

Session at HNA (Cambridge/London, 10–13 Jul 24)

Historians of Netherlandish Art Conference 2024, Cambridge/London, Jul 10–13, 2024

Deadline: Sep 29, 2023

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Moving Dutch Knowledge: Collections as Knowledge Repositories and Sites of Transformation and Transfiguration.

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Both the Southern and Northern Netherlands were a mighty hub for art, culture, trade, and, ultimately, knowledge. Much of the latter has been preserved in objects as well as in the context in which they were collected and presented. However, all too often, the meta-level of knowledge is obscured by particular aspects related to single objects, without taking into account the larger context of the collection. Ultimately, collections of artistic and cultural objects as well as literal sources can serve not only as repositories of knowledge, but also display how this knowledge was perceived, stored, displayed, transformed, applied, and implemented into new contexts.

In this particular case knowledge primarily encompasses the respective scientific level of knowledge and understanding: Exotic objects, for instance, convey awareness of flora and fauna of distant countries and continents as well as their exploration; scientific instruments demonstrate the technical achievements of the time; the same applies to ethnographic pieces, ancient relics, or alchemical artefacts, which may stand for knowledge, learning, discovery, and contemporary (linguistic) fixation and systematisation. In addition, knowledge may also refer to epistemological systems of knowledge collections such as Aristoteles's five Intellectual Virtues.

As soon as scholarly attention is shifted onto the objects themselves, the focus is usually laid on the context of origin, style, artistic design process, materiality, or significance for cultural or economic history, to name only a few. The idea of "knowledge repositories" has already been explored in studies on art chambers and especially constcamer paintings (e.g. Koeleman 2021). In order to examine this broad concept in a larger context, this session would like to shed light on

a variety of collections and objects. In addition to aristocratic collections, also collections created in a private, religious, or economic context come into question here, as well as objects used in everyday practice, for example in craft workshops or publishing companies.

This session seeks to focus on knowledge entailed in collections in either The Netherlands or foreign collections holding Flemish or Dutch objects in the early modern era. Examined in this way, collections are understood to function as knowledge repositories which are able to transmit, transform, and transfigure knowledge via the context in which they are presented and perceived in. Special emphasis is placed on the trajectories of "Dutch" knowledge, i.e. knowledge that originated from The Netherlands, was passed through them, or was considered Netherlandish.

Possible case studies may address the following questions, but are not limited to:

- Which kinds of knowledge transfer originated in The Netherlands?
- Which knowledge was created, transformed, or transfigured in The Netherlands?
- Which aspects of knowledge could Netherlandish objects add to a collection and in which way do these hold the ability to redraft a collection?
- In which ways was Dutch knowledge connected to imperialism and how could this knowledge be altered or even adulterated?
- Which knowledge did the Dutch claim as their own?
- How did Dutch knowledge ultimately shape the view on The Netherlands in foreign countries?

The session focuses on the early modern period, but contributions from other periods are also welcome. We especially welcome submissions from early career researchers.

Proposals should consist of a title and an abstract (about 500 words) for a 20 min talk and a short CV. Please send your proposal in one PDF file by Friday September 29th to vorstand@ankk.org. Accepted participants will be notified by Monday October 10th the latest and will be expected to give confirmation of their participation before Friday October 13th. The ANKK may provide partial travel allowance for speakers. All speakers are expected to be members of HNA by the time of the conference.

Reference:

CFP: Session at HNA (Cambridge/London, 10-13 Jul 24). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 20, 2023 (accessed Apr 4, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/39836>>.