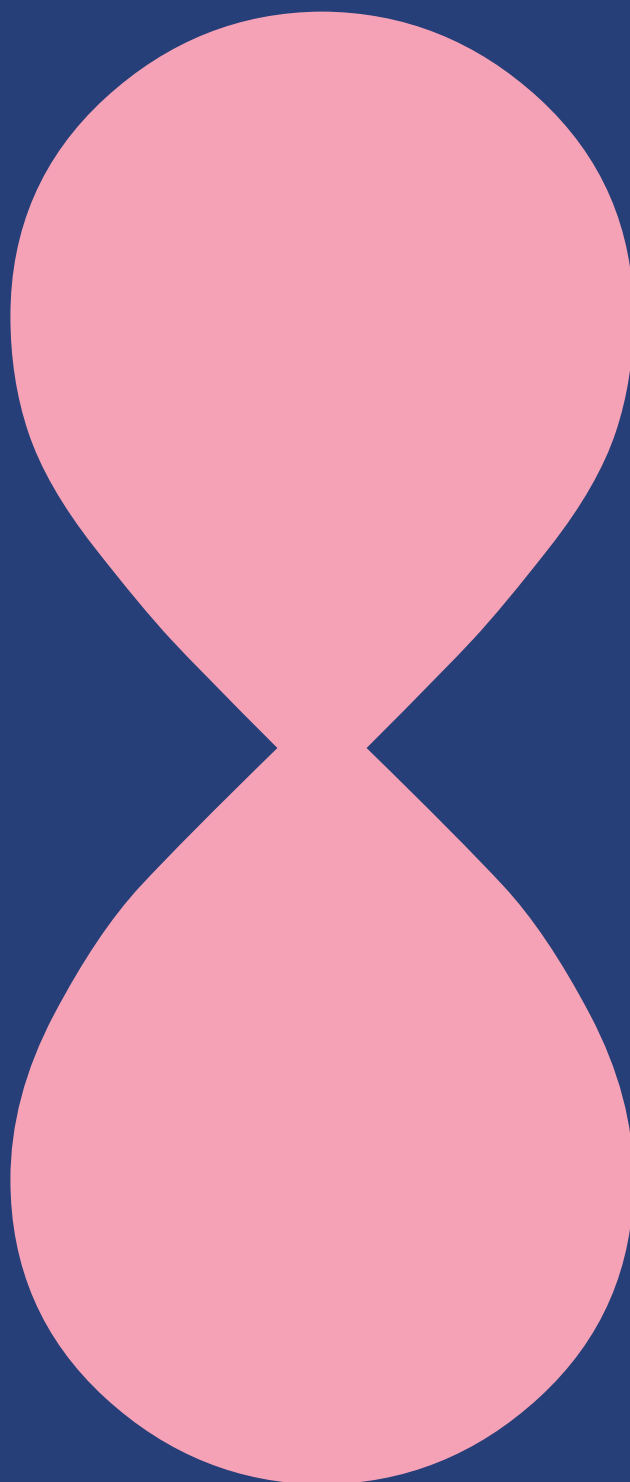


KBR museum



Press dossier

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Press release

On 18 September 2020, the KBR museum will open its doors, inviting the public to discover a national treasure hidden for 600 years: the Library of the Dukes of Burgundy and its fabulous collection of 15th century manuscripts. With the opening of this new museum, KBR, the National Library of Belgium, is helping to revive our cultural life and establishing itself as a major cultural centre in Brussels.

Due to the health measures related to the COVID-19 crisis, no more than 50 visitors per hour will be admitted to the 1,500 m² museum space. This means that they will enjoy the perfect conditions for discovering this exceptional collection, which brings together nearly a third of the 900 volumes of the library created by the Duke of Burgundy Philip the Good.

A rich patron of the arts, this ambitious prince (founder of the Order of the Golden Fleece) was the driving force behind the Golden Age in the southern Netherlands. He was a bibliophile who built up a collection of books renowned throughout

the West during his lifetime. This collection encompassed all fields of thought and included the great authors of antiquity, such as Xenophon and Livy, as well as medieval texts – chansons de geste, poems by Christine de Pizan etc. Attracting the best artists of his time, such as Rogier van der Weyden, to his court in Brussels, Philip the Good also commissioned them to produce books richly illustrated with illuminations. These are of such high quality that the curators of the KBR museum state that “the most beautiful paintings of the Middle Ages are in books”.

This formidable collection, whose highlights include the famous *Chroniques de Hainaut* and the *Chroniques et conquêtes de Charlemaine*, has only been available to scientists until now. KBR has decided to make it accessible to the general public and to tell the story of these books and the period in which they were created, in five languages (French, Dutch, English, German and Spanish) and with three visit profiles (“Discovery”, “In-depth” and “Children’s”).

In a scenic arrangement that meets the highest museum standards, the KBR museum shows why you should watch out for rabbits, that the Middle Ages are to die of laughter, that pink elephants were spotted in Brussels and that history books do not always tell the (whole) truth.

After a general introduction in the Nassau Chapel, the only remnant of the palace of the same name and now incorporated into the modernist KBR building, the visit continues on the upper floor, where 160 items – manuscripts, prints, altarpieces, weapons, etc. – are displayed in individual cases. For conservation reasons, the manuscripts are changed three times a year, meaning that repeat visitors will discover different manuscripts each time. Particularly as the KBR museum also exhibits period works and objects entrusted to it by other Belgian museums and collections (e.g. Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Royal Museums of Art and History of Belgium, Groeninge Museum of Bruges, City of Brussels). Several themed rooms offer audiovisual immersions that plunge visitors into the heart of the 15th century, into the world of manuscripts and the art of book illumination, meeting the men and women who wrote, copied, decorated or read these works.

The opening of the KBR museum is part of KBR’s new strategy: the institution not only wants to preserve the Belgian cultural heritage, as is reflected in its slogan “Where time is treasured”, but also intends to open up to the widest possible public, both online and on site. KBR is therefore becoming a real “cultural hub” in the heart of Brussels, offering, in addition to reading rooms and conference rooms, a restaurant and gardens with free access.

The creation of the new museum was accompanied by major infrastructure works to improve the accessibility of the KBR building (including the installation of several lifts and ramps). Lastly, the former palace of Charles of Lorraine, which is also an integral part of the building, has been fitted out to host temporary exhibitions.

KBR’s main partners in the KBR museum are the Belgian Buildings Agency, Toerisme Vlaanderen, the Baillet-Latour Fund and the non-profit organisation Friends of KBR.



Anonymous, Fragment of an altarpiece: *Martyrdom of Saint Adrian*
Southern Netherlands, ca. 1510-1520
Royal Museums of Art and History, inv. 0918



KBR museum

Belgium has been hiding a treasure for 600 years

The KBR museum illuminates the history of the collection of manuscripts belonging to the Dukes of Burgundy and the period in which it was established. Visitors can find out all about the Golden Age in our district and discover the steps in producing a manuscript. Explanations and illustrations reveal the secrets of the medium, text, decoration and binding. The historical, political and economic context, the artistic and literary universe, the personality of the manuscripts' patrons are all presented and – above all – depicted with exceptional pieces from the collections belonging to KBR and other prestigious institutions. Like dukes in their day, visitors to the KBR museum are able to enjoy these ancient treasures.

For their protection, the manuscripts cannot be permanently on display. For this reason, a selection of the exhibits is changed three times a year. Great news for visitors, as it makes every visit a unique experience.

