

Kreises wissenschaftlich aufgearbeitet und vom 10. November 2017 bis 7. Januar 2018 in der Anhaltinischen Gemäldegalerie dem Publikum präsentiert. Im Zuge dieses Projekts werden sämtliche Bildinschriften in Kooperation mit den Altphilologen Anja Wolkenhauer und Hans van de Venne neu übersetzt – geleitet von der Absicht, mögliche zusätzliche Bedeutungsdimensionen der Bildwerke zu erschließen.²⁰

Ein großes Verdienst des Basler Kataloges besteht zweifellos darin, die dortigen Bestände vorbildlich erschlossen und der (Fach-)Öffentlichkeit zugänglich gemacht zu haben. Darüber hinaus unterstreicht der gewählte Zugriff auf das Material jene Tendenzen innerhalb der Forschung zur niederländischen wie im übrigen auch zur italienischen Druckgrafik²¹ der Frühen Neuzeit, welche das kreative Potenzial der Stecher stärker in den Blick nimmt und macht diese Ansätze für *Das Unternehmen Hendrick Goltzius* fruchtbar: „Die [...] enge Bindung an die Vorlage wird häufig so interpretiert, dass der Kupferstich *per se* eine reproduktive Kunst ist – eine eingeschränkte Sicht, die durch einen Stecher wie Goltzius, der vor allem eigenen Entwürfe in virtuose Bilder verwandelte, widerlegt wird.“ (14)

Erfreulicherweise gilt also auch weiterhin: Goltzius und mit ihm die Grafik um 1600 hat Konjunktur – verdientermaßen, wie uns Ariane Mensger exzellent vor Augen führt.

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20 Mündliche Auskunft von Norbert Michels am 4.11.2016.

21 Vgl. Norberto Gramaccini und Hans Jacob Meier, *Die Kunst der Interpretation: Italienische Reproduktionsgraphik 1485–1600*, Berlin/München 2009 und Gudrun Knaus, „Druckgraphik nach Raffael als Impulsgeber für neue Bildschöpfungen“, in: Castor 2010 (s. Anm. 3), S. 25–37.



John Marciari (Hrsg.); Hans Memling. Portraiture, Piety, and a Reunited Altarpiece (Ausst.-Kat. The Morgan Library & Museum, New York

2. September 2016 bis 8. Januar 2017); New York: Paul Holberton Publishing 2016; 112 S., 60 farb. Abb.; ISBN 978-1-911300-08-3; ca. € 25

In this review, I will focus on the theme of the historical context in which Memling produced his works, as it is one of the significant topics throughout the catalog. This theme is mostly discussed in the catalog's first three articles. The following three essays discuss new discoveries through recent technical studies. Thus, the review concentrates on article 1–3.

This catalog was made for the exhibition *Hans Memling, Portraiture, Piety and a Reunited Altarpiece* held at the Morgan Library & Museum in New York between February 2016 and January 2017. The main theme of the exhibition is a reconstruction of

the Crabbe altarpiece, for the first time in the United States,¹ which was unfortunately divided into parts and preserved separately.

The original altarpiece showed *the Crucifixion* on the center panel; Anna Willemzoon, mother of Jan Crabbe, with her patron saint, Saint Anne, on the left panel; Willem de Winter, Crabbe's half-brother, with Saint William Maleval on the right wing; and *the Annunciation* on the outer wings. The inner wings belonged to the Morgan collection, while the central panel is preserved at the Museo Civico in Vicenza, and the outer wings are found at the Groeningemuseum in Bruges.

John Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913) was a great collector of European paintings in America. His collection was enormous and rich, but its majority was given to the Metropolitan Museum of Art after his death. However, the Italian and Northern Renaissance paintings hung on the wall of his study were an exception as they were “among his favorite works of art, and most of them have remained on permanent view in this very room at the Morgan Library & Museum”. (6)

Although the wings from the Crabbe altarpiece are the most important paintings in the Morgan collection, Colin B. Bailey, director of the Morgan Library & Museum, thinks its original, meaningful context is lost by being kept separately from other parts of the altarpiece.² Yet, he emphasizes that the Morgan Library & Museum also holds “a remarkable portrait by Memling”, “illuminated manuscripts include many produced in Bruges” during Memling's lifetime, and a range of sheets of drawings that “document the working practice of early Flemish painters and show Memling's influence”. (6) By combining these elements with the reunited Crabbe altarpiece, Memling and his works can be grasped meaningfully within the historical and environmental context that surrounded the artist during his production. Thus, this is not a mere exhibition or its catalog that just provides us with the appealing attraction of the reconstructed altarpiece, but an opportunity for “demonstrating Memling's genius and setting him in the context of Renaissance art in Bruges”. (6) The catalog consists of six articles which are written for the themes already mentioned, and each of them plays the role of a guide for viewers and readers.

