

# Coudenberg Palace

Press Release - **BERNARDI BRUXELLENSI PICTORI**

This year, the programme of the Coudenberg Palace plays tribute to 2 major Renaissance artists: Bernard van Orley (pre 1490-1541) and Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525? - 1569) who died 450 years ago and will be the subject of an exceptional programme in both Brussels and Flanders.

The Coudenberg Palace was the principal residence of the Dukes of Burgundy and the Spanish and Austrian Habsburgs, including Charles V. Thanks to the court's presence in



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Brussels, Renaissance artists in the old Burgundian Netherlands were able to obtain numerous commissions; widely disseminated, these exceptional creations shared in the prestige of these princes and princesses and contributed to the fame of artists whose work reproduced nature. Their influence has spanned the centuries. Major works of this period include the series of 12 tapestries presenting "The Hunts of Charles V". Through examination of historic sources and archeological discoveries, it has been found that the drawings serving as the basis for the patterns present these panoramas in an astonishingly realistic fashion. Although relatively small, these sketches contain a wealth of detail to which we would like to draw the attention of visitors by means of enlargements and projections. This iconographic material is displayed in the archeological remains of the Coudenberg Palace.

## **Bernardi Bruxellensi Pictori**

***From 20th February to 4th August 2019***

*Bernard van Orley was one of the remarkable artists employed by the royal court in Brussels during the first half of the 16th century. This was the period in which the principles of the Renaissance were developing in the Burgundian Netherlands, where the patronage of Margaret of Austria and later of Marie of Hungary promoted emerging talents such as Pieter Coecke van Aelst and Pieter Breugel.*

*In parallel with the BOZAR monographic exhibition, the Coudenberg Palace invites you to make a journey through 16th century Brussels in a time-capsule featuring enlarged pictures and projections from that period.*

## **Practical information**

*From 20/2 to 4/8 – Coudenberg Palace – Place des Palais 7 – 1000 BRU*

*Rates 5€-7€ - Special rates (€ 14) at the exhibition Bernard van Orley in BOZAR by presentation of your ticket to Coudenberg Palace. [www.coudenberg.brussels](http://www.coudenberg.brussels) +32 (0)2 500 45 54*

## Coudenberg Palace

*To discover the old town of Brussels, it's no so difficult: a few feet below the "Place Royale" would be sufficient enough to go back in the past centuries and explore the pomp and splendour of the Burgundian court or the one of Charles V. Let's follow the guide! The structures and rooms underneath the "Place Royale", give a glimpse of what used to be the main buildings of the former palace of Brussel, one of the most prestigious courts of Europe from the 15th century to the 18th century onwards, when the palace was destroyed by fire.*

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Perched on the Coudenberg and dominating the town, the Palace of Brussels was without a shadow of a doubt one of the most beautiful princely residences in the whole of Europe. It traces its roots back to the 12th century. In the 13th century, the Dukes of Brabant decided to give the city a central political role. In the following century, this defensive castle soon became a mecca for diplomats and a prime site for entertaining.

On the 3rd of February 1731, after a tiring day, the Governess of the Low Countries, Maria-Elisabeth of Austria, retires to her apartments in the palace of Brussels. Overcome with tiredness, Charles VI's sister fails to have all the candles extinguished. The fire quickly passes through wooden panelling into adjacent rooms. Throughout the night, the palace guards struggle to extinguish the blaze with the only means at their disposal at the time: leather buckets and water spray pumps. The town militia who gather quickly to help are pushed back in the confusion. The strict respect of protocol, formally forbidding access to the governor's private apartments, prevents the fire fighters from attacking the source of the blaze. The governess is saved by the intervention of a grenadier who dares to break down the doors of her apartments. In addition, the wind is strong and icy conditions hamper water supplies. After the drama of 1731 that left half of the palace destroyed.

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In the 1770s, political will and financial conditions met around a large-scale architectural project to redevelop the entire court district. The ruins of the old palace as well as numerous surrounding buildings were raised to the ground in order to make way for the creation of a new square: Place Royale. The square was to be bordered with neoclassical buildings, that can still be seen today.

Certain elements of the old buildings were nevertheless preserved to function as cellars and foundations for the new constructions. It is these remains that we can visit today at the Coudenberg archaeological site.

## The archaeological site

The remains of the former palace of Brussels, Hoogstraeten House, and a street all constitute the **archaeological site of Coudenberg**. They extend under Place Royale, Rue Royale and some of the buildings around the square.

Located underneath Rue Royale, the **cellars of the main building** are the oldest part of the site. They were situated under the main building, where the Prince's apartments and audience rooms were located, and were probably used for storage purposes.



Within the building that housed the **chapel** for the palace, only one level of basement survives under the BIP (Brussels Info Place). These rooms had no liturgical function and were used as cellars and kitchens. The chapel was built during the first half of the 16th century, during the reign of Charles V, as replacement of an older medieval chapel.

Within the big building that housed the **Aula Magna**, the palace's banqueting hall, only cellars survive, which are located directly underneath Place Royale. Kitchens and storage occupied this lower level.

Today's **Rue Isabelle** is underground, but it used to be open to the sky. Of medieval origins, the street ran along the Palace from Place des Bailles (Public Square in front of the Palace) to the Saint-Michael-and-Gudula Church, and followed the strong slope of the Coperbeek valley.

The Coudenberg palace was bordered with imposing private mansions owned by the nobility and court advisers, in particular the, which was the Brussels residence for the Lalaing family. Around 1516-1517, Antoine de Lalaing, 1st count of Hoogstraeten, commissioned a gothic style gallery.

For any request please get in touch with our **communication department**:

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