KBR offers a tour in five languages (Dutch, French, English, German and Spanish) to suit different types of visitors.

A museum for everyone

Everyone is different and that is why visitors can choose their favourite kind of visit. A tour has been designed for three different profiles. At the beginning of the visit, visitors receive a wristband, which can be activated according to their selected profile: “In-depth tour”, “Discovery tour” or “Children’s tour”. Using this wristband, visitors can activate appropriate stories using touchscreens and handsets.

In-depth tour

Giving added-value seekers the opportunity to savour the knowledge in the Burgundian library and take their time to discover each piece in detail. Experts have prepared detailed explanations for each item.

Discovery tour

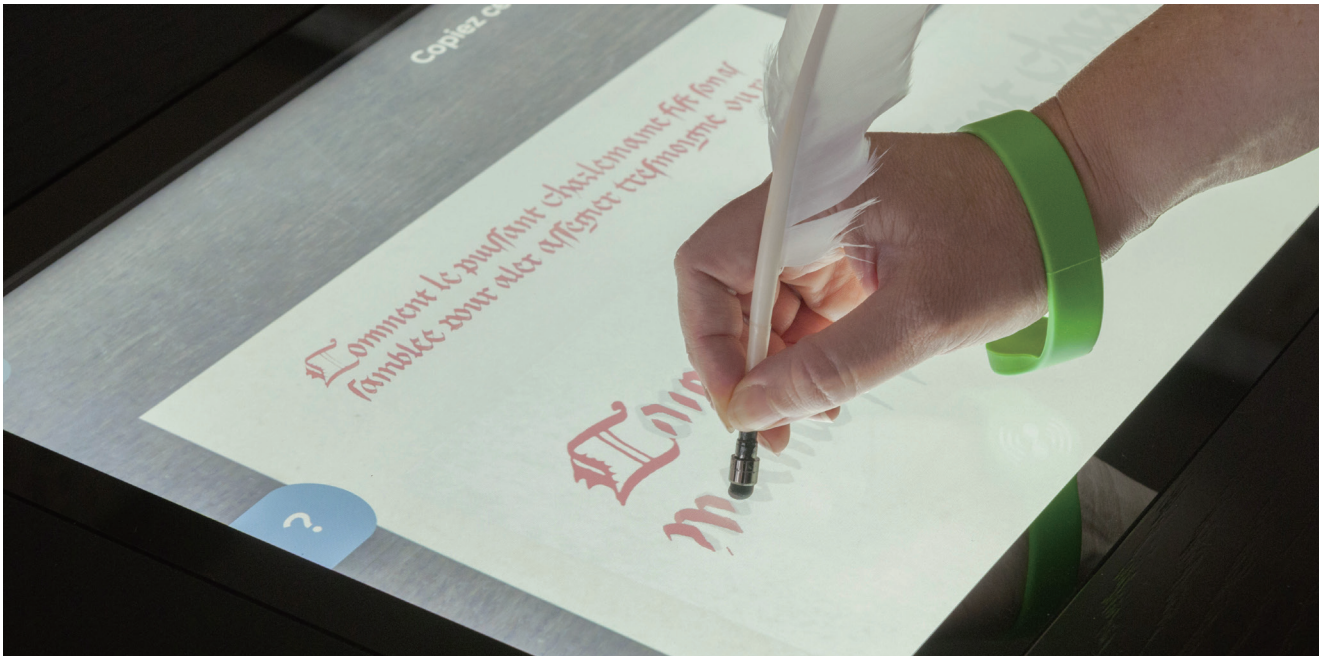
Allowing explorers to learn all they need to know about the Library of the Dukes of Burgundy, but in a nutshell. The explanation of each piece is shorter, but equally historically correct.

Children’s tour

Giving fun-lovers the chance to discover the Golden Age in our district with child-friendly explanations. Secretly, this kind of visit is just as fun for grown-ups.

Visitors who only have time for a quick visit can easily recognise the pieces that should not be missed. These are marked with a golden hourglass.





Museum experience

In the KBR museum, visitors can naturally enjoy the beauty of the exhibited manuscripts. But that's not all! Characters from the manuscripts dance on the ceiling or whisper stories in your ear.

The manuscripts in the KBR museum are very precious and are therefore displayed in glass cabinets for their ultimate protection. However, thanks to modern technology, visitors are still able to browse through a book, just like the Burgundian duke Philip the Good at his desk, allowing you to make a close study of every detail. Many of the manuscripts can also be viewed online.

Hands-on visitors can also design their own miniature, test their copying skills or have a go at dating a manuscript. Once we have combated the coronavirus, touching will also be possible: museum visitors will be able to feel the materials used in making a manuscript.

Tour and scenography

Tour

The tour of the KBR museum begins in the Nassau Chapel. The 16th-century chapel that appears modest and intimate comes to life a show of light, sound and projection. We meet the stars in the story of the KBR museum: the Dukes of Burgundy – Philip the Bold, John the Fearless, Philip the Good ... The religious context in the 15th century is also explained in the chapel.

The story of these dukes continues in the next section of the KBR museum. On the same floor as the Nassau Chapel, the visitor is immersed in the history of the 15th century, the period when the collection of manuscripts belonging to the Dukes of Burgundy was established. Visitors learn how a manuscript was produced and discover the skills of 15th-century artists. There is also an explanation of the historical, economical and artistic context in which the magnificent collection was formed.

On the top floor, visitors are treated to a real treasure trove: the family library of the Dukes of Burgundy. The focus lies on the dukes' manuscripts, and most of these can be seen in their own cabinet. Their collection includes very diverse manuscripts, including several boasting world fame. Their tremendous diversity can be

discovered in four “cocoons”, each providing a different perspective of the world of medieval manuscripts. Cocoons are designed around the original folios of several manuscripts and immerse visitors in the history, decoration or subject of a manuscript. In the cocoons, visitors can sit back and relax on a comfortable sofa while watching wondrous figures float above them in an enchanting world, take a peek into Euryant's bathroom in the *Roman de Gérard de Nevers* by the reputed Master of Wavrin, or chat to a deer, rabbit, wild boar and wolf about hunting. A reference to the manuscript called *Les Livres du roy Modus et de la royne Ratio*.



Scenography

It's one thing to retrieve medieval manuscripts from the archives, but how are the stories in such books best portrayed to the public? This question was tackled by KBR together with the Bailleul Design Agency. The collection belonging to the Dukes of Burgundy is tremendously diverse, which is why the stories are told in very different ways. Ranging from informative and interactive, to enchanting and intimate, not to mention in some unexpected locations.

For the design of the museum, sober and durable materials were chosen that evoke a modest atmosphere, so that all attention is focused on the manuscripts and works of art on display. Adapted lighting accentuates the preciousness of the objects.

In the interior, dark colors contrast with color accents that refer to the pigment colors used during the manufacture of manuscripts. The gold leaf that is so characteristic of the medieval manuscript illumination is also present in the interior: it subtly underlines the richness of the time of the Dukes of Burgundy and the feeling of walking through a treasury.



The different themes presented in the museum are highlighted with distinctive colors: red for the political context, blue for the literary and artistic context and green for the entourage of the dukes.

The modesty of the scenography is strongly reflected in the cocoons: the outside appeals to travertine, the material that typifies the KBR building, while the inside has a frivolous covering that plays with the motifs from 15th-century miniatures.



