

contextualize the programs of the *ducali* images. In part 3, “Themes and Programs,” the author takes a two-pronged thematic approach to analyzing the imagery, first looking at that employed in the rectors’ manuscripts, reflecting their experiences and attitudes toward serving abroad, and then by exploring the ways patricians chose to commemorate their participation in the Holy League and Battle of Lepanto in their *ducali*. At the end of the volume, the author provides a highly useful finding guide listing all the *ducali* by current location, as well as indications of online databases of these manuscripts.

Though long known to specialists in Venetian manuscript painting, and studied extensively by scholars such as Giordana Mariani Canova and David S. Chambers, for others this masterly study of the *ducali* will open a fascinating perspective on the world of Renaissance Venice. This volume will be of particular interest to those in the fields of Venetian art history, early modern ego documents, and the history of the book. Lavishly illustrated, with 225 stunning color reproductions, Szépe’s book is a delight for the eyes as well as the mind.

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*The Henri IV Series.* Alexis Merle du Bourg.

Ed. Bert Schepers, Brecht Vanoppen, and Isabelle Van Tichelen. Trans. Jane MacAvock and Abigail D. Newman. Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard 14.2. Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2017. 484 pp. + 105 color pls. €175.

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The aspirations, layout, and political import of the series of paintings dedicated to the life of Henri IV (1553–1610) at the Luxembourg Palace remain among the great enigmas of seventeenth-century European painting. Contracted on 26 February 1622, when Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) was in Paris to discuss plans for a gallery dedicated to the king’s consort, Maria de’ Medici (1573–1642), and one celebrating the life of the late French king, the painted cycle for the latter was never completed. From the beginning, the vision for the second gallery seemed ill defined and neglected. While the contract sets the series theme—“to represent and paint all the battles of the late King Henri the Great, the encounters he made, his combats, his captures and sieges of towns along with the triumphs of the said victories in the manner of the triumphs of the Romans, following the program that will be provided by her majesty” (12–13)—and stipulates that the canvases should be painted by Rubens’s own hand, it specifies neither the number of compositions nor their subjects. The twenty-four canvases for the Medici Gallery were installed in 1625 (now Paris, Musée du Louvre), but the canvases slated for the Henri IV Gallery received attention only in fits and starts, subject to the French court’s interest and the demands of the artist’s diplomatic career, until the project was definitively abandoned in 1631. Even the consideration of alternates, such as Guido Reni

(1575–1642) and Orazio Gentileschi (1563–1639), failed to result in the project's realization. Today, all that remains of the memorial to the slain monarch are two contracts between Rubens and the Queen Mother, an anonymous drawing of the gallery's elevation, a series of passages in letters dating between 1622 and 1631, and a number of paintings. These include five of the six canvases (cats. 4, 5, 7, 8, and 10) listed in Rubens's estate inventory, in various conditions and states of completion, and thirteen oil sketches (cats. 1, 2a–b, 3, 5a, 6, 7a, 8a–d, 9, and 11). From this morass of textual and visual evidence, Alexis Merle du Bourg has crafted a rich and eloquent narrative, in another installment of the definitive catalogue of Rubens's production, the *Corpus Rubenianum* Ludwig Burchard.

Following the series template, Merle du Bourg offers a comprehensive, 165-page essay that chronicles the project's sources, its situation within the artist's oeuvre, and its collaborators, followed by detailed catalogue entries. In keeping with the scholarly tone of the *Corpus*, the author presents seven appendixes, including one (appendix 4) with a thorough comparative table outlining contemporaneous (ca. 1600–35) cycles of the life of Henri IV, in order to assess the likelihood of specific subjects appearing in Rubens's series. This tool contributes to new identifications, such as that of Amiens for a canvas (no. 10) formerly thought to represent Rouen or Caen, when read alongside sources like topographical prints and historical records. *The Siege of Amiens (March–September 1597)* is also an important demonstration of Rubens's vertical collaboration with Peter Snayers (1592–1667), a hypothetical relationship that the author endorses through formal and technical analysis. Furthermore, Merle du Bourg's mining of contemporary chronicles, the history of arms and armor, printed series of joyous entries, classical mythology, and modern French history is an excellent investigation into the ways in which the house of Bourbon self-consciously attempted to frame the unpopular king-cum-martyr as the merciful unifier of a fractured nation.

A profound credit must be given to the translators of the French prose, Jane MacAvock and Abigail D. Newman, whose lyrical English text mirrors the well-reasoned character of the author's arguments. Given the dearth of visual evidence remaining from this project, Merle du Bourg admirably contextualizes this material within an intellectual framework that amplifies our understanding of the artist and his priorities, the dynamics of the French court, and the shaping of the king's legacy during a period of political upheaval. This volume is a critical contribution to the literature on Rubens and a valuable source for scholars interested in the intersection of painting, politics, and decorative programs in the early modern age.

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