

Snijders, de Vos, van Kessel, Fijt, Weenix und anderer niederländischer Barockmaler zu entdecken. Die Publikation ist daher eine erstklassige Einführung in die Thematik. Leider kommen neben der ausführlichen Betrachtung der jeweiligen Erzählstrategie die Fragen des Entstehungsprozesses und der Mal- beziehungsweise Zeichentechnik etwas zu kurz. Denn obwohl es zutreffend ist, dass Künstler wie Hondecoeter oder Snijders malende Dramaturgen waren, ist für mich das Faszinierendste an ihren Werken doch die Virtuosität bei der Darstellung von Tieren in Aktion. Eine Frage, die sich in diesem Kontext aufdrängt und die fraglos eine vertiefende Betrachtung und weitere Forschung verdient, ist also die nach (Unter-)Zeichnungen und Vorstudien, die nur in geringer Zahl erhalten sind. Im gesamten Buch sind nur zwei Zeichnungen abgebildet, die allerdings nicht ausführlicher diskutiert oder mit den Gemälden verglichen werden. Darüber hinaus könnte man zum Beispiel durch Vergleiche mit Fotografien beziehungsweise Filmaufnahmen untersuchen, wie präzise die Maler die Anatomie und die Bewegungsabläufe der Vögel beobachteten.

Insgesamt präsentiert uns Lianne Wepler mit ihrer Dissertation dennoch eine beeindruckende Studie und einen grundlegenden Beitrag zur Erforschung der niederländischen Vogelmalerei. Sie verweist auf viele offene Fragen und ebnet zahlreiche neue Wege für die künftige Forschung auf diesem bisher zu Unrecht vernachlässigten Gebiet.

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Alejandro Vergara and Anne T. Woollett (Eds.); Spectacular Rubens. The Triumph of the Eucharist; issued on the occasion of the exhibition on view at the Museo Nacional del Prado (March 25 to June 29, 2014), the J. Paul Getty Museum (October 14, 2014 to January 11, 2015), and the Museum of Fine Arts Houston (February 15 to May 10, 2015); Los Angeles: Getty Publications 2014; 112p.; ISBN 978-1-60606-430-6; \$ 24.95

In the early sixteen-twenties Peter Paul Rubens designed a series of tapestries celebrating the triumph of the Eucharist for Isabella Clara Eugenia, sovereign of the Spanish Netherlands. Characteristic of the process of creating templates for tapestries was the necessity to execute mirror-inverted, full size cartoons for weavers to use as patterns. Rubens expressed his initial ideas in the form of small rudimentary oil sketches, known as *bozzetti*. These *bozzetti* served as templates for slightly larger, more detailed modelli, in which the compositions were inverted in anticipation of the real size cartoons. The Museo Nacional del Prado houses the largest collection of modelli, which were until recently in a delicate condition, and unsuitable for public display. In 2010 it was decided to restore the six

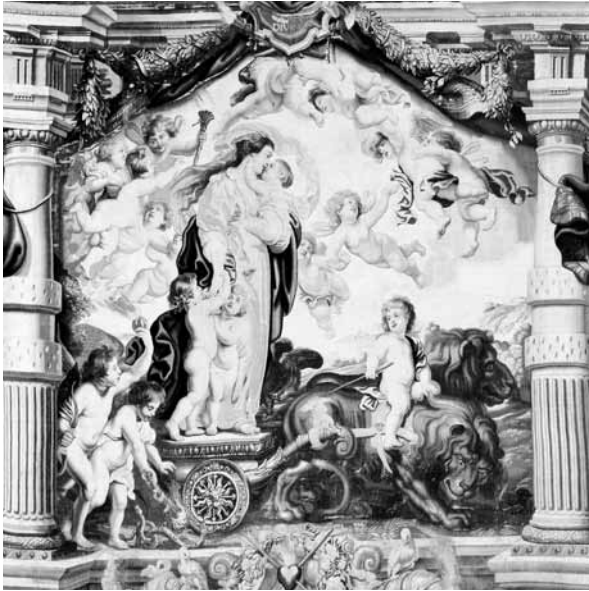


The Triumph of Divine Love,
Modello (79)

panels, which involved the correction of previous mishandling and the removal of later additions to the panels.

