

Friends of CODART

Newsletter, Summer 2022

Dear CODART Friends,

We hope you're having a great summer. Although the year started off in a mood of uncertainty, we were fortunately able to meet several times in the course of our activities, both online and in person. In this newsletter, we review the past several months and look ahead to the autumn. Like so many others, we earnestly hope the world can remain open and no more closures will be forced on museums. CODART will continue to support curators in their work to promote and highlight Flemish and Dutch art, both through digital channels and offline.

We can't emphasize often enough that it is thanks to the financial contributions of our friends that CODART is able to continue its work and maintain its high standard. Each and every one of you continued to support our work during the COVID-19 crisis. This testifies to the value you attach to what we do. We are very grateful to all our friends for this loyal support.

The Friends of CODART support us because they believe in the work that CODART does for the international network of curators. We do our best to provide interesting activities for our Friends as well. We hope you enjoyed the "Coffee with a Curator" series we set up during COVID-19. Since July 2021 we have organized a total of eight of these Coffees to give you a glimpse behind the scenes of a curator's work. We plan to continue this series in the coming autumn.

After two years without a Congress, we were finally able to meet again at the end of May. In the space of three days, over 100 curators from 14 countries congregated at CODART 23 in The Hague, Gouda, and other cities. Eight of these curators – from five different countries – were able to participate thanks to a grant from the Friends. They are very grateful for this essential support.

On 4 June, we partnered with Historians of Netherlandish Art (HNA) to hold a joint meeting at the Rijksmuseum on the theme: "Re-visioning Permanent Collection Installations of Netherlandish Art: Dialogues between Academia, Museum and Society." This was a highly relevant theme for academics as well as museum curators. The interesting, dynamic session ended with a festive reception. The joint meeting was sponsored by the Friends of CODART Foundation.



Maerten de Vos, *Moses with the Ten Commandments among the Israelites (detail)*, ca. 1574-75, Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht (on loan from the Mauritshuis, The Hague)

These activities ushered in a busy period in which we were delighted and relieved to be finally greeting and speaking to everyone again in real life. On 18 June, we organized a Friends' afternoon in Brussels during the BRAFA art fair. Friends and visitors to the fair were treated to an Art Talk by CODART member Micha Leeflang, curator at Museum Catharijneconvent in Utrecht.

On 25 June we were guests at TEFAF and organized the Patrons Salon in cooperation with the Rubenianum Fund. We celebrated a fantastic milestone with the Salon's tenth anniversary – it was at TEFAF in 2012 that we launched what would become an annual event. With almost 50 participants this year, the Salon can rightly be called a fixed occasion to meet in the calendar and a fine tradition. You can read more about these activities later in the newsletter.

In the meantime, we are hard at work planning a range of new events, and we hope that we will be able to meet you again there. Thank you so much for your support!

With best wishes,

Manfred Sellink
Chair of the Friends of CODART Foundation

Maartje Beekman
Director of CODART

Friends Activities

2021-2022

BRAFA Day for Friends

On Saturday 18 June a select group of Friends of CODART gathered in Brussels at BRAFA art fair. It was lovely to escape the heat outside and to enjoy all the wonderful art on the cool fair. After a tour of the fair, highlighting several eye-catchers, the Friends attended the Art Talk, organized by CODART. The Dutch ambassador Pieter Jan Kleiweg de Zwaan in Belgium also joined us there. This year's Art Talk was presented by Micha Leeflang, curator at Museum Catharijneconvent in Utrecht. She spoke about the upcoming exhibition *From Antwerp to Amsterdam: sixteenth and seventeenth century painting*, which will be on view in the museum in 2023.

It was a successful afternoon – we look forward to the next one!



Micha Leeflang presenting the Art Talk at BRAFA

Patrons Salon at TEFAF Maastricht

After a one-year hiatus we were happy to be able to organize a Patrons Salon again at TEFAF Maastricht. Organized in cooperation with the Rubenianum Fund, it was dedicated to the differences and similarities in research on Rubens' and Rembrandt's oeuvres. Extensive research projects have been devoted to both artists. Which approaches to connoisseurship did those projects take and to what extent are they similar? Do the oeuvres of the artists ask for different research methods? How does the research on paintings by Rubens and Rembrandt relate to the research on their prints and drawings?

Three panelists shared their views on this topic. Nils Büttner, Professor of Art History at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildende Künste in Stuttgart and chairman of the Centrum Rubenianum, Koen Bulckens, curator at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp,

and Jaco Rutgers, independent researcher, participated in a conversation moderated by Gary Schwartz, Rembrandt scholar and founder of CODART.

