded as a superstar *avant la lettre* in 17<sup>th</sup> century Antwerp, and how he turned himself into a somewhat famous brand.

Finally in Chapter 6 I will discuss the issue of Rubens's price setting criteria and their actual implication. The master once wrote in his very famous correspondence with the British Ambassador Sir Dudley Carleton about his own criteria for the pricing of paintings. I will then present an overview on the price level of Rubens's paintings and see out of which determinant factors comprises the price. In Chapter 7 a critical conclusion and methodological reflection will be given.

In order to give an extensive discussion on all the abovementioned topics, I have drawn on supportive literature from art history, economics, and social history, especially the one dealing with the trends of consumption in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Some questions may still remain unclear, either due to the lack of information or due to my circumscribed account of the matter. Nevertheless, it is through endless researching, analyzing and putting forward reasonable conjectures that one can learn to be a researcher.

## 2 On the economic history of arts

### 2.1 Introduction

Economic history of arts is an interesting but somehow complex subject to carry out research, probably because of its interdisciplinary characteristics. A basic premise we have to realize before we start the discussion is that, in order to study the relation between economy and culture, one needs to look at objects from both vantage points. The economic historian Wim Blockmans explains the issue by using an example:

‘In fact, the reduction of the problem of artistic production to one investment strategy, is simply unacceptable. Other factors, such as the structure of production and demand have to be considered as well. These imply notions of the form and function of the products, which are related to values and taste. Not only economic, but also social, political and cultural dimensions are required for an adequate theory of the relation between art, economy and society. Leaving aside these aspects cripples any discussion on the factors influencing artistic production (Blockmans, 1996, pp. 15-16).’

What exactly then is the economic history of the arts? What can economic historians learn from art historians, and vice versa? The economic historian Michael North (1996) suggests three common approaches within the sociological discussion of the arts: 1) macro-sociological, 2) micro-sociological and 3) economic ones. In fact, the macro-sociological perspective is serving the complementary role to the micro-sociological one, meaning that the former is looking upon the development of society in general and placing art into a broader and more encompassing context. On the other hand, the micro-sociological perspective emphasizes more on the ‘changing material conditions under which art was commissioned and created in the past (North, 1996, pp, 10)’ and this means to examine the artists very own social conditions (e.g. social origin and professional training) to organizational activities (e.g. guild regulations) and networks (e.g. relationship between artistic circle or with the clients). So, the micro-perspective is aiming on a smaller scale; both together are trying to give a comprehensive view of a certain setting, as the particular setting is always caused simultaneously by mechanisms deriving from both heuristic levels. Further chapters in this thesis will show the intertwining example of both scales took place in a particular time and place, namely Rubens and the city of Antwerp.

Finally, the narrower economic approach is linking the artistic development to the economic sphere as a whole; a good example for this 'linkage' is the 'Lopez thesis' on the Italian Renaissance and the economic crisis in the end of the Middle Ages. The historian Robert S. Lopez first introduced his renowned thesis, also known as the 'theory of hard times' in 1962. He takes the Italian Renaissance as an example and argues that hard times (e.g. recessions) are more likely to boost investment in cultural goods than periods of a steady economic growth. Because people tend to invest their money on profitable businesses when the economy is growing and booming; and it is only in recessions and crises that people are prone to lose the will to invest in trade, real estate and industrial productions. Consequently they will turn their pecuniary attention to 'unproductive items' like arts and culture.

But is it really the case? While other historians may come up with counter-examples to challenge Lopez's statement, a fair remark for researchers would be to reckon each situation as independent and somewhat uniquely over-determined, and to take account of all possible (social, political, cultural) conditions. In the study of the interdependence and imbuing of economy and the art, observations can be made on the individual (micro) and collective (macro) level, and the answer will not necessarily be the same. However, these are the aspects of great importance before proceeding further.

In this chapter further on I intend to present various aspects of the economic history of the arts in separate sections. A good way to advance is to follow the pattern of supply (production) and demand (consumption), and the market where the two ends finally meet and somehow mingle. In order to have a neat structure, I will present the more concrete issue of the art market in Antwerp in Chapter 3, instead of here.

Most of the literature focuses on the art market studies, probably because of the relative ease of data accessibility. On the other hand, some titles try to give a more comprehensive overview, which cover all the important issues. For example, in *Art and Commerce in the Dutch Golden Age* (1999), Michael North brings his reader to an extensive and thrilling journey heading to the elucidation of the economic history of the Dutch Golden Age art. Similarly, John Michael Montias (1982) draws sizable data from the probate inventory and he even applies statistical methods to analyze the socio-economic conditions of the 17<sup>th</sup> century artists and dealers in Delft.



## 2.2 The supply of art

### 2.2.1 Introduction

The supply of the arts is an area of research where art historians probably can interpret more than economists. Economists examine the supply of art by stressing the level of production output, such as cost, labor, equipment and market strategies. Their observations are generally on the monetary or quantitative details, which are of course important but somehow aesthetically ignorant. Art historians, on the other hand, investigate carefully the context of artists and their creations. They try to trace down the possible elements within an artwork: technique, artistic autonomy, stylistic change and influences etc. Here in this section I present examples from history that demonstrate how these two subjects can serve as complementary fields for the discussion of artistic phenomena.

### 2.2.2 Artists' Earnings

Economists believe that there is some kind of 'opportunity cost' in every incident, insofar as resources are limited. Hence individuals will make rational decisions, in order to gain what is best satisfying their interests and needs. But such a notion doesn't really make sense when it comes to the discussion of the artists' labor market, since it works quite contradictory to the usual economic rules defined for the 'normal market'. The general perception is that artists tend to earn less than other people, and that they also suffer from a higher unemployment rate than other profession (Grampp, 1989). That's why economists state that artists tend to choose their job due to a strong 'intrinsic motivation'<sup>2</sup> instead of chiefly doing so for 'portentous' monetary rewards.

To take a look at the art history, most of the time artists had a similar role as craftsmen, and it was not until the establishment of academies of the arts in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that the division between fine arts and applied ones emerged. There has been a significant tradition of patronage on the arts and culture. Cultural patronage might come from political (aristocracy) or religious (churches) institutions and it could take the form of either individual or collective patronizing. Since patronage can be examined from both the supply and the demand side, here in this section I refer to

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<sup>2</sup> Intrinsic motivation is a term that describes some actions people do purely for their own satisfaction, without the expectation of getting rewards or achievements. It is contrary to 'extrinsic motivation', i.e. people do their business because of exterior factors so as to attain certain exterior objectives (e.g. to earn more money or to gain higher status) or in prevention of punishment.

the more subtle patronage, i.e. by giving fixed stipend, and I put those active commissions into the demand's section.

To begin with individual cases, some researchers tried to construct the income structures of the musicians, especially for the so-called big maestros. Tschmuck (2001) has drawn much data from old Austrian archives, particularly in Tyrol, to resemble the income structures of the court musicians that served the 16<sup>th</sup> century Archduke Ferdinand II in Tyrol. He lists the wage structure for the court musicians, which comprises financial (money), material (fine clothes and luxury goods) and non-material benefits (such as trade or tax privilege). The findings give us an illustrative description of how courtier musicians lived in the past, and how the power relations to their patrons have presumably looked like.

Moreover, Baumol and Baumol (1994; 2002) give us two excellent examples of writing economic history of the arts, focusing on the income structures of the famous musicians Mozart and Beethoven (and also Beethoven's patrons) with systematic examination of the socio-economic conditions in this period. The authors were very cautious with the monetary values and they have shown great capacities in comparing the average income and purchasing power of the past with the present time even taking account of adjustments for inflations. In addition, they have concluded that contrary to the image of a starving artist, Mozart actually earned quite a lot with his musical activities (composing, teaching and performing). His ignorance or inability in household financial management was therefore the main reason that led him die in poverty.

In another comprehensive research on the 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch artist Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675), Montias (1991) tracks down the entire social milieu that surrounded the great but somehow understated artist. Starting with Vermeer's family, putting attention on his artistic connections (masters, apprentices and fellow artists) and finally clients, Montias traces each individual's story and then he skillfully elaborates Vermeer's social web. His study demonstrates moreover an intricate style of writing, which makes social history more interesting to his readers.

### 2.2.3 Production pattern and strategies

Artists are just human beings, thus we may discover that a certain behavior entails clear economic patterns or thoughts. To start with the basic concept, artists receive training in order to gain their skills, and later on they try to establish a distinguished personal style(s) that can impress the audience and differentiate themselves from

their competitors. Such a process can be recognized as product differentiation, and economist William Grampp (1989) makes a precise description here:

‘All of these painters tried to increase their income by reducing the supply of painting (and painters). There is another way to increase income, and it has been attempted more often. It is by an artist making his work a substitute for the works of others and their work no substitute for his. The practice is called product differentiation and is to be observed in matters having to do with art and in matters having nothing at all to do with it, such as making automobiles (Grampp, 1989, pp. 95).’

Various examples in the art history show how artists try to maximize their profit by cutting costs, developing a division of labor (i.e. workshop) and even creating marketing strategies. In a study on the great German master Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) and his ‘enterprise’, Schmid (1996) presents how Dürer 1) established his workshop, 2) launched a series of different products (paintings, prints and book illustrations) and 3) developed his selling strategies. The findings suggest that the great master was also a successful businessman, as he designed his own monogram as an unique trade-mark not only out of his confidence of being an artist, but also so as to distinguish his artwork from illegal copies. Furthermore, in order to attract more customers, he sent out agents to discover markets in different European countries and he also attended art fairs. Dürer even complained that ‘paintings were financially unattractive for him, and that he had to work for patrons outside Nuremberg (Schmid, 1996, pp.36).’ But it was also obvious that by working for foreign aristocracy, Dürer not only had increased his reputation as an exceptional master but also opened up some new markets for his works.

Wijnberg (1997) examines the relation between art and different selection systems, i.e. market, peer and expert selections in the Renaissance Italy and the 17<sup>th</sup> century Netherlands. He identifies three types of strategies for the production and explains each of them with a distinctive example. To begin with Rubens and his prolific workshop, there were a clear division of labor and the style of paintings was highly specialized (history or allegorical paintings). Conversely the strategy chosen by Vermeer was quite different; as he and his ‘fijnschilders’ followed the tradition of the guild; which means they chose to create art in a slow pace and only focused on delicate art objects. It could be a reason why Vermeer was known for his few works, as Montias (1991) has estimated that Vermeer’s lifetime production was less than 60 paintings. Finally the author talks about Rembrandt and how he distinguished his

styles for meeting the needs of different customers, instead of following the conventional rules of the academy or the guild.

Another interesting case presented by Zablutney (1999) shows the intertwining of economic relationships between artists in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century London. During that time there was a steady demand for (oil) paintings, but due to their rarity and high price many people have turned to collect prints, especially those made out of the popular paintings. Thus engravers saw the emerging business and started to seek for artistic inputs, meaning that they have negotiated with painters to buy the copyright of reproducing a painting into prints. The author points out that, such a bargaining process could be recognized as bilateral monopoly, i.e. there is only a single seller (monopoly) and a single buyer (monopsony) in the market, and both want to reduce their costs to achieve profit-maximization. This example shows how economic activities such as production, distribution, and consumption can be found even within the artistic production cycle, and in fact artists are also economic beings.

## 2.3 The demand for art

### 2.3.1 Introduction

The demand for the arts is a hot topic for economists to show their knowledge and expertise. It touches one of the very basic economic concepts: the act of consumption. Art as a product is different from other commodities, since it is in nature unique and attributes abnormal demand elasticity. It is also crucial to study consumers' behavior and preferences as they may be subject to various institutional settings and constraints. In below I present some cases from history, in which we can observe how socio-political changes can affect the demand level.

### 2.3.2 Patrons as consumers

As already stated in section 2.2.2, cultural patronage can take two forms, the first type is to provide artists shelter and a certain amount of salary as to be a courtier, which was quite common to be seen in history, especially for starting artists. Here, nonetheless, I want to discuss the second type of patronage, which means patrons gave commissions to artists, which could be analyzed as market transactions. Grampp (1989) states that by identifying the demand for art researchers should take the exact form of demand into account. Either producing an artwork for a specific buyer or for the market, one way or the other artists have to consider the taste or

preferences of their customers. Most of the time the consumer stands on a higher position than the artists, as s/he has the power to decide whether to pay or not, and Grampp (1989) relates it to the economic term 'consumer sovereignty'.

Preciado (2005) gives a brief example of patronage by presenting two Flemish noblemen in the Spanish court during the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The author draws large material from the archive to reconstruct their collection and personal preferences, and he comes to the conclusion that collecting artworks was an indicator for the social status of the collectors themselves. It is possible that the Spanish king Philip IV, who had a unique love for Flemish paintings, boosted this demand. Moreover, he highlights the role of dealers, since they were engaged at the emerging international market. Finally, as the two noblemen's collections were auctioned after their death, the list of buyers provides us some socio-demographic evidence.

In another study on the art consumption in the 15<sup>th</sup> century Bruges, Blockmans (1996) analyzes the relationship between flourishing economic conditions and the arts, by listing the possible patrons and consumers for the arts. He indicates two different consumption patterns for sculptures and illuminated manuscripts, since they can both be produced under certain standardization. The author states that the demand for the illuminated manuscripts has long existed before 1400 and Bruges was a net-exporter for this kind of art. While for sculptures the case was a different one; buyers actually went to art fairs and examined certain 'models' displayed there and then they signed a contract and waited for the final products for a period of time. The author also constructs a list of Hans Memling's (1430-1494) patrons, and out of 44 there were 27 international merchants, i.e. more than 60 percent. One possible reason was that local buyers might have had personal contact to the artist thus they have left no records to be examined.

Since history is a subject that reflects the substantial changes amongst human beings, it is also important to consider how societies react under different social and political conditions. Guerzoni (1996) studies the consumers' profiles on the British painting auction market dated after the French Revolution until the beginning of 'the long 20<sup>th</sup> century', the same division as historian Eric Hobsbawm chooses in his title *The Age of Empire* (1989). Based on existing auction records, his findings suggest a significant change in buyers' profiles in the long run. By separating the time span into two periods it is clear that during the first period (1789-1850) the buyers consisted mainly of aristocrats, and throughout the second stage bourgeoisies (especially

newly-emerged industrial capitalists) took up a higher percentage of the consumption.

King (2001) intends to compare the relations of the quality of opera composition with both: 1) patronage and 2) market power, and as he has concludes there is no clear pattern for all the time periods he researched. However, he gives some valuable suggestions for the usage of economics to analyze the cultural history. He recognizes the fact that 'cultural history, especially the history of the creation of the finest cultural objects, is concerned with the activities of very small numbers of named individuals, possessed of a particular genius. What determines the emergence of this genius at a particular time and in particular place is quite unclear (pp. 41)'. So what we shouldn't do is to generalize facts and incidents in both history and the arts. As history itself is an always-changing environment in the end done by nobody else but mankind, even under very different, changing and restricting circumstances. Or to quote Karl Marx: 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past (Marx, 1852)'.

### 2.3.2 Taste formation

A very important point concerning the demand for art is the individual taste, which is considered to be subjective and suffers from limited information. Since the whole art history can be divided into many periods with a myriad of stylistic changes, economists may be interested in measuring the shifts of demand for art.

Many studies draw materials from the probate inventories in order to know how people lived in the past. One of the most common practices is to count the material possessions owned by each household, and to put such information into statistical analysis in order to reconstruct a more general picture. One of the initial research that has introduced modern statistical analyses into the history of art was Michael Montias's eminent book *Artists and Artisans in Delft: A Socio-Economic Study of the Seventeenth Century* (1982). He has drawn substantial data from the Delft probate inventory and studies the results systematically, in order to reconstruct the socio-economic conditions of the 17<sup>th</sup> century artists.

Van de Woude (1991) chooses samples from Delft and Amsterdam and divides the samples into five income categories, and it is noteworthy that for the so-called 'Golden Age', there was indeed a strong consumption in paintings. Even from the

lowest income category (property < 300 gulden) the average number of paintings per house was seven. But the author recognizes two significant declines in owning paintings during two periods: 1706-1730 and 1770-1794. One possible answer could be the change in fashion of the house decoration, instead of buying paintings, people tended to decorate their walls with painted linen or maps. Since paintings are durable goods and can be preserved for a long time, there must have been a saturation point for the consumption, unless the buyers were incredibly rich.

Blondé and De Laet (2006) elaborate on the issue in a similar study by making a comparison between Antwerp and s'Hertogenbosch during the 17<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> century. Their investigation implies a substantial change of motives for owning paintings, from serving as social, religious and political prestige objects, which economists would subsume under "conspicuous consumption", to have a decorative role. The authors also list the following fads that attracted the society's attention: French dressing (including wearing a wig), fine textiles, silverwares, exotic spice and drinks etc.

## 2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented various examples drawn from the economic history of the arts and I aimed to ponder their importance for further research. As already stated in the introduction, every case is unique and so each and every time there are materials and insights from different disciplines required. On the one hand, using economic theories, economists can indeed all on their own provide insightful analyses for the history of art. On the other hand, certain topics like taste formation and the preferences, which economists fail to answer, can draw on discussion from art history, sociology and even philosophy (aesthetics). In this sense, interdisciplinary research permits multiple perspectives on a subject and thus it contributes to the realm of our – fallible - knowledge.

## **3 Rubens and his time**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter serves as a background prologue on Rubens and the time he lived in. Since my task is to recognize how institutional settings have affected, and possibly contributed to Rubens's artistic accomplishments, the focus will be on Rubens's social and economic conditions and surroundings, especially during his early days in Italy, before his resettlement in Antwerp in 1608.

Three important aspects will be presented, following a chronological order. I will begin with an extensive introduction on the history of Antwerp, with emphasis on the development of and the practices in the art market. Then I will shift my attention to Rubens's social origin, as it seemed to be a determinant factor that contributed significantly to the artist's later career. Finally I will discuss Rubens's training and career development in Italy, where he learned not only the essence of artistic creation at that time but also the organizational practices so as to run a big workshop.

### **3.2 Antwerp's art scenes during Rubens's age**

#### **3.2.1 Introduction**

In this section I will briefly present the general history of Antwerp, and the crucial causes and more or less coincidental incidents that made the city a cultural center in Europe during Rubens's time. Apart from the general history, examples of the Antwerp art market between 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries will be presented and discussed in brief. By studying a fixed location across a long time-span, it is easier for us to comprehend the evolution and turbulence of art dealing. Furthermore, I want demonstrate how political, economic and social factors can perturb the business as usual of art and even its underlying structures and contexts.

#### **3.2.2 A history of Antwerp and the development of art market**

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Netherlands (or the Low Countries, which covered most parts of nowadays Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg) was part of the territory of the Habsburg Empire. When in 1512, the Habsburg Emperor Charles V (1500-1558)



gained the title of the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire; his kingdom soon took both the Netherlands and even Spain under the Habsburg domination. Charles V was born and educated in Ghent, and upon his grandfather's insistence, during his childhood he had spent quite some time on the streets observing 'all walks of life'<sup>3</sup>. Thus he had a certain degree of understanding and sympathy for the Netherlands, which was demonstrated in his political decisions, such as granting the Netherlands exempt from imperial jurisdiction in 1548. During his reign, the Low Countries witnessed a huge economic prosperity and a high development in culture. Antwerp became not only the most important financial capital but also a center of knowledge and culture of that time.

Various reasons contributed to this development of Antwerp as being a financial and cultural center. In an extensive study on the 16<sup>th</sup> century Antwerp art market, Vermeylen (2003) presents evidence showing how closely art market fluctuates with the general cycles of the economy. Antwerp would not have risen to one of the most important metropolises north of the Alps, if the European economic attention did not shift from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic Ocean. In this general shift of attention and importance, as Vlieghe (1999) points out, the Southern Netherlands had a favorable geographic location that connected France, Germany and Italy. The Scheldt and the harbor further extended the trading route to England and allowed Portuguese merchants to trade exotic spices in replacement of bullion (used as a trading tool in Asia). All sorts of goods were transported and traded in Antwerp, and the city soon developed specific services in maritime insurances and banking (Belkin, 1998). In the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Antwerp replaced Bruges to be the new capital north of the Alps, known as 'commercial capital of Christendom (Arblaster, 2006, pp. 111).'

