

# Creativity and disruption in Brussels tapestry, 1698–1706: New data on Jan van Orley and Judocus de Vos

by KOENRAAD BROSENS and ASTRID SLEGTEN

THE INDIAN SUMMER of the Brussels tapestry industry can be credited to the Brussels painter Jan van Orley (1665–1735). No fewer than seventeen sets were produced by him and his regular associate, the landscape painter Augustin Coppens (1668–1740),<sup>1</sup> making Van Orley one of the most prolific of all tapestry designers. His sets fuelled the production of all the last major Brussels tapestry workshops, including those of the Leyniers, Van der Borch and Van den Hecke families. As Brussels tapestry was fashionable throughout Europe, Van Orley's importance reaches far beyond his native city. Indeed, it is safe to assume that his most successful series, such as the *Teniers* and *Triumph of the Gods*, influenced painters and tapestry merchants in France and other countries.

Almost all the sets by Van Orley that have been subjected to meticulous analysis date from after 1715.<sup>2</sup> This means that the work that is most familiar is essentially that of the ageing Van Orley. This article aims to complement this picture by investigating Van Orley's activities as a cartoon painter between 1698 and 1706. This new focus has been made possible by the discovery of a file containing *mémoires* and other documents in a lawsuit that the artist brought in 1706 against the Brussels tapestry producer Judocus de Vos (1661–1734) for payments that were in arrears.<sup>3</sup> This source allows us not only to attribute certain tapestries and sets to Jan van Orley and Augustin Coppens, and to date them, but also to give a more precise account of the entrepreneurial strategy pursued by De Vos around 1700.<sup>4</sup> Finally, it demonstrates the remarkable complexities involved in the scholarly quest for a single recognisable stylistic signature in tapestries, not only because cartoons were often retouched by different artists, but also because sets of cartoons by different artists were often combined.

The newly discovered documents show that Van Orley's first commission from De Vos was for the retouching and enlarging of two cartoons belonging to a series called '*nobel plesiers*' (*Noble pleasures*) in 1698. Van Orley took a 'triumph of the noble pleasures' and expanded it with a canvas that was 207 cm. wide, for which he received 94 guilders. In a 'naval battle' he retouched some of the figures and added new ones, a commission he carried out 'together with De Hondt' – probably Lambert de Hondt (d.1708), a Mechelen painter who was registered in the Brussels painters' guild in 1678.<sup>5</sup> The document states that

De Vos and De Hondt paid Van Orley 129 and 81 guilders respectively for his contribution. This reveals that Van Orley was working for De Hondt in the capacity of a subcontractor and that his share in this work was substantial.<sup>6</sup> The *mémoires* further reveal that the cartoons were worked on 'in the house of sr achtschelinckx'. This was the Brussels landscape painter Lucas Achtschellinck (1626–99), who may therefore have collaborated on the backgrounds of these scenes.

The cartoon of *Naval battle* enables us to identify *Noble pleasures* with De Vos's *Art of war* series.<sup>7</sup> This belongs to a group of three closely related tapestry sets depicting warfare and military campaigns.<sup>8</sup> The Brussels *tapissiers* and business partners Gaspard van der Borch (1675–1742) and Hieronymus le Clerc (1643–1722) commissioned an *Art of war* set from Lambert de Hondt no later than 1695.<sup>9</sup> It is assumed that this extremely popular set inspired De Vos to commission a similar series from Lambert's son Philippe de Hondt (1638–1741) in about 1715–20, after Philippe had designed a comparable series that was also produced by De Vos, the *Victories of the Duke of Marlborough*, between about 1712 and 1715. De Vos's *Art of war* revisited most of the same compositions from the earlier series (although some appeared in mirror image), but they also contained two new subjects, including the *Naval battle* (Fig.9).

As the *Art of war* sets show the misery and suffering that are caused by aristocratic 'pleasures' or 'pastimes', Van Orley's title is obviously intended ironically, as was that of the sixteenth-century Brussels *Fructus belli* (*Fruits of war*) series.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the *Fructus belli* set may well have inspired the *Art of war* sets, since the former resurfaced around 1690: the Gobelins workshop executed an edition of it in 1685–86,<sup>11</sup> and in 1692 the original sixteenth-century cartoons, which were preserved in an unnamed Brussels tapestry workshop, attracted the praise of an agent surveying the tapestry market.<sup>12</sup> Tellingly, in 1705 the successors of the Antwerp tapestry dealer Nicolaas Naulaerts (d.1703) referred to the *Art of war* series as '*Fructus belli*'.<sup>13</sup>

