

Drawing and modelling to become a silversmith

Academy, St. Eligius or St. Luke?

On July 6th, 1663, King Philip IV of Spain approved David Teniers the Younger's request to found an academy in Antwerp, along the lines of the *Accademia di San Luca* in Rome (1593) and the *Académie de Peinture et de Sculpture* in Paris (1648). In essence strong ties still existed between the Academy and the Guild of St. Luke, which grouped painters and sculptors as well as other professions, including engravers, gilders and bookbinders. From the inception training at the Academy was limited to perspective drawing lessons and life drawing (nude study) for painters. The training was considered a supplement to the vocational training in the master's workshop, either in the frame of the Guild of St. Luke or of other guilds, such as the silversmiths' guild, with St. Eligius as its patron saint.

At the Academy the classes were taught by deans and former deans of the Guild of St. Luke who were allowed to use the title of director. In 1694 drawing from plaster casts was added to the curriculum. Silversmiths regularly enrolled in the academy from the very start. From 1706 until 1708 the goldsmith Peeter Franciscus II Oosterlinckx for example learned to draw from plaster casts at the Academy while simultaneously signing a four-year contract as an apprentice goldsmith and diamond setter with Peeter Gobbaerts on January 1st, 1707. Jacobus Wouters, who agreed to apprentice for seven years with Balthasar Lepies in 1713, learned to draw at the Academy in 1718 while Gaspard de Lanoy from Tienen and an apprentice in the workshop of Jan Carel I van Beughen attended drawing classes at the academy in 1697. In 1710 he moved to Brussels where he was accepted by the Guild as master silversmith in 1711. Besides the Academy there were several other options available to aspiring silversmiths for acquiring the required skills. Jan Anthoni Lepies, Balthasar's brother, taught artists *teeckenen, drijven, boetseren, etc.* (drawing, embossing, modelling). He attended classes at the academy himself in the years between 1691 and 1697. He expressed his artistic ambitions by signing his works in full and including his nickname *Dedalus*, a reference to his maker's mark which consisted of a pair of spread wings.

Silversmiths had been apprenticing with painters and sculptors for centuries, a tradition which was upheld in the early years of the Academy. The records of the Guild of St. Luke mention eight apprentice silversmiths for the period from 1672 until 1677 and sixteen even from 1697 until 1716. Jacobus Martens for example apprenticed with the painter Peeter Ykens in 1672-1673 and that same year Jacobus van der Biest decided to hone his skills with the sculptor Ludovicus Willemsens. In 1687, moreover, the architect Nicodemus Tessin the Younger praised Willemsens for his qualities as a sculptor and his models in particular: "*ist sonstens auch der beste, undt sonderlich in modellen*" (he is one of the best, especially when it comes to models).

Some silversmiths combined various training programmes. From 1696 until 1700 Passchier van Lamoen took drawing classes at the Academy. Meanwhile he had also registered with the Guild of St. Luke in 1698-1699 to learn to draw to become a goldsmith. In 1714-1715 Franciscus van der Motten went to apprentice with Joannes Cosyns after which he enrolled in the academy, where he learned to draw from life and from plaster casts, from 1715 until 1719.

From 1697 onwards Joannes Claudius de Cock trained no fewer than sixteen apprentices in his workshop, five of whom were learning to draw and model in hopes of becoming a silversmith: Jan Carel II van Beughen, Michiel Hennekin, Jan Baptiste de Backer, (Joannes) Franciscus Goubau and Jan Baptist Melchior II Buysens. De Cock, who apprenticed in the sculptor's workshop of Peter I Verbrugghen and was a journeyman of Peter II Verbrugghen, was mainly praised for his sculptural work, of which Jakob Campo Weyerman writes the following: "*Joannes Claudius de Cock hails from Antwerp. He is a relatively good painter but an even better sculptor. He is especially known for his beautifully sculpted naked dwarves, he is even capable of sculpting the tiniest dwarves. (...) given that he himself was pint-sized (...) He is a versatile sculptor, who has designed and modelled several artistic marble sculptures as well as life-sized wooden statues, children and ornaments including an infinite number of loam and clay nude nymphs, models, vases and other art objects. Moreover he is a gifted draughtsman and an equally great teacher.*"

Joannes Claudius de Cock was obviously a man of many talents as is obvious from his extensive and diverse body of work, consisting of church furniture, sculptures, garden vases, engravings and designs for book illustrations and reliquaries. He also had an excellent theoretical knowledge of the various disciplines he practiced. In 1701 he acquired the *Tractaet in wat manieren men op root koper snijden ofte etzen zal (...)*, a treatise on copper engraving by Abraham Bosse, which was published in 1662. In 1720 he himself wrote a sculpture textbook, entitled *Eenighe voornaemste en noodighe regels van de beeldhouwerye om metter tijdt een goet meester te worden*, in which he expressed his barely-veiled criticism of the Academy's training programmes. The question remains whether he was merely referring to the quality of the training provided because a drop in the number of apprenticeships also had financial implications for him. Apprentices were cheap labour after all and depending on the duration and the type of training they also generated earnings.

