Growing up with Eight Brothers

A Biographical Exploration

Mysterious Michaelina

Who was Michaelina, where did she come from and how did she become what she did? It is often hard to gather information about historical women artists, as the customary clues that enable us to reconstruct the careers of their male counterparts are often lacking. They are rarely if ever named in the membership lists of guilds and corporations, making it virtually impossible to identify the town where they trained or who their teachers were. What biographical information does survive is generally found in sources relating to their contemporaries – relatives, other artists or patrons. This is also the case, sadly, for Michaelina Wautier, for whom fascinating personal documents have yet to be unearthed. Sufficient references can nevertheless be found to her social, family and professional network for us to attempt a sketch of her biography. The account of her life includes lacunae and mysterious coincidences, yet this information, albeit incomplete, is all we have at present to illuminate and to some extent understand her exceptional position and talent.

Magdalena or Michaelina? Woutiers or Wautier?

Her very name poses a dilemma: the most important surviving source – the foundation on which all our knowledge of Wautier as an artist rests – is an inventory that Archduke Leopold Wilhelm had drawn up of his collection of paintings on his return to Vienna after spending the period between 1647 and 1656 in the Low Countries (fig. 2). The inventory itself dates from 1659 and was drafted with considerable precision: not only are her first name and surname stated a total of four times, extremely important details are provided concerning her origins. The painter’s Saint Joachim (see cat. 12, fig. ••a) is described as an ‘Original von Jungfraw Magdalena Woutiers von Mons oder Berghen, Henegaw in Niderlandt’. Item 87 lists ‘der heyl. Joseph’ (cat. 11) as an ‘Original von der Jungfrawen Magdalena Woutiers’ and the subsequent item, no. 88, is another Saint Joachim, described as an ‘Original von Magdalena Woutiers’ (Saint Joachim Reading a Book, cat. 12). Her name does not appear again for another fifty pages, at which point it is linked to the Bacchanal or Triumph of Bacchus, an ‘Original von N. Woutiers’ (cat. 13). The inventory provides us with one secure fact: the paintings were the work of a Jungfraw – i.e. an unmarried woman – called ‘Magdalena Woutiers’.
This information matches the only point of reference that can be gleaned from parish records in Mons. On 2 September 1604, the baptism was recorded at Saint-Nicolas d’Havré of ‘Marie Magdalena Watier, filia Carolj Watier, patrius, Johannes Watier, Maria Magdalena de Hoúst Athest[nantes]’ (fig. 5). Surprisingly, the record in question fails to mention the name of the baptized infant’s mother. The godfather was Johannes Wautier and the name of the godmother is given as ‘Maria Magdalena de Hoúst’.

Both the first name and surname by which the artist is identified in the Vienna catalogue differs from ‘Michaelina Wautier’, the name with which she signed a substantial proportion of her paintings; the question remains, therefore, as to whether this was the same person? ‘Michaelina’ was an unusual name in the early modern period, but that is not sufficient reason in itself to conclude that the names ‘Magdalena’ and ‘Michaelina’ were interchangeable. On the other hand, a similar vagueness can be detected at an earlier date in the inscription ‘Michelline Woutiers’, which appears on the back of Saint Joachim (see cat. 12, fig. 3). In other words, the artist identified as ‘Jungfraw Magdalena Woutiers’ in the 1659 inventory was named as ‘Michelline’ on the back of one of her paintings. It would seem, therefore, that the two given names were used interchangeably as early as the seventeenth century.

The rendering of her name was still evidently deemed worthy of explanation in the early nineteenth century: when Pietro Zani published his Enciclopedia metodico in 1824 in Parma, the name ‘Woutiers Michelina’ accompanied by the comment ‘Michelina, detta anche Madalena’ (‘Michaelina, also called Magdalena’) appears in the list of artists the book contains. Alphonse Wauters likewise suggested in 1884 that the painter ‘Magdalena Wouters’ and ‘Michaelina’ must have been one and the same. Virtually every subsequent author has followed his example, with the exception of those historians who drew on the nineteenth-century genealogy of F.V. Goethals (see Chapter 2) and who therefore considered ‘Marie Madelaine’ and ‘Michelle’ to be sisters. Archive research has demonstrated, however, that these cannot have been two different people. As far as we can ascertain, all the available sources relate to just one woman: Michaelina, whose name also appears in the variations ‘Madeleine’, ‘Michelle’ and ‘Michiel[l]e’.

