



B

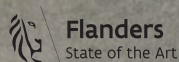
Musea
Brugge

Accademia Belgica • Rome, Italy
30 September – 1 October 2025

Conference Program

(RE)SEARCHING CONNECTIONS

Artists' international
social networks • 1750-1914



museabrugge.be

**CONFERENCE:
“(RE)SEARCHING
CONNECTIONS: ARTISTS’
INTERNATIONAL
SOCIAL NETWORKS, 1750–1914”**

- Academia Belgica
(Via Omero 8, 00197 Rome, Italy)
- Tuesday 30 September –
Wednesday 1 October 2025
- Organized by Musea Brugge in
collaboration with Academia Belgica
- English (mainly) and French
- Info and registration via the conference
website [via the conference website](#)

About the conference

The two-day international academic conference “(Re)searching connections” presents recent and ongoing research into the social networks of artists who lived, studied, and worked abroad in the period 1750–1914. The program is the result of a peer-reviewed selection following an open call for papers.

Embracing a broad chronological and geographical scope, the conference brings together insights spanning the long nineteenth century and various global contexts. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue across art history, sociology, and digital humanities, and by connecting diverse methodologies and findings across specializations, we aim to deepen our understanding of the transnational social connections that “make” art history.

**PROGRAM OVERVIEW
TUESDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2025**

9:30-10:00: registration, coffee & tea

10:00-10:10: welcome address – Cécile Evers (director, Academia Belgica)

10:10-10:15: introduction – Anne van Oosterwijk (director of Collection, Musea Brugge)

10:15-11:15: keynote lecture – France Nerlich (project lead for the future Centre de ressources et de recherche Daniel Marchesseau, Musée d’Orsay)

Between legacy and the living: Artistic dialogues in a transnational Europe

Focusing on the decades between 1830 and 1850, this talk examines how, confronted with the legacy of the Old Masters, artists engaged with the pressing questions of contemporary creation. It explores the networks—both conceptual and material—that emerged through art to connect the living and the dead, foster communities of thought and conviction, and shape artistic circles grounded in individuality. Through a precise dialogue between two major works produced in Rome and Paris—embedded in a wider European constellation—we will examine how two foundational visions of art arose from these transnational networks, transcending both time and geography.

11:15-12:45: session I: navigating national identities – chair: Christine Dupont (curator, House of European History)

The writing’s on the wall: Mentorship, mobility and the Bruges-Rome artistic network c. 1800

Thijs Dekeukeleire (researcher, Musea Brugge)

This paper, part of the research project [Apprentice-Master II](#), explores the social networks of a group of artists from Bruges (Southern Netherlands, present-day Belgium) who lived and worked in Rome around 1800. Drawing on archival research and a growing dataset of Bruges-trained artists who traveled abroad, it critically examines the extent to which these networks were transnational, with particular attention to the affiliation with the Académie de France. Moving beyond individual agency, the paper considers broader structural factors—such as institutional ties and transgenerational transfer—as catalysts

of cross-border mobility and exchange. It also reflects on how such networks were constructed, remembered, and represented.

Réseaux superposés: Espaces et sociabilités dans la Rome du XIXe siècle

Cécilia Hurley-Griener (professor and member of the Centre de recherche, École du Louvre)

Léopold Robert constitue un exemple fascinant pour l’étude des réseaux artistiques, dans la mesure où il exploite rarement de manière directe les espaces traditionnels ou les structures relationnelles typiques de la sociabilité artistique. Il s’immerge dans la vie artistique cosmopolite de Rome et tire constamment parti de son “statut hybride”—artiste prussien formé à Paris—pour créer des réseaux parallèles de mécènes à Paris, Berlin et en Suisse. Cette communication remettra en question certaines de nos hypothèses de base sur les réseaux. Plutôt que de les considérer comme des unités distinctes reposant sur des espaces traditionnels de sociabilité ou sur des relations sociales clairement définies, elle les envisagera comme des zones dynamiques, susceptibles parfois de remettre en cause ces normes et conventions.

Networking and the making of a transnational sculptor: The social sites of Luigi Persico

Julia A. Sienkewicz (Joanne Leonhardt Cassullo Associate Professor of Art History, Roanoke College)

Luigi Persico (ca. 1791–1860) emigrated from Naples, Italy to the United States in 1818. He next returned to Naples in 1829, now a U.S. citizen and a successful public sculptor, working on his second of three eventual sculptural commissions for the United States Capitol. This paper considers Persico’s strategies of local, national, and transnational networking. Parsing the assertions and silences of the archives, I consider what these records of his transnational network of acquaintances, friends, and enemies reveal or conceal. I trace the divergences, confluence, and contradictions of Persico’s networks, as “social sites” of influence on his career.

