

# RESEARCH STRATEGY



ROYAL MUSEUMS OF ART AND HISTORY  
KONINKLIJKE MUSEA VOOR KUNST EN GESCHIEDENIS  
MUSÉES ROYAUX D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE



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# OUTLINE

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The Royal Museums of Art and History have recognised the critical need to launch a well-defined and purposeful research strategy to effectively fulfil their mission.

In crafting our research strategy, we have conscientiously identified and addressed a spectrum of challenges that we, as the Royal Museums of Art and History, encounter in our quest for academic excellence, societal impact, and the preservation and transmission of our invaluable cultural heritage. The table below highlights these challenges and outlines the solutions we have incorporated into our strategy to target them. We have also provided chapter references for ease of navigation, enabling stakeholders and readers to delve deeper into our approach.

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Solutions included in strategy</b>	<b>Chapter</b>
Museum performance	Improved profiling of the museums and its research departments	Ch3, Ch4
Alignment with BELSPO management plan & collaboration with other FSI	Clear positioning of the research strategy with BELPSO. Outlined synergies with other FSIs through the “centres of expertise”	Ch3, Ch4
Numerous individually based research agendas	Coordinated approach in engaging with research, networks of scientific partnerships and research collaborations beyond the traditional (citizen science, artist collaborations, source communities, etc.)	Ch3
Dependence on external funding	Showcasing RMAH uniqueness and internal assets, creating clear research links for potential for new partnerships	Ch4
Public Perception of Research Potential and Expertise	Improved profiling of the museums with a clear and understandable research strategy, presenting mission, future focus, potential collaboration opportunities, and successful examples	Ch3, Ch4
Link between museums research and societal debates	The research strategy acts as a communication tool engaging students and young academics. It includes illustrative cases highlighting university collaboration and calls for an improved research infrastructure and digitisation. The research strategy also comments to achieve Full Transition to Gold Standard Open Access	Ch4

Challenges	Solutions included in strategy	Chapter
Sceptical staff	Strategy co-developed with research staff, outlining aims and influence on all researchers and strengthening internal and external collaboration	Ch 3
Open Access	Transition to Gold Standard Open Access and Open Data policies	Ch 4
Acquisition policy	Strategy to enable cooperation with partners that increases contemporaneity or enables collection extensions	Ch 4





**ADDRESS  
OF THE  
PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
SCIENTIFIC  
COUNCIL**

# ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

The Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH) are taking decisive steps towards leading scholarly research in heritage studies, with a focus on their extensive collections. This important and vital task can be only achieved through an ambitious research strategy that aims to fully leverage the capabilities of our four Centres of Expertise, to develop an interdisciplinary approach and foster a network of national and international collaborations.

As Federal Scientific Institutes (FSIs), the RMAH stand out through their rich collection, unique historical legacy, and the strong expertise of its curators and researchers, together with their extensive networks. In view of that, we have designed a research strategy that will serve as a **guiding framework** for both present and future research initiatives. The aim is to forge a **unified sense of direction** and to support research activities across our multifaceted galleries, libraries, archives, and research teams. The Centres of Expertise within the RMAH are instrumental in this, serving as hubs of collaboration, ensuring that the RMAH's research strategy not only reflects our aspirations but also equips us to meet them with a unified purpose and clear communication.

The objectives of the Research Strategy plan can be summarized into four high level goals:

- **Enhance Scientific Research and foster Research Synergies with academic and scholarly institutions and beyond:** At the core of this strategy is the pursuit of **stronger collaboration with other FSIs and with academic institutions** to further transform our collections into vibrant hubs of scholarly activity and community dialogue. We aim to create a stimulating ground for scientific research, promoting interdisciplinary studies. Our four Centres of Expertise should provide the means for propelling innovative research projects that will combine diverse threads of knowledge. They will play a key role in building partnerships and expanding our research acumen and resource pool. Our philosophy embraces a collaborative open spirit, that champions the principles of open data and open access. Our priorities are focused on our vision statement and the overarching management plan. This guarantees **alignment with our institutional mission** and the strategic targeting of resources to areas of greatest impact. We plan to enhance our internal and professional communication to ensure that **the team is fully attuned to the RMAH's policy**, and the broader context within which we operate. This awareness is vital to enhance the museum's identity and the value it offers to the broader research community.
- **Improve research infrastructure:** We must capitalise on the dynamic landscape of funding opportunities to boost our research infrastructure and make it accessible to a larger number of scholars, students, and wider audiences. This can be only undertaken through models of open, collaborative research facilities. We will continue our efforts in upgrading our collections, maintaining our library and other facilities. We will also further support our human and financial resources to effectively enhance the collection database rich in high quality imagery and 3D data and metadata.
- **Secure Sustainable Funding:** We are dedicated to broadening our financial foundation through a variety of channels such as governmental, European Union, and private funds, thus ensuring the longevity and vigour of our research pursuits.
- **Ensure Excellence and Innovation:** Through the application of strict protocols and governance standards, we wish to assure supreme quality and ingenuity in our research quests. The Centres of Expertise will embody this commitment to excellence, driving forward the RMAH's prestigious legacy. Our research strategy functions as both a beacon and a bridge, it serves as a guide for our institution while it further facilitates interactions and join projects with the broader scientific and cultural community.

**Athena Tsingarida'**

President of the RMAH Scientific Council  
Brussels, 15 December 2023

*1 — I would like to warmly thank the members of the scientific council, the two Bruno's - general director a.i. Bruno Verbergt and research coordinator Bruno Overlaet - and all the researchers and research curators of the RMAH for the important work they have undertaken and the energy they have devoted to build up the first research strategy plan ever for our institution. Special thanks to Geert van der Veen and Kleitira Zeqo of Technopolis Group for editing a vast amount of raw strategy documents into this final strategy plan.*







# RMAH: CONNECTING PEOPLE, ART AND HISTORY



# RMAH: CONNECTING PEOPLE, ART AND HISTORY

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MUSEUMS

The Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH) encompass the Art and History Museum, the Musical Instruments Museum and the Halle Gate. These Museums fall under the umbrella of Belgium's Federal Scientific Institutes and are overseen by the Secretary of State for Science Policy and the Belgian Science Policy administration (BELSPO).

At the heart of the RMAH lies a diverse part of Belgium's Federal Collection that captures the essence of humanity in its myriad facets. This collection is a treasure trove of skills, artistic insights, aesthetics, traditions, and knowledge that spans from prehistoric times to the present day and covers a large variety of cultures. Furthermore, we are the custodians of archives that chronicle two centuries of scientific research dedicated to this rich cultural heritage.

Through their collections, the museums delve into universal human themes such as life, death, love, survival, conflict, birth, youth, faith, mythologies, dreams, and the perennial human quest for beauty and inner peace. Consequently, the RMAH resonate with pressing societal issues and contemporary discussions.

### — CONNECTING PEOPLE, ART AND HISTORY —

Our mission is to connect **people, art and history**. Located in Brussels, the heart of Europe, the Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH) foster curiosity and wonder about the worlds women and men have made. The RMAH offer democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the past and the future. We hold and research works of art, objects of daily life, scientific data and documents in trust for society. We safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage and scientific expertise.

We are a participatory, non-profit and transparent federal scientific institute. We work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to preserve, collect, interpret, exhibit, and make collections accessible for the purposes of education, study, comfort and enjoyment. Our vision is to enhance a deeper understanding of societies and cultures, which encourages us to become better caretakers of the world, enabling us to imagine it otherwise.

We aim to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing as well as to transmit a sense of beauty and time.

The RMAH goes beyond mere preservation and exhibition. Guided by an internationally acknowledged research team with international recognition, the RMAH operates through four specialised centres of expertise:

- **Archaeology & Cultural Anthropology**
- **Decorative Arts and Crafts**
- **Organology and Music Cultures**
- **Heritage Studies: collection management & material sciences**

While each of these centres possess a unique focal point and expertise, they all engage with shared sub-themes, tailored to the distinctive lens of each centre. Central to all these centres, two overarching thematic priorities reflect the essence and mission:

- **History of Collections: Delving into archival research, tracking provenance, and verifying authenticity.**
- **The Changing Role of Museums in Society**



## — THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS MUSEUM AND ITS RESEARCH NETWORKS: THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT DATABASE PROJECTS —

**Context and Background:** Through the Musical Instrument Museum (MIM), located at the Mont des Arts in Brussels, the RMAH are renowned for their extensive collection of musical instruments and their commitment to fostering collaborative research. The collection encompasses musical instruments from various historical periods and geographical regions, reflecting the rich tapestry of musical heritage. The museum also houses a specialised library, historical archives, sound recordings, and a dedicated conservation and restoration workshop. The RMAH's and RMCA's researchers on musical instruments and database specialists have actively participated in the Musical Instrument Museums Online (MIMO) Consortium, a collective effort that seeks to create a singular online access point for musical instrument collections held by museums worldwide.

**Research Focus:** The Musical Instrument Database Project is dedicated to expanding the accessibility and reach of the museum's diverse collection of musical instruments. These instruments represent a global cultural heritage, and the project aims to provide an inclusive online resource that allows researchers, musicians, and the general public to explore and study these musical treasures in depth. By collaborating within the MIMO Consortium, the project strives to achieve a broader global impact.

**Methodology and Approach:** Building upon the pioneering work of the MIMO Consortium, the Musical Instrument Database Project employs a multifaceted methodology. It encompasses comprehensive cataloguing, digital documentation, and data harmonization, aligning with the objectives set during the European Commission-funded MIMO Project (September 2009 - August 2011). This prior project successfully established the world's largest freely accessible database for information on musical instruments held in public collections. It also addressed the challenges of multilingual content, enabling searches in six different languages and connecting non-specialist terminology with professional terms and classification systems. Additionally, the project produced invaluable documentation that outlines standards

for photographing musical instruments, facilitating digitization efforts across museums. Detailed guidelines for setting up repositories to enable the harvesting of digital content further enhance the project's sustainability.

**Partnerships and Collaborations:** The RMAH and the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) collaborate closely with prestigious national and international universities and museums that share a passion for musical instruments. As core members of the MIMO Consortium, the RMAH and the RMCA actively contribute to the global initiative, enriching the collective understanding of musical heritage. The consortium welcomes new museums worldwide to join this collaborative effort, offering a unique opportunity for institutions to unite their resources and contribute to a truly global initiative. This initiative promises enduring benefits for anyone interested in the world's diverse collections of musical instruments.

**Significance and Impact:** The Musical Instrument Database Project stands as a testament to the RMAH's dedication to preserving and sharing the world's musical heritage. By expanding the accessibility of its extensive collection and contributing to global standards and guidelines, the project fosters research, education, and cultural exchange. It embodies the spirit of collaboration and inclusivity, promoting the long-term enrichment of the global understanding of musical instruments.

