



**Bulletin de l'Institut royal du Patrimoine
artistique / Bulletin Van Het Koninklijk
Instituut Voor Het Kunstpatrimonium**

**38 | 2023
Varia**

Raffaella Morselli and Cecilia Paolini, *Rubens e la cultura italiana 1600-1608*, Rome, Viella libreria editrice, 2020, 337 p., 16 ill., ISBN 978-88-3313-451-2

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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/kikirpa/500>

DOI: 10.4000/kikirpa.500

ISSN: 2983-855X

Publisher

Institut royal du Patrimoine artistique - Koninklijk Instituut voor het Kunstpatrimonium

Printed version

Date of publication: September 1, 2023

Number of pages: 84-85

ISSN: 0085-1892

Electronic reference

Ana Diéguez-Rodríguez, "Raffaella Morselli and Cecilia Paolini, *Rubens e la cultura italiana 1600-1608*, Rome, Viella libreria editrice, 2020, 337 p., 16 ill., ISBN 978-88-3313-451-2", *Bulletin de l'Institut royal du Patrimoine artistique / Bulletin Van Het Koninklijk Instituut Voor Het Kunstpatrimonium* [Online], 38 | 2023, Online since 01 September 2023, connection on 14 December 2023. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/kikirpa/500> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/kikirpa.500>



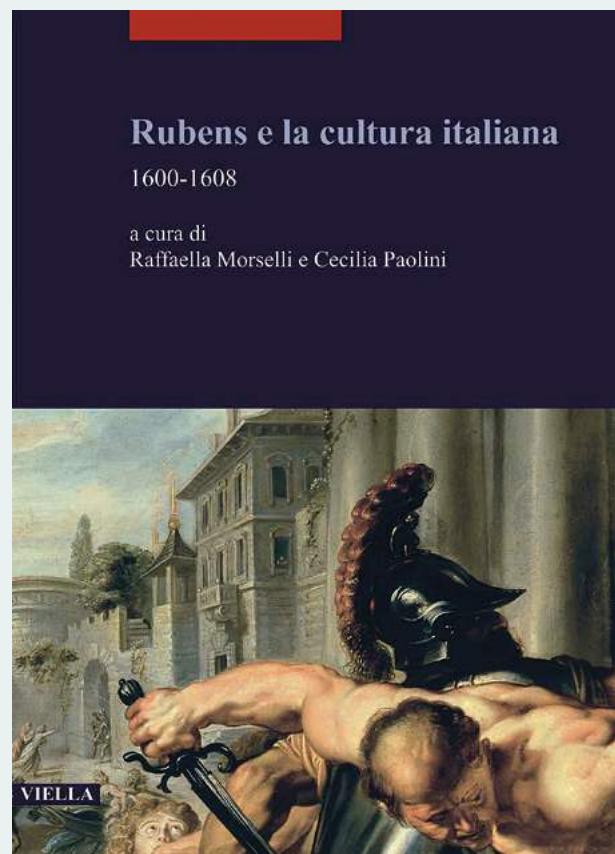
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In 2020 Raffaella Morselli and Cecilia Paolini published *Rubens e la cultura italiana 1600-1608*, a collection of the studies presented at the conference of the same title held at the Palazzo Venezia in Rome from 17 to 19 December 2018 under the coordination of Prof. Morselli. Like the 2018 documentary compilation of the Flemish painter during his journey through Italy (1600-1608),¹ this volume was published by Viella in Rome. In this way, the books produced in Italy on Rubens' Italian journey achieve a visual uniformity.

This volume on Rubens and Italian culture between 1600 and 1608 comprises five sections. The first four relate directly to the painter's milieu during his stay in Italy, while the last is devoted to the reception of Rubens' art in Italian society, particularly in Rome and the viceroyalty of Naples, beyond the years Rubens lived in Italy.

The structure of the book follows a logical approach, beginning with a focus on the network of relations and friendships that supported Rubens on his arrival in Italy, through both the specific commissions he received and the close relations he established with his new patrons. Belinda Granata draws on the correspondence of Cardinal Montalto in various archives, including the Gonzaga Archive, to confirm the drawing in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin as a design by Cardinal Alessandro Peretti Montalto and not Cardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte, as has been suggested.² Madeline



Delbé traces the Flemish painter's presence in Florence, not only through his documented visits and the works that he made in relation to the city, but also through those works that the Flemish painter was able to see and copy directly in the city. Cecilia Paolini reviews Vincenzo Gonzaga's mission to Rubens in Spain. The historian starts from the known correspondence and rescues some new records in the Gonzaga Archive which highlight the Duke's intentions to gain royal favour for him as successor to Archduke Albert in Flanders, as well as his reactions to the negotiations at the court in Valladolid. This first section ends with Alberto Banco's work on Rubens' commission for Santa Maria in Vallicella or *Chiesa Nuova*, for which the painter made various proposals.

