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3 Pos. Researchers and Data Scientist (m/w/x), project BRAIN 2.0, Brussels

Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Sep 1, 2023–Aug 31, 2027
Application deadline: Jun 30, 2023

Ingrid Goddeeris, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium

[1] Researcher, PhD Student (m/w/x), project BRAIN 2.0: ProvEnhance. WP3: Provenance research
[2] Researcher, PhD Student (m/w/x), project BRAIN 2.0: ProvEnhance. WP4: Art market history
[3] Data scientist / Data manager / Database programmer (part-time) (m/w/x), project BRAIN 2.0: ProvEnhance

[1] Researcher, PhD Student (m/w/x), project BRAIN 2.0: ProvEnhance.
WP3: Provenance research, 2023-2027

The PhD project is part of the larger research project ProvEnhance: Enhancing the provenance data of the collections of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (RMFAB) since 1933. Scientific study, digital valorization and narrative in context. It is a 4-year research project funded by the BRAIN 2.0 program of the Belgian Science Policy PPS (see project page), coordinated by the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium with as partners the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), the Technische Universität Berlin (TU) and the Belgian State Archives / CegeSoma (see below for more information about the partner institutions).

Since the 1990s, the study of the provenance of works of art has become increasingly important in Europe and the Western world, in an ethical context determined by questions of restitution and empowerment for remembrance work. Following the Washington, Vilnius Forum and Terezin Declarations, Belgium, as many countries in Europe, through a special commission, studied around the year 2000 the issue of restitution of property looted from Jews during the Second World War in depth, using then available archival sources and research on institutions involved (see Rapports Commission Buysse 2001). However, twenty years later, the international provenance research and societal landscapes have evolved and there is an increasing awareness of the mechanisms of loot.

The project ProvEnhance aims to lay a global scientific and methodological frame for provenance research in Belgium for artworks acquired around WWII. As a real case-study, it will systematically study and enrich the provenance data of artworks entered in the collections of the RMFAB from 1933 on, concentrating on the pre-, war and postwar periods, but possibly extending until the 1990's for subsets of acquisitions that could have a story related to the (pre)war-period. Another objective of the project is to improve transparency by displaying the research results in the digital and physical museum environment.

The PhD-research position is part of the work package "Provenance Research on the RMFAB Collection as a -study for Belgium" (WP3). It will provide the opportunity for the PhD candidate to examine in the context of an in-depth and systematic research the provenance of objects that entered the MRBAB's collection in various ways (e.g. purchase, donation, exchange) during the National Socialist and in the postwar era, or

even later if they have a story possibly related to the (pre)war-period. A corpus of artworks from the art collection of the RMFAB (paintings) will be initially prioritized following a risk analysis based on WWII provenance research's international standards and practices, and a screening of all the RMFAB acquisitions. After a general sample analysis, the researcher will systematically verify provenances and validate them through historical and archival research, using RMFAB sources (material study, collection data, archival and relevant library materials) and sources from public and private archives, at least in Belgium and Germany.

The PhD-student will benefit from the extensive knowledge and network of the project partners and be integrated in current provenance research initiatives and cooperation projects in the academic and museum sector in Germany and Europe. A connection to the international association Arbeitskreis Provenienzforschung e.V. offers networking opportunities as does the participation in the (inter-university) doctoral colloquia or the participation in or independent organization of international workshops and conferences at the two partner universities in Brussels and Berlin.

The PhD research will be conducted under the co-supervision of the ULB and the TU Berlin: the successful candidate will be enrolled as a PhD in both universities and defend a doctoral thesis at the end of the 4-year research.

Job duties
- To research the provenances of a selection of paintings preserved at the RMFAB and the museum's purchasing policies and practices, in the framework of the ProvEnhance project as described above and write a doctoral thesis on a topic relevant to the project
- The commitment to spend parts of the project period in Germany or to make regular longer stays in Germany for the archival research and the participation in conferences, workshops and the PhD student activities
- To contribute to the scientific activities and academic outputs of the project such as conferences and publication of article(s), including the organization of and communication about these activities through appropriate channels
- To participate in the project management and reporting, with regular feedback to the project team on progress
- To collaborate with the other project researchers, a.o. in structuring and sharing the provenance data on the RMFAB collection and art market during WWII
- To collaborate with other museum departments according to the project needs, e.g. the curators, the mediation and communication teams, etc.
- To collaborate with international research networks on provenance
- To participate to the university PhD program requirements (both ULB and TU Berlin)
- To support the project advancement through other administrative tasks as well as other duties that may be reasonably requested