12:45-14:15: lunch (speakers only)

14:15-15:45: session II: networks’ sources – chair: Veerle Thielemans (scientific director of the Festival de l’histoire de l’art, INHA-Institut national d’histoire de l’art)

Achieving ideals: The social network behind Andries Lens's neoclassicism

Virginie D'haene (curator Old Master prints and drawings, Museum Plantin-Moretus)

The Museum Plantin-Moretus recently acquired an exceptional collection of 475 drawings by the Antwerp artist Andries Lens (1739–1822). Originating directly from the artist's workshop, these drawings have remained in private ownership until now. Lens was among the first artists in the Southern Netherlands to actively promote the neoclassical style. The newly acquired collection provides compelling evidence of the central role that drawing played in his pursuit of the neoclassical ideal. In addition, accompanying archival documents shed new light on Lens's international network. This paper offers a preliminary examination of this important and largely unpublished material. It focuses on how the artist's extensive network enabled him to realize his neoclassical ambitions.

Reconstituer les réseaux des artistes femmes: Les approches cartographiques

Lucie Montassier (PhD candidate, Université de Poitiers)

Si de récentes recherches, toujours plus nombreuses et innovantes, contribuent à de meilleures connaissances biographiques des artistes femmes, la question de leur mise en réseau reste encore peu étudiée. En prenant l'exemple d'une sculptrice française installée à Rome, Marcelle Lancelot-Croce (1863–1946), cette communication cherche à montrer l'importance de cet axe de recherche, tout en pointant les difficultés liées au manque ou à l'inaccessibilité des sources. En s'appuyant sur les méthodes de cartographie spatiale et de cartographie des réseaux sociaux, elle propose une ébauche des réseaux professionnels romains de cette artiste entre 1889 et 1914.

Mapping a network: Documenting Latvian and Spanish artistic connections in Paris (1900–1914)

Ieva Kalnača (head of the project management department, Latvian National Museum of Art) & Aija Zandersone (curator of collections, Latvian National Museum of Art)

This paper explores the artistic networks between Latvian and Spanish artists in early twentieth century Paris, focusing on figures such as Jāzeps Grosvalds, Kārlis Brencēns, Xavier Gosé and Hermenegildo Anglada Camarasa. Drawing on archival corresponddence, exhibition

records, and contemporary reviews, the study reveals how these transnational connections shaped modernist developments in Latvia. It highlights the methodological challenges of reconstructing networks and emphasizes the value of cross-border collaboration between researchers and institutions. By shedding light on overlooked artistic interactions, the paper contributes to a richer understanding of European modernism and the role of Paris as a meeting point for cultural exchange.

15:45-16:15: coffee break

16:15-17:15: session III: the studio as a social hub – chair: Laura Overpelt (director of studies in art history, KNIR-Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome)

Beasts on loan: Global networks and the economy of nineteenth-century animal art

Oriane Poret (PhD candidate, Université Lyon 2/LARHRA)

This paper examines the interconnected networks that shaped nineteenth-century European animal art practices. Artists like Rosa Bonheur, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Gustave Courbet relied on living animals for their work, participating in systems of extraction, commodification, and exchange. Through intermediaries—art dealers, diplomats, breeders, veterinarians—animals were loaned, bought, or gifted, often transcending national borders. Focusing on the transactional, personal, and economic nature of these relationships, the paper highlights how artistic production was deeply embedded in broader logistical and extractive infrastructures. It argues for an expanded art history attentive to global circuits of material acquisition and the role of non-human models.

In the light of Batoni's studio: Artistic networks and the circulation of drawing practices between Rome and German art academies

Marlen Schneider (maître de conférences, Université Grenoble Alpes/LARHRA)

This paper retraces the dissemination of new drawing practices during the second half of the eighteenth century, discussing them in relation to artistic social networks and the history of technology, especially the technical innovations regarding lighting conditions. An important hub of international networks was the studio of Pompeo Batoni



in Rome, which will be highlighted regarding its pedagogical impact and the fostering of new artistic practices between Rome and the Holy Roman Empire. Building on the sociological concept of reciprocity, the paper will also question how Batoni benefitted from taking in foreign artists in order to strengthen his commercial network.

