



# MEDIEVAL WOMEN

Subjects & Makers of Art

SAM FOGG



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*'There is not the slightest doubt that women belong to the people of God and the human race as much as men, and are not another species.'*<sup>1</sup>

Christine de Pizan (1364–c.1430)

Although medieval art is dominated by a lack of female voices, a story of exceptions has emerged in 20th century scholarship, which looked at the Middle Ages through a feminist lens. While this perspective acknowledged the underprivileged status of women in medieval society, it demonstrated that women were not absent from the world of art. More recent literature has taken this research one step further, urging us not to marginalise women in medieval art as exceptions while asking: 'how many so-called exceptions must there be before we decide that a new rule is in order?'<sup>2</sup>

This exhibition will explore women as subjects and women as makers of medieval art. As subjects, we find women taking centre stage as venerated mothers, powerful heroines and resolute saints. In this part of the exhibition, we give a platform to the stories of the women that were commonly depicted in medieval art, such as the Virgin Mary, Saint Clare and Mary Magdalene, but we also look at the stories of less known female saints, such as the imprisoned Saint Avia of Sicily and Saint Etheldreda. Additionally, this part of the exhibition explores less conventional images of women, such as the Wild Woman or Judith holding the head of Holofernes. Still, while our contemporary outlook may view some of these images of medieval women as powerful and commanding, it may also be misleading because many of these images were created by men and for men, adding a further layer of complexity to every story told.

As makers, we look to scholars who have redefined the way we credit women for the creation of artworks.<sup>3</sup> This new definition calls us to be more inclusive with the term 'maker of art,' which embraces artists, patrons and recipients as having equally active roles in the conception of art in the Middle Ages. The artworks exhibited in this section, such as the Foljambe Hours or the Eichstätt Tapestry, allow us to discuss the women who worked closely with artists, the women who were powerful patrons and the women who were artists in their own right. While medieval art in general is plagued by a deficiency of artists' names and by much confusion regarding those names that do survive, many of the objects in the exhibition have convincing evidence to identify a female maker.

With this exhibition, we want to tell a story that will take medieval women out of the 'subplot' and bring them centre stage, thus acknowledging that medieval women were fully integrated into the story of art, whether or not they are 'written in' by art historians today.

*Jana Gajdošová*

1, Marlene leGates, *In Their Time: A History of Feminism in Western Society* (London, 2001), 107.

2, Therese Martin, 'Exceptions and Assumptions: Women in Medieval Art History,' in *Reassessing the Roles of Women as Makers of Medieval Art and Architecture* (Brill: Leiden, 2012), 2.

3, Ibid.



# SUBJECTS

## The Education of the Virgin by Saint Anne





# The Education of the Virgin by Saint Anne

*The theme of the Education of the Virgin spread across Western Europe as part of the rising fashion for Marian devotion during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, encouraged by the Devotio Moderna movement of the Low Countries and the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in France (and soon after also in Spain). Although it was an invention of the Middle Ages and has no basis in canonical or apocryphal texts, its imagery helped late-Medieval theologians anchor the figure of Christ's mother within a carefully prescribed notion of lineage and ancestry, embedded in the Old Testament and indicative of not only Christ's, but also the Virgin's immaculacy. It also helped to cement the notion of a special, pure form of diligence and motherhood, that late-Medieval devotees associated with the Virgin Mary and Saint Anne. It was particularly popular in manuscript illumination (see fig.1) since it could be woven into the varied symbolism of the Hours of the Virgin and the narrative of her early life; however, it was depicted across a variety of media according to successful compositional formulae that hardly changed over the centuries.*

In a room decorated with moulded marble panelling and a tall leadlight window just visible at left, the Virgin appears with her mother Saint Anne, engaged in the act of reading. She is shown as a young adult, dressed in a panelled dress of yellow cloth of gold, with green sleeves slashed open along the upper- and forearm to reveal a blue undershirt. She wears a cusped gold crown set with pearls, and her long hair falls loosely over her shoulders. The monumental figure of her mother, Saint Anne, is garbed in a voluminous blue mantle folded back over her shoulders and shrouding her knees. Beneath this she wears a rich purple dress belted at the waist, and covers her hair with a striped veil pinned below the neck with a large gold brooch. The two women together hold a large book open at the middle, its leaves decorated with gilding and fore-edge tooling. Anne holds a pointer in her right hand with which she instructs her daughter, whose own hand rests on one of the pages as they read together.

This square-form panel has been cut down along the its lower half, and was originally made as part of a much larger window scheme, perhaps showing several scenes from the Life of the Virgin. It was produced in North-Eastern France, perhaps in Troyes, since its closest parallels are offered by windows in several churches in that city (fig.2).<sup>1</sup> It was executed with an incredibly free hand; the loose and febrile brushwork on the fictive marbling and the rapid, undulating marks decorating Saint Anne's veil betray the imagination of an artist completely liberated from his or her preparatory drawings. The self-referential depiction of a leaded window within the room in which the two women sit, shows that by the sixteenth century, stained-glass windows were perceived as integral extensions of a church building's pictorial surfaces, and not just the spaces through which light was allowed to permeate the interior; the figures advance into our space as tangible entities, visibly contrasted by the absence of imagery in the fictive glass beyond.

North-Eastern France, Troyes?  
c.1540

56.2 × 53.9 cm; Excellent condition. Large sections of the glass completely intact and undisturbed. Several breaks through the book, the Virgin's forearm, and Saint Anne's proper left shoulder, including a small stopgap along the right-hand edge. The leafy vine running along the upper margin likely repositioned from elsewhere in the same window.



**Fig.1**  
The Master of John Fastolf  
The Education of the Virgin  
England or France  
c.1430–40  
Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty  
Museum, MS. 5 (84.  
ML.723), fol. 45v

<sup>1</sup> It also bears close comparison to the mid sixteenth-century window of the Miraculous Host in the church of Saint Nicolas, Troyes; *Corpus Vitrearum France – Recensement IV: Les Vitraux de Champagne-Ardenne*, Paris, 1992, p.260, fig.248.



**Fig.2**  
 The Baptism of Saint Martin  
 Second third 16th century  
 Troyes, church of Saint-  
 Martin-es-Vignes





## The Virgin Annunciate





## The Virgin Annunciate

*The Annunciation is one of the most commonly depicted scenes from the Life of the Virgin. Although its iconography adheres to a certain set of standards, there is also much variation in how the scene was portrayed throughout the Middle Ages. In Byzantine art, the Virgin is often depicted without a book but with a roll of wool, because according to the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, she helped spin a veil for the temple using purple wool. It was during this moment, as she worked at her task, that the angel Gabriel appeared and brought the news of her conception of the Christ Child. A vivid example of this iconography is present in mosaic form on the spandrels of Santa Maria dell Ammiraglio in Palermo (fig.1). Here, the Virgin holds on to a roll of wool in her left hand, as she turns in shock to her right.*

This relief panel displays a clear influence of Byzantine style and iconography – most especially because the Virgin holds on to a roll of wool. The low relief carving depicts the Virgin with a large halo and wearing a long mantle of stylised drapery that covers her from head to foot, forming sharp v-shaped folds at the knees. Standing within a shallow space defined by a frame on three sides, the figure is depicted before a low cushioned throne, her head turned towards the left. With one hand raised in front of her chest in a gesture of modesty, the other holds a roll of wool. These attributes clearly identify this figure as the Virgin Mary from a scene of the Annunciation, where she would have originally been accompanied the Archangel Gabriel, towards whom she looks and who was almost certainly contained within the same framing device.

Originally, this panel would have decorated the interior of a church, perhaps a pulpit or altar screen, forming part of a narrative cycle of the Infancy of Christ. Examples of such narrative church furnishings can be found in Tuscany and Central Italy, such as a relief of the Annunciation from the now relocated pulpit from San Piero Scheraggio in Florence, now in the collection of the MET Cloisters (Fig.2). Another early narrative pulpit to note is the pulpit by Guido Bigarelli from c.1250 in St Bartholomew's Church, Pistoia, Italy. Although a church furnishing is the most likely context for this relief, its presence on a church façade also cannot be ruled out. The Annunciation relief from the MET Cloisters also offers some general stylistic analogies to our panel, such as the composition of the panel as well as the Virgin's stance and dress. However, a marked difference exists between the two panels. There is a departure in our Annunciate Virgin from the overtly decorative character of the MET panel, and its stocky figures. Our sculpture finds closer parallels with 13th century works such as the Virgin and Child from the Sanguinacci Family sarcophagus, housed in the MET Cloisters (MET 18.109).

Much like the iconography, the stylised drapery on our relief along with the veil that covers the Virgin's hair, and her large halo reflect a link with Byzantine art and form an analogy between this sculpture and the few Byzantine stone reliefs of this type that survive. One example is a relief of the Virgin Hagiosoritissa, from the Dumbarton Oaks museum which shares not only the style of our relief but also a similar format and frame (fig.3). It is important to note here that Middle Byzantine art had a strong presence in Italy during the 12th and 13th centuries. This time of the Crusades created a constant influx of foreign objects and foreign artists, who were imported by crusaders, merchants and diplomats from

**Northern or Central Italy  
Early 13th century**

54.4 x 23.8 x 6 cm: limestone

*Provenance*

Collection Altounian-Rousset

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**Fig.1**  
Virgin of the Annunciation  
Italy, Palermo, Santa Maria  
dell Ammiraglio  
Mid-12th century

east to west. In 1185, Frederick Barbarossa is even recorded to have given a Byzantine icon of the Virgin to the Cathedral of Spoleto. Apart from small luxury objects, such as ivories and metalwork, Middle Byzantine mosaics also started to become extremely desirable at this time, resulting in Greek mosaicists being employed in Venice, Montecassino and Sicily.<sup>1</sup>

The sudden presence of such large-scale artworks allowed for a much wider audience of this foreign Byzantine style. Hence the Italian masons who worked on the monument that this relief comes from would have thus had plenty of opportunity to come into direct contact with Greek artists at this time and to absorb a style that was considered extremely fashionable. The relief is thus not only a testament to the cross-cultural nature of artistic styles but also to the way that artists were able to learn from one another during a particularly turbulent time.



**Fig.2**  
Relief with the Annunciation,  
from a pulpit  
Italy, Florence, San Piero  
Scheraggio  
c.1180–1200



**Fig.3**  
Virgin Hagiosoritissa Relief  
Middle Byzantine, mid-  
eleventh century  
Dumbarton Oaks Museum  
BZ.1938.62

1, Ernst Kitzinger, 'The Byzantine Contribution to Western Art of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries,' in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* Vol. 20 (1966), pp.37–38.





The Virgin Annunciate



The Annunciation to the Virgin,  
from a Book of Hours





## The Annunciation to the Virgin, from a Book of Hours

This half-page square miniature depicts a scene of the Annunciation, which was commonly included in private devotional manuscripts, known as Books of Hours. These types of images provided female readers with the ideals of womanhood that they could aspire to. As they themselves read the manuscript, they looked to the Virgin reading her book as she was suddenly interrupted by the Archangel Gabriel.

The miniature shows the Virgin to the right of the composition, kneeling under a cloth canopy with one hand on her prayerbook, a white flower at her feet, as the angel appears from the left holding a scroll. The figure of God the Father looks down from the upper left corner, all before a tessellated background of tiny blue, pink and bright-gold tiles. A large, four line initial in blue with fine white brushwork is located below the miniature. The miniature and text are enclosed within very thick border of thin coloured bars twisted together and intersected enclosing stylised coloured ivy-leaves and supporting similar foliate sprays. The reverse contains 14 lines of text with 3 delicately illuminated initials, a border panel of similar rinceaux and smaller initials in gold.

This refined and glittering miniature is by a talented follower of the Master of the Munich Golden Legend (*fl.* c.1420–60). Our artist worked in the crucial innovative first decades of the fifteenth century, and like the Boucicaut Master and the Dunois Master he partly inherited and reworked the models of the Bedford Master (see the notably close composition on fol.21r of the Book of Hours, now Pierpont Morgan Library, MS. M.359), but his figures are fuller and less elongated.

This and the impassive rounded face of the Virgin here, shaded with peach-pink to create depth, shows the influence of the Master of the Munich Golden Legend (see the Book of Hours, sold Sotheby's, 3 December 2013 lot 54), who was named after a copy of the French translation of the *Golden Legend* (Munich, Bayer. Staatsbib., Cod.gall.3), and who is thought to have contributed to the Bedford Hours. Certainly the two worked together on the sublime Sobieski Hours (Windsor, Royal Library). He seems to have worked at certain stages of his career with a number of associates who adopted and domesticated his style, and the hand here may be one of them.

Northern France, Paris  
c.1430–1440

180 × 125 mm; single vellum leaf; pricecode in pencil "lkt" at foot of reverse, small area of hem of Virgin's robe rubbed, trimmed at edges, otherwise in clean and bright condition

Provenance  
Private Collection, UK



The Annunciation to the  
Virgin (verso)



**The Annunciation to the Virgin with the  
Martyrdom of Saint Peter on the reverse**





## The Annunciation to the Virgin with the Martyrdom of Saint Peter on the reverse

In late medieval Northern Europe, depictions of the Annunciation had a tendency to be rich in iconography, and the present rendition seems to show a particular zeal in the establishment of symbolic connections. This panel would have formed one side of the wings of an altarpiece. While a scene of the Annunciation occupies the interior face, an image of Saint Peter is painted on the exterior. The Annunciation depicts the Virgin shown in the act of reading as the Archangel Gabriel interrupts her, holding a scroll with the words *Ave gratia plena Dominus tecum* (Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with thee [Blessed are you among women] ((Luke 1:28))). The small lectern at which the Virgin kneels is decorated with a representation of the Temptation in the Garden, with a crowned female headed snake wrapped around the Tree of Life. The deployment of this detail in this scene gives a particularly literal resonance to the medieval homiletic trope according to which mankind was *fallen in Eve and restored in Ave*. In other words, the Virgin Mary is shown here as the New Eve. Above the Virgin's opened breviary, the Ten Commandments are signalled in faux Hebrew script, serving metonymically for the entire realm of the Old Law which is about to be superseded by the Incarnation. The lilies, attributes of the mystical spouse in the Song of Solomon, emerge from a porcelain vase bearing the painting's date (1506); they are combined with roses, which in this context are usually conceived as a poetic juxtaposition of the Rose of Sharon of the Old Testament *Song of Songs* and the *Mystical Rose* which it prefigures. A pair of shearing scissors and a collection of spindles hanging from the wall below the back opening, much like the carefully-rendered velvet cushion below, provide a characteristic counterweight to the realm of religious mystery, drawing us back to an intimate and domestic atmosphere which was also conceived as thoroughly contemporary.

The steep, distorted perspective of the scene's architectural space, aided by its tunnel-like vaulted ceiling, forcefully directs the viewer to the contemplation of a remote Visitation scene, thus progressing from the first to the second of the Joyful Mysteries of Marian devotion, as observed in the Rosary sequence (its use then spreading to the North of Europe, after its popularisation by the preaching orders in the South). The meeting of the Virgin and Saint Elizabeth is set in a dramatic landscape, sublimated by the thick gold background. Such tunnelling architectural structures opening on to a thick golden atmosphere are a trait of some Southern German painting of the period, as illustrated by the *Virgin of the Master of Mondsee*.

The reverse of the panel is decorated by an image of Saint Peter, coped and crowned with the Papal tiara, holding the keys. His cope is fastened by a morse bearing a miniature Veronica, and the golden halo inscribed with the invocation *S[ancte] Petre ora pro n[obis]*.<sup>1</sup> Framed by two stylised pines, he stands against a harsh landscape with sparse patches of vegetation, as if providing a transition between the desolate surroundings of the Golgotha and the more uncompromisingly northern ambience of the scenic background. The relief of the intermediate plane is made to open up dramatically, revealing the walled urban mass of Jerusalem. The adjacent spaces are the setting for the scenes of the carrying of the Cross and the martyrdom of Saint Peter.

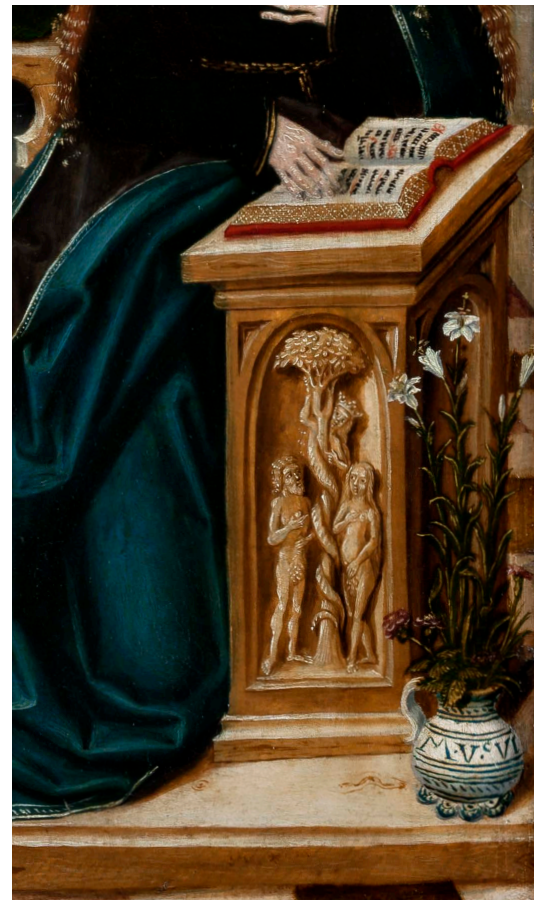
The fabrics on both St Peter's cope and Gabriel's cloak are treated with particular care – much in line with the fascination which rich textile patterns exerted in Southern German painters of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. A comparable treatment is attested by a

Germany, Swabia  
dated 1506

73.5 × 43.9 cm; oil on softwood panel, likely spruce or pine

### Provenance

Collection of Stuttgarter Landgerichtsrates Burkhardt  
Nagel Auction in February 1993, lot 3068



The Annunciation  
to the Virgin  
(detail)

<sup>1</sup>, Rather than the tentative transcription provided in Anna Moraht-Fromm (Berlin, 2015)



donor figure in the *Virgin at the Temple* of the Master of Mondsee (1499), which resonates closely with the manner in which textile surface is conceived in our piece (fig.1). A further testimony to the artist's response to textile is to be found in the saint's curious, quasi-transparent Rochet, which is summarily suggested through the use of dry, white strokes, and only acquires actual shape as it detaches itself from the sleeves of the underlying robe. The saint's beard, much like the archangel's hair on the Annunciation scene, is conveyed as a cursive pattern of spiralling curls, each independently treated; this manner appears idiosyncratic and may be an element deserving of comparative analysis.

The composition of the exterior panel is contained by a partial architectural frame of late gothic design, revealing that the panel was originally conceived as the inside wing on a triptych piece. Hanging from the top left corner, a German-style shield *à bouche* bears the arms of the Edlen of Hürnheim, allowing us to establish that the piece was produced under their patronage. Considering that the wing's now-lost counterpart was in all probability also endowed with a heraldic representation <sup>2</sup> it is possible to speculate as to whether the combined armorial bearings could have configured a matrimonial composition, the female arms traditionally being represented on the right.



