# Collections of the Governors of the Habsburg Netherlands (Kyoto, 22 Nov 26)

Kyoto, Nov 22, 2026
Deadline: Aug 9, 2026

Michiko Fukaya

Collections of the Governors of the Habsburg Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.

The main aim of this conference is to gain deeper insight into and develop a clearer understanding of the collections assembled by the governors of the Habsburg Netherlands, from Margaret of Austria to Archduke Leopold Wilhelm.
Although the term governor is used throughout this call, the status of the individuals who held this position varied considerably. Some were legitimate sovereigns in their own right; others served as regents drawn from the Habsburg royal family; still others were appointed governors without familial ties to the dynasty. For the inhabitants and indigenous nobility of the Netherlands, however, the governor represented the highest authority present in the territory and thus served as the embodiment of the polity itself. At the same time, the governor functioned, by definition, as the representative of the Spanish king.
A telling example of this dual role may be found at the court of Albrecht and Isabella. While the language of communication and courtly fashion were predominantly Spanish, local nobles and elites became increasingly integrated into the court over time, and the archducal couple avidly collected works by Netherlandish artists. At the same time, a simple opposition between “Spanish” and “Flemish” or “Netherlandish” is both reductive and potentially anachronistic. In this context, “Spanish” largely denotes the broader Habsburg world, while “Habsburg” culture itself incorporated significant Burgundian—that is, Netherlandish—as well as Castilian elements, particularly during the sixteenth century. One objective of this conference is therefore to explore how perceptions of the “Burgundian” and the “Habsburg” evolved over time and how these identities interacted and overlapped in the collections of the governors.
The complex and non-hereditary nature of the governorship has made it difficult to study these collections from a diachronic perspective. Yet a comparative examination of the governors’ courts and collections promises to yield valuable new insights. By bringing together specialists working on different periods and individuals, the conference seeks to illuminate both continuities and transformations in the character and functions of these collections.
Substantial scholarship has already been devoted to the collections of the governors of the Netherlands. Research on individual collections, however, has developed unevenly. The Burgundian period, especially the first half of the sixteenth century, has been investigated extensively and fruitfully (e.g., Eichberger), while recent scholarship has devoted considerable attention to the reign of Albert and Isabella (e.g., the conference held at KIK-IRPA in 2024 and the works of Ganz,

Raeymaekers, and Duerloo and Thomas). By contrast, the periods of Ernest of Austria, Margaret of Parma—despite the renewed attention generated by the 2025 exhibition dedicated to her—and several other interim or short-term governors remain comparatively understudied. This project does not seek to provide an exhaustive account or to fill every gap in the existing literature. Rather, it aims to assemble as broad a body of evidence as possible and to develop a clearer picture of the courts and collections of these relatively overlooked governors.
With these objectives in mind, we welcome papers concerning any governor of the Habsburg Netherlands during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as comparative studies of collections associated with other branches of the Habsburg dynasty.

Possible Topics
Proposals may address, but are not limited to, the following questions:
- What were the distinctive characteristics of the collection under consideration?
- How were collections inherited, dispersed, or bequeathed, and what significance did these processes have for the cultural politics of the Netherlands?
- What relationships did these collections maintain with national, dynastic, regional, or local forms of representation?
- Did these collections influence local perceptions of, or expectations toward, rulers and governors? If so, how?
- What provenance histories, circulation routes, and intermediary actors shaped the movement of specific objects—such as samurai armor, lacquerware, or other artefacts—before they entered the collection under consideration?

Submission Guidelines
We invite scholars to submit proposals for 30-minute presentations. Please send an abstract of no more than 300 words, together with a brief biographical note, to Michiko Fukaya at michiko.fukaya@kcua.ac.jp by 9 August 2026.

Important Dates
- Submission Deadline: 9 August 2026
- Notification of Acceptance: 20 August 2026
- Conference Date: 22 November 2026

Organizers
Prof. Michiko Fukaya (Kyoto City University of Arts) and prof. Sumiko Imai (Kansai University)

Venue
Kyoto City University of Arts, 57-1 Shimono-chō, Shimogyō-ku, Kyoto, Japan

For any inquiries, please contact Prof. Michiko Fukaya at michiko.fukaya@kcua.ac.jp.

This conference is organized as part of the project A Study on the Art Collections of Successive Governors of the Habsburg Netherlands: Collections as an Apparatus of the Representation of Identity in a Composite State, funded by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (Project ID: 23K25281).

For speakers traveling from overseas, reimbursement of travel expenses of up to JPY 200,000 will

be available. Receipts for airfare and accommodation must be submitted for reimbursement.

Reference:

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