Due to the flooding capitals, the city soon discovered a new business: luxury goods. Consequently Antwerp attracted many high-skilled artisans and developed industries on tapestries, diamonds, woodcarving, glassmaking etc. Surviving documents demonstrate that the number of artists rose significantly between 1460 and 1540. Figure 3.1 signifies that by showing the increasing number of new members that joined the Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp during this period:

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<sup>3</sup> Arblaster (2006) describes that even though ambassadors and courtiers found that Charles V was 'stately, reticent and immobile' at the crowd, it was still a common theme in jest books to portray the king hunting or traveling in the Netherlands.

	Masters	Apprentices	Total
1460-69	41	4	45
1470-79	51	63	114
1480-89	72	73	145
1490-99	97	53	150
1500-09	115	126	241
1510-19	159	162	321
1520-29	157	129	286
1530-39	191	133	324

**Figure 3.1 New members of the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke (1460-1539)**

Source: Liggeren, 13-136, retrieved from Vermeylen (2003)

By 1520 the city had reached the reputation of being a cultural capital, so more and more paintings were produced not on commission-base but rather sold *on spec*, meaning a focus on the open market (Vermeylen, 2003). The '*Panden*'<sup>4</sup> appeared and acted as both gallery and transaction centers for the ready-made artworks and fine objects. The emergence of the *panden* was a crucial step, which triggered the commercialization of the Antwerp art market, since it saved transaction costs for both artists and clients. From 1540 on to 1565, Antwerp saw fascinating new wealth and opportunities that made up in sum the so-called 'golden age'. An estimated figure says that more than 75% of the artworks were produced for the open market instead of on commission (Vermeylen, 2000). The demand for luxury goods and artworks came from both national and international levels. Popular objects included paintings, altarpieces, tapestries and even musical instruments. The famous printing house, Plantin Press, marked the city as a center of idea and information dissemination (Belkin, 1998).

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<sup>4</sup> Vermeylen (2003) gives an extensive description on the emergence, function and importance of the *Panden*. It was not clear what the word '*pand*' means in Dutch, but one explanation suggests 'gallery surrounding the courtyard of a cloister (Vermeylen, 2003, pp.19).'

But such prosperity didn't last too long; as Antwerp built its glory heavily on the international trade; it was then very vulnerable to external changes. Historical events reshaped in Antwerp several times its political, social and economic conditions, and the city gradually lost its leading position in the European economy. In 1555, Charles V retired to a monastery and passed the ruling rights for Spain and the Low countries to his son Philip II (1556-1598). Contrary to his father, Philip II had neither any emotional affiliation to nor understanding of the Netherlands. Being an avid Catholic, Philip II was especially harsh on imposing and maintaining the catholic religion in the whole Netherlands, in opposition to the Protestant Reformation.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) first introduced in Germany the wave of reforming the Catholic Church, known as the Protestant Reformation. Since then, several other theologians followed suit, a renowned and influential one being John Calvin (1509-1564). His doctrines forbid religious use of images and lucrative ornaments in church. Though the Calvinists grew stronger, they were soon under the threats of heresy laws. Hundreds of citizens, being accused of heresy or simply as 'Calvinist sympathizers', were executed or exiled, and their properties were being confiscated.

Besides the religious disagreement with the Netherlands, politically Philip II also abolished the administrative and legislative autonomy owned by the Low Countries. Hence small revolts started to emerge; the constant hostilities between the protestant Dutch and the Catholic Spanish became also more apparent and even lethal. During the August and September of 1566, the Iconoclasm broke off and spread through the whole Low Countries. The Calvinists removed or even destroyed paintings, altarpieces, stain glasses, relics, and statues and basically anything that reflected for them idolatry in churches and monasteries. But very soon the Spanish sent out an army and tried to suppress the raging revolts. The years between 1566 and 1585 saw Antwerp under the treats of numerous battles and small conflicts, which led wealthy merchants and high skilled labor, including artists, fled from Antwerp to other countries. The emigrants, especially of Protestant religion, most commonly chose to relocate in the Northern Provinces and the German hinterland (Aachen, Cologne and the town of Frankenthal). Antwerp lost a significant amount of capital, both in terms of human and economic ones, and the city by the Scheldt gradually lost its favorable economic conditions in a shambles and was so under recession (Vermeulen, 2003).

An important date, which marked the fundamental change in the history of the Low Countries, was the 17th of August 1585, as Antwerp capitulated to the Spanish Habsburg army. The Netherlands fell into two: the Protestant United Provinces (or

Holland) in the north, and the Catholic Southern Netherlands (or Flanders). From this moment on the two countries faced different in political, economic, cultural and social structures and influences. The terms of negotiation seemed no big harm, for Protestants, they had to either convert to Catholic or otherwise leave Antwerp in a period of four years. And the city magistrate had to pay a significant amount of ransom (400,000 guilders) to spend on the restoration of Catholic churches (Vermeulen, 2003). In September 1585, the city council made an order that all the altars in cathedral and churches must be repaired or replaced. However, most of the religious institutions failed to respond to the order immediately due to the lack of funds, and the actual action took place little by little in the following years.

During the years of 1566 to 1585, Antwerp's population dropped to a low point, and the treacherous relationship between Spanish Habsburg and the United Provinces led eventually to the blockage of the Scheldt and the city was isolated militarily and economically. International trade, including the art market, declined drastically. There were continuous fights in between the United Provinces and the Spanish Netherlands, as the former wanted to guard their independent status. As for Antwerp, since the year of 1590 there were signs of economic revival, trading routes were once again established and it was also possible to trade with the United Provinces when a toll was paid (Vermeulen, 2003). However, it was not until the signing of a cease-fire agreement between the Dutch and the Spanish, the Twelve Year Truce on April 9<sup>th</sup> 1609 that Antwerp once again reestablished its economic and artistic importance on the European map. The Twelve Years' Truce marked the so-called 'Indian summer' for the city, and Rubens was very fortunate to be back right on time to capture the hunger demand for artworks from both religious institutions and private collectors.

A comparison of the artistic development and attention in the Northern and the Southern Netherlands can be seen on Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3. These two figures clearly show the differences in church interiors between a Calvinist church and a Catholic one. While in Figure 3.2 there were no decorations at all, Figure 3.3 contains all kinds of religious or devotional items that could glorify the spirit of Counter-Reformation, such as paintings, altarpieces, statues, shrines, stained glasses. These two pictures showed not only the differences in religions between the Northern and the Southern Netherlands, but also marked different paths of development for artistic style and genres.



**Figure 3.2** *The Interior of a Protestant Church*

Source: Baudouin (2000).



**Figure 3.3** *The Interior of a Catholic Church*

Source: Baudouin (2000).

The Reformation in Holland, or the Calvinist, has prohibited the idolatrous icons in their religious institutions, especially on big paintings (altarpieces) and sculptures. Consequently commissions for religious paintings or altarpieces became non-existent (Baudouin, 2000). In the Calvinist theology, emphasis was made on the individual relationship between men and god, and the images besides Christ became less frequent. It doesn't mean that religious paintings were completely missing in the United Provinces; instead, the religious paintings were commissioned by wealthy merchants for their private use, instead of by churches and monasteries. The religious art found their way in the Northern Netherlands in the open market, usually rather small in size so that they fitted into private houses and homes, and reproductive prints were also a popular item to carry religious art (Baudouin, 2000).

Popular subject for religious art in the United Provinces including bible scenes depicting in a daily-life manner, and these types of art gradually transformed into an innovative direction -genre paintings – which also emphasized on the hardworking and humble human life, with the help of emerging middle-class consumption in art.

As for the Southern Netherlands, starting in 1585 and the following decades, the Catholic religion institutions, in turn of the Counter-Reformation, created a substantial demand for religious artworks. The arrival of Spanish Habsburg governors, the Archduke Albert and the Archduchess Isabella in 1598, pushed further the investment in art, which glorified the essence of Counter Reformation. Besides the restoration of the artworks that already existed in churches and monasteries, new artworks were commissioned with subjects which fitting more the decree agreed by the Council of Trent (1545-1563). There was also a huge increase in the number of newly established religious institutions including churches, monasteries and abbeys, and all of them sought for religious works of art. Following the 'Indian Summer' after the signing of Twelve Years' Truce in 1609, Antwerp again positioned itself as an artistic production center by manufacturing religious paintings, sculptures and architecture, and very soon it even got international commissions from other catholic countries throughout and even outside Europe (Vlieghe, 1999). The Counter-Reformation truly marked the city one of the most important examples of the Baroque art and architecture, as the strong demand dominated for the first half of the Seventeenth Century (Belkin, 1998).

Elizabeth Honig (1998) points out that the 17<sup>th</sup> century Antwerp witnessed significant changes in the marketing of paintings. Despite the fact than the general economy in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was gradually declining (if we compare it to the conditions of the 'Golden Age' in the 16<sup>th</sup> century), there was still a big volume of artworks produced for the market. Artworks could be bought at auctions, or put into the market through the inventory estate by secondhand clothes dealers, who at the time were also engaged in the business of retailing (old) paintings (see next section). One important force for the driving of the Antwerp art market was the role of art dealers, which also existed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century but played their major roles in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The registrations of the Guild of Saint Luke clearly showed that from 1570 to 1619, less than ten new dealers joined the business in any given decades. However, since the 1620s, dozens of new entrants listed as art dealers could be found (Honig, 1998). There were also art dealers who were involved in the business of a smaller scale, consequently not to be found at the guild's record. Many of the dealers were at the same time also artists, and just like the artistic career; they even

turned dealership into a family business. These art dealers traveled to foreign cities to attend art fairs and to seek for a chance to export their artworks. They contributed greatly to the reestablishment of the Antwerp export industry.

### 3.2.3 The Guild of Saint Luke and its role

In this section I present a brief explanation of the role and function of the artists' guild in Antwerp, as it helps us to understand the certain dimensions of the art industry. It is important to note that; Rubens was exempted from the Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp of any kind of regulations. The great artist enjoyed his privileges as a court painter for the Archduke Albert and his wife, which including not paying membership fees and taxes, and free from registering his pupils at the guild. However, Rubens was just one of the peculiar cases (his friend and contemporary artist, Jan Breughel the Elder, was another case) and we should keep in mind that in general there were regulations in the art industry.

Grampp (1989) points out that the artists' guilds and academies were both institutions, which cut down the outside competition and made the art industry a more centralized one. Was it really the case? Van Der Stichelen and Vermeylen (2006) present a comprehensive overview of how artists' guilds, the Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp in particular, shifted their role according to different economic and social conditions across three centuries. To look at the historical development closely, we may divide the time frame into different frames, as suggested by De Marchi and Van Miegroet (2006).

The first stage was a growing and booming one. During the beginning and the middle years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Antwerp was an international metropolis (see above) with a great commercial and cultural importance. Merchants from all over Europe came and traded their goods there, and their demand for the arts was high. To prevent over supply, the Guild of Saint Luke thus reinforced a strict quality control for both artists (over their apprenticeship) and artworks (woodcuts). Since obtaining a membership of the guild was obligatory for artists and artisans, it meant that competition was circumscribed and taking place just within an exclusive circle<sup>5</sup>. The

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<sup>5</sup> The authors point out that it was a lengthy and expensive process for artists to receive their training and become a master in the guild. In order to register at the Guild of Saint Luke as a master, one needed to be a citizen of Antwerp and had to complete the full training of being an artist. This rule was essential in preventing foreign artists to flood in the city. As for the artistic training, the guild limited the number of students a master might have within a certain period, and they also paid careful attention on the quality of the training itself. Due to the limitation of the documental evidence, it is difficult to know what exactly the measurements were, which were set by the guild so as to judge the quality of the

guild members enjoyed consequently a monopoly position in the art market, though there were also art fairs organized twice a year, which allowed foreign dealers to trade. Such a close relationship between the guild and its members was beneficial in the case of facilitated collaboration. Since painters, engravers, and sculptors all belonged to the same guild, it was easier to save transaction costs when artists collaborated together<sup>6</sup>.

However, as Antwerp faced political strife that affected its economic performance several times, it was necessary to develop new demands and markets for artworks. Toward the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, auctions for paintings emerged as a primary channel to sell paintings. Since Paintings are durable goods, they can exist for a very long time and quite often they are put on the auction market with other collectibles after a collector's or an artist's death. An estimation of the average number of paintings per household indicates that by the 1680s, there were on average 24 paintings per house (Blondé, 2002). Collecting painting was seriously challenged by other luxury goods, such as mirrors, porcelain from China, French dressing etc. As a consequence, painting no longer held its important position in a household; a second hand market for paintings appeared. It is interesting to acknowledge that secondhand clothes dealers were an avid force in retailing auction paintings in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This development was strongly opposed by the Guild of Saint Luke, since the latter wanted to reduce other public sales outside its very own system. But still, as time went by, auctions had gained more and more significance in their marketing roles.

To summarize how the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke posited itself under different exogenous factors, there are several characteristics that are worthwhile mentioning. Firstly, by including various artists and even art dealers into the organization, it provided an encompassing platform for artistic collaboration. Secondly, the guild provided moreover a strict quality control on both artistic training and products. These two aspects were very beneficial in creating a prosperous art market, as it controlled the ravaging competition to a certain extent. And as we can see in subsequent chapters that how privileged Rubens was to be able to establish his workshop without being regulated by the Guild of Saint Luke.

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training. Nevertheless, it proved that the art industry was indeed quite centralized and held a strong monopoly power.

<sup>6</sup> The Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp was in this case exceptional, as different kinds of artists were all summoned in the same guild. On the contrary, at the same time in Brussels, painters and sculptors belonged to two different guilds, and their collaborations were not always smooth.



### 3.3 Early life and Training in Antwerp

Peter Paul Rubens was born on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 1577 in Siegen, a city in the Westphalia State (nowadays within the German territory). The painter's father, Jan Rubens (1530-1587), was a highly educated lawyer from Antwerp, who had received a doctoral degree in Law in Rome, and who probably also emphasized on and encouraged greatly his children's education (Held, 1985). In 1562, Jan Rubens became 'schepen' (alderman) of Antwerp's magistracy, a position that contributed greatly to his social advancement<sup>7</sup>.

Being Calvinists in the Habsburg ruled Low Countries meant in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century for them to face political and societal repression. As a consequence the family fled from Antwerp to Cologne, and then to Siegen, and later on to Cologne again, where Rubens had spent ten years of his childhood. While moving to Cologne in the first place, Jan Rubens became the legal consultant of Anna of Saxony (1544-1577), wife of William of Orange (1533-1584), and they had an adulterous affair. Because of this fatal incident, the whole family had to exile to Siegen, and there they had to struggle for life there<sup>8</sup>. Jan Rubens eventually converted to the Catholic religion, together with his family shortly before his death. This incident marked the family's religious turn from Calvinist to Catholic, and made it easier for the family to move back to the Catholic-ruled Antwerp. It was in 1589, two years after Jan Rubens's death, Maria Pijpelinex moved back to Antwerp again; by that time Rubens was an adolescent of 12 years old.

For Rubens, the choice of being an artist was quite unusual, considering the social ranking of his parents, and the fact that he didn't come from a family with a firm artistic background. Belkin (1998) states that Rubens's oldest brother, Jan-Baptist Rubens, was also a painter (the fact was documented in Cologne), and he was probably the one, who gave the young painter some rudimentary education on the arts. But it remains unclear to what extent Rubens had affiliations with his artist brother. During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, it was common that art had been treated as family business and handled down from one generation to the other. By doing so, artists and artisans could reduce the training fees for their own children. Moreover,

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<sup>7</sup> Both of Rubens's parents came from the upper section of middle class families in Antwerp. Jan Rubens's family had been engaged in spice dealership, whilst Maria Pijpelinex (1538-1608) was the daughter of a tapestry dealer (Held, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> A letter of Jan Rubens written in 1583 demonstrated that the family was suffering from poverty and that he had to work day and night in order to raise his seven children (Muller, 1989).

family connections contributed significantly to the establishment of big workshop; an example was the Francken family in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century (Peeters, 2000).

Rubens's education level was extraordinarily high compared to other artists in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was common for artists to receive some basic education before starting their artistic training, and basically this education just encompassed the knowledge of reading and writing in the vernacular (Belkin, 1998). However, together with his brother, Philip Rubens, the young Peter Paul attended the Latin school in Antwerp, where the syllabus included Latin, Greek and classical literature<sup>9</sup>. During Rubens's time, Latin schools were institutions attended by upper-class boys in preparation of a service in church, government or scholarship. During his study, Rubens had met Balthasar Moretus (1574-1641), the future head of Plantin Press, a man with whom he kept a life-long friendship. It was also through the education in Latin school that Rubens established a profound love for and knowledge of humanistic thoughts (Held, 1985).

Rubens spent roughly one year in Antwerp's Latin school and very soon he turned to another pathway of his life. Around 1591 due to his family's financial difficulties<sup>10</sup>, the young Rubens and his brother left school so as to earn their own living. By the arrangement of Maria Pijpelinex, Rubens became a page in the service of the Countess de Lalaing d'Arenbergde, in a castle in Oudenarde (a suburb of Brussels). Even though he didn't stay there for a longer period of time as he had soon turned to the artistic apprenticeship, this 'page-job' was his first close contact with the aristocracy (Belkin, 1998; Held, 1985; Vlieghe, 1999). Meanwhile, Philip Rubens, by the time 16 years old, was employed as secretary of Jean Richardot, President of the Privy Council of the Southern Netherlands. Then he became the tutor of Richardot's two sons, and accompanied them to University of Louvain for the studies. Philip Rubens then became a pupil of the famous scholar Justus Lipsius (1547-1606), and later on he remained in and introduced Peter Paul to this highly intellectual circle, which again reinforced Rubens's knowledge of and connection to humanistic studies and ideas.

Rubens himself received his artistic training under three different masters: Tobias Verhaecht (1561-1631), Adam Van Noort (1561-1641) and Otto Van Veen (1556-

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<sup>9</sup> Rubens and his brother were firstly educated at home by their father, Jan Rubens. They both attended Latin school in Cologne before moving back to Antwerp (Belkin, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Rubens's elder sister, Blandina, was marrying and the family had to arrange for a suitable dowry (Held, 1985).

1629). The last one was especially significant for his further artistic progress. In the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Antwerp didn't really have a distinctive style or artist that dominated the artistic communities. As already stated in Section 3.2, the Counter-Reformation in the Southern Netherlands raised the demand for altarpieces and religious artworks to a significant level. After the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the Catholic Church restricted artistic production to certain canonical subjects, whether in form or content. As a consequence, the artworks produced during this period not only showed the spirit of the Counter-Reformation but also exhibited monumental and decorative excellence (Baudouin, 1972). For the production of big altarpieces, it was necessary to illustrate Catholic dogmas like the life of Christ, the veneration of the Virgin, some of the saints or the sacraments etc. By depicting those religious scenes that were not allowed in the Calvinist doctrines, the Catholic clergy was able to demonstrate and emphasize their theology clearly and thoroughly.

Next to ecclesial art in churches and monasteries, it was also common during the Counter-Reformation to produce devotional art for private use. The circulation of devotional prints, which were made after famous religious paintings, was very popular among the mass audience. Furthermore, probate inventory research indicates that there was a significant amount of religious art, regardless of size, to be found in individual households in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Antwerp. Popular topics included the images of Madonna, representations of the Holy Family, the birth of Christ or the Adoration of Magi. The demand for religious paintings was so strong that it dominated the art market in Antwerp and outnumbered the demand for secular history-paintings. Nonetheless, there was still a market for paintings that focused on Greek and Roman mythology, history and allegorical scenes. These paintings nurtured the intellectual wave of Christian neo-Stoicism, a philosophical trend which influenced Rubens and his contemporaries very much (Vlieghe, 1999).

