

# Friends of CODART

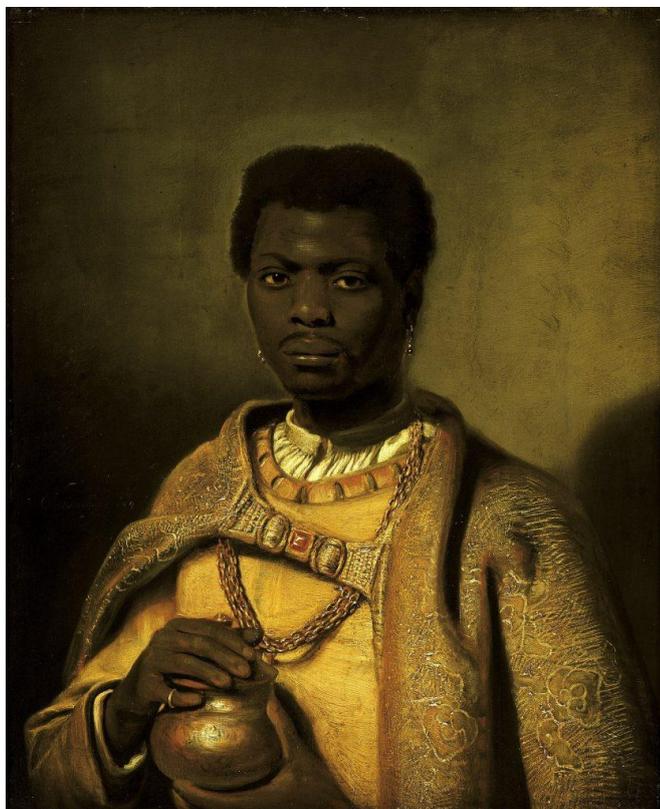
## Newsletter, Summer 2020

Dear CODART Friends,

In spite of all the challenges we have faced, CODART is still going strong – not in the last place thanks to the indispensable support of our Friends. We are happy to present our Newsletter, which reviews the activities of the Friends of CODART Foundation over the past year and sets out what lies in store for the year to come.

We rounded off 2019 with a Friends meeting at Museum De Lakenhal for the exhibition *Young Rembrandt: Rising Star*, another successful collaboration with the friends of the RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History in The Hague. Less than two months later, we met again in Brussels for a visit to the BRAFA art and antiques fair. There we were warmly welcomed for a tour and a lunch hosted by BRAFA. We enjoyed a BRAFA Art Talk, organized for the second time in collaboration with CODART, and given at our request by CODART member Till-Holger Borchert, who sits on the Friends board. Borchert's subject, suitably marking the "Van Eyck Year," was the Van Eyck exhibition that opened in Ghent that same day. The packed auditorium reflected the enormous interest in this subject.

We gathered in Maastricht on 7 March, during TEFAF. At the time, many of us were still unaware of how much we were teetering on the brink of a lockdown caused by the COVID-19 virus. Although the world looks very different today than it did then, we can still look back on a successful Salon. This Newsletter contains a detailed report of the morning, the theme of which was "Changing Perspectives." This topic has acquired even more resonance through the recent events following the death of George Floyd and the actions of the Black Lives Matter movement. CODART too devotes attention to this topic, through activities such as our Salon, as well as through articles and webinars. This month, the curator Jessie Park discusses diversity and her experiences as a curator of color in the US in CODART features on our website. If you have registered for the notification service, you will receive a message each month when a new article appears. To replace the annual conference in Stockholm, we organized an online conference in June, in which many CODART Friends and members took part. If you attended the digital conference, we would appreciate hearing your feedback.



Hendrick Heerschop, *King Caspar*, ca. 1654-1659, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

Those who missed this event can catch up by going to [www.codart.nl/our-events/codart-2020-online](http://www.codart.nl/our-events/codart-2020-online). We will be continuing our digital resources and trying out different formats, always with a view to helping you share in the best that CODART has to offer.

The CODART Canon, which was developed in 2019, is now being produced in book form. This publication was made possible in part through the support of our Friends. All our Patrons will receive a copy of it as soon as it is printed. Let's hope that we will be able to celebrate this moment together in festive style next year. We wish you a pleasant and fruitful Autumn, in good health, and hope to be able to meet in person in the very near future.

With best wishes,

Titia Vellenga  
Chair, Friends of CODART Foundation

Maartje Beekman  
Director, CODART

# Friends Activities

## 2019-2020

### Patrons Salon Maastricht

This year's Patrons Salon was dedicated to developments in the museum field relating to new and different interpretations of the past and how museums deal with them. Over the past few years, we are seeing an increased focus on groups of individuals and stories that have long been neglected. Through what kind of lens do we look at the past, and how can museums help us to adopt a different perspective? How do museums present differing views of historical events, historical objects and artworks? What are the implications for the role of museums?

Three curators exchanged views on these issues in the morning session in a moderated discussion.

### Lea van der Vinde – *Shifting Image*

Lea van der Vinde, curator at the Mauritshuis in The Hague, reflected on the making of the exhibition *Shifting Image: In Search of Johan Maurits*. On the basis of works from the permanent collection relating to Dutch Brazil and Johan Maurits, the exhibition explored the way in which the image of Johan Maurits was formed and how his history can be viewed from different perspectives. Each object was accompanied by four to six texts, written by a total of 46 authors with a range of backgrounds and specializations. As a result, the explanations and comments for the public consisted not of anonymous, institutional texts, as in the past, but of highly diverse texts by different people, each of whom had a certain involvement with the subject. By adopting this approach, the museum sought to show the variety of interpretations that can be given to a work of art, the different stories that can be told about it. Lea spoke about the way in which this experience had changed her outlook and made her aware of her blind spots. She had been used to viewing the Mauritshuis and its collection solely from an art-historical perspective. The new approach brought home to her that by connecting art and history, the museum can contribute to the contemporary debate on the country's colonial past.

