

Summary

Education and development as an architect

Jan Peter van Bourscheit the Younger (1699 – 1768) was educated to become a sculptor and an architect in the studio of his father, J.P. van Bourscheit the elder (1669 – 1728), who owned one of the leading sculptor studios in Antwerpen. Van Bourscheit the elder, taught the fundamentals of architecture to the students who received their education at his premises. Among those pupils were four favourites of the Russian Tsar who studied around 1718. Architect Leblond, first architect of the court of the tsar, revised the *Cours d' Architecture van d'Aviler* in 1710. Therefore we assume that this edition of the well-known treatise would have been circulated in the studio of father and son Van Bourscheit as well.

Little is known of the architectural education in Antwerp. A Royal Academy was founded in 1663. Teaching instructions were the responsibility of the deans of the guild of Saint Luc. In the beginning teachings in architecture received a lot of interest. The teachings of this Academy should be complementary to replace the journeys of art to Rome and Paris which were thus far undertaken. However, the lessons did not seem to have been very satisfactory at least from 1722 onwards. There is no evidence that Van Bourscheit the younger was a pupil here. Classical architecture was taught and developed by the masters at home.

At the age of seventeen, Jan Peter Van Bourscheit participated in his father's architectural projects as a co-partner. In 1718 he signed a drawing of the

tiater, this was a piece of festive architecture, commissioned by the Court in Brussels for the occasion of the Inauguration of the emperor Carl VI as duke of Brabant. He then called himself Statuaire, architecte and ingénieur. Other important projects were the renovation of the church of Carolus Borromeus after a fire in 1718 and the funerary monument for Brederhoff in the church of Oosthuizen (N-H). Van Bourscheit qualified himself in designing architecture and supervising the execution of the projects. He designed architecture for great altarpieces as well. His father developed the sculpture and modelling. An example of such a project in which father and son co-operated was the altar for the church of the Kartuziers (1727) in Antwerp. The son delineated and signed the design of the altar and the father modelled the figure of St. Bruno.

Around Van Bourscheit the elder, other studios were specialised in making ordonnances, het maken van ordonnantiën. Jacobus Van der Sanden, contemporary biograph of Van Bourscheit, mentioned Peter Verbrugghen the elder because of his extra-ordinary skills in the making of ordonnantiën for country-seats and city dwellings or hôtels. Several designs of H.F. Verbrugghen the son of Peter Verbrugghen the elder, are maintained. In part I, chapter Van Bourscheit en Antwerpen of this thesis Hendrik Frans Verbrugghen is mentioned because of the influence of his work on Van

Bourscheit the younger and other architects in Antwerp. The making of ordonnantiën included taking measures and making an architectural design according to classical principals. Usually some other works were added as the designing and delivering of bridges, porches, wrought iron gates and the deliverance, replacing or recovering of sculptured figures, vases and pedestals for gardens. For townpalaces, ordonneren implied designing new façades, modernizing interiors and delivering the necessary ornaments in stone and marble. In 1721 Van Bourscheit was commissioned by the duke of Ursul to take measurements at his castle at Hingene for the designing of a bascour with stables and coachhouses. This was the first commission of architecture mentioned in the Rekeningen that proved that Van Bourscheit the younger was engaged in architectural projects, independent of his father. Of this type of commissions the existing bascour at the kasteel van Vorselaar near Antwerp, still shows a good example of these early works of Van Bourscheit.

The architectural business

Van Bourscheit continued the business after his father's death in 1728. He was the leading man at the office and chief designer. He confined his activities to tekenen en vassen. From the Rekeningen it was to be concluded what tekenen and vassen meant. Namely the conferring with and consulting of principals, the designing of projects and the supervising

of the execution of the designs by sculptors, stonemasons, suppliers of marble and all other crafts that were involved. In special cases or if really necessary, Van Bourscheit modelled the sculptures and ornaments himself. In the thirties and the beginning of the forties the tradition of the fathers studio still continued. But later on in the forties the architectural projects were given priority and the clients who commissioned garden sculpture, the reparation of sculpture or other minor works had to be disappointed. In the thirties Van Bourscheit built his first important town palaces and country-seats in Zeeland and Holland. In the forties and fifties he built his masterpieces in and around Antwerp such as the town palaces and country-seats for members of de Du Bois and Van Susteren families. Some other important commissions came from town councils and church committees such as the townhall of Lier, the Koepoort and the renovation of the townhall at Middelburg. Most of the engeneerworks were not subjects of this thesis.

