



Sic Victoria Victis

Date
c. 1700

Primary Maker
Gaspard Duchange

Medium
Engraving

Description
Peter Paul Rubens was the court painter to Albert VII of Austria from 1609 until the archduke’s death in 1621. During that period, around 1617–19, he painted a canvas after which—at a later date—this print was created. The former now resides in the collection of the Alte Pinakothek, Munich. In many of his

paintings—especially those with mythological themes—Rubens used his subject to reflect on contemporary political events. The Munich work depicts two forces—the ancient Greeks and the Amazons, a mythical tribe of courageous, bellicose women—in the heat of battle. In contrast to most other images of war created at the time, the victor is not apparent; rather, both forces are shown suffering losses, with deaths on both sides, which conveys a much more ambivalent message. Although the scene is not drawn from a specific literary source, Rubens probably studied Titian’s Battle of Spoleto and Leonardo da Vinci’s Battle of Anghiari closely, as the action in those two works is also centered on and around a bridge. In Rubens’s painting, however, there are no heroes. At the time he made it, the Netherlands’ truce with Spain, which had begun in 1609, was coming to a close (and would, in fact, end in 1621). The artist, himself a diplomat, was wary of renewed hostilities. Rubens sought to have an engraving made after the painting, and in 1623, Lucas Vostermann produced one from six plates, printed on separate sheets of paper and conjoined—the largest print published in the Low Countries to date, at one-third the size of the original canvas. The print in the Wellin Museum’s collection is a smaller version after Vostermann’s engraving. It was published under the direction of Gaspard Duchange at the end of the seventeenth century, perhaps in the years of unrest leading up to or during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–15), demonstrating the lasting relevance and popularity of Rubens’s composition. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017)

Dimensions
Composition: 12 7/16 × 17 1/4 in. (31.6 × 43.8 cm) Sheet (trimmed to edges of plate): 14 9/16 × 18 3/8 in. (37 × 46.7 cm)