BRUGGE MUSEA
BRUGGE

BRUEGEL’S WITCHES
EXHIBITION | 25.02 > 26.06.2016 | SINT-JANSHOSPITAAL | MARIASTRAAT 38, 8000 BRUGES
IN SHORT
The witch as we know her today, complete with bubbling cauldron, broomstick and black cat, was actually first dreamed up some 450 years ago by no less a person than Pieter Bruegel the Elder. It is curious, almost sinister, that there are so many similarities between the way witches are now pictured in our collective memory and the way this picture was first developed in Bruegel’s day. All it took was two engravings - albeit from an artist of great quality - to introduce his vision of witchcraft into Europe for all time. ‘Bruegel’s witches’ not only focuses on these two initial engravings, but will also tell you more about how the persecution of witches grew in the years that followed, about their supposed ‘magical’ powers, and about all different kinds of sorcery in Bruges and the Low Countries.

The witches and their world will be presented in one of the most authentic and atmospheric places in Bruges: the medieval attic of the Sint-Janshospitaal. From there, these creatures of the dark will transport you over the roofs of the city and into the swirling mists of the night...

MORE INFO

The iconic image of a witch
Everyone knows what a witch looks like: an ugly old woman who flies up a chimney on a broomstick and then disappears into the night. In her hearth stands a huge cauldron, full of bubbling potions, while her evil black cat warms itself next to the crackling fire. It is less well known that this characteristic image of witchery was first invented and developed by artists working in Flanders and the Netherlands, with Pieter Bruegel the Elder leading the way.

TWO REMARKABLE ENGRAVINGS
Until the 16th century, there was no such thing as a stereotypical image of a witch. Two engravings by Pieter Bruegel changed that almost overnight. It was Bruegel who gave the witch her broomstick and cauldron. Such was his reputation and such was the quality of his engravings that artists throughout Flanders and the Netherlands were inspired to imitate his work. This led to the creation of an iconic image of witches that is still with us today.
Important imitators
More than 150 images of witches made by artists from the Low Countries have survived to the present day. This represents an output unequalled anywhere else in the world. For this exhibition, a fine selection of often fragile paintings, manuscripts, engravings and drawings have been gathered together in Bruges to tell the story of ‘Bruegel’s witches’. From rare archive pieces and manuscripts to the detailed depiction of sabbath scenes by Frans Francken and David Teniers the Younger. The absolute highlights are the prints by Pieter Bruegel: ‘St. James visiting the magician Hermogenes’ and ‘The fall of the magician Hermogenes’.

In search of a scapegoat
‘Bruegel’s witches’ also gives an insight into the era in which this popular image of the witch was created. This is inextricably linked to the persecution of these wretched women, with the first public trials for witchcraft taking place around 1430. The exhibition highlights the consequences that can arise from a desire to exclude certain people from society, simply because they think and behave differently. In medieval times, the witch became a collective scapegoat for everything that was wrong in the world.

Collaboration
For this project, Musea Brugge has worked closely with the Museum of St. Catherine’s Convent in Utrecht, taking as a starting point the academic findings detailed in the thesis ‘Women on broomsticks and other such sorcery. Pieter Bruegel and the tradition of depicting witchcraft in the Netherlands between 1450 and 1700’ by Dr. Renilde Vervoort. In her doctoral dissertation at the Radboud University of Nijmegen in 2011, she demonstrated that the Dutch and Flemish Masters, and Pieter Bruegel in particular, had made a significant contribution to defining the way witches are still seen in society today.
EXTRA ACTIVITIES

In the exhibition, the image of the witch is approached from two different angles:

- the classic image of the witch on a broomstick, with black cat and cauldron, which is still popular with children and young people today, and lives on in the stories of Cornelia Funke and characters such as Lotje, Lilly, etc.
- the problem of 'being different' and the difficulty that society sometimes has in coming to terms with this difference, including the negative reactions that can result.

'Bruegel’s witches' is complemented by a full programme of related activities, with an interesting selection of lectures, workshops, guided tours, a concert, etc. You can also take part in an exciting 'witches walk’ during the dark spring nights in Bruges!

In the St.-Janshospitaal there is a welcome area for children, where a short film will give them an introduction to the exhibition, with plenty of other 'witchy’ literature to read. There is also a special 'witches class': fly with a broomstick over the night-time rooftops of Bruges and take home an original souvenir of your adventure! The very youngest can take part in a 'search-and-find’ game to identify a real witch. Alternatively, they can try and draw one - just like Bruegel!

