

PRESS RELEASE

North & South
European masterpieces reunited
25 October 2019 - 26 January 2020

The logo for Museum Catharijne Convent is a solid red square with the text "Museum Catharijne Convent" in white, sans-serif font, stacked in three lines.

Museum Catharijneconvent presents this autumn the exhibition *North & South: European masterpieces reunited*. It turned out that in both the far north and far south of Europe medieval masterpieces had survived that were remarkably similar despite the great distance that separated them. The museum has succeeded in having these rare works of art from the period 1100-1350 travel on this one occasion from Catalonia (Spain) and Norway to Utrecht. From 25 October 2019 until 26 January 2020 visitors will be able to enjoy their astonishing beauty and similarity in style. It will be an absolute 'must see' occasion, because art from this early period has been almost entirely lost in Central Europe.

Striking similarities

Despite the thousands of miles separating them, the collections from northern and southern Europe are surprisingly similar, attesting to a remarkable mobility of cultural objects and ideas in the high Middle Ages. The display will include superb, colourful panels with intriguing narrative scenes. They are painted altar decorations and objects related to the altar, which in those days was the most sacred and important meeting place in the medieval world. They show how fascinating and colourful churches must have been throughout western Europe in those days. It will be a unique opportunity to come and take a look around the art gallery of the Middle Ages!

Separated by mountains

The medieval masterpieces from the period 1100-1350 that have somehow escaped the ravages of time owed their rescue in part to their geographical locations. Separated by the Pyrenees in the south and the fjords in the north, it is only in Catalonia in Spain and in Norway that we still have these early works, often in small and remote village churches. It is art that has been lost in Central Europe due to iconoclasm, the French Revolution, changing tastes and the urge to innovate.

On foot, horseback and by ship

In addition to enjoying the unrivalled beauty of the works there is a firm focus on comparisons between the art of the north and the south. The panels sometimes seem interchangeable. It is almost impossible to imagine that there was a common visual language in every single church in a Europe where people only travelled on foot, horseback or by boat. Priests, conquerors, merchants and pilgrims journeyed throughout Europe, with the result that the same imagery was used in churches in the farthest corners of the Continent. A Spanish traveller around the year 1300 would not have had the slightest difficulty understanding the celebration of Mass in a country church in Norway. The liturgy, altar decorations and language were the same wherever you went.

The Virgin Mary and her contemporaries

The key work in the exhibition is a statue of the Virgin from around 1240, one of the oldest objects in the museum's collection. She has a very forceful appeal, even though her child, crown and arms are missing. Fascinated by her age - she is almost 800 years old, after all - the same questions came up time and again. How did her original locations look? What was her function? How did she manage to survive? The exhibition *North & South* supplies the answers, and allows Mary to dazzle among her contemporaries.

International cooperation

North & South is the result of lengthy research and international cooperation. Museum Catharijneconvent is grateful to its partner institutions in this prestigious project: Museu Episcopal in Vic (Catalonia, Spain), the Universitetsmuseet in Bergen (Norway), The Museum of Cultural History (University of Oslo) and the Cathedral Museum in Trondheim. *North & South* shines a fresh light on shared similarities in medieval art from a European perspective.

Publication and programme

There will be an extensive programme of activities around the exhibition, including lectures, city rambles and guided tours. There will also be a lavishly illustrated, in-depth publication for those who wish to know more.

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Note for the Editorial Department / Not for publication

In mid-September 2019 the museum will be organising a press trip to both Catalonia and Norway. Relevant media with an interest can contact pressoffice@catharijneconvent.nl.

Press photographs can be downloaded from <https://www.catharijneconvent.nl/pers/persafbeeldingen/>

For further information or answers to queries please get in touch with Rosemarie Boone, exhibition marketing officer, at r.boone@catharijneconvent.nl, or call +31-(0)30-231 38 35.