The organization of the office

Van Bourscheit worked with some sculptors and joiners, whom he contracted for longer periods. Waumans and Jasper Moons both master sculptors, worked in his studio for many years. They modelled also and worked in stone and wood. The most important pupils of Van Bourscheit were his two nephews

Engelbert and Francis Baets. In the second half of the forties these sculptors and pupils left the studio. The reason why is not exactly known. The pupils had not finished their training courses properly, according to Van Bourscheit. Van Bourscheit suffered ill health from 1746 onwards. Probably his pupils and co-operaters were commissioned in greater projects themselves. Formerly the guilds provided in supervising the education in the masters studio and they thus guaranteed the qualities of the masters degree. But as architects the sculptors were not bound to the guild of St. Luc, they were free to set up their own bussiness. Apart from these pupils and sculptors who worked in the office, there was a group of craftsman who were commissioned if the need arose (cabinet makers, the smith, the master stonemason etc and also master sculptors who had their own studio). They all worked according to the designs of Van Bourscheit who supervised the results. There names are called in part I of this thesis. From the end of the forties onwards, Van Bourscheit was on the look at guest sculptors in Wallonië and France. He wrote letters to his stonemERCHANTS in Namen and Féluÿ and to a teacher of the French Academy of St. Luc at Paris to contract qualified sculptors who were able to design and model feuillages and rocailles and could sculpture these ornaments in stone and wood. He was interested in finding a sculptor who could sculpture marble figures as well. The quality of the ornaments

played a very important role in the work of Van Bourscheit as is explained in Part I and IV of the thesis, Van Bourscheit and le bon goût. The marble and stone suppliers delivered parts of architecture and sculpture (such as altarpieces). They executed the designs of Van Bourscheit in their own studios. Van Bourscheit supervised the works, and met the specification of the timing of the project. In the forties Van Bourscheit apart from the natural stone ordered a lot of other building materials for his architectural projects himself, such as wood, brick, tiles, lead and other materials.

The sculptor -architect as man wit taste, le bon goût

In alle the works mentioned in part III it is obvious that Van Bourscheit had received a profound training as an architect. His buildings are well constructed. If nesecessary Van Bourscheit asked advise of the baes metselaar or meester timmerman, master mason or master carpenter of his principal. He designed with their consultation façades and ground plans which were in accordance with the function and status of the owners and he placed modern decorations in the accurate position which harmonised with the function of the building and the appropriate rooms. He took into account the comfort and hygiène of the people he was building for. He also was aaware of the local building traditions and was interested in developing these. This was necessey for an architect in those days. During the training in his father's studio he had

encountered all aspects of the profession of an architect. He knew all the crafts necessary that were involved in the execution of a building. In these days it was important that an architectural design was properly executed. From 1741 onwards Van Bourscheit gave lectures in architecture at the renewed Antwerp Academie of Art. The program involved the acquaintance of perspective, and the classical architectural orders, the drawing of ground plans, cross and - transverse sections, comfortable and useful distributions, winding and other types of staircases. These were necessary skills in being able to produce representative architecture in the second quarter and around the middle of the eighteenth century.

Typical of Van Bourscheit's career was the fact that he graduated from a sculptor's studio and a man of practice into a modern architect. He had an important network of principals, suppliers, contactpersons, masters and craftsmen at his disposal which for a great part dated mainly from the time that Van Bourscheit the elder was still alive. A large part of important inhabitants of Antwerp had confidence in Van Bourscheit's ability as an architect. They supported him financially and gave countenance to his ambitions for improving art education for young artists and architecture in Antwerp. From 1728 onwards Van Bourscheit boasted as an architect with *le bon goût*. Contacts with most of the important principals dated from this time. They were highly educated patricians in Zeeland who had important positions in city councils

and the country government. They were administrators of trading companies as the O.I.C (Oost Indische Compagnie) and the Oostendse Compagnie. Important principals in Antwerp and surroundings belonged to the group of negotianten or traders, who were allied by marriages to the noble families of Antwerp. Van Bourscheit was commissioned by these families to built their town palaces and modernize and enlarge their country-seats. The works that he built are modern creations with *caractère*. They represent the interpretation of what in France was meant by *le bon goût*. Van Bourscheit had as an architect the same attitude as colleagues in France. He was interested in the work of Boffrand, whose buildings he must have known. As Van Bourscheit, Boffrand was also schooled in a sculptor's studio.

