

## ARTPRESSE

An intermedial study of Belgian art as a networked structure seen through the lens of the mass media magazines in the interbellum years

**Contract - B2/191/P2/ARTPRESSE**

### SUMMARY

The Artpresse project (2020–2025) was a five-year interdisciplinary collaboration between KBR, KU Leuven, and ULiège, investigating the networked structure of the Belgian art during the interwar period. By leveraging mass-market magazines as a primary lens, the project sought to map the cultural landscape of the interbellum through both Dutch-speaking and Francophone periodical collections. The central objective was to bridge the gap between traditional art history and digital heritage, exploring how large-scale digitized corpora can reveal patterns of artistic reception and cultural representations across linguistic and ideological boundaries. At the heart of Artpresse is a significant archival component. The project facilitated the large-scale digitization and processing of over 750,000 pages from KBR's historical periodical collections. This extensive corpus is now fully accessible in full-text search mode via the Belgica Periodicals platform and stored in KBR's Media Stock for long-term preservation. Beyond digital accessibility, the research placed a strong emphasis on the material and editorial dimensions of the magazines, with specific attention paid to printing techniques. Archival research complemented this analysis, providing crucial insights into the interconnected networks of publishers and printers that shaped the Belgian media landscape. A key academic output of the project is a forthcoming doctoral dissertation at ULiège focusing on the representation of fine arts within a curated sub-corpus of 17 family magazines published between 1929 and 1936. This research is supported by a comprehensive illustrated and indexed catalogue, providing a critical selection and methodic description of the visual and textual contents. The findings of Artpresse underscore the vital importance, and the inherent methodological challenges, of studying and describing periodical collections. The project successfully demonstrated that while these "middlebrow" sources are essential for understanding modern heritage culture, their sheer volume and heterogeneous nature require robust digital infrastructures and precise metadata standards. Ultimately, Artpresse has not only enriched the digital accessibility of Belgian press periodical heritage but also established a rigorous framework for future quantitative and qualitative studies of the 20th-century press.

**Keywords:** Interbellum – Belgian modern art – Illustrated press – Family magazines