

Peter Paul Rubens and the decoration of the Jesuit church in Antwerp

Valerie Herremans

Le nom de Rubens a été prononcé si souvent à propos de cette église, qu'on finit par attribuer au génial artiste tout le mérite de l'entreprise.¹

Introduction

The church of the professed house of the Antwerp Jesuits, nowadays known as the Carolus Borromeus church, was a milestone in the art history of the Southern Netherlands (Fig. 18). It has also long been the subject of art-historical controversy, primarily due to the figure of Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640).² Most scholars agree that Rubens and his workshop not only executed a series of painted ceilings and various altarpieces for the church but also that Rubens was involved in the design of the building. The point of vigorous disagreement is the extent to which he was involved in the design process. While some think he provided no more than a few designs for architectural sculptural elements,³ others are convinced that he was the creative mastermind behind the entire building project, and a few deny that he had anything at all to do with the building's erection. In what follows a number of recent attributions and insights into this controversial issue will be re-examined to produce a new and more balanced view of the precise extent of Rubens's involvement in this pioneering project.

- 1 A. PONCELET, *Histoire de la Compagnie de Jésus dans les anciens Pays-Bas. Etablissement de la Compagnie de Jésus en Belgique et ses développements jusqu'à la fin du règne d'Albert et Isabelle*, (Académie royale de Belgique. Classe des Lettres et des Sciences morales et politiques, Mémoires: collection in -8°, 2e série, 21), Brussels, 1927, vol 1, p. 561.
- 2 K. DE JONGE & J. SNAET, *The Architecture of the Jesuits in the Southern Low Countries. A State of the Art*, in *La arquitectura jesuítica. Actas del Simposio Internacional Zaragoza*, 9, 10 y 11 de diciembre de 2010, Zaragoza, 2012, p. 267.
- 3 This essay will consistently use the term architectural sculpture, which derives from the title of the volume of the Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard devoted to this aspect of Rubens's oeuvre: *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*, vol. XXII, 4: *Architecture and Sculpture. Architectural Sculpture*. Architectural sculpture designates: 1. Parts of the architectural orders and free applications of them, for example as part of a portico or the frame of a window or a door; 2. monumental sculpture built in relationship to architecture in general or to that outlined under 1.

Fig. 1.
Jean de la Barre,
*Facade of St. Charles
Borromeo's church,*
Antwerp, Plantin-
Moretus Museum,
printroom, inv.
PK.OP.20169 |
VI/B.3, © Plantin-
Moretus Museum





Fig. 2.

Anonymous, *St. Charles Borromeo's church Antwerp, Borgerhout, Klooster Jezuitenhuys Xaverius vzw*, © KIK-IRPA, cliché KM008878

professae name the members of the order involved in the Antwerp building project.⁵ François Aguilon (1567–1617), a famous mathematician, physicist, and rector of the Jesuit college in Antwerp, is regarded as the building's designer.⁶ After Aguilon's death in March 1617, the lay brother Petrus Huysens (1577–1637) comes to prominence in the documents. The documents had, however, mentioned Huysens as “*architectus*” from the beginning of the works in 1614. Accordingly, it is primarily his name that is associated with the execution of the works, which fits well with his background as the son of a Bruges stonemason and with the inscription on the engraving of the church's façade by Jean de la Barre (ca. 1644–50) (Fig. 1): “*Petrus Huysens Brugensis Soc.tis Iesu, architectatus est*”⁷

Interestingly, these sources also reveal that the megalomaniac project was not only subject to criticism by the general public but was also controversial within the order. The enormous debts, mounting to over 500,000 guilders during construction,⁸ alarmed the superiors and drew adverse attention to the building's extremely luxurious finishing, which jarred with the principle of evangelical poverty.⁹ Both Jacob Tirinius (1580–1636), a biblical scholar¹⁰ who was praepositus of the professed house for which the project was intended, and lay brother Huysens were promoted away in 1625.¹¹ The sources concerned clearly state that Huysens was not only in charge of the building works but also provided the designs.¹²

- 4 This is well illustrated by an archival document published in J. CRAB, *Het Brabants beeldsnijcentrum Leuven*, Leuven, 1977, appendix 5 and p. 40: ‘{...}. Alsoo die voorscreven ambachten daegelijx worden gedefraudeert ende achterbaeldt bij de cloosters, collegien, ende andere persoenen, dewelcke presumeren in hunne huijsen te hauden ende te laeten wercken contrarie den rolle vande voorscreven ambachten, soo wordt andermael midts desen geordonneert, ende aen alle cloosters collegien, ende andere persoenen wel expresselijck verboeden van in hummen huijsen te hauden eenighe onrijke gasten ende door de selve te laeten maecken eenich werck vande voorscreven ambachten dependerende, opde pene van vyf-en-tweentich guldens voor d'ierste reijse, vyftich voor de tweede, ende hondert voor de derde reijse, ende soo voort te bedeylen naer d'ande gewoente. 2. Dat oock geene leeckebroeders van eenighe cloosters buijten hun cloosters en sullen moegen gaen wercken, tsij in andere cloosters ofte huijsen buijten het bevanc van het clooster, alwaer de selve effectivelijck sijn woonende, opde pene als voor. {...}’
- 5 For a good overview of the surviving archives relating to the building of the church see: C. BAISIER, *De documentaire waarde van de kerkinterieurs van de Antwerpse school in de Spaanse tijd (1585-1713)*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, KULeuven, 2008, vol. 1, pp. 68-70.
- 6 ‘*Basilica si quae alia toto terrarum orbe tanto colono digna. Cuius idaeam primo dum viveret, adumbraverat P. Franciscus Aguilon, qui quantum in mathematicis disciplinis valeret, tum doctissimo de optico volumine doctis omnibus fecit testatum, tum praecipue nobilissimi templi, omnibus numeris absolutissimi delineatione quam*

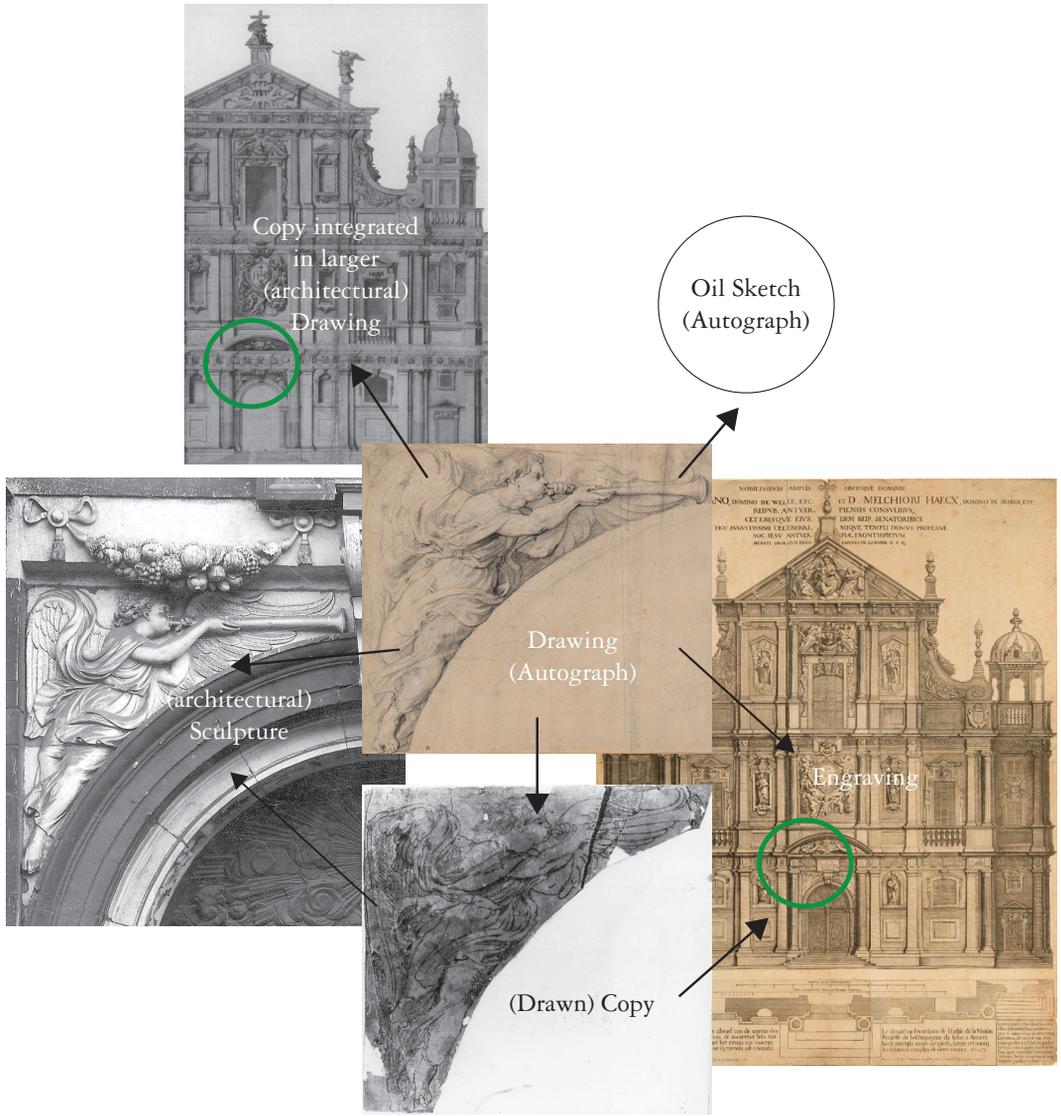


Fig. 4.
 Diagram of relations between Rubens related material with concrete examples:
 Peter Paul Rubens, Trumpet blowing angel, New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, inv. 1, 232 © The Morgan Library & Museum ; Trumpet blowing angel from the facade of St. Charles Borromeo's Church, © KIK-IRPA, cliché b164051 ; Copy after Peter Paul Rubens, Trumpet blowing angel, Archive of St. Charles Borromeo's Church, © KIK-IRPA, cliché b205291; Attributed to Petrus Huyssens, Design for the façade of the church, Archive of St. Charles Borromeo's Church, inv. PA.008. L014 (Photo: *Innovation and Experience in Early Baroque in the Southern Netherlands: The Case of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp*, (*Architectura Moderna*, 6) (ed. P. Lombaerde), Turnhout, 2008, p.46)

