



Painting Pairs: Art Historical and Technical Study 2018/19

Anonymous Artist, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist after Martin Schongauer*, 16th century, The Pheobus Foundation, Antwerp

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Introduction

Painting Pairs aims to shed light on a given piece of art through the combination art historical and technical research. The painting that will be discussed in the following paper is *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist* (fig 1), which came to the Department of Conservation and Technology at The Courtauld Institute of Art, London, from the Phoebus Foundation in the Netherlands, in October 2018.¹ Based compositionally on an engraving by Martin Schongauer (c.1450-1491) produced in the 15th century the painter of this work is unknown, as are the precise date and location of its production. This paper explores the making of this painting as well as its relationship to the source of its composition, whilst endeavoring to place the work within its historical context.

Provenance and state of research

Little previous research has been done on this panel or its provenance prior to this project.² Markings in chalk, and a series of letters and numbers stenciled with black paint on the reverse indicate that the work passed through Christie's auction house on several occasions in the 20th century. Anonymous owners put the painting up for sale through Christie's New York on 12 January 1994 as lot 69 and again on 11 January 1995 as lot 291. It is then recorded as being in the property of a Belgian noble family who offered it for sale with Christie's Amsterdam on 24-25 May 2016. Whilst the RKD database and Christie's catalogues trace the panel's prior ownership back to a M. van Spreybroeck from Bruges in the 1890s and then to Brussels in the 1960s in the collection of Vicomte Léon Ruffo de Bonneval de la Fare, nothing is known of its whereabouts before the late 19th century.³ The work has never been exhibited or published and with regards to attribution, dating and localisation, the painting has so far only been identified as the work of an anonymous Netherlandish artist active in the first half of the 16th century.

Description of Composition

The half-length figure of Christ, crowned with thorns, is depicted in the centre of the composition in a moment, following his death on the cross and before his resurrection, that falls outside the biblical narrative of the Passion and which is commonly described as the Man of Sorrows. Christ's crossed arms are raised to his chest. His hands rest over his heart and clearly display the wounds he suffered during his crucifixion, from which blood trickles down his forearms. Shrouded in a blue mantle, the Virgin Mary stands to his right holding her left hand delicately to her face to wipe away her tears. The careful positioning of her index finger directs the viewer's gaze downward to her other hand, which tenderly touches Christ's torso. In doing it so frames the wound in his side, made when pierced with the spear of a Roman centurion to confirm Christ's death, at which the Virgin's own gaze is also directed as

¹ We would like to thank the Pheobus Foundation and Sven Van Dorst for providing this painting for research and analysis, Pippa Balch for arranging this with the foundation, and Dr. Pia Gottschaller for coordinating the Painting Pairs project. We are also grateful to the Sackler Research Forum for hosting the two public presentations that were given on the project's aims and findings respectively in January and May 2019.

² Prior to the panel's arrival at the institute the Foundation had established that the composition is based on that of an engraving by Martin Schongauer.

³ All provenance information has been provided by the RKD database entry for the work and corresponding Christie's catalogues. Christie's were also contacted to explore if any further information was available on the paintings past ownership but they were unable to expand on the work's provenance beyond that already published in their catalogues. For the RKD database entry see: <https://rkd.nl/explore/images/62427>

a mixture of blood and water gushes out of it.⁴ St. John the Evangelist stands to Christ's left, holding his elbow with his right hand and a book in his left. His index finger rests inside the book, as if he has just been interrupted in a moment of contemplative reading and is holding his place. A screen of dark rolling clouds forms an atmospheric backdrop behind them and above this, in a pale yellow sky, seven angels making a variety of prayer gestures look down sorrowfully on the figures below. The whole scene is contained within the rounded arch of an architectural aperture, decorated with two grotesques in the spandrels. The edge of Mary's robe, which rests on the ledge of the opening, is the only element of the central image to transgress this illusionary boundary between the celestial vision and the viewer's space.

Imagery

The Man of Sorrows is an image type that gained popularity during the later middle ages, and one that Medieval Historian Miri Rubin has suggested was a particularly enduring theme in the work of Flemish painters.⁵ Derived from a Byzantine prototype, although this iconography appears to have been present in the West as early as the 12th century in the later middle ages it appears to have become closely associated with the legend of the Mass of St. Gregory, in which the saint received a vision, above the altar whilst saying mass, of the suffering Christ displaying his wounds.⁶ Distinct from those images that reflect the narrative of the legend, the development and dispersal of Man of Sorrows imagery is often discussed in relation to a circa late 13th century mosaic icon of the subject that, despite the date of its actual creation, was believed by late medieval votaries to be a visual record of the miraculous vision the saint had encountered.⁷ Installed in the Carthusian Church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome, the icon was closely entwined with the popularisation of the image type, narrative legend, and of an accompanying prayer, the verse of Saint Gregory, which was designed to be said in front of a likeness of the vision, an action that carried a large indulgence.⁸

Although the Santa Croce icon itself became a cult image that was variously copied, most notably by Israel van Meckenem who translated it into print form c.1495, images of the Man of Sorrows took a variety of forms during the 15th and 16th centuries. Whilst these were developed to suit the various devotional needs of their owners, rubrics preceding the indulgenced prayer in manuscripts indicate that as images of the suffering Christ they would

⁴ The episode of the piercing of Christ's side is recorded in the gospel of John 19:34, it is also greatly expanded on, including the naming of the centurion, in the Pseudo Bonaventura's account of the passion in his *Meditations on the Life of Christ* in which the focus is on the Virgin's emotional reaction to the episode. See Isa Ragusa & Rosalie B. Green, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 338-340.

⁵ Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 308.

⁶ The vision was first recorded in the life of St. Gregory the Great by Paul the Deacon c.880, was later popularised in the 13th century when it was included in the *Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voraginey, and by the 15th century several versions of the legend are thought to have existed. See Kathryn Rudy, *Rubrics, Images and Indulgences in Late Medieval Netherlandish Manuscripts*, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2017). Also, Catherine Puglisi & William Barcham [eds.], *New Perspectives on the Man of Sorrows*, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2013).

⁷ For a discussion of the variety of possible approaches to the iconography see Rudy's discussion of the imagery in manuscripts in, *Rubrics, Images and Indulgences in Late Medieval Netherlandish Manuscripts*, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2017), pp.101-107.

⁸ For information on the Byzantine mosaic icon in the Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, Rome, see Maryan Ainsworth, "À la façon grèce": The Encounter of Northern Renaissance Artists with Byzantine Icons" in Helen Evans [ed.], *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 556.

have still been appropriate for use in this manner and therefore maintained an inherent connection to his vision.⁹ This range of approaches is well demonstrated by looking at the painting currently under examination alongside a small sample of surviving works made in the century that preceded its creation, such as those by Hans Memling, Dirk Bouts, and Geertgen tot Sint Jans (see figs. 2a-c).

In addition to the potential receipt of a hefty indulgence the popularity of images of this type may also have been indebted to the devotional flexibility imbued by its separation from the biblical narrative of the Passion. Furthermore, its immediacy, emphasis it places on the suffering body of Christ, in particular his wounds, and the potential for the inclusion of additional mourning figures, such as the anguished Virgin Mary and St. John in the Pheobus Foundation painting, made it well suited to the models of private devotional contemplation that focused on empathetic responses to the life of Christ and which were promoted by biblical exegeses in use at the time such as the Pseudo Bonaventura's *Meditations on the Life of Christ*.¹⁰

Appearance of the Painting upon arrival

This painting arrived at the Department of Conservation and Technology in a lavish gold and black tabernacle frame that is not original to the work. It appears to be from the early 20th century, indicated by its squared-off pilasters and bright gold and black colour scheme. Given that an insert has been added to fit the painting, it is highly unlikely that this frame is original to the work. Other than its degraded dark yellow varnish, the most noticeable feature of the painting on its arrival was the discolored overpaint on the cloud above St. John's head, as well as on his hair, shoulder, and hand (fig. 3a-b). The panel itself was found to be structurally stable, with only a slight planar deformation on the right-hand side. Although the conservation of this painting will not be discussed, findings from the treatment relevant to the research questions will be noted.

Condition of Paint and Original Colour Palette

The removal of the yellow varnish revealed the painting's original colour palette and balance, the volume of the figures' draperies, as well as previously unseen details like St. John's eyelashes, beard stubble and tears that can now be seen (fig. 4c-d & 5a). Notably in regard to the original colour palette, the angels' dresses, which all seemed to be the same colour under the varnish, were revealed to be made up of soft purples, pale blues and pinks, with touches of bright yellow highlights (fig. 4a-b). The Virgin's robe and the clouds behind her that had once looked green became a vibrant deep blue and the tonal range was visually restored so that the folds on the Virgin's robe looked deeper, with more volume (fig. 5a-b).

