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THE SPINOLA RUBENS



*The Spinola Rubens.*



THE  
SPINOLA RUBENS

AN APPRECIATION

BY

WALLACE L. CROWDY  
HENRI FRANTZ  
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INCLUDING DECLARATIONS BY

PROF. GIOVANNI BATTISTA VILLA  
AND  
MARCHESE ALBERTO SPINOLA

WITH PHOTOGRAVURE PLATE  
AND  
PORTRAIT OF RUBENS

EDINBURGH

OTTO SCHULZE AND COMPANY

20 SOUTH FREDERICK STREET

1911



## THE SPINOLA RUBENS

**T**HERE is a splendour in the art of Rubens which no connoisseur will attempt to deny; and there is more, there is genius; and in considering the art of such a master this picture from the collection of Mr J. S. Murray of Galashiels is of the greatest importance. Rubens, like every really great man, has his detractors, or it would be more accurate to say those who misjudge his art. They take one aspect of it, which does not appeal to their modern delicate and fastidious taste, and pass by on the other side. But Rubens is no maimed or wounded traveller waiting for Samaritan aid. He has arrived in the full splendour of his glories, and his fame remains secure in the temple of art. *Judicis officium est, ut res, ita tempora rerum quaerere!* It is quite unfashionable to quote the classics, but it is sometimes politic to say a hard thing in a hard language. The art and genius of Rubens must be considered in relation to its age and the place of its birth, and the very qualities of it are the more valuable inasmuch as they mirror the life and manners that are coeval and coexistent. Rubens was born in a sumptuous age in Flanders. On an old Gothic house in the Sternengasse at Cologne a marble slab informs the stranger that here Peter Paul Rubens was born. But neither Cologne nor her rival Antwerp can support their claim to the honour of having seen



the birth of the Flemish artist-prince. Incontestable facts now prove that this event occurred in the little town of Siegen in Westphalia. And the date—28th June 1577.

The time and place of the birth of Peter Paul Rubens having been considered, is there not something premonitory in the circumstances which surrounded it? The almost incredible intrigue between the lawyer father and Anne of Saxony, wife of William of Orange, the great leader of the Dutch Rebellion; and the noble-minded forgiveness by the injured wife, born Maria Pypelinx, a merchant's daughter. The noble letters which Maria Ruebens (for the name was then spelt thus) wrote are still to be seen, and Peter Paul must be added to that long list of famous sons who have owed so much to their patient, all-guiding mothers.

Let us follow the life history of Peter Paul a little further, for these circumstances of his upbringing are of the utmost significance. He was but ten years old when the newly-made widow of Johann Rubens obtained permission to return to Antwerp with her children. Here he was attached as a page to the suite of Marguerite de Ligne, widow of Count Phillip of Lalaing, and became first the pupil of the landscape-painter, Tobias Verhæcht, and then of Adam van Noort, an artist much praised by his contemporaries, but of whose talent we can now form no judgment whatever, since no picture now extant can with any certainty be attributed to him. Then came the four years with Van Veen, the far-famed Otho Vænius; and finally, in 1598, the admission of Peter Paul into the Guild of St Luke. To this event, and to the fact that the patrons of the arts were still to be found almost entirely amongst the rulers of the



States and the princes of the Church, we owe that series of religious pictures which some find it difficult to understand in the sumptuous fleshly art of the great Fleming.

Then the sojourn in Italy; his friendship with that most zealous patron of the Arts, Vincenzo Gonzaga, then Duke of Mantua; the execution of the pictures for the decoration of the Church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme at Rome, especially interesting, as they are generally regarded as the earliest original creations of the artist; the copying (or translating is a better word) of the works of Titian and the commission of the Emperor Rudolf of two pictures by Correggio; his return to his own country, where he really discovered his talent and entered upon that period of his life during which he achieved his immortal fame; his marriage in October 1609 to Isabella Brandt; the birth of his son Albrecht in 1614; the innumerable commissions for religious pictures which now crowded upon him—all these things must be taken into account in our consideration of the art of Peter Paul Rubens and particularly of this picture of "The Infant Christ and St John."

In considering in the first place the art of the painter-prince let us remember the two inscriptions which are still to be seen on the triumphal arch of the garden pavilion of the sumptuous palace which Rubens fashioned for himself on the Place de Meir. Both are most characteristic of his philosophy. On the one side are these lines from Juvenal :

"Trust to the gods to care for us and our prosperity,  
They love men better than they do themselves";

on the other side :

"Pray that in your healthy body may live a healthy mind ;

And that your heart may neither flinch from death  
Nor be given over to passion and desire."

Read these mottoes ; think of them and rightly judge Rubens.

In an article which I wrote elsewhere I tried to make the position of Peter Paul Rubens in art fairly definite. What a stupendous genius was his! He chose all subjects for his brush, but the religious altarpiece probably occupied him as much as any. To this he gave little of Gothic sentiment, but everything of Renaissance splendour. His art was more material than spiritual, more brilliant and startling in sensuous qualities, such as line and colour, than charming by facial expression or tender feeling. Something of the Paolo Veronese cast of mind, he conceived things largely, and painted them proportionately—large Titanic types, broad schemes and masses of colour, great, sweeping lines of beauty. One value of this largeness was its ability to hold at a distance upon wall or altar. Hence, when seen to-day, close at hand, in museums, people are apt to think Rubens's art coarse and gross.

