



# Remigio Cantagallina

A Florentine artist in Brussels in the early 17th century

Guidebook



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..... Walking route

 Views by Cantagallina

 Metro stations

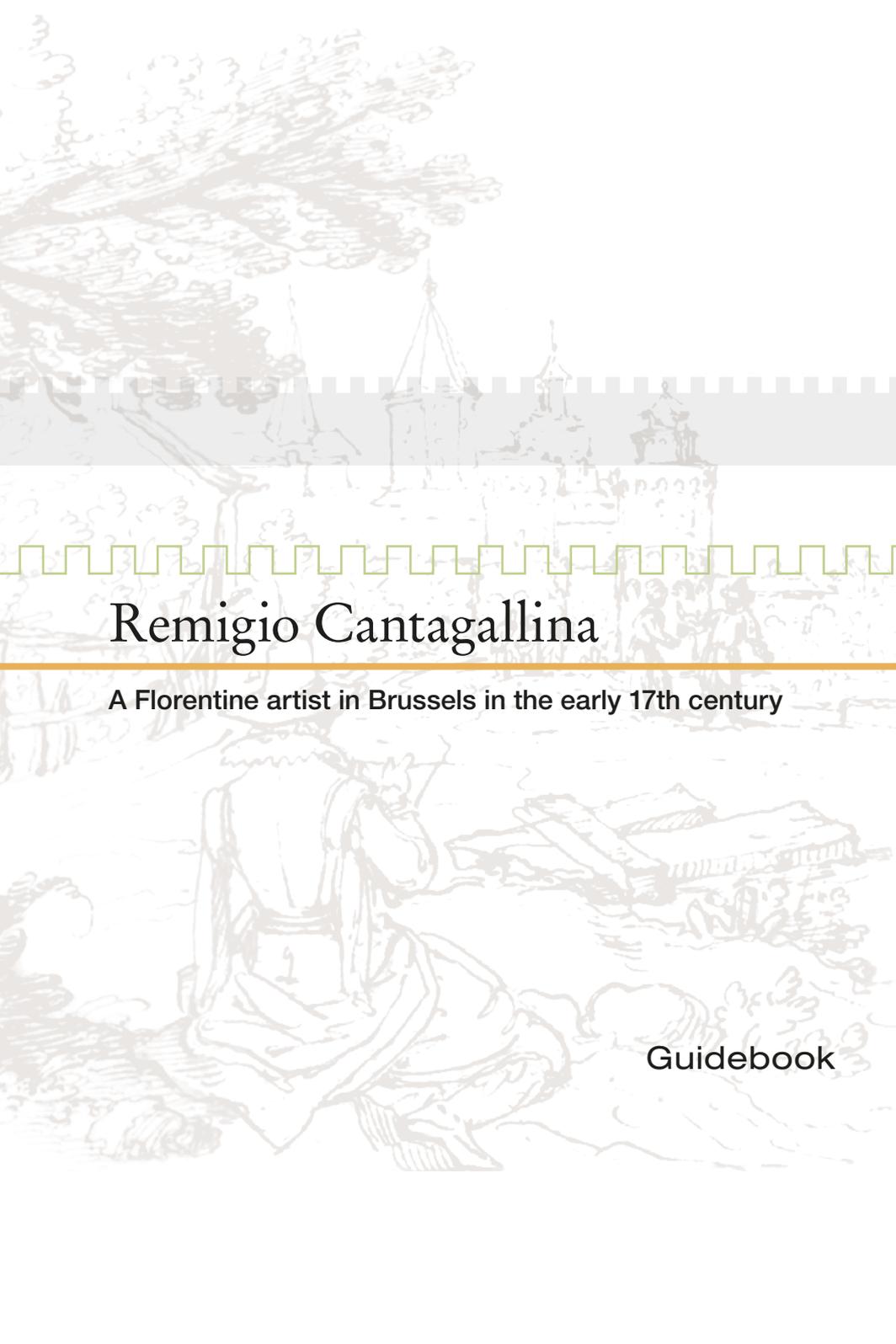
 Vantage points

 City blocks

 Encountered green spaces

 Canal and waterbodies

 Remarkable buildings



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▲ *The Grosse Tour.*



▲ *The ramparts in the south of Brussels.*

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

*There are works in the iconography of a city that stand out due to their originality and major documentary value, and this certainly applies to the drawings of Remigio Cantagallina. This brochure invites you to discover Brussels and the surrounding region in the early 17th century through the travel journal of the Florentine artist. It starts with a tour through the Pentagon, from the Halle Gate to the former Schaerbeek Gate (Botanique), travelling mainly through the upper town, across neighbourhoods where emblematic buildings such as Coudenberg Palace and the Collegiate Church of Saint Michael and Saint Gudula were concentrated, as well as a significant number of aristocratic townhouses, including Hôtel de Bourmonville and Hôtel d'Hoogstraeten. The guidebook then suggests a number of excursions outside the city centre, following in Cantagallina's footsteps towards Saint-Gilles, Anderlecht, Forest and Etterbeek.*

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born in 1575 in Borgo San Sepolcro, a Tuscan town in the Tiber Valley, Remigio Cantagallina came from minor provincial nobility and his family was relatively well off. He had two brothers, one an architect, the other an engineer. From 1602, he enrolled in the *Accademia delle Arti del Disegno* in Florence. This renowned academy of fine arts brought together those dedicated to the arts of drawing: painters, architects and sculptors. Tuscany was, at the time, a leading artistic centre due to the great patron families that welcomed foreign artists and acquired Roman, Venetian and Flemish works. It was within this environment that Remigio began his apprenticeship. Inspired by Flemish artists working in Italy, such as Paul Bril, he started his career as a painter and etcher, focusing on biblical characters and scenes. His first documented works, etchings of landscapes, date from 1603. The style of his drawings ranks him among the pupils of Antonio Tempesta (1555-1630).



▲ The artist at work in front of the Ransbeek lock in Vilvoorde, 10 March 1612.

While at the academy he met an important figure in the Florentine School, Giulio Parigi (1571-1635), a painter, engraver and architect attached to the court of Cosimo II de' Medici. Through this connection, he discovered the close relationship between landscape drawing, topography and military engineering. Parigi also introduced him to the world of stage design and decoration. The master had been commissioned to create a series of installations for the 1608 celebrations marking the wedding of Prince Cosimo and Maria Maddalena of Austria. Parigi tasked Cantagallina with creating the plate engravings for the album commemorating this event, which allowed the splendour of the Medici celebrations to be known throughout the courts of Europe.

In 1612-1613 Cantagallina travelled around the Spanish Netherlands, a journey that brought him to Brussels among other places. During his travels he kept a sketchbook in which he developed his technique of "drawing from nature". After returning to Italy towards the start of 1614, he was taken on as a drawing master at the Court of the Medicis, a position which afforded him a comfortable income. He was to no longer stray from what he had become as a result of his journey across the Netherlands: an artist doubling as a traveller, fully devoted to landscape art. Among other things, he was renowned for his vast cityscapes. Remigio Cantagallina died in Florence in 1656.

### An Italian traveller in the Southern Netherlands

In the early 17th century, an Italian artist travelling across the Southern Netherlands was an uncommon sight. Remigio Cantagallina performed a rare equivalent of the countless journeys undertaken in Italy by artists from Northern Europe. At the time, training in a faraway country was not only an educational experience; it was also seen as a recognised, even essential, stage in one's career. He took to the road with his brother, the military engineer Giovan Francesco.

A number of theories have been proposed to explain this trip. The two brothers wanted to show off their expertise as engineers and designers, indeed even as party organisers. They wanted to enhance their learning by being near Flemish artists. Or perhaps their journey was inspired by close connections with the Brussels Court. Since the start of their reign in 1598, the Archdukes Albert and Isabella had endeavoured to



▲ *Saint Martin's Church in Hénin-Liétard (Pas-de-Calais).*

improve the position of the arts in the wake of the Religious Wars. In all likelihood, all of the above factors played a part. However, the most plausible reason for Cantagallina's journey was his close relationship with Duke Alexander de Bournonville (1585-1656), Knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece, General of the King's Armies and Governor of Artois. Related to the Florentine Court though his mother, Bournonville had visited the Medicis during a trip to Italy between 1601 and 1605, during which he perhaps met Cantagallina and his brother. The Duke had a number of holdings in the Netherlands. He most likely engaged the Florentine artist to create an album of drawings of his estates; Cantagallina produced, among others, views of Temse Castle on the River Scheldt (East Flanders), the village of Hénin-Liétard in Artois (Pas-de-Calais) and Hôtel de Bournonville in Brussels.



▲ *The area surrounding Anderlecht, 4 March 1612.*



▲ *Temse castle and village on the banks of the Scheldt, 12 April 1612.*

Thirty-two dated drawings enable establishing the chronology of his travels, which lasted at least twenty-three months, between March 1612 and October 1613. However, the artist's journey was undoubtedly much longer because, before reaching the Netherlands, he would have first had to cross the Alps and France. The first documented date is that of 4 March, in the environs of Anderlecht. Received by Bournonville in Brussels, he resided at the townhouse that the Duke owned on Rue aux Laines. He then followed his patron on his travels to his various properties. The two men visited Temse, a domain that Bournonville had acquired in 1610. They took a boat along the Willebroek Canal, travelling down the Rupel and back up the Scheldt. En route, the artist sketched Vilvoorde Castle, the Ransbeek lock (10 March 1612), further away Rupelmonde Castle and village, as well as Bornem Castle. In Temse Cantagallina drew two sketches of the castle and immortalised a fireworks display marking the end of a splendid party thrown in the gardens running alongside the Scheldt (May-June 1612). From Temse he most likely travelled to Antwerp, which was then the artistic centre of the Spanish Netherlands. However, there are no drawings confirming this. It was perhaps there that he first met Jan "Velvet" Brueghel (1568-1625), appointed as court painter by the Archdukes in 1609.



