

‘Den quaden tyt’?¹ The artistic career of the young Ambrosius Francken before the Fall of Antwerp*

Introduction

Some areas of the turbulent years between the first wave of Iconoclasm in 1566 and the Fall of Antwerp in 1585 are still a neglected subject in Southern Netherlandish art-history. Research such as Carl Van de Velde’s study on Floris, David Freedberg’s PhD dissertation and book on iconoclasm, Justus Müller Hofstede’s article on the young Otto Vaenius, Martin Zweite’s book on Marten de Vos, some articles by Adolf Monballieu, Jan van Roey and Carl Van de Velde, and more recently Anne T. Woollett’s PhD dissertation on militia altarpieces have been both enlightening and inspiring.² But as to activities of artists, the actual possibilities and limitations of the painter’s craft, the social and economic context of the painter’s trade, and their working conditions, the often rich archival sources remain untapped.

First, this contribution aims to explore the aspirations, professional prospects and artistic endeavours of Ambrosius Francken (1544/1545-1618), a young painter, during a time of economic crisis. After the spectacular general economic boom of the 1560s, the economy, including the art market suffered from the economic, political and religious instability in the Southern Netherlands. How does this translate to the painter’s profession? Ambrosius Francken, a journeyman of the famous Antwerp history painter Frans Floris (1519/1520-1570), is an interesting case. While Ambrosius left no ego-documents, fortunately, his background is well-documented, as is the case for the whole of the large Francken-family. Administrative records left by different members of the dynasty provide interesting information on social mobility and resilience.³ When ego documents are absent or rare, the researcher needs to zoom in on the background of the artist’s interaction as can be read in various documents on loans, obligations, investments, baptismal records and inventories. Artists in sixteenth-century Antwerp were part of an urban network, which functioned both as social capital and buffer.⁴ Through relationships with various social, religious, and professional groups, they can be situated in the social context of the larger early modern Antwerp community. The Dutch art historian Marten Jan Bok rightly stated that these often neglected archival documents in which painters act, bear witness to their mutual contacts.⁵

Second, this contribution also looks into the situation of religious art at a time in which religious painting specifically was the object of distrust or downright anger as Antwerp was taken over by image-breaking Calvinists who stressed the word, not the image. In his PhD dissertation of 1972, published in 1988, on iconoclasm and art in the Netherlands, Freedberg wrote that the Francken brothers made a name as a result of the Silent Iconoclasm of 1581.⁶ Indeed, both Ambrosius and his older brother Frans profited from the high demand of new altarpieces after these events. But both were active in the arts long before that time.

The career of Ambrosius Francken and his siblings started when their father Nicolas sent them from small-town Herentals where he taught them the basics, to nearby Antwerp. Nicolas Francken was probably a well-to-do artist, but few facts are known about him.⁷ Ambrosius Francken came to the workshop of the renowned Frans Floris in Antwerp between ca 1566 and ca 1568, at a time when the workshop was turning out history pieces that were in high demand by merchants and rich burghers. Antwerp needed a continuous influx of workers of all trades to keep its market going, and this certainly applied to artists who were lured to the town in search of a market.⁸ On the supply side, recent statistical analysis of the *Liggeren*, (the membership lists of the guild of Saint Luke) by Martens and Peeters shows that the majority (78 per cent) of the Antwerp artists up to 1585 were immigrants from Brabant, Flanders, but many also came from further away.⁹ Ambrosius went to Floris' workshop in order to train and extend his education but especially to work there as a journeyman.¹⁰ These workers were expected to have the competence of a schooled artist, without the master's title. Floris, according to Carel van Mander, was reputed to have employed some hundred and twenty journeymen in the course of his career.¹¹ Was that a rhetorical number, or was it a loose count whereby anyone, even those in the orbit of Floris for a short time, was included? In any case, Van Mander only mentions some thirty disciples by their name. As the average Antwerp workshop between 1501 and 1579 ranged from about five to seven persons in the course of its entire existence, Floris's workshop was extraordinarily large.¹²

An aspiring artist's apprentice had approximately one chance in five to become a master.¹³ On average, those who became a master worked between one and eleven years as a journeyman after his circa four-year¹⁴ training period. This means that the journeyman's phase was something any aspiring artist on the road to effective mastery would pass through, some ending it with the title, others dropping out, dying, taking up another trade, or remaining a journeyman for the rest of their lives. The precise activities of Ambrosius in the workshop remain a matter of conjecture; he would have been about twenty-two years of age and he thus probably had more than four years of basic training. While working with and for Floris, young artists not only perfected their craft and sharpened their talent with a master of great fame. They probably also considered it an investment in their future: when Ambrosius left the workshop around 1568, he was armed with an extensive network of contacts that would be of continuing importance for the rest of his career. But the times were not favourable to history painting. In August 1566, the first wave of Iconoclasm swept over the Netherlands; many altarpieces and other works of art in churches and cloisters were irreparably damaged or destroyed.¹⁵

The wander years 1568-1572

In the years after 1566, the atmosphere in Antwerp became grim: many migrants who had initially come to Antwerp, now fled out of religious or professional motives as the tensions put a halt to economic possibilities. Documents state that craft and trade had come to a halt.¹⁶ In 1568 Ambrosius left Floris's workshop for Tournai, presumably in search of work: after the iconoclasm had raged through the Netherlands, many towns such as Tournai, or Mechelen, found themselves in need of repairs and decoration of their religious buildings. Other Floris-trainees as well as his relatives such as Cornelis Floris II (ca 1513/1514-1575), and his brother the glazier Jacob Floris († 1581)¹⁷ also worked in Tournai for some time. It is reasonable to suppose that he went there armed with recommendations by Floris. Van Mander mentions Ambrosius in the service of bishop Gilbert d'Ognies, but he does not give any further information.¹⁸ The town had been much vandalised during the Iconoclasm, so that it attracted a fair number

of artists for repairs and new commissions for art.¹⁹ Presumably, these migrant artists were not always favourably received by the 'established' artistic community and the other migrants who had come first. Van Mander recalls how Pieter Vlerick, his own former master who had gone to Tournai in the years after 1566, had fared: 'Finding himself in these limited circumstances he became like the others so that he could not bear it if other people arrived there [Tournai] from elsewhere in order to become a master, or even only to make portraits.'²⁰ Was this embittered competition the reason why Ambrosius, still a young journeyman-painter at that time, did not stay, or did he find other and better opportunities?

Next we find Ambrosius in Fontainebleau near Paris: he may well have travelled there in the company of Cornelis Floris III, son of Cornelis II, who is recorded in Paris in 1568 at the age of eighteen years, as an apprentice to Ambrosius's older brother Hieronymus who had settled in Paris around 1566. Ambrosius is mentioned on May 27th 1570, as present during a baptism at the church of Saint Peter in Avon, in the vicinity of the palace of Fontainebleau, where he signed together with the further unknown painter Pieter Engelbrechtsen as a witness to the baptism of the child of Mathurin Mordieu.²¹ The church in Avon where Ambrosius witnessed the baptism was much used by artists and artisans working for the court. In the past, much has been made of Ambrosius's presence at Fontainebleau, but no proof has as yet been found that he was engaged in the decoration of the palace, as the palace-archives for these years were destroyed. It seems logical to assume that Ambrosius also went to Paris, to visit or maybe work for his elder brother Hieronymus. Perhaps they explored the possibilities of the Antwerp-Paris art market; in any case, the Francken-brothers had a tight bond.²² One has to keep in mind that Ambrosius was not yet a free master which meant that he was not allowed to work independently or for his own account. That he was probably active as an artist at that time is shown by some attributed designs for prints that must have originated during his stay in France: a series of drawings of the *Commedia dell'arte*.²³ One signed drawing, *Pantalone handing over a love letter*²⁴ (Amsterdam, Historical Museum) (fig. 1), and two gouaches showing *The Lover hitting Pantalone* and *Pantalone handing over a love letter* (present location unknown for both), were attributed to Ambrosius by Schapelhouman in 1979.²⁵ The gouache and the Amsterdam drawing of *Pantalone handing over a love letter* are alike in composition and dimensions, although the gouache shows less self-control in the execution. This similarity notwithstanding, the sequence nor the attribution of

1
Ambrosius Francken, *Pantalone handing over a love letter*, drawing, 230 mm x 353 mm. Amsterdam, Historical Museum. Photo copyrights Amsterdam, Historical Museum.