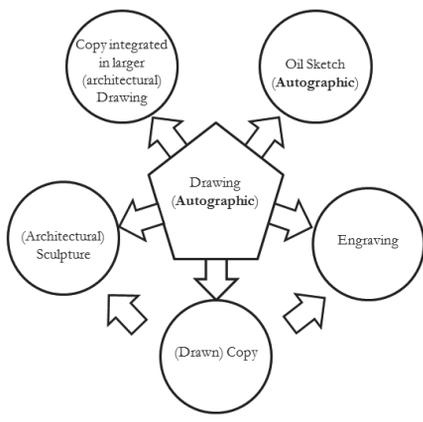


Fig. 3.
 Diagram of relations between Rubens related material

In the oldest sources Rubens's name only occurs in connection with paintings that he (and his followers) carried out for the interior decoration of the church.¹³ The earliest mention of him is in the letter that the Antwerp Jesuits sent to their superiors in Rome on the occasion of the dedication of the church on 12 September 1621.¹⁴ Rubens himself never mentioned having a share in the design of the building, despite having several good opportunities to do so, such as in the introduction to the *Palazzi di Genova* or in his correspondence with Sir Constantine Huygens (1596–1687).¹⁵

This changed in the aftermath of the disastrous conflagration of 1718, when a bolt of lightning hit the building and set the roof on fire, destroying it completely along with Rubens's painted ceilings (Fig. 2). A poem commemorating the terrible event provides the first mention of Rubens having a hand in the design of the façade and the tower, at this stage in collaboration with Petrus Huysens.¹⁶ About three decades later, in reporting on his visit to the church, Jacob de Wit (1695–1754) also ascribed the design of the portico of the main altar to Rubens.¹⁷ In 1768 Gerard Berbie added the design of the Lady Chapel.¹⁸ Finally, in 1774, Jean Michel stated that Rubens was responsible for the design of the whole building and its interior decoration.¹⁹

How can the growing reputation of Rubens as designer of the church be explained? Since his name first occurs in connection with the fire in the church, it seems likely that Rubens came into view during the preparations for the restoration. De Wit and Berbie's attributions, and perhaps Michel's too, occur after a visit to the Antwerp professed house. We now know that from 1747 onwards the library of the professed house held what is known as the *Promptuarium pictorum*.²⁰ This collection of drawings had been gifted to the library by Petrus Dolmans when serving as the order's provincial.²¹ Part of the collection related to the building of the church for the Antwerp professed house and is still kept in the church. These drawings must have been consulted after the destruction had taken place. Father Dolmans had the collection minutely provided with captions and annotations on loose pieces of paper. (Fig. 14)²² Many of these Latin texts declare Rubens to have been the author of the drawing²³ or that whatever was shown on the (anonymous) drawing had been built to his specifications.²⁴ The "new" attributions to Rubens made in the eighteenth

postea executioni mandavit, addita etiam non parva turris aliarumque templi partium symmetria, totique operi iam inde a fundamentis ad fastigium usque praefuit Petrus Huijsens Societatis nostrae coadiutor temporalis[...] J. SNAET, *Case Study: Rubens's Palazzi di Genova and the Jesuit Churches of Antwerp and Brussels*, in *The Reception of P.P. Rubens's Palazzi di Genova during the 17th century in Europe: Questions and Problems (Architectura Moderna. Architectural Exchanges in Europe, 16th-17th Centuries, 1)*, (ed. P. Lombaerde), Turnhout, 2002, pp. 179–80.

- 7 Copy preserved in the print room of the Museum Plantin-Moretus inv. PK.OP.20169 | VI/B.3.
- 8 J. M. MULLER, *Jesuit Uses of Art in the Province of Flanders, in The Jesuits II: Cultures, sciences, and the arts, 1540-1773*, Toronto-Buffalo-London, 2006, p. 133; J. SNAET, *Case study. Rubens's Palazzi di Genova and the Jesuit Churches of Antwerp and Brussels*, in *The Reception of P.P. Rubens's Palazzi di Genova during the 17th century in Europe: questions and problems, (Architectura Moderna. Architectural Exchanges in Europe, 16th-17th Centuries, 1)*, (ed. P. Lombaerde), Turnhout, 2002, p. 170.
- 9 « En effet, pour ne rien dire des ornemens superflus, répandues à profusion au frontispice du temple et dans le reste de l'œuvre, blâmés d'ailleurs par beaucoup de connaisseurs, qu'était-il nécessaire de confectionner à tant de frais toutes ces statues, ces tableaux, ces confessionnaux de prix, tout cet ameublement d'église, alors que les temps sont si malheureux? » Leuven, KADOC, Fonds Charles Droeshout, Vol. 31 Maison professe 1607-21, p. 441: passage from a letter from General Mutius Vitelleschi to Jacob Tirinus, praepositus of the Antwerp professed house, 12 June 1621, translated by Droeshout. For the original see C. BAISIER, *De documentaire waarde van de kerkinterieurs van de Antwerpse school in de Spaanse tijd (1585-1713)*, onuitgegeven doctoraatsverhandeling Kuleuven, 2008, bd. 2, p. 342, Bijlage 5; See also: J. VAN

- WOENSEL, *De ontwerptekeningen voor de Antwerpse jezuïetenkerk (1615-1621): van bouwverf tot Promptuarium Pictorum (1747) en terug*, Master Thesis KULeuven, 2012, p. 44.
- 10 Tirinus collaborated on a number of exegetical publications, including *Biblia magna commentariorum literalium ... / ... Ioannis Gagnaei ... Guillelmi Estii ... Emmanuelis Sa, Ioannis Menochii & Iacobi Tirini ... cura & labore Ioan. de la Haye ...*, Paris, 1643.
- 11 J. SNAET, *De Romereis van Pieter Huyssens in 1626*, in *Relations artistiques entre Italie et anciens Pays-Bas (16e et 18e siècles): bilan et perspectives = Artistieke relaties tussen Italië en de Nederlanden (16de-18de eeuw): status quaestionis en vooruitzichten*, Brussels, 2012, p. 67.
- 12 Leuven, KADOC, Fonds Charles Droeshout, Vol. 31 Maison professe 1607-21, p. 177: Passage from a letter dated 15 February 1625 from General Mutius Vitelleschi to Florentius de Montmorency, provincial, translated by P. Droeshout: *Votre révérence n'écrit que dans la composition des plans de nos édifices Pierre Huyssens a une propension au luxe et à la dépense peu conforme à la pauvreté et à la simplicité religieuses. Que désormais ce frère ne soit employé comme architecte ni directeur des travaux dans la province et qu'on l'applique a quelque 'autre emploi.*
- 13 Next to the ones previously cited, these sources also have to be mentioned: Antwerpen, Rubenshuis, *Bouw der kercke*: rekeningboek van de bouw van de kerk; [M. DE GRUYSE (S. J.)], *Honor D. Ignatio de Loyola {...} habitus a Patribus S. J. domus professa ex collegii Soc. Jesu Antverpiae, 24 julii 1622*, Antwerp, 1622; J. BOLLANDUS, G. HENSCHENIUS & D. PAPEBROCHIIUS, *Acta sanctorum Martii*, Antwerpen, 1668, vol. 1, p. 24. In addition also the correspondence by Rubens has to be taken into account, together with contemporary travel literature such as *Voyage de Pierre Bergeron*, 1619 & B. de Monconys, *Journal des voyages*, 1677. For this early travel literature, see: P. LOMBAERDE,

century can, in our view, be explained by Fr Dolmans's captions on the drawings that were housed in the library from 1747 onwards.

Over the succeeding centuries the view of Rubens as designer of the Jesuit church, which first emerged in the eighteenth century, was to be used by many different authors in support of specific ideas or goals of their own. A first category used "*Nationalberos*"²⁵ Rubens for patriotic ends by ascribing him a leading role in a glorious "national" history of art. This could only benefit from portraying him as a creative genius who mastered all artistic disciplines, including architecture, and to whom all other parties in the creative process were subordinate. In this context, the Jesuit church in Antwerp was presented as his architectural masterpiece, alongside the remodelling of his own house. M. Paquet-Syphorien's guidebook²⁶ provides an example of this approach from the French period, the work of André Van Hasselt²⁷ from the early years of the Kingdom of Belgium, and that of Stan Leurs²⁸ from the period of the Second World War, when the trope was pressed into service for Flemish nationalist and even Great-Netherlandish ends.

For a second category, the idea of a multifaceted artistic genius was similarly fundamental. In some cases, for example with Fernand Donnet, the idea served a very specific purpose, such as the urgent need for new restoration work on the church early in the twentieth century.²⁹ Katherine Freemantle in 1959 presented Rubens as the most important exponent of the South-Netherlandish baroque, on the basis of his being the first artist to be able to integrate all artistic media in a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.³⁰ This concept — which reflects, and in Bernini's case precedes, Italian baroque art — was developed further by Anthony Blunt, Frans Baudouin, Barbara Haeger and Léon Lock.³¹

But this was only one side of the coin. Many other authors argued a contrary position. Here we can again distinguish two categories: members of the Society of Jesus³² and architectural historians.³³ Both focused on the earliest sources and on the figures of Aguilon and Huyssens. Fr Dolmans's attributions to Rubens on the *Promptuarium pictorum* drawings were rejected on the basis of qualitative stylistic criteria and the pieces were re-attributed to Huyssens or to another, less talented draughtsman. Even when autograph drawings by Rubens came to light at the end of the nineteenth century, these authors continued to see his role in the design as subordinate to the two Jesuit architects.

