

RUBENSHUIS



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PRESS KIT



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Rubens

Rubens (1577–1640) and Antwerp being mentioned in the same breath: it makes sense. One of the world's greatest painters, he lived and worked in the city by the Scheldt for most of his life. But Rubens was so much more than an artist in his Italian palace in Wapper, which he designed himself. An entrepreneur, family man, architect, friend, and collector: in the Rubenshuis he lived life to the full. And it is here that he invited the nobility, royals and close friends into his studio and home, on his own terms. He surrounded himself with a loyal entourage, including a gardener and florist, maid and servant. His wives and his children gave him his appetite for life. In his studio, he shared his knowledge with a new generation of artists with a knack for entrepreneurship. He painted all his most famous works himself, but also had various designs duplicated for sale at home and abroad, and employed apprentices. The Rubenshuis was a bustling and professional hotbed.

Rubenshuis

The Rubenshuis is the universe of one of the world's greatest artists: Peter Paul Rubens. It provided a launchpad for a career that took him to the Royal Courts of Paris, London and Madrid. From here, he corresponded with his European network. Here, he also ran his workshop, producing a staggering number of virtuoso and innovative artworks.

When Rubens and Isabella Brant acquired the 16th-century house and land in 1610, he immediately set about designing their home, combining the old-Flemish style with an Italian Renaissance look and feel. People were blown away by the design. Today, the portico and garden pavilion, which were deemed highly innovative at the time, are just as astonishing to our modern-day eyes, with one structure offering a view of the other thanks to a unique sightline. A surprising perspective which already stunned architecture lovers back then. He created something that had not been done before in the Low Countries. In so doing, Rubens ensured that his city palace is still one of the most famous and architecturally valuable artists' residences in the world today. It is also the only place in the world where you can still see a unique architectural design by the master himself.

After Rubens' death in 1640, his home passed through the hands of various owners. In the second half of the 18th century in particular, some major alterations were carried out. Fortunately, a few decades later, people began to realise that the home of Antwerp's most famous artists deserved more attention. After many attempts, the city acquired the premises in 1937 and converted it into a museum. Its doors opened for the first time in 1946.

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The masterplan: a phased remodel

The Rubenshuis has been undergoing a major transformation since 2016, which is scheduled for completion in 2030. The remodel is needed to bring the Rubenshuis into the 21st century – with the greatest respect. The renovation and reopening will take place in phases. The new concept guarantees improved accessibility, more space, additional facilities, and maximum comfort and convenience, both for visitors and the collection.

Phase 1: 2016 – 2024

New entrance

The new entrance in Hopland has been designed by internationally-renowned Robbrecht en Daem architecten. The building is entirely inspired by Rubens. While the playful columns are reminiscent of the powerful, muscular bodies that populate his paintings, they are also a nod to his predilection for Italian architecture. The many rounded shapes, meanwhile, illuminate the spaces, creating shadows that add surprising depth and texture to the building, both during the day and at night. The two gigantic book cases in the design refer to the place where Rubens kept his own books and where the art historical library of the Rubenshuis is now located.

Inside, the enormous diagonal winding staircases are a symbolic reference to the movement in the artist's dynamic compositions. These eyecatchers force visitors to look up, literally and figuratively. The contemporary building makes its presence felt but is discreet nonetheless, as it is set somewhat to the side of the artist's residence. Thanks to this well-thought-out design, the view of the garden and portico and their connecting role have been preserved.

Robbrecht and Daem architects' detailed architectural vision is available on request.

