



PRESS RELEASE ATELIER BOUTS

15.01.2024

Dieric Bouts reveals his secrets

M Leuven's focus exhibition 'Atelier Bouts' lays bare the master's practice and showcases the latest research and restoration project

'Atelier Bouts', which runs from 16.02 to 28.04, is a fascinating follow-up story to M Leuven's international retrospective 'DIERIC BOUTS. Creator of Images'. Six iconic artworks have been retained by the museum for a focus exhibition on the scientific research into a 15th-century masterpiece. Visitors will discover the techniques of the Flemish Masters, the composition of the various paint layers, whether Bouts was the sole mastermind behind the works attributed to his hand, and how they are restored today – some 500 years later.

"M Leuven is immensely proud of the successful New Horizons | Dieric Bouts Festival, but we are far from saying goodbye to Bouts, on the contrary," says Bert Cornillie, Alderman for Culture and Chairman of M's board of directors. "Now that Bouts is definitively on the map as an important Flemish Master, he will not only continue to be present in St Peter's Church but also at M. This focus exhibition zooms in on the technical and scientific aspect of his work and takes us behind the scenes of the artist's studio."

"A visit to 'Atelier Bouts' is an unmissable opportunity to see four of Bouts's most important triptychs in the same room", adds Marjan Debaene, curator of Old Masters at M Leuven, "The Last Supper' and 'The Martyrdom of Saint Erasmus' will be permanently returned to St Peter's Church after the exhibition, while 'The Martyrdom of Saint Hippolytus' will go back to St Salvator's Cathedral in Bruges. Meanwhile, 'The Descent from the Cross', a prestigious loan from Granada, will travel to the KIK-IRPA for a major restoration campaign. The exhibition takes a closer look at how a restoration is conducted. Visitors will also learn about cutting-edge technologies such as macro-XRF scanning, infrared reflectography and dendrochronology, and the surprising discoveries they have already yielded."

Six works, six technologies

Thanks to modern imaging techniques and innovative material research, 'Atelier Bouts' sheds new light on six of the most iconic works created in Dieric and Albrecht Bouts' studios some 500 years ago.

The exhibition includes 'Christ Crowned with Thorns' (c. 1470), M's newly-restored acquisition from 2019, whose construction we can study, in meticulous detail, through radiography (X-rays).

Dendrochronology – the science of dating wood – demonstrates that the 'Mater Dolorosa' (after 1490) cannot be by Dieric Bouts but may have originated in his son Albrecht's studio.





Macro photography has delivered staggeringly high-resolution images of the 'Triptych of the Descent from the Cross' (c. 1450-1458), while macro-XRF (full name: macro X-ray fluorescence spectrometry scanning) reveals the intricate chemical composition of the materials used in the 'Martyrdom of St Erasmus' (c. 1460-1464). The latter information helps us to understand the work's restoration history, amongst other things.

'The Martyrdom of Saint Hippolytus' (central panel and right panel c. 1475; left panel c. 1479), one of Bouts's last paintings, was examined with infrared reflectography, or IRR. It revealed a signature that proves the hypothesis that Hugo van der Goes painted the lefthand panel, otherwise known as the donors' portrait.

Finally, no exhibition on Bouts is complete without his magnum opus, 'The Last Supper' (c. 1464-1468). The masterpiece is dissected through new stratigraphic research in 'Atelier Bouts', right down to the finest paint layer.

Food for Thought

'Food for Thought' is M's diverse programme of lectures, classes, debates and encounters. From introductions to expert analyses: there is something for everyone. And it's all free! M is organising two in-depth 'Food for Thought' lectures to coincide with the 'Atelier Bouts' exhibition.

WELCOME TO 'ATELIER BOUTS'

15.02

On Bouts as an artist and the material history of selected paintings

This 'Food for Thought' lecture takes a comprehensive look at some of the Flemish master's most iconic paintings. How did Bouts create his artworks, and was he working alone? From panel, through to primer and underdrawing, right down to the final paint layers: how were these works constructed? And how do conservators study and treat them today? On the opening night of 'Atelier Bouts', Marjan Debaene (M Leuven), Bart Fransen (KIK), Valentine Henderiks (Université Libre de Bruxelles/Fondation Périer-D'leteren) and David Lainé (IPARC) will delve deeper into Bouts's masterpieces and explain the master's techniques.

After the 'Food for Thought' lecture, you are welcome to examine the painting up-close during a free visit to the museum. And you can also enjoy a pre- or post-exhibition drink.

[Registration essential](#)





DIERIC BOUTS, A PROMINENT CITY PAINTER AND ENIGMA

21.03

In search of Bouts

We know the names of Dieric Bouts's wives and sons. We know he that he hailed from Haarlem (Netherlands) and became the city painter of Leuven, where he died in 1475. And we have two documented and dated masterpieces by the old master. Altogether, we have more information about Bouts than for the majority of other great 15th-century Netherlandish painters. And yet Bouts and his artistic evolution remain difficult to fathom. So-called early works turn out to be from his late period, while the relationship between Bouts' work and the oeuvres of other masters calls out for reappraisal.

Dr Stephan Kemperdick, curator of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and one of the world's foremost authorities on Flemish Masters, takes us on a journey in search of Bouts and invites us to enjoy a host of detours and meanderings.

[Registration essential](#)

Practical info

Atelier Bouts

15.02 > 28.04.24

www.mleuven.be/programma/atelier-bouts

