

STAINED GLASS AND THE (RE-) CREATION OF AN IDEAL PAST.

THE MAYER VAN DEN BERGH COLLECTION IN ANTWERP AROUND 1900

ABSTRACT

The Mayer van den Bergh Museum in Antwerp, Belgium, contains a fine collection of stained-glass panels, mainly Southern Netherlandish roundels from the Early Modern period. As an internationally active private collector in the late nineteenth century, Fritz Mayer van den Bergh (1858-1901) maintained close contacts with art dealers, museum professionals and other private collectors from various European countries. In the eventual museum, the collector's mother Henriëtte van den Bergh (1838-1920) integrated the stained-glass panels into the decorative scheme of its historicizing interiors. This article explores Fritz and Henriëtte Mayer van den Bergh's collecting and display strategies, traces their underlying motivations, and reconstructs the function historical stained glass served within the overall conception of the museum. It will distinguish the Catholic social networks and neo-Gothic philosophy of the Mayer van den Bergh family as their major incentive. The appendix provides a complete catalogue of the Mayer van den Bergh collection of stained glass.

KEYWORDS

PRIVATE COLLECTING | INTEGRATED DISPLAY | HISTORICISM | BELGIAN NEO-GOTHIC MOVEMENT | CATHOLIC REVIVAL

RESUMO

O Museu de Mayer van den Bergh em Antuérpia, na Bélgica, contém uma bela coleção de vitrais, principalmente rondeis do sul da Holanda, do início do período Moderno. Como colecionador privado ativo ao nível internacional no final do século XIX, Fritz Mayer van den Bergh (1858-1901) manteve contatos próximos com negociantes de arte, profissionais de museus e outros colecionadores privados de vários países europeus. A mãe do colecionador, Henriëtte van den Bergh (1838-1920), integrou os painéis de vitral no esquema decorativo do interior historicizante deste museu. Este artigo explora as estratégias colecionistas e de exibição de Fritz e Henriëtte Mayer van den Bergh, localiza as motivações subjacentes e reconstrói a função que os vitrais históricos terão servido dentro da concepção geral do museu. Irão destacar-se as redes sociais católicas e a filosofia neogóticas da família Mayer van den Bergh como os seus principais incentivos. O apêndice fornece um catálogo completo da coleção de vitrais Mayer van den Bergh.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

COLECIONISMO PRIVADO | EXPOSIÇÃO INTEGRADA | HISTORICISMO | MOVIMENTO BELGA NEOGÓTICO | REVIVALISMO CATÓLICO

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I N D E X



E D I T O R I A L



I N T E R V I E W



D O S S I E R



P R I N T

Introduction

The Mayer van den Bergh Museum in Antwerp, Belgium, is well known for its outstanding collection of late medieval and Early Modern fine and decorative arts, most notably perhaps for Pieter Bruegel the Elder's famous *Dulle Griet (Mad Mag)*. But the museum also owns a fine and well-preserved collection of 44 stained-glass panels, most of them Southern Netherlandish roundels from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, brought together by Fritz Mayer van den Bergh (1858-1901) between the early 1880s and 1901.¹

After the premature death of the collector, his mother Henriëtte van den Bergh (1838-1920) created the Mayer van den Bergh Museum to fulfill the dream that both mother and son had nourished. The museum presents paintings, sculptures, antiques and decorative arts side by side and in close relation to each other. From the very first, the stained-glass collection was integrated into the existing windows, thereby functioning as a distinctive element within the historicizing exhibition rooms. Although the arrangement of the objects was frequently altered over the years, the museum emanates the personal atmosphere of a turn-of-the-century private collection until the present day, with the majority of the stained-glass windows still being an integral part of the museum display.

The Mayer van den Bergh collection of stained glass lends itself to examining the artistic taste, methodological approach and underlying motivations of its owners. As such it can serve as a representative case study of the practice of gathering and using stained glass in the private context in late-nineteenth-century Europe. This article therefore

focuses on Fritz and Henriëtte Mayer van den Bergh's collecting and display strategies of historical stained glass. On the basis of archival material and the earliest published museum catalogues, it will map where Fritz acquired stained glass and examine the objects' presentation in Henriëtte's museological concept. It will then trace the family's motivations and aims by means of analyzing their social networks, political and religious convictions. By doing so, it is the intention to shed new light onto the function of stained glass in the conception of the museum, and on the role the family's personal, philosophical and ideological world-view played therein.

Fritz and Henriëtte Mayer van den Bergh

Fritz Mayer was born in Antwerp in 1858 as the oldest son of Emil Mayer (1824-1879) and Henriëtte van den Bergh. Fritz' father was of German origin and one of Antwerp's foremost businessmen who had established the Belgian branch of the Cologne family business in spices and pharmaceuticals in 1849. Henriëtte was the daughter of the eminent Antwerp businessman and politician Jean van den Bergh (1807-1885), who had played a leading role in the Antwerp city council during the 1860s, as a Catholic alderman for the Meeting Party (Heylen and D'hondt 2009).

Fritz Mayer grew up in a wealthy, aristocratic and cultured environment, with Henriëtte being the greatest influence on his emerging love for the arts (de Coo 1979, 7-8). Destined for a diplomatic career, he studied Literature, Philosophy and Law at Ghent University from 1877 onwards. But when his father died in 1879, he abandoned his studies and moved back into the Antwerp family residence in the Lange

¹ 30 silver-stained roundels and unipartite panels from the Mayer van den Bergh Museum are published, according to the criteria of the *Corpus Vitrearum*, in Berserik and Caen 2007, 14-35. A complete catalogue of the collection is published here for the first time, see appendix.

Gasthuisstraat 21, the neighboring house of the present-day museum. He dismissed the career plans and left the business to his younger brother Oscar. From that moment on, he dedicated himself entirely to his passion for art collecting, enthusiastically assisted by his mother. On frequent travels they visited museums, auctions, art dealers and collectors all over Europe. Their shared interest strengthened their already tight personal bonds enormously. Fritz would never marry, but in 1887 he added Henriëtte's last name to his, from now on calling himself Mayer van den Bergh.

With the help of his mother Fritz Mayer van den Bergh was able to build up a most varied collection of more than 3.000 works of fine and decorative art from all periods, but with a marked preference for late medieval sculptures and early Netherlandish paintings, furniture, textiles as well as stained glass from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. To extend his collection and his knowledge about it, Fritz established connections with national and international connoisseurs, art historians, dealers and other collectors. Among these were for instance Max Friedländer and Wilhelm Bode in Berlin.