Profile
- Master's Degree in Art history, History, Digital Humanities, Cultural Studies, Cultural Management or Law, or any other disciplines related to the project
- Strong interest and possibly research experience in Provenance Research or European Art Market history (20th century). A familiarity with Belgian history during WWII is an asset
- Fluency in French and excellent knowledge in German (at least excellent reading skills) as well as a professional command of English; knowledge of Dutch is an asset

- Excellent written and oral communication skills

- Excellent information literacy skills or willingness to learn quickly (use of research and historical databases, bibliographic management tools)

- Proficiency in the use of Microsoft Office / Microsoft 365, Internet usage and social media communication

- Self-motivated with ability to meet deadlines and to work on own initiative

- Excellent organizational skills, ability to work in team

- Ability to write project reports and make presentations to diverse groups

- Availability to work both at the RMFAB in Brussels and at the TU-Berlin (duration and times to be discussed)

Conditions of service and compensation

- We offer a two-years renewable contract as Scientific assistant (SW 1 – scientific career grade 1) at RMFAB, combined with a PhD position at the ULB and TU Berlin (with obligation of long or regular stays in Berlin during the project).

- Wage scale SW10 or SW11 (SW11 if at least 2 years of recognized scientific seniority).

- Salary (gross amounts adapted to the current index, regulatory allowances not included) between : €49.000 and €58.000 per year.

- A budget for research-related travel will be available as well.

Work place

- Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Museum street 9, 1000 Brussels.

- Possibility of working partly from home.

Working hours

Monday to Friday; duties might involve working outside normal office hours or even at weekends (for on--call duty).

The contract will start on 1 September 2023.

Advantages

- The Museum is an equal opportunity employer, supports a diverse workplace and offers a competitive benefits package including:

- possibility of acquiring a bilingualism premium

- extensive training offer (to be followed during working hours)

- free hospitalization insurance

- free commuting by public transport

- possibility for a bicycle allowance

- various social benefits

- easily accessible by public transport

- company restaurant at democratic prices

- sliding working hours in a 38-hour week.

- possibility of teleworking after internship period

Application Instructions

Candidates are invited to submit their application in English consisting of:

- a cv, including a detailed list of course marks/grades of bachelor and master studies

- a letter of motivation stating the candidate's qualifications and reasons for applying

- a writing sample (published article, MA thesis, ...)
- the contact information of two reference persons (including information on relationship with the applicant).

Interviews with a selection of the applicants are scheduled in the month of July.

Closing date for receipt of applications: 30.06.2023 via aude.alexandre@fine-arts-museum.be (ref. ProvEnhance PhD WP3)

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[2] Researcher, PhD Student (m/w/x), project BRAIN 2.0: ProvEnhance.
WP4: Art market history, 2023-2027.

The PhD project is part of the larger research project ProvEnhance: Enhancing the provenance data of the collections of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (RMFAB) since 1933. Scientific study, digital valorization and narrative in context. It is a 4-year research project funded by the BRAIN 2.0 program of the Belgian Science Policy PPS (see project page), coordinated by the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium with as partners the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), the Technische Universität Berlin (TU) and the Belgian State Archives /CegeSoma (see below for more information about the partner institutions).

The project ProvEnhance aims to lay a global scientific and methodological frame for provenance research in Belgium for artworks acquired around WWII. As a real case-study, it will systematically study and enrich the provenance data of artworks entered in the collections of the RMFAB from 1933 on, concentrating on the pre-, war and postwar periods, but possibly extending until the 1990's for subsets of acquisitions that could have a story related to the (pre)war-period. Another objective of the project is to improve transparency by displaying the research results in the digital and physical museum environment.

The PhD-research position is part of the work package "Study of the Belgian Art Market 1933 – 1960" (WP4). It will provide the opportunity for a PhD candidate to analyze the Belgian art market during WWII and thus address research question(s) such as: who were the actors of the art market in Belgium? What were their international connections? How did the market evolve during the period under study (prices, quality, fakes etc…)? The research will rely on both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study of the pre-, war and immediate post-war institutional, political & legal framework (spoliations, restitutions, art import/export) on the basis of prior research and national and international archival sources (Office for economic recuperation, archives of the postwar purges etc.) will provide the context. The creation of sales database (on the basis of published sources (Almanacs and Fine Arts Directories, Belgian Sales Catalogs …) and databases created by partners) will provide a first overview of the importance of each actor on the art market. It will also serve as basis for the quantitative network analysis and reveal the strength of the connection between actors. The creation of prices indices using hedonic regressions will allow the PhD candidate to determine the general price movement of the market and whether the price paid for a specific artwork was in line with prices for similar artworks sold at the same time. Other econometric methodologies will be used when necessary, depending upon the research questions and the quality of the available data.