**Fig.1**  
Master of Mondsee  
The Virgin at the Temple  
with donor.  
1499  
Tempera on canvas  
57.5 × 45 cm,  
Belvedere, Wien,  
cat. no 4863



**The Martyrdom  
of Saint Peter on  
the reverse of  
the Annunciation  
scene**

## The Virgin of the Nativity





## The Virgin of the Nativity

*The topos of the reclining Virgin, often depicted in a cave, developed as early as the 6th century in Byzantium and became a dominant way to depict the scene of the Nativity in the Middle Ages. This type of image did not represent the actual birth of Christ but rather the bed rest which was required of women postpartum. 'The separation of the mother from her child – that is, no holding or touching – became standard [in the scene], and often Mary and the child were represented on different planes (he above, she below)' for example in the Nativity on the pulpit by Nicola Pisano in Siena Cathedral (fig. 1). In Italy, this subject was most often depicted sculpturally on pulpits, where the view of the reclining Virgin was from an angle similar to Byzantine depictions, creating an illusion that the viewer was seeing the scene from above even though they stood well below it. In contrast, on French portals, the reclining Virgin was often depicted in profile so that the viewer below had the impression of standing under the Virgin's bed (fig. 2).*

This relief shows the isolated reclining Virgin on a mattress, which has been tipped so that the viewer can see the figure from above rather than in profile. This in turn gives the sculpture the shape of a right-angled triangle, which is wider near the Virgin's head and narrows towards her feet. The Virgin rests her head on a large cushion, her arms extended out and right palm turned upwards. Her hair peeks out from under the veil that covers her head. She turns her head delicately to her left, probably to look up at the infant Christ, whose figure would have formed part of the same relief. The Virgin's mattress and her body are covered in an abundant amount of clingy drapery, broken up by delicately carved soft folds. Her round face is characterised by fleshy cheeks, small almond shaped eyes and a wide nose.

Although it is uncertain where this relief originated, its size, state of preservation and the choice of material suggest that it may have once adorned a church furnishing, such as a pulpit. Pulpits in Central Italy were often richly decorated with scenes from the life of Christ and examples such as the celebrated pulpits by Nicola Pisano for the baptistery in Pisa and by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano for Siena Cathedral present obvious compositional comparatives (fig. 1). In both of these pulpits, the scene of the Nativity depicts the Virgin as a reclining figure whose mattress is tilted to the viewer. In Nicola Pisano's Pisa pulpit relief, the Virgin is represented as the largest and therefore the most important figure of the scene. Although it is uncertain how the size of our sculpture would have compared to the other figures that would have surrounded her, the Virgin's reclining position and the tilt of her mattress would have certainly given her a dominant role amongst them.

Marble was an extremely expensive material; however, it was readily available to sculptors working in Central Italy because it was quarried there. So the material of this sculpture suggests this part of Europe as a place of origin. Moreover, the style of the softly modelled drapery and of the facial features find analogies with early 14th century sculpture in Central Italy, such as the work by Lorenzo Maitani, who was responsible for designing the west façade of Orvieto Cathedral (fig.3). Maitani did not work alone and his workshop is largely held responsible for the individual sculptures, which are characterised by round fleshy faces with wide noses and by fabrics which cling to the bodies of the figures. These features find parallels with our work, which, despite the loss of its original context, is an accomplished and eloquent autonomous sculpture.

### Central Italy

#### Early 14th century

34.5 x 75 x 18.5 cm; white marble, the tip of the Virgin's nose and left hand have been lost

#### Provenance

Collection of Nicholas & Genevieve Brady, Inisfada, Manhasset, Long Island, prior to 1930;  
Private Collection, Southern Netherlands



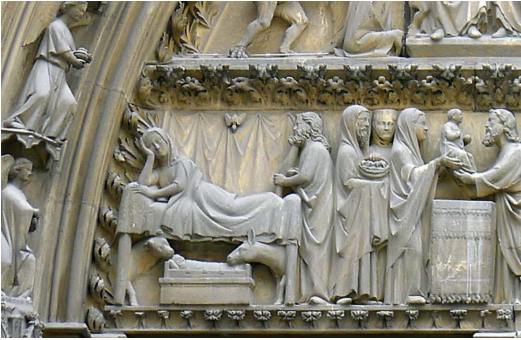
**Fig.1**

Nicola Pisano and Giovanni Pisano  
The Nativity  
Italy, Siena Cathedral,  
Pulpit  
c. 1260

1, Helen E. Roberts,  
*Encyclopedia of  
Comparative Iconography:  
Themes Depicted in Works  
of Art* (Taylor & Francis,  
2013), 142.



The Virgin of the Nativity



**Fig.2**  
Nativity  
France, Paris, Notre Dame  
(North Transept)  
c. 1250



**Fig.3**  
Lorenzo Maitani  
The Annunciation  
Italy, Orvieto  
c. 1310



## Life of the Virgin



## Life of the Virgin

The iconography of the Nativity changed in the late 14th century, when the mystical Revelations of Saint Bridget of Sweden (1303–1373), the founder of the Bridgettine Nuns, inspired the development of new types of images.<sup>1</sup> Primary sources reveal that Bridget was one of the most charismatic saints of the Middle Ages, ‘commanding prelates and popes and engaging in political secular intrigues in the courts of Europe.’<sup>2</sup> She gained an important status in influential circles in the Christian world and together with her writings, which constitute approximately seven hundred revelations, she was ‘widely revered, read, cited, emulated and debated.’<sup>3</sup> (Fig.1). Saint Bridget described her vision of the birth of Christ as such:

*I saw that glorious infant lying on the earth, naked and glowing in the greatest of neatness. ... When therefore the Virgin felt that she had now given birth, at once, having bowed her head and joined her hands, with great dignity and reverence she adored the boy and said to him: "Welcome, my God, my Lord, and my Son!" ... When these things therefore were accomplished, the old man [Joseph] entered; and prostrating on the earth, he adored him on bended knee and wept for joy.*<sup>4</sup>

This vision was translated to iconography in several guises but one which was widely adopted by artists in the later middle ages depicts the Virgin, her hands clasped, kneeling before Christ, who lays on the ground with rays of light around him. As the vision dictates, the traditional figure of Joseph is usually missing from this interpretation of the scene.

Carved in high relief, this sculpture is composed of three scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary. The first scene on the left is not fully decipherable, but the bearded male figure is probably Joseph, who holds hands with another figure dressed in a long tunic and cloak, probably the Virgin. A further male figure stands between them, indicating that this scene almost certainly forms a part of the Marriage of the Virgin. The central scene is that of the Annunciation, which depicts the startled figure of the Virgin turning to the winged figure of the Archangel Gabriel, who approaches her kneeling. Clothed in a long tunic covered by a cloak, similar to that of the fragmentary figure from the first scene, the Virgin raises her hand in front of her chest in a gesture of modesty.

The most interesting scene here, however, is the Nativity, which is located to the right of the Annunciation. It shows the Virgin kneeling in prayer next to a naked Christ child, who is lying on the floor surrounded by rays of light – clearly inspired by the revelation of Saint Bridget of Sweden. A figure of a midwife is also a part of this scene, holding the hand of the Christ child. Albeit unusual in late medieval western iconography, the midwife was commonly represented in Greek Orthodox images and was based on the Protoevangelium of James, where it is written that a midwife went in and ‘bowed her knees unto the Lord.’ At that moment an angel appeared saying to her, ‘Salome, Salome, the Lord hath hearkened to thee: bring thine hand near unto the young child and take him up, and there shall be unto thee salvation and joy’ (Chapter XX 1).

The *Revelations* of Saint Bridget were extremely influential throughout Northern Europe and it was especially the iconography of the Nativity that had the most lasting effect. This type of image gained a lot of popularity in Northern Europe and examples of it can be found in France and Netherlands (fig.2). Northern European images from the 15th century also reveal the work of other apocryphal texts, such as the *Protoevangelium* of

Northern France, Burgundy?  
c.1440–1460

60 × 47 × 15 cm; limestone

Provenance:  
Tajan Auction, 1997



**Fig.1**  
Saint Bridget of Sweden  
writing her revelations  
Germany, Augsburg, Breviary  
for Birgittine Use  
1475  
The New York Public Library  
Spencer Collection Ms. 63

1, Although it is unlikely that Saint Bridget's text inspired the iconography directly, her Revelation 'was crucial for the popularity of this way of depicting the Nativity.' See Henk van Os, *The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages in Europe 1300–1500* (London, 1994), p.21.

2, Bridget Morris, *St Birgitta of Sweden* (Woodbridge, 1999), p.1

3, Ibid. 4

4, Bridget of Sweden's Vita in *Breviarium Romanum: Ex decreto Sacros[ancti] Conc[ilii] Trid[entini] Restitutum*. Rome: Typis Vaticanis, 1632.







**Fig.2**  
Nativity  
Southern Netherlands  
c.1460  
MET 32.100.39

James, which mention the presence of Mary Salome at the birth of Christ. In such images, as in our relief, a figure of a midwife often accompanied the Virgin, offering an example for the viewers to follow (fig.2).

Judging by its size, composition and fragmentary nature, this relief probably formed a part of a larger narrative on a portal or a church furnishing. The simple, heavy folds of drapery, along with rounded faces, high foreheads, heavy lids and naturally flowing hair find parallels with Northern French sculpture from the middle of the 15th century. These characteristics can be compared to the Virgin Annunciate from the Godwin-Ternbach Museum, or even the Virgin and Child sculpture from the MET Cloisters (fig.3-4). Although more monumental, the facial features, wavy hair and drapery style of these figures is extremely similar to our relief.



**Fig.3**  
Virgin of the Annunciation  
Northern France  
c.1450  
Godwin-Ternbach Museum,  
Flushing 63.14



**Fig.4**  
Virgin and Child detail  
France  
15th century  
Metropolitan Museum of Art 26.63.37a





Life of the Virgin

**A 'Shrine Madonna' showing the  
Virgin Mary holding the infant Jesus**





## A 'Shrine Madonna' showing the Virgin Mary holding the infant Jesus

*The veneration of the Virgin Mary was immense throughout the Middle Ages, especially as the Council of Ephesus in 431 confirmed her to be Theotokos or God-bearer. Images of the Virgin changed as her cult grew and the late thirteenth century saw the birth of a curious object called a 'Shrine Madonna'. At first glance, this object looks analogous to the sculpted image of Sedes Sapientiae or the Throne of Wisdom. The Virgin Mary sits upright, staring out into the distance while her left hand protects a small figure of Christ, who is carved in the form of a miniature adult, rather than a baby. A seam that runs vertically down the Virgin's chest, however, indicates that this is not a typical image of a Sedes Sapientiae; the seam allows her chest open up like the wings of an altarpiece. This Shrine Madonna would have almost certainly been located on an altar of a church and opened on feast days. Although the polychromy and any interior decoration is now lost from the sculpture, thanks to other surviving examples such as the Shrine Madonna from Eguishem, we know that it would have once been brightly painted and the interior would have probably revealed an image of the Trinity inside her chest (fig.1).*

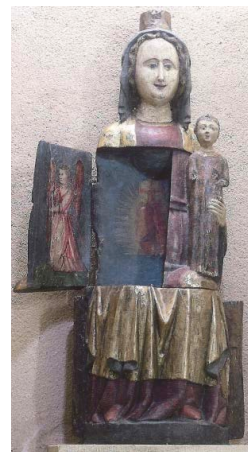
Stylistically, this work can be localised to the Rhineland. The style of the drapery and the composition of the sculpture (its opening only extending as far as her waist) can be compared to a Shrine Madonna from Eguishem, dated to the early 14th century (fig.1). Our Virgin, however, wears an elaborate headdress called a *kruseler*, which became fashionable on sculpture only in the middle of the 14th century. An elaborate example of this headdress, which consists of a veil with a very decorative headband, is found on a reliquary bust from Cologne (fig.2). Another stylistically related sculpture with a *kruseler* is a 14th century Virgo Lactans from the Schnütgen Museum (fig.3). The style of the drapery of this figure as well as the facial features, which include a small mouth, rounded eyes and a high forehead, find close parallels with the present work.

Popularised in the late 13th century, only a small proportion of Shrine Madonnas, such as this example, have survived the ensuing 700 years (fig.4)-you illustrate the Met example but make no mention of it? Perhaps should move it up to be Fig.1. As Elina Gertsman pointed out, the Virgin's body became 'the cover of the sacred codex' in images such as this.<sup>1</sup> From about the 15th century, however, these objects were looked upon as abhorrent and flawed because they placed the Virgin at the centre of the sacred doctrine. As Jean Gerson (d. 1429) declared after seeing a Shrine Madonna in the Carmelite monastery in Paris, it has 'the Trinity within its womb, as if the entire Trinity took flesh in the Virgin Mary!'<sup>2</sup> He continued on to say that he worried that such a sentiment might cause a lack of devotion. What's more, these representations transformed the body of the Virgin Mary, which was a symbol purity and modesty, to one that was cut open and revealed. As a result, by the early modern period, most of these statues were banned, destroyed or glued shut.

Germany, Rhineland  
c.1350

77.9 × 27.4 cm; carved softwood with traces of polychromy. Historic woodworm damage to the lower section of the Virgin and on the body of the infant Christ, the head of Christ and his left hand lost; the remains of iron pins in the crown suggest the attachment of decorative elements; two dowels added to the inside to protect the doors from collapsing in

Provenance  
Private Collection, France



**Fig.1**  
Shrine Madonna  
Germany, Eguishem,  
Parish church of Saint  
Peter and Saint Paul  
c.1320

1, Elina Gertsman, 'Image as Word: Visual Openings, Verbal Imaginings,' in *Studies in Iconography* Vol. 32 (2011), 55.

2, Elina Gertsman, 'The Lives and Afterlives of Shrine Madonnas,' in *California Italian Studies* Vol. 6 (2016), 3.



**Fig.2**  
Reliquary bust with Kruseler  
Germany, Cologne  
c.1350  
Cologne, Schnutgen Museum

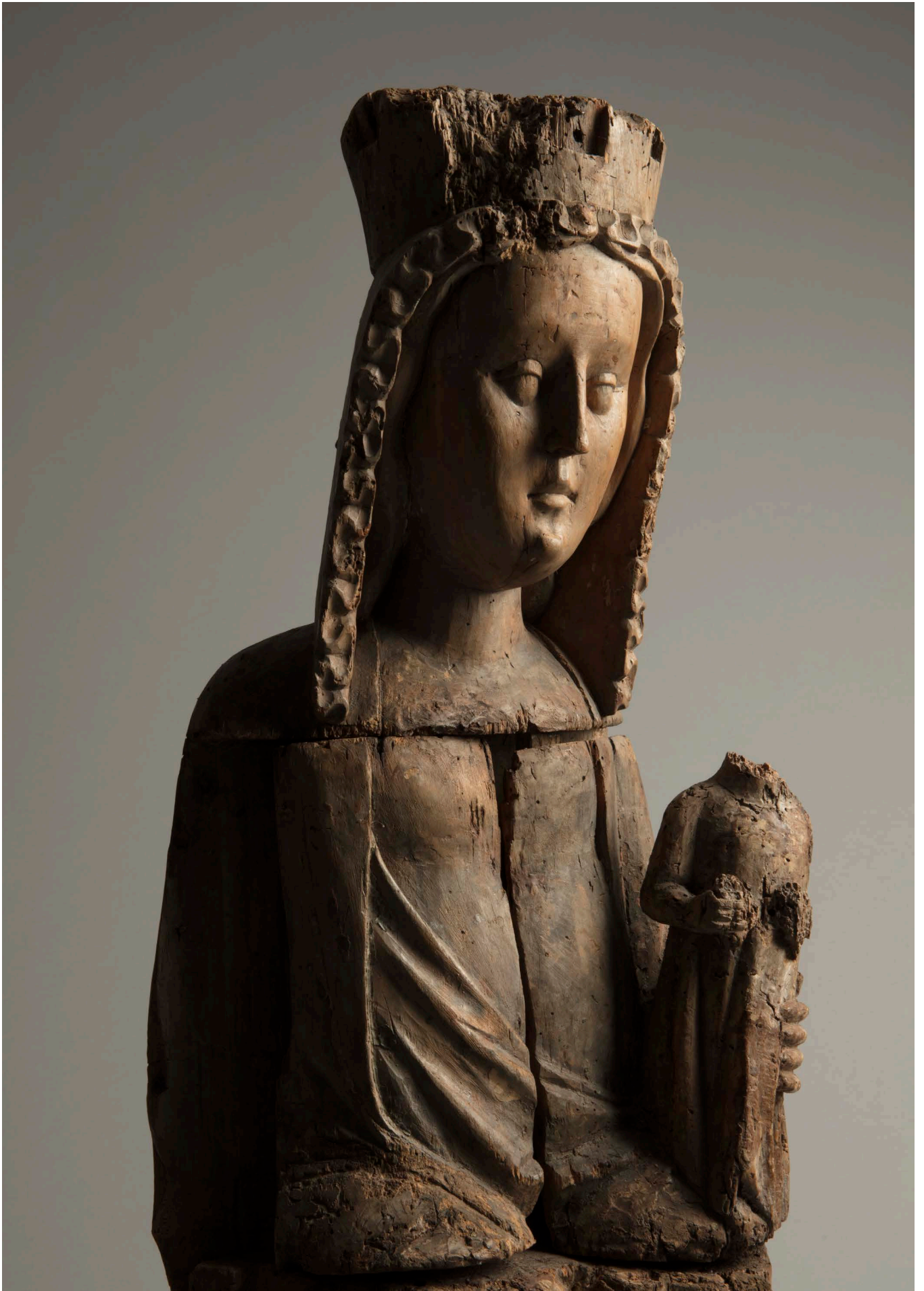


**Fig.3**  
Virgo Lactans  
Germany, Rheinland  
c.1350  
Cologne, Schnutgen Museum



A 'Shrine Madonna'  
showing the Virgin Mary  
holding the infant Jesus  
(detail)





## Virgin and Child Enthroned





## Virgin and Child Enthroned

*Driven by the Dominican order and its growing female component, southern Germany became the centre of mysticism in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. As Carolyn Jirousek has argued, the nature of the written works by the Dominican mystics 'was affected by the remarkable increase in the number of women devoting themselves to religious life as members of formal monastic orders. [This was due to] an increase in the religious fervor spread by the preaching friars and vernacular texts, by a search for liberation from the constraints of marriage and societal restrictions on education, and by the imbalance in the male/female populations because of frequent war and the choice of monastic life among many marriageable men.'*<sup>1</sup> Many of these women were highly educated and came from the upper classes, often contributing to the instructive mystical texts and to the rapid evolution of devotional images. This time period is therefore often called the age of the *Andachtsbilder* – a monumental devotional image that was 'psychologically charged' to communicate an emotional state and transport the soul to God.<sup>2</sup> As such, images of the Virgin and Christ changed rapidly in this period, prioritising an emphasis on the intimate relationship between the mother and child over the more traditional *Sedes Sapientia* image. The Virgin, who was once perhaps too remote from humanity as the Throne of Wisdom, now became the smiling compassionate figure, who was a real mother playing with her child.<sup>3</sup>

This extremely important and finely carved sculpture of the Virgin and Child is created in this vein. The figure of the Virgin sits on a low throne and delicately turns her head to the figure of the Christ Child, whom she holds with her left hand. The elegantly carved facial features of both figures include almond shaped eyes, delicate eyebrows and straight noses. Rather than sitting positioned centrally on the Virgin's lap, the Christ child stands on the edge of the throne and wears a long tunic. In her right hand, the Virgin holds a small ball, a symbol of an orb, which the Christ reaches out to. The Virgin's fine veil frames her face, while her hair peeks out just underneath it in delicate waves. Her voluminous mantle falls in a series of dramatic folds down over her knees. The group is carved in the round, although the back is simpler, suggesting that this large sculpture was meant to have been viewed frontally.

