

# THE BRUEGEL SUCCESS STORY

Papers Presented at Symposium XXI for the  
Study of Underdrawing and Technology in Painting,  
Brussels, 12–14 September 2018

Edited by

Christina Currie,  
in collaboration with  
Dominique Allart, Bart Fransen, Cyriel Stroo  
and Dominique Vanwijnsberghe



PEETERS  
LEUVEN – PARIS – BRISTOL, CT

2021

# Foreword

---

On 30 April 1996, as part of a seminar organized at the KU Leuven by the late Maurits Smeyers (1937–1999), Gaston Vandendriessche presented a group of art-history students with an overview of his ongoing research on a painting that had long fascinated him: Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Dulle Griet*.

An Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the KU Leuven, Gaston Vandendriessche (1924–2002) had acquired an international reputation for a pioneering study on a case of demonic possession, that of the Austrian painter Christoph Haizmann. From Haizmann, Vandendriessche was led to work on another painter linked to the infernal world, Hieronymus Bosch, and Bosch brought him quite naturally to Bruegel.<sup>1</sup>

In 1996 I was working at the Studiecentrum Vlaamse Miniaturisten in Leuven. One of my colleagues, Rita Van Dooren, would later, as a curator at the Museum Mayer van den Bergh, be responsible for the *Dulle Griet*. Every Friday, at 10 o'clock in the morning, Gaston would come and join us for a cup of coffee, telling us about his

latest findings on the painting. It was a moment we looked forward to, because he was a great storyteller and his account of his scholarly adventures enthralled us.

At the end of March 1996 I defended my doctoral dissertation and took a few well-deserved weeks off. I was away when Gaston gave his Leuven seminar. This missed opportunity is probably what saved the essence of his long and thrilling research, since, to console me for not being able to attend his lecture, Gaston generously offered me a copy of his notes.

Obviously, these notes were not intended for publication – Gaston had prepared them as course material on his research in progress. But given their interest and the originality of their ideas, we have decided to present them here *dans leur jus*, with a minimal number of additions (notes, subheadings, illustrations). We offer this transcription, made possible thanks to Gaston's son Yuri, as a tribute to a passionate and most creative scholar, who was unfortunately unable to complete a project that was very close to his heart.

Dominique Vanwijsberghe

<sup>1</sup> The results of Gaston's long research on Bosch, entitled *De vergeten taal der vier elementen en temperamenten*, were presented in 1996 on an interactive CD (CD-i, a digital format created by Philips and abandoned the same year).