

Paul de Vos

Hulst c. 1592 (?) – 1678 Antwerp

The Triumph of Neptune with the Fruits of the Sea

Jasper Hillegers

SALOMON LILIAN

DUTCH OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

Paul de Vos
Hulst c. 1592 (?) – 1678 Antwerp

The Triumph of Neptune with the Fruits of the Sea

Signed and dated lower left (on the dune): P . D . Vos . Fecit
Oil on canvas
204 x 343 cm.
Old inventory number, lower left: 99 (in ochre, unidentified)

Provenance:
St Petersburg, collection Count Lazar Ekimovich Lazareff (1786-1871)[1]
Collection Charles Venance Marquis d'Abzac (1822-1905)
His sale, Paris, Haro, 29 January 1875, lot 33, as Frans Snijders, bought by M. Duberville for 2450 francs
Sale Versailles, Chevau-Légers (Me Martin et Desbenoit), 28 February 1988, not in catalogue, as Frans Snijders
France, private collection, until 2022

Literature:
H. Mireur, *Dictionaire des ventes d'art faites en France et à l'étranger pendant les XVIIIme et XIXe siècles*, 7 vols., Paris 1901-1912, 7 (1912), p. 49
M. Pinette, F. Soulier-François, *De Bellini à Bonnard : chefs-d'oeuvre de la peinture du Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon*, Paris 1992, p. 102



See also pp. 16-17

Paul de Vos
"Paulus de Vos is an excellent and famous painter of animals, hunts and armoury, of which many Cabinets of Princes en Art-loving Gentlemen bear witness, which are fiercely reliant on life and cleverly composed, rich in ordinance and painted with replete, of which Spain, Germany, and other Kingdoms can testify; [De Vos] who for his imperial majesty, and for the King of Spain, for the Duke of Aarschot, too, has adorned many cabinets with his Art, so that he is among the most well-known and greatest Masters in the Art of Painting of these times."

Says Cornelis de Bie in 1662 in his biography on De Vos, the earliest published praise dedicated to the painter.[2] By 1662 De Vos (fig. 1) had advanced in age, and was among the few remaining representatives of the golden generation of Antwerp artists of the first half of the seventeenth century. Paul de Vos (whose name in contemporary documents is variously spelt Pauwel, Pauwels, Pauwelus, Paulus, Poulus, Paoulus, Pauels, or Paulo) was born in Hulst, a son of the wine distiller Jan Michielsz de Vos (c. 1548-1629) and his wife Elisabeth van den Broeck (c. 1554-1626), Hulst natives who married there c. 1575.[3] A 1623 testimony by Jan and Elisabeth – then about 75 and 69 years old – informs us that the couple had nine children, five of whom were still alive. The eldest of the surviving siblings was the pastry baker Adriaen de Vos (d. 1642), followed by three painters, Cornelis (c. 1584-1651), Jan (or Hans) (c. 1588-1627) and Paul, and their sister Margaretha (d. 1647).[4] The same document also relates that the family had moved to nearby Antwerp in 1596. A reason is not specified, but their departure should probably be connected with the violent recapture of Hulst (which the Northern Provinces had occupied since 1591) by the newly-appointed Governor General of the Spanish Netherlands, Archduke Albert of Austria (1559-1621). Indeed, following the town's siege during the summer of 1596, and her bloody defence, Hulst surrendered in August of that year.[5]

With no birth certificate at hand, we remain somewhat in the dark about Paul de Vos' year of birth. While in 1965 the art historian Marguerite Manneback asserted – unfortunately without providing a source – a rather specific birth date of 9 December 1595, this date is contradicted by De Vos himself, who on two occasions – in 1670 and 1672 – consistently stated that he was 78 and about 80 years old, respectively, indicating a birth year around 1592.[6] A look at De Vos' education might shed light. In 1604 Paul is first documented in the *Liggere* (the archives of Antwerp's Guild of St Luke), when he is apprenticed to the Antwerp painter Denys van Hove (d. 1610/11); a year later he is mentioned again, now as a pupil to the painter David Remeeus (1559-1626).[7] Following Manneback's dating, this would mean that De Vos started his artistic education at the age of eight – extremely young, even for early modern standards. Alternatively, a year of birth c. 1592 suggests the first apprenticeship to have started at around 12-, the second with Remeeus at around 13 years old, fitting rather more consistently with the standard curriculum of young painter-apprentices, such as Paul's own siblings. Cornelis de Vos, whose year of birth can be safely estimated at c. 1584, started with the same Remeeus in 1599, around 14 years old.[8] Two years later in 1601, Jan de Vos followed his older brother and likewise entered the Remeeus workshop, presumably about the same age.[9]

The choice for the little-known Van Hove and Remeeus might surprise. However, in 1600 Remeeus served as the dean of the Guild of St Luke, meaning he was well connected in Antwerp's artistic community, and able to exercise influence and pull strings. Moreover, Remeeus was involved in the art trade, a career path initially pursued by his pupil Cornelis de Vos, who until c. 1620 seems to have primarily focused on selling art. In 1608, when Paul was probably still with Remeeus, Cornelis became a master of the Antwerp Guild. Might this have been a shifting moment for Paul, joining Cornelis as an assistant? This does not seem likely, all the more since no paintings by Cornelis survive from this period. Might, alternatively, Paul have teamed up with his brother Jan, who became a master of the Guild the next year, 1609?[10] It is not impossible, yet any evidence of an independent workshop lacks, as do paintings by Jan.

Rather, Paul will have made the decisive step to continue his career in the workshop of a rising star, the talented animal- and still life painter Frans Snijders (1579-1657), soon to become his brother-in-law.[11] Snijders, an Antwerp native, had first studied with Pieter Brueghel the Younger (1564-1638) in 1593, before becoming the assistant of Hendrick van Balen (1573-1632). In 1602 he became a master of the Antwerp Guild but then disappeared from the radar for several years. Documented in Italy in 1608 he was back in Antwerp in July 1609, where he set up his workshop. When exactly Paul – and possibly Jan – switched from Remeeus to Snijders is unknown. However, we do know that on 23 October 1611 Snijders married Margaretha de Vos, the De Vos brothers' sister, and that the couple subsequently moved into the roomy house Korte Gasthuisstraat 17, where Snijders established his studio. Did Snijders first find a chance to meet Margaretha through his new assistant Paul



Fig. 1 Schelte Adamsz Bolswert after Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of Paul de Vos 'Painter of Hunting Scenes'*, c. 1630/32, etching and engraving, 23.7 x 15.2 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 2 Peter Paul Rubens, *The Recognition of Philopoemen*, 1609/10, oil on panel, 50 x 67 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre



Fig. 3 Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snijders, *The Recognition of Philopoemen*, 1609/10, oil on canvas, 201 x 313.5 cm., Madrid, Museo del Prado

and his brothers, or vice versa? In any case, we might presume that by the time of the wedding, Paul had firmly established himself in Snijders' orbit.

During the same period, Snijders started a successful and longstanding collaboration with his peer Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), who had returned from Italy in 1608.[12] The earliest of their joint products is the splendid *Recognition of Philopoemen*, of c. 1609/10 in the Prado, Madrid. In preparation for the work, Rubens painted a superb initial oil sketch, in which he indicated the still life, which Snijders subsequently worked out, while Rubens took care of the figures (figs. 2, 3).[13] Paul de Vos surely witnessed the creation of this masterpiece and many more to come, which provided templates for his own future working method, in which he as an animal specialist collaborated with other artists in the creation of large-scale (history) paintings. The present *Triumph of Neptune with the Fruits of the Sea* is, as we will see, a fine example of this practice.

While we hear little of Paul himself during these years – he no doubt sharpened his still life and animal-painting skills assisting Snijders – several events and documents give insight into the De Vos family situation. A 1614 document concerning a debt by Cornelis indicates that the De Vos family were living in de Kammenstraat, in the house 'Onze-Lieve-Vrouwe-van-den-Troost' (current day number 18). This address is confirmed in a Guild members-chart of 1616: listed in the 'Rechte Camerstrate' are 'Johannes de Vos, scilder, ende noch twee gebruers, al scilders' ('Johannes de Vos, painter, and two more brothers, all painters').[14] Remarkably, Jan is apparently at that point – at least in the Guild's perception – the most prominent of the three painter-siblings. In 1617 Cornelis marries Susanna Cock, whose half-brother was the landscape painter Jan Wildens (c. 1585-1653). After his return from Italy in 1618, Wildens, too, entered the De Vos circle. When marrying Maria Stappaert in 1619, his witness was 'Pedro Paulo Rubens, zijnen goeden vriendt' ('his good friend'), another indication of how closely-knit this artistic network was. For decennia, Wildens would contribute landscape backgrounds to the paintings of Rubens, Snijders, and Cornelis and Paul de Vos. Tellingly, in Rubens's last will of May 1640, he appointed Wildens and Snijders as executors of his art inventory.[15]

In 1619 De Vos became – as did many young artists – a member of the bachelor society 'Soladiteit der Bejaerde Jongmans', and in September 1620, when his brother Cornelis served as Dean, Paul at long last entered the Guild of St Luke as a master.[16] The specific timing of his acceptance seems no coincidence. In December, Paul's sister Margaretha and Frans Snijders bought the stately house 'De Fortuyne' in the residential Keizerstraat, neighbouring Rubens's close friend, burgomaster Nicolaas Rockox (1560-1640) (their joint houses are now the Snijders&Rockoxhuis Museum). Their subsequent relocation paved the way for Paul to move into their former address Korte Gasthuisstraat 17 (where, after all, had worked for years as Snijders assistant) and set himself up as an independent master.[17] Paul's changed social position brought about personal developments: on 15 November 1624 he married, in Antwerp's cathedral, Isabella van Waerbeke (d. 1660), daughter of a wealthy notary. Over the years, the couple had ten children.[18] While, tellingly, Rubens stood godfather to

one of them – Peter Pauwel, baptised on 28 May 1628, who died in infancy – none became artists. From the 1620s on, Paul almost without exception appears in the yearly Guild registers, as a member of the Violieren, the Chamber of Rhetoric closely linked to the Guild of St Luke, always partaking in the festive banquets in honour of St Luke. The registers also mention pupils: Alexander Daemps, apprenticed to De Vos in 1627, was simultaneously registered as a pupil with Paul's brother Cornelis, suggesting that the two educated him jointly, again confirming their close artistic ties.[19] In 1636 a certain Lanslot van Dalen, otherwise unknown, is likewise mentioned as Paul's pupil. Such insights point at De Vos' embedded status in Antwerp's artistic milieu during these decades, when he became a sought-after collaborator – working with among others his brother Cornelis, Rubens, Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641), Jacques Jordaens (1593-1678), Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert (1613/14-1654) and Erasmus Quellinus II (1607-1678) – received important commissions, and did well financially. His prominence is further indicated by Paul's inclusion in Van Dyck's *Iconography* portrait series (fig. 1).[20] De Vos' own will of 1675 also mentions painted portraits of himself and his wife by Van Dyck.[21] Paul's portrait was destroyed in a fire in 1890, but that of Isabella, painted c. 1628, was preserved, and is kept in the Wallace Collection, London (fig. 4).[22]

In September 1627, just weeks after the untimely death of Paul's brother Jan[23], Snijders and Margaretha de Vos, whose marriage remained childless, made up their will. Should they pass, they'd leave to Paul Snijder's favourite easel and his large grinding stone – deeply personal belongings, underlining their intimacy – and a copy of Marcus Gheeraerdts' *Fables of Aesop*.[24] In a later testament of 1655, Snijders – Margaretha died in 1647 – further bequeaths him 'a painting, being a naked woman with a fur by sir Rubens after Titian', underlining their special bond.[25] After Margaretha's death, and Cornelis' death in 1651, the passing of Snijders in 1657 and Isabella in 1660 must have greatly affected Paul, who no longer attended the St Luke's banquets after 1661, around the time that De Bie wrote his praise. After a long and full life, De Vos – still living in Korte Gasthuisstraat, where he had since bought the adjacent house[26] – passed away on the summer day of 30 June 1678. His death inventory lists among others Van Dyck's portraits, but additionally



Fig. 4 Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of Isabella van Waerbeke*, c. 1628, oil on canvas, 119.7 x 94.2 cm., London, Wallace Collection

mentions another 430 (!) paintings.[27] Judging from their description, some are private belongings, yet the vast majority are reported as large groups according to their size (capital, large, small, etc.). Many are by De Vos ('geschildert door den Aflyvighe'), yet plenty of others carry no attribution. It fuels the impression that Paul de Vos, in his later years, dabbled in the art trade.