Her surname was also written in several different ways. Variations in the spelling of family names were still extremely common in seventeenth-century records, even within the same document. The Dutch form ‘Woutiers’ was used in the previously mentioned inventory of 1659 and appears on the engraving that Paulus Pontius made in 1643 after her painted portrait of Andrea Cantelmo (cat. 1): ‘Michaelina Woutiers pinxit’. Pontius’s print was much sought-after by collectors while few other works by Michaelina were in circulation, with the consequence that the spelling ‘Woutiers’ came to be used in later publications. In her native Mons, the family used ‘Wautier’ – the form that also appears on her paintings. Whatever the case, the notarial deeds in which she is mentioned, and which were variously drawn up in French and Dutch, tell us that the painter spoke both languages.

Michaelina Wautier’s exceptional activities whet our curiosity as to the milieu in which she grew up. Based on the reference in the archduke’s inventory, Mons is the obvious place to start looking for the Wautier family (fig. 4), which is referred to in a variety of sources as ‘anciennement noble et originaire de la ville de Mons’... Wautier’s forebears in the male line had served as aldermen of the city since the fifteenth century. Her great-grandfather, François Wautier, is identified as ‘Seigneur à Courrières’, and was ‘Secrétaire des États du Hainaut’. Jean Wautier, Michaelina’s grandfather was an alderman of Mons in 1541, 1544, 1545 and 1548, and he too is described as ‘Seigneur à Courrières’. According to Goethals, the painter’s father, Charles Wautier (d. 24 November 1617), bore the title of ‘Seigneur de Ham-sur-Heure’. This does not appear, however, to be correct. Well-documented publications on the lords of Ham-sur-Heure make no mention of his name, and they were, moreover, without exception members of or related to the Merode family. Goethals also claims that Charles Wautier was
‘page’ to the ‘marquis’ of Fuentes, the viceroy of Naples. Since ‘page’ refers to a boy or young man – not necessarily noble – who was trained in the arts of heraldry and etiquette in a nobleman’s immediate circle, this phase in the life of Michaelina’s father must have occurred before or shortly after his first marriage in 1593. Although there never was a ‘marquis’ of Fuentes, the person referred to was in all likelihood Pedro Enríquez de Acevedo, Count of Fuentes (Zamora 1525–Milan 1610), who served as commander of the Spanish army. This brought him to the Low Countries in 1592, where he captured Cambrai in 1595, but was subsequently defeated by the advancing troops of Maurice of Nassau. By the time he returned to Spain in 1596, the Count of Fuentes had been Governor of the Low Countries for two years (fig. 3). It is possible that Charles Wautier belonged to the count’s entourage during that period and took an active part in his military operations.

The two marriages of Charles Wautier, Michaelina’s father

Charles Wautier married Barbe Hallet, daughter of the ‘pensionnaire de la ville’ in Mons on 1 December 1593. The couple’s five children – Jean, Françoise, Marie, Pierre and Albert – were baptized between 1594 and 1601. Jean died at an early age and Françoise when she was twenty. Barbe Hallet must have died before 12 February 1602, as Charles Wautier was married for a second time on that date to Jeanne George at the Church of Saint-Germain. The couple had six children, of whom Michaelina was the second oldest and the only girl. Her brothers all went on to play an important role in advancing the family’s social status.

Jacques was baptized on 8 December 1602, Michaelina on 2 September 1604, Nicolas on 18 March 1607, Charles on 15 August 1609, Pierre on 18 December 1611 and Leon on 11 July 1616. Michaelina’s father, the ‘semi-aristocratic’ Charles Wautier, married two different women from the wealthy bourgeoisie of Mons. Barbe Hallet was the daughter of a city magistrate, while according to Goethals, Jeanne George came from Valenciennes, although this is disputed by other sources.