Design and execution:

- Client: City of Antwerp for the Rubenshuis
- Commissioned by: AG Vespa
- Design team Robbrecht en Daem architecten
- Engineer/stability: Bureau d'étude Greisch
- Engineer/technical services: hp engineers
- Engineer/acoustics & building physics: Daidalos peutz
- Heritage architect: Callebaut architecten
- Contractor: BAM Interbuild
- Safety coordinator: EVEKA bv
- Advice: Onroerend Erfgoed Vlaanderen, Flemish Master Architect & Antwerp Master Architect
- With subsidies from: the City of Antwerp and VISITFlanders

Scenography and layout:

- Scenography Rubens Experience and Workshop: Wondering
- Execution Rubens Experience: Create and Bruns

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Hopland in figures:

- 2,600 m² surface area
- 4,000m³ excavated ground
- 8 storeys
- Foundation depth: 28 metres
- Basement depth: 10 metres
- 1,400m³ in-situ concrete; approx. 9m³ per concrete mixer
- 350 tons of steel reinforcement mesh, of which 200 tons woven on site and 150 tons in precast concrete elements
- 20 geothermal drillings at a depth of 150m
- 456 pilasters with a diameter of 18cm and a height of 420cm on the ground floor and 340cm on the upper floors
- 800m² of glass
- 48 solar panels
- 700 litres of paint for the walls and floors

Timing: 491 days of work

Cost: 16,147,440 euros

The garden

Today the new garden evokes Rubens's unique, Italianate contribution to the architectural gardens of the Low Countries. The garden's gaze is now directed inward to accentuate the illusion of an island in time. Thanks to Ars Horti's design, the garden's surroundings have been shut out more than ever.

A central feature of the design by Jan Bleys and Jasper Bijnen of Studiebureau Ars Horti is the use of historical dimensions based on the Antwerp foot, the restoration of the central and radial sightlines and perspective depth, and the berceau with its arcades, whose dimensions have been aligned with the historical architecture. The result is a garden consisting of two large parterres divided into four smaller rectangles. A large marble vase and a bluestone fountain have been positioned along the central axis of each parterre. The paths in between the flowerbeds are covered with yellow Hansegrand, a permeable material whose colour matches the architecture of Rubens's workshop.

The parterres, in which 17,427 plants bloom throughout the seasons, are lined with some 450 yew hedges. They were carefully chosen by Ars Horti in consultation with garden conservator Klara Alen, based on historical research and the advice of fashion designer Dries Van Noten who was drafted in as a colour consultant. Forty citrus trees, in handcrafted wooden tubs, barrels and casks and glazed terracotta pots, have been positioned around the garden and courtyard, in line with Rubens's painting *The Walk in the Garden*.

RUBENSHUIS

Design and execution:

- Client: City of Antwerp for the Rubenshuis
- Commissioned by: AG Vespa
- Design team: Ars Horti
- Contractor: Estate & Landscape Management
- Planting parterres & maintenance: Parks & Public Gardens Department of the City of Antwerp

The garden in figures:

- A total of 17,427 new plants
- 39 trees
- 5,441 perennials
- 631 climbing plants
- 10,452 bulbs and stinzen plants
- 346 shrubs
- 438 hedges
- 30 orangery plants
- 50 water plants

A detailed list of the plantings is available on request.

Timing: 337 days of work

Cost: 2,582,584 euros

Phase 2: 2022 – c. 2030

The artist's residence

The artist's residence is closed until 2030 for thorough restoration. The remodel is necessary to ensure that the museum can continue to welcome visitors in the future in the most comfortable conditions. A state-of-the-art climate control system also ensures the museum's collection is preserved and displayed in optimum conditions. Thanks to sustainable facilities and low-energy technologies, the building will become precisely what Rubens intended it to be: the ideal venue for exhibitions and international encounters.

Kolveniershof

Kolveniershof, the building behind the Rubenshuis, will be incorporated into the museum building and will be restored, along with the artist's residence. In the 17th century, it served as the base of an Antwerp gunners' guild. Here, its members practised their shooting skills and relaxed. More recently, it was home to the library of the Rubenianum. This has since been moved to Hopland. As a result, the Kolveniershof will be repurposed: from 2030, it will host workshops, lectures, and other events.

For phase 1, the total cost is 18,730,024 euros. The City of Antwerp is investing 14,580,024 Euros.

VISITFlanders is paying 4 million euros and Real Estate Heritage 150,000 euros.

For phase 2, the cost price is estimated at 32.5 million euros.

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The collection

The Rubenshuis has an art collection and a library collection.