Work

Paul de Vos' oeuvre has never been systematically compiled. He only occasionally signed, but never dated his works, which makes it challenging to get an accurate idea of his output and development. The caption underneath Van Dyck's *Iconography* portrait of De Vos characterises him as a 'Pictor Venationem Antverpiae', an Antwerp painter of hunts. Indeed, among De Vos' most impressive works are the often monumental, large animal hunts, i.e. dogs attacking boars, wolves, bears, horses or panthers, sometimes painted as ensembles. Other favoured themes were bird concerts, fables, and kitchens and storerooms with still lifes of food – dead game, fowl, vegetables, occasionally fish – displayed at a table, with cats, dogs, parrots or monkeys, often fighting over these delicacies. Some compositions include human figures, such as servants, mostly executed by collaborators. Compositions that mainly display fish – such as the present, signed *Triumph of Neptune with the Fruits of the Sea* – are extremely rare, although we might have to slightly adjust that statement. In addition, De Vos excelled in depicting armoury, metal objects and musical instruments, which he contributed to collaborative history paintings.[28]

Talented and in demand, De Vos' initial example was the oeuvre of his brother-in-law, whose works often exist in versions and variants, and in which specific motifs – animals, fruit baskets, etc. – were recycled. Paul integrally contributed to that production, first as Snijders' assistant and later by integrating motifs in his own work. In fact, as has often been remarked, many works hiding under Snijders' name will in fact have been largely executed by De Vos.[29] In his mature style, De Vos distinguishes himself from his brother-in-law by his broader brushstroke, painterly fluidity, his warmer and lighter tonality, and rhythmic and dynamic compositions. De Vos collaborated, as indicated, with many artists, key among them his family members and Rubens, who clearly appreciated his skills.[30] A scribble in Paul's sketchbook (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) informs us that 'I, Pauwels de Vos, have worked for Pieter Rubbens for 6 days'.[31] In 1626 Rubens owed De Vos 310 florins, probably for similar assistance, or for paintings bought from De Vos. The 1640 catalogue of Rubens's collection informs us that Rubens possessed three paintings by De Vos – a *Kitchen with a Catfight*, a *Music of Birds*, and a *Piece with Fruits and Birds* – and 'A Peasant and his wife' by himself 'with copious game and fruits, done by Paulus de Vos'.[32] Furthermore, a debt declaration in Rubens's 1645 estate summary points out that the two painters had ongoing affairs.[33] This comes as no surprise, as Rubens included De Vos prominently in the two large commissions of his later life, the enormous decoration cycles for the Buen Retiro and the Torre de la Parada, the hunting lodge outside Madrid of Philips IV of Spain (1605-1665), executed c. 1636-1638, for which Paul painted possibly as many as 42 animal paintings.[34] Other prominent contemporaries that collected De Vos' work include the Marqués de Leganés (c. 1580-1655) in Madrid, Emperor Ferdinand III (1608-1657) and his brother, Archduke Leopold Wilhelm (1614-1662), Governor of the Spanish Netherlands.

The Triumph of Neptune with the Fruits of the Sea

'*L' Empire de Neptune*' ('Neptune's Empire') is the poetic title given to the present work at its earliest recorded appearance, in a Parisian auction in January 1875. Triggering the imagination, the title could relate to a scene of the god of the sea and his entourage in a dripping underwater cave, in submarine lands where Neptune rules the waves. Yet it likewise applies beautifully to the enormous heap of fish and other creatures of the ocean, piled up on a dune at the surf, and occupying the better part of the canvas; before all since next to this abundance, the mighty Neptune himself triumphantly rises out of the water with his trident full of fish, being offered precious red corals, presented to him in a large seashell by a bearded Triton at his side. The painting displays a magnificent sampling of all the amazing – and for the most part delicious and healthy – species that inhabit and celebrate Neptune's Empire. In the middle distance, at open sea, Neptune is seen once more, now seated in his hippocampus-driven sea chariot, with his wife Amphitrite beside him, and surrounded by his entourage of Tritons and Nereids, some of them blowing their shell horns (fig. 5).

Impressive if only for the canvas' sheer size, it is the spectacle of all these vibrant life-size fish, so colourful and palpable, with all their different textures, sliding over each other and rendered with stunning accuracy, that causes an overwhelming effect. One could almost smell the briny odour of the fish. Yet behind this supposed realism is a carefully constructed composition, a masterly organisation of volumes, arranged with a keen feeling for shape and space, a Baroque masterpiece. The central element to the still life is the large diagonally positioned Atlantic sturgeon with its red fins, topped by a huge, blue-green wolffish



Fig. 5 Paul de Vos Salomon Lilian, detail of the Triumph of Neptune and Amphitrite



Fig. 6 Cornelis Bos after Giulio Romano, after Andrea Mantegna, *The Triumph of Neptune with Grotesque Sea Creatures*, 1548, engraving, 14.5 x 100.4 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

(a.k.a. seawolf), swinging its tail and spreading its gruesome mouth.[35] To the left of this diagonal, we see a cod, a pike and a carb, two brown crabs, a king crab, and a lobster. This lobster lies with its back on top of a catshark, itself partly resting on a huge white halibut that offers a counter diagonal in the composition. The brown fish on top of the halibut is a lumpfish (or lumpsucker). Next to it, another king crab lies upside down on top of a horseshoe crab, around whose tail a sea lamprey has wrapped itself – to three-dimensional effect – in a desperate, but brilliant attempt to glean some of the blood dripping down from the sturgeon's fin. Underneath the king crab hides a garfish. Above the sturgeon, we see another horseshoe crab, a tub gurnard, a barbell, a lobster seemingly crawling on top of another – huge – cod, another tub gurnard, a smaller dark wolffish and a squid. If that weren't enough, two wonderful red-footed tortoises inhabit the foreground amidst a myriad of pretty shells and starfish (strictly speaking, these tortoises, originally inhabitants of Middle and South America, are not marine- but land animals). While in the upper right two eels and a salmon are dangling from Neptune's trident, two cuddly pup seals complete the composition in the lower right.

Our painting is a hybrid. On the one hand, it convincingly presents itself as a mythological scene, with the large Neptune and the Triton as protagonists, substantiated by the thematically akin cortege of Neptune and Amphitrite at sea (the actual 'Triumph of Neptune'). Well-established since antiquity, the themes of Neptune and his triumphal procession boasted a vivid pictorial tradition during the sixteenth century. Prints, in particular, of a heroic trident-carrying Neptune often depict him, and sometimes Amphitrite, riding his sea chariot or his hippocampi, escorted by his entourage of Nereids and Tritons. The depiction of Neptune, both in large-figure, or within his triumph, persisted and flourished in seventeenth-century Antwerp, and the present painting emphatically fits within that tradition. On the other hand, depictions of Neptune that included large displays of sea animals were not that common. One example, Cornelis Bos' (1506/10-1555) spectacular, meter-wide print after Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506), depicts a frieze with *Neptune's Triumph* and a following of grotesque marine fable creatures (fig. 6). In the Northern Netherlands Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem (1562-1638) and Jacques de Gheyn II (1565-1629) produced two somewhat isolated paintings showing Neptune and Amphitrite with shells in front of them, the latter clearly imbued with erotic overtones (fig. 7).[36] Furthermore, there were depictions of the element Water (Aqua), represented by an allegorical figure (occasionally Neptune) amidst fish and other sea beasts (figs. 8, 9). All such imagery clearly echoes in our work, yet the realistic fish display in our painting, and the painting's pictorial conception as a whole, specifically originates from another source, the monumental Antwerp market- and kitchen scenes by Pieter Aertsen (1508-1575) and his nephew and pupil Joachim Beuckelaer (c. 1534-1574/75). Halfway trough the sixteenth century they developed the genre of large, copious displays of food – meat, poultry, vegetables and fish – on kitchen tables or offered for sale at urban markets. While Aertsen was probably the first to exclusively depict fish in this context, Beuckelaer's *Fish*



Fig. 7 Jacques de Gheyn II, *Neptune and Amphitrite*, c. 1610, oil on canvas, 104 x 136 cm., Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum



Fig. 8 Philips Galle, *Aqua*, 1564, engraving, 19 x 24.8 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 9 Nicolaes de Bruyn after Maerten de Vos, *Aqua*, in or after 1581, engraving, 17.1 x 21.2 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 10 Joachim Beuckelaer, *Fish Market*, 1569, oil on canvas, 158.5 x 215 cm., London, National Gallery

Markets of the 1560s and 1570s, with their multi-layered meaning – mercantile, religious, sexual, humorous, allegorical (representing Water), aesthetical – were game-changing works of art (fig. 10).[37] Frans Snijders and his pupil, Paul de Vos – Antwerp's new generation of large-scale animal still life painters – must have felt that they were following in Beuckelaer's footsteps.

We already saw how Snijders c. 1609/10, basing himself on an initial oil sketch by Rubens, executed the animal still life in the latter's *Recognition of Philopoemen* (figs. 2, 3). It provided him with a template that he could likewise apply to the fish still life. Having been to Italy, he must have also been well aware of the work of the Italian follower of Beuckelaer, Vincenzo Campi (1536-1591), whose fish markets present a broader range of fish than those by Beuckelaer, and introduce the sturgeon, so prominent in the present composition (fig. 11).[38] Both Snijder's early *Fish Shop* in Moscow, datable c. 1610/15 (fig. 12) and his group of somewhat later fish still lifes of the 1620s, such as the two masterly *Fish Markets* in the Hermitage, St Petersburg, underline this (figs. 13, 14).[39] Tellingly, the St Petersburg works' arrangements – an elevated fish pile, a figure to the side, and a middle view towards open water in the background – strongly resemble our painting's set-up, a clear indication of De Vos' indebtedness to his brother-in-law's output, and our composition's direct obligation to the pictorial tradition of the market scene. Moreover, the measurements of the St Petersburg *Fish Markets* (209 x 343 cm., and 210 x 341 cm.) are virtually identical to those of the present *Triumph of Neptune with the Fruits of the Sea* (204 x 343 cm.), another reminder of the strong conceptual similarities between these works. Still, it is another painting likewise belonging to this group, which is of the most significance to us. This unsigned *Fish Market with the Sale of Tiberius's Mullet*, an obscure theme from Roman history only identified recently by Elizabeth McGrath, is kept in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, where since over a century it has been given to Frans Snijders (the fish still life) and Anthony van Dyck (the figures) (fig. 15).[40] Generally dated to c. 1620/21, the Vienna *Fish Market* again presents a similar arrangement of a copious fish pile displayed on a broad surface (a table) with a large-figure narrative next to it. This time, though, it concerns the exact same pile of fish seen in our painting (the eels and salmon skewered on Neptune's trident in our



Fig. 11 Vincenzo Campi, *Fish Sellers (Allegory of Water)*, c. 1580/90, oil on canvas, 145 x 215 cm., Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera



Fig. 12 Frans Snijders, *Fish Shop*, c. 1612/14, oil on canvas, 134 x 204 cm., Moscow, State Pushkin Museum



Fig. 15 Studio of Peter Paul Rubens (attributed to Frans Snijders and Anthony van Dyck), *Fish Market with the Sale of Tiberius's Mullet*, c. 1620/21, oil on canvas, 253 x 375 cm., Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



Fig. 13 Frans Snijders, *The Fish Market*, signed, c. 1620, oil on canvas, 209 x 343 cm., St Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum



Fig. 14 Frans Snijders, *A Fish Market*, signed, c. 1620/25, 210 x 341 cm., St Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum

work, are here seen hanging from the timber). If we consider our painting to be from a somewhat later date – as discussed below – we recognise in the Vienna *Fish Market* its prototype. Moreover, plenty of other works – though none signed – turn out to likewise include the fish pile, which thus seems to have had commercial appeal. However, before raising further questions concerning this remarkable group, we will first denote the figures of Neptune and the Triton in our painting, which were painted by a collaborator of De Vos.