### Epcó Runia – *HERE: Black in Rembrandt's Time*

Epcó Runia, head of collections at the Rembrandt House Museum in Amsterdam, contributed to the exhibition *HERE: Black in Rembrandt's Time*. The exhibition shows seventeenth-century portraits of black Amsterdammers and focuses on how images are formed, on recognition and appreciation. How were people from Brazil or Africa perceived by their fellow townspeople at the time?

Research has shown that there was a black community not far from Rembrandt's house, in the vicinity of Jodenbreestraat. Rembrandt regularly depicted black people, not just as minor characters in history paintings, but also in portraits of individuals, as in *Two African Men* from the Mauritshuis.



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Two African Men*, 1661, Mauritshuis, The Hague

The exhibition was the product of a partnership or co-creation involving a large group of experts, including the guest curators, Stephanie Archangel (junior curator of history at the Rijksmuseum) and Elmer Kolfin (University of Amsterdam). Runia conceded that a collaborative structure is not always easy; curators are used to adhering to their own art-historical perspective and a partnership like this compels them to open themselves up to other approaches. In spite of the difficulties, however, this method proved more than anything else to be inspirational.

### Richard Kofi

Richard Kofi expressed his enthusiastic support for the concept of co-creation. Kofi is an artist and works as an independent curator at institutions including the Museum of World Cultures, where he collaborated in the exhibition *Afterlives of Slavery*. The exhibition focused on the stories of enslaved people and their descendants, illustrated by objects from the collection of the Tropenmuseum. The aim was to set up a difficult but productive dialogue. The public was also involved in the

exhibition: they were encouraged to add their own reactions and suggestions regarding the way the exhibits were presented. That too is a form of “co-creation.” Curators should not feel threatened, as if their power is slipping away. It is not about changing the existing narrative but about adding more voices. We have a shared past and must work towards a common future. In this context, co-creation offers a solution.

## Discussion

In the discussion, moderated by Ann Demeester, Director of the Frans Hals Museum, Epcó Runia argued that curators must be aware of the social impact of the subjects that are programmed in museums. Demeester asked him whether that was largely a policy decision or a personal conviction. Runia replied, “Of course it is now policy. It is both, but personal and policy considerations influence each other and grow together. At present, our public consists largely of white women from the older age groups. That needs to change. We must reach out to a more diverse public.” Lea van der Vinde responded by saying that if your heart is not in what you are doing, you can’t do it. “You have to be sincerely committed to it, or you won’t be able to work together in a respectful way.”



Lea van der Vinde illustrating her point with CODART’s banner showing a detail of *Apelles Painting Campaspe* by Willem van Haecht

Ann Demeester commented: “But it can be very difficult to reflect honestly on your own blind spots. You are used to addressing things in a critical scientific way. This is different, this is dealing with emotions.” Richard Kofi agreed: “It is changing the way you address history and that is a vulnerable process.”

Someone from the audience asked whether the changes were in fact attracting a wider range of visitors to the museum. Van der Vinde said they were, and that the peripheral programming was also key to this. Epcó Runia agreed. The audience that attended the opening of the exhibition HERE was very different from the usual crowd. That was because of the co-creation concept. The people you work with act as the “ambassadors” for your exhibition and encourage others to come.

Another question from the audience: “CODART is a network of curators. Isn’t the primary mission of curators to promote the *enjoyment of art*?” Lea van der Vinde walked to the CODART banner displaying a detail from the painting *Apelles Painting Campaspe* by Willem van Haecht. She pointed to a group of three men, one of whom was black, discussing a painting together. They are standing in a similar setting, enjoying art. “Of course you can still enjoy a painting – this is part of the painting’s story. History is part of art history.” Richard Kofi added: “We are not erasing histories, but addressing all possible questions. This gives it more depth and more layers.” The final words were spoken by Epcó Runia: “Love of art is enhanced by all the perspectives and new insights.”

## Changes in the Board

In April, two new members joined the Board of the Friends of CODART Foundation. We welcome Dorien ter Haar and Michiel Scherpenhuijsen Rom. When his mandate ends this fall, Rob Vellekoop will leave the Board after eight years of service. We thank Rob for his all his efforts and look forward to working with Dorien and Michiel.



Michiel Scherpenhuijsen Rom Dorien ter Haar

## In memoriam: Hester Diamond

On 23 January 2020 Hester Diamond passed away at the age of 91. She was a passionate art collector, philanthropist and a remarkable figure in the art world. She supported CODART as a Patron since 2015.

# CODART Friends

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RKD Netherlands Institute for Art History

## Board of the Friends of CODART Foundation

Titia Vellenga (chair)	Rob Vellekoop
Bob Haboltd	Michiel Scherpenhuijsen Rom
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## CODART Calendar

This fall and winter CODART events will take place online. Please consult [www.codart.nl](http://www.codart.nl) for up-to-date information about CODART events.

### Find a Friend

We continue to strive to find new persons and companies that might be interested in supporting us and have not discovered CODART yet. We would be delighted if you could recommend the Friends of CODART Foundation to one or two of your closest friends or relations and inform them about the benefits. By joining our organization, they would support the research, exchange, and exhibitions of our Old Masters in museums all over the globe. Feel free to forward this Newsletter or contact us for more information or brochures: [friends@codart.nl](mailto:friends@codart.nl).