

# The Snijders&Rockox House

A surprising museum in the heart of Antwerp

Visitors guide

Frans Snijders and Nicolaas Rockox were key figures  
in 17th-century Antwerp.

Frans as a painter of animals and still lifes, Nicolaas as burgomaster.



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THE SNIJDERS&ROCKOX HOUSE  
A surprising museum in the heart of Antwerp

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# THE SNIJDERS&ROCKOX HOUSE

A surprising museum in the heart of Antwerp

**Visitors Guide**

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Nicolaas Rockox and Frans Snijders were key figures in Antwerp during the Baroque era. Each made his mark on the city's cultural and social life – Nicolaas as burgomaster and Frans as a brilliant painter of animals and still lifes. They were also neighbours for 20 years, occupying adjacent patricians' houses in the Keizerstraat.

Following *The Golden Cabinet* – the successful collaboration with the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp from 2013 to 2017 – KBC is now opening the Snijders&Rockox House. Both buildings, painstakingly restored, are part of the heritage of KBC, which inaugurated the Rockox House as a museum back in 1977.

The Rockox House concept has been carefully examined and redefined and the Snijders House added to it. The everyday world of 17th-century citizens is evoked by artworks from the museum's own rich collection, supplemented by longer-term loans from museums and private collections in Belgium and abroad.

We get to view Nicolaas and Frans's domestic environment through their own eyes, along with the making and promotion of art, collecting and display, games and leisure, markets and richly set tables, nature and gardens, and the humanist and the average citizen in the turbulent era in which they lived. They are also hosting another patrician family, namely the De Duartes. These were renowned jewellers, but it was above all their musical talents that attracted their contemporaries' admiration.

The Snijders&Rockox House is a place to celebrate!

We wish you a wonderful journey of discovery!



**Frans Snijders (Antwerp, 1579–1657)**

Pantry with Dogs and a Cow's Head

Oil on canvas

Private collection (through the Rubens House)

*Cave Canem!* Beware the dog! But most of all, welcome to the Snijders&Rockox House.

This is Snijders all over! The dog in the pantry looks like it's just come back from the hunt. Its collar, designed to protect it from the sharp teeth of a wild boar, lies on the table, along with a new prize, a flayed cow's head. You'll find out all about Snijders, his animals, hunts, still-lives and pantries in the home of the master himself.



**Wardrobe (early 17th century)**

Oak, inlaid with ebony

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.31

This typical Flemish wardrobe is attractively decorated with scallop motifs and inlaid with small pieces of expensive ebony. The clothes were not hung in it, but laid out on shelves. The inventory of Rockox's estate following his death records that a clothes brush was kept in this wardrobe. During the summer, the streets were dusty and particles of sand had to be brushed off people's robes; in wintertime, mud was the biggest problem. Robes, mantles and other types of overcoat were therefore stored in the wardrobe in the hallway before entering the house.





**Hans Bol (Mechelen, 1534–Amsterdam, 1593)**

Panoramic View of Antwerp and its Port

Oil on vellum, signed and dated 1584

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 2003.1

Hans Bol belonged to the Mechelen School of landscape painters. He fled the town during the Spanish siege in 1572 and moved to Antwerp. When this city also fell into the hands of Spanish troops in 1584, Bol moved to the Northern Netherlands.

This fine panorama of Antwerp is dominated by the tower of the Cathedral of Our Lady and the spire (now disappeared) of St Michael's Abbey church. The tower of St Andrew's Church can be made out between these two buildings, while to the left we glimpse the Church of St Walburga (now demolished), which is partially concealed behind the Steen fortress. Many of Bols's landscapes were influenced by those of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Bol belonged to the generation who renewed the painting of city views. This portrait of Antwerp dates from just before the city's capture by the Spanish in 1585.



**Hendrick van Balen the Elder (Antwerp, 1575–1632)**

**Abel Grimmer, (Antwerp, c. 1570–1618 or 1619)**

Antwerp with Part of the 'Vlaams Hoofd' in 1600

Oil on canvas

Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp, inv. 817

The landscape and, to a lesser extent, architectural artist Abel Grimmer painted this view of Antwerp from the Vlaams Hoofd. He was the son of Jacob Grimmer, who had been the first to break with the tradition of mountain landscapes. The sky, with God the Father, Christ, the Virgin Mary and angels, was done by Van Balen. Grimmer took inspiration from Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Hans Bol. He set out to simplify his city views and to give them a more linear orientation, and he used an unusual palette of colours. The artist paid particular attention to detail and naturalism in both his landscapes and his city views. The religious scene in the clouds gives the work a Counter Reformation character.

# THE SNIJDERS HOUSE

DE FORTUYNE

## Frans Snijders

Frans Snijders, born in Antwerp in 1579, and his wife Margriete de Vos bought this house, *De Fortuynne*, in the residential Keizerstraat, in 1620. Snijders was already a well-known animal and still life painter at that point. It was not his first home: he previously lived in the Korte Gasthuisstraat, just a few steps away from his parental home. His parents ran the *Geschildert Huis* ('Painted House') tavern and reception rooms called the *Grote Bruyloftcamere* ('Grand Wedding Chamber'), located at the junction of Meirbrug, Schoenmarkt and Eiermarkt. The richly laid tables and bustling activity of the pantries must have made an impression on Frans Snijders from an early age.

Frans and Margriete's home consisted of a portico, a courtyard, a main building with three stepped gables and an annex. There was plenty of room, therefore, for him to set up his studio. In addition to a prestigious home, a portrait was needed to add lustre to Frans's status. Anthony van Dyck, who had established his reputation as a portraitist at an early age, produced a marvellous double portrait of Frans and Margriete. His friend and neighbour Nicolaas Rockox had already commissioned portraits from Rubens and van Veen, and also wanted his likeness painted by the celebrated van Dyck. The later was appointed court painter to James I in London in 1620, but he briefly returned to Antwerp in 1621, at which point several members of the social elite took the opportunity to have a quick portrait done.

A van Dyck portrait was, after all, the ultimate calling card. Later in 1621, van Dyck left for Italy for six years.

Snijders spent time in Italy too, but before that he had trained since 1593 under Pieter Brueghel the Younger and later under Hendrick van Balen. A much more important encounter for Snijders was that with Jan Brueghel, Pieter's brother, who returned in 1596 after six years in Italy. Jan paid much greater attention to detail than Pieter did, a talent for precision that Snijders shared, and Jan became Frans's mentor. Jan Brueghel was keen to introduce Snijders to his patron, the Cardinal of Milan, Frederico Borromeo, when Snijders went to Italy in 1608–09. Jan influenced Snijders in various ways, including his views of Mariemont, a residence with fabulous gardens, where the archducal couple spent their leisure time. Snijders later drew inspiration from Brueghel's garlands of fruit too and he is also likely to have enjoyed access to the gardens of his friend Peter Paul Rubens and that of Nicolaas Rockox, both of which featured exquisite plants and flowers.

Frans was back in Antwerp by 1609. The Twelve Years' Truce had been proclaimed – the temporary peace in the drawn-out religious conflict – and there was a great deal of work to be done. Snijders set out to support Antwerp's reviving economic prosperity through his still lifes, pantries and market scenes. Rubens too was freshly returned from Italy and Snijders collaborated with him regularly, learning from his illustrious colleague how to integrate drama and movement in his paintings. In the period 1636–38, Snijders was one of the artists (Cornelis de Vos was another) who painted the mythological decorations

under Rubens's supervision for Philip IV of Spain's hunting lodge, Torre de la Parada, near Madrid. Snijders contributed 60 hunting scenes and animal paintings.

Frans and Margriete found a good neighbour in Nicolaas Rockox, whose wife Adriana had, sadly, already died. They purchased their house from Marco Antonio Perez, Adriana's cousin. Like Nicolaas and Adriana, Frans and Margriete never had children. Frans and Nicolaas both had an art collection: Rockox owned some 80 paintings, including a still life by Snijders – a 'little basket with grapes'. The burgomaster had already made his name as an antiquarian and might have helped Snijders in 1616 when he acquired five plaster casts from the estate of Cornelis Floris III, including heads of Marcus Aurelius and Hercules. These purchases testify to his interest in classical antiquity and by extension in Neostoicism, as developed by the humanist Justus Lipsius. Rockox also invited Snijders to witness the final codicil to his will. And, lastly, both men chose the Minorite church as their final resting place. Rockox and Snijders might have died over 400 years ago, but their houses still testify to a fascinating piece of Antwerp history.

ROOM 1 Neercamer  
HUNTING AND FISHING



**Anthony van Dyck (Antwerp, 1599–Blackfriars, 1641)**

*Icones principum virorum doctorum, pictorum chalcographorum, statuariorum  
nec non amatorum pictoriae artis numero centum.*

Antwerp, Gillis Hendricx, s.d. (c. 1650)

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 2017.2

**Jacob Neefs (Antwerp, 1610–after 1660)**

**after Anthony van Dyck (Antwerp, 1599–Blackfriars, 1641)**

Portrait of Frans Snijders

Burin engraving, c. 1645

Jacob Neefs was a Flemish etcher and engraver, who was also active as a publisher and was a pupil of Lucas Vorsterman. Neefs worked for Peter Paul Rubens and likewise contributed to Anthony van Dyck's *Icones* or 'Iconography'.

Anthony van Dyck was a celebrated painter and draughtsman, and a leading figure in Antwerp Baroque, alongside Rubens. In his younger years, he was one of Peter Paul's favourite assistants, along with Jacques Jordaens and one or two others. The dominant position that Rubens enjoyed in Antwerp might explain why van Dyck spent a large part of his career in Italy and England, where he was appointed court painter and emerged as probably the most important portraitist.

The Snijders portrait comes from this edition, which included 113 likenesses. Van Dyck was the *inventor* of the portraits, which were then engraved by colleagues like Paulus Pontius, Lucas Vorsterman, Peter de Jode and many other celebrated engravers, who contributed to this photo album *avant la lettre*. It offers a visual record of the network of Nicolaas Rockox and Frans Snijders. Aside from the two neighbours, it includes portraits of Snijders's teachers – Pieter Brueghel the Younger and Hendrick van Balen – but also patrons like Peeter Stevens and Cornelis van der Geest, and clergymen such as Bishop Malderus. The *beau monde* collected in a *Who's Who*.



**Frans Snijders (Antwerp, 1579–1657)**  
Still Life  
Oil on panel  
Signed: F. Snijders fecit, 1616  
Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 85.3

Is this a still life? Yes it is, but still a Baroque one, with a sense of vitality in a spatial composition – a perfect, natural-looking and harmonious arrangement, with graceful curves that suggest movement. An imaginary diagonal running from the upper left, with the cheerful branch with apricots, to the lower right, with the dead birds, reinforces the composition. The birds make this a literal *nature morte*, as the still life is called in French. The objects are bathed in a wonderful, cool light, while the background remains shrouded in darkness. Like the diagonal, the contrast between the two emphasises the thin line between life and death. All the same, Frans Snijders's still life underpinned a new period for Antwerp – the Twelve Years' Truce, which brought temporary calm and prosperity during the long Eighty Years' War. It was a time of good fortune and economic growth. There were no billboards in the streets or social media advertising back then, but Snijders was still a marketeer *avant la lettre*. Fruit, vegetables and poultry were all readily available once again, and that was worth capturing visually and displaying on well-to-do walls. The fruit stands out for its absolute, just-picked freshness: look at the grapes, for instance, with their full bodies and half matt, half gleaming skins that guarantee their juiciness.





**Frans Snijders**  
**(Antwerp, 1579–1657)**  
Wild Boar Hunt  
Oil on canvas, c. 1620–30  
Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House,  
inv. 77.165

With your back to the outside wall, you can view the hunting scene in the room beyond. This space has the effect almost of a miniature theatre, making what you see feel like a still from an action film. A wild boar defends itself fiercely from a pack of dogs, bloodthirsty and undaunted by the boar, which they approach with open maws and menacing stares. We can guess where all this is leading, but at this stage of the game, everything is still possible. And it is very much a game, as the boar was initially unafraid of the dogs and sought out the confrontation. The situation in which dogs goad a quarry was in keeping with the principle of ‘Hide on Hide and Feather on Feather’, which the Archduke and the Infanta issued as an ordinance in 1613. The sword alone was permitted to put an end to the animal’s life. In this case, however, there is no human in sight. Snijders composed most of his hunting scenes without a human presence, unlike other artists such as Rubens, in whose work the hunters feature prominently in the scene. The drama and tension here are supplied by the animals themselves. Thanks to his good knowledge of animal anatomy, Snijders succeeds brilliantly in bringing this wild boar hunt to a dramatic climax.



(Attributed to) Frans Snijders  
(Antwerp, 1579–1657)

Still Life

Oil on canvas

Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts,  
inv. 5082

Hunting scenes first appear in Snijders's work around the 1620s, whereas he had been painting still lifes since as early as 1609. Shot game certainly features in his early work, though. The brace of rabbits, woodcocks and partridges in this still life remind us of the hunt. Several other elements from the still-life repertoire can also be seen on a table, including several artichokes, a Wanli dish with wild strawberries, a vase with a couple of tulips and a sprig of columbines, a small basket of grapes, three bundles of asparagus, apples and a lemon, and a *tazza* with confectionery and a few carnations. The *tazza* came into use in aristocratic and royal households during the Renaissance, and was inspired by Italian examples. It is a shallow drinking vessel, which was also used to display fruit or delicacies, and was mostly made of silver, crystal or silver gilt (vermeil). Frans Snijders's entire range of skills is, as it were, summarised here in a single image.



**Frans Snijders (Antwerp, 1579–1657)**  
Still Life with Hare, Tazza and Lobster  
Oil on panel, c. 1613  
Private collection

The hare in this painting alludes to the hunt. It is depicted together with a *tazza* and a lobster – a rather odd combination, but both types of food were delicacies for the patrician’s table. Each item is painted from life and emulates reality very precisely – a quality in which Snijders displayed unmatched brilliance. The painting radiates a sense of fragility: the brittleness of life is recalled by the dead hare and boiled lobster, but also by the delicate porcelain and the tempting fruit that will not stay fresh for long.

The hare, like the wild boar, was a prized quarry for hunters, for whom its legendary speed and cunning posed a challenge. Hares would outwit hunting dogs by jumping into water wherever possible in order to mask their scent. In his book *L’Agriculture et La Maison Rustique*, Charles Estienne wrote that the flesh of a young hare was a delicacy not to be missed. He also claimed it was a good remedy for diarrhoea.



**Joannes Fijt (Antwerp, 1611–1661)**

Game

Oil on canvas

Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 882

Fijt joined the Guild of St Luke in Antwerp in 1621 and was a pupil of Goltzius in Haarlem and later of Rubens. He completed his training under Frans Snijders between 1629 and 1631, following which he spent time in Italy, France and the Northern Netherlands. Fijt finally settled in Antwerp, where he became a successful animal and still-life painter. He had the talent to vie with Snijders, his teacher, excelling in tactility and in the naturalistic rendering of animals and objects. Here he sets a rifle, bird trap, game bag, powder horn, hare, pheasant, jay, snipes, thrushes and various songbirds against a thickly overgrown crag to create an attractively composed still life. A growling dog peers out warily from behind the rock, while a weasel creeps over the vegetation towards the catch. The hare's paws are tied around a wheel-lock musket. Hunting with firearms was prohibited, but it still went on clandestinely.



**Osias Beert I**

Still Life with Fruits Served in a Tazza,  
Pewter Plates and a Lacquered Dish  
Oil on panel

Antwerp, Snyders&Rockox House, inv. 2.006.1.

Beert played an important part in the early development of the still life in Northern Europe. Together with Jan Brueghel, he is viewed as the genre's inventor. He primarily painted floral pieces and 'banquets'. Beert was a contemporary of Clara Peeters, and might have been her mentor or inspiration.



**Frans Snijders (Antwerp, 1579–1657)**

Fish Market in Antwerp

Oil on canvas, 1720s

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.148

Snijders was unsurpassed in his painting of seafood– a tradition begun by Joachim Beuckelaer. He could handle all sorts of fish, shellfish and sea mammals, and knew the best way to approach them to achieve a balance between colour, brushwork, anatomical accuracy and drama. Snijders painted fish with looser strokes, to suggest their wet bodies more effectively and hence to convince the viewer of their freshness. Covered and open-air fish markets were held around the fortress in Antwerp, with stalls offering fish from the river Scheldt and tables displaying sea fish. Snijders did not distinguish between these markets, but here he has painted the sea fish on the table on the right, dominated by the cod and the sturgeon, which you can almost touch. The wooden tub on the left is full of fish from the Scheldt, while the copper one contains carp. A cat tries surreptitiously to steal a juicy morsel. Demand for fish was high, as the amount of meat that could be consumed was limited for religious reasons. In the distance, we recognise Het Steen and the tower of the Cathedral of Our Lady.



**Joannes Fijt (Antwerp, 1611–1661)**

Still Life with Fish

Oil on canvas, signed

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 2016.1

This still life by Fijt is one of the few he painted with fish. Although he clearly studied the paintings of Snijders, under whom he trained, very attentively, his fish are rendered less naturally than those of his teacher. In this painting too, a stretch of water runs along a city into the distance. The landscape is a probably a Mediterranean one, possibly Italian. In the still life itself, we make out a diagonal running from the upper right with the lobster to the lower left with the eel, along which the composition of the fish and objects has been constructed. The central zone, with the ray, the cod and the white cloth, seem to catch the most light. The flecks of pink in the cloth draw the viewer's eye towards the salmon steaks and the lobster.



