

From Antwerp to Amsterdam

Painting
from the
Sixteenth and
Seventeenth
Centuries



Contents

6	Foreword Marieke Van Schijndel
10	Introduction – Golden times? Micha Leeftang
14	‘Art desires to be near wealth’ – From Antwerp to Amsterdam Micha Leeftang
36	Venite et videte – Come and see Koenraad Jonckheere
58	The art of conservation Sven Van Dorst
70	Catalogue
398	Bibliography
407	Photo credits
408	Colophon
408	Acknowledgements

‘Ode to Antwerp: The Secret of the Dutch Masters’

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This is the title of the exhibition at Museum Catharijneconvent devoted to painting from Antwerp and Amsterdam from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; the period, in other words, prior to, during and after the wave of iconoclastic violence that swept through the Low Countries in 1566. No previous exhibition has paid such detailed attention to paintings from the 1560s until the fall of Antwerp to Spanish forces in 1585, a pivotal historic event that triggered the permanent separation of the Northern and Southern Netherlands. The region to the north of Antwerp became the territory of Protestant insurgents, while Antwerp itself and everything south of the river Scheldt remained in Spanish Catholic hands. Protestant inhabitants were given four years to convert to Catholicism or leave. The resulting wave of migration and the fact that the northern rebels denied the Spaniards use of the Scheldt as a commercial artery spelled the end of Antwerp as the economic heart of the Low Countries. The same factors also marked the beginning of Amsterdam’s development in the seventeenth century into the cultural, economic and political powerhouse of the Republic of the Seven United Provinces, roughly corresponding with the modern-day Netherlands.

The exhibition and its accompanying publication would not have been possible without the enthusiastic cooperation of The Phoebus Foundation in Antwerp, established in 2011 by the entrepreneur, art collector and Antwerp native Fernand Huts. The Phoebus Foundation pursues philanthropic goals, acquires works of art, guarantees a professional preservation and management framework, and oversees the conservation of the objects (of which you can read more in the essay by Sven Van Dorst, conservator and founder of The Phoebus Foundation’s conservation studio, on page 58). It was during the Covid pandemic in 2020 that preliminary talks took place – online at first and later in person – between

Micha Leeflang, Curator of Museum Catharijneconvent, and The Phoebus Foundation’s Collection Consultant Katrijn Van Bragt, Project Coordinator Niels Schalley, and Chief of Staff Katharina Van Cauteren. The intensive collaboration which resulted led ultimately to the present book and exhibition. The expertise and enthusiasm of the project group, consisting of Micha Leeflang, Marieke Meijers, Marije De Nood, Aukje Lettinga and Dieuwke Beckers, were indispensable. Together, they developed a narrative to introduce museum visitors to the characteristic features of seventeenth-century Dutch painting and how it was shaped by sixteenth-century Flemish Masters.

Biblical painting from the Northern Netherlands is richly represented in Museum Catharijneconvent while The Phoebus Foundation has a correspondingly large number of Southern Netherlandish (Flemish) masterpieces in its collection. The two collections complement and enhance one another. Generous loans have also been provided by the Rockox&Snijders House Museum in Antwerp, the Amsterdam Museum, Rijksmuseum and P. and N. de Boer Foundation in Amsterdam, the Mauritshuis in The Hague, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, Dordrechts Museum and a number of private collectors.

While preparing the publication and exhibition, Micha Leeflang was able to exchange views with members of the advisory committee: Marten Jan Bok, Philippe De Potter, Koenraad Jonckheere, Tanja Kootte, Henk Looijesteijn and Matthias Van Rossem. We are extremely grateful to all of them. Koenraad Jonckheere penned the second essay in this book on the significance of the debate between Catholics and Protestants regarding the use of visual images, while Tanja Kootte, former Van Oord Curator of Protestantism at Museum Catharijneconvent, provided indispensable contributions in the form of catalogue notes and commentary on the content of the other essays.