Art collection

The art collection comprises paintings by Rubens and his contemporaries. Popular works include Rubens's famous Self-Portrait, the Gallery of Cornelis van der Geest by Willem van Haecht, the Self-Portrait of the young Anthony van Dyck, Adam and Eve, The Annunciation, and the Battle at Ivry by Rubens and Neptune and Amphitrite by Jacques Jordans. The collection also features other art objects that Rubens designed or liked, such as sculptures, tapestries, silver, furniture, tableware, and linens.

Some items are on display in the Rubens Experience, including Rubens's famous Self-Portrait. Another part of the collection will be travelling the world while the artist's residence is being refurbished. Moses and his Ethiopian wife Zipporah by Jacques Jordans is temporarily on display at The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. An antique sculpture of the Greek god Hesperus (the Evening Star) from Rubens's private collection will go to the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. And the Antwerp art room of Willem van Haecht will grace the walls of Prado in Madrid. Closer to home, works from the Rubenshuis will go on display at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp, the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent, Museum Plantin-Moretus, the MAS, the Snijders&Rockoxhuis, DIVA, and Het Steen. The temporary relocation of the works to relevant museums ties in with the philosophy of a cosmopolitan artist who called Antwerp home. The other artworks will be kept in a depot.

Library collection

The library collection is a colourful collection of publications, documentation, digital resources, and art-historical archives about, by, or related to Rubens and his contemporaries. Monographs, catalogues from exhibitions, art dealers and auction houses, file folders full of photos, clippings and notes, articles and magazines: it's all there. Classified by theme and stored in accordance with best practices for climate control. Older and fragile books were transferred to the depots. The research archives, brimming with notes by leading art historians, are unique to the library of the Rubenshuis. Each year, the collection is expanded with new acquisitions and donations from authors, museums and private individuals. Admission to the new scientific library on the second floor of Hopland 13 is free.

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Visit & offering

Podcast

Experience Rubens's garden even more intensely with this fascinating 45-minute podcast. Bring your own headphones and listen to the stories about the garden and its history. For your listening pleasure!

The podcast is a production of audio collective Schick in collaboration with Huræ for the Rubenshuis.

- Free
- Available in NL, ENG, FR, DU for listening in the garden of the Rubenshuis and through the website.

Garden guide

Rubens's garden was a private garden. He never intended to create a botanic or scientific garden, which explains the lack of labels. Read the garden guide to find out more about the garden and a small selection of the plants in it.

- Price: 4.00 euros
- Available in NL, ENG, FR, DU from the shop of the Rubenshuis.

Publication **The Rubens Garden. A Masterpiece in Bloom.**

This book contains the results of the research conducted in the margin of the restoration. It offers a look at an unprecedented wealth of historical material from archives and libraries and an overview of the most important flowers and plants in the garden with their stories. Beautiful flower pieces and details of works by Rubens and his contemporaries enhance the beauty of a masterpiece in bloom.

- Price: 24.5 euros
- Available in NL and ENG from the shop of the Rubenshuis and a selection of bookshops.
Published by Hannibal Books.

Schools

Every Tuesday and Thursday morning, the doors to the Rubens Experience swing open to secondary school groups. Rubens loved to share his knowledge and expertise with his assistants and apprentices. He was a trendsetter, an influencer, and a much sought-after teacher. His studio has always been a place to learn and grow, and today, it is no different. The Rubenshuis developed an innovative offer for secondary school pupils together with the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwecollege, an Antwerp secondary school.

- Price: 95 euros per guide + 25 euros administrative fee. Admission is free for pupils and their teachers. Book through the website of the Rubenshuis.
- Tour in NL

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Groups

Experiencing Rubens with friends, colleagues, or family is an unforgettable experience. Follow our guides through the Rubens Experience and the atmospheric garden, the impressive architecture and the library. Listen to fascinating stories and fun facts. Groups can choose from four different visits: the overview, the green treasure, bookworms, and stone by stone.

- Price: 95 euros per guide + 25 euros administrative fee, excludes admission to the Rubenshuis.
- Tours in NL, ENG, FR, DU.