The project's starting point was a partnership between the Prado and the Getty Foundation's Panel Paintings Initiative. A two-year grant, additionally funded by the Fundación Iberdrola, not only supported the restoration of the panels but also the training of seven panel conservators in the Prado's conservation studio. Displaying both design and final product by uniting the newly restored modelli with four of the original tapestries from the Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales was the special merit of the Exhibition. Alejandro Vergara of the Prado and Anne Woollett, curator of Paintings at the Getty Museum, cooperated on the exhibition as well as the associated catalogue.

Woollett opens the series of six catalogue essays with an article on the Infanta, presenting details on her upbringing, her duties and beliefs and the contextual circumstances of the commission. Isabella Clara Eugenia was raised in Madrid as Philip's II favourite daughter, and after being married to her cousin Archduke Albert of Austria in 1598, she and her husband were appointed sovereigns of the Spanish Netherlands. When Rubens returned to Antwerp from Italy in 1609, the archdukes named him their *'paintre de hostel'* within months. During the following years their relationship evolved and Rubens became a close confidante of the princely couple. After the twelve-year truce between the Dutch and the Spanish expired in 1621 and Albert's passing a couple of months later, Rubens functioned as one of Isabella's most trusted advisers. She entrusted Rubens with carrying out sensitive diplomatic missions and in the 1620's these official duties took him to France, Spain and England. It was during these years of political and personal turbulence that the Infanta commissioned a series celebrating the Eucharist, which she intended as a present to the Fran-



*The Triumph of Devine Love,
Tapestry (81)*

ciscan Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales (Convent of the Barefoot Royals) in Madrid. For Rubens this was not the first commission of this sort. Around 1616 he had designed a tapestry cycle depicting the life of the Roman consul Decius Mus for an unidentified Genoese aristocrat and in 1622 a series illustrating the life of Constantine was manufactured. Documentation regarding the commission of the series has been lost and consequently, the exact circumstances that brought about the costly donation to the convent are open to speculation. Seeing that a first batch of tapestries was verifiably sent to Madrid as early as 1628, Woollett doubts that the tapestries could have been commissioned as a votive offering after a military success in 1625. In view of the time it took to plan and to execute a series of this sort, she suggests the tapestries were commissioned as early as 1622, when the Infanta stepped into the dual role as a sole political sovereign and a paragon of piety.

Ana Garcia Sanz addresses the question of function and placement of the 20 tapestries that were presumably manufactured concurrently in the workshops of Jan Raes I and Jacob Geubels II.¹ With regard to the issue of dating the commission she mentions a document which recorded the transport of a large quantity of silk thread from Madrid to Brussels in 1620, thereby challenging Woollett's proposed date of 1622. Unfortunately the issue is not further elaborated upon. The main function of the tapestries was to adorn the traditionally bare church walls on high ceremonial events such as Good Friday. Sanz's essay provides four graphic representations of the

¹ In revision to the Spanish version of this publication the tapestries are ascribed to Jan Raes I (1574-1651) in accordance with Koenraad Brosens' research on the Raes family.



*The Triumph of the Church, Tapestry,
Detail (Front Flap)*

church's interior presenting the proposed location of the tapestries in a clear way. Although not part of a consecutive story, the image content allows for some conclusions. For instance, the order of the depicted columns strongly suggests a hanging in two tiers. Additionally, the rendering of the architectural elements from different perspectives gives some indication of their envisioned location. This, together with a seventeenth century description of ceremonies and the analysis of the church's interior, have allowed for new hypotheses concerning the hanging of the variously sized tapestries. In contrast to most studies, for instance, which propose a group of five tapestries at the high altar, Sanz concludes that the chancel was decorated with the single largest tapestry of the series, *The Triumph of the Church*. Descriptions of ceremonies reveal that the altar was customarily highly adorned for ceremonial events, and with all the decorations, for the tapestry at the altar to be visible it would have had to be hung high. *The Triumph of the Church* tapestry's Solomonic columns indicate a high hanging point, making its placement above the altar plausible.