Stylistically, the Virgin and Child belongs to a group of carvings produced in and around the city of Constance, which was the most important episcopal and mercantile city in the Upper Rhine around 1300. This localisation is also supported by the sculpture's provenance and the scientific analysis conducted on it.<sup>4</sup> In 1959, when Alfred Schädler published this monumental sculpture, it was in the collection of Schloss Rauhenzell in Allgäu. He dated it to 1310 and noted that it was originally in the Chapel of Schloss von Altlaubenberg. This is also supported by an inscription in pencil on the back of the base, which notes that it was found in Egg, a hamlet near Rauhenzell, and that it probably comes from the destroyed castle of Altlaubenberg. Comparisons have been made between our figure and that of the celebrated *Christ and Saint John the Evangelist* group, attributed to Master Heinrich of Constance, now in Antwerp's Museum Mayer van den Bergh (fig.1).<sup>5</sup> Scholars have put forward the Mayer van den Bergh's *Christ and Saint John* as the primary example of a broad group of devotional carvings from Lake Constance and the surrounding region around 1300, such as the Visitation in Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig.2).<sup>6</sup> Comparing our sculpture to the Mayer van den Bergh example, the folds of our Virgin's draperies form a similar pattern

**Germany, Swabia, Lake Constance  
1310**

96 × 65 × 45 cm; walnut, left hand and tip of nose of Christ Child, and right hand of Virgin replaced, abraded surface of wood from previous restoration smoothed particularly in crevices; base is probably a later addition; inscription in pencil on back: Auf der Egg gefunden, stamt wahrscheinlich aus dem nahe gelegenen abgebrannten Schloss Altlaubenberg bei Rauhenzell

### Provenance

Chapel of Schloss von Altlaubenberg, Grünenbach;  
Found in Egg, a hamlet near Rauhenzell (inscription on back);  
Schloss Rauhenzell, Allgäu, by 1928

### Published

Alfred Schädler, *Allgäu*, Munich, Berlin, 1959, p.41, pl. 113, p.51 (described here as originally in the Chapel of Altlaubenberg at Grünenbach)

Ed. Michael Petzet, *Die Kunstdenkmäler von Schwabe, VIII, Landkreises sonthofen*, Munich, 1964, pp.698–702, fig.606 (Bavarian State Conservation Office *The Art of Monuments Swabia*)

Ilse Futterer, *Die seeschwäbische Holzbilderei im frühen 14. Jahrhundert*, in: *Das Schwäbische Museum*, 1928, pp.1–4

1, Carolyn S. Jirousek, 'St. John the Evangelist as a Model of Medieval Mysticism,' in *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art*, Vol. 6 (2001), 11.

2, Ibid. 14.

3, Emile Mâle, *Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century* (Icon: New York, 1958), 236.

4, RCD analysis (2013) confirms the age of this sculpture.

5, Joz de Co, *Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Catalogus 2*,

*Beeldhouwkunst Plaketten Antiek* (Antwerp, 1969), cat. 2096, pp.87–102; Gillerman dates it more precisely to around 1305, see Dorothy Gillerman, *Gothic Sculpture in America, II. The Museums of the Midwest* (Turnhout, 2001) p.328.

6, Carolyn S. Jirousek, 'St. John the Evangelist as a Model of Medieval Mysticism,' in *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art*, Vol. 6 (2001), 6–27.



**Fig.1**  
Christ and Saint John the  
Evangelist  
Hazelnut; 129.5 cm high  
Germany, Constance  
c.1312  
Museum Mayer van den  
Bergh, Antwerp



**Fig.2**  
The Visitation (1310–20)  
Attributed to Master  
Heinrich of Constance  
Germany, Constance  
c.1300  
Walnut, paint, gilding, rock-  
crystal cabochons inset in  
gilt-silver mounts; 59.1 ×  
30.2 × 18.4 cm  
The Metropolitan  
Museum of Art, Accession  
Number: 17.190.724

of folds to those of Christ and Saint John, with vertical folds rising from her waist, a series of deep undulating folds that reveal the inner lining, and those falling over their legs. A comparison which is closer still can be drawn with another example from this Constance group: a much-damaged sculpture of Saint John the Evangelist and Christ now in the Badisches Landesmuseum in Karlsruhe, dated to c.1300 (fig.3). Stripped of paint, the Karlsruhe example shares the same style of carving with long wavy hair, elegant facial features and delicately articulated tunic with a 'v' shaped collar. The carving of the sheer layers of drapery on the shoulders of these figures is also analogous. Although not enough similarities exist to attribute our sculpture to the same hand as either of these two examples, the Virgin and Child can firmly be dated to the early 14th century and localised to the Lake Constance area.

The iconography of the Christ and Saint John group of sculptures from Constance, which showed Christ tenderly holding onto the hand or the cheek of Saint John, is also linked to our piece. As argued by Jirousek, these sculptures were 'exceptional in melding form and content to communicate to the beholder messages of love and union with the divine.'<sup>7</sup> In our sculpture, the Virgin and Child are enthroned and monumental; however, the Virgin is stripped of her crown and her role as the Throne of Wisdom. Instead, she becomes a doting mother, tenderly wrapping her arm around the child as she watches over him carefully. He stands at the edge of her seat, reaching for the orb in a gesture that is very childlike. The duality expressed in this image 'emphasises humanity at the expense of the heavenly' and illustrates the changing notion of Gothic sculpture in this period.<sup>8</sup>

7, Ibid. 22.

8, Ibid. 22.





**Fig.3**  
 Christ and Saint John the Evangelist  
 Germany, Constance  
 c.1300  
 Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe



**Virgin and Child Enthroned**  
 (detail)





## The Meeting of Anna and Joachim at the Golden Gate



## The Meeting of Anne and Joachim at the Golden Gate

*Saint Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary, first appears in an apocryphal gospel called the Protevangelium of Saint James, written in the middle of the 2nd century CE. However, it was not until the 12th century that the cult of Saint Anne grew in Northern Europe.<sup>1</sup> It was at this time that questions surrounding the conception of the Virgin Mary started to inhabit the minds of medieval theologians, who could not reconcile the purity of the Virgin with the original sin that may have accompanied Mary's birth. The focal point of Anne's story in art thus became the miraculous conception of the Virgin Mary after Anne's inability to have children with Joachim for twenty years. This event was represented in art with the embrace between Anna and Joachim at the Golden Gate, after they were both told by an angel that Anna will become pregnant with Mary.*

**Master of the Bamberg Altarpiece**  
Germany, Nuremberg  
c.1435

106.8 × 58.1 cm; oil on unidentified softwood panel

*Provenance*

Munich, collection of Prof. Dr. Johannes Sepp, c.1900; H. Becker collection, Dortmund; Sotheby's, New York, 1990; collection of Richard F. Sterba

*Published and exhibited*

Susie Nash, *Late Medieval Panel Paintings: Materials, Methods, Meanings*, 2011 pp.12–21. Exhibition at Richard L. Feigen & Co, New York, 4 November 2011–27 January 2012.

In this panel, Joachim, who wears a blue hood over a dark purple-red cloak, embraces Anne, who wears a red cloak lined with grey fur and a white headdress that completely covers her hair. Only Anne is haloed in this painting, emphasising the important status of her cult. The embrace between the two figures, which alludes to Anne's miraculous pregnancy, is the only reference needed to understand the iconography here. The scene is set between two twisted gold columns in a vaulted space indicated by arches that spring from the flat piers of the columns behind. That the columns do not represent the gate of the story is indicated by their inclusion in two other panels related to this work (fig.1–2); they are a compositional device, not an iconographic feature.

This panel is one of six fragments that are thought to have been part of the high altarpiece of the church of the Augustinian canons at Langenzenn, just outside Nuremberg. The panels can convincingly be attributed to the Master of the Bamberg Altarpiece, one of the most important painters active in Nuremberg in the second quarter of the fifteenth century in the generation before Hans Pleydenwurff.<sup>2</sup> Two of these fragments, *The Virgin Entering the Temple* in the Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, and a Virgin, presumably from a Visitation, in the Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum in Aachen, are very similar to the present panel (fig.1–2).<sup>3</sup> All three are of similar height, all three have twisted yellow-glazed silver-leaf columns defining the edges and confining the figures within them and all three are set in identical spaces, with a central pier from which springs a blue vault, set against a gold ground. All three also have figures that are shown at three-quarter length, presenting the scenes in a restrained manner without any extraneous detail at all, allowing a focus on the faces and hands to explicate the story. While there is no doubt these panels are related stylistically to one another and, indeed, would seem to be by the same painter or workshop, the assumption that they are all part of the same altarpiece has been disputed.<sup>4</sup>

1, Virginia Nixon, *Mary's Mother : Saint Anne in Late Medieval Europe* (PSU Press, 2004), p.12.

2, On the Master of the Bamberg Altarpiece see Stange 1934–61, IX, pp.9–15; K. Löcher, 'Panel Painting in Nuremberg:1350–1550', in R. Kashnitz and William D. Wixom (eds.), *Gothic and Renaissance Art in Nuremberg 1300–1550*, exh. cat., New York, 1986,

pp.81–83 and 150–54, and most recently Strieder 1993, pp.30–32.

3, The Aachen panel was previously in Erfurt, in the collection of Clemens Lagemann: see E.G. Grimme, *Führer durch das Suermondt-Museum Aachen: Skulpturen, Gemälde, Schatzkunst*, Aachen, 1974, no. 145.

4, Susie Nash, *Late Medieval Panel Paintings: Materials, Methods, Meanings*, 2011 pp.12–21.





**Fig.1**  
The Virgin Entering  
the Temple  
Germany, Nuremberg  
c.1435  
Stuttgard, Staatsgalerie



**Fig.2**  
The Virgin of  
the Annuciation  
Germany, Nuremberg  
c.1435  
Suermondt-Ludwig Museum  
in Aachen





## The Education of the Virgin



## The Education of the Virgin

Images of women reading or women learning to read were not unbefitting in medieval art because medieval women were often more educated than men. At aristocratic courts, women became important patrons of literature, frequently owning an impressive library of manuscripts. Images such as this sculpture of Saint Anne, who teaches the young Virgin Mary to read, illustrated the way that children of wealthier parents would have been taught to read by their mother or their father. Saint Anne is in a frontal pose here, gently resting her right hand on the Virgin's back and holding a book in her left. With her left hand, the Virgin holds one side of the book and in her right, she holds a marker which she uses to guide her reading. The Virgin is crowned, wearing an elaborate costume, while Saint Anne wears a hooded mantle and a long robe.

This sculpture is related in style to a group of carvings from Poligny, which include the Virgin of Clarrisses de Poligny, a monastery founded in 1415 and the well-known Saint Anne of Poligny from the Church of Saint-Hippolite of Poligny (fig.1).<sup>1</sup> The latter can be dated to the 1420s and its style takes precedence from the work of Claus de Werve and his Burgundian contemporaries. Saint Anne's broad draperies, the high waisted dress, the treatment of the wimple and the veil which rises to a point, are comparable to those of Saint Anne of Poligny. Close attention to fine detail is also characteristic of the style and can be found in the present work with features the presence of a marker with which the Virgin points to the book; this can also be seen on the Saint Anne of Poligny carving and rarely elsewhere. The saints' facial features, the drapery and the carving of the hair can also be compared to other sculptures from this region of France, such as the Virgin and Child, now in the Musée Rolin (fig.2).

Whilst this sculpture is related in style to the Poligny group, there are a number of features which indicate it is of a slightly later date. The inclusion of the cotehardie, a surcoat worn over a longer gown by the Virgin, and her crown contrast with the simpler garments worn by the Virgin in the Anne of Poligny group.<sup>2</sup> These features belong to a later development in medieval art of Northern Europe where the young Virgin is depicted in a courtly costume with a corseted dress and a mantle. Such trends would have caused images such as this sculpted group to be closer still to the fashions of wealthy women, who would find much relatability with this image.

France, Franche-Comté, Poligny (?)

Mid-15th century

78 × 27 × 21 cm; limestone, traces of polychrome, a few small surface repairs otherwise remarkably good condition

*Provenance:*

Private Collection, France

1, Illustrated in Jacques Baudoin, *La sculpture flamboyante en Bourgogne et Franche-Comté*, (Nonette, 1994) fig.222, p.140 and fig.220, p.139.  
2, Ibid. fig.165, p.114.





**Figs.1**  
 Saint Anne of Poligny  
 France, Church of Saint-  
 Hippolita of Poligny  
 1420s



**Figs.2**  
 Virgin and Child  
 France, Burgundy  
 First half of the 15th century  
 Musee Rolin, Autun



**The Education of the Virgin**  
 (detail)







## A lampas panel depicting Saint Barbara





## A lampas panel depicting Saint Barbara

*Saint Barbara is thought to have been born in the 3rd century AD in Turkey or Lebanon as the daughter of a wealthy pagan man named Dioscorus, who kept her guarded in a tower. While her father was away, Barbara asked the builders who were constructing a bathhouse for her to build in three windows to symbolize the Trinity because she secretly converted to Christianity. After discovering that Barbara had become a Christian, Dioscorus became enraged and had her arrested. She was tortured and sentenced to death by beheading, which was carried out by her father. By the 14th century, Barbara's cult grew immensely, and she was included in a group called the Holy Helpers – saints that were believed to protect against disease and sudden death.*

This woven panel was originally part of an orphrey band from a liturgical vestment. The standing figure of Saint Barbara holds a martyr's palm in one hand and her attribute of the tower in which she was imprisoned by her pagan father in the other. She is depicted against a background of green intertwined vines sprouting large flowers. While the panel's dominant patterns and features are woven integrally, they are embellished with a plethora of embroidered elements; the figure's face, hair and haloes, the blue tiled roof of the tower in and the astonishingly delicate flowers sprouting at her feet, are all embroidered. In many places these touches of needlework are of truly remarkable subtlety and skill.

This panel attests to the incredible ingenuity and inventiveness of the weavers of Cologne in the second half of the fifteenth century. Although we have little knowledge concerning exactly where and by whom such textiles were made, the production of these woven textiles for use in liturgical vestments seems to have been perfected in the city and its environs as early as the twelfth century, and flourished right up until the Reformation.<sup>1</sup> In recent years scholarship on the subject has developed rapidly, and several important new studies have helped to broaden our understanding of the status and importance that these extraordinarily costly luxury objects enjoyed at the time of their manufacture.<sup>2</sup> The medium's easily divisible format and inherent suitability for use on a variety of liturgical textiles and furnishings has meant that, like most extant pieces of this date, our panels survive as short sections of textiles that must originally have been woven in much greater lengths.

This panel has two sister pieces, whose widths and warp count correspond precisely, suggesting that while they were executed individually, and perhaps even in different workshops, production for this class of textile was standardized to a large degree. The elegant vines that criss-cross and march across the backgrounds of the group seem to have come into fashion around the middle of the fifteenth century, and most surviving examples are characterized by figures similarly superimposed on to a decorative framework of large green or red vines that resemble a garden in full bloom. Closely comparable lampas bands (particularly those ornamented with green foliage) are preserved in the Schnütgen Museum, Cologne, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Fine Art Museum, San Francisco.<sup>3</sup> Examples depicting figures set against a dense red ground in the manner of panel (a) are comparatively rarer. A chasuble ornamented with several panels of the same design survives in the Schnütgen Museum, woven with the name and arms of Johann Pennynck, a burgomaster of Cologne who died in or before 1479.<sup>4</sup> It allows us to date our example accordingly to the twenty or so years immediately after the middle of the century.<sup>5</sup> It is likely that the embroiderers responsible

Germany, Cologne

c.1450–75

34.2 × 14 cm, 17 warps/cm; woven lampas embroidered with gold- and silver- metal-wrapped threads and coloured silks; a general and even level of surface abrasion, with some broken or missing threads but only minimal fading to the coloured dyes

*Provenance*

With Brimo de Laroussilhe, Paris, 2002;  
Private collection, London, until 2018

*Exhibited*

Blumka Gallery, New York, 22 January – 8 February 2002

*Published*

*Collecting Treasures of the Past* exh. cat. New York 2002, nos. 76–78

1, Leonie Von Wilckens, 'kolner Textilien', in Anton Legner. Ed., *Ornamenta Ecclesiae: Kunst und Künstler in der Romantik in Köln*, exh. cat., Schnütgen museum, Cologne 1985, pp.440–45; Marita Bombek, 'Kölner Borten, Kölner Garn, Kölner Gold in der mittelalterlichen Textilwirtschaft der Stadt Köln', in Marita Bombek and Gudren Sporbeck, *Kolner Bortenweberei im Mittelalter*, Regensburg 2012, pp.17–39.

2, Evelin Wetter, *Liturgische Gewänder in der Schwartzen Kirche zu Kronstadt in Siebenburgen*, Riggisberg 2012, pp.209–43; Marita Bombek and Gudren Sporbeck, *Kolner Bortenweberei im Mittelalter*, Regensburg 2012.

3, Sporbeck dates the examples in Cologne to c.1450, see Gudren Sporbeck,

die Liturgischen Gewänder 11. Bis 19. Jahrhundert, cologne 2001, pp.112–14, cat. 20; San Francisco panels inv. 1952.30; Metropolitan Museum panels inv. 53.35.3. 4, Bombek and Sporbeck 2012, pp.209–11, no. 101 see 1.

5, Other fragments similarly given to this date range survive in the Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin, the treasury of Aachen Cathedral, and the Museum für angewandte Kunst in Cologne. For the Aachen and Berlin fragments see Bombek and Sporbeck 2012, p.211, and for the fragments in the Museum für angewandte Kunst see Bombek and Sporbeck 2012, pp.212–14, no. 103.1; for those in the Schnütgen see Bombek and Sporbeck 2012, pp.214–16, no. 103.2.



for this figure collaborated closely on their design with contemporary painters, since many of their stylistic features echo those found in panel paintings executed in Cologne during the 1450s and 1460s, a connection that further helps in the dating of this panel and the wider group to which they belong (figs. 1 and 2).



