

The Brukenthal Museum Sibiu: an update

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The Brukenthal Museum has a long and eventful history. In 2001 I had the privilege of introducing the Brukenthal collection to CODART VIER participants in Cologne. The following study trip to Romania familiarized many of you with its actual contents. *Courant 7* (December 2003) included another brief presentation of the historical and political background that led to the nationalization of the museum in the early days of the postwar period. Now, another major change is about to affect the status of the Brukenthal Museum. On 28 December 2005, an agreement was signed by the Ministry of Culture and the Bishop of the Lutheran Church with regard to the restitution of the Brukenthal Museum to its owner, the Evangelical Church of Sibiu. The core of the European art collections, including the ca. 450 Dutch and Flemish paintings, as well as the prints, is to be handed over. Other collections registered after 1948 will remain the property of the state. This will not change the status of the museum as a public institution: the Brukenthal Museum will continue to function under the same name, funded by the state, only its management will involve representatives of both parties to the agreement. This is a new development in the life of Romanian museums and we are going to experience it really soon. Due to this situation, some of the curatorial projects are on a "waiting list", until appropriate mechanisms are in place and the new board of management has taken charge of all the operations.

In 2007, Sibiu will share with Luxembourg the status of European Capital of Culture. Many cultural events are planned throughout all of next year. Unfortunately, the ownership transfer agreement and its implications left little if any chance for closer cooperation with our European partners. Therefore, we focused our projects mainly on the collections of the Brukenthal Museum. A new display in the European art gallery will highlight the gems of the collection in a fresh context. This will feature for the first time since 1948 the paintings of Jan van Eyck, Brueghel, Jordaens, Teniers and Wouwermans, which are to be returned by the National Museum of Art in Bucharest. A catalogue of the paintings on display and a virtual reconstruction of the 18th-century gallery are now a work in progress. However, this represents only the start as far as the cataloguing of the entire collection of the Dutch and Flemish paintings is concerned. It would be a major step forward if the project first launched on the CODART website by Pieter van den Brink, and successfully continued by Wietske Donkersloot, were to be put in motion, with the support of CODART members. The interactive catalogue of the Brukenthal collection of 16th- to 18th-century Dutch and Flemish pictures will include the 1909 edition of the catalogue, with digital images. Comments, questions and additions by those interested would be most welcome. This catalogue could be linked with the database started by the Instituut Collectie Nederland, the conservation studio of the Mauritshuis and the ICOM Committee for Conservation.

The team of curators of Dutch and Flemish art at the Brukenthal Museum is very grateful for the continuing support of the CODART board and members. I would like to take this opportunity to make a plea to you to contribute to this important CODART initiative: your ongoing commitment and enthusiastic help would make the long-awaited catalogue of the Brukenthal collection possible.

The friendly CODART network has facilitated not only professional contacts, but also important book donations, so necessary for our research. We are very grateful to the RKD in The Hague, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and to our colleagues from Munich, Braunschweig, and Brussels for their generous gifts. Another, more unusual result came in the form of a major unrestricted donation of 16th- and 17th-century Dutch and Flemish prints made by the CODART associate member Jan de Maere to the Brukenthal Museum. At the end of 2005, 142 prints were registered and these are now being researched and processed. They include series of prints by Lucas van Leyden, Phillips Galle, Crijspin and Simon de Passe, Cornelis Galle I, Schelte Adams à Bolswert, Pieter van Sompelen, Paul Pontius, Alexander Voet, Jan and Casper Luyken and the German “Little Masters” Georg Pencz, Hans Sebald Beham and Heinrich Aldegrever.

At the end of his Haarlem period, Phillips Galle (1537-1612) engraved a series of prints illustrating the Acts of the Apostles. The prints were based on the drawings made by Maarten van Heemskerck shortly before his death; these are signed and dated 1571 to 1573 (fig. 1a-b). First published in 1575, the series was completed by Ph. Galle and his workshop, with new prints and a title page, after the drawings provided by Johannes van der Straet, published in Antwerp in 1582 (fig. 2a-b). The donation comprises 18 sheets out of the 34 of this series; they are copies after the third state published in the 17th century by Joannes Galle (1600-76). Whether this is a fourth state or a copy not mentioned in the literature is a matter for further research. A large demand for mannerist engravings prompted publishers to reissue many of the late 16th-century plates, right into modern times.

Another donation was a series of 47 prints of illustrations for Virgil's *Georgics*, by an unknown 17th-century artist from the Low Countries. I have identified the masters: the Dutch printmaker Crispijn de Passe (1565-1637) for most of the plates, and his son Simon (ca. 1595-1647). The latter signed three of the donated plates in monogram, and they seem to be among his earliest known works, engraved at the age of 17. The series engraved by De Passe are illustrations of the selected works of Virgil (fig. 3), published in 1612, the first great undertaking of Crispijn de Passe after he left Cologne and settled in Utrecht. They include the title page of *Compendium Operum Virgilianorum*, five illustrations of the *Eclogues* (fig. 4a-b) and four of the *Georgics* (fig. 5a-b), printed by Herman van Borculo, with verses by Aernout van Buchell, and sold by Jan Janszoon in Arnhem. Then there are thirteen plates of Virgil's *Aeneid*, published by Jan Janszoon in the same year of 1612 (fig. 6a-b). Another series of prints engraved by De Passe are 24 illustrations of Homer's *Iliad*, published in 1613 (fig. 7a-b). All these prints are currently being studied in order to establish the states, and they will be presented in future thematic exhibitions, along with paintings, books and prints from our collection. We are interested in a partnership with other museums. It would be a great satisfaction if we could complete the series and bring the drawings and related paintings to the attention of the public.

I have saved the most intriguing piece in the donation for the end. This is a *Christ carrying the cross*, by Lucas van Leyden (1494-1533), signed with monogram and dated 1521 (fig. 8). Whether this is a modern impression of the reworked plate, a deceptive copy of Jan Harmensz Muller (1571-1628) or a state of the original plate is still to be decided. So please do not hesitate to comment – all opinions are most warmly welcomed by yours truly!

I would not end my brief presentation without expressing once more the gratitude of the Brukenthal Museum and its curators to Jan De Maere for the generous donation and to CODART for its role in generating this donation and for being a framework that enables research and cooperation.

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