

# historians of netherlandish art

*Dedicated to the Study of Netherlandish, German and Franco-Flemish Art and Architecture*

## *Baltimore/Washington 2006*

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## **From Icon to Art in the Netherlands**

Baltimore/Washington, November 8-12, 2006

### **Workshop Descriptions**

#### **The Pleasures and Treasures of the Archives: A Session in Honor of John Michael Montias**

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Casting a wider net than his eminent predecessors, over the last twenty-five years, Michael Montias transformed for our field the way archival data has been interpreted. His model encouraged following generations of scholars, in several disciplines, to locate works of art in the larger context of both production and collection. In the process, we have a greater intimate knowledge not only of Vermeer, the shifting market for art training and consumption in Delft, but also collecting communities in Amsterdam, and models for analyzing fluctuations in this data in broad perspective. This workshop will address the variety of materials available in specific archives, discuss past interpretive models, and then brainstorm about alternative models that might be used in the future, in order to enlarge our understanding along the full range of this spectrum, from details of the personal life of an artist, patron, or guild to analysis of larger aggregations of data - not only in Montias' chosen areas, but also earlier and later periods and in other regions also studied by HNA membership. Participants are encouraged to suggest articles that might serve as the basis of a reading list, as well as a 250-word summary of your own archival research that might be presented in 5 minutes or less as the basis for discussion of interpretive models by the group.

#### **The Rise of Old Testament Themes in Sixteenth-Century Netherlandish Art**

Dagmar Eichberger, University of Heidelberg, in collaboration with Ariane Mensger, research fellow, Heidelberg

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Netherlandish art of the fifteenth century is characterized by a strong preference for New Testament scenes, focusing predominantly on Christ, the Virgin

Mary and popular saints. In the early sixteenth century, themes from the Old Testament become increasingly important in prints, paintings and tapestries. New ideas and combinations are explored by artists such as Hieronymus Bosch, Lucas van Leyden, Bernard van Orley, Pieter Coecke van Aelst, and Pieter Bruegel. This workshop will investigate factors that contributed to this shift in focus both in the southern and northern Netherlands, concentrating on the different contexts in which Old Testament themes occur: typology in books and paintings; triptychs and/or altarpieces; printed and illustrated editions of the bible; positive images of Old Testament heroines (Judith, Esther, Susanna, etc.); narrative cycles of Old Testament heroes (Gideon, David, Joseph, etc.); human and natural catastrophes (the deluge, the tower of Babel, etc.); the ambivalent nature of gender relations (Susanna and the Elders etc.); and sensuous images for private consumption.

The organizers invite specific suggestions for topics and/or readings which can be used as the basis for the group discussion.

#### **Rembrandt and Technical Studies**

E. Melanie Gifford, National Gallery of Art,  
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An important aspect of the three-hundredth anniversary of Rembrandt's death in 1669 was a new focus on the technical study of Rembrandt's paintings. Scientific research was essential to the working method of the Rembrandt Research Project, initiated the year before, and in 1969 the RRP and the Central Research Laboratory for Art and Science organized a symposium that brought together the comparatively small number of researchers who had applied techniques such as x-radiography and paint analysis to the paintings of Rembrandt. Technical studies have increased exponentially since 1969, but no artist has been the object of more concerted attention than Rembrandt. Significant new publications for 2006 include Volume IV of the *Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings* and a revised and expanded edition of *Art in the Making: Rembrandt* by The National Gallery, London.

The four-hundredth anniversary of Rembrandt's birth in 2006 offers the opportunity to consider Rembrandt scholarship since 1969. How have technical studies contributed to changes in our perception of Rembrandt and his paintings over the past 37 years? Have our expectations of technical studies changed? Has the fact that technical studies frequently call for collaborative research had an impact on scholarship? Where does Rembrandt scholarship go from here, and how should technical studies contribute?