The PhD candidate will rely on the project team's expertise in history, digital humanities, and economics as the analysis of the Belgian art market's complexity requires a transdisciplinary approach.

The PhD-research will be conducted under the supervision of a professor at the ULB and the successful

candidate will be enrolled as a PhD in this university and defend a doctoral thesis at the end of the 4-year research.

Job duties

- To study and analyze the art market in Belgium during WWII, including the mapping of the actors and an economic analysis, as well as the legal and political context, in the framework of the ProvEnhance project as described above. He or she will write a doctoral thesis on the topic / enrollment in a doctoral school at ULB depending on the profile of the candidate - each doctoral school has its prerequisite

- To contribute to the scientific activities and academic outputs of the project such as conferences and publication of article(s), including the organization of and communication about these activities through appropriate channels

- To participate in the project management and reporting, with regular feedback to the project team on progress

- To collaborate with the other project researchers, a.o. in structuring and sharing the network data on the art market during WWII

- To collaborate with other museum departments according to the project needs, e.g. the mediation and communication teams, etc.

- To collaborate with international research networks on art market

- To participate to the university PhD program requirements (ULB)

- To support the project advancement through other administrative tasks as well as other duties that may be reasonably requested

Profile

- Master's degrees in Art history, History, Economic History, Digital Humanities, , Business, Economics, or any other disciplines related to the project

- Strong interest and possibly research experience in European Art Market history (20th century). A familiarity with Belgian history during WWII is an asset

- Strong interest or experience in using econometric methodologies for market analysis

- Fluency in French as well as a professional command of English; knowledge (at least reading skills) of German and/or Dutch is an asset

- Excellent written and oral communication skills

- Excellent information literacy skills or willingness to learn quickly (use of research and historical databases, bibliographic management tools)

- Proficiency in the use of Microsoft Office / Microsoft 365, Internet usage and social media communication

- Self-motivated with ability to meet deadlines and to work on own initiative

- Excellent organizational skills, ability to work in team

- Ability to write project reports and make presentations to diverse groups

- Conditions of service and compensation

- We offer a two-years renewable contract as PhD candidate, with a fellowship paid on a monthly basis. The annual amount of the fellowship is based on the ULB and FWB scale.

- A budget for research-related travel will be available as well.

Work place

- Université libre de Bruxelles (Av. Franklin Roosevelt 50, 1050 Brussels). The candidate's research unit will depend on his/her academic background.

- The candidate will also be encouraged to work at least part-time with the project team at the Museum of Fine Arts of Belgium, Museum street 9, 1000 Brussels.

Working hours: Monday to Friday.

The contract will start on 1 September 2023.

Application Instructions
Candidates are invited to submit their application in English, consisting of:
- a cv, including a detailed list of course marks/grades of bachelor and master studies
- a letter of motivation stating the candidate's qualifications and reasons for applying
- a writing sample (published article, MA thesis, ...)
- the contact information of two reference persons (including information on relationship with the applicant).
Interviews with a selection of the applicants are scheduled in the month of July.

Closing date for receipt of applications: 30.06.2023 via aude.alexandre@fine-arts-museum.be (ref. ProvEnhance PhD WP4)

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[3] Data scientist / Data manager / Database programmer (part-time) (m/w/x), project BRAIN 2.0: ProvEnhance, 2023-2027.

This position is part of the research project ProvEnhance: Enhancing the provenance data of the collections of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (RMFAB) since 1933. Scientific study, digital valorization and narrative in context. It is a 4-year research project funded by the BRAIN 2.0 program of the Belgian Science Policy PPS (see project page), coordinated by the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium with as partners the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), the Technische Universität Berlin (TU) and the Belgian State Archives / CegeSoma (see below for more information about the partner institutions).

Since the 1990s, the study of the provenance of works of art has become increasingly important in Europe and the Western world. Today, the legitimacy of museum collections as well as the functioning of art market are questioned. Based on the study of the collections of the RMFAB, the project ProvEnhance aims to lay a global scientific and methodological frame for provenance research in Belgium for artworks acquired around WWII. It also aims to increase transparency by displaying the research results in the physical and digital museum environment (in particular within the museum collection catalogue), as well as to increase impact on society by publishing narratives of the collection history via informative websites and other existing channels (e.g. CegeSoma Belgium WWII website, RMFAB social medias channels).

