

# Friends of CODART

## Newsletter, Summer 2025

Dear CODART Friends,

It hardly needs saying that these are turbulent times. Museums and curators are devising appropriate responses, such as finding ways of highlighting topical social issues and the wars raging around the world. We see numerous examples of international partnerships and support. In this context, the newsletter before you focuses on an exhibition currently on view at the Bredius Museum in The Hague. CODART member and Patron Willem Jan Hoogsteder discusses the museum's collaboration with the Khanenko Museum in Kyiv and the importance of such partnerships in general.

Topical issues were also raised at the Patrons Salon held in Maastricht during TEFAF last March. Three CODART members – Samuel Mareel, Marleen Ram, and Ingmar Reesing – discussed the theme “Old Masters, Current Issues” in a panel moderated by CODART member Lidewij de Koekkoek, director of the Frans Hals Museum in Haarlem. You can read a report of the panel discussion in this newsletter.

In the past year, we said farewell to our Chair Manfred Sellink and board member Christi Klinkert. They passed the baton to Peter Schoon, former director of the Dordrechts Museum, and Hildegard Van de Velde, curator of the Snijders&Rockoxhuis in Antwerp, respectively. We are extremely grateful to Manfred and Christi for their dedicated efforts on behalf of the Friends and warmly welcome Peter and Hildegard, wishing them every success and much enjoyment in their new roles.

We want to thank all our friends for your support and generosity. Your donations funded Friends of CODART grants enabling no fewer than sixteen CODART members to take part in the Cologne congress, which was also attended by several Patrons. As always, the three days were full of memorable events. These included remarkable visits to various locations, the high point of course – quite literally – being a visit to the roof of Cologne Cathedral. All this, in combination with the discussion of the congress theme “Tracing Contested Histories: The Challenges and Future of Provenance Research” made it an outstanding and highly informative congress.

The board of the Friends has decided to award even



Juan de Zurbarán (1620-1649), *Still Life with Chocolate Service*, 1640  
The Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Arts, Kyiv

more grants this year, specifically to enable newly-appointed curators to take part in this autumn's CODART focus meeting in Washington and Baltimore. This focus meeting is also receiving support from several Patrons, in the form of donations or the provision of specific parts of the program, as well as from the Dutch Embassy in Washington and Visit Flanders. We are very grateful to all Patrons and partners for their support. More information about these events can be found on the CODART website.

This summer, we also appointed our first Ambassador! This is a new category within our Friends group, intended for long-time CODART supporters and Patrons for Life who have contributed to the organization in diverse ways. As this first Ambassador, the board chose George Abrams, who has supported CODART in multiple ways for many years, for instance by providing contacts and making extra donations, while always expressing enthusiastic interest in our activities. We have placed Mr. Abrams in the spotlight in the present newsletter. Of course, he is not the only standout Patron, and others will be added to the list over the next few years.

As always, you can find a calendar of our upcoming activities in this Newsletter. We look forward to seeing you at one or more of these activities!

With warm regards,

Peter Schoon  
Chair of the Friends  
of CODART Foundation

Maartje Beekman  
Director of CODART

# Friends Activities

## 2024-2025

### Friends Afternoon at PAN Amsterdam

On 28 November 2024 the Friends of **CODART** Foundation hosted an afternoon at PAN Podium, centered around the theme ‘color’. Three lectures approached this topic from different angles. Conservators Jessica Roeders and Mireille te Marvelde of the Frans Hals Museum kicked off our program with a talk about the restoration of Maarten van Heemskerck’s *St. Luke Painting the Madonna*, and how transformative the revealing of the original colors was for the altarpiece. Next, Janneke van Asperen of Museum De Lakenhal discussed the changes of Rembrandt’s use of color throughout his career. Lastly, David de Witt of Museum Rembrandthuis spoke about the role color plays in the illusionistic work of Samuel van Hoogstraten, and the painter’s characteristic ‘Dordrecht’s rood’. The program was concluded with a round of drinks and access to the PAN Private Art Evening.



