# Highlights



MUSEUM MAYER VAN DEN BERGH







Museum Mayer van den Bergh hosts the impressive and highly diverse art collection put together by Fritz Mayer van den Bergh (1858-1901) in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The museum opened in 1904, three years after his sudden death caused by an accident during horse riding.

The fact that the museum saw the light of day was thanks to his mother, Henriëtte van den Bergh. She realised her son's life project after his death. The museum has been managed by the City of Antwerp since 1951. The collection - some 3,100 works of art and almost 2,500 coins and tokens - is still from that one man: Fritz Mayer van den Bergh.

## THE MAYER VAN DEN BERGH FAMILY

In 1849, the father of Fritz Mayer van den Bergh, Emil Mayer (1824-1879), moved from Cologne to Antwerp, where he ran a large branch of the family business, trading in spices and pharmaceutical products. He became one of Antwerp's most important and wealthy businessmen.

In 1857, he married Henriëtte van den Bergh (1838-1920). Her respected Antwerp-based family was active in liquor distilling, beer brewing and shipping. The couple had two sons, Fritz and Oscar. From 1862 on, the family lived in Hof van Arenberg and in 1878 the Mayers bought the pleasure garden Pulhof in Berchem, as a summer residence.



Henriëtte, mother of Fritz

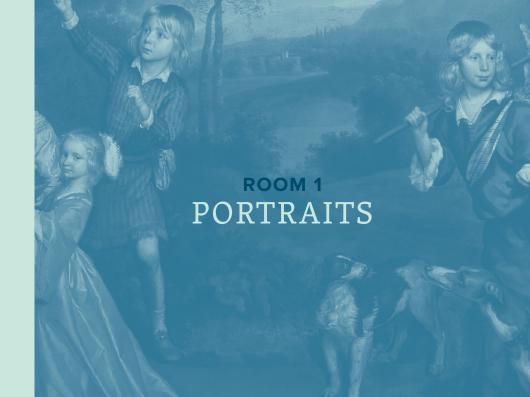


# FRITZ MAYER VAN DEN BERGH (1858-1901)

Five years after the death of his father in 1879, Fritz Mayer left the commercial and industrial activities to his brother Oscar (1859-1913) and from then on primarily devoted himself to his passion for art, which he had shared with his mother from an early age. Fritz never married and lived with his mother in Antwerp and Berchem. Their adoration for their mother was such that the two brothers added her surname to theirs in 1887. A year later, in 1888, they were elevated to the nobility.

# THE MUSEUM

Following Fritz' premature death and in memory of her son, Henriëtte van den Bergh had the museum built next to the family home. The architect was the renowned Jos Hertogs, who was commissioned to design, among other things, a facade in the Flemish Renaissance style, after an example of a facade that had previously been found in the Sint-Walburgis district in Antwerp. The museum was officially inaugurated on 17 December 1904 and was pioneering in terms of museum design, with numerous safety and climate facilities. Visitors could come by appointment, by invitation and on several bank holidays. It opened its doors to the public in 1924 and has been a municipal museum since 1951.





#### WILLEM VAN DER DOES WITH WIFE AND CHILDREN

Johannes Mijtens (ca. 1614-1670) The Hague, 1650 MMB.0135

This is one of the three large family portraits in this room. All three demonstrate the considerable variation in the genre, in one and the same period. During the Dutch Golden Age, families could increasingly be seen in the open air, as is the case here: this is the approximately 33-year-old Willem van der Does from The Hague, who later became mayor of his city, along with his wife Wilhelmina van den Honert and their seven children. The eldest child, Jacob, is nine years old and is standing to the right with the dogs. Some of the clothes the family members are wearing are fanciful, but their hairstyles are fashionable for the time. Painter Johannes Mijtens painted dozens of family portraits in a landscape setting.



# MEYNDERT SONCK WITH WIFE. CHILDREN AND FOSTER MOTHER

Jan Albertsz. Rotius (1624-1666)

Hoorn, 1662

MMB.0138

Meyndert Sonck, the man on the left of the image, held various official positions in the Dutch provincial town of Hoorn. He was the mayor, among other things. Here he is in the company of his family: his wife Agatha van Neck and their five lavishly dressed children, the youngest of whom is sitting on the foster mother's arm. As the family's main heir, son Albert occupies the most important position to the left of his father.

This family portrait is rigid, formal and stereotypical. This was probably expected of portrait painters by the conservative elite of Hoorn. In the Dutch Golden Age, the longer they worked the more commissions they received from the wealthy bourgeoisie, who wanted to make an impression with their prosperity.