Colleagues from the aforementioned institutions, and many others besides, played a crucial part in preparing the exhibition and this book, which has been magnificently designed by Tim Bisschop and published by Hannibal Books. We worked closely with Ted Alkins, Xavier De Jonge, Sofie Meert and Jan Vangansbeke. Moreover, our gratitude is due to Frank Van der Velden, project leader for the Museum Catharijneconvent publication, and Gautier Platteau, Hannibal’s director.

I would like to thank Micha Leeflang for her enthusiasm and her unwavering commitment to the realization of this publication on the shared history of the Netherlands and Belgium. Our benefactors made an essential contribution too. We are grateful to the Flemish Government, Van Baaren Stichting, Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds, K.F. Hein Fonds and the Zabawas Fund for the financial support they have provided for the research and organization of *Ode to Antwerp*. We are also indebted to Museum Catharijneconvent’s regular partners: the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and the Vriendenloterij. Lastly, we would like to extend our thanks to the donors to our Museum Catharijneconvent Fund and, in particular, to Bert Twaalfhoven for his many years of support and involvement with the museum.

Next page

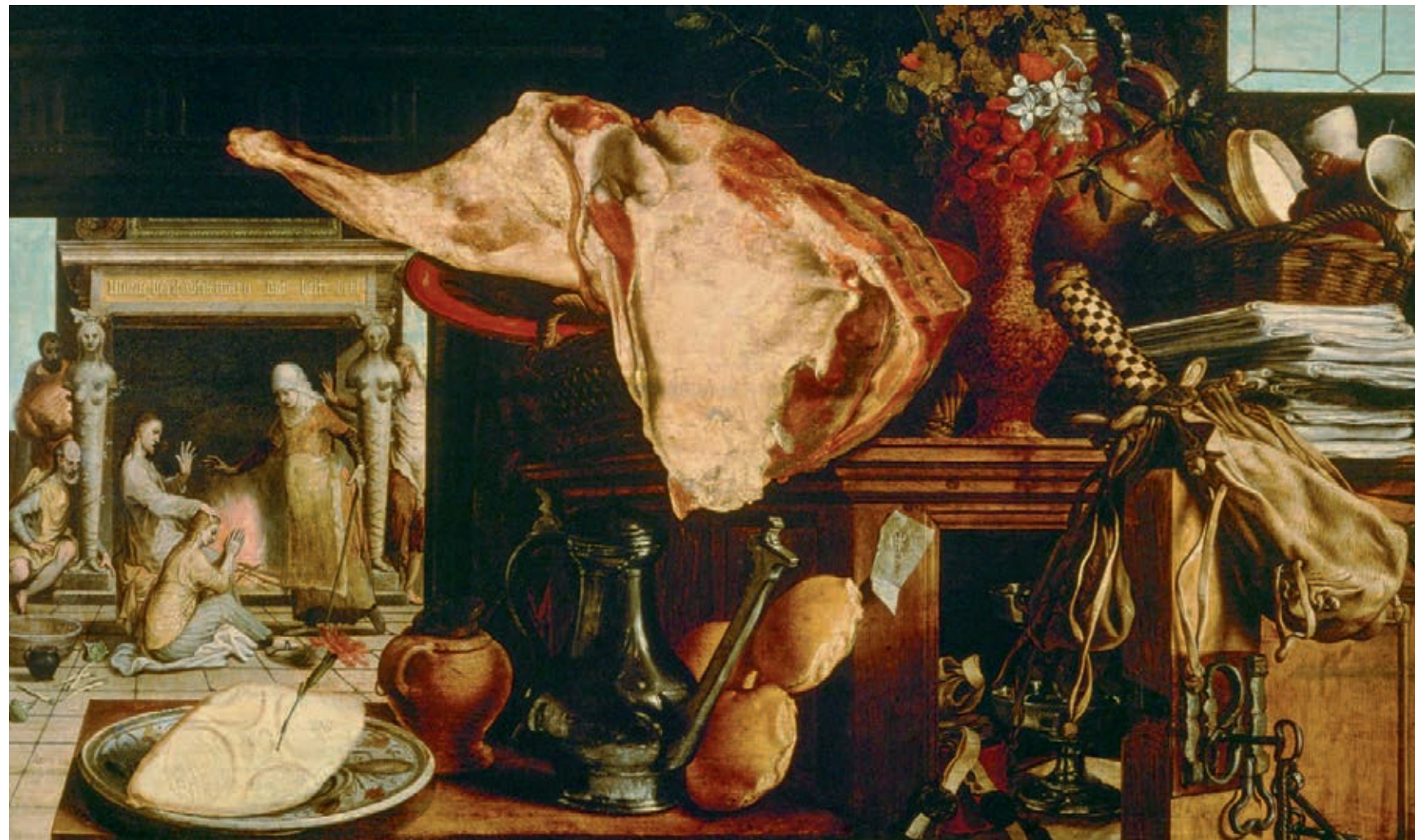
Joachim Beuckelaer, *Kitchen Scene with Christ at Emmaus*, c. 1560–65
Oil on panel, 109.5 x 169 cm
The Hague, Mauritshuis (long-term loan from Amsterdam, the P. & N. de Boer Foundation, since 1960)



