Hieronymus Cock (1518-1570) was the most successful print publisher of his day. Within a short space of time Cock built up his printing office known as ‘At the Sign of the Four Winds’ (In de Vier Winden or Aux Quatre Vents) into the most influential print publishing house in Europe. The engravings he brought out were spread far and wide, ensuring the fame of artists such as Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Frans Floris, Maarten Van Heemskerck and many others. More than two hundred rare and fragile works on paper give a broad overview of the production of Cock and his associates.

Providing the core of the exhibition are prints and drawings from the rich holdings of the Royal Library of Belgium. Added to these are a number of exceptional prints and drawings from the Fondation Custodia – Collection Frits Lugt. The overview is completed by many important loans from Belgian and foreign collections.
The publishing house *Aux Quatre Vents*

In 1548 the first prints rolled from the presses of the publishing house *Aux Quatre Vents* (‘At the Sign of the Four Winds’) in Antwerp. In the decades that followed, the founders of that company, the Antwerp painter Hieronymus Cock and his wife Volcxken Diericx, would flood Europe with strong printed images of the highest artistic quality. Cock employed the best etchers to make important masterpieces of great Italian masters, such as Raphael, Andrea del Sarto or Giulio Romano available in print. He thus played a crucial part in the breakthrough of new artistic ideas on the whole European continent. Under the impulse of Cock, Antwerp would grow to become the leading (print)publishing center of Europe in the second half of the 16th century.

Hieronymus Cock gained great fame and popularity through his long term artistic and commercial partnership with Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Commissioned by the Antwerp publisher, Breugel designed dozens of unforgettable prints, which permanently defined his great international reputation and would have a permanent influence on the Dutch and European history of art. - Besides Bruegel, other famous artists – Italian, but mainly Dutch – supplied designs for the publications of *Aux Quatre Vents*. This spread their reputation and work at an international level and the latter was imitated everywhere. Maarten van Heemskerck designed impressive print series with biblical, historical and allegorical themes, demonstrating his amazing narrative talent. Frans Floris designed mythological and biblical compositions on a par with the best Italy has to offer at the time. His brother, the sculptor and architect Cornelis Floris developed a very personal ornamental figurative language, which proceeded to spread throughout Europe via Cock’s prints. Floris’ influence is even surpassed by the architectural and ornamental designs of the Friesian painter Hans Vredeman de Vries, which seeped through to innumerable European studios and sites via the presses of *Aux Quatre Vents*. Those Antwerp prints would deeply influence the architectural and ornamental figurative language in Europe for decades.

Cock worked in an extremely interesting era, when Antwerp and the Habsbourg Netherlands played the main role on the international commercial, artistic and intellectual scene. His circle of friends and business partners included – in addition to artists – people like the printer-publisher Christopher Plantin, the cartographer Abraham Ortelius and the humanist and poet Dominicus Lampsonius. When Cock passed away in 1570 his widow continued the business for another three decades, having to face the increasing competition and the dramatic political and economic turns of the latter quarter of the 16th century.

This exhibition presents a broad overview of the activities of the publishing house *Aux Quatre Vents* for the first time in twentyfive years. The activities of Cock and his colleagues are presented to the public through more than two hundred rare and fragile works on paper. Most of the pieces originated from the rich collection of prints and drawings of the Royal Library of Belgium. New research was carried out in that institution in recent years on the publishing house *Aux Quatre Vents* and its production. Dozens of crucial loans from important national and international collections complete the overview.
The Story of the Exhibition

The exhibition is built up around several themes. The introduction presents the figure of Cock, his main employees and contemporaries, and his native city Antwerp. The first section addresses one of the main sources of inspiration of renaissance culture: the art and architecture of Antiquity. Here, Cock’s pioneering and often-imitated etchings representing the ruins of Rome are the main focus. Etchings based on antique sculptures and ceramics are presented here. A prestigious project in line with Cock’s interest in the art of antiquity consists of the large friezes with reconstructions of the antique Baths of Diocletianus in Rome. This publication is extremely rare and is exhibited integrally for the first time.

In the next section the new Italian renaissance style is the main focus. The eye catchers are the two masterly prints by Giorgio Ghisi after Raphael’s frescos the ‘School of Athens’ and the ‘Dispute on the Eucharist’. This monumental publication enabled the international public to view these peak moments of the renaissance for the first time. Further works after famous Italian masters and the designs in Italian inspired style by important Dutch artists are exhibited. These established Cock’s international reputation. There are monumental etchings after compositions by Raphael, Bronzino, Primaticcio, Giulio Romano, Andrea del Sarto, Polidoro da Caravaggio, Lucca Penni, Giorgio Vasari, Maarten van Heemskerck, Frans Floris and Lambert Lombard on display.

The next section shows a wide selection of religious and moralizing print series from the publisher’s fund. The key pieces are Breughel’s series with the virtues and the cardinal sins, which are juxtaposed with a few original preparative drawings. In 16th century Europe, affected by religious divisions, faith and morality were obviously key themes. A large part of the publisher’s fund of Aux Quatre Vents therefore consists of the most diverse religious and moralizing pictures. Although the conflict between the Catholics and reformists was prevalent at the time, publishers (and Hieronymus Cock in particular) often adopted a cautious or ambiguous approach when publishing pictures which could lead to suspicion of heterodoxism. This section shows how Aux Quatre Vents mainly targets the higher market segment of prints of both artistic and technical high standards. A religious-political message clearly is not present on the surface. The religious or moralizing tableau often has a definite artistic tone. A diverse public is thus targeted. Both artists and craftsmen can thus search for artistic examples, and religious clients looking for a good devotional print can find what they are looking for in the same item. Maarten van Heemskerck and later Maarten de Vos in particular developed important religious and moralizing series for Cock. It is known that both adhered to the Protestant faith.

