

Work Session: Early Modern Botanical Woodblocks at the Museum Plantin-Moretus



Deep in the storage of the Museum Plantin-Moretus lie approximately 4,000 woodblocks with images of plants. Made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these printing materials illustrate the important botanical treatises compiled by Renaissance botanists Rembert Dodoens, Carolus Clusius, and Matthias Lobelius. On 17th and 18th of May, there will be two rare opportunities to examine and engage in person with a selection of more than one hundred of these botanical woodblocks at the museum, organized and hosted by Utrecht University Research Master student Jessie Wei-Hsuan Chen. Chen is a former intern and current visiting researcher at the museum. She is investigating the printing history and technical production of the woodblocks for her Research Master's thesis "The Blocks, The Tools, and The Printed Plants: The Making and Using of Botanical Woodcuts at the *Officina Plantiniana*," supervised by prof. dr. Sven Dupré. The work sessions aim to bring people with different areas of expertise and background (historians of art, science, and/or book, botanists, conservators, wood specialists, artists with an interest in relief printing, et cetera) to study the woodblocks as a collective to understand them from various perspectives. The observations and data gathered during the work sessions will be used in Chen's thesis project. There will also be a chance to tour the museum and print a woodcut (a modern replica) on the day of the event.

Please note that the woodblocks are toxic due to woodworm treatments in the mid 20th century. Proper protection gear will be provided to safely handle and study the blocks, but discomfort might occur.

Dates: 17th or 18th of May

Location: Museum Plantin-Moretus, Vrijdagmarkt 22, 2000 Antwerp

11.00-12.00 Optional tour of the museum

12.45-13.00 Arrival, coffee, tea

13.00-13.30 Introduction

13.30-15.30 Examination of the woodblocks

15.30-16.30 Optional workshop to print with a modern replica of botanical woodblock

Participation is limited to 10 people in total. To register, please choose between a session on the 17th or 18th and email JessieWei-Hsuan.Chen@stad.antwerpen.be (Jessie Wei-Hsuan Chen) before the 10th of May.