The Friends Afternoon at PAN Amsterdam – Janneke van Asperen speaks about Rembrandt’s colors

### BRAFA Day for Friends

At BRAFA, Friends of **CODART** were offered a tour of the fair by Paul Huvenne, former director of the Rubenshuis and KMSKA in Antwerp, and former **CODART** member. Later that afternoon, the Art Talk was presented by Leonore van Sloten, senior curator at Museum Rembrandthuis, about Samuel van Hoogstraten and the exhibition dedicated to him at the Rembrandthuis. The afternoon was concluded with a glass of champagne, kindly offered by one of our Donors at the stand of Delen Private Bank.

### Patrons Salon at TEFAF Maastricht

On the morning of Saturday, 15 March, **CODART** Patrons and Business Sponsors met at the Patrons Salon at TEFAF Maastricht to exchange views on the theme “Old Masters, Current Issues.” The

introductory remarks by the three panelists were followed by a discussion moderated by **CODART** board member Lidewij de Koekkoek, director of the Frans Hals Museum.



Panelists Ingmar Reesing, Samuel Mareel, Marleen Ram and moderator Lidewij de Koekkoek

First up was Samuel Mareel, curator of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century art at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp. He started by recalling remarks from his 2024 article on the pressure of the present day on Old Master art (“De druk van het heden op oude kunst”, published by de-lage-landen.com). It focused on the difference in the public reception of two purchases of works by Rembrandt. In 2015, the joint purchase by the Rijksmuseum and the Louvre of the master’s double portrait of Marten Soolmans and Oopjen Coppit was widely celebrated. Six years later, in 2021, when the Rijksmuseum purchased another Rembrandt, *The Standard Bearer*, the reactions were far more critical.

Critics questioned whether the Rijksmuseum – and the Netherlands – really needed yet another Rembrandt. Were there no other past or contemporary artists on whose work the huge purchasing sum might not have been better spent? Could we not have expanded the representation of female artists or people of color, for instance? This difference in reception illustrates a paradigm shift that took place in the intervening six years, partly fueled by major social movements such as #MeToo and Black Lives Matter. These themes are increasingly encroaching on the world of the Old Masters, and Mareel explained that he had a few reservations on this front. He said: “I hope I am not seen as representing the ‘conservative’ voice in this discussion, but I do think it is worth placing some caveats regarding the current trend of looking at the Old Masters from a contemporary perspective. The risk here is that we could end up with “past becomes prologue” – in other words, that we only study the past for what it has to teach us about the present. There are real problems in the modern world, for which we can present symbolic solutions in this way.

But what does such an approach contribute to genuine solutions?" Mareel argued that art should rather be allowed to speak for itself: "Art can change our lives, but it works in mysterious ways. In the kinds of exhibitions we are discussing today, the richness of art is sometimes lost – it is flattened."

Ingmar Reesing discussed a project that did use this approach successfully. In his exhibition *Susanna: From The Middle Ages to #MeToo*, Old Master art is viewed through a contemporary lens. The scene in which the nude Susanna is spied on by two elders has been depicted in numerous paintings – far more than the court case that actually plays a greater role in the biblical story. The exhibition frames this story in the context of #MeToo *avant la lettre*. The programming and audio tour devote a great deal of attention to related, topical themes such as consent and victim blaming. "The exhibition was very well received," said Reesing: "Visitor numbers reached an all-time high, including many school groups and other young people. We saw this as a sign that linking Old Master art to a socially relevant theme has particular appeal to a modern audience."

Marleen Ram adopted a similar approach for her exhibition on Christina of Sweden, scheduled for 2027. "I have long wanted to make an exhibition about Christina of Sweden, much of whose drawing collection is owned by Teylers Museum. Since she was an important monarch with a large art collection, it was important to adopt a specific angle," Ram explained. "Christina of Sweden (1626-1689) was a historical figure who transcended the traditional division between male and female roles. Raised as a prince and crowned king, she sometimes dressed as a man. She refused to marry because it would mean losing power. René Descartes, who taught her philosophy, admired Christina because of her lack of female weaknesses. This resonates with today's popular discourse – if a woman is described as 'one of the guys,' it is generally meant as a compliment. It's interesting that you can address a topic like this through the Old Masters."

Although linking Old Master art to recognizable topical themes can help to reach new audiences and forge interesting connections, Mareel also urged caution with this approach. He stressed the importance of remaining open to the unfamiliar and of remembering: "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there."