In the ensuing essay Alejandro Vergara devotes himself to Rubens's pictorial language, through which he chose to glorify the mystery of the Eucharist. Compared to earlier versions of this subject, Vergara recognizes a distinct evolution in the depiction of the central mystery of the Roman Catholic Church. In Raphael's *Disputa* the figures seek to comprehend – in Ruben's designs there is no more room for discussion. The dispute is over and the church emerges victorious. Quite literally, John Calvin and Martin Luther flee from the personification of truth in *The Victory of Truth over Heresy*. Vergara further observes that the scenes from the series offer a prime demonstration of Rubens's profound knowledge of Renaissance art and antiquity. For



The Victory of Truth over Heresy, Modello (69)

instance, the general compositional scheme of some scenes is retrieved from depictions of Roman triumphs. Figurative elements such as presenting the images on feigned tapestries that hang from fictional architecture derive from Italian fresco decoration. Raphael's central scene of the vault of the gallery of Psyche, in the Farnesina, depicted as a trompe l'oeil tapestry, is referred to as an example.

The second part of the catalogue is dedicated to the methods and results of the extensive restoration. Key aspects of the restoration process were the removing of enlargements and later painted additions and the reinforcing of the structures without thereby restricting the wood's need for dimensional movement. The restoration team around José de la Fuente, the Prado conservator in charge of the project found a solution in the form of perimeter strainers with spring mechanisms tailored to the curvature of the panel. By closing cracks and reducing the warping, the legibility of the images was improved greatly.

María Antonia López de Asiaín follows with an account of the treatment of the paint surface. The six modelli had never been treated collectively and the aim was to unify their appearance and to rectify the damage resulting from earlier improper handling. The cleaning brought Rubens's extremely direct technique to light, which consisted of a layer of translucent wash on which he formulated shadows with parallel or crosshatched lines. After this he applied diluted paint in long brushstrokes to build the composition and the figures in the background, and thicker paint to define the foreground. Finally, he added shadows and delicate details with a grainy paint that resembles tempera.

The catalogue concludes with an essay by Alejandro Vergara on the technical study of the modelli. It is noticeable that underdrawings, inscriptions and corrections never appear in all six designs. For instance, only two of the modelli feature inscriptions referring to the subject depicted. Why inscriptions were needed in those particular cases is unclear. Vergara concludes, that rather than in an orderly process, the se-

ries emerged somewhat haphazardly and throughout an extensive space of time. To what extent these varying origins were taken into account regarding the restoration and its objective of achieving “the greatest possible uniformity” (87) is not specified.

In total, the catalogue offers a comprehensive view on the evolvement of the Eucharist series.

Especially the results of the restoration offer an interesting new insight into the development of the series, even if further interpretation of these results was not provided.

The catalogue is presented in a pleasing and straightforward fashion, clearly legible and therefore equally suitable for use in research as well as a broader audience. High quality images provide additional advantages, making the publication an altogether successful conclusion of an ambitious project.

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Jan Blanc; Vermeer: La fabrique de la gloire; Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod 2014; 382 S., zahlr. zumeist farb. Abb.; ISBN 978-2-85088-579-2

Den Umschlag der gewichtigen Vermeer-Monografie von Jan Blanc ziert das *Mädchen mit dem Perlenohrring*. Nicht erst seit der Verfilmung von Tracey Chevaliers gleichnamigem Roman behauptet dieses bemerkenswerte Bild einen festen Platz im kollektiven Bildergedächtnis. Die kaum drei Dutzend Gemälde Vermeers sorgen in Ausstellungen für Besucherrekorde und stimulieren Dichter, Filmemacher und Wissenschaftler zu immer neuen Formen der Annäherung. Von der kunsthistorischen Forschung werden Zu- und Abschreibungen genauso eifrig diskutiert, wie die Chronologie des Œuvres. Zu diesen seit dem 19. Jahrhundert diskutierten Themen traten in den letzten Jahrzehnten biografische und sozialhistorische Forschungen, vor allem aber Debatten um Deutung und Bedeutung von Vermeers Bildern, die bis heute fortgeführt werden. Darüber hinaus hat sich der Interpretationsrahmen in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten um Naturwissenschaften, Philosophie- und Technikgeschichte erweitert sowie um Deutungsansätze, die ausgehend von phänomenologischen Überlegungen das Überzeitliche in der Kunst Vermeers zu beschreiben versuchen. Vor dem Hintergrund einer kaum mehr überschaubaren Flut an Publikationen versucht Jan Blanc eine neue Annäherung an die ‚Sphinx von Delft‘, wie der Maler seit den Zeiten Thoré-Bürgers gern genannt wird.

Der Verfasser, Inhaber des Lehrstuhls für Kunstgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit an der Universität Genf, ist ein ausgewiesener Experte auf dem Gebiet der niederlän-