Press Release, 27 May 2016

Clara Peeters, *Still Life,* 1611, oil on panel, 52 x 73 cm,
Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, © Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

Sharing a table with an exceptional woman artist from the seventeenth century

Clara Peeters was one of the few female artists in the first quarter of the seventeenth century and a pioneer in the development of still life as a genre. Beginning on 18 June, the Rockox House, in collaboration with the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp (KMSKA), is presenting the paintings of this talented and confident artist in *Clara Peeters. Dinner is served!* Having been unveiled in Antwerp, the exhibition will travel to the Prado in Madrid.

Clara Peeters (1594 – after 1657) was an outsider in the Antwerp painting scene of the first quarter of the seventeenth century.
She exclusively painted still lifes: opulent banquets, delicious meals, floral pieces and still lifes with fish, cheese or poultry, luxuriously displayed on a table along with expensive crockery, ornate goblets and gold coins. Her work is notable for the elegance with which she presents these objects against a dark background and the attention she pays to the different textures. Peeters sought above all to capture reality, prompting her, for instance, to paint a half-eaten biscuit, suggesting that someone was eating at the table just a moment ago. She was one of the first artists to paint still lifes with fish, a theme that would later become very popular. In short, she created novelties for Antwerp's flourishing art market.

It was not only her fascination for reality that prompted her to paint the tiny reflection of her own face on the gleaming surface of the jugs and jars in her still lifes: these miniature self-portraits also testify to her confidence as a woman painter in a profession dominated by men.

We know very little about her life. If she was the same Clara Peeters who was baptised in May 1594 at the Church of St Walburga, she must have been a prodigy, as her first painting was signed as early as 1607. She appears to have been most active in the years 1611–12, and her last dated painting was done in 1621. Forty paintings by her have currently been identified.

Clara Peeters. Dinner is Served! does more than simply showcase the achievements of this largely unknown yet exceptional artist. The exhibition also sets out to answer the questions evoked by the sometimes enigmatic work of Clara Peeters. What is the deeper meaning of these still lifes? What did Chinese porcelain mean to a middle-class household in 1610? Why did Peeters include an artichoke with other delicacies and exquisite objects? By combining the paintings with seventeenth-century objects from a wealthy patrician home, meanwhile, the exhibition brings us closer to the domestic world of Antwerp at that time.

Twelve works by Clara Peeters are on show, including loans from the Prado and the Fundación Juan March in Madrid, the Mauritshuis in The Hague, Museum Mayer van den Bergh in Antwerp and private collections in Belgium and abroad.

Clara Peeters. Dinner is Served! is the sixth focus exhibition at *The Golden Cabinet*. It has been jointly organised by the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp (KMSKA) and the Rockox House in Antwerp and the Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid, where the exhibition will also be shown from October 2016.
The next focus exhibition at the Rockox House will be a selection of sixteenth and seventeenth-century landscapes from the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden (March–2 July 2017).

Practical information

Clara Peeters. Dinner is Served!
18 June–2 October 2016

Rockox House Museum, Keizerstraat 12, 2000 Antwerp
Tel. + 32 3 201 92 50 – fax + 32 3 201 92 51
www.rockoxhuis.be and www.kmska.be
Open: Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; closed Monday

Entry: €8 / €6 / €0.

Tours: for groups of up to 20 people. Tours cost €75 (€50 for student groups) and last 90 minutes. Info and bookings: tel. + 32 (0)3 224 95 61 / fax + 32 (0)3 248 08 10 / publiekswerking@kmska.be

Catalogue and visitor guide: A catalogue (in Dutch) is available, and there is also a free visitor guide (NL/EN). The visitor guide is available for download from 18 June www.kmska.be.

DOWNLOAD PRESS PACK AND HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES:
pers.kmska.be
Username: pers; Password: kmska
or www.rockoxhuis.be
Username: pers; Password: rockox

KMSKA
Véronique Van Passel

Veronique.VanPassel@kmska.be
Tel. + 32 (0)3 224 95 68
M. + 32 (0) 485 49 31 27

ROCKOX HOUSE MUSEUM
Hildegard Van de Velde

Hildegard.vandevelde@kbc.be
Tel. + 32 (0)3 201 92 71
M. + 32 (0) 499 96 53 34