Fig. 16 Peter Paul Rubens, *The Birth of Venus*, c. 1615, oil on canvas, 227 x 249 cm., formerly Potsdam, Bildergalerie am Schloss Sanssouci



Fig. 17
Peter Paul Rubens, *Neptune and Amphitrite*, c. 1614-1618, oil on canvas, 230 (?) x 305 cm., formerly Berlin, Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum

A brotherly collaboration

As said, the tradition of depicting Neptune and his cortege flourished in the harbour city Antwerp during the first decades of the seventeenth century. Frans Francken the Younger (1581-1642), for instance, painted numerous *Triumphs of Neptune*, mostly small-scale cabinet pictures. Before all, a number of monumental paintings depicting Neptune and/or look-alike river gods by Rubens, all datable to the 1610s, set the tone. The most relevant of these for our Neptune and the Triton are Rubens's *Birth of Venus* of c. 1615, once in Potsdam (fig. 16), and the equally impressive *Neptune and Amphitrite*, datable to c. 1614-1618, once in Berlin but possibly destroyed in 1945 (fig. 17).[41] In the first painting Neptune, with his long beard, wreath of reeds, coral, shells and little flowers, and his wife Amphitrite watch from the side as Venus rises from the foam of the waves, wringing out her hair amidst Nereids and Tritons who laud her with music and aquatic gifts. Clearly, there are substantial parallels between the depictions of Neptune here and in our painting. However, our attention is before all drawn to the Nereid on the right side with her long wet hair sticking to her

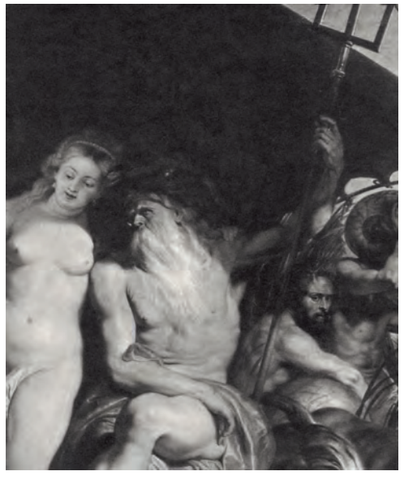


Fig. 18
Fig. 17, detail (mirror image)



Fig. 19
Paul de Vos Salomon Lilian, detail



Fig. 20
Fig. 16, detail

back, looking upward to Venus as she offers her a string of pearls. She was – a gender transformation into the bargain – recycled in our painting, and became the bearded Triton with his similar upward gaze and his long wet hair in his neck (and – identical to the Nereid – on his cheeks), offering Neptune corals (figs. 19, 20). Even more than the *Birth of Venus*, the former Berlin *Neptune and Amphitrite* offers an iconic blueprint for the depiction of Neptune. In fact, our Neptune seems modelled on Rubens's example – up until the upper hand grip on the trident – be it that the sea god's body was mirrored (fig. 18).

Who could have been the artist responsible for our figures, and when? Considering possible candidates in Paul de Vos' circle it appears that, on stylistic arguments, Pauls own brother Cornelis de Vos has by far the best papers. He intensified his painting career around 1620, becoming one of the most sought-after portraitists in Antwerp; in addition, he proved to be a history painter of merit.[42] Through the years he and his younger brother Paul worked together on many occasions.[43] Sometimes Paul contributed still life elements or animals to Cornelis's histories or portraits, in other cases Cornelis added figures to Paul's still lifes or hunts. As noted by Katlijne van der Stighelen and Hans Vlieghe in their study on Cornelis de Vos' history paintings, De Vos during the 1630s often relied – as observed here – on Rubens's compositions of the 1610s.[44] Our figures can be dated accordingly, as they show several characteristics of Cornelis' work around the time.[45] One of these is the figures' relatively undetermined musculature, which contrasts with Rubens' much stronger modelling of the 1610s, but instead follows his later handling, a tendency that we find in several of De Vos' paintings of this period. The result in the overall rendering of skin is somewhat flocky, or cloudy – a characteristic of Cornelis's work from the period – especially in the case of Neptune, which actually suits his mature age well.[46] We recognise the same orange-inclined flockiness in other works, such as the *Triumph of Bacchus* and *The Birth of Venus*, both in the Prado, Madrid (fig. 21). Datable to 1636/38, these works were executed by Cornelis de Vos after designs provided by Rubens, and were part of the aforementioned cycle for the Torre de la Parada hunting lodge of Philips IV of Spain, a mega-commission for which Rubens relied heavily on the assistance of his Antwerp confrères, not in the least on Snijders, and Cornelis and Paul de Vos.[47] Remarkably, Rubens's composition for the *Birth of Venus* largely mirrors the composition of his earlier *Birth of Venus* of c. 1615 (fig. 16), which as demonstrated was exactly the painting from which Cornelis adopted the figure of the Nereid that he transformed into a Triton. No wonder, once we realise how deeply involved Cornelis was at the time with Rubens, and with this particular composition. In the wreathed Triton holding the Nereid in Cornelis's *Birth of Venus* in Madrid, we recognise a strong resemblance with the Neptune in our painting. It is typical for Cornelis, whose work from the period boasts more examples of such recycling of motifs



Fig. 21 Cornelis de Vos after Peter Paul Rubens, *The Birth of Venus*, signed, c. 1636/38, oil on canvas, 187 x 208 cm., Madrid, Museo del Prado

adopted from Rubens's designs.[48] In this respect, one might point to other Rubens sketches of around 1635/36, in which the same bearded, wreathed Berlin Neptune-type is recycled, as a river god (fig. 22) and as Midas (fig. 23), and of which Cornelis was surely aware. As such, our work fits the profile of a De Vos - De Vos co-production, fitting in a trusted working pattern that in itself corroborates their partnership in the present work.[49] If Cornelis's brother-in-law Jan Wildens was responsible for the execution of the clouds and the sky can neither be confirmed nor denied.



Fig. 22
Peter Paul Rubens, *Meeting of King Ferdinand of Hungary and the Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand of Spain at Nördlingen*, 1635, oil on panel, 49.1 x 69.8 cm., Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum, detail of a river god



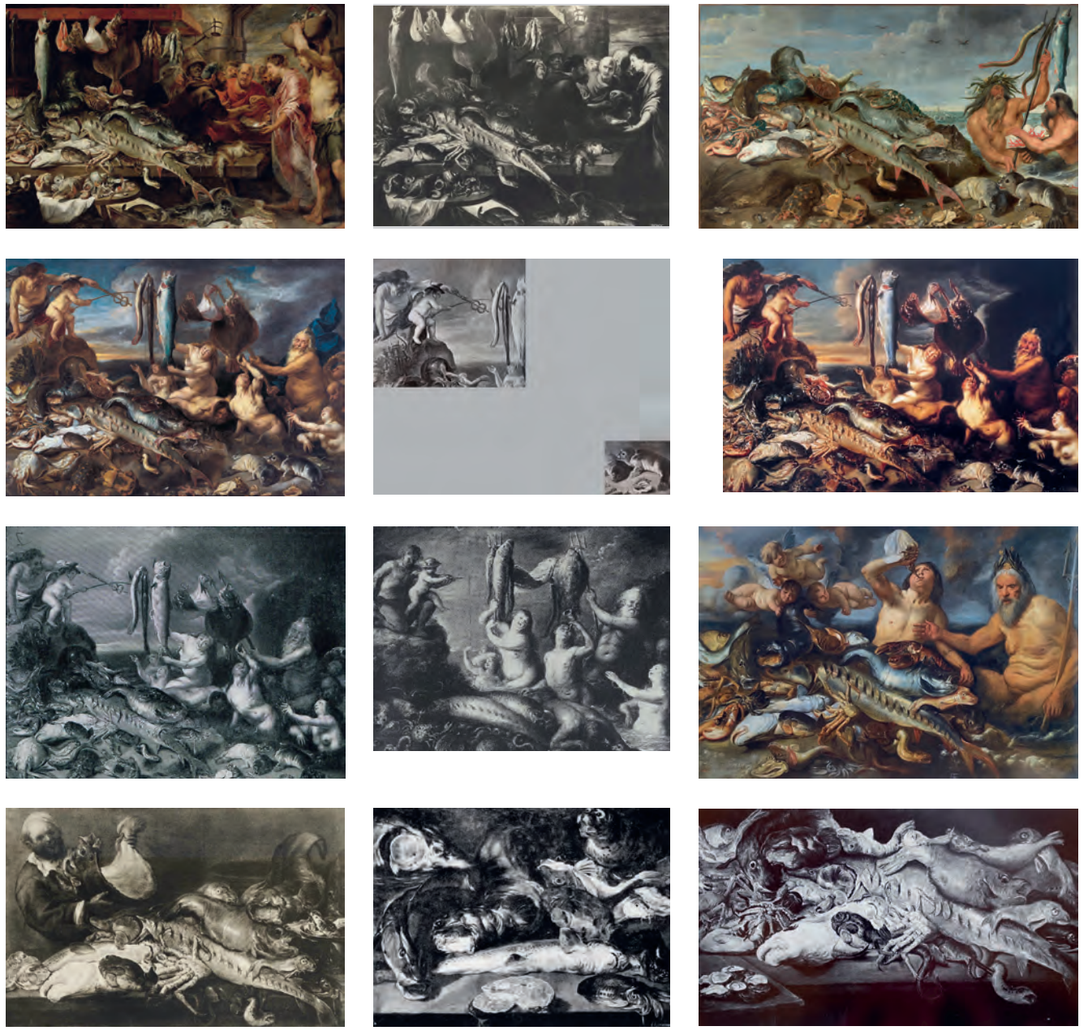
Fig. 23
Peter Paul Rubens, *Apollo and Pan*, c. 1636, oil on panel, 25.5 x 38 cm., Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België, detail of Midas

Antwerp's favourite fish pile

Having determined a probable dating of our painting c. 1535-1640, we now return to the fish pile. The Vienna *Fish Market with the Sale of Tiberius's Mullet* was first recorded in 1635, in the inventory of the late George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham (1592-1628), Rubens's friend and commissioner. It is listed there as 'Rubens – a Great piece with Fishes'.[50] Considering this description and assuming that Buckingham bought it directly from Rubens, one might best, as McGrath argues, attribute the painting to Rubens's workshop, a view that gains strength from the notion that Rubens was without any doubt responsible for devising the work's unique theme.[51] Over the centuries the work's attribution changed several times. In 1649 it was called 'Rubens et Snyders', after 1721 'Snoyens [sic] und Jordans', in 1772 'Schneyers et Jordans', and in 1781 it was attributed to the Antwerp still life painter Jacob van Es and 'Johann Jordaens', an attribution it still carried in 1881.[52] During the late nineteenth century the work was apparently given to Snijders and Cornelis de Vos. Since Gustav Glück in 1907, scholarly consensus attributes it to Snijders and Van Dyck, which is compatible with a creation under Rubens's roof, as both are known to have worked for him.[53] Following the attribution, Van Dyck's departure for Italy in October 1621 provides a fitting *terminus ante quem*.

If Rubens was indeed responsible for the conception, he must have provided his star assistants with a design. As a matter of fact, this design seems mentioned in the 1643/44 inventory of Rubens's brother-in-law Arnold Lunden (1595-1656): 'Un Marché au Poisson par le meme [Rubens]. F. 40'.[54] As no *Fish Market* by Rubens is known otherwise, and the relatively low estimation concurs neatly with those of other oil sketches in Lunden's collection, this 'Marché au Poisson' will, as Hans Vlieghe proposed, in all probability have been the preparation for the Vienna painting. While we do not know how elaborate Rubens's sketch was, it must have been detailed enough to be recognised as a 'Marché au Poisson'. Taking as a reference the oil sketch for the *Recognition of Philopoemen* (fig. 2) – in which the still life to be worked out by Snijders was developed to a considerable degree – one could argue with good reason that the fish still life in Vienna, and thus in our *Neptune*, originated with Rubens himself.