French influence, interpretation by the sculptor architect Van Bourscheit

The current architectural views held in France with regard to what was suitable architecture for patrician principals, is known from treatises which before their publication were to be approved by the council of the Académie Royal d'Architecture at Paris. These official publications were a reflection of what was considered important in contemporary architecture in France. These views were also spread by contacts with other colleague artists who worked in Paris, journals as the *Mercure de France*, prints and books and so on.

Whether Van Bourscheit studied this publications or not he was well enough informed about recent developments in architecture to achieve important contemporary architecture himself. This assumption is again supported by the fact that Van Bourscheit borrowed elements and received inspiration of the works of French designers and architects. Prints and books of this works were available in Antwerp. Famous ateliers had modernised their work for centuries in this direction. See part IV

Van Bourscheit adapted his concept of the ideal town palace such as d'Aviler explained in his *Cours d'Architecture*, to local traditions in Zeeland and Antwerp. He was also aware of later developments in designing architecture and distributions. From this viewpoint he developed two different types of town palaces. The squareform for patrician dwellings in the Northern Netherlands as in the Van Dishoekhuis in Vlissingen and in Antwerp the *hôtel* where rooms were arranged around one or two courts. In Antwerp the *Grote Robijn* built for Joan Antonie du Bois was taken as model of the ideal town palace in Antwerp. This was possible in these two cases because the concept of the plans could be ascertained from the details which were still available.

For the country-seats Sint Jan ten Heere for Johan Pieter van den Branden, the castle of

's Gravenwezel built for Melchior and Joan Alexander van Susteren and Sorghvliet at Hoboken near Antwerp built for Jean Joseph du Bois, illustrate Van Bourscheit's concept of an ideal country-seat. The houses took central place. They lie high above the surrounding gardens and estates. The ground plans are arranged symmetrical along the central axis as in the town palaces. This classical way of composing was continued in the interiors and in the gardens. The architecture of the country houses and town palaces and the architectural concept is represented as best as possible in part III of the thesis. Van Bourscheit paid attention to the comfort of the inhabitants like his colleagues who were doing that in France. However this should not be at the detriment of the impression of symmetry. (This was not to jeopardise the symmetry.)

Van Bourscheit knew the l'art de distribution et la belle décoration. At irregular places, even if circumstances were not most optimal for making a classical design, Van Bourscheit managed to create the illusion of symmetry and regularity in his architecture. He used staggering axes as Jean Courtonne did in 1722 in the groundplan of the Hôtel de Matignon. In irregular buildings, Van Bourscheit just like his french colleagues who developed the art de la distribution, concealed the irregularities by using these places as toilets or garderobes or rooms for servants. While in the rooms along the

representative routes the interiors were arranged symmetrical and regular or at least were given the illusion of symmetry and regularity. Van Bourscheit also manipulated measurements in façades where symmetry was important. The town palaces and country houses had separated zones for representative, private and service purposes. Service rooms most of the time were arranged in the souterrain (basement storey) or at the attic. In Antwerp the kitchen sometimes was situated at the back of the right wing at ground level. The service stairs also were left outside the representative zone. The eye catching features on the central axis as porches in stone with wrought iron gates and sculptured vases were applicable to country-seats. At the end of the central axis the sightlines ended at a central part of the house as port of entry. This entrance was carefully designed with richly profiled door and windowframes in natural stone. Sculptured ornament, a shield with coat of arms, all carried on the right place in harmony with the composition of the façade was part of the decoration. In part IV the architectural language of Van Bourscheit is carefully analyzed and explained. If symmetry was impossible because of irregularities in the place around the house, Van Bourscheit nevertheless suggested this, usually in a very successful manner. At the country estate Sorghvliet at Hoboken, an existing alley the drève d'un quart d'heure ended in an

asymmetrical placed entrance, which was attractively decorated. Seen from the garden this entrance distracts the attention of the beholder from the asymmetrical placing of the house in a corner of the estate instead of a central place in the middle of it as would be desirable for an important country house. In the town palaces the eye-catching features were also frames of doors and windows in natural stone with sculptured ornament that contrasted with the fine lines of the profiled frames. In the interiors of rooms the marble chimneys with mirrors and paintings were the most important places. They divided the rooms into regular parts and functioned as eyecatchers as it should be.

