

Intentional Alterations of Early Netherlandish Paintings

MARYAN W. AINSWORTH

Curator, European Paintings, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

IN MY FIRST POSITION at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, I was privileged to be invited to collaborate with an exceptional interdisciplinary team—the Museum’s research scientist, Pieter Meyers; the curator of seventeenth-century paintings, Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann; and the chairman of the Department of Paintings Conservation, John Brealey—in a scientific investigation of paintings by Rembrandt in the Museum’s collection. When the project came to an end, John Brealey asked me to join Paintings Conservation as the department’s art historian to investigate the early Netherlandish paintings with infrared reflectography. This unconventional route to my current position as a curator in the Department of European Paintings has had an enormous impact on my approach to the study of paintings.

The indispensable lessons that I learned from John Brealey about how to judge the state and condition of paintings, the details of their technique and manufacture, and the elements of their style today serve as the foundation of every aesthetic judgment that I make as a curator of paintings. John’s enduring contribution was his commitment to an interdisciplinary approach, one uniting conservation, scientific examination, and art history. Today this approach, now often referred to as technical art history, is gaining increasing acceptance.¹

It was John’s belief that an assessment of the state and condition of a painting was always the essential first step toward understanding it. This approach to a work of art, practical and seemingly straightforward, is, however, deceptively simple and in fact takes years of close looking. Indeed, training the eye is a never-ending process. There are distinctions to be made between the various types of changes that have occurred over time—between those that have happened naturally and those that have resulted from human intervention. It is the latter group that I wish to discuss in this article, in an attempt to determine, within the context of Brealey’s interdisciplinary

approach, how, why, and when such changes were made. The assessment of a given alteration—be it an addition or a subtraction—often necessitates a reconsideration of the painting’s history, which sometimes, in turn, reveals facts about the function and importance of the work in its own time.

Although elements have been added to and subtracted from paintings from all periods and cultures, those I wish to discuss here can be observed in works dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the Low Countries, including several in the Metropolitan Museum. This is a cautionary tale, as one quickly learns that in the evaluation of such examples, preconceived notions can easily lead to faulty conclusions. Let me illustrate what I mean with some cases in point.

The presence of haloes as identifying appurtenances of holy figures in early Netherlandish paintings is a relatively rare occurrence; their appearance in Italian paintings of the same period is commonplace. To assess whether haloes are original to a painting or later additions, close visual scrutiny of images with haloes is the best way to begin. Noted paintings in the Metropolitan’s collection in which the authenticity of haloes has been brought into question include the *Portrait of a Carthusian* (Figures 1, 2) and *A Goldsmith in His Shop (Saint Eligius?)* (Figures 3, 4), both by Petrus Christus (active by 1444, died 1475/76), and the *Portrait of a Young Man* by Hans Memling (active ca. 1465, died 1494), in the Robert Lehman Collection (Figures 5, 6). The haloes in the paintings by Christus were questioned by Max J. Friedländer as early as 1916 and by William Martin Conway in 1921.² In preparation for the 1994 exhibition “Petrus Christus: Renaissance Master of Bruges,” the issue of the haloes was again raised. They were determined through technical examination to be later additions, and they were removed.³ With the removal of the haloes, the aesthetic intentions of the artist were restored. Christus was among the first early Netherlandish painters to break through the barrier of the plain, dark background that was conventionally employed in portraiture by providing an illusionistic

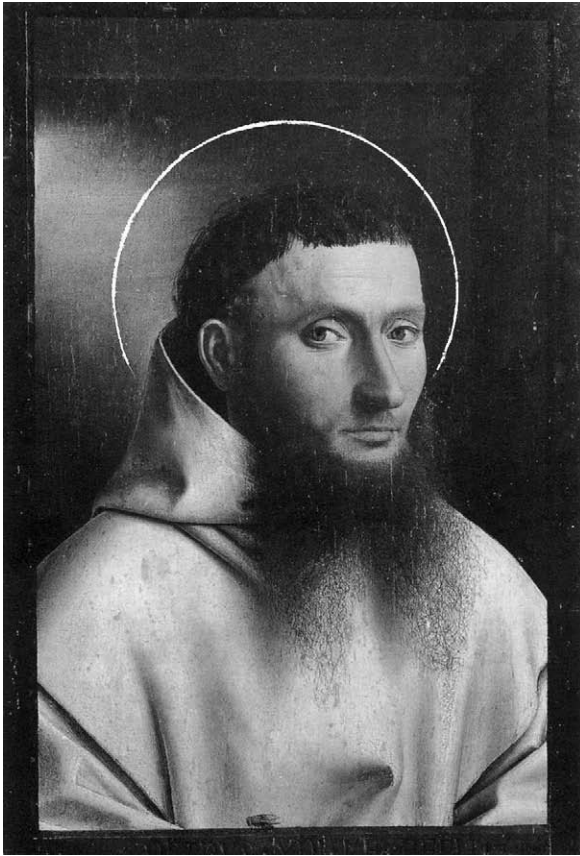


Figure 1. Petrus Christus (Netherlandish, active by 1444, died 1475/76). *Portrait of a Carthusian* (with halo), 1446. Oil on panel, 29.2 x 21.6 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Jules Bache Collection, 1949 (49.7.19)

