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The Man of Sorrows by Hans von Aachen in Břevnov Monastery in Prague

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Abstract

This study presents a hitherto unpublished painting of *The Man of Sorrows*, located in Břevnov monastery in Prague, by the Rudolfine court painter Hans von Aachen. The aim is to investigate not only the provenance of the work and the presumable commissioner, Abbot Wolfgang Selender of Prošovice, but also the painting's place in Von Aachen's œuvre, possible sources of inspiration for its iconography as well as formal design in Italy and Prague. Among other findings, a technological survey conducted during its restoration revealed a man's face in the lower layers of paint, possibly a portrayal of the Emperor Rudolf II.

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Introduction

[1] Founded in the year 993, the Benedictine monastery in Břevnov (today a district of Prague) is the oldest monastic institution in the Czech Republic, which still functions today. Its privileged status was confirmed by a bull supposedly issued by Pope John XV in 993 (which, however, was a later counterfeit). According to the bull, the Abbot of Břevnov was the second most important person in the Bohemian church hierarchy after the Bishop of Prague, with the right to carry out visitations of other houses of the Benedictine order. In the early modern period, the monastery also claimed the right of exemption, namely to be released from the authority of the diocesan bishops, and to become a direct subject to the Holy See.[1] The monastery building acquired its present appearance in the first third of the 18th century when the original medieval structure was replaced by a magnificent residential complex with the Church of St Margaret embodying not only the new economic prosperity, but also the historical and political importance of this institution in the Kingdom of Bohemia.[2]

[2] An integral part of the monastery is the abbot's residence, designed as a grand aristocratic chateau, whose interiors are richly decorated by ceiling paintings and provided with valuable furnishings.[3] In the former dining room, among other Renaissance and Baroque paintings, hangs a picture of *The Man of Sorrows* (Fig. 1), which has hitherto received only marginal attention from the specialist literature and from guidebooks. To list a few, the authors of the oldest art-historical monograph about Břevnov monastery did not mention the painting at all;[4] more recently, guidebooks have misclassified it as an early 18th century anonymous work from the circle of the Bohemian Baroque master Petr Brandl,[5] while a gallery caption has until now described it as the work of an unknown Bohemian painter from the second half of the 17th century.

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[1] Beda Franz Menzel, "Exemptionsstreit zwischen den Äbten von Břevnov-Braunau und den Prager Erzbischöfen 1705–1758", in: *Bohemia. Jahrbuch des Collegium Carolinum* 17 (1976), 53-136.

[2] Mojmír Horyna, "Barokní 'znovuzaložení' benediktinského kláštera v Břevnově. Opat Otmar Zinke a jeho architekti – poznámka k problematice vztahu stavebníka a architekta", in: *Zprávy památkové péče* 53 (1993), 177-185; Heinrich Gerhard Franz, "Christoph und Kilian Ignaz Dientzenhofer im Dienste von Abt Otmar Zinke", in: *Tausend Jahre Benediktiner in den Klöstern Břevnov, Braunau und Rohr*, ed. Johannes Hofmann, St. Ottilien 1993, 381-400.

[3] Martin Mádl et al., *Benediktini. Barokní nástěnná malba v českých zemích*, vol. I, Prague 2016, 273-305.

[4] Oldřich Jakub Blažíček, Jan Čeřovský and Emanuel Poche, *Klášter v Břevnově*, Prague 1944. As will be shown later, until 1950 the painting was located in the abbot's private rooms, whose furnishings were not described in the monograph.

[5] Jan Royt and Ondřej Koupil, *Břevnovský klášter. Historie kláštera, průvodce, benediktinský život*, Prague 2002, 36; Jan Royt, Anselm Skřivánek and Ondřej Koupil, *Břevnovský klášter. Historie kláštera, průvodce, benediktinský život*, 2nd ed., Prague 2011, 24.

1 Hans von Aachen, *The Man of Sorrows*, after 1612, oil on canvas, 94 × 82 cm (state after restoration). Břevnov monastery in Prague (photograph © David Stecker, Prague)

[3] Measuring 94 × 82 cm, the painting presents a close-up view, immediately in the foreground, of a three-quarter-figure of a dejected Christ wearing a loincloth and a crown of thorns. His wrists are tied by a rope, which is attached by a fetter to a plinth in the bottom right-hand corner of the picture. Christ is leaning slightly forward and his gaze is directed upwards. An additional figure, whose identity and gender is ambiguous, is removing (or offering) a crimson robe, thus revealing (or covering) a body bearing wounds

from scourging. The scene takes place in a neutral dark setting, where the only spatial reference is a hardly visible fluted column with a pedestal on the right-hand margin.