There is no prettiness about his type. It is not effeminate or sentimental, but rather robust, full of life and animal spirits, full of blood, bone and muscle, of majestic dignity, grace, and power, and glowing with splendour of colour. In imagination, in conception of art purely as art, and not as a mere vehicle to convey religious or mythological ideas—in mental grasp of the pictorial world—Rubens stands with Titian and Velasquez in the very front rank of painters. As a technician he was unexcelled. A master of composition, modelling, and drawing, a master of light and a colour-harmonist of the rarest ability, he, in addition, possessed the most certain, adroit, and facile hand that ever



handled a paintbrush. Nothing could be more sure than the touch of Rubens, nothing more easy and masterful. He was trained in both mind and eye, a genius by birth and by education, a painter who saw keenly, and was able to realise what he saw with certainty.

Well born, ennobled by royalty, successful in both court and studio, Rubens lived brilliantly, and his life was a series of triumphs. He painted enormous canvases, and the number of pictures, altar-pieces, mythological decorations, landscapes, and portraits scattered throughout the galleries of Europe and attributed to him is simply amazing. He was undoubtedly helped in many of his canvases by his pupils, but the works painted by his own hand make a world of art in themselves. He was the greatest painter of the North, a full, rounded, complete genius, like Titian in his universality.

"The Spinola Rubens," in the words of Lord Henry Scott, "is quite one of the nicest and most companionable Rubens I have ever seen, quite devoid of the coarseness which is so common in a Rubens." And this brings me to my outlook with regard to Rubens and his attributed coarseness. "A man long trained to love the monk's vision of Fra Angelico," says Ruskin, "turns in proud and ineffable disgust from the first work of Rubens which he encounters on his return across the Alps. But is he right in his indignation? He has forgotten that while Angelico prayed and wept in his olive shade there was different work doing in the dark fields of Flanders—wild seas to be banked up, and boundless marshes to be drained; hard ploughing and harrowing of the frosty clay; careful breeding of stout horses and fat cattle; close setting



of brick walls against cold winds and snows ; much hardening of hands and gross stoutenings of bodies in all this ; gross jovialities of harvest homes and Christmas feasts which were to be the reward of it, rough affection and sluggish imaginations ; fleshy, substantial iron-shod humanities, but humanities still ; humanities which God had His eye upon and which won, perhaps, here and there, as much favour in His sight as the wasted aspects of the whispering monks of Florence. (Heaven forbid it should not be so, since the most of us cannot be monks, but must be ploughmen and reapers still.) And are we to suppose there is no nobility in Rubens's masculine and universal sympathy with all this, and with his large human rendering of it, gentleman though he was by birth, and feeling, and education, and place ; and, when he chose, lordly in conception also ? He had his faults, perhaps great and lamentable faults, though more those of his time and his country than his own ; he has neither cloister breeding nor boudoir breeding and is very unfit to paint either in Missals or annuals ; but he has an open sky and wide world breeding in him, that we may not be offended with, fit alike for king's court, knight's camp or peasant's cottage."

It is thus that Rubens was a child of Flanders. But he was also a child of the intellectual time in which he lived. "He was born at a time," says Ruskin, "when the Reformation had been arrested. His father, curiously enough, had fled from Antwerp as a Reformer, but afterwards returned to Catholicism. The Evangelicals despised the arts, while the Roman Catholics were effete or insincere, and could not retain influence over men of strong reasoning power. The painters could only

associate frankly with men of the world, and themselves became men of the world. Men, I mean, having no belief in spiritual existences, or interests or affections, beyond the grave. Not but that they still painted Scriptural subjects. Altar-pieces were wanted occasionally and pious patrons sometimes commissioned a cabinet Madonna. But there is just this difference between men of this modern period and the Florentines or Venetians, that whereas the latter never exert themselves fully except on a sacred subject, the Flemish and Dutch Masters are always languid unless they are profane."

Let me, for a time, pass from a consideration of Rubens's art and turn to the pedigree of the Spinola family. Here it is:—

## FAMIGLIA SPINOLA

Battista *q. Antonio Francisca Grimaldi q. Gio. Batta	1551.73.†79 Luca Ginevra Ler- cari q. *Gaspere 1573 †94	1573.78.98 Gioffredo *Maria Gri- maldi *q. Girolamo q. Bene- detto	1593†1604 Girolamo Maria Palla- vicini q. Tobia	1636.44.†57 Gio. Stefano Cattarina Pallavicini q. G. Andrea q. Tobia	1647.76 Gio. Andrea Teresa Giustiniani q. Luca	1678.76.93 Gio. Stefano Giulia Spi- nola q. Francesco Ma <sup>a</sup> erede di Lerma 1693	1692 Gio. Andrea Francisca Brignole q. Anton Giu- lio, 1719† 1778	1724.44.†70 Gio. Stefano Lilla de Mari q. Ippolito	1769.92.95 Gio. Andrea Teresa Gri- maldi Oliva q. Battista 2 <sup>a</sup> Isabella	ex <sup>1a</sup> 1825 *Ippolito Giulia Bossi q. Marchese Benigno di Milano 2 <sup>a</sup> Gironima Carrega di Gio. Batta	1809 25 ex <sup>2a</sup> Gio. Batta
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Si certifica l'esattezza di questa trascrizione dall' Opera:—*Battiliana, genealogie delle famiglie Nobili di Genova*, vol. ii. pp. 23, 33, e 34, esistente in questa Biblioteca.