Fritz Mayer van den Bergh's sensitive and intelligent character reflected itself in his collection. A subtle esthete and an "Artiste dans l'âme" (Catalogue 1933, v), he adored the art from the Middle Ages, "when the artists sought to represent the soul rather than the body", and he was fascinated by the piety and mysticism they emanated. His study in the parental home, where a part of his collection was kept during his lifetime, resembled "a small and delicate sanctuary that allowed the visitor to forget the time" (Delbeke 1904, 8-9).²

Putting an abrupt end to his prolific collecting activity, Fritz Mayer van den Bergh died in 1901 after a horse riding accident. After his death it was Henriëtte who arranged for the preservation of the collection. She commissioned the Antwerp architect Joseph Hertogs to design the museum building in the style of a sixteenth-century townhouse. The museum officially opened in December 1904. In 1906, Henriëtte bequeathed the collection and building together with an endowment to a Board of Trustees (*Raad van Regenten*), thus guaranteeing its preservation as a private museum (Baisier and Müller 2013, 157). Until her death in 1920, Henriëtte played an important role in the management of the museum and the edition of the first catalogues. Her effort to preserve the collection for the future reflects the strong emotional attachment with which both mother and son dedicated their lives to the arts.

International Connections and an Eye for Quality. Methods of Collecting

With the extensive historical archives preserved in the Mayer van den Bergh Museum – comprising more than 1.100 letters, invoices and receipts,³ as well as a book documenting the acquisitions made between 1879 and 1901 – researchers have at their disposal an exceptional basis for investigations into the collector's networks and collecting strategies. The collection of stained glass is well-documented by archival material. From the 44 items, the provenance and circumstances of acquisition of 23 pieces can be identified on the basis of the collector's correspondence and notes. Additionally, the archive provides useful information about many more sellers and

² "Ce qui le captivait surtout c'était l'art ancien. Les tableaux et les sculptures du moyen âge, où l'artiste cherche à peindre et à modeler l'âme plutôt que le corps, l'architecture ogivale, les miniatures gothiques, tout cet admirable poème de prière, de piété, mysticisme et de souffrance le jetait dans des ravissements. [...] Son cabinet de travail révélait l'homme: c'était un délicieux petit sanctuaire où les œuvres d'art les plus variées et les livres de choix faisaient oublier à l'heureux visiteur la fuite des heures."

³ Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp, *Stukken betreffende de collectievorming*. Archival documents will in the following be referred to as: addresser, date, MMB.A. + archive number. All letters, invoices and receipts cited here are addressed to Fritz Mayer van den Bergh.

prices of stained-glass objects of which the identification is not possible.

Fritz Mayer van den Bergh acquired stained glass at auctions as well as from art and antique dealers, private persons and even directly from religious institutions in Belgium and abroad. Most of the frequented dealers, agents and collectors from which he purchased historical stained glass also provided him with other art works, such as paintings, sculpture or furniture.

The first identifiable acquisition of stained glass was at the auction of the renowned Antwerp collection Van der Straelen-Moons-Van Leries (1884-1886). At the sale of the section “Antiques et objets d’art” in 1885, Mayer van den Bergh acquired three lots of mainly religious and heraldic stained-glass panels for 286 Belgian francs, among which the *Sermon on the Mount*, *Sheltering strangers*, *Joseph of Arimathea*, and several coats of arms of the former Antwerp clerics Marcus Cruyt, Gaspar Nemius and Balthazar Cruyt. The collector’s correspondence reveals that he paid great attention to the state of conservation of the desired objects. After the successful acquisition of the three lots, the Antwerp art dealer Charles Van Herck (Mayer’s intermediary at the auction) informed him that three other pieces had not been purchased because they were “modern” and “entirely broken”, respectively.⁴

It was not until the early 1890s that Fritz Mayer van den Bergh significantly extended his stained-glass collection. Interestingly, his increased attention to stained glass coincides with his changing taste after he resold a great part of his so far gained antiques collection at two auctions in 1891 and 1892 (de Coo 1979, 12). Not only was this

the moment when he shifted his focus to old paintings, sculptures and decorative arts, but also when Fritz and Henriëtte started to develop plans to create a private museum.

In these years, Mayer van den Bergh acquired in rapid succession an “early-sixteenth-century glass panel in grisaille representing Saint Roch” from Madame Wéry in Tongeren for 120 francs,⁵ the *Saint Barbara* from the rectory of Herk-de-Stad through the intermediary Germain Jaminé from Hasselt for 200 francs,⁶ the *Saint Cornelius* from Henri Van Severen, an art and antiques dealer from Sint-Niklaas for 150 francs,⁷ a “painting on glass representing the Madonna at the tomb of Christ” from Steyaert in Bruges for 55 francs,⁸ and two roundels representing the *Nativity* **[FIG. 1]** and *Daniel opposes the verdict against Suzanna*, together with three seventeenth-century fragments at the auction of the collection Camille Van Langenhove-Biebuyck in Aalst for 200 francs.⁹ Other unidentifiable panels were bought, especially between 1890 and 1896, from Pierre Peeters, owner of an “atelier de sculpture religieuse” in Antwerp,¹⁰ Paul Dangis in Chokier,¹¹ and from many other dealers and collectors in Antwerp,¹² Brussels¹³ and Ghent.¹⁴ At the same time Mayer van den Bergh had nine panels repaired in the Antwerp atelier of Auguste Stalins and Alfons Janssens.¹⁵

At the international level, Mayer van den Bergh acquired stained glass in Switzerland, France, the Netherlands and Germany. The first was the so-called *Wappenscheibe von Thomas von Schauenstein*, purchased from Jacob Storz in Chur in 1889.¹⁶ Together with four other Swiss panels today in the collection, this piece demonstrates that Mayer van

⁴ Letter Marie Van Herck (daughter of Charles Van Herck), Antwerp, 3 June 1885: “[...] le No 671 était moderne, le 674 et 677 étaient entièrement brisés.” MMB.A.0013. (The pieces that had not been acquired were a small panel representing the *Christ Child* and two sixteenth-century roundels with the *Death* and the *Assumption of the Virgin*, cf. Auct. Cat. Van der Straelen-Moons-Van Leries, Vol. VIII, 54-57). Cat. nos. 7, 9, 10, 13, 38, 42.