The identity of the artist and the discovery of a portrait

[4] At the time the painting was discovered in 2016, its overall condition was unsatisfactory: the canvas was cracked, the varnishes had turned dark, and the painting had become dirty. However, there had been no major repainting, and the work was in an almost intact state of preservation, including the upper glaze layers. The outstanding artistic quality was already clear at that stage, and the distinctive painterly style gave rise to the hypothesis that it could be the work of Hans von Aachen (1552–1615), a prominent German painter who worked at the court of Emperor Rudolf II in Prague.

[5] Although the artist's signature was not found or preserved (and Von Aachen signed his works relatively often), the painter's mature style is clearly discernible: a slightly built figure, a comely face with a moving expression gazing upwards, and long delicate fingers in a refined Mannerist gesture (Fig. 2).

2 Hans von Aachen, *The Man of Sorrows*, after 1612 (detail)

Two features of the *The Man of Sorrows*, namely the chiaroscuro arrangement of the naked body in a dark setting and the painful pathos expressed by the eyes turned upward and filled with tears, are especially similar to those in Von Aachen's painting of *The Suicide of Lucretia* (dated 1601), included in the collection of Emperor Rudolf II (Fig. 3).[6]

[6] Thomas Fusenig, ed., *Hans von Aachen (1552–1615). Hofkünstler in Europa*, exh. cat., Munich and Berlin 2010, 258, cat. no. 110 (catalogue entry by Eliška Fučíková); Joachim Jacoby, *Hans von Aachen. 1552–1615*, Munich and Berlin 2000, 130-131, no. 32.

3 Hans von Aachen, *The Suicide of Lucretia*, 1601, oil on canvas, 67.7 × 48.2 cm. National Gallery Prague (photograph © National Gallery Prague)

The attending figure holding the robe is likewise reminiscent of female types by this painter; a comparison can be made with the painting of *Pallas, Venus, and Juno* (1593) in the possession of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.[7] Another comparable example is the head of the angel from the *Annunciation* (1607 or 1613) in the National Gallery Prague[8] or the young woman in Von Aachen's late work *A Courtesan with Her Procuress* (dated 1613) in the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen in Munich.[9]

[6] Before a close examination of where *The Man of Sorrows* stands in Von Aachen's oeuvre, I would like to mention a surprising discovery made thanks to the technological survey conducted between 2018 and 2020 when the painting was under restoration.[10] The survey revealed a man's face below the surface layers of the painting at the place of Christ's right shoulder (Figs. 4a and 4b).

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[7] Jacoby (2000), 137-138, no. 37, colour plate 4.

[8] Fusenig (2010), 260-261, cat. no. 112 (catalogue entry by Michal Šroněk); Jacoby (2000), 87-89, no. 8. About the possible dating of the painting to 1607 see Štěpán Vácha, "Léta 1598, 1599, 1607. K datování tří děl rudolfínských mistrů", in: *Libellus amicorum. Beket Bukovinská*, ed. Lubomír Konečný and Lubomír Slavíček, Prague 2013, 156-173: 167-173.

[9] Fusenig (2010), 214-215, cat. no. 78 (catalogue entry by Lubomír Konečný); Jacoby (2000), 80-82, no. 3.

[10] More details can be found in the unpublished restoration report by restorer Adam Pokorný from December 2020.

4a Infrared image of the painting *The Man of Sorrows* (photograph © Adam Pokorný, Prague)

4b Detail of infrared image with a face in a layer of paint beneath the surface (photograph © Adam Pokorný, Prague)

The identity of this man is not certain, but physiognomic features such as the shape of the nose and the protruding lower lip give grounds for the hypothesis that it may have been a portrait of Emperor Rudolf II (Fig. 5).[11]

5 Hans von Aachen, *Emperor Rudolf II*, ca. 1603, oil on canvas, 60 × 58 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien (photograph © Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien)

Von Aachen's principal duty as a court painter was to make portraits of the monarch in various sizes and formats, which in many cases were painted with the help of his assistants.[12] The positioning of the head halfway up the canvas of the Břevnov painting leads to suppose that its original dimensions were different and most probably conceived as a full-figure portrait. Although the head is modelled in detail, the work as a whole remained unfinished, and the canvas was cut off and reused for the painting of *The Man of Sorrows*.

[7] Such an interpretation of the sitter allows for the possibility that the painter may have painted Christ only after Rudolf's death in 1612, when the completion of the emperor's portrait became superfluous. This assumption is confirmed by the painterly style of the upper painting, which corresponds to Von Aachen's late works such as the *Portrait of King Matthias* (Prague Castle Collections), a work obviously created with the participation of his assistants.[13] Similarly in the Břevnov piece, we can discern a certain weakness in the

[11] Fusenig (2010), 186, cat. no. 58 (catalogue entry by Eliška Fučíková); Jacoby (2000), 248-250, no. 94.

