

**NOT SO SPLENDIFEROUS BRUSSELS BAROQUE  
TAPESTRY: DANIEL LEYNIERS  
(1618–1688) RECOVERED**

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One hundred and forty years ago, in his *Les tapisseries bruxelloises*—the bible of Brussels tapestry studies—Alphonse Wauters paraphrased an application for tax relief that Daniel Leyniers (1618–88) successfully submitted to the Brussels city administration in 1644.<sup>1</sup> The document shows that the most important tapestry producers had supported Leyniers’s application as he was “the most effective and most experienced” *patroonschilder* (cartoon painter/tapestry designer) in town. Though he clearly had some renown in his time, art history has all but forgotten Daniel Leyniers. As the 1644 application does not detail any of his sets, tapestry scholars had no access point to the artist’s work, and no pieces

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have been definitively attributed to him. Meanwhile, the sets created by Leyniers's far more famous predecessors and contemporaries, including baroque heavyweights Peter Paul Rubens and Jacob Jordaens, beckoned. As a result, tapestry scholars have not paid attention to Daniel Leyniers.<sup>2</sup> This, however, is not to say that he disappeared from memory completely. A genealogical study of the Leyniers family published in 1989 provides a wealth of biographical information on the artist.<sup>3</sup> It also demonstrates that the tapestry designer Daniel Leyniers can be identified with the flower painter of the same name, who led a shadowy existence in dictionaries of artists.<sup>4</sup> In 2004 Leyniers finally resurfaced in tapestry scholarship, albeit only in a short paragraph. In my 2004 study of Brussels tapestry, I mentioned a contract recorded in 1672 suggesting that Leyniers had created sets of the *Story of Joseph*, the *Trojan War*, and the *Story of Julius Caesar*.<sup>5</sup> This essay will attempt to identify the tapestries of *Joseph*, *Caesar*, and *Venus and Adonis* based on the cartoons of this obscure painter, thereby contributing to a more inclusive history of Flemish baroque tapestry.

Daniel Leyniers belonged to a dynasty of tapestry entrepreneurs, workshop managers, and directors of dye works, who played vital roles in the Brussels tapestry industry in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries.<sup>6</sup> Around the time Daniel Leyniers was exempted from taxation, the family was omnipresent on the tapestry scene. Daniel's uncles Gaspar (1576–1649) and Daniel (1587–1659) directed, respectively, a tapestry workshop and a dye works. His father, Gilles (1579–1666), was also a tapestry producer and, at least according to one of his descendants, a painter.<sup>7</sup> As he was never enlisted as a master in the Brussels guild of goldbeaters, painters, and stained-glass makers,<sup>8</sup> Gilles Leyniers must have been a tapestry producer first and a painter second, probably limiting his painterly activities to refurbishing and copying tapestry cartoons. Since his son Daniel never enlisted as an apprentice in the guild,<sup>9</sup> he was probably trained by his father to do similar work. However, Daniel Leyniers seems to have been more ambitious. In 1645, one year after he had received the exemption from taxation, he regis-

tered as a master painter in the Brussels guild. While he never trained apprentices—or at least never registered them with the guild—he was dean in 1653 and 1659.

Up until now, only a handful of flower paintings have been attributed to Daniel Leyniers.<sup>10</sup> The 1672 document I recovered, however, confirms the addition of three tapestry sets to his oeuvre. Recorded on October 22, it is a contract between Leyniers and Hieronymus Pauwels, a tapestry producer about whom nothing is known. It mentions an unspecified previous arrangement in which Leyniers had lent “some tapestry cartoons” to Pauwels, who had agreed to produce tapestries after the cartoons and give Leyniers half of the profits they garnered. On October 22, 1672, both parties slightly altered these conditions of their partnership. Leyniers *gifted* the following cartoons to Pauwels: “Ten or eleven cartoons depicting Joseph together with the cartoons of the borders, and four cartoons depicting Paris and Venus also with the cartoons of the borders,” as well as “Four out of nine cartoons depicting Julius Caesar.”<sup>11</sup> Any profits made on editions woven after the cartoons would still be split equally between Pauwels and Leyniers. The contract is characterized by a lack of precision in number (“a couple of cartoons,” “ten or eleven”) and in the ambiguous theme of “Paris and Venus.” In 2004 I assumed that the set depicted the story of Paris and Helen, that is, the *Trojan War*. However, it is also possible that the subject was *The Story of Venus and Adonis*.