At any rate, the fish pile seems to have enjoyed considerable popularity in Antwerp, as a grouping of the paintings that include it clarifies (figs. 24-35). The Vienna *Fish Market with the Sale of Tiberius's Mullet* was at least copied once. This proficiently executed version, last recorded in Neuilly-sur-Mer in 1960 (fig. 25) was likely produced in a contemporary Antwerp studio, that of Snijders' or – it cannot be excluded – that of Paul de Vos who, as said, moved into Frans Snijders' former premises Korte Gasthuisstraat 17 after December 1620.[55] Whereas the present Lilian *Neptune* was probably painted in c. 1635/40, the fish pile was again recycled during



Figs. 24-35
Left-to-right, top-to-bottom (following the traditional attributions by institutions, auction houses, etc.): (24) Fig. 15; (25) After Frans Snijders and Anthony van Dyck, *Fish Market with the Sale of Tiberius's Mullet*, after 1620/21, oil on canvas, 223 x 279 cm., Neuilly-sur-Seine, collection Walter Goetz (1960); (26) Paul de Vos Salomon Lilian; (27) Fig. 36; (28) After Jacques Jordaens and Frans Snijders, *The Gifts of the Sea*, oil on canvas, originally c. 270 x 380 cm., preserved in two fragments: *Mercury and Cupid*, 160 x 185 cm., *Two Seals*; (29) After Jacques Jordaens and Frans Snijders, *Allegory on Fishing*, oil on canvas, 73 x 90 cm., Coburg, Schloss Ehrenburg, Gemaldegalerie; (30) Jacques Jordaens and Abraham Janssens, oil on canvas, 70 x 85 cm., sale Berlin, Lepke, 9/10 April 1937, lot 83; (31) Jacques Jordaens, *The Triumph of Fishing*, oil on panel, 36 x 45 cm., sale Vienna, Dorotheum (coll. Wawra), 6 May 1933, lot 13; (32) After Frans Snijders and Jacques Jordaens, *The Gifts of the Sea: Allegory on the Riches of Fishing*, oil on canvas, 155 x 234 cm., sale London, Sotheby's, 28 October 2010, lot 39; (33) Paul de Vos, *The Fishmonger*, oil on canvas, 120 x 184 cm., Bergamo, Galleria Lorenzelli (1986); (34) Frans Snijders, *Fish*, oil on canvas, 90 x 124 cm., Sale Antwerp, Zaal Wynen, 19 January 1925, lot 102; (35) Frans Snijders, *Fish Still Life*, oil on canvas, 120.5 x 185.5 cm., sale Brussels, Galerie Giroud, 6 December 1957, lot 439



Fig. 36 Jacob Jordaens and Frans Snijders (?), *The Gifts of the Sea*, c. 1640/50, oil on canvas, 269 x 377 cm., Vienna, Liechtenstein Collection

the 1640s or early 1650s, this time featuring within a majestic composition apparently elaborating on our work. This large *Gifts of the Sea*, now in the Liechtenstein Collection in Vienna, shows the fish pile surrounded by Neptune, Amphitrite and their following of Nereids and Tritons, as on a hill to the left Mercury teaches Cupid how to fish (figs. 27, 36). The painting was first recorded in 1746 in the Schönborn-Buchheim collection as by 'Lucas Jordano', an erroneous name switch, as later catalogues list the figures correctly as by Jacob Jordaens, whereas the fish still life was given to the already-mentioned Antwerp still life painter Jacob van Es (1596-1666), an attribution it still carried in 1962.[56] The work is currently attributed to Jordaens and Frans Snijders.[57] Several versions exist of the Liechtenstein work. The largest of these was first recorded in the inventory of Copenhagen Castle in 1690 ('A large piece with a History of Nymphs who fish'). It later suffered terribly from being rolled up for decades, the reason that only two fragments survived, with an attribution to (or after) Jordaens and, tentatively, Snijders (fig. 28).[58] A smaller version is kept in Schloss Ehrenburg, Coburg as after Jordaens and Snijders (fig. 29), while two more copies appeared in auctions in Vienna and Berlin, in 1933 and 1937, with attributions to Jordaens, and Jordaens and the Antwerp history painter Abraham Janssens (1575-1632), respectively (figs. 30, 31).[59] A variation, with Neptune and a Triton blowing a seashell horn, showing affinity with our work, was auctioned in London in 2010, again as after Frans Snijders and Jacques Jordaens (fig. 32). An interesting *Fishmonger* appeared in auction in Munich in 1918 as part of a set of four paintings by Paul de Vos (fig. 33).[60] It is, with the exception of our painting, the only work depicting the fish pile that at one point was actually given to De Vos, before surfacing again in the Italian art trade in 1986, as a work by Frans Snijders. However, the De Vos attribution gains strength from the fact that the fishmonger himself appears again as the protagonist in a *Cook at a Table with Dead Game* in the Hermitage, St Petersburg, by Paul de Vos (the still life) and Jacques Jordaens (the figure), on which during a 2015 cleaning De Vos' signature appeared (fig. 37).[61] As



the Hermitage cook was without any doubt executed by Jordaens himself, the painting provides solid proof that he and De Vos worked together. Finally, two fish pieces depicting (segments of) the popular fish pile appeared in Belgian sales in 1925 and 1957, as by Snijders (figs. 34, 35).[62]

Authorship

What the various attributions of all these unsigned works make clear is that the Vienna and Liechtenstein paintings – themselves over the centuries subject to varying attributions – have been normative, but that solid evidence regarding authorship is limited. All attributions were, in fact, done without awareness of the present, fully signed painting, which somehow escaped attention.[63] Should we, then, reconsider all of these attributions, and suggest a more prominent role for Paul de Vos, and/or his workshop? We might. De Vos indeed seems to have recycled more pictorial elements encountered in our painting. The pup seals, for instance, lack in the Vienna *Fish Market* (which includes another seal) but reappear in the later Liechtenstein work and its versions. We find one of the seals in a *Fish Market* in Ghent, long attributed to Snijders, but not accepted by Hella Robels in her *catalogue raissonné* on Snijders, in which she points to Paul de Vos (fig. 38).[64] As a duo the seals lounge on the beach in a painting in Besançon formerly attributed to Snijders, but given to De Vos by Jacques Foucart on stylistic grounds in 1977 (fig. 39).[65] Still, one should be cautious with drawing conclusions too eagerly. The tortoises, for instance, likewise lack in the Vienna *Fish Market* while featuring in our work and the Liechtenstein *Gifts of the Sea* (and its versions). Do they, then, belong exclusively to Paul's repertoire? Apparently not, for they also appear in two signed *Fish Markets* by Snijders (figs. 13, 14) datable to the 1620s; in another one (where they are switched around) that is firmly attributed to Snijders (and Cornelis de Vos for the figures) (fig. 40), and in a separate *Fish Still Life with Tortoises*, once attributed to a 'follower of Snijders' (fig. 41).[66]

While it seems significant that Paul added his signature to our work – thus emphatically claiming it as his achievement – one wonders how to judge this statement. Other monumental signed works by Paul, although depicting themes also treated by Snijders, all display original De Vos compositions. This goes for the *Deer Hunts* in the Royal Museums, Brussels (217 x 347 cm.) and the Prado, Madrid (201 x 344 cm., fig. 42), and for



Fig. 37 Paul de Vos and Jacques Jordaens, *Cook at a Table with Dead Game*, signed lower left: P. De. Vos fecit, oil on canvas, 176 x 245 cm., St Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum



Fig. 38 Paul de Vos (?), *Fish Market*, oil on canvas, 200 x 179 cm., Ghent, Museum voor Schone Kunsten Gent



Fig. 39 Paul de Vos, *Two Seals*, oil on canvas, 80 x 146 cm., Besançon, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon

the *Bear Hunt* and the *Leopard Hunt* in the Hermitage, St Petersburg (205 x 345 cm. and 201 x 244 cm.), all paintings – it should be remarked – with measurements similar to those of our *Triumph of Neptune with the Fruits of the Sea* (204 x 343 cm.).[67] Other versions of such works exist, but they are autograph replicas by De Vos, rather than prime versions by Snijders.[68] Sometimes, too, De Vos signed co-productions to which his contribution was predominant – of which our *Neptune* is an excellent example. We already discussed the signed *Cook* in the Hermitage, in which Jordaens added the figure (fig. 37). Another case is the *Amor Vincit Omnia* in Vienna, a collaboration with Jan van den Hoecke (1611-1651), in which De Vos executed the spectacular armoury still life, and Van den Hoecke added the figure (fig. 43). In both works Paul's still life seems to have been his own invention.

Is our work, then, the exception to the rule, and does the signature here merely indicate De Vos' leading contribution? Or did Paul have more input in the initial design than we realise? Let us compare the three main works displaying the fish pile: the Vienna *Fish Market* of c. 1620/21, the present *Neptune* of c. 1635/40, and the Liechtenstein *Gifts of the Sea*, datable to c. 1640/50.[69] First of all, it is astonishing to observe how close in execution these works really are, considering that they were executed over a period of up to 30 years



Fig. 40 Frans Snijders and Cornelis de Vos, *Fish Market*, oil on canvas, 225 x 365 cm., Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



Fig. 41 Follower of Frans Snijders (?), *Fish Still Life with Tortoises*, oil on panel, 75 x 105 cm., present whereabouts unknown



Fig. 42 Paul de Vos, *Deer Hunt*, signed: P. De vos fecit, oil on canvas, 212 x 347 cm., Madrid, Museo del Prado



Fig. 43 Paul de Vos and Jan van den Hoecke, *Amor Vincit Omnia*, signed: P. DE VOS, oil on canvas, 152 x 193 cm., Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

apart, all the more since the prime Vienna version was presumably in England before 1628. Remarkably, too, is that the Liechtenstein version borrows from both the composition of the Vienna *Fish Market* (e.g. the curled-up turbot hanging on strings in the Vienna painting is absent from the Lilian work, but returns in the same position – without strings – in the Liechtenstein work, now floundering on Neptune's trident) and the Lilian *Neptune* (e.g. the tortoises and the seals). Still, studying the works side-by-side in detail (fig. 44) one notices slight deviations, mostly between the Vienna *Fish Market* and the Lilian *Neptune*. Compared to the sharp and disciplined Vienna execution, one observes in the Lilian work a marginally broader, facile brushstroke, a looser, expressive interpretation of detail, a warmer, colourful palette – all characteristics of Paul's mature style – and sometimes a slight divergence from the initial forms. This applies, for instance, to the catshark, whose nose seems fairly pointed in the Vienna work, while it is distinctly rounder in the Lilian *Neptune*. Similarly, the gurnard's nose curves downward in the Lilian work, while its shape in the Vienna painting is more stretched, beak-shaped. The gurnard's colours, too, are quite different – yellow, grey, red and blue – from the predominantly darker red tonality in the Vienna work. The Liechtenstein work adheres more to the Vienna work in these details. Elsewhere, however, we recognise the same generous attitude, for instance towards the rendering of the skin of the fish. A good example is the smaller black wolffish, whose skin is dotted with black, grey and white spots indicating its rugged scales in both the Lilian and Liechtenstein works, which also show a certain 'mean' characterisation of the fish, all observed with less intensity in the Vienna *Fish Market*. The squid, then again, is executed near-identical (and extremely competent) in all three works. As for the execution of the Liechtenstein lamprey, it seems closer to the Vienna lamprey, in which a three-dimensional effect is enhanced by similar pasty ridges of light paint that are absent from the Lilian lamprey. The drop of blood the fish is reaching for, however, is executed rather sloppy in the Liechtenstein *Gifts of the Sea*, in comparison to the other works, where the effect is more vivid.

One could go on comparing and analysing details, and find endless overlap and differences among these fascinating, interrelated works. Are the differences too substantial to consider a prominent role for De Vos in the conception and execution of the prime Vienna *Fish Market*, after all the implication of Paul's signature on our painting? Not necessarily, but the answer is hampered by a lack of attributable works from this period, around 1620, when Paul became an independent master and must have been a very capable painter, but was probably still mimicking Snijders, before gradually growing into his own style. And what was Rubens's role? If he provided the basic design, did Snijders and De Vos collaborate on elaborating and executing the composition? For now, this all remains hypothetical. While the differences with the Lilian *Neptune* are small, they seem indicative of a handling by an artist that – if he was not Snijders himself – stood closer to him than the matured Paul de Vos in the Lilian work.

