

The Raising of the Cross



Peter Paul Rubens was an important painter during the Baroque period. He painted *The Raising of the Cross* which is one of the altar pieces that played an important role in establishing him as a leading painter in Flanders. He painted *The Raising of the Cross* in 1611, when he came back to Flanders after he studied in Italy studying the work of other great artists like Michelangelo, Tintoretto, and Caravaggio. He painted this piece for the church of St. Walpurgis, one of the Antwerp churches. In 1794 the painting was stolen by the French and taken to Paris. In 1815, following the defeat of Napoleon, the painting was returned to Antwerp and put on display in the church of Our Lady. In the 1980s the painting underwent a renovation which removed a gray film that had covered the painting. The renovation revived the colors and contrasts of Rubens' work.

In the middle panel we can see the nine muscular, executioners struggling to lift the cross which Christ's pale and fragile body is hung. Also you can notice the dog on the left hand side towards the bottom and Rubens painted this to represent his Flemish heritage.

On the left side panel you can see one of Christ's apostles John and Jesus' mother, Mary, are surrounded by other women weeping and the children are only witnesses to this horrible tragedy that is going on.

On the right panel you can see the Roman officers watching all the drama that is happening from their horses. In the background you can see two other thieves being crucified by the Roman soldiers.

I like this piece because to me it feels really intense and feels real, which I like. It captures your attention when you look at it for the first time. You can see the struggle the men are having to raise the cross of Christ.