



Universiteit Utrecht

Panel Paintings with Narrative Scenes

Function and Typology of Horizontal Panels in North-Western Europe

1400 – 1500

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“Without a viewer, a reader, a listener, art is dead.” - Siri Hustvedt, *A Woman Looking at Men Looking at Women – Essays* (2016), p. 5.

Summary

In the Sint-Katharinakerk of Hoogstraten in the province of Antwerp is preserved a fifteenth-century panel painting by a Netherlandish anonymous master depicting scenes from the life of St Joseph. Measuring 64 x 203 cm in a long horizontal format, it was for a long time considered a copy of Robert Campin's *The Betrothal of the Virgin* (Museo del Prado) and an unusual size within the Early Netherlandish panorama. The panel appears in the nineteenth century in the church; no documentation regarding the commission, provenance, and authorship survives. Nevertheless, no systematic study has been conducted, leading the scholarship to make wrong assumptions. Since 2021 the painting is at KIK-IRPA, Brussels for restoration which will shed light on technical aspects that should be considered.

This study aims to re-evaluate the function of the Hoogstraten panel by comparing it with other examples of horizontal panels in north-western Europe – in the Burgundian holdings in the Southern Netherlands, Germany (Augsburg) and parts of France (Avignon and Paris) – in the period between 1400 to 1500. Aspects such as socio-historical context, iconography, patronage, original provenance, and setting will also be discussed. Therefore, this study is divided into two chapters; the first starts with some general notions of measurements and guilds' regulations for the region of Flanders, followed by an iconographical analysis of seventeen panels of the 'corpus'. In the second chapter, the paintings' functions will be studied. Here some clarifications regarding misunderstandings in previous scholarship are made. Respecting the painting *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph*, essential data will be evaluated and also an attempt to clarify the provenance, patronage, and function.

As a result, this first systematic study of the Hoogstraten panel concludes that whatever the identity of the painter, he was aware of both Campin's and Van der Weyden's models, as well as of the Netherlandish painting panorama. In the lack of further evidence, it is impossible to determine the patron, provenance, and panel's original function, but some options are given which might lead us to conclude that it was used as an altarpiece in the altar of the guild of St Joseph of Hoogstraten at Sint-Katharinakerk.

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Figure 1 - Next page: Anonymous, *Panorama of Hoogstraten* (on top: Castle of the Lalaing family; below: Sint-Katharinakerk) 1564. © Stedelijk Museum Hoogstraten



DIT IS DE VRYHEYT VAN HOOCHSTRATEN
MET HET CASTEEL ALSOO SY WAS A° 15 04

Introduction

‘In jeglicher Geschichtstradition steckt Irrtum aus typischen Fehlerquellen, wie dem Hange zur Vereinfachung’ – ‘Historical tradition is always fraught with error, stemming from a recurrent source’. With this generalization, Max J. Friedländer introduced the Early Netherlandish painting in the first volume of *Die altniederländische Malerei* (1924-1937)¹. Among other examples, the panel *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph*, preserved at Sint-Katharinakerk, Hoogstraten, province of Antwerp, is inserted by Friedländer in this generalization. Since the nineteenth century, there have been disagreements over authorship, dating, provenance, and commissioner(s), often based on hypotheses, some more speculative than others.

The panel was displayed for the first time to a large audience in the summer of 1902 in the Provinciaal Hof in Bruges, during the exhibition *‘Les Primitifs flamands et l’art ancien’* dedicated to the ‘Flemish Primitives’ group. What made art critics question and debate was the painting’s shape: a horizontal rectangular format². That fifteenth-century oblong panels with narrative scenes have not yet received the same degree of attention compared to triptychs has been remarked indirectly upon by several authors³. This absence may be due to the fact that the number of examples is limited compared to the number of triptychs or even diptychs. Nonetheless, it is possible to group together nine oblong panels with “Flemish” origin, two with “German”, and four with “French” origin. Furthermore, as one may expect, many of these artworks are not in their original context anymore, partly due to the iconoclasm and the two World Wars, resulting in most of them being preserved in national museums nowadays.

¹ Friedländer, Max J. *Die Altniederländische Malerei*. Berlin, Cassirer, 1924, p. 13.

² Georges Hulin. *Bruges 1902: Exposition de tableaux flamands des xiv, xv et xvi siècles*. Gand: A. Siffer, 1902, p. 94; Friedländer Max J. *Die Brügger Leihausstellung von 1902*. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1903, pp. 73-74.

Throughout this study I will use the words – horizontal, oblong, and rectangular – to refer to this format. Likewise, I will use the word combination: *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph*, Hoogstraten panel, and Hoogstraten painting when referring to the case-study. Additionally, each painting in the corpus was given a Roman numeral, which throughout the text will serve to identify the panels.

³ See among others Borchert, Till-Holger; Chapuis, Julien (ed.). *Van Eyck tot Dürer: de Vlaamse primitieven & Centraal Europa 1430-1530*. Tiel: Lannoo, 2010, p. 176; Kermperdick, Stephan. “I Tableau à II Hysseoirs – A panel with two wings: Altarpieces with and without fordable wings at the time of Rogier van der Weyden” in *The Master of Flémalle and Rogier van der Weyden* (exh. cat.). Städel Museum Frankfurt am Main and the Gemäldegalerie Staatliche Museen Berlin. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz. 2009. pp. 117-132.

Various criteria were used to set the parameters of this research. Firstly, the support: panel⁴. Since the creation of the Hanseatic League and the expansion throughout the North Sea cities, the commerce of timber was a key element, particularly oak. Contrary to the Southeast of Europe, such as Portugal, Spain, or even the South of Italy, the panel paintings produced in Flanders and Northern Germany were on oak from the southern Baltic seacoast region⁵.

The second criterion is shape. So far, the scholarship has yet to come up with a reason for this format. Did they function as an altarpiece, antependium, or predella and what was their original location and setting? The seventeen paintings under discussion range in length from 92 to 350 cm. The oldest historiography commonly refers that the rectangular shape was unpopular in the Low Countries, due to only a few being known, but the corpus of paintings in this study contradicts this. Therefore, the meaning and function of this typology still need to be determined⁶.

It is important to mention other examples that may resemble the paintings in the corpus, either based on the shape or narrative scenes⁷. Here I highlight three examples: the horizontal *Leinwand* (canvas) attributed to the conventional name of the Master of the Small Passion representing the *Martyrdom of St Ursula at Cologne*, datable to around 1411, measuring 60 x 179 cm, and depicting a continuous narrative scene similar to the Hoogstraten panel⁸. The second example is the *Heiligental altarpiece* by Hans Bornemann, representing an identical portal to my case-study⁹. Lastly, the *Lyversberg Passion* by the master of the same name, dating

⁴ Most of the paintings here in the discussion are on Baltic wood, while the only exception occurs with the so-called *Kortesse Panel – Alken Predella* (III) which is on walnut. This support was rarely used in the Low Countries. Stroo, Cyriel (ed.) *Pre-Eyckian Panel Painting in the Low Countries*. Contributions to Fifteenth-Century Painting in the Southern Netherlands and the Principality of Liège, 9. Turnhout: Brepols, 2009, pp. 202-205.

⁵ Klein, Peter. “Dendrochronologische Untersuchungen an Eichenholztafeln von Rogier van der Weyden” in *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 23 (1981), pp. 113-123; Verougstraete, Hélène. *Frames and Supports in the 15th-and 16th-Century Southern Netherlandish Painting*; Brussels, Royal Institute of Cultural Heritage, 2015, pp. 9-14.

⁶ Peters, H. “Die Marienleben-Tafel. Bemerkungen zu einem Antependium im Brüsseler Museum” in *Bulletin/Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique* 4 (1953), pp. 187-188.

⁷ For the full list of paintings see Appendix, section 3.

⁸ Zehnder Frank Günter; Kühn, Hermann; Bauch, Josef (ed.) *Katalog der Altkölner Malerei. Kataloge des Wallraf-Richartz-Museums*, 11. Köln: Stadt Köln, 1990, p. 340ff.

⁹ See Kemperdick, Stephan. “Nochmals Hans Bornemann – und ein Blick auf Conrad von Vechta” in *Lüneburg: Sakraltopographie einer spätmittelalterlichen Stadt*. Edited by Peter Knüvener. Ilmtal-Weinstrasse. Ars Ecclesia: Kunst vor Ort, Bd. 5; Jonas Verlag, 2019, pp. 89-104. For a full view of how the altarpiece looked like see Idem, “Zum Werk des Johannes Bornemann. Überlegungen zu Chronologie und Vorbildern” in *Niederdeutsche Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte* 33 (1994), pp. 57-86.

from ca. 1464-1466, is an example of how an altarpiece with moveable wings can resemble the format of the Hoogstraten painting.

The third criterion is the subject. The majority of paintings in discussion have narrative scenes, whereas others do not, for example, Van der Weyden's *Lamentation* or *La Trinité aux chanoines de Notre-Dame*. I decided to include those with just one scene due to the shape and because these panels are important to be analysed and compared with the Hoogstraten panel.

As it will be seen in the first chapter, the discussion emerges since the Hoogstraten panel represents seven episodes non-chronologically, i.e., narrative scenes, in one single panel, which is an exception in this period in Northern Europe. Most of the scholarship mentions that this wide format – 203 cm in length – was unpopular in the fifteenth century¹⁰. Nonetheless, in those studies, the authors do not justify this assertion and quite often their argumentation is ambiguous. More recently, Borchert tried to justify why such a wide format was 'unpopular' by connecting it with the Brabant and Flanders urban context and events such as *Heilig Bloedprocessie* (Procession of the Holy Blood) in Bruges¹¹.

The fourth criterion is geographical. I limited myself to Flanders¹², Germany (Augsburg) and parts of France (Avignon and Paris). The restriction is due to the number of surviving paintings; most of them share stylistic similarities and historical relations. As the historiography presents us, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Flanders or the Burgundian Netherlandish regions were the most important commercial centres north of the Alps¹³, attracting many merchants, courtiers, and high officials. Consequently, some of the painters established in those cities formed their own workshops with many apprentices, and journeymen (*Wandergeselle*)¹⁴. These apprentices and journeymen came from diverse regions, namely Germany and France. Moreover, after their apprenticeship period, some returned to their homeland establishing themselves as 'masters'. An example is the painter Michel Sittow, who was born in the Hanseatic city of Reval (Tallinn), Estonia, but undertook his apprenticeship in Bruges¹⁵. Additionally, the stylistic similarities can be traced in some cases

¹⁰ Peters, 1953, pp. 187-188.

¹¹ Borchert, Chapuis (eds.), 2010, p. 176.

¹² I will use the term Flanders in this thesis in the broadest sense, to refer to the larger Burgundian holdings in the southern Netherlands and northern France.

¹³ Van Houtte, J. A., "The Rise and Decline of the Market of Bruges," in *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 19 (1966), pp. 29-47.

¹⁴ On this matter see Huth, Hans. *Künstler und Werkstatt der Spätgotik*, Darmstadt, 2^o ed. 1967, pp. 89-90.

¹⁵ Hand, John Oliver, Koppel, Greta; Borchert, Till-Holger (ed.). *Michel Sittow: Estonian painter at the courts of Renaissance Europe* (exh. cat). Washington: National Gallery of Art; Art Museum of Estonia - Kumu Art Museum, Tallinn, 2017.

through German-born painters, such as the case of Hans Memling. Born in Seligenstadt, Hesse region, and widely influenced by Stefan Lochner's painting, he established himself in Bruges in the 1450s and used German typological models during his career, although strongly touched by Rogier van der Weyden's style and compositions¹⁶.

The final criterion is the chronology: from 1400 to around 1500. The choice of this temporal space allows us to demonstrate how the oblong panels with narrative scenes from the pre-Eyckian period to the *de facto* establishment of Antwerp as the 'capital' of European commerce developed.

This study aims to justify and explain the function, provenance, and commission of the Hoogstraten panel; the scholarship dates the painting between the 1440s and 1490s based on comparisons. Therefore, it is essential to clarify and expound on what was produced before and after the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph*. Most of the paintings in the discussion here have been so far studied from a stylistic point of view and compared within each painter's entourage rather than as a group.

The central question of this research is concentrated around the Hoogstraten panel in terms of function and meaning but inserted in a larger question: To what extent were the horizontal panels specifically produced to serve in a very specific context? This main question can be divided into two sub-questions: Who were the commissioner(s)? Religious orders or members of prominent families? Moreover, did these paintings serve as altarpiece(s), antependium(s), predella(s) or other liturgical furnishings?

I have relied mainly on painters' monographs, exhibition catalogues, and museum catalogues for my research. The core of the discussion surrounding the paintings is based on iconography and for that, I used the well-known medieval written sources, such as the *Legenda Aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine and the *Vita Christi* by Ludolph of Saxony, without neglecting the New Testament¹⁷. Respecting the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* my research has been a continuous work since my internship at the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA) in Brussels, Belgium during the academic year of 2021-2022. Before, the painting has never received a thorough study, only being mentioned as the product of a follower of Robert Campin in articles¹⁸. Moreover, the often-mentioned assumption in the older scholarship that the

¹⁶ De Vos, Dirk. *Hans Memling: The Complete Works*; London, Thames and Hudson, 1994, pp. 14-16.

¹⁷ James, M. R. *The apocryphal New Testament: being the apocryphal gospels, acts, epistles and apocalypses with other narratives and fragments*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955.

¹⁸ Throughout this study I will use the name Robert Campin when referring to this painting. For more about the attribution and painter's identification see: Kemperdick, Stephan. *Der Meister von Flémalle: die Werkstatt Robert Campins und Rogier van der Weyden*. Ars Nova: Studies in Late Medieval and Renaissance Northern

painting was to be located in the Sint-Katharinakerk or in the convent of Poor Clares of Hoogstraten cannot be sufficiently proven. The number of studies regarding this panel is insignificant compared to many of the paintings which will be discussed in this thesis. However, as will be demonstrated throughout the text, it is unlikely that who painted the Hoogstraten panel was a court painter or a well-known master, but possibly an unknown apprentice of a famous painter. This option can show us how the workshops worked during this period and the role of young painters in the conceptualization of an artwork.

This study is divided into two chapters. The first one titled “Artistic Production During the Fifteenth Century”, explores how the guilds regulated the size of the panels and the limitations, in addition to the commissions’ contracts. The typological and iconographical analysis starts with the Hoogstraten panel, as it is the central case study of this research. Additionally, as the subchapters indicate the examination starts with the paintings of “Flemish” origin, then “German” and lastly “French”, always chronologically. The choice of this segment is purely based on stylistic affinities.

In the second chapter, “Reflections on the Practical Function of Oblong Panels”, I will discuss the function, i.e., the original display of each painting based on the available information regarding provenance and, if known, the church’s plans. Finally, I will evaluate the options and alternatives of the Hoogstraten panel’s original function and possible patrons.

Throughout this study, all names and terms are spelt as they are generally found in modern art historical literature. The names of buildings and places are in English, apart from a few cases, for example, the Sint-Janshospitaal in Bruges, where this Netherlandish designation is most used in historical literature. Additionally, all translations, unless indicated otherwise, are mine.

Painting and Illumination, 2. Turnhout: Brepols, 1997; Idem, Sander, Jochen, Eclercy, Bastian; Aston, Paul (ed.). *The Master of Flémalle and Rogier van der Weyden* (exh. cat.): An exhibition organized by the Städel Museum, Frankfurt Am Main, and the Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009.

Theoretical framework

The study of Early Netherlandish painting involves the objects themselves and the questions of attribution, dating, patronage, provenance, and socio-historical context of the place for which it was designated. Since the pioneering studies by Friedländer and Panofsky were published in the twentieth century, technical research was developed and since then widely used, including UV fluorescence, infrared reflectography, X-ray fluorescence (XRF), X-radiography, dendrochronology, and paint sample analysis¹⁹.

While the scholarship tends to concentrate more on the analysis of large paintings, i.e., triptychs and polyptychs, for instance, Jan van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece*, ca. 1420s-1432 (St Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent) or Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, ca. 1490-1510 (Museo del Prado, Madrid) single panels are normally overshadowed by these artworks. Some exceptions include Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*, ca. 1434 (National Gallery, London) or Rogier van der Weyden's *The Descent from the Cross*, ca. 1435 (Museo del Prado). However, the shape of all these examples is not rectangular, like the one from Hoogstraten. Due to this, it is important to do a systematic study of the development and patrons' choice for such a format, by comparing it with a group of similarly shaped panels in North-western Europe of the late medieval period.

Although no previous studies are entirely dedicated to horizontal panels, some precedents regarding typologies exist. Regarding diptychs, in 2006-2007 in a joint organization by the National Gallery of Art (Washington), the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, (Antwerp), and the Harvard University Art Museums (Cambridge), displayed for the first time more than forty Netherlandish artworks altogether²⁰. Additionally, important articles were published concerning altarpieces and triptychs, including Kemperdick's study on altarpieces with shutters²¹, and most recently Hannah De Moor's PhD dissertation related to Netherlandish carved altarpieces in Sweden, demonstrating the assimilation, function, and reception of these formats in Scandinavia²². On carved altarpieces the study by Lynn F. Jacobs in 1998 it is still important to take into account, as well as her most recent book dedicated to the painted triptychs

¹⁹ On this matter see Hermans, Erma. "Technical Art History: The Synergy of Art, Conservation and Science" in *Art History and Visual Studies*. Ed M. Rampley et al, Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2012, pp. 151-166.

²⁰ Hand, John Oliver (ed.) *Prayers and Portraits: Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych* (exh. cat). Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art; 2006; and the related volume of essays Idem, Spronk, Ron (ed.). *Essays in Context: Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych*. Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums, 2006.

²¹ Kemperdick; Sander; Eclercy; Aston (ed). exh. cat., 2009.

²² De Moor, Hannah. *Unravelling the History of Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces in Sweden. c. 1470-1527 and Beyond*. Leuven, PhD dissertation KU Leuven, 2022.

in Germany²³. Still, regarding triptychs, there is also the important study by Shirley Neilsen Blum (1969), in which she analyses the patronage of these ensembles²⁴.

Respecting the function of North-western Europe paintings, the series of essays in the publication titled *The altar and its environment, 1150-1400*²⁵, 2009, provides a concise overview of the matter in the discussion here. Still relevant in this context, despite the focus being different, is the study by H el ene Verougstraete, PhD dissertation in 1989 and revised and expanded edition in 2015, dedicated to frames and supports in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; this study combines typology and technical investigations, additional to the explanation of how the guilds were organized²⁶.

Methodology

As the purpose of this study is to determine the function of the Hoogstraten panel one of the major methodological components is the iconographical analysis. Since mid-2021 the panel is at KIK-IRPA for restoration and scientific examination; until the conclusion of the writing of this study, the painting's overpaint was removed, showing the green colour in some parts of the landscape that was covered by brownish. Furthermore, the dendrochronology analysis is not yet scheduled. However, none of these elements would mean a large change in my argument – although the technical research could contradict it – because the matter here is to clarify the function of the painting in the fifteenth-century context.

As one will notice in the next subchapter, the information available about the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* is limited; therefore, some elements of how the research was conducted needs to be mentioned. Respecting the literature review, this was done during my internship at KIK-IRPA, during which I did some discoveries. Using all this data and comparing it with the corpus of paintings, will be important to clarify the function of the painting, based on the iconographic analysis. This method serves to gather what type of

²³ Jacobs, Lynn F. *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces, 1380-1550: Medieval Tastes and Mass Marketing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Idem, *The Painted Triptychs of Fifteenth-Century Germany: Case Studies of Blurred Boundaries*. Visual and Material Culture 1300-1700, 36. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022.

²⁴ Blum, Shirley Neilsen. *Early Netherlandish Triptychs: A Study in Patronage*. California Studies in the History of Art, 13. Berkeley (California): Berkeley, University of California Press, 1969.

²⁵ Kroesen, Justin; Schmidt, Victor M (ed.). *The altar and its environment, 1150-1400*. Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages, Vol. 4. Turnhout: Brepols, 2009.

²⁶ Verougstraete H el ene; Van Schoute, Roger. *Cadres et supports dans la peinture Flamande aux 15e et 16e si cles*. Heure-le-Roumain: H el ene Verougstraete-Marcq, 1989; Idem, 2015.

iconography – for instance, the life of Christ, the Virgin, saints, etc. – was mostly represented in these panels and the patrons' taste.

Secondly, given that little is known regarding the Hoogstraten panel and its function, doing archival research would have been ideal for this study to provide any additional information. However, from all the documentation already transcribed from the Sint-Katharinakerk and the city of Hoogstraten – partially done by Piet Van Deun²⁷ – nothing was found. For this reason, and in the expected timeline to conclude this thesis, archival research was not considered, due to the lack of certainty about whether information about the painting would be found or not.

Finally, it should be noted that for the majority of the corpus of paintings in this study, many aspects could have been mentioned. However, I focus mainly on attribution, dating, iconography, commission, and provenance. For the iconography, I follow mostly Louis Réau's and Panofsky's studies, and for the rest, the most recent historiography. Likewise, in the footnotes, some additional information will be provided, so that the reader can easily be aware of other aspects.

Literature review

Until the Friedländer's pioneering study *Die altniederländische Malerei* (1924-1937), the painting *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* (fig. 2) has not received international wide recognition²⁸. This modest place within the context of the Northern European painting of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was in part due to the attribution to a follower of Robert Campin. This negligence continued until this moment since there are no large studies dedicated to the panel, only brief mentions.

The earliest reference to the painting appeared in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in the *Bulletin de Gilde de St-Thomas et St-Luc*²⁹. This Belgian cultural association for

²⁷ The references for these documents are: Rijksarchief Antwerpen, Archief van de schepenbanken, van cijnsen leenhoven, van het dorpsbestuur en van gilden van Hoogstraten, no. 637, Lakengilde of wolambacht en confrerieën Sint-Joseph; Stadsarchief Hoogstraten, Kerk- en Parochiearchief Sint-Katharina Hoogstraten, nr. K040. Register van de Sint-Jozefgilde, 1565-1606, 1 deel. and no. K047. 'Memoriael boeck voor de guldebroeders van St. Joseph gulde', 1714-1802.

²⁸ Since the publication of the image of the painting in Friedländer's book (no. 77), there has been a growing interest in the panel. Friedländer, 1924, plate 103.

²⁹ As far as it is possible to know, this reference was never mentioned in the historiography. In all publications, the authors go back to the 1902's exhibition in Bruges as the earliest reference.

the study of archaeological and historical sites from a Christian perspective, when describing the city of Hoogstraten and the Sint-Katharinakerk, mentioned: “*dans la première chapelle on remarque un tableau ancien représentant la vie de saint Joseph*”³⁰. In 1895, Adriaensen and Segers remarked that the painting was produced in a typical ‘Flemish school’ of the fifteenth century, without further argumentation³¹. Additionally, they showed why such a highly remarkable painting has not been researched by specialists, by publishing the first photograph of the panel so far found (fig. 3).

Moving to the first half of the twentieth century, it is possible to observe an increasing interest in the panel, particularly in the authorship. Starting with the 1902 exhibition in Bruges, George Hulin de Loo in his catalogue critique listed the Hoogstraten panel as a ‘copyist or imitator of the Master of Flémalle’³². He goes further and affirms with conviction that the panel is a ‘copy’ of the Master of Flémalle’s *The Betrothal of the Virgin*, ca. 1420-1430 (Museo del Prado, Madrid)³³; nowadays the museum attributes the painting to Robert Campin³⁴. Moreover, George Hulin de Loo specifies one of the Master of Flémalle’s apprentices as a possible painter of the panel, the Master of Arras, but does not develop this. Still, in the aftermath of the exhibition, Henry Hymans remarked on the same points as Hulin de Loo, adding that it was a privilege that the painting was exhibited in the same room with Jan van Eyck’s and Rogier van der Weyden’s artworks³⁵.



Figure 2 - *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* at Sint-Katharinakerk, Hoogstraten © KIK-IRPA, Brussels

³⁰ Gilde de Saint-Thomas et de Saint-luc, *Bulletin des séances - Gilde de Saint-Thomas et de Saint-Luc: Tables 1863-1869*; Tome V, Lille-Bruges, Société de Saint-Augustin, 1881-1883, p. 222.

³¹ Adriaensen, Edward; Segers, Gustaaf. *De collegiale kerk van de H. Katharina te Hoogstraeten*. Hoogstraeten: Boekdrukkerij Lod. van Hoof-Roelans, 1895, p. 93.

³² Hulin de Loo, 1902, p. 94.

³³ For further discussion of this see Chapter I of the present study.

³⁴ On this matter see Alba, Laura. “El Maestro de Flémalle en el Museo Nacional del Prado: nuevas consideraciones técnicas.” *Boletín del Museo del Prado* 27 (2009) pp. 6-25.

³⁵ Hymans, Henri. *L'exposition des primitifs flamands à Bruges*. Paris, Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 1902, p. 200.



Figure 3 - The panel was preserved in the church's choir around 1895 (only half is visible here). source: Adriaesen; Segers 1895.

The connection between the Hoogstraten panel and the oeuvre of the Master of Flémalle/Robert Campin is most noticeable in the iconography. Apart from L. Maeterlinck, who considers Nabur Martins – a name known from the Ghent archives³⁶ – or his workshop as the possible painter of this panel, most scholars situate the production in the entourage of Robert Campin: Friedländer (1903), Jules Destrée (1928), Louis Demonds (1928), Erwin Panofsky (1953), Heinz Peters (1953), Charles Sterling (1971, 1972), Jozef de Coo (1991), Maryan Ainsworth (1994), Albert Châtelet (1996), Fabienne Joubert and Philippe Lorentz (2000), and Till-Holger Borchert (2010) assume that it was painted by one of Campin's apprentices or followers, or someone aware of his models and compositions³⁷. Only Joubert

³⁶ For more about this painter see Maeterlinck, L. *Nabur Martins, ou: le maître de Flémalle (nouveaux documents)*, Bruxelles, Van Oest, 1913.

³⁷ Friedländer, 1903, pp. 72-74; Destrée, Jules. "Le Maître dit de Flémalle: Robert Campin." *Revue de l'art ancien et moderne*, LIII (1928), p. 82; Demonds, Louis. 'Le Maître de l'Annonciation, d'Aix, des Van Eyck a Antonello de Messine', *Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne*, LIII (1928), p. 259; Panofsky, E. *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character*; New York, The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1947-1948, Harper & Row, imp. 1971, pp. 161-162; Peters, 1953, pp. 187-188; Sterling, Charles. "Observations on Petrus Christus" in *The Art Bulletin*, 53 (1971), pp. 1-26; De Coo, Josef. "Robert Campin: weitere vernachlässigte Aspekte" in *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 44 (1991), p. 82; Ainsworth, Maryan (ed.). *Petrus Christus: Renaissance Master of Bruges* (exh. cat.). New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994, p. 117-123; Châtelet,

and Lorentz, and Kemperdick suggest a specific apprentice, the miniaturist Jean le Tavernier, and Jacques Daret, respectively. However, they do not develop their hypotheses.

More recently, a theory of a certain German ‘influence’ in the Hoogstraten panel was emphasized by Kemperdick (1995, 1997) – which is contradicted by his own latest publications – but supported to some extent by a small mention of Maerterlinck (1913). Kemperdick considers that the enigmatic German painter Hans Bornemann, from Lüneburg, a town in Lower Saxony, had contact with the artist who painted the Hoogstraten panel, where the motifs used are mainly influenced by Daret³⁸. Specifically, Kemperdick considers Bornemann’s *Heiligental altarpiece* with similar compositions, namely the architectural characteristics. Surprisingly during my research at KIK-IRPA, I discovered an unpublished letter from 1986 by Jozef de Coo, curator of the Museum Mayer van den Bergh in Antwerp at the time, who wrote to Micheline Comblen-Sonkes, a researcher at the Centre of Flemish Primitives, mentioning the hypothesis of this attribution. De Coo and Kemperdick based their opinion on an obscure publication of Helmut Reinecke (1938), who had set the possibility of Bornemann’s implication in the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph*³⁹.

Regarding dating the range of possibilities is diverse according to the authors. The first mentions of the painting by Hulin de Loo (1902), Hymans (1902) and Destrée (1928) placed the panel in the ‘fifteenth’ century⁴⁰, while Friedländer (1903) dated it around 1440-1460, without providing evidence⁴¹. Based on visual comparisons with other paintings, most of the scholarship considers the execution between 1460 to 1500. Taking into account that the painter uses Campin’s and Rogier’s models, I propose a date close to 1440⁴². The planned dendrochronology analysis would help to deal with this question.

Albert. *Robert Campin. Le Maître de Flémalle. La fascination du quotidien*, Antwerpen, Fonds Mercator Paribas, 1996, p. 299; Joubert, Fabienne; Lorentz, Philippe. “Maitre Jacques Daret, painter, pour lors demourant à Arras” in *Fragments d’un splendeur. Arras à la fin du Moyen Age* (exhib. cat.) edited by Annick Notter, Arras, Musée des Beaux-Arts Arras, 2000, pp. 84-85; Borchert, Chapuis, Julien (ed.), 2010, p. 176.

³⁸ Kemperdick, Stephan. “The impact of Flemish art on Northern German painting around 1440” in *Flanders in a European Perspective. Manuscript Illumination around 1400 in Flanders and Abroad. Proceedings of the International Colloquium...*, B. Cardon; M. Smeyers (eds), Series 5 (Corpus of Illuminated Manuscripts), Peeters Publishers, 1995, pp. 607-608.

³⁹ I will discuss this issue in Chapter I of the present study. Reinecke, Helmut. “Der Maler Hans Bornemann” in *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft*. 5 (1938), pp. 204–227.

⁴⁰ De Loo, 1902, p. 94.; Hymans, 1902, p. 200; Destrée, 1928, p. 158.

⁴¹ Friedländer, 1903, p. 73.

⁴² Alberto Velasco González in his PhD dissertation, while discussing the representation of the Nativity both in Aragon and in Northern Europe, mentions the Hoogstraten panel. He indicates that “cal esmentar una taula dedicada a la vida de sant Josep conservada a l’església de Santa Caterina de Hoogstraten (Bèlgica), datada cap a 1425, que s’ha considerat còpia d’un original perdut del mestre flamenc”. Velasco cites Macías Prieto Guadaira’s PhD dissertation as a source; however, he misunderstood the date. In fact, Macías mentioned that

Another theory concerns the Lalaing family. From the late fifteenth century this family was the most influential and powerful in the city. The Gothic Sint-Katharinakerk was commissioned by two members of this family⁴³. For that reason, it is not surprising that the historiography persists in placing the family as the commissioner, namely Elisabeth van Culemborg⁴⁴ – ruler of the city after her husband’s death, Antoine of Lalaing – in 1553. As one can notice, the dating here is problematic, and the most recent scholarship rightly abandoned this idea.

As previously mentioned, the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* never received an independent study and analysis. Since Kemperdick’s PhD dissertation was published in 1997, no new contributions have been added to the study of this panel⁴⁵. The scholarship tends to repeat or follow the same lines of thought of the earliest studies, which generates more hypotheses.

“[the Hoogstraten panel] considerat còpia d’un original de Campin de cap al 1425”; ca. 1425 is the date of Campin’s panel, and not of the Hoogstraten painting. Macías, Guadaira. *La pintura aragonesa de la segona meitat del segle XV relacionada amb l’escola catalana: dues vies creatives a examen*, tesi doctoral, Barcelona, Universitat de Barcelona, 2013, p. 353 and footnote 1013; Velasco González Alberto. *Pintura tardogòtica a l’Aragó i Catalunya: Pere Garcia de Benavarri*. PhD Dissertation, Universitat de Lleida, 2016, pp. 205-206 and footnote 700.

⁴³ On the Lalaing family in literature see Van Nieuwenhuysen, Andrée. *Inventaire des archives de la famille de Lalaing; Archives générales du royaume et archives de l’état dans les Provinces*; Bruxelles, Archives Générales du Royaume, 1970; Morrison, Elizabeth (ed.). *A Knight for the Ages: Jacques de Lalaing and the Art of Chivalry*. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, 2018. For the church see Mercelis, Jan. *Sint-Katharinakerk Hoogstraten*; V.V.V.-Hoogstraten: Hoogstraten, 1987. Ceulaer, Roeland de; Aerts, Willem (ed.). *De Sint-Catharinakerk te Hoogstraten*. Inventaris van het Kunstpatrimonium van de provincie Antwerpen. Gent: Snoeck-Ducaju, 1988.

⁴⁴ Although only Châtelet specifically mentions her name, he believes that the painting at some point was in the convent of the Poor Clares. Châtelet, 1996, pp. 199-201.

⁴⁵ Kemperdick, 1997, pp. 100-114.

Chapter I: Artistic Production During the Fifteenth Century

A. Measurements and Guilds' Regulations⁴⁶

Beginning in medieval times and even continuing into the nineteenth century, those who wanted to practice any craft needed to be part of a Guild and follow the rules imposed. Only court painters were exempted from following these regulations, as in the case of Pierre Coustain and Lieven van Lathem, in Bruges and Ghent, respectively⁴⁷. In some specific cases, a craftsman could have been a member of different guilds in different cities, as Lorne Campbell demonstrated⁴⁸. Occasionally, two or even three crafts were joined in a single guild, for instance, in fifteenth-century Paris, the glass painters were joined with the painters, sculptors, and embroiderers. However, this was not geographically limited to north-western Europe: as early as 1365 in Prague, the Kingdom of Bohemia, the glass-painters joined the guild of St Luke, which also included other crafts⁴⁹.