## **VEGETABLE SELLER**

Joachim Beuckelaer (ca. 1533 - ca. 1575) Antwerp, 1565 MMB.0047

Joachim Beuckelaer was a cousin and also a student of Pieter Aertsen. Around 1550, Aertsen launched a new genre in Antwerp: exuberant market scenes with copious amounts of fruit and vegetables, exotic or otherwise, and sometimes also game; with market stallholders, farmers' wives and other people from the countryside. The genre enjoyed long success, partly thanks to Beuckelaer. Some of the fruits depicted were well-known erotic symbols and the behaviour of the people portrayed is sometimes explicit, but these paintings also testify to the interest in what the world had to offer, in the new spirit of the Renaissance.



#### FRANCESCO I DE'MEDICI

Alessandro Allori (1535-1607)

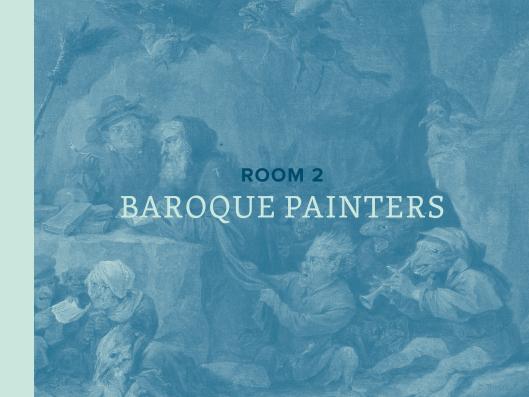
Florence, ca. 1560

MMB.0199

Fritz Mayer van den Bergh often travelled to Italy to buy art from the North. This canvas is an exception: it is a full-length, official portrait of the 19-year-old Francesco I de'Medici (1541-1587), who later became Grand Duke of Tuscany and was the father of the French Queen Maria de'Medici. It was a model for subsequent portraits.



Mayer van den Bergh purchased this work in Bergamo in 1892, one of his first paintings. He had it comprehensively restored, gave it a suitable frame and did research into its then anonymous creator. This was one of his characteristics: for him, it was a challenge to be able to attribute (anonymous) works to a particular artist.







#### FLOWERS IN A GLASS VASE

Daniël Seghers (1590-1661) Antwerp, 17<sup>th</sup> century

#### **GRAPES IN A NICHE**

Abraham Mignon (1640-1679) Utrecht, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century MMB.0192

The 17<sup>th</sup> century was a golden age for still lifes, and Antwerp was no exception. Painters such as Jan Brueghel I, Frans Snijders, the Jesuit Daniël Seghers and the lesser-known, but in his day highly regarded, Abraham Mignon produced rich, masterly and lush scenes, with intense colours. Flowers and grapes took centre stage, and there were supporting roles for various fruits and small animals. Still lifes primarily demonstrate how skilfully a painter could portray reality. At the same time they are deceptive because they are uniquely artificial. For example, the flowers of many painted bouquets do not bloom at the same time of the year.



#### THE TEMPTATION OF ST. ANTHONY

David Teniers II (1610-1690)

Antwerp, mid-17<sup>th</sup> century

MMB.0087

Saint Anthony (ca. 251-356) was often depicted in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries: according to his biography, he withdrew from the civilised world to be a hermit, and demonic creatures tried to tempt him to a life full of earthly pleasures. This is depicted by David Teniers in this scene. Through his marriage to Anna Brueghel, Teniers became part of the famous family of painters, which spanned several generations. In 1651, the Antwerp native became court painter to Archduke Leopold Willem in Brussels, and founded the Academy in 1663 in his birth city, where young artists were trained.



This is the last painting that was added to the collection of Fritz Mayer van den Bergh. His mother purchased it in 1901, when he was already on his deathbed.



#### HARBOUR AND MARKET IN ANTWERP

Antwerp, ca. 1600

MMB.0062

This is the Antwerp harbour circa 1600, when the Scheldt had been closed to trade for about fifteen years. Fishing boats are mooring and buyers - primarily housewives and servants - come to inspect the daily fresh catch. The result is a vibrant and colourful scene. Of the three towers we see here, two have since been demolished: the tower of St Michael's Abbey and that of St Walburg's Church. The cathedral tower is prominent on the far right. In the background, the crane head is standing idle.



Fritz Mayer van den Bergh's collection of paintings contains great names, but his main interest was mainly in high-quality work by lesser known and anonymous masters. He also did a lot of research in this regard.



## THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

Jacob Jordaens (1593-1678) Antwerp, ca. 1617-1618 (?)

Jacob Jordaens, who outlived his contemporaries Rubens and Van Dyck by almost forty years, populated many of his religious scenes with 'ordinary' people. Shepherd figures were particularly suitable in this respect, but in this early work, Joseph on the far right is also a man of the street. The light falls fully on the infant Jesus and his mother Mary, and the five shepherds and shepherdesses kneel down, pray, play music, blow fire, offer a dish and look on. This intimate scene recalls the revolutionary style developed by the Italian painter Caravaggio around 1600, which quickly became known throughout Europe.