Shortly before 1550, the ideal of the 'savant painter' (*pictor doctus*) started to have an influence on the Antwerp artistic circle. Painters started to justify the artistic value of their profession by separating themselves from other manual craftsmen, such as 'doeckschilders' (painters of cheap work on canvas) and others. It was necessary for an erudite painter to equip himself with the knowledge and the artistic notions of the High Renaissance and Mannerism, most of the time by making a trip to Italy or France (to the Fontainebleau) in order to be familiar with essence of Renaissance art (Vlieghe, 1999).

Being a very popular artist in Antwerp specializing in historical paintings, Van Veen had studied in Italy for five years and was a member of the Romanist group in Antwerp. The Romanist group in Antwerp was formed by some Flemish artists, who had studied in Italy and who admired greatly the Humanist notions of the High Renaissance; a community, which Rubens later on joined after his return from Italy. Van Veen's profound knowledge for classical literature was shown in his emblem works. The emblem book originates in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Italy and became more influential in the Netherlands in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A typical emblem work comprised of three parts: picture, motto, and explanatory texts, and it was a perfect exercise to combine pictorial inventions with classical literature.

Even though Rubens didn't devote himself to the making of emblems, Van Veen still taught him the practice of consulting the original sources when dealing with artistic creation (Belkin, 1998). Throughout his whole life, Rubens constantly turned to classical literature written in Latin and Greek, so as to bring different ancient elements into his history-, mythology- and allegory paintings. Belkin (1998) points out that the ability to read classical literature in the original languages was not common for normal artists at the time. Therefore 'Rubens's first-hand knowledge of classical texts constitutes one of the most important elements in the formation of his very own pictorial language; it enabled him to search for new subjects and to give a fresh reading of established ones (Belkin, 1998, pp.33).'

But it takes more than knowledge in classical literature to be a painter, and it was by making copies of famous paintings or the master's works that Rubens acquired the familiarity with visual images. During his Antwerp training, Rubens spent some time copying famous works such as woodcut by Hans Holbein the Younger (1497-1543) and other German woodcuts, especially book illustrations (Vlieghe, 1999). Since the Middle Ages, it was common to copy compositions or figures of masterpieces or classical sculptures during artistic trainings. Famous artworks were made into prints and circulated in different countries, serving as a tool for visual credits and reputation in general. Rubens clearly knew this habit and applied it throughout his lifetime, as it will be discussed in Section 4.2.4.

Around 1598, Rubens had finished his training with Van Veen and became a master in the Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp. Little is known about Rubens's early career before departing to Italy. There are some proofs that he made some paintings, as listed in his mother's will. But still, scholars had difficulties in identifying his early originals; a reason for that fuzz is that Rubens didn't like to sign on his works. It is

assumed that his early style looked similar to Van Veen's, thus it creates a virtual difficulty to clearly distinguish their works (Belkin, 1998). Rubens stayed in Van Veen's studio as an assistant for a short while, and eventually in 1600, he departed for the journey to Italy.

### 3.4 The Italian period

#### 3.4.1 Introduction

In the spring of 1600, Rubens arrived in Italy, a place where he lived for eight years and a place that remained all his life a favorite resort for him. It was in Italy that he discovered and accumulated his artistic stimuli from the studies of classical antiquities and paintings of high Renaissance and Baroque styles. Moreover, by being a court painter and working for various commissions in Italy and abroad, Rubens had the chance to exercise his talent on an international level. In this section I will present all the important aspects during this period, which directly or indirectly contributed to his later artistic success.

#### 3.4.2 Artistic emulation

Rubens's first stop in Italy was Venice, a city full of great architecture and paintings. Rubens was able to extract the essence of the Venetian style, which would very soon pay off in his first major commission in Italy. Soon Rubens became court painter of Vincenzo Gonzaga (1562-1612), Duke of Mantua, who granted the young Flemish artist the freedom to travel and to receive commissions outside his court. The painter benefitted very much from such a privilege, as he was so able to make visits to cities like Florence, Venice and Rome, where he had the occasion to study ancient sculptures as well as great masterpieces of the Renaissance and of his contemporaries.

During his first visit to Rome in 1600, Rubens could to study the classical ancient art, an artistic tradition that shaped and contributed to the Renaissance artistic taste and expression. The classical art at this time meant a mixture of Hellenistic art, Roman art or Roman copies after Greek art (Belkin, 1998). And most of the artworks were sculptures; since only a small number of classical paintings existed until the rediscovery of Pompeii in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The classical sculptures clearly represent the essence of the Renaissance, in the sense of transforming the deep curiosity for human beings into the expression of ideal physical traits. Rubens made numerous sketches after these Greek and Roman sculptures, and he paid especially high attention in maintaining three-dimensional movement. Instead of just making a sketch of the front side of a statue, Rubens drew his sketches from both sides and even the very back, as if he was observing it simultaneously from different angles (Belkin, 1998)

Rubens wrote down what he considered to be important in studying sculptures: 'I am convinced that in order to achieve the highest perfection one needs a full understanding of the statues, indeed a complete absorption in them; but one must make judicious use of them and before all avoid the effect of stone (Belkin, 1998, pp.47).' This passage demonstrates two important notions for Rubens's art; one is the necessity of careful study of sculptures, the other is to add up flesh and bone to the images. We can see from his following works that he clearly build his whole art on this principle.

Besides making copies of great classical collections, Rubens also admired and learned from paintings of high Renaissance masters, such as Michelangelo (1475-1564), Rafael (1483-1520), Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), and Andre del Sarto (1486-1531). Among their style Rubens was particularly interested in Michelangelo's figurative compositions for the work on the Sistine Chapel ceiling (Vlieghe, 1999). He didn't make many direct copies after these famous masterpieces, since the reproduction of these paintings could be bought quite cheaply. Instead, Rubens made use of these reproductions by highlighting small details or retouching the composition as a whole. It was through this practice of reworking that Rubens worked out his creativity by adapting various figures from other artist's pieces into his own work.

At the end of 1605 Rubens made his second visit to Rome, where he had somehow a family-reunion and lived happily with his brother Philip for a few months. Upon this time Philip already completed his doctor degree of Law in Rome and had accepted a position as librarian for Cardinal Ascanio Colonna. The two brothers grabbed the chance and did something for their common intellectual curiosity by researching together the social life and the customs of antiquity. The study was later on published in Antwerp by the Plantin Press, whose owner was an already mentioned dear friend of Rubens (Belkin, 1998). Moreover, Rubens made careful

studies and sketches after other kinds of collectables: gems, cameos and coins, a hobby that he continued throughout his lifetime.

While staying in Rome, the Rubens brothers also formed a small circle of friends with similar interests, with whom they could discuss subjects like classical literature, philosophy and history. Through this forum Rubens accumulated ideas and exchanged views about ancient culture. In this circle he gained a great understanding of the humanistic thoughts, which later on served as the inspiring sources of his religious, history and allegory paintings.

To sum up what Rubens had learned in Italy for his art, one couldn't neglect the artist's exceptional ability in borrowing figures and composition, as well as his high adaptability in blending different artistic elements. When Rubens arrived in Mantua, he was a young painter who was still under the influence of his previous teacher Otto Van Veen. But very soon he was able to adapt his own style and turn it into one influenced by the popular Venetian tradition, *mangier grande*. This kind of style was derived from Venetian masters like Titian (1488-1576) and Tintoretto (1518-1594) in the late *Cinquecento*, and in Venice and the surrounding its influence lasted until the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Vlieghe, 1999). It can be characterized by dramatic movement in composition rendered by highlights and coloring in order to support a theatrical effect; a style which can be recognized again in the early Baroque art.

Moreover, in Rubens's art there were elements from classical sculptures, figurative composition and Venetian colors, which showed a combination of *disegno* and *colore* (Belkin, 1998)<sup>11</sup>. His profound interest in and knowledge of classical literature and antiquity further strengthened his inclination to history and allegory paintings, a famous example being the Medici cycle. In Chapter 4 more examples on Rubens's creativity in regard of pictorial innovations will be presented and discussed.

### 3.4.3 Patronage and commissions

Rubens acquired sufficient experience in dealing with the aristocracy and important institutions during his eight years stay in Italy. Upon his arrival, he was immediately appreciated and hired by the Duke of Mantua, and he remained in his service throughout his sojourn. Besides being a court painter, Rubens's duty in Mantua also

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<sup>11</sup> In Renaissance art there are generally two styles that prevailed on the art market: *disegno* (design) and *colore* (color). Artists of the Florentine-Roman school emphasized more on their design, whilst the Venetian artists were famous for their use of colors. Even though Rubens was noted for the Venetian expression, his solid training in design should also be taken into consideration (Belkin, 1998).

included traveling with the Duke and advising him and negotiating alongside with him for some artworks (Magrun, 1955). It was at the court of Mantua that Rubens learned how to deal with the nobility and wealthy patrons in general, an experience that helped him significantly later on in his life.

It was also in Italy that Rubens was appointed for his first diplomatic mission. In 1603, Rubens set out for Spain so as to deliver some presents to the Spanish King Philip III (1578-1621) and his courtier, Duke of Lerma (1532/33-1625). Among the presents there were pictures by big Italian masters. Soon after his arrival in Spain Rubens had to repair most of the paintings, which were heavily damaged due to the humid weather. He tried to repair two of them, and substituted two painting of his own since they were too damaged to be repaired. After delivering all the paintings, the Duke of Lerma was deeply amazed by the young artist and granted him a few commissions, including an equestrian portrait (Figure 3.4) and a series of half-length figures of Christ and the Twelve Apostles, which he also mad some copies after and listed at the exchange with Carleton (see chapter 6).



**Figure 3.4 *Equestrian Portrait of the Duke of Lerma***

Source: Belkin (1998).



Even though Rubens only got one important commission from the Duke of Mantua<sup>12</sup>, his privilege to travel and to work freely outside of Mantua made it possible for him to build up a connection with patrons in other cities. For example, he painted some portraits and altarpieces in Genoa, and he kept close contact with those Genoese patrons even after his return to Antwerp.

As for Rome, where Rubens had spent a substantial time, he also established himself with some major commissions in this highly competitive artistic center. The first major commission appeared in 1602; it was an altarpiece for the subterranean chapel of Saint Helen in the church of Santa Croce, donated by the Archduke Albert (1559-1621), governor of the Netherlands since 1598<sup>13</sup>. Since the representative for the Archduke Albert was Jean Richardot, the former student of Philip Rubens, the commission fell into Rubens's hand.

Anyhow, the most important commission for Rubens during his Italian period was a high altar for Chiesa Nuova, a church funded by the Oratorian order. This painting was called *Saint Gregory the Great surrounded by Other Saints* (Figure 3.5) and was considered a cornerstone of Rubens's career (Vlieghe, 1999). In order to carry out such a project, Rubens wrote to the secretary of the Duke of Mantua to ask for permission to prolong his stay in Rome. His excitement is documented as follows:

‘... When the finest and most splendid opportunity in all Rome presented itself, my ambition urged me to avail myself of the chance. It is the high altar of the new church of the Priests of the Oratory, called Sta. Maria in Vallicella – without doubt the most celebrated and frequented church in Rome today, situated right in the center of the city, and to be adorned by the combined efforts of all the most able painters in Italy... (Magrun, 1955, pp. 39).’

This painting turned out to be rejected by the church. According to Rubens's letter it was caused by a strange reflection from the light, which prevented the audience from seeing it clearly. But as Vermeylen (2006) shows, on the documentation of the Oratorian Order, this painting was rejected because of its upper composition. In the end, Rubens had to make a new copy of similar composition in substitution for the old one, which he tried to sell to the Duke of Mantua, who also rejected it.

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<sup>12</sup> In Rubens's correspondence with Annibale Chieppio, Secretary of the Duke of Mantua, he complained quite often about the fact that the Duke had delayed his salary.

<sup>13</sup> It was in this church that the Archduke received his cardinal's hat, right before his marriage (Belkin, 1998).



**Figure 3.5 *Saint Gregory the Great surrounded by Other Saints***

Source: Belkin (1998).

The incident that marked the end of Rubens's Italian period occurred in the end of 1608, when he received news from Antwerp that his mother was severely ill and that she probably would die sooner or later. He reported his absence to his employer and hurried back home. Anyhow, it was too late to see his mother ever again. After dealing with the family affairs, for several months Rubens was indecisive about whether to return to Italy or to stay in Antwerp. A letter he wrote in the spring of the year 1609 indicates:

'I have not yet made up my mind whether to remain in my own country or to return forever to Rome, where I am invited on the most favorable terms. Here also they do not fail to make every effort to keep me, by every sort of compliment. The Archduke and the Most Serene Infanta have had letters written urging me to remain in their service. Their offers are generous, but I have little desire to become courtier again. Antwerp and its citizen would satisfy me, if I could say farewell to Rome. The peace, or rather, the truce for many years will without doubt be ratified, and during this period it is believed that our country will flourish again (Magurn, 1955, pp. 12).'

Vermeulen (2006) reconstructs the personal, economic and political circumstances that Rubens encountered during the decision-making process by comparing what he had left in Rome to what he would presumably have gained at that time in Antwerp. He points out that already in 1607 Rubens started to have problems with the Duke of Mantua. For one thing, there were his frequent complaints about the delay of his salary (Magrun, 1955). Furthermore, the duke didn't show much interest in buying Rubens's *Saint Gregory the Great surrounded by Other Saints*. It is tempting to speculate that the relationship between the young Flemish artist and his noble employer was slowly deteriorating. In addition, the rejection of the Chiesa Nuova altarpiece was not only a defeat for Rubens's ambitions but also a sign of difficulties in gaining popularity within the Roman art market.

By contrast, the situation in Antwerp was much more promising for him; he soon won the appreciation of Archduke of Albert and his wife Archduchess Isabella (1566-1633), who employed him with great privileges. The favorable conditions can be listed as the following:

- 1) Rubens received an annual salary of 500 guilders,
- 2) He was exempted from living at the court in Brussels and could choose freely where he wanted to live,
- 3) He would receive separate payments from the paintings ordered by either the Archduke or his wife,
- 4) He was free from taxes,
- 5) He was free to set up a workshop and teach his art to anyone he wanted to, without obeying the regulations of the guild,

6) He received a gold chain which worth 300 guilders (Vermeylen, 2006).

Moreover, his brother, Philip Rubens, also returned to Antwerp and was appointed as a secretary at the city magistrate. The painter could enjoy a family reunion, and he also could benefit from Philip Rubens's social position and his political network in getting access to Antwerp's elite circles.

### 3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have briefly presented the history of art market in Antwerp, and the very beginning of Rubens's socio-economic conditions, including his family background, his educational level, his artistic training and his early career. There are indeed some interesting factors that contributed to his artistic success either directly or indirectly; in below I sum up all of these aspects.

It may be unfair to list the importance of family background on the first position instead of his artistic genius. But as the events of his early life clearly demonstrate: Rubens enjoyed advantages concerning his family background and his education attainment. To explain this whole development in a present-day terminology, we can say that he had huge advantages in what the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) called 'cultural and social capital'. Bourdieu pointed out the different types of capital in (modern) societies: economic, cultural, social and symbolic, and he presented moreover careful observation of how these different capitals work within the societal context. Cultural capital here refers to a good and legitimate taste, appropriate behavior, sophisticated thoughts and knowledge, whilst social capital shows how individuals are able to connect themselves within or between different social networks.

In Rubens' case, it was not chiefly the economic capital that paved his way to success - as his family faced some financial struggle when he was young - but the other forms of capital. He acquired ample cultural capital from his father and later on his brother, which was further strengthened through his classical education and his artistic training. The solid education he received was very important for his career, for it allowed him to have first hand knowledge when dealing with history, religious or allegory paintings. Additionally, he spoke several languages fluently; an ability from which not only benefited his communication with patrons but which also made him a desirable candidate for diplomatic actions. As for social capital, Rubens enjoyed the network of his brother, Philip Rubens, and his father-in-law, Jan Brant. While being in

Rome, he gained his first commission for the St. Helen Chapel predominately due to his network. I will present more examples of Rubens's relation with his patrons and his networks in Antwerp in Chapter 5.

But after all, we shouldn't neglect Rubens's talent and love for artistic creation, as it remained the life-long devotion of the artist. If we look at works from his Italian period, it is fairly clear that Rubens demonstrated both solid training and high adaptability in the pictorial language. In Italy he studied after so many great masterpieces and built up a rich visual database, and he was able to incorporate and combine different stylistic or contextual elements into his own works. A *mélange* of all this factors is probably the key to understand why Rubens is yet known to be the 'king of painters.'

## 4 On the Supply of Rubens's art

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the production of Rubens's art under different institutional and market conditions. Nowadays it is almost cliché to mention Rubens's prolific studio and its enormous output, which included more than three thousands paintings, engravings and woodcuts (Alpers, 1995). It is interesting to examine Rubens's artistic activities from an economic point of view. In the following sections I will use economic theories and notions to categorize his production pattern, and art historical evidence to give further details on the various kinds of collaboration methods and products.

In Section 4.2 and 4.3 I will present the very distinctive features of Rubens's production pattern, i.e. the division of labor and the quality control. Judging from the existing number of Rubens's paintings, one maybe wonders about his productivity as a whole. It is generally believed that Rubens had established a workshop of considerable scale, which can be indentified as hierarchical vertical collaboration. But there is little information on the issue, due to his privilege as court painter, so that he was exempted from registering both his apprentices and his workshop practices at the Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp. In addition, Rubens also collaborated, or even subcontracted, certain parts of paintings with other masters, which could be categorized as horizontal collaboration. Here, my task is to present how Rubens organized and supervised the production of art.

### 4.2 Vertical collaboration: workshop

#### 4.2.1 Introduction

To begin with this subject, it is better to review again the favorable opportunities Rubens faced when he came back to Antwerp: a growing demand for artworks from the open market as well as under commissions. The city already had a long tradition as being an artistic center, as explained in Chapter 3. Big workshops were established and various artworks produced *en masse* to meet the increasing demand on both national and international scale. In order to survive in such a competitive market, artists needed to minimize their production costs, either in materials or labor,

or increase the demand for their artworks. We will see in the following sections how Rubens mastered these two aspects by certain genuine means.

In between the year 1609 to 1620, Rubens had produced more than 63 altarpieces, which were destined to be decorated in churches in the Southern Netherlands and abroad (Baudouin, 1975). Such an enormous output wouldn't be possible without a well-structured workshop, where the division of labor was quite clear and strict. Unfortunately, scholars have difficulties in identifying Rubens's artistic activities within his very own workshop due to his privilege of not being obliged to register his pupils in the guild of Saint Luke. Nevertheless, some surviving documents, either legal or personal, do provide us sporadic evidence concerning the individuals and their duties inside the workshop. Moreover, art historical observation on the style and the techniques used<sup>14</sup>, together with modern technological testing such as infrared reflectography, X-ray and pigment analysis, could help us to understand the sequence of Rubens's production (Nakamura, 1994).

Just a few years after his return to Antwerp, Rubens became the 'king of painters' at the city by the Scheldt. In a letter dated May 11<sup>th</sup> 1611 to a friend Jacob de Bie, Rubens wrote that he purportedly had to turn down more than one hundred people who wanted to enter his workshop (Magrun, 1955, pp. 55). In the same letter, Rubens also mentioned how his selection process was pursued: many people were trained by other masters and remained in their studios for several years just to wait for a vacancy available in Rubens's studio; in other words, the quality of his assistants must have been fairly high.

Given that Rubens was such a sought after and renowned artist that received big commissions constantly and internationally, he needed to be efficient for the making of art. It is generally believed that Rubens not only made his assistants paint copies after his original works, but that he also let them paint some original composition out of his sketches and drawings, and in the end he would apply the so-called 'finish touches' (Balis, 1994). In 1808, F.-X. de Burtin wrote that he heard from one of Rubens's descendents, Mr. van Parys, that the great master only made twenty big paintings and no more than two hundred small paintings, including oil sketches completely by himself. All the other works were done by Rubens's assistants under his supervision, and he then finalized the works by a few corrections and strokes

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<sup>14</sup> Balis (1994) summarizes most of the art historical discussion on the attribution of Rubens's (authentic) paintings, but there is no general accord on the issue since scholars have very little information on Rubens's assistants and their artistic styles.