For practical reasons, here I will focus on the guilds' regulations related to the panels' measurements than on the organization of these corporations and the apprenticeship system⁵⁰. The main source of these rules are the archival documents, but the transcripts published to date

⁴⁶ On this matter see Vanden Haute, C. *La corporation des peintres de Bruges*. Courtrai, Flandria, 1913; Dambruyne, Johan. *Corporatieve Middengroepen: aspiraties, relaties en transformaties in de 16de-eeuwse Gentse ambachtswereld. Verhandelingen van de maatschappij voor geschiedenis en oudheidkunde te Gent*, 28. Gent: Academia Press, 2002; Campbell, Lorne, 'The Art Market in the Southern Netherlands in the Fifteenth Century', *The Burlington Magazine* 118 (1976), pp. 188-198; Idem, 'The Early Netherlandish Painters and their Workshops', in: D. Hollanders-Favart and R. Van Schoute (eds.), *Le dessin sous-jacent et la technologie dans la peinture. colloque III. 6-7-8 septembre 1979. Le problème Maître de Flémalle-Van der Weyden*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Collège Erasme, 1981; Martens, Maximiliaan P. J. *Artistic Patronage in Bruges Institutions, ca. 1440-1482*. PhD Dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1992, pp. 27-49 and 50-86; Van der Stock, J. 'De organisatie van het beeldsnijders- en schildersatelier te Antwerpen. Documenten 1480-1530' in *Antwerpse retabels 15de-16de eeuw*. II. Essays (exh. cat.), edited by Nieuwdorp H., Museum voor Religieuze Kunst, 1993, pp. 47-53.

⁴⁷ Campbell, op. cit. p. 191.

⁴⁸ Idem, op. cit., pp. 190-194.

⁴⁹ Brown, Sarah; O'Connor, David. *Glass-Painters. Medieval Craftsmen*. London: British Museum, 1991, pp. 23-24.

⁵⁰ For the distinction of *guild* and *corporation* see Schouteet, A. *De Vlaamse primitieven te Brugge: bronnen voor de schilderkunst te Brugge tot de dood van Gerard David*. Fontes Historiae Artis Neerlandicae, 2. Brussel: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, 2002, pp. 14-16.

revealed little regarding these technical matters. Each city had their own regulations⁵¹ and metric system; additionally, the contract between the painter and commissioner determined the dimension of the artwork and the consequent price. As Maximiliaan Martens exposed, sometimes measurements were the target of conflict between the artist and the commissioner, but these types of conflicts seem to have been rare⁵².

As far as I am aware, in the region of Flanders, Northern Germany and France there is no evidence of any guilds' measurement rules or specifications for rectangular panels nor limitations for the shape. However, some elements could shed light on the evolution and decreasing use of the oblong format. The planks of the panel are the essential elements for this shape. The Hoogstraten panel is formed by three long horizontal rectangular planks supported by three battens to support the construction; nowadays the panel is warped, i.e., curved by a few centimetres and has water damage. That is to say, the warping happened because is a natural process, as wood is a 'living' material, and not because the boards exceed the size that would be 'normal' for rectangular panels (figs. 4 and 113).

One general rule in any Flanders guild was the wood, i.e., oak, already used since the pre-Eyckian period⁵³. Until the seventeenth century, the wood for panel painting came from the Baltic region, i.e., Gdansk, and later from the Königsberg (now Kaliningrad) and Riga centres. During the late medieval and early modern periods, the cutting of trees from different areas was saturated, so it was necessary to exploit the smaller trees, which affected the quality of the wood. According to Verougstraete, between 1441 and 1500 around 30% of the planks are wider than 30 cm, with a decrease in the following decades, adding that '17th century boards were not as long and wide as in the 15th and 16th centuries'⁵⁴. This confirms that although not widely spread it was common to find oblong panels in the period under investigation.

⁵¹ On the one hand, in the imperial city of Ulm, Baden-Württemberg, the guild regulations were similar to those of Brussels, but few documents have survived; on the other hand, Brussels had different rules from Bruges or Ghent. Kemperdick, 2009, p. 96; Verougstraete, 2015, p. 4.

⁵² On the lawsuit see Martens, 1992, pp. 34; pp. 441- 442 for the full passage of the doc. 36.

⁵³ Verougstraete, op. cit, p. 7.

⁵⁴ Idem, op. cit, p. 10.



Figure 4 – Reverse of the Hoogstraten panel in 2022 © KIK-IRPA, Brussels

1. Variants and Geographically Disseminated Formats

Although the *schilders* (painters) in the Low Countries did not have any rules for the oblong format, for diptychs and triptychs, the reality was slightly different. For those formats, there were practical limits due to the weight of the shutters, but this is not something that can be considered a ‘rule’. For instance, Verougstraete indicates that ‘the dimensions of the large altarpieces [triptychs or polyptychs] were based on the available length of boards’⁵⁵; however, she adds that twelve feet was the maximum length of oak boards available, i.e., 315 to 329 cm. Considering that the dimensions of the horizontal in the corpus variate between 92 to 273 cm, the maximum length falls within this scope. However, seems reasonable to think that in the case of the Hoogstraten panel the artist, the patron or someone in the guilds paid attention to balance the planks’ weight so as to avoid any future damage to the artwork.

It is virtually impossible to determine who had the authority to verify the size limitations, for instance, compared to other types of jobs, the joiners in fifteenth-century Bruges were not able to produce movable furniture longer than eight feet, i.e., 219.5 cm, while the carpenters had freer rules⁵⁶.

A parallel with diptychs should also be noticed here. Once again Verougstraete indicates that usually, this type of format made of two parts had limitations, i.e., around 11.5 cm and 140 cm in height, and in the majority of the cases less than 50 cm⁵⁷. In this particular case, the height was more significant than the length, normally shaped like books; however, this demonstrates again that measurements of an artwork were an important element comparable to the iconography.

⁵⁵ Verougstraete, 2015, p. 119.

⁵⁶ Idem, op. cit., p. 1.

⁵⁷ Idem, op. cit., p. 169.

Comparing the oblong shape in the same period but in different geographic areas, one can notice that the dissemination of this shape was not common at all. For example, in Catalonia and Castile, this format appears in very specific cases, such as in Jaume Huguet's *Lamentation of Christ*, ca. 1466-1475 (Musée du Louvre, Paris), or in Juan de Flandes' *Crucifixion*, ca. 1509-1518 (Museo del Prado, Madrid); both paintings are inserted in the so-called *hispano-flamenco* style⁵⁸. In the Italian Peninsula, the most well-known example is Piero della Francesca's *Flagellation of Christ*, ca. 1468-1470 (Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino).

Lastly, it should be noted that the number of oblong panels in Europe at the time is substantially inferior to vertical panels or even more complex formats. As elsewhere noted, an oblong panel implies precise battens to sustain the weight. Likewise, these paintings had a specific role, i.e., function, which I will discuss in the next chapter. The *cassone* (plural *cassoni*) were chests produced particularly in Italy since the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries; their format is intrinsically related to a specific function, and usually were horizontal⁵⁹.

⁵⁸ On this matter see Kasl, Ronda. *The making of Hispano-Flemish style: art, commerce, and politics in fifteenth-century Castile*. Me Fecit. Turnhout, Brepols, 2014.

⁵⁹ On this matter the standard reference is Schubring, Paul. *Cassoni: Truhen und Truhenbilder der italienischen Frührenaissance*. Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1916.

B. Iconography:

2. ‘Netherlandish’ Paintings:

I. *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph*⁶⁰ (figs. 5)

Artist active in Bruges

Provenance: unknown

64 x 203 cm, ca. 1440-1450, oil on oak panel, Sint-Katharinakerk, Hoogstraten



Figure 5 – *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* © KIK-IRPA, Brussels. Episodes:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1° → Miracle of the Rod | 5° → Repentance of his Doubt |
| 2° → Betrothal of the Virgin | 6° → Nativity |
| 3° → St Joseph discovers Mary's pregnancy | 7° → Second dream of Saint Joseph |
| 4° → First dream of Saint Joseph | |

The painting *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* was most likely produced by an anonymous artist active in Bruges during the mid-fifteenth century. This seems quite reasonable due to diverse factors: firstly, as it will be demonstrated by the iconographical analysis, the painting uses Campin's and Rogier's iconographical and typological models. While Campin was active in Tournai and *meester Rogier* in both Tournai and Brussels, their art had repercussions in other places, such as Bruges⁶¹. Additionally, as already remarked in this study most of the corpus of paintings are from artists who at some point were in Bruges or were active there, the most important artistic metropolis of North-western Europe of the mid-fifteenth century. Likewise, using Campin's and Van der Weyden's models per se does not mean that whoever painted the

⁶⁰ See the technical data, Appendix 1 of the present study.

⁶¹ Rogier van der Weyden is often identified as 'Rogelet de la Pasture' who entered in Campin's workshop in Tournai (Doornik in Flemish) in March of 1427. Likewise, Jacques Daret also entered in this studio around 1418. For more see Kemperdick, 1997; Kemperdick; Sander; Eclercy; Aston (ed). exh. cat., 2009. For a general overview of Rogier's life see Dhanens, Elisabeth. *Rogier van der Weyden: revisie van de documenten*. Brussels, Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België. Klasse der Schone Kunsten, 1995.

panel was active in Brussels, or was their apprentice⁶². It should not be excluded that the painter of the Hoogstraten panel used indirectly the models of Campin and Van der Weyden. For instance, the gilded background resembles works such as the *Seilern Triptych*, ca. 1425 by the workshop of Robert Campin (The Courtauld, London). That is to say, the anonymous painter through sketches had access to those models, but not in situ. However, this seems unlikely as there is no indication that a common model of the iconography of the first two episodes once existed, but Bornemann used the model in his paintings and there is no evidence that he ever came to the Low Countries⁶³.

The proto-gothic architecture in the Hoogstraten painting might be an indication that the painter did not work in Tournai or Brussels – cities where Campin and Van der Weyden were active: its forms, the mix of brick with stone (?), and the flowering pinnacles on the top, do not occur there⁶⁴. Instead, it resembles some aspects of the Tolhuis in Bruges, in the Jan van Eyckplein, with its forms and simplicity. However, other buildings like those placed along the already mentioned Jan van Eyckplein and the Grote Markt area of Bruges, seem to have this proto-gothic architectural language that the Hoogstraten painting uses, although simplified.

From the 1440s onwards, painters like Petrus Christus, and Hans Memling and illuminators like Willem Vrelant, Philippe de Mazerolles, and Loyset Liédet worked in Bruges. Putting forward a stylistic aspect seems rather problematic. The figure of the Virgin, both face and hair, in the Hoogstraten painting is a reference to the figure of Mary in the upper register of the *Ghent Altarpiece* by Jan and Hubert van Eyck, also used by Campin in the panel of Madrid. However, the depiction and drapery are not refined as in Van Eyck's and Campin's representations. After the death of Van Eyck, Petrus Christus 'followed' the style of his master, precisely in the city of Bruges. That said, seems possible that the Hoogstraten panel is not a direct but instead an indirect product of these innovations and models, which Christus contributed to this connection. Still, it remains questionable whether the artist of the *Scenes*

⁶² Regarding the dissemination of models, typological compositions, and drawings within the Burgundian Netherlands and abroad see Nuttall, Paula. *From Flanders to Florence: the impact of Netherlandish painting, 1400-1500*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004; Idem (ed.). *Face to Face: Flanders, Florence, and Renaissance Painting* (exh. cat.). San Marino, California: Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, 2013.

⁶³ Kemperdick, 1995, p. 607. The Hoogstraten panel's underdrawing reveals that the painter knew very well the iconography and the models before applying the paint layer.

⁶⁴ As Kemperdick demonstrated, in Campin's *The Betrothal of the Virgin*, the form and yellow stone in the architecture do not occur in Tournai. Instead, seems to indicate that the portal of the church of Notre Dame de Sablon in Brussels. In opposition, Ludovic Nys thinks that the portal resembles the architecture in Ghent of the fifteenth century. Kemperdick, Sander, Eclercy, Aston (ed). exh. cat., 2009, p. 233.

from the *Life of St Joseph* was a master who may have been active in Bruges, or just this artwork was produced there.

Secondly, I argue that the dating is around 1440-1450 due to comparison with other artworks from the same period in which the models are slightly similar. As will be demonstrated, the left side of the Hoogstraten painting has some elements used in or inspired by Bornemann's *Heiligental altarpiece*, produced ca. 1444-1447.

The painting has a strong contrast between light and shadow applied to the architecture around the figures. From the left to the right side of the panel, the figuration tends to have a crescendo, which could lead us to think that the artist did not dominate the perspective, also emphasized by the tiles on the right side. Representing uncommon episodes in the context of the European painting of the fifteenth century, i.e., St Joseph as an independent subject from Mary's and Christ's lives⁶⁵, this panel is the oldest dedicated to Joseph to survive. Most of the episodes here might go back to Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*, which derives its account from the much older Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew and recounts the Miracle of the (flowering) Rod, i.e., the election of Joseph as Mary's husband⁶⁶. Beyond a wall with large stones that appears to be under construction, the viewer looks inside the temple of Jerusalem, where Mary stayed as a temple maiden⁶⁷. In front of the altar the high priest with a small beard, red and white robes, and the mitre is surrounded by other figures (fig. 6). These figures represent ten men of different ages, each of them holding a branch, although only one of them has a flowering branch: St Joseph⁶⁸. He defeated other candidates, single and descendants of David or representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel. Initially, it seemed odd that a man of his age would take a young woman as his wife, also because he had already children. Nonetheless, when he approached the altar, his branch bloomed, and it was clear to all the candidates that Joseph had won the 'divine election'⁶⁹ (fig. 7). The painting represents him surrounded by the other candidates, wearing a red cloak and cap, while he looks to the altar and at the high priest. Outside the temple, three wooden slats are represented, possibly a reference to his job as a

⁶⁵ On the saint's representations see Wilson, C. C. *St. Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art: New Directions and Interpretations*; Philadelphia, Saint Joseph's University Press, 2001.

⁶⁶ Voragine, Jacobus de (author); Ryan, William Granger (trad.); Duffy, Eamon (intr.). *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*. Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2012, pp. 538-539.

⁶⁷ The medieval tradition based on the Apocryphal sources mentions that Mary lived from age three to fourteen in the temple. For a more general overview see Idem, op. cit., 143-151.

⁶⁸ Voragine (author); Ryan (trad.); Duffy (intr.), 2012. p. 539.

⁶⁹ Réau, Louis, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien, II. Iconographie de la bible, 2. Nouveau Testament*, Paris, 1957, pp. 171-176.

carpenter, but also, due to the position in form of a cross, a prefiguration referring to the sacrifice of Christ (fig. 8).

In the steps of a church portal⁷⁰, occurs the second episode, the *Betrothal of the Virgin* (also known as *Marriage of the Virgin*)⁷¹. Surrounding the newly married couple are fourteen women and men, some of whom are only partly visible (fig. 9). While the high priest is joining Joseph's and Mary's right hands – a symbol of the marriage consummation – the couple are looking at each other in the eyes. Mary is wearing a white robe and a long green cloak, while her long blonde hair is loosely adorned with a bridal wreath (fig.10). Compared to the other figures, she in terms of proportions is bigger than them, which puts her as the main figure of this scene and as divine. On the other hand, Joseph is dressed as in the first scene, but now he holds his broad, round cap in his left hand, exposing his grey hair, a sign of his old age.

These first two depictions resemble Campin's composition of Madrid (fig. 11), and it is likely that the painter of the Hoogstraten panel was aware of this model and subject. Additionally, a less-mentioned artwork from the same period – the mid-fifteenth century – preserved at Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal, Antwerp (fig. 12), depicts the same subject within the church, but with Eyckian and Rogier's models⁷². Nevertheless, the author of the Hoogstraten panel got inspired by Campin's portal as there is an attempt to reproduce the upper part and the surrounding decoration; however, instead of Gothic elements the artist depicted proto-gothic ones in a very simplified way (fig. 13). This architectural element also appears on Bornemann's *Heiligental altarpiece* in the depiction of St. Lawrence baptizing in the lower part of the panel, where the façade resembles⁷³ the paintings from Madrid and Hoogstraten (fig. 14).

⁷⁰ The representation of the steps are based on the normative of the standard marriage in Northern Europe of the mid-fifteenth century. There is no mention of this detail in the biblical texts, where these representations are based on the Roman tradition and Law.

⁷¹ Commonly wrongly named "marriage", this scene is only *de facto* marriage when Joseph and Mary exchange the rings, which is not the case in this panel painting.

⁷² On this matter see Reyniers, Jeroen. "Onroerend erfgoed op paneel. Een 15de-eeuwse voorstelling van een gotische kerk" in *M&L. Tijdschrift voor Monumenten, Landschappen en Archeologie*, 33, 1, (2014), pp. 42-61; Idem, "Onbekend maakt onbemind. Een vijftiende-eeuws schilderij in de stijl van Rogier van der Weyden in de Antwerpse kathedraal" in *Revue belge d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art/Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Oudheidkunde en Kunstgeschiedenis*, 84 (2015), pp. 57-123.

⁷³ Kemperdick considers that the material of Bornemann's depiction is brick, a common element in the region of Lüneburg at the time. He also argues that is virtually impossible to determine who "copied" who, Bornemann or the painter of the Hoogstraten panel, but it is a variant of Campin's painting. It seems to me seems that Bornemann was aware of the Netherlandish elements and productions in the region of Brussels and Bruges; through drawings, he might have been inspired by Campin. However, I do not consider Bornemann's tried to "copy" the Hoogstraten panel or vice versa, as these Netherlandish models were reused by different artists. See

Another element of this painting that shows the circulation of Netherlandish drawings is in the unidentified figure next to the Virgin in the second episode (fig. 16). In the early sixteenth century, the German woodcut printmaker Hans Burgkmair the Elder drew Judith (fig. 15) – a figure of the Old Testament – in the same manner as the one from the Hoogstraten panel painted roughly fifty years before, possibly a model of a lost Rogier van der Weyden's work⁷⁴. The drapery, the perspective in which she is depicted, and the hennin match the one from Hoogstraten; however, I believe this was a Rogerian model and widely used. A similar figure – although with a different headdress – appears in Campin's Prado panel in front of the church.



Figure 6 - Miracle of the Rod (detail)



Figure 7 - St Joseph and his flowering branch (detail)

Kemperdick, 1995, pp. 605-609. For more about the painter see Schneede, Uwe M (ed.). *Goldgrund und Himmelslicht: die Kunst des Mittelalters in Hamburg* (exh. cat.), Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 2000.

⁷⁴ This was first noted by Kemperdick, 1997, p. 111.



Figure 8 - Wooden planks (detail)



Figure 9 - Betrothal of the Virgin (detail)



Figure 10 - Marriage (detail)



Figure 11 - Robert Campin, *The Betrothal of the Virgin*, ca. 1420-1430, 77 cm × 88 cm © Museo del Prado, Madrid



Figure 12 - Anonymous, *Marriage of the Virgin*, ca. 1451-1475, 128 x 104 cm. © Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal, Antwerp



Figure 13 – Left side of the Hoogstraten panel and Campin's painting (detail)



1

2

3

Figure 14 – From the left to the right side: 1 – Church portal from Campin’s painting; 2 – Temple from the Hoogstraten panel; 3 – Temple from Bornemann’s *Heiligentalterpiece* (lower central part)



Figure 15 – Hans Burgkmair the Elder’s *The Wise Virgins and Blessed Women Received by Peter at the Gate of Heaven* (detail of Judith), ca. 1500, drawing © Amsterdam Museum



Figure 16 – Figure in the first plan in the second episode of the Hoogstraten panel (detail)

According to the Gospel of Matthew (1:18), Joseph found Mary pregnant before they were living together. Similar stories appear in Pseudo-Matthew and the *History of Joseph the Carpenter*⁷⁵. This scene represents the exact moment when Joseph discovers that she is pregnant (fig. 17). Mary is sitting on a bench, praying, surrounded by white flowers that could symbolize her purity, while Joseph has his carpenter's clothes, which the painter emphasized as 'dirty' through the dark brown colour⁷⁶. In contrast to the last two episodes, Joseph here is not wearing his red robe, indicating that he was not in a festive mood.



Figure 17 - St Joseph discovers Mary's pregnancy (detail)

The Gospel of Matthew (1:20) recounts the story of the *First Dream of St Joseph*⁷⁷ where an angel appears during his dream stating that he should return to Mary and accept her as his bride; after waking up he went back home. Joseph is depicted sleeping in front of a tree surrounded by his tools, wearing the same clothes from the last episode (fig. 18). The angel is on his left side and holds a band with a Latin inscription with Gothic writing that reflects his appearance: *Joseph, fili David, noli timere accipere Mariam coniugem tuam, quod in ea natum est de spiritu sancto est* (Matthew 1: 20) (fig. 19). As this Latin band is large the angel nearly touches the building on his left side. It resembles a monastic complex with a central tower completed with a horizontal body, recalling a Romanesque building.

⁷⁵ James, 1955, p. 74 and pp. 84-86.

⁷⁶ Idem, op. cit., pp. 39-41.

⁷⁷ I call this episode "first dream" because the last episode also is a dream, which I call "second". The biblical texts do not differentiate between the two, i.e., they call it simply "dream".

In the first plan of the painting on the right side occurs the fifth episode of this narrative story, the *Repentance of Joseph's Doubt* (fig. 20). It is a continuation of the last episode in the sense that Joseph comes back home to apologize to Mary for his behaviour and to show his faithfulness. He kneels in front of her wearing the same clothes as before, while she is standing in front of him⁷⁸. Additionally, the house behind them is very simple with four openings, including the main door. Mary is wearing the same cloak as in the third episode in which her part of the green cloak is still in the doorway. Her pregnant belly is already noticeable, while her bright blonde hair has a halo; this could symbolize and represent her dignity as Christ's mother. In turn, Joseph's face and his eyes clearly show a certain regret for his previous attitude. In his sheath, he carries several tools, including augers and drills. Behind the couple, on an elevation of the terrain, a tree is represented; the leaves are green on the top but also brown, which can indicate autumn. Moreover, the red flowers below the tree can symbolize Mary's prodigious fertility.



Figure 18 - First Dream of St Joseph (detail)

⁷⁸ Lauwerys, 1960, vol. II, p. 160.



Figure 19 - Latin inscription (detail)

One of the major subjects of the fifteenth century was the Nativity, depicted in the centre of the panel. It is represented in the Bethlehem stable on a rock, a symbol of the birth of Christ (fig. 21). Some animals appear in the background, such as parrots, a donkey, and an ox; according to the tradition, these last two eat straws. Surrounding the new-born child are four angels adoring him. The child is on the floor embodied in the green cloak of Mary, looking into her eyes.

St Joseph is approaching the scene holding a candle in his left hand while his right hand protects the flame against the wind⁷⁹. According to St Brigid's vision, Joseph arrived at the cave and fixed the candle on the wall and left the scene to not be present at the birth of the child. The importance of this light is intrinsically connected to the fact that the child was born during the night in the cave; the darkness was transformed into light, i.e., the laws of nature were changed⁸⁰. Nonetheless, the scene here receives a strong light, which contradicts part of the medieval vision and story.

On the right corner of the panel occurs the last episode, the so-called *Second Dream of St Joseph* (fig. 22). After his exhaustive working day as a carpenter, Joseph fell asleep on a

⁷⁹ According to St Brigid's vision, the candle was in St Joseph's left hand – as depicted here –; however, in some cases that does not happen, for instance, in Jacques Daret's *Nativity*, ca. 1434-1435, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, Inv. no. 124 (1935.17). In this case, the candle is in his right hand, which can indicate a different interpretation or mistake by the painter.

⁸⁰ Bergh, Birger (ed.). *Den heliga Birgitta Revelations Book VII*, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri AB, 1967, pp. 187-190.

bench with his tools in front of him, such as a jigsaw, a few beams, and a square tray. During his sleep, an angel comes again touching his left arm and tells the following message written in the Latin band: *Surge, accipe puerum et matrem eius et fuge in Egiptam et esto ibi [usque] dum dicam tibi* (Matthew 2:13); Joseph is advised to take his family and flight into Egypt before the Massacre of the Innocents and stay there (fig. 23). Dressed as in the previous episodes, and although the designation of this episode is his ‘dream’, Joseph has his right eye half-open. Additionally, his clothes appear to be clean compared to the dirty ones of his First Dream on the left side of the panel. Behind the scene, a small window is represented through which and above which the gilded background is visible.

Throughout the painting a considerable number of objects associated with Saint Joseph are depicted (figs. 18, 20, and 23); Mary’s husband was the saint patron of carpenters. Here the artist reproduced practically the same objects as the ones from the right wing of the *Mérode Altarpiece* attributed to the workshop of Robert Campin (fig. 24). This reinforces the character of devotion and adoration to this saint which could explain the function of the panel.

The depiction of the life of St Joseph before the Flight into Egypt is rare within the fifteenth-century European context. For a long period, the Hoogstraten panel was considered a ‘copy’ of the lost Campin’s triptych with two shutters which the left side is preserved at Museo del Prado (fig. 11), in part due to the similitude of both representations. Through a hypothetical reconstruction (figs. 25 and 26) it is possible to have an idea of how both paintings share a common characteristic, that is, possibly the same iconography and roughly the same size in length – although no evidence exists to clarify the dimensions of the original triptych. Nonetheless, Campin’s painting differs in one aspect: the painting’s reverse depicts St Clara and most likely St James, both in grisaille (fig. 27). Quite often the scholarship repeats the hypothesis that Campin’s panel was a commission for a convent of the order of Poor Clares, due the painting’s reverse, thus establishing a connection with the cult of the St Joseph; however, this assumption does not have any secure and documented evidence with any religious institution⁸¹.

⁸¹ I am grateful to José Juan Pérez Preciado, for pointing out this “wrong” historical background, which will be addressed in the forthcoming *Pintura holandesa en el Museo Nacional del Prado. Catálogo* (2023). Nonetheless, important studies about this issue should be considered, see Nash, Susie (ed.). *Robert Campin: new directions in scholarship*. Museums at the Crossroads, 2. Turnhout: Brepols, 1996, pp. 55-69; Châtelet, 1996, pp. 299-300. For a general overview see Pérez Preciado, José Juan. “Restituir la paternidad de algunas tablas muy bellas. Sobre las atribuciones históricas de la pintura neerlandesa antigua en el Museo del Prado (1819-1912)” *Boletín del Museo del Prado*, 32, (2014), pp. 6-29.

Precisely due to this incorrect provenance hypothesis, the historiography positioned the Hoogstraten panel origin in a convent of the Poor Clares, repeating the same argumentation, i.e., the devotion to St Joseph by the religious order⁸². As one can notice, the panel in the reverse does not have any decoration, contrary to Campin's panel (fig. 3). As far as I know, the association between the painting and the Poor Clares is purely an assumption without any documentation or factual evidence; I suppose the scholarship, in the lack of further data, used the same line of thought as the one used in Campin's painting.



Figure 20 - Repentance of Joseph Doubt (detail)



Figure 21 - Nativity (detail)

⁸² The convent in Hoogstraten (Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ter Kroon) was founded in 1489, in 1494 a new structure was added and in 1527 an entirely new monastery was built. Assuming that the panel is from 1440s, this provenance hypothesis is very unlikely. For more about the convent see Thiels, Nancy; Plomteux, Greet. *Klein Seminarie* (2002) – <https://id.erfgoed.net/erfgoedobjecten/46595> - (accessed 21 September 2022).



Figure 22 - Second Dream of St Joseph (detail)



Figure 23 – Second Latin inscription (detail)



Figure 24 – Attributed to the workshop of Robert Campin, *Mérode Altarpiece* (detail of the right-wing), ca. 1427-1432. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

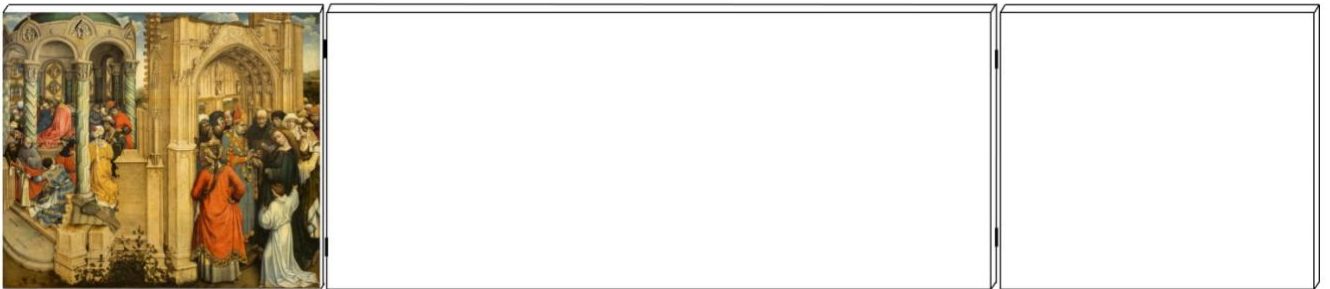


Figure 25 – Hypothetical reconstruction of Campin's triptych – with two shutters © Ricardo Neto



Figure 26 – Hoogstraten panel might show how Campin's painting looked like



Figure 27 – Robert Campin, *The Betrothal of the Virgin* (detail of the reverse with depictions of St James and St Clara). © Museo del Prado, Madrid

II. Memorial Tablet for the Lords of Montfoort⁸³ (fig. 28)

Artist active in Northern Netherlands

Provenance: altar of the Virgin Mary, at St Janskerk, Linschoten, Utrecht

69.5 x 142.9 cm, ca. 1400, oil on panel, Rijksmuseum,

Amsterdam, inv. no. SK-A-831



Figure 28 - Memorial Tablet for the Lords of Montfoort © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

From the thirteenth century up to the fifteenth century, the area today known as Friesland in the Netherlands had the so-called *Fries-Hollandse Oorlogen* (Friso-Hollandic Wars)⁸⁴. Diverse political actors were involved, among them the De Rovere family of Montfoort, who possibly commissioned the painting⁸⁵. It entered the private collection of Jonkheer Godschalck van Harmale, Hofstede Heulenstein, in 1659; after being kept in diverse collections, it ended in 1885 in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Nothing is known about the painter but seems likely that was active in the same region. Likewise, this pre-Eyckian panel shows a mix of ‘influences’ of French manuscript

⁸³ As noted by Victor M. Schmidt ‘memorial tablets’ or ‘epitaphs’ were executed in multiple media, for example, mural paintings, reliefs, and statues, among others. In these media, the portraits are the most important part. Schmidt, Victor M. “Diptychs and Supplicants: Precedents and Contexts of Fifteenth-Century Devotional Diptychs” in *Essays in Context: Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych*, edited by John Oliver Hand and Ron Spronk. Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 19. For more on this matter see Bueren, Truus van, *Leven na de dood. Gedenken in de late Middeleeuwen*. Utrecht: Museum Catharijneconvent, 1999.

⁸⁴ On this matter see Janse, Antheun. *Grenzen aan de Macht - De Friese oorlog van de graven van Holland omstreeks 1400*, Den Haag: Stichting Hollandse Historische Reeks, 1993.

⁸⁵ J.G. Frederiks in Obreen, Frederik Daniel Otto (ed.). *Archief voor Nederlandsche kunstgeschiedenis: verzameling van meerendeels onuitgegeven berichten en mededeelingen betreffende Nederlandsche schilders, plaatsnijders ...* Rotterdam, Van Hengel & Eeltje, 1877-90. Vol. VI, 1884-87.

illumination, and Burgundian, and German ‘primitive painting’ of the same period⁸⁶. The panel is inserted in the period of the *Friese Vrijheid* (Frisian freedom) and due to that, a depiction of the family’s knights is not surprising. Due to diverse reasons, the painting suffered severe paint losses and was overpainted. Additionally, contrary to what was common in this period there is no underdrawing. In a scenario against a blue background with gold stars Virgin Mary is depicted on the left side and St George on the right side, with four members of the De Rover family. Three of these knight men are identified by the inscription below the scene:

“in the year of Our Lord 1345, on Sts Cosmas and Damian’s Day, killed by the Frisians along with Count Willem of Hainaut, Holland and Zeeland, and Lord of Friesland: Lord Jan van Montfoort, Lord Roelof van Montfoort, Lord Willem van Montfoort, with many of their kin, friends and subordinates. Pray for all their souls. This was portrayed in the year 1608; portrayed for the third time in 1770”⁸⁷

From the left to the right side: Jan I, Burgrave of Montfoort, his great-uncle Roelof de Rovere van Heulestein, and his uncle Willem de Rovere van Montfoort⁸⁸. All of them fought in the Battle of Warns, on 26 September 1345 in order to stop a rebellion by the Frisians. The unidentified fourth knight – the nearest of St George – based on the family’s story is most likely Hendrik de Rovere van Heulestein, who also fought and died in battle⁸⁹. Each knight wears the same tunic and armour. Likewise, St George on the right side is identified by his banner and shield with a red cross on a white field⁹⁰ (figs. 29 and 30).

Due to the conservation-state it is not possible anymore to perceive the third-dimension effect of the drapery. This part of the painting recalls French manuscript illumination, for

⁸⁶ J. Niessen, 2010, 'Anonymous, Memorial Tablet for the Lords of Montfoort, Northern Netherlands, c. 1400', in J.P. Filedt Kok (ed.), *Early Netherlandish Paintings*, online coll. cat. Amsterdam: hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.7027 (accessed 3 November 2022).

⁸⁷ Original: “int jaer ons heeren durent drie hondert vijf en veertich op sante cosmas en damianus dach doe bleven doot op die vriezen bij grave willem van heynegouwen van hollant en van Zeland en heer van Vrieslant heer jan van Montfoorde heer roeloff van Montfoorde heer willem van Montfoorde met veel hare magen vrienden en onderhebbenden. Bidt voor haer allen zielen. // dit is verlicht anno 1608; voor de derde maal verlicht 1770”. Transcribed in Plomp, N. “Een Linschotens schilderstuk uit de veertiende eeuw”, in *Heemtijdinghen XIII* (1977), p. 46. The deaths of these three identified men are confirmed in the necrology of the Abbey of St Servaas in Utrecht, Idem, op. cit. pp. 46-47. The last phrase of the inscription was added in the eighteenth century, together with the coat of arms of the family.

