

HOME ADVANTAGE

ACCOMPANYING TEXTS

FLEMISH PAINTINGS AT HOME IN AACHEN

The background of the cover is a painting of a landscape. The top half is a pale, textured sky. Below it is a wide expanse of blue water, possibly a river or a bay, with a bridge visible on the left side. In the foreground, there are green and brownish hills or fields, rendered with visible brushstrokes. The overall style is impressionistic or post-impressionistic.

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INTRO DUCTION

In the late medieval and early modern times, painting in the Burgundian Netherlands (now the Benelux countries and parts of northern France) flourished. Its groundbreaking realism was highly influential. Artists such as Jan Van Eyck, Hans Memling, and Joos van Cleve had an impact on painting throughout Europe. The polyphonic music of Flanders, which emerged around the same time, was celebrated by contemporaries even then as *Ars Nov*—as New Art. Today, this term is also used for the painting of the time.

With more than fifty paintings from the 15th and 16th centuries, the Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum in Aachen owns an important collection of Old Flemish art. This unique collection, which was assembled in Aachen by collectors from Barthold Suermondt to Peter and Irene Ludwig, is shown for the first time in its entirety.

The exhibition follows a cultural-historical sequence. It presents the results of art-historical research as well as material technical findings on individual works. It takes a fresh look at the production process of the works and the organization of painters' workshops in art centers such as Antwerp, Bruges, Brussels, Amsterdam or Leiden.

ROOM 1

1.1 ESTABLISHED AND RENEWED

Flemish and Dutch painting of the 15th and 16th centuries was particularly innovative. The sovereign use of the technique of oil painting and the application of fine glazes allowed painters for the first time to achieve effects of light and shadow that substantially increased the illusion of space.

Artistic originality, as we appreciate it today, was secondary in the eyes of the contemporaries. It was common practice that popular compositions by older masters were copied for generations with only minor changes. Often, clients demanded specifically that painters made their work look like other paintings and stipulated this in their contracts.

The Crucifixion of Christ (GK 340), for example, can be traced back to a pictorial invention by the Brussels' painter Rogier van der Weyden. His compositions characteristically consist of emotionally charged figures and remained exemplary well into the 16th century. The expressively lamenting Mary Magdalene below the Cross led the viewers of that time to visualize the suffering of Christ in their own devotion.

The Carrying of Christ to the Cross (GK 58) is based on a lost painting by Jan van Eyck, who is considered the founder of the Flemish Ars Nova. The anonymous painter of the small panel, however, was unfamiliar with Van Eyck's original; rather, he already oriented himself on a copy thereof. This copy—known only by a drawn copy—was made around 1470 in the circle of the Leuven city painter Dieric Bouts. Our panel was possibly part of a Passion cycle with depictions of the Crucifixion and the Deposition. The figure of a man and child in the foreground are shown from the back. This

way the painter introduces the viewer to the event and makes him a witness to the biblical event.

1.2 INTO THE BLUE

In the first decades of the 15th century, numerous paintings by Flemish and Dutch workshops already depicted central events of the New Testament—birth, crucifixion, resurrection—against a landscape background. The landscapes significantly increased the realism of the paintings. They replaced the ornamented golden background, which transcended the depicted scenes into the heavenly realms, but at the same time seemed unreal. In the Burgundian Netherlands, the

gilded background were later only used for smaller devotional paintings.

The Flemish landscapes consist of several horizontal zones, which faded in color: the painters know the principle of aerial perspective, according to which hills and mountains become lighter in the far distance. Their consistent use of aerial perspective, described much later by Leonardo da Vinci, enhances the spatial effects of Early Flemish panels.

The landscape backgrounds of the Flemish Ars Nova were revolutionary. In the neighboring Rhineland, in large parts of the Holy Roman Empire, in Central Eastern Europe and on the Iberian Peninsula, painters still used golden backgrounds until the late 15th century.

The Italian Renaissance humanists praised the Flemish landscapes of Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden around the middle of the century. Their paintings often received a place of honor in the

princely and bourgeois art collections of Italy. Italian artists such as Sandro Botticelli, Giovanni Bellini, Leonardo da Vinci or Raphael admired the works of Jan van Eyck or Hans Memling, and regularly included Flemish landscape motifs in their own works.