'Art desires to be near wealth'



1.4 Frans Francken II, *Picture Gallery with Abraham Ortelius and Justus Lipsius*, 1617
Oil on panel transferred to canvas,
52.5 × 73.5 cm, Antwerp, The Phoebus
Foundation



1.8 Pieter Aertsen, *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*, 1553
Oil on panel, 126 × 200 cm, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen

Influenced by the new group of art buyers, who also purchased works for their homes, new genres were now created in which the Christian message seems less prominent.³⁰ Religious scenes were sometimes pushed literally into the background. Holy figures in the paintings of Joachim Patinir (Dinant, c. 1475–80–Antwerp, 1524) and his followers in the first quarter of the sixteenth century were often depicted very small and secondary to the panoramic landscape (cats. 6–9). Yet even in representations of *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*, which were popular works for residential kitchens and monastery refectories, the emphasis was increasingly on the secular, non-religious part of the composition, in this case the kitchen still life (cat. 28).

Pieter Aertsen (Amsterdam, 1507/08–Amsterdam, 1575) produced no fewer than seven versions of *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*. In paintings now in Utrecht (cat. 28) and Brussels, he still placed the biblical scene in the foreground,³¹ whereas in a work in Rotterdam the

foreground is given over to a lavish kitchen still life, the disciples are placed in the middle ground, and the New Testament action as such is rendered on a rather small scale in the background (fig. 1.7).³² In a version in Vienna, meanwhile, the religious scene is limited to a view into another space in the background, which is, moreover, painted in monochrome (fig. 1.8).³³ The principal role in this instance is seemingly played by a large piece of meat and other still-life elements. But appearances can deceive: kitchen still lifes of this kind had a didactic function too (see cats. 28 and 39) in that they express the opposition between the material and the spiritual life – a *vita activa* and a *vita contemplativa*.³⁴ In the course of the seventeenth century, these ultimately spawned market scenes, kitchen still lifes and genre works, including brothels and peasant scenes without a biblical element.³⁵ Works of this kind continued to serve as a warning against an excessive and sinful life, while market and kitchen pieces belong to a highly period-specific genre that seems to have arisen in the first instance as a critique of Antwerp's wealth.³⁶

Pivotal moment

As of 1477, when Mary of Burgundy married Maximilian of Austria, the Low Countries (roughly the area of the modern Netherlands and Belgium) formally belonged to the house of Habsburg. Maximilian was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1486 and went on to add even more territories to his empire. He was succeeded by his grandson Charles (Ghent, 1500–Cuacos de Yuste, 1558),³⁷ who ruled over the Low Countries from 1506 to 1555 and was King Charles I of Spain from 1516 to 1556 and Holy Roman Emperor Charles V from 1519 to 1555.

