

Round Table

Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces in the Nordic Regions



As a result of their popularity in the late 15th and the beginning of the 16th century, Netherlandish carved altarpieces were exported abroad to Rhineland and Westphalia, France, the Baltic Coast (especially Poland), the Iberian Peninsula, England and Scandinavia. There still exist more than 350 Netherlandish carved altarpieces today. This round table, which is organized by LECTIO (Leuven Centre for the Study of the Transmission of Texts and Ideas) and Illuminare – Centre for the Study of Medieval Art, will focus on Netherlandish carved altarpieces in the Nordic region.

Denmark nowadays preserves four Antwerp retables and three groups of retable fragments; Finland one Brussels and one Antwerp exemplar; Iceland a group of retable-fragments; and Norway one altarpiece from Antwerp. Sweden possesses thirty-eight Netherlandish carved altarpieces, around ten retable-fragments, and at least two *poupées de Malines* (wooden statuettes of Mechelen). These remnants are probably only a fraction of the number that originally decorated the Nordic churches.

This LECTIO round table will address the export and the transport of the altarpieces to the North; the use of this artworks in liturgical rituals; the import and interaction between other imported or local sculptures; and the contemporaneous reception of the artworks in the North.

PRELIMINARY PROGRAM

11.30	Introduction by Jan Van der Stock (Illuminare – KU Leuven)
11.45-12.45	Filip Vermeulen (Erasmus University Rotterdam)
12.45-14.00	Lunch
14.00-15.00	Hannah De Moor (Illuminare – KU Leuven)
15.00-16.00	Kristin Kausland (Norwegian Institute of Cultural Heritage Research – University of Cambridge)
16.00-16.30	Coffee
16.30-17.30	Ragnhild M. Bø (University of Oslo – Courtauld Institute of Art London)
17.30	Concluding remarks by Wim François (KU Leuven)

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Date: Tuesday 17 September 2019

Venue: Romero Room, COVE 02.10, Sint-Michielsstraat 2-4, 3000 Leuven

Participation is free, but registration is required via lectio@kuleuven.be by 8 September 2019.

Organization: Hannah De Moor, Wim François, Erika Gielen, Céline Szeceł (KU Leuven)

ABSTRACTS

Filip VERMEYLEN (Erasmus University Rotterdam), *The Export of Antwerp Carved Altarpieces to the Baltic during the Sixteenth Century*

My contribution will explore the lively export of Antwerp carved altarpieces to the Baltic region during the first half of the sixteenth century. I will argue that this was not an isolated phenomenon, but part of a broader international trade network. Also, I will examine how Antwerp artists and dealers managed to overcome challenges in terms in quality and demand when exporting art to distant markets.

Hannah DE MOOR (Illuminare – Centre for the Study of Medieval Art KU Leuven), *Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces in Sweden: Provenance, Patronage and Personalization*

Today, Sweden possesses 38 Netherlandish carved altarpieces, about ten retable fragments, and at least two *poupées de Malines*. Some exemplars are still preserved in the location for which they were originally indented. The majority of them, however, are not stored in their authentic environment any longer. My contribution will trace the provenances of Netherlandish carved retables in Sweden - that moved from one residence to the other in the past five centuries - as far back as possible, by analysing archival documents and travel annotations from antiquarians. The presence of these shimmering artworks in Swedish parish churches, moreover, gave rise to multiple unfounded legends that reflected on how these high-quality medieval altarpieces ended up there. After a critical reading of these legends, this talk will consider how, why and by whom Netherlandish carved altarpieces were ordered. Finally, this lecture will end with examining the way in which commissioners wanted to personalize their retables, and the manner in which sculptor workshops adapted Netherlandish carved altarpieces to the demands of Swedish customers.

Kristin KAUSLAND (Norwegian Institute of Cultural Heritage Research – University of Cambridge), *Trading Art over the North Sea at the Dusk of the Middle Ages*

This talk will focus on the provenances of art works previously attributed to Northern Germany, which through technical examinations instead seem to share characteristics with artistic practices in the Lower Rhine area and the Netherlands.

Ragnhild M. Bø (University of Oslo – Courtauld Institute of Art London), *Antwerp Altarpieces, Religious Reading and the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother*

Visual representations of the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother appear in manuscripts for devotional use from c.1300 and is occasionally included in Netherlandish altarpieces made c.1480–1530. Without dismissing the effects of patronage, commissions and the circulation of models, my talk argues for more weight to be given to the agency of the often anonymous individual artist within workshops in the selection of religious scenes in larger altarpieces, further arguing for the employments of such scenes – exemplified by the Resurrected Christ Appearing to his Mother – as partly resulting from artists' increased partaking in religious reading due to the dissemination of Vita Christi literature.

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