**Up for Negotiation? The Role of Artist and Sitter in Portraiture**

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Any work of art is potentially a matter of negotiation between artist and sitter, but portraiture more than any genre brings both parties together, from commission to completion. This interaction involves cooperation, and sometimes even tension, over the final outcome. The relationship between artist and sitter is, therefore, crucial to the resulting image. Yet reconstructing the process that engendered a portrait in the past is practically impossible, because discussions about the development of a work are never fully recorded.

This workshop seeks to ask the unanswerable, but fundamental, question about portraiture: how can we address the respective roles of sitter and artist in the formulation of a portrait? Are there any patterns to be discerned or is every portrait necessarily the result of a unique dialogue? How did an artist respond to various types of patrons? Participants will be asked to prepare an example that might shed light on the negotiations that engendered a portrait (or portraits), such as an anecdote from contemporary literature, documentation of a commission, a discovery made through technical examinations, a concrete example of the intervention of artist or patron in the final outcome, etc.

**Iconoclasm's Netherlandish Image**

Christopher Heuer, Columbia University, and Angela Vanhaelen, McGill University  
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Those who seek in scholarship nothing more than an honoured occupation with which to beguile the tedium of idleness I would compare to those who pass their lives looking at paintings.

John Calvin, 1540

The Protestant Reformation prompted sweeping reassessments of the visual arts in the Netherlands. Iconoclasm, among the most lurid of responses to an artwork, was therefore bound up not just with real (or incited) hostility to divine images, but with political motives, class conflict, even civic unrest. From the destruction of images in Antwerp and elsewhere arose new forms and genres of painting, along with new ways of selling, displaying, and describing art. This workshop attends to these practices and their history in Dutch and Flemish visual culture. With the aid of assigned readings and a few short presentations, we will discuss the changed status of the image in the sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries, its sites and audiences in the wake of iconoclastic battles. The focus of the workshop will be on relations between the mistrust, hostility towards, or outright destruction of images and their forceful persistence, and between broken images and the new genres, forms and practices that arose in their place. A key consideration will be how Netherlandish art history, as much as Netherlandish art, was (and we maintain, still is) affected by iconoclasm.

### **Painting and the Aesthetic Conditions of the Early Modern Collection**

Elizabeth Honig, University of California at Berkeley  
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In this workshop we will discuss, describe, and theorize the nature of the visual experience solicited by the early modern collection and its space of display. We will further consider how paintings fit into that visual experience, and how (or whether) the aesthetic of certain Netherlandish painting could have responded to the demands of the eye accustomed to such viewing. Participants will be asked to read in advance several short texts: Brian O'Doherty's analysis of modernist painting and the museum space (as a paradigm for our investigation) and then essays by Bann, Stewart, and Wood that seem suggestive about the aesthetic nature of the [early modern] collection and the gaze it fostered. Proposals for short (10-minute) presentations are welcome but no more than one will be accepted so that the discussion format of the workshop can be maintained. This workshop will be held in the "Chamber of Wonders" at the Walters Art Gallery.

### **Master and Pupil: Transmission and Transformations**

Vida J. Hull, East Tennessee State University  
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This workshop will examine any aspect of the complex relationship between master and pupil in Netherlandish art, such as guild regulations and training, influence and dependency in the art, or the process of developing independence and artistic autonomy. This includes investigations of workshop practices and the emergence of artistic education from workshop to studio practice as guild-dominated instruction wanes. Studies of the relationships between specific artists, including anonymous and minor artists, are encouraged.

This workshop will be a collaborative effort among the participants. I invite participants to send me a short description of their research on the theme of "Master and Pupil" and their suggestions for articles indicative of the various methodologies used to investigate this topic. I would like to have short (5 minute)

presentations from some of the participants, representative of different methodologies or new research, followed by discussion or other activities suggested by presenters.