Europe found itself in crisis in the second half of the sixteenth century. Poor harvests, an English trade embargo and other setbacks resulted in economic problems, just as religious unrest was intensifying. Adherents of new religious movements resisted certain Catholic practices and sought to reform the Church, ultimately leading to the Reformation and a schism between Protestants and Catholics. The reformers – most notably Martin Luther (Eisleben, 1483–Eisleben, 1546) (fig. 1.9) and John Calvin (Noyon, 1509–Geneva, 1564) – wanted to return to a 'pure' Christian religion centred on the Bible and the Word of God.³⁸



1.9 Lucas Cranach, *Portrait of Martin Luther*, 1546
Oil on panel, 63.3 × 48.5 cm, Utrecht
Museum Catharijneconvent, RMCC s107

1.13 Pieter Isaacsz. (after a design of Karel Van Mander?)
Harpisichord lid with *Allegorical Representation of the
City of Amsterdam as the Centre of World Trade*, 1606
Oil on panel, 79.4 × 165 cm, Amsterdam, Amsterdam
Museum



Amsterdam as metropolis

In the course of the seventeenth century, Amsterdam took over Antwerp's former position as North West Europe's leading economic, political and artistic centre (fig. 1.12).⁴⁶ It developed into a commercial metropolis and soon became known as the 'Antwerp of the North' (fig. 1.13). The city imported goods like timber and grain from the Baltic, along with iron ore, furs and cod. The salt used to preserve the fish was sourced in Portugal. In this way, Amsterdam became a staple market at which northern and southern products were stored, processed, sold and distributed across Europe. Other activities grew up around this trade, including cartography, printing, and banking and insurance.⁴⁷ The river IJ offered another link to the sea, with a harbour connected to the Damrak, a stretch of the river Amstel (cat. 90). This allowed sea-going vessels to sail right into the city as far as what is now Dam Square, Amsterdam's central hub.

Following the example of the Spanish and Portuguese in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, speculative trading companies now dispatched explorers from Amsterdam to every corner of the world. The Dutch East India Company – *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC; see cat. 83) – was founded in 1602 to provide fitted-out ships, trade goods and money to buy costly spices. The success of this model led to the creation in 1621 of a West India Company (WIC) to target the Americas and West Africa. The Dutch Republic's merchant fleet, in which Amsterdam enjoyed the largest share, was bigger at the time than those of England, Scotland and France combined.

Amsterdam prospered, the art market flourished and demand for art increased explosively. Huge residences were constructed along the ring of canals dug since 1613 – a grandiose urban planning project that offered the clearest testimony to the extent of Amsterdam's newfound prosperity. Demand for history paintings, portraits, landscapes, seascapes, city views, genre scenes and still lifes to decorate these fine houses grew accordingly.⁴⁸ The city's social elite – most of whom were migrants – vied with one another to show off their wealth and status, an aspiration to which portrait painting lent itself perfectly.⁴⁹ The poet,



Theological treatises like this on art and images and aimed at a wider readership went much further, however, than simply dredging up unfamiliar subject matter: they actually altered the way art was perceived and the role that it played in society. Entirely different narratives arose within the Protestant community and the Catholic Church, with the result that the development of art diverged in the two parts of the Low Countries. The de facto splitting of the territory after 1585 into a southern region under Spanish Catholic rule and a Reformed Republic in the North caused art to move slowly but surely in contrasting directions. While these two branches were still grafted onto the same stem, they were fundamentally different.³⁵ This was expressed not only in distinct choices of subject matter, as we have seen already, but also in far more subtle and complex changes. It is certainly not the case that there was an unambiguously 'Catholic' idiom or a plainly 'Reformed' brand of art. Instead, basing themselves on the issues raised by the image debates, artists sought answers to the complex question in which the problem ultimately was not so much the existence of images or art itself, but above all how they functioned within religious and wider society. Even a passionate and hard-line Calvinist like Teellinck was stung by the accusation that he was out to ban painting or sculpture. This was absolutely not what he wanted, as he would repeatedly claim. 'None of us is saying that sculpting or painting is wicked in itself', he fulminated. 'Such art is customary in our midst, and is practised blamelessly by adherents of our faith.'³⁶ The two fundamental issues were, firstly, whether it was permitted to depict God and, secondly, whether 'images of his Creation' honoured him sufficiently. No difficulty whatsoever was posed, therefore, by a beautiful painting of nature or human beings, and hence of God's Creation.

