



2019, the Year of Flemish Masters in Situ

PRESS RELEASE

***Flemish Masters in Situ* displays masterpieces in exceptional locations. 45 hidden gems in Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent, as well as in smaller towns and villages throughout Flanders. 1 June to 30 September 2019.**

Flemish Masters in Situ opens doors, including some that are currently closed, to churches, chapels, monasteries, beguinages, castles and town halls where paintings by Flemish Masters from the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries can still be admired in their original locations. These often unknown works are true discoveries, as are the specific locations where they've rested for centuries, unnoticed. Discreet scenography sets off these masterworks appropriately. Through images and words, the in-situ narrative brings visitors very close to the paintings, highlighting the sublime ways in which the Flemish Masters took the intended destination of the work, then and now, into account.

The **background stories** are uniquely interesting as well. For example, the young Van Dyck was on his way to Italy when he paused for a break two miles from Brussels in Zaventem, only to fall head over heels for the beautiful Anna van Ophem. He lingered just a bit too long in Zaventem to suit his teacher Rubens, who prodded him to resume his journey immediately. Van Dyck's amorous procrastination did result in two altar pieces for the local church, one of which can still be admired in situ. This is only one of many enchanting stories chronicled by **Leen Huet** and other authors (stories attached).

Scent artist **Peter De Cupere** created a scent for *De heilige Ursula gekroond door het kind Jezus* (Saint Ursula Crowned by the Infant Jesus) by Theodoor van Loon in the Church of Saint John the Baptist at the Beguinage in Brussels. De Cupere will design a scent tour for visitors to be experienced through scratch and sniff cards.

Flemish Masters in Situ by the magazine for art and heritage **Openbaar Kunstbezit Vlaanderen** aligns with the larger *Flemish Masters* project organised by Visit Flanders, which uses tourism projects as a lever to invest in various infrastructure projects and international event programmes.

With this new project, OKV opens up 45 sites in Flanders to the public that still feature works by Flemish Masters in their original locations, in the period between 1 June and 30 September 2019. 30 September should definitely not be seen as the end, as much of the improved access will be permanent.

Peter Wouters, director of OKV: *"For over 50 years we've been doing our best to improve access to public art collections in museums and elsewhere. Not just through our magazine, but also through media such as radio and television, ever since our first beginnings in the 1960s. So, the transition from paper to touchscreens, audio and video wasn't that big a step for us."*

Flemish Masters in Situ summarised in seven items:

- **Forty-five sites** from Bocholt to Nieuwpoort, immediately recognisable thanks to an eye-catching ladder displayed by the location entrance.
- Dozens of "hidden" masterpieces from the Flemish Community.
- Countless stories brought to life through the masterpieces by means of **sustainable investments** in **optimal illumination** of the works, as well as **interactive touchscreens and storytelling** - permanently installed experiences using modern media to access old masters.
- The sites are putting their best foot forward. The restoration of the Saint Servatius Church in Schaarbeek will be complete at the start of the project and various paintings have been recently restored: an Antoon van Dyck in Dendermonde, a cycle of four works by Theodoor van Loon in Diest, Abraham Janssens in the Church of Our Blessed Lady of the Sablon in Brussels, etc.
- A generous selection of "**experiences**" with concerts, lectures, films, and more.

- An intriguing “**pilgrimage diary**”, to which a unique reproduction can be added for each visit to one of the masterpieces.
- Detailed **day trips**, combining visits to multiple sites as you explore the Flemish Masters in Situ on foot, by bicycle, from the water, etc.

The locations:

Province of Antwerp: Antwerp, Lier, Geel, Westerlo, Herentals, Turnhout, Oud-Turnhout, Hoogstraten. **City of Brussels:** four sites, and one in Schaerbeek. **Flemish Brabant:** Lennik, Averbode, Diest, Scherpenheuvel. **Province of Limburg:** Bocholt, Maaseik, Neeroeteren. **Province of West Flanders:** Veurne, Wulveringem, Nieuwpoort, Zedelgem, Deerlijk, Kortrijk (two sites). **Province of East Flanders:** Watervliet, Hemelveerdegem, Sint-Martens Lierde, Geraardsbergen (two sites), Aalst, Dendermonde, Sint-Niklaas, Ghent (six sites).

Scientific committee:

The selection of the works for “Flemish Masters in Situ” was performed with the assistance of the Art History departments at Ghent University, KU Leuven and Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB).

Prof. Dr. Ann Diels (VUB), Prof. Dr. Koenraad Jonckheere (Ghent), Prof. Dr. Katlijne Vanderstighelen (KU Leuven), David Lainé (IPARC)

Protective committee:

Jozef Dauwe - Honorary Delegate for Culture for East Flanders, Cardinal Jozef De Kesel, Kristine De Mulder - Honorary Director of Europalia International, Thomas Leysen - Chairperson of Umicore and KBC, Peter De Wilde - Administrator-General for Tourism in Flanders, Herman Balthazar - Honorary Governor of the Province of East Flanders, Luc Demeester - Treasurer Openbaar Kunstbezit Vlaanderen

Practical Information

1 June - 31 September 2019

Admission: Free (but for some sites you need the Pilgrimage diary as a ticket)

Pilgrimage diary for sale at various locations, €10

45 sites and opening hours at

www.vlaamsemeestersinsitu.be

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For your information

€1 million in subsidies was granted by Visit Flanders for the selection of experiences at the 45 sites.

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