GENOVA, BIBLIOTECA CIVICA BERIO,  
2 Febbraio 1898.



IL BIBLIOTECARIO  
IPPOLITO ISOLA.

V<sup>o</sup>. IL SINDACO.  
F POZZO.

BRITISH CONSULATE,  
GENOVA, February 8, 1898.

The above signature of F. Pozzo, Syndic of the City of Genoa, is hereby attested by me.

WM. KEENE,  
H.B.M. Consul.

[STAMP.]



Rubens was connected with many of the names on this tree, having painted the portraits of Maria Grimaldi and also that of the daughter of Gaspare Spinola, of whom he was said to have been greatly enamoured. These two portraits, among the finest he ever painted, hang at Kingston Lacy in Dorset. It is quite reasonable to surmise that this picture of "The Infant Christ and St John" was in all probability painted for this lady or the family generally. The picture itself was left by the Marquis Ippolito Spinola (a bachelor), who always stated that it came direct to him by family descent from the Doge Luca Spinola, together with all his effects to the Society of the Pio Ricovero of Genoa. From these custodians it passed to Professor Isola of Genoa and was sold by his friend, Professor Villa, a great sculptor of that city, to its present owner on behalf of his widow.

It was only after long investigation that Mr Murray discovered what he had purchased and whence it had come. Moreover, any connoisseur of Rubens could see, since it has been so carefully and perfectly cleaned, and as it hung amongst that wonderful exhibition of "L'Art Belge au XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle" in the new palace of art in the Cinquantenaire Park at Brussels, that it was one of the finest of Rubens's works and one of the most pleasing.

By the way, the great General Spinola, who was such an intimate friend of Rubens and whose portrait he painted several times, belonged to a different branch of the family. The connection between the two branches can be seen in the tree of the Spinola family. All these facts make this picture most interesting. Even the name of Pallavicini can be

connected with Rubens and this work as they again were closely connected with the Balbi family, who possess a small panel of the same which was formerly looked upon as the original, but has since lost that proud title. There are other copies to be found in the galleries and private collections of Europe, including an interesting School picture of the subject at Potsdam belonging to His Majesty the Kaiser.

What gives "The Spinola Rubens" additional importance is that the figures are life-size. Notwithstanding this it is painted like a miniature and has the beautiful colour of a fine enamel. I do not know of any other picture upon which Rubens has bestowed the same care and it is not difficult to find the reason of his having done so. The greatness of the subject, the fact that the children are obviously painted from his own children, the person for whom it was in all probability painted—these are reasons enough for a fineness and completeness of finish seldom found in his work. Indeed, as a study in modelling and flesh painting, I think it would be difficult to find its equal, while the landscape with its brilliant colouring reminds us of the glow of Titian.

I will pass to some further considerations of the work in detail made possible by its exhibition side by side with the others recently in Brussels. But meanwhile look at the characteristic drawing of a "Head of a Child" (Nicholas Rubens as a child), in the Albertina at Vienna; of the two children in the "Mary, Refuge of Sinners," in the Gallery at Cassel; of the undoubted likeness to the "Rubens Sons"—now grown older—in the Lichtenstein Gallery; at "The Garland of Fruit,"



in the Pinakothek at Munich; at the "Madonna with the Holy Innocents," in the Louvre; there is a great deal more than a mere family likeness between these and the "Christ and St John." How characteristic of Rubens' genius, the sense and feeling of life and motion which he has so successfully imparted in the eager attitude of the youthful St John.

It was unquestionably the most brilliant of all the Rubens got together last year at Brussels. Let us take for comparison "La Madone à la Corbeille à Ouvrage," belonging to his Majesty the German Emperor. Although handled as well as seen on a smaller scale, it is own fellow to this, with a wealth of most beautiful colour, and in a far greater state of finish than the somewhat similar "La Vierge allaitant L'Enfant"—also belonging to his Majesty—a very Rubenesque child by no means highly finished but full of fresh charm. Then again there is much in common between this picture of these wholesome, chubby children and the extremely fine and famous "Portrait of Isabella Brandt," which belongs to M. Jules Porges of Paris and is very much of the same splendid period. In both is the same true golden quality, subtle but round modelling, undying qualities as fine as anything of this period and country.

The general tone of the picture appears to me similar to the "Madone à la Corbeille" and the "La Vierge" already referred to; and to the interesting "La Louve allaitant Romulus et Remus" painted by Rubens at the end of his stay in Rome, and now in the Musée du Capitole in that city. The similarity of the landscape, the touch and the tone, the children painted obviously from the same models and the characteristic atti-



tudes! "The Spinola Rubens" again finds its counterpart in the flesh tones of "Le Bain de Diane" from Munich. So different in subject and yet so similar in colour, tone and handling! Look at the flesh painting and especially the beautiful drawing of the figure of the seated attendant. It is much more own brother to that of the "La Louve," and to the most typical "Judgment of Paris," which, small as it is, is full of gorgeous quality and comes from M. Ch.-Léon Cardon's collection in Brussels.

