Hieronymus Bosch, Painter and Draughtsman  Catalogue Raisonné
Hieronymus Bosch, Painter and Draughtsman: Catalogue Raisonné was published in February 2016 and is based on the findings of the Bosch Research and Conservation Project (BRCP). The research reports have been published in full in the present book's companion volume, Hieronymus Bosch, Painter and Draughtsman: Technical Studies, and can also be consulted online at Boschproject.org.

Bosch online (web application with documentation on all the paintings) and BoschDoc (documents on Bosch and his oeuvre to 1800) can be accessed via the website Boschproject.org.

The Bosch Research and Conservation Project was established and completed as part of the preparations for the exhibition ‘Hieronymus Bosch – Visions of Genius’ at the Noordbrabants Museum in ’s-Hertogenbosch, 13 February to 8 May 2016. The exhibition and the research project are both part of the ‘Jheronimus Bosch 500’ event, organized to mark the five-hundredth anniversary of the artist’s death. The Bosch Research and Conservation Project is an initiative of the Noordbrabants Museum, Radboud University Nijmegen and Jheronimus Bosch 500, and has been generously supported by the Gieskes-Strijbis Fund.

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Bosch Research and Conservation Project Foundation

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Hieronymus Bosch died in ’s-Hertogenbosch in 1516 – half a millennium ago. This five-hundredth anniversary in 2016 has prompted a large-scale and critical examination of the painter’s complete oeuvre. Some of his works have a pedigree that dates back a very long way indeed, the most complete being that of the Garden of Earthly Delights; the triptych is recorded in the palace of the Counts of Nassau in Brussels as early as 1517, and we can track its whereabouts more or less continuously from that moment through to the present. We do not know, however, when or for whom Bosch painted it – a situation that holds true for virtually all the distinctive Brabant master’s paintings. All the same, the outlines of an oeuvre have emerged since the late nineteenth century in the shape of a body of works ascribed to Bosch on stylistic grounds. This nucleus crystallized in the course of the twentieth century into a fairly generally accepted corpus of some twenty-five paintings.

The founding principle for our ’Bosch Research and Conservation Project’ (brcp) was to scrutinize Bosch’s reconstructed oeuvre as thoroughly and consistently as possible, using modern optical and imaging techniques. Supplementary archive research was also performed, and the style, iconography and meaning of Hieronymus Bosch’s paintings and drawings were re-examined. The scholarly goal was to gain a better understanding of questions like: What is a Bosch? Which paintings and drawings are by his hand? What relationships exist within his oeuvre? How reliable are the attributions? What did pupils and assistants contribute?

From our base in ’s-Hertogenbosch, the brcp team set out to study all Bosch’s paintings and drawings worldwide. The results of these efforts have now assumed tangible form in the anniversary year of 2016: a new monograph with catalogue raisonné; a supplementary volume with comprehensively detailed research reports of all the examined paintings; and a website with thousands of high-resolution images, innovatively presented and freely accessible to all (Boschproject.org). Meanwhile, the exhibition being held in parallel at the Noordbrabants Museum in ’s-Hertogenbosch, features more works by Hieronymus Bosch than have ever been seen before in the Netherlands.

The collaboration of virtually all the museums that oversee works by Bosch was generous and welcoming: our team was unable to examine and/or document only two of the twenty-five paintings we consider autograph. A panel previously thought to be the work of a follower was recognized as an authentic Bosch, as was a magnificent drawing – one of the now twenty sheets in total that we attribute to the ’s-Hertogenbosch master. No fewer than nine panels and triptychs by Bosch were restored by or in close consultation with the brcp in the period 2013–15, while two more triptychs were restored to their former glory in Spain. As of 2016, therefore, almost half the autograph paintings by Hieronymus Bosch have been given back their original lustre thanks to the efforts and commitment of highly qualified restorers in Italy, Belgium, Spain, France, the Netherlands and the United States.

The Bosch Research and Conservation Project was proposed as a tentative, dream initiative in 2007; less than a decade later, we can present its substantive results. That we are able to do so is due in the first instance to the Mayor of ’s-Hertogenbosch, Dr Ton Rombouts, who threw his weight behind the project. It all began with the support of the City of ’s-Hertogenbosch and the Province of North Brabant, following which many other funds, foundations, public authorities and sponsors came on board. The Bosch Research and Conservation Project was set up as a collaborative venture between the Jheronimus Bosch 500 Foundation, the Noordbrabants Museum and Radboud University Nijmegen, following which the research itself could get under way. Backed by an academic committee and a foundation board – whose members are listed on page 5 – we established an interdisciplinary team, which began as a five-strong core that was subsequently extended to eight specialists, all of whom contributed their own specific expertise. We feel justifiably proud therefore in presenting ourselves as a team on the title page and of signing off on our work together. We can now look back with satisfaction at several years of intensive and fruitful collaboration.

All that remains is to express our hope that the results achieved so far will allow the remaining works to be examined and documented in exactly the same way: above all the two large triptychs,
the Last Judgement in Vienna and the Garden of Earthly Delights in Madrid, as well as The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things – the so-called ‘tabletop’ – also in Madrid. Research is never ‘finished’.

The Bosch Research and Conservation Project is a long-term, complex initiative, which has come about with the help of many people. We are grateful to everyone for the assistance we have received in recent years. Our thanks are due in the first place, of course, to those who took the initiative: Mayor Ton Rombouts and Charles de Mooij, Director of the Noordbrabants Museum. They responded to Jos Koldeweij’s proposal to thoroughly document, study and, where necessary, restore Hieronymus Bosch’s oeuvre from a centre based in the artist’s own city. The Jheronimus Bosch 500 Foundation – Ad ’s-Gravesande, Paul van der Eerden and Lian Duif – then saw to it that the project could actually be implemented. Jos Koldeweij, Ron Spronk, Matthijs Ilsink and Luuk Hoogstede formulated the research goals and methodology; Robert G. Erdmann, assisted by Travis Sawyer, developed the digital infrastructure to enable all the visual material to be presented online using the latest techniques (Boschproject.org); Rik Klein Gotink provided the photography; Hanneke Nap and Daan Veldhuizen contributed their specific expertise to the success of this project. None of this would have been possible, however, without the financial foundations laid by various public authorities, institutions, foundations and sponsors, via the aforementioned Jheronimus Bosch 500 Foundation. Special thanks are due to the Gieskes-Strijbis Fund, which supported the research project very generously. The Getty Foundation took part through the ‘Panel Paintings Initiative’ in the restoration of the Venice triptychs and contributed to the development of the digital infrastructure. Queen’s University gave Ron Spronk the scope to participate in the project, and the Stichting Restauratie Atelier Limburg (sral) did the same for Luuk Hoogstede.

Equally crucial to the project’s success were the collaboration and extraordinary hospitality of all the participating museums. It is impossible to name everyone who helped us devise and perform our research, and to whom we owe our sincere gratitude. We are much indebted to them, especially:

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Note to the Reader

CATALOGUE NUMBERS

Catalogue numbers (cat.) in the text refer – depending on the context – to both text and illustration(s) in the relevant entry of the catalogue raisonné. Painted sides of triptychs and other composite works have been given an alphabetical suffix:

e.g. cat. 4.a = (inside of) left wing of cat. 4
    cat. 21.b = central panel of cat. 21

ILLUSTRATIONS

References to all other illustrations are found in the margin.

A decimal numbering system has been used for the catalogue raisonné comprising the catalogue number (before the point) and a serial number:

e.g. FIG 12 refers to figure 12 within the same chapter
    > 11: FIG 7 = see figure 7 in chapter 11
    24.10 = cat. 24, figure 10
    > 24.10 = see cat. 24, figure 10.

CAPTIONS: CONVENTIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

For details from paintings and drawings by Bosch, the catalogue number of the work in question (followed, in the case of a composite work, by a letter indicating the painted side) is included in square brackets:

e.g. 2.4 [cat 2.b] = detail from central panel of cat. 2.

IR infrared
IRP infrared photography, infrared photograph
IRR infrared reflectography, infrared reflectogram
RR [followed by serial number(s)] = Research report in BRCP, Technical Studies
UV ultraviolet
VIS (photograph taken in) visible light
XR X-radiography, X-radiograph

While we are sure to have overlooked people who have advised or otherwise supported us on this project, we would also like to thank:

Hieronymus Bosch, Painter and Draughtsman arose from the work performed by the Bosch Research and Conservation Project (brcp) in the period 2009–15. The project was, first and foremost, object-oriented: Bosch’s entire oeuvre was examined in situ and documented to as great an extent as possible in a standardized, scientific manner.

We set out in this book our view of Hieronymus Bosch’s œuvre and his workshop, together with a catalogue raisonné of his paintings and drawings. The few paintings that the brcp was not able to document or examine are also included. The research likewise took in the most important of those paintings that were long ascribed to Bosch or his workshop (and in some cases still are), but which do not, in our opinion, belong to that group. We explain here why we believe there are insufficient grounds for retaining the work within the œuvre. The converse also applies: we have been able to add the fragment of a Temptation of Saint Anthony from Kansas City (cat. 3) to the group of autograph paintings.

The catalogue entries accompanying the paintings combine the documentation with observations on technique and condition in an art-historical text in which artistic practice and iconography are interwoven, and in which account is also taken of the work’s provenance. The detailed technical data and observations relating to the paintings are set out in the equally richly illustrated counterpart to this book, Hieronymus Bosch, Painter and Draughtsman: Technical Studies (referred to throughout this volume as brcp, Technical Studies).

Drawings were an important part of Bosch’s artistic practice and we attribute far more of them to the master than has been customary in recent literature: almost twice as many, in fact. Most of the sheets in question have been ascribed to Bosch at one time or another, but the Infernal Landscape (cat. 44) is attributed to him here for the first time.

The actual catalogue section is preceded by four essays addressing Bosch’s biography, his artistic practice, the materials and techniques he used, and the conservation history and condition of his work.

Alongside its research, the brcp set itself the goal of contributing to the enhanced conservation of Bosch’s works. For that reason, the project facilitated the restoration of the Saint Wilgefortis Triptych, the Hermit Saints Triptych and the reverses of the Visions of the Hereafter panels in Venice (cat. 2, 8, 18), Saint Jerome in Ghent (cat. 1), the Last Judgement in Bruges (cat. 16) and Saint Christopher in Rotterdam (cat. 7). Christ Carrying the Cross in Vienna (cat. 12), the Ship of Fools in Paris (cat. 19b) and the Adoration of the Magi in Philadelphia (cat. 25) were also restored in the run-up to the anniversary exhibition in ’s-Hertogenbosch. All these works are shown here in their restored state for the first time.

Ever since Bosch’s era, the printed book has allowed written text to be supported with images. You will find the same here on a large scale and at a previously unattainable level of quality. Despite this, a great deal more brcp material is available. To enable readers to view for themselves comparisons that are made in the text but could not be illustrated in the book, several links have been included to the Boschproject.org website (the L numbers in a number of footnotes), offering a bridge between the publication and the website as a research and verification tool. The research reports are available in full on the website, where interactive viewers have been provided to allow the brcp’s entire body of photographic documentation to be consulted. This allows you to zoom in even more or to view a particular detail that is not illustrated in the book. And what if, in the worst case, the website ceases to be available in ten, twenty or thirty years’ time? Then we would still have the two books. Scripta manent.
Some time around 1577, the following entry was made in the register of deaths of the Brotherhood of Our Lady in 's-Hertogenbosch concerning the year 1516: 'Hieronymus Aken[sis] alias Bosch, insignis pictor' – 'Jeroen van Aken, alias Bosch, famous painter'. With these words, it was recorded half a century after Hieronymus Bosch's death that the painter had been a noteworthy member of the elite local religious association and that, in addition to the surname 'Van Aken', he called himself 'Bosch', referring to his own place of birth and residence, rather than to his family's roots in Aachen.  

'Bosch' is a toponym: Hieronymus came from and lived in 's-Hertogenbosch (literally 'the Duke's Forest'), also known in Dutch as 'Den Bosch' and sometimes referred to in the English-language literature using the French name 'Bois-le-Duc'. The forename in the artist's signature was also a play on words, since 'Hieronymus' – the Latin version of 'Jerome' and of the Dutch 'Jeroen' – was thought at the time to have derived etymologically from 'sacred grove', making it a further allusion to the forest (see cat. 1). He was the only member of his family – which had come to 's-Hertogenbosch from Aachen by way of Nijmegen – to use the name 'Bosch'. Precisely when he began to do so is not known, but it might well have coincided with the moment in 1487–88 when he became a sworn member of the Brotherhood of Our Lady. He painted the panel with Saint John on Patmos, now in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin, shortly afterwards (cat. 6) and, as far as we can tell, it was the first painting to which he proudly affixed the Latinized signature 'Jheronimus bosch'. Not only did the artisan-painter now belong to an urban elite familiar with Latin, he had also achieved high artistic status. The way he signed his name was entirely new: in clearly legible, calligraphed letters, which he henceforward placed systematically along the lower edge of his paintings – mostly in black, but twice in light yellow and once even in gold. Contemporary records in 's-Hertogenbosch refer to the painter as 'Bosch' on only one occasion, in an item dating from 1510 which, oddly enough, makes the same point twice in quick succession: ‘die hem selver scrift Jheronimus bosch’ (‘who “writes” himself Jheronimus bosch’). If we take this at face value, it tells us that the artist signed using that name rather than that he was known by it locally.  

A 1504 entry in the Burgundian accounts, meanwhile, refers to ‘Jheronimus van Aeken dit Bosch’ (‘Jheronimus van Aken called Bosch’), suggesting that he was known as Bosch outside his native city.  

Hieronymus Bosch, or more accurately Jeroen or Joen van Aken, belonged to a family of relatively minor painters, some of whose names we know, but none of their paintings. There is very little reference to their work in the archives either. Hieronymus's exceptional mind and immense talent enabled him to rise to prominence from this family in a place that, while a relatively prosperous commercial centre, nevertheless lacked a princely or ecclesiastical court, administrative bodies beyond the strictly local, or a noteworthy artistic tradition. The town of 's-Hertogenbosch, in what is now the Netherlands, was founded in

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**FIG 1** Infernal scene: right wing of the Garden of Earthly Delights [CAT 22c]  
**FIG 2** Bosch's signature on Saint John on Patmos [CAT 6a], presumably the first one in which he used the Latin version of his name.
the late twelfth century by the Duke of Brabant (the hertog in the town’s name). It was the northernmost of the duchy’s four capital cities, the others being Leuven (Louvain), Brussels and Antwerp, all of which are now located in Belgium.

 Origins and family

Hieronymus’s grandfather, Jan van Aken, brought his family to ‘s-Hertogenbosch from Nijmegen in the Duchy of Guelders in around 1426. Johannes die maelre or ‘Johannes the painter’, as he is mostly referred to in local records, married a certain Katharina with whom he had five sons and probably a daughter. The couple enrolled as members of the Brotherhood of Our Lady in 1430/31. From that year onwards, Jan received regular commissions from the brotherhood and also from another ‘s-Hertogenbosch institution, the charitable Tafel van de Heilige Geest (Holy Ghost Table), which provided poor relief. In 1431/32, he designed coevens or chaperons for the brotherhood, hooded copes which continued to be worn for centuries by the sworn brothers – the association’s elite inner core (see cat. 24). Katharina died relatively early, in 1432, and Jan later remarried. He lived with his second wife, identified only as Christina, in Vughterstraat. Four of Jan’s five sons became painters: Thomas the eldest; Jan, who probably moved to Bruges; Goeswijn, who worked for the Brotherhood of Our Lady like his father and for other customers including the hospital; and Anthonius, father of Hieronymus Bosch. We have no information regarding the occupation of Hubertus, Jan’s third son. Anthonius and his wife Aleid van der Mynnen joined the Brotherhood of Our Lady in 1454/55, and he too received commissions from
it. The couple had five children – two daughters and three sons, one of whom was Hieronymus. In 1462, the family moved into a brick house, four metres wide and with a cellar, which Anthonius had purchased on the east side of the town’s main square, the Markt. It was one of seven buildings there of similar size, which served as homes and workshops for better-off craftsmen. Anthonius and Aleid’s three sons followed in their father and grandfather’s footsteps and became painters. The customers of the eldest brother, Goeswinus Anthoniusz, included St John’s Church and the aforementioned Holy Ghost Table. He joined the Brotherhood of Our Lady in 1495 and died around 1499. His wife Katharina (‘Goessens smaelders huysvrou’) received a payment in 1499/1500 for a sculpture which he or his workshop had polychromed. The couple’s children, Johannes Goeswinusz and Anthonius Goeswinusz, also became artists, the first a painter and sculptor, the second a painter. The second son, Johannes Anthoniusz, likewise joined the Brotherhood of Our Lady and died in about 1499. The third, Jheronimus Anthoniusz, known to posterity as Hieronymus Bosch, enrolled as an ordinary member of the brotherhood in 1486/87 and was subsequently admitted as a ‘sworn member’ of the organization’s elite inner core in 1487/88. He died at the beginning of August 1516.

Following the death of Anthonius van Aken in 1478, the house on the east side of the market square passed to his eldest son, Goeswinus, who will have lived there until his own death. It remained in the family’s hands until 1523, and continued to be occupied by the Van Aken painters, who also had a workshop there. Hieronymus was not born in the house, but lived in it from the age of about ten or twelve, when Anthonius van Aken and his family moved there. We do not know where Anthonius and Aleid van der Mynnen were
living when Hieronymus was born in, or shortly after, 1450. The name they gave their third son was unusual and had not previously appeared in their family.

One of the earliest references to the celebrated painter makes a point of how his Latin name was turned into a more readily pronounceable Middle Dutch version: ‘Jeronimus dictus Joen’ (‘Hieronymus called Joen’).

The reference dates from 1474, when ‘Anthonius die maelre’ and his young son were involved in a financial matter. Anthonius appears in another financial document a few months earlier, accompanied by his four children, including ‘Jheronimus’. The painter would later sign his works exclusively with this Latin version of ‘Jerome’, the saint for whom he was named. Contemporary records refer to him variously as ‘J[her]onimus’, ‘Jeroen’ (once), and more frequently as ‘Joen’. The note cited earlier tells us that he was commonly known by the latter name (‘dictus Joen’), but examples are also found where he is called ‘Jonen’. The Latin version of his forename was, of course, the most formal. Educated clerks dutifully inflected it in written records to ‘Jheronimi’, when describing things that belonged to him, or ‘Jheronimo’, when a payment was made to him.

His parents most likely named him for Saint Jerome – known in Dutch as ‘Hiëronymus’ and spelled locally as ‘Jheronimus’ – in response to recent religious developments. The popularity of the Church Father Jerome surged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, driven in the Low Countries primarily by the Devotio Moderna or Modern Devotion, a movement committed to spiritual regeneration, which included the Brethren of the Common Life. The latter adopted Jerome as their patron, for which reason they were also known as ‘Hieronymites’. They founded a community in ‘s-Hertogenbosch in 1425. Somewhat later, an altar dedicated to Saint Jerome was installed at the city’s St John’s Church on 8 October 1459.

The iconographical theme of the penitent Jerome in the wilderness became extremely popular from the later fifteenth century onwards, as we also find in the work of Hieronymus Bosch.
mus Bosch himself (cat. 1, 2). Consequently, the Hieronymite house in 's-Hertogenbosch and the altar in St John’s have frequently been cited as the original locations of the Ghent Saint Jerome in Prayer (cat. 1) and the Venice Hermit Saints Triptych, in which Jerome also takes centre stage (cat. 2). There is no concrete evidence, however, to identify the specific location or patron for which Bosch produced these paintings.

Hieronymus and his two brothers are likely to have received their training from their father Anthonius and their uncles, all of whom worked on the same premises on the main square in 's-Hertogenbosch. There is no firm proof of this, however. Details of the length of apprenticeships, the relationship between masters and journeymen, the ‘masterpiece’ submitted to the guild on completion of training, and other similar matters have not survived for 's-Hertogenbosch in the second half of the fifteenth century. The artistic trades seem largely to have been incorporated in other guilds. Hieronymus appears in notarial documents for the first time in 1474, on both 5 April and 26 July. On the first occasion, he was included with his father Anthonius, his sister Katharina and his two brothers Goeswinus and Johannes; on the second, with his father alone. Given this context, we cannot be certain as to Hieronymus’s age, but he was still probably a minor. As has been suggested, the two transactions might have been intended to release money so that Hieronymus could spend time away from 's-Hertogenbosch. We have no information regarding travel or training elsewhere, but his name does not appear again in the local archives until June 1481. On this occasion, Hieronymus was acting on his own behalf for the first time, and is recorded as being married to Aleid van de Meervenne, the daughter of a fairly well-off family. The marriage enabled him to move into a house called ‘Inden Salvatoer’ (‘The Saviour’, later...
known as ‘Het Root Cruys’ or ‘The Red Cross’) on the north side of the main square, which his wife had inherited from her grandfather.26 Well-to-do houses on this side of the Markt were interspersed with craftsmen’s workshops, and their cellars and outhouses were often rented out for trade or as homes. Bosch lived in the house until his death, and his widow, Aleid, remained there for over six more years.27 Aleid van de Meervenne was born in ‘s-Hertogenbosch in 1453, in a house close to the Markt, in which she also grew up.28 Hieronymus and Aleid had probably known one another since they were children, although Aleid came from a somewhat better-off family of merchants, which accumulated a certain amount of real estate in the city and bailiwick of ‘s-Hertogenbosch.29 The share of that property inherited by Aleid provided Bosch and his wife with a regular income. The couple never had children, and so when Aleid van de Meervenne died in 1522/23, the goods she had brought into the marriage reverted entirely to her family in the customary way.30 Hieronymus regularly acted on Aleid’s behalf in business matters, and there is nothing to suggest that he himself was particularly wealthy.31 Aleid’s possessions were, however, counted as part of his assets. The taxes – zettingen and ruitergeld – for which Bosch was liable32 were high compared with those of other master craftsmen, suggesting that he was relatively prosperous. Within the population of ‘s-Hertogenbosch as a whole, however, his position was in line with that of well-to-do burghers and the more prosperous artisans.33 Twelve of these tax assessments have survived from the period 1497/98 to 1512/13, showing that the level of Bosch’s taxes fluctuated sharply, and did not follow the customary pattern. For the time being, the reasons for this remain wholly unclear. We should also bear in mind that the record of taxes paid in Bosch’s name virtually every year does not prove that he was necessarily present in the town in person throughout that period: the assessments were drawn up in his name, but might equally well have been settled by his wife or an agent.34
Hieronymus and Aleid continued to live in the house ‘Inden Salvatoer’, which boasted a frontage of almost five and a half metres, on the Markt. On 1 December 1516, less than a half year after Bosch’s death, the artist’s heirs – his sister Herbertke and his nephews, the sculptor and painter Johannes and the painter Anthonius – declared that they had received from Aleid, his widow, all the household goods and possessions that Hieronymus had brought with him on marriage and had acquired subsequently. It was evidently not deemed necessary to specify these any further, and there is no reference at all to any real estate. We can only conclude from this that Bosch did not have an artist’s workshop at ‘Inden Salvatoer’, which would have housed a valuable stock of artist’s tools, pigments and model drawings, ricordi, panels and finished or semi-finished paintings; unless, that is, all these things had been removed in the four months since Hieronymus’s death and placed in the family workshop.

Only a few archival references have survived concerning financial transactions in which Hieronymus Bosch was involved other than those in which he was acting on his wife’s behalf, or those relating to the share he inherited in his parents’ house, ‘In Sint Thoenis’. He was assigned a substantial sum of money on two occasions: on 31 January 1492, five men – one of them a joiner – undertook to pay him 58 Rhenish florins at All Saints that year, while on 29 March 1515, two brothers promised to pay 68 florins the following Christmas. It is not clear why they owed Hieronymus these sums and the names given in the document do not match those of any members of the social elite in ’s-Hertogenbosch. A promised payment dating from 6 March 1494 might provide the explanation; five other men undertook on that occasion to pay Bosch 51 florins at All Saints in return for wood he
had sold them. A little earlier, on 1 July 1493, his brother, the painter Goeswinus van Aken, had also sold 72 florins' worth of wood to 'Laurentius de Timmerman [the Carpenter]. It seems that the painters bought batches of timber, selected panels for their own use and sold the rest.

We know for certain that Goeswinus and his sons Anthonius and Johannes – known familiarly as Goessen, Toon and Jan respectively – worked at the house 'In Sint Thoenis' ('Saint Anthony'), now number 29 on the Markt. This was, at any rate, the name given to the building from the 1520s onwards. 's-Hertogenbosch was badly damaged by a huge fire in the summer of 1463, and so it might have been after repairing the house, purchased the previous year, that Anthonius, Goeswinus's father, placed it under the protection of his namesake saint. The architectural history of the row of houses shows that the Van Aken family's home and workshop must have been damaged in the fire, as the adjoining late-medieval roof trusses date from after 1463. The fate of two altarpiece wings that were temporarily stored there indicate, however, that some of the building's contents were saved. In 1462, a carved altarpiece was moved from the brotherhood's chapel in St John's Church to the workshop of a sculptor and polychromist called Claes van Schoenhoven. The wings were meanwhile given to Anthonius van Aken to be painted, for which he received an advance of 33 Rhenish florins. The fire in the town largely destroyed the wooden part of the altarpiece at Van Schoenhoven's workshop, but the wings were preserved. Anthonius van Aken had already laid down the preparatory ground layer, so the deans of the brotherhood decided to pay him 12 florins, while Anthonius promised on 17 August 1464 to refund the balance of 21 florins. He later received 10 florins to paint the wings ('opt stoffeeren van den dueren'), after all, though evidently in a less elaborate fashion than initially intended. The matter was settled during the next accounting year: 'Item for the collection of the wings of the burned altarpiece from Anthonius the painter and for placing these above the vault'. The brotherhood used the space above the vaulted ceiling of its chapel at St John's for storage, and it was here that the superfluous wings were placed. Many years later, in 1480/81, Anthonius's son Hieronymus bought the 'wings from the old altarpiece of Our Lady' from the brotherhood, no doubt with a view to recycling the panels for another painting.

Hieronymus must have witnessed the burning of the town in June 1463 – a disaster that destroyed hundreds of homes and part of the town hall – at first hand. His parental home, 'In Sint Thoenis', continued to be used as a residence and workshop by his family of painters until the late fifteenth and first quarter of the sixteenth century. We know from property tax records that Hieronymus's brothers 'Goeswinus die Maelder' and 'Jan die Maelre', both lived there, as did Goeswinus's widow, Katharina, after his husband's death. There is no mention of Bosch himself in connection with the house or workshop. At least four other artists are known to have lived and worked there in the early sixteenth century, after Goeswinus had died: 'Jan die maelre' (painter), Hieronymus's brother; Jan 'die beeldsnyder' (sculptor) and painter, and Thony's 'die maelre' (painter) – Goeswinus's two sons – as well as a certain Meeus, who is recorded 'inde Maelgerie'. The latter reference, dating from 1511/12, is very interesting, as it refers explicitly to the painter's workshop. The question remains as to what extent Hieronymus continued to work there after he left the parental home around 1480 to live a few doors away at his wife's house on the Markt. Whatever the case, the different hands detected in the underdrawing and painting of the surviving panels that can be linked to Hieronymus Bosch tell us that close collaboration occurred at the workshop with a variety of draughtsmen and painters. The appearance of identical or very similar motifs and forms in paintings produced within his immediate circle suggests the same thing. A clear example can be found in the triptych commissioned by Peter van Os and Henrickzen van Langel (cat. 24), which was painted by different individuals active in Bosch's workshop. Any other origin is all but ruled out by the directness of the work's relationship with several autograph works by Bosch. There is just one explicit archival
reference to the effect that Hieronymus did not work alone: in 1503/04 the Brotherhood of Our Lady paid an amount to ‘Jheronimus knechten schilder’ (‘Hieronymus’s assistant painter’), for painting three small coats of arms.\(^{51}\) Indirect evidence of workshop collaboration is more plentiful. In 1480/81 Hieronymus’s brother Goeswinus was commissioned to paint the wings for the high altar of St John’s Church; the work was to be delivered by 1 October 1482. We know from later sources that it was Hieronymus who painted the central panel of the altarpiece,\(^{52}\) making the overall work a joint production of the two brothers. In 1511/12 and 1514/15, meanwhile, Hieronymus Bosch and his nephew Anthonius van Aken (Thonis ‘die Maelre’) were paid for embroidery designs they had produced for matching blue brocade vestments for the Brotherhood of Our Lady, from which we can deduce at the very least that they worked closely with one another. We might also conclude that this was a workshop commission, especially since – as a sworn brother – Hieronymus seems generally not to have charged the brotherhood for his own work.

Bosch enrolled as an ordinary member of the Brotherhood of Our Lady, a prestigious local religious association, under the name ‘Hi[er]onim[us] antonissoen van aken’ in 1486/87. In the summer of 1488, he presented himself at the brotherhood’s banquet as one of the new ‘sworn members’, having evidently been admitted in the meantime into the organization’s elite inner core.\(^{53}\) His status as a sworn brother was unusual in several respects: first of all, he had not been born into the upper echelons of ‘s-Hertogenbosch society, but came from a trade background, even if he had married ‘above his station’ to a daughter of a wealthy Brabant family. Membership of the brotherhood represented a major step up the social ladder, which he owed not to his financial position but to his personal development and his status as a painter. Bosch donated the customary amount of ten écus as his contribution to the first ‘Swan Banquet’ he attended. However, his name was initially overlooked in the account books and had to be added in the margin; ‘Jeroen maeld[er]’ was inserted almost immediately afterwards in the same pen and ink, yet it remains the case that errors of this kind are found virtually nowhere else in the brotherhood’s supremely neat accounts. Equally noteworthy is the fact that he is not listed under his first name and surname, but with explicit reference to his profession. This was also the case in the same section of the accounts for ‘Zymo[n] scoelmeest[er]’ – the learned Symon van Couderborch, who had been appointed rector of the Latin school in ‘s-Hertogenbosch that year.\(^{54}\) He too came from a more humble background, but was university educated and would also achieve considerable prosperity as a notary and municipal secretary.\(^{55}\) As recently elected sworn brothers, Symon and Hieronymus contributed to the costs of the Swan Banquet, as did two newcomers from more well-to-do families. Three other sworn brothers paid ten écus each, as they had raised their social status in the meantime by marrying, becoming an alderman and being ordained as a priest, respectively.\(^{56}\)

The sworn brothers more or less took turns to host a meal after meetings, either at the brotherhood’s house on Hinthamerstraat or in their own homes. Hieronymus Bosch hosted three such banquets: in the summer of 1488, for instance, ‘Jheronim[us] die scilder’ (the painter) received his fellow brothers at his home. Guests from outside the brotherhood were also invited, including the steward of the King of the Romans and future Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian of Austria.\(^{57}\) Bosch was the host again ten years later, this time for the Swan Banquet, which was a highlight of the group’s annual cycle of activities. It was held in 1498–99 at the brotherhood’s house, this time without any eminent guests. In the course of the banquet, the sworn brother Peter van Os donated ten écus to the association to mark his recent marriage to Henrickxen van Langel – daughter of Franco van Langel, who was Peter’s predecessor as member of the brotherhood, as municipal secretary and as notary public.

The dishes included two swans – the delicacy to which the group owed its nickname of the ‘Swan Brotherhood’. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the memorial triptych Peter van Os commissioned from Hieronymus Bosch’s studio in around 1500 contains a discreet...
The third and final banquet hosted by Hieronymus Bosch on 10 March 1510 – once again at his home – took place during Lent, and so no meat or dairy was served. The wine and the mass held before the banquet were funded by a bequest from a deceased former member, while the brotherhood contributed to the costs of the fish course and the other lenten dishes. The statement of expenses for this banquet is the source mentioned earlier in which we read twice in short succession that the event was held at the home of Jeroen van Aken who ‘writes himself Jheronimus Bosch’.

Hieronymus Bosch died in early August 1516. The municipal chronicle referred in 1516 and 1517 to ‘a dangerous disease, of which many died as if it were the plague’. Bosch may have been one of the victims. His funeral was organized by the Brotherhood of Our Lady, as was the custom when a sworn brother died. The formal requiem mass was celebrated in the brotherhood’s chapel on the north side of St John’s Church, next to the choir. The expenses incurred by Bosch’s funeral were set out neatly once again in the accounts. We are fortunate to have this information, as it was not strictly necessary for it to be recorded: the ceremony lay officially outside the brotherhood’s accounts, since it was the deceased member’s ‘friends’ – that is to say his fellow brothers – who traditionally paid for this final token of respect. ‘For the funeral of Jeroen van Aken, painter, on 9 August, Mr Willem Hameker, dean, one and a half pence for singing the mass and another halfpenny for his presence; the deacon and subdeacon, a penny each; all the other priests, singers, sacristans, bearers, gravediggers, bell-ringer and organ-blower, a halfpenny each; the choristers a farthing [oordje] each; and the poor before the chapel, one farthing each; making 27 pence, which was paid by the other brothers, and so is cancelled out here.’ The sworn brothers
actually collected a little more than this amount, leaving the brotherhood with a penny profit on the event. Hieronymus was thus remembered with a sung mass officiated by three clergymen – the priest, deacon and subdeacon, no doubt clad in black mourning chasubles and dalmatics. The presence of fellow members of the brotherhood, relatives, friends and acquaintances will have helped make this a worthy final tribute. The poor who gathered before the screen separating the brotherhood’s chapel from the rest of the church received a small amount of alms. We do not know where Bosch was buried, but it is likely to have been in the churchyard, which was directly accessible from the north transept of the church and was used for burials from the middle of the fifteenth century onwards. It was located immediately alongside the brotherhood’s chapel. Interment in the chapel itself and in the choir of the church only occurred in exceptional cases, and St John’s was, moreover, still undergoing major building work at the time. When Symon van Couderborch – the scholar who became a sworn brother the same year as Bosch – died ten years later, the alterations were further advanced, which meant he could be buried inside the church at a spot just in front of the brotherhood’s chapel.

In keeping with tradition, the commissions that Bosch received consisted of much more than panel paintings alone. Like other late-medieval artists he painted all manner of objects, produced designs for items as varied as stained-glass windows, embroidery and brasswork, and even consulted on the work of other artists and craftsmen. The records of the Brotherhood of Our Lady have survived almost intact and – combined with other archive material from ’s-Hertogenbosch and with Bosch’s surviving oeuvre – help us reconstruct the diverse range of activities in which he engaged in the course of his professional life.

In October 1475, the brotherhood consulted ‘the painter Anthonius [van Aken] and his sons’ regarding design drawings submitted by Adriaen van Wesel from Utrecht for a new altarpiece for its chapel. If Hieronymus was one of those sons, this would be his first documented appearance. Whatever the case, Bosch would be involved for some considerable time with the execution and gradual expansion of this Marian altarpiece in carved oak, which Adriaen van Wesel delivered in 1477, and for which Hieronymus painted the lower set of wings around 1489. We know from an early seventeenth-century description that they showed ‘the history of Abigail who goes with food and gifts as a supplicant to David, to seek his forgiveness for an insult, and Solomon honouring Bathsheba’. Two extra upper wings were added in the years 1490–95, with images of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist (cat. 5–6). Bosch did all this work as a sworn brother, probably without financial reward. Van Wesel’s carvings were not polychromed or decorated with gold leaf until the years 1508/09 to 1510/11; Bosch, together with Jan Heyns, the architect of St John’s, advised on the work. The polychromy was not done in the Van Aken family workshop or by Bosch himself, but in another local painter’s workshop.

The earliest painting by Hieronymus Bosch so far identified – known only from archival sources – is the central panel of a triptych that adorned the high altar of St John’s Church until 1615. It showed ‘the six-day creation of the world’. Bosch must have painted it some time around 1480–82, as the churchwardens signed an agreement with his brother, Goeswinus, on 30 June 1481 to supply the wings by 1 October 1482. The triptych was described in the following terms in the mid-sixteenth century: ‘the altar here (which is displayed more or less in the middle of the choir) shows two sets of painted scenes. Frequent viewings are allowed of the marvellous colours applied to the wood, which encompass life-like, monstrous creatures from the underworld’. In other words, this was a triptych that was mostly kept closed, but which was regularly opened so that its wonderful colours could be admired. Bosch’s central panel was criticized following an official visitation in December 1615, when it had already been moved from the choir to the ambulatory, due to its profusion of naked figures; the church’s administrators were ordered to have it removed from the building. The wings were purchased by the city of ’s-Hertogenbosch a year later, on
4 January 1617, and placed in the town hall. What happened to them subsequently is not known.

A painting by Bosch depicting ‘the Three Kings offering gifts’ was still located in the Lady Chapel next to the tower on the west side of St John’s Church in the early seventeenth century. This ‘taeffereel van den drie coningen’, together with Bosch’s wings for the brotherhood’s altarpiece, were among the works of art and other precious items removed from St John’s for safekeeping in September 1566, when they risked being damaged or destroyed by iconoclasts. The items were returned to the church once the danger had abated. Although this is not documented, the painting, along with many other of the church’s contents, is also likely to have been moved when Saint John’s came under Protestant control in 1629, following Prince Frederick Henry’s capture of ’s-Hertogenbosch.

The recently vaulted and refurbished Gothic choir at St John’s had been the venue in 1481 for the fourteenth chapter meeting of the Order of the Golden Fleece, which brought the Habsburger Maximilian of Austria to the town, accompanied by his immediate family and his court. Count Engelbert II of Nassau was among the knights who attended the meeting. The painted shields that were installed at the time in the choir of the church – one of which was hung upside down in a porch as a token of the knight’s disgrace and punishment – were the inspiration for the prototype, probably painted by Bosch, of the Cure of Folly or Stone Operation (cat. 33). The surviving version in the Prado dates from the early sixteenth century and may have been painted in Bosch’s workshop. The commission possibly came from Philip of Burgundy – Admiral of the Netherlands and later Bishop of Utrecht, who was admitted to the Order of the Golden Fleece in Brussels in 1501.

There is not much documentary evidence regarding the more decorative work done by Hieronymus Bosch, but we do know a little about it. In 1487, for instance, he painted ‘a new cloth and a deer’s antlers’ for the ‘Geefhuis’ (Holy Ghost Table). The latter item probably refers to a chandelier made of antlers combined with a wooden sculpture, which his grandfather Jan van Aken had also painted a century earlier. The expense was recorded at that time as ‘the painting of a sculpture standing on the antlers and the antlers themselves’.

By 1491/92, the board on which the names of current and former sworn brothers were listed was full, and so the brotherhood decided to have it enlarged. Bosch seems to have added some painted decoration and possibly also text to the refurbished name-board. Eighteen pence was paid ‘aside from what Hieronymus did, for which he made no charge and wished to donate to the brotherhood’.

The windows of the brotherhood’s chapel in St John’s Church were decorated with stained glass, some of it designed by Bosch. In 1492/93, on the recommendation of the architect and engraver Alart Duhameel, the brotherhood contracted the local stained-glass maker Willem Lombart to produce new glass ‘after the sketch that Joen the painter was to make for him’. An early seventeenth-century description of the chapel refers to the ‘most artful windows’ (‘artificiosissima vitra’), which showed the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Circumcision of Christ and the Assumption of the Virgin; these might therefore have included a design by Bosch. ‘Joennen den maelder’ was also paid for helping the same Willem Lombart so that ‘the aforesaid glass should be well made’; the brotherhood recorded a separate payment for the linen (‘a few old bedsheets’) on which ‘Joen die maelder’ drew the designs. Once again, Bosch’s work as such does not appear in the accounts.

The wealthy Antwerp cloth-dresser Peeter Scheyfve, who held prominent positions in both the guild and the city council, commissioned the Adoration of the Magi Triptych, now in the Prado, from Hieronymus Bosch in about 1495. Scheyfve himself is depicted in the inside of the left wing and his wife Agnes de Gramme on the right; the closed wings of the memorial triptych show the donor’s son and father (cat. 9). As far as we know, this is the first work by Bosch to find its way to Antwerp. The successful merchant and master of the mint Joris Vezelaer (1493–1570) almost certainly brought an inherited painting of the Seven Deadly Sins by Bosch or from the Van Aken workshop with him when he moved to Antwerp in around 1515 (see cat. 34). The Spanish merchant Diego de Haro and his ’s-Hertogenbosch-born wife Johanna Pijnappel belonged to the same Antwerp business and
political elite as Peeter Scheyfve and Agnes de Gramme. The couple owned the triptych with Saints Job, Anthony and Jerome from Bosch’s workshop (cat. 23); it was given a memorial function in Antwerp in around 1520, with the arms of two married couples – De Haro–Pijnappel and Van der Voirt–Smaechs – painted on the closed wings.

Some time around 1500, Peter van Os, whom we mentioned earlier, had Bosch’s workshop expand a slightly earlier Ecce Homo panel to make a triptych showing Van Os and his wife as donors. A few years later, Franco van Langel’s large family was added to the closed wings (cat. 24). The Ecce Homo scene is a somewhat free variation on the composition that Bosch himself painted in the 1480s, now in the Städel Museum in Frankfurt (cat. 11).

We have already referred to the payment in 1503/04 to ‘Hieronymus’s assistant painter’ for painting the arms of three notable and extremely wealthy members of the Brotherhood of Our Lady, which were hung from the balusters (possibly donated by them) in the screen of the brotherhood’s chapel in St John’s. They probably consisted of small bronze shields like the one discovered in the floor of the chapel.

War with the Duchy of Guelders meant that, with a few short interludes, Duke Philip the Fair of Burgundy spent the period from 9 September 1504 to the end of May 1505 in ’s-Hertogenbosch. He must have commissioned Bosch to paint a large Last Judgement almost immediately, as the ducal accounts for that September include a preliminary payment for the painting, which Philip ordered ‘pour son tres noble plaisir’. The Duke undoubtedly knew what he would get for his money; it is safe to assume that Bosch had already demonstrated on several occasions just how fanciful a Last Judgement by him could be, although Philip is sure to have ordered one more beautiful and certainly larger than any other Bosch painting. Sadly, the work has not survived, assuming of course that it was ever actually finished; as far as we can tell, no further payment was made in respect of it, nor is there any report of its completion or delivery. The only work of comparable size is the Vienna Last Judgement, which includes several still mysterious elements, such as the figure of a donor in the underdrawing and initial painting of the central panel, who did not make it into the finished work (cat. 17).

Dendrochronological analysis of the panels shows that the triptych could have been produced from as early as 1476. Lucas Cranach the Elder copied it for an unknown patron around 1520–25. We do not know of any other large-format, autograph Last Judgement by Bosch. The smaller Last Judgement Triptych in Bruges was painted...
by Bosch at the beginning of the sixteenth century (cat. 16); Alart Duhameel’s engraving from around 1490 might have been inspired by another, now-lost original by Bosch. A sixteenth-century reversed copy of the print explicitly refers to him at any rate: ‘Hiëronymus Bos inventor’.\footnote{91}

A few years before Philip the Fair gave Bosch his commission, Engelbert II or Henry III – both counts of Nassau-Breda and members of the elite of the Burgundian-Habsburg empire – almost certainly had Hieronymus Bosch paint the Garden of Earthly Delights for their palace in Brussels, which stood almost next door to that of the Dukes of Burgundy (cat. 21). Bosch also received commissions in this period from the senior Burgundian civil servant Hippolyte de Berthoz, who was employed at the court. He ordered a Saint Anthony triptych between 1498 and 1503, which was purchased after his death by Philip the Fair as a gift for his father, Maximilian of Austria (see cat. 4). The Vienna Last Judgement Triptych was also painted for de Berthoz during the same period, probably around 1503; it includes his patron saint Hippolytus in one of the closed wings (cat. 17). Both the Saint Anthony Triptych and the Last Judgement Triptych found their way in the seventeenth century to the Habsburgs’ palace complex at Coudenberg in Brussels.

The payment by the Brotherhood of Our Lady in 1511/12 for an embroidery design has already been discussed.\footnote{92} It was stated in the notes that blue brocade (‘blaeu gulden laken’) and numerous pearls had been purchased for a chasuble (the choice of cloth naturally reflected the fact that blue was the colour of the Virgin Mary). A payment was then made to ‘Hieronymus the painter as he created the design for the cross’.\footnote{93} This was followed by an amount to ‘Walter the embroiderer for making the cross on the gold chasuble’.\footnote{94} Several years later, the same embroiderer – Wouter Janssen van Culemborch – was commissioned to provide two matching blue brocade dalmatics with embroidered edging (boerde) designed by the painter ‘Anthonius Goessenssoen’, who was Hieronymus Bosch’s nephew.\footnote{95} In other words, the embroidery designs for this set of three matching robes were prepared by Hieronymus and his nephew Anthonius, suggesting that this was an order placed with the family workshop. It would also explain why Bosch was paid by the brotherhood on this occasion. Anthonius too worked for the Brotherhood of Our Lady quite regularly; when he died during the 1516 epidemic, his heirs had to pay death dues to the association, of which he had been an ordinary member. The accounts note that half the amount owing – fifteen pence – was repaid in respect of certain paintings he had previously made for this brotherhood.\footnote{96}

Hieronymus Bosch produced a design for a brass chandelier in 1512/13. The Brotherhood of Our Lady had received a donation to be paid to ‘Jheronimo den maelder’ for ‘the pattern he has made for the chandelier’, assuming that Bosch actually wanted to be paid, given that he was a sworn member.\footnote{97} The cost does not appear in the accounts either, so this was probably Bosch’s way of contributing to the project, which was funded by several of the brothers. The chandelier might have been cast by the brass-founder Aert van Tricht, who was based in Maastricht.\footnote{98} Later entries in the accounts indicate that it was a candle-holder topped with a sculpture.\footnote{99} Aert van Tricht had made the large baptismal font for St John’s Church in ’s-Hertogenbosch in 1492; the figures supporting it are also reminiscent of Bosch’s work, as is the case with other brasswork by Van Tricht. It is no longer possible to determine whether Bosch supplied designs for casting in Maastricht. Contacts of this kind did exist, as witnessed by the fact that in 1493/94, Alart Duhameel – the sculptor and architect of St John’s and of the Chapel of the Brotherhood of Our Lady – had Aert van Tricht cast brass balusters in Maastricht after models made in ’s-Hertogenbosch.\footnote{100}

The figure of Alart Duhameel, who was also a sculptor and engraver, brings us to another aspect of Bosch’s oeuvre. Several of Duhameel’s prints display a close relationship with Bosch’s drawings and paintings, especially his Last Judgement engraving,\footnote{101} which seems to have drawn on Bosch’s versions of the subject, such as those in Bruges and Vienna (cat. 16, 17). In Duhameel’s print, however, the mass of fighting angels, monsters and demons produces a chaotic tangle, whereas Bosch was always able to maintain a sense of balance and transparency.\footnote{102} The fool below the fountain in another print by Duhameel, the decorative foliage in the same print and the fountain ornament with a twisted column (on which sits
an early Manneken Pis} are similar to all sorts of details in Bosch's painted oeuvre, but also once again to Van Tricht's brasswork. Other engravings by Duhameel can likewise be linked with Bosch's work, including the War Elephant and Saint Christopher. Some of the prints are inscribed with the word bosche, indicating that Duhameel made them during the period in which he lived and worked in 's-Hertogenbosch.

**Patrons**

If we take the whole of Bosch's known oeuvre and the available written sources, three groups of patrons emerge: the Church, the Burgundian-Habsburg court and the wealthy bourgeoisie. As we have seen already, his principal sources of religious commissions were St John's Church and the Brotherhood of Our Lady, both in his native town. There are three memorial paintings, meanwhile, that point towards a Dominican abbey church, namely the Ecce Homo in Frankfurt, the Ecce Homo Triptych in Boston and the Job Triptych in Bruges (cat. 11, 24, 23). This might, of course, be coincidental, as the Dominicans were present at lots of locations within the emerging towns and their abbey churches offered space for bourgeois tombs over and above that provided by parish churches. There is, however, a noteworthy archival reference that suggests there was also a direct link between Bosch and the Friars Preachers; in return for the painting he made for the high altar of their abbey church, the Brussels Dominicans undertook to devote an annual mass to the artist's salvation. Correspondence dating from 1638 reveals that the abbey had recently sold Bosch's altarpiece. Karel van Mander refers in his 1604 Schilder-boeck, moreover, to a painted wing by Bosch he had seen in a collection in Haarlem, which depicted a miracle from the life of Saint Dominic.

Bosch’s work was much admired in the final years of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century at the Burgundian-Habsburg court of Duke Philip the Fair and his immediate circle. His sister, Margaret of Austria, owned a medium-sized panel in 1516 showing Saint Anthony, while his mother-in-law Isabella I of Castile (died 25 November 1504) had a panel with Mary of Egypt (Maria Aegyptiaca), signed jeronimus in black letters on the lower member of the gilt frame. Bishop Philip of Burgundy, the youngest illegitimate child of Philip the Fair’s great-grandfather, acquired a version of the Cure of Folly (see cat. 33) probably not long after 1501. Count Engelbert II of Nassau and his nephew Henry III of Nassau, in whose palace the Garden of Earthly Delights hung in 1517 (cat. 21), were members of the intimate court circle, as was Hippolyte de Berthoz, who may be linked with both the Vienna Last Judgement (cat. 17) and the Saint Anthony Triptych (cat. 4), which Maximilian of Austria gave to his son Philip the Fair. The Adoration of the Magi triptych – ‘made by Hieronymus Bosch’ (‘faict par Jeronimus Bossche’) and confiscated by the Duke of Alva in Brussels in 1567 – had the Van Bronckhorst and Boshuysen family arms on the closed wings, and might have been painted for the knight Andries van Bronckhorst (c. 1478–c. 1548), who married Wendelmoed van Boshuysen in about 1520. If we can take that ‘made by Hieronymus Bosch’ at face value, the coats of arms must have been added to the existing triptych at a later date, as also occurred with the Job Triptych (cat. 23).

Bosch and his workshop also received commissions from the wealthy bourgeoisie – a commercial and craft elite that had risen to the higher echelons of society and public administration. This is evident from a number of surviving paintings done for patrons in 's-Hertogenbosch and Antwerp, such as the Prado Adoration of the Magi, the Boston Ecce Homo, the Frankfurt Ecce Homo and the Job Triptych with ‘Holy Man Job’, Saint Anthony and Saint Jerome in Bruges (cat. 9, 24, 11, 23). Hieronymus Bosch himself was an example of this upward mobility on the part of prosperous artisans, although it owed more in his case to sociocultural factors than to his financial status.
Dozens of different prints after and in the spirit of Hieronymus Bosch were produced in the course of the sixteenth century, particularly in Antwerp. Together with the countless copies and imitations on panel and canvas that also poured out of the city, they testify to the artist’s growing popularity and to the steadily increasing interest in the demonic and caricatural aspects of his work. All this prompted the Netherlands-based Italian Lodovico Guicciardini, who published a description of the Low Countries in 1567, to include Bosch among the ‘excellent painters’, whose work enjoyed wider currency thanks to the engravings made and distributed by Hieronymus Cock in Antwerp. Guicciardini refers in his book to ‘Hieronymus Bosch of ’s-Hertogenbosch, a much admired and marvellous creator of fantastic figures and bizarre things’. He mentioned him a second time too, when he praised Pieter Bruegel as a ‘great follower of Hieronymus Bosch’s artistry and imagination, for which reason he is called the second Hieronymus Bosch’.109 Marcus van Vaernewijck, an alderman of Ghent, described Bosch around the same time as a ‘maker of devils, as no one could match him when it came to painting demons’.110 Admiration for Bosch, and the way that admiration evolved, is nicely illustrated in both text and image by the first and later editions of Dominicus Lampsonius’s portraits of celebrated northern painters.111 The first edition, published in 1572 with an engraved portrait by Cornelis Cort, shows ‘Hieronymo Boschio’ in front of a neutral background. In a later edition published four decades later, by contrast, the engraving has been reworked by Hendrick Hondius to include a glimpse of hell – the subject to which Bosch chiefly owed his fame – in the background. The painter and author Karel van Mander used a Dutch translation of it to round off the account of Bosch’s life and work in his 1604 Schilder-boeck.112

‘Maker of Devils’
Hieronymus Bosch, what means your frightened face
And pale appearance? It seems as though you just
Saw all infernal spectres fly close around your ears.
I think that all the deepest rings of miserly Pluto
Were revealed, and the wide habitations of Hell
Opened to you – because you are so artful
In painting with your right hand depictions
Of all that the deepest bowels of Hell contain.

Hieronymus Bosch, c. 1450–1516

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1. ‘Aken’ is Dutch for Aachen. Archief ILVB, inv. 49 fol. 34; Van Dijck 2001a, 107.
2. Archief ILVB, inv. 125 fol. 88r–v; Vink 2001a, 83.
5. Archief ILVB, inv. 118 fol. 9r; Vink 2001a, 50.
8. Van Dijck 2001a, 31–32.
9. The current building is at 29 Markt. Its name in 1569 was ‘Inden Ryder’. Van Drunen 2006, 400; Van Drunen/Vink 1996, 352–53; indirectly also Van Dijck 2001a, 171, where a butcher and a pewterer are listed as neighbours.
10. Van Dijck 2001a, 30–31; Vink 2001a, 47.
11. Archief ILVB, inv. 123 fol. 330, payment of membership dues: ‘Goessen de Maelder A[-n]thonis s’. Van Dijck 2001a wrongly states that this refers to death dues. Goessen was still liable for tax on the house ‘St. Thoenis’ on the Markt in 1496/97 and the years that followed. There is a reference on 30 June 1501 to the estate of ‘Goewinsus de Maelre’ [Goewinsus the painter] and on 29 December 1502 to Katharina, widow of the late Goewinsus van Aken, painter. Van Dijck 2001a, 180; Vink 2001a, 29.
12. Van Dijck (2001a, 31, 179) interprets this payment as evidence that she was a painter too, but there is no evidence of this whatsoever. Katharina died in 1526 as ‘Goessen’s widow’. Archief ILVB, inv. 128 fol. 52r.
14. Some time around New Year 1481, Goessen bought the shares his brothers Jan and Hieronymus and his sister Herberke had inherited in the house on the Markt, which made him the sole owner. There is no mention in this transaction of the other sister, Katharina (born 1442), who must either have died by this date or have entered a convent. Accompanied by a guardian, she had sold her sources of income in 1474. Stadsarchief, ‘s-Hertogenbosch, Bosch Protocol 1243, fol. 243v, 5 April 1474 and fol. 286r, 26 July 1514; Van Dijck 2001a, 166; Van Drunen 2006, 482 n. 121; Vink 2001a, 89–90.
Willelmus Goyarts. Van Dijck 2001a, 177; Vink 2001a, 91.

Son of Johannes van Herler and Godefridus, son of Wilhelmus Wouters; Bartholomeus Janssoen; Stephanus, Laurentius and Theodericus, sons of Gerard Michiels. These were as follows in 1492: Baudewinus, son of had a workshop on the ground floor of the house.


For the name and ownership of the house, see Van Dijck Vink 2001a, 26–27, 107–09.

Vink 2001a, 34–35.


For the name and ownership of the house, see Van Dijck Van Dijck 2001a, 48, 168; Van Drunen 2006, 209–10.


Van Drunen (2006, 56), by contrast, assumes that Bosch had a workshop on the ground floor of the house.

These were as follows in 1492: Baudewinus, son of Baudewinus Maes; Lambertus, son of Lamberti Arnts; Johannes Everts; Johannes Bauxrens and Wilhelmus, son of Henricus van den Vienne. In 1515 they were Laurentius and Theodoricus, sons of Gerard Michiels.

Van Dijck 2001a, 176, 184–85; Vink 2001a, 91.

These were Johannes die Brouwer; Henricus, son of Wilhelmus Wouters; Bartholomeus Janssoen, Stephanus, son of Johannes van Hefer and Godfriedus, son of Willelmus Goyarts. Van Dijck 2001a, 177, Vink 2001a, 91.

80 Van Dijck 2001a, 176.

Only panels of the highest quality, made from Baltic oak, appear to have been used for the surviving paintings. See also Chapter 111, ‘Materials and Techniques’.

81 Stadsarchief, ‘s-Hertogenbosch, Bosch Protocol ii.1243, fol. 286v, 26 July 1474. Van Dijck 2001a, 166.


Van Vink 2001a, 38–41.

See below. Vink 2001a, 101–02; Koldeweij 2001a, 66–70.

1243, 71; Mosmans 1947, 69; Gerlach 1967, 100, 103–04 n. 49; Halsema-Kubes, Lemmens and De Wesel 1968, 79; Van Dijck 2001a, 49.

1873, 227.

Van Wesel agreed to supply the carving and the altarpiece case, with upper and lower sets of wings, for the price of 350 Rhenish florins; thirty years later, over 462 florins were paid. Archief ilvb, inv. 125, fol. 121v–22r. The overall sequence is discussed in Halsema-Kubes, Lemmens and De Wesel 1968, 79; Van Dijck 2001a, 49, Vink 2001a, 66–68, 70.


Archief ilvb, inv. 125, fol. 121v–22r. The overall sequence is discussed in Halsema-Kubes, Lemmens and De Wesel 1968, 79; Van Dijck 2001a, 49, Vink 2001a, 66–68, 70.


1873, 71; Mosmans 1947, 57; the ‘1 d.’ was omitted in the transcription. Van Dijck (2001a, 186) wrongly read ‘1 d.’ instead of ‘1 d.’ for the poor.


Van Dijck 1973, 144, 466.


The joiner Goyart Cuper delivered the wings that were ‘to be painted’ [‘dieren[s] soudse doen stofferen’] in 1488/89. Bosch was recorded as the painter of the wings over half a century later, in 1546. Archief ilvb, inv. 125, fol. 121v; inv. 131, fol. 307; Van Dijck 2001a, 96; Vink 2001a, 103–04.


Van Dijck 2001a, 175; Vink 2001a, 97.


‘Ter lester exequie van Jeronimus van Aken maelder is. Augusti heren Willem Hameker deken 1 1/2 st., want hy di disse gesongen heeft ende voor zyn presente 1/2 st., diissen ende subidischen eliken 1 st., allen anderen priesteren, senghoren, costeren, bastonier, graffekeren, beyerman, orgenblaszer, eliken 1/2 st., den choralen eliken 1 oert ende den armen voer tchoer eliken 1 d. tot ii st. toe, viderdiecxxx st. di die vrienden betaelt hebben, daerom hier niet.’ Archief ilvb, inv. 126, fol. 16v; Gerlach 1667, 57: the ‘1 d.’ was omitted in the transcription. Van Dijck (2001a, 186) wrongly read ‘1 d.’ for the poor.


Van Wesel agreed to supply the carving and the altarpiece case, with upper and lower sets of wings, for the price of 350 Rhenish florins; thirty years later, over 462 florins were paid for the polychromy of the carved figures. Halsema-Kubes, Lemmens and De Wesel 1968, 35, 56, 70.


Van Dijck 2001a, 170; Vink 2001a, 101.


Bergé 1990, 441 and 606 n. 25; Van Zuijen 1866, 1236–37.

90 and Wyckoff 2015, 130–35.

91 Koldeweij 2014, 401–02.

92 Dehaisnes 1881, 307; Gerlach 1988 (1967), 47; Van Dijck 2001a, 175; Vink 2000a, 95, 106.


95 Van Dijck 2001a, 177.


97 Max J. Friedländer nevertheless believed that a drawing by Hieronymus Bosch served as model for the print. Friedländer inv 1969, 70.


99 Michael Ophovius (1570–1637), who joined the Dominican Order and was ordained Bishop of ‘s-Hertogenbosch in 1626; tried in vain during the priorate of Petrus Dufay (1626–29) to acquire the altarpiece Bosch had painted for the Dominican abbey in Brussels. Archives Générales du Royaume/Algemeen Rijksarchief, Brussels, Archives Écclésiast. en Brabant, inv. 124, fol. 190v. Hezenmans 1876, 350; Van Dijck 1973, 138; Van Dijck 2001a, 175; Vink 2000a, 95, 106.

100 Van Mander 1604, fol. 216v: ‘TLeven van Ieronimus Bos... To Haerlem ten huyse van Const-liefdighen Ioan Dietring, heb ik ghesien van hem verscheyden dinghen/ deuren met eenighen heylghen: onder ander/ daer eenighen Sanct Monick wesende/ met verscheyden Ketters disputender/ doet alle hun boeken met oock zijnen leghegen op het yver/ en wiens Boeck niet verbrande/ die soude recht hebben/ ende des Sancts Boeck vlieget uyt het yver/ dat seer aerdigh gescheldt was/ also wel het branden des yveys/ als de rookende houten verbrandt en met de asschen bekleedt wesende: den Sanct met zijnen ghesele seer stathigh siende/ ende d’ander bootstige vreemde tronen hebbende... ‘We have no further information regarding this panel and its authenticity cannot be verified. The subject is an unusual one, however, and Van Mander is categorical in his description. Pijler 1974, 431; Vandenbroeck 2002, 399.

101 Le Glay 1839, 480; Gerlach 1968 (1977), 56; Van Dijck 2001a, 52; Vandenbroeck 2002, 177.


105 ‘gueulmakere, omdat zijne gelijckte niet uit en quam van duvelen te maken’. Van Vaenvenwick ed. 1872, 158; Van Dijck 2001a, 100.

106 Lampsionius 1723; Lampsionius 1650.

107 Van Mander (Miedema) 1696–99, 1, fol. 261v–71. Lampsionius’s text, printed under the engravings, reads as follows: ‘HERMIONOMOS BOSCHII POSTERIOR. / Quod sibi vult, Hieronyme Boschi. / Ille oculus tuus attonitus? / Quid Pallor spectat / Hironyme Boschi,/ Ille oculus tuus attonitus? / Quid Pallor spectat’ (Div. Pluto, god of the underworld; Erebus: god of darkness; Tartarus: the underworld; Avernus: entrance to the underworld in Virgil’s Aeneid).