The data scientist / data manager will work in collaboration with 2 PhD researchers who are part of the project, and will contribute respectively to the provenance research and art market analyses. The data scientist / data manager will be able to rely on the project team's and network's expertise in digital provenance and collaborate with RMFAB Digital Museum for the integration of the data model with the museum collection database (CMS).

Job duties

As a data scientist / data manager, you will be in charge of the work package "Provenance Data Model, FAIR Data and Linked entities" (WP5), and assume the following:

- provide and formalize following the FAIR principles an adequate data model for provenance data on artworks on the basis of an analysis of existing standards and practices (e.g. Linked Art Data Model, JDCRP Project) and specific needs of the research project ((in)security of the information, historical management of the information, state of research label)

- set up a corresponding data infrastructure to store and provide the RMFAB collections provenance research data, compliant with the requirements for the museum Collection Management System

- open up this data as linked open data and publish the data model (e.g. on GitHub)

- prepare graphics, statistics or data visualizations for the project website

- collaborate with the other 2 researchers working on the project and punctually assist them if specific needs in terms of digital humanities arise (e.g. use of API, data cleaning and enrichment)

- contribute to the scientific activities and academic outputs of the project such as conferences and publication of article(s)

- participate in the project reporting on data management, with regular feedback to the project team on progress

- collaborate with other museum departments according to the project needs, e.g. the digital museum or other ongoing research projects (HENSOR, BISHOPS)

Profile

- Master of Arts in Computer sciences or Digital Humanities with excellent programming skills or equivalent education and/or at least 1 year proven experience relevant to the project

- Proven knowledge of database programming and mainstream programming languages in digital humanities, such as Python, JSON, and, if possible, semantic web vocabularies (RDF etc.)

- Excellent knowledge of the technologies and methodologies for data modelling and FAIR publishing / linked data, as well as data reconciliation

- Experience or knowledge of at least strong interest to experiment data visualization technologies

- Interest in working in the cultural landscape; experience with the common vocabularies used in the GLAM community (CIDOC-CRM, Getty Vocabularies, VIAF, …) is an asset

- At least a professional command of English; knowledge French and/or Dutch is an asset

- Self-motivated with ability to meet deadlines, to work on own initiative

- Excellent organizational skills, ability to work in team

- Ability to write project reports and make presentations to diverse groups

Conditions of service and compensation

- We offer a four-year-part-time contract (19 hours/week) as Scientific assistant (SW 1 – scientific career grade 1) at RMFAB.

- Wage scale SW10 or SW11 (SW11 if at least 2 years of recognized scientific seniority).

- Salary (gross amounts adapted to the current index, regulatory allowances not included) between € 25.000€ and € 30.000 per year.

Work place

- Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Museum street 9, 1000 Brussels

- Possibility of working partly from home.

Working hours: Days to be defined between Monday to Friday.

Entry into service planned for 1.09.2023.

Advantages

- The Museum is an equal opportunity employer, supports a diverse workplace and offers a competitive benefits package including:
- possibility of acquiring a bilingualism premium
- extensive training offer (to be followed during working hours)
- free hospitalization insurance
- free commuting by public transport
- possibility for a bicycle allowance
- various social benefits
- easily accessible by public transport
- company restaurant at democratic prices
- sliding working hours in a 38-hour week.
- possibility of teleworking after internship period
- interesting benefits and offers thanks to the Benefits@Work card
- taking over years of seniority in the public sector
- corporate discount in the museum shops

Application Instructions

Candidates are invited to submit their application in English, consisting of:
- a cv, including a detailed list of course marks/grades of bachelor and master studies
- a letter of motivation stating the candidate's qualifications and reasons for applying

Interviews with a selection of the applicants are scheduled, as well as a small test to evaluate programming and data management skills, during the month of July.

Closing date for receipt of applications: 30.06.2023 via aude.alexandre@fine-arts-museum.be (ref. ProvEnhance Data manager)

Candidates interested in combining this job with a 4-year complementary part-time position in data science (0.5 ETP - 2023-2027, funded by the European Commission – ERC Starting Grant) are invited to specify their interest in their application. For further information, please write to Aude.Alexandre@fine-arts-museum.be or Anne-Sophie.Radermecker@ulb.be.

Reference:
STIP: 3 Pos. Researchers and Data Scientist (m/w/x), project BRAIN 2.0, Brussels. In: ArtHist.net, Jun 9, 2023 (accessed Jul 31, 2025), <https://arthist.net/archive/39499>.