The state archives in Mons contain very few records relating to the two families of in-laws, but they do give us an impression of the network to which they belonged. It is particularly interesting to note in this regard that there were constant contacts – not to mention an element of endogamy – between members of the Hallet and George families. The second wife of Jean George, the brother of Michaelina’s mother, for instance, was none other than Jeanne Hallet, the sister of Charles Wautier’s first wife. In short, Michaelina’s family on her
A glimpse behind the scenes

A surviving notebook document – a hand-sized leather-bound manuscript, in which the aforementioned Jean George, Michaelina’s uncle, recorded all sorts of memorable facts and events relating to his family – provides us with a glimpse of the George family’s private life (fig. 6). There is little structure to his notes and no obvious chronology, and the account is disjointed and probably unreliable in some cases. Moreover, Jean George’s style is anecdotal and his handwriting messy: the little book is full of grammatical errors, with regular use of dialect words. Concerning his wedding with Jeanne Hallet, he writes that the reception was postponed for a day as it fell on a Sunday, and there is a moving passage about his son Jean who was born ‘with a caul’ and died shortly afterwards. Jean recalls his young son Albert’s first day at school; excursions with his wife to the castle of ‘Boussu’ (Binches) and the pilgrimage place Notre-Dame de Chièvres; and a relative who was run over by a coach on the road from Mons to Merbe and died of his injuries. He likewise records the plague epidemic that struck Mons in 1615, killing between 7,000 and 8,000 people. There is even room for a toothache remedy. In all, the manuscript paints a disarming picture of everyday reality in Mons at the time over a period of more than a century.

At home in Rue d’Havré, Mons

The kind of news that appears in her uncle’s notebook must have been familiar to Michaelina too. As a child, she experienced the birth of her four younger brothers, while the outbreak of plague that carried off so many victims is bound to have made a powerful impression on a twelve-year-old girl. And when she was thirteen, her father died on 24 November 1617. The children from his first marriage were aged between sixteen and twenty-three at the time, and Michaelina’s full brothers between one and fifteen. It is not known how her now single mother managed to support such a large brood. Even if the children of her husband’s first marriage had already more or less left home, she would still have had at least six other mouths to feed. It is difficult to reconstruct Jeanne George’s financial situation, but we do have an idea of where the Wautier family lived thanks to the annually updated population register for Mons. The ‘District Books’ contain a street-by-street record of home owners ‘qui ont payé bourgeoisie’. In 1608, ‘Charles Waultier’ and his half-brother Jean Waultier occupied a house in ‘Rue de Havrech’ (Rue d’Havrè). The two men were recorded in the same street in
Forgotten Glory, Flawed Strategy?
FIG 5 Lorenzo Tinti
Giovanni Luigi Picinardi, Il Pennello Lagrimato
[funeral oration for Elisabetta Sirani, Bologna], Giacomo Monti, 1665. Frontispiece. The British Library, London, inv. 72.i.16

FIG 6 Jérôme David
after Artemisia Gentileschi
Self-Portrait, c. 1627. Engraving, 141 x 80 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-08-63.787