The Musical Instrument Database Project aims to serve as the universal access point for information on public collections of musical instruments worldwide. Its mission extends beyond Europe, inviting museums from across the globe to join this global initiative. Through collective efforts, museums have the opportunity to contribute to a worldwide endeavour that will benefit generations with an interest in the rich collections of musical instruments.

**For more information visit:** <https://www.mim.be/en/research-2> & <https://mimo-international.com/MIMO/accueil-ermes.aspx>

## — RMAH AS PROMOTERS OF RESEARCH —

The Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH) proudly uphold their multifaceted research mandate, which encompasses the systematic collection of scientific data, rigorous scholarly research, the valorisation and dissemination of findings, active participation in scientific expeditions and projects, and the generation of scientific and outreach scientific literature. These activities are not only the result of research, but they also **enable research**.

The RMAH gather an all-encompassing **collection representing world cultures** from all continents and all periods from Prehistory onwards. Its diversity allows infinite possibilities of research and worldwide networking. Moreover, a history of careful and well documented collecting activity spanning from the Renaissance until now, originating from both archaeological excavations and historical collections, increases the value of the collection.



Federal Scientific Institutions share several tasks with universities—chief among them the quest for a deeper understanding of the world, humanity, and society. While universities have a focus on instruction and educational infrastructure, institutions like the RMAH are custodians of museum activities and infrastructure. They are responsible for the collection of some 250.000 record titles that stand for about the double of artefacts. The educational mission of universities is fulfilled through teaching and training both resulting from leading scholarly research; for RMAH it is achieved through the presentation and interpretation of collections to the public. The RMAH's wealth lies in its distinctive museum collection, its unique historical legacy, and the leading expertise of its curators and researchers, together with their extensive networks. These elements form the cornerstone of the RMAH's cultural and scientific value. The daily collection, care, handling, study and exhibition of these artefacts and works of art provides a solid ground to knowledge which fuels research opportunities.

The public dissemination of these collections and data serves a multitude of valuable purposes, including:

- To provide with a foundational resource for academic and research communities to conduct further studies.
- To enable the sharing of knowledge and facilitate educational pursuits.
- To provide opportunities for intellectual enrichment and aesthetic appreciation.
- To stimulate public discourse and contribute towards the shaping of opinions.

## — RESEARCH PRINCIPLES AND VALUES —



**The curation, cataloguing, and public unveiling of the Museums' collection is at the core of the research strategy of the FSI.** RMAH have recognised a growing need to streamline the plethora of different research streams into a cohesive direction. The implementation of this research strategy will enhance the integration of museum activities and research areas, enable precise assessment of research opportunities by our research staff, and raise the level of expertise.

This refined focus is guided by four **research principles and research values** that resonate deeply with the Museums' mission and vision. These principles ensure that every initiative we undertake is both meaningful and impactful:

— 1

Recognise and highlight the RMAH's distinctive qualities, such as its extensive collections, a **unique historical narrative**, **robust research facilities**, and ensure these are in sync with the management strategies outlined by the Belgian Science Policy.

— 2

Pursue a collaborative research ethos, engaged in global networks of scientific partnerships and extended collaboration beyond conventional bounds, including citizen science, artistic collaborations, and engagement with source communities, while upholding sustainability as a core value.

— 3

Enhance synergies within the RMAH and among other Federal Scientific Institutes through specialised centres of expertise.

— 4

Embrace and implement policies that support Gold Standard Open Access and Open Data, promoting widespread sharing and accessibility of knowledge.

## — RESEARCH ETHICS, DIVERSITY, GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT —

The commitment to ensuring **equitable rights and access** to heritage and scientific knowledge for all lies at the centre of our **research values**. We stand dedicated to **participatory, non-profit and transparent practices** that foster a community-oriented approach to research and knowledge dissemination.

- At the RMAH, researchers are expected to honour the principles of **research integrity**, thereby protecting and sustaining their commitment to excellent research at our institutions. Valuable frameworks for responsible research exist on a national and European level, which we are committed to as a research institution. Their principles and practices guide the RMAH in safeguarding responsible scholarly activity.
- A researcher's conduct is expected to be in line with Belgium's **federal government's principal values**: respect, trust, professionalism, public interest and social responsibility. W
- [The Code of Ethics for Scientific Research in Belgium, supported by BELSPO, establishes a set of principles for ethical research practice](#) that our scholars are trusted to follow. This national code stresses the importance of scholarly independence and stipulates, among other things, that the researcher's work must be rigorous, reliable and verifiable. Similar practices and responsibilities are encouraged in the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, which promotes good practices in areas such as research procedures, data practices and management, collaboration as well as publication and dissemination.
- Researchers participating in projects at the RMAH are asked to **disclose any conflicts of interest** that might undermine the validity and/or integrity of the institution's research. The aim is to ensure that research practices and policies are never influenced by the private interests of its staff.
- The RMAH follow the Federal Diversity Charter and aim to be a model of **diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity**. Recently the RMAH published a Gender Equality Plan, which follows the guidelines and decisions taken at BELSPO level and at federal and European levels and thus intends to respect the commitments included in the [Gender Mainstreaming Plan 2021-2024 adopted by the Council of Ministers on 11 June 2021](#).
- [Societal change calls for answers for which new frameworks for sustainable development](#), such as the 2030 (soon 2045) UN Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), provide strong guidelines. Within the field of museums and heritage studies, the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (the Faro convention), the legacy of the European Year of Cultural Heritage, and the new International Council of Museums definition encourage us to reassess the **societal role and utility** of our research.

## — RESEARCH GOALS AND OBJECTIVES —

The table below presents RMAH research goals and objectives as linked to the Museum's Mission and Vision.

Mission & Vision	Solutions included in strategy
<p>Our mission is to connect <b>people, art and history</b>.</p>	<p>The goal and objective of the RMAH research activities is to help the institute preserve, collect, interpret, exhibit the collections and make them more accessible.</p> <p><b>Research Goal 1: Understand and Strengthen the Connection between People, Art, and History</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Objective 1.1: Investigate the varying ways art and history impact different societal groups.</li> <li>– Objective 1.2: Identify gaps or missed opportunities in current exhibitions or displays that might foster deeper connections for visitors.</li> <li>– Objective 1.3: Research and analyse emerging trends in art and history education to continuously evolve our offerings.</li> </ul>
<p>Our vision is to enhance a <b>deeper understanding of societies and cultures</b>, which encourages us to be <b>better caretakers</b> of the world, enabling us to imagine it otherwise.</p>	<p><b>Research Goal 2: Foster Deeper Understanding of Societies and Cultures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Objective 2.1: Conduct interdisciplinary studies on artworks and historical objects to uncover societal and cultural insights.</li> <li>– Objective 2.2: Collaborate with experts in humanities (e.g. anthropology, sociology, the arts and cultural studies) and in hard sciences (e.g. geology, mineralogy, chemistry) to enrich our understanding.</li> <li>– Objective 2.3: Monitor visitors to measure their understanding and reception of exhibitions, aiming to ensure comprehension and appreciation.</li> </ul>
<p>RMAH offer <b>democratising</b>, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for <b>critical dialogue</b> about the past and the future.</p>	<p><b>Research Goal 3: Evaluate and Promote Democratic, Inclusive, and Polyphonic Spaces</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Objective 3.1: Assess the inclusivity and diversity of our research practices.</li> <li>– Objective 3.2: Engage with diverse communities to gather feedback on how they perceive and experience our research output (in physical and digital spaces, publications and other material practices).</li> <li>– Objective 3.3: Investigate international best practices for creating polyphonic spaces that promote critical dialogue.</li> </ul>
<p>We hold and research works of art, objects of daily life, scientific data and documents in trust for society.</p>	<p><b>Research Goal 4: Enhance the Preservation and Accessibility of Collections</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Objective 4.1: Study and contribute to the latest technologies and methodologies in art and history collection preservation.</li> <li>– Objective 4.2: Assess current collection accessibility and identify areas for improvement to ensure equal access.</li> <li>– Objective 4.3: Research and develop strategies to digitise collections, making them more widely available for education and study.</li> </ul>
<p>We safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage and scientific expertise. We work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to preserve, collect, interpret, exhibit and make collections accessible for the purposes of education, study, comfort and enjoyment.</p>	<p><b>Research Goal 5: Strengthen Partnerships and Collaboration with Research Communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Objective 5.1: Map out and assess current partnerships and identify potential new collaborations with other FSE, universities, heritage communities, artists, citizens and other stakeholders.</li> <li>– Objective 5.2: Develop outreach programmes based on the findings to engage diverse communities in the collection, interpretation, and exhibition processes.</li> <li>– Objective 5.3: Improve research infrastructure (upgrading collection and other facilities) to enable better access and use of the collection.</li> </ul>





Since their inception, the Royal Museums of Art and History have been the guardians of an extraordinary assemblage that encompasses both rare and distinctive tangible and intangible treasures. We offer a snapshot of their diverse and significant wealth:

— **Curatorial Wisdom:** The RMAH house deep insights into their collections, offering the capability to re-examine artifacts with fresh perspectives and new technologies. The presence of these collections affords an unparalleled opportunity to integrate the physicality of objects into their scholarly study, complemented by extensive and invaluable archives that date back to the late 19th century nationally and early 20th century internationally.

— **Informational Foundations:** An ever-evolving inventory database and robust information management systems enhance the RMAH's offerings, along with increasing access to a rich online repository. A well-endowed scientific library, specialising in the main facets of the collection, further supports this infrastructure.

— **Historical Singularities:** The RMAH take pride in the presence and long standing partnerships with esteemed bodies such as the Association égyptologique Reine Élisabeth and the Assyriological Centre Georges Dossin, among others, utilising their specialised libraries and archives. Pioneering endeavours, including groundbreaking archaeological excavations and the institution of organology, make up the museum's DNA and a history of commitment to excellence.

— **International Outreach:** The RMAH's work transcends national borders, with international collaborations that are not solely reliant on university affiliations, but also on those of museums.

— **Collaborative Networks:** Our alliances extend to academia through joint research initiatives (via FED-t-WIN, EoS and other joint research programmes), personal academic roles of our staff, and leadership in archaeological digs. Furthermore, our unique collections and research personnel fortify our participation in museum and academic networks, alongside collaborations with regional governments and complementarity with researchers from other Federal Scientific Institutes, in particular the RMCA (archaeology in Africa, anthropology, geology, musical instruments and cultures, material studies, and international collection databases), the RMFAB (art history), the RBINS (paleontology, physical anthropology, paleobotany, archaeozoology, geology, and digitisation) and the RICH (C14 dating, material studies, collection care, ...)