*Save the date for the next Patrons Salon at TEFAF Maastricht on Saturday 14 March 2026!*

## Five Questions for Willem Jan Hoogsteder about *Old Masters from Kyiv in The Hague* at Museum Bredius

Since 21 June 2025, Museum Bredius in The Hague has been showcasing 14 paintings from the Khanenko Museum in Kyiv, Ukraine. These pieces are displayed alongside 12 works from the Bredius collection. Together, they tell the story of the close connections between the Netherlands and Ukraine.

Specifically for this newsletter, Rosalie van Gulick spoke with Willem Jan Hoogsteder, Patron for Life of CODART and curator at Museum Bredius, about this special project, its creation, and the importance of art in difficult times.

### How did the idea for the exhibition come about?

"In 2024, I loaned 31 Hague School (*Haagse School*) paintings from my own collection to the Khanenko Museum in Kyiv. Just before I went to visit the museum there, Suzanne Laemers, a curator at the RKD (Netherlands Institute for Art History), contacted me. She had been in long-standing contact with Maryana Varchuk, one of the curators at the Khanenko Museum, and heard about my plan through her. She then started investigating if there was a link between the Khanenko Museum and Abraham Bredius. It turned out that Bredius had been to Kyiv in 1897 during his trip through Europe, and there he met the collectors Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko. He also described works from their collection in his notebooks. Upon this discovery, the idea arose to bring the artworks Bredius described to the Netherlands and exhibit them among the works he himself collected."



General Onno Eichelsheim, mayor of The Hague Jan van Zanen, singer Veronika Morska, Willem Jan Hoogsteder, First Deputy Minister of Culture and Strategic Communications Galyna Grygorenko, director of the Khanenko Museum Yuliia Vaganova, and Ambassador of Ukraine to the Netherlands Andrii Korstin at the opening of the exhibition

### How were the painting combinations made, and do you have a favorite combination?

"Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko had a very European

taste, much more diverse than how people collected in the Netherlands at that time. Abraham Bredius's taste was very similar, quite comprehensive. In the exhibition, duos have been created consisting of one work from the Khanenko Museum and one work collected by Bredius. Because the collections are so similar, we found it important to emphasize the connection and resemblance. Combinations were made based on all sorts of parallels: for example, the type of scene, a comparable composition, or based on the school of painting. One of my favorite pieces is *Still Life with Chocolate Service* by Juan de Zurbarán (see the cover of this newsletter), because it's such an unusual work. The Jordaens is also great, and it's special that we can show such a large piece here."



Jacob Jordaens (1593-1678), *Amor and Psyche*, ca. 1650/1655  
The Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Arts, Kyiv

**You already referred to the exhibition with works from your private collection at the Khanenko Museum in Kyiv in 2024. What did this mean for the museum? And for you personally?**

"The trip made a deep impression on me. What really struck me is how differently people view culture there. When I was walking through the museum with director Yuliia Vaganova during the preparations, we heard people shouting from the street, 'We miss you, when will you open?' When First Lady Olena Zelenska finally opened the exhibition, she said: 'If you take away a country's culture, that country is dead. Then there is no soul left.' Russia has long been trying to destroy culture in Ukraine to erase Ukrainian identity. Culture is vital there. There was enormous interest in the exhibition, in the press, but also in terms of visitors. People of all ages and backgrounds visited the exhibition and were eager to enter the museum. It was the most emotional trip I have ever made in my life."

"What's also interesting to mention: initially, I suggested naming the exhibition 'Dutch Impressionism' to indicate what kind of art would be on display. But the museum really wanted to call it 'The Hague – Kyiv.' The Hague is a well-known city and a concept there, more familiar than Amsterdam, because of the International Criminal Court and the Peace Palace."

**What challenges are there in organizing an exhibition in cooperation with a museum in a war zone?**

"It's definitely more complicated than usual. Fortunately, the museum staff was extremely helpful. What was surprising to me was that the artworks came to The Hague from three locations: Kyiv, Vilnius, and Warsaw. Parts of the collection had been moved to safety there. That also means different transports, multiple couriers, and therefore much higher costs. Unexpectedly, the works also had to be insured on Ukrainian territory. That was, of course, terribly expensive, but fortunately, a sponsor was found who was able to cover these costs. It helps that there's a certain goodwill for a project like this."