⁵ Book of acquisitions, 14 May 1890: “Vitrail grisaille commencement XVI S. à St. Roch, acheté chez Mme Wéry à Tongres — 120 fr.” Although catalogued in 1933, this roundel with the inscription “SANCTE ROCHE ORA PRO NOBIS” and a diameter of 28 cm (with border) is not in the museum today.

⁶ Book of acquisitions, 5 January 1891: “Vitrail médaillon en grisaille repr. Ste. Barbe comm. XV S. par l’intermédiaire de Jaminé de Hasselt — 200 fr.” and receipt Germain Jaminé, Antwerp, 5 January 1891: “[...] médaillon représentant Sainte Barbe provenant de M. le curé de Herck.” MMB.A.0188. Cat. no. 19. In 1890, Mayer van den Bergh had purchased from Germain Jaminé a “Renaissance door”.

⁷ Book of acquisitions, 14 November 1891: “Vitrail rond représ. St. Corneille acheté chez Van Severen à St. Nicolas — 150 fr.” Cat. no. 22. Mayer van den Bergh also bought liturgical garments and tapestries from Van Severen in 1892 and 1898.

⁸ Receipt Steyaert, Bruges, 31 May 1893: “[...] tableau en verre représentant la mère au tombeau de Christ la somme de f. 55.” MMB.A.0365. The panel is not in the collection today and was thus certainly resold.

⁹ Invoice Louis De Maeyer, Aalst, 14 June 1894. MMB.A.0457. Auct. Cat. Van Langenhove-Biebuyck 1894, lot no. 539. Cat. nos. 6, 11, 30-32.



FIG. 1 *Nativity*, Southern Low Countries, Early 16th century, Ø 20,3 cm, inv. no. 636, Photograph: Ulrike Müller, © Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp

¹⁰ Letter Pierre Peeters, Antwerp, 30 July 1890, confirming the sale of a “glasraam”. MMB.A.0152.

¹¹ Letter Paul Dangis, Brussels, 10 June 1896, confirming the sale of a “petit vitrail”. MMB.A.0656. Dangis also supplied, among others, Gothic paintings and ivories in 1896.

¹² Book of acquisitions, 12 March 1891: “9 vitraux anciens du commencement du XVI S. (médaillons) chez Eva Krug — 350 fr.” and receipt Eva Krug, Antwerp, 12 March 1891. MMB.A.0365.

¹³ Letter Burny, Brussels, 14 June 1893, confirming the sale of a “petit vitrage”. MMB.A.0371.

¹⁴ Book of acquisitions, 27 September 1891: “2 vitraux forme médaillon achetés à Gand chez Willems — 70 fr.”

¹⁵ Invoice Stalins & Janssens, “Atelier de Peinture sur Verre”, Antwerp, 31 December 1891, for repairing “2 oude medaillons”, “4 pannelen met medaillons” and “drÿ oude glasraamen” for 60 fr. MMB.A.0251.

¹⁶ Letter Jacob Storz, Chur, 6 March 1889. MMB.A.0092. Cat. no. 29.

den Bergh's focus on Netherlandish roundels was by far not exclusive. This is also confirmed by the thirteenth-century French *Annunciation* which would later receive a prominent place in one of the exhibition rooms dedicated to Gothic art [FIG. 5].¹⁷ This panel, acquired with the collection Carlo Micheli from Paris in 1898 (de Coo 1965), originates from the south rose window of Notre Dame de Paris from where it apparently was removed at the time of Alfred Gérente's restorations in 1861 (Perrot 1989). A roundel purchased from Geoffroy in Marseille¹⁸ and two roundels representing *Children playing* and a *Female figure* acquired from the Parisian collector de Lannoy in exchange for three ivory plaquettes testify Mayer van den Bergh's good connections to French dealers and collectors. Upon his request, de Lannoy moreover declared that both panels were "ancient and have not been retouched".¹⁹

The small oval *Annunciation* was acquired from the Dutchman François van Waegeningh in 1892. This "antiquaire-expert" who seems to have run, together with his father Gerard, two businesses in art and antiques in Nijmegen and Breda, repeatedly sold paintings, sculptures and antiques to Mayer van den Bergh. Bought as a fifteenth-century panel and still catalogued as such in 1933 (Catalogue 1933, 91), it is today considered a nineteenth-century work after a painting by Albrecht Bouts.²⁰

In Munich, Julius Böhler was a reliable dealer not only in paintings and sculptures, but also in stained glass.²¹ Finally, Mayer van den Bergh's friend Alexander Schnütgen, the canon, collector and founder of the Schnütgen Museum of Christian Art in Cologne, offered him a roundel with the

Annunciation, because he knew that Fritz attached "great importance to the acquisition of such objects".²²

The analysis of the collecting strategies, criteria and networks allows us to draw a profile of Fritz Mayer van den Bergh as a well-connected, discriminating and conscientious collector. He paid great attention to artistic quality and conservation state, and he approached his collecting activity in a systematic way, selecting and documenting stained-glass objects with the same care as other art works in his collection. His exclusive focus on small-scale panels from the early modern period confirms that he already nourished plans to integrate them within a historicizing (museum) space.

Historical (Re-) Construction and Musealization. Display Strategies

The 1933 museum catalogue and a number of photographs of its interior from approximately the same period provide valuable information about the original display of the stained-glass collection. When the museum was opened in 1904, the exhibition rooms were dedicated to different (art) historical periods in which paintings, sculptures, furniture and the surrounding decorative elements such as chimney pieces, beam ceilings, gold leather hangings as well as stained glass formed a consistent, esthetically appealing unity. Originally, the entire collection of stained-glass panels was integrated into the existing windows in five of the nine exhibition rooms (rooms II, III, IV, V, and IX) as well as in the vestibule, upper corridor and staircase. Today, 38 of the 44 panels are still on display in the museum's windows, most of them however in different locations.²³

¹⁷ Cat. no. 1.

¹⁸ Book of acquisitions, 15 June 1899: "Acheté à Marseille chez Geoffroy Rue de la Pyramide un vitrail rond en grisaille du commencement du XVIe — 50 fr."