— **Public Engagement:** The RMAH serve as an illuminating portal to research for the public, translating complex studies into accessible knowledge.

— **Adaptability and Innovation:** Our researchers not only champion critical thinking but are also advocates for Open Access and Open Data policies, aligning with a well-structured research strategy.

These resources are further enriched by the RMAH's unique historical narrative, marked by renowned expertise in specialised domains such as Egyptology, musical instrument history, decorative arts and significant relationships borne from museum leadership, which collectively contribute to its esteemed reputation and global standing.



## — THE CINQUANTENAIRE TAPESTRIES: WEAVING THE PAST INTO THE PRESENT —

**Description:** This illustrative case brings to light the fascinating world of tapestries from the Southern Netherlands, modern-day Belgium, a historical hub for tapestry production and export since the late Middle Ages. The Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH) proudly house a diverse collection of tapestries, originating from renowned production centres such as Tournai, Brussels, Bruges, Oudenaarde, and Enghien, spanning from the 14th to the late 20th century. Alongside these remarkable tapestries are intricate designs and cartoons, forming a comprehensive and unique ensemble.

**Context and Background:** Belgium's historical significance in tapestry craftsmanship is vividly reflected in the RMAH's tapestry collection. A substantial effort was made to meticulously catalogue and study this valuable collection through collaborative research involving RMAH's dedicated research staff and experts from KU Leuven. In 2023, the culmination of their work materialised in the form of a catalogue raisonné.

**Research Focus:** "The Cinquantenaire Tapestries" publication goes beyond being a mere catalogue. It delves into the intricacies of individual tapestries, shedding light on their manufacturers, the artists behind them, and the broader history of the collection itself. This ambitious endeavour aims to cater to both the international research community and the curious public. Aligned with the RMAH's vision and commitment to open access, the publication has been made readily accessible through Orfeo, the institutional Open Access repository supported by Federal Science Policy funding. By embracing open access, the RMAH ensures that valuable research like this publication is available to a global audience, fostering knowledge dissemination and accessibility.

**Methodology and Approach:** In the "Cinquantenaire Tapestries" project, our methodology encompasses comprehensive cataloguing, extensive archival research, rigorous scientific analysis, cross-disciplinary

collaboration, and meticulous digital documentation. We employ advanced scientific techniques and foster collaboration among experts from diverse fields, significantly enhancing the depth and precision of our research. This project addresses a long-standing need for a new synthesis and status questions for the national collection in Brussels. The authors, who have curated and studied the collection for many years, have integrated the latest data from scholarly literature and augmented it with the results of their own research. The utilisation of cutting-edge digital photography techniques ensures high-quality reproductions of these remarkable artworks, serving the interests of all those passionate about this enduring art form of weaving.

**Partnerships and Collaborations:** The RMAH's reference collection has been catalogued and jointly studied by research staff from the RMAH and the KU Leuven. Snoeck Publishers has played a vital role in disseminating the project's findings through the publication of the comprehensive research volume.

**Significance and Impact:** This project holds significant impact by preserving cultural heritage, deepening historical understanding, serving as an educational resource, and catalysing further research in material culture in the Southern Netherlands. It contributes not only to the conservation of tapestries but also to a broader comprehension of European art and history, setting a high standard for future research endeavours in this field.

**Reference:** Guy Delmarcel & Ingrid De Meûter: *The Cinquantenaire Tapestries – The Collection of the Royal Museums of Art and History*, Snoeck Publishers, Ghent & Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels, 2023, 432p. , ISBN 9789461617729

**For further information and digital version of the publication visit:**

<https://orfeo.belnet.be/handle/internal/11039>



## ARTISTIC LEGACIES UNEARTHED: THE HOME-AGE EXPLORATION OF 17<sup>TH</sup> AND 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SOUTH NETHERLANDISH ARTS

HOME-AGE project is a long-term research initiative potentially spanning 15 years, divided into three funding phases. The initiative begins with the first phase (2021-2026), entirely financed by BELSPO under the FED-tWIN programme.

**Context and Background:** The KMKG-MRAH collection, which ranges from prehistory to the 20th century, has a special emphasis on South Netherlandish applied arts from the 17th and 18th centuries. Despite the richness of this collection, it has not been extensively studied from a material-technical perspective, with most research focusing on art history. The HOME-AGE project seeks to fill this gap through a multidisciplinary approach, including archival research, historiography compilation, and material-technical studies of selected objects.

### Research Foci:

- Archival and Literature Research: Creating a comprehensive historiography of South Netherlandish applied arts.
- Audit and Collection Information: Completing the information backlog of focus collections.
- Technical Art History: Investigating materials, construction techniques, and conservation history.
- Contextualisation: Integrating insights into the broader narrative of South Netherlandish applied arts.
- HOME-AGE Platform and Dissemination: Developing a digital hub to share the project's findings with a wider audience.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration: Fostering collaboration between different scientific disciplines, integrating approaches from art history, material science, conservation, and archival studies

**Methodology and Approach:** The project's approach centres on historical materials and techniques used in storage furniture such as art cabinets and scribes (writing desks) from the Southern Netherlands during the 17th and 18th centuries. By examining primary archival documentation and integrating educational programmes from the University of Antwerp, HOME-AGE seeks to understand these objects' role and interactions within their contemporary interiors. The Faculty of Design Sciences and the Faculty of Arts of the University of Antwerp (e.g., departments Conservation Restoration and History) are actively involved.

**Partnerships and Collaborations:** HOME-AGE is a collaborative venture involving the RMAH and the University of Antwerp.

**Significance and Impact:** The outcomes of this initiative will enhance the information and understanding of the museum's collections, gain new insights into the complex interplay between the art history, material culture, and technology of the region and era, and enrich educational programmes. Additionally, the project fosters engagement and research through an online platform, thereby amplifying accessibility and interest. A key outcome is also the strengthening of the collaboration with the University of Antwerp, which serves to bolster heritage education and elevate scientific expertise in the field.

## RESEARCH GOVERNANCE IN ACTION

The Royal Museums of Art and History research governance is overseen by a structured framework designed to maintain high standards and align with strategic priorities (see figure below). The **Belgian Federal Scientific Council**, which has the role of assessing BELSPO's scientific research programmes, stands at the pinnacle of this framework.

**BELSPO** itself is instrumental in defining the financial frameworks for Federal Scientific Institutes (FSIs), orchestrating the peer review process that evaluates research proposals submitted by FSIs and checking governance compliance of the FSI. This ensures that a rigorous quality assurance mechanism is in place.

The alignment with the Belgian Science Policy Management Plan for 2022-2024, which is encapsulated in the management contract between the Secretary of State and BELSPO, is integral to our research governance. This contract outlines a strategic vision aimed at fostering scientific collaboration among BELSPO and the federal scientific institutions within its purview. It establishes two pivotal strategic objectives:

- **Cross-Cutting Research Strategy:** We aim to cultivate a multidisciplinary research approach that not only aligns with societal needs and governmental directives, but also bolsters overall support for research and innovation, leveraging inter-institutional synergies.
- **Open Science and Data Dissemination:** Commitment to the complete implementation of an open data and science strategy is paramount. This involves promoting transparency and accessibility to research findings and data (adhering to FAIR—Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable—principles), which is expected to enhance the utility of research outputs and solidify our principal partnerships.

### — GOVERNANCE —

#### BELGIAN FEDERAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

— Assesses BELSPO's scientific research programmes

#### BELSPO

— Defines the financial frameworks for FSIs  
 — Organises the evaluation of FSIs research proposals (peer review)  
 — Checks governance compliance of FSIs

#### RESEARCHER

— Conducts research (proposals)  
 — Acts as peer within the RMAH

#### CENTRES OF EXPERTISE

— Assess coherence of their research projects & programmes

#### GENERAL DIRECTOR

— Prepares scientific council decisions  
 — Issues procedures on (peer) evaluation, ethics of research, centres of expertise, membership, etc.

#### SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

— Defines and assesses research and research priorities  
 — Validates research project proposals



The **Scientific Council** plays a strategic role, both in defining and assessing research directions and priorities, as well as in validating the alignment of research project proposals with the institution's overarching research strategy.

The **General Director** is tasked with preparing decisions for the Scientific Council and establishing procedures for peer evaluations, project selections, and memberships. He or she can of course rely on the **Direction Council**. Within this ecosystem, the **Centres of Expertise** have a specialised function to assess the coherence of their respective research projects and programmes, ensuring they are in sync with RMAH's goals. Lastly, **individual researchers** within RMAH are responsible for crafting detailed research project proposals and conducting the research activities, embodying the institution's commitment to advancing knowledge within the museums' scope.

The Royal Museums of Art and History engage with a diverse range of stakeholders, each playing a role in shaping and supporting the museums' activities. These stakeholders range from internal teams, including permanent researchers, project-based staff, and the collection care team, to external entities like government bodies, academic institutions, and funding agencies. The European Union and Belgian governmental bodies, including the Belgian Parliament and BELSPO, are pivotal in providing policy direction and funding. Academic collaborations with universities and interactions with other federal scientific institutes enrich our research with fresh perspectives and shared expertise. Other museums and scientific institutes, both domestic and international, offer valuable opportunities for collaborative exhibitions and knowledge exchange. Additionally, the museum interacts with schools and the media, enhancing educational outreach and public engagement. Citizen scientists and volunteers contribute grassroots insights and support, while activists and foreign governments and diplomats extend the museum's global reach and relevance. Each stakeholder group, from policy influencers to community volunteers, plays an important role in driving the mission and vision of the museums.



## MEROVINGIAN SPLENDOR: UNVEILING THE SECRETS OF EARLY MEDIÉVAL JEWEL PRODUCTION, MATERIALS AND EXCHANGE

“Mero-Jewel” is a four-year project (2023-2027), funded by BELSPO (Belgian Science Policy Office) in the framework of the Brain-be 2.0. The project aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of early medieval jewelry crafted from precious metals like gold and silver, often adorned with glass, gems, and stones.

**Context and Background:** Spanning the 5th to 8th centuries, the Merovingian era in Northwestern Europe was a time of significant transition marked by population movements and sweeping socio-political changes. Despite these upheavals, this period saw the creation of a rich and uniform material culture. The RMAH houses an extensive Merovingian collection obtained from archaeological excavations at Harmignies, Sint-Gillis-bij-Dendermonde, Lede, Anderlecht and Marilles dating back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While neighboring countries have advanced in researching early medieval cultures, Belgium now has the exciting opportunity to enhance its focus in this area, especially in the study of gold and silver jewelry. “Mero-Jewel” represents a significant step in this direction, uniting expertise from various scientific disciplines to explore this rich cultural heritage.