▲ *The Sauvenière spring in Spa, 4 August 1612.*

In any event, the two artists worked together in Temse. They next visited Spa (August 1612), undoubtedly with Bournonville. At the time the small town was a holiday and health resort that was very popular with the nobility. Cantagallina observed the lives of those taking the curative waters, sketched the main springs (Géronstère, Sauvenière, Tonnelet...) and visited the nearby hills from where he produced a number of panoramas. On 27 August 1612 he left Spa, heading for Liège via the Vesdre Valley; he stopped off in Fraipont and Chaudfontaine along the way. He spent the next day in Liège before reaching

Maastricht. Along the Meuse, he drew the castles in Argenteau and Visé as well as the area surrounding the latter. He also passed through Saint-Trond, sketching the city's belfry and church. His last drawing before returning to Brussels – a view of the area around Temse – is dated 7 September 1612. The following year he once again visited Bournonville's properties in Artois, as well as the town of Tournai.



▲ *The castle of Argenteau.*

## Cantagallina in Brussels

During his travels across the Southern Netherlands, it was Brussels and its environs that Cantagallina sketched most often – around thirty images, eight of which date from 1613. During the winter months of 1612-1613, he stayed with Duke Alexander de Bournonville who, as was customary, spent the coldest season in his Brussels mansion. A sketch of the Rivage Gate is the only drawing that clearly alludes to the winter conditions.



▲ Skating scene on the canal at the Rivage Gate.

He took an interest in the ramparts and gates of the 14th century second city walls, which he observed from both inside the city and from the countryside. He focused in particular on Halle Gate, but also drew the Namur and Schaerbeek entryways. The Anderlecht gate appears in the background of the only image that Cantagallina dressed with a biblical scene, Tobias and the Angel, taken from the Old Testament. He also depicted various sections of the curtain wall as well as the *Grosse Tour*, an imposing watchtower situated in *Wollendries*, opposite Hôtel de Bournonville.



▲ *The fortifications of Brussels with Tobias and the Angel.*

He mainly sketched the neighbourhoods in the upper town, where the nobility lived: Rue aux Laines, the Sablon, the area surrounding Coudenberg Palace as well as the surroundings of the Collegiate Church of Saint Michael and Saint Gudula. The lower town did not seem to interest him, perhaps because his host did not visit it. A defining feature of his drawings is the realistic rendering of the topography. The steep relief depicted in his images has been greatly reduced today due to the urban development of the 19th and 20th centuries.

His drawings follow a gradual climb upwards from the Halle Gate to Rue aux Laines, then manoeuvring along a crest before reaching the Schaerbeek Gate. The slope is interrupted in places by plateaus such as the one on which Rue Haute was traced and those on which the Church of Our Blessed Lady of the Sablon, Coudenberg Palace and the Collegiate Church were built. Highly detailed, these depictions of neighbourhoods, streets and gates constitute a remarkable source of iconography.



▲ *The city from within the walls close to Schaerbeek Gate.*

## “Drawing from nature”

Cantagallina's stay in the Netherlands marked a decisive turning point in the evolution of his style. It was during this period that he started to produce “drawings from nature”, influenced by the Flemish tradition. The practice of drawing *naer het leven* is a blend of both the documentary and poetic approaches; it prefigured the *veduta*, the depiction of towns and countryside that flourished in Italy in the 18th century. After his travels, Cantagallina dedicated himself exclusively to landscape drawing, putting the experience he gained in the North into practice. For his drawings, he mainly favoured the quill pen and brown ink with brown or blue wash, often after an initial sketch with black chalk.

His interests were many and varied. Above all else, they complemented each other and contributed to the development of a body of work enriched with a mass of observations that, while precise, were often rendered with a certain amount of liberty. The drawings that we see today are, at times, the impressions of a traveller, at other times, more meticulous depictions, clearly intended to serve a documentary purpose.



▲ Study of an oak tree.

He was first and foremost interested in architecture. He drew numerous castles, aristocratic townhouses and churches, but was not averse to vernacular architecture either. He was just as fascinated by engineering, which can be seen in the attention he gave to canal locks. He was also intrigued by local industry and machinery – mills, kilns, mines, etc. – and regularly drew the same subject to try out different vantage points.

His images are enlivened with numerous characters: passers-by in conversation, a shepherd surveying his flock, men at work in the fields, boatmen... He had a fondness for everyday scenes as much as for prestigious celebrations. He very often depicted himself, in the foreground, observing the landscape or committing it to paper. Among the elements that make his work so very recognisable are the omnipresent trees, usually chestnut or oak. He has populated almost every page of his travel journal with foreground images of undulating tree trunks and shaded foliage, as much for decorative effect as to enhance the depth of the landscape.

### A unique account of the city in the early 17th century

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All the authors agree on the topographical accuracy and major documentary value of Remigio Cantagallina's images drawn during his travels in the Netherlands. The sketches created in the field are particularly realistic renderings of his observations, even where the images were subsequently altered or reworked with other iconography. These (often imaginary) additions that appear in the "edited" drawings do not in any way detract from the value of the parts depicting a portion of the city or a building based on the original sketches. A critical analysis of the drawings should be based on not only a comparison with other iconographic sources, where they exist, but an examination of the remains of the early 17th century urban reality.

Through his wider format images, most notably the grand panorama of Brussels from the heights of Saint-Gilles, as well as the view of the lower town from where the canal enters the city, and from several viewpoints from the upper towards the lower town, Cantagallina offers a series of images of the urban horizon of Brussels at the end of the 16th century. While the size of the drawings meant he could not include the roof profiles of each and every house, he took great care not to leave out any noteworthy buildings, such as churches and monasteries, the outline of Coudenberg Palace, the town hall, the turrets of aristocratic townhouses or the towers of the fortifications. Comparisons with the engraved town plans from the end of the 16th century confirm the accuracy of the artist's topographical depictions.

Thanks to the extensive knowledge gleaned via archaeology for a number of pre-1600 buildings, it is possible to compare the architectural details depicted "from nature" by the artist, with the physical remains present in today's architecture. The exercise was carried out by the archaeologists who studied these buildings. The inserts in the following pages illustrate the examples of Halle Gate (p. 20), Hôtel de Bournonville (p. 28), the Church of Our Blessed Lady of the Sablon (p. 34), Hôtel d'Hoogstraeten (p. 44) and the Treurenberg Gate (p. 52). They attest to the exceptional accuracy of the details provided by Cantagallina. This accuracy is, however, inversely proportional to the distance separating the artist from the building being drawn. In this way, the details of the close-up drawing of the interior façades of Hôtel d'Hoogstraeten or the southern façade of Hôtel de Bournonville, often noted by a simple brush stroke, are very much in keeping with the architectural reality observed during recent restorations of these two buildings.



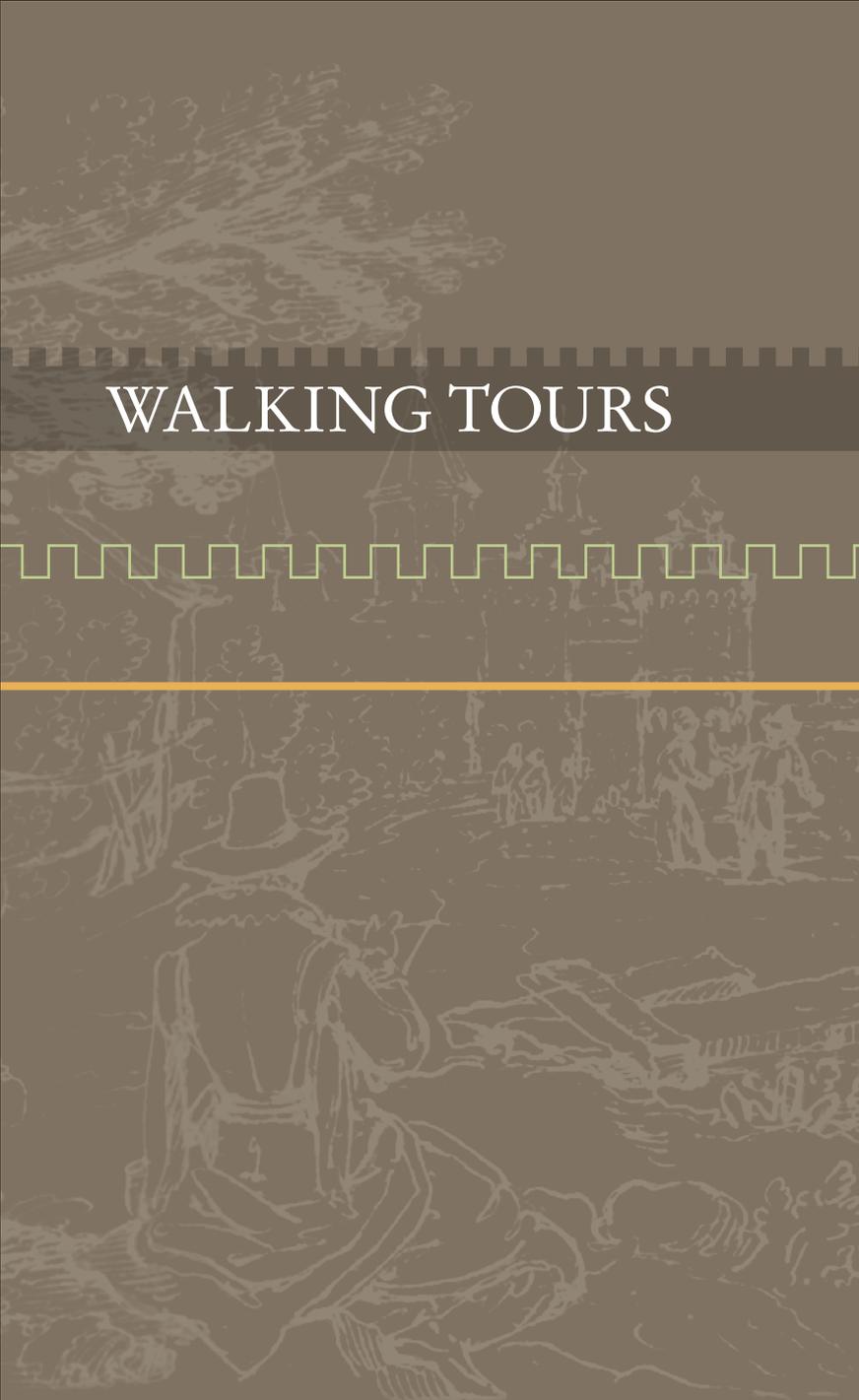
▲ 3D recreation of the home of Andreas Vesalius viewed from the south east (D. Van Grieken).