[12] Jacoby (2000), 249; Karl Schütz, "Porträtmalerei", in: Fusenig (2010), 53-61: 60; Rüdiger an der Heiden, "Die Porträtmalerei des Hans von Aachen", in: *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* N.F. 30 (1970), 135-226: 166-174.

[13] Jacoby (2000), 241-242, cat. no. 88, coloured plate 11. On the issue of workshop practice in Von Aachen's studio, see Jürgen Zimmer, "Hans von Aachens Werkstatt: Freunde, Schüler, Lehrlinge, Stipendiaten, Gesellen, Gehilfen?", in: *Hans von Aachen in Context. Proceedings of the International Conference Prague 22–25 September 2010*, eds. Lubomír Konečný and Štěpán Vácha, Prague 2012, 189-196.

execution of the attendant figure's face, while his (or her) long fingers lack the intensity and grace of Christ's delicate gesture.

The provenance of the painting

[8] As a religious subject, the painting fits well in a monastic setting, and its provenance from Břevnov can also be proved in spite of the chequered fortunes that the furnishings of the monastery experienced in the second half of the 20th century. In April 1950, the communist government decided to close down all houses of religious orders in Czechoslovakia and to intern the monks. This was followed by the VK Campaign (VK being an abbreviation for Vyklízení klášterů – "Clearing out the monasteries"), during which the monasteries were assigned to be used by state institutions, and the movable property was redistributed, sold, or even misappropriated.[14] The VK 683 designation mark on the reverse side of the painting is testimony to its fate. In the National Archives in Prague, lists have been preserved of furnishings confiscated from Břevnov monastery along with records of the subsequent transfer of valuable works of art to public galleries and museum collections. The painting of *The Man of Sorrows*, described in the inventory as a "picture of a martyr with a crown of thorns and a female figure in a black frame", was originally located in one of the rooms in the abbot's apartment and was handed over to the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague together with other artefacts in 1953.[15] The monks returned to Břevnov after the re-establishment of a democratic regime in Czechoslovakia in the early 1990s, and the painting was returned to them in 1996.

[9] Significant testimony to the fact that the painting originally came from Břevnov is provided by the portrait of Abbot Wolfgang Selender of Prošovice (in office 1602–1619), located in Broumov monastery in Eastern Bohemia (Fig. 6).[16] Since the mid-15th century, after the Hussite Wars, Broumov monastery had become the main seat of the abbots, who titled themselves *Abbas Brzewnoviensis et Dominus in Brauna*. Břevnov, inhabited by only a small community of monks, served as the abbot's residence during his visits to Prague. This Baroque portrait, although not particularly attractive in its painterly execution, renders the sitter in a cultivated manner: The elegant pose, the chiaroscuro modelling of the face and, in particular, the striking gesture of the hand with the fingers pointing to the pectoral cross, expressing 'emotional

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[14] Eva Richtrová, "Klášterní inventáře v první polovině 20. století na příkladu mužských benediktinských domů v Rajhradě a Broumově", in: *Hortus inventariorum. Statě k problematice inventářů pro dějiny umění*, ed. Jiří Roháček and Lubomír Slavíček, Prague 2018, 141-156: 150-155.

[15] Prague, National Archives, holding Zemský úřad – Náboženská Matice, box 132, fol. 400-524 (Inventory of the confiscated furnishings of the monastery of Břevnov from May 16, 1950), here fol. 438 ("obraz mučedníka s trnovou korunno[!] a ženskou postavou v černém rámu, olej 110 × 99 [measured with the frame]"); also ibid., box 489, fol. 771-773 (Record of handing over art-historical objects taken from the monastery in Břevnov on July 29, 1953, signed by Dr. Emanuel Poche, employee of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague), here fol. 773, item no. 47: *Obraz Ecce homo s andělem, olej, plátno, rám. Čechy, kol 1700, 80 × 93* (Painting of Ecce Homo with an angel, oil on canvas, framed, Bohemia, ca. 1700, 80 × 93 [cm]).

[16] Broumov monastery, Portrait Gallery of Abbots of Břevnov, not inventoried, oil on canvas, 96 × 76.5 cm (unframed). For more details about the abbot Selender, see Johannes Zeschick, "Abt Wolfgang Selender von Prossowitz OSB. Ein Leben für die katholischen Erneuerung in Bayern und Böhmen", in: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bistums Regensburg 6 (1972), 267-307; Josef Svoboda, "Volfgang Zelender, neohrožený opat v Broumově", *Časopis katolického duchovenstva* 28 (1887), 129-144, 198-213.

concern'.[17] Von Aachen used this hand gesture quite often in his portraits, such as that of an unknown lady in the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen in Munich[18] and several images of William V, Duke of Bavaria (Fig. 7).[19] It is thus likely that the painting from Broumov is a copy of an original by Hans von Aachen, which has probably been lost.

