

Friends of CODART

Newsletter, Summer 2021

Dear CODART Friends,

We are delighted to present the annual newsletter of the Friends of CODART, to update you on all the activities of the Friends of CODART Foundation – the foundation set up to support CODART, the international network of museum curators of Dutch and Flemish Old Master art.

The doors have opened again and although we remain cautious, we are busily preparing several in-person activities. We aim to compile an interesting array of activities for our friends. You can read more in the agenda and we will keep you informed by email. We sincerely hope you enjoyed the online congress in May and the first cups of Coffee with a Curator this summer. We hope to be able to extend this series and offer you many glimpses behind the scenes. You can find more information about this series on the next page of this Newsletter.

You may already have read on the CODART website about the changes that have taken place in the Friends board. This Foreword is co-signed by the Friends' new chair – Manfred Sellink. He has gladly seized the opportunity to introduce himself to you in this newsletter, in an exchange with his predecessor Titia Vellenga, who completed her term in office in April. The article reflects on the past as well as looking to the future. We are very grateful to Titia, as well as to the other board members who left us this year, Bob Haboltd and Till-Holger Borchert, for their enormous commitment to the Friends of CODART. We look forward to working with Manfred and our other new board member, Martine Lambrechtsen.

Fortunately, Covid was not the only “C-word” that marked the past year for us. It was also the year of our Canon, which we presented in a book, on the website, and in videos. No fewer than 100 CODART members wrote about the 100 works chosen in 2019 by members and the public. If you have not yet done so, please take a look at canon.codart.nl – where you can also order the book. We were pleasantly surprised with all the attention the book received in the press and the good reactions we are continuing to receive.



Allart van Everdingen, *Mountain Landscape with a River and Castle*, ca. 1660-1670, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

We want to express our heartfelt thanks to you, the Friends of CODART, for your continued support, especially over the turbulent past year. It gives us great confidence in the future that you have continued to support our work and to know that CODART is not only important to curators worldwide but is also appreciated by many others. We hope to meet you again in real life very soon!

With best wishes,

Manfred Sellink
Chair of the Friends of CODART Foundation

Maartje Beekman
Director of CODART

“How do you cultivate enthusiasm for the Old Masters among the younger generation? That’s the challenge we face.”

A conversation with the former and current chair of the Friends of **CODART** Foundation

Last year, our chair Titia Vellenga stepped down after her eight-year term in office. Manfred Sellink took over in May. This summer we spoke to them both about the Friends and the importance of Friends’ societies. How does Titia look back on her time as chair and what is Manfred in particular looking forward to?

Titia Vellenga was appointed to the board of the Friends of **CODART** in March 2013 and succeeded Thomas Leysen as chair in 2017. After graduating in art history at Leiden University, she worked, among other things, as the PR and marketing manager at Museum Het Rembrandthuis in Amsterdam. Her next position was at TEFAF, The European Fine Art Fair, where she worked as Head of Marketing and Communication for several years. Titia is a board member of diverse organizations, including the Mauritshuis, Noordbrabants Museum, and Drents Museum.



Titia Vellenga

Titia, how did you first become involved with CODART?

“It started some time in 2011. I was working for TEFAF, and in that capacity I was contacted by Gerdien Verschoor, the previous director of **CODART**. We worked together on the eZine, **CODART**’s new online magazine. Its first edition was a TEFAF special, with diverse articles about the Art Fair. It was then that the possibility was created for **CODART** members to obtain complimentary tickets for TEFAF. A little later I was asked to join the board of the Friends. I was happy to accept, not just because of the pleasant working relationship we had already established, but also because **CODART** focuses to a large extent on my favorite art form, paintings, and primarily those by Dutch and Flemish Old Masters. It was a perfect fit. I also had a particular advantage in that having worked so long at TEFAF, I had built up a large network – a significant advantage. When Thomas Leysen left the organization, I was asked to replace him. I soon became enthusiastic about the new role.”

How would you describe your time as chair?

“I very much enjoyed it. As chair, you have a different kind of involvement than as a board member. From the moment I became chair, I made sure to attend all the congresses, which illuminate the way **CODART** works for its members. I found them very inspiring and really learned the power of **CODART**. It is a unique knowledge platform to which Patrons – as lovers of the Old Masters – have access. Instead of dealing with a single museum or a single type of collection, you’re dealing with a global network of collections of Dutch and Flemish Old Masters, to which over 300 museums are affiliated. I find it important that as Friends we can help members from less well-off institutions to take part in congresses, including paying travel expenses. The Friends’ grants program enables them to take part in congresses and in this way make a real contribution to the exchange of knowledge, research, and loans. This epitomizes **CODART**’s role in bringing people and institutions together.”

