

THE CASTLE AT HEVERLEE

The castle in Heverlee offers key testimony to the lifestyle of the Netherlandish nobility from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, from Croÿ to Arenberg. Both families belonged to the highest nobility in the Burgundian and Habsburg Low Countries and had important positions at the Brussels court. A gift to the University of Leuven a century ago, it now hosts the Faculty of Engineering Science and the Department of Architecture of KU Leuven. The exhibition in the University Library casts new light upon the castle and its surroundings, and invites the visitor to experience the existing building. Thirty years after the exhibition *Leuven & Croÿ* (1987), it focuses upon the close relationship between Leuven and its region on the one hand, and the noble families who left their stamp on the landscape on the other.

However, the exhibition offers far more than a description or even the chronicle of the castle's construction. It brings the architectural dreams of the castle's owners back to life, from the Renaissance to the eve of the First World War. This story has the whole of the Low Countries as its backdrop. At its peak, the castle served as the hub of a network of residences ranging from Brabant to Hainaut. Together, these residences express both the ambitions and the image of Charles III of Croÿ, duke of Aarschot, who died without issue in 1612. It took his sister Anne of Croÿ, wife of Charles of Arenberg, years of litigation to acquire the legacy of her brother, but in the end, a major part of the Croÿ heritage fell to the Arenbergs.

The story is told through more than a hundred original objects, a great many of them dating from the sixteenth century. Some of the objects on show in the rooms of the University Library come from its own collections, the Arenberg Collection in the University Archive and the University Library itself. Others, however, were lent by private collectors and are shown here publicly for the very first time. Among them, two precious "Albums of Croÿ" with views of Croÿ possessions in Hainaut and Artois, painted on parchment, rare or even unique prints and books, and a hitherto unknown, early sixteenth-century gradual with chants of the Mass. Like today's university inhabitants, the visitor can experience life in the castle through an immersive installation with image and sound. New models, underpinned by years of research, represent the architectural dreams of Charles III of Croÿ for Heverlee, Aarschot, Vaalbeek and St Josse-ten-Noode near Brussels in a more tactile way. A large number of photographs from private and university collections evoke the memory of life in the castle with its "upstairs" and "downstairs", as it was on the eve of the Great War, to be lost forever.

NOBLE LIVING

THE CASTLE AT HEVERLEE, FROM CROÿ TO ARENBERG

The exhibition has four parts: 1. Architectural dreams, 2. Network of residences, 3. Ambition and image, 4. Life in the castle.

ARCHITECTURAL DREAMS

In the early sixteenth century, William II of Croÿ and Mary of Hamal erected a new residence “in the manner of Brabant”, with brick masonry alternating with layers of white stone. The towers featuring an octagonal roof and onion spire are quite innovative, as are the galleries surrounding the courtyard. This highly influential model of Netherlandish Renaissance architecture was first developed by the Keldermans building masters from Mechelen. Philip II of Spain as well as the Danish kings Frederick II and Christian IV were inspired by it. Contrary to Valsaín (from 1552) and Frederiksborg (from 1606), however, the castle at Heverlee would never be completed. Between 1596 and 1612, Charles III of Croÿ came close to building the missing wings and towers. He also used the castle as a template for other architectural projects in his duchy of Aarschot. After his death, all building activities ceased for a century and a half. In the eighteenth century, Louis Engelbert of Arenberg ordered a monumental neo-classical façade from a famous Parisian architect, which was never realised either. Only in the late nineteenth century would the courtyard be entirely enclosed by buildings.

NETWORK OF RESIDENCES

Heverlee castle was an important link in the network of ducal residences. Like most members of the high nobility, Charles III of Croÿ led a nomadic existence in accordance with the seasons of the hunt and of court life. The core of this network was located in Hainaut. Well-considered marriage strategies had added the principedom of Chimay to the county of Beaumont, where the Croÿ power base rested. The second centre of gravity could be found in the duchy of Aarschot. Brussels, as the city most frequented by the court, also played a major part. As governor of the provinces Artois and Hainaut, Charles also travelled frequently through the border regions. From 1606 he retired to his favourite residences in Heverlee and Beaumont. Charles III of Croÿ paid close attention to the management of his domains and had every possession surveyed by Pierre and Jacques de Bersacques of Courtrai. Each document was carefully revised and signed in Charles’s own hand: “V(ist)a et R(evist)a fait et paint a lhuylle sur toille CCroy”. Together with extensive descriptions or *Besognés*, these maps and registers constitute a true cadaster. Adrien de Montigny’s painted views in the *Albums* are based on this.

AMBITION AND IMAGE

Charles III of Croÿ intended each barony in his duchy of Aarschot to have an exemplary building in the prestigious style called “the manner of Brabant”. Heverlee castle, as chief protagonist, served as a model for Rotselaar, Bierbeek and Aarschot. This consciously referred to the residential system of the dukes of Brabant in and around Brussels. Thus represented through architecture, Charles III was

symbolically present in each of his domains, whether he ever visited them in person or not. The “Brabant connection” also emerges from the genealogical studies ordered by Charles III of Croÿ. With the domain of Heverlee, acquired by his ancestor Anton I in 1446, also came the hereditary title of steward of Brabant. The Burgundian past is no less important. Like his predecessors, Charles III was a member of the Order of the Golden Fleece, a truly Burgundian foundation. Both the residence in Beaumont and the fortress in Comines dated from Burgundian times and were carefully restored. The family’s funerary foundation in the Celestin priory of Heverlee also referred to Burgundian tradition.

