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The Key to all Arts

**Master Drawings | 14.02-18.08 - ARENTSHUIS
from the Bruges Print Room | DIJVER 16, BRUGES, BE**

THE KEY TO ALL ARTS

MASTERS DRAWINGS FROM THE BRUGES PRINT ROOM

FROM 14 FEBRUARY UNTIL 18 AUGUST 2019 / COLLECTION PRESENTATION / ARENTSHUIS

Intro

Almost every type of art is preceded by a preliminary drawing: from paintings, wall and ceiling frescos, sculpture, engravings and prints to stained glass windows and gold and silverware. As a result, these drawings display a great richness of different techniques, formats, functions, styles and subjects. The completed works of art they depict are sometimes not known or have not always survived. But for the careful viewer a drawing can reveal a veritable treasure trove of information.

These preliminary designs bear witness to the creative process of the artist concerned. They show the search for inspiration and the technical preparations from the first collection of ideas and motifs to the outlining of the final design at full size.

The Print Cabinet of Musea Brugge has been the repository for many years of the old master drawings of, amongst others, Frans Floris, Roelandt Savery, Ambrosius Francken, Govert Flinck, Jan van Mieris, Federico Zuccaro, Jacques Callot and Pierre Mignard. These fragile works need to be protected against UV light and cannot normally be viewed. However, from 14 February 2019, they will be exceptionally on display in a unique exhibition in the Arentshuis.

Until now, this less well-known collection of Bruges drawings has largely been overlooked by art-historical research. A forthcoming scientific publication will shine new light on fifty of the most fascinating 16th to early 18th century European drawings. It is to mark this scientific publication that the public will now be given an intimate glimpse of these works of art.

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Alexandre Ubeleski, Bacchante Playing the Tambourine

Reasons for the presentation of the collection

From 14 February to 18 August, the Arentshuis will be exhibiting drawings from the Print Room of Musea Brugge. This exhibition is based on a selection of fifty of the most remarkable 16th to early 18th century European drawings from the Room's rich collection. Most of the works on display are sheets crafted by noteworthy artists from the Low Countries, although a number of Italian, French and German masters are also represented. Each drawing is important in its own right, even if until now the majority have remained largely unknown to the broad general public.

The impulse for organizing this exhibition is the publication of the new academic catalogue 'European Old Master Drawings from the Bruges Print Room' (Lannoo, 2019), edited by Virginie D'haene (Deputy Curator at the Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp and a former colleague at the Bruges Print Room) and coordinated by Vanessa Paumen (coordinator of the Flemish Research Centre for the Art of the Burgundian Netherlands at MuseaBrugge). This book will be officially presented to the public in March 2019 during an introductory lecture given by Virginie D'haene.

This new academic catalogue is appearing exactly thirty-five years after the publication of the first ever catalogue of the Bruges drawing collection. In 1984, Carl Van de Velde (†2018) completed a full inventory of the entire collection held by the Print Room of Musea Brugge, totalling some three thousand individual sheets. Until recently, this catalogue, with its concise but accurate and meticulous descriptions, was still the standard work of reference for the collection. However, additional research in recent years has provided many new insights into the city's repository of old master drawings. For example, fifteen of the drawings have been given new attributions, while the iconographic puzzles of many others have now been solved or further clarified. In some cases, it has even been possible to tentatively formulate new iconographic interpretations. Similarly, for many drawings we now have a better appreciation of their possible function and the context in which they were first created. By updating the current state of artistic knowledge about the

Bruges collection, this new catalogue - an initiative of the Flemish Research Centre for the Art of the Burgundian Netherlands - makes an important contribution to our understanding of 16th to early 18th century draughtsmen and their drawing practices.

Collection

The drawing collection of the Bruges Print Room is a relatively small collection but a highly diverse one in terms of the different schools, techniques and functions it contains. Although there are drawings by several famous names, like Jacques Callot, Frans Floris or Govaert Flinck, one of the most important aspects of the collection - and perhaps its main strength - is the number of rare pieces by less well-known artists, such as Jan van Mieris, Johan van Lintelo, Theodoor van Thulden or Lodewijk de Deyster. Moreover, and notwithstanding its limited scale, the collection's varied amalgamation of techniques, formats, functions and styles, together with the wide range of objects depicted, allows it to illustrate in a highly informative manner the versatile use of the medium of drawing in the art of the 16th to early 18th century.

With the exception of just five sheets, all the old master drawings in the collection are part of the bequest made by John Steinmetz in 1864. The remaining five drawings are the results of the acquisition policy followed by the Print Room in recent years. For the very first time, this exhibition focuses the spotlight on the highlights of the collection, whilst at the same time underlining the role of draughtsmanship as the key to all other forms of art, with drawing as an essential initial component in the creative processes that leads to every type of artistic production. The exhibits on display include drawings in pen, pencil, red or black chalks on plain, blue or primed paper for paintings, altar pieces, frescos, ceiling decoration and miniatures. There are also design pieces for all kinds of graphic arts: prints from allegorical or religious series, book illustrations, votive and 'in memoriam' cards, as well as other graphic applications, often involving a widely differing

range of graphic techniques. Similarly, there are designs for stained glass windows and for silver and goldware. Last but not least, there are a limited number of drawings which suggest that they were not preparatory pieces for some other work of art, but were intended to stand as works of art in their own right. At the same time, a number of workshop drawings and copies that were clearly preparatory have also been selected for inclusion, not only because they offer fascinating insights into the workshop practices of the artists of the 16th to early 18th century, but also provide us with a glimpse of finished works of art that no longer exist today.