the gouaches vis-à-vis the drawing can be ascertained here, as no other gouaches are known by the artist. The Amsterdam drawing, however, shows round toes, elegant poses, simple uncluttered background, a row-like arrangement of large figures, and an absence of strong contrast that are typical features of Ambrosius's early artistic endeavours. A fourth Commedia-composition is only known by its print *Pantalone being cuckolded*²⁶ or its mirrored version *Comédie ou farce de six parsonnaiges* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes).²⁷ According to Hans Mielke, the print was made after an invention by Ambrosius Francken and engraved by one of the Liefrincks.²⁸ Presumably, the *Commedia*-designs were destined for a series of prints, but apart from the Paris-print, none have been found up to now. As the paper of the Amsterdam drawing is French, Ambrosius could well have designed it in France. The prints were probably destined for the French market, but the inventions retain a Florislike elegance. In December 1570, Italian actors (specifically Zanni and Pantalone) performed for the first time a Commedia-play in Paris, to great popular acclaim.²⁹ In March 1571 and the beginning of 1572, more performances were held both at court and in town; Ambrosius would have had many opportunities to watch a troupe perform.³⁰

But unlike his elder brother Hieronymus, Ambrosius returned home after three years in the French capital. His decision to return to Antwerp may have been prompted by the volatile political situation in Paris: France was the theatre of religious violence more than once in these years, and these tensions culminated in August of the year 1572 with Saint Bartholomew's Night. It could well have coincided with a more economic reason: also Ambrosius may have wanted to make use of his Paris experience, and his knowledge of the market. With his brother Hieronymus remaining in place as a person of contact, he may have thought of setting up a good business. Also, the Southern Netherlands were in need of artists to replace the altarpieces that had been destroyed after the iconoclasm; that was surely a good prospect for someone trained in history painting?

An exercise in resilience: 1573-1579

In 1573, a new phase started in Ambrosius's career: he became a freemaster in the Antwerp guild of Saint Luke. This was an important step in the life of any painter, and bears witness to his belief in his future prospects to earn an independent living. Historians Hugo Soly and Catharina Lis remarked that membership of a corporation was one of the few means to acquire security in a precarious world.³¹ But which aspirations could a young master-painter have in Antwerp in the 1570s? According to the rules of the guild of Saint Luke, one needed official citizenship in order to become a master, but exceptions exist: Ambrosius only registered as a citizen in 1577 thus four years later (see below). No explanation has yet been found for this anomaly. Apparently, Ambrosius had not decided at that point on staying permanently; without the bonds of marriage, he may have planned to leave Antwerp again at a certain point in the future. Maybe Paris still beckoned. The existing archival sources divulge no information about Ambrosius's activities between the end of 1573 and 1576.

But Antwerp proved scarcely calmer than Paris: the Spanish Fury of November 1576 had disastrous consequences for Antwerp. The city was plundered, houses were burned, the city hall damaged, and many inhabitants were wounded or killed.³² George Gasgoyne, an English traveller and eyewitness to the events, scarcely found words to describe what he had seen: 'I forbear also to recount the huge numbers drowned in the new town, where a man might behold as many sundry shapes and forms of man's motion at time of death as ever Michel Angelo did portray in his tables of Doomsday (sic)'³³ Ambrosius designed for the political print *Lament on the*

2

Ambrosius Francken (invention),
Hans Collaert (engraver),
*Lament on the Destruction in the
Netherlands*, print. Antwerp,
Cabinet of Prints. Photo copyrights
Antwerp, Cabinet of Prints.



Destruction in the Netherlands engraved by Hans Collaert (fig. 2).³⁴ The print shows lady 'Belgia', attacked by Spanish soldiers who tear out her heart and strip her of her clothes, possessions, and decency. In the background the Spanish Fury is depicted, showing the ruins of a castle, burning towns and fleeing people. Two women, Ambitio and Avaritia, have taken over rule and riches just like the Spanish soldiers and the winged harpies Dissidentia, Fiducia and Invidia try to tear the Netherlands apart and hold up a rope with the heraldic signs of the Seventeen Provinces. The verse below the

3

Ambrosius Francken, *Beneficentia*,
drawing, 224 x 355 mm. Brussels,
Royal Library, Cabinet of Prints.
Photo copyrights Brussels, Royal
Library, Cabinet of Prints.



image alludes to the heavy misery and unbearable sadness of the Netherlands and can be read as a defence for unity. The soldier tearing at the hair of Belgia is reminiscent of the position of the player with the dagger and the helmet of the soldier reminds one of the plumed hat of the player on the left in the aforementioned Amsterdam drawing of *Pantalone handing over a love letter*. Another print, *Pax and Justitia, New Years' wishes of Antwerp to Archduke Matthias*³⁵ is not signed but is attributable to Ambrosius on the basis of style. It was presumably made in 1577, when Archduke Matthew was appointed as a governor; he was deposed two years later. The series of prints *Three favours wanted by man* was also designed by Ambrosius. Although no date is present on any of the prints, they probably originated around 1577 as well.³⁶ The three designs are homogeneous in their simple and clear compositional scheme: they show one or two large figures, a few accessories, and vistas in the background. A preparatory drawing for *Beneficentia* (Brussels, Royal Library, Cabinet of Prints) is signed 'Ambrosio van Herentals' (fig. 3).³⁷ It shows a seated woman holding two large slates and two small children in an austere interior with a view onto a square or street at the upper left hand corner. Dividing lines are visible. A wash was used generously for shading.

One of the most ambitious projects in printing at that time was the picture bible *Thesaurus sacrarum historiarum Veteris Testamenti*,³⁸ or *Thesaurus veteris et novi testamenti* published in 1579, and in 1585.³⁹ It was overseen and edited by the publisher and engraver Gerard de Jode. It consisted of the Old Testament only, or sometimes the Old and New Testament. Every page comprises some short verse with a large illustration. A select group of international artists contributed to it, such as the Plantin-designers Chrispijn van den Broeck and Pieter van der Borcht, as well as Hans Vredeman de Vries, Hans Bol, Michiel Coxie, Marten van Heemskerck, and Johannes Stradanus. Not all the prints were made especially for the *Thesaurus*; in some cases, older designs were used, such as those by Van Heemskerck. The designs were engraved by Hans Collaert I, Hans Collaert II, the Wierix brothers, Adriaan Collaert, his father-in-law Philip Galle and finally also by Gerard de Jode himself.

4
Ambrosius Francken (invention),
Gerard de Jode (engraver), *Christ
in the house of Mary and Martha,*
print. Antwerp, Cabinet of Prints.
Photo copyrights Antwerp, Cabinet
of Prints.





5
 Ambrosius Francken, *The convening of king Jeroboam*, drawing, 192 x 300 mm. Antwerp, Mayer van den Bergh Museum. Photo copyrights Antwerp, Mayer van den Bergh Museum.

More than thirty inventions have been attributed to Ambrosius by Mielke in 1975.⁴⁰ In the Brussels *thesaurus*-edition of 1585, only the print *Christ in the house of Mary and Martha* (fig. 4), featuring an Aertsen-like composition with a division in foreground and background, is signed by Ambrosius. With this division and the strong contrast between light and dark parts, he returns to the compositional scheme of the aforementioned Brussels drawing of *Beneficentia*. The strong muscular bodies of Christ and the women surrounding him show his interest of prints by artists such as Marten van Heemskerck and other Italianist artists which he may have wanted to emulate here specifically, and whose inventions were used in the *Thesaurus*. The 1579 edition however, boasts other title pages signed by Ambrosius.⁴¹ Moreover, some of his preparatory drawings have been preserved, such as *The convening of king Jeroboam* (Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh) (fig. 5) for the *Roboam/Rechabeam*-series.⁴² They show pathos, and drama and action are evident in the extensive use of expressive hands, heavily contracted torsos, and 'overacting' figures.

None of the prints or existing drawings which Ambrosius made for the *Thesaurus* bears a date, but they could well have been made around 1577 in order for them to be ready, engraved and printed by 1579. This is certainly the case for an invention by Hans Snellinck used for the *Thesaurus* which is explicitly dated '1577'.⁴³ On the preserved title-pages, Ambrosius signed 'Ambrosius ab Herentael's Inue(n)tore'⁴⁴ or a variation of it. This could put the inventions before or in 1577, the date of his Antwerp citizenship, as he never used this kind of signature after that date.

