

Tapestry, Power and Representation (Tournai, 18 Feb 27)

Tournai

Deadline: Jul 8, 2026

Laruelle Anne-Sophie

Tapestry, Power and Representation in the Sixteenth-Century Low Countries. New Perspectives on the Armorial Tapestries of Adrien de Croÿ-Roeulx.

As part of the conservation-restoration project for two armorial tapestries bearing the arms of Adrien de Croÿ-Roeulx, dating from the 1530s and preserved at TAMAT (Museum of Tapestry and Textile Arts of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Tournai), an international study day is being organised to examine these works and the questions they raise.

These two armorial tapestries, dominated by a monumental heraldic composition combining coats of arms, the collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece, and the figure of the dragon, offer a privileged lens through which to examine forms of noble representation in the sixteenth-century Low Countries. They raise questions relating to chivalric culture, the ceremonial uses of tapestry, strategies of aristocratic visibility, and the emblematic forms of power. Their ongoing conservation-restoration also provides an opportunity to reconsider the material, technical, and visual dimensions of this type of production.

Drawing on these works preserved at TAMAT, the study day aims to explore tapestry more broadly as a medium of aristocratic representation, at the intersection of material culture, ceremonial practices, and heraldic and symbolic languages.

While the tapestries of Adrien de Croÿ-Roeulx remain the central point of reference for the study day, proposals addressing comparable objects, related corpora, or broader questions that may shed light, through comparison or contextualisation, on the issues raised by these works are also welcome.

Bringing together art history, social and political history, heraldry, visual culture studies, and conservation-restoration, this study day seeks to encourage dialogue among specialists on ongoing research and emerging lines of inquiry. It also aims to develop comparative and cross-disciplinary perspectives on the circulation of models, objects, artists, and visual forms within the Low Countries and across European courtly contexts.

THEMES

Proposals may address one or more of the following themes:

- Producing, Circulating, Displaying: Tapestry as a Mobile Object

This theme invites contributions that consider tapestry as a material object embedded in patterns of production, mobility, and use. Papers may address weaving centres, workshops, materials, manufacturing techniques, or modes of commission and acquisition. Particular attention may be paid to the circulation of designs, artisans, and works within the Low Countries, as well as to their presence in residential, ceremonial, liturgical, or military spaces.

- Nobility, Networks, and Strategies of Representation

This theme considers tapestries in relation to the social and political strategies of their patron and his aristocratic milieu. Contributions may explore the networks surrounding Adrien de Croÿ-Roeulx, practices of patronage, family dynamics, and modes of representing power within the context of the Habsburg Netherlands, with particular attention to the links between chivalric culture, lineage, dynastic memory, and the use of luxury textiles.

- Heraldry, Emblems, and Visual Languages of Power

This theme focuses on the heraldic and iconographic devices present in the tapestries: coats of arms, mottos, emblems, animal figures, and symbolic motifs. Contributions may examine their role in the construction of aristocratic identities and in practices of political and ceremonial communication. It also invites reflection on the methods and challenges of iconographic interpretation, as well as on the relationships between tapestries, heraldic panels, illuminated manuscripts, and other contemporary visual media.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Proposals for papers (approx. 300 words), accompanied by a short bio-bibliographical note, should be sent by 8 July 2026 to: AS.Laruelle@uliege.be

Notifications of acceptance will be sent in September 2026.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Location: Tournai (with the possibility of online participation).

Languages: French and English.

Length of presentations: 25 minutes, followed by discussion.

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Anne-Sophie LARUELLE (ULiège)

Béatrice PENNANT (TAMAT, Tournai)

PROJECT AND SUPPORT

This study day is part of a study and conservation-restoration project undertaken by TAMAT, with the support of the Fonds Baillet Latour. It may serve as the starting point for a publication.

Reference:

CFP: Tapestry, Power and Representation (Tournai, 18 Feb 27). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 8, 2026 (accessed Jun 8, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52662>>.