**Figs.1-2**  
Coffer panel with the Entry  
of Saint Ursula into Basel  
(details)  
Cologne, c.1455-60  
Oil on spruce, 54 × 248 cm  
Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz  
Museum, inv. WRM 0716



## Mary Magdalene at the Crucifixion





## Mary Magdalene at the Crucifixion

*Mary Magdalene was one of Christ's closest followers and her intimate relationship with him is emphasised by the fact that her name is mentioned in the Gospels more than that of any other apostle or saint. Her story is introduced in medieval sources by emphasising her weakness for pleasures of the flesh. As the Golden Legend recounts, 'renown as she was for her beauty and her riches, she was no less known for the way that she gave her body to pleasure.'<sup>1</sup> After learning about the preaching of Christ, however, Mary Magdalene was guided by a divine will to go to the house of Simon, where she washed Christ's feet with her tears and anointed them. The intimate friendship that developed between Mary Magdalene and Christ is emphasised in the Golden Legend: 'He took her side at all times. He defended her when the Pharisee said she was unclean, when her sister implied that she was lazy, when Judas called her wasteful. Seeing her weep, he could not contain his tears.'<sup>2</sup> As a reformed sinner, she offered a Biblical parallel to life on earth. The visual and literary arts had an important role in shaping the story of Mary Magdalene, which served as a model for the medieval viewer. In both art and in medieval writing, Mary Magdalene is a vital presence during Christ's most important moments on earth. It was believed that through devotion and prayer to images of Mary Magdalene, the viewer might, like her, regain purity and find the same redemption that she was given by Christ.*

**Southern Netherlands, likely Bruges**  
c.1515–1520

85.8 × 58.1 cm; oil on oak panel; a narrow band has been repainted along the panel's bottom edge; minor level of abrasion to the paint surface

*Provenance*

Count Woldemar von Schwerin, Bohrau Castle, Silesia, and by descent until 2016;  
Christie's New York, 14 April, 2016, lot. 124.

*Exhibited*

On permanent view at the Hamburger Kunsthalle, 1977–2015

This dramatic vision of the Crucifixion stresses the unique role of Mary Magdalene, placing her at the forefront of the composition. The cross is positioned at a three-quarter angle to the left, so that Christ's extended arms are shown in foreshortened perspective. Around his body, seventeen angels clad in pastel-coloured garments appear in the sky. To emphasise the composition's perspectival shift, the figures conventionally shown at the foot of the cross – Saint John and the grieving Marys – are positioned together on the left. They are depicted at subtly different scales, so that the spatial progression from Mary Magdalene, who is shown kneeling at the very foot of the cross at the front of the group, to the Virgin and Saint John who stand behind her, and finally to the weeping female figures visible in the middle distance, takes on a heightened recessive quality. A city visible in the distance and before it, a large castellated bridge spans a stretch of water, with a throng of people gathered around its buildings.

Our painter's single most important source was a painting of *Christ on the Cross* executed around 1502 by Gerard David (fig.1). This suggests his activity in Bruges, where David operated a successful workshop and where his painting is believed to have been displayed. A panel from David's circle showing the *Lamentation* now in the Art Museum of the University of California-Santa Barbara (Inv. 1960.4) depicts the Magdalene equally prominently, and at a similarly large scale at the front of the scene, attesting to the ways in which the artists associated with David's Bruges workshop manipulated and expounded upon the Magdalene themes of his paintings. Other features of our panel also reflect contemporary Antwerp painting, and some degree of contact with that centre must also be accommodated. Typical of Antwerp painting is the expansive space, with a deep landscape dominating the visual effect of the scene.

Despite the many similarities between David's *Christ on the Cross* and our painting, several crucial changes to David's prototype make it clear that our panel was not a copy but a highly considered and sophisticated commission with a clear symbolic function. Instead of being placed behind the foot of the cross, as in David's painting, the Magdalene is brought

1, Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, William Granger Ryan, trans. Vol. 1 (Princeton, 1993), 375.  
2, *Ibid.* 376.





Mary Magdalene at the Crucifixion detail



forward and physically isolated from the rest of the mourners. Her clasped hands and piercing gaze out at the viewer are intended to invoke our own reaction to the scene above, but simultaneously serve to focus our attention on her, and her implausibly large scale in comparison with the other figures thus shows itself to be a deliberate compositional decision. The clear emphasis on Mary Magdalene, who looks out at the viewer, could be a response to her rising popularity in late Medieval devotional practice. It is also possible that she was the patron's name saint – that the person who commissioned our panel was a woman called Mary.<sup>3</sup>

3, Lorne Campbell rather convincingly argues that David's Christ on the Cross may have formed part of an altarpiece painted for an altar endowed by Bernardin Salviati and he suggests that the prominent positioning of the Magdalene in was a direct response to Salviati's unmarried mother, who may have venerated the Magdalene. Lorne Campbell, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Fifteenth Century Netherlandish Schools*, London, 1998, pp.130–132.



**Fig.1**  
Gerard David  
Christ on the Cross  
c.1502  
141 × 100 cm; oil on oak  
Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Inv.  
573

## Bust of one of the Three Marys





## Bust of one of the Three Marys

*The Three Marys appear abundantly in medieval art and although their identities are not always certain in scripture, they may include Mary the mother of Christ, Mary Magdalene, Mary Salome and Mary of Cleophas. Mary, being a common name for Hebrew women, means that their individual identities are often confused in the Gospels. Despite this, the presence of these women at the most crucial moments of Christ's life is a testament to their incontestable devotion. These female followers of Christ have also been discussed in recent feminist literature as disciples, challenging the authority of the male apostolic tradition. In literature and in art, the presence of these historical women at the side of Christ is essential to redefine public memory, which often distorts their story and gives them diminished roles.*

**France, Burgundy (?)**  
**1460–1500**

52 × 46 × 23 cm; limestone, some areas of surface abrasion, with losses to nose, mouth and top of the head.

*Provenance*  
Private Collection, France

*Related Literature*  
Jacqueline Boccador, *Statuaire Médiévale en France de 1400 à 1530*, France, 1974.

Kennedy, Tammie M. 'Mary Magdalene and the Politics of Public Memory: Interrogating "The Da Vinci Code"'. *Feminist Formations* 24, no. 2 (2012): 120–39. Accessed December 3, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23275107>

This relief bust of a woman is probably one of the three Marys or a holy woman from an *Entombment* group. The figure wears a veil and a wimple, with the drapery elegantly covering her head, neck and shoulders. The hem of her cloak is carved to suggest a row of buttons and embroidered decoration. She has a downcast gaze, heavy eyelids and a sad facial expression. Her round face is articulated by fleshy cheeks, a small nose and pursed lips.

Large scale Entombment groups with multiple figures became popular devotional monuments in the second half of the fifteenth century, carved for churches through Burgundy and Languedoc. An early example is the group carved by a disciple of Jean de la Huerta, c.1460, in the Côte-d'Or, Dijon, Hôpital du Saint-Esprait.<sup>1</sup> The closest stylistic comparison to our bust is the Entombment group made by the so-called Maître de Chaource, active in the late 15th and early 16th century (figs.1–2). The rounded facial types, with sad expressions and elaborate veils, are all very reminiscent of our relief. Whilst depicting a Biblical scene that shows the death and humanity of Christ, the figures in these scenes still embody the elegance of Gothic sculpture – young idealised faces, rich dresses and an excess of fabrics.



**Fig.1**  
Maître de Chaource  
Two Holy Women from  
an Entombment Group  
France, Chaource  
c.1500–1515

1, Published in Jacqueline Boccador, *Statuaire Médiévale en France de 1400 à 1530*, France, 1974, I, fig.289, p.277.



**Fig.2**  
Details of Two Holy Women  
from an Entombment Group  
France, Chaource  
c.1500–1515



**Bust of one of  
the Three Marys**



**A pair of Opus Anglicanum embroidered panels  
depicting Saint Etheldreda and Saint Anne**





## A pair of Opus Anglicanum embroidered panels depicting Saint Etheldreda and Saint Anne

*Saint Etheldreda (originally Aethelthryth), daughter of King Anno of East Anglia and later the Abbess of Ely, is believed to have been born around 636 AD near the Suffolk market town of Newmarket and lived in and around Ely for most of her adult life. She is perhaps the most widely venerated of all medieval English female saints, with more vernacular accounts of her life to her name than any other.<sup>1</sup> One of four siblings who all retired from courtly life in order to found abbeys, she married twice, first to Tondberct, ealdorman of South Gyrwas (modern-day Fens), from whom she was gifted the Isle of Ely before his death in 655. According to legend she married again five years later, this time for the sake of a political union, to Ecgfrith of Northumbria, but she wanted to remain a virgin (having been allowed to do so by her first husband) and refused to conjugate the marriage. Etheldreda fled back to Ely, where in 673 she founded a double monastery on the site of what is now Ely Cathedral, and which flourished for over two centuries until its ruination during the Danish invasion (fig.1). It is believed that she died of the plague, along with several of her fellow nuns, in around 680. According to Bede, her remains were disinterred 17 years after her death by her sister Seaxburh (who succeeded her as Abbess of Ely), and were apparently found in a miraculously incorrupt state. Seaxburh had them reburied in a white coffin made from spoliated Roman marble found at Grantchester, and transferred to the new church at Ely. Her shrine quickly became a popular pilgrimage site, drawing thousands of pilgrims to the city.*

**England**  
**c.1400**

Each 34.7 × 17 cm; Linen ground embroidered with silver-gilt and silver metal-wrapped thread in underside and surface couching, with coloured silk threads in split stitch. The brown-black outlines to the figures reinforced and fragmentary. Rubbing to the metal-wrapped threads in places. The dyes faded somewhat throughout.

### Provenance

The Berkeley collection, Spetchley Park, by 1905;  
Acquired from the above in 2019

### Exhibited

Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1905  
V&A Mediaeval Art, 1930, No. 455  
Royal Academy, British Art, 1934, No. 4  
Commemorative Exhibition of the Art Treasures of the Midlands, City of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 1934, No. 420

### Published

'Spetchley Park -I. Worcestershire, The Seat of Mr. R. V. Berkeley', *Country Life*, 8 July 1916, p.45, illustrated in the Drawing Room;  
Commemorative Exhibition of the Art Treasures of the Midlands, Exh. Cat., City of Birmingham Museum and Art

On the first of these richly embroidered textiles, produced by English craftsmen at the turn of the fifteenth century, Etheldreda is depicted with her two key identifying attributes; the crown of her status as a princess, and the crozier of her role as the Abbess of Ely, the latter accompanied by her traditional wimple and veil. She stands at full length in a blue dress belted high at the waist, pulling a pink mantle across her midriff with her free hand. She is framed by chamfered columns which rise to support an ornate ogival arch, the uppermost mouldings of which sprout elaborate green hawthorn leaves and other foliate sprays. On the counterpart panel, which is decorated with an arch identical save for its blue colouration as opposed to green, we see the Virgin Mary being taught to read by her mother, Anne. She is shown as a child, though she wears a tripartite crown and a royal dress of blue fabric trimmed with white panelling, symbolic of her status as Queen of Heaven. She is partially shrouded within the pink fabric of Anne's mantle, which the older woman wraps protectively around her daughter while standing behind her. Both women are shown holding and gesturing to the open book, engaged diligently in the act of reading.

England was famed right across Medieval Europe for the skill of its embroiderers, who drew the patronage and adulation of kings, popes and cardinals across the continent over several centuries. They perfected a style of embroidery commonly known today as *opus anglicanum*, or English work, after the manner in which they are found described in early inventories. Our panels were produced in around 1400, during the last great moment of *opus anglicanum* production in this country, and are related in their format, stylistic treatment, and decorative language to a small group of examples surviving from this date and now preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (fig.2). As is typical for their type, the backgrounds of both of our panels are carefully enlivened with gold



**Fig.1**  
Attributed to Robert Pygot  
of Bury St Edmunds  
Scenes from the life of  
Saint Etheldreda

c.1455  
121.5 x 54.5 and 122 x 52.5  
cm; oil on oak panels  
London, Society of  
Antiquaries

1, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "Rerouting the dower: the Anglo-Norman life of St. Audrey by Marie (of Chatteris?)", in Jennifer

Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean, *Power of the weak: studies on medieval women*, Urbana, 1995, pp.27–56.





**Fig.2**  
 Saint Anne teaching the  
 Virgin to read  
 England  
 c.1390–1410  
 Linen ground embroidered  
 with silver-gilt and silver  
 thread in underside and  
 some surface couching and  
 coloured silk threads in  
 split stitch and some raised  
 stitches.  
 London, Victoria and Albert  
 Museum, inv. S-1892

metal-wrapped thread laid over the surface of the support and fixed in a trellis-like pattern using a technique known as underside couching, which was perfected by English embroiderers during the period. Originally, the precious, shimmering effect of the metal, undulating across the surface of the embroidery in rhythmical forms, would have been brilliantly set off by further embroidery using silver metal-wrapped thread in the spaces around the foliate sprays above each arch, the surface of which has tarnished to a gun-metal grey over time. The richness of the two materials and their incredibly skilful employment together marks these embroideries out as high-status commissions of great refinement. Their choice of imagery indicates that they were probably made for use in a convent or foundation associated with Saint Etheldreda, perhaps even for Ely itself or for a site in the surrounding region, and would originally have adorned the front and back of a dalmatic or chasuble (types of liturgical vestment worn by priests and deacons for the performance of Mass).



## A Reliquary Bust of a Virgin Martyr





## 15. A Reliquary Bust of a Virgin Martyr

This striking reliquary bust a rare survival from the late Middle Ages.

It is fashioned from sheets of hammered brass, which have been worked separately to create the desired shapes and textures before being fitted together. Made according to the same model as another bust in the exhibition (Cat. 16), the two reliquaries are undoubtedly part of the same group, though not identical. The bust depicts a female saint with a diadem decorating her long hair, which is parted in the middle with a fringe painted on her forehead. The hair is rendered in sheets of repousse metal that fall in soft waves over her shoulders and down her back, undulating in and out to create soft patterns of regularised lozenges. The brass on the face of the bust was originally fully polychromed in naturalistic flesh tones, while the hair and dress are gilded. The striking facial features of the bust are characterised by an archaic quality, with large almond shaped eyes, a small mouth and a rigidly straight nose. Her dress suggests two layers of clothing with a sharp, 'v' shaped neckline that reveals a two-stranded beaded necklace. A glass medallion, which appears to be suspended by a thick, highly decorative chain, would have enabled a view of the relics which were once kept inside. One of the most shocking features of the bust is the polychromy which depicts blood gushing out of the Virgin's neck and an arrow that pierces her left side, or her heart. With her long, unbound hair, these features identify the bust as a Virgin martyr.

**Switzerland**  
**c.1480-1500**

43.5 × 43 × 25.5 cm (arrow through side) brass alloy with gilding and polychromy

*Provenance*

Collection of the Marchese Lanza di Ajeta at Lepke, Berlin (sold 20–21 March 1928)





## A Reliquary Bust of a Virgin Martyr with a Heart Shaped Face





## 16. A Reliquary Bust of a Virgin Martyr with a Heart Shaped Face

This reliquary bust depicts a Virgin martyr with long unbound hair beneath a simple diadem, a slit throat and a large arrow that pierces her chest. It has been fashioned from sheets of brass, which have been worked separately to create the desired effects, most impressively in the depiction of her hair that falls down her back undulating in and out to create soft patterns of regularised lozenges interspersed with rope-like strands. The Virgin's heart-shaped face was originally fully polychromed in naturalistic flesh tones, and the wound on her neck is dripping with blood, while the hair and dress are gilded. The striking facial features of the bust are characterised by an archaic quality, with large almond shaped eyes, a small mouth and a prominent nose. A glass medallion in the centre of her chest would have enabled a view of the relics which were once kept inside. This is conceived as a pendant with a decorative rope-like frame, hanging from a thick chain, one link of which is still extant just above the medallion. This detail distinguishes this bust from another in the exhibition, (cat. 15), which was clearly made according to the same model but is not identical.

**Switzerland**  
c.1480–1500

42.5 × 45 × 26 cm (arrow through chest); brass alloy with gilding and polychromy

*Provenance*  
Collection of the Marchese Lanza di Ajeta at Lepke, Berlin  
(sold 20–21 March 1928)





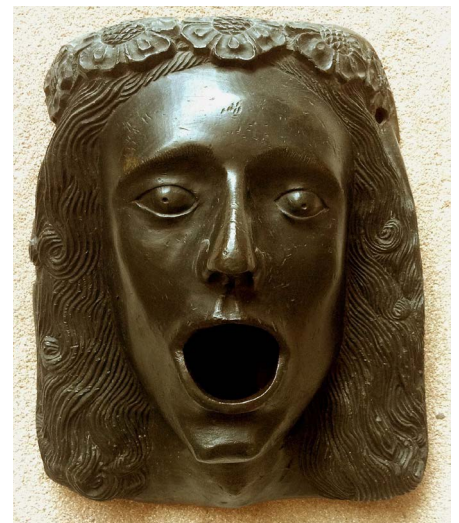


## Discussion



The two reliquary busts are highly unusual because they combine an archaic aesthetic, characterised by abstraction, with late medieval detailing. The stylistic character of the busts, including the undulating hair, the late medieval dress type and the heavy chains allow us to firmly date the two busts to circa 1500. The localisation is probably best suggested by the unusual choice of material used for these busts – polychromed brass. Centres of brass production in late medieval Europe were concentrated between the Meuse and Rhine rivers, areas which were important sources of calamine, ‘the carbonate of zinc that, when smelted with copper, produced brass alloy.’<sup>1</sup> The brass industry therefore found a natural home here and two important centres of brass production developed in Aachen and Nuremberg. An example of a Nuremberg fountain mask, dated to the early 15th century, illustrates the specific character that objects made of brass possessed (fig. 1). Similarities of facial type and the way that the hair is depicted indicate that perhaps the master working on our two busts may have been someone who did not specialise in treasury objects.

The localisation to Southern Germany or Switzerland is also suggested by the unusual practise of using polychromy on metal, which has a tradition in this region. Discussed in a recent exhibition catalogue, this technique was common in 15th century Aosta and Geneva where several polychromed metal busts survive.<sup>2</sup> One example is the silver reliquary bust of San Vittore, which is gilded and polychromed (fig. 2). Much like our examples, the paint on this bust is applied directly onto the metal without any preparatory layer and it begs the question: Why use an expensive material, such as brass or silver, but cover it entirely with gilding and polychromy? According to Alessandra Vallet, the answer is twofold. Unlike wood, metal was increasingly thought to be a more appropriate material to house sacred remains of saints. In addition to this, it is thought that the growing taste for naturalism in the 15th century and the ‘evocative force’ of polychromed wooden busts probably created a shift in the desired aesthetic of the metal busts of Southern Germany and Switzerland.<sup>3</sup>



**Fig.1**  
Fountain Mask  
Germany, Nuremberg  
Early 15th century  
Germanisches Nationalmuseum Pl 0.225

1, ‘Dish,’ Victoria & Albert Museum <<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O88072/dish-unknown/>> (accessed Feb, 2020).