## PORTRAITS OF THE VEKEMANS-VAN GHINDERDEUREN FAMILY

Cornelis de Vos (1584-1651)

Antwerp, ca. 1625

MMB.0070, MMB.0071, MMB.0072, MMB.0073 Collection of the King Baudouin Foundation

Cornelis de Vos, a contemporary of Rubens, was one of Antwerp's most famous portrait painters. He excelled in child portraits. Around 1625, the wealthy Antwerp-based businessman Joris Vekemans commissioned a series of (at least) six panels from de Vos depicting the members of Vekemans' family: himself, who died in 1625 at the age of 35, his wife Maria van Ghinderdeuren and their children Frans, Elisabeth, Cornelia and Jan. The museum has four panels and one is on permanent loan. The portraits are made in pairs, with each pair matching the colour palette and background. The family's prosperity is evident.



#### VENUS PRESENTING WEAPONS TO AENEAS

Gerard de Lairesse (1641-1711) Amsterdam, 1668

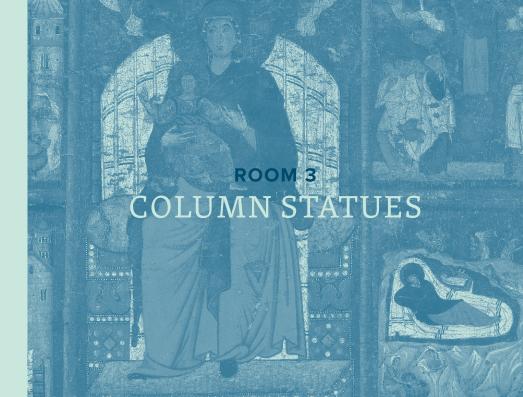
MMB.0097

A naked woman is pointing out various weaponry to a man holding a spear, which is being offered by naked cherubs. The two are holding hands. It is the goddess Venus and her son Aeneas, the founding father of the Romans. Venus wanted to help Aeneas and consequently instructed her husband, Vulcan, to make armour.

This mythological scene is by Gerard de Lairesse, an important painter and theoretician in Amsterdam at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He was a proponent of classical, 'scholarly' painting, of which this grand work is a fine example. This may have been a work for a mantelpiece, and it was commissioned by an erudite client in Amsterdam.

# STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Throughout the museum building, you can see a collection of painted stained glass windows. They are incorporated into the stained glass, as was customary in town houses of the  $16^{\rm th}$  and  $17^{\rm th}$  centuries. Fritz Mayer van den Bergh built up a collection of primarily round glass windows from the  $15^{\rm th}$  to the  $17^{\rm th}$  century, mainly from the Netherlands. The four in this room are Swiss and are among his earliest acquisitions. Switzerland was a stop-off on the many trips he made to Italy in his early years.







# TWO STATUES FROM CHÂLONS-SUR-MARNE

Champagne, 1170-1183

MMB.0312.1-2, MMB.0312.2-2

In the 1960s, hundreds of fragments of column statues, capitals and arches were found in Châlons-sur-Marne, along with plinths and cover plates: they were the remains of what was once the rich decoration of the Notre-Dame-en-Vaux monastery. These two column statues, acquired by Fritz Mayer van den Bergh in 1898, are also from there. They are very important in the development of sculpture: the figures are, as it were, detached from the stone block, the draping of the robes is supple and the movement is visible, more so than in Romanesque art.



#### THE VIRGIN AND CHILD AND FOUR SCENES FROM HER LIFE

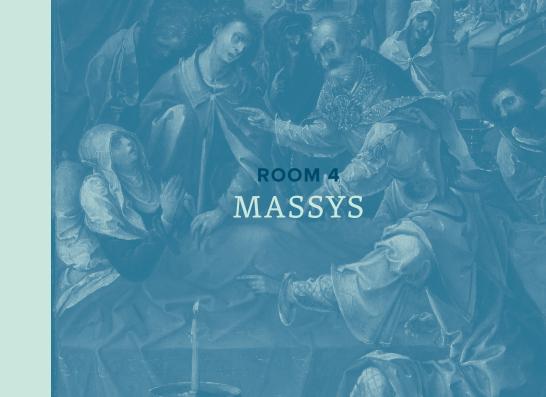
Simeone and Machilos da Spoleto (active in the  $3^{\rm rd}$  quarter of the  $13^{\rm th}$  century) Umbria – Siena, ca. 1270-1275

MMB.0195

This is the oldest painting in any Belgian collection. It was painted by two Umbrian-Tuscan painters and shows Mary with the blessing Jesus on her lap. To the left and right are four scenes from her life: her own birth, the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to Mary, her Assumption into Heaven and the Birth of Jesus. The two columns that separate the middle section from the side sections make this work a kind of precursor to triptychs.



