PRESS RELEASE, March 23rd 2017

Joachim Patinir, *Landscape with the Flight into Egypt*, (1516-1517),
KMSKA, Photograph Lukasart in Flanders vzw, Hugo Maertens

THE SKY IS THE LIMIT
THE LANDSCAPE IN THE LOW COUNTRIES

***The Golden Cabinet* continues at the Rockox House Museum until July 2nd. The museum will then close while renovation and extension work is carried out. The last 'focus exhibition' in *The Golden Cabinet* series, *The Sky is the Limit. The landscape in the Low Countries,* opens on Saturday (March 25th). It presents the best sixteenth and seventeenth-century landscapes from the collections of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp (KMSKA) and the Rockox House Museum. By way of exception, the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden is lending twenty works.**

After last year's successful still life exhibition centring on the work of artist Clara Peeters, this spring *The Golden Cabinet* at the Rockox House Museum turns its attention to sixteenth and seventeenth-century landscapes. *The Sky is the Limit* brings together *chefs-d'oeuvre* from that genre by artists like **Joachim Patinir, Pieter Bruegel I, Joos de Momper II, Jan Brueghel I, Paul Bril, Roelant Savery** and **Salomon van Ruysdael.** It features a total of some forty paintings and drawings from the two Antwerp collections, and over twenty works from Dresden.
David Claerbout's intriguing video *Travel* will be screened as a contemporary counterpoint.

The Sky is the Limit shows how landscapes took the art market by storm in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Initially, when the genre came into being in the sixteenth century, landscapes were confined to the background of paintings dealing with biblical or mythological subjects. Joachim Patinir (1475/80 – 1515/24) is regarded as the father of the genre. Hanging in the exhibition is the impressive *Landscape with the Flight into Egypt* (see illustration): a postcard avant la lettre (1516/17). Albrecht Dürer described Patinir as "der gut landschaft maler". It is the first mention of the word 'landscape' in German. The Holy Family is fleeing in an imaginary landscape, which combines craggy

rocks from the Maasland with picturesque Flemish farmhouses and a misty Italian coastline. Typical of these early panorama landscapes produced between 1540 and 1550 are the bird's eye view and the use of coulisses in successive shades of brown, green and blue to create depth.

The exhibition also has the good fortune to feature *Landscape with Pilgrims* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (ca. 1525-1569). As this pen drawing on paper is very fragile it can only be shown on rare occasions. Its condition may be vulnerable but it is one of Bruegel's most important landscape drawings. Pieter Bruegel I was unquestionably the most complete landscape painter of his time. He brought innovation to a tradition that had remained pretty well unchanged since Patinir. He drew and painted nature in a more natural way. With his exceptional eye for detail, he brought together in his works elements from nature such as rocks, woods and water to create an organic scene. Bruegel spent the years from 5552 to 1554 in Italy, but it was the Alps in particular which stayed with him all his life. Some thirty drawings of landscapes have survived from Bruegel's artistic pilgrimage. *Landscape with Pilgrims* was a design for a print that was published by the Antwerp publisher Hiëronymus Cock around 1555. In contrast to the more expensive paintings, prints found a market among a wider public and that helped promote the genre. Town dwellers must surely have been drawn to the beautiful mountain views they had never seen for themselves.

Bruegel exerted an influence on many artists. Hans Bol (1534 –1593) represents a new generation who broke with the tradition of mountain landscapes and painted mainly townscapes. A pocket-sized gem by this artist is on show in the exhibition: *Panoramic View of Antwerp and its Port.* Though small in size (6 x 25 cm), the towers of St Michael's Abbey and the cathedral are painted with great precision.

Joos de Momper II (1564 -1635) combined his admiration for Pieter Bruegel I's landscapes with his own observation of the Alpine mountain range. The monumental mountain landscapes he produced after 1600 make him a transitional figure. He used the atmospheric perspective to give his works a sense of depth. On the right of his scenes he tended to use mainly warm reddish-brown tones and on the left cooler colours like green and blue.

The exhibition contains no fewer than five paintings by Jan Brueghel I (1568 -1625) on loan from Dresden. Jan Brueghel I left for Italy in 1589 where he and fellow countryman Paul Bril (1553/54-1626) painted mainly true-to-life woodland views. After returning home to Antwerp in 1596, Jan Brueghel concentrated more on panoramic views with an uninterrupted horizon. *The Sky is the Limit*, literally! Between 1603 and 1611 Jan Brueghel painted landscapes with windmills which do seem to stretch into infinity. These landscapes with their vast plains were a new element in landscape painting.
After the death of his father, Jan Brueghel II went on producing these very popular types of landscape into the second half of the seventeenth century.

Gallery paintings depicting large rooms in which paintings and other precious items are displayed shed light on collecting in the first half of the seventeenth century and testify to the success of townscapes, mountains, panoramas, hell scenes and seascapes. *The Golden Cabinet* includes *An Art Gallery* by Frans Francken (ca 1542-1616). The paintings presented in it are landscapes or have a landscape in the background. On the table we recognize a landscape with a mill by Jan Brueghel I. Hanging on the wall are landscapes which can be attributed to Paul Bril (top left and bottom right), Joos de

Momper (top right), Gijsbrecht Lytens (bottom left) and Pieter Schoubroeck (the oval work at the top).

In the exhibition the landscapes by old masters are juxtaposed with the video *Travel* (1996-2013) by David Claerbout (1969). The film is one long camera movement that takes us through a park, a dark European wood and the Amazon forest. The video draws on a relaxing and therapeutic sound composition by Eric Breton. The images were not filmed; rather they are advanced computer images which reflect the quest for a place that is universal. That place could be anywhere.

The Sky is the Limit. The landscape in the Low Countries has been mounted by the KMSKA and Rockox House Museum with the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister en Kupferstich-Kabinett, where a slightly different version of this exhibition was shown last autumn.

The exhibition concludes the series of 'focus exhibitions' at Rockox House.
The Golden Cabinet will close on a festive note on July 1st and 2nd. A whole series of fun and informative activities is planned for that weekend. Renovation work will then begin at Rockox House and at the same time the building will be extended by incorporating the adjoining Frans Snijders House. The new-look Snijders & Rockox House will open in February 2018.

Practical information

THE SKY IS THE LIMIT. THE LANDSCAPE IN THE LOW COUNTRIES
from March 25th to July 2nd 2017

Rockox House Museum, Keizerstraat 12, 2000 Antwerp
T + 32 3 201 92 50 - F + 32 3 201 92 51
www.rockoxhuis.be and www.kmska.be
Open: Tuesdays to Sundays, 10 - 17.00 hrs; closed on Mondays

Prices: €8 / 6 / 0

Guided tours: for groups of maximum 20 people. A guided tour costs 75 euros (50 euros for school groups) and lasts 1 ½ hours. Information and reservations: T + 32 (0)3 224 95 61 / F + 32 (0)3 248 08 10 / publiekswerking@kmska.be

Visitors' guide: a free visitors' guide in Dutch/English will be available to download at www.kmska.be from March 25th

DOWNLOAD PRESS PACK AND HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES
pers.kmska.be / User name: pers / Password: kmska
or www.rockoxhuis.be / User name: pers / Password: rockox

MORE INFORMATION

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

www.rockoxhuis.be and www.hetguldencabinet.be