⁸⁸ Niessen, op. cit.

⁸⁹ This identification was discussed by Plomp, op. cit. pp. 46. Suggestions were made that possibly his name was also recorded in the inscription, however, if that was the case, the name disappeared, due to the conservation-state.

⁹⁰ Kirschbaum, Engelbert (ed.). *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, Freiburg, VI, 1974, col. 365-390, s.v. “Georg”.

instance, the *Virgin and Child* by Jacquemart de Hesdin in the title page of the *Très belles heures du Duc de Berry*, ca. 1400 (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België), which was probably a widespread drawing model (fig. 31 and 32).

Furthermore, the arrangement of the painting with a similar background was still in use in the second quarter of the fifteenth century in Germany, for example, in the *Adoration of the Magi* by an anonymous painter from Cologne (Wallraf-Richartz-Museum), although with a red background⁹¹.



Figure 29 – Leftmost knight, i.e., the first, identified as Jan I, Burgrave of Montfoort (detail)



Figure 30 – St George (detail)



Figure 31 – Virgin and the Child (detail)



Figure 32 - Jacquemart de Hesdin, *The Virgin and Child*, title page of the *Très belles heures du Duc de Berry*, ca. 1400. miniature on parchment, 27.5 x 18.5 cm. © Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België

⁹¹ See the painting in Appendix, section 3.

III. Kortessem Panel – Alken Predella⁹² (fig. 33)

Artist possibly active in Limburg

Provenance: Unknown

62.5 x 273 x 3 cm, ca. 1400, walnut, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België/Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels, inv. no. 4883



Figure 33 - Kortessem Panel – Alken Predella © KIK-IRPA, Brussels – Episodes

Like the Hoogstraten panel, the *Kortessem Panel* (also known as *Alken Predella*) was discovered in the region of Flanders, but in this case in the year 1925. On the underside of a seventeenth-century dresser in a château of the family of Louis Ghysens, the unpainted back of the painting was the top of the dresser's lower section, while the front was 'safe' in the interior⁹³. After the discovery of the panel, and especially after Georges de Froidcourt's publication in 1949-1950⁹⁴, many studies were made without any conclusive answer as to the authorship, style, and provenance⁹⁵. Although most of the scholarship agrees to assign it as a 'Flemish' artwork, it is considered that the artist was rather aware of, or in contact with many influences, including French, Bohemian, English, and Italian⁹⁶.

As a result of poor conservation conditions and various treatments since its discovery, the original paint layer is damaged in several places⁹⁷. This large pre-Eyckian panel represents four episodes beneath an arcade of five arches, each of them divided by colonettes⁹⁸ (fig. 33).

⁹² See footnote 4 of the present study. This analysis follows mainly the latest extensive study dedicated to this painting, inserted in the catalogue: Stroo, (ed.), 2009, pp. 197-271.

⁹³ Idem, op. cit., pp. 198-202.

⁹⁴ De Froidcourt, Georges, 'Histoire anecdotique du "panneau de Cortessem"', *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique liégeois*, 67 (1950), pp. 79-91.

⁹⁵ Stroo, (ed.), op. cit., p. 199.

⁹⁶ Idem, op. cit., p. 198.

⁹⁷ Accordingly with the imaging and technical examination of 2003, 2005 and laboratory studies from 2003 to 2008, it is believed that a fifth episode existed alongside the *Presentation in the Temple*. Idem, op. cit., pp. 198; 229-231.

⁹⁸ Smeyers, Maurits. "De 'Taferelen uit het Leven van Maria' uit de Koninklijke Musea te Brussel en het zgn. pre-Eyckiaans realisme" in *Bulletin van de Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België/Musées royaux*

Contrary to what is sometimes said, the cycle of the Life of the Virgin is not in the New Testament, but in the apocryphal Gospel of James and the *Legenda aurea*. The first two episodes of this painting were uncommonly depicted in this period⁹⁹.

In an arched building with a colourful tiled floor, *Joachim and Anne meet at the Golden Gate*¹⁰⁰, upon learning that she will bear a child. On the top above their heads on a banderole, the inscription – *den heer s(ij) gebenedijt inder Ewichheit* (The Lord be blessed in eternity) – in Limburg or Mosan dialect which, can determine the provenance or place of origin¹⁰¹. Holding the right hand of each other, Joachim looks at her eyes, and Anne in contrapposto is looking at the hands; this hands' joining depicts the *dextrarum iunctio* of the Roman iconography (fig. 34)¹⁰². The book that Anne carries in her left hand alludes to her maternal role as the nurturer of Mary¹⁰³. Joachim and Anne's age difference stands out; while he is a rich elderly man¹⁰⁴ with a long grey beard, Anne contrasts with her youth and white veil.

In a long and furnished bed, the second episode, the *Birth of the Virgin* (James, 5:2), is depicted. This bed combined with the table occupies roughly the entire scene where Anne is seated with her newborn child (fig. 35). One would expect a tiny child, but instead, Mary's size suggests an older age than it was supposed to be. Both female figures – the mother and the daughter – are cradling in their arms, looking at the eyes of each other. Behind the bed possibly a table has among other objects, a knife, a glass, and a basket of bread. Contrary to the first scene, here the faces of the figures receive more light, presumably through the oil lamp suspended from the ceiling¹⁰⁵.

des Beaux-Arts de Belgique (Miscellanea Henri Pauwels), 38-40/1-3, 1992, p. 82. See also Stroo, (ed.), op. cit., pp. 232-233, notes no. 165-167.

⁹⁹ Réau, 1957, pp. 155-164; Van der Linden, Stijn (with the collaboration of Esther Scheepers), *De heiligen*, ed. Sjoerd de Jong, Amsterdam-Antwerp, 1999, pp. 66-68; 441-442; Idem, op. cit., p. 266.

¹⁰⁰ The “Golden Gate” is not literally represented here, but it seems likely that a subsequent episode is depicted when the couple is returning home – the arched building possibly tries to emphasize it –; additionally, there is no kiss. Depending on the author, different arguments and perspectives are giving on this matter. Idem, op. cit., p. 266, notes 205 and 206.

¹⁰¹ On this matter see in particular Van Puyvelde, Leo. *La Peinture Flamande au siècle des Van Eyck*, Paris-Brussels-New York-Amsterdam-London, 1953, p. 52; Lejeune, Jean. *Les Van Eyck, peintres de Liège et de sa cathédrale*, Liège, 1956, pp. 22-23; Idem, op. cit., pp. 200-201.

¹⁰², Stephen D. “Dexiosis and Dextrarum Iunctio: The Sacred Handclasp in the Classical and Early Christian World” in *Mormon Studies Review* 18 (2006), 18, pp. 431-436.

¹⁰³ Idem, op. cit., p. 236.

¹⁰⁴ According to the Apocrypha – Gospel of the Birth of Mary and Protoevangelium of James – Joachim was extremely wealthy.

¹⁰⁵ Stroo, (ed.), op cit., p. 230.



Figure 34 - *Meeting of Joachim and Anne* (detail)



Figure 35 - *Birth of the Virgin* (detail)

The final episode of the Life of the Virgin is represented in the central part of the panel, the *Coronation of the Virgin*¹⁰⁶, in which Mary receives her crown from two angels (fig. 30). Depicted on the left side of the scene, Mary has on her right side her son's blessing as *Salvator Mundi*, with his left hand holding an orb (known as *Globus cruciger*), which is an imperial attribute. Surrounding them are the musician angels, who turn the coronation into a festive scene. Whereas Mary and Christ occupy a large part of the representation, the angels are quite small. The gesture of the crowned Virgin towards Christ was rather popular in the Southern Netherlands of the early fifteenth century; in contrast, in the Italian Trecento Christ was often represented by placing the crown on the Virgin's head¹⁰⁷.

The right side – the most damaged part of the panel – shows the *Presentation in the Temple* (Luke 2:23–24)¹⁰⁸. Mary is holding her child and gives him to Simeon¹⁰⁹. Behind her, two figures peep over a screen that divides the altar scene from the rest of the composition. The haloed figure in red to the left of the Virgin one is identified as Joseph or Anna the Prophetess (figs. 36 and 37).

¹⁰⁶ The intrinsic meaning of the *Coronation* is the apotheosis of the Virgin, as *Sponsa Dei*. Smeyers, 1992, p. 76; Stroo, (ed.), 2009, p. 232.

¹⁰⁷ Idem, op. cit., p. 324.

¹⁰⁸ Following Voragine's accounts one will observe that this feast was known by three names: Purification; Hypopanti and Candlemas. On this matter and the differences see Idem, op. cit., p. 244.

¹⁰⁹ The laboratory studies revealed that behind Simeon existed a male figure – unidentified –, however, only a small vestige of the face remains. Idem, op. cit., p. 231.



Figure 36 - *Coronation of the Virgin* (detail)



Figure 37 - *Presentation in the Temple* (detail)

IV. Rogier van der Weyden's *The lamentation over the dead Christ* (fig. 38)

Artist in Tournai and Brussels

Provenance: Unknown

80.6 x 130.1 cm, ca. 1460-1464, oil on oak, Mauritshuis, The Hague, inv. no. 264



Figure 38 - Rogier van der Weyden's *The lamentation over the dead Christ*. © Mauritshuis, The Hague

In his 1953 publication, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, Erwin Panofsky emphasized the simplification that Renaissance Italian authors had towards the painting north of the Alps: Jan van Eyck as the founder master of the 'new' school and Rogier van der Weyden as his pupil¹¹⁰. Notwithstanding, *meester Rogier* had an extensive, productive, and profitable workshop that made him hold the title of *stadsschilder* ('painter of the town of Brussels')¹¹¹.

Within the heterogeneous group of Van der Weyden's oeuvre, *The lamentation over the dead Christ* (fig. 38) is exceptional for its horizontal format. Bought and incorporated in the Mauritshuis collection in 1827 by order of King William I of the Netherlands, the panel was for a long time attributed to Hans Memling – one of the many pupils of Rogier. In the mid-nineteenth century, this attribution was dismissed and accredited to Van der Weyden. More recently, this was contested, and it is most likely that the painting was finished after his death in 1464 by one of his apprentices in his workshop.

¹¹⁰ Panofsky, imp. 1971, pp. 153-154.

¹¹¹ On this matter see Van Bendegem, J. P. *Jan van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden en de ontdekking van de wereld*. Enschede, Rijksmuseum Twenthe, 2014.

One aspect of Rogier van der Weyden's paintings is his ability to show emotion and intensity in the faces of each figure represented. The most well-known examples are his portraits, such as *Portrait of a Woman with a Winged Bonnet*, ca. 1440 (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) where the feminine figure looks directly at the viewer showing serenity and tranquillity¹¹². The *Lamentation over the dead Christ* is no exception. After the death of Christ and the descent of his body from the cross, a group of people mourn his life's end. Inserted in the Passion of Christ – the final period of his life – this iconographic representation increased towards the end of the first millennium¹¹³. As described in the Gospel of Saint John (19:38-40), Christ's body was taken down from the cross and prepared for burial. Present at this moment were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, here as usual at the left and right side of Christ respectively. The moment of the 'lamentation' is manifested by the Virgin, who mourns the tragic end of her son's life, supported by John the Evangelist. The painting north of the Alps typically represented the scene at the foot of the cross – as in the case of this panel – with Jerusalem represented as a Netherlandish city, with palaces in the background¹¹⁴.

In a green hilly landscape, possibly Golgotha, Christ is laid down on the ground supported by Joseph of Arimathea, who took the crown of thorns from his head. While he is wrapping him on the shroud, Nicodemus is on the right side of the composition holding up a slip of this cloth. Dramatically, the Virgin kneeling beside him cries while praying for her beloved son's life (fig. 39). The emotion and tranquillity on her face resemble the same model that Rogier previously used in the central panel of the *Seven Sacraments Altarpiece*, ca. 1445-1450 (Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp), where the detail of the tears transmits the sentiment of loss (fig. 40). In the Lamentation she is supported by John the Evangelist who stands behind her and is elevated over the rest of the figures. Behind Christ, the three Maries feel the loss, as described in the canonical gospels (Mark 15:40–41): Mary Magdalen, who is holding the ointment jar while drying her tears with her cloak; and Mary of Clopas and Mary Salome, wife of Zebedee. In the foreground between these figures and Christ is displayed a skull which is an allusion to Golgotha, the place of the crucifixion (Gospel of Matthew 27, 33; Mark 15, 22; Luke 23, 33; John 19, 17).

¹¹² On this matter see Campbell, Lorne. *Van der Weyden*; London, Chaucer, 2004.

¹¹³ Réau Louis, 1955, vol. II, 393-400.

¹¹⁴ For example: Gerard David's *Lamentation*, ca. 1515-1523, National Gallery, London, inv. no. NG1078. In the background behind the stairs used to down Christ's body a Netherlandish citadel is depicted. On this matter see Campbell, Lorne. National Gallery (London). *The Fifteenth-Century Netherlandish Schools*. London, The National Gallery Catalogues, 1998.



Figure 39 - Virgin's face (detail)



Figure 40 - Rogier van der Weyden, *Seven Sacraments Altarpiece* (detail of the Virgin's face in the central panel), ca. 1445-1450. © Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp

On the right side of the panel, among the men next to Nicodemus, features St Paul carrying the sword, which is a reminder of his martyrdom. The other male figure is St Peter, who carries the keys of Heaven given by Christ. The kneeling bishop in the foreground is possibly the painting's commissioner¹¹⁵. The embroidered borders of the cope resemble the arch motifs of the *St John Altarpiece*, ca. 1455 (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin), although here they represent the twelve apostles.

Rogier van der Weyden's models were widely spread after his death and used by his contemporaries. As Panofsky pointed out, Hugo van der Goes in his *Portinari Altarpiece* was inspired by the body models used by Rogier and his sculptural forms¹¹⁶.

¹¹⁵ Panofsky in 1953 suggested a connection between this figure and St Peter behind him in the painting. He proposed that the bishop might be Pierre de Ranchicourt, Bishop of Arras, who at the time was the only Bishop in the Netherlands whose first name was Peter. I will address this issue in the next chapter.

¹¹⁶ Panofsky, 1953, p. 277.

V. Petrus Christus' *The Lamentation*¹¹⁷ (fig. 41)

Artist active in Bruges

Provenance: Jeruzalemkerk, Bruges

98 x 188 cm, 1455-1460, oil on wood,

Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België/Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de

Belgique, Brussels, inv. no. 564



Figure 41 - Petrus Christus' *The Lamentation* © Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België

Most of the chronology of Petrus Christus's oeuvre was established by Friedländer, with strong opposition from Otto Pächt¹¹⁸. Both authors compared *The Lamentation* with Rogier van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross*, ca. 1435 (Museo del Prado, Madrid), to show how the painter from Baarle used the figures' disposition surrounding Christ, the drama, and chiaroscuro in the panel. Although both authors disagreed on the dating of the panel nowadays in Brussels, this analysis follows the commonly accepted dating of ca. 1455-1460.

The painting entered the museum in 1844, together with the altarpiece of *The Assumption of the Virgin* by Albrecht Bouts, which was in the private collection of the Brussels

¹¹⁷ There are two smaller *Lamentations* painted by Petrus Christus in the same period, ca. 1450: the first is preserved at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 91.26.12; the other at Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. RF 1951-45. Both were included and attributed to the artist by Friedländer, Max J. *Die Van Eyck, Petrus Christus, [2. Aufl.]*; *Die Altniederländische Malerei, I*; Leiden, Sijthoff, 1934.

¹¹⁸ Idem, op. cit., p. 81-91 and 95-97; Pächt Otto. *Early Netherlandish painting: from Rogier van der Weyden to Gerard David*; London, Harvey Miller, 2010.

art dealer Albert Lucq. According to Ainsworth based on Friedländer's opinion, the panel was a commission of the Bruges family the Adornes¹¹⁹.

In opposition to Rogier van der Weyden's *The lamentation*, this painting represents fewer figures. As a consequence, there is more space between the figures, creating a disconnection between them. Although both 'Flemish' painters depicted the same iconographic episode¹²⁰, they had different points of view, or the commissioner asked for different elements: for instance, in Christus' painting, he does not represent the cross in the background but emphasizes a Flemish landscape with small hills. Additionally, the non-interconnection between the figures is notorious, where Mary Magdalene is set apart from the others, with her back to the painful moment (figs. 42 and 43).

The Virgin's face shows serenity, while the pathos is emphasized by her arms, i.e., she falls resigned at Christ's feet, supported by John the Evangelist and Mary of Clopas or Mary Salome – it is not possible to identify who is who. Her drapery is sharp by the light that comes from the right side of the panel; however, the outline and shadow are less prominent than the one applied on Mary Magdalene's clothes. This central part where the Virgin is represented reflects the central part of van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross*, in which the bodies are emphasized by an S-curve.



Figure 42 - Mary Magdalene (detail)

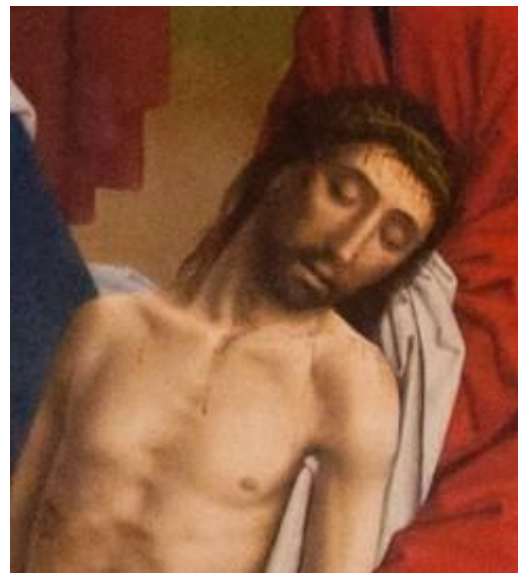


Figure 43 - Christ's face (detail)

¹¹⁹ Ainsworth (ed.). exh. cat. 1994, 25-27.

¹²⁰ To the formal analysis and biblical sources see Rogier van der Weyden's *The lamentation over the dead Christ* of the present study (IV).

VI. Hugo van der Goes' *Adoration of the Shepherds*¹²¹ (fig. 44)

Artist active in Ghent and Brussels

Provenance: Unknown

97 × 245 cm, ca. 1480, oil on oak,

Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, inv. no. 16622A



Figure 44 - Hugo van der Goes's *Adoration of the Shepherds* © bpk / Gemäldegalerie, SMB / Dietmar Gunne

When in 1550 the famous Italian biographer Giorgio Vasari in his *Vite* wrote that an ‘Ugo d’Anversa’ painted the *Portinari Altarpiece*, his fame spread across the Italian peninsula¹²². In the following centuries, many of the paintings attributed to him were based on Vasari’s passage and assumptions¹²³.

Within Hugo van der Goes’ oeuvre, the *Adoration of the Shepherds* together with the *Death of the Virgin*, ca. 1475 (Groeningemuseum, Bruges), can be situated in the painter’s last creative period before his death in 1482. Intrinsically connected with the *Devotio Moderna*

¹²¹ This analysis follows mainly the publications of Ridderbos, Bernhard. *De Melancholie van de kunstenaar: Hugo van der Goes en de oudnederlandse schilderkunst*. Den Haag: SDU 's-Gravenhage:, 1991; Dhanens, Elisabeth. *Hugo van der Goes*. Antwerpen: Mercatorfonds, 1998; Idem; Van Buren, A (ed.). *Early Netherlandish paintings: rediscovery, reception, and research*; Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2005, pp. 100-148. Although I did not use for this study because it is not published yet, see the catalogue of the upcoming exhibition dedicated to Hugo’s artistic life at the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin. Kemperdick, Stephan; Eising, Erik (ed.). *Hugo van der Goes: Between Pain and Bliss* (exh. cat.), Berlin, Hirmer Publishers, 2023.

¹²² Vasari, Giorgio. *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori* (ed. 1550), Firenze, 1550, p. 87; Dhanens, 1998.

¹²³ In the case of the *Adoration of the Shepherds* Otto Pächt and Elisabeth Dhanens diverge in their opinions and considered it as an early work, i.e., before 1480. Dhanens, op. cit., pp. 158-159; However, recent dendrochronological analysis indicated that it might be after 1476. Grosshans, Rainald. “IRR-Investigations of the Panel Paintings by Hugo van der Goes in the Berlin Gemäldegalerie” in *Jérôme Bosch et son entourage et autres études*. Edited by Héléne Verougstraete and Roger Van Schoute, Leuven/Paris, Peeters. 2003, pp. 235-249.

(New Devotion movement), Hugo produced extraordinary paintings while his madness affected him personally and his art¹²⁴. Before entering in the Gemäldegalerie collection in 1903, it was part of the private collection of María Cristina de Borbón, Princesa de las Dos Sicilias in Madrid.

The *Adoration of the Shepherds* appears in the Gospel of Luke (2:16-20), recounting that an angel appeared to a group of shepherds giving the message that the Saviour was born in the city of David. They hurry up to go to Bethlehem to visit the new-born baby and spread the news. It is precisely at this moment that Hugo's painting represents¹²⁵. In the foreground, two half-length prophets are opening the green curtains to reveal to the viewer the child as the centre of attention. The one from the left side does not contain his curiosity and while is holding the curtain looks at the scene, while the other one faces the viewer with strong eyes (fig. 45).

While through an opening on the right side in the background of the stable happens the annunciation to the shepherds, on the left side they are approaching the main scene. In the second moment, they are looking inside the stable, while their faces reveal admiration and surprise at the event. At the centre occurs the main scene with the new-born child completely naked attracting the attention of every figure present at this divine moment. Looking directly at the viewer outside this theatrical scenario, his face does not represent any emotion (fig. 46). Mary and Joseph looking at him with serenity while kneeling and praying. The Virgin has golden rays above her head. In turn, Joseph who was supposed to be an older man, compared to the prophets seems young with a small beard. Behind them, angels are praying, wearing mostly clothes with soft colours. Additionally, the composition is illuminated from the left side by the two advancing shepherds, who have rushed to enter the stable.

¹²⁴ On this matter see Van Engen, J. *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings*; The Classics of Western Spirituality; New York, Paulist Press, 1988, p. 10; Idem, *Sisters, and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages*; The Middle Ages Series; Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

¹²⁵ Many authors analyze this painting through Geert Grote's treatise *On the four kinds of things on which one can meditate (De quattuor generibus meditabilium)*, a key book within the *devotio moderna* movement. On this matter see Buskirk, Jessica. "Hugo Van Der Goes's Adoration of the Sheperds: Between ascetic idealism and urban networks in late medieval Flanders." *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 6 (2014), pp. 1-40. <https://doi.org/10.5092/jhna.2014.6.1.1>. For Hans Belting the panel "is indeed a scene in the theatrical sense, as we see the curtains opening on the stable in Bethlehem as if the play is about to begin". Belting, Hans; Kruse, Christiane. *Die Erfindung des Gemäldes: Das erste Jahrhundert der niederländischen Malerei*. München: Hirmer, 1994, p. 203-220.

In the foreground, the flowers might be an allusion to the virtues and sorrows of the Virgin, whereas the sheaf of corn refers to Bethlehem, i.e., the ‘house of Bread’ (John, 6:41)¹²⁶. Moreover, the flowering plants¹²⁷ on either side also appear in the famous *Portinari Altarpiece*.



Figure 45 - Prophet on the right side (detail)



Figure 46 – New-born child (detail)

¹²⁶ Ridderbos; Van Buren (ed.), 2005, p. 109.

¹²⁷ Hugo was active in Bruges and Elisabeth Dhanens suggested that he might have known the famous member of *rederijerskamer De Heilige Geest* of the city, Anthonis de Roovere. The floral imagery in the panel could be related to floral symbolism used by Roovere in his odes to the Virgin. Dhanens, 1997, pp. 157-159; On a more general analysis regarding the herbs see Behling, Lottlisa. *Die Pflanze in der mittelalterlichen Tafelmalerei*. 2nd ed., Köln: Böhlau, 1967, pp. 59-60, 64-66.

VII. Hans Memling's *Scenes from the Passion of Christ*¹²⁸ (fig. 47)

Artist active in Brussels and Bruges

Provenance: Possibly the Sint-Jakobskerk or
the church of Franciscan Observants, both in Bruges

54.9 x 90.1 cm¹²⁹, ca. 1470-1471, oil on oak, Galleria Sabauda, Turin, inv. no. 358



Figure 47 - Hans Memling's *Scenes from the Passion of Christ* © Galleria Sabauda, Turin

The fame of Hans Memling was still highly considerable many decades after his death as it was recounted by a scholar in the mid-sixteenth century¹³⁰. His painting *Scenes from the Passion of Christ* (also known as *Passione di Torino*) is intrinsically connected with the *Seven Joys of the Virgin*, ca. 1480 (Alte Pinakothek, Munich) (fig. 42) and the *Lübeck Passion* altarpiece, 1491 (St. Anne's Museum, Lübeck). The three constitute *Simultanbilder*, i.e., the

¹²⁸ Similar compositions of this depiction were painted roughly in the same period: Anonymous, *The Passion of Christ*, 101,7 x 148,6 cm, ca. 1470 – 1490, M-Leuven, inv. no. S/384/O; Anonymous, *Passion of Christ*, ca. 1480-1490, St. James church, Toruń; Anonymous, *Jerusalem Panorama*, 200 x 200 cm, ca. 1517, National Museum of the Azulejo, Lisbon, inv. no. MNAz 1 Pint.

¹²⁹ Depending on the author or publication the dimensions differ. However, this study follows the data of one of the latest exhibitions dedicated to the artist. Borchert, Till-Holger (ed.). *Memling: Rinascimento Fiammingo* (exh. cat.). Scuderie Papali al Quirinale, Rome; Milano: Skira, 2014, p. 112.

¹³⁰ “Die XI Augusti, Brugis obiit magister Johannes Memelinc, quem praedicabant peritissimum fuisse et excellentissimum pictorem totius tunc orbis christiani. Oriundus erat Magunciaco, sepultus Brugis ad Aegidii...” in Friedländer Max J. *Hans Memlinc und Gerard David*, [6. Aufl.]; Die Altniederländische Malerei, 1; Leiden, Sijthoff, 1934, p. 10.

depiction of a narrative scene in a single space¹³¹. In the specific case of diverse episodes from the Passion, the *Sobieski Hours*, ca. 1420-1430, by the so-called Master of the Bedford Hours (The Royal Library at Windsor Castle), and the *Wasservass Calvary*, ca. 1420 (Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne) in Cologne by the master with the same name¹³², are the best-known examples of the same kind of subject depiction, although the number of episodes included is far more limited.

The panel nowadays preserved in Turin was commissioned by Tommaso Portinari. At some point during the sixteenth century, the painting's owners were the Medici, who in 1570 donated it to Pope Pius V, who bequeathed it to the Complesso monumentale di Santa Croce e Tutti i Santi, Alessandria, Piemonte. Sacked during the Napoleonic Wars, it was sold to Victor Emmanuel I of Sardinia by a priest in the first half of the nineteenth century, and finally, Charles Albert of Sardinia donated to the new Galleria Sabauda in 1832.

The *Scenes from the Passion of Christ* represent a panoramic view of twenty-three episodes¹³³ starting in the bottom left corner and ending on the right side of the panel. At the centre is an imaginary view of Jerusalem, where according to the canonical writings these events happened within the city's walls. The scenes depict the narrative of the Gospels, from the entry into Jerusalem to Christ appearing by the Sea of Galilee (fig. 41). After entry into the city, the story continues with the cleaning of the Temple (Matthew 21:12–17, Mark 11:15–19, and Luke 19:45–48), followed by the event where Judas receives thirty pieces of silver from the high priests. Then, to the left, a bright Last Supper is depicted, and the following events tend to go to the centre of the panel. From Christ before Pilate to him carrying the Cross, these episodes are at the centre of the panel highlighted by a strong light that comes from the right side of the painting. From the Ecce Homo, the episodes go to the foreground, where a procession moves toward the right behind Christ on the way to Calvary. After being nailed to the cross, Christ is taken down by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, followed by the Entombment. In the top right corner, the supper at Emmaus is represented and further to the left, in a small depiction, of Christ appears to his disciples. In the lower corners of the panels

¹³¹ Lane, Barbara. *Hans Memling: master painter in fifteenth-century Bruges*; London, Harvey Miller, 2008. p. 53-59; 147-164.

¹³² Idem, op. cit. p. 53.

¹³³ For the entire description of these scenes see Aru, D.; Gérardon, E. de (eds.) *La Galerie Sabauda de Turin. Corpus de la peinture des anciens Pays-Bas méridionaux et de la principauté de Liège au quinzième siècle*, 5. Anvers: Sikkell, 1952, pp. 14-15; Barbara Lane does not consider the Making of the Cross part of the episodes of Christ's Passion, so she counts twenty-two episodes in total. Lane, 2008, p. 154, endnote no. 21.

isolated from the events, the donors were depicted as devout figures, praying and without looking at the scene¹³⁴.

Memling could have been inspired by the *tableaux vivants*, but this type of representation, i.e., many episodes in a single space, was uncommon at the end of the fifteenth century in Northern Europe¹³⁵. Additionally, as Borchert pointed out, the panel ‘should be placed in the context of late medieval religiosity’ where the viewer mentally could ‘visit’ the places of Salvation and pilgrimage with their own eyes¹³⁶.

VIII. Hans Memling’s *Seven Joys of the Virgin* (fig. 48)

Artist active in Brussels and Bruges

Provenance: chapel of the guild of the tanners at Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk, Bruges

81.3 × 189.2 cm, ca. 1480, oil on oak, Alte Pinakothek, Munich, inv. no. WAF 668



Figure 48 - Hans Memling’s *Seven Joys of the Virgin* © Alte Pinakothek, Munich

The second painting of Memling’s *Simultanbilder* is the *Seven Joys of the Virgin* (also known as *Coming and the Triumph of Christ and Advent and Triumph of Christ*)¹³⁷. It was

¹³⁴ Barbara Lane suggests that is Tommaso Portinari who is kneeling on the left side of the Betrayal, in which Christ turns toward him and is associated with Tommaso activities in the service of the Medici and the consequent betrayal of Angelo Tani and the funds. On this matter see Lane, 2008, pp. 125-127.

¹³⁵ Verougstraete; Schoute (ed.), 1997, p. 192.

¹³⁶ Aru; Geradon, 1952, p. 112.

¹³⁷ The painting’s title differs according to the author’s interpretation; some argue that it represents the Life of the Virgin and others the Life of Christ. On this matter see Coleman, Sally Whitman. “Hans Memling’s Scenes from the Advent and Triumph of Christ and the Discourse of Revelation.” *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 5, no. 1 (2013), pp. 1-24 <https://doi.org/10.5092/jhna.2013.5.1.1>.

commissioned by the tanner Pieter Bultynck, alderman of the city of Bruges, who is represented in the lower left¹³⁸. An inscription in the lost frame of the painting identified Bultynck and his wife as the donors and gives more details regarding the panel¹³⁹. After the donation, the painting would have hung in the tanners' chapel¹⁴⁰.

In contrast to the *Scenes from the Passion of Christ* (VII), the *Seven Joys of the Virgin* emphasizes the movement where each scene seems to have an interaction with the previous scene; this 'movement' is accentuated by the curving roads. With a total of twenty-five scenes from the Life of the Virgin, the depiction starts with the Infancy and ends with the Assumption. The narrative starts in the upper left corner with the Annunciation, moving down to the Annunciation to the shepherds and the Nativity¹⁴¹. Continuing the story, the painter depicted the Adoration of the Magi in the central foreground, the Massacre of the Innocents, and the rest on the Flight into Egypt. To end the infancy cycle, in the upper left corner, the Virgin is at the entrance of the Temple. Then the story continues to the right foreground, where the Resurrection and Christ's appearance are depicted, followed by *Noli me tangere* behind the Resurrection. On the left, the Ascension of Christ is witnessed by the apostles on a hill, and a minuscule scene shows Christ appearing on the sea of Galilee¹⁴². The third and last cycle starts with the Pentecost in the right foreground which is followed by the Death of the Virgin and her Assumption in the clouds in the corner of the painting.

Like the *Passion of Turin*, the donors – Pieter Bultynck and his wife Katelijne van Riebeke – are kneeling but without looking at the scenes, as if they had no intention to be part of the events. Some authors alluded to the fact that Memling emphasized the journey of the Magi, which could be associated with pilgrimage. The Magi were the patron saints of the travellers and pilgrims and so were the first ones who started the so-called Christian pilgrimage.

¹³⁸ Martens, 1992, p. 27.

¹³⁹ For the original passage see Appendix, section 2, doc. 7; Martens, op. cit., p. 235. For further details on provenance, see De Vos, 1994, p. 179.

¹⁴⁰ Coleman, 2013, pp. 4-5; Martens, 1994, pp. 171; 231.

¹⁴¹ Verougstraete; Schoute (ed.), 1994, p. 184.

¹⁴² Idem, op. cit., p. 185.

