

New Art-Historical Resource on the Web

Ron Spronk

Web site "Closer to Bosch" is now online: <https://closertobosch.org/>

Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516), the famous Dutch painter whose actual name was Jheronimus van Aken, remains an exceptionally popular painter and draughtsman today. He is, for example, one of only three painters to be included in the historical Canon of the Netherlands, together with Rembrandt and Vincent van Gogh. The 500th-anniversary of his death was commemorated in 2016 with numerous publications and celebrations, especially in the city where he lived and worked, 's-Hertogenbosch. Among these events two major exhibitions (in Madrid and 's-Hertogenbosch) stood out, which together drew well over one million visitors, an astonishing success. The scholarly interest in this remarkable master also remains exceptionally strong. Studies of Bosch were traditionally focused on the often-enigmatic iconography of many of his works, which historians of art have tried to decipher since the late 19th century. In the last decades, especially thanks to the work of the Bosch Research and Conservation Project (or BRCP, see below), numerous works of Hieronymus Bosch, his workshop and his followers have been studied with a large array of technical examinations as well.

Closer to Bosch

The innovative web site Closer to Bosch was officially launched on 24 November 2025 at a festive gathering at the Jheronimus Bosch Art Center (or JBAC, see below) in 's-Hertogenbosch, by Marianne Craste, alderman of the city. Closer to Bosch provides full access to the images that were acquired by the BRCP. All these images, of the highest quality and in extremely high resolutions, have been reprocessed in recent years with the financial support of the JBAC. The detailed images were seamlessly stitched together to create enormous images of the entire painting, and the various images (such as visible and infrared light) were perfectly registered so they can be viewed in context. Users of the site will be able to study and compare paintings in unprecedented detail. The images are presented in combination with texts from publications by the BRCP, and additional paintings and Bosch's drawings will be added later. This website will undoubtedly become an important resource for anyone interested in Bosch and late medieval art in general. Closer to Bosch will make the works of Bosch and the research of the BRCP accessible to a broad and international audience.

The Bosch Research and Conservation Project ran from 2010 to 2019, in the context of the organization of the large exhibition Jheronimus Bosch—Visions of Genius in 's-Hertogenbosch in 2016. The BRCP was the first project ever to research and document a large group of works by a single painter with standardized procedures and the same equipment. The BRCP consisted of art historians, a technical art historian, a conservator/restorer, a specialized art photographer, and a computer specialist. This team traveled to numerous museums, always working with the same cameras and lights, even bringing along the same microscope. All paintings were documented in visi-

ble and infrared light at the same, extremely high resolutions. The award-winning project published two major books on Bosch's oeuvre.

The Jheronimus Bosch Art Center is located in the former St. James Church in 's-Hertogenbosch. Since its opening on March 26, 2007, the JBAC has been promoting appreciation for the work of Bosch, through offering broad educational programming for a variety of audiences, and a museum-like presentation of the entire oeuvre in full-scale, high-quality reproductions. The JBAC receives individual visitors as well as classes from primary and secondary schools, and it organizes exhibitions of contemporary art. The JBAC also serves Bosch scholarship through its specialized library, the organization of international conferences, scholarly publications, and now also with the interactive website Closer to Bosch.

For more information:

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Reference:

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