¹⁹ Letter de Lannoy, Paris, 10 May 1895: "Je garanti à M. le Chevalier Mayer que les deux vitraux que je lui ai changé pour trois plaques [...] sont anciens [...] le vitrail rond jeu d'enfants du XV siècle et le vitrail rond buste de femme commencement du XVI siècle, et que ces vitraux n'ont subi aucun retouche." MMB.A.0558. Cat. nos. 3, 26. On 4 May 1895, Mayer van den Bergh sold "4 vitraux ronds, 1 poignard, 1 fragment de retable représ. une crédence, 1 couronne de lumières gothiques en fer forgé" to "de Lannoy de Paris — 1.200 fr." The identity of this Parisian collector, resident in 48, Rue de Londres, is unclear. He may be the "E. de Lannoy" from Paris whose collection of Old Master paintings and antiques was auctioned in Antwerp in October 1899. He is however not to be confused with "Lannoy, marchand de tableaux à Paris, 139, Boulevard Haussmann" from whom Mayer van den Bergh, according to an entry in his book of acquisitions, purchased "un portrait de prélat par Jordaens" on 31 July 1899, or with the Belgian "Delannoy", from whose collection five stained-glass roundels can be traced in public museums in Louisville, Kentucky and Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, cf. Husband 1991, 82, 85, 109.

²⁰ Book of acquisitions, 4 May 1892: "Vitrail médaillon représentant l'Annonciation milieu du XV S. acheté à Van Waegeninghe jeune — 60 fr." Cat. no. 43. The art and antiques dealer François Van Waegeningh later settled in The Hague, cf. Auct. Cat. Van Waegeningh 1923.

²¹ Receipt Julius Böhler, Munich, 2 October 1899: "[...] bestätige Ihnen [...] den Empfang von fr. 2200 für 1 Bild Maria Tod, kleines Porträt, 1 Bronzemörser + eine Glasscheibe."

In the beginning of the twentieth century, visitors entered the museum not through today's main entrance, but through a door in the first exhibition room leading to the Mayer van den Bergh's neighboring family home. In the second exhibition room one could find the first set of eight fifteenth- and sixteenth-century stained-glass panels: the *Nativity* [FIG. 1], *Sheltering strangers, Saint Barbara, Allegory of Patience* [FIG. 2], *Tobias' return, Saint Martin, Children playing* and a *Coat of arms*.²⁴ They were exhibited together with the late-thirteenth-century *Christ-Saint-John-Ensemble*, Lucas Cranach's *Saint Catherine* and *Saint Barbara* (then forming a triptych with the *Maria lactans* by the Master of Frankfurt), the retablo with the *Madonna and the Saints Catherine, Barbara, Mary Magdalene and Agnes* [FIG. 3], and other sixteenth-century Flemish sculptures, paintings and furniture [FIG. 4].

The *Salle III* was an intimate room dedicated to late medieval devotional images, altarpieces (the *Adoration* by the Master of 1518), statues of saints and lamenting angels, textiles, chandeliers and other liturgical equipment. Within this atmospheric setting, the thirteenth-century French *Annunciation* took pride of place as the only stained-glass window in the room [FIG. 5].²⁵

Returning through the inner courtyard, one reached the vestibule. This area exhibited an eclectic mix of old and modern. Neo-Gothic architecture and decorative elements such as the ornamental frieze above the door were complemented with three sixteenth-century stained-glass panels: *Saint Joseph of Arimathea, Daniel and Suzanna* and *Christ's Sermon on the Mount* [FIG. 6].²⁶ For the vestibule, Henriëtte had commissioned two representative modern

stained-glass windows: the *Coat of arms of the Mayer van den Bergh family* [FIG. 6] and the large *Coat of arms of the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke* above the door, the latter a work of the Antwerp artist Frans Proost.²⁷ The two modern panels were not catalogued in 1933 and thus certainly conceived as decorative elements rather than museum objects. Especially the *Coat of arms of the Mayer van den Bergh family*, of which the present whereabouts is unknown, indicates Henriëtte's determination to symbolically inscribe her family into Antwerp's glorious history, revived and eternalized through her museum.

On the first floor, the tour continued in the fourth room, the "Salle Gothique". Together with Quentin Massys' *Crucifixion* triptych and Vrancke van der Stockt's *Lamentation*, four fifteenth- and sixteenth-century stained-glass panels — *Saint Agnes* [FIG. 7], two *Calvaries* and the today lost *Saint Roch* — mirrored the devotional intimacy, mysticism and piety so admired by Fritz.²⁸

Representing the typical seventeenth-century Flemish collector's cabinet, the large *Salle V* or *Library* displayed Baroque paintings, gold leather and furniture ("Rubens chairs") as well as Mayer van den Bergh's collections of prints and drawings, Renaissance lead plaquettes, books and local antiques [FIG. 8]. The room's particular atmosphere of local pride and piety, encyclopedic knowledge and vanity is enhanced by the here-presented roundels *Saint Cornelius, Saint Margaret, Saint Mary Magdalene* and *Saint John the Evangelist*,²⁹ and the representative Swiss heraldic panels.³⁰

The *Grande Salle VI* — dedicated to the Bruegel family and their contemporaries — and the rooms VII and VIII, decorated in the eighteenth-century style, did not

MMB.A.0975. Between 1894 and 1900, Mayer van den Bergh regularly bought (and resold) objects of fine and applied art from (and to) Böhler.

²² Letter Alexander Schnütgen, Cologne, 7 July 1894: "Da ich für dieses [Glasscheibchen] keine unmittelbare Verwendung habe, weil alle meine Fenster mit Glasmalereien ausgestattet sind wäre ich nicht abgeneigt, dasselbe gegen ein anderes Kunstwerk einzutauschen [...] weil Sie gerade auf die Erwerbung solcher Scheiben Wert legen. Dasselbe hat 24 cm Durchmesser, stellt die Verkündigung in prachtvoller Zeichnung und Färbung dar, ist wohl kurz vor 1500 am Niederrhein entstanden, von absolut tadelloser Erhaltung." MMB.A.0469.

²³ Currently not on display are the cat. nos. 4, 5, 25, 30, 31, 42.

²⁴ Cat. nos. 3, 5, 6, 7, 19, 23, 33, 35.

²⁵ Cat. no. 1.

²⁶ Cat. nos. 11, 37, 38.

²⁷ Cat. no. 44.

²⁸ Cat. nos. 2, 4, 8.

²⁹ Cat. nos. 22, 25, 26, 34.

³⁰ Cat. nos. 17, 18, 24, 29, 36.