By 1500, some painters in Flanders had already become specialists in landscapes and painted the backgrounds for other masters. One specialist was praised by Albrecht Dürer as a "good landscape painter:" Joachim Patinir (GK 386), who cooperated in Antwerp with Joos van Cleve and Quentin Massys. Patinir's landscapes were influenced to an astonishing degree by Hieronymus Bosch. Patinir is considered a pioneer of the genre of landscape painting, which emerged during the 16th century and reached its first peak in Flanders with Pieter Brueghel the Elder.

1.3

THE BOSCH BRAND

To this day, Hieronymus Bosch's paintings seem unusual, strange, and enigmatic. Even where Bosch depicted traditional themes of the infancy and passion of Jesus, his depictions depart from the pictorial tradition of Early Flemish and Dutch art of the late Middle Ages. Nevertheless—or perhaps because of this—his paintings, which he created to a considerable extent on behalf of the Burgundian high nobility, were extremely sought after and found numerous imitators.

Hieronymus Bosch, who appears in contemporary documents as "Joen van Aken," belonged to a family of painters that originally came from Aachen. His ancestors had moved from there to Nijmegen in Guelders around 1400, and his grandfather, Jan van Aken,

lived in s'Hertogenbosch in the Duchy of Brabant from 1426. The name "Bosch" with which the painter and his relatives signed their works, indicates the place of production: "Made in Den Bosch."

Together with his older brother Goswijn, Bosch was trained in his father's workshop and became a master in 1481. He married an extremely wealthy merchant's daughter and since then belonged to the elite of his hometown. While his relatives and siblings made a living from their craft and ran several workshops in the city, Hieronymus Bosch had rental income and was financially independent. Perhaps one can best do justice to the phenomenon of Hieronymus Bosch's art by comparing his work with the production of Walt Disney: Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck have been created by several cartoonists for decades and while their differences in style is rarely noticed, they are recognized as "Disney".

In fact, the production of paintings in the style of and copies after Bosch was by no

means limited to Den Bosch, but cultivated in several cities in Flanders in the early 16th century. The Adoration of the Magi (GK 49), a copy after a triptych by Bosch, now located in Madrid, was probably made in a Brussels workshop. Instead of painting the biblical parable of the Prodigal Son, which can be seen in the underdrawn first design, the painter,—for whatever reason, decided to copy the work by Hieronymus Bosch instead.

Numerous painters created their own paintings with bizarre depictions based on Bosch's imagery, so-called Boschiads. The most famous of them was undoubtedly Pieter Brueghel the Elder, who created engravings with motifs in the style of Bosch and then, for commercial reasons, passed these compositions off not as his but as Bosch's pictorial inventions. The Last Judgment (GK 50), of which two other versions are known, also evokes the manner of Bosch. We don't know who made this painting.

ROOM 2

2.1 FAITH

Conciliar era had led to great uncertainty in large parts of the population. This resulted in numerous religious reform movements, which targeted the papacy, the religious orders and especially the mendicant monks, and not least propagated lay piety. These reform movements wanted to eliminate grievances in religious orders and within the ecclesiastical hierarchy and to return to the origins of Christian religious practice.

The importance of the regular Canons of Saint Augustin can hardly be overestimated. They joined together to form the so-called Windesheim Congregation. Starting from Deventer in the North the so-called Devotio Moderna spread across the entire Burgundian Netherlands and further on through the Rhinelands. Their theologians urged lay people to actively identify with Christ

and the Virgin Mary, to suffer with them and to follow Christ. In the practice of faith advocated by the *Devotio Moderna*, devotion before and with images played a very prominent role.

Especially in the Burgundian Netherlands, the *Devotio Moderna* contributed significantly to the popularity of devotional images. On these, suffering was explicitly depicted in representations of the Man of Sorrows or the *Mater Dolorosa* for purposes of meditative contemplation (GK 1668). Such devotional images were everyday objects of use that were placed or laid in front of the devotee at times of prayer. Sometimes they were also attached to the bed like talismans. In most towns, lay devotion enjoyed great popularity among all classes of the population, and the quality of the devotional pictures is correspondingly heterogeneous. In addition to elaborate triptychs (GK 553) and exquisite panel paintings of wealthy families, workers and day laborers also used colored woodcuts or cheap canvas paintings.

2.2 LOVE

Throughout the Middle Ages, the trade in relics flourished. Pilgrims brought them via Mediterranean sea from the Holy and the Byzantine Empire to the West, where they became objects of mass veneration. Among them were icons of the Virgin Mary, which were believed to be the work of St. Luke the Evangelist. According to the legend, Luke, who later became the patron saint of painters, painted a vision of the Virgin Mary with the Infant Jesus. Numerous such icons of the Virgin Mary had come to the North with pilgrims or crusaders. They were venerated as miraculous images, exhibited in churches, and privileged with indulgences.