FIG 7 Anna Maria van Schurman
Self-Portrait, 1633. Engraving and etching, 198 x 152 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-08-59.344
VERSCHOEYDE NEDERLANDSCHE JOFYROUVEN HAER SELVEN OEFFENENDE INDE SEER EDELE SCHILDER-CONST' [THE fame of several young Dutch women who exercise themselves in the noble art of painting]. Artists such as the sisters Maria Theresia, Anna Maria and Françoise van Thielen (fig. 8), Anna Maria van Schurman (figs. 7 and 9), Catharina Peeters, Johanna Vergouwen and the ‘daughters of Pepijn, d’Egmont and Van Dijck’ were praised to the skies with statements about their ‘ONSTERFELIJKE FAEM’ [immortal fame], ‘WONDER SELDSAEMHEYT’ [amazing rareness] and ‘MANHAFTICH WERCK’ [brave work]. From some of these women not a single work of art survives – and by Van Schurman and Vergouwen no more than a single painting each – while the style of Justiniana van Dyck’s paintings and drawings is a matter of pure conjecture. Oddly enough, attention was paid to the dilettantes, but not a word was devoted to the only fully-fledged contemporary woman painter, and that in spite of the fact that Michaelina far surpassed these artists on both an artistic and technical level. The portrait engraving of Commander Cantelmo played a modest role in disseminating her name, but even this could not replace the function of an engraved self-portrait. Moreover, she lacked the lyrical words of admirers to help spread her fame in prose. Shortly after her death in 1689, or perhaps even prior to this, Michaelina disappeared from the public realm. Her name was barely circulated, and her virtuoso paintings were stored safely in the archduke’s collection or hung on the walls of her relatives behind velvet drapes and expensive façades.
Namely a scene with Cain and Abel and one
Michel De Marolles, See Chapter 1.
Berger 1883••.
5 Namely a scene with Cain and Abel and one
Michel De Marolles, Catalogue de livres d’estampes et
de figures en taille douce. Fait à Paris en l’année 1666,
Paris 1666, p. 62. For less well-known artists – such as
Wautier – the author often adopted the spelling
of names and the forms of address from the prints:
many names are shown in their Latinized form
and accompanied by qualifications such as pictor.
‘Pictrice’ can be considered a corruption of the
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Archduke Leopold Wilhelm (1614–1662) (fig. 1) is to date the most important and – almost – the only collector of pictures by Michaelina Wautier of the seventeenth century. He owned four works by her, including the *Bacchanal* (cat. 13), which he most probably even commissioned – such large paintings were not normally produced for the open market.

The circumstances under which Leopold Wilhelm was able to assemble what was undoubtedly the most important collection of the seventeenth century in terms of the number, quality and variety of its paintings, have already been reconstructed and presented in numerous publications. Our current knowledge is based primarily on the correspondence between Leopold Wilhelm and his elder brother Ferdinand (1608–1657). The two men shared a passion for art and from the start of their collecting activity they acted in consultation, seeking each other's advice and keeping each other up to date on acquisitions and opportunities to expand their respective collection. This approach, to which they adhered steadily over the years, culminated in Leopold Wilhelm's purchase of the Duke of Buckingham's collection for Ferdinand III.

We do not know which paintings Leopold Wilhelm's collection contained when it was still housed in his Amalienburg apartments within the Hofburg palace complex. Walter Crowne, however, who was received by the Empress and the then twenty-two-year-old archduke in June 1636 as part of the retinue of the Count of Arundel, noted that 'we saw only a few pictures'.

Leopold Wilhelm's love of paintings was well known outside Austria, too. In June 1641, during an extended stay in Regensburg, Ferdinand received the English ambassador, who presented him with a letter from King Charles I and a crate that evidently contained paintings for the Emperor's brother, since Ferdinand subsequently wrote to Leopold Wilhelm asking what he should do with the chest and whether he might open it to look at the pictures.

In 1643 the art dealer Stainer, who had already been paid the sum of 1100 fl. in 1636, offered Leopold Wilhelm (in a now-lost document) sixty-six works from the collection of Mr Steininger in Augsburg. The Steininger collection was evidently quite significant: Joachim von Sandrart had visited it and specifically admired its works by Venetian masters. We know that the archduke proceeded with the purchase, since various paintings in his collection inventory of 1659 can be identified with those offered to him by Stainer. The majority are Venetian, among them six paintings by Paris Bordone, which were produced for the...
Fuggers and later passed into Steininger’s possession. They include two representations of women and an allegory of Mars Disarming Cupid and Venus (fig. 3).