Fritz Mayer van den Bergh purchased this panel in 1898 for a mere 255 francs. At the time, there was little interest in pre-Giotto, 13<sup>th</sup>-century Italian painting. For many years, this museum room was a small open colonnade that led out onto a picturesque courtyard. The area was covered over in 1974 to create new rooms.





#### CHRIST ON THE CROSS WITH DONORS

Quinten Massys (1465/1466-1530) Antwerp, ca. 1500-1520

MMB.0027

When Quinten Massys arrived in Antwerp around 1500, the city quickly became the most important art centre in the Netherlands. Many artists established themselves there, attracted by the international art market. Massys himself, 'the father of the Antwerp painting school', became an almost legendary figure.

His work was still in the tradition of the Flemish primitives, but the renewal of the Italian Renaissance was already noticeable. In the middle panel of this triptych, the witnesses to Jesus' crucifixion show their emotions. On the side panels the unknown donors and their patron saints Jerome and Mary of Egypt are depicted. The open landscape with the city of Jerusalem is bathed in a faded light: in Massys' day, this so-called 'atmospheric perspective' was new to landscape art in the Southern Netherlands.



## THE DEATH OF MARY

Master of Amiens (active between 1515-1525) Antwerp or Amiens, 1st quarter of the 16th century MMB.0189

In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, a generation of painters was active in Antwerp who generally painted overfull, detailed and brightly coloured panels with refined and perplexing characters: they were called 'the Antwerp Mannerists'. The unknown painter of this panel belonged to this generation and worked for a time in Amiens, Northern France, hence his name. A provisional name is used to attribute paintings painted in the same style to an unknown master. In a spacious and richly decorated hall, Mary is lying on her deathbed and receives the last sacraments. The apostles and angels are present. John lays the traditional candle of the dying in her hands and Peter acts as the priest.



# SIX ANGELS FROM A CALVARY

Brabant, ca. 1460-1470

MMB.0258.1-4 to 4-4, MMB.0302.1-2 to 2-2

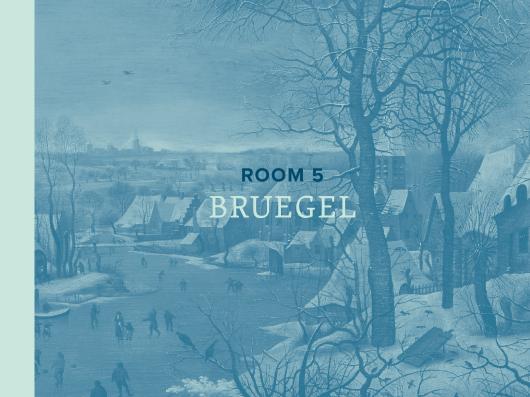
In 1899, Mayer van den Bergh purchased a series of six angels in Brussels, each more than a metre high and with their wings raised. They are each in a different stance and convey a lot of emotion. The angels were once part of a Gothic Calvary, large groups of statues representing Christ's crucifixion. The images are of a very high quality, as can be seen from the dynamics of the drapery and the pathos on the faces.

# **FURNITURE**

Throughout the museum are historical pieces of furniture that Fritz Mayer van den Bergh collected for decorative purposes. He wanted to create a homely living ambiance in his museum. His mother realised his wish after his death. In this room, you can see a  $16^{\rm th}$ -century cabinet, a  $15^{\rm th}$ -century couch and a mantelpiece with colourful tiles from the  $16^{\rm th}$  century.

# ARCHAEOLOGY

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, collecting meant first and foremost building up a collection of antiquities: objects of all kinds and types that testified to one's broad historical interest and attention to local history. The young Fritz Mayer van den Bergh also purchased a wide range of artworks, as well as utensils and objects found in excavations. In a later phase, and after having sold a large part of his collection in 1891 and 1892, he concentrated more on the so-called fine arts.





# TWELVE PROVERBS ON WOODEN PLATES

Pieter Bruegel I (1526/1531-1569) Antwerp, 1558

If you smooth out the rising edges of twelve painted plates, put the wooden discs together and add explanatory texts to them, you get a wonderful panel like this one. What is special about these plates is that they were painted by Pieter Bruegel I: a figure can be seen in action in each one, in an everyday scene. The scenes depict moralising, but whimsical, proverbs and one-liners:

	1.	2.	3.
	Ontydich	Een placebo ben	In deen hant
BRUEGEL	tuyssc(hen?)	ick ende alsoo	draghe vier, in
	en droncken	gesint dat ick de huyck alom hanch naeden wint.  I am a wheedler and so believe in holding my cloak to the wind	dander waeter, met clappaers en clappeyen houd ick den snaeter.
	drincken maeckt		
	arm misacht		
	den naem doet		
	stincken.		I carry fire in one hand and water in the other; in the company of
	Playing dice		
	and drinking at		
	an inopportune	(i.e. setting my	
	moment makes	sail according to	chatterboxes and
	a man poor and	the wind).	scandalmongers I hold my mouth.
	disdainful and gives		
	him a bad name.		