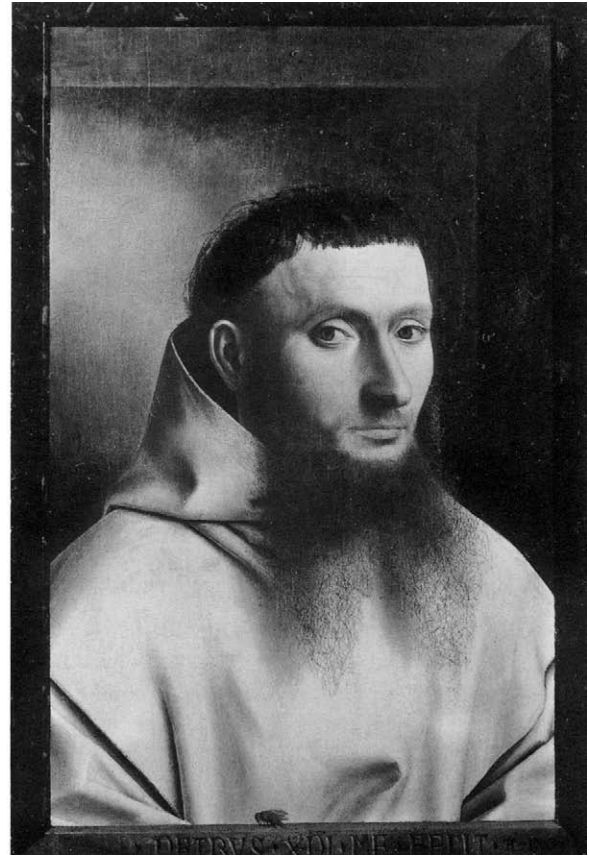


Figure 2. Figure 1, with halo removed

space to surround the figures. The addition of the haloes by contrast introduced an element that forced the viewer to focus on the foreground, discouraging further investigation of the space beyond the picture plane. The restoration also allowed for a renewed discussion of the function and meaning of the paintings. Neither panel was originally conceived as a religious image; the false haloes had altered their intended function as secular portraits.

The identification of the Carthusian in Christus's portrait as a saint had long been doubted, as there was no known Carthusian lay brother who rose to sainthood in the south Netherlands around 1446, when the painting was made.⁴ (The sitter is not a monk, as he has no tonsure and is not, by the rule of the order, clean-shaven.) Perhaps it was Bruno (ca. 1030–1101), the founder of the Carthusian Order, formally canonized in 1623, whom a later owner of the painting wished to identify by the addition of the halo. The alteration may have been made in Spain; the panel was in the collection of Don Ramon de Oms, viceroy of Majorca by 1911, and two

nineteenth-century copies of the painting were known in Valencian collections.⁵

In the *Portrait of a Goldsmith* (Figures 3, 4), the removal of the halo similarly prompted discussion about the identity of the central figure. The sitter had been thought to represent Saint Eligius, the patron saint of goldsmiths, and until 1998 the picture was known by that eponymous title. That year, Martha Wolff and Hugo van der Velden each noted, independently, that the painting did not conform to any of the standard representations of the saint, which show him performing miracles, and they argued convincingly that the identification of the sitter with Saint Eligius occurred in modern times.⁶ Early mentions of the painting refer to it only as a representation of a goldsmith in his shop. It was not until 1817 that the subject of the picture was described as “a goldsmith or rather the patron of goldsmiths—Saint Eligius.”⁷ It may have been at this time, when the painting also received a new gold frame, that the halo was added.⁸ Van der Velden even proposed an alternative identification for the sitter, namely, Willem van Vlueten,



Figure 3. Petrus Christus. *A Goldsmith in His Shop* (with halo), 1449. Oil on panel, 100.1 x 85.8 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman Collection (1975.1.110)



Figure 4. Figure 3, with halo removed



Figure 5. Hans Memling (Netherlandish, active ca. 1465, died 1494). *Portrait of a Young Man*, ca. 1482. Oil on panel, 40 x 29 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman Collection (1975.1.112)

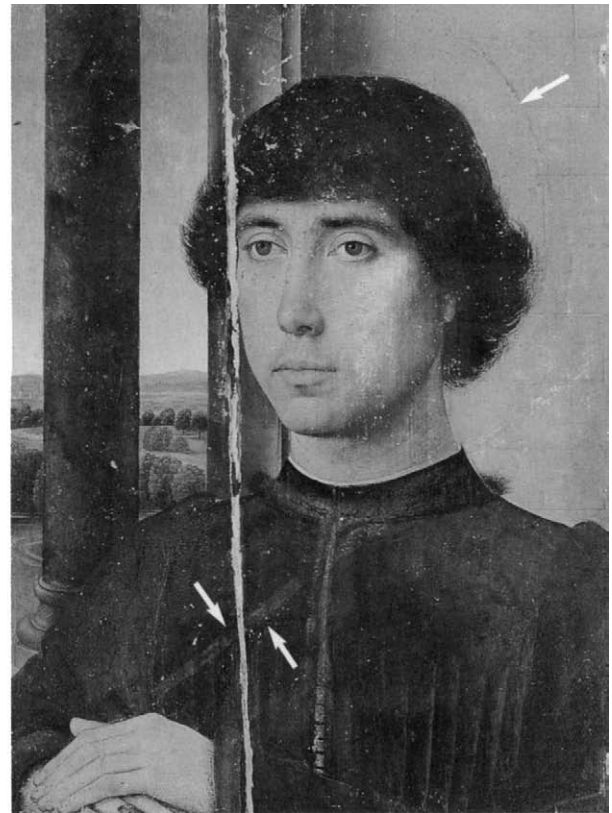


Figure 6. Figure 5, in stripped state during cleaning and restoration, showing evidence of former halo and arrow

who is documented as having paid for his citizenship in Bruges in 1433 and later rose to prominence as a celebrated goldsmith at the court of Duke Philip the Good.⁹ If Van der Velden is correct, the portrait would be among the earliest and largest professional portraits known in early Netherlandish painting. This would, in turn, certainly call for a reassessment of the development of early portraiture.