**Research Focus:** The project’s primary goal is to enhance our understanding of Merovingian jewelry in Northwestern Europe, spanning from the late 5th to the early 8th century CE. It revolves around three core objectives:

- **Material Characterisation:** Analysis of raw materials, alloys, mixed materials, and fillings.
- **Artisanal Techniques:** Understanding the crafting techniques and processes of early medieval artisans.
- **Preservation:** Assessing and improving the preservation of these materials.

**Methodology and Approach:** “Mero-Jewel” applies an original applied material-based approach blending traditional archaeological contextual research (analytical

and descriptive analyses) with non-invasive visual and archaeometrical techniques such as pXRF, ion beam analysis, x-ray radiography, and 3D modelling. This approach is complemented by cataloguing and data interpretation using a flexible and open information infrastructure (<https://heuristnetwork.org>) for data management.

**Partnerships and Collaborations:** The project is a joint effort among three institutions:

- Royal Museums of Art and History
- Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage
- Université de Liège

**Significance and Impact:** This project will significantly enhance scientific knowledge by characterising and understanding the nature and the use of precious materials in the Early Middle Ages. It aims to shed light on the methods of exchange and production of these exquisite artifacts. The online methodological tools developed will lay the groundwork for future collaborative research in material culture in Belgium. Additionally, the detailed study and documentation of these collections will greatly benefit conservation and management practices.

“Mero-Jewel” not only promises to fill a crucial research gap but also sets a new standard for the study of material culture in the Merovingian era, offering invaluable insights into this fascinating period of European history.

**For further information visit:** <https://www.artandhistory.museum/en/scientific-research/mero-jewel>

# PYRAMIDS AND PROGRESS

## — PYRAMIDS AND PROGRESS - THE EVOLUTION OF EGYPTOLOGY IN BELGIUM —

“Pyramids and Progress” is a four-year project (2018-2022), a collaborative effort funded by the F.R.S.-FNRS for the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles and the FWO for the Flemish Community as part of the Excellence of Science programme. This research project delves into the history and evolution of Egyptology in Belgium, a field that, despite a late emergence compared to other European countries, experienced rapid growth in the early 20th century. By the 1930s, Brussels was at times referred to as ‘the capital of Egyptology’, a testament to the significant strides made in this discipline.

**Context and Background:** The project explores the trajectory of Belgium’s burgeoning interest in Egyptology within the broader scope of its industrial and political expansionism towards Egypt, which commenced soon after the creation of the Belgian state in 1830.

### **Research Focus:**

At the heart of “Pyramids and Progress” are several critical inquiries:

- What were the driving forces behind Belgium’s interest in Egypt during this era?
- How did Belgian royalty, politicians, diplomats, industrialists, and intellectuals navigate and contribute to the country’s expansionist doctrine?
- How did the scientific discipline of Egyptology evolve within Belgium amid these wider geopolitical aspirations?

**Methodology and Approach:** The project involves a detailed investigation of the personal, institutional, and commercial networks of key historical figures in this field. It scrutinises the milieu that enabled renowned Egyptologists like Jean Capart to elevate Egyptology to a prominent status in Belgium. The study employs an interdisciplinary approach, weaving historical, political, and cultural threads to paint a comprehensive picture of this unique period in Belgian Egyptology.

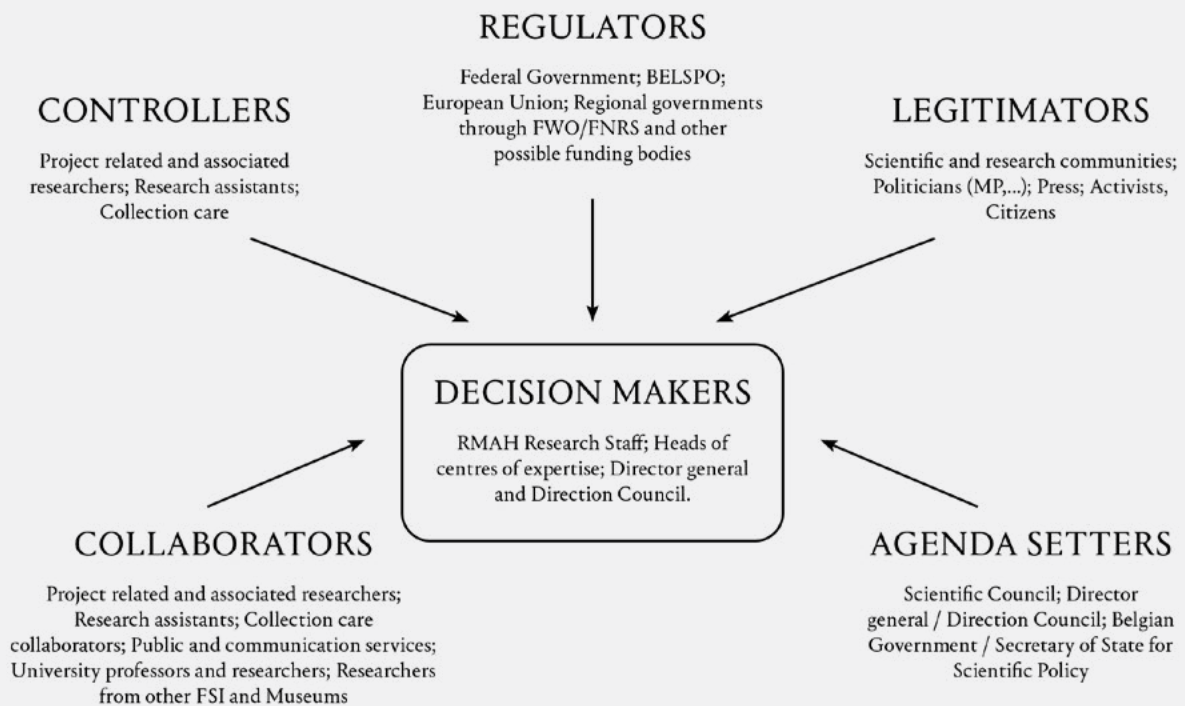
**Partnerships and Collaborations:** “Pyramids and Progress” is a collaborative venture involving several prestigious institutions:

- Royal Museums of Art and History
- KU Leuven – Department of Archaeology
- Université Libre de Bruxelles – Department of Archaeology
- Universiteit Gent – Department of History
- Musée royal de Mariemont – Egypt and Near East Section

**Significance and Impact:** This project not only provides insight into the historical context of Belgium’s fascination with Egypt but also sheds light on the formation and development of Egyptology as a scientific discipline in Belgium. The findings contribute significantly to our understanding of Belgium’s role in the broader narrative of European interest in Egyptian antiquities and culture. Additionally, it offers a critical reflection on the intersection of science, politics, and culture in the pursuit of academic knowledge during a pivotal era in European history. In 2023, the exhibition Expedition Egypt acted as a scientific and public valorization of this research project, as did the publication of an extensive biography on Jean Capart, former museum director and Belgium’s father of Egyptology.

**For further information visit:** [www.pyramidsandprogress.be](http://www.pyramidsandprogress.be)

# STAKEHOLDER MAPPING PER STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY



## — RESEARCH TEAM AND PROJECTS —

The Royal Museums of Art and History have a dedicated team of talented researchers who play a key role in furthering the RMAH’s mission to uncover, preserve, interpret and share our rich collections.

As of December 1, 2023, the RMAH research staff consists of 27 tenure track researchers, including research curators (21.5 FTE) and 20 research assistants (15.2 FTE). This team is supported by 20 collection management staff (15.2 FTE), including art handlers, restorers, photographers, registrars, IT-staff and others. An additional team of 15 staff members (11.65 FTE) is responsible for the Museums’ research communication and dissemination.

The Royal Museums of Art and History encompass a range of initiatives, from ground-breaking research projects and digitalisation efforts to scholarly publications and the cultivation of professional networks.





# NAVIGATING THE FUTURE: IMPLEMENTING RMAH'S RESEARCH STRATEGY

# NAVIGATING THE FUTURE: IMPLEMENTING RMAH'S RESEARCH STRATEGY

The world in which we live and operate is Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA). The Royal Museums of Art and History must navigate through this period of transformation and address current challenges. Our research strategy is designed not only to navigate these challenges but to transform them into opportunities for growth and innovation.

## — **Transforming Challenges into Opportunities**

At RMAH, we recognise the necessity of evolving in response to the dynamic global environment. Key to this evolution is fostering synergies with peer institutions, strengthening external collaborations, adeptly managing funding mechanisms, and optimising organisational (research) leadership. Our forward-thinking research strategy is structured to address these challenges head-on, aiming to streamline scientific inquiry and reinforce the museums' esteemed heritage as a centre of education, culture, and scientific exploration.

## — **Enhancing Institutional Performance**

Our strategy focuses on unifying efforts across teams to elevate the museums' scientific profile. We are committed to enriching the information on our collections, advancing our understanding of the intricate relationship between art history, materiality, and technology, and involving educational programmes to enhance public engagement and research.

## — **Fostering Visibility, Collaboration and High Scientific Quality**

The RMAH aim to make a significant impact within the global research community. This involves spotlighting the museum's scholarly contributions and catalysing both national and international partnerships. Our strategy empowers researchers to extend their work beyond personal networks, aligning with the museums' collective goals. Furthermore, it aims to enhance RMAH's public significance and elevate the expertise of our scientific staff by prioritising research that resonates with societal needs and deploying cutting-edge technologies.

## — **A Vision for the Future : Nurturing Expertise and Societal Impact**

The RMAH were conceived in an era of global exploration, amassing a wide collection that mirrors our planet's natural and cultural wealth. Today, we face the challenge of contextualising this cultural heritage within the modern world. Our research strategy outlines priority themes, clarifies societal relevance, and showcases the museums' unique capacity to address pressing questions with its collections. The upcoming renovation of the Art & History Museum building and its infrastructure will further enhance our capabilities, enriching visitor experience and cementing our role as a leading centre for cultural and scientific learning.

The RMAH are committed to both fundamental research and broader societal issues. Through the research strategy, the research staff will be better equipped to define a clear trajectory for the research centres, identify new opportunities and build

new partnerships in line with societal questions.

## — **Strategic Resource Management and Enhancement**

Our strategy is anchored in strategic resource allocation and optimisation. We focus on channelling resources towards dynamic and promising units, setting clear performance metrics for research units, and upholding high standards of research quality. Additionally, we implement strategies to support research units requiring restructuring or refocusing, ensuring overall institutional health and sustainability.

## — **Communication and Cooperation**

We are developing a comprehensive communication plan to bridge internal and external scientific dialogues, thus enhancing the visibility of our research and fostering interdisciplinary collaborations.

