

Vesalius College, Vrije Universiteit Brussel  
**ART 107, Belgian Art in European Perspective 1400-Now**  
Syllabus, summer 2009

**Course tutor** : Dr Léon Lock

**Office hours** : Fridays, hours as indicated in the weekly schedule

**Email** : [l.lock@lowcountriessculpture.org](mailto:l.lock@lowcountriessculpture.org) (please always indicate something recognisable in your subject line, e.g. VeCo, VUB... so that I don't take your message for spam !)

**Mobile** : +32 472 501894 (to be used especially during field trips, otherwise, please prefer email)

**Time and place of class**

Fridays, normally 9 am-6 pm (slight variations indicated in the weekly schedule, depending on field trip practicalities)

Please note that field trips are an integral part of the course, at which your presence is required. The planning of the field trips may be subject to change. Any changes will be communicated as the course progresses : please check announcements.

Entrance fees and transportation costs are not included in the tuition for this course, but many museums offer free entrance to students in art history, so please use the Dean's letter for this purpose. You are also encouraged to buy a 10-single-trip train ticket (Go Pass at €50 for under 26; Rail Pass at €73 for 26-64), which is cheaper and also avoids queuing for single/return tickets and can be used for several passengers at the same time.

**Course description and objectives**

Based around three case studies of art in Belgium (or the equivalent cultural area before Belgium's independence in 1830), the course intends to function as an eye-opener towards art and culture in Belgium from the 15th to the 20th century, by using a number of analytical tools in art appreciation, art historiography, the collecting and display of art, including some business and legal aspects. The course should provide an historical and intellectual framework for the other courses given at Vesalius College and life in Brussels during the Summer Course, so that students can contextualise the rich and diversified aspects of Belgian culture, as well as its quirky ones.

Classes are mostly organised in front of the original works of art, so as to encourage a pragmatic approach and visual experience. Active participation will further help students develop a critical vocabulary in the appreciation of art and increase their skills in expressing informed views on painting, sculpture, architecture and the decorative arts.

The richness of artistic holdings in Belgium is a direct consequence of the (historically) highest concentration of artists compared to any other part of Europe, including Italy. It is a small part of this artistic heirloom at our doorstep that we will be using for our three case studies.

It is hoped that students will gradually be able to draw numerous links between these three quite diverse case studies – allowing them to form a well-argued view of Belgian culture, its manifold roots and the remarkable continuity of some of its aspects.

**Reading list**

Compulsory reading :

« Charles the Bold » **Susan Marti, Till-Holger Borchert and Gabriele Keck eds.** (2009) *Charles the Bold. Splendour of Burgundy*, Mercatorfonds, Brussels, especially the essays on pp. 20-35, 50-61, 72-81.

« Panofsky » **Erwin Panofsky** (1953/1971) *Early Netherlandish Painting, Its Origin and Character*, Harper & Row, New York/London, especially the introduction on pp. 1-20.

- « Giotto to Dürer » **Jill Dunkerton, Susan Foister, Dillian Gordon and Nicholas Penny** (1991) *Giotto to Dürer. Early Renaissance Painting in The National Gallery*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, especially the section on *Oil Painting in the Netherlands*, pp. 193-197.
- « Jaffé » **David Jaffé et al.** (2005) *Rubens : A Master in the Making*, exh. cat. National Gallery, London, especially pp. 11-20 and 21-27.
- « Tapestry » **Guy Delmarcel** (1999) *Flemish Tapestry*, Thames & Hudson, London, especially the introduction, pp. 11-23.
- « Balis » **Arnout Balis** (2007) *Rubens and His Studio : Defining the Problem*, in : Rubens, A Genius at Work, exh. cat. Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels, 30-51.
- « Greenhalgh » **Paul Greenhalgh** (2000) *The Style and the Age*, in exh. cat. Art Nouveau 1890-1914, V&A Publications, London, 14-33.
- « Aubry » **Françoise Aubry** (2000) *Victor Horta and Brussels*, in exh. cat. Art Nouveau 1890-1914, V&A Publications, London, 274-285.
- « Borsi » **Franco Borsi and Paolo Portoghesi** (1970/1991) *Victor Horta*, Academy Editions, London, especially pp. 11-35.

Suggested further reading/consultation :

[www.fine-arts-museum.be](http://www.fine-arts-museum.be): « Fabritius database » of their collections.