FIG. 2 *Allegory of Patience*, Southern Low Countries, First half of the 16th century, Ø 20,2 cm, inv. no. 654, Photograph: Ulrike Müller, © Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp



FIG. 3 Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp, *Salle II* on the ground floor (today Baroque Hall), First half of the twentieth century, Photograph: anonymous, Universiteitsbibliotheek Ghent, BRKZ.TOPO.1062.E.06



FIG. 4 Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp, *Salle II* on the ground floor (today Baroque Hall), First half of the twentieth century, Photograph: anonymous, Universiteitsbibliotheek Ghent, BRKZ.TOPO.1062.E.07

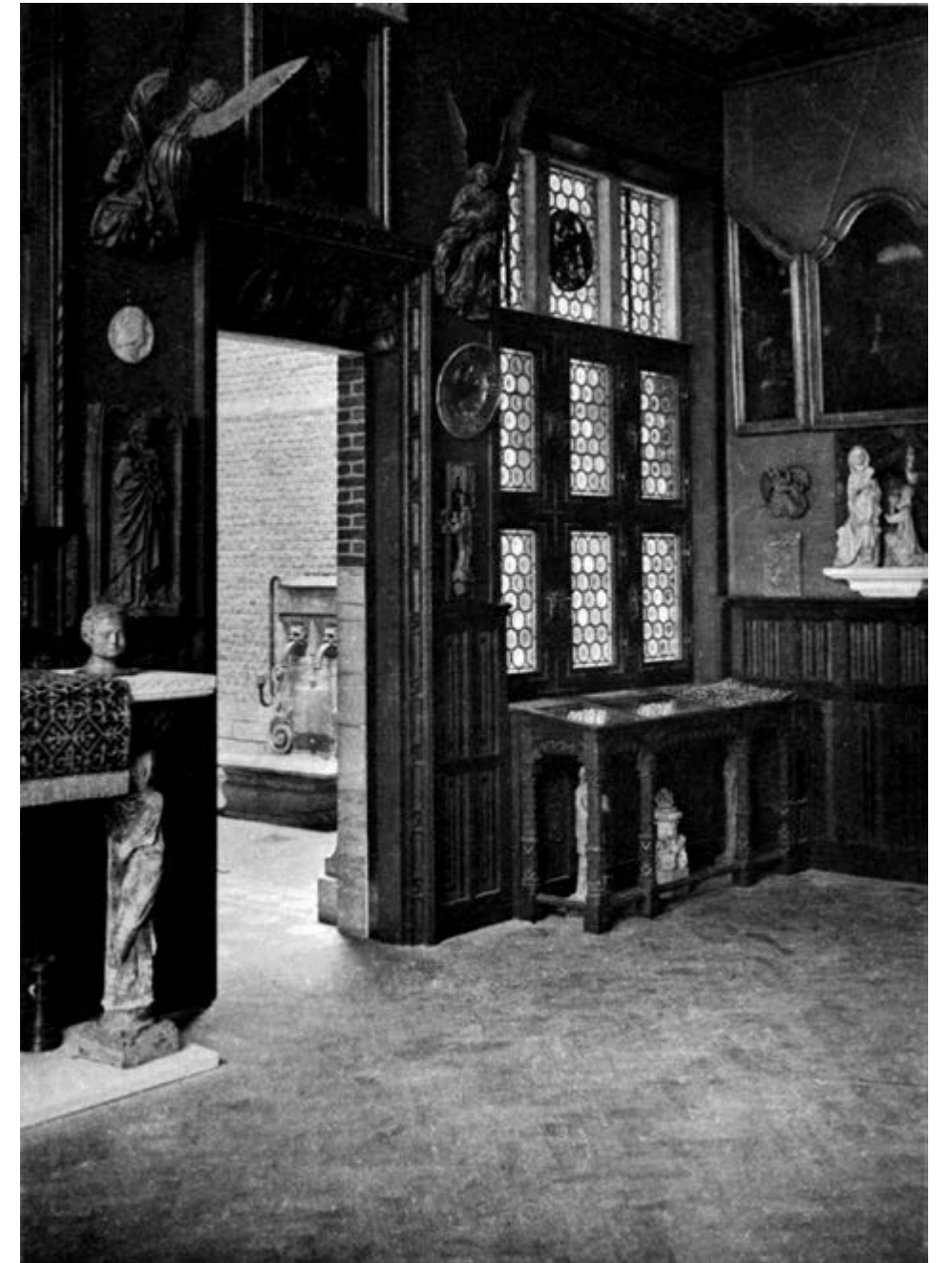


FIG. 5 Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp, *Salle III* on the ground floor (today not a part of the museum anymore), First half of the twentieth century, Photograph: anonymous, Universiteitsbibliotheek Ghent, BRKZ.TOPO.1062.E.09

incorporate any stained-glass panels. The allegedly fifteenth-century *Annunciation* was displayed in the eclectic *Salle IX* on the third floor, next to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sculptures, Baroque paintings, porcelain and metalwork, and the tapestry series of *Astrea and Celadon*.³¹ The remaining panels — the *Charlemagne*, *Allegory of Death*, *The Damned in Hell* and *The Triumph of Amor*,³² the coats of arms of Antwerp clerics and the fragments with inscriptions³³ — were spread over the windows in the upper corridor and staircase.

For the museum, Henriëtte thus devised an elaborate display concept in which the stained-glass panels alluded to their original devotional, representative and decorative function in an early-modern domestic setting. Herein, certain historical inconsistencies — such as the display of sixteenth-century stained glass within a seventeenth-century interior, completed with nineteenth-century decorative elements — were not considered as disruptive. After all, the prevailing aim was to create a historical and esthetically appealing atmosphere rather than to reconstruct an authentic historical space.

Flemish Movement and Catholic Revival. Motivations and Aims

In turn-of-the-century Antwerp, Fritz and Henriëtte Mayer van den Bergh were not the only ones attracted to stained glass and its use within historicizing interiors. In fact, in the second half of the nineteenth century Flanders experienced a revival of interest in this traditional art.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Flanders had been the center of a great production of stained glass, but in the

Baroque era the art had fallen into decline due to changing tastes. With the rise of the early Romantic Movement in eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Britain, great amounts of Netherlandish stained glass were purchased by English collectors and integrated into neo-Gothic mansions and churches (Berserik and Caen 2007, xvii-xxv, Caen 2009, 331-342). With the neo-Gothic fashion, the taste for stained glass then gradually spread on the continent.³⁴ In Flanders, the interest in and the number of publications on the subject for specialist as well as lay audiences considerably increased after 1860 (f.i. Lévy 1862, Van Cauwenberghs 1891), and authors such as Herman Druyts praised especially the decorative and atmospheric qualities of stained glass (Druyts 1875, 1-2).³⁵

Another important collector of stained glass in Antwerp was the historian and archeologist Frans Claes (1860-1933). In November 1904, one month before the inauguration of the Mayer van den Bergh Museum, Claes opened his private museum *De Gulden Spoor* (*The Golden Spur*) in the Sint-Vincentiusstraat (Denucé et al. 1932, 168, Müller 2013, 27-28). Next to his extensive collection of archeological and art objects related to the history of Flemish guild life, Claes owned a number of stained-glass panels. As in the Mayer van den Bergh Museum, these were integrated into the museum's period rooms. The windows in the historicizing *Guild Halls* on the ground floor, for example, incorporated several nineteenth-century stained-glass panels with moralizing images and inscriptions in vernacular borrowed from Jacob Cats' famous seventeenth-century emblem books. Claes, whose taste was strongly coined by the Flemish movement, certainly preferred the moralistic imagery and vernacular

³¹ Cat. no. 43.

