

4 | Rubens the Antiquarian and His Circle in Antwerp

4.1 | Rubens's Humanistic Circle and its Antiquarian interests

Rubens was part of a humanistic circle that can be located in and around Antwerp, and this circle was part of a larger network of antiquarians all over Europe.¹ The network emerging from the books with title pages by Rubens is mirrored in other work by Rubens and substantiated in many letters. Rubens's ties to this network were based on the relationships his parents had already made and were strengthened by his and his brothers' education. While Rubens went to the same school as Balthasar Moretus, his brother, Philip Rubens, shared an important teacher with Moretus, the humanist Justus Lipsius (1547–1606).

Lipsius was a humanist, a professor at Louvain University since 1576 and he was greatly interested in Roman history.² The list of his publications is long: his scholarly essays and monographs tackle Roman law and its institutions, gladiatorial games, amphitheatres, and libraries, to name but a few subjects.³ Although the publication of the first critical edition of Tacitus in 1574 made him renowned, his neo-Stoic work in his later years came to define him. For most of his publications he worked with the Officina Plantiniana, often producing several editions of his works by constantly revising his work.

Rubens portrays Lipsius as a neo-Stoic professor in the painting "The Four Philosophers".⁴ The painting has been read as a tribute by Rubens to his brother Philip, which accounts for the fact that these two specific pupils of Lipsius' as well as Rubens himself are depicted in it: Johannes Woverius and Philip Rubens are seated on either side of their eminent teacher.⁵ Lipsius had nu-

¹ White 1993.

² From 1579 until 1590 he taught history at the newly founded University of Leiden, a period of great productivity.

³ Papy 2004.

⁴ Oil on panel; 167 x 143 cm; Florence, Palazzo Pitti; Vlieghe 1987, pp. 128–132, no. 117.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 131–132.

merous pupils, many of whom lived as *contubernales* with him in his house during their studies.⁶ Among his pupils were the sons of the influential Catholic families in the Low Countries, be it Balthasar Moretus, Philip Rubens (1574–1611), the successor to Lipsius’s chair in Louvain Erycius Puteanus (1574–1646), Hemelarius (Jan Hemelaers, 1580–1655), and Johannes Woverius (Jan Van de Wouwer, 1576–1635) with whom Rubens had gone to school.⁷ Many of those in Lipsius’s social circle were Rubens’s friends and were important to his endeavours in book illustration. Via his brother Philip, Rubens had contact to other members of this circle, especially when the brothers resided in Rome.⁸ When his brother Philip died in 1611, their friends Moretus and Woverius wrote the epitaph for Philip’s grave and included Hemelarius and Rubens’s father-in-law in their endeavours.⁹ Many of the friendships and working relationships struck in Lipsius’s *contubernium* lasted a lifetime, thus the first documented design for a title page by Rubens was for a project in which some of these pupils played a crucial role.

The painting of the “Four Philosophers” shows not only Johannes Woverius, Philip Rubens and Lipsius, but also Rubens himself. As he has not seated himself at the same table as the scholars, he nonetheless includes himself in this group portrait. On the one hand this supports Hans Vlieghe’s estimate that the painting is a tribute to his brother, but on the other, it also presents Rubens as very close to this neo-Stoic circle of scholars. Rubens’s interest is also shown by the inclusion of a bust in the painting that was wrongly believed to be a portrait of Seneca. The same bust, now in the Rubens House in Antwerp, was used as a model for the illustrations Rubens provided for the *Collected Works of Seneca* printed by Moretus in 1615, and belonged to Rubens himself.¹⁰ Rubens’s self-fashioning is thus closely tied with his collection and also with his network.

Rubens was known as a *pictor doctus*, a well-educated painter, and his erudition was attested by both the large library he owned and his exchange of letters with scholars and numismatists throughout Europe. His repeated references to antiquity in all his work were thus visible proof of the erudition he also displayed in his letters. Rubens placed himself close to a scholarly, humanistic network in the “Four Philosophers”, and he also did so with his title pages. Part of his knowledge about classical images and objects was derived from numismatic publications and collections, which is why the following will focus on this important aspect of his work as a title page designer while at the same time looking at those involved in the production of these numismatic

⁶ Morford gives a good impression of what living in the *contubernium* with Lipsius might entail. Especially from the time table that was written for Moretus by Lipsius. See Morford 1991, pp. 31–32.

⁷ Büttner 2006b, p. 28. Other pupils were: Gregorius II Del Plano (later mayor of Antwerp), Gregorius Uwens, Van Santen, Franciscus Oranus (François d’Heure), Johannes Baptista Perezus Baronius (Juan Bautista Pérez de Baron), Guilelmus and Antonius Richardot, Gulielmus Scarberg, Cornelius Anchemannus, Balduinus Iunius (Baudoin de Jonghe), Hubertus Audeiantius. Esser 2012; Morford 1991, p. 36.

⁸ For Philip Rubens, cf. Huemer 1985; Huemer 1996, *passim*; Morford 1991; and Papy 1999 here pp. 190–198.

⁹ Rooses 1882, pp. 214–218.

¹⁰ Cf. Büttner in: Bertram 2018b, pp. 62–65; Judson and Van de Velde 1977a, p. 154–169, nos. 30–32.

books. It is certainly no coincidence that the title pages for this circle of friends and scholars were for books that dealt with specific antiquarian matters. Thus many of the books belong to the historical book class of "Libri Historici"; in Albert Rubens's catalogue they are listed in the subcategory of "Antiquarii".

The numismatic books produced with the help of Rubens were part of a long tradition of this genre. Numismatic literature developed throughout the sixteenth century: the first publication on coins was the philological publication by Guillaume Budé in 1514, *De asse et partibus eius*, followed by Andrea Fulvio's *Illustrum imagines*, which illustrated monarchs until the middle-ages using the images of Roman rulers on ancient coins.¹¹ The first proper handbook on ancient coins, written by Enea Vico and published in 1555, was a collector's book with information on the designs of coins and the material they were made of, as well as on forgeries.¹² Soon numismatic literature was printed all over Europe and, especially in Rubens's time, it was particularly popular, as can be seen by the peaks in the number of publications. France, in particular, was a centre of numismatic book-printing; throughout the seventeenth century 413 numismatic titles were printed in Paris alone. Lyon's importance as a centre of book-printing generally decreased from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, and that included numismatic books.¹³ In Germany the influence of the Thirty Years' war could be felt as printing of numismatic literature stopped abruptly in the twenties and was only resumed in the seventies.¹⁴ Rubens and a small group of numismatic enthusiasts also contributed to this flood of numismatic literature with several high-quality works that, all in all, were connected to the great numismatist Hubert Goltzius.

Rubens Working After the Antique

From early on it was important for art critics that Rubens painted following classical examples: De Piles, in his reflections on Rubens's painting, emphasises that Rubens had spent time in Italy and had borrowed the beauty of ancient art by copying medals, statues and sculpted stones, reliefs, and cameos.¹⁵ In his praise of Rubens, he claims that no other artist had treated allegorical subjects so clearly and learnedly as this man, who had only used symbols gleaned from antique monuments, such as, for instance, medals. The importance of this statement can be seen when the *Compléate Gentleman* by Peacham is again consulted:

It is not enough for an ingenuous Gentleman to behold [the Antiquities] with a vulgar eye: but he must be able to distinguish them, and tell who and what they be. To

¹¹ Burnett 2005, p. 48.

¹² Vico 1555.

¹³ Dekesel 2005, p. 20.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁵ Piles 1699, p.403; cf. Meulen 1994a; Meulen 1994b; Meulen 1995.

doe this, there be foure parts: First, by generall learning in History and Poetry. [...] But because all statues have not such properties and badges, there is a second way to discerne them, and that is by their coynes. [...] A third and very good way to distinguish them, is by the booke of collection of all the principall statues that are now to be seene at Rome [...]. The fourth and last helpe, and without which the rest are weake, is to visit them in company of such as are learned in them, and by their helpe to grow familiar with them, and so practice their acquaintance.¹⁶

The gentleman was expected to know his antique monuments, to be able to recognise them and to relate their background stories. Within this context, numismatic works were important reference works that would help to learn to distinguish the mythological figures and personifications that also inhabited Roman gardens, the literature of the time, and the allegorical title pages.

De Piles sees allegory as a language that was based on traditions that “must consequently be sanctioned by usage and understood by many people”, and a language that could be learned, as de Piles insists that the well-educated would be familiar with the symbols.¹⁷ It is this language that the gentleman has to learn, as Henry Peacham so clearly explains. What De Piles here expresses is one explanation of the importance of medals for Rubens and his contemporaries. The books on medals were replacements for the Italian monuments, and the only accessible way to be able to study and learn the language of allegory if a princely collection was currently not available. That the main figure in the allegorical painting “Sight and Smell”, produced by several Antwerpian artists collaboratively, is exploring a collection of coins when the sight of her face in the mirror captures her interest, is certainly no coincidence, and emphasises the importance artists attributed to coins.¹⁸ The interest in coins was much more than a mere personal fascination with history; for Rubens it was the centre of an intellectual and social discourse that influenced him both as an artist and as a gentleman.

Classical art was the foundation of art as Rubens understood it and the standard by which he was certainly measured; many of his copies after the antique were later used as a source of inspira-

¹⁶ Peacham 1634, p. 109.

¹⁷ Büttner 2017b, p. 44; Piles 1699, pp. 402–403: “Aucun Peintre n’a traité si doctement, ni si clairement que Rubens les Sujets Allégoriques: & comme l’Allégorie est une espèce de langage, & que par conséquent elle doit être autorisée par l’usage, & entenduë de plusieurs, il y a introduit seulement les symboles que les Médailles & les autres Monumens de l’Antiquité ont rendus familiers, du moins entre les Savans. Si ce Peintre a sù ingénieusement inventer les objets qu’il faisoit entrer dans ses Compositions, il avoit encore l’Art de les disposer si avantageusement, que non seulement chaque objet en particulier fait plaisir à voir: mais qu’il contribué encore à l’effet du tout-ensemble”.

¹⁸ The painting “Sight and Smell” (Ca. 1620. Oil on canvas, 176 x 264 cm) and its companion piece “Taste, Hearing and Touch” were made by ten Flemish artists under Jan Bruegel the Elder for Archduke Albert and Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia de Austria. The original paintings were lost, the replicas that were sent to Madrid by the Ducal couple are still in the Prado. De Maeyer, *Albrecht en Isabella*, 1955, p. 119, nos. 3–4.

tion for his paintings.¹⁹ Rubens used his long-term stay in Italy to study classical sculpture in reliefs, sarcophagi, and miniature artworks, as well as large scale sculptures.²⁰ Several drawings attest to his visits to the papal collections in the Villa Belvedere complex and also his knowledge of Cardinal Scipione Borghese's collection.²¹ After his first meeting with Rubens, the antiquarian and scholar Peiresc wrote of Rubens that "in matters of antiquity he possesses the most universal and remarkable knowledge I have ever seen."²² He also emphasised that the cartoons of Constantine had received particular praise for the archaeological precision of the costumes in a letter to the master himself.²³ Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637), was a jurist and member of Aix city council, but best-known as a French astronomer, humanistic scholar and letter-writer with a network spanning all Europe and even beyond.²⁴ At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the numismatic world gravitated around Peiresc, whose network of correspondence was extensive, and his opinion certainly reflected the shared opinion about Rubens.

Rubens was known to have bought a renowned collection of coins and gems.²⁵ If his nephew Philipp can be believed, then Rubens's greatest joy was to "behold his coins, his agates, his carnelians and other cut stones, of which he had a nice collection", as Roger de Piles relays more than thirty years after the artist's death, based on the nephew's report.²⁶ But Rubens's collection served not only his own pleasure, but fulfilled a social function in that it made him known in the right circles. In 1641 Gevaerts writes in his commentary to the *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi* that "just like Alexander the Macedonian", Ferdinand had visited Rubens's house, which was worth seeing not only because of its architecture, but also because of the collection inside—complimenting not only Ferdinand with that comparison.²⁷ Thus shortly after Rubens's death, the English King's agent wrote to England to inform the two greatest English collectors of the sale of "rarities of Pictures, Statues, Agates, Ivory cut workes, and Drawings" that was to take place, while the Cardinal Infante wrote to the Spanish king about it in September the same year.²⁸ De Piles, in his short biography

¹⁹ Cf. Gruber et al. 2017, *passim*; Meulen 1994a.

²⁰ For a discussion on Rubens's time in Italy, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 25–27.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 47–48; for current bibliography see Jochen Sander's introduction to the catalogue's section on Ancient Models, Gruber et al. 2017, pp. 181 ff.

²² "in materia dell' antiquita principalmente, egli ha una notitia la piu universale et la piu esquisita ch'io viddi mai." Letter from Peiresc to Guidi da Bagni, 26 February 1622; in: White 1993, p. 147; Ruelens and Rooses 1972b, p. 336.

²³ Letter from Peiresc to Rubens, 1 Dec 1622, in: Ruelens and Rooses 1972e, pp. 85–87; cf. Brosens 2011, pp. 164–166.

²⁴ Miller 2000, 2015, 2012.

²⁵ Pointon 2017, p. 102; Meulen 1994a, pp. 89ff.; Meulen 1994b, 1995.

²⁶ Piles 1677, pp. 215.

²⁷ Cf. Büttner 2006b, p. 93, fn. 46; Gevaerts 1642, p. 171. Rubens's collection was remarkable even after he had sold most of it to the Duke of Buckingham in 1626–27. In an often-quoted letter to Peiresc he writes that he had kept "some of the rarest gems and most exquisite medals from the sale" for himself. Letter from Rubens to Peiresc, 18 Dec 1634, in: P. P. Rubens 1955, p. 394. See the Appendices in Muller 1989 for more on Rubens's collection.

²⁸ Muller 2004, p. 11; Letter from Gerbier to the Earl of Arundel, 2 Jun 1640, in: Ruelens and Rooses 1972d, p. 302 and letter from Cardinal Infante Ferdinand to Philip IV, 24 Sep 1640, in: *ibid.*, pp. 310–311.

in 1677, mentions in passing that the Spanish King had bought Rubens's collection.²⁹ Just as with collecting books, Rubens's personal interest in antiquities does not contradict the fact that he used a well-known collection to highlight his social status.³⁰

As a matter of course, the contact to Peiresc developed because the French scholar had heard of this remarkable collection of coins and gems in Antwerp and wanted an inventory. He contacted the collector through Rubens's friend Jan Caspar Gevaerts (Janus-Casperius Gevartius, 1593–1666), who had met Peiresc in Paris in 1617.³¹ It seems that the first letter he wrote to Rubens on 27 October 1621 was not only the start of a lasting friendship, but also of a joint venture to publish a book on ancient gems.³² Over the years, this project grew in content and manpower. At some point it was to include not only gems, but also other antiquities such as heads of famous men after ancient marbles, heads copied from reliefs, and Trajan's column.³³ From 1625 onwards the project included six people in Antwerp, Rome and Provence, among them the secretaries of Cardinal Francesco Barberini, Girolamo Aleandro and Cavaliere Cassiano dal Pozzo. In the next few years Rubens repeatedly sent proofs and counter-proofs to Valavez, Aleandro and Peiresc to be studied and retouched.³⁴ It is even possible that Peiresc and Rubens talked about their book as late as 1635, but due to the many obligations that most members of the group had, work on the book was constantly interrupted and it was never published.³⁵ With Peiresc's death in 1637, the project was finally abandoned.

Rubens's profound interest was also reflected by the books he bought. His important book acquisitions included books on numismatics and on ancient Roman monuments. The first documented numismatic books that Rubens bought himself were Adolph Occo's (1447–1503) *Imperatorum romanorum numismata*, published by Plantin in 1579, and *Romanorum antiquitatum libri decem* by Joannes Rosinus.³⁶ These numismatic works were followed by a book on Roman topography, the city's monuments and their inscriptions by Janus Jacobus Boissardus in five parts and two volumes, and Joannes Pierius Valerianus's *Hieroglyphica*, an iconographic handbook.³⁷ This last book was used at least twice for Rubens's book illustrations, for the Aguilonius in 1613 as well as for the Lessius title page in 1617.³⁸ However, there is only mention of Rubens buying Valerianus in 1615; he must have had access to a different copy when he was designing Aguilonius's title page two years earlier, either a different edition or maybe Galle's or Moretus's copy. Valerianus's work was

²⁹ Piles 1677, pp. 215.

³⁰ Büttner 2006b, pp. 91–92; Timmermans 2006; Welzel 2004.

³¹ Miller 2014, p. 51.

³² Ibid.; De Grummond 1968, p. 102 ff. The friendship lasted until Peiresc's death in 1637, Ruelens and Rooses 1972b, pp. 235–236.

³³ De Grummond 1968, pp. 107–108.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 108–112.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 114–118.

³⁶ Entry in the ledgers of the Officina Plantiniana, 17 March 1613, in: Arents et al. 2001, nos. E3 and E5, p. 134.

³⁷ Ibid., no. E20, p. 140 and no. E23, p. 142, respectively.

³⁸ Cf. 5.2 and 5.3.

a well-indexed collection of symbols, illustrated with woodcuts, based on more than 320 antique coins, mentioning contemporary coins in his comments.³⁹ Many artists used this handbook for their work, not only Rubens: Van Mander had used its French translation for his *Schilderboek* and had thus provided accessible excerpts for the Netherlandish artists, and Velázquez, for instance, also owned a copy.⁴⁰

As is attested by their libraries, the interest in antique languages and cultures was cultivated in the Rubens family. Rubens even illustrated the first book of his brother's scholarly works, the *Electorum libri II* in 1608. But given the aristocratic leanings of the whole family, the interest in collecting would have been instilled in the Rubens children early on. Even as a page, Rubens would have had access to collections. He grew up in a world in which collecting coins and gems had become a prerogative of not only princes and scholars, but also of minor aristocrats and gentlemen.⁴¹ Henry Peacham's advice to look at coins was thus not coincidental but was part to a long-established educational programme for the budding gentleman. For the painter Peter Paul Rubens, however, the interest in coins was more than just a genteel convention.

The focus of Rubens's letters, when he writes to Peiresc about gems and coins, reveals a deeper, very scholarly interest in the matter. It is an interest that coccupied his mind his whole life. In one letter to Peiresc, he explains that he has never failed in his travels to "observe and study antiquities, both in public and private collections, or missed a chance to acquire certain objects of curiosity by purchase".⁴² He certainly shared the widely held view of his brother Philip Rubens on the value of coins for an educated interest in the classics:

It is incredible how much the study of coins, stones, and other ancient monuments is worth for a fuller acquaintance with antiquity. Indeed, I would venture to assert that there are not a few things in the writers that could scarcely be both understood and explained rightly in any other way than from these sources.⁴³

Apart from an artistic interest, it is this serious interest in history that moved Rubens to support any endeavours of his friends and his acquaintances to publish on coins.

Rubens's eldest son came to share his interest and was supported with books and his father's very good contacts. In fact, the way in which Rubens supported his son's entry into this network shows that he was well aware of the network's importance to the career of a young gentleman. When Albert was thirteen, a poem he wrote in Latin was included in the second edition of Jan

³⁹ Rolet 2002.

⁴⁰ McGrath 2009a, pp. 397–400.

⁴¹ Burnett 2005, p. 48.

⁴² Letter from Rubens to Peiresc, 18 Dec 1634, in: P. P. Rubens 1955, p. 394.

⁴³ P. Rubens 1608, p. 20. "Incredibile est, quantum ad pleniorē antiquitatis notitiā valeat observatio [...]."

Hemelaer's catalogue of Charles de Croÿ's coin collection. Three years later Rubens introduced his son to Peiresc by letter, framed by a sincere, if topical praise:

The passages from Ancient authors have been added by my son Albert, who is seriously engaged in the study of Antiquities, and is making progress in Greek letters. He honors your name above all, and reveres your noble genius. Pray accept his work done in this spirit, and admit him to the number of your servants.⁴⁴

From a very young age, Albert was introduced into the intellectual society, the so-called Republic of Letters. His father later also arranged for Albert to visit the famous Peiresc in his home in Provence, when he mentioned in a letter from 18 December 1634, that Albert was on his grand tour in Italy for a year and would call on Peiresc on his return.⁴⁵ Albert, who had inherited his father's library and archaeological papers, later used some of his material for his own publication.⁴⁶

Considering Rubens's long lasting interest in classical art, his life-long occupation with antique gems and coins, and his broad correspondence regarding these things, his contribution to several numismatic works is not surprising. And yet, he was involved in different ways for each publication as will be shown in the following case studies.

4.2 | Rubens's first project: Hemelaer and De Bie's *Imperatorum Romanorum Numismata Aurea* (1615)

Rubens's first title page and collaboration on a book project unveil the networks within which he operated. They also show that the numismatic interest was usually driven by a collector's and an antiquarian interest, shared by aristocrats and scholars alike. This first project for Rubens was a title page for the catalogue of Duke of Aarschot and Croÿ's coin collection. Duke Charles III de Croÿ (1560–1612) was Seigneur de Croÿ, 4th Duke of Aarschot, 5th Prince of Chimay and 5th Count of Beaumont, and one of the most powerful men in the Spanish Low Countries.⁴⁷ Justus Lipsius had dedicated several works to this friend and patron of his.⁴⁸ The Duke not only collected coins, but also books, paintings and other art.⁴⁹ In around 1600, he had prompted this publication of his well-

⁴⁴ Letter from Rubens to Peiresc, 10 Aug 1630, in: P. P. Rubens 1955, p. 367, no. 216. Max Rooses, "Rubens (Albert)", *Biographie Nationale* 1908–1910, col. 309–313; here: 310.

⁴⁵ Letter from Rubens to Peiresc, 18 Dec 1634, in: P. P. Rubens 1955, p. 394.

⁴⁶ In Albert Rubens's book, seven drawings of his father's were published, cf. A. Rubens 1665.

⁴⁷ For the patronage of the family Arenberg de Croÿ for the family Rubens, cf. Heinen 2004, pp. 88–92.

⁴⁸ E.g. *De bibliothecis syntagma*, Antwerp 1602; or *Lovanium sive: Opidi et academiae eius descriptio, libri tres*, Antwerp 1605.

⁴⁹ His library had more than 3,000 volumes and was one of the most valuable libraries of its time. He is best known for the commission of his *Albums*, a collection of gouaches and maps depicting his domains. See Esser 2012, p. 191.

known and extensive coin collection, for which the Antwerp canon Jan Hemelaers, a former pupil of Lipsius, wrote the commentary.⁵⁰

In 1610 he appointed the Antwerp engraver Jacob de Bie (1581–1650) keeper of the coin collection, because of his knowledge of coins and antiques, and possibly because he could engrave the plates.⁵¹ Jacob de Bie moved to Brussels and began to work on the catalogue of the collection, for which Rockox asked Rubens to design the title page at the latest in 1611. This publication would also include coins owned by Rockox himself, indicated in the book by asterisks. Erycius Puteanus, another pupil of Lipsius and a member of his network of scholars, contributed poems to this publication.⁵² The publication of the project was stalled, however, when Charles de Croÿ died at the beginning of 1612. Because Rubens was usually contacted for the title page design shortly before a book was finished, it can be assumed that the death of the Duke was the main reason why it took until 1615 to publish the catalogue. The Duke had specified in his will that his heirs were to publish specific works, one of which was the numismatic catalogue.⁵³ With that his heir, his nephew Alexander van Arenberg, also became the dedicatee of the book.

The contact between Jacob de Bie, the engraver, and Rubens, the designer, was most probably initiated by Nicolaas Rockox. Nicolaas II Rockox descended from an old aristocratic family in Antwerp and belonged to a similar social sphere as the Rubenses.⁵⁴ After Rubens's return to Antwerp from Italy, the powerful mayor Rockox immediately stepped up as his patron and secured him good commissions, such as the painting of the *Adoration of the Magi* for Antwerp city hall.⁵⁵ A few of the coins from Rockox's own collection were illustrated in De Bie's first catalogue.

The network that is sketched by these books and the commissions cannot be overemphasised. In the majority of cases, Rubens's work on books was commissioned by Balthasar Moretus, whom he had known since school. Moretus was also part of the Lipsius network, but more importantly, he was the head of the world-famous publishing house Officina Plantiniana. While the work Rubens did for his friend Moretus soon took the appearance of a professional relationship, this first numismatic title page was probably more a favour for a couple of influential friends. Whether it was paid work is not known, but it is highly probable. All that is known about this title page has been passed down through letters preserved in the Royal Library in Brussels.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Büttner 2006b, pp. 30–31.

⁵¹ Büttner 2018.

⁵² Albert Rubens would contribute his Latin poem in the second edition from 1627.

⁵³ Baudouin 2005b, p. 88.

⁵⁴ His family is even mentioned by Lodovico Giucciardini in his description of the city. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁵⁵ One of the first paintings Rubens painted after his return to Antwerp; ordered for Statenkamer in 1609 where the negotiations of the Spanish with the Dutch forces were to be held. The negotiations ended in the Twelve Years' Truce which was economically an important step for an Antwerp that was impacted by the war on its doorstep. Peter Paul Rubens, *Adoration of the Magi*. Oil on canvas, 346 × 438 cm. Madrid, Prado, Inv. 1638. Further literature in Ost 2003.

⁵⁶ Judson and Van de Velde 1977b, pp. 429–430.



Figure 17 – Title page for De Bie 1615; etching, 169 × 126 mm by Jacob de Bie. BM, 1857,0314.5. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

4.2.1 | The Printing of the *Imperatorum Romanorum Numismata Aurea*

The correspondence between Nicolaas Rockox and de Bie concerning the drawing by Rubens dates from January and February 1611, and shows how much depended on Rockox organising the production of the book. In January, Rockox sent the conception of the title page to De Bie in Brussels with the note that Rubens would make a neat version of the sketch if De Bie liked it.⁵⁷ Apparently De Bie agreed, for within the next two weeks the sketch was sent back to Antwerp for Rockox to deliver it to Rubens, which he did immediately.⁵⁸ Another three weeks later Rockox requested De Bie's engravings of the coins in order to write the explanations of those.⁵⁹ In this letter he added that he would also see that "Mr Rubens finishes the dedication and his brother the frontispiece of the Moneta".⁶⁰ The dedication in the printed book, however, is not by Philip but by De Bie himself. Philip Rubens died on August 28 of the same year, so that the dedication had either not been written or could no longer be used.⁶¹ Dedications were usually always connected with a hopeful wish for patronage, thus they were rarely wasted on the dead, be it the dedicatee or the author of the dedication.⁶²

At the end of February, on the 26th, the drawing by Rubens was finally sent to de Bie in Brussels. It was left to him either to engrave the title himself or to send it on to the Galle workshop—it seems that de Bie was able to decide what was to be done as he was directly employed by the Duke and the title page would also have been paid by the Duke. Rockox reminded him emphatically to heed Rubens's marginalia on the drawing and copy a beautiful head of Rome from Goltzius's *Fasti*, so that the figure would be completely "antique right down to the feet" (Fig. 17).⁶³ It was important to Rubens and to Rockox that a fitting model would be used: they used a coin from Goltzius's work, which shows the importance of Goltzius to numismatists, especially in Antwerp.

Goltzius's work was so renowned that all those involved in de Bie's numismatic project most probably owned a copy. Rubens knew the work long before buying four volumes of Goltzius's works from Moretus for 50 guilders in 1626.⁶⁴ The entries of 22 August 1620 and 23 January 1621 in Moretus's ledgers reveal that Rubens had new bindings made for two of his Goltzius books, *Julius*

⁵⁷ Letter from Rockox to De Bie, 3 Jan 1611, in: Judson and Van de Velde 1977b, p. 429.

⁵⁸ Letter from Rockox to De Bie, 22 Jan 1611, in: Held 1977, p. 26.

⁵⁹ Letter from Rockox to De Bie, 11 Feb 1611, in: Judson and Van de Velde 1977b, p. 430.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 430.

⁶¹ It was Moretus who wrote the funerary ode to Philip with the help of Hemelaers. Cf. H. F. Bouchery 1941, p. 218.

⁶² Enenkel in his study on authorship in early modern neo-Latin literature shows that dedications played an important role during this time; a role that definitely superseded the mere monetary role usually accorded to dedications, cf. K. A. E. Enenkel 2015, pp. 6–9.

⁶³ "Je vous envoyé icy ce que monsr Rubens at deseigne pour le premier feullet de vostre livre. Vous pouvez adviser si le laisserez tailler a Cornille Galle, ou si le ferez vous mesmes, en quel cas il vous faudrat bien consid rer ce quil at escript du costet de la figure, et prendre quelque belle teste de Roma en la bague, hors des faites de Goltzius. La figure est du toust a l'antique jusques aux piedts." Letter from Rockox to De Bie, 26 Feb 1611, in: Held 1977, p. 26.

⁶⁴ Arents et al. 2001, p. 175, E 113.

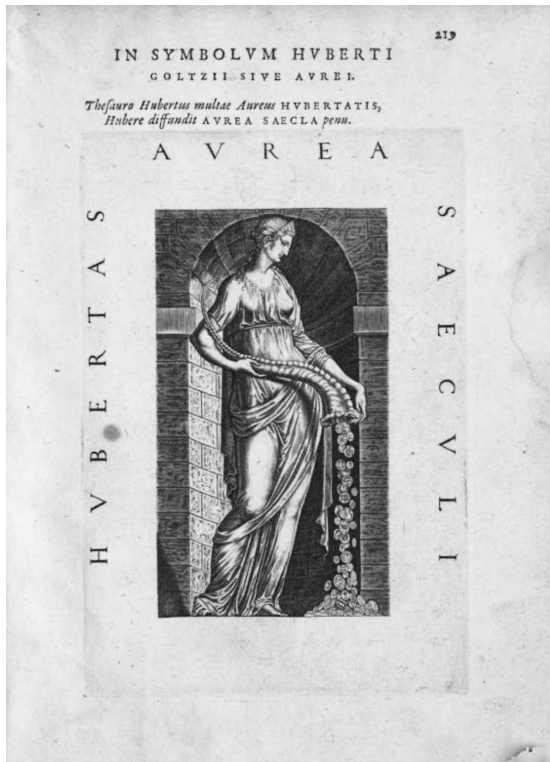


Figure 18 – Vignette for Goltzius 1579; engraving.

Caesar sive historiae Imperatorum Caesarumque Romanorum and *Goltzii numismata*. It is unclear which of Goltzius's books these were, and it merits a closer look as the Goltzius was such an important reference work for Rubens. Especially the second book is completely unclear as *Numismata* can describe any numismatic book by Goltzius and by 1621 De Bie had already published three of his Goltzius commentaries.⁶⁵ It is possible that both entries refer to the seventeenth century copies of these books, for after having finished the Duke's catalogue, Jacob de Bie decided to start a venture that should end in his bankruptcy and a mixed variety of books by and on Goltzius.⁶⁶ All of Rubens's title pages for numismatic works refer to Goltzius's books and plates.