The art of making mouldings and mastering of the ornament were essential parts of the theory of le bon goût

Classical architecture remained the frame of reference for Van Bourscheit as it was for all other architects in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. As far as we have been able to trace, Van Bourscheit followed Vignola's treatise on classical architecture. His studio owned an edition, edited in Amsterdam in 1619. It was not necessary to follow the classical examples literally as is explained in part I of the thesis. An architect introduces his own inventions and used the proportions of one of the architectural orders as basic consideration which was also done by the colleague Boffrand in France. The ornaments as feuillages and rocailles were carried in suitable places as keystones and brackets.

The making of mouldings was an important skill, they were designed in harmonie with each part of the architecture. There was also a relation between mouldings in stone at the outside of the building and the wooden mouldings of the doors en-suite and wooden pannelings inside. The accurate firm lines of the mouldings contrasted beautifully with the ornaments in stone, wood or plaster. See the designs of De Grote Robijn part III and IV.

The style of the ornament and references to important contemporary architecture changed over the years. The characteristic ornaments such as a female head with a shell and symmetrical leaf motives that were derived from compositions of Bérain and Lepautre were replaced by influences of other French designers as Pineau, Huiquer, Meissonnier and De Lajoue. The resemblance with architecture of Fischer von Erlach dates back to the time of Van Bourscheit the elder and belonged to the tradition of the studio.

Van Bourscheit and Boffrand

The works in part III reflect the interpretation by Van Bourscheit and his principals of how architecture in the second quarter of the eighteenth century was supposed to look. The designs must be the result of the dialogue between architect and principal he was building for, they were attuned to the lifestyle and the person and position of the families. The classical views and suitable architecture necessary for patricians were taken into account. The hôtels and countryhouses

are individual creations or works of art. Boffrand wrote in his dissertation sur ce qu'on appelle le bon goût in architecture: *Une chose qui contribue beaucoup à la perfection d'une maison est la justesse d'esprit du Maître qui la fait construire: c'est lui qui pour ainsi dire donne le ton à l'architecte qui doit en faire le plan, suivant ce qui convient à la dignité et à l'état du propriétaire: il en règle les proportions et la liaison pour qu'elles s'unissent au tout.* If the principal was narrow-minded and wished to build the house only to his own ideas the house would be badly ornamented. But if he was modest and looking for a deeper understanding, the house would be striking for its elegant proportions and ornaments and for the richness of the materials. If the principal was bizarre and whimsical, the house would look despairing and the parts would harmonize badly with one another. It was the task of each architect to steer the ideas of the principal into the right channels.

That Van Bourscheit agreed with the ideas of Boffrand was apparent from fragments in his letters to principals in the Northern Netherlands and equally so to Jan de Munck about the country seat of Van der Poort in 1748 and in his letters to Van der Perre in the sixties. See part II and III.

Caractère

The façades of the townpalaces all have the quality of what Boffrand called caractère. They

impress by elegant proportions and ornaments and there are allusions to the person and position of the owner. Especially the façades of De Grote Robijn in Antwerp and the two townpalaces at the Meir were no longer imitations of classical examples but individual creations which honoured the personality of the owners, their richness, patrician way of life and good taste or bon goût.

Technical inventions, more material by indepth investigation is desirable

From the still existing buildings of Van Bourscheit we get some idea of his technical innovations. In the castle of Vorselaar and the Tanghof at Kontich, both buildings lying in the surroundings of Antwerp, equally so in other buildings, there are windows in the basement storey necessary for good ventilation. The Offices as d'Aviler refers to these rooms in his Cours d'Architecture, or servant rooms were housed here. Of the so called commodités or provisions that were needed for the household or private needs of the principal, for instance kitchens, laundries, rooms for the servants, extra staircases, entresols, bathing rooms, water pipes, some examples are still present in these houses. See part III

For the material examinations the relations between the whole building and the individual parts should be subject of examination. Especially delimiting the mouldings and ornaments should be part of documentation of

these works because of the importance they played in the theory of le bon goût. They were designed for a specific place within the whole concept of architecture. Within this concept variety played an important role. Each room should differ from the others and at the same time all parts should be in harmony with one another and the whole, as is usual in classical architecture. Traces of the technical inventions of Van Bourscheit, which are still present in some buildings should earn more study too. Parts of natural stone and wrought iron balustrades, gates and suchlike bear signatures of their suppliers for instance names like J.B. Lisse and Cornelis Marckx. These signatures are matching the names in the Rekeningen and Boek van Incoop.