Memling's *Portrait of a Young Man* (Figure 5) was considered, when first mentioned in 1857 by Gustav Waagen, as a Saint Sebastian, since the figure then appeared with two added features—a halo and an arrow held between the thumb and forefinger of his left hand.¹⁰ The landscape view through the window remarkably reappears in two Italian paintings of about 1480, a *Self-Portrait* by Pietro Perugino (active by 1469, died 1523; Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence) and a *Virgin and Child* from the circle of Andrea del Verrocchio (possibly Domenico Ghirlandaio [1449–1494]; Musée du Louvre, Paris). The quotation indicates that the panel must have traveled to Italy soon after it was painted. This would explain the Italianate foreshortened oval form of the halo, traces of which may still be

seen when viewing the picture in raking light. By the time Philip Lehman (Robert Lehman's father) acquired the painting in 1915, both the halo and the arrow had been removed in a cleaning and restoration of 1912 in London.¹¹ Evidence of this is visible in a stripped-state photo (Figure 6).

Careful technical study of an arrow inserted in another Memling portrait, namely the *Man with an Arrow* in the National Gallery, Washington, D.C. (Figure 7), however, raises the question of whether this same feature of the Lehman painting was indeed a much later addition. The arrow of the Washington portrait also was thought not to be part of the original conception. However, the pigments used to paint the arrow were determined, through technical analysis, to be contemporary with those of the rest of the portrait.¹² This result calls into question just how early it was inserted and the significance this alteration has for the meaning of the portrait. One plausible explanation is that the arrows in both the Washington and the Lehman portraits were added soon after the completion of each painting, perhaps after the sitters had won prizes in archery contests.¹³ The archery guilds and



Figure 7. Hans Memling. *Portrait of a Man with an Arrow*, ca. 1470/75. Oil on panel, 31.9 x 25.8 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (photo: National Gallery of Art)

their annual shooting competitions were an important part of fifteenth-century Netherlandish city life.

Other examples of alterations appear to be roughly contemporary with the date of a painting, perhaps requested by the first or a subsequent owner to bring the painting up-to-date or to render it more meaningful. How else may we explain the addition of the arched latticework and grape arbor to Hans Memling's *Virgin and Child with Saints Catherine of Alexandria and Barbara* (Figure 8)? There is no underdrawing for this feature, as there is for the rest of the work.¹⁴ Close examination of the surface reveals that the greens used for the arbor and employed for the trees in the background are of different values and intensities (Figures 9, 10, Colorplates 4, 5). Furthermore, the brushwork used to describe the leaves in the arbor is broader and more descriptive of nature than are the schematic strokes that characterize the stylized trees and bushes of the background landscape.¹⁵ Because the paint film for the arbor appears, under high magnification, to be very old and integral with the original paint layers, indicating that it was added very early on to the painting, another explanation must be sought.

Although the identity of the hand responsible for the arbor is difficult to determine, the probable impe-



Figure 8. Hans Memling. *Virgin and Child with Saints Catherine of Alexandria and Barbara*, early 1480s. Oil on panel, 68.3 x 73.3 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913 (14.40.634)

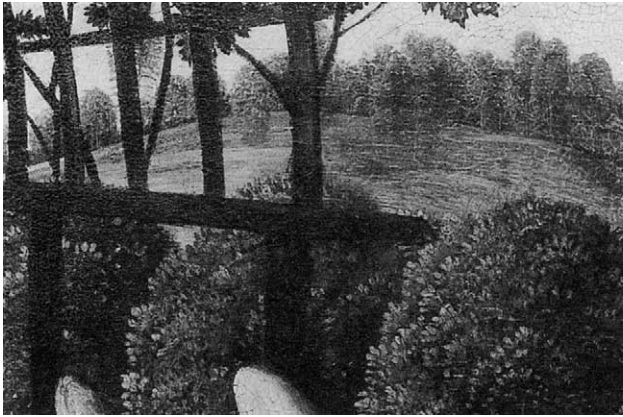


Figure 9. Detail of trees in Figure 8 (photo: M. Ainsworth).
See also Colorplate 4

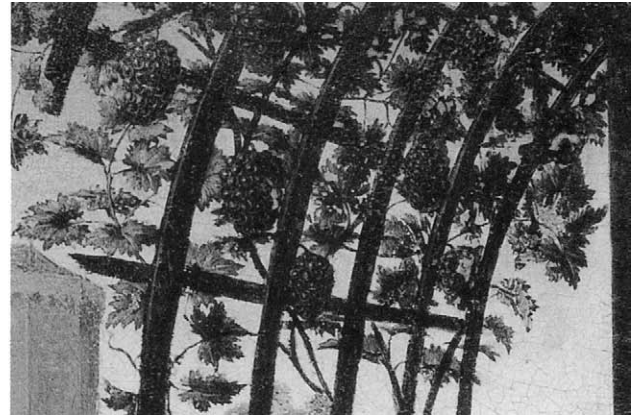


Figure 10. Detail of grape arbor in Figure 8 (photo: M. Ainsworth).
See also Colorplate 5

tus for the alteration may perhaps be more readily explained. Grapes are a well-known symbol for the Eucharist and for the divine salvation that was bestowed through Christ's sacrifice on the Cross.¹⁶ The iconography of the grapes is especially significant in its connection to Memling's hometown of Bruges, where, still today, a relic of Christ's blood is housed in the Basilica of the Holy Blood. The Holy Blood had been granted papal justification by Pope Sixtus IV (r. 1471–84) in 1467 and 1472, which gave rise to a popular devotion in both Bruges and Mantua.¹⁷ The addition of the arbor to Memling's *Virgin and Child*

with Saints Catherine of Alexandria and Barbara is evidence of this devotion. Whether the male donor, shown kneeling at the left of the assembly of holy figures, requested the alteration himself or whether it was made by a later owner is not known. But the fact that it appears in an early (probably sixteenth century) copy of the painting (Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice) suggests that it was added not long after the completion of the painting.¹⁸