The new documents shed light on the chronology of the two *Art of war* sets and the *Victories* series, suggesting that De Vos already possessed the cartoons for his *Art of war* series by 1698 at the latest – not from c.1715, as has traditionally been assumed. This earlier dating is confirmed in a list of cartoons that De Vos com-

<sup>1</sup> K. Brosens: *A contextual study of Brussels tapestry, 1670–1770: The dye works and tapestry workshop of Urbanus Leyniers (1674–1747)*, Brussels 2004, p.380; *idem*: 'Re-visiting Brussels Tapestry, 1700–1740: New Data on "Tapissiers" Albert Auwercx and Judocus de Vos', *Textile History* 43 (2012), p.185.

<sup>2</sup> An exception is Van Orley's *Psyche* series, which Brosens has dated to c.1685, K. Brosens: '"The Story of Psyche" in Brussels tapestry c.1700: New data on Jan van Orley, Jan-Baptist Vermillion and Victor Janssens', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 147 (2005), pp.401–06. For a bibliography on Van Orley up to 2004, see Brosens 2004, *op. cit.* (note 1). See also K. Brosens and G. Delmarcel: 'Raphael's "Acts of the Apostles": Italians in the service of the Habsburg monarchy and the Leyniers tapestry workshop, 1725–55', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 156 (2014), pp.376–81.

<sup>3</sup> Stadsarchief, Brussels, 7402.

<sup>4</sup> For De Vos, see K. Brosens: 'Brussels Tapestry Producer Judocus de Vos (1661/1662–1734): New Data and Design Attributions', *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 9 (2002), pp.58–86, and Brosens 2012, *op. cit.* (note 1).

<sup>5</sup> K. Brosens: 'Eighteenth-Century Brussels Tapestry and the Goût Moderne: Philippe de Hondt's Sets Contextualized', *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 14 (2006–07), p.54.

<sup>6</sup> For a *Teniers* cartoon measuring 311 by 484 cm., Van Orley received 196 guilders. <sup>7</sup> The 'triumph' cartoon that Van Orley enlarged may have been *La Marche*.

<sup>8</sup> A. Wace: *The Marlborough Tapestries at Blenheim Palace and their Relation to Other Military Tapestries of the War of the Spanish Succession*, London 1968; W. Hefford: 'Some problems concerning the "Art of War" tapestries', *Bulletin de liaison du Centre International d'Etude des Textiles Anciens* 41–42 (1975), pp.101–18; J. Bapasola: *Threads*





9. *Naval battle*, from the *Art of war* series, by Judocus de Vos after Lambert de Hondt, Lucas Achtschellinck and Jan van Orley. Brussels, c.1715–20. Wool and silk, 344 by 400 cm. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).

piled in July 1702, when he ended his business partnership with Naulaerts, since the list includes a set entitled '*Plaisiers des princes*'.<sup>14</sup> Given the similarity between this title and the title that appears in the documents it is safe to assume that they are one and the same. This allows us to specify 1698 as the *terminus ante quem* for the series. It is fair to assume that the series was actually several years old by then, since the interventions by Van Orley (and De Hondt) show that the cartoons were in need of retouching in

1698, suggesting that they had already been used several times. Does this mean that De Vos's *Art of war* predates the one by Van der Borch and Le Clerc? Or should the approximate date of their *Art of war* also be moved from the mid-1690s to the early 1690s or even the late 1680s? And could De Vos have commissioned his *Art of war* set in emulation of the one by Van der Borch and Le Clerc? Whatever the case, it is clear that the cartoons of the *Victories of the Duke of Marlborough* were not painted between the

of History: *The Tapestries at Blenheim Palace*, Oxford 2005; K. Brosens: 'A Naval Battle', in T.P. Campbell, ed.: exh. cat. *Threads of Splendor: Tapestry in the Baroque*, New York (Metropolitan Museum of Art) and Madrid (Palacio Real) 2007–08, pp.480–83; R. Wellington: 'A Reflection of the Sun: The Duke of Marlborough in the Image of Louis XIV', *The Court Historian* 21 (2016), pp.125–39.

<sup>9</sup> An edition of the series was delivered to the Elector Maximilian Emmanuel of Bavaria in 1696; Hefford, *op. cit.* (note 8), p.101. Some of the tapestries bear the signature L. DE HONDT INV.