Though the contract does not explicitly identify Daniel Leyniers as painter of the cartoons in his possession, it is logical to assume that he, as their owner, had created them. It is also possible that some or all of the cartoons were older and that Leyniers had had a hand in updating them stylistically.<sup>12</sup> Either way, the commercial appeal of the sets must have been below par. Leyniers realized that neither Pauwels nor any of his colleagues, for that matter, were interested in leasing let alone buying the cartoons. By first lending and then giving them to Pauwels and by negotiating a share in any profits made on the sale of editions after the cartoons, Leyniers seems to be making an almost desperate at-

tempt to get a return on the materials and time invested in the creation or restoration of the cartoons.

The question arises whether we can identify any *Joseph*, *Venus*, or *Caesar* tapestries produced by Hieronymus Pauwels (or other *tapisiers*) between about 1640 and 1680 after cartoons that can be attributed to Daniel Leyniers. This would involve a process of elimination, as the cartoons would have to have been produced by a single artist who cannot be identified with any other known *patroonschilders*. A tapestry depicting *Joseph's Brother Judah Standing Surety for Benjamin* that appeared on the London art market in 1978 provides a starting point.<sup>13</sup> According to the sale catalog, the piece has the Brussels city mark and a signature that reads I. E. PAUWELS. Stylistic features link this piece to an edition of five *Joseph* tapestries that was on the art market in the early twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> None of these five tapestries has a mark or signature. Their borders, which are similar yet not identical to that of the tapestry sold in London, suggest that the pieces were woven around 1660 in Brussels.

Taken together, the six *Joseph* tapestries show an unsteady and wavering *patroonschilder* struggling with anatomical precision. Limbs and hands are heavy and disjointed. The schematic folds of the garments accentuate rather than mask the lack of expertise in rendering the human body. Some scenes, such as *Joseph Interpreting Pharaoh's Dreams*, clearly echo sixteenth-century mannerist aesthetics characterized by sophisticated and somewhat crowded zigzag compositions with figures represented in elongated poses and meaningful episodes placed in the background (fig. 1). Other tapestries, such as *Joseph's Brother Judah Standing Surety for Benjamin*, have an august quality that is more in line with—though still very different from—the overpowering monumentality so typical of tapestry design in the 1620s to 1650s. The hybrid yet essentially backward-looking nature of the series suggests that the artist recycled older cartoons of a *Joseph* series. The set cannot be attributed to any of the usual suspects, that is, Rubens, Jordaens, Justus van Egmont (1601–74), Antoon Sallaert (1594–1650), or Lanceloot Lefe-



Fig. 1. Unknown workshop after a cartoon by Daniel Leyniers, *Joseph Interpreting Pharaoh's Dreams*, ca. 1660. Wool and silk, dimensions unknown. Present location unknown.

bure (ca. 1585–ca. 1650).<sup>15</sup> This observation, together with the data in the 1672 contract and the PAUWELS signature on one of the tapestries, allows us to hypothesize that it was Daniel Leyniers who refurbished the cartoons for the *Joseph* series.

It is also possible to identify the *Caesar* drawings in the recycled sixteenth-century cartoons designed by Pieter Coecke van Aelst (1502–

50).<sup>16</sup> An edition of the set, signed by Marcus de Vos who acquired a handful of *Caesar* cartoons in 1675,<sup>17</sup> shows compositions and figures that are close to the sixteenth-century originals yet have “a distinctly Baroque feel” (fig. 2).<sup>18</sup> The somewhat clumsy depiction of hands, limbs, and robes is highly reminiscent of the *Joseph* series.