We know that the archduke employed the services of Frans Luycx (1604–1668) and Caspar Della (c. 1583–1661), court painters to his imperial brother, and that the artist Joachim Khoéler (documented 1646/47) was instructed to make purchases in Venice, of which we have no further details, however. In 1647 Leopold Wilhelm was appointed Governor of the Spanish Netherlands. Prior to his departure, the archduke asked his brother not to use his apartments during his absence, since his paintings were hanging in them and he had nowhere else to house them. On several occasions during the journey from Vienna to Brussels, Leopold Wilhelm took the opportunity to buy works of art, maps, tapestries and antiquities, as he reported to his brother. The profile that emerges in the light of this information is that of a collector with a great passion for art, in particular for painting, and first and foremost Italian painting. This corresponds with the general trend in tastes throughout Europe. What is certain, however, is that his stay in the Spanish Netherlands opened up unexpected perspectives for Leopold Wilhelm, who was enraptured above all by the variety and wealth of what was on offer. Thus he wrote in reference to Antwerp, for example: ‘A chaos of paintings reigns there’, and although he complained about being constantly short of money, he undertook to buy works by local contemporary painters, namely in each case one for his brother and one for himself. He nevertheless also continued to collect Italian paintings. In 1647 he received two ‘Roman’ landscapes, which his court painter Jan van den Hoecke had brought back from Rome, and in a letter to his brother he spoke of his successful purchase in Lille of twenty-nine paintings by various artists and schools and in different genres. Some of these appear in the inventory of 1659 and are still housed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum today. Among these partly identified works we may mention a Crucifixion from Michelangelo’s circle, on the obverse and the reverse of a copper plate, as described by Leopold Wilhelm in his letter and later confirmed in the 1659 inventory.

As Governor of the Spanish Netherlands from 1647 to 1656, Leopold Wilhelm had the opportunity to make two major acquisitions within a short period of time. In 1649, following the tragic events of the English Civil War, two magnificent collections came onto the market: that of the Duke of Hamilton, who had been beheaded in March that year, and that of the Duke of Buckingham, whose collection had been restituted to his heirs in 1647 following his murder in 1628. Both collections rapidly found their way to the Continent and were then taken to Antwerp. Leopold Wilhelm purchased the first for himself and the second for his brother, in order to fill the gaps left in the imperial collection by the Swedish troops after they had plundered Prague Castle in 1648. At the heart of the Hamilton collection was the collection of the Venetian Bartolomeo della Nave, comprising Venetian paintings of great variety and quality as well as antique and modern drawings and sculpture. Della Nave probably founded his collection at the start of the seventeenth century, taking advice from his friend Jacopo Palma Giovane. When it became rumoured that the heirs of Della Nave (d. 1632), were thinking of selling his collection, several of the most famous collectors of the day (including Thomas Howard, 14th Earl of Arundel, Francesco Barberini and others) entered into negotiations with the family via their respective agents. In the end it was Basil Feilding, the brother-in-law of James, 3rd Marquis (later 1st Duke) of Hamilton, who secured the purchase of the Della Nave collection for Charles I of England. Hamilton financed the purchase on the assumption that the monarch would take at least some of the paintings and reimburse him accordingly. Charles I had no more money, however, and in his delicate political situation could not afford to spend another vast sum on works of art. Hamilton therefore remained the owner of the Della Nave collection for the rest of his life. These core holdings were joined by paintings from the collections of the painter Nicolas Régnier (ca. 1591–1667) and the senator Michele Priuli (1565–1637). Following the Duke of Hamilton’s execution, his
brother and heirs managed to transport the collection in secret to the Continent, where it was immediately offered for sale to the new governor.

There is no doubt that archduke Leopold Wilhelm was extremely proud of this exceptional and fortunate acquisition: at the start of the 1650s his court artist David Teniers the Younger (1610–1690) made a series of paintings showing the archduke in his picture gallery in Brussels. Leopold Wilhem sent these gallery pictures to relatives and to other rulers with whom he was on friendly terms. The Vienna version (fig. 4), probably painted around 1650 and thus the first of the group, went to his brother Emperor Ferdinand III, who displayed it in his gallery in Prague Castle; another is documented at the Madrid court in 1653.

