Twenty years of scientific analysis dedicated to the painted works of Pieter Bruegel the Elder and the copies by his son Pieter Brueghel the Younger have come to fruition in a new book:

**THE BRUDEL PHENOMENON**  
**Paintings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Pieter Brueghel the Younger with a Special Focus on Techniques and Copying Practices**

Christina Currie and Dominique Allart

This three-volume book is the culmination of a long-term research program carried out by the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage in partnership with the University of Liège; it has benefited from the generous collaboration of 19 Belgian and foreign museums and numerous private collections.

The fascination for the works of Pieter Bruegel in the decades following his death in 1569 is only matched by the public interest they stimulate today. At the end of the sixteenth century and in the first half of the seventeenth century, the most ambitious art collectors fought over the rare paintings by the master that were still on the market. This context was the catalyst for the appearance of copies and pastiches; genuine forgeries were also produced.

It was then that the elder son of Pieter Bruegel, known as Brueghel the Younger (whose name is spelt ‘Brueghel’, conforming to the signature that he adopted during the initial phase of his career) emerged as a legitimate successor, using working material inherited from his father. He produced astonishingly faithful replicas, all the more surprising given that they were often reproductions of paintings that were by then scattered in diverse and often inaccessible private collections. Working together with his studio, in which there was a streamlined organisation of work following a well-established practice in Antwerp during the period, Brueghel supplied the market with hundreds of copies of variable quality according to the client. This fascinating phenomenon merited an in-depth study and re-evaluation, taking into account the historical and economic context.

The examinations undertaken within the framework of a wide-reaching program of study comprise a representative sample of paintings by Pieter Brueghel the Younger and Pieter Bruegel the Elder. In relation to the latter, crucial discoveries were made, leading to a reconsideration of his art as well as the evolution of painting practice in the Southern Netherlands in the sixteenth century. The study therefore also provides an in-depth account of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's working techniques. Aside from the examination of a series of works by the latter artist, and in the light of observations made on them, the controversial Fall of Icarus from the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium is re-considered.
As to the works produced by Pieter Brueghel the Younger's studio, new scientific imagery and analysis enabled an intimate comparison of their techniques of execution. This revealed common technological traits that distinguish works produced under the master's direct control from those produced outside his workshop. Practical reconstructions of procedures used in his studio bring these techniques to life and make them more easily understandable. Subtle stylistic characteristics were also detected amongst the paintings examined, making it possible to identify in a significant number of cases the individual hand of Brueghel the Younger as opposed to that of one or other of his assistants.

More than a thousand images illustrate this volume, on the text and the accompanying DVD. In this way, visual material relative to the over 70 works studied is available to art historians and the wider scientific community: detailed examinations of the surface, infrared reflectography, X-radiography, dendrochronological data, chemical analyses (notably Raman spectography, GC-MS and SEM-EDX).

In press. Publication expected for the beginning of 2012, in the *Scientia Artis* collection (no. 8)