Teellinck was by no means alone in such views. Even the previously mentioned Protestant catechism (published by Ursinus) felt the need to emphasize that no prohibition on art as such was intended: '[...] the service of idols is indeed forbidden, but not the service of simulacra', the text clarified,³⁷ 'simulacrum' being a word used since ancient times to signify images made by humans.³⁸ What did continue to provoke Teellinck's ire, however, was the 'sorcery' (*tovenarije*) emanating from images; it was this bewitchment and the associated worship of images that were problematic. A work of art could pass muster as soon as it

was removed from an ecclesiastical context and began to function in another way, which explains how come it was acceptable in Calvinistic republics for altarpieces removed from churches in early 1580 to be transferred to the town hall, for instance:³⁹ different context, different perception.

Protestant concerns were not, of course, entirely unfounded. The Catholic Church and its principal champions – Joannes David among them – vigorously defended the ability of art to touch human beings in the very depths of their souls. In among the historical, etymological and theological arguments, David reiterated the Jesuit conviction that paying respect to images – and preferably doing so physically – brought you 'closer to God'.⁴⁰ In other words, by interacting physically and spiritually with images (kneeling before them, lighting candles, praying, and so forth) one could be profoundly stirred by what those works represented, namely the story of divine Salvation. David went further still, calling on artists to use their God-given talent, wisdom, fantasy and imagination to the greater glory and honour of that goal.⁴¹ We should take care, incidentally, before automatically linking an artists' choice of a particular iconography with their personal religious convictions. Protestant artists, for instance, do not seem to have rejected altarpiece commissions out of hand. Work by artists who did not sympathize with either the Spanish king or the Catholic Church were highly sought after, even in Spain itself. Gillis Coignet, for instance, painted an impressive altarpiece in 1584 for the Concatedral de Santa María de la Redonda in the Spanish city of Logroño, Spain,⁴² while at the same time (1583) turning out canvases with themes reflecting the Calvinist attitude 'better a Turk than a papist'.⁴³ We should be wary, therefore, about simplistic distinctions between orthodox and heterodox artists. It was more the case that they went in search of a solution to the image conflict, even if for no better reason than that their living depended on it. This quest led to fascinating experiments with style and iconography. A Reformed painter like Adriaen Thomasz. Key, for instance, known for his portrait of William of Orange, experimented with dirty fingernails⁴⁴ to question the holiness of St Jerome. Established stories, meanwhile, were given fresh associations, such as the Blinding of Zaleucus in a work by Gillis Mostaert and Hans Vredeman De Vries (fig. 2.9), a theme that became a metaphor for the familiar combination of adultery, blindness and idolatry.⁴⁵

2.8 Rembrandt, *Balaam and the Ass*, 1626
Oil on panel, 63 × 47 cm, Paris, Musée Cognacq-Jay, J 95

Abel Grimmer

Interior of the Antwerp Cathedral, c. 1600

Oil on panel, 78.6 × 111.5 cm

Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation

Local lead

Born into a family of painters, Abel Grimmer (Antwerp, c. 1570–Antwerp, 1618) had artistic talent in his genes. His father Jacob Grimmer (Antwerp, 1525/26–Antwerp, before 1589) was already active as a painter in the city in 1547 (cat. 49), and his views of the countryside around the city in different months and seasons of the year were exceptionally popular and universally praised. Abel continued the successful family business in 1592. Like his father before him, he focused on landscapes but also painted numerous allegories and proverbs.¹ The genre of the church interior was introduced to Antwerp by the Dutch specialists Hans Vredeman De Vries (Leeuwarden, 1525/26–Hamburg, 1609) and Hendrick Van Steenwijck I (Kampen, c. 1550–Frankfurt am Main, 1603), who lived and worked in the Southern Netherlandish city from the 1560s onwards. Both of these Calvinist masters left Antwerp with their families in 1586, after the notorious Spanish governor Alexander Farnese recaptured the city on behalf of the Catholic King Philip II of Spain. By then, however, the genre had firmly established itself.² Abel Grimmer can be seen as its local pioneer after he began to record the interiors of various Antwerp churches on panel and canvas from 1595 onwards. This *Interior of the Antwerp Cathedral* is among his largest and most ambitious compositions. Abel Grimmer rarely signed or dated his interior views, which often makes it hard to attribute works to him with any certainty.