(Balis, 1994). Even though these figures don't bare scientific proof and should be treated with caution, nevertheless, they provide us a possibility to imagine Rubens's productivity as a whole.

In this section I will present the various aspects concerning Rubens's workshop activities. Starting from Ruben's role as a teacher, to his supervision after the production of art done by the assistants. The main discussion is based on the making of oil paintings; nevertheless, the making of prints and book title pages will also be discussed since they shared similar procedures in the making.

#### 4.2.2 Rubens as a teacher

To fully understand the organization of Rubens's studio, we have to start with some definitions concerning the laboring forces. Peeters and Dambruyne (2007) point out the importance of recognizing the hierarchy within an artist's workshop. First of all, masters referred to trained artists who registered themselves within the artists' guild. By passing the selection system on the artistic training and paying the annual fees, masters could teach their art to pupils and sell their artworks legally. And workshops are perfect organizations to combine both teaching and selling art with efficiency. These two aspects are also the crucial questions I want to identify in this section.

Pupils and apprentices here are two interchangeable terms that both mean the individuals who undertake the artistic training. According to Peeters and Martens (2007), between 1453 and 1539, only 27% of painters' apprentices became masters in the Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp. And when one completed his (in very rare cases also her) training but had not yet become a master, then he was called a *journeyman*. These journeymen didn't have the privileges the masters obtained, since they belonged to a different category in the guild. Journeymen normally worked in some workshops as assistants and waited until they became masters and could start their own workshop. Some of them, however, would never succeed in getting the master's title. Therefore, they became part of the 'invisible' force in the art history, who did a lot of work, but whose names are whitewashed by all the famous names in the books<sup>15</sup>.

Judging from Rubens's case, even though we don't know much about his workshop organization, it is worthwhile mentioning that he remained in Otto Van

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<sup>15</sup> Since the status of journeymen was only a transitory period, there were few registrations in the guild concerning either names or activities. This created difficulties for scholars to indentify their social status and productivity (Peeters & Dambruyne, 2007).



Veen's workshop and worked as assistant from 1598 to 1600 even after he became a master. So it was not uncommon for young artists who newly acquired masterships to work in Rubens's workshop as assistants, especially when he claimed to 'turned down more than one hundred.' Since there was a huge supply of young and talented artists for Rubens to choose, it was fairly logical that he could get very high quality labor and thus reached high productivity.

In fact, a workshop with such great scale was not Rubens's unique invention; many Renaissance masters also enjoyed big workshop productions. Cannon-Brookes (1985) suggests that Rubens probably got not only his artistic inspiration but also the production strategies from the Venetian artist Tintoretto. Moreover, during the Renaissance the differences between *disegno* (design) and the actual execution of paintings was developed and emphasized. It was the masters' duty to work through the creative process of the invention, and studio assistants up to a certain level could carry out the execution. In Flanders, studio practices were common since the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, and it was said that famous artist like Flans Floris (1519-1570) had a workshop which contained 120 apprentices and assistants (Balis, 2000). Since Rubens was in Italy for a considerable time, he must have taken the Italian tradition into account and realized it in Antwerp. Arnout Balis (1994) further stresses that the establishment of Rubens's studio must have been around 1611, when commissions kept crowding in and Rubens was in need of assistance.

Two recollections of Rubens's studio practices from his contemporaries still exist, and they provide an elucidative view inside his workshop. Otto Sperling (1602-1673) was a physician at the Danish court and he had visited Rubens's studio in Antwerp in 1621, where he saw:

'Many young painters who worked on different pieces on which Sr. Rubens had drawn with chalk and put a spot of color here and there; the young men had to execute these paintings which then were finished off with lines and colors added by Rubens himself (Balis, 1994, pp.98).'

The other contemporary, Joachim von Sandrart (1606-1688), recalled his visit to Rubens's studio in 1675 before his death and he actually mentioned something concerning Rubens's teaching. He states:

'Rubens used many young people to speed up the production of his large paintings. He instructed each one carefully in accordance with his inclination and ability, who would then paint after him. This was great help since these

assistants added all the birds, fish, landscapes, trees, rivers, grounds, air, water and woods. Every composition always originated with Rubens. He alone would prepare the preliminary design on a small scale, which his best disciples would then transfer to the large canvas. This he then retouched, or even painted the most important parts himself. This procedure was most advantageous for him. It also was most useful to the youths in his studio since they become well versed in all parts of the art (Logan, 2007, pp. 251-252).'

These two passages above provide us some interesting clues regarding Rubens's workshop activities. First of all, it yields some descriptions of how Rubens instructed his students. According to Sandrart (Logan, 2007), Rubens instructed the students suitable to their own inclination and ability, and the very important part of his instruction was to paint after the master's compositions. Balis (1994) points out that it became virtually difficult to identify the attribution of different hands, since Rubens trained his pupils to be familiar with the master's own style.

In addition to Rubens's teaching, we don't really know how much he charged his pupils for the artistic training. But here some examples may be illustrative for the discussion. For example, Rembrandt charged 100 guilders per year from his students (Logan, 2007). And in 1639, Wallery Vaillant paid a considerable sum of 150 guilders per year in order to study under Erasmus Quellin (Balis, 1994). These two instances showed how famous artists could make a profit by having a large number of pupils in their studios. It is tempting to stipulate that Rubens must have earned a quite substantial income from his teaching. On the other hand, economic textbooks tell us that there is one thing called 'scarcity' and it is in most cases the prevailing reason that affects human behavior. Since the big master had only limited time and energy, and his workshop also had limited space, maybe it would be more profitable for Rubens just to have high quality assistants trained by other masters instead of providing training on his own. This statement is supported by the fact that brilliant assistants such as Anthony Van Dyck (1599-1641), Jacob Jordeans (1593-1678) and Erasmus Quellin the Second (1584-1640) were all trained by other masters and came to work with Rubens after obtaining their masters at the Guild of Saint Luke (Balis, 1994). But again, these are just conjectures based on sporadic evidence, and we shouldn't generalize the situation.

Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assume that there was some sort of hierarchical structure within Rubens's workshop. Beginning from the lowest level, the

novices were probably engaged with preliminary tasks like preparing the canvas and panels or cleaning the studio. When they became more advanced, they could start making copies after their master's works. Belkin (1998) suggests that, considering Rubens's busy schedule, he probably had appointed more senior pupils to give lessons to those pupils with lower levels. We know for example that Van Dyck, who was considered the most talented among Rubens's assistants, provided some head drawings for the master as a visual inventory. It might be possible that these head studies were part of the sources for apprentices to study after (Balis, 2000).

Among his assistants, the most famous one was probably Anthony van Dyck, who collaborated with Rubens from 1617 to 1620. Van Dyck showed his artistic brilliance from an early age on, and it should be noted that he started his training under the guidance of Hendrik van Balen (1575-1632) at the age of ten, instead of being Rubens's pupil. He became a master in the Guild of Saint Luke in 1618, and afterwards he worked for Rubens actively (Vlieghe, 1999)<sup>16</sup>. He was also the only assistant, who was mentioned in Rubens's correspondence<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, he was even the only assistant to be listed in the contract for the ceiling paintings for the Jusuut Church in Antwerp (see Section 4.2.3). Balis (1994) points out that, besides Van Dyck's heavy duties inside Rubens's workshop, he also ran his own production outside Rubens's studio. Van Dyck demonstrated his talent in two directions, on the one hand he had to adapt himself to Rubens's style, and on the other hand he also developed his own personal technique. After 1620 he departed for England and stayed there for a few months, then he came back to Antwerp for short, just to make his way to Italy. The young artist then truly set out for his own short but splendid artistic career.

Another frequently cited artist who worked closely with Rubens was Jacob Jordaens (1593-1678), who contributed greatly in Rubens's last years when he was suffering from gout. Like with Van Dyck, it was not Rubens but a second master, Adam van Noort that gave Jordaens the preliminary artistic training. But Jordeans was very much influenced by Rubens's style and borrowed many motifs from the great master (Belkin, 1998). He was in Rubens's studio responsible for many big

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<sup>16</sup> Scholars have different opinions concerning the period van Dyck worked for Rubens. Balis (1994) suggests that it already started in 1617, before van Dyck received his mastership, and Belkin (1998) thinks it could be in 1616. Vlieghe (1999) on the other hand, thinks that they must have had closer connection even earlier, as van Dyck made a portrait of Rubens already in 1615.

<sup>17</sup> In 1618, when Rubens had an exchange with the British Ambassador in The Hague, Sir Dudley Carleton, he mentioned that one of the paintings was made 'by one of my best pupils' and he had thereby referred to the young Van Dyck.

projects, such as the Rosary series from 1617 to 1620. In addition, Nakamura (1994) identifies Jordaens's style in Rubens's studio from a work called *The Flight of Lot and his Family from Sodom* (now in the Museum of Western Art, Tokyo), and suggests Jordaens probably made this painting as a copy after Rubens's original work<sup>18</sup>. And after Rubens's death, his heir assigned Jordaens to finish two yet uncompleted paintings commissioned by the Spanish King, so there must have been a strong connection between the two artists.

We have some traces of Rubens's preliminary drawings and ideas on human figures from one assistant named Willem Panneels (ca. 1600/1605-1634), who made copies after the master's works, now called 'Rubens's Cantoor' in Copenhagen. Panneels entered Rubens's studio around 1622 to 1624 as an apprentice, and he was entrusted by Rubens to take care of his house and property when the great master was in England and Spain from 1628 to 1630. Due to his responsibility, Panneels had the access to Rubens's private collection of drawings, either painted by the master's hand or just collected by Rubens. The collection included mostly Rubens's anatomical studies; either from real human models or from the antiquity he studied in Rome. Panneels's drawings comprised of mostly one or two human figures, and occasionally he wrote some notes concerning changes or improvement. It seemed that Panneels was very cautious of the 'contour' (*omtreck*) of figures, and this was made possibly by Rubens's emphasis on outlines for figures (Logan, 2007).

Some of the assistants were entrusted with a variety of tasks, though sometimes these tasks were not really related to artistic creation. For example, Deodaat del Monte (1582-1644) accompanied Rubens to Italy and back to Antwerp through all the years, and Rubens had written in a letter in Rome to the Duke of Mantua that he had to pay salary for two servants, it could be possible that Del Monte was one of them (Magrun, 1955). Moreover, another assistant, Lucas Fayd'herbe (1617-1697), was appointed to take care of the house, and especially 'to make sure that everything is well locked up, and no originals or any sketches remain upstairs in the studio' when Rubens was staying at his Castle Steen (Magrun, 1955, pp. 410-411). It may seem like Rubens was exploiting these young talents to a certain extent, but we should also consider that some of them worked for Rubens in exchange for food and

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<sup>18</sup> Nakamura (1994) traces and compares all the existing copies of *The Flight of Lot and his Family from Sodom* that were attributed to Rubens and his studio. And based on art historical judgment and scientific testing he was able to reconstruct the probable sequential order of these works.

lodgment. Plus they had the chance to watch or study after the great master's works; this might have been the biggest incentive for those young and ambitious artists.

#### 4.2.3 Product type and productivity

After the discussion on Rubens as a teacher, now we should turn to the subject concerning the workshop productivity as a whole. In the famous Carleton exchange case in 1618 (see Chapter 6), Rubens identified three different categories of his paintings based on their production methods in his letters:

- 1) Works completely by Rubens's own hand;
- 2) Works by Rubens's hand with a contribution by a specialist (an animal by Frans Snyders or a landscape by an unidentified landscape specialist)<sup>19</sup>;
- 3) Works that were painted by pupils and afterwards were retouched by Rubens.

Nakamura (1994) states that in the third category, works could be further distinguished as 'works created by studio assistants on the basis of Rubens's idea' and 'copies after Rubens's previous works (with or without the help from studio assistants)'.

Firstly, we should understand the fact that the first category (works done entirely by Rubens's hands) probably included the smallest number of paintings. Since these originals serve as a visual reference for us to develop criteria for 'authentic' Rubens's paintings, they need to be carefully distinguished from the rest. Since Rubens rarely signed his paintings, it is not possible to judge his originals just by signature. Balis (1994) suggests that even though it was not clear which subject or commission would attract Rubens's personal involvement in the making, we can nevertheless start from certain topics that were very personal to the artists. For example, Rubens's family portraits and portraits of dear friends and patrons, landscape (a subject Rubens devoted much in his last years), some *modelli*, some big altarpieces (as recognized by certain experts) and finally those he identified in the letter to Carleton as completely painted by his own hand.

The second category consists of the paintings for which Rubens collaborated with other masters, and in fact it was a common practice in Southern Netherlands already

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<sup>19</sup> The landscape specialist here refers to Jan Wildens (1586-1653).

in the early years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This topic will be dealt separately in Section 4.3 with detailed explanations.

Finally we can come to the discussion of the third category. A general description concerning for the making of this type of products could be explained as following: Rubens was to decide the layout of composition, and usually he would draw oil sketches, i.e. *modelli*, directly on a small panel<sup>20</sup>. Such *modelli* served as initial models to be shown to the patrons. If the patrons were satisfied with the design, then Rubens assigned his assistants to apply the composition on full-scale canvases or panels. Rubens also provided his assistants some other drawings or sketches for details like human movements, gestures and facial expressions (Balis, 2000). In the end Rubens rechecked the paintings, made corrections and put on his famous 'finishing touches.' By assigning the main execution of paintings to his assistants, Rubens could save his time and effort for the design part as well as the final supervision (quality control).

Balis (1994) follows the distinction made by Nakamura (1994) and distinguishes those paintings for which Rubens only provided (limited) preliminary designs or drawings, from those painting, which were made after Rubens's original copies or *modelli*. The former one applies not just to oil paintings but also for the production of prints and title pages for books, as it will be further explained in Section 4.2.4. The latter ones were then in the lowest category when originality and creativity were taken into consideration.

Rubens applied another type of preliminary drawings, i.e. *bozzetti* for the commission of the Jesuits Church ceiling decoration in 1620 (Belkin, 1998). The term *bozzetti* was derived from Italian and it referred to the small models used for sculptures. The steps for *bozzetti* was quite simple, as figures were generally shown in white, with a few black lines supported their contours. *Bozzetti* could be regarded as a middle part between sketches and *modelli*, and they also became collectible items afterwards among connoisseurs.

It is obvious that Rubens kept his studio busy with two kinds of production: those for the commissions and copies made for the open market. Nakamura (1994) suggests that Rubens tended to hold various commissions in hand at the same time,

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<sup>20</sup> Initially Rubens drew his sketches on paper with pen and brown ink, outlined by black chalk and some brushes. But in a noticeable change after the 1620s he turned to paint oil sketches on panel, known as *modelli*. This change might be caused by the increasing demand for large commissions, and the involvement of trained assistants in his studio (Logan, 2000).

instead of finish them one after another. Paintings for important commissions seemed to get more of his attention and engagement, depending on facts such as price, the commissioner, and the location to display etc. When important works were finished and delivered, it was only possible for Rubens's assistants to make copies based on the preliminary drawings or *modelli* (Nakamura, 1994). We can see examples of such copies in Rubens's exchange with Carleton in Chapter 6.

Making copies after popular works was a standard practice in Rubens's time, since there had been a growing demand from the middle classes already in the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Vlieghe, 2000). Certain subjects were very much sought after, thus artists generally made a few copies after an original one and sold them for a cheaper price. We can see from Rubens's inventory list that he kept some original paintings of important political leaders in Europe in order to make copies. Among them there were figures such as Ambrogio Spinola (1569-1630), whose image was in huge demand when he won the battle of Breda in 1625. Portraits of the Archduke Albert (Fig. 4.1), the Archduchess Isabella (Fig. 4.2), Philip IV (1605-1665), Wolfgang Wilhelm the Duke of Neuburg (1578-1653), Marie de Medici (1575-1642, Fig. 4.3), Elizabeth of Bourbon (1602-1644), and Cardinal Infanta Ferdinand (1609/10-1641, Fig. 4.4) were all found in Rubens's house and numerous copies, either paintings or prints, were created after these role models (Muller, 1989). They could also be regarded as Rubens's 'international' demand.



**Figure 4.1 *Portrait of the Archduke Albert of Austria***

Source: Muller (1989)



**Figure 4.2 *Portrait of the Archduchess Isabella***

Source: Muller (1989)



**Figure 4.3 Portrait of Marie de Medici**

Source: Muller (1989)



**Figure 4.4 Portrait of Cardinal Infanta Ferdinand**

Source: Muller (1989)

Moreover, devotional paintings and copies after Rubens's own paintings were also very much in demand, and the quality of the products differed according to their buyers and prices. Many scholars are engaged with identifying various copies after Rubens's originals, and it is sometimes very hard to reach a general agreement on certain paintings. Nakamura (1994) provides a detailed research on one of Rubens's work called *The Flight of Lot and his family from Sodom* (see above). In fact there were three oil paintings and a preparatory drawing for the reproduction print (engraving), and by cross comparisons based on both art historical and scientific examination, it is possible to identify variants in different stages and thus reconstruct a sequence of creativity flow.

Already in Rubens's time connoisseurs were aware of the authenticity issue, and sometimes they specified in commission contracts the degree of involvement of Rubens. For example, in the contract for the commission of the ceiling paintings for the Antwerp Jesuit Church in 1620, it was stated that Rubens had to draw all the 39 *modelli* for the project, and he should supervise the execution of 'Van Dyck and other pupils' to apply these designs on canvases. When all the paintings were done, Rubens should examine their quality and apply necessary corrections or/and his 'finishing touches'. Afterwards Rubens should submit all 39 *modelli* made by his hand to the fathers in the Jesuit Church, otherwise he could also choose to paint another altarpiece instead of handing in the *modelli* (Martin, 1968). In the end



Rubens chose to keep his *modelli* and painted the other contract, and it can be seen as a sign to protect his original design.

The contract for the Medici Cycle was even stricter, that as it required the artist to paint the entire painting, especially the figures by his own hand (Belkin, 1998). Art historical examination suggests that Rubens did have 'high involvement' in painting the major figures, but left the background and decoration elements to his assistants (Balis, 1994).

#### 4.2.4 Prints and book illustrations

The tradition of making reproductive prints was not Rubens's invention; examples can be already found in 16<sup>th</sup> century Italy. Great Renaissance masters like Raphael and Titian both had printmakers to make reproductive prints after their paintings (Belkin, 1998). Another noteworthy example was Albrecht Dürer, for his awareness of the art business through making prints. He even developed his own monogram for artworks, so as to prevent illegal copies (see Section 2.2.3).

Rubens's engagement with prints can be traced back to his early training in Antwerp; as he copied diligently some woodcuts after Hans Holbein the Younger and other German woodcuts, mainly book illustrations (Vlieghe, 1999). He further used some other prints from Italy as his visual practices: Marcantonio Raimondi's engraving after Raphael, Cornelis Cort's engravings and woodcuts after Titian, and the etching and engravings by Carracci (Hartley, 1990). Consequently when he was in Italy and saw the masterpieces in original, he must have identified the differences between the prints and the painted originals. Take Raphael for example: some of his prints were different from original paintings. Especially when the composition and details were concerned. These prints were usually made after the preparatory drawings for the paintings, and not necessarily after the original paintings. And this also shows how artists could emulate their ideas or designs, through different versions of works and methods.

Hottle (2006) argues that Rubens regarded prints as another way to increase his income and his international reputation, besides his already mentioned regular commissions for oil paintings. Before the 1620s, Rubens's commissions mainly came from guilds and confraternities, city magistrates and wealthy merchants in Antwerp and the Southern Netherlands. Foreign commissions seemed to be rare, one exception being Wolfgang Wilhelm, the Duke of Neuberg. Politically at this time the

Spanish officials were having serious debates over resuming war again with the Northern Netherlands when the Twelve Years Truce expired in 1621.

Rubens's awareness for his financial status is epitomized in the following letter, as he was negotiating with Carleton in 1618: 'I have spent this year some thousands of florins on my estate, and I should not like, for a whim, to exceed the limit of good economy. In fact, I am not a prince, but one who lives by the work of his hands (Magrun, 1955, pp. 62).' Around this time Rubens was over forty years old, with a family and a large studio to support, and facing the uncertainty of war; he would have needed to discover another source of income, as suggests by Hottle (2006).