**Maryan Ainsworth et al.** (1994) *Les Primitifs flamands et leur temps*, La Renaissance du Livre, Louvain-la-Neuve.

**Jane Block** (1980) *Les XX : Forum of the Avant-Garde, Belgian Art 1880-1914*, Brooklyn Museum, New York, 17-40.

**Richard Calvocoressi** (1990) *Magritte*, Watson-Guption, New York.

**Rudi Fuchs and Jan Hoet** (1997) *Flemish and Dutch Painting from Van Gogh, Ensor, Magritte, Mondrian to Contemporary Artists*, Bompiani, Milano, 63-98.

**Anne Pinget and Robert Hoozee eds** (1997) *Paris-Bruxelles. Bruxelles-Paris. Réalisme, impressionnisme, symbolisme et art nouveau*. Editions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris/Fonds Mercator, Antwerpen.

**Nicholas Serota** (1996) *Experience or Interpretation. The Dilemma of Modern Art*, Thames & Hudson, London.

### Preparation for class and attendance

Given the short period during which the summer course takes place, students are required to read the materials, as indicated on the syllabus and/or announced during class, before coming to class. Class attendance and participation are essential and will influence the final grade. In the event you are unable to attend class, please notify the reception of Vesalius College by phone beforehand.

### Written work

Written work for the course consists of one homework assignment. Written work should be typewritten, single spaced, 12 font. Only electronic versions are accepted (RTF/Word 2003 preferred ; please avoid the latest version of Word, which I don't yet have, as well as PDF as it does not allow for online corrections). The deadline is **Wednesday 1 July at 4.00 pm**, essay to be emailed to [l.lock@lowcountriessculpture.org](mailto:l.lock@lowcountriessculpture.org); given the short duration of the term, overdue work will not be accepted.

Length : **minimum 1000, maximum 1500 words** (excluding footnotes, references and bibliography).

Choose an essay title amongst the following :

- *How did the Dukes of Burgundy use art for political propaganda ? Illustrate your argument with a few specific cases that you analyse in detail.*
- *What do social and business aspects imply for Rubens's art ? Illustrate your argument with a few specific cases that you analyse in detail.*
- *Choose a painting, a sculpture or a building of the late 19th or early 20th century and analyse its importance with respect to Belgian culture then and now.*

You also need to adhere to the following rules : specify your sources (footnotes and bibliography, that fall outside the word limit) ; do not use low-quality (internet) sources ; be critical towards your sources ; do not plagiarise ; always refer to the original source of the text ; be specific, establish connections, think outside the box...

### **Presentation**

Apart from informal discussions and interventions, students are required to give one presentation for which some research will be required. Duration : **minimum 2 minutes, maximum 5 minutes.**

Possible subjects :

Theme Weeks 1-2 (to be presented 12/6/2009, 9.00-10.30) : analyse the intrinsic and contextual qualities of any work seen on the field trips, provided that you can find a decent photograph of it, that you should include in a one-slide Powerpoint presentation (please bring this to class in week 3 on a memory stick)

Theme Weeks 3-4 (to be presented 12/6/2009, 3.30-5.00) : analyse the intrinsic and contextual qualities of a painting by Peter Paul Rubens on display at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels. Presentation to be done in-situ.

Theme Weeks 5-6 (to be presented 26/6/2009, 1.30-5.00) : analyse the intrinsic and contextual qualities of a painting or sculpture of the 19th or 20th century on display at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels. Presentation to be done in-situ.

You will need to sign-up for a specific presentation session in week 2.

### **Midterm exam**

The midterm exam is a written exam which will take 40 minutes and will constitute two pairs of images to be compared and contrasted. These pairs of images will be projected on screen for 20 minutes each.

As a reminder, the following may constitute a methodological check-list (non-limitative list), to guide you in finding inspiration how to structure your comparisons :

- Artist / period / place of conservation
- Subject / iconography > meaning
- Composition / formal analysis > meaning
- Materials / techniques
- Stages in the conception and production
- Place of installation/exhibition
- Collection(s) / former collection(s)
- Contemporary and current reception
- Patrons, and their intentions
- Other actors in the commission, contemporary politics
- Signature(s), date(s) and other inscription(s)
- Sources of inspiration of the artist
- Influence on other works: imitations, derivations, copies

### **Final exam**

The final exam is a written exam of the same format as the midterm exam, but will take one hour (three instead of two pairs of images).

Make-up examinations are discouraged and will be allowed only in extreme emergency, which must be documented by a physician or college official.