On December 27th 1577 Ambrosius became a citizen of Antwerp.⁴⁵ Three days later, he married the fifty-year old widow Barbara Reyns, whose husband had been a trader in stone and who now owned the business of her late husband.⁴⁶ The bride was twenty years older than Ambrosius. His father and his sister-in law Elisabeth (wife of his elder brother Frans) acted as witnesses to the marriage.⁴⁷ The artist moved

in with his wife in house Saint Peter at Schelleken, not far from where his brother Frans lived.⁴⁸ The street, running parallel to the river Scheldt, was located in the stone carvers' quarter, and featured many warehouses. The well-known German merchant-family Fugger⁴⁹ owned property there, as did Cornelis Floris III.⁵⁰ Barbara Reyns also owned other real estate in the neighbourhood, as well as some stone quarries in Hemiksem near Antwerp, and the above mentioned stone business.⁵¹ Ambrosius besides being an artist, through his marriage also became a merchant in stones and lime. The Antwerp building trade prospered and profited from the destructions of the previous years. Ambrosius and his wife sold building materials to the contractors for repairs of the city hall between 1579 and 1581.⁵² It has every appearance that the couple's stone business did well.⁵³ The clientele of the business was varied and also included artists such as Tobias Verhaecht, and the city painter Peeter Leys, with whom Ambrosius would continue to keep in touch artistically.⁵⁴ The many foreign currencies in Barbara's inventory after her death in 1582, representing a value of 252 guilders, indicated that many transactions were done with foreigners.⁵⁵

In August 1578 the fate of Antwerp was sealed by the Provisional Religious Peace, proclaimed by archduke Matthew and William of Orange. It confirmed the growing dominance of Protestants in Antwerp. It also meant that Calvinists and Lutherans were assigned official and religious buildings for their meetings and services.

Next to his work for the stone business Ambrosius continued to make inventions for prints.⁵⁶ In 1578 he designed a series of *The Fate of Man*, an allegory consisting of three prints: *Vanitas*, *Casus Hominis*, and *Exitatio Hominis*. The *Vanitas*-print was obviously designed to be put above the *Casus Hominis* to make a large double leaf. A preparatory drawing by Ambrosius has been preserved for the *Exitatio Hominis* (Antwerp, Cabinet of Prints) (fig. 6). However, as the design is not mirrored, its specific relation to the print is not clear.⁵⁷ It may have been a first stage or preparatory drawing, as some details such as the book on which Man supports himself, have been changed subsequently, while others (such as the city in the right hand background) have been added. In the *Exitatio Hominis*, the subjects of the *Vanitas* and *Casus Hominis*, which take place in a house, have been inserted in the background on the left. The composition is balanced, but crowded and filled with action; the figures are muscular but again more refined, elegant, slim and mannered than the robust figures of some of the prints for the *Thesaurus*. The figure of *Death* even looks like a study of muscles and tendons.⁵⁸ Other designs such as those for the series of eight *Virtues*

6
Ambrosius Francken, *Exitatio Hominis*, drawing, 224 mm x 355 mm. Antwerp, Cabinet of Prints. Photo copyrights Antwerp, Cabinet of Prints.



Ambrosius Francken (invention),
Adriaan Collaert (engraver), *Christ
shedding his blood before Fides*, print.
Brussels, Royal Library, Cabinet of
Prints. Photo copyrights Brussels,
Royal Library, Cabinet of Prints.



and Vices, dated 1579, also testify of his prolific designing-activities in these years. The series was engraved by Hieronymus Wierix,⁵⁹ and published a first time by Willem Verhaecht, a relative of the better-known Tobias, who was a client in Ambrosius's stone business.⁶⁰ The inscriptions of Bible passages in four languages point to an international distribution. A preparatory drawing in ink and wash by Ambrosius's hand for *Caritas and Invidia* (Florence, Uffizi), shows again the neatly divided compositional panes, clearly delineated shapes with volumes hinted at by sparsely drawn hatching and a few soft washes that are typical for Ambrosius.⁶¹

On June 11-12th 1579 the Religious Peace was proclaimed by the Antwerp city council.⁶² According to this agreement Antwerp Catholics kept the Church of Our Lady, Saint James's church and the (no longer extant) church of Saint Walburga. The other churches were given to the Protestants. In August 1579, houses were searched, city-gates closed and street corners watched. A pest epidemic in August and September of that year made things worse. Presumably, Ambrosius's main source of income at that time was the stone business, which continued to prosper.⁶³

A last-known design for a print, probably made in the early 1580s, and engraved by Adriaan Collaert, is *Christ shedding his blood before Fides* (fig. 7). The iconography is an elaboration of an invention by Marten van Heemskerck and engraved by Dirck Volkertsz. Coornhert around 1559.⁶⁴ As far as is known, it marks the end of Ambrosius's career as a designer for prints. Before 1581, no mention is made of paintings by his hand, and none are preserved. Although no information on payment to Ambrosius has as yet been found, he probably did not earn much money with his designs, as the designer was usually paid less than the engraver.⁶⁵ But prints that sold well could be

an artist's calling card and make his name. For other artists such as Marten de Vos, the 1570s were relatively quiet years as well as far as large commissions went, but they were fruitful for his designs for prints.

The more than ten drawings of the 1570s which have been preserved show that Ambrosius had an easy hand, and they have a finished and polished look. The firmly drawn lines and the few *pentimenti* present an artist who is sure of himself. Maybe the preserved drawings represent a final stage of a long process of trials: no studies, sketches or model drawings have been found. One could hold it against him that he imitated the brilliant and sparkling compositions of Marten de Vos too much, and that they are repetitive so that his inventions are wanting in originality, and look merely efficient. But Ambrosius keeps his inventions close to the textual source, with clearly designated allegorical figures that leave no room for obscurity. His compositions show a suitable *variété* and a good blending of antique decorative elements, landscape and small figures. The planes are neatly constructed and the play of nearness and distance is well balanced, something in which he is comparable to Marten de Vos. Marten van Heemskerck especially is an older source which Ambrosius seems to have emulated, with large clearly delineated figures showing the main action while in the background related events take place. Especially in the beginning of his career, Ambrosius eschewed motion and contrasts, so that there are few hatchings and dark passages, which make his early designs somewhat bland. His compositions of the late 1570s are generally more agitated, and sometimes even violent.

'Den quaden tyt'?⁶⁶ The years 1580-1585

It has every appearance that Ambrosius's professional ambitions as an artist were higher than his work in the stone trade offered, although he undoubtedly earned a good living. Between October 1580 and 1581, he became co-dean in the guild of Saint Luke, together with painter and art dealer Bartholomeus de Momper (1535-after 1597).⁶⁷ De Momper succeeded the painter Peter II Liesaert (Marten de Vos's nephew) as dean.⁶⁸ This new function implies that Ambrosius was active as an artist and that he attached importance to his artistic activities. He probably also had a penchant for correct administration and neat book-keeping, a capacity he appears to have shared with his brother Frans.⁶⁹ The deans of the guilds performed administrative and financial duties, estimated prices, judged and controlled quality of art, but were also involved in social calls, they visited and checked up on ill members, helped distribute poor relief money where necessary and they were present at baptisms, burials and marriages of the members of the guild. It was also expected of the dean and his close aides that they showed generosity towards the guild and contributed financially to all sorts of activities, if needed.

In the early 1580s, the Calvinist city council replaced the Catholic administration, and the guilds and militias were cleansed. That Ambrosius became dean during this troubled period is indeed curious. Was he a closet-Protestant after all? Up to now no archival or artistic proof of possible anti-Catholic ideas has been preserved. That he was not specifically marked down by insertion of a symbol as a non-Catholic in the 1584-tax register (see below) may point to his Catholic beliefs. But whether to be of Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran or any other religion was probably as much a matter of belief or conviction, as of opportunity. Not all artists and artisans wanted to take sides, especially in a mercantile town such as Antwerp where the market reigned and where every customer usually counted.⁷⁰

By the beginning of 1581, Ambrosius, next to being a stone trader was also a painter and maybe an art dealer. The Frenchman Antoine Gassen bought five paintings from him at that time, for 124 Carolus guilders, a substantial sum.⁷¹ At 25 Carolus guilders

a painting on average, this seems rather expensive when placed in the context of late sixteenth-century prices.⁷² Unfortunately, the document does not say whether the artist made the paintings himself or whether he sold them as a dealer. It is interesting that the French connection appears here again; maybe it had been present all the time in the background after his return from Paris. Antoine Gassen's brother Jean was married to Catherine, the daughter of the famous printer and bookseller Christopher Plantin. Catherine and her sister Martine (later wife of Jan Moerentorf or Moretus) ran a prosperous lace business and often came into contact with Parisian dealers.⁷³ The Gassen-dynasty was not only active in the lace trade but also dealt in art objects and paintings. Pierre Gassen (of whom Antoine was a nephew) in 1570 had been called 'lingier de Messieurs frères du Roy' and 'pourvoyeur de marchandises,' selling luxury goods to the French court.⁷⁴ No other such transactions were found in these years for Ambrosius.

