

TECHNICAL ART HISTORY COLLOQUIUM:

BOXWOOD MICRO-CARVINGS



Image: Prayer Bead with the Adoration of the Magi and the Crucifixion, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

The Technical Art History Colloquium is organised by Sven Dupré (Utrecht University and University of Amsterdam, PI ERC ARTECHNE), Arjan de Koomen (University of Amsterdam, Coordinator MA Technical Art History), and Abbie Vandivere (University of Amsterdam, Coordinator MA Technical Art History & Paintings Conservator, Mauritshuis, The Hague). Monthly meetings take place on Thursdays, usually in Utrecht and Amsterdam. The thirteenth edition of the Technical Art History Colloquium will be held at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, in connection with the exhibition 'Small Wonders': Dutch micro-carving from the late Middle Ages. Prof. dr. Frits Scholten (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam and University of Amsterdam) and Rosa Hoogenboom (University of Amsterdam and Netherlandish Institute for Conservation, Art and Science) will present papers on micro-carvings made of boxwood. There will be substantial time for audience discussion. Admission to the colloquium is free. All those interested are welcome.

Date and time: 29 June, 2017 - 15:00 – 17:00

**Location: Meeting room Bureau van het Rijksmuseum, Hobbemastraat 20,
Amsterdam**

**In order to ensure that you will be accommodated, please RSVP by Thursday
22 June: j.briggeman@uu.nl.**

Virtuoso Micro-Carvings from the Low Countries 1500-1550

Prof. dr. Frits Scholten - Senior curator of sculpture at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and professor in the History of Western Sculpture at the University of Amsterdam

In the Netherlands of the early 16th century, many very small objects were carved in boxwood. They served a growing market for private devotionalia among laymen: prayer notes, rosaries, miniature-altarpieces, devotion-monstrances, and other 'spiritual toys'. By far the largest group of these works comes from one workshop, which has recently been localized in the city of Delft. During this lecture, various aspects of this virtuoso micro-cutting will be presented, such as the ingenious and inconceivable way in which they were manufactured. Also, the use of these objects will be discussed in relation to their extremely small scale.

On Boxwood

Rosa Hoogenboom - Graduate student in the Technical Art History MA at the University of Amsterdam, and assistant for the Netherlandish Institute for Conservation, Art and Science (NICAS)

The micro-carvings currently on display in the Rijksmuseum's exhibition 'Small Wonders' are all made of the same material: boxwood. *Buxus sempervirens* – the shrub that boxwood comes from – is an evergreen bush that has been used for architectural gardening over the centuries. Characteristics such as the hardness and density of this wood make the material exceptionally suitable for micro-carving. This lecture will present the calculated choice of boxwood as a material for micro-carving, and the way it stimulated artist virtuosity. It will also discuss: the history of boxwood throughout the centuries, the tools required to work with this hard timber, and some ideas about the value that was attached to the material itself. At the end of the lecture, the audience can try to carve different wood samples themselves, in order to personally experience the characteristic differences between wood types.

Next TAH colloquia:

- **21 or 28 September – Amsterdam**
- **26 October – Utrecht**
- **7 December – Utrecht**
- **15 February – The Hague**
- **8 March – Amsterdam**
- **12 April – Utrecht**