An exception to the newly revealed, highly keyed colouration of the composition is the brown cloak of the angel on the upper right-hand side (fig 5a). Analysis using the Scanning Electron Microscope with Energy-Dispersive X-ray (SEM/EDX) detected elemental copper in this paint layer, which suggests the presence of a discoloured green copper glaze such as verdigris or copper resinate. Such glazes can change colour quite quickly—often even

⁹ For information on Meckenem's late fifteenth century print of the icon and subsequent copies after it see Maryan Ainsworth, "À la façon grèce": The Encounter of Northern Renaissance Artists with Byzantine Icons" in Helen Evans [ed.], *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 556. For a discussion of the connection of the rubrics to the varying visual approaches see Rudy, 2017, pp. 113-133.

¹⁰ For *Meditations* see Ragusa & Green. For a broader discussion of the devotional trends of the time period and the role of images within these see Nash, 2008, chapter 18.

in the artist's own lifetime—from a cool blue-green when first brushed out, to warmer greens, and finally to brown¹¹. Like the brown robe, the reds of the angels' garments probably looked more vibrant when originally painted. The red lake pigments often used for these parts have a tendency to fade, but when larger in particle size and more thickly applied, the pigments retain more of their original brightness, which is why the folds of the garments still look quite red.¹² A digitally reworked image of the painting gives a sense of the former balance of colours (fig 5c).

Paint Layers

The sequence of paint application and the materials are consistent with 16th century Northern European painting techniques. A cross-section taken from the lower right-hand edge of the painting allowed us to better understand the painting's layer structure (fig. 6a). A single ground layer was applied. In this time period, the ground would have been prepared in thin layers of chalk from the region and oil or glue, and then planed or scraped until smooth.¹³ Calcium was found in this layer using SEM/EDX. This is indicative of a chalk (calcium carbonate) ground which tells us it is more likely to have been made in a Northern European country, as opposed to a Southern European country like Italy or Spain, where they would use gypsum (calcium sulfate) (fig. 6b).

On top of the ground is a thin intermediate layer containing lead white and chalk. This is perhaps be what Karel Van Mander called the *primuersel* layer: a translucent flesh-coloured wash of oil-bound paint. This would commonly be applied on top of the underdrawing to effectively seal it in while being transparent enough to leave it visible during the painting stage, preventing the oil-bound paint from absorbing into the ground.¹⁴ It is difficult to know what the term “flesh-coloured” denotes. It may have meant the addition of red, black, and white pigments to make a beige colour. The intermediate layers of 15th and 16th c. Netherlandish paintings were not always flesh-coloured. They could range from a clear oil layer, to white, or grey.¹⁵ In the cross-section, the layer in *The Man of Sorrows* appears to be a slightly lighter beige in comparison to the ground (fig. 6a).

The following paint layers are bound in oil. Apart from the above-mentioned copper glaze, X-ray fluorescence (XRF) and SEM/EDX analysis identified elements that denote pigments such as vermillion (used for the robe of St. John) and lead white (used for the highlights on St. John, Christ's loincloth and Mary's headdress).¹⁶ With the use of light microscopy the characteristic colour of red lake was distinguishable in the angel's robes, blood of Christ, and the archway. In addition to this, the particle shapes associated with

¹¹ Katherine Waldron, *A Technical and Scientific Investigation of the Materials and Discoloration of Copper Green Paints on Easel Paintings: an Unusual Case Study with Reconstruction Research*. Unpublished Dissertation, Courtauld Institute of Art, 2018, pp. 9-12.

¹² Jo Kirby and David Saunders, *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, vol. 15 (1994): pp. 85-93.

¹³ Jørgen Wadum, “Historical Overview of Panel-Making Techniques in the Northern Countries” in Kathleen Dardes & Andrea Rothe [eds.], *The Structural Conservation of Panel Paintings: Proceedings of a Symposium 24-28 April 1995*, (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute): p. 167.

¹⁴ Cited in Wadum 1995, p. 167.

¹⁵ Abbie Vandivere, “In search of Van Mander's *primuersel*: Intermediate layers in early Netherlandish paintings” In *ICOM-CC 16th Triennial Conference Preprints, Lisbon, 19-23 September 2011*, ed. J. Bridgland (Lisbon: Critério - Artes Gráficas, Lda; Paris: ICOM CC, 2011): pp. 2-6.

¹⁶ We would like to thank Ben Blackburn and Bill Lockhurst for providing the facilities for SEM/EDX analysis of inorganic elements.

azurite were visible in the Virgin's robe, clouds in the background, as well as on the angels and the arch.¹⁷

Underdrawing

Through the paint layers, hints of an underdrawing are visible in normal light. The lines appear a cool blue-green even under warm-coloured passages, which indicates that the underdrawing was probably made with a black medium. Infrared Reflectography made the full extent of the underdrawing visible. In the infrared OSIRIS image (fig. 7a-b), the tool marks look dashed—as if the tool skipped on the irregular surface of the ground. This indicates that the underdrawing was probably made with chalk or charcoal. There also looks to be a wash of carbon-containing fluid medium over the area where the angels are located and in the shadows of the garments.¹⁸

Although Mary's robe is painted in a thicker layer of azurite, the angels appear darker in the IR image. This indicates that the IR image is showing an additional stage in the painting process. This chalk or charcoal wash could be a toning mechanism in a lower paint layer meant to add depth in the final paint layer, or it may be what Art Historian and curator Marian Ainsworth refers to as a *vidimus*, a mock-up made directly on the panel and shown before painting for approval by the potential buyer.¹⁹

Underdrawing and Paint Layer: Compared

Two distinct styles of drafting can be observed in the underdrawing. One drawing style is indicative of a compositional sketch, the details of which were expected to be worked up later, in the painting stage. The angels for example are drawn with bravura. The lines are sure, swift, and summary; and the details of their faces, hands, and wings are not fully delineated. The features of the faces of the three main figures are also denoted with very light and economical marks. The other drawing style is indicative of a hand that is in the process of seeking the right contour line. The bodies of the main figures and the architectural niche double over themselves. In each case one line looks to be chosen as the correct one, and reinforced. The paint layer generally follows the underdrawing. However, there are some pentimenti. For example, the positions of the fingers on Christ's left hand were reworked multiple times. In the IR image at least four thumbs and three middle fingers can be seen (fig. 8a-b). Other examples are the folds on Virgin's headdress where there are two peak-shaped folds depicted in the underdrawing that were changed into one large fold in the painting stage (fig. 8c-d). The position of the higher fold in the underdrawing, interestingly, is very close in position to that of the Schongauer engraving (fig. 8e).

The Engraving by Martin Schongauer

As mentioned above, the composition of the panel appears to be sourced from an undated engraving produced by Martin Schongauer (fig 9). A painter and engraver born in 1435 in Colmar, on the Rhine Valley, by his death in 1491 Schongauer had produced over 115

¹⁷ Azurite was later confirmed with the use of SEM/EDX. However, the substrate for red lake was not detected using SEM/EDX which may mean that it was precipitated onto an organic material. Therefore only visual identification was possible within the parameters of this research project. We are grateful to Prof. Aviva Burnstock for her aid in the visual identification of these pigments.

¹⁸ We are grateful to Clare Richardson of the Courtauld conservation department for her assistance in the interpretation of the infrared images.

¹⁹ Ainsworth, "Northern Renaissance Drawings and Underdrawings: A Proposed Method of Study", *Master Drawings*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Spring, 1989): pp. 16-17.

engraved plates and achieved widespread regard for his innovative designs which continued to be circulated long after his death.²⁰ As well as having been highly popular with the art purchasing public, it is clear that there was an active and enduring market for Schongauer's prints amongst professional painters and craftsmen who appear to have used them as compositional models. An example of this can of course be found in the Phoebus panel, as well as widely in the in the works of Jan Gossaert amongst others.²¹ As these works were being produced in the first half of the 16th century they were in effect utilising prints that had most likely been in circulation for three to four decades prior to their creation, a point of potential significance that will be returned to later.²²

Painters Using Prints

A collection of reference material, or "patterns", as they are often described, appears to have been a vital piece of equipment for any painter and their workshop.²³ These designs could be used both for consultation by the painter during the creation of a work and also to show potential buyers the possible compositions that could be created. As art historian Molly Faries amongst others has illustrated, the integration of prints from woodcuts and engravings into these pattern collections alongside drawings of the owner's own design and copies of other painters' works appears to have been common practice throughout the 15th and 16th century across Europe.²⁴

With the rapid expansion of the art market at the end of the 15th century this widespread replication of print compositions in paintings has often been seen as a product of the related demand and therefore the need for a rationalisation of production techniques to meet this.²⁵ Art historian Susie Nash has also demonstrated in her discussion of print makers that they were most likely aware of the capacity of their wares to satisfy this constant pressure for new designs, and actively sought to market them towards this audience.²⁶ Notably those

²⁰ For further information on the career and influence of Schongauer see David Landau & Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print 1470-1550*, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 50-56.