### **Grade weighting scheme**

Presence and participation	15%
Presentation (oral)	15%
Written paper	30%
Midterm exam (written)	15%
Final exam (written)	25%

A note on *participation*. The course tutor will distribute an attendance sheet during each class session and will keep a record on participation in class (e.g. raising interesting questions, participation discussions in class and during field trips).

### **Grading scale**

A	85
A-	81
B+	77
B	73
B-	69
C+	66
C	62
C-	58
D+	54
D	50
F	anything below 50/100

### **Academic Honesty**

Each tutor at Vesalius College is responsible for ensuring proper conduct in his or her classes. The Student Handbook has a section on conduct that you should read before continuing. The responsibility for preventing cheating belongs both to the tutor and to the student. The tutor takes responsibility for designing and monitoring examinations so that cheating will be difficult, if not impossible. Severe punishment will be inflicted on anyone caught cheating. Besides maintaining a high standard of personal honesty, it is the student's responsibility to take the necessary precautions to avoid being copied or plagiarised.

# Course schedule

## **Week 1 – 29/5/2009 Brussels, the Burgundian Netherlands and the Holy Roman Empire**

- Class E2.13 at Vesalius College
- 9.00 – 10.30 **Presentation of the course**: methodology, learning objectives, course requirements, student introductions and expectations
- 10.30 – 11.30 **Introductory lecture**: Art and history, with case studies on the patronage of Charles the Bold and on Early Netherlandish Painting
- 11.30 – noon Travel to the historic centre of Brussels
- noon – 1.00 **Lunch break** (and « office hour »)
- 1.00 – 5.30 **Field trip**: meet in front of the town hall, Grand'Place: the mercantile and court areas of Brussels (C15-17), the cathedral (architecture, sculpture, stained glass windows, treasury), later urban developments (C18-20), including the Palace of Justice.

Compulsory reading before the class : none.

---

## **Week 2 – 5/6/2009 Early Netherlandish Painting and Charles the Bold**

- 10.00 – 11.45 **Field trip**: meet at the group entrance on Place du Musée (not the main entrance !) of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts. Class on Early Netherlandish Painting. Free entrance with your letter.
- 12.00 – 1.02 Train Brussels Central – Brugge (« office hour » on the train)
- 1.02 – 1.15 Walk to the Groeningemuseum, Brugge and purchase tickets (€9 full price, €7 group ticket, €1 under 26).
- 1.15 – 2.30 **Field trip group 1**: « Charles the Bold » exhibition. Meet in the main hall of the Groeningemuseum, by the ticket booths.
- 1.15 – 2.30 **Lunch break group 2**
- 2.30 – 4.00 **Field trip group 2**: « Charles the Bold » exhibition. Meet in the main hall of the Groeningemuseum, by the ticket booths.
- 2.30 – 4.00 **Tea break group 1**
- 4.00 Meet just outside the Groeningemuseum.
- 4.05 – 5.00 Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk, where the « Charles the Bold » exhibition ends, both groups together

*During your lunch/tea break, you are encouraged to visit the small Sint-Jans hospital/Hans Memling Museum*

Compulsory reading before the class : « Charles the Bold » and « Panofsky » (see reading list)

Return to Brussels: direct trains at 31 and 58 minutes past every hour, last trains at 9.58 and 10.58 pm.

**NB** **Field trip group 1** : students with surnames **A – G**  
**Field trip group 2** : students with surnames **H – Z**

---

### **Week 3 – 12/6/2009 Rubens between art and business I**

- Class **D3.04** at Vesalius College
- 9.00 – 10.30 **Student presentations** on subjects related to the first two weeks
- 10.30 – 11.30 **Lecture** on *The Archdukes Albert and Isabella, Peter Paul Rubens and their time*
- 11.30 – noon Travel to the Royal Museums of Art and History, Cinquantenaire Park
- noon – 1.30 **Field trip group 1: meet in the main (circular) hall of the Royal Museums of Art and History.** Tapestries and other court art in the age of Rubens (+preview of a few Art Nouveau works of art)
- noon – 1.30 **Lunch break group 2**
- 1.30 – 3.00 **Field trip group 2: meet in the main (circular) hall of the Royal Museums of Art and History.** Tapestries and other court art in the age of Rubens (+preview of a few Art Nouveau works of art)
- 1.30 – 3.00 **Lunch break group 1**
- 3.00 – 3.30 Travel to the Royal Museums of Fine Arts, enter via the group entrance on the Place du Musée
- 3.30 – 5.00 Student presentations on paintings by Peter Paul Rubens
- Compulsory reading before the class : « Jaffé » and « Tapestry » (see reading list)