The colour of the red drapery in Mr Murray's picture at first puzzled me, but I am of opinion that its beauty is due to the extraordinarily fine state of preservation of the picture. When the "La Madone à la Corbeille" has had like thoughtful treatment and approaches to something of the fine condition of the Dublin picture we shall find the colours almost identical. That of the "Spinola," if lower in tone than the typical uninspired but none the less interesting "Les Saintes Femmes" belonging to Count Czernin of Vienna, is shade for shade a match for the red in the oval "Portrait de l'Archiduc Ferdinand" which belonged to W. Sedelmayer of Paris, and the dignified "Jésus-Christ remettant les clefs à Saint Pierre" which was painted a year or two before the "Spinola" and belongs to Mr Bacon of New York.

The unusual breadth of treatment marks the picture indubitably of its period. See, for the same large way of handling, the "La Louve allaitant Romulus et Remus," unquestionably of the same period, the "La Madone à la Corbeille," and the "Satyre et Tigresse."

*What others think let them say :*

Parmi les plus brillants d'exécution, un vrai morceau de maître et Rubens fût le Maître des maîtres. — Benjamin Constant.

Superbe, incontestable.—Antonin Proust, the well-known French critic and Ministre des Beaux-Arts for a generation.

De la main même du maître—un œuvre de Rubens *de tout premier ordre*—une chose unique. (Le paysage qui sert de fond ne laisse aussi aucun doute à ce sujet, il est parfaitement de la même main, et qu'aucune autre main n'aurait pu s'identifier à ce travail plus que délicat.)—L. G. Barrau, the distinguished painter, pupil of Baron Wappers and a special student of Rubens.

Rubens à l'apogée de son talent.—Neumans.

I look upon the picture as one of the finest works by Rubens in existence and a work of quite incomparable beauty. (The picture is a splendid one, Dr W. to Mr G. M.)—Dr Williamson.

(Dr Williamson writes that he thought of proposing the picture to the Hermitage Gallery at St Petersburg but gave up the idea on account of the deplorable condition of Russia.)

A remarkable specimen of the incomparable Master's hand—a remarkable picture in every way; one of the finest master-pieces of Rubens.

In this picture I find, first of all the extreme elegance of harmonious lines in the composition; the easy and natural realism of the movements in the children; also the real types of heads so familiar and so characteristic in most of his pictures



where children are introduced ; then the skilful masterly way of adapting the landscape to the figures—the background proves his great talent for landscape painting—there is an idyllic feeling in absolute keeping with the subject. In this picture there is more refinement of feeling than in most of his other works ; and there is great delicacy of treatment which is entirely exempt from a certain coarseness of forms, which can often be traced in the works of Rubens—the heads are most realistic and finely modelled notwithstanding the powerful key and brilliancy of colouring which is one of the great merits in this work. The picture seems to be painted with the utmost care to avoid exaggeration ; as well in form as with regard to colour ; there is absence of crudeness in the shadows, and though powerful, they are never harsh or overdone — the technique however is as bold as in his work of tenfold dimensions. The subject is so refined and pleasant that one could place this picture in any room as well as in a gallery.—Heyermans, a student of Rubens for nearly half-a-century at Antwerp under Baron Wappers, de Keyser, and Charles Verlat.

Painted in Antwerp in 1615.—Max Rooses.

One of the finest Rubens I have seen, one of the great pictures of the world.—Heymans.

The finest Rubens I know : the famous Rubens.—Nico Jungman.

That remarkable picture.—The Duke d'Alençon.

Quite one of the nicest and most companionable Rubens I have ever seen, quite devoid of the coarseness which is so common with a Rubens.—Lord Henry Scott.

We have seen picture, which is splendid.—Brangwyn.

There is no doubt the picture is a Rubens and a *good* one.  
—George Clausen, R.A. to Frank Brangwyn, A.R.A.

Superb, incomparably superior to expectations from photograph.—Father Mackey, a keen student of pictures and resident for over twenty years in Rome.

An original Rubens.—Baron Kervyn, Organiser of the Salon of Ancient Art, Brussels.

The picture was No. 123 in the last Old Masters exhibit at Burlington House, and was No. 410 in the Rubens's Age Exhibition of 1910, at Brussels, to which it was specially invited.

This classic work was frequently engraved at the time of its execution. The following is an extract from a catalogue of engravings after Rubens issued at Harlem in 1873, edited by C. G. Voorhelm Schneevoogt, Director of the Teyler Museum:—

91. (B. 40.) L'enfant Jésus et St Jean, jouant avec un agneau, dans un paysage. Sans titre. P. P. Rubens *delin. et excudit* C. P. C. Jegher *sculp.* en bois. 12 p. de haut, 16 p. 8 l. de large. **T.** Les 2<sup>ds</sup>. états sont sans *excudit*.

Le tableau est à Potsdam.

92. (B. 41.) La même composition, en sens contraire. L'enfant Jésus est couvert d'une chemise. Titre: *O Baptista, quis fuit—utero clausus exultaras.* Par un anonyme, Corn. Galle *excudit.* 11 p. 9 l. de haut, 16 p. 2 l. de large. **T.**

93. La même composition, dans le même sens; eau-forte sans titre ni nom de peintre ou de graveur, attribuée par quelques-uns



à Rubens lui-même. 5 p. 4 l. de haut, 7 p. 6 l. de large. T.  
Planche très rare.