IX. *Scenes from the Life of Saint Lucy* (fig. 49)

Master of the Legend of Saint Lucy

Active in Bruges ca. 1475-1507

Provenance: unknown

79 x 183 cm, 1480, oil on oak, Sint-Jakobskerk, Bruges



Figure 49 - Master of the Legend of Saint Lucy's *Scenes from the Life of Saint Lucy* © Sint-Jakobskerk, Bruges

From the same generation as Hans Memling, the conventional name of the master of the Legend of Saint Lucy – coined by Max J. Friedländer in 1902 – derives from an altarpiece in the Sint-Jakobskerk, Bruges, which represents scenes from the life of this female saint¹⁴³. Little is known about the painting before the nineteenth century, when it was mentioned for the first time in the church's inventory of 1847¹⁴⁴. In the marble columns, two coats of arms are represented which were identified as those of the Blanckaert family, possibly the commissioners of the panel, but this theory is merely speculative¹⁴⁵. For decades the work was considered a central panel of a triptych, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁴³ Regarding the painter's identification see Martens, Didier. "Brugge Lucia legendi meister: üleavaade uurimistööst ja uued hüpoteesid = Der Brügger Meister der Lucialegende: Bilanz der Forschungen und neue Hypothesen" in *Eesti Kunstisidemed Madalmaadega 15. - 17. Sajandil / Eesti Kunstimuuseum. Toimetajad: Tiina Abel, Anu Mänd 20-83* (2000). pp. 20-83; Zdanov, Sacha. "Quelle identité pour le Maître de la Légende de sainte Lucie? Révision des hypothèses et proposition d'identification" in *Koregos. Revue et encyclopédie multimédia des arts sous l'égide de l'Académie royale de Belgique*, 2013, article 76, pp. 1-14.

¹⁴⁴ Wilenski, R. H. *Flemish Painters 1430-1830*; London, Faber and Faber, 1960, p. 58. Most of the information regarding the panel was written by Friedländer, 1903, pp. 84-85.

¹⁴⁵ On this matter see Weale, W. H. J. *Bruges et ses environs*; Bruges, De Brouwer, 1884, p. 146. Lavalleye, Jacques (ed.). *Anonieme Vlaamse Primitieven: Zuidnederlandse meesters met noodnamen van de 15de en het begin van de 16de eeuw: Tentoonstelling ingericht door de stad Brugge in het Groeningemuseum, 14 Juni - 21 September 1969* (exh. cat.). Brugge: Stad Brugge, 1969, pp. 205-206; Roberts, A. M. *The Master of the Legend of Saint Lucy: Catalogue and Critical Essay*. PhD Dissertation, 1982, p. 253.

This large panel painting recounts three episodes of the legend of St Lucy, a story widely spread as many others through Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*. When Lucy got sick, she together with her mother went on a pilgrimage to the grave of St Agatha. Recovering miraculously, both decided to convert to Christianity and give their possessions to the poor – the first scene on the left side. Regardless of it, Lucy's fiancé did not accept her act and dragged her before the consul Paschasius, who condemned her to prostitution – central scene. Nonetheless, by a miracle, she became so heavy that was impossible to punish her, even when pulled by oxen – right scene. The story continues and she received diverse tortures until she received divine grace and succumbed, but this is not depicted here¹⁴⁶.

The painting is divided into three parts; the landscape in the background and the composition as a whole are based on Dirk Bouts' and Hans Memling's models. This is clear in the first scene, Lucy with a long bluish cloak raises her left hand to her mother dressed in a red cloak. A similar gesture with Lucy's left hand holding part of the mantle is found in Memling's *St. Ursula Shrine*, ca. 1489 (figs. 50 and 51). Additionally, in the second scene, the painter most likely got inspired by Dirk Bouts' right side of the *Justice of Emperor Otto III: Beheading of the Innocent Count and Ordeal by Fire*, ca. 1473-1475 (figs. 52 and 53). In both paintings, the male figure on the throne wears a red brocade coat while the position of one of the figures next to them is similar¹⁴⁷. In Bouts' painting, the third dimension is accentuated by the empty space in the foreground, i.e., the floor, while in the panel from Bruges, the space is totally occupied.

One intriguing aspect of the Master of the Legend of Saint Lucy's paintings is his *horror vacui*. One can also notice this in his painting *Mary, Queen of Heaven*, ca. 1485-1500 (National Gallery of Art, Washington), where there is an attempt to occupy all the available space with figures¹⁴⁸. In the panel in the Sint-Jakobskerk, the painter organized the composition in such a manner that there is no three-dimension, i.e., the figure in the background do not distinguish themselves from the ones in the foreground, namely Saint Lucy.

¹⁴⁶ Zdanov, 2010, pp. 9-10.

¹⁴⁷ Idem, op. cit. p. 7.

¹⁴⁸ Idem, op. cit. p. 8.



Figure 50 - Virgin (detail)



Figure 51 - Hans Memling's *The Shrine of St Ursula* (detail of scene no. 6) © Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges



Figure 52 - Central scene (detail)



Figure 53 - Dirck Bout, *Justice of Emperor Otto III: Beheading of the Innocent Count and Ordeal by Fire* (detail of the right side) © Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België, Brussels

X. Throne of Grace with John the Baptist and John the Evangelist (fig. 54)

Anonymous master, active in Bruges ca. 1475-1500

Provenance: unknown

55 x 118.5 cm¹⁴⁹, ca. 1475 – 1499, oil on oak (?), Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges,

inv. no. 0000.SJ0196.I



Figure 54 - Anonymous' *Throne of Grace with John the Baptist and John the Evangelist* © Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges

Possibly the most enigmatic painting in the corpus together with the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph*, Hoogstraten, is the *Throne of Grace with John the Baptist and John the Evangelist*. The information is scarce, however, based on the landscape's treatment it can be situated around the last quarter of the fifteenth century, roughly the same period in which Hans Memling was developing his detailed landscapes and introducing them in Northern Europe¹⁵⁰. So far it was not possible to discover the provenance and who commissioned it. Nonetheless, for some time it adorned the chapel of the Godshuis - Rooms Convent, one of the oldest houses of this type in Bruges, being transferred to the museum around 1929¹⁵¹.

¹⁴⁹ On each side the panel was cut off – undated –, but nowadays is again connected to the rest of the panel, however, the cut site is still visible.

¹⁵⁰ On this matter see Ainsworth, Maryan; Borchert, Till-Holger; Van Calster, Paul, et al. *Memling's Portraits* (exh. cat.). Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza; Ghent (ed.): Ludion, 2005.

¹⁵¹ Sint-Janshospitaal (Brugge). *Sint-Janshospitaal Brugge 1188-1976: tentoonstelling georganiseerd door de Commissie van Openbare Onderstand van Brugge*. Brugge: Sint-Janshospitaal, 1976, pp. 570-571. For a more general overview of the Sint-Janshospitaal see Vervaeke, Lies. *Goederenbeheer in een veranderende samenleving: het Sint-Janshospitaal van Brugge, ca. 1275-ca. 1575*. Gent: Universiteit Gent. Faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte, 2015.

During the fifteenth century, the saints were interpreted as protectors, and usually, a saint or a biblical episode is associated with a specific role. The poor and sick people used devotion to a specific saint to gain strength to get cured. Due to that, it is reasonable to think that indeed that the painting was originally or at some point at Sint-Janshospitaal, the main hospital of Bruges.

In front of a fortified citadel and a meandering river, John the Baptist and John the Evangelist identified by their attributes are symmetrically depicted on each side, while the Throne of Grace is occupied by God, the Father¹⁵². The subject, Throne of the Grace, has a strong emphasis on the Eucharist and goes back up to the twelfth century, when this depiction gained form¹⁵³. Likewise, in Flanders particularly at the Sint-Janshospitaal, one finds traces of veneration towards this theme; besides the figure of John the Baptist was the patron saint of the Hospital. For instance, still at the Sint-Janshospitaal, a triptych by an anonymous painter (fig. 55) possibly made specifically for this location, depicts the Trinity as well.

As Hilde Lobelle-Caluwé noted, the painting's background was painted in a 'very rudimentary manner', while the panel as a whole shows a colourful scenario¹⁵⁴. The predominant colour is red, in both the throne and the figures' drapery. Interestingly, the painter emphasized the figures in the first plan, which turns them bigger than one would think; possibly the painter did not have full command of the proportions of the human representation (figs. 56 and 57). Both John the Baptist's and John the Evangelist's eyes are looking towards God the Father, who in turn looks out to the viewer while holding the cross with Christ, bleeding from his chest and feet. Apart from Christ's face, the rest of the figures do not show any pathos, demonstrating instead serenity. Likewise, the halo on the figures' heads is similar, whereas the one in the Throne of the Grace is circumscribed in the throne itself.

Interestingly, it is the fact that the vegetation of this painting resembles in some parts that of the Hoogstraten panel, which possibly can indicate more about the original place of production of both paintings. Likewise, here the figures' size is disproportionate to the setting of the painting, which once again has a parallel with the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph*, although less notorious.

¹⁵² It is believed that during an undocumented restoration the depiction of the Holy Spirit, i.e., in a form of a dove, in the middle part, was removed from the painting. Sint-Janshospitaal (Brugge), 1976, p. 570.

¹⁵³ On this matter see Lobelle-Caluwé, Hilde. *Memlingmuseum, Brugge*; Musea Nostra, 6; Brussel: Gemeentekrediet, 1987, pp. 88-89.

¹⁵⁴ Idem, op. cit. p. 88.



Figure 55 - Anonymous, *Triptych with Trinity, St Adrian, and St Barbara*, ca. 1505-1525, 60 x 64 cm © Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges



Figure 56 - John the Baptist (detail)



Figure 57 - John the Evangelist (detail)

3. 'German' Paintings:

XI. *Scenes from the Life of Saint Ulrich*¹⁵⁵ (fig. 58 and 59)

Master of the Legend of Saint Ulrich, active ca. 1446-1455¹⁵⁶

Provenance: possibly in the choir of the Basilika of St. Ulrich und Afra in Augsburg

115 x 190 cm each, ca. 1453-1455, oil on oak, in the north transept wall of the Basilika

St. Ulrich und Afra, Augsburg



Figure 58 – Master of the Augsburg Legend of Ulrich,
first Ulrich panel



Figure 59 – Master of the Augsburg Legend of Ulrich,
second Ulrich panel

The unknown Augsburg painter named Master of the Legend of Saint Ulrich was active in the mid-fifteenth century in this German city in the Bavaria region. According to Kemperdick, it is quite possible that roughly around 1445 he has been in Van der Weyden's workshop in Brussels, which is demonstrated by his paintings, particularly the one under analysis here, through 'motifs quite faithfully' of *meester Rogier*¹⁵⁷. Moreover, this master organizes the scenes with the building's columns, resembling Simon Marmion's paintings, active roughly in the same period in Valenciennes, integrated into the Burgundian Netherlands.

There is no documentation regarding the commission and provenance. The basilica was in this period a Romanesque church, which could be the depiction of the building at the time; additionally, in the region of Augsburg, no other painting is comparable to these panels¹⁵⁸. Regarding dating, Alfred Stange suggested ca. 1450, and Kemperdick argues that it was before 1454¹⁵⁹. The panels' backs are unpainted, i.e., they have no decoration.

¹⁵⁵ This analysis follows mainly Kemperdick, 1997, pp. 141-145; Kemperdick; Sander; Eclercy; Aston (ed). exh. cat., 2009, pp. 111-113.

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/item/UEEWCT25246R4FR3SVGSXAFEGLFHAEJB>

¹⁵⁷ Idem, op. cit. 2009, p. 111.

¹⁵⁸ Kemperdick, 1997, p. 141.

¹⁵⁹ Kemperdick; Sander; Eclercy; Aston (ed), op. cit., 2009, p. 111.

Each of the two panels depicts three scenes from the life of Saint Ulrich. Saint Ulrich was bishop in Augsburg (b. 890, d. 973), and later the first person to be canonized by the Pope John XV, in the year 993; and so, the panel could be a celebration of the local population towards him and his miracles.

Both panels represent three scenes divided by architectural elements. In the first panel, the central scene is situated in the church's choir and the rest to the sides in the ambulatory; which could be the interior of the old Romanesque church, destroyed in 1474. On the left side, the angels appear to Ulrich, who is sleeping, bringing him the chalice and the sacramental bread (fig. 60). According to the tradition, he was too weak to say mass and the angels' appearance served to rehabilitate him. Above their heads, on the columns' capitals, Eve and Adam are represented, who are depicted after the original sin, i.e., covering their intimate parts. At the centre, while the future saint celebrates mass – in his black tunic – God's hand appears to him. An altarpiece is represented on the altar and above the crucifixion; behind him kneeling are two deacons, and the one on the right side holds the mitre. According to Kemperdick, this interior is a variation of the choir of *The Exhumation of Saint Hubert* attributed to Rogier van der Weyden's workshop, ca. 1430s (National Gallery, London)¹⁶⁰, which depicts the chapel of Saint Hubert in the church of Saint Gudula, Brussels. However, in ca. 1500, an unknown master executed a drawing¹⁶¹ of Rogier's painting that resembles the church's choir. Lastly, on the right side of the first panel, bishop Ulrich already with the mitre on his head blesses the poor people, and behind them is a natural landscape, contradicting the full representation of the church's interior (figs. 61 and 62).

¹⁶⁰ Kemperdick, 1997, pp. 141-142.

¹⁶¹ Netherlandish master, *The Exhumation of Saint Hubert*, 22 x 19 cm, ca. 1500, pen and ink on paper, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, inv. no. N 8 (PK). Kemperdick; Sander; Eclercy; Aston (ed). exh. cat., 2009, p. 111, fig. 71; <https://www.boijmans.nl/en/collection/artworks/90553/the-exhumation-of-st-hubert>



Figure 60 – Left side of the first panel



Figure 61 – Central scene of the first panel



Figure 62 – Right scene of the first panel



Figure 63 – Left side of the second panel



Figure 64 – Central scene of the second panel

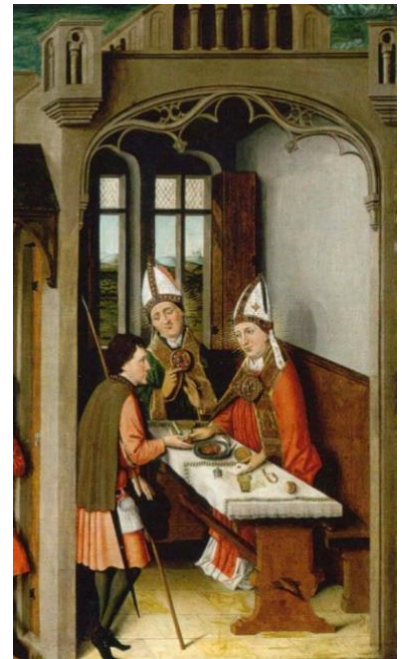


Figure 65 – Right side of the second panel

The second panel shows on the left bishop Ulrich ill, while Saint Afra – also a patron saint of Augsburg – asks him to request to the emperor the consecration of the monastery, i.e., the old church preceding the current basilica. Behind them, all the church’s clerics are looking inside through a window. The temple where the scene unfolds has the depiction of the Christ Pantocrator in the centre of the tympanum, a common representation in Romanesque architecture. The building itself with the two arches and sculptures on the columns’ capitals, resembles the one from Van der Weyden’s workshop, *The Dream of Pope Sergius*, ca. 1435 (J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles). Then the story continues to the right side, where Ulrich – farther to the right – rewards a messenger with meat and bread. In the centre, when the messenger is giving the bishop’s ‘gift’, i.e., the meat to Arnulf, Duke of Bavaria, it turns into a fish; a symbol of the Friday fast-breaking (figs. 63-65)¹⁶². Moreover, in this scene, it is notorious how the master of Augsburg ‘copied’ Van der Weyden’s models, as the building complex behind the figures is similar if not the same as in the one in *The Visitation*, ca. 1445 (Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig)¹⁶³.

As mentioned above, this unknown master was certainly aware of the Netherlandish developments at the time, as there is no evidence that a school of painting with such quality with Rogier’s models existed in this region. Additionally, the figures depicted here are wearing typical clothes of the Burgundian times, characterized by slim and elongated outlines. This could indicate that he received the influence of Burgundian illuminators, but if he ever came to the Low Countries, he could have seen these costumes in real life and in paintings.

¹⁶² Stange, Alfred, Norbert Lieb, and Peter Strieder (ed.). *Kritisches Verzeichnis der deutschen Tafelbilder vor Dürer*. Bruckmanns Beiträge Zur Kunstwissenschaft. München: Bruckmann, 1970, p. 149.

¹⁶³ This is noted by Kemperdick in Kemperdick; Sander; Eclercy; Aston (ed). exh. cat., 2009, p. 111.

XII. *Pietà de Saint-Germain-des-Prés* (fig. 66)

Master of Saint-Germain-des-Prés¹⁶⁴, active in Paris ca. 1500-1525

Provenance: possibly from the chapel of the Virgin in the ambulatory of the
abbey church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Paris

97.3 x 198.5 cm, ca. 1500-1505, oil on wood, Musée du Louvre, Département
des Peintures, Paris, inv. no. 8561



Figure 66 - Master of Saint-Germain-des-Prés' *Pietà de Saint-Germain-des-Prés* © 1995 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski

Like Master of the Legend of Saint Lucy, the name of the so-called Master of Saint-Germain-des-Prés also derives from his magnum opus. Little is known about his apprenticeship; however, his paintings suggest the influence of Master of the Holy Kinship, in how he creates the scene and the figures¹⁶⁵.

As far as it is possible to trace the historical background of this panel, it was originally commissioned for the abbey church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Paris, ca. 1503 and recorded in the church's sacristy in 1713¹⁶⁶. In the early stage of the French Revolution, it was moved to the National Deposit of French Monuments, and initially attributed to a certain 'Fabrino' –

¹⁶⁴ Probably from Cologne, this painter was active in Paris in the first half of the sixteenth century. For more about him see Reynaud, Nicole. *Les Primitifs de l'école de Cologne: Catalogue*; Les dossiers du Département des Peintures, 9; Paris, Editions des Musées nationaux, 1974, pp. 35-37. As he has German origins, I decided to include him in the 'German paintings' section.

¹⁶⁵ Idem, op. cit., p. 35.

¹⁶⁶ On this matter see Bouillart, Jacques, Lodewijk, Dupuis Gregoire (Parijs), d' Arnaud, Baco, Baquoy, Bullet, et al. *Histoire de l'abbaye royale de Saint Germain des Prez: Contenant la vie des abbez qui l'ont gouverné depuis sa fondation: Les hommes illustres qu'elle a donnez à l'église & à l'état*. Paris: chez Gregoire Dupuis, 1724.

possibly Gentile da Fabriano (?) – but this was dismissed soon afterwards. More recently it was assigned to this unidentified German master painter¹⁶⁷.

As the title indicates, the painting represents the Lamentation of Christ with Paris in the background¹⁶⁸. It resembles Rogier van der Weyden's *The lamentation over the dead Christ* (fig. 36), although it contains fewer figures represented compared to the one from the Brussels master. In the upper right corner, the Crucifixion is depicted. In the background, Paris is represented, seen from the south showing the late medieval Louvre and the former Hôtel du Petit-Bourbon. Being a topographical representation of a city, i.e., Paris, and presuming that indeed the painter came from Cologne, this background would not be surprising as in the early sixteenth century this was common.

All the figures are richly dressed, particularly Joseph of Arimathea with his gold brocade and Nicodemus. The latter carries a splendid crown of thorns with minutely rendered details, which may indicate that the artist was a miniaturist as well (fig. 67)¹⁶⁹.



Figure 67 - Crown of Thorns (detail)

¹⁶⁷ For more about this master see Jones, Susan Frances. “German (Cologne?), The Entombment, 1500/05” in *Northern European and Spanish paintings before 1600 in the Art Institute of Chicago: A catalogue of the collection*. Wolff, Martha (ed.), New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2008, pp. 366-70.

¹⁶⁸ For the formal analysis and biblical sources see Rogier van der Weyden's *The lamentation over the dead Christ* of the present study (IV).

¹⁶⁹ Although there is no evidence of such an apprenticeship, it seems very plausible that he was inserted in a larger workshop that was not only dedicated to the painting. It was common for artists in this period to learn other crafts, see for instance, the case of Petrus Christus. Ainsworth, Maryan (ed.), exh. cat., 1994, p. 25-27.

4. 'French' Paintings:

XIII. *The Jouvenel des Ursins Family*¹⁷⁰ (fig, 68)

Anonymous master active in Paris mid-fifteenth century

Provenance: chapel of Saint Rémy in the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris

165 x 350 cm, ca. 1445-1449, oil on wood,

Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. 9618

(on loan to the Musée de Cluny | Musée National du Moyen Âge)



Figure 68 - *The Jouvenel des Ursins Family* © RMN-Grand Palais (musée de Cluny - musée national du Moyen-Âge) / Gérard Blot

From the fourteenth century up to the seventeenth century, the Jouvenel des Ursins family, originally from Troyes, was highly active in Paris¹⁷¹. They are depicted in a long horizontal panel by an anonymous painter, most likely from Paris, who shows 'influence' from French manuscript illumination. Moreover, as will be seen later, this painter is connected with the Master of Dunois and *Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry*, and less by Early Netherlandish painting.

The painting is remarkable, not only by the emphasis on the light but also by the number of figures – thirteen. Although painted in the 1440s, the panel served as a family portrait, in which Jean Jouvenel and his wife Michelle de Vitry are depicted together with their eleven children, in adoration to the left with their hands clasped praying before a prie-dieu with a

¹⁷⁰ For an extensive analysis of the painting see Sterling, Charles. *La peinture médiévale à Paris, 1300–1500*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1987–1990), 2: pp. 28-35; Demurger, Alain, « La famille Jouvenel. Quelques questions sur un tableau », *Annuaire-Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de France*, 1997 (1999), pp. 31-56.

¹⁷¹ Members of this family were among other things: part of the *Prévôt des marchands* de Paris, *chancelier de France* and bishops. On this matter see Batiffol Louis. « Le nom de la famille Juvénel des Ursins ». *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes*. 50 (1889), pp. 537-558.

prayer book. From the left to the right, the figures are identified by the inscription below in Gothic letters¹⁷².

This family portrait served to show the power and prestige of the Jouvenel des Ursins within the French nobility (figs. 69 and 70); see, for instance, the two well-dressed women with their high butterfly hennin¹⁷³. The painting's background has gold brocades in relief and behind it, the architectural depiction seems to indicate the family chapel in the choir of the Notre Dame de Paris (today known as *chapelle Saint-Guillaume*). The family's coat of arms – from both Jean's and Michelle's sides – is carried by angels on top of each capital (figs. 71 and 72).

As demonstrated by Sterling, the painting follows some models of the manuscript illumination in the region of Île-de-France¹⁷⁴. He gives two examples: on the one hand, the painting's composition follows the asymmetry of an illumination (lat. 1158, fol. 27 v.) in the *Book of Hours of the Neville family* and attributed to the Master of the Golden Legend of Munich, which years before depicted this other Parisian family (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris), with gold brocades in relief on a red surface behind them (figs. 73 and 74). On the other hand, Sterling goes back to Eleanor Patterson Spencer's hypothesis that the painter might have been in the Bedford Master's workshop in Paris, which was very prolific at the time¹⁷⁵.

Furthermore, the painting's symmetry emphasized by the architectural structure behind the figures resembles the compositions developed by Hans Memling a few years later, i.e., defines the painting in three arcades, also developed by the Master of the Legend of Saint Lucy. While in the epitaph the painter tried, without success, to arrange the figures along the panel – once again is similar to the manuscript illumination of the Master of the Golden Legend of Munich –, in contrast Memling was able to do it. Moreover, the three-dimensional space and perspective in *The Jouvenel des Ursins Family* panel were hardly achieved and as Sterling concluded, the painter did not master this technique¹⁷⁶.

¹⁷² See the inscription in Sterling, 1987-1990, vol. II, pp. 28-29

¹⁷³ For more on this matter see Piponnier, Françoise; Mane, Perrine. *Dress in the Middle Ages*, New Haven – London: Yale UP, 1997.

¹⁷⁴ Sterling argues that these family portraits could be found in wall painting during the fifteenth century in Italy, namely in Lombardy, but he does not give any example. Likewise, he does not rule out the possibility that these portraits were on the walls of the chapels of castles in France in the same period. Sterling, op. cit., pp. 30; 32.

¹⁷⁵ Sterling, op. cit., vol. II, p. 34-35 and vol. I, p. 60.

¹⁷⁶ Idem, op. cit., p. 31.



Figure 69 – Jean Jouvenel des Ursins and Michelle de Vitry on the left corner (detail)



Figure 70 - Jacques Jouvenel des Ursins – archbishop of Reims – on the right side (detail)



Figure 71 – Coat of arms of Michelle de Vitry's family side (detail)



Figure 72 - Coat of arms of Jean Jouvenel des Ursins' family side (detail)

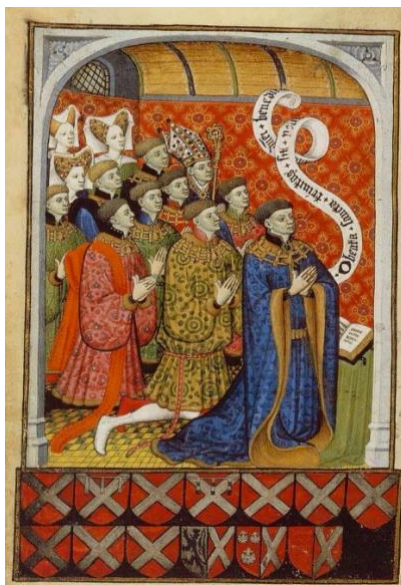


Figure 73 - Master of the Golden Legend of Munich, *Book of Hours of the Neville family* (detail of the male members), lat. 1158, fol. 27 v., ca. 1430-1435 © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris



Figure 74 - Master of the Golden Legend of Munich, *Book of Hours of the Neville family* (detail of the female members), lat. 1158, fol. 34 v., ca. 1430-1435 © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

XIV. Master of Dunois' *La Trinité aux chanoines de Notre-Dame* (fig. 75)

Artist active in Paris in the mid-fifteenth century

Provenance: chapelle de Saint-Aignan (?)

68 x 179 cm, ca. 1450, oil (?) on panel, École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, inv. no. MU 1261



Figure 75 - Master of Dunois' *La Trinité aux chanoines de Notre-Dame* © École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais

The painter, known as the Master of Dunois, a close associate of the Bedford Master, imported the prototypes and motifs of the Early Netherlandish painting to the regions of Île-de-France and Loire Valley¹⁷⁷. A clear example is the Master of Dunois's 'copy' of the parapet and river scene from Jan van Eyck's *Virgin of Chancellor Rolin*, ca. 1435 (Musée du Louvre, Paris), in *The Dunois Hours* (London, British Library), MS Yates Thompson 3, ca. 1441, fol. 162¹⁷⁸.

Discovered accidentally in the attic of the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, in 1884, the panel remained off-light until 1999¹⁷⁹. Little is known about the commission of this panel. Eleonor Spencer in 1965 attributed the painting to the Master of Dunois and

¹⁷⁷ On this matter and question of identities see Durrieu, P. *La Peinture à l'exposition des Primitifs Français*; Paris, Librairie de l'art ancien et moderne, 1904, pp. 258-260; Reynolds, Catherine. "The Workshop of the Master of the Duc of Bedford: Definitions and Identities" in *Patrons, Authors and Workshops: Books and book production in Paris around 1400*, edited by Godfried Croenen and Peter Ainsworth, Leuven, Peeters, 2006, pp. 437-472; Gras, Samuel. "The Swooning Virgin: From Rogier Van Der Weyden to the Loire Valley" in *Artistic Translations between fourteenth and sixteenth centuries*. ed. by Zuzanna Sarnecka, Aleksandra Fedorowicz-Jackowska, Warsaw: Institute of Art History, University of Warsaw, 2013, pp. 50-66; Thiébaud, Dominique; Lorentz, Philippe; François-René, Martin (ed.). *Primitifs français: découvertes et redécouvertes* (exh. cat.). Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2004, pp. 88-92.

¹⁷⁸ Gras, op. cit., p. 57.

¹⁷⁹ Mentioned for the first time in Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts (France). *Inventaire Général des richesses d'art de la France: Archives du Musée des Monuments Français*; Paris, Plon: 1883, vol. III, p. 324 – «retable du quinzième siècle, peinture française sur fond d'or gaufré, représentant la Trinité entourée de moines adorateurs; bois »; <https://www.beauxartsparis.fr/en/actualite/restoration-la-trinite-aux-chanoines>

according to her, it was an altarpiece of the chapter house of the cathedral of Notre-Dame, Paris, also known as chapelle de Saint-Aignan. Nevertheless, Reynaud suggested that it could have been commissioned for 'l'autel des Ardents' which was dedicated to the Holy Trinity; located in the back of the cathedral sanctuary, behind the main altar¹⁸⁰.

Similar to the *Throne of Grace with John the Baptist and John the Evangelist* (X), this panel shows the iconography of the Trinity in the middle – Matthew (3:16), Mark (1:10), Luke (3:22), and John (1:32) – surrounded by the canons of Notre Dame on each side. In fact, according to Dominique Thiébaud, this depiction resembles the one of the *Meßornats des Ordens vom Goldenen Vlies* (Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Kunstkammer), in which the Father also holds Christ on the throne (figs. 76 and 77)¹⁸¹. Likewise, Thiébaud remarks that the dense composition of the *La Trinité aux chanoines de Notre-Dame* is an 'exact équivalent' of the Last Judgement of *The Sobieski Hours* (Royal Collection, Windsor Castle) produced ca. 1430-1440, which gives the impression that indeed the Master of Dunois was aware of the manuscript illumination produced by the Bedford Master and his associates¹⁸². Additionally, the canons are wearing white robes with an almuce over their arms. They are facing the throne while praying, a gesture of devotion towards the Trinity.

The figures in the painting occupy entirely the first plan, while the background is ornamental and similar to Quarton's *Virgin of Mercy* (XVI). Due to the damage and possibly lack of preservation, the background is the part of the panel that was most affected, which the recent restoration of 2022 had shown.

¹⁸⁰ Reynaud, N. "Le retable de la Trinité aux chanoines de Notre-Dame de Paris (suite)" in *Revue de l'art*, 128, 2000-2, pp. 30-32 ; Thiébaud; Lorentz; François-René (ed.). exh. cat. 2004, p. 91.

¹⁸¹ Thiébaud; Lorentz; François-René (ed.). op. cit., pp. 90-91.

¹⁸² For more about this matter see Ungeheuer, Laurent. *Le Maître de la Légende dorée de Munich: un enlumineur parisien du milieu du XVe siècle, formation, production, influences et collaborations*. Paris, PhD Dissertation, École Pratique des hautes Études, 2015.



Figure 76 – Trinity (detail)



Figure 77 – Anonymous, *Meßornats des Ordens vom Goldenen Vlies* (detail of the central scene), 1425-1440, 330 x 119 cm © Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Kunstammer

XV. Master of Coëtivy's *Resurrection of Lazarus* (fig. 78)

Master active in the Loire and Paris regions

Provenance: unknown

78.5 x 141 cm, ca. 1450, oil on oak, Musée du Louvre, Département des Peintures, Paris,

RF 2501/RF 1994 1¹⁸³



Figure 78 - Master of Coëtivy's *Resurrection of Lazarus* © 2017 RMN-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre) / Tony Querrec

In recent decades, the scholarship tends to concentrate more on the painter's identification than the formal analysis of the panel *Resurrection of Lazarus*¹⁸⁴. Nonetheless, whether Colin

¹⁸³ Before 1890 the painting was cut off at the right side, without the representation of the 'Donor and Apostles'. In 1994, the Musée du Louvre acquired this right part, and connected it to the rest of the panel, but it still keeps two inventory numbers for both parts. <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010065031>

¹⁸⁴ Regarding the painter's identification see Thiébaud; Lorentz; François-René (ed.). exh. cat. 2004, pp. 97-100; 174.

d'Amiens or Nicolas d'Ypres was his real name, he came from Flanders or Northern France, where he trained as a manuscript illuminator and painter and then worked in Paris from the mid-fifteenth century onwards¹⁸⁵.

The panel nowadays preserved in Paris was until 1925 in the private collection of Richard von Kaufmann in Berlin, when it was acquired by the Louvre¹⁸⁶. From the information available, it is impossible to know the provenance or the original commissioner. However, as a manuscript illuminator, his clientele was connected to the French court, so it would not be surprising if the patron of this painting came from the same milieu¹⁸⁷.

The Master of Coëtivy depicts Christ raising Lazarus from the dead four days after his entombment (John 11:1-46)¹⁸⁸. In front of a cityscape with a castle and fortification – Bethany is depicted as if it were a French citadel – Christ stands in the centre of the composition. Lazarus rises from his tomb to the astonishment of all present, while a man helps him with the ties around his hands. To the left, Martha and Mary of Bethany, the sisters of Lazarus, look at him and the resurrection with amazement (fig. 79). Behind these female figures, a group of five men and two women assist with surprise at the event showing emotion in their faces and with gestures. The anonymous donors are represented on the far left and far right; their bodies are not fully represented, which shows where the panel was cut in the nineteenth century. On the other side of the panel next to Christ, is Saint Peter with the keys in his belt, with two disciples who look surprised by the miracle. Behind them are the other disciples, who do not interact directly with what is happening behind their backs.

¹⁸⁵ Thiébaud; Lorentz; François-René (ed.). exh. cat. 2004, p. 98.

¹⁸⁶ Labande Léon Honoré. *Les Primitifs Français: Peintres et peintres-verriers de la Provence Occidentale*; Marseille, Librairie Tacussel, Tome I, 1932, pp. 221-222.

¹⁸⁷ Hourihane, Colum (ed.). *The Grove Encyclopedia of Medieval Art and Architecture*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, vol. II, p. 158.

¹⁸⁸ This episode does not have a connection with the parable Rich man and Lazarus from the Gospel of Luke (16:19–31).