Between the 19th and the 22nd of June 1581, the altarpieces of the Cathedral were systematically removed on demand of the powerful Calvinist guild members: the Silent Iconoclasm.⁷⁵ In early July, the city council forbade the exercise of the Catholic religion and by the end of 1581, Antwerp was the virtual capital of the protestant Netherlands.⁷⁶ Interestingly, as co-dean and dean, Ambrosius might have known up-to-date sensitive information about the destruction of religious art during the Silent Iconoclasm in 1581: deans had access to the colonels' chamber where these important decisions were made. Was he thus in a position to inform his brother Frans about the plundering of Peter Pots abbey so that Frans, living opposite the abbey could rescue its valuable goods, embroidered chasubles and works of art for safekeeping in his house?⁷⁷

In these times, Ambrosius registered as a member of the *Armenbus*, or 'poor relief box,' which provided a certain social security for its members in exchange for regular contributions. It looked after its ill and poor members, provided relief and covered funeral and burying costs if needed.⁷⁸ Due to his position in the guild, Ambrosius may have felt obliged to become a member, as financially he and his wife were still sailing in calm waters. That they were careful and made good investments is abundantly clear.⁷⁹

Between October 1581 and October 1582, Ambrosius took upon him the full deanship of the guild of Saint Luke; his co-dean was Joos van de Wyere, a dealer in paintings.⁸⁰ In the guild's ledgers Ambrosius started the year's chapter with the ominous words: 'Memory of those who took their free master's oath with me, Ambrosius, and who left because of the bad times without paying their inscription fee.'⁸¹ Here we read one of the few personal remarks preserved by Ambrosius. The 'quaden tyt', or bad times were felt by many artists and artisans in their purse. Not being able to make a living, and looking for other places to ply their trade, they left without paying their entry fees. But while the political and religious situation worsened, in February 1582, the entry of the new duke of Brabant, François of Alençon, was celebrated. Although he had been appointed as long ago as July 1580, he only arrived in the Netherlands in early 1582. Theatres, arches, and also ceremonial wagons were decorated with appropriate themes.⁸² Nothing is known about the participation of Ambrosius Francken as an artist in the preparation of these events, but he appears in the accounts as a stone trader.⁸³

In July 1582, Ambrosius's first wife passed away at the age of 55, after a marriage of less than five years. If the inventory is anything to go by, their house, called Saint Peter, was rather large, and it was valued at 2768 Carolus guilders.⁸⁴ It had a back room, a large room, front room, gallery, corn attic, kitchen, small room, cellar, store-room and a few others. The inventory does not mention paintings, as they were probably Ambrosius's own belongings, but it does contain luxury items such as a painted cupboard, Spanish leather chairs which were usually quite expensive, a Dutch Bible (the only book mentioned), silver and gilt salt cellars and tableware. The division of goods shows that Barbara Reyns died a well-to-do woman, as the total value of her houses, real estate, land and rents amounted to 10031 Carolus guilders.⁸⁵ Ambrosius inherited

his own dowry of 162 Carolus guilders, as well as part of the belongings of his late wife for the total amount of 4437 Carolus guilders, a sizeable sum: the artist had made a profitable match.⁸⁶ The death of his wife ended Ambrosius's career as a stone dealer, as the business passed on to her children from her first marriage.

In January 1583, the French fury ravaged Antwerp, as the capricious and unpredictable d'Alençon tried and failed a coup d'état. In April 1583, less than a year after the death of his wife, Ambrosius married Clara Pickaerts, a hose-maker's widow. She lived in Augustijnenstraat, where he joined her and would live until his death in 1618. The whole of Ambrosius's inheritance was used as dowry for a marriage that would bring him yet a step further to financial success, as hose-makers were well-to-do artisans.⁸⁷ It must have been at this time that he took in Antoinette and Hans, the orphans of his recently deceased youngest brother Cornelis about whom, besides that he was a lead white maker, little else is known.⁸⁸ Hans was apprenticed to him and became a painter. Two years after Ambrosius had come to live at Augustijnenstraat, Frans Francken also moved there in a rented house. There is no information on Ambrosius's artistic activities in the years 1583-1585, but one gathers he was far from poor. According to the 1584-tax accounts, he was one of the few taxed artists of Antwerp. The richest was the famous sculptor and architect Cornelis Floris, who paid 10 Carolus guilders of taxes per month, followed by the little-known Ambrosius Schmidt at 7,5 guilders per month. Ambrosius Bosschaert, Cornelis van Coninxloo, Ambrosius Francken and Frans Mirou each paid 30 *stuivers* per month.⁸⁹ The historian Jan Van Roey who studied the voluminous set of tax documents of 1584, thus calculated that of the many dozens of artists living and working in Antwerp, only eight belonged to the group of high taxed, while six belonged to the lower taxed. The majority of artists and artisans in the art trade went untaxed and thus did not have a very large income. However, one may ask how much Ambrosius had actually earned with his art. It is reasonable to assume that his first marriage and the stone business contributed more to his (modest) fortune than his prints and his other artistic activities. In any case, it also seems clear that Ambrosius's situation differed from that of the majority of artists.

A flying start

In the meagre period before the Fall of Antwerp in 1585, there is a rich hoard of data which shows that Ambrosius not only survived, but came out of this period as a modestly prosperous man. While the professional and economic possibilities for him, just as for other painters, were much influenced and even limited by the political and religious events of the 1580s, it is clear that he had his own strategies and ways to battle the crisis: apparently, he made the right choices, and the right wagers. In the years 1566-1585 he was able to strengthen his position in the professional and social milieu; this integration by mastership, citizenship and marriage manifests itself in the social and professional functions the artist took up in the guild of Saint Luke. The urban corporate milieu of which Ambrosius was part, formed a social net and a buffer. He also had enough resilience to cope with changing professional situations, taking opportunities as they came. His entrepreneurship as well took up a prominent place: it is clear that the stone business offered full time employment, allowing only limited time for his artistic activities. Indeed, the straightened economic circumstances of those years must have forced him to try out other professions as the opportunities presented themselves. One thing that points in this direction is the high fall-out rate of 80 per cent of apprentices on their way to mastership, a certain (but unknown) portion of them looking for work elsewhere. There is no clear answer as to why Ambrosius apparently stopped designing prints after the early 1580s, contrary to his fellow-artists such as Marten de Vos. Was this caused by the fact that designs



for prints had been an extra income and not his main source of living when he was involved in the building trade before 1582?

In the early 1580s, his acute sense of business, his involvement with art (whether painting or maybe dealing in art, and as a dean to the guild) remained firmly present. He was more than ever interested in exercising the trade he had trained in: painting. Antwerp continued to play an important role as an international and local art centre during the years after 1566 and altarpieces and works of art in public and religious buildings were repaired or replaced with renewed fervour. Due to this, the town took the lead in history painting in the early 1570s, which benefited painters such as Michiel Coxie (1499-1592), Willem Key (1515-1568), Adriaan Thomasz. Key (ca 1544 - after 1589), and Marten de Vos (1532-1603). But the build-up towards the Calvinist republic caused religious painting to end at a rather low point by the early 1580s. Still, the young artist seemed not to have been deterred by this: he was determined to succeed: a combination of talent, luck and a shrewd nose for business would allow him to build a prolific studio some decades further on.⁹⁰ By 1584, Ambrosius, as shown by the tax registers, was not quite an average artist, but someone with enough capital to inject into his own studio, and have the funds to take in his niece, and his nephew who became his apprentice. All this certainly makes him exceptional. After 1585 his career as a painter of altarpieces took a flying start.⁹¹ Ambrosius was able to obtain many commissions for altarpieces for Antwerp churches, such as the *Preaching of Saint Eligius* (Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts) (fig. 8). His eye-catching altarpieces, with drama and over-acting figures, with a story line close to the source, striking colours and contrasts, were all set in a clearly defined and neatly expressed composition. Together with his brother Frans and with Marten de Vos, Ambrosius topped the bill for more than a decade.

NOTES

* The author wishes to thank J. Dambruynne for his advice.

¹ P.F. Rombouts and T. van Lerijs, *De Liggeren en andere historische archieven der Antwerpsche Sint-Lucasgilde*, 2 volumes, The Hague 1864-1876, Amsterdam 1961, vol. 1, p. 282. The words were written by Ambrosius Francken. This article is a revised account of part of chapter 2 of N. Peeters, *Tussen continuïteit en vernieuwing. De bijdrage van Frans en Ambrosius Francken I, en de jonge generatie Francken, tot de historieschilderkunst te Antwerpen ca 1570-1620*, Brussels 2000 [unpublished PhD dissertation Vrije Universiteit Brussels] (publication forthcoming).