Besides a rather choleric temperament and some pedagogical qualities de Cock also had a good knowledge of Classical Antiquity, as is evidenced from his designs and his textbook for aspiring sculptors. He also was familiar with the work of Michelangelo, François du Quesnoy and Artus II Quellinus. He made a drawing of the main altar in St. James's Church in Antwerp, by Artus II Quellinus (1685), which served as the basis for an engraving by Petrus Balthasar Bouttats in 1741.

Sculptors and silversmiths working together

In 1716 several masters, including the sculptor Jan Peter van Bourscheit the Elder, took the initiative to create snow sculptures across the city, together with their academy students, which were supplemented with the work of some amateur artists. The statues mainly represented mythological figures from Classical Antiquity. Behind the town hall the silversmith Jan Anthony Lepies sculpted Europa in snow, as documented by Jakob van der Sanden in his *Konst-Tonneel*: "*Lepies den zilversmid in Drijfkunst wel ervaeren, agter het Raedhuys brogt Europa langs de Baeren*". During the harsh winter of 1670 the lion's share of the snow sculptures, as described in *Den Gheestelijcken Val-hoet*, still consisted of popular figures. In 1772 Classical Antiquity once again was the preferred source of inspiration for creating snow sculptures, such as silversmith Jan Baptist I Verberckt's sculpture of Bacchus: "*In Oever, in the garden of the Green House, a cabaret, J.B. Verberckt, a silversmith and chiseller, installed a sculpture of a young Bacchus, fourteen feet high, in a cabinet decorated with vines. The cabinet was crescent-shaped and the grapes and leaves were pleasantly arranged. It was not possible to install the entire niche on such a small plank, which is why they only used the main sculpture.*" The sculptor Cornelis de Smet created a statue of Charles of Lorraine for the occasion.

"It is worth paying attention to jewellers' artistry, dear friend, because their work and the fine arts complement each other."

The above title, a reflection on the collaboration between sculptors and silversmiths, is taken from *Konst-Tonneel* by Jakob van der Sanden, who was appointed Secretary of the Academy in 1757. Even for talented and well-trained silver embossers such as Jan Anthoni Lepies, Jan Baptist I Verberckt and Jan Pieter Antoon Verschuylen, this collaboration proved crucial for the realisation of more sculptural elements using precious metals. Sculptors created models in wood, wax, plaster and earth and in some cases even supplied a (preliminary) design on the customer's request. Contracts and accounts refer to this practice. Together with the design and presentation sketches, the rare terracotta *bozzetti* and wood models that were preserved they are the main sources for documenting the creative and production process.

For the guild of Our Lady of Praise in Antwerp's cathedral Judocus Ignatius Picavet embossed several panels between 1710 and 1712 after a design by Henricus Franciscus Verbrugghen, while the antependium, designed by Willem Ignatius Kerrickx, was completed in 1735 by Jan Baptist Melchior I Buysens and gilded by Jan Carel van Beughen. For the antependium that was commissioned in 1675 from Wierick IV Somers by the merchant Andries van Cantelbeeck the artist used a drawing by the painter Erasmus Quellinus as the main motif. Artus II Quellinus created the models of the Virgin Mary and the angels. A terracotta model for a cruet tray, which was excavated in Pelgrimsstraat in Antwerp

in 1989, has been attributed to Quellinus and is similar to silver cruet trays by the Antwerp master of the pear with two leaves and Wierick IV Somers, which date from 1672-1673 and 1687-1688 respectively. A holy-water stoup dating from 1716-1717, featuring the maker's mark of Wierick IV Somers, can also be linked to one of Quellinus's drawings. In 1712 Somers executed a design by the sculptor Michiel van der Voort for St. Andrew's Church in Antwerp. The doubled-sided preliminary design as well as the monstrance have both been preserved. Six years later Jan Anthoni Lepies used a design by Van der Voort to create a silver reliquary bust of St. Francis Regius for a commission from the Jesuit Paul Meganck. Another interesting example is a ceremonial staff made by Joseph I Hennekin in 1709 for the brotherhood which accompanied the priest to administer the Last Sacrament to the sick and the dying of St. Walburga's Church in Antwerp, based on a model by the sculptor Willem Kerrickx de Oude. Today the polychrome wooden model is preserved in St. Paul's Church in Antwerp. In 1713-1715 Hennekin also worked with Kerrickx's son, Willem Ignatius, to complete a reliquary shrine for St. Martin's Church in Moerzeke. The aforementioned Michiel Hennekin, who elected to become a priest in spite of his academic training, served as an intermediary in this frame.