³² Cat. nos. 15, 20, 21, 27.

³³ Cat. nos. 9, 10, 12-14, 16, 28, 30-32, 39-42. The majority of the panels originally displayed in the corridor and staircase retained their original locations until today.

³⁴ Other collectors of stained glass in nineteenth-century Flanders were f.i. Jean d'Huyvetter (1770-1833) from Ghent, the architect Louis Minard (1801-1875) from Ghent and the artist Walter Vaes (1882-1958) from Antwerp.

³⁵ Van Cauwenberghs' treatise on the history of glass painting was also published in the Antwerp periodical *De Vlaamsche School* in 1878 and thus certainly known to a broader, art-interested public.



FIG. 7 *Saint Agnes of Rome*, Low Countries or Germany (?), Mid-15th century, Ø 18,6 cm, inv. no. 632, Photograph: Beeldarchief Collectie Antwerpen, © Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp



FIG. 6 Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp, *Vestibule*, First half of the twentieth century, Photograph: anonymous, Universiteitsbibliotheek Ghent, BRKZ. TOPO.1062.E.04



FIG. 8 Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp, *Salle V (the Library)* on the second floor, seen from *Salle VI (La Grande Salle)*, First half of the twentieth century, Photograph: anonymous, Universiteitsbibliotheek Ghent, BRKZ. TOPO.1062.E.14

texts for ideological purposes. The panels moreover formed an ideal frame for the meetings of several flamingant cultural societies that regularly took place in *De Gulden Spoor*, of many of which Claes was a leading member: the *Vlaamsche Oudheidkundige Kring (Flemish Archeological Circle)*, *Antwerpsch Oudheidkundig Genootschap (Antwerp Archeological Society)*, *De Club der XII*, the artists' circle *De Scalden* and *De Kunst in het Openbaar Leven (The Art in the Public Life)*, an association that promoted the conservation of historical buildings in Antwerp. In Claes' museum, stained glass played a meaningful role in the creation of a particular atmosphere in which the totality — “arts, customs, language and religion” — mirrored and represented the beauty of “his beloved Flemish community” (Denucé et al. 1932, 10-11).³⁶

Fritz Mayer van den Bergh and Frans Claes certainly shared the same interests and moved in similar social and cultural circles. Mayer van den Bergh was for instance an honorary member of *De Scalden* since the group's foundation in 1889, and he and his mother patronized many of its members, among which Frans Proost.³⁷ In 1894 Fritz and Henriëtte were actively involved in the organization of the Antwerp World Fair for which the sixteenth-century city center *Oud Antwerpen (Old Antwerp)* was reconstructed (de Coo 1979, 15-16), and in 1897 he joined *De Kunst in het Openbaar Leven*, which had emerged out of the 1894 event. The collector's sympathy with the Flemish movement is moreover apparent from his only publication, a book with translations of German legends from the Rhine area into Dutch, lavishly illustrated by yet another *Scalden*-artist, Edmond Van Offel (de Coo 1968).

Besides the flamingant sympathies, religious motivations were a similar — if not stronger — driving force in the shaping of the Mayer van den Bergh's socio-cultural ideals and artistic taste. In contrast to Claes, Mayer van den Bergh had a strong preference for stained glass representing religious subject matters such as Saints, biblical scenes and allegories of Catholic virtues.

The first Board of Trustees that managed the museum after the collector's death — summoned by Henriëtte and consisting of a group of close friends of the family — can function as an indicator of the Mayer van den Bergh's political and religious ideals. The museum's first director was the lawyer and Catholic politician August Delbeke (1853-1921). Acquainted with Henriëtte's father Jean van den Bergh from the Antwerp Meeting Party and one of his followers in the provincial council, Delbeke was known for his ultramontane and conservative aspirations (Heylen 2012). Another board member was the neo-Gothic painter Jozef Janssens. The author of the collector's posthumous portrait,³⁸ Janssens was a sought-after portraitist of Catholic Churchmen and politicians and a painter of idealizing religious murals (Römer 2013). The artist was a member of the Catholic Guild of Saint Thomas and Saint Luke, the Flemish neo-Gothic artists' circle around Jean-Baptiste Bethune and Arthur Verhaegen in which particular importance was attached to appropriate and authentic restorations of medieval architecture and stained glass (Caen et al. 2008).

In line with their Catholic values, the Mayer van den Bergh family furthermore demonstrated a great social responsibility and charitable commitment. Fritz was appointed a knight of

³⁶ “Een warme liefde voor eigen schoon zweeft in de atmosfeer van het machtige huis, om 't even of het gaat om de kunst, de zeden, de taal of den godsdienst van zijn vóór alles geliefde Vlaamsche gemeenschap.”

³⁷ Cat. no. 44.

³⁸ Jozef Janssens, *Portrait of Fritz Mayer van den Bergh*, 1901, Oil on Canvas, inv. no. 1871.2.

Malta in 1901 (de Coo 1979, 109). After his death, Henriëtte founded, in addition to the museum, several charitable institutions, among which the *Sint-Henricusstichting* and the *Sint-Fredericusgesticht* (*Saint Henry-* and *Saint Frederic Foundations*) for the care of the injured and the elderly, both named after Fritz' titular Saints (Baisier and Müller 2013, 157).³⁹

Just as Henriëtte's social projects, the establishment of the museum — equally dedicated to her beloved son — can thus also be understood as an act of philanthropy, reflecting the family's religious ideals and values as well as their socio-cultural involvement.

Conclusion

Fritz and Henriëtte Mayer van den Bergh collected and arranged stained glass with the same care as other objects of fine and applied art. For his acquisitions Fritz could draw on an extensive national and international network. He always paid great attention to the objects' authenticity and state of conservation. Despite his systematic approach, he most likely considered the stained-glass panels not so much as objects of (art) historical inquiry (as for instance his paintings), but rather as decorative elements. Henriëtte integrated the stained-glass collection into the museum display to enhance the historicizing atmosphere of the exhibition rooms.