4. Int slampampen en mocht my niemant verrasschen, al quyt, sit ick tusschen twee stoelen in dasschen. When it comes to drinking nobody can outdo me; now that I have lost everything I find myself sitting between two chairs in the ashes (i.e. in an awkward situation).

5. Wat baet het sien en derelyck loncken, ick stop den put als tcalf is verdroncken. Looking woeful and pitiful serves no purpose; I fill in the hole when the calf has drowned (i.e. I lock the stable door after the horse has bolted).

6. Die lust heft te doen verlore wercken, die stroyt die rosen voor de vercken. He who works to no avail, throws roses to the pigs (i.e. casts pearls before swine).

T' Harnasch maeckt my een stouten haen, ick hanghe de kat de belle aen. The armour gives me courage, I bell the cat.

8. Myns naesten welderen myn herte pynt, ick en mach niet lyden dat de sonne int waeter schynt. The success of my fellow human beings causes me much heartache: I do not want the sun to shine in the water (i.e. I am very envious).

9.	10.	11.	12.
Crygel ben ick, en	My compt het	Ick stoppe my	Vat ick vervolghe
van sinnen stuer,	mager, aen	onder een blau	en geraecke
dus loop ick met	andere het vet,	huycke, meer	daer niet aen,
den hooffde tegen	ick vische altyt	worde ick bekent	ick pisse altyt
den muer.	achter het net.	hoe ick meer	tegen de maen.
I am touchy and contrary, so I bang my head against a brick wall.	The lean is my lot, the fat the lot of another; I always fish behind the net	duycke.  I hide under a  hooded cloak;  the more I hide,	No matter what I attempt, I never succeed; I always piss against the
	(i.e. miss out).	the better known I become.	moon (i.e. bark at the moon).



Fritz Mayer van den Bergh was fascinated by the work of Pieter Bruegel I since the start of his career as a collector. Numerous letters from international collectors, art dealers and art historians show that he was constantly on the lookout for works by Bruegel. In addition to Mad Meg and this work, Mayer van den Bergh owned 22 copper engravings and 12 prints by the artist. As such, the role of Fritz Mayer van den Bergh in re-assessing the work of the Bruegel dynasty in the 19<sup>th</sup> century should not be underestimated. Still today, the museum remains important for its Bruegel collection.



# THE CENSUS AT BETHLEHEM

Pieter Brueghel II (1564-1638) (after Pieter Bruegel I) Antwerp, early  $17^{th}$  century  $_{\rm MMB.0054}$ 

Since Pieter Bruegel I was highly successful and his work remained in demand, it was a lucrative activity for his son Pieter and other painters to copy his work after his death.

Read more on the next page.



# WINTER LANDSCAPE WITH A BIRD TRAP AND WITH THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

MMB.0055

Pieter Brueghel II (1564-1638) (after Pieter Bruegel I) Antwerp, 1602 or 1622

The Winter landscape was the most popular composition: we know of more than 120 versions. Copying is not exactly the right word, because these imitations deviate from the original in many details. In this Winter Landscape we see Mary, Joseph and the donkey as miniature figures: this 'flight into Egypt' gave the work a religious connotation.



### CHRIST CARRYING THE CROSS

Hieronymus Bosch (ca. 1450-1516) (follower)

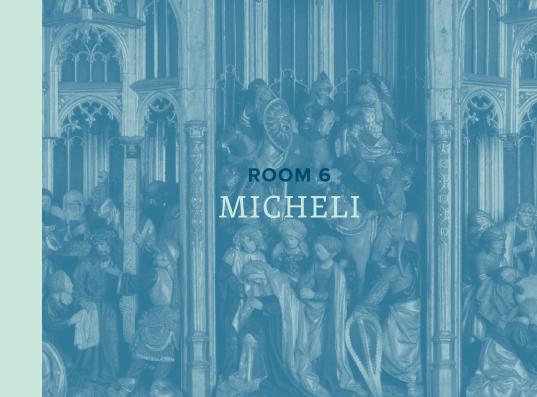
The Netherlands, ca. 1540

Donated by Jacobs van Merlen family Collection of the King Baudouin Foundation

An anonymous follower of Hieronymus Bosch copied the master's original version. Christ is carrying the cross and is surrounded by a hostile crowd. We can see their hostility in the grimaces and the imaginative armour and helmets. In the background to the left, Jerusalem is depicted as a medieval city, on the right three crosses are erected on the Calvary.