**Abraham van Beyeren (The Hague, 1620/21–Overschie, 1693)**

Still Life with Fish

Oil on canvas, monogrammed lower left ABF

Private collection

Van Beyeren was one of the most important painters of the Dutch Golden Age. He initially painted seascapes, before turning to still lifes, mostly of the ornamental kind influenced by Jan Davidsz. de Heem. Van Beyeren concentrated on still lifes with fish in the 1640s. This one presents more of a humble meal, with cod fillets displayed on a simple table. Although cod is one of the more expensive fish varieties today, it used to be a common ingredient, along with herring and mussels, in meals consumed by the poor.





**Frans Snijders (Antwerp,  
1579–1657)**  
Still Life with Birds and Fruit  
Oil on wood, signed lower left: F  
Snijders  
Private collection

Grapes have been masterfully arranged on a scalloped marble dish. They look freshly picked and contrast sharply with the dead birds on the other side – two partridges, a snipe, a thrush and other songbirds. Snijders was familiar with vegetarianism, as first defended by the Greek philosopher Pythagoras (6th century BCE) and then revived during the Renaissance by Thomas More. Christian morality also frowned on the eating of meat, which only began after the Fall and was hence associated with sinfulness. Despite this, eating birds – even finches and tits – in combination with fruit was considered a delicacy in the 17th century. A marvellous stoneware pitcher, probably from Westerwald, can be seen to the rear on the right. Note the knife, which protrudes over the edge of the table. Osias Beert and Clara Peeters too gave a subtle sense of depth to their paintings by adding small shadows not only to knives but also to other objects, such as bread.



**Frans Snijders**

Still Life with Game, Fruit, Vegetables  
and Flowers

Oil on canvas

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockoxhuis,  
Inv 2022.2

We are standing in the pantry, looking at a table covered with a red tablecloth, on which the game is displayed uncut. A deer and a swan, both head down, particularly draw our attention. The “new” vegetables of the time, the artichoke and asparagus, as well as fruit, freshly picked in the basket, will be served with the prepared game. But small birds, such as the goldfinch and the blue tit, were also often on the menu. In the back, three live pigeons can still be seen. The dogs that were hunt-ing are depicted at the bottom. Also notable is a vase with flowers, three peonies, sweet peas and a tulip. In the right upper corner, empty, à la façon de Vénise glasses are waiting to be filled with wine.

# THE ROCKOX HOUSE

DEN GULDEN RINCK

Nicolaas Rockox (Antwerp, 1560–1640) was born into a wealthy, noble family. He studied law at Leuven, Paris and Douai and played a key role in the political, artistic and social life of his city in the 17th century, holding several important posts, including those of alderman and burgomaster. His diplomacy, his bond with the city and his influence were especially strong during the period between the Spanish capture of Antwerp in 1585 and the Treaty of Münster in 1648, which marked the permanent separation of the Northern and Southern Netherlands (the modern Netherlands and Belgium). He married Adriana Perez, who came from an old and wealthy family of Spanish merchants. The couple remained childless.

Rockox was also a highly influential patron of the arts, humanist, antiquarian and numismatist. He contributed to Rubens's breakthrough in the 1620s by providing the great Baroque master with important commissions. As burgomaster, one of the paintings he ordered from Rubens was the *Adoration of the Magi* (Prado, Madrid) for the Antwerp Town Hall. In his capacity as dean of the arquebusiers' guild, Rockox also commissioned Rubens to paint the famous *Descent from the Cross* for the guild's altar in the cathedral, while his private commissions to Rubens included his own tomb memorial, *The Incredulity of Thomas* (Antwerp Royal Museum of Fine Arts). Rockox's passion for art was also demonstrated by his personal collection. The inventory of his estate following his death offers a glimpse of it, listing 82 paintings that Nicolaas acquired in the course of his life and revealing him to be a collector of contemporary art.

Nicolaas Rockox and Adriana Perez both lived in the Keizerstraat even before they married. They remained there for a time after their wedding at the home of Adriana's father, the Spanish merchant and banker Luis Perez. In 1603, they then jointly purchased their splendid house, *Den Gulden Rinck*, on the other side of the same prestigious street, from a German merchant. The building can be traced in the archives back to 1532, while a corbel piece bearing the date 1560 was found in the gallery around *Den Gulden Rinck*'s interior garden. Rockox had it refurbished in the Flemish Renaissance style and added an art gallery and a study, also giving the house an enclosed garden. KBC purchased the Rockox House in 1970. At the same time, the non-profit organisation 'Museum Nicolaas Rockox' was established under the bank's auspices to take charge of the building's restoration. It continues to manage the property today as a witness to a grandiose past and in memory of an illustrious burgomaster.

**Nicolaas Rockox bids you a warm welcome!**

The inventory of Rockox's estate, drawn up after his death in December 1640, tells us how the various rooms in this stately town house were used. 'De Cleyn Salette' or 'Small Salon' was his reception room, in which he welcomed his many friends and relatives. Various portraits in this room symbolise the network he built up in both political and religious circles.

These days, we take snapshots of our family and friends all the time, not to mention selfies. In the 17th century, portraits were a lot rarer. Members of the social elite had their portrait painted an average of four times during their active career.

Each cost the equivalent of a car - a small family runabout in the case of a less well-known painter to the price of a top-end luxury model for the likes of De Vos, van Dyck or Rubens. Portraits were status symbols in the early modern period: they made a statement about their owners.



**17th century copy after Peter Paul Rubens**

Portrait of Nicolaas Rockox

Oil on panel

Antwerp, Snyders&Rockox House, inv. 77.08

Rubens painted the epitaph for Rockox and his wife Adriana Perez around 1613/15. Nicolaas Rockox is facing right, towards the central panel of his memorial. He is holding a prayer book in his hand and is soberly dressed. However, he has a gilded belt around his doublet, closely resembling that of Archduke Albert – which can also be seen in this room. In Albrecht’s case, one can clearly see that such a belt was used to carry a sword, a status symbol for noble patricians. Rockox was a nobleman through his grandfather, and was knighted at the Joyous Entry of Albrecht and Isabella in 1599 in recognition of his social commitment to orphans and widows, among others. The memorial triptych hung in Rockox’s memorial chapel in the Franciscan church in Antwerp – now occupied by the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp – and is now part of the collection owned by the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp.

### **Rockox: an important political career**

Rockox became an Antwerp alderman for the first time in 1591, six years after the city's capture by the Spanish. He went on to serve seven terms in that office. He was first appointed 'buitenburgemeester' (burgomaster for external affairs) in 1603, a post that placed him in charge of the city militia, military guilds and civic guard. He also represented Antwerp in its dealings with the sovereign, the States of Brabant and other cities. Rockox was elected 'buitenburgemeester' nine times during a crucial period in the city's history, which included the beginning and end of the Twelve Years' Truce – a temporary period of peace during the long Eighty Years' War between Spain and the rebellious Low Countries.

He never held the position of 'binnenburgemeester', who was responsible for legal affairs. He did, however, serve as justice of the peace, master of the Cloth Hall, and treasurer and dean of the 'poorterij', the city's elite citizens. From December 1602 to January 1633, he was master of the arquebusiers' guild, one of the city's six armed corporations in the 17th century. In other words, Rockox consistently played a leading role in the public life of Antwerp for almost half a century.



**Paulus Pontius (Antwerp, 1603–1658), after Anthony van Dyck**  
Portrait of Nicolaas Rockox  
Copper engraving  
Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 2004.1 (from July 2018)

This is the eighth state of the print and bears the date of Rockox's death, indicating that it was made after his decease. The first state, which closely matches the little painting described above, notes that Rockox was 79 years old.





**Philip Fruytiers (Antwerp, 1627–1666)**  
**(after Peter Paul Rubens)**

Nicolaas Rockox

Gouache on ivory

Private collection (from July 2018)

Fruytiers was a Brabant painter and engraver of the Baroque period, best known for several miniature portraits in watercolour and gouache, although he also painted altarpieces.

This miniature is a jewel of refinement. Fruytiers painted the famous portrait after the left wing of a memorial painting that Rockox commissioned from Rubens in 1613. Rockox and Adriana were both still alive at that time, but since the couple had no children, they organised the memorial themselves. They wanted to be buried in a worthy manner, with a commemorative painting of the highest quality. Rockox exudes confidence and responsibility, but also has a kindly appearance that testifies to a warm personality.



**Southern Netherlandish School**

Banquet of the Lords of Liere in Antwerp

Oil on panel, 1523

Utrecht, Centraal Museum

(long-term loan from the Van Wassenauer family foundation)

It was first suggested in 1932 that the interior depicted in this painting is the Hof van Liere in Antwerp, built by Arent van Liere between 1516 and 1520, which Albrecht Dürer admired during his journey round the Low Countries in 1521. The principal figures have been identified as Arent, Claes and Willem van Liere. Arent was a knight, the lord of Santhove and Woldese, alderman and burgomaster of Antwerp several times between 1500 and 1529, dean of the city's Guild of St Luke and owner of the Hof van Liere. Claes was lord of Berchem and margrave of Antwerp, while Willem, lastly, was a knight and official of Antwerp and also served as the city's burgomaster. Nicolaas Rockox's great-grandmother, Adriana van Liere, was the sister of these brothers, which means that this group portrait links 100 years of burgomasters and nobles.



### **Gold leather**

18th century

Vienna-Vaduz, Lichtenstein. The Princely Collections, inv. TA 155

Gold leather is a refined wall covering (mostly comprising tanned calfskin), stamped with visual motifs and decorated with silver leaf, beneath a layer of gold-coloured varnish. The material began to replace tapestries as a wall-covering from around the 17th century. The gold leather technique is extremely old, and originally came from the Libyan town of Ghadames. It is thought that gilded and decorated leather was already being produced in Cordoba in Spain in the 9th century. It continued to be exported on a large scale all over the world, including the Low Countries, until the beginning of the 17th century. Seven rooms in Rockox's house were dressed with gold leather, including this one, which was hung with the material against a black background.



**Cassone**

Walnut, c. 1600

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.180

*Cassoni* were amongst the most richly ornamented pieces of furniture in the Renaissance. They were also referred to as ‘bridal chests’ or ‘wedding chests,’ as they were often given as wedding gifts. By the 16th century, the preference was for richly carved chests, a tradition that was continued in the Baroque style until the late 17th century. This cassone is decorated with three carved panels on the front. The central panel features grotesques, with an armorial tree in the middle. Each of the panels on either side has a large mask. Adriana likewise brought a substantial dowry with her, consisting chiefly of jewellery and linen.



**Peter Paul Rubens**

**(Siegen, 1577–Antwerp, 1640)**

Portraits of the Archduke Albert and

Infanta Isabella

Oil on panel, 1615

Stansstad, Frey-Näplin Stiftung

Peter Paul Rubens was Northern Europe's most important Baroque artist. He was employed as a court painter and received countless commissions from home and abroad. The time he spent in Italy between 1600 and 1608 shaped his career decisively. The influence of the Italian Baroque is chiefly apparent in his altarpieces and mythological scenes. On his return to Antwerp, he introduced the Baroque to the Low Countries. Not only was he a celebrated painter, he also proved to be an able businessman and a skilled diplomat.

Albert, son of Emperor Maximilian II of Austria, married his cousin Isabella, daughter of King Philip II of Spain. Through the Act of Cession in 1598, Philip handed over control of the Low Countries to the Archduke and Infanta in a final attempt to maintain Spanish influence over the region. The Northern Netherlands – roughly the modern Dutch state – did not recognise Spanish sovereignty, which meant that the couple only ruled in practice over the Southern Netherlands (more or less modern Belgium). The cession of power came with strings attached, including a ban on Protestantism and the continued garrisoning of Spanish troops in the region. Albert and Isabella were patrons of the arts, they stimulated the economy and promoted reconciliation after the religious troubles of the 16th century. Their residence was Coudenberg Palace in Brussels. The conflict with the North dragged on, with changing fortunes. War-weariness led the combatants to sign a Twelve Years' Truce in 1609. Isabella became governess of the Southern Netherlands following Albert's death in 1621.



**Anthony van Dyck**  
**(Antwerp, 1599–Blackfriars, 1641)**  
Johannes Malderus  
Oil on panel, 1626–28  
Private collection

Johannes Malderus (1562–1633) was the fifth bishop of the diocese of Antwerp. He was appointed at the request of the Archduke and Infanta following the death of Bishop Miraeus and was ordained in 1611. He studied at Douai and at Leuven, where he became professor of philosophy. He later obtained a doctorate in theology. Malderus is buried in the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp. Among his writings were important tracts on the divine virtues, on justice and on religion in the light of the teachings of Thomas Aquinas. He was fierce opponent of heresy, which led him to target the group of Protestant merchants who had settled temporarily in Antwerp. It was during his term that the cathedral was finally completed. Malderus was also behind the commission from Rubens of the *Assumption of the Virgin* for the building. In 1621, he had the Jesuit church dedicated to Ignatius of Loyola, who had been declared a saint that year.

The portrait differs in its Rubenesque features from other van Dyck portraits done in the same period, which seem considerably less static.



**Interior of Antwerp Cathedral, 1647**

Pieter Neefs I (Antwerp, 1578/90 - 1656/61)

Oil on panel

Private Collection

The interior of the cathedral is shown in perspective view. Painters like Pieter Neefs referred to the architectural treatises of Hans Vredeman de Vries (1527–1609) as an aid. The scene is enlivened by statues, altarpieces on the columns and a confessional on the right. The foreground figures (rich people, beggars, children and dogs) were painted by another artist, whose name is no longer known. Although the church interior was finished in 1647, the clothes worn by the wealthy churchgoers suggest that they were only added some time after 1692.





**(Attributed to) Pieter Neefs the Younger (Antwerp, c. 1578–1656/61)**

Church Interior

Oil on canvas

Leuven, M Museum, inv. S/4/N

Pieter Neefs the Younger was a Brabant painter, who specialised in church interiors. He was active in Antwerp and his canvases show the influence of Hendrik van Steenwijk the Elder. What we see here is the interior of an imaginary church. The part on the left looks through into a large Gothic church, with a baptismal font in the centre of the porch. The church has not been identified. The part on the right offers an accomplished display of perspective drawing and the exploration of lighting effects. The tiled floor and the stairs are useful tools in capturing this interior.

As we look closer, we also pick out signs of life among the ecclesiastical architecture: people pray, beg for alms or attend mass. There is procession too of clergy and soldiers. These figures immediately give us an idea of the building's grandeur.



**Joris van Son**  
Cartouche with fruit  
garland  
Oil on canvas  
Private collection

A magnificent fruit garland serves as a setting for an exceptional portrait. Succulent fruit, including citrus varieties and grapes, were also found in city gardens such as Nicolaas Rockox's in the 17th century. Oranges and lemons were imported from Sicily and Spain and were very expensive, underlining the status of the individual being portrayed. When the present owner bought the painting, the middle section of the cartouche was blank... or rather it had been overpainted. During restoration, the portrait of a member of the wealthy elite was revealed, wearing what is called a Van Dyck ruff which reflected his social status. The current owner decided to leave the portrait in the state in which it emerged from under the overpainted layer and not to have it retouched. Presumably, the new owner of the painting in the 17th century ordered the portrait of his predecessor to be painted over, possibly to be replaced by his own portrait, something that never materialised.



**Abraham Ortelius**  
Theatrum Orbis Terrarum  
Atlas  
Private collection

The cartographer Ortelius became famous as compiler of the first ever modern atlas. His first edition – containing 53 maps – appeared in Latin in 1570. Many editions and additions followed in Dutch, German and French, even long after his death.

Ortelius presented the maps as a journey around the world. His final edition of 1595 – containing 115 maps – includes two maps that he dedicated to Nicolaas Rockox, which can be seen in the copy shown here.

Despite an age difference of more than 30 years, Ortelius and Rockox struck up a friendship through their humanist beliefs. It was a great honour for Rockox to have the map of Europe dedicated to him.



**Halberd**

Iron, early 1700

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 174

**Halberd**

Iron, c. 1520

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 174

The halberd is a multipurpose pole-mounted weapon. It consists of a wooden shaft, two metres or more in length, fitted with an iron thrusting blade with an axe on one side and a hook on the other. The axe was razor-sharp and could mutilate opponents. During a battle, the halberd could be used as a striking and thrusting weapon, and its hook could pull a rider from his horse. It was used by foot soldiers from the Middle Ages until the 16th century, before being superseded by the pike and above all by the emergence of firearms. From then on, it was a purely ceremonial weapon, carried as a symbol of rank by sergeants or in parades.



#### **Antwerp School**

Portrait of a Member of the Guild of St Sebastian

\*EETER LESTEENS/\*ANNES SCHUT/\*ANNE S. MERTEN\*

Oil on canvas, c. 1645

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 2017.1

The first mention of an Antwerp archers' corporation dates from 1305 and concerns the Old Arbalest Guild. The old and the new arbalest guilds, and the old and new hand-bow guilds were two military divisions, each of which had its trained members (the old guild) and recruits (the young guild). Both arbalest guilds had St George as their patron and both hand-bow guilds St Sebastian. Other guilds were the fencers, with St Michael as their patron, and the arquebusiers, who were dedicated to St Christopher.