The first article, by John Marciari, can be divided into two main parts. In the first half, the history of the Morgan collection and the Crabbe wings is described to help us understand the Morgan Library & Museum and this exhibition. The author further discusses the identities of the subjects portrayed on the Crabbe wings together with other Memling portraits at the exhibition. In the other half, he mainly discusses Memling's representation of grisaille and the mutual influence between Memling and illuminated manuscript painters.

1 The first reconstruction of the Crabbe altarpiece and the history of the Morgan wings traveling outside of the museum are explained in page 23 of the catalog.

2 “However essential they are to the decoration there, and however much they contribute to the evocation of Morgan's milieu, it must, nonetheless, be admitted that in other ways they are removed from a meaningful context, seen neither with the panels that originally joined them in constituting the Crabbe altarpiece nor with other works by Memling and his contemporaries as they might be in a more conventional museum installation.” (6)

The Annunciation painted in grisaille on the exterior wings of the Crabbe altarpiece is treated here as a unique creation with a concept of “demi-grisaille.”³ According to the author, some scholars attribute Memling’s “demi-grisaille” to a German inspiration he might have received during his early years in Germany, although Marciari himself has a different opinion: “Yet all of the conceptual precedents can be found in the earlier paintings by Van Eyck and others mentioned above; further, varieties of grisaille are everywhere in the manuscripts painted in Bruges and the surrounding area in the decades before 1470”. (36)⁴

The influence of Memling’s paintings on the Italian paintings has been widely discussed by scholars.⁵ Marciari additionally points out that “Memling’s panels also had much to offer the manuscript painters, not only in terms of specific motifs but also in the questions asked of, and the expectations for, the work of art” (39) with examples to show that the influence is not one-sided. The influence of Memling’s paintings has been mainly discussed in the sense of Italian painters, and the influence on the manuscript painters has not been paid much attention to. Thus, the author contributes to further debate and research on the interchange between Memling and the manuscript painters. However, he writes that his main intention here is to “show that the moment in which he was working was one of significant innovation and rapidly increasing artistic sophistication”. (42)

The writer of the second article, Till-Holger Borchert is undoubtedly one of the leading Memling scholars. In the article, as its title *Hans Memling (ca. 1440–1494): An Introductory Sketch* implies, he traces Memling’s life and his works chronologically and shows the background behind the works and commissions. He also writes on the process through which Memling became such a prominent, successful artist in Bruges, as demonstrated by surviving documents. At the beginning of the article, he describes the flourishing city of Bruges and the people who contributed to its prosperity:

“During the fourteenth century, Bruges had become the most important trade and banking center in northwestern Europe and, by the following century, had emerged as one of the cultural epicenters of the Burgundian Netherlands. The presence of wealthy foreigners, important religious institutions, local noblemen, and rich bourgeois families—in addition to the regular visits of members of the Burgundian court—created a flourishing market for a wide range of luxury items ...”. (45) The patrons of Memling came from the different social classes mentioned above. The article emphasizes that Memling especially worked for private patrons.⁶

3 “Memling’s *Annunciation* for the Crabbe Triptych, painted soon after *The Last Judgment*, marks another stage in the evolution of grisaille painting, for the figures, clad in white drapery, are set on pedestals in niches like sculptures, an impression only undermined by the rosy flesh tones of their heads and hands.” (36)

4 Two examples from illuminated Manuscripts produced in 15th Bruges which the Morgan collection holds are shown as concrete evidence. Marciari, New York 2016–2017, p. 38.

5 Michael Rohlmann, “Memling und Italien: Flämische Malerei für die bologneser Familie Loiani”, in: *Memling studies: proceedings of the international colloquium*, Bruges, 10–12 November 1994, ed. by Hélène Verougstraete, Roger van Schoute, and Maurits Smeyers (Leuven 1997), p. 92–104; Till-Holger Borchert, ed. *Memling: Rinascimento fiammingo*. Exh. cat. Milan 2014.

