

## Session at HNA 2021 (Amsterdam/Den Haag, 2–5 Jun 21)

Historians of Netherlandish Art Conference 2021, Amsterdam/Den Haag, Jun 2–5, 2021

Deadline: Jul 1, 2020

ArtHist Redaktion

Dis/abilities in Early Modern Netherlandish Art

Session organizers:

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Netherlandish art has a very rich iconography of sensory and motor disability. This session invites papers that explore, expand and interpret this corpus in novel ways. It aims at analyzing contexts in which the disabled are depicted in secular and religious images, and examining visual strategies adopted in those images to express socioreligious, legal, and economic anxieties caused by the presence of the disabled in the increasingly urban, mercantile, and work-oriented communities. We invite potential speakers to consider how visual arts negotiated the often negative approaches to the disabled and chronically ill members of society with the Christian call to charity in an era when the traditional distinction between the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor was gradually becoming obsolete. Further, questions of collecting and market for those images shall be addressed, along with the impact of sixteenth-century religious reformations on the approaches to the disabled and the poor. We also want to draw attention to the careers of artists with disability in the early modern period. Finally, this session aims at investigating methodologies relevant to the study of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century iconography of disability. While in recent years disability studies have become an important area of research in social sciences and humanities, their methodological and theoretical approaches, often grounded in postcolonialism, are yet to produce satisfying and non-anachronistic readings of early modern imagery. Conversely, studies published by social, cultural, and medical historians are often sparsely, poorly, and repetitively illustrated. Art historians have a unique contribution to make by bringing to light a broad and diverse visual discourse on disability and to an admittedly smaller yet important group of historic representations of and by individual people with a disability. Similarly, we want to call attention to the relative absence of exhibitions dedicated to disability. While museums themselves have vastly improved physical accessibility, they often struggle with actually engaging people with a disability through content-driven methods. Scholarship in this area is meaningful. It impacts current debates on diversity and inclusion, not just within the confines of academia and the museum world, but in society at large. Together, museum curators and art historians are well equipped to sensitively interpret the generalized visual discourse on disability as they are keenly aware of the specific objectives of differing image types, and can recover unique faces and voices from history

through a much more in-depth knowledge of collections. While, as outlined above, we invite papers on a broad range of subjects related to the representation of disability in the early modern Netherlandish art, preference will be given to those papers which discuss unpublished images and case-studies, and explore the careers of artists with a disability.

Please send proposals of max. 500 words and a single-paged curriculum vitae to the session chairs: [bak018@shsu](mailto:bak018@shsu) and [bert.watteeuw@antwerpen.be](mailto:bert.watteeuw@antwerpen.be) by July 1, 2020. Applicants will be notified by the program chairs no later than 1 August 2020.

Reference:

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