Recognition as an architect with good taste or le bon goût

The (lavish)care and attention Van Bourscheit expended to the smallest parts of his compositions, the accurate drawings of mouldings and the harmonious proportioning of the ornaments as a whole, which referred to classical architecture, resulted in the fact that Van Bourscheit was seen as a dignified colleague and contemporary of architects such as Boffrand. Van Bourscheit had matured into an independent architect with his own bureau. Contemporary equally talented

sculptors in the Northern Netherlands such as Ignatius and Jan van Logteren in contrast had not succeeded in achieving this position. Van Bourscheits was a man of means, he owned a country seat in Hoboken.

His architecture met the expectations of which his principals understood by le bon goût. His buildings were marvelled at by connoisseurs recognising contemporary classical architecture with adaptations to local circumstances.

Van Bourscheit proved that his acquaintance of le bon goût, the use of modern ornament and the free interpretation of classical rules did not necessarily lead to excesses and extravagances. Van Bourscheit's oeuvre could function as a framework from which other architecture in the second quarter of the eighteenth century could be interpreted and examined. Reference to this was missing till now. In connection with the works of Van Bourscheit there was no other study available of architects. During this period, the second quarter and around the middle of the eighteenth century till about 1765, silversmiths, plasterers and sculptors like Van Bourscheit himself produced their own architecture. Van Bourscheit is one of the few sculptor architects whose education and whose architectural views have been examined and reconstructed by this thesis.

Concept of architectural uniformity

In the catalogue Rococo in Nederland⁴⁷⁸ that was published in 2002 at the occasion of the exhibition of Dutch Rococo in Amsterdam in the Rijksmuseum, the authors constated that stylistic uniformity was missing in important buildings of the period. After Daniël Marot there would have been no leading architects who were able to create this concept of architectural uniformity. However, the study of Van Bourscheit proves that in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, also in the Netherlands there were architects who had proper understanding of the international developments in architecture. In his important buildings see Part III of this thesis it is obvious that Van Bourscheit aimed at stylistic uniformity in his own way.

In all designs of Van Bourscheit it is apparent that he strived after creating beauty of details in the interior as well as on the outside of the buildings. The experience of symmetrical, harmonious architecture played an important role in his architectural concepts. This strive after ideal architecture could also be seen in his other designs such as in funeral monuments and church interiors as altars and organs.

As far as his principals were concerned, Van Bourscheit was the man with le bon goût. Van Bourscheit also possessed the qualities of the sculptor and designers who knew all about precious ornaments and sculptures in all types of materials, for their houses and gardens. He was in

⁴⁷⁸ Baarsen, R. e.a. *Rococo in Nederland*, Amsterdam, z.j. (2001-2002), 15

this respect a representative for the architect of the second quarter of the eighteenth century. His architecture represented also the ideal of the generation of sculptor architects of Van Bourscheit the elder. They aimed to develop the important architecture in Antwerp to a higher level. H.F. Verbruggen was one of the most important representatives of this Antwerpse architectuur school as was explained in part I of this thesis. In Van Bourscheit's time architects were supposed to have knowledge of the local building traditions and to integrate them in the more universal directives of international architectural developments.

Lemonnier wrote in the introduction of the published minutes of the meetings of the Parisian Académie Royale d'Architecture that the architects from the first half of the eighteenth century continued their studies of classical architecture and authorities on architecture like Vitruvius for instance. In the meantime they were fascinated by interpretations of the antique works by modern artists like Oppenord, who is called the creator of the rococo. See part I le bon goût. The invention and bon goût of the architect was very much appreciated. The architect got the freedom to deviate from the classical architectural rules. This double interest in classical rules and modern interpretation of classical ornament was apparent here and also in the works of the architects outside of France, in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. The taste for new ornament sometimes resulted in excesses. Van Bourscheit's

architecture proves that this did not need to be the case.

The emphasis (accent) that was laid on the renewed study of antiquity and specially the Greek examples are said to be a reaction on the excesses that also arose during the second quarter and around the middle of the eighteenth century, but more than being a reaction on extravagances and excesses it was in fact a new fashion. The architectural education became more universal because the guilds had no longer the supervision of the academies of art. All skills an architect should have were taught at these academies. Local building traditions played still an important role in architecture but the local masters were more often subordinate to the well-educated architects. The talented among them probably were educated as proper architects themselves.