Several early Netherlandish paintings record through their alterations the most significant events of life—marriage, birth, and death. The Merode Trip-



Figure 11. Robert Campin (Netherlandish, active by 1406, died 1444) and Assistant. *The Annunciation Triptych (Merode Triptych)*, ca. 1425–30. Oil on panel; left wing: 64.5 x 27.3 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1956 (56.70)



Figure 12. Hans Memling. *The Moreel Triptych*, 1484. Oil on panel; inside frame measurements, central panel: 121.1 x 153.4 cm, left wing: 120.7 x 69 cm., right wing: 121 x 68.6 cm. Groeningemuseum, Bruges (Photo: ACL)



Figure 13. Master of the Saint Barbara Legend (Netherlandish, active late 15th century). *Abner's Messenger Before David (?)*, ca. 1480. Oil on panel, 93.3 x 44.8 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Michael Friedsam, 1931 (31.100.56a)

Figure 14. Detail of Figure 13, showing figures with added crosses



Figure 15. Gerard David (Netherlandish, active by 1484, died 1523). *The Nativity with Donors and Saints Jerome and Leonard*, ca. 1510–15. Oil on canvas, transferred from wood, wings each 90.2 x 31.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Jules Bache Collection, 1949 (49.7.20a–c). Detail of left wing showing Saint Jerome and a male donor



Figure 16. Gerard David. *The Nativity with Donors and Saints Jerome and Leonard*, ca. 1510–15. Oil on canvas, transferred from wood, wings each 90.2 x 31.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Jules Bache Collection, 1949 (49.7.20a–c). Detail of right wing, showing Saint Leonard and a female donor



tych (Figure 11), dating to the 1430s, in The Cloisters Collection, is one case in point. Sometime after the completion of the left wing, two figures were added, presumably when the donor, Peter Engebrechts (shown kneeling), was married. The two figures are the town messenger at the back gate and Engebrechts's new wife.¹⁹ It was common practice for noble families thus to document weddings and births, adding to already existing paintings portraits of new family members. In Memling's Moreel Triptych of 1484 in the Groeningemuseum, Bruges (Figure 12), for example, six heads of the daughters were later painted over the completed landscape on the right wing. The heads of the sons on the left wing were moved to accommodate a late arrival to the family of Willem Moreel and his

wife, Barbara van Vlaenderberch.²⁰ The wings of an altarpiece by the Master of the Saint Barbara Legend in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 13) acknowledge the deaths of four members of the guild, lay confraternity, or civic group that commissioned the triptych. Small crosses were later painted in above the praying hands of these kneeling donors (Figure 14), who may have died in an outbreak of the plague of 1489–90.²¹

Examples such as these are readily explained; others are more problematic, and a word of caution is advised. It had been maintained that on the wings of Gerard David's Nativity Triptych in the Metropolitan Museum (Figures 15, 16), the attributes of the pig and of the wheel and sword were later additions to the

original work, made in order to transform the kneeling donor figures into saints.²² This could have occurred when the triptych was acquired by a collector for whom the identities of the donors were unknown and for whom their conversion into saints—specifically, Saints Anthony Abbot and Catherine—had particular personal relevance. The explanation is logical, but the conclusion was contradicted by the results of technical analysis. Indeed, these findings call for a reconsideration of the period and context in which the triptych was made. It is very clear, under the high magnification of a microscope, that the image of the pig, while painted over the black coat of the male donor, is integral with the original paint layers and was thus part of the initial composition. The instance of the female donor even more clearly demonstrates the evolution of the picture. The