Cabinets

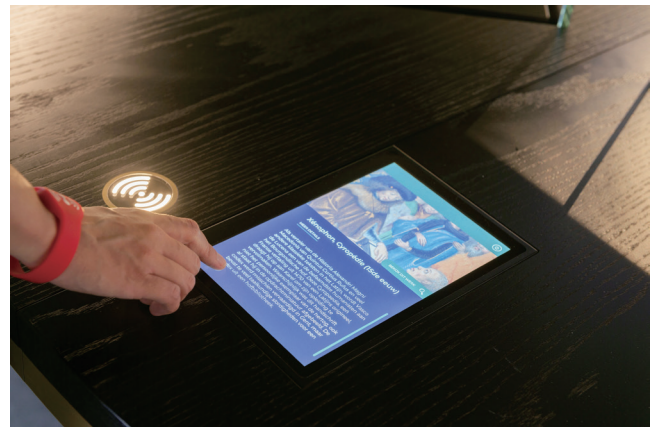
Every piece in the museum is of huge historical value. However, the manuscripts are very fragile. Light, humidity and dust are a real hazard. Each manuscript may be exhibited for a certain period of time, before returning to the archives. Therefore, the cabinets must offer both protection and flexibility, allowing museum staff to easily switch over the manuscripts. The Bailleul Design Agency created a modular system allowing six cabinet types to be combined, in a range of heights and widths. All cabinets allow wheelchairs underneath, so that wheelchair users can also make the very most of the works of art on display.



Tablets and wristband

We provide plenty of information in the KBR museum. Each cabinet is equipped with a tablet, identifying the objects on display, according to the visitor's profile. Once activated with the visitor's wristband, the tablets in the museum provide text and explanations of the manuscripts in the cabinet.

The illustrations on the touchscreens can be viewed in great detail. Also, visitors can digitally browse through twenty top items in the collection.



Music

The KBR museum is an amazing place. Here, visitors can discover the colourful history of 15th-century Flanders. They are immersed in the splendours of the Flemish Primitives, miniatures and polyphony. Stirring projections and music enhance the experience. Especially for this museum, the experts at Alamire Foundation selected polyphonic music, used to reinforce the stories in different rooms.

The pieces chosen by Alamire and played to visitors in the museum are:

E qui le dira – Isaac – (1.08') – recording Crawford Young, Karl-Ernst Schröder (instrumental)

Sonnerie royale pour la fin du sacre– (1.26') – recording Hespérion XXI, Jordi Savall (instrumental)

Vive le roi – (1. 15') – Josquin des Prez – recording Hespérion XXI, Jordi Savall (instrumental)

Alleluya – Busnois – (1.25') – recording Capilla Flamenca

O Salutaris Hostia – de la Rue – (3.30') – recording Nederlands Kamerkoor

Le Souvenir de vous me tue – Morton – (4') – recording Le Miroir de Musique

Amours amours amours – Busnois – (2.30') – recording Crawford Young, Karl-Ernst Schröder (instrumental)

De tous biens plaine – van Ghizeghem – (3') – recording Hespérion XX, Jordi Savall (instrumental)

Fortuna desperata – Busnois – (3') – recording Accademia Strumentale Italiana (instrumental)

Tant est mignonne ma pensée – anonymous – (2.30') – recording Sollazzo Ensemble

Dit Le Burguygnon - Fanfare

The topics in the KBR museum

Politics, history and economy in the Southern Netherlands in the 15th century

In Europe, the 15th century represented the turning-point between the Middle Ages and the modern era. During this period, characterised by contrast and sweeping changes, the Dukes of Burgundy constituted a powerful, prosperous and modern state. The Dukes of Burgundy, who were princes of the house of Valois, fought to free themselves from the authority of the King of France and to forge a new state from territories that extended from Dijon to the Netherlands. From 1384 to 1477, pursuing a policy of marriages, acquisitions and inheritances, Philip the Bold, John the Fearless, Philip the Good and Charles the Bold acquired numerous estates located between France and the Holy Roman Empire. Philip the Good, the “Grand Duke of the West”, ruled over Europe’s most brilliant court. But the dramatic death of his son Charles the Bold in 1477, followed

five years later by that of the duchy’s heiress, Mary of Burgundy, destroyed the Burgundians’ political plans. The duchy passed into the hands of the Habsburgs and soon Spain.

By the 15th century, the Southern Netherlands was one of the most urbanised regions in Western Europe. The Dukes of Burgundy could rely on a flourishing economy, with Flanders, Brabant and Holland providing them with the majority of their income. The cities of Ghent, Bruges, Antwerp and Brussels were centres for major international trade and home to many communities of foreign merchants. The Southern Netherlands owed its prosperity to its rich agricultural lands and its handicrafts. Thanks to the development of major international maritime, river and overland trade routes, the region’s products – including woollen cloth and textiles from weavers in the north, and gold-, silver- and metalwork from the Mosan region – were exported throughout Europe.

Despite marking the end of the grand political ambitions of the Burgundian dynasty, they left an artistic legacy that is still incredibly valuable today.





Anonymous, Fragments from the altarpiece of Bassine:
Annunciation
Brabant, Antwerp, ca. 1510-1520
Royal Museums of Arts and History, inv. 3629.002.1019a
© KMG-MRAH

Art and literature in the Southern Netherlands in the 15th century

The Burgundian court was resplendent with artistic and literary renewal – a far cry from our image of the dark Middle Ages. Concurrent with the Renaissance in Italy, Northern Europe was also home to an avant-garde movement. Looking through the lens of art and literature, we discover a dynamically changing era, world and culture. More importantly, visitors of the KBR museum catch a glimpse of the women and men of the time. The vibrant Burgundian century was a turning-point in history, and this was reflected in all the arts. What is known as the Early Netherlandish School emerged at this time, exemplified by such illustrious artists as Jan Van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden, Dieric Bouts and Hans Memling. Other arts also flourished, including tapestry, Gothic architecture and polyphonic music, which visitors can hear in the background. In sculpture, outstanding altarpieces were created in Brabant, including the altarpiece of Bassine, whose most evocative sections are on display in the KBR museum.

This artistic flourishing is also reflected in illuminated manuscripts. The book market passed into the hands of urban craftsmen. Writers, copyists, bookbinders and illuminators created an outpouring of manuscripts. Although many of these were books of hours or treatises on devotion and morality, every literary genre was represented.

Panel painters, illuminators and sculptors did not work in isolation: artists from different backgrounds and with different techniques often interacted. They exchanged sketchbooks, copied the same models and shared their ideas, views of the world and artistic norms for depicting it. From François Villon and Christine de Pizan to *The Romance of the Rose* and the fables of Reynard the Fox, medieval literature was multifaceted.

The works that filled medieval libraries covered every field of thought: ancient history, science, morality and philosophy, as well as law, poetry and theatre. Works that were popular in the kingdom of Burgundy in the 15th century included prose versions of chansons de geste, historical chronicles, accounts of voyages and translations of ancient classics.

Religion in the Southern Netherlands in the 15th century

In the KBR museum, the religious context in the 15th century is highlighted in the Nassau Chapel. During the Middle Ages, religion was an integral part of society, and a religious dimension could be found in all the arts. But such expressions of religious devotion took many forms. The religion of the ruling class, the nobility, learned scholars and the wealthy reflected a mystical aspect, as can be observed in the period's major paintings and manuscripts.

