

***“Thank you for your message. The curator in question is not available for further research.”***

Micha Leeflang, curator of Medieval Art, Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht

The hefty cutbacks recently imposed by the Dutch state have brought even more pressure to bear on museum directors who must decide whether to allocate funds for scholarly research on the museum's own collection or to use their resources to mount temporary exhibitions. The large majority of visitors to the Museum Catharijneconvent come to see the temporary exhibitions; a negligible number – apart from classes of school children – come to view the permanent collection.

The three curators and two educators employed by the museum thus work mainly from exhibition to exhibition. As outlined in our policy plan, Museum Catharijneconvent mounts three large exhibitions a year in order to attract the desired number of visitors. Naturally the quality of the exhibitions is not allowed to suffer from this busy schedule, but how is success to be achieved? Collaboration with external partners – including universities, other museums and guest curators – is indispensable in this regard, but does any of this help the museum-based curators to pursue research into their own collection?

To avoid losing sight of our own holdings, it stands to reason that the subjects of our temporary exhibitions are closely related to our core collection. Scholarly research into our collection is part and parcel of the preparations for new exhibitions (and the catalogues published to accompany them), and is largely dependent on time and money. One-third of the objects shown at the last exhibition – *Surviving the Iconoclasm, Medieval sculpture from Utrecht, 1430-1530* (2012-2013) – came from our own collection, some from the permanent display and some from the depot. These sculptures have now been studied from a new perspective, yielding fresh insights. The discovery of new aspects and perceptions does not end on the opening day of the exhibition, however, since such shows often generate ideas for new research projects. Unfortunately, though, the curator in question is already immersed in preparations for a new exhibition on a completely different subject.

#### *About Micha Leeflang*

Micha Leeflang received her Ph.D. from the University of Groningen in 2007. Her dissertation, titled *Uytnemende Schilder van Antwerpen*, deals with the studio, production and working methods of the Antwerp painter Joos van Cleve (c. 1480-1540/41). Since 2007 she has served as curator of medieval art at Museum Catharijneconvent Utrecht, where she is responsible for the collection of manuscripts, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century paintings, sculpture and liturgical textiles. Among other exhibitions, she organized *Masterly Manuscripts, The Middle Ages in Gold and Ink* (2009); *Surviving the Iconoclasm, Medieval sculpture from Utrecht, 1430-1530* (2012-2013); and, as guest curator, *Joos van Cleve, Leonardo des Nordens* at the Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum, Aachen (2011).

*Micha Leeflang has been a member of CODART since 2007.*