Figure 79 - Central part (detail)



Figure 80 - Adrien Wincart and his apprentices (?), *The Entombment*, ca. 1495-1496, église Saint-Martin de Malesherbes (département du Loiret)

Despite the scarce information about Coëtivy's art, he was most likely well-known in the region of Paris and its surroundings. George Hulin de Loo and Henri Bouchot in 1904 indicated that the painting served as a model for Nicolas Froment's *Resurrection of Lazarus*, ca. 1461 (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence), constituting an extraordinary example of how a 'Flemish' artist brought Early Netherlandish elements to this region¹⁸⁹. Roughly forty years after Coëtivy's painting in the spring of 1495, the sculptor Adrien Wincart received the commission by the Parisian notary Pierre Pichon l'ainé, to create a funerary monument, *The Entombment*, ca. 1495-1496, 'suivant le dessin de Nicolas Damiens [i.e., Master of Coëtivy]' for the church of Saint-Martin de Malesherbes, Loiret (fig. 80); which once again confirms the fame that this painted still had in this region¹⁹⁰.

Additionally, since the Master was active in Paris in the mid-fifteenth century it seems reasonable to think that he was aware of the models and style of the so-called Master of Dreux Budé, who was influenced by Rogier van der Weyden¹⁹¹.

¹⁸⁹ Labande, Tome I, 1932, p. 222.

¹⁹⁰ Grodecki, C. "Le « Maître Nicolas D'amiens » et la mise au tombeau de Malesherbes. à propos d'un document inédit" in *Bulletin Monumental* 154 (1996), 154 (4), pp. 329–342; Thiébaud; Lorentz; François-René (ed.). exh. cat. 2004, p. 100; For the full passage of the document see Paris, Archives nationales (France), *Minutes et répertoires du notaire Pierre I Pichon, 1er mai 1487 -14 octobre 1533 (étude XIX)*, Répertoire numérique détaillé, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, 1ère édition électronique, 2013.

<https://francearchives.fr/fr/findingaid/1da8cfac4f738efa4c49a7032d12b1e01fb5170f>

¹⁹¹ Thiébaud; Lorentz; François-René (ed.). exh. cat. 2004, p. 100-101.

XVI. Enguerrand Quarton's *Virgin of Mercy* (fig. 81)

Artist active in Paris and Avignon

Provenance: chapelle St Pierre-de-Luxemburg in the convent des Célestins
d'Avignon

66 x 187 cm, ca. 1452, oil on canvas transferred from panel, Musée Condé,
Chantilly, inv. no. PE 111



Figure 81 - Enguerrand Quarton's *Virgin of Mercy*

In contrast to the examples described above, Enguerrand Quarton's (or Carton) art shows a different style which does not reflect the development of Early Netherlandish painting, but of the late Gothic of the School of Avignon, where he produced the majority of his oeuvre¹⁹².

The *Virgin of Mercy* (also known as the *Cadard altarpiece*) is well documented, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The commission's contract dates from February 1452 when Pierre, son of Jean Cadard – exiled in Comtat Venaissin after being accused of having ordered the assassination of John the Fearless in 1419¹⁹³ – asked for the altarpiece and the predella¹⁹⁴ to Quarton and Pierre Villate. An associate of the master of Avignon, Villate came from Limoges and is first mentioned in Avignon in 1451 as '*magister*'; although most of the documentation regarding this painter is related to Cardon's commission, more recently the historiography considers that the connection between both masters was only of a legal character, as it is difficult to distinguish both hands¹⁹⁵.

¹⁹² Favre, Constantin. "Enguerrand Quarton et Pierre Villate" in *Peindre à Avignon aux XVe - XVIe siècles*, éd. Frédéric Elsig, Milan: Silvana, 2019, pp. 97 – 107.

¹⁹³ On this matter see in particular Girard, Joseph. *Evocation du vieil Avignon*. Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1990.

¹⁹⁴ The contract did not specify the predella's subject, however, according to the Avignon altarpieces traditions, it might represent Christ surrounded by the twelve apostles.

¹⁹⁵ Despite the difficulty to distinguish the two hands, Dominique Thiébaud suggests some of the sheltering figures are weaker than others, which possibly could be by the young Villate. Additionally, the author adds that

The commission contract – discussed in the next chapter – mentions an altarpiece that will adorn the chapelle St Pierre-de-Luxemburg in the church of the Celestines in Avignon. There is a gap between the commission and 1823, when the painting appeared in the private collection of the ‘orientalist’ Jean-Baptiste Rousseau; it was then acquired by the curator of the Louvre, Frédéric Reiset. In 1879 it was bought by Henri d'Orléans, Duke of Aumale, who donated it in 1886 to the Institut de France to be part of the newly created Musée Condé and displayed it in the ‘cabinet du Giotto’. Only in the early twentieth century, after archival discoveries – which included the document of the commission – it was attributed to Quarton¹⁹⁶.

The *Virgin of Mercy* is a representation of a group of people under the outspread cloak of the Virgin¹⁹⁷. Against a gold background, in the centre, the Virgin stands with her mantle over different orders of society, i.e., the religious, and the nobility. The donors, Jean Cadard and Jeanne des Moulins with their hands clasped, are kneeling praying before a prie-dieu with a prayer book. To the left, John the Baptist with the lamb in his hands presents Cadard to the Virgin, and on the right side John the Apostle, with the chalice with a snake, a symbol of the poison, does the same with Jeanne des Moulins (fig. 82).

The *Virgin of Mercy* is together with the *Pietà of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon*, ca. 1450-1475 (Musée du Louvre, Paris), and the *Virgin of the Coronation of the Virgin*, ca. 1453-1454 (Musée Pierre-de-Luxembourg, Avignon), characteristic of Quarton’s art, demonstrating a continuation of the Gothic and Italian Trecento tradition with special attention to the gestures, particularly by the Virgin, who in this case is the protector of all orders of the society.



Figure 82 - Central scene (detail)

he might be the responsible for the predella, nowadays lost. Thiébaud; Lorentz; François-René (ed.). exh. cat. 2004, p. 113; Hourihane, Colum (ed.), 2012, vol. II, p. 305.

¹⁹⁶ Favre, 2019, pp. 97 – 107.

¹⁹⁷ For a brief explanation of this subject see Hall, James. *Dictionary of subjects and symbols in Art*. London: Murray, 1992, pp. 324-325.

XVII. Jean Grassi's *Nativity, Adoration of the Magi, Presentation in the temple* (fig. 83)

Artist active in Avignon from 1484 to 1502

Provenance: unknown

54 x 176 cm, ca. 1495-1500, Église Saint-Thomas de Cantorbéry, Cuiseaux,
Saône-et-Loire



Figure 83 - Jean Grassi's *Nativity, Adoration of the Magi, Presentation in the temple*

Roughly a century after the last pope's residence in Avignon, the Comtat Venaissin had a 'revival' attracting merchants and particularly artists. When in the early 1480s the native Provence painter Jean Changuenet founded his studio in the rue de la Mirallerie in Avignon¹⁹⁸, he received many apprentices, including a certain Jean Gras (or Grassi), native from Piemonte. After Changuenet's death, Grassi took over the workshop until 1502. Around thirty documents survived of this Italian painter who is described as a versatile artist, being active from 1484 to 1502.

Little is known regarding the provenance and commissioner. It was first recorded in 1852 in the side chapel on the south side of the nave of the Église Saint-Thomas de Cantorbéry, Cuiseaux; this side chapel disappeared thereafter. Since then, the panel is in the church's choir.

Against a gilded background – resembling the Hoogstraten panel and Quarton's painting (figs. 5 and 83) – three episodes of the life of Christ are depicted¹⁹⁹. In the Nativity, only Mary and Joseph are represented; few examples with only them survive²⁰⁰. Joseph's face,

¹⁹⁸ On this matter see Adam, Elliot; Caron, Sophie. *La Maison Changuenet: une famille de peintres entre Provence et Bourgogne vers 1500*, Paris, In fine éditions d'art. 2021.

¹⁹⁹ For the religious subject analysis see the Hoogstraten painting (I), *Kortesse Panel – Alken Predella* (III), and Hugo van der Goes' *Adoration of the Shepherds* (VI) of the present study.

²⁰⁰ Here I highlight three paintings: Rogier van der Weyden, *Bladelin Altarpiece*, ca. 1450, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, inv. no. 535; Hans Memling, *The Nativity*, ca. 1470-1472, Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne, inv. no. KGM A 1060; Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *The Nativity at Night*, ca. 1490, The National Gallery, London, inv. no. NG4081.

forehead, and head inclination resemble Jacques Daret's *Nativity*, ca. 1434-1435 (Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid). For Grassi, who was of the second generation of painters of this period, there is no evidence that he ever went to Flanders. However, when Grassi took over Changuenet's workshop in 1495, he adopted Van der Weyden's models. Rogier's prototypes were widely circulated in this region and adopted by the next generation of artists²⁰¹.

In the centre of the composition, the *Adoration of the Magi* is situated in a different setting than the Nativity. One of the Magi, Melchior looks straight at the viewer, whereas a well-dressed Magus gives the gift to the new-born child. Consequently, while Joseph is sitting in the back of the scene with a faraway look, Mary turns her head to the other side (figs. 84 and 85).

On the right side is the *Presentation in the temple*, which shows Mary with two women behind her, one of whom is Anna – inscription on the bottom of the dress –, while the priest holds the Child. On the altar, there is an altarpiece that shows the Annunciation (fig. 86). Behind the enormous tree is depicted Jerusalem rendered as a French city, with a palace and a citadel.



Figure 84 – Left side of the panel

²⁰¹ *La Maison Changuenet* (review by Auderic Maret, EHESS) – <http://histara.sorbonne.fr/cr.php?cr=4177&lang=fr&quest=arti> - (accessed 13 July 2022).



Figure 85 – Right side of the panel



Figure 86 - Presentation in the Temple (detail of the altarpiece on the right side of the panel)

Chapter II: Reflections on the Practical Function of Oblong Panels

A. Liturgical Furnishings

After the European Reformation and the reaction of the Roman Church during the Council of Trent (1545-1563) the function of the artworks changed; the iconography acquired new meanings, for instance, by the Marian cult or the major devotion to St Joseph, which will be discussed later on. However, previously to the mid-sixteenth century in Northern Europe, the iconoclasm movement was higher than in the rest of Europe²⁰². As a campaign against religious art with a cultic function, the iconoclasm affected the reception of the artworks.

During the late medieval period, the liturgical furnishings included among other objects, altarpieces, predellas, and antependia that adorned the altars in churches or chapels. In a recent study on the altars and their decoration, Justin E. A. Kroesen noted that ‘many configurations which actually occur in medieval churches remain overlooked’²⁰³. Although the concern in my study is the paintings’ function in this period and not the churches themselves, Kroesen’s statement is crucial to consider the context where these objects were placed.

The definition of an “altarpiece” (*retabulum*) implies an image-bearing object placed upon an altar, which can be either decorated with paintings, sculptures, or even reliefs²⁰⁴; Matthias Grünewald’s *Isenheim Altarpiece* is an example of how different techniques are combined in the same altarpiece. A “predella” (*predel*, or *pretel*)²⁰⁵ is intrinsically linked to an altarpiece, as it is the horizontal element below, usually with saints or narrative scenes that often continue the subject of the altarpiece (fig. 87). Unfortunately, only a few examples of altarpieces with a predella in their original setting still survive today. Finally, an “antependium” (*ante* ‘front’, *pendēre* ‘to hang’, plural *antependia*, also known as altar frontal) is an artwork

²⁰² On this matter see Kooi, Christine. *Reformation in the Low Countries, 1500-1620*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

²⁰³ Kroesen, Justin, “The Altar and its Decorations in Medieval Churches. A Functionalist Approach” in *Medievalia* 17 (2014), p. 153.

²⁰⁴ <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/glossary/altarpieces>

²⁰⁵ <https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/predella1/>

that adorns the front of the altar, as the Latin terminology specifies²⁰⁶. Due to diverse circumstances, only a few examples are still intact in their original context (fig. 88).

It is often assumed that commissions of panel paintings from the late medieval period were not recorded or that a contract between the painter and the patron, normally supervised or signed up by the alderman of the city, does not survive²⁰⁷. The idea underlying this assumption is in part due to the loss of documentation in some cases, but the surviving records provide insight for undocumented works, the price – although varying from city to city –, and the patron(s).

For the period in question here, and as Elisabeth Dhanens had shown some Netherlandish terminology is often found in archival documentation that reveals the function of panel paintings: ‘tafel’ was used to designate a church altarpiece; ‘taverneelen’ for devotional panels made for sale on the art market; ‘verguld’ for a gilded central section of an altarpiece; ‘gestofferd’ for a polychromed central section of an altarpiece; and ‘beeld’ to a statue or in grisaille. Likewise, additional information such as the size of a painting can be found, for instance, the contract for the *Wachtebeke altarpiece* by Daneel Hoeybant mentions that it should be ‘naer de groete vanden autarsteen’ – according to the size of the altar²⁰⁸.

²⁰⁶ On this matter see Schmidt, Victor M. “Ensembles of Painted Altarpieces and Frontals” in *The altar and its environment, 1150-1400*, Kroesen, Justin; Schmidt, Victor M. (ed.). Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages, Vol. 4. Turnhout: Brepols, 2009, pp. 203-205.

²⁰⁷ See footnote no. 52 of the present study.

²⁰⁸ Dhanens, Elisabeth “A contribution to the study of Pre-Eyckian panel painting in Ghent” in *Pre-Eyckian Panel Painting in the Low Countries: Essays*. Edited by Cyriel Stroo. Contributions to Fifteenth-Century Painting in the Southern Netherlands and the Principality of Liège, 9. Turnhout: Brepols, 2009, pp. 121-151.

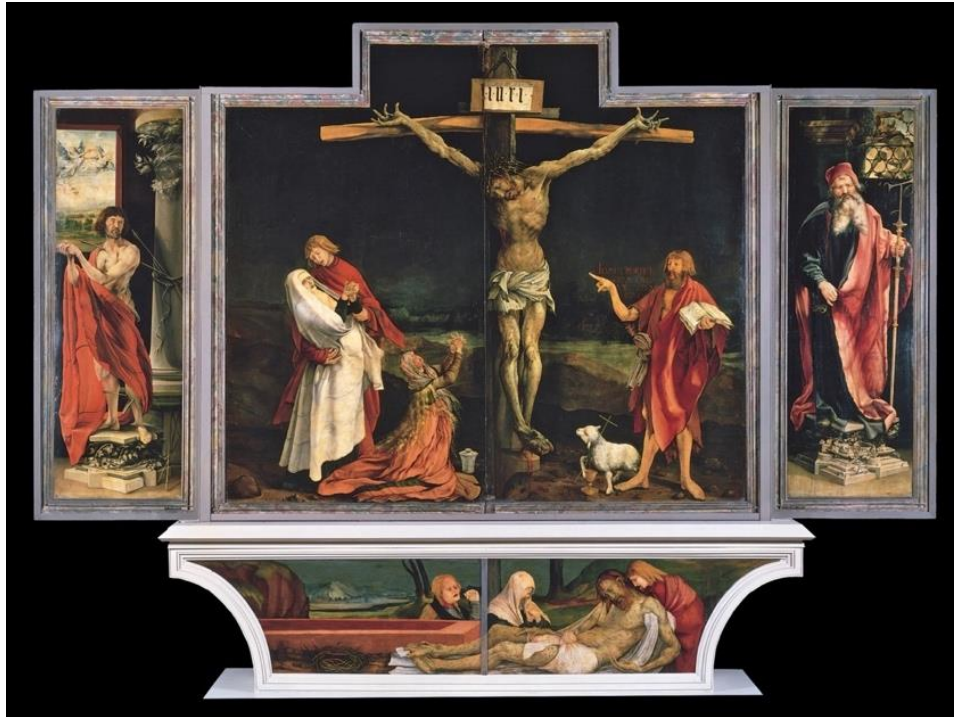


Figure 87 - Matthias Grünewald, *Isenheim Altarpiece* (above: altarpiece; below: predella), ca. 1512–1516. © Unterlinden Museum, Colmar



Figure 88 - Anonymous, *Antependium of Christ with the Instruments of the Passion*, ca. 1480, 93 x 193 cm. © M – Museum Leuven / KIK-IRPA, Brussels

B. Shape and Function

1. Altarpieces in Context: Between the Public and Semi-Public Context

The commission contract dating from 16th February 1452 between the painters Enguerrand Quarton and Pierre Villate and the monks of the church of the Celestines in Avignon²⁰⁹ – acting on behalf of Pierre, son of Jean Cadard – for the painting *Virgin of Mercy* (XVI) is a fundamental record as far as oblong panels are concerned²¹⁰:

“For the convent of the Celestines of Avignon [chapel of Saint-Pierre de Luxembourg].
Agreement on an altarpiece

On 16th February [1452], Enguerrand Quarton (...) and Pierre Villate (...), had promised through an agreement with the Celestine brothers Michael Gardeti and Petrus Chalmelli (...) to make an altarpiece with its predella to be placed upon the altar of the chapel of the Lord of Thor [Jean Cadard] built by his progenitors [his son Pierre Cadard] in the large chapel of St. Pierre de Luxembourg, [with] the height of four palms, including the already said predella of one simple palm, and otherwise according to the proportion of the altar itself, from the altar’s *mensa* up to the slope [*talutum*, in modern French: *talus*] of the window but of the width of one reed, or according to the width of the altar itself; (...)

(...) for the price of three hundred crowns of new gold (...) and the procurators promised to deliver to the painters themselves five other similar crowns of gold beyond the aforesaid price. In the diminution of the price of which the painters acknowledged that they had from the procurators, as they had there really by the hand of brother Michael, to wit, ten crowns of gold, with which they [the painters] were satisfied, etc.

(...)

And the said procurators promised that the above mentioned would be paid to the painters themselves and another ten crowns when the painting was gilded and the remaining ten crowns²¹¹ after the work was completed (...)”²¹²

²⁰⁹ I am grateful to my supervisor Victor M. Schmidt for pointing out this contract to me.

For more about this monastic order and their role see Capron, Emma. “Dynamiques de la commande artistique à Avignon au XVe siècle: l'exemple du retable des Cadard” in *Peindre à Avignon aux XVe-XVIe siècles*. Elsig Frédéric (ed.). Biblioteca D'arte, 62. Cinisello Balsamo, Milan: SilvanaEditoriale, 2019, pp. 82-83.

²¹⁰ See chapter I, section B, subsection 4. XVI of the present study.

²¹¹ In total the price of this painting was thirty new gold crowns, which corresponded approximately to seventy Avignon florins. The time of execution was five months, being finished on 24th June of the same year.

²¹² For the full contract passage see Appendix, section 2, doc. 2.

As the function of Quarton's and Villate's painting and predella is mentioned at the very beginning of the document, both artworks were adapted to the architectural environment of the chapel. The order of the Celestines limited the dimensions, particularly the height to 'four palms', corresponding roughly to one meter high²¹³. This in turn was limited by the distance leading from the altar to the lower edge of the window in the side chapel, which corresponded to the width of the altar – *et alias secundum proporcionem ipsius retabuli a superficie altaris usque ad talutum fenestre exclusive* (figs. 89 and 90). The excerpt of the contract above indicates that the shape is dictated by the architectural context. The window here is the key factor as it occupies roughly half of the space of the chapel's wall; perhaps the painting's execution was closely followed by the monks themselves to ascertain that the format would match the altar and the distance to the window.

As Capron recently argued, the placement of painting at the entrance of the chapel, suggests that there was already an intention to put the panel in this place²¹⁴. This is reinforced by the iconography of the Virgin – developed within a monastic environment – as the monks worship her maternal side to protect all the different orders of society; that is, the universality of the Marian protection, *Mater Omnium*²¹⁵. The role of the Celestines in the production of the panel was essential as it was a 'private' commission but at the same time included a collective identity with devotional interests²¹⁶. The format was dictated by the spatial conditions, the iconography by this commission, and the way the iconography was represented was at least partly dictated by the format of the painting.

For a long time, Hugo van der Goes' *Adoration of the Shepherds* (VI) was considered a predella or an antependium due to its width (245 cm)²¹⁷. Due to the lack of documentation, particularly before entering the Gemäldegalerie collection in 1903, clues for the original function might be found in the painting itself. As Jessica Buskirk pointed out, 'two scorch marks along the bottom edge of the panel indicate that candles were placed in front of it', that is, suggesting that it served as an altarpiece²¹⁸. The scorches indicate that the panel stood on

²¹³ Capron, 2019, p. 84.

²¹⁴ Idem, op. cit., p. 84.

²¹⁵ Perdrizet, Paul. *La Vierge de Miséricorde: étude d'un thème iconographique*. Dissertation, Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1908.

²¹⁶ Capron, op. cit., p. 88.

²¹⁷ Friedländer proposed a predella, Friedländer Max J. *Hugo van der Goes*, [4. Aufl.]; Die Altniederländische Malerei, 1; Leiden, Sijthoff, 1934, p. 51. In turn, Peter Parshall suggested an antependium. Macchioni, Silvana; Parshall, Peter W.; Lane, Barbara G. et al. "Letters to the Editor" in *The Art Bulletin* 58, no. 4 (1976): 639–42. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3049587>.

²¹⁸ Buskirk, 2014, p. 2.

the altar, and not in front of it – otherwise, these marks were not visible –, as it would have been the case if the panel were an antependium²¹⁹.

However, the painting's function must be interpreted in the light of the *devotio moderna* movement²²⁰. Rightly or wrongly, Hugo's panel is often linked with Grote's writings and Anthonis de Roovere's *Lof van Maria*²²¹. Nevertheless, Bernhard Ridderbos goes further and adds that whoever commissioned the panel, must have shared the religious reform beliefs and the 'desire to transcend images'²²². Most likely the panel served for contemplation for those who were devoted to this new religious movement, which the painter shared as well²²³. Due to the loss of the contract, the scholarship concentrates on three men the hypothesis who may have commissioned the painting: Tommaso Portinari, Hippolyte de Berthoz, and Edward Bonkil. Despite these figures having different backgrounds and nationalities, they were active in Bruges religious institutions, particularly in confraternities²²⁴. Precisely here resides the key element to understand the function of the panel; the painting served not only social prestige – as many others – but also in case of being a product of the *devotio moderna* movement, was most likely supported by the confraternities of Bruges. The possibility that it was kept in the inner circle of whoever was the commissioner, i.e., a private chapel, is unlikely as is without donor portraits, in contrast to Quarton's *Virgin of Mercy* (XVI) or Memling's *Scenes from the Passion of Christ* (XII). As a donation, Hugo's panel would be in a public or semi-public context and taking into consideration the prestige that it would bring, it certainly was an altarpiece, justifying the large dimensions and the scorch marks that today are still visible²²⁵.

An example of a donation to a religious institution is the *Seven Joys of the Virgin* by Hans Memling (VIII), which was commissioned by the prominent Bruges citizen Pieter

²¹⁹ Buskirk mentions the possibility of the painting would have been produced to replace an "older image" of the same size, for example the panel from the high altar of the Wiesenkirche in Soest, Westphalia, ca. 1340-50. However, the author does not develop this hypothesis. Buskirk, 2014, p. 3, endnote 8.

²²⁰ See footnote no. 124 of the present study.

²²¹ On the connection of *devotio moderna* with this particular painting see Ridderbos, Bernhard. "Die 'Geburt Christi' des Hugo van der Goes. Form, Inhalt, Funktion" in *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 32 (1990): 137–52. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4125824>; Idem, 1991, pp. 181-210. Accordingly to Dhanens, this poem in particular served as direct inspiration for the *Adoration*, but this hypothesis is not generally accepted. Buskirk, op. cit., p. 12.

²²² Buskirk, op. cit., p. 7.

²²³ Idem, op. cit., p. 17.

²²⁴ On this matter see Eisenbichler, Konrad (ed). *A Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities*. Boston: Brill, 2019, pp. 23-45.

²²⁵ "The donation of a painting to a religious institution was an act of charity, and, as in certain social circles today, one's position in society may well have been determined partly by the extent of one's charitable gifts. (...)" Lane, 2008, p. 118; This type of donation has precedents, see Buskirk, op. cit., p. 23.

Bultynck and his wife Katelijne van Riebeke for the chapel of the guild of the tanners at Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk, Bruges. The patron's name, the date and the original site are all documented through an inscription in the now lost frame of the painting²²⁶. The inventory of 1480 gives a good impression of the painting's function, which was originally placed in the eastern-most chapel of the church:

“In the year of Our Lord 1479, this book was made and commissioned by the dean and the inspectors, and also by the community of the corporation of the tanners in Bruges, to insert from now on at that which concerns the corporation daily.

In these following pages, one finds all which was then in the chapel and has been added to it since. First, at our altar, a beautiful panel of Our Lady which was given by sir Pieter Bultynck in the year thousand four hundred and seventy-nine before Easter [i.e. 1480]²²⁷; and the same Pieter desired that from then on the priest would read a *Miserere mei Deus* and *De profundis* for all souls at the end of each mass of the corporation.

Item at the same altar two metal chandler-holders, a missal bound with two boards covered with red leather.

Item a green chasuble with everything included, to be known: the chasuble of green silk damask fabric, the albs, the amicts, the maniple and the girdle; further the corporal and 1 altar cloth with the arms of the corporation held by two angels (...)”²²⁸

As listed amongst the objects of the treasures of this guild, the painting was serving as an altarpiece, while the altar was adorned with two metal candle holders and a missal bound with red leather²²⁹. Additionally, a decorated cloth with the corporation's coat of arms and held by two angels was in front of the altar²³⁰. Also mentioned in the inventory is the Bultynck's desire of a '*Miserere*' and a '*De Profundis*' for all souls to be read after each Mass, which indicates that the prayers were devoted to the members of the tanner's guilds rather than him and his wife; here is once again a case of showing wealth and social status²³¹. Bultynck was a past

²²⁶ “In the year 1480, this work was given to the corporation of the tanners by sir Pieter Bultynck, fs. Joos, tanner and merchant, and lady Katelyne, his wife, Godevaert van Riebeke's daughter; for this the priest of the corporation had to read a ‘Miserere’ [Psalm 51] and a ‘De Profundis’ [Psalm 130] for all souls after each mass”. For the original passage see Appendix, section 2, doc. 7; Martens, 1992, p. 235.

²²⁷ Accordingly, to Martens, this inventory must have been made no less than three months after the painting was donated, as it was before Easter, which in this period in Flanders was from January to April, i.e., three months. Martens, op. cit., p. 238.

²²⁸ For the original passage see Appendix, section 2, doc. 3; Martens, op. cit., p. 589, doc. 143.

²²⁹ Idem, op. cit., p. 237.

²³⁰ Idem, op. cit., p. 237, footnote no. 260.

²³¹ Lane, 2008, p. 156; Martens, op. cit., p. 239.

member and an inspector in this corporation²³², and Martens argues that this shows a sign of respect for his former colleagues. Moreover, roughly in the same year Memling's *St. John's Altarpiece* was placed at Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges, in a new apse, and displayed publicly. Bultynck's altarpiece also was intended to be placed in a public place, as the chapel was centrally located behind the choir of the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk (fig. 91)²³³; in this way, a large panel with more than 189 cm in width would attract many people and confer prestige to the donors. The painting has an undecorated reverse, meaning that it was not intended to be seen from behind, but instead to be placed near a wall.

Notwithstanding, this painting, as well as Hugo's *Adoration of the Shepherds* (VI), needs to be interpreted in the light of another phenomenon of the fifteenth century: pilgrimage. As Lane remarkably demonstrated 'the prominent placement of the Resurrection in the right foreground [...] provides the viewer with one of the goals of both actual and spiritual pilgrimage: a vision of the resurrected Christ'²³⁴. In the impossibility of embarking on actual pilgrimages to Jerusalem or Rome, the writers of the fifteenth century had written devotionals texts to 'imitate' the events of Christ's life, i.e., spiritual travel²³⁵. Memling's iconography served to let the donors be able to do their 'voyage' as often as they wished; additionally, certainly, a costly painting would bring prestige to them²³⁶.

²³² In the years 1468-69, 1470-71 and 1472-73. Martens, op. cit., p. 239; For more details about him see Gailliard. Jean Jacques. *Ephémérides brugeoises ou relation chronologique des événements qui se sont passés dans la ville de Bruges, depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à nos jours*. Bruges, 1847, V, 1862, p. 131.

²³³ It is interesting that Mary of Burgundy – duchess of Burgundy from 1477 to 1482 – was buried in the choir on 3 April 1482, but not in the chapel of the guild of the tanners.

²³⁴ Lane, 2008, p. 158.

²³⁵ Lane, op. cit., p. 147.

²³⁶ Barbara Lane assumes that the worshiper may have earned the same number of indulgences as pilgrims as the ones who visit physically Jerusalem. However, she does not develop this idea. Idem, op. cit., p. 159.

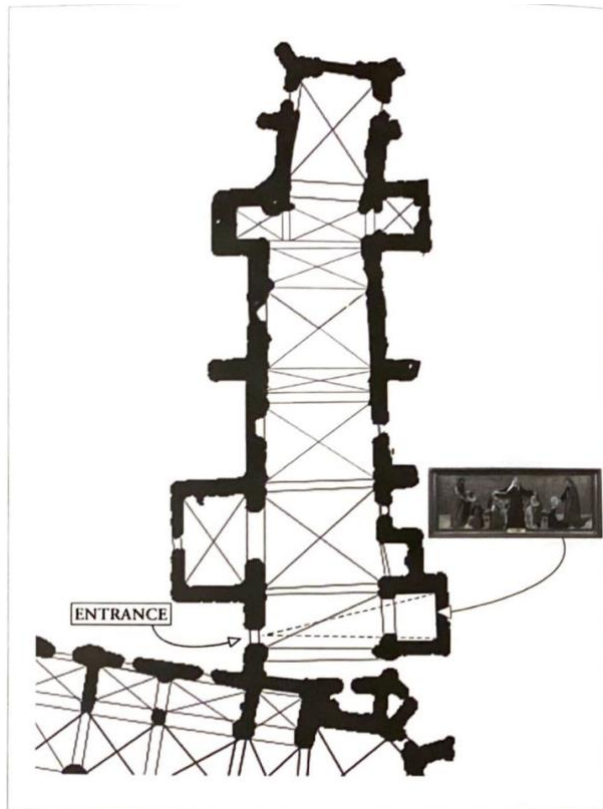


Figure 89 – Plan of the chapel of Saint-Pierre de Luxembourg and the position of the altarpiece. © Emma Capron



Figure 90 – Hypothetical reconstruction of the altarpiece in situ in the chapel according to the established proportions in the commission contract. © Emma Capron

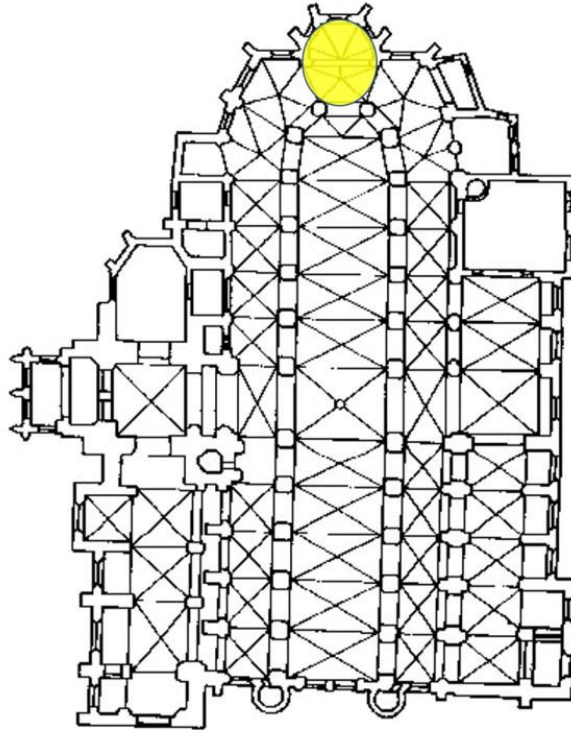


Figure 91 – Plan of the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk, Bruges (in yellow the chapel of the guild of the tanners behind the choir)

Roughly in the same period as Memling's painting, the so-called Master of the Legend of Saint Lucy painted what was most likely a triptych, of which only today the central panel survives (IX). According to early studies, this possibility is due to the saint being connected to the pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Agatha and the episode of the saint's martyrdom, which would require more depictions²³⁷. Likewise, in the late 1960s in the exhibition dedicated to the *Anonieme Vlaamse Primitieven*, Janssens de Bisthoven pointed out that the painting's old frame bears on both sides traces of hinges used to pivot the two shutters²³⁸; an indication that was a central panel of a triptych. Considering the dimensions (79 x 183) seems quite plausible to think that served as an altarpiece, although the height here is interesting. Taking into account other Netherlandish triptychs from the same period, the majority are more than 1 m in height, but there are some exceptions like the *Mérode Altarpiece* by the workshop of Robert Campin, with 64,5 in height²³⁹. It seems unlikely that the dimensions of the *Scenes from the Life of Saint*

²³⁷ Roggen, Domien; Duverger J.; Pauwels, H. (ed). *Le siècle des Primitifs Flamands* (exh. cat.). Bruges, Groeningemuseum, 26 juin – 11 septembre, 1960, pp. 135-136.

²³⁸ Lavalleye (ed.), 1969, pp. 205-206; Zdanov, 2010, pp. 2-4.

²³⁹ Among other examples are: Master of the Legend of Saint Ursula, *Triptych of the Annunciation*, 1483, 59.1 cm × 116.2 cm, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, inv. no. 1997.138; Anonymous, *Martyrdom of Saint Hippolytus*, ca. 1490-1500, 87 x 253.1 cm, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, inv. no. 63.660.