### **Mythological Imagery in the Netherlands 1500-1600**

Ethan Matt Kavalier, University of Toronto

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Mythological imagery enjoyed considerable status in Netherlandish culture of the sixteenth century, as in other European lands. Paintings of mythological subjects were early collectables, destined for the living room or cabinet rather than the chapel. From the courtly owners of Gossaert's early Ovidian panels, to the bourgeois patronage of Frans Floris and Marten van Heemskerck, to the international vogue for the creations of Hendrik Goltzius and Karel van Mander, such pictures continued to attract a select and significant public. Prints appreciably widened the audience for these themes. Central to much of this imagery was its erotic appeal, its presentation of the female body as an object of desire and a term of reference in Renaissance aesthetics. Mythological subjects lent themselves famously to solemn humanist allegory, but no less to humorous and ironic treatment at the hands of painters and printmakers. In this session, we explore the evolution and reception of this enterprise in the context of artistic and literary traditions cultivated in cosmopolitan Antwerp, Haarlem, and other centers of the Low Countries

### **Down to Earth: The Representation of Labor in Late Medieval and Early Modern Netherlandish Art**

Alison McNeil Kettering, Carleton College, and

Annette de Vries, University of Groningen

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Images of human labor can be found throughout late medieval and early modern European art. In spite of their secular subject matter and life-like appearance, many of these images long functioned as icons of cosmic order. But while medieval pictorial traditions cast a long shadow into early modern times, the representation of labor changed considerably as European societies grew more economically and religiously complex. Images of work proliferated especially in the Low Countries as economic growth encouraged a shift from rural to urban subject matter. Whether late medieval or early modern, icon or art, these images reveal as much about societal attitudes and concerns pertaining to class, gender, technology, socio-economic conditions, and forces of change as about contemporary perceptions of human labor. Many of these images construct meanings well beyond the topic of labor itself. This workshop aims to stimulate

the discussion of the representation of labor from a variety of angles -- religious, social, anthropological, professional (including the practice of art as labor). Participants are invited to submit a proposal for a 3-5 minute presentation which focuses on a specific work (or type) of art related to the topic.

### **"Scripture for the Eyes": Bible Prints as History and Exegesis**

Walter S. Melion, Emory University  
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The Netherlands was one of the chief centers for the production of illustrated bibles and biblical print series that adhered to the literal text of scripture, purporting to describe historical places, people, and events as they originally appeared. Shorn of allegorical commentary, such imagery corresponds to the philological method of biblicists such as Erasmus, who called upon scholars to rediscover the true word of Christ by directly consulting scriptural sources (*de verbo ad verbum*), rather than relying on exegetical tradition and the fourfold method of figurative interpretation (*sensum de sensu exprimere*). Benito Arias Montano's *Biblia Regia*, for example, consists of parallel translations of the bible -Latin, Greek, Syriac, and Aramaic -in six volumes, accompanied by a scholarly apparatus illustrated with maps of ancient Israel, Chanaan, and Jerusalem, detailed panoramic views of the tabernacle precinct amidst the twelve tribes, architectural plans and elevations of the Solomonic temple, and a costume study of the high priest's liturgical vestments. However, prints could also serve as exegetical instruments. Issued singly or in series, inscribed or without text, or bound as illustrations within biblical excerpts and paraphrases, they gloss scriptural events by depicting them in distinctive ways that inflect our sense of scripture. In Arias Montano's *Humanae salutis monumenta*, a pioneering scriptural emblem book, biblical events are gathered into a doctrinal statement on the mystery of human salvation, understood in historical images that also prompt various kinds and degrees of devotion, both meditative and contemplative. This workshop uses the resources of the bible collection at Johns Hopkins' Garrett Library, along with pertinent materials in Special Collections (including the rare illuminated copy of Arias Montano's *Monumenta*), to examine the form, function, and meaning of northern prints that either focus attention on the bible as an evidentiary source of historical truth, or provide an hermeneutic lens through which the bible can be interpreted and its meaning experienced in affective terms. To encourage discussion, a list of suggested readings will be circulated to the registered participants.