<sup>10</sup> G. Delmarcel, ed.: exh. cat. *Gli arazzi dei Gonzaga nel rinascimento*, Mantua (Fruttieri di Palazzo Te, Palazzo Ducale and Museo Diocesano) 2010, pp.78–95.

<sup>11</sup> M. Fenaillé: *État général des tapisseries de la Manufacture des Gobelins depuis son origine jusqu'à nos jours. Vol.2: Période de la fondation de la Manufacture Royale des*

*Meubles de la Couronne sous Louis XIV, en 1662, jusqu'en 1699*, Paris 1903, pp.279–89.

<sup>12</sup> M. Viale Ferrero: 'Nouveaux documents sur les tapisseries de la maison de Savoie', in *Miscellanea Jozef Duverger: Bijdragen tot de kunstgeschiedenis der Nederlanden*, Ghent 1968, II, p.813.

<sup>13</sup> J. Denucé: *Antwerpsche tapijtkunst en handel*, Antwerp 1936, p.279. A 1700 document labelled the set as '*d'Exercitie van den Oorloghe*', A. Wauters: *Les tapisseries bruxelloises*, Brussels 1878, p.270. This name, translated as *Art of war*, was adopted in the literature.

<sup>14</sup> Brosens 2012, *op. cit.* (note 1), p.190. Brosens found the set's identification highly problematic and tentatively linked two 'unattached' tapestries to the '*Plaisiers des princes*'.





10. *Fish quay*, from the *Teniers* series, by Judocus de Vos after Jan van Orley and Augustin Coppens (after David II Teniers). Brussels, c.1710. Wool and silk, 312 by 470 cm. (Formerly Galerie Chevalier, Paris).

two *Art of war* sets but after them. The revised date of De Vos's *Art of war* also eliminates the certainty that the set was designed by Philippe de Hondt. This suggests that the designer was Lambert de Hondt, although he may have been assisted by one or both of his sons, Ignatius (d.1710) and Philippe.<sup>15</sup>

The second project that Van Orley executed for De Vos was a contribution to the twenty-nine-piece *New Testament* series commissioned from De Vos by Ramon Perellos y Roccaful, Grand Master of the Knights of Malta (reg.1697–1720), for St John's Cathedral in Valletta, the largest series of Brussels tapestries ever woven.<sup>16</sup> Although the cartoons of this series have been attributed to the Brussels artist Louis van Schoor (c.1650–1702),<sup>17</sup> the *mémoires* link several to Van Orley. Of the fourteen large cartoons, two were painted by him: *Triumph of the Catholic Church* and the *Last Supper*.<sup>18</sup> He also executed in grisaille the cartoons of all fourteen of the narrower figurative pieces: *The twelve Apostles*, *Christ and the Virgin*.<sup>19</sup> In addition he painted the

cartoon depicting *Perellos as donor* and 'the base of the portrait'.<sup>20</sup> Van Orley was also responsible for the two cartoons of the bases depicting trophies and the client's coat of arms that complete the cartoons of the apostles Simon and Thaddeus.<sup>21</sup> Finally, he executed two cartoons for the friezes with garlands of flowers that were to be placed along the tops of all the tapestries, making the design a unified whole.<sup>22</sup> In short, Van Orley painted a large proportion of this huge commission, but twelve of the fourteen large cartoons have yet to be conclusively attributed.

In some cases, Van Orley gave the precise dates on which he supplied his cartoons for the *New Testament* series to De Vos. For the two large ones, the *Triumph of the Catholic Church* and the *Last Supper*, the dates were 24th June and 1st December 1699, respectively. The portrait of Perellos was finished on 10th November 1700 and the cartoon for its base on 8th December 1700. These dates tally with those mentioned in correspondence between Perellos and the agent who co-ordinated the project for

<sup>15</sup> Ignatius and Philippe de Hondt were not registered as masters in the Brussels painters' guild until 1699 and 1708, respectively, but since their father was a master they were allowed to assist in commissions; Brosens, *op. cit.* (note 5), p.54.

