

THE PRE-RAPHAELITES AT THE ANTWERP SALON OF 1852

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It is often assumed that the reception of Pre-Raphaelite art on the European continent began in 1855, when John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, and Ford Madox Brown exhibited some of their work at the *Exposition universelle* in Paris (*Exposition universelle* 74-79; Lethève 315-28; Rosenfeld 91). Three years earlier, however, in August 1852, Millais and Brown had already made a first, though modest, bid to conquer Europe, when they each submitted a painting to the Antwerp Salon, the Belgian national exhibition organized that year in Antwerp.

The participation of Brown and Millais was the result of a request made by Gustave Wappers, president of the Salon's organizing committee and director of the Antwerp Academy, to his friend Henry Mogford, a British artist, restorer, exhibition organizer, and journalist, who worked for *The Art Journal* and regularly acted as an agent in London for foreign artists (Baetens 127-39). In May 1849 Wappers had asked Mogford to encourage his British artist-friends to submit their work for the Antwerp Salon (Wappers, letter, 6 May 1849). Although only Mogford's friend David Roberts seems to have sent work to Antwerp (Wappers, letter to Mogford, 21 August 1849), Wappers reiterated his request in preparation for the next Salon, in 1852. That year, the organizers hoped to be able to present work from all the "great schools of the time," especially by the leading artists from France and Germany, in imitation of the highly international Salon organized in Brussels the year before (Smekens, letter to Mogford, 24 April 1852). Mogford replied to Wappers's request by explaining that he had discussed the matter with *The Art Journal's* chief editor Samuel Carter Hall and that they thought it best to authorize Mogford to act as the official go-between and organize the logistics. Mogford also recommended to pay for the cost of transportation, which British artists would be reluctant to pay themselves (Mogford, letter to Wappers, 27 January 1852).¹ The organizing committee of the Salon agreed and reserved 500 Belgian francs for the transportation of forty to fifty paintings (Wappers and Smekens, letters to Mogford, 12 February and 11 March 1852).