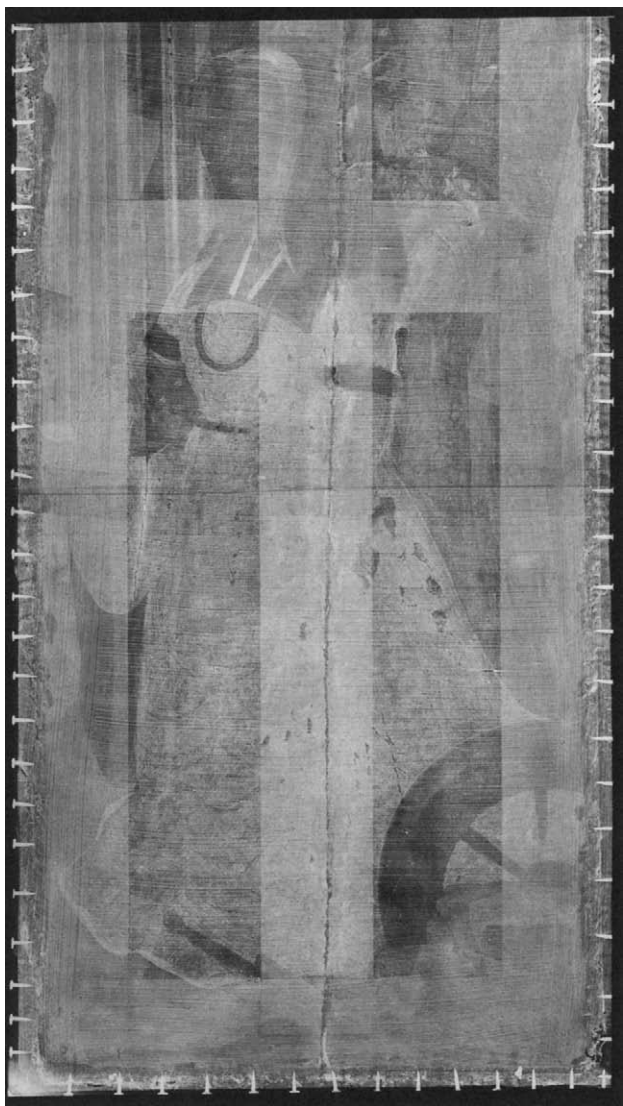


Figure 17. X-radiograph of Figure 16

X-radiograph (Figure 17) shows that an area was left in reserve for both the wheel and the sword, indicating that these traditional attributes of Saint Catherine were from the outset intended to be associated with the figure. Catherine's crown was also part of the original plan, although it has been restored. Unfortunately we do not know the identities of the donor figures, but it is likely that they are an Anthony and a Catherine who wished to model their daily lives after those of their name saints.

The representation of mortals as saints, reflecting a desire to emulate the lives of the saints and to follow their sacrifices and devotion to Christ becomes increasingly apparent in the early sixteenth century. The practice reflects an extension of the beliefs of and widespread adherence to the Modern Devotion, a popular reform movement begun by Geert Grote in the late fourteenth century and initially practiced by the Brothers of the Common Life. This religious movement encouraged an individual to imitate Christ by identifying with his life and sufferings, renouncing the world, and embracing virtue. The more readily identified examples of this phenomenon in painting are those depicting royalty or nobility. Margaret of Austria (1480–1530) and Prince Juan (1478–1497) were portrayed as Saints Margaret and John in one panel of a lost diptych documented in Margaret's inventory of 1516.²³ Juan de Flandes (active by 1496, died 1519) most likely intended the same royal pair to be identified as the couple celebrating their marriage in his intimate *Marriage Feast at Cana* (Metropolitan Museum of Art).²⁴ Margaret of Austria also had her portrait painted as Mary Magdalene (e.g., *Mary Magdalene*, ca. 1510–20, by the Master of the Magdalene Legend, Staatliche Galerie, Schleissheim, on loan from the Alte Pinakothek, Munich). The Virgin in Michel Sittow's (1469–1525) *Virgin and Child*, ca. 1515–18, in Berlin (Gemäldegalerie), and the Magdalene in his *Mary Magdalene*, ca. 1518, in the Detroit Institute of Arts, may be portraits of Catherine of Aragon. Jan Gossaert (active by 1503, died 1532) used disguised portraiture on the wings of the *Deposition Triptych* of 1521 (wings, Toledo Museum of Art; centerpiece, State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg), where he gave John the Baptist his own features and Saint Peter those of the donor, Pedro de Salamanca.

For Anna van Bergen (1492–1541), wife of Adolf of Burgundy (ca. 1489–1540), marquis of Veere, identification with the Virgin Mary as the exemplar of ideal motherhood had a very personal significance. According to Karel van Mander, in his *Schilder-boeck* of 1604, Anna and her son were the models for Gossaert and his workshop in their production of the *Virgin and Child*, ca. 1525, of which multiple versions were



Figure 18. Jan Gossaert (Netherlandish, active by 1503, died 1532). *Portrait of Anna van Bergen*, ca. 1525. Oil on panel, 54 x 41 cm. The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass., Gift of the Executors of Governor Lehman's estate and the Edith and Herbert Lehman Foundation

made. Comparison of the features of the Virgin with known depictions of Anna in the Arras Codex (Bibliothèque Municipale, Arras) in the Clark Art Institute, Williamstown (Figure 18), and in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, tend to support Van Mander's claim. Of the numerous extant versions, the one in the Metropolitan Museum is the finest (Figure 19).

Occasionally, the close scrutiny of early Netherlandish paintings yields quite another finding—that portions of figures, and sometimes even figures in their entirety, were reworked or initially painted by a different hand. Here the physical evidence hints at developments in workshop structure and procedure, and perhaps also at contractual stipulations. The observation that the Virgin's head is clearly the work of a different and superior hand in several panel paintings and manuscript illuminations of the same period (that is, the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries) has often led to the conclusion that they were overpainted at a later date. However, technical examination has in some cases proven otherwise. Let us take, for example, the five panels of about 1510 of the

Virgin and Child attributed to the Master of the Embroidered Foliage (active early sixteenth century). All five paintings show the same motif of the Virgin and Child, but with varied backgrounds.²⁵ Although each panel is by a different painter, they appear to come from the same workshop, in which the pattern for the Virgin and Child was used by several artists to produce variants of one image for sale on the open market.