Van Steenwijck's influence on Abel Grimmer could hardly be plainer in *Interior of the Antwerp Cathedral*. With the exception of a few details, Grimmer's depiction is a verbatim copy of a view by Van Steenwijck dating from around 1585, now in the collection of the Hamburger Kunsthalle.³ Unlike his predecessor, however, Grimmer painted his



Circle of Frans Francken II

Picture Gallery with Donkey Iconoclasts, c. 1620

Oil on panel, 50 × 74 cm

Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation

Fabulous Francken

The Antwerp Baroque scene is immediately associated with the names of Peter Paul Rubens (Siegen, 1577–Antwerp, 1640), Anthony Van Dyck (Antwerp, 1599–Blackfriars, 1641) and Jacob Jordaens (Antwerp, 1593–Antwerp, 1678). But Frans Francken II (Antwerp, 1581–Antwerp, 1642) would be perfectly at home on that list too. Born and raised in Antwerp, young Frans came from an established family of painters. His father Frans I and his uncles Hieronymus I and Ambrose I all enjoyed flourishing careers as history painters employed by a variety of important religious and secular institutions.¹ Frans II's brothers, Ambrosius II and Hieronymus II, also took up the painter's profession. There was a veritable Francken dynasty, in other words, but Frans II can, nevertheless, be considered its most talented progeny. With his productive workshop and countless collaborations with fellow Antwerp geniuses like Pieter Neefs I (Antwerp, c. 1590–Antwerp, 1656–61) and Joos De Momper II (Antwerp, 1564–Antwerp, 1635), the master's reputation extended far beyond his native city. His eye for precision and his talent for painting small figures lent themselves perfectly to the production of cabinet pieces, picture galleries and even the decoration of harpsichords – genres that perfectly met the tastes of wealthy merchants eager to decorate their city palaces with modestly sized paintings. Some of them even created private galleries of their own to show off their knowledge and exquisite taste.²



Cat. 6

92

Joachim Patinir

Landscape with St Christopher, c. 1520¹

Oil on panel, 28 × 35 cm

Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation

Protection from sudden death

In the course of the sixteenth century, Antwerp developed into a leading centre of the art trade: there was something available for every budget and every taste. The travel journal of the German artist Albrecht Dürer (Nuremberg, 1471–Nuremberg, 1528) and the writings of the Italian merchant, historian and humanist Lodovico Guicciardini (Florence, 1521–Antwerp, 1589), who settled in Antwerp in 1541, are some of the sources that paint a picture of Antwerp's international importance as a European economic and artistic hub. Writing in his celebrated *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi, altrimenti detti Germania inferiore* ('Description of the Low Countries, otherwise called Lower Germany'), Guicciardini stated that no fewer than 300 artists were active in Antwerp in 1560. Their output was immense, with paintings made on commission or for the open market. And it was not just the Church and nobility who placed commissions: wealthy merchants too had begun to buy art with increasing frequency, ordering portraits, altarpieces and devotional panels. While the subject matter was mostly religious, new genres also began to emerge in the sixteenth century, including market scenes, images of everyday life and landscapes.



Workshop of Joos Van Cleve

Christ as Salvator Mundi, c. 1520

Oil on panel, 45 × 31.5 cm

Utrecht, Museum Catharijneconvent, ABM s324

Radiant Salvator Mundi

Numerous versions are known of this composition with Christ as *Salvator Mundi* (saviour of the world), varying in size and quality, and attributed to a number of different workshops. Several of them by Joos Van Cleve and his assistants have also survived.¹ One of the best is the painting in the Louvre, which is thought to have been based on the right-hand panel of a diptych of around 1505 showing the Virgin Mary praying on the left and Christ as *Salvator Mundi* on the right. Painted by Quinten Metsys (Leuven, 1465/66–Antwerp, 1530), it now belongs to the Royal Museum of Fine Arts (KMSKA) in Antwerp (fig. on p. 110). Quinten's son, Jan Massijs (Antwerp, 1509–Antwerp, 1575) also painted several diptychs with Mary and the *Salvator*, mostly dated around 1529. The position of the figures in these works varied, with Mary sometimes appearing on the right and Christ on the left (see cat. 11).