At the same time there was also a need for more intimate vehicles of devotion, such as the worship of saints or the role of popular legends, where symbolic images carried the force of law. For artists of the Middle Ages, the Christian religion's vast scope of imagery was an inexhaustible source of inspiration. Stories from the Old Testament, episodes from the life of Christ and the lives of the saints were the subjects of many paintings, sculptures and altarpieces. Similarly, large religious manuscripts, such as Bibles and missals, were illuminated by renowned miniaturists. Highly influential figures, such as the Dukes of Burgundy, commissioned such pieces. Works of art like these embellished places of worship and private homes, where power, splendour and beauty were on display.

The lives of the saints serve as moral examples. Derived from popular culture, these stories exist in multiple versions that were disseminated far and wide. Their protagonists, the heroes and heroines of the time, were role models who endured tremendous hardships in the name of their faith. These tales of divine intervention – the details of which were by turns astonishing or lurid – undoubtedly held the attention of the faithful and rekindled their devotion.



The dukes' entourage

As symbols of power, luxury and intellectual cultivation, the fine art of manuscripts in the 15th century became synonymous with the Burgundian Netherlands. The ducal court attracted artists and bibliophiles and influenced the aesthetics and tastes of the time. At the same time, the book market began to expand, becoming more democratic, urban and secular. The stage was being set for a gradual revolution of printing.

Collecting books and patronising the arts were both signs of power and intellectual cultivation and were widely practiced by the nobility. Philip of Cleves, Louis of Gruuthuse, Margaret of York and Margaret of Austria all owned remarkable private collections.

The aesthetic conventions established by Philip the Good determined what styles were to be followed. Members of the highest social circles – including mid-ranking aristocracy and landed gentry, the clergy, members of the bourgeoisie and urban officials – emulated the dukes and placed orders with copyists, illuminators and bookbinding workshops. Urban elites were a great impetus to the book sector by commissioning miniaturists to illustrate a wide variety of texts, such as books of hours, chronicles, romans, devotional works, etc. Under Burgundian influence, the book market flourished as nowhere else. Manuscripts circulated and were sources of ideas and social status.

Creation of the manuscripts

For thousands of years, techniques for sharing information and texts have evolved along with their audiences. Before the invention and mechanisation of the printing press, each book was entirely made and written by hand. Today it is hard to imagine such a slow pace and so much attention to detail. To create a single copy could take years and required the skills and dedication of a number of craftspeople.

In the Middle Ages, abbeys were important centres for manuscript production, hence the familiar image of the copyist monk. However, book workshops gradually developed in urban settings, particularly as universities grew in importance. By the early 15th century, the book market had passed into the hands of urban professions who were well-organised and structured into guilds and corporations. Each manuscript is a unique creation. It is the result of a traditional, unique and precious craft. In the KBR museum, visitors can find out about the four steps in producing a manuscript and discover the great variation and evolution in these different phases.



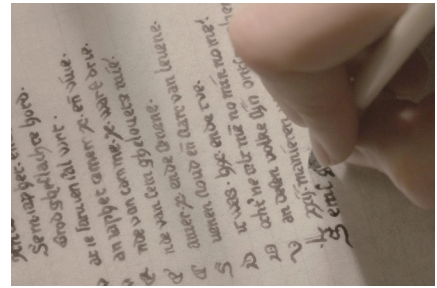
Making the writing surface

The pages of medieval books were generally made of goat-, sheep- or calfskin. After being treated and dried while stretched on a frame, the skin becomes parchment. It was then cut and folded into a quire, ready for the text. The number of skins one needs depends not only on the dimensions and the number of folios of the manuscript, but also on the size of the animals whose skin is used. The *Rijmbijbel* (Rhymed Bible), for example, has 218 folios (436 pages) measuring 30 by 22 cm. They are made from calf skin. Depending on the size of the animals, 4 to 6 folios can be cut from one skin. To produce this manuscript, one therefore needed between 36 and 53 calf skins. Manuscripts can also be made of paper. Paper, which was invented in China, arrived in Europe via the Arab world in the 11th century. Less expensive than parchment, but also less prestigious, paper slowly spread throughout the West.



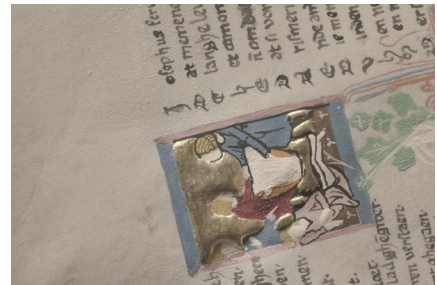
Copying the text

Before writing, the copyist drew lines – known as rulings – to keep the text straight. Then, ink had to be prepared and the quill pen sharpened. Only then could the copyist begin the script, executed entirely by hand and with precision. Most of the time, this work involved copying an existing text. When a manuscript is written out in the author's own hand, it is called an autograph.



Illuminating and decorating the pages

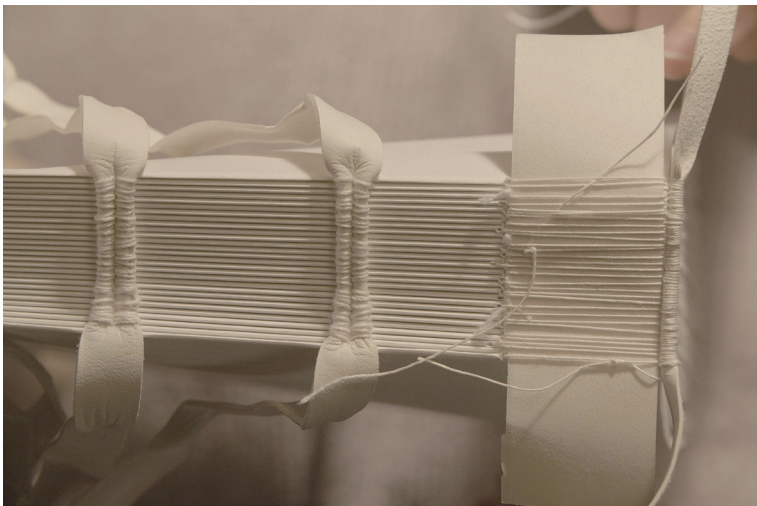
Illumination was reserved for the most ornate manuscripts. Its forms and functions were multiple. Miniatures were genuine paintings within books, and served to illustrate the text, whereas initials structured it. Artists could give free rein to their imaginations in the marginalia. The margins in the manuscripts are also filled with satirical humour, anthropomorphic monsters and fantastical creatures.



Binding the book

At this stage, the book was a set of separate quires, which had to be bound, i.e. assembled, sewn and given a cover to make the book durable and easy to use. Sometimes binding played an aesthetic role as well.

Only a few original bindings have come down to us. Above all, they suffered the ravages of time, but they were also frequently the victims of changes in ownership and aesthetic tastes.



The ducal library

The Library of the Dukes of Burgundy features major works of medieval literature, including *Roman de la Rose*, *Les Pèlerinages de vie humaine*, *La Belle Hélène de Constantinople*, *La Fleur des histoires* and Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*. Other texts are directly related to the Burgundian context. The collection shows a clear interest in the Middle East, born out of a crusading spirit. Also present are treatises that evoke the dukes' fabulated ancestry, including figures such as Alexander the Great, King Arthur, Charles Martel and Charlemagne. The oldest manuscripts date back to the 13th century, and the most recent are from the end of the feudal era and the beginnings of humanism. Many have been translated from Latin into French and copied at the dukes' express request by renowned copyists such as Jean Miélot, Jean Wauquelin and David Aubert.

