

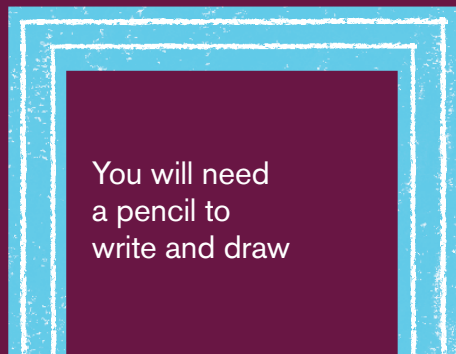
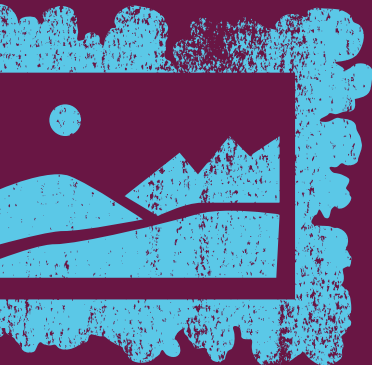
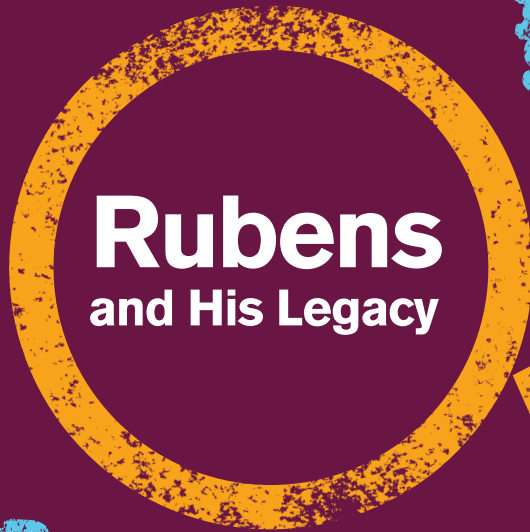
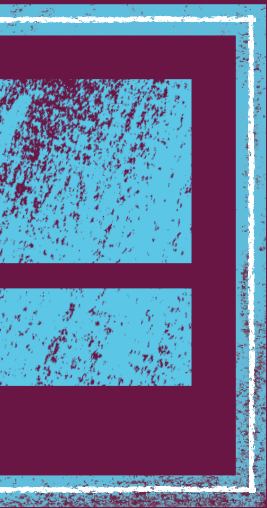
RA

Royal Academy of Arts

Art Detectives

A guide for
young visitors

Art Detectives are supported
by the Flow Foundation



You will need
a pencil to
write and draw

Introduction

Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) was an extraordinary man. He was an incredibly successful artist and created many masterpieces throughout his life, and has been a great influence on other artists for centuries, right up until the present day. His paintings are known for their richness and drama, and intense use of colour. Rubens was also an important diplomat in 17th-century Europe, and worked for the Kings of England and Spain and the Queen of France.

This exhibition tries to show the impact or legacy that he left, and examines his paintings, and the works they inspired, looking at six different themes: Poetry, Elegance, Power, Compassion, Violence and Lust. By hanging Rubens's paintings side by side with those of his followers, we can discover his influence on the generations that followed him.

Please be aware that some of the material in this exhibition may be unsuitable for young children.

Let's explore...

Section 1. Poetry



Find number 120:

Peter Paul Rubens, *The Carters*, c. 1629

The exhibition opens with a section that explores poetry and the natural landscape. Rubens was a great fan of the countryside, and spent the last ten years of his life dividing his time between the city of Antwerp and 'Het Steen', his country house, where he enjoyed painting landscapes.

This is an image of rural life, with two men guiding their horse and cart down a rocky road and past a stream (at the centre of the painting). Some people have noticed that Rubens included all four elements in this landscape. Where can you see:

Earth
Air
Water
Fire

Do you notice any differences between the left and right hand sides of the painting? Tell us what? Why do you think the artist has done this?



Find number 130:
Peter Paul Rubens,
The Garden of Love, c. 1635

This enormous work shows the rich and fashionable citizens of Antwerp enjoying romantic conversations in a beautiful natural setting. It contains many traditional symbols of romantic love. Can you find:

- A pair of doves
- A couple secretly holding hands
- A dog (a traditional symbol of loyalty)
- Cupid, the god of desire (he is often shown with a bow and arrow)
- A musician

Look around the other works in this room. Can you spot any of the characters or symbols from Rubens's 'Garden of Love' appearing elsewhere?

Section 2. Elegance



Find numbers 104 and 105:
Peter Paul Rubens, *Portrait of Maria Grimaldi and Dwarf*, c. 1607 and
Sir Anthony Van Dyck, *A Genoese Noblewoman and Her Son*, c. 1626

Rubens wasn't just a painter – he was a great thinker, an art collector and a diplomat, interested in politics and ideas. He could speak 5 languages and had access to some of the richest courts and palaces in Europe, where people would pay handsomely to have their portrait painted.