Lucy have adorned a high altar: as far I am aware none of the late medieval churches of Bruges at the time were dedicated to this saint. Wilenski proposed the provenance from a convent of nuns or a religious institution of women, but the connection between the probable patrons, the Blanckaert family²⁴⁰, and any convent near Bruges is unknown²⁴¹. The reverse of the central panel is not painted, suggesting that at least the central panel was not intended to be seen from behind. It is, however, possible that the shutters had decoration, as was common at the time, but not necessarily. That said, the triptych it might have adorned a lateral chapel, public or semi-public, but it is not possible to have an idea of the original setting, and at some point, the triptych was dismantled.

In the fifteenth century, the Master of Dunois introduced the iconography of the Throne of the Grace in the French painting panorama (XIV)²⁴². Three hypotheses regarding the provenance and function of the *La Trinité aux chanoines de Notre-Dame* have been formulated: originally, according to the nineteenth-century hypothesis, the painting served as an altarpiece and adorned the chapelle Saint-Aignan in the old cloister of Notre-Dame de Paris, in the area of the canons' quarter²⁴³. According to another hypothesis it was intended for the former Couvent des Petits-Augustins (originally named *Sainte-Trinité*)²⁴⁴. More recently, Reynaud suggested that was initially commissioned for the altar of the *Ardents* (or Holy Trinity), located behind the high altar of Notre-Dame cathedral, and possibly transferred to the chapelle Saint-Aignan²⁴⁵.

Notwithstanding the complexity of the provenance, from the information available and taking into consideration previous studies, it seems most likely that the panel was an altarpiece, not for a high altar, but for a chapel either in Saint-Aignan²⁴⁶ or in the Notre-Dame Cathedral.

²⁴⁰ According to Zdanov alluding to A. M. Robert's hypothesis, "un certain Cornelis Blanckaert a été enterré dans l'église Saint Jacques [Sint-Jakobskerk] entre 1498 et 1494 [sic]". However, he does not develop his argument and cites two different sources, the latter of which I was not able to consult for this study: Bruges, Stadbibliothek, *Notas Weale*, Reg. 32, Eglise St. Jacques, comptes, 44; Zdanov, 2010, p. 3.

²⁴¹ Wilenski, 1960, p. 58.

²⁴² Reynaud Nicole. "Les Heures du chancelier Guillaume Jouvenel des Ursins et la peinture parisienne autour de 1440" in *Revue de l'Art*, 1999, n°126. pp. 23-35.

²⁴³ More specifically, Gilbert mentions that was in the apse which is the main liturgical and architectural element where the altar is located. That is to say, the panel was indeed an altarpiece and not hung on a wall. The chapel's dimensions were ca. 10 m x 6 m; however, part of the structure was rebuilt, and new elements were added, particularly after the French Revolution. Gilbert, A. P. M. *Souvenirs historiques de la chapelle de Saint-Aignan et du cloître Notre-Dame à Paris*. Paris. Impr. de Crapelet, 1847, p. 168. Grant, Lindy; Héber-Suffrin, François; Johnson, Danielle. "La chapelle Saint-Aignan à Paris" in *Bulletin Monumental*, 157 (1999), pp. 283-299.

²⁴⁴ Müntz, Eugène. "Le musée de l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts (troisième article): le musée de peinture" in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 3e période, t. 4, juillet 1890, pp. 283-284.

²⁴⁵ Reynaud, 2000-2, pp. 30-32.

²⁴⁶ Grant; Héber-Suffrin; Johnson, op. cit.. pp. 283-299.

It has almost the same measurements as Quarton's panel (68 x 179), and the shape and the height possibly were dictated by the architectural context. However, this limitation would only be applied if it was intended for the church of Saint-Aignan. Furthermore, the panel does not have decoration on the reverse, which might suggest that it was placed on a wall or on the altar of the canons chapel.

Regardless of the original provenance, the Master of Dunois' painting should be interpreted through iconography as it represents multiple canons of Notre-Dame. Considering this seems reasonable to think that they were the patrons of the panel, which was intended to adorn either their chapel or semi-publicly displayed at Notre-Dame Cathedral.

2. Use and Function of Undetermined Paintings

The fascination with the pilgrimage, or rather Jerusalem, was rooted in all social classes of the Low Countries. The Holy City depicted as a Netherlandish city in the landscape of *The Lamentation* by Petrus Christus (V) is a sign of it. To understand the function of the painting it is crucial to understand who the commissioner was. One of the main Bruges patrons was the merchant dynasty of the Adornes, originally from Genoa, who founded the *Jeruzalemkerk* (Jerusalem Chapel) in Bruges in the first half of the fifteenth century²⁴⁷. The most notorious member connected to Petrus Christus was Anselm (Anselmus), who seems to have been the commissioner of the *Lamentation*²⁴⁸. Both were members of the Bruges *Broederschap van Onze-Lieve-Vrouwe van den drogen* (Our Lady of the Dry Tree), so they knew each other²⁴⁹. In the 1450s Christus was one of the most prolific painters in Bruges; Anselm most likely wanted to 'immortalize' his voyage to the Holy City and who else could produce such a painting than possibly the most famous artist of the city? Assuming that indeed Anselm was

²⁴⁷ For the family's name there are different variants: Adoerne, Adoorne, Adoren, Adorens, Adores, Adorne, Adornes, Adourne, Adournes, Adurne, Adurnus, Dadoerne, Dadourne. However, the Italian form 'Adorno' does not appear in Netherlandish sources. Information taken from Martens, 1992, p. 291. At least three members went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Pieter II, Jacob and Anselmus, the first two were the founders of the chapel. Idem, op. cit., p. 292.

²⁴⁸ For some figures it is not possible to establish their identity, as the iconography is quite complex. See chapter I, section B. 2. V of the present study. In the nineteenth century the French Édouard Fétis considered the provenance from the Abbey of Tongerlo, Belgium. Peter H. Schabacker in his monograph dedicated to Petrus also mentions this possibility. As far as I know, there is no evidence to support this, and the panel is not mentioned in any of the abbey inventories. Schabacker, Peter H. *Petrus Christus*. Utrecht: Haentjens Dekker & Gumbert, 1974, p. 119; Martens, 1990-91, p. 12.

²⁴⁹ Martens, 1992, pp. 302-303; 492-497, doc. 88.

the commissioner and taking into consideration the subject and the family's chapel inspired by the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, it is possible to connect all these elements. Martens identified two figures as Anselm and his wife Margaretha vander Banck – the two on the far right of the panel –, which increases the possibility that indeed the Adornes were the patrons.

In case the panel adorned their *Jeruzalemkerk*, it seems likely that it did not serve as an altarpiece but instead as an independent panel. The original chapel consecrated in 1429 was demolished and replaced by the one that still stands, between 1470-83²⁵⁰. Assuming that Christus' painting was produced circa 1455-60, and made for this chapel, reconstructing the original function seems rather problematic. The building has one lower and one upper chapel; in the first is located Anselm's funerary monument with an adorned altar; next to the upper chapel is the prayer chapel (fig. 92) Considering this architectural structure, it seems likely that a painting with a pilgrimage subject would suit better in a place for prayer. Moreover, Petrus during this period was a widely requested painter, meaning that his artworks were costly. Therefore, the painting may have hung in the prayer chapel.

In the case of the *Lamentation* by the Master of the Pietà de Saint-Germain-de-Prés (XII), there is less evidence compared to the previous paintings. As mentioned above, the painter's conventional name comes from the commission of the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. The French Benedictine monk Jacques Bouillart in 1724 in his *Histoire* of the Abbey mentioned, 'we see in the sacristy an old painting which was once used in some chapel, where the Abbé Guillaume [unidentified] is represented on his knees respectfully supporting under his arm a Christ detached from the cross [i.e., Lamentation]'²⁵¹. From this description, it is possible to deduct that before it was moved to the sacristy, the panel was in 'some chapel', meaning that was not intended to be an altarpiece of the high altar of the church. Sharing nearly the same height and length as Christus' painting (97.3 cm), it is plausible that it also served as an independent panel. Attending to the depiction of the abbey, the painting certainly was commissioned for the church and for unknown reasons ended up in the sacristy in the eighteenth century. However, Bouillart points out that it was 'once used in some chapel'; if he is correct, this means that the panel would have been placed in one of the nine existing chapels, reinforcing the idea that it indeed was intended for the abbey (fig. 93). Among all those chapels, the chapel of the Virgin in the ambulatory would be the best place of display, as the painting's

²⁵⁰ For more about the architecture see Geirnaert, N.; Vandewalle, A. *Adornes en Jeruzalem. Internationaal Leven in het 15de- en 16de- eeuwse Brugge*. exh. cat. Bruges: Stad Brugge, 1983, pp. 50-81.

²⁵¹ For the original passage see Appendix, section 2, doc. 6.

subject is intrinsically connected to Mary and none of the other options has a strict relationship between the subject and the chapel's dedication, e.g., Saint Casimir or Saint Nicholas. The sixteenth-century chapel was demolished in the nineteenth century and considering the painting's dimensions (97.3 x 198.5 cm) nothing indicates or excludes that it was either on a wall or was an antependium.

Of all the *Lamentations*, Van der Weyden's painting has the least information (IV). As pointed out elsewhere, the key to knowing the original setting is through the figure of the bishop on the right side, but who cannot be identified with certainty²⁵². Also, there are no elements to associate the painting with any specific building²⁵³. Attending to the dimensions (approximately 80 x 130) and compared to the previous examples, Van der Weyden's panel size is more limited, which could indicate that was not either an antependium or predella; in those cases, the panel of the Master of the Pietà de Saint-Germain-de-Prés (XII) or Hugo van der Goes (VI) would be more viable options for these functions. The option of an altarpiece should not be ruled out, but some considerations need to be made: with similar depictions, two panels have served as an altarpiece, Rogier's *Descent from the Cross* (Madrid) and the *Lamentation of Christ* (Florence); only one might have been a predella²⁵⁴. Likewise, the *Lamentation* has an undecorated reverse, which indicates that it was not to be seen from behind.

²⁵² As noted before, some authors tried to identify this figure as: Jean Chevrot, bishop of Tournai (ca. 1395-1460); Philippe Courault, abbot of Saint Peter's Abbey in Ghent (ca. 1410-after 1471); Goswin Herdickx, abbot at Affligem Abbey, near Brussels (1457-1493); and Pierre de Ranchicourt, bishop of Arras (?-1499). The identification is not consensual due to absence of evidence. However, who commissioned the panel certainly had a powerful position and influence, as Rogier's paintings were costly. On these matters see Panofsky, Erwin. "Two Roger Problems: The Donor of the Hague Lamentation and the Date of the Altarpiece of the Seven Sacraments." *The Art Bulletin* 33 (1951), pp. 33-40. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3047326>; <https://www.restauratoren.nl/blog/symposium-rogier-van-der-weyden-the-mauritshuis-lamentation/>

²⁵³ For the Mauritshuis, the College van Atrecht, Leuven (Atrechtcollege) is the original provenance. However, they do not provide further details for this. <https://rkd.nl/nl/over-het-rkd/actueel/agenda/718-symposium-rogier-van-der-weyden-and-the-mauritshuis-lamentation>

²⁵⁴ In the Friedländer database, a "Predella from the so-called Schongauer's altarpiece" is registered. No further information is given, and on recent Rogier's studies and corpus of paintings, this predella is not associated to him. Likewise, I am not aware of any "Schongauer's altarpiece" in the Minster of Ulm. <https://www.kikirpa.be/friedlaender/4867>. For more information about the other two paintings by Rogier see Kemperdick; Sander; Eclercy; Aston (ed). exh. cat., 2009.



Figure 92 – Interior of the Jeruzalemkerk

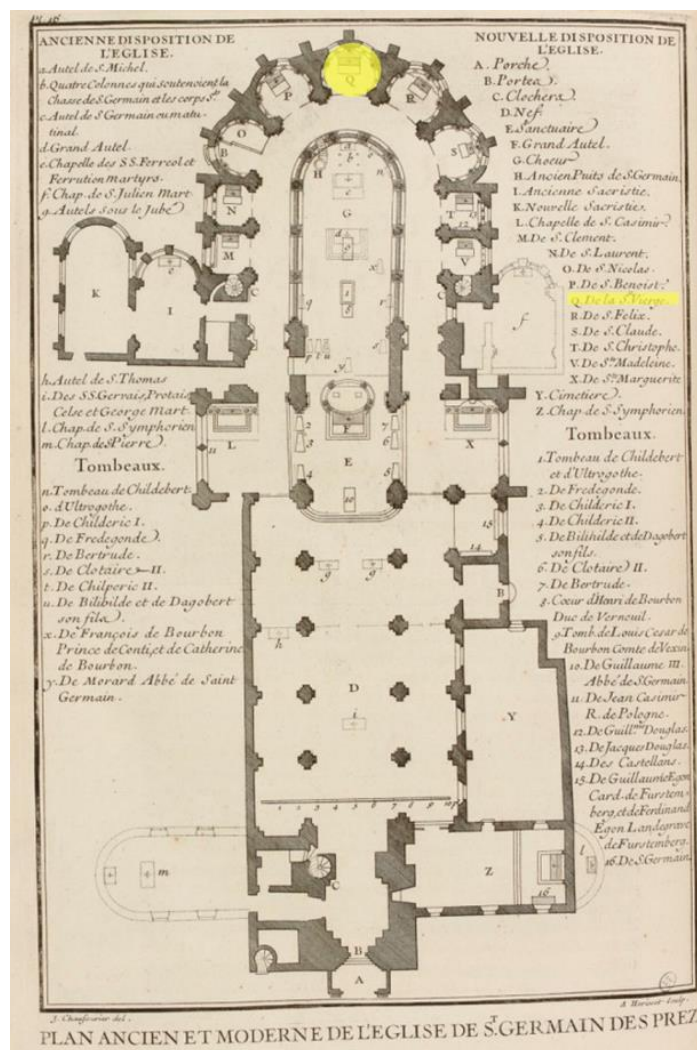


Figure 93 - Plan of the church of the abbey of Saint-Germain-de-Prés in the middle 18th century with the medieval parts (in yellow the chapel of the Virgin, demolished in the 19th century). Boullart, 1724, p. 368.

In his second edition of the *Vite* in 1568, Vasari claims that a *quadro picciolo* ('little painting') was commissioned by Tommaso Portinari for Santa Maria Nuova of Florence, identifying the subject (VIII)²⁵⁵. A careful analysis of the painting shows that none of the couple's seven children is depicted. On this basis, this panel is usually dated around 1470, roughly the same period of their marriage²⁵⁶; it therefore may have been commissioned on that occasion. It is often considered that it remained in Bruges, particularly at the Sint-Jakobskerk, to circa 1510-1515²⁵⁷; this assumption is based on the fact that Portinari acquired the panel shortly before his private chapel in this church, where the painting could have served as an altarpiece²⁵⁸. However, there is no evidence to support this provenance. Additionally, as exposed by Martens and Nuttall, the painting is not mentioned in the original decoration of the chapel, and the authors consider that a panel with Christ's passion in a chapel dedicated to the Virgin would be 'inappropriate'²⁵⁹. Alternatively, Tommaso extended his patronage to the church of Franciscan Observants, where the iconography is intrinsically connected with this monastic order²⁶⁰.

Furthermore, just as the *Seven Joys of the Virgin*, the *Passione* can be interpreted in the context of the spiritual pilgrimage. With its relatively modest size, it is unlikely that the panel served as a high altarpiece. Alternatively, the panel may have been displayed on a side altar or on a wall. In the latter case, it might have been in a chapel where the couple and their family could do their 'pilgrimage'. Additionally, as far as I am aware there are no burn marks caused by candles, supporting the hypothesis that indeed was not used as an altarpiece, although these

²⁵⁵ The scholarship agrees that the Italian historian was referring to the *Passione di Torino*, where both the patron and his wife were depicted in the lower left and right corners, respectively. For the full passage see Appendix, section 2, doc. 5; Lane, 2009, p. 18.

²⁵⁶ On this matter see Lane, 2008, p. 147.

²⁵⁷ De Vos, 1994, p. 46.

²⁵⁸ De Vos, op. cit., p. 109; Waldman, L.A. "New Documents for Memling's Portinari Portraits in the Metropolitan Museum of Art" in *Apollo*, CLIII (2001), p. 30.

²⁵⁹ Martens, 1992, pp. 253-264; doc. 117, pp. 532-536; Nuttall, 2004, p. 64.

²⁶⁰ Nuttall suggests that when in 1518 the friars of this church asked the Florentine *nazione* to remove their ornaments, as the church would be relocated, some donations of Portinari may have been preserved here. This is supported by the foundation of the *Broederschap van Onze-Lieve-Vrouwe van den drogen boom* in the same place, of which Tommaso was a member. To me this hypothesis seems plausible as the painting is not recorded as Portinari's belongings when he died in 1501, which could indicate that the painting was donated to some religious institution. Although, two caveats should be done here: around 1510-1515 the so-called Master of the Bruges Passion Scenes produced a painting with aspects from Memling's work, indicating that during this period the painting was still in the Flemish city; secondly, in the beginning of the sixteenth century the Italian painter Gaspar Sacchi painted some elements that allude to Hans' painting, suggesting that he knew the painting itself or drawings of it. On these matters see De Vos, op. cit., p. 51; Nuttall, op. cit. p. 64; Borchert (ed.). exh. cat., 2014, p. 112.

marks are not always present. The same goes for the undecorated reverse of the panel, which indicates that did not serve as an altarpiece of a high altar. In the absence of further evidence, we can only speculate about the place where the painting was displayed. At any rate, Vasari's assumption that the painting was commissioned for Santa Maria Nuova seems unlikely in this context²⁶¹.

The painting *Nativity, Adoration of the Magi, and Presentation in the temple* of the *Piemontesi* Jean Grassi (XVII) has been since its restoration the subject of some studies. As far as it was possible to detect from the scientific examination, there are traces of candle wax on the surface of the painting; additionally, the frame was repainted in an old black and gold colour which possibly is the original²⁶². The panel has an undecorated reverse.

Grassi was active in Avignon, but according to the scholarship, the panel adorned the church of Saint-Thomas de Cantorbéry at Cuiseaux – a *commune* further north with different political actors –, as a predella or a freestanding altarpiece. This assumption is based on the fact that in 1490 Cuiseaux was part of the *seigneurie de la Bresse bourguignonne*, which was assigned to Guy de Rochefort, elected as the first president of the Parliament of Dijon (1488-1492), who likely donated the panel to the church; he might have followed the example of his associate Nicolas Bouesseau, president of the Chamber of Auditors of Dijon, who commissioned an altarpiece produced by Jean or Pierre Changenet (from whom Grassi took over the workshop) for the high altar of the church of Notre-Dame de Dijon²⁶³. Although this seems reasonable, there is no factual evidence to associate the church of Saint-Thomas with Grassi and Rochefort.

The traces of wax throughout the painting might suggest that it was used as an altarpiece. However, in some very specific cases, those marks could also be found in predellas, depending on the height of the altarpiece in relation to the altar structure and therefore the distance between the candles and the support. It seems, then, that we are dealing with a freestanding altarpiece, identical to Christus' *Lamentation* (V), although the hypothesis of a predella should not be excluded. In fact, if used as a predella, the ensemble would probably consist of a triptych with either paintings or sculptures. Moreover, the height of 54 cm is

²⁶¹ Lane, 2008, p. 315, cat. no. 68, note no. 5.

²⁶² Adam and Caron also mention that above the donkey in the *Nativity*, there is a representation of a burning candle (detected during the restoration). They argue that this and the traces of wax could suggest the possible function; however, regarding the "burning candle" I am more reticent, as the candle representation was common in the Nativity scene and not necessarily makes a panel an altarpiece or predella. Adam; Caron. *Annales de Bourgogne*, 2021, p. 97.

²⁶³ Adam; Caron. *La Maison Changenet*, 2021, pp. 20-21; 55-57.

compatible with this lower part of an altarpiece; nowadays, there are no surviving complete altarpieces plus predella in the Avignon region²⁶⁴.

Furthermore, in the two panels *Scenes from the Life of Saint Ulrich* by the artist of the same name (XI), the original function is also difficult to determine. Considering the iconography seems reasonable to think that the panel was originally commissioned for the Basilica of Sts. Ulrich und Afra in Augsburg. Although nowadays the painting is kept in the north transept of the church, the original place of the display was not there. As Tilmann Breuer noted in 1958, the church's main altar is from 1604, and the side altars dedicated to St Afra and St Ulrich are in the North and South, respectively²⁶⁵. Considering this layout, it seems reasonable to propose that the original location of the two panels was on the St Ulrich altar as the iconography is intrinsically connected to the saint. Excluding the possibility of a high altar, I suggest that both panels were used as St Ulrich's altarpiece in the choir²⁶⁶. The two panels' reverses are unpainted, which suggests that normally they were not visible. The difference between the *Scenes from the Life of Saint Ulrich* and the rest of the corpus is that they consist of two separate panels, which makes it difficult to uncover their original function. Today a representation of a Virgin and a Child – dating from 1480-1485²⁶⁷ – is in between the two paintings, which could indicate that were intended as shutters originally. However, it is very unlikely that it was originally used as shutters because 2 m in width would be too large for the fifteenth century artistic panorama.

One of the oldest surviving Northern Netherlandish panel paintings, the *Memorial Tablet for the Lords of Montfoort* (II) has a complex history. One would assume that the commissioners were the De Rovere family of Montfoort themselves. According to the dendrochronological analysis the youngest heartwood ring of the painting was formed in 1351,

²⁶⁴ The painting recently attributed to Antoine de Lonhy, *Three Prophets*, ca. 1480, 61.7 × 139 cm, (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon, inv. no. B938), is the closest example in the region that one can find. However, also for Lonhy's panel there are no reliable surviving sources.

²⁶⁵ Breuer, Tilmann. *Die Stadt Augsburg*. Bayerische Kunstdenkmale, 1. München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1958, p. 46. Burger, Fritz; Schmitz, Hermann (ed.). *Die deutsche Malerei vom ausgehenden Mittelalter bis zum Ende der Renaissance / III: Oberdeutschland im XV. und XVI. Jahrhundert*, Wildpark-Potsdam: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1913, p. 530.

²⁶⁶ The *Ulrichskapelle* was only built between 1762-1765, so that it is not likely that it was intended for this specific chapel or an older one.

²⁶⁷ See the objects today at north transept of the church. The Warburg Institute – *Iconographic Database* – https://iconographic.warburg.sas.ac.uk/vpc/VPC_search/subcats.php?cat_1=2&cat_2=39&cat_3=4151&cat_4=9350&cat_5=10642 - (accessed 19 September 2022).

which around 1362-65 could have been ready for use²⁶⁸. All the four family knights depicted died in the Battle of Warns, 1345, so none of them could have been the patron. Between 1396 and 1401 there was another clash between the counts of Holland – De Rover family side – and the Frisians²⁶⁹. Van Anrooij in 1989 suggested that Hendrik III van Montfoort – nephew of Jan I and who died in 1402 – was most likely the patron in order to remember his ancestors in a period when the conflict had resurfaced²⁷⁰.

The painting might have not intended to be an altarpiece but as a ‘commemorative panel’ in the family chapel on the altar of the Virgin Mary, either in the church at Montfoort or in the St Janskerk, Linschoten. The undecorated reverse of the panel might reveal the function. According to the scholarship, Roelof de Rovere, the second knight from the left, specified in his will that he wanted to be buried in or near the church in Linschoten, which seems the most logical original provenance²⁷¹. That said, a fire in 1482 destroyed part of the St Janskerk – due to the *Hoekse en Kabeljauwse twisten* (Hook and Cod wars) –, which does not allow us to perceive the original architectural context. However, as a private commission to celebrate the bravery of the family for their private chapel, it seems likely that it was on the *Maria-altaar*, which connects with the depiction of the enthroned Virgin. The size of the panel might indicate that due to diverse architectural factors, the painting needed to be ‘limited’ in height.

As noted by Schmidt, these epitaphs were located either on the altar or near it²⁷². The author explains that ‘when the holy figures to whom the supplicant directs himself are the Virgin and Child, the iconography and its structure come quite close to devotional diptychs’. This might suggest that the *Lords of Montfoort* (II), had been located on the Marian altar possibly near the tomb of any of the four depicted knights.

The other epitaph is *The Jouvenel des Ursins Family* (XIII), produced for the family’s chapel. Sterling mentions a drawing by Gilles Corrozet from 1550 – copied (?) by Louis

²⁶⁸ J. Niessen, 2010, 'Anonymous, *Memorial Tablet for the Lords of Montfoort*, Northern Netherlands, c. 1400', in J.P. Filedt Kok (ed.), *Early Netherlandish Paintings*, online coll. cat. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam: hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.7027 (accessed 3 November 2022).

²⁶⁹ Initially Hendrik III did not support the counts of Holland, but in the end, he approved of the offensive.

²⁷⁰ Van Anrooij, W., ‘De Memorietafel van de heren van Montfoort en het Hollandse gravenhof omstreeks 1400’, *Madoc* III (1989), pp. 24-25. In the past other possible candidates were cited, for instance, Willem van Oostervant, Duke of Bavaria-Straubing and count of Holland. However, this alternative is not reasonable. See Bauch, Kurt. *Studien zur Kunstgeschichte*, Berlin 1967, p. 106.

²⁷¹ Olde Meierink, B. et al., *Kastelen en ridderhofsteden in Utrecht*, Utrecht, Matrijs, 1995. p. 252.

²⁷² Schmidt, 2006, p. 19. See also Schoenen, Paul. “Epitaph,” in *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 5 (Stuttgart, 1967), cols. 872–921.

Boudan in the seventeenth century and part of the collection of François Roger de Gaignières²⁷³ – showing the now-lost tomb of Jean Jouvenel and his wife Michelle de Vitry in the chapel of Saint Rémy in the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris, which was confirmed by the canon Montjoie in 1763 (fig. 94)²⁷⁴. It is important to take into account that all figures are in adoration to the left with their clasped hands in prayer. That said, the drawing shows also the couple in adoration to the left, who may be facing the altar, possibly a sacred figure like the Virgin and Child²⁷⁵. Let us look at the document – published by André du Chesne (or Duchesne) in 1617 but written by Gilles Le Bouvier and Alain Chartier: on Friday 14th of June 1443, the chapter of Our Lady of Notre-Dame, gave authorization to Michelle de Vitry and her family to be buried, built their ‘crypt’ and above it to raise a tomb, where ‘images’, i.e., portraits can be displayed in the designated place, without any restrictions²⁷⁶.

With this authorization, Michelle de Vitry was able to ‘repatriate’ her husband, who had died in Tours, to their own family’s chapel in Notre-Dame. According to Matteo Ferrari, the epitaph was “*gravée sur le bord de la dalle qui scellait le sarcophage et fournissait le support aux deux sculptures*”, i.e., served to support two sculptures which were those portraits in Boudan’s drawing²⁷⁷. Interestingly, the document gives freedom to the family in terms of architectural disposal, so they could place any kind of art without restrictions. Likewise, the document ends with the permission that in case they wanted, they were allowed to adjust the chapel’s windows. A second drawing by Boudan made in the same period, shows the *tombeau* de Guillaume Jouvenel des Ursins – who died in 1472. Again, Ferrari argues that based on the drawing, the sarcophagus was placed inside an *enfeu*²⁷⁸ or framed by an arcade because a tympanum is seen

²⁷³ Sterling mentions that: “les informations que nous donnent Corrozet (1550), la gravure de Gaignières reproduisant le tombeau”. In fact, the drawing was made by Corrozet in 1550s, and later Boudan made the engraving and was in the collection of Gaignières. Likewise, in the image of the tomb (here figure 94, in Sterling’s book figure 2), Sterling cites the reference BNP “Est. Rés. 9, fol. 94”, but it should be “PE-9, fol. 96”. Sterling, 1987-1990, vol. II, pp. 31-33. Ferrari, Matteo. *Notre-Dame (chapelle Jouvenel des Ursins)*, <https://armma.saprat.fr/monument/paris-notre-dame-chapelle-jouvenel-des-ursins-> (accessed 04 October 2022).

²⁷⁴ Idem, op. cit., p. 31. The chapel is the sixth of the ambulatory of the choir on the south side. According to Demurger there still is a double chapel – *chapelle Saint-Rémy*. Demurger, 1997, p. 40.

²⁷⁵ Towards the end of the nineteenth century the chapel underwent a huge renovation and due to that it is not possible anymore to perceive the original decoration. Nowadays the chapel still displays the sculptures of the couple’s tomb, which during some time were in Versailles but in 1955 returned to the chapel.

²⁷⁶ This is a summarize of the document, for the full French passage see Appendix, section 2, doc. 1.

²⁷⁷ Ferrari, Matteo. *Notre-Dame (chapelle Jouvenel des Ursins)*, <https://armma.saprat.fr/monument/paris-notre-dame-chapelle-jouvenel-des-ursins-> (accessed 04 October 2022).

²⁷⁸ French word used to designate a watertight locker to receive a coffin or funerary urn and only applied to burial vaults on the floor. Used since the Middle Ages up to the eighteenth century, it is characteristic of the Gothic period and only accessible to important families.

on the top of the tomb²⁷⁹. In the past, Schmidt had proposed that the supplicants' orientation toward the altar to the left, might be an indication that a painting by Jean Fouquet depicting Guillaume Jouvenel des Ursins (Musée du Louvre, Paris) functioned as a counterpart of the family portrait (fig. 95)²⁸⁰. Nevertheless, nothing is known about the original altar of the chapel of Saint Rémy in Notre-Dame, although it can be assumed that a sacred figure was placed on it. Wherever the epitaph of *The Jouvenel des Ursins Family* (XIII) was located within the architectural environment of the family's private chapel, it had the same function as the *Memorial Tablet for the Lords of Montfoort* (II): both served to reinforce the memory of the families ancestors.

Sepulchral moments such as those of the De Rovere and Jouvenel des Ursins families certainly were places of importance where the most prestigious art would be placed side by side with the patrons. For the data available, the two epitaphs discussed above seem to have been placed next to the families' tombs. Due to that, the height of each panel – 69.5 cm for the Netherlandish panel and 165 for the French painting – indicates that they were adapted according to the available space in the private chapels, otherwise the size could have been bigger. Moreover, both paintings do not have decoration on the reverse, which suggests that were placed on a wall or above the tombs, so for not to be seen from behind. Another example of a painting next to a sepulchral moment is Memling's portrait of Gilles Joye (Clark Art Institute, Williamstown), which was near the sitter's tomb at the now-destroyed Sint-Donaaskathedraal, Bruges.

²⁷⁹ Ferrari, Matteo. *Notre-Dame (chapelle Jouvenel des Ursins)*, <https://armma.saprat.fr/monument/paris-notre-dame-chapelle-jouvenel-des-ursins-> (accessed 04 October 2022).

²⁸⁰ As Schmidt noted some scholars propose that this portrait was part of a triptych, which possibly included the portrait of his consort, Geneviève Héron. Additionally, Schmidt noted that “the image of the supplicant would seem to require a pendant to the right, as in Fouquet's Melun Diptych”. Schmidt, 2006, p. 23.

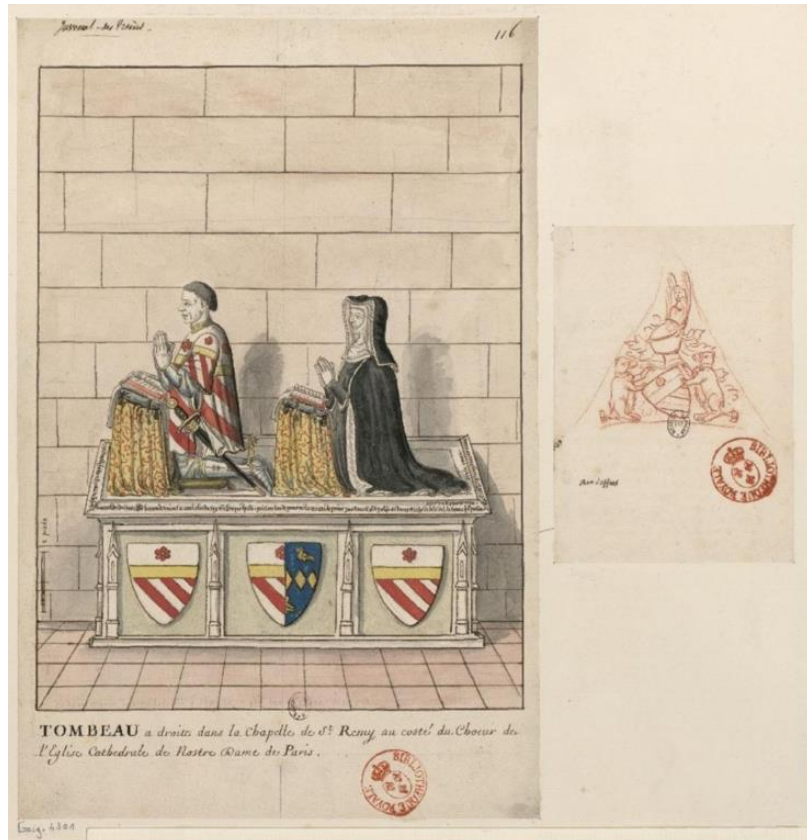


Figure 94 - Louis Boudan, *Tomb of Jean Jouvenel and Michelle de Vitry*, [no additional information nor dimensions], BnF, Département des estampes et de la photographie, Reserve PE-9. fol. 96 © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris



Figure 95 - Jean Fouquet, *Guillaume Jouvenel des Ursins*, ca. 1450-1475, 93 x 115 cm, Musée du Louvre, Département des Peintures © 2017 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Tony Querrec

For the *Kortessem* panel, the *Throne of the Grace*, and the Master of Coetivy's *Resurrection of Lazarus* (III, X, XV) it is difficult to establish the original function due to the lack of evidence. With an unpainted reverse, 3 cm of thickness and an uncommon support for panel paintings in the Low Countries – walnut –, the so-called *Kortessem panel* is together with the *Memorial Tablet for the Lords of Montfoort* the panels that are pre-Eyckian. Additionally, it nowadays measures 62.5 x 273 cm, but during the latest restoration was detected that it 'was also reduced in height: both top and bottom edges have been trimmed [approximately 10 cm]. The panel's original dimensions are estimated to have been around 73 x 338 cm'²⁸¹. These dimensions might affect the function of the panel. An alternative title usually used for the artwork is *Alken Predella*, but recent studies demonstrated that a panel painting of more than 3 m in length would be too large for a predella in the early fifteenth century²⁸². Alternatively, it is considered that the painting was originally an altarpiece or an antependium²⁸³. Often the *Kortessem* panel is compared to the *Thornham Parva Retable* from the 1330s (Thornham Parva, Suffolk), which is 1 m wider than the Netherlandish artwork. As noted elsewhere, antependia usually are more than 80 cm high, and the *Kortessem* has 62.5 cm. However, in terms of width the *Kortessem* panel is within the standard of 150 to 435 cm, with 338 cm originally before it was cut²⁸⁴. For the English painting, there are some records regarding provenance which allow us to have an idea of the function, but for the *Kortessem* panel the situation is more complex. There are still two hypotheses that persist regarding the original place of display: first, it was indeed used as an antependium, which Radulphus de Rivo as a Canon of the chapter of Tongeren commissioned for the high altar of the church of Our Lady in Tongeren²⁸⁵. The second hypothesis relates the painting to a document from 1524, according

²⁸¹ Stroo (ed.), 2009, p. 202; endnote no. 57.