One of the versions, today in the Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts (Figure 20), is distinguished from the other four by the fact that the execution of the head and right hand of the Virgin is clearly superior to that in the rest of the painting. These two features have been reworked, showing an approach markedly different from that in the other pictures where the handling is uniform throughout. It is notable that the underdrawing of the Williamstown painting is followed quite closely, with the exception of that for the head and the hand.²⁶ The reworked head is raised to a slightly more vertical position, and her broad headband is painted as a thin fillet embellished with pearls and a gemstone (Figures 21, 22). Even more telling is the Virgin's right hand. The



Figure 19. Jan Gossaert. *Virgin and Child*, ca. 1525. Oil on panel, 45.4 x 34.6 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.17)



Figure 20. Master of the Embroidered Foliage (Netherlandish, active early 16th century). *Virgin and Child*, ca. 1510. Oil on panel, 99 x 66 cm. The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass. (photo: Ron Spronk)



Figure 21. Detail of Figure 20, showing the Virgin's head (photo: Ron Spronk)



Figure 22. Infrared reflectogram of Figure 21 (photo: Ron Spronk)



Figure 23. Infrared reflectogram of Figure 20, showing the underdrawing in the Virgin's proper right hand (photo: Ron Spronk)

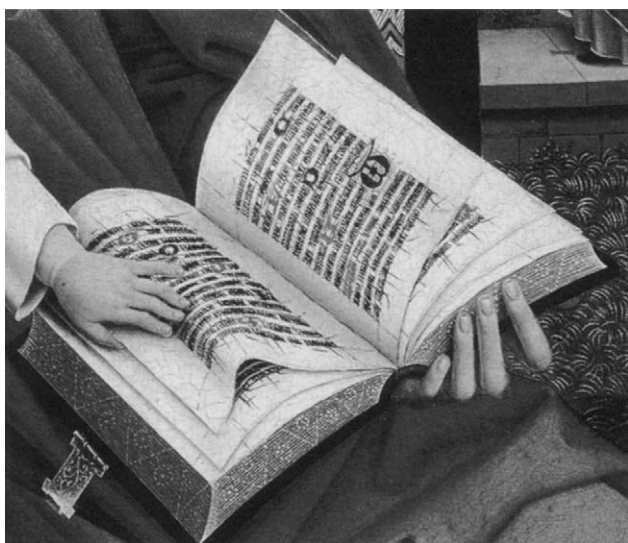


Figure 24. Detail of Figure 20, showing the Virgin's left hand (photo: Ron Spronk)

underdrawing shows the slender, tubular fingers pointed vertically, similar to those of the Virgin's painted left hand (Figures 23, 24). However, the right hand is repainted in a more carefully articulated manner, as if studied from life by an artist who clearly understood the naturalistic rendering of flesh over bony structure (Figure 25). There was nothing found during the technical investigation of the painting to contradict the supposition that these were roughly contemporary alterations.²⁷ Perhaps the head and right hand were added by the master of the workshop. This could well have been done at the request of a client wishing to purchase the work, one who was willing to pay a higher price for such intervention.

Let us look briefly at another example. The Évora Altarpiece, associated with the workshop of Gerard David, is with its thirteen panels one of the largest early Netherlandish altarpieces known.²⁸ It was produced in the first decades of the sixteenth century for the cathedral in Évora, Portugal, and is currently under study and restoration at the Instituto Português de Conservação e Restauro, Lisbon.²⁹ In the center panel, which represents the Virgin and Child in Glory with Angels (Figure 26), the head of the Virgin may easily be identified as the product of a different and



Figure 25. Detail of Figure 20, showing the Virgin's proper right hand (photo: Ron Spronk)

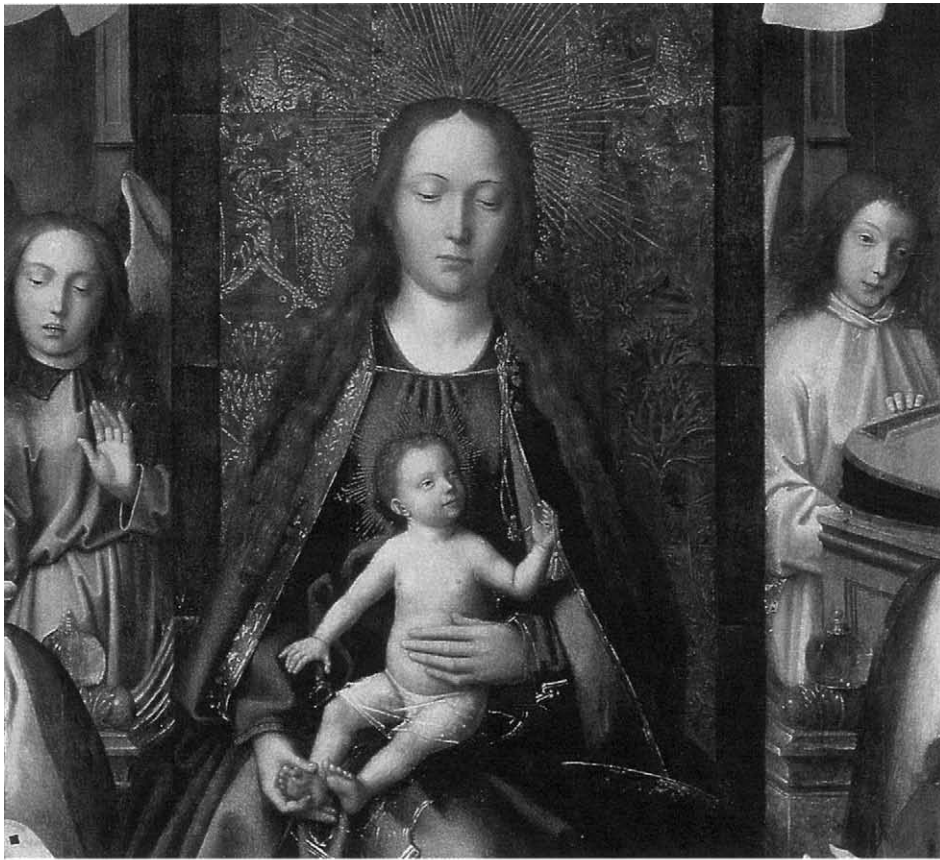


Figure 26. Workshop of Gerard David. *Virgin in Glory* (detail) from the Évora Altarpiece (detail), ca. 1510. Museu de Évora, Portugal (photo: Courtesy of the Museu de Évora, José Pessoa, photographer)