The man in the painting is a servant of the old hand-bow guild. He wears chest plates on which St Sebastian is depicted. The work is inscribed with the names 'Jean Schut', 'Pietter Lesteens' and, less distinctly, 'Jean Mertens' (?), who can also be found in a list of members of the old hand-bow guild.



**Alexander Van Bredael (Antwerp 1663 – 1720)**

Parade Floats on the Meir in Antwerp

A whale for Mary

Oil on canvas

Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation

You might think this is a carnival parade, but it isn't: these impressive floats are paying tribute to Mary, Antwerp's protectress. It was perfectly normal for parade floats and giants to liven up Christian festivities in the 17th century. In the background, you can see the giant Druon Antigonus, while in the middle, the sea god Neptune rides a whale that spurts water at unsuspecting passers-by. The crucifix by the entrance to Huidevettersstraat tells us that these popular festivities are religious in character.



**David Vinckboons (Mechelen, 1576–Amsterdam, before 1633)**

Distribution of Bread to the Poor

Oil on canvas

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.40

Vinckboons followed the painting style of the Bruegel family, concentrating on scenes from daily life and landscapes.

Desperate poverty is the subject of this work, in which monks distribute bread to the poor at the gate of their monastery. It is an image of the 'struggle for life', in which the weak are left on the sidelines. On the far right, we see a blind hurdy-gurdy man: neither he nor the legless man propelling himself on a board is able to get hold of a piece of bread. Their position in the painting, in the right corner, is not coincidental: it is a commentary on the scene and encourages the viewer to reflect. Rockox and his wife were committed to helping the poor, creating 31 bursaries, for instance, to allow boys from impoverished families to study. Rockox also provided large stocks of grain to feed the poor in the event of another siege and his will ordered that his house and goods be sold and the proceeds used for charity.



**Frans Pourbus the Younger (Antwerp, 1569–Paris, 1622) and studio**  
Philip III of Spain  
Oil on panel, c. 1600–10  
Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation

Pourbus was an important link in the development of Netherlandish portraiture. He synthesized the developments of the sixteenth century and acted as a bridge between the Renaissance and the 17th-century Baroque.

Philip III was king of Spain, Naples, Sicily and Portugal from 1598 to 1621. The brother of Archduchess Isabella, he succeeded his father Philip II on the latter's death. Philip III left the practical day-to-day rule of his kingdom to the Duke of Lerma, preferring to devote himself to dancing, poetry and hunting rather than politics.





**Abraham Janssens**  
**(Antwerp, c. 1567–1632)**  
Concord, Charity and Sincerity  
Conquering Discord  
Oil on panel, 1622  
Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts,  
inv. 5001

Abraham Janssens was a Brabant Baroque painter who, having visited Rome for five years, returned to Antwerp, where he achieved immediate success amongst the bourgeoisie through his use of secular themes. Concord, Charity and Sincerity are values that every society pursues. This work was painted during the Twelve Years' Truce – the temporary peace agreed in the hope that it would prove permanent and lead to renewed prosperity. In her right arm, Concord bears a cornucopia of fruit and ears of corn; in her left, a bundle of arrows, a symbol of unity in diversity. Charity, or Love, binds the bundle together with a red ribbon. Beside her is a young boy with a red heart. Sincerity, dressed in white, has already tied her white ribbon. In the background, grisly Discord looks on impotently.



**Portrait of Jacopo da Trezzo, c. 1555-1559**

Antonio Moro (Utrecht, 1516/21 - Antwerp, 1576/77)

Oil on panel

Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation

Antonio Moro was a Dutch painter. He produced almost exclusively portraits. He had an impressive career as a portrait painter in the service of the Habsburgs.

Moro painted the portrait of Jacopo da Trezzo (Trezzo sull'Adda, 1515 - Madrid, 1589), who was one of the most successful and skilful medallists of his time. That the artist and the person portrayed knew each other well is evidenced by the subdued look on da Trezzo's face, painted subtly and unapologetically.

Jacopo da Trezzo spent much of his early career in Milan, where he was an active engraver of gems and portrait medals for, among others, Duke Cosimo I de' Medici. He was also in the service of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and his son Philip of Spain and his second wife Mary Tudor.



**Sconce**

Anoniem, Antwerpen

Chased brass

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockoxhuis,

inv. 77.191

A sconce is an ingenious form of lighting used in 17th-century parlours. Rooms were lit using the glow of the fireplace, candles in chandeliers, candelabra and sconces. The more rounded the sconce's wall-bracket, the better the candlelight was reflected into the room. Inventive brass chasers did their best to make their sconces glow aesthetically too. The heart shape is a fine example.

### Picture Gallery

Nicolaas Rockox's personal art gallery symbolises the rich collection that he assembled. He had the room immortalised in a painting by Frans Francken the Younger (Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek). The work is an important iconographical document, but still only offers a glimpse of Rockox's cultural interests. He loved contemporary art and the very best artists of his time were represented in his collection: Rubens, van Dyck, Francken, members of the Bruegel dynasty and many more besides. On average, members of the social elite owned about 15 paintings in the period in question. The inventory of Rockox's estate, by contrast, listed 82 works in the deceased's collection. Many of these works were religious in character, reflecting the fact that as burgomaster for external affairs, he was expected to set an example and to be a champion of Catholicism. Rockox was also a collector, however, of Greek and Roman coins from the 5th century BCE to the 2nd century CE, Roman busts, seashells and a great many books. These bear physical testimony to a man who was an intellectual, a humanist, an antiquarian and a jurist.

On the one hand, Rockox viewed art as a means of shaping his image, while on the other, he was also aware that a great deal of talent was present in Antwerp and that art was a key export product. The city was known for the high quality of its art and luxury goods. Antwerp's dazzling art cabinets found their way to distant markets, its silversmiths were renowned, and its painters and sculptors enjoyed an immense reputation. Buying and showing off works of art supported the local economy.



**Jan van Kessel**  
**(Antwerp, 1612–1652)**  
Allegory of Sight  
Oil on copper  
Snyders & Rockox House, inv. 2018.1

Jan van Kessel was influenced by his grandfather Jan Brueghel the Elder. He was trained by Jan the Younger, who had taken over his father's studio. Van Kessel became an independent artist in 1645. We are treated here to a magnificent picture gallery by the river Scheldt in Antwerp with a view of the cathedral. Our eyes are also drawn to paintings referring to Frans Snyders, as well as sculptures that strongly resemble the bronzes of the Flemish sculptor Giambologna, who settled in Italy. The figures were painted by another hand. The nude woman has frequently been identified as Venus, but might also represent Juno, the personification of optics. The little boy holds a mirror, a symbol of self-reflection.



**Art cabinet, Italy?**

Ebony, ivory, mid-17th century

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.181

This art cabinet resembles a harmoniously constructed façade with three little doors featuring a tympanum. In other words, we are being tricked a little here, as the cabinet is a kind of trompe-l'oeil. The doors enclose drawers, one of which conceals a further, secret drawer behind it.

The images show us the Garden of Eden. The three doors recount the story of Adam and Eve. The many birds and other animals on the edges of the drawers refer to the Earthly Paradise.



**Workshop of Rogier van der Weyden  
(Tournai, 1399/1400–Brussels, 1464)**

Trinity

Oil on panel, c. 1430–40

Leuven, M Museum, inv. S/13/F

Rogier van der Weyden was one of the most important Flemish Primitives. He is thought to have received his training in Robert Campin's workshop. In his own lifetime, van der Weyden was known throughout Europe, probably as the most influential painter of his century. He was the first to bring the new element of 'emotion' into Flemish painting.

The Trinity is a theological doctrine in many strands of Christianity, according to which the one God exists in three divine guises: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit. Here God the Father presents his son, who is surrounded by angels. Two of the latter hold the *Arma Christi* or 'Instruments of the Passion.' The dove representing the Holy Spirit originally perched on Christ's left shoulder. However, due to damage, only its feet can now be seen. Christ's wounds move the viewer to pity. The composition derives from a model by Robert Campin, known as the Master of Flémalle, and was probably commissioned by the Leuven municipal secretary Gerard van Baussele.



**Peter Paul Rubens (Siegen, 1577–Antwerp, 1640)**

Christ on the Cross

Oil on panel, 1628

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.124

Images of the crucified Christ are not the most attractive of paintings, but take a moment to look more closely. It seems as though Rubens was in a hurry and that he laid Jesus down on the panel in rapid strokes of his brush. The background is a rough suggestion of clouds, while despite the lack of detail in their execution, the faces of Mary and John have expressions that arouse our pity. This is great art: highly synthetic, yet simultaneously a piece that ‘works’. An oil sketch like this is called a *modello* – a small-scale design for a large painting. Rubens made the sketch in preparation for an altarpiece in St Michael’s Church in Ghent. A diplomatic mission prevented him from completing the assignment, and so Anthony van Dyck was asked to paint the altarpiece instead. Next time you’re in Ghent, take a moment to visit the fine Gothic church and see for yourself.





**Jan van Hemessen**  
**(Hemiksem, c. 1500– after 1575)**

Saint Jerome as a Monk

Oil on panel

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.3

Jan van Hemessen mainly painted religious and genre scenes, but also produced satirical portraits. His paintings are characterised by his attention to detail and intense facial expressions.

St Jerome, or Hieronymus in Latin, has his feast day on 30 September and is the patron saint of translators and humanists. Jerome was a very early saint: he was born in Stridon, in what is now Croatia, and died in Bethlehem in 420. At the age of about 37, Jerome was appointed secretary to Pope Damasus in Rome. The pontiff was full of praise for his knowledge of languages – in addition to his native tongue, Jerome spoke Latin, Greek, Hebrew and even Syriac. The pope commissioned him to translate the Old Testament from Hebrew to Latin. Damasus died shortly afterwards, and Jerome withdrew to Bethlehem, where he spent the next 35 years living as a hermit, immersing himself in biblical history, writing biographies and continuing to work on his Bible translations and letters. In the early 16th century, the humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam refocused attention on Jerome, stripped away the myths that had accreted around him and presented the saint as a precursor of humanism. This is the only artwork we still have that originally belonged to the Rockox collection and which can be seen in Francken's painting of his picture gallery.



**Anonymous**

Adriana Perez

Oil on canvas, 19th century

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 94.4

Adriana Perez was 21 when she married the young alderman Nicolaas Rockox in 1589. She was the only daughter of Maria van Berchem – a member of a noble family that also produced several burgomasters – and the Spanish merchant and banker Luiz Perez. Maria van Berchem died a year after Adriana’s birth. Adriana also had two half-sisters through her father’s other relationships. The family all lived together in the Keizerstraat. She and Nicolaas purchased their home, *Den Gulden Rinck*, in 1603. The couple never had children. In 1613–15, Nicolaas commissioned Rubens to paint their memorial, *The Incredulity of Thomas*, which shows Nicolaas and Adriana on the left and right wings respectively. This striking 19th-century copy commemorates the lady of the house.



**Pieter Thijs**

St Roch Tended by Angels and Fed by a Dog

Drawing, black and white chalk

Private collection

Following the death of his parents, St Roch (France, 14th century) decided to live the life of a pilgrim. Whenever he came to a place in the grip of plague or other disease, he would remain there to care for the sick. After spending three years in Rome, he paused in Piacenza to nurse victims of the plague. This time, however, he too succumbed to the epidemic and isolated himself to avoid spreading it further. A dog belonging to a local country gentleman brought him a hunk of bread each day. Roch survived, recovered and later became the patron saint of victims of plague and other diseases and also that of dogs.



**Maerten de Vos (Antwerp, 1532–1603)**

The Allegory of the Seven Liberal Arts

Oil on panel, c. 1590

Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation

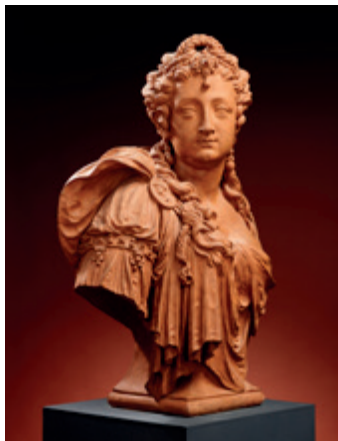
Maerten de Vos spent several years in Italy, as we can see from his style and use of colour. He was one of the most sought-after painters in Antwerp when it came to restoring church interiors after the damage inflicted by Calvinist iconoclasts, but he also produced a lot of allegorical scenes.

The chimney breast is decorated by this imposing painting by de Vos, with an allegorical theme represented by women. The Seven Liberal Arts – originally known in Latin as the *septem artes liberales* – were curriculum subjects in both classical-era and medieval European schools. The woman in the foreground playing the lute from a musical score is the personification of Music, while on the left, we see a woman with a pair of dividers and a globe, who represents Geometry. The ‘liberal arts’ were broken down into linguistic subjects (Latin grammar, logic and rhetoric) and mathematical ones (arithmetic, geometry, music and cosmology). They were ‘liberal’ in the sense that they formed the education of a ‘free man’ and were not concerned with economic activity. ‘Art’, meanwhile, refers to the skills or knowledge typical of humanism.



**Maerten de Vos (Antwerp, 1532–1603)**  
The Tribunal of the Brabant Mint in Antwerp  
Oil on panel, 1594  
Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.4

The warlike woman at the centre of this painting is standing up, as it were, on behalf of men – seemingly the opposite of the late-16th-century world. Although women do feature in the paintings of the time, they mostly appear in paired aristocratic portraits or as anonymous housewives at fairs and country celebrations. This woman is not a biblical figure, either – she is too boldly painted for that. This is, in fact, the mythological figure of *Dame Justice*, a Roman goddess. She stands before a row of men finely dressed in robes and starched ruffs, members of the tribunal of the Antwerp Mint – the institution where coins were struck. The Mint had its own law court, in which cases of forgery, for instance, were tried. The other men in the foreground are biblical and secular figures who featured in the history of justice, such as Moses, with the Tablets of the Law, who looks up at Emperor Justinian, the codifier of the Roman legal system. Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, who was said to have drawn up the sacred laws, sits on the right.



**Bust of Omphale, signed, c. 1675-1680**

Lucas Faydherbe (Mechelen 1617-1697)

Terracotta

Mechelen, Hof van Busleyden, inv. nr. B/40

Omphale, the queen of Lydia, bought Hercules as a slave. He had been sentenced to slavery by the oracle at Delphi after a dispute about an alleged theft of cattle. Omphale fell in love with Hercules and married him. Both statues in the Baroque style were conceived as pendants.

Omphale is particularly richly decorated. The earrings and pendant give her a royal distinction. A certain irony can be read in her gaze.

It is not known for whom the statues were made. Both statues have a hollow back and were probably made to be placed in a niche or against a wall.



**Bust of Hercules, c. 1675-1680**

Lucas Faydherbe (Mechelen 1617-1697)

Terracotta

Mechelen, Hof van Busleyden, inv. nr. B/39

The Greek hero Heracles, or Hercules to the Romans, was the illegitimate son of the supreme god Zeus and the king's daughter Alcmene. The goddess Hera, wife of Zeus, was particularly vindictive towards the child and tried to kill him by hiding two snakes in his crib. But the baby managed to kill the snakes, proving his special power. Hera, however, continued to stalk him until he became so mad that he killed his own family. As punishment, Hercules had to perform ten almost impossible tasks, such as killing the dangerous lion of Nemea. This is why Hercules wears the head of the lion as his headdress.



**Lucas Faydherbe (Mechelen, 1617–1697)**  
**Virgin and Child**  
Carrara marble, c. 1675  
Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House,  
inv. 77.16

Faydherbe worked in Mechelen as an architect and sculptor, having received some of his training under Rubens. It was there that he learned the formal language of the Baroque, which he translated into sculpture.

This Madonna with the Infant Jesus was sculpted at the height of his career. It radiates a Baroque expressiveness and displays commensurate attention to finely detailed finishing. Mary sits on a little bench, decorated with fringes, placing her in a domestic environment as a mother. Once again, a contrapposto stance is used to suggest a natural sense of movement.





**Anonymous, Southern Netherlands**  
Madonna and Child  
Terracotta, 17th century,  
Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.61

This little statue is a fine example of a *bozzetto*, a preparatory model for a sculpture. The finished piece has yet to be identified. The design bears witness to high quality and a perfect Baroque interpretation. A beautifully draped Madonna suckles her wriggling child. The contrapposto stance lends a powerful dynamism to the figure. The sculpture exudes a sense of naturalness that overshadows the religious element.



**Tobias van Tissenaken (Mechelen, 1560/70-1624)**

Crucified Christ

Alabaster, monogrammed

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.149

Van Tissenaken was a painter and *cleynsteker* (sculptor), who became dean of the Guild of St Luke in Mechelen in 1619. Mechelen was a flourishing centre of alabaster carving from around 1535 to 1630.

The alabaster used here is not the calcite but the gypsum variety – a translucent stone consisting of gypsum that has not fully crystallised. Van Tissenaken has achieved a balanced sense of drama in this small space. He carved the integrated frame too.



