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## Peter Paul Rubens 1577 - 1640

Paris  
Art Studies - Peter Paul Rubens  
1577- 1640

1577 &ndash; Born in Siegen, Westphalia, son of Jan Rubens Protestant lawyer and alderman of city of Antwerp and Maria Pypelincks. His parents had fled Antwerp to escape war and the prosecution of the Protestants by the Spanish troops of the duke of Alba. In Cologne an adulterous affair with Anne of Saxony, the estranged wife of Prince of Orange, leads to Jan's arrest and jailing. He is saved by his wife's pleading and bribes and exiled to Siegen. In future Rubens who will be deeply ashamed of father's disgrace will thirst for respectability.

1578 &ndash; Father's punishment lifted, return to Cologne.

1587 &ndash; Jan Rubens dies.

1589 &ndash; Peter Paul returns with his mother to Antwerp. He enters Rombout Verdonck college, receives thorough classical education and studies Greek and Latin literature. From mother receives solid Catholic education. In college meets Balthasar Moretus heir of great Plantin printing house (founded in Antwerp in 1555) for whom he will often design frontispieces.

1590 &ndash; Leaves college and is admitted as page (arranged by his mother) in the house of Marguerite de Ligne-Arenberg a count's widow. Learns etiquette and aristocratic manners which will prove useful in future diplomatic career. Draws when idle, copies from prints by Dürer and Holbein.

1591-92 &ndash; Apprenticed to Tobias Verhaecht and Adam Van Noort, master and future father in law of Jacob Jordaens.

1596 &ndash; Enters studio of most reputed Antwerp painter Otto van Veen president of guild of St Luke. Van Veen, having studied in Rome introduces Rubens to Barocci, Michelangelo, Raphael. He is also a fervent catholic and loyal subject of Hapsburgs.

1598 &ndash; End of apprenticeship years and admission into guild as master, takes on pupil.

1600 &ndash; Leaves with pupil Deodat for Italy. In Venice discovers Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto. Presented to Vincent I Gonzaga, duke of Mantua patron of Mor, Tasso, Galileo and Monteverdi. In Mantua Rubens charged with copying Renaissance pictures. Familiarizes himself with Titian, Mantegna, Corregio, Raphael and Guilio Romano. In October assists at wedding by proxy of Marie de Medici (sister in law of duke) in Florence which he will later paint. Discovers Michelangelo's tombs in

Medici chapel and Leonardo's Battle of Anghiari in palazzo Vecchio.

1601 – Arrival in Rome to copy pictures for his patron. Copies from antiquity, Caravaggio's altarpieces and Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling. "Painting requires the intelligence of the antique but mustn't have the sense of stone";

1602 – Return to Mantua. Receives visit of brother Phillip and Jan Woverius both pupils of great neo-stoic philosopher Justus Lipsius. This visit will later inspire the "Four Philosophers". First diplomatic mission, sent by duke to new king of Spain Phillip III with cargo of royal presents, including 16 copies after Raphael and Titian and six horses. Drenched in sea crossing the pictures have to be restored in Madrid by the painter with the help of local painters. In royal collections discovers more Titians and Raphaels.

1604 – Return to Mantua. Receives first original church commissions.

1605-6 – New trip to Rome where Phillip is now librarian to influential Cardinal Colonna. The study of antiquity by both leads to publication in 1608 of Phillip's Electorum Libri II illustrated by his brother. Rubens builds up his antique collection.

1607 – In Genoa under patronage of duke of Mantua paints local nobility.

1608 – Back in Rome finishes his first altarpiece, convinces duke to buy Caravaggio's Death of the Virgin refused by convent. Learns of mother's serious illness and immediately leaves for Antwerp but arrives too late.

1609 – Phillip named secretary of city of Antwerp. "12 year truce" between Spain and rebellious Dutch provinces. Burgmaster Nicolas Rockox commissions Adoration of Magi for City Hall. Rubens enters service of Archduke Albert and archduchess Isabella. Marries niece of his sister in law, 19 year old Isabella Brandt.

1610 – Builds Italianate house and classical pavilion with garden in fashionable quarter of Antwerp. House finished in 1616.

1611 – Rockox commissions Descent from The Cross for Arquebusiers' chapel in cathedral. Death of brother Phillip. Paints in commemoration "Four philosophers". Jan Brueghel (flower specialist), Frans Snyders (bird and animal specialist) and Antoon Van Dyck (enters studio 1616-1620) are his most famous assistants in this period.

1611-20 - Immense altarpiece production along with mythologies and portraits.

1621 – Death of Philip III, succeeded by son Philip IV – end of 12 year truce, war resumes despite archdukes' efforts to prolong truce. Italian general Ambrogio Spinola heads Spanish troops. Death of Albert without heir, Flanders reverts automatically to Spain. Isabella uses Rubens for clandestine talks with Dutch enemy.

1622 – Called to Paris by Marie de Medici (in good terms with Isabella) to paint gallery of her new palais de Luxembourg.

1625 – Assists at Henrietta Maria's (sister of Louis XIII) marriage by proxy to Charles I of England. Meets impetuous and vain duke of Buckingham who commissions portrait.

1626 – Death of Isabella Brandt. Rubens grieves.

1627 - Sells antique collection plus 13 of his own pictures to Buckingham for 100 000 florins in Delft. Meets some of the great Dutch painters: Terbruggen, Bloemaert, Honthorst.

1628 – Diplomatic journey to Madrid.  
Re-examines and copies Titians in royal gallery. Meets Velasquez.

1629 – Sails for England. Given Master of Arts degree by Cambridge University. Commission for Whitehall banqueting hall ceiling (finished 1634). Banquet in his honour, knighted and given diamond ring and a sword by Charles I.

1630 – Marriage with Helen Fourment, 16-year old daughter (Rubens is 53) of tapestry and silk merchant whose sister Suzanne the artist had already painted some years before. Will have 5 children with her (last born after his death.) To commemorate marriage paints "Garden of Love". Rejuvenation of his art.

1631 – Knighted by Philip IV (only painter to ever receive two titles by 2 different kings:) "Painter of princes and prince of painters".

1633 – Death of his great patron Isabella. Economic misery created by endless Dutch war.

1634 – Buys country residence Het Steen at Elewijt, between Brussels and Malines. Paints famous late landscapes.

1636 – Commissioned to paint a series of mythological paintings for Philip's summer hunt pavilion near Madrid (60 models painted after Ovid.) Frequent attacks of gout.

1640 – Dies after violent gout attack.  
Succeeded as first painter to the court by Jacob Jordaens.