2, Alessandra Vallet, ‘Busti reliquiario medievali a cavaliere delle Alpi,’ in *Ritratti d’oro e d’argento Reliquiari medievali in Piemonte, Valle d’Aosta, Svizzera e Savoia*, Simonetta Castronovo and Viviana Maria Vallet, eds. (Torino, 2021), 59 – 61.  
3, *Ibid.*

Another stylistic comparison to these busts can be found in a copper bust now in the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art (fig. 3). Dated to the second half of the 15th century, the general style of the Ringling bust, including the loose hair under a diadem, the archaic aesthetic and the dress type, is comparable to our examples. Another comparison can also be drawn with a reliquary bust of a female saint in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 4). While the MET bust was made by a more accomplished artist, the similarity in dress type, including a glass medallion suspended on the necklace, a two layer 'v' shaped dress and a diadem, provides further evidence for dating and localising our busts to Germany in circa 1500.

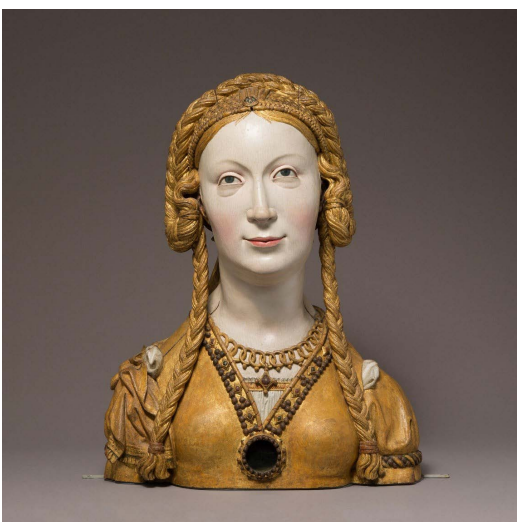
The two reliquary busts with their slit throats and arrows through their hearts probably represent two of the 11,000 Virgins who, along with Saint Ursula, the daughter of an English king, were slaughtered by the Huns during the siege of Cologne in A.D. 238. As told in the Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine, Ursula led a large 'army' of Virgin women on a march from England to Cologne, accompanied by pope Cyriacus, the bishop of Basel, and other dignitaries. They accepted the 'crown of martyrdom' when 'the barbarians saw them, rushed upon them with wild yells, and, like wolves ravaging a flock of sheep, slew them all.'<sup>4</sup> During the first half of the 14th century, there was an extraordinary explosion in devotion to these saints following the believed discovery of their bones in Roman grave fields near the city walls.<sup>5</sup>



**Fig.2**  
Bust of San Vittore  
After 1418  
Gilded and painted silver  
Switzerland, Saint-Maurice, Abbey of Saint-Maurice d'Agaune



**Fig.3**  
Virgin Saint  
Germany  
Second half of the 15th century  
Gilded copper  
The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art



**Fig.4**  
Reliquary Bust of a Female Saint  
Southern Netherlands  
c. 1520  
MET 59.70

4, W. G. Ryan trans., *Jacobus de Voragine; The Golden Legend*, Princeton and Oxford, 2012 ed., 644

5, See A. Legner ed., *Die heilige Ursula und ihre elftausend Jungfrauen*, Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Museum, 1978, especially pp.9–14



## Saint Clare of Assisi



## Saint Clare of Assisi

*Born as the daughter of a count, Saint Clare (1193 – 1253) abandoned her family and her way of life after hearing Saint Francis preach in San Giorgio in Assisi. She quickly became a fervent follower of Francis and moved to a convent, despite the disapproval of her father. With the help of Francis, she founded the Order of the Poor Clares, originally known as the Order of the Poor Ladies of San Damiano, a name taken from the church adjacent to their foundation. In 1216, Clare accepted the role as Abbess. In early 13th century Europe, all nuns lived their lives according to monastic guidelines written by men, most commonly following the Rule of St Benedict. However, Clare wanted to create guidelines which relied closely on the teachings of Saint Francis but which were also composed to fit the life of a woman. In 1253, she wrote the Rule of Life, which was the first set of monastic guidelines written by a woman and which focused on helping the poor and the sick. Eloquently summarised by Catherine Mooney, ‘scholars of Saint Clare see her not just as an influential figure for her contemporaries and subsequent history, not just as a woman able to achieve and gain fame in a world and Church dominated by men, but as a woman whose life, writings, personality, spirituality, and theology are integrally connected to her gender.’<sup>1</sup> Clare was canonised two years after her death in 1255.*

**Germany, Swabia**

**C.1470**

68 × 32 cm; oil and gilding on panel; a historic vertical split has been re-joined, some minor losses and retouching (mostly on back of panel), minor abrasion to the gilding

*Provenance*

Private Collection, Barcelona

*Literature*

Ainsworth, Maryan W., and Joshua P. Waterman. *German Paintings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1350–1600*. New York, 2013.

Bushart, Bruno. ‘Studien zur Altschwäbischen Malerei.’ In *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* Vol. 22 Bd. H. 2 (1959), pp.133–157.

Kahsnitz, Rainer, and William D. Wixom. *Gothic and Renaissance Art in Nuremberg, 1300–1550*. New York, 1986.

Mooney, Catherine, M. *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters*. University of Pennsylvania, 1999.

This small-scale panel painting, its gilded and tooled surfaces evocative of fine damask, depicts Saint Clare as a nun dressed in the habit of her order and holding a large monstrance in both hands. The microarchitectural monstrance is symbolic of the power attributed to her prayer, which helped rescue Assisi from siege twice. On one occasion, Clare warded off invaders by displaying the sacrament and kneeling in prayer, and so the monstrance has become her attribute in most depictions in medieval art. Her youthful round face is complemented by large eyes, delicate lips and soft skin. The tunic that she wears is fastened by a cincture – a rope belt with several knots, representing the vows taken by the nun. The lavishly punched background, abundance of heavy fabric and delicate gilding along the hem of Clare’s cloak emphasise that this image is a heavenly vision, far from the poverty that Clare would have endured during her life. The back of the panel depicts a fragment of a gruesome scene against a blood red background. A dead tree rises across the centre of the panel as two naked bodies are impaled on its large thorns. The scene probably depicts The Theban Legion, which was a legion of 6666 men who converted to Christianity and who were all martyred.

The style of this image finds parallels with German painting from the third quarter of the 15th century, especially from the region between Swabia and Franconia. It can be compared to the work of the Master of the Burg Weiler Altarpiece, whose name is derived from the altarpiece that he painted for the chapel of the castle of Burg Weiler near Heilbronn (fig.1). The large hooded eyes that slant downwards, delicate rounded eyebrows and darkened bags under the eyes all find parallels here. The painting of the drapery, which is extremely heavy and deeply accentuated with shadows, is extremely similar. Likewise, the exterior of one of the wings of the Burg Weiler Altarpiece is related to our panel because it depicts the Theban Legion, imagined with a very similar composition (fig.2). The panel also finds a certain affinity with other Swabian artists, such as Friedrich Herlin, active in Nördlingen, or the Strigel family of artists, active in Memmingen in the second half of

<sup>1</sup>, Catherine M. Mooney, *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters* (University of Pennsylvania, 1999), 52–3.





Saint Clare of Assisi (reverse)



**Fig.1**  
Master of Burg Weiler  
Altarpiece  
Detail of Saint Appollonia  
Germany, Burg Weiler Castle  
c.1470  
MET 53.21



**Fig.3**  
Hans Strigel d. J. und Ivo  
Strigel  
Archangel Gabriel (detail  
from Annunciation)  
Germany, Swabia,  
Memmingen  
c.1470  
Strigel Museum, Memmingen



**Fig.2**  
Master of Burg Weiler  
Altarpiece  
Detail of Saint Appollonia  
Germany, Burg Weiler Castle  
c.1470  
MET

the 15th century (fig.3).

Moreover, the iconography of this panel is relevant to this region because the cult of Saint Clare gained a large following in southern Germany already during her lifetime. Two important institutions of Poor Clares were established in Bamberg and in Nürnberg, the latter being able to secure a donation already in 1246. The Klarakirche in Nürnberg is the oldest ecclesiastical building to have survived in the city, despite the dissolution of the convent in the 16th century. And although it is uncertain which institution this panel originated in, its style and iconography create a link with the traditions established in this region by the Poor Clares.



**Saints Cecilia and Valerian being  
crowned by an angel with garlands**



## Saints Cecilia and Valerian being crowned by an angel with garlands

*Saint Cecilia was born in the early third century to a noble Roman family and when she was of age, her parents arranged for her to marry a pagan nobleman named Valerian. During their wedding, Cecilia famously sang to God in her heart, prompting her designation as the patron saint of music. After her wedding to Valerian, Cecilia told her new husband that she had taken a vow of chastity, managing to convince him and his brother Tiburtius to convert to Christianity. When Valerian returned to Cecilia after his decision to emulate her and accept baptism, an angel appeared and crowned the couple with garlands of roses and lilies. Cecilia, Valerian and Tiburtius were all martyred around 230 AD. According to the Golden Legend, Cecilia's martyrdom consisted of both being burned and beheaded. However, after the 'headsman' tried three times to behead her, he could not cut her head off. 'And because the decree forbade striking a fourth blow, he left her bleeding and half dead. She lived for three days, during which time she gave all her possessions to the poor' and asked for her house to be converted to a church.<sup>1</sup>*

**Workshop of Giustino di Gherardino da Forlì**  
Italy, Venice  
c.1365

111 × 128 mm; illuminated on vellum, historiated initial 'O' cut from a missal, the letter 'O' is pale pink on a blue ground, both with white tracery decoration.

*Literature:*

Giordana Mariani Canova, *Miniature dell'Italia Settentrionale nella Fondazione Giorgio Cini*, Venice 1978, Cat. No. 47–56.

*Provenance:*

Julius Böhler 2004

This initial 'O' comes from a missal, a book used for the celebration of mass. The miniature depicts Saint Cecilia and Saint Valerian kneeling in their bedchamber. As the couple clasp their hands together and look at each other in front of a large bed, an angel with outstretched wings appears from the starry sky above and crowns them with garlands.

This historiated initial belongs to a group attributed to Giustino di Gherardino da Forlì and his workshop. Other leaves and initials from the same missal have been identified and published by Gaudenz Freuler.<sup>2</sup> They include historiated initials that depict the *Finding of Saint Anthony's Body* and *Mary Magdalene in the House of Simon* (figs.1–2). An immediate affinity between the decorative elements, the figure types and the pigments can be made here. However, as Freuler has noted, 'more than being the product of a single artist, these fragments seem to define a style common probably to a workshop active in Venice from the seventh to the ninth decade of the fourteenth century, [which] seem to belong to one artistic project, an antiphonary with the Proper of Saints, presumably executed for the Anthonites at Saint'Antonio in Castello in Venice.'<sup>3</sup>



**Fig.1**  
The Finding of Saint Anthony's Body by Theophilus  
Italy, Venice  
c.1365



**Fig.2**  
Saint Mary Magdalene in the House of Simon the Pharisee  
in an Initial M

- 1, Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, William Granger Ryan, trans. Vol. II (Princeton, 1993), 323.
- 2, Gaudenz Freuler, *Italian Miniatures from the Twelfth to The Sixteenth Centuries* (Silvana, 2013), 370–372.
- 3, *Ibid.* 370–372.



**Michel Erhart (c.1440 – after 1522) Workshop**  
**A bust-length reliquary of a lady in fashionable dress**



## Michel Erhart (c.1440 – after 1522) Workshop

### A bust-length reliquary of a lady in fashionable dress

A bust-length carved reliquary bust on its original integral base, depicting a woman with full red cheeks and lips, and pale brown eyes. Her hair is concealed by a large embroidered headdress save for braids that frame the temples and forehead and partially cover the ears. The headdress is gathered at the nape of the neck, and from its base issues a loose ribbon of fabric that falls across the sitter's proper left shoulder and terminates at the level of her chest. She wears a low-necked gold dress embroidered with a brocaded hem. Looking straight ahead at the viewer, her eyes are open and bright, and the sides of her mouth curve up subtly to suggest a smile. The figure is not clothed in classicising or archaic costume but instead presented in contemporary dress, representative of a style familiar to Swabian portraiture around 1500 and visible in painted portraits emanating from this region. The same large gathered headdress can be found in a portrait by Albrecht Dürer of the artist's mother, painted in around 1490 (Fig.1). Equally, the embroidery running parallel to the hemline of the dress offers comparison with a portrait of Barbara Wespach-Ungelter painted in c.1500 by the so-called Ulm Master and now in the Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart (Fig.2). This garment completely conceals the hair of its wearer, and only a tiny number of similar carved representations survive.

Germany, Swabia, probably Ulm  
c.1500

59.2 × 30.1 × 26.1 cm; gilded and polychromed limewood with carved pastiglia decoration; the gilding abraded, general isolated flake losses to the polychromy, the face and upper neck restored on the proper-left side. A single thermal crack running vertically through the sculpture, and minor stable cracking visible on the upper part of the headdress.

*Provenance*  
Private collection, Germany



**Fig.1**  
Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528)  
Portrait of Barbara Dürer,  
the artist's mother  
c.1490  
47 × 38 cm; Oil on panel  
Nuremberg, Germanisches  
Nationalmuseum



**Fig.2**  
The Ulm Master  
Barbara Wespach-Ungelter  
Germany, Ulm  
c.1500  
39 × 30.5 cm; Oil on panel  
Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie



While clearly intended to function in a liturgical context, the careful individuation of our figure's facial type and the details of her costume suggest that the sculptor responsible was also seeking to represent a contemporary as opposed to a biblical female topos. Aesthetic concerns beyond the spiritual or liturgical held increasing importance for the late Medieval viewer after c.1500. Both Jopek and Baxandall note that in Germany, late Gothic sculpture emerges as 'a bourgeois art', with the narrowing of the divide between the social, cultural, and financial status of the artist and his patron.<sup>1</sup> This change in tradition, or more aptly, the *fashion* for objects, was also due to increased artistic movement within Europe, as well as the rise of humanism and the coterminous development of private patronage.

Of the few well-defined wood sculptors known to us from Swabia, the work of Michel Erhart, the foremost carver in the artistic milieu of Ulm from the 1470s until his death after 1522, provides a compelling context with which to locate the present piece, and his *Schöne Ulmerin* a direct parallel (fig.3). The same approach to the finish and degree of detail on the reverse of our bust was taken with the *Schöne Ulmerin*, with its highly figured dress sweeping down at the back to reveal the flesh below the neck in a similar U-shaped trough of material, and with draperies of the headdress considered with an attention to continuity and naturalism.

Erhart spent his journeyman years travelling across the German speaking lands, and as far west as the Netherlands, before finally settling in Ulm around 1469, where works by him dated between 1474 and 1518 are recorded. He seems to have been instrumental in a number of remarkable and miraculously preserved bust-length figures adorning the ends of the stalls, many of which are represented wearing secular dress.<sup>2</sup> One in particular is an early type of which ours must surely be a direct descendant, both in the attention to details of costume and in the long, elegantly curving nose set against a broadly rounded facial type. Two portrait heads of c.1480 attributed to Michel Erhart and now in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, of a young man and girl respectively, also offer a close comparison for our figure. They incorporate the same crisp, thick eyelids, the attention to the bones of the neck and the elegant, sloping form of the shoulders, and a long, refined nose structure. Moreover, the head of a girl shares the same arabesque curvature from the lower lip to the underside of the chin, as well as the high, structured forehead of our bust.

Comparisons with the carving techniques and employment of painted surfaces associated with Michel Erhart's oeuvre make clear that the sculptor of our figure had sustained and close contact with that master, and it is highly plausible that it was carved in Erhart's well-established and highly demanded workshop in Ulm during one of the most successful periods of his career.



A bust-length reliquary of a lady in fashionable dress (reverse)



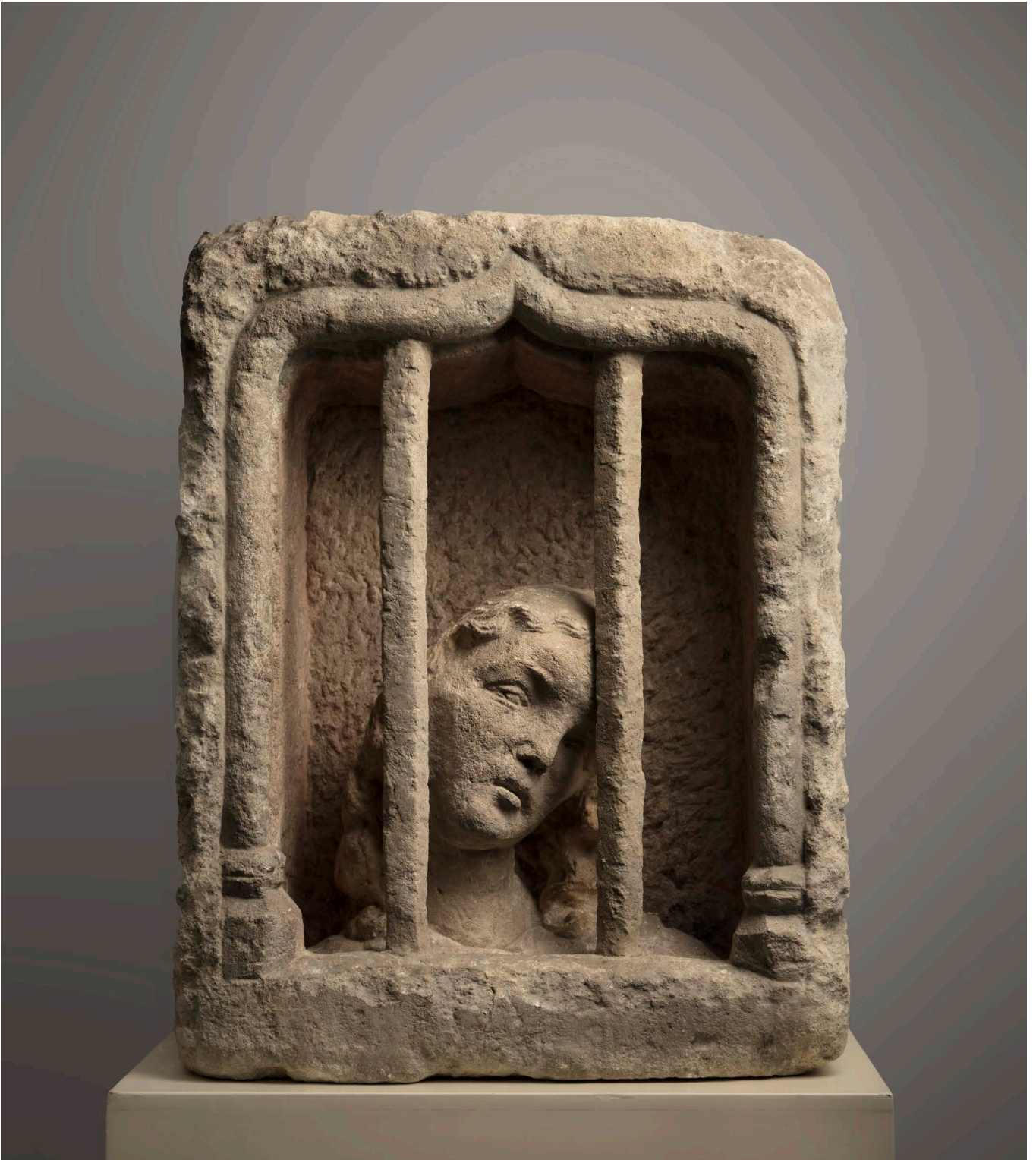
**Fig.3**  
Michel Erhart  
Bust of Mary Magdalene,  
the *Schöne Ulmerin*  
1475–80; limewood with  
polychromy  
Ulm, Ulmer Museum

1, M. Baxandall, *South German Sculpture 1480 – 1530*, London, 1974, p.14

2, Both Otto and Deutsch have argued that Erhart played a key role in the Ulm choir stalls, and attributed eighteen of the busts to him. See G. Otto, 'Der Bildhauer Michel Erhart: Ein Vorbericht', in *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, lxiv (1943), pp.17–44, and *Ibid.*, Gregor Erhart (Berlin, 1943), pp.14–32. See also W. Deutsch, 'Der ehemalige Hochaltar und das Chorgestühl, zur Syrlin- und zur Bildhauerfrage', in *Festschrift; 600 Jahre Ulmer Münster*, Ulm, 1977, pp.242–322

3, Illustrated in M. Baxandall, *South German Sculpture 1480 – 1530*, plate 69-70.

