

Zooming In and Out: Reconsidering Hans Memling (Brugge, 20–21 Nov 25)

Auditorium BRUSK, Musea Brugge, Bruges, Belgium, Nov 20–21, 2025

Deadline: Mar 30, 2025

Melis Avkiran, Brussels

To celebrate its opening in 2025, BRON Research Centre (Musea Brugge), in collaboration with the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA, Brussels), is organising a two-day conference on new and ongoing research on the oeuvre of Early Netherlandish painter Hans Memling.

In the spring of 2023 the first phase of the project Decoding Memling commenced, a research project initiated by Musea Brugge to study the 9 works by Hans Memling in its collection. Following the Closer to Van Eyck website, Closer to Memling, in collaboration with other institutions, aims to document the core works in Memling's oeuvre in high resolution and with various imaging techniques. Via the website, the resulting images will be made available to all. This will allow us to come closer to Memling's work than ever before.

Closer to Memling can also aid study of the paintings by Hans Memling—the artist who was active in Bruges from 1465 to his death in 1494—in other ways. In comparison to his contemporaries, Memling's oeuvre survives in relatively large numbers; Dirk de Vos's 1994 monograph of the artist listed some 90 paintings. While a group of key works can be seen in Bruges to this day (in Museum St. John's Hospital and in the Groeningemuseum), others are spread over more than 50 public institutions in at least 17 countries, on 4 different continents. By being able to digitally compare Memling's works, we therefore not only come closer, but we also reach farther, in terms of easier (digital) accessibility to the locations where these works are physically located.

In the 30 years since De Vos's monograph and the landmark exhibition in Bruges, exhibitions with and studies on Memling's works have of course continued. Recent projects include the restoration of one of his largest works, but also the recently launched IOHANNES project from KIK-IRPA and UCLouvain (in collaboration with Musea Brugge) that, between 2024–2029, will study the devotional context of the fifteenth-century paintings of the Saint John's hospital, which includes 6 works by Hans Memling. In light of these recent developments, it seems pertinent to reassess Memling's oeuvre and the questions it poses— and whether these are still the same, or new ones.

For this reason, Musea Brugge, in collaboration with the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA, Brussels), is organising a two-day conference devoted to new and ongoing research on Hans Memling. The conference will also conclude the first phase of the Closer to Memling project and celebrate the opening, in November 2025, of BRON Research Centre.

The aim of the conference is to highlight and stimulate new interdisciplinary research on the pain-

ter by leading and new scholars in the field. We welcome papers that 'zoom in' (case studies of individual paintings) and focus on subjects like attribution, organisation of the workshop, or patronage, but we also invite studies that 'zoom out', by addressing broader cultural historical and historiographical issues, and everything in between—as long as the main focus of your paper is Hans Memling and/or his oeuvre. Contributions may draw upon a variety of disciplines, including (technical) art history, (social; cultural) history, conservation, and conservation science.

Submission procedure:

We invite proposals for 25-minute papers, preferably in English, or in French.

Proposals should be submitted by Sunday 30 March 2025 at the latest via the online form: https://www.museabrugge.be/collecties/bron/bron_academy/reconsidering_memling/call_for_papers

Each submission must consist of a single PDF file with the following components:

- A 100-word biography
- A 300-word abstract
- Optional: 1 or 2 relevant images (e.g. artworks, archival documents, data visualization)

Selection criteria: Proposals will be evaluated based on relevance, clarity, novelty, and contribution to the field. We seek papers that reflect critically on the source material and methodologies employed.

Submission deadline: 30 March 2025

Notification of acceptance: end of April 2025

Contact: for more information please contact symposium@brugge.be

Organising Committee:

Dr. des. Melis Avkiran (KIK-IRPA/UCLouvain), Dr. Bart Fransen (KIK-IRPA), Dr. Christina Currie (KIK-IRPA), Joyce Klein Koerkamp (Musea Brugge), Dr. Anna Koopstra (Musea Brugge), Anne van Oosterwijk (Musea Brugge)

Reference:

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