What is a Bosch?

Value and valuation

Good art is rare, exclusive, expensive and desirable. To its owner, the work of art is something to enjoy, a token of piety, an aid to devotion, a symbol. Art is prestigious and, when offered as a gift, an effective means of buying favour. It is political too; and the more exclusive the art, the more political it can be.

The Garden of Earthly Delights (cat. 21) is just such a highly exclusive work. It is large, its subject matter bold, and its execution full of confidence. It is a painting that brims with ambition; a painting that cries out to be possessed. Prince William of Orange was confronted by this desirability when, on 20 January 1568, his property was confiscated by the Spanish general Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, the Duke of Alva. William himself had already fled in the meantime to the German town of Dillenburg in Hessen, abandoning his possessions at the Hôtel de Nassau, his palace on Coudenberg in Brussels. The goods seized by Alva, whom King Philip II of Spain had recently appointed governor of the Low Countries, included ‘ung grand tableau de Jeronimus Bosch’, thought to have been the Garden of Earthly Delights. The triptych had earlier passed from Henry III of Nassau to René of Chalon and then, in 1544, to William of Orange, who was able to enjoy the original work for almost a quarter of a century.

At the time, it was already recognized as a Bosch original, prompting Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle, cardinal and counsellor of Philip II, to commission a copy of it in the form of a tapestry in 1566. The result was evidently a success, as the very same Duke of Alva promptly asked to borrow the copy to have his own tapestry made from it. Odet Viron, Granvelle’s agent, seems to have been less than keen on this suggestion, replying to Alva that ‘le principal est sur le prince d’Orange’ and that it would be much better to make a copy after the original painting.¹

Not that this let Granvelle off the hook (he clearly feared he would never see his tapestry again): after Alva had confiscated the original from William, he approached the cardinal again to demand the tapestry as well. The Spanish general wanted it all. All the same, Granvelle’s fears proved ungrounded: once Alva had his copy, the first tapestry was returned. There must, incidentally, have been at least three tapestry copies of the Garden of Earthly Delights in that period, since another is listed in 1542 in the collection of King Francis I of France. This shows that Bosch’s work, however unconventional it might have been, was admired in the very highest circles. More than that, it was thought worthy of being copied on the large scale of a tapestry – an extremely expensive art form. What mattered, moreover, was not just the image, but also the name of the artist responsible for the original artwork; it was noted in each case that the design was an invention of Hieronymus Bosch, even though the original Garden of Earthly Delights – the ‘principal’ referred to in the records – was not signed.

Similar appreciation is already found during Bosch’s own life among the municipal and regional elites, and the highest echelons of the Burgundian realm, as witnessed by the various commissions Bosch received and from inventories listing paintings by him. The Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Fair, commissioned a Last Judgement from Bosch in 1504;² while the Counts of Nassau owned the Garden of Earthly Delights, which was hanging in their palace.

² E. van de Wetering, Hieronymus Bosch (Amsterdam, 1978), 27.
in Brussels in 1517, the year after Bosch’s death. Hippolyte de Berthoz, a senior official at the Burgundian court, owned a triptych with the Temptation of Saint Anthony, which his son Charles was obliged to sell to Philip the Fair; the latter presented it in turn to his father, the powerful Maximilian of Austria. De Berthoz was, moreover, the likely commissioner of the Last Judgement now in the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Vienna (cat. 17). Bosch and his workshop received commissions from prominent burghers and prelates from the 1480s onwards.3

These orders were carried out either by Bosch himself, in collaboration with assistants, or in the workshop without the master’s own input; we have very little idea of the circumstances that determined the respective approaches. Some works were signed with the (prestigious!) name ‘Jheronimus bosch’, others were not. At any rate, the signature does not appear to relate consistently to the status, chronology or autograph nature of the work. The Garden of Earthly Delights and the Vienna Last Judgement (cat. 21, 17) are not signed, while the other surviving triptychs were all inscribed with the painter’s name in the central panel (Hermit Saints, Temptation of Saint Anthony, Saint Wilgefortis, Adoration of the Magi, the Bruges Last Judgement and the Haywain [cat. 2, 4, 8, 9, 16 and 20]). Saint John on Patmos (cat. 6) – the wing of a larger, carved altarpiece – was also signed. All the other panels and former wings are unsigned, with the exception of Saint Christopher (cat. 7).

**Original and autograph**

Copies, imitations and forgeries too were sometimes – for obvious reasons – inscribed in Gothic letters with the painter’s name. Felipe de Guevara already raised the issue in his Comentarios de la pintura around 1560: ‘So are there countless paintings in this style that are falsely inscribed with the name of Hieronymus Bosch; they are paintings on which he would never have thought of laying a hand, but are made with limited talent and with smoke, that is to say by making them appear old by smoking them in a chimney.... but it is right to warn that among these imitators of Hieronymus Bosch, there is one who was his pupil and who, out of respect for his master, or to give his works a good name, inscribed the name Bosch on his paintings and not his own. And they are nevertheless paintings very much to be esteemed, and those who own such works ought to be aware of their value, as this painter emulated his master in terms of invention and morals, as he was more diligent and patient in his work than Bosch, and because his work did not deviate in style, elegance or colour from that of his master.’4 De Guevara then cited as an example of such work – that is, signed imitations – a panel in the Escorial, which may be identified as The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things (cat. 34). This intriguing panel which, according to Antonio Ponz’s 1788 edition of De Guevara’s text, was kept in Philip II’s bedchamber at the Escorial, the room in which the king also died, does indeed raise questions about its authenticity: the execution of the underdrawing and of the painting differs from that of other works by Bosch and his immediate circle, as does the support, which is made of poplar. The signature on the painting does not prove, therefore, that it was done by Bosch himself. In which case, what does the signature mean? Does The Seven Deadly Sins come from the master’s workshop? Is it a deliberate forgery? Or is it actually a homage to Bosch, referring to his inventiveness or to the genre of moralizing paintings in general? Whatever the case, autograph status and quality were evidently important to Felipe de Guevara and his contemporaries.

**Versions and variations**

Our efforts to answer the question ‘what is a Bosch’ are complicated by a phenomenon that goes unmentioned in the early art literature on Bosch – either in De Guevara or De Sigüenza in Spain, or in Karel van Mander in the Low Countries – namely that of versions and variations. There are indications that Bosch’s workshop did not only produce ‘originals’ but
also replicas of those originals, no doubt to order and for commercial reasons. This means
that not only products of the highest quality left the workshop, but also paintings of lesser
quality. Although insufficient research has been performed so far into the earliest copies
and imitations, and although we do not yet have sufficient insight into the functioning of
Bosch’s workshop, there are plenty of reasons for raising the issue here.

A good example is provided by the Haywain, of which two versions are currently known:
the principal one in the Prado (cat. 20) and a copy in the Escorial. What the status of this
copy is – where, when, by whom, for whom, and why it was produced – is not known. Both
versions have been in the the Spanish royal collection for centuries, and were used to deca-
rate the king’s palaces. A now-famous archival source states that Mencía de Mendoza – the
wealthy and powerful widow of Henry III of Nassau – instructed her Antwerp agent, the
Spanish merchant Arnao del Flano, in 1539 to find her a version of Bosch’s Haywain. Her
own version had been lost, and she now wanted a new one. Although this is not evidence
in itself that copies of a successful composition were already being produced in Bosch’s
workshop, Mencía’s request to ascertain whether other versions were available does not
appear to have been particularly unusual. What is more, while the two autograph versions
of the Wayfarer – on the Haywain Triptych and the version in Rotterdam (cat. 19) – are not
identical, their existence shows that Bosch had no qualms about producing different ver-
sions of the same theme.

There are reasons to assume that this was also the case with the Temptation of Saint
Anthony in Lisbon (cat. 4). Two versions of the central panel of this triptych, one in Phila-
delphia and the other in São Paulo, include details which Bosch might once have painted,
but which were overpainted before the work was completed. We can infer from this that
different versions of the subject were produced in Bosch’s workshop. Whether or not these
were all autograph and whether the versions of lesser quality in Philadelphia and São Paulo
also came from the workshop remains to be seen.

The notion that different versions of a painting were made at a very early stage, actu-
ally in Bosch’s workshop, is reinforced by the mysterious case of the Vienna Last Judgement
(cat. 17). This painting – or at any rate its invention – must have been highly esteemed,
judging by the extremely faithful copy that Lucas Cranach made after it. As far as we can
tell at this point, the two triptychs do not appear to have coincided historically: Cranach
painted his copy in around 1520–25, whereas he was in the Low Countries in 1508. There
are indications that the version in Vienna was produced in Bosch’s workshop for St Sav-
iour’s Church in Bruges. These circumstances might point towards an early second version,
whether or not from Bosch’s workshop, which was accessible to Cranach from the end of
the first quarter of the sixteenth century.

The surviving versions of a Crowning with Thorns represent a different scenario. The
best-quality (unsigned) version is in the Escorial (cat. 27). The painting was attributed to
Bosch for centuries but, in view of the dating of the oak panel, cannot be autograph. A
somewhat lesser-quality variation, painted on wood that is slightly older but still too recent
for Bosch, is signed and serves as the central panel of a triptych in Valencia (cat. 28). The lat-
er variation must have been highly esteemed, as it was installed in the sixteenth century
in the Capilla de los Reyes in the Dominican abbey in Valencia near Mencía de Mendoza’s
garden. Two other copies belong to the collection of the Museo Lázaro Galdiano in Madrid
and to the Carmelite monastery in Salamanca. The version now in the Escorial is straight-
forwardly described as the work of Bosch in the inventory of goods that Philip II donated
to the monastery-palace in 1593: ‘Another painting on panel in oil paint of the Crowning of
Christ Our Lord with five torturers, painted in a circle and surrounded by various drolleries
of Hieronymo Bosco; dark coloured with gilded and marbled frames; it is 2 vara [vara = almost
84 cm] and 1 sesma [one sixth of a vara] high and 2 vara and 2 tercia [tercia = almost 28 cm]
long, which came together with that [painting].’

Although the Ecce Homo in the Boston triptych (cat. 24) does not share the quality of
the version in Frankfurt (cat. 11), we have to assume that the painting was done in Bosch’s
workshop and that one way or another, therefore, it is a Bosch. The Flood Panels and the Job Triptych also lack the painterly qualities we find in Bosch’s own works, and yet we still consider them to be workshop products (see cat. 22 and 23). The Job Triptych, the Boston triptych and the aforementioned Saint Anthony pictures all display close affinities with paintings that we consider autograph: in this case the Hermit Saints Triptych in Venice (cat. 2) and Saint Jerome in Ghent (cat. 1). Although we currently label the Flood Panels and the Job Triptych as ‘workshop of Bosch’, we have to admit that we lack the data to determine whether this would also have been the case around 1500, that is to say in the period when the paintings were produced. Would the same qualitative distinction have been drawn then too?

It is a question that cannot be firmly answered. The extract from De Guevara suggests that he took a ‘modern’ view of attribution issues, yet his text is an exception: the vast majority of references to paintings do not distinguish between master and apprentice, original and copy, real and fake. Take this reference to a (copy of the?) Garden of Earthly Delights in the ‘Sala de las Audiencias’ at the Pardo Palace in an inventory from 1614–15:¹³ A large painting by Geronimo Bosque, painted in oil paint on panel with its two half shutters, on one of them the Creation with Adam and Eve, in the middle the tumult of the world, and in the other half-shutter the punishments of hell, with its wooden frame in gold and black.’ The version now in the Prado, which was described as ‘principal’ in William of Orange’s collection in 1568, was located at that point in the ‘Galería de la Infanta’ at the Escorial. A copy of the left wing of the Garden of Earthly Delights is still kept at the Escorial today.¹⁴ The fragment might be a survival of the variation once in the Pardo, but that is not certain.¹⁵ The status of this copy has so far remained unclear. We are gradually coming to the conclusion that the painting in the Pardo must have been a (later) copy, as we know the original in the Prado. We cannot be certain, however, whether the Pardo version as a whole was identical to the Prado version (as is the case with the surviving panel), or whether Bosch’s workshop supplied two versions, both of which were presented as the work of ‘Bosch’.

It is stated only very occasionally in a description that a painting or drawing was made ‘by his own hand’; an example is the model sheet with ‘witches’ (cat. 39) to which a later hand has added, ironically, that the drawing is by Bruegel (!) – ‘de manu propria’. Similar additions are found in inventories too, suggesting that importance was indeed attached to the autograph status of art and to its attribution. This is also apparent, for instance, from the Hours of Philip of Cleves (c. 1485), which includes a margin decoration with wild men fighting a knight mounted on a seahorse; a text was inserted here, probably in the second half of the sixteenth century, reading ‘Hieronymi bosch belgae propria manus’.¹⁶

Philip II’s purchase of work by Bosch from Felipe de Guevara’s collection in 1570 was accompanied by a description of a Haywain that refers explicitly to Bosch’s authorship:¹⁷ A panel/painting of 1 vara and 2 tercia in height, with two shutters, which is 3 vara wide when fully opened, and it is [a] Haywain, Geronimo Bosco, by his own hand.’ The aforementioned 1614–15 inventory from the Pardo Palace only states explicitly in three of the seventeen cases relating to work by Bosch that the piece in question is a copy after that artist.¹⁸ In most cases, the autograph status of the work is not stated and it seems first and foremost to be the invention that is being attributed to Bosch. Amounts are stated in a few rare instances, from which the value of a specific piece might be inferred. An example is the sale in 1505 of a ‘Saint Anthony triptych by Bosch’, which Philip the Fair purchased from Charles de Berthoz for just over 312 pounds (see cat. 4) – a reasonable, but by no means exorbitant sum.¹⁹ The value placed on the triptych is chiefly apparent in this case from the efforts made to acquire it. The Portuguese humanist Damião de Góis (1502–1574) – secretary to the Portuguese merchant community in Antwerp from 1523 to 1545 – acquired a Crowning with Thorns and two other paintings by Bosch, probably during his period of residence in the Spanish Netherlands.²⁰ De Góis found himself in trouble with the Inquisition and declared in the course of his interrogation that he had paid a considerable sum for the Crowning with Thorns but that it was also worth a great deal because of ‘the perfection, originality and the subject’.²¹

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**FIG 2** ‘Hieronymi bosch belgae propria manus’. This erroneous caption in the Hours of Philip of Cleves (c. 1485) is an early example of the importance attached to the autograph status of a work of art. The caption itself probably dates from the second half of the sixteenth century. Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique/Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, Brussels, MS IV 40, fol. 122v
As we seek an answer to the question of what is ‘a Bosch’, the picture that emerges from all this is far from clear. On the one hand, paintings that have been viewed for centuries as works by Bosch turn out not to be, while on the other, there seems to be some justification for calling a painting a Bosch, even though we cannot detect his hand in it. Where arguments exist for considering a painting to be the product of Bosch’s workshop, as is the case with the triptych in Boston, the Job Triptych or the Flood Panels, we take the view that these works belong in his catalogue raisonné. The immediate upshot of this is that – as far as the Bosch Research and Conservation Project (brcp) is concerned – quality and stylistic homogeneity are not the only criteria determining whether or not a painting is a Bosch. The brcp has focused in its research primarily on those paintings and drawings that are more or less generally attributed to Bosch, together with works for which there are reasons to suppose they were produced in his workshop, and works that display an obvious and significant affinity with paintings and drawings attributed to Bosch. In the case of the Temptation of Saint Anthony in Lisbon (cat. 4) specialist photographic documentation (X-radiography and infrared) means that we have to ask ourselves once again, and in a different manner, what is ‘a Bosch’ and what status should be ascribed to different versions of a composition?

In our view, an approach to the question of ‘what is a Bosch’ that focuses entirely on a search for Bosch’s own hand in the work is too limited and, given the nature of late-medieval workshop practice, ultimately impossible. We regularly express our disagreement in this book, therefore, with the ideas set out by Fritz Koreny in his Hieronymus Bosch, die Zeichnungen (2012). The publication is valuable and lavish, yet Koreny’s approach is too simplistic when it comes to the issues surrounding paintings. The certainty with which he answers the question of whether Bosch was right or left-handed and the conclusions he draws from it are especially problematic in our view. The question of Bosch’s left or right-handedness arose from the observation that the underdrawing of the fragments of the Wayfarer Triptych (cat. 19) deviates from the way the rest of the paintings in the Bosch group were prepared. Koreny’s argument may be summarized as follows: the preferred direction of the unusually extensive hatching in these panels is from upper left to lower right (or vice versa), which means that the underdrawing must have been done by a left-handed artist. Since Hieronymus Bosch appears from his drawings to have been right-handed, the underdrawing of the Wayfarer Triptych cannot therefore have been done by him. Koreny extrapolates this conclusion to the triptych as a whole, which he attributes to a left-handed assistant in Bosch’s workshop.21

As far as it goes, Koreny’s argument is logical and we too acknowledge the difference in appearance between the underdrawings in the Wayfarer Triptych and those in other paintings in the Bosch group. Our opinion differs, however, as to what conclusions ought to or may be drawn from these observations. First of all, the question of whether a drawing, underdrawing or painting has been done left or right-handedly cannot be answered as readily as Koreny suggests.22 It is by no means certain, moreover, that the person who prepared the underdrawing was the same who did the painting. We also believe it is going too far, too fast to then assemble a group of paintings that ought to be ascribed to the putative left-handed master. In our view, the Haywain and the Wayfarer Triptych (cat. 20, 19) – the core of the group of paintings for which Koreny believes a left-handed workshop assistant of Bosch to have been responsible – should definitely be attributed to Bosch himself. The fact that the underdrawing of the fragments of the Wayfarer Triptych might have been done by another hand in no way diminishes this.
The composition of Hieronymus Bosch’s oeuvre is based substantially on visual analysis of his drawings and paintings. This reflects the total lack of documented works, the attribution and dating of which have been securely established. We are therefore obliged to choose a starting point for the attribution of drawings and paintings. It also means that comparisons between paintings and drawings are crucially important to the composition of the oeuvre assembled on the basis of the selected starting point. Art historians have used stylistic analysis for the past hundred years to determine what is and what is not a Bosch, and visual analysis will remain the predominant tool in this regard until such time as arguments other than stylistic ones can be mobilized in questions of attribution.

Facilitating stylistic comparison is therefore extremely important. The experience and visual memory of art historians who have been able to study the works at first hand play a key role. ‘The only true record for the connoisseur is the work of art itself,’ Ivan Lermolieff (Giovanni Morelli, 1816–1891) commented in a dialogue in Kunstkritische Studien über italienische Malerei.\textsuperscript{23} Where comparisons between paintings, between drawings, and between paintings and drawings play an important role in questions of attribution, it is vital that such comparisons are actually possible and can be made verifiably.

Morelli’s drawn illustrations of the way different artists painted ears and ear-lobes were an early attempt to shape art history as a scientific discipline. While there is a lot to be said against his methodology, the pursuit of the most accurate possible visual illustration of images remains valuable.\textsuperscript{24} If we claim that Saint Jerome and Saint Christopher (cat. 1 and 7) were painted by the same hand, macrophotographs of their respective ears might well be enlightening.\textsuperscript{25} If these photographs were taken in the same conditions, the relative proportions are clear and account has been taken of differences in the state of preservation and the conservation history of the studied items, it ought to be possible to visualize the artist’s ‘individual hand’ and open it up for discussion in a credible manner. It goes without saying that comparisons of this kind are inherently subjective and open to manipulation. It is important therefore not only to be able to look at the detail in question, but also at its immediate context; or at an entirely different detail from the same painting at the same magnification; or at a series of ears from other paintings.\textsuperscript{26} The more comparisons that are possible, the greater the scope for a considered and detailed discussion of the studied objects and also for dismissing those comparisons if necessary. The possibilities in a printed book are, however, inherently limited, as the number of illustrations is not infinite.

The BRCP considers the possibility of describing objects in detail to be extremely important, which is why it set out in the period 2010–15 to study most of the paintings and drawings attributed to Bosch in depth (including examination with a stereo microscope) and to document them photographically using a standardized methodology.\textsuperscript{27} The extensive photographic documentation produced in the course of the project has been made available online via a purpose-developed digital infrastructure.\textsuperscript{28} Interactive viewers allow the documentation and analysis produced by the BRCP, together with existing and third-party documentation, to be freely consulted online. The effect of this has been hugely to expand the opportunities for art historians to compare works by Bosch using whichever imaging modality is most useful to them. Tools like the curtain viewer and synchrone parallel viewer mean that it has never been so easy to compare an infrared image with the paint layer applied over the underdrawing. Meanwhile, the degree to which it is possible to illustrate what was observed and the extent to which third parties can verify these observations and the conclusions drawn from them have increased by several orders of magnitude. Users can readily set up their own viewers too.\textsuperscript{29} The online aspect of the BRCP’s initiative is therefore an essential element of the research project. It is both the result of research and development and an instrument for future study. It might not, perhaps, answer the question ‘what is a Bosch’ once and for all, but it considerably expands the discursive scope in which to address the question.
FIG 4a–d Ears: Saint Christopher [CAT 7] and Saint Jerome [CAT 1]

FIG 5a–p Ears

a CAT 21c  
b CAT 29  
c CAT 29  
d CAT 3  
e CAT 7  
f CAT 7  
g CAT 32A  
h CAT 4D  
i CAT 4B  
j CAT 4B  
k CAT 4B  
l CAT 4C  
m CAT 8B  
n CAT 15  
o CAT 398  
p CAT 4B  

WHAT IS A BOSCH?
Detailed analysis and consideration of arguments lead to a decision as to whether a work should be viewed as a ‘Hieronymus Bosch’, ‘Hieronymus Bosch and workshop’, ‘Workshop of’ or ‘Follower of’. When we refer solely to ‘Workshop’, the painting or drawing in question is closely related to Bosch, but there is no concrete evidence to support a direct link with the master himself. ‘Follower’ is applied to works with numerous ‘Boschian’ elements, but for which there are no grounds for placing the work in Hieronymus Bosch’s workshop in ’s-Hertogenbosch. In by far the majority of cases, we are dealing with works accompanied by a substantial historiography from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century onwards. It is always advisable, therefore, to take a fresh and critical look at the opinions expressed by earlier scholars, in conjunction with the new information that is now available. Archival and historical research also provides new data from time to time or casts new light on earlier thinking. In a number of other cases, this has led to a more rationally founded assignment to the ‘Follower’ group of works which – despite the doubts that have been expressed – continue to be presented as authentic paintings by Hieronymus Bosch: the vertical Temptation of Saint Anthony in the Prado, the Last Judgement fragment in Munich, the Passion Triptych in Valencia, the dispersed fragments of an Adoration of the Magi, and the Crowning with Thorns in the Escorial. This group (cat. 26–32) also includes Christ Carrying the Cross in Ghent (cat. 29). This magnificent painting occupies a place of its own, since many art historians, and above all the public, viewed and continue to view it not only as a work by Hieronymus Bosch, but an archetypal one at that. It was declared to be an authentic Bosch around 1900 based on comparison with works that are themselves no longer considered authentic. It has assumed such a powerful aura, however, that it continues to serve as a touchstone and point of departure for Bosch’s oeuvre.

The Adoration of the Magi in the Prado (cat. 9) offers a valid point of reference from which to reconstruct Bosch’s oeuvre. It is a painting of sublime quality, which has survived the passage of time exceptionally well and is still substantially original. The triptych is signed and includes patrons who can be precisely identified from their coats of arms and placed within an appropriate sociocultural context. Saint John on Patmos (cat. 6) and its highly probable pendant Saint John the Baptist (cat. 5) can also serve as foundations and touchstones for Bosch’s reconstructed oeuvre. The panel in Berlin is signed and, like the one with the Baptist in the wilderness, can be firmly situated in ’s-Hertogenbosch with an approximate date. The Boston triptych (cat. 24) is another important reference point, albeit for
different reasons. It can be placed in 's-Hertogenbosch based on the identification of the donors’ portraits and their historical context. The iconography, composition, imagery and technique all suggest production in Bosch’s workshop. At the same time, comparison with Bosch’s assembled oeuvre shows that it is not an autograph work but must have been done by workshop assistants.

The point of departure for the drawings has to be approached differently. It is not enough simply to adopt the attribution of the three finest sheets, which have traditionally and universally been admired as autograph works by Bosch. Fortunately, there are additional pointers in the case of two of these: the Tree-Man and The Wood Has Ears, The Field Has Eyes (cat. 35 and 37). The figure of the tree-man is clearly related to the Garden of Earthly Delights (cat. 21), more specifically to the tree-man painted in the ‘hell wing’ of the triptych, which is securely included in Bosch’s oeuvre. The Wood Has Ears, The Field Has Eyes is a semantically complex sheet, which can be directly connected with Bosch as an individual. These drawings are closely related in style and may be linked directly to the Owl’s Nest (cat. 36). Taken together, this gives us three sheets that can then serve as a reliable point of departure for the reconstruction of the drawn oeuvre. It was possible in this way to attribute a previously unexhibited drawing in a private collection (cat. 44), which only came to light in 2003, not only to Hieronymus Bosch himself but also to the core group of his drawings. The hell scene seamlessly matches the creative drawing of non-existent creatures and situations that we find in Bosch’s other drawings and also in the paintings. A new attribution like this drawing, with its fantastical demon, can only be justified if it is carefully framed and securely underpinned. This was possible through repeated examination of the sheet at first hand and comparison to the rest of the oeuvre using the digital infrastructure described above. The likelihood of further additions like this to Bosch’s oeuvre may be extremely small, yet, as the ‘discovery’ of this drawing shows, it is not non-existent.

A new Bosch?

The possibility that new works will yet be discovered applies even to paintings. The French government issued an export licence in 1989 for a panel belonging to a family in Normandy.30 The painting, which shows a Virgin and Child and is signed ‘Jheronimus bosch’ lower left, was auctioned in Switzerland, where it was purchased by a private collector.31 The principal figures, the canopy over the throne and the lower zone of the panel in particular, were heavily overpainted. The Christ Child is plumper than was originally the case, while Mary’s face was initially turned to the right. The painting was unfortunately not accessible for examination by the BRCP and so we cannot express an opinion as to where to situate this interesting work, which has been cleaned and restored in the meantime.32 However, based on the documentation of the Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France (c2rmf), we suspect that it was produced in close proximity to Hieronymus Bosch.33 Dendrochronological analysis suggests that the panel could have been painted after 1494, but more likely after 1496.34 Although the configuration of the enthroned Mother of God reflects the Southern Netherlandish tradition since Jan van Eyck,35 the painting – if attributed to Bosch – cannot have been an early one. The two musician angels and numerous details seemingly point to Bosch’s authorship. The throne on which Mary sits is traditional in form, but not in decoration: the little columns have been painted with slender birds flying off in all directions, just as we find in drawings and paintings by Bosch. The dots in lead-tin yellow immediately recall the decoration of the column drum in the central panel of the Hermit Saints Triptych (cat. 2). The capital of the column on the right is decorated with a man riding a hind, which is drawn in paint just as fluently and deftly as the detail from the same central panel of the man preparing to mount the unicorn. The other capital shows a man carrying a deer on his back. The black stone back of the throne immediately behind Mary’s left arm features a painted relief of the Dance around the Golden Calf; the other side shows Moses receiving the
Fig 7a–b  Hermit Saints Triptych [cat 2b]; Virgin and Child [private collection] [detail of fig 10]

Fig 8a–b  Saint Anthony Triptych [cat 4b]; VIS; Virgin and Child [fig 10]; VIS (photo 1989)

Fig 9  Jan van Eyck, 'Lucca Madonna', 1436.
Städel Museum, Frankfurt

Fig 10  Hieronymus Bosch (?), Virgin and Child [private collection]; VIS (photo 1989)
Tablets of the Law. Together, they form a motif that must have been based on the same model as the detail in the central panel of the *Saint Anthony Triptych*; they are variations on a theme. The same goes for the figures carrying grapes who decorate the building in the right background and the equivalent scene in both the underdrawing and painting of the *Saint Anthony Triptych*. The cockerel in the right background is identical to the one in the *Saint Christopher* panel, while the porcupine-like creature has a counterpart in the Paradise wing of the *Garden of Earthly Delights*. Despite the overpainting, the undulating landscape in the left background with the fountain, trees and the walled city with the huge church tower and the windmill outside the walls, still form a good match with what we know from the Bosch group of paintings. The status of this panel will have to be determined by precise analysis using all the available examination methods, and by comparing the painting as a whole and its details with the oeuvre of Hieronymus Bosch.

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**Legibility**

The legibility of the works depends largely on the condition in which the paintings have come down to us, and so also influences our answer to the question of ‘what is a Bosch?’. In addition to the natural ageing of the painter’s materials, the history of the works’ restoration is of importance in this regard. A striking example is the condition of the *Saint Wilgefortis Triptych* in Venice (cat. 8). The painting was in poor condition, making it extremely difficult to assess and to compare with other works in the Bosch group. An extensive conservation treatment in 2013–15 was unable, of course, to reverse the paint losses, but it did free the painting from dirt, old varnish, overpainting and earlier, discoloured retouching. The treatment has given the painting back some of its original lustre and it is much easier now to compare it with works belonging to the Bosch group. The same applies to a whole series of paintings that have been restored in the run-up to 2016 – the five-hundredth anniversary of Bosch’s death – the legibility of which has been significantly enhanced as a result. In addition to the *Saint Wilgefortis Triptych*, they are the *Hermit Saints Triptych* and the *Visions of the Hereafter* (Venice; cat. 2 and 18), the *Last Judgement* (Bruges; cat. 16), *Saint Jerome* (Ghent; cat. 1), *Christ Carrying the Cross* (Vienna; cat. 12), *Saint Christopher* (Rotterdam; cat. 7), the *Haywain* (El Escorial, Patrimonio Nacional; fig. 20.14–15), the *Adoration of the Magi* (Madrid, Prado and Philadelphia; cat. 9 and 25), and the *Ship of Fools* (Paris, cat. 19).
A typical feature of Bosch’s painted oeuvre is the powerful way it appeals to his viewers to contemplate the painted scene. The painter goes to great lengths to grab his beholders’ attention, so that they will look at the painting for longer and meditate on its content. He is determined to create a link between viewer and subject matter. Bosch makes it personal, through the technique he uses on the one hand, and the imagery on the other. The paint layers – applied relatively swiftly and often thinly – and the impastoed details on top of sketched underdrawings give the paintings a spontaneous and direct feel. The artist’s hand is identifiable, which has the effect of drawing the viewer into the creative process. The latter is important: time and again we see Bosch searching for his final form, even after he has set down his preliminary design and applied his first strokes of paint. We frequently find alterations in both his underdrawings and paint layers – alterations that heighten the eloquence of the image. This must have been surprising and revolutionary, certainly in the period in which Bosch was active; the general tendency in early Netherlandish painting – and more widely in the so-called ‘primitive’ art of the fifteenth century – was to finish paintings to a high degree of perfection, making them as smooth as mirrors. The (paradoxical) effect of this perfection was to increase the distance between the viewer and the image. The painting offered a view of another world: it was a window onto a different reality, set in the past or in the future. Jan van Eyck created peerlessly lifelike paintings that offer a glimpse of an imagined reality. Bosch’s approach, by contrast, was entirely different. He set out in his paintings and drawings to achieve a real connection with the viewer. Landscape, figures and objects are instantly recognizable, but are frequently represented in an alienating way; the scene appears familiar, yet more often than not turns out not to be. The aim is to sweep viewers up in the narrative; to have them recognize themselves in the image and empathize with it. Beholders of The Wood Has Ears, The Field Has Eyes (cat. 37) are urged in a very direct way to observe the drawing carefully and thoughtfully, and Bosch frequently deployed the same technique in his paintings in order to draw viewers in and make them
What is a Bosch?
look more intently. When we see the streaming and bloodshot eye of the messenger-bird in the Saint Anthony Triptych – skilfully painted wet-in-wet – we feel the bitter cold of an icy wind. And when we observe the hollow eyes of the dying man in Death and the Miser, we understand the pain, exhaustion, sleeplessness and mortal terror that confront him in his final moments. His eyes were painted very swiftly, with three brownish strokes, allowing the ground tone and the underdrawing to show through a little. The intensity of his gaze is heightened by the more opaque, flesh-coloured strokes around the eye-socket. Bosch used a similar technique for the dazed expression of the miser in the foreground and the fear in the eyes of the monk-like figure beneath the crucified Wilgefortis.

The fragility of the little boy with the walking frame on what was once the outside of a triptych wing is heightened by the open, visible brushstrokes with which Bosch painted him. In this way, the form contributes to the content, considerably intensifying the story of Christ’s childhood through to the Passion scene(s) in the open triptych. Bosch paints and ‘draws in paint’ narrative details, the constantly changing content of which lends perspective or adds depth to the main scene – gossamer-fine, rapid and confident. This relates to small, autonomous scenes that allude to antiquity, the Old Testament or the world of fable: to the groups of cavalrymen and foot-soldiers who advance across distant hilly landscapes; and to small anecdotal scenes or motifs that recur surprisingly frequently, such as the lone horseman on his white horse, always riding towards the right, and the lion devouring a deer.

Hieronymus Bosch’s work is much easier at first sight to imitate and copy than that of predecessors and contemporaries like Jan van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden or Gerard David, and this is indeed what occurred on a large scale in the sixteenth century. In many cases, the result amounted to little more than an incoherent and poorly executed collection of monstrosities and diableries – a phenomenon to which Felipe de Guevara (c. 1560) and José de Sigüenza (c. 1605) made early reference. In many cases, what distinguishes a work by Bosch from one by an imitator or, more generally, a follower, is the care with which it was conceived and the attention to detail. Almost without exception, copies of the Temptation of Saint Anthony in Lisbon, for instance, or the Adoration in the Prado – and there are quite a few of them – have been simplified in one way or another. We frequently find that only the central panel of the triptych was copied, and that the narrative details that constitute the richness and opulence of a Bosch painting have been omitted. In other cases, the iconography of a Temptation of Saint Anthony or a Last Judgement prompted the creation of a catalogue of devils and demons. The creatures are scattered about the panel in a manner reminiscent in some cases of the sheets of model drawings that Bosch too is known to have produced. The individual elements are isolated and fail to form a coherent whole. Pieter Bruegel the Elder is the only follower, in fact, whose work stands comparison with Bosch, in terms of both form and content. We find the same attention to detail and multiple layers of meaning in Bruegel, whom contemporaries were already calling the ‘new Bosch’, together with similarly well-tried subjects. The two masters from the Duchy of Brabant can perhaps be compared even more effectively in a subject like the Adoration of the Magi, than in images of monsters and demons, in which the form always seems to struggle for priority with the content.

The triptych that Bosch painted and signed around 1490–1500 for Peeter Scheyfve in Antwerp (cat. 9) must have been relatively accessible – to painters too – until it was shipped to Spain in the 1570s. The large number of copies and pastiches are persuasive evidence in this regard. In 1564 Bruegel painted an Adoration of the Magi in which he explicitly responded to Bosch’s work for Scheyfve. Compared with Bruegel's version, we are struck by how much emphasis Bosch placed on the world in which the dilapidated stable is located. Bruegel distils the scene, bringing the threat of Herod’s army (depicted as contemporary foot-soldiers) right into the stable. The soldier in brown next to Joseph, who stares at the newborn Child...
with bulging eyes, has taken the place of Bosch’s Antichrist. Although the element of threat and hostility has been retained, Bruegel seems to have added a contemporary political allusion, where Bosch was far more interested in the cosmic struggle between good and evil. At the same time, Bruegel understood very well how Bosch had emphasized the Eucharistic aspect of the Epiphany by alluding to Christ’s death on the cross (see cat. 9). Mary’s right hand plays a crucial role in Bruegel; not only does she use it to introduce the Three Kings to Christ, she also directs the viewer’s attention towards the Crucifixion by juxtaposing the crossbow of the soldier clad in brown with the gift offered by the first king. Bruegel’s use of Michelangelo’s Bruges Madonna for Christ’s pose is, moreover, brilliant in this regard. In Michelangelo’s sculpture, the lack of any further context makes the Child’s pose first and foremost a dynamic representation of an everyday human scene: Mary accompanies and supports her little boy as he takes his first steps. Bruegel uses the same pose but has the Child seek the protection of his mother’s lap, as he realizes what his future holds.

Bruegel must have been particularly impressed by the way Bosch represented the black king. In Bosch’s Adoration, the figure provides a grandiose introduction to the scene by opening the image on the left side of the composition. The artistic touch of dressing him in snow-white robes that contrast with the colour of the man’s skin is both simple and effective. It is not surprising that Bosch should have chosen to sign his painting in gold letters beneath the feet of this figure. Bruegel’s composition is more ‘traditional’ and less narrative. His protagonist is located at the centre and he has moved the black king to the right, where he closes off the scene. Bruegel simplified the king’s robes, but compensated by giving him brilliant reddish-brown boots with gold spurs: he is a nobleman. Like Bosch, Bruegel placed his name under the black king.
FIG 19a–b and 20a–b Bosch [cat 98] and Bruegel (London): black kings
The way in which this work was painted shows even more clearly than the iconography and composition alone that Bruegel really studied Bosch carefully. One of the most fascinating elements of Bosch’s *Adoration* is the care and detail with which he painted the Three Kings’ headgear and gifts. He tended to execute narrative details like this swiftly and wet-in-wet with visible brushwork that emphasizes the facture. The oldest king’s richly decorated silver headaddress, for instance, is shown lying at Mary’s feet. His helmet is set with precious stones, one of which is held up like a mirror by two little figures. Viewed close-up, we find that this element is purely suggestive, drawn in paint. Bruegel imitated this in the black king’s gift, which consists of a censer in the form of a golden ship incorporating a nautilus shell. A tiny figure leans out of the shell to reach for a jewel; Bruegel, like Bosch, painted this detail rapidly, wet-in-wet and suggestively.

There are different ways to pay homage. King Francis I of France did so by having a copy of Bosch’s *Garden of Earthly Delights* woven in wool and gold thread, raising it to the level of royal art and making it desirable to nobles like Granvelle and Alva. Bruegel did Bosch the honour of carefully studying his *Adoration* and then updating it in his treatment of the theme. Bosch was reborn in Bruegel, in whose *Adoration* the story of the revelation of Jesus as Christ was retold in a manner that reflected a fashionable, European Renaissance culture in which people were used to discussing art in terms of *imitatio* and *emulatio*. The manner in which Bruegel emulated Bosch here is as intelligent as it is refined. Careful consideration of the homage in relation to its object offers a richer insight into both and – in Bosch’s case – an enhanced understanding of what makes this Bosch a Bosch.

We can focus in a similar, comparative manner on the signature Hieronymus Bosch placed on certain of his paintings. The use of a signature to identify the maker remained unusual in the Low Countries in the period around 1500. Among his contemporaries and predecessors, only Jan van Eyck – who was active sixty years before Bosch – signed as frequently as he did. Of the painters working in the period immediately after 1516, meanwhile, only Pieter Bruegel – just over sixty years after Bosch – consistently signed his work. Without wishing to draw too many conclusions from a comparison between the three signatures, it is noteworthy that Bosch signed his name in Gothic letters of the type in use at the time in the new art of book printing. He signed, in other words, in a manner that was at once idiosyncratic and generic. He consistently included his first name to avoid any misunderstanding as to which member of the workshop was responsible for the work in question. Yet he did so in international and prestigious Latin and using a typeface which, as already stated, was very similar to the Textura used at the time in printing. Another feature is the absence of any indication of the date. Since the name ‘Bosch’ is a toponym selected by the artist himself, we can only assume that he thought it important to state where the work came from. These features are all the more striking when we contrast them with Van Eyck and Bruegel’s signatures. Van Eyck turned his signature into a fine art; he varied it considerably and excelled in *trompe-l’œil* inscriptions that look like they were carved in wood, chiselled in stone or engraved in metal. He often had the painting itself speak, as it were, by using the *me fecit* (‘made me’) formula – a touch that was perfectly in keeping with his desire for naturalism, as was the indication of the date on which he made the painting, often stated to a precise day. Bruegel systematically signed his work in Roman capitals, followed by a year in Roman numerals. Like Bosch, he confidently placed this signature like a caption within the painting. At the same time, it is an illustration – albeit with a touch of exaggeration – of the affinity and the difference between the ‘Gothic Bosch’ and the ‘Renaissance Bruegel’.

The standard way in which Bosch sometimes signed his work made it easy to copy his signature, which thus appears to have happened considerably more often than with Van Eyck. Where Jan van Eyck’s naturalism proved too difficult to imitate, with the result that he had few followers, Bosch bequeathed a ‘brand’ that was exploited by those who came after him – in some cases honestly, in others less so. For some reason, this did not occur...
The tapestries woven after the Garden of Earthly Delights are dealt with by Kurz 1967; Vandenburgroek 2003, with references to earlier literature.

It cannot be ruled out, though it is far from certain, that Bosch was the author of a painting in the estate of Isabella the Catholic (26 November 1504) – Philip the Fair's mother-in-law, a panel showing what was probably Mary of Egypt (Maria Aegyptiaca) was signed jerominius on the frame. Sánchez Cantón, Vandenburgroek and Van Dijck believe that several other paintings in her collection were also by Bosch. Vandenburgroek 1987a, 167, 426 n. 1231; Van Dijck 2001a, 59, 68, 91; Vandenburgroek 2002, 177, 322, 324. The publication of sources in which this was first suggested is Sánchez Cantón 1931, 174, 182–84.

See Chapter I, ‘Hieronymus Bosch c. 1450–1516’, p. 27.


‘y saber sy ay otro carro como el que se quebro de Geronomo Bosque’. Steppe 1967, 14 nn. 67–69.

See cat. 4 and 8429, Technical Studies, cat. 4, 88 11–16.

The panel in Philadelphia cannot be analysed dendrochronologically at this point, as the edge of the painting is not accessible. The panel in São Paulo could have been painted after 1505, although production after 1507 is statistically more probable; see Klein 2001, 126.

Klein 2001, 128.

The wood used for the Crowning with Thorns in Valencia could have been painted from 1537 onwards, that for the equivalent panel in the Escorial from 1527. See Klein 2003b, 5, and Klein 2001, 127 respectively.

De Vrij 2012, 357–61. A fifth copy is thought to be privately owned. See De Vrij 2012, 361.

‘ outra pintura a tabla al ollo de la Coronación de Cristo Nuestro Señor con cinco sayones, hecho la pintura a Redondo y a la redonda disparates diversos de Hieronymo Bosco, color obscusa con molduras doradas y jaspadas; tiene de alto dos baras y sesma y de largo dos baras y dos tercias, que vino con las antes desta.’ Checa Cremades, Mancini and Vázquez Dueñas 2013, 401.

‘Una tabla de Geróni[mo] bosque grande pintada al ollo en tabla con sus dos medias puertas, en la una pintada la creacion con adan y eba, en el medio el tráfico del mundo y en la otra media puerta las penas del yniño con su guirançion de madera de oro y negro.’ Silva Maroto 2000a, 28, Silva Maroto 2000b, 540–541: 35.

The triptych wing is part of the Prado collection but is exhibited at the Escorial. The Garden of Earthly Delights now played at the Prado belongs to the Patrimonio Nacional collection.

A copy after the central panel once belonged to the Count of Pomeireu’s collection in Paris, and later reportedly to a private collection in Brussels. It is not known whether the panel is still there. Isabel Mateo Gómez suggested that this copy was commissioned by Philip II, that it was done by Michiel Coxie, and that it belonged with the left wing from the Prado collection; the early dendrochronological dating of that wing makes this hypothesis less likely, however. See Mateo Gómez 1967, 49–50; Silva Maroto 2000a, 29. The wood used for the left wing has an earliest possible felling date of 1447, making it the oldest in the entire Bosch group – older than that of the Garden of Earthly Delights triptych in the Prado. See Klein 2001, 123, and 8429, Technical Studies, ‘Dendrochronology’. No dendrochronological data is known for the copy of the central panel.


‘una tabla de varo y dos tercias de alto, con dos puertas, que abiero todo el tiene de ancho tres varas, y es Carro de Heno, Gerónimo Bosco, de su propia mano.’ Matilla Tascón 1988.


Approximately 1200 pounds were paid for series of Golden Fleece panels – standard heraldic paintings containing a considerable amount of gold or silver leaf. Substantially larger sums were expended on woven fabrics, brocade, silk and so on. Veratelli 2013, passim.

Engelenburg 1901, 195–96; Unverfehrt 1980, 13, 24, 116; Van Dijck 2001a, 93–94; Caetano 2014, 77. See also cat. 23, the Job Triptych.

See cat. 12, Campbell 2014, 158, 161 n. 40; Unverfehrt 1980, 24; Feist Hirsch 1967, 48.

This is confirmed by consultation of several handwriting experts. Scientific research into this question is virtually non-existent. Simple tests with left and right-handed people indicate, however, that left-handed people sometimes hatch in the manner expected of right-handed people and vice versa. Moreover, drawing on paper is not the same as ‘drawing’ on a panel, whether or not the artist uses a mahlstick to do so. Systematic research is needed to obtain a better understanding of the possibility of identifying left and right-handedness in artists.

via the family workshop in 's-Hertogenbosch: it evidently took a larger, more open market like that in Antwerp. This will have been the context in which an unknown artist around the mid-sixteenth century painted the faithful yet uninspired copy of the central panel of Bosch's Adoration, now in the Noordbrabants Museum in 's-Hertogenbosch. This too was a way of paying homage to Bosch: after all, reproductions intensify the aura of the original, but also steal it, and that makes them valuable. They do not need a signature.

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24 For a critical discussion of Morelli's method, see Wollheim 1973.
25 See the website Boschproject.org, link 1.37.
26 See the website Boschproject.org, link 1.38.
27 See ibid., Technical Studies, ‘Photography for the Bosch Research and Conservation Project’.
29 Information on which object has been loaded in the viewer, the location within the object that is being viewed, and the modality is included in the url, so that users can easily share and discuss it with others.
32 Jos Koldewey and Matthijs Ilsink had a brief opportunity in 2002 to observe the painting, which had been cleaned and partially restored at that point.
33 See the C2RMF documentation in Paris (Musée du Louvre) and Versailles.
34 Klein 2001, 126.
35 The Virgin and Child is comparable not only with the Luca Madonna in the Städel Museum, Frankfurt, but also with the Virgin with the Child Reading (1533) in Melbourne and the Madonna in the painting with Canon Van der Paele (1436) in Bruges. The capitals on either side of the throne, decorated with finely painted typologies, are also relevant to the comparison with the Van der Paele Madonna.
36 See also ibid., Technical Studies, cat. 8, RR 21–26.
37 Swiftness of both imagination (inventio) and execution, together with a distinctive artist’s hand, became more important aspects of artistic practice in the sixteenth century – a development seemingly anticipated by Bosch. A well-known example is that of Albrecht Dürer, who proudly declared – in the painting itself – that he had completed his Christ among the Doctors (1506) in just five days. He also declared that ‘one man may sketch something with his pen on half a sheet of paper in one day, or may cut it into a tiny piece of wood with his little iron, and it turns out to be better and more artistic than another’s big work at which its author labours with the utmost diligence for a whole year’. See Panofsky (1943) 1995, 283.
38 This effect was heightened prior to the restoration in 2014–15 by non-original remnants of brown paint in the interstices of brushstrokes. See ibid., Technical Studies, cat. 12, RR 9–10.
40 Campbell 2014, 156–97; Sellink 2007, 196–97; Arasse 2013, 39–70.
41 The damaged signature was incorrectly retouched in an earlier restoration to read ‘Jheronnnis bosch’. See ibid., Technical Studies, cat. 8, RR 134–139.
42 For a fuller discussion of Bruegel’s art in these terms, see Ilsink 2009 and 2015.
43 Gerlach and Le Blanc 1988, 91–95.
Adoration of the Magi (Madrid), right wing [CAT 90]
Materials and Techniques

Introduction

The surviving records tell us frustratingly little about the material and technical aspects of the work of Hieronymus (Jheronimus) van Aken, whose toponymic surname ‘Bosch’ does not appear in a document until 1504. Like other painters of his time, Bosch did not only produce drawings and paintings: the archives also mention a painted wall hanging and a panel listing the names of sworn members of the Brotherhood of Our Lady in ’s-Hertogenbosch. There are also references to a stained-glass window designed by Bosch, an embroidered cross on a chasuble, and a chandelier. The painter acted as a consultant too, advising for instance on the polychromy and gilding of the large Marian altarpiece for the Brotherhood’s chapel. In 1480/81, he purchased two old altarpiece wings from the Brotherhood, probably with a view to reusing them. There are also indications that Bosch and his elder brother Goessen (Goeswinus) bought larger consignments of wood; what they did not use themselves was evidently sold on to joiners and carpenters. The aforementioned design for a stained-glass window was done on old bedsheets (slaeplakens). When it comes to the painting materials used by Bosch, however, the archives can only offer information regarding some of his contemporaries. Painters purchased their materials in ’s-Hertogenbosch from local or travelling merchants, or had them brought in from elsewhere, such as Antwerp.

The Van Aken family produced a strikingly large number of painters in successive generations. Various commissions to artists in the family are documented, but like those relating to Bosch himself, none can be linked to surviving works. The archives offer only scraps of information concerning the organization of the family workshop itself. Given that the trade was passed down from generation to generation, we can assume that Hieronymus and Goessen were trained by their father, and that Anthonius van Aken himself learned the profession together with his three brothers from Jan van Aken, Bosch’s grandfather. The family workshop in which Bosch learned to draw and paint was located from 1462 to 1523 in a house on the east side of the city’s main square, at what is now 29 Markt. Collaboration was the norm in the late-medieval workshop, especially when it came to larger or urgent commissions. When the Brotherhood of Our Lady discussed the design of its large Marian altarpiece with the sculptor Adriaen van Wesel in 1475/76, Anthonius van Aken and his sons (‘ende syn soenen’) were also on hand. The family workshop continued to operate after Anthonius died in 1478. Bosch begins to be referred to as painter in the documents from 1480 onwards. Unlike the other artists in his family, however, there are no clear references to him using the title of meester (master). Interestingly, the agreement drawn up in 1481 for the prompt delivery of the wings for the main altar at St John’s Church was not made with Hieronymus, but with his brother Goessen.

Following their marriage, which must have occurred before June 1481, Hieronymus Bosch and Aleid van de Meervenne moved into the house ‘Inden Salvatoer’ on the north side of the Markt, and Goessen became the owner of the house with the family workshop. We do not know whether Bosch set up a workshop in his new home or whether he continued to use his family’s. The relatives are likely to have continued to collaborate closely, however, whether or not a second workshop was established nearby. They will have shared not
only commissions, materials and visual sources, but also assistants, journeymen and workshops. Bosch had an assistant of his own in 1503/04, who was paid for painting three coats of arms.\textsuperscript{12}

Karel van Mander’s 1604 \textit{Schilder-boeck} should also be considered as a potential source for Bosch’s artistic methods and workshop practices, as the author focused in unusual detail on painting techniques. As Hessel Miedema rightly concluded, however, it seems highly likely that Van Mander based himself primarily on the techniques used by the many followers of Bosch who were active in the later sixteenth century, and might never have seen an autograph Bosch painting in person.\textsuperscript{13}

That leaves us with the paintings themselves – the direct, physical result of the choice of specific materials and techniques, on the part of both the painter(s) and later restorers.\textsuperscript{14} Technical examination sets out to provide a better understanding of these decisions made over the centuries. Early Netherlandish panel paintings are complex objects with a characteristic, layered structure. Each of these successive layers can contain important information for art historians and restorers, for which different, complementary research methods can be applied. The three sections of this chapter roughly follow the layered structure of the paintings. The lack of secure, documented attributions is, however, felt particularly acutely in this type of study, as it also means we cannot identify a group of technical features that can be securely described as characteristic of Bosch.

\textbf{Supports and frames}

Hieronymus Bosch did not differ from his contemporaries in terms of the materials used for his paintings on panel; his wooden supports too, for instance, were made from Baltic oak. The panel with \textit{The Seven Deadly Sins} and \textit{the Four Last Things} in the Prado (cat. 34) is made of poplar, but this might reflect its unusual function as a tabletop.\textsuperscript{15} For their supports early Netherlandish painters almost exclusively used high-quality, fine-grained oak from...
the dense oak forests in what is now Poland. Bosch’s oak supports were almost always made by panelmakers in the customary way using butt-joined and glued boards reinforced with dowels. As usual, the boards were glued in the direction of their longest side – mostly vertical, therefore, in this group of paintings – to minimize the number of joins. The quarter-sawn (radially cut) wood was devoid of knots and the softer, young sapwood just beneath the bark was nearly always removed completely.

Dendrochronology can be used in the case of oak to determine the earliest possible felling date of the original tree, which can be exceptionally important for attributions. It was established, for instance, that the Marriage at Cana in Rotterdam could not have been painted by Hieronymus Bosch, as the tree from which the support was made could not have been felled any earlier than 1553 – many years after Bosch’s death in 1516. It was similarly possible to establish for around thirty other panels by Bosch followers, including the Crowning with Thorns in the Escorial (cat. 27), that they could only have been painted after 1516. The results of dendrochronological analysis have to be used with caution, however, which is not always the case in the literature. The major problem in this regard is adjusting for the unknown number of sapwood rings that were removed when the panels were produced. Study of 174 living oaks in Poland shows that they have between a minimum of nine and a maximum of thirty-six sapwood rings, with a median of fifteen. This weighted average is frequently adopted as a probable or even absolute value for the number of rings that must be added; of the 174 trees studied, however, eighty-one had a smaller number of sapwood rings. This can have major consequences, particularly for the attribution of later works. Both Fritz Koreny and Lorne Campbell, for instance, have suggested recently that the dendrochronological dating of the Haywain in the Prado (cat. 20) makes it improbable that the triptych was painted before 1516. Yet this certainly could have been the case. The youngest measured growth ring in the triptych dates from 1499 which, taking account of the minimum number of nine sapwood rings gives an earliest possible felling date of 1508 and, with two years of seasoning and processing, an earliest possible creation date of 1510. Statistically speaking, however, a felling date in or after 1510 is more likely, as this covers 93 per cent of the possible numbers of sapwood rings, together with a creation date in or after 1512. In the case of the Haywain, therefore, dendrochronological dating cannot be used as a firm argument against attribution to Hieronymus Bosch.

In recent decades, the wood biologist Peter Klein in particular has subjected many panels by Bosch and his followers to dendrochronological analysis. Several more works have been added by our project, including the Adoration of the Magi (cat. 9), the wings of the Haywain and the wings of the Garden of Earthly Delights (cat. 21), all in the Prado in Madrid. When all these data are placed in a table (see Technical Studies, ‘Dendrochronology’), there is an almost automatic tendency to view this sequence as a relative chronology for the overall oeuvre. This is however highly problematic: as emphasized above, dendrochronological dating can only be used as a terminus post quem – that is to say, as the earliest possible creation date – not as an actual date. The situation is further complicated by the fact that Bosch sometimes recycled older panels. We know, for instance, that he purchased the shutters of the old Marian altarpiece from the Brotherhood of Our Lady for 5 Rhenish florins and 8 pennies in 1480/81. He might also have acquired the panels for the Garden of Earthly Delights in a similar way, for, with their most recent growth ring dating from 1455, they have an unusually early dendrochronological date. There are indications that the workshop had an exceptionally large stock of wood available due to the trading by Goessen and Hieronymus referred to above. It is entirely possible that this resulted in a relatively large number of paintings with unusually early dendrochronological dates. The Escorial version of the Haywain was dated in this way to twelve years earlier than the triptych in the Prado (cat. 20), even though the latter is undoubtedly the original work after which the Escorial painting was copied. The later cropping of panels can also distort the results obtained from dendrochronological dating. This is the case with John the Baptist in Madrid (cat. 5), for instance, where growth rings have disappeared on the sides.
If the statistical similarities between the growth ring patterns are unusually strong, it can be concluded in some cases that different boards were sawn from the same tree, strengthening the connection between different works. This is the case, for example, with the four *Visions of the Hereafter* panels in Venice (cat. 18), the original presentation form of which is not known. When the growth ring patterns coincide exactly, it can be concluded that the panels were originally the front and back of the same panel, which was later split lengthwise. This is what occurred with the *Wayfarer* in Rotterdam (cat. 19a), for example, which originally functioned as the exterior wings of a triptych, the central panel of which has been lost. The *Ship of Fools* in Paris, together with the fragment in New Haven (cat. 19b), formed the inside of the left wing, and *Death and the Miser* in Washington (cat. 19c) was the right interior wing. The two wings were, therefore, sawn apart to create four separate paintings. 

Hieronymus Bosch, like his contemporaries, painted on panels with engaged frames. This type of frame consists of four members that fully enclose both the front and the back of the panel. There is not a single work for which the original engaged frame has survived fully intact, but those of two triptychs in the Prado in Madrid, the *Adoration of the Magi* (cat. 9) and the *Haywain* (cat. 20), are still largely original. Traces of the original paint have been detected in some cases on the edge of the frame, indicating that it is authentic. Even where the frames have been lost, traces often remain on the panel from which we can deduce how it was originally framed. This reflects the fact that the ground layer of chalk and glue was only applied and the panel actually painted after the frame had been fitted. Ungrounded and unpainted edges were therefore left around the sides of the panel, where
it was originally covered by the frame, together with ‘barbs’ or ridges of ground and paint where these layers ran up against the frame elements. If these ridges are present on all sides, we can conclude that the painting has retained its initial dimensions. It has been possible to establish in this way that the dimensions of several panels have been altered. Another situation was found in the case of Christ Carrying the Cross in Ghent (cat. 29), which our research indicates is not autograph. No barbs or unpainted edges were found on that painting, but the paint layer extending to the panel edges and the bevelling on the reverse go to show that this panel originally had a rabbeted rather than an engaged frame – a type that only became customary in the second quarter of the sixteenth century.

A thin layer of glue was applied to the framed panel, followed by a whitish ground which covered the colour and texture of the wood and served as a flat, light-reflecting and evenly moisture-absorbent base for the paint layers. Anthonius van Aken was paid in 1463 for the ‘whitening’ (witten) of two altarpiece wings, showing that this dusty task was also done at times in the family workshop. The chemical composition of the ground can provide an indication of the region in which the work was created. The ground, which could be applied in several layers, comprised a mixture of animal glue and local filler. In the case of panels painted in Spain, the filler was invariably gypsum (calcium sulphate, CaSO₄); north of the Alps, by contrast, chalk (calcium carbonate, CaCO₃) was used for this purpose.

Because the panel with The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things in the Prado (cat. 34) was painted on poplar, it has been suggested that it might have been made in Spain. Its ground layer contains chalk, however, which argues against this hypothesis. Calcium carbonate does appear to have been used occasionally as a filler for ground layers in Portugal and Venice, and perhaps in other regions of Italy too. Reinforcements between the panel and the ground layer have not been detected in the works attributed by us to Hieronymus Bosch and his workshop.

Although the paintings would seem to fit perfectly within the established tradition in terms of their frames, that is not the case. This is because Bosch did something very unusual with the exteriors of his triptychs, by using them as a single, continuous picture plane. It was not uncommon in early Netherlandish painting to place images on the closed wings of triptychs and polyptychs in a continuous space. The space in which the Annunciation is set, for instance, on the closed wings of Hubert and Jan van Eyck’s Ghent Altarpiece (1432), runs across four separate panels with engaged frames. Hans Memling, meanwhile, depicted figures on the outside of the triptychs of Jan Floreins (1479) and Adriaan Reins (1480), both in Bruges, in a continuous landscape punctuated by the upright frame members. The vertical members of engaged frames presented the painter with a practical problem, as they interrupt the picture plane in the middle not only visually, but also physically. This is because the frames do not lie in the same plane as the panel but significantly higher and, moreover, there is a bevelled or rounded edge between the frame member and the panel. Van Eyck solved the problem brilliantly: he simultaneously emphasized and integrated the frame elements by giving them cast shadows. In so doing, he affirmed the reality that the frames are located physically in front of the image, while at the same time creating the impression that the viewer is looking between these frames at the painted space beyond.

Bosch opted for radically different solutions to this problem. In the spectacular Mass of Saint Gregory – the semi-grisaille painting on the exterior wings of the Prado Adoration (cat. 9) – he simply ignored the presence of the vertical members of the frames in the middle of the picture plane. He made the highly unusual choice of painting the image straight across the two frame uprights. The centrally positioned Christ as Man of Sorrows from the Vision of Pope Gregory is not painted on the panel but on these vertical members, while the join between the frames of the two wings runs right through the figure. The join also runs through the crucified Christ in the Passion scene at the top, while Gregory’s figure is continued onto the bevelled side of the frame member.

This solution was evidently not always satisfactory: in two later triptychs, for instance, the vertical frame members were not ignored on the exterior but were physically omit-
ted, albeit in different ways. The first of these is found on the *Wayfarer* panel in Rotterdam (cat. 19A) which, as indicated above, was not originally a single panel but the exterior of two wings of a dismantled triptych, the elements of which were dispersed. Round holes were found on either side of the vertical join where the two parts were later glued together. These will have held wooden dowels used to attach an integrated or applied frame member on the inside of the wings. This made it possible to paint the exterior wings with the *Wayfarer* as a single picture plane, not interrupted by frame elements. We may assume that these wings did have an engaged frame on the three other sides. A similar figure is painted on the exterior of the *Haywain* triptych in the Prado. The whole picture plane was used here too and not interrupted by frame members. The panels originally had engaged frames on all sides, but the two upright frame members that would have interrupted the centre of the picture plane of the closed wings were thinned until they lay in the same plane as the panels themselves. The alteration made it necessary, however, to reinforce the fixing of these frame members to the panel on the outside of the wings. Wooden pins were inserted to this end in the frame members. This unusual construction and differences in the rate of shrinkage of the wood of the panel and that of the frame have resulted in the slightly open join.