LIFE IN THE CASTLE

In the eighteenth century, the Arenberg family showed renewed interest in the castle of Heverlee. Between 1762 and 1768, the living spaces were renovated according to the then-dominant French fashions at the behest of Charles Marie Raymond of Arenberg. The original great halls and long galleries were subdivided by surveyor-architect Jean Baptiste Joris into smaller drawing rooms and apartments, while the chapel became a billiards room. The last colourful traces of the original furnishings, carefully described in Charles III of Croÿ’s *Besognés*, disappeared.

Photos show how the castle played an important role in Arenberg family life until the First World War. Dinners and theatre performances took place in the drawing rooms; hunting parties visited the surrounding woods. This lifestyle of exclusivity and wealth was made possible thanks to an extensive staff of servants. Around 1900, the family opened up the castle and gardens a few times for a “Flemish fair”, the revenue of which was given to charity. The First World War brought the story of the Arenbergs in Heverlee to a definitive closure, the university becoming the new owner.

MASTERPIECES IN THE SPOTLIGHT

PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF THE CASTLE IN HEVERLEE

KU LEUVEN, UNIVERSITEITSARCHIEF

This small but rather expressive perspective view represents the situation in Heverlee at the close of the sixteenth century. In 1596 Charles III of Croÿ inherited the duchy of Aarschot and with it also the barony of Heverlee. The fortified tower or keep, possibly from the fifteenth century, and its artificial hill surrounded by a moat are clearly rendered, as is the new south wing along the river Dijle, built between 1517 and 1520 by William II of Croÿ and Mary of Hamale in the fashionable “manner of Brabant”. Soon after his accession, Charles III ordered the keep to be demolished. He indeed intended to complete the castle by adding the missing wings and corner towers. The draughtsman is probably Pierre Le Poivre of Mons, a military engineer who drew other plans for the duke, on show in the exhibition: for instance, a project for a new bridge in Renaissance style over the Dijle, and a drawing of the castle in Comines, part of the legacy of the duke’s mother.

“BLUE” VIEW OF BEAUMONT

PRIVATE COLLECTION



“Blue” view of Beaumont
© Private collection

We do not know who drew this mysterious night view of the city of Beaumont (Hainaut). It probably dates from the last years of the sixteenth century. Beaumont, “capital” of the homonymous county, played an important role in the nomadic existence Charles III of Croÿ led, like any other member of the high nobility in that era. It indeed was his chief residence, and had originally been gifted by Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, to his favourite, Anton I of Croÿ (1453). Charles III housed his library with the famous *Albums*, which offer colourful views of all his possessions, in the Salamander Tower. The palace and the Salamander Tower are clearly shown in the centre of the view. From 1606, after his second marriage, he retired here – next to Beaumont, only the castle in Heverlee could still count on his continued attention. The view has been carefully restored in order to be shown here for the first time.

HEVERLEE FOREST

KU LEUVEN, UNIVERSITEITSARCHIEF

This colourful survey of Heverlee forest was carried out in 1605, at the request of the Duke. Not only the forests, but also the adjacent properties and the forest tribunal were drawn with an incredible

attention to detail. The surveyor signed the survey with his characteristic indication of scale, finished with an open passer. Together, the Heverlee forest, Meerdaal forest and Mollendaal forest formed one large “free forest” or hunting preserve, where only the Duke was allowed to hunt. This exceptional privilege recalls the hunting rights of the Dukes of Brabant in the Soignes forest near Brussels.

GOLDEN PORTRAIT COIN PRIVATE COLLECTION

This golden coin shows a portrait of Charles III of Croÿ, first Duke of Croÿ and fourth Duke of Aarschot. The reverse shows a rising phoenix, accompanied by his catching motto ‘SEUL’. In his cabinet in Beaumont, Charles assembled an exceptionally rich collection of antique coins. The golden coins in this collection were published with the help of two knowledgeable men, Nicolaas Rockox, mayor of Antwerp, and court architect Wenzel Cobergher. None other than Rubens designed the title page of this book.

ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPT PETRUS ANGELI, 1582 KU LEUVEN BIBLIOTHEKEN, BIJZONDERE COLLECTIES



Illuminated manuscript Petrus Angeli, 1582
© KU Leuven Bibliotheken, Bijzondere Collecties

Petrus Angeli, brother of the Celestine monastery in Heverlee, noted proudly at the beginning of this small book that he wrote and illuminated it in 1582.

Angeli possibly created this missal for his monastery’s patron, the Duke of Croÿ. He portrayed a knight of the Golden Fleece – the highest order of chivalry to which the Croÿ belonged – worshipping Christ on the cross. Angeli and his brothers may have intended this book as a gift to Duke Philippe III of Croÿ, who celebrated his second marriage in 1582.