Fritz Mayer van den Bergh collected work by contemporaries of Bruegel which was linked to the latter's paintings. That is why this panel is a perfect addition to the collection: the Jacobs van Merlen family, who are related to the Mayer van den Bergh family, donated it to the Heritage Fund of the King Baudouin Foundation. In 2010, this Foundation in turn gave it to the museum on permanent loan.



#### MICHELI

In 1898, Fritz Mayer van den Bergh purchased the collection of 451 works of art from the then recently deceased art collector Carlo Micheli. Micheli worked at the Louvre, where he made casts in plaster. With modest means but excellent taste, Micheli built up a collection of small medieval works of art that were not in vogue at the time. Fritz acted much faster than the large museums, put all his capital into the acquisition and also took out a loan. He primarily kept the French and Dutch sculptures from the collection, making his museum one of the most important in Belgium in the field of medieval sculpture. Afterwards, he sold around three hunderd works again.



# THE ARREST OF CHRIST

Paris,  $1^{\text{st}}$  quarter of the  $14^{\text{th}}$  century

MMB.0340

The kiss of Judas was the moment when the apostle Judas betrayed Christ. This extremely finely worked sculpture depicts that moment. It tells other episodes from the story of the Passion: on the far left Peter cuts the ear off a certain Malchus. With his right hand, Christ immediately heals him. Three soldiers and a veiled woman are standing in the second row: she is a medieval figure who supposedly helped the gang of Malchus to find Jesus. This group of sculptures was part of an altarpiece. These sometimes contained dozens of figures. The rare, fragile and easy-to-work alabaster, a white limestone, was mainly used for similar small sculptures or reliefs.



#### ALTARPIECE WITH SCENES FROM THE PASSION

Jan Borreman III (attributed) Brussels, 1500-1515

MMB.0403.1-2

This is a fragment of a retable, a cabinet with groups of sculptures. The retable was intended to stand on or behind the altar in a church. Originally, it had painted side panels. Due to its size and wonderful colours, it was bound to catch the eye of the faithful. The groups of statues with many dozens of figures tell a story, like here the Passion of Jesus: on the left we see the carrying of the cross - we see the kneeling Veronica who wiped the sweat of Christ's head with her cloth -, in the middle the crucifixion - although the crucified Christ is now missing - and on the right the Lamentation. In the Southern Netherlands, Antwerp, Brussels and Mechelen became important export centres for luxurious altarpieces such as this one. This altarpiece is from Brussels. We know this from the Brussels cabinet maker's mark on the cabinet.



# HEAD OF BONNE DE FRANCE, DAUGHTER OF CHARLES V OF FRANCE

Jean de Liège (+1381) Paris, ca. 1364

MMB.0329

Un jeune prince: until the end of the 1970s, that is what this beautiful, idealised portrait head with a crown was called. But then it was identified: it is Princess Bonne de France, the daughter of the French king Charles V and Jeanne de Bourbon. The little girl died when she was one or two years old, 17 days after her sister Jeanne. The mausoleum with the lying tomb statues of the girls was erected in 1364 in the abbey church of Saint-Antoine-des-Champs in Paris. The monument was lost during the French Revolution, all that remained was a drawing and this fragment. Sculptor Jean de Liège came from the Maasland and worked for the French court.



#### YOUNG MAN AS A PLEURANT

France, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century

MMB.0337

From the late Middle Ages, family members and friends formed a funeral procession when someone was buried. The placing of statues of grieving figures near royal tombs comes from that practice: pleurants form, as it were, a funeral procession made of stone. As a sign of mourning, they often wear a cap on their head and clasp one or two hands against their chest.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century marble was often used for monuments that were set up in an interior, for example a church.



#### **VIRGIN WITH CHILD**

Bruges, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century

Little of the medieval stone sculpture from the Southern Netherlands has survived, especially statues that stood in an interior. This statue of the Virgin has also retained its original painting, making it completely unique. It comes from the Sint-Donaas Church in Bruges, which was destroyed in 1799.

It is a cheerful image: the crowned Mary looks at Jesus with a smile on her face, who laughs in turn. In her right hand she was probably holding a lily, a flower associated with Mary and a symbol of purity. The bird that Jesus is holding is biting him on the hand, a sign of the suffering that awaits him.



#### TWO EVANGELISTS

Maasland, early 13th century

MMB.0458.1-2, MMB.0458.2-2

One of these two figures is holding the traditional instruments of a writer: a goose feather and a knife to cut the pen and flatten the parchment. The two figures come from a group of four who together depict the four evangelists; their two brethren are in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Dijon. They used to be support figures together in a larger silver work. They were produced in the Maasland and are classically inspired in their stance, hair and clothes. They are individuals, as opposed to many Romanesque statues and images.



