

**CATALOGUE OF  
THE PLANTIN-  
MORETUS MUSEUM**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649453894

Catalogue of the Plantin-Moretus Museum by Max Rooses

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**MAX ROOSES**

**CATALOGUE OF  
THE PLANTIN-  
MORETUS MUSEUM**





CATALOGUE

## PLANTIN-MORETUS MUSEUM

---

The Plantin-Moretus Museum is situated in the buildings which were occupied, since the year 1576 until 1876, by the illustrious printer, Christopher Plantin, his son-in-law John Moerentorf or Moretus, and their descendants.

By act dated the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1876, the Municipality of Antwerp bought the Plantin-Moretus mansion, with the printing materials and collections which it contained, and converted it into a public Museum, which was opened on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 1877.

Before enumerating the objects exhibited in the different rooms, we shall briefly make the family known who, during three centuries, inhabited and managed the renowned architypography. We shall then concisely state the history of the buildings, composing the actual Museum.

---

### THE PLANTIN-MORETUS FAMILY.

The founder of the Plantinian printing office, Christopher Plantin, was born at Saint-Avertin, one mile from Tours. The date of his birth is not exactly known. One of his engraved portraits and his tombstone both mention the year 1514; one of his painted portraits shows it to be 1520; in several public acts Plantin himself varies about the date of his birth and fluctuates between 1518 and 1525. He lost his mother when very young.

Plantin's father, having fled from the pest which had carried away his wife, went to Lyons and there entered the service of Claude Porret, « *audiencier* » of the church of St-Just. Accompanied by his son, he followed one of his master's nephews, called Peter Puppier, who was going to study at Orleans and Paris. On his departure from the latter town, he there left young Christopher and remitted him a small sum to continue his studies. He promised to come and fetch him soon, but forgot his promise and the youth, at the expiration of his meagre resources, went to Caen where he bound himself apprentice to a printer.

The oldest witnesses agree to designate as his master the printer Robert Macé, second of that name. At Caen Plantin made the acquaintance of Jane Rivière; he married her in 1545 or 1546, and went to live with her in Paris. There he found Peter Porret, a nephew of the « *audiencier* » Claude Porret, with whom he had been brought up in Lyons. The two, who had been friends since childhood called each other

brothers, and this habit, which they kept up during lifetime, served as a foundation to a legend on the origin of Plantin and Porret.

Both, it is said, were sons of the illustrious Charles de Tiercelin, who died crowned with glory, but devoid of fortune. His children having to provide for their sustenance by the labour of their hands, resolved to do so with courage. But, that they might not dishonor the coat of arms of their noble ancestors, they assumed the plebeian names of two plants, the plantain and the leek, in French Plantain and Porret. One became a bookseller, the other an apothecary.

Only the last phrase is true in this legend. Plantin, after his marriage, lived some time in Paris. In 1549 he settled at Antwerp, which was at that time, together with the capital of France, the most flourishing town of the north-west of our continent, as a book-binder and casket-maker.

He first lived in the « Lombaarden vest » (Lombard Rampart) near the « Kammerstraat » (Brewerstreet — now « Kammenstraat » rue des Peignes — Combstreet) and then transferred his quarters to one of the streets in the neighbourhood of the Exchange, where we again find him established in 1555. He soon made a reputation as a clever workman; his book-bindings, his caskets and cases, his works in gilding and mosaic on leather, excelled in beauty all that was made of that kind in the Netherlands.

He was well received by the scholars of Antwerp and by the merchants who frequented the Exchange; he even gained the good graces of Gabriel de Çayas,



secretary to king Philip II. This high officer of state who, towards 1555, staid in Antwerp, wishing to send his master a precious stone of great value, directed Plantin to make a small box to send it in. The work being finished, Plantin took it himself to Çayas. Night falling, the artisan, preceded by a servant who carried a light, arrived at the « Meirebrug », when some drunken men with their faces covered by masks, in search of a guitar player, who had offended them, thought they recognized their enemy in the inoffensive workman, carrying his box under his arm. They rushed upon him, one of them drew his sword and pierced him. The thrust was so violent, that the evil-doer had great difficulty in withdrawing his weapon from the wound. Plantin explained to his furious assailants that they were mistaken in their man; they then saw their mistake and fled. The wounded man reached his house half dead. They immediately called surgeon John Farinalius and Doctor Goropius Becanus, who, at first sight, despaired of saving the victim of this fatal mistake. Nevertheless his life was saved; but, not being able to devote himself to manual labors, which necessitated his moving and holding his body bent, he abandoned his trade as a book-binder and returned to the profession of printer, which he had practised at Caen.

Plantin became a citizen of Antwerp on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1550; in the same year he was received into the corporation of S<sup>t</sup> Luke, with the title of printer, which proves that, occupying himself with book-binding, he regarded as his principal trade that which he was to follow so gloriously later on.

The first book Plantin printed under his name is dated 1555, and entitled : *La Institutione di una fanciulla nata nobilmente*. From 1555 to 1562, he only published a comparatively small number of works, and the progress of this first period, although real, was rather modest.

In 1562, he was accused of having printed an heterodox tract entitled : *Briefve instruction pour prier*. (Short instruction for praying). A search was made at his house and three of his workmen were arrested and condemned to the galleys. Plantin himself escaped from a sentence, the most rigorous examination having discovered nothing in his conduct which was contrary to orthodoxy. But not thinking himself safe in the Netherlands, he took refuge in France and remained a whole year at Paris. The next year he returned and entered into partnership with Cornelius and Charles Bomberghe, James de Schotti and Doctor Goropius Becanus. Plantin was appointed what we should call the managing director of the Association. This lasted until 1567 and enabled our printer to give a large extension to his business.

Plantin declares in many places of his correspondence, that he broke off with his companions, because they were not of an irreproachable orthodoxy. And, in fact, shortly after the end of the Association, the brothers Bomberghe and James de Schotti were obliged to fly on the charge of an accusation of heresy. It would be difficult to estrange Plantin himself, before and after 1567, from all relationship with the heretics. We know from certain sources, that in the years

of his outset, he was one of the fervent disciples of Henry Nicolaes, the founder of the *Family of Charity*, one of the branches of anabaptism.

Later on, he disagreed with the father of this sect; but, to the end of his life, he remained on the most intimate terms of friendship with Henry Jansen, who, after the name of his native village, called himself Barrefelt and took, as an author, the Hebrew name of Hiël. Barrefelt was one of the first followers of Henry Nicolaes, but afterwards left the Family of Charity, to found a new church in his turn. Plantin's ideas were in community with those of this kind of illuminate, and he printed several of his works. Barrefelt preached the absolute identification with God and considered exterior worship an indifferent thing. In this mystic doctrine Plantin saw no obstacle to serving with ardour the Catholic church and his great supporter, the king of Spain.

Towards 1567, he found his principal supporter in Philip II and counted amongst his most devoted and powerful protectors cardinal Granvelle and the king's secretary, Gabriel de Çayas. On their recommendation he was chosen to publish the royal Bible in five languages, the principal work he ever printed, nay, the most important which any printer ever produced in the Netherlands.

Whilst Plantin was working at the Bible, he printed at the same time his first Breviary and Roman Missal, after the authorized version of the council of Trente. In November 1570, Philip II commissioned Plantin with the printing of the liturgical books for Spain and