**Anonymous (copy after the School of Rhodes,  
c. 25 BCE)**

Laocoön

Carrara marble, early 17th century

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 83.6

The celebrated Laocoön sculptural group was discovered during excavations in Rome in 1506 (Museo Vaticano). In Greek mythology, Laocoön was a Trojan priest of Apollo and Poseidon. He warned the Trojans about the horse left behind by the Greeks as a ruse by their commander, Odysseus. The goddess Athena punished Laocoön by sending a pair of snakes to suffocate the priest and his sons. The anonymous sculptor who made this copy succeeded brilliantly in expressing Laocoön's agony in marble. Flemish Baroque artists like Rubens and van Dyck were fascinated by the power of these ancient sculptures and frequently drew inspiration from them for their own work.



**Southern Netherlands**

**Raising of the Cross**

Terracotta, bozzetto, late 17th century

Leuven, M Museum, inv. C/159

This powerful piece of sculpture shows immense craftsmanship. Four muscular executioners struggle to raise the cross to which Christ has been nailed. Their facial expressions express their intense physical exertion. The cross functions as a diagonal axis around which a characteristically Baroque dynamism is developed. The composition reflects one by Anthony van Dyck, now in the Musée Bonnat in Bayonne.



**Catharina van Hemessen (Antwerp, c. 1527/28–after 1560)**

The Lamentation of Christ

Oil on panel

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.94

Catharina, daughter of the painter Jan van Hemessen, was one of the few women to make her name as an artist in the 16th century. She was also a lady-in-waiting to Mary of Hungary in Brussels. Catharina chiefly painted religious scenes and female portraits. Here she subtly depicts the drama of the Lamentation, with its agonising yet suppressed sorrow. St John is visibly overcome with grief and holds a handkerchief to his face. Mary Magdalene grips Christ's hand tenderly. She is recognisable by her symbol, the ointment jar standing in the foreground. A landscape, with Calvary hill on the left, unfolds behind the scene. The heavenly Jerusalem can be made out to the right of the valley beyond a rocky crag that recalls elements in the work of Patinir. Compared to the Lamentation in the foreground, the landscape is rendered very sketchily.



**Frans Pourbus II (Antwerp, 1569 – Paris, 1622)**  
Elisabeth of France (1602-1644), later Isabella,  
queen of Spain, 1610-1612  
Oil on canvas  
Private collection

The girl in this portrait is Elisabeth of France, daughter of Henry IV, king of France, and Maria de' Medici.

This recently rediscovered work by the Antwerp master Frans Pourbus the Younger shows the girl at the age of ten, richly adorned with jewels and clothes embroidered with gold thread. The painting belongs to the series of royal portraits that Pourbus produced during his career as a painter at the French court.

Through her marriage in 1615 to the Spanish Philip IV, Elisabeth later became Queen of Spain and was named Isabella. Together they had eight children, seven of whom died at a very young age. Only their daughter Maria Theresa, who later married Louis XIV, reached adulthood.



**(workshop) Quinten Massijs**  
Christ as Salvator Mundi, the Saviour of the World  
Oil on panel  
Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation



**Quinten Massijs**  
Mary in prayer  
Oil on panel  
Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation

These two paintings recall a similar pair from Rockox's original collection, painted by Quentin Massys and now owned by the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp.

They hung in his art room – the very one you're in right now – but to the right of the fireplace, as shown by Frans Francken II (Munich, Alte Pinakothek) in his painting of this room.

They were also mentioned in the inventory of Rockox's estate.

Christ holds a globe at the foot of the cross while performing His blessing. You can see three symbols of the Evangelists on this globe, which symbolises the universe and thus depicts Christ as the Saviour of the World. Such traditional imagery is indebted to Greco-Roman culture, where world domination was represented by a globe held in the palm of the hand.



**Quinten Massys the Elder (Leuven, 1456–Antwerp, 1530)**

Virgin Mary and the Infant Christ

Oil on wood

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.201

Massys was a pioneer of Renaissance painting and a founder of the Antwerp School. Before he began to paint he was a decorative ironsmith. Where he had his training is not known, but he grew up in Leuven and in 1491 enrolled as a free master in the Antwerp Guild of St Luke. In his early career, he adhered closely to the style of the Flemish Primitives, as we can see in this tondo showing Mary in late-Gothic costume and with an aureole against a gold background. Massys focused after 1500 on the Renaissance ideal of beauty. His famous diptych of *Mary and Jesus* (Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts) was among the works Rockox had in his art gallery.





**Peter Paul Rubens (Siegen, 1577–Antwerp, 1640)**  
Mary Adoring the Sleeping Christ Child  
Oil on canvas, c. 1616  
Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.2

Mary gazes lovingly at her baby. How did Rubens manage to capture this intimate moment so skilfully? We believe that Rubens's first wife, Isabella Brant, was the model here, as she was for other works. The likeness is certainly striking. The Christ Child, meanwhile, resembles Nicholas, Rubens's second son. Although the little painting is imbued with a religious atmosphere, we also get a sense of Rubens's happy marriage.



**Jacques Jordaens (Antwerp, 1593–1678)**

Education of Jupiter, c. 1645

Oil on wood

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.20

This particular work was probably painted around 1645. Jupiter, or Zeus, as he is known in Greek mythology, was the son of Chronos and Rhea. Chronos devoured his children at birth, but Rhea was able to save Jupiter by hiding him on Crete, where he was raised by nymphs. He was suckled by the goat Amalthea, shown upper right. Jupiter is depicted here with a lyre, an instrument that probably made its way into Greece from Asia Minor. The lyre and the associated cithara, which is bigger and more robust, were chiefly used to accompany singing or poetry recitation.



**Anthony van Dyck (Antwerp, 1599–Blackfriars, 1641)**

Study of a man's head

Oil canvas transferred to panel, c. 1618

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.111

Did you see Rubens's oil sketch of the crucified Christ earlier? Here we find similar brilliance on van Dyck's part. Both artists might have been figureheads of the Baroque, but this did not mean they could conjure up a masterpiece out of nowhere. For each master, it was a question of constant practice and reinvention. Sketches and experiments were all part of the job. Van Dyck sketched a study for a man's head that acted as a model for various depictions of St Jerome, using white highlights to subtly suggest the greying of the man's hair. He was particularly skilled in capturing the character of his sitters.



**Anthony van Dyck**  
**(Antwerp, 1599–Blackfriars, 1641)**  
Nicolas Claude Fabri de Peiresc  
Oil on wood  
Private collection

Van Dyck gave this oil sketch to Lucas Vorsterman so he could engrave it for his *Iconographie* – a large series of portrait prints that was a kind of Facebook *avant la lettre*. Van Dyck visited Aix-en-Provence, where Peiresc lived, in 1625 and might have painted his portrait then. Peiresc was a French humanist who corresponded with Rockox and, through him, later with Rubens too. He wrote a number of letters to the two gentlemen and also visited them in Antwerp. His favourite themes were numismatics and botany and he sent Rockox southern European plants, delivered to Antwerp in tin boxes, as well as coins for his collection.



**Jewellery chest**

Anonymous, Antwerp

Ebony and silver foil

Antwerp, Snyders&Rockox House, inv. 77.28

This box was used to store perfume bottles, diamonds, pearls or jewellery. It still incorporates an old mirror. A decorative button on the lid gives access to a small, hidden drawer.



**Wan-Li Vase**

Anonymous

Wan-Li porcelain

Antwerp, museum Snijders&Rockoxhuis

This vase is part of Chinese porcelain from the Rockox&Snyders House. Wan-Li porcelain was named after the last emperor of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), and was a very popular import. It is white and blue, egg-shell thin and virtually transparent. Also in the kitchen, dishes, plates and bowls in Wan-Li porcelain are exhibited.



**Anonymous, Southern Netherlands**

St James

Oak, traces of polychromy, 16th century

Antwerp, Snyders&Rockox House, inv. 77150

This statue represents St James of Compostella, identifiable from the scallop shell on his beret as well as the pilgrim's staff and beggar's sack – also attributes of pilgrims to Compostella. The Rockox family had strong links with St James' Church (Sint-Jacobskerk) in Antwerp. Nicolaas' grandparents, Adriaan Rockox and Catharina van Overhoff, were buried in their own chapel in the church. The statue still shows traces of the original polychromy (painting). No makers' or other marks have been found on the figure, possibly indicating that it was made for sale on the open market.



**Anonymous, Mechelen**  
St George Slaying the Dragon  
Walnut, polychrome, c. 1500-10  
Leuven, M Museum, inv. C/62

As the patron of the arbalest guild, St George was a much venerated saint in the 16th and 17th centuries. Both he and his horse are shown here wearing Gothic armour. The horse's protective covering features a Burgundian cross (a St Andrew's cross formed from rough, knotty branches), and the 'steel and flint' emblem of the Burgundian territories and the Order of the Golden Fleece. St George the dragon-slayer is about to decapitate the vanquished monster. The sculpture is missing its lance. Four guild marks and a quality mark – three vertical poles in the form of a shield – identify it as a product of Mechelen. Traces of gold and silver leaf can still be found.





**Attributed to Rombout de Raisier  
(Antwerp, c. 1573–before 1638)**

The Van Nispen tazza

Silver gilt, 1615

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 2007.1

An Antwerp silversmith called Rombout de Raisier made the so-called Van Nispen *tazza*. Saucer-shaped cups like this, mounted on a foot, originally served as drinking vessels, but this one was designed as an ornamental cup for Balthasar van Nispen, Provost of the Brabant Mint. Van Nispen himself might have had it made to commemorate the visit to the Mint of Archduke Albrecht and the Infanta Isabella. Another possibility is that the minters presented it to Van Nispen on the occasion of his marriage in 1621. The vessel is a fine example of chased silver work and shows the interior of a mint workshop, with minters at work in the foreground. Balthasar van Nispen himself appears at the centre of the dish, presenting what is presumably a medal to Albert and Isabella. To the top of the scene are two putti with the crowned coat-of-arms of Spain. A banderole is inscribed in Spanish: 'I entrust you with the dispensation of justice, that you might do it well'. We know from the engraved text that the meeting occurred on 26 August 1615. Van Nispen's coat-of-arms and those of his wife Maria de Moy and of the Antwerp Mint are depicted on the foot, together with emblems recalling the minter's craft. The coat-of-arms of Brabant appears on the stem.



#### Greek and Roman coins

Bronze, silver and gold, 5th century BCE - 2nd century CE

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House

Rockox possessed a considerable collection of coins, notable for their quality and chronological completeness. He drew up a catalogue in which he listed both his coin and antiquarian collection (The Hague, Meermann Museum). The coin collection consisted chiefly of bronze, silver and gold pieces from the time of the Roman empire and the Roman Republic. It also included a smaller number of Greek pieces. It is not known just how many gold coins Rockox had, as his catalogue notes that part of the collection was already in the possession of Gaston d'Orléans, the brother of Louis XIII. On the title page of his catalogue, Rockox himself noted a total of 1 129 coins, 744 silver and 385 bronze. Examples include: gold stater, Philip II, Macedonia, 359-336 BCE; silver tetradrachm, Alexander the Great, Macedonia, 336-323 BCE; bronze sestertius, Nero, 54-68 CE.



**Hieronymus Verdussen and Jan Jansz Kaen (IK)**

*Nieuwe valuatie vande goude Munte*

Coin-weighing scale in box, 1612

Wood, copper, engraving, iron

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 2011.1

Jan Jansz Kaen lived and worked in Amsterdam in the second quarter of the 17th century. He made weights for use in weighing coins and signed his work 'IK'. Verdussen was an engraver, who made the valuation table for this little box, which contains a set of little weights and a scale. The box holds 46 blanks, 30 of which are marked with a hand, a goldsmith's hammer, gauges and the maker's mark IK. There is also a sliding panel with 27 weights.



**Anonymous, Germany**

Gimmel ring with memento mori  
Gold, polychrome enamel, mid-17th century  
Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation

**Anonymous, British Isles**

Love ring  
Partially enamelled gold, set with a diamond  
and a ruby, late 15th century  
Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation

**Anonymous, Germany**

Necklace  
Silver, metal, silver gilt, gold, decorated with  
diamonds, sapphires, rubies, emerald and  
pearls, mid-16th century  
Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation

Jewellery often formed part of a dowry, including that of Adriana Perez, Rockox's wife. Her portrait hangs in this room, showing her holding prayer beads in blood coral in her right hand and with a string of pearls around her neck.

### **German ornamental goblets**

Princes and wealthy nobles had been fond of objects made of gold and silver since the Middle Ages. Silver tableware and ornamental drinking vessels were displayed in richly decorated sideboards or art cabinets. Precious metalwork of this kind was intended to highlight the patrician's power and splendour.

Antwerp was an international trading centre in the first half of the 16th century.

Nuremberg and Augsburg too had been important centres for gold and silver objects since the Middle Ages. They were especially known for ornamental drinking vessels of various types, including columbine and pineapple goblets, which also found their way into patrician interiors in the Southern Netherlands. They were mostly made of silver or silver gilt (vermeil), but could also be executed in glass or incorporate other materials too, such as a sculpted coconut. Nicolaas Rockox owned not only two goblets, but also silver tableware like fruit bowls, candelabra, salt cellars.

### **Plate**

Nuremberg had a flourishing metalworking industry from the 15th to the 17th century, after which the city began to decline. It was famous not only for its silver chasing but also brass objects like this plate, which were often decorated with biblical scenes and could be used in a religious context as collection plates. A circle with lobes is stamped into the flat part of the plate, referring to the decoration on the columbine goblet.



**Friedrich Hildebrand (? - 1608)**

Ornamental goblet with mythological scenes and cartouches

Vermeil

Antwerp, Snyders&Rockox House, inv. 77.57



**Andreas Gilg I (1585 - 1633)**

Columbine goblet with lid surmounted by a Roman soldier

Vermeil

Antwerp, Snyders&Rockox House, inv. 2020.3

A columbine consists of five graceful, dove-shaped petals. They were a frequent source of inspiration for the decorative arts, as in the elegant lobes on the body of the goblet.

**Jeremias Flicker II (c. 1610 - 1647)**

A pear-shaped ornamental goblet

Vermeil, Augsburg 1622-26

Antwerp, Snyders&Rockox House, inv. 2021.1



**Friedrich Conrad (1628-1675)**

Coconut goblet

Vermeil, Nuremberg, first half of 17th century

Antwerp, Snyders&Rockox House, inv. 2021.2

**Anonymous, Nuremberg**

Plate

Copper, 16th century

Antwerp, Snyders&Rockox House, inv. 11.177A



### **Selection of book bindings**

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House

When Nicolaas Rockox died in 1640, the notary who prepared the inventory of his estate recorded 203 books, without specifying what their titles were. Rockox probably owned a lot more books than that, as there were several other publishing houses and booksellers in addition to the Plantin Press, which you can still visit today. We know from the archives of the Plantin Moretus Museum that at that printers' alone, he bought 162 books over a period of 31 years.

They were the bestsellers of their time, including a number of fine botanical publications, famous historical works and also religious books.



### **Coral**

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House

In addition to seashells, coral featured amongst the *naturalia* that were often displayed in art cabinets.

It was collected on account both of the exotic locations where it was found and its rarity.





**Writing Cabinet**

Marquetry

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockoxhuis inv. 77.115

The writing cabinet is a small storage cabinet for documents and papers of value, for pens and feathers. Like art cabinets, this small piece of furniture has hidden drawers. For example, the bottom cover shelf is extendable and hides three small drawers. The furniture is decorated with marquetry in decorative motifs. It is not very functional, but rather serves as a showpiece.

## ROOM 4 De camer achter Tgroot Salet

### NATURE

Every picture gallery had a study nearby. This was the place where Nicolaas Rockox could devote himself to his collection of smaller objects, such as his books, his busts and his seashells. Rockox loved the peace of this spot – a tranquillity you can also sense in the landscapes. Most of the works in his painting collection were in fact landscapes. Rockox never travelled very far. He visited Paris, where he also studied, and the Northern Netherlands too. But landscape paintings also enabled him to ‘travel’ to their beautiful vistas, idyllic scenes and perfect portraits of nature.

The landscapes might seem perfect, but there isn’t a single one in Southern Netherlandish painting prior to the mid-17th century that can be identified with certainty. They are all images of an unspoiled, idealised nature in which you can lose yourself for hours. Things were different with city views, although here too artists were not afraid to adjust the visual iconography to suit their own tastes and themes. For the most part, though, the cathedrals and churches, with their powerful spires on the skyline, can be identified.

Landscape is a relatively recent discipline. It was not until the early 16th century that landscape painting emerged as a genre in its own right and Joachim Patinir was there at its birth. All the same, landscapes continued to function for many years as a decorative element in both religious and mythological scenes. As a genre, landscapes present an all-embracing nature: if we zoom in more closely, we find a wide variety of flowers, plants and animals. Don’t forget to take a look out of the window at Rockox’s city garden, with its own microcosm of nature.