### Underdrawings

Before beginning the painting process, early Netherlandish artists almost always drew on the light-coloured ground layer to prepare their composition. Bosch too, a draughtsman to the core, nearly always made use of an *underdrawing* of this kind. Such preparatory drawings were typically executed in a dark material containing carbon, which could be applied both dry and wet. The underdrawing served important functions in the creative process, both practically and artistically. The drawn contours of the forms and folds served the painter as a guide, making it easier to apply the paint ‘from back to front’. The modelling of the paint layers to be applied could also be prepared – with parallel and cross-hatching, for instance, to indicate the depth of the shadow areas. Working with an underdrawing also played a more general role in the rationalization of the production process, which became steadily more important as the open art market developed. It facilitated the division of labour within the workshop and the serial production of copies based on patterns. Substantially elaborated modelling in the underdrawing meant, moreover, that the paint could be applied in fewer and in thinner layers. A new composition could also be created, worked out or altered quickly and efficiently – much faster than in oil paint.

Because carbon, unlike the light-coloured ground, absorbs infrared radiation, the drawings beneath the painted layer can be rendered partially visible using two separate and
complementary techniques: infrared photography (IRP) and infrared reflectography (IRR). IRP has a lower spectral response than IRR, and most green and blue paint therefore remains impenetrable at this wavelength. Considerably better image quality and much higher resolutions can be achieved, by contrast, with IRR. In both techniques, paint containing carbon absorbs infrared, which means that underdrawings beneath grey or black layers cannot be made visible. The black or otherwise dark underpainting that is found in some cases also absorbs infrared and so if these are underdrawn in a carbon-containing material, that underdrawing too remains invisible.

Documentation using infrared also allows information from X-radiographs (XR) to be supplemented when determining the state of preservation of the works and identifying changes in the paint layer—something that has regularly delivered spectacular results for Bosch. The equipment for IRR and for macrophotography in infrared and visible light has improved markedly in recent decades, and working with a professional photographer has also meant that maximum benefit could be gained from these improvements. The digital infrastructure designed especially for the BRCP has made it possible to compare the new, high-quality images very precisely. The BRCP represents an important methodological development, because for the first time a widely dispersed oeuvre has been documented in a standardized way, with the same equipment used under comparable conditions in each case. The vast majority of the museums cooperated enthusiastically with the project.

The new images have proved especially important for the study of the underdrawings of the works in the Prado collection, as the spectral response of the IRR camera used by Garrido and Van Schoute was surprisingly limited (comparable with that of IRP). Blue and green paint was not penetrated, as can be seen in the case of a bird from the Paradise wing of the Haywain Triptych. The BRCP re-examined and documented three important works from the Prado collection: the Adoration of the Magi (cat. 9), the Haywain (cat. 20) and the Cure of Folly (cat. 33). The absence for the time being of high-quality infrared material for the Garden of Earthly Delights (cat. 21) in particular naturally remains a significant hiatus in this study.

Comparison of the underdrawing with the paint layer often results in a new understanding of the genesis of a painting and hence of the artist’s creative process. A traditionally important aspect of this type of research consists of determining whether, and if so to what extent, the underdrawn form that has been revealed deviates from the painted form. Relatively minor shifts in outline can be highly significant in this regard, when distinguishing, for instance, between an original composition and a copy. The BRCP documentation of the Prado Haywain, for example, shows several adjustments between the underdrawn compositions and the final version in paint, implying that this composition was conceived here. No such changes whatsoever were found, by contrast, in the version of the Haywain in the Escorial, while the painted image follows that of the Prado triptych very closely. It must therefore be concluded that even though the Escorial painting was done on older wood, it was copied after the Prado triptych and certainly not the other way round.

Such changes between the original design and the final composition can also be important iconographically, as in the case of Death and the Miser in Washington (cat. 19c), with its vision of a greedy old man face to face with the figure of Death. The dying man in the bed reaches out with his right arm for the bag held by a toad-like monster, while gazing with a seemingly restrained expression at the personification of Death appearing in the doorway. The painted scene is strikingly ambiguous, as it is unclear whether the demon is offering the bag to the man, or whether he has just taken it from him. The emphasis of this detail in the underdrawing, by contrast, is entirely different: in that case, the man clasps the bag with his right hand, while his left hand holds up a large and precious goblet, which was omitted in the painted version. The impression created in this case is that the man is trying to buy his way out of his impending death. His mouth was also depicted as open in the first instance, like the maw of the monster next to the bed, suggesting that the two are negotiating the possibility and price of such a transaction. In the painted composition, the battle has been fought and only the angel is shown with its mouth open, no doubt to plead on behalf of the dying man to Christ, who appears in the form of a crucifix.
Smaller or subtler adjustments too can sometimes be iconographically significant. Christ’s left hand in the Ecce Homo in Frankfurt (cat. 11), for example, crosses over his right hand in the underdrawing, but this has been reversed in the final, painted version. Leaving aside, for a moment, the risk of a circular argument, the fact that this alteration was made suggests that the position of the arms was considered important enough to change, and that the position of the hands must therefore also be explained iconographically.

In some instances, the underdrawing is also essential when it comes to identifying the painter’s visual sources. The fine city view in the upper left of the Frankfurt Ecce Homo, for example, was not originally planned; the composition was closed off at first by a wall, in keeping with the visual tradition for this Passion episode in the later fifteenth century. A significant change was also found in the city view in the central panel of the Ecce Homo Triptych in Boston (cat. 24): rather than the open square for the Carrying of the Cross that we see in the painting, a diagonally positioned bridge over a canal was initially drawn here, precisely like the one painted in the Frankfurt panel. In this case, therefore, the underdrawing provides a further argument for the creation of the triptych in Bosch’s workshop.

Changes of this nature are found so often in paintings generally held to belong to the core group of Hieronymus Bosch’s oeuvre that we consider the presence of traces of the creative process as a sine qua non for attributions to Bosch. The underdrawings of the Cure of Folly in Madrid (cat. 33), the Conjurer in Saint-Germain-en-Laye (cat. 32) and Christ Carrying the Cross in Ghent (cat. 29) were all followed relatively closely in the paint layer. We therefore believe that these works were copied from existing examples, just like the Haywain in the Escorial, although in these three cases the principaal has not survived. This conclusion does not automatically mean, of course, that these copies cannot have been produced in Bosch’s workshop, but rather that additional evidence would be required to demonstrate this.\footnote{Sufficient further arguments appear to be present in the case of Christ Carrying the Cross to conclude that this painting was not produced until considerably later; as noted above, for instance, the panel was originally painted right up to the edges and mounted in a rabbeted frame.\footnote{Underdrawings in early Netherlandish paintings are often strikingly characteristic in terms of style and choice of material. Comparative stylistic studies of underdrawings can therefore play an essential role in the attribution of paintings, and the underdrawings of works by Bosch have chiefly been studied in the past with this aim in mind. This applies in particular to the studies of Roger Van Schoute, who published regularly on this subject over half a century, sometimes in collaboration with Hélène Verroustraete and Carmen}}

>11.9, 11.11–12
>24.2
>20.15

\[\text{FIG 32:} \text{Haywain (Madrid) [CAT 33]: vis and irr}\]

\[\text{FIG 20.15:} \text{Haywain (Escorial): vis and irr}\]
The works studied and published by these authors include the ones in the Prado. Other comparative studies were published by Jan Piet Filedt Kok, Jetske Sybesma Ironside and Fritz Koreny. What links all these publications is that they point, without exception, to what is indeed the substantial diversity in style in the execution of this group of underdrawings. Some of the authors have compiled clusters of related paintings based on these differences. Van Schoute formed three groups in this way, and Sybesma Ironside five. In both cases, however, one of the created groups is a residual cluster consisting of underdrawings that show few if any mutual stylistic affinities.

Many of the previously published findings were confirmed by our research, while others can now be adjusted and supplemented. We also identify stylistic links in the underdrawings. By far the largest and clearest cluster relates to a number of paintings with one or more figures painted full-length in a landscape. The underdrawings were consistently done in these cases with a relatively large brush and a watery binding medium. Only sparing use of hatching is found here for modelling purposes, while a variety of adjustments made between the underdrawing and execution in paint provide evidence of a creative process.
that continued until the very final stages of production. These panels with stylistically similar underdrawings are generally viewed as belonging to Bosch’s core oeuvre. Saint Jerome at Prayer in Ghent (cat. 1); the Hermit Saints Triptych in Venice (cat. 2); John the Baptist in Madrid (cat. 5); Saint John on Patmos in Berlin (cat. 6); Saint Christopher in Rotterdam (cat. 7); the Saint Wilgefortis Triptych in Venice (cat. 8); the Adoration of the Magi in Madrid (cat. 9); and Christ Carrying the Cross in the Esco\textit{rial} (cat. 13). The Crowning with Thorns in London (cat. 14) – a composition with half-length figures – also belongs to this group. While it is a logical and almost automatic response by art historians to compile stylistic clusters of this nature, several methodological provisos ought to be expressed in this regard. One significant difference between the studies alluded to above is found in their respective conclusions. Van Schoute, Verougstraete and Garrido consistently emphasized – albeit not always equally persuasively – that underdrawings differing markedly from one another can still have been done by one and the same hand, while Sybesma Ironside and Koreny divided up this group into different hands. This fundamental difference in approach nevertheless conceals an important point in common, in that none of these studies addresses the possibility that different hands might have worked on a single painting, even though this was surely common practice in early Netherlandish workshops. Collaboration will have been the rule rather than the exception for the production of larger altarpieces in particular.

The huge differences in style and materials of the underdrawings of the Last Judgement in Vienna (cat. 17) are particularly important in this regard. The triptych was probably painted on behalf of the Burgundian official Hippolyte de Berthoz, who was based in Bruges.
FIG 14  Last Judgement (Vienna) [CAT 178]: IRR

FIG 15  Last Judgement (Vienna) [CAT 178]: IRR
underdrawings of the grisailles on the closed wings, showing the Apostle James the Greater and Saint Hippolytus, were done in a large brush in a watery medium, and form a close stylistic match with the aforementioned cluster, even though many of the shadows were prepared here using broad, parallel lines, especially in the landscape. The open wings and the central panel of the triptych, by contrast, present an entirely different approach. These compositions were worked out in a free and expressive underdrawing to a detailed and surprisingly advanced degree. The vigorous, sketchy style is characterized by repeated outlines and hatching that is precisely worked out and bends to follow the modelling of the figures. Deeper shadows were implemented using closely placed hatching in both long, straight lines and zigzags. The occasionally sharp turns in the lines do not reflect the execution in a dry material. As far as we can tell, this underdrawing cannot be compared with any other in a work by Bosch, including other highly detailed compositions. It seems eminently possible, therefore, that the compositions in the open triptych were set down by a different hand – perhaps by a particularly talented journeyman, an itinerant assistant who was only active in the workshop for a short time, or by a workshop assistant by whom no further work is known.

As many as three different hands were evidently responsible for the underdrawings in the triptych of the Ecce Homo in Boston (cat. 24): for the central panel, the interior wings and the exterior wings. Of these three hands, two may be linked relatively straightforwardly with the preparation of other works in the group, but the underdrawing style on the exterior wings so far stands alone within the larger group. These and similar findings seem to confirm the suspicion that collaborators who might only have been active in the workshop for a short time could be set to work during all phases of production, including that of the underdrawing. We ought to be cautious, however, about drawing conclusions of this nature, as the number of surviving paintings is only a fraction of what must once have been produced in the Van Aken/Bosch workshop.

The underdrawings of the Wayfarer in Rotterdam, the Ship of Fools in Paris, the fragment with Gluttony and Lust in New Haven and Death and the Miser in Washington (cat. 19A–C) have also been cited in the literature as a separate stylistic cluster. The underdrawings – characterized by webs of parallel and cross-hatching, worked out to a surprisingly advanced degree with a medium-sized brush and applied in different directions – are indeed related very closely in stylistic terms. This does not come unexpected since, as was noted above, these panels did originally form the wings of the same triptych. This characteristic manner of underdrawing has yet to be detected in other works, and so it would seem more meaningful to view it as a one-off in Bosch’s workshop rather than as another stylistic cluster. It is even conceivable that this was some kind of experiment on Bosch’s part, in which the modelling used in engravings was imitated in the underdrawing, so that it would contribute to the effect of the unusually thin paint layers. The idea that the underdrawings of these sawn-apart wings essentially stand alone within the group also creates a new context for the discussion of its supposedly left-handed execution – something claimed by various authors since 1962, including Nicole Veronee-Verhaeghen, Frits Lugt, Micheline Sonkes, Jetske Sybesma Ironside and Fritz Koreny. In our view, however, the left-handedness of these underdrawings is not unambiguous: the new documentation shows hatching in various directions. We believe it is still an open question whether the direction and lines of hatching in underdrawings may indeed be considered conclusive evidence – as has traditionally been the case for drawings on paper – of the left- or right-handedness on the maker’s part. Underdrawings – unlike ‘ordinary’ drawings – were mostly done on a vertically mounted support, with possible use of a mahlstick.

A related and problematic aspect of organizing underdrawings stylistically is that observations of this kind can only apply to the preparatory sketches, and not automatically to the rest of the painting as well. Given the division of labour within early Netherlandish painters’ workshops, it is entirely possible, after all, that different hands worked on the same painting not only alongside but also after one another. In other words, we cannot simply assume that the underdrawing hand was, by definition, also responsible for applying the
paint layers. This is still by no means viewed as self-evident, as witnessed by the far-reach-
ing conclusions that Fritz Koreny drew recently from the style of the underdrawing of a
single detail from the Haywain in the Prado (cat. 20).71

Putting together clusters of this kind is an art rather than a science. It depends by defi-
nition on the stylistic variables for this group and so is bound to vary. The manner in which
these variables are defined and applied is, moreover, significantly subjective. A first, dry
underdrawing was detected, for instance, in Christ Carrying the Cross in the Escorial (cat. 13),
which was used to set down the beginnings of the principal forms; it was later worked out
in a watery medium with a relatively large brush. A similar first preparatory stage could not
be determined – at least not with certainty – in the other works belonging to the cluster.72
The presence or absence of a first underdrawing like this in a dry material might also serve
as a criterion for compiling a group to which this important panel would be allocated on
its own. To our mind, however, this would be an extremely illogical, not to say undesirable
outcome, as the detectable underdrawing of the other works in the aforementioned group
shows strong affinities with the wet underdrawing of this Christ Carrying the Cross. A sim-
ilarly problematic criterion is the way the shadow areas in the underdrawing of the land-
cape behind the figure of James the Greater on the exterior of the left wing of the Vienna
Last Judgement (cat. 17) are formed with broad, parallel lines in a watery medium. This leads
in the first instance to the images in question being excluded from the group. However, as
soon as we drop this characteristic as a criterion, the exterior of the wings actually fit back
into the group without the slightest problem. Good arguments can be formulated, inciden-

tally, for both choices, in which other variables too can be taken into account, such as the
fact that the Vienna triptych is so much larger than the other works in the group or that we
are dealing in this case with a grisaille and hence with a different type of painting. Taking
everything into account, the similarities between the underdrawings once again appear to
be much more important than the differences. And if we were to apply our stylistic criteria
a little less strictly, other works too would suddenly fit into the cluster, such as the Last
Judgement in Bruges (cat. 16), the Flood Panels in Rotterdam (cat. 22) and the Job Triptych in
Bruges (cat. 23). Bosch appears, incidentally, to have had a greater personal involvement in
the underdrawing of the two latter works than in their execution in paint.

A final methodological proviso relates to a surprising new finding from our research. We
found that many underdrawings were done in multiple stages – four or more suc-
cessive ones in some cases. These different phases can be distinguished by variations
in the use of materials (paintbrush size, different tones of black and a variety of binding mediums). At the same time, they appear to coincide in many cases with the nature of the underdrawn feature, which also helps identify it. The outlines and the most important folds, for instance, were often drawn in a different stage from the finer modelling. Although it remains difficult, and in some cases even impossible, to securely determine the sequence of the different stages based on current documentation methods, it is reasonable to assume that the outlines were done before the modelling. This unusual way of working might be indicative more of a fully-fledged draughtsman than of the traditional painter’s approach to preparation. The phased underdrawings seem to have been used primarily to prepare more complex compositions with several different figures, including the larger triptychs we studied: the Temptation of Saint Anthony in Lisbon (cat. 4), the Adoration of the Magi (cat. 9), the Haywain in the Prado (cat. 20), the central panel of the LastJudgement in Bruges (cat. 16), and the dispersed wings of the WayfarerTriptych (cat. 19); but also smaller works like the Adoration in Philadelphia (cat. 25) and the one in New York (cat. 10), the Ecce Homo in Frankfurt (cat. 11) and the Calvary in Brussels (cat. 15).

The most important outlines and folds in the Frankfurt Ecce Homo were prepared using a relatively large brush and a watery medium. This method was used for most of the figures, including the donor family – which was later scraped away and overpainted – on the lower left and right, and for the wall with arched openings in the background, which was never painted (cat. 11). The same brush and watery binding medium also appear to have been used here locally for modelling, namely in the group around Christ. The modelling of the figures in the group of spectators, by contrast, was prepared with a finer brush and a less watery medium, with hatching placed relatively precisely and in different directions. Several folds – in the sleeve of the man with the gesticulating hands in the central foreground, for instance – were emphasized at a later stage using a similarly fine brush, but in a material that stands out darker in infrared light, and therefore appears to contain more carbon. The watery underdrawing applied with the relatively large brush shows close affinities once again in terms of style and choice of materials with those of other panels in the aforementioned group, while the later stages show no such similarities at all.

The phased execution seems to point once more towards the possible involvement of several hands in the production of these works, although it is unclear for the time being whether, and if so to what extent, this was indeed systematically the case. Comparison with the Entombment of Christ – a Bosch drawing in London (cat. 54) – is extremely interesting in this regard. If we examine this stylistically coherent sheet in detail, we find evidence here too of a surprisingly similar, phased execution in at least three stages, in which washes and closely applied hatching with broad lines have been combined with more precise hatching set down with a finer brush. A large pen-and-ink drawing like that of the Tree-Man (cat. 35) was also done in various stages and inks. And if Bosch – the thoroughbred draughtsman – was in the habit of completing his drawings in phases, is he not likely to have done the same in his underdrawings?

The possibility that a single hand might have been responsible for several or all the stages of the phased underdrawings does imply an exponential increase in the previously formulated stylistic criteria. We would have to expand the cluster, for instance, to include all the phased underdrawings that likewise display the characteristic preparation with a relatively large brush and a watery medium. Should we not, however, also open up the group to underdrawings that correspond stylistically with other stages in the phased works, such as modelling using relatively finer hatching? And if these works display other characteristics in turn, ought we not to apply those as well? Given this multiplication of criteria and, with it, the number of subjective decisions, clustering based on separate stages would not appear very helpful, and might even be counter-productive. However, the fact that various underdrawings of panels ascribed to Bosch display a markedly phased structure of this kind makes this feature in itself a new stylistic characteristic for the workshop, which can indeed be usefully applied for purposes of clustering and attribution.
The harder question is that of where the precise boundaries of workshop production lie. For the time being, it will often be very difficult or impossible to distinguish assistants from followers and copyists, particularly where compositions are repeated with few traces of a creative process.

The information from the study of the underdrawings fits well with the image of an artist with an exceptionally creative mind, for whom drawing and underdrawing were an integral and essential element of the creative process. Even if it turns out that Bosch had little or no input into the execution in paint of certain works, his hand can still be firmly detected in many cases, albeit beneath that of his assistants.

The pigments and binding media available to Bosch were relatively limited. Like his contemporaries, he used lead white and bone or plant black, the blue pigments azurite and natural ultramarine, and green copper pigments like verdigris and malachite. There was vermilion and red lead for red, along with organic lakes such as madder lake or carmine, which he could also use to make purple. Earth pigments offered a range of different brown and yellow tones, and sometimes red and green too, while for yellow highlights he employed lead-tin yellow. Bosch evidently used linseed oil as his main binding agent. Like his contemporaries, he might also have used walnut oil locally, which yellowed less and was therefore better suited to painting white and blue areas. Bosch was much less traditional when it came to his painting technique. As is the case with the underdrawings, the available literature reports striking variations in the layered structure of the painting, in the handling of the paint and the use of impasto. We also encountered differences of this nature, not only between different paintings, but also within a single work.

The early Netherlandish painting technique would change significantly in the course of the sixteenth century, and Bosch appears to have been an important forerunner of this process. Generally speaking, paintings were executed in fewer layers, and these paint layers also became thinner and more transparent, with the result that the underlying elements showed through more. This offers several significant advantages, as paintings can be produced in this way in a shorter time and using fewer materials. This development is often linked to the steady rise of the open art market: painters required to invest time and materials without a guaranteed buyer for their work will, it is argued, have wanted to keep the cost-price as low as possible. However, since the open art market in ‘s-Hertogenbosch did not develop until relatively late and paintings there in Bosch’s time were mostly commissioned, his faster way of working will have offered creative benefits to begin with. It made it easier for him to adapt his compositions as he worked – something he did surprisingly frequently and substantially.

Van Mander, in the passage in his Schilder-boeck (1604) on the life of Hieronymus Bosch, wrote as follows: ‘He had a steady hand and a very adroit and subtle working manner, usually finishing his works in one layer which nevertheless remains bright without discoloration. Also, just like some other old masters, he used to draw his subjects onto the white of the panel, laying over that a transparent, flesh-coloured ground layer; he often allowed the ground to contribute to the effect of the picture.’ As noted earlier, it is highly questionable whether Van Mander is referring here to works by Bosch or by his followers; this is less relevant in the present instance, however, as it was just as important for the many followers to imitate Bosch’s technique as it was his characteristic subjects and motifs. The phrase ‘in one layer’ (‘ten eersten opdoen’) refers to alla prima painting, in which a composition was laid down in a single layer, possibly wet-in-wet, with no preparatory doodverf, the underpainting in muted or ‘dead’ colouring. Bosch did indeed frequently model his flesh tones not in the underpainting, as was customary, but on the surface of the paint, in a semi-transparent scumble applied over a thin, first transparent layer, as we can see, for instance, in the pink paint on a hand in a detail from Christ Carrying the Cross in the Escorial.
This made it possible to work with fewer and thinner layers, resulting in a shorter drying time, higher productivity and lower costs. Van Mander’s comment that Bosch’s paintings remained beautiful (‘seer schoon’) needs to be viewed in the light of the poor reputation enjoyed by alla prima painting, which led not infrequently to problems of quality. Various painters’ guilds had charters, therefore, that made the use of dead colouring compulsory to avoid discoloration and other problems. It was not until 1546, however, that the guild in ’s-Hertogenbosch imposed a similar rule.87

It is not entirely clear what Van Mander meant by ‘transparent, flesh-coloured ground layer’ (‘doorschijnigh carnatiachtigh primuersel’). Vandivere recently interpreted it as referring to a transparent, pigmented intermediate layer, applied over the entire surface.88 A pigmented isolation layer has been detected on a number of paintings attributed to Bosch. The pigment used, however, is not flesh-coloured yet frequently white, but also brown or black or a combination of the two.89 A thin layer of unpigmented linseed oil applied over the underdrawing was identified in Christ Carrying the Cross in the Escorial.90 Van Mander had to make do, however, without a microscope or paint samples; rather than a pigmented isolation layer, therefore, he may have been describing a local, relatively transparent initial paint layer, as we see between the middle and forefinger of the man next to Simon of Cyrene. Van Mander’s observation that Bosch ‘often allowed the ground to contribute’ (‘liet oock dickwils de gronden mede wercken’) is also important, as it tells us that these works were already noticeably transparent in the late sixteenth century. This is interesting, as certain colours become more transparent with age, and it is often extremely difficult to determine at this stage precisely how a painting will have appeared in the sixteenth century.91

In a number of works, the composition was prepared not only by means of an underdrawing, but also through incisions. These were used, for instance, in the grisaille on the back of Saint John on Patmos (cat. 6) and in the Cure of Folly (cat. 33) to indicate the edges of the circle to be painted. This was done before painting began by scratching the circular form in the ground layer using compasses of some kind. The point made by an instrument like this is visible in the nimbus of the Christ Child in Saint Christopher (cat. 7). Some incisions in this painting might have been made using the end of the paintbrush. Incisions in the wet paint found in several other panels were used to help define forms: in the Christ Child for instance on the exterior of the wing with Christ Carrying the Cross in Vienna (cat. 12). The width of these incisions varies, indicating that they were made using different instruments. Some of the lines are perfectly straight and will therefore have been drawn using a straight, hard object. Both straight and curved incisions were used on the outside of the Adoration of the Magi in the Prado (cat. 9) to indicate the stone frame and the flat part of the altar. Incisions were also employed in two early works, the Adoration in New York (cat. 10) and the Ecce Homo in Frankfurt (cat. 11), to prepare stone walls, as later occurred with the floor of the platform in the central panel of the Saint Anthony Triptych in Lisbon (cat. 4). A perspective system with a single vanishing point was used in the New York Adoration. The point is not located on the horizon, however, but beneath the two little dancing figures in the landscape, precisely below the staff. The X-radiograph shows a white dot at that point and so we may assume that the perspective system was set up using a nail in the vanishing point, following which the hole was filled in before painting began. This way, the painter could use a string or a ruler to determine the correct perspective of parallel horizontal lines for the underdrawing and the incisions. Lines of this kind in the central panel of the Saint Anthony Triptych in Lisbon do not all meet precisely at a single vanishing point.

Gold leaf, which seems to have been on sale at a building on the Markt in ’s-Hertogenbosch,92 was traditionally applied before the actual painting began. It was detected in just a handful of works, in which it seems to have been applied systematically using the oil or mordant gilding technique. The many gilded details in the New York Adoration (cat. 10) stand out particularly. Only the three inscriptions and the rays of Christ’s halo in the Ecce Homo in Frankfurt (cat. 11) were decorated with gold leaf. The material was also used in the
Madrid Adoration (cat. 9) for some smaller details and the signature, and for small accents in the Boston Ecce Homo Triptych (cat. 24) too. A sticky layer containing oil was used as mordant, which – where this could be determined – was invariably pigmented. This is especially apparent where the gold leaf has largely abraded, as in the words spoken by Pontius Pilate in the Frankfurt panel: Ecce Homo, ‘Behold the man’. The mordant also added relief to smaller, gilded forms, which will have been especially striking in flickering candlelight.

A great deal of attention was paid in the early Netherlandish painting tradition to preparing the composition. Careful and efficient planning was required if the artist was to be able to work from ‘back to front’ during painting. The background was laid down first, including the blue sky where appropriate. The underdrawing made it possible for forms set against the sky, such as figures or trees, to be left in reserve from it, which saved paint. Less paint was also needed later when these forms themselves were added, as there was no blue sky or other background to cover. Smaller details, by contrast – the figure’s hair, for instance, or the branches and leaves of the tree – were painted over the edges of the reserved spaces, on top of the background. Bosch worked in precisely this way for a certain number of panels, including the Calvary with Donor in Brussels (cat. 15), in which the principal forms were left in reserve in the background, as revealed by the X-radiograph. Space was left blank from the sky for the cross, for instance, the buildings and the trees, which show all dark in the X-radiograph. The figures were also reserved in this way from the landscape. The building with the tower in the upper right, meanwhile, was not planned and was therefore painted over the already-completed sky.

In many more cases, however, this efficient way of working was clearly too rigid for Bosch’s creative mind and he regularly made significant changes as he painted. The ageing of the paint layers means that these changes are now often visible to the naked eye. The landscape in Saint Christopher in Rotterdam (cat. 7), for instance, was drastically altered, and the large tree with its curious hermitage on the right was only added at the very last moment on top of an earlier, virtually finished background. Because the paint used for the
tree has become more transparent, the leaves of the original trees – which were positioned lower – can now be made out locally beneath the painted surface: in the trunk, for instance, and in the shelter above the hermitage. More frequently, however, changes of this kind can be seen more readily using infrared reflectography or X-radiography. Several examples can be given of alterations like this in the paint layer that are also extremely important in iconographical terms. In the central panel of the Hermit Saints Triptych in Venice (cat. 2), for instance, Saint Jerome embraces a strikingly large cross, which can also be made out in the X-radiograph, as the form was left in reserve from his red robe. This triptych is also extremely interesting in terms of its execution, as Bosch did not work from back to front here in the customary way, but actually did the opposite: he began by painting the central figures in each of the three panels, which, for a draughtsman pur sang, must have been a more organic approach.

Remarkably, the donors were overpainted in no fewer than four of Bosch’s paintings – John the Baptist (cat. 5), the Saint Wilgefortis Triptych (cat. 8), the Ecce Homo in Frankfurt (cat. 11), and the Calvary (cat. 15). The donor of the Last Judgement in Vienna (cat. 17), meanwhile, was included in the underdrawing but never painted. We do not know in the case of the Frankfurt and Brussels panels whether the alterations were done in the workshop, but this does appear to have been the case with the overpainting of the donors in John the Baptist and Saint Wilgefortis. We can often reconstruct the original appearance of these paintings quite well using X-radiographs, IRR and microscopy, although this is no longer possible in the case of the Frankfurt Ecce Homo, where the paint was physically removed by scraping. Our study was able to shed more light on the numerous changes made during the painting of the central panel with the Temptation of Saint Anthony in Lisbon (cat. 4), but it has so far not proved possible to deduce the exact original composition.

The structure of the paint layers can vary significantly for specific colours. Blue skies, for instance, were done in azurite and lead white and frequently shade from light blue on the horizon to dark blue at the upper edge of the painting, with the lighter elements containing a larger proportion of lead white. This paint was often applied relatively swiftly using a large, bristly brush in a variety of short, mostly vertical strokes applied in broad, horizontal zones. Horizontal brushstrokes are also used on occasion, as we find in the X-radiograph of Christ Carrying the Cross in the Escorial. These can also be made out with the naked eye, as the sky was applied here in a single layer. In the Saint Jerome in Ghent (cat. 1) and the Saint Christopher in Rotterdam (cat. 7), the sky was applied in two layers and quite coarsely, while the skies in Saint John the Baptist and Saint John on Patmos are painted more smoothly, with almost no individual brushstrokes visible. We find a fourth variation in the open wings of the Saint Anthony Triptych, in which the underpainting has once again been applied relatively freely and roughly. The dark areas, by contrast, were done in a layer of grey paint that strongly absorbs infrared light. The flying fish, which was originally going to have two extra pectoral fins, was left in reserve from the base layer.

Looking at figure 28b, we are struck by how much grey and black paint Bosch used in this composition, not only in the underpainting for the sky, but also, for instance, in the water in the foreground and the middleground, and for certain buildings. He distinguished himself in this respect too from his fifteenth-century predecessors, who often avoided black, or used it only sparingly. Bosch employed a thin, grey, infrared-absorptive base layer for the brilliantly painted little figures who storm the tower in the upper right of the composition; he worked wet-in-wet with lead white, lead-tin yellow and a little red lake. The image was then finished off with a few final touches of white, yellow and black. Virtually no paint at all was used for the bridge itself, as a result of which the underdrawing of details that were never executed in paint are readily visible here with the naked eye. Taken together, it is a perfect display of efficiency, virtuosity and control, in which we see the ‘draughtsman in paint’ in his element.
Bosch frequently laid his forms down in a single, thin layer, therefore, on which he could then continue to work as he saw fit. This often produced striking results, especially in his faces, such as that of Simon of Cyrene in Christ Carrying the Cross in the Escorial (cat. 13), the flesh tints of which were applied in a thin, almost entirely transparent first paint layer, through which the underdrawing can be made out locally. The face was shaped further on top of this underlayer using a few rapid touches of white, pink, red and brown paint. Apart from the lead white, the impasted pink paint is visible particularly clearly in the X-radiograph – in the cheekbone, for instance, the nostril and the corner of the lower lip. We can conclude, therefore, that this too is lead white with a little red lake mixed in. This manner of modelling on the surface was modern: early Netherlandish painters of the generations before Bosch achieved similar modelling using opaque paint in the underlying layer, over which they then laid a transparent glaze. Yet Bosch is not consistent in this respect either: local, ochre-coloured underpainting has been detected in two works – Saint Jerome in Ghent and Saint Christopher.

Bosch frequently used an underlayer for red lakes too. The organic pigments are not very opaque, making it difficult to achieve the required modelling, and so the lighter parts of forms to be painted with red lake – the lighter folds of red robes, for instance – were underpainted locally with an opaque paint containing lead white, while the darker parts were not. Further modelling was possible on the paint surface using short strokes of red lake applied at right angles to the direction of the folds – a technique that was evidently used primarily in earlier works; the same effect is obtained in later paintings by broader strokes of red lake applied in the direction of the fold, sometimes also mixed with black. There are various works in which lakes seem to have been applied with a rag rather than a brush. Bosch already prepared the light underlayer during the underdrawing phase using a striking yet efficient method: he frequently used hatching to indicate the shadows in drapery, which meant no underpainting containing lead white was actually needed in these locations. The impasted, modelling underpainting and the relatively thin, smooth red lake resulted in striking differences in the texture of the paint. We should bear in mind, however, that the colour balance of the red lakes and the lead-white-containing underpainting has altered as the paint layers have aged, thus increasing the contrast between light and shade.

We also find more texture in the paint surface where Bosch altered his compositions significantly at a later stage, requiring him to work on top of the existing layers. This explains why the unchanged elements of the open Saint Anthony Triptych (cat. 4) appear more smoothly painted than the central panel. Bosch was seemingly unconcerned about differences in texture like this or about the visibility of his brushwork. Individual strokes can often be readily distinguished – another respect in which he deviates from the early Netherlandish tradition. In some cases, he appears to use texture deliberately to add definition to his forms, particularly in hands and ears. Another typical use of texture in these paintings is found in the small, impasted dots of paint – mostly pure lead white or lead-tin yellow – which Bosch used to structure the smooth forms of some of his fantastical botanical motifs.

It is striking how often and how brilliantly Bosch applied his paint wet-in-wet. It occasionally appears to have been a deliberate choice, for the technique also achieves an extra-realistic effect, as in the sap dripping from the hollow dead tree in the interior right wing of the Saint Anthony Triptych. More often, however, it seems first and foremost to have been a pragmatic method that enabled him to work swiftly and efficiently. The folds in the yellow tunic of the figure in the central panel of the Haywain (cat. 20), for instance, were not scratched into the wet lead-tin yellow with the end of the brush, but were painted in using red lake mixed with a little lead white, which had the effect of pushing the yellow paint away. A similar effect was achieved in the red turban, but now with unmixed lead white. In the underside of this figure’s right sleeve, we also find the contour line that was so typical of Bosch: it was applied here in brown paint as one of the very last details.
The observations set out above illustrate first and foremost the wide variation in working methods that we and others have identified in these paintings, of which the research reports in ‘BRCP, Technical Studies’ – the companion volume to this book – contain a more complete overview. The picture that emerges from the multiplicity of approaches in terms of frames, underdrawings and painting techniques is that of a painter who not only developed a visual language of his own, but who also applied very unusual working methods. He frequently deviated in this regard from existing early Netherlandish painting traditions, without establishing a new, rigid approach in their place. The substantial liberties Bosch systematically appears to have allowed himself run counter to our traditional image of the painter as a late-medieval craftsman. His painting technique also gives the impression of a unique creative mind – an ‘artist’ in the modern sense of the word.

However, any such conclusion would push and possibly even exceed the boundaries of scientific examination as part of the study of a technically varied body of work. If differences in the technical execution of a group of paintings are to be interpreted as a direct consequence of their production by a unique creative mind, the attribution of those works to that painter must be beyond any doubt. Otherwise we risk falling into circular arguments. As we know, it is precisely such a core group of paintings, whose attribution is supported by a documented commission, that is lacking for Bosch – something that also denies us a reliable chronology. An additional and for the time being unresolved issue here is that the role of the family workshop in the production of these works remains highly opaque, also
fig 26a–b  Christ Carrying the Cross (Escorial) [CAT 13]: VIS and XR

fig 27  Saint Christopher [CAT 7]

fig 28a–b  Saint Anthony Triptych [CAT 4C]: VIS and 1RR

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fig 29 Adoration of the Magi (New York) [CAT 10]

fig 30–b Saint Anthony Triptych [CAT 4c]: VIS and IRR

fig 31a–b Christ Carrying the Cross (Escorial) [CAT 13]: VIS and XR

fig 32a–f Hands

a CAT 1  d CAT 2c
b CAT 4b  e CAT 8b
c CAT 8b  f CAT 29b

fig 33a–b Haywain (Madrid) [CAT 20b]: VIS and XR
FIG 34a–c  Gluttony and Lust (CAT 19B): V15, IRR and XR
after our study. It is reasonable to assume, however, that different painters belonging to the family collaborated at the workshop, and that these painters received the same or very similar training from the same teacher. One of the surprising findings of this study is that works of lesser quality, such as the Ecce Homo Triptych in Boston (cat. 24), originated in the workshop too. This might also be the case with two versions of the central panel of the Temptation of Saint Anthony, in São Paulo and Philadelphia. We hope that further research will shed additional light on the circumstances of these works’ production, although it is possible that the hands of the different artists active in the workshop will never be clearly identified through technical examinations.
These sources are discussed in Chapter 1, ‘Hieronymus Bosch, c. 1450–1516’, pp. 13–31. See also Vink 2001a, 119–23.

In 1508/09, see Chapter 1, p. 23. See also Marijnissen 1987, 13, and Vink 2001a, 49, 71, 100.

The central panel of that altarpiece was lost in a fire, probably the one that badly damaged the city in 1463. The two wings were commissioned from Anthonius van Aken, and were located in the family workshop at the time of the blaze. See Koldeweij, Vandenbroeck and Vermet 2001, 53, and Chapter 1, p. 20. See also Vink 2001a, 79–80.

See Chapter 1, p. 19. See also Van Dijck 2001a, 176, 184–86; Vink 2001a, 91.

Vink 2001a, 76–78.


See Chapter 1, pp. 14–16. See also Van Dijck 2001a, passim; Vink 2001a, 79, 83–84.

Cf. Van Dijck 2001a, 28; see also Chapter 1, pp.16–18.

Campbell 1979.

See Chapter 1, p. 23. See also Vink 2001a, 49.

According to Jos Koldeweij, this relates to a version of the Garden of Earthly Delights (cat. 21). See Koldeweij, Vandenbroeck and Vermet 2001, 69–70.

See Chapter 1, pp. 20, 25. See also Vink 2001a, 107. It is possible that the reference to ‘Jheronimus knechten schilder’ actually refers to multiple assistants.

Van Mander (Miedema) 1994–99, iii, 55.

See also Chapter 1v, ‘Conservation History and Appearance’, pp. 82–107.

Garrido and Van Schoute identified the wood variety as black poplar, Populus nigra. See Garrido and Van Schoute 2001, 24, 41, 77. See also the entry for cat. 34. For painted tabletops, see Kremb 2013.
80

See Klein 2003a. Klein [72, table 4] does not cite The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things as the exception to the rule, but four panels made respectively of limewood (The Cordholders by a follower of Lucas van Leyden in Washington), pine (Virgin and Child by the Master of Legend of Mary Magdalene [7] in Rotterdam and an Adoration of the Magi by Jan van Scorel in Chicago), and beech (Dieing Cleopatra, attributed to Jan van Scorel in Amsterdam).

12 Except in the central panel of the Adoration of the Magi (cat. 3), the construction of which differs significantly. See also brcp, Technical Studies, cat. 9, pp. 134–139. Cf. also Garindo and Van Schoute 2001, 271. The two boards of the Adoration of the Magi in Philadelphia (cat. 32) were not glued with a butt joint but with a V-shaped tongue-and-groove.

14 Sapwood was detected, however, in Christ Carrying the Cross in the Escorial (cat. 13; see brcp, Technical Studies, cat. 13, pp. 89–90).

15 Klein 2001, 129.


19 The present study systematically quotes both the earliest possible and the statistically more likely creation date. See also brcp, Technical Studies, ‘Dendrochronology’.

20 We are grateful to Peter Klein for his collaboration with the brcp. Pascal Frature also shared results with us for which we thank her. See also brcp, Technical Studies, ‘Dendrochronology’.

21 Van Dijck 2001a, 170. See also Chapter 1, p. 19.

22 Peter Klein performed the dendrochronological analysis of the wings for the brcp on the X-ray films. The youngest growth ring in the central panel, 1449, had been published previously (Klein 2001, 129, Klein 2001a, 219). The discovery of the Paradise wing in the Escorial has an even earlier dendrochronological dating, with a most recent growth ring of 1438.

23 See the entry for cat. 20.

24 See also Chapter 14, pp. 85–89 on the sawing of panels and other interventions that alter their dimensions.

25 Lammetse, Roorda and Boersma 2003, 102–14; see also Chapter 14, pp. 88–89.

26 The frame of the Haywain in the Escorial is wholly original, but the work in question was probably not produced in Bosch’s workshop.

27 See also Chapter 14, pp. 85–89.

28 This was only partially preserved during the most recent restoration, when new wooden strips were applied to the four damaged edges of the panel. X-radiographs made prior to this intervention show a panel painted up to the edges. Rabbeted frames replaced engaged frames as common method of framing in the second half of the sixteenth century. The earliest known example of a rabbeted frame (the central panel of Van Orley’s Last Judgement in Antwerp) dates from 1518–25; see Verougstraete 2010, 68. We are grateful to Hélène Verougstraete for communicating her findings by email (9 February 2010) before her book was published. The second quarter of the sixteenth century was a period of transition, during which both methods were used side by side.

29 The preliminary glue sizing is usually covered entirely by the ground and the paint layers, but a possible glue layer was observed in the Ship of Fools in Paris (see brcp, Technical Studies, cat. 198, fig. 17–18).

30 The ground was applied more thinly and finished less smoothly on the exterior wings of the Saint Anthony Triptych in Lisbon (cat. 3), and the texture of the support remained partially visible.


32 The use of calcium carbonate as a filler for the ground layer of Spanish panels is mentioned in the literature (e.g. in Zahira Véliz, ‘Wooden Panels from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century in Spain’, in Kathleen Daniels and Andrea Rothe (ed.), The Structural Conservation of Panel Paintings, Los Angeles 1999, 147; Judith Berg Sobre, Behind the Altar Table, The Development of the Painted Relatable in Spain, 1150–1100, Columbia 1989, 53). However, all these references go back to the same erroneous source. The analytical laboratory at the Prado’s restoration department has never detected calcium carbonate in a Spanish panel, nor has it ever been reported in a reliable publication. Calcium sulphate was always used for this purpose, even in coastal regions. We are grateful to Maite Jover de Celis for this information (email, 9 January 2010).


34 The Évora Altarpiece, which was probably painted in Portugal, possibly has a double ground, with a layer of calcium carbonate over another layer of calcium sulphate. See Maryan Ainsworth and Catherine Metzger, ‘The Évora Altarpiece, A Preliminary Report’, in The Quest for the Original (Le Dessin sous-jacent dans la peinture XVIe), Leuven 2009, 17. A chalk ground was also found in Giovanni Bellini’s Portrait of a Woman in the Gallerie dell’Accademia, Venice. We are grateful to Giulio Bono and Chiara Maida for this information.

35 In the case of the Last Judgement fragment in Munich (cat. 30), strips of canvas were applied over the joins between the boards before priming; in that of The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things in the Prado (cat. 34), the joins were filled; see Garindo and Van Schoute 2001, 79–80.

36 Hubert and Jan van Eyck, The Adoration of the Lamb (the ‘Ghent Altarpiece’), completed in 1432, Sint-Baafskathedraal, Ghent.

37 This was not a problem for the wings of smaller triptychs, as integrated rather than engaged frames could be used, in which the frame and the panel consisted of a single piece of wood. There are no surviving panels by Bosch with this type of frame.

38 The scene on the closed wings of the Ecce Homo Triptych in Boston (cat. 24) was also painted across the elements of the frame. The Creation of the World – the grisaille on the closed wings of the Garden of Earthly Delights in Madrid (cat. 20) – might also have been painted across the frames in this way, but this can no longer be determined, as the original frames of the monumental triptychs have not survived.

39 Lammetse and Roorda Boersma 2003, 107. Their fig. 5 shows a hole of this kind during the restoration, before the inpainting. The holes can now be distinguished better in infrared.

40 Observations made during the 2014–15 restoration of the Last Judgement in Bruges (cat. 16) suggest the same original construction.

41 See brcp, Technical Studies, cat. 20, pp. 97–102. Garrido and Van Schoute 2001, 214 wrongly described this engaged frame as an integrated frame, and the planed-down element as a narrow plank.

42 In some grisaille paintings on the outside of triptych wings (e.g. cat. 3 and 12) the underdrawing could only be revealed locally. Of the works we examined, only the predella of the Ecce Homo Triptych in Boston (cat. 240) was not underdrawn, but that little panel was certainly not executed by Bosch. The other panels without underdrawing (the Arrest of Christ in the Rijksmuseum and the two versions of Christ Before Pilate in Princeton and Rotterdam) are not by Bosch either. See also cat. 28.

43 For more on the functions of underdrawings, see Faries 2003.

44 See brcp, Technical Studies for the specifications of the equipment used by the brcp to this end.

45 See also brcp, Technical Studies.

46 Only the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Vienna and the National Gallery in London refused permission for documentation of this kind, although we were allowed to examine the London panel. Moreover, the brcp was not able to examine and document all the Bosch paintings in the Prado in Madrid.

47 This relates to all the 14x documentation published in Garindo and Van Schoute 2000 and 2001. The specifications of the equipment were not provided, but the Hamamatsu Vidicon camera used for the analysis was probably not fitted with a daylight filter.

48 The most recent growth ring of the Escorial Haywain dates from 1487, implying an earliest possible creation date of 1486 and statistically more likely 1500. The equivalent dates for the Prado Haywain are twelve years later.

49 Cf. Campbell 2014, 139, 140.

50 The dendrochronological dating of the Cure of Folly and the Conjurer is relatively early, so that the panels could in principle have been created in Bosch’s workshop. The youngest growth rings of these works date from 1475 and 1485 respectively. This suggests an earliest possible creation date of 1488 for the Cure of Folly and 1496 for the Conjurer, although execution after 1500 and 1498 respectively is statistically more likely. Both panels were examined by Peter Klein; see Klein 2001a.

51 The underdrawing of Christ Carrying the Cross in Ghent (cat. 29) is not related to that of the grisailles of the triptych with the Temptation of Saint Anthony in Lisbon (cat. 4), as proposed in Van Schoute, Verougstraete and Garindo 2001, 107.
in the underdrawing. The materials used for the to distinguish different stages for the finer details with relative certainty. It is not always possible to detect the presence of these thin and frequently recurring subject of discussion for the researchers.

Spronk 2011 was the first to raise this issue with regard to Bosch. According to Koreny, a left-handed pupil of Bosch did make a number of adjustments to two panels, but only after they were completed. See Koreny 2012, 14–17.

Our observations in this essay are based on the illustrations in Tisse 2014, and the images shown during the presentation on which this publication is based. The bcr did not obtain permission from the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Vienna to examine and document this triptych.

No underdrawing was detected in the predella. See also bcr, Technical Studies, cat. 24, RR 77–84.

Underdrawings in two different styles have also been found in the Crowning with Thorns in London; see also the entry for cat. 14.


Two possible but not entirely conclusive connections can be found in the underdrawing of the tondo with ‘Deathly’ in The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things (cat. 34), and in the very last stage of the highly complex underdrawing of the central panel of the Temptation of Saint Anthony in Lisbon (cat. 4), especially in the upper part of the ruined tower. This underdrawing style does not relate strongly to that of Christ Carrying the Cross in Vienna (cat. 12), as Iriisone (1973, 87) suggested, nor with that of the angel in Christ Carrying the Cross.

It is possible that more accurate documentation methods could detect even more stages in these and other paintings.

Painters’ materials documented for contemporaries in 15th-century Bosch can be found in Vink 2001a, 53–54 and 76–78.

Natural ultramarine has so far been identified only in the Madrid Adoration. See Garrido and Van Schoute 2001, 42, 115; Parra Crego 2001, 233. It also appears to have been used for a few smaller details in the Bruges Last Judgement; see bcr, Technical Studies, cat. 16, RR 69–74. The blue pigment small might also have been used; ibid., cat. 4, RR 11–16, and cat. 16, RR 69–74.

See, e.g., Rossi-Maranes and Tucci 1992; Lomentari Vinrds 1992; Garrido and Van Schoute 2001; Parra Crego 2001; Van Schoute, Verougraete and Garrido 2001; Lammerste and Roorda Boersma 2003; and Campbell 2014. Garrido and Van Schoute 2001 and Parra Crego 2001 also described the use of copper resinate glaze (verdigris dissolved in hot vinegar), but Van Ekema Hommes 2004 (51–89) has shown that copper resinate was most likely not used for paintings on panel or canvas.

Carminic is a generic name for two different red lakes made using dyes derived from scale insects. Kermes vernonia has been identified in the Haywain in the Prado; see Garrido and Van Schoute 2001, 246. Polish cochineal was found in the Madrid Adoration; see Garrido and Van Schoute 2001, 244.

Cambridge 2014, Garrido and Van Schoute 2001 and Parra Crego 2001 also describe the use of egg as a binding medium. Recent research by Marika Spring, presented during the Van Eyck Studies Colloquium (Brussels, 19–21 September 2012) has demonstrated that the presence of proteins in a binding medium is not sufficient to conclude that the binder itself is egg. Earlier research (Higgin, Spring and Saunders 2003) produced a similar result for the binding medium of lead-tin yellow, which was traditionally viewed as an emulsion of oil and egg.

Linseed oil and walnut oil were both identified in Christ Carrying the Cross in the Escorial. See bcr, Technical Studies, cat. 13, RR 89–90.

Vink 2001a, 45.

Quoted from Van Mander (Miedema) 1994–99, 1, 124 (fol. 216v).

Materials and Techniques
The paintings of Hieronymus Bosch are now more than 500 years old. Those that have survived are by no means unmarked by the passage of time and by human intervention. In each case, therefore, we have to ask ourselves what we see; what precisely are we looking at? What has happened to these paintings in all that time? To what extent are we seeing the original pictures as intended by the artist?

When today’s visitors to the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna stand in front of Christ Carrying the Cross with the Christ Child with a walking frame on the reverse (cat. 12), few will realize that they are looking at a mere fragment of a triptych. The information leading to this conclusion is contained in the painting itself, but it takes an expert’s eye to detect it and – often a conservator in consultation with art historians – to draw the right conclusions from it.

The appearance of a picture may have been radically affected by the natural ageing of the materials that were used to make it; by the environmental conditions of its surroundings, including biodegradation of the organic materials; and by human intervention, for instance in the form of past restorations. Consequently, great care must be taken in interpreting both the images produced by the artist and his techniques, for the appearance of the works may be obscured in many ways. Conservators are trained to detect changes like this and hence to distinguish original material and its ageing from damage and later restoration. This is obviously important for any painting, but all the more so for Bosch’s works, which are so packed with detail – a fact that in many cases also enables art historians to discover a deeper meaning. ‘Bubo significans’ – the significant owl – is the title of a publication by Bosch specialist Paul Vandenbroeck.\(^1\) In it, he explores the extremely important role the owl plays in the universe of Hieronymus Bosch, who sometimes appears to have used the bird almost as a signature or a self-portrait.\(^2\) One of the most appealing examples of this can be found in Bosch’s Saint Jerome in Ghent (cat. 1), where a small owl looks out of the image at the beholder. In the Ghent picture we are not only looking at Bosch’s namesake, but at the artist himself too; it is through his eyes that we see his patron saint. The game of looking, peeking, seeing and seeing through takes on an added dimension when we consider that the painting’s restoration in 2014–15 revealed that the owl on the branch is actually being observed by a second owl from the darkness of what was previously just a black hole.

Things get more complicated when panels turn out to have been partially overpainted in the past, as in the case of the wings of the Saint Wilgefortis Triptych in Venice (cat. 8), which initially included portraits of the donors. It has been suggested in the past that a Flemish merchant acquired the wings from Bosch’s workshop after his death. He then supposedly added them to the painting of Saint Wilgefortis and shipped the ensemble to Venice as a triptych.\(^3\) This hypothesis can be rejected based on the findings of X-ray analysis: the triptych has always been a triptych. But it nevertheless raised questions as to the authorship of the overpainting, which was done with great respect for the initial composition and also made use of it. Why such reverence for what Bosch had done previously? Was it because the

Saint Jerome at Prayer [cat 1]: before and after treatment.
work was done in his workshop? Did Bosch himself carry out some or all of the overpainting? A dead man dangling from a noose has been painted entirely convincingly in the right wing with just a few strokes of the paintbrush. The manner of painting is readily comparable with work by Bosch, such as the grisailles on the back of Saint John on Patmos (cat. 6a). Does this mean that Bosch himself was responsible for this detail in the Wilgefortis Triptych? Whatever the case may be, it turned out to have been painted during the same phase as the overpainting of the donor portraits.

These examples illustrate the need for intensive dialogue between art historians and conservators if we are to correctly understand and preserve works of art from the past. It is important, therefore, in a monograph about an artist like Bosch to focus on questions of the condition, the restoration and conservation history, and the current appearance of the paintings.

Published information on the condition and conservation history of paintings by Hieronymus Bosch is relatively scarce. Hitherto the most prominent study has been Bosch at the Museo del Prado: Technical Study (2001) by Carmen Garrido and Roger Van Schoute. Roger Marijnissen also included information on the condition of most individual paintings in his 1987 monograph, Bosch: The Complete Works. Although for centuries Bosch’s work has stimulated scholarly discourse, a lack of insight into condition-related alterations has at times resulted in misinterpretation of not only the artist’s painting technique but his intentions too. The systematic physical examination by the Bosch Research and Conservation Project (brcp) of nearly all the paintings of the known core oeuvre has revealed – often for the first time – how extensive these alterations can be.

This essay roughly follows the structure of the research reports (rr) on the examined paintings as published in brcp, Technical Studies, the present publication’s companion volume. The reports systematically address such issues as physical changes to the support, the influence of preparatory layers, and the consequences of the ageing of paints and varnishes, while it also includes notes on the effects of past and current treatments.
FIG 5 Hermit Saints Triptych [CAT 2]: cradled reverse and metal framing, before treatment

FIG 6 Carrying of the Cross and Christ Child (Vienna) [CAT 12]: schematic reconstruction of the triptych

FIG 7 Carrying of the Cross (Vienna) [CAT 12]: before treatment
Even at first glance, most modern frames present Bosch’s pictures differently from the way they would have appeared in their original frames. Some pictures are even displayed unframed, as for quite some time has been the case of the paintings in Venice (cat. 2, 8, and 18) and of the Flood Panels in Rotterdam (cat. 22). The often-preserved unpainted and ungrounded panel edges of Bosch’s works indicate that his panels were originally set into engaged frames. Where those frames have survived, the natural shrinkage of the wooden panels within them has caused panel edges parallel to the wood grain to become exposed over time. This is visible, for example, in the Job Triptych in Bruges (cat. 23) and in the Ecce Homo Triptych in Boston (cat. 24). In some panels the visibility of these ungrounded edges has been reduced through retouching, as in the Haywain and the Adoration of the Magi (cat. 20, 9) in Madrid, whose frames are largely original.

Bosch painted on panels made of excellent-quality Baltic oak. Generally speaking, these supports have only limited woodworm damage, and just a few exit holes were observed in the paint surfaces. Other signs of biodegradation, however, are visible in the form of brown-rot fungi in one of the Visions of the Hereafter panels in Venice (cat. 18) and in the Escorial Haywain, indicating extended exposure to high levels of humidity.

Since planks are typically quarter-sawn (also referred to as ‘radially cut’), there are comparatively few issues with the stability of the support. Daily fluctuations in ambient temperature and relative humidity normally only result in minimal natural swelling and shrinkage of the wood. In-plane dimensional changes in the form of shrinkage may cause raised-paint issues, though, and natural out-of-plane movements may result in minor warping. In past structural treatments, in order to restore or preserve the flatness of the picture support, a warped panel reverse would often be thinned, flattened using moisture and/or pressure, and then reinforced with a rigid structure or cradle to maintain this form. Cradling, now practically abandoned, became common practice in the nineteenth century, and over a dozen Bosch paintings have suffered this invasive treatment. Peculiarly, the
outsides of the wings of both triptychs in Venice, which were originally painted black and may have had grisailles or other compositions, have also been thinned and cradled. In general, this type of intervention can produce cracks, splits or fractures in the panel. Over time, a dysfunctional or blocked cradle restricts the wood’s natural dimensional changes and can cause additional cracks. Unsightly ‘washboarding’ may also occur, as seen in the undulating panel of Saint John the Baptist in Madrid (cat. 5). This panel originally had a painted reverse, now lost, but was probably cut lengthwise in two separate paintings. All four edges of the Saint John panel were cropped before the cradle was applied. This explains why the painting is considerably smaller than its pendant, the Saint John on Patmos in Berlin (cat. 6), which has retained its original dimensions and is painted on both sides.

Double-sided paintings are usually better preserved, as the wooden support is ‘sealed’ by the layered buildup of ground, paint and varnish on both sides. This slows down moisture adsorption and desorption. It thus acts as a climate buffer and results in reduced panel deformation. Nevertheless, having two painted sides does not always protect a work from other types of change: one double-sided painting, the Christ Carrying the Cross with the Christ Child on its reverse in the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum (cat. 12), although structurally stable, has been altered fundamentally. Originally the panel had a quarter-round arched top and formed the left wing of a triptych. The arch-topped central panel as well as the right wing are presumed lost, but the remains of an original arched barb on the left wing indi-
cate the amount of cropping at the top. The minimum height of the original painted surface was about 80 centimetres, although this further depends on the amount of loss at the bottom. After cropping, a small, triangular piece of wood was added to the remaining arched section at the top, making the panel rectangular. The reverse with the Christ Child was bevelled, and the currently visible unpainted and ungrounded edges are not original. This was likely done to mimic original edges and reinforce the suggestion that this was a separate panel rather than the wing of a triptych. At some point, the entire reverse was overpainted brown, and wooden extension strips were added to the top and bottom, allowing more of the Carrying of the Cross to be visible when framed.

Economic motives were probably the driving factor in the disassembly of the former Wayfarer Triptych (cat. 19). The two wings were originally painted on both sides but were sawn through the middle to separate the front and back, creating four panels. Subsequently, the interior left wing was cut into two parts. The top, representing the Ship of Fools (cat. 19b), is now in Paris, while the bottom fragment, the so-called Allegory of Gluttony and Lust, is now in New Haven, Connecticut (cat. 19b). The Death and the Miser panel, now in Washington DC, formed the interior right wing (cat. 19c). The two exterior sides of the wings were joined and then cut into the current octagonal form of the Wayfarer in Rotterdam (cat. 19a). From the moment the triptych was split into at least five paintings, each part has experienced a different condition history. Indeed, the central panel is probably
lost, and the appearance of the Ship of Fools has profoundly changed. Its entire background has been extensively overpainted and non-original foliage added around what was once a much smaller branch, the underdrawing of which indicates its original size. This information makes it easier to understand that the branch was tied to a mast, which has been misinterpreted as a tree by some scholars. The overpainted areas also include the hill in the right background and much of the dark blue-green in the lower part of the panel. Such changes can thus influence iconographical interpretations as well.

Close examination has also led to a better understanding of the Hermit Saints Triptych in Venice, which originally had arched tops (cat. 2). The exteriors of the wings were thinned and cradled after the paintings were moved to Vienna in 1838. Possibly in 1895, the central panel and wings were cropped, and the latter made into rectangles with triangular inserts. The wings were cropped at the bottom too, and small wooden strips replaced the cropped sections to mimic unpainted edges. From this it can be surmised that the wings were originally positioned slightly higher in relation to the central panel.

Several other panels were also cropped. For instance, the Saint Jerome in Prayer in Ghent (cat. 1) was cut back somewhat at the top and bottom, but the composition does not appear to be lacking any significant elements. This is not the case for the Visions of the Hereafter panels in Venice (cat. 18), which were also cropped at the top and bottom. This reduction is especially evident in the Paradise scene, where one would expect to find a complete fountain at the top. Had the lost parts been preserved, they might have enabled us to determine the position of the four panels relative to each other and perhaps their original function.

Changes in the function or a setting of a work of art most likely prompted or indirectly resulted in such interventions. An eighteenth-century painting of a Palazzo Ducale room in Venice shows one of the Venetian triptychs as three panels in a single frame, mounted on the wall. This shows that the painting had already lost its function as a triptych with folding wings at that time, making the nineteenth-century thinning and cradling of all three panels (including, as mentioned above, the painted outside of the wings) slightly more comprehensible.