20:00-22:00: conference dinner (speakers only)

WEDNESDAY 1 OCTOBER 2025

9:30-10:00: registration, coffee & tea

10:00-10:15: introduction – Anne van Oosterwijk (director of Collection, Musea Brugge)

10:15-11:15: keynote lecture – Giovanna Ceserani (professor of Classics and faculty director of the Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis, Stanford University)

“Here in the proper center for gentlemen of [t]his profession”: Artists in eighteenth-century Rome

Rome has long been a major destination, first as the imperial capital in Roman times, then as the seat of the Holy See during the Christian centuries. In the eighteenth century, however, travel to the city increased exponentially, as tourists flocked there alongside a growing number of special-interest travelers, chief among them artists. These artists came to train amid unparalleled works of art, but they also found themselves participating in the multinational and multifaceted world of Grand Tour travel. How might digital tools offer new ways of exploring this thick web of relations through which artists' lives and careers were shaped and transformed, often with far-reaching consequences that extended well beyond their time in Rome?

11:15-12:45: session IV: from data to networks – chair: Eva Geudeker (curator of Fine Arts 1700-1900, RKD-Netherlands Institute for Art History)

Paris intimates: The role of connections for Dutch artists' success in the French capital 1774–1914

Mayken Jonkman (curator of nineteenth-century paintings, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam)

During the nineteenth century, many Dutch artists travelled to Paris in pursuit of a successful career. Success is defined by the positive reaction given by people to artists and their art. To realize such a response, artists and their work had to be visible: they had to relate to their audience to determine their position within the art world. Artists were thus connected to those from whom they hoped to receive a positive opinion. In this paper, I discuss which role connections played in artists' success abroad. I aim to demonstrate that certain patterns recur time and again, that networking was an essential part of recognition, and that artists with a talent for sociability had a greater chance of success.

Networking over a bowl of onion soup: A data-driven perspective on the artist François-Joseph Navez in Rome

Fien Messens (PhD candidate, Ghent University and KBR-Royal Library of Belgium)

This presentation explores the artistic network of François-Joseph Navez (1787–1869) during his stay in Italy (1817–1822), through the lens of

his participation in the Société Cipollésienne—a close-knit circle of French-speaking artists rooted in the French academic tradition and humorously symbolized by the communal sharing of onion soup (cipolla). By combining epistolary sources with Social Network Analysis, we examine how Navez embedded himself in a transnational network that shaped his artistic development and career trajectory. While the group itself is known, our data-driven approach uncovers relational patterns, highlighting how Digital Humanities methods can enrich art historical research by offering a critical, quantified lens on social capital and artistic exchange.

For a map of artistic sociability inside the Museo di Roma: Nineteenth-century visiting experiences and networks
Carla Mazzarelli (professor, Università della Svizzera italiana), Gaetano Cascino (PhD candidate, Università della Svizzera italiana and Università Roma Tre) & Luca Piccoli (PhD candidate, Università della Svizzera italiana and Sapienza Università di Roma)

This paper, part of the research project [Visibility reclaimed](#), analyzes how social networks shaped access to Rome’s early public museums, between 1820 and 1870. Drawing on archival sources—such as visitor requests, access records, and guestbooks—it investigates how artists, often from abroad, navigated a complex system of recommendations, regulations, and institutional mediation, where personal and professional networks facilitated access to cultural spaces, and new forms of sociability and exchange proliferated. The investigation offers insights into the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion experienced by artists, revealing the interconnections between artistic mobility, career-building, and the institutions responsible for preserving the city’s cultural heritage.

12:45-14:15: lunch (speakers only)

14:15-15:15: session V: academies as anchor – chair: Anne van Oosterwijk (director of Collection, Musea Brugge)

National academies and artistic communities in Rome: The Portuguese pensioners of the 1820s–1830s
Gabriel Marques (PhD Candidate, Art History Institute, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa – FCSH)

At the dawn of the nineteenth century,

Rome maintained its status as the preferred destination for artists from across the Western world to pursue their education. This paper aims to shed light on the apprenticeship of a discreet group of Portuguese artists who studied in Rome during the 1820s and 1830s, and to situate them within the city’s broader network of national academies and artistic communities. It also highlights the trajectory of António Manuel da Fonseca (1796–1890), who, upon his return to Portugal, affirmed a “Roman” artistic identity in his rise to prominence as the country’s leading history painter.

A transnational network to ‘revive Flemish art’: Bruges and Rouen in the eighteenth century
Dominiek Dendooven (researcher and curator, Merghelynck Museum and Yper Museum)

Personal contacts, supported by a shared language and cultural background, were crucial to the mobility of artists. These social ties were often shaped by common ambitions. One such nationally inspired network, examined in this paper, was united by the goal of ‘reviving Flemish art’. It linked the cities of Bruges (Southern Netherlands, present-day Belgium) and Rouen (France) through Matthijs de Visch (1701–1765), director of the Bruges academy of art, Jean-Baptiste Descamps (1714–1791), his counterpart in Rouen and a well published art historian, and their mutual pupil, Jean-François Legillon (1739–1797).