In the case of the Liechtenstein work, however, we can consider De Vos' authorship more seriously. The closeness of the execution, the sometimes freer



Fig. 44 Details from the Vienna *Fish Market* (c. 1621), left; The Salomon Lilian *Neptune* (c. 1635/40), middle; The Liechtenstein *Gifts of the Sea* (c. 1640/50), right

handling, the indisputable reliance on the earlier Lilian composition (e.g. the inclusion of the tortoises and the seals), the later dating and the fact that De Vos and Jordaens demonstrably worked together (e.g. the signed Hermitage *Cook*, fig. 37) seem to open the doors for a reconsideration of the attribution. Moreover, in her *catalogue raisonné* on Snijders, Hella Robels asserts – while discussing the Vienna and Liechtenstein works – that Snijders and Jordaens *never* worked together, instead pointing to Jacob van Es and the Antwerp painter Adriaen van Utrecht (1599-1652) as possible authors of the Liechtenstein still life.[70] In view of the above, Paul de Vos might be a more logical candidate. Furthermore, De Vos' role, and that of his presumed workshop, in several of the works depicting the fish pile, are possibly larger than assumed.

How, finally, the composition – including the colouration, which more or less complies – was transformed so minutely from one support to the next over so many years, remains mysterious, especially given the prime version's move to England at an early stage. Did Paul de Vos work from large drawings? Or did he work from another version of the *Vienna Fishmarket*, possibly the version recorded in Neuilly-sur-Seine in 1960 (fig. 25)? At any rate, infrared reflectography of the Lilian *Neptune* neither shows a grid nor a preparatory underdrawing (fig. 45).

A mythological *Fish Stall* for an Antwerp physician?

In the 1875 Parisian auction where our 'Neptune's Empire' surfaced as a work by Snijders, it was accompanied by another canvas of the same measurements, likewise attributed to Snijders, which carried the title 'L' Étal du Poissonier', 'The Fish Stall'.[71] Its description 'Near an enormous heap of fish, a fishmonger talks with a fisherman who brings him the products of his catch. Pendant of the previous' seems unidentifiable with known works by Snijders or De Vos, but it no doubt resembled, to a degree, the *Fish Stalls* in St Petersburg and Vienna (figs. 13, 14, 40). Could these works have indeed been created as pendants? Or were they executed separately and later combined by a collector? Surely the latter is entirely possible. After all, the size of these monumen-



Fig. 45 Paul de Vos Salomon Lilian, infrared reflectography

tal works was, as we have seen, rather standardised. Be that as it may, the combination is interesting: a profane fish stall versus a mythological fish stall.

Much has been said about the complex, multi-faceted meaning of fish in the early modern visual culture, and within its various contexts. Favourite in this respect are the many erotic implications connected with fish in all its saline manifestations.[72] Well known, too, is the religious context in which the act of fishing metaphorically refers to the fishing for souls. These associations with fish do not seem to play an overly significant role in the present *Triumph of Neptune with the Fruits of the Sea*, although in all its nutritious abundance the reference to fertility can surely not be overlooked. Rather, the painting celebrates the life aquatic, in all its grandiosity. Neptune proudly presents to us everything the waters have to offer, as if he were a fishmonger, or even a fisherman diving up the fruits of the sea with his trident, for the beholder to marvel at, and to be consumed. In that regard, it is striking to see the visual parallel with a painting that De Vos probably didn't know, *Piscatus (Allegory of Fishing)*, painted in 1613 by the German artist Johann Briederl the Elder (d. 1634) (fig. 46). Here, too, the allegorical representation of fishing, Piscatus, is being offered gifts from the sea by a lower positioned figure, here a fisherman with his basket, instead of the Triton with his shell. This notion of fishing, the physical act of catching the fish, is an important aspect of our *Neptune* (cf. the skewered fish on Neptune's trident), yet there seems to be an extended dimension to our painting.



Fig. 46 Johann Briederl the Elder, *Piscatus (Allegory of Fishing)*, 1613/15, oil on canvas, 218 x 154,5 cm, Munich, Munich Residence



Fig. 47 Peter Paul Rubens, *Portrait of Ludovicus Nonnius*, c. 1627 (or c. 1635?), oil on canvas, 124.4 x 92.2 cm., London, National Gallery

A number of recent publications have paid attention to a milieu of fish aficionados in Antwerp in the earlier decades of the seventeenth century.[73] The central figure within this socio-cultural circle was Ludovicus Nonnius (1553-1645), or Luis Nuñez, a physician and humanist of Portuguese-Sephardic background. In 1616 Nonnius, who was Rubens's doctor and his intimate friend, wrote a book on fish consumption. This *Ichtyophagi a sive de Piscium Esu Commentarius* ('Ichtyophagia, or commentary on the eating of fish'), dedicated to Rubens's friend (and Snijders's neighbour) Nicolaes Rockox, explicitly describes the many benefits of fish as a healthy, nutritious and noble food, especially for those with a less exercised body, such as lawyers and scholars. Fish – although widely consumed in seventeenth-century Flanders – still had the connotation of a dangerous food offering little nutrition. Nonnius' book was thus an importrant catalyst in a burgeoning scholarly debate about food and health. Rubens, who probably acquired the book directly from its author, had it bound in July 1616.[74] Interestingly, the *Ichtyophagia* extensively chronicles the story of Tiberius' Mullet, the unique subject of the Vienna *Fish Market*. Nonnius' book was no doubt Rubens's main source and forms compelling evidence that Rubens was surely the intellectual mastermind behind the painting's conception. In her recent study on this matter, Elizabeth McGrath entertains the possibility that Nonnius might have owned the Vienna *Fish Market*, in the end rejecting it as the painting was shipped to England before 1628.[75] Still, the idea that such works were created, if not for Nonnius himself, then at least for a public that dwelled in this milieu and was sympathetic to his ideas, seems logical. In fact, our *Triumph of Neptune with the Fruits of the Sea*, even more so than the various *Fish Markets* by Snijders, fits Nonnius' universe perfectly.

In 1627 – around the time that Rubens painted Nonnius' portrait (fig. 47)[76] – the physician published a follow-up book, the ambitious *Diaeteticon sive de re cibaria libri IV* ('Diaeteticon, or about the matter of food in four parts'), arguably the world's first diet book. Again Nonnius presents the case for a diet containing plenty of fish, yet this time his scope is broader. In four *libri* Nonnius deals with the whole spectrum of food theory and practice, discussing separately the consumption of bread and vegetables (Liber Primus); eating meat (Liber Secundus); food from the sea and the rivers (Liber Tertius, a reprise of the *Ichtyophagia*); and drinking (Liber Quartus). Intriguingly, the book's four-*libri*-format is reflected in the anonymous frontispiece of its second edition (fig. 48). This frontispiece presents Asclepius, the Roman god of healing medicine and good health, seated on a base, as four gods offer him their wares. They are Diana, goddess of the hunt, who offers all kinds of meats (dead and living); Ceres, goddess of agriculture, grain and crops, offering a basket with vegetables; Bacchus, god of winemaking, orchards and fruit, holding up a bunch of grapes; and last but not least, Neptune with his trident, presenting Asclepius with the fruits of the waters, fresh fish (fig. 49). It needs no explanation that the Neptune scene here represents the 'Liber Tertius' of Nonnius' book, as said a reprise of his *Ichtyophagia*. Nor does it require explanation that the image is essentially a condensed



Fig. 48 Anonymous, Frontispiece for the *Diaeteticon sive de re cibaria libri IV*, Antwerp 1627 (second edition, 1645), Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus

version of our *Triumph of Neptune with the Fruits of the Sea*, in which Neptune offers his wares to us, the consumers of the picture, and of his healthy fish (remarkably, the figure of Bacchus offering grapes, too, echoes our Triton). Vice versa, our painting is the large-scale visual embodiment of the *Diaeteticon's* 'Liber Tertius' – Nonnius' *Ichtyophagia* – a laudation of the riches of the sea, an advertisement for its products, with Neptune as the mythological-allegorical fishmonger, all within the glorious perspective of health benefits.

As such, the idea of Nonnius as a potential commissioner of our painting is not far-fetched. More than the Liechtenstein *Gifts of the Sea*, in which the prominent inclusion of Mercury, god of the trade, seems to allude openly to the economical aspects of fishing (probably commenting on Antwerp's dire situation with regards to the Scheldt river's blockade by the North[77]), our *Neptune* is a pure, allegorical manifestation of Nonnius' food theory. Yet the idea of a direct relationship with Nonnius becomes earnestly compelling when taking his personal situation into consideration. Nonnius lived in Lange Gasthuisstraat, in the house 'Schild van Spagne', current day no. 18, together with his young-



Fig. 49 Detail of fig. 48, Neptune offering the fruits of the sea



Fig. 50 Johan Blaeu, *Map of Antwerp*, 1649, detail with the houses of Nonnius (left star) and Paul de Vos (right star), and the 'Arch of the Porrtuguese'



Fig. 51 Theodor van Thulden after Ludovicus Nonnius, *The Arch of the Portuguese*, 1639/41, etching and engraving, 21.4 x 29 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

er wife, the wealthy Francisca Godines. She was the daughter of the fabulously wealthy sugar importer Francisco Godinez and his wife Inez Lopez – like Nonnius of Portuguese origin – who had settled in Antwerp in 1591.[78] Francisca's brother was Filips Godines (1603-1633), the Spanish king's tax collector in Antwerp. He married Sebilla vanden Berghe in 1624, but died untimely, in 1633.[79] It is in Filips Godines' estate inventory of May 1633 that we find Rubens's *Birth of Venus* (fig. 16), the very painting that provided the direct example for our Trition, and the template for Cornelis de Vos' *Birth of Venus* (fig. 21), the work that he had executed for the Torre de la Parada project after Rubens's design, and that shows such resemblance with our *Neptune*.[80] After Filips' death, the *Birth of Venus* remained with his widow Sebilla – Nonnius' sister-in-law – until her death in 1661.

Nonnius' active and on-going involvement with Rubens and his circle during the 1630s, and his interest and practice in art and composition, are explicitly manifested by the exceptional fact that he personally executed the design for the 'Arch of the Portuguese', one of the temporary arches constructed for the *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*, the Joyous Entry of Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand of Austria (1609/10-1641) in Antwerp on 14 April 1635. This huge project was led by Rockox and Rubens, who was – with the exception of the 'Arch of the Portuguese' – responsible for the arches' designs, and for their execution called on the help of many of his Antwerp colleagues, among them Cornelis de Vos.[81] Tellingly, the 'Arch of the Portuguese' was positioned right opposite Nonnius' house 'Schild van Spagne', at the corner of Arenbergstraat and Lange Gasthuisstraat. Overseeing this topography, one all the more realises the physical and social proximity in which this all took place. Lange Gasthuisstraat 18 is only a stone's throw away from Korte Gasthuisstraat 17, the house and studio of Paul de Vos (figs. 50, 51), the steady collaborator of Nonnius' friend Rubens, the brother-in-law of Frans Snijders, who was the neighbour and close friend of Rockox', to whom Nonnius had dedicated his *Ichtyophagia*.[82] With this in mind, it seems evident that the nutrition specialist Nonnius and the famous food painter Paul de Vos knew each other well. Having married into a very wealthy family, Nonnius could certainly spend serious money on art, a field that clearly interested him. Considering his single-handed design for the Portuguese Arch in 1635, might we hypothesise that Nonnius was in fact himself the anonymous designer of the frontispiece for the second edition of his book? Remarkably, there are intriguing parallels between the figures of Neptune and Bacchus, and the figures in Rubens's *Birth of Venus*, the painting owned by Nonnius' sister-in-law Sebilla vanden Berghe, to which he thus had exclusive access (cf. Neptune and Amphitrite, whose traits and poses, in reverse, merge in the frontispiece's upward-looking Neptune). Since there can be no doubt that Nonnius was well aware of Rubens's *Fish Market with Tiberius' Mullet* – a story Rubens took from his own *Ichtyophagia* – wouldn't he be the ideal candidate to have commissioned and devised our *Triumph of Neptune with the Fruits of the Sea*? After all, it combines the Vienna fish pile with the Neptune scene encountered in the frontispiece of Nonnius' most influential and well-known book, and it also includes the evident borrowing from his sister-in-law's *Birth of Venus*. To be sure, the commission for our painting would have been processed in close consultation with the De Vos brothers. Visiting the De Vos studio, discussing his ideas and overseeing the work would have been utterly convenient for the elderly Nonnius: all he'd have to do was cross the street. Did, thus, Nonnius commission our *Neptune*, as a splendid reflection of his pioneering efforts in promoting fish on the table? Of course this necessarily remains a hypothesis, but given the various compelling clues, it seems more than simply wishful thinking (or 'fishful thinking', if you will).