The conservation history of the Last Judgement in Bruges (cat. 16) provides another example of a drastic format change. In 1845, the triptych was documented not as three but as two separate panels, the wings having been joined together into an arched panel. In this ensemble, the Hell wing ended up as the left half, with Paradise on the right, reversing the original narrative sequence. The panels were presumably connected with two metal dowels, and two horizontally placed battens, applied to the locally planed reverses, severely damaged the grisaille painting. The combined grisaille composition on the outside of the wings was cropped by about two to three centimetres at the top and is currently also missing a vertical strip, about six to seven centimetres wide, in the centre. The composition
of the grisailles presumably continued over the two wing panels without visual interference of a vertical framing element, which would have been present on its reverse, at the outermost sides of the open triptych. These framing elements were removed to allow the joined Hell and Paradise scenes to be displayed as one image. Although the triptych format was reconstructed between 1900 and 1906, the frame as it was then put together did not allow the wings to actually close over the central panel. This was corrected during the 2014–15 treatment, which restored the ensemble as a folding triptych. Such instances demonstrate that although the original construction of a painting was sometimes radically altered for commercial or other reasons as cited above, conservation concerns (either responding to issues or as preventive measures) also have led to a great number of structural interventions.

Preparing the panel for painting: effects of underlying layers

For works of this type, Bosch most likely began in his studio with a bare wooden support supplied by a panelmaker. Traditionally, a water-based glue sizing was the first preparatory layer applied, followed by one or more coats of a chalk ground (CaCO₃) bound in animal glue. This preparation was of critical importance for the durability of a painting. The sizing sealed the panel and improved the bond with the ground. The composition and thickness of the ground determined its capacity to prevent the layer buildup from cracking when the panel underwent natural dimensional changes from ageing and environmental influences. Furthermore, it improved the bond with the paint and could prevent uneven absorption of the paint medium, for which reason an oily isolating layer was often applied as well atop the chalk ground.

Since these preparatory layers were applied onto the assembled panel and frame together, later shrinkage of the panel within the frame exposed the barb, a ridge of ground and paint at the interface of the panel and frame. This raised section, often with paint, is prone to damage, especially when a non-original frame covers such ridges. In the case of Christ Carrying the Cross and the Christ Child, the arched barb was purposely scraped away in
an attempt to conceal the panel’s original format after the quarter-round arched top had been cropped. The condition of the barbs may thus indicate changes in framing and suggest whether or not the original dimensions of the painted surface have been preserved.

In addition to the vital role of the preparatory strata for the preservation of paint layers, it also plays a major part in the way the viewer perceives the work. Naturally, the light ground contributes to the distinct luminosity of the oil paints and especially of the glazes – an effect that in some cases has been enhanced by the application of a thin intermediate layer pigmented with lead white. In most paintings, the preparation was not meant to be directly visible, but the tone of the ground and/or intermediate layer is often discernible in visible light as it locally shimmers through thin paint layers. Partially, this appears to be a result of Bosch’s working method, whereby he deliberately made use of the underlying tonality (for instance in the walls of the building in the Wayfarer, cat. 19A). However, increased transparency of the paint film through ageing has often resulted in an altered appearance and increased clarity of the underlying layers in many areas – an unintended effect causing, among other things, underdrawing to become more visible. Revisions in the underdrawing and differences between underdrawing and paint surface have especially become more visible this way, as in the underdrawn birds and foliage in the sky of the Wayfarer, which were omitted from the paint stage.

Several impastoed and highly radio-opaque (X-ray absorbing) dabs of lead white were noted in the Wayfarer. These correlate to small, local damages in the ground layer and probably served to quickly fill these lacunae. The damages must have occurred while the painting was in the artist’s studio, as the holes also damaged the underdrawing, while the lead-white dabs/fills were applied before the actual painting started. Similar white touches have been detected in one other painting: the Escorial Haywain (see BRCP, Technical Studies, s1). Spread throughout its wing panels, many such impastoed patches appear to
cover irregularities in the ground layer. These brush-applied dabs were not worked into a smooth finish before the underdrawing was applied. These somewhat similar repairs might seem to place both panels in the same environment, although the BCP observed no particularly skilled hand in the Escorial painting, which was copied after the Haywain in the Prado (cat. 20) and can also be dated to after Bosch’s death.

In both Saint John the Baptist and the grisaille side of Saint John on Patmos, several local, vertically oriented features were observed in visible or raking light, and especially in X-radiographs. These enigmatic areas appear to have the shape of brushstrokes; see, for example, below the hand of the overpainted donor. They are characterized by a very coarse and unusually grainy texture, the granules of which are radio-opaque. This might relate to the presence of lead soaps, but the precise nature of these features remains unclear for the moment. Even so, the fact that they were not found in any other Bosch painting strengthens the interrelationship of these two panels.

The materials that Bosch used were carefully selected and skilfully employed, and the artist also built on the background of a family workshop spanning multiple generations. The ground utilized by Bosch has proved to be a reliable base for painting, as adhesion problems between the layers have seldom been observed. Bosch’s paint materials are generally of high quality, for example, vermilion pigment usually appears to have been chosen above the less stable but cheaper red lead. Likewise, the master seems to have avoided the use of unstable yellow lake paints. In addition, like some of his contemporaries, he appears to have carefully chosen the oil binding mediums in accordance with the specifics required by the respective colours. Because of such efforts, most deterioration effects are due to the natural ageing and instability of the paintings’ components, and a variety of the issues described below frequently occur in other early Netherlandish panel paintings as well.

Sometimes at first sight, a network of cracks caused by the natural drying and ageing of the entire structure of the painting is visible on its surface. Ageing craquelure – a pattern of mechanical cracks in dried paint film and ground caused by stresses within the support – is a common feature in paintings and is present in all Bosch’s works. Additionally, drying cracks – caused by drying and shrinkage of paint – are observed locally in many paintings. These are often found in areas where the artist used coarser azurite pigment with more oil-binding medium, and sometimes in sections with thick vermilion paint. Drying cracks have also formed in a few other areas, such as at the edges of the black floral motifs on the sleeve of the male donor in the interior left wing of the Prado’s Adoration of the Magi. Youth cracks – drying cracks caused by applying medium-poor over medium-rich paint (as opposed to the painters’ adage of ‘fat-over-lean’) – have rarely been observed in Bosch’s works, substantiating his understanding of paint properties. However, in the Saint Wilgefortis Triptych in Venice (cat. 8), it appears that a fast-drying lead-white layer on top of a slower-drying vermilion accounts for the slightly broader youth cracks in the red robe of the martyr. Youth cracks are also present in the Crowning with Thorns in London (cat. 14), which goes to show that the red headpiece of the figure on the lower left was initially painted entirely with a slow-drying vermilion and then largely overpainted by the artist with lead white and red lake. Wide cracks that sometimes reveal the light ground are visible in the central panel of the Bruges Last Judgement Triptych. In the areas immediately around the fires in the background, the use of slow-drying red lake in the underlayer appears to have caused the youth cracks. The warm brown paint here and towards the left is also wrinkled, a possible indication that the artist used ample oil binder there that set unevenly. Also, adhesion problems in the area directly below the sphere may have contributed to the localized exposure of the blue underlayer. Such effects generally result in an irregular and discontinuous appearance of the paint surface. In the Last Judgement, especially, the originally smooth transition of the smoke – with a red-brown glow from the fire – to the light blue sky at the left is interrupted.
In paintings by Bosch, the adhesion of both paint and ground generally appears good and, as mentioned above, panels painted on both sides are usually better preserved. Panel shrinkage has often led to issues of raised paint, though, mostly occurring along lines of craquelure. In the case of the *Saint Wilgefortis Triptych*, which had a blocked cradle and is unevenly warped, not only raised paint was observed but also cupping, tenting and blistering. The tenting paint has formed ridges that run parallel with the wood grain and resulted in a rippling of the paint surface in the affected areas. Flaking paint was only detected in a small number of the works, mostly in the Bruges *Last Judgement*. At the right edge of the closed right wing, extensive losses and remains of ground indicate an adhesion problem of unknown cause at the interface of ground and paint. The apparently fragile, underbound paint of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* in Madrid (cat. 21) is also poorly adhered. Relatively few areas of this triptych, particularly in the central panel and the closed right wing, have survived the centuries intact.

There are several other oil paint defects that have changed the way the viewer perceives the paintings. Countless minuscule holes or spots are often visible in the paint surfaces of the panels, as in Christ’s face in the Brussels *Calvary with Donor*. These are caused by metal-soap aggregates that can appear as small opaque points in X-radiographs (XR). Expansion of the aggregates may cause them to protrude from the paint surface. This results in very small, raised spots, which together create a more granular surface texture that could mistakenly be interpreted as gritty paints used by the artist. Bright spots are
visible where these protrusions are abraded. Complete loss of the aggregates results in tiny, craterlike holes that appear dark in \( \text{XR} \). Over time, accumulation of dirt and varnish residues in them causes them to appear dark in visible light (\( \text{VIS} \)), and in infrared photography and reflectography (\( \text{IR[R]} \)) as well.\(^{25} \) The dissolution and saponification process also leads to an increased translucency and, depending on the hue of the underlying layer, a visual colour change. In many cases, underdrawing and/or pentimenti have become more visible to the naked eye, too.

A general increase in transparency has occurred in all the paintings as a result of age-related changes in the oil binding medium.\(^{24} \) With age, the refractive index of the drying oil increases and comes closer to the indices of the pigments. This reduces the reflection at the

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**FIG 21** The Last Judgment (Bruges) [**CAT 168**]: youth cracks in the central panel, before treatment

**FIG 22** Visions of the Hereafter [**CAT 18A**]: decreased legibility in the Garden of Eden
oil–pigment interface and consequently the opacity of the paint. The effect becomes more apparent in places where a darker underlayer is present (as in the *Visions of the Hereafter*, especially at the poorly legible figures on the left, but also in pentimenti or where paints are thinly applied (as in *The Wayfarer*, in which case the reduced opacity reveals extensive underdrawing). Natural ageing processes also have a disruptive effect, for instance on the thinly painted faces in the central panel of the *Saint Wilgefortis Triptych*. The thinner mid-tones in particular have become more transparent, resulting in a slight visual darkening. Consequently, this has reduced the contrast between mid-tones and shadows. The thicker-applied highlights, however, still have ample opacity, making them stand out more strongly. As a result, the original subtlety of the modelling of the faces is partially lost.

Colour change occurs in several ways and not exclusively in the colourants used for the paints. Through drying and ageing, the oil medium itself yellows. Since this yellowing is also a measure of the speed and extent of drying, the commonly used fast-drying linseed oil discours more than walnut or poppyseed oil. The latter two also have a greater clarity and, despite setting slower, were frequently chosen by painters for whites and blues as these would be affected the most by the yellowness of the medium. Bosch reportedly used walnut oil as a binding medium for specific paints in the Escorial *Christ Carrying the Cross* (cat. 13). It was detected in paint samples of blue clothing and sky, which consist of azurite, lead white and chalk pigments; in the whitish robe of Simon of Cyrene, consisting of lead white, chalk, and traces of carbon black and red earth; and also in the cool, grey paints of the landscape and the robe of Christ, consisting of lead white, chalk and carbon-black pigments. The lead white – perhaps not fortuitously – also acts as a drier in the paint mixture. The azurite, however, has an unfavourable effect, as it can yellow or brown the oil medium.
around the pigment, thus darkening the paint. Additionally, crusts can form, as appears to be the case in the Saint Wilgefortis Triptych, where an abraded area in the sky reveals the original blue colour. The paints of the sky and other light blues in the Bosch paintings in the Prado are also composed of azurite and lead white, but these are reportedly bound in an emulsion of a drying oil and protein (mostly egg white and/or yolk), presumably also to reduce discoloration.

High oil absorption of certain pigments – mainly browns and blacks – may have induced additional darkening. This appears to have influenced the appearance of the grisaille side of the Saint John on Patmos panel in Berlin (cat. 6). Aside from having created a somewhat heightened contrast between the grisaille and its dark surrounding, the deepened hues of the background have affected many of the figures and animals painted wet-in-wet and with minimal materials atop this layer, as subtle tonal contrasts are now lost. The increased transparency of the lighter paints with which these small elements were executed further impedes their current visibility. Such darkening may have also caused the poor visibility of the signature in the bottom right of the central panel of the Bruges Last Judgement (cat. 16), where Jheronimus Bosch is much better visible in infrared. On the barrel bottom left, the four dragons are also more easily discerned in infrared. They were most likely painted with a green glaze that has completely discoloured to brown. The two dragons in the centre, which do not appear to have a light green underpainting, have become barely distinguishable from the background in visible light. Such discoloration, although not always disturbing for the legibility of the composition, is found in most of the green areas in Bosch’s works. As a result of pigment–medium interactions, the oil binding medium of
copper-green pigments has yellowed or browned. This is visible in the landscapes and foliage, for example, in the *Hermit Saints Triptych* and the Prado *Haywain*. Where copper-greens have been employed in medium-rich glazes, such as those in the figures’ robes, more severe discoloration can occur at the paint surface. The green pieces of clothing in the Frankfurt *Ecce Homo* (cat. 10) all have a brown ‘veil’ that is especially visible where the glaze was applied on a lighter base. This natural discoloration may resemble highly yellowed varnish, which has caused its being misinterpreted as non-original in the past. Subsequent efforts to remove this material have considerably damaged the original paint surface, an unfortunate example of which is the entirely retouched green robe of the man leading the group in the Escorial *Christ Carrying the Cross* (cat. 13), as well as the crown of thorns. Bosch also used red glazes in most paintings, typically for fabric of mantles and robes. The natural, organic red lakes are prone to fading by photochemical (light-induced) degradation. Analysis of Bosch’s paintings in the Prado indicates that he primarily used kermes, but also Polish cochineal and pigments derived from madder root.

Bosch’s characteristic technique of using a relatively light local undermodelling may have adversely affected the red glaze on top as well, as the bright base layer reflects more light, which increases fading of the sensitive lake above. Furthermore, since fading occurs mainly in the upper part of the paint layer, it is more pronounced where the glaze is applied thinly. In thick, pure applications, such as for shadows, the lower part of the layer is not faded and the overall color appears unaffected. The original effect of a more gradual modelling is thus partly lost, and the increased brightness of the undermodelling further heightens the unintended contrast.

These effects are especially pronounced in the *Hermit Saints Triptych*, where fading of red glazes and increased transparency of the undermodelling have resulted in increased visibility of both the underdrawing and the initially much larger, partly painted figure of Saint Jerome. Heightened visibility of underlying layers probably also instigated the non-original pink overpainting of the considerably faded, pinkish pennant in the *Ship of Fools* in Paris (cat. 19b). The garb of the figure climbing the mast must also have been redder once; the original tone is observable between his arms, where the glaze was applied more thickly. Fading led to the greater visibility of the hatched underdrawing there. This is also the case in the fragment in New Haven (cat. 19b), originally the bottom part of the *Ship of Fools* panel. Moreover, the bluish cloth at the bottom left of the fragment was originally more purplish because a red lake glaze was used in the final modelling, although abrasion appears to have played a role there as well. Such effects can also influence iconographical interpretations; the now-blue mantles of Christ in the *Ecce Homo* panels in Boston (cat. 24) and Frankfurt were originally purplish, as explicitly described in the Bible. Yellow lakes suffer from light-induced degradation in a similar way to the red lakes, and generally have poorer colour fastness. Perhaps for that reason they do not appear to have been used in a noticeable manner in paintings by Bosch, with the exception of the yellow robe in *Christ Carrying the Cross* in Vienna (cat. 11), which has indeed faded considerably. On the reverse of this panel, the red lake of the area outside the tondo with the Christ Child has also faded somewhat, although abrasion is a bigger issue there. The background must have been a deep red, but the abrasion of the red lake glaze layer has exposed the bright red vermilion underlayer to the atmosphere and direct light, which have probably accelerated the blackening of the vermilion and resulted in a partially darkened surface. This degradation only appears in one other painting of those examined, the *Cure of Folly*, where the vermilion of the woman’s purse is locally blackened. In the case of this (workshop?) copy, a red lake glaze was found below the vermilion but not on top. One must wonder, therefore,
**Fig 26** Hermit Saints Triptych (CAT 28): increased visibility of the underdrawing, before treatment

**Fig 27** Ecce Homo (Frankfurt) (CAT 11)

**Fig 28** The Cure of Folly (CAT 33): micrograph

**Fig 29** The Adoration of the Magi (Madrid) (CAT 35): micrograph

**Fig 30** Saint Jerome (CAT 1)
whether red lake glazes, which appear to cover most opaque red areas in Bosch’s paintings, were applied not only to create a richer colour or to aid in modelling, but also to ‘seal’ the vermilion. If so, Bosch was aware of this degradation process.

Every surviving Bosch painting has been repeatedly cleaned and repaired in the past, as have nearly all early Netherlandish paintings. Over five centuries, these works have been exposed to many external threats, and materials have deteriorated, leading to a variety of conservation issues. In the past, painters and craftsmen ‘washed’ paintings and carried out repairs using harsh cleaning agents and methods that damaged the objects. Restoring art as a specialization only emerged in the eighteenth century. Gradually, the available materials and methods to address conservation issues have improved, as well as understanding the consequences of using them. Ongoing dialogue on conservation ethics has also influenced treatment approaches. Especially in the last quarter of the twentieth century, the profession has grown from a craft into an academic discipline. Scientific research and technical examinations have helped to gain more insight into paintings’ constituent parts and their ageing, enabling us better to understand pictures as artists intended them. The general aim of modern conservation treatments is to stabilize the works of art and remove non-original material that impedes their proper legibility, while respecting irreversible changes due to natural ageing. Evidence of the painting’s age thus needs to be maintained, yet this principle sometimes conflicts with the legibility of the image itself and the intentions of the artist.
All Bosch paintings that have come down to us are varnished, typically with an initially clear surface coating that was applied to saturate and protect the paint. Although little is known about early Netherlandish varnish compositions, egg white and oil-resin compounds were probably used, and from the later fifteenth century onwards, so were spirit or essential oil varnishes. Original varnishes do not seem to have survived on the paint surface. However, several of Bosch's paintings underwent major contemporary alterations to the finished composition, and in between these paint layers, original varnish may have survived. Such resinous intermediate layers were observed in paint cross-sections of Saint John the Baptist (cat. 5) and of the Saint Wilgefortis Triptych (cat. 8), in both of which large donor figures were overpainted.

Natural resin varnishes degrade and yellow as they age, which alters the colour perception (blues become greener, for example). Moreover, contrasts are reduced over time because dark paints appear lighter and less saturated and light paints appear darker, more yellowish, under a degraded varnish. This leads to a continuing cycle of removing degraded varnish and applying new coatings. In Bosch’s paintings, old varnish residues left behind in the interstices of the paint have resulted in disfiguring dark spots. In some cases the discoloured residues interrupt the originally fluent modelling of skin tones, especially where brushstrokes are apparent in the texture of the paint. In earlier practice, tinted or pigmented varnishes were sometimes used to harmonize aged surfaces and to provide a ‘historic’-looking finish. Nonetheless, such a coating was only found in the Prado Adoration of the Magi – one of the best-preserved Bosch paintings – where the composition on the closed triptych appeared much browner.
In the past, degraded varnishes were often removed with relatively harsh cleaning methods and materials such as alkalis, accounting for much of the abrasion and many of the losses currently seen on painted surfaces. In the case of the Ecce Homo in Frankfurt am Main (cat. 11), however, paint was intentionally removed. At some point, the donors and family members bottom left and right were scrubbed off, whereas the rest of the painted surface is well preserved. During the last treatment, previously hidden remnants of the two figural groups were emphasized again, resulting in their now-ghostly appearance. Cleaning agents may also have opened up craquelure, as these breaks in the paint film are more easily penetrated, and the cleaners may have undercut the paint. A misleading effect of abrasion can be found in translucent red clothing, where Bosch typically applied red lake paint onto a modelled, whitish base. The fairly stiff lead-white paint in the local undermodelling resulted in more impasto, with discernible brushstrokes. Later abrasion of the red lake on top exposed ridges of the underlying paint. The resulting bright, local striations may be misinterpreted as long or hatched highlights on top of large sections of red lake – a technique apparently not used by Bosch.

Elevated points in the paint surface of other works have been affected in a similar way. In the central panel of the Saint Anthony Triptych in Lisbon (cat. 4), the severe abrasion at the plateau and several areas around it is presumably related to the multilayered paint buildup and the compositional changes in that area. For example, below the small dog with the red hood the foot of a figure that was painted out has become visible again in the bottom left of a detail. Abrasion also affects raised paint: at light-hued places where cupping occurs, the combined abrasion of the raised edges and the accumulation of dirt and varnish residues in the cupped centre produce unintended contrasts. Because these are on a near-microscopic scale, however, this spotty effect is not always disturbing to the naked eye. Raised paint areas have typically been consolidated and flattened, sometimes with the use of syringes to inject glue, as is evident from the often-dark needle holes in the paint surface of the Adoration of the Magi in New York. Other damages to the paint surface may be found, such as dents and scratches caused by poor handling or accidents, and abraded or damaged edges – especially at the barbs – occasioned by improper framing. In several cases, certain areas show signs of wear from specific types of use, such as the opening and closing of triptych wings.

During earlier conservation treatments, most damages in Bosch’s paintings were restored. Losses were filled and integrated, and damages retouched. Only in After the Flood and After the Last Judgement in Rotterdam (cat. 22) are strong deviations in the conservation approach apparent. In the most recent treatment of these works, between 1982 and 1985, variable manners of reintegration led to a striking imbalance in the visual perception of the four paint surfaces. After the Flood was filled and retouched to a higher level of finish than the more damaged After the Last Judgement. Moreover, their reverses were treated in a rather ‘archaeological’ manner, and large areas of bare wood were left visible. Only the contours of the roundels were completed through retouching. In general, many such retouchings have since discoloured and are clearly discernible now. This is especially the case for those done in oil paint.

Integrated retouching is essential in restoring the balance of Bosch’s pictures. In several of his paintings restored in Italy and Spain, a typical retouching technique known as riga-tino (or tratteggio, or a variant thereof) was used. This alternative to mimetic (or ‘invisible’) retouching consists of the layered application of thin, vertical brushstrokes which optically merge when seen from a distance. This technique can blend especially well with paintings done in tempera. For paintings done in oils, however, the numerous fine lines may result in an inappropriate and disturbingly vibrant effect. This is visible in a photograph of the uneven, whitish sky of the Saint Wilgefortis Triptych that was taken before the 2013-15 treatment of the work.

The broad drying cracks and the youth cracks showing the often-lighter preparatory layer are generally considered to distract from the legibility of the picture. In a treatment of the Bruges Last Judgement, these cracks were partly toned by retouching, a conservation practice that is used in treatments of many early Netherlandish paintings.
Old retouchings often extend slightly beyond the borders of losses, but in some cases large parts of a picture have been overpainted, as in the Ship of Fools in Paris (cat. 198). Another such example is the double-sided panel of the Carrying of the Cross and the Christ Child in Vienna (cat. 12). As mentioned above, the entire surface with the Christ Child was covered with a thick, brownish overpaint, presumably to create the impression that the Carrying of the Cross was an autonomous panel rather than merely a part of a disassembled triptych. This crude coating was removed in 1925, but many smaller remnants of the brown overpainting remained on the surface until the 2014–15 restoration. Because much of the original sky was cropped from the Carrying of the Cross when the support was made rectangular, a broad, blue overpainting of the entire upper background resulted in a much lower horizon. Extensive efforts were thus undertaken in the past, in structural work as well (see above), to increase the credibility of this new ‘autonomous’ panel. Large-scale overpaints are also still present in the Saint Anthony Triptych (cat. 4), where the brown outer fields of the grisaille panels are later additions that cover original stone imitation.

The examination of the paintings by the Bosch Research and Conservation Project and the ensuing commemorative Hieronymus Bosch exhibition in 2016 have directly inspired conservation treatments of the Ship of Fools in Paris (cat. 198); the Adoration of the Magi in Philadelphia (cat. 25); the Adoration of the Magi in Madrid (cat. 9); the Christ Child and Christ Carrying the Cross in Vienna (cat. 12); the Saint Christopher in Rotterdam (cat. 7); the Saint Jerome in Ghent (cat. 1); the Last Judgement in Bruges (cat. 16); and the Hermit Saints Triptych, the Saint Wilgefortis Triptych, and the Visions of the Hereafter (cat. 2, 8 and 18) in Venice. These treatments all promise greatly increased visibility of the original paint surfaces.

For the Venetian Bosch paintings, the benefits of restoration are evident in several ways. Presumably in an early treatment of the three paintings while they were in Venice before 1838, a transparent surface coating had been applied, onto which copious amounts of soot and dirt came to adhere over time. Degradation resulted in a greyish-brown layer that was soluble only with difficulty and was later partially removed, using harsh cleaning agents that severely damaged the paints. During the current treatment, that grimy surface layer has been successfully removed. Especially on the imitation-stone reverses of the Visions of the Hereafter panels, where the layer was thickest, its effect on the original painting is evident from photos taken during treatment. Removal of this layer revealed artistic images of what appears to be imperial red porphyry and green serpentine marble that can be appreciated for the first time in centuries.

The triptych with the crucified martyr has also been so difficult to read in the past that the gender and identity of the saint had been interpreted in different ways. The removal of dirt and degraded varnishes revealed remnants of a very subtle beard, which thus enabled the identification of the female martyr as Saint Wilgefortis. The work’s cleaning and subsequent integration of the damages and application of varnish have gradually brought back the exceptional colour depth and contrast, attracting the viewer even from a distance. Up close, subtle textural differences and the fine, intensive detailing have become legible again.

The Hermit Saints Triptych and the Saint Wilgefortis Triptych were cradled in nineteenth-century Vienna, but both cradles were actively damaging the panel supports, as well as the ground and paint layers. Structural conservation treatments executed in 2013–15 have stabilized the panels and acted to preserve these important works.
The present-day paintings can look radically different from when they left Bosch’s studio. Changes in object form and function as a result of structural interventions have been identified, for example, in the disassembled former Wayfarer Triptych (cat. 19) and in the altered Christ Child and Christ Carrying the Cross panel (cat. 12). Recognizing and properly interpreting alterations is essential to determine the original function, and sometimes also the meaning of a painting, such as the Ship of Fools (cat. 198).

The variety and extent of certain conservation issues within an oeuvre could be taken as an indication of the painter’s knowledge and experience of natural ageing effects and proper painting techniques. Hieronymus Bosch, like other master painters of his time, seems to have been well aware of such issues, as his careful selection of materials and his skilled use of them demonstrates. For example, youth cracks from lean over fat paint application have rarely been observed in his paintings, and drying cracks are relatively limited. Although Bosch largely circumvented the problem of unstable colourants by using mostly

Conclusions

FIG 15a–b Saint Wilgefortis Triptych (cat. 8b): the face of the martyr before and during treatment

FIG 36 Saint Wilgefortis Triptych (cat. 8b): before treatment
FIG 37 Saint Wilgefortis Triptych [CAT 88]: after treatment
high-quality pigments, his rare use of costly ultramarine is noteworthy. Most deterioration, therefore, has been the inevitable consequence of natural ageing in art materials, and not the result of how they were applied. In any case, the decades of experience gained through the family workshop must have been of great use to him.

Two characteristics of his painting technique, however, did create their own problems. In the Berlin grisaille (cat. 68), light figures were painted subtly with minimal material, wet-in-wet atop the dark border. The latter gradually darkened, whereas the light paint increased in transparency, with its thinnest areas becoming nearly indistinguishable from the border. Similarly, Bosch’s custom of using a lead-white-based undermodelling for areas with red lake, which enabled him to work faster, also caused fading problems and locally increased contrasts.

Understanding ageing effects is also of importance when ‘reading’ or interpreting a painting. Sometimes grainy, textured areas are the result of metal-soap formation and not intended by the artist. This process, as well as changes in paints’ refractive indices, have given rise to increased transparency and a greater visibility of underlying layers. The artist’s use of semitransparent paints and his thin paint applications did nothing to reduce this effect. The discoloration of copper-containing paints has frequently resulted in greener skies and browner landscapes. For green glazes, the brown discoloration has often been misinterpreted in the past, and their subsequent removal sometimes brought about complete loss of original paint.

Many treatments in the past have had adverse effects, either directly or over time. Undesirable effects include abrasion from harsh cleaning methods and materials used, as well as incorrect or inappropriate retouchings and overpaintings. The former is especially problematic in Bosch’s paintings, as the paint layers were frequently applied so thinly that in some cases not much remained after such interventions. Abrasions may also lead to misleading effects when it comes to interpreting technique, layer buildup and the visible image. The quality and condition of the varnish layer, too, including residues from older layers, has a great impact on the legibility of the picture. It is not always obvious when an original paint surface is obscured by later additions. Modern treatments of the paintings are therefore aimed not only at a better state of physical conservation but also at achieving a properly legible image. By honouring these goals, conservators can help answer such questions as those in the long dispute – 1733 at least, but now finally settled – on the identity of the Venetian triptych’s martyr, Saint Wilgefortis (cat. 8).

We have to realize time and again that paintings have not come down to us as they originally appeared. They are usually presented as if undamaged to allow legibility of the image, but they have all the same undergone all kinds of unavoidable and often irreversible ageing changes, accidental damage and human interventions. Recognizing the effects of ageing and former treatments on a painting is not often straightforward, even for the trained and experienced eye, but it is essential to better our understanding of the artist’s techniques and intentions.
surface thick white short brushstrokes can be detected. 28 August 2015.

during the restoration committee meeting in Bruges, Sizes proposed by paintings conservator Griet Steyaert Stampalia, Venice. See further, cat. 2.

The Garden of Earthly Delights (cat. 23) — wooden strips have been added to both sides of the central panel to close the gaps, even though the work is housed in a modern frame.

Klein 2001; see also Chapter 111, ‘Materials and Techniques’, pp. 56–57.

A cradle typically consists of one set of wooden battens glued parallel to the wood grain of the panel reverse, and another set of battens (the ‘runners’) positioned crosswise to the grain within slots in the first set. This type of cradle, in theory allowing in-plane but not out-of-plane panel movements, was invented in France around 1720. Bergeon et al. 1998, 269.

The central panel reverse of the Saint Anthony Triptych in Lisbon (cat. 4) was also considerably thinned, but it was reinforced with cross-battens only.

Sections of the panel reverse that are covered by cradle members respond more slowly than the exposed areas to changes in relative humidity. Over time these different absorption zones can result in an undulating or ‘washboard’ effect in the panel. Panel undulation as a result of the cradle is also visible in the Hermit Saints Triptych (cat. 2) and Saint Wilgefortis Triptych (cat. 8), both in Venice, and to a lesser extent in the Saint Jerome (cat. 1) and the Saint Christopher (cat. 7). The slight undulation in the central panel of the Saint Anthony Triptych (cat. 4) is caused by restrictive battens applied to the panel reverse.


The Ship of Fools drawing (cat. 56), also in the Louvre, probably gives an accurate impression of the painting’s conservation history and appearance without the overpainting.


Gabriele Bella, Interior of the Sala de’ Tre Capo del Consiglio dei Dieci, after 1779–before 1792, Pinacoteca Querini Stampalia, Venice. See further, cat. 2.

Sizes proposed by paintings conservator Griet Steyaert during the restoration committee meeting in Bruges, 28 August 2015.


This was previously noted and published in Lammertse and Roorda Boersma 2003, 117. ‘Under the paint surface thick white short brushstrokes can be detected. Their exact meaning is not clear ... They appear to be indications for the composition. It is remarkable that the same kind of brushstrokes can be seen in the Haywain Triptych.’

See cat. 5–6, where the original function of the two panels is hypothesized.

The binding mediums used by Bosch are discussed in Parra Crego 2004 (unpublished report); Parra Crego 2001, 234. For those used by his contemporaries, see Billinge et al. 1997, 40–41.

It has been suggested that high environmental humidity levels caused this during the painting’s stay in the Escorial monastery, but such issues were not discovered in the other paintings of that provenance. See Silva Maroto 2000a, 109, 111.

Such holes should not be confused with the more grouped needle holes of consolidation treatments using a syringe to inject glue, such as those noted in the New York Adoration of the Magi (see Chapter 111, fig. 28).

Such metal-soap aggregates can form from pigment–medium interaction (saponification or recrystallization) that may occur in the presence of free fatty acids in oil binding mediums and reactive metal ions in pigments (in Bosch’s paintings, predominantly lead white and Type I lead-tin yellow). The size of these aggregates can vary – larger protrusions up to three millimetres have been documented in the CALVARY with DONOR. For an overview of this degradation process and further references, see Van Loon, Noble and Burnstock 2012, 27–31.

When this effect is evident in all areas of the painting and not just in specific paint layers, the intermediate layer is a likely source, such as the lead-white-pigmented isolation layer in the CALVARY with DONOR.

Commonly used walnut and linseed oils have a refractive index of approx. 1.48, while pigments have an index roughly between 1.5 and 2.8. Nicolaus 1995, 265.

An excellent overview of oil-bound pigment degradation is presented in Van Loon, Noble and Burnstock 2012, Table 9, 218–23.

The drying of oil occurs through chemical reaction – oxidative polymerization – rather than solvent evaporation, and co-oxidation reactions of contaminants in the oil are the likely cause of its yellowing. Linoleic acid content, added driers and increased temperature do not appear to affect the yellowing. Malégal, Lemaire and Gardette 2001.


The reaction between copper ions in azurite and fatty acids in the oil may turn blue skies greenish. Gunn et al. 2002.

Parra Crego 2001, 234. It must be cautioned that the presence of metal-soap aggregates in paints such as lead-tin yellow may result in a false positive for the identification of protein when analysed with gas chromatography–mass spectrometry (GC–MS). Higgitt, Spring and Saunders 2003.

They are now better revealed in infrared or when studied up close. This has led some scholars to believe that the panel could not have functioned as an upper wing of an altarpiece, because it was thought to be too far away for the background detailing to be visible (see also cat. 6).
LOGUE RAISONNÉ
Hieronymus Bosch

C. 1485–95

Oil on oak panel, 80 ⅞ x 60.7 cm

Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent, 1908–11

BRCP examination and documentation data: Ghent, 22–24 November 2010; BRCP, Technical Studies, cat. 1, RR 2; //Boschproject.org no. 1.

Condition

The panel is cropped at top and bottom. The barbs and unpainted edges at both sides indicate that the painting originally had an engaged frame. The panel reverse has been thinned considerably and cradled, although two small areas of the original reverse, underneath the transferred wax seals, have survived. Losses are concentrated along the two joins and the crack at bottom centre, but ground and paint layers are generally stable and in good condition. The paint surface is abraded in places, especially at impastoed paint tops and the sky. Light paints have increased in transparency, for example in the tree at upper left, and background hills and sky cause a reduced legibility of the generally well-preserved original paint surface. Conservation issues were addressed in the 2015 full treatment of the painting.

Provenance

French private collection (Colbert family seal) (ad causa seal of the town of Merville, Nord–Pas-de-Calais); English private collection (?); 1908 Ghent: purchased at auction, Galerie Fiévez, 11 April 1908, by Mr Peypers, Antwerp; from his collection to the Vrienden van het Museum van Gent, and donated by this museum friends’ society to the museum through the art dealer E. De Coninck, Brussels, and Georges Hulin de Loo, Ghent.

Literature


Saint Jerome at Prayer

Oil on oak panel, 80 ⅞ x 60.7 cm

Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent, 1908–11

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Analysis

Bosch’s Saint Jerome at Prayer is an intimate and personal image of the saint for whom the artist was named. The hermit-cardinal lies prostrate in an inhospitable landscape, with nothing but discipline and religious devotion to shield him from distractions and sinster urges. For the time being, Jerome has won this inner struggle and is able – pure and unsullied – to focus his full attention on the crucifix he embraces fervently in his arms. The wilderness into which Jerome has withdrawn not only illustrates a passage from his vita, it also refers to the saint’s name, which is translated in the Passio – a popular Middle Dutch version of Jacopo de Voragine’s Legenda aurea (Golden Legend) – as ‘sacred grove’ or ‘holy wood’ (heilig bosch). The fact that the artist chose the same toponym (bosch) as his professional surname seems, therefore, to allude to more than just the city of ’s-Hertogenbosch where he lived and worked.

SAINT JEROME

Saint Jerome stretches out on the ground in an ominous landscape, praying with utter absorption to Christ. He embraces the crucifix with both arms, his hands clasped together, and his eyes closed. Jerome is positioned at the centre of this panel – one of Bosch’s greatest achievements.1 The painter has carefully arranged a series of visual elements around the hermit, which refer to both his worldly and his spiritual life.

Jerome was born in Stridon, Dalmatia, around 345 CE. Following a classical education and a career in the Church in Rome, he decided to withdraw into the Syrian desert. He wrote vividly of this period of isolation and penitence in one of his letters to Eustochium – a pious woman who had sought his spiritual guidance. The same passage is quoted in the Legenda aurea, and must also have inspired Bosch as he painted this panel: ‘Now, although in my fear of hell I had consigned myself to this prison, where I had no companions but scorpions and wild beasts, I often found myself amid bevy of girls. My face was pale and my frame chilled with fasting. I do not blush to avow my abject misery; rather I lament that I am not now what once I was. I remember how I often cried aloud all night till the break of day and ceased not from beating my breast till tranquillity returned at the chiding of the Lord.’2

The rock with which he has just chastised himself lies nearby. Jerome meditates on the physical torments suffered by Christ, while wrestling with his own earthly desires. His resemblance to the Saviour – also visually to some extent – cleanses him of the blemish represented by his physical urges.3 The idea of purification is alluded to in the background as well, where a woman washes her clothes in the river; they are the same immaculate white as Jerome’s robe and Christ’s loincloth. The saint’s red cassock is draped over a hollow tree

1.2

1

2

3

1

2

3
1.1 In prayer
1.2 Washing and bleaching
trunk and his cardinal’s hat lies on the ground nearby. Both attributes recall the time he
spent in Rome at the age of twenty-nine as secretary to the pope. The idea of Jerome as a
cardinal, even though no such rank existed in his era, probably derived in the mid-four-
teenth century from Johannes Andreae’s Hieronymianus, following which it rapidly estab-
lished itself more widely. From the second half of the fourteenth century onwards, there-
fore, Jerome – who enjoyed great prestige throughout the Middle Ages as a Church Father
and Bible translator – was frequently depicted not only as a scholar in his study, but also as
a cardinal.4

A closed book lies between the cassock and the cardinal’s hat or galero. According to tra-
dition, Jerome took his library with him into the wilderness and some compositions there-
fore show him reading in the open air. In this case, the book is an attribute alluding to his
learning and to the many years he spent on his Vulgate translation, which he began at a
monastery in Bethlehem after spending four years in the wilderness.5 The lion on the left of
the scene recalls his period in Bethlehem. Jerome extracted a thorn from its paw, following
which the now-tame animal became his faithful companion.6

The lion, cardinal’s hat, book, rock and crucifix are all standard attributes in images of
the penitent Saint Jerome praying in the wilderness – a type that originated around 1400 in
northern Italy and became immensely popular in the fifteenth century. The emergence of
this iconography might reflect the foundation of several Hieronymite orders in the second
half of the fourteenth century. Asceticism and penance were central to their religious life,
alongside devotion to the Passion of Christ.7

Jerome’s popularity in the Low Countries increased sharply in the fifteenth century
under the influence of the Devotio Moderna. The Brethren of the Common Life adopted
him as their patron, and founded Hieronymite houses,8 including one in ’s-Hertogenbosch
in 1425.9 Images of the penitent Jerome begin to appear in the Low Countries too from
the mid-fifteenth century onwards. The type might have been introduced by Rogier van
der Weyden, following his time in Rome and his visit to Ferrara. Jerome was especially
important in Ferraran humanist circles at the court of Lionello d’Este, and he was also the
patron saint of the Gesuati.10 Whatever their origins, images of Saint Jerome in the wil-
derness had grown so numerous in Italy by the second half of the fifteenth century that
the new iconography arrived in northern Europe via several routes simultaneously. It was
also disseminated, for instance, through woodcuts in Bibles and editions of the Legenda
aurea.11 Late-medieval images of Saint Jerome in the wilderness almost always show him
kneeling, with his eyes fixed on the crucified Christ and beating himself on the chest with
a rock. Bosch’s treatment of the theme in the Ghent painting deviates from this visual tradition; here the moment of physical mortification has passed, and the focus has shifted from the external to the internal. Sinful thoughts have been banished, creating the space for meditation, prayer and submission; Jerome, his eyes closed, summons up the image of Christ before his ‘inner eye’.

The late-medieval viewer could imagine the saint poring over Christ’s body in his thoughts in remembrance of his suffering. The crucifix aided this exercise, which became a widespread meditative technique under the influence of the Devotio Moderna. The image of Saint Jerome exhorts the worshipper to close his or her eyes to all worldly temptations. In this particular instance, the crucifix might even be interpreted as the physical manifestation of a vision, as Bosch only added it to the composition at a very late stage of the painting process; it was not included in the underdrawing and was only painted after the background and the figure of Saint Jerome had already been completed.
Hermits were a favourite theme of Bosch’s and lent themselves perfectly to nature scenes. The wildness of Jerome’s surroundings in the Ghent panel is emphasized by the contrast with the brightly lit, peaceful and cultivated landscape, complete with bleaching fields, in the background. ‘I used to dread my very cell as though it knew my thoughts; and, stern and angry with myself, I used to make my way alone into the desert,’ Jerome wrote in his aforementioned letter to Eustochium. ‘Wherever I saw hollow valleys, craggy mountains, steep cliffs, there I made my oratory, there the house of correction for my unhappy flesh.’ The strange rock formation with its thorny plants where he has sought shelter is, indeed, a less than reassuring abode. Other elements too in the scene have a sinister and admonitory character, such as the mauled remains of a cockerel in the lower left, which evidently got a little too close to the innocent-looking fox sleeping nearby; or the large, hollow tree trunk with an owl on one of its branches, gazing steadily at the viewer. Precisely the same elements are found in a different context, but to similar effect, in the drawing The Wood Has...
Living trees:
1.7 Garden of Earthly Delights [CAT 21C]
1.8 Tree-Man [CAT 35]
1.9–10 Temptation of Saint Anthony [CAT 4A–B]
Ears, The Field Has Eyes, which comes close to the essence of Bosch’s artistic practice (cat. 37). Dead branches and withered trees regularly appear in his work, mostly with a negative connotation. They even come to life on occasion and are given a face, as in the anthropomorphic trees in the Tree-Man drawing, in the right wing of the Garden of Earthly Delights and in the panels of the Saint Anthony Triptych in Lisbon (cat. 35, 21, 4). Temptation appears in the right wing of the latter work in the guise of a naked woman peering out from the trunk of a dead tree. A thick red and white liquid, painted wet-in-wet and unmistakably alluding to bodily fluids, oozes from the surface of the wood, which the woman touches with her hand.

Jerome is surrounded in the Ghent panel by dead branches and withered tree trunks, yet the saint embraces the wooden cross, which was linked in the Middle Ages with the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. Jerome himself made a similar analogy in one of his letters to Pope Damasus: ‘This is the peace through which we are reconciled with God, for we are reconciled to him by the Lord Jesus, who redeemed our sins and obliterated the evidence that testified against us and threatened us with death by nailing it to the cross, and who openly humiliated governments and powers when he triumphed over them on the tree.’ Dead trees appear regularly in images of the penitent Jerome from the late fifteenth century onwards. In some cases, the connection with the crucifix is represented very explicitly, as the cross is fixed to a dead tree or placed directly in front of it. That is the case in the central panel of the Hermit Saints Triptych (cat. 2), in which a green branch grows from the stump as a symbol of new life through Christ’s death on the cross.

**Holy Wood**

It is safe to assume that Hieronymus Bosch felt a special affinity with Saint Jerome, his namesake. The account of Jerome’s life in the *Legenda aurea* begins with an explanation of the different meanings of his name: ‘Hieronymus dicitur a gerar, quod est sanctum, et nemus, quasi sanctum nemus.’ Jerome (Hieronymus in Latin) can be read, Jacobus de Voragine tells the reader, as ‘sacred grove’ or ‘holy wood’. Johannes Andreae repeats this etymology almost verbatim in his *Hieronymianus*, a Middle Dutch translation of which states: ‘Iheronimus es gheseit van ierar Dats heylich. Ende nemus dats bosch. Want hi was een heylich bosch.’ The rendering of *nemus* here as *bosch* clearly appealed to the painter, as it meant the professional surname he had adopted referred both to his forename and to the city in which he lived.

It was not only his first name that enabled Bosch to identify with Jerome; in his letters, the future saint had demonstrated a keen ability to pillory the misconduct of people at every level of society, from the common folk to the clergy. It was this aspect that appealed to Erasmus, who admired Saint Jerome’s erudition and piety, and who published and commented on his letters in 1516. Margaret Sullivan has shown how Christian humanists like Erasmus drew on the classical genre of satire, and how Jerome’s adaptation of the genre to the Christian context served to link the satirists of antiquity with the humanist authors of the late fifteenth century. In Sullivan’s view, Bosch’s visual satires belong to this same tradition. Jerome’s moralism and his religious commitment combined to make him a worthy model for Bosch, whose work depicts sinful and immoral behaviour while simultaneously expressing profound religious devotion.

The way Bosch poses Jerome in the Ghent panel, embracing the crucifix, is rare in images of this saint; it is reminiscent of the iconography associated with Mary Magdalene, for whom a similarly intimate position was reserved in Crucifixion scenes, in which she is often shown throwing her arms passionately around the base of the cross. Jerome actually compares himself with Mary Magdalene in his letter to Eustochium, where he describes how he found himself at Christ’s feet while doing penance. ‘My face was pale and my frame chilled with fasting; yet my mind was burning with desire, and the fires of lust kept bubbling up before me when my flesh was as good as dead. Helpless, I cast myself at the feet of Jesus, I watered them with my tears, I wiped them with my hair.’
Jerome’s intimate relationship with Christ forms the essence of Bosch’s panel, which is precisely what distinguishes the work from other images of the penitent saint. The latter’s own allusion to Mary Magdalene – who, according to ecclesiastical tradition, had repented her immoral behaviour – is an apt one for his famous letter to Eustochium, of which the central theme is chastity. The letter, which Jerome himself described as a ‘little book’ (libellus), is sometimes given the subtitle De virginitate servanda because of the advice it offers Eustochium on preserving her virginity. Drawing on his own experiences in the wilderness, Jerome seeks to persuade her of the importance of both mental and physical purity. The central panel of the Hermit Saints Triptych in Venice (cat. 2) shows that Bosch was aware of Jerome’s ideal of celibacy; it features a number of details that symbolize chastity, including the depiction of the deuterocanonical figure of Judith and the taming of the unicorn. The Ghent painting differs from the Venice triptych, however, in that the emphasis here is not so much on Jerome’s personal struggle, but on repentance and forgiveness. It is precisely this that fosters Jerome’s intimate position with respect to Christ. Bosch shows the viewer of the panel a way to escape a corrupt world.
Koreny recently challenged the panel’s attribution to Bosch (Koreny 2012, 28). We see no justification for this, however. The style of the underdrawing too is entirely consistent with that of several other generally accepted paintings.


For Jerone’s imitation of Christ, see Ruppel 1988.

Jerome (c. 340–420) translated the Old Testament (excluding the Psalms), the Apocrypha (excluding Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch and First and Second Maccabees) and the New Testament for Pope Damasus I (366–383).

The little circles we now detect in both the lion and elsewhere in the painting were not intended by the artist, but resulted from the ageing of the paint film.


Koldeweij, Vandenbroeck and Vermet 2001, 22.

The saint is shown doing penance in the background of the small panel with Saint Jerome and the lion (c. 1450) in Ferrara, see Barstow 2000, 165.

The Middle Dutch Bible published by Steffen Arndes in Lübeck in 1494, for instance, and the Latin Bible published in Nuremberg in 1501 by Anton Köberger. Editions of the Passionael with a woodcut of the penitent Saint Jerome were printed in 1488 by Anton Köberger (in German) and in 1492 by Steffen Arndes (in Low German). Gerard Leeu published the Psalterium Sancti Hieronymi in Antwerp in 1492, with an image of the penitent Saint Jerome. See also the notes on Saint Jerome in cat. 2.

This expression can be found verbatim in medieval texts, including ‘The Four Extremes’, in which readers are also exhorted to picture the terrors of hell in order to shield themselves from future sin. See also Falkenburg 2012 on insien and uutsien.

This meditation technique and the worshipper’s relationship with devotional objects are dealt with by Rudy 2000, 128–29.


Letter to Eustochium (no. 22), Tazelaar 2008, i, 118.

Ilsink 2009, 34ff.

Hieronymus a hiera quod est sanctum, et nemus, quasi sanctum nemus.’ Johannes Andreae, Hieronymus, Cologne (Conrad Winters) 1482, fol. 12.

See Bietenholz 1989 on Erasmus and Saint Jerome.

See, for instance, the closed wings of the Adoration of the Magi in the Prado (cat. 9).

Letter to Eustochium (no. 22), Tazelaar 2008, i, 118.

The letter was published as a booklet in Nuremberg in 1493.
Hieronymus Bosch
C. 1435–1516

Oil on oak panel, left wing 85.4 × 29.2 cm; central panel 85.7 × 60 cm; right wing 85.7 × 28.9 cm
Gallerie dell’Accademia, Venice
Signed central panel, lower right: Hieronymus Bosch


Condition
Originally the wings were painted on both sides and the triptych had arched tops. The triptych was cropped, including the two bottom edges of the wings, which were slightly lowered relative to the central panel.
The non-original rectangular format was achieved with wooden inserts and the panel reverses were thinned and cradled. This has produced undulating surfaces and some panel cracks. Overall paint and ground are well adhered, but the surface is quite abraded and locally severely worn. Copper-green paint has discoloured, resulting in a browner appearance of the landscape. Red lakes have faded and light paints have increased in transparency, resulting in the shimmering through of the underlying composition, mainly in the central panel with the significantly altered saint. The disturbing rigatino-style retouchings, the greyish surface layer, and the poor varnish resulted in an uneven appearance of the paint surface. Conservation issues were addressed in the 2014–15 full treatment of the painting.

Provenance

Literature

Analysis
In what was once a triptych with an arched top, Bosch uses the early Christian saints Anthony, Jerome and Giles (Aegidius) to express the struggle for chastity and renunciation of the world. The emphasis here – more so than in Bosch’s other painting of Saint Jerome, now in Ghent (cat. 1) – is on strife and penance. Jerome has not only withdrawn from the world, he has explicitly sought out the remains of a pagan culture in which to confront it and to be bolstered in his faith.
FORM AND COMPOSITION

Three saints, unperturbed by the world around them, kneel in pious meditation in a landscape running across all three panels. They are immediately identifiable from their respective attributes: Jerome has his cardinal's robe and hat; Anthony is surrounded by demons and tempted by a naked woman; and Giles is pierced with an arrow and accompanied by a hind.

The three separate panels originally belonged to a triptych with an arched top, corresponding in form with the Saint Wilgefortis Triptych (cat. 8) – also present in Venice for many years – and with the Bruges Last Judgement (cat. 16). The first firm reference to the Hermit Saints Triptych dates from a 1733 description of the paintings in the Doge's Palace, where it hung in a corridor. It is listed there as a three-part painting with a Saint Jerome and two other saints. The next time it is recorded, in 1771, it was displayed with the Wilgefortis Triptych in a much more prestigious location, the Sala dei Tre Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci. It is likely that the Hermit Saints Triptych had already been dismantled by that time and remounted as three separate panels in a single large frame. This was probably done shortly before 1740 – well before the two triptychs were taken to Vienna in 1838. During their time in Vienna between 1838 and 1919, the three Hermit Saints panels were thinned significantly and cradled, resulting in the loss of any painting there might have been on
the panel reverses. They were subsequently cropped and expanded, probably in 1895, to obtain the current rectangular shape. The latter operation had far-reaching consequences for the ensemble. Not only were all three panels cropped at the top, but the wings were cut down slightly at the bottom edge too. Even before these changes, however, the final painting differed significantly from the version that was initially planned and prepared: the saints themselves and sections of the background were substantially altered in the course of painting. Anthony, for instance, seems to have been positioned lower down in the original configuration of the left wing, and a larger jug was left in reserve where we now see a brown patch in the lower left of the canvas of what was originally a red tent cloth.

The figure of Saint Jerome in the central panel was originally sketched and painted not only a little lower down, but also considerably larger; this version of the saint was ultimately overpainted with a smaller one and the background too was substantially altered. The changes are comparable with those undergone by the Saint Anthony Triptych in Lisbon (cat. 4), in which the artist, on further reflection, significantly reduced the size of the relatively large, partially completed figure of the saint.

The underdrawing of the central panel of the Venetian triptych is similar in style to those of the other panels. The figure of Jerome as originally sketched seems to be clutching the long beam of a cross with both hands. Since this form was left in reserve in his much larger robe, it can also be made out clearly in the X-radiograph in which the space left

2.4 Saint Jerome [CAT 2B]
2.5 Unicorn [CAT 2B]

2.6 Judith and Holofernes [CAT 2B]

2.7 Man in basket [CAT 2B]
2.8 Saint Anthony’s temptress [CAT 2A]
for the cross-beam can likewise still be made out around the much smaller painted crucifix. This would have been iconographically unique, although it does recall the painting in Ghent (cat. 1), in which Jerome embraces a small crucifix.

Saint Giles was considerably larger and shown kneeling in the first painted version of the right wing, in which he also had a book, which was prepared towards the saint’s right. His hermitage was originally a structure with walls and a larger window in the back wall, with a door next to it. This was subsequently altered to the cave we see now – a more appropriate dwelling for an anchorite.

**ASCETICISM**

The final composition shows Jerome kneeling in desolate surroundings. The ruin in which he is placed consists of a rising stretch of wall, remnants of a floor and a vaulted cellar. His red cardinal’s hat lies in front of him to the right. The lion, viewed from the back, is painted in the far left background, standing at the water’s edge. It is hardly conspicuous, but the animal’s tail leaves no room for doubt that this is the beast that became Jerome’s companion after the saint removed a splinter from its paw. Immediately behind the kneeling hermit, the statue of a pagan divinity tumbles from the truncated column on which it was presumably standing. The tottering idol, which has already lost the arm with which it once wielded a sword, heightens the sense of Jerome’s resolution. A praying man, almost a mirror image of Saint Jerome, is painted on the lower part of the pseudo-antique column. The motif beneath him alludes to Christ’s crown of thorns, while above him is the sky with sun, moon and stars. The scene recalls Christ’s Agony in the Garden, but in this pagan setting it is no doubt intended to represent its antithesis. Jerome holds a stone in his right hand, with which he beats his chest in self-chastisement. His left hand touches the crucifix standing on the throne-like structure, which the cross turns into a kind of altar.

Several areas of paint loss to the left of the throne have been restored in a neutral colour, complicating the interpretation of the magnificently painted relief of the man who is about to mount the famously untameable unicorn. The story of Judith and Holofernes is painted in monochrome on the outside of the throne; the yellowish-brown paint has been applied with great skill, wet-in-wet, with highlights in lead white mixed with blue. The decapitated body of Holofernes lies inside a tent on a camp bed, next to which a guard continues to sleep soundly. Judith emerges from the tent, a sword raised in her right hand and the severed head in her left, which she will place in the basket held by her maidservant (Judith 13:6–10). The two scenes depicted on the throne – Judith, the biblical heroine who saved her city while preserving her honour; and the unicorn, which according to legend could only be tamed by a virgin – undoubtedly allude to Jerome’s ideal of chastity and to his struggle to conquer his sinful thoughts (see also cat. 1). The scene that appears beneath the one with Judith and Holofernes is very different and is intended as a contrast with the virtuous Old Testament figure. A man, naked from the waist down, has crawled into a basket. A stick inserted into his backside serves as a perch for a decoy bird – probably the tiniest owl in Bosch’s entire oeuvre.

In his prologue to the Book of Judith, Jerome explicitly presented the Jewish heroine as a model of chastity to be emulated. The Church Father’s influence as both an ascetic and a Bible translator grew immensely towards the end of the fifteenth century, by which time his prologues to sixteen Old and New Testament books were being included in many new editions of the Bible. Several versions exist in which Jerome’s authorial role is emphasized both visually and in the text: in the Bible published in Nuremberg in 1501, for instance, and in the Lübeck edition of 1494. A large illustration at the front of the latter, Low German, Bible shows the saint working on his translation, and again in the background as a penitent. What is more, each of Jerome’s prologues in this Lübeck edition is accompanied by a woodcut of him in his study, emphasizing his work as a translator and scholar. In the **Hermit Saints Triptych**, by contrast, the book that is the most important attribute of this scholarly status is found in the underdrawing below the cardinal’s hat, but was not included in
the final painting. Rather than his intellectual powers, therefore, what brings Jerome into such direct contact here with Christ and the redemption he offers is primarily his senses: the physical pain in his chest, the gaze he fixes on the crucifix, and the tentative way he touches the cross.

Saints Anthony and Giles, like Jerome, have withdrawn from society to devote their lives to God. Anthony is shown in the left wing, surrounded by a horde of relatively harmless-looking little monsters. The real temptation confronting him takes the form of a naked woman bathing – the personification of the lustful thoughts which Jerome sought to banish. Saint Anthony closes his eyes to worldly desire and does not succumb to the illusions conjured up by the devil. Giles, meanwhile, appears in the right wing at a desk or table on which lie a book and a scroll. He has been struck in the chest by an arrow intended for a hind that God had sent to him, and which provided him with milk from time to time. The deer herself lies unscathed at Giles’s feet. Another, almost invisible little owl has been painted behind him. The male figure peering through a window into the dark cave where the saint stands in prayer is probably the king who, following in the trail of his huntsmen, discovered the wounded hermit. According to the Passionæl, he was ‘coninck Kaerle’ – Charles Martel, the Frankish ‘mayor of the palace’. Charles offered the hermit medical assistance, but Giles refused, going so far as to ask God ‘that he might never be healed as long as he lived’. Like Jerome, Giles willingly endured physical pain, though not as a form of penance, but because ‘virtue is perfected in sickness’.

The book on the lectern is no doubt a Bible or a prayerbook. The lettering on the scroll is written in black with certain words picked out in red; this might refer to an important document mentioned at a later point in Giles’s vita, namely the letter that an angel supposedly placed on the altar of the monastery Giles founded. It described a sin committed by Charles Martel that was so grave the mayor of the palace dared not confess it; yet it would nevertheless be forgiven if Giles were to hear the confession. Absolution was only possible, in other words, through the intermediary of the extraordinarily pious Giles who, like Saints Anthony and Jerome in the other panels, had achieved a state of physical and spiritual purity.
The three panels of the triptych contain a number of details that also appear in other works by Bosch in a virtually identical or at least strongly related form, suggesting that drawn or painted models were kept in his studio and were used whenever convenient. There is a porcupine with antlers, for instance, on the hill above Saint Giles’s cave, of which similar specimens appear in the Paradise wing of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* and in the right wing of the *Saint Anthony Triptych*. The great tit hanging upside down from a branch behind Giles is also found (reversed) in the tree in the *Wayfarer* in Rotterdam and on a branch of the tree stump in *Saint Jerome* in Ghent; it also appears – somewhat larger and more detailed, this time – in the central panel of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* (cat. 21), just above the couple in the mussel shell. Giles’s head strongly resembles that of the Jerome figure in the central panel of the Ghent painting and the monk leaning forward in the central panel of the *Wilgefortis Triptych* (cat. 1 and 8). The body of the nude woman appearing to Saint Anthony, meanwhile, is virtually identical (although reversed) to that of the woman standing on the roof of the building on the left of the central panel of the Vienna *Last Judgement* (cat. 17). In Saint Jerome’s T-shaped crucifix, lastly, the titulus at the top is fixed to a narrow protruding batten. We find precisely the same unusual construction in the crucifix embraced by Jerome in the Ghent panel, in the cross of the Brussels *Crucifixion*, and in the crucifix to which Saint Anthony prays in the central panel of the Lisbon triptych.
1 ‘... un altro simile pure in tre comparti con un San Girolamo, e due altri Santi ...’ Zanetti 1733, 109.

2 ‘... Sono sei compartimenti. Nei primi v'è S. Girolamo nel mezzo ed altri Santi dai lati ...’ Zanetti 1771, 491.

3 Ludwig (1901, iv) also described the triptych as three separate panels in a single frame, based on the Prospetto A – the inventory prepared in Venice in 1837: ‘Tavola con cornice d’oro’.


5 See also the Saint Wilgefortis Triptych (cat. 8).

6 For more information, see brcp, Technical Studies, cat. 2, 27–31, 40. The dimensions after cropping are recorded for the first time in a note dating from 1895: Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Evidenzbuch für die Restaurierungen (1888f), Post no. 616. Dep. 1 Nr. 39 [nb = 40] / Evidenzbuch 185 / Neuaufl.: 651 / alte Bezeichnung: 25 / Bosch / ‘Martyrium des heiligen Antonius.’ These measurements are also given in Schaeffer’s letter, 11 July 1899 (see note 4 above): ‘Mittelbild 83,5 x 61 cm. Jedes Flügelbild 83,5 x 29 cm.’

7 A detailed description of these changes can be found in brcp, Technical Studies, cat. 2, 27–31, 40.

8 Mark 14:35–36, 39, Matthew 26:39–40, 42, Luke 22:41–44. If Bosch had intended to show Christ here in the Garden of Gethsemane, he would have made the scene more recognizable by adding the cup from which Jesus did not wish to drink. Cf. the closed wings of the Temptation of Saint Anthony (cat. 4).

9 ‘Nemet to iuw iudith de wedewen een bille der kuscheyt.’ Biblia, Lübeck 1494.

10 The 1477 Biblia Latina published by Anton Koberger in Nuremberg, for example, or the 1483 Biblia Germanica.

11 Biblia cum Concordantia Veteris et Novi Testamenti; Sanctus Hieronymus interpret. Bible, Nuremberg (Anton Koberger) 1501. The title page has a woodcut showing Saint Jerome doing penance in the desert and also working in his study. De Biblie mit vlytigher achtinge: recht na deme latine in dudesck auverghesett. Mit vorluchtinghe vnde glose: des hoch-ghelerden Postillatoers Nicolai de lyra Unde anderer velen hillighen doctoren, Lübeck (Steffen Arndes) 1494.

