

Changing Sides -

The backs of paintings and their secrets

(Seitenwechsel. Gemälderückseiten und ihre Geheimnisse)

August 12, 2006 – January 14, 2007

Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum Aachen, Germany

The common relationship between a painting and its beholder is usually a face-to-face one.

The exhibition „Changing Sides“ departs from this traditional position of viewer and painting: in this exhibition the backs of paintings will be in the centre of interest, instead of their fronts.

The material aspects of paintings, that often provide the most diverse information, are the starting point of this show. In this view, a painting is not only perceived as a flat (two-dimensional) ‚picture‘, but also as a three-dimensional, historical object, and as an important source of information concerning its own making and history.

Seals, marks and paper labels are some of the examples of the ‘secrets’ that are revealed on the backs of paintings that museum visitors normally do not get to see. They can provide information about the maker, a painting’s provenance and its history, and give insight into material aspects as well as to historical and more recent measures that were taken in the conservation of the painting.

The exhibition will feature about 30 works that are all from the broad and rich collection of paintings of the Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum itself. Interesting „backs“ of well-known paintings, that include examples by artists like Cornelis Engebrechtsz, Anthony Van Dyck, Adriaen Brouwer, Lucas Cranach and Lovis Corinth, as well as exciting reverses from lesser known paintings from the museum’s storage will for the first time be presented to the public in an unusual way.