In the next section the work of Breughel and his great inspiration Hieronymus Bosch is examined. Although Cock had been trained as an artist, he soon demonstrated a true commercial talent. Around the mid-16th century print publishers became increasingly better organized commercially and marketing strategies were developed to sell a steadily greater and more diversified range. Aux Quatre Vents was the pioneer. Cock was particularly successful in promoting artists who supplied designs for his publishing company. He turned Pieter Bruegel the Elder into a true star artist. In certain aspects Bruegel continues to expand on the hugely popular work of Hieronymus Bosch at the time. Cock and Bruegel were so clever in their approach that Bruegel and Bosch soon became synonyms to a large public. Later, Bruegel became a lot more famous than the Bossche master and he was called ‘The second Hieronymus Bosch’ with a portrait published by Cock. In this section the way Cock defined and exploited the public image of artists (mainly Bosch and Breughel, but also a few old and modern masters) is a central theme.
As a figurative medium, prints were particularly suitable for the distribution of new forms and ideas. Architects, artists and craftsmen soon became familiar with the printed architecture and ornament books they could find inspiration in. Besides prints based on a few antique and modern Roman monuments, Aux Quatre Vents published numerous template books filled with ornaments and architectural inventions by masters such as Floris and Vredeman de Vries. A selection of these is exhibited.

Cock lived and worked in a period of growing conflict between the population of the Netherlands and the almighty Habsbourg dynasty. From the start, he had the support of the Prime Minister of Charles V and his successor Philip II: cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle. It is therefore not surprising that Cock pictured his loyalty to the Habsbourg leaders in a few of his main publications. He illustrated important Habsbourg victories and territories. Together with Christopher Plantin he produced a monumental representation of the funeral procession of Charles V.

From the 16th century, mankind began to form an increasingly clearer perception of the world around it. This was largely thanks to the new printing methods, which could reproduce images in large quantities. In this section, two areas that were prominent during the 16th century in the Netherlands are represented: landscapes on the one hand and cartography and chorography on the other hand. We find a few examples of the cartographic production of Aux Quatre Vents here. Works by other Antwerp landscape painters like Hans Bol are also on display. However, the attention will mainly be attracted to Breughel's magisterial landscapes published by Cock. In addition, a selection from the enigmatic and influential ‘Small landscapes’ will also be on display. The visitor will gain insight in the navigation of the time from Bruegel's series with ships and the large-scale view of a ‘Nautical battle in the strait of Messina’. Bruegel’s only personally etched print, the ‘Rabbit hunt’ closes the exhibition, juxtaposed with a rare preparative drawing.

**Walking guide & guided tours**

Free walking guide, available in English, French and Dutch

Guided tours: 60 € for the guide + ticket for the museum | reservationat latest 2 weeks in advance

**Catalogue**

The exhibition is being accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue, which is available in three languages: Joris Van Grieken, Ger Luijten en Jan Van der Stock, *Hieronymus Cock. The Renaissance in Print*, Yale University Press, 2013.

Available at the museumshop: € 59,95 | price in bookshops: € 64,95

hardcover 30,6 x 24,5 cm, 416 p., 320 illustrations in color
editor: Mercatorfonds | distribution FR version: Mercatorfonds / Actes Sud | EN version: Yale University Press.
worldwide available via www.mercatorfonds.be
Colloquium

On 5 and 6 June 2013 a colloquium is being organized entitled Art, knowledge and commerce. Print publishers and the professionalization of printmaking in Europe 1500-1650. This colloquium takes place in M – Museum Leuven and in the Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels.

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Organization

This project is a partnership between the Royal Library of Belgium, M – Museum Leuven, the Fondation Custodia – Collection Frits Lugt and Illuminare – Centre for the Study of Medieval Art (KU Leuven).

Joris Van Grieken, Ger Luijten and Jan Van der Stock are the curators of this exhibition. Joris Van Grieken is curator of prints and drawings at the Royal Library of Belgium, Brussels; Ger Luijten is director of the Fondation Custodia, Paris, and editor of The New Hollstein, the essential reference work for German and Netherlandish printmaking; Jan Van der Stock is professor of art history at the University of Leuven and director of Illuminare - Centre for the Study of Medieval Art (KU Leuven).

The scholarly committee, under the direction of Joris Van Grieken (Royal Library of Belgium), consists of Ger Luijten (Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt), Prof. dr. Jan Van der Stock (Illuminare – KU Leuven), Prof. dr. Dominique Allart (Université de Liège), Dr. Gwendolyne Denhaene (Royal Library of Belgium) and Prof. dr. Manfred Sellink (Museums Brugge).

From 18 September to 15 December the exhibition takes place in the Institut Néerlandais in Paris.

Exhibition partners:
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OPEN
Mon. till Tue. and Fri. till Sun. from 11h00 till 18h00 – Thu. till 22h00. Closed on Wed.

TICKETS
Individual visitors: 9 €  Reduction fee: 7 € < 26: 5 €
13 > 18: 3 € < 13: free entrance Families: 22 €

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