² C. Van de Velde, *Frans Floris (1519/20-1570). Leven en Werken*, Brussels 1975; D. Freedberg, *Iconoclasm and painting in the revolt of the Netherlands 1566-1609*, New York 1988 (diss. 1972); A. Zweite, *Marten de Vos als Maler*, Berlin 1980; A.T. Woollett, *The altarpiece in Antwerp, 1544-1615: Painting and the Militia guilds*, Ann Arbor 2004 [unpublished PhD dissertation Columbia University, N.Y.]; J. Müller Hofstede 'Zum Werke des Otto van Veen 1590-1600', *Bulletin van de Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België* 3-4 (1957), pp. 127-174; A. Monballieu, 'Een werk van Pieter Bruegel en Hans Vredeman de Vriese voor de Tresorier Aert Molckerman', *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten van Antwerpen* (1969), pp. 113-134; A. Monballieu, 'De reconstructie van een drieluik van Adriaen Thomasz. Keij bestemd voor het hoogaltaar van de Antwerpse Recollettenkerk', *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten van Antwerpen* (1971), pp. 91-104; C. Van de Velde, *Frans Pourbus the elder and the Diffusion of the style of Frans Floris in the Southern Netherlands*, in: E. Mai, et al. (eds.), *Die Malerei Antwerpens*, Cologne 1994, pp. 11-17. But there remain important lacunae in the available information concerning Southern Netherlandish painters specialised in religious history paintings between 1566 and 1585. Although parts of their oeuvre has been studied, the all-important role of Michiel Coxcie, and the precociously talented but short-lived Frans Pourbus remain largely uncharted: no complete catalogue exists as yet. This is also the case for Christpijn van den Broeck, Jacob de Backer, Bernard de Rijckere and Adam van Noort.

³ G. Crossick, 'Past Masters: in search of the artisan in European History', in: G. Crossick (ed.), *The artisan and the European town, 1500-1900*, Aldershot 1997, pp. 1-40, esp. p. 9, speaks of the fundamental role of the household in craft production. Ideas on method and interpretation are developed in: N. Peeters, Family matters: an integrated biography of Pieter Brueghel II (*Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Oudheidkunde en Kunstgeschiedenis, forthcoming*). See also: N. Peeters, 'Marked for the Market? Continuity, collaboration and the mechanics of artistic production of history painting in the Francken-workshops in Counter-Reformation Antwerp', *Kunst voor de Markt, Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 50 (1999), pp. 59-80.

⁴ Ideas were found in: R. Mackenney, *Tradesmen and Trades, the world of the guilds in Venice and Europe c. 1250-1650*, London 1987; J.R. Farr, 'On the Shop floor: Guilds, artisans, and the European market Economy, 1350-1750', *Journal of Early Modern History* 1 (1997), pp. 24-54; H. Soly, 'Sociale relaties in Antwerpen tijdens de 16de en 17de eeuw', in: J. Van der Stock (ed.), *Antwerpen, verhaal van een metropool*, Antwerp 1993, p. 37.

⁵ M.J. Bok, 'The rise of Amsterdam as a cultural centre: the market for paintings, 1580-1680', in: P. O'Brien (ed.), *Urban Achievement in early Modern Europe, Golden Ages of Antwerp*, Cambridge 2001, pp. 186-209.

⁶ Freedberg 1988 (note 2), pp. 212 and 203.

⁷ N. Peeters, 'Nicolaes Francken van Herentals (ca. 1520-1596), schilder zonder oeuvre: een korte bijdrage over de stamvader van de Franckendynastie', *Taxandria. Jaarboek van de Koninklijke geschied- en oudheidkundige kring van de Antwerpse Kempen*, new series (1997), pp. 207-210.

⁸ N. Peeters, 'Zugewanderte Künstler in Antwerpen in der Frühen Neuzeit', in: K.J. Bade, P.C. Emmer, L. Lucassen en J. Oltmer (ed.), *Enzyklopädie Migration in Europa vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, Paderborn 2007, p. 1108-1110.

⁹ M.P.J. Martens and N. Peeters, 'Artists by numbers. Quantifying Artist's Trades in 16th century Antwerp', in: M. Faries (ed.),

Making and Marketing: Studies of the Painting Process in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Netherlandish Workshops, Turnhout 2006, p. 221.

¹⁰ H. Miedema (ed.), *Karel van Mander, lives of the illustrious Netherlandish and German painters*, Doornspijk 1994-1999, 6 vols., vol. I, fol. 242v; N. Peeters en J. Dambruynne, 'Artists of the twilight zone, Some introductory remarks on journeymen in Painter's workshops in the Southern Netherlands c. 1540-c. 1650', in: N. Peeters (ed.), *Invisible hands? The role and status of the Painter's Journeyman in the Low Countries c. 1450-c. 1650*, Louvain 2007, pp. ix-xxiv.

N. Peeters with M.P.J. Martens, 'Assistants in artists' workshops in the Southern Netherlands (fifteenth and sixteenth centuries). Overview of the archive sources', in: N. Peeters (ed.), *Invisible hands? The role and status of the Painter's Journeyman in the Low Countries c. 1450-c. 1650*, Louvain 2007, pp. 33-49.

¹¹ Miedema (ed.) 1994 (note 10) vol. I, fol. 242v-243r. The exact number is unknown: no journeymen's lists were preserved for the Antwerp guild of Saint Luke.

¹² M.P.J. Martens and N. Peeters, 'Masters and servants. Workshop assistants in artists' workshops (1453-1579): a statistical approach to workshop size and labor division', in: H. Verougstraete (ed.), *La peinture ancienne et ses procédés: copies, répliques, pastiches. Le dessin sous-jacent colloque XV*, Louvain 2006, p. 115-120.

¹³ Martens and Peeters 2006 (note 9), pp. 211-222.

¹⁴ Martens and Peeters 2006 (note 9), note 28. This was an article in the statutes of some artists' corporations, but more often the timespan was variable.

¹⁵ C. Van de Velde, *Het kunstpatrimonium*, in: W. Aerts (ed.), *De Onze Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal van Antwerpen*, Antwerp 1993, p. 187.

¹⁶ N. Peeters and M.P.J. Martens, 'A tale of two cities': Antwerp artists and artisans in London in the Sixteenth century', *Dutch and Flemish Artists in Britain 1550-1800: Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 13 (2003), pp. 31-42; Freedberg 1988 (note 2), pp. 192-193.