15:15-15:45: coffee break

15:45-16:45: session VI: collaboration across borders – chair: Evelien De Wilde (curator of Prints and Drawings, Musea Brugge)

The power of the print: International etching societies during the fin-de-siècle
Nina Reid (PhD candidate, Radboud University)

This paper explores the transnational networks formed by etching societies in the late nineteenth century, focusing on the Royal Society for Painter-Etchers (London), the New York Etching Club, and Amsterdam’s Etching Club of Holland. It examines how these societies fostered the exchange of styles, ideologies, and commercial strategies, facilitating broader recognition for their members. Through international exhibitions, publications, and cross-cultural collaboration, artists expanded their influence across Europe and the United

States. Drawing from archival materials such as artists’ letters, exhibition catalogues, and critical texts, this research reveals the role of these networks in shaping the global reputation of etching during the fin-de-siècle.

Russian artists’ exhibition activities in Helsinki, 1890–1911: Organization, artistic exchange, and transnational connections
Iliana Mejias-Ojajärvi (PhD candidate, University of Helsinki)

This paper explores early Russian art exhibitions in Helsinki (1893–1911) through archival research, highlighting key organizational practices and artistic exchanges, as well as the social networks that enabled them. Bernd Otto Schauman’s correspondence from the 1880s already reveals Finnish–Russian collaboration, while deepening transnational connections play out in exhibitions such as the Russian Watercolourists’ shows (1893, 1895) and Albert Benois’ 1911 solo exhibition. Letters between Benois and others provide crucial insights into the underlying processes. These findings challenge traditional narratives by demonstrating that cross-border artistic networks shaped Helsinki’s exhibition culture well before Sergei Diaghilev’s arrival on the scene.

16:45-17:45: closing keynote lecture – Giovanna Capitelli (professor, Università Roma Tre)

Transnational sources for studying the cosmopolitan art world of early nineteenth-century Rome

Historiography confirms that early nineteenth-century Rome retained its role as a capital of the arts and an academy of the world, though impacted by shifting European politics. The city was a meeting place for a cosmopolitan artistic population, where diverse traditions intersected. Yet writing this history is no easy task. The Roman art world was fluid, made up of a multitude of institutional and social presences—ranging from academies and ateliers to art dealers and cultured travelers. How can these be woven into a coherent, transnational narrative? This contribution will attempt to do so, while also reflecting on the broader insights raised throughout the conference.

17:45-17:50: final words

18:00-20:00: reception

CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION
This conference is organized by Musea Brugge (the Museums of Bruges, Belgium) in collaboration with Academia Belgica, as part of the [Apprentice-Master II](#) project, financed by the Flemish Government. The project aims to enhance research on international trajectories and social networks of Bruges artists from 1757 onwards, further contributing to Musea Brugge’s focus on the long nineteenth century as a central collection pillar. The newly established research center BRON embodies Musea Brugge’s commitment to innovative scholarship.

Scientific committee: Thijs Dekeukeleire (Musea Brugge), Evelien De Wilde (Musea Brugge), Christine Dupont (House of European History), Eva Geudeker (RKD-Netherlands Institute for Art History), Fien Messens (Ghent University and KBR-Royal Library of Belgium), France Nerlich (Musée d’Orsay), Laura Overpelt (KNIR-Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome and Utrecht University), Asker Pelgrom (Nationaal Centrum voor de Nederlandse Buitenplaatscultuur), Veerle Thielemans (Institut national d’histoire de l’art), Laurence Van Kerckhoven (Musea Brugge), Anne Van Oosterwijk (Musea Brugge)

PRACTICALITIES
Location: Academia Belgica ([academiabelgica.it](#) – Via Omero 8, 00197 Rome, Italy) is located in central Rome, on the edge of Villa Borghese Park. It is approximately a 10-minute walk from Flaminio metro station and Piazza del Popolo.
Accessibility: The venue is accessible. If you have reduced mobility or use a wheelchair, we kindly ask you to get in touch with us beforehand so we can assist you as needed.
Catering: Coffee, tea and water will be available for all participants during scheduled breaks. Please note that lunch is provided exclusively for speakers and conference organizers.
Registration: The conference is free of charge, but registration is required [via the conference website](#) by Saturday 20 September 2025.
Contact: for more info: e-mail Marie Vandeghinste at [marie.vandeghinste@brugge.be](#).

[musea Brugge.be](#)