Figure 27. X-radiograph of Figure 26 (photo: Courtesy of the Museu de Évora, José Pessoa, photographer)

superior hand. The X-radiograph here reveals a thicker application of lead white than in other heads in the painting, in an apparent reworking of the area (Figure 27).³⁰

Although archival documentation concerning the manufacture of the altarpiece is lacking, such a large and important work most certainly had a detailed contract. Its production undoubtedly required the participation of several assistants, and the panels show the involvement of a number of hands. Was the superior execution of the head of the Virgin that of the master of the workshop? Further study may yet yield the answer.

The practice of having important sections of a work painted or reworked occurs also in the sister art of manuscript illumination.³¹ An early example, dating to the 1450s, is the Llangattock Hours, in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. The book is the collaborative effort of as many as eight illuminators. In *The Annunciation* (fol. 53v), the face and hands of the Virgin are by Willem Vrelant (1430–1481/82), while the rest of the miniature is the work of the Master of the Llangattock Hours.³² Gerard David was the superior hand in a 1486 Book of Hours in the Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial (Vitrin 12). His work is evident in several folios throughout the manuscript.³³ David was responsible for the most important illuminations, the *Virgin and Child* (fol. 30v) and the *Salvator Mundi* (now in the Robert Lehman Collection of the Metropolitan Museum), and he also collaborated on other miniatures, painting the heads of the main figures in the *Crucifixion* (fol. 17v) and the *Adoration of the Magi* (fol. 83v). He may also have painted the heads of the Virgin and Child on folio 197 of the Rothschild Prayerbook of about 1510 (present location unknown).³⁴

We have little written documentation about the actual production of the abovementioned works. In the case of the panel paintings, however, we do know that they were either part of a series of like images offered on the open market (as in the Clark Art Institute *Virgin and Child*) or the collaborative effort of a team of artists on a large-scale work commissioned for export (the Évora Altarpiece). In each case, the wishes of the client and the specific requirements of the contract undoubtedly came into play.

Unfortunately, relatively few contracts survive. However, of those that do, occasionally certain ones stipulate that the heads and other parts of a painting must be painted by a hand superior to the rest of the work. On August 31, 1487, the church masters of Saint Bavo in Haarlem commissioned Mourijn and Claas van Waterlant to paint additional portions of an altarpiece on which they had already worked, and to be assisted

in their work by “as good a master as can be found in Holland” for some faces and other parts.³⁵ An additional document concerning a lawsuit against Albert (or Aelbrecht) Cornelis (active in Bruges before 1513, died 1531) may be helpful to consider. It pertains to Cornelis’s only documented painting, the *Coronation of the Virgin* (Groeningemuseum, Bruges), which was commissioned by the Guild of Saint Francis in 1517 for their chapel in the Church of Saint James in Bruges. The contract stipulates that Cornelis himself must paint the main parts of the image, including the faces and hands of the figures. In the suit brought against him, Cornelis was accused of subcontracting portions of the painting. In his defense he argued that his sole obligation was to paint only the faces within a designated period of time. The suit was resolved, but not without Cornelis having to rework some sections of the painting that he had originally subcontracted.³⁶

From this brief inquiry into the practice of intentional alterations in early Netherlandish painting, it is clear that identifying such changes is only the first step toward understanding the meaning and function of a work of art in its own time. Technical examination, comparative looking, and a close reading of period contracts, guild regulations, and workshop practices are also necessary to place the work in its proper context. Toward this end, it becomes increasingly apparent that, ultimately, it is only through an interdisciplinary approach that new discoveries can be made.

NOTES

1. Maryan W. Ainsworth, “From Connoisseurship to Technical Art History: The Evolution of the Interdisciplinary Study of Art,” *Conservation* (Getty Conservation Institute) 20, no. 1 (2005), pp. 4–10.
2. Max J. Friedländer, *Von Eyck bis Bruegel: Studien zur Geschichte der niederländischen Malerei* (Berlin, 1916), p. 21; William Martin Conway, *The Van Eycks and Their Followers* (New York, 1921), p. 109.
3. For discussions on this issue, see Maryan W. Ainsworth, with Maximiliaan P. J. Martens, *Petrus Christus: Renaissance Master of Bruges*, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (New York, 1994), p. 95 n. 5, and Catherine Metzger and Hubert von Sonnenburg in *Petrus Christus in Renaissance Bruges: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, ed. Maryan W. Ainsworth (New York and Turnhout, 1995), pp. 183–85. See also Hubert von Sonnenburg’s comments in “The Changing Image: Studies in Paintings Conservation,” *MMAB* 51, no. 3 (winter 1993–94), p. 5, and illustrations on pp. 6–7.
4. See H. J. J. Scholtens, “Petrus Christus en zijn portret van een Kartuizer,” *Oud Holland* 75 (1960), pp. 59–72, regarding this question and the possible lay brothers at Genadedal at this time who may be represented here.