94. La même composition ; gravé par E. Thelot d'après l'original de P. P. Rubens, dédié à Joseph Truchsess à Vienne. 10 p. 6 l. de haut, 13 p. 6 l. de large.

Au musée de Cologne.

95. (B. 43.) La même composition, planche en hauteur. L'enfant Jésus est nu et entouré d'une auréole, et l'on a ajouté la croix de St Jean avec sa banderole, sur la quelle : *Ecce agnus Dei*. Titre : *Est puer hic—delicias ne putet*. Par un anonyme. Gaspar Huberti excudit Antuerpiæ. 15 p. 3 l. de haut, 11 p. 2 l. de large. T.

The engraving by Cornelius Galle bears this inscription :—  
“*O Baptista, quis fuit animi tui sensus? Quid mentis tripudium? conspecto Salvatore coram quo nondum natus, materno adhuc utero clausus exultaras!*”

Wallace L. Crowley.







D. PETRVS PAVLVS RVBBENS EQVES  
REGI CATOLICO IN SANCTIORE CONSILIO A  
SECRETIS ÆVI SVI APELLES ANTVERPIÆ

*Ant. van Dyck pinxit  
Paul. Pontius sculpsit*

*Cum privilegio*



C'EST une heureuse idée entre toutes d'avoir organisé au Palais du Cinquantenaire de Bruxelles, durant l'été de 1910, cette magnifique exposition de peintres flamands du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle où Rubens éblouit et surpasse tous les autres artistes par l'éclat, la puissance et la multiplicité de son génie. Et de même que Rubens dépasse tous les autres artistes de son temps, les Snyders, les Jan Fyt, les Jordaens et jusqu'à l'élégant van Dyck lui même, de même aussi certaines productions du maître se détachent brillamment dans son œuvre, comme de grands points lumineux auxquels on revient toujours avec une joie égale. Le tableau connu sous le nom de Spinola Rubens est de ceux là.

C'est une charmante, noble et belle composition où l'on voit au milieu du tableau un petit St Jean drapé d'une toison de brebis autour de la ceinture, qui s'appuie sur un agneau couché. En avant de l'agneau qu'il caresse de sa main droite, l'Enfant Jésus, blond et nu, est presque assis au pied d'un arbre sur une magnifique draperie rouge d'un extraordinaire éclat. Cette scène si pure et si simple se passe dans un de ces beaux paysages dont Rubens a le secret. A droite se trouve un roc en partie couvert de végétation, à gauche c'est une grande plaine aux lignes bleutées, et où de petites collines d'un joli effet décoratif s'élèvent ; ça et là, de grands arbres les surmontent en harmonieux bouquets, et sous l'un d'eux pait une chèvre.

C'est là un sujet qui fut cher à Rubens, aussi le traita-t'il plusieurs fois, et le Musée de Berlin en possède deux répliques ; il en existait également une plus petite à Gênes. Il ne m'appartient pas ici d'entrer dans des comparaisons toujours



déliçates, lorsqu'on ne peut placer directement les œuvres les unes à côté des autres, mais ce qui est certain c'est que ce tableau est de Rubens, et de la plus belle manière de Rubens.

Quels sont les mots qui diront le charme de son coloris ! La fraîcheur des chairs blondes se détachant si claires sur le paysage, le beau rouge chaleureux de l'étoffe, le bleu délicat du ciel et de l'horizon, et enfin ce ton de pur et bel émail qui luit et brille d'un éclat onctueux et transparent !

Assurément, Rubens lorsqu'il traite le nu tombe parfois dans l'exagération, dans la redondance. Quelle que soit la puissance décorative des grandes toiles du Louvre, on est parfois gêné par l'ampleur que l'artiste se plaît à donner à ses corps féminins. L'exécution en est toujours magistrale, la couleur très riche, mais ces qualités sont si compromises par une certaine vulgarité.

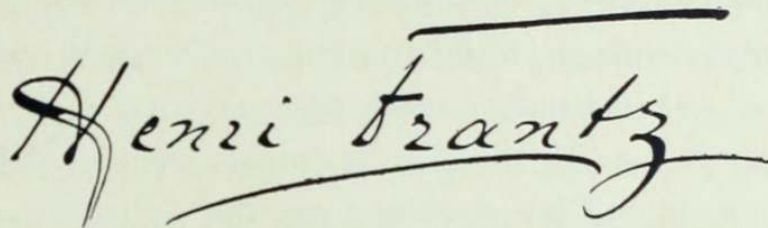
Aussi n'est-ce pas dans de telles œuvres, œuvres à grand fracas, œuvres célèbres, je n'en disconviens pas, qu'il faut chercher Rubens. L'artiste dans ce qu'il a de plus beau et de plus complet, se trouvera bien plutôt dans des œuvres plus petites où il apparaît seulement avec ses qualités et sans ses défauts. On sait que dans ses grandes œuvres Rubens se faisait aider beaucoup de ses élèves, qui exécutaient des morceaux entiers d'après ses dessins et ses cartons.

Mais dans ce délicieux "Jésus et St Jean jouant avec un agneau" on a bien la sensation de se trouver en face d'une œuvre née *entièrement* de l'imagination du maître, et exécutée *entièrement* de sa main.