Conversely, the very distant sketch of the Treurenberg Gate in a wider panorama offers almost no details, apart from a rather succinct silhouette. As for the Church of Our Blessed Lady of the Sablon, while the depiction of each of the gables is in keeping with its specific features, they have been simplified in Cantagallina's drawing, as have certain architectural details of the cladding on Halle Gate.

The consistency of the artist's collection of drawings is such that the appreciation of its documentary value – established for several buildings and for the general topography of the city by archaeologists – reflects positively on the interest in his depictions of buildings that have long disappeared. In other words, even where Cantagallina's drawings are the only remaining images of a building that later disappeared, they are worthy of interest and can be used not only to assess other, later iconographies, but also to attempt to reconstruct the situation at the beginning of the 17th century. For example, the Renaissance lodge built by Andreas Vesalius in the gardens of his family's property in *Hellestraat* – later added to the Bournonville property – was documented in detail by Cantagallina, enabling a preliminary 3D graphical reproduction of the structure (Meganck, 2015).

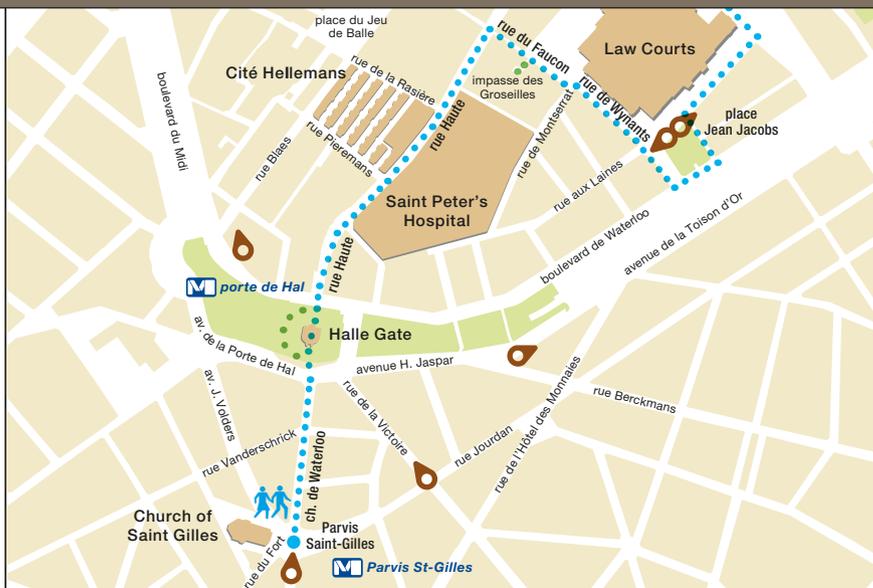
*Stéphane Demeter*





# WALKING TOURS

## 1. SAINT-GILLES – RUE HAUTE



 Starting point: Parvis Saint-Gilles, in front of the church, at the junction with Chaussée de Waterloo.

From **Parvis Saint-Gilles**, Chaussée de Waterloo offers a bird's eye view of Halle Gate, a monument which was drawn by Cantagallina several times and which forms the central element of a panorama of Brussels that he created from the heights of Obbrussel, the name for Saint-Gilles under the *Ancien Régime*. To create this drawing, he positioned himself at various locations around the village, in particular along today's Rue du Fort and Rue des Fortifications, where Monterey fort would be built in 1672-1675, as well as around Rue de la Victoire.





▲ Panorama of Brussels from Saint-Gilles with the Halle Gate in the centre.

By opting for a panorama from the south, he was forced to depict Obbrussel. Mentioned as early as 1216, the village spread out around its church and on both sides of the roadway leading to the city via Halle Gate. The church drawn by the artist corresponds to a building erected in the 16th century to replace a medieval sanctuary. This was, in turn, replaced by the current **Church of Saint Gilles** (V. Besme, 1862-1878). Initially confined to a small space in front of the church, the parvis was expanded in the direction of Rue Jourdan in 1900. The **Brasserie Verschueren** (nos. 11-13) features a Modernist-style front window with touches of Art Deco (G. Beatrix, 1935). The **old town hall** (no. 1) in the Neoclassical style (V. Besme, 1864 & E. Quétin, 1881) is today home to a police station.



Take Chaussée de Waterloo in the direction of Halle Gate.



The section of **Chaussée de Waterloo** between Halle Gate and Parvis Saint-Gilles already appears quite densely built-up in Cantagallina's drawings; the road would only be paved at the start of the 18th century. At no. 15, at the corner of **Rue Vanderschrick**, a wooden corner turret signals a remarkable complex of Art Nouveau houses (E. Blérot, 1900).



▲ *An aspect of Saint-Gilles with the Halle Gate.*



Cross Avenue de la Porte de Hal. In the park, position yourself in front of the entrance to the monument.

Cantagallina's drawings are some of the oldest depictions of **Halle Gate**, the only above-ground section of the 14th century second city walls that has been preserved. Featuring a central passageway for carts and pedestrians, the structure is shaped like the letter D, with the rounded part oriented towards Saint-Gilles. Over the centuries, the different levels were used, in turn, as a granary, a Lutheran church and a homeless hostel. In the 17th century, the gate was converted into a military prison, a function that saved it from destruction during the 1782 demolition of the fortifications ordered by Joseph II. It subsequently housed an archive and then, from 1847, collections of armour, antiques and ethnology.



Take the covered passageway (accessible during the opening hours of the museum) or walk around the gate to the square bordering Boulevard du Midi, in line with Rue Haute.



In 1868-1870 the gate underwent significant modifications carried out by H. Beyaert, who gave the building a neo-Gothic design: corbelled machicolations, slate roofs enhanced with wrought iron decorations, and a new north façade with a projecting tower containing a spiral staircase. The building was closed to the public in 1976 to enable its renovation. Entrusted to architect M. Bollen, the works began in 1991 and were completed in 2013.

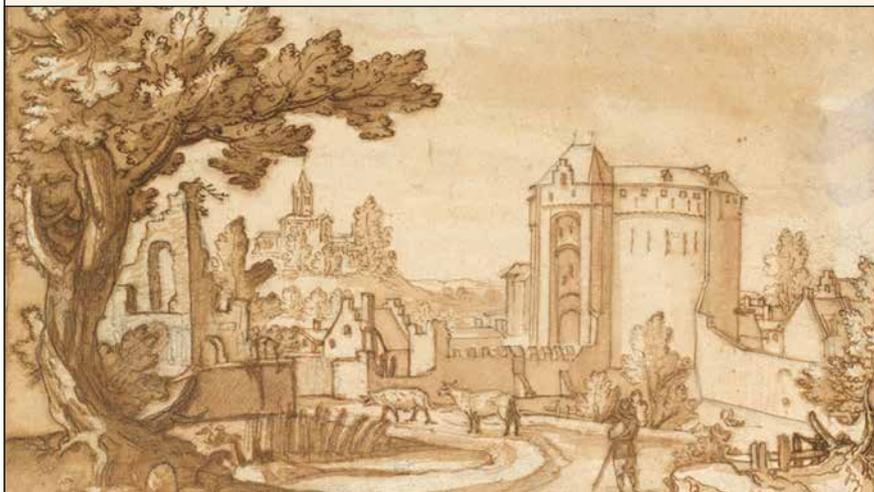
Today, in addition to hosting temporary exhibitions, Halle Gate, a department of the Royal Museums of Art and History, functions as a visitor interpretation centre on the urban fortifications and the role of guilds in the city.

## Halle Gate

While creating a series of drawings showing the city from the south, Remigio Cantagallina depicted the area surrounding Halle Gate a number of times. The gate appears in around half a dozen drawings, but only from two perspectives: a position outside the city walls, from Saint-Gilles, showing the south-eastern façade of the monument, and another viewpoint from within the city, once again depicting the eastern side. At a glance, the massiveness characterizing the gate is striking. Combined with other elements of fortification (curtain walls and a moat), it is perfectly suited to its defensive role.

Archaeological investigations conducted inside the building in the 1990s (de Waha & De Poorter, 1993), as well as outside and beneath the passageway in the 2000s (Modrie, 2012) provided a wealth of information on its medieval architecture. Before the modifications in the third quarter of the 19th century, the gate still retained its original, primitive design as depicted by Cantagallina. Isolated since the demolition of the curtain walls at the end of the 18th century, it lost the essential aspect of its fortified appearance.

The curtain walls feature prominently in the landscapes drawn by Cantagallina. The junction point between the rampart and the eastern side of the gate is well documented. The entrance to the rampart walk can be made out in the building. The rampart walk itself is supported by arcades that are visible *intra muros* and protected by a solid brick wall on the outside, built on top of the defensive embankment. These curtain walls date from the initial phases of fortifying the city walls. They were modified in the third quarter of the 17th century by widening the moats and adding bastions. Two crenelated walls extend along the passageway beneath the gate towards Saint-Gilles, flanking a fixed bridge and protecting the “Volmolen” water-mill and its water supply stemming from the Elsbeek.





▲ Halle Gate viewed from inside the city walls.



The archaeological finds both inside and at the foot of the building enabled the circulation levels and defensive function of the gate to be reconstructed. The passageway was protected by two deep moats, separated by a wall supporting a drawbridge. This drawbridge was controlled from the first floor, along with the portcullis, behind which a heavy wooden door closed off the entrance. In the passageway walls, archers sheltered behind the arrowslits, while the openings in the vaulted ceiling were used for throwing stones. The corbelling depicted by Cantagallina

on the second floor of the façade delineated an empty space above the bridge from where potential assailants could be seen and projectiles thrown down upon them. Sealed off by Beyaert's staircase tower, the passageway was partially restored in the new cellars.