6 “Unlike Petrus Christus and Gerard David, however, Memling never received official commissions from the city of Bruges.” (56)

Jan Crabbe, the abbot of the abbey at Ten Duinen, commissioned the Crabbe altarpiece and is referred to as one of the most important patrons for Memling by Borchert, because his commission “would have brought him to the attention of members of the abbot’s impressive secular network in the city”. (49) He had connections with many Italian merchants and bankers. Thus, Borchert suggests that “Memling’s extraordinary work for Crabbe [may have] persuaded Angelo Tani, the representative of the Medici bank in Bruges between 1450 and 1464, to commission from him *the Last Judgment Triptych*”. (49) In the article, other examples of a commission leading to another are also revealed; one of them refers to Ferry de Clugny’s altarpiece, which might have been triggered by the connection Memling had, because he “undoubtedly came in contact with members of the Burgundian administration and the courts of Philip the Good and the Count of Charolais (the future Charles the Bold), all of whom were among Van der Weyden’s clients”. (48)

This is an important perspective⁷ that shows that a cycle of commissions occurred through Memling’s network taken over from Weyden and his own patrons’ networks.

There is no doubt that these continuing commissions contributed to Memling’s immediate success in Bruges. Borchert also points out that Memling was flexible enough to change some details on his clients’ request. Memling’s attitudes toward his work and patrons might answer the question of why he was so popular with foreign patrons.

The third article by Noël Geirnaert gives a precise biography of Jan Crabbe. While Borchert’s article focused on the relationship and impact of connections that Crabbe, as one of the patrons, had on Memling, the key point in Geirnaert’s article is how Jan Crabbe built his network. The article has three parts: Firstly, the family background of Jan Crabbe and his career until 1457 before the former abbot died are described. Secondly, the troublesome period between 1457 and 1459 tells how he was appointed as the abbot at Ten Duinen and managed to remove the interfering influence of the Burgundian court from Ten Duinen. The last part describes the activities of Crabbe in making his abbey prominent and developing his classical, cosmopolitan taste through connections with Italian merchants and bankers.

The important suggestion of the article is that it shows how Jan Crabbe built “an extensive network in Bruges among both local and foreign bankers”. (66) Borchert’s article demonstrates a relationship between Memling and his patron through a commission and a relation between patron and commission through Memling’s work. Now Geirnaert’s article shows, through Crabbe’s network, the background of what is revealed by Borchert, not merely Crabbe’s biography.

According to Geirnaert, “it was also through his interactions with the international community of bankers in Bruges that Crabbe developed his interest in the Italian culture of the quattrocento”. (67) This reflects the change in Crabbe’s taste in his collec-

⁷ The cycle of commissions through a network of the artist and patron gives a clue to understand the background of Memling’s artistic production and of his success.

tion of books; he became more and more interested in classical and humanist texts. His tastes and interests had an influence on the environment around the Crabbe altarpiece. The triptych was painted around 1468/70 and had been installed by 1479 as an altarpiece in the chapel of “the refuge house that Ten Duinen owned on Snaggaardstraat in Bruges” (67).⁸ However, a daily mass at the chapel was performed by “a monk from the neighboring monastery of the Carmelites” because “during the fifteenth century, the Bruges monastery of the Carmelites was the meeting point of an international network, where Italian businessmen mingled with merchants and bankers from the Hanseatic League and from England, Scotland, and the Iberian Peninsula”. (67) The reason for Crabbe’s choice of the monk is interesting, but it is not always easy to find out the exact situation an altarpiece experienced. Thus the article includes some significant clues for understanding the background of the Crabbe altarpiece.

A main focus of the fourth article by Maryan W. Ainsworth is the transition of Memling’s artistic style in his early career just after he left Brussels and started to be independent in Bruges. Through a rare opportunity for the Crabbe altarpiece to be reunited, his observation in the article, based on previous and recent studies, enables him to investigate the altarpiece as an entire creation, which had not been easy due to the altarpiece’s separation.