## — **Setting Objectives and Planning Actions**

Our strategy involves creating recruitment plans to attract and retain top-tier scientists and expand international collaborations. We also focus on enhancing our contribution to higher education and on innovating our research infrastructure. Furthermore, we are establishing centres of expertise, identifying avenues for increased external funding, and outlining plans for knowledge transfer and innovation.

## — **Institutional-Level Priorities**

At the institutional level, we are refining our recruitment processes, cultivating a collaborative and healthy working environment, broadening networks and cooperation, and promoting a research-centric culture. A critical component of our strategy is the transparent and strategic allocation of funding to ensure responsible financial stewardship.

## — **A co-developed research strategy**

The development of the research strategy at the Royal Museums of Art and History commenced in spring 2021 with the establishment of institutional priorities and guiding principles, which provided a framework for conducting a thorough SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. This critical examination of the museums' research activities was first shared with the scientific communities of the RMAH in December 2021, inviting their contributions and suggestions for modifications. Since then, the Scientific Council applies these institutional priorities and guiding principles when assessing research proposals (FEDtWIN, BRAIN and INFRA-FED) by the research staff. To further refine and enhance the SWOT analysis, an open workshop was held on October 13, 2022, where 15 researchers engaged in a collaborative process to elaborate

on and refine the strategic priorities that emerged from the initial findings. The following months, RMAH's Direction Council and Scientific Council discussed the further elaboration of the strategy plan. The final editing of all the analyses and documents was conveyed to Technopolis and the final draft of this research strategy has been validated by the members of the Scientific Council. This participative methodology ensured that

the strategy was shaped by a collective understanding and the incorporation of perspectives from the research community. This participatory approach not only indicates a collective understanding of the strategy and its implications, but also ensures that the research strategy is rooted in the practical realities and expert insights of those directly involved in its implementation.

Our research strategy marks a significant advancement for the RMAH. It reflects our dedication to fostering innovation, maintaining quality standards, and positively impacting society.

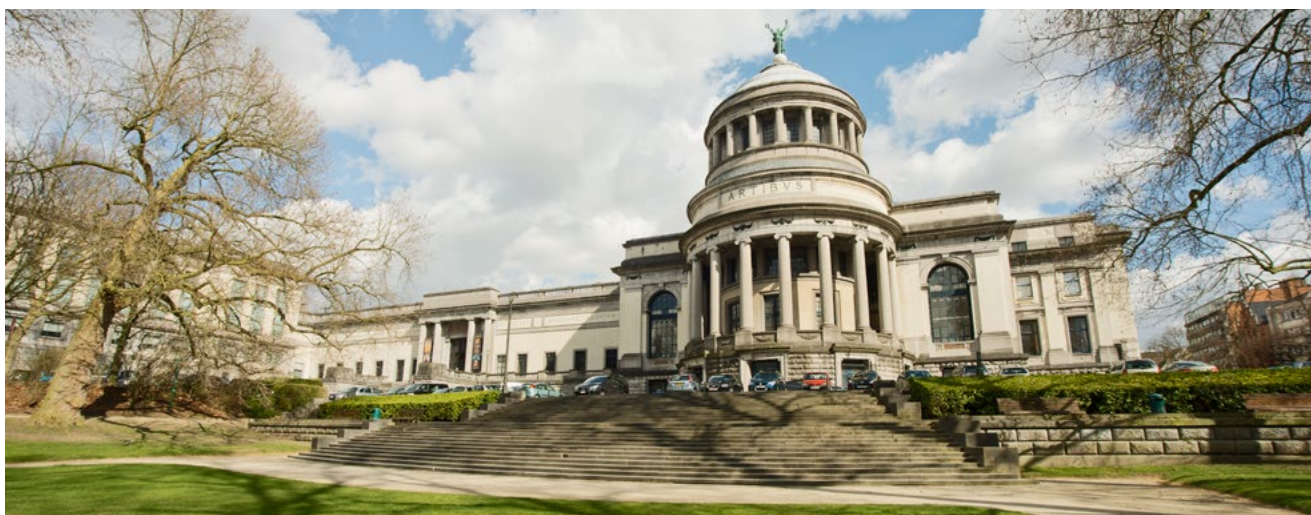
## CENTRES OF EXPERTISE: SPEARHEADING RMAH'S SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

As a Federal Scientific Institute, the Royal Museums of Art and History go above traditional museum roles by engaging in innovative research through their four specialised Centres of Expertise:

- **Archaeology & Cultural Anthropology:** Delving into the depths of human history, its material culture and cultural context.
- **Decorative Arts and Crafts:** Exploring the intricacies of artistic expression through various mediums and eras.
- **Organology and Music Cultures:** Investigating the rich field of music and musical instruments across cultures.
- **Heritage Studies:** Collection Management & Materials Sciences: Focusing on the preservation, study, and management of our vast collections.

Our research groups play a vital role in merging historically developed expertise with interdisciplinary research. This synergy significantly enhances our scientific output and elevates our prestige both nationally and internationally. Each centre, driven by a team of internationally acclaimed researchers, makes a unique contribution to deepening our understanding of art and history. To remain sustainable and relevant, these research centres are building robust identities that resonate with current societal conversations, emphasising inclusivity and breaking down traditional barriers in scientific research. Our centres, rich in study material and intrinsically linked to human societies, serve as ideal environments for pioneering new research methodologies, including citizen science and engaging with source communities.

Central to the mission and aims of our institute, **two key thematic priorities span** across all four centres: understanding the 'History of Collections' and exploring 'The Changing Role of Museums in Society'. These themes are integral to all our research endeavours, underscoring the RMAH's role as a custodian of both tangible and intangible heritage and its societal and cultural responsibilities.



**— COOPERATION BETWEEN FSI AS STEPSTONE FOR COOPERATION WITH UNIVERSITIES —**

Historically, the relationship between FSIs and universities has been predominantly informal, with many FSI directors and researchers holding part-time teaching or research positions at Belgian universities, some even on tenure tracks. The FED-tWIN program has formalised this relationship, facilitating long-term co-engagement of post-doctoral researchers. The time is ripe to evolve these collaborations into more structured and innovative partnerships, leveraging the strengths of both FSIs and academic institutions for mutual benefit and enhanced research outcomes.

The Centres of Expertise serve as hubs for these collaborations, ensuring that the RMAH's research strategy not only reflects our aspirations, but also equips us with a unified purpose and clear communication. These centres are at the forefront of initiating innovative research projects and are essential in building strategic partnerships. A key objective of RMAH is to make use of these specialised centres to reinforce synergies both internally and with other Federal Scientific Institutes (FSI).

Looking ahead, the development of inter-FSI Centres of Expertise represents a significant strategic direction for RMAH. This initiative aims to broaden our outreach, fostering deeper collaboration and cooperation with universities.



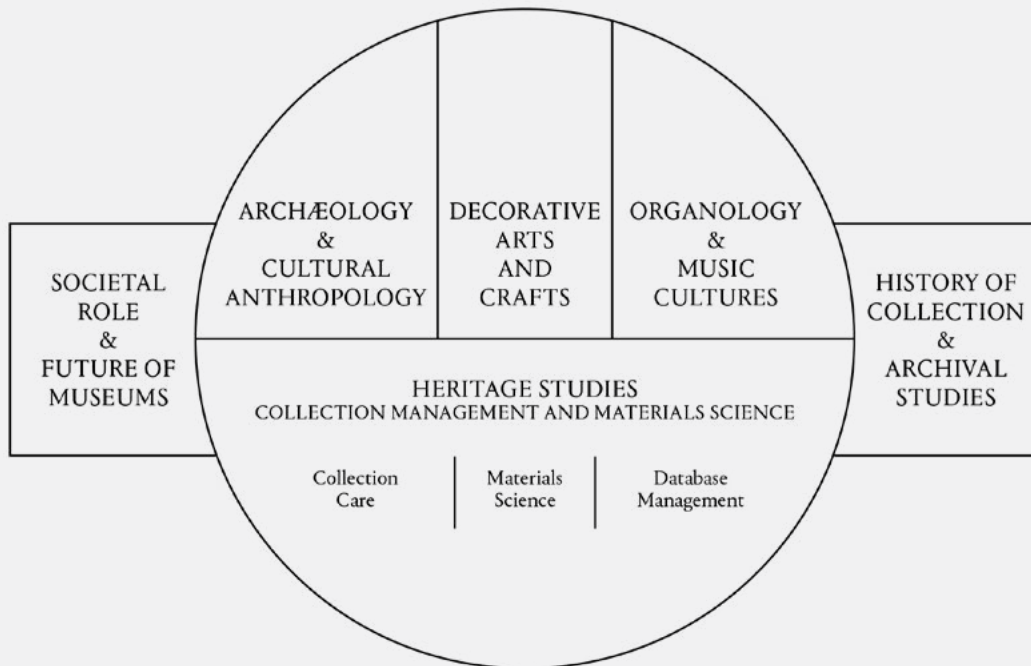
**CENTRES OF EXPERTISE AS JOINT RESEARCH UNITS,  
INSPIRATION FROM THE FRENCH UNITÉ MIXTE DE RECHERCHE.**

In France, a Unité Mixte de Recherche (UMR) is an administrative entity created by the signing of a contract of association between one or more research laboratories of a university or a research organisation and the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS). Its duration is that of a multi-annual contract (five years).

The UMR is the basic building block in the organisation of research in France, with its own budget lines and staff assigned by its partners. Administered by a director and a council, it is largely autonomous in defining its research strategy.



**ROYAL MUSEUMS OF ART AND HISTORY:  
RMAH CENTRES OF EXPERTISE**



## — ARCHAEOLOGY & CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY —

The Archaeology & Cultural Anthropology Centre at the Royal Museums of Art and History encompasses a diverse array of objects and collections, spanning various eras and continents. Many of these are derived from archaeological excavations, while others are sourced from living cultures. This rich collection is pivotal in exploring both ancient and contemporary cultures. The primary objective of this centre is a comprehensive investigation into the physical and cultural essence of these artifacts, as well as the communities that crafted and utilised them. Key to this exploration is an in-depth understanding of the materials, their sourcing, the production techniques employed, distribution networks, and historical context. Equally crucial is the discernment of each item's functionality, usage, and its cultural and historical significance.

To achieve these aims, the centre employs a blend of precise scientific methods, among them advanced analytical and dating technologies, and a broad spectrum of archaeological and anthropological approaches. This includes conducting archival research on past excavations, engaging in fieldwork and surveys, performing landscape studies, experimental archaeology, and various forms of participant observation.

Collaborative efforts extend the centre's reach both geographically and temporally. Partnerships with institutions like the Royal Museum for Central Africa enable research into Central African cultures, while collaboration with the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences brings in expertise in palaeontology, geoarchaeology, archaeozoology, and environmental archaeology. Joint research with the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage enhances our materials science capabilities. Additionally, our association with the Belgian School of Athens and the Academia Belgica in Rome enriches our knowledge in Greek, Etruscan and Roman cultures.