Based on these Byzantine prototypes, Flemish painters created copies of these icons during the first half of the 15th century. They believed that the copies maintained some

of the miraculous qualities of the originals. However, these paintings were not strict copies but highly innovative representations of Mary with Child. They were adopted almost unchanged by subsequent generations and had a normative effect. As a result, such representations could be and were mass-produced in the various workshops on the basis of identical templates.

In addition to the representations of the standing or enthroned Mary in full figure by Jan van Eyck in Bruges, on which our panel from the Memling workshop is based (GK 1623), there were half-length depictions of the Virgin produced by Rogier van der Weyden in Brussels. These became very popular and were particularly widespread in the context of private devotion among members of the elite in Bruges, Brussels, Ghent or Antwerp.

Often representations of the Virgin Mary were supplemented with portraits of the donors or the donor couple to form devotional diptychs or triptychs. This was not only due to the fact that the veneration of Mary had

generally gained in importance during the late Middle Ages, but also to her role as intercessor. Because of her intimate relationship with Christ, more efficient intercession could be expected from her than from other saints.

Devotional diptychs were allowed to be used in private oratories or on journeys, provided that appropriate privileges were acquired from the ecclesiastical authorities, and still could have served as the donors' epitaphs after their demise. Our examples come from Bruges and Brussels and vividly show how the different state of preservation of the paintings influences their effect today.

2.3 HOPE

The appropriation of Byzantine icons in 15th century Flemish and Dutch painting was by no means limited to Marian icons. It also extended to representations of Christ as Man

of Sorrows, as Triumphator or as Ruler of the World. Robert Campin, working in the then French city of Tournai, combined the image of Christ with one of the Mother of God. He thus created the basis of a type of diptych created by Dieric Bouts and his son Albrecht in several versions, which juxtaposed the Man of Sorrows with the mourning Mater Dolorosa and enjoyed great popularity into the 16th century (GK 57).

Jan van Eyck had transformed the iconic Byzantine representations of Christ into portraits of Christ, who appeared en bust in front of a neutral dark background. The ambiguous character of Eyck's images Christ was quickly transformed by illuminators and panel painters into unambiguous depictions in the context of the Passion or the Triumph by adding motifs such as the crown of thorns or the globe. In his representation of Christ as Salvator Mundi (GK 295) Quentin Massys ultimately repeats an Eyckian prototype, which he combines with archaic elements reminiscent of the Byzantine archetypes, such as the golden background.

ROOM 3

3.1 RARITIES OF THE NORTH

Only few late medieval paintings survive from the Northern Netherlands. This is partly due to the destructions of the Eighty Years' War (1568 – 1648), as the struggle for independence of the northern provinces from the austere Catholic Spanish monarchy is called. Another factor was the rapid diffusion of the ideas of the Reformer John Calvin, who found a large following in the Netherlands in particular and was strictly against religious images. Calvinists sparked the iconoclasm in 1566, during which numerous altarpieces were destroyed in Ghent, Antwerp and elsewhere in the North and South as well; iconoclasts later systematically removed all ecclesiastical pictorial decoration in the Calvinist north. Not a single altarpiece of this period is preserved in its original location

in today's Netherlands. This represents a significant obstacle for our understanding of the artistic production most of the art centers in the Northern Netherlands and even in former Prince-Bishopric of Utrecht.

The Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum owns an important collection of Northern Netherlandish panel painting. These are often fragments of altarpieces whose original context is unknown. For stylistic reasons, some paintings can be linked to known masters, so that the place of origin is clear. The large-format panel with the Temptation of Christ (GK 103) that focusses on Christ's subsequent refreshment by angels was painted by Jakob Cornelisz. van Oostanen, a painter and designer of woodcuts who was active in Amsterdam. The now highly rectangular panel originally had an arched finial. The depiction was probably shown on the exterior wings of an altarpiece which probably depicted Passion scenes. It may have been the altarpiece that Van Oostanen completed around 1526 for the High altar of the Egmond Abbey

north of Amsterdam, which was looted by iconoclasts in 1567 and destroyed in 1573.