For the production of prints, Rubens didn't make any engravings or woodcuts by himself. Instead, he only provided the drawings for engravings, and left all the rest to the engravers so as to work it out. Hartley (1990) states that for Rubens's paintings the most important elements were their **design** and **supervision** after execution by other assistants, the same rule also applied to prints. For the creation of reproductive prints, a drawing or a *modello* was necessary for engravers to transfer the outlines and images onto the copper plate. In Rubens's case, these drawings or *modelli* were provided by studio assistants, for example Van Dyck, but also by the printmakers (Nakamura, 1994). However, he corrected the models by himself, and then ran a test print. Afterwards Rubens could add variations or adjust certain effects if needed, and he paid especially great attention to the arrangement of light and shadow (Hartley, 1990).

In 1619 Rubens wrote six letters to Pieter van Veen, the brother of his teacher who was a lawyer living in Holland, in order to consult him about legal issues. He mentioned his preferences in choosing collaborators for making engravings:

'I should have preferred to have an engraver who was more expert in imitating his model, but it seemed a lesser evil to have the work done in my presence by a well-intentioned young man, than by great artists according to their fancy (Magrun, 1955, pp. 69).'

Here the 'well-intentioned young man' was Lucas Vorsterman, a young engraver from the Northern Netherlands who stayed in Rubens's house for making engravings. Besides making engravings after Rubens's own paintings, Vorsterman was also responsible for creating engravings after various paintings and subjects. For example, he also made engravings of Rubens's copies which by themselves

copied Titian and Pieter Brueghel the Elder, and some of Brueghel's paintings in Rubens's collection. The artist probably also made engravings after Rubens's collected items, such as gems and sculptures (Muller, 1989). He was considered to be the most competent engraver Rubens ever had (Belkin, 1998), but very soon the two quarreled and stopped their collaboration<sup>21</sup>. Based on the same incident, Rubens also stated his concept concerning the design and making of prints in a letter to Pieter van Veen, dated April 30, 1622:

‘...Unfortunately we have made almost nothing for a couple of years, due to the caprices of my engraver, who has let himself sink to a dead calm, so that I can no longer deal with him or come to an understanding with him. He contends that it is his engraving alone and his illustrious name that give these prints any value. To all this I can truthfully say that the designs are more finished than the prints, and done with more care. I can still show these designs to anyone, for I still have them (Magrun, 1955, pp. 87).

Based on the letter above, Nakamura (1994) suggests that it was possible that Rubens made his own drawings for the engravings, at least for those executed by Vorsterman; but there seemed no pertinent evidence to support this argument. Many questions concerning the drawing for the prints still remain unknown here, as it is still not clear how many assistants were involved, and how much they contributed etc. Rubens's wish to gain copyrights for his prints was granted in 1620, and the artist had required, quite remarkably, legal protection for all of his prints from three countries: Southern Netherlands, Holland and France.

Rubens created prints for various purposes, and these can be recognized both in the images and the dedication texts (normally underneath the image). As Hottle (2006) suggests, Rubens devoted most of the time to these dedication texts for various members of the European aristocracy, a notable example is Wolfgang Wihelm, the Duke of Nerburg, which had created a beneficial outcome for his later career. Sometimes he also dedicated the texts to his old friends and patrons, for example, Cornelis van der Geest (1555-1638), who helped Rubens in gaining his first major commission, i.e. *The Raising of the Cross* for the altarpiece in the church of St.

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<sup>21</sup> Julius Held (1982) gives an extensive account of the dispute between Rubens and Vorsterman, which included Vorsterman's mental disease and his attack against Rubens. Many scholars suggest that it was due to Rubens's high demand for the engravings that the relation between the two eventually deteriorated (Held, 1982; Belkin, 1998; Nakamura, 1994). However, there was not enough evidence to explain why the two have broken off their relationship.

Walburgis (Hatley, 1990, Figure 4.5). By doing so Rubens had further strengthened his contact with the European aristocracy as well as with the Antwerp elite circle.

As for the production of book illustrations and title pages, Held (1982) reports some detailed description. Since one of Rubens's childhood friends, Balthasar Moretus, was the owner of Plantin Press in Antwerp, the two men built their collaboration not only on friendship but also imbued with mutual love for humanitarian knowledge. Already in the very beginning of Rubens's career, he started to design book illustrations and title pages for the publications of the Plantin Press. The earliest illustrations Rubens provided for books were made for his own brother Philip Rubens, in philological miscellanea called *Electorum libri II* in 1608. The painter provided several drawings of Roman sculptures, as they helped to clarify his brother's concept. Rubens was acknowledged by his brother in the preface not only for the artistic output but also for the intellectual exchange on certain points; again it proves to us that Rubens was indeed a *pictor doctus* in his time.



**Figure 4.5 *The Raising of the Cross***

Source: Belkin (1998).

Concerning the design of title pages and illustrations, generally Rubens only drew the design and passed the making of engravings to real engravers. Held (1989) argues that Rubens's engagement with prints was not primarily caused by pecuniary

aspects; instead he probably was seeking a chance to combine his intellectual curiosity with some artistic challenge. For the design of title pages Rubens had to pay attention to the overall compositional layout as well as the presentation of verbal information. And among the publications that Rubens drew title pages and illustrations for, most of them were affiliated to ancient Roman culture. Rubens was an avid connoisseur of Roman sculptures, architecture and collectibles such as coins, medals and cameos; this profound interest and knowledge certainly was a source of inspiration for the artist. Just like in his practices for paintings, Rubens also chose to use symbols and personifications to compose allegorical scenes (Belkin, 1998).

Balthasar Moretus once wrote in a letter that Rubens only worked on Sundays and holidays for the design, as to devote his normal working days to more important and expensive productions (Held, 1989). He further stated that generally he would give Rubens the topic six months ahead, so the artist could engage himself when he felt so. Rubens earned quite little for these products, as the salary scale was fairly low: for a large drawing (folio) he normally received 20 florins, for a medium size drawing (quartos) 12 florins, and 8 florins for octavos. And for those really small drawings Rubens would receive 5 florins each, and this price scale in fact was only  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an engraver's salary, because the engravers had to work longer (Held, 1982, pp. 168). In addition to the little salary, Rubens also received the publications in return, so the biggest incentive for him to design for books was probably a chance to realize his creativity paired with gaining solid intellectual possessions in book form.

#### 4.3 Horizontal collaboration: other masters

In this section I will present the 'collaborative paintings' that Rubens made with other masters in Antwerp. As Honig (1998) explains such 'collaborative paintings' mean works made by two masters, each applied their specialization to certain segments of the imagery. It should be distinguished from the vertical collaboration within a studio, where assistants only executed parts of the masters' designs. While in a horizontal collaboration, such collaborations, artists had equal or almost equal positions, so that there was no hierarchical structure and the division of labor was based on the different specializations. Common combination of subjects included figures and animals, architecture and still life, landscape and history, flowers and grisaille sculpture (Honig, 1998).

In fact, Antwerp was the place where such collaborations became a common practice, and the Guild of Saint Luke also supported such collaborations (Honig, 2006). This tradition was also spread out to the rest of the Southern Netherlands and even the United Provinces, with the help of Flemish immigrants. But such a trend was never that strong in other places as in its birthplace Antwerp. The collaborations between different specialists in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Antwerp were more pursued by mediocre artists, who aimed to produce artworks that could be sold at the market immediately. Most commonly a landscape painter would employ a figure painter to provide 'staffage' in his paintings; and artistic attribution was neglected by either painters or buyers. Such low-level collaborations should indeed be distinguished from high-level collaborations, such as the ones taking place between Rubens and his Antwerp contemporaries<sup>22</sup>.

In Rubens's case, his collaboration with other masters could be seen as a sign of readapting into the Flemish artistic tradition after his return to Antwerp. In a letter written in 1604, Rubens has stated that 'I have always guarded against being confused with anyone, however a great man (Magrn, 1955, pp. 33)' and it could be seen as a sign of strong artistic identity. Moreover, we know that Rubens had painted many great masterpieces and in the meanwhile altered or corrected certain compositions or figures so as to show his ideas and preferences. However, after Rubens's reestablishment in Antwerp, he also enacted the so-called 'horizontal collaboration' and thus collaborated with other competent masters. The degree of Rubens's involvement varied according to the subjects and the collaborators, sometimes he took a more dominant role whilst occasionally he was in equal position with the other masters. Such high-level collaboration was different from the low-level products since both artists contributed their specialty as well as exchanged and emulated their artistic concept and expression. Rubens's most well known collaborators were probably Frans Snyders and Jan Brueghel the Elder, whom he entrusted for elements like still life, landscape, animals and hunting scenes. In the following sections I will present separately how Rubens collaborated with these two masters.

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<sup>22</sup> Honig (1998) presents an exception of the high-end collaboration in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Antwerp and it was between the two famous artists Quinten Metsys (1466-1530) and Joachim Patinir (1480-1524). And she further points out that renowned artists, such as Frans Floris, Pieter Brueghel (1525/30-1569) and Pieter Aertsen (1507-1575) didn't have collaborations within their circle and instead each of them ran and supervised its own studio.

#### 4.3.1 Jan Brueghel the Elder

Jan Brueghel the Elder was another eminent artist in Antwerp during Rubens's time. Both went to Italy for artistic training and were court painters for the governor of the Southern Netherlands. Born into Brussels in 1568 in a family of great artistic tradition, Jan Brueghel the Elder was the second son of the famous genre painter Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1525/30-1569). Jan's brother, Pieter Brueghel the Younger, was also a painter who enjoyed a successful career making copies after his father's peasant scenes. Jan Brueghel the Elder was first trained to paint watercolor by his maternal grandmother Maycken Verhulst Bessemers, a miniaturist, and later on he studied oil painting under the landscape specialist Pieter Goetkint (Woollett, 2006).

In 1589/90 Jan Brueghel the Elder departed to Italy just like any other ambitious contemporary Northern artists; there he befriended and collaborated with other Northern artists like Paul Bril (1554-1626) and the history painter Hans Rottenhammer (1564-1625). Paul Bril was a landscape painter and he influenced Jan Brueghel the Elder with his lively drawings and small-scale but delicately painted landscapes. At the same time, Bril also introduced Brueghel to important collectors such as Cardinal Ascanio Colonna and Cardinal Federico Borromeo; both of them provided Brueghel commissions.

According to Honig (2006), Paul Bril and Hans Rottenhammer also collaborated with each other, and the common practice was that Rottenhammer drew figures first and then sent the copper plate to Bril for adding the landscape. This painting sequence might be caused by Italian tradition that figures generally came first. And this kind of collaboration had a stimulating effect for artists to develop new pictorial inventions, different from their own practice.

The first existing collaborative painting between Rubens and Brueghel was *The Battle of the Amazons* (Figure 4.6), made in 1598, prior to Rubens's departure to Italy. Even though Rubens was already a master by this time, Brueghel was eleven years older and probably had a more leading position in this collaboration. For the actual execution, the two artists had divided the panel horizontally into two sections, where Rubens was responsible for the figural presentation and Brueghel was in charge of the landscape. Rubens demonstrated his ambition by a complicated composition of both humans and horses, and it was besides influenced by a fresco *The Battle of Constantine against Maxentius* designed by Raphael for the Sala di Costantino in Vatican (Woollett, 2006).



The following painting they produced together was *The Return from War: Mars Disarmed by Venus* (Figure 4.7) and it was one of the largest collaborative paintings between the two. Rubens again was responsible to paint the figures, whilst Brueghel depicted the relatively large piece of armor and architectural details. For the making of the painting, Brueghel took the first step by drawing the layout of the paintings, which depicted an interior view with many objects in the foreground. Then Rubens drew the figures of the loving couple Venus and Mars, with little cupids playing next to them. In order to work out his settings for the figures into a better presentation, he altered some objects near his figures. Finally Brueghel received the panel back again and rechecked all the still life objects. This paintings presented the allegorical traditional that both artists were fond of, and it could be seen as a longing hope for peace instead of war.



**Figure 4.6** *The Battle of the Amazons*

Source: Belkin (1998).



**Figure 4.7** *The Return from War: Mars Disarmed by Venus*

Source: Woollett (2006).



Elizabeth Honig (2006) suggests that the collaboration between Rubens and Brueghel was not only based on friendship but also on both artists' commitment to artistic stimuli. It was well known that Rubens had a profound personal friendship with Brueghel, as they were both members of the Humanist group in Antwerp and shared similar interests in classical culture. Besides their vibrant collaborations, Rubens even served as Brueghel's 'secretary' for correspondences with his Italian patron Cardinal Federico Borromeo. They have provided for their collaborative paintings different but complementary elements: from Rubens the tradition of antiquity and Renaissance was emphasized, and Brueghel was known as an excellent painter of the nature. Their collaboration method varied according to the subject and content of each painting, nevertheless, both artists held equal position and shared sincerely their ideas about the end products.

This fond relationship ended when Brueghel died in the year of 1624, leaving his workshop to his son Jan Brueghel the Younger (1601-1678). Rubens collaborated afterwards with Jan Brueghel the Younger as well, but never with equal compassion as with his father. And Rubens probably also took a more dominant role within the collaboration with Pieter Brueghel the Younger, as he seemed to be less prominent than his father (Honig, 1998).

#### 4.3.2 Frans Snyders

Frans Snyders was born in 1579 and apprenticed in 1593 to Pieter Brueghel the Younger, the elder brother of Jan Brughel the Elder. Snyders became a master at the Guild of Saint Luke in 1602, and he made his trip to Italy from 1608 to 1609. After his return to Antwerp, he married Margaretha de Vos, the daughter of the De Voses painter family. During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, there were a few eminent families dominating the artistic cycle, such as the Brueghels, the De Voses, the Franckens, the Mompers, the Tenierses, and the Quellinuses (Honig, 1998). These families worked closely within their immediate cycles and they married amongst each other quite often. Thus they were more inclined to engage in family business, which could be regarded as another type of collaboration.

During Rubens's time, Snyders was very famous for his hunting scenes, an activity that had been long regarded as an aristocratic amusement. One of the most famous collaborations between the two masters was *Prometheus Bound* (Figure 4.8), as it was listed in Rubens's letter to the British Ambassador Dudley Carleton in 1618. In

this painting Rubens again depicted the forceful human figure, whilst Snyder had painted a vivid eagle.



**Figure 4.8** *Prometheus Bound*

Source: Belkin (1998)



**Figure 4.9** *The Head of Medusa*

Source: Woollett (2006)

In another painting *The Head of Medusa* (Figure 4.9), both artists showed their specializations. Rubens chose to paint the face of Medusa, leaving the horrific snakes and other poisonous animals to Snyder. This painting was indeed a new attempt to combine still life, history and allegory painting (Woollett, 2006).

The relationship between Rubens and Frans Snyders seemed to be more business-like than the warm friendship between Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Elder. Nevertheless, Snyders remained one of Rubens's most important collaborators and their collaborative paintings were very much sought after by connoisseurs.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a detailed description of Rubens's artistic oeuvre, which covered various products as well as production patterns. A few remarks concerning both the working force and the products will be discussed here.

Rubens kept a very clear division of labor within his artistic circle, which can be further distinguished into vertical collaboration (workshop) and horizontal collaboration (other masters). Thanks to his fluid creativity and profound knowledge of the classical culture, Rubens could provide his assistants as well as collaborators huge amount of works with different pictorial compositions. It seems that the artist was very much influenced by the Italian Renaissance notions on the design and execution, which led to the establishment of a huge workshop. We could see that Rubens enjoyed the challenge of inventing new compositions, and he seemed to be less interested in the actual execution of each painting. He taught, corrected and supervised the works made by his assistants, and retouched the surface of the works (not even all of them) and he still regarded these works as his very own originals. Thus concept of attribution, which might sound weird as nowadays the emphasis is put on the originality and authenticity of artworks, together with the problem of pricing, will be discussed in Chapter 6.

It is not totally clear what the strongest motivation for Rubens was to produce his art, and it may be unfair to assume that monetary rewards were the only incentive. Rubens was very much aware of the value of his artworks, and he kept a prolific workshop which not only produced works on commissions but also for the open market. By making his famous paintings into reproductive prints, he was able to circulate his images internationally, which was very helpful for the development of a pictorial tradition in his aftermath. His collaborative paintings with other masters could indeed be regarded as products aiming for a niche market. In this sense, we can discover that Rubens created products for all layers of the market, and he tried very hard to make his art visible and assignable. He was consequently for his times indeed a true businessman in this sense.

But on the other hand, Rubens also produced works not merely for the sake of money, as we can see from his engagement with book title pages and illustrations. It was more Rubens's personal commitment to intellectual subjects, which drove him to do this minor paintings and illustrations. Moreover, his collaboration with Jan Brueghel the Elder showed their profound friendship and a dedication to mutual artistic exchange. And I believe that it also showed Rubens's obligation to his 'dolcissima professione'

## 5 On the demand of Rubens's art

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present an overview of the demand for Rubens's art. Nowadays we all know that Rubens was probably the most well to do master in the history of (Western) art, and there were indeed various favorable circumstances and conditions ('institutional settings') that paved his way to be the 'superstar' of the Southern Netherlands. As already stated in Chapter 3, Rubens came back to Antwerp right at the moment when the city faced its 'Indian summer' after the signing of the Twelve Years' Truce in 1609. The economic revival boosted the demand for art not only from religious institutions but also for private connoisseurs. Furthermore, Rubens's social and cultural capital also played a pivotal role in his career when customer relation was concerned; important examples of this fact will be shown in this chapter.

To start the discussion concerning the general demand for Rubens's art, we can briefly differentiate his demand into two categories: public and private. Public commissions included big decorative paintings or other artistic designs for public buildings, which can be further separated into religious (churches), civic (city magistrate), and commercial (guilds) ones. Private demand could be specific (commissions) and unspecific (open market). Rubens was a very versatile artist, as he could adjust his styles and working methods, according to the different institutional settings. For example, while he was in Rome he switched from Flemish expressions to Italian ones, and the other way round when he came back to Antwerp. Thanks to such a flexibility concerning consumers' needs and preferences, Rubens could receive and fulfill commissions and market demands, which cross a different and wide variety of subjects.

In Section 5.2 I'll present the different range of customers Rubens satisfied, such as public commissions, and private demand from connoisseurs and aristocracy. Besides his artistic brilliance, Rubens was also known as an outstanding diplomat and throughout his life he was on many diplomatic missions on behalf of different countries. He was even knighted by two different dynasties in Europe for his diplomatic contributions. And such a skill was a major reason for him to be acquainted with and be in fluid contact to people at a higher social ranking, as will be demonstrated later.

Section 5.3 explains how Rubens could be recognized as a ‘superstar’ from today’s perspective; one is even inclined to say that he was a superstar *avant la lettre*, whereas it is perfectly clear that the term and notion of stardom developed yet in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover he was prestigious ‘brand’ in his time, a notion given by the economist Schroeder (2005). Economists are interested in the phenomenon that certain professionals earn much more than their fellow practitioners, even though the quality of service doesn’t really differ much. And indeed this ‘superstar phenomenon’ may be stronger or weaker based on the market structure and other conditions, as will be further explained in Section 5.3.

## 5.2 Market segregation

One important reason that contributed to Rubens’s extraordinary career was his great artistic adaptability, which can be identified from his existing artworks. Liedtke (1997) suggests that Rubens changed his style and expression according to the different demand types, so that he was able to make all parties fairly satisfied. Based on Liedtke (1997), in below I present three kinds of general demand for Rubens’s art, namely public commissions, paintings for the Antwerp elite circle and artworks for aristocratic business.

### 5.2.1 Public commissions

As briefly stated in Section 3.4.3, there was a series of circumstances that let Rubens to come back to Antwerp and to reestablish his career there. The artist came back from Italy to Antwerp in the end of 1608, hoping to see his dying mother another time again. After her death he was indecisive about whether to stay in Antwerp or to return to Italy, as he was very much welcomed by his fellow citizens in Antwerp. Rubens’s brother, Philip Rubens, was appointed at the same time to be an alderman of Antwerp on 10 January 1609, and very soon he married the daughter of his colleague Hendrik de Moy. A few months later Rubens also fell in love and eventually married Isabella Brant, daughter of Jan Brant, another alderman of Antwerp. The Rubens brothers indeed regained the social status of their parents, and by their marriages they secured themselves through their strong connection to the city’s elite class.

