

| The Friendship between CODART and the National Museum in Warsaw

When I succeeded Rembrandt specialist Gary Schwartz in 2005 as the director of CODART, the CODART members working in the National Museum in Warsaw (NMW) were the first to send their congratulations. CODART and the NMW had just finished a year of very intense cooperation. In March, 2004, CODART had organized its annual congress with the subject “Dutch and Flemish art in Poland,” with guest speakers from the NMW. The congress was followed later that spring by a study trip to Gdańsk, Warsaw and Krakow, where CODART, in close cooperation with its Polish partners, could offer a rich programme of visits to collections of Dutch and Flemish masters.

About CODART

CODART is *the* international network of curators of Dutch and Flemish art. The tremendous popularity and the fact that the works of art are widely disseminated means that CODART's network is extensive and unique. Major holdings of Dutch and Flemish art are located in approximately fifty countries, and Poland holds an important position. Most of these collections – assembled by royals and individuals passionate about Dutch and Flemish art – are currently held in public museums. CODART aims to make this widespread cultural heritage more visible and accessible to an international public. At the same time, the organization aims to increase public knowledge of Dutch and Flemish art, thereby lending a historical phenomenon a contemporary dimension.

At present, CODART connects over 600 curators from more than three hundred museums in almost fifty countries. Members work not only for prestigious institutions such as the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, the Louvre in Paris or the National Museum in Warsaw, but also for smaller significant collections, such as the Bogdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum of Art in Kyiv, the Sinebrychoff Art Museum in Helsinki or Kasteel Duivenvoorde in Voorschoten, The Netherlands. Curators from these institutions, and from many other museums, are active in the various CODART activities.

CODART cooperates closely with the RKD (Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie – Netherlands Institute for Art History) in The Hague, a research institution that is of pivotal importance in the international network of scholars of Dutch and Flemish art. CODART receives a subsidy from the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and is supported by a growing circle of Patrons, such as collectors, art dealers and museums.

Activities

To stimulate the exchange of information and cooperation in the areas of exhibition and research, CODART offers various platforms. Its website (www.codart.nl) is the main port

of call on the Internet for everything related to Dutch and Flemish art in museums. It functions as an information and meeting center, a research tool and as guide to information and sources found elsewhere on the Internet. Visitors of the website scan the latest news, seek information about museum curators and undergoing exhibitions, look at paintings in collection catalogues, read the CODART publications.

The annual CODART congresses are unique events for members, who gather from all over the world to share insights and find partners for new exhibitions. The congress themes, workshops and excursions focus on issues related to curatorial work within a broad, topical and international framework.

The focus meetings are one-day sessions in which curators show their collections, open their stores and discuss their exhibitions with colleagues from abroad. In this respect, it is worthwhile mentioning the CODART focus meeting that took place in the National Gallery in Prague on the occasion of the exhibition “Rembrandt & Co.” (May, 2012). During one day, the National Gallery hosted an international group of twenty-five curators for lectures, a visit to the exhibition and an expert meeting during which Dutch and Flemish “uncracked nuts” from the storages were discussed.

The CODART eZine is the beautifully designed digital successor of the paper CODART *Courant*. It provides information on the network's activities, new developments, lesser-known collections and new curators. The newsletter also contains information about the results of congresses and study trips. The eZine has a broad target audience, made for and by members, meant for everyone interested in Dutch and Flemish art around the globe.

CODART and Poland

Since its founding, CODART has cooperated closely with museums in Poland. One of the highlights of this cooperation was the realization of the “Dutch and Flemish Art in Poland” congress in Utrecht and the CODART study trip to Poland, both organized in 2004, with the National Museum in Warsaw as main partner. Thanks to this initiative, an international group of curators could deepen its knowledge of Dutch and Flemish art in significant Polish collections, and learn a lot about the rich cultural heritage that Poland and the Low Countries have in common. One of our hosts made use of the occasion in an excellent way and prepared a special exhibition to honour the study trip: *Skarby Niderlandów. Rysunki i wybrane rycin y artystów niderlandzkich XVI–XVII wieku ze zbiorów Fundacji Książąt Czartoryskich* [The treasures of the Netherlands. Drawings and selected etchings by Netherlandish artists of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries in the collection of the Princes Czartoryski Foundation] was organized by the National Museum in Krakow and the Princes Czartoryski Foundation, with an extensive catalogue edited by Ewa Czepielowa. In addition, the *CODART Courant* 8 (June 2004) was dedicated to Dutch and Flemish art in Poland (the complete issue can be found at: <<http://www.codart.nl/downloads/Courants/courant8.pdf>>).

The National Museum in Warsaw is one of the loyal partners of CODART. NMW curators are playing an active role in the network as speakers during conferences and as authors of articles for the CODART newsletters. Piotr Borusowski, member of the CODART website committee, acted as “curator in the spotlight” on the CODART website in April 2011.

Hanna Benesz, interviewed by Ruud Priem (now director of Museum het Catharijneconvent in Utrecht) for the *CODART Courant* 17 (Winter 2008), underlined the importance of CODART for her work as a curator as follows: “Annual congresses fundamentally broaden our knowledge of Dutch and Flemish art. [...] This knowledge is especially valuable when writing a collection

catalogue. CODART, as a network of specialists and friendly people, is of great value for the exchange of information.” A detail from a beautiful Dutch painting from the MNW collection adorned the cover of the same issue of *Courant*.

For more information please visit: www.codart.nl or ezine.codart.nl. Via the website, you can sign up for free-of-charge subscriptions to CODART *Notifications* (information about exhibitions on Dutch and Flemish art worldwide) and CODART *News*. Polish curators interested in CODART membership can apply with a registration form available on the website.

The National Museum in Warsaw curators in CODART:

Prof. Antoni Ziemia (Collection of Old Masters European Art)

Hanna Benesz (Collection of Old Masters European Art)

Piotr Borusowski (Department of Prints and Drawings)

Zofia Herman (Collection of Old Masters European Art)

Aleksandra Janiszewska (Collection of Old Masters European Art)

Joanna A. Tomicka (Department of Prints and Drawings)