Investigations carried out during the restoration of the façades in 2008 made it possible to identify the attachment points of the curtain walls as well as the different modifications made to the windows inserted in the brickwork. Originally very narrow arrowslits, they were widened to allow more light into the exhibition rooms in the 19th century. On the city-side façade, Cantagallina showed cross windows, square on the second floor, arched on the first, which contrast with the almost total absence of any openings on the outward-facing section. This drawing is the oldest evidence of this façade, which is hidden today behind Beyaert's additions.

*Sylvianne Modrie*



Cross Boulevard du Midi and enter Rue Haute.

A number of Cantagallina's drawings depict part of **Rue Haute**, most notably a series of houses located between the Halle Gate and Saint Peter's Leprosarium. The buildings adjoining the defensive structures as well as the start of the street were destroyed at the beginning of the 19th century when Boulevard du Midi was constructed. As the main accessway to Brussels from the south, Rue Haute enjoyed a certain prestige in the 16th-17th centuries, becoming more working class in the 19th century with a large population of labourers. Along with Rue Blaes, it now forms one of the major arteries of the **Marolles Quarter**.



Continue along to no. 322 Rue Haute, the former main entrance to Saint Peter's Hospital, at the corner of Rue des Faisans.

While still focusing on the ramparts and Halle Gate, this time drawn from within the city walls, Cantagallina also depicted part of **Saint Peter's Leprosarium**, from the southern end of Rue aux Laines. Mentioned as early as 1174, this establishment was initially situated outside the city walls to limit the risk of contagion; it was incorporated into the perimeter of the second city walls in the 14th century. Run by nuns, it had its own chapel.



▲ Halle Gate viewed from inside the city walls (centre) and Saint Peter's Leprosarium (on the right), the chapel of which is marked by a cross.

The adjoining area, extending to the ramparts, was undeveloped and was used as pastureland. Converted into a contemplative convent in the middle of the 18th century, the old leprosarium was closed in 1783 and transformed into a hospital. A Neoclassical complex (A. Partoes, 1848-1878) was succeeded by a more functional structure punctuated with Art Deco elements (J.-B. Dewin, 1926-1932). Now occupying a huge site between Rue Haute, Rue aux Laines, Rue de Montserrat, Rue des Faisans and Rue de l'Abricotier, **Saint Peter's Hospital** has been undergoing reconstruction and restoration works since 1995.



Continue to the junction of Rue Haute and Rue Pieremans.

Across from the hospital built by Dewin, **Cité Hellemans**, a beautiful example of Art Nouveau Hygienist architecture (E. Hellemans, 1912), was constructed on a site previously occupied by unsanitary alleyways. Further on, at no. 255, the façade of the **Baron Steens Primary School** (A. Samyn, 1895-1897) is decorated with a statue of Marnix de Sainte-Aldegonde, a statesman, military man and writer from the second half of the 16th century.





Continue along Rue Haute and turn right onto Rue du Faucon.

At the time of Cantagallina, **Rue du Faucon** led towards *Galgenberg*, a hill where gallows were erected to execute those sentenced to death. This street was originally known as “Rue du Bourreau” or “Hangman’s Street” as this is where he would have lived. The northern end was, for the most part, destroyed when the gigantic law courts building in Eclectic-style was constructed (J. Poelaert, 1866-1883).



**Impasse des Groseilles** (nos. 17-19) is the last remaining of seven blind alleys that once led off the street. Opposite the impasse, on the retaining wall separating Rue du Faucon and Rue de Wynants, a bas relief pays tribute to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood (M. Wolf, 1933).

After **Rue de Montserrat**, where the convent of the *Soeurs Maricolles* once stood (1660-1715) and from where the neighbourhood got its “Marolles” name, the climb continues via **Rue de Wynants**. At the junction of Rue de Wynants and **Place Jean Jacobs**, Cantagallina drew two views, one looking towards Rue aux Laines and Hôtel de Bournonville (p. 28), the other towards Halle Gate and Saint Peter’s Leprosarium (p. 23).

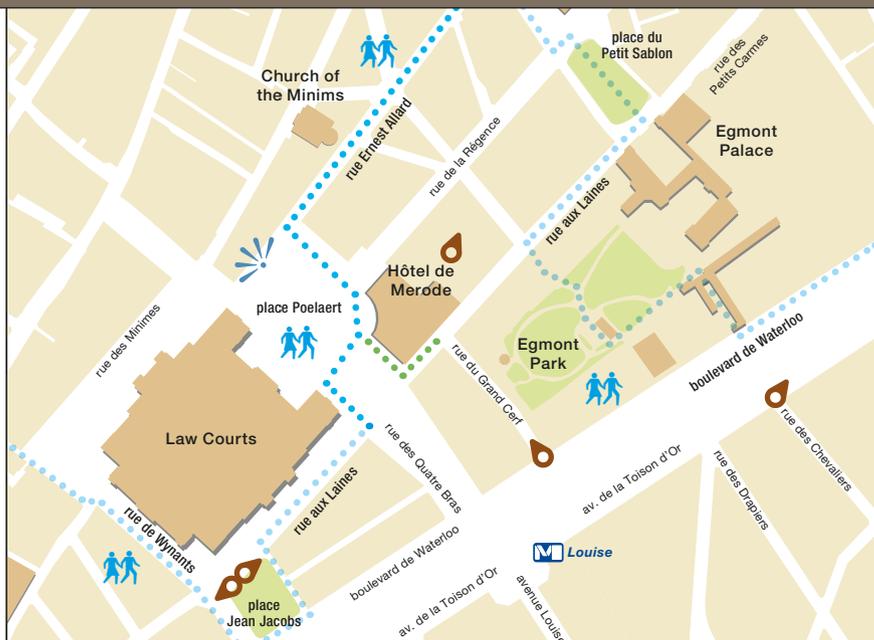


 Go around the square.

Created after the demolition of the Pachéco hospice in 1890, the square bears the name of the Brussels-based goldsmith Jean Jacobs (1575-1650), the founder of a school for Brabant students at the University of Bologna. The northern end of the square is dominated by the imposing Law Courts, while a number of Eclectic and Art Nouveau style houses border its western edge. Facing Boulevard de Waterloo, a monument (J. Van Neck & Ch. Samuel, 1912) pays tribute to the shipwreck victims of the Belgian training ship *Comte de Smet de Naeyer*, which sank in the Bay of Biscay on 19 April 1906.

 Exit Place Jean Jacobs by turning right onto Rue aux Laines. Continue to the junction of Rue aux Laines and Rue des Quatre Bras. Cross Place Poelaert to the northern side of Rue aux Laines.

## 2. RUE AUX LAINES AND SURROUNDING AREA



Stand at the corner of Rue aux Laines and Place Poelaert.

Mentioned as early as the 13th century, the street owes its name to a “Pré aux Laines” (*Wollendries*) or “wool meadow” which extended along its entire route up to the ramparts. In the Middle Ages, it was used by drapers as a location to dry their fabrics. From the 16th century, noble families wishing to settle close to Coudenberg Palace built prestigious residences in the area. At the corner of Place Poelaert and Rue aux Laines (no. 23), **Hôtel de Merode** retains vestiges in its façades and interiors of Hôtel de Bournonville, where Cantagallina lodged. In the 16th century, this urban palace belonged to the Mansfeld family. In 1608, it was inherited by Alexandre de Bournonville and his wife Anne de Melun who, ten years later, had it rebuilt as a grand townhouse with extensive gardens. The property then passed to the Ongnies, Counts of Coupignies and Mastaing, and finally to the Merode-Westerloo family at the end of the 18th century. The buildings have been redesigned countless times. The Neoclassical façade overlooking Place Poelaert is now flanked by corner pavilions. The long façade on Rue aux Laines was rebuilt in a pseudo-traditional style and fitted with a reused Louis XV-style bluestone doorway. An extensive renovation of the townhouse was completed in 2007. Today, it is occupied by the *Cercle de Lorraine* business club.



Take Rue aux Laines until reaching the junction with Rue du Grand Cerf.



▲ Celebration around the Grosse Tour,  
26 April 1613.

Cantagallina drew the **Grosse Tour** or grand tower, located close to Hôtel de Bournonville, a number of times. This high watchtower of the 14th century second city walls played a vital role in not only defending the city, but also in the prevention of fire. The artist immortalised the celebrations of the Crossbowmen's Guild taking place at the foot of the structure in the presence of Archdukes Albert and Isabella. Demolished in 1807, the tower was situated in the axis of **Rue du Grand Cerf**, the entrance to which is marked by a corner turret on a Flemish neo-Renaissance building (J. Barbier, 1901).

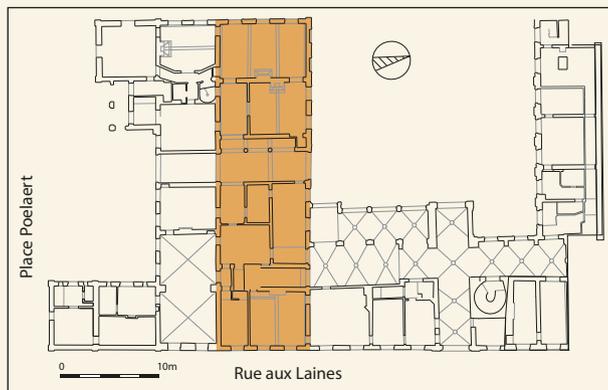


▲ Church of the Sablon, Hôtel de Bournonville and the Grosse Tour, May 1613.

### Hôtel de Bournonville

A drawing dated May 1613 provides us with an invaluable record of the *Wollendries* Quarter. The perspective chosen by Cantagallina – from *Galgenberg* – encompasses a wide area, stretching from the ramparts and the Grosse Tour in the east to the aristocratic townhouse of the Nassau family at the western end, recognisable thanks to its imposing stepped tower. Rue aux Laines is placed at the centre of the composition, providing the artist with a “central vanishing point” around which the rest of the drawing is arranged. The Church of Our Blessed Lady of the Sablon is prominent in the landscape, as is the home of the Bournonville family. Standing along Rue aux Laines, the Bournonville property consists of a townhouse at the edge of the road surrounded by gardens which separate it from an annex, at the extreme left of the drawing.