5. Ainsworth, *Petrus Christus*, p. 95 n. 14.
6. Martha Wolff in Charles Sterling et al., *Fifteenth- to Eighteenth-Century European Paintings: France, Central Europe, the Netherlands, Spain, and Great Britain*, vol. 2 of *Robert Lehman Collection* (New York and Princeton, 1998), pp. 62–73, and Hugo van der Velden, “Defrocking St. Eloy: Petrus Christus’s Vocational Portrait of a Goldsmith,” *Simiolus* 26 (1998) pp. 242–76.
7. Wolff in Sterling et al., *European Paintings*, pp. 67–69.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
9. Van der Velden, “Defrocking St. Eloy,” pp. 257ff.
10. Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Galleries and Cabinets of Art in Great Britain* (London, 1857), p. 440.
11. Wolff in Sterling et al., *European Paintings*, p. 74 and n. 1.
12. John Oliver Hand and Martha Wolff, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, The Collections of the National Gallery of Art: Systematic Catalogue (Washington, D.C., 1986), p. 192 n. 11.
13. Hand and Wolff, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, pp. 188–93, esp. p. 191, for this and other possible explanations; and Dirk De Vos, *Hans Memling: The Complete Works* (Ghent, 1994), p. 200, no. 48.
14. The underdrawing of details of the painting are published in Maryan W. Ainsworth, “Hans Memling as a Draughtsman,” in *Hans Memling: Essays*, ed. Dirk De Vos (Ghent, 1994), pp. 83–84.
15. Dirk De Vos has suggested that the grape arbor, which is not present in any other painting by Hans Memling but does occur in the Detroit Institute of Arts *Virgo inter Virgines*, by the Master of the Legend of Saint Lucy (active ca. 1475–1505), may have been added to Memling’s painting by that master (De Vos, *Hans Memling*, p. 166, no. 35).
16. E. De Jongh, “Grape Symbolism in Paintings of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Simiolus* 7 (1974), pp. 182–84, 190–91.
17. Franco Strazullo, *Il sangue di Cristo: Iconografia e culto* (Naples, 1999), p. 16.
18. Elizabeth Cleland further explored the Mystic Grape symbolism in “‘One lytle pece of Arras . . .’: Netherlandish Small-Scale Devotional Tapestries of the Mystic Grapes in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries” (paper presented at the Fellows’ Colloquium, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, March 30, 2004).
19. Maryan W. Ainsworth and Keith Christiansen, eds., *From Van Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Painting in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (New York, 1998), p. 95.
20. De Vos, *Hans Memling*, pp. 238–44, no. 63.
21. Ainsworth and Christiansen, *From Van Eyck to Bruegel*, pp. 120–22.
22. Guy Bauman, “Early Flemish Portraits, 1425–1525,” *MMAB* 53, no. 4 (spring 1986), pp. 29–30.
23. Chiyo Ishikawa, *The Retablo of Isabel la Católica by Juan de Flandes and Michel Sittow* (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 92, 161 n. 36.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
25. In addition to the Clark Art Institute panel, other versions are in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille, the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, and the Groeningemuseum, Bruges. For illustrations, see Max J. Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, vol. 4, *Hugo van der Goes*, with comments and notes by Nicole Veronee-Verhaegen, trans. Heinz Norden (Leiden and Brussels, 1969), pls. 77–79, and *Le Maître au Feuillage brodé: Primitifs flamands—secrets d’ateliers*, exh. cat., Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille (Paris, 2005), pp. 38, 74–83, nos. 4–7.
26. The underdrawing was studied by Henry Lie and Ron Spronk of the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, Cambridge, Massachusetts, in July 1997. I am grateful to Ron for sharing with me these results and for allowing me to publish them here.
27. I am grateful to Sandy Webber and Kate Duffy of the Williamstown Art Conservation Center, Williamstown, Massachusetts, for discussing this matter with me. See the examination report of Sandy Webber, July 15–16, 2004, on file at the Center.
28. For a color illustration of the entire altarpiece, see Till-Holger Borchert, *The Age of Van Eyck: The Mediterranean World and Early Netherlandish Painting, 1430–1530* (Ghent, 2002), p. 162, fig. 189.
29. I am grateful to Isabel Cordeiro, Vice Director, Portuguese Institute of Museums, Lisbon, and to Joachim Caetano, Director, Museu de Évora, for inviting me to serve as consultant on this project.
30. We are currently awaiting results from infrared reflectography, which should further clarify the alteration made to this area. I am grateful to José Pessoa, at the Instituto Português de Conservação e Restauro, for the photographic documentation of the painting, and to Joachim Caetano, for permission to publish these results.
31. For such practice, see Jonathan J. G. Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators and Their Methods of Work* (New Haven and London, 1992), esp. pp. 49, 62–63.
32. I wish to thank Thom Kren for calling this example to my attention. See Thomas Kren and Scot McKendrick, with Maryan W. Ainsworth et al., *Illuminating the Renaissance: The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting in Europe*, exh. cat., J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and Royal Academy of Arts, London (Los Angeles, 2003), p. 88, pl. 2a.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 345–47, no. 99.
34. Formerly housed at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna. See Dagmar Thoss, *Flämische Buchmalerei: Handschriften-schätze aus dem Burgunderreich*, exh. cat., Vienna Prunksaal (Graz, 1987), pp. 121–24, no. 79.
35. Jeremy Duperuis Bangs, “The Masters of Alkmaar and Hand X: The Haarlem Painters of the Van Waterlant Family,” *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 60 (1999), p. 75.
36. Dorien Tamis in *Bruges et la Renaissance—de Memling à Pourbus: Notices*, ed. Maximiliaan P. J. Martens, exh. cat., Memlingmuseum, Bruges (Ghent, 1998), pp. 85–86. See also Dorien Tamis, “The Genesis of Albert Cornelis’s ‘Coronation of the Virgin’ in Bruges,” *Burlington Magazine* 142, no. 1172 (November 2000), pp. 672–80, esp. p. 674.