In the late Middle Ages, the city of Leiden, located in the south of the county of Holland, had an important cloth industry that competed with the Flemish textile metropolises. Culturally, however, there was a lively exchange between the cities in the Northern and Southern Netherlands, which only came to a halt with the outbreak of the Eighty Years' War. The fragment, now trimmed into an oval, depicting John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene comes from a much larger panel by the Leiden painter Cornelis Engebrectsz. (GK 144). Presumably, the two saints must be supplemented by an enthroned Virgin with Child and other saints. The painter used the technique of oil gilding for Magdalene's golden robe of splendor. This technique is characteristic for the early work of Engebrectsz. in the years after 1500 and does not appear in his later works.

Cornelis Engebrectsz. was Lucas van Leyden's teacher who is one of the most

important representatives of Northern Netherlandish painting. Like Albrecht Dürer, whom he admired, the younger Lucas van Leyden was not only active as a panel painter, but also created numerous woodcuts and engravings, which repeatedly served as a source of inspiration for his contemporaries. His skill as a draftsman is also manifested in the underdrawings of his paintings, which are no longer limited exclusively to contours and hatching, but for the first time create shadow zones through washes in ink. The triptych, probably completed by the workshop after the master's death, depicting Jesus' Healing of the Blind Man of Jericho (GK 472), is a replica of a triptych dated 1531, now in Saint Petersburg.

3.2 SHARED SORROW

After Haarlem and Dordrecht, Delft was the third largest city in the county of Holland. In addition to two monumental parishes—the Oude Kerk and the Nieuwe Kerk—the city had no fewer than eight female monasteries, where the nuns of the Monastery of St. Agnes ran an important workshop for book-illumination. Further, there were five monasteries for men, of which the Carthusian monastery was founded only in the Burgundian period. The religious life of the city was essentially determined by the reform movement of the *Devotio Moderna*, with which the city's monasteries maintained close ties.

The painters in Delft were united in the Guild of St. Luke, which maintained its own chapel in the Oude Kerk since 1425. This shows that

the painters in the city of about 13,000 inhabitants was an important craft. Among the artists whose work can be located in Delft is the anonymous Master of the Virgo inter Virgines (GK 315ab). He or she is named after a depiction, now preserved in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, of the Virgin Mary enthroned among other virgin saints, and is distinguished by figures that have somewhat oversized heads with dark "beady eyes."

The painter, who was active in the late 15th century, ran an extremely productive workshop that, over the years, included numerous collaborators. The Aachen panels were originally the wings of a triptych. The exterior showed the Annunciation, the interior wings showed Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus on the left, and Mary Magdalene with another Mary on the right.

Probably around 1900, both wings were sawn apart and the Annunciation was then transformed into a single panel. The painting was severely damaged by this intervention. The two representations of the saints allow

conclusions about the scene shown on the central panel of the dismembered triptych. It must have been a Lamentation of Christ, a scene that the anonymous artist painted several times during his career. However, due to the dimensions, only a Lamentation kept today in the Museo Nacional del Prado could have been the original middle panel. This hypothesis has now been confirmed by the results of technical examinations.

3.3 MARY: ONE FOR ALL

Devotion to the Virgin Mary increased dramatically during the late Middle Ages. The faithful prayed directly to the Mother of God. In Books of Hours of the period, it was the Marian prayers to be read at prescribed times from dawn to dusk that were regularly illustrated.

Depictions of the Annunciation to Mary usually marked the morning prayer, and presumably the faithful associated the corresponding prayer text when viewing Annunciation depictions on altars of private or guild chapels. Annunciations are often found on the exterior of altarpieces, where they were usually executed as grisailles, i.e. in gray painting. They could also be part of Marian or Infancy cycles. The Annunciation (GK 337), designed with numerous Renaissance elements, was probably created in the Dutch-German border region and still has its original frame. It was originally the central panel of a triptych.

In the cities of the Burgundian Netherlands, as in neighboring Germany, numerous confraternities were dedicated to the Virgin Mary and commemorated certain events that were links to Marian devotion. Under the influence of the *Devotio Moderna*, a book dedicated to the Seven Sorrows of Mary was published in Antwerp in 1492. It contained prayers for those events of the New Testament in which the Virgin

suffered. Beginning with the circumcision and the episode in which the twelve-year-old Jesus had sneaked into the temple without the knowledge of his parents to debate with the scribes, the Sorrows of the Virgin extended to the crucifixion and the moments leading up to the entombment.