It was Max Rooses in 1892 who first published the two drawings entirely or partly in Rubens's hand, and was so able to demonstrate to naysayers that the artist had at least some role in the design process.³⁴ The drawings in question are the design for the ceiling of the Lady Chapel and a design for the high altar that was never used. The latter was linked to the high altar on the basis of the assumed date of origin, as there are substantial formal differences with the portico altar as built. Rooses only accepted one of the drawings from the *Promptuarium pictorum* as an autograph, namely that of the cartouche above the high altar. Fernand Donnet, on the contrary, used the drawings for the Antwerp church from the *Promptuarium pictorum* as a central argument in support of his position that Rubens was the real creative brain behind the project.³⁵

Two oeuvre catalogues, that of Gustav Glück & Franz Martin Haberditzl in 1928 and that by Ludwig Burchard & Roger d'Hulst in 1956, added five new drawings to the corpus of those drawn in Rubens's hand: a standing angel with candelabra for the high altar,³⁶ an angel blowing a trumpet for the spandrels of the access door,³⁷ a cherub for the arch of the access door,³⁸ a cartouche for the façade³⁹ and an unexecuted standing angel with an instrument of the passion⁴⁰ for the pediment of the façade.⁴¹ Michael Jaffé added to these a caryatid head for the same pediment.⁴² Finally, Frans Baudouin introduced an oil sketch related to the high altar.⁴³ Just like the drawing linked to the high altar, this sketch shows formal differences from the final result and, on the basis of its probably date of production, is likewise regarded as a design that was rejected.

Old and new pieces of the puzzle

The publication of these drawings shed new light on the complicated skein of this exceptional building project's origins. How can these very different strands of evidence be woven together? Before even attempting such a thing, let us consider a number of other new elements that will make some aspects clearer.

The only conclusion we can draw from all the material that documents Rubens's part in the design of the church is that these are extremely diverse material objects. Their relationship to one another can be charted schematically (Fig. 3). The first piece to consider is the autograph drawing by Rubens, central to the scheme.

Introduction, in Innovation and Experience in Early Baroque in the Southern Netherlands: The Case of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp, (*Architectura Moderna*, 6) (ed. P. Lombaerde), Turnhout, 2008, pp. 22–23.

14 J. SNAET, *Case study. Rubens's Palazzi di Genova and the Jesuit Churches of Antwerp and Brussels*, in *The Reception of P.P. Rubens's Palazzi di Genova during the 17th century in Europe: questions and problems*, (*Architectura Moderna. Architectural Exchanges in Europe, 16th–17th Centuries*, 1), (ed. P. Lombaerde), Turnhout, 2002, p. 181: {...} omnes (plafondschilderijen) delineatae sunt et conformatae, ab Appelle nostri temporis Petro Paulo Rubbenio pictore celeberrimo {...}.

15 *Palazzi di Genova*, [Antwerpen], 1622; K. OTTENHEYM, *De correspondentie tussen Rubens en Huygens over architectuur (1635–'40)*, in *Bulletin van de Koninklijke Nederlandse Oudheidkundige Bond*, 1996: 1, 1997, pp. 1–11.

16 “[...] Dien Rubbens, die het al in const quam t’overswieren, Heeft in syn tydt den prael des gevels helpen cieren, Die pater Huysmans (sic) gbeest en kundigh bouw verstandt, Gbebaert heeft, en ter plaats soo loffelyck gbeplant, Daer hij (Godt lof) noch staet, wyt Rubbens breyn den thoren (By t’vriendelyck toverstae van Huysmans (sic) is gheboren [...]” [J. C. DE COCK], *Klaegende-dicht: over het onverwachte en schrikelijck verbranden totten gronde, van den overschoonen en vermaerden Tempel Godts van het Huys der Professien van de Societeyt Jesu binnen Antwerpen den 18. Julii: door’t sneL bLIXeM-VIer gesChlet: als med*, Antwerp, 1718, p. 7. Remarkably, there is a second edition in which these lines do not appear.

17 “Den hoogen autaeer is geordonneert door Rubens waer van de schetse, elders int’ professiehuys, in syn geheel is, de Belden daer boven op synde syn appaert door Rubens geschildert geweest, die tegenwoordigh bewaert worden by den konst liefhebber A: de Groot. int’ S’. Hagen.” J. DE WIT, *De kerken van Antwerpen. Schilderijen, beeldbouwwerken, geschilderde glasramen, enz., in de XVIIIe*

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- 18 *« 2. En entrant l'église on ira d'abord à la Chapelle de la Vierge, (...) toute entière de l'ordonnance de Rubens. »* G. BERBIE, *Description des principaux ouvrages de peinture & sculpture; actuellement existans dans les églises, couvens, & lieux publics de la ville d'Anvers*, Antwerp, 1768, p. 62.
- 19 "Alyorens deze Kerk in te treden, is deszelfs voorgevel waardig beschouwd te worden, gebouwd volgens de tekening van Rubbens, die hy gezamentlyk met die der Kerk en alle deszelfs inwendige versierselen beeft vervaardigt: te weten, het Cboor, twee Kapellen en bunne Altaaren (...)" J. F. M. MICHEL, *Historische levensbeschryving van Petrus Paulus Rubbens ... Nevens eene naauwkeurige opgave zynrer schilderyen*, Amsterdam, 1774.
- 20 B. DAELEMANS, *Het Promptuarium Pictorum. 2: Een studie van barokke architectuurtekeningen uit de Zuidelijke Nederlanden*, Master Thesis KULeuven, 1998; F. DONNET, *L'architecte de l'église des jésuites à Anvers*, in *Bulletin des commissions royales d'art et d'archéologie*, 1909, pp. 25-72; A. JANSEN & C. VAN HERCK, *Archief in beeld. Inventaris van de tekeningen bewaard op het archief van de Sint-Caroluskerk te Antwerpen*, in *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis en folklore*, 11, 1948, pp. 45-91; J. VAN WOENSEL, *De ontwerptekeningen voor de Antwerpse jezuïetenkerk (1615-1621): van bouwwerf tot Promptuarium Pictorum (1747) en terug*, Master Thesis KULeuven, 2012.
- 21 B. DAELEMANS, *Het Promptuarium Pictorum als spiegel van de ontwerppraktijk der Vlaamse jezuïetenarchitecten in de 17de eeuw*, in *Bellissimi ingegni, grandissimo splendore: studies over de religieuze architectuur in de zuidelijke Nederlanden tijdens de 17de eeuw*, (Symbolae: Facultatis Litterarum et Philosophiae Lovaniensis: series B, 15), Leuven, 2000, p. 183.
- 22 See the inventories mentioned in note 20.
- 23 (...) *authentica delineatio per P. P. Rubenium* (...) of (...) *delineatio authentica ab ipso P. P. Rubenio* (...)

Working outwards from this original source we can distinguish a number of different types of object: an architectural drawing incorporating material from the Rubens drawing, an oil sketch by Rubens after the drawing, an engraving based on the Rubens drawing, a drawn copy of the Rubens drawing, and the architectural sculpture as executed. The copy drawn after the Rubens original probably relates to the execution of the engraving or of the architectural sculpture. Take the trumpet-blowing angel from the collection of The Morgan Library, New York, as an example, together with a drawn copy (Antwerp, Sint-Carolusborromeuskerk, archive, inv. PA.008.L046.), an architectural drawing ascribed to Huysens that shows an unexecuted version of the façade (idem, inv. PA.008.L014), the engraving of the front of the church by Jean de la Barre, and the sculpture itself (Fig. 4). In this case we lack an oil sketch, but another example shows that it is likely that one was produced. This is the design for the sculpture of St Norbert that crowned the high altar of St Michael's Abbey, Antwerp, dating from the same period: shortly before 1624.⁴⁴

Using this schema, 5 new engravings can be identified as designed after lost autograph drawings in which Rubens designed free-standing façade sculptures for the church. The first engraving was made by Petrus Clouwet (active 1643-1673) and represents the Risen Christ from the niche on the east side of the bell tower (Fig. 5).⁴⁵ The other four were made by Adriaen Lommelin (active from around 1640 to 1677) and depict the sculptures of the four evangelists from the façade niches (Figs. 6-9).⁴⁶ These engravings came to light as a result of research relating to the KMSKA's 2012 purchase of a *bozzetto* by Jacques De Braekeleer (1823-1906) linked to the replacement of the façade sculpture representing the Apostle Peter.

The replacement of this façade sculpture was only one of many episodes of restoration to which the façade and the façade sculptures were subject over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁴⁷ For the façade sculptures we know that a first campaign took place around 1818, after the destruction wrought during the French occupation. The images of St John and St Luke were restored and returned to their original locations in the uppermost niches. The statues of St Matthew and St Mark had suffered more damage; they were replaced with new sculptures by Jan Baptist van Hool senior (1769-1837) and located in a different position, namely in the niches flanking the central cartouche.⁴⁸ That these



niches originally held the statues of St Peter and St Paul is clear from an archival source from 1621, from the publication celebrating the canonization, and from de la Barre's engraving (Fig. 1).⁴⁹ These two statues were replaced by two statues of the same saints that had originally flanked the entrance to the courtyard of the Antwerp professed house. These were placed in the lowest niches. This temporary situation is documented in a photograph taken in 1863 by the Belgian photographic pioneer Edmond Fierlants (1819–1869) and preserved in the Antwerp Hendrik Conscience Heritage Library (Fig. 10). Alas, only the Apostle Peter is visible. Around 1868 these sculptures were in turn replaced with two works by Jacques De Braekeleer.⁵⁰ These are the statues that still adorn the façade.