## **BURIAL OF ANDREW**

Brussels, ca. 1510-1515

MMB.0239

It is not surprising that, when Fritz Mayer van den Bergh purchased this group of statues, the scene was entitled Burial of Christ. The masterly group is a fragment of a Brussels retable. It is not Christ, but the apostle Andrew who is being buried here, a rare motif in art. The evidently wealthy woman carrying him is Maximilla, a Roman woman who was healed and converted by Andrew. He advised her to refrain from sexual relations from then on. Maximilla's husband had Andrew tied to an X-shaped cross as a punishment, where he died after three days.



#### LIBRARY

This is where the library of Fritz Mayer van den Bergh is preserved, which contains around 650 volumes and several unique ancient prints. The various auction catalogues, journals and catalogues of other collections give a good idea of his interest in a wide range of art forms and crafts. Some of them are on display here: the limited collection of jewels and silver attest to the fact that his collection remained unfinished due to his early death. In selecting art, he paid particular attention to exceptional techniques, craftsmanship and the rare nature of objects.

#### PLAQUETTES

Plaquettes are small reliefs in metal. As they were easy to reproduce, bronze and tin smiths, and goldsmiths, used them as models. Mayer van den Bergh had a unique fondness for this separate branch of art. Most plaquettes date from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and came from Italy and Germany. The subjects are often mythological or allegorical. The absolute master was Peter Flötner from Nürnberg, of whom the museum, with sixty copies, has the largest collection in the world.



# STILL LIFE WITH OYSTERS, BREAD AND VENETIAN WINE GLASS

Henri de Fromantiou (1633/1634-1693/1705) The Hague (?), ca. 1661

MMB.0132

How do you depict different fabrics, materials and food as 'real' as possible and in a harmonious (of course 'fabricated') composition? This was the challenge of a painter of still lifes, a genre that was very successful in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, among other places in Antwerp and the Netherlands, and especially among the bourgeoisie. Unique, often exotic foods were combined with delicate, precious glassware or crockery. Still lifes reflected the wealth of the bourgeoisie for whom they were produced.

Read more on the next page.



# STILL LIFE WITH PEACHES, WALNUTS, MOUSE AND VENETIAN WINE GLASS

MMB.0133

Henri de Fromantiou (1633/1634-1693/1705) (attributed) The Hague (?), after 1661

Still lifes are often vanitas symbols: they contain a deeper meaning that refers to the transience of life. The insects and small vermin in the paintings, but also the ripeness of the fruits, refer to the transience of life. No matter how wealthy you are, death is inevitable.



# HILLY LANDSCAPE

Cornelis Massys (ca. 1510-1556/1557) (attributed) Antwerp, 1565

The landscape as a genre came about from a renewed interest in nature and accurate depictions of it.

Read more on the next page.

MMB.0052



## WINTER LANDSCAPE WITH ICE SKATERS

Christoffel van den Berghe (1588/1592- ca. 1628) Middelburg, 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century MMB.0117

In the Netherlands in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Netherlandish painters specialised in forest and winter landscapes, village and city views. They aimed to evoke a certain atmosphere using colour and light effects.

# CHESTS AND CASES

15<sup>TH</sup> AND 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

Fritz Mayer van den Bergh had a particular interest in small cases and chests with locks. They were often made of wood and wrapped in iron bands and leather. People from all walks of life have traditionally stored valuables such as jewellery, money, important papers, souvenirs, etc. in similar cases. The examples in the collection are primarily 15<sup>th</sup>- and 16<sup>th</sup>-century and are often finely decorated. As a result, they are precious in their own right.



## SALON

The collection of Fritz Mayer van den Bergh also included an 18<sup>th</sup>-century room wall. This salon was made to fit within this room wall. Henriëtte van den Bergh, the mother of Fritz who had the museum built after his death, served tea in this room to important visitors. She also had the ceiling painting made. The selection from Fritz's porcelain collection goes well with the atmosphere here: Chinese porcelain, earthenware from Delft and Japanese pieces.





## FLOWERS IN A VASE WITH GRASSHOPPER AND FROG

Clara Peeters (1580/1589-1621/1659) Antwerp, 17<sup>th</sup> century

MMB.0193

#### FLOWERS IN A VASE WITH A FIELD MOUSE

Clara Peeters (1580/1589-1621/1659)

Antwerp, 17<sup>th</sup> century

MMB.0194

The Antwerp-based painter Clara Peeters was one of the pioneers of the still life genre, which emerged around 1600. From an early age on she masterly painted flower, bird and fish still lifes, which remained her speciality. The fact that she was successful is evident from the many copies and forgeries of her work that circulated.