All three panelists started with a statement, followed by a discussion and questions from the audience. Koen Bulckens started by highlighting the most striking difference between the Corpus Rubenianum and the Rembrandt corpus, which to him is their attitudes to authorship. The reason for this can be found in the context in which they originated. The Rembrandt Research Project started from discontent with the existing Rembrandt catalogues, which did not have motivated attributions. The Rembrandt Research Project set out to purify the Rembrandt canon, used advanced technical research and motivated their attributions. The Rubens corpus, on the other hand, originated in the mind of Ludwig Burchard. The series did not set out to deal exclusively with questions of authorship. The motive for creating the series lay more in newly discovered documents, information about the context of the artworks, and new insights in iconography, for example.

Jaco Rutgers explained that the differences in the approach for the catalogues of the prints of Rembrandt and after Rubens mostly spring from the differences in their oeuvres. For example, the Hollstein volumes dedicated to Rembrandt's prints are organized chronologically, which is possible because so many of his prints are signed and dated. In contrast, hardly any prints after Rubens are dated, which led to a thematic grouping.



Koen Bulckens, Jaco Rutgers and Nils Büttner

Nils Büttner noted that the differences in the projects also stem from the research tools available to art historians at the time of their origination. Back when Ludwig Burchard started his Rubens research, shortly after 1900, he relied solely on the eye of the connoisseur as his art historical method. When the RRP started in 1968, various technical research methods were available. This too makes both projects differ. Büttner adds the Corpus Rubenianum is now also modernizing, and that when the last volume is published, the project will continue with a 2.0 version.

A new project will be started to digitize all the volumes and make them searchable by motive, dating, title, etcetera.

Another difference highlighted by the panelists is the character of the projects. The CR is considered 'open', the RRP 'closed'. The RRP worked with a small team of experts. In their reasoning, having a team would make their judgement more sure. But they only relied on the people within the team. They didn't take advice or opinions of outsiders. As Koen Bulckens stated: "Connoisseurship by committee doesn't make for more true attributions, but you learn so much from looking at art with your colleagues. Different eyes see different things." A very fitting statement for **CODART**.

Gary Schwartz concluded by posing the question why we tend to catalogue based on artist at all. Shouldn't a question of authorship come at the very end, instead of at the beginning? Interesting food for thought!



Michael Kwakkelstein lecturing about the lost Rubens sketchbook containing anatomical studies

The panel discussion was followed by the presentation of the latest volume of the *Corpus Rubenianum*. Michael Kwakkelstein, professor of Art History at Utrecht University and director of the NIKI in Florence, gave a fascinating lecture about Rubens' anatomical studies, or rather, Rubens' lost sketchbook containing anatomical drawings, the subject of the newest *Corpus* volume.

The morning was concluded by Thomas Leysen, chairman of the Rubenianum Fund, who handed the first copy of the new *Corpus* volume to drawings collector George Abrams, who has generously supported both the Rubenianum Fund and the Friends of **CODART** for a long time. For more information about the Rubenianum Fund and the latest *Corpus* volume, visit www.rubenianum.be.

It was wonderful to welcome so many of you to the Salon. Mark your calendars for next year's edition, on Saturday 11 March 2023!

Coffee with a Curator

In 2021 we started a series of informal online lectures by **CODART** members for the Friends of **CODART**. The format has proven a good way to reach Friends that cannot easily attend our in-person events, and to gain some insight into the work of the curator in the process of preparing exhibitions or other projects. This autumn we will continue the series. Keep an eye on your email and our website for new editions!

In October 2021 Robert Fucci presented a talk about his research on the Dutch and Flemish drawings in the Sheldon Peck collection. The exhibition for which he conducted that research is on show at the Ackland Art Museum in Chapel Hill from 23 September to 31 December 2022. In March 2023 the exhibition will come to the Rembrandt House Museum in Amsterdam.

The recordings of all previous Coffee with a Curator sessions are available for viewing via vimeo.com/showcase/8855172 and the password 'friends'.

CODART Calendar

2022

Coffee with a Curator - keep an eye on your email and our website for the announcement of new sessions this autumn

24 November (tbc)

Event for Friends at **PAN Amsterdam**

2023

29 January

BRAFA Day for Friends in Brussels

11 March

Patrons Salon at TEFAF Maastricht

An exclusive lecture or exchange of expertise in the field of the Old Masters, during TEFAF Maastricht

12-14 March

CODART 24 congress Antwerp

The congress is organized in conjunction with the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp. A limited number of places is available for Patrons and Business Sponsors

Please consult www.codart.nl for up-to-date information about **CODART** events.

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