6 (left) *Portrait of Wolfgang Selender of Prošovice, Abbot of Břevnov*, probably a Baroque copy after the lost original by Hans von Aachen, oil on canvas, 96 × 76.5 cm. Broumov Monastery (photograph © David Stecker, Prague) | 7 (right) Hans von Aachen, *Portrait of William V, Duke of Bavaria*, ca. 1590, oil on canvas, 130 × 104 cm (photograph © Archivio Patrimonio Artistico Intesa Sanpaolo / photo: Fabio Speranza, Napoli)

[10] Wolfgang Selender, once prior of the monastery of St. Emmeram in Regensburg, visited Prague repeatedly already in the 1590s; in 1601–1602 he unsuccessfully attempted to reform the Schottenstift in Vienna.[20] But as soon as in August 1602, he was appointed as Abbot of Břevnov at the behest of Emperor Rudolf II in order to put an end to the moral decline of the monastic community, improve the economic management of the monastery, and prevent the spread of Lutheranism on the Broumov estates.[21] The emperor also supported him financially, by contributing to the renovation of the dilapidated Church of St. Margaret in Břevnov.[22] These contacts with the imperial court offer an explanation how Selender met

[17] Cf. Valeska von Rosen, "Painterly Eloquence in El Greco's El Espolio", in: *El Greco: The first twenty years in Spain. Proceedings of the International Symposium Rethymno, Crete, 22–24 October 1999*, ed. Nicolas Hadjinicolaou, Rethymno 2005, 53-67: 58.

[18] Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen in München, inv. no. 10.332. See Jacoby (2000), 213-214, no. 69, fig. 87.

[19] Antonio Ernesto Denunzio, "A newly rediscovered portrait of William V of Bavaria by Hans von Aachen", in: *Studia Rudolphina* 15 (2015), 126-132. Especially this gesture in Von Aachen's portraits of Duke William V of Bavaria, see Orsola Bubryák, "Hans von Aachens Werke in Augsburger Sammlungen", in: *Studia Rudolphina* 21-22 (forthcoming).

[20] Zeschick (1972), 280-282.

[21] Zeschick (1972), 282-289.

[22] Milada Vilímková and Pavel Preiss, *Ve znamení břevna a růží. Historický, kulturní a umělecký odkaz benediktinského opatství v Břevnově*, Prague 1989, 51.

Rudolf's favourite painter and commissioned him to paint not only his portrayal, but also *The Man of Sorrows*. The abbot most probably kept it in his private chapel and used it for personal devotion.

Artistic sources

[11] Having a permanent residence in Prague from 1596, Hans von Aachen produced a variety of paintings for his principal patron Rudolf II, especially with mythological themes, allegories, portraits, and miniatures on alabaster.[23] However, as previously in Germany, he also had private clients for whom he painted religious compositions. In 1613 (or before 1607), the Imperial Privy Councillor Johann Barvitius commissioned a large canvas of *The Annunciation to the Virgin Mary* (today in the National Gallery Prague) for one of the side altars in the Jesuit church of the Holy Saviour in Prague's Old Town.[24] Another piece by Von Aachen, depicting *The Madonna and Child in a Flower Garland*, is still displayed on the side altar in the Church of St James (Prague Old Town).[25]

[12] Von Aachen's career as a successful producer of religious paintings had begun in Italy, where he lived in the years 1574–1586.[26] The painter's biographer Karel van Mander mentions, among other works, a painting of *The Mocking of Christ*, which was commissioned by a Netherlandish merchant living in Venice, and which has only recently been identified in a private collection in England.[27] According to Van Mander, Christ was portrayed "life-sized, almost completely naked, inclining to one side, or half lying, and depicted in a graceful, upward-looking pose".[28] Bernard Aikema and Thomas Fusenig have found models in Venetian painting (especially in the works of Tintoretto) for this elegant pose of Christ, whose nobility and grace provide a contrast to the harsh appearance of his tormentors. They also point out that the painter developed this composition further in later years, especially in the large canvas of *Christ Being Stripped of His Garments* from 1595–1596, which was supplied to the oratory of the Jesuit church of St Michael in Munich. This work, destroyed in 1944, served as a model for small-format variants created with the help of

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[23] Jacoby (2000), 44-64; Eliška Fučíková, "Das Leben", in: Fusenig (2010), 3-11.

