

Anne T. Woollett, Ariane van Suchtelen, and Tiarna Doherty. *Rubens and Brueghel: A Working Friendship*.

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In a roughly twenty-five year span, between 1598 and 1625, Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Elder completed approximately two dozen paintings together of varying themes with each artist adhering to their specialization: Rubens, the figure, and Brueghel, the landscape background and its myriad details. Through its catalogue entries and essays, *Rubens and Brueghel: A Working Friendship* provides valuable information on their artistic methods and the nature of their collaboration, describing the artists' relationship as one of equals and confirming the important role of Jan Brueghel the Elder.

While the majority of the paintings in the catalogue were executed jointly by Brueghel and Rubens, it also includes paintings that both artists completed with other collaborators: Brueghel with Hans Rottenhammer, Hendrick de Clerck, and Hendrick van Balen, and Rubens with Frans Snyders, as well as images that the two artists painted independently. Each of the entries is beautifully illustrated and provides an excellent discussion of each painting's subject matter, patrons, meaning, genesis, and evolution.

Accompanying the individual catalogue entries are two essays. The introductory essay, entitled "Two Celebrated Painters: The Collaborative Ventures of Rubens and Brueghel, ca. 1598–1625," includes separate biographies on Brueghel and Rubens and explores the nature of their collaboration in the context of its history and reception. Known for his detailed rendering of landscape and still-life, Brueghel's style and career evolved in Rome through his artistic exchange with significant Northern artists, such as Paul Bril and Hans Rottenhammer, and personal exploration of Rome's ruins. Upon Brueghel's return to Antwerp, he became a leading artist, creating inventive and influential works for Cardinal Federico Borromeo, receiving the title "painter to their Royal Highnesses" from the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, and collaborating with Antwerp's most well-known artists.

Similar to Brueghel, a prolonged stay in Italy was decisive for Rubens's artistic development. In Italy, Rubens immersed himself in the study of important Renaissance and antique works along with contemporary Italian and Northern artists. After receiving several important commissions in Italy during his prolonged sojourn, Rubens returned to Antwerp, where he achieved unparalleled success. A

short time after his return, he became the court artist for Albert and Isabella and formed an unusually large workshop. While simultaneously engaging in diplomatic endeavors, he created large works and cycles for some of the most powerful political and religious figures in Europe and worked collaboratively with Jan Brueghel the Elder, Frans Snyders, and Osias Beert.

In her introductory essay, Anne Woollett also explores the friendship between Brueghel and Rubens and, through visual evidence, demonstrates their mutual artistic esteem. Eschewing a unified style, she interprets the artists' retention of their individual styles in joint projects as evidence of their mutual respect for the other's art. While as a collaboration of equals the relationship between Rubens and Brueghel was only preceded by the sixteenth-century artists Metsys and Patinir, collaboration was firmly rooted in Northern artistic practices. In the production of manuscripts and in the workshops of panel painters, the tasks were distributed depending on their significance, with the master executing the most important parts. Although little documentary evidence survives regarding the reception of collaborative works in the seventeenth century, testifying to their status is the frequency with which paintings of joint authorship are identified.

Supporting the equal status of the collaborative efforts of Brueghel and Rubens was the technical examination of several paintings in the exhibition. The final essay, "Brueghel and Rubens at Work: Technique and the Practice of Collaboration," describes not only the materials and painting techniques employed by both Brueghel and Rubens, but sheds light on how the paintings examined technically originated and evolved. Although not every work was executed in the same manner, x-rays of the paintings revealed a chronology of the painting process whereby the painting was transported back and forth between Brueghel's and Ruben's studios several times. Through *Rubens and Brueghel: A Working Friendship* not only does the reader gain a general understanding of collaboration in its historical context along with the specific nature of Rubens's and Brueghel's working relationship, but also a great appreciation of each artist's individual style and contributions to their collaborative works.

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