The Mayer van den Bergh's cultural, artistic and charitable activities as well as their social networks all point to the preeminent role that the Catholic ideals in the sense of the neo-Gothic philosophy played in the family's self-understanding. This mindset informed Fritz' collecting

activity and Henriëtte's decisions concerning the installation of the museum, in which the historicizing (re-)construction of an ideal past was combined with a fervent plea for a revival of the Roman Catholic values and virtues. In the museum, decorative and ideological functions did not contradict, but instead complement one another in the pursuit of the total work of art. The museum's holdings of stained glass can thus exemplarily stand for the collection as a whole, mirroring Fritz' and Henriëtte's romantic ideals, neo-Gothic philosophy and Catholic values in their artistic taste, method of collecting and display strategies.

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³⁹ The collector's birth name was Fredericus Henricus Godfridus Emil Constant Mayer.

Appendix

Catalogue

1. *Annunciation*, France, 13th century, Ø 40 cm, inv. no. 631, Provenance: acquired in 1898 with the collection Carlo Micheli, Paris. Notre Dame de Paris, Southern Rose Window.
2. *Saint Agnes of Rome*, Low Countries or Germany (?), Mid-15th century, Ø 18,6 cm, inv. no. 632, Provenance: unknown.
3. *Two boys and two girls playing*, Southern Low Countries, 15th century (?), Ø 22,5 cm, inv. no. 633, Provenance: acquired in 1895 from de Lannoy, Paris.
4. *Calvary*, Southern Low Countries, Early 16th century, Ø 21,3 cm, inv. no. 634, Provenance: unknown.
5. *Coat of arms with three birds*, Low Countries, Late 15th – early 16th century, Ø 21,7 cm, inv. no. 635, Provenance: unknown.
6. *Nativity*, Southern Low Countries, Early 16th century, Ø 20,3 cm, inv. no. 636, Provenance: acquired in 1894 from the auction Camille Van Langenhove-Biebuyck, Aalst (lot. no. 539).
7. *Sheltering strangers (one of the Seven Acts of Mercy)*, Low Countries, Late 15th – early 16th century, Ø 20,9 cm, inv. no. 637, Provenance: acquired in 1885 from the auction Van der Straelen-Moons-Van Leries, Antwerp (Vol. VIII, lot. no. 686-3).
8. *Calvary*, Southern Low Countries, 15th century, 41,5 x 32 cm, inv. no. 643, Provenance: unknown.
9. *Two angels holding the coat of arms of Balthazar Cruyt*, Southern Low Countries, Mid-17th century, Ø 22,7 cm, inv. no. 638, Provenance: acquired in 1885 from the auction Van der Straelen-Moons-Van Leries, Antwerp (Vol. VIII, lot. no. 681-2 or 686-4). Former convent of the Norbertine nuns, Antwerp (founded by Balthazar Cruyt in 1649).
10. *Two angels holding the insignia and motto of abbot Marcus Cruyt*, Inscription: *SPES MEA I DNO M C*, Southern Low Countries, Mid-16th century, Ø 22,8 cm, inv. no. 639, Provenance: acquired in 1885 from the auction Van der Straelen-Moons-Van Leries, Antwerp (Vol. VIII, lot. no. 682-3).
11. *Daniel opposes the verdict against Suzanna*, Southern Low Countries, Pseudo Ortkens workshop, Early 16th century, 18 x 19,7 cm (oval), inv. no. 645, Provenance: acquired in 1894 from the auction Camille Van Langenhove-Biebuyck, Aalst (lot. no. 539).
12. *Coat of arms with three pentagrams*, Southern Low Countries, 18th or 19th century (?), Ø 24,8 cm, inv. no. 641, Provenance: acquired in 1885 from the auction Van der Straelen-Moons-Van Leries, Antwerp (Vol. VIII, lot. no. 681-5).
13. *Coat of arms of bishop Gaspar Nemius*, Inscription: *1636 ATTENDE TIBI ET DOCTRINAE*, Southern Low Countries, Antwerp, 1636, Ø 25,8 cm, with border 29,7 cm, inv. no. 642, Provenance: acquired in 1885 from the auction Van der Straelen-Moons-Van Leries, Antwerp (Vol. VIII, lot. no. 686-1).
14. *Coat of arms with three eagles, a rose and a bishop's staff*, Southern Low Countries, 16th century, Ø 21,9 cm, inv. no. 644, Provenance: unknown.
15. *Charlemagne with a kneeling male donor*, Southern Low Countries, First half of the 16th century, Ø 21,2 cm, inv. no. 646, Provenance: unknown.
16. *Fragment with inscription in Gothic letters in a cartouche: TE LISTRIS EEN CREPEL IS GHENESEN. VA[N] PAULUS*