12 In his letter to Eustochium (no. 22), Jerome wrote of how he had seen dancing girls during his seclusion in the desert: ‘I thought nevertheless that I was among the pleasures and the dancing of the girls of Rome’ (English translation: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001022.htm). Anton Koberger also published the letter as a booklet in 1494.

13 ‘dat hi nymmermeer also langhe als hi levede mochte ghenesen’.

14 ‘die doghet volmaect wort in cranche’.

15 See the website Boschproject.org, link 119.

16 The V-pattern in the floor tiles also resembles the Lisbon painting. It has almost entirely disappeared in that work, but it can still be made out clearly in the copy in Brussels. See Stroo et al. 2001, 101.
Burton Dunbar discusses the fragment with the Temptation of Saint Anthony in a thoughtful and lucidly structured text in the 2005 catalogue of the early German and Netherlandish paintings in the collection of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. In his view, the present condition of the painting makes it impossible to compare this panel stylistically with other work by Bosch and followers. Dunbar described the painting as ‘disjointed’ and stated that it lacks the fluid rhythm of authentic paintings. He shares the view of Mia Cinotti, who categorized the painting as a workshop product. Molly Faries, who examined the painting using infrared reflectography in preparation for the Nelson-Atkins museum catalogue, concluded that the underdrawing – done in brush in a very watery medium – is not atypical for this period or group of paintings. Nevertheless, she found too little evidence to allow her to compare it with the other underdrawings by Hieronymus Bosch known to her at that time.

The fact that the underdrawing runs all the way to the edge of the panel is a strong indication that this is a fragment of a larger whole. The absence of barbs or unpainted edges offers further support for the hypothesis that the panel has been cropped on all sides. Dunbar’s argument that the lack of a fluid rhythm in the composition rules out an attribution to Bosch ceases to apply as a result: it is, after all, difficult to draw that kind of conclusion based merely on a fragment. The panel’s fragmentary character in itself makes the composition appear somewhat disjointed and unbalanced, and so these characteristics cannot be an argument against attribution to Bosch. Consequently, Dunbar’s iconographical objection is no more persuasive either. The author notes that the demon-queen, who plays a prominent role in the Saint Anthony scenes in Venice (cat. 2) and Lisbon (cat. 4), is absent in Kansas City, which he takes as evidence of an imperfect understanding of Anthony’s iconography and hence as another argument against attribution to Bosch. Once again, however, given that this is a fragment, we do not know what is missing. The inclusion of the woman in order to entice sinful thoughts or behaviour is not, moreover, an absolute prerequisite in the saint’s iconography.

Nor does the dating of the wood on which the triptych was painted preclude its attribution to Bosch. The most recent growth ring dates from 1471, which means the panel could have been painted from 1482 onwards, and more probably from 1484.

Still, it is entirely understandable that art historians have so far hesitated to attribute the fragment to the master himself. The degree of abrasion and the numerous areas of over-

Hieronymus Bosch

C. 1500–10

Oil on oak panel, 38.6 x 25.1 cm

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 35–22

BRCP research and documentation data:
Kansas City, 28–29 September 2015; BRCP, Technical Studies, cat. 3, RR 155–56; //Boschproject.org no. 3.¹

Condition
The small panel (a fragment) has been cropped all the way around, and the back has been thinned and cradled. There are various cracks in the panel, but the adhesion of the ground and paint layers appears to be good. The painting is significantly abraded, especially in the foreground, and there are substantial paint losses around the cracks and in the upper right. Other areas are better preserved, but the work has been heavily retouched, limiting its legibility.

Provenance

Literature

Analysis
This painting has hitherto been attributed to the workshop or a follower of Bosch. We believe it was done by the master himself, a view based on both the painting style and comparisons with other works by him: in particular, the Kansas City fragment is related to the left wing of the Hermit Saints Triptych in Venice (cat. 2a).

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painting make it hard to judge the picture, while large parts of the landscape have been retouched, as have significant elements like the saint's face and beard. The work as a whole has lost some of its depth due to damage and overpainting, the composition has become less coherent, and the painter's hand is hard to discern.

Gerd Unverfehrt suggested a date of around 1510–20 for this fragment, which he ascribed to the 'Master of the Water-scooping Anthony'. He also attributes the left wing of the Hermit Saints Triptych (cat. 2) to that anonymous artist. Dunbar objects to this: he thinks the Venetian triptych is too good not to attribute to Bosch, but he does agree with Unverfehrt's proposed dating.

In our view, the Kansas City fragment ought to be considered an autograph Bosch. We propose a date around 1500–10, roughly the same period to which the Hermit Saints Triptych and the Lisbon Temptation of Saint Anthony are dated. Our attribution to Bosch is based primarily on the comparison between the original parts of the paint layer and the underdrawing and the rest of the artist's oeuvre, most notably the Hermit Saints Triptych and the Saint Anthony Triptych. This was made possible by the extensive documentation the BRCP produced for this painting and virtually the whole corpus of Bosch's work.

The now considerably more complete registration of the underdrawing reinforces the picture previously sketched by Molly Faries. The figure of Saint Anthony was prepared in a relatively thick brush and a watery medium. Not only the saint's head, but also the jug he
is using to scoop water and the stick with the roast fowl, the bread and the sausage seem to have been underdrawn. No underdrawing could be revealed for the monsters in the lower zone of the composition, which are painted on top of the green landscape. However, where it was possible to make the underdrawing visible, it seamlessly matches those belonging to the group we associate with Bosch. We repeatedly find a relatively thick brush in a watery medium – in Saint Jerome (cat. 1), for instance, the Hermit Saints Triptych (cat. 2), Saint John the Baptist (cat. 5), Saint John on Patmos (cat. 6), Saint Christopher (cat. 7), the Adoration of the Magi (cat. 9) and Christ Carrying the Cross in the Escorial (cat. 13). The underdrawing has an exploratory character and does not appear to have been made after an existing model.7 We also find that the underdrawn composition was not followed precisely during the painting of the Kansas City fragment, any more than in the other listed works.

Having established that the support no longer argues against attribution to Bosch and that the underdrawing actively points in his direction, we have to assess the paint layer. Can we discern Bosch’s hand in it? And if so, what arguments and comparisons support this
There are numerous motifs that reappear in similar form in other paintings and drawings by Bosch. Strictly speaking, of course, this does not tell us anything about the autograph status of the fragment. A more important observation is that the manner in which this type of motif has been painted also matches. Bosch was a brilliant and efficient painter, but very much his own man too. His painting technique was not geared to achieving a high degree of finish or naturalism: what mattered more was the suggestion he evoked as he painted. Virtuosity is of prime importance, especially in terms of creativity and speed. He mostly allowed his brushwork to remain visible.

The characteristic way Bosch has painted Anthony’s staff here is found in several other places too. Where possible, he set it down with no more than two more or less parallel lines – a brownish-black one on the right and a white one on the left, with the ground layer used between them. This technique – rapid, efficient and effective – is found in very similar
form in the walking frame and toy windmill of the Christ Child on the reverse of Christ
Carying the Cross in Vienna (cat. 12a) and a triangle-like instrument in the Hell wing of the
Garden of Earthly Delights (cat. 21c).

The strange creatures at the bottom were not left in reserve from the background but
were painted on top of the green landscape instead. This required them to be more opaque
and they do indeed look a little flatter (due in part to abrasion); this somewhat coarse and
thick way of painting is, however, seen in precisely the same form in countless other places
in Bosch’s work. We find not only the same manner elsewhere, but the same motifs too.
The little funnel-man also appears in the right wing of the Bruges Last Judgement (cat. 16c),11
while monstrous spoonbills often feature in Bosch’s work, including the Saint Anthony Triptych (cat. 4a), the Garden of Earthly Delights (cat. 21c) and the left wing of the Hermit Saints
Triptych (cat. 2a).

The black hood of the monster with the fox’s head near the left edge is decorated in a
refined and characteristic manner with opaque white dots, just like the undefinable piece of
clothing worn by a similar creature in the right wing of the Saint Anthony Triptych in Lisbon.
The fox’s head gazing out from beneath a headdress appears repeatedly in the central panel
of the Bruges Last Judgement, where a woman scooping water almost functions as a pendant
for the Saint Anthony figure.22 The pig’s trotter lying on the floating tabletop is another
recurring motif; it is used in various ways: sticking out from the front of the Wayfarer’s
jacket in Rotterdam (cat. 19a), as a hanging sign in the fragment in Yale (cat. 19b), an amulet
in the drawing of ‘witches’ in the Louvre (cat. 39), and thrust into a jug in the right wing of
the Saint Anthony Triptych in Lisbon.11 The turtle in the right foreground is very similar to the
one set down in the underdrawing of the Lisbon triptych but not actually painted, and the
landed fishes struggling to breathe in Kansas City and Lisbon are also highly comparable,
despite the difference in scale.24

Taking everything together, this fragment is most comparable with the left wing of the
Hermit Saints Triptych (cat. 2a) – not just iconographically, but also in terms of painting style
and condition. We find the same water-scooping Anthony, surrounded by a group of crea-
tures who seem intended more to impress the viewer than to tempt and harass the saint.
Although the condition of neither painting is optimum, we are in no doubt that both were
painted by the same hand.

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1 John Twilley, Art Conservation Scientist, Mellon
Scientific Advisor, Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, took a
series of micrographs of the painting on 29 September
2015. Scott Heffley, Senior Conservator of Paintings,
Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, took an X-radiograph.
These too can be found at Boschproject.org.
2 Dunbar 2005, 197.
3 Cinotti 1969, 104 no. 41.
4 Molly Faries, Provisional Entry, 18 September
1990, Provisional Outline for Appendix, 23 July 1991,
Conservation Files 35–22, Nelson Atkins Museum of
Art, Kansas City, Dunbar 2005, 151.
6 Peter Klein, report 24 March 2003; see also BRCP,
Technical Studies, ‘Dendrochronology’.
8 We are grateful to Rob Bergmans, who drew our
attention to the painting.
9 The opposite seems to be the case, however, with the
Cure of Folly (cat. 33) and the Crowning with Thorns in the
Escorial (cat. 27) and in Valencia (cat. 28), in which the
underdrawing was done in a dry medium, with little
sense of searching for the right form. The Haywain in the
Escorial (see cat. 19 and BRCP, Technical Studies, cat. 51, RR 103–08) is a striking example in this regard.
10 Compare the way he painted the little fire on the
spoonbill’s head with the corresponding flames on the
reverse of Saint John on Patmos, and in the Hermit
Saints Triptych and the Garden of Earthly Delights. See the
website Boschproject.org, link 143.
11 See the website Boschproject.org, link 143, for a
comparison of ‘funnel-men’.
12 See 140 for a comparison of these water-scoopers.
13 See 141 for a comparison of these pigtails.
14 See 142 for a comparison of these ‘turtles’.
Temptation of Saint Anthony (Kansas City) [CAT 3] and Saint Anthony Triptych (Lisbon) [CAT 4b]
Hieronymus Bosch

C. 1500–1510

Oil on oak panel, left wing 144.8 x 66.5 cm, central panel 145.1 x 132.8 cm, right wing 144.8 x 66.7 cm

Signed central panel, lower right: Hieronymus Bosch

Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, 1498

BRCP examination and documentation data:

Lisbon, 4–13 September 2011; BRCP, Technical Studies, cat. 4, RR 11–16; //Boschproject.org no. 4.

Condition

The wings appear to have retained their original dimensions and are stable, with their interiors being better preserved. The central panel reverse was thinned considerably and the added horizontal battens have resulted in panel deformations. No recent cracks have been noted in the triptych, but some of the old cracks are slightly open. The ground and paint layers have relatively few losses but there is slight abrasion overall. The central panel is severely abraded at the plateau and around it, probably relating to the multi-layered build-up and changes there. Thin paint application and increased transparency have also led to a greater visibility of underlying layers. The brown outer fields of the two grisailles are later additions, which cover an original stone imitation here. Abrasions, discoloured retouching (mostly on joins), and highly yellowed old varnish residues cause a reduced legibility of the relatively well-preserved original paint surface.

Provenance

This is probably the triptych that Charles de Berthoz inherited from his mother, the widow of Hippolyte de Berthoz, and then sold in October 1505 to Duke Philip the Fair; the latter presented it to his father, Emperor Maximilian of Austria; it appears in the will dated 16 September 1615 of Maximilian’s grandson, George of Austria, in which it was bequeathed to Archduke Albert of Austria; entered the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga in Lisbon in 1872.

Literature


Analysis

The Temptation of Saint Anthony is one of the highlights in Bosch’s oeuvre. Imaging techniques like X-radiography and infrared photography have proved extremely valuable in the attempt to reconstruct Bosch’s artistic and iconographical pursuit of the triptych’s final form and content. Bosch probably painted the triptych around 1500 for Hippolyte de Berthoz, a senior official at the Burgundian court.

CONCEPT AND IMPACT

The Temptation of Saint Anthony in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga in Lisbon is widely considered to be the most important and most original of the more than forty known versions of this theme.1 Saint Anthony, the painting’s principal figure, finds himself in the eye of a demonic storm. Calm and unaffected, but with flushed cheeks, he gazes amiably at the viewer and makes a sign of benediction. Anthony’s blessing is echoed by that of Christ, who shines out in the dark space to the rear of the ruined building where the saint kneels. The torments surrounding him are numerous and terrible, yet the battle seems to have been fought already and the outcome decided. Thanks to Christ’s death on the cross, Satan will not prevail over humanity. Remembrance of this fact, highlighted by the crucifix on the ‘altar’ in the painting, is Anthony’s greatest support and consolation during his struggle. The viewer is reminded of this, not only by the image of the saint and the crucifix in the central panel, but also by the relationship between this panel and the wings, on the backs of which we see the Arrest of Christ and Christ Carrying the Cross. The Passion scenes on the closed triptych combine with the episodes showing Saint Anthony’s battle with evil in the open wings, to shape the context in which the hermit’s triumph is made possible. The temptation of Saint Anthony is an example of both the constancy of the believer and of God’s mercy.2 the two elements which together ensure the triumph of good over evil, the salvation of the soul and the victory of life over death.

José de Sigüenza (1544–1606), a Hieronymite monk at the Escorial, wrote in the following terms about Bosch’s images of Saint Anthony:

Sometimes he painted Temptations of Saint Anthony (this is the second type of painting), as this was a subject in which he could show strange effects. On the one
hand, one sees the holy prince of the hermits with a serene, devout, contemplative and calm face, and a soul filled with peace; on the other, the countless fantasies and monsters created by the enemy to confuse, worry and disturb this mild soul and steadfast love. To this end, he conceived animals, wild beasts, chimeras, monsters, fires, corpses, cries, threats, serpents, lions, dragons and terrifying birds of so many varieties, that it is admirable how he was able to give shape to so many ideas. And all this to show that for a soul aided by God’s grace and which pursues a similar path at his hand – even though in his imagination and with his inward and outward eyes he represents the enemy (which can lead to laughter or vain delight, or to other excessive emotions) – who shall not be able to cast him down or deflect him from his intention. He made so many variations on this subject and on this idea, and with so many new inventions, that I find it admirable how he was able to conceive so much; it makes me pause to consider my own wretchedness and weakness, and shows me how far removed I am from this perfection. For I am disturbed and agitated by such simple troubles and trifles, and I then miss my cell, the silence, the solitude, and I even lose my patience. In the case of this saint, all the ingenuity of the devil and hell was not enough to cast him down. And the Lord is so equipped to succour me, just like him, if only I throw myself valiantly into the fray.  

The quoted passage offers an enlightening insight into the earliest surviving reception of Bosch’s Temptation of Saint Anthony. What makes de Sigüenza’s commentary so remarkable is the way the author interprets the triptych on at least three levels. He discusses why, as an artist, Bosch was interested in creating images of Anthony’s temptations, concluding that it was because it gave him the opportunity for artistic invention. The anchorite’s adversity provided Bosch with a source of inspiration that allowed him to return to the theme repeatedly. De Sigüenza then explains the painting’s iconography, before turning to the third level, namely the work’s effect upon him as a Christian. The appearance of the painting, he writes, helped him to realize that no matter how distracted he might be by all manner of things, the Lord was there to save him.  

De Sigüenza must have based his commentary on a variation on the Lisbon triptych, but that makes no difference to his analysis. He also tells us, significantly, that Bosch painted this theme on several different occasions. It is not clear, however, whether this refers to different compositions showing the temptation of Saint Anthony, variations on the same composition or a combination of the two. Close analysis of the Lisbon painting suggests that Bosch’s workshop produced several variations in addition to the superlative prototype now in Portugal. A great many imitations and copies, both full and partial, were clearly painted as well.  

CLOSED  

The closed left wing shows the Arrest of Christ at the still moment just before dawn. The darkness is lit by a small crescent moon, while the first signs of daylight can be made out behind the church tower on the left edge. The silence into which Christ has withdrawn with his disciples is shattered by the arrival of a band of yelling, hooting and gesticulating soldiers, who take him prisoner and lead him away. The cup that Christ cannot avoid can be made out on a hill in the background, where two disciples look on in shame as their master is arrested. Judas slips away in the left foreground, the money he has received for his betrayal hanging in a purse on his back. Peter, who had joined Christ in the olive grove, is shown in the foreground with his sword drawn, ready to slice off the ear of the high priest’s servant.  

The monochrome of the grisaille is alleviated here and there by subtly rendered flames comprising a few touches of yellow, orange and red: a burning candle in an overturned lantern in the foreground and three flaming torches carried by soldiers and onlookers. No noteworthy alterations have been detected between the underdrawing and the markedly linear painting. Physical analysis clearly shows, however, that the successive stages of production
are often difficult to distinguish in the closed wings, which were painted strikingly quickly. Bosch made frequent and highly efficient use here of the underlying creamy-grey paint layer as a uniform midtone for both scenes; he probably used the same dark material for the underlying sketch and the painted contour lines as well. The forms were laid down systematically in thin, almost ethereal, semitransparent paint layers in different shades of grey, and were then worked out with white highlights and a few outlines in a deeper black. These grisailles, done almost entirely wet-in-wet, show once more that Bosch was a brilliant draughtsman in paint, able to achieve maximum effect with minimum means.

The Carrying of the Cross is depicted on the closed right wing in virtually the same technique. The scene is set in a rocky terrain, the ominous nature of which is heightened by the traces of previous executions. Before the distant landscape in the background, a tall pole rises against the grey sky, from which a sheep or large lamb has been hung by its back legs – apparently even animals are executed here. Christ struggles, half kneeling, beneath the heavy cross he has to carry to Golgotha, assisted by Simon of Cyrene. He turns his head to Veronica, who kneels before him holding out the cloth with which she will mop the blood and sweat from his face. Three children watch Christ’s progress from a mound to the left of the rocky terrain. Jesus is followed by a father with two children, giving the disturbing impression of the execution as a popular entertainment. The two thieves who are due to be crucified at the same time as Christ are positioned nearer to the viewer, where they are addressed by figures dressed in monks’ habits. The body of a previously executed man has been dumped callously in the foreground. The linear painting of this scene once again follows directly from the sketched underdrawing, with a number of adjustments that have a marked impact on the composition, without significantly affecting the iconography. There are no colour highlights at all in this grisaille, which is set on a grey morning.
The open triptych was also painted rapidly and often wet-in-wet, but is finished in more detail than the scenes on the closed wings. It is devoted entirely to Saint Anthony Abbot, who refuses to be tempted by demonic tricks and enticements. The saint is shown four times – surrounded by all manner of hellish figures on the ground and in the air – in a landscape that runs across the three pictorial fields. Several sources for the saint’s life were available in Bosch’s time, all of which derived from the Vita Sancti Antonii, written in 357 by Saint Athanasius (295–373), Bishop of Alexandria, and from the Collationes patrum in scetica eremo by the monk and theologian John Cassian (c. 360–435). An account of Anthony’s life based on these sources was included in the sixth century in the collection of hagiographies called the Vitæ sanctorum patrum, sive Vitæ patrum or Vitae Patrum for short. This Latin text was widely disseminated, and is certain to have been available in ’s-Hertogenbosch too. A Middle Dutch translation was published in 1490 by Peter van Os in Zwolle, with the title vader boeck (‘Book of the Fathers’). The life of Saint Anthony also featured in the Legenda aurea, thirteen Middle Dutch editions of which appeared following Gerard Leeu’s first publication of the Passionael in Gouda in 1478. The four scenes in the triptych showing Anthony beset by Satan correspond most closely with the principal demonic threats described in the vader boeck.

The scene in the left wing, in which Anthony is helped across a bridge by two monks and a layman, forms a visual rhyme with the figure of Christ on the closed shutters. The vader boeck and the Passionael both tell how the hermit was severely abused by demons and thrown out of the cave to which he had withdrawn. A friend took him into his house and treated his injuries. Having recovered, Anthony wanted to return to his cave to devote
himself to God in solitude. The natural setting in which the saint finds himself seems enchanted; it is anthropomorphic and freezing cold in the foreground, while ships founder in the background, set ablaze by the heat. The landscape is populated by demonic, unnatural creatures, including the unforgettable ‘mail bird’ in the foreground, which skates up, its eyes streaming from the icy cold. The figure of the tree-man in the background tells us that the very landscape is unnatural, providing a space for behaviour that is all too human, yet cannot bear the light of day.

Anthony is depicted again high in the air, his hands clasped together and leaning backwards on the belly of a winged, toad-like monster. The saint is dressed in the customary if anachronistic manner in the robes of the Antonine Order – a wide, black cloak decorated with a large tau cross over a grey habit. The scene is a visual translation of a passage in the Passionael, which describes how the saint was tormented by demons: ‘They hurled him into the air, and they hurled him down again, almost killing him.’ We then see a half-dead Anthony being helped across the bridge by his friends. The lay figure with the blue headdress on Anthony’s left is intriguing; his individualized features have tempted quite a few authors to identify him as a self-portrait of Bosch. While there is no further evidence to support such a claim, the figure has an interesting effect, in that he draws the viewer more closely into the scene. He is comparable in this respect to Simon of Cyrene, who helps Christ to carry his cross, as illustrated in the closed right wing.

The painting follows the underdrawing here quite faithfully. Unlike those of the grisailles in the closed wings, the underdrawings in the open triptych use parallel and cross-hatching to help prepare the modelling. The principal forms were sketched with a medium-sized brush, before being worked out with a somewhat finer brush – a method we also find in several other works. The central panel of the Temptation of Saint Anthony is an explosion of creativity; the underdrawing includes numerous figures that were never painted, while a significant proportion of those that were finished were subsequently painted over with completely different figures. After Anthony’s demonic tormentors had
left him for dead, he withdrew once more into solitude. Bosch places him, small and kneeling, in an old ruin, surrounded by demons in the most fantastic forms. The *vader boeck* and the *Passionael* tell us that the monsters returned in great numbers ‘in all manner of animal shapes’. They created such a commotion that Anthony feared the building would collapse around him, but the hermit stood firm and did not allow their threats to shake his faith. Seeing this, God decided that Anthony should not suffer any further torment. He sent ‘a wondrously beautiful light, which drove away the demons and all their infernal darkness’. When Anthony asked God where he had been while the hermit was being tortured, ‘the divine voice [answered] from the light’ that he wanted to see how strong Anthony’s faith was. Bosch visualizes this idea through the Christ figure by the altar in the ruin and the powerful beam of light that falls through the window on the left.

The three scenes to the right of Saint Anthony on the exterior of the ruined tower add an Old Testament angle to the saint’s *vita*. Together, they depict the Jewish people’s arduous journey to the Promised Land. They can be read as a typology or prefiguration of the suffering that Christ had to endure prior to his death and resurrection, and by extension of the hardship and torments suffered by Saint Anthony. The scene at the top shows the Dance around the Golden Calf, while Moses receives the Tablets of the Law from God (Exodus 31:18, 32:1–6). Below it we see a group of Jews sacrificing animals to a simian idol, enthroned on a column drum; these are most likely the Israelites who fell into idolatry under Gideon and again after his death (Judges 8:27 and 33). The scene at the bottom shows two men carrying a gigantic bunch of grapes – two of the scouts Moses sent on ahead and who returned with tales of the land that ‘does flow with milk and honey…’ But the people
who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large’ (Numbers 13:23–27). The decorative edge beneath the grape-carriers shows a hunting scene: a hunter blows his horn and hurries after his dog as it pursues a hare that glances back over its shoulder. This image too derives from an earlier tradition, as shown by the equivalent scene in a margin decoration from the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, Utrecht, of about 1435–40.

Patience, constancy, faith and trust are the virtues that guide Anthony safely through the devil’s trickery. The best-known of the temptations he endured – an attractive woman – is shown in the right wing. The attempted seduction by ‘a beautiful queen’ (‘ene schone conigine’) is the most minutely described of all the enticements recounted in the vader boeck.

No matter how disturbing and provocative Anthony’s immediate surroundings, the saint looks with only half an eye at the naked woman in the hollow of the tree, who wears nothing but a transparent gauze held over her loins. Anthony points to his would-be seducer, but so unobtrusively that we almost doubt he is really doing so. The hermit seems slightly amused by the knots into which Satan is tying himself in his efforts to tempt him away from the straight and narrow. Calm and unruffled, he lets things take their course.

Many of the details painted around the principal scenes in the three panels seem to refer to other episodes from the life of Saint Anthony as recounted in the vader boeck, without representing them literally. The book describes with a plethora of examples how Anthony resisted all the threats and temptations thrown at him. The little group of monsters dressed as priests next to the stone plateau on which the saint kneels in the central panel, seem to represent the pagan priests who came to Anthony in the desert clutching their books.
to debate matters of faith.\textsuperscript{24} The blazing church, beset with demons, meanwhile, is something Anthony saw in a vision that prophesied trouble ahead for the Christian faith and its institutions.\textsuperscript{25} The two fantastic fishing boats in the water in the foreground, with the male figure behind bars, presumably refer to the episode in which Anthony saves a man possessed by the devil on a ship laden with merchandise. \textquoteright Then said Anthony that he smelled something bad. To which they [the monks accompanying him] replied that there were fish on the boat. But Anthony said that that was not the smell. Then a possessed man, who had crept aboard stealthily, cried out, after which Anthony bade the devil to leave him. Upon which the man was released.\textsuperscript{26}

\textbf{CHANGES}

The central panel has an interesting genesis, which can be partially revealed with the assistance of X-radiography and infrared reflectography (\textsc{irr}). Previously painted and drawn figures and compositional elements can be found beneath the paint layer of the current painting that differ sharply from what is now visible. Numerous changes can be detected in the core of the scene with the kneeling Saint Anthony, in both the preparatory drawing and earlier painted motifs. Some of the dramatic alterations have already been published, but we can now discuss these observations more precisely and add to them significantly. The changes in question are exceptionally difficult to read, as certain sections were revised twice in paint and the new forms were likewise drawn first. It is even more challenging, if not impossible at this point, to determine the precise order in which the adjustments were made and which ones were done during the same stage. The most important of the detected alterations are described below.

Anthony was initially drawn much larger and upright, his upper body bent over to the right. His head was located immediately above its current position, in the place where the woman with the exuberant white headdress can now be seen. The back of Anthony’s dark habit can be readily traced in the \textsc{irr} through the round table and beyond the edge of the
4.17–18 XR and VIS [CAT 48]

4.19 ‘Fish-boat’ [CAT 48]

4.20 XR

4.21 IRR

4.22 Follower/Workshop (?) of Hieronymus Bosch, The Temptation of Saint Anthony (detail). Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia
current stone plateau. Anthony stood on the bank of a river and there was also another scene at first beneath the ruined tower with the altar and the figure of Christ. A red, tent-like form was initially painted here, containing four figures, which can still be clearly distinguished in the X-radiograph. We can also make out the top of a column there, rising above the tent and left blank in the passage of sky. The group of demonic figures behind and to the left of the round table was also drastically altered. The monsters as initially painted were replaced in a subsequent phase by more human-seeming demons of roughly the same size as the final figure of the saint. This creates a much stronger sense that Anthony is swallowed up by the threats surrounding him; they encroach on him much more closely, making his triumph over his tormentors all the greater. The painting technique seems to deviate here in places from that in the wings. This is not surprising, however, as the underlying painted composition appears largely to have been finished, obliging the artist to lay down the alterations in thick, opaque paint. For the same reason, we find the more familiar painting technique, in which Bosch generally used thinner, more transparent paint, in those zones where the painting was not altered. The underdrawing method used in this case is entirely comparable with that on the inside of the wings. In the underdrawing for
the new elements, by contrast, such as the area of shadow at the top of the tower, the hatch-
ing seems to have been applied more heavily and densely – presumably because it was laid
down over an already dark background.

The X-radiograph shows that a little man was painted in an earlier phase in the ‘fish-
boat’, in which he blows a trumpet with his backside. A bird (a finch or a tit) can be seen
above him, and above that a human arm holding a fish by the tail. None of these figures
can be made out in the present painting by the naked eye, but the little man and a bird are
depicted, curiously enough, in the smaller version of the central panel in the Barnes Foun-
dation in Philadelphia. If we compare this detail with the X-radiograph and the IR of the
Lisbon painting, it is clear that the long, curved tail of the fish, the yawning monkey, and
the bird in the spherical cage, were initially painted or prepared here too. None of these lit-
tle figures appears again in any other copies of the Temptation of Saint Anthony, in which we
invariably find the solution developed in the Lisbon work. The question then is how the
artist who produced the painting in the Barnes Foundation came to know about this part
of the composition. Was this version painted in – or in the immediate vicinity of – Bosch’s
workshop? Or did a version of the painting exist from which this detail was copied? A
copy of the central panel in São Paulo seems to support the latter possibility, as it contains
details that can be seen in the painting in Philadelphia but not in the triptych in Lisbon,
while the detail with the ‘fish-boat’ is configured as in Lisbon. Whatever the case, these are
strong indications that Bosch’s workshop delivered more than one version of this com-
position, as de Sigüenza already noted. We need to adjust our picture of how that workshop
operated. We already knew, for instance, from the Ecce Homo Triptych in Boston (cat. 24) that
Bosch’s workshop did more than just supply paintings of the very highest quality, a conclu-
sion that is confirmed and fleshed out further by the Job Triptych (cat. 23) and the so-called
Flood Panels (cat. 22). Meanwhile, we can only infer from the verso of a drawing like The
Wood Has Ears, The Field Has Eyes (cat. 37) that assistants were active in Bosch’s workshop
who were considerably less talented than the master.
It was believed until recently that the *Temptation of Saint Anthony* had belonged to the Portuguese humanist Damião de Góis, who supposedly acquired it in Antwerp between 1523 and 1545. In 2012 however, Joaquim Oliveira Caetano, curator of paintings at the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, argued persuasively that the triptych was not exhibited in Lisbon until 1872 and that there is no information as to its prior whereabouts. It cannot be ruled out that the work was in Spain shortly before that date.

The triptych is probably mentioned in descriptions dating from 1505 and 1613, from which the patron who commissioned it can be identified. In October 1505, Charles de Berthoz – alderman of the Liberty or Franc of Bruges – was paid the substantial sum of 312 pounds, 10 pence ‘... for a large painting on wood, richly executed in oil paint, of the life of Saint Anthony, to which several other episodes have been added, in both the two wings and elsewhere, which the King has had purchased from him ...’. Although there is no mention of a painter, it has long been supposed that this might refer to a triptych by Hieronymus Bosch. Later descriptions show that this is indeed the case. The ‘king’ who ordered the purchase was none other than Philip the Fair, Duke of Burgundy, who had succeeded his late mother-in-law Isabella as King of Castile in November 1504. Philip was in Bruges towards the end of December 1505, where he purchased the triptych in order, according to the item in the accounts, ‘to present it to the King, his father [Maximilian]’. Charles de Berthoz evidently sold the altarpiece from his mother’s estate, as a somewhat later account entry refers to ‘the widow of the late Master Hippolyte de Berthoz’. The latter, who died in July 1503, was a senior financial officer at the Burgundian court. It is not known where or how he came into possession of the triptych, but it is entirely possible that he himself commissioned it from Hieronymus Bosch, who almost certainly painted the *Last Judgement Triptych* now in the museum of the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Vienna (cat. 17) for him in 1502–03.

The *Temptation of Saint Anthony* must have passed via Maximilian (1459–1519) to his illegitimate son, George of Austria (1505–1557). George – whose mother was Maximilian’s lover, Margaret of Edelsheim – grew up with the future Charles V and Ferdinand I at the court of Margaret of Austria in Mechelen. He went on in turn to father a natural, but legitimate son, who was also known as George of Austria (and as Georgius d’Autriche, Georgius ab Austria and Georgius Austrius). George Junior was appointed dean of St Peter’s Church in Leuven and chancellor of the city’s university on 2 April 1557; following his death in Brussels on 20 April 1619, he was buried in front of the high altar of St Peter’s in Leuven. The Flemish historian and jurist Valerius Andreas (Walter Driessen) described him, taking his cue from Justus Lipsius, as ‘Maximiliani I Imp. ex filio nepos’ – grandson of Emperor Maximilian. The younger George of Austria drew up his will on 16 September 1613. In it, he specified that his triptych by Hieronymus Bosch was to go, along with several other items, to Archduke Albert (1559–1621).

Albert of Austria will have been glad to accept this legacy, and might even have lobbied for it himself, given his interest in both contemporary masters and earlier painting. In his obituary for the Archduke, published in 1622, Aubertus Miraeus makes explicit reference to Albert’s admiration for ‘Hieronymo Boscio’, as well as for Rogier van der Weyden, Quinten Metsys, Albrecht Dürer, Lucas van Leyden, Hans Holbein and Frans Floris. He is likely to have inherited a number of works from his brother and predecessor, Archduke Ernest of Austria (1553–1595), although no details of this are available. Ernest’s estate included some ten works attributed to Bosch: a ‘Stone Operation’ with several figures, a Saint Christopher, a scene referring to the time of Noah, a Crucifixion, three fantasies ‘in einem Buch’ and three large scenes ‘auf Leinwath’ (on canvas). What became of these works is not known. Nor do we have any subsequent information about the *Temptation of Saint Anthony* or virtually any of the other works from Archduke Albert’s collection, some of which will have been destroyed by fire in Brussels in 1731, while others will already have been moved elsewhere.
The high price paid for the *Temptation of Saint Anthony* to the Burgundian-Bruges official Charles de Berthoz, allied with the fact that the work was presented as a royal gift and later became a prized element in several major collections, supports the hypothesis that this might well be the triptych discussed here, which has been in the Portuguese capital since 1872. The dating of the wood of the central panel indicates that the Lisbon triptych could have been painted from 1497 onwards; combined with the identification of Hippolyte de Berthoz as patron, this suggests a date of around 1500 – that is, after 1497 and before Hippolyte’s death in mid-1503.
Van Waarden 2007, 81–82, referring to Bax 1948, 23.

28 A more recent surviving example of the device in the former Post- and Telegrafmuseum (now Technisches Museum) in Vienna is shaped like a bird’s head, in which the letter was inserted in the beak. See Führer des Post- und Telegrafmuseums Wien, 1959, 6; Von Schwerger-Lichenfeld s.a., 7–8. With thanks to Dr Veit Díczunetz, Berlin.

29 Van Waarden 2007, 81–82, referring to Bax 1948, 23.

30 Cf. Van Waarden 2007, 76.


32 ‘Sij worpen up in die lucht. Si worpen wever neder. Also dat si hem bi na dood ghebrocht hadden.’ Passioneel Winterstuc 1478, fol. 16v; Passioneel Winterstuc 1482, fol. 147v.

33 ‘in alhante dyeren ghelijkenissen’. 1

34 ‘een wonderlik schoon lichte ende dat verdeef die duvelen ende alle hare duysternissen’ and ‘die godlike stemme uit den licht’. vader boeck 1490, fol. 8, equivalent passage in the Passioneel Winterstuc 1478, fol. 16v; Passioneel Winterstuc 1482, fol. 147v.

35 There is no technical reason to suppose that the Christ figure was only added to the scene in the tower in the third instance; the altar, the crucifix, the standing Christ and the beam of light were prepared and painted as an ensemble. This contrary to Gambo and Van Schoute 2001, 17, 21v, 51.

36 Duckers and Priem 2009, 262–63 no. 60 (Eberhard König).

37 vader boeck 1490, fol. 20v–25v.

38 vader boeck 1490, fol. 27v–28v.

39 vader boeck 1490, fol. 19v–20; Passioneel Winterstuc 1478, fol. 16v; Passioneel Winterstuc 1482, fol. 148v.


41 Follower/workshop (?) of Hieronymus Bosch, The Temptation of Saint Anthony, oil on panel, 69.9 x 51.8 cm. Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, inv. 461.


43 Passioneel. Winterstuc, Gouda (Gerard Leeu) 1478 (copy in Ghent, Van Os) 1490 (copy in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague), the life of Saint Anthony (‘leven des heylighen vaders anthonius’) is on fol. 59–62.

44 vader boeck 1490, fol. 7v; Passioneel Winterstuc 1478, fol. 16v; Passioneel Winterstuc 1482, fol. 147v.

45 Letters to dignitaries were not always delivered by hand, but sometimes using an instrument in which the letter was gripped to avoid direct contact between the messenger and the recipient. The device was known as a postvogel (‘post bird’). An example is shown in a woodcut in the Weisung (1514–15). See TSB 11, 132. Albrecht Dürer holds one in his self-portrait in the Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand (1508). See Klauner 1979, 61 n. 9. A more recent surviving example of the device in the former Post- und Telegrafmuseum (now Technisches Museum) in Vienna is shaped like a bird’s head, in which the letter was inserted in the beak. See Führer des Post- und Telegrafmuseums Wien, 1959, 6; Von Schwerger-Lichenfeld s.a., 7–8. Thank you to Dr Veit Díczunetz, Berlin.

46 Van Waarden 2007, 81–82, referring to Bax 1948, 23.

47 ‘… pour une grande table de plaste paincture faite a huille de lhistoire saint anthoine, avec plusieurs autres histoires y adjustees tant a deux feuillete de lad[cite] table que aulcuns richement [fajolles que le] Roy a fait prendre et achever de lui…’ Lille, Archives Départementales du Nord, Série B 2191 fol. 389v./
Hieronymus Bosch
1490–95
Oil on oak panel, 48.5 × 40.5 cm
Museo Fundación Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid, 8155

BRCP examination and documentation data: Madrid, 20–23 February 2012; BRCP, Technical Studies, cat. 5, RR 47–48; //Boschproject.org no. 5.

Condition
All four sides of the panel were cropped. The original reverse has not been preserved as it has been thinned and cradled. The dysfunctional cradle has resulted in panel deformations and raised-paint issues. There are many smaller and larger losses spread over the paint surface and at the join, which have mostly been filled and retouched. The paint surface is only slightly abraded overall. Overall the visibility of the original surface is good.

Provenance

Literature
Hieronymus Bosch
1490–95

Oil on oak panel, 63 ⅓ × 43.2 cm
Signed lower right: Jheronimus bosch [damaged]
Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, 1647A

Condition
The panel has been almost completely preserved and the painting is stable. There are several small losses. The side with Saint John also has some larger restored losses, mainly in the area of the signature and the lower sky. The paint surfaces are only slightly abraded overall. Numerous residues of non-original surface layers result in the uneven and ‘dirty’ appearance of the paint surface with Saint John. On the reverse, ageing effects have resulted in a somewhat greater contrast between the grisaille and the dark surrounding area.

Provenance

Literature
brcp, Technical Studies, cat. 6, RR 51–52; Boschproject.org no. 6.

Analysis
Stylistic, physical and iconographical considerations, supported by dendrochronological data and combined with archival material, lead to the conclusion that Saint John the Baptist (Madrid) and Saint John on Patmos (Berlin) once belonged to an extended sculptural and painted ensemble, which formed the altarpiece of the Brotherhood of Our Lady in Saint John’s Church in ’s-Hertogenbosch. Saint John on Patmos was painted in the early 1490s and appears to be the earliest painting signed by Bosch. The two Saint John panels are key elements therefore in the reconstruction of Bosch’s oeuvre.
5.2 Reconstruction of the Altarpiece of the Brotherhood of Our Lady, ’s-Hertogenbosch

Closed
v Hieronymus Bosch, grisailles [CAT 6b]
vI Exterior large wings, painted by Gillis Panhedel, 1521–22 [lost]

Open
i Statue of the Virgin, 14th or 15th century [lost]
ii Case with wood carvings by Adriaen van Wesel, 1476–77 [a few fragments survive]
iii Interior large wings with wood carvings by Adriaen van Wesel, 1476–77 [lost]
iv Upper small wings, interior: wood carvings by Adriaen van Wesel, 1476–77 [fig 5.3]
v Exterior small wings: Hieronymus Bosch, 1488–89;
 – right wing (closed): Passion Scenes [CAT 6b]; (open) Saint John on Patmos [CAT 6a]
 – left wing (closed): [Childhood of Christ? lost]; (open) Saint John the Baptist [CAT 5]
vi Exterior large wings, painted by Gillis Panhedel, 1521–22 [lost]
The accounts of the Brotherhood of Our Lady in 's-Hertogenbosch for 1545/46 refer to ‘the painted doors of the altarpiece of Our Lady, done by Master Jeronimus’. The panel in Berlin showing Saint John on Patmos and the one in Madrid with Saint John the Baptist can almost certainly be identified as two of the wings that Bosch painted for the large altarpiece in the brotherhood’s chapel in Saint John’s Church in ‘s-Hertogenbosch. The precious carved and painted polyptych was gradually completed in the period 1475/76–1522/23. In its final form, it had two pairs of double wings. According to a Latin chronicle dating from around 1550, ‘A two-fold image can be seen there on the altar. For on working days, one picture is visible, which is so artful … On feast days the golden story is shown.’

The Utrecht sculptor Adriaen van Wesel made the carved altarpiece, which was then polychromed and gilded in ‘s-Hertogenbosch, where extra pairs of wings were added to both the wide, lower section, and the narrower section at the top. This process can be followed quite closely in the brotherhood’s account books. The Virgin Mary, patron saint of the Brotherhood of Our Lady, was the altarpiece’s principal subject. The Adoration of the Christ Child provided the central theme, while the scenes from the life of the Virgin will no doubt have been accompanied by painted Old Testament typologies on the outside of the now-lost lower wings. The Vision of Emperor Augustus and the apocalyptic vision of Saint John on Patmos in the carved upper wings were oriented primarily towards an earlier Marian statue that stood at the top of the altarpiece. This Madonna was carried in an annual procession and was central to the brotherhood’s worship. It was always visible, regardless of whether the carved and painted altarpiece wings were open or closed. When the polyptych was fully opened, Van Wesel’s carved figures of the apostle John and Emperor Augustus in the upper wings looked up towards the Mother of God who was positioned high above them and served as the object of both their visions at once. Saint John’s vision on Patmos provided the brotherhood with an ideal devotional combination of the apostle and evangelist – the patron saint of Saint John’s Church.

5.2, 5.3
5.4 Pelican [CAT 68]
and hence also of ‘s-Hertogenbosch – and the Virgin Mary, its own patron saint. Mary was, moreover, the object of the most important popular cult at Saint John’s, albeit centred on another, miracle-working statue. For the same reason, the brotherhood commissioned the local book printer Laurens Hayen in 1518/19 to insert a woodcut of Saint John on Patmos looking up at the ‘Woman in the Sun’ (also recognizable as the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child) in a Latin book of indulgences. Saint John’s vision of the Apocalypse was thus a key visual image for the Brotherhood of Our Lady.

The large altarpiece was removed for safekeeping in 1566 during an outbreak of iconoclastic violence. Its various parts were then cleaned by the painter Dirck Janssone and his assistant before the work was reinstalled: ‘The paintings from the altarpiece, with all the scenes ... [were] cleaned and washed, and the damage filled with paint.’ This was done at the Brotherhood of Our Lady’s house, where the altarpiece is also likely to have been stored.
5.8 Martin Schongauer, Saint John on Patmos, c. 1475–80. Engraving

5.9 Israhel van Meckenem, Saint John on Patmos, c. 1480. Engraving

5.10 [CAT 6A]

5.11 [CAT 6A]
after it was removed from St John’s Church once more in 1629 when the building came under Protestant control. What happened next is not known, but in the course of the nineteenth century, parts of the altarpiece turned up at various places in Brabant, but also in British collections. The altarpiece cases with the carved Saint John on Patmos and Emperor Augustus groups are the only elements still owned by the Brotherhood of Our Lady.

**PAINTED PANELS**

The panels with Saint John the Baptist and Saint John on Patmos painted by Hieronymus Bosch have long been considered pendants. The question was whether they originally belonged to a diptych, a triptych or to a larger altarpiece still. The scene with the Evangelist in Berlin has preserved its original dimensions (63 × 43.2 cm). The slightly smaller panel with the Baptist in Madrid (48.5 × 40.5 cm) has been cropped on all sides. The semi-grisaille on the back of the Berlin panel points towards an original function as the hinged wing of a diptych, triptych or polyptych. No traces of painting have survived on the back of the panel in Madrid, which has been thinned severely, suggesting that it was split to separate the front and the back; the Wayfarer, the Ship of Fools and Death and the Miser (cat. 19) were subjected to a similar procedure. The compositions of the two scenes are oriented so firmly to the left and right respectively, albeit with no mutual connection, that the possibility of them having once formed a diptych, as suggested earlier, is untenable. There must have been a certain amount of space between the two panels. Moreover, the focus in Saint John on Patmos is firmly towards the upper left. The Berlin panel forms a precise match, both iconographically and in terms of its dimensions, with the upper right wing of the brotherhood’s altarpiece. This means that the scene with Saint John on Patmos appeared in the altarpiece twice – the painting by Bosch and the carving by Van Wesel – and that the connection with the statue of the Virgin Mary positioned in the middle of the ensemble was almost always maintained. We do not know which scenes were painted on the backs of the wings supplied by Adriaen van Wesel.

John the Baptist is an excellent pendant for Saint John on Patmos in this Marian altarpiece. Not only were the feasts of the two Saint Johns celebrated with almost equal pomp at St John’s Church (dedicated to the Evangelist), the inclusion of John the Baptist, who preached the coming of Christ the Redeemer, is also an appropriate link in the altarpiece as a whole between the Old and New Testament.

In 1488/89, the accounts of the Brotherhood of Our Lady contain an order for two wings, which were to be painted for the altarpiece (’twee doren … die men soude doen stof feren’). The price of seven Rhenish florins suggests a fairly substantial job, from which it is reasonable to conclude that these were the larger, lower wings rather than the considerably smaller upper set. A payment was made in 1521/22 for two borders (panels), which were painted by Gillis Panhedel (also called Gielis vanden Bossche) from Brussels. These are likely to have been panels that were mounted on the back of the large wings, also hinged, made by Adriaen van Wesel. The wings were cleaned and varnished in 1545/46: ‘Item cleaning and varnishing the painted wings of the altarpiece that stands on the altar of Our Lady, which were painted by Master Jeronimus. And also the inside of the wings painted by Gielis vanden Bossche residing in Brussels.’ A municipal chronicle written in 1608 and printed in 1610 adds that the wings were painted with Old Testament Marian typologies by Hieronymus Bosch. Interestingly, although all the costs incurred for the altarpiece are systematically recorded in the brotherhood’s accounts, no reference is made to Bosch’s activities. Nor is anything recorded regarding the construction or the painting of the upper part of the altarpiece; either the costs were paid by individual members of the brotherhood, or Bosch made no charge.
DATING

Dendrochronological dating of Saint John the Baptist and Saint John on Patmos shows that the panels may have been painted as of 1476 and 1491 respectively. The Madrid panel has been cropped on all four sides, which means that growth rings are missing there. The relationship between the two images, in terms of both style and use of materials, is so strong that the paintings are likely to have been produced at more or less the same time. Hieronymus was admitted to the brotherhood’s elite inner core in 1487–88 and accepted as a sworn brother. Perhaps he showed his gratitude and paid tribute to the Virgin Mary at the same time by painting the already-purchased panels for the lower set of wings, followed a few years later by the upper set too. He signed the Berlin panel bottom right in Gothic letters using the Latinized version of his name. As far as we can tell, this was the first time that Jeroen (Joen) van Aken used the signature ‘Jheronimus Bosch’, squarely presenting himself as a learned and self-assured artist. Very few painters signed their works quite so emphatically and, in doing so, the talented craftsman highlighted the huge step he had taken up the social ladder when he was admitted to the inner core of the Brotherhood of Our Lady. He owed that status to his own exceptional artistry, to which he might actually have alluded here by incorporating a self-portrait in the monster painted above his signature. If so, he found a creative way to insert a demonic portrait historié of himself in a panel that does full justice to his immense artistic qualities. Together with the panel showing John the Baptist and the refined grisaille painting on the back, Bosch displays his skills here on a scale so minutely detailed that it is hard at times to make out with the naked eye: a demonstration of his ability, yet doubtlessly intended above all in praise of God.

SOURCES OF INSPIRATION: SCHONGAUER AND VAN MECKENEM

The two panels are closely related in both the fluid brushstrokes with which the underdrawing is laid down and their mode of painting. It is evident from the underdrawing of the Berlin panel that Bosch was familiar with the engravings of Saint John on Patmos by both Martin Schongauer (c.1450–1491) and Israhel van Meckenem (c.1440/45–1503). Max Dvořák pointed out the striking similarities between Schongauer and Bosch’s renditions of Saint John on Patmos as early as 1924 and these are even more noteworthy when we take account of the underdrawing of the painting. Both Schongauer’s engraving and the underdrawing of Bosch’s panel, for instance, show Saint John with his head raised significantly higher than in the finished painting. The saint’s foot and the landscape in the left foreground are also similar in the print and the underdrawing, but not in the painted version. The same goes for Israhel van Meckenem’s engraving, in which moreover the eagle is in the same place as in Bosch’s panel. Van Meckenem and Bosch both place the Woman in the Sun – conflated with the Virgin and Child – on the crescent moon and show her sitting, whereas Schongauer has her standing. Bosch’s painting is by no means a slavish copy: there are too many differences and too much effort has been made in the underdrawing to position the pictorial elements correctly. He is likely to have drawn inspiration from Schongauer and Van Meckenem’s printed and hence widely available images, as also appears to be the case for the Ecce Homo in Frankfurt (cat. 11); nevertheless Bosch’s composition differs fundamentally from these models, as he has placed the Evangelist in an imposing and convincing landscape, which he has rendered with considerable care (while apparently indifferent to the fact that Patmos is an island). The naturalism with which Bosch painted the landscape around Saint John offers an excellent stage (literally so, given the presence of the hill) for the angel – an invention of the painter, inspired by but not directly borrowed from the text of Revelations – who points towards the Woman in the Sun. The realism of the landscape heightens the wondrous nature of the scene while simultaneously presenting the vision in a compelling way to the late fifteenth-century viewer.
The alterations in the panel with Saint John the Baptist are more substantial. The underdrawing – where it can be detected at any rate – was followed in paint fairly closely. However, the large, fanciful, thistle-like plant and the green bush behind which John stretches out conceal the figure of a male donor, kneeling in prayer. He was hidden behind the vegetation relatively soon after being painted, presumably because he was no longer wanted. A thin layer of varnish between the donor figure and the plants painted over him suggests that some time – a few months at least – must have passed between their respective execution, but it is no longer possible to determine precisely how long. The high quality and the nature of the overpainting, perfectly in keeping with Hieronymus Bosch’s imagery, indicate firmly that the adjustments were made in Bosch’s workshop, possibly by the master himself.

It is hard to estimate the age of the overpainted donor, but he might have been the local dignitary Jan van Vladeracken (c. 1450–1532), who paid for the large set of lower wings in 1488/89. He was an alderman in ’s-Hertogenbosch for many years and became a sworn member of the Brotherhood of Our Lady in 1475; he was dean of the brotherhood in 1503/04, as he had been in 1487/88, the year in which Bosch was admitted as a sworn member. The donor, kneeling before his name saint John the Baptist, is directly comparable with Petrus van Os on the inside of the left wing of the Ecce Homo Triptych in Boston (cat. 24); they wear similar brimless hats and tabards trimmed with fur. Bosch and Jan van Vladeracken must have known each other well; both had houses on the north side of the Markt, and Van Vladeracken was one of the hosts of the Swan Banquet in 1487–88, when Bosch was accepted as a sworn brother. Whatever the identity of the kneeling donor, his conspicuous presence...
was evidently surplus to requirements and he was painted out shortly afterwards. Perhaps he died without heirs who could have taken over the commission. Nor is it hard to imagine that the inclusion of a single donor’s portrait in a sizeable altarpiece developed over many years through the efforts of a large number of brothers was felt to be inappropriate. The ensemble – which ultimately took almost half a century to complete – was, after all, the collective possession and focus of devotion of the Brotherhood of Our Lady as a whole.

John the Baptist lies pensively in a landscape that represents the wilderness into which he withdrew as a prophet. It seems peaceful enough, yet we see a bear in the background devouring a deer and another shaking a tree. John rests his head on his left hand and holds the fabric of his red robe in his right, with which he simultaneously points towards the lamb lying in front of him. The little animal is his principal attribute, based on the words he spoke on baptizing Christ in the River Jordan: ‘Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’ (John 1:29). All that has yet to come, however, and the prophet also points here beyond the lamb and towards the scenes in the carved altarpiece below him, all of which are focused on the Nativity of Christ. In this way, Bosch presents the two Johns in their visionary role – the Baptist pointing to the advent of the Redeemer and the Evangelist on Patmos setting out his prophecy of the end of the world in the Book of Revelation. Bosch has painted a small bird of prey on the ground in front of the Evangelist, representing his eagle attribute, together with a pen-case and ink pot at his feet, and behind him an insect-like demon with a human head. The monster’s belly and right wing are pierced with arrows; it holds its little arms up helplessly in the air, and a small fire smolders on its head. The world behind him seems Christian, as a wooden cross has been raised next to the road winding between the hills. The angel, rendered in shades of blue, who has appeared to John, points to the apparition of the ‘woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars’ (Revelation 12:1). Further weight is added to the prophecy by a blazing ship on the sea, dotted with sails, that lies beneath the visionary woman and behind the hill on which the angel stands: ‘But woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you with great wrath’ (12:12).

**PASSION SCENES**

The reverse of the panel with Saint John on Patmos is painted in semi-grisaille. It shows the story of Christ’s Passion in an illuminated circle surrounded by hellish darkness. The essence of Christ’s advent – self-sacrifice and charity – is symbolized at the centre of the circle by a heroic, oversized pelican feeding its young with its own blood. Although Bosch often painted birds very naturalistically, he plainly had to rely here on a visual tradition in which pelicans tend to look more like large birds of prey. An example can be found in an engraving produced by Bosch’s contemporary, Israhel van Meckenem, to whom we have already referred, and who worked in Bocholt, a hundred kilometres east of ’s-Hertogenbosch. The pelican’s nest is located on top of a tall rock rising out of the sea, beyond which we see a distant landscape beneath a brightly lit sky, with a horizon line leaning steeply to the right. A fire blazes at the foot of the rock, lending extra emphasis and balance to the roundel. The central image also forms a visual rhyme with the other side of the panel, in which the salvation of humanity through the Son of God is, of course, also the essence of Saint John’s apocalyptic visions. John sits in front of a steep hill in an almost identical view of land and water with a city in the distance; behind him we see a demon with burning flames on his head and the angel on the hill pointing to the brightly lit Woman in the Sun, in the form once again of the Virgin and the Christ Child.

The Passion of Christ is set out in eight scenes incorporating a number of interesting details: Agony in the Garden; the Kiss of Judas; Christ before Pilate; the Flagellation; the Crowning with Thorns; Christ Carrying the Cross; the Crucifixion; and the Entombment. The prayer in the garden of Gethsemane is presented in the manner described in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, with Jesus shown praying to his father at a distance from the apostles Peter, James and John (Matthew 16:36–39; Mark 14:32–35). Judas, who
has betrayed him, can be seen approaching with a group of soldiers. The apostle John is depicted on his own; he sits with his back to Christ and has fallen asleep, while James and Peter sit together, Peter’s sword lying on the ground in front of him. In the next scene, he uses the weapon to cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, who has dropped his lantern in the struggle. It lies there near the servant’s feet, but damage to the paint surface makes it difficult to identify. In the third scene, Christ is brought before the Roman governor, Pilate, who holds a judge’s staff in his right hand. Next to him stands his wife who, according to Matthew, asked her husband not to find Christ guilty (Matthew 27:19). Bosch turned to John’s Gospel for the next two scenes, in which Christ is flogged and then crowned with thorns (19:1–2). The dome of the building in which the Flagellation is set is almost identical to that of the tower in the right wing of the Saint Wilgefortis Triptych (cat. 8). Christ Carrying the Cross, meanwhile, focuses on the moment when Simon of Cyrene intervenes to help Jesus. The sky behind the three crucified men on Mount Golgotha, lastly, shades from very dark to an ominous twilight; this allows Christ and the penitent thief to stand out brightly against the dark background, while the 'bad thief' could be rendered as a near-silhouette (Luke 23:39–43).

The Passion Scenes – painted largely in shades of brown around the central allegory of Christ’s self-sacrifice – are surrounded by deep darkness, in which Bosch has painted all
5.16 188 [CAT 68]

5.17 Passion Scenes [CAT 68]
sorts of barely visible, disproportional figures in dark tones, surrounded by foliage and flower petals. A bat-like monster hangs from a crossbow below the upper right corner, where a helmet has also been painted; above these we make out a harp and a little human figure, pierced with an arrow, in a cocoon; and below them a gigantic fish with a gaping mouth, from which a flock of birds flies out. A bell hangs directly above the crucified Christ; a flying fish moves towards the left, with a little figure bent upside-down, which appears again in reverse in the right wing of the *Last Judgement* in Bruges (cat. 16). In that work, the figure has a jousting lance inserted in its backside, whereas here the remains of a long white pole are still visible. A relatively large, helmeted figure approaches from below in the upper left corner carrying a long ladder over his shoulder. He is attacked by another naked man brandishing a sword. In the lower left corner, a large bird pecks at a dead fish, while another bird flies up. An animal resembling a pig is placed in the extreme corner, from where it looks outwards. A giant dog to the right growls menacingly at three deer loitering peacefully on a riverbank. While not identical, the bad dog is directly comparable with the ones in the *Wayfarer* panel and the closed wings of the *Haywain* in the Prado (cat. 19 and 20). In the latter triptych, a bird flutters down just in front of the dog,
similar to the one above the dog in the Berlin panel. A winged knight riding a fish hurries up on the right, armed with a jousting lance from which a tankard is suspended. A similar knight can be seen high in the air in the interior of the left wing of the Saint Anthony Triptych in Lisbon (cat. 4). He advances towards a figure with a bare backside creeping out of the water and into the wood. A sword, evidently belonging to the knight, lies before the fish to the left. The lower right corner contains a winged, insect-like monster below a tankard with a blossom branch. Above this is a monster resembling a cross between a centipede and a hare, and higher up still, lastly, we make out a cannon on a two-wheeled carriage, as we also find in the right wing of the Bruges Last Judgement (cat. 16). The overall effect is that of a chaotic mass in deep darkness, in the midst of which Christ brings salvation. All these little figures were executed using an extremely curious, yet simultaneously rapid and efficient painting technique. The basic forms were applied by pressing a small amount of paint into a still wet, dark background with a paintbrush. The figures were then finished by means of a few expertly placed highlights. Because of this method and the ageing of the paint layers, they can often be made out more clearly using infrared reflectography than in visible light.
As the pendant to this semi-grisaille, the reverse of the John the Baptist panel must have had a corresponding composition. It is impossible to reconstruct the themes depicted there with any certainty, but the Passion cycle and the theme of self-sacrifice in the right wing indicate that it is likely to have focused on the childhood and ministry of Christ, lighting up once again out of the unearthly darkness. When the wings were closed, the two images alongside one another would have seemed like a pair of eyes regarding the viewer. The intention was perhaps to exhort beholders to pay extra attention to these scenes, while also reminding them that they themselves were constantly observed by God. The prints of Israhel van Meckenem (after Master E.S.) offer an interesting point of comparison once again as we seek potential sources of inspiration for this composition. We find the same structure, for instance, in an engraving thought to be the design for a paten. John the Baptist features at the centre in a landscape surrounded by a circle of evangelists’ symbols and Church Fathers framed by decorative trails. A talented follower – possibly even a pupil or assistant of Hieronymus Bosch – developed this idea further and more explicitly in The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things in the Prado in Madrid (cat. 34). That panel shows the risen Christ in the pupil of a giant eye, around which are depicted the sins of humanity, together with references to death and judgement on the Last Day.

21 Baldass suggested in 1943 (32–33, 243) that these were the left and right wings of a small altarpiece. By 1959, however, in the second edition of his monograph (von Baldass 1955, 44, 233), he had changed his mind, writing instead that the panels originally functioned as a diptych, of which only three sides were painted. A configuration of this kind is only found, however, in ‘stationary’ diptychs, where one of the two wings was fixed to the wall, which meant the back did not have to be painted; diptychs of this type are, however, considerably larger than these panels. Fuster Sabater (1996, 77–86) concurred with the triptych reconstruction.

22 The panel has been thinned so severely that it cannot have been done simply with a view to cradling. See brcp, Technical Studies, cat. 6, RR 51–52.


24 The maximum dimensions of the cases (96.7 x 61.6 cm) imply that the original frame elements of the panels were 9–10 cm wide, with a slightly wider member at the bottom.