Towards the end of the 15th century, in Flanders, the Northern Netherlands and also in the Rhineland, there were more and more depictions of the Seven Sorrows of Mary. They usually represented the Virgin Mary with Seven Swords, the points of which were aiming at her heart. According to the inscription, the painting here (GK 357) was commissioned by Christina van Holtmeulen, who belonged to a convent of nuns located near Roermond. The painting shows the Virgin Mary surrounded by seven medallions in which her sorrows are depicted. The painting is a rare example of painting that originated along the Meuse in Maastricht or Roermond.

ROOM 4

4.1 QUANTIFYING QUALITY

By the beginning of the 16th century, Antwerp had surpassed Bruges as the leading commercial and financial metropolis in the Burgundian Netherlands under Habsburg rule. Numerous sculptors and painters, including prominent artists from Bruges and Ghent, maintained workshops here or offered their paintings in the pand of Antwerp's Church of Our Lady, the first place in Europe where people could consistently buy works of art.

The rising demand for devotional paintings and portable altarpieces had already brought about fundamental changes in the production processes of painters' workshops in the late 15th century. Even established painters no longer produced exclusive commissions, but

built up a stock of popular depictions of the Passion or the Virgin and Child based on largely standardized compositions. These were bought ‚off the peg‘ by interested parties or adapted to the wishes of the customer and ‚made to measure‘, for example, with donor portraits.

The ever-growing demand in pictures, that were exported from Antwerp, Bruges and Brussels beyond Flanders and Holland to all of Europe, led to particularly efficient workshop practices. Some masters employed workers who specialized in painting figures or landscapes. Others used printmaking models such as Albrecht Dürer’s woodcuts and engravings for their own paintings (GK 578). In other cases, production was organized on a division of labor, with the execution of the actual painting within the workshop often entrusted to assistants. These carried out the master’s designs. In Antwerp, some masters even commissioned neighboring workshops to produce the compositions they had designed. This may explain why the underdrawing, often carefully

applied with brush or chalk to the primer, is in many cases much more appealing than the finished paintings themselves.

Antwerp and Brussels were not only centers of panel painting, but also of sculpture. Flemish carvers produced large-scale carved altarpieces in workshops organized by division of labor, which were polychromed by panel painters and provided with painted wings. Due to the efficient production, the high-quality altarpieces could be offered quickly and relatively cheaply. They were therefore mostly intended for export and can still be found today in Scandinavia and along the Lower Rhine in their original places of installation.

The two high rectangular panels, with the Raising of Lazarus (GK 13a) and the Pentecost (GK 13b), were originally the front and back of the left wing of such a carved retable. The retable lost its altar function during the Napoleonic period at the latest. It was probably then disassembled and its parts sold separately. At the end of the 19th cen-

ture, the wing was split through lengthwise, so that the Pentecost could be viewed at the same time as the Raising of Lazarus.

The two large wings of an altarpiece (GK 236a+b) depict the Nativity and the Flight into Egypt on the interior and the Fall of Man on the exterior. They come from a Brussels workshop and originally were part of an altarpiece. However, this was probably not a carved altar, but a painted triptych, which probably showed the Adoration of the Magi at the center. While the compositions are based on Dürer's prints, the paintings are stylistically influenced by Bernard van Orley. Van Orley, who worked in Brussels, held the office of court painter during the reign of Margaret of Austria.

Most of the paintings from Antwerp, Bruges, Brussels or other places in Flanders and Holland are works that were created in a collective workshop context. The great differences in the quality of the works exhibited here, both artistically and in terms of craftsmanship, are immediately apparent.

These differences are, on the one hand, related to the different state of preservation of the paintings, some of which have been more damaged over the centuries than others. On the other hand, they also reflect the social differences and intentions of the respective clientele. For some, the social prestige of owning a painting by a recognized painter was as important as its religious function; others wanted a simple Crucifixion or Marian image to use for prayer.

Under the influence of humanism, members of the courtly and urban elites became art collectors during the 16th century. For them, it was not least important that the master had painted the painting himself.

4.2 JOOS VAN CLEVE

In the collection of the Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum, the panel paintings by Joos van Cleve stand out from a qualitative point of view. Born around 1480 in Kleve, the painter, whose real name was Van der Beke, was trained in the Lower Rhine by Jan Joest van Kalkar and then probably spent some time in Bruges before settling in Antwerp in 1511 as a master. Van Cleve may have been one of the employees of the Antwerp workshop run by Gerard David. The painter Ambrosius Benson, who came from northern Italy to Flanders, also worked at the same time with David in Bruges. Joos van Cleve was one of the most prolific painters of his generation, executing numerous important commissions and creating novel devotional paintings. He was an innovative portraitist, painting both the

future Emperor Maximilian I and the French King Francis I, who hired him as court painter for several years. At the French court he must have seen works by Leonardo da Vinci, whose lost Madonna with the Cherries was the prototype for the panel painting that Joos van Cleve painted in several versions. The latter's Madonna with the Cherries, a loan from the Ludwig Foundation, is one of the best works in the collection of the Museum. Incidentally, Joos' depiction of Jesus and John the Baptist as children embracing each other also goes back to a prototype by Leonardo. Both paintings come from the workshop of Van Cleve, where he worked along his son Cornelis.