Finally, two scenes depicting the *Story of Venus and Adonis* that were woven between 1650 and 1660 can also be attributed to Daniel Leyniers on stylistic grounds. While *Venus Discovers Adonis’ Body* shows a sparse landscape and psychological drama that is somewhat reminiscent of Justus van Egmont’s brutal baroque style, *Venus Tries to Prevent Adonis from Going off to Hunt* has far more decorative qualities (fig. 3).<sup>19</sup> Both compositions reveal Leyniers’s signature tune, that is, heavy limbs, contrived torsos, and heavy, unnatural garments. Contrary to the *Joseph* and *Caesar* sets, however, the *Venus and Adonis* series—or at least the two compositions that are known today—could very well be original compositions as the arrangement of the figures and their interplay do not echo sixteenth-century forerunners.

When compared with sets designed by his predecessors and contemporaries, some of which were showcased at the 2007 exhibition *Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art,<sup>20</sup> it becomes clear why in 1672 Leyniers humbly bowed his head. His attempts to revitalize old cartoons or to create new ones lacked both conviction and force, and it seems safe to assume that Leyniers was granted tax relief because of his family’s status in the industry and not because of his exceptional talent. This is not to say that tapestry scholarship should exclude Leyniers’s work and that of other baroque artists who were not quite so splendiferous. Insight into the activities of the “B Team” is necessary to fully understand the dynamics of the industry. In illustrating, rather than merely describing, the artistic drought that hit the industry in the third quarter of the seventeenth century, this case study helps to explain the urgency with which workshop managers in the 1650s to 1670s embraced entrepre-



Fig. 2. Marcus de Vos after a cartoon by Daniel Leyniers, *The Death of Pompey*, ca. 1675. Wool and silk, 335 × 320 cm. Powis Castle and Garden, Powys, Wales. National Trust 1181080.2

neurs like Charles de La Fontaine, Adrien Parent, and Jean Valdor as they had access to foreign and far more fashionable tapestry cartoons.<sup>21</sup> It also corroborates Michiel Sweerts's 1656 assertion that the Brussels tapestry industry was in dire need of his drawing academy.<sup>22</sup>





Fig. 3. Unknown workshop after a cartoon by Daniel Leyniers, *Venus Tries to Prevent Adonis from Going off to Hunt*, ca. 1660. Wool and silk, 400 × 300 cm. Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 98.403.



## NOTES

1. Brussels City Archives (BCA), *Register der Tresorije* 1293, fol. 315v–316v; Alphonse Wauters, *Les tapisseries bruxelloises* (Brussels: Baertsoen, 1878), 252–53.
2. Daniel Leyniers was duly included in Heinrich Göbel (*Wandteppiche: I. Teil, Die Niederlande* [Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1923], 1:429) yet Göbel only rehashed the data given by Wauters.
3. Michiel Vanwelkenhuyzen and Pierre De Tienne, “Une famille de tapisseries bruxelloises. Les Leyniers,” *L’Intermédiaire des généalogistes* 44 (1989): 154–58.
4. See, e.g., Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, eds., *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler* (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1929), 23:172–73, and Adriaan van der Willigen and Fred G. Meijer, *A Dictionary of Dutch and Flemish Still-Life Painters Working in Oils: 1525–1725* (Leiden: Primavera, 2003), 131.
5. Brussels National Archives (BNA), *Notariaat Generaal van Brabant (NGB)* 1701(2), 22 October 1672; Koenraad Brosens, *A Contextual Study of Brussels Tapestry, 1670–1770* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 2004), 81n337.
6. For an introduction to the Leyniers family, see Brosens, *Contextual Study*.
7. BCA, *Genealogie van de familie Leyniers* 3524, carta 6: “hij was schilder ende tappissier van sijnen stiel.” This document was compiled by a later Daniel Leyniers (1705–70) in 1733.
8. The sixteenth-century register of the guild has not been preserved, so Gilles Leyniers could have registered as a master painter prior to 1599. However, when his son Daniel was listed as a master painter in 1645, he was not designated as a *meesterszoon* (son of a master). In addition, the *Genealogie van de familie Leyniers* identifies Gilles Leyniers as a “painter” and Daniel Leyniers as a “master painter” (BCA 3524, carta 6 and 17).
9. BNA, *Ambachten en Gilden* 818. The *Boeck* is accessible via <https://projectcornelia.be/actors>.
10. The Getty Provenance Index Databases include a painting that is signed and dated 1652. It was sold in Belgium in 1810. The RKD Databases include a filing card written by Dutch art historian Hofstede de Groot listing two small paintings that are signed and dated 1660 and 1661. Both were sold in Germany in 1920; <https://rkd.nl/explore/excerpts/273841>.
11. “thien off elff stucken patroonen van Joseph mette boorden ende vier stucken patroonen van Paris ende Venus oock mette boorden . . . een vierde paert in negen stucken patroonen van Julius Cesar” (BNA, NGB 1701[2], 22 October 1672).