Events

The Rubens House programs a varied and surprising range of concerts, performances, guided tours, lectures, workshops, ... About, linked to or inspired by Rubens.

More info on www.rubenshuis.be/en/calendar

Rubens residents

Rubens enjoyed surrounding himself with talented young artists. The Rubenshuis is no different, which is why it invites young artists to experiment with Rubens's ideas in a unique location. These Rubens residents are not deterred by the grandiose body of work of this Antwerp artist. On the contrary, even, they explore the boundaries of Rubens's versatility and creativity. They work on location to experiment, inspire and create.

The Rubens residents are theatre maker Pleun van Engelen and musicians Hantrax & Theo Carpentier.

Workplace

Rubens was a master of reinvention. But what if he himself were reinvented? In the workroom on the first floor of Hopland 13, everyone has an opportunity to contribute a chapter to the story of Rubens. The Rubenshuis invites visitors and artists to explore the limits of Rubens's versatility and creativity. This is a place to experiment, inspire and create. Here Rubens residents work at the museum's invitation, and schools inspire their pupils. Visitors can browse the publications on the table, enticing them to visit the library on the second floor.

Shop

Extend your museum experience with a visit to the shop and take home a part of Rubens. The shop has a qualitative range of merchandising inspired by Rubens's own artworks, the garden and his lust for life.

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Research

Corpus Rubenianum

The Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard is a complete overview of Rubens's works. This impressive catalogue, which is based on the lifelong work of its creator, Ludwig Burchard, includes over 40 exhaustive books on every aspect of Rubens's work. This ambitious project maps more than 2,500 compositions and 10,000 works of art. The Corpus is based on the documentation of Rubens expert Ludwig Burchard (1886–1960), which was gifted to the City of Antwerp in the 1960s. The non-profit organisation Centrum Rubenianum took on the daunting task of publishing it. The first volume was published in 1968 with the final volumes set to be published over the next few years. The Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard contains information about every work – however small or large – that was created under Rubens's supervision, ranging from drawings and sketches to engravings, prints and tapestries. It also includes high-quality copies in the style of Rubens but produced by his pupils, assistants or successors. Each volume deals with a different topic, and an expert on the subject is tasked with enriching the Corpus with his or her scientific knowledge.

We are currently working on making this amazing undertaking available online. Each artwork is recorded digitally, new research findings are added, and the best possible image included. Our intention is that all volumes will be available by 2027. Volumes that are more than 15 years old are searchable as full-text PDF files via www.rubenshuis.be. You can leaf through these digitised volumes as if you were holding the actual books.

Guest researchers

Research into Rubens and his contemporaries continues to play a vital role, which is why the Rubenshuis supports guest researchers, including PhD students, postdoctoral researchers and senior art historians, with their ongoing projects. They have free access to the entire research collection and studiolo, and they can attend and organise conferences.

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Rubens valued an extensive network. This principle also shines through in our activities. The Rubenshuis maintains partnerships with organisations and businesses that uphold sustainable values.

Partnerships with the government

The Rubenshuis is part of the City of Antwerp and can count on financial support from the Government of Flanders and VISITFlanders.

Partnerships with the business community

The Rubenshuis is a cultural entrepreneur, and actively seeks partnerships with businesses. The Rubenshuis has a long-term cooperation agreement with Boortmalt, world leader in malting, and enjoys the support of media partners Gazet van Antwerpen, VRT, De Standaard and Eden Magazine.

Patronage

The Rubenshuis collection would have never been able to grow into the collection that it is today without donations and long-term loans. The Rubenshuis has a long tradition of and an intensive network with donors and collectors and can continue to count on important support from its patrons.

Friends of the Rubenshuis

Rubens liked to surround himself with a large entourage. The Friends of the Rubenshuis, founded in 1947, support the museum with financial contributions, knowledge and actions. These friendly philanthropists tap into their network, contributing to research and publications on the life and work of Peter Paul Rubens and his era, the enrichment and embellishment of the Rubenshuis, the collection and various (international) projects.