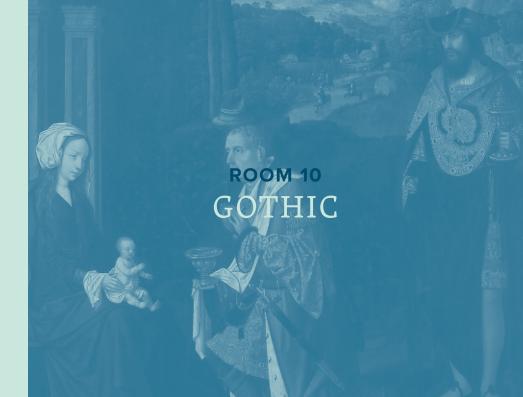
# HENRIËTTE MAYER VAN DEN BERGH

Jozef Van Lerius (1823-1876) Antwerp, 1857 MMB.1869

In the room - the name 'studio' was already used when the museum was founded - where Henriëtte van den Bergh (1838-1920) presumably wrote her correspondence regarding the museum, also hangs her portrait from 1857. She was only 19 years old in the portrait. 1857 was the year in which she married businessman Emil Mayer from Cologne (1824-1879) who had settled in Antwerp in 1849. She was the daughter of Jan van den Bergh. Emil Mayer died suddenly in 1879. A short while later, Fritz went to live with his mother. You can find out more about the family at the beginning of this guide.

# **TEXTILE**

Fritz Mayer van den Bergh soon went on to become an expert in coins and textiles. He purchased and studied embroidery, fabrics, lace, (wall) tapestries, etc. He had them cleaned and restored by specialist restorers using materials that he selected himself. Also thanks to the care of his mother, the fragile collection of more than 200 objects is very well preserved.





#### ADORATION OF THE MAGI

Master of Hoogstraten (surroundings) Bruges or Antwerp, ca. 1520

MMB.0025

Between 1505 and 1530, the most popular theme on triptychs in Antwerp was the adoration of the newborn Jesus by the Magi. Due to high demand, painters' studios were able to produce them in series. On the left stands a strikingly young Joseph and in the middle the oldest wise man kneels before Mary, and the second king stands behind him. On the right the young Moor King and his entourage are approaching. Note the striking or even extravagant clothes: the painter was a so-called 'Antwerp Mannerist'.



This is the most expensive painting Mayer van den Bergh ever acquired: he bought it in 1891 for 14,500 Belgian francs (approx. 360 euros). With his interest in Antwerp Mannerism, he was ahead of his time.



## **GROUP OF CHRIST AND JOHN THE APOSTLE**

Master Henry of Constance Konstanz, ca. 1280-1290 (?)

MMB.0224

This world-famous showpiece was one of Fritz Mayer van den Bergh's last acquisitions: Jesus' favourite apostle John rests his head on Christ's chest and places his right hand in that of his master. Jesus in turn puts his arm around John's shoulder. An emotive image like this one showed viewers, as it were, the example: such a close relationship with Jesus was also the aim of the sisters of the Dominican convent of St. Katharinenthal in Switzerland, for whom Master Henry of Constance carved the statue just before 1300. It was a period of a new spirituality, in which the personal bond of the faithful with God was central.









## **MIRACULOUS HEALINGS OF CHRIST**

Byzantine, 6<sup>th</sup> century

MMB.0431.1-4, MMB.0431.2-4, MMB.0431.3-4, MMB.0431.4-4

Ivory plates such as this quartet decorated the front cover of books, in this case undoubtedly of a manuscript with a gospel. The four scenes are similar: Jesus is barefoot, holds a cross staff and is making a blessing gesture. One or two apostles accompany him and Christ heals a sick person each time. In the fourth relief he raises Lazarus from the dead. In the early Middle Ages, Ivory was as rare and precious as gemstones. These four reliefs are Byzantine.





#### FOUR PAIRS OF ANIMAL FIGURES AND THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

Lombard (?) and Carolingian,  $8^{th}$  and  $9^{th}$  century

MMB.0432

A Spanish or Italian artist carved the mythical animals in this relief, which is surrounded by wickerwork, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. In what are now holes were previously pearls or stones. The plaquette may have been part of a case for religious use, or part of a reliquary.

A century later, the other side was reworked, the ivory was shortened and used as decoration on a book plate: such re-use has everything to do with the precious nature of ivory. The scene depicts the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. The hand of God appears from the clouds and the dove is the Holy Spirit.









# PETER, PAUL, BARTHOLOMEW, JAMES (KNOT OF A BISHOP'S STAFF)

Paris, 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century MMB.0440

This four-sided relief is the ivory knot of the staff of an abbot who belonged to Yves de Chartres. The staff itself is located in Florence. The apostles Peter, Paul, Bartholomew and James are in the four niches.

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