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Rubens and Italian Architecture

When Peter Paul Rubens travelled to Italy, he did not only encounter the magnificent works of Italian Renaissance and Baroque painters and the marvellous sculpture of antiquity but also classical Roman and Italian Renaissance and Baroque architecture. In his introduction to the pivotal publication of *Palazzi di Genova*, Rubens explains his understanding of splendid architecture, which he also aimed to introduce in his home country. His own house and studio, an Italianate *pallazetto* in the heart of Antwerp, is a statement of his architectural ambition. Apart from pointing out the Italian models in Rubens's architecture, this contribution also deals with architectural iconology and the ethics of architecture, related to the early modern understanding of the Vitruvian term *décor* and a concept of virtuosity that is based upon theories of art and architecture of the Italian Renaissance. Rubens made use of the architectural language of the classical orders, being extremely aware of the parallel between Ciceronian concepts of virtue and the rhetoric of architecture in a Vitruvian sense. Italy thus played a crucial role in Peter Paul Rubens's understanding of architecture. This contribution sheds a light on Rubens's study of Italian architecture and architectural theory. It will also address the question how he used his knowledge to erect his own house and discuss his ambition to introduce a new style in Flemish architecture.

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