The Vienna gallery picture shows only paintings which the archduke had indeed acquired shortly beforehand. Yet the pictures are not reproduced true to scale, since they could not otherwise hang so closely side by side: the entire representation is pure fiction. The interior architecture nevertheless appears so convincing that several authors have sought to identify it with a real location. It has been regularly suggested, for example, that Teniers has here portrayed part of Coudenberg palace, Leopold Wilhelm’s residence in Brussels, or a view of a specially built picture gallery. But although payments for a ‘galleria’ in the gardens are indeed documented between 1653 and 1656, in 1659 this building is described more specifically as a ‘Domus et hortus floreus Archiducis Leopoldi,’ from which we may conclude that it was more probably a garden house or greenhouse. At the same time, moreover, the type of interior seen in Teniers’s gallery pictures corresponds to an Antwerp pictorial invention of the first half of the seventeenth century. Such pictures traditionally show a box-shaped room full of paintings, in which art is being discussed. Many such gallery pictures have allegorical overtones and the majority are at least partly fictional. Teniers goes one step further and, with sophisticated visual rhetoric, communicates the archduke’s appreciation of art and the power of painting to convey prestige and status. Pictures dominate; tapestries, the medium of princely luxury, are excluded. By presenting these paintings as gifts, Leopold Wilhelm increased his renown as a collector and connoisseur.

Many of the paintings reproduced in the Brussels gallery picture (fig. 7) carry numbers on their frames, which match those in the inventory of Leopold Wilhelm’s collection compiled in 1659 in Vienna. This inventory took up and continued the numbering employed in
figs 4–6  David Teniers II
Archduke Leopold Wilhelm
in His Gallery in Brussels, c. 1650.
Oil on canvas, 124 × 165 cm.
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna,
Gemäldegalerie, GG 739.
The details show the names of the artists on the paintings.
a previous inventory, evidently already in existence in Brussels\(^3\) and perhaps drawn up in 1651 at the same time as Leopold Wilhelm’s will.\(^2\) In most of Teniers’s gallery pictures, the names of the artists can be read on the frames – only in the Vienna canvas are their signatures integrated within the paintings themselves (figs. 5–6).\(^3\) These artist names inform the viewer about the attribution of each work and are thus very useful, since the name of the artist is also a pointer to the importance of the painting.

The next step in the presentation and representation of the archducal gallery was the production of a volume of engravings: the famous *Theatrum Pictorium* ("Theatre of Painting"), which Teniers published in 1660, four years after Leopold Wilhelm’s departure for Vienna.\(^4\) The project was conceived in consultation with the archduke, who probably also financed it.\(^5\) Reproduced within its pages were the famous Italian paintings which also appear so prominently in Teniers’s gallery pictures. But while these latter remained confined to a very narrow circle of individuals, the *Theatrum Pictorium* – which could be printed on paper in a large number of copies – was addressed to a wider public wishing to discover the archduke’s collection, and at the same time to artists and art lovers as a study aid.\(^6\) David Teniers, who had already demonstrated his ability to reproduce the characteristic elements of individual paintings in his gallery pictures, now executed miniature copies of the works selected for the *Theatrum Pictorium* in oil on panel, scaled down to the three main formats chosen for the engravers’ plates. The reason for this unusual practice of issuing the engravers with a painted model (from which they would still have to make a drawing) was evidently the imminent departure of the archduke and his collection for Vienna; with the originals no longer available, it would be necessary to have a replica against which to check whether the colour values

*[Image 7]*

David Teniers II

*Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in His Gallery in Brussels, 1651.*

Oil on canvas, 96 x 129 cm.

Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, inv. 2569
FIG 8 Giorgione
The Three Philosophers, 1508–9.
Oil on canvas, 125.5 × 146.2 × 3.5 cm.
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna,
Gemäldegalerie, GG 111

FIG 9 David Teniers II after Giorgione
The Three Philosophers.
Oil on canvas, 21.5 × 30.9 cm.
National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, NGI.390
had been translated accurately into lines. Teniers set to work, therefore, and systematically, professionally and efficiently copied the vast majority of the archduke’s Italian paintings. The twenty-seven paintings that Teniers did not manage to copy in miniature were engraved in Vienna by Nicolaus van Hoy and Jan Frans van der Steen, who then sent the plates to Teniers in Brussels, together with those showing the hanging of the gallery in the Stallburg. Along the bottom of Teniers’s pasticci, notes written to the engravers regarding proportions are in many cases still visible through the paint layer. After the pasticci had fulfilled their purpose, Teniers put them on the market. In the case of Giorgione’s _Three Philosophers_ (fig. 8), he turned his copy into a genre scene that would be easier to sell, namely by transforming the philosophers into peasants (fig. 9). From this decision, too, we can recognize the intelligent and ready way in which Teniers turned his work to his own commercial advantage to the maximum possible extent.