²¹ A notable example being the *Adoration of the Kings*, oil on panel, c.1515, in the National Gallery in London, the composition of which Lorne Campbell has related to a Schongauer print of the same subject. For more information on Gossaert's use of Schongauer prints, see Campbell's entry on the painting and specifically the section "The Creation of the Composition" in *The Sixteenth Century Netherlandish paintings with French Paintings before 1600*, (London: National Gallery Company, distributed by Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 352-379. A similar observation has been made about the Master of The Bruges Passion Scenes, *Christ Presented to the People*, oil on oak, c. 1510, also in the National Gallery London by Deluda Waldemar in relation to Schongauer's *Ecco Homo* engraving see "The Influence of Prints on Paintings in Eastern Europe" *Print Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (September, 1993): pp. 219-231.

²² In the case of the Phoebus Foundation painting, the Schongauer *Man of Sorrows* would have been in circulation for a minimum of ten, but more likely thirty-fourty years prior to the panel painting's creation.

²³ This is numerously documented, most famously in regards to the early 16th century dispute over two coffers containing different patterns between Ambrosius Benson and his former employer Gerard David. For details of this incident and other documented instances of the presence of patterns in workshops, as well as further information on the construction of the workshop at this time, see Lorne Campbell, *The Fifteenth Century Netherlandish Schools*, (London: National Gallery Company, distributed by Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 23-25.

²⁴ Molly Faries, *Making and Marketing: Studies of the Painting Process*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006).

²⁵ Amy Powell "A Point "Ceaselessly Pushed Back": The Origin of Early Netherlandish Painting" *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (2006): pp. 771. For further information on the development and expansion of the market see the introductions of Campbell, 1998 and 2014.

²⁶ Susie Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 134-135.

issued as sets, such as Passion series, seem to have been particularly successful, as they provided a broad range of stock patterns for their most common subjects.²⁷

Transfer Technique

Patterns could be transferred onto supports in a number of ways and in varying degrees of truth in relation to the original design; they could be pricked and pounced, traced, or drawn free hand.²⁸ The underdrawing that was found on the Phoebus panel, as discussed above, seems to indicate that the design was transferred freehand onto the panel and therefore the scale and composition were adjusted by eye. Whilst this is something many artists would have been capable of doing at the time, it raises questions regarding to what extent this would have been employed purely as a time-saving device.²⁹ Further comparison and analysis of the differences between the panel painting, its underdrawing, and the engraving, as well as the processes involved in creating them, seems to indicate that the relationship between the engraving and the painted surface may not be as straightforward as first presumed, and that different or additional motivations could be at play for using a print in this way rather than it simply being the product of known workshop practices.

Underdrawing and Engraving: Compared

One of the principal differences between the two images is their scale, with the print measuring around 17cm less in height and 20cm less in width than the panel. As a result of this difference the anonymous artist has had to make significant adjustments to the composition in order to place it within the increased space, not only enlarging the figures but also spreading them out laterally across the panel to adapt to its wider width (fig 10). Furthermore, whilst there is clearly a very strong relationship between the engraving and the painting, it being carefully copied in some areas such as in the handling of the drapery, especially prevalent when looking at the underdrawing and the print together (fig 11), there are also numerous areas where the composition has been modified and adapted.³⁰ This can be seen most dramatically in relation to the treatment of the faces, which have less exaggerated proportions and softened features, and in adjustments that have been made to the angels in the upper register. They have been spread out and the foreshortening on the central angel's head has been notably reduced—perhaps to make it more visually agreeable. The exterior mass of the architectural framing device has also been removed, bringing the viewer a step closer to the miraculous vision it depicts. Further details have been added that are not present in the print such as the blood on Christ's head and hands, the updating of the binding of St. John's book, and the inclusion of the little fabric tabs that would have been used widely at the time to mark out particular prayers.

In many ways then, even just taking into account the scale and nature of how the composition has been transferred, this is clearly not a straightforward “copy” in the modern sense of the word, but a considered and conscious reference to Schongauer's work. It

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ For a more extensive discussion of these techniques see Campbell, 1998, p. 27. For a discussion of the use of pouncing in sixteenth century workshops see Jean Wilson, *Painting in Bruges at the Close of the Middle Ages*, (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

²⁹ Paula Nuttall has however highlighted the strong lines and contours of printed images may have made them particularly well suited to free hand transference. For her discussion of this in relation to works being bought on the open market by Italian merchants and agents see Nuttall, *From Flanders to Florence*, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 140.

³⁰ We are very grateful to Prof. Susie Nash for looking at the painting with us in the conservation studio and for her insightful comments about its relationship to the engraving.

incorporates perceived improvements and modifications that adjust the impact of the imagery whilst still maintaining a strong connection to the earlier work. In his work on Michele Coxcie's copies of 15th century paintings by Netherlandish masters art historian Ruben Suykerbuyk has suggested that corrective changes to an older model, such as those found in the Phoebus panel, should be seen through the lens of 16th century writings on emulation, and therefore as an effort to improve the model that was being employed rather than merely imitating it.³¹

Transfer from Print to Paint

The painter was also obliged to make choices out of necessity that the engraver did not have to consider as the work was translated from one medium to another, as well as from monochrome to colour, resulting in both the loss and gain of several visual effects.

In order to depict shade and light, the artist had to take into account both tone and hue at the same time. The figures in the foreground are modelled mostly with shading. Very little white is used to bring up the highlights. To create volume, the artist thinned out the paint in the light areas and allowed the white ground to show through. There are only a few areas where the artist used white for light areas, the most apparent of which are the Virgin's headdress and Christ's loincloth. Another is the robe of St. John, where the artist makes use of short parallel strokes of white paint on the peaked folds. The artist painted without many visible brushstrokes, smoothly transitioning from light to dark and from one colour to another, however, individual brushstrokes can be seen, such as the aforementioned robe of St. John, as well as on the shadow under one of the folds of Christ's loincloth (fig. 12a-b). This effect was achieved through manipulation of the paint while still wet; with a dry brush, or its end, parallel strokes were incised through the paint.

The engraving relies on the distance and density of lines to create form and shadow. These patterns of hatching shift from dark to light more dramatically than that of the painting, which utilizes the texture of the paint to make smooth transitions. The Schongauer engraving uses this contrast to make elements appear luminous and voluminous. This contrast allows the figures to stand out against the dark background. For example, in the engraving the Virgin's robe appears light, which pushes her forward in the composition. In paint however, this high contrast has been partially lost. The blue used for the Virgin's robe is dark in tone, which means the Virgin blends into the equally dark blue of the clouds behind her. On the other hand, the use of colour emphasizes certain elements of the painting that were not accentuated in the engraving. For instance, the artist's use of blue for the Virgin's robe is standard for the 16th century, but the addition of a red cuff to her sleeve serves to lead the eye from the crying face of the Virgin to St. John's garment, which is of the same colour. This then draws attention to one of the paintings focus points —Christ's bleeding side wound.

Quotations of 15th century visual vocabulary

Without a specified artist or body of work to which to compare it to it is difficult to make assessments of the Phoebus panel's painting style. As scholar Lorne Campbell has discussed, whilst many of the techniques used within the painting were developed in the 15th century, they would have been commonplace within the majority of painters' skills by the 16th century.³² However in addition to using a print created in the previous century for the

³¹ Ruben Suykerbuyk, "Michele Coxcie copies of old masters: an addition and an analysis" *Simiolus*, Vol. 37, No. 1, (2013-14): p. 18.

³² See Campbell, 2014, p. 24.

composition, the painter appears to have made a conscious effort to reference the visual vocabulary of the 15th century Flemish artist in the work. This seems particularly present in the figure of St. John, whose dress and facial features seems to resonate strongly with depictions of the biblical character by Rogier van der Weyden.

Whilst the decision of the artist to use both a composition and a painting style that would have been widely recognized as belonging to the previous century by its contemporary audience is striking, it does not appear to have been an isolated incident amongst surviving works produced in the Netherlands at this time. For example, art historians have noted the presence of earlier compositions, iconography, and figural styles in works by both Gossaert, as already mentioned, and Pieter Bruegel the Elder.³³ Although the motivations behind this kind of replication and the impact it was intended to hold beyond the sphere of workshop practice are still areas that are in need of further research, scholars such as Marian Ainsworth, Amy Powell, and Jean Wilson amongst others have provided numerous insights that indicate it was a process that had more nuanced meanings attached to it.