**Are there any future collaborative projects in prospect?**

"It would be fantastic to expand collaboration with Ukrainian institutions. But several beautiful projects have already been realized. For example, at the very beginning of the war in 2022, we had a photo exhibition in the gallery (Hoogsteder & Hoogsteder), *Faces of War*, with documentary photography by Oksana Parafeniuk and portrait photography by Alexander Chekmenev. Recently, the Friends of Museum Bredius supported the Ukrainian audio tour of the Rembrandt House Museum. Abraham Bredius and Rembrandt are, of course, closely linked, so it was great to be able to help in that way. Museum Bredius itself, by the way, was the first museum in the Netherlands with an audio tour in Ukrainian."

"Museum Bredius is a small institution, and about once every five years, it's possible for us to realize a somewhat larger exhibition. There are no concrete plans for that yet, but we want to continue to solidify the connection between The Hague and Ukraine, and we're keeping the contacts warm."

*The exhibition Old Masters from Kyiv in The Hague is on view at Museum Bredius until 28 September.*

*In the August CODART feature, Suzanne Laemers and Yuliia Vaganova go into more depth about the exhibition and the consequences of war for the Khanenko Museum. Read the article on [www.codart.nl/features](http://www.codart.nl/features).*

### CODART Ambassador

We are very excited to announce the first **CODART** Ambassador: George Abrams! Ambassador is a new category within our Friends group, intended for long-time **CODART** supporters and Patrons for Life who have consistently demonstrated exceptional commitment to the organization. George Abrams has supported **CODART** in multiple ways for many years, for instance by providing contacts and making extra donations, while always expressing enthusiastic interest in our activities. He has acted as a true ambassador by actively promoting our organization to others, and for that we would like to honor him with this title.



George Abrams: “I appreciate very much this special honor and, of course, accept it with gratitude. I have spent much of the art side of my life working with Dutch and Flemish curators in the United States and Europe and many of my closest friends over the years have been curators. When Gary Schwartz first talked to me about his idea to form an international organization of Dutch and Flemish curators, I immediately realized the importance such an organization (**CODART**) could become and thanks to him, subsequent directors and other key people, **CODART** has evolved into a very important, unifying organization which I happily support.”

For further information about **CODART** Ambassadors, visit [www.codart.nl/friends](http://www.codart.nl/friends).

### Changes on the Board

As of 1 January 2025, Peter Schoon succeeded Manfred Sellink as the chair of the Friends of **CODART** Foundation. Peter was the director of the Dordrechts Museum from 2002 until his retirement in 2022. Before that, he served as curator of Old Masters at the museum, and was one of the founding members of **CODART**. In the course of his long career as a museum director, he built up an extensive and valuable network, which he will gladly use to further enhance the success of the Friends of **CODART** Foundation.

Hildegard Van de Velde succeeded Christi Klinkert as board member this spring. Hildegard is curator at Museum Snijders&Rockoxhuis in Antwerp, and has been a member of **CODART** since 2012. She will serve as a member representative on the board, and help further strengthen the ties with the Flemish community.

The fellow board members and **CODART** team thank Manfred and Christi for their years of service on the Friends of **CODART** board and for their commitment to **CODART** in general. We warmly welcome Peter and Hildegard and greatly look forward to working with them in the coming years.

## CODART Calendar

### 2025

#### 6 November

##### **Friends Afternoon at PAN Amsterdam**

An afternoon at art fair PAN Amsterdam, with talks by several **CODART** members, concluded with drinks and access to the Private Art Evening

### 2026

#### 25 January

##### **BRAFA Day for Friends**

A special day at BRAFA Art Fair in Brussels, including an Art Talk by a **CODART** member

#### 14 March

##### **Patrons Salon at TEFAF Maastricht**

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

#### 15-17 March

##### **CODART 27 congress Ghent**

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

Please consult [www.codart.nl](http://www.codart.nl) for up-to-date information about **CODART** events.

# CODART Friends

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George S. Abrams

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The Weiss Gallery

Ineke Wolf

and several Patrons wishing to remain anonymous

## Business Sponsors

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PAN Amsterdam

Salomon Lilian Dutch Old Master Paintings

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

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