

## Entangling neo-gothic. A network of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century stained-glass windows

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In this short paper presentation, I will briefly introduce my PhD research, my nodegoat database, and how I use nodegoat in an art historical context. My PhD project researches the Dutch stained-glass workshop ‘Atelier Glasschilderkunst Frans Nicolas en Zonen (1855-1940/1968)’ from Roermond (Limburg, NL). Frans Nicolas established his stained-glass workshop mid-nineteenth century in a period of catholic emancipation, innovation, internationalisation, and the Gothic Revival. Atelier Nicolas quickly became one of – if not the most- important stained-glass workshop in the Netherlands. With my research, I look at the resources this workshop mobilised to organise its business, to meet growing regional, national and international demand for stained-glass windows, and to carve out a prominent position in the stained-glass industry. ‘Resources’ is interpreted quite broadly and covers not only finance and labour, but also craftsmanship, knowledge, technological innovation, design and style, and networks. I am particularly interested in the exchange between Atelier Nicolas and its environment.

To facilitate my research of these resources, I am working on a nodegoat database to bring together the network of the windows of Atelier Nicolas.

The windows of Atelier Nicoals are the starting point of my network analysis and a visual representation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century prevalent neo-gothic style. Stained-glass windows are fascinating objects and (can) carry a lot of information in them, for instance on the commissioner, designer, maker, iconography, techniques, style, year of production, the occasion and building for which it was made. These information elements are not only tied to the window itself but are also related to each other. The style of the window for instance, can say something about the signature style of a designer or maker, about a preference of the commissioner, the period or region/place. Grasping the interconnectedness between the data is particularly challenging to grasp without the help of digital tools.

The main source for my research is the archive of Atelier Nicolas. The business archive and the cartoons (life-sized drawings used during the manufacture of windows) of this workshop have been recently conserved and digitised by the Sociaal Historisch Centrum Limburg and are now preserved at the Gemeentearchief Roermond.<sup>2</sup> Information on the windows is extracted from documents such as correspondence and registers of the cartoons.

When cataloguing these windows in nodegoat, information is added on the designer and maker, iconography, date of production, and a link is made to their designated building and people involved. A ‘building’ contains information on the architect, place, date of

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<sup>2</sup> Gemeentearchief Roermond, *4072 NV Glasschilderkunst F. Nicolas en zonen, sedert 1940 Max Weiss te Roermond*, <https://proxy.archieven.nl/103/16C49F1FAB2C4D29BEE7028A984C136C>; Sociaal Historisch Centrum voor Limburg, <https://shclimburg.nl>.

completion, and type of building, as well as the different phases of restoration. Often church buildings were built in the Middle Ages, and throughout the years wings and towers were modified, added, or replaced. By adding the information on the building's history to nodegoat, the stained-glass windows by Atelier Nicolas can be more easily linked to the Gothic Revival related building activities.

I use nodegoat for art historical research. The nodegoat environment facilitates gathering my data in a structured way and allows me to carry out various analyses on the data. The first analysis shows the geographical spread of the production output by Atelier Nicolas. This preliminary result shows that the center of their production output lies in Limburg, but they produced windows for buildings all over the Netherlands. Occasionally Atelier Nicolas received commissions in neighbouring countries Belgium and Germany. Commissions in other countries are mostly connected to missionaries from the Netherlands. This geographical analysis together with the timeline of Atelier Nicolas, illustrates the interconnectedness of Atelier Nicolas and the catholic revival. The production in the United States is closely connected to the export practices from the son of a business partner. These export activities are not always easy to reconstruct as correspondence often only indicates how many cases of glass are shipped to the United States without any indication of the building for which windows are intended or the iconography of the windows.

The second analysis is an analysis of the network of people involved in window making; designer, maker, commissioner, and architect. Windows are often commissioned by the architect. This relates to the role of a window. It is both part of the architecture as well as the decoration, and an important part of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The network of people helps to unravel the network of the neo-gothic network Atelier Nicolas was part of. I focus mainly on the architects involved. A preliminary analysis shows the close cooperation of Atelier Nicolas with Dutch architect Pierre Cuypers, which is confirmed by other archival sources. Most other architects Atelier Nicolas worked with were architects trained by Pierre Cuypers.

The third analysis focuses on the iconography and style. By adding key terms of the iconography to the objects in nodegoat, I can easily compare windows with the same iconography. Not only can I then perform a stylistic analysis, but I can also analyse how the style preferences changed over the years. The possibility of easily adding photos is a great advantage of working with nodegoat. The comparison of the finished window with the digitised cartoons and in some cases preliminary sketches, helps to understand the process behind the manufacturing of a stained-glass window.

Apart from the benefits for my research, the nodegoat database also fills in the role of an oeuvre catalogue. In the case of Atelier Nicolas, there is no catalogue raisonné. The goal is to publish my nodegoat database as an online accessible catalogue raisonné as part of my PhD research. The database will be an interesting tool for art historical research, allowing researchers to compare windows, ateliers, and artistic practices like the use of model books. The database will also be an interesting tool for the general public to interact with digitised cultural heritage.