### **Idols and Art from Beyond Europe**

Dawn Odell, Department of Art and Art History,  
Virginia Tech  
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This workshop will consider the movement from icon to art in the Netherlands through the lens of Europe's increasing knowledge about non-Christian religions in the early modern period. Did contact with the cultures of Asia, Africa and America provide evidence to support changing Netherlandish conceptions of religious practice, the propriety of uniting visual images with divinity, and definitions of idolatry? Do European beliefs in a hierarchy of civilizations and theories about the role of art (or the presumed lack of it) in non-European cultures support or subvert Netherlandish conventions of how (and whether) gods should be visualized? The workshop welcomes discussion of diverse approaches to these questions, including analysis of the trade in religious art between European and non-European cultures, the representation of non-Christian gods and religious practices in Netherlandish printed texts and other visual materials, the activities of missionaries and the role art plays in promoting their conversions goals, the collection of religious objects as artifacts rather than art, and theoretical divisions between text and visual representation as a means of picturing divinity. Participants will receive a short reading list and proposals for brief presentations on current research are encouraged.

### **From Objects to Ideas: Material Culture in Art and Science**

Pamela Smith, Columbia University  
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How can historians move from physical objects and material culture to the realm of intellectual history? How can the history of material and intellectual culture be combined effectively? Because much attention has focused recently on drawings and prints as objects rather than simply bearers of content and iconography, Claudia Swan (Art History, Northwestern University) will consider the case study of drawings in Holland ca. 1600 as the intermediaries of empirical investigations to investigate how images informed and conditioned practices of investigation. Andrew Morrall (Bard Graduate Center, New York) will explore the ways collecting and display of objects shaped natural philosophy. His examination of a single Kuntschrank will suggest how the art cabinet could embody a scheme of natural philosophy and provide a conceptual framework with which to understand the things of nature and of art that it contained. The workshop will then turn to the Chamber of Wonders. Pamela H. Smith (History, Columbia University) will discuss through case studies how the reconstruction of historical

objects, techniques, and spaces can be employed as sources by historians of art and science. Joaneath Spicer (Curator of Renaissance and Baroque Art, The Walters Art Museum) will explain how the Chamber of Wonders at The Walters Art Museum represents one such attempt at reconstruction and what may be learned from such a project. After this series of short papers, the audience will join the discussion around the objects in the Chamber. Audience members may be contacted in advance and asked to initiate the discussion on objects displayed in the Chamber.

**Debating Art: Dialogue between Artists, Rhetoricians and Printers in Antwerp (1555-1565)**

J.J.M. Vandommele, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen  
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In 1561, a competition called the "Landjuweel", staged between different chambers of rhetoric of Brabant, took place in the city of Antwerp. At that moment, Antwerp was the centre of art and learning in the sixteenth century Low Countries. The festival highlighted the flourishing of the arts and proved to be a gathering point for discussions about the arts, since the main question - "What spurs men most to consten (arts)?" - focused on the nature of art and its role in the world.

In this workshop the Antwerp Landjuweel will operate as a starting point: an occasion on which artists and rhetoricians were brought together to discuss plays about subjects with relevance to them and to their audience: subjects like the importance of education, the transformations of the liberal arts (including poetica and pictura), the place of men in the world and the ever so fast changing society... The workshop-discussion will focus in particular on the role of rhetoricians and artists, both mediators in the early modern urban cultural landscape of the Low Countries. What was their common ground? Can topic similarities be pinpointed? How is the discussion about science and art between rhetoricians during the Landjuweel related to the debates between artists themselves? And what was the role of the printing press, engaging both rhetoricians and artists in their businesses?

**Simon Bening's Stein Quadriptych, Manuscript or Altarpiece?**

Lynn Ransom, Free Library of Philadelphia/Mellon Fellow, Univ. of Penn  
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The Stein Quadriptych in the Walters Art Museum is a series of sixty-four miniatures depicting scenes from the life of Christ by the Flemish illuminator Simon Bening. Presently, they are affixed to four oak panels, a fact that has led scholars to assume that they were



always intended to be displayed as an altarpiece, but there is no good evidence for this assumption.

This workshop examines first the problems underlying this assumption and then proceeds to reconsider the function, origins, and iconographic sources of Simon Bening's exceptional study of the Vita Christi. We will also look at the cycle in relation to other similar cycles from various media in order to consider the larger implications of question of format in an age when assumed distinctions between the various media were constantly shifting.

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