<sup>16</sup> M. Jarry: "'New Testament' Tapestries in St John's, Malta: "Triumphs" after Rubens', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 102 (1960), pp.151–52; G. Delmarcel: 'Nieuwe gegevens over de wandtapijten van het Nieuwe Testament door Judocus de Vos te Malta (1699–1700)', *Revue Belge d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art* 54 (1985), pp.29–44; *idem*: 'De Rubenstapijten te Malta/Rubens's tapestries in Malta', in *idem*, et al.: *exh. cat. Rubenstextiel / Rubens's Textiles*, Antwerp (Hessenhuis) 1997, pp.136–51; C. de Giorgio: 'The Tapestries at St John's Conventual Church – Spirituality and Exuberance', in K. Brosens, K. Alen and A. Slegten, eds.: *Engineering*

*Flemish and French Tapestry*, Turnhout 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Delmarcel 1997, *op. cit.* (note 16), p.141.

<sup>18</sup> These cartoons measured 4¾ by 9 ells and 5¾ by 8½ ells and cost 350 guilders and 360 guilders respectively.

<sup>19</sup> The documents give only the price for all the *Apostles* cartoons – that is, 240 guilders. *Christ* measured 6 by 3 ells and cost 46 guilders. For the *Virgin* cartoon, the dimensions of which are not given, De Vos paid 24 guilders.

<sup>20</sup> *Perellos* measured 5 by 4½ ells and cost 176 guilders. The 'base', the dimensions of which are not given, cost 46 guilders.

<sup>21</sup> These cartoons measured 4½ by 2½ ells and cost 88 guilders.

<sup>22</sup> The dimensions are not given; the price was 20 guilders.





11. *Harvest*, from the *Teniers* series, by Judocus de Vos after Jan van Orley and Augustin Coppens after David II Teniers). Brussels, c.1710. Wool and silk, 340 by 460 cm. (Present location unknown). RIGHT 12. *Fortune-tellers*, from the *Teniers* series, by Judocus de Vos after Jan van Orley and Augustin Coppens (after David II Teniers). Brussels, c.1710. Wool and silk, 347 by 284 cm. (Present location unknown).

him in Brussels.<sup>23</sup> But since the Perellos tapestry – and possibly other pieces as well – could not be woven until 1701, the general assumption that all the tapestries were woven in 1699–1700 and had arrived in Valletta by 7th February 1701 is clearly wrong.<sup>24</sup> This is indeed the date that appears in a document preserved in Malta, but it is based on the calendar that counts *ab incarnatione*; according to the standard Gregorian calendar it was 7th February 1702.<sup>25</sup> De Vos therefore took three rather than two years to complete the project – a tour de force all the same.

A third project that Jan van Orley executed for Judocus de Vos was a set of cartoons depicting scenes of peasant life after David II Teniers (1610–90), known as the *Teniers* series. The documents reveal that Van Orley contracted with De Vos to provide six cartoons on 28th March 1702. Interestingly, the source includes the information that De Vos had invited Van Orley to his home and workshop, where he had shown him two cartoons that ‘had already been begun by a Frenchman’, who unfortunately remains anonymous.<sup>26</sup> These cartoons were of *Fish quay* and *Hunters*. Van Orley decided to build upon ‘parts of the existing background’ of *Fish quay* (Fig.10). In the case of *Hunters*, on the other hand, he decided to design the cartoon from scratch. The four additional cartoons depicted *Fête* (present location unknown), *Harvest* (Fig.11), *Game of pins* (present location unknown), and *Fortune-tellers* (Fig.12).<sup>27</sup> Immediately

after he had completed one or more of the cartoons in the spring of 1702, it seems that De Vos contracted out the first edition to Naulaerts. This can be inferred from a letter sent by Naulaerts in August 1702 stating that he had already finished a tapestry woven after the largest cartoon (*Fête*).<sup>28</sup> The case file shows that in 1705 De Vos commissioned two additional scenes from Van Orley, *Maypole* (Fig.13) and *Jan Potage*, a depiction of travelling comedians (Fig.14).<sup>29</sup> Van Orley specified that Coppens had executed the landscapes in all eight cartoons.

According to Van Orley, De Vos would often say that ‘these cartoons were his most important assets’.<sup>30</sup> This may not have been an exaggeration. It is certainly true that the genre was immensely popular between about 1680 and 1760, as illustrated by the hundreds of Brussels *Teniers* pieces in public and private collections. These tapestries make up an intricate web of related and adapted subjects. As understanding of this web continues to grow, together with our knowledge of the tapestry makers and their entrepreneurial behaviour, it often conflicts with Henry C. Marillier’s pioneering attempts to classify the *Teniers* tapestries, leaving us with puzzling attribution and dating issues.<sup>31</sup> However, documents such as the case file discussed here help to disentangle the jumble of data.