The centre also benefits from international collaborations, particularly as many artifacts from similar excavation sites are dispersed across museums worldwide. These global partnerships are vital for a comprehensive understanding of our collections.

Moreover, established structural collaborations with Belgian universities, through the FED-tWIN programme with institutions like KUL, UCLouvain, and ULB, complement RMAH's expertise, fostering a robust academic network that enriches our research capabilities.



— **Keywords:** Prehistory, Ancient Near East and Egypt, Classical Antiquity, Islam cultures, Medieval cultures, Asia, Pacific Ocean cultures, Americas, national archaeology, materiality, autochtonisation.



## — DECORATIVE ARTS AND CRAFTS —

At the Decorative Arts and Crafts Centre of Expertise, we delve into the intricate design, craftsmanship, utility, and symbolism of objects that blend design with functionality. Our collection, renowned as Belgium's most significant repository of art objects, encompasses a broad historical span of roughly a thousand years, primarily focusing on the artistic endeavours of Western Europe, especially in the regions between the Seine and Rhine rivers, from the 11th century up to the early 20th century.

This collection is internationally acclaimed for its diversity and breadth, boasting exceptional sub-collections such as Maasland (Mosan) art, exquisite altarpieces, rich tapestries, a comprehensive array of Delft pottery, intricate lace, and seminal works of Art Nouveau. The scope further extends to include a variety of sculptures and furniture, carriages and sleighs, a range of metal and precious metal works, precision instruments and clockmaking, glassware including stained glass windows, ceramics, textiles, photography, graphic arts, decorative and industrial arts from the 20th century, and ethnologically significant objects.

The Decorative Arts and Crafts centre is underpinned by the unique complementarity of its collection and documentation, requiring a wide array of research techniques and methods that delve into the materiality of these objects, their societal context, and the dynamics

of intercultural exchanges and appropriation. This research is not just about understanding the objects themselves but also about grasping the broader cultural and historical narratives they represent.

In addition to exploring the overlapping areas between decorative and fine arts, such as in our ethnographic collections, we establish synergies with the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium. This collaboration extends our research into broader arts sciences and art history domains. Joint research with the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage further enhances our expertise in the study of materials.

Our structural collaboration through the FED-tWIN programme with the University of Antwerp and University Gent has been instrumental in advancing our research objectives. Additionally, partnerships with art and design schools, including La Cambre in Brussels, bring fresh perspectives to our understanding of creativity and design, enriching our approach to the study of decorative arts and crafts.

— **Keywords:** materiality, artisan, artists and collectors, iconography, arts movements and styles, sacred art, art nouveau, art deco, art mosan, fashion.

## — ORGANOLGY AND MUSIC CULTURES —

The Organology and Music Cultures Centre of Expertise is dedicated to the study and appreciation of music and musical instruments from diverse cultures and historical periods. This centre stands out for its extensive music-related collections, considered among the most important globally. The collections are currently dispersed across four key Belgian federal scientific institutions: the RMAH and their Music Instruments Museum MIM, the Royal Museum for Central Africa, the Royal Library, and the State Archives.

The RMAH and the RMCA boast an impressive array of musical instruments and a rich collection of audiovisual material. These collections have been shaped by the pioneering work of notable scientists such as Victor-Charles Mahillon, Jozef Maes, Armand Hutereau, Olga Boone, and Jacques Laurenty. The centre's mission extends beyond traditional views of music, encompassing a broad spectrum of research that includes the study of musical instruments, cultures, archival materials, scores, iconographic and archaeological documents, and various other music-related artifacts.

The research conducted at the Organology and Music Cultures Centre of Expertise is committed to an in-depth exploration of musical cultures. This includes a detailed examination of musical repertoires, as well as the functional and practical use of musical instruments in their historical contexts. The scope of study extends to a wide array of resources: it encompasses not only musical instruments and audio-visual sources, but also handwritten and printed scores, iconographic and archaeological findings, everyday objects, technical instruments, books, periodicals, various media, and comprehensive databases housed in the Royal Library and the State Archives.

This expansive approach allows for a more holistic understanding of music, transcending the conventional view of music merely as an art form or a collection of techniques and sounds. By integrating these diverse sources of information, the centre delves into the deeper significance of music in society, exploring its role in cultural identity, societal practices, and historical development. The Organology and Music Cultures Centre of Expertise provides invaluable insights into the societal and cultural dimensions of music, fostering a richer and more engaged understanding of the diverse ways in which music influences and is influenced by the world around us.

The research priorities of this centre emphasise the comprehensive study of musical cultures and their evolving nature.

Key areas of interest include:

- Analysis of characteristics of musical instruments: Studying the physical attributes and acoustic qualities of musical instruments, such as construction methods, sound properties, and decorative aspects. This area of research aims to understand both the technical construction and the aesthetic elements of musical instruments.
- Exploration of Musical Cultures and Repertoires: Investigating the diverse functions and uses of musical instruments within their original and changing geographical and historical contexts. This includes a deep dive into various musical traditions, examining how repertoires and musical instruments have been shaped by these contexts over time and across cultures.
- Provenance and Collection History Research: Delving into the history of the centre's extensive collections and tracing the origins of individual instruments. This provenance research is crucial for understanding the journey and background of each piece within the collection, and helps to shed light on (passed) world views represented by the collections' contents.

In addition to these core research priorities, a significant emphasis is placed on international collaboration, particularly in the development and expansion of networked online databases dedicated to musical instrument research. These digital platforms are invaluable for sharing knowledge, facilitating global research collaboration, and enhancing the accessibility of research findings.

Moreover, the centre benefits from a structured collaboration with academic institutions, notably through the FED-tWIN programme with UCLouvain. This partnership fosters a rich exchange of knowledge and expertise, bridging academic research with the practical and historical study of musical instruments and cultures.

— **Keywords:** organology, musical instruments, intangible musical heritage, music performances



— **HERITAGE STUDIES: COLLECTION MANAGEMENT & MATERIALS SCIENCE** —

The Heritage Studies Centre of Expertise at the RMAH plays a crucial role in the stewardship of the museums' collections, archives, and libraries. This centre focuses on a wide array of tasks, including the management and preservation of these valuable assets. Its responsibilities encompass not only the routine care but also the strategic enhancement of these resources through modern practices and technologies.

**Key Activities and Focus Areas:**

- **Digitisation and Technological Advancement:** The primary focus is on the optimisation and development of digitisation processes and software. This involves improving data storage and creating innovative access solutions, making collections more accessible and preserving them for future generations.
- **Conservation and Materials Science:** The centre is dedicated to support the other Centres of Expertise in the meticulous analysis, monitoring, and study of the collections' material aspects. This includes assessing their preservation needs and physical storage requirements to ensure optimal conservation. The aim is to maintain the integrity of these items while making them available for research and public viewing.
- **Service and Research Contribution:** Beyond serving as a high-quality resource centre for both internal and external researchers, the Heritage Studies Centre of Expertise is committed to advancing research methodologies in data management and preservation. This includes refining techniques for data capturing, storage, retrieval, linking, and overall management, as well as deepening our understanding of material studies related to heritage items.

- **Collaborative Efforts:** The centre benefits significantly from a structured collaboration with academic institutions, particularly through the FED-tWIN programme with the University of Antwerp. This partnership enhances the centre's research capabilities and promotes the exchange of knowledge and expertise in heritage studies.

The Heritage Studies Centre of Expertise is integral to the RMAH's mission, ensuring that our collections are not only preserved and managed with the utmost care, but also studied and understood in ways that contribute to the broader field of heritage and conservation science. The output of this Centre is primordial in the research on the inseparable link between the physical properties of artifacts and their anchoring in the socio-historical environment. As such, this Centre of Expertise will be the first candidate to join forces and share resources with similar research centres at the RMCA, RBINS, RMFAB and, with respect to conservation and presentation, RICH. The same goes with respect to archival studies for the State Archives, and with respect to the library management, for the Royal Library.

— **Keywords:** collection and data management, digitalisation, preservation, conservation, restauration





The Centres of Expertise at RMAH are more than just individual research units; they are integral to our mission of understanding and presenting art and history. By combining specialised knowledge with collaborative efforts, these centres ensure that the RMAH remain at the forefront of cultural and scientific discovery, significantly contributing to the global academic landscape.

## — GOLD STANDARD OPEN ACCESS & OPEN DATA —

Achieve Full Transition to Gold Standard Open Access and Open Data by 2030

RMAH are paving the way to a more open, collaborative, and accessible future in scientific research and cultural dissemination. The RMAH are committed to fully transitioning to the Gold Standard for Open Access and Open Data by 2030.

### Specific Objectives for Gold Standard Open Access & Open Data

#### 1. Open Access (OA) Policy for Historical Publications

- **Objective:** Develop a comprehensive Open Access policy for all publications issued by the RMAH since its inception in 1835.
- **Action Plan:** Digitise and make available these publications on the RMAH website and Orfeo, the federal Open Access repository. This initiative will not only preserve our historical scholarly contributions but also make them widely accessible to the public and research community.

#### 2. Implementation of Open Access Principles in Research

- **Objective:** Fully integrate the principles of Open Access into the scientific research and output of RMAH researchers.
- **Action Plan:** Establish guidelines and training programmes for researchers to ensure all new research adheres to Open Access standards, thereby fostering a culture of open and accessible scientific inquiry.

#### 3. Financial Provisions for Open Access and Data

- **Objective:** Ensure sustainable financial support for Open Access and Data initiatives in all new research projects.
- **Action Plan:** Mandate the inclusion of specific budgetary allocations for Open Access and Data in all new project proposals. This financial planning is essential to facilitate the seamless integration of Open Access and Data principles in our research activities.

## EMPOWERING RESEARCH THROUGH RESOURCES AND TRAINING

The Royal Museums of Art and History are committed to enhancing their research capabilities through strategic resource allocation, innovative collection enhancement, and robust capacity building.

### Resource Allocation and Management

- **Innovative Enhancement of Collections:** The RMAH should innovate their collections through strategic acquisitions, new extensions, and significant investments in digitisation. This includes openness to expand the collections with artifacts that represent the digital age and contemporary (applied) arts, exemplifying public entrepreneurship.
- **Digital Transformation:** A key focus is on fully embracing digital capabilities, particularly investing in digital research infrastructure like rapid 3D digitisation processes. This is essential for modernising our approach to preserving and presenting collections.
- **Funding Strategies:** Diverse funding sources, including government grants, sponsorships, and international programs, support our research activities. Efficient fund utilisation is a priority for our research output.
- **Infrastructure Investment:** Investment in state-of-the-art facilities and equipment are crucial for maintaining our leading position in research.

