

Jos De Gelas

Paper Carrier of Playing Cards and Tapestry Cartoons, 1450-1800. Provisional Status and Intermediary Conclusions of an Ongoing Study

The study of the products produced at the Herisem papermill and the other papermills in the area around Brussels generated the material for this lecture. Tracking paper from a production that started around 1440 revealed links with the tapestry weaving industry and the production of playing cards. The link between the crafts was paper, the product used as carrier of printed or painted images. The presentation will focus on the present knowledge of the cartoon paper and the inner layers of playing cards, and covers the timeframe from 1440-1800. The data are a compilation of primary and secondary sources. In contrast with prints and archival documents, the remaining materials are rather scarce and difficult to study.

Special attention will be paid to the 16th century cartoon preserved at the Brussels city museum and known as "The martyrdom of St. Paul". This masterpiece on paper, as the authors of a recent publication called it, has been restored over the period 2014-2017. The experiences of the team that conducted the restoration have been published and the author will add some personal views and conclusions to the published data.

Keywords: play cards, tapestries cartoons, stained glass cartoons, watermarks, grey paper