At the time of Philip the Good, the ducal library contained no fewer than nine hundred volumes. His son, Charles the Bold, added to the collection. Some works accompanied the dukes during their travels, but most remained in the Coudenberg Palace library in Brussels. The palace, which was surrounded by gardens, was one of the most sumptuous royal residences in Europe. It contained the dukes' private chambers, as well as the Aula Magna, a huge banqueting hall, and the famous Bailles Square.

A fire in February 1731 destroyed a large part of the building; only the library, the chapel, the stables, the page house and the hunting lodge were untouched. The library endured many other vicissitudes before this collection became the core of the Royal Library of Belgium.

Despite various disasters and looting, nearly three hundred manuscripts have survived. In the KBR museum, visitors can discover the remains of this treasure. The ducal library is one of the most prestigious book collections of its time, alongside those of the rulers of France and England, the Medici family and the pope. Enriched by commissions, donations and bequests, the library of the Burgundian dukes and duchesses is a family collection. It forms a coherent but diverse and multi-faceted whole.



Anonymous, *View of the inner courtyard of the Coudenberg Palace during the fire on 3 February 1731*
KBR – Print Room, S.III 24727

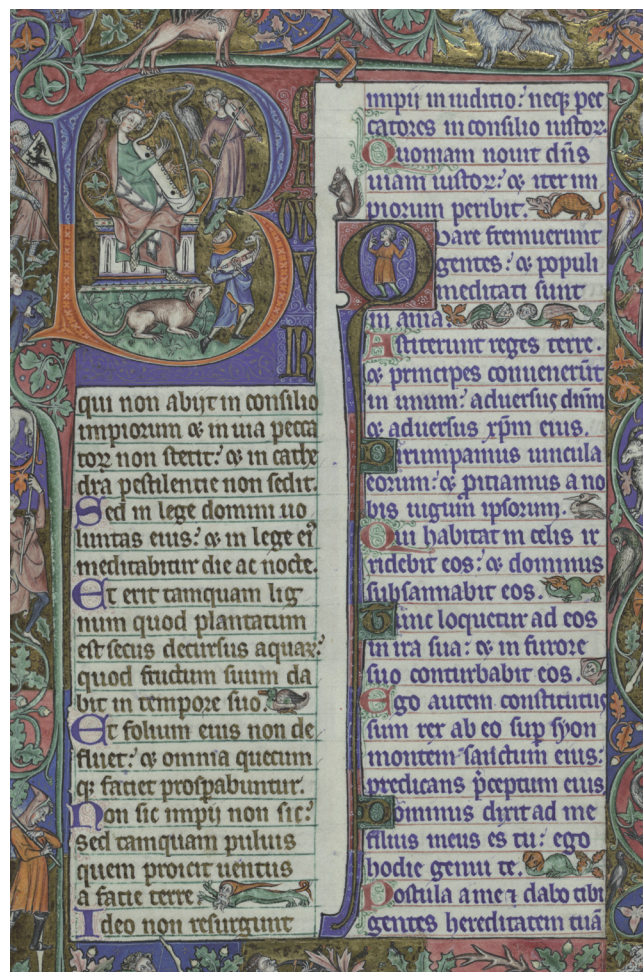
Five top pieces from the Burgundian library

Peterborough Psalter

This exceptional volume, copied entirely in gold and azure ink and illuminated around 1300 at Peterborough Abbey in England, appears to have been an ideal gift. It was given to Pope John XXII and to Clementia of Hungary, widow of Louis X of France. Philip VI of France then purchased the book and gave it to his wife Joan the Lame. It was probably then that the fleurs-de-lis were added to the backgrounds of the illuminations.

The illuminations in this codex are impressive. In addition to full-page miniatures and historiated initials, each folio is decorated with initials populated by anthropomorphs, plant motifs and monsters entwined in the ends of strokes. The use of gold and azure ink further enhances its exceptional character. The iconography of the religious illuminations seeks to link episodes from the Old and New Testaments – a typological approach that was highly esteemed in the Middle Ages. Secular subjects are also present, however, as is French literature. In the folio on display, a fox holds a fowl by the neck. This episode is taken from the famous *Reynard the Fox*, in which the mischievous Reynard carries off Chantecler the rooster, probably for dinner ... As from 1250, the emergence of secular workshops and the wider distribution of profane texts caused a fundamental transition. The stylised and hierarchical nature of

Romanesque art made way for the narratives in Gothic imagery. Religious rules applied less and less to what was initially the simple decoration of initials and borders. These became populated with animals, monsters, anthropomorphic creatures and jokes inspired by popular culture. The “mundus inversus”, or world upside down, made its appearance on the pages as well. These secondary illustrations played an ever greater part in the pages of the manuscripts. The edge of each page provided the miniaturist with more space for expression. The reader became a spectator. The iconography and typology of the scenes became increasingly varied and tentative steps were taken towards realism in the compositions. The slender female forms without hips repeatedly highlighted court preferences, while the male figures were inspired by daily life.



Peterborough Psalter
England, first half of the 14th century
KBR – ms. 9961-62, folio 14r

Chroniques de Hainaut

In 1433 Philip the Good annexed Hainaut, Holland and Zeeland, which he took from his cousin Jacqueline, Countess of Hainaut. This impressive book is a propaganda tool, designed to legitimise Philip's seizure of power through carefully calculated depictions and texts. In 1446, Jean Wauquelin, a bookseller and copyist in Mons, translated into French for Philip the Good the *Annales historiae illustrium principum Hannoniae* by the Franciscan Jacques de Guyse. This vast compendium retraces the history of the province of Hainaut, which had recently been annexed by the duke.

The celebrated frontispiece that depicts Wauquelin presenting his work to Philip the Good in the presence of the court has been attributed to the painter Rogier van der Weyden. These representative miniatures or commissioned scenes are universal and can be found in many manuscripts. The type of presentation is not exclusive to the late Middle Ages, but can also be found in works from the Greek and Byzantine world, and from the Romanesque and Gothic period. Yet this presentation is most common at the end of the 14th century in France, and in the Southern Netherlands in the 15th century under the patronage of the Dukes of Burgundy.

Symbolically and iconographically, this scene in the first volume of the *Chroniques de Hainaut* is remarkable. Philip the Good is at the centre of this composition, expressionless and straight as an arrow. He is depicted standing, rather than seated on a throne, as is the tradition. The verticality of the throne, covered in brocade and topped by a canopy, underscores Philip's central role. His left hand rests on his dagger, while in his right hand the slender hammer symbolises his power. Dressed in black damask, the duke stands out clearly against the background. Next to the duke stands his son, the young Count of Charolais and the future Charles the Bold, aged about fifteen.

As the heir apparent, the young Charles embodies the continuity of the State. The message here is clear: princely power is not the work of one individual, but rather becomes the prerogative of a dynasty that aspires to be a lasting one. On bended knee, Jean Wauquelin is offering the fruits of his efforts to his patron: the manuscript of the *Chroniques de Hainaut*. Jean Wauquelin not only copied the manuscript, he also translated the original Latin text into French, with some adaptations. One notable inclusion is a prologue presenting Philip the Good as the legitimate heir to a line of sovereigns dating back to the Trojan War. More than twenty years were required to complete the three volumes of this manuscript of the *Chroniques de Hainaut*. Four copyists and more than ten illuminators worked on its 1,700 pages and 121 miniatures. The artists included Rogier van der Weyden, Willem Vrelant and Loyset Liédet. Although Jean Wauquelin worked in Mons, most of the illustrations were created in Bruges. In addition, the duke regularly reread the completed signatures, proof of the importance he attached to the project. As with many manuscripts, the folios travelled a great deal before joining the ducal library.