**NB Field trip group 1 : students with surnames A – G**  
**Field trip group 2 : students with surnames H – Z**

---

### **Week 4 – 19/6/2009 Rubens between art and business II**

- 8.32 – 9.15 Train Brussels Central – Antwerpen Centraal + 15-minute walk
- 9.30 – 9.50 **Field trip: meet on the Grote Markt of Antwerpen, around « Brabo »**
- 10.00 – 11.30 Rockoxhuis Museum, Keizerstraat 10-12, **in 2 groups** alternating
- 11.45 – 13.30 Rubenshuis Museum, Wapper 9-11, **in 2 groups** alternating between the house, studio and garden
- 13.30 – 14.00 **Lunch break** (and « office hour » at the café Wappertien, opposite the Rubenshuis).
- 14.00 – 15.00 Former Jesuit church (Sint-Carolus-Borromeuskerk)
- 15.15 – 17.00 Plantin-Moretus Museum, with exhibition *In the wake of Columbus. Antwerp books and prints around the world*, **in 2 groups** alternating
- Return to Brussels: direct trains at 03, 06, 17, 35 and 45 minutes past the hour, last trains at 11.17, 11.24 pm and 00.24 am.
- Compulsory reading before the class : « Balis » (see reading list)

**NB Field trip group 1 : students with surnames A – G**  
**Field trip group 2 : students with surnames H – Z**

---

### **Week 5 – 25/6/2009**

- 2.00-3.00 Extra « office hour » at Vesalius College (room tbc).  
**Only if requested in advance** the day before by email to [l.lock@lowcountriessculpture.org](mailto:l.lock@lowcountriessculpture.org).
-

## Week 5 – 26/6/2009 Modernity to Surrealism I

- Class **D3.04** at Vesalius College
- 9.00 – 9.40 **Midterm exam**
- 10.00 – 11.00 **Lecture:** *Towards Modernity: Art Nouveau architecture and decoration*
- 11.00 – noon **Lecture:** *Belgian art 1880-1958*
- noon – 12.30 Discussion
- 12.30 – 1.00 **Lunch break** (and « office hour » in class D3.04 at Vesalius College).
- 1.00 – 1.30 Travel to the centre of Brussels
- 1.30 – 5.00 **Field trip:** Royal Museums of Fine Arts and Magritte Museum, including student presentations on C19 and C20 paintings/sculptures of their choice
- 5.00 – 6.00 « Office hour » in the café « Pain Quotidien », Grand Sablon
- Compulsory reading before the class : « Greenhalgh » (see reading list)
- 

**Week 6 – 1/7/2009** Essay due on this day by 4.00 pm by email to [l.lock@lowcountriessculpture.org](mailto:l.lock@lowcountriessculpture.org).

---

## Week 6 – 3/7/2009 Modernity to Surrealism II

- 8.50 **Field trip:** meet in front of the Palais Stocklet, avenue de Tervuren 279-281 (near metro Montgommery ; don't forget sturdy shoes and an umbrella if it rains !). Travel together (metro+tram) to the Horta Museum.
- 10.00 – 12.30 Horta Museum, rue Américaine 23-25, **in 3 groups** (€3.50 per student)
- 10.00 – 10.40 Group 1 interior
- 10.40 – 11.20 Group 2 interior
- 11.20 – noon Group 3 interior
- noon – 12.30 Exterior all together
- 12.30 – 1.00 **Lunch break** (during which the course tutor holds his « office hour » at a nearby café)
- 1.00 – 3.00 Walking tour in the Avenue Louise area: Victor Horta, Paul Hankar, Jules Brunfaut, Albert Rosenboom, etc.
- 3.00 – 3.30 Travel by tram to the Van Buuren Museum, avenue Léo Errera 41
- 3.30 – 4.30 Van Buuren Museum (Art Deco house and garden, with exhibition on Pol Bury monumental sculpture). (€5 per student). **In 3 groups alternating between house and garden**
- 4.30 – 5.30 Course review in the garden/a local café (if it rains)
- Compulsory reading before the class : « Aubry » and « Borsi » (see reading list)

**NB** **Field trip group 1 : students with surnames A – E**  
**Field trip group 2 : students with surnames F – L**  
**Field trip group 3 : students with surnames M – Z**

---

## Week 7 **Final Exam**

**Date and time tbc** Final exam (written) at Vesalius College (class tbc). Version 2/06/2009