The image of Christ as *Salvator Mundi* also existed as a stand-alone theme and did not always have a pendant. In the present case, however, the painting did form part of a diptych, as the original frame shows traces of a hinge on the left. Christ remained united with his mother until 1901. The auction catalogue from that time describes the left-hand panel in the following terms: 'The Virgin is represented half-length, her hands clasped and with a white headdress.'² The panels were sold separately. Christ ended up in Museum Catharijneconvent, while the location of the painting of the Virgin Mary is not known.

Description of Christ's appearance

The 'Letter of Lentulus', containing a detailed description of Christ's appearance, might have been the source for the many paintings with a 'portrait of Christ' by artists including the fifteenth-century precursors of the Antwerp School.³ 'Flemish Primitives' like Jan Van Eyck (Maaseik?, c. 1390–Bruges, 1441), Hans Memling (Seligenstadt, c. 1430–40–Bruges, 1494) and Rogier Van der Weyden (Tournai, c. 1399/1400–Brussels, 1464) all painted Christ as *Salvator Mundi* with features in keeping with the letter, which was named for the supposed Roman official Lentulus, procurator of Judea and an immediate predecessor of Pontius Pilate. In all likelihood, however, the text does not date from the time of Jesus, but was probably composed in the late Middle Ages.⁴ It was included in the fourteenth century in the *Vita Christi* (Life of Christ) of Ludolph of Saxony (1295–1378). A printed version was published in 1474, which meant that the letter, with its description of Christ's appearance, was also widely distributed: 'His hair has the hue of an unripe hazelnut, waving from the ears in curling locks over his shoulders and parted in the middle [...] His brow is smooth and calm, with the nose and mouth no fault at all can be found. The colour of his skin is pinkish red. The full beard is the colour of his hair, not long, but a little forked at the chin. In stature of body tall and straight, his gaze light, vivid, bright and shining [...] A man of exceptional beauty, fairer than the children of men.'







Marco D'Oggiono, *The Infant Christ and St John Embracing*, c. 1513
Oil on panel, 64.5 × 48.1 cm, London, The Royal Collection, 405463

These four paintings, done in a large, vertical format, were aimed at wealthy customers, one of whom we know by name. Pompeius Occo (1483–1537) was a German-Dutch merchant, based on Amsterdam's Kalverstraat, where he acted as the business agent of the Augsburg banking house the Fuggers. He originally owned the version of the theme now in Chicago.⁸ Although Occo probably bought the panel ready-made from Joos Van Cleve in Antwerp, he did have his family arms and those of his wife added to the piece.

Do you have one in a smaller size?

The composition proved very popular, and Joos Van Cleve also produced versions of it in a smaller, horizontal format, including the work now in Museum Catharijneconvent. However, the same cartoon was used to set down the children, who are thus exactly the same size as their counterparts in the larger variants of *The Infant Christ and St John Embracing*.

Significant differences in execution and detail are, nevertheless, found when we compare the large and small versions. The large, upright variants are very carefully painted, largely by Joos Van Cleve himself, whereas the vast majority of the smaller, horizontal works appear to have been left to his assistants. They were rapidly painted and less care was taken over the detail.⁹ The speed with which these works were produced and their modest size suggest that they were intended for a less wealthy clientele.

In duplicate

All the known versions of *The Infant Christ and St John Embracing* from the workshop of Joos Van Cleve were traced using a cartoon (see cats. 15–16). The schematic and precise contours typical of this technique are clearly visible in IRR imaging of the Chicago and Brussels versions. The first impression of the cartoon traced in the Brussels work was redone in a second phase to enhance the legibility of the composition. The light grey jawline of the young John (right) was probably set down during the first transfer, which is why it is lighter in tone.