FOR SCHOOLS

- MUSEUM MENU ‘Bruegel’s witches’ for the third grade of primary education (10-11 years): the class plays the ‘search-and-find’ game in the exhibition area and each pupil is given an accompanying booklet, which contains tasks to be completed or discussed back at school. Reservations: > musea.reservatie@brugge.be

- READING FOLDER with tips for schools: see www.museabrugge.be

FOR INDIVIDUALS

- ‘SEARCH-AND-FIND’ GAME for (grand) parents with their (grand) children younger than 12 years of age

- WORKSHOP ‘Make a print of a witch’, available during the Easter holidays for children aged 8 to 12 years. Participation is possible on Wednesday 6 April, Friday 8 April and Saturday 9 April 2016. Duration: 3 hours. Prior registration via musea.reservatie@brugge.be
**GUIDED VISITS**

- in the exhibition (roughly 2 hours)
- outdoor walk (roughly 1.5 hours).

These options can be booked separately or in combination with each other.
Reservations: +32 (0)50 44 46 46 or toerisme.reserveringen@brugge.be

**CONCERT**

‘Heksentoeren’ [Witchery] | 03.06.2016
Concertgebouw (Kamermuziekzaal) | The ‘Transports Publics’ Ensemble | Programme: Jean-Baptiste Lully [1632-1687], ‘Armide’: info & tickets (€ 22) > www.concertgebouw.be

‘Enfin, il est en ma puissance!’ [At last, I have him in my power!]. The sorceress Armide, who in spite of herself has fallen in love with her enemy Renaud, does everything she can to bend her reluctant lover to her will. Based on this story, Lully wrote one of the finest works of early French opera and set the tone for several decades of similar lyrical tragedies. In conjunction with the exhibition ‘Bruegel’s witches’ in the St.-Janshospitaal, the Baroque ensemble ‘Transports Publics’, with viola da gamba player Thomas Baeté, will transport us to the fantasy world of Torquato Tasso’s ‘Jerusalem Delivered’. Lully’s score is given added emphasis by the performance of fragments of the 17th century translation of his opera into Dutch by Pieter Dubbels. Using his words, this concert - like the exhibition it complements - seeks to find the woman behind the caricature: ’But is Armide not idolatrous? And yet she is so meet. But is Armide not guilty? And yet she is so sweet.’
Walpurgis Night (St. Walpurgis’s Eve) is celebrated every year. But it is not every year that there is an exhibition about witches in the St.-Janshospitaal! We want to take this unique opportunity to ensure that this witches’ Sabbath is celebrated like never before!

Programme: see www.museabrugge.be

LECTURES IN COLLABORATION WITH FRIENDS OF MUSEA BRUGGE

THE REALITY BEHIND THE POPULAR FANTASY: THE CONTEXT OF WITCHCRAFT AND SYRCEY IN BRUGES DURING THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY
by Dries Van Ysacker
Sunday, 20 March 2016
Vriendenzaal Musea Brugge
€ 5 | free for members Vrienden Musea Brugge

‘THE WITCHES AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS’
by Jos Monballyu
Sunday, 12 June 2016
Vriendenzaal Musea Brugge
€ 5 | free for members Vrienden Musea Brugge

BOOKSHOP ACTION
In collaboration with the bookshops in Bruges, a special ‘witches programme’ has been developed.

LIBRARY: ‘WHO IS THE SEA-WITCH?’
Wednesday, 13 April 2016 from 14.30 to 15.30 | 3-6 years | ‘Biekorf’ Youth Library, Kuipersstraat 3.
A varied programme of storytelling, animated reading and a little bit of musical theatre, specially devised for kids.

EXTRA ‘DID YOU KNOW?’
THE STORY OF THE BALSTRAAT

In Bruges, witches also came together to celebrate the sabbath with the Devil. They chose what they thought was the perfect spot: underneath the tower of the Jerusalem Church, on the corner of the Balstraat. It is no coincidence that this is precisely where the ‘Black Cat’ tavern stands today! Legend tells that this was also the spot where a hunchback lost his hump by kissing Satan’s backside. The story goes as follows.