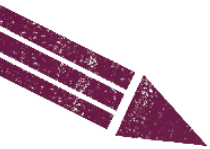
These two enormous portraits have been hung side by side. What are the similarities between the two works? You might like to think about who is being painted, what they are wearing, and how they are placed within the painting.

What are the main differences between the works?

Which do you prefer and why?

Which painting would you describe as more luxurious, or over the top? Why?

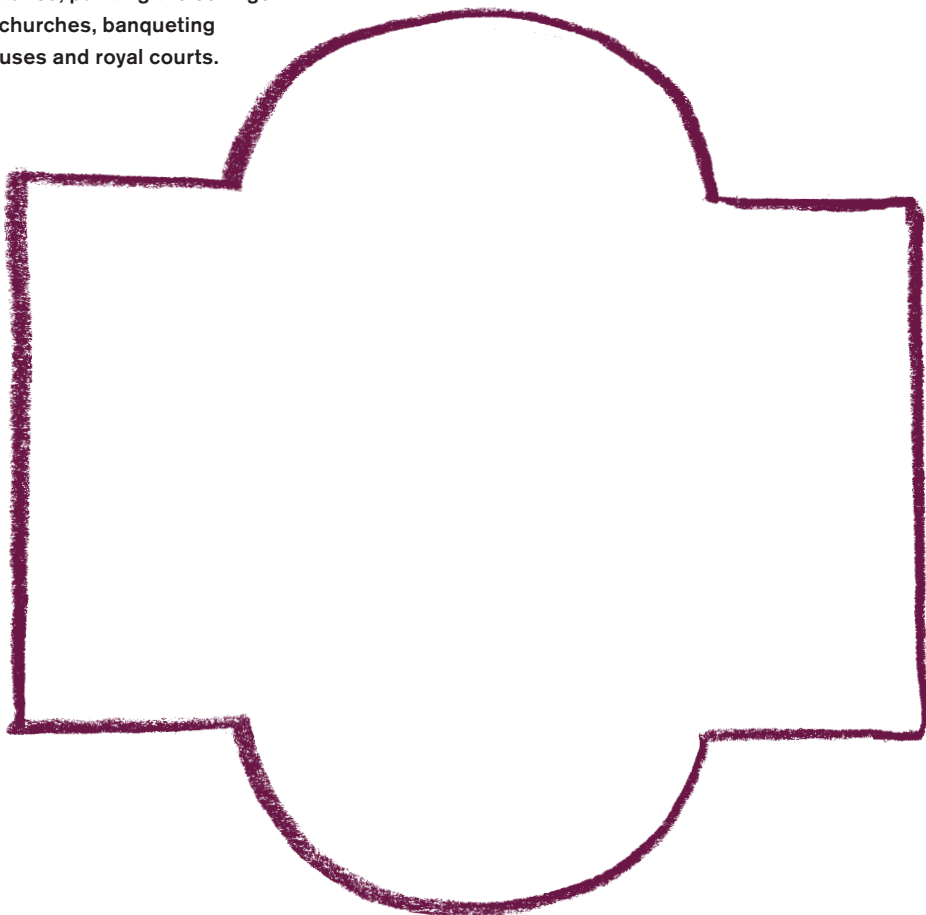
Section 3. Power



Draw your own design for a ceiling painting in the space below.

By the early 1620s, Rubens had a large studio and a number of people working for him. This meant he was able to take on bigger projects, for instance, painting the ceilings of churches, banqueting houses and royal courts.

Remember, ceiling paintings were often thought of as the 'crowning glory' of a grand room. The design needs to be bold and big enough to see from the ground, with a strong focal point. You might want to think of the open sky beyond the ceiling and let that inspire you...



Section 4. Compassion



Find number 91: Peter Paul Rubens,
Christ on the Straw, 1617–18

Rubens was also one of the most influential religious painters of his time, and the works in this section are designed to make the viewer feel strong emotions and to inspire their faith.

This fairly gruesome painting shows the moment after Jesus Christ has been removed from the cross, to be washed and dressed before his burial.

How can you tell that the people around the figure of Jesus are sad, or in mourning?

How has Rubens portrayed the figure of Jesus? Describe how he appears to you.



Find number 83: Unknown Artist,
*Porcelain Dish with illustration after
'Coup de Lance', c. 1720–30*

This Chinese dish, whose design is based on an engraving (a type of print) by Rubens, goes some way to show us just how far Rubens's influence spread across the world. Engravings and prints were a useful way for artists to copy and then share their work.

Why would an artist want their work to be reproduced and then passed on throughout the world?

Describe the colours in this dish.
How do they look to you?

Section 5. Violence



Find number 1:
Peter Paul Rubens, *Tiger, Lion
and Leopard Hunt*, c. 1617

This impressive scene is full of fear and energy. It is enormous, almost life size!

Can you describe what is happening in this scene?


Look at the bright colours Rubens has used in this painting. What really jumps out at you, and why?

We can see emotions on the faces of the soldiers, but can you also tell what the animals are feeling? Give an example.


Does the size of a painting affect how it makes you feel? Why?

Choose some words from the selection below that best describe this painting:

Violent Confusing Sad Calm
Exciting Chaotic Balanced Scary



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