D'ailleurs il est intéressant de rappeler dans une notice, si brève fut elle, consacrée à ce chef-d'œuvre, qu'il fut toujours

très admiré par les amateurs français. Benjamin Constant, qui connaissait fort bien les maîtres anciens écrivit à son sujet: "Parmi les plus brillants d'exécution, un vrai morceau de maître, et Rubens fut le maître des maîtres!"

On ne saurait mieux caractériser en quelques mots, *et l'œuvre et l'homme.*

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Henri Frantz". The signature is written in black ink on a light background. The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent flourish under the 'z'.

PARIS.



**E**S ist heutzutage Mode unter einigen unserer Kunst-aestheten Rubens' Malweise als derb und unfein zu verurteilen. Für diejenigen deren Geschmack sich an der Blutlosigkeit der frühen italienischen religiösen Malerei herangebildet hat, mag etwas Wahres daran sein, ungefähr wie dem Liebhaber italienischer Windhunde eine Bulldogge grob und unschön erscheinen wird. Selbst wenn wir zugeben, dass in einigen Rubensschen Werken ein Übermass von Lebenskraft herrscht, ist es doch nicht zu leugnen, dass andere seiner Bilder, die nicht weniger lebendig sind, eine Zartheit und Kraft vereinigen, die selbst Fra Angelico's Beifall gefunden haben würden. Betrachten wir beispielsweise den sogenannten Spinola Rubens, jetzt im Besitz des Herrn J. S. Murray in Schottland. Dieses herrliche Werk zeigt eine seiner bekanntesten Kompositionen, für die er selbst eine Vorliebe hatte. Er verwandte sie verschiedentlich mit geringen Abänderungen und befindet sich eine Kopie unseres Bildes in den Sammlungen des deutschen Kaisers.

Dieses Christusbild wird häufig von Kritikern besprochen und man weiss oft nicht, welche der Kopien gemeint ist. Uebereinstimmend wird die Kraft und Zartheit des Werkes hervorgehoben. Es ist nicht meine Absicht Vergleiche anzustellen. Es genügt mir zu betonen, dass das Spinolabild ein bemerkenswertes Beispiel Rubensscher Feinheit ist. Meiner Meinung nach entstand das Bild nach Rubens' Rückkehr aus Italien, denn es zeigt ebensoviel Teutonische Kraft als Italiensche Grazie.

Ich sah das Spinolabild zum erstenmal in der Weltausstellung in Brüssel (1910) inmitten hervorragender Werke desselben

Meisters. Es fiel mir auf, dass gerade dieses Bild besonders gut erhalten ist, obwohl auch die meisten seiner Bilder nicht viel von der Zeit gelitten haben. Dies verdanken wir nicht nur der Sorgfalt mit der Rubens seine Farben mischte, sondern auch der Tatsache, dass seine Werke von Anfang an hoch geschätzt und dementsprechend behandelt wurden. Bei den Bildern in Privatbesitz trifft es noch mehr zu als bei solchen, die in Kirchen und Klöstern dem Weihrauch und dem Dunst der Kerzen ausgesetzt gewesen sind. Das Spinolabild war in dem Genueser Palast der Familie Spinola gut aufgehoben, ging erst kürzlich in andere Hände über und wurde schliesslich von Herrn Murray erworben. Das Bild zeigt nur wenige Spuren seines Alters von dreihundert Jahren. Unter den Werken in Brüssel zeichnete es sich in dieser Hinsicht ganz besonders aus. Jeder Ton ist hell und klar geblieben, jeder Pinselstrich unverändert. Die Betrachtung der Hautfarben, besonders am Körper des St Johannes, ist sehr lehrreich für das Studium der Rubens' schen Methode. Andererseits sind die silber-graublauen Töne der fernen Landschaft gerade so schön und selbstverständlich als am Anfang.

Nur an einem so gut erhaltenen Werke kann man die Methode des alten Meisters richtig beurteilen, gewöhnlich ist das Bild aus jener Zeit nicht viel mehr als der Schatten dessen was es früher war. Selbst wo die Farben sich nicht vollständig verändert haben, sind Sprünge entstanden oder das Bild hat durch restauriren gelitten. In dem Spinolabild finden sich nur wenige Spuren der Restauration, obwohl die Leinwand an einer Stelle gesprungen und nachher ausgefüllt zu sein scheint und das Bild möglicherweise gereinigt worden ist.



Betrachten wir jetzt die eigentliche Komposition. St Johannes wendet sich zum Christkind, um es um Schutz für ein Lamm zu bitten, das zwischen den beiden Kindern kniet. Links im Mittelgrund ist ein anderes Tier, teilweise sichtbar, teilweise versteckt hinter einer kleinen Erhöhung. Es ist nicht leicht zu erkennen was es sein soll; seinen funkelnden Augen nach ist es ein Wolf, dessen Absicht das Lamm anzugreifen durch die Dazwischenkunft des Johannes vereitelt wird. Hinter dem Wolf ist die Landschaft in das silberne Licht eines Frühlingstages getaucht und grosse Baumstämme heben sich vom glänzend blauen Himmel ab. Rechts wirft ein überhängender mit Epheu bedeckter Felsen tiefen Schatten, der mit den Fleischfarbentönen der Kinder einen Schönen Kontrast bildet. Die Farbengebung ist gedämpft und abgestimmt, um die schönen Kinderkörper zur Geltung zu bringen. Man beachte zum Beispiel die prachtvolle Wirkung des roten Kleides nachlässig über den Sitz geworfen, von dem sich der Heiland eben erhoben hat. Man geht vielleicht nicht zu weit, wenn man in der Anordnung der Farben eine symbolische Bedeutung sieht, insofern als die beugende Figur des Heilands, die das Lamm umgebende Dunkelheit überstrahlt und Licht über die ganze Welt verbreitet.

