

Loose Heads (Rome, 21-22 Sep 09)

Barbara Baert

Symposium Loose Heads
21 and 22 September 2009
Academia Belgica
&
Istituto Olandese a Roma, Rome

Organised by
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Point of departure in this symposium is the representational tradition in word and image of loose heads, the iconification of separate body parts and its cultural-historical significance in relation to changing concepts of sensations/pain, cruelty and their practice.

In art and hagiography the 'loose or disembodied head' holds a pivotal role. Well-known examples are the so-called 'cephalophores', amongst which the patron of France St Denis is the most widely known. After their execution they picked up their head and carried it along towards chapel, church or grave. In other cases the head takes up its original place after the beheading. A special veneration of reliquaries in the form of the heads developed in the High Middle and continues to the present. In the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance new examples and categories of increasingly popular 'loose heads' developed. In Italy as well as in Northern Europe many St John confraternities came into being, which venerated the head of Saint John or "Johannes in disco". It is telling that many of these organizations consoled the capitally condemned in their last moments and often negotiated with the medical doctors who were after these bodies for anatomy.

Thanks to a renewed and broad interest in the Bible especially the severed heads of the Old and New Testament gained popularity during the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period. This seems to have expressed itself in hundred of paintings and woodcuts of Judith and Salomé with the heads of Holofernes and John the Baptist, next to those of David with that of Goliath.

Accademia Belgica

<http://www.academiabelgica.it/>

Istituto Olandese a Roma

<http://www.nir-roma.it/>

Iconology Research Group (K.U.Leuven)

<http://www.iconologyresearchgroup.org/>

University of Groningen

<http://www.rug.nl/>

Programme

Monday 21 September

@ Istituto Olandese a Roma

9:15 Coffee

9:20 Opening by the directors Prof. Walter Geerts (AB)
and Prof. Bernard Stolte (KNIR)

9:30 Setting Concept and Agenda by Catrien Santing and
Barbara Baert

10:00 Esther Cohen (Jerusalem): Head and body: The meaning of
decapitation

10:45 Coffee

11:00 Scott Montgomery (Denver): Securing the Sacred Head:
Cephalophory and Relic Claims

11:45 Jeanette Kohl (California): The Currency of Heads. Portrait
Medals and Reliefs in the Renaissance

12:30 Barbara Baert (Leuven): Head and face. Spiritual and visual
intertwinings between the Johannesschussel and the vera icon

13:15 Lunch

14:30 Mateusz Kapustka (Wroclaw): Fighting with St. John's Heads.
Images of the Caput in a Political Struggle

15:30 Visit to the complex of San Giovanni Decollato

20:00 Dinner at the Academia Belgica

Tuesday 22 September

@ Academia Belgica

9:00 Coffee

9:15 Bert Treffers (KNIR Rome): Baroque Heads in
Comparison: Sts John, Gennaro and Andrew

10:00 Arjan de Koomen (Amsterdam): The Victimized Artist:
Decapitated Selfportraits of the Early Modern Period

10:45 Coffee

11:00 Marina Montesano (Genova): Adam's skull

11:45 Bob Mills (London): Talking Heads

12:30 Dominic-Alain Boariu (Geneva): Cephalovory. A
homofageous gaze over some Western Art's beheadings

13:15 Lunch

14.15 Jetze Touber (Groningen): Late Antique Beheaded
Martyrs in Counter-Reformation Martyrologies

15:00 Catrien Santing (Groningen): Matters of the heart
or the brain? Renaissance discussions about body and soul

15:45 Coffee

16:00 Bert Watteeuw (Leuven): Ruff Stuff. Framing the Face in
Early Modern Dress and Portraiture

16:45 Florike Egmond (Leiden): Drawing conclusions

Barbara Baert and Catrien Santing: Formulating
preliminary content book

19:00 Dinner

Professor dr. Barbara Baert

Medieval Art, History of Christian Art, Iconology Research Group (IRG)

Faculty of Arts Room 04.05

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Reference:

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