[24] See note 8.

[25] Unfortunately, nothing is known about the origin of the painting. See Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *The School of Prague. Painting at the court of Rudolf II*, Chicago and London 1988, 146, no. 1.38; Jaromír Neumann, "Die rudolfinische Kunst und Niederlanden", in: *Netherlandish Mannerism. Papers given at a Symposium in Nationalmuseum Stockholm, September 21–22, 1984*, ed. Görel Cavalli-Björkmann, Stockholm 1985, 47-60: 55-57, Fig. 12.

[26] Bernard Aikema, "Hans von Aachen in Italy. A Reappraisal", in: Konečný and Vácha (2012), 17-27.

[27] Bernard Aikema and Thomas Fusenig, "Hans von Aachen in Italien. Eine neu aufgefundene 'Dornenkrönung'", in: *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 79 (2018), 189-203.

[28] Karel van Mander, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters, from the First Edition of the Schilder-Boeck (1603–1604). Proceded by the Lineage, Circumstances and Place of Birth, Life and Works of Karel van Mander, Painter and Poet and likewise his Death and Burial. From the Second Edition of the Schilder-Boeck (1616–1618), with an introduction and translation*, ed. Hessel Miedema, vol. I, Doornspijk 1994, 418 (fol. 290r).

his workshop.[29] The same composition is also repeated in an epitaph (in a private collection), which is likewise the work of Von Aachen's assistants.[30]

[13] With regards to the overall arrangement of the setting and the stylization of the Christ figure, the Břevnov painting has, however, even closer parallels in Von Aachen's oeuvre. The first is a drawing study of the *Ecce Homo* in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, in which Christ, being stripped of his robe, is positioned in a spectacular architectural setting with a large cast of accompanying figures (Fig. 8).[31]

8 Hans von Aachen, *Ecce Homo*, ca. 1590–1600, pen and brown ink, and grey wash over black chalk, 362 × 276 mm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (photograph © The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

[29] Jacoby (2000), 99-100, no. 15. For the replica of Von Aachen's work in the Städtische Kunstsammlungen in Augsburg see Reinhold Baumstark, ed., *Rom in Bayern. Kunst und Spiritualität der ersten Jesuiten*, exh. cat., Munich 1997, 445-446, cat. no. 131 (catalogue entry by Ilse von zur Mühlen); for a second one in the National Museum in Prague see Eliška Fučíková et al., eds., *Rudolf II and Prague. The Court and the City*, exh. cat., Prague, London and Milan 1997, 671, cat. no. V.135 (catalogue entry by Lubomír Sršeň).

[30] Oil on canvas, 155.5 × 118 cm. Christie's, Amsterdam, Live auction 2742 Old Master Pictures, 9 May 2007, Lot 36. See https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-4901053 (accessed January 4, 2022).

[31] The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, accession no. 2001.191. See https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/343505 (accessed January 4, 2022).

As in the *The Man of Sorrows*, Christ holds an unsteady posture, and his bending forward expresses physical fragility and vulnerability. Furthermore, a young man standing behind him is taking his cloak off in a similar way.

[14] Another striking similarity can be observed in the half-figure composition of a dejected and mocked Christ with soldiers and Pilate thronging around him, originally a painting which is known today through a graphic reproduction by the Augsburg engraver Lukas Kilian (Fig. 9).[32]

9 Lucas Kilian after Hans von Aachen, *Ecce Homo*, copper engraving, 175 × 119 mm. Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg, Kupferstichkabinett (photograph © Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg)

More than a century ago Rudolf Peltzer established the Venetian origin of this composition, and on the basis of similarities with works by Titian, Tintoretto, Contarini and Ligozzi, he came to the conclusion that the original painting must have been made while the artist was still residing in Venice.[33]

[15] *The Man of Sorrows* represented as a devotional type of image, or indeed any kind of depiction of the Passion of Christ in general, has a strong tradition in Venetian art going back to the second half of the 13th century. In addition to the usual depiction of Jesus's body after death, with traces of the crucifixion and closed eyes, the Renaissance period saw the increased popularity of the image known as *Ecce Homo* of a

[32] Joachim Jacoby, *Hans von Aachen*, Rotterdam 1996 (= *The New Hollstein German Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts, 1400–1700*, 1), 72-73, no. 23. Jacoby mentions other copies, one published by Justus Sadeler in Venice and another by Andrea Vaccari in Rome in 1602.