**Cabbage leaf verdure, first half 16th century**

Tapestry, wool and silk

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.178

The walls of the most important rooms in noble castles were hung with pictorial tapestries, mostly in series of biblical, mythological or historical scenes. There was also a strong demand in the 16th century for verdure tapestries, which were cheaper than the pictorial ones, on the part of the lesser nobility and the emerging middle classes. Verdures could be woven faster and were often less refined.

Here we see stylised *Anthurium scherzerianum* leaves (also known as ‘flamingo flowers’) in the middle against a dark background. Delicate flowering vines wind between them and the overall effect is completed by birds, both large and small.

The border consists of impressive vases, some filled with plants. There are fruits too.



**Osias Beert the Elder**

**(Antwerp, c. 1580–1624)**

Flower still life in a niche

Oil on copper, c. 1610–20

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.167

In his early-17th-century floral still lifes, Beert followed in the footsteps of Jan Brueghel the Elder. No works of Beert are mentioned in the Rockox inventory, though paintings by representatives of the Bruegel dynasty are. Beert and Jan Brueghel were both masters in the creation of beautiful bouquets in which each flower is pictured at the most attractive moment of its existence and is a reflection of keen observation. The flowers here form a somewhat unnatural arrangement. This bouquet actually features an exquisite selection of what the patrician cultivated in his city garden over several seasons, with the artist making what amount to a series of floral portraits. The arrangement is topped with orange lilies, surrounded by a garland of tulips. This was not possible in the 17th century, when you could only admire tulips in the spring, while lilies flowered in the summer. Bouquets of this sort refer to the transience of existence on earth, the ‘vanitas’ theme.



**Abraham Mignon**  
**(Frankfurt 1640 - 1679 Utrecht)**  
Garland of Fruit and Flowers with Roses,  
Tulips and Raspberries and a Variety of  
Insects  
Signed lower left: A. Mignon. Fe.  
Oil on panel  
Private Collection

Mignon was a painter of floral and fruit still lifes. He trained in Frankfurt under Jacob Marrell, with whom he relocated to Utrecht in 1664. He enrolled in that city's Guild of St Luke in 1669. In the three years that followed, he continued his training in the studio of Jan Davidsz. de Heem.

This impressive garland of both wild and cultivated flowers is an early work of Mignon, which remains close to De Heem's work. The magnificent natural ensemble, most of which is in full bloom, has a blue silk bow at either end. A white rose, a peony and a tulip with flaming petals grab the viewer's attention, but the still life also includes fruit, such as raspberries, blueberries and wheat sheaves. A variety of insects add the finishing touch to the picture. Mignon's refined use of light and colour creates a powerful contrast with the dark, monochrome background.



**(Follower of) Joachim Patinir**  
**(Bouvignes?, 1475/80–Antwerp, 1515/24)**  
St Christopher Carrying the Christ Child  
Oil on panel  
Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.35

Joachim Patinir came from the Dinant region and probably trained in Bruges, in Gerard David's studio. He later joined the Antwerp Guild of St Luke. Patinir is considered to be the first autonomous landscape painter in the Low Countries.

If you immerse yourself in the landscape paintings you will soon sense how the horizon is used as an axis in the presentation of these images. The horizon is placed higher in one landscape than in another, and one artist was quicker to master the perspective technique than another. The higher the horizon, the less depth the painting suggested, the lower the horizon, the more realistic it seemed.

This brilliant landscape draws our attention to the brightly lit zone on the horizon, thereby emphasising the spatial aspect. The way the colours are applied – blending from brown and green in the foreground to blue-grey tones in the sky – further enhances the effect in a technique known as 'atmospheric perspective'. The banks of a river function in the same way as the scenery on either side of a theatre stage, with an expansive view of the landscape at the front, with the gaze then narrowing towards the horizon. Talking of theatre, Patinir uses the landscape here to stage a performance of a saint's legend, namely the moment when Christopher carries the Christ Child across the river. All the same, the landscape dominates the religious scene.



**Lambert Lombard (Liège, 1505/06–1566)**

Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes

Oil on panel

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.35

Lambert Lombard had considerable influence on Antwerp painters in the first half of the 16th century. His fascination for the culture of classical antiquity – he spent two years in Rome – prompted Frans Floris and Willem Key to become his pupils. Frans Floris in particular would become the figurehead of Renaissance painting in Antwerp. The main characters in this story from the Bible are placed at the centre of the picture plane: Christ blesses the loaves and fishes, with his disciples Peter and Andrew to his right. The composition with its numerous figures is structured in an orderly way, with a high foreground and high horizon. The landscape continues behind the craggy rock placed at the centre of the painting and which enhances the sense of space, following Patinir's example.



**Cornelis Massys (Antwerp, 1510/11–1556/57)**

Calvary

Oil on panel

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.36

Cornelis Massys – son of the famous Quentin and brother of Jan – started out as a draughtsman and engraver. He enrolled in the Antwerp Guild of St Luke in 1532. His landscapes often include fanciful rocky outcrops like the one in the foreground here and are influenced by the style of Joachim Patinir. As in Patinir’s work, the landscape is the dominant element in Cornelis Massys’s work. The rock on which the Calvary scene takes place offers a view on the left of Jerusalem in the distance, symbol of spiritual power. To the right is a castle, symbol of secular power. The menacing sky heightens the scene’s drama.





**Joachim Beuckelaer (Antwerp, 1533–1575)**

The Flight into Egypt

Oil on panel

Monogrammed JB on a barrel and dated 1563

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.182

Joachim Beuckelaer initially painted religious themes, later using the religious context to enhance the attraction of his market pieces and still lifes. Together with his uncle, the Amsterdam painter Pieter Aertsen (Amsterdam, 1508–1575), he was an initiator of the independent market and still-life themes in painting. Their works were often also allegorical depictions. Laden with goods, market-sellers are shown here moving to the bank of a river to be ferried across. Among them is Joseph, leading a donkey carrying Mary and the Infant Jesus. The Bible scene occupies an inconspicuous place in the scene of market bustle. In this painting too, the landscape predominates over the biblical theme.



**Frans Francken the Younger (Antwerp, 1581–1642)**

Worship of the Golden Calf

Oil on canvas

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.93

Francken belonged to a family of artists that produced numerous painters. His paintings were chiefly of art galleries, but he also painted religious scenes. In the foreground, the Israelites are depositing their silver vessels and jewels at Aaron's feet. In the distance, they dance around the column bearing the golden calf. Above left, Moses descends from Mount Sinai accompanied by Joshua; in despair, he smashes the Tablets of the Law. Francken also included landscapes in many of his picture gallery paintings, rendering them in a mostly suggestive way. In this religious scene, the pillar with the Golden Calf serves as an indicator of depth. The foreground with the Israelites' offerings has been painted in a very detailed and tactile manner.



**Jan Brueghel the Elder (Brussels, 1568–Antwerp, 1625)**

Travellers on the Road

Oil on copper, signed

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.118

Jan Brueghel the Elder belonged to an artistic dynasty headed by his father Pieter Bruegel the Elder (whose sons added the 'h' to the family name). Jan travelled to Italy in 1589, where he worked in Naples, Rome and Milan, chiefly painting forest views. He returned to Antwerp in 1596, where a few years later, he was appointed court painter to the Archduke Albert and the Infanta Isabella. During his Antwerp period, Brueghel concentrated more on panoramic views.

This painting bears witness to his technical skill. Jan Brueghel the Elder represents an important link in the history of landscape painting. This work must have been painted around 1610 and exhibits a highly refined way of maximising the perspective effect of the panorama. To this end, Brueghel employs two colour zones: a brown one in front of a blue. He depicts several of his figures with their back to the viewer, and has them moving in the direction of a distant village, an effect that further emphasises the perspective.



**Jan Brueghel the Younger (Antwerp, 1601-1678)**

Charon Ferrying Souls Across the Styx

Oil and gold on copper

Bob Haboldt Collection

Charon drags his boat ashore having rowed the souls of the dead across the Styx, the river that separates the world of mortals from the underworld.

The composition of this painting draws on hell scenes by Jan Brueghel the Elder, which were inspired in turn by the tradition of Hieronymus Bosch.

None of the figures in this painting can be identified, with the exception of Charon himself, who is depicted as an old man with a long beard and an oar. On the far bank of the river, he has left behind a number of souls who were unable to pay the ferryman.



**Denis van Alsloot (Mechelen, 1560/80–1626/28)**

Wooded Landscape

Oil on copper

Signed: D. ab. Alsloot. S.A. PIC., stamped on the back

Antwerp, Snyders&Rockox House, inv. 2006.2

Van Alsloot worked chiefly in Brussels between 1606 and 1626, where he was court painter to Archduke Albert and the Infanta Isabella. He painted landscapes, festivities and ceremonies. His landscapes are innovative, in that they are frequently painted in a topographically correct way. He took inspiration for them from the Forêt de Soignes, and some can even be identified, such as views of Groenendaal and La Cambre. This landscape can be placed in a similar sphere. Van Alsloot based his imaginary landscapes on the work of Gillis van Coninxloo, although he used a softer palette and his work has a more realistic feel.



**Roelant Savery (Kortrijk, 1576–Utrecht, 1639)**

Horses and Cattle

Oil on canvas

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.184

Roelant Savery chiefly painted landscapes in the Flemish tradition of Gillis van Coninxloo the Younger, in which animals and plants occupied a prominent place within a mythological, biblical or moralising context. In 1603–04, he went to Prague, where he was appointed court painter to Emperor Rudolf II, a Habsburg prince who invited several artists to his court in the city. All the animals in this painting seem to be fighting each other, both on the ground and in the air. People too can be seen chasing one another in the little village painted in the background.



**Roelant Savery (Kortrijk, 1576–Utrecht, 1639)**

Zoo

Oil on canvas

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.39

Emperor Rudolf II, for whom Savery worked in Prague, had a zoo and also built up a collection of exceptional stones, shells, insects and other exotic rarities. Savery was invited to Prague as a landscape painter, because of his affinity for the tradition of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. This extraordinary painting shows various wild, strong animals, such as lions and leopards, devouring the weaker ones, like ducks and deer. The scene is set in a fantastic landscape, in which both banks of a river lead our gaze into the background, where a kind of ruin catches the eye.



**Joos de Momper the Younger**  
**(Antwerp, 1564–1635)**

The Journey of Tobias

Oil on panel

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House,  
inv. 77.130

De Momper travelled to Italy, having probably become an independent master in Antwerp in 1581. He was back in his native city before 1590. Like Pieter Bruegel the Elder, he drew inspiration from the rugged Alpine landscapes he saw on his travels. De Momper specialised in panoramic landscapes and imaginative mountain scenes with a relatively high horizon. Images of nature and the seasons reached a peak in the late Middle Ages in Books of Hours. De Momper lifted the seasons out of their allegorical context and presented them instead as pure nature. From 1600 onwards, he specialised in landscapes with deep valleys and tall peaks, rocky crags and caves. For all his expressive and fanciful brushwork, he achieved little progress during this productive period: the works do not go beyond variations on a theme. De Momper rarely signed or dated his paintings and so the study of his art is based on stylistic comparison and connoisseurship. This landscape serves as the setting for the biblical story of Tobias's journey.





**Lucas van Uden (Antwerp, 1595–1672)**

Stuck Cart

Oil on panel

Signed lower right: LVV

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 2017.3

Van Uden was the most important landscape painter in Rubens's period. He never worked in his eminent colleague's studio, but Rubens often provided the example for his art. Van Uden's smaller works show a focus on detail, while in his larger paintings we find decorative elements. Colour and shadow contrasts also make his compositions very strong – an approach that echoes the art of Jan Brueghel the Elder and Joos de Momper. Brueghel and David Teniers both provided 'staffage' – human and animal figures – for van Uden's work.

An etching was made after this painting, which confirms that Lucas van Uden was its author. The painting reveals the clear influence of Rubens. The stuck cart, in particular, is an element that van Uden must have seen in Rubens's work around 1635.



**(Attributed to) Hans Jordaens III**  
**(Antwerp, 1595–1643)**  
David Meeting Abigail  
Oil on canvas  
Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House,  
inv. 77.169

Hans Jordaens devoted himself primarily to painting historical themes, interiors, animals and art collections in the style of Frans Francken the Younger. He also collaborated with other artists, such as Cornelis de Baellieur and Abraham Govaerts, who painted the figures in his landscapes.

The mountainous landscape here recalls the work of Joos de Momper the Younger. The story of David and Abigail comes from the Book of Samuel (25:1–15). After Samuel's death, David withdrew to the wilderness of Maon, where a very wealthy but surly and bad-tempered man called Nabal lived with his wife Abigail. David sent ten young men to greet Nabal, wish him peace and request hospitality. They were rudely rebuffed, so angering David that he set out with 400 soldiers on a punitive expedition. When she learned of these events, Abigail, accompanied by servants and a large quantity of bread, meat and figs, went to see David without her husband's knowledge. She prostrated herself before him, offered the gifts and with great eloquence persuaded him to call off his retribution. In the meantime, Nabal had been giving a great feast at which he had fallen into a drunken stupor. When he sobered up, Abigail told her husband what she had done, dismaying him so much that he promptly died of a heart attack. David then took Abigail as his wife, to which she readily agreed.



**Art cabinet, second quarter 17th century**

Images of birds and the Garden of Eden

Ebony and gold embroidery on silk

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.58

This notable art cabinet is decorated with carefully embroidered depictions of fruit, flowers, trees and poultry on a light silk background. Various embroidery stitches beautify the inside of the doors and the folding lid, as well as the front panels of the drawers and portico. A griffon jumping up a parasol tree has been embroidered in gold, silver and coloured silk thread at the centre of an oval.



### **Shells**

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House

Nicolaas Rockox also had a collection of shells. The inventory notes ‘two casks of divers shells in all colours’. They were brought by merchant ships from trips far abroad and were expensive trinkets at the time. Silversmiths incorporated larger shells, such as the Nautilus, in drinking vessels.

### City garden

From nature in art (Room 3, Nature) to the art of nature. The little city garden was an oasis of peace for Rockox. When the wind is in the right direction, you can hear the cathedral bells. Those of St Charles Borromeo's Church can always be heard. Rockox's friend Nicolas Claude Fabri de Peiresc, the eminent humanist from Aix-en-Provence, wrote him a letter after visiting *Den Gulden Rinck* in 1606, in which he congratulated him on his *beau petit jardin*. A few years later, he twice sent Rockox tin boxes containing southern European plants, including a grapevine, a mastic tree, an olive tree, a stirax, a strawberry tree and many others. You can see them here in the beds in the middle.

Rockox had several botanical publications in his library from the likes of the Mechelen physician and botanist Rembert Dodoens, his colleague Carolus Clusius and the French garden designer Olivier de Serres. He immersed himself in these valuable reference works during winter evenings and made his choice. In the spring and summer, for instance, you can see orange trees in blossom: for just one week, the scent of these Mediterranean citrus plants is intoxicating. There is not enough sunlight here for us to eat their fruit, but they were jewels in a 17th-century ornamental garden. You could not pick up plants like this just anywhere in the Low Countries, they had to be sent from Southern Europe – Sicily or Spain.

To see tulips you have to come in the spring. These only began to be imported to the Low Countries from Turkey in the late 16th century. Their exquisite flowers, especially those with flaming colours, were rare and could not be cultivated. It was only realised in the 18th century that this lovely colouring was caused by a viral disease. The rarity of tulip bulbs made them very expensive and they could cost as much as a patrician's house. This state of affairs caused a great deal of trouble: in 1637, speculation in tulips came to a sudden end when the bubble burst and prices collapsed. Wealthy collectors were ruined overnight.

Take your time and linger a while on the bench. A garden like this offers not only botanical pleasure, it also brings calm in the heart of the city. Horses used to pull carriages in the streets outside, while the rattling beer-carts caused congestion while they were loaded and unloaded. And it did not always smell so sweet. Many wealthy residents kept their horses in a stable behind their homes, while lots of domestic animals roamed the streets: dogs and cats, but pigs too. You had to watch out where you were walking ... Enjoy the garden for a moment. Next up are leisure and entertainment.

# ROOMS 5 AND 6 Twaschhuys

## LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

The functional rooms in this patrician's residence were mostly located at the front. This is the laundry while a little further along the street side is the kitchen. No interesting facts about the laundry were recorded in the inventory of Rockox's estate.

We will pause here for a moment, though, as there was time for leisure and entertainment in Nicolaas's period too - more than you might think. People had virtually as many days off and holidays then as they do now, although this free time was subject to a fixed calendar. There was no work on Sunday, and there were also between 30 and 40 saints' days that were likewise free of labour. But you couldn't just do what you liked on those days: they were devoted at least in part to church services and religious activities that were strictly enforced under the Spanish regime. All the same, everyone - rich and poor - had their own pleasures.

Although the lower classes were largely illiterate and so did not leave any written records, paintings can provide us with a few insights. If you take a look around this room you can see activities such as card games, dancing, drinking, fairs, and playing the bagpipes or drum. Some of the depicted people dance enthusiastically or have had a few too many, but others simply enjoy a waffle. There are moments too of social contact. The only trip that the ordinary person could afford - and was actually allowed to take - was the annual pilgrimage. The Basilica of Our Lady in Scherpenhevel, one of the most famous Flemish

pilgrimage places, was founded in the 17th century by Archduke Albert and the Infanta Isabella.