Silver for the laureates

In 1741 six directors, led by the architect and sculptor Jan Peter van Bauscheit the Younger, attempted to provide the Academy with a fresh impetus by separating it from the Guild of St. Luke, with the town council's support. From 1742 the town council also granted subsidies for medals for the laureates. In 1749 the two organisations were finally separated. The town council appointed both the head and the director of the Academy. The sculptor Alexander van Papenhoven, the engraver Petrus Balthasar Bouttats and the engraver Jacob II Roettiens lectured at the academy among others. Cornelis Jozef d'Heur replaced Jan Peter van Bauscheit the Younger, lecturing on perspective theory and geometry. The sovereign of the Southern Netherlands, Duke Charles of Lorraine, took the Antwerp Academy under his protection. To demonstrate his commitment he donated three pieces of silverware to the academy as prizes for the academic year 1749-1750 "*alle seer constigh uijtgevrocht*" (which had all been very artfully crafted). The first prize, *een massiven silveren caffépot* (a massive silver coffee pot), turned out to be a chocolate pot by the Brussels master of the six-pointed star. Nonetheless the sculptor Joseph Gillis, who replaced Roettiens in 1764 as the Academy's director, would have been very satisfied with this gift. The engraved inscriptions refer to this happy event: "*ARTIS DELINEAT PREMIUM PRIMUS*" and "*IOSEPHUS GILLIS = 1750 ANTVERPIA SCULPSIT I.G.*" The second and third prizes, a pair of silver candlesticks and a silver teapot, were awarded to the painters Joannes Jozef Horemans the Younger and Jacobus van Baelen. During the next academic years, until 1757-1758, several prominent Antwerpensers donated silverware for the laureates: three cups, a teapot, holy-water stoups, trays, three bowls, a gravy boat, two salt cellars, a serving spoon and table knife with spoon and fork. The medals which Charles of Lorraine donated after 1750 were manufactured by Jacob II Roettiens. The town council continued the tradition. In 1778 Theodoor van Berckel made new medals. In later years the Antwerp silversmiths Jan Baptist I Verberckt, Joannes Franciscus Bogaerts and Cornelius Joannes Volckerick would also supply medals.

Art education under pressure

When Johann Georg Adam Forster travelled through Brabant, Flanders and Holland in 1790 with Alexander von Humboldt he noted the following in the margin of his visit to Antwerp: "*Once the frenzy of the war years had dissipated, once Van Dyck had been transplanted to England and died far too soon the art of the Low Countries withered and the so-called painting academies, which still exist in Antwerp and Mechelen today, lapsed into an insignificance which is even worse than complete obliteration. The technical skills withstood this process better because the arts and crafts, which do not require any thought but are the outcome of practice and habit, can become second nature in phlegmatic peoples.*"

We do not know much about the silversmiths who took drawing classes at the Academy during the second half of the eighteenth century. Contrary to what the above quote suggests, however, some of the silversmiths who did enrol in the academy were actually quite well-known, including Simon Hoffinger, André Joseph Petit and Jan Baptist I Verberckt. In 1777 Petit, who attended classes from 1775 until 1780, received the second prize for drawing from plaster casts. Hoffinger only seems to