[33] Rudolf Arthur Peltzer, "Der Hofmaler Hans von Aachen, seine Schule und seine Zeit", in: *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 30 (1911/1912), 59-182: 74, 164.

live, bloodied, and bruised Christ with bound hands, a purple mantle, and a crown of thorns, accompanied and often mocked by several executioners or by Jewish Elders and Pilate.[34]

[16] A distinctive narrative motif, which the Venetian passion scenes (and also the paintings by Hans von Aachen) have in common, is an additional figure removing Christ's robe in order to show his scourged body to the Jews, and at the same time to make it the object of the beholder's devotion. This treatment known as *ostentatio Christi* was analysed in medieval iconography by Erwin Panofsky,[35] but Renaissance representations of the theme intensify the contrast between the aggression, physical ugliness, and moral inferiority of the persecutors and the physical beauty of the almost naked Christ. Furthermore, in Venice the pictorial invention of stripping the robe and exposing Christ's body corresponded to a renewed interest in direct personal spirituality and reflected a Christocentric religious sensibility, one which depended on the internal imagination of the devout and drew on recalling the narrative details and setting.[36]

[17] This is especially evident in Titian's influential pictorial composition *Christ Mocked* as a half-figure, accompanied by Pilate and two secondary figures, one of whom is holding the hem of Christ's robe.[37] In Paolo Veronese's interpretation of *Ecce Homo* (in a private collection), one of the two executioners is also removing Christ's robe.[38] The same narrative plot also served as a vehicle for two striking theatrical *Ecce Homo* presentations by Ludovico Cigoli and Caravaggio[39] and was also adopted by Anthony van Dyck for a painting dating from 1625–1626 (The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham). In this latter work, the composition is reduced simply to Christ with one secondary figure, a dark-skinned man placing a purple robe around his shoulders.[40] What bears the closest resemblance to Von Aachen's painting is a composition by the Bavarian painter Christoph Schwarz also trained in Venice, who depicted the solitary soldier with Christ in a painting known only from an engraving by Johann Sadeler (Fig. 10).[41]

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[34] William Barcham and Catherine Puglisi, "The Man of Sorrows in Venetian Art", in: Catherine Puglisi and William Barcham, eds., *Passion in Venice. Crivelli to Tintoretto and Veronese*, exh. cat., New York and London 2011, 10-27; cf. Colum Hourihane, "Defining terms. Ecce Homo, Christ of Pity, Christ Mocked, and the Man of Sorrows", in: *New Perspectives on the Man of Sorrows*, ed. Catherine Puglisi and William L. Barcham, Kalamazoo 2013, 19-47: 24-28. The popularity of this composition in Venice might be initiated by the painting *Ecce Homo* by the Netherlandish painter Quentin Matsys, having been displayed in the chapel of the Palazzo Ducale from the second half of the 16th century. See Maddalena Bellavitis, "Tra Fiandre e Italia. Alcuni passaggi per un'iconografia dell'Ecce Homo", in: *Citazioni, modelli e tipologie nella produzione dell'opera d'arte. Atti delle giornate di studio, Padova, 29–30 maggio 2008*, ed. Claudia Caramanna, Novella Macola and Laura Nazzi, Padova 2011, 263-269.

[35] Erwin Panofsky, "Jean Hey's Ecce homo. Speculations about its author, its donor and its iconography", in: *Bulletin des Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts* 5 (1956), 95-138: 102-110.

[36] Raymond B. Waddington, "Aretino, Titian, and La Humanità di Cristo", in: *Forms of Faith in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, ed. Abigail Brundin and Matthew Treherne, Aldershot 2009, 171-198.

[37] Miguel Falomir, "Christ Mocked, a late *Invenzione* by Titian", in: *Artibus et Historiae* 28 (2007), No. 55, 53-61.

[38] Davide Banzato and Elisabetta Gastaldi, eds., *Ospiti al museo. Maestri veneti dal XV al XVIII secolo tra conservazione pubblica e privata*, exh. cat., Padova 2012, 68-70, cat. no. 17 (catalogue entry by Elisabetta Gastaldi).

[39] Anna Orlando, ed., *Caravaggio e i genovesi. Committenti, collezionisti, pittori*, exh. cat., Genova 2019; Sebastian Schütze, *Caravaggio. Das vollständige Werk*, Köln 2015, 293-294, no. 80.

[40] Richard Verdi, *Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641). Ecce Homo and The Mocking of Christ*, exh. cat., Princeton 2002, 36-44.

