The Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (RMFAB) is looking to hire a doctoral student (project Brain-be 2.0. BePAPER)

Belgian Avant-garde Art on Paper in a European Context. 1918-1950

Are you interested in working at one of the largest European Fine Arts Museum in the heart of Europe and being affiliated to a research centre of excellence within one of continental Europe’s top-5 universities in the Arts and Humanities? Does writing a PhD on visual art and culture appeal to you? The Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (RMFAB) and the MDRN research centre at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven) are looking to hire a doctoral student to work within the research programme, “BePAPER. Belgian [Avant-garde] Art on Paper in a European Context. 1918-1950”, funded by the Belspo Brain-be 2.0 framework. The successful applicant receives a two-year full-time scientific assistant contract (SW1) at the RMFAB which after positive evaluation will be followed by a two-year scholarship (doctoraatsbursaal) at KU Leuven.

The RMFAB (www.fine-arts-museum.be) form the oldest art museums of Belgium and are situated in the heart of Brussels, capital of Europe, just a hop away from train stations with direct access to Paris, London, Amsterdam, Cologne and Frankfurt. The Museums have both a scientific research and public service mission. These are to preserve and to study the collections comprising more than 22.000 works of art (paintings, sculptures, and drawings dating from the end of the 14th century to today). About 2,500 of these works are on display, spread over the Old Masters Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Magritte Museum, the Fin-de-siècle Museum, on the main site, and two artist’s studios turned into museums off-site: the Constantin Meunier Museum and the Antoine Wiertz Museum. The RMFAB also manage the largest library in Belgium specialized in art history as well as many important historical archives from artists, artist’s associations, art critics or art dealers and documentary files. Part of the museums’ mission is the transmission of knowledge through the organization of temporary and permanent exhibitions for the widest possible audience and the publication of catalogues.

The MDRN research centre (www.mdrn.be) houses about 30 experts in the expanding field of avant-garde and modernism studies. It unites scholars from various languages and disciplines. The centre offers an exciting environment that allows young scholars to pursue their individual research goals, while at the same time offering the benefits of collaborative work. To learn more about working at MDRN as a young scholar, or about MDRN’s many other projects, people and activities, just visit our site (mentioned above). The centre is based at the Arts Faculty of the University of Leuven. Located in a historic city in the heart of Belgium, the university is a stone’s throw away from Brussels.

Project

The PhD project is part of the larger research programme, “BePAPER. Belgian [Avant-garde] Art on Paper in a European Context. 1918-1950”. This programme is funded by the Federal Public Programming Service (FPS) Science Policy (Belspo) and is supervised by Dr. Inga Rossi-Schrimpf (curator at RMFAB) and professors Sascha Bru, Fred Truyen (KU Leuven) and Michel Draguet (Université Libre de Bruxelles). The programme studies and discloses Belgian avant-garde “work on paper” (under which we understand autographic, unique artworks using paper as
basic material, such as drawings, watercolors, collages, and paper assemblages) between 1918-1950. The programme builds on the collection of “work on paper modern art” of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, which includes work by, among others, the Futurist Jules Schmalzigaug, the Expressionists Frits van den Berghen, Joseph Cantré, Gustave De Smet, Constant Permeke, the Constructivists Jozef Peeters, Karel Maes, Felix De Boeck, Victor Servranckx, Edmond van Dooren and Pierre-Louis Flouquet, the Surrealists Paul Delvaux, René Magritte, E.L.T. Mesens as well as the Dadaist Paul Joostens. The programme’s main objectives are, first, to study why and how this wide variety of Belgian classic avant-garde artists turned to paper during the interwar period and to isolate possibly late appropriation tendencies within the Belgian avant-gardes as well as the emergence of trends already pointing ahead to the neo-avant-gardes. Second, we aim to better disclose the RMFAB collection of works on paper through the findings gained within the study and through the development of open data solutions. As a result several outreach events such as conferences, publications or exhibitions addressing a scientific and student audience as well as a wider audience are planned. In doing so, the programme will provide a first overview and study of the field of Belgian avant-garde works on paper within an international context between the years 1918 to 1950, that is, up and until the dawn of CoBrA and the rise of the so-called neo-avant-gardes, and contribute to a better definition of the collection category of “modern works on paper”.

