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Cover Art

A tribute to a dead brother



Peter Paul Rubens, *Two Children Sleeping*, between circa 1612 and 1613. Credit for the journal cover image and the image above: Peter Paul Rubens [Public domain] via Wikimedia Commons.

Although Sir Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1740) spent most of his career as a painter in Antwerp, he had spent time in Italy where he was influenced by the works of Veronese, Tintoretto, Titian, Michelangelo, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, and Caravaggio. When one thinks about Rubens, we conjure up images, sometimes huge, of works of art that emphasized color, grandeur, sensuality, and motion. His paintings span Christian history, European history, classical mythology, landscapes, and hunting scenes. His works include sumptuous portraits of royalty and the rich and famous of the courts of King Charles

I of England and Philip IV of Spain. There are over 1400 known works of his in existence. His scenes are so real you feel like you are a witness. His characters are real, indeed fleshy! The term *Rubenesque* is reference to his paintings of voluptuous female nudes.

The 2 sleeping children on the cover of this issue, ages about 2 and 3 years, are believed to be the children of Peter Paul Rubens's brother, who died in 1611, about 2 years before this painting was created.¹ Rubens was very close to his brother. The painting, only 65.5 cm by 50.5 cm, small compared to most of his works, was a sketch and not intended to be shown to the public. This is a private and personal work. It shows tenderness and love. The focus is entirely on the sleeping faces; there is no background. The viewer's eyes are immediately drawn to the children's ruddy cheeks. The lighting suggests that they are napping in the daytime. The partially open eyes of the child on the right suggest to the author that the child is in rapid eye movement sleep, when eyes dart about and may be partially open. This image is very different from his monumental works but is quite moving. Rubens was expressing love for his brother by showing his brother's 2 beautiful children sleeping peacefully. Later, Rubens used the faces of the 2 children in other paintings.

Disclosure

The author has declared that he has nothing to disclose.

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Reference

1. Adams A. Rubens: His Palette. Creatrespace; 2016.