De Vos used two sets of *Teniers* cartoons.<sup>32</sup> One was the original, painted by David II Teniers between about 1656 and 1680,<sup>33</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Published by Delmarcel 1985, *op. cit.* (note 16), pp.42–44.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, *ibid.*, p.34; *idem* 1997, *op. cit.* (note 16), p.137; Brosens, *op. cit.* (note 4), p.62.

<sup>25</sup> In the calendar *ab incarnatione*, the new year begins on 25th March; De Giorgio, *op. cit.* (note 16).

<sup>26</sup> The cartoons were 7 ells (484 cm.) and 5 ells (346 cm.) wide.

<sup>27</sup> These measured 8½ ells (588 cm.), 6 ells (415 cm.), 4 ells (276 cm.), and 3 ells (207 cm.) in width, respectively. All the *Teniers* cartoons are 4½ ells (c.311 cm.).

<sup>28</sup> Denucé, *op. cit.* (note 13), p.218.

<sup>29</sup> The document does not give their dimensions.

<sup>30</sup> ‘hem menichmael beroempt dat dese [kartons] sijne principaelste neeringhe maecken’,

document cited in note 3.

<sup>31</sup> H.C. Marillier: *Handbook to the Teniers tapestries*, London 1932 (for De Vos’s *Teniers* pieces, see pp.12–25; Marillier does not list *Maypole* among the subjects woven by De Vos). For recent discussions of the genre, see Brosens 2004, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp.140 and 160–65; *idem*: *European Tapestries in the Art Institute of Chicago*, Chicago, New Haven and London 2008, pp.191–98.

<sup>32</sup> Marillier, *op. cit.* (note 31), p.12.

<sup>33</sup> Brosens 2008, *op. cit.* (note 31), p.193; M. Klinge and D. Lüdke: exh. cat. *David Teniers der Jüngere 1610–1690. Alltag und Vergnügen in Flandern*, Karlsruhe (Staatliche Kunsthalle) 2005–06, pp.346–57.





13. *Maypole*, from the *Teniers* series, by Judocus de Vos after Jan van Orley and Augustin Coppens (after David II Teniers). Brussels, c.1710. Wool and silk, 250 by 280 cm. (Formerly Galerie Chevalier, Paris).

and first used by Gaspard van der Borcht and Hieronymus le Clerc. It is as yet unclear when De Vos came into possession of these cartoons,<sup>34</sup> but a date earlier than 1702 is highly improbable.<sup>35</sup> When De Vos enlisted Van Orley's services that year, he clearly wanted a set of cartoons that could compete with those by Teniers, given that all six of the scenes he commissioned from Van Orley in 1702 also featured in that earlier nine-part series.<sup>36</sup> Van Orley's set of *Teniers* for De Vos, included in the list that De Vos compiled in July 1702, may have been the second – or possibly third – *Teniers* set created for the Brussels tapestry industry.<sup>37</sup>

Interestingly, the documents reveal that after painting the six cartoons for De Vos in 1702, Van Orley and Coppens created six 'similar' cartoons for the Brussels *tapissier* Albert Auwercx (1629–1709). The source does not give the exact year in which Van Orley and Coppens painted their second *Teniers* set, but the cartoons, which are listed in the inventory of Auwercx's estate, where they are described as being by Van Orley and Coppens,<sup>38</sup> can be dated to after 1702 and no later than 1706, when the lawsuit between Van Orley and De Vos played itself out. Curiously, however, to date there are no known *Teniers* tapestries that can be confidently attributed to Auwercx or to his son and successor, Philippe (1663–1740), yet it is surely ex-

tremely unlikely that the Auwercx workshop failed to capitalise on the genre's success, leaving unused the cartoons in which it had invested. This third (or possibly fourth) Brussels *Teniers* set has yet to be discovered.<sup>39</sup>

Four cartoons depicting *Europe*, *The Virtues*, *Victory* and *Abundance* made up a fourth project that Van Orley and Coppens executed for De Vos. Van Orley supplied the cartoons, which he entitled the *Continents*, in May 1705. Since they were sold for only 60 guilders each, either they were small compositions or the commission involved only the retouching of copied cartoons. Their titles do indeed link them to an older *Continents and related allegories* series. This set's cartoons, which were painted in the 1680s by Louis van Schoor and the landscapist Pieter Spierinckx (1635–1711), were owned by Naulaerts and his successors Jan-Jozef Naulaerts and François Blommaert.<sup>40</sup> Naulaerts subcontracted the weaving of this very successful series to various tapestry producers in Antwerp, Brussels and Oudenaarde, which complicates the attribution and dating of tapestries and editions of the series.<sup>41</sup> From July 1702, when De Vos and Naulaerts signed a collaboration contract, De Vos had privileged access to the cartoons.<sup>42</sup> But in October 1704 the Naulaerts–De Vos alliance was dissolved, possibly prompting