- ¹⁷ D. Roggen and J. Withof, 'Cornelis Floris', *Gentsche Bijdragen* 8 (1942), p. 167; P. Rolland, 'La Famille Floris à Tournai', *Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Oudheidkundige Kring van Antwerpen* (1950), pp. 294-295 and pp. 311-312; J. Van Damme, A. Huysmans and C. Van Mulders, *Cornelis Floris: 1514-1575: beeldhouwer, architect, ontwerper*, Brussels 1996, pp. 111-113.
- ¹⁸ Miedema (ed.) 1994 (note 10), vol. I, p. 242v; E. Cortyl, *Un évêque du 16^e siècle, Pierre Pintafleur, évêque de Tournai 1575 à 1580*, Lille 1893, pp. 99-100.
- ¹⁹ M. Van Vaernewijck, *Van de beroerlijke tijden in de Nederlanden en voornamelijk in Gent (1566-1568)*, Hasselt 1966, p. 150.
- ²⁰ Miedema (ed.) 1994 (note 10), vol. I, p. 252r.
- ²¹ E.-H. De Grouchy, 'Extraits des registres paroissiaux d'Avon', *Annales de la Société historique et archéologique du Gâtinais* (1890), p. 5. For more on Antwerp journeymen-painters in Paris around the Franckens, see N. Peeters, 'Connecting people. The activities of the Antwerp painter Hieronymus Francken, and other Floris disciples in Paris, after 1566', in: G. Maës and J. Blanc (ed.) *The artistic exchanges between the Low Countries and France, 1482-1814*, (forthcoming).
- ²² For the close connection between the three brothers, see for example: N. Peeters, 'Resiliency and enterprise. The Francken-brothers in the years between the Iconoclasm and the Spanish Fury (1566-76)', in: H. Verougstraete (ed.), *Symposium XVI for the Study of Underdrawing and Technology in Painting*, Bruges, 21, 22 and 23 September 2006, Louvain 2008 (in print); and N. Peeters, 'The Nachwuchs of Frans Floris: a reconstruction of the triptych of the Adoration of the Magi by Hieronymus and Frans Francken from 1571', (in preparation).
- ²³ M.A. Katritzky, *The art of the commedia: a study in the Commedia dell'arte 1560-1620*, Amsterdam 2006; C.S. Sterling, 'Early painting of the Commedia dell'Arte in France', *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (1943), p. 11ff; H. Mielke, 'Antwerpener Graphik in der 2. Hälfte des 16. Jh.', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 38 (1975), p. 52; M. Schapelhouman, *Tekeningen van Noord- en Zuid-Nederlandse kunstenaars geboren voor 1600 in het Amsterdams Historisch Museum*, Amsterdam 1979, pp. 46-47.
- ²⁴ Paper with watermark of French lilies and eight letters. Watermark not mentioned in C.M. Briquet. Signature of later date below to the right: *M. Ambrosius Vranckx*. See Schapelhouman 1979 (note 23), p. 46, nr. 22; J. van Tatenhove, 'Recensie van M. Schapelhouman, Tekeningen van Noord- en Zuid-Nederlandse kunstenaars geboren voor 1600 in het Amsterdams Historisch Museum, Amsterdam 1979', *Oud-Holland* 96 (1982), pp. 195-196; [Cat.] Anon., *Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dessins de maîtres des Pays-Bas méridionaux et septentrionaux nés avant 1600*, Lyon 1980, nr. 20; A. Leik, *Frühe Darstellungen der commedia dell'Arte. Eine Theaterform als Bildmotiv*, Neuried 1996 (diss. 1991), p. 339, nr. A 115.
- ²⁵ It has as yet not been possible to trace the current whereabouts of the two gouaches. The author knows them from photos only. Dimensions of both 245 x 370 mm; Schapelhouman 1979 (note 23), pp. 191-197. Both were sold in Rome, Christie's, on 15/10/1970, nr. 88. Van Tatenhove 1982 (note 24), pp. 195-96 and the catalogue of the auction, attribute the gouaches to Toeput.
- ²⁶ Dimensions 240 x 335 mm; Mielke 1975 (note 23), nr. 34; Schapelhouman 1979 (note 23), pp. 46-47; Van Tatenhove 1982 (note 24), pp. 195-196.
- ²⁷ Dimensions 301 x 309 mm. Below: French verse in 6 columns and 4 lines. Mielke 1975 (note 23), p. 52, nr. 34, note 43; Schapelhouman 1979 (note 23), p. 47; Van Tatenhove 1982 (note 24), pp. 195-196; Leik 1996 (note 24) p. 311, nr. A 87 and p. 156.
- ²⁸ Hans Liefrinck the Elder died in 1573, but was followed in the trade by his eponymous son. Another Hans Liefrinck was inscribed in the Antwerp *Liggeren* in 1581 as a master's son. For the stylistical attribution, see Mielke 1975 (note 23), p. 52.
- ²⁹ R. Lebègue, *Etudes sur le théâtre français*, Paris 1977, vol. 1, p. 284.
- ³⁰ A. Baschet, *Les comédiens italiens à la cour de France*, Paris 1882, p. 15, note p. 16, p. 26, pp. 20-21; N.M. Bernardin, *La comédie italienne en France et les théâtres de la foire 1570-1791*, s.l. 1902, p. 9; A. Beijer (ed.), *Le Receuil Fossard, la commedia dell'arte au XVI^e siècle, en 1601...* (sic) et en 1981, Paris 1981, p. 23; G. Attinger, *L'esprit de la Commedia dell'arte dans le théâtre français*, Geneva 1981 (1950), pp. 92-93, 96-97 and 99; Lebègue 1977 (note 29), vol. 1, pp. 279, 291-294.
- ³¹ C. Lis and H. Soly, 'Ambachtsgilden in vergelijkend perspectief: de Noordelijke en de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (15de-18de eeuw)', in: C. Lis and H. Soly (ed.), *Werelden van verschil, ambachtsgilden in de Lage Landen*, Brussels 1997, p. 36. For the master's title, see Rombouts and Van Lerijs (1864-1876) 1961 (note 1), vol. 1, p. 250.
- ³² J.A. Van Houtte, *Déclin et survivance d'Anvers 1550-1700*, in: *Studi in Onore di A. Fanfani*, Milan 1962, vol. 5, pp. 710-711; Idem, 'Economie et société aux Pays-Bas à l'époque de Rubens', *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique belge de Rome* 48-49 (1978-1979), p. 191; C. Avery, 'Antwerp, August 1577, the "Spanish Fury" and the liberation of the Citadel: A series of Bronze Plaquettes after Martin de Vos', *The Connoisseur* 195 (1977), pp. 252-263.
- ³³ G. Gascoyne, 'The Spoyle of Antwerpe (1576)', in: R. Simpson (ed.), *The School of Shakespeare*, London 1872, p. 28.
- ³⁴ Peeters 2000 (note 1), pp. 91-92. E. McGrath, 'An allegory of the Netherlandish war by Hendrik de Clerck', in: *Rubens and his world*, Antwerp 1985, pp. 80-81 (both as ca 1570); F. Muller, *De Nederlandsche Geschiedenis in Platen*, Amsterdam 1863-1880, 4 vols., vol. 1, p. 77, nr. 520; G. Van Rijn, *Atlas van Stolk, Katalogus der Historie-Spot- en Zinneprenten betreffende de Geschiedenis van Nederland*, Amsterdam 1895-1933, 9 vols., vol. 1, p. 282, nr. 69; Mielke 1975 (note 23), p. 51, fig. 33; A. Diels and M. Leesberg (ed.), *The Collaert Dynasty (The New Hollstein, Dutch & Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts 1450-1700)*, Ouderkerk aan den IJssel 2006, vol. V, p. 199, nr. 1213, and vol. I, p. li, with date 1576, used here.
- ³⁵ Peeters 2000 (note 1), p. 100; Mielke 1975 (note 23), pp. 50-51, and fig. 32.
- ³⁶ The series was engraved by Hieronymus Wierix and re-edited different times, among others by Pieter Balten and Johannes Galle. Peeters 2000 (note 1), pp. 100-101; Mielke 1975 (note 23), p. 48; M. Mauquoy-Hendrickx, *Les estampes des Wierix*, Brussels 1978-1983, 3 vols. in 4, vol 2, 1978, p. 278, nrs. 1520-1522; Van Tatenhove, 1982

(note 24), pp. 193-198, specifically p. 194; J.S. Kostyshyn, *Door tsoecken men vindt: A Reinroduction to the life and work of Peeter Baltens alias Custodis of Antwerp (1527-1584)*, Case Western Reserve University 1994 [Unpublished PhD dissertation], pp. 983-986, nr. C 42-44. The engravings were mentioned in the inventory of the late Pieter Balten in 1593.

³⁷ Peeters 2000 (note 1), p. 102. The signature is in the same ink as used for the drawing. The drawing consists of two leaves glued together and is foxed. Drawing in dark brown ink over pencil, with brown wash sparingly used. Indented for transfer. Below to the left a collector's mark 'WSB' topped by a swan. Dividing lines in pencil are visible.

³⁸ *Thesaurus sacrarum historiarum veteris testamenti, elegantissimis imaginibus expressum excellentissimorum in hac arte virorum opera: nunc primum in lucem editus*, Antwerp 1579, published by Gerard de Jode. A few copies of 1579 have been preserved, among others in Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, in Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek and Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. The second edition from 1585, *Thesaurus veteris et novi testamenti*, has presumably been preserved in more copies. I consulted the copy in the Royal Library, Cabinet of Prints in Brussels (1585). There is as yet no general study of the typology and the contents of the *Thesaurus*, and its two editions. According to Dr. P. Van der Coelen (Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Cabinet of prints), no two copies are the same. I wish to thank him for sharing his knowledge on the edition of 1579.

³⁹ P. van der Coelen, *Das Alte Testament in Bilderbibeln des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, in: C. Tümpel, *Im Lichte Rembrandts. Das alte Testament in Goldenen Zeitalter der Niederländischen Kunst*, Münster 1994, p. 329, for the publishing date of 1579. Mielke 1975 (note 23) presumably had no knowledge of the earlier edition. Diels and Leesberg (ed.) 2006 (note 34) use the date '1585' for the Collaerts.

⁴⁰ Peeters 2000 (note 1), pp. 103-106, for information on the copy of 1585. For the 1585-edition, Mielke 1975 (note 23) is still the firm basis for all attributions of inventions for prints to Ambrosius Francken. I further wish to thank Dr. H. Bevers (Berlin, Cabinet of Prints) and Mrs.

Mielke for letting me consult the archive of the late Dr. Mielke.