Frans Baudouin (1977) argues that it can be possible that Rubens made his acquaintance with Nicolaas Rockox (1560-1640), the *burgomaster* of Antwerp, already when the painter was still in Italy, as they shared many common friends and associates. But there is no solid evidence to support such an argument, and it may be safer to assume that Rubens and Rockox had become familiar with each other after Rubens's return to Antwerp. Nevertheless, Rockox played a significant role in Rubens's artistic career, especially for the very first major commission Rubens had received. It was *The Adoration of the Magi* (Figure 5.1), a painting commissioned by the city of Antwerp in order to decorate the Hall of the States, where the Twelve Years' Truce would be signed. Since the Truce was signed in April, it would only be possible for Rubens to finish it in the early months of 1609, and Baudouin (1977) suggests that Rubens probably had received the commission right after his return to Antwerp.



**Figure 5.1** *The Adoration of the Magi*

Source: The Art Browser

(<http://www.artst.org/album.php?style=baroque&album=rubens&page=2>, retrieved on July 29<sup>th</sup> 2009)

Judging from the style of *The Adoration of the Magi*, there was still a strong Italian influence within the painting of Rubens. Certain elements such as sharp contrasts with light and shadow were the impact of Caravaggio, whilst the expressive and muscular human figures resembled to Michelangelo's *Final Judgment* (Vlieghe,



1999). Frans Baudouin (1977) calls the style of Rubens's first few years *Sturm und Drang* period<sup>23</sup>, meaning his paintings had a violent effect that strengthened the contrasts between the objects he depicted. Another example of this style was shown in *Samson and Delilah* (Figure 5.2), painted also on the demand for Rockox.



**Figure 5.2** *Samson and Delilah*

Source: Belkin (1998)

As already explained in Section 3.2.2, Antwerp witnessed economic revival after the signing of Twelve Years' Truce, so that public sectors (including religious and civil institutions) as well as rich citizens were able to boost the demand for art. But in order to gain local commissions, especially religious ones, Rubens had to readapt his Italian style into the southern Netherlandish style. The Counter Reformation had a significant influence on the art forms in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and it was especially successful in the Southern Netherlands (Belkin, 1998). The initiative to reform the Catholic Church within its own structure had been successful to a certain extent, and new religious societies and orders kept emerging, such as the Society of Jesus (known as the Jesuits), Oratorians, Carmelite Order etc (Belkin, 1998). Rubens had received lots of commissions from all of them, and especially the one

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<sup>23</sup> The term is normally referring to a period of German literary production within the early enlightenment, literally meaning 'storm and urge' or 'storm and compulsion.



made by the Jesuits was the most famous. Sometimes the commissions didn't come from churches but rich citizens of Antwerp, as they wanted to donate the great artworks on behalf of their names (Belkin, 1998).

The Council of Trent was one cornerstone for the Counter Reformation, as it provided canons and decrees for the visual arts. Artists were given a mission to glorify God and the Bible, and they had to make sure that no fake doctrines, as the council defined them, were presented in their artworks (Belkin, 1998). This could be regarded as some sort of content control for artists and their expressions, as the Catholic Church found it important to use art as a tool to convey its messages. So in Antwerp the city council constantly provided grants for religious institutions to build or to renovate their churches, and they wanted to see pictures on the altars representing both the spirit of Counter Reformation and the sign of the new dawning century (Baudouin, 1972). Besides the effort made by the city council, commercial groups such as guilds, together with wealthy citizens, also commissioned or donated religious works of art to churches and other religious communities. All these reasons boosted the demand for large religious paintings during the years immediately after the signing of the Twelve Years' Truce and consequently marked Antwerp as one of the most important cities of the Baroque art.

Two important altarpieces Rubens made from the year 1609 to 1614 marked clearly his stylistic change. In 1610, Rubens was commissioned to paint *The Raising of the Cross* (Figure 4.5) for the parish church of St Walburga. In this painting Rubens chose the form of a triptych, which was common in the North of Alps since the Middle Ages. In Italy it was customary to paint portico altarpieces, meaning only a single panel in the middle without two winged side panels attached next to it. In *The Raising of the Cross*, Rubens painted the whole Passion scene across three panels, an expression which was unusual in the Southern Netherlands at this time. And again Rubens's *Sturm und Drang* style was virtually identified throughout the whole painting. It should also be noted that the commission was at Rubens's hand because of the help from another connoisseur of Rubens, Cornelis van der Geest, as will be stated further in the next section.

In the September of 1611 Rubens got another commission from the harquebusier's guild, and the task was to paint an altarpiece for the guild's altar in

the cathedral of Antwerp<sup>24</sup>. It was *The Descent from the Cross* (Figure 5.3), also known as *The Deposition*, and again it was Rockox who assigned Rubens the commission because the former was the dean of the Guild since 1602 (Baudouin, 1977). In *The Descent from the Cross*, Rubens chose a different way of expression than *The Raising of the Cross*, as he depicted on each panel a separate scene. And Rubens also included Rockox's figure on the right panel of the painting, as a sign of showing his gratitude to the patron. Hans Vlieghe (1999) suggests that *The Descent from the Cross* showed a typical composition of the late medieval tradition, as it could be distinguished from the school of Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400-1464). This painting not only showed Rubens's readapting to the Southern Netherlandish tradition but also marked the beginning of his classical period (Baudouin, 1977).



**Figure 5.3** *The Descent from the Cross*

Source: Belkin (1998)

These two triptychs had established Rubens's reputation as a great master in and beyond the whole Southern Netherlands, and similar demand kept flooding in. Frans Baudouin (1972) points out that Rubens had never ever painted again so many altarpieces in his life, as he did in the period 1609 to 1620; an estimated number of 63 altarpieces were produced during this time. Most of the demand from religious institutions had to follow the canons and decrees of the Counter Reformation. An example was the two altarpieces ordered by Bishop Maximilian Villain de Gran for

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<sup>24</sup> The Harquebusiers were a kind of military group, which was common in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Netherlands. For the counterpart in Holland, Rembrandt drew the famous group portrait *Nightwatch* that vividly showed their more or less repressive duties.

the Cathedral in Tournai. For this commission Rubens had to follow very strict iconographical instructions, as pointed out by Göttler (2005). The subjects for these two altarpieces were purgatory scenes, and Rubens showed the Baroque tradition, which focuses on the souls' journey to heaven and some interactions between Mary and Christ. It was that the fact that the Catholic Church wanted to separate its doctrines clearly from the Protestant ones, so even the content of artworks should have significant differences. In the Protestant doctrine however, the idea of the purgatory was not emphasized; instead they encouraged the believers to focus on practicing good deeds in this world in their daily life.

Frans Baudouin (1972) suggests that, as Rubens's fame grew wider over time, he was more capable to foreshadow his personal idea of art. Roughly after 1615, he started to paint more often a new kind of altarpiece based on his own design. These new altarpieces were accompanied by monumental columns on both sides, so it was not possible to attach winged panels anymore. Baudouin (1972) also notes that these new altarpieces grew much in height and they represent the true Baroque portico altar; an example is the high altar for the Jesuits Church in Antwerp.

On March 29, 1620 Rubens signed a contract with the Jesuits Church in Antwerp for 39 paintings to decorate its ceiling, and it was the first big decorative commission Rubens received. As I have briefly mentioned in Section 4.2.3, on the contract it was specified that Rubens should make the original designs of all 39 paintings, and he could leave the actual execution to Van Dyck and other assistants. The idea of ceiling decorations came from Italy, and Rubens was obviously very familiar with examples, such as Michelangelo's ceiling paintings at the Sistine Chapel. When the project for the Jesuits Church was finished, Rubens was already a great impresario of the Northern Europe, and would receive afterwards similar commissions like the Medici Cycles and Banqueting House in Whitehall, London, as will be further discussed in Section 5.2.3.

### 5.2.2 The Antwerp elite networks

As already stated in previous section, Rubens received a number of important commissions right after his return to Antwerp due to his solid social network. Firstly, his brother and father-in-law were both members of the political elite and ruling class of Antwerp, and this connection gave Rubens an easy access to the elite circles in Antwerp. Secondly, many of Rubens's friends were also important connoisseurs, and

they shared a mutual interest on classical culture and antiquities, which made their relation different from regular producer-consumer relationships. Finally, as the city by the Scheldt experienced its 'Indian summer' up to the 1640s, there were many merchants who were active in commercial activities. Timmermans (2006) estimated that in the early modern Antwerp, economic and political elite made up approximately 2.5% of the whole population. Many of these people came from mercantile origins, and once when they were successful in business, they sought ways into political influence or even aristocratic recognition. Between 1585 and 1700, at least 77 families of mercantile origins were ennobled, and for those families who had similar economic capital but didn't obtain the noble title, they still tried to imitate the aristocratic way of living. Collecting art could be regarded as a status symbol, since it not only exposed the accumulated fortune but also entailed the idea of connoisseurship (Timmermans, 2006). This trend of collecting art also existed in the middle class families, as inventory studies suggests that in the 1630s, the median number of paintings in the upper middle class family was 16 (Timmermans, 2006). All of these aspects weave an intertwining web, which contributed to Rubens and his artistic career, and enables us to understand the demand for his art within this particular milieu<sup>25</sup>.

Rubens had won the commission for *The Adoration of the Magi* possibly through the help of Nicolaas Rockox, the mayor of Antwerp. The two shared a profound friendship ever since, as Rubens mentioned Rockox's name in his famous letter to Jacob de Bie on May 11, 1611 that he had to turn down more than one hundred assistants who wanted to enter his studio. Rubens wrote:

'...From all sides applications reach me. Some young men remain here for several years with other masters, awaiting a vacancy in my studio. Among others, my friend and (as you know) patron, M. Rockox, has only with great difficulty obtained a place for a youth whom he himself brought up, and whom, in the meantime, he was having trained by others... (Magrun, 1955, pp. 55)'

Here Rubens had mentioned Rockox as 'my friend and patron', and Baudouin (1977) suggests that Rockox was somehow the most important patron of Rubens, as he supported the artist either directly or indirectly for many commissions. For

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<sup>25</sup> Timmermans (2006) and Büttner (2006) both indicate that during Rubens's time, the social network among the elite class was like a 'who's who' game because all the people formed a strong network nexus.

example, we can still discover the work *Samson and Delilah* (Figure 5.2) as an important showpiece in Frans Francken the Second's painting *Burgomaster Rockox's Gallery* (Figure 5.4). Moreover, in the triptych Rubens painted for Rockox and his wife, *Incredulity of St. Thomas* (Figure 5.5), he chose to present both Rockox and his wife on both side panels, a Flemish tradition one or two centuries ago. This small triptych was to be placed on the tomb of Rockox and his wife in the Recollects' Church, where Rockox's wife was buried in 1619. Rubens dedicated to her an engraving made by Lucas Vorsterman, *The Holy Family with St. Elizabeth* (Figure 5.6) in 1620, after he finally received his privileges for prints (Baudouin, 1977).



**Figure 5.4**  
***Burgomaster***  
***Rockox's Gallery***

Source: Belkin  
(1998)



**Figure 5.5** ***Incredulity of St. Thomas***

Source: Peter Paul Rubens the complete works  
(<http://www.peterpaulrubens.org/The-Incredulity-Of-St-Thomas-large.html>, Retrieved on July 29<sup>th</sup> 2009)



**Figure 5.6** *The Holy Family with St. Elizabeth*

Source: Hottle (2006)

Rubens and Rockox's friendship was further strengthened on their common interests in antiquity, especially cameos and ancient coins. It was through Rockox that Rubens made his acquaintance with Nicolas Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1637), a French humanist who shared a lifetime friendship with Rubens. Already in the 1610s, Rubens had made some designs of title pages for volumes of the Duke of Aarschoot's collections on coins and medals, a project in which Rockox was seriously involved. This enthusiasm for antiquity was even carried on by Rubens and Peiresc's project on a joint publication of antique cameos, with Rubens supplying illustrations and Peiresc the necessary commentary. Rubens wrote to Rockox for financial assistance on the publication, and Rockox even confirmed with zeal (Baudouin, 1977).

Another important patron of Rubens was Cornelis van der Geest, a successful spice merchant who was also an avid art collector. He was listed in the Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp as a '*Kunstliefhebber*' (art lover), as he also actively sponsored or donated decorations for churches and chapels. It was through van der Geest's help that Rubens received the commission for *The Raising of the Cross*. he dedicated the



engraving of *The Raising of the Cross* to van der Geest in 1638, shortly after his death, with the following text written next to it:

'To Heer Cornelis van der Geest, the best of men and the oldest of friends, in whom ever since youth he (Rubens) found a constant patron, and who all his life was an admirer of painting, this souvenir of eternal friendship is dedicated, intended to be presented in his lifetime. Engraved after the picture in the church of St. Wallburgis, the idea of which he was first to conceive and which he supported so zealously (Held, 1982, pp. 35-36).'

Van der Geest's large collection of artworks was depicted in a '*kunstkammer*' i.e. a gallery painting made by Willem van Haecht in 1628, *The Cabinet of Cornelis van der Geest* (Figure 5.7), which also showed a detailed version of the Antwerp social nexus. In this painting, van Haecht separated the crowds into different groups based on their social ranking and professions (Held, 1982). The picture was strictly divided into nobility, collectors, painters and sculptors. In this picture Rubens and van Dyck were the only exceptions for painters to trespass their social standing, as they were portrayed within the aristocracy. Rubens stood next to the Archduke Albert and Nicolaas Rockox, whilst Van Dyck stood somehow at the outskirts of the group, probably because he was younger.



**Figure 5.7** *The Cabinet of Cornelis van der Geest*

Source: Honig (1998)

Timmermans (2006) points out that a picture like *The Cabinet of Cornelis van der Geest* shows that the political, social, economic and religious power was brought together for the patronage of local art. Since Antwerp in the 17<sup>th</sup> century served as a center for arts and information, the city had several important communities for their elite citizens to meet each other. Associations like the brotherhood of Romanists, the Guild of the Harquebusiers, the chamber of rhetoric, and the Guild of Saint Luke all served as a gathering place for artists to meet their patrons. Since Rubens and his friends were all important members of these communities, he made himself tightly bounded to the informal economy within this crowds that relied firmly on trust, friendship and mutual respect instead of the normal transactions (Timmermans, 2006).

Finally, Büttner (2006) and Filipczak (1987) both talk about Rubens's financial affairs deriving their data from existing archival documents and the results suggest that the painter indeed enjoyed a life like a prince. Filipczak (1987) points out that Rubens's income scale fell into the category of princes, which required an annual income of 14,000 guilders. According to Hans Floeke's estimation, the artist earned 100 guilders per day, and for the Medici Cycle made between 1622 and 1625, Rubens earned 68,000 guilders alone (Filipczak, 1987). Büttner (2006) discovers how Rubens made his way to the upper social circle in Antwerp by lending money to important people free of interests. The archival records suggest that only in the year 1614 Rubens had lent out more than 9,000 guilders to other people, and he even gave 9,975 guilders to Baron van Wangen for dike maintenance (Büttner, 2006). All these records imply that Rubens must have had a large sum of money available all the time, which serves as a proof of the 'superstar status' he enjoyed.

Besides his role of a painter, Rubens was also a keen collector for paintings and antiquities. Muller (1989) states that the collections served not only aesthetic purposes but also pursued social objectives; by keeping a remarkable collection, Rubens also showed his contemporaries his own social standing and distinctive taste and his political allegiance. Driven by his strong curiosity for antiquities, Rubens also connected himself to many scholars throughout Europe who had similar interests, and their correspondence shows that they not only talked about intellectual topics but also helped each other with some professional affairs, as will be explained in the next section.



### 5.2.3 The noble business

Besides the role of a painter, Rubens was also a very renowned diplomat, who was entrusted by several different dynasties. As explained in Section 3.4.3, Rubens already showed his diplomatic talent during his first trip to Italy in 1603, where he received several commissions from the Duke of Lerma, as the latter was very much impressed by the young artist. Rubens must have learned much from this experience, as throughout his lifetime he had many occasions to be at the courts of Brussels, London, Madrid, Munich etc. (Liedtke, 1997).

To begin with Rubens's role as a court painter for the Archduke Albert and Archduchess Infanta Isabella, Van Sprang (2005) suggests that he was probably the most favorable one among all the other court painters. The only other person who also received special attention from the Archduke was Van Dyck. But Van Dyck didn't gain equal importance as Rubens at the court in the Southern Netherlands, because Rubens also served as political consultant for the Archduchess Isabella. Belkin (1998) points out that even though it was unusual for painters to act as diplomats, in Rubens's case his unusual human capital and close ties to the Infanta Isabella were the main reasons for his appointment as an official diplomat for the Habsburg empire.

In 1621 Rubens got commissions from Marie de Medici, the queen mother of France, for the decoration of two large galleries in the Palace of Luxemburg. The first gallery contained twenty-one paintings, all devoted to the struggles and achievements of Marie de Medici, and the second one, on the other hand, was to be decorated with scenes concerning the life of Henry IV, Marie's husband. The gallery for Henry IV was never completed, as Marie de Medici was banned from Paris in 1631; this plan was forever torn apart (Belkin, 1998).

The Medici Cycle was a very huge task for Rubens, but thanks to his previous commissions from the Jesuits Church, he was able to handle commissions with great scale. Certain difficulties did exist, for example, since Paris was far from Antwerp, all the details concerning the contents were to be dealt with in correspondence. And even the delivery and the installment of the paintings took quite a lot of effort. But the most difficult part for Rubens was to decide the contents of each painting, since Marie was quite controversial during her days. In the end, Rubens chose to an allegorical personification to depict the French Queen Mother's eventful life (Belkin, 1998).

In the meanwhile, when Rubens received the commission for the Medici Cycle, in the Southern Netherlands the political situation was changing and unstable. As the Twelve Years' Truce was going to expire, it was necessary for the Spanish Habsburg and Holland to reconsider their next steps. Clearly for Rubens, he was in favor of peace, as he didn't want his hometown to be involved once again in war. During the year 1627 to 1630, Rubens left home for many diplomatic missions; he first went on a secret mission to Holland, and then to official journeys to Madrid and London. Even though Rubens's actions taken for peace negotiations went on slowly and with due success, he didn't forget his true career. In both courts, Madrid and London, Rubens had studied after great masterpieces, an example was that he copied every paintings made by Titian at the Spanish court. Howarth (2005) assumes that Rubens's act of copying after Titian could be one of self-promotion, as he awaited so badly something of great scale commissioned by the king.

Rubens's trip to England demonstrates the fact that indeed some middlemen were needed to get to the nobility. One example was his correspondence with the British Ambassador Dudley Carleton, with whom Rubens had exchanged his paintings with Carleton's collection of antique sculptures (see Section 6.2) in 1618. Rubens sold the whole collection to the Duke of Buckingham in 1626, probably due to political reason (Belkin, 1998) through the middleman Balthasar Gerbier. Rubens painted some portraits for the Duke of Buckingham and Earl of Arundel, but the highest appreciation came directly from the king, Charles I. Since the king was such an admirer of the arts, he commissioned Rubens for a ceiling painting of the Banqueting House, a task Rubens had been longing for for nine years. Rubens chose to depict the image of James I, Charles I's father. Charles I knighted Rubens in 1625, and Rubens painted *The Allegory of Peace* (now in the National Gallery, London) as a personal gift for the king.

Through his different dealings with the aristocracy, Rubens learned to distinguish what his customers really wanted. Liedtke (1997) identifies how Rubens recognized the suitable buyers for his paintings; a good example was the *Wolf and Fox Hunt* painting, which Rubens sold to Duke of Aerschot because other parties didn't offer favorable conditions in 1616<sup>26</sup>. Similarly, Rubens produced other hunting scenes and sold them to the Duke of Bavaria, and he also made copies after these hunting

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<sup>26</sup> Liedtke (1997) points out that for the painting *Wolf and Fox Hunt*, the Archduke Albert didn't have the space to exhibit it, and Carleton offered too little money.

scenes to be sold on the open market to everyone, who could afford them (Belkin, 1998).