26 Koldeweij 1990a, 212 no. 128; Koldeweij 2001a, 34, 76.

27 The scene also featured in a sculpture in the brothderhood’s chapel, as shown by a 1516/17 account of the expenditure of two florins: ‘Willem the painter for the polychromy of Our Lady in the Sun beneath the Madonna (probably fourteenth-century) at the top of the altarpiece – was made as late as 15,476/8.


30 The works are extremely closely related in material terms; see brcp, Technical Studies, cat. 5, RR 47–48 and cat. 6, RR 51–52.

Hieronymus Bosch

c. 1490–1500

Oil on oak panel, 113.7 × 71.6 cm

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, St. 26

Signed lower left: Jheronimus bosch

BRCP examination and documentation data:
Rotterdam, 23–26 May 2011; BRCP, Technical Studies, cat. 7, RR 7; Boschproject.org no. 7.

Condition

The presence of barbs on all edges indicates that the dimensions of the painted surface were preserved. Although the panel reverse has been thinned and cradled, slight original bevelling is still present at the top and bottom edges. In the corner near the abraded signature a small, triangular section of the panel was replaced. The cradle is blocked, and caused undulation of the panel as well as some cracks at the bottom, one of which is large. The minor, restored losses are concentrated there and along the three joins. Ground and paint layers are well adhered. The paint surface is significantly abraded, as can be seen in the thin green glaze on the foreground water, and locally severely worn. The paint has become more transparent over time, which has resulted in increased visibility of underlying layers, for example in the tree at right. Extensive overpainting and the uneven varnish resulted in the reduced legibility of the original paint surface. Conservation issues were addressed in the 2015 full treatment of the painting.

Provenance

1931 Kunstsalon Paul Cassirer (noted by M.J. Friedländer); 1935–40 Haarlem, Franz W. Koenigs, loaned to Museum Boymans, Rotterdam; 1940–41 Daniel George van Beuningen; 1941 donated to Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

Literature


Analysis

The signed painting of Saint Christopher carrying the Christ Child is a characteristic example of Hieronymus Bosch’s working method. The image was prepared with a meticulous underdrawing as a fairly traditional scene. This was then altered and added to during the painting process, to create a more typically Boschian end product. The jug used as a dwelling in the tree on the right and the tiny hermits emphasize Christopher’s immense stature, and hence the might of the Christ Child he carries. The bleeding fish, meanwhile, symbolizes the crucifixion and identifies Christ as the true focus of this panel.

Christopher

Christopher was an unusual saint. His feast day was removed from the official Church calendar following the Second Vatican Council in 1969 and it is not certain that he ever existed. He is traditionally said to have been a giant who carried Christ across a river: ‘Christophorus’, his Latin name, literally means ‘Christ-bearer’. All the same, Christopher was an immensely popular saint in the period around 1500, prompting Erasmus to mock the veneration of the legendary ferryman in his Praise of Folly (1511):

But there’s no doubt [says Folly] that those folk are all men of my kidney who delight in miracles and fictitious marvels, whether hearing or telling about them. They can never have enough of such tales when there are any wonders to relate about ghosts, spectres, phantoms, and the dead, and all the countless miracles there are of this kind. The further these are from truth, the more eagerly they are believed and the more agreeably they titillate the ear. Such things not only serve remarkably well for whiling away a tedious hour but can also be profitable, especially for preachers and demagogues. Closely related to them are the people who’ve adopted the foolish but pleasurable belief that if they see some carving or painting of that towering Polyphemus, Christopher, they’re sure not to die that day.1

Images of Saint Christopher, both carved and painted, were frequently displayed in the fifteenth century in churches and other public places where travellers could see them;2 they were believed to have apotropaic power – the ability to ward off evil. Bosch’s contemporary and fellow townsman Alart Duhomeel – a printmaker and the architect of St John’s Church – produced a small engraving in ‘s-Hertogenbosch that includes most of the ghouls and monsters mentioned by Erasmus.1 It shows Saint Christopher wading through the water with Christ – clutching a remarkably large orb – on his shoulders. The saint is surrounded
and menaced by a large number of weird creatures, including an immense lobster that has sunk its claw into his right calf. The banderole at the top contains a Latin verse stressing the print’s function as an amulet: ‘Saint Christopher, many are your salutary powers; those who see you in the morning smile in the evening.’

The word _bosche_ on a pennant in the upper left indicates that the print was made in ‘s-Hertogenbosch.

The way Duhameel presents the saint contrasts sharply with Bosch’s treatment, even though both images must have been produced in the same town at more or less the same time, probably in the first half of the 1490s. Interestingly, Duhameel’s print is considerably more ‘Boschian’ than Bosch’s own painting, because of the fanciful creatures it contains. Bosch places the emphasis elsewhere, on the figure of Christ and its meaning.

Christopher wades through a ford in the ostensibly peaceful surroundings of an expansive river landscape. Compared with the Christ-bearer, the figure with his dog at the water’s side is minuscule, telling us that this Christ Child too must be enormous, not to mention the fish that dangles from Christopher’s staff. It is far easier to distinguish here between the principal and secondary elements than it is in Duhameel’s print.

**Sources**

The legend of Saint Christopher as Bosch and his contemporaries knew it can be found in various fifteenth-century sources. The _Passio_ – the Middle Dutch version of the much older _Legenda aurea_ (‘Golden Legend’), compiled in the second half of the thirteenth century by the northern Italian monk Jacopo de Voragine – was the most widely disseminated. It tells how Christopher wanted to work for the most powerful master and so made his way from one prince to another. Having offered his services to the devil, he discovered that even he was afraid of Christ, who must therefore be mightier still. Christopher subsequently joined a community of hermits, one of whom instructed him in the Christian faith. Seeing his size and strength, the hermit put him to work carrying people over the river: ‘because you
are large in build and strong of limb, go and dwell by the river and carry the people across’. Christopher accepted the task and settled at the river. In Bosch’s painting he wades through the water supported by a large staff, which he grips with both hands. A monk – possibly the hermit from the legend – stands on the riverbank, where he is about to fill a jug with water. A much larger jug hangs in the tree behind him, where it is apparently being used as a dwelling by several hermits. One of them hides in the neck of the jug, where he busies himself with a lantern that will serve Christopher as a beacon when he crosses back over the water.

One day, Christopher heard a child calling and hurried to the other side of the river to pick it up; when he got there, however, there was no one to be seen. The same thing happened again; only on the third occasion did he discover ‘a child sitting there on the riverbank, who asked Christopher to carry him across’. Christopher lifted the child to his shoulders, took his staff in his hand, and began to cross the river. As the water grew deeper, the child grew heavier and heavier. Christopher risked drowning and only reached the other side with the greatest of difficulty. He asked himself aloud what had just happened, to which the child replied: ‘Don’t be surprised, Christopher. You were not only carrying the whole world on your shoulders, but also he who made the world. For I am Christ, whom you serve with this work.’

SYMBOLISM

Bosch’s painting is set before that moment occurs. Christopher carries the Christ Child, whose identity he does not yet know but who is clearly identifiable to the viewer from the halo around his head and the right hand raised in blessing; his left hand grasps a slender crosier. The miraculous nature of the scene is apparent from the hefty staff on which Christopher supports himself; new twigs with leaves have sprouted at the bottom of the shaft, just above the water, and also above the saint’s head. We read in the Passionael that Jesus instructed Christopher to plant his staff in the ground next to his house, where it would sprout the following day as proof that it had indeed been Christ whom he carried over the river. The Child then vanished. The next morning Christopher rose and found that his staff ‘had leaves like a palm tree, and dates growing on it.’ Bax, and more recently De Bruyn, have noted that an alternative tradition existed alongside this version of the story; it is alluded to in a fourteenth-century German devotional poem which states that the staff began to bud during the crossing of the river.

The exterior of the right wing of the Saint Anthony Triptych in Lisbon (cat. 4) includes a hanged lamb in the background of Christ Carrying the Cross, referring to the unjust condemnation of the Lamb of God. The dead bear here, by contrast, should be interpreted in the opposite way, namely as a victory over evil. The jug in the large tree on the right of the panel is a hermitage. Although it is one of the most striking elements in the overall scene, it did not initially feature in it. The tree, along with the bushes on the riverbank to Christopher’s rear, was only painted after the background was finished. A little chapel hangs from the tree trunk on the left, surmounted with a cross. There is a dung heap beneath it, near which two hens scratch around. A dead fox has been hung by its hind legs on the other side of the trunk, as a further symbol of the defeat of evil.
The large fish dangling from Christopher’s staff has a much more prominent place in the image. It is, to say the least, an unusual detail in the saint’s iconography. Given the presence of Jesus, it certainly cannot be dismissed as an anecdotal touch. The fish has been a common symbol of Christ and Christianity since the faith’s earliest days, based on the reading of the Greek word ichthys (‘fish’) as an acronym of ‘Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour’. For that reason, the bloody fish Bosch has painted hanging from the staff ought to be read as a metaphor for the crucified Christ. The fish was initially placed closer to the staff, but was then redone with greater emphasis to underline its importance. While not obvious to us nowadays, it was entirely possible in the period around 1500 to interpret the staff as an allusion to Christ’s wooden cross. A passage in the early fifteenth-century Spieghel der Menscheliker Behoudenisse (i.e. the Speculum Humanae Salvationis or Mirror of Human Salvation), for instance, refers to the traveller’s staff as the cross on which Christ died. Another text, dating from about 1500, explicitly describes such a stick as ‘the cross of our Lord’. What Bosch shows us in this image of Christopher carrying Christ – and with him the weight of the world – across the water, is that the giant can only do so with the support of his faith, represented by his staff. The inclusion of the dead fish emphasizes Christ’s role as Redeemer. It is worth noting in this regard that, unlike Duhameel’s print, Bosch does not show Christ with an orb (symbol of a ruler) but with a subtly rendered crosier.

**DATING**

Dendrochronological dating of the Saint Christopher panel shows that it could have been painted from 1490 onwards. Comparison with other works by Hieronymus Bosch also suggests a date in the 1490s. The painting fits neatly into Bosch’s oeuvre in terms of its preparation and execution. As noted above, the artist overpainted a virtually finished, more tradi-
tional composition to include scenes like the hanged bear, the hermitage, the flying fish and the sunken ship. This must have been done during the painting process, as the long branch with the little figure in the upper right was added while the paint of the water was still wet. Similarly, only the patch of land in the bottom right corner was initially planned: the patches bottom left and centre were painted on top of the water, and the signature was then added. The latter is very similar to the signature on Saint John on Patmos in Berlin (cat. 6).

The preparatory underdrawing is closely related to that of other saints’ images, including Saint Jerome, Saint John the Baptist and Saint John on Patmos (cat. 1, 5 and 6).11 The ear of the Rotterdam Saint Christopher, meanwhile, is virtually identical to that of Saint Jerome in Ghent. Although Christ is represented in a far less linear way in this painting than he is on the back of Christ Carrying the Cross in Vienna (cat. 12), he is unmistakably the same child. Lastly, Bosch used the same study for the pose and figure of Saint Christopher as he did for his Saint James the Greater on the closed wings of the Vienna Last Judgement (cat. 17). The parallel is an interesting one: the first of these saints is the protector of all travellers, while the second watches over pilgrims, especially those to Santiago de Compostela.


3 Lehrs, Gkk, 238–39.

4 ‘Cristofore s[anse]te virtutes sunt tibi tante Qui te de... tempore Ridet.’

5 The Passionael states that he was ‘oversized in build and terrible in appearance, and was twelve cubits [roughly six metres] tall’ (‘alte groet van maecsel ende vreselic van aensichte, ende hi was xij cubitus lanc’).

6 Passionael Somerstuc 1482, fol. 110–12v.

7 ‘om dattu groot biste van maecsele ende stark van leden... ende alle luden over draghen’.

8 Original quotes in this paragraph: ‘daer een kijnedekijn sitten opten oever vander ryvieren, ende het bat... ghenen die die werelt maecte want ic ben xps die du in desen wercken dienes.’

9 ‘bladeren hadde, als een palmboem, ende hi hadde dadelen daer op’.


11 Dinzelbacher 2002.

12 As far as we can tell, it is unique.


14 &quot; – Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Σωτήρ.


17 See also Chapter iii, ‘Materials and Techniques’.
Saint Wilgefortis Triptych

Hieronymus Bosch  
c. 1495–1505

Oil on oak panel, left wing 105.2 x 27.5 cm, central panel 105.2 x 62.7 cm, right wing 104.7 x 27.9 cm  
Signed central panel, lower left: Jheronimus bosch  
Venice, Gallerie dell’Accademia

BRCp examination and documentation data:  
Venice, 14–25 November 2011; BRCp, Technical Studies, cat. 8, RR 21–26; Boschproject.org no. 8.

Condition  
The triptych panels have retained their original format, but their reverses were thinned and cradled. A possible remnant of a red bole suggests that the (now-lost) original, engaged frame was gilded. The panel surfaces are undulating and some old woodworm damage as well as several cracks were observed. Despite a history of raised paint issues, the layers are generally well adhered. The painting is severely abraded and there are many restored losses. Given, moreover, that red lakes have faded and light paints have increased in transparency, most red clothing has lost its original finish. The overpainted donors and other alterations have become more visible over time. Disturbing retouchings, the greyish surface layer and poor varnish result in an uneven appearance of the painting. Conservation issues were addressed in the 2013–15 full treatment of the painting.

Provenance  

Literature  

Analysis  
The triptych showing Saint Wilgefortis has been in Venice for over 350 years. However, there are no unambiguous sources documenting the painting’s presence in the city from the sixteenth century onwards. The Bosch Research and Conservation Project has shown that the triptych was conceived as an ensemble from the outset, and that any dispute as to the identity of the crucified female martyr can be ruled out. It has also become clear that the triptych is of excellent quality and deserves to be placed unequivocally in Bosch’s core oeuvre.

The triptych  
The restoration performed in 2013–15 has given back to the Saint Wilgefortis Triptych its legibility and rich colour, along with some of its earlier lustre. The figure groups and the landscape have regained much of their original depth and plasticity. Greater clarity has also been achieved regarding the creation of the triptych, whose wings were overpainted at an early stage (most likely before it left the workshop) while respecting and utilizing the original composition. The profusion and intensity of the reds in the central panel are even more striking now than they were before restoration. Most of the red garments have a red base, followed by a modelling layer, mostly of lead white, and finally a red lake glaze. This bright red base is not found in most other paintings by Bosch. The painting thus appears to have been constructed very deliberately to use colour to seize the viewer’s attention. Only when approached more closely and viewed more attentively does the work gradually reveal its details, depth and finesse.

The earliest description of the triptych of a crucified female martyr is that of Marco Boschini in 1664: ‘... another painting in three parts, in which one sees the martyrdom of a female saint on the cross, with many figures, and one in particular that has fallen unconscious to the ground, supported by others; it was painted by Girolamo Basì.’ At that time the triptych hung in a corridor in the Doge’s Palace in Venice. It was mentioned again when a new edition of the guide was published in 1664, including several comments on the previous description: ‘... a painting in three parts with the martyrdom of a crowned male saint,
not of a female saint, [and] not by Girolamo Bassi, but by Girolamo Bolch, as may be seen written in white German [Gothic] letters. The author of this quotation, Antonio Maria Zanetti, thus believed he was seeing a male saint. His nephew and namesake, Antonio Maria Zanetti il Giovane, returned to the subject of the triptych in the Doge’s Palace in a later publication of 1771. The martyr’s gender was less clear to him, causing him to write that this was ‘a male or a female saint’. He transcribed the signature as Jeronimus Bosch, leaving out the first h: Italians were anything but used to reading Gothic script.

The younger Zanetti also noted that the two works by Girolamo Bosch da Bolduch (that is, ‘from Bois-le-Duc’ – French for ‘s-Hertogenbosch) in the Doge’s Palace comprised a total of six panels. Both triptychs – this one and the Hermit Saints Triptych (cat. 2) – were probably displayed at the time in a way that concealed the reverses of their wings, as these are not mentioned in any of the sources, prompting the question of whether they might have been lost at an early stage. In 1740 the Wilgefortis Triptych was in the Sala dei Tre Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci. It was still recorded there in 1837, before being sent to Vienna a year later. If the paintings – presumably grisailles – on the closed wings had not disappeared already, they were certainly removed between 1838 and 1919, when the backs of all the panels were cradled.

As we have seen, the three Venetian authors did not know the identity of the crucified figure and differed as to the saint’s gender. The feminine physique was decisive for Boschini, while the elder Zanetti probably focused more on the facial hair, which must have been more clearly visible at the time. It was confirmed during the thorough restoration performed in 2013–15 that the martyr did indeed have a beard originally. This is an important observation, as it not only explains the hesitation expressed by the younger Zanetti, it also concludes a debate triggered in 1937 by the Flemish folklorist Jozef Gessler, who was the first to suggest that the crucified young woman was the martyr Wilgefortis. This saint was venerated throughout northern Europe in the late Middle Ages, where she was also known by the name ‘Uncumber’ in a variety of forms and spellings. Gessler’s view contradicted the received opinion that this was the relatively unknown Saint Julia, whose cult was chiefly located in the Brescia region of Italy. Hermann Dollmayr had confidently proposed this identification in 1898, when the triptych was still in Vienna, and his conclusion had been widely adopted by subsequent authorities. It was even cited as one of the principal arguments in favour of a presumed visit to Italy by Bosch – a hypothesis that continues to crop up regularly, but which as yet remains unproven.

Bosch gave the crucified virgin a light beard, as did Hans Memling in the Wilgefortis figure on the closed left wing of his 1480 Triptych of Adriaan Reins in St John’s Hospital in Bruges. The martyr remained an attractive young princess, despite the facial hair, but the miraculous beard spared her having to marry a non-Christian. Her heathen father responded furiously and had her crucified in the manner of Jesus Christ, whom she refused to renounce.

Bosch turned this crucifixion scene into a complex figure study, with considerable drama. The T-shaped cross to which Wilgefortis is bound has been positioned at the centre of the painting, where it towers above two groups of men, one on either side. The pair of finely dressed individuals in the right-hand foreground seem to be responsible for her condemnation and execution. The figures behind them look on, while one man points an accusing finger at the victim. The group on this side of the cross recalls images of the baying crowd in Ecce Homo scenes. The figures on the left create a very different impression; these bystanders seem to have come to their senses and to have realized the gravity of the crucifixion.

Together, they are reminiscent of depictions of the Conversion of Saul. The man at the front falls backwards in a faint and is caught by two monks. The mi-parti-coloured hose worn by this figure includes a little embroidered owl sitting on a bare branch, no doubt intended as a symbol of evil. Bosch decorated this garment with expensive embroidery incorporating a large number of pearls, telling us that this is an important and wealthy personage. His fine cloak is fastened with a pin on which another bird can be seen.
DONORS

The vast landscape beyond the crucified martyr contains a church on the right and originally ran continuously into both wings, providing a background for two male donors. These were overpainted centuries ago, but can be made out clearly in X-ray and infrared images of the painting. The two men kneel, their hands clasped together, and observe the scene in the central panel; they are positioned just above the low wall, which was already present in this preliminary composition. Each wears a wide-sleeved cloak with a brown fur collar, and a hat with a turned-up brim. The figure in the left wing wears a dark-blue toga and a reddish shirt. His counterpart on the right has a very dark cloak worn over a green, long-sleeved shirt, on top of which the artist laid a transparent layer of reddish-brown paint to create the effect of shot silk. The straight neckline of his shirt was decorated with an embroidered pattern. We do not have sufficient evidence at this point to identify these donors or to place them in their sociocultural context. There is no reason, however, to suppose that they are Italians, as has been claimed repeatedly on the grounds of their costume.

The wings were painted in at least three phases. In the first of these, the donors were placed in landscapes, with a large expanse of sky, which was rendered more consistently across all the panels. Adjustments were then made and the painting was completed in the second phase. The final phase included the overpainting of the donors, in the course of which substantial alterations were made to the landscapes; parts of the central panel were also painted over.

During the second phase, the donor in the left wing was given a hat, the one worn by the donor on the right was adjusted, and their shoulders were made squarer. It was probably during this phase too that the neck of the martyr in the central panel was altered. The landscape near the donor’s head in the right wing was adjusted, the initially higher coastline was lowered and the whale and the sinking ships were added. The warship and the fanciful architecture – the foremost tower is topped with an owl-like structure – were not left in reserve in the preparatory layer and might also have originated during the second phase.

Saint Anthony was added to the left wing during the final phase, now against the background of a burning city, to which end most of the panel was overpainted. The whole of the
8.5 XR

8.6 IRR of the donors during restoration [CAT 8A, 8C]
hollow tree to the left of the central panel was added, with its branches and foliage painted over the sky. Several green sections of landscape were painted brown, probably to make the transition to the dark, overpainted left wing less abrupt. The clouds in the central panel and the right wing, of which little now remains, are also likely to have been done during the third phase. The whole of the zone containing the donor in the right wing was painted over, from the parapet to the whale. The two large figures that have been added presumably relate to the scene in the central panel. The donors were painted over while respecting and exploiting the original composition. The cloak of the donor in the left wing, for instance, was substantially recycled in the one worn by Saint Anthony. What is more, the execution of the overpainting is closely related to the first and second painting phases. The skilfully rendered detail of the hanged man on the far right actually belongs to the final phase. The overpainting is thus likely to have been done in Bosch’s workshop as well, even though the
execution feels a little cruder. The central panel has generally been painted more precisely than the overpainted wings, with a defter touch and greater virtuosity. The elements are larger yet more refined, as we see in the two men in the right foreground.

Apparently, the donors were overpainted shortly after they had been included in the composition. It is not inconceivable that both men deceased before the triptych was completed and that the painter had to find another destination for the work. According to a ’s-Hertogenbosch chronicle of 1496, around the time the triptych was painted, the city was affected by an outbreak of the ‘Spanish’ pox, also known as ‘Job’s disease’.22

Because of the poor condition of the triptych and the overpainting, it was only possible to reveal fragments of the underdrawing. Where the latter could be documented – in the cloak of the swooning figure at the foot of the cross, for instance – it closely matches the style and method found in the underdrawing of other paintings by Hieronymus Bosch.
Dendrochronological dating of the central panel indicates that the triptych was definitely produced after 1491, and most probably after 1493. The triptych’s original destination is not known. Saint Wilgefortis was venerated in many places in Brabant and Flanders, with her most important shrine – said traditionally to be her burial place – located in Steenbergen in the west of Brabant. There was also an altar dedicated to the female martyr in St John’s in ‘s-Hertogenbosch. A local chronicle stated around 1550 that an image of Oncumerna barbata – ‘Uncumber with a beard’ – could be seen on the altar, a reference that has been seized on to identify St John’s Church as the original home of the Venice triptych. Elsewhere, however, the author of the chronicle names Hieronymus Bosch explicitly (see cat. 5 and 6) and he would undoubtedly have done so here too if relevant. For the time being therefore, the identity of the two donors, the location for which the triptych was made, and the reason why it was reworked so soon after completion cannot be determined.

The triptych found its way to Venice at a relatively early date, together with two other triptychs of almost identical form and size, the Hermit Saints Triptych (cat. 2) and the Bruges Last Judgement (cat. 16). Saint Wilgefortis and the Hermit Saints remained there, while the Last Judgement later returned to the Southern Netherlands by way of the Balearic Islands.
un’altro quadro in tre comparti, ove si vede il martirio d’una Santa in Croce, con molte figure, & in particolare uno in terra caduto in fuenimento, sostenuto da diversi: & è dipinto da Girolamo Bassi. Boschini 1664, Sestier di S. Marco, 24; Boschini 1674, Sestier di S. Marco, 19.

... e poi vi mette un quadro in tre partiti col martirio di un Santo coronato non d’una Santa, non di Girolamo Bassi, ma di Girolamo Bolch, come vedesi scritto in lettere Tedesche bianche ...' Zanetti 1733, 110.

Sono sei compartimenti. ... Nei secondi la crocefissione d’un Santo o Santa martire. V’è in esti il nome del Pittore scritto così appunto: Jeronimus Bosch'. Zanetti 1771, 491.

Ludwig 1901, 11, iv, with as source: Codex misc. Des Archivio di Stato, containing the ‘Inventario dell’incomparabile tesoro delle Pitture (Magistrato del Sal)’. One of the three Bosch triptychs in Venice (either Saint Wilgefortis or the Hermit Saints Triptych, which also had an arched top originally) is included in a view of the interior of the Sala de’ Tre Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci by Gabriele Bella (1730–1799) in the Pinacoteca Querini Stampalia, Venice. We can see from this painting that the triptych was mounted as three separate panels next to one another in a single large gold frame.

Ludwig 1901, 1v.


Dollmayr (1898, 289–90), followed immediately by von Friesheim (1899, 462 no. 613). Bax 1961 provides a good historiographical overview.

Slatkes 1975, recently raised again as a point of discussion by Hitchins 2014, 164–68.

The painting of this figure is very similar to that of the reverse of Saint John on Patmos and the closed wings of the Adoration of the Magi (cat. 6 and 9). See the website Boschproject.org, link l20.


Wichmans 1632, 597–99; Krippenbergh 1968, 40–44.

Desmense 1995, 27.
The Adoration of the Magi

Hieronymus Bosch
1450–1516

Oil on oak panel, left wing 138 × 29.2 cm, central panel 138 × 72 cm, right wing 138 × 33 cm
Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, 192048
Signed lower left: Hieronymus bosch

BRCP examination and documentation data:

Condition
The engaged frames and hinges are original, with the exception of some sections of the frame of the central panel. The gliding of the frames is largely covered with bronze overpainting. The planks have never been separated, but the two joins in the central panel are partly open and unstable. They were later reinforced with oakum that was glued to the reverse. Shrinkage partly exposed the panel's unpainted edges (now largely overpainted) and led to slight surface rippling. The painting is well preserved, except for the upper right wing, the foreground landscape and the sky in the open left wing, and the sky in the open right wing. Most damages were restored but many retouchings have discoloured. The original paint is in very good condition, but the highly yellowed and pigmented varnishes largely obscure its visibility. Dark residues in paint interstices and damages to the surface interrupt the fluent modelling of skin tones. The treatment of the painting in 2015–16 addressed several of the conservation issues.

Provenance
Commissioned between 1491 and 1498, probably around 1495, by Peeter Scheyfve and his wife Agnese (Agneese) de Gramme from Antwerp; in 1574 sent to the Escorial by Philip II of Spain. Moved from the Escorial to the Prado on 13 April 1839.

Literature

Analysis
The theme of the Adoration of the Magi Triptych is the revelation of Christ as humanity’s redeemer. The central panel shows the adoration of the new-born Christ Child by the Three Magi. The closed memorial triptych presents the Mass of Saint Gregory – a scene that emphasizes the constant presence of Christ. The wings depict three generations of the donor’s family. The wealthy Antwerp burgher Peeter Scheyfve is shown in the open triptych with his wife and their patron saints, while his father and his son appear on the closed wings. Unusually, the two latter figures are rendered realistically in colour as worshippers who are actually present at the miracle presented in grisaille. The identification of these individuals enables us to date the triptych to between 1491 and 1498, and more probably to around 1495.

The closed triptych has a semi-grisaille representation of the Mass of Saint Gregory – the manifestation of Christ during the celebration of the Eucharist by Pope Gregory the Great (c. 540–604). Christ is represented as the Man of Sorrows, rising from his tomb and surrounded by nine angels and seven scenes from the Passion. Gregory’s Mass developed as a theme in the late fourteenth century and was extremely popular in the second half of the fifteenth century and the early sixteenth.1 When the triptych is opened, the greyish-brown monochrome shades give way to an expansive, brightly lit landscape beneath a blue sky: a colourful group of people is depicted in the foreground over the full width of the three panels. The principal figure, the infant Christ born a few days earlier, appears just to the right of centre in the middle panel. The Magi are positioned before him, with the male and female donor kneeling on either side. The presence of the Redeemer is the key element of the scenes in both the open and the closed triptych; from his first incarnation to his crucifixion and resurrection, and henceforth for all eternity (José de Sigüenza referred in this regard to the mysteries of our salvation). At the same time, however, both scenes allude to the threat of doubt and disbelief.

The triptych is one of Bosch’s best-preserved works and forms an exceptionally well-conceived ensemble. The Mass of Saint Gregory on the closed wings is painted as a continuous scene that even runs over the engaged frame in the middle. The visionary episode has a second, trompe-l’œil frame painted around it in light grey, just inside the slightly darker grey physical frame. Within the scene itself, Bosch plays elegantly with the fluid boundary between reality and vision. He has incorporated two male figures – painted realistically and in colour – who kneel in prayer at Pope Gregory’s Mass, forming a link as it were between the beholder and the depicted event. The older and the younger man thus witness
the miracle at first hand. While Gregory was celebrating Mass one day, a member of the congregation questioned the reality of the transubstantiation. Gregory responded by praying for a miracle, upon which Christ appeared to them all to prove the truth of the Catholic doctrine that the bread and the wine are literally transformed into his flesh and blood during the celebration of the Eucharist. The pope kneels before the altar, on which we see liturgical vessels, a pax tablet, an open Gospel or missal, and candlesticks with burning candles. The papal retinue crowds into the space to the rear on either side of the altar and the cortinae or altar curtains. Clerics hold his tiara and crosier on the right. A retable stands above the altar, of which the sarcophagus from which Christ rises seems to be part. The viewer sees both the apparition of Christ and the crowd of people gathered on either side of the altar, but do the bystanders see the risen Christ too? The altar curtains appear to screen off the central event, although the pointing figure on the far left emphasizes that something extraordinary is going on. The curtains were only added at the last moment on top of the already-finished background (but before the figures were painted), no doubt to add greater visual weight to the central element of the scene. At the same time, the cortinae refer to the concept of concealing and revealing, and so also form a link with the Epiphany scene in the open triptych. A rectangular predella was also painted in the first version of the altar, before being turned into the wide console beneath the sarcophagus. The alteration places greater emphasis on the latter and creates space for the body of the risen Christ. Christ is an almost querulous figure, dressed only in the loincloth, his head with the crown of thorns.
bowed slightly over his right shoulder. The wounds in his side and in his left hand are the only marks on an otherwise intact body. The way Christ places his left hand over the right here is unusual.\(^3\) 

Christ’s shadow falls on the lighter central part of the altarpiece, which somewhat resembles a gravestone. The outside edge of this painting within a painting, the shape of which broadly matches that of the closed triptych, shows the Passion of Christ in seven scenes, from the Agony in the Garden to the Crucifixion.\(^4\) Bottom left, we see Jesus praying in the garden: ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.’ The apostles Peter, John and James are with him, but have fallen asleep (Matthew 26:36–46). The scene depicted opposite shows the Arrest of Christ,\(^4\) with the Flagellation immediately above it. Level with this on the left we see Jesus being brought before Pilate, who sits on his judge’s throne holding his judicial staff. His wife whispers to him: ‘Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him’ (Matthew 27:11–25). Moving up a level, Christ is crowned with thorns. Opposite this on the right-hand side we see him carrying his cross to Golgotha, assisted by Simon of Cyrene. The cycle is topped with a Crucifixion scene which – like the figure of Christ appearing to Pope Gregory – is painted entirely on the frame of the triptych. In the three uppermost scenes, what appears to be a painted narrative on the altarpiece merges with the ‘reality’ of the events depicted in the same space that contains Gregory and the other figures. The crucified Christ with the grieving bystanders and above
The Antichrist between two kings

Protective helmet of the Antichrist's headgear (rotated 180 degrees)

Phoenix standing on the incense-holder of the black king
all the setting with the dramatic episodes on and around Mount Golgotha are represented as reality: the sky has turned black, an angel flies down, and a demon surrounded by black birds carries off the soul of the remorseful Judas, who has hanged himself. The cross of the penitent Good Thief has already been raised to the right of Christ, and the condemned man sits at its foot awaiting execution. The cross intended for the impenitent Bad Thief is still being brought up on the other side, as is the criminal himself.

Beholding the Redeemer caused the Good Thief to repent, just as Christ's appearance during the Mass of Saint Gregory caused the doubters to rediscover their faith. The two contemporary male figures included in the scene with Saint Gregory observe at close quarters how Christ's manifestation proved his true presence – a fact confirmed to viewers of the triptych by the pointing man behind the cortina on the left.

OPEN

The open triptych conveys the same message. Mary shows the new-born Saviour to the Three Wise Men who, full of conviction, have followed the star we see shining above the stable. The ominous figure of the Antichrist also appears, however, in the stable doorway, dressed as a fourth king. His malevolence is emphasized by the owl perched high above him in the hayloft, which gazes down unsettlingly, a dead mouse in its claw. The landscape in the background of the central panel contains exotic, identifiably non-Christian armies preparing to confront one another, while further away still, we see the statue of a man standing on top of a column, who points to yet another group of horsemen. A standard protrudes above him, topped with a crescent moon, referring once again to heathendom. A group of people dance with abandon in the background of the left wing, while in the one on the right, a couple are attacked by wild animals.

Minutely painted details emphasize the charged nature of the scene. The gift offered by the oldest of the Three Kings lies at Mary's feet. It resembles a medieval table decoration in precious metalwork set with pearls, and shows Abraham being restrained by an angel just as he is about to sacrifice his son Isaac – a prefiguration of Christ's death on the cross. The red cloth that has caught on Abraham's sword, the angel's wing and Isaac's bundle of sticks, once again highlights the importance of revelation or epiphany in this painting (epiphaneia is Greek for 'appearance' or 'manifestation'). What is revealed here is not only the splendour of the king's present, but also the link between the birth of Jesus (which prompted the gift) and the necessity of his death on the cross to redeem humanity from original sin. The bittersweet nature of the scene as a whole is echoed in this detail, where we notice that the precious gift rests on the back of toads.

The short steel cape or bevor worn by the second king, who brings the Christ Child a gift of myrrh on a silver platter, is decorated with an image of the Queen of Sheba offering gifts to King Solomon (1 Kings 10:1–13) – a prefiguration of the Adoration of the Magi. The lower border depicts the offering made by Manoah and his wife after God announced the birth of their son Samson, who would free the Jewish people from the Philistines (Judges 13:19–23); a prefiguration this time of the Nativity of Christ. The third king, the youngest, holds a spherical gift, which must contain frankincense and which is decorated with the figures of Abner kneeling before King David to add the northern tribes of Israel to the kingdom of Judah (2 Samuel 3:10). This too is a typological reference to the Adoration of the Magi. A phoenix stands on top of the incense-holder, gripping a piece of red fruit or a grain of frankincense in its beak. An almost identical bird can be seen in the central panel of the Garden of Earthly Delights. In this case, the phoenix is an allusion to the Resurrection – Christ's sacrifice of his life and subsequent raising from the dead.

The figure in the stable doorway, dressed as a fourth king, has a face and neck tanned by the sun. The red cloak draped loosely around him emphasizes the paleness of his body, which is partly veiled in gauze. Cloak and veil are normally concealing elements, but here they serve to reveal the man's sickly and disfigured body. A crystal sheath with gold fastenings has been slid over a nasty wound in his lower right leg. He also wears a gold bracelet.
around his right upper arm, attached by a chain to the protective helmet – held in his left hand – that fits over his strange, round headgear. The latter is circled by a crown of thorns and topped with another crystal tube, set in gold, from which sprouts a delicate blue flower, identifiable as speedwell. Because of its colour, the latter was associated with the Virgin Mary and alluded symbolically to the Salvation. The weird crown worn by this ‘fourth king’ thus refers to the Nativity, the Passion and Christ’s redemption of humanity. The outer helmet (possibly in chased silver) seems at first sight – not least because of its colour scheme – to belong to the second king; however, its shape and the opening to accommodate the crystal tube with the flower, clearly show that this is not the case.\(^9\) The virginal white birds on the helmet’s lower edge are harassed by the little men placed above them. One of them gets a nasty peck from a long, pointed beak; the figure on the far right wearing a Jewish-style hat tries to filch one of the precious stones. The questionable identity of the ‘fourth king’ is heightened by the pearl ring that pierces his thigh. Bosch subtly arranged a series of disquieting details like this to enable viewers to deduce the identity of this mysterious figure, who enters the scene from the stable, for themselves. He is the Antichrist – a ‘revelation’ that forms a pendant to the painting’s central epiphany: the revelation of Jesus Christ. The Feast of the Epiphany (6 January) centres on the recognition and acknowledgement of ‘Christ in Jesus’, whose sacrifice is required to complete the story of the salvation and the redemption of humanity. Without sin there can be no redemption, and without Christ’s death on the cross, there can be no resurrection. Viewed in this light, the ‘fourth king’ is a negative element that must be present if the positive is to be realized.\(^9\) The importance of the Antichrist figure placed full height against the dark interior of the stable was developed during the painting process; another standing figure was initially drawn here – an old man leaning on a staff.

The stable takes the form of a typical Brabant *hoekboerderij* – a farmhouse type with a distinctive concave corner. Bosch deliberately painted it in this dilapidated, not to say structurally impossible, manner. A shepherd lies on the roof next to a shepherdess with a bagpipe. Four other shepherds are depicted behind the stable; one of them climbs into the stump of a dead ash tree, which sprouts fresh young branches at the bottom with the characteristic compound leaf – a withered tree from which new life springs. Two other shepherds observe the scene through a hole in the wall, while a fourth peers round the edge. Bosch’s constantly evolving creative process is illustrated by the way he painted the
WINGS AND DONORS

The elderly Joseph sits on an upturned basket in the middle ground of the left wing. He is drying pieces of cloth over a wood fire beneath an improvised awning in the ruins of a large house. Bosch used a shred of gold leaf here as the base layer to add lustre to the flames. Light falls from the doorway at the back of the ruin to the left, even though the space glimpsed through it is utterly black. The Gothic doorway is decorated with sculptures. A toad-like figure performs a handstand on top of the pointed arch. The unidentifiable remains of a statue stand on the console on the left, while on the right we see a prophet whose pointed hat tells us he is Jewish. He points backwards with one hand into the darkness and forwards with the other at Joseph and the Adoration of the Magi in the central panel. His gesture seems to be emphasized by the dancing figures on either side of the doorway. In this way, the prophet makes the link between the 'darkness' of the Old Testament and the mystery of the Salvation – the central theme of the triptych, which is reiterated in other details, including the aforementioned typologies. The scene depicted on the hem of the cloak worn by the black king’s page, showing a large, monstrous fish on legs devouring a smaller fish, ought probably to be interpreted in the same sense.\textsuperscript{12}

The donors are shown in the foreground of the wings, accompanied by their respective patron saints. They appear in the same plane as the Adoration in the central panel, making them present, as it were, in the principal scene. The coat of arms of the man in the left wing was identified as early as 1893 as that of the Scheyfve family from Antwerp. Xavier Duquenne refined that information by naming the couple as the Antwerp dignitaries Peeter Scheyfve and Agneese de Gramme.\textsuperscript{13} Scheyfve was a cloth-dresser who rose to become the dean and elder of the Antwerp weavers’ corporation, and also served as a steward and city alderman.\textsuperscript{14} Having grown rich, he purchased the seigniory of Niel, to the south of Antwerp, a year before his death.\textsuperscript{15} His patron saint, the Apostle Peter, stands behind him protectively; the Scheyfve family arms are depicted by the edge of the panel,\textsuperscript{16} below their motto ‘een voer al’ (‘one for all’) in gold letters. Agneese de Gramme, whom Peeter Scheyfve married following the death of his first wife in or shortly before 1491, kneels in the right wing. Agneese did not have any children and she died between 1496 and 1498. Saint Agnes, her name saint, is shown full-length behind her, together with the de Gramme family arms – a fleur-de-lis on a silver shield. The arms were prepared slightly smaller at first, the position indicated by means of an incision. Agnes can be identified by the lamb lying a little way off in the landscape. Surprisingly, although it is her principal attribute, the lamb was not originally planned and was painted on top of the green and grey base layer of the background, followed by the foliage. It is almost identical to the lamb in the panel with John the Baptist in the Museo Lázaro Galdiano in Madrid, which was also painted over the finished background (cat. 5).\textsuperscript{17} Peeter Scheyfve and his wife are both dressed entirely in black, apart from Agneese’s bright-red underskirt. Their sleeves are trimmed with the same expensive black damask we see in the man’s shirt. This is undoubtedly a reference to his profession as cloth-dresser, in which he was evidently very successful.
DATING AND COMMISSION

A dendrochronological analysis has recently been performed on this triptych too: it could have been made from 1472 onwards, but a date after 1474 would be more probable statistically.18 The painting itself ought to be dated somewhat later, given the identity of the depicted couple, namely between 1491 and 1498. There is no evidence to suggest that it was painted for the altar of the Antwerp weavers’ corporation in the Church of Our Lady, where the guild’s patron saint, Severus, was venerated.19 It was more likely intended as a memorial work for display near the Scheyfve family’s graves, possibly on an altar in a chapel of their own. Duquenne tentatively identified the realistically presented men in the Mass of Saint Gregory scene as the still young Jan Scheyfve, Peeter Scheyfve’s son from his first marriage to Barbele van Woelputte, and his uncle Jan Scheyfve, or – more likely – his step-grandfather Peeter de Gramme. In making this identification, Duquenne assumed that the two were only added later, some time around 1507.20 However, since both figures form an integral part of the paint structure, they must actually be a young man and an older gentleman who had some direct personal relevance to the donor, Peeter Scheyfve, at the time the triptych was painted. Duquenne reconstructed Peeter Scheyfve’s family tree very precisely and this, combined with the aforementioned analysis, leads to a single plausible alterna-
tive: the older man will be Claus (Nicolaas) Scheyfve, Peeter’s father, while the young man is indeed most likely his son Jan. Nicolaas Scheyfve died in, or just before, 1495. In view of his son’s age, he must certainly have been around sixty years old. His eldest grandson, Jan, was still a minor in 1506. He married in 1509 and will have been aged under ten in 1495. The younger Jan Scheyfve died in 1548. It might have been Claus Scheyfve’s death that prompted the commission for the memorial triptych. To summarize, then, the open triptych shows Peeter Scheyfve as donor with his wife Agneese de Gramme, while the contemporary figures in the closed wings are probably Peeter’s father Claus Scheyfve and his son Jan. Taken together, the triptych’s various panels – dedicated as a memorial around 1495 – thus commemorate three generations of the Scheyfve family. We find the same thing, along with a number of other details, in Hieronymus Bosch’s workshop five years later in the triptych of Petrus van Os and Henrickxen van Langel (cat. 24).
1 Westfehling 1982, passim.
2 The ninth-century Vita Sii Gregorii Magni by John the Deacon (Johannes Hymonides) recounts that a woman who had baked the bread for Mass burst out laughing when Gregory, the celebrant, presented it during the service as the body of Christ. The pope asked for a sign and a bloody finger appeared on the piece of unleavened bread. This miracle tale was adopted by the Legenda aurea and was the seed from which the later version grew in which Christ appears to Gregory as the Man of Sorrows. Westfehling 1982, 17–18.
3 This motif was originally drawn the same way in the Frankfurt Ecce Homo, but is different in the final painting (cat. 11).
4 Bosch also appears to have worked several numerological symbols into his Mass: three burning candles on the altar, which are probably a deliberate allusion to the Holy Trinity; nine angels, which might refer to the celestial hierarchy of the nine angelic orders; and seven scenes representing the Passion and Christ’s death on the cross.
5 Christ is shown here, as the pendant of the centrally positioned Man of Sorrows and in a more iconographically conventional way, with his right hand placed over his left, as we also see in the Crowning with Thorns in London (cat. 15), and the Ecce Homo scenes in Frankfurt (cat. 11) and Boston (cat. 24).
6 Brand Philip 1933; Higgs Strickland 2002.
7 The blockbook of the Biblia Pauperum, East Middle German, c. 1455, for instance, shows the Adoration of the Magi with Solomon and the Queen of Sheba on one side, and David and Abner on the other. Heidelberg, University Library Cod. Pal. germ. 438, fol. 112v.
8 Cf. also the Adoration of the Magi in New York (cat. 10).
9 An ornate helmet-shaped crown was drawn on the ground in front of the king in the middle, but was never painted (see the website Boschproject.org, link 118). His steel cape was also different at first, in both the underdrawing and the preliminary painted version.
10 There was another spectator in the darkness behind the fourth king, who belonged to the group gathered in the stable. The man was painted out completely to place even greater emphasis on the Antichrist, but can still be made out in the ir. See the website Boschproject.org, link 117.
11 The grisaille on the closed wings was painted without any preparatory underdrawing.
12 Ilsink 2015, 5.
14 Pieter Scheyfve became guild steward in 1495 and alderman in 1500. Wouters 2000–01, 125, 146. He was one of three stewards named in the years 1502–04, along with his father-in-law Pieter de Gramme, who served in 1495 and again in 1501–05. Stewards were appointed for three-year terms. Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, Brussels, ms 19447, fol. 86v–87.
15 Prims 1939, 30.
16 Duquenne 2004, 17, after Marijnissen 1987, 240, with reference to Carmen Garrido, Museo del Prado. Koreny 2012, 53–54, 56–57 argues on the one hand that both men were planned from the outset and on the other — following Duquenne’s example — that they were not added until around 1507 by the ‘Maler des Prado–Heuwagens’. We see no evidence in support of the latter idea. See 8109, Technical Studies, cat. 9, ff. 134–139.
18 Bands a) in vert (green) three argent (silver) animals’ heads in argent, b) gules (red) with overhanging collars or drops of blood from the animals’ heads in a). Shield roofed with silver helmet with mantling of gules, vert and silver, and a wreath of gules and argent; the crest a silver animal’s head with a pair of wings in gules and vert.
19 See the website Boschproject.org, link 118.
20 Peter Klein examined the panels in 2014 on behalf of the brcp. The most recent growth ring dates from 1461.
21 Prims 1939.
22 Duquenne 2004, 17, after Marijnissen 1987, 240, with reference to Carmen Garrido, Museo del Prado. Koreny 2012, 53–54, 56–57 argues on the one hand that both men were planned from the outset and on the other — following Duquenne’s example — that they were not added until around 1507 by the ‘Maler des Prado–Heuwagens’. We see no evidence in support of the latter idea. See 8109, Technical Studies, cat. 9, ff. 134–139.
The Adoration of the Magi

Hieronymus Bosch

C. 1470–80

Oil on oak panel, 71.1 x 56.7 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1913, 13.26

BRCP examination and documentation data:

Condition
The panel is slightly cropped on all sides and three strips of wood were added to its thinned reverse, after which it was cradled and coated with a thick layer of wax. The panel undulates slightly and has an old crack in the upper right. Adhesion of both paint and ground appears good, and previously raised paint issues have been consolidated locally using a syringe to inject glue. Numerous other tiny holes are the result of metal soap aggregate formation. There are many restored losses of differing size in the painting, the largest being close to the bottom edge and the lower left edge, especially in the lower part of Joseph’s green robe. Abrasion locally severely damaged the paint, for example in the pinkish highlights in the face of the magus at the back. The varnish has an even appearance and the painting is properly legible.

Provenance

Literature

Analysis
The Adoration of the Magi was attributed to Hieronymus Bosch at the beginning of the twentieth century. Doubt was cast on this identification from the 1930s onwards, but the painting has once again been considered autograph since 2001. The rather labourous central perspective and the varying quality of the different elements suggest that this is a relatively early painting by Bosch. The fairily copious use of gold leaf is also something we do not find in any other of his works. The scene is traditional and straightforward in its iconography.

THE THREE KINGS

This is an unusual dog for Bosch. We normally find unassuming mutts in his paintings, but not here; this is a noble-looking hound, which must belong to one of the Three Wise Men who have come to pay tribute to the new-born Christ. He sits perkily in the foreground, waiting obediently for the end of the ceremony. The dog was planned from the outset, as he can already be found in the underdrawing, but he is also isolated, employed to fill a space that would otherwise be quite empty. He resembles a sticker applied to a picture made of disconnected elements. Putting it in these terms does this charming painting a disservice, yet it does capture something of its naivety. The New York Adoration is as light as its counterpart in the Prado (cat. 8) is serious and carefully conceived.

The episode depicted in this early painting by Bosch is the visit of the Three Kings who have come to present their gifts to the Christ Child, as described in Matthew 2:9–11.¹ The Passionael – the Middle Dutch version of the Legenda aurea – adds all manner of details to Matthew’s barebones account of Christ’s birth, several of which became part of the iconographic tradition.² It recounts for instance that Joseph, Jesus’s foster father, took an ox to Bethlehem to sell and a donkey on which the heavily pregnant Mary could ride. The ox and the ass are shown to the left of the ruined building. Shepherds and a flock of sheep can be seen in the background, while two more shepherds lean through the window opening on the right to warm their hands over a fire. The centre of the composition is occupied by the Virgin and Child, who receive the adoration of the Kings, known as Caspar, Balthasar and Melchior. The gifts they offer as a tribute to the new-born king are represented in the painting as gold objects decorated with pearls. The three men are identifiable as kings from their crowns and their expensive clothes. Their oldest member kneels and offers a gift of gold in the form of an exotic pitcher on a large dish. The rearmost king, dressed in a turban and brocade, holds a Gothic ciborium in the shape of a tower in both hands. It will be filled with myrrh, given that this is what the equivalent figure offers in the Adoration of the Magi Triptych in the Prado. The black king, the youngest of the three, holds a spherical ciborium in his right hand. The bird on the lid is a phoenix, a legendary creature said to feed on

¹ 10.1

10.1

216 CAT 10
incense, indicating that this is a gift of frankincense. The gilded bird is part of the precious metalwork, unlike the live one we find in the Prado Adoration, which takes a red grain from another spherical container (cat. 9b). According to myth the phoenix also filled its nest with incense before bursting into flame and rising from the ashes. This self-sacrifice and resurrection explain why the phoenix is a symbol of Christ in the Physiologus (a collection of didactic animal tales), in bestiaries and the wider visual tradition.³ As in the two other Adorations (cat. 9 and 24) and in keeping with tradition,⁴ the Three Kings also represent the three ages of man and the three then-known continents. It was customary from around the mid-fifteenth century to depict one of the kings, usually the youngest, as a black man, and Bosch did likewise in his various renditions of the theme. In each case, the black king is dressed in flamboyant white robes, and the other two in red and green respectively. Joseph, the Infant Christ's elderly stepfather, kneels to Mary’s right in this painting – a prominent position that he does not get to keep in the two other versions. He is placed further back in the Philadelphia panel (cat. 25), while in the Prado Adoration he has been banished to the left wing, where he sits drying pieces of cloth over a fire in the background.

The way the ox and the ass are rendered at the bottom of the fortified tower is a striking detail; the ox is shown kneeling and seems to observe the scene sideways. All we see of the donkey are its hindquarters: it has turned away from the central event. The detail is prob-

10.2 Adoration (New York) [CAT 10]
10.3 Adoration (Philadelphia) [CAT 25]
10.4 Garden of Earthly Delights [CAT 21b]
10.5 Garden of Earthly Delights [CAT 21b]
10.6 Adoration (New York) [CAT 10]
10.8 Adoration (New York) [CAT 10]
ably intended playfully. The New Testament does not mention the two animals, but the Old Testament does. The Prophet Isaiah describes how God, incensed by a rebellion on the part of his people, declared that ‘The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner’s manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand’ (Isaiah 1:3). From the early third century onwards, the passage was linked with the Nativity and the animals began to appear in the visual tradition; the ox – considered a clean animal – represents those who follow God’s word, and the unclean donkey those who turn away from him.

**COMPARISONS**

The general structure of the painting in New York is related to the *Ecce Homo* in Frankfurt, which has roughly the same dimensions (cat. 11). The central perspective, accentuated by the many walls, plays an important part in both cases in the suggestion of depth. Several figures in this relatively early work, in which mordant gilding has been used to a greater extent than in any other painting by Bosch, correspond closely with types from elsewhere in his oeuvre. The position of the kneeling king’s head and upper body closely resemble those of the standing man with the short green cape in the right foreground of the Frankfurt *Ecce Homo*. Various authors have noted the similarity between the face of the rearmost king and that of Herod. The striking profile, head and curly hair of the black king are also found in the *Garden of Earthly Delights* (cat. 21), in the shape of the black youth in the right foreground and the young man shown pointing on the left of the central axis. There is a striking resemblance between Mary’s face and slightly wavy hair and those of Eve in the left wing, and also the young woman sitting to the left of the black youth in the central panel of the *Garden of Earthly Delights*. Her features are also very similar to those of Mary in the Brussels *Calvary* (cat. 15). The background, consisting of trees and copse, the outlines of a city in the distance, and the body of water upper right with the couple followed by a little dog on the bridge, is related to the background landscape of the Prado *Adoration of the Magi Triptych* (cat. 9). We also find a similar couple in the Brussels *Calvary* and in St Jerome in Ghent (cat. 1). The Prado *Adoration* also features similar groups of finely painted horsemen advancing from behind the hills towards the foreground action; they are comparable in turn with the groups of horsemen and other figures in the drawing from a private collection (cat. 44) and those in the Hell wing of the *Garden of Earthly Delights*.

The *Adoration* discussed here is also very similar to the Frankfurt *Ecce Homo* in terms of the phased execution of the underdrawing. Many of the contour lines, for instance, were set down with a relatively large brush and a watery medium in strikingly fluent and expressive lines. Where these are located close to one another, the drawing resembles a wash; examples can be found in the round corner elements on either side of the ruined building’s back wall. The modelling and shadows were prepared, by contrast, with precise parallel hatching done with smaller brushes. The skin tones were prepared using a small brush, while the underdrawing for the larger folds in the drapery was done primarily with a medium brush. Variations in the darkness of the lines observed under infrared light suggest that different materials were used, as is also the case in Frankfurt.

On the other hand, several noteworthy differences can be identified compared to other works by Bosch. The golden gifts, for instance, are rendered very differently here from the precisely painted objects brought by the kings in the Prado *Adoration*. The confident lines we find, for instance, in the protective helmet held by the ‘fourth king’ in the Madrid triptych are less in evidence here. The angels who stretch a cloth over the roofless building are less detailed and seem heavier and more static than those in, say, the *Ascent of the Blessed* in Venice (cat. 18a). Despite the differences, the way the paint is handled in these angels does not differ essentially from that in *Death and the Miser* or the *Haywain* (cat. 19c and 20c). As in many other Bosch paintings, we find details here that were drawn as it were in the paint; the subtly rendered black damask elements in the black king’s costume, for instance, the gauze tied around the kneeling king’s waist as a belt, and the stripped skeleton in the background. The fact that the panel includes elements that can be linked unmistakably with
Bosch, such as the brilliantly painted background, makes the differences in quality all the more noteworthy. Perhaps Bosch did not work on the panel alone, and the less well-painted elements can be ascribed to a workshop assistant; or, more likely, what we see here is a young, still developing artist at work. The application of the paint is also very precise, with fine, controlled strokes. These were laid down in various directions, but generally in a linear fashion. The thin lines are often short and resemble hatching, as in the red lake in the elderly king’s robe; we find this unusual technique in the Frankfurt Ecce Homo in particular, but rarely in the later works.

Although the painting broadly follows the underdrawing, several changes are apparent between the preparatory sketch and the execution in paint, and further adjustments were made after that stage too. The architecture in particular was altered considerably: the artist evidently struggled with the perspective. The solution he found was to apply a central perspective with a vanishing point by means of light incisions in the preliminary paint layer; he then corrected a number of elements, such as the lower edge of the awning. The low wall on the right was not originally planned, and the head of the oldest king was originally turned more towards Mary. The head of the rearmost shepherd in the window frame on the right was painted larger than initially planned over the section of wall, which was already finished. An angel was originally painted in the high window in the tower on the left, with the ox and ass at the bottom; it looked down from there at the events below but was entirely overpainted and replaced with a dove. Two angels originally held the green cloth on the
10.15 *Adoration* (New York) [CAT 10]

10.16 *Adoration* (Madrid) [CAT 98]

10.17 *Saint Jerome* [CAT 1]

10.18 *Calvary* [CAT 15]
left as they do on the right, but the rearmost figure was subsequently painted out. The left-
most angel on the tower was not prepared. A dark niche containing one of Bosch’s charac-
teristic owls was added beneath the slate-tiled awning lower down on the wall on the left.
Dendrochronological dating of the panel shows it could have been painted from 1470
onwards, slightly earlier than the dating of the Frankfurt Ecce Homo, which could have been
done from 1472. It would seem that on stylistic grounds, too, the painting should be placed
ey early in Bosch’s career.
The Adoration was viewed as an authentic work by Bosch since its first publication in
1904 and also at the time it was purchased by the Metropolitan Museum in 1912.9 Doubt
was then cast on the attribution by Charles de Tolnay in 1937, following which the painting
was long considered to be a pastiche dating from around 1550. The consensus shifted again
when the work was shown in Rotterdam in 2001, where it could be compared directly with
the Frankfurt Ecce Homo; it was accepted once again at this point as an autograph Bosch10 –
a conclusion that has now been confirmed by the research performed by the BRCP.

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1 In his Middle Dutch translation of the Gospels, the Nieuwe Testament van de Moderne Devotie
(late 14th century), Johan Scutken described the visit of the Three Kings according to Matthew as follows:
‘… ende siet, die siet, die sterne, die sghesien hadden in Oestlant, ghinc voer hem al tot si quamen ende
ghinc staen recht boven daer dat kijnt was. Doe se die
sterne sghen, worden si seer verblijt in groter vrouden
ende ghinghen int huus ende oploken hore scatte
ende offerden hem gaven: golt, wierooc ende mirre.’
De Bruin 1979, 2.

2 Passionael. Winter- ende somerstuc, Gouda (Gerard Leeu)
1478 (copy in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague),
fol. 131v–33v (Nativity), fol. 152v–55v (Magi).


4 Weis 1968.

5 See cat. 11, note 2; see also BRCP, Technical Studies,
cat. 10 and 11, RR 49–50.

6 See also Chapter 111, ‘Materials and Techniques’.

7 See also BRCP, Technical Studies, cat. 11, RR 49–50.

8 The angel, dressed in red and with golden blonde
hair, can be seen clearly in photographs taken before
2001, prior to the most recent restoration. Koldeweij,
Vandenbroeck and Vermet 2001, 39–40. The precise
copy in Rotterdam produced in the mid-sixteenth
century shows the dove against the background of an

9 Glück 1904, 182; Cohen 1910, 387–88 no. 5; Burroughs
1913; Lafond 1914, 39; Friedländer 1916, 74; Von Baldass
1917, 177–79; Friedländer 1927, 88–90.

10 The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Collection
Online: /www.metmuseum.org/ collection/
the-collection-online/search/435724?rpp=30&page=
1863bosch&pos=1 (entry dated 2012; accessed
June 2015).
Hieronymus Bosch

C. 1475–85

Oil on oak panel, 71.4 x 61 cm

Inscribed upper left: ecce homo; middle: Crucifige eu[m]; lower left: Salva nos Xp[iste] r[e]de[m]ctor

Städel Museum, Eigentum des Städelschen Museums-Vereins e.V., Frankfurt am Main, 1577

BCCP examination and documentation data:
Frankfurt, 19–20 March 201; BCCP, Technical Studies, cat. 11, RR 49–50; //Boschproject.org no. 11.

Condition
The panel reverse was thinned and cradled and the bottom edge was cropped somewhat. Predominantly smaller restored paint losses are concentrated along the joins, mainly the left one. The paint is preserved well, but the donors and family members were removed in the past. During the last treatment, remnants of these figures were emphasized. Despite yellowed varnish residues and darker areas appearing slightly matte, the legibility of the original paint surface remains good.

Provenance


Literature


Analysis
Bosch’s Ecce Homo is a traditional religious theme, painted as a memorial for the parents of a Dominican monk. The artist used a number of unconventional details to draw out the meaning of the scene. Although it is broad daylight, one of the bystanders still holds a burning torch, alluding to the haste with which Christ has been tried and condemned and to the crowd’s complicity. The painting encourages the viewer to reflect on all this in the context of a memorial to its donors. Despite its apparent simplicity, the work – probably done early in Bosch’s career – is ingeniously constructed and skilfully and confidently executed.

ECCE HOMO – ‘BEHOLD THE MAN’

The Ecce Homo in the Städel Museum and the Garden of Earthly Delights in the Prado in Madrid (cat. 21) are the only surviving autograph paintings by Hieronymus Bosch to include pieces of text other than the artist’s signature. They are inscribed in both cases in Gothic letters or littera textualis, which Bosch also invariably used for his signature. The texts in this image of Pilate showing Christ to the Jewish people consist of three statements that emphasize the interaction between the three parties around the tortured Christ. Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect, points to [Jesus with the words ‘Ecce homo’ (‘Behold the man’). The crowd of people looking up at him call out ‘Crucifige eum’ (‘Crucify him’). The monk in the left foreground, kneeling in front of his brothers and behind the male donor, recites the prayer ‘Salva nos Christe redemptor’ (‘Christ, Redeemer, save us’). The lettering was done using oil gilding – gold leaf on mordant – as were the rays of the cross nimbus behind Christ’s head and the Christe redemptor (‘Christ, Redeemer, save us’). The lettering was done using oil gilding – gold leaf on mordant – as were the rays of the cross nimbus behind Christ’s head and the

The Ecce Homo scene is described in all four Gospels (Matthew 27:11–26, Mark 15:2–15, Luke 23:2–7, John 18:28–19:16), but the words ‘Ecce homo’ as such are only spoken by Pilate in that of Saint John (19:5–6), and so it was this version that Bosch took as his source. The feeling that the painter preferred the Gospel of John – to whom St John’s Church in ’s-Hertogenbosch was dedicated – to those of the other Evangelists, is also suggested by his treatment of Christ Crowned with Thorns in London (cat. 14).