⁴¹ There are title pages for the series of *David* (four engravings) *Roboam/Rechabeam* (six engravings), *Conversion* (six engravings), *Four Evangelists* (four engravings), and the *Parables* (twelve engravings), in the copies of Stuttgart and Wolfenbüttel; for the *Roboam/Rechabeam* and *David*-series, there are also title-pages in Rotterdam. I wish to thank Dr. P. van der Coelen for this information.

⁴² Peeters 2000 (note 1), p. 105. Drawing in dark brown ink, with brown wash sparingly used. Indented for transfer, with indented lines completing the composition where no contours have been drawn in ink. Below to the centre two collectors' marks both stamped with intertwined letters: 'PE' and 'BJ'. Below in the right hand corner 'o/4' (?) written in the same ink as used for the drawing.

⁴³ Mielke 1975 (note 23) p. 35, fig. 6. Diels and Leesberg (ed.) 2006 (note 34), vol. II, pp. 62-64, nrs. 290-295, with date '1585'.

⁴⁴ Information by Dr. P. van der Coelen.

⁴⁵ Stadsarchief Antwerp [hereafter as S.A.A.], Vierschaar (Court of Law) 151 (1575-1582), p. 29.

⁴⁶ S.A.A., Parish Registers, Church of Saint Andrew 244, Marriages (1568-1603), 7th of January 1578, fol. 119 bis (not published). The marriage contract is not preserved but it is mentioned in S.A.A., Notary Acts 1172, A. de Witte (1579-1582), fol. 348v (not published). That Ambrosius had connections in the stone-carvers' and stone-traders' milieu is not surprising, given the link of that trade with the guild of Saint Luke and artists. Also, the family of Frans Floris had deep roots in the stone trade.

⁴⁷ The marriage remained childless, but Barbara already had three children by her first marriage: Jacques, Pauwels en Anna de Bruyne alias De Vriese.

⁴⁸ The precise location of the house is not known.

⁴⁹ S.A.A., Rekenkamer (Accounts chamber) 2196 (1580), fol. 7v-8v (not published).

⁵⁰ S.A.A., Rekenkamer (Accounts chamber) 2196 (1580), fol. 6v-7r (not published).

⁵¹ S.A.A., Notary Acts 1172, A. de Witte (1579-1582), fol. 349v (dated between 9th of July 1582 and 14th of February 1583) (not published).

⁵² S.A.A., Rekenkamer (Accounts chamber) 20 (1579-1580), fol. 217r-218r, 26th of October 1582 (not published); S.A.A., Alderman's registers 371 M & N II (1582), fol. 539r, 26th of October 1582 (not published); S.A.A., Notary Acts 1172, A. de Witte (1579-1582), fol. 339r-350 a r, 9th of July 1582-14th of February 1583 (not published).

⁵³ H. Soly, *Urbanisme en kapitalisme te Antwerpen in de zestiende eeuw. Stedebouwkundige en industriële ondernemingen van Gilbert van Schoonbeke*, Brussels 1977, p. 53.

⁵⁴ Among the clientele were pastry bakers, silver smiths, masons, drapers and shoemakers. S.A.A., Notary Acts 1172, A. de Witte (1579-1582), fol. 344v, between 9th of July 1583 - 14th of February 1583 (not published).

⁵⁵ They comprised gold reals, ducats, French crowns, *pistolets* and Dutch *daalders*, see S.A.A., Notary Acts 1172, A. de Witte (1579-1582), fol. 341r (not published).

⁵⁶ For of this article, we have made a selection of Ambrosius's work as a designer. A large overview of this aspect of his work shall be published more extensively elsewhere. For an exhaustive overview of his designs for prints, see Peeters 2000 (note 1), chapter 2. For the role of prints during the 1560s, see J. Van der Stock, *Printing images in Antwerp, The introduction of Printmaking in acity: Fifteenth century to 1585*, Rotterdam 1998.

⁵⁷ Mielke 1975 (note 23), p. 46, fig. 22.

⁵⁸ They were engraved by Hieronymus Wierix and edited and published by the Lutheran published Willem Verhaecht, who was active in Antwerp between ca 1570 to before 1585. Peeters 2000 (note 1), p. 102; Mielke 1975 (note 23), pp. 46-47; Mauquoy-Hendrickx 1979 (note 36), vol 2, pp. 266 and 271, nrs. 1702, 1473 and 1494; Kostyshyn 1994 (note 36), p. 118. Hieronymus Francken was acclaimed for his anatomy drawings, see M. Sellink, 'As a guide to the highest learning: an Antwerp drawing book dated 1589', *Simiolus* 21 (1992), pp. 40-56.

⁵⁹ For Verhaecht, see: H. Bevers, 'Willem van Haecht composuit. Zu einem aspekt der Antwerpener

- Stichproduktion um 1570', in: E. Mai, K. Schutz and H. Vlieghe, *Die Malerei Antwerpens, Gattungen, Meister, Wirkungen*, Cologne 1994, pp. 178-185, specifically p. 179.
- ⁶⁰ On the last print of the series *Christ and satan*, Ambrosius's signature is visible on the slab of the tomb: *Amb Fran In.*, as well as the date 1579. This also appears on the orb in the first print of the series, *Sapientia and Stultitia*. Peeters 2000 (note 1), p. 102; Mauquoy-Hendrickx 1979 (note 36), vol. 2, pp. 252-254, nrs. 1412-1419; Mielke 1975 (note 23), pp. 48-50 and fig. 27; Bevers 1994 (note 59), pp. 178 and 183.
- ⁶¹ W.T. Kloek, *Beknopte catalogus van de Nederlandse tekeningen in het prentenkabinet van de Uffizi te Florence*, Utrecht 1975, nr. 109 (attribution to Ambrosius Francken); E.A. Petrioli Tofani, *Gabinetto disegni e stampe degli Uffizi, Inventario 2. Disegni esposti*, Florence 1988, p. 711 (attribution to Sebastiaan Vranckx).
- ⁶² F. Baudouin, '1585. De val van Antwerpen, een belangrijke datum voor de kunstgeschiedenis der Nederlanden', in: *Herdenking van Willem van Oranje 1584-1984*, Brussels 1985, pp. 88-89.
- ⁶³ Between March and June 1579, and also after that date, Ambrosius sold stones and chalk to the city of Antwerp for a value of 900 pounds artois [900 Carolus guilders] see S.A.A., Rekenkamer (Accounts Chamber) 20 (1579-1580), fol. 217r-218r (not published). The city accounts further mention payments of 56 pounds artois [56 Carolus guilders] for chalk and stone for repairs of the city hall, and 66 pounds artois [66 Carolus guilders] for chalk and stone for repairs of the dikes of Suikerrui, see Peeters 2000 (note 1), p. 109.
- ⁶⁴ Published by Philip Galle. Peeters 2000 (note 1), p. 106; Diels and Leesberg (ed.) 2006 (note 34), vol. V, pp. 88-89, nr. 1131. For a comparison to the Heemskerck-print, see: I.M. Veldman and G. Luijten (ed.), *Maarten van Heemskerck (The New Hollstein, Dutch & Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts 1450-1700)*, vol. II, p. 125, nr. 435.
- ⁶⁵ By way of an example: while Marten de Vos was paid 15 pounds for a design, Christijn de Passe was paid 6 pounds for the execution per plate, see Zweite 1980 (note 2), p. 193, note 126.
- ⁶⁶ Rombouts and Van Lerijs (1864-1876) 1961 (note 1), vol. 1, p. 282.
- ⁶⁷ F. Vermeylen, *Painting for the Market, Commercialization of Art in Antwerp's Golden Age*, Turnhout 2003, p. 54ff.
- ⁶⁸ S.A.A., Privilegiekamer 555, Collegiaal Actenboek (1580-1581), fol. 174v (23rd of September 1581) (not published); Rombouts and Van Lerijs (1864-1876) 1961 (note 1), vol. 1, pp. 267 and 275. Peter II Liesaert was the son of Peter I Liesaert and Barbara de Vos, who was Marten de Vos's sister, see J. van Roey, 'Een Antwerpse schildersdynamie de Liesaerts XVIe-XVIIe Eeuw', *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten van Antwerpen* (1967), p. 88 and 93.
- ⁶⁹ Rombouts and Van Lerijs (1864-1876) 1961 (note 1), vol. 1, p. 295 ff, especially p. 300ff, show that Frans Francken was meticulous in noting the full draft accounts in the official guild ledger. Not all deans were good administrators. Most only copied their records superficially, and some never did.
- ⁷⁰ Freedberg 1988 (note 2), pp. 186ff; N. Peeters, 'The guild of Saint Luke and the painter's profession in Antwerp between ca. 1560 and 1585: some social and economic insights', in: *The artist in the Early Modern Netherlands, Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 59 (2008, forthcoming).
- ⁷¹ J. Denucé, *Correspondance de Christophe Plantin*, Antwerp 1916 (1968), vol. 6, pp. 268-269. The author refers to the Archives of Plantijn-Moretus (now Antwerp, Cabinet of Prints), nr. 18, *Le grand livre* (1571-1582), fol. 411, 10th of April 1581. The paintings were transported by boat, and toll was paid on 11th of April 1581. The transaction ended on 28th of April 1581.
- ⁷² Peeters (2008, forthcoming) (note 70), on prices of paintings at that time.
- ⁷³ J.B. Van der Straelen, *Geslagtlijste der nakomelingen van den vermaerden Christoffel Plantin*, Antwerp 1858, pp. 15-18.
- ⁷⁴ M. Risselin-Steenebrugen, 'Les débuts de l'industrie dentellière. Martine et Cathérine Plantin', *De Gulden Passer* 39 (1961), pp. 89, 98 and 122.
- ⁷⁵ Freedberg 1988 (note 2), pp. 134-66; J. van Brabant, *Rampspoed en restauratie der Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal van Antwerpen*, Antwerp 1974, pp. 43-44.
- ⁷⁶ J. van Roey, *Antwerpen als protestants centrum in het laatste kwart van de zestiende eeuw*, in: F. de Nave (ed.), *Antwerpen en de scheiding der Nederlanden, 17/8/1585*, Antwerp 1986, p. 46 and 48.
- ⁷⁷ Peeters (2008, in preparation) (note 22).
- ⁷⁸ Archief van de Koninklijke Academie voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, Oud Archief 243/4, Bussenboek (Poor relief Box Ledger) (1538-1627), fol. 28r, 2nd of July 1581 (not published). See also Peeters (2008, forthcoming) (note 70).
- ⁷⁹ Rents were very popular with tradesmen as it was a means to acquire land and property cheaply without having to invest much capital. Soly 1977 (note 53), pp. 57 and 82. For financial matters, see also J. Dambroyne, *Mensen en centen. Het 16de-eeuwse Gent in demografisch en economisch perspectief* [Verhandelingen der Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent, 26], Ghent 2001, p. 125ff.
- ⁸⁰ The guild year 1582-1583 was left blank in the *Liggeren*.
- ⁸¹ Translation by author. See Rombouts and Van Lerijs (1864-1876) 1961 (note 1), vol. 1, p. 282: 'Memorie van denghenen by my Ambrosius Francken, haren eetghedaen hebben als vrymeesters, ende mits den quaden tyt vertrocken syn, ende niet voldaan en hebben'.
- ⁸² I. von Roeder-Baumbach and H.G. Evers, *Versieringen bij Blijde Inkomsten gebruikt in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden gedurende de 16e en 17e eeuw*, Antwerp 1943, p. 17 and 80; F. Yates, *La loyouse entree de Charles IX Roy de France en Paris, 1572*, Amsterdam 1973, p. 34; J.B. van der Straelen, 'Geschiedenis der Rederijkkamer van den H. Geest, genaamd den Olijftak', *De Vlaamsche School* (1863), p. 16; H.M.C. Purkis, *La magnifique entrée de François d'Anjou en sa ville d'Anvers 1582*, Amsterdam 1973, p. 27.
- ⁸³ Indeed, in 1582 he was paid for stones for the repairs of the now disappeared abbey of Saint Michael, near Kloosterstraat and Hoogstraat, where the Calvinist city council met, and where d' Alençon stayed.