◀ Floor plan of Hôtel de Merode with the 16th century wing drawn by Cantagallina indicated.

Of the townhouse itself, the artist only depicted a single façade, perpendicular to the street. Built over two floors separated by a horizontal plain building is pierced by several simple or cross windows. The eastern end of the façade is taken up by an imposing projecting chimney with a flared base, narrowing towards the top. The building is topped by an overhanging roof featuring dormer windows.

In 2005-2006, an archaeological study of the Hôtel de Merode building was able to prove the precision of Cantagallina's depiction (Demeter & Sosnowska, 2007). Improvements to the property in the 17th and especially 18th centuries saw the construction of new structures against this façade, which gradually became a long internal load-bearing wall. Most of the elements depicted by the artist have been physically identified. On the ground floor, stripping the render revealed a cross window as well as some remains of the large chimney. On the first floor, the group of three windows sketched by the artist was located thanks to the imprints left behind by the complete removal of their abutments when doorways were created in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was possible to retrace the outline of a simple window thanks to the remains of the partially preserved abutments, lintels and sills. Finally, the horizontal line separating the two floors has been identified as a white stone drip mould.

*Philippe Sosnowska*



▲ *The Hôtel de Bournonville annex.*



Return to Place Poelaert.

The **annex of Hôtel de Bournonville**, also drawn by Cantagallina, was located on the site of today's Place Poelaert. This building was initially owned by Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564), the famous Renaissance anatomist, before being inherited by the Mansfeld and then the Bournonville families. The pavilion was sited on a terrace of gardens offering a view over the city and the hills to the west of Brussels. Bournonville lived there with his wife while waiting for his townhouse on Rue aux Laines to be rebuilt. Their son, Alexandre II, renovated the belvedere, which he christened "Beauregard", and installed a library there as well as a cabinet of curiosities.



Head towards Rue de la Régence.



The remaining gardens of Hôtel de Merode are enclosed by monumental railings (A. Delpy, 1902) along which the **Anglo-Belgian War Memorial** is laid out (T.S. Tait & C.S. Jagger, 1923).

- ▼ View over the lower town from the gardens of Hôtel de Bournonville, with the Church of Our Lady of the Chapel.



Cross Rue de la Régence. Go to the western side of Place Poelaert to enjoy the view of the lower town and the Senne River Valley.



The stretch of **Rue de la Régence** connecting Place Poelaert to Sablon was laid out in 1872 and swallowed a large part of the former gardens of Hôtel de Bournonville. Developed over several terraces, the gardens stretched as far as what is now Rue des Minimes. It was from this vantage point that Cantagallina drew the lower town and its main landmarks: the Church of Saint Géry, the Church of Our Lady of the Chapel, the belfry attached to the Church of Saint Nicolas, the tower of the city hall and, finally, *Steenpoort*, a gate from the first city walls of the 13th century which stood where one now finds Boulevard de l'Empereur. The centre of

Place Poelaert is today dominated by the **Belgian National Infantry Memorial** (A. De Mol & E. Vereycken, 1935), consisting of a tall obelisk made from blue stone decorated with statues of infantrymen.

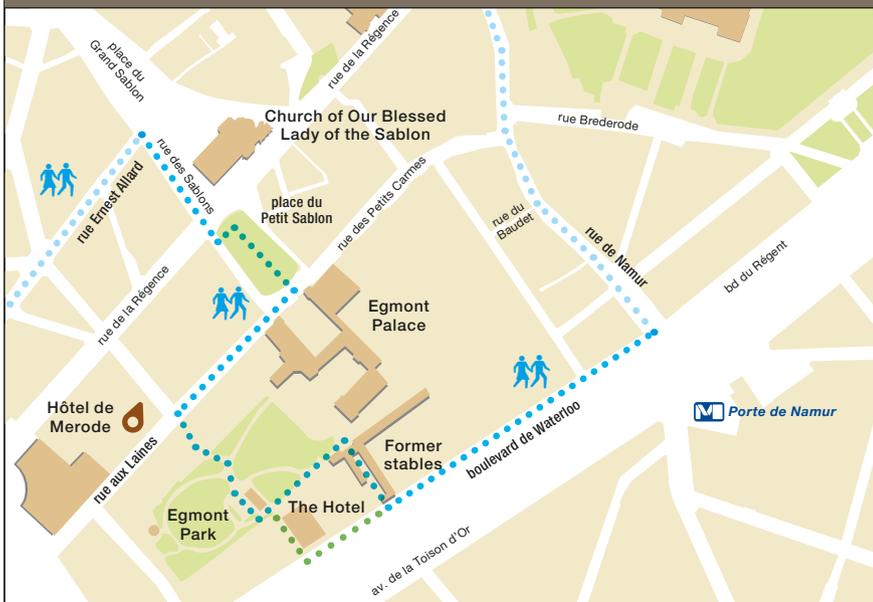


 [Take Rue Ernest Allard.](#)

**Rue Ernest Allard** is the central axis of the Astre Quarter, created in the 1880s. The **Athénée Robert Catteau** secondary school (no. 49), an imposing Art Deco complex (F. Malfait, 1923-1927), stands on the site of the former Monastery of the Minims, established in 1616 on part of the gardens of Hôtel de Bournonville and demolished in 1796. The Church of the Minims, which became a parish church, is all that remains today; to the north of the school, its apse sits lower than the street, proof that the height of the circulation level has profoundly changed since the 17th century.

 [Continue to Place du Grand Sablon via Rue Ernest Allard.](#)

## 3. SABLON



Place du **Grand Sablon** is bounded on the east by the Church of Our Blessed Lady, which Cantagallina depicted in detail a number of times, either looking at it from Rue aux Laines, or used as a simple visual reference point in his wider panoramas of Brussels. From the 16th century, some of the great noble families settled around the square, which regularly hosted processions or prestigious festivities such as the *Ommegang*.

The site was home to a horse market from 1320 to 1754, a vegetable and dairy market from 1800 and, finally, a weekly antiques market from the 1960s. The square is mainly bordered by traditional and Neoclassical houses. The central area, opposite Petite Rue des Minimes, is decorated with a **Minerva Fountain** (J. Bergé, 1751).



Turn right onto Rue des Sablons and head for the square in front of the church.

The **Church of Our Blessed Lady of the Sablon** dates back to the beginning of the 14th century, when a parcel of land used as a cemetery for Saint John's Hospital was transferred to the Crossbowmen's Guild who built a chapel on the site. A "miraculous" statue of the Virgin brought by boat from Antwerp in 1348 made the sanctuary so successful that it was rebuilt in the Gothic style in the 15th-16th centuries. The building has been modified countless times over the centuries up to and including the recent exterior renovations.

### Sablon church

Remigio Cantagallina depicted the Church of Our Blessed Lady of the Sablon from the south-east on two occasions, an original angle, to say the least, compared to the rest of the iconographic body of work relating to the sanctuary (Boelens-Sintzoff & Walazyc, 2004). The first time, he drew the building in a wide view of Rue aux Laines, the second time, from the gardens of Hôtel de Bournonville, where he was staying. This angle prevented him from seeing the entire church; the lower levels are hidden by a series of buildings and a stand of trees in the foreground. Still, the drawings provide information about the Gothic style of the structure.



▲ Church of Our Blessed Lady of the Sablon with, in the background to the right, one of the turrets of Hôtel de Nassau and the gable of the Aula Magna of Coudenberg Palace.

Cantagallina shortened the nave by at least two bays, giving it a squatter profile than it had in reality. The artist also distinguished the two arms of the transept, the north arm being a finished structure, featuring a projecting gable framed by two pinnacles. The turrets abutting the nave are depicted with a certain degree of precision.



A dendrochronological analysis in 2015 enabled the typology of the rafters to be examined and the period in which the wood was felled to be determined (end of the 14th/first half of the 15th centuries). Certain metal elements were also analysed (nails, tie rods, etc.) A study of the bricks, wall masonry and vaults visible from the attic space of the church was carried out at the same time (Crémer *et al.*, 2016).

While the restorations of the 20th century profoundly changed the external appearance of the Gothic structure, they did not result in the disappearance of all of the original masonry. Specifically, the interior brick facing was well preserved. The brickwork on the western gable dates from the 16th century. Visible externally, it contrasts sharply with the extensive use of white stone in the rest of the church. This wall was also pierced by a tall window, a feature that was not depicted by Cantagallina – perhaps an oversight? – or maybe the window had been closed up before the start of the 17th century? Finally, some brick foundations dating from the 15th century are still apparent in the gable of the south arm of the transept, visible only from the attic space.

*Philippe Sosnowska*



Cross Rue de la Régence and enter Place du Petit Sablon.



Until the start of the 18th century, part of **Petit Sablon** was used as a cemetery. The site was gradually surrounded by houses and finally delimited in the west by Rue de la Régence (1872). It was then developed into a Flemish neo-Renaissance style square (H. Beyaert, 1879-1890). This is bordered by a blue-stone and wrought iron fence decorated with 48 bronze sculptures personifying

the trade associations of times gone by (brewer, draper, weaver, goldsmith, etc.) The garden is also adorned with a series of statues of famous 16th century men (such as Gerard Mercator and Bernard Van Orley). An imposing set of bronze sculptures of the Counts of Egmont and Horn (C.-A. Fraikin, 1864) dominate a bluestone basin surrounded by steps.



After crossing the square, stand facing Egmont Palace.