²⁸² On this matter see Colman, Pierre. "Le panneau de Cortessem, alias 'Scènes de la vie la Vierge' (Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, inv. 4883), pré-eyckien ou Lombard?" in *Bulletin de la Classe des Beaux-Arts Académie Royale de Belgique*. 16/1-6, 2005, pp. 51-53.

²⁸³ For Froidcourt in the 1950s the painting was a predella; in the same decade Peters and Baudouin agreed that it was used as an antependium. Nowadays, it is accepted that in the absence of further evidence, an antependium seems the most logical original function. Stroo (ed.), op. cit., p. 250; endnote no. 308. Scenes from the Life of the Virgin in this period and with the Coronation are found in both altarpieces and antependia, but the Coronation was more often depicted in Germanic artworks than in Netherlandish.

²⁸⁴ Stroo (ed.), op. cit., 268, endnote no. 310.

²⁸⁵ Colman suggested this commission and function, but there is not any factual evidence. Likewise, this author argues that in the archival publication regarding Radulphus' commissions the supposed antependium is mentioned, but nowhere in the publication this is referred. Paquay, Jan. *Cartulaire de l'ancienne église collégiale et archidiaconale de Notre-Dame à Tongres*. Tongres: Collée, 1909, pp. 539-40; Colman, op. cit., p. 53.

to which the ‘Virgin and her parents, Anne and Joachim’ adorned as an altarpiece the church of Saint-Jacques-sur-Coudenberg, Brussels²⁸⁶.

Different is the situation for the *Throne of Grace with John the Baptist and John the Evangelist* and the Master of Coëtivy’s *Resurrection of Lazarus*. Both still need a systematic study of the provenance and commission. None of them has decoration on the reverse, which suggests the use as an altarpiece, but not for a high altar. The *Throne of Grace* is a very specific theme, similar to the *La Trinité aux chanoines de Notre-Dame*. That said, in the painting from Bruges the height (55 cm) is lower than the usual antependium, which can also indicate that it may have been a low altarpiece. Considering the given elements, it seems very likely that it functioned as an altarpiece.

Likewise, in the *Resurrection of Lazarus*, iconography plays an important role, as this subject was uncommon as an independent scene in the mid-fifteenth century. The panel have similar dimensions to Christ’s *Lamentation*, Memling’s *Seven Joys*, and *Scenes from the Life of Saint Lucy*. Nothing about the original provenance and function is known, so we can only speculate. The Master of Coëtivy’s patrons were members of the French court, which could suggest who were his patrons. Additionally, in the corpus of paintings, none was produced directly for members of any European court; ultimately, the patrons were merchants, businessmen or from prominent families. The other paintings with similar dimensions mentioned above served in different functions. Coëtivy’s panel is 78.5 cm in height, which seems to indicate that there was some limitation. Nonetheless, based on the iconography we can presume that the panel was not a high altarpiece, but instead an independent panel.

²⁸⁶ Stroo (ed.), 2009, p. 250, endnote no. 317.

3. Re-Evaluation of the Hoogstraten Painting

After evaluating the possible functions of the paintings that are part of the corpus, it is time to suggest the possibilities for the Hoogstraten panel. As indicated above, the panel with *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* was mentioned for the first time in the mid-nineteenth century in one of the left chapels of the Sint-Katharinakerk, among other artworks (fig. 3). In the absence of documentation and factual evidence ‘reconstructing’ the original setting seems rather problematic.

The analysis should start with simple but tricky question: what do we know about the commission, provenance, original setting, and place of origin? Assuming that the painting was indeed commissioned for the Sint-Katharinakerk – which is not certain – this provenance still not helps to reveal the iconography’s choice. Founded in the early thirteenth century, the church was destroyed and rebuilt at least three times, and the one that still persists is from the mid-sixteenth century²⁸⁷. This leaves us with the problem of how the mid-fifteenth century Gothic church looked like, as there are no records of it, and assuming the dating ca. 1440-50 for the painting is correct. Presuming that the patron was a cleric – similar to the canons of Notre Dame who commissioned the *La Trinité* (XIV), or even Rogier’s painting (IV), which was most likely painted for a bishop – only two persons were able to do so: Florentius, who was in charge of the church of Hoogstraten between 1420-1462, the period of the two phases of construction, from a Romanesque building to a proto-Gothic one; and his successor Reysenald Arnold, from 1462 to 1499²⁸⁸. A systematic study still needs to be done about these figures, as there is no information about them besides their names²⁸⁹.

In the city of Hoogstraten, the most logical secular patrons would be the Lalaing family – originally from the County of Hainault –, who controlled the city from the late fifteenth century. Previously, members of the Van Gemmenich, Van Kuik, and Van Borselen families were also in the city, but few traces of their role and patronage survived. However, the Lalaing branch *de facto* took over Hoogstraten after the marriage of Antoon I van Lalaing with Elisabeth van Culemborg in 1509. Until that period, other individuals had the lordship of Hoogstraten. For the period in question, they were Jan IV van Hoogstraten from 1382-1442;

²⁸⁷ For the history since the foundation and complete description of the church see Gilde de Saint-Thomas et de Saint-Luc, 1881-83, pp. 218-222.

²⁸⁸ Adriaensen; Segers, 1895, p. 181.

²⁸⁹ In the few publications where these figures are mentioned, they are designated as *plebaan*, i.e., a priest serving in a cathedral, alike the German *Leutpriester*. However, neither in the fifteenth century nor today the Sint-Katharinakerk is a cathedral, which makes this designation wrong.

Frank van Borssele²⁹⁰ from ca. 1442-1470; and, less likely attending to the dates, Jasper van Culemborg from 1480-1504²⁹¹. However, the extent of their patronage role is unknown, and as far as I am aware there is no secure evidence of any painting for Hoogstraten during their duty. That said, it cannot be excluded that one of these three lords has ordered the panel. However, nowhere in the painting, a coat of arms is present which would be strange in the case of a private commission.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century several elements caused a shift in the sale of artworks. Painters – some of them were *meesterschilders*²⁹²– would produce paintings not commissioned by any specific patron, but for potential buyers. In the absence of further evidence, one cannot rule out the possibility that the Hoogstraten panel was purchased in these markets – possibly in Bruges, Brussels, or Antwerp – by someone connected with one of the local families or by the church itself. With depictions similar to Rogier’s *The Betrothal of the Virgin*, the potential buyer²⁹³ for a mere sum would request a ‘copy’ and display it in his private chapel or donate it to any religious institution. However, a caveat should be made: according to Martens the most popular representations that one would find in these markets were the Virgin and the Child, usually in small size and for private devotion²⁹⁴. Considering that the panel *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* has more than 2 m in length, the size is too large for these markets. In this sense, it is not likely that such a painting as the Hoogstraten panel would have been found in these fairs.

In a different situation, and with a signed contract, ca. 1444 the painter Nabur Martins was requested to paint a *Last Judgement* comparable to the ‘*Judgement hanging in the hall of the Bakers’ Guild*’ in Ghent²⁹⁵. This was indeed a specific commission which demonstrates that ‘copies’ of other artworks were not unusual.

²⁹⁰ For more about this central figure in the affirmation of Hoogstraten see Van Deun, Piet. “De Hoogstraatse rekeningen van Frank van Borssele, neergelegd in de Grafelijkheidsrekenkamer” in *Jaarboek Erfgoed Hoogstraten* 8, 2017, not numbered.

²⁹¹ Damen, M. J. M. ‘Heren met banieren: de baanrotsen van Brabant in de vijftiende eeuw’. *Bourgondië voorbij. De Nederlanden 1250-1650. Liber alumnorum Wim Blockmans*. Damen; Sicking (eds.), Hilversum: Verloren, 2010, pp. 139-158.

²⁹² On this matter see Campbell, 1976, pp. 188-198. For an overview of the scholarship regarding this see Martens, 1994, pp. 10-14; 21-25.

²⁹³ Lorne Campbell mentions another way to sell artworks that increased in the fifteenth century: lottery. Although no examples of paintings as “prizes” are registered, we should not exclude this possibility for the Hoogstraten panel. Campbell, op. cit. p. 195.

²⁹⁴ Martens, op. cit. p. 38.

²⁹⁵ Campbell, op. cit., p. 193.

As discussed previously during the iconographic analysis, the Hoogstraten panel does not have decoration on the reverse, which can limit the range of options regarding the function. A non-painted reverse might suggest the function of an altarpiece or a frontal, but the height is crucial. Usually, an antependia height is around 80 to 115 cm, while for an altarpiece the height is diverse. Moreover, so far, no traces of candle burns or wax were found in the Hoogstraten painting.

Firstly, it is essential to put perspective on the iconography to determine the function of the Hoogstraten panel. A careful analysis of the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* might generate questions about the cult of the saint in Northern Europe and the places where the panel may have been. The veneration of Joseph started in the twelfth century, although only in the fifteenth century did the cult increase all over Europe²⁹⁶. Wilson in her book clarifies some misunderstandings related to St Joseph's cult, in part because there '[exists] a perception of St. Joseph not just as primarily a saint of the Counter-Reformation but as exclusively a Counter-Reformation saint'²⁹⁷. This wrong understanding of the saint might be the key that could lead us to the original function and setting. In other words, already in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries – before the Reformation and the Council of Trent – Joseph's *Hosen* at Aachen Cathedral served for public devotion, which expanded the saint's cult in Northern Europe²⁹⁸. This relic at Aachen was visited mainly by pilgrims, who, because they could not travel to the Holy Land, had the possibility to do so in Germany to a saint who is part of the Holy Family. The representation of the *hosen* can be found in some paintings in this period, in Hans Multscher's *Nativity* from the *Wurzach Altar*, 1437 (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) or in Rogier van der Weyden's *Columba Altarpiece*, ca. 1455 (Alte Pinakothek, Munich). However, the extent of the relation between this relic and the paintings is unknown, but it shows that certainly, its depiction was intentional, as it was an uncommon representation.

²⁹⁶ Williams, Anne. *Satirizing the Sacred: St. Joseph and Humor in Northern European Art, ca. 1300-1530*, PhD Dissertation, 2015, p. 4. <https://doi.org/10.18130/V3ZK2M>; De Coo, 1965, pp. 144-184.

²⁹⁷ Wilson, 2001, p. 9.

²⁹⁸ On this matter see Heublein, Brigitte. *Der "verkannte" Joseph: Zur mittelalterlichen Ikonographie des Heiligen im deutschen und niederländischen Kulturraum*, Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 1998. Williams, op. cit., pp. 26-27; 29-37.

Another possibility for the commission of the Hoogstraten panel is the *Sint Jozefsgilde* of Hoogstraten for their altar in the church. Assuming that the original provenance was the Sint-Katharinakerk, which functions and locations were possible? Certainly, the present church plan does not correspond to the one of the fifteenth century. De Coo noted that the *Sint Jozefsgilde* (guild of St Joseph) of Hoogstraten is recorded in 1408 and it comprised cartwrights, masons, and blacksmiths, but not carpenters²⁹⁹. The fact that a *Jozefsgilde* did not include carpenters, as the patron was, after all, a carpenter seems strange.

In turn, Jozef Ernalsteen observed that several guilds and brotherhoods before the decade of 1550 erected their altars in the new Sint-Katharinakerk, and here the carpenters were part of the *Jozefsgilde*³⁰⁰. Also, according to him based on the deed of the church consecration from 1544 the guild's altar was dedicated to St Joseph in the first place, and then to Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and St John the Evangelist³⁰¹. Around 1553 the *Jozefsgilde* ordered and appealed to Elisabeth van Culemborg (a petition and a drawing) to obtain monetary compensation for their altar 'een nieuwe voet ende tafele met eenen welfsele' – a new foot [possibly a predella] and a panel with a protruding upper part³⁰².

It is reasonable to assume that there was a *Jozefsgilde* in Hoogstraten around the fifteenth century and that they had an altar in the previous church, in which they commissioned the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* (I). On the one hand, the diversity of carpenters' tools represented in the painting emphasizes the patronage and the relationship between the saint and his cult. On the other hand, the *Jozefsgilde*'s petition for a new panel in 1553 appears to suggest that they had already a decorative element in their altar, which this new one could have been the substitute for the fifteenth-century panel. At any rate, it is very likely that there is a relationship between the panel and the guild after all. From all the studies published to date and the archival documentation regarding the Sint-Katharinakerk, the authors go always back to the guild's petition to Elisabeth van Culemborg and never clarify the origin of the *Jozefsgilde*

²⁹⁹ “Von ihnen ist jedoch nicht bekannt, dass sie in der kleineren Kirche, die dem heutigen erst 1544 eingeweihten Bau voranging, einen eigenen Altar besaßen. Die Zunft soll sich schon vor 1408 „Sint Jozefsgilde“ genannt und auch Wagner, Maurer und Schmiede – merkwürdigerweise nicht die Schreiner – unter demselben Schutzpatron vereinigt haben”. The author does not give a source for his statement and, as far I am aware it is not possible to confirm this account. De Coo, 1991, p. 87.

³⁰⁰ Ernalsteen, Jozef. “Hoogstraten - Het altaar der St. Jozefsgilde – 1533” in *Oudheid en kunst: algemeen tijdschrift voor Kempische geschiedenis* 38 (1929), pp. 49.

³⁰¹ Idem, op. cit. p. 51.

³⁰² See the full passage in Appendix, section 2, doc. 4. The guild estimative for this new decoration was ‘50 Karolus gulden’.

and other guilds present in the church³⁰³. However, it remains to be seen what the exact function of the panel was, as there are no surviving sources of the previous Sint-Katharinakerk.

The church is dedicated to Catherine of Alexandria; it would be strange to have a high altar altarpiece with Saint Joseph's depiction in this context³⁰⁴. Additionally, as one can perceive from the building nowadays, it follows the 'rules' of Gothic architecture with verticality and open space (fig. 96). The panel with 64 cm in height is unlikely to have been on.

Alternatively, the painting was perhaps used as a freestanding altarpiece in one of the chapels. The current church plan does not allow us to deduce considerations about this, but some reflections must be taken into account: let us look at Quarton's commission document again. It is said that the *Virgin of Mercy* should be made 'according to the proportion of the altar itself, from the surface exclusive of the window up to the platform of the altar, but of the width of one reed, or according to the width of the altar itself'³⁰⁵. Interestingly, the Sint-Katharinakerk is known for its large stained-glass windows in the transept and in the apse (fig. 97). This can suggest that the shape and height of the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* were dictated by the architectural context, particularly the windows. But a closer look at the architectural environment would invalidate this argument, as the space between the lower edge and the windows and the ground floor is more than 2 m in height (figs. 98 to 100); the only exception is the seventeenth-century altarpiece, which certainly was adapted to the architectural context. Considering the 2 m of 'free' space, it would have been awkward to place a merely 63 cm height panel on a secondary altar. However, a horizontal panel as the one from Hoogstraten could easily have functioned as a wall covering. Quarton's panel setting suggests that horizontal panels are related to the architectural space for which they were intended based on the height of the windows, which in the case of the Sint-Katharinakerk is hardly applicable.

Excluded is also the possibility of a location in the church's ambulatory, as there is no evidence of the existence of this behind the apse either in the fifteenth-century church or in the present structure. Due to this, is unlikely that the painting had the same function as the

³⁰³ For example, Adriaensen and Segers in 1895 mention without dating and locating in the church, that "het altaarstuk stelt den marteldood van den H. Crispijn voor. Onder het altaar heeft men de relikwiekas van de Sint Jorisdijlde, ook wel de Gilde van den Edelen Kruis boog genoemd. Zij bevat het hoofd van den H. Benicnus". Adriaensen; Segers, 1895, p. 93. From all the studies about the church the different authors repeat the same ideas and never clarify the origins of the diverse elements.

³⁰⁴ It is unknown when the church was formally dedicated to the Saint. The first mention to this is in 1394: *Beatae Catharinae de Hoestraten*. During his lordship, Jan IV van Hoogstraten, dedicated a chapel to this female saint.

³⁰⁵ See chapter II, section B, subsection 1 of the present study.

Lamentation of the Master of the Pietà de Saint-Germain-de-Prés, which was most likely in the church's ambulatory.

Turning lastly to the antependium and predella options, there are few reliable Netherlandish surviving examples that can offer us further information regarding their visual content. From the corpus, only four paintings could have been antependia or predellas, but even for these paintings, there are more doubts than certainties. That said, the Hoogstraten panel does not fit in the standard height of the Northern European antependia; often, but not always, this liturgical furnishing was in textile or metalwork. Frequently, the scholarship assumes that rectangular panel paintings were not used as antependia, which is an incorrect assumption³⁰⁶. Nevertheless, let us look to these two examples of the fifteenth century, one in painting and the other in textile: the *Antependium of Christ with the Instruments of the Passion* by an anonymous painter³⁰⁷, measures 93 x 193 cm (fig. 88); and the already mentioned *Meßornats des Ordens vom Goldenen Vlies* (Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Kunstkammer)³⁰⁸; the dimensions are clearly superior to the Hoogstraten painting, 119 x 330 cm. The painting from Leuven is interesting because it has similar dimensions to the Hoogstraten panel. However, a caveat should be made: while the Leuven panel has the standard height of the antependia, the *Scenes of the Life of St Joseph* does not. Additionally, there are few examples of antependia for this period, which do not allow us to be aware of the most common iconography in these mediums and if St Joseph was often represented as an independent subject. Again, it cannot be excluded that the Hoogstraten painting was an antependium (fig. 101).

The lack of examples also applies to Netherlandish predellas; as noted elsewhere these elements below an altarpiece usually have several small narrative scenes from the life of Christ

³⁰⁶ On this matter see Schmidt, 2009, p. 205; Braun Joseph, *Der christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 2 vols., Munich: Karl Widmann, 1924; For the Italian context see Hager, Helmut. *Die Anfänge des italienischen Altarbildes. Untersuchungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte des toskanischen Hochaltarretabels*, Römische Forschungen der Bibliotheca Hertziana 71, Munich: Anton Schroll & Co., 1962, pp. 59-66.

³⁰⁷ Further study needs to be conducted regarding this antependium, but Edward Van Even in the nineteenth century mentioned that the panel was produced for the confraternity of the Holy Cross in the Sint-Jacobskerk in Leuven, without showing any evidence. Moreover, the damage at the bottom of the panel was most likely caused by the priest's feet, which reinforces its function. In the case of the Hoogstraten panel, in the absence of its original frame it is impossible to know the existence of any damage. Erfgoedplus - *Antependium met de verzezen Christus* – <https://www.erfgoedplus.be/details/24062A51.priref.16382> - (accessed 04 October 2022), Verougstraete, 2015, pp. 110; 622-623,

³⁰⁸ In the early sixteenth century, an antependium in silk was produced for the abbey of the Norbertines in Middelburg, Zeeland, in “*or nué*” technique (shaded gold) widely spread in the late medieval period in the Netherlands. BALaT - *Antependium van Middelburg-Nassau-Grimbergen* – <https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/20014717> - (accessed 05 September 2022).

or a saint³⁰⁹. In the German context, the situation is slightly different as many of them were preserved. However, there are more examples for the early sixteenth century than for the mid-fifteenth century³¹⁰. Unlike the antependia, the predellas do not have a standard height and length, but this horizontal element below an altarpiece usually falls approximately between 10 to 60 cm in height and from 100 cm to 300 cm in length – depending on the size of the altarpiece and the surrounding architectural space. Assuming that was originally for the Sint-Katharinakerk and used as a predella, would be strange as there is nothing dedicated to St Joseph in the church, except the probable altar of the guild of St Joseph. Additionally, the altarpiece would have had possible depictions of the Life of Christ or the Virgin. Through a hypothetical reconstruction of such an ensemble – altarpiece plus predella (fig. 102) – and attending to the fact that the *Scenes of St Joseph* measures 64 x 203 cm, most likely the altarpiece was a large triptych.

If it was indeed a predella and placed on the high altar, this would generate other questions: Are we dealing with the same painter? What happened to the dismantled (or not) altarpiece? The sixteenth century iconoclasm at Sint-Katharinakerk was not as severe as for example in the churches of Ghent³¹¹. Furthermore, the absence of portraits in the Hoogstraten panel might be significant. Donor portraits sometimes appear in predellas: the *Allerheiligenaltar* in the southern nave of the Stadtkirche at Murrhardt, has not only a depiction of the donor – abbot Oswald Binder – but also his coat of arms (fig. 103). In altarpieces, Petrus Christus' panel (V) is a clear example of it. Although there is no evidence of any portrait and coat of arms in the Hoogstraten painting, these depictions served to show patronage and exhibit

³⁰⁹ In the Netherlandish context for the period in question, I am only aware of two survived predellas: Anonymous master, *Passion of Christ*, 51 x 235 cm, ca. 1451-1500, (Stedelijk Hospitaal Sint-Elisabeth/Openbaar Centrum voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn van Aalst, inv. no. 102510); and, Workshop of Hieronymus Bosch, Predella of the *Ecce Homo triptych*, 15.6 x 68.2 cm, ca. 1496-1500, (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 56.172). The best-known example of the fifteenth century was certainly the lost predella of Jan van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece*. On this matter see Kemperdick, Stephan; Rössler Johannes (ed.). *The Ghent Altarpiece by the Brothers Van Eyck: history and appraisal*. Berlin: Gemäldegalerie Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2014. Erroneously the scholarship still considers the painting *Titus' Conquest of Jerusalem* by the so-called Vienna Master of Mary of Burgundy, a predella; although the curved sides are indeed sometimes seen in predellas Van Elslande noted that the height available in the chapel of Viglius Aytta in the crypt of St Bavo's Cathedral in Ghent was not enough to have an altarpiece plus a predella. Van Elslande, R. "De Predella: De verovering van Jeruzalem door Titus" in *Ghendtsche Tydinghen* 19 (1970). pp. 200-201.

³¹⁰ For a comprehensive number of examples of predellas in Germany see Gmelin, Hans-Georg. *Spätgotische Tafelmalerei in Niedersachsen und Bremen*. Veröffentlichungen der Niedersächsischen Landesgalerie Hannover. München etc.: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1974.

³¹¹ On this matter see Vaernewijck, Marcus van. *Van die beroerlicke tijden in die Nederlanden en voornamelijk in Ghendt 1566-1568*. Maatschappij der Vlaamsche Bibliophilen, 4e Reeks, Nr. 1. Gent: C. Annoot-Braeckman, 1872 ed.

the power of the commissioner (figs. 104 to 106)³¹². For instance, the memorial tablet of Elisabeth van Culemborg with her two husbands – which includes the coat of arms (fig. 107) – is a clear example of how portraits can function as a duality: keep the memory of those portrayed and show their power, as in the paintings of the *Lords of Montfoort* (II) and *The Jouvenel des Ursins Family* (XIII).

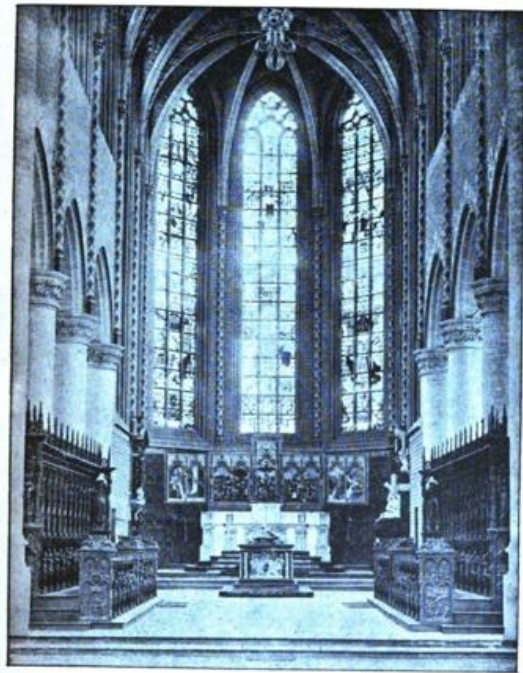


Figure 96 - High altar of the Sint-Katharinakerk with the altarpiece of the eighteenth century. source: Adrianesen; Segers 1895

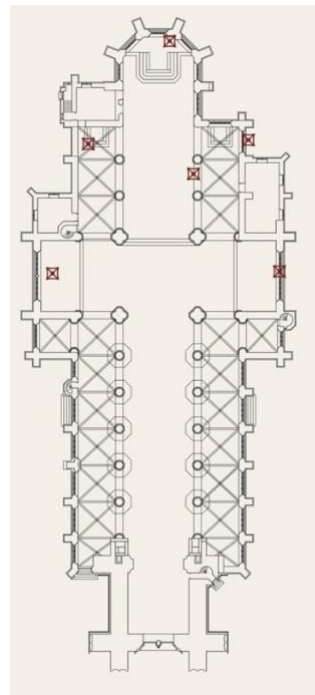


Figure 97 - Plan of the church: in red the location of the current stained-glass windows © Sint-Katharinakerk, Hoogstraten

³¹² Numerous coats of arms that often appear on Netherlandish and German paintings can be found in the *Wapenboek Beyeren*, Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB), Den Haag, 79 K 21.



Figure 98 – Choir of the Sint-Katharinakerk © Ricardo Neto



Figure 99 – View from above of Sint-Katharinakerk © Sint-Katharinakerk, Hoogstraten



Figure 100 – View from above near the entrance of the Sint-Katharinakerk © Sint-Katharinakerk, Hoogstraten



Figure 101 - Hypothetical reconstruction of an altar with the Hoogstraten panel as an antependium © Ricardo Neto

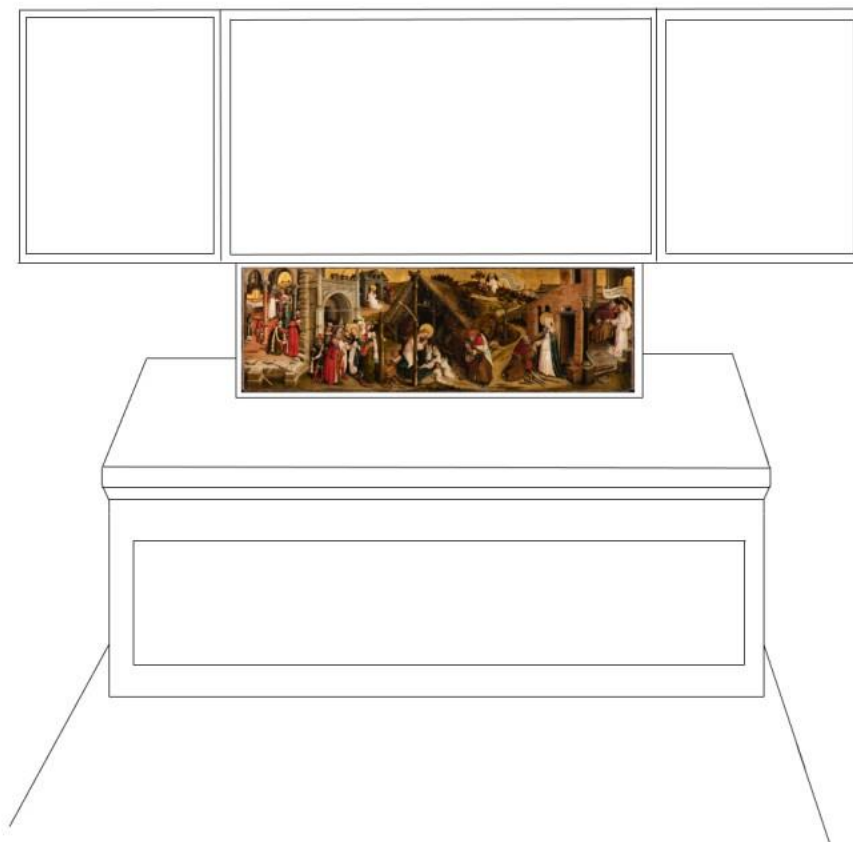


Figure 102 - Hypothetical reconstruction of an altar with the Hoogstraten panel as a predella © Ricardo Neto

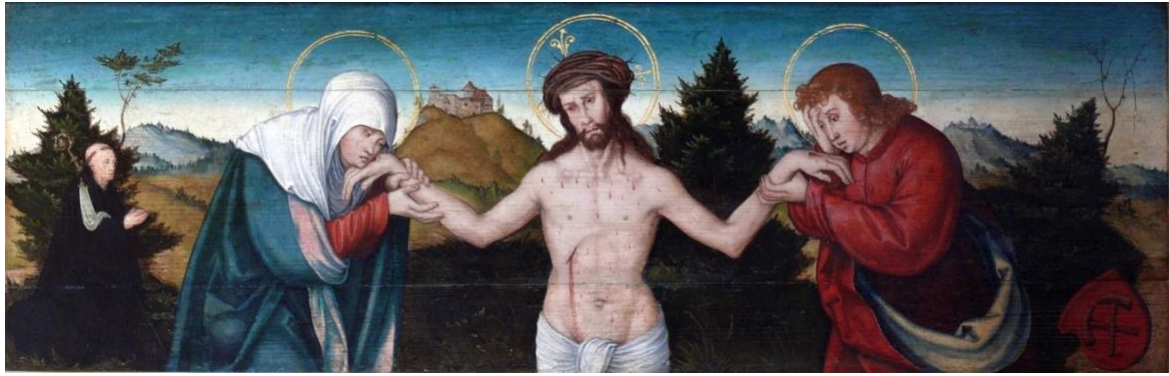


Figure 103 - Anonymous, Predella of the *Allerheiligenaltar* (left side: donor; on the right side the coat of arms), ca. 1490-1500, unknown dimensions, Stadtkirche at Murrhardt



Figure 104 - Coat of arms of the Van Borssele family

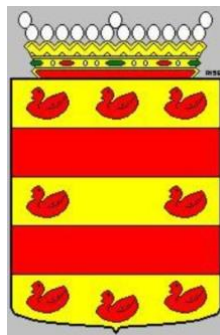


Figure 105 – Coat of arms of the Van Kuik family

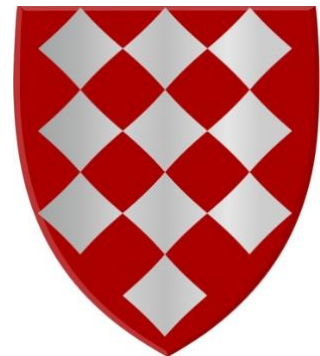


Figure 106 – Coat of arms of the Lalaing family



Figure 107 – Anonymous (possibly by the workshop of Jan van Scorel), *Memorial Tablet of Elisabeth van Culemborg and her Husbands*, ca. 1540-55, 110 x 156 cm © Elisabeth Weeshuis Museum, Culemborg

Considering all these elements abovementioned, I cannot propose a solution for the original function of the Hoogstraten panel. The absence of any archival documentation makes it difficult to determine the original function of the painting, but the material aspects of the panel provide some clues. The provenance is unknown, but it seems likely that was an altarpiece in the altar of the guild of St Joseph of Hoogstraten at Sint-Katharinakerk considering all the given arguments. The unpainted reverse could indicate the function of an altarpiece or an antependium, which is found often in both cases. Moreover, as Kemperdick observed: ‘indeed not all panel paintings in churches were altarpieces’³¹³, adding that for the fifteenth century, the absence of documentation makes it difficult to estimate the magnitude of this. A careful analysis of the corpus of comparable paintings makes clear that similar panels with comparable formats and measurements had diverse original functions; only for a few of them, we are sure of their original setting. The width was uncommon – considering the number of survived Netherlandish paintings – and the iconography totally dedicated to St Joseph’s life, although known in this period, was not usually depicted in a single panel. That said, in case of a request from a patron³¹⁴ – and here I exclude the art market option – he or she might wanted to adorn a private chapel or to donate it, like Memling’s *Seven Joys of the Virgin*, which was a donation to the chapel of the guild of the tanners at Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk, Bruges.

Not yet mentioned is the original painting’s frame, now lost, as with the majority of Netherlandish panel paintings of this period³¹⁵. Often these frames were painted, as the anonymous *The Dance of the Virtues*, 1545 (Museum Hof van Busleyden, Mechelen)³¹⁶, which was originally red but was overpainted in black and gold. The frame design and thickness are inextricably tied to the architectural context. The Hoogstraten panel seems to have some traces of a frame, i.e., the unpainted space between the pictorial layer and the edges, indicating a now

³¹³ Kemperdick; Sander; Eclercy; Aston (ed). exh. cat., 2009, p. 131.