have enrolled in 1750. His lesser known brother, the diamond setter Jean Baptiste Louis Hoffinger, attended classes at the academy from 1760 until 1772. Simon Hoffinger's brief time at the Academy is consistent with his much more extensive training in the workshops of the silversmith Jan Baptist Melchior II Buysens from 1746 onwards, of the painter Michiel van der Voort the Younger in 1749, of the Lille-based silversmith François-Joseph Baudoux from 1750 onwards and during a stay in Paris in 1753. From Baudoux he learned how to draw "*loof en figueren*" (plants and figures). Van der Sanden, whom we have already quoted above and who usually was quite well informed, has the following to say about Simon Hoffinger: "*on Sunday after Mass this master also organised jewellery design lessons but he died in the night of 22 October 1772 due to the consequences of gallbladder disease and lung cancer, caused by vitriol and acid vapours.*" Hoffinger was also friends with Jan Baptist I Verberckt, who, in 1753 and 1756, stayed with his uncle, the court sculptor Jacques Verberckt, in Paris. In 1751-1756 and 1760-1767 Jan Baptist successfully completed courses at the Academy. On 20 March 1762 he received the second prize for drawing from life, on 9 March 1766 he obtained a third prize for sculpture and on 19 February 1767 he came first in his class. In the next academic year he was appointed as lecturer for the plaster modelling class. During this same period, more specifically in 1765, the Academy's curriculum was extended with a class on geometry and perspective and the five orders of architecture. This was quite an important time for the development of neo-Classicism in Antwerp. At the time Jan Baptist I Verberckt was already working in the workshop of his father, Michiel Verberckt, for about ten years. He signed his own work but continued to use his father's maker's mark until 1775. In 1778 he received two important commissions: a samovar with an integrated smoke stack and scuttle for the van Sanen-van Loon family, a merchant family from Alkmaar and a staff for Trudo Salé, the abbot of the Norbertine abbey in Averbode. The sculptor Cornelis Smet created the wood model for this staff, of which the sketch has also been preserved. De Smet knew Verberckt quite well given that in 1766 he won second prize for drawing from life at the Academy. After having worked for one year in Jacob Jozef van der Neer's workshop he became a master of the Guild of St. Luke. In 1780 De Smet was appointed deputy director of the Academy and went on to become lecturer in sculpture in 1796. Meanwhile Verberckt was appointed as member of the board of the Academy in 1803. One year later Willem Herryngs became the director of the reorganised academy.

In 1788 an art society was founded in the lap of the academy. Its motto was *Nut, Baet en Dienst* (Use, Benefit and Service). This society of art lovers was disbanded as early as 1794. In 1811, under the impetus of the Academy's director Willem Herryngs, the Society for the promotion of the Fine Arts in Antwerp was founded. This society contributed to the recovery of the 66 paintings which had been transferred to Paris in 1794. Balthasar Ommeganck, Pieter van Regemorter and Jean J. Van Hal played a key role in the negotiations. Van Hal, the great-grandfather of Squire Pierre Lunden, was rewarded for his efforts in 1815 by William I, the King of the Netherlands, with a gold snuff box made by the Parisian silversmith Pierre Croissant. The silversmith Joseph Lecocqmartin, who had made a silver jug featuring the portrait of Napoleon Bonaparte between 1809 and 1814, endorsed this campaign. In 1817 William I elevated the Academy to the status of national academy and as of 1819 the *Prix de Rome* was established.

More attention to the applied arts

In the nineteenth century the attention to the applied arts increased, which is reflected in the increase in the number of silversmiths at the Academy. Of the 1,365 students who enrolled in 1848, 31 were silver- or goldsmiths. With the exception of the 397 scholars this profession was ranked in sixth place at the Academy, after the woodworkers, the painters, the sculptors, the decorative painters and the architects. The (aspiring) silversmiths mainly took the figures, ornaments, modelling or sculpting classes as well as industrial design. In 1885, when the Academy was renamed *Nationaal Hoger Instituut voor Schone Kunsten* (NHISK or National Higher Institute of the Fine Arts), the development of the applied arts in industry actually became one of the Academy's primary objectives. Besides Jan Pieter Antoon Verschuylen, whom we will discuss below, the children of Jan Baptist II Verberckt also attended the Academy after 1824, including Jan Baptist III, Jacobus Joannes and Hypolite Michel Verberckt who all excelled in modelling and figures. Egide Joseph Watlé, who worked as a journeyman in the Verberckt workshop for several years, in 1818 studied heads and in 1824 took a

class on modelling from ornaments. His son, Joannes Baptist, attended the figures, sculpture, antiquity and drawing from life classes from 1843 until 1858. The silver embosser Lambert I Van Ryswyck, one of Verschuylen's students, took the following classes from 1837 until 1850: figures, modelling, sculpture, and finally drawing from life. From 1858 the silversmith Albrecht Jacobs attended the sculpture classes, together with Charles Verschuylen, the son of Jan Pieter Antoon Verschuylen. Previously, as of 1854, Charles took classes in ornament and figures. As was the case in the eighteenth century these silversmiths often collaborated with other artists. The architect and sculptor Frans Durlet is most frequently mentioned as a designer of religious silver and gold, which was executed by Egide Joseph Watlé and Lambert I Van Ryswyck. The golden crown of the painter Henry Leys was made by Jean François Joseph Vanderhulst based on a model by the sculptor Joseph Jacques Du Caju.

Wim Nys