## 5.3 Rubens as a superstar/ the branding process

### 5.3.1 Introduction

What were the underlying reasons and causes that contributed to Rubens's success in the art business and which made him arguably the 'king of painters' in Antwerp? After his return to Antwerp, only within a few years Rubens became the most eminent painter in and beyond the Southern Netherlands. His better off position created a huge gap for other artists to catch on, and by this time, so to speak, a 'true star' was born. We could call him with a little wink the Andy Warhol (or Demian Hirst) of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, for he turned his name into a famous brand that people seemed eager to buy. In order to figure out what was going on behind this 'mania', two economic theories seem to provide us a direction, namely the superstar theory and the branding of artists.

### 5.3.2 Superstar phenomenon

Rozen (1981) was the first economist who was dwelling on the subject of superstars in the economics by posing the question: why do certain professionals earn much more than the mediocre rest in their specific fields? And the main reason for him is that there can be hardly any substitution for the qualities a superstar is embodying in the particular market, and 'lesser talent often is a poor substitute for greater talent. The worse it is the larger the sustainable rent accruing to higher quality sellers because demand for the best sellers increase more than proportionately (Rozen, 1981, pp. 846).' Additionally, technology plays a crucial role in making the market structure more versatile to future trends, and to provide chances and opportunity structures for certain practitioners to reach the 'international' level instead of staying in their initial position.

Adler (1985) follows suit Rozen's emphasis on the role of individual talents, as he posts the bold statement that 'large differences in earnings could exist even if there are *no* differences in talent *at all* (Adler, 1985, pp. 208, emphasis in the original)'. The main thrust of the argument is here that in order to enjoy art, people need to spend searching and information costs to know their preferences. During this process, the more popular artists would get – more or less automatically - more attention than the less popular ones, because of their already established and renowned fame. Thus, if

there are two artists with different degrees of success, the audience could reduce their search costs while just reaching out for the more popular one. Adler points out that in fact stardom is a market mechanism that economizes individuals' attention, and that it has in fact more to do with the prevalent information flow than talent.

We should also take into consideration the relationship between the market structure and the superstar phenomenon, since it helps to clarify Rubens's peculiar case. In his book *'What Price Fame? (2000)'*, the cultural economist Tyler Cowen explains how fame may take place amongst different (institutional) settings. Cowen argues that 'fame typically accrues to stars who hold dominant market positions, rather than to performers with numerous close competitors (Cowen, 2000, pp. 57).'

And he goes on with emphasizing that, when all conditions hold equal (*ceteris paribus*), business stars in centralized or concentrated industries tend to be more famous than other entrepreneurs in decentralized sectors, due to the divergence of the market structures. He points out that the most recognized American entrepreneurs such as Bill Gates and Walt Disney both made their way through a highly centralized business. Since in centralized industries, there are fewer sellers in the market, the barrier for entry is higher. Once succeeded, however, it is therefore easier to maintain one's own leading position.

Now we have several criteria to examine the issue here, namely talent, information and the market structures within the institutional settings. To start with the first factor, it is certainly very difficult to judge how 'talented' Rubens was, as this question is beyond the discussion of cultural economics and needs more input from other disciplines (mostly a sociologically informed art history). However, if we move on to the second feature, historical evidence coincides with Adler's suggestion that Rubens's success was caused predominantly by the flow of information.

There is a series of preconditions and causes, which helped to establish Rubens's affluence and reputation, and the first one was the rising demand for public commissions at the time. Rubens was fortunate to be back in Antwerp at a moment when the demand for religious artworks rose to an increasingly high level. The Catholic Counter-Reformation had brought Rubens a huge amount of commissions, especially from religious and public institutions, not only in Antwerp but also throughout the whole Southern Netherlands. Those large altarpieces he made for churches served as a good advertising tool to establish his reputation, and it spread out fairly quickly.

It is of certain pertinence to understand why Rubens was capable of winning so many public commissions soon after his return to Antwerp, taken into consideration that at the time he was only a bit more than thirty years old. The answer is to be found at the amazing social capital Rubens had accumulated by the time. We shouldn't forget that Rubens was very close to the socio-political core of the Antwerp elite circle and ruling class. His brother Philip Rubens and his father-in-law Jan Brant were both aldermen of the city, so they could have helped him to strengthen the relationship with the mayor Nicolaas Rockox. Moreover, Rubens was highly appreciated by the Spanish governor Archduke Albert and his wife Archduchess Infanta Isabella, already when he was still in Italy. By securing his connections and bonds to the aristocracy, Rubens enjoyed the advantage as the better off artists, when information was concerned.

Further proof suggests that Rubens also applied other strategies to strengthen his fame; an example would be Rubens's very own dedication to the business of prints. As discussed in Section 4.2.4, Rubens spent a significant amount of effort to deal with prints and the subsequent copyright or originality issues. By engraving his major works, he not only had free marketing tools to spread out his artistic ideas but this way he also received a substantial income from selling these works. Since engravings have the characteristics of being highly reproducible and easily portable, they were perfectly apt to reach out to a wider sales and customer area. And Rubens additionally chose wisely the dedication texts on each of the engravings, since they served as an important tool for him to connect himself once more to the nobility throughout Europe.

Finally, it is interesting to think about the somewhat fuzzy interrelation between the market structures and Rubens's success. The art sector in 17<sup>th</sup> century Antwerp could indeed be seen as a fairly centralized industry. As already stated in Section 3.2, the threshold for being a painter was quite high. Most painters came from the upper section of middle class families, which could afford the substantial costs for several years of artistic training. Then for artists to become a master and start their own career, it was obligatory to join the guild. Grampp (1989) points out that the artists' guilds and academies were both institutions that cut down the outside competition. Supply was consequently exclusive for those within the artistic circle, and it took a long time for the art world to accept secular changes, which aimed at making the sector less centralized and more liberal.

The Antwerp art market could be regarded as centralized but also competitive, since both supply and demand reached its peak in this international metropolis of the time. As a city with great commercial and cultural importance, merchants from all over Europe came and traded their goods and commodities there: exotic spices, fine cloths, silverware and porcelains etc. And we shouldn't forget that Rubens was exempted from all the guild regulations when artistic activities were concerned. In other words, he had a more favorable position in the art market than other artists, who had to adhere themselves to the strict rules of the Guild of Saint Luke. All the abovementioned conditions can be regarded as reasons that made Rubens highly competitive and versatile environment that Rubens built on his artistic kingdom, and secured his position as the 'king of painters' in Antwerp.

### 5.3.3 The branding process

By applying management theories, Schroeder (2005) points out the interrelation between fine arts, branding and consumption. He argues that certain prominent artists such as Andy Warhol and Barbra Kruger could indeed be regarded as 1) managers of their own art, and 2) – somewhat reified - a brand for consumers. By trying to make their works exhibited, collected or bought, artists transform themselves into businessmen, and some of them even develop specific strategies such as market segregation, and product innovation. And the process of producing art 'offers exemplary instances of image creation in the service of building a recognizable look, name and style—a brand (Schroeder, 2005, pp. 1293)'.

Moreover, the art market has always been concerned with distinguished brands like Rembrandt, Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), to which certain recognition and value was firmly attached. These three artists present very distinct features concerning their artworks as well as their self-images. When talking about Van Gogh, most of us would come up with the story of the poor artist who had never sold a single painting during his lifetime (which is in fact wrong, but still a persistent myth) and in the end cut away his ear and committed suicide. Stories like this add some legendary effects to the branding of the artist, thus we can say that branding takes active initiatives from the artists but could also be attributed by others.

The difference between the superstar and branding something that is done, is that a superstar is a constant phenomenon, while branding serves as a vigorous strategy. We can see from this chapter that Rubens kept on creating a wide variety of products for different customer ranges, and he was also very eager to promote himself by

participating in public commissions and the production of prints – so to conclude it can be said that he was a ‘superstar’, who was at the same time branding himself and his artworks.

## 5.4 Conclusion

There are indeed various reasons that caused the demand for Rubens’s art, and some of them didn’t seem to be clear. One major reason for Rubens to receive high demand after his return to Antwerp was his solid social network. By positioning himself within the Antwerp elite circle, Rubens was able to receive various public and private commissions, either directly or indirectly.

Another also crucial issue, that adhered to Rubens’s reputation, was his adaptability when style and production pattern were concerned. Rubens knew how to follow his customers’ opinion and ideas, and he could restrict his own ideas within certain iconographical instructions. But when he reached the peak of his fame, he was not at all fearful to show the art world his artistic ingenuity.

A large part of Rubens’s success, especially his international fame, was fostered by his solid human capital. Besides the fact that Rubens could speak several languages, Belkin (1998) points Rubens’s pleasing personality, his sharp observations and his solid intellectual competence all helped to make him a natural born diplomat. Even though these character traits seemed to be innate and very hard to measure, still we shouldn’t ignore these as they also contributed to his human capital.

Finally, we should also consider the external effects that leveraged Rubens success. As Büttner (2006) states: ‘Rubens was famous for being rich and successful, which made him even more successful and therefore even richer (pp. 73).’ We can think of Rubens as a true superstar in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Antwerp, and he even made turn himself into a big brand for the Baroque art – his fame even seems self-referentially enlarged itself – fame created more fame on a higher scale.

## **6 An economic analysis on the price level of Rubens's works**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter deals with the issue of the prices for Rubens's artworks. When talking about the matter of price setting, various aspects and criteria may be effective and should be taken into consideration. In Rubens's case, due to his privilege that he could exempt himself and his workshop from the Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp, there are just a few surviving documents either on his workshop organization or its productivity. Consequently I can only derive materials from certain surviving documents such as the legal contracts of his commissions and Rubens's correspondence. Three types of artworks and their relative price will be discussed, namely altarpieces, oil paintings and book illustrations.

In Section 6.2 certain criteria and notions concerning the price setting will be presented and discussed. Rubens had his own notion for the pricing of paintings, which he presented in his famous correspondence with Sir Dudley Carleton. In Section 6.3, based on existing literature and materials, I will present and discuss Rubens's actual price level for paintings.

### **6.2 Price-setting criteria**

#### **6.2.1 Rubens's notion**

Rubens has clearly written, especially in his early letters (from 1609 to 1623), some interesting and illuminating sentences concerning his transactions with his patrons. From these letters we can discover his perception of the valuation of art, which will be presented in the subsequent sections.

In 1618, Rubens corresponded with the British ambassador in the Dutch city of The Hague, Sir Dudley Carleton about an exchange of paintings, which would have satisfied both parties. Carleton was in Italy before for five years, where he assembled a remarkable collection of ancient marble, which caught Rubens's great attention. At the time when Carleton shifted his interests to paintings and wanted to have some artworks from the master's hand, the negotiation could begin



A series of letters were written by Rubens dated from March 17<sup>th</sup> to June 1st, 1618, which can all be found in Magurn (1955), with details of every step of the negotiating. However, the real transaction probably took some extra time, as Rubens wrote another letter in the following spring to urge Carleton to make up his mind for the exchange or to break up their negotiations entirely. Eventually in the end the deal was done and Carleton remained an important friend of Rubens ever since. He had obtained several times help from the British diplomat, for example, in gaining legal rights to protect his prints in Holland, and in gaining commissions from British aristocratic circles.

The negotiating procedure was in fact quite simple; Carleton calculated the price he paid for the marble, and asked Rubens to trade with him his pictures, which should have equally the same value (6000 florins). Rubens wrote in the letter no. 28 about his own productivity at that time:

‘...To tell the truth, I am so burdened with commissions, both public and private, that for some years to come I cannot commit myself. Nevertheless, in case we agree as I hope, I will not fail to finish as soon as possible all those pictures that are not yet entirely completed, even though named in the list here attached [in margin: the greater parts are finished] ... (Magurn, 1955, pp. 60).’

Since Rubens was so busy, as stated in the letter, that it was extremely difficult for him to finish so many paintings altogether for the deal. Rubens’ confidence for the delivery in time of the works must largely have come from his prolific workshop organization, as he explained in the descriptions of the paintings he offered to swap (see Appendix A). And Rubens stated in his letter that these pictures, destined for the exchange, were indeed ‘the flower of my stock’, which Rubens kept for his own enjoyment and he even repurchased some of them after sold to other collectors (Magrun, 1955, p. 60).

Moreover, Rubens clearly distinguished the paintings made by his hand from those he just applied the finishing touches, though he regarded both as his authentic originals. Carleton only wanted to take those paintings made purely by Rubens’s hand (including certain collaboration with other masters), and within the bargain he changed his mind so that he only wanted half of the assigned price in paintings (3000 florins) for the exchange. With the other half he wished Rubens to order a tapestry for

him, or simply to pay in cash. Rubens wrote the following paragraph to defend his ideas about authenticity, which is quite at odds with the today's notion of the term:

*'...Since your Excellency has taken only the originals, with which I am perfectly satisfied. Yet your Excellency must not think that the others are mere copies, for they are so well retouched by my hand that they are hardly to be distinguished from originals. Nevertheless, they are rated at a much lower price...The reason I would deal more willingly in pictures is clear: although they do not exceed their just price in the list, yet they cost me, so to speak, nothing. For everyone is more liberal with the fruits that grow in his own garden than with those he must buy in the market (Magrun, 1955, pp. 61-62, emphasis added).'*

And in the end Rubens successfully agreed with Carleton by offering two other pictures retouched by his hand (a hunting scene and a Suzanne) and some other small drawings, which added up to 1000 florins. He further reported to Carleton some of his working habits:

*'According to my custom, I have employed a man competent in his field to finish the landscapes, solely to augment Your Excellency's enjoyment. But as for the rest, you may be sure that I have not permitted a living soul to lay a hand to them (Magrun, 1955, pp. 65).'*

Here Rubens stated that he occasionally worked together with other masters for certain parts of his paintings, but he seemed to be fully aware of the portentous authenticity issue and he mentioned the same issue several times in his letter. Already in 1603, when the artist was on a diplomatic mission on behalf of the Duke of Mantua to Spain, Rubens had to repair some pictures, which were damaged by the humid weather in Spain. And he wrote in a letter about the attribution of responsibility for repairing the paintings, a task that he was willing to take but reluctant to share with other Spanish painters:

*'...I am convinced that, by its freshness alone, the work must necessarily be discovered as done here (a thankless trick), whether by the hands of such men, or by mine, or by a mixture of theirs and mine (which I will never tolerate, for I have always guarded against being confused with anyone, however a great man). And I should be disgraced unduly by an inferior production unworthy of my reputation, which is not unknown here (Magrun, 1955, pp. 33).'*

What are the actual factors that affected the price-setting mechanism for Rubens's artworks? Rubens wrote on the issue in a letter to Carleton about some tapestries Carleton wanted him to order. Here the painter talked about the measurements between paintings and tapestries:

'As for the measurement, which proved somewhat less than you had expected, I did my best, taking the dimensions according to the measure current in this country. But you may be sure that this slight difference has no effect upon the price. For one evaluates pictures differently from tapestries. The latter are purchased by measure, *while the former are valued according to their excellence, their subject, and number of figures* (Magrun, 1955, pp. 67, emphasis added).'

As Rubens expressed his judgment of the factors, which correlated with the price of the paintings, he also talked about his preferences concerning similar topics. The hunting scene he produced for Carleton was returned to him a few years later, because Carleton thought the lions were too frightening to be displayed in his residence<sup>27</sup>. Rubens promised to repaint the same subject, with less scary animals, and entirely by his hand. And he also dwelled on his own preference:

'...Such things have more grace and vehemence in a large picture than a small one. I should be glad if this painting for the gallery of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales were of larger proportion, because the large size of a picture gives one much more courage to express one's ideas clearly and realistically...*I confess that I am, by natural instinct, better fitted to execute very large works than small curiosities. Everyone according to his gifts, my talent is such that no undertaking, however vast in size or diversified in subject, has ever surpassed my courage* (Magrun, 1955, pp. 77, emphasis added).

In a letter written by Rubens's friend Barthasar Moretus to the Flemish merchant Jean van Vucht, dated on the 25 June 1630, Moretus states: '...For 200 or 250 florins he (Rubens) does not do much, unless you're content with a composition with one or two figures (Peeters, 2008, pp.108).'

In Moretus's second letter to van Vucht, written on the 31 August in the same year, other information concerning the relationship

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<sup>27</sup> In fact the hunting scene was ordered by Carleton on behalf of Lord Danvers, and the painting met much criticism, as Lord Danvers thought it was a piece that was 'scarcely retouched by the master's hand (Magrun, 1955, pp. 446).'

Rubens wrote in a letter to Carleton's agent that even though Carleton didn't state clearly his dissatisfaction, he would nevertheless repaint a new hunting scene completely by his hand, together with a rebate in price (Magrun, 1955, pp. 77).

between figures and prices is given: 'I openly spoke to Mr. Rubens about the price of 100 pattacons which you want to spend. He answered that none of the three subjects could be done under 200 pattacons as they are too much work. But if you want to have a Diana with two nymphs or some other subject with two or three figures, he would happily furnish this for the aforementioned 100 pattacons (Peeters, 2008, pp.108).' As the bargaining is somehow standing still, a final letter from Moretus specified: 'If you're content with a painting of three or four figures, he will execute one for you in any format you wish for 100 pattacons (Peeters, 2008, pp.108).' As we can see from these letters: there seemed to be in Rubens's mind a certain correlation between price and number of figures.

Another example given by Balis (1994) also represents Rubens's dealing with his long-term patron, Duke of Neuburg. The painter had carried out several altarpieces for the Duke of Neuburg, the first one was a huge named *Last Judgment* (now in the Alte Pinakotek in Munich) and could be identified as largely painted by his assistants with some of Rubens's finishing touches to create general effects. Then there were two other altarpieces, *Pentecost* and *The Adoration of Shepherds*, both were executed by his assistants and had less alteration by Rubens than the *Last Judgment*. Then in 1619, the Duke had again ordered a picture *St Michael Casting down the Rebellious Angels*, which was mentioned in Rubens's letter:

'...As for the subject of St. Michael, it is a very beautiful but difficult one, and I doubt that I can find among my pupils anyone capable of doing the work, even after my design; in any case it will be necessary for me to retouch it well with my own hand... (Magrun, 1955, pp. 72)'

And finally in 1621 when *St Michael* was ready to be delivered, Rubens informed the Duke that the painting was made entirely by his hand, and art historical evidence also proved that (Balis, 1994). It is interesting to see how Rubens treated these three altarpieces with different degrees of notice. Even though they were all ordered from the same patron and sold at the same price (1500 florins each) and comparable in size.

What did the abovementioned examples teach us about Rubens's idea about art and commerce? A few preliminary insights can be presented here. Firstly, as Rubens himself had stated, since he was so tight up with commissions, he could only offer those paintings, which he kept at home for his own enjoyment. Hans Vlieghe (1999) suggests that Rubens indeed had an entrepreneurial mind here, as he knew to keep certain paintings in stock and released them to the right collector at the appropriate

time. By doing so Rubens showed his awareness for the open market and his pursuit for the best price. On the other hand, Nakamura (1994) comments on the same issue and he thinks that Rubens was just trying not to give Carleton the impression that he's selling unwanted and abandoned works to the British Ambassador. However, Balis (1994) provides us evidences that certain paintings, such as the political portraits and the devotional paintings, were so much on demand that it was a common practice for the workshop to paint more copies after the originals.

Secondly, this documented bargain shows Rubens's criteria for the pricing of his works, as he distinguished with firm assertion those made completely by his hand from other; and those 'originals' should be more than double in price. But here we have to take into consideration Rubens's definition of 'originals' and 'copies'. In fact he charged the same price (600 florins) for three different works with similar size. 'Denial among lions' was made entirely by his hand, whereas the other two ('Achilles clothed as a woman' and 'hunting scene') paintings were begun by his students; Rubens promised to complete these with his famous final finishing touches. These are proofs of the painter's belief that well-retouched paintings should be regarded as his own originals, a concept, which will be discussed further in the following sections of this chapter.