Leopold Wilhelm’s gallery pictures celebrate the fame of Italian painting, and above all that of the Renaissance; paintings from the seventeenth century are only sporadically represented. The dominance of works of (Venetian) Renaissance painting in these gallery pictures thereby corresponds to that in the archducal collection as a whole: of 517 Italian paintings, over 310 date from the Renaissance and only around sixty from the seventeenth century; the remainder are without an attribution in the inventory of 1659. Yet Leopold Wilhelm also owned a considerable body of ‘Northern’, that is German and Netherlandish paintings (880 inventory entries). Alongside the Venetian Renaissance, Flemish painting forms another clear focus of the collection: the archduke owned some 120 early Netherlandish pictures and around 270 Flemish Baroque paintings, as compared with some 120 paintings by German artists and some seventy by the Dutch School. Leopold Wilhelm was determined that his collection should be as wide as possible – the description of its ‘abundance and diversity’ in the _Theatrum Pictorium_ is truly appropriate. He managed to acquire paintings by a number of important early Netherlandish masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; in April 1648, for example, he bought Jan van Eyck’s _Portrait of Cardinal Albergati_ from the Antwerp collection of Peter Stevens.

Leopold Wilhelm was also very interested in contemporary Flemish art. When the archduke took up his post as governor, Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony van Dyck had only recently died (in 1640 and 1641 respectively) and Rubens’s estate (with the exception of the drawings) had already been sold. Several paintings from this estate nevertheless found their way into Leopold Wilhelm’s collection, including Rubens’s _Stormy Landscape with Philemon and Baucis_ (fig. 13), which Charles I, who had coveted it, was prevented from buying on account of the English Civil War. Leopold Wilhelm’s court painters played an important role in securing these acquisitions. Both Jan van den Hoecke (1611–1650) and, after his death, David Teniers had excellent contacts with the art trade and Flemish artists. Thus Jan van den Hoecke, for example, was related to the prominent Antwerp art dealer Matthias Musson (1598–1678), who knew Antwerp’s art collections very well and was also in contact with Peter Stevens. Teniers was likewise acquainted with Stevens and was firmly part of Antwerp’s artist network through his own marriage to Anna, the daughter of Jan Brueghel the Elder and the god-daughter of Rubens. And the majority of the contemporary works in Leopold Wilhelm’s collection were produced by painters either native to or working in Antwerp. Brussels artists are represented in much smaller numbers and Michaelina is the one and only female artist by whom Leopold Wilhelm owned works. Interestingly, the name of her brother Charles does not appear in the inventory compiled by the Brussels court artist Anton van der Baren. Even if the archduke cannot be said to exhibit a clear preference, his collection undoubtedly testifies to a certain open-mindedness and a desire to include representative works by all the leading Antwerp painters of the day.
Flower painting is the only genre for which just one pair of pendants survives. Both garlands of flowers, of which one is included in the exhibition (cat. 22) and the other is untraced, are dated 1652.

Examples of this are the Portrait of the Jesuit Martino Martini (cat. 8): 69.5 × 59 cm; Portrait of a Commander in the Spanish Army (cat. 2): 63 × 56.5 cm; Study of a Young Man (cat. 4): 69 × 58 cm; Young Man Smoking a Pipe (cat. 20): 68.5 × 58.5 cm; Study of a Young Woman (cat. 5): 62.5 × 57.5 cm; Portrait of a Commander (cat. 7): 73 × 58.5 cm.

See, for example, Van der Stighelen and Westen 1999, pp. 133–6 (Catharina van Hemessen, 1528–after 1581); p. 140 (Cornelia toe Boecop, after 1553–after 1629); p. 147 (Magdalena de Passe, 1600–1680); pp. 152–3 (Maria de Grebber, 1602–1680); pp. 156–7 (Anna Maria van Schurman, 1607–1678); pp. 168–9 (Eva van Marle, active c. 1650); pp. 204–5 (Margartha Wulfraet, 1678–1760); p. 206 (Maria Verelet, 1680–1744). For the context of this phenomenon, see Chapter 5.