The top end of the square is dominated by **Egmont Palace** (no. 8), the origins of which date back to the first half of the 16th century. From 1738, the estate passed to the Arenberg family, who commissioned numerous refurbishments, giving the complex a Classical appearance. The entrance gate (G. N. Servandoni, 1759-1762) gives access to a vast courtyard surrounded

by three wings that were built and converted in several stages (16th-19th centuries). Today, the palace is home to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

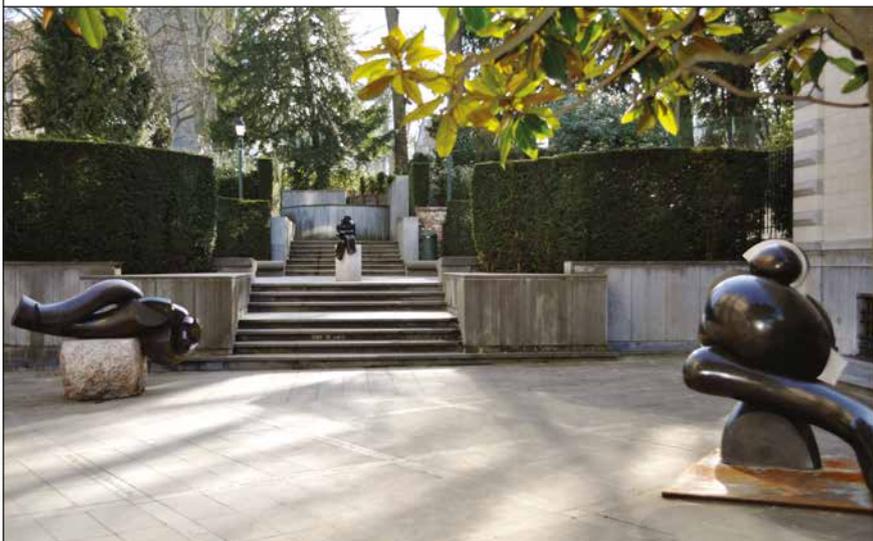


Turn right onto Rue aux Laines in the direction of Egmont Park.



In the corner of the square, the former inn **Au Roy d'Espagne** (no. 9) consists of two traditional houses, the foundations of which date to the early 17th century. The odd-numbered side of the street contains several prestigious residences (17th-19th centuries): the **Maldegheem** (nos. 3-5), **Willebroeck** (no. 11), **Lannoy** (no. 13) **Beaufort** (no. 17) and **Merode** (no. 23) townhouses. Between 1902

and 1906, a set of twenty-six Eclectic-style aristocratic mansions (nos. 4-54) were constructed on plots bordering the western edge of Egmont Park.



Enter the park via Passage Marguerite Yourcenar (between nos. 32-34).



Access is via a memorial to the author of *L'Œuvre au noir* (1968), extracts from which are engraved in the stone, on the ground and on the steps. The gardens of Egmont Palace, reconfigured at the start of the 20th century (E. Galoppin, 1902), included an orangery (1781) – converted into a cafe-restaurant – and a cold room. To the northeast, the former stables

(T.-F. Suys, 1830-1832) are home to the contemporary art institute ISELP (*Institut Supérieur pour l'Étude du Langage Plastique*). To the south, close to the entrance from Rue du Grand-Cerf, a small Gothic building referred to as *Groote Pollepel*, or “big ladle” in English (15th century), once sat atop a municipal water reservoir. Uncovered during construction of the Galerie Ravenstein complex, it was dismantled, moved and rebuilt in the park in 1957. The green space is also adorned with bronze statues of the Prince de Ligne (G. Frampton, 1935) and Peter Pan (J. Cluysenaar, 1913).



Go to Boulevard de Waterloo via the former stables or via the passageway running alongside the The Hotel tower block.

▼ *Namur Gate, 30 September 1613.*



 Take Boulevard de Waterloo as far as the Namur Gate.

**Boulevard de Waterloo** (J.-B. Vifquain, 1823-1830) was built on the route followed by the old ramparts. Originally consisting of three double traffic lanes and a tree-filled reserve, it was significantly modified during construction of the vehicle tunnels under the central roadway (1956-1957). It still contains rows of Neoclassical style buildings, including a number of townhouses with carriage entrances giving access to internal courtyards and former stables (nos. 27, 25-26, 20-21). Many of these buildings have now been converted into luxury shops.

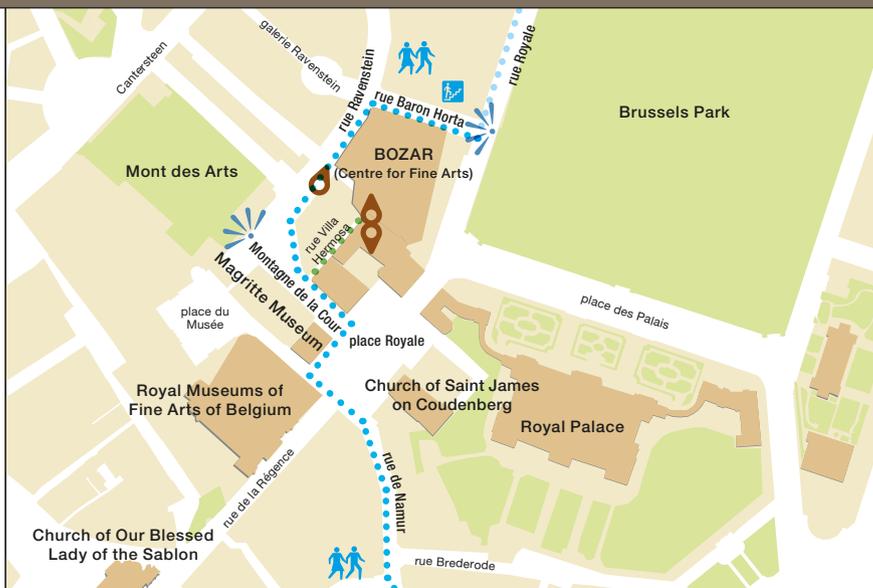
 Stand at the corner of Rue de Namur and Boulevard de Waterloo.



The **Namur Gate** intersection was developed on the site of an old gate in the second city walls, also called the “Coudenberg Gate”, which Cantagallina drew from outside the city. After demolition of the fortified structure (1782), a vast esplanade was created at the end of Rue de Namur along with two Neoclassical style city toll booths (A. Payen, 1835-1836), which were moved to the entrance of La Cambre Wood after 1860. A huge sculpture, *Signe de Lumière* (J. Moeschal, 1999), adorns the central roundabout. On the other side of the boulevards,

the **Bastion Tower** (R. Goffaux, 1967-1970) owes its name to the 17th century fortified structures that once protected the gate.

## 4. COUDENBERG QUARTER



 Turn left onto Rue de Namur.



Part of an ancient medieval roadway that once crossed the city from west to east, the curved route of **Rue de Namur** spans the significant difference in height between the *Petite Ceinture* inner ring road and the Royal Quarter. The junction with Rue Brederode and Rue des Petits-Carmes marks the site of the first Coudeberg Gate (13th century), which controlled city access until its demolition in 1761. Before arriving at Place Royale, the entrance wing to the old **Abbey of Saint James on Coudeberg** (nos. 4-12) – founded in the second half of the 12th century and suppressed in 1786 – features a grand Neoclassical façade (1776-1778).



 Reach Place Royale by passing under the portico.



Passing the portico on Rue de Namur (B. Guimard, 1780) brings you onto Place Royale, an imposing Neoclassical architectural complex built between 1776 and 1782 on the site of Coudenberg Palace, Place des Bailles and part of the Abbey of Saint James. The centre is decorated with a bronze equestrian statue of **Godfrey of Bouillon** (E. Simonis, 1848). Dominating the

eastern side of the square, the Neoclassical style **Church of Saint James on Coudenberg** (1776-1780) was built roughly on the site of the old abbey church.

▼ *The Aula Magna.*



▲ *Rue Isabelle.*



◀ *The Gothic chapel.*



Cross Rue de la Régence to the junction of Place Royale and Rue Montagne de la Cour.

Coudenberg Palace, the origins of which date back to the 12th century, was a vast complex at the location of the current Place Royale where the main entrance was, preceded by Place des Bailles, a public esplanade bordered by a balustrade. The gardens and *warande* (now Brussels Park) were situated to the north. A stateroom, the **Aula Magna**, was built under Philip the Good from 1452 onwards. Cantagallina depicted the silhouette of this structure in the background of some of his views of Brussels. From the gardens of Hôtel d'Hoogstaeten, located beside the palace, or from Rue de la Chancellerie, he also sketched the **Gothic chapel** constructed from 1522 during the reign of Charles V. The palace was destroyed by fire in 1731. The ruins were abandoned until the 1770s, when they were demolished and flattened to facilitate the development of what is now Place Royale. The remains of the Aula Magna and the chapel, bordered by a section of the old **Rue Isabelle**, were uncovered between 1995 and 2003. Along with the remains of Hôtel d'Hoogstraeten, they form the Coudenberg archaeological site, which is open to the public.



Go down Rue Montagne de la Cour as far as Rue Villa-Hermosa.

The name Rue Montagne de la Cour (“Montagne” means “mountain”) refers to the hilly terrain that Cantagallina regularly depicted. Until the end of the 19th century, this artery leading to Coudenberg Hill was lined with buildings on both sides; with the western slope having disappeared, a clearing now opens towards Mont des Arts. The former **Old England** department store (no. 2), a remarkable Art Nouveau building (P. Saintenoy, 1898), currently houses the **Museum of Musical Instruments**.



▲ Hôtel d'Hoogstraeten's  
Gothic gallery.

Now a no-through road, **Rue Villa Hermosa** owes its name to the Duke of Villahermosa, governor general of the Spanish Netherlands (1675-1681). It originally formed one of the “Jewish steps” (13th-14th century) leading to Rue Terarken until the demolition of its northern section in 1910. The odd-numbered side of the street was once bordered by Hôtel d'Hoogstraeten, the origins of which date back to the 14th century. This prestigious townhouse was owned successively by the Van Kersbekes, the Lord of Auxy, Philip of Burgundy, the Lord of Beveren and, finally, Antoine de Lalaing, Count of Hoogstraeten, a powerful advisor and diplomat to Charles V. A major part of the building was demolished from 1774. However, certain elements were preserved and integrated into a building constructed by the Count of Spangen and subsequently occupied by various public institutions.



