

**07.05 – 31.08.2019**

## **Bruegel Panorama - Brussels ca. 1560**

The medieval tower of the Halle Gate presents two events in this Bruegel Year. The exhibition "*Back to Bruegel. Experience the 16<sup>th</sup> century*" (see separate presentation) will open in the fall, but from the 7<sup>th</sup> of May visitors can already discover the "*Bruegel Panorama*".

The "*Bruegel Panorama*" is a **virtual reality experience** on the rampart walk of the only preserved city gate of Brussels. The rampart walk which offers already a beautiful view on the contemporary city is now equipped with high-tech binoculars offering a breathtaking **16<sup>th</sup> century panorama of the city** and its surroundings. Brussels was then still a typical medieval city with its river Senne, narrow streets and many churches, but also the *Mont des Potences* (Gallows Hill) and an impressive wall. The meticulously created virtual panorama is based on historical maps, cadastral plans, old engravings and drawings.

The combination of modern technology in a **unique historic location** offers not only a clear view of how Brussels looked in Bruegel's time, but also a better understanding of the contemporary city. An experience not to be missed!

### **A bit of history**

Pieter Bruegel moved to Brussels in 1563, married in the Chapel Church and settled with his wife in the fortified city. Around that period Brussels had around 50,000 inhabitants. How would he have seen the city?

We know the extent of Brussels' urbanisation thanks to the hand-drawn map by Jacob van Deventer, produced just a few years before Bruegel came on the scene. It is a pentagonal plan, delimited by the ramparts of the second city wall from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, a plan that corresponds to the current location of the inner ring. The ramparts were punctuated with as many as 70 towers. They were protected in the higher parts of the city by dry canals, and by flooded canals in the lower parts. Initially there were seven gates at the start of the main paved roadways. An eighth gate, the Porte de Rivage, was opened on the north side to allow the Willebroek canal, which came into operation in 1561, to enter the city.

The main axis through the city was the *Steenwech*, a paved street dating from medieval times, which connected the Porte de Flandre and the Porte de Namur from west to east. To the south, the Rue Haute formed the "backbone" of the district that stretched from the Hallepoort to the Steenpoort (gate of the first city wall, near Boulevard de l'Empéreur). Outside the city, groups of dwellings developed along the paved roads. Some of the suburbs (Saint-Gilles, Ixelles, Saint-Josse, and Molenbeek) bordered the city walls, others were clearly separated from them by sparsely occupied areas.

In the silhouette of the city, prominent landmarks could be made out: the tower of the Town Hall and that of St. Nicholas' Church, the Church of Notre-Dame de la Chapelle, the two towers of the Court of Nassau, the outline of the Aula Magna in the Coudenberg Palace, St. Géry's Church, the collegiate church of St. Gudula, etc.

The complete image of Brussels - with its monuments, its city walls, its topography - attracted many visitors in the 16<sup>th</sup>-century. Witnesses to this are the enthusiastic descriptions of Juan Calvete de Estralla (1549), for whom the city and the palaces that dominate it were '*great and beautiful*'. Or that of Albrecht Dürer (1520), who enjoyed '*the most beautiful view imaginable*' looking out from the Court of Nassau, writing: '*I don't think there is anything like it in all of Germany.*'

### **Practical information**

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Halle Gate

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1000 Brussels

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<http://www.kmkg-mrah.be/halle-gate>

### **Opening hours**

Tue-Fri: 9:30 am – 5:00 pm

Sat-Sun: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

Closed on Monday

Last admission: 45 minutes before closing time

### **Rates**

9€ - 7€ - 5€ - 2€

The ticket also gives access to the museum and its permanent collection.

Please note: the panorama is not accessible to people with reduced mobility.

More pictures on <http://www.kmkg-mrah.be/press-2>

This project came about thanks to a collaboration between the Royal Museums of Art and History and Urban Brussels and with the support of Tourism Flanders.

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