Given these alterations, de la Barre's engraving is the most reliable source that we have for an image of the original ornamentation of the façade.⁵¹ Lommelin's four engravings agree completely with the sculptures shown in the uppermost and lowermost niches on de la Barre's engraving. The two princes of the apostles were originally in the middle niches. All of Lommelin's engravings give Rubens as *inventor* or *pictor* and therefore are copied from an original. It is

Fig. 5.

Petrus Clouwet after Peter Paul Rubens, *Resurrected Christ*, Antwerp, Plantin-Moretus Museum, printroom, inv. PK.OP.06371 | II/C.165, © Plantin-Moretus Museum

Fig 6.

Adriaen Lommelin after Peter Paul Rubens, *The four Evangelists: Matthew*, London, British Museum, inv. 1891,0414.1085, © The Trustees of the British Museum

Fig. 7.

Adriaen Lommelin after Peter Paul Rubens, *The four Evangelists: Marc*, London, British Museum, inv. 1891,0414.1086, © The Trustees of the British Museum

24 (...) *figuras et ornamenta ordinavit P. P. Rubens* (...); (...) *a P. P. Rubens ordinata* (...); (...) *ex scemata a Rubenio picto* (...)

25 M KONRAD, *Antwerpener Binnenräume im Zeitalter des Rubens*,

Fig. 8.

Adriaen Lommelin after Peter Paul Rubens, *The four Evangelists: Luke*, London, British Museum, inv. 1891,0414.1087, © The Trustees of the British Museum

Fig. 9.

Adriaen Lommelin after Peter Paul Rubens, *The four Evangelists: John*, London, British Museum, inv. 1891,0414.1088, © The Trustees of the British Museum

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(*Belgische Kunstdenkmäler*, VIII), s.l., 1923, p. 206.

- 26 M. PAQUET-SYPHORIEN, *Voyage historique et pittoresque, fait dans les ci-devant Pays-Bas, et dans quelques départemens voisins pendant les années 1811, 1812 et 1813*, Paris, 1813, vol. 2 p. 76: «*Cette magnifique église avec sa charmante tour, a été entièrement construite sur les dessins du grand Rubens même.*».
- 27 A. VAN HASSELT, *Histoire de P.-P. Rubens, suivie du: catalogue général et raisonné de ses tableaux, esquisses, dessins et vignettes avec l'indication des lieux où se trouvent et des artistes qui les ont gravés*, Brussels, 1840, p. 79: «*Mais celle des églises anversoises pour lesquelles notre peintre aimait le plus à travailler, ce fut celle des Jésuites. En effet, cet établissement était en quelque sorte son enfant. Il était naturel qu'il l'aimait d'un amour de père. La façade et toutes les décorations intérieures furent construites d'après un plan dressé par lui-même. Ces décorations étaient surtout le chœur, deux chapelles et leurs autels.*»
- 28 S. LEURS, *Geschiedenis der bouwkunst in Vlaanderen van de Xe tot het einde der XVIIIe eeuw*, Antwerp, 1946, pp. 98-100.
- 29 F. DONNET, *L'architecte de l'église des jésuites à Anvers*, in *Bulletin des commissions royales d'art et d'archéologie*, 1909, pp. 71-72: «*(...) on se rappelle surtout que si les plans de l'œuvre ont été dressés par le Frère Huyssens, que toutefois le grand Rubens a pris à leur élaboration une part importante, qu'il en a surveillé l'ordonnance, que de sa propre main il en a modifié maints détails parfois importants,*



likely that there were once also engravings of St Peter and St Paul after original designs, alongside the four evangelists. At present, however, neither is known to survive.

Rubens designs in the building's development

A clearer understanding of Rubens's role in the building's development requires an examination of the contemporary working methods in (architectural) sculpture, and in particular the reuse of Rubens designs in other commissions.⁵² In most cases it was the sculptor-architect Hans van Mildert who reused designs related to the Antwerp Jesuit church elsewhere.⁵³ In 1986 Jean-Luc Meulemeester published a contract dated 4 April 1627 identifying Hans van Mildert as the contractor for the high altar in Bruges Cathedral. This job again incorporated the standing angel with candelabrum from the Antwerp high altar, "according to the design of Mr Rubens".⁵⁴ In this case, Rubens's original design was probably preserved (Berlin, Kupferstichkabinet, inv. 3242).



Fig. 10.

Edmond Fierlants, *Facade of St. Charles Borromeo's church*, Antwerp, Hendrik Conscience Heritage Library, cat.nr. K 11889:II,07, © Hendrik Conscience Heritage Library

Fig. 20.

Hans Van Mildert, *Retable of the Triest Chapel*, Ghent, Cathedral of S Bavo, 1624-25, © author

qu'il en a dessiné les principaux motifs ornementaux, et que certaines parties même ont directement été exécutées d'après ses projets. Ces considérations nous incitaient à recommander, qu'une restauration qui 's'imposait, ne fut confiée qu'à une main experte entre toutes. »

30 K. FREEMANTLE, *The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam*, Utrecht, 1959, pp. 128-33 .

31 A. BLUNT, *Rubens and Architecture*, in *The Burlington Magazine*, 119: 894, 1977, pp. 609-621; F. BAUDOUIN, *De toren van de Sint-Carolus-Borromeuskerk te Antwerpen*, in *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België. Klasse der Schone Kunsten*, 44:3, 1983, pp. 15-56; F. BAUDOUIN, *Peter Paul Rubens and the Notion "Painter-Architect"*, in *The Reception of P. P. Rubens Palazzi di Genova*, (*Architectura Moderna. Architectural Exchanges in Europe, 16th-17th Centuries*, 1), (ed. P. Lombaerde) Turnhout, 2002, pp. 15-36; B. HAEGER, *The Façade of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp: Representing the Church Militant and Triumphant*, in *Innovation and Experience in Early Baroque in the Southern Netherlands: The Case of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp* (*Architectura Moderna* 6), (ed. P. Lombaerde), Turnhout, 2008, pp. 97-124; L. LOCK, *Rubens and the Sculpture and Marble Decoration*, in *Innovation and Experience in Early Baroque in the Southern Netherlands: The Case of the*



- Jesuit Church in Antwerp*, (*Architectura Moderna*, 6), (ed. P. Lombaerde), 2008, pp. 155-75.
- 32 J. BRAUN (S. J.), *Die belgischen Jesuitenkirchen*, Freiburg, 1907; Charles Droeshout (S. J.), *Bibliothèque Charles Droeshout. Histoire des Provinces belges de l'ancienne Compagnie*, KADOC, Leuven (before 1908); A. PONCELET (S. J.), *Histoire de la Compagnie de Jésus dans les anciens Pays-Bas. Etablissement de la Compagnie de Jésus en Belgique et ses développements jusqu'à la fin du règne d'Albert et Isabelle. Académie royale de Belgique. Classe des Lettres et des Sciences morales et Politiques. Collection in-8°*; 2e série, vol. 21, 1, Brussels, 1927; F. PEETERS (S. J.), *Rubens et la Compagnie de Jésus*, in *Etudes classiques*, XIII, 1945, pp. 167-88; B. DAELEMANS (S. J.), *Pieter Huysens S.J. (1577-1637), an Underestimated Architect and Engineer*, in *Innovation and Experience in Early Baroque in the Southern Netherlands: The Case of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp*, (*Architectura Moderna*, 6), (ed. P. Lombaerde), Turnhout, 2008, pp. 41-53.
- 33 S. BRIGODE, *Les projets de construction de l'église des jésuites à Anvers d'après les plans conservés à la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris*, in *Bulletin van het Belgisch Historisch Instituut te Rome*, XIV, 1934, pp. 173-174; J. PLANTEGNA, *L'architecture religieuse dans l'ancien duché de Brabant depuis le règne des archiducs jusqu'au gouvernement autrichien (1598-1713)*, The Hague, 1926 pp. 75-116; J. PLANTEGNA, *Rubens en de bouwkunst*, in *Heemschut*, 11, 1934, 78-81 & 92-96; A. G. B. SCHAYES, *Histoire de l'architecture en Belgique depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à l'époque actuelle*, Brussels, s. d., vol. 4, p. 183; A. SCHOY, *Pierre-Paul Rubens*, Brussels, 1878, pp. 28-30; J. SNAET, *De bouwprojecten voor de Antwerpse jezuitenenkerk*, in *Bellissimi ingegni, grandissimo splendore: studies over de religieuze architectuur in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden tijdens de 17de eeuw*, (*Symbolae Facultatis litterarum Lovaniensis. Series B*, 13), Leuven, 2000,

Various other examples can now be added to this one. Three other drafts were "recycled", as it were, for the three sculptures crowning the altar for Ghent Cathedral, paid for by Bishop Antonius Triest (1577-1657) in 1624-25 (Fig. 20).⁵⁵ In the middle is the abovementioned Risen Christ from the Antwerp bell tower, the drawing for which seem not to have survived but did provide the design for an engraving by Petrus Clouwet (Fig. 5). On either side he is flanked by two angels with instruments of the passion. These are the two angels that were designed for the front of the Antwerp church, as can be seen from an architectural drawing in the church archive, but that were not included in the final build.⁵⁶ These too provided the basis for engravings by Petrus Clouwet, published by Gillis Hendricx (Fig. 11-12).⁵⁷ Rubens's design for one of the two has survived (Fig. 13).