The nobility and the wealthy had different hobbies. They played tric-trac on ivory boards, went hunting, listened to music played on elegant spinets, travelled, read books and rode horses, not to mention their mania for collecting things.

Let us begin, though, by taking a look at a special kind of game – the wordplay.





**Pieter Bruegel the Younger**  
**(Brussels, 1564 or 1565–Antwerp, 1638)**  
Flemish Proverbs  
Signed: P. Bruegel, 1595  
Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House,  
inv. 77.152

Little is known of Pieter Bruegel the Younger's life. He was born in Brussels as the eldest son of the famous Pieter Bruegel the Elder (whose sons added the 'h' to their surname). Because he was very young when his father died, he and his brother Jan the Elder probably learnt the art of painting from their grandmother Mayken Verhulst. Pieter the Younger's art lay very much in the shadow of his father's. Not only did he copy many of the elder Bruegel's works repeatedly, even the paintings of his own invention were influenced by his father's popular style. *Flemish Proverbs* in the Rockox House collection is an excellent copy of the painting that Pieter the Elder made in 1559 in Antwerp and that today hangs in Berlin. The more than one hundred proverbs can be split into two groups. The first illustrates the absurdity of human behaviour and turns the world on its head, as symbolised by the globe with the cross pointing downwards. Such illogical conduct could give rise to sin, as represented in the second category of scenes. A good example of these is the one showing the unfaithful wife who puts a blue cloak on her husband. Take a moment to analyse the scene: there are more than 100 proverbs in it waiting to be discovered.



**(After) David Teniers the Younger (Antwerp, 1610–Brussels, 1690)**

Domestic scene

Oil on copper

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.133

The man with the dancing master's fiddle sits on an improvised chair made from a half barrel. He is the focus of the action. The farmer's wife gazes at him expectantly while the farmer peers over her shoulder at the letter in her hand. There is a pot of burning coals on the bench, a clay pipe and beer jug on the ground and a carafe of wine in a niche. Everything you need for a great party?



**'Matthys Hofmans tot Antwerpen'**

Dancing master's fiddle

Late 17th century

Antwerp, Vleeshuis Museum | Klank van de Stad, inv. AV.2146.1-2

The Hofmans family built lutes and violins for seven generations stretching from the 16th to the 18th century. It is not certain, therefore, which member of the family made this dancing master's fiddle. The various names given to the instrument tell us a lot about its sound, size and purpose. Fiddles or 'kits' of this kind were very popular for recreational music, while dancing teachers used them during their lessons. It is a very small instrument – also called a 'pochette' or 'pocket fiddle' for that reason – that could be carried around easily when visiting, travelling or going to the inn. Its size gave the kit a limited, nasal sound, prompting the Flemish nickname *cryter* ('wailer', 'screecher').



**David Teniers the Younger (Antwerp, 1610–Brussels, 1690)**

Card-Players in a Tavern

Oil on panel, signed lower right: D. TENIERS. F, c. 1644–45

Brussels, National Lottery, Lottery Museum, inv. 7098

Men play cards in the corner of a bare room with an open window. A fire burns in the hearth in the space behind them on the right. The cards have just been dealt and a stack with the ace of spades on top lies on the table. The two seated players take their first look at their hands. The scene is played out in silence, but the body language suggests which player Lady Luck has favoured and has probably been dealt the best cards. The monochrome painting of the interior is relieved by just a few touches of colour, such as the luminous red of the cap. Teniers has succeeded in his depiction of a card game in making tangible a moment of silence, concentration and tension.



**(After) David Teniers the Younger (Antwerp, 1610–Brussels, 1690)**

Monkeys Playing Cards

Oil on copper

Brussels, National Lottery, Lottery Museum, inv. 6877

Comical scenes featuring costumed monkeys in all sorts of human situations were a visual genre developed in Flemish painting in the 17th century. They were produced by Antwerp masters in particular. David Teniers the Younger quickly became the genre's standard-bearer. In this composition, five flashily dressed monkeys are busy playing cards, smoking and drinking wine.



**Frans Floris (1519/20 - 1570)**

Family portrait

Oil on panel

Lier, Stadmuseum, inv. 52

Here the virginal and lute symbolise close family ties and the harmony between three generations of an unidentified middle-class family in the Southern Netherlands. The family members are seated around the table, which is draped with a Turkish carpet. This and their expensive clothing both betray the family's status. The family group includes the grandparents, with the deceased grandfather still present in a portrait, three couples, two single adults and two children. They not only have blood ties, but also a spirit of togetherness, as attested by the text on the original frame. The virginal shown here has a polygonal shape, which was already in existence before Hans Ruckers started building keyboard instruments.



**Cornelis Hagaerts**

Virginal, signed, Cornelius Hagaerts me fecit Antwerpiae (jack rail), 1636

Virginal

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House Museum, inv. 80.1

The history of harpsichord building in the Southern Netherlands almost coincides with the history of the Ruckers and Couchet dynasty, and 100 of their instruments have survived. This virginal is of the spinet type, with the keyboard on the left-hand side. This instrument has a clear sound. A virginal with the keyboard on the right-hand side is called a muselar type, and it has a softer sound.

The quotation on the lid flap, which reads *Sic Transit Gloria Mundi*, 'Thus passes the world's glory', is reminiscent of the transience of both music and life itself.



**Marinus Van Reymerswale**  
The moneylender  
Oil on panel  
Antwerp,  
The Phoebus Foundation

At the beginning of the 16th century, this subject was incredibly popular and was depicted by many artists. Van Reymerswale's painting evokes another work owned by Nicolaas Rockox, *The Moneylender and his Wife*.

But the major difference is that the moneylender here is portrayed in a grotesque manner, staring into our eyes with a questionable grimace on his face. The shambolic state of his office does not provide a good impression either. Is the painting warning us about malicious practices? Perhaps Van Reymerswale was mocking burgeoning capitalism at the beginning of the 16th century? Or was he condemning greed and avarice, two of the seven deadly sins?



*Kunstwerk  
tijdelijk tentoongesteld*



**Peter Paul Rubens (Siegen, 1577 – Antwerp, 1640),  
Paul de Vos (Hulst, 1595 – Antwerp, 1678),  
Jan Wildens (Antwerp, 1586 – 1653)**  
The Hunt of Diana  
Oil on canvas  
private collection

The goddess Diana closes in on her prey, accompanied by two nymphs and a pack of dogs. The hounds leap at the stag and hind, who struggle in vain to escape. A reference to the tale in Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' in which the hunter Actaeon watches Diana as she bathes. The furious deity turns him into a deer, who is immediately chased by his own hunting dogs.

A work like this might have been commissioned by a wealthy patron with a taste for hunting, who wanted it for a country house or palace. The painting is also an example of a fruitful collaboration between Rubens, who painted the figures, De Vos, who was responsible for the animals, and Wildens who provided the landscape.



**Jacques Jordaens (Antwerp, 1593–1678)**

Meleager and Atalanta

Oil on panel

Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp,

inv. 844

In Homer's *Iliad*, we read that the goddess Diana sent an enormous boar to Calydon, because the king of that country had failed to sacrifice to her. The local people attempted to hunt and kill the animal and the fierce Atalanta managed to wound it. Her admirer, the king's son Meleager, delivered the coup de grâce and presented its head to her. However, his jealous uncles attempted to deprive her of the hunting trophy. Jordaens depicts the moment when the indignant Meleager draws his sword. In the story, he then kills his uncles and is subsequently cursed by his mother, before going on to die a horrible death.



**Woman's crossbow, carved butt**

Wood, metal and bone, 17th century

Antwerp, MAS Vleeshuis collection, inv. AV.8735

A crossbow of this type would have been used chiefly by women to hunt deer, which could be done most easily during the rutting season between mid-August and mid-September.



**Wheel lock rifle, inlaid with plates engraved with hunting motifs**

Wood and bone, 1600

Antwerp, MAS, Vleeshuis collection, inv. AV.2607

Firearms were used for hunting – despite a law of 1613 prohibiting them – especially in the latter part of the 17th century. Boar hunters, for instance, used guns, especially for a form of hunting where tarpaulins were employed to drive the animals into a tight spot. Firearms became increasingly refined and safe, so much so that, from the end of the 17th century, they could be used on horseback. The wheel lock system did not depend on external ignition but used a spiral spring tensioned with a spanner, prior to firing. The ball and the charge were placed in the barrel, with fine priming powder in the closed pan. The cock was clicked shut. When the trigger was pulled, the spring was released and the cock with its sparking material rotated; this material, a flint, provided sparks to ignite the powder in the pan and discharge the shot. In the case of a flintlock, the pan was closed by a hinged cover, fitted with a raised steel ‘frizzen’. When triggered, the cock, in which the flint was mounted, struck the steel, opening the pan. Friction between the flint and the steel generated a shower of sparks, which fell onto the now exposed pan, igniting the charge and discharging the shot.

**Powder horn  
with image of Adam and Eve, the Fall**  
Original filling spout, lever and spring  
Ivory and iron

Antwerp, MAS Vleeshuis collection, inv. 6845



**Powder flask**  
Ivory, 1590-1609

Antwerp, MAS Vleeshuis collection, inv. AV.8735



**Small priming powder flask  
with image of St George and the Dragon**  
Copper, 1500

Antwerp, MAS Vleeshuis collection,  
inv. 1899 029 094



A powder flask or horn was carried by firearm users to prime their weapon prior to firing. All the ones here are notable for their decoration and materials.



**Willem Anthonis (Antwerp?, before 1619–after 1628)**

Nocturnal Banquet with Company Playing Tric-Trac

Oil on panel, signed and dated (upper right): WA 1628

Brussels, National Lottery, Lottery Museum, inv. 6902

A finely dressed company is seated on the left of a nocturnal interior, drinking, smoking and playing tric-trac around the table by the fireplace. Their intimate gathering is interrupted, however, by the arrival of a group of masked musicians through the door on the right. The dog barks at them and we sense that something ominous has entered the room along with the blast of cold night air. We are right to do so, because the figures resemble those of the *commedia dell'arte*, street-performers with a dubious reputation. We know from contemporary texts and the inscriptions on prints that masks and nocturnal darkness alike served to conceal vices such as drunkenness (the black maid on the left has just brought in a jug of alcoholic drink); smoking (the lady on the left lighting a pipe with a candle); indecency (the couple canoodling in the centre of the background and the chimney breast with its image of *Susanna and the Elders*); and, lastly, gambling, which brought debt and moral turpitude in its wake (the tric-trac set on the table on the left).



**Venice**

Case with tric-trac and chess set

Inlaid à la certosina, ivory and ebony, c. 1500

Brussels, National Lottery, Lottery Museum, inv. 7141

This little box dates from the period when the game of tric-trac, a form of backgammon, first emerged in Italy. Double-sided game-boxes or boards like this, laid out for chess on one side and tric-trac on the other, were made in Italy by the Embriachi family and other craftsmen.



**German, Augsburg?**

Deluxe wheel of fortune

Moulded ebony, inlaid with rosewood, ivory and bone, 17th century

Brussels, National Lottery, Lottery Museum, inv. 6987

This magnificent wheel of fortune was probably made in Augsburg, southern Germany, and shows that the principle of a rotating disc with a fixed pointer – the precursor of the later roulette wheel – almost certainly dates from the 17th century. Technically speaking, this is a ‘tourniquet’, as it comprises a pointer in the form of a serpent, and a disc with ten numbers, indicated by spots. Only two examples of such a piece are known worldwide. Apart from the wheel of fortune in the Belgian National Lottery collection, there is one in the Musée Suisse du Jeu in La Tour-de-Peilz (Switzerland). The wheel was probably accompanied by a board on which the bets were placed.





### **The Last Judgement**

Memorial painting of Adriaen Rockox and Catherine van Overhoff

c. 1535

Oil on panel

Antwerp, St James' Church (long-term loan due to restoration work in the church)

Jan van Hemessen

Hemiksem?, c. 1500–1556/57

### A visit from Nicolaas' grandparents

Adriaen Rockox (1460–1540), chamberlain to Emperor Charles, and his noble wife, Catherine van Overhoff (1486–1549), enjoyed considerable prestige in Antwerp. They commissioned this bold Last Judgement, which recalls the Italian Renaissance, for their memorial chapel. The entire family appears in the side panels. On the right, we see Catherine and her ten daughters, accompanied by her patron saint, Catherine of Alexandria, identifiable by her broken wheel. Adriaen kneels on the left, alongside his patron, St Adrian, with his anvil attribute. Three sons are shown behind him, including Adriaen Jr, Nicolaas Rockox's father.



**(Follower of) Lucas van Leyden (Leiden, 1494–1533)**

Crucifixion with Soldiers Playing Dice

Oil on copper

Brussels, National Lottery, Lottery Museum, inv. 6940

Lucas van Leyden was a painter, draughtsman and maker of engravings, etchings and woodcuts from the Northern Netherlands. This Crucifixion scene includes an episode mentioned in all four Gospels, in which the soldiers – shown here in the left foreground – play dice for Christ's robe. According to John (19:23–24), they did so because the soldiers did not wish to cut the garment, made from a single length of cloth, into pieces. The painting adds further obnoxious behaviour for good measure: the soldiers do not accept the result of the game and physically attack one another. Brawls of this kind were traditionally a symbol in visual art of the vice – not to mention deadly sin – of wrath.



**Isabelle de Borchgrave**  
Paper outfits  
Paper  
Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation

Isabelle de Borchgrave dresses mannequins in paper. She draws her inspiration from the 'vlieger' costumes, robes, skirts and bodices, doublets and long gowns worn by 17th-century ladies and gentlemen. The distinctive fashion was introduced to the Southern Netherlands from Spain by Archduke Albert and the Infanta Isabella towards the end of the 16th century.

The artist uses simple paper to reproduce garments made with great skill in gold brocade, velvet and silk, stitched with jewels and pearls and finished with ruffs and cuffs in needle-point lace. She does not need expensive 17th-century red and black dyes to suggest the tactility of the fabrics or the precious character of jewels and accessories: Isabelle de Borchgrave weaves her magic with white paper.



**Joannes Fijt (Antwerp, 1611–1661)**

Vase with Flowers, c. 1650–61

Oil on panel

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.21

Joannes Fijt trained under Frans Snijders and subsequently travelled to Italy. He was back in Antwerp by 1641 and visited Holland the following year.

Pink and white roses in a glass jug meander around an imaginary diagonal axis. The bouquet is topped by orange and white lilies and a purple Turkish lily. A red poppy also catches the eye. This flower was an emblem of fertility and sleep in ancient Greece, but in the Middle Ages it became a symbol of Christ's Passion. Fijt painted his floral still lifes in a very free way, with loose brushstrokes, and had a penchant for luxuriant flowers in full bloom in a natural arrangement. He specialised in creating atmosphere and animation through asymmetry.



**Antwerp, mid-17th century**

Art cabinet with garden vista and flowers and fruit

Ebony, maple, lemonwood

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.96

The exterior doors of this ebony cabinet conceal drawers that held precious objects such as valuable documents, coins, diamonds, jewellery, embroidery and lace. Pieces like this were therefore symbolic of expensive trinkets. Rare flower bulbs were also stored in drawers of this kind. There is a 'perspective' or mirror chamber in the middle of the cabinet in which small precious objects were often placed. Depending on the position of the object, you could see it in one mirror but not another – an optical game that was much loved by the well-to-do. Deftly carved reliefs in the centre of the two doors show *Abraham's Sacrifice* and *Rebecca and Eliezer*. There are images of *Abraham and Sarah* and *The Banishing of Hagar* beneath the cornice. The exterior and interior of the doors, as well as the drawers, are decorated with carved floral motifs, featuring spring and summer blooms.



**Beguinage**

First quarter of the 17th century. An oak, narrow but tall cabinet with three superimposed unequal doors.

Rockox owned such a cabinet as a linen cupboard.



**Seven-door wardrobe**

Typical Antwerp oak cabinet from the first quarter of the 17th century, richly decorated with lion's pillars, root motifs, moldings and intarsia (inlay).

### Kitchen

For poor people in 17th-century Brabant, the kitchen was merely the place where they were employed as maid or servant. Their own, single-room dwellings didn't even have cooking facilities. Antwerp patricians' houses featured separate kitchens from as early as the 16th century, amongst the first to do so in Europe.

The inventory of Rockox's estate includes a great deal of information about the kitchen, but also the scullery and *bottelrye*.

What was there in Rockox's kitchen? A prominent place was occupied by the pantry or *keuckenschappraye*, as it was called at the time. This was crammed with pewter plates, dishes, sauce bowls, spittoons, a water pot, silver candlesticks, sugar sprinklers, powder tins, salt cellars, spoons, forks, cups and so on. We actually noted 111 pieces of pewterware in the inventory, distributed among several cupboards in the house. The list of the kitchen's contents continues with a linen press, 13 stone pots, a frying pan, a copper ham boiler, a copper bucket, a wine cooler, a bedpan, a bellows, branding irons, two bird-houses, a Spanish leather chair, an iron shovel and various *drinckgelasen* (drinking glasses). It isn't specified where the latter items were kept in the kitchen. There was obviously a fireplace in the kitchen and, strange as it might sound, there was a painting hanging on the chimney breast and a second painting besides.