12. Given the value of cartoons, they were often reused by different generations. Wear and tear, together with changes in fashion, necessitated frequent restorations and adaptations.
13. Sotheby's London, 2 June 1978, lot 2 (348 × 270 cm). With thanks to Stephanie Douglas, director of the Furniture & Decorative Arts Department at Sotheby's London.
14. This set includes *Joseph Is Pulled Out of the Pit*, *Advisers Fail to Interpret Pharaoh's Dreams*, *Joseph Interpreting Pharaoh's Dreams*, *The "Missing" Cup*, and *Joseph Goes to Goshen to Meet His Father* (Getty Research Institute Photo Archive: GCPA 0236345–0236349).
15. Koenraad Brosens and Veerle De Laet, "Matthijs Roelandts, Joris Leemans, and Lanceloot Lefebure Unearthed: New Data on Brussels Baroque Tapestry," *Burlington Magazine* 151 (2009): 360–67.
16. For the series, see Thomas P. Campbell, "New Light on a Set of History of Julius Caesar Tapestries in Henry VIII's Collection," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 5 (1998): 2–39, and Lorraine Karafel, "The Story of Julius Caesar," in *Grand Design: Pieter Coecke van Aelst and Renaissance Tapestry*, ed. Elizabeth Cleland (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014), 254–61.
17. Erik Duverger, "Patronen voor tapijtwerk in het sterfhuis van François van den Hecke," *Artes Textiles* 10 (1981): 232. The edition is at Powis Castle and Garden, Powys, Wales.
18. Campbell, "New Light," 23.
19. The latter tapestry is in the collection of the Madrid town hall. The vertical borders show putti. See Victoria Ramírez Ruiz, *La colección de Tapices del Ayuntamiento de Madrid* (Guadalajara: AACHE, 2008), 33, 39, 42–43. While this piece has no marks, another tapestry showing the same scene framed by twisted columns has a monogram attributed to Hendrik van Assche (Erik Duverger, "Tapijten naar Rubens en Jordaens in het bezit van het Antwerps handelsvennootschap Fourment-Van Hecke," *Artes Textiles* 7 [1971]: 132–33). This same mark can be found on a tapestry depicting *Venus Discovers Adonis's Body* that is at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (1969–223–2). The vertical borders of this piece show lions. Another tapestry depicting this scene surfaced on the art market in 2004. It has a fourth type of border with empty cartouches in the vertical borders (Christie's London, 11 November 2004, lot 38).
20. Thomas P. Campbell, ed., *Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007).
21. Koenraad Brosens, "Charles Le Brun's *Meleager* and *Atalanta* and Brussels Tapestry c. 1675," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 11 (2003–4): 5–37; idem,

“Nouvelles données sur l’*Histoire de Cléopâtre* de Poerson: Le réseau Parent et la tapisserie bruxelloise à la française,” *Revue belge d’Archéologie et d’Histoire de l’Art* 74 (2005): 63–77; idem, “Bruxelles/Paris/Bruxelles: Charles de La Fontaine et la diffusion des modèles des tapisseries de Charles Poerson à Bruxelles, 1650–1675,” *Revue belge d’Archéologie et d’Histoire de l’Art* 76 (2007): 43–60.

22. Wauters, *Tapisseries*, 305. See also Guido Jansen and Peter C. Sutton, *Michael Sweerts* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum; San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2002), and Lara Yeager-Crasselt, *Michael Sweerts (1618–1664): Shaping the Artist and the Academy in Rome and Brussels* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015).