“As a Patron [Titia and her partner Bernard Wientjes support **CODART** as Patrons] I think it’s extremely important that wherever possible we raise the profile of the Old Masters. They serve as sources of inspiration for many modern and contemporary artists – and rightly so. I am happy that **CODART** has developed numerous online initiatives and activities, even though they were born of necessity, as a result of Covid-19. They have increased the organization’s visibility, range, and profile. Sharing relevant new knowledge and initiatives online, as in *Coffee with a Curator*, is essential to getting a wide-ranging group of interested people committed to **CODART**. I see online activities as a valuable supplement. However, they can never replace physical

meetings, which I see as truly indispensable because of the personal ties that are forged, the interaction, and the fascinating excursions.”

Do you have any particularly vivid memories over the past eight years?

“I wouldn’t single out any specific occasion, but I gained enormous pleasure from working with the curators. Being a board member, and also a CODART Patron, enables you to gain special access not just to certain places but also to people – in particular CODART’s members, the curators. I have wonderful memories of a guided tour of Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio, by Larry Nichols. If I had not been associated with CODART that would have been much harder to arrange – or I might not even have thought of it.”

“Most curators are enthusiastic and are eager to share their knowledge. In fact, I’ve never encountered anyone who was reluctant to do so. I found that really inspiring and an absolute unique selling point for CODART.”

Is there any congress in particular that you remember with pleasure?

“I thought the congress in Warsaw in 2017 was really remarkable. It was also related to my own perception of Poland, which was well and truly turned upside down. It was marvelous. I also joined the trip to Cracow, which was offered as an extra excursion. In St. Mary’s Basilica the enormous Veit Stoss altarpiece was being restored. We were allowed to climb the scaffolding and take a close at the restoration work at the back. That was really unique. That’s something you’ll never experience again.”

What would you like to say to the new chair?

“Manfred knows CODART well, so I’m sure he knows what he can mean for the network and the Friends. I hope that he will derive just as much enjoyment from the meetings as I did – but I’m sure he will. There is also a challenge to be faced. We’ve gathered a very good, stable group of benefactors over the years. It is important to hold onto them in the years to come – and even more important to attract more. At some point your own address book is exhausted, and besides, you have to compete with many other Friends’ societies – especially those of museums. CODART really needs people who are less focused on the activities on offer, but are dedicated to preserving this branch of art –especially in terms of scholarship. I’m extremely happy to be handing over to Manfred, because as a scholar and a CODART member he is ideally placed to serve the

interests of CODART Friends and members. I think that opens up new possibilities and may attract new types of Patrons. Special visits, possibly in the form of short trips, could prove a good means of engaging and recruiting Friends. CODART has something unique to offer, and that deserves more exposure.”



A panel from the Veit Stoss altarpiece in St. Mary’s Basilica in Cracow that CODART members and Patrons were able to see up close while being restored

Manfred Sellink is well acquainted with CODART. He has been a member of the organization since its earliest beginnings, in 1998, and has always been active and involved. First for many years on the program committee, and then on the board. He is regarded worldwide as the Bruegel expert and has many publications to his name. After a period as curator at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in the 1990s, he went to work in Bruges, eventually being appointed director of Musea Brugge. He subsequently served as director of the KMSKA in Antwerp, and in April 2021 he was appointed director of the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent, where he lives and also works as Professor of Museology and Arts Policy at the University of Ghent. He is very much looking forward to continuing his career at the Museum of Fine Arts and we are delighted that he is also willing to take on the chairmanship of the Friends of CODART Foundation.

What do you hope to achieve as chair of the Friends of CODART?

"Two things matter most, I think. On the one hand, there is the financial aspect. The Friends of CODART is a foundation set up to support CODART and give it a little extra – and that can also give CODART, only a small organization with a limited budget after all, a little more elbow room. In this way the Friends can contribute to projects – or bring about projects that could not otherwise have been realized. But what is at least as important is cherishing the moral support that is radiated by Friends' societies. This is the inner circle of people clustered around your organization who support its mission and consider it important. After all, a friend is someone who stands by you, in good times and bad; we all need friends. No doubt my predecessors also prioritized these two aspects, but regardless, for me these are the two things that matter most."

What are you most looking forward to?

"I'm a great believer in teamwork and look forward to working with the CODART team, as well as its members, the board and Friends. For the Friends to work well, it's crucial to have a close working relationship with the CODART board, and that too is something I will constantly strive to achieve. We share a common mission and must always support each other in its pursuit. I have worked with CODART for years, I've been around in the museum world for a long time and I am fortunate to know a great many people. To work with such a pleasant and inspiring group of people within the Friends, and to support CODART in that way, is something I'm certainly looking forward to."

"I watched the Friends come into being years ago. It's a good way of binding to CODART a group of people who don't work in museums but are active in the field, like collectors, dealers, and other art lovers. It is for me a great pleasure and privilege to follow in the footsteps of Thomas and Titia and to build on their achievements."