It has been suggested that in the case of devotional imagery, the serial production of works from a single compositional model could be related to a perceived spiritual value ascribed to recognisable prototype, reinforced through their continual use across the works of different artists and media, in a similar manner to cult images like Santa Croce icon. If the engraving was indeed seen as one of these prototypes, the familiarity of its imagery and forms would have lent validity to the painting, and through its unexceptionally made it even more suitable for use in prayer due to the immediate legibility of its content for the viewer.³⁴ The existence of a small group of other works that also recreate this central figure group presumably also from the engraving, including one work on ivory, could be used to support this theory and demonstrate its wide spread dispersal (fig. 13a-e).

The use of a composition and visual vocabulary that was consciously recognisable as being from an earlier period may have further added to this notion of validity, as the perceived age of something could be fundamental to the acceptance of its spiritual worth, a notion often discussed in relation to relics. When discussing Pieter Bruegel's *Christ Carrying the Cross*, a work that contains stylistic elements taken from both the work of Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden, art historian Stephanie Porras suggests that it was employed specifically to indicate and emphasize the historical nature of the scene being depicted.³⁵

It has further been suggested that conscious and overt archaism of both the composition and painting style in works produced in the 16th century were also the product of a growing sense of nostalgia that had emerged for the artwork of the early 15th century as well as the time in which it was created.³⁶ In line with this argument the replication of the forms

³³ For the use of Schongauer prints in Gossaert compositions see note 21 above. For an additional discussion of the motivations behind this see Marisa Anne Bass *Jan Gossaert and the Invention of Netherlandish Antiquity*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016. For Pieter Bruegel the Elder see Stephanie Porras, *Pieter Bruegel's Historical Imagination*, (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), in particular pp73-79 for her discussion of *Christ Carrying the Cross* referenced below.

³⁴ This is discussed by all three authors stated in varying degrees but in particular see Ainsworth, *Purity of Vision in an age of Transition*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, distributed by H.N. Abrams, 1998), chapter 6.

³⁵ Porras, pp. 73-79.

³⁶ Panofsky briefly mentions this turn towards the past in *Early Netherlandish Painting, Its Origins and Character*, (New York; Hagerstown; San Francisco; London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971), pp. 350-351.

and painting techniques of 15th century precursors would have imbued the Phoebus *Man of Sorrows* with a deeper sense of history and tradition that linked it to the recent past, which in the Netherlands had marked a period of prosperity and power under the Valois Burgundian Dukes that was at the beginning of the 16th century entering a period of transition and ultimately decline.³⁷

Ainsworth amongst others has emphasised the desire to establish continuity with the past through replication was not only a preference of the artists or a method for fast production but something that was actively sought out by the art purchasing public. Ainsworth states in her work on “replicas” that nearly half of the contracts that she has examined from the early 16th century specifically request replicas of existing works of art.³⁸

Whilst there is still work to be undertaken on establishing the relationship between the panel painting and the engraving, the above discussion demonstrates that it may extend beyond simply being rationalisation of production techniques.

Original Form

Aside from some conservation treatment in the past, the panel appears to have retained, for the most part, its original unpainted reverse. The work also has original barbes at the top and bottom edges that suggest that it may have had a partially engaged frame or that it was potentially placed in a temporary frame during its preparation. In regards to the latter, Campbell has noted that this was a practice employed frequently at the time.³⁹ There is some evidence that the two sides have been trimmed, which would account for the visual imbalance in the architectural surround, however this only appears to have been a minimal reduction, meaning that the overall size of the panel would not have been drastically different from its current dimensions.

As the original frame is lost, along with any evidence that it had any attachments, it is virtually impossible to say whether this panel would have been a stand-alone object or if it was intended to be seen with additional images in another format such as in a triptych or diptych (both forms which we know this imagery could take).⁴⁰ However, we can say that the relatively small scale of the panel in conjunction with its imagery would have made it well suited for use by an individual.

Construction of the panel

An x-ray revealed a split running through the areas where overpaint is visible (fig. 14). It was considered at first that this could have been a split that occurred in what was originally one panel. Standard oak boards from the Baltic (where most of the boards from the middle ages to the 17th century were sourced from) range from an average of 22.5cm to 30cm in width. This

³⁷ This effect has been discussed in regards to Gossaert's work by Marisa Anne Bass. See Bass, *Jan Gossaert and the Invention of Netherlandish Antiquity*, (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), in particular see pp. 21-26.

³⁸ M. Ainsworth, *Facsimile in Early Netherlandish Painting: Dieric Bouts's "Virgin and Child"*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993), p4. Ainsworth also cites J. Dijkstra, *Origineel en Kopie: Een onderzoek naar de navolging van de Meester van Flémalle en Rogier van der Weyden*, (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 1990).

³⁹ Campbell has noted that the effects of this can be seen on several of Gossaert's painting in the National Gallery Collection, see Campbell, 2014, p. 20.

⁴⁰ Two examples were found on the RKD database of works produced at similar times that have the *Man of Sorrows* as the central panel of a triptych and as we have already seen Dirk Bouts *Man of Sorrows* could be accompanied by the *Virgin Mary* in a diptych form.

painting's width is just beyond the standard range, measuring 35.8cm. However, excluding the board on the right-hand side, the largest board that makes up this panel fits perfectly within range, at 26.7cm.⁴¹ This is all evidence that the panel was constructed from two boards.

Examination of the top and bottom edges of the panel showed that the rays of the wood grain were found not be continuous across the split. Confirming that the panel is made of two separate boards and that the split that was observed in the X-ray is in fact a disjoin (fig. 15b, c).

The split running vertically on the right-hand side of the painting cannot be seen in the back. This was found to be due to an expertly fitted wood insert (fig. 15a). The insert is sympathetic to the rest of the panel and possibly close in age, based on the type of wood, signs of aging of its cell structure, and inferences about its prior treatment. The species of wood looks very similar to the wood of the boards. Its colouring matches almost exactly, and the medullary rays indicate that it is of the same radial cut. It only has very subtle differences; it is slightly darker, the medullary rays that don't align with the surrounding wood.

The insert could have been made with simple tools such as a chisel, router plane, and plane, all of which were available to 16th century panel makers. Although the insert is substantially aged and could have been made with tools that were available at the time of the painting's creation, it is not known to be part of standard 16th century joining techniques (fig 16a-b).⁴² Typical inserts used in the construction of panel paintings were butterflies, dowels, and battens.⁴³ Taking all of these factors into account, the lack of evidence for this type of construction points to it being a later addition.

Previous Aesthetic and Structural Interventions

After removing retouchings and fill material in the area of the split, it was apparent that the reason for the application of the overpaint was to cover and reintegrate a misalignment in the boards. This led to the composition of the painting not matching up across the join in the arch and the hand of St. John (fig 17a-d). This is indicative of a loss of about a millimeter of wood in the area. The loss might have been due to some form of damage that resulted from insect attack or environmental factors like high relative humidity. Joins can be particularly vulnerable to insect attack because of animal glue or the presence of sapwood⁴⁴ The misalignment probably occurred after the boards had disjoined as a result of damage in that area, smoothed down and adhered back together. This is when the insert was most likely fitted in.

⁴¹ Wadum, p. 150.

⁴² This insert cannot be mistaken for a batten as it would not typically be used for a panel of this small size and would run perpendicular to the grain of the wood. Based on conversations with Pippa Balch of the Courtauld conservation department, conservator at the National Gallery London, Lynne Harrison, in February 2019 and conservator emeritus of the Met Museum New York, George Bisacca, in February 2019. See also Wadum, pp.154-155.

⁴³ Günther Heine, "An Historically Important Woodwork Joint – the method of making it in Germany and some specialised tools" *Tools and Trades The Journal of the Tool and Trades History Society*, vol. 2 (1984): pp. 29–45.

⁴⁴ It was not unusual for panels made of two boards to be fitted together with sapwood against sapwood, and this may be the case for this panel. Sapwood is particularly susceptible to insect attacks because of its live cells. From discussion with Ian Tyers in March 2018. See also Klein, P. 1984 Dendrochronological studies on panels by Jean Fouquet (1415/20–1477/81). In *ICOM Committee for Conservation 7th Triennial Meeting, Copenhagen, 10–14 September 1984 Preprints*, ed. Diana de Froment, 84.1.25–26. Paris: ICOM Committee for Conservation.