## Saint Avia (The Jailed Woman)





## Saint Avia (The Jailed Woman)

*Saint Avia of Sicily was a virgin martyr who was imprisoned for adhering to her Christian beliefs. While incarcerated, she miraculously received communion from the Virgin Mary, a moment in her story which is often depicted in late medieval art (fig.1–2). Contemporary miniatures which depict this moment often represent the Virgin followed by an entourage of adoring angels, who carry a variety of liturgical objects such as processional crosses. The popularity of depictions of Avia in French books of hours and the fact that prayers to her were often written in French in manuscripts that were predominately Latin, illustrate her localised veneration. Intercessory prayers vary greatly in book of hours, since they were often personalised with prayers dedicated to local saints or to saints who may have had a personal meaning for the patron.*

France  
c. 1500

69 x 53 x 23 cm;  
limestone with traces of polychromy

*Provenance*  
Collection of Dr. Willem Elias, Brussels, since the 1970s.



**Fig.1**  
Saint Avia  
Book of Hours  
France, Tours, c.1490–1500  
Morgan Library MS M.1054  
fol. 9v



**Fig.2**  
Jean Bourdichon  
St. Avia in Prison Receiving  
Communion from the Virgin  
French, Tours, about  
1480–1485  
J. Paul Getty Museum, MS. 6,  
FOL. 143

This remarkably rare object depicts the bust-length portrait of Saint Avia, the female figure imprisoned behind a flat ogee-arched window with stone railings at its front. Avia's life-sized head is cocked to one side as she leans her forehead on the bars in desperation. Her hair flows in long waves down over her shoulders and she is sculpted with delicate facial features and almond shaped eyes. The window of her prison takes the form of a typically late medieval flat ogee arch with hexagonal bases that support the mouldings of the frame. The localisation of this sculpture to France is rooted not only in the style of carving, which can be compared to French sculpture from c.1500 (fig.3), but also to the popularity of her cult in France as is demonstrated in the surviving Books of Hours. The bust length format of the portrait, along with the overtly window-like aspect of the surrounding stonework, would suggest a positioning at window height, set in to the wall of a church or chapel, although it is equally likely that the figure was placed outdoors or within a loggia space, a placement consistent with the wear to the exterior edges of the stone. This would have created a highly vivid relationship between spaces, and a potent image to which the medieval viewer would have prayed and beseeched for aid.

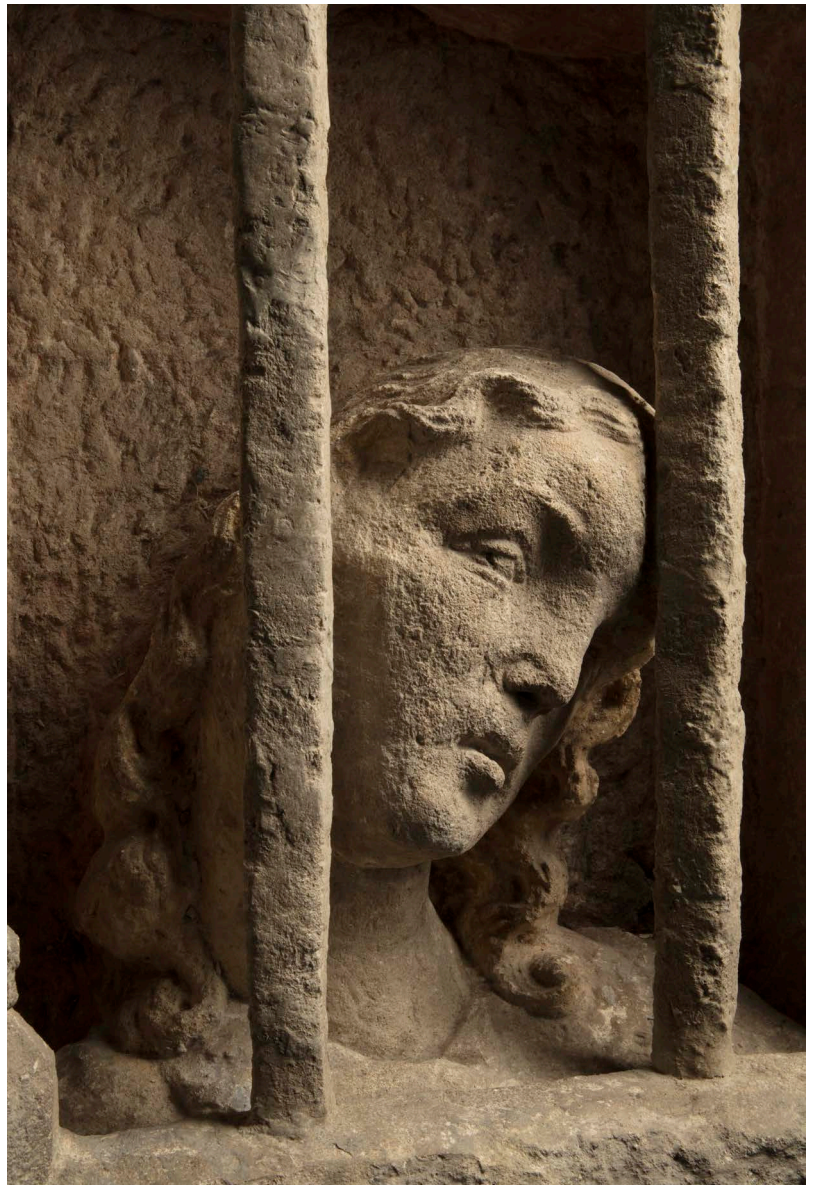
The notion of incarceration during the medieval period was far more developed and nuanced than is commonly perceived today. There is evidence to suggest that life within medieval prisons was modelled on 'the monastic penitential life, including solitude, long fasts, and prayers.'<sup>1</sup> From the early thirteenth century, the link between the church and penal reform increased through the activity of the Papal Inquisition, which freely used its power to incarcerate laymen. Spiritual reform was

1, G. Geltner, 'Medieval Prisons: Between Myth and Reality, Hell and Purgatory', in *History Compass* Vol. 4 (2006), p.2

an integral aspect of such practice, and by 1300, with the establishment of dedicated prison institutions such as Le Stinche in Florence, the prison system had become an ingrained aspect of societal concerns, and a potent idea within individual spiritual concerns. This object would have occupied the role of a shrine and would have found particular prominence for those praying for relatives in prison, or for masses said on behalf of all prisoners.

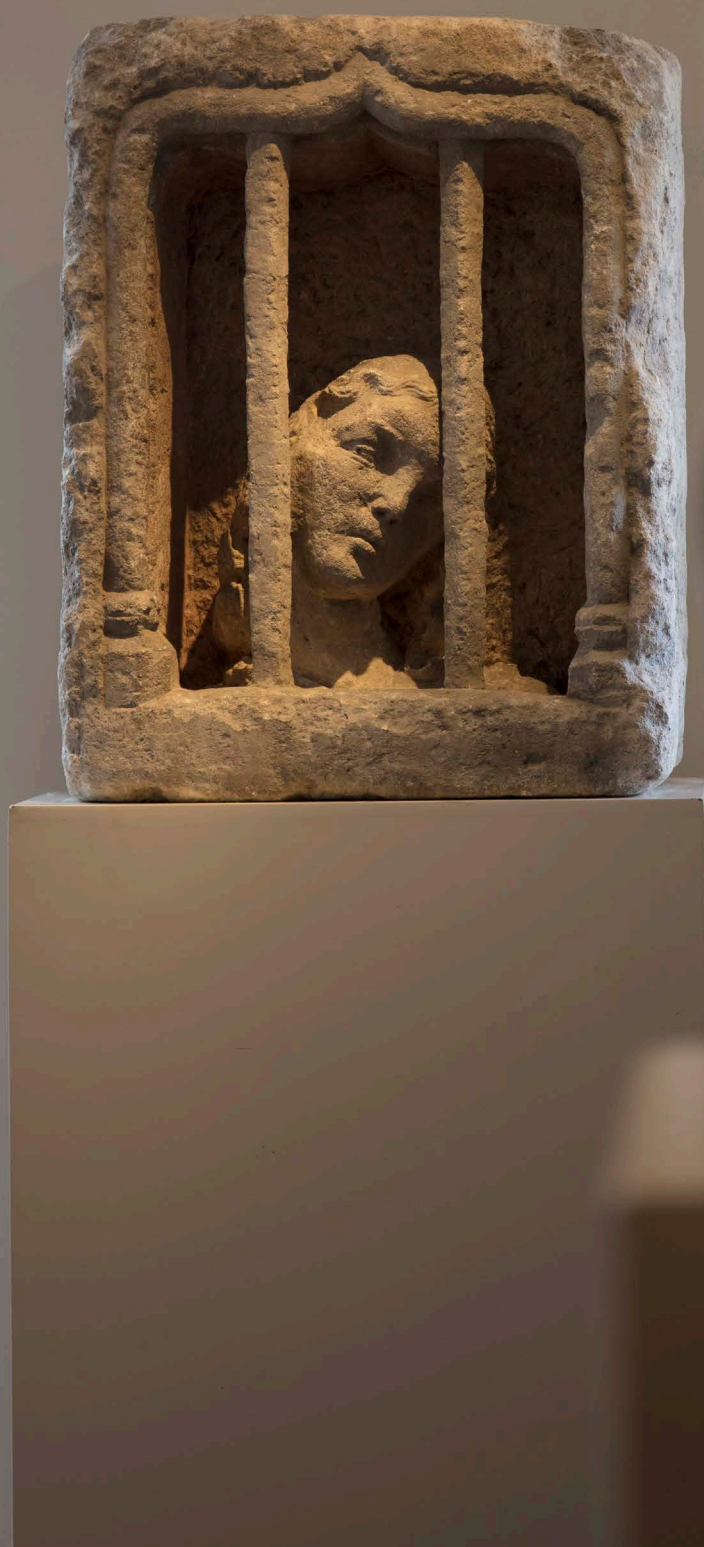


**Fig.3**  
Saint Mary Magdalene from  
an Entombment Group  
France  
c.1515  
MET 16.31.2a



Saint Avia (detail)







## Anton Schiterberg

The armorial window of Hans Strüb of Unterwalden depicting a wild man and a wild woman





## Anton Schiterberg

### The armorial window of Hans Strüb of Unterwalden depicting a wild man and a wild woman

*Late-medieval secular art is saturated with images of wild women and wild men especially in the German speaking world. Many late-medieval inns, called 'Zum wilden mann' or 'du sauvage', still carry historic connections to the subject. But who or what were these creatures? Medieval literature clearly suggests that there was ambiguity surrounding the identity of these giants – they are routinely described and depicted as being covered in thick hair, only their face, feet and hands exposed (as well as the breasts of Wild Women). As a complete contrast to the ideal Christian, the wild folk are unable to resist their animalistic urges. Wild women are less frequently found in art and their depiction evolves throughout the Middle Ages. Similarly to the wild man, they first appear as sexual aggressors, their behaviour fearful and their appearance repulsive. Towards the later Middle Ages, however, images of the Wild Woman transform into sensually enticing and nurturing figures (fig.1). As Michelle Moseley-Christian argues, by the 15th century medieval society exempted the wild woman from the 'continued demonisation of other fantasy figures outside the boundaries of civilisation that possessed a predatory sexuality, such as witches and satyrs, [and rather] emphasised her beauty and erotic appeal by depicting the figure as an ideal representation of fertile motherhood and calm restraint.'*<sup>1</sup>

In this vividly painted stained-glass panel made for the Swiss judge Hans Strüb of Unterwalden, the Wildman and Wild Woman stand at full length flanking a large coat of arms. Their bodies are almost totally covered in mousy-coloured hair save for their nipples, knees, hands, feet and faces. They wear garlands of green hop vines around their heads and their midriffs. The man, his face partially covered by a shaggy, unkempt beard, looks out at the viewer and holds a tall branch in his left hand. Mirroring his stance, the wild woman holds the leather strap of a shield, which stands on the ground between them both as she looks at him. Both figures are framed by an ornate loggia-like space opening to reveal a deep receding landscape in the distance. In the two upper spandrels of the panel a battle is taking place between a charging army of mounted lancers and a routed band of cavalymen and foot soldiers. The use of a Wild Man and Wild Woman together on our window, taking centre stage rather than purely a marginal role, is extraordinarily rare, and few surviving heraldic windows incorporate quite the same iconographic scheme. Similar iconography can be found in the Victoria and Albert Museum, executed by the Zurich glass painter Lukas Zeiner around 1490, and in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Martin Schongauer print (fig.1–2).

Our panel would have originally functioned as the decorative focus of a suite of windows set into a domestic interior or municipal hall, its colours framed by a larger matrix of clear bullseye glass roundels (fig.3). The patron of our window is identified by his name, inscribed along the low stone step running along the ground behind the Wild Man figure, as well as by his Hausmark, a type of shorthand insignia popular among merchants, agents, and artisans from the German-speaking lands and used by them throughout the later Middle Ages. Our patron, Hans Strüb of Unterwalden, is documented as coming from a wealthy

**Switzerland, Lucerne**  
**Dated 1556**

43.5 × 32.6 (excluding wooden frame); clear, blue, purple and red glass with silver stain and vitreous paint; extremely well preserved, with no stop-gaps or replaced elements. There are a small number of breaks to individual quarries, for the most part repaired with thin lead comes. One fine diagonal break to the central red capital is stable and does not need leading.

#### *Provenance*

Mentioned as being on the art market in 1928;  
Collection of Josef Hieronymus Höchli, Baden;  
Collection of Fritz Kummer, Zurich

#### *Published*

Hans Lehman, *Geschichte der Luzerner Glasmalerei von den Anfängen bis Zu Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Lucerne, 1941, p.89, fig.127

#### *Exhibited*

*Gemalt auf Glas & Licht – Kabinettscheiben von Gotik bis Barock*, Iphofen, Knauf-Museum, 29 March–2 August 2009  
*Gemalt auf Glas & Licht: Kabinettscheiben von Gotik bis Barock*, Heidelberg, Museum für Sakrale Kunst und Liturgie, 16 July–16 October 2011  
*Goldene Geschichten auf Glas: Kabinettscheiben von Gotik bis Barock*, Linnich, Deutsches Glasmalerei-Museum, 16 March – 4 August 2013



**Fig.1**  
Martin Schongauer  
Wild woman supporting  
a shield  
Germany  
c.1435–1491  
Engraving  
New York, Metropolitan  
Museum of Art, Inv. 28.26.9



**Fig.2**  
Wild Man and Wild Woman  
supporting the arms of Kyburg  
Switzerland, Zurich  
c.1490  
V&A Museum C.9:1-1923

Unterwalden family and in 1535 is recorded in the role of a judge and district administrator in the city.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the wild woman holds on to his shield is a fascinating aspect of the iconography of this panel. Medieval heraldry by definition is governed by meticulous rules and formalities – the opposite of the characteristics associated with the wild folk. However, any creature made to yield to these proud formalities would lose its blurred identity and would therefore represent restraint and reason. In this panel, the changing nature of these creatures in the Middle Ages is made clear and the wild woman supporting the shield is shown to be an embodiment of ideal femininity rather than that of a monster.

The artist to whom our panel has been securely attributed since the first definitive monograph on Swiss glass painting was published by Hans Lehmann in 1941, is the Lucerne-based glass painter Anton Schiterberg, active during the second third of the sixteenth century. He was recognized early on in the surrounding scholarship, and the few surviving panels attributable to his hand are now widely considered to be among the aesthetic apexes of their art form. Our panel, his masterpiece and an astonishing survival from this formative date of Swiss armorial glass painting, is also notable both for its figures (a rare iconographic choice for Swiss heraldic panels), and for its miraculous state of preservation. A less accomplished but stylistically closely-related panel attributed to the same glass painter is preserved in the Detroit Institute of Arts.<sup>3</sup>

1, Michelle Moseley-Christian, 'From page to print: The transformation of the wild woman in early modern Northern engravings,' in *Word & Image* 27 No. 4 (October 2011), 429–442.  
2, My thanks to Fritz Kummer for sharing his

private research on this subject with us.  
3, See V. Raguin and H. Zakin, *Stained Glass Before 1700 in the collections of the Midwest States (Corpus Vitrearum United States of America 7)*, vol I, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan. London, 2001, pp.242–245 no. DIA 39 (ill.).





**Fig.3**  
 A meeting of officials  
 from Lucerne, Ob- and  
 Nidwalden, Schwyz,  
 Uri, Zug and Zurich, in  
 a room decorated with  
 heraldic panels in larger  
 bullseye matrices, from  
 the Schweizerische  
 Bildchronik of Diebold  
 Schilling, fol. 124v  
 Lucerne  
 1513

## Maiolica Inkwell depicting the Four Cardinal Virtues





## Maiolica Inkwell depicting the Four Cardinal Virtues

In Roman and Medieval cultures, the gender of personifications in art and literature was almost exclusively female. While many scholars agree that the gender of the personification was based on the grammatical gender of abstract concepts such as *prudentia* or *justitia* in Latin and Greek, scholars have also argued that there is a more complex reasoning that lurks under the surface of these figures. As stated by Adolf Katzenellenbogen, 'Prudentius personifies the opposing forces of the soul as female figures. In doing so, he lends the Vices the character rather of mortal sinners than of inescapable demons and thus, using the wealth of everyday experience, he lessens the fear of the power of evil.'<sup>1</sup> While written with a problematically gendered tone, this theory illustrates that 'gendered personification in ancient and medieval literature in part reflects a persistent and powerful discourse of misogyny,' which often continued well into modern historiography.<sup>2</sup>

This magnificent late fifteenth-century maiolica inkwell depicts the four Cardinal Virtues of Prudence, Fortitude, Justice and Temperance as female figures seated on an architectural stellate base. It is by far one of the finest faience maiolica inkwells still in circulation, and perhaps, alongside the monumental inkwell in the Museo Civico, Bologna (See Fig.1), the best surviving example anywhere.<sup>3</sup> Four pen emplacements punctuate the group, while above them a drum inkwell decorated with a dark blue checkerboard design on its dust cover is supported by the heads of the figures. In the context of the known corpus of maiolica inkwells, the large majority of which depict nativity scenes, the present example is a remarkably rare and extremely significant survival. The clarity of the pigments, which have not bled in the manner so common to this technique, is of particular note.