### Enhancing Research Through Collaboration

- **Collaborative Research Approach:** Collaborations, both internal and external, accelerate the acquisition and exchange of knowledge. They are crucial for securing external research funds.
- **Maximising Research Output:** Grouping similar collections and expertise and considering them as one virtual collection enhances research capabilities and output.
- **Interdisciplinary Research:** Cooperation between various disciplines is key to creating stronger, more visible research. Establishing shared research centres of excellence enhances the possibilities for interdisciplinary research.

### Capacity Building and Human Resources

- **Recruitment and Training:** Attracting and retaining skilled professionals and providing them with continuous training and development is a cornerstone of our strategy implementation.
- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** We promote cross-departmental and external collaborations to broaden our research scope and capabilities.

### Communication and Collaboration

- **Targeting Core and Diverse Audiences:** Our communication strategy focuses on engaging students, academics, heritage communities, and educational institutions, highlighting the communicative potential of our research.
- **Stressing Long-Term Impact:** We emphasise the long-term economic and sustainable impact of our investments in digital infrastructure, showcasing these as models of sustainable museum management.
- **Training in Communication Skills for Researchers:** Researchers will be provided with training in communication skills to effectively disseminate their research findings to a wider audience.
- **Fostering a STEAM-Attitude:** Our strategy includes developing scientific communication and marketing with a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) focus. This involves setting operational goals for internal, professional, and external communication. We aim for transparency in our research strategy, a comprehensive research section on our website, regular newsletters, active social media engagement, and strengthened relations with the scientific press.





Through strategic resource management, capacity building, and fostering a collaborative research environment, the RMAH are set to make significant contributions to art and history research. Our approach ensures that our researchers are well-equipped and supported, paving the way for their future achievements.

Bringing our vision to life requires not only creativity and dedication but also a well-structured financial framework. Our commitment to research, preservation, and public engagement is made possible through various funding sources and strategic partnerships which can be found in Appendix A.

— **MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH STRATEGY** —

**Ensuring Effective Implementation and Impact**

As we embark on implementing our research strategy at the Royal Museums of Art and History, a system of monitoring and evaluation is essential to ensure that our goals are being met and that the strategy is effectively driving the desired outcomes. This system will focus on both qualitative and quantitative measures of success.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

Our approach to measuring the success of the research strategy will be grounded in a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These will include:

- **1. Project Outcomes:** The number, scope, and impact of research projects undertaken.
- **2. Publication Metrics:** Quantity and quality of publications, including citations and influence within the academic community.
- **3. Scientific Service:** the amount and impact of services rendered to scholars, other institutions and governments, such as the co-promotership of PhD's, the consultation of digitised artefacts, ...
- **4. Funding Allocation and Utilisation:** Efficiency and effectiveness in the use of allocated funds for research projects.
- **5. Public Engagement:** Measures of public understanding and engagement with the museum's research, exhibitions, and educational initiatives.
- **6. Collection Enhancement:** The growth and diversification of our collections through research-driven acquisitions and discoveries.

**Milestones and Checkpoints**

To ensure the strategy remains on track, we will establish a timeline of milestones and checkpoints. These will provide opportunities to assess progress, identify areas needing adjustment, and celebrate achievements. Key milestones will be set annually, with checkpoints at regular intervals throughout the year.

**Governance Structure for Monitoring**

A dedicated governance structure will oversee the strategy's implementation and monitoring. This will include the Direction Council and Scientific Council, who will be responsible for reviewing progress against KPIs and making strategic decisions.

**Feedback Mechanisms**

Regular feedback from museum staff, visitors, and research partners will be sought and incorporated, ensuring a dynamic and responsive approach.

**Regular Strategy Reviews**

The research strategy will be reviewed every ten years. Besides the yearly assessment of progress against current goals, a thorough revision of the research strategy will consider emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities, allowing RMAH to adapt and evolve its strategy to remain at the cutting edge of research and public engagement in art and history.



A photograph of two women in white lab coats working in a storage room. They are standing next to a blue metal cart with red shelves. The cart has a grey top shelf with a grey bag and some papers. The middle shelf is empty. The bottom shelf has a grey bag and some papers. The cart has the text "GALLO MERO" and "TE 646" written on it. The women are looking at the shelves and handling items. The room has metal shelving units on both sides, filled with various items. The floor is light-colored tile.

# APPENDIX

# APPENDIX A

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The Royal Museums of Art and History operate within a structured financial framework, supported by various funding sources and partnerships. Below we provide the current budgetary sources and outline the new contours of a funding program set to launch in 2024.

Primary Funding Sources include:

**1. BELSPO Funding:** The primary financial backbone for RMAH research activities is the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO). BELSPO supports the RMAH through major programs like FED-tWIN, BRAIN-be, and DIGIT.

- **FED-tWIN (2019-2023):** This program fosters long-term joint research activities between FSIs and Belgian universities. It focuses on collaborative research profiles implemented by post-doctoral researchers, with an annual budget of €125,000 for the first five years, reducing to €75,000 for the next five years.
- **BRAIN-be 2.0 (2018-2023):** This initiative funds research projects that cater to the scientific knowledge needs of Belgian federal departments and support the scientific potential of FSIs.
- **DIGIT-04:** Part of the BELSPO Digitization Program, DIGIT-04 (2019-2024) aims at digitizing the vast heritage patrimony housed in federal museums, libraries, research institutes, and archives.

- **INFRA-FED (2023-2026):** Impulse action call to fostering the development of emerging research infrastructures within federal research institutions, the upgrading and/or the deployment of such emerging infrastructures with an impactful potential on the (inter)national scientific community and/or on society.

**2. Individual Research Grants:** RMAH staff also have the opportunity to apply for limited funding, mainly for travel grants and stay abroad grants, from FWO-Flanders (FWO-Flanders) and FNRS (FNRS).

**3. Other Resources:** Additional funding comes from European Union research programs, various (inter) national research institutes, and foundations.





### — EMERGING BUDGETARY LANDSCAPE —

With the conclusion of the BRAIN-be 2.0 program in 2023 and a gradual decrease in budget contributions to the FED-tWIN research profiles starting from 2025, a new budgetary framework is taking shape for the continuation of federal research.

Starting in 2024, each Federal Scientific Institute (FSI) will receive a lump sum for financing its research projects. Of this funding, 90% is contingent upon positive reviews of proposed projects (with an internal FSI pre-selection aiming for a 30% success rate). The remaining 10% will be allocated competitively, based on project reviews conducted across various FSIs. The first call for these projects is scheduled for spring 2024.

### — SUCCESSOR PROGRAMMES P4S AND S4P —

Launching in 2024, the Policy for Science (P4S) and Science for Policy (S4P) are planned to replace BRAIN-be 2.0 and FED-tWIN. P4S and S4P aim for greater coherence and are tailored to meet the needs of the primary target groups of federal science policy. The objectives are twofold:

- **Strengthening Scientific Potential of FSIs:** Ensuring thematic coherence to facilitate knowledge accumulation while maintaining scientific activities, aligning with programs of federated entities, and positioning at the European level.
- **Enhancing Decision-Making Support:** Continuing cooperation with federal government and Public Federal Services (FPSs) and creating capacity to address their inquiries.

This separation allows for a clearer definition of each project's objectives: either supporting the scientific capacity of FSIs or aiding in political decision-making.

Additionally, the guiding principles for these new programmes include:

- Clear definition of each program's finality.
- Simplification of program structure and management to reduce the administrative burden.
- Commitment to scientific excellence.
- Promotion of gender equality in research.

FSIs are the primary stakeholders of the new P4S Research Program, with one of its goals being to bolster scientific excellence within the FSIs. Scientific evaluations conducted by international experts will ensure that a competitive element based on scientific quality is maintained, supporting the overarching objectives of the Federal Science Policy.



# APPENDIX B

## CURRENT RESEARCH PROGRAMS & PROJECTS OF THE RMAH

### ARCHAEOLOGY AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

#### **MuSEE.doc - Materia collecta, viva memoria (FED- $\tau$ WIN)**

From heritage inventory to cultural appropriation: MUSeographic and Scientific Exploitation and Enhancement of the Gallo-Roman collections of the RMAH and of the FSIs analytical and DOCUMENTARY resources

- 2019 –
- Budget: total 937,500 € ; RMAH 324,375 €
- Promoters: Evers Cécile (RMAH) / Verslype Laurent (UCL)

#### **B- $\tau$ WIN AMERICAS - Between Americas: America's Intermediate Area in the Pre-Columbian Era (FED- $\tau$ WIN)**

- 2019 –
- Budget: total 937,500 € ; RMAH 324,375 €
- Promoters: Lemaitre Serge (RMAH) / Eeckhout Peter (ULB)

#### **OLDEgypt - Objects of Life and Death: study and recontextualisation of the Egyptian collection of the RMAH through excavations, philology, and historiographical research (FED- $\tau$ WIN)**

- 2024 –
- Budget: total 937,500 € ; RMAH 324,375 €
- Promoters: Luc Delvaux (MRAH) / Yann Tristant (KULeuven)

#### **ERNEsT - Egypt and its Relationships with the Near East in Medieval Times (FED- $\tau$ WIN)**

Understanding the evolution of material culture and societies through the study and valorisation of the ceramic collection from Fustat (Cairo, Egypt) at the RMAH.

- 2022 –
- Budget: total 937,500 € ; RMAH 324,375 €
- Promoters: Overlaet Bruno (RMAH) / Vokaer Agnès (ULB)M

#### **Mero-Jewel - Production, materials and exchange of Merovingian jewellery (5th - 8th century) (BRAIN-be)**

Keywords: Merovingian archaeology, Material Culture, Archaeometry, Gold and silver smithery, Conservation of collections, Metalwork (Archaeology)

- 01/02/2023 - 01/05/2027
- Budget: 340.431 €
- Lead promoter: Claes Britt (RMAH)
- Promoters: Van Wersch Line (ULiège), Wouters Helena (RICH)



## — EXCAVATIONS —

**EL KAB (Egypt)**

For more than 85 years, researchers of the Royal Museums of Art and History have been conducting archaeological and epigraphical research at El Kab, a site located on the east bank of the Nile, some 80 km south of Luxor.