Conclusions and Thoughts on Further Research

Through historical research and technical examination, we have come to the conclusion that this painting fits within the standard 16th century Netherlandish context. Further analysis still needs to be undertaken to continue to establish the relationship between the Phoebus Foundation painting and the Schongauer engraving, which ideally would be done alongside research into the intended reception of the painting amongst its contemporary audience. Whilst the investigation into this painting and its context has by no means reached a close, we hope that this project will add to this vast and exciting area of research.

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Figure List

Unless otherwise specified images are the authors' own taken in the conservation studio over the course of the project.

Fig 1. Unknown artist, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, 16th century, oil on oak panel (untested), framed 61.2 x 57.7 x 5 cm, unframed 38.5 x 35.8 x ~ .4 cm, Phoebus Foundation, The Netherlands.

Fig 2 (a). Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *Man of Sorrows*, c. 1485-95, oil on panel, Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht.
Source: Web Gallery of Art,

Fig 2 (b). Hans Memling, *The Man of Sorrows in the arms of the Virgin*, c. 1475-1479, oil on panel, National Gallery of Victoria.
Source: National Gallery of Victoria.

Fig 2 (c). Workshop of Dirk Bouts, *Christ Crowned with Thorns*, c. 1470-5, oil on panel, National Gallery London.
Source: National Gallery London.

Fig 3 (a-b). Unknown artist, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, details of Saint John showing over paint, 16th century, oil on oak panel (untested), framed 61.2 x 57.7 x 5 cm, unframed 38.5 x 35.8 x ~ .4 cm, Phoebus Foundation, The Netherlands.

Fig 4 (a-d). Unknown artist, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, details of angels (a-b) and Saint John (c-d), 16th century, oil on oak panel (untested), framed 61.2 x 57.7 x 5 cm, unframed 38.5 x 35.8 x ~ .4 cm, Phoebus Foundation, The Netherlands.

Fig 5 (a-b). Unknown artist, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, images of the surface before and during treatment to remove the discolored varnish, 16th century, oil on oak panel (untested), framed 61.2 x 57.7 x 5 cm, unframed 38.5 x 35.8 x ~ .4 cm, Phoebus Foundation, The Netherlands.

Fig 5 (c). Unknown artist, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, digitally reworked image, 16th century, oil on oak panel (untested), framed 61.2 x 57.7 x 5 cm, unframed 38.5 x 35.8 x ~ .4 cm, Phoebus Foundation, The Netherlands.

Fig 6 (a-b). Unknown artist, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, (a) cross section taken from the right hand edge of the painting (b) pigment breakdown of the cross section, 16th century, oil on oak panel (untested), framed 61.2 x 57.7 x 5 cm, unframed 38.5 x 35.8 x ~ .4 cm, Phoebus Foundation, The Netherlands.

Fig 7. OSIRIS Infrared Scan of Unknown artist, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, with detail, 16th century, oil on oak panel (untested), framed 61.2 x 57.7 x 5 cm, unframed 38.5 x 35.8 x ~ .4 cm, Phoebus Foundation, The Netherlands.

Fig 8 (a-b). Unknown artist, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, details Christ's hands, 16th century, oil on oak panel (untested), framed 61.2 x 57.7 x 5 cm, unframed 38.5 x 35.8 x ~ .4 cm, Phoebus Foundation, The Netherlands.

Fig 8 (c-d). Unknown artist, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, details of the Virgins headdress, 16th century, oil on oak panel (untested), framed 61.2 x 57.7 x 5 cm, unframed 38.5 x 35.8 x ~ .4 cm, Phoebus Foundation, The Netherlands.

Fig 8 (e). Martin Schongauer, *Christ as the Man of Sorrows with the Virgin and Saint John*, detail of the Virgin's headdress, c.1435-1491, engraving, 21.2 x 16.2 cm, The Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Source: The Metropolitan Museum, New York

Fig 9. Martin Schongauer, *Christ as the Man of Sorrows with the Virgin and Saint John*, c.1435-1491, engraving, 21.2 x 16.2 cm, The Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Source: The Metropolitan Museum, New York

Fig 10. Unknown artist, *Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, with scaled overlay of the Schongauer print (see fig 9 for details)

Source: Image of the engraving is from the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Fig 11. OSIRIS Infrared Scan of Unknown artist, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, with enlarged overlay of the Schongauer engraving to show compositional differences.

Source: Image of the engraving is from the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Fig 12 (a-b). Unknown artist, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, details of St. John's garment, 16th century, oil on oak panel (untested), framed 61.2 x 57.7 x 5 cm, unframed 38.5 x 35.8 x ~.4 cm, Phoebus Foundation, The Netherlands.

Fig 13 (a). Unknown South German Artist, *Man of Sorrows with the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist*, c.1500, ivory with paint and gilding, 8.6 x 6.5 x 1 cm, the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Source: the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Fig 13 (b). Unknown Follower of Martin Schongauer, *Man of Sorrows with the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist*, c. 1500, oil on panel, 44.8 x 33.4 cm, Sotheby's 2004.

Source: Sotheby's Auction House

Fig 13 (c). Unknown Artist, *Man of Sorrows with the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist*, c. 1500, oil on panel, 28 x 24 cm, Dorotheum 2007.

Source: Artnet.co.uk

Fig 13 (d). Wenzel von Olmütz, *Man of Sorrows with the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist*, engraving, c. 1481-1500, 19 x 15 cm, British Museum, London.

Source: The British Museum, London.

Fig 13 (e). Cristofano Robetta, *Man of Sorrows with the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist*, c. 1495-1500, engraving, 15.8 diameter, British Museum, London

Source: The British Museum, London.

Fig 14. Unknown artist, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, X-Ray, 16th century, oil on oak panel (untested), framed 61.2 x 57.7 x 5 cm, unframed 38.5 x 35.8 x ~.4 cm, Phoebus Foundation, The Netherlands.

Fig 15 (a-c). Unknown artist, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, reverse with details, 16th century, oil on oak panel (untested), framed 61.2 x 57.7 x 5 cm, unframed 38.5 x 35.8 x ~.4 cm, Phoebus Foundation, The Netherlands.

Fig 15 (d). Diagram showing construction of the Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St. John the Evangelist Panel.

Source: diagram authors' own

Fig 16 (a). Unknown artist, *Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, reverse, 16th century, oil on oak panel (untested), framed 61.2 x 57.7 x 5 cm, unframed 38.5 x 35.8 x ~ .4 cm, Phoebus Foundation, The Netherlands.

Fig 16 (b). Diagrams of common panel construction types

Source: Wadum, 1995, p. 155.

Fig 17 (a-d). Unknown artist, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, details of the upper right hand corner showing misalignment of the panels, 16th century, oil on oak panel (untested), framed 61.2 x 57.7 x 5 cm, unframed 38.5 x 35.8 x ~ .4 cm, Phoebus Foundation, The Netherlands.



Fig. 1, *The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St. John the Evangelist*, Unknown artist (after Schongauer), 16th century, Oil on oak panel (untested), 61.2 x 57.7 x 5 cm, framed 38.5 x 35.8 x ~.4 cm, unframed, Phoebus Foundation

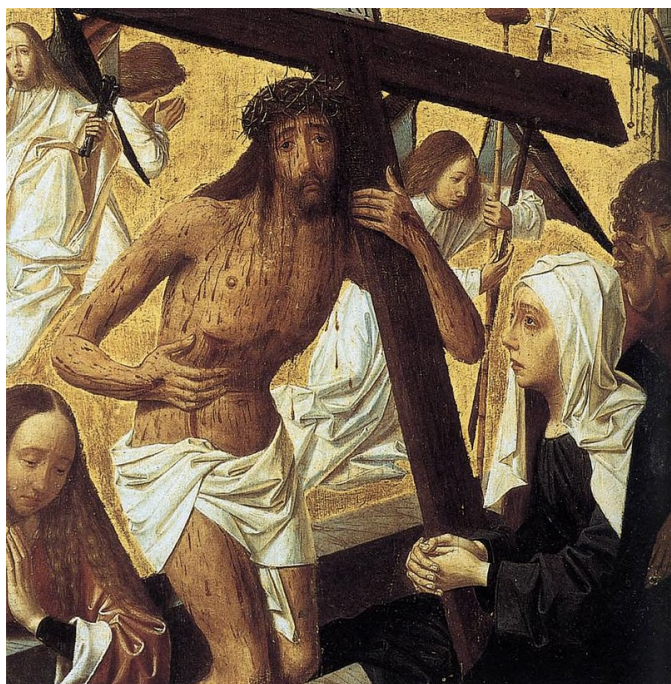


Fig. 2, (a) *Geertgen tot Sint Jans, Man of Sorrows*, c. 1485-95, oil on panel, Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht



(b) *Hans Memling, The Man of Sorrows in the arms of the Virgin*, c. 1475-1479, oil on panel, National Gallery of Victoria