Although various authors have followed Peter Visschers (who cites no source) in attributing the images on the façade to (Robrecht) Colyns de Nole (who died after 9 July 1636), the only name mentioned in the accounts book for the building of the church of the Antwerp professed house is Hans van Mildert.⁵⁸ His name appears beside numerous large sums still due.⁵⁹ Since it was, moreover, Hans van Mildert who reused Rubens's designs for the Jesuit church elsewhere, it would seem that these drawings were in Mildert's possession. They should possibly be regarded as a sort of workshop capital, perhaps even in some instances used as a "unique selling point". This is illustrated by the Bruges case, where the contract explicitly mentions that the sculpture is to be executed according to the design by Rubens.⁶⁰

This sort of collaboration, a painter providing a sculptor-architect with high-quality designs, chimes with the fact that two-dimensional designs seem to be entirely lacking in the workshops of sculptor-architects until well into the second half of the seventeenth century.⁶¹ Another testimony to the practice can be found in the business agreement between the painter Jan Boeckhorst (1605-1688) and the sculptor Mattheus van Beveren (1630-1690), who provided the painter with plaster casts in exchange for designs.⁶²

This form of co-operation between Rubens and Van Mildert took place not only in the case of the Jesuit church but also in a number of other projects, such as the high altars for the Brussels Church of Our Lady of the Chapel (1619) and for the Antwerp Carmelites of the Old Observance (1637-42). The designs that Rubens provided for



Fig. 11.

Petrus Clouwet after Peter Paul Rubens, *Angel with Arma Christi*, Antwerp, Plantin-Moretus Museum, printroom, inv. OPB.0201.049 | R.213, © Plantin-Moretus Museum

Fig. 12.

Petrus Clouwet after Peter Paul Rubens, *Angel with Arma Christi*, Antwerp, Plantin-Moretus Museum, printroom, inv. PK.OPB.0201.050 | R.213, © Plantin-Moretus Museum

these altar porticos built by Hans van Mildert and by his son Cornelis illustrate Rubens's interest in what he himself, in his own writings, consistently calls "*ornamento*". The meaning of this term is not immediately obvious: it covers all architectural-sculptural elements, often in the form of a portico and the related sculptural elements that frame his altarpieces or epitaph paintings.

This definition reflects the contemporary Italian meaning of the term, as it was used for example by Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574) or Giovanni Battista Montano (1534–1621).⁶³ Consistent with the meaning of ornament in the Vitruvian semantic tradition, this also included the decoration of doors and windows with the initially functional architectural elements of the classical orders. This turned these elements into something like decorative *appliqués* that were to give the building an outer beauty consistent with its intrinsic beauty and – according to Rubens himself – with the dignity of its function (decorum).⁶⁴ These "decorative" architectural-sculptural additions to a façade Rubens in his own words designated "*relievo*", a term that can be translated as relief or, more broadly, as plasticity.⁶⁵

This description of Rubens's design activities with regard to architectural sculpture is perfectly applicable to the Antwerp Jesuit church. It corresponds to the nature of all Rubens designs so far

- pp. 43–67; J. SNAET, *Case Study: Rubens's Palazzi di Genova and the Jesuit Churches of Antwerp and Brussels*, in *The Reception of P.P. Rubens's Palazzi di Genova during the 17th century in Europe: questions and problems*, (*Architectura Moderna. Architectural Exchanges in Europe, 16th–17th Centuries*, 1), (ed. P. Lombaerde), Turnhout, 2002, p.161–182; J. SNAET, *De Romereis van Pieter Huysens in 1626*, in *Artistieke relaties tussen Italië en de Nederlanden (16de–18de eeuw): status quaestionis en vooruitzichten*, (*Artes*, 3), Brussels, 2012, pp. 61–85; M. M. THIBAUT DE MAISIÈRES, *L'architecture religieuse à l'époque de Rubens*, Brussels, 1943, pp. 28–32.
- 34 M. ROOSES, *L'oeuvre de P.P. Rubens: histoire et description de ses tableaux et dessins*, vol. V, Antwerp, 1892, pp. 177–183.
- 35 F. DONNET, *L'architecte de l'église des jésuites à Anvers*, in *Bulletin des commissions royales d'art et d'archéologie*, 1909, pp. 71–72.
- 36 Berlin, Kupferstichkabinet, inv. 3242.
- 37 New York, The Morgan Library, inv. I, 232.
- 38 Private Collection, auction in Madrid, Ansorena, 17 May 2011, lot 136.
- 39 London, The British Museum, inv. Oo, 9.28.
- 40 Private collection, auction at Christie's, New York, 26 January 2011, lot 270.
- 41 G. GLUECK & F. M. HABERDITZL, *Die Handzeichnungen von Peter Paul Rubens herausgegeben von Gustav Glück und F. M. Haberditzl*, Berlin, 1928, p. 46; L. BURCHARD & R. A.

Fig. 13.

Peter Paul Rubens, *Angel with Arms Christi*, private collection (auctioned at Christie's NY 01-26-2011, lot 270), © www.artprice.com

- D'HULST, *Stad Antwerpen Rubenshuis 16 juni-2 september 1956 Tekeningen van P. P. Rubens*, Antwerp, 1956, p. 68 no. 67.
- 42 Private collection, auction at Christie's London, Sale 7863, 7 July 2010, Lot 343. M. JAFFÉ, *Rubens' Drawings at Antwerp*, in *The Burlington Magazine*, 98:642, 1956, p. 314, n. 5.
- 43 Antwerp, Rubenshuis, inv. R.H.S.194; F. BAUDOIN, *Het door Rubens ontworpen hoogaltaar in de kerk der Geschoeide Karmelieten te Antwerpen*, in *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België. Klasse der Schone Kunsten*, 51: 1, 1991, pp. 21-72; P. HUVENNE, *Een Rubensschets voor het Rubenshuis*, in *Cultureel Jaarboek Stad Antwerpen*, III, 1985, pp. 19-24.
- 44 *St Norbert Overcoming Tanchelm*, ca. 1622-23, oil on panel, 66.5 × 46 cm, Private Collection, auctioned at Sotheby's New York on 28.01.2016, lot 31; J. HELD, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens: A Critical Catalogue*, (*National Gallery of Art. Kress Foundation Studies in the History of European Art*, 7), Princeton, 1980, pp. 577-8.
- 45 Antwerp, Prentenkabinet, inv. PK.OP.06371 | II/C.165, published by Gillis Hendricx.
- 46 London, British Museum, inv. 1891,0414.1085-1088. This series of four evangelists was for a time regarded as part of a larger series of engravings with images of the thirteen apostles, Christ and the Blessed Virgin after Rubens, executed by Scheltes A. Bolswert and published by Cornelis Galle (London, British Museum, inv. 1891,0414.1070-1085). Cf. H. VLIËGHE, *Saints*, (*Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*, 8), London, 1968, p. 55. These four were, however, executed by Adriaan Lommelin and published

identified, all of which relate to partial aspects of the building, namely architectural sculpture. This might explain the status of many of the *Promptuarium pictorum* drawings. It is quite possible that Rubens designed not only (architectural) sculpture but also provided drawings for the building's architectural "ornament". An example is the frame of two niches in the choir that turns up as the frame for a niche in *The Madonna of the Rosary* (formerly Swinton Collection) (Figs. 14-15).⁶⁶ Since it was customary to copy these elements in larger architectural drawings, it is perfectly conceivable that the zealous Fr Dolmans was not so badly informed as some think, when he identifies the *inventor* of the drawings of these ornaments as Rubens.

It is also interesting that the Antwerp church was not the only Jesuit church with which Rubens was involved in this way. The other example is Neuburg-an-der-Donau, for which Rubens, in much the same time period, also executed three altarpieces. In a letter to Rubens dated 8 January 1619, Count Palatine Wolfgang Wilhelm wrote: "I have the honour of confirming receipt of your letter by way of Jülich, Cleves and Berg. We examined your proposals for the outer decoration of the new church with pleasure and on most points our opinion agrees with your own."⁶⁷ The church was consecrated on 21 October 1618.⁶⁸ Between 1618 and 1627 the façade and the tower were finished by master builder Hans Alberthal (died 1657) in accordance with the initial plans of the court painter and architect Joseph Heintz (1564-1609) (Fig. 16).⁶⁹ Judging by the result, the (lost?) Rubens designs for the façade were not used.

In this context it is also worth mentioning the similarities between the Neuburg church's stucco ceilings and those of the Lady



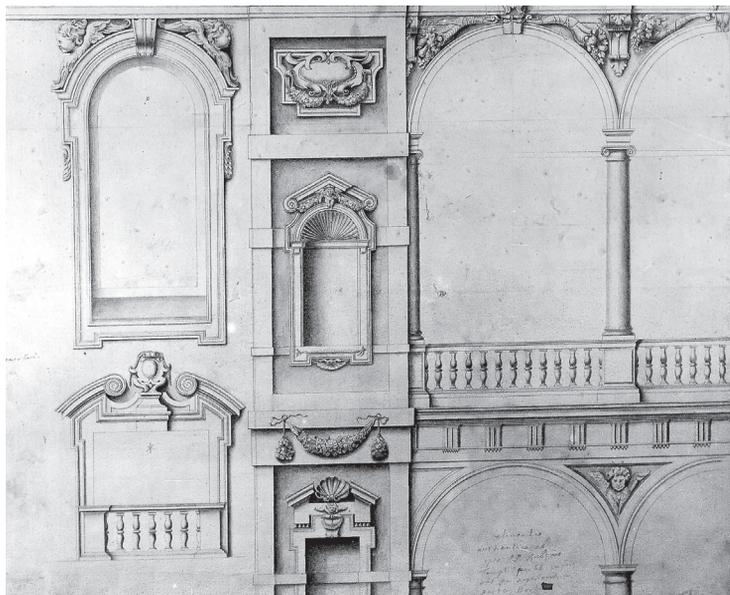


Fig. 14.
Anonymous, *Architectural drawing with elements from the interior of St. Charles Borromeo's church: niches and galleries*, Archive of St. Charles Borromeo's Church, inv. PA.008.L035, © KIK-IRPA, cliché A076400

Chapel in the Jesuit church in Antwerp, Rubens's design for which has been preserved. The Michele brothers, Antonio and Pietro Castelli, executed this decorative programme, in which the Blessed Virgin is central, between 1616 and 1619.⁷⁰ Furthermore at least one and perhaps both of two additional monumental mural reliefs with representations of the Nativity and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary executed in Neuburg show the stuccadores working to a Rubens design. This is apparent from a drawing in a private collection representing the Nativity.⁷¹ For the Assumption, Rubens was asked for sketches after already existing altarpieces on the theme in Brussels churches (Fig. 17). The final relief is most similar to the version from the Church of Our Lady of the Chapel in Brussels, now preserved in Düsseldorf.⁷²

Léon Lock rightly notes that many decorative and sculptural elements of the Antwerp church do not have the level of integration with the surrounding architecture that would ultimately be achieved in the South-Netherlandish architectural-sculptural idiom of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.⁷³ In our view this is not so much because Rubens retained the mind-set of a painter, as because of the place that his architectural-sculptural designs occupied in the over-all design process for the building.

by Gillis Hendricx. The evangelists series not only differs from the apostles series in engraver and publisher. The pedestal on which the evangelists are placed is remarkably different, corresponding to the image of the sculptures of the four evangelists on Jean de la Barre's engraving of the façade of the church (c. 1644).