Notes

1 The Lazareff provenance follows indisputably from the introduction to the Paris sale catalogue of 29 January 1785 (see Provenance), which explicitly states that the collection at auction – belonging to Charles Venance Marquis d'Abzac (1822-1905) – formed part of the former Lazareff collection in St Petersburg: 'La collection de M. le marquis d'A..., que nous mettons en vente, n'est qu'une partie de la galerie provenant de la succession de M. le comte de L..., si connu à Saint-Pétersbourg.' In fact, the paintings were inherited by d'Abzac from his father-in-law, count Lazar Ekimovich Lazareff (1786-1871), whose daughter Marie Louise Dorothée von Lazareff, countess of Hoym (d. 1866) he had married (Poland, 1 September 1858). As the Lazareff (or Lazarev) family had accumulated wealth for generations, it remains unclear if Lazar Lazareff acquired the present work himself. *Pater familias* was Lazareff's grandfather, Lazar (or Agasar) Lazarevich Lazareff (1700-1782), a merchant, banker and jeweller from a prominent Georgian family from Ishfahan, settling in Moscow. His son Ivan Lazarevich Lazareff (1735-1801), who moved family operations to St Petersburg, became court banker to Tsarina Catherine the Great (1729-1796) from whom he received the title Imperial Count (Reichsgraf). He died childless, bequeathing his properties to his brother Ekim (or Ovakim) Lazarevich Lazareff (d. after 1822), count Lazar Ekimovich Lazareff's father.

2 C. de Bie, *Het gulden cabinet van de edel vry schilderconst*, Antwerp 1662, pp. 236-237: 'Paulus de Vos is oock een uytghemunt ende vermaert Schilder in beesten, jachten en crijgh-wapenen daer menich Cabinet der Princen ende Constminnende Heeren ghetuyghenis van gheeft, overmidts de selve seer op het leven trecken ende met goet verstant sijn uytghewerckt, rijck van ordonnantien ende vollijvich gheschildet: daer Spanien, Duytslandt en andere Coninckrijcken ghenoch af connen ghetuyghen, die voor sijn Keyserlijcke Majesteyt ende voor den vooszeiden Coninck van Spanien, oock voor den Hertogh van Aerschot heel Cabinetten met sijn Const heeft gheciert, sulckx dat hy eenen vande ruchtbaerste ende grootste Meesters inde Schilder-const teghenwoordigh is.'

3 For biographical information on Paul de Vos, see before all F.J. van den Branden, *Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche schilderschool*, Antwerp 1883, pp. 679-683; M. Manneback, in: L. van Puyvelde et al., *De Eeuw van Rubens*, exh. cat. Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België 1965, pp. 283-287; K. van der Stighelen, 'Van "marchant" tot "vermaert conterfeyter": het levensverhaal van Cornelis de Vos', in: *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen* 1991, pp. 87-156 (principally on Cornelis de Vos, but containing a wealth of information on the De Vos family); A. Balis, in: J. Turner (ed.), *The Dictionary of Art*, 34 vols, New York 1996, 32, pp. 705-707. For the De Vos family epitaph in the Antwerp cathedral, with several dates of death, see P. Génard et al., *Verzameling der graf- en gedenkschriften van de provincie Antwerpen : Arrondissement Antwerpen*, 11 vols., Antwerp 1856-1903, 1 (1856), p. 391.

4 Van der Stighelen 1991, pp. 88-89, 144-145, appendix VII.

5 Van der Stighelen 1991, pp. 89-90.

6 See E. Duverger, 'De moeilijkheden van A. van Diepenbeeck met de Antwerpse St. Lucasgilde', in: *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen* 1972, pp. 239-262, pp. 248, 257-261, Docs. IV, VI. Balis 1996 rightly pointed out the contradiction. See further Manneback, in: Brussels 1965, p. 283, as '9 December 1595' without source. Manneback's two earlier discussions of Paul de Vos remain opaque on the subject. See M. Manneback, in: U. Thieme, F. Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, 37 vols., Leipzig 1907-1950, 34 (1940), pp. 556-559, as 'um 1596'; M. Manneback, 'Paul de Vos et François Snijders', in: M.G. Theunis (ed.), *Miscellanea Leo van Puyvelde*, Brussels 1949, pp. 147-152, date of birth not discussed.

7 Ph. Rombouts, Th. van Lerius, *De Liggeren en andere historische archieven der Antwerpsche Sint Lucasgilde*, Antwerp 1864-1876, 1, pp. 428, 433.

8 Rombouts/Van Lerius 1864-1876, 1, p. 409. As with his siblings, Cornelis de Vos' birth certificate has not been retrieved. From several of his testimonies a date c. 1583/85 can be deduced. See Van der Stighelen 1991, p. 88, who keeps to c. 1584.

9 Rombouts/Van Lerius 1864-1876, 1, p. 417. Given his later entrance in Remeeus' workshop, Hans will have been a few years younger than Cornelis. See K. van der Stighelen, in: J. Turner (ed.), *The Dictionary of Art*, 34 vols., New York 1996, 32, pp. 702-705, p. 702, who keeps with c. 1588.

10 Rombouts/Van Lerius 1864-1876, 1, p. 454.

11 On Snijders and his biography, see Van den Branden 1883, pp. 673-679; H. Robels, *Frans Snijders : Stilleben- und Tiermaler 1579-1657*, Munich 1989, pp. 47-54 ('Leben'); S. Koslow, *Frans Snijders : stilleven- en dierenschilder : 1579-1657*, Antwerp 1995, pp. 13-29, ch. 1 ('Biografie').

12 Robels 1989, cat. nos. 260-306 lists no less than 47 collaborations with Rubens over a 30-year period.

13 Robels 1989, pp. 353-354, cat. No. 260; Koslow 1995, pp. 74-80.

14 On the house, see Van der Stighelen 1991, pp. 95-98, notes 44, 46, 54; pp. 117-118, notes 114-115. See further M. Rooses, Ph. Rombouts (eds.), *Boek gehouden door Jan Moretus II, als deken der St. Lucasgilde (1616-1617)*, Antwerp 1878, p. 24.

15 E. Duverger, *Antwerpse kunstinventarissen uit de zeventiende eeuw*, 14 vols., Antwerp 1984-2009, 4 (1989), pp. 345-347, doc. 1105, 17 May 1640.

16 Rombouts/Van Lerius 1864-1876, 1, p. 560. For the membership of the 'Sodaliteit', see C. Depauw, in: C. Depauw, G. Luijten, *Anthony van Dyck as a printmaker*, exh. cat. Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum 1999-2000, pp. 151-154, cat. no. 18.

17 Van den Branden 1883, p. 682; Van der Stighelen 1991, pp. 109-111; Koslow 1995, pp. 20-21. The purchase was finalised in January 1622.

18 Van den Branden 1883, p. 681.

19 Rombouts/Van Lerius 1864-1876, 1, pp. 646, 657. See further Van der Stighelen 1991, p. 121.

20 On this print, see C. Depauw, in: Antwerp/Amsterdam 1999-2000, pp. 151-154, cat. no. 18.

21 Duverger 1984-2009, 10 (1999), p. 94, doc. 3127, 31 December 1675.

22 S. Barnes et al., *Van Dyck : a complete catalogue of the paintings*, New Haven 2004, pp. 361-362, cat. no. III.141; p. 414, cat. no. III.A28 (= copy after Van Dyck's *Portrait of Paul de Vos*. The original, in the possession of the Belgian King Leopold I, was burned in a fire in Brussels in 1890).

23 Jan died on 7 September 1627. See Van der Stighelen 1991, p. 98, note 54. See also Koslow 1995, who mentions a '1 Keueken van Snyders, de figuren van Jan de Vos' in the inventory of the art dealer Marcus Forchont in 1690.

24 Duverger 1984-2009, 3 (1987), p. 70, doc. 621, 20 September 1627.

25 Duverger 1984-2009, 7 (1993), pp. 187-189, doc. 2044, 21 December 1655: 'eene schilderije wesende een Naeckt Vrouken met eenen pels van d'heer Rubens naer Titian'. See also Robels 1989, p. 53, note 162.

26 Only in 1661 De Vos moved into the neighbouring house 'Oud Brabant', which he had owned since 1638. See Van den Branden 1883, p. 682.

27 Duverger 1984-2009, 10 (1999), pp. 254-256, doc. 3261, 5/6 July 1678.

28 E.g. *The Triumphant Cupid among Emblems of Art and War*, with Willeboirts Bosschaert, Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, inv. NM 410 (a variation, likewise with Willeboirts Bosschaert, in Madrid, Museo Lázaro Galdiano, inv. 8476); *Mars Crowned by Victory*, with Rubens's studio, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Staatsgalerie Neuburg, inv. L 1043; *Amor victorious ("Amor vincit Omnia")*, with Van den Hoecke, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. 3554.

29 E.g. Van den Branden 1883; Manneback, in: Brussels 1965, p. 284; Robels 1989, pp. 67-70 ff., 'Exkurs' where she addresses this issue. She attributes many of the works in her enormous A-category (pp. 425-513, 'School works and false attributions') to Paul de Vos.

30 On the collaboration with Rubens, and his influence on De Vos, see: A. Balis, *Rubens Hunting Scenes* (*Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard* 18/2), London etc. 1986, esp. pp. 81-87.

31 Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-T-1905-165-1(R) : 'Ick Pauw[...]els de Vos/ hebbe voor Pieter rubbens/ gewrocht 6 daaghen/ [...]'.

32 Duverger 1984-2009, 4 (1989), pp. 293-301, doc. 1084, 1640, p. 295 (section 'works by Rubens himself'), no. 153; p. 299, nos. 258, 259, 262.

33 Duverger 1984-2009, 5 (1991), pp. 263-284, doc. 1383 (Rubens's estate summary), 17 November 1645, p. 280, no. 158.

34 See S. Alpers, *The decoration of the Torre de la Parada* (*Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard* 9), Brussels 1971, esp. pp. 119-125.

35 See L. Raat, 'Determinatie van de vissen', in: L. Helmus (ed.), *Vis : stillevens van Hollandse en Vlaamse meesters 1550-1700*, exh. cat. Utrecht, Centraal Museum, Helsinki, Amos Anderson Art Museum 2004, pp. 373-391, p. 376, for a partial determination of the fish in the identical pile of fish in another painting (Coburg, Schloss Ehrenburg, see below). I wish to thank Dr. Alex Huiberse, biologist at Artis aquarium (Amsterdam zoo) for his kind assistance in further determining the species, Email January 2023.

36 Cornelis Cornelisz van Haalem, *Neptune and Amphitrite*, c. 1615, oil on panel, 72 x 92.5 cm., Amsterdam, P. & N. De Boer Foundation. See L. Nichols, in: H. Buijs, G. Luijten, *Goltzius to Van Gogh : drawings and paintings from the P. & N. De Boer Foundation*, exh. cat. Paris, Fondation Custodia 2014-2015, pp. 22-23, cat. no. 5 (Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem), where both paintings are discussed. Whereas De Gheyn's work alludes to eroticism, Cornelis Cornelisz' work must be a *portrait historié* of a shell collector.

37 See on Aertsen's and Beuckelaer's *Fish Markets* o.a. P. Verbraeken et al., *Joachim Beuckelaer : het markt- en keukenstuk in de Nederlanden 1550-1650*, exh. cat. Ghent, Museum voor Schone Kunsten Gent 1986-1987, cat. nos. 6, 9, 13; E.H. Honig, *Painting and the Market in Early Modern Antwerp*, New Haven/London 1998, esp. pp. 82-94 ('Disciples and Fishwives, Burghers and beholders'); F.G. Meijer, 'Visstillevens in Holland en Vlaanderen', in: Utrecht/Helsinki 2004, pp. 12-73, pp. 18-22; pp. 212-213, cat. no. 1. For a detailed study on fish symbolism in early modern Netherlandish paintings, see E. de Jongh, 'De symboliek van vis, visser, visgerei en vangst', in: Utrecht/ Helsinki 2004, pp. 75-119. For tradition and meaning of the Netherlandish kitchen- and market scenes, and Beuckelaer's London series, see Z. Kwak, *'Proeft de kost en kauwtse met uw' oogen' : Beeldtraditie, betekenis en functie van het Noord-Nederlandse keukentafereel (ca. 1590-1650)*, diss. Universiteit van Amsterdam pp. 134-139.