(c) *Workshop of Dirk Bouts, Christ Crowned with Thorns*, c. 1470-5, oil on panel, National Gallery London

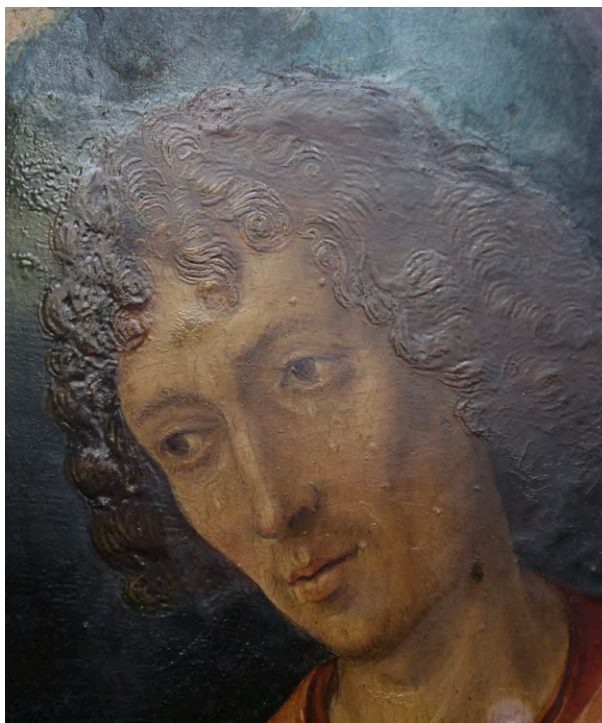
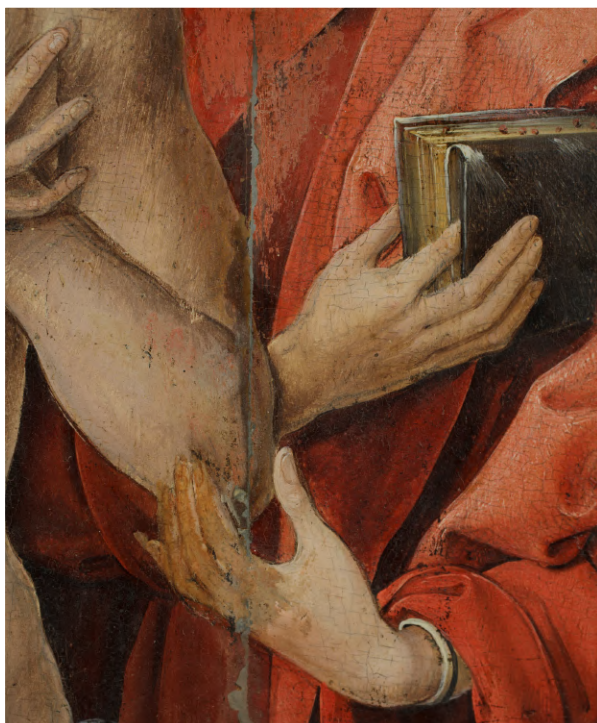


Fig. 3 (a) *Raking light, showing thick glossy overpaint in hair*



(b) *Normal light, showing thick orange overpaint on hand and pink overpaint on shoulder*



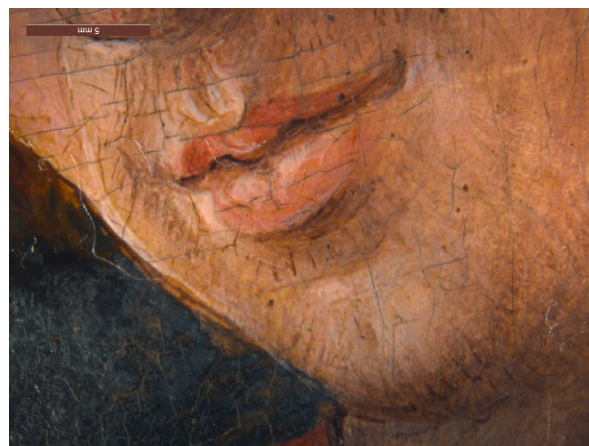
Fig. 4. (a) *Photomicrograph, angel's face, with varnish*



(b) *Photomicrograph, angel's face, without varnish*



(c) *Photomicrograph, eye of St. John, without varnish*



(d) *Photomicrograph, mouth and stubble of St. John, without varnish*



Fig. 5 (a) *Normal light, during treatment, cleaned varnish*



(b) *Normal light, before treatment, showing yellow varnish for comparison with fig. a*



(c) *Normal light, digitally reworked image*



Fig. 6, (a) *Cross-section taken from the right hand edge of the painting, in the purple-grey archway*

	Description	Chemical composition	Artist Material Indicated
Layer 6	Non-pigmented transparent layer, fluoresces in UV	-	Varnish
Layer 5	Non-pigmented transparent layer, fluoresces in UV	-	Varnish
Layer 4	White layer with large transparent green and pink-red particles	Pb, Cu, Al	Lead white with Azurite (Green Malachite?) and Red Lake
Layer 3	Light pink tinted layer with blue and red particles	Pb, Cu, Al	Lead white with Azurite and Red Lake
Layer 2	White layer with clear particles	Pb, Ca	Lead white with Calcium Carbonate primuersel layer
Layer 1	White Ground	Ca	Calcium Carbonate

(b) *Pigment breakdown of the above cross- section according to information gleaned from analysis by SEM/EDX*