**Fig.1**  
Maiolica Inkwell in the form of the city of Bologna, held on the shoulders of its four patron saints.  
Late 15th century  
Museo Civico, Bologna

Italy, Emilia-Romana, Faenza  
c.1480

27 × 27.5 × 28 cm; cobalt, copper, iron and antimony pigments on tin-glazed earthenware; restoration to the chequered top and cylindrical sides of the inkwell, each figure consequently having restoration to the head, neck and surrounding area; Temperance: losses to tips of feet; Fortitude; losses to tip of baton; Justice: fasces and left hand fingers restored. Prudence: restoration to bag in left hand, left foot and edge of dress; one head reattached (Which one?); overall, small typical chips and craquelure commensurate with age.

### Provenance

Museo Guidi Collection, Faenza;  
Sangiorgi Collection; until their sale, Rome, April 21st–27th, 1902, lot 307;  
Ercole Canessa Collection; c.1930;  
William Randolph Hearst; until his sale, New York, Parke-Bernet Galleries, December 7th–8th, 1951, lot 67;  
Cucci Collection, Rimini

### Literature

C. Ravanelli Guidotti, *Thesaurus*, Faenza 1998, p.226  
G Gardelli, 'Problematiche di un 'virtuoso' calamaio del Quattrocento', *Ceramica Antica*, 1991, pp.43–51

1, Adolf Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Medieval Art* (London: Warburg Institute, 1939), 1.

2, James J. Paxton, 'Personification's Gender,' in *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* Vol. 16 No. 2 (Spring 1998), 158.

3, See Ravanelli Guidotti, *Ceramiche Occidentali del Museo Civico Medievale di Bologna*, 1985, no.30 p.57.

The identification of the figures as the Cardinal Virtues is appropriate for the symbolism associated with inkwells at this date, the notion being that through study, education, and literary enlightenment intellectual virtue could be obtained. Indeed, the inkwell itself is often found as part of the symbolic retinue of Prudence, one of the four virtues. The harp held by one of the four figures held a meaning similar that of a ladder, with the attendant suggestion of ascendance through virtue being implicit in its depiction alongside the attributes of the other figures.

Alongside the more commonly known tiles, plaques, plates and vases that characterise much of the Maiolica production of the Italian Renaissance, inkstands offered the late fifteenth-century ceramic artist a platform for expression on a grander, three-dimensional scale. They enjoyed a fairly short period of popularity from *circa* 1490 to between 1510 and 1515, and then seem to have been less fashionable, though certainly still in production, well into the 1600s. Inkwells of this nature were used as prominent objects of display within domestic contexts, similar to the display of plate and metalwork, although they were certainly used as well, and there is evidence to suggest they held a sophisticated symbolic value for the contemporary patron. Normally kept in the *scrittoio* or *studiolo* (the study), they effectively formed desktop sculptures for the scholarly patron.

There is evidence to suggest that the artist responsible was responding to contemporaneous developments in large-scale stone sculpture, and works such as Benedetto da Maiano's figure of Fortitude from the Basilica of Santa Croce, Florence, seem to have exerted some influence over the conception of the present piece (Fig.2). Alongside this, we can date the inkwell fairly precisely through its inclusion of knots, hatchings, and lozenges in the design, motifs entirely indicative of a late-fifteenth century date of creation; this form of decoration was developed from the 1450s onwards, and by the turn of the sixteenth century seems to have been almost entirely replaced by a combination of finer arabesque vine-work and unadorned fields of colour. Its closest stylistic comparison is an inkwell in the form of Saint George slaying the dragon, now part of the William A. Clark Collection held at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC (fig.3). The Clark inkwell, which depicts the armoured saint astride a rearing grey horse, incorporates a similar colour palette, including a marked absence of manganese purple – otherwise common in maiolica of the period. The rather compelling similarities between the two suggest their creation within the same circle, sharing a particular, localised and idiomatic approach to surface design and stylistic motifs.



**Fig.2**  
Benedetto da Maiano  
Fortitude  
1472–1475  
Florence, Basilica of Santa  
Croce



**Fig.3**  
Maiolica Inkwell in the form  
of Saint George Slaying the  
Dragon.  
Faenza  
Late 15th century-early 16th  
century  
26.2 × 21 × 12 cm  
Washington DC, The  
National Gallery of Art,  
2014.136.335





Faience Maiolica Inkwell  
depicting the four  
Cardinal Virtues (viewed  
from above)





**Giovanni della Robbia (1469–1529), Workshop**  
**Judith holding the head of Holofernes**



## Giovanni della Robbia (1469–1529), Workshop Judith holding the head of Holofernes

The story of Judith, an Old Testament heroine, is described in a deuterocanonical book called the Book of Judith (XIII, 7–8) but it was also a part of the Power of Women topos (or Weibermacht), which became popular in medieval and Renaissance art. The story revolves around a time when the Jewish people are held captive by the Assyrians. Judith, a beautiful and virtuous widow, plans to save Israel by sneaking into the Assyrian camp and killing their general, Holofernes. After successfully seducing him, Judith decapitates Holofernes while he sleeps in a drunken stupor. The theme of Judith and Holofernes became particularly popular in Renaissance Italy and was used to symbolize the triumph of humility over pride and vice. Much like Delilah betraying Samson after promising her love to him, however, stories such as Judith and Holofernes, which belonged to the Weibermacht topos, had dual meanings. While symbolising strength in weakness, justice and humility, the stories were not always received with ease. For the church, they acted as reminders that women were evil and manipulative.<sup>1</sup> The topos of Judith and Holofernes demonstrated a medieval vision of the world ‘upside down, [which was] “in violation of every officially sanctioned norm of female behavior that demanded the submission of the female to the male.”’<sup>2</sup> Still, documentary evidence shows that gender affected the way that the Weibermacht topos were understood and interpreted. Christine de Pizan even challenged the topos, arguing that ‘male writers perpetuated false notions about women.’<sup>3</sup>

The figure of Judith, dressed in a vivid, two-layered blue and yellow dress tied at the waist with a sash, stands with her right arm raised and her left gripping the decapitated head of Holofernes which hangs by her left thigh. She shifts her weight onto her right leg in elegant contrapposto, which serves to break the stasis of the figure and accentuates the S-curl of her arms. Her name, ‘IVDIT HEBREA’ is painted in delicate serif majuscule on the hexagonal maroon and white base on which she stands.

The present figure is one of only six known versions to have survived from the workshop of Giovanni della Robbia (1469–1529), and the only one of this group in which the flesh areas are intentionally left unglazed, a decision that may have been taken in order to embellish these areas with cold paint following the firing of the surrounding glazes.<sup>4</sup> Other figures of the same composition firmly attributed to Giovanni are preserved in public collections including the Szépművészeti Múzeum in Budapest, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (no. 46.839) and the Brooklyn Museum, New York (fig.1). Scholars have argued that Donatello’s *Judith* was a source of inspiration for this composition. However, according to Gentilini, Donatello’s lost *Dovizia* (Abundance) may have influenced Giovanni della Robbia who produced several statues of *Dovizia*, including a female figure similar to his *Judith*.<sup>5</sup> It has also been suggested that Ghiberti’s figure of *Judith* on the east doors of the baptistery in Florence may have been a source for the Detroit bronze statuette of Judith by Pallaiuolo (circa 1470) which in turn could have provided Giovanni della Robbia with the inspiration to produce his own version of this figure (fig.2).

Giovanni della Robbia’s famous, pioneering great uncle Luca della Robbia (1399/1400–1482) was among the most important and influential Renaissance sculptors working in Florence. In the second quarter of the 15th century, Luca della Robbia had developed the *terracotta invetriata* process by modelling terracotta and then glazing it in a variety

Italy, Florence  
c.1520

62 × 25 × 17 cm; tin-glazed terracotta, minor repairs to the base, including retouching to part of the letter ‘A’ in ‘EBREA’, and the raised right arm is a modern replacement. Otherwise in excellent condition. Apparently, none of the surviving versions of Judith (discussed below) preserves the original raised arm intact.

### Provenance

Collection of Margarete Oppenheim, sold Julius Böhler 1936; William Randolph Hearst, acquired at above sale for £500; Restituted to the Oppenheim family in 2017; Private Collection, Stuttgart

### Published

Julius Böhler, *Sammlung Frau Margarete Oppenheim*, Sale Cat., Munich, 23 April – 15 May 1936, no. 722, fig.47  
Tschernek von. Seysenegg, ‘Die Judith von Giovanni della Robbia’, in *Keramos*, October, 1986, pp.27–36, no. 114



reverse

1, Diane Wolfthall, ‘Review: Smith, Susan L., The Power of Women: A Tapas in Medieval Art and Literature. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995; in *Medieval Feminist Newsletter* 22 (1996), 55.

2, Ibid.

3, Ibid.

4, A. Marquand, *Giovanni Della Robbia* (Princeton, 1920).

5, G. Gentilini, *I Della Robbia e l’“arte nuova” della scultura invetriata*, Exh. Cat. (Florence, 1998), 114–115.





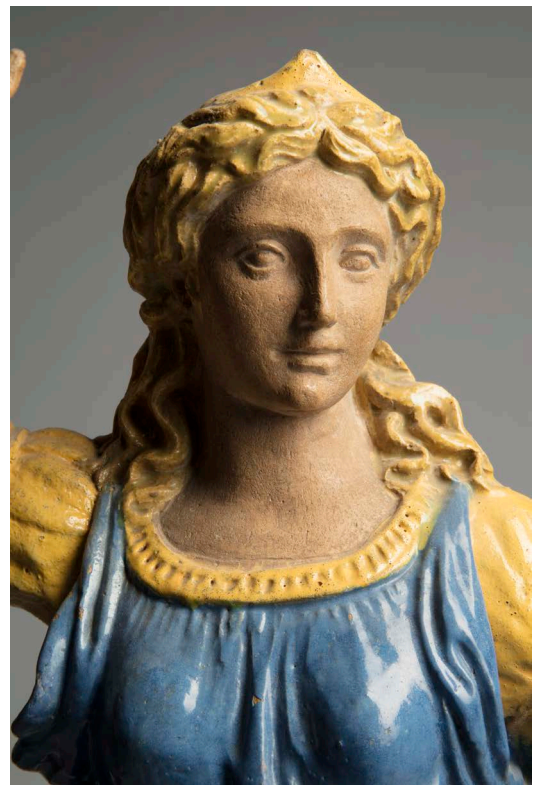
**Fig.1**  
Workshop of Giovanni della  
Robbia  
Judith with the Head of  
Holofernes  
Italy  
Early 16th century  
New York, Brooklyn Museum  
of Art, Inv. 19.114a-b



**Fig.2**  
Lorenzo Ghiberti  
Judith from the Gates of  
Paradise  
Italy, Florence, Baptistry  
1425–1452

of colours, or in white, often made to imitate marble. Luca employed his nephew Andrea della Robbia (1435–1525) who maintained the renowned studio after Luca's death. Giovanni, the most accomplished of Andrea's sons, took over the running of the workshop and seems to have been instrumental in its productivity even before the death of his father. He is distinguished, in part, for his use of polychromy and heightened colours including bright yellow, multiple shades of blue and green.

*Thermoluminescence analysis undertaken by Arcadia, Milan, in October 2015 has confirmed the authenticity and age of the piece.*



detail





MAKERS

**A Ceremonial and Tonary with the  
Constitutions of the Nuns of St. Mary  
Magdalene**





## A Ceremonial and Tonary with the Constitutions of the Nuns of St. Mary Magdalene

Religious communities of women held an important role in the social history of Siena because remarkable percentages of the female population (10–12%) lived in convents. Although their activities in the convents are not always very well documented, manuscripts such as this rare copy of the Ceremonial and Tonary created by the nuns of St. Mary Magdalene of the Hermits of St. Augustine give us a glimpse into their lives. The object is an example of a manuscript that was made by and for medieval women, and it includes not only the chant and liturgy but also chapters which outline the rules that governed the daily life in one of the most illustrious convents in Renaissance Siena.<sup>1</sup> Given the importance of religious women for the history of music in Italy, the prodigious content on liturgical chant in this manuscript is also an important survival because many of the most skilled female musicians lived in convents at this time. The remarkable punched binding of the manuscript includes a painting of the convent's patron, St. Mary Magdalene.

The Convent of St. Mary Magdalene in Siena was founded in 1339 at the southern edge of the city but the roots of the Hermits of St. Augustine (now known as the Augustinian Friars) go back to a number of eremitical groups in Italy in the twelfth century.<sup>2</sup> After the approval of their Constitutions by Pope Alexander IV in 1256, the Order grew quickly and founded many houses throughout Europe. Since Pope Pius III is mentioned on the verso of folio 4 of this manuscript, the original section of the manuscript (ff. 1–46v) can be dated to between 1503, the date when Pius III died, and 1510, the date when the Franciscan order was imposed on the nuns by Petrucci. The *Constitutions*, found on ff. 1–13v, were re-copied in an elegant italic script on ff. 47–67v while Girolamo of Naples was the Vicar General of the Augustinians. This Girolamo can probably be identified as Girolamo Seripando (1493–1563), and the time of this part of the manuscript narrowed down to between 1539–41, when he visited all the Augustinian houses under his charge. The Convent was destroyed in 1526 to prevent Papal troops from using the space during the battle of Camollia. Nothing is known about the state of affairs at the Convent of Mary Magdalene during these years, although we can assume they were difficult ones for the nuns. We do know that the convent was rebuilt inside the city walls, and continued to be a place where the nobility sent their daughters.<sup>3</sup> The convent was suppressed in 1782, but its archives remained in place until they were finally moved to the Archivio di Stato in 1865; this manuscript may have been removed between 1782 and 1865.

The manuscript includes the Constitutions, or the rules governing life in the community, as well as the Ceremonial, which described the community's liturgical life. The Constitutions, (ff. 1–13) include topics such as confession, dress and bedding, silence in the cell, sins of various degrees, and the election of the Abbess. One example, in the chapter called 'Of Life Outside Fasting Time' (f. 3v), notes 'When the food is ready, the sister in charge of such a duty rings the bell, [and] all the nuns go swiftly and composedly to wash their hands and congregate in silence according to their rank.' Another example notes that 'The nuns maintain total silence while eating, and if in need to speak, they do so in short and at low voice.... If any nun makes a noise, laughs, acts disorderly or makes agitated gestures or similar, the abbess reprimands and corrects her accordingly' (folio 4r). This part of the manuscript is an important direct source of information about the life in the convent.

Italy, Siena  
c.1490–1510

233 × 162 mm; parchment; 68 folios on parchment; in Italian and Latin

### Provenance

Richard Bladworth Angus (1831–1922);  
Sold at Sotheby's, November 26, 1985, lot 99;  
H. P. Kraus, N.Y. (collation in pencil: H.P.K. NY, 20.10.1987;  
UDNXLRL);  
Martin Schøyen (b. 1940), Spikkestad, Norway.

- 1, The nuns of St. Mary Magdalene copied and illuminated religious books for the Ospedale della Scala and the Opera del Duomo in Siena in 1440 and 1470. See Scipione Borghesi Bichi, *Nuovi documenti per la storia dell'arte senese, raccolti da S. Borghesi e L. Banchi*, (Siena, 1898), 210.
- 2, David Gutiérrez, *The Augustinians in the Middle Ages, 1256–1356 Vol. 1* (Pennsylvania, 1984), 207; Fabrizio Nevola, *Siena; Constructing the Renaissance City* (New Haven, 2007), 197–198; Colleen Reardon, *Holy Concord Within Sacred Walls: Nuns and Music in Siena, 1575–1700* (Oxford, 2002), 10–11.
- 3, Reardon, *Holy Concord Within Sacred Walls*, 10.

The Augustinian Ceremonial consists of thirty-nine chapters, followed by a tonale of common tones.<sup>4</sup> A tonary sets forth the various musical settings, or psalm tones, used in Gregorian chants for the sung texts of the Mass and Office. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Siena, as in Milan, Bologna, Rome and other Italian cities, many of the most skilled female musicians lived in convents.<sup>5</sup> Given the importance of religious women for the history of music in Italy, the amount of information about the liturgical chant at the Convent of St. Mary Magdalene found in this manuscript is of particular interest.

The original brown leather-stamped binding probably dates to the last quarter of the fifteenth century and it includes a painting of the Convent's patron inserted into the back cover. The painting depicts Mary Magdalene holding her jar of ointments, finely painted in colors and gold on a gesso ground with a pink border. The saint stands full-length, in a light-yellow robe, with a deep red over mantle with a vivid green lining, partly exposed over her shoulder, on a green and deep blue ground, with touches of gold. The figure of Mary Magdalene, clearly painted by a Sienese artist around 1500, can be compared to a full-length Mary Madgalene found in the Altarpiece in the Bichi Chapel in Sant'Agostino painted by Luca Signorelli, c.1489–90 (fig.1).