Enter Rue Villa-Hermosa to see the Gothic gallery of Hôtel d'Hoogstraeten overlooking a courtyard (on the right, after no. 5).

## Hôtel d'Hoogstraeten

The depiction of Hôtel d'Hoogstraeten in the shadow of the Palace of Brussels by Remigio Cantagallina guided the first archaeological investigations conducted on the site in 1985-1987 (Van Eenhooge & Celis, 1988), as well as the preliminary excavations and those in parallel with the restoration works carried out by the Ministry of the Brussels-Capital Region in 1999-2006 (Cnockaert & Modrie, 2014).

From the garden, enclosed by a crenelated wall, the artist drew this architectural complex comprised of two-storey stepped-gable buildings with attics, a chapel and a gallery. Vertical circulation is suggested by a massive tower that contained a spiral staircase discovered during the dig. A small volume attached to the façade most likely contained latrines, as suggested by the cesspit found buried to the right of this structure.

It is possible to identify numerous architectural details: a number of discharging arches sit atop the bays which are fitted with cross windows; a gutter collects rainwater from the roof, while the façades are equipped with drip mouldings, the profile of which was discovered on site.

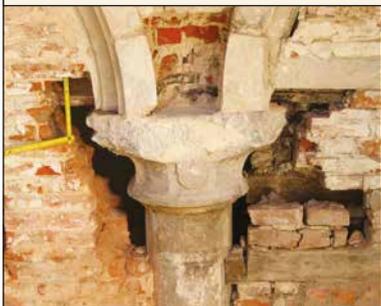
Despite multiple conversions, the 16th century connecting gallery is well preserved. It was restored based not only on archaeological research, but also on elements highlighted by Cantagallina. The space, unfolding over five bays, mainly overlooks the garden. While only one and a half bays are depicted in the drawing, they encompass the main





▲ *Hôtel d'Hoogstraeten and the chapel of Coudenberg Palace.*

characteristic elements of the gallery. Under the front arch supported by two columns, the ridges of the vaults that support the floor of the upper storey can be seen. The sketch of a low wall connecting the base of the columns spurred on the archaeologists to look for any remnants. Another element, a simple line connecting the capitals of the columns, also intrigued them. The removal of the walls separating the bays on the inside of the gallery revealed tie rods, and the typology of their associated anchors on the rear façade links them to the original construction. In the front façade, concealed in the filling of the arches, tie rods matching those depicted in the sketch were uncovered. Thanks to the removal of certain elements as required for the restoration, it was possible to see how the tie rods and anchors, intentionally hidden in the columns, were connected,



revealing a construction method combining iron, stone and brick dating to an earlier period than suspected up to then.

*Sylvianne Modrie*



▲ *Garden of the crossbowmen, 2 October 1613.*

It was also, most likely, from Hôtel d'Hoogstraeten that Cantagallina drew a view of the **garden of the crossbowmen**, acquired by their guild sometime around 1422. Adjoining the grounds of Terarken Hospice, the garden was amputated two centuries later during the construction of Rue Isabelle, which was to connect Coudenberg Palace to the collegiate church. The garden disappeared when Rue Ravenstein was laid out (1911-1913).



Continue along Rue Ravenstein.



**Hôtel de Clèves-Ravenstein**, on Rue Ravenstein (no. 3), a rare preserved example of a turn-of-the-16th century aristocratic townhouse, was built on the site of the former Meldert family house (14th century). Extensively restored (P. Saintenoy, 1893), it consists of several building complexes around an internal courtyard. Along the main façade, steps lead to what is left

of Rue Terarken. To the north, the townhouse is now bordered by the **Centre for Fine Arts – BOZAR** (nos. 5-23), a vast complex of exhibition and concert spaces (V. Horta, 1922-1929). Opposite this, the international style **Galerie Ravenstein** (A. & Ph. Dumont, 1954-1958) makes up for the 10 m height difference between Rue Ravenstein and the Cantersteen via a series of stairs.



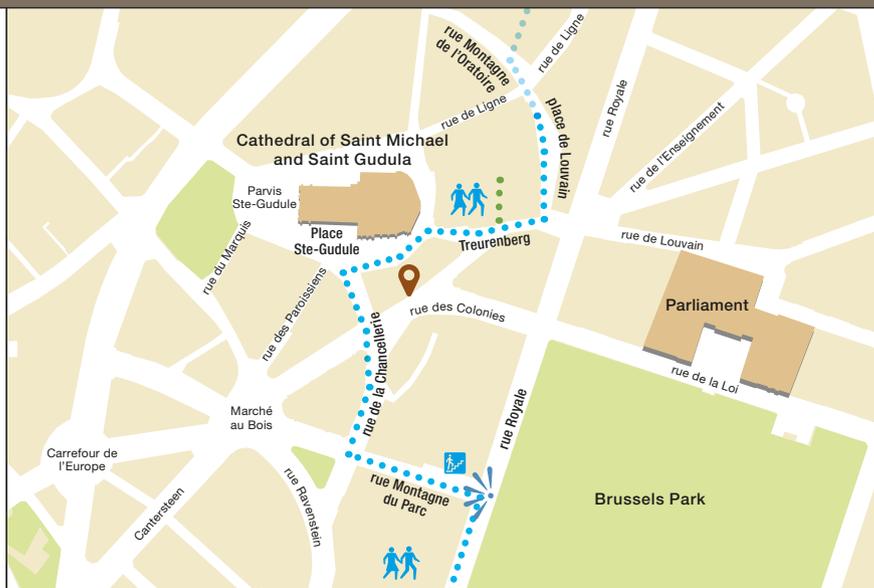
Turn right onto Rue Baron Horta and climb the steps leading to Rue Royale.



**Rue Baron Horta** is located on the site of *Domus Isabellae* (1625), built for the crossbowmen on the orders of Archduchess Isabella. After the palace fire in 1731, the library of Burgundy was installed in this building which was demolished at the end of the 18th century. The current bluestone steps (Fr. Malfait, 1921-1923) give access to a small Neoclassical

square decorated with a white marble statue of Count A.B. Belliard, general and envoy to Leopold I (G. Geefs, 1836).

## 5. AROUND SAINT MICHAEL AND SAINT GUDULA



Turn left onto Rue Royale and continue until Rue Montagne du Parc.



**Rue Royale** was originally limited to the lane bordering the western side of the park developed on the former *warande* (park) of Coudenberg Palace. Extended up to the Schaarbeek Gate (Botanique) in 1822, it forms the main artery of the Neoclassical Parc Quarter, which was developed from 1776.



Turn left onto Rue Montagne du Parc and go down the steps.



At the start of the 17th century, the site of what is now **Rue Montagne du Parc** was occupied by the house of refuge of Park Abbey (Heverlee, Leuven), whose grounds extended from the ramparts of the first city walls to Rue des Douze-Apôtres and Rue de la Chancellerie. From the latter street, Cantagallina drew the neighbourhood looking towards Coudenberg



▲ *The Isabelle quarter and Coudenberg Palace.*



Palace, depicting both the chapel and Aula Magna. Extended up to the Marché-au-Bois intersection around 1913, Rue Montagne du Parc is bordered by a Classical-inspired bank building (north) and a square (south) decorated with a group of white marble figures, *La Maturité* (V. Rousseau, 1922).



Continue right onto Rue de la Chancellerie.

The name of **Rue de la Chancellerie** recalls that the Council of Brabant and its Chancellor occupied a townhouse here from 1496 to 1782. All of the old buildings that once bordered the street were destroyed during its enlargement in 1908-1909. Today, the street contains a number of prestigious building complexes, such as the building constructed for the **Union Minière du Haut-Katanga** (G. Deru, 1926-1927) at the corner of Rue Montagne du Parc (nos. 1-11) and that built across the way (no. 2) for the **Caisse Générale de Reports et de Dépôts** (P. Saintenoy, 1911).



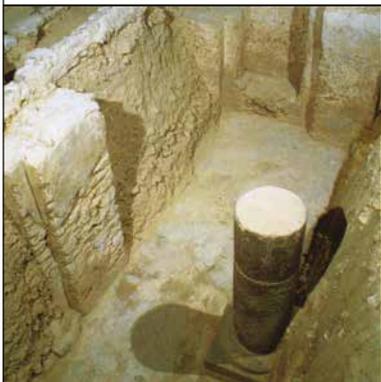
Cross Rue des Colonies and continue via the second stretch of Rue de la Chancellerie to Place Sainte-Gudule.

Until 1784, the area where **Place Sainte-Gudule** was later created was used as a cemetery for the collegiate church. The old buildings that surrounded it, composed of large traditional houses, were not preserved. Close to the southern entrance to the sanctuary stands a bronze statue of Cardinal Mercier (E. Rombaut, 1941).



▲ *The Collegiate Church of Saint Michael and Saint Gudula and the Terarken quarter.*

Cantagallina depicted the **old collegiate church** a number of times. An unfinished drawing shows its southern side and the Terarken Quarter. He also sketched the building from the area around the Schaerbeek Gate as well as showing it in the background of an image of the gardens of the crossbowmen. Initially a collegiate church, it was only upgraded to a cathedral in 1961. The current Gothic building was constructed between the start of the 13th and the end of the 15th century and underwent numerous modifications over the course of the following centuries. It replaced a Romanesque structure most likely dating from the 11th century.



▲ *Remains of the Romanesque crypt.*

Various archaeological digs conducted in parallel with the restoration of the cathedral (1975-2000) have enabled archaeologists to observe the layout of the Romanesque collegiate church, the remains of which are accessible to the public via two crypts. You can enter the cathedral from **Parvis Sainte-Gudule** via the monumental stairs (F. Coppens, 1860-1861).



Continue to the right via **Treurenberg**.