Catalogue d'une très belle collection de tableaux des écoles flamande, hollandaise, française, allemande et italienne, la plupart du XVIIe siècle et de dessins anciens et livres de l'art dont la vente aura lieu par suite du décès de feu M. de Malherbe, Valenciennes, 17–18 October 1833, lots 86–90: ‘leur facture et leur coloris dénotent un excellent de Peeter van de Heydt’.

This is probably true of both, but it has only been proven for the work exhibited here.

Mertens and Aumann 2003, pp. 288–90.

This motif is extremely rare in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Netherlands painting. It does occur, however, in Italian works derived from Roman prototypes. Tommaso Vincidor (b. c. 1536) used the motif in Henry II of Nassau’s palace in Breda. Just as in Michaelina’s bouquets, the garlands are hung between two ox skulls adored with ribbons. See G. W. C. van Wezel, Het paleis van Hendrik III, graaf van Nassau te Breda, Zwolle/Zeist 1999–2001, pp. 90, 216–218.

Among all Michaelina’s signed works, only cat. 10 and 16 carry a signature that includes both ‘fecit’ and ‘invenit’. Unsurprisingly, they are both history paintings requiring an elaborate ‘invented’ composition.

Cf. note 2.

The date ‘1649’ which supposedly appeared on the work (see cat. 3) would seem to be unreliable.

The extent to which her work is a stylistic and thematic aberration in the Netherlands is explained elsewhere (see Chapter 5–6).

See Delvingt 2009, pp. 67–78. Bullart’s writings were published in 1682 in Brussels, Amsterdam and Paris, precisely ten years after his death, and form one of the most important biographical repertories of the seventeenth century. The Académie des Sciences et des Arts, contenant les vies et les éloges historiques des hommes illustres, qui ont excelle en ces professions, depuis environ quatre siècles, parmy diverses nations de l’Europe. For thirty years, Bullart had collected material for this compendium of scholars and artists. The two-volume publication contains 279 biographies.

Francart played an important role in the entourage of the archdukes. Together with Erycius Puteanus, he organised the funeral of Albert in 1620. See Papy 2003, pp. 217–220.

Van der Stighelen 2018 (forthcoming).

The present whereabouts of these small paintings is unknown.

See also Pierre Vanderlinden, La Chapelle Notre-Dame du Bon Vouloir à Havré, Mons 1982.

See Van der Stighelen 2005, pp. 94–5: ‘Vera amicitia quam vara est sed nostra vera est....’


See Chapter 1, note 56, 20.

Even at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Brussels painters did not always follow the rules. Denijs van Alsloot never became a master. He probably started his career around 1599–1600 when he simultaneously came into contact with the court of the archdukes, although he was only paid for a first commission in 1603. However, between 1599 and 1604 he taught three students who were registered in the guild. Here, too, he was breaking the rules of the painters’ corporation, since he was only allowed to have one pupil at a time (whom he was required to train in his studio for three years). See Sabine van Sprang, Denijs van Alsloot (vers 1568–1625/26): Peintre paysagiste au service de la Cour des Archiducs Albert et Isabelle (Pictura Nova, xv, 1), Turnhout 2014, pp. 30–31.


An exception to this rule was Elisabetta Sirani (1638–1665) who, as the daughter of the famous artist Giovanni Andrea Sirani (1601–1670), established her own Accademia di Disegno in Bologna, where she also trained female pupils. A study of a male nude by her hand survives (c. 1664). See Modesti 2014, pp. 67–78, 99, 377, fig. 113) and Chapter 5, pp. 24. Until the late nineteenth century, discussions took place in Antwerp and Brussels over who could be allowed to draw from a living male model (fully swathed), whether or not in mixed classes for girls and boys. See Mayer 1987, pp. 21–40; Garb 1994; Gerrish Nunn et al. 1997; Wiertz and Desmedt 2018. With thanks to Wendy Wiertz for providing additional information.