The accounts show that Ambrosius was involved in the building of a 'kaatsspel' at Saint-Michael's abbey, which was used by the courtiers. S.A.A., Privilegiekamer 1627, Blijde Inkomst (1582), n.p. (not published); S.A.A., Rekenkamer (Accounts Chamber) 22 (1581-1582), fol. 306v (not published); S.A.A., Notary Acts 1172, A. de Witte (1579-1582), fol. 339r-350a r (not published). R. van Passen, 'Kaatsspelen te Antwerpen in de 15de-18de eeuw', *Naamkunde* (1988), p. 22; Idem, 'Kaatsspelen en kaatsbanen te Antwerpen', *Provinciale Commissie voor Geschiedenis en Volkskunde, Jaarboek* (1988-1989), pp. 151-53; Idem, 'Kaatsspelen te Antwerpen in de 15de-18de eeuw (vervolg)', *Naamkunde* (1989), pp. 51-52.

⁸⁴ Soly 1977 (note 53), p. 89.

Although the estimate concerns the year 1545, the amounts are still valid for the 1580s.

⁸⁵ The wills of Ambrosius and his wife were made at notary B. van den Berghe's on the 16th of January 1582 and 31st of January of the same year. They have not been preserved. The index of the years 1581-1601 in S.A.A., Notary Acts 3420, Van Cantelbeck (not published) confirms that these wills existed.

⁸⁶ S.A.A., Alderman's registers 371 M & N IV (1582), fol. 539r-541v, 26th of October 1582 (not published). The estate was divided; the heirs were Pauwels de Bruyne-de Vriese, mason (son of Barbara Reyms), daughter Anna de Bruyne with her husband and warden Dirick Hackart, and Ambrosius Francken. For comparison to other inventories of the sixteenth

century, see: M.P.J. Martens and N. Peeters, 'Antwerp painting before Iconoclasm, Considerations on the quantification of taste', in: S. Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Economia e Arte Secc. XIII-XVIII*, [Istituto Internazionale di storia economica "F. Datini"], Prato 2002, pp. 875-894; M.P.J. Martens and N. Peeters, 'Paintings in Antwerp houses (1532-1567)', in: N. De Marchi and H. van Miegroet (ed.), *Mapping Markets for paintings in Europe, 1450-1750*, [Studies in European Urban History 6], Turnhout 2006, pp. 35-54; N. Peeters and M.P.J. Martens, 'Piety and splendor: The art collection of Antwerp burgomaster Adriaan Herten', in: A. Golahny, M. M. Mochizuki and L. Vergara (ed.), *In his Milieu, essays on Netherlandish Art in memory of John Michael Montias*, Amsterdam 2006, pp. 347-374.

⁸⁷ Peeters 2000 (note 1), p. 125ff. For hose-makers and their well-to-do status, see H. Deceulaer, *Pluriforme patronen en een verschillende snit. Sociaal-economische, institutionele en culturele transformaties in de kledingsector in Antwerpen, Brussel en Gent, 1585-1800*, Amsterdam 2001.

⁸⁸ S.A.A., Notary Acts 1173, A. de Witte (1583-1584), fol. 211r-213v, 23rd of June 1583 (not published).

⁸⁹ Other painters such as Chrispijn van den Broeck and Adriaan Thomasz. Key paid 4 Carolus guilders per month; Gillis Coignet, Eewout Eewouts, Antonio Palermo and Marten de Vos all paid 2 Carolus guilders and 10 *stuivers* per month; Pauwels van Overbeke, Hans Snellinck and Marten van Valckenborgh paid

1 Carolus guilder per month; J. van Roey, 'De Antwerpse schilders in 1584-1585, pogen tot sociaal-religieus onderzoek', *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten van Antwerpen* (1966), p. 122ff. For what painters could earn with altarpieces and the setting of the prices in relation to the different parameters, see: N. Peeters, "'Painters pencils move not without that musicke". Prices of Southern Netherlandish painted altarpieces between 1585 and 1650', in: A. Tummers and K.J.A. Jonckheere (eds.), *The Art market and connoisseurship in the Dutch Golden Age* (forthcoming 2008).

⁹⁰ Peeters 1999 (note 3), pp. 59-80.

⁹¹ On altarpieces by Ambrosius Francken after 1585, see: N. Peeters, 'Frans I and Ambrosius I Francken, painters of the metropolis Antwerp, and their altarpieces in the years just after the fall of Antwerp (1585-1589)', *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten van Antwerpen* (2003), pp. 69-91; N. Peeters, 'Art Noir: A sign of turbulent times? Investigating the principle of causality in late sixteenth-century Antwerp', in: T.F. Shanon and J.P. Snapper (ed.), *Janus at the millennium, Perspectives on Time in the culture of the Netherlands*, Dallas 2004, pp. 265-278; N. Peeters, 'A corporate image? Decoration for the Saint Luke's altarpiece for the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp (1589-1602)', in: A. Balis, P. Huvenne et al. (ed.), *Florissant: Bijdragen tot de kunstgeschiedenis der Nederlanden (15de-17de eeuw), Liber Amicorum Carl van de Velde*, Brussels 2005, pp. 239-252.