The PhD-project is to be conducted under the main supervision of professor Sascha Bru. The project is to build on the RMFAB collection and on the central hypothesis of the programme that art on paper was a key experimental field in the development of the aesthetics of the Belgian classic avant-gardes. To test this hypothesis, the doctoral student is first to map the quantitative data gathered, and then to zoom in on a number of case studies representative of the Belgian avant-gardes’ art on paper, taking into account different networks and movements (Expressionism, Dadaism, Constructivism, Surrealism), the variety of work on/with paper (ranging from sketches, gouaches, collages and unique prints to ‘sculptural’ paper assemblages), these works’ variety of uses (from the design of unique decorative wall paper to social critique) as well as their varying international success (from almost no international visibility to broad European renown). The thesis will also draw on a wider scope of sources in order to: (1) analyse the art on paper of the above-mentioned artists; (2) study the place and function of work on paper within their avant-garde oeuvres more generally and describe the different “aesthetics of paper” elaborated by their work and in their reflective writings; (3) relate their aesthetics and work on paper to the wider Belgian avant-garde context (with a focus on other work with/on paper); (4) study the broader European reproduction and circulation of the artists’ works and compare their work and aesthetics to those of other European avant-gardists.

Profile

- You are interested in Europe’s modernisms and avant-gardes
- You are familiar with Belgian art of the concerned period
- You hold either an MA in Art History (major in Contemporary/ Modern Art), or an MA in literary studies (major in comparative literature or in modern European literature)
- You have a passion for art and want to become an outstanding scholar
- You are willing to contribute to disclosing the RMFAB collection(s) and to help set up an exhibition concept
- You are willing to communicate on your research at conferences, through publications and on social media
- You are happy to work and be present full-time at the RMFAB (the first two years) and on the KU Leuven campus (second two years)
- You are ready to work in team and to play an active role both within the research programme, both at the RMFAB and the MDRN centre
Offer

We offer a two-year-full-time contract as Scientific assistant (SW 1) at RMFAB which is to be followed by a two-year scholarship (doctoraatsbursaal) at KU Leuven after positive evaluation. A budget for research-related travel will be available to you as well.

Work conditions at RMFAB

You will be engaged as a Contract Scientific Officer - Assistant (Scientific Career Grade 1) with the corresponding scale. A fixed-term (full-time) contract is offered.

Work place

Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Rue du Musée 9, 1000 Bruxelles.

Compensation

The chosen candidate will be recruited as Assistant Trainee (class SW1) with the associated bet scale SW10 or SW11 (SW11 if at least 2 years of recognised scientific seniority).
Minimum salary (gross amounts adapted to the current index, regulatory allowances not included): SW10 (0 years' seniority): € 35,896.33 per year (€ 2991.36 per month).

Timetables

Monday to Friday; duties might involve working outside normal office hours or even at weekends (for on-call duty).

Entry into service planned for 1.09. or 15.09.2020.

Advantages

The Museum is an equal opportunity employer, supports a diverse workplace and offers a competitive benefits package including:
- possibility of acquiring a bilingualism premium
- extensive training offer (to be followed during working hours)
- free hospitalization insurance
- free commuting by public transport
- possibility for a bicycle allowance
- various social benefits
- easily accessible by public transport
- company restaurant at democratic prices
- sliding working hours in a 38-hour week.
- possibility of teleworking after internship period
- interesting benefits and offers thanks to the Benefits@Work card
- taking over years of seniority in the public sector
- corporate discount in the museum shops
Application Instructions

Candidates are invited to submit their application in English, Dutch or French, consisting of:
- a CV, including a detailed list of course marks/grades of bachelor and master studies
- a letter of motivation stating the candidate’s qualifications and reasons for applying
- one writing sample (published article, MA thesis, …)
- the contact information of two references (including information on relationship with the applicant).

Interviews with a selection of the applicants are scheduled. Candidates who are selected will be notified about a month before the interviews. At that moment, they might receive a small writing assignment, which is due a week before the interviews.

The contract will start at the latest on 15.09.2020.

You can apply for this job no later than 01.06.2020 via inga.rossi@fine-arts-museum.be (ref. BePAPER PhD)

Interested?

More information
... about the project and the position?
Dr. Inga Rossi-Schrimpf - project coordinator
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or Prof. dr. Sascha Bru,
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... about working conditions?
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