Connecting the cathedral to Rue Royale, **Treurenberg** was once sealed off by the Sainte-Gudule Gate, forming part of the first city walls (13th century), where the road from Louvain ended. Converted into a state prison, the gate was named “Treurenberg” (or “Hill of tears”) in reference to the tears of the prisoners; it was demolished in 1760. The street is bordered by

a number of stepped-gable façades (nos. 5, 7 and 9). The Hungarian Cultural Centre (no. 10) is housed in a building leaning against the curtain wall which once connected the gate to the Pléban Tower.



Turn left via **Place de Louvain** in the direction of **Rue de Ligne**.

Formerly triangular in shape, **Place de Louvain** was initially situated within the glacis of the Treurenberg Gate. It was the site of a livestock market until 1563. The old moats that once bordered it to the south were divided up and built on from 1640 onwards. Today, the street mainly consists of relatively new buildings. At the junction of Rue de Ligne and Rue Montagne de l’Oratoire, on the left, stands a polished steel sculpture, *Capteur de ciel* (P. Bury, 1983).



▲ The house of provost Grouwels (in the centre), the 13th century walls and the choir of Saint Gudula (on the far right).

### Treurenberg Gate

While creating a panoramic view from the area surrounding Schaerbeek Gate, showing the Collegiate Church of Saint Michael and Saint Gudula (extreme right) and the home of the provost of the Duke of Alba, Jean Grouwels, known as Spellekens (centre), Cantagallina drew a long stretch of the 13th century first city walls as seen from outside the city. He also depicted the massive structure of the Treurenberg Gate. However, from where he chose to sketch it, only the top part can be made out, including a saddleback roof between two stepped gables, with the northern gable pierced by two bays. A small volume (a turret?), also with a stepped gable roof, links the gate and the curtain wall which extends to the Pléban Tower. Like the other gates in the city walls, the Treurenberg Gate consisted of a covered passageway flanked by two towers, not depicted by Cantagallina, perhaps because of his angle of view. A limestone rubble block that was part of the foundations of one of these towers was discovered in 1952 during roadworks at no. 16 Treurenberg.



Between March and June 2000 archaeological excavations conducted in the cellars of nos. 12 and 14 uncovered other elements of the gate's foundations, as well as part of its northern façade (these

remains are visible in the entrance hall of no. 14). These various elements were also built from limestone rubble. An additional dig conducted in the cellar of no. 12 allowed the identification of two other stone walls which could possibly have formed part of the fortified structure. The archaeological research also uncovered the full height of a city-side section of the curtain wall running towards the Pléban Tower, from its foundations up to the crenelations (Degraeve, 2001). Finally, during winter 2013-2014, while reconstructing a building located just opposite, the outward-facing side of the same section of curtain wall was exposed and restored.

*Ann Degraeve*

## 6. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF THE SCHAERBEEK GATE



Continue for a few metres along Rue Montagne de l'Oratoire, turn right (after no. 28) and climb the steps to reach the esplanade of the former Cité Administrative or Administrative City.



The creation of the **State Administrative City** (J. Gilson, G. Ricquier, H. Van Kuyck, M. Lambrichts & L. Stynen, 1957-1968), between Boulevard Pacheco and Boulevard du Jardin Botanique, Rue Royale, Rue de Ligne and Rue Montagne de l'Oratoire, resulted in the disappearance of the "Bas-Fonds" Quarter,

where the Oratorian monastery once stood (17th century). Sold by the state in 2003, the functionalist complex subsequently underwent a major renovation as part of a multi-functional urban development project (offices, housing, green spaces).



Stand facing Congress Column.



The esplanade created at the junction of Rue Royale and Rue du Congrès was originally called “Place du Panorama” on account of the view it offered over the lower town. It was connected to the Bas-Fonds Quarter by an imposing set of steps and a covered market (J.-P. Cluysenaer, 1857) which were demolished to make way for the Administrative City. It was renamed **Place du Congrès** following the installation of a column (J. Poelaert, 1850-1859) paying tribute to the National Congress of Belgium, a legislative assembly elected to vote on the 1831 Constitution and to appoint Leopold of Saxe-Cobourg to the throne as the first King of the Belgians.



 Go down the steps and continue through the Administrative City garden.

The **Suspended Garden of the Administrative City** (R. Pechère, 1977), recently restored, sits atop a vast car park facing Boulevard de Pacheco. Crowning the view to the north, the **Finance Tower** (141 m), completed in 1983, has been extensively renovated (M. Jaspers, 2005–2008).

 At the foot of the Finance Tower, turn right and climb the steps to reach Rue Royale.

The **Schaerbeek Gate**, which was demolished at the end of the 18th century, was located where the Finance Tower stands today. To draw it, Cantagallina positioned himself outside the city walls, to the east.

▼ *Schaerbeek Gate, October 1613.*



He depicted with precision the defensive system of the fortified structure, composed of an entrance porch connected to the main building by a solid covered passageway flanked by two turrets. In the background, the artist offers a vista over the Senne River Valley and the hills to the west of Brussels. In a drawing of the area around Schaerbeek Gate from within the city walls, Cantagallina this time portrayed ramparts and curtain walls.

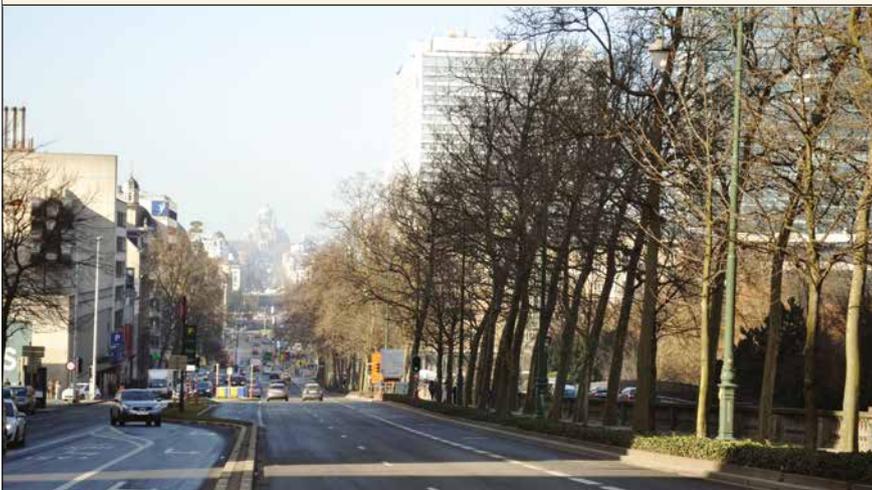


▲ View towards the Collegiate Church of Saint Michael and Saint Gudula and the city centre.

He also took up position on the rampart walk running between the Schaerbeek Gate and the Laeken Gate to create two panoramas looking towards the centre of the city. The collegiate church occupies an important place in these compositions, as do the towers of a series of buildings which serve as visual reference points: the Church of Saint Nicolas, the town hall, and Nassau Palace, among others.



Continue to the junction of Rue Royale and Boulevard du Jardin Botanique to enjoy the vista over the Senne River Valley looking towards Koekelberg.





## ENVIRONS OF BRUSSELS

Cantagallina did not make do with merely stepping outside the city to create a panorama from the south or to linger on the architecture of gates and fortifications. He also explored some of the localities in the area surrounding Brussels, where he sketched remarkable buildings and landscapes.

## Saint-Gilles



▲ Fontange castle in Saint-Gilles.

Besides the church of Obbrussel and some images of the village in the area around Halle Gate, Cantagallina also left us a drawing of a small castle situated in the middle of what is now the block formed by Chaussée de Forest, Rue de l'Église Saint-Gilles, Rue d'Andenne and Rue Vanderschrick. Protected by a moat, the complex is dominated by a stepped-gable tower. In the 18th century, this castle was called *Fontange* or *Het Motteken*. It was leased to the Duke of Saint Alban in 1760 when it consisted of a house and outbuildings, stables and a garden with a fountain. It disappeared during the urban development of the neighbourhood in the 19th century.

## Anderlecht

The artist's attention was drawn by the ruins of a fortified farm situated on the left bank of the Pede brook, on the site of what are now Quai de Biestebroecq and Rue François-Ysewyn. Mentioned as early as the 15th century, the complex consisted of two main buildings organised around a central tower. Cantagallina was undoubtedly very

interested in this traditional architecture, which was very different from what he was familiar with in Italy. The complex was rebuilt around 1700 and converted into a country house, the last remains of which disappeared in the middle of the 1950s.



◀ Hof ter Biest in Anderlecht.

He drew the Collegiate Church of Saint Peter and Saint Guy, located in the heart of Anderlecht (Place de la Vaillance). Run by a chapter of canons, the sanctuary was an important place of pilgrimage following development of the cult of Saint Guy in the 12th century. Replacing a Romanesque building, the Gothic church built in the 14th-16th century had a profile very similar to that today, except for the tower which was completed by a stone neo-Gothic spire at the end of the 19th century (J.-J. Van Ysendyck, 1898).



▲ The Collegiate Church of Saint Peter and Saint Guy in Anderlecht.



## Forest

Cantagallina created three images of Forest Abbey from what is now Chaussée de Bruxelles. Nestled in the Geleysbeek Valley (Place Saint-Denis), the 12th century priory of nuns was elevated to the rank of Benedictine abbey in 1238.



▲ *Church of Saint Denis and Forest Abbey.*



The Gothic abbey church was completed around 1447 and underwent numerous modifications up to the 18th century. It was destroyed after the closure of the complex in 1796. The Church of Saint Denis located outside the walls of the monastery was constructed in the 12th century from an older chapel devoted to Saint Anne. It was replaced by a Gothic structure (13th-18th century) which still exists today.

## Etterbeek



▲ *An aspect of Maelbeek Valley in the area surrounding Etterbeek (detail).*

It was perhaps after drawing the Schaerbeek Gate that Cantagallina descended into the Maelbeek Valley, of which he left a unique image, most likely sketched from the area surrounding Chaussée d'Etterbeek: a hamlet consisting of a handful of houses scattered on both sides of a rolling country lane.

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Panorama of Brussels from Saint-Gilles and the Ransbeek lock in Vilvoorde (detail)

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