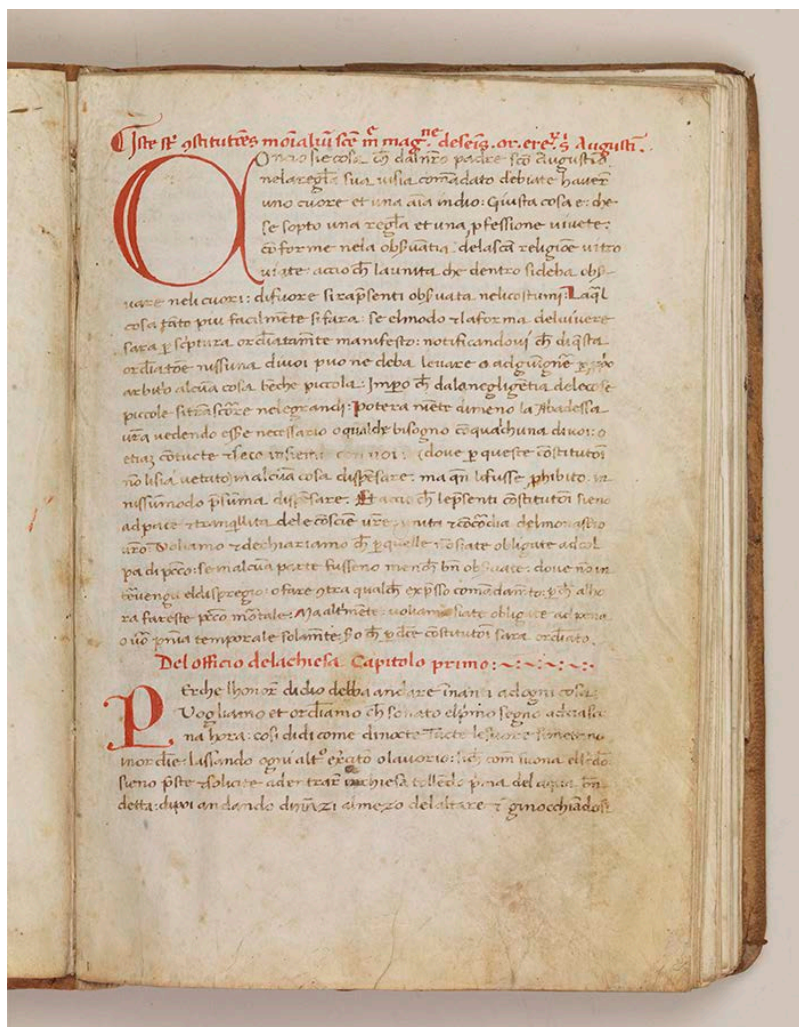
Although the study of the history of women in religion in the Middle Ages and the early modern period has flourished in the last decades, direct sources that were created by nuns themselves are comparatively difficult to find. This manuscript, therefore, is an important direct source of information of the rules that governed the daily life and the liturgy at one of the most illustrious convents in Renaissance Siena.



**Fig.1**  
Luca Signorelli  
The altar in the Bichi Chapel  
in S. Agastino  
Italy, Sienna  
1491

4, P. C. Langeveld,  
*Historica cum aestimatione  
relatio documentorum  
ad caeremonias pristinas  
intra Ordinem Eremitarum  
s. Augustini vigentes  
pertinentium*, fasc. 1,  
*Ordinationes et ordinarium  
cum notis O.E.S.A.* (1960),  
51ff.  
5, Reardon, *Holy Concord  
Within Sacred Walls*.





A Ceremonial and Tonary  
 with the Constitutions  
 of the Nuns of St. Mary  
 Magdalene of Hermits of  
 St. Augustine

**R**orate celi resuper et nubes pluant iustum. **Ton omniis uic  
 eloz breuium**

**A**ue maria grana plena:

**H**omo pacis mee in quo sperabam. **Ton vltioz maioz intriduo  
 ante pascha refrectois**

**A**lium uoce te celo dicentem mihi. **Ton vltioz maioz iohis mo  
 tuoz**

**K** yrie

**S**anctus. **A**gnus dei qui. **B**enedica  
**Sequis. Ite missa e or  
 refrectois in missa  
 duobz sequitibz die  
 bus.**

**I**te missa est alle lu ia al le lu ia. **D**eo gratias

**Sequis. Ite missa est. or fena. in  
 el domo refrectois r coaps  
 usq al sabbatu in albis icluli  
 ue tantum.**

**T**e missa est alleluia alle lu ia. **D**eo gratias al  
**In missis uotuis bre mane r to  
 die amulos etia iel fira uel  
 folepnitans cantatur in fira  
 to modo.**

**K** yrie **leison. G**lo na in excelsis te o.

**S**anctus **A**gnus dei qui. **I**te **m**ul  
**sa est. I**te **m**issa est. **B**e ne.

**I**n fenaibz diebz excepto  
 tepore paschali cantatur  
 sic.

**d**ica mus to mino



## Tapestry with scenes from the Life of Christ





## Tapestry with scenes from the Life of Christ



This remarkable textile is a part of a large tapestry set now preserved in the Museo Nazionale del Palazzo di Venezia in Rome. Strong evidence shows that this tapestry was made by women weavers in the last decades of the fifteenth century, in a workshop run and patronized by the nuns of the monastery of Saint Walburga in Eichstätt. Following the lead of another successful conventual tapestry workshop that had been set up at Nuremberg earlier in the century, the nuns at Eichstätt worked closely with contemporary woodblock printers and engravers on the adaptation and translation of printed designs into full-scale tapestry versions that depict the narrative of the Creation, Fall, and Redemption of humanity. As a vivid liturgical story-book that literally unrolls over many registers and scenes, this massive tapestry set would most likely have been hung around the convent's choir and used as a visual exegesis of the Bible at a grand and imposing scale. Simultaneously, in a period when tapestries were as costly as metalwork and illuminated manuscripts, such a set would also have displayed and communicated the wealth and status of the monastery, which was built on the individual wealth of a community of nuns composed of the pious daughters of the European nobility.

This tapestry, formerly in the celebrated von Hirsch collection (fig.1), represents the previously unknown final hanging from a much larger set that belongs to the Museo Nazionale del Palazzo di Venezia in Rome (figs.2–5).<sup>1</sup> These four hangings begin with scenes of *The Expulsion of the Rebel Angels* and *Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden*, followed by scenes from the Lives of both Christ and the Virgin. Stylistically, they exhibit the simplified and wavering outlines, distortions of the figures, striking colour palette and other design features characteristic of the present tapestry – including the enlarged hands, foliate backgrounds, tiled floor or flower-strewn ground, and the ‘saw-tooth’ design of the vertical borders. The materials, fineness of the weave and the dimensions are comparable: the Rome panels are also woven with wool and linen wefts at six warps per

**Central Germany, possibly Eichstätt  
c.1480**

60.5 × 233.5 cm; tapestry of wool and linen wefts on an undyed wool warp, 6 warps/cm; left ‘saw-tooth’ vertical border rewoven and applied. Some losses to pale blue and brown weft threads. In 2014 an upper horizontal border and previous repairs, not original to the tapestry, were removed; laid and couched detailing to the halos and over stitching to the eyes, nose and mouth were removed; and cleaning and consolidation were undertaken

### Provenance

Collection of Rudolf Kuppelmayr (1843–1918), Munich;  
His sale, Heberle, Munich, 24–26 September 1896, lot 951;  
Collection of Robert von Hirsch (1883–1977), Basel;  
His sale, Sotheby's, London, 23 June 1978, lot 517;  
Private collection, UK, until 1998;  
Private collection, London

### Published

Betty Kürth. *Die Deutschen Bildteppiche des Mittelalters*, vol.III, pl.191, Vienna, 1926.



**Fig.1**

The library of Robert von Hirsch's house at no.55 Engelgasse, Basel, with the present tapestry on display over his case of treasury objects

1, Frederico Hermanin, *Il Palazzo di Venezia*, Rome 1948, pp. 313–14; Mercedes and Vittorio Viale, *Arazzi e tappeti antichi*, Turin 1952, pp. 25–27; Forti Grazzini 2017, pp.240–51.





**Figs.2-5**  
*Stories from the Life of the Virgin and the Passion of Christ*  
 German, middle Rhine area, 2nd half of the 15th century  
 Tapestry, 73 × 308 cm;  
 75 × 324 cm; 75 × 159 cm;  
 57 × 232 cm  
 Museo Nazionale di Venezia, Rome, inv. 8804, 8805, 8805bis, 8806





centimetre.

Divided into five scenes separated by column-like bands, and read from left to right, the narrative of this charmingly creative tapestry depicts moments from the Life of Christ. It depicts the scenes of Noli Me Tangere, Christ Appearing to the Disciples on the Road to Emmaus, The Ascension of Christ, The Pentecost, and The Last Judgement. Beginning with the scene of Noli me Tangere and ending with The Last Judgment, the narrative moments depicted in this hanging would naturally follow on from the final scene of *The Descent from the Cross* in the Rome set. In addition to the hangings in Rome, there is a further fragment in the Museum für angewandte Kunst in Vienna, depicting Christ being nailed to the cross (Österreichisches Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna, inv. T1.116).<sup>2</sup> Though this scene is indeed missing from the Rome hangings, Forti Grazzini argues that it could not have been part of this set as there is no division to the left of the Crucifixion where this scene should be located in the narrative sequence.<sup>3</sup>

The simple and meandering outlines of the design indicate that this tapestry was not designed by an individual experienced in drafting tapestry cartoons, but by an enthusiastic artist that has nonetheless achieved a work of great dynamism. Though manufactured by technically skilled weavers, the delightful eccentricity of the design indicates that it was likely woven in a small regional workshop. It has been argued by Betty Kürth, who published our tapestry in 1928 as missing (*verschollen*), that this centre may have been Eichstätt. She based her argument on comparing the style, the materials used and the technique of this set of tapestries with a handful of examples associated with the Abbey of Saint Walburga.<sup>4</sup> The tapestry's schematic outlines, emphasis on surface pattern and flattening of three-dimensional space are all highly indicative of pre-existing models having been copied. These models likely encompassed highly mobile printed sources, complicating the matter of localization. In *The Last Judgment*, for instance, Christ raises both hands, instead of the more usual one-handed blessing, in a manner similar to the woodcut of the Last Judgement by Johann Zainer, printed in Ulm around 1482.

It is clear that this tapestry was a part of a significant and large-scale set. The largest of the surviving panels in Rome (a) contains seven scenes between the two vertical borders. If each of the hangings were equivalent in scale, the tapestry may have contained around thirty-five scenes. Together, this group of tapestries would have formed a monumental set, beginning with the Expulsion of the Rebel Angels and Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and featuring the entire cycle of the Lives of Christ and the Virgin. These highly unusual and remarkable hangings would have enveloped an ecclesiastical space, perhaps the choir, in a highly chromatic and bold narrative that would have been both didactic and devotional in nature.<sup>5</sup>

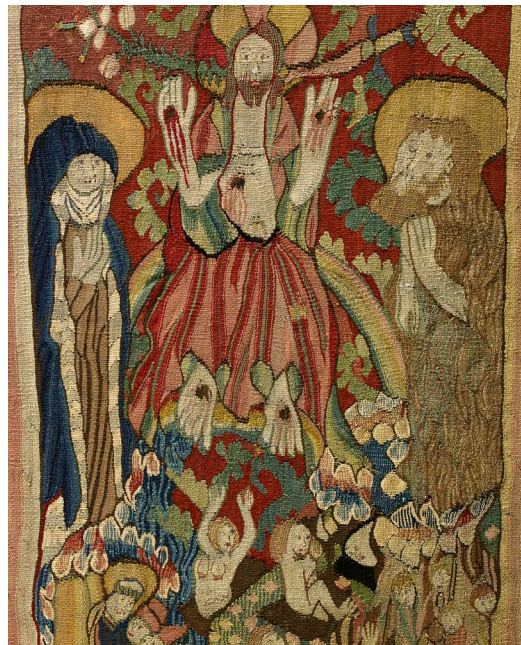
2, Betty Kürth. *Die Deutschen Bildteppiche des Mittelalters*, vol.III, pl.191, Vienna, 1926; Heinrich Göbel, *Wandteppiche III, Die Germanischen und Slavischen Lander*, Leipzig, 1933, pl.99b; Christina Cantzler, *Bildteppiche der Spätgotik am Mittelrhein 1400–1550*, Germany 1990, fig.30.

3, Nello Forti Grazzini, in Emmanuele Pellegrini, *Voglia d'Italia: il collezionismo internazionale nella Roma del Vittoriano*, Rome, cat.4.102017, pp.240–51.

4, Betty Kürth 1926, III, pp.192–94. Forte Grazzini, who was unaware of the present panel, places the Rome panels in the Middle Rhine, possibly Cologne, based on parallels with works in various media created in that region, particularly the panel painting of *The Lives of Christ and the Virgin* made in Cologne around 1410–20 (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, inv.1224).

5, This entry is based on a chapter written by Rosamund Garrett in *Late Medieval and Renaissance Textiles* (London: Sam Fogg, 2018).





Tapestry with scenes from  
the Life of Christ (details)



**A maiolica jug depicting a woman  
spinning yarn**



## A maiolica jug depicting a woman spinning yarn

A stout, bulbous jug with round body depicting a Romanticised vision of a woman spinning yarn. The woman is clothed in a green- and orange-sleeved dress with yellow skirts and wearing a long white headscarf tied over her hair. She sits on a low shapely bench, her hands working a length of thread spun around a hand spindle held in place under the crook of her left arm. In the Middle Ages, a hand spindle was the only tool available, which made the process of turning fibres into yarn a simple yet extremely time-consuming process. Spinning was therefore done anywhere and everywhere – in the home, in between tasks, while tending to livestock and doing errands. It is interesting to note that almost no images survive that show men spinning, suggesting that spinning was commonly done by women. This image of a woman spinning gives us a glimpse into the kind of work that women would have done on a daily basis – whether they were wealthy or poor.

A pale blue cartouche frames this scene with delicate vine tendrils sprouting from its sides. This is in turn enclosed by a blue ladder motif encircled by stylised sprays alternating with small curlicue licks in blue. The jug has an applied strap handle with a pinched thumb indentation at the lower end, which curves upwards at the end to form a sort of tail. Covered inside and outside with expensive white tin glaze, a mark of its status as a luxury object. Traces of sediment and root deposits in the interior indicate that this jug was thrown, almost certainly by accident, into a well or river, and has miraculously been preserved as a result.

The generous, bulbous shape of this vessel, the decorative language of its painted design, and the idiosyncratic shape of the base of its handle, all serve to localise it with great firmness to the important pottery-producing centre of Pesaro in the Marche region of east-central Italy. Although the figurative decoration on our example is vanishingly rare among this group, stylistically it corresponds very closely indeed with published fragments found during excavations at Pesaro.<sup>1</sup>

Thanks in large part to Camilla of Aragon's support, Pesaro became one of central Italy's most dominant centres for maiolica production during the latter part of the century. The first maiolica made for foreign royalty, the wonderful service of King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary and his wife Beatrice of Aragon (daughter of the King of Naples), who was Camilla's cousin, was made in Pesaro.<sup>2</sup>

The most famous representation of this general type of jug appears on the reverse of a painting of a young man praying, painted by Hans Memling in around 1485 and now in the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection in Madrid (fig.1). Memling clearly had access to a Pesaro-made jug of this design, since he in fact painted it twice, once on the Madrid portrait and again on a Virgin and Child Enthroned now in Berlin (fig.2a). The shape of the handle's base, kicking out at the bottom with a narrow tail of clay, is identical to that on our jug and on sherds discovered in Pesaro kiln wastes and midden pits (fig.2b).

Made in Italy and sought after by foreign patrons, jugs such as ours with its woman spinning yarn, were used and enjoyed at the tables of high-status patrons right across Europe during the fifteenth century. Moreover, their representation in important northern European religious paintings are reminders of the way such objects could be given deeper meaning.<sup>3</sup>

**Italy, Marche, Pesaro**  
**c.1490**

22 × 22.4 × 23 cm; tin-glazed earthenware with cobalt blue, orange, green and yellow decoration on a light buff body, with tin glaze to the interior; excellent condition. An even craquelure and some generalised abrasion to the glaze, with two small isolated flake losses to the lower body, and some chipping to the rim and foot, along with glaze losses around the former. The handle restored. Kiln scars and a single hairline crack below the handle.

### Provenance

Anonymous sale, Semenzato, Milan, 5th November 1986, lot 123;

The Art of the Italian Potter, Maiolica and Porcelain from a Private Collection, Christie's London, 24th May 2011, lot 2; Private collection, Italy

1, Andrea Ciaroni, *Maioliche del Quattrocento a Pesaro: Frammenti di storia dell'arte ceramica dalla bottega dei Fedeli*, Florence, 2004, pp.165, 180–81; Paride Berardi, *L'antica maiolica di Pesaro*, Florence, 1984, p.267, figs. 51b, d; Bettini in Giuseppe Albarelli, *Ceramisti pesaresi nei documenti notarili dell'Archivio di Stato di Pesaro sec. XV–XVIII* (Biblioteca Servorum Romandiolae 9), Bologna, 1986, fig.14.

2, Gabriella Balla and Jekely Zsombor eds, *The Dowry of Beatrice: Italian Maiolica and the Court of*

*King Matthias*, exh. cat., Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest, 2008; Timothy Wilson, *Maiolica: Italian Renaissance Ceramics in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, 2016, no.3, On maiolica in northern European paintings more generally see Konrad Strauss, 'Keramikgefäße, insbesondere Fayencegefäße auf Tafelbildern der deutschen und niederländischen Schule des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts', in *Mitteilungsblatt (Keramik-Freunde der Schweiz)*, no. 84 (Dec. 1972), pp.3–42.





**Fig.1**  
Hans Memling (1435–1494)  
Portrait of a Young Man  
Praying (verso showing a still  
life in a Pesaro jug)  
c.1485  
Oil on panel: 29.2 × 22.5 cm  
Madrid, Museo Nacional  
Thyssen-Bornemisza,  
Inv. 284.b (1938.1.b)



**Fig.2a**  
Hans Memling (1435–1494)  
Virgin and Child Enthroned  
c.1480s  
Oil on panel: 81 × 55 cm  
Staatliche Museen,  
Gemäldegalerie, Berlin,  
Inv. 529



**Fig.12b**  
Detail of Memling's Virgin  
and Child Enthroned





## A Rounded jug



## A Rounded jug

This handsome jug with a mottled green glaze was thrown on a fast wheel and made by an experienced and confident potter, as demonstrated by the density of the rings visible on the interior of the jug. The two small but distinct finger impressions at the top of the handle and the stabbed holes along its length have practical functions but are also ornamental. These fingerprints also give us a clue as to the maker of this jug, their size suggesting that this object may have been made by a woman.

This jug was most probably made at the Brill/Boarstall potteries in central Buckinghamshire, identifiable as such by its fine pinkish fabric and well-executed design. Its size and shape is small when compared to surviving Brill/Boarstall serving vessels, suggesting it was used for drinking rather than serving, as its small pinched spout is also more vestigial than practical. A similar rounded jug was discovered at the bottom of a well in Oxford, perhaps having slipped when being refilled, and is now in the Ashmolean Museum (PW128).

At Brill, as elsewhere, some of the medieval pottery making would have been done next to the potters' dwellings, so that members of the family including women and children could contribute to their labour. The kilns, however, were sited further away and downwind from the hamlet, in an area reserved for the purpose, as is evident in the large number of 14th century kilns identified in 1978 at Temple Farm, Brill, which leave little room for workshop activities. This division also makes practical sense because sparks from the firing would be hazardous to thatched cottages of the hamlet, and smoke noxious to its inhabitants.

The potters of the villages of Brill and Boarstall were operating from at least c.1200, when documents attest to potter surnames. Archaeological evidence suggests that they were amongst the most technically competent in all medieval England, as does this handsomely proportioned pot. This prolific production centre supplied a variety of vessels throughout the south Midlands, from the utilitarian to the elegant and highly decorated.

**England, Buckinghamshire, Brill/Boarstall ware**  
**Mid-14th – early 15th century**

21.5 × 10 × 11 cm; earthenware jug with pinched spout and rod handle, green glaze with flecