

PETER PAUL RUBENS

Flemish school, 1577 - 1640

Rubens, ^{the leading Flemish master of the seventeenth century} was born at Siegen in Westphalia on June 28, 1577. His father was Jan Rubens, an Antwerp lawyer who had left Flanders because of the prosecution of the Protestants. After his death in 1587, Rubens's mother returned to Antwerp and made the young boy into a page. In 1598, having received his training there from Tobias Verhaecht, Adam van Noort and Otto Venius, Rubens became a master in the Saint Luke's Guild of Antwerp. From 1600 to 1608 he was in Italy, entering the service of Vincenzo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, in 1600. He stayed in Venice, Mantua, Rome and Genoa, where he painted portraits of the nobility, including the Spinola, Doria and Grimaldi families --and made copies after works by Michelangelo and Correggio. In 1603-4 he went to Spain for the first time, in the service of Vincenzo Gonzaga; he did works for the Duke of Lerma and made copies after paintings of Titian's. In 1608 he returned to Antwerp, and settled there after the death of his mother ; and the following year he was appointed painter to the Brussels Court of the Archduke Albert and the Infanta Isabella, and married Isabella Brant, by whom he had three children. Between 1609 and 1621 he did numerous paintings for churches in Antwerp and won international fame. Between 1622 and 1625 he paid visits to Paris, in connection with the cycle of paintings commissioned from him by Marie de Medici for the Luxembourg Palace. The cartoons for the tapestry series of the Story of Constantine (see below) also date from this period. Isabella Brant died in 1626. In 1625-27 Rubens did cartoons for the tapestry series depicting the Life of Achilles and in 1627-28 for the Eucharist series. In 1628 he went back to Spain on a diplomatic mission. He did portraits there of Philip IV, who appointed him Secretary of the Netherlands Privy Council, and of other members of the Spanish Royal Family. In 1629-30 he visited London as envoy to Charles I, who knighted him ; and in 1630 he married the sixteen-year old Helena Fourment, by whom he had five children. In 1630-34 he did sketches for the Whitehall Ceiling in London.

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In 1635 he purchased the Castle of Steen, and this estate, to which he virtually retired during the last years of his life, and the countryside around would become the inspiration for his most important landscape paintings. At the same time in 1636-38 he did paintings for Philip IV's hunting lodge near Madrid, the Torre de la Parada. Following his death from a paralytic stroke on May 30, 1640, an inventory was taken of the extensive collection he had formed, and of the paintings remaining in his studio. He maintained a large workshop, particularly in the Antwerp house that he occupied during his middle years --employing numerous assistants and specialist collaborators. His letters show him as a many-sided man -- diplomat, statesman and humanist as well as a painter.

RUBENS, cont.

Portrait of a Man in Armure (called the Duke of Mantua)
oil on panel, $12\frac{3}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ ins.

Provenance

Private colln., Vienna ; Mr and Mrs F.E.Keeler, Los Angeles ; Newhouse Galleries, New York (1930)⁽¹⁾. Acquired by Dr Clowes in 19 .

Literature

J.A.Goris - J.S.Held, Rubens in America, New York, 1947, p.28, no.10 ; M.Jaffé, "The Deceased Young Duke of Mantua's Brother", Burl.Mag., 103, 1961, p.378, n.22.

Exhibited

Loan Exhibition of Portraits, 17th to 19th Centuries, from Indiana collections, John Herron Art Museum, Indianapolis, Feb.-Mar.1945, no.5 ; Ind., 1959, no.51.

Versions

1. Putnam Foundation, on loan to Metropolitan Museum, New York. Life size, $25 \times 19\frac{1}{2}$ ins. (Goris-Held, no.9). Corresponds compositionally to the present version. Acquired by Charles I as Prince of Wales.

2. Colln. Charles Graves, England. On panel, 26.5×23.5 cm. Version matching the Putnam painting, but with more of the armored shoulder⁽²⁾

3. Black chalk drawing, formerly in Francis Wellesly colln. (Connoisseur, 53, Mar.1919, p.138). ~~Pl.~~

This painting was acquired with certificates from W.R.Valentiner (1928 and 1934) identifying it as the preliminary study by Rubens for the Putnam version, which is larger, and

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dating it as having been painted in Italy in 1608-10.⁽³⁾ Goris and Held (1947) equally called it the preliminary study, and W.Suida recorded his belief that it was by Rubens.⁽⁴⁾ Jaffe', however, (1961), considered this version to be a reduced copy of the Putnam version, of considerably later date. The compiler concurs in this view ; an eighteenth century date suggests itself as most likely.⁽⁵⁾

The identification by Jaffe' of the true Rubens portrait of Francesco IV Gonzaga (National Trust, Saltram House) established that this cannot be, as previously supposed, the young man of about twenty depicted here. Jaffe' assigned the Putnam portrait to a later date correspondingly, the mid 1620s, on the basis of style.⁽⁶⁾

Notes.

1. See Burl.Mag., 58, Dec.1930, advert. suppl., pl.13.
2. Mentioned by Jaffe' in a letter of 1960 to Allen W.Clowes and in his 1961 article (loc.cit.), where he classed both it and the drawing as copies.
3. Certificates of Apr.20, 1928 and Oct.18, 1934 (Clowes archives). In a letter to the Newhouse Galleries of Dec.4, 1930, Valentiner reiterated the same view of the painting.
4. Undated doc., Clowes archives, in which Suida held the portrait to have been painted for the artist's enjoyment and as a personal record.
5. F.Grossmann, in a letter to the compiler of Aug.6, 1966, noted that the brown paint is applied like the other pigments, a contrast to Rubens's technique in which the brown underpainting is left uncovered in the shadows. He considered this a copy, most probably French XVIIIth c.
6. Francesco IV was born in 1586 and died in 1612.