The study of *the Crucifixion* with infrared reflectography by Maria Galassi from 1999 is one of the previous studies to which he refers: Galassi noted in particular that there appeared to be two somewhat different styles of underdrawing in the painting, which led her to conclude that the left side of the panel was executed before 1465, while Memling was still under the influence of Rogier van der Weyden in his Brussels workshop, and that subsequently Memling tailor-made the work for Crabbe, completing it in around 1468 in Bruges, his newly adopted home. (74)

This bold suggestion is discussed with detailed analyses and evidence from technical examinations by Ainsworth, who seems to be ready to share the idea. The process of Memling’s work with flexibility and alterations due to the requests of his patron is interestingly shown.⁹

Another topic of interest is that of an image of the Virgin holding the Christ child that appears between the standing Saint Anna and the kneeling Anna Willemzoon on the left wing in the X-radiograph. Ainsworth suggests the possibility that this image of the Virgin with the Christ child was originally intended to be included in the Anna group as an *Anna Selbdritt*, which is more common in German painting than in that of the Netherlands and which appears to give a hint for the problem of Memling’s origin and inspirations. As evidence for it, “a late fifteenth-century fragment of a copy after the left wing is in the Rijksmuseum Twenthe in Enschede” (79) is noted. Through the

8 It is important to note that the abbey at Ten Duinen belonged to the Cistercian order.

9 There are other examples for Memling’s flexibility in his works, as Borchert also mentions it about portraiture: Borchert in New York 2016–2017, p. 53 and fn. 20; Double wings of the Greverade altarpiece at the Sankt-Anne-Museum in Lübeck. See Dirk De Vos, *Hans Memling: The Complete Works*, London and New York 1994; The use of Italian renaissance motifs such as putto with festoon in the Uffizi Madonna, see Michael Rohlmann, 1997, p. 93.

existence of the fragment presented here, it enables us to develop the argument about the source of the inspiration for this representation, since the fragment suggests that there was a pattern of *Anna Selbdritt* in Memling's workshop and Memling intended to use it for the left wing of the Crabbe altarpiece, but he changed the plan.

The fifth article by Gianluca Poldi and Giovanni C. F. Villa reports some new discoveries about underdrawing by Memling – and also some hands in his workshop – based on a result of an investigation of the Crabbe altarpiece through the X-radiograph and infrared reflectography analyses. Some of the alterations found in the underdrawing of *the Crucifixion* on the Crabbe panel are also discussed by Ainsworth. In addition, all the details are listed, and precise information about drawing methods and pigments is given. The article is not one that proposes a bold hypothesis, but in the context of Memling studies these pieces of evidence and details are important because they contribute to the understanding of the development of Memling's artistic style.

In the last article, Ilona van Tuinen introduces all nine sheets of drawing displayed at the exhibition. Here, it is intended to show Memling's graphic style and the role of drawing for his art through an examination of drawings or copies by his contemporaries and followers and through an examination of Memling's underdrawing discussed in chapters four and five.

Van Tuinen writes, "of the relatively small number of surviving fifteenth-century drawings from the Low Countries (roughly six hundred), only very few are autograph works by known masters". (91) Therefore, she attempts to identify to which artist or workshop a drawing can be attributed and to clarify an environmental relationship between drawing and workshop through the analysis of a style of drawing and drawing techniques. For instance, she introduces a drawing that can be assumed to be a copy of van Eyck's drawing and discusses if the artist of the copy has ever worked in Van Eyck's workshop. Or the opposition of the "painterly" style by Van Eyck and the more graphic style by Weyden is mentioned. Through comparison of drawings by Vrancke van der Stockt, Memling's contemporary and a successor of the workshop of Weyden, the author shows how much Memling owed his graphic style to Weyden. In her observation, relations between artists are not precisely discussed, but we can see how the drawings of Memling's contemporaries reveal the relationship between Memling and other artists.

The greatest value and success of the exhibition and catalog is in the presentation of the pieces from the Morgan collection and other museums together in their historical context. Though the catalog's articles can only be introductory, the considerations of the Crabbe altarpiece in its original form together with its environmental background are of use for future studies on Memling. Further, the presentation and discussion of Memling in the context of other contemporary media such as illuminated manuscripts or drawings by contemporaries are useful indicators for understanding Memling's influences and impact. Each author succeeds not only as a guide to the exhibition, but also in suggesting another perspective for Memling studies.

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