Jean Wauquelin, *Chroniques de Hainaut* (detail)
Southern Netherlands, 1447-1468
KBR – ms. 9242, folio 1r

Roman de Gérard de Nevers

Chivalric romances, such as the *Roman de Gérard de Nevers*, were often quite high-spirited, animated, amusing and sometimes irreverent tales. They were also very popular. In the flourishing cultural climate of the Burgundian court, these works were often written in prose. Older texts were adapted for new times and new audiences. The language and style in which they were written were updated, while rhymed verse slowly disappeared. Nostalgia for the chivalry of bygone days was overlaid with an ironic attitude towards out-dated values. A quest for new stories went hand-in-hand with more innovative illustrations. The ink and watercolour miniatures by the Master of Wavrin are astonishing in their modernity and singular nature. Breaking with conventions of the time, they accompany the story, bringing a sense of animation to the drawings. The story told in the *Roman de Gérard de Nevers* is based on the 13th-century *Roman de la Violette* by Gerbert de Montreuil, which tells of the love between Gérard and Euryant. Gérard flaunts Euryant's love and is prepared to face any challenge to demonstrate their mutual adoration. Liziart, as the Earl of Forest, is annoyed by his great pride and challenges Gérard. If he can demonstrate Euryant's disloyalty, Gérard must relinquish his earldom to Liziart. Gérard accepts the challenge and Liziart goes to Nevers in an attempt to seduce Euryant. However, Euryant remains faithful to Gérard. With a trick, Liziart is able to observe the naked Euryant, and in doing so sees a birthmark on her breast in the form of a violet. When returning to court, he uses this intimate detail as he swears to have made love to Euryant. Gérard loses his earldom, but the story ends happily ever after and Gérard and Euryant are wed. The romance of Gérard and Euryant tells the story of a lady and two knights – one boastful, one jealous. It is a tale of deception, wild adventures, dragons, duels and love, which triumphs in the end. At the centre of the tale is a violet-shaped beauty spot that is revealed by trickery.



Jean de Wavrin, *Roman de Girard de Nevers* (detail)
Southern Netherlands, 1450-1467
KBR – ms. 9631, folio 12v



Henri de Ferrières,
Les Livres du roy Modus et de la royne Ratio (detail)
Brussels, 1450-1467
KBR – ms. 10218-19, folio 46v

Les Livres du roy Modus et de la royne Ratio

In a letter written in 1452 to his nephew the Duke of Cleves, Philip the Good wrote, “Je ne fais que chassier” (I am but a hunter). In the Middle Ages, hunting played an important role. A knightly pastime, hunting was primarily for putting food on the table and for protecting crops and herds from wild animals. Treatises that taught falconry, hunting and trapping were amongst the most widely read and discussed texts. In the *Book of the Hunt of King Modus & Queen Ratio*, which was commissioned by Philip the Good, a fictional king named “Method”, teaches his apprentices about the behaviour of animals and techniques for hunting them. His Queen, called “Wisdom”, interjects edifying and educational comments. The animals he describes symbolise quite different things than they do today. In the medieval world, animals and humans lived in close proximity. The animal world was frequently represented in art as well as in manuscripts and figured prominently in symbolic representations and in the collective imagination. For most medieval authors, the deer is a noble beast, a royal game animal. In the *Book of the Hunt of King Modus & Queen Ratio*, deer and roe deer are clearly classified as gentle, tawny-coloured wildlife. The book opens with deer hunting, lingering over it longer than any other topic, and highlighting it in every respect. For the Church, which had long been opposed to all forms of hunting, deer hunting was a lesser evil. It was considered less savage than wild boar or bear hunting, which were carried out on foot and ended in close, bloody, combat. Moreover, in the 15th century, dinner guests preferred stag, doe or fallow deer meat, as well as the white flesh of waterfowl. A symbol of Christ as well as a solar animal, a mediator between heaven and earth, the stag symbolises virtues. In a simplistic interpretation, the ten points of its antlers evoked the Ten Commandments. Moreover, since its antlers grow back each year, the stag was also a symbol of fecundity and resurrection.

Chroniques et conquêtes de Charlemaine

The first part of the *Chroniques et conquêtes de Charlemaine* was completed for Philip the Good. The prologue in the manuscript tells how Jean V de Créquy from the north of France, lord of Canaples and one of Philip the Good's favourite generals, commissioned the luxury manuscript. The *Chroniques et conquêtes de Charlemaine* tells the legendary epic of Charles the Great in a mixture of myths and reality. The work is inspired by the *Chroniques de France* and the *Chronique du Pseudo-Turpin* and was compiled by David Aubert. In the second half of the 15th century, he completed many assignments for the Dukes of Burgundy and was one of the main chronicle writers and copyists. The *Chroniques et conquêtes de Charlemaine* is filled with the chivalrous ideals which played a key role in the Burgundian court. Tales of prestigious ancestors, such as Charles the Great, aim to legitimise the duke's authority and play on his dream of liberating the Holy Land. There are many reports of historic details, but also invented and exaggerated tales. Despite containing a grand

total of 105 miniatures in grisaille, it probably took less than two years to complete the two parts of the manuscript. The main focus lies on the opening miniature, where the submission of the manuscript to Philip the Good takes place in a market scene, filled with tradesmen, bankers and excited spectators. A subtle tweak of perspective leads the spectator's eye to the back of the illustration, to witness the most important events. The medieval city is realistically depicted, and the former social pyramid, with the duke uppermost, is highlighted. The slight difference in style in the illustrations in the second volume may indicate a second miniaturist. When creating miniatures, the focus lay on carbon black and black iron gall ink, together with gold, vermilion and an organic red. This makes the colour palate used by Jan Tavernier for the *Chroniques et conquêtes de Charlemaine* much less varied than the work of his contemporaries, such as Willem Vrelant, who also painted in semi-grisaille.



David Aubert,
Chroniques et conquêtes de Charlemaine (detail)
Southern Netherlands, ca. 1458-1460
KBR – ms. 9066, folio 11r

Special items

Crane

The crane, built in Bruges in 1288, symbolises the city's prosperity. The crane's operation is inspired by the technology in hydraulic watermills. "Crane children" walk in the wheel thus moving the horizontal reel in the crane. The cables then lift the goods: barrels of wine, beer or oil, crates of herring or bales of wool.

Using funds from the non-profit organisation Friends of KBR, the company Archim'aide made a scale model of this emblematic crane for the KBR museum. As a symbol of the riches in our district under the Dukes of Burgundy the model will be a valuable addition in the presentation of the 15th century in the Southern Netherlands.



Reproductions from the casting workshop at the Royal Museums of Art and History of Belgium

The casting workshop at the Royal Museums of Art and History was founded in the 19th century under the reign of King Leopold II. It manages a collection of around 4,000 casts of artwork dating from prehistoric times to the 18th century, as well as using them. Meanwhile, it has been producing new plaster models continuously for almost 150 years. The specialised tradesmen still employ ancient techniques, both in casting and patination. Especially for the KBR museum, the casting workshop has made a bust of Philip the Good, and mourners at the graves of Philip the Bold and John the Fearless and from the mausoleum of Isabella of Bourbon.