³¹⁴ The Lalaing family in the early sixteenth century had one of the biggest private libraries in Northern Europe in their castle in Hoogstraten, which included books in at least five languages and from diverse areas of knowledge. It would not be surprising if somehow their artistic patronage, either in this painting or in another, has intrinsically connected to this “humanist” wisdom. However, the dating for the painting does not correspond to their reign as lords. A more in-depth study still needs to be carried out about the patronage, private collection, and reception of this family in Hoogstraten. On this matter see Wijsman, Hanno. “De bibliotheek van het kasteel Hoogstraten in 1548 en het adellijk boekenbezit in de Bourgondische Nederlanden” in *Jaarboek van het Nederlands Genootschap van Bibliofielen*, 11 (2003), p. 77-95.

³¹⁵ An interesting example of a painting still with its original frame is: Dirk Bouts, *Mater Dolorosa and Ecce Homo*, ca. 1470-80, formerly at Museo de Pontevedra until January 2023 and now at National Museum in Poznań.

³¹⁶ Verougstraete, 2015, pp. 75; 654-655.

lost frame (figs. 108 to 111)³¹⁷. If a frame were present originally, the size of the Hoogstraten painting would increase to approximately 70 x 210 cm³¹⁸.



Figure 108 - Upper left corner (detail) © KIK-IRPA, Brussels

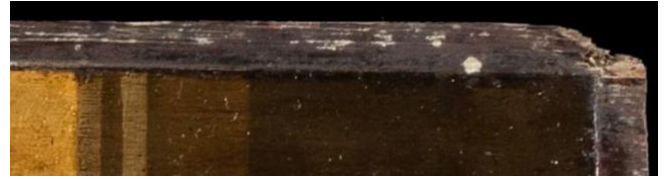


Figure 109 - Upper right corner (detail) © KIK-IRPA, Brussels



Figure 110 - Lower left corner (detail) © KIK-IRPA, Brussels



Figure 111 - Lower right corner (detail) © KIK-IRPA, Brussels

³¹⁷ On this matter see Appendix, section 1.

³¹⁸ This calculation is based on the number of survived frames which also varied from each region. On this matter see Verougstraete, 2015.

Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to gain insight into the horizontal format of panel paintings from the pre-Eyckian period to circa 1500 in North-western Europe, with a case study of the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph*. My focus was the format, provenance, authorship, and iconography. Although some past studies were dedicated to most paintings in the corpus, my approach was to bring up textual and visual evidence. By confronting this material with the scholarship about different geographical areas in Europe but interrelated, this study tries to clarify misunderstandings that still persist regarding oblong panels.

As remarked by Victor M. Schmidt: ‘size is thus not necessarily an indicator of function’³¹⁹, but often the scholarship tends to simplify the discourse about the horizontal painting format saying that it was uncommon in the fifteenth century. By mapping the existence of these panel paintings and the considerable large number of examples³²⁰, I found that this idea needed to be qualified.

In the mid-fifteenth century, north-western Europe had a thriving economy favourable for the production, exchange, and donation of paintings, among other objects. The city of Hoogstraten, today in the province of Antwerp, was near the largest artistic centres and was an important passageway for those who did not arrive to the Low Countries by sea. The *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* is since at least the nineteenth century at the Sint-Katharinakerk.

In the first place, using an interdisciplinary approach, I could identify and demystify some misunderstandings about the Hoogstraten painting that still persist. For a long time, the panel was attributed to either an apprentice of Robert Campin, Jacques Daret, Rogier van der Weyden, Nabur Martins, or even to the miniaturist Jean le Tavernier. Indeed, whoever painted the Hoogstraten panel knew the iconographic models from any of these masters, but that does not make him necessarily their apprentice. Jean Grassi’s painting (XVII) suggests a Rogerian ‘influence’, but it is very unlikely that he was Van der Weyden’s apprentice. The phenomenon of circulation of drawings and patterns throughout Europe increased in the fifteenth century, which is most likely here. Let us look at an example: Robert Campin’s portal in his *The Betrothal of the Virgin* introduced the ‘side view’ of the entrance of the church, which was most likely transferred to drawings. Later, artists from other geographical areas reused the model – who might have access through drawings or engravings –, for example, the painter of

³¹⁹ Schmidt, 2006, p. 21

³²⁰ In the corpus I analysed seventeen paintings, but the number of examples of oblong panels is clearly superior. For a general overview see the full list of paintings, Appendix, section 3.

the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph*, and also in the case of Hans Bornemann's *Heiligental altarpiece*³²¹.

Due to this, I propose that the painter of the Hoogstraten painting produced the panel in or lived in Bruges. The proto-gothic architecture resembles the Tolhuis and the late medieval buildings of the Jan van Eyckplein and Grote Markt of Bruges; however, in the painting, a more simplified language is used. The forms, a mix of brick with stone, and the flowering pinnacles are more often seen in Bruges than in Tournai and Brussels in the decade of the 1440s. Additionally, the Virgin's hair and face are a reference to Mary in the upper register of the *Ghent Altarpiece*, which both Campin and Van der Weyden reused this model in their artworks. However, the Hoogstraten panel does not seem to have been a direct model from Van Eyck's and Campin's panels, but instead, indirectly through Petrus Christus who worked in Bruges, which the anonymous painter had access to the figuration.

Nonetheless, a question remains: are we dealing with a master painter, who possibly produced numerous artworks, or is the Hoogstraten panel a painting created within a workshop, so by different hands? In fact, it is not possible to make a corpus of paintings purely based on the 'hand' of this painting; and at Sint-Katharinakerk and elsewhere in the city of Hoogstraten, there are no other paintings that one can associate with this panel. Due to this, I do not suggest any 'Notname' for this painter. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, one finds the Master of Hoogstraten, but he is not related to this panel and belongs to the so-called Antwerp Mannerism³²². The purpose of the present study was oriented towards iconography and function, but a more sustained discussion regarding authorship should be developed in the future.

Quite often the scholarship considers the provenance of the Hoogstraten panel the convent Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ter Kroon (Poor Clares of Hoogstraten). However, nothing indicates this, and the convent only emerges in 1489. Likewise, the argument is made by association with Campin's *The Betrothal of the Virgin* – also wrongly interpreted. Instead, I consider a date between 1440-1450 the most logical based on comparisons with other examples

³²¹ A similar situation happens with Jan van Eyck's *Virgin in a Church*, ca. 1438-1440 (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin); possibly a drawing of the church's interior circulated in diverse geographical areas. The same interior also appears in the *Mass of the Dead*, from the Turin-Milan Hours and attributed to the anonymous Hand G (Museo civico d'arte antica, Turin). This model is also found in the *Heiligental altarpiece* by Hans Bornemann. Later, the same model also appears in the diptych the *Virgin in a Church and Christian de Hondt* by the so-called Master of 1499 (Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen). Once again, seems to indicate the circulation of drawings For more see Kemperdick, 2019, pp. 89-104.

³²² On this matter see Friedländer Max J. *Quentin Massys*, [7. Aufl.]; *Die Altniederländische Malerei*, 1; Leiden, Sijthoff, 1934.

of the same period. In turn, the provenance is intrinsically connected with the identity of the patron(s). Only for the mid-sixteenth century, there is a document referring to the *Sint Jozefsgilde* of Hoogstraten, in which the guild orders and appeals to Elisabeth van Culemborg to obtain monetary compensation for their altar's new panel. In 1553 the altar was dedicated in the first place to St Joseph, and then to Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and St John the Evangelist. It is reasonable to assume that the guild was already present in the church in the fifteenth century, and they commissioned the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph*. This is reinforced by the number of carpenter's tolls in the painting, and also by the fact that in the 1553 document, it is suggested that they had already a decorative element in the altar. Moreover, this new panel might have been a substitute for the fifteenth-century panel. It is very likely that there is a relationship between the panel and the guild after all, and the *Jozefsgilde* was the patron.

Studying the evolution of the Early Netherlandish panel painting and north-western Europe as a whole during all of the fifteenth century, rather than being limited to a certain decade or artist milieu, revealed some key findings. From the corpus of paintings, the Hoogstraten panel is the only one that is entirely dedicated to St Joseph's life, as an independent subject. Does this suggest that his cult was still not well-established in this region of Europe? As mentioned earlier, due to diverse political and religious issues, more examples of St Joseph's depiction may have disappeared. In this context, I consider excessive the constant use of keywords such as 'unusual depiction', 'rare representation' or 'uncommon' that one finds often in the scholarship regarding this painting, as many examples (will) remain unknown to us due to those factors.

Contrary to the general opinion about the function of any fifteenth-century panel painting, not all of them were originally placed on an altar. Instead, both Kemperdick and Schmidt pointed out this wrong assumption which still persists in the scholarship³²³. To determine the original function of all the paintings in the corpus, I relied when possible, on archival documentation. Due to diverse factors already noted in the introduction, the use of documentation would possibly give new findings and evidence for my argument, particularly about each of the panels. Nevertheless, I was able to demystify some assumptions about the function based on the painting's typology. From the seventeen panels in the corpus, about 12 paintings might have been freestanding altarpieces – some placed against a wall –, while the rest were either altarpieces (main retable of the church), antependia or predellas. This information per se already refutes the generalizations still found on the scholarship. The

³²³ Kemperdick; Sander; Eclercy; Aston (ed). exh. cat., 2009, p. 131; Schmidt, 2009, p. 205.

challenge here is the scarcity of material regarding provenance, which clearly does not allow us to determine the original function, but also the fact that approximately seven paintings were produced by anonymous painters or by ‘masters’ that cannot be localized precisely.

Moreover, the fact that many of the churches where these paintings were originally located were transformed or simply destroyed, made my task difficult. Likewise, after the evaluation of the panels in the corpus, I did a re-evaluation of the function of the Hoogstraten panel. I suggest that the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* was an altarpiece in the altar of the *Sint Jozefsgilde* on the basis of the following arguments: in the period of the mid-fifteenth century there are no chapels dedicated to St Joseph. But assuming the probable presence of the Guild of St Joseph in Hoogstraten and their altar at Sint-Katharinakerk, and the fact that the panel has an unpainted reverse, this indicates that there was no intention to be seen from behind. Likewise, the iconography seems to have a clear association between the guild and their saint’s patron.

Nevertheless, this only offers a partial explanation and still more research needs to be conducted about the role of the clergy in charge of the Sint-Katharinakerk – assuming that the painting was indeed for this church –, the families that controlled the city since the beginning of the fifteenth century, and possibly native artists from this city. However, a caveat should be made here: the study and recognition of the ‘Flemish Primitives’ as a creative and innovative group of painters in the late medieval period only started in the nineteenth century³²⁴. In this light, it is not shocking that records of the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* only appear in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Likewise, this also can suggest that the painting was not originally intended for the Sint-Katharinakerk and that only at some later point, entered into the church’s inventories. Further study on this matter needs to be conducted in the future; I propose a definitive monograph of the church³²⁵ with its inventories preferably in English. As the church is currently undergoing a vast exterior and interior restoration, I think it is the right moment of doing it.

Going back to the central research question and sub-questions of the present study, these were very ambitious, and some challenges appeared during the research and writing process. First of all, a common aspect of all these paintings is the lack of technical research,

³²⁴ On this matter see De Vlaamse primitieven: *What's in a name?* -

<https://vlaamseprimitieven.vlaamsekunstcollectie.be/nl/onderzoek/webpublicaties/de-vlaamse-primitieven-whats-in-a-name/> - (accessed 28 November 2022).

³²⁵ There are some studies about the church but often one finds misunderstandings or lack of evidence, and all of them are in Dutch. See Adriaensen; Segers, 1895; Lauwerys, 1960; Mercelis, 1987; Ceulaer; Aerts (ed.), 1988.

which turns makes it complicated to determine the dating, the authorship, and the place of production. For example, there is no evidence to confirm or deny that the oak is the support of all paintings in the corpus. Likewise, although I do not include any image of the parts that were already cleaned of the Hoogstraten panel, visually the difference is quite astonishing. That said, seems essential for the next couple of years that some of the paintings in the corpus need to be subjected to some kind of technical examination.

The context of horizontal panel paintings is intrinsically connected with the patrons and original locations. Generally speaking, the panels in the corpus were created to function as altarpieces, freestanding altarpieces, predellas, and antependia. Catholic liturgical furnishings are not limited to only these four options but were the most common in this region during the fifteenth century. Connected to this are the artworks' prices – which I do not include in this study –; one would assume that altarpieces were costly compared to antependia. Unfortunately, due to the loss of archival documentation nowadays it is unfeasible to do a systematic study of this applied to the Netherlandish and Germanic paintings. However, studies by Lorne Campbell and Maximiliaan Martens in particular provide a good basis for these matters. For instance, the Hoogstraten painting has a gilded background, which can be an indicator of the price, as one would assume that gold leaf was expensive.

The commissioners of oblong panels were in the majority lay members of the upper classes or ecclesiastics, people who could afford costly paintings and were able to donate them to certain religious institutions. Interestingly is that within this panorama, merchants or bankers were commonly patrons, for example, the Adornes and Portinari families³²⁶. A larger study about the patronage of the paintings in the corpus is needed, as for most of them we do not have any information on this.

The present thesis is a preliminary study of horizontal panels in North-Western Europe from circa 1400 to 1500. As one can find in the appendix (section 3), there are numerous paintings that could have been included in this study. In total there are roughly thirty panels, which would be sufficient for an exhibition and a related catalogue in order to build a narrative to understand the evolution of the function of these paintings during the fifteenth century.

³²⁶ It is interesting that towards the end of the sixteenth century, after the economic collapse of Bruges and the rise of Antwerp as a commercial city, one finds commissions of all typologies of Netherlandish paintings in geographies as distant as Portugal, Sweden or even Bohemia. On these matters see Hořejší, Jiřina. *Renaissance art in Bohemia*. London: Hamlyn, 1979; Pohle, Jürgen. *Os mercadores-banqueiros alemães e a Expansão Portuguesa no reinado de D. Manuel I*, Lisbon, CHAM, FCSH/NOVA-UAc, 2017; De Moor, 2022.

Ultimately, this study shows how the artistic innovations led by Jan van Eyck, Robert Campin and Rogier van der Weyden since the early 1420s were expanded to other geographical areas. Horizontal panel paintings with *Simultanbilder* had a certain function and usually were placed in specific places within the Catholic architectural context. But what can be gauged from the inherent qualities of the *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph* is that it is an indirect product of these fifteenth-century innovations, which fostered artistic reception, exchange, and circulation.

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Appendix

1. Technical Data³²⁷



Figure 112 - Dimensions of each plank studied by Aline Genbrugge and Karen Bonne during the restoration process ©KIK-IRPA, Brussels

Title: *Scenes from the Life of St Joseph*

Artist: Anonymous master active in Bruges

Dimensions: 64 cm (height) x 203 (width)³²⁸

Support and technique: oil on oak panel

Location: Sint-Katharinakerk, Hoogstraten, province of Antwerp

Dating: ca. 1440 – 1450

Provenance:

- Unknown - 1868 (only published in 1881-1883 by the Gilde de Saint-Thomas) is the earliest reference to the painting in the first chapel on the right side of the Sint-Katharinakerk, Hoogstraten;

³²⁷ This was done during my internship at KIK-IRPA, Brussels, which is included in the internship final report, but here I include some updated data. For more see BALaT - *Taferelen uit het leven van de H. Jozef* – <https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/28628> - (accessed 15 September 2021); Sint-Katharinakerk - *Het leven van Sint-Jozef* - <https://sintkatharinakerk.be/ontdekken/ontdek-van-dichtbij/het-leven-van-sint-jozef/> - (accessed 21 October 2022) and KIK-IPRA - <https://www.kikirpa.be/nl/nieuws/een-origineel-materieel-spoor-van-een-ontbekende-kunstenaar> - (accessed 12 January 2023).

³²⁸ See figure no. 112 of the present study. During the technical study the painting was measured, and the planks have different dimensions with a maximum of 1 cm of difference, however, there is no indication that the panel was ever cut off after the application of the paint layer.

Restorations:

- Three undated interventions (detected during the scientific study by Aline Genbrugge and Karen Bonne);
- The most recent possibly in the second half of the twentieth century by A. Van den Eynde (noted by Jozef de Coo in 1991);
- 2021-2023 at KIK-IRPA, Brussels;

Exhibitions³²⁹:

1902 – Bruges: *Exposition des primitifs flamands à Bruges*, no. 341;

1911 – Malines: *Les Expositions d'art ancien de Charleroi, de Tournai et de Malines*, not numbered;

1954 – Antwerpen: *De Madonna in de Kunst*, no. 60;

1956 – Doornik: *Scaldis tentoonstelling*, pint. no. 56;

2010-2011 – Brugge: *Van Eyck tot Dürer: de Vlaamse primitieven & Centraal-Europa 1430-1530*, no. 47;

Imaging and technical examination (by KIK-IRPA, Brussels):

- Negative and high-resolution photography (1954, 2011, 2019);
- Infrared reflectography (2021);
- X-radiography, UV, and IR photography (2021);
- Dendrochronology (2022-2023);



Figure 113 - Reverse of the Hoogstraten panel in 1954 (still with the frame, possibly not the original) © KIK-IRPA, Brussels

³²⁹ The cities' names are given conform the exhibition catalogue or publication, either in French or Dutch. For example, instead of using the English city's name "Antwerp", I use the Flemish version "Antwerpen".

2. Documents

Doc. 1.

Authorization to Michelle de Vitry and her family to be buried in the chapel of Saint Rémy in the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris (1443)

“Messire Jean Jouvenel Avocat du Royaudit Parlement, lequel estoit grandement enlignagé. Il étoit fils de Noble homme Monfeigneur lean Iuuenel des Vrfins, Cheualier, Seigneur & Baron de Treynel, & de Dame Michelle de Vitry sa femme; & eut pour frères, Messire Guillaume Iuenel des Vrains Cheualier, Seigneur dudit Treynel, Confeiller du Roy, & Bailly de Sens; Maître Jacques Iuuenel des Ursins Archidiacre en l'Eglise de Paris, Avocat & Conseiller da Roy en sa Cour de Parlement, & Michel Iuuenel des Ursins Écuyer. Lesquels tous conjointement avec ladite Dame Michelle de Vitry leur mere obtinrent le Vendredy XIV. Jour de Iluin l'an MCCCCXLIII. du Chapitre de notre Dame de Paris, la Chapelle Monsieur saint Remy fondée en ladite Église, & le costé dextre ioignant du mur en icelle Chapelle, pour sepulcher & enterrer lesdits feu Seigneur de Traynelleur père, & ladite Dame, leurs enfants & héritiers, et ceux qui d'oresnauant descendroient de ceux d'entre eux qui estoient & seroient mariez, & de leurs posteritez & lignees, qui toutesfois y voudroient estre Sepulturez & enterrez Ensemble permission de faire au ioignant dudit mur une voute en façon de sepulture, & dessus une representation sur vne tombe eslevée, où seroient mises & apposées les représentations en images dudit feu Seigneur & de ladite Dame, et de faire peindre à leur plaisir le dit costé du mur, & faire cha(n)ger les voirrieres d'iceluy se bon leur sembloit (...)³³⁰

Source: Chartier; Le Bouvier. 1617, p. 661.

Doc. 2.

Archives Départementales de Vaucluse, Avignon, Fonds Martin n°800, fol. 25, 25 v°, 26. 1452, 16 février
Le prix-fait du retable Cadard

“Pro convent Celestinorum de Lucemburgo Avinionen. Pactum de pingendo unum retabulum. Die XVI februarii Enguerandus Quarton diocesis Laudunensis, habitator, et Petrus Vilate Lemovicensis diocesis pictores socii in hac parte, ambo simul et eorum uterque in solidum, promiserunt et pactum fecerunt fratibus Micaeli Gardeti et Petro Chalmelli celestinis, procuratoribus seu sindicis et yconomis prioris et conventus monasterii Celestinorum Avinionen., presentibus et stipulantibus vice et nomine nobilis Petri Cadardi domini Thoro diocesis Cavallicensis, se facturos et depicturos hinc ad festum Sancti Johannis Baptiste proxime futurum unum retabulum cum suo scabello pro ponendo super altare capelle ipsius [sic] domini de Thoro per suos progenitores noviter constructa (sic) in capella magna beati Petri de Lucemburgo, altitudinis quatuor palmorum, incluso dicto scabello unius palmi simplicis, et alias secundum proporcionem ipsius retabuli a superficie altaris usque ad talutum fenestre exclusive, latitudinis vero unius canne seu secundum latitudinem ipsius altaris; et illud retabulum depingere bene et

³³⁰ For the full passage see the same publication, Chartier; Le Bouvier. 1617, pp. 661-663.

fideliter cum sufficienti fundamento seu assiziis debitis et convenientibus cum campo aureo ex auro fino et puro brunito; et in medio ymaginem gloriose virginis Marie cum mantello coloris lazuli puri de Acre sufficientis et fidelis, que ymago communiter appellatur nostra domina de misericordia; et a latere dextro sanctum Johannem Baptistam tenentem sive presentantem figuram domini Johannis Cardardi, patris ipsius domini de Thoro, et a latere sinistro sanctum Johannem evangelistam presentantem matrem ipsius domini de Thoro; et dictas ymagines bene depingere de bonis auro et lazulo de Acre ac ceteris coloribus pertinentibus et condecantibus ad dictas ymagines et ad decorationem earumdem.

Pro precio trigenta scutorum auri novorum tantum vero quo dictum retabulum esset bene et notabiliter factum ad dictum et placitum dominorum prioris et procuratorum celestinatorum, dicti procurators promiserunt facere tradi ipsis pictoribus ultra predictum precium alia quinque scuta auri similia. In cuius precii diminucionem dicti pictores recognoverunt se habuisse a dictis procuratoribus, prout habuerunt ibidem realiter per manus dicti fratris Micaelis, videlicet decem scuta auri, de quibus fuerunt contenti etc.

Quitaverunt etc. Pactum facientes etc. Renunciantes etc.

Et dicti procurators promiserunt quo supra nomine solver ipsis pictoribus alia decem scuta quando opus erit deauratum et reliqua decem scuta post opus completum.

Pro quibus dicte partes obliga(ve)runt sibi mutuo omnia bona sua mobilia et immobilia presentia et futura et se submiserunt realiter et personaliter curiis camera apostolice spiritualis et temporalis Avinionen., Uticen., Carpen., Nem., parvi sigilli Montispessualani convencionum Nem.

De quibus etc.

Et ita omnia et singular premissa tenere etc.

Et iuraverunt etc. Et renunciaverunt etc. De quibus etc.

Actum Avinione in domo habitacionis mei.

Presentibus Gilletto Barbe diocesis Tarensariensis et Johanne Durandi alias Boussac Lugdunensis diocesis laboratoribus testibus.

Et me Johanne Morelli etc.”

Source: Sterling; Reynaud (ed.). 1983, p. 200, doc. 6.

Doc. 3.

1 January - 1 April – 1480 - Inventory of the jewels in the chapel of the guild of the tanners at Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk, Bruges.

“In tjaer ons heeren m.iiiijc lxxix zo was desen bouc ghestelt ende gheordineert by dekin ende vinderes, ende voort by den ghemeen gheselschipe vanden hambochte van den hudevetters in Brugghe om van nu voort an der in te stellen al tgont dies den hambochte daghelicx an gaen zal. In dese naervolghende blaren vint men al tgont dat doen ten tyden in de cappelle behoorde ende naermaels commen es.

Eerst te onzen houtaere een scone tafel van onser liever Vrouwen de welke ghegheven was by deer Pieter Bultync in tjaer duust vierhondert neghen ende tseventich voor Paeschen;(1) ende begheerde de zelve Pieter al dien dat men van dier tyt voort telken henden van des hambochs messen zal de zelve priester ghehouden zyn over alle zielen te lesen Miserere mei Deus ende De profundis.

Item ten zelve houtare twe metalen candelaers, eenen missael bouc ghebonden tusschen ij barderen met roeden leder overtrocken.

Item een groen cassule met al datter toebehoort, te weten: de cassile groen zidin laken damaest, de alve, de amitte, tmanipel ende tgordel; voort den corporael ende j houtaer cleet met shambochs wapen ghehouden met ij inghelen (...)³³¹

Source: Martens, 1992, p. 589, doc. 143 and published previously in Weale. 1864-5, pp. 268-271.

Doc. 4.

Letter from *Sint Jozefsgilde* of Hoogstraten to Elisabeth van Culemborg (1554)

“Edele welgeboren vermogende vrouwe Gravinne van Hoochstraten, Vrouwe van Culenborch, van Borsselt, van Sombreff, van Lenze, etc.

Verthoonen ende geven et kennen in alder ootmoet Overman, Dekens ende gemeijne guldebrueders der Gulden van St Josephs outaer ni uwer collegiate en prochiekercken binnen Hoochstraten uwe onderdanige ondersaten hoe dat sij supplianten als die ander gulden gemoveert zijnde doer die nieuwe excellente fabrijske bij onse Edele vermogende Grave van Hoochstraten saliger ende zijn achtergelatene wedue onse genadige vrouwe Gravinne alder gesticht, ooc hebben begrepen inde selver kercken te doen maecken totten voers. outaer een nieuwe voet ende tafele met eenen welfsele, na uitwijsens alsulcke patroons als zij mine genadiche vrouwe met dese mede overseynde. Welcke werck wel costen sal vijftich kg. ende meer, ende want den voers. outaer gheen renten meer en heeft dan tot eender weeckmisse ende de selve guldebrueders schamele ambachtsgesellen zijn ende sij dat onder haer lieden niet wel na den eijsch vanden nieuwer kercken en souden connen volbrenghe, bidden daeromme oetmoedelyc onse genadige vrouwe de voers. supplianten dat haer Edele goedertierenheyt believe tot alsulcke goede voernemen haerder ondersaten haer bijstant ende behulp mede te done. Alsoo God de Heere haere Edele goedertierenheyt daer toe vermanen sal, die uwe Edele Hoocheyt ni een salich lange leven in gesontheyt gespaere”.

Source: Ernalsteen, 1929, p. 50.

³³¹ Here is only the section regarding the painting. The passage of the full document published by Martens includes all the interior decoration of the chapel.

Doc. 5.

1568 *Vite* edition - Vasari mentions Hans Memling and the *Passione*

“Del dipingere a olio in tavola, e su le tele.

Fu una bellissima invenzione ed una gran comodita all'arte della pittura, il trovare il colorito a olio; di che fu primo inventore in Fiandra Giovanni da Bruggia, il quale mando la tavola a Napoli alre Alfonso, ed al duca d'Urbino Federico II, la stufa sua; e fece un San Gironimo, che Lorenzo de' Medici aveva, e molte altre cose Iodate. Lo seguito poi Ruggieri da Bruggia, suo discepolo; ed Ausse, creato di Ruggieri, che fece a' Portinari, in Santa Maria Nuova di Firenze, un quadro picciolo, il qua! e oggi appresso al duca Cosimo; ed e di sua mano la tavola di Careggi, villa fuori di Firenze della illustrissima casa de' Medici. Furono similmente de' primi Lodovico da Luano e Pietro Crista, e maestro Martino e Giusto da Guanto, che fece la tavola della Comunione del duca d'Urbino ed altre picture; ed Ugo d'Anversa, che fe la tavola di Santa Maria Nuova di Fiorenza.”

Source: Ainsworth (ed.). exh. cat, 1994, p. 210, doc. 31.

Doc. 6.

1724 inventory of the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Paris

“Enfin on voit dans la sacristie un ancien tableau qui a servi autrefois dans quelque chapelle, où l'abbé Guillaume est représenté à genoux, soutenant avec respect par delfous le bras un Christ détaché de la croix, accompagné de plusieurs autres figures assez mal dessinées, selon la manière de ce tems-là, mais dont les têtes sont bones, & le coloris d'un grande fraîcheur. Ce qui est le plus à estimer dans ce tableau, c'est le lointain où l'abbaye est représentée au milieu des prez, environnée de tours rondes, de hautes murailles & de fossez profonds, comme Richard prédecesseur de l'abbé Guillaume les avoit fait faire. Le Louvre avec ses grosses tours y paroît aussi de l'autre côté de la riviere dans le même état qu'il avoit été construit par Philippe Auguste. Le petit Bourbon, à présent le garde-meuble du Roy, y est dépeint de la même manière qui'il est encore aujourd'hui, sur tout du côté de la riviere. On voit encore plus loin derriere ces édifices la butte Montmartre, & au fommet l'ancienne église avec le monastère des religieuses tel qu'il étoit pour lors.”

Source: Bouillart, 1724, p. 169.

Doc. 7.

1795 - Still visible at the end of the 18th century as it was copied by P. Ledoulx³³²

"Int iaer m. cccc. lxxx. zo was dit werc ghegheven de ambochte van de hueidevetters van dheer Pieter Bultync fs. Joos, hueidevetter ende coopman, ende joncvrouwe Katelyne syn wyf, Godevaert van Riebekes dochtere, dies moest de priestere van desen ambochte achter elcke misse leesen eenen miserere ende profundis voor aller zielen."



Source: Martens, 1992, p. 235.




³³² Ledoulx, P. *Levens der konstschilders, konstenaers en konstenaressen, soo in't schilderen, beeld-houwen als ander konsten, de welke van de stadt van Brugge gebooren syn, ofte aldaer hunne konsten geoeffent hebben, Bruges* (SAB, Fonds Academie, ms. 230) 1795, pp. 10-11; firstly, published in Weale, W. H. J., "Sur un tableau perdu de Memlinc" in *Journal des Beaux-Arts et de la Littérature*, II (1860), pp. 153-154.

3. Comparative material

The following list of comparative material has been compiled during my research for the present study. As far as I am aware, there is no such list of material in the scholarship. Here my approach was to use diverse Catalan, French, German, Italian, Netherlandish, and Spanish databases and bibliographies in order to compile the maximum number of horizontal paintings of North-Western Europe.

This comparative material serves to give an overview of the horizontal panels in North-western Europe; I do not attempt to do a definitive list. Some paintings are not totally connected with the Hoogstraten painting; however, their dimensions, format or region of production could give us an indication of the artwork's creation.

Artist	Title	Date	Dimensions	Location/City	Inv. No.	Image
Anonymous	<i>Majestas Domini with eight standing saints</i>	1350	83,5 x 320 cm	Gemäldegalerie, Berlin	1519	
Master of the Small Passion	<i>Martyrdom of St Ursula at Cologne</i>	ca. 1411	60 x 179 cm	Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne	WRM 0051	

Anonymous	<i>Calvary</i> [or <i>Crucifixion</i> with two saints]	ca. 1420	70 x 141 cm	Sint- Salvatorskathedraal, Bruges	0301.S.002	
Master of the Wasservass Crucifixion	<i>The Passion of Christ</i>	ca. 1420- 30	131 x 180 cm	Wallraf-Richartz- Museum, Cologne	WRM 65	
Workshop of Master of the Deokarus- Altarpiece	<i>Christ and the twelve apostles</i>	c. 1430- 1440	56.8 x 229.5- 230.3 x 5.7- 6.2 cm	Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg	Gm122	

Anonymous	<i>Eighteen Scenes from the Life of Christ, known as the Roermond Passion</i>	c. 1435	110 x 173,3 cm	Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam	SK-A-1491	
Johannes (Hans?) Bornemann	<i>Heiligentaltpiece</i>	ca. 1444-1447	270 (?) x c. 600 cm (wings open)	St. Nicolai, Lüneburg (Lower Saxony)	—	
Anonymous	<i>Triptych with Scenes from the Life of the Virgin</i>	c. 1450	84 x 152 cm	Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam	SK-A-2649	

Simon Marmion	<i>Scenes from the Life of St Bertin</i>	1459	56 x 147 cm	Gemäldegalerie, Berlin	1645	
Anonymous	<i>The Adoration of the Magi</i>	ca. 1425-1450	56 x 246 cm	Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne	WRM 63	
Master of the Lyversberg Passion	<i>Two wings of a Passion Altar (Lyversberg Passion)</i>	c. 1464-1466.	92 x 67 cm (each scene)	Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne	WRM 0143 – 0150	
Attributed Vienna Master of Mary of Burgundy	<i>Titus' Conquest of Jerusalem</i>	ca. 1469-1483	30 x 169,4 cm	Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent	1958-AE	

Anonymous	<i>Holy Kinship</i>	c. 1480	ca. 60 x 110	Schatkamer van de Sint-Servaasbasiliek, Maastricht	N. K. 1793	
Master of the Holy Family	Altarpiece of the <i>Seven Joys of Mary</i>	ca. 1480	127 x 182 cm	Musée du Louvre, Paris	RF 2045	
Master of the Wenemaer Triptych	<i>Triptych with Scenes from the Life of Christ</i>	c. 1480	83.7 x 68.8 cm	Museum voor Schone Kunsten, MSK, Ghent	1903-I	

<p>Master of the Saint Lucy Legend</p>	<p><i>Virgin Surrounded by Female Saints</i></p>	<p>c. 1488</p>	<p>108 x 171</p>	<p>Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België, Brussels</p>	<p>2576</p>	
<p>Gerard David</p>	<p><i>Virgin among the Virgins</i></p>	<p>ca. 1500</p>	<p>118 x 212 cm</p>	<p>Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen</p>	<p>1803.4</p>	
<p>Master of the Aachen Altar</p>	<p><i>Epiphany</i></p>	<p>ca. 1510</p>	<p>81 x 135 cm</p>	<p>Staatliche Museen zu Berlin</p>	<p>1820</p>	