38 Kwak 2014, esp. pp. 135-136, 182, 197. See also T. Fusenig, 'An unknown "Fish Seller" by Vincenzo Campi in Antwerp?', in: *Arte Lombarda* 144/2 (2005), pp. 48-51. Fusenig convincingly attributes a *Fish Seller* in the Antwerp St Pauluskerk, previously labeled as 'Flemish School', to Campi and points to other pictures by Campi present in Antwerp in the early seventeenth century.

39 Robels 1989, cat. nos. 11, 29, 30. Another early *Fish Still Life* by Snijders (c. 1610) is discussed by F.G. Meijer, in Utrecht/ Helsinki 2004, pp. 216-217, cat. no. 3 (oil on panel, 97 x 126 cm., Delft, Museum het Prinsenhof). Remarkably, Robels, without mentioning the painting, does include its preparatory drawing (Robels 1989, cat. no. Z 20, c. 1610/14), sale Munich, Karl & Faber, 8 May 2015, lot 86. For a discussion of Snijders' Fish markets in their soci-cultural context, see Koslow 1995, pp. 137-149.

40 See A. Balis, in: A. Balis et al., *De Vlaamse schilderkunst in het Kunsthistorisches Museum te Wenen*, Antwerp 1987, pp. 200-201; E. Larsen, *The paintings of Anthony van Dyck*, 2 vols. Freren 1988, 2, cat. no. 313; Robels 1989, cat. no. 309; For the brilliant identification of the subject, see: E. McGrath, 'Rubens, Snijders and the Emperor's Mullet', in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 83 (2020), pp. 349-358.

41 See for these paintings E. McGrath, 'The Streams of Oceanus : Rubens, Homer and the Boundary of the ancient World', in: V. von Flemming, S. Schütze (eds.), *Ars naturam adiuvans : Festschrift für Matthias Winner*, Mainz 1996, pp. 464-476, who also includes Rubens's *Four Rivers* (c. 1615, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum), which includes a similar river god figure, in her discussion. See also F. Baudouin, 'Schilderijen van Rubens en van Dyck in het Bezit van Filips Godines en Sebilla Vanden Berghe', in: *Academiae Analecta : Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van Belgie : Klasse der Schone* Kunsten 51 (1991), p. 61-82, esp. 63-66, ill. 1, for the Birth of Venus

42 See K. van der Stighelen, H. Vlieghe, 'Cornelis de Vos (1584/5-1651) als historie- en genreschilder', in: *Academiae Analecta : Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van Belgie : Klasse der Schone Kunsten* 54/1 (1994), pp. 1-75.

43 See K. van der Stighelen, 'Het problem van een samenwerking: niet Jan Boekhorst, maar Cornelis de Vos', in: P. Huvenne (ed.), *Jan Boeckhorst 1604-1668 : medewerker van Rubens*, exh. cat. Antwerp, Rubenshuis, Münster, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte 1990, pp. 87-97, esp. pp. 91-92, 95-96, notes 30-38, who lists no less than eleven brotherly co-productions.

44 Van der Stighelen/Vlieghe 1994, pp. 37-39, 44.

45 I thank Cornelis de Vos expert Prof. Dr. Katlijne van der Stighelen for her generous input, her agreement with the attribution of the figures of Neptune and the Triton to Cornelis de Vos, and her suggestion that they were executed during the 1630s. Email correspondence December 2022.

46 Van der Stighelen/Vlieghe 1994, p. 42. The authors use the Dutch word 'vlokkig'.

47 Alpers 1971, pp. 146-148, 185-186, cat. nos. 7/7a (*Triumph of Bacchus*, and Rubens's preparatory sketch in Rotterdam), 264-265, cat. nos. 58/58a (*Birth of Venus*, and Rubens's preparatory sketch in brussel); Van der Stighelen/Vlieghe 1994, pp. 42-43.

48 Van der Stighelen/Vlieghe 1994, pp. 42-43, as explicitly stated by the authors, who mention the example of a recycled Cupid taken from *Appolo and Python* (Torre de la Parada, after an oil sketch by Rubens) and recycled in a *Cimon and Iphigenia*. Idem., p. 10, for an example c. 1620 of direct copying after Rubens of a whole group of putti in a collaboration with Paul de Vos.

49 E.g. *Ceres*, c. 1631/40, oil on canvas, 120 x 180 cm., Genua, art trade (1978); *Crowning of the Victor*, c. 1636/40, oil on canvas, 147 x 200 cm., Vatican Museums, Pinacoteca. See Van der Stighelen/Vlieghe 1994, pp. 40-41, 44, figs. 82, 89. The latter is based on a *Mars Crowned by Victory* (Staatsgalerie Neuburg, inv. L1043) executed in Rubens's studio, likewise in collaboration with Paul de Vos. See further Van der Stighelen 1990, pp. 91-92, 95-96, notes 230-38.

50 R. Davies, 'An Inventory of the Duke of Buckingham's Pictures, etc., at York House in 1635', in: *The Burlington Magazine* 10 (1907), pp. 376-382, p. 380.

51 McGrath 2020, pp. 349, 356-358, convincingly argues that the topic was known to Rubens through publications on fish by the Italian naturalist Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522-1605) and the Antwerp doctor Ludovicus Nonnius (1553-1645), that he demonstrably owned. Rubens was friends with Nonnius, who was his doctor, and he painted his portrait. See below.

52 C. von Mechel, *Verzeichniß der Gemälde der Kaiserlich Königlichen Bilder Gallerie in Wien*, Vienna 1783, p. 209, cat. no. 24 (Van Es/Jordaens); E. von Engert, *Catalog der k.k. Gemälde-Gallerie im Belvedere zu Wien*, Vienna 1858, p. 54, cat. no. 14 (Van Es/Jordaens); E. von Engert, *Kurzgefasstes Verzeichniss der Kaiserl. Koenigl. Gemaelde-Galerie im K.K. Schlosse Belvedere*, Vienna 1881, p. 28, cat. no. 14 (Van Es/Jordaens). Idem. for the 1873 and 1878 catalogues.

53 First expressed by G. Glück, *Kunsthistorische Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses : die Gemäldegalerie alte Meister*, Vienna 1907, p. 245, cat. no. 1083, who mentions the former attribution of the figures to Cornelis de Vos.

54 As remarked by H. Vlieghe, 'Une grande collection Anversoise du dix-septième siècle: Le cabinet d'Arnold Lunden, beau-frère de Rubens', in: *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 19 (1977), pp. 172–204, p. 194, no. 105. See also McGrath 2020, p. 358.

55 McGrath 2020, p. 350, note 5, remarks that the Vienna *Fish Market with the Sale of Tiberius's* Mullet once had even larger proportions, referring to a colour drawing of the work of 1733, included in a larger drawing of a wall hanging in the imperial galleries (See S. Haag, G. Swoboda, *Die Galerie Kaiser Karls VI. in Wien : Solimenas Widmungsbild und Storffers Inventar (1720-1733)*, Vienna c. 2010, Tafel VIII 'Zweiter Saal'). Indeed, the painting appears larger in the drawing (in the foreground and the upper part), but can this reflect the original size of the canvas? After all, proportions and composition of the Goetz version largely concur with the Vienna prime version. It seems not necessarily evident that the Goetz work was executed after 1733 in Vienna (judging from photos, the fish still life, in particular, seems period and very skillfully executed), a suspicion that gains strength when looking at another *Fish Market* by Snijders in Vienna (inv. 384, Robels 1989, cat. no. 33) that is likewise depicted in the colour drawing (Haag/ Swoboda c. 2010, loc. cit.) and likewise appears significantly larger there than in its current state. Might, alternatively, the paintings have been enlarged at one point, possibly in order to fit the wall hanging, an intervention that was later reversed? A later drawing in the Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon (inv. D 236), which depicts a genre variant of the Vienna *Fish Market with the Sale of Tiberius's Mullet*, likewise omits the part above the timber.

56 T. Frimmel, *Kleine Galeriestudien : neue Folge III : Die Gräflich Schönborn-Buchheimsche Gemäldesammlung in Wien*, Leipzig 1896, pp. 26-29, cat. no. 23 (Jordaens/Van Es); E. Buschbeck et al., *Residenzgalerie Salzburg mit Sammlung Czernin und Sammlung Schönborn-Buchheim*, Salzburg 1962, p. 55, cat. no. 93 (Jordaens/Van Es).

57 M. Kersting, in: H. Asenbaum et al., *Barocke Sammellust : die Sammlung Schönborn-Buchheim*, exh. cat. Munich, Haus der Kunst 2003, 148-149, as Jordaens, mentioning the traditional attribution to Van Es, while tentatively proposing an attribution to Snijders, with reference to the Vienna painting. The *Gifts of the Sea* was recently bought by the Liechtenstein Collection, where it was previously on loan. See I. Schaudies, in: J. Tátrai, Á. Varga (eds.), *Rubens, Van Dyck and the splendour of Flemish*

painting, exh. cat. Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum 2019-2022, pp. 290-291, cat. no. 77.

58 When in 1732 the Old Castle in Copenhagen was demolished, the work was apparently rolled up, destined for the new castle, but forgotten. It was rediscovered on the attic above the workshop of the stonemason/sculptor Karlebye (Jens Carlebye? 1730-1812) at Marmorpladsen (Frederikstad), sadly beyond repair. The fragment with Mercury and Cupid (159.9 x 184.1 cm.) ended up in the Gaunø collection (later: sale London, 2 July 1976, lot 22, as studio of Jacques Jordaens), the fragment with the seals was auctioned in 1885 as part of the C.I. Thomsen collection, lot 15, and ended up in the collection of Karl Madsen (see: sale Kopenhagen, Karl Madsen, 28 September 1938). See K. Madsen, O. Andrup, *Fortegnelse over to hundrede af baroniet gaunøs malerier af* ældre *malere samt over dets portrætsamling*, Copenhagen 1914, p. 24, cat. no. 76; K. Madsen, 'Malerisamlingen Pa Gaunø', in: *Kunstmuseets Aarsskrift* 4 (1917), pp. 34-66, pp. 42-46. I thank Prof. em. Jørgen Wadum for his kind assistance with the translation of the Danish in these publications.

59 H.W. Grohn, 'Die flämischen und holländischen Bilder im Schloss Ehrenburg zu Coburg', in: *Jahrbuch der Coburger Landesstiftung* 1961, pp. 153-170, pp. 155-156, 169, notes 13-18, who provides a summary list of versions, all of which are included here. See for the Coburg version: E. de Jongh, in: Utrecht/Helsinki 2004, pp. 218-221, cat. no. 4 (after Jordaens and Snijders).

60 Sale Munich, Helbing (coll. O. Messinger), 16 April 1918, lots 114-117. In 1986 the work was with Galleria Lorenzelli, Bergamo. See P. Lorenzelli, A. Veca, *Orbis pictus : natura morta in Germania, Olanda, Fiandre, XVI-XVIII secolo*, exh. cat. Bergamon, Galleria Lorenzelli 1986-1987, pp. 21, 235, tav. 42 (as Frans Snijders); Robels 1989, cat. No. A 35.

61 See N. Gritsay, in: N. Gritsay, N. Babina, *State Hermitage Museum Catalogue : Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Flemish painting*, St Petersburg/New Haven 2008, p. 416, cat. no. 507. Signature found during a 2015 restoration. See: https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/01.+paintings/46301 (website accessed January 2023). See also Robels 1989, cat. nos. 49 (Snijders, *Cook in a Storage Room*, Amiens, Musée de Picardie), A 34 (*Cook in a Storage Room*, sale London, Christie's, 23 March 1973, lot 97), which feature the same cook. Robels refers to the Hermitage painting (under A 35), but is unaware of its location.

62 Robels 1989, cat. no. 309 b.

63 The only apparent reference to our work in modern art literature is found in Pinette/Soulier-François 1992 (see Literature), where mention is made of 'the discovery in a private collection of a large signed work which reproduces this composition [i.e. the seals] in one corner.' Robels does not mention our work, although it was listed as Snijders in Mireur 1912 (see Literature), a publication providing auction records per artist, to which she refers in her *catalogue raisonné*.

64 Robels 1989, cat. no. A 1, where she mentions the work in Besançon (se following note).

65 See J. Foucart, *Le siècle de Rubens dans les collections publiques françaises*, exh. Cat. Paris, Grand Palais 1977-1978, p. 254, cat. no. 211; G. Marcel, *Het aards paradijs : dierenvoorstellingen in de Nederlanden van de 16de en 17de eeuw*, exh. cat. Antwerp, Zoo Antwerpen 1982, p. 99, cat. no. 34; Pinette/Soulier-François 1992, pp. 102-103.