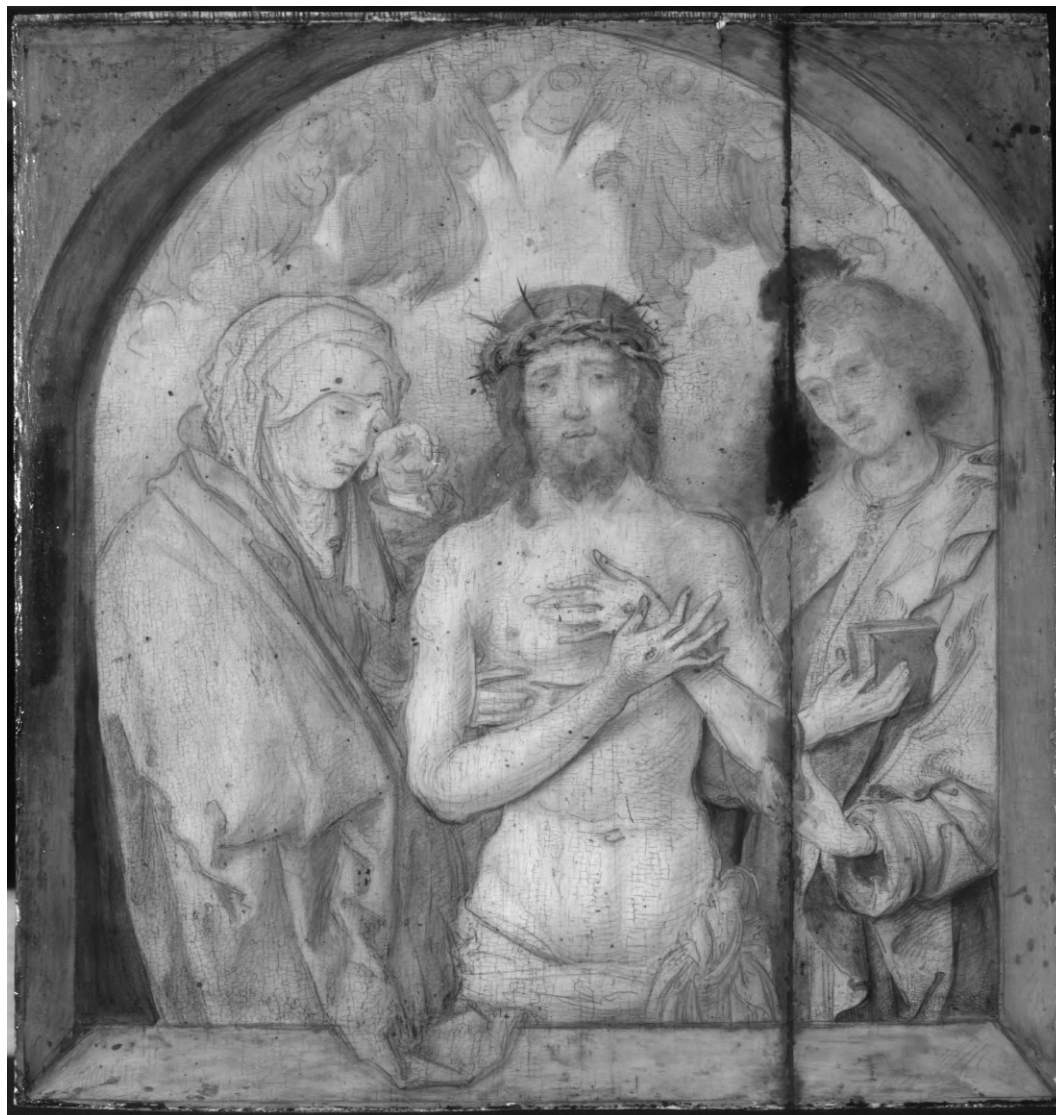


Fig. 7, (a) *OSIRIS IR scan (950-1,700nm)*

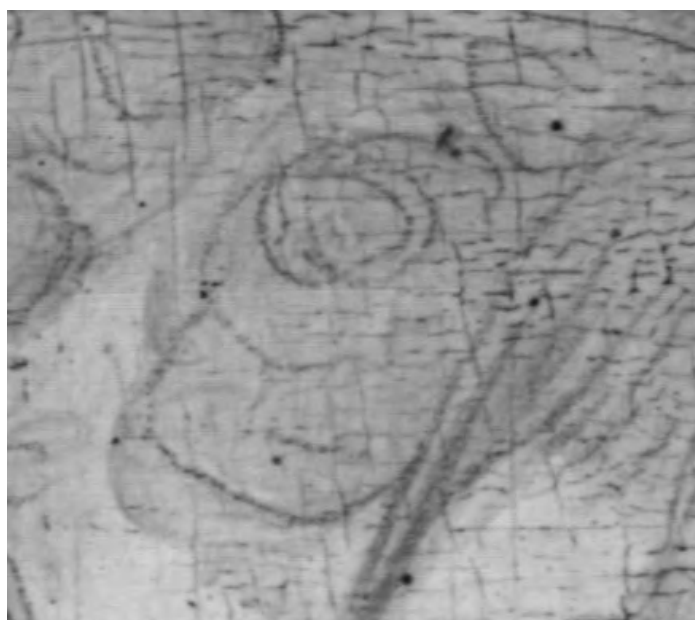


Fig. (b) *Detail, OSIRIS IR scan, showing dashed lines indicating a friable medium*

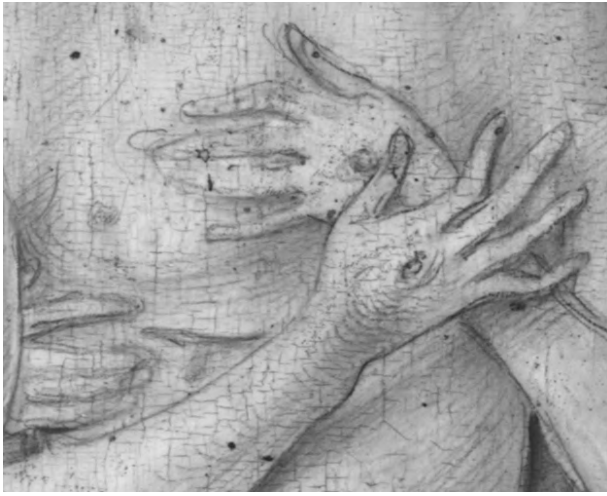
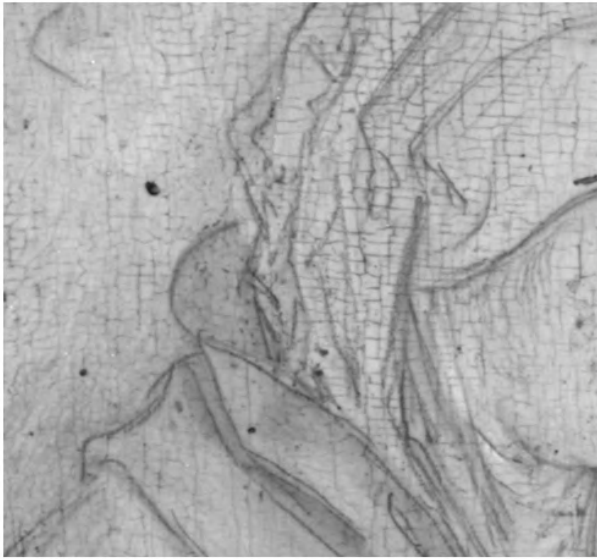


Fig. 8, (a) *Detail from IR image, showing multiple thumb and middle fingers*



(b) *Detail from normal light image, shown for comparison with fig. (a)*



(c) *Detail from IR image, showing multiple folds on the headdress*



(d) *Detail from normal light image, shown for comparison with fig. (c)*



(e) *Detail from engraving by M. Schongauer, shown for comparison with (c) and (d)*



Fig. 9, Martin Schongauer (1435/50–1491) , *Christ as the Man of Sorrows with the Virgin and St John*, c.1435-91, engraving, 21.2 x 16.2cm, Met Museum



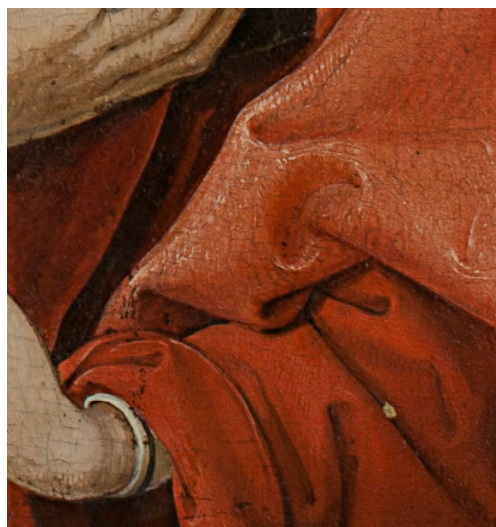
Fig. 10, *Diagram, showing comparison of scale between the painting and the engraving*



Fig. 11, *Diagram*, showing the compositional difference between the engraving and the painting. Here, the engraving is red (digitally colorized), and the infrared image is grey



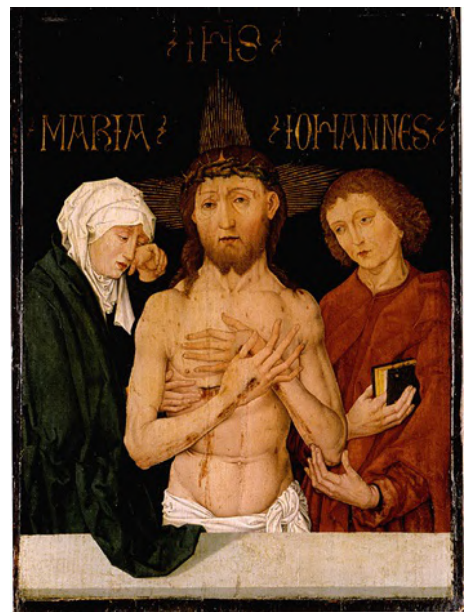
Fig. 12, (a) *Normal light*, detail of St. John, showing the artist's technique of painting highlights



(b) *Normal light*, detail of St. John, showing the artist's technique of painting highlights



Fig. 13, (a) *Unknown South German Artist c. 1500, ivory with paint and gilding, 8.6 x 6.5 x 1 cm, Met Museum*



(b) *Unknown Follower of Martin Schongauer, c. 1500, oil on panel, 44.8 x 33.4 cm, Sotheby's 2004*