This was only possible in a wealthy person's home. In addition to several benches, there were two chairs upholstered in leather. Might Nicolaas and Adriana have sat in them from time to time on a cold winter's day?

Next door was the scullery for the dirtier chores, leaving the kitchen for the serious culinary work.

And on the way to the 'Cleyn Salette', lastly, there was the *bottelrye* – a storeroom for large objects such as a *mercktbekken*, a container used at the market or a washtub, the house's stock of candles and all sorts of *berders* or shelves.



**Frans Ykens (Antwerp, 1601–Brussels, 1691/93)**

Kitchen Still Life with Christ at the House of Martha and Mary

Oil on canvas, c. 1640

Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation

Ykens was a Southern Netherlandish painter who specialised in Flemish Baroque art, including floral and fruit still lifes. He trained under his uncle, Osias Beert. Ykens's best paintings are kitchen still lifes that put us in mind of Frans Snijders.

This is a pretty impressive pantry! The wooden tub lower left contains various types of cabbage, turnips, onions and a head of celery – the ingredients for a delicious *potagie*, a thick vegetable soup. A cauliflower lies next to the tub. It was not intended for the soup: like the asparagus and artichokes cauliflowers

were first imported in the 16th century and were used only for more luxurious dishes.

One level up, we see some fruit displayed in a Chinese Wanli dish. Fruit was mostly grown in the orchards of the large pleasure gardens to the rear of patricians' houses. It was a delicacy served with game, duck and other fowl, such as the little tits on the stick or the pheasant at the top in a copper basin or the woodcock hanging from the hook and the partridge next to the side of beef. In the left background, we make out three people in a large, attractive kitchen. We're looking straight into the home of Martha and Mary, in what is a scene from the New Testament. Their visitor is Christ, identifiable from the halo around his head. Mary listens to him, while Martha busies herself with her household duties. She is a strong presence and, like every woman, the ruler over her realm, which is why Martha was seen as both a role model and the patron saint of housewives. The composition of this work derives from a genre that Joachim Beuckelaer and Pieter Aertssen invented in the mid-16th century. We can tell from the way the vegetables, fruit, meat and fowl are presented that this is a 17th-century still life, somewhat indebted to Frans Snijders.



**Jacques Jordaens**  
**(Antwerp, 1593–1678)**  
Old Woman  
Oil on paper and wood,  
c. 1610  
Private collection

This old lady seems to be sitting by the window and looking out. The cap she wears on her head could indicate that she ran the household for a wealthy patrician family. The sketch is deft and lifelike and the woman served as a model for paintings by both Jordaens and Rubens. This is probably not a ‘portrait’, however, but rather a character sketch. She seems to have been drawn from life: the woman has a healthy glow in her cheeks, but there is no attempt to conceal a life of hard work. The chiaroscuro effect heightens the drama of this portrait type.



**Peter Paul Rubens (Siegen, 1577–Antwerp, 1640)**

Study of an old woman

Oil on panel, c. 1615–20

Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation

This lady is of similarly humble origins. She belongs to a series of sketches that Rubens made from life. The same woman can be found in several paintings by Rubens. Once again, her coarse appearance is intensified by the chiaroscuro.



**Augsburg**

Wall clock

Copper gilt, 16th century

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 79.4

The clock has just a single hand and strikes the hours. The mechanism is controlled by a foliot device (tumbler) and is of Augsburg origin.

The astronomical engravings reveal an Antwerp influence. The clock has a homely feel.



**Antwerp**

Linen press

Oak, inlaid with ebony, 17th century

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.77

Perfectly folded linen was the pride of every 17th-century housewife. Having been ironed, the linen was also compressed for several hours in a special press.



**Flemish**

Bulbous-leg table

Oak, first quarter 17th century

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.84

This table has striking  
claw-shaped feet in the style  
of Hans Vredeman de Vries.



**Westerwald**

Lidded jugs

Earthenware, pewter lids, 17th century

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.97

Small beer pitchers like this also appear in still lifes. They were made in the Westerwald region, to the east of the Rhine in Germany.



**Frechen**

Bartmann jug

Earthenware, 1611

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.121

Bartmann jugs were almost certainly used to pour beer. The gurning face of a bearded man can be seen on the neck of the jug. This is thought to be the portrait of Robertus Bellarminus (1542–1621) – a Reformation-era Jesuit who was a defender of the Catholic faith. He railed against Protestantism and excessive drinking among students.





**Raeren**

Beer jug

Earthenware, pewter lid, 16th century

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.44



**Antwerp**

Dish

Pewter, 17th century,

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.106

Pewter features prominently in the inventory of Rockox's estate. Seventeenth-century pewter – a tin alloy – is rare nowadays. This dish has three identifying marks, including one for the city of Antwerp and another for the arquebusiers' guild of which Rockox was head.



**Wine cooler**

Brass, 17th century,

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 79.9

Wine coolers like this made of beaten brass were filled with ice. Only the wealthy could afford to construct special ice cellars or ice houses where they could store ice collected during the winter for refreshment in the summer. Wine coolers were therefore status symbols.



**Antwerp**

Wall-cupboard

Oak, c. 1600

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.88

This wall-cupboard is used to display a selection of Chinese porcelain from the Rockox House. This type of porcelain is named after Wanli (1563–1620), the last emperor of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), and was a popular import. The Dutch term for it, ‘kraak’ porcelain, derives from the type of Portuguese ship known as a *carraca*, (carrack) which first imported it to Europe in the late 16th century. Dishes, plates, a vase and little bowls in this blue-and-white porcelain can be found in the kitchen. They were used mostly to serve food. Wanli porcelain is egg-shell thin and virtually transparent. Cobalt-blue decoration was painted on the surface of the porcelain prior to glazing and firing in an oven. The characteristic decoration of these bowls, plates and dishes is a typical sectioning into wide and small panels generally applied vertically. The panels contain recognisable motifs, including Taoist symbols and flowers, and the lotus flower and the artemisia or sagebrush leaf, which were among the ‘eight precious things’ (Pa-pao) and symbolised prosperity, good fortune or wealth. This sort of porcelain was produced until well into the 1640s.



**Frans Snijders (Antwerp, 1579–1657)**

Cock Fight

Oil on canvas, c. 1615

Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 946

The poultry yard provides an attractive setting for this fight between two cocks, which Snijders painted as early as 1615. He places the two birds face to face, with their wings spread, their tails erect and their neck-feathers bristling. They prepare to peck at each other's combs, witnessed only by a hen. At stake is domination over the roost. Snijders based this composition on an illustration from Marcus Gheeraerts's edition of Aesop's fable about the partridges and hens.



**Artus Wolffort (Antwerp, 1581–1641)**

Kitchen Maid

Oil on canvas

Leuven, M Museum, inv. S/9/W

Wolffort was first and foremost a maker of genre scenes and history paintings. The kitchen maid is shown in a pantry with an elderly man – her lover – and a boy. Kitchen maids often personified the temptation exerted by sensual and worldly things. The cat who surreptitiously steals a piece of offal in the lower right corner was known as a mischievous animal that only followed its own instincts.



**Cornelis de Heem**  
**(Leiden 1631 – Antwerp 1695)**  
Still Life with Dimpled Glass, Peeled  
Lemon, Grapes and Oysters  
Olieverf op doek  
Private Collection

Cornelis de Heem specialised in still lifes just like his father Jan Davidsz. de Heem, from whom he received his training. He moved from Leiden to Antwerp at a very young age and was admitted to the Guild of St Luke as a master painter in 1660.

This canvas presents a splendid still life featuring amongst other things bunches of grapes, oysters, a lobster, a shaker and a dimpled glass filled with white wine. Through his faithful rendering of these elements, the artist was able to demonstrate his technical prowess. They might have had a symbolic meaning, too. The grapes, for instance, could refer to both the pleasures of drinking and to Christ, the ‘true grapevine’. The lobster suggested a luxurious lifestyle, but was also a well-known symbol of contrariness and inconstancy. Oysters, meanwhile, were associated with physical lust in the seventeenth century. Whatever the case, this magnificent still life is also a typical ‘vanitas’ image highlighting the transience of existence.



**Peter Willebeeck**  
**(Antwerp 1625 – 1648)**  
Still Life, Fleeting pleasure  
Oil on canvas  
Antwerp, Snyders&Rockox House,  
inv. 77.104.

Willebeeck presents the theme of transience ('vanitas') using all sorts of everyday objects. The wine-glass, drinking vessel and jug are overturned and empty. The cigar will soon burn out and the pipe has been used up. There's no longer any sign of life in the shell. In this way, Willebeeck highlights the fleeting character of stimulants like alcohol and tobacco.



**Rembert Dodoens**  
**(Mechelen, 1517/18–Leiden, 1585)**

*Stirpium historiae pemptades sex*  
Antwerp, Jan Moretus the Younger and  
Balthasar Moretus the Elder, 1616  
Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 2006.4

Rembert Dodoens studied medicine at Leuven and, like his father before him, was appointed municipal physician in Mechelen. During the revolt against King Philip II, Dodoens fled the Southern Netherlands and was appointed physician to the Emperor Maximilian in Vienna. After spending time in Prague and Cologne, he returned to the Low Countries, becoming rector of Leiden University in 1582.

In 1554, following the appearance of a few smaller works, the first edition of his *Crujjdeboeck* (Herbal) was published. His categorisation of the plant kingdom also reflected the practical use of the plants, which was an enormous advance on earlier herbals, which simply used an alphabetical classification. From 1566 on, Dodoens had his works printed by Christophe Plantin. In 1583, he published his masterpiece, the *Stirpium historiae pemptades sex*, a herbal in which he substantially expanded the descriptions of plants and further refined his classification system. The number of woodcuts with illustrations of plants was increased to 1358. Dodoens's work dominated the field of botany for almost a century and was instrumental in botany's development into an independent science. The prints evoke scents too: abandon yourself for a moment to the fragrance of lemon thyme, rosemary, lily of the valley and orange blossom.





**Antwerp**

Five-door cupboard

Oak, 1621

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.14

This skilfully carved cupboard, with fine cherub heads, lion muzzles and symmetrically carved decorative motifs on panels, holds the following objects.



**Venetian-style glasses**

Antwerp (Flügelglas), Liège (clear wine glass)

Mid-17th century

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 2002.01 and 02

Venetian glass-blowers came to particular prominence around the mid-15th century, when they succeeded in producing colourless glass, which was often enhanced with decorative elements in enamel. Paintings of picture galleries and depictions of curiosity cabinets from the 17th century often feature examples of Venetian glassware. Although the secret of these glass-blowing techniques was supposed to stay in Venice, and more specifically in Murano, from the second quarter of the 16th century on, celebrated glass-blowers were lured to other European centres by all sorts of privileges. 'Façon de Venise' glasses also came in this way to be produced in Antwerp.



**Italian**  
Albarelli  
Faience

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 78.4



**Delftware**  
Tobacco jar  
Earthenware, 18th century

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House,  
inv. 77.154

When producing faience, the object was initially fired unglazed. Tin glaze and the decoration were then applied to the porous surface and the object was fired again. Italian potters, the most important of whom was Guido di Savino, set up shop in Antwerp around 1500. Religious conflict drove the faience makers out of Antwerp in around 1560–70. They relocated to Delft, where they founded that city's ceramic industry, primarily in former breweries that had gone out of business because of the economic crisis. An *albarello* is a cylindrical apothecary's pot used to store herbs.



**Model for a towel rail**

Antwerp, circle of Artus Quellinus the Younger

(Sint-Truiden, 1626–Antwerp, 1700)

Terracotta, c. 1680–1700

Private collection

A grimacing man in a cowl grips a towel rail. His eyes are raised upwards. The inspiration for this theme dates back to the Middle Ages. Towel rails like this were chiefly found at the entrance to monastic refectories. Before sitting down to dine, monks were expected to wash their hands and then dry them on the towel. As they did, they looked up as it were at a man whose flippant example they were best advised not to imitate. The towel-holder can also be interpreted as a symbol of purity, a call to cleanse the soul before partaking of earthly food.



**Antwerp**

Foot-warmer

Copper, 17th century

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.163

Foot-warmers were filled with glowing charcoal and taken to unheated churches, for instance, where women would place them beneath their skirts.



**Flemish**

Bellows

Oak, 17th century

Antwerp, Snijders&Rockox House, inv. 77.105

A wooden bellows with an image of the *Adoration of the Magi* carved in relief on the front.



**(Attributed to) Cornelis de Vos**  
**(Hulst, 1584–Antwerp, 1651)**  
Vertumnus and Pomona  
Oil on canvas  
Leuven, M Museum, inv. S/107/V

Cornelis de Vos was the older brother of the animal painter Paul de Vos and the brother-in-law of Frans Snijders. He specialised in portraits and history paintings. A column on a broad base stands in the middle of this work, part of an imposing country house with a wide terrace and an ornamental, semi-circular balustrade. Our attention is drawn to the two ladies who gaze into each other's eyes. The one on the right is the wood nymph Pomona, goddess of the woods and gardens, in which she carefully cultivated fruit and vegetables. An elderly, veiled woman – actually the god Vertumnus in disguise – bends over her. Vertumnus was the god of gardens and orchards and of the autumn. He, like so many others, fell in love with the beautiful Pomona, but she was devoted to her work as a gardener and not interested in love. The only way he could approach her in her walled garden was in the guise of an elderly woman. Vertumnus praised her delicious fruit and urged her to open her heart by telling her lurid tales of frigid women who rejected their suitors earning them the wrath of the gods. He eventually managed to persuade Pomona, and when he returned in his young, male shape, she responded straight away to his courting. The story is told in the *Metamorphoses* by the Latin poet Ovid.



**Theodor Boeyermans**  
**(Antwerp, 1620–1678)**  
 Allegory of the City of Antwerp,  
 c. 1663  
 Oil on canvas  
 Antwerp, The Phoebus  
 Foundation

The work of the Antwerp painter Theodor Boeyermans is closely related to that of Gonzales Coques. Both men liked to paint group portraits of the urban elite and nobility. Boeyermans, however, also showed a great interest in allegorical and religious works, which exude the Baroque atmosphere of Rubens. In 1661, he was involved with the foundation of the Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp and painted several works on the theme, incorporating *Antverpia*, the personification of the city, and *Scaldis*, that of the river Scheldt, along with the Arts, *Pictura* (Painting) and *Poesis* (Poetry).

In this *Allegory of the City of Antwerp, Fama*, the personification of Fame, helps Antwerp, represented by an elderly man, supported by his rich history, to rise up. The man's pose recalls that of other personifications of watercourses, and so he might be intended here as a symbol of the Scheldt, the source of the city's wealth. Several musical instruments are shown in the foreground, including a violin, a lute or theorbo, a spinet, a guitar, a cello, a tromba marina, a set of bagpipes and a dancing master's fiddle or 'kit'. We see a painting and scientific instruments too. The work might also incorporate an allegory of the *Septem Artes Liberales* or Seven Liberal Arts.

### The Duartes

The musical tastes of the Duarte family were international, making them a good reflection of Antwerp and the musical influences that could be discovered in the city during the 'long' 17th century. Music and musicians from all over Europe passed through the port.

This room reverberates with the international music performed by the Duartes during their famous house concerts: in addition to pieces composed by Leonora Duarte herself, it included instrumental and vocal music by music teachers (John Bull, Guillielmus Messaus) and by friends (Constantijn Huygens, Nicholas Lanier) or from their music library (Girolamo Frescobaldi).

There was a place for music too in the lives of Antwerp burghers: at the theatre, during processions or simply at home. Welcome to the music room of the Duarte family, fellow citizens of Rockox and Snijders. Although the Duartes were not professional musicians – Gaspar, the father, and his eldest son Diego were jewellers – they were by far Antwerp's most musical citizens. The family adored music and gave house concerts that drew friends and acquaintances to Antwerp from all over Europe.



Gaspar, his two sons and three daughters played all sorts of different instruments, including the lute, the theorbo, the violin and the virginal: instruments worthy of their social standing, all of which you can see in this music room. Leonora, one of the daughters, had a fine voice, but also composed music for the viola da gamba, while her sister Francisca was an accomplished harpsichordist. Their brother Diego, meanwhile, set all manner of lyrics and psalms to music.

Like Adriana Perez's family, the Duartes had Jewish roots and came originally from Spain and Portugal. They converted to Catholicism to escape persecution, but are likely to have remained deeply Jewish in their hearts, as was the case with several dozen other families in the city. The arts provided the Duartes with an ideal means of networking: after all, music is a language that everyone speaks, whatever their religion. What's more, Antwerp was a genuinely musical city, with music printers, church choirs, composers and instrument makers.

You can see two exceptional keyboard instruments in the Music Room: a virginal and a harpsichord. They were made by the Ruckers-Couchet family in Antwerp, who were good friends of the Duartes and who made what might well have been the best keyboard instruments of the period. Even the municipal harpsichord in Amsterdam is a Ruckers instrument.



**Gonzales Coques**  
**(Antwerp, 1614–1684) and studio**  
Portrait of a Musical Family  
(Duarte Family)  
1653  
Oil on canvas  
St. Paul im Lavanttal, Museum im  
Benediktinerstift St. Paul,  
inv. G1609

Although Gonzales Coques learned his trade under the genre painter Pieter Brueghel III and the still-life painter David Ryckaert II, it was primarily as a portraitist that he himself made his name. His flattering, luxurious style is particularly reminiscent of Anthony van Dyck, and Coques is indeed sometimes referred to as the ‘Little van Dyck’.

Anyone who doubts the Duarte family’s love of music only has to look at this painting.

Gonzales Coques’s portrait introduces the family to us. On the left, we see Gaspar, the father (c. 1584–1653), between his sons Gaspar II (1616–1685), playing a viola da gamba (bass viol), and Diego (1612–1691).

The mother of the family, Catharina (1584–1644) stands on the right, holding a musical score in one hand and taking hold with the other of the guitar held out by her daughter Leonora (1610–1678). Two other daughters – Catharina (1614–1678) and the brilliant harpsichordist Francisca (1619–1678) – sit close together by a portative organ. (A fourth daughter, Isabella (1620–1685), appears to have had little talent for music and to have shown herself rarely if ever to visitors.) The painting leaves several questions unanswered, including the identity of the clergyman. Coques, his studio or other followers made at least six contemporary copies of the original portrait, now in Budapest.



**Anonymous**  
Passover or Seder dish  
Pewter, Central Europe, 18th century  
Antwerp, Rubens House, inv. RH.G.173

The name 'Josef Pfeil' appears on the dish, of which he might have been both the maker and owner. The elements of the Pesach meal are also inscribed in Hebrew letters. The Star of David or *Maḡeen David* featured in the middle is an ancient Jewish symbol. Around 100 *converso* families lived in Antwerp around 1600. *Conversos* were Spanish and Portuguese Jews who had been forced to convert to Catholicism. Many of them remained secretly faithful to their Jewish identity, possibly including the Duartes. They continued to celebrate important Jewish festivals, but always carefully concealed from the outside world. Feasts of this kind often required candelabra (menorahs) and ceremonial dishes and were an occasion for *conversos* to quietly sing their old religious songs of homeland and exile. The pewter Seder dish shown here is one of the few everyday Jewish artefacts in the Antwerp museums to date from before 1800. It was originally used during the celebration of Passover, commemorating the end of the Jewish people's period of slavery in Egypt.



*You can listen to a replica of this instrument in the music room.*

**Joannes Couchet (Antwerp, 1615–1655)**

Virginal (muselaar)

Antwerp, 1650

Antwerp, Vleeshuis Museum | Sound of the City, inv. AV.1967.006.1-2

Joannes Couchet was a cousin of Andreas and Joannes Ruckers and a grandson of Hans Ruckers. Together, they were the most important harpsichord builders in Northern Europe in the 17th century. Joannes learned the trade from his uncle

Joannes Ruckers. Only five of his instruments have survived.

With its lid closed, this virginal resembles a simple piece of furniture. When opened and played by skilled hands, however, it evokes the sound of 17th-century Antwerp.

### **Virginals and muselaars**

The 27 white and 18 black keys are half as many as you find on a 21st-century concert grand piano. Virginals were made in the 17th century with their keyboard on either the left or the right side. Those with their keyboard on the right are called ‘muse-laars’ and have a very soft, warm tone. They were only produced in Northern Europe, with Antwerp as the absolute centre. The instruments could be found in countless wealthy townhouses in the city.

### **The maker’s signature**

A gilded rosette in the middle of the front-board draws the attention. It shows an angel playing a harp, flanked by the initials I and C. Artists usually like to sign their works, and harpsichord makers were no exception. This rosette was Joannes Couchet’s way of showing that the instrument was a product of his workshop.

### **Musical flowers**

Spring has well and truly sprung on the front-board of this instrument, the whole of which is adorned with flowers. Decoration like this was mostly done in Flanders. Some Antwerp-made

instruments also feature animals, birds and insects. Instrument makers usually collaborated with a painter who took care of the decorations. These tended to be craftsmen rather than fine artists. The painters who worked in the Ruckers-Couchet family workshop often drew inspiration from books of plant and animal prints, including Adriaen Collaert’s *Florilegium* (Antwerp, c. 1589).

### **Sales trick?**

Nicolaas Rockox’s coat of arms is painted on the back of the instrument, which is odd seeing as he died in 1640 and Couchet did not build the instrument until 1650. Research shows that the outside was painted at a much later date, on top of the earlier decoration. Might this have been a 19th-century salesman’s ruse to make the instrument more attractive to an Antwerp public?



**Anonymous**  
Theorbo  
19th century?

Antwerp, Vleeshuis Museum | Sound of the City, inv. AV.2131

The theorbo was invented in Italy in the 16th century. Its basic form followed that of the lute, to which a longer neck and extra bass strings were added to increase the instrument's musical capabilities. Like the lute, the theorbo was ideally suited for playing with other instruments and accompanying a singer. The Duartes sang madrigals, for instance, accompanied by a theorbo.



**'Matthys Hofmans tot Antwerpen'**  
**(possibly Matthijs Hofmans III (Antwerp, 1594–after 1675)**  
**or Matthijs Hofmans IV (Antwerp, 1622–1672))**

Violin

Antwerp, 1671

Antwerp, Vleeshuis Museum |

Sound of the City, inv. AV.1961.019.1-2)

The Hofmans family of Antwerp built lutes and violins for seven generations stretching from the 16th to the 18th century. Not only is this violin a wonderful example of the family's skills, it is also one of the most beautiful instruments of its kind to be produced in the Low Countries in the 17th century. Both its form and its sound recall the best Italian instruments by makers such as Andrea Guarneri and Antonio Stradivari.

Violins had a dubious reputation in the 17th century – they were the preserve of professional musicians, who often enjoyed a certain notoriety. As an upright amateur and enthusiast, you did not want to be mistaken for someone who played music for a living ... All the same, Gaspar Duarte liked to play the violin during his house concerts.



**Anonymous**

Guitar (chitarra battente)

Italy, second half 17th century

Antwerp, Vleeshuis Museum | Sound of the City, inv. AV.1967.001.025

We tend to associate the guitar, most notably its Baroque version, with Spain. The guitar carved out a place for itself alongside the lute in the 17th century. The instrument had its roots in Italian elite circles and only became a folk instrument much later. Guitars were often exuberantly decorated with expensive materials like ivory and ebony, and with a complex rosette in the sound hole. Catharina Duarte, the mother, is shown holding a guitar in the family portrait.





**Anonymous**

Pardessus de viole (viola da gamba)

France?, c. 1700

Antwerp, Vleeshuis Museum | Sound of the City, inv. AV.3737.1-2

The 'pardessus de viole' is a late addition to the viola da gamba family: the instrument was developed in France towards the end of the 17th century. It was the smallest member of the family, making it ideal for playing on your lap. It also had the highest pitch, which meant it was an alternative for the violin. All this made the pardessus de viole attractive to women: the expansive gestures needed to play the violin were considered too undignified for respectable ladies, so the new instrument offered a wonderfully refined substitute.

If the bass viol was the most popular member of the gamba family in the 17th century, the pardessus took over from it as the 18th century progressed. In short, the pardessus de viole already looked forward to a new era, and not only in music.



**Wim Raymakers (Leuven, 1958)**

Violin after 17th-century examples

Leuven, 1996

Antwerp, Vleeshuis Museum | Sound of the City, inv. AV:2005.005

Very few 17th-century violins today look the same as they did originally: most of them have been ‘modernised’ over the centuries. The Leuven instrument-maker Wim Raymakers made this violin in 1996, basing it on examples in early-17th-century paintings like Gerard van Honthorst’s *Merry Fiddler* of 1623 (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). It is the kind of violin the Duartes will have known.

Although violin music was sometimes viewed suspiciously – wasn’t it an instrument for drunken fiddlers? – Gaspar Duarte was a gifted player. What’s more, it had been Sephardic (Iberian-Jewish) musicians who played such an important role in the 16th century in introducing the violin to England and spreading its popularity in Antwerp.



**‘MVB’ (probably Marten van der Biest(’s harpsichord workshop))**

View of Antwerp from an Imaginary Landscape on the Left Bank

Oil on panel, final quarter 16th century

Antwerp, Vleeshuis Museum | Sound of the City, inv. AV.2002.003.001

It is not known who painted this decoration: it was probably not Marten van der Biest himself, assuming that the ‘MVB’ initials are his, but someone working on his behalf. Van der Biest was a well-known Antwerp harpsichord builder, who was active from around 1557 to after 1587. Only one of his instruments has survived. He was one of the witnesses at the wedding of Hans Ruckers.

The virginal lid shows Antwerp as Nicolaas Rockox and the Duarte family knew it, including all its contrasts. We find economic and cultural well-being in the picture: the Scheldt is full of merchant and other ships, while a noble company in a natural setting enjoys the music they and a number of minstrels are playing. But there is war too: a battle can be made out on the far left of the lid.

The lid has survived without the instrument to which it belonged. It might have been part of a virginal from van der Biest’s workshop, as the ‘MVB’ initials appear inside a virginal in the middle of the musical company lower right.



**(Attributed to) Maerten de Vos (Antwerp, 1532–1603)**

Harpsichord lid, 'Triumph of the Arts'

Antwerp, c. 1590–1600

Oil on wood

Private collection

### **Where is the instrument?**

Harpsichords had a limited life-span. They were fragile, liable to be rebuilt, and fell out of fashion in the late 18th century, when they were replaced by pianofortes. If their lids had been painted by a renowned

artist, these were sometimes removed and kept, as in the case of this harpsichord lid attributed to Maerten de Vos. Sadly, similar lids by Peter Paul Rubens, Jan Brueghel and Hendrick van Balen were all lost.

The shape and dimensions of the lid suggest that it came from an Antwerp harpsichord with two keyboards, possibly an instrument made by the Ruckers family.

### **Expensive music**

In the 17th century, a harpsichord cost roughly the equivalent of a year's pay for a skilled worker. For that price, you got a fantastic instrument with simple decoration. If you wanted to impress your guests even more, you could have it painted by a fashionable artist, doubling or trebling the price in the process.

### **Old men and young women**

Seven young women and two old men: what's going on here? Music was often associated in the 16th and 17th centuries with the idea of transience, given the way it disappears the instant it is played. The two elderly men represent this transience as personifications of Time and Old Age. But what is more powerful than time?

Knowledge of course! The seven women represent the Seven Liberal Arts, which formed the elite curriculum in the 16th

and 17th centuries. We can identify the Arts from their respective attributes as Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, Geometry, Arithmetic, Astronomy and Music with her lute.

### **Antwerp?**

A river meanders through the landscape to the right of the old men, with a large city on its bank. The painting of the lid is not signed, but has nevertheless been attributed to Maerten de Vos on stylistic grounds. There is also a signed drawing by the same artist that is virtually identical to the lid painting. The main difference is that the drawing includes the Temple of the Arts, but not the city. Perhaps it made sense to Maerten de Vos (or someone from his circle) to include a rich port city when decorating an Antwerp harpsichord. After all, it was there, in the homes of wealthy burghers, that the Arts were able to flourish.



**Michiel Coignet II (Antwerpen, 1618 – 1663)**

Art cabinet with scenes from the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid

Ebony, tortoiseshell, ivory and oil paint on copper  
Antwerp, Snyders&Rockox House, inv. 77.144

Art cabinets or *cantoors* were used to store valuable items such as jewellery, letters, coins and share certificates. They look like items of furniture intended for display, and they are rarely absent from the inventory describing the contents of a rich patrician's house. They are just as sumptuous as keyboard instruments. Both have a wooden frame, although the types of wood used are different. The way they are finished is particularly striking, with painted scenes on the drawers of an art cabinet or the lid of a harpsichord. The subjects depicted are taken from the same sources, mostly from mythology. Fragments from the '*Metamorphoses*' by the Roman poet Ovid are very popular, such as the story of 'Meleager and Atalante' shown on the left-hand panel, and 'The sacrifice of Iphigenia' on the right.



**Jacob de Formentrou (Antwerp, 1629–1695)**

A Gentleman Courting a Lady Playing a Lute

Oil on canvas, 1668

Private collection

Very little is known about the Antwerp painter Jacob de Formentrou, by whom only a handful of works have survived. He was associated with the same circle of art dealers as Diego Duarte.

A young woman plays a lute beneath a canopy in a courtyard. She was reading the score lying on the table in front of her, when a young man arrived, causing her to look up. Was it her music that attracted him or her beauty? The hand he places on her shoulder suggests a high degree of familiarity and the empty chair between them awaits him invitingly.

His touch, her gaze, her playful, loose strand of hair and, of course, the music make this a scene that radiates sensuality. Music was indeed used in painting as a symbol of harmony, but also of love, sensuality and even eroticism.



**Gaspar Borbon (c. 1635–1710)**

Viola da gamba (bass viol)

Brussels, 1665

Antwerp, Vleeshuis Museum | Sound of the City,

inv. AV.1960.037.001.1-2

Gaspar Borbon was an instrument-maker from Brussels, whose clients included the governor's court. Only a handful of his instruments have survived. In addition to members of the viola da gamba family, he built various types of violin.

In 1540, King Henry VIII invited several Jewish (*converso*) musicians from Southern Europe to the English court. Bringing their violins and viole de gamba with them, they formed an ensemble or 'consort', thereby establishing an English tradition of consort music, which continued long into the 17th century. That same tradition inspired Leonora Duarte to compose her seven *Sinfonie* for a consort of five viole da gamba.

The player grips the viola da gamba between their legs: hence the name, which literally means 'leg violin.' The bass viol was the most common member of the family. It has a mild, warm tone and is both a solo and an ensemble instrument. The tuning of the strings was very similar to that of the lute, which meant that amateur musicians like the Duartes could readily swap instruments.





**Joannes Christophorus Anderlan (?-?)**

Lute

1747

Antwerp, Vleeshuis Museum | Sound of the City, inv. AV.1967.012

The lute was one of the most popular instruments amongst well-to-do Antwerp people around 1600. Learning to play it was often part of their general education, and there was even a fully-fledged lute school for a while in the city. The lute is a versatile instrument, which can be played elegantly and is suitable for solo use, ensemble playing or accompanying a singer (whether the lutist themselves or someone else). The one shown here is a soprano or descant lute, ideal for use in a lute quartet (soprano, alto, tenor and bass lute). Constantijn Huygens, a good friend of the Duarte family, composed over 800 works for lute in his spare time. The Duartes too liked to play the instrument. Lutes also feature regularly in paintings: one can be seen, for instance, in Frans Francken the Younger's painting of Burgomaster Rockox's picture gallery.



**Andreas Ruckers the Elder (Antwerp, 1579–1651/1653)**  
Harpsichord  
Antwerp, 1644  
Antwerp, Vleeshuis Museum | Sound of the City, inv. AV.2137

Andreas Ruckers the Elder was one of the sons of Hans Ruckers, the founder of the family business. Hans moved from Mechelen to Antwerp around 1575 and set up a workshop in Jodenstraat around 1584. His sons Joannes and Andreas, as well as his grandson Joannes Couchet, also built harpsichords there. Andreas was married to Catharina de Vries, Jacques Jordaens's sister-in-law.

Every well-to-do Antwerp burgher had at least one harpsichord or virginal in their home, preferably one built by the famous Ruckers family. This instrument is a typical example of a harpsichord by this family: the painted marbling on the outside, the dolphin motif above the keyboard, and the 'A R' rosette and motto on the lid. But it was, of course, first and foremost the powerful, clear sound that led music-lovers from across Europe to order a Ruckers harpsichord. The Duartes were good friends of the Ruckers-Couchet family and owned a variety of their instruments.

The phrase *sic transit gloria mundi* – 'thus passes the glory of the world' – emphasises the transience of things: just like music, life is done before you know it.

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## CREDITS

### **Exhibition Design**

Hildegard Van de Velde  
Timothy de Paepe (music room)  
Design studio Bailleul

### **Visitor guide texts**

Hildegard Van de Velde  
Timothy de Paepe (music room)

### **Editing**

KBC Language Service,  
Sigrid Ven  
Luc Philippe

### **Design**

KBC External Communication,  
Claudine Simpelaère

### **iPad and audio guide**

*produced by:*  
Ontwerpbureau Bailleul  
*Textes:*  
Hildegard Van de Velde  
Hannelore Duflou  
Patrick De Rynck

### **Coordination and communication**

Patrick Wuytack

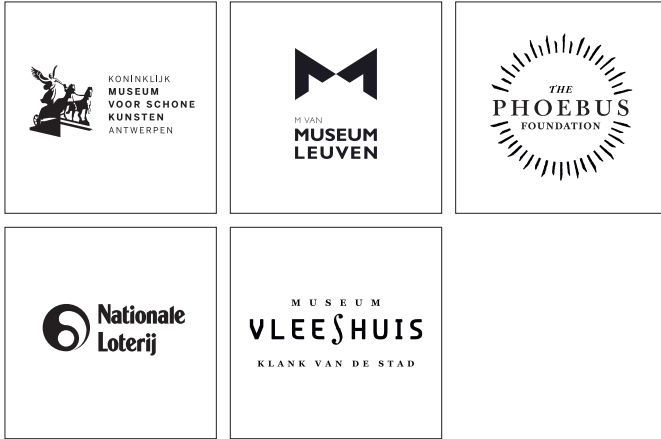
### **Translation**

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