After having one too many in Café Vlissinghe, the drunken hunchback wandered into the Balstraat just after midnight. He was amazed to find a group of voluptuous women dancing around a blue fire. Encouraged by the women, he tentatively joined in. To reward him, they wanted to help him get rid of his crooked back. Unfortunately, he first had to do something in return: kiss the Devil underneath his tail. To this he agreed, and was surprised to find that the Devil’s bottom smelt of lavender and roses! Immediately after the kiss, his hump disappeared and a bulge appeared on top of the tower of the Jerusalem Church!

He was so happy to be rid of his hump that he decided to return to Café Vlissinghe, to tell a fellow hunchback about his good fortune. Full of hope that the same might happen to him, the second hunchback left the tavern and set off into the cold winter night. When he arrived at the Balstraat, he saw the same scene. The women were still dancing around the fire and he eagerly joined in, until the moment came that he also had to kiss the Devil’s backside. He lifted the tail, but the smell was so appalling that he pulled away in disgust. The witches called him ‘a dirty coward’ and to punish him for his weakness gave him the hump of the first hunchback to add to his own! And so he went through the rest of his life with two humps instead of one. Is it true? Who can say? But just to be on the safe side, perhaps it is wise to avoid the Balstraat late at night or in the early hours of the morning...
Catalogue: ‘Bruegel’s witches. The depiction of witchcraft in the Low Countries from 1450 to 1700’

Author: Renilde Vervoort
Vandewiele Publishers
€ 19.95
Available from the museum shops at the St.-Janshospitaal and the Arentshuis, Dijver 16, 8000 Bruges.

MORE INFO

All arrangements can be made via sarah.bauwens@brugge.be or on +32 50 44 87 08.

Press visits to the exhibition are possible with an appointment: see under the heading ‘pers’ (press) on the website www.museabrugge.be.

The press file can also be consulted online and texts can be transcribed, again via www.museabrugge.be, under the heading ‘pers’ (press).
HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES

Images to promote this exhibition/museum can be downloaded via the following link:
http://www.flickr.com/photos/museabrugge/sets/. Please mention the correct credits.

David Teniers II (studio of), Witchcraft Scene, ca. 1635
Private collection, Brussels

Urs Graf after Hans Baldung Grien, Witches’ Meeting, 1514 | © Albertina Gallery, Vienna

David Rijckaert III, Mad Meg or Sweeping Hell Clean, after 1650 | © Art History Museum, Vienna

Fortune-teller discs for prophesying the future | © MAS, Antwerp

David Teniers II, Witches’ Sabbath, 1633
© Musée de la Chartreuse, Douai

David Teniers II, The Magician
© Museum of Fine Arts, Bordeaux

Swaddled doll with a tooth pinned on
© MAS, Antwerp

A wax doll and a wax heart, punctured with needles
© MAS, Antwerp
A magical rat’s foot whistle | © MAS, Antwerp

Hans Baldung Grien, Wicked Sorcery, 1510 | © National Museum, Amsterdam

David Teniers II, Departure for the Witches’ Sabbath, ca. 1640-50 | © Poitiers Museum


After Pieter Bruegel the Elder, St. James and the Magician, 1565 | © National Museum, Amsterdam

Burning witches in Baden, 1585 | © Wickiana Collection, Zurich Central Library

David Teniers II, Witch Under the Gallows | © State Art Gallery, Karlsruhe

Ambrosius Visscher; Jacobus van der Hoeven, Pillory cowl, 1688 | © Noordbrabants Museum, ’s-Hertogenbosch

Cat with phallus in its mouth, second half of the 14th century | Private collection
PRACTICAL INFO EXHIBITION

Title: Bruegel’s Witches
Location: Sint-Janshospitaal, Mariastraat 38, 8000 Bruges, Belgium
Period: from 25th February until 26th June, 2016
Opening Hours: from Tuesday to Sunday from 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Tickets: € 8 (26-64 y.) | € 6 (>65 y. & 12-25 y.) [permanent collection included]
free for children under 12 years old and inhabitants of Bruges
More info: www.museabrugge.be

In collaboration with Museum Catharijneconvent Utrecht

REQUEST

We collect every possible review of our museums and events. Therefore we would like to ask you to send a copy of any article you publish, or a CD of the relevant broadcast, to Sarah Bauwens, head of Press & Communications, Musea Brugge, Dijver 12, B-8000 Bruges. You can also send the files digitally (stating ftp or url) to sarah.bauwens@brugge.be.

We thank you for your cooperation and interest
Vrienden
Musea Brugge
THANKS ITS SPECIAL BENEFACTORS