With his several volumes of numismatic work Hubert Goltzius (1526–1583) had provided the most extensive research on coins in the middle of the sixteenth century. He had travelled to more than 977 coin collections in Italy, France, Germany and the Low Countries in order to see and sketch coins. Goltzius was a trained painter and was first exposed to the classical world by his teacher Lambert Lombardus from Liège.⁶⁷ He moved to Antwerp in 1546 and opened a shop for classical antiq-

⁶⁵ See section 4.4 on page 133. The books by Goltzius which Rubens had bound in 1620 and 1621 could have been either the original books, Goltzius 1563; Goltzius 1574; Goltzius 1576; Goltzius 1579, or the reprints with modern commentaries by Jacob de Bie.

⁶⁶ Dekesel 1988, p. 101.

⁶⁷ Dekesel 1988, p. 3.



Figure 19 – Title page for Faber 1606, engraving.
Source gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

unities with Abraham Ortelius, the famous cartographer. In 1556 he started his first tour around Europe's coin collections on which he visited 137 coin cabinets.⁶⁸ Between 1557 and 1560 he published the coins he had sketched in his famous and widely read guide *Icones Imperatorum Romanorum*.⁶⁹ His first books made Goltzius world-famous and secured him a post in Bruges with Marc Laureyns and Laureyn's brother Mathieu, Lord of Watervliet, who then enabled him to travel on a larger scale.⁷⁰ He moved to Bruges and opened his own private press, where he would print all his later works. After having sketched all the coins in his patron's collection, a second trip from 1558 to 1560 took Goltzius to another 799 cabinets throughout Europe.⁷¹ Of particular value were the large, very accurate and well-printed chiaroscuro illustrations of the coins in his publications.⁷²

In his title page for de Bie's catalogue Rubens does not emphasise the coins: only one coin is visible in form of a medallion. *Moneta*, as Rockox calls her in his letter to De Bie,⁷³ is standing in front of a rusticated arch, leaning in classical pose on the oval carrying the title of the catalogue

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

⁶⁹ Schepper 1995, p. 31. Printed by Gilles Coppens van Diest in Antwerp; the Latin, Tuscan, Italian and German editions appeared simultaneously in 1557, the French edition in 1559 and the Spanish one year later. Dekesel 1988, p. 5.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 7.

⁷² Papy 2004, pp. 117.

⁷³ Letter from Rockox to De Bie, 3 Jan 1611, in: Judson and Van de Velde 1977b, p. 429.

and wearing the medallion around her neck. The architecture is overgrown and ruins can be made out in the background. *Moneta* was an aspect of Juno who carries a filled cornucopia in her left arm, while holding scales in her right hand in Rubens's depiction. Her gaze rests on these scales, under which hammer and tongs can be made out. The placement of *Moneta* in front of a rusticated niche is a clear reference to the vignette in the colophons of some of Goltzius's books. In these *Moneta* is depicted in contrapposto in front of a rusticated niche, holding an overturned cornucopia (Fig. 18). In contrast to Rubens's design, this figure holds her cornucopia upside down so that a multitude of coins can be seen falling out, emphasising the great variety of coins presented in the books. This motif can also be seen on a coin with the epithet *Abundantia Augusti* in De Bie's catalogue,⁷⁴ and is used by the engraver Theodor Galle on the title page to *Illvstrivm imagines* (Fig. 19) first published by Jan Moretus in 1598.⁷⁵ Galle subscribes her with "COPIÆ CORNV", the horn of plenty, and does not show the faces of the coins in such a detailed way as Goltzius. However, he places "FELIX ANTIQVITAS" opposite the horn of plenty, an old bearded man with a stick pointing to the book on top of the title page, on whose pages is written, "VITA MEMORIÆ | HISTORIA". Even here the coins are celebrated as a tool of history and their relevance pointed out. On his title page Rubens does not use the upturned horn of plenty; in his design the horn is filled with fruit and corn, pointing to an aspect of abundance that incorporates more than coins. In a similar way he broadens the aspect of the scales: *Moneta's* gaze is concentrated on the instrument that is necessary in order to establish a coin's value, but which can also weigh invisible values, in the hands of justice, for instance.

In the same manner, Rubens takes the same combination of coins with history as in Galle's title page for the *Illvstrivm imagines*, but expresses it in a subtler way and not as literally (Fig. 17).⁷⁶ Rubens alludes rather to both, to the minting of coins and the passing of time. It is possible that the niche alludes to Juno *Moneta's* temple that stood on the Arx on the Capitoline Hill, with the Roman mint next to it in ancient days.⁷⁷ The hammer and tongs leaning against a stone block are a clear reference as they refer to Vulcan, the mythological smith, shown on a coin depicted in Gevaert's commentary in *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*. In this large folio about the entry of the Cardinal Infant Ferdinand to Antwerp in 1635, to which event Rubens designed the artistic programme, his friend, the scholar Gevaerts describes Rubens's inventions and very often refers to antique coins.

Rubens also uses *Moneta* on the face of the Arch of the Mint in the Joyous Entry for Ferdinand, where she is not only depicted with a cornucopia, but also with scales, caduceus, and a money bag, indicating her importance for the Habsburg empire.⁷⁸ In the title page the reference to the mint is prevalent, i.e. to the making of coins, and is introducing the aspect of time in the image: from

⁷⁴ Cf. De Bie 1615, p. 114; plate 38.

⁷⁵ Faber 1606.

⁷⁶ De Bie 1615; engraving, 171 x 128 mm.

⁷⁷ Judson and Van de Velde 1977a, p. 168; Mattingly 1960, p. 11, fn. 1.

⁷⁸ McGrath 1974, p. 194.

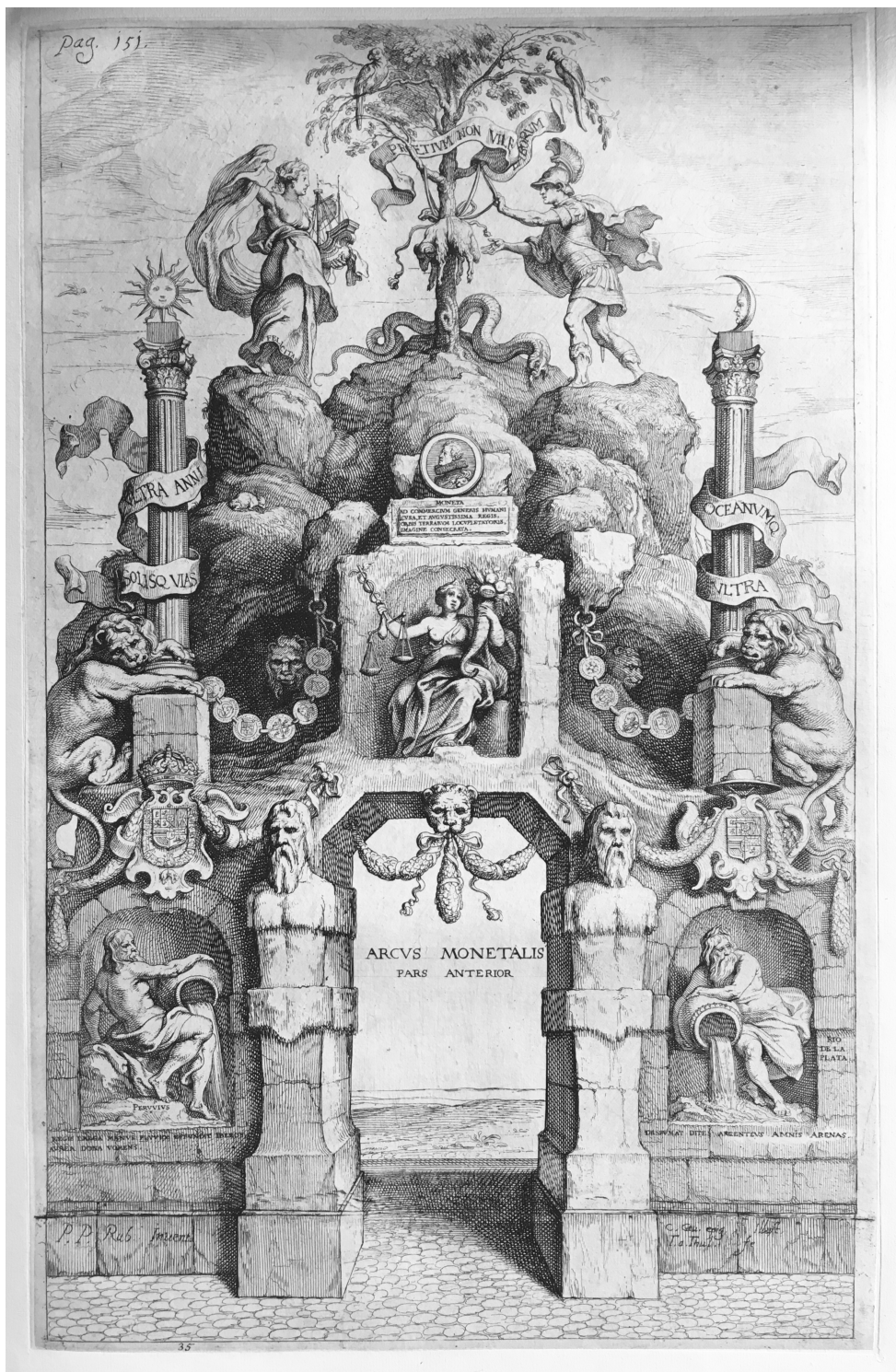


Figure 20—Theodoor van Thulden after Rubens, *The Arch of the Mint*, (Front Face) in Gevaerts 1642, p. 151. Private Image.

the making of the coins, to their use and, on the right-hand side, to the ruins within which they are later found and where they attest to history. This concept is similarly employed in the Arch of the Mint in *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*: the face of the arch shows money not only in use, both as the motor for economy, and as the means to transport a ruler's face and with it his power over the whole world as the columns of Hercules indicate (Fig. 20). The back of the arch shows the mining and Vulcan at work with hammer and tongs in the same place as *Moneta*: the use and the making of coins are equally important here and, in the iconography of a ruler, literally show two sides of a coin (Fig. 21). On the title page, the aspect of time is reinforced by the architecture of the niche and the plants growing on it, and more expressly by the fallen ionic column lying beside it, the capital of which is lying upturned next to the medallion carrying the title of the book.

The same emphasis on the course of time is shown in a vignette in the same book, before which the *approbatio* by Laurentius Beyerlinck and the Ducal Privilege signed by G. Wouwer in Brussels are printed. This vignette introduces the plates of De Bie's catalogue and shows the head of Roma within the *ouroboros*, a snake that is eating its own tail. This was a symbol for eternity, often used in Rubens's title pages, and also gleaned from antique coins and jewellery.⁷⁹ Here it is decorated with tassels and ribbons to which coins are bound on a chain, also a concept that Rubens often uses in later title pages, for instance in the last title page designed by him for a numismatic title page, the fifth volume of the collected works of Goltzius.⁸⁰

With his first title page Rubens already disposes of the traditional architectural frame as, for instance, shown in Galle's title page of 1606 (Fig. 19), and introduces a title page that is more open and versatile in its interpretation. For Rubens the format also has a compositional aspect and for this quarto he only uses one figure which he presents in a clear and monumental manner, while at the same time referring to both antique predecessors and those authorities of his own time, such as Goltzius. Goltzius was to occupy him for the rest of his life, as he was personally involved in the production of Goltzius's *Opera Omnia* published by the Officina Plantiniana.

4.3 | The Further Numismatic Title Pages

The history of the further numismatic title pages by Rubens is very complex, mainly because two of the title pages he designed were later reused for the collected works of Goltzius. It is thus difficult to stay in the chronological progress without confusing the reader. The other title pages by Rubens for the numismatic books are interesting, however, as they already show what will be confirmed

⁷⁹ Rubens mentions visiting Lelio Pasqualino's collection where he saw a gold torques in the shape of an *ouroboros*, a fact he mentions in the text accompanying the title page for Marselaer 1666 and in his *Roman Itinerary*. Meulen 1994a, p.121. The text is quoted in full in Judson and Van de Velde 1977a, pp. 347–348, fn. 5. Other title pages with this symbol were Mudzaert 1622; Haraeus 1623; portrait of Olivares in: Liutprandus 1640; Goltzius 1645a.

⁸⁰ See section 4.4.

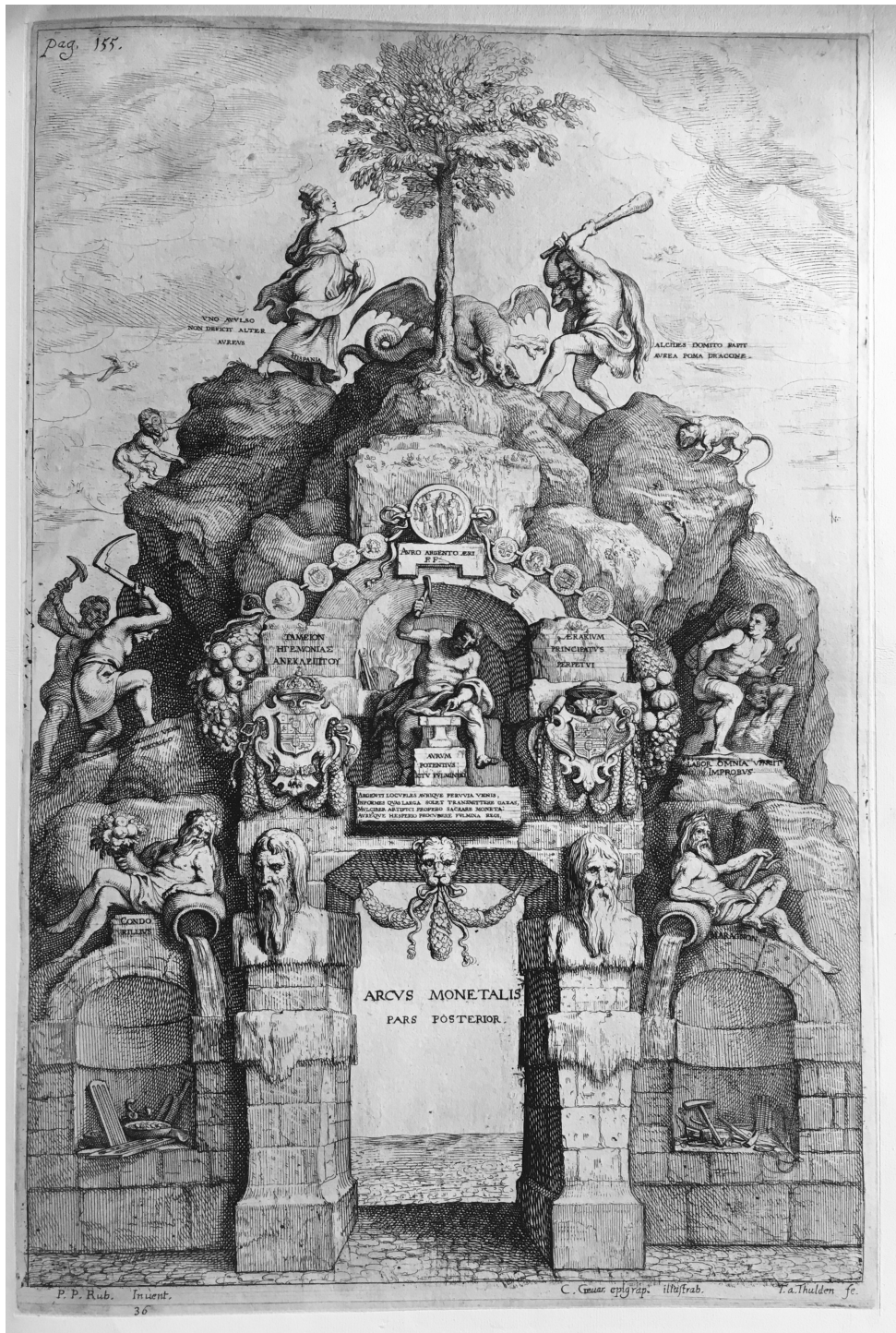


Figure 21—Theodoor van Thulden after Rubens, *The Arch of the Mint, (Rear Face)* in Gevaerts 1642, p. 155. Private Image.

by later case studies. Rubens designs his title pages for specific books, but the concepts he uses are so open that they can be used without problems for other books in the same book class. He does not repeat himself, but uses variations with different emphases for title pages addressing similar topics. In the two following subsections the numismatic title pages have been subdivided into Roman and Greek coins, a subdivision which is also made by Rubens in his design.

From 1617 to 1620 Jacob de Bie republished Goltzius's work, the first volume (*Fast Magistratum et Triumphorum Romanorum*) under his own name, the second and third with the printer Gerard Van Wolsschaten (*Thesaurus Rei Antiquare Huberrimus* and *Sicilia et Magna Graecia*), the fourth was printed by Henricus Aertssens (*Graeciae Universae Asiaq. Minoris et Insularum Nomismata*), and the fifth by Hieronymus Verdussen (*Imp. Iuli Augusti. et Tiberi*). De Bie used the original copper plates, but edited information on them. Of the third volume he produced one version for the Northern Provinces, and one for the Southern Netherlands as the dedications show, and there are signs that he used the same strategy in the fourth volume.⁸¹ Rubens provided two title pages for the last two volumes of this "real second edition" of Goltzius's books.⁸² Nevertheless, De Bie encountered many problems with his second edition, and since "the original editions didn't sell well, De Bie couldn't sell his books either and he was declared bankrupt".⁸³

In 1627 Rubens bought the remaining unsold and partly unfinished Goltzius books, as well as the copperplates from Jacob Loemans, a middleman. Peiresc had alerted Rubens to check on De Bie's financial situation in 1623 already in order to help a fellow numismatist, but also with the express wish to save the plates for further publication.⁸⁴ Another seven years later, Rubens sold the remaining 328 sets of Goltzius books for the sum of 4,920 florins, and 400 copper plates worth 1,000 florins to his friend Balthasar Moretus, who had them checked and intended to print them as the *Opera Omnia* of Goltzius's work.⁸⁵

All of the books compiled into an edition of Goltzius's collected works were therefore initiated by De Bie and involved the same numismatic network, members of which also provided the commentaries for the second edition. The Antwerp Jesuit Andreas Schotte (1552–1629) wrote the commentaries for the first and the third volumes,⁸⁶ and Louis Nonnius those for the fourth and fifth.⁸⁷ Schotte was intimately acquainted with Rubens and his family: he later attended the deathbed

⁸¹ Dekesel 1988, p. 111; there are copies with the printer Isaac Elsevier from Leiden in the colophon.

⁸² In his bibliographical study of the confusing publishing history of the Goltzius books Christian Dekesel concludes that "[t]he books published by De Bie form[ed] the real second edition of at least four Goltzius books"; *ibid.*, p. 131.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁸⁴ Letter from Peiresc to Rubens, 10 Mar 1623, in: Ruelens and Rooses 1972e, p. 138.

⁸⁵ "Checked all the plates of the Medals of Goltzius, for two and a half day wages and expenses 4 guilders 8." 16 July 1633, in: Judson and Van de Velde 1977b, p. 484; "Corrected all the plates of the Medals of Goltzius, being 400 plates, for everything 520 guilders." 23 July 1633, in: *ibid.*, p. 471.

⁸⁶ Goltzius and Schottus 1617 and Goltzius and Schottus 1618.

⁸⁷ Goltzius 1618 and Nonnius 1620.



Figure 22 – Title page for Augustín et al. 1617; etching, 259 × 170 mm by de Lasne after Rubens. Private Image.

of Isabella Brant, Rubens's first wife.⁸⁸ He was also involved in the production of the catalogue of Rockox's coins in 1617, and belonged to Lipsius's circle of friends.⁸⁹ In 1617 Schotte's translation of Antonio Agustín y Abanell's dialogues on antique buildings and the inscriptions on them, as well as African, Spanish and Gallic coins was also published. Agustín, the archbishop of Tarragona, had printed these scholarly dialogues between himself, his brother and his nephew in an edition of one hundred in 1575 to give to his friends and fellow enthusiasts. Schotte, who had lived with Agustín for two years, translated the work into Latin, Jacob de Bie provided the plates and Aertssens printed it.⁹⁰ The book is dedicated to Nicolaas Rockox as a patron of the study of antiquity.⁹¹

4.3.1 | Title Pages for Roman Emperors

Rubens made title pages for two books on coins of the Roman emperors. The first was for *Nomismata Imperatorum Romanorum Aurea*, published in 1617 (Fig. 22 on page 125). It was later reused for the second volume of Goltzius's *Opera omnia*, a commentary by Ludovico Nonnius on the coins of the Augustan age.⁹² The wording of the title was changed, but otherwise the image of the title page stayed unchanged.⁹³ The other title page for Roman coins was for the last volume of Goltzius's *Opera omnia*, the *Icones Imperatorum Romanorum* (Fig. 26 on page 130).⁹⁴ The title pages for numismatic books show how Rubens slightly shifts the meaning of the title pages while using similar iconography.

The first book on the coins of the Roman Emperors from 1617 is about a collection of coins from Caesar to Valentinian owned by, and thus dedicated to, Nicolaas Rockox.⁹⁵ The sixty-eight plates are followed by a commentary in the form of a humanistic dialogue written by Schotte. The image refers to a previous book, Janus Jacobus Boissardus's (Jean Jacques Boissard 1528–1602) *Romae urbis topographia* printed in 1597 in Frankfurt/Main (Fig. 24).⁹⁶ Boissardus's illustrator Theodor de Bry (1528–1598) was the first to design a title page that played with the depth of the title page leaving the architectural frame aside. De Bry had taken this invention from Hendrick Goltzius's title page for a series of ten prints dedicated to the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II (Fig. 23).⁹⁷

⁸⁸ Baudouin 2005b, p. 88.

⁸⁹ Agustín et al. 1617.

⁹⁰ Agustín y Abanell 1617.

⁹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, dedication; Huet et al. 2010, pp. 296ff.

⁹² Agustín et al. 1617; Vol. II in Goltzius 1645b.

⁹³ Dekesel 1988, pp. 146–147.

⁹⁴ Goltzius 1645a.

⁹⁵ Rockox probably also financed the publication, as it shows about 180 of his coins; Agustín et al. 1617.

⁹⁶ Rubens bought this book in May 1614 and used it for many projects. Arents et al. 2001, pp. 140–141, E 20.

⁹⁷ Engraving Hendrick Goltzius, 370 mm x 238 mm; Rijksmuseum, no. RP-P-H-OB-101.286. M. Leesberg, *Hendrick Goltzius*, vol. I, p. 273, no. 163; H. Leeftang, *Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617): tekeningen, prenten en schilderijen*, p. 89–92, no. 29; R. L. Falkenburg, *Goltzius-studies: Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617)*, p. 208, no. 26.



Figure 23 – Hendrick Goltzius, *De Romeinse helden*, 1586; engraving, 370 × 238 mm. Rijksmuseum, RP-P-H-OB-101.286. © Rijksmuseum.

Hendrick Goltzius depicted *Roma* seated on weapons, wearing a helmet, holding a spear and the personification of Victory in her hands. The personification of the city of Rome was always also a symbol of civic virtue, while the armaments symbolised the militaristic nature of the empire. Looking up at her on the title page is river god Tiber, while the personifications of Europe, Africa and Asia are offering her goods. The founding figures, Romulus and Remus, are depicted in the foreground together with their nurturing wolf. In his design for the title page of the topography of Rome, De Bry omits Europe and the coat-of-arms above her, still shown in Goltzius's print, and instead depicts triumphant Rome, to which all other continents bow. Rubens takes the imperial imagery of this title page and uses the concept in a different way.

On Rubens's title page, too, *Roma* sits on a pedestal bearing the title, but she is holding an orb and a sword in her hands, while the personification of victory is stepping up behind her, crowning her with a laurel wreath. For this depiction of *Roma* Rubens reverted to a model he must have seen in Rome, a marble statue in the Giardino Cesi. He already had it engraved by Galle for his brother's book in 1608 (Fig. 25).⁹⁸ Rubens enforces the imperial theme in his title page and uses symbols that match the topic of coins for Roman emperors: a victorious Rome flanked by trophies and set above a relief showing the founding myth of Romulus and Remus. This, too, is based on a classical

⁹⁸ P. Rubens 1608, between pp. 66–67.



Figure 24 – Title page for Boissard 1597, engraving by Theodor de Bry.

model, recognisable for the erudite as part of the River Tiber group; he did not have to include the river for it to be part of the invention. To emphasise the triumph over other nations, Rubens places two captives below *Roma*'s pedestal instead of using the personifications of the continents. He uses these captives often and widely in representations of power; the classical and imperial reference they provide were useful to show the power of a king or the Church.⁹⁹ Rubens thus exploits this numismatic reference to the concept of triumph for books displaying the triumph of the church.¹⁰⁰

For the second Rubens title page on the coins of Roman emperors (the fifth volume of the complete Goltzius), the artist places Julius Caesar, the first Roman emperor, on a similar pedestal as *Roma* in the previous title page (Fig. 26). He carries the same attributes with which Rome's city deity is commonly depicted on coins, the orb and victory, while a star is placed above his head. This book spans a large time frame: it deals with the biographies of emperors from Julius Caesar to Ferdinand III, and also included Byzantine and Holy Roman emperors. Thus the two emperors below Caesar on the title page are Constantine, the first Christian emperor, and Rudolph I, the founder of the Habsburg dynasty of which Ferdinand III was the last living emperor and king.

⁹⁹ Büttner 2018, no. 29, pp. 404–410.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. chapter 6.

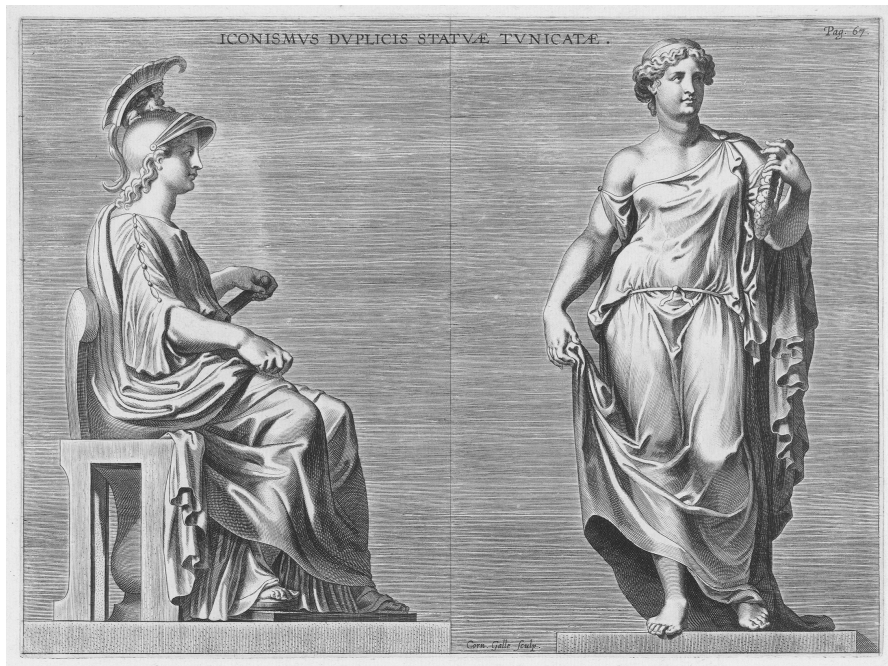


Figure 25 – Illustration for P. Rubens 1608; engraving by Cornelis Galle I after Rubens, 206 × 276 mm. Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-4307. © Rijksmuseum.

The rudder, the fasces, rods bundled together, the snake, and the orb crowned by laurel are all symbols taken from the typical Roman empirical iconography as depicted on the coins and emphasise the wise government of a ruler, the eternity or strength of his rule or the eternity of it. The sun and the moon, just as the star, are also included in the title page to *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi* above and flanking the medallion of Philip IV (Fig. 10 on page 65). The star could symbolise the soul of the divine emperor and his fame, but it could be also used in the same way as Rubens includes it in the *Pompa*.¹⁰¹ There Gevaerts in the *explicatio* of the title page points the reader to the *adscriptum* on the title page itself: *HESPERVS EOIS LV CET ET OCCIDVS*—the evening star shines in the East and the West. Gevaerts explains that the stars never set on the Spanish Empire, and Aurora as the personification of the East Indies and the dawn rise to the left of the title page while Luna, the sign of the West Indies urges on a chariot pulled by a team of horses in the top-right corner of the title page. The extension of the empire was certainly also a topic in the Roman empire. It is entirely possible that Rubens uses the star in this context in a very similar way.

While the first title page by Rubens in 1617 was still focussed on antiquity and put the victory of Rome and its superiority into its centre, the second title page focusses much more on imperial power and on the founding myths of the Spanish Catholic empire. It shows a “dynastic” line from

¹⁰¹ Judson and Van de Velde 1977a; Mattingly 1960, p. 146, fn. 2.



Figure 26 – Title page for Vol. V, *Icones Imperatorum Romanorum*, in: Goltzius 1645b; etching by Cornelis Calle I after Rubens, 310 × 206 mm. Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1963-306. © Rijksmuseum.

Julius Caesar to the Habsburg dynasty with an emphasis on the faith, as Constantine is also included. While the imperial iconography is firmly rooted in antiquity, its meaning is transported to the present and, of course, includes the present king.

4.3.2 | Title Pages for Greek Coins

Rubens designed *Graeciae universae Asiaeque minoris et insularum nomismata ueterum* in 1618, reused in 1645 for the same book in the Plantinian Goltzius (Fig. 27).¹⁰² For this work on coins from Greece and Minor Asia Rubens uses the symbolism from the depicted coins. The centre of this title page is an altar on which Rubens has combined typical classical decoration which probably did not exist in this combination.¹⁰³ A medallion at the top shows the profile of Alexander with ram's horns on his head, taken from coins of Alexander III of Macedonia, and placing him in the league of gods rather than humans.¹⁰⁴ Alexander's profile was for a long time the only human face on Hellenistic coinage, apart from Ptolemy I and common mythological scenes. His cult continued for more than two hundred years following his death in 323 B.C., and several coins were minted depicting his face.¹⁰⁵ With Roman standard coinage, Alexander's face disappeared from coins. That Alexander, one of the world's greatest military leaders, is placed in a line with the eagle of Zeus and the coat-of-arms of Archduke Albert of Austria, presented by two griffins in a laurel wreath, is no coincidence. Jacob de Bie dedicated the volume to the Archduke and his praise is here expressed visually through this juxtaposition.

On the title page, several Greek deities appear in the form of their attributes: the eagle of Zeus is sitting at the top of the altar, lightning bolts in his claw and with a vicious look towards the owl of Athena, who leans out as if to avoid the glance. Hercules's club and his lion's skin are placed on the right against the altar alongside Diana's bow and quiver, and Neptune's trident together with the dolphin with which he is depicted on coins. On the other side two pigeons, referring to Venus, are perched on top of the altar, while to their side lean Apollo's lyre, Hygieia's snake and staff, Fama's trumpet, and the tripod that was believed to be used by the Delphic priestess when delivering her oracles.¹⁰⁶ Some objects are ambiguous, such as the laurel wreath, which could be accorded to Bacchus together with the staff,¹⁰⁷ and the garland and the branch held by the snake could point to Demeter. Although Rubens includes the profile of Alexander in this title page of Greek coins, the symbolism in general refers to Greek mythology.

¹⁰² Goltzius 1618.

¹⁰³ For garlands, ram's heads and bucrania as altar decoration in Roman antiquity, cf. Altmann 1905.

¹⁰⁴ Goltzius 1618, for instance on plate XXXI, also plates XXXVI and XXXVII.

¹⁰⁵ Even long after that, memorial coins with his face on continued to be minted for centuries. Shipley 2000, p. 21.

¹⁰⁶ The subject of the Delphic tripod occupied Peiresc and indeed Rubens also for some time in the 1630s. Cf. Ossa-Richardson 2011; Meulen 1977.

¹⁰⁷ Judson and Van de Velde 1977a, p. 202.

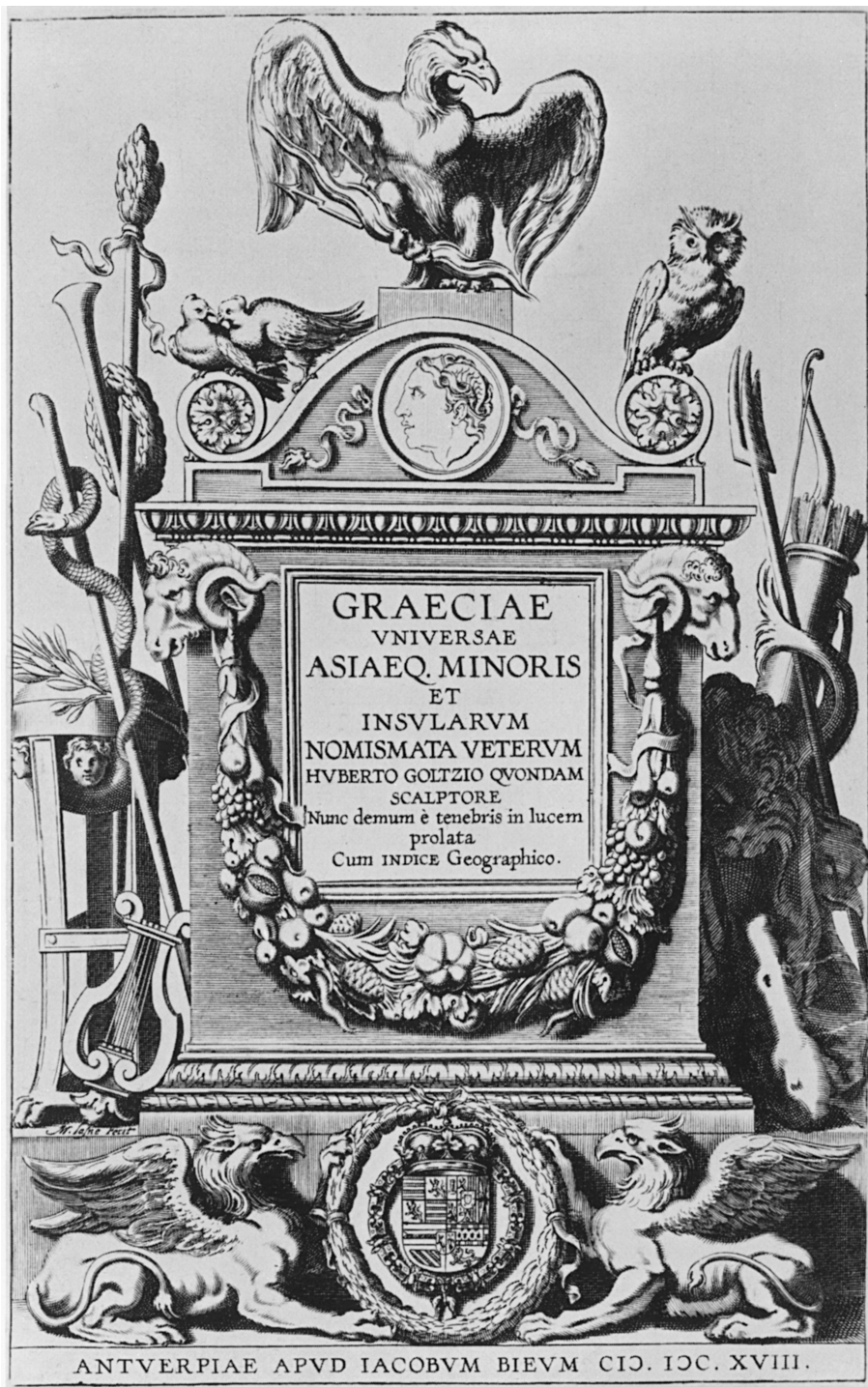


Figure 27 – Title page for Goltzius 1618; etching by Lasne after Rubens, 279 × 181 mm. Private Image.

4.4 | The Title Page for Goltzius's *Opera omnia* (1645)

Rubens provides two new title pages in addition to the two existent ones for the *Opera omnia* of Hubert Goltzius, in which each book had its separate illustrated title page. The first of the five volumes has a general title page for the entire set *Romanae et Graecae Antiquitatis Monumenta* (Fig. 28), and the separate parts have their own, mostly reused title page apart from the four Rubens title pages. Apart from the old designs by Rubens, the older title pages from the first Goltzius edition were used and probably even recut. The Goltzius books were so well-known that the old title page would provide a moment of recognition with the buyer. The dedication of the whole work, and the dedication of the final volume, the only really new book, were written by Gevaerts. He was an intimate friend of Rubens, whose eldest son he looked after, when obligations called Rubens away. After his studies, Gevaerts returned to Antwerp and was appointed city clerk from 1621 to 1622.¹⁰⁸ Gevaerts had also written the text to the *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi* which—by virtue of his explanations and inclusion of coins—can almost be considered a numismatic work.

The first volume of the collected works of Goltzius included *Fasti*, with a title page by Michel Lasne after the original, and *Thesaurus Rei Antiquare*.¹⁰⁹ In the second, third and fourth volumes De Bie's title pages were used: volume two included the Ludovico Nonnius's commentaries on the coins of the Augustan age, introduced with the title page that had been designed by Rubens for the *Nomismata Imperatorum Romanorum Aurea* in 1617 (Fig. 22 on page 125).¹¹⁰ Volume three comprised Nonnius's commentary on the Greek coins and had the title page that had been designed by Rubens for the same book in 1618 (Fig. 27 on page 132).¹¹¹ Volume four had again two books bound into one, the first of which provided the title page for the volume: a copy of the title page for *Siciliae et Magnae Graeciae Historia* from 1576 was used for this whole volume. The fifth volume was added to those De Bie had provided, and was a new edition of Goltzius's first book, with the coins minted by the Roman emperors. This title page was a new invention by Rubens, drawn by Erasmus Quellinus (Fig. 26).

The title page that Rubens designed for the complete works of Goltzius incorporated an idea he had already used in his first numismatic title page in 1615: the idea of the passing of time and history related to coins. The first title page is followed by the dedication to Ferdinand Franz of Habsburg written by Gevaerts and dated 1 August 1645 and an explanation of the title page called *Tabulae praeliminaris sive Frontispicii Explicatio*.¹¹² Gevaerts especially mentions the figures on the right

¹⁰⁸ Judson and Van de Velde 1977a, p. 327, no. 81.

¹⁰⁹ Dekesel 1988, pp. 140–145.

¹¹⁰ Augustín et al. 1617.

¹¹¹ Goltzius 1618. Dekesel 1988, pp. 147–150.

¹¹² Not all title pages had explanations, but even if they had they usually only name what could be seen, especially figures that might be ambiguous or difficult to understand.