Drawing as ‘the key to all art’: testimonies to the creative process of the artist

The works in the exhibition and the catalogue illustrate the artist’s search for perfection, from the first setting down of ideas and motifs, through the preparation of various compositional studies, to (in some cases) the drawing of a final design to serve as a guide for the completion of the actual work of art. In contrast to the catalogue, in which the drawings are presented in chronological order, the drawings in the exhibition are grouped together according to what was most probably their intended purpose. In this way, it is possible to highlight the different functions of drawings in the creative process of the artist.

Figure studies and copies

By making drawings, artists were able to develop what was effectively a kind of visual databank of images, whilst at the same time practicing their manual dexterity and other skills. They collected various motifs and ideas by drawing from life, setting up their easels close to markets and other places of work, where they sketched the everyday scenes and objects they saw.

Often, they also copied motifs and ideas from other works of art. Sadly, in many cases the original works of art to which these drawings relate have been lost or cannot (yet) be identified. As such, the drawings offer a glimpse of works of art that are unknown to us today.

Compositional studies as preparation for prints, paintings and applied art

Most of the drawings in the exhibition are compositional studies for the implementation of various works of art. These drawings range from first brief sketches to fully developed compositional designs (‘modelli’), some of which are full size.

For large works of art, such as stained glass windows and tapestries, it was common for a ‘cartoon’ to be made. This was a final, full-scale design drawing that served as a pattern or guide for the completion of the actual work. These cartoons could sometimes assume large proportions. A good indication of this is the drawing of the ‘Head of a shepherd (?). The relatively large scale of this piece, the drawing style and the attached sheet of paper all point to it being a fragment of a ‘cartoon’ for a stained glass window. Recent research has allowed this previously unattributed drawing to be identified as the work of Theodoor van Thulden (1606 – 1669), a painter and designer of prints and stained glass, including at least four of the monumental windows in the St. Michael and St. Gudula Cathedral in Brussels. The sheet in the exhibition shows that Van Thulden designed stained glass windows more frequently than was previously assumed.

Independent drawings

The exhibition also contains a number of drawings that were intended to be works of art in their own right; the so-called ‘presentation drawings’. Antonie Crussens drew his ‘Landscape’ on costly ‘vellum’ (a kind of parchment). Using pen and ink, he imitated the engraving style of prints, so that he could create, as it were, more luxurious, hand-drawn and unique editions of this popular art form.

This exhibition in the intimate surroundings of the two rooms of the Arentshuis offers a unique opportunity to admire and appreciate the creative process of artists from the 16th to the early 18th century. The drawings will be on display for a period of six months, following which they will be returned to the Print Room of Musea Brugge for a number of years of rest away from the light.

PUBLICATION

European Old Master Drawings from the Bruges Print Room (EN)

Edited by Virginie D'haene

Lay-out Leen Depoorter

Lannoo Uitgeverij, 2019

Hardcover, 256 pages

Price: € 55

Available at the museumshop.



HR IMAGES

Images to promote this exhibition/museum can be downloaded via the following link
<https://brugge.mediahaven.com/index.php/collection>.

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1. Pierre Mignard, Study of Apollo or John the Baptist © Lukas - Art in Flanders, photo Dominique Provost
2. Jacob de Gheyn II, Study of a Girl in a Fantasy Costume, © Lukas - Art in Flanders, photo Dominique Provost
3. Pieter van Sychem, Design for the Shield of the Brewers' Guild , © Lukas - Art in Flanders, photo Dominique Provost
4. Alexandre Ubeleski, Bacchante Playing the Tambourine, © Lukas - Art in Flanders, photo Dominique Provost
5. Giovanni Battista Trotti, David, © Lukas - Art in Flanders, photo Hugo Maertens
6. Pieter de Jode I, The Sacrifice of Isaac, © Lukas - Art in Flanders, photo Hugo Maertens
7. Theodoor van Thulden, Head of a Shepherd, © Lukas - Art in Flanders, photo Hugo Maertens
8. Jan Wandelaar, Design for a Title Vignette for a Collection of Wedding Poems © Lukas - Art in Flanders, photo Dominique Provost
9. Ambrosius Francken I, The Power of the King, © Lukas - Art in Flanders, foto Dominique Provost

AFTERGLOW

Since recently, Musea Brugge has been keeping its doors open after the normal closing time on the third Thursday of each month, and this between the hours of 17.00 and 21.00. This extended opening is always at a different location and the programme includes special activities, guided tours and workshops.

The evening opening of **21 February** takes place at the Arentshuis, and is dedicated to this exhibition.



Practical info

Visitors pay the reduction rate, i.e. 5 euro instead of 6. Children -18 years old: free access.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION EXHIBITION

Title	The key to all arts. Masters drawings from the Bruges print room
Location	Arentshuis, Dijver 16, 8000 Bruges
Dates	from 14 Februay until 18 August 2019
Opening hours	from Tuesday to Sunday from 9.30 to 17 hrs.
Tickets	€ 6 (26-64 y.) € 5 (>65 y. & 18-25 u.) [incl. permanent Brangwyn collection] free entrance -18 years old and Bruges inhabitants
Publication	'European Old Master Drawings from the Bruges Print Room' (EN), €55
Info	www.museabrugge.be

MORE INFO

All arrangements can be made via sarah.bauwens@brugge.be or on +32 50 44 87 08. Press visits to the exhibition are possible with an appointment: see under the heading 'pers' (press) on the website www.museabrugge.be. The press file can also be consulted online and texts can be transcribed, again via www.museabrugge.be, under the heading 'press'.

REQUEST

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You can also send the files digitally (stating ftp or url) to sarah.bauwens@brugge.be. We thank you for your cooperation and interest.



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