Die Kleinen sind wie immer bei Rubens stark und gesund. Der St Johannes ist ein rein menschliches Kind. Zweifellos ist es ein gutes Kind, aber zu aller kindlichen Schelmerei fähig. Christus nicht weniger kräftig, ist, wenn auch nicht æsthätischer, doch vergeistigter dargestellt. Es ist von grossem Interesse, an diesem Gemälde zu studiren wie der Meister den Gottmenschen auffasst. Er bemühte sich

nicht die Figur des Johannes zu idealisieren. Er hat sich aber offenbar angestrengt, Christus etwas Göttliches zu verleihen. Die Christusfigur ist sicher feiner und vergeistigter aufgefasst, und durch leuchtende Farben hervorgehoben. Wie sehr sich Rubens auch bestrebt das Körperliche gegen das Geistige zurücktreten zu lassen, so ist doch das Christkind von erstaunlicher Lebenskraft, die Rubens besser als irgend ein anderer Meister auf die Leinwand zaubern konnte.

In diesem Zusammenhang ist es interessant, das Christkind mit Romulus und Remus in einem anderen bekannten Rubensbild zu vergleichen. Romulus und Remus aus dem Capitolinischen Museum in Rom, eines der letzten Bilder, welches Rubens während seines Aufenthaltes in Italien malte, hing im selben Zimmer in Brüssel wie das Christus und Johannesbild. Hier sehen wir den Unterschied in der Rubensschen Behandlungsweise des Helden und des Gotteskindes. Dieses kräftige lebensvolle kleine Pflegesöhnchen des Wolfs hat nichts von dem halb-lächelnden, halb-sehnsüchtigen Gesichtsausdruck des Christus. In dieser Kinderstudie zeigt sich deutlich Rubens' Grösse in der Vereinigung von Realismus und Idealismus. Wie alle bedeutenden Werke des Meisters macht auch das Christkind einen tiefen selbstverständlichen Eindruck. Es kommt dem Beschauer nicht in den Sinn, dass etwas darin anderes sein könnte. Die Körperstellungen des sich halberhebenden Christus und des Johannes, der um Schutz für das Lamm fleht, sind beide vollendet. Die Art der Pinselführung ist von einer absoluten Sicherheit, ebenso weit entfernt von Kühnheit als von Zaghaftigkeit.

Vergegenwärtigen wir uns noch einmal das Vorher-



gesagte. Die Haupteigenschaften, die wir bei Rubens finden, sind vor allem seine pulsierende Lebendigkeit, seine breit und edel angelegte Komposition, seine reiche Farbenzusammensetzung und die Selbstverständlichkeit seiner Technik. Bei dem Spinolabild sehen wir all dies vereinigt, dazu die Zartheit, die Rubens' reifste Periode kennzeichnet. Hier ist nichts von der Derbheit, die man mit Recht oder Unrecht manchen seiner bedeutendsten Werke vorwirft, zu bemerken. Statt dessen finden wir nicht nur die oben erwähnte italienische Grazie, sondern auch ausgesprochenes religiöses Gefühl, das bei diesem Meister selten ist, dem sonst das menschliche Leben so viel zu bieten hatte. Wenn wir die gute Erhaltung des Bildes dazufügen, haben wir eines der interessantesten und bedeutendsten Meisterwerke des 17<sup>ten</sup> Jahrhunderts. Es ist mir noch nicht gelungen andere Beispiele ähnlicher Komposition zu sehen, doch ist es mir leicht verständlich, dass ein solch anziehendes Subject von seinen Schülern und andern mehrfach wiederholt wurde.

*Oliver Madox Hueffer*

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### *Extract from old Berlin Catalogue*

Bild No. 771. Christuskind mit dem Lamm. Bisher dem Meister zugeschrieben, aber in der Behandlung nicht energisch genug, um von seiner Hand ausgeführt zu sein. Der Entwurf

ist wohl vom ihm, aber die Ausführung von Schülerhand. Eine bessere Wiederholung doch gleichfalls nicht von dem Meister in der Combe Abbey in England. Andere Exemplare in der Gallerie in Schleissheim und im Privatbesitz zu Wien. Das Original dieses Bildes in der Gallerie und der anderen ist uns nicht bekannt. Eine grössere Wiederholung im Schlosse in Potsdam.





REGIA PRETURA DEL V MANDAMENTO DI GENOVA.  
ATTESTAZIONE GIUDIZIALE.

**L**'ANNO mille otto cento novantotto, alli due del mese di Febbraio, in Genova, frazione di San Francesco d'Albero via San Nazzaro No. 18 int 5 in altra delle camere dell' appartamento abitato dallo Scultore ufficiale della Corona d' Italia Signor Giambattista Villa.

