

Sessions at HNA (Ghent, 24–26 May 2018)

HNA Conference, Ghent, May 24–26, 2018

H-ArtHist Redaktion

Call for paper received:

[\[1\]](#) Picture This: The Role of Images in Alba amicorum

[\[2\]](#) Unravelling the anonymous masters in the Rhine Meuse Region c. 1500-1550

[\[1\]](#)

Picture This: The Role of Images in Alba amicorum

In the sixteenth century in northern Europe, a new practice took hold among young scholars: students gathered signatures as mementoes of their time at university. Initially, they did so in the pages of their private Bibles. Starting in northern Germany around the middle of the sixteenth century, university students—literate men of sufficient means to study medicine, law, or theology—gathered the marks of friendship, the signs of status, the traces of personal networks in bound volumes. Within the span of a century, this practice spread from Germany through the Netherlands and to England, and templates were devised to satisfy the desire among humanists, nobility, and theologians alike to preserve signatures of friends, colleagues, peers, and aspirational peers. These books, known as Stammbücher or alba amicorum, were actively assembled by men and, later and in lesser numbers, women too in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This “new apparatus” captured and likewise fostered connections among the movers and shakers of early modern Europe. By way of their alliances and friendships (and alliances strategically framed as friendships) these humanists and statesmen produced the culture of learning and discovery we associate with this period. The volumes of signatures they assembled, alba amicorum, are maps, in a sense, of early modern knowledge networks and social systems at work.

Today, hundreds of alba amicorum, archives of lives and associations long past and relics of encounters, are preserved in European libraries. Some have been studied individually and they have been studied as a genre, but to date alba amicorum have been studied almost exclusively for the information they contain rather than for the vast store of images— from amateurish watercolors of heraldry and costume studies to stunning, jewel-like works of art and refined penwork—contained in them. This session is intended to highlight these forgotten works, crucial pictorial traces of early modern social history. While the content of some of the books has been digitized, scholarly interest in the information contained in the albums has favored making the signatures, rather than the images, available for study remotely. Calling scholarly attention to the ways in which alba served as repositories for collecting images (whole print series and extensive costume studies survive intact in some instances) and as vehicles for image dissemination, this session will also consider digital preservation and study of alba amicorum. This session welcomes curators and scholars to address pictorial elements of alba amicorum as material artifacts in the context of art his-

tory, history of collecting, material history, and history of knowledge.

Please submit a proposal of ca. 250 words accompanied by a brief bio (100 words) to Claudia Swan (cswan@northwestern.edu) by May 15, 2017.

Panel Chair: Claudia Swan, Associate Professor, Department of Art History, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL USA.

NB: If you submit a proposal to more than one session, you should notify the chairs in advance. Only papers that are unpublished and not previously presented will be considered. Speakers must be HNA members at the time of the conference. The conference language will be English.

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Unravelling the anonymous masters in the Rhine Meuse Region c. 1500-1550

Session Chairs: Cynthia Osiecki and Lars Hendrikman

Over the past two decades the interest for painters of the sixteenth century steadily increased. To a much lesser degree, the interest in wood sculpture also increased, which is underlined by research and exhibitions on for instance Tilman Riemenschneider (1999-2000), Jan van Steffeswert (2000), Nicolaus Gerhardt (2011), Jan Borman (forthcoming 2019) and the so-called "Master of Elsloo" (2013, and forthcoming 2019). The latter stands out, because it deals rather with an artistic phenomenon than an individual sculptor. The phenomenon can be observed over the span of half a century, radiating from Dutch South Limburg across the present day Belgium and German borders.

The Master of Elsloo was "baptised" in 1940, after a wooden statue of The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne, then and now in the village of Elsloo in South Limburg. However, this location was not the historic one, which was supposedly the city of Roermond in the same region, also the presumed residence of the statue's sculptor. Ever since the "Elsloo-group" grew up to 200 sculptures, engulfing anonymous wood sculptors from the surrounding area, such as the Master of Neeroeteren, the Master of Siersdorf and the Master of Beek. Hardly without any exceptions the sculptures are (semi) freestanding religious figures or figure groups in a - compared to developments in cities in Brabant and elsewhere – old fashioned manner. Until now, not one single artwork in this group could be connected to written documents or a documented sculptor, and just one work is securely dated (1523).

Recently, the works in nowadays Belgium, have been studied most thoroughly, with an emphasis on technical aspects (published 2013). Currently, the Bonnefantenmuseum is undertaking technical, archival and stylistic research into the group of works that can be found in the Netherlands and Germany, which will result in an exhibition in 2019. In doing so, we came across, and will be coming across, practical, heuristic and methodological questions, which we would like to address in a wider context than the Master of Elsloo alone. We therefore invite papers dealing with technical, stylistic, and/ or historiographical questions relating to sculpture between circa 1500-1550 in Northern Europe, with a special interest in papers dealing with wood sculpture.

Contributions may address, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- In what way does the workshop practice and the division of labour in a sculptor's workshop differ from the somewhat better analysed workshop practice in a painters' shop?
- The mobility of sculptors or stylistic motives within artistic regions and transregional. How do guilds, wander years and patrons influence mobility?
- The adaption of new (i.e. renaissance or Italianate) motifs in wood sculpture in comparison to stone

sculpture and painting. Does this differ per region? Which transition styles are visible (Kavaler coined the term Renaissance Gothic). Can we separate developments in sculpture from those in painting in Northern Europe?

- How is the choice of material (wood, alabaster, copper etc.) determined by costs, location, subject etc.?
- Is, by absence of other means such as archival or technical evidence, connoisseurship alone a valid tool for attributing wood sculpture to one single hand or workshop?

We invite scholars, curators, young researchers and doctoral students to submit abstracts in English of no more than 250 words plus a short bio of maximal 100 words no later than Sunday 4 June 2017 to Hendrikman@bonnefantenmuseum.nl and Osiecki@bonnefantenmuseum.nl.

The session is organized by:

Cynthia Osiecki who currently works as scientific assistant at the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht and is a PhD candidate at Greifswald University (since 2013).

Lars Hendrikman, the curator of old master painting and sculpture in the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht (since 2006).

Reference:

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