Preface to the Annual

With this publication we present you a double issue of the Jaarboek Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen, the Antwerp Royal Museum Annual. This voluminous work covers the years 2013-2014. It bundles the results of research done by several specialists in art history. Not just the history of art, but art and its broad, historical and anthropological interpretation.

We start looking at the middle ages with Lynn Jacobs contribution “Tu labora”: Peasants in their Places in the Très Riches Heures. She describes how peasants and aristocrats have been represented in the landscape, alone and ‘together’ and how space plays a critical role as an instrument of social differentiation and as a vehicle for asserting social class ideology. The illuminations of the calendar communicate the cultural associations of peasants with the land, and of aristocrats with the independence of it. The binding of the peasant to the land was not only part of the stereotypical depiction of the peasant but also had the character of a command “You shall work” (Tu labora). This visualized to the elite readers of the Très Riches Heures (and other Psalters and Hours) their power and authority over the peasant labor force.

In Peter Paul Rubens and the decoration of the Jesuit church in Antwerp Valérie Herremans looks at the oldest sources of the building history of this magnificent church and where Rubens's name occurs in these. She has thoroughly researched sources, documents, publications and works of art and brings the extremely diverse material objects which lead to a number of new elements under our attention. To be able to understand Rubens's role in the building's development Herremans also examines the contemporary working methods and the role of sculptor-architect Hans van Mildert in all this. Besides the numerous altarpieces and the exceptional programme
of ceilings for the Jesuit church, Rubens contributed greatly to the building’s appearance by providing the designs for the bountiful architectural-sculptural ornaments and for the furnishings.

Around 1617-1618 Rubens painted for the high altar of the Jesuit church in Antwerp *The Miracles of St. Francis Xavier*. In *A hint of distant Asia in Rubens’s The Miracles of St. Francis Xavier* author Mayu Fujikawa focusses on the differentiations and indications of foreignness in this painting and more in particular on one of the figures in a ‘Korean’ costume. The essay explores Rubens’s purpose for including a figure dressed in East Asian clothing within the altarpiece and how he evoked a sense of the exotic for European eyes. With the luxurious and costly silk textile he indicated a highly developed civilization with a great amount of wealth.

Paul Vandenbroeck’s article *The Solomonic column and the double spiral* describes Rubens’s use of the Solomonic column and how the ‘twist’, with its connotations of dynamism, is also a recurrent feature in his art. Starting from the Baroque tapestries with Solomonic columns, the author looks southwards to the Mediterranean, to Antiquity and even to North African cultures, thus placing the Solomonic column in a broader anthropological perspective, relating it to a sensorial but also as a meta-sensorial experiential data, linking the double spiral to the body’s energies, the chakras, and the ‘birth motif’. The double turn and the birth motif are universal symbols found in many cultures.

*When the daughter came in and danced. Revisiting Salome’s Dance in Medieval and Early Modern Iconology* explores the theme of the dancing girl and woman. Barbara Baert analyses a variety of artworks where Salome has been represented and explains what is not any longer obvious for today’s spectator. Dance, the body, the head, blood, skin, textile, space, spatial energy, the energy of the body, psycho-energetics as well as the importance of the unvisible detail, all this gets attention and results in a fascinating article. Barbara Baert also wrote *Kairos or Occasion as Paradigm in the Visual Medium. Nachleben, Iconography, Hermeneutics*. In this essay she not only examines the literary-historical impact and iconographical Nachleben of Kairos, but also the concept of opportunity as a paradigm for art history. It contributes to fundamental research relating to time and
the perception of time in the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Baert also offers insights into how Kairos can function as a hermeneutic key when it comes to the image and its embedment is cultural-historical dynamics.

The final article in this Annual, *Tapestry as a Brand for the Belgian State*, resulted from my doctorate research about tapestries in Belgium after the Second World War. It considers the attempts to revive Belgian tapestry making, going back to before WW II, and the drive for reconstruction after it. The role of a number of artists and the commission of tapestries by the Belgian State through the ministries is looked at. Also given is an overview of the competitions for tapestry designs and the exhibitions of Belgian contemporary tapestries that were organized up to 1980 to bring wider attention to this branch of the arts, all too often reduced to mere ‘decorative’ art.

All together the essays to this *Jaarboek Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen 2013-2014* are of varied subjects and interests and I am sure a lot of readers will be fascinated by them. I would like to thank dr. Paul Vandenbroeck for the editing of the annual, all authors for their enthusiastic contribution and Frédéric Jonckheere for his administrative support.

I hope you will enjoy reading this publication.

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