- DES WOL DAT VOLCK MYEDS DESEN. HEER GODLYCK EEN HEBBEN GHEDAEN. MAER PAULUS KEER DE DOER SYN VOERMAEN. 1549, Southern Low Countries, 1549, 10,5 x 13,5 cm, inv. no. 647, Provenance: unknown.*
17. *So-called "Wappenscheibe" of Obervogt der Reichenau Marx (Markus) Empser, Inscription: MARX EMPSER DIESER ZEIT OBERVOGT IN DER REICHENOW 1564, Switzerland or Germany, 1564, 36,5 x 26 cm, inv. no. 648, Provenance: acquired in 1898 with the collection Carlo Micheli, Paris. 1839 from the collection Debruge-Duménil, Paris.*
18. *Coat of arms of Andareas von Salis, Inscription: 1587 · ANDAREAS VON SALIS · BURGER · ZU · KUR, Switzerland, Chur (?), 1587, Ø 14 cm, inv. no. 649, Provenance: unknown.*
19. *Saint Barbara with a kneeling female donor, Inscription: S BARBARA ORA PRO NOBIS, Southern Low Countries, Leuven, early 16th century, Ø 22,5 cm, inv. no. 650, Provenance: acquired in 1891 from the rectory of Herk-de-Stad through the intermediary Germain Jaminé, Hasselt.*
20. *Personification of Death, Southern Low Countries, early 16th century, Ø 22,3 cm, inv. no. 651, Provenance: unknown.*
21. *The Damned in Hell, Southern Low Countries, Late 15th – early 16th century, Ø 22,4 cm, inv. no. 652, Provenance: unknown.*
22. *Saint Cornelius with a kneeling male donor, Southern Low Countries, Leuven (?), early 16th century, Ø 22,3 cm, inv. no. 653, Provenance: acquired in 1891 from Henri Van Severen, Sint-Niklaas.*
23. *Allegory of Patience, Inscription: SATAN; PATIENTIA; MORS; NIDICHEYT; IO BAPTISTA, Southern Low Countries, First half of the 16th century, Ø 20,2 cm, inv. no. 654, Provenance: unknown.*
24. *So-called "Bauernscheibe", Inscription: JACOB HAGGS AMAN ZUE SULG UND DOROTHEA DÖNERIN SEIN ELICHE HAUSFRAW 1625, Switzerland, 1625, 31 x 20,5 cm, inv. no. 655, Provenance: unknown.*
25. *Saint Margaret of Antioch, Southern Low Countries, First half of the 16th century, Ø 22,4 cm, inv. no. 656, Provenance: unknown.*
26. *Female figure or Saint Mary Magdalene, Southern Low Countries or France (?), First half of the 16th century, Ø 21,9 cm, inv. no. 657, Provenance: acquired in 1891 from de Lannoy, Paris.*
27. *Triumph of Amor, Southern Low Countries, First half of the 16th century, Ø 23 cm, inv. no. 658, Provenance: unknown.*
28. *Fragment with inscription: D, PEETRVS ANCHEMANT, CANONIC S, MICHAELIS ORD PRAEMONSTRAT PERSONA IN DEOERNE A° 1611, Southern Low Countries, 1611, 15 x 13 cm, inv. no. 659, Provenance: acquired in 1885 from the auction Van der Straelen-Moons-Van Leries, Antwerp (Vol. VIII, lot. no. 681-4). Former church of Saint Michael or abbey of Saint Michael, Antwerp.*
29. *So-called "Wappenscheibe" of Thomas von Schauenstein, Inscription: THOMAS VON SCHAUWENSTEIN VNND EHREN VELS ZU HALDENSTEIN FREYHERR UNND RITTER A° 1614, Switzerland, Felix Schärer (Zurich), 1614, 44 x 33,5 cm, inv. no. 660, Provenance: acquired in 1899 from Jacob Storz, Chur.*
30. *Woman Smoking, Low Countries, 17th century, 13,1 x 8,3 cm, inv. no. 661, Provenance: acquired in 1894*

- from the auction Camille Van Langenhove-Biebuyck, Aalst (lot. no. 539).
- 31.** *Man Smoking*, Low Countries, 17th century, 12,9 x 7,3 cm, inv. no. 662, Provenance: acquired in 1894 from the auction Camille Van Langenhove-Biebuyck, Aalst (lot. no. 539).
- 32.** *Fragment with inscription in a cartouche: JOANNES LOYENS ENDE MARGRIT VAN DEN ENDT SYN HUYSVROU DAT 1666*, Southern Low Countries, 1666, 18,5 x 15,5 cm, inv. no. 663, Provenance: acquired in 1894 from the auction Camille Van Langenhove-Biebuyck, Aalst (lot. no. 539).
- 33.** *Tobias' return*, Southern Low Countries, Mid-16th century, 24 x 19,4 cm, inv. no. 664, Provenance: unknown.
- 34.** *Saint John the Evangelist*, Southern Low Countries, First half of the 16th century, Ø 25,8 cm, inv. no. 665, Provenance: unknown.
- 35.** *Saint Martin*, Inscription: *MERTINS DE MVNCK E. IACOPS A° 1643*, Southern Low Countries, after Jan van der Straet/Johannes Stradanus, 1643, 26,8 x 19,8 cm (oval), inv. no. 666, Provenance: unknown.
- 36.** *So-called "Standesscheibe von Glarus"*, Inscription: *1596*, Switzerland, 1596, 31,5 x 22 cm, inv. no. 667, Provenance: unknown.
- 37.** *Christ's Sermon on the Mount*, Southern Low Countries, Late 16th – early 17th century, 18,4 x 14,3 cm (rectangular with rounded top), inv. no. 668, Provenance: acquired in 1885 from the auction Van der Straelen-Moons-Van Leries, Antwerp (Vol. VIII, lot. no. 682-5).
- 38.** *Fragment from a descent from the cross: Saint Joseph of Arimathea*, Southern Low Countries, circle of Bernard van Orley (?), First half of the 16th century, 15,8 x 6 cm, inv. no. 669, Provenance: acquired in 1885 from the auction Van der Straelen-Moons-Van Leries, Antwerp (Vol. VIII, lot. no. 682-6).
- 39.** *Fragment with inscription in Gothic letters: 1463 WILL VAN BERG WYN IN VLAS... 1464 JAN DE BEENHO... PEET CLAES*, Southern Low Countries, 1464, 17 x 17 cm, inv. no. 1292, Provenance: unknown.
- 40.** *Fragment with inscription: 1496 JAN VA BERGE JAN DE CONINCK 1497 JAN DE SCHOT WILLEM DE VOS*, Southern Low Countries, 1496-1497, 10 x 17 cm, inv. no. 1293, Provenance: unknown.
- 41.** *Fragment with the pedestal of a Renaissance column*, Southern Low Countries, 16th century, 17,5 x 13,5 cm, inv. no. 1294, Provenance: unknown.
- 42.** *Two angels holding the coat of arms of Balthazar Cruyt*, Southern Low Countries, Mid-17th century, Ø 22,6 cm, inv. no. 1295, Provenance: acquired in 1885 from the auction Van der Straelen-Moons-Van Leries, Antwerp (Vol. VIII, lot. no. 681-2 or 686-4). Former convent of the Norbertine nuns, Antwerp (founded by Balthazar Cruyt in 1649).
- 43.** *Annunciation*, Southern Low Countries (?), after Albrecht Bouts, 19th century, 22,2 x 15,1 cm, inv. no. 1360, Provenance: acquired in 1892 from François van Waegeningh.
- 44.** *Coat of arms of the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke*, Inscription: *WT JONSTEN VERSAEMT*, Southern Low Countries, Frans Proost (Antwerp), Early 20th century, 114,5 x 111,5 cm, inv. no. 1951, Provenance: Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp.

ARCHIVAL RESOURCES

ANTWERP, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Historisch Archief, *Aankoopboek*.
ANTWERP, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Historisch Archief, *Stukken betreffende de collectievorming*.

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