<sup>34</sup> From then on, De Vos was able to market amalgamated Teniers/Van Orley editions like the one at Minterne House, Dorchester. This edition includes three compositions by Van Orley (*Fête*, *Game of pins* and *Fish quay*); there is a fourth: *Fish quay* after Teniers.

<sup>35</sup> In the list of his cartoons compiled in July 1702, De Vos included only one set of *Teniers*; Brosens 2012, *op. cit.* (note 1), p.190.

<sup>36</sup> The other three subjects were *Milking scene*, *Pig killing* and *Shepherds*.

<sup>37</sup> Ignatius de Hondt also created a *Teniers* series that must be dated before 1710

(the year of his death); it may have been commissioned by the Brussels *tapissier* Hendrik II Reyndams (1650–1719); Brosens 2004, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp.140 and 270.

<sup>38</sup> *Idem* 2012, *op. cit.* (note 1), p.185.

<sup>39</sup> In this context it is interesting to note that the cartoons are not listed in Philippe Auwercx's inventory; Brosens 2004, *op. cit.* (note 1), p.260.

<sup>40</sup> For the series, see Brosens, *op. cit.* (note 31), pp.187–90; I. De Meûter: *Vlaamse wandtapijten. Productie en handel. De Oudenaardse familie Van Verren (1680–1740)*, Ghent 2016, pp.305–15.





14. *Jan Potage*, from the *Teniers* series, by Judocus de Vos after Jan van Orley and Augustin Coppens (after David II Teniers). Brussels, c.1710. Wool and silk, 268 by 921 cm. (Present location unknown).

De Vos to commission a handful of copycat cartoons from Van Orley. Three of the four subjects were among those depicted in the cartoons owned by Naulaerts, while *The Virtues* was a new composition. It is not yet possible, within the relatively large and complex group that constitutes the *Continents and related allegories* tapestries, to confidently identify any as made after Van Orley's cartoons. Only a detailed comparative study of extant signed editions and isolated tapestries could illuminate this.

This fourth project also contained the germ of the conflict between Van Orley and De Vos. When De Vos decided to add a fifth cartoon to his *Continents and related allegories* series, he did not commission it from Van Orley, instead choosing Philippe de Hondt, who teamed up with Coppens. De Vos's rationale is perfectly clear from the case file: as a cartoon painter, De Hondt was both better and cheaper. The source does not mention the subject of De Hondt's cartoon, which further complicates the task of attributing and dating the *Continents and related allegories* tapestries from Brussels.

Shortly thereafter, in late 1705 or early 1706, De Vos added insult to injury. He first asked Van Orley to execute an unspecified number of cartoons depicting scenes from the life of Alexander the Great, and then decided to give the commission to a different, unnamed, painter since he feared that Van

Orley would overcharge him. According to De Vos, it was this – in his view justifiable – decision that had aroused Van Orley's resentment and led him to bring the lawsuit. Van Orley saw De Vos's inconstancy as displaying a grievous lack of loyalty and gratitude. After all, he argued, it was only thanks to his own cartoons that the De Vos workshop was 'flourishing': without them, 'he [De Vos] cannot weave tapestries'. A glance at the list of cartoons compiled by De Vos in July 1702 shows that this was an exaggeration.<sup>43</sup> Of the five sets listed by De Vos, Van Orley executed the *Teniers* series, besides which he played a key role in the *Holy Church* set (which De Vos kept in his sales catalogue after the Maltese commission).<sup>44</sup> But the other three sets, *Il Pastor fido*, *Art of war* and 'the set by Achtschellinck' did not originate on Van Orley's drawing board.<sup>45</sup>

Be that as it may, when he set about ordering some new *Alexander* cartoons, De Vos followed what was by then an established pattern: taking themes with proven commercial potential, he marketed a more contemporary version. *Alexander* had featured in the range on offer in Brussels since the final decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>46</sup> Judocus's father, Marcus de Vos (1630–1704), and some of his associates had produced *Story of Alexander* editions after cartoons based on Charles Le Brun's famous *Alexander* paintings (1660–72) and on tapestry

<sup>41</sup> Brosens 2008, *op. cit.* (note 31), p.189.