The 75-folio manuscript is extraordinarily small. Petrus Angeli nevertheless managed to write a legible and decorative text. He also illuminated everything in great detail with vibrant colors, numerous border decorations, coats of arms, and miniatures.

**NOTEBOOK WITH HANDWRITTEN MENUS FROM THE ARENBERG FAMILY (1912-1913).
PRIVATE COLLECTION**

This handwritten menu booklet is a valuable witness to the *Upstairs Downstairs* culture that dominated life at the castle up until the beginning of the twentieth century. Each day, the cook carefully noted down the menu; one page for the Duke and his following, the opposite page for the staff. Judging from these notes, we can establish that the staff could enjoy a daily tasty meal consisting of soup, a main course and a pudding. Hasty changes were often made to the Ducal menu, probably after consultation with the Duchess. The booklet is on display, showing the pages detailing the Easter festivities of March 25 1913. The varied menu consists of no less than 14 courses.

**TAPESTRY WITH VIEW OF THE CASTLE IN HEVERLEE
PRIVATE COLLECTION**

The monumental tapestry created by Édouard Thiébaud (Brussels, 1913) represents the castle in Heverlee and its new landscaped garden in the romantic style, with the Arenberg coat of arms above. The original design (*carton*) was transferred from the Arenberg residence in Brussels, actually known as Egmont Palace, to the Capucin convent in Edingen (Enghien). This tapestry is part of a series woven by M. Verdonck in Brussels for Duke Engelbert Maria of Arenberg, showing the most important Arenberg residences of the late nineteenth century: Clemenswerth (1915), Nordkirchen (1916), Edingen (1915), and of course, Heverlee. The orange-coloured columns framing the view of Heverlee correspond with those in the monumental staircase of the Egmont Palace, which was also painted in trompe-l'oeil by the designer of the series, Georges Brasseur. The lower edge of the tapestry shows the ancient quality label of Brussels tapestry weaving, imitating the manner of the Golden Age of the art, the sixteenth century. It was carefully restored at the occasion of the exhibition.

FLEMISH FAIR IN THE DUCAL PARK IN HEVERLEE – LEUVEN
BRUSSELS, ALGEMEEN RIJKSARCHIEF



Flemish Fair in the ducal park in Heverlee – Leuven
Brussels, Algemeen Rijksarchief

Three times around 1900, a Flemish fair was held in the castle grounds. This impressive poster – more than three meters high – announces the fair of 1908. The initiative was placed under the high patronage of the duke of Arenberg. A committee of prominent citizens from Leuven, together with several (Catholic) societies, organised and managed the attractions. Almost 20.000 visitors amused themselves at the shooting stand and in the labyrinth, with the magic shows, the demonstrations of fencing and wrestling, and novelties such as cinematic projections. The profits of the fairs went to various charities.

Via this link <https://arenberg.prezly.com> you can access our pressroom where you will find a selection of photos. Other photos can be made available upon request.

PRACTICAL INFO

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY LEUVEN

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3000 Leuven
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adellijkwonen@kuleuven.be

OPENING HOURS

The exhibition is daily open from 10 a.m. till 5 p.m..

The University Library is closed on December the 25th and 26th and on the 1st of January.

On December 24th and 31st, the Library is open till 2 p.m..

www.arenbergleuven.be/adellijk-wonen

TICKETS AND GROUP VISITS

Book your tickets quickly and easily at www.arenbergleuven.be/en/tickets

Please book your tour at least three weeks in advance at <https://www.arenbergleuven.be/en/group-visits>

ARENBERG COMBI-TICKET

Combine the exhibition at M Museum Leuven with a visit to the exhibition at the University Library with a value-for-money Arenberg Combi-ticket.

Price: € 16

The Combi-ticket gives you admission to:

- The 'Power and Beauty' exhibition (incl. audioguide)
- The 'Noble Living' exhibition
- M - Museum's permanent collection
- Leuven University Library and its tower

TICKET NOBLE LIVING

Individuals

- Standard admission: € 6
- Concessions € 5
- With an I LUV Leuven ticket: € 5

Group visits

- € 65 per guide
- Admission of € 5 p.p.
- Min. 10 – max 20 people per tour
- 90 min.

COMBI TICKET UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

The ticket gives you admission to/

- The 'Noble Living' exhibition
- Leuven University Library and its tower

Individuals

- Standard admission: € 10

Group visits

- € 65 per guide
- Admission of € 10 p.p.
- Min. 10 – max 20 people per tour

PRESS

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PRESS PHOTOS

Via this link <https://arenberg.prezly.com> you can access our pressroom where you will find a selection of photos. Other photos can be made available upon request.

COLOPHON

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Scientific and executive committee: Jean-Marie Duvosquel, Roeland Hermans, Katharina Smeyers, Luc Vints, Annelies Vogels, Max Wiringa

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Production: Chloroform

Graphics: Undercast

Textile creation: Lene Meeus

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Collectie NB, Duitsland

Edingen, Arenberg Stichting

KADOC – KU Leuven

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M - Museum Leuven

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