10 Johann Sadeler after Christoph Schwarz, *Ecce Homo*, copper engraving, 195 × 123 mm. London, British Museum (photograph © British Museum)

Iconography and style

[18] The afore-mentioned examples clearly show that Hans von Aachen, in his portrayals of Christ – whether derided, crowned with thorns, or stripped of his garments before his crucifixion – drew on experience acquired during his time in Venice, while making use of the accompanying figure in rather creative ways. In some cases, Christ is assisted by a Roman soldier (as in the above mentioned *The Crowning with Thorns* and the engraving *Ecce Homo*), elsewhere by a Moor, most likely the Ethiopian eunuch from Acts 8,26–40 (*The Disrobing of Christ* formerly in Munich), and in another one, by a compassionate woman (the epitaph in the private collection) who can be interpreted as a projection of the devout attitude of the donator depicted in the bottom right-hand corner of the scene. In the Břevnov painting, which is primarily a non-narrative depiction (see below), Von Aachen went even further by painting a very soft and tender companion in Christ's suffering instead of a rude executioner or yet another biblical character.

[19] Another of Von Aachen's particular contributions to the formulation of Passion iconography is the motif of Christ's head, tilted back with upward gaze filled with tears. It is his gaze looking up rather than down or at the viewer that gives his suffering a moving pathos and transcendental nature.[42] This feature, generally understood as indicator of a highly emotional state, i.e., the classical depiction of an *exemplum*

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[41] Sandra-Kristin Diefenthaler, *Christoph Schwarz. Hofkünstler der Wittelsbacher im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, Berlin and Munich 2018, 425, cat. no. St I.26.

[42] Andreas Henning and Gregor J. M. Weber, *'Der himmelnde Blick'. Zur Geschichte eines Bildmotivs von Raffael bis Rotari*, exh. cat., Emsdetten and Dresden 1998; Giovanni Morello and Maria Grazia Bernardini, eds., *Visioni ed estasi. Capolavori dell'arte europea tra Seicento e Settecento*, exh. cat., Ginevra 2003.

doloris,[43] seems to be a characteristic imprint of the painter's rendering of the theme. However, Von Aachen also used it in his profane compositions such as above mentioned *The Suicide of Lucretia* (Fig. 3) and, surprisingly, also in hilarious scenes, e.g., *Bacchus, Amor and Cupid* in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (Fig. 11).[44]

11 Hans von Aachen, *Bacchus, Amor and Cupid*, between 1595–1600, oil on canvas, 63 × 50 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien (photograph © Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien)

In fact, it is an effective pictorial formula with its origin in the Italian Renaissance (especially Raphael's *Ecstasy of St. Cecilia* and Titian's *Penitent Magdalene*), which came to be fully exploited and widely used in post-Tridentine art in the early 17th century. The development of this motif is associated in particular with Guido Reni; however, the comparison with Von Aachen's work reveals that it had a much broader background.[45]

[20] To sum up, with the painting of *The Man of Sorrows* in Břevnov, Hans von Aachen took a highly original approach to the depiction of the dejected Christ by deliberately reducing the composition to two figures and developing only a sketchy, allusive narrative plot. Unlike in other depictions, the fact that Christ is bound to a plinth may refer to the scene of the scourging in Pilate's palace. Since there is no mention of this

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[43] Cf. Leopold D. Ettlinger, "Exemplum doloris. Reflections on the Laocoön Group", in: *De artibus opuscula XL. Essays in honor of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. Millard Meiss, vol. 1: Text, New York 1961, 121-126.

[44] Fusenig (2010), 209, cat. no. 73 (catalogue entry by Lubomír Konečný); Jacoby (2000), 152-153, no. 47.

[45] Sybille Ebert-Schifferer, Andrea Emiliani and Erich Schleier, eds., *Guido Reni und Europa. Ruhm und Nachruhm*, exh. cat., Frankfurt am Main and Bologna 1988, 120-124, cat. nos. A 3 (*Saint Margaret*, 1606/1607) and A 4 (*Penitent Magdalene*, 1615/1616), both catalogue entries by Sybille Ebert-Schifferer.

attendant figure in the Gospels, it stands outside the familiar context of the action. Offering solace and comfort, the figure serves as a point of identification for the beholder, evincing an empathetic response. Such explanation can be supported by the spiritual, richly illustrated literature written by contemporaneous (mostly Jesuit) authors, who instigated, in the devout reader, a participatory and contemplative engagement with pictorial narratives.[46] Thus, I would argue that the painting can be regarded as a very individual, meditative interpretation of Christ's Passion in the way it stimulates the beholder's piety and internal evocation of the object of devotion.

[21] A prominent feature of the Břevnov painting is the hands with elongated fingers and delicate gesture. This is a formal sign and expressive instrument, typical of the figural painters at the court in Prague – it was also used by Bartholomaeus Spranger or Joseph Heintz the Elder.[47] Although the skin bears traces of scourging, the wounds are not very prominent and do not disturb the appearance of an inviolate and visually attractive body, whose sensuality is accentuated by the fact that the loincloth covering the genitals is fastened very low down.[48] Formal virtuosity and grace clearly predominate over the vivid depiction of physical torments and the degradation of human dignity; even the expression of pain on the face is softened into a restrained sentiment.