Van Cleve seems to have produced two fairly identical versions of each composition. The panels in Brussels and Chicago, for instance, closely resemble one another, the privately owned version described here is very similar to the work auctioned in 2012, the version in Utrecht has an exact copy in Weimar, and there is also a pair of smaller works in which the landscape has been omitted and the children are placed on a bed with red fabric (Vienna and Naples). It is possible that Van Cleve systematically produced two versions at a time. As soon as one was sold, the remaining copy could then serve as an example for the production of the next pair of paintings, in which something was always altered to maintain the unique character.

Unusual iconography

The meeting between Jesus (left) and John the Baptist (right) as children goes back to an apocryphal source by a group of authors referred to as 'Pseudo-Bonaventura'. The latter's *Meditationes vitae Christi* recounts how Jesus and John met one another following the Holy Family's return from Egypt.¹⁰ If we try to square this tale with what the Bible has to say, however, we find that the children ought to be older. What's more, John was six months older than Jesus, whereas the children in the paintings are almost the same age.

Other paintings of the encounter frequently include Joseph and Mary, and Mary and/or Elizabeth. The versions done by Marco D'Oggiono and Joos Van Cleve, however, depict the children without any of their parents.¹¹ This made the scene less traditionally religious and hence more appealing to a wider group of art buyers.¹² (ML)



IRR detail of Joos Van Cleve, *The Infant Christ and St John Embracing*, shortly after 1521
Oil on panel, 72.5 × 54 cm, Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Art of Belgium (IRR: Faries/Leeflang)

- 1 Leeflang 2015, pp. 29–89. With specific reference to *The Infant Christ and St John Embracing*, pp. 75–85.
- 2 A painting 'with two children embracing' is mentioned in her inventories of 1516 and 1524 (Hand 2004, p. 98; Eichberger 2002, pp. 307–10).
- 3 Dürer/Fry 1995, p. 91: 'And on Friday Lady Margaret showed me all her beautiful things.'
- 4 Wolff in Chicago 2008, pp. 159–67.
- 5 Cennino d'Andrea Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook 'Il Libro dell'Arte'*, New York: Dover Publications 1960 (Yale University Press 1933), Translated by Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. Quote from p. 13.
- 6 This version was sold in September 2012 at Koller auctioneers, Zurich. Oil on wood, 97.5 × 59 cm. Reproduced in Leeflang 2015, p. 170, fig. 4.5.
- 7 Chicago: 74.5 × 57.6 cm and Brussels: 72.5 × 54 cm. Reproduced in Leeflang 2015, pp. 80–81, figs. 2.68–2.69. The smaller version in Utrecht and the version in Weimar of around 1530 (oil on panel, 38.5 × 58.7 cm. Weimar, Schlossmuseum, G 77) also have an Antwerp landscape.
- 8 Chicago 2008, pp. 159–67.
- 9 The landscapes of both the painting in Utrecht and the one in Weimar are very detailed and could have been painted by a landscape specialist within the workshop. If you wanted a cheaper version of *The Infant Christ and St John Embracing*, you could also choose one in which the children were placed on a bed against a fairly neutral background, without a landscape (Naples, Museo di Capodimonte and Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum).
- 10 Hand 2004, p. 96; Hecht 1981, pp. 228–29.
- 11 A similar pair of embracing children appears in Bernardino Luini's early-sixteenth-century work, *Holy Family with John the Baptist as a Child*. Madrid, Museo del Prado (reproduced in Hand 2004, p. 96, fig. 103). The motif of the meeting with John recognizing Jesus as the true Lamb of God, the Messiah, is also found in Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin of the Rocks*, c. 1483–86. London, National Gallery and Paris, Louvre. The scene is likewise found in Antwerp in, among others, Quinten Metsys, *Virgin and Child with Elizabeth and John the Baptist*, c. 1520–25. Clark Art Institute, Williamstown.
- 12 The author is grateful to Pim Arts, who suggested that Pompeius Occo might not have purchased the painting as a devotional work but rather in response to his urge to create an art collection (in his lecture 'Pompeius Occo and the Motives of a Mecenat' on behalf of the Historians of Netherlandish Art in Amsterdam on Saturday 4 July 2022, during the session on 'Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Netherlandish Art', led by Daantje Meuwissen and Dan Ewing).