Conservation



Book conservation was originally a task for librarians. The manuscripts in the Burgundian library have always been carefully looked after, as they symbolise the political and economic powers of their owners.

This symbolic value is also the reason why they are still in such exceptional condition: the brightness and spirit of the miniatures, the clean parchment and scripts give the impression that they have been untouched by time. Even so, some books from the Library of the Dukes of Burgundy bear witness to the turbulent times characteristic of the collection. For example, bindings were long considered as nothing but temporary protection, which could be replaced or adapted according to the latest fashion or whenever the book changed owners. Manuscripts are therefore seldom in their original binding, and usually in an 18th or 19th-century binding. However, modern custodians and restaurateurs adopt internationally recognised scientific and deontological procedures, which pay just as much attention to the material as to the immaterial elements in the heritage object. The key objective is to stabilise the condition of a book, and to prevent any deterioration. Meanwhile, it is important to conserve the authenticity and history. Tears can be mended, gaps filled, ink corrosion

prevented, paint fixed, bindings reinforced, spine leather replaced, ... the options to repair a book are endless and are always carefully considered depending on the state, composition, historical, aesthetic, artistic, cultural, religious, scientific or documentary value. "Do as little as possible but as much as necessary" is the motto for those wishing to preserve the past, share it now but protect it for the future.

Digitisation

The “digitisation of heritage” and the “digital library” have emerged as a result of digital images and the overwhelming success of the internet since 2000. Thanks to this digitisation, large libraries have been able to show off hidden treasures in their vaults to a wide audience and researchers worldwide.

For a decade, KBR has been digitising its collections, both as preventive conservation and to give access online. To manage this properly the institute set up the digitisation department in 2011, charged with coordinating the execution of digitisation projects. Digitisation is the gradual reproduction in digital form of documentary and artistic heritage held in heritage institutions. The aim is to give access to heritage on a computer and to do so in a way that is both comprehensible and scientifically reliable. This requires a systematic approach for image capture and the provision of uniformly exchangeable and structured metadata. The digitisation stations used by KBR are specially designed to store all information from one source without harming the source. The images and metadata produced in this way form files which are permanently stored on a server as part of a sustainable approach to digital archiving. The digitisation of manuscripts requires more caution than other documents in a library. This delicate operation demands precision, patience and expertise, not to mention the appropriate technical infrastructure. Old manuscripts are precious and fragile, while their size, thick binding and weight make them tricky to handle. Illustrated manuscripts are also a special category, as their iconography is of great artistic value

and requires a faithful colour reproduction. The use of gilding adds to the complexity, certainly when it comes to illumination. Depending on the nature of a manuscript, its digitisation can be very time consuming. It is a challenge to manage more than 100 pages per day. We can spend an entire fortnight on a large volume. Preparations at the KBR museum have included the complete digitisation of almost all manuscripts from the Burgundian library. You can browse through them on belgica.kbr.be.



Loans

Thanks to many lenders, those visiting the KBR museum can enjoy even more than just the magnificent collection of manuscripts held by KBR. Altarpieces, retables and casts give visitors a clear idea of the context in which the collection of the Dukes of Burgundy was established.

Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium

Master of the legend of St. Barbara
Scenes from the life of St. Barbara
Southern Netherlands, ca. 1480 (inv. 6149)

Anonymous (imitator of Pieter van Coninxloo?)
Portrait of Philip the Fair
Southern Netherlands (Brussels?)
ca. 1500 (inv. 6355)

Anonymous master
Portrait of Philip of Cleves, Southern Netherlands
second half of the 15th century (inv. 3607)

Workshop belonging to Rogier van der Weyden
Group of people, Fragment of a painting
Southern Netherlands, 15th century (inv. 7016)

Anonymous master from Brussels
Preaching, Fragment from a panel
Southern Netherlands, 15th century (inv. 567)

Anonymous,
The bearing of the cross and The resurrection
Fragments from a triptych
(inv. 8737 and 8738)

Anonymous
The bearing of the cross and The crucifixion
Panels from the triptych
of Affligem (inv. 344)

Anonymous
The birth of Christ
Triptych (inv. 2242)

Brussels, The Royal Museums of Art and History

Anonymous
Descent from the cross, Fragment from a retable
Southern Netherlands, ca. 1460-1470 (inv. 868)

Anonymous
The Martyrdom of St. Adrian
Fragment from an altarpiece (inv. 0918)

Anonymous
St. Catherine
Statue (inv. 9021)

Anonymous
Fragments from the altarpiece of Bassine
(inv. 3629)

Brussels, War Heritage – The Royal Museums of Art and History

Hand culverin with hook,
Southern Netherlands, late 15th century
(WHI 11078 / MRAH PHN 1078)

Bollock dagger, Southern Netherlands,
15th century (WHI 10504 / MRAH PHN 0504)

Two-handed sword, Germany, mid-15th century
(WHI 10493 / MRAH PHN 0493)

Sword for a hand and a half for pedestrian soldier,
Southern Netherlands, mid-16th century
(WHI 10279 / MRAH PHN 0279)

Guisarme, Germany or Switzerland,
15th century (WHI 14447 / MRAH PHN 4447)

Chain-mail shirt with short sleeves,
Southern Netherlands, 15th century
(WHI 10004 / MRAH PHN 0004)

Cross bow with pulley, Southern Netherlands,
17th century (WHI 10731 / MRAH PHN 0731)

Mechelen, Museum Hof van Busleyden

Anonymous
St. Wilgefortis
Southern Netherlands, first half of the 15th century

Bruges, Groeninge Museum

Attributed to the workplace of Simon
Marmion Mater Dolorosa and Man of Sorrows,
Diptych
Southern Netherlands, 15th century
(inv. GRO 0201-202. I)

Brussels, Brussels City Museum

Oil lamp with a flat base and pouring spout,
found during excavations below Coudenberg
Palace, Southern Netherlands, 15th century
(inv. C195a)

Brussels, Société royale d'Archéologie

Optical glass lenses, found during excavations
under the St. Gudula's Cathedral in Brussels
Southern Netherlands, 15th century
(inv. St Mich 91 B / X 0-45)

Nivelles, Collegiate Church of St. Gertrude

Jacob Sourdiaus
Episodes from the life of St. Gertrude
Panels from St. Gertrude's chariot
Southern Netherlands (Nivelles?), mid-15th century

Private collection

Hans Boxhammer
Necklace from the Golden Fleece
of Heinrich Wilhelm
Wroclaw, 1647

Belgian National Archives

Payment register for miniaturists. Invoices from
Guilbert de Ruple, treasurer for Charles the Bold
1 January 1468 - 31 December 1468
Southern Netherlands, 1468 (CC register 1923,
fol. 173v)

Casts from the Royal Museums of Art and History based on the original pieces

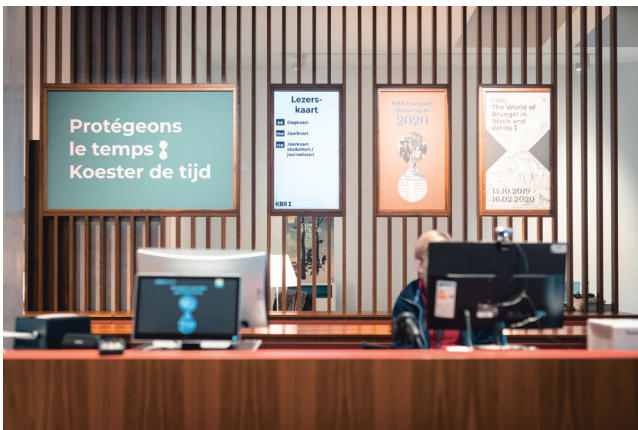
Attributed to Jörg Muscat
Bust of Philip the Good
Augsburg, ca. 1510
Stuttgart, Landesmuseum Württemberg (inv.
KRG 5432)

Mourners at the graves of Philip the Bold and John
the Fearless
Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, (inv. CA 1416)

Six mourners from the mausoleum of Isabella
of Bourbon
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, (inv. BK-AM-33)

KBR as a meeting place

KBR has been entirely redesigned to maximise the use of your time. It is an inspiring place providing access to exceptional knowledge. As a public space in the heart of Brussels, KBR attracts many passers-by and students looking for a pleasant place to study, read, work or enjoy a bite to eat. In addition to the cherished heritage collection, other treasures include the inner courtyard and magnificent views of Brussels. In 2019, many modifications were made to provide visitors with a professional reception infrastructure, facilitate circulation in the building and improve accessibility to those with limited mobility.