- 1937 –
- Field director 2022 excavations: Wouter Claes (RMAH)
- Partners: UGent – Departement of geography; American University in Cairo – Department of Sociology, Egyptology and Anthropology; Universität zu Köln – Institut für Prähistorische Archäologie
- Financial partners: Gerda Henkel Stiftung (Research project A57/F/18; 2019–2023)
- National Geographic Society (Research project GEFNE173-16) and Huis van Horus

**Alba Fucens (Italy)**

- 2007 – 2024
- Director: Cécile Evers (RMAH)
- Partners: ULB
- Financial partners: FNRS

**Mleiha (Sharjah, UAE)**

- 2009 –
- Director: Bruno Overlaet (RMAH)
- Partners: KULeuven, ULB, UGent, Sharjah Archaeology Authority
- Financial partners: Sharjah Archaeology Authority, FWO, FNRS

**Matignolle – Treignes (Belgium)**

- 2017 –
- Director: Pierre Cattelain (ULB)
- RMAH contributor: Nicolas Cauwe

**Petra (Jordan)**

- 2014 –
- Director: Laurent Tholbecq (ULB)
- RMAH contributor: Cécile Evers

## — EXCAVATIONS AND RELATED RESEARCH PROJECTS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF CONVENTIONS OR TENDERS BY REGIONAL BELGIAN GOVERNMENTS —

**Brussels Capital Region (Belgium), preventive archaeology**

A scientific team of the Royal Museums of Art and History contributes, in association with Urban.Brussels, to the implementation of the archaeological policy in the Brussels Region. In this context, a field team consisting of two archaeologists and one technician execute preventive excavations and excavations part of restoration projects. The RMAH research team studies the archaeological discoveries in collaboration with various academic and other institutions, such as the Free University of Brussels for the paleoenvironmental sciences, the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences for the anthropological and zoo-archaeological analysis and the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage for dendrochronological analyses.

- 2009 –
- Director : Julie Timmermans, in collaboration with Valérie Ghesquière
- Partners: VUB, ULB, RICH
- Annual Budget : ca. € 170.000

**Brussels Capital Region (Belgium), ‘Abbey’ project (Forest, La Cambre, Cloître Rouge)**

A scientific team at The Royal Museums of Art and History contributes, in association with Urban.Brussels, to the archaeological follow-up of restoration works at the Abbeys of Forest, Rouge-Cloître and La Cambre. In this context, a field team consisting of two archaeologists executes preventive excavations and excavations part of restoration projects in collaboration with the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage for the dendrochronological analyses.

- 2018 –
- Director ‘Building Archaeology’: Patrice Gautier, in collaboration with Louise Hardenne
- Partners: RICH
- Annual Budget : ca. € 130.000



## DECORATIVE ARTS AND CRAFTS

### **PROMATECH - Production, Materials and Techniques of Copper Alloy Alms Basins in Northern Europe (15th - 17th centuries)(BRAIN-be)**

- Keywords: Basin, Material culture, Chemical characterization, Technological history, Copper alloys
- 15/12/2020 – 15/03/2023 (extended to 15/11/2023)
- Budget: 314.620€
- Coordinator: Balace Sophie (RMAH)
- Promoters: Strivay David (ULiège)

### **HOME-AGE - Historical Materials and Techniques of the South Netherlandish Home in the MRAH-KMKG collections (FED-tWIN)**

- 2020 –
- Budget: total 937,500 € ; RMAH 324,375 €
- Promoters: Van Binnebeke Emile (RMAH) / Van der Snickt Geert (UA)

### **FATEX - The Fashion and Textile collection at the Royal Museum of Art and History, Brussels (FED-tWIN)**

- 2024 – (tbc)
- Budget: total 937,500 € ; RMAH 324,375 €
- Promoters: Adriaenssens Werner (RMAH) / Maude Bass-Krueger (UGent)

### **Photo Collection RMAH - The Photography Collection at the Royal Museum of Art and History, Brussels (FED-tWIN)**

- 2020 –
- Budget: total 937,500 € ; RMAH 324,375 €
- Promoters: Adriaenssens Werner (RMAH) / Jacobs Steven (UGent)

### **BELCAIRE - Belgian Carriage Interior Research Project. (FED-tWIN)**

The scientific analyses of historical materials and techniques and historical interiors of Hippomobile heritage in de collection of RMAH

- 2022 –
- Budget: total 937,500 € ; RMAH 324,375 €
- Promoters: Van Binnebeke Emile (RMAH) / Van der Snickt Geert (UA)

## ORGANOLOGY AND MUSIC CULTURES

### **MIMO – Musical Instruments Museums Online**

MIMO began life as a consortium of some of Europe's most important musical instruments museums, which came together for a European Commission funded project that aimed to create a single online access point to their collections. After the end of the EU funding, the museums continued their cooperation. Today, the original MIMO group has grown into a consortium of 33 partners, with new collections from Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, China, Burkina Faso and Congo-Brazzaville, among others. Content is available in English, French, German, Dutch, Italian, Swedish, Catalan, Chinese and Polish. MIMO has grown from a European to a global database in 2017, with data from nearly 65,000 instruments. The construction of an additional interface with a faceted search ([www.mimo-international.com](http://www.mimo-international.com)) made MIMO more user-friendly for the general public. RMAH are, through MIM, contact point for Thesaurus-matters of the database.

- 2009 –
- Founding partners: University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom (initiator and project management); Royal Museums of Art and history (MIM), Brussels, Belgium; Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium; Cité de la Musique / Philharmonie, Paris, France; Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, Italy; Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Germany; Horniman Museum, London, United Kingdom; Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin, Germany; Scenkonstmuseet, Swedish Museum of Performing Arts, Stockholm, Sweden; University of Leipzig, Museum für Musikinstrumente, Germany.
- Promoters of the RMAH: Saskia Willaert (RMAH)

### **MaHiOn - A Material History of Otherness: Musical Instrument Museums as source and resource in contemporary debate (FED-tWIN)**

- 2021 –
- Budget: total 937,500 € ; RMAH 324,375 €
- Promoters: Willaert Saskia (RMAH) / Van Wymeersch Brigitte (UCLouvain)

### **MUSIM - The Musical Instruments Museum of the Brussels Royal Conservatory. History and Network (1877-1992) (FED-tWIN)**

- 2023 –
- Budget: total 937,500 € ; RMAH 324,375 €
- Promoters: Claire Chantrenne (RMAH), Saskia Willaert (RMAH, as of 2023), Anne-Emmanuelle Ceulemans (UCLouvain)



### **Tradition and modernity in 18th century Flemish harpsichords**

European joint catalogue of 18th century Flemish harpsichords in public collections

- 2022 – 2026
- Budget: total 129,500 € ; RMAH 60,000 € (King Baudouin Foundation – Fund Jean-Jacques Comhaire)
- Lead promoter: Pascale Vandervellen (RMAH)
- Partners: RMAH (MIM), Museum Vleeshuis (Antwerp), HOGENT (Ghent), Musée de la Musique (Paris), RICH, Versteeg Geigenbau, Institut national du Patrimoine de France (INP), Philharmonie de Paris, UA (Antwerp), Edinburgh University (Musical Instrument Collection), Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Musikinstrumenten-Museum des Staatlichen Instituts für Musikforschung Berlin, Kunstmuseum Den Haag, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe (Hamburg), Germanisches Nationalmuseum (Nuremberg)

### **Be-MUSIC - A Plurivocal Acces to Belgian Musical Heritage (BRAIN-be)**

Keywords: Collection management, (Ethno)musicology and organology, Open access and Linked open data, Sound Archives, IPR, Crowdsourcing

- 01/02/2023 - 01/05/2027
- Budget: 558,800€
- Lead promoter: Jadinon Remy (RMCA)
- Promoter: Willaert Saskia (RMAH)

## HERITAGE STUDIES: COLLECTION CARE AND MATERIALS SCIENCE

### **RMARCH The Royal Museums of Art and History**

**(RMAH):** the History of its Buildings and its Collections based on the Museum's ARCHives (FED-τWIN)

- 2019 –
- Budget: total 937,500 € ; RMAH 324,375 €
- Promoters: Claes Wouter (RMAH) / Pottgiesser Uta (UA)

### **CUNE-IIIF-ORM - Towards an Internationally Interoperable Corpus of Cuneiform Tablets (BRAIN-be)**

– Keywords: Ancient History, Cuneiform Tablets, Digital Humanities and Digital Cultural Heritage, Internat. Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF), Linked Open Data, Machine Learning

- 01/09/2021-01/12/2025
- Budget: 957,037€
- Coordinator: Angenon Els (RMAH)
- Promoters: De Graef Katrien (UGent), Hameeuw Hendrik (KULeuven)

### **Enigma - Endorsing Safeguarding, Protection and Provenance Management Of Cultural Heritage (Eu-Horizon 2022)**

ENIGMA shall achieve excellence in the protection of CGs and artefacts from man-made threats by contributing to identification, traceability, and provenance research of CGs as well as by safeguarding and monitoring of endangered heritage sites. ENIGMA objectives are designed to help the involved stakeholders better respond to this complex, and multi-dimensional problem, and leverage active collaboration by fostering and enabling interlinking of databases, and evidence-based deployment of preventative measures.

- 2023 - 2025
- Budget total 3,993,500 € ; RMAH 324,375 €
- RMAH Contributions: Conceptualization and System Architecture; Tasks lead: develop training materials; dissemination, communication, exploitation + training
- Executors: Aristotelio Panepistimio Thessalonikis, Greece, Coordinator; Geospatial Information Technologies P.c., Greece; Eratosthenes Centre Of Excellence, Cyprus; Cellock Ltd, Cyprus; Turun Yliopisto, Finland Partner; RMAH, Belgium; Kentro Meleton Asfaleias, Greece; Hellenic Police, Greece; Heritage Malta, Malta; Noesis Technologies Ite, Greece; Miralab Sarl, Switzerland; Anyolution Sl, Spain

### **DIGIT-04**

The BELSPO DIGIT-04 programme (2019-2024) aims to support the digitization of the huge Belgium heritage patrimony, which resides in the federal museums, libraries, research institutes and archives. DIGIT-04 stimulates maximum synergies between the 10 different Federal Scientific Institutions and the Royal Belgian Film Archives (CINEMATEK). This is done by, amongst other things, streamlining common digitizing activities within these institutions and the sharing of knowledge, equipment, infrastructures and resources. The DIGIT programme recognizes the following priorities: digitization, long term preservation, access and (re)use of the collections.

- 2019 - 2024
- Budget: 37,63 million euro for all 10 FSI + Cinematek; ca. 380.000€ annually for RMAH

### **MetaBelgica - A shared entity management infrastructure between Federal Scientific Institutions (Impuls action INFRA-FED)**

- Period: 2023-2026
- Budget: 728,560 € (overall)
- Executors: Royal Library of Belgium (KBR), Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (RMFAB), Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (RICH), Royal Museums for Art and History (RMAH)



# COLOPHON

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**What type of research should  
the Royal Museums of Art and History  
undertake?**

For the first time in their history, these museums, which house the antiquity, ethnography, decorative arts and crafts, and musical instruments collections of the Belgian federal state, have established their long-term research values, principles, and priorities.