Ecce Homo scenes were customarily presented in enclosed spaces, but Bosch does something new in this rendition of the theme; he opens it up and incorporates a view of a city, referring in the process to a tradition developed by Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden. Their influence has also been detected in the tiny figures of the couple on the bridge, whose backs are turned to the principal action and who seem oblivious to the commotion going on nearby. The same goes for the beggar further along the bridge, and the two men on the right behind the wall of the quayside. The figures glimpsed in the distance on the
public square, fringed with buildings, have no idea what is going on either. Aside from this uncomfortable contrast, Bosch has composed the overall scene very cautiously by his standards, allowing himself little in the way of creative extravagance. All the same, it is not difficult to spot several typical touches: details like the familiar little owl, for instance, shown here high up in a niche in the wall, or the burning torch carried by one of the bystanders, can readily be found elsewhere in Bosch’s oeuvre. This torch, incidentally, is one of the most noteworthy elements, given that the scene is set in daylight and with a clear sky. It emphasizes the haste with which Christ was arrested (at daybreak) and sentenced, thereby heightening the sense of injustice at these summary proceedings. A virtually identical flambeau can be seen in a print by Israhel van Meckenem of the Arrest of Christ from the same Passion cycle as the Ecce Homo print on which Bosch based his composition (see below). Once we become aware of it, the simple inclusion of the man with the torch is enough to tell us what time of day it is and why the square in the background is so quiet: we are still in the cool of the early morning. Christ was hurriedly condemned to death to head off an uprising by his followers.

Christ, wearing the crown of thorns, is not positioned centrally, yet he is unmistakably the principal figure of the overall composition. He has been flogged and his body is covered with wounds; blood has even run from his head onto the cloak placed about his shoulders. The fabric is now a surprising blue colour, as the original red lake is largely abraded, although it can still be made out in the pores of the light-blue paint. The cloak was originally more purple in colour, as stated in the Bible (Mark 15:17, 20; John 19:2, 5). The agony of the scene is stressed by the droplets of blood on the ground and in particular by the bloody print left by Christ’s right foot. Another crowd has gathered on the public square in the right background beneath a red flag with a tiny crescent moon, hanging from a fortified...
gatehouse. The square is otherwise ominously quiet and deserted, in sharp contrast with the agitated men who jostle in the right foreground. Their facial expressions and the menacing way they brandish their weapons tell us that their intentions are far from good. The large shield with the mysterious, toad-like creature emphasizes their malevolence.

The Ecce Homo was included in the famous exhibition of ‘Les Primitifs flamands et l’art ancien’ in Bruges in 1902, following which it was purchased by the Berlin art collector Richard von Kaufmann (1849–1908). He evidently found the bloody figure of Christ too explicit, as he had it painted over with a light-coloured ankle-length robe with long sleeves. The overpainting was removed in 1917 when the Städel acquired the work.

**DONOR FAMILY**

The painting as originally executed had a donor family right at the front, which was largely scraped away and overpainted at an early stage. An X-ray photograph of the panel made in the 1930s revealed these figures, which had been concealed beneath dark patches in the wall in the left foreground. When the panel was restored in 1983, it was decided to remove the old overpainting and to restore the balance of the original composition. This resulted in the painting’s current state, in which the large donor family can be made out in the ghostly figures in the foreground. Identifiable traces were left visible and some additional retouching was carried out. The male family members appear in the lower left, which corresponds with the ‘heraldic right’. The donor is shown with one of his sons, both of them kneeling and with their hands clasped in prayer. The son’s habit identifies him as a Dominican. Six boys – smaller and standing – are included behind them. The female members of the family appear on the heraldic left. The donor’s wife, also kneeling, has virtually disappeared, but six girls can be made out behind her, some on their knees, others standing. Traces of the underdrawing can still be distinguished in what remains of the two groups, from which we can infer that the donor family was planned from the outset. An interesting adjustment between the underdrawing stage and the first version of the painting can be detected in the female donor; the man dressed in white with the short green cape originally wore a sword, which disappeared behind the woman’s bowed and covered head. The shape of the sketched sword matches the one painted at the same angle, but without underdrawing, of the man in red who stands a step further back, slightly to the right.

**DATING**

Dendrochronological dating shows that the panel could have been painted from 1472 onwards. This tallies with the prevailing stylistic consensus that the work was done relatively early in Bosch’s career, between 1475 and 1490. The use of gold leaf for the lettering and the absence of atmospheric perspective in the view of the city are consistent with an early date, as is the fact that the composition was originally closed off by a wall in the right background (see below). The execution is fairly precise, with brushwork that is controlled rather than dynamic. The strokes were laid down in various directions, although generally in a linear fashion. The panel is likely to have been painted in the 1480s, possibly just after the Adoration of the Magi in New York (cat. 10) of around 1480, and before the Prado triptych with the Adoration of the Magi, commissioned by Peeter Scheyfve (cat. 9), which must have been done in the 1490s. The Ecce Homo Triptych of Peter van Os in Boston (cat. 24), whose central panel is closely related to the Frankfurt Ecce Homo in both composition and style, was probably produced in Bosch’s workshop no earlier than 1500, whereas the precise copy in the Mariënwater monastery (Koudewater), near ‘s-Hertogenbosch cannot – given its dendrochronological dating – have been produced until after around 1524, well after Bosch’s death in 1516. The texts were omitted in the latter version as, naturally, was the donor family. This freed up the blank wall in the left foreground which, following the example of an engraving by Israhel van Meckenem, was given a window with a round arch and bars, through which a prisoner watches the crowd calling for Christ to be crucified. The repeated
11.7–8 Female members of the donor family: VIS and IRR
11.9 The underdrawing was done in three or four phases.

11.10 Entombment [cat 54]
patterns in the gold brocade in the robe worn by the man nearest the foreground, on the other hand, were accurately copied; they comprise a bird in a vine and a relatively large fleur de lis – motifs that also feature in precisely the same way in the Ecce Homo panel of the Peter van Os triptych (cat. 24).

MEMORIAL PAINTING

The Ecce Homo panel with the donor family was undoubtedly painted as a memorial. The positioning of the family suggests that it was intended as a single panel, without wings. The surviving traces are insufficient to offer any clue as to the family’s identification and other evidence is similarly lacking. It is significant, however, that the man dressed as a Dominican – presumably the eldest son – was given a very prominent position. In addition, the Ecce Homo Triptych commissioned by Peter van Os, the central scene of which was undoubtedly based on the Frankfurt painting, was also probably installed in the first instance as a memorial in the Dominican church in ‘s-Hertogenbosch. The Dominican abbey had a large number of graves in the churchyard, in the church itself and in the cloister. The latter was reserved for the Dominicans themselves, and the choir of the church for prominent individuals. Numerous lay people were also buried elsewhere in the church. The Ecce Homo from the Städel might have served as a memorial in the same church, marking the tomb of a family whose eldest son had entered the monastery and risen to a high position. This would explain the prominent place he was given in the painting. If the Dominican abbey in ‘s-Hertogenbosch was indeed the original destination of Bosch’s Ecce Homo panel, it would at any rate have been readily accessible until the late 1520s as the model for the copy painted for the Brigitte n monastery of Mariënwater.

UNDERDRAWING

Infrared examination of the Frankfurt Ecce Homo produced several surprising results. The detailed underdrawing was done in three or four phases, with striking differences between them. The most important forms were laid down using a relatively broad brush with a freedom and openness typical of Bosch’s style. The modelling was then worked up with a finer brush, using parallel hatching in thin, sometimes long lines, applied in zones that are delimited fairly precisely. Several drapery folds were then emphasized further with a brush during a final phase, using short, darker (in the IR) hatched lines. The hatching itself varies surprisingly in terms of both direction and thickness. The combination of stylistic variations and an underdrawing done in several phases has been attributed in the past to execution by several different hands; however, the evidence for this is not persuasive. A very similar approach is found in the drawing of the Entombment in the British Museum in London (cat. 54), and phased underdrawings also occur in several other paintings.

The cityscape in the upper right was not originally planned. Bosch initially prepared an enclosed setting with no view into the distance. Three solid horizontal lines running to the right from the eaves of the palace/court building, most likely marked the top of a wall. The round arches sketched on the right-hand side, just above the wall along the canal, are a significant hint that the baying crowd was originally going to be placed before a loggia or arcade, or in front of an arched opening in the wall. The overall effect of this would have been much flatter and more theatrical, in keeping with the visual tradition for the Ecce Homo theme in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, in which two densely packed groups face one another in front of a closed background. Two engravings offer good examples of this configuration: the aforementioned Ecce Homo by Israhel van Meckenem, and the one by Martin Schongauer from his Passion series, dating from around 1480, which achieved a wide circulation very quickly. We also know of a second Ecce Homo by Israhel van Meckenem, in which the scene is presented frontally, with a closed background on either side. In the second state of that engraving, Christ’s body has also been covered with bleeding wounds, comparable with those in Bosch’s panel in Frankfurt. The similarities
between Schongauer’s engraving and the Frankfurt Ecce Homo have been pointed out in the literature fairly regularly. Although the panel is not, of course, a direct copy of the print, the figure of Christ, bent forwards with his hands crossed and with unusually long feet, does form a close match with the print; his clothing is likewise very similar. The latter aspect is important, as the combination of the open cloak over a body otherwise clad only in a loincloth, is somewhat unconventional. Christ is also depicted this way in the Peter van Os triptych in Boston (cat. 24). The gesticulating hands, with their strikingly long fingers, in the underdrawing of the Ecce Homo also seem to reflect the engraving, in which the motif is presented even more emphatically. Bosch must have been familiar with these prints and it is tempting to think that the unusual hatching style in the underdrawing might have been prompted by the engravers’ frequent use of hatching in different directions.
The closed wings of the Garden of Earthly Delights contain an explanatory inscription along the upper edge, where two short sentences spoken by the Creator are set out in paint (cat. 21). The motto of Peeter Scheyfve, placed above his coat of arms in the left wing of the Adoration of the Magi in the Prado (cat. 9) is not intended as a text explaining the content of the painted scene.

Mordant gilding is, however, used widely in the Adoration of the Magi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (cat. 10). It was also utilized in the left wing of the Prado Adoration of the Magi (cat. 9) for the motto een voor al (‘one for all’) and in the central panel for the signature and the star at the top (which was later overpainted). Gold leaf was incorporated very subtly in the little fire lit by Joseph in the left wing of that painting, but the precise technique used to apply it could not be securely determined. Mordant gilding is likewise found in the Boston Ecce Homo Triptych by Bosch’s workshop (cat. 24) and in paintings by the workshop or followers, such as The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things (cat. 34) and in the calligraphy around the Cure of Folly (cat. 33), both in the Prado.

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3 Fischer 2013, 32–34. Sander 1993b, 70. It is not known when the overpainting should be dated; it might have been done in the seventeenth century after the panel had lost its memorial function.

4 The most recent growth ring dates from 1459. (Analysis of the plank on the far left did not produce a date.) Allowing for a minimum of nine rings of removed sapwood, plus two years for transport and drying, the earliest possible painting date is 1470. Production after 1472 is, however, statistically more likely.

5 A summary of the literature can be found in Sander 1993a, 32. Sander himself proposed a slightly later date of around 1500; see Sander 1993a, 42.

6 Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. SK-A-4252, oil on panel, 73 × 54.5 cm, on long-term loan to the Museum voor Religieuze Kunst, Uden. The most recent growth ring dates from 1511. Allowing for a minimum of nine rings of removed sapwood, plus two years for transport and drying, the earliest possible creation date is 1522. Production after 1524 is, however, statistically more likely. See also BRCP, Technical Studies, cat. 11, RR 111–112.

7 See also Chapter 111, ‘Materials and Techniques’.

8 There are signs that the composition was begun using a dry medium, but this could not be determined with certainty; see further BRCP, Technical Studies, cat. 11, RR 49–50.
According to Ironside (1973, 113–17), the underdrawing was done by two different painters, one left-handed, the other right-handed. Sander (1993a, 40) likewise noted that parallel hatched lines run from both lower left to upper right and from upper left to lower right, but he hedges his bets by stating this between inverted commas: ‘… Nebeneinander von “links-” und “rechtshändig” ausgeführten Schraffuren’.

See also Chapter iii, ‘Materials and Techniques’.

A similar wall in this location can also be seen in the Ecce Homo in the closed right wing of the Saint George Altarpiece by the Master of the Legend of Saint George from around 1460. See Zehnder 1990, 252 no. 118; Sander 1993a, 42.


HG, Schongauer, no. 25. See also Landau and Parshall 1994, 50–63.

HG, Meckenem, no. 637. This is a plate by an anonymous Dutch engraver, which Van Meckenem worked on further.

See Sander 1993a, 35 n. 36; Fischer 2013, 242.

Christ’s left hand crosses his right in the underdrawing of the Ecce Homo; this is reversed, however, in the painted version. In that case, and in the engraving, the right hand crosses the left, as it does in the later Boston Ecce Homo (cat. 24).
**Hieronymus Bosch**

C. 1490–1510

Oil on oak panel, 59.7 x 32 cm

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie, Vienna, GG-6429

**Condition**

This panel, which is painted on both sides, must have functioned as the left wing of a triptych. Its original quarter-round arched top was cropped off, and so was a strip at the bottom. A triangular insert at the top right corner of *Christ Carrying the Cross* and strips at the bottom and top were added to give the panel its current rectangular format. The ground and paint layers appear overall relatively stable but several larger restored losses are present in the *Christ Carrying the Cross*, especially in the open space between the two main

**Analysis**

The panel with the *Child* on one side and *Christ Carrying the Cross* on the other, is the cropped left wing of a dismantled and otherwise lost triptych, the principal theme of which is likely to have been a Crucifixion. *Christ Carrying the Cross* will have been the left wing, while the right wing might have featured an Entombment scene. The painting of the *Christ Child* on the back of the left wing will have been matched in the other closed wing by an image of John the Baptist as toddler. Christ’s baptism by John in the River Jordan marked the beginning of his public ministry, which culminated in the Passion cycle, including the Carrying of the Cross and the Crucifixion. The two thieves who were crucified on either side of Jesus are shown in the foreground. They stand, as it were, between the viewer and the Redeemer, stressing the idea of good and evil, acknowledgement of one’s sins and the possibility of forgiveness.

**THE WAY OF THE CROSS**

A detail in the right upper corner of the Vienna *Christ Carrying the Cross* directs our attention to how much has been lost in the course of five hundred years. The beginning of a curve in the panel clearly shows that this is the left wing of a triptych that must originally have been of similar shape and size to the Venice triptychs and the Bruges *Last Judgement* (cat. 2, 8 and 16). Christ Carrying the Cross was situated on the inside of the left wing of a triptych and was probably accompanied by a Crucifixion scene in the central panel and an Entombment or Resurrection of Christ in the right wing. The back of the Vienna panel, and hence the other side of the altarpiece wing, viewed when the triptych was closed, has a semi-grisaille image of the *Christ Child* with a walking frame and windmill toy set in a tondo against a red background. The outside of the lost right wing will no doubt have been structured in the same way, with the young John the Baptist as Christ’s likely counterpart, as is also the case in an engraving of around 1475 by Israhel van Meckenem.

The unsteady child is located precisely where Jesus is placed on the other side of the panel, struggling to bear the weight of the cross. This is clearly visible in the X-radiograph, which makes it look as though the toddler is already carrying his cross – albeit in reverse. It is an eerie photographic effect, yet one that immediately highlights for us a fundamental aspect of Christian iconography, namely that Christ’s destiny was fixed from the very beginning of his life. This was a familiar notion in Bosch’s time, as shown by fifteenth-century New Year prints, in which the *Christ Child* is shown standing in front of the cross or even holding it in his hands. In other words, Bosch placed the child – an image of the young Christ – very deliberately in this position. The touching images on the closed triptych of Jesus and the young John the Baptist will have served to introduce the open painting, which showed the Son of God’s self-sacrifice on behalf of humanity.

The authors of the four Gospels have very little to say about the ‘way of the cross’ – Christ’s journey from the palace where Pontius Pilate delivered his sentence to the execution site
at Golgotha (the ‘Place or Mountain of the Skull’). According to Luke, Matthew and Mark, the Romans ordered a man called Simon of Cyrene to carry Christ’s cross.\(^6\) John, by contrast, insists that Christ carried it himself.\(^7\) Luke adds that a large crowd, including women, accompanied him to Golgotha. Bosch shows Christ, carrying his cross over his left shoulder, about to arrive at the place of execution. A group of more than twenty people – some of them armed and rather exotically dressed – walk with Christ from left to right. Jesus himself is placed centrally in the middleground of the panel. A man dressed in white leads the way; the rope over his shoulder is fastened around Christ’s waist to urge him forwards. The other end of the rope is tied in a loop and is used to beat him by the conspicuously placed man, shown head on, who stands immediately next to him. The two thieves due to be executed at the same time are shown in the foreground. They too have been led to Golgotha tied to a long rope. A T-shaped cross lies on the ground in the lower left corner, while the other cross has already been raised.
Christ is dressed in a long, deep-blue robe. Two spiked blocks hanging from a cord around his waist make it nigh-impossible for him to walk. His left foot steps on the block lying on the ground, while the sharp nails in the other block strike his right heel. The same motif is found in Bosch’s Christ Carrying the Cross in the Escorial, as is the balding man who goads him on with the rope (cat. 13). The version of the scene in the Escorial clearly shows Simon of Cyrene helping Christ to carry the cross. In the Vienna panel, by contrast, no one shares the burden: Christ has to bear his cross alone. Bosch might have based himself here, as he often did, on the Gospel of John, in which case the man in the chaperon walking behind Christ, his right hand on the shaft of the cross, might not be intended as Simon of Cyrene. Simon was not, after all, mentioned in John’s Gospel, which emphasizes instead that Christ struggled with the cross alone. Nor is the figure distinguishable by his costume from the executioners or the agitated crowd, although we do notice that his footwear is conspicuously protected by a civilized patten, while Christ goes barefoot. The man – Simon of Cyrene or otherwise – is, therefore, somewhat ambiguous; he points Christ out to the viewer with his left hand, yet he is certainly not using his right hand to help him carry the cross. The underdrawing, in which the man’s hand reaches further around the shaft, reveals that Bosch heightened this ambiguity deliberately, no doubt to encourage viewers to ask themselves what they would have done in his place. The soldier in the green robe who walks in front of the man in the chaperon clearly rests his armoured hand on the cross, forming a visual rhyme with the hand of the man behind him and emphasizing the question as to the status of these figures and their complicity with the rest of the lynch mob. The idea that Bosch is urging his viewers to reflect on questions of this kind is supported by the inclusion of several figures in the composition who are less caught up in the central action. This is
particularly the case with the figure on the lower left edge, who looks out of the painting and makes eye contact with the viewer. He and the red-clad executioner in the foreground, who also looks right at us, serve as intermediaries between ourselves and the painted scene and create a sense of communication. There are at least two other figures in the crowd who observe the events in which they have been swept up a little more passively.

The prominent presence of the two thieves in the foreground – comparable with Christ Carrying the Cross on the closed right wing of the Temptation of Saint Anthony in Lisbon (cat. 4) – is significant in this regard; though they are criminals, the pair are ordinary mortals like us. Their end is near and the question arises as to whether there is any prospect of forgiveness for their crimes, which depends in turn on the extent of their remorse. ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’, Jesus will say later. According to Christian tradition, Jesus was crucified with a ‘good’ or penitent thief on one side and a ‘bad’ one, who showed no remorse, on the other. The Good Thief was traditionally placed on Christ’s right side, and the Bad Thief on the ‘sinister’ left side. Bosch does the same: the cross of the penitent thief has already been raised, while the condemned man, kneeling and with his hands clasped together, is comforted by a priest. The viewer is guided into the scene along with the Bad Thief and the two figures immediately behind him. The eye is then drawn from the impenitent criminal to the penitent one, and via the latter’s cross up towards Christ carrying his cross and the now-lost central panel. In this way, the two thieves determine the angle from which the beholder views Christ. Bosch often used this pictorial strategy to introduce his viewers to the principal action and to encourage them to reflect on it. He does something similar in Christ Carrying the Cross in the Escorial (cat. 13), this time using the figure of Simon of Cyrene.
UNDERDRAWING

The underdrawing of Christ Carrying the Cross is noteworthy for the systematic way it was laid down in phases using brushes of varying size along with apparently different pigments and media. This distinctive technique is also found in the underdrawing of other paintings by Bosch with numerous figures and complex compositions. Each of the different stages has its own stylistic characteristics in those other works, just as they do here. We can see, for instance, that the outlines have mostly been drawn with a medium-size brush in fluid, confident lines. The same brush was also employed to prepare the modelling by means of short, parallel hatching in different directions. Bosch used a relatively large brush and a watery medium for another type of underdrawing, as in the yellow tunic of the man in the helmet behind the executioner with the rope. For some details, the hatching was done with a material that absorbs more carbon, giving it a darker appearance in the X-ray, as in the executioner in the red robe. The underdrawing of this figure also features another technique that was evidently typical of Bosch; the painting was prepared here in a distinctive way using red lake. In the lighter parts, the relatively transparent lake was laid over a thin layer of lead white; as we might expect, however, this underlayer is not used in the shadow areas of the red lake, as we can see in the X-radiograph. In this case, the hatching in the underdrawing indicates where the light underlayer was not to be placed.

The Christ Child was executed with great skill almost entirely wet-in-wet, and with virtually no underdrawing whatsoever. The head shows obvious similarities with that of Christ in Saint Christopher (cat. 7) and the Adoration of the Magi in New York (cat. 10), as well as with the head of a child in the central panel of the Temptation of Saint Anthony (cat. 4). The paint layer is strikingly thin and transparent in several places and efficient use has been made of the underlying cream-coloured base layer, as in the child’s face. The lead white in the broadly laid-down lighter parts has actually been applied thickly, creating a striking contrast. The
effect has been intensified by the ageing of the paint and its increased transparency. The grey background has been used as a base colour between highlight and shadow to paint the walking frame. The paint layers in Christ Carrying the Cross also vary quite markedly in thickness, but little use is made there of the underlayers and no coloured base layer was found. The large amount of vermilion and the powerful colour contrasts stand out, while the use of a yellowish lake (for a figure in the upper right) is exceptional. There is virtually no wet-in-wet painting, which means Christ Carrying the Cross is less impressive in quality than the Christ Child. Furthermore, given that the refinement and quality of detail in Christ Carrying the Cross are also somewhat less striking than in those of many other paintings, it is likely that Bosch’s workshop might have had some hand in it. Thanks to the recent treatment the work has regained much of its original lustre.

Dendrochronological dating has so far not proved possible. Dating on stylistic grounds is difficult, but in view of the cited similarities with other works by Bosch, the panel ought probably to be placed in the period 1490–1500, or perhaps a little later.

2 Marijnissen 1987, 271.
3 Koldeweij, Vandenbroeck and Vernet 2001, exhibition supplement no. 18.5; Fischer 2013, 58–59.
4 Heitz 1990, 17–18, 21, pls. 1–7, 16.
5 Cf. Acres 2013, 76.
7 John 19–17.
9 The interpretation suggested by Fischer [2013, 245] that this is Peter is unsupported and untenable.
10 John the Evangelist was the patron saint of both St John’s Church in ’s-Hertogenbosch and the city itself. He was also held in high esteem by the Brotherhood of Our Lady. See cat. 5–6.
11 Ilsink and Koldeweij 2011, 18–21.
12 The question arises as to whether this might be a portrait, possibly of the artist or the patron. Figures of this kind crop up regularly in Netherlandish art around 1500, in the work of Hans Memling for instance (Saint John Altarpiece, Bruges) and even more so in that of a slightly younger artist like Joos van Cleve. See Scaillitrez 2011.
13 See the website Boschproject.org, link L27.
14 Compare the Calvary with Donor [cat. 15], Temptation of Saint Anthony [cat. 4] and Adoration of the Magi in the Prado [cat. 9], in which mediating figures also play an important role in guiding the viewer’s attention towards Christ.
15 See also Chapter iii, ‘Materials and Techniques’.
Christ Carrying the Cross, Vienna
Christ Carrying the Cross

Hieronymus Bosch
c. 1495–1505

Oil on oak panel, 142.8 x 104.3 cm
Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial,
Patrimonio Nacional, 10014733

BRCP examination and documentation data:
El Escorial, 22–25 April 2013; BRCP, Technical Studies,
cat. 13, RR 89–90; //Boschproject.org no. 13.

Condition
The panel has largely retained its original dimensions,
while its partly thinned reverse has always been unpainted. The bottom part of the rightmost join is open and there are several indentations along the middle join. The painting is stable. Large parts are in good condition, but in areas of green clothing, the landscape bottom left, and the brown-yellow hill on the right the paint is almost completely lost.

These areas and most of the smaller losses have been filled and retouched in vertical strokes, using a rigatino technique. The red lakes have faded somewhat and areas of light paint appear to have increased in transparency. Locally the abrasion, matte areas and large repainted areas distract slightly from the otherwise good visibility of the original paint surface.

Provenance
Transferred to the Escorial in 1574 on the order of King Philip II of Spain.

Literature
BRCP, Technical Studies, cat. 13, RR 89–90; Fischer 2013,
44, 51, 54–55, 244–45; Koreny 2012, 28, 29, 57, 229, 342;
Vandenbroeck 2002, 320; Klein 2002, 126; Vandenbroeck
2000, 50; Van Schoute, Vernooystraete and Garrido 2001,
108; Koldeweij, Vandenbroeck and Vermet 2001, 96;
Rutgers 2001; Marijnnen 1987, 280; Unverfehr 1980, 27,
131, 143–44; Cohen 1975, no. 6; Gibson 1972–73, 83–93;
Tolnay 1965, 11, 377; Lozoya and Perez Sanchez 1963, 92;
Von Baldass 1959, 245; Combe 1946, no. 17; Friedländer
1927, 93, 147; Lafond 1914, 43; Justi 1889, 124.

Analysis
Christ Carrying the Cross is almost a metre and a half in height, making it Bosch’s most monumental devotional painting we know. It was presented to the Escorial by Philip II as early as 1574. The work’s original destination is not known. Meditation on Christ’s execution (emphasized by the unusual shape of the cross) and the theme of the imitation of Christ (highlighted here by the prominent position given to Simon of Cyrene) play an essential part in this painting. Its attribution is not disputed, while its execution is most readily comparable with images of saints such as Saint John the Baptist and Saint John on Patmos (cat. 5–6), and with the Crowning with Thorns in London (cat. 14).

SOURCES

The dignified and resigned figure of Christ, seemingly impassive, carries his cross to Golgotha, where he is to be executed. A single tear runs down his cheek. The moments of resistance, unease and despair in the Garden of Gethsemane are now behind him. He will be seized with doubt one final time on the cross, calling out to his father in bewilderment to ask why he has forsaken him. The moment during the carrying of the cross that Bosch has chosen to depict in this painting – and above all the manner of its depiction – means that little emphasis is placed on the physical pain Jesus suffered during his earlier flogging and crowning with thorns, or on the agonizing death he is about to endure. That pain is nevertheless alluded to by the traces of blood on his head, where the thorns cut deeply into his flesh. His feet too have been wounded by the spiked wooden blocks tied to his legs. Jesus is about to take a step forward, which will place the combined weight of his body and the cross onto his right leg. The nails driven through the block are about to pierce the sole of his foot, just as they have punctured his right heel; Simon of Cyrene’s sharing of the burden will do little to help in this respect. These heartrending details do not appear, of course, in the New Testament, but were drawn instead from late-medieval devotional texts. The two spiked blocks are described, for instance, in the Fasciculus mirre, which was published in numerous Middle Dutch editions from 1504 onwards: ‘And they tied two rectangular boards to him, into which sharp nails were driven, so that with each step they struck his shins.’

The Gospels do not mention the trumpeter either, but the figure does occur in late-medieval texts in which the story of the Passion is embroidered with all sorts of anecdotal and symbolic details. Die passie Jhesu – a devotional text written around 1500, which circulated in the sixteenth century – has the following to say, for instance, regarding Christ carrying the cross: ‘They led Our Lord out to the sound of trumpets and fanfares, as was the custom there with condemned men.’ Another Middle Dutch account of the episode adds the detail that Jesus was accompanied by ‘the great trumpet of death, which was only blown
when someone was led to their execution. Christ was brought to the place of execution to the sound of trumpets, just as, according to the Old Testament, animals were driven to slaughter or sacrifice. The question then is whether the inclusion of one or more trumpeters in scenes like this had its origins in this analogy with similar Old Testament scenes, or whether it was a reflection of late-medieval customs. Perhaps both parallels played a part: on the one hand, the carrying of the cross was depicted as an event with an immediate contemporary relevance, while on the other, the Old Testament was believed to contain numerous prefigurations of Christ’s life and death.

These are details that only strike us when we view the painting attentively and reflect on what we see. Although the Carrying of the Cross was an extremely popular theme in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century iconography, the episode is only mentioned briefly and succinctly in the Gospels. According to Matthew (27:32): ‘As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene [Libya] named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall.’ Mark (15:21) also has Simon of Cyrene carrying the cross, whereas John (19:17) states firmly that Jesus himself bore it: ‘So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.’ Bosch chose to base his Christ Carrying the Cross primarily on the Gospel of Luke, which writes explicitly (23:26): ‘they laid the cross on him [Simon], and made him carry it behind Jesus’. This has almost always been interpreted as meaning that Simon of Cyrene was forced to help Jesus carry the cross, not to carry it in his place.
One very striking visual element in Bosch’s painting is indeed the prominent position occupied on the left of the scene by Simon of Cyrene – dressed, unusually, entirely in white. This was noted as early as 1574, when the painting was transferred to the Escorial on Philip II’s order: ‘a panel with Christ, our Lord, carrying the cross, with Simon of Cyrene dressed in white and other figures, done by Gerónimo Bosqui’. In his 1605 account of the works by Bosch in the Escorial, the monk José de Sigüenza noted that Christ Carrying the Cross shows the malevolent, cruel and furious faces of the Pharisees and scribes, who would not rest until Jesus had been killed. Further weight is placed on Simon by the way the bearded old man in blue places his right hand round his shoulder and points to him with his left – a gesture that makes Simon the scene’s most important figure after Christ. Bosch places the focus here on an ordinary man: Simon was, after all, a chance passer-by who was trying to enter Jerusalem just as the procession leading Christ away left the city. The flow of movement in the panel from left to right begins with Simon, who follows Christ and carries the cross with him. Simon provides the viewer with a link between the world of the meditating worshipper and Jesus Christ, the essence of his or her faith.

Popular devotional texts like Ludolph of Saxony’s Thoeck vanden leven ons heeren Ihesu Christi (‘The Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ’; 1374) and Thomas a Kempis’s Imitatio Christi (‘Imitation of Christ’; before 1441) – both of which were widely disseminated and frequently reprinted around 1500 – encouraged readers to meditate on the life and passion of Christ and to imitate his example in order to bring them closer to him. Ludolph, for instance, describes in detail how Christ’s last, sleepless night left him so weak that he collapsed under the weight of the cross and that a bystander called Simon, a heathen who had converted to the Jewish law, was forced by the soldiers to carry his cross with him. Much of the chapter is given over to moralizing and contemplative passages telling the reader how to meditate on and empathize with the text. It is stressed towards the end, for example, that the way Jesus allowed himself to be led to his death as meekly as a lamb should inspire the reader to obey God’s commandments and that the individual’s own will should be subordinated to that of
his or her superiors. A link was also made, lastly, with the author’s own times, in which the Church organized processions dedicated to the cross, to ward off danger and to reflect on the Passion of Christ. To a significant extent, these and other texts on the suffering of Christ were intended to arouse compassion, so that the reader would truly empathize with Jesus. A great deal of attention was likewise devoted to Mary, the mother obliged to witness the sacrifice of her son, but who despite everything never loses her dignity. Stressing the relationship between the mother and her son highlighted the humanity of both. Bosch too was mindful of this aspect, which is why he paints the Virgin in the middleground, where she is supported in her grief by Saint John.

‘Seeing is believing’ is the watchword here as it was in many of the texts and images linked to the Devotio Moderna movement. One thing these texts and images have in common is the way they use intermediate figures to draw the viewer and reader into the central action. Mary and Simon of Cyrene function this way in Christ Carrying the Cross. The figure who leads the procession in Bosch’s treatment of the theme in the Escorial plays a similar role; he and Christ are the only ones whose gaze is directed towards the viewer. The powerful and expressive execution of this figure’s head is a high point of Bosch’s work. The figure of Simon of Cyrene (a representative of the people picked out at random to lend a hand) encourages viewers to deny themselves, to pick up their cross and to follow Christ (Luke 9:23). Bosch seems to use the figure to ask us very directly who we are and what we would do in the situation he depicts. Would we, like Simon, take up Christ’s cross? Would we follow Jesus or persecute him? The simple, somewhat coarse and perhaps even slightly foolish appearance of the person at the head of the group makes us realize that those who persecuted Christ were not monsters but the most ordinary of citizens – people just like us. The emphasis that this places on the worshipper’s individual responsibility is something that recurs frequently in Bosch. The viewer is allowed very little space here not to ponder such questions, as the procession of monumental, full-length figures fills the entire width of the picture plane.

13.4 Martin Schongauer, Christ Carrying the Cross, 1470–82. Engraving. The British Museum, London

This pictorial strategy recalls the engravings from Martin Schongauer’s Passion cycle, two prints from which (The Arrest of Christ and Christ Carrying the Cross) seem to have provided Bosch with inspiration for the figure leading the procession on the far right. He must have seen a print by Israhel van Meckenem as well, in whose engraving of the same subject we also find a soldier immediately behind Christ who is about to whip him with the rope to urge him on. A fluttering pennant and raised trumpet in the upper left corner add to the dynamism of the crowd that drives Christ to Golgotha. The position of the little group with the grieving Mary supported by Saint John, placed surprisingly deep in the landscape, is also similar in Van Meckenem’s print and Bosch’s painting. The primary difference compared to Van Meckenem and Schongauer’s engravings is that Bosch achieves a strong rightward movement in his painting, for which the kneeling Mary immediately above Christ’s head forms a small but essential counterweight. The unusual shape of the cross – depicted in a similar way in the tondo with the Passion cycle on the back of Saint John on Patmos in Berlin (cat. 58) and in the background of the Boston Ecce Homo (cat. 24) – contributes strongly to this dynamic thrust. Simon lifts the upright of the cross, causing the horizontal beam at the top to form an acute angle on one side and an obtuse angle on the other. How ought we to interpret this detail? Is Christ carrying an unstable cross, to symbolize his ultimate victory over it? The cross in the Escorial panel seems too solid and heavy for that. On the other hand, it is not tenable to argue that Bosch was incapable of painting a ‘correct’ tau cross: he did so in both Christ Carrying the Cross in Vienna (cat. 12) and in his rendition of the same theme on the closed wings of the Saint Anthony Triptych in Lisbon (cat. 4). Another possibility is that he used foreshortening to take account of the original location of the painting; once again, however, this idea is not supported by the corresponding details in the Lisbon and Boston paintings. The distortion is too strong, moreover, and not in keeping with the other pictorial elements in
the large Escorial panel. None of these suggestions adequately explains a striking visual detail which, whatever else it does, certainly focuses the viewer’s attention on the cross. It encourages reflection on the theme depicted by the painting, which must in itself have been the artist’s primary objective. Viewed in those terms, the way Bosch presents Christ’s cross is effective. A seemingly casual detail in the background, high up on top of one of the buildings in Jerusalem, offers a hint; the T-shaped cross that stands out there against the blue sky echoes the one borne by Christ.

The Escorial Christ Carrying the Cross is probably the least studied of all Bosch’s paintings. This is understandable to some extent, as the image is relatively uncomplicated and contains none of the peculiar creatures that made Bosch so famous. On the other hand, the limited attention paid to the work is surprising, given its monumentality and the fact that it dramatically illustrates a fundamental theme in Christian doctrine. And besides, the execution of the painting allows it to be linked fairly readily with other important works in the Bosch group, drawings as well as paintings.

UNDERDRAWING

The underdrawing was done in at least two phases, in the first of which the composition was prepared with thin, refined lines in a dry material. The composition was then underdrawn more comprehensively during a second phase, with a relatively large brush and an unusual, watery medium. The contours were laid down with sketchy but confident lines that serve primarily to indicate the placement of the figures. Shadow effects were also prepared here and there. The underdrawn composition was followed fairly closely for the most part in the final painted version, although several more substantial changes have been detected, along with adjustments to certain details. The man in the green robe in the left middleground, for instance, was initially drawn more frontally and with a beard. The rope used to whip Jesus did not end in a knot at first but in a loop, and the man wielding it was not originally bald. John, who supports the Virgin Mary in the background, initially knelt next to her, making him share her grief rather than consoling her. The pennant, sticks and trumpet were not
13.9 T-shaped cross on one of the roofs of Jerusalem
prepared in the underdrawing. The IRR documentation also shows that black paint was frequently mixed with the red lakes. The style and function of the underdrawing are very similar to those of paintings like the Adoration of the Magi in the Prado (cat. 9), Saint John the Baptist (cat. 5), Saint John on Patmos (cat. 6), Saint Christopher (cat. 7), Saint Jerome (cat. 1), the Crowning with Thorns (cat. 14), the Hermit Saints Triptych (cat. 2) and the closed wings of the Vienna Last Judgement with Saint James and Saint Hippolytus (cat. 17).

In artistic terms, we are struck here, as we are in many other paintings in the group, by the speed, efficiency and focus with which Bosch worked. The eyes of the principal figures, for instance, are worked out to a much greater extent than those of the secondary figures.

Several striking connections can be made, moreover, with other works in the group, suggesting the existence of study drawings. The face of the man whipping Christ with the rope is very similar, for instance, to that of Saint John the Baptist in Madrid, and the same type was also used as the figure at the centre of the group below the right arm of the crucified Saint Wilgefortis (cat. 8), and as the executioner who drives Christ forward in the much smaller Christ Carrying the Cross in Vienna (cat. 12). The whip in the Vienna painting ends in a loop, just like its equivalent in the underdrawing of the Escorial panel. The stumbling, bent-over figure of Christ also corresponds closely with its much smaller equivalent in the Vienna painting: even the way he clutches the horizontal beam of the cross is identical, and we find the two spiked blocks there too, which would actually have made it impossible for him to walk. The rope tied around Christ’s waist is used the same way in both compositions: the man at the head of the procession leads him forward with one end, while the other end serves as a whip. Saint John’s face is rendered more sketchily, as it is smaller and located further in the background. The way the eyes, nose, mouth and the shadow under the lower lip are indicated is very similar to how the features of the angel were painted in Saint John on Patmos, but also the faces of the figures in the middleground of the Garden of Earthly Delights (cat. 21). A more surprising correspondence exists between the face of Saint John in Christ Carrying the Cross and the figures inside the body of the Tree-Man in the Vienna drawing.
13.13–14 Eyes of the tormentors far left and far right [CAT 13]

The slender tree framing the picture plane on the right, lastly, has been painted in a manner similar to how the tree on the left of the Vienna sheet is rendered. In other words, this Christ Carrying the Cross can be readily linked with a number of other paintings from the Bosch group, in terms of both its underdrawing and final execution. The works in question are primarily the aforementioned saints' images, but also the Garden of Earthly Delights and the Adoration of the Magi in Madrid (cat. 9). Other examples are the London Crowning with Thorns (cat. 14) and the drawing of the Tree-Man. The idea that Bosch was, in a very real sense, a 'draughtsman in paint' may be illustrated, finally, by a comparison between Saint John in the painting and one of the bystanders in a drawing in the Morgan Library.

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1. This contrast, for instance, with the emphasis placed on Christ's physical suffering in Bosch’s Ecce Homo in Frankfurt. Although painted on a different scale, the crowns of thorns in the two paintings are very similar in execution.

2. ‘En ende twee viercante borden daer scherpe prickelkens in geslagen waren, bonden si aen hem, als wanneer hi voort ginc die sloegen beneden aen zijn schenen.’ Fasciculus mirre. Dit is een sonderlinge devote materie van die passie onse heren Jhesus Christi, Antwerp (Willem Vorsterman) 1504–44, and numerous later editions. Marrow 1979, 180–81.

3. ‘Sij leijden Onsen Lieven Heer uut met basuijnen ende met gescal, als daer gewoenliken was dat men die dede den verdoemden menschen.’ Marrow 1979, 321, after Die passie Jhesu, c. 1500, copy c. 1575, Provinciaal Museum, Hasselt, unnumbered.

4. ‘… die grote trompette des doots, diemen niet anders en sloch dan alsien yemant totter doot waert leijde.’ Marrow 1979, 159–60, 321, after a Passion treatise of c. 1500, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague, ms 75 h 46, and a copy of c. 1570: Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, ms 11v 115.

5. See Marrow 1979 (153–69) for the symbolic interpretation of trumpeters in Passion scenes.

6. Simon of Cyrene is also dressed in white in the scene with Christ Carrying the Cross in the background of the Boston Ecce Homo (cat. 24).


9. Ludolph of Saxony, Thoeck vanden leven on heeren Jhesu Christi, published in Antwerp (Gerard Leeu) 1487; in Delft (Christiaan Snellaert) 1488; and in Zwolle (Pieter van Oys) 1499. Chapter 152 deals with Christ Carrying the Cross. Thomas a Kempis, Imitatio Christi: Dit is een schoon boecxken ende es geheten (Qui sequitur me) ende metten anderen drie boecxken, printed around 1500 in Leiden, Antwerp and other cities.

10. See, for example, Liden ende Passie Ons Heren Jesu Christi, Gouda (Gerard Leeu) 1477; reprinted repeatedly.


14. For further information, see BRCP, Technical Studies, cat. 13, RR 89–90.

15. Compare also the little tree on the right of the Owl’s Nest in Rotterdam (cat. 36) and the tree in Saint John on Patmos in Berlin (cat. 6).
Hieronymus Bosch

C. 1490–1500

Oil on oak panel, 73.8 x 59 cm

The National Gallery, London, 4744

Not documented by the brcp.1


Condition

The panel was slightly cropped on all sides, as well as thinned and cradled. There is an old, stable crack in the top centre, left of which paint is damaged from something that dripped down, extending onto the gauntlet. Adhesion of both paint and ground is very good, with minimal losses. Several scratches stand out, as the retouching has discoloured, and some pentimenti are visible. Red lakes have faded somewhat and the sleeve in the bottom left was more purplish originally. The increase in transparency of light paints has resulted in underlayers shimmering through, for instance in the garment of Christ where the initial composition is visible, but the legibility of the painting is reasonably good.

Provenance

Prior to 1882 Hollingworth Magniac, Colworth Park (Bedfordshire); 1882–92 C. Magniac, auction London, 2 July 1892; purchased by R. Crawshay, Rome; 1933 Galleria Sangiorgi, Rome; purchased in 1934 by the National Gallery, London.

Literature


Analysis

The London Crowning with Thorns is presented in the manner described in John’s Gospel, which recounts how a crown made of thorn branches was placed on Christ’s head. Only after that was a royal purple cloak hung about his shoulders, a sequence that enabled Bosch to create a powerful contrast between the white-clad Christ and the colourfull band of torturers surrounding him. As he painted, the artist made quite a few changes from the situation in the underdrawing: the elderly tormentor lower left, for instance, originally made a mocking gesture with his left hand. The crown of thorns has been woven from two carefully selected types of thorn, which further heightens the painting’s symbolic meaning. An image of Saint Christopher was originally planned for the panel, but was later entirely ignored. A close-up representation of large, half-length figures as we see in this Crowning with Thorns was still unusual in northern European painting in the final quarter of the fifteenth century.

ACCORDING TO JOHN

John’s Gospel describes the flogging and mockery of Christ very briefly: ‘Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and striking him on the face’ (John 19:1–3). This episode from the Passion story also occurs, of course, in the three other Gospels. There is one noteworthy difference, however: only John describes how the crown of thorns was pressed onto Christ’s head first, with the purple ‘royal robe’ draped around him afterwards. The Crowning with Thorns in the National Gallery closely follows John’s text rather than those of Luke, Matthew or Mark. At the moment of his ‘coronation’, Jesus wears only a thin, white linen robe. This was evidently a deliberate choice on the painter’s part, as we can see in the underdrawing – now visible to the naked eye – that a cloak, fastened with a pin, was originally drawn in fluid lines, but was never painted. There will have been both substantive and aesthetic reasons for this change of mind between the initial design and final execution. It might have been requested by the patron, for instance, after seeing the underdrawing on the panel. It is safe to assume that people at the time read, quoted and knew biblical texts very literally and precisely. Saint John the Evangelist was the patron of the principal church in ’s-Hertogenbosch and was held in high regard by the Brotherhood of Our Lady (see cat. 5–6). It was logical, therefore, to take his Gospel as the starting point. In aesthetic terms, meanwhile, excluding the purple cloak meant that Christ in his virtually white robe could be surrounded by torturers in dark and strongly contrasting costumes.

THE TORMENTORS

The older man lower left, with his sharply drawn features and prominent nose, is clearly intended as a Jew; he places his right hand on Christ’s clasped hands, while grinning up at him. His blue robe was originally more purple, and the chaperon entirely vermilion.2
This was partly overpainted with lead white and then red lake, on which a crescent moon is placed as an embroidered exotic motif; in the underdrawing he was given a helmet-like headdress. Originally his left hand (now grasping a short staff) was raised, and he pointed towards his mouth with his extended forefinger, in an insulting gesture.

The man shown upper left plays the most important role: he is about to place the crown of thorns on Jesus’s head with his armoured glove. We also notice the precisely rendered arrow inserted through his turban. Its shape is specific and significant: this is a crossbow bolt with a square head, as used particularly for hunting. The crown of thorns is carefully composed of two types of thorn branch, twisted together, which must have been intended symbolically. The branch with the long and sharp thorns is undoubtedly a Christ’s Thorn (Ziziphus spina-christi) – a thornbush or tree found in various regions including the Holy Land. Branches were brought back by Western pilgrims in the belief that Christ’s crown of thorns had been woven from it. A rose-branch, with its typical curved thorns, is twined around the spina-christi. In the Christian context, the rose was primarily a symbol of the Virgin Mary and through her of the advent of the Redeemer. The beauty of the flower and plant’s thorny stems are inextricably linked with one another as a symbol of love and pain. The link is made in a line from the responsory during the Feast of the Nativity of Mary. ‘Sicut spina rosam genuit Iudea Mariam’ – ‘As the thorn brought forth the rose, so did Judea bring forth Mary.’

In the underdrawing, the torturer in the upper right only held Christ with his left hand. The painter moved this hand – which now grasps a staff – further towards the edge of the panel. The staff in the underdrawing is a weapon with murderous spikes. The right hand of this figure, which rests on Christ’s right shoulder, was painted over the green robe of the other tormentor and Jesus’s white robe. The gesture is almost solicitous and contrasts cruelly with the man’s occupation. He wears a spiked leather collar around his neck to protect him from attack, as does the dog that threatens the traveller on the closed wings of the Haywain (cat. 20) and in the Wayfarer panel in Rotterdam (cat. 19). Christ’s tyrants were regularly compared with aggressive dogs, both visually and in writing.

The man shown lower right wears a chaperon, the colour of which matches that of the sleeves protruding from beneath his red outer garment. His nose is smaller in the underdrawing and, as Lorne Campbell rightly notes, he seemingly wishes to rip Christ’s robe in two with his hands. The figure of Jesus was also adjusted during the painting process compared to the underdrawing. His hands, for instance, were positioned lower down in the preparatory sketch, almost at the bottom edge of the panel. Moving them to a slightly higher position meant that the lower left figure could touch them in what is the only contact with Christ’s skin made by his tormentors. The gesture (both Bosch’s adjustment and the action of the torturer) emphasizes the importance of hands in this composition: there are no fewer than seven of them in the centre of the composition, one above the other.

CLOSE-UP

A more understated, almost frozen image results from the changes made during the painting process with respect to the underdrawing. Christ’s calm and serenity are all the more striking when we consider the four torturers. His white, extremely simple robe gives the impression – more so now than will have been the case originally – of having been set down entirely in dead colour. It makes his friendly face even more eloquent; he is pure and inviolate. ‘Truly this man was God’s Son’, the centurion will say as he guards Christ on the cross, but not until Jesus has been first mocked, humiliated and put to death. It is noticeable that the officers’ facial expressions are rendered without too strong an element of caricature. Do they know already what only dawned on the centurion after the sentence had been carried out? The painting in London is a serene devotional panel more than a dramatic Crowning with Thorns of the kind we find in a Passion cycle.

The confrontational close-up and large-scale presentation of half-length figures is both striking and innovative; it was hitherto still found only rarely in painting north of the
Alps. The close-up composition was more common, by contrast, in religious printmaking by the likes of Martin Schongauer and Israhel van Meckenem. The same effect is used in Christ Carrying the Cross in the Museum voor Schone Kunsten in Ghent, which was once widely attributed to Bosch. It results there, by contrast, in a more dramatic image (cat. 29). Similar half-length figure compositions are also found in other Passion scenes that probably draw on examples by Hieronymus Bosch, such as the Arrest of Christ in the Rijksmuseum, Christ Before Pilate in Princeton, and the Crowning with Thorns in the Escorial (cat. 27).

The London panel was initially intended, incidentally, for an image of Saint Christopher carrying the Christ Child on his shoulders rather than a Crowning with Thorns. The painting of the sky for that earlier composition was actually begun. In his recent catalogue of the National Gallery collection, Campbell discusses only the detail of the naked Christ Child. The little figure was laid down in great detail using an unusually fine brush, while the rest of the underdrawing was done with a relatively large brush and in a watery medium that can be readily linked with underdrawings elsewhere in the Bosch group. Campbell believes that Bosch was probably responsible for the underdrawing of the Saint Christopher figure too; this seems unlikely, however, since no other underdrawing has so far been found within Bosch’s oeuvre that closely resembles it. Given that the two compositions were done within a short space of time, the panel offers important evidence for the idea that several artists made underdrawings in Bosch’s workshop.

DATE

Dendrochronological dating of the support gives 1468 as the most recent heartwood ring, suggesting 1477 as the earliest possible felling date and a production of the painting after 1481. We assume a creation date between 1490 and 1500 based on stylistic similarities with the Prado Adoration and Christ Carrying the Cross in the Escorial.

The London Crowning with Thorns has been linked with a painting of the same subject done by Bosch according to early accounts. It was owned by the Portuguese humanist Damião de Góis, who was the secretary of the Portuguese merchants’ community in Antwerp from 1523 to 1545. De Góis (1502–1574) undoubtedly acquired the painting, together with two other works by Hieronymus Bosch, during his time living in the Low Countries. By his own account, he paid a considerable sum for this work by Bosch, which was worth a great deal because of ‘the perfection, originality and the subject’. De Góis declared, moreover, during his trial by the Inquisition in 1571–72 that he had presented the Crowning with Thorns – ‘an altarpiece with doors’ – to the Church of Santa Maria da Várzea in his native village of Alenquer, where he also wished to be buried. It is not impossible that the painting in the National Gallery – said to have been acquired in Spain in the nineteenth century – was once the central panel of de Góis’s triptych; this is far from certain, however, given the painting’s format, which is relatively small and narrow for such a panel.
The BRCP was given permission to examine the painting in situ and out of its frame, but not to document it. The documentation in visible light, IR, and XRF discussed and reproduced here was obtained in the National Gallery’s studios and differs from the BRCP’s standard procedures.

2 See also BRCP, Technical Studies, cat. 14, pp. 142–143.

3 A similar gesture is shown in two engravings by Martin Schongauer of around 1475–80: Crowning with Thorns (Bartsch 13; HG x.lx, 23) and Ecce Homo (Bartsch 15; HG x.lx, 25). See our fig. 11.12. See for the dating Shestack 1967, 51–52.


6 Timmers 1947, 512–15, especially no. 1142.

7 According to Lorne Campbell, this right hand is not underdrawn, although this seems to be the case in the published IR. Campbell, however, argues that this is the underdrawing of Christ’s hair. Campbell 2014, 148, fig. 1, 149.

8 Marrow 1979, 36–40.

9 Campbell 2014, 149.

10 Cf. Ringbom 1965, 115–70. Bosch also used the close-up technique in the drawing of the Owl’s Nest (cat. 36).

11 See, for example, Martin Schongauer’s Mon of Sorrows with the Virgin Mary and Saint John (Bartsch 69), which dates according to Shestack (1969, xi) from shortly after 1470.

12 It is interesting to note that the two paintings – Crowning with Thorns in London and Christ Carrying the Cross in Ghent – match precisely in height.

13 See also Chapter 111, ‘Materials and Techniques’.

14 Campbell 2014, 148, 157, and fig. 3.

15 When the outlines of the crossbow bolt upper left were scratched in, the underlying layer of paint for the sky in the Saint Christopher scene was still wet. We may conclude from this that the two compositions were created in quick succession and in the same workshop. See also Chapter 111, ‘Materials and Techniques’, and Spronk 2011, passim.

16 Allowing for a minimum of nine rings of removed sapwood, plus two years for transport and drying, the earliest possible creation date is 1479. Production after 1481 is, however, statistically much more likely.

17 Engelenburg 1901, 191–206; Unverfehrt 1980, 13, 24, 116; Van Dijk 2000, 93–94; Caetano 2014, 77. See also the Job Triptych (cat. 23).


19 Caetano 2014, 77.

20 The work in question might also have been a Crowning with Thorns by an early follower of Bosch, such as the one in the Escorial (cat. 27) or one of the other versions of the composition in Madrid (Museo Lázaro Galdiano, inv. 3047) or Segovia (Museo Provincial de Bellas Artes, inv. 12). Vandenbroeck 2002, 317–18. It is clear from Mencía de Mendoza’s triptych in Valencia that this Crowning with Thorns, painted in a tondo, served as the central panel of a triptych. Unverfehrt (1980, 19, 24, 26) believes that the version in the Escorial is the one previously owned by Damião de Góis.
Hieronymus Bosch  
c. 1490–1510

Oil on oak panel, 74.8 x 61 cm  
Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique/Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België, Brussels, 6639

BRCP examination and documentation data:  

Condition
The panel reverse is original except for the buttons applied onto the join, a rectangular block and a replaced corner at the upper left, and strips of wood that replaced the severely worm-eaten lower edge. The panel could originally have been about 0.5 cm longer at the bottom, but the other edges are original. In a past treatment the sky was likely extended to the non-original incised line (now restored). Woodworm tunnelling has severely damaged and weakened the support and four cracks were observed, two of which appear unstable. Ground and paint are adhered well, but severe lead soap aggregate formation throughout has resulted in numerous pinpoint losses, for example in Christ’s face. Large restored losses are mainly present at the join and the cracks. The paint surface is somewhat abraded overall but reasonably legible.

Provenance
1886 Fétis collection, Brussels; auctioned 1909; 1926 Brussels, Franchomme-Van Halteren; purchased by the museum from that collection in 1952.

Literature

Analysis
The Brussels Calvary with Donor is unusually simple and sober for an image of the crucified Christ. Bosch deliberately presented the theme this way to optimize its contemplative effect. The (unidentified) donor and the viewer are invited to focus on Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and the ensuing redemption of humanity. The landscape is bleak and the people walking away indifferent, while scraps of bone and a dead tree allude to the transience of life. At the same time, the Apostle Peter presents the donor to Saint John and the Virgin Mary, who will intercede in turn with Christ for his salvation. Although the marked stylization of this unsigned panel is not evidence in itself of an early date in Bosch’s oeuvre, it was painted by him in the late fifteenth century.

LUCID AND SERENE

While Bosch’s painted oeuvre may firmly be described as Christocentric, the Brussels Calvary with Donor is his only surviving painting with the Crucifixion as its subject. The viewer’s relationship with Christ is frequently an indirect one in many of Bosch’s paintings; this is the case, for instance, in images of saints like Jerome (cat. 1) and Anthony (cat. 4), but also in the Haywain (cat. 20) and even the Garden of Earthly Delights (cat. 21). Not so, however, in the Brussels painting, in which the crucified Christ forms the central point of a highly lucid and serene composition. The donor kneeling at the foot of the cross to the right also calls very subtly for the viewer’s attention, in what is undoubtedly an expression of his personal devotion to Christ. The figures of Peter, John and Mary, along with the empty landscape and the view of the city pushed into the background, are all conceived in such a way as to place the focus on the kneeling man, the crucified Christ and the relationship between the two.

The Calvary with Donor is viewed almost unanimously in the Bosch literature as an autograph work. It fits neatly into the painterly tradition of the second half of the fifteenth century in the Low Countries, and is related to Calvary scenes by the likes of Rogier van der Weyden and Bosch’s contemporary Gerard David. The choices Bosch made here are highlighted by a brief comparison with David’s Crucifixion in New York, which was produced at more or less the same time.1 David follows Van der Weyden’s example by encouraging the viewer to empathize with the Virgin Mary; Bosch, by contrast, strips the landscape back and simplifies it until it resembles the sandy area to the south of ‘s-Hertogenbosch. David treats the scene as a historical event by giving a prominent position to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and by allowing a direct relationship between John and Mary Magdalene on the one hand and Christ on the other, which he achieves through the direction of their respective gazes. The city in the background of Bosch’s painting has a much more Brabantine feel, down to the windmill outside the city walls. Most striking, perhaps, is the fact that no one in Bosch’s painting – unlike David’s – is looking at Christ or tending to him. This applies to the figures gathered beneath the
cross, but also to those in the background, all of whom seem indifferent to or unaware of the Crucifixion as they make their way towards the city.

PARALLELS

Several stylistic similarities can be identified between this panel and other works by Bosch, most notably the Garden of Earthly Delights (cat. 21). The features of Saint John and the Virgin Mary in the Brussels painting, for instance, resemble those of Christ and Eve in the left wing of the Prado triptych, and the painting of the background is also similar. This is particularly apparent in the way the trees have been painted, with broader, dark-green brushstrokes at the base and semi-circular crowns with fluidly applied green and light-green to yellowish highlights in the foliage, and also in the construction of the rolling landscape in varying shades of green. The way the trees are painted is also related to Christ Carrying the Cross in the Escorial (cat. 13). The post mill on a rise outside the city walls, meanwhile, is virtually identical to the one in the central panel of the Adoration of the Magi in the Prado (cat. 9). There is also a somewhat hidden, yet unmistakable parallel with the small Calvary scene at the top of the closed Adoration; the poses of both the Virgin and Jesus are very similar in the two panels, and Christ’s loincloth is virtually identical too, even though the grisaille painting in Madrid was executed on a far smaller scale than the Brussels painting.

The style of the underdrawing, laid down in successive phases, fits in well with other works in the group. The main outlines were set down first – in the landscape as well – with a medium-size brush in a relatively watery medium. The modelling was then prepared fairly precisely with small, parallel hatched lines applied with a finer brush and following the direction of the form. The deepest shadows were subsequently emphasized using a larger brush; these thicker, closely spaced lines resemble a wash in certain places, including Saint John’s robe lower right. The donor is harder to distinguish in the underdrawing than...
the other figures, due primarily to the black cloak he is wearing and the damage to his face. It is clear, however, from the hands and legs in particular, that this figure too was prepared in the underdrawing. The artist made virtually no changes in the final painting compared to the underdrawing.

The iconography of the painting is clear: the Virgin Mary, who wears a blue robe beneath her grey (mourning) cloak, grieves over the crucified Christ. She is consoled by the Apostle John, whom we recognize from his long hair, youthful appearance and the book under his arm. The two of them stand on Christ’s right, traditionally the most important side. The painting’s donor is shown kneeling to Christ’s left (the viewer’s right), together with what is no doubt his patron saint, the Apostle Peter. The latter is depicted in the traditional way as an older, balding man, with a short beard and holding a bunch of keys. Peter presents the donor to John, who recommends him in turn to Mary and to the viewer. None of the three holy figures looks up at Christ on the cross. Most puzzling of all is the donor’s gaze: what is he looking at? Perhaps we are meant to infer that his gaze is directed inwardly, that he is primarily viewing the scene in his mind’s eye.

**DATING AND DONOR**

The conventional and deceptively simple character of this painting has prompted a number of authors to give it an early date. Dendrochronological analysis has shown that the panel could have been painted from 1477 onwards, and most likely two years after that date. An early date cannot, therefore, be ruled out. On the other hand, the execution of the painting differs quite markedly from the Frankfurt *Ecce Homo* (cat. 11) and the New York *Adoration of the Magi* (cat. 10) – two works that are indeed believed to date from relatively early in Bosch’s career. The stylistic affinities with the *Garden of Earthly Delights*, *Christ Carrying the Cross* in the Escorial and the *Adoration of the Magi* in the Prado (cat. 21, 13 and 9) rather seem to suggest a date in the 1490s.
Despite the panel’s simplicity, it raises a number of awkward questions regarding the figure of the donor. Most notably, why is he dressed this way? The striking red and black striped hose, combined with the cloak, sword and headgear, ought to be enough to determine the man’s social position. It has been suggested, though without offering the slightest supporting evidence or comparative material, that he is the ’s-Hertogenbosch municipal secretary or a prominent member of a guild or society. Cyriel Stroo noted that hoses of this kind were popular in the late fifteenth century as an alternative to the older mi-parti-coloured type and were worn chiefly, though not exclusively, by servants or subordinates, such as courtiers and pages. However, none of the examples that Stroo cites in this regard match the costume of the donor figure, despite the fact that this combination of colours and the meticulously painted staggering of the stripes provide what ought to be an important clue. Although in earlier times conspicuously striped clothes often had a negative connotation, and could even suggest an executioner in this context, they actually became fashionable among the social elite in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Although it is not impossible that the choice of clothes was purely personal, it seems more likely that the man’s eye-catching hose had something to do with his status or position. The sword hanging from his belt could mean that he held some kind of military post. The fact that he is not wearing spurs tells us he is not a nobleman, while the presence of the Apostle Peter makes it likely that his first name was Peter, Pieter or some other variation. Sadly, it has proved impossible so far to identify the donor, or even his social position.
The subject of this Calvary with Donor might be traditional, but the way it is executed is certainly not. The contemplative, stately, almost aloof character of the painting is particularly intriguing. The cool shades of blue, green and brown used in the background lend the scene a sense of desolation. Even though most of the trees are in blossom, it is the withered trunk behind Saint Peter and slightly to his right that best sums up the mood of the painting for the viewer – an effect heightened by the bones scattered around the central scene, the birds we see just above the donor’s head, and the bird sitting on a tree-stump to the left of the Virgin Mary, which consists entirely of strokes of black paint. Pursuit of simplicity – in everyday life, but very much in a spiritual sense as well – enables the donor figure to focus as effectively as possible on Jesus and on his personal devotion to him.