"Titia raised a good point. How do we cultivate a new generation of people who are fascinated by art – including collectors? I detect a change in this respect. There does seem to be a decline in the art of the Old Masters, but collectors are changing too. Today's collectors tend to be eclectic in their choices. An item may be contemporary or many centuries old – including design – anything that appeals to their taste. We seldom see collections with a specific focus these days. How can we interest that type of collector in CODART? Still, I was encouraged to see, this past Covid year, that

because Belgium's museums stayed open, we have attracted a new, younger public. Our visitor numbers included a higher proportion than before of people in their twenties and thirties. They were looking for something to do – and happily found it in our museums."

"I think it's important to organize special visits, like the one Titia describes in Cracow. Nowadays, people are more interested than ever in the role of science, restoration and so on. Letting people look behind the scenes there too, with a certain exclusivity, might provide added value. Or perhaps we could also visit places that don't immediately come to mind, but where you can find wonderful collections, such as Salzburg, Rennes, or Lyon. Still, what it comes down to is supporting CODART's work – a Patron has to want to support it."

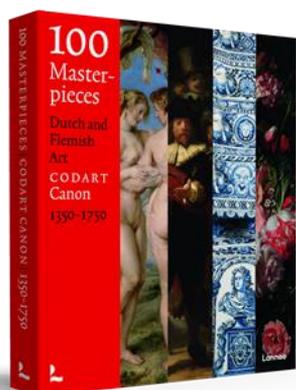
Titia adds a final word: in this respect, she saw the co-financing of the CODART Canon project as a real highlight. "This has really shone a light on what CODART is and does and generated more attention for the art of the Old Masters. That's what it's all about in the end – the love of that art."



Manfred Sellink

Find a Friend

We continue to strive to find new persons and companies that might be interested in supporting CODART. 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.



100 Masterpieces Dutch and Flemish Art 1350-1750

In May CODART published the CODART Canon book *100 Masterpieces Dutch and Flemish Art 1350-1750* and launched the accompanying website. A special occasion for CODART. One hundred curators were involved in this project and each wrote about an artwork in the Canon, for the book as well as the website. The project was made possible in part by the Friends of CODART Foundation. As a token of our appreciation all of our Patrons received a complimentary copy. The book is available in Dutch and English at your local bookstore or online (including canon.codart.nl). We hope you enjoy the book and website!

The project received a lot of attention in the Dutch and Flemish press, in newspapers and magazines, as well as radio and television. A festive presentation of the book and website will be organized in The Hague on 4 November 2021.



Maartje Beekman and Pieter Jan Kleiweg de Zwaan

On 25 May CODART presented the book to Pieter Jan Kleiweg de Zwaan, the Netherlands Ambassador to Belgium and to Joachim Pohlmann, Secretary of Culture to the Flemish Government, at the Ambassador's residence in Brussels.

Coffee with a Curator

This summer, CODART launched a new series of online activities for the Friends, called *Coffee with a Curator*. In these informal Zoom-meetings, curators spoke with us about their current projects, followed by Q&A sessions.

Christi Klinkert kicked off this series on 8 July with a talk providing insight into the preparations for the exhibition *Allart van Everdingen (1621-1675) - The Rugged Landscape*. She openheartedly shared with us the whole process of creating the exhibition, from the original concept to securing loans and the exhibition designs. A nice teaser for our Friends Museum Visit to Alkmaar on 11 October!

Three weeks later, Renske Cohen Tervaert introduced us to the collection of Old Master drawings of the Kröller-Müller Museum. This relatively unknown part of their collection will be the focus of the exhibition *Aged Well - Three Centuries of Drawings from the Kröller-Müller Collection*, which will open on 4 December. Leading up to the exhibition the drawings collection was researched extensively, and in her talk Renske shared some of the most interesting finds.

Sander Paarlberg concluded this summer's series of *Coffee with a Curator* with a presentation about the upcoming exhibition *In the light of Cuyp: Aelbert Cuyp & Gainsborough - Constable - Turner*, which explores Cuyp's impact on British painters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including J.M.W. Turner, by whom the Dordrechts Museum acquired a landscape this June.

We hope to organize more *Coffees with a Curator* in the coming months, and plan to make the recordings of the past lectures available to Friends who were not able to attend.

Changes in the Board

Several changes took place in the Board of the Friends of CODART Foundation this spring. Manfred Sellink succeeded Titia Vellenga as chairman, we said goodbye to Bob Haboldt and Till-Holger Borchert and welcomed Martine Lambrechtsen to the board. We thank Titia, Bob and Till for their efforts and look forward to working with Manfred and Martine.



Martine Lambrechtsen

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These museums support **CODART** as institutional member:

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Partner

RKD Netherlands Institute for Art History

CODART Calendar

11 October 2021

Friends Museum Visit

Exclusive guided visit to the exhibition *Allart van Everdingen (1621-1675) – The Rugged Landscape* at Stedelijk Museum Alkmaar

4 November 2021

Presentation of the **CODART Canon**

A festive gathering celebrating the publication of **CODART's** first book and the renewed **CODART Canon** website in The Hague

12 March 2022

Patrons Salon

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

29-31 May 2022

CODART 23 Congress The Netherlands

The twenty-third **CODART** congress will take place in The Netherlands

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