Finally, attention should be paid to Rubens's dealing with different customers when it comes to the authenticity issue. Balis (1994) suggests that though it was not clear how Rubens decided which of his works deserved his greater attention to be executed completely by his hand. As certain criteria seemed to be effective, such as the price, his relationship to the connoisseur, the location to exhibit the paintings etc. Nakamura (1994) follows Balis's argument and further distinguishes different types of copies from Rubens's studio. Copies could be created for a specific commission, or just to be prepared in stock. Moreover, not all the copies were made after original paintings; sometimes when the originals were already sold out, then copies were made after the *modelli* that remained in studio. So we can conclude that Rubens was conscious of the value of his creations, and that he developed some sort of price discrimination for different customers.

To summarize all the abovementioned factors, we can somehow discern certain aspects of Rubens thinking about art and commerce. Thanks to his abundant creativity and solid humanistic knowledge, Rubens was able to equip himself with endless pictorial inspirations. For he knew that his design suited better on large canvases than smaller ones, he had enough assistants in the studio to carry out the

actual production of the paintings. By applying this production pattern Rubens made himself one of the most prolific masters in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Filipczak, 1987).

### 6.2.2 Other criteria

In a short but illustrative essay, Bok (1998) draws our attention to certain factors that account for the interrelation between artistic output and price. Price setting seems to be a rather complex affair, as Bok states: 'In the end, price turns out to be a function of labor, the reputation of the artist and the 'quality' of the buyer (Bok, 1998, pp. 108)'. What he meant by the quality of buyer in a certain flattery is indeed the 'willingness to pay', which is subject to the consumer's income or information problem. And Bok's further suggestion is that scholars should look into the issue in the following way: 1) the size of artwork, 2) the annual turnover of the workshop, and 3) the number of paintings that 'disappeared.'<sup>28</sup> By making a cross-reference comparison of the 2) and 3), we can calculate an average price level for the output. The main problem here is that not every artist had kept an account book, so it is maybe more effective to turn to the first method, i.e. the size of the artwork.

Similarly, De Marchi and Van Miegroet (1994) introduce the 17<sup>th</sup> century writer Bernard Mandeville's view on the valuation of art, which was based on: 1) the name of the master, 2) the time of his age (probably this means the stages of the artist's development), 3) the scarcity of the artist's works, and 4) the quality i.e. the rank of those owning the work and the length of time those works have been in the possession of 'great families (De Marchi & Van Miegroet, 1994, pp.454-455).' Mandeville's ideas provide us the question of how taste was socially constructed and perceived, of which we also need to take careful consideration.

Finally, O'Malley (2005) separates the possible price setting criteria into two categories: the painters' fee and the contextualizing fees in her research on the 15<sup>th</sup> century altarpieces produced in Italy. For the painters' fee she refers to factors such as the size, the figures depicted, and the region and time of execution. Whilst for the contextualizing fees she mentions the differences between the objects themselves (such as the size and shape of the altarpieces), demand and production, honor and reputation of the artists, and the relationships between artists and their patrons etc.

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<sup>28</sup> The idea was initially given by John Michael Montias in his book *Vermeer and His Milieu: A History of Social Web (1991)*. To estimate the total number of paintings that Vermeer had produced, Montias traces back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century documentations the exact provenance of certain paintings. He then does a cross-reference comparison of the paintings, which we know nowadays as Vermeer's originals (or attributed to him) to the 17<sup>th</sup> century titles. By applying simple calculation, he estimates not only the number of the 'missing' paintings but also his total production output.

There are in fact many different criteria concerning the determination of prices; in the next section I'll present the price level of Rubens's artworks and we will see what were the decisive factors that attributed to his prices.

### 6.3 Price level of Rubens's artworks

In this section I will compare Rubens's price level of two occasions, namely the paintings from the Carleton exchange and the 22 altarpieces Rubens painted, as summarized by Peeters (2008). Such a comparison can give us some insights about how Rubens actually charged for his paintings and whether the price level was constant based on his own criteria (size, number of figures and excellence).

Figure 6.1 shows a list of the paintings Rubens offered to exchange with Carleton, together with a calculation of the price he charged per square meters for each painting. A detailed description of each painting's finishing status is listed in Appendix A. The paintings were separated into three categories based on their type of attribution, as suggested by Nakamura (1994).

When we look at Figure 6.1 we may discover that the price level Rubens charged was indeed quite constant, regardless of the 'attribution' of these paintings. The highest price he charged per square meter was a nude St. Sebastian painted entirely by Rubens, which sums up to 166 guilders<sup>29</sup> per square meter. The second highest price he charged was 159.2 guilders for *The Last Judgment*, which was a studio copy after a painting commissioned by the Duke of Neuburg. Here it is very interesting to note that from Rubens's letters to the Duke of Neuburg, we know that he made two side altars for the Duke, which were considered as too large. The scale of each painting was 16 feet in height and 9 feet in width, and in total Rubens received 3000 florins for these two paintings. By applying simple calculations we come to a price of 161.5 per square meters (in florins). This means the price Rubens charged from the Duke of Neuburg was almost the same as the sum he requested from Carleton. It is especially important to note that in fact the Carleton exchange took place in 1618, and the two paintings for the Duke of Neuburg were also made and delivered more or less in the same period of time (as Rubens replied to the Duke at December 1619).

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<sup>29</sup> Florins and guilders were the two different names for the same currency. In Magrun (1955) the prices are stated in florins, so I tried to keep this usage in Table 2. But in main text I chose to write in guilders.

So this price level was only based on the paintings Rubens had made before the 1620s.

Tummers (2008) points out that Rubens must have thought that all these works were of good quality, as he charged most of the paintings, across the three categories, with a very constant price level. Here the most important measure for the price of the paintings seemed to be their size, as the lowest price per square meter was charged for *The Twelve Apostles* (65 guilders). But we should bear in mind that *The Twelve Apostles* were created as a set (with a Christ), which would make in total 650 guilders.

Now if we turn to Figure 6.2 to look at the price level for Rubens's altarpieces, there are indeed certain aspects we should be cautious as noted by Peeters (2008)<sup>30</sup>. Firstly, Rubens used to paint quite often on oak panels in the beginning of his career, and he turned to use canvases after 1620. Since oak panels were more expensive than canvases, it was possible that the prices were different due to the materials used. Secondly, the form of altarpiece also differed after early 1620s as *portico* altarpieces began to replace winged altarpieces. The different forms of altarpieces caused changes in size, so Rubens's altarpieces created after 1620 rarely exceeded 20 square meters. Finally, we should also take consideration factors such as the institutions that commissioned the altarpieces, as Rubens might have given a discount to certain parties he wanted to please.

Peeters (2008) suggests that we should divide Rubens's artistic career into three periods: 1610-1619, 1620-1629 and 1630-1639; and this way we can calculate the average price for each period. In 1610-1619, the average price per square meters was 68.1 guilders. As from 1620 to 1629, the price level shifted to 80 guilders/per square meters. And in the last period of Rubens's creative work his price level rose to 138 guilders per square meters. It is then also very obvious that his price level for altarpieces rose substantially from 1630 to 1638. Some possible explanations for the increasing of price can be stated here. First, it is possible that the price increased, as his reputation and fame grew over time, consider here what is presented in Section 5.3 - Rubens could be regarded as a superstar and a brand of his time. Second, the decreasing of supply could also cause the price level to increase in the last years. In

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<sup>30</sup> Peeters (2008) has created an extensive table, which also includes information on the commissioners, on the numbers of figures in the altarpiece, the location of the altarpieces and their current spots. Here I only extract the relevant information for the comparison with the Carleton exchange; as a consequence I have omitted the numbers of figures.



Rubens's last days after he retired from his diplomatic missions, he lived in his Castle Steen and enjoyed a very comfortable life. During these last days he mainly painted for his own recreation instead of for money, and he turned then to more personal subjects such as landscape, genre paintings and portraits of his family (he made especially quite some portraits for his second wife). Since Rubens painted less and less for the market in his last days, it was possible that the price rose up due to the shortage of supply.

Categories	Title of work/ Description	Price	Size	Price per m <sup>2</sup> (In florins)
1) Works completely by Rubens's own hand	Daniel among many lions*.	600 fl.	8*12 ft.	97
	A Leda, with the swan and a cupid*.	500 fl.	7*10 ft.	110.7
	St. Peter taking from the fish the coin to pay the tribute, with other fishermen around*.	500fl.	7*8 ft.	138.5
	A St. Sebastian, nude*.	300 fl.	7*4 ft.	166
2) Originals by his hand with a contribution by a specialist.	A Prometheus bound on Mount Caucasus (with an eagle by Frans Snyders)*.	500 fl.	9*8 ft.	107.6
	Leopards, taken from life, with Satyrs and Nymphs. Original (with a landscape done by a skillful master)*.	600 fl.	9*11 ft.	93.9
3) Works that were painted by pupils and afterwards were retouched by Rubens	A hunt of men on horseback and lions*.	600 fl.	8*11 ft.	105.7
	The Twelve Apostles, with a Christ.	50 fl. Each	4*3 ft.	65
	A Last Judgment,	1200 fl.	13*9 ft.	159.2
	A picture of an Achilles clothed as a woman.	600 fl.	9*10 ft.	103.3

**Figure 6.1 A List of the paintings Rubens agreed to exchange with Carleton**

Source: Information concerning title, size and price retrieved from Magrun (1955); three categories of artworks by Nakamura (1994); price per square meters calculated by Fu Lo; paintings signified with an asterisk mean those Carleton agreed to accept in the bargain.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Price (in guilders)</b>	<b>Size (m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Price per m<sup>2</sup></b>
<i>Raising of the Cross</i>	1610-13	2,600	62.7	41.4
<i>Descent from the Cross</i>	1615	2.400	38.5	62.3
<i>Assumption</i>	1616-18	1,200	11.8	101.6
<i>Adoration of the Magi</i>	1616-19	1,800	28.9	62.3
<i>Miracle of Ignatius Loyola</i>	1616-17	1,500	21.1	71
<i>Miracle of Franc Xavier</i>	1617-18	1,500	21.1	71
<i>Last Communication of St. Francis</i>	1618	750	9.4	79.7
<i>Miraculous Draught</i>	1618	1,600	28.7	55.7
<i>Descent of Holy Spirit</i>	1620	1,500	12.8	117
<i>Adoration of the Shepherd</i>	1620	1,500	12.8	117
<i>St. Joseph and Infant Christ</i>	1620	530	4.4	120
<i>Adoration of the Shepherd</i>	1621	300	4.6	65.2
<i>Adoration of the Magi</i>	1621	400	6.3	63.4
<i>Descent of Holy Spirit</i>	1621	300	12.1	24.7
<i>Assumption</i>	1624	1,500	15.9	94.3
<i>St. Roch</i>	1626	500	12.9	28.7

<b><i>Institution Eucharist</i></b>	1631-32	1,000	10	100
<b><i>Christ Carrying the Cross</i></b>	1634-37	1,600	20.1	79.6
<b><i>Martyr St. Peter</i></b>	1637	1,300	5.2	250
<b><i>Martyr St. Paul</i></b>	1638	1,500	11.3	132.2
<b><i>Martyr St. Just</i></b>	1638	300	2.5	120

**Figure 6.2** *A list of Rubens's altarpieces (1610-1638) chronology*

Source: Peeters (2008) pp. 111.

## 6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented an overview concerning Rubens's price setting criteria and his actual price level. The findings can be summarized as below. First, even though Rubens seemed to have his own criteria for the pricing of his artworks, these criteria don't seem to be very effective. In the case of oil paintings size seemed to be of crucial importance, whilst for the altarpieces size was not a determinant factor. Second, the price level within a fixed period of time tended to stay constant, but it tends to change significantly over a longer period. In Rubens's case this change in the price level was going along an upward direction, which could be caused by his growing fame or the decreasing of supply of his paintings. Third, even though Rubens had stated in his correspondence that an original by his hand should be two times more expensive than copies made by his assistants and 'just' retouched by his hand, in fact the price level was quite constant among these two kinds of 'authentic' paintings. It can thus be conjectured that Rubens regarded his studio copies as in good in quality as his very own originals, which were 'only touched by the master's hand'.

## 7 Conclusion and methodological reflection

The aim of this thesis is to present and to discuss a prime example of cultural entrepreneur, Peter Paul Rubens, through a research in the economic history of the arts. As my research question suggests:

***What are the underlying reasons that made Rubens a successful cultural entrepreneur?***

In each chapter I have presented one or more factors and conditions, both internal and external, which possibly contributed to Rubens's successful career. These topics cover:

- 1) Rubens's social origins and his artistic training,
- 2) The division of labor in his production of art, i.e. his workshop and his collaborations with other masters,
- 3) The different types of market demand for Rubens's art, and
- 4) His price setting criteria and the actual price level for his paintings.

All the specific conclusions concerning each topic were already presented in their own section; here I would like to give a brief summary of my findings to the research question.

To start with the very basic beginning, i.e. Rubens's socio-economic origins, which including his family background, his educational level, his artistic training and his early career in Italy. It is obvious that Rubens attained ample cultural and social capital from his family, either directly or indirectly, and it contributed significantly to his later career. Rubens's family, especially his father and his brother, both received solid classical humanistic education and obtained high civil positions in the city of Antwerp, were two indirect factors that reinforced the artist's path to success. Through some social network from his family and his early years in Italy, Rubens was able to speak several languages and he learned the 'legitimate' codes of dealing with people in the higher social ranking, which were very useful for his later (artistic) career. Rubens was especially famous for his big history and allegory paintings, and thanks to his knowledge on classical languages (Latin and ancient Greek) and

culture, he was able to depict these scenes with vivid representations. Moreover, the fact that Rubens spoke several languages fluently was a key to strengthen his relationship with foreign customers; many of them were elite or aristocracy from different countries in Europe. During his peak time he was even entrusted by the Spanish governor in the Southern Netherlands, the Archduchess Isabella, for several different diplomatic actions.

A very important reason for Rubens to enjoy a well-to-do life was his sharp mind in business. He established a prolific workshop, where the division of labor was clear and strict (vertical collaboration). One of Rubens's biggest talents was the fluid creativity that he could be involved in various projects at the same time and still came up with different designs. He was the one that provided the *design* and *supervision*, and left a very large part of execution of artworks to his workshop assistants, and he still kept an eye on the quality of the final products. Moreover, Rubens collaborated very often with some of the best artists at his time, each one concentrated on certain parts of the whole painting. This horizontal collaboration was indeed a form of product specialization. Finally, Rubens knew the idea of market segregation, and he separated his artworks to different categories: for commissions and for the open market. He painted certain important commissions completely or largely by his own hand, and left those less important ones to his assistants. And he always kept some paintings with popular subjects in stock, so his assistants could make more copies for the open market.

Finally, there were also external factors that made Rubens a superstar in his time. For one thing was his return to Antwerp at the right timing. The signing of Twelve Years' Truce made the city once flourished again, with numerous commissions from religious institutions and private citizens flooded in his workshop. The other thing was Rubens's privileges of exemption from the guild regulation, as it not only saved his time and effort and provided him very favorable condition for the business than the rest of his contemporary artists.

The title of this thesis is 'Peter Paul Rubens – cultural entrepreneur *avant la lettre*: a case study in the economic history of the arts.' And indeed, what I wanted to show in this research is that the reality 'out there' is more diverse and fuzzy than it might look at first glance after having consulted the (hand) books of (cultural) economics. In this sense I am embracing totally interdisciplinary research strategies; as it was my aim in this thesis to demonstrate that many factors and mechanisms contributed to

the success of the 'phenomenon' called Rubens. None the least of them can be called 'extra-economical' ones.

However, an approach like that is also imbued with certain severe limitations, and here is the right place to sketch them at least roughly. Treating the reality in the way it is displaying itself to us, that means showing the interdependence and intertwinement of all social categories, like economic and sociological ones (or artistic features), limits necessarily the scope of your whole research. Besides, it seems difficult to find a neat structure in researching these connected 'threads', as their interconnection can hardly be shown in the obligatory logical textual way. In concrete terms this means, for example, that I could only discuss some aspects of the social relations of a polarizing figure like Rubens. So, I had to omit some of his relations to aristocratic patrons. Notwithstanding, the relations I drew attention to should give an overview of his dealing with his patrons and their relationship among each other in general.

If I ever have the chance again to do a research of similar scale or contents, I would urge myself to be keen on the following aspects: interdisciplinary research requires from every researcher to be familiar with all subjects involved. This may sound difficult and it is really a challenge, but as I endeavored to show above, reality is just not as pure and simple as theory often wants it to be. For example, art historically trained eyes differentiated (Balis 1994; Nakamura 1994) originals of Rubens from studio replicas, and this information paves the way for economical discussions on the quality and authenticity of Rubens work (and it also opens up the possibility of posing the question, whether authenticity issues influenced the price of Rubens paintings).

In 1628 Willem van Haecht painted a picture known as *The Cabinet of Cornelis van der Geest*. This painting can somehow be seen as the pictorial epitome of my whole thesis. In it we can see all the parties that contributed to the 17<sup>th</sup> century art world of Antwerp. Rubens was the only painter standing in the middle of this noble aristocratic and elite circle of Antwerp's ruling class, which fostered predominantly the arts at his time. So, we can conclude that Rubens was a very special and peculiar case in his times (and even today), as he reached a social standing no other painter – before and after – achieved. This achievement was created by both his vast economic instinct and his artistic ingenuity. Rubens made out of himself a successful cultural entrepreneur, a superstar, or a famous brand *avant la lettre*, and his Baroque



style and his unique production patterns are still one of the biggest referential points for art history and for the economic history of the arts as well.

**Appendix A List of Paintings Rubens offered to exchange with Sir Dudley Carleton**

Price	Description	Size	Other Information
500 florins	A Prometheus bound on Mount Caucasus, with an eagle, which pecks his liver. Original by my hand, and the eagle done by Snyders.	9*8 ft.	Now in Philadelphia Museum of Art.
600 fl.	Daniel among many lions, taken from life. Original, entirely by my hand.	8*12 ft.	Now in National Gallery of Art, Washington.
600 fl.	Leopards, taken from life, with Satyrs and Nymphs. Original, by my hand, except a most beautiful landscape, done by the hand of a master skillful in the department.	9*11 ft.	Now lost.
500 fl.	A Leda, with the swan and a cupid. Original, by my hand.	7*10 ft.	
500 fl.	Crucifixion, life-sized, considered perhaps the best thing I have ever done	12*6 ft.	
1200 fl.	A Last Judgment, begun by one of my pupils, after one which I did in a much larger size for the Most Serene Prince of Neuburg, who paid me 3,500 florins cash for it; but this one, not being finished, would be entirely retouched by my own hand, and by this means would pass as original	13*9 ft.	The 'much larger' version done for the Prince of Neuburg is now in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
500 fl.	St. Peter taking from the fish the coin to pay the tribute, with other fishermen around, taken from life. Original, by my hand.	7*8 ft.	
600 fl.	A hunt of men on horseback and lions, begun by one of my pupils, after one that I made for His Most Serene Highness of Bavaria, but all retouched by my hand.	8*11 ft.	The original painting done for the Elector Maximilian of Bavaria was destroyed by fire in 1870.

50 fl. each	The Twelve Apostles, with a Christ, done by my pupils, from originals from my own hand, which the Duke of Lerma has; these need to be retouched by my own hand throughout.	4*3 ft.	The originals (except the Christ) are all in the Prado. This series of replicas is now in the Rospigliosi pallavicini Collection, Rome.
600 fl.	A picture of an Achilles clothed as a woman, done by the best of my pupils, and the whole retouched by my hand; a most delightful picture, and full of many very beautiful girls.	9*10 ft.	Now in the Prado; and here 'the best of my pupils' referred to the 19-year-old Van Dyck.
300 fl.	A St. Sebastian, nude, by my hand.	7*4 ft.	Now in the Berlin Museum.
300 fl.	A Suzanna, done by one of my pupils, but the whole retouched by my own hand.	7*5 ft.	

Source: Magurn (1955)

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