The subject of this painting is not, therefore, the physical or emotional suffering of Christ or those around him; it is far more concerned with themes of remembrance, contemplation and reflection. Christ’s presence in the life of the unidentified donor is more important than the donor’s ‘physical’ presence at a historical event. The image of the crucified Christ, accompanied by Saint John and the Virgin Mary as intercessors, functions here for the donor as an aid to meditation. This aid (it is useful to view the painting in this context as a tool) must have been intended in the first instance to serve the historical donor as he viewed the panel; the donor contemplating himself, in other words, as a painted figure at the foot of the cross. The painted donor no longer seems to need any such aid to meditation. He ‘sees’ the key event in Christian doctrine so vividly that it seems to him that he is actually present. The painting presents an ideal image of the donor’s meditative practice and reminds him of it, while simultaneously memorializing the donor himself as an exemplary Christian. This is a work intended to set an example to others. The viewer is invited to pray for the salvation of the man in the painting, who is likely to have been buried close to the original destination of this Calvary image.
Ainsworth 1998, 121–24. Comparison of the two paintings is not meant to suggest that Bosch took David’s work as a source of contrast and inspiration, it is merely intended to highlight the artistic and iconographical choices that Bosch made in his Calvary.

Silver 2006, 147.

It was discovered during the restoration of the Brussels panel in 1966–67 that the donor had been partially overpainted, most likely with the figure of Mary Magdalene, who was shown with her arms wrapped around the base of the cross, in the same way as on the outside of the Adoration of the Magi triptych in the Prado. This addition was subsequently removed at an unknown date. See also Stroo et al. 2001, 76.

3 See also Chapter 111, ‘Materials and Techniques’.

4 John and Mary also stand to the crucified Christ’s right in the tiny Calvary scene on the back of Saint John on Patmos in Berlin (cat. 6); in that case, however, John firmly directs her and the viewer’s attention towards Jesus on the cross.

5 Stroo et al. 2001, 72. See also Chapter 111, ‘Materials and Techniques’.

6 Gerlach 1975, 90, Marijnissen 1987, 348, respectively. No dress code of any kind is known for ‘s-Hertogenbosch.

7 Friedländer (1927, 35) describes the donor as ‘einen ganz jungen Ritter’.

8 This was a widely used pictorial format in fifteenth-century Netherlandish art, of which Jan van Eyck’s Madonna of Chancellor Rolin (1435) is probably the best-known example. See Belting 2010, 125–34.

9 This principle has been confirmed scientifically in recent decades by the discovery of ‘mirror neurons’. See, for example, V.S. Ramachandran, ‘Mirror neurons and imitation learning as the driving force behind “the great leap forward” in human evolution’: http://edge. org/3rd-culture/ramachandran/ramachandran.p1.html; Marco Iacoboni, Mirroring People – The New Science of How We Connect With Others, New York 2008.
Hieronymus Bosch

C. 1455–1516

Oil on oak panel, left wing 99.5 x 28.8 cm, central panel 99.2 x 60.5 cm, right wing 99.5 x 28.6 cm

Signed central panel, lower right: Hieronymus bosch
Stad Brugge, Groeningemuseum, Bruges, 0000/RO.0208.1

16.2 Provenance

Condition
The triptych originally had an engaged frame. The composition continued across the closed triptych, where a vertical strip of about six to seven centimetres wide appears to be missing in the centre. The central panel is mostly original. It has a reglued corner tip, two cracks and a slightly open join that has never been separated. In the past, the wings were joined together and cropped by circa two centimetres at the top. Two horizontal bars were attached to the reverses, severely damaging the grisailles. Besides severe paint damage at drip marks, the right edge of the closed right wing shows extensive flaking. The opened triptych is severely damaging the grisailles. Besides severe paint damage at drip marks, the right edge of the closed right wing shows extensive flaking. The opened triptych is largely intact. There are some larger losses at the left edge of the central panel, and local abrasion and youth cracks in the brown smoke in the background. Green lakes have discoloured brown and several lighter paints have increased in transparency. Conservation issues, such as the degraded varnish, were addressed in the 2014–15 full treatment of the painting.

16.3 Analysis

The Last Judgement in Bruges was restored in 2014–15, revealing once again the triptych’s superb quality. Variations on many of its details are found in other works from the Bosch group. The underdrawing displays the painter’s typical, exploratory work method. There are so many affinities between the painting of this work and Bosch’s technique in other panels we ascribe to his core oeuvre that we include the Bruges Last Judgement in that group. It is interesting in iconographic terms that the figure of God the Father that was originally planned in the left wing was not actually painted. This transformed the work from a triptych comprising three discrete scenes to one with a single large image of Judgement Day, which extends over all three panels and intensifies their Christocentric character. The Last Judgement scene is introduced by the grisaille image of the Crowning with Thorns on the closed wings.

PROVENANCE

Some time around 1527, Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo (c. 1480–1548) painted a panel with the Temptation of Saint Anthony.1 He incorporated several details borrowed directly from the Last Judgement that has been in Bruges since 1907. These details, which are found in no other paintings, are reproduced so precisely in terms of form and colour that Savoldo must have worked from the Bruges triptych rather than from a variation on it or from drawings, prints or ricordi.2 Savoldo was active in Venice from around 1520 until his death in 1548, and so it makes sense that it was there that he saw the Last Judgement and copied details from it. Didier Martens suggested recently that the triptych can indeed be traced to Venice in that period.3 ‘A Flemish painting with two wings, the Judgement of Christ’ (‘uno quadro con due sportelli fiandrese iudecio di chisto’) is recorded in the possession of Paola Grimani in 1528. This triptych probably remained in Venice until the death in 1546 of her brother, Cardinal Marino Grimani, who was its actual owner. The cardinal’s impressive art collection was inherited by their brother Giovanni. The paintings must have remained in the latter’s house for a while following his death in 1592, but were later dispersed.4 Marino Grimani probably acquired the triptych as a bequest from his uncle, the famous Cardinal Domenico Grimani (1461–1523), owner of various works by Bosch; the latter are not described with sufficient precision, however, to be securely identified with the triptychs and the Afterlife panels kept in Venice today (cat. 2, 8 and 18).5 Among these works, the triptychs with the Hermit Saints and with Saint Wilgefortis display striking affinities with the Last Judgement, and originally had virtually the same form and dimensions. The three triptychs thus form

Hieronymus Bosch

Oil on oak panel, left wing 99.5 x 28.8 cm, central panel 99.2 x 60.5 cm, right wing 99.5 x 28.6 cm

Signed central panel, lower right: Hieronymus bosch
Stad Brugge, Groeningemuseum, Bruges, 0000/RO.0208.1
Timken Museum of Art, San Diego

16.3 Paradise fountain [CAT 16A]

16.4 Herri met de Bles, Paradise fountain, detail of Paradise, 1541–50. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Savoldo: Temptation of Saint Anthony / Bosch: Last Judgement, Bruges: corresponding details

Central panel Bruges [CAT 16B]
- rat-like creature with long ears and red cloak (reversed)
- bird-like creature with red hood; cage on human head
- bottom right: millstones with funnel-like top operated by humans, simple (Bosch) and richly decorated (Savoldo)
- woman drawing water
- above the woman drawing water: knot of demons behind a large metal shield with central pike

Right wing Bruges [CAT 16C]
- beaked monster devouring a man; yellow wing tips; the wings are closer to those in central panel Bruges
- small hooded demon reading a book
a separate group within Bosch’s known oeuvre, and their early presence in Venice suggests
the possibility of a common origin, with Domenico Grimani as their owner around 1520.
What is more, if Herri met de Bles did indeed base the ‘Fountain of Paradise’ he painted
in the mid-sixteenth century directly on the left wing of Bosch’s triptych (as seems more
than likely), this would be one more piece of evidence that that Southern Netherlandish painter
spent time in Italy.6

The Last Judgement was acquired in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century by
the prelate and count of Montenegro Antonio Despuig y Dameto (1745–1813).7 Following
his death, it ended up in the private museum in the palace of the counts of Montenegro in
the centre of Palma de Mallorca. It was sold by Despuig’s heirs at auction in Paris on 11 July
1900, and was subsequently offered for sale again in the same city six years later.8 Didier
Martens reconstructed this provenance based on a description of the triptych in the 1845
catalogue of the museum in Palma de Mallorca.9 The triptych had been split up at the
time and was displayed as two paintings. The central panel was listed as ‘111. El infierno (Tabla
gótica semicircular)’ and the wings as ‘123. El infierno y el mundo (Tabla gótica semicir-
cular)’. It was auctioned in this form in 1900,10 but the panels were then reassembled as
a triptych in 1906; they were probably mounted at that point in the moulded neo-Gothic
frame that was replaced following the 2015 restoration. The triptych was loaned in this
configuration for the ‘Toison d’Or’ exhibition held in Bruges in 1907, following which it
was purchased for the city’s municipal museums. The grisaille painting on the backs of the
wings was entirely ignored when the two panels were mounted in a single frame. They
were joined using two horizontal planks that were glued and nailed to the back, with the
result that the painting in that location was lost. The painted reverses of the wings were
again ignored when the three panels were reunited as a triptych, after which the fully
opened triptych could only be displayed flat against the wall. It was not even possible to
close the altarpiece completely. This was not remedied until the 2015 restoration, when the
panels were reframed. Justice has also been done, moreover, to the grisaille painting, which
is essential to the meaning of the Last Judgement as a whole.

IMAGERY

Both wings of the closed triptych contain a single large scene against a virtually black back-
ground within an originally green contour line now discoloured to brown, which follows
the arched top of the triptych. The now almost black surface around it was a very dark green.
The grisaille shows the Crowning with Thorns. The shutters were probably framed in such a
way that the images on the outside fitted closely together, as we find in the Haywain in
the Prado and in some other triptychs (cat. 20).11 Christ is shown sitting, surrounded by six
guards. The balding man who places the crown of thorns on his head strongly resembles the
centrally placed figure of the Escorial Christ Carrying the Cross (cat. 13). Like his counterpart
in Crowning with Thorns in London (cat. 14), the torturer grasps the crown in an armoured
glove. The figure in front of him with a round shield on his back is wearing unusual head-
gear camouflaged with branches, similar to the one worn by the demonic musician on
top of the haywain in the Prado triptych. The Crowning with Thorns as an image of Christ’s
self-sacrifice and the mocking presentation of him as a king form the prelude to the open
triptych. Here we see Christ again, now in his role of humanity’s judge. He is pictured in a
circle of bright blue sky where, small but optically dominant, he forms the absolute focus
of the image as a whole. The contrast is theatrical; the closed triptych shows a dark, grisaille
painting with large figures; when opened, it displays a brightly coloured scene, twice as
large, populated with small figures and glowing with the flames of hell and damnation, yet
also with a luminous paradise wing at Christ’s right hand.

The concentration on the figure of Christ explains the structure of the open triptych.
This was initially conceived as a narrative sequence, as we often find in Bosch’s triptychs:
the Garden of Eden on the left and hell on the right, with a scene between them that links
this beginning and this end in various different ways. This is what we find, for instance, in
the Haywain, the Garden of Earthly Delights and the Vienna Last Judgement triptychs (cat. 20, 21 and 17). Infrared photography and reflectography reveal that a Paradise scene referring to the first days of Creation was also planned for the left wing of the Bruges Last Judgement. This is still visible to the naked eye. Beneath painted clouds, God the Father can be made out in the underdrawing in the same form as he takes in the Haywain and the Vienna Last Judgement, with several angels to the right of him. In the Bruges Last Judgement, by contrast, Bosch decided to drop this design while still at the underdrawing stage and sketched a paradisaical setting instead around the tall fountain-tower. The latter was originally painted on a little island surrounded by a lake. The people swimming and bathing there are only drawn. Slightly below the fountain, on the extreme left of the panel, where we now see a stand of trees, a sitting figure was painted, dressed in red, with what might have been a smaller angel to the right of it. The angels in the sky carry barely visible souls to the point of light in the grey clouds that were painted over the underdrawn God the Father.

**GENESIS**

The finished version of the scene differs in numerous respects from the underdrawing in the open wings and the first painted version: sketched details were not painted, and many of the elements that were painted were not initially planned or were themselves later adjusted. The underdrawing in the central panel, by contrast, was followed surprisingly closely in the preliminary paint layer. Perhaps a preliminary study was made for this more complex composition, but not for the wings. Substantial changes in the paint layer have been detected in the wings, primarily in the background. Several painted details in the foreground of the central panel were also altered, including a naked man posed acrobatically before the jib of the clog-shaped sailing boat, who was completely painted out. The central panel also differs somewhat in the style of its underdrawing. The underdrawing of the open wings, particularly that of the outlines, was laid down freely and expressively with a medium brush in a watery medium; these lines are mostly short and are likewise often intermittent. Such lines were also used in the central panel, but the forms of the more complex composition are worked out there to a greater extent, while the modelling and shadow effects are prepared to a greater degree using parallel hatching, with the exception of the figures in the uppermost zone. Several of the details here were, moreover, underdrawn with a larger brush and in a relatively watery medium, as in the large dead hollow tree on the right. In other words, the underdrawing of the central panel was done in several stages. Different brushes and underdrawing media also appear to have been used in the wings for details that were not included in the painting stage; this is apparent in the lower left of the Paradise wing and in the figure bent forwards in front of the large tower in the right wing. The compositions were systematically developed therefore even during the actual application of the paint layers – an exploratory way of working that was typical of Bosch and his workshop. The quality of execution is very high throughout the triptych in terms of foreshortening and the rendering of materials and reflections, while the brushwork in many details is downright brilliant. The image seems highly detailed, even though a great many elements, including faces, are actually rendered quite sketchily.

**CONNECTIONS**

The overall triptych with the Crowning with Thorns in grisaille on the closed shutters and the colourful Last Judgement on the inside matches the workshop practice of Hieronymus Bosch in terms of technique, conception, imagery and the way compositional and iconographic adjustments were made. Similar pictorial elements are also found in the Garden of Earthly Delights, the Last Judgement Triptych in Vienna, the Haywain in Madrid and the Saint Anthony Triptych in Lisbon (cat. 21, 20 and 4). The affinities between the Bruges Last Judgement and other works by Bosch is both striking and remarkably structural. Janssens de Bisthoven already noted this in the various editions of the *Corpus des Primitifs Flamands*.
The central panel contains motifs drawn primarily from the equivalent panel of the Vienna Last Judgement (cat. 17). Christ sitting in judgement is almost identical, albeit done by another hand. In Bruges, however, he is flanked by two groups of male saints—fourteen in total, while the Vienna panel depicts the Apostles, John the Baptist, and the Virgin Mary as intercessors. The instrument of torture consisting of two millstones stood on edge, to which two souls are tethered and which grind a third soul in a dish as they rotate, is placed in front of a large green jug in Bruges and on top of it in Vienna. Both panels have a head-and-feet figure with a cap in the extreme foreground on the left and a somewhat obscene, fleshy creature further towards the middle. A similarly oversized knife with the same cutler’s mark is used as an instrument of torture. One of the curious war machines—which features in both Judgement scenes—consists of a relatively large round shield, with a long, thin skewer sticking out from the middle; in Bruges it is a kind of fishing rod, in Vienna more of a double boathook. Two more anecdotal torture scenes feature, lastly, in both panels. A monstrous creature roasts a soul on a spit, basting it with a long wooden ladle. Two other souls have been hung high up in the chimney where they are smoked like hams. Further in the background, there is a demonic smithy with several souls cowering behind the furnace as the smith lays one of their number on the anvil and beats him with a large hammer.

Several elements from the central panel in Bruges also appear in the Hell wing of the Garden of Earthly Delights. Demons and souls walk or dance around a gigantic bagpipe on a large disc; the instrument originally had a long bourdon like its counterpart in Bruges. An equally colossal lantern offers space for a group of partygoers in one case and a band of soldiers in the other. The Hell scene in the Garden of Earthly Delights includes a soul trapped with outstretched arms and legs in an oversized harp, the strings of which run straight through his body; the equivalent figure in the Bruges panel has been hung up there in the same pose. The human soul whose punishment is to be used as the clapper of a large bell appears once in the Bruges painting, while the one in Madrid has two smaller bells with souls as clappers. Both panels, lastly, have a round hole in the ground lower right, in which we make out damned souls in the darkness.

There are only two details that reappear almost literally in the Temptation of Saint Anthony in Lisbon (cat. 4). The panther running away in the tent on the left of the Bruges panel corresponds with the same animal under the table in the left foreground of the right
wing in Lisbon, while the open basket containing a little monster in one case and a bunch of flowers in the other, appears in both panels.

The details identified by Janssens de Bisthoven in the central panel in Bruges and in full or partial copies, particularly of the Vienna Last Judgment, are not so relevant here. What is exceptionally interesting, by contrast, is the similarity in a number of details with a privately owned drawing (not known to Janssens de Bisthoven), which Fritz Koreny attributed for that reason to an assistant of the ‘Master of the Bruges Last Judgement’, and which is ascribed in the present book without any hesitation to Hieronymus Bosch himself (cat. 44). The most important details in this regard are the human clapper in the bell, the souls sat astride the edge of the knife-blade, the monstrous animal vomiting into a cooking pot, the waterwheel used as an instrument of torture, the disc with protruding teeth and the dancing souls, and the lantern occupied by other souls.

The right wing of the Bruges Last Judgment does not feature any details that correspond with the panels mentioned above, but there are two elements that recur directly and exclusively in the Hell wing of the Haywain (cat. 20). The large fortified tower, which is finished in the Bruges painting, is still being constructed in the Haywain. There, it is approached by an ox, over which a cloth has been draped that hangs down to the ground, and which is ridden by a soldier pierced by a long skewer and holding a looted chalice in his left hand. The beast with its sinful rider also advances towards the tower in the Bruges Hell wing. In this case, the soldier has been run through with a sword. In the underdrawing of the Haywain


16.8–11
scene, the body lying behind the ox, which looks like it is actually being dragged along by it, has likewise been pierced by a sword.18

The left, Paradise wing of the Bruges triptych does not contain any elements found in any other surviving work by Hieronymus Bosch, but there are some that feature in an engraving of around 1560–70 attributed to Cornelis Cort after a triptych with scenes of Judgement Day, Heaven and Hell. It is stated on the print that the theme is an invention of Hieronymus Bosch,19 but the engraving is undoubtedly a pastiche. The bottom half of the left wing displays clear similarities with the Bruges Paradise scene. The little group with the angel playing the harp with three souls in the right foreground, the ship crewed by angels and souls a little further back in the paradise garden, and – somewhat more freely – the fountain in the left foreground, can only have been inspired by the triptych wing in Bruges, a variation on it or a ricordo. It cannot be a coincidence that Cornelis Cort spent time in Venice in 1566–67.

DATE AND ATtribution

Based on the similarities with various works by Bosch and in view of the shift in conception whereby the open triptych became a large Last Judgement scene rather than the usual narrative sequence over three panels, Hieronymus Bosch is likely to have painted the triptych at a relatively late date, although a slightly earlier one might also be possible. The most recent annual growth ring of the wood is from 1469, which means the triptych could have been painted from 1480 onwards or, more likely, after 1482.20

This conclusion brings us back to the cataloguing of the central panel and combined wings in 1845, when the triptych was ascribed to Hieronymus Bosch. This remained the case until Louis Maeterlinck attributed it to Herri met de Bles in 1908.21 Max J. Friedländer reassigned the painting to Bosch in 1927, but other authorities failed to follow his example and continued to view the triptych as originating from the workshop, circle or a follower of Bosch. The consensus shifted in 1959 on the rediscovery of the grisaille painting on the shutters, following which many concluded that the triptych was at least partially an autograph work by Hieronymus Bosch. Gerd Unverfehrt listed it in his authoritative 1980 study as the work of a pupil of Bosch, and dated it to around 1510.22 Since then the various attributions have existed alongside one another.23

Based on the new BCP documentation of both the underdrawings and the painting process, and on our improved understanding of the triptych thanks to its conservation and restoration in 2014–15, we conclude that it must be attributed to Hieronymus Bosch himself, as the authentic signature likewise insists.
2 This relates to at least seven elements – more than hitherto recognized. Jacobsen 1974, 134; Brown 1999, 444; Martens 2013, 203.
3 Martens 2013, 199–203. We are grateful to Didier Martens for providing us with the original French text of his article.
5 See Brown 1999, 432–33; Alkema 2001, 25–26. It is unlikely that Mari dantia Michiel was referring to one or more of these triptychs in his 1721 description of Cardinal Domenico Grimani’s paintings: not only would he have had to mistake panels for canvases, he would also have had to describe the subjects incorrectly. Michiel (Morelli) 1800, 77, 221; Mussi and Williamson 1903, 115; Von Frimmel 1888, 102–03. Michiel described Bosch’s works in the following terms: “La tela del inferno con la gran diversità di monstri fo de mano de Hieronimo Bosch; La tela delle sogni fo de mano de l’istesso” (‘The inferno canvas with a great variety of monsters was the work of Hieronymus Bosch; the canvas of fortune with the whale which swallowed up Jonah was by the same hand’).
6 Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. SK-A-780. It is generally assumed that Heni met de Illes borrowed this directly from the Bruges Last Judgement. Boeke 1974, 76; Serck 1990, 111, 115, 180, 185; Unverfehrt 1980, 235 no. 119; Weemans 2013, 67–68, Bakker 2015, 123–24, 132 n. 44. To infer from this, however, that the Bruges Last Judgement was intended for a church in Antwerp, where Illes was based, is a circular argument. A discussion of a possible visit to Italy by Illes can be found in Limentani Virdis 2001; Weemans 2013, 8.
7 Probably during his time in Rome between 1785 and 1792, when Despuij was attached to the Sacra Rota Romana. Martens 2013, 204–05.
8 Sale ‘Collection de feu M. Emile Gave’, Paris (Hôtel Drouot), 8 May 1906, no. 2 and pl. 2 (copy in The Hague, Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, with buyer’s notes and price: Ducrey, 2550). The illustration shows the triptych freestanding, without the frame that had recently been fitted.
9 Martens 2013, 199; Joaquin María Bover de Roselló, Noticia histórica-artística de los Museos del Eminentísimo Señor Cardenal Despuig existentes en Mallorca, 1845, no. 111, 123.
10 Catalogue de tableaux anciens des XVème, XVIème, XVIIème et XVIIIème siècles... marbres antiques, le tout provenant de la Collection du cardinal Despuig ... Paris (Hôtel Drouot), 11 July 1900, 4 no. 4 (copy in Philadelphia Museum of Art, with note on the price: ‘1750 francs’).
11 9 July 1900, 4 no. 4 (copy in Philadelphia Museum of Art, Collection du cardinal Despuig et XVIIIème Catalogue de tableaux anciens des XV, XVI, XVII et XVIII siècles...). 12 See also Chapter 111, ‘Materials and Techniques’.
13 See also Chapter 111, ‘Materials and Techniques’.
14 Similar broken lines were used in the underdrawing of the Christ Child in the scene beneath the Crowning with Thorns in London (cat. 14), although this was done with a much smaller brush. See Campbell 2014, 148 fig. 3.
15 Phased underdrawings like this are also found in several other, relatively complex compositions in the group; see also Chapter 111, ‘Materials and Techniques’.
17 The mark is a capital ‘M’. A knife has been excavated in ‘s-Hertogenbosch with precisely the same stamp on the left side of the blade. There are two heavier versions of a knife with the same mark in the Hell wing of the Garden of Earthly Delights. Koldeweij, Vandenbroeck and Vermet 2001, Exhibition Supplement, 235 no. 19.33.
18 Janssens de Bisthoven, Baes-Dondeyne and De Vos 1981, 79.
19 See the website Boschproject.org, link 135 and 136.
20 See the website Boschproject.org, link 134.
21 Published by Hieronymus Cock, Antwerp. Also noted by Martens 2013, 202–03. For the print and the associated literature, see Bass and Wyckoff 2015, 136–39. Cornelis Cort was active in Venice in 1566–67, where he worked for Titian, among others. Michiel Snyders republished the engraving in Antwerp some time around 1600: Cagol 2015, 128–31, 134–35.
22 Klein 2003a, 124. Only the central panel was analysed.
23 For a detailed historiographic overview, see Janssens de Bisthoven, Baes-Dondeyne and De Vos 1983, 75–76.
24 Unverfehrt 1980, 240–41 no. 3.
25 The triptych was listed on the occasion of the Rotterdam exhibition in 2001 as the work of Hieronymus Bosch and his workshop; Silver 2006 views it as a workshop piece and De Vrij 2012 as autograph; Fischer 2013 attributes it to the workshop or to a former workshop assistant; Koreny, lastly, identifies the painter as the anonymous ‘Master of the Bruges Last Judgement’ – a workshop assistant of Bosch. Exhib. cat. Rotterdam 2001, 116, 121–31, 144; Silver 2006, 357–59; De Vrij 2012, 222, 253–54, 383–65 no. 8.6, Koreny 2012, 108–10; Fischer 2013, 264–65 no. 26.
The Last Judgement

Hieronymus Bosch and Workshop

C. 1500–05

Oil on oak panel, left wing 163 x 60 cm, central panel 163 x 127 cm, right wing 163 x 60 cm
Vienna, Akademie der bildenden Künste, GG-579–GG-581

The BRCP was not granted permission to examine and document the painting in situ; //Boschproject.org no. 17.

Condition
Since the BRCP was not allowed to study the work in the collection, we have to rely on earlier statements by colleagues. Margarethe Poch-Kalous: ‘The altarpiece is undoubtedly not well preserved and has already been reworked in the sixteenth century and again in the seventeenth, to the extent that the original artist’s hand is not easily recognized in places.’ Roger H. Marijnissen: ‘The central panel lost about four centimetres. … We know of several restorations, the last of which took place in 1954. The areas with thick, severely cracked impasto – particularly in the left wing – are totally out of character with Bosch’s painting technique and must be viewed as overpainting from a later period. The present frame dates from 1877.’

Provenance
Probably commissioned by the Bruges-based Burgundian Hippolyte de Berthoz in the early sixteenth century; 1659 Vienna, Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria (1614–1662); Emperor Leopold I (1640–1705); imperial collections, Vienna; late eighteenth century Count Lamberg-Sprinzenstein; donated by him in 1822 to the Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna.

Literature

Analysis
The Vienna Last Judgement is the second-largest triptych in the Bosch group after the Garden of Earthly Delights. It is now clear that the saint on the reverse of the right wing, who has been taken for Saint Bavo for over a century, is actually Hippolytus. This identification suggests in turn that the triptych might have been commissioned by Hippolyte de Berthoz, a senior official at the Burgundian court. Numerous questions regarding the genesis of the painting, its patron, original destination and authorship nevertheless remain. It is clear, however, that both the underdrawing and the painting of the exterior wings fit in seamlessly with Bosch’s other works. The underdrawing and painting of the open triptych, by contrast, differ so much from the remaining oeuvre that in this case substantial workshop involvement must be assumed.

Imagery

Christ, surrounded by the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist and the twelve Apostles, sits on his judge’s throne on a double rainbow. He looks out over a creation engulfed in the hell of Judgement Day. Demons and monsters spread chaos and misery over the earth, which seems to have been delivered up entirely to evil. If we look carefully, however, we can still find a way out. Christ’s actual and final judgement of humanity occupies only a small proportion of the central panel: in the background, at Christ’s right hand, the souls of the righteous are borne up by angels towards a brightly lit opening in the clouds. At his left hand, the souls of the damned fall literally into a sea of fire, or are dragged downwards by demons. The origin of these ‘black angels’ is shown in the left wing, which depicts the Garden of Eden. The battle between the loyal and the rebel angels rages in the sky, marking the origin of the evil by which human beings will be tempted. The creation of the first humans is shown in the foreground, with the Fall of Man and the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise in the middleground. The right wing contains an image of Hell, of which we already had a foretaste in the central panel. Here, however, it is too late to repent; the only way the damned souls can go is even deeper into hell. The open triptych therefore tells the story of humanity, from the first beginnings until the very end – from alpha to omega.

The backs of the wings depict two carefully selected patron saints, who no doubt refer to the donor of the altarpiece and its original destination. By including them, the patron honoured the respective saints and invoked them as guides and intercessors on his behalf. The same also applied to any worshipper who sought the assistance of these saints through their images, and so there is also a link in this sense between the grisaille figures on the closed triptych and the altarpiece’s principal Last Judgement theme.
The Last Judgement in Vienna entered the Akademie der bildenden Künste in 1822 as a bequest of Count Anton Lamberg-Sprinzenstein (died 26 June 1822). The Count had acquired it in the late eighteenth century, possibly in 1787, from the imperial collections, in which it had been placed by Emperor Leopold (1640–1705). Leopold had acquired the triptych in turn from the estate of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria (1614–1662) – governor of the Southern Netherlands from 1647 to 1656. Leopold Wilhelm resided at Coudenberg Palace in Brussels, where he assembled a large collection of art. Bosch’s Last Judgement probably belonged to that collection too, but it is not known how the archduke came to own it. The triptych is first recorded in an inventory of the archducal collection in Vienna that was kept from 1659: ‘Another altarpiece with two wings in oil paint on wood, showing the Last Judgement with Hell below, in which the Seven Deadly Sins are punished. In a flat gilded frame, 8 Span 6 Finger high by 7 Span 1 Finger wide. Original by Hieronimo Bosch.’

The triptych in the Akademie in Vienna has been identified since the late nineteenth century – albeit not unanimously and with varying degrees of persuasiveness – as a Last Judgement with Paradise and Hell commissioned by Philip the Fair. War with the Duchy of Guelders meant that, with a few short interludes, Philip spent the period from 9 September 1504 to the end of May 1505 in ’s-Hertogenbosch. He must have given Hieronymus Bosch the commission almost immediately, as the ducal accounts include a preliminary payment in September 1504 for the painting, which Philip had ordered ‘pour son tres noble plaisir’. Philip ordered a ‘grant tableau’ that was to be more beautiful and
certainly larger than any other work by Bosch.7 Sadly, Philip the Fair’s painting has not survived, assuming of course that it was ever actually finished; as far as we can tell, no further payment was made in respect of it, nor is there any report of its completion or delivery. The account item from the Lille archives was first published in 1860 by the Belgian historian and archivist Alexandre Pinchart.8 His compatriot, the art historian Henri Hymans, cautiously linked the payment with the Vienna Last Judgement in his 1884/85 book on Karel van Mander: ‘peut-être ... commandé par Philippe le Beau en 1504’.9 His suggestion has since been followed with great regularity, even though the dimensions listed in the archive document certainly do not match those of the triptych in Vienna. The iconographic identification of the saints on the exterior wings as James the Greater and Bavo was another significant argument in favour of such an identification, which has been discussed at length recently by, for instance, Laurinda Dixon (2003), Frédéric Elsig (2004), Stefan Fischer (2009), Marc Rudolf de Vrij (2012) and Stefan Fischer (2013).10 The argument here is, however, a circular one. Because the Last Judgement Triptych was supposedly commissioned by Philip the Fair, James and Bavo were interpreted as referring to Spain and to the Burgundian Netherlands, the territories that together formed his realm, which was then cited in turn as a reason for identifying the triptych as the one commissioned by Philip. The idea that these were the patron saints of the Netherlands and Spain respectively then led several authors to detect the features of the still young Duke Philip the Fair in the figure of Saint Bavo, providing yet another argument for identifying the Vienna triptych with the work Philip commissioned in 1504.11

It is not Bavo who is depicted here, however, but another saint. Besides, the dimensions of the triptych in Vienna are nowhere near those of the painting referred to in the archive
document. As for the supposed portrait historié of Philip the Fair, lastly, this too is highly contested. The arguments for linking the Vienna Last Judgement with the 1504 commission by Philip the Fair do not therefore stand up.

NOT BAVO BUT HIPPOLYTUS

The earliest publications on the Last Judgement do not specify who was shown on the closed shutters. Gustav Friedrich Waagen wrote in 1866: ‘On the reverses of the wings, in grisaille, a pilgrim and a saint giving alms to the poor.’ Theodor von Frimmel, writing in 1899, cited the 1659 inventory item, which merely referred to ‘two wings in oil paint on wood’. Von Frimmel mentioned the closed triptych again in the 1901 museum catalogue, where he states: ‘On the exterior of the wings, grisaille paintings of saints.’ The Austrian art historian Ludwig von Baldass wrote in 1917 in a publication on the chronology of Hieronymus Bosch’s works that the Last Judgement in Vienna must be a smaller copy of the painting that Philip the Fair ordered from Bosch in 1504. He identified the saints as James and Bavo, taking his cue from his colleague and compatriot Gustav Glück, who was the first to suggest this identification in 1904. Glück identified James and Bavo as the patron saints of Spain and the Burgundian Netherlands respectively, suggesting that the coats of arms, which were left blank in the Vienna copy, contained the arms of Burgundy and Castile in Philip the Fair’s original. It was Glück, therefore, who interpreted the charming young man as Bavo in 1904, more or less en passant and without offering any further evidence. He probably based his identification on the status granted to Bavo in a woodcut by Hans Leonhard Beck (Augsburg 1480–1542), which states that he was the patron saint of Ghent and Flanders. This was not added, however, until the 1799 edition. The 1518 edition simply describes the figure as: ‘Von Sant Bavo, furst von hasbania’. It is highly unlikely, however, given the early sixteenth-century political context, that Philip the Fair and his father Maximilian of Austria would have accepted the patron saint of the most recalcitrant and rebellious city in the Low Countries as the personification of that territory as a whole. It is not conceivable that Bavo could have been used as the patron saint for the whole of the Burgundian Netherlands with James the Greater as the equivalent in his capacity as protector of the Spanish territories. We therefore have to reject the identification of the figure in Bosch’s Last Judgement Triptych as Bavo – an interpretation which had been generally accepted since Glück.

Bosch painted a young, male saint with aristocratic, probably individualized features, on the back of the right wing. Several beggars sit and kneel in front of and behind him. There is a falcon on his gauntleted left hand, while he reaches with his other hand into a conspicuous purse on his belt. His gold spurs stand out in the context of this grisaille. The falcon is the most specific attribute; at least ten male saints were depicted with this hunting bird in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. None of them, however, are shown with the beggars who are presented here so prominently, and who have further counterparts in the shape of two crippled paupers in the background of the Saint James panel. The iconography of four of these saints – Bavo, Theobald, Julian and Hippolytus – is very similar and in some cases identical. Images of them – certainly late-medieval ones – are, moreover, exceedingly rare. It seems, however, that Bavo is not presented anywhere in the manner of the saint with the falcon in Bosch’s Last Judgement and that this must in fact be Saint Hippolytus.

The Legenda aurea and its Middle Dutch translation, the Passionael, states that Hippolytus was a Roman soldier charged with guarding Saint Lawrence, who converted him to Christianity. Following his trial, Lawrence was given three days to gather the Church’s treasures and hand them over to the emperor, once again with Hippolytus as his guard. The two agreed to bring a group of cripples and blind people together and to present them to the emperor as the Church’s true treasure. Hippolytus arranged Lawrence’s funeral after he was tortured and executed for his faith; he too was then revealed to be a Christian and was put to death in turn. Just as Saint Lawrence was sometimes shown ringed by these ‘treasures’ of the Church, the destitute figures who surround Hippolytus here will have
17.6–7 Anonymous (Brussels), Saint Hippolytus Triptych, c. 1490, closed and open. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Walter M. Cabot Fund, inv. 63.660

17.8–9 Dirk Bouts and Hugo van der Goes, Saint Hippolytus Triptych, c. 1470–75 and 1475–79, open and closed. Museum van de Sint-Salvatorskathedraal, Bruges
been intended as a reference to the passage in question.²⁹ The representation of Saint Hippolytus as a standing, fairly young nobleman with the falcon as his attribute can be found in a small series of images of the saint, three of which are directly relevant as a parallel for his depiction in the Vienna Last Judgement. The earliest of these is the Hippolytus featured in a triptych commissioned by Alessandro Sforza in Milan, which was probably made around 1450–60 in Rogier van der Weyden’s workshop in Brussels. This figure too has often been identified as Saint Bavo in the past.²⁸ The two other images of Saint Hippolytus were painted later in the fifteenth century for the senior Burgundian official Hippolyte de Berthoz on the outside of two triptychs dedicated to his namesake saint by Dirk Bouts and Hugo van der Goes in the 1470s and by an anonymous Brussels master in the 1490s.²¹
Hippolyte de Berthoz came from the small town of Poligny in Burgundy and held a leading position at the Burgundian court for many years, first under Charles the Bold, and following his death, under Margaret of York, Mary of Burgundy, Maximilian of Austria and finally Philip the Fair. He settled in Bruges, where he was married in 1465, and died in the summer of 1503 a long way from the Low Countries. He will have been about sixty-five at the time. A funeral service was held for him at St Saviour’s Church in Bruges, although his remains were not present. He and his widow had been major benefactors of St Saviour’s, which was their parish church.

Their son, Charles de Berthoz, donated the Saint Hippolytus Triptych by Dirk Bouts and Hugo van der Goes to one of the chapels in the church following his parents’ death. Some time between 1503 and 1508, Charles de Berthoz had two panels added to this little triptych showing his own patron saint and that of his wife. The two saints are represented as painted statues in a niche with a pointed arch, above a closed rectangular compartment with Gothic tracery, in which a race or tournament shield with the donors’ arms hangs diagonally from a strap. This is interesting, because as far as we know the only previous occasion on which this was done was by Bosch, on the backs of the wings of the Last Judgement, although no arms were added there. The painter hired by Charles de Berthoz evidently drew on an example therefore that was both relevant and readily accessible in Bruges. The precise circumstances are, however, more complex. An X-radiograph of the right wing of the Vienna Last Judgement reveals another shield – upright and rounded at the bottom – beneath the one we see today. The shape and heraldic arrangement of this earlier shield match those of Hippolyte de Berthoz below the figure of Saint Hippolytus in the triptych by Bouts and Van der Goes. In the first instance, therefore, Bosch placed a shield under his Hippolytus of precisely the same type as in the Bouts/Van der Goes triptych, before later altering it to create the more dynamic form in the Gothic niche. This was then adopted in the extension to the Bouts/Van der Goes triptych. The latter occurred between 1503 and 1508, and may thus be taken as the terminus ante quem for the exterior wings of the Last Judgement in Vienna.

The identification of the saint as Hippolytus rather than Bavo, combined with the form and arrangement of the (overpainted) coats of arms in the wings, put us on the trail of Hippolyte de Berthoz as the probable patron rather than Philip the Fair. De Berthoz also owned a valuable Saint Anthony Triptych by Bosch, indicating that he knew and appreciated the artist’s work (cat. 4). Hippolytus is not a common saint and he also appears in the two Hippolytus triptychs produced in the third quarter of the fifteenth century for Hippolyte de Berthoz. He is even depicted almost identically in the triptych in Boston, which was probably painted around the same time as Bosch’s triptych.

If we wish to explain the presence of Saint Hippolytus in the Last Judgement Triptych by identifying him as De Berthoz’s namesake (rather than as a reference to the painting’s original destination in a chapel of or church of Saint Hippolytus, say), we also need to explain the presence of Saint James the Greater. De Berthoz might have commissioned the Last Judgement for St Saviour’s Church in Bruges. It was the parish church of Hippolyte de Berthoz and his family, and both he and they made repeated donations to it, including the Saint Hippolytus Triptych by Dirk Bouts and Hugo van der Goes. His requiem was held there too. The Chapel of Saint James was located on the south side of the tower on the west side of the church. It was founded around 1360 and was remodelled and refurbished on successive occasions. The chapel was converted into the churchwarden’s room in the mid-eighteenth century, at which point the altar was one of the objects removed. Further research is needed into the history of the chapel and the precise position of the altar to determine whether this might provide an explanation for the noticeably asymmetric rendering of the architecture in the closed triptych. The fact that the Chapel of Saint James was located on the extreme west side of the church would have made it the perfect spot for a large image of the Last Judgement – a theme that was traditionally represented in precisely that position.
Hieronymus Bosch: Last Judgement (Vienna) [CAT 178]

Lucas Cranach after Hieronymus Bosch, Last Judgement (detail), c. 1520–25. Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin
If St Saviour’s in Bruges was indeed the triptych’s original destination, the question remains as to whether it was ever actually installed. No sixteenth-century written source has yet been found that refers to the painting. A number of important questions remain, moreover, with regard to it. Was the overpainted coat of arms really intended to be that of Hippolyte de Berthoz? And if he was the painting’s patron, how do we explain the presence of a donor figure in the underdrawing of the central panel? Was this going to be De Berthoz until it was decided at a somewhat later stage to refer to his patronage through his namesake saint on the closed shutters instead? Were the shields on the exterior wings left blank because of a change in the commission?

The matter becomes even more complex when we take account of the fact that the German painter Lucas Cranach made an exceptionally faithful copy after Bosch’s painting around 1520–25. Although Cranach might have been in the Low Countries in 1508, Gunnar Heydenreich has demonstrated that the copy, which is now in Berlin, could not have been painted before 1520. How could Cranach have made such a detailed copy without having the original at hand? Heydenreich proposes that he worked from a detailed colour study. However, aside from the fact that no similar studies or exact copies have survived, a study of this kind would necessarily have been so detailed as to make this explanation unlikely.
Any such colour study would need to indicate, for instance, how Bosch varied between red, white and yellow in the flames of the fires we see breaking out all over the painting. Cranach painstakingly copied abstract details like these too. The only conclusion in our view is that the copy was made in the immediate vicinity of either the original, now in Vienna, or a replica of it.

**DIFFERENT HANDS**

Apart from the triptych’s patron and original destination, questions remain as to its execution. There are significant differences between the three panels in terms of both the underdrawing and the paint layer. Comparing the painting of the open triptych to that of other works attributed to Bosch is, moreover, highly problematic. The underdrawings of the grisailles, done with a relatively large brush and in a watery medium, can be readily linked stylistically to other paintings in the group, and their attribution to Bosch is indisputable. The inside of the wings, by contrast, and the central panel present an entirely different picture. The compositions here were worked out in a free and expressive underdrawing in a dry material to an advanced and even detailed degree. This was done in a vigorous, sketchy style characterized by repeated outlines and hatching that is precisely worked out and bends to follow the modelling of the figures. Deeper shadows are executed with closely placed hatching in long, straight lines and also with zig-zag lines. Since this way of drawing has yet to be found in any other work by Bosch, it is questionable whether the underdrawing here was done by him. This does not diminish the fact, however, that it is a very original underdrawing, in which forms were developed and not copied. Doubts were also raised occasionally in the past regarding Bosch’s authorship. All the same, it is somewhat reluctantly and uneasily that we conclude that Bosch left such a large and ambitious image as the overall composition of the open triptych to an assistant. The question then arises as to the authorship of the painting of the central panel and interior wings. This too is not easy to answer; the paint layer, like the underdrawing, is hard to link with other examples from the Bosch group. Although the iconography as a whole and a number of individual motifs
and figures reflect Bosch’s imagery very closely, their execution does not, even though the quality of the painting in many places is excellent.

The glazes – now partially discoloured and abraded – in the central panel are noteworthy: in the building on the left, for instance, and the roof of the war machine on the right. Many of the robes, moreover, especially the ones with red lake, are more gently modelled, with subtle and more even transitions between light and dark passages. There is greater emphasis on shiny effects, also in the figures in the foreground, including the shoulder of the man on the red cloak in the central panel. The creature in front of him to the left has turned out relatively squat, as has the monster a little higher up with the pan. The red robe is structured differently again, with highlights applied with short hatching on the red lake – a technique not observed anywhere else in Bosch. The highlights on the millstone in the middle of the panel are a little more comparable perhaps with the red fruit of the Paradise wing of the Bruges Last Judgement, but the figures of Christ and the Apostles and angels in the central panel in Bruges deviate significantly once again from their counterparts in the Vienna Last Judgement.

It is also interesting to compare the way the painter of the Vienna Last Judgement has rendered the spikes on the horizontal disc and the way this was done in the Bruges Last Judgement and in the drawing of the Tree-Man (cat. 35). Bosch’s triptych and drawing do not display the same concern for light, dark and shade and hence the suggestion of three-dimensionality that we find in the painter of the Vienna triptych. It is important, of course, to take account of the scale of the details here; this might help to explain the difference in appearance.

As stated already, the exploratory underdrawing rules out the possibility that the Vienna triptych is a copy. In addition to this, changes were made during the painting process with respect to both the underdrawing and the preliminary paint layer and zones left in reserve. This too illustrates the creative process and the freedom with which the painter worked. The portrait of the donor, which is included in the underdrawing in the lower left corner of the central panel, was not ultimately painted either. The thorough knowledge of Bosch’s formal language, as well as the similarities between a variety of pictorial elements and the
artist’s other work, together with exterior wings painted by Bosch himself, suggest that the triptych as a whole was produced in his workshop.

Dendrochronological dating of the three panels results in an earliest possible creation date of 1476, with execution after 1478 more likely. In stylistic terms, the exterior wings seemingly correspond with work we assume to have been done in the 1490s. It is not clear, however, whether the saints’ figures marked the end or the beginning of the painting process. It is entirely possible that the painting of the open triptych was done after 1500. If we link the empty coats of arms beneath Saint James and Saint Hippolytus with events in the life of Hippolyte de Berthoz as the likely patron, we arrive at a date around 1503, the year of De Berthoz’s death.


2 Marijnissen 1987, 214.

3 Bax 1983, 12–13; see regarding Leopold Wilhelm’s collection the exhibition catalogue Sommelius, Die Galerie Erzherzog Leopold Wilhelm, Vienna (Kunsthistorisches Museum) 2014.


5 Van Heurn 1776–78, i, 408; Sasse van Ysselt 1910–14, 111, 212; Koldeweij 1990b, 369–70; Van Lich-Droogleever Fortuyn, Sanders and Van Syngle 1997, 298–301; Fischer 2009, 92–93, 97. Fischer states, without citing the source, that Philip and Maximilian were also present together in ’s-Hertogenbosch in 1499; Fischer 2009, 92.

6 Archives départementales du Nord, Lille, Register b 2185, fol. 230v: ‘Septembre l’an xv quatre, A Jeronimus Van aeken dit bosch paintre dem[eurant]/ au boisleduc La somme de trente six livres/ du[dict]/ au boisleduc. La somme de trente six livres/ du[dict]/ pris En prest et paiement a bon compte/ Sur ce qu’il/ povoit et pourroit estre deu/ sur ung grant tableau/ de paincture de neuf/ piets de hault et unze piets/ de long. Ou doit/ estre le Jugement de dieu/ assavoir/ paradis et/ Infer que icellui S[eigneu]/ lui avoit ordonné/ faire po[u]/ sur tres noble plaisir/ Pour ce icy par sa/ quictan[ce]/ cy Rend[ue]/ lad[icte]/ somme de [–] xxvij/ L[livres].’ It is also confirmed in the margin of this account item that payment had been made: ‘Soit ce prest rabatu a la parpaye.’ See also Dehaisnes 1881, 307; Van Oijck 2001, 91.

What is important here is the combination of a saint’s figure with a niche with tracery below, in which the shield hangs. This was followed shortly afterwards by the triptych wings – ascribed to Jacob Cornelisz van Oostsanen – of Dirk Willemsz van Betuwe (died 1516), a canon in Egmond (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam). Veelenturf 2014, 219–21.

Koldeweij 2014, 417.

The Oude Kerk in Delft, for instance, was dedicated to Saint Hippolytus.


Heydenreich 2007, 311.

These observations are based on the illustrations in Fischer 2013, Timek 2014, and the images shown during Renate Timek’s presentation in September 2012 in ’s-Hertogenbosch, on which her publication is based. See also Chapter 113, ‘Materials and Techniques’.


The attribution of the Vienna Last Judgement to Bosch has been the subject of debate for some considerable time. Roger Van Schoute and Monique Verboomen noted in this regard: ‘La qualité de l’œuvre est médiocre…. La mauvaise qualité de ce triptyque fait douter de l’exécution par Bosch au stade de la couche.’ Van Schoute and Verboomen 2000, 158, 163. The inventory drawn up in Vienna in 1659 ascribes the triptych to ‘Hieronymus Boss’, while later inventories suggest that the painter’s name was ‘forgotten’. 1758, ‘Sammet-Prüghel’ (= Jan Breughel); 1800 ‘Brügel’; 1822 ‘Breughel Peter oder Hållen Breugel’. The triptych is then firmly ascribed to Bosch once more in the nineteenth-century literature. Gustav Glück proposed Jan Mandijn as the painter in 1895, while in 1898, Dollmayr suggested the Monogrammist M’, whom he identified as Jan Mostaert. Although these attributions – based on the maker’s mark ‘M’ on the knife-blade – found little backing, the authorship of Hieronymus Bosch himself was both firmly advocated and persistently doubted. In 1960 Robert Delevoy extended the list of Bosch imitators to include the name of ‘Peeter Huys, le plus brillant disciple de Jérôme Bosch’. Glück 1895, 196–97; Dollmayr 1898, 299; Glück 1904, 178–81; Delevoy 1960, 110; Unverfehrt 1980, 76, 88. These observations are based on the illustrations in Fischer 2013, Timek 2014, and the images shown during Renate Timek’s presentation in September 2012 in ’s-Hertogenbosch, on which her publication is based. See also Chapter 113, ‘Materials and Techniques’.


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Visions of the Hereafter

A–B  The Road to Heaven:
*The Garden of Eden* | *The Ascent of the Blessed*

C–D  The Road to Hell:
*The Fall of the Damned* | *The River to Hell*

Hieronymus Bosch
c. 1505–15

Oil on oak panel, *Garden of Eden* 88.5 x 39.8 cm; *Ascent of the Blessed* 88.8 x 39.9 cm; *Fall of the Damned* 88.8 x 39.6 cm; *River to Hell* 88.8 x 39.6 cm
Museo di Palazzo Grimani, Venice, 184

**Condition**
The original configuration of the ensemble to which the four panels belonged is unknown. All panels have been cropped at the top and bottom and show minor woodworm damage. On the reverse of *Fall of the Damned*, the red imitation porphyry is almost completely lost and the wood is affected by brown-rot fungi. Non-original bevelling has heavily damaged the edges of the other three stone imitations. There are several cracks and all four joins have a thin wooden inlay. Overall the surface is quite abraded and has multiple losses of differing size, but the panels are stable. The fronts were restored in 2007, but much of a greyish surface layer remains as only the *Garden of Eden* was thoroughly cleaned. The non-original materials were removed from the reverses in the 2015 treatment, uncovering the imitation stone.

**Provenance**

**Literature**
BRCP, Technical Studies, cat. 18, RR 32–39; Boschproject.org no. 18.

The series of four visionary paintings customarily identified as the ‘Afterlife Panels’ comprise two negative images – the *Fall of the Damned* and the *River to Hell* – and two positive ones – the *Garden of Eden* and the *Ascent of the Blessed*. All four are decorated on the back with non-figurative painting – red, green, red, green respectively – which suggests imperial red porphyry and green serpentine marble. The original arrangement and function of the panels, which have been cropped a little at the top and bottom, is not known. They evidently deal, however, with the sorting of humanity on Judgement Day, following which the souls of the damned disappear into hell and those of the blessed ascend to heaven. The panels must therefore have flanked some kind of Last Judgement scene or a reference to Christ’s advent on earth and his Second Coming at the end of the world. One possibility is that they were intended for the kind of carved rectangular altarpieces that were popular in Brabant in the early sixteenth century, the wings of which consisted of two framed panels connected by hinges.1 Based on the dimensions of the Afterlife Panels, this would mean an altarpiece case measuring about 200 centimetres across. The Hell wing would then have been on the far right from the viewer’s point of view and the panel with the souls of the righteous ascending to heaven on the far left. When closed, the red exteriors would have been positioned next to one another, flanked by the green panel backs on the outside. In reality, however, the wings of larger altarpieces invariably have figurative images painted on both sides, because the ensemble was still the central focus of the altar in its church or the artist to use an entirely different technique. The light elements were done using thicker layers of paint, while the black base tone could show through for the dark elements. The panels were probably in Venice as early as the 1520s. All four were originally framed separately, but we do not know what purpose these relatively narrow wings served. Two of the panels refer to the souls of the damned, which are condemned to hell, while the other two show blessed souls being received into heaven. The backs are painted in a surprisingly abstract way, which was probably intended to imitate red porphyry and green serpentine marble.

HEAVEN AND HELL

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chapel, even during periods and days when the shutters were closed. The abstract paintings on the backs of the Afterlife Panels cannot have functioned in this way, which makes it unlikely that they were used as altarpiece wings. They are more likely to have been the shutters for a niche in a wall or some other object, such as a relic cabinet, astronomical clock and oralogium, or tabernacle. In that case, they will not have been arranged in pairs next to one another, but with one above the other, to close off a space almost two metres high and one metre wide. When the shutters were opened, they revealed the paths to heaven and to hell of the blessed and the damned respectively.

LOCATION AND DATE

The pedigree of the four panels stretches back a long way, and can now be reconstructed more clearly than has hitherto been attempted. In 1521, the Venetian Marcantonio Michiel (1484–1552) saw three paintings at the home of Cardinal Domenico Grimani, which he reported as being works by Bosch: ‘The inferno canvas with a great variety of monsters was the work of Hieronymus Bosch; The canvas with the dream scene was by the same hand; The canvas of Fortune with the whale which swallowed up Jonah was by the same hand.’ These descriptions are somewhat problematic. Later sources indicate that the first two paintings refer to Bosch’s Hell and Heaven panels, while the third relates to a panel attributable to Joachim Patinir or Herri met de Bles (‘Civetta’), or one of their respective followers. It is generally stated that Michiel was careless by wrongly describing all three of them as ‘canvases’. This probably was indeed the case. The Afterlife Panels are, after all, recorded in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century descriptions by Boschini and Zanetti Senior and Junior as being in the Doge’s Palace, albeit attributed to Herri met de Bles, whose work they discuss in terms far more appropriate to Bosch’s oeuvre. The Hell and Heaven panels were probably displayed at Cardinal Grimani’s house in pairs, which is why Marcantonio Michiel recorded them as two paintings rather than four. They are thought to have passed into the ownership of the Venetian state together with other works of art from Domenico Grimani’s estate. Marco Boschini noted in his 1664 guide that a corridor leading to one of the principal rooms in the Doge’s Palace included fifteen paintings on panel by ‘Civetta’, featuring a variety of monsters, dreams, visions and strange scenes. The paintings in the same corridor were described again in 1733 by Antonio Maria Zanetti in a revised edition of the aforementioned guide. The earlier listing was now made more precise: the paintings included ‘four with monsters and sorcery’. A later edition of 1771 by his nephew and namesake Antonio Maria Zanetti il Giovane describes the ‘four, elongated panels’ a little more precisely still, together with their putative maker – ‘Civetta’ or Herri met de Bles. The four panels, together with the Hermit Saints Triptych (cat. 2) and the Saint Wilgefortis Triptych (cat. 8) had evidently been moved in the meantime to the prestigious Sala dei Tre Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci. The two triptychs were located in Vienna from 1838 to 1919, but the Afterlife Panels remained at the Doge’s Palace. They were moved from there to the Accademia around 1885, as reported by the Kunstchronik of February 1886.

This was the earliest publication to attribute the Afterlife Panels to Hieronymus Bosch. Cesare Levi described them in 1900, giving their earlier origin as the ‘Tribunale Capi Consiglio X’ in the Doge’s Palace: ‘no. 182 Bosch – Dannati; no. 184 Bosch – Scene in paradiso’. Ludwig von Baldass also recorded seeing the four panels at the Accademia in 1917, as did Friedländer in 1927. The Afterlife Panels were back in the Doge’s Palace from around the mid-1930s. Friedländer (1927) considered them to be autograph, while von Baldass (1943) gave them an early date in Bosch’s oeuvre. Tolnay (1937), by contrast, considered that they were done during Bosch’s period, but were certainly not by him.

Dendrochronological study of the Afterlife Panels shows that they could have been painted from 1484 onwards, although execution after 1486 is statistically more likely. The wood of the panels comes in part from the same trees, which further confirms the original connection between the paintings. The presence of barbs and unpainted edges, together
with the dimensions of the individual boards show that the four panels were originally mounted in engaged frames. The iconography, style and painting technique likewise show unambiguously that the four panels were produced as a single coherent whole.

**BLACK**

The *Afterlife Panels* are unusual in that an even layer of black paint was laid down over the prepared ground, with the various scenes then painted on top of it. This seems to have been done with only a minimal underdrawing in blue-grey paint, in so far as there is any underdrawing at all. The black base layer also required the artist to employ a different technique, in which the lighter elements had to be set down more thickly, while the darker parts could simply allow the preparatory layer to show through. As the paint has aged, however, light paints containing lead white have become more transparent, as we see in the figures, for instance. This has adversely affected the contrasts between light and shadow, and has been further exacerbated by the wear suffered by the paint surface. Because of their technique, the *Afterlife Panels* would seem to occupy a place of their own within the Bosch group. They also stand out for the unusual technique employed on the panel backs. We have to wonder, therefore, whether this might not have been a commission with an excep-
tional status, comparable with the small group of extremely precious black illuminated parchment books produced in Flanders in the third quarter of the fifteenth century for the Burgundian court. Changes to the composition and pentimenti are only visible to a limited extent, with the exception of the Paradise wing, in which the hill with the fountain originally had a different shape. The form of this hill, the base of the fountain and a pair of deer, one lying down, still partially visible, and the other standing, create a somewhat distorted image due to the not very successful retouching of several larger areas of paint loss.

The Afterlife Panels have a carefully conceived composition, which generates a powerful dynamic within the paintings; the way they are arranged relative to one another creates a strong contrast between the positive movement towards heaven and the negative fall into the fires of hell. The two extremes are formed by the tunnel of light upper left and the river to hell lower right. The tunnel exerts an immense optical attraction, demanding all the viewer’s attention. If we concentrate on the divine light in the distance, we see that the souls of the blessed are welcomed there by an angel, barely visible on the ‘other side of the light’, who has been painted wet-in-wet in lead white. The angel forms a blissful contrast with the artfully foreshortened sinner shown leaning backwards in the lower right corner of the infernal river, where a demon is cutting his throat. Our eyes are led here almost imperceptibly by the obliquely flowing river, which carries the damned off to hell.
PARALLELS

Bosch must have referred here to models and ricordi from his workshop, as there are many details that display strong affinities with figures in his other paintings. The artfully rendered figure lying on its back is also found in the Saint Anthony Triptych (cat. 4), the Haywain Triptych (cat. 20) and the Garden of Earthly Delights (cat. 21), where we likewise find the demons from the two Hell panels. The hindquarters of the monster creeping away on the right edge of the Hell panel also appear in the Haywain, the Saint Anthony Triptych and the Bruges Last Judgement (cat. 16). A lion devours a deer in the background of the Paradise panel, as it does in the Vienna Last Judgement, in the Garden of Earthly Delights, and in the Saint Jerome panel of the Job Triptych (cat. 17, 21, 23). The naked woman in the Paradise panel is based on the same model as Eve in the Haywain. Several of the ‘souls’ and angels
correspond with figures from the panel with *Death and the Miser* (cat. 19c) and the afore-mentioned triptychs in Vienna, Bruges and Lisbon. The angel in the left foreground of the Garden of Eden panel who tends to two people is similar to the one in *Saint John on Patmos* (cat. 6). The bird with a rat’s head appearing in the Hell panel and beneath the bridge in the left wing of the *Saint Anthony Triptych* is not identical, but springs from the same imagination. We would also point out, lastly, the finely rendered angel, leaning back as it ascends, directly below the tunnel of light, which is based on the same model as the fainting man beneath the cross of Saint Wilgefortis (cat. 8).

In view of all these links with other work by Hieronymus Bosch and taking account of the other arguments cited here, we conclude that the *Visions of the Hereafter* panels were painted fairly late (although earlier creation is also possible based on the dendrochronological dating), and so propose a date in the period around 1505–15.
Invenzioni. Boschini 1664, 23–24; Boschini 1674, 18–19.

sogni, visioni, e bizzarie, che insegnano al capriccio nuove quadretti in tavola di mano del Civetta, con varie Chimere, dell’Eccelso Conseglio de X. che ivi vederemo quindeci …Passiamo nel Transito, che ci conduce alla Sala dell’Eccelso Conseggio de’ Dieci. …e quattro con chimeere, e stregozzi dello Civetta. …’. Zanetti 1771, 109.

Boschi 1981, 473. The exterior wings of the two Venetian triptychs. The exterior wings of the Job Triptych (cat. 23) also have a black base layer. The even later Last Judgement fragment in Munich (cat. 30) is the only work with a polychrome figurative image on top of a largely black ground layer.