<sup>42</sup> *Idem* 2012, *op. cit.* (note 1), p.190.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> For later editions, see Delmarcel 1997, *op. cit.* (note 16), pp.142–43.

<sup>45</sup> For *Il Pastor fido*, see I. De Meûter: 'Twee 18de-eeuwse Oudenaardse wandtapijtrekken en hun bronnen: Don Quichotte en Il Pastor Fido', *Handelingen van de Geschied- en Oudheidkundige Kring van Oudenaarde* 35 (1998), pp.238–47. The case file shows that at some point between 1698 and 1706, Van Orley re-

touched 'a number of figures in [the cartoon of] the falcon hunt' – possibly one of Achtschellinck's compositions.

<sup>46</sup> R. Vanhoren: 'Tapisseries bruxelloises d'après les modèles de Charles Le Brun: l'Histoire d'Alexandre le Grand', in C. Arminjon and N. de Reyniès, eds.: *La tapisserie au XVIIe siècle et les collections européennes*, Paris 1999, pp.61–68.





15. *The Battle of Poros*, from the *Alexander* series, by Judocus de Vos after an unknown artist. Brussels, c.1715. Wool and silk, 385 by 600 cm. (Gaasbeek Castle).

designs that were known through engravings.<sup>47</sup> In 1689 Naulaerts had commissioned a *Story of Alexander* series from Peter Ykens (1648–95), which likewise followed engravings after Le Brun.<sup>48</sup> Thus in 1705–06, shortly after the dissolution of the De Vos–Naulaerts alliance, De Vos ordered not only *Continents and related allegories* but also *Alexander* cartoons that competed with the Naulaerts firm. However, *Alexander* reunited the former business partners in August 1707, when John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, commissioned an eight-part *Alexander* edition after four cartoons owned by the Naulaerts firm and four owned by De Vos.<sup>49</sup> In 1709 Marlborough commissioned four more *Alexander* tapestries from De Vos.<sup>50</sup> By then, De Vos's *Alexander* series numbered ten compositions – which thus cannot be attributed to Van Orley.<sup>51</sup> Five echo those by Charles Le Brun: *Alexander and the wife of Darius*, *The Battle of Arbeles*, *The Battle of Poros*, *The Battle of the Granicus* and *Alexander's triumphal entry into Babylon*. The remaining five cartoons are *Alexander meets the Chaldean prophets*, *Alexander visits Diogenes*, *Alexander greets his father*, *The founding of Alexandria* (Fig. 16) and a battle scene that is referred to in the 1707 contract as 'the new piece that is the battle of Poros' (Fig. 15).<sup>52</sup>

These details in the case file illuminate another side of the entrepreneurial strategy pursued by De Vos. He has previously been described as a 'commercial link and broker between Brussels, the Antwerp–Oudenaarde production and trading complex and the European élite',<sup>53</sup> but this article reveals De Vos to have been not so much a facilitator as an opportunistic entrepreneur who introduced a disruptive dynamic into the Flemish tapestry industry. Perhaps De Vos's *Art of war* set was produced before that of Van der Borcht and Le Clerc, and he saw his investment in new cartoons being undermined by competitors. Or it may have been the other way round: perhaps it was De Vos who confronted Van der Borcht and Le Clerc with a rival set. Whatever the truth of the matter, De Vos's next projects – the *Teniers*, *Continents and related allegories* and *Alexander* cartoons – all echoed and mirrored existing cartoons used by Brussels and Antwerp *tapissiers*. This portrait of Judocus de Vos as a grasping entrepreneur who did not shy away from confrontation or conflict chimes with the picture painted by the Brinck affair (1711–12), in which De Vos enticed Jan Brinck (1674–1743) away from the dye works run by Leyniers (1674–1747) and helped him to set up one of his own.<sup>54</sup> Ironically, the Brinck affair ended with Urbanus Leyniers deciding to use De Vos's

<sup>47</sup> J. Vittet, ed.: exh. cat. *La tenture de l'Histoire d'Alexandre le Grand*, Paris (Galerie des Gobelins) 2008.

<sup>48</sup> E.J. Kalf: *Waar legwerk hangt*, Alphen aan den Rijn 1988, pp.255–56. For the series, see De Meûter, *op. cit.* (note 40), pp.253–59.