- 47 F. BRENDERS & M. MANDERYCK, *De Sint-Carolus Borromeuskerk te Antwerpen gerestaureerd*, in *Monumenten & Landschappen*, 6: 5, 1987, pp. 12–29; V. MEUL, *Joseph Schadde (1818-1894): creatieve restauraties in een eclectische architectuurbenadering*, in *Negentiende-eeuwse restauratiepraktijk en actuele monumentenzorg: handelingen van het Nederlands-Vlaams Symposium, Leuven, 13-14 september 1996*, (Kadoc Artes, 3) (red. J. de Maeyer, A. Bergmans, W. Denslagen et al.), Leuven, 1999, p. 127. In 1849 an initial design for works on the full façade was submitted to the Royal Commission. After the architect Ferdinand Berckmans's death in 1854, Joseph Schadde took over the restoration project for the church front. This campaign of restoration was completed in 1865, as the chronogram on the façade records: "sanCtI CarolI prIstInVs DeCor reDDItVs". In 1909 a number of sculptures, moulded ornaments and pilasters that had to be removed in the interests of public safety were clumsily removed. On the intervention of the provincial governor and of the Royal Commission, the works were stopped and the architect Jules Bilmeyer (1850–1920) was commissioned to draw up a dossier for the restoration of the façade and the tower. This 1912 design again provided for the replacement of a number of elements.

Fig. 15.

(Copy after a lost painting by) Peter Paul Rubens, *Madonna of the Rosary*, private collection, (formerly Swinton collection (Photo: Centrum Rubenianum vzw)

- 48 P. VISSCHERS, *Iets over Jacob Jongbelinck, metaelgieter en penningnyder: Octavio van Veen, schilder, in de XVIe eeuw: en de gebroeders Collyns de Nole, beeldhouwers, in de XV.e, XVI.e en XVII.e eeuw*, Antwerp, 1853, p. 53. “De HH Petrus en Paulus bevonden zich voor 1798 aan de ingang van de jezuïetenhof en zijn het werk van Andries de Nole. Tussen 29 juni 1818 en 1820 werden de HH Ignatius, Mattheus en Marcus vervangen door werken van J. B. Van Hool de ouden. Lucas en Johannes werden bijgewerkt en in de bovenste nissen geplaatst.” This author cites J. Bauclerq as his source.
- 49 J. SNAET, *Case study. Rubens's Palazzi di Genova and the Jesuit Churches of Antwerp and Brussels*, in *The Reception of P.P. Rubens's Palazzi di Genova during the 17th century in Europe: questions and problems*, (*Architectura Moderna. Architectural Exchanges in Europe, 16th-17th Centuries*, 1), (ed. P. Lombaerde), Turnhout, 2002, p. 180: from the letter regarding the dedication of the church in 1621: “*Intercolumniae, sex implent aediculae seu scapulae partim conchis imbricatis, partim corona frondium exornatae: quarum medias occupant Apostolorum Principes Petrus, et Paulus; alia quatuor totidem Evangelistis attributae.*”; [M. DE GRUYSE (S. J.)], *Honor D. Ignatio de Loyola (...) habitus a Patribus S. J. domus professa ex collegii Soc. Jesu Antverpiae, 24 julii 1622*, Antwerp, 1622, p.10.
- 50 According to Magriet Casteels the appeal by the church council was made in 1868. M. CASTEELS, *De beeldhouwers de Nole te Kamerijk, te Utrecht en te Antwerpen, (Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België. Klasse der Schone Kunsten, 16)*, Brussels, 1961, p. 152. *Catalogue de*



Dignità & decorum

The literature repeatedly touches on just how exceptional the abundant architectural-sculptural ornament that characterizes the façade of the Antwerp church was. In comparison with other Jesuit churches, such as the Chiesa del Gesù in Rome (1568–1584) or the contemporary Jesuit church in Brussels (consecrated 24 June 1621) the differences are indeed remarkable.⁷⁴ The lavish finish of the façade is referenced by authors such as Frans Baudouin, Barbara Haeger and Léon Lock as a central argument in support of the view that Rubens was the creative mastermind behind the building of church.⁷⁵ According to these authors, the “plastic” view of the front and the iconographic programme of the numerous sculptures can



Fig. 16.
Neuburg-an-der Donau, Hofkirche, ©
Wikimedia Commons

only be ascribed to Rubens. Where Frans Baudouin still has a process of interaction between Rubens and the other figures involved, Barbara Haeger does not hesitate to assert that: “Despite the lack of documentary evidence, it seems clear to me that Rubens contributed far more than just the drawings for the sculptures that adorn the structure. Indeed, I believe that he played the key role in the conception and the design of the façade”.⁷⁶ This suggests that the exceptional appearance of the façade, in terms of both form and content, is due to the artistic “genius” of Rubens.

la collection de tableaux modernes & atelier de sculptures de feu Monsieur Jacques De Braeकेleer, dont la vente ... aura lieu dans la Galerie des beaux-arts 41, Marché aux Souliers, à Anvers le samedi 22 décembre 1906 ..., Antwerp, 1906, introduction (pages unnumbered) and cat. no. 94. This catalogue only mentions an image of St Peter made for the façade. <https://inventaris.onroerendergoed.be/dibe/relict/4118>, accessed 20 August 2015.

- 51 The current arrangement of the façade sculptures therefore does not correspond to the original, as was assumed by B. HAEGER, *The Façade of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp: Representing the Church Militant and Triumphant*, in *Innovation and Experience in Early Baroque in the Southern Netherlands: The Case of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp*, (*Architectura Moderna*, 6), (ed. P. Lombaerde), Turnhout, 2008, pp. 97-124.
- 52 V. HERREMANS, *Rubens as an Inventor of Ornament*, in *Questions of Ornaments* (R. Dekoninck & C. Heering eds.), Turnhout, 2013, p. 274.
- 53 So far as is known there is one other instance, namely that of the cherub for the arch in the entrance porch of the Jesuit church in Antwerp, reused for the arches in the ceilings of the north and south transepts of the Jesuit church in Bruges. In this case the author of neither work is known. See F. BAUDOUIN, *Peter Paul Rubens and the Notion ‘Painter-Architect’*, in *The Reception of P. P. Rubens Palazzi di Genova*, (*Architectura Moderna. Architectural Exchanges in Europe, 16th-17th Centuries*, 1), (ed. P. Lombaerde), Turnhout, 2002, pp. 33-35.
- 54 “volgens de teekeninghe van Sr Rubbens”. J.-L. MEULEMEESTER, *Huyssens, Rubens, van Mildert en het zeventiende-eeuwse hoofdaltaar van de St. Donaaskathedraal in Brugge*, in *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen*, 1986, p. 203.

Fig. 17.

Castelli studio after Peter Paul Rubens, *Assumption of the Holy Virgin*, Hofkirche, Neuburg-an-der Donau, © www.flickr.com

- 70
- 55 H. Vlieghe, *Hans van Mildert en de chronologie van de bisschopskapel in de Sint-Baafsabdij te Gent*, in *Miscellanea Jozef Duverger. Bijdragen tot de kunstgeschiedenis der Nederlanden*, Ghent, 1968, II, pp. 625-632.
- 56 J. Van Woensel, *De ontwerptekeningen voor de Antwerpse jezuitkerk (1615-1621): van bouwverf tot Promptuarium Pictorum (1747) en terug*, master's thesis KU Leuven, 2012, .Inv. PA.008.L016.
- 57 See note 45.
- 58 P. Baert, *Mémoires sur les sculpteurs et architectes des Pays-Bas*, Brussel, 1848, p. 56; P. Viisschers, *Iets over Jacob Jongbelinck, metaelgieter en penningnyder: Octavio van Veen, schilder, in de XVIe eeuw: en de broeders Collyns de Nole, beeldbouwers, in de XV.e, XVI.e en XVII.e eeuw*, Antwerp, 1853, p. 93.
- 59 Leuven, KADOC, Fonds Charles Droeshout, vol. 11, *Bouw der kercke van de professen S. J. Antwerpen 1614-1628*: "Schulden bevonden tot laste van~ nieuwe kerck den I Julii A° 1619 [...] Mr Hans van Mildert beelsnyder 700"; "Schulden bevonden tot laste van de nieuw kerke den 13 febr. A° 1621 [...] Mr Hans van Mildert beelsnyder 2688.10"; "Schulden bevonden tot laste vande nieu kerck den 10 novemb A° 1621 Syn te voldoen aen d'ondergenoemde: gelt op jaerlyksche renten [...] 200. Mr Hans van mildert 3200 [...] Item noch aen dese naervolgende loopende schulden: [...] Aen Mr Hans mildert beelsnyder 4234.8"; "Schulden voor de kercke bevonden den 15 April A° 1623 [...] In loopende schulden [...] Mr Hans mildert beelsnyder 957.4". All of this was published in F. BAUDOUIN, *De datering van de twee schilderijen van Rubens voor het hoofdaltaar van de Antwerpse Jezuitkerk en enkele aantekeningen over Hans van Mildert*, in *Miscellanea Jozef Duverger. Bijdragen*



While it is hard enough to imagine that Rubens, rather than those who commissioned him, would have the final word on the appearance of the church's façade, let alone on the visual programme,⁷⁷ it is beyond belief that the only reason for the lavishly decorated façade was Rubens's personal artistic-intellectual idiom. As has already been mentioned, the archives show that the abundantly rich decoration – not just of the façade but of the whole church – resulted from a series of thought-out choices on the part of the Antwerp Jesuits (which led not only to running up large debts but also to clear disapproval by their superiors in Rome). Jeffrey Muller sees an explanation for the building project's financial escalation in the principle of deficit spending: spending money to make money.⁷⁸ This mechanism was undoubtedly at work, but it sheds no light on the underlying motivations of the "profligate" Antwerp Jesuits.