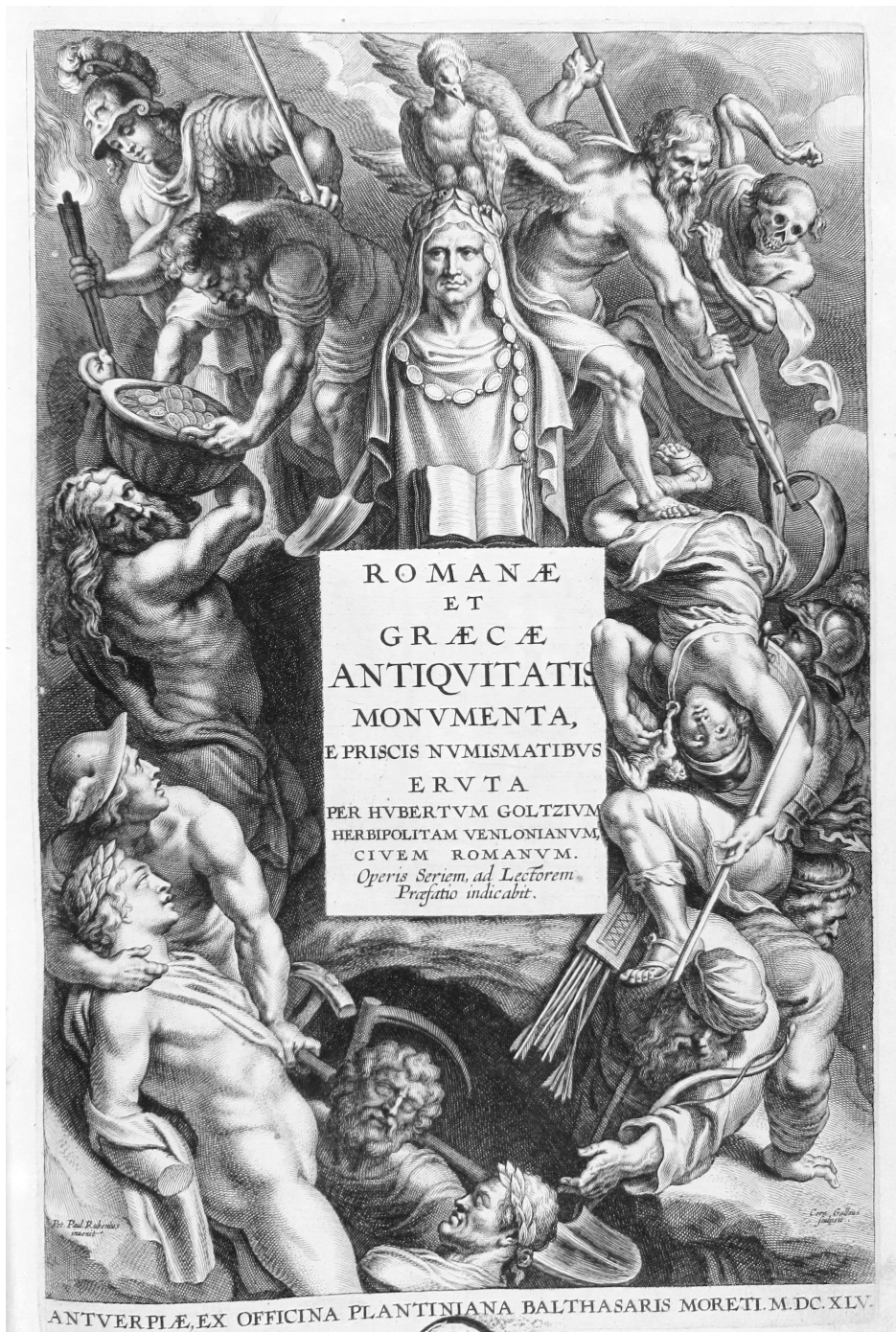


Figure 28 – Title page for Vol. I, Goltzius 1645b; engraving by Cornelis Galle I after Rubens, 302 × 200 mm. Private Image.

who represent the monarchies of Rome, Macedonia, Persia, and Media and by which attributes they can be identified.¹¹³ He explains why the attributes were chosen for these figures and even mentions a literary source in which all four monarchies were mentioned. Thus, the explanation was more than a simple aid in identifying the figures for the reader: it was proof that the design by the painter was permissible and sanctioned by antique sources, something which Rubens himself also did occasionally. Gevaerts does not explain why any figures are present or what they denote: it is not an interpretation of the title page. What Gevaerts presents to the reader is the overall topic of the title page: “the image shows the rebirth of antiquity”.¹¹⁴

In the later title page the concept of circular history, as it was used in Rubens’s first title page, was fully worked out. The rebirth of antiquity is shown in a circular motion around the title on a pedestal, aptly associated with Rubens’s grand schemes like the “Great Last Judgement” in which a similar movement can be observed.¹¹⁵ The title is headed by a veiled bust of Antiquity crowned with a laurel wreath. On the head of the bust a phoenix is perching and leaning against it is an open book. Besides being self-referential, the book points to a history transmitted by books, while the phoenix is the symbol of revival and eternity, as Gevaerts points out. The revival of Antiquity starts, in reading direction, with its death: the figures of Death and Time, an old bearded man, are pushing four ancient monarchies to the ground. The Persian monarchy is trapped beneath the others and was the first to fall, while the Macedonian or Greek and the Roman monarchies, as the last ones to fall, are still on top. The way in which these monarchs are toppled down is reminiscent of depictions of the wheel of fortune, itself an expression of the circular motion of history.

Below the title is a hole in the ground with digging tools and the statues of Roman and Greek leaders visible. Mercury, Hercules, and Minerva are helping to uncover the inheritance of these collapsed monarchies. Mercury, whose gaze draws the reader’s attention back to Time and Death, is the opposite to these figures: while Time and Death overthrow even monarchies, Mercury drags them out, such as the statue with a cape and laurel wreath he hauls out of earth. The figure is reminiscent of statues of Apollo and, as this deity was associated with the arts, Mercury could be also unearthing classical poetry and music. Thus, Mercury, who also symbolises eloquence, reverses the work of Time and Death and uncovers the arts of antiquity. With his strength, Hercules hauls them upwards to where Minerva. Minerva, as the goddess of wisdom, helps to enlighten the collector or historian of coins who takes up a hoard of coins from Hercules. The bust of antiquity presides

¹¹³ Gevaerts reverses left and right; he probably described the drawing rather than the print: Judson and Van de Velde 1977a, p. 337.

¹¹⁴ “Tabella Praeliminaris, à Petro-Paullo Rubenio, Equite, Aevi nostri Apelle, designata & delineata, ANTIQUITATIS REVIVISCENTIS Typum exhibit.” Goltzius 1644, p. xi.

¹¹⁵ Munich, K.d.K., p. 118; Judson and Van de Velde 1977a, p. 338.

over this circle of death and rebirth, her eyes not blind like those of the statues below, but staring into eternity.

That both Minerva and Mercury help uncover the archaeological finds is not a coincidence: both are the patrons of the arts and sciences.¹¹⁶ The title page is a fitting argument for the complete works of Goltzius, and illustrates one of the driving forces behind the publication: the fight against time and death, and the uncovering of history, which was also important for Rubens's work directly.

4.5 | Conclusion: Rubens and Numismatics

The numismatic books were used professionally by Rubens and others: much of the iconography Rubens used was known from ancient coins as Gevaerts repeatedly shows in his commentary to the Joyous Entry of Cardinal Infant Ferdinand.¹¹⁷ But the numismatic books also reflect a deeply personal interest of Rubens and are thus presented here as an introduction to the other aspects of his title page design.¹¹⁸ Rubens's numismatic interest was embedded in his general fascination with antiquity, a fascination which also compelled him to study and draw the sculptures and reliefs in Rome.¹¹⁹ As his correspondence with the scholar Peiresc shows, Rubens was deeply interested in the historical background of the gems and artefacts that were found all over Europe, an interest which he shared with his son Albert. He not only considered publishing a book of his own on gems together with his friend Peiresc, but also bought a large number of plates from his bankrupt friend Jacob de Bie, which resulted in the publishing of the *Opera omnia* of Hubert Goltzius. The network around the numismatic books includes aristocratic and scholarly enthusiasts, and, more importantly, life-long friends and important patrons with whom he cooperated—and most of these play a part in other, non-numismatic commissions and publications. It was probably also the ties to this numismatic network, coupled with his personal interest, that induced Rubens to buy all the plates for Goltzius's books from Jacob de Bie; this was a personal and financial involvement in a doomed book project which is exceptional.

The involvement in and commitment to this singularly unsuccessful project by Rubens and Moretus demonstrate the importance of numismatics to them both. Neither one of them would live to see the finished five volumes of the *Opera omnia* appear on the market in 1644–45. From an economic point of view, the Officina Plantiniana's investment in this work was never justified: the books were too expensive, especially as so many plates were involved, and the market of nu-

¹¹⁶ Cf. Bertram 2016, pp. 231–232.

¹¹⁷ Gevaerts 1642. See also Büttner 2017b, *passim*.

¹¹⁸ De Grummond 1968.

¹¹⁹ Meulen 1994a.

numismatic enthusiasts was too small for such an edition. The end of this publishing endeavour is telling: between 1670 and 1678 the Verdussens bought the unsold volumes from the Officina Plantiniana, but as late as 1689 more than 500 miscellaneous volumes of Goltzius's *Opera omnia* were still in their warehouse.¹²⁰ As those books had not sold well, Moretus's decision to re-publish them for a third, equally unsuccessful time is clearly influenced by the lifelong enthusiasm both he and Rubens had for numismatics and for the work of Goltzius who certainly was the most influential numismatist until the eighteenth century. This enthusiasm was nurtured by the social network surrounding them and it exemplifies the importance of this network for business decisions.

With his title pages, Rubens showed and advocated that he belonged to an antiquarian network that spanned the whole of Europe. The Antiquarian network in Antwerp was built on a common interest in antiquarian matters, but it also implied common goals and thus bolstered trust among a dispersed community. Furthermore, this was a community of scholars who were often in the service of the various European courts and as such they were very useful contacts. To be introduced as one of theirs could be beneficial in other ways, as it often proclaimed trustworthiness of the contact. An example already mentioned earlier, is the letter written by Frans Sweerts to Gruterus, the librarian of the elector of the Palatinate. In an earlier letter, Gruterus must have complained about having been cheated by tapestry dealers during an acquisition he undertook in the elector's name.¹²¹ Sweerts, tapestry merchant and humanist, sees his chance to offer Rubens's tapestries to the Elector through Gruterus and provide a political contact at the same time. As Ulrich Heinen shows in his contextualisation and interpretation of this letter, introducing Rubens as an antiquarian and someone who was well versed in history would not only make Rubens trustworthy, but also enhanced the quality of his tapestries for someone who had not seen them.¹²² To prove his point, Sweerts also mentions Rubens's collections. Unsurprisingly, Rubens's friend Woverius is mentioned in the letter. Thus Sweert's and Rubens's contacts to the Antwerp antiquarian circle, just as Rubens's collection and his knowledge in the field, have become bargaining factors for a tapestry merchant and thus have economical and political implications. This suggests that celebrating this network of fellow enthusiasts by means of an active participation in their projects, i.e. design title pages for their publications, might not only have been in Rubens's personal interest, but would also have made him known in circles which he might not yet have penetrated professionally.¹²³

This case study has also shown several points concerning Rubens's title page design. The Goltzius project had in total four of Rubens's title pages, two of which were designed early in his illus-

¹²⁰ Dekesel 1988, pp. 160–161.

¹²¹ This letter was already mentioned in section 2.5.

¹²² Heinen 2002, passim, here p. 286.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 288.

tration career and were later reused, and two from the later years of his life. Title pages were often reused by publishers, especially for books of the same genre. For the Goltzius project various title pages were not only reused but even recut. Thus all means to provide title pages for a book were used in the collected works: new prints from old plates, new engravings made by copying old plates, and new designs by Rubens. This raises the question of the value of older title pages: clearly it was not necessary to provide a book with a new title page in each case, which suggests that some title pages were valued for their ties to older publications. The value of these older title pages is also suggested by the fact that Rubens often refers to earlier title pages as will be seen in the following case studies. The corpus of numismatic title pages shows in a nutshell the issues which were further studied in the other Rubens title pages: the social context of book production, Rubens's references to older title pages and the influence of these on the interpretation of the title page.