[22] Both thematically and formally, there is a striking similarity to the statue of *Christ at the Column* by the Rudolfine court sculptor Adriaen de Vries, which was commissioned by the Imperial Privy Councillor and Court Secretary Andreas Hannewaldt von Eckersdorf for the church in Żórawina (Rothsürben) in Silesia (Fig. 12).[49] Bearing the date 1604, this sculpture is considered a significant example of the Rudolfine Mannerist figural style: Christ's physical beauty, typical of Renaissance art, is replaced by a beauty of the artistic form that takes on a life of its own. What strikes the viewer is the intricate, almost dance-like posture of the sinewy body with a conspicuous gesture of the outstretched arms.[50]

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[46] Andrea Catellani, "Before the preludes. Some semiotic observations on vision, meditation, and the 'fifth space' in early Jesuit spiritual illustrated literature", in: *Ut pictura meditatio. The Meditative Image in Northern Art, 1500–1700*, ed. Walter S. Melion, Ralph Dekoninck and Agnes Guiderdoni-Bruslé, Turnhout 2012, 157-202.

[47] Lubomír Konečný, "A note on two 'Rudolfine' gestures", in: *Studia Rudolphina* 15 (2015), 132-135.

[48] On the nudity of Christ in Renaissance art see most recently Jill Burke, *The Italian Renaissance Nude*, New Haven and London 2018, 46-48; also Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*, 2nd, rev. and exp. ed., Chicago 1996.

[49] Most recently Evelyn Reitz, *Discordia concors. Kulturelle Differenzerfahrung und ästhetische Einheitsbildung in der Prager Kunst um 1600*, Berlin and Boston 2015 (= *Ars et scientia*, 7), 203-234; Piotr Oszczanowski, *Casus Żórawiny. Kościół Trójcy Świętej w Żórawinie około 1600 roku*, Wrocław 2007.

[50] Reitz (2015), 211, 227.

12 Adriaen de Vries, *Christ at the Column*, 1604, bronze, 122 cm. National Museum in Warsaw (photograph © National Museum in Warsaw)

[23] Models for De Vries' statue are usually found in Italy,[51] but Piotr Oszczanowski has pointed out that considerable attention to this topic was devoted also by court artists in Prague.[52] The newly discovered painting of *The Man of Sorrows* in Břevnov is fully in line with Oszczanowski's notion, although it cannot be determined which work of art directly inspired which. Furthermore, apparent formal and stylistic relations between the Břevnov painting and De Vries' *Christ at the Column* support Eliška Fučíková's observation based on different comparable cases, i.e., the relatively homogenous figural and compositional style at the imperial court in Prague circa 1600 resulted from close cooperation between both painters and sculptors.[53]

[24] To conclude, the hitherto unknown painting of *The Man of Sorrows* in Břevnov is a remarkable example from the end of Hans von Aachen's work. It significantly expands our knowledge of the work of Rudolfine artists outside the imperial court in Prague. It was commissioned by a prominent prelate, who also had his portrait painted by the artist. Although Venetian models served as a starting point for the composition and iconography, Von Aachen developed the theme of Christ's Passion in his own way. The Břevnov painting is thus arguably the last, most original piece of this series. Recombining pictorial elements to new iconographic settings, the artist sought to depict Christ's suffering with an emphasis on emotionality and pathos, stirring the viewer's imagination and awakening an empathetic response.

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[51] Francesco Gonzales, "L'iconografia dell'Ecce Homo nella cultura lombarda di inizio Seicento", in: *L'Ecce Homo ritrovato di Cerano. Restauro e ricerche*, ed. Marco Rosci, Novara 2007, 23-33: 24; Frits Scholten, ed., *Adriaen de Vries, 1556–1626. Imperial Sculptor*, exh. cat., Zwolle 1998, 156-158, cat. no. 17 (catalogue entry by Frits Scholten).

[52] Oszczanowski (2007), 340.

[53] Eliška Fučíková, "Malerei und Bildhauerkunst", in: Beket Bukovinská, Eliška Fučíková and Prokop Muchka*, Die Kunst am Hofe Rudolfs II.*, Hanau 1988, 61-140: 126; also Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, "A 'Modern' Sculptor in Prague. Adriaen de Vries and the 'Paragone' of the Arts", in: *Festschrift für Konrad Oberhuber*, ed. Achim Gnann and Heinz Widauer, Milan 2000, 283-293.

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