In my view one important datum in the history of the church's origins throws light on the motivations of the commissioning party. Ambition is without a doubt the single word that best characterizes the whole project. From the very beginning it was clear that they envisaged an exceptional achievement, as can be seen from the initial exorbitant plans for a central-plan church that were turned down by the Roman superiors.⁷⁹ Or the fact that the Antwerp Jesuits did everything they could to secure the relics of important saints, even including early Christian martyrs such as St Fortuna-

tus from Rome or St Felicity, some of which were then placed on the high altar in tremendously costly reliquaries.⁸⁰ For the design of the building they looked back to early Christian roots, with a layout based on ancient basilicas, and the use of ancient *spolia* and precious marble.⁸¹ The Antwerp Jesuits even called their church the marble temple.

This ambition is also apparent from the desire to dedicate the church to the order's founder, Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), even though he had then not yet been canonized. This too is exceptional, as it is not in principle allowed to dedicate a church to a *beatus*. Special permission had to be sought from Rome, and was ultimately forthcoming.⁸² The purpose of this unusual manner of proceeding was undoubtedly the desire of the Antwerp Jesuits to have their church be the first in the world to be dedicated to the new saint, which immediately opened perspectives for the Antwerp church to become an exceptionally “prestigious” church not only within

tot de kunstgeschiedenis der Nederlanden, Ghent, 1968, pp. 317–18.

- 60 V. HERREMANS, *Rubens as an Inventor of Ornament*, in *Questions of Ornaments* (R. Dekoninck & C. Heering eds.), Turnhout, 2013, p. 274.
- 61 V. HERREMANS, “Mingling with artless crafts”: *The corporative context of Antwerp sculpture after 1585*, in *Antwerp Royal Museum Annual*, 2012 (2014), p. 142.
- 62 V. HERREMANS, *Rubens as an Inventor of Ornament*, in *Questions of Ornaments* (R. Dekoninck & C. Heering eds.), Turnhout, 2013, p. 274.
- 63 V. HERREMANS, *Rubens as an Inventor of Ornament*, in *Questions of Ornaments* (R. Dekoninck & C. Heering eds.), Turnhout, 2013, pp. 270–71.

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Fig. 18.

Antwerp, *St. Charles Borromeo's church*, © author



PETER PAUL RUBENS AND THE DECORATION OF THE JESUIT CHURCH IN ANTWERP

64 See note 86 below.

65 K. OTTENHEYM, *De correspondentie tussen Rubens en Huygens over architectuur (1635-40)*, in *Bulletin van de Koninklijke Nederlandse Oudbeidkundige Bond*, 1997, 1, pp. 7 & 9; B. UPPENKAMP & B. VAN BENEDEN, *'La vera simmetria'. Italië als model*, in *Palazzo Rubens: de meester als architect*, Brussels, 2011, p. 74.

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the order but also in general. It would be the first church in the world to be dedicated to the founder of the young and fast-growing Societas Iesu.⁸³ In a sense the mechanism at work here was similar to that accounting for the deficit spending. The convincing “positioning” of Ignatius as saint before he had actually been canonized could only have a positive influence on his eventual canonization and veneration.

One clue to the link between the special status aspired to for the church and its lavish ornamentation can be found in the remarka-

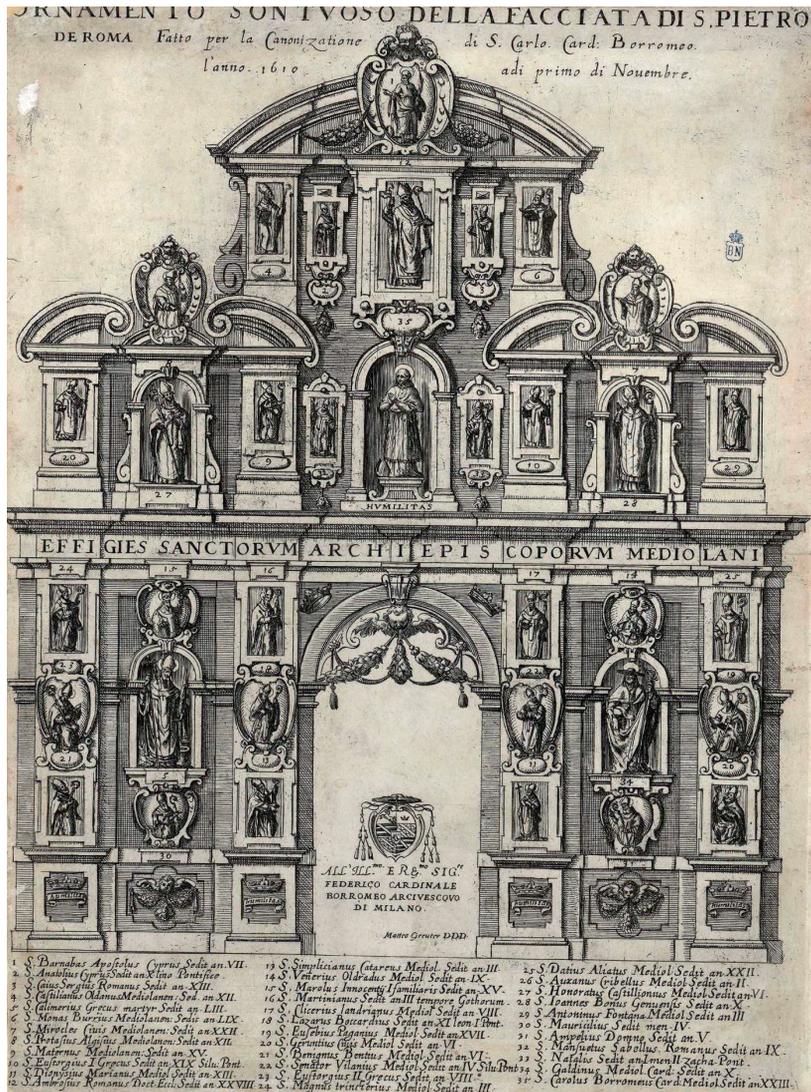


Fig. 19. Matteo Greuter, Ornamento sontuoso della facciata di S. Pietro de Roma. Fatto per la canonizatione di S. Carlo Card: Borromeo l'anno 1610, Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, © Biblioteca Nacional de Espana

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ble similarity of the decoration of the façade to another contemporary form of ornament. There was in fact a specific context in which it was customary to provide the façades of churches with ornaments and representations: the ephemeral decorations that added lustre to all sorts of religious festivities. These were something for which the Society of Jesus in particular was well known. An important part of them were painted and sculpted decorations of the church front, installed temporarily for all sorts of ecclesiastical feasts, and in particular consecrations or canonizations (Fig. 19).⁸⁴

The decoration of the façade is described at length not only in the letter sent to Rome about the consecration of the church, but also in the publication issued for the occasion of the celebration of the canonization of Ignatius of Loyola (Fig. 18). It seems to me plausible that the inspiration for the Antwerp church's lavish façade should be sought in the contemporary tradition of ephemeral façade decoration. But here too Antwerp ambitions went beyond the usual ephemerality. A festive façade decoration literally carved in stone, in combination with the rich interior finish with marble and stucco, painted ceilings and various altarpieces, the church would acquire a lasting lustre. This corresponded to the prestige that would hopefully accrue to the first church dedicated to the Jesuit founder.