<sup>49</sup> Denucé, *op. cit.* (note 13), pp.331–34; and Bapasola, *op. cit.* (note 8), pp.41–46.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p.47.

<sup>51</sup> Brosens, *op. cit.* (note 4), p.72, suggested that Van Orley could have painted the

cartoons.

<sup>52</sup> For images of the other three pieces, see Bapasola, *op. cit.* (note 8), pp.46–47. The most complete edition is composed of seven pieces and is at Hampton Court Palace, see H.C. Marillier: *The Tapestries at Hampton Court Palace*, London 1931, p.28.

<sup>53</sup> Brosens 2012, *op. cit.* (note 1), p.193.

<sup>54</sup> For the Brinck affair, see Brosens 2004, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp.37–41.





16. *The founding of Alexandria*, from the *Alexander* series, by Judocus de Vos after an unknown artist. Brussels, c.1715. Wool and silk, 393 by 600 cm. (Gaasbeek Castle).

copycat strategy against De Vos – with the help of Van Orley.

The attributions to Van Orley and Coppens of a number of scenes belonging to the *New Testament* series and of the *Teniers* set certainly deepen our understanding of Brussels tapestry design around 1700. They highlight the tendency of tapestry merchants and designers to draw in a conservative fashion on a multifaceted pictorial tradition. Van Orley's work has previously been described as 'a refined fusion of the Franco-Italian classicising vocabulary and the native Baroque manner'.<sup>55</sup> The two large cartoons of the *New Testament* series perfectly exemplify this eclecticism: whereas the *Triumph of the Catholic Church* was based on a boisterous Baroque composition by Rubens dating from around 1626, the *Last Supper* followed a rigorous classical one painted by Nicolas Poussin in 1647.<sup>56</sup> Of course Van Orley also engaged in a dialogue with the past in designing his *Teniers* set. In his first attempt to modulate the genre he was clearly casting about for ways of reconciling Teniers's anecdotal intimacy with the monumentality of tapestry. This led to 'full' compositions, such as *Fish quay*, *Fête* and *Jan Potage*, or to less dense scenes, such as *Fortune-tellers* and *Game of pins*. Tapestries belonging to the latter group in particular owe much of their decorative appeal

to the landscape settings by Coppens. *Maypole* demonstrates Van Orley's desire to enrich genre painting with dynamic energy and sophisticated quotations, since the man whose shoulder supports the maypole is an offspring of the ubiquitous *Borghese gladiator*. In his later *Don Quixote* series, which closely resembles *Teniers*, Van Orley incorporated other borrowings of this kind.<sup>57</sup> This chameleon quality, which also proved useful when recent compositions required additions, or when they needed to be retouched or copied, makes Van Orley a somewhat elusive artist with a changeable stylistic signature, a quality that compels caution in attributing and dating sets and compositions.

Furthermore, the case file of the lawsuit discussed above adds an additional layer of complexity to issues of attribution and dating, as it highlights the fact that cartoons were, in essence, collaborative works in progress. In consequence, the authorship and dating of cartoons could change, as *tapisseries* continued to use them over a period of many years. Tapestry scholarship has not yet dealt with this issue of the time-dependent, multiple authorship of editions, but future studies should plumb the storehouse of archival evidence to address and illuminate this complex problem.

<sup>55</sup> *Idem*: 'Flemish Production, 1660–1715', in Campbell, *op. cit.* (note 8), p.450.

<sup>56</sup> Poussin's painting is in the National Gallery of Scotland (NGL 067.46 F); for this work, see A. Blunt: *Nicolas Poussin*, New York 1967, I, pp.29, 189, 253–54 and 367; II, pl.159. Rubens painted his *Triumph of the Catholic Church* for his *Eucharist* series around 1626. For the series and the enduring lives of compositions in engravings and later editions, see N. De Poorter: *The Eucharist Series (Corpus Rubenianum*

*Ludwig Burchard* 2), London and Philadelphia 1978; A. Vergara and A.T. Woollett, eds.: exh. cat. *Spectacular Rubens. The Triumph of the Eucharist*, Los Angeles (The J. Paul Getty Museum) and Madrid (Museo Nacional del Prado) 2014.

<sup>57</sup> K. Brosens and Guy Delmarcel: 'Les aventures de Don Quichotte. Tapisseries bruxelloises de l'atelier Leyniers-Reydam', *Revue belge d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art* 67 (1998), pp.55–92.