4.3 GERARD HORENBOUT

The recently completed restoration of St. Livinus (GK 317), the patron saint of the city of Ghent and especially venerated in East Flanders, has once again brought to light the high artistic quality of the painting. It is a work by Gerard Horenbout, one of the most important illuminators of 16th century Flanders. It is one of the rare examples that professional illuminators also worked as panel painters and mastered the technique of oil painting. Horenbout came from a family of painters and also trained his sons and daughter Susanna to be painters and miniaturists. Susanna Horenbout, who like her brother Lucas worked in her father's studio in her younger years, later made a career in London.

It is striking that the saint's head is shown cut at the top. A molding was added to the top only between 1850 and 1901 to complete the miter (headdress worn by bishops). The truncated depiction, however, was a conscious decision by the artist, related to the practice of book illumination. There it had become customary to choose a section of the picture reminiscent of the close-up in today's movies in order to heighten the drama of the biblical events.

4.4 THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE WORKSHOP BUSINESS

Guilds usually favored members of families who had lived in a city for a long time. This was no different in Flanders and Holland and

explains why it was much more favorable for the sons (more rarely for the daughters) of a master to acquire the title of master for themselves and to run their own workshop than for those who had newly arrived in a city. In the history of Flemish art, one encounters regularly real dynasties of painters: Hieronymus Bosch's great-grandfather, grandfather, and father, for example, were painters, while his brother, uncle, and their children ran workshops in Den Bosch that presumably cooperated closely with each other. The case is very similar with the painter family Claeissens from Bruges (GK 225ab). The two sons of Pieter Claeissens the Elder were Gillis Claeissens and Pieter the Younger; they were trained in their father's workshop and later ran their own. Their father's patterns were used for many years after his death and ensured that successful compositions of the period around 1530 remained available in Bruges until the early 17th century.

Occasionally, one encounters in documents that journeymen married the widow of their master. The widows continued the work-

shop business of the deceased, so it was economically advantageous for an employee to be able to establish his own workshop in this way. It was more common, however, for journeymen to take their masters' daughters as wives. This was the case with Pieter Coecke van Aelst, who worked in Antwerp with Jan van Dornicke and then married his daughter. He took over his father-in-law's workshop, which was particularly successful in the prolific production of altarpieces, after Van Dornicke had died.

Under Coecke's leadership, the range of products offered by the workshop, which had been transformed into a large-scale enterprise, was significantly expanded. It included, in addition to altarpieces and devotional paintings, designs for stained glass, tapestries, woodcuts, and architectural decorations. Coecke's designs were constantly varied by the workshop's numerous collaborators through minor changes. The paintings of the Holy Family and the triptych with the Adoration of the Magi shown here are typical examples of Coecke van Aelst's workshop production (GK 314).

After the death of his first wife, Coecke married Mayke Verhulst, a native of Mechelen and a widely praised miniature painter at the time. Their daughter later became the wife of Pieter Breughel the Elder, who had learned his trade in Coecke's Antwerp workshop. Mayke Verhulst not only successfully continued Coecke's Antwerp workshop after his death, but also took care of Brueghel's children, Jan the Elder and Pieter the Younger, whom she taught the basics of the painter's craft.

The workshop context is of inestimable importance for understanding late medieval art, and it is all the more regrettable that we have only rudimentary ideas about it. This is particularly true for women: They must have played a decisive role in the management of the workshops, because they often continued the work successfully for years after the death of their husbands. Their names rarely appear in the guild registers, but there were women painters outside of monastery workshops who were known by name and held in high esteem by their contemporaries. They

included Jan van Eyck's sister Margarethe, the painter Agnes van den Bossche, who was active in Ghent around 1475, as well as Livina Bening and Susanna Horenbout, who made a career at the English royal court, and finally Mayke Verhulst, whose importance for Brueghel's art can not be overestimated.

This booklet is published to accompany
the exhibition

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IMPRINT

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