



*Benoît-De-Puydt's portrait*  
Alexis Bafcop  
Oil painting on canvas, 1857



*Benoît-De-Puydt's portrait*  
Detail



*Benoît-De-Puydt's portrait*  
Daguerréotype  
1858

## Benoît De Puydt, a knowledgeable donor

Benoît De Puydt was born in Bailleul on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1798 (5<sup>th</sup> Germinal or 7<sup>th</sup> month, Year VI of the French Republican calendar), and died there on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1859. He was single, had a private income, worked as a clerk of the court. He administered the Registry Office. He was a well-informed and passionate collector who gathered various works throughout his whole life : cabinets from Antwerp, ceramics, paintings, sculptures, engravings, wood carvings ...

In 1847, he decided by will to donate his fortune to the city of Bailleul, so that a drawing, painting and architecture school would be created, his house and collections would become a museum and a yearly Mass would be held for the rest of his soul.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many art lovers such as Auguste Mariette in Boulogne, Chevalier Wicart in Lille or Dominique Vivant Denon, director of the Louvre Museum, bequeathed their collection to their hometown or to an organization of their choice. It is thanks to those contributions that many museums got richer or came to life.

## A contemporary collector

In 1857, he had his portrait painted by Alexis Bafcop (1804 -1895), a painter from Cassel. Benoît De Puydt, seated and slightly turned to the right, dressed in his Registrar gown, was kindly and softly looking at the viewer.

Several objects belonging to his collection accompany him: he is holding a Greco-Roman statuette in his hand; on a side table are set a Notre Dame de Foy statue (whose cult was introduced by the Jesuits in Bailleul in 1625), a Venetian glass from the Renaissance, a small flask and his Registrar cap on which his flap was carelessly thrown. In the background, the Renaissance-style cabinet with ebony veneer, which is displayed in this room, is topped by two ceramics.

Alexis Bafcop managed to demonstrate his qualities as a refined man with eclectic taste, which were shared by other scholars and collectors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Having their portrait painted allowed collectors to pass down their image among their favorite artworks.

The frame's ornament represents Justice and Arts : there is a figure of a seated woman who is holding a scale in her right hand, which is missing today, and in front of her, lies an emblem with De Puydt's initials, flanked by two children representing the art of sculpture on the left and the the art of painting on the right.

Sensitive to progress, he was interested by the emerging use of photography : in 1858, he had his portrait taken again with the daguerreotype technique. He seemed tired, slimmed, in dressing gown, probably holding his testament.