(c) *Unknown Artist, c. 1500, oil on panel, 28 x 24 cm, Dorotheum 2007*



(d) *Wenzel von Olmütz, c. 1481-1500, engraving, 19 x 15 cm, British Museum*



(e) *Cristofano Robetta, c. 1495-1500, engraving, 15.8 diameter, British Museum*



Fig. 14, X-radiograph showing the split on the right-hand side

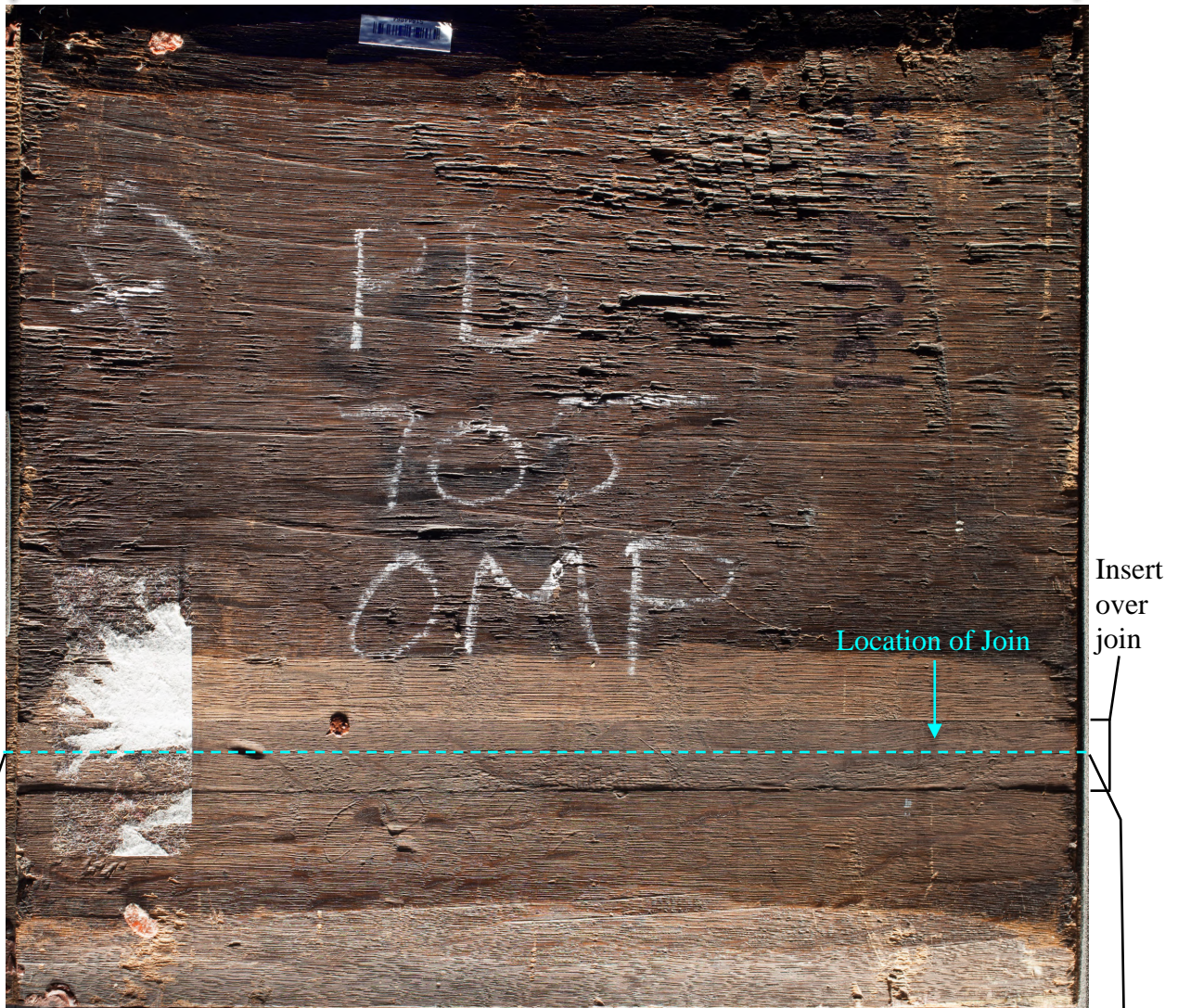
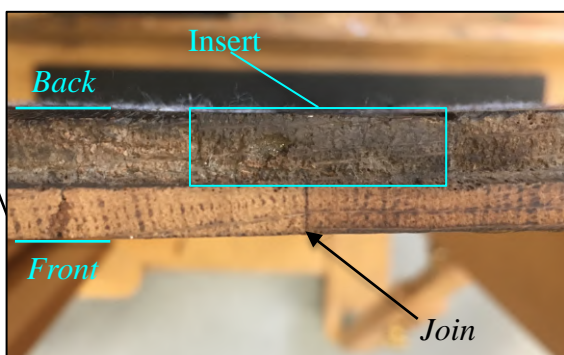
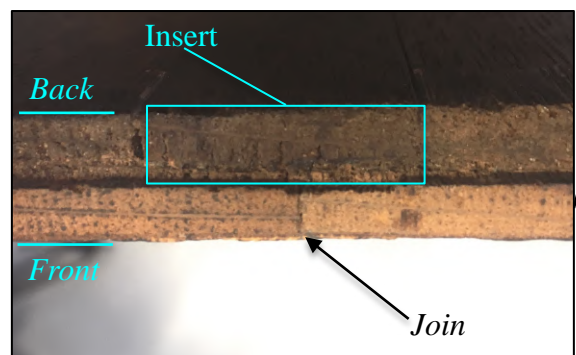


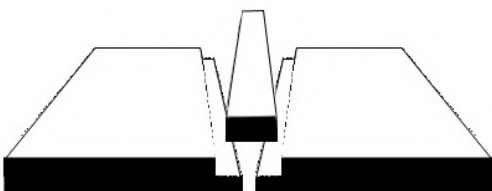
Fig. 15, (a) *Back of panel, raking light, showing insert and location of join*



(b) *Top edge of panel, showing join and insert*



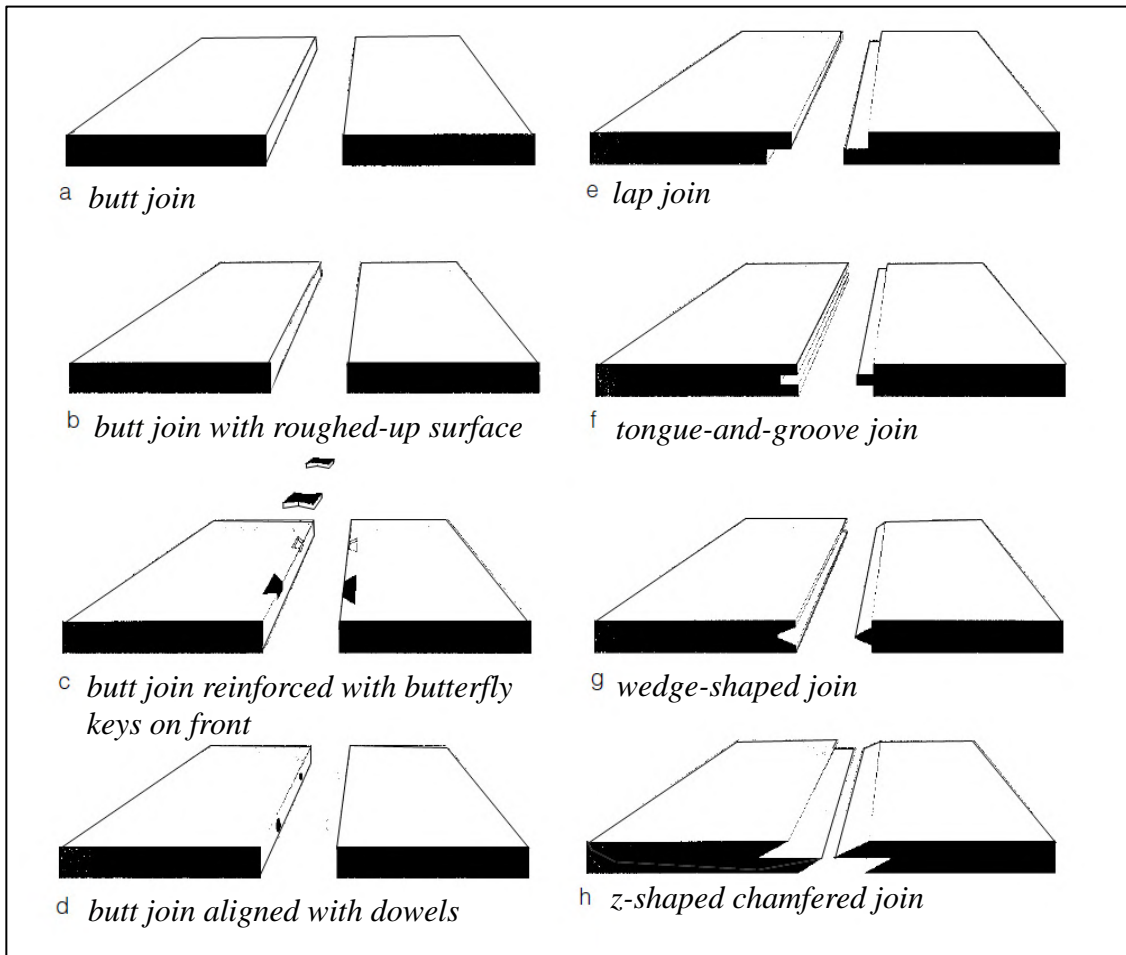
(c) *Bottom edge of panel showing join and insert*



(d) *Construction of The Man of Sorrows with Virgin and St. John the Evangelist, lap on two boards and insert fitted between*



Fig. 16 (a) *Back of panel, showing insert, and loss of lignin*



(b) *Different types of board joinery*



Fig. 17 (a) *Normal light, before removal of fill*



(b) *Normal light, after removal of fill, showing misalignment of arch*



(c) *Diagram, showing misalignment of arch*



(d) *Diagram, showing missing material and re-alignment*