Peter Paul Rubens was not only the exceptionally talented painter ("the Apelles of his days") whose workshop was engaged to provide the unique painted ceilings and monumental altarpieces, he was also the natural choice to design the lustrous decoration of the building.⁸⁵ Rubens had a deep fascination with architectural-sculptural ornament that is expressed in his designs for the frames of altarpieces, for frontispieces, and for ephemeral decorations such as those of the *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*. A number of sources demonstrate that he was a convinced proponent of the link between ornament of this type and status. In 1622, the year that Ignatius's canonization was celebrated, Rubens wrote of the Jesuit church in Antwerp (inspired by his part in it?) that in its appearance the architectural rules of the ancients had been applied with "grandissimo splendore et ornamento".⁸⁶ Years later, in his correspondence with Constantine Huygens, he was to write about the design for the façade of Huygens's own house that the addition of a particular ornament "avrebbe dato maggior dignità e rilievo a tutta la facciata".⁸⁷

- 66 A. BLUNT, *Rubens and Architecture*, in *The Burlington Magazine*, 119: 894, 1977, p. 614.
- 67 « O l'onore dirle la ricevuta della [a?] Guliers Cleves et Berghe quali si sono visti volentieri le repliche fatte circa li esteriori ornamenti di questa nuova chiesa i et nel piu concorriamo nella sua oppinione. » As published in K. RENGGER, *Peter Paul Rubens: Altäre für Bayern Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen Studio-Ausstellung München, Alte Pinakothek 9. November 1990-13. Januar 1991*, Munich, 1990, pp. 62 and 89, doc. 9.
- 68 A. LIDEL & R. SEITZ, *Die Hofkirche Unserer Lieben Frau zu Neuburg an der Donau: Ein Kirchenbau zwischen Reformation und Gegenreformation*, (*Kunst in Bayern und Schwaben*, 4), Weissenhorn, 1983, p. 46.
- 69 J. C. SMITH, *Sensuous Worship: Jesuits and the Art of the Early Catholic Reformation in Germany*, Princeton, 2002, pp. 118-19.
- 70 A. LIDEL & R. SEITZ, *Die Hofkirche Unserer Lieben Frau zu Neuburg an der Donau: Ein Kirchenbau zwischen Reformation und Gegenreformation*, (*Kunst in Bayern und Schwaben*, 4), Weissenhorn, 1983, pp. 40 ff.
- 71 E. MCGRATH, *Peter Paul Rubens. Altäre für Bayern* (Book Review), in *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXXIII: 1063, 1991, pp. 717-719; K. RENGGER, *Peter Paul Rubens: Altäre für Bayern Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen Studio-Ausstellung München, Alte Pinakothek 9. November 1990-13. Januar 1991*, München, 1990, pp. 63-63, 95-98 and docs. 29-39. H. STIERHOF, *Entwürfe von Peter Paul Rubens für die Ausstattung der Hofkirche in Neuburg an der Donau?*, in *Neuburger Kollektaneenblad*, 140, 1992, pp. 254-257. It was Konrad Renger who first drew attention to the possible relationship between the Rubens' drawing of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and a commission of a similar theme mentioned in the correspondence with Count Palatine Wolfgang Wilhelm. It was, however,



McGrath who was able to link this to the monumental relief in the Jesuit church at Neuburg. A year later Stierhof arrived at a similar conclusion, independently of McGrath.

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- 72 Executed around 1618. There are similarities between the representation of the tomb and the covering of the tomb, the books in front of it, the figure in the red cloak (John?), the repoussoir figure in the foreground, the figure at front left with the blue cloak.
- 73 L. LOCK, *Rubens and the Sculpture and Marble Decoration*, in *Innovation and Experience in the Early Baroque in the Southern Netherlands. The case of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp*, (*Architectura Moderna*, 6), (ed. P. Lombaerde), 2008, p. 170.
- 74 J. SNAET, *De jezuietenkerk van Brussel en de XVIIde-eeuwse religieuze architectuur in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden*, in *Vier eeuwen jezuieten te Brussel / Quatre siècles de présence jésuite à Bruxelles*, (*Jésuitica*, 1) (A. Deneef & X. Rousseaux eds.), Brussels, 2012, p. 153.
- 75 K. DE JONGE & J. SNAET, *The Architecture of the Jesuits in the Southern Low Countries. A State of the Art*, in *La arquitectura jesuítica. Actas del Simposio Internacional Zaragoza*, 9, 10 y 11 de diciembre de 2010, Zaragoza, 2012, pp. 267, 272.
- 76 B. HAEGER, *The Façade of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp: Representing the Church Militant and Triumphant*, in *Innovation and Experience in Early Baroque in the Southern Netherlands. The Case of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp*, (*Architectura Moderna* 6), (ed. P. Lombaerde), Turnhout, 2008, pp. 120-121.
- 77 Father Provost Tirinus kept things on a tight rein. The contract for the painted ceilings contains the clear stipulation: “Ten Eersten dat den Voorschreven Sr Rubbens soo baest het hem mogelijk sal synf...)leveren sal de negen en dertigh stucken schilderije de welke tot de Suffjiten soo van de bovenste als benedenste galderijen in de Nieuwe Kercke van de voorschreve Professen noodig syn, volgende

Conclusion

Peter Paul Rubens not only provided numerous altarpieces and an exceptional programme of ceilings for the church of the Jesuit professed house in Antwerp, he also contributed greatly to the building's appearance. The sources make clear, however, that Rubens was not regarded as the building's architect. In line with current understandings of the term, he was not responsible for the building's design, nor did he lead the project. He did provide the designs for the architectural-sculptural ornament of the building and its furnishings. This bountiful decoration was just the thing that gave the whole its characteristic, lavish appearance. In building its marble temple, the militant Society of Jesus was making an inimitable entrance on to Antwerp's “devotional marketplace”.⁸⁸

In light of the canonization and future veneration of the church's patron, St Ignatius of Loyola, the aim of the superiors was a building that in appearance would reflect its status as the first church in the world to be dedicated to the founder of their order. Their inspiration for the lavish architectural-sculptural ornamental front may have come from the tradition of ephemeral church decorations during canonizations. Also, in this period sculptor-architects from Antwerp, such as Hans Van Mildert who took part in the project, often turned to painters for designs. For Van Mildert the painter in question was none other than Peter Paul Rubens. As an experienced designer of architectural-sculptural ornament, and furthermore as someone convinced of their importance to decorum, Rubens was the right man in the right place.

de LySte van de selve schilderijen hem overgegeven van den voors. Praepositus tot wiens geliefte nochtans sal by gebouden syn ettebycke van dien te veranderen soo wanneer by't selfde nuttig bevinden sal. A schedule to the agreement provides a detailed list of the subjects to be depicted.” J. R. MARTIN, *The Ceiling Paintings for the Jesuit Church in Antwerp*, (*Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*, 1), pp. 213-14.

- 78 J. M. MULLER, *Jesuit Uses of Art in the Province of Flanders*, in *The*

Jesuits II: Cultures, sciences, and the arts, 1540-1773, Toronto-Buffalo-London, 2006, p. 133.

- 79 J. SNAET, *De bouwprojecten voor de Antwerpse jezuietenkerk*, in *Bellissimi ingegni, grandissimo splendore: studies over de religieuze architectuur in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden tijdens de 17de eeuw*, (*Symbolae Facultatis litterarum Lovaniensis. Series B*, 13), Leuven, 2000, pp. 43-67.
- 80 C. BAISIER, *De documentaire waarde van de kerkinterieurs van de Antwerpse school in de Spaanse tijd (1585-1713)*,



- unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Leuven, 2008, vol. 1, pp. 71 & 75.
- 81 J. SNAET, *Case study. Rubens's Palazzi di Genova and the Jesuit Churches of Antwerp and Brussels*, in *The Reception of P.P. Rubens's Palazzi di Genova during the 17th century in Europe: questions and problems*, (*Architectura Moderna. Architectural Exchanges in Europe, 16th-17th Centuries*, 1), (ed. P. Lombaerde), Turnhout, 2002, p. 170.
- 82 A pontifical indult granted by the Holy See is needed to dedicate a church or an altar to a Blessed. See also R. MANNAERTS, *De artistieke expressie van de mariale devotie der jezuiteten te Antwerpen (1562-1773): een iconografisch onderzoek*, unpublished Master Thesis University of Leuven, 1983, pp. 363-364.
- 83 J. SNAET, *Case study. Rubens's Palazzi di Genova and the Jesuit Churches of Antwerp and Brussels*, in *The Reception of P.P. Rubens's Palazzi di Genova during the 17th century in Europe: questions and problems*, (*Architectura Moderna. Architectural Exchanges in Europe, 16th-17th Centuries*, 1), (ed. P. Lombaerde), Turnhout, 2002, p. 179; uit de brief nav de wijding van de kerk "Primum quod tota Europa nostra Sanctissimo Parenti nostro Ignatio solenni ritu novimus inauguratum. Basilica si quae alia toto terrarum orbe tanto colono digna." That such elements were in play – and not only for the Society of Jesus – is shown by the example of the Premonstratensian Abbey of St Michael, which in the same period made (vain) attempts to have the body of their order's founder transported to their church in Antwerp. V. HERREMANS, "Opus vere basilicum & stupendum" *Devotionele profilering en persoonlijke zielenheil: de inrichting van het boogkoor van de Antwerpse Sint-Michielsabdij en de abten Matheus Irsselius (1541-1629) en Johannes Chrysostomos Van der Sterre (1591-1652)*, in *Rubensbulletin*, 2, 2008, pp. 15-16.
- 84 M. FAGIOLO DELL' ARCO & S. CARANDINI, *L'effimero barocco: strutture della festa nella Roma del '600*, (*Biblioteca di storia dell'arte*, 10), Rome, 1978. For example: ills. 126 (*Ornamento sontuoso della facciata di S. Pietro de Roma fatto per la canonizzazione di S. Carlo Card: Borromeo l'anno 1610 adi primo di Novembre*, Girolamo Rainaldi, 1610), 174 (San Giacomo degli Spagnoli 1665), 175 (Santa Maria sopra Minerva, 1671), 177 (Anonymous, *Processione della confraternita dell'Annunciata alla Minerva ca. 1650*, Museo di Roma) & 178 (Sant' Agostino).
- 85 See note 14.
- 86 *Palazzi di Genova*, [Antwerpen], 1622, introduction.
- 87 K. OTTENHEYM, *De correspondentie tussen Rubens en Huygens over architectuur (1635-'40)*, in *Bulletin van de Koninklijke Nederlandse Oudheidkundige Bond*, 1996: 1, 1997, pp. 9.
- 88 B. TIMMERMANS, *Patronen van Patronage in het 17de-eeuwse Antwerpen: een elite als actor binnen een kunstwereld*, Amsterdam, 2008, pp. 135-143.