66 For the Snijders/De Vos *Fish Market* in Vienna, see Robels 1989, cat. no. 33. As first remarked by Julius Held, the fishmonger in this painting recurs identically as a Triton in *Two Tritons at the Feast of Acheloüs*, a painting in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (acc. no. 06.1039), likewise attributed to Cornelis de Vos and Snijders. See W. Liedtke, *Flemish Paintings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York 1984, pp. 275-278.

67 Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België, inv. 2858 (see M. Manneback, in: Brussels 1965, pp. 284-285, cat. no. 301, ill.); Madrid, Museo del Prado, inv. P001869 (see M. Díaz Padrón, *El siglo de Rubens en el Museo del Prado: catálogo razonado*, 3 vols. Madrid 1995, 3, p. 1546, ill.); St Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, inv. GE 603, GE 605 (see Gritsay/Babina 2008, pp. 411-413, cat. nos. 500, 501, ill.).

68 See, for instance, Paul de Vos' *Deer Hunt* (oil on canvas, 211 x 330 cm., inv. Gemäldegalerie, 1715) in the Kunsthistorische Museum, Vienna, which is an autograph, unsigned replica of De Vos' signed Prado *Deer Hunt*.

69 It should be noted that these are observations were done from hi-res images, rather than from real life. I thank Dr. Gerlinde Grüber, curator of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, and Dr. Alexandra Hanzl, curator of the Liechtenstein Collection, Vienna, for providing me with hi-res and detail images.

70 Robels 1989, pp. 140-141. Although accepting the Vienna *Fish Market* (cat. no. 309), Robels does not include the Liechtenstein work (then Salzburg, Rezidenzgalerie) in her catalogue, nor other works that depict the fish pile (except the above-discussed A 35, *The Fishmonger*, in her A-category 'School works and false attributions').

71 'Snyders (François) : 34. – *L' Étal du Poissonnier* : Auprès d'un tas de poisons énormes, un marchand de poissons cause avec un pêcheur qui lui apporte les produits de sa pêche. Pendant du précédent. T. – H., 2m,10. L., 3m,40.' See Provenance.

72 See E. de Jongh, 'De symboliek van vis, visser, visgerei en vangst', in: Utrecht/Helsinki 2004, pp. 75-119.

73 See K. Albala, 'Ludovicus Nonnius and the Elegance of Fish', in: P. Janssens, S. Zeischka (eds.), *The Dining Nobility. From the Burgundian Dukes to the Belgian Royalty*, Brussels 2018, pp. 34-44; S. Wyssenbach, 'Riches of the Sea : Collecting and Consuming Frans Snijders's Marine Market Paintings in the Southern Netherlands', in: S. Burghartz, L. Burkart, C. Göttler (eds.), *Sites of Mediation: Connected Histories of Places, Processes, and Objects in Europe and Beyond, 1450–1650*, Leiden 2016, pp. 328–352; McGrath 2020.

74 McGrath 2020, p. 356, note 37.

75 McGrath 2020, p. 357.

76 See H. Vlieghe, *Portraits of Identified Sitters Painted in Antwerp* (*Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard 19/2*), London 1987 pp. 137-139, cat. no. 124. Although traditionally dated c. 1627, Vlieghe provides valid arguments to consider a later date, c. 1635.

77 See E. de Jongh, in Utrecht/Helsinki 2004, cat. no. 4, who entertains the idea of a political-economical dimension.

78 See Baudouin 1991, esp. pp. 70-76, for biographical information on the Godines family.

79 For the couple's portraits by Van Dyck in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich, see Baudouin 1991; Barnes et al. 2004, pp. 314-315, cat. nos. III.84, III.85; M. Neumeister, in: M. Neumeister et al., *Van Dyck : Gemälde von Anthonis van Dyck : Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, München*, Munich 2019, pp. 266-277, cat. nos. 18a, 18b.

80 See Baudouin 1991, p. 63: 'Een schilderije vande geborte van Venis geschildert by Sr Rubbens met eene syde gordyne' as in the 'voorsalette aen de straete'. See also Duverger 1984-2009, 3 (1987), p. 320, doc. 780, 23 December 1632, Testament of Filips Godines.

81 See J.R. Martin, *The decorations for the Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi* (*Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard* 16), Brussels 1972, pp. 64-66, 'Arch of the Portuguese'.

82 When Rockox made up his last will in December 1640, Snijders was witness. See Koslow 1995, p. 26.

Colophon

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ADDENDUM

Following the publication of the Salomon Lilian brochure on Paul de Vos' *The Triumph of Neptune with the Fruits of the Sea* (March 2023) it was kindly brought to the gallery's attention that the inventory number 99 in the lower left corner of the painting, which had not been identified, is that of the collection of Diego Mexía Felípez de Guzmán y Dávila, 1st Marquess of Leganés (1580–1655).[1] It turns out that our painting is recorded in the Leganés inventory as early as 1637.[2] In the 1655 post-mortem inventory, the work is described as 'A large painting four yards wide and two and a half high by the hand of Pedro de Vos with the figure of Neptune and another with all types of fish, seals, and turtles n° ninety-nine, valued at two thousand and five hundred Reales'.[3] The Leganés collection largely remained together until 1812, when our painting was still listed in the inventory of Leganés' descendent Vicente de Moscoso y Guzmán, 11th Count of Altamira (1756-1816). That year the collection was confiscated by the French army and taken to Paris. While in 1815 most of the Leganés collection was returned to Madrid, no mention was made of *The Triumph of Neptune with the Fruits of the Sea*. The painting resurfaced in the 1875 d'Abzac sale in Paris, there as by Frans Snijders, and belonging to the former Lazareff collection in St Petersburg.[4] Noteworthy, the painting was offered there together with a *Fish Market* of similar dimensions, and a *Boar Hunt*, both likewise attributed to Snijders.[5]

As mentioned in the introduction (p. 7) the Marquess of Leganés – among the most important collectors of his time – was a significant commissioner of De Vos. As a long-time Spanish diplomat and military leader in the Southern Netherlands, Leganés had direct access to the Flemish art market. Through the years he assembled an enormous collection – more than 1300 works at the time of his death – which included many works by contemporary Antwerp artists, such as Snijders, De Vos, Wildens, Van Dyck and most of all Rubens, who in a 1628 letter referred to Leganés as 'among the greatest connoisseurs of this art [of painting] in the world'.[6] The present *Triumph of Neptune with the Fruits of the Sea*, painted as argued halfway the 1630s, was probably commissioned by Leganés before his final departure from the Southern Netherlands, at the very end of 1634, quite possibly via direct contact with De Vos, of whom the marquess owned no less than 30 works.[7] In any case, the painting's presence in the 1637 inventory provides a solid *terminus ante quem*.

As for the possible commissioning of the painting by the Antwerp physician, writer, art enthusiastic and friend of Rubens *cum suis* Ludovicus Nonnius (1553-1645), about which I hypothesized (pp. 21-26), this suggestion appears untenable due to the presence of the work in the 1637 Leganés inventory. The connections set out seem intriguing nonetheless, and given the social and spatial proximity of the main protagonists – Paul and Cornelis de Vos, Nonnius, Godines, Rubens, Snijders and Rockox – it might be worthwhile to keep them in mind, as reminders of the tight fabric of Antwerp's intellectual, artistic and art-loving circles in general, and as a fertile backdrop for the creation of *The Triumph of Neptune with the Fruits of the Sea*, which in diverse ways reflects Antwerp's rich and varied culture of these times.

JH, September 2023

Provenance:

Madrid, collection of Diego Mexía Felípez de Guzmán y Dávila, 1st Marquess of Leganés (1580–1655), by 1637, by descent to

Madrid, collection Vicente Joaquín Osorio de Moscoso y Guzmán, 11th Count of Altamira (1756-1816), 1812

Confiscated by the French army, transported to Paris, 1812[8]

St Petersburg, collection Count Lazar Ekimovich Lazareff (1786-1871)

Collection Charles Venance Marquis d'Abzac (1822-1905)

His sale, Paris, Haro, 29 January 1875, lot 33, as Frans Snijders, bought by

M. Duberville for 2450 francs

Sale Versailles, Chevau-Légers (Me Martin et Desbenoit), 28 February 1988, not in catalogue, as Frans Snijders

France, private collection, until 2022

Literature:

V. Poleró, 'Colección de pinturas que reunió en su palacio el marqués de Leganés D. Diego Felipez de Guzmán (siglo XVII)', in: *Boletín de la Sociedad Española de Excursiones* 6/66-68 (1898), pp. 122-134, p. 126

H. Mireur, *Dictionaire des ventes d'art faites en France et à l'étranger pendant les XVIIIme et XIXe siècles*, 7 vols., Paris 1901-1912, 7 (1912), p. 49

J.L. López Navío, 'La gran colección de pinturas del Marqués de Leganés', in: *Analecta Calasanctiana* 8 (1962), pp. 259-330, p. 274

M. Díaz Padrón, *Pintura Flamenca en España,* diss. Universidad Complutense de Madrid 1976, p. 1905

M. Pinette F. Soulier-François, *De Bellini à Bonnard : chefs-d'oeuvre de la peinture du Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon*, Paris 1992, p. 102

J. J. Pérez Preciado, *El Marqués de Leganés y las Artes*, 2 vols., diss. Universidad Complutense de Madrid 2008-2010, 1 (2010), pp. 755, 875, 892; 2 (2008), pp. 90, 888, cat. no. 99

Notes

1 I thank Dr. Brecht Vanoppen of the Rubenianum, Antwerp, for bringing this information to the attention of the Salomon Lilian gallery, and for referring us to the dissertation of Dr. José Juan Pérez Preciado (see Addendum, Literature), which provides an in-depth study of the Marquess de Leganés and his amazing collection. On Leganés, see also M. Crawford Volk, 'New Light on a Seventeenth-Century Collector: The Marquis of Leganés', in: *The Art Bulletin* 62 (1980), pp. 256-268; A. Vergara, *Rubens and his Spanish Patrons*, Cambridge 1999, esp. pp. 93-94.

2 Pérez Preciado 2008-2010, 2 (2008), p. 90, cat. no. 99.

3 Pérez Preciado 2008-2010, 2 (2008), p. 90, cat. no. 99: 'Un quadro grande de quatro baras de ancho y dos y media de alto de mano de pedro de Vos con la figura de neptuno y otra con todos generos de pescados perros merinos y tortugas no nobenta y nueue y la taso en dos mill y quinientos Reales'.

4 The attribution of the work to Snijders dates to at least the early nineteenth century, when it was restored for Vicente Joaquín Osorio de Moscoso y Guzmán (1758-1816), 11th Count of Altamira. See Pérez Preciado 2008-2010, 1 (2010), p. 756.

5 Sale Paris, Haro, 29 January 1875, lots 34 (*Fish Market*, see Brochure, p. 30, note 71), 35 (*Boar Hunt*), the latter described as: '35. Chasse au sanglier. Le solitaire, acculé dans sa bauge, tient tête à la meute et quelques chiens sont déjà tombés et roulent devant lui décousus. T[oile] H[auteur] 1m,65. L[argeur] 2m,35.' Coincidentally or not, the November 1812 list of paintings confiscated by the French army from the Count of Altamira includes paintings whose descriptions seemingly correspond with these works. See 2008-2010, 2 (2008), p. 913 (Doc. 17).

6 Letter to the French humanist Pierre Dupuy (1582-1651). See R. Magurn, *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens*, Cambridge (MA) 1955, p. 234, no. 145, dated January 27, 1628. See also Crawford Volk 1980, p. 256; Vergara 1999, p. 93; Pérez Preciado 2008-2010, 1 (2010), p. 25.

7 Pérez Preciado 2008-2010, 1 (2010), pp. 746-757, esp. p. 755.

8 Pérez Preciado 2008-2010, 2 (2008), p. 90, cat. no. 99, suggests that the painting, although not mentioned after 1812, was probably returned to Madrid, just as most other works that travelled to Paris. Alternatively, the painting might have remained in France (possibly together with the *Fish Market* and *Boar Hunt*, see note 5), ending up with Lazareff.