Alla richiesta del Sig. Giovanni Murray proprietario residente in Scozia.

Avanti dell' Illustrissimo Signor Avvocato Eugenio Formentarro Pretore del V Mandamento di Genova, assistito dal Cancelliere Gio. Batta. Granello sono personalmente comparsi li Signori.

1. Professore Giambattista Villa fu Filippo ufficiale della Corona d' Italia, Scultore, membro della Commissione Conservatrice dei Monumenti, d'anni 63, nato e residente in Genova, abitante in questo stesso palazzo, giacente a letto per essere infermo di corpo, ma perfettamente sano di mente.

2. Marchese Alberto Spinola fu Marchese Camillo d'anni 72 nato e residente in Genova frazione Vernozzicola No. 4 int 7.

I quali previa seria ammonizione, loro fatta dal Sig. Pretore

sull' importanza del giuramento sul vincolo religioso che i credenti con esso contraggono dinanzi a Dio, sull' obbligo di dire la verità, e sulle pene stabilite dalla legge contro i testi falsi o reticenti prestarono l' uno dopo l' altro il giuramento pronunciando ciascuno la formula che segue "Giuro di dire la verità, tutta la verità e null' altro che la verità."

Quindi il Signor Professore Ufficiale Gio. Batta Villa in particolare ha attestato ed attesta quanto segue.

"Io Giambattista Villa in senso di pura verità e sotto il vincolo del prestato giuramento attesto e depongo, che il quadro acquistato dal Sig. Giovanni Murray e rappresentante i bambini Gesù e Giovanni Battista seduti sull' erba ed accarezzanti il simbolico agnello, fu da me osservato, prima nello studio della amministrazione del Pio Ricovero di Mendicità al quale era pervenuto per testamento del defunto Marchese Ippolito Spinola rogato nel febbraio del 1862; poscia presso il defunto clarissimo Professore Giuseppe Isola vero Maestro dei contemporanei artisti Genovesi, e Direttore delle Gallerie dei palazzi della Duchessa di Galliera; ed infine, dopo la morte di questo Professore, fu depositato per circa due anni nel mio studio, di guisa che ebbi tempo e largo campo di osservarlo, studiarlo, e confrontarlo coi migliori dipinti che si trovano in Genova usciti dal pennello del celebre *Pietro Paolo Rubens* riafermandomi in tal modo nel piú profondo convincimento che esso quadro costituisce veramente uno dei migliori parti dell' ingegno di quel Grande Artista. Affermo altresì che il sollodato professore Isola, sua vita durante, ebbe a riferirmi che essendo venuto a cognizione della esistenza di altro consimile quadro di Rubens, si fece premura di recarsi appositamente (non ricordo se a Vienna o a



Berlino, o altrove) a visitarlo, e ne era ritornato colla convinzione che al confronto dei due quadri, fosse piú pregievole quello da esso posseduto, di guisa che poteva asserire che, se uno dei due di essi fosse una copia dell' altro, il suo appariva di certo il vero originale."

Ed in particolare, io Marchese Alberto Spinola del fu Camillo attesto e depongo che, nei vari ritrovi avuti col Marchese Ippolito Spinola del fu Giovanni Battista quondam Ippolito, defuncto nel 1862, nel suo appartamento da scapolo al No. 6 in via Carlo Felice, ebbi occasione di osservare, fra gli altri quadri posseduti dal detto signore, in uno dei quali piú particolarmente egli si compiaceva, perché asseriva essergli pervenuto in ereditá di famiglia, discendente da Luca Spinola Doge di Genova nel secolo XVI, epoca che presso a poco corrispondeva a quella in cui il celebre Rubens si soffermava qualche tempo in questa cittá stessa decorandola di non pochi dei suoi rinomati quadri, fra i quali si doveva appunto annoverare quello in questione eseguito per ordinazione del suo antenato, e rappresentante Gesù con San Giovanni Battista ambedue bambini trastullantisi con un' agnello, quadro che fu poi venduto da pochi anni al Signor Giovanni Murray proprietario in Galashiels nella Scozia.

E previa lettura e conferma hanno sotto scritto d'ufficio.

Registro Copia No. 2421  
Esatto Li. per 1. Copia  
5-2/98.

GRANELLO.

Firmati all'originale.

Prof. G. B. VILLA, Scultore, Ufficiale della Corona  
d'Italia, Membro della Commissione Conservatrice  
dei Monumenti.

ALBERTO SPINOLA.

FORMENTARRO, Pretore.

GRANELLO, Cancelliere.

Per Copia conforme all'originale, Genova, 5 Febbraio 1898,  
Il Cancelliere,

GRANELLO.

STAMP

Visto per la legalizzazione della firma del  
SIG. GRANELLO, Cancelliere della  
5 Pretura di Genova.

Genova dal Tribunale Civile e Penale il 7 Febbraio 1898,

Il Cancelliere,

A. LOIY.

Il Presidente,

V. GIOVINNAZZI.

STAMP

BRITISH CONSULATE,

GENOA, February 8, 1898.

The above signature of V. GIOVINNAZZI, President of the Civil and Penal Tribunal at  
Genoa, is hereby attested by me.

(Signed)

WM. KEENE,

H.B.M. Consul.

STAMP





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