Reception

Thanks to the renovation, the reception at KBR is a very pleasant spot. Visitors can take a seat in the lounge while they wait for their appointment or they can work quietly on their laptop. It is possible to buy a ticket or reader's card at the information counter, where the questions of all visitors will be answered.

Inner courtyard

KBR's inner courtyard is ideal for some fresh air in between visitor's studies or research. It is a green and pleasant oasis, in the centre of the busy city.



Shop

Looking for a book or nice gift? Visitors can always be sure to find something in the shop of KBR. They can purchase KBR publications and exhibition catalogues, prints of works by famous artists and unique products that KBR designed together with artists.

Concert hall

KBR accommodates a concert hall on the 4th floor, where visitors can enjoy a musical gathering six times a year. Each concert is an imaginary journey to the heart of musical scores stored in the institution. Talented and motivated musicians entrance listeners with famous and unknown musical treasures from KBR's collections.

Renting a venue

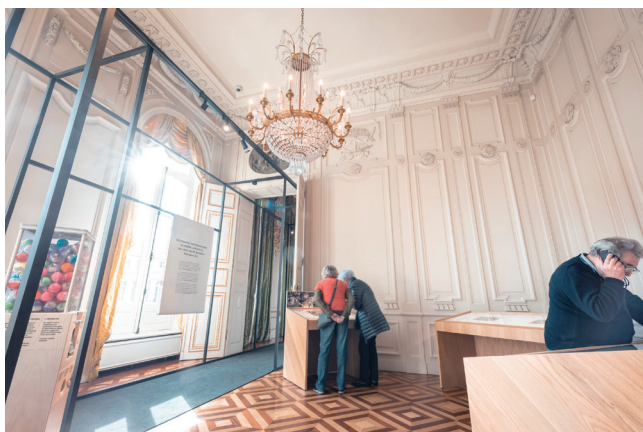
KBR is the perfect location for an event or meeting. The stylish galleries are an original place for a reception, conference, event, meeting, presentation or course. Furthermore, KBR's location is very central: in the heart of Brussels, close to Central Station and next door to an underground car park.

Exhibition area

One of KBR's renovations in 2019 was the Palace of Charles of Lorraine, an 18th-century palace belonging to KBR. The space has been transformed into a magnificent exhibition area where, until 16 February 2020, it was possible to admire "The World of Bruegel in Black and White" exhibition. This exhibition displayed the entire collection of Bruegel's prints and was organised as part of Bruegel Year. In 2022, the museum will launch an exhibition about the world-famous jazz musician, Toots Thielemans. The Toots Thielemans Fund, in the care of KBR, contains hundreds of photos, press cuttings, fifty musical scores, books, letters and other objects illustrating the exciting life of Thielemans.

Restaurant

In the last months of this year the new restaurant "ALBERT" will open its doors. On the 5th floor of KBR, visitors, locals and tourists can enjoy lunch, coffee and afternoon pastry with perspective. "Perspective" is to be found in the amazing view over the city as well as in the philosophy of chef Filip Fransen's kitchen: a combination of local products, sustainability and artisanry that revives the grandeur of the partly renewed interior.



Partners

The KBR museum saw the light thanks to collaboration and support from the Belgian Buildings Agency, Toerisme Vlaanderen, the Baillet-Latour Fund and the non-profit organisation Friends of KBR.

The **Belgian Buildings Agency** is the federal real estate authority for the federal public service and Belgium's national architectural and historic patrimony. The organisation invests heavily to maintain the country's patrimony and adapt this to the evolving context. The Belgian Buildings Agency has played a key role in the infrastructural and interior design work in KBR's premises. Thanks to them visitors of KBR will enjoy more frequent opportunities in the future to admire the magnificent heritage collection in the renovated exhibition spaces.

Toerisme Vlaanderen promotes the sustainable development in tourism and of the tourist industry in Flanders and Brussels with a view to improving economic return, employment and social welfare. Toerisme Vlaanderen has supported KBR by adapting the reception infrastructure, the museum layout and improving accessibility. As such, KBR can satisfy the needs of every (inter)national visitor seeking cultural added value.

The **Baillet-Latour Fund** focuses on encouraging, developing and promoting human excellence in Belgium, with a rigorous but open approach to social evolution. The Fund's mission is to preserve Belgian heritage with the allocation of funds, prizes and grants. The Fund is regularly involved in restoration projects and, in this way, contributes to managing Belgium's patrimony. In doing so, the Baillet-Latour Fund supported the restoration of the medieval manuscripts.

The non-profit organisation **Friends of KBR** supports KBR's activities in a number of ways. For example, it supports KBR in purchasing collection items and funding. The Fund financed the model of a crane from Bruges.

Practical information

Opening times

From 18.09.20, Tuesday to Sunday:
10.00 am – 6.00 pm

Closed on Mondays and certain bank holidays (1 January, Easter Sunday, Easter Monday, 1 May, Thursday of Ascension Day, Whit Monday, 21 July, 15 August, 1 November, 11 November, 25 December)

Location

Mont des Arts 28, Brussels
(metro “Gare Centrale”,
tram/bus stop “Place Royale”)

Access via the main entrance of KBR.

The building and museum tour are accessible to people with a disability. Several disabled parking bays can be found in Boulevard de l’Empereur 4.

Tickets

11 €	Standard
8 €	Reduced rate (65+, students, groups > 15 people)
Free	Under 18s, visitors with a disability (+1 companion), job seekers, Belgian teachers (Lerarenkaart/carte PROF), ICOM card, museumPASSmusées

Guided tours

Guided tours are offered in Dutch, French, English, German and Spanish. Go to www.kbr.be for more information.

Museum visit by train

SNCB offers a reduction on train journeys for visitors of the KBR museum. Thanks to the SNCB code on their online admission ticket to the museum, visitors can buy a Discovery Ticket which gives them a **50% reduction** on their journey to Brussels-Central and back.

Health measures to protect against COVID-19

- 1.** The number of visitors is limited to 50 people per hour.
- 2.** There is hand sanitiser gel in various locations and disinfectant wipes for audio devices.
- 3.** A digital stylus is provided for using the interactive screens.
- 4.** The museum is fully disinfected every day (twice a day for risk points).
- 5.** Visitors do not pass each other and numbers are limited in confined spaces.
- 6.** Wearing a mask is mandatory, as is maintaining physical distance.

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