1 R. Morselli, *Tra Fiandre e Italia: Rubens 1600-1608: regesto biografico-critico*, Rome, 2018.

2 M. Jaffé, *Rubens e l'Italia*, Rome, 1984, fig. 258; Z. Waźbiński, *Uno schizzo di P.P. Rubens per il ritratto di un cardinale: Montalto o Del Monte? L'ipotesi su un committente romano del pittore fiammingo*, in C. Limentani Viridis and F. Bottacin (ed.), *Rubens dall'Italia all'Europa*, Vicenza, 1992, p. 61-74; A. Seidel, *Gia Lorenzo Berninis Büste Kardinal Alessandro Peretti Montaltos aus der Villa Montalto*, in *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, 41, 2017, p. 393-424.

The second section focuses on the influences that Rubens experienced during his stay in Italy but also on the impact that his own works had on Italian artists. From what direct knowledge of Caravaggio's work meant for the Flemish artist – which led to his intervention in the purchase of the *Virgin of the Rosary* for the Dominicans in Antwerp, which Nils Büttner explains as marking Rubens' admiration for the Italian – to the inspiration, highlighted by Michele Nicolaci, that the Flemish artist's work brought to some of Giovanni Baglione's compositions. The references behind *Prometheus Bound*, which Eveliina Juntunen points out, are broader, and this section ends with some of Rubens' own reflections on the concepts of copy, replica and imitation, in particular his treatise *De imitatione statuarum*, of which he spoke in his letters and of which loose leaves and several partial copies have survived, and which Marina Daiman uses to investigate Rubens' theory of Italian art.

The third section could have been included in the previous one as it deals with the influences, in this case of architecture, sculpture and the remains of classical and contemporary stones, which Rubens assimilated and integrated into his compositions. Barbara Uppenkamp starts with the design of the master's house in Antwerp to discuss the Italian models Rubens adapted and his perception of the classical world, partly as a result of the humanist and enlightened circle he frequented in Italy. Marcia Pointon is more specific, including knowledge of the natural collections published at the beginning of the seventeenth century that Rubens may have known, as well as the collections containing these types of objects that the painter visited, as a further source of inspiration for his compositions.

The book's fourth section is devoted to the theoretical apparatus, both philosophical and literary, to which he had access during his stay in Italy. Dalma Frascarelli deals with a subject that has not yet been sufficiently explored, Rubens's readings. She compares the titles listed in the inventory of his library, known from the inventory drawn up on the occasion of its sale in 1658, with the

editions of these books that circulated during the painter's lifetime. For the historian, these readings explain many of the interactions between the classical and religious traditions. More specific with regard to his books is the text by Giacomo Montanari, which focuses on the painter's Neostoic interests in the Genoese Giovanni Vincenzo Imperiale. Teresa Esposito reflects on the Neostoic scholarship which Rubens drew on and which is embodied in his *Theoretical Notebook*. Catherine Lusheck ends the section by discussing Rubens' artistic theory, drawn from his text on *De imitatione statuarum*, and the Neostoic influences that permeate it, derived from his circles of friends.

This extensive analysis of Rubens' stay in Italy – from the (diplomatic and artistic) circles in which he moved to the readings and art collections to which he had access – expands and explains part of the directions in which his art developed. This monograph by Raffaella Morselli and Cécilia Paolini brings to the fore a period in Rubens' production which, since Jaffé's monograph of 1977 based on his thesis on *Rubens in Italy 1600-1608*,³ defended at Kings College, Cambridge in 1951, had not been approached as a whole. Exhibitions have been held on the subject, especially on the portraits painted in Genoa, with an emphasis on the change of pattern that the Flemish artist proposed, and articles have appeared on specific aspects of his work during his stay.⁴ However, there has been no reflection on what Rubens' expectations were upon his arrival in Italy and how his experiences there affected him. With this in mind, Prof. Morselli's introductory chapter to this volume perfectly summarises the great capacity for observation and curiosity that imbued the Flemish painter's works and letters during those transcendental years in his production. The book includes a useful index of names and places (p. 305-320). The specific bibliography is given in the footnotes to each of the papers, leaving the last pages for abstracts in English and Italian of each of the papers as well as brief author profiles.

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³ M. Jaffé, *Rubens and Italy*, Oxford, 1977.

⁴ J. Müller Hofstede, *Rubens in Italien 1600-1608: Rangstufen der Skulptur in der 'Imitatio' von Antike und Florentiner Cinquecento*, in M. Seidel and F. Fehrenbach (ed.), *L'Europa e l'Arte italiana: per i cento anni dalla fondazione del Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz*, Venice, 2000, p. 284-305; R. Morselli, *Vincenzo Gonzaga e la pittura fiamminga alla corte di Mantova. Spigolature su Rubens e Pourbus*, in *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome*, 76, 2006-2008, p. 137-169.