
Rubens's stakes have risen dramatically in the past fifteen years. His ascent is most graphically charted in the numerous exhibitions and exhibition catalogues which, more than monographs and articles, testify to the public as well as academic nature of his popularity. Some of these exhibitions and catalogues have been general affairs (outstandingly, the richly endowed but questionably presented Lille extravaganza of 2004), but most have highlighted particular aspects of the artist's working practice, patronage, and personality. The intelligently written and superbly illustrated catalogue reviewed here relates principally to collaboration, an aspect of Rubens's career which has generated much less discussion than its importance for his oeuvre demands. While scholarship would benefit particularly from studies of Rubens's studio assistants (men such as Jan van den Hoecke and Cornelius de Vos, for example) discussion of independently established collaborators such as Jan Brueghel the Elder is also very welcome. Rubens's reputation with the general public, dominated by notions of overarching and Olympian genius, could benefit too from nuancing. Bearing this in mind, perhaps the most interesting general proposition in the current volume is that Brueghel planned the majority of the pictures he produced with Rubens, and that he occasionally tampered with his younger colleague's work. Given the health of Rubens's ego, and all we read of his individualism, this is a thought-provoking revelation.

At first approach, one expects of the volume an analysis of the approximately twenty-five surviving paintings jointly made by Rubens and Brueghel. However, it soon becomes clear that the authors (and their contributors, Tiatna Doherty, Mark Leonard, and Jørgen Wadum) have larger ambitions. Along with investigations of seventeen works by the two artists, the catalogue contains entries on collaborations with other painters: Rubens with Frans Snyders; Brueghel with Hans Rottenhammer, Hendrick de Clerck, and Hendrick van Balen. One obvious intention here is to indicate the normalcy of collaboration among professional and social equals who, following traditional art historical method, are usually studied in isolation. A handful of single-authored works are also discussed for the
light they shed on the main theme of the catalogue. There is only one by Rubens: the Vienna *modello* for the *Madonna della Vallicella*, which demonstrates his familiarity with the *Einsatzbild* type so strikingly represented in his collaboration with Brueghel. A further valuable addition would have been the *Death of Hippolytus* now in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, which shows Rubens’s skill at rendering the jewel-like details for which Brueghel was so esteemed. Brueghel’s own *Entry of the Animals into Noah’s Ark* and *Sermon on the Mount* suggest, in a negative manner, the Fruitfulness of the two masters’ shared enterprise. This is not at all to deprecate his artistic talents, but rather to suggest the uniquely successful combination of obviously distinct styles—success which culminated in the superb *Garden of Eden with the Fall of Man* now in the Mauritshuis.

The *Garden of Eden* is one of the works on which the catalogue dwells; others include the *Allegories of the Five Senses* in the Prado (only one of which, *Taste*, was obtained for the exhibition), the interesting *Battle of the Amazons* (which predates Rubens’s Italian sojourn), and the remarkable *Return from War: Mars Disarmed by Venus*, which until 2000 was known to scholars only through an eighteenth-century engraving. Most of the catalogue entries make substantial contributions to the existing literature on the paintings they describe. Some of the most important information here is based on technical investigations of selected works, carried out in conjunction with the exhibition. Appended to the catalogue is a very useful essay on technique, which analyzes the working methods of both painters generally and in relation to specific works. There is more of “making” than “meaning” here, however. A possible broad criticism of the catalogue is that its authors are reluctant to discuss the intellectual culture of collaboration in seventeenth-century Antwerp, not simply among artists but scholars, ecclesiastics, and businessmen as well. Friendship, a phenomenon flagged up in the title but hardly analyzed, might also have come in for scrutiny given its documented (and depicted) importance to Rubens, and its prominence as a subject in contemporary learned discourse (returning ultimately to Aristotle’s *Ethics*). Such investigations may not have increased knowledge about individual works, but would have given readers and viewers a more rounded appreciation of what it meant for two renowned, educated, and well-traveled artists to set aside their autonomy and work together.

An excellent selection of works was put together for the exhibition, but, perhaps inevitably, there were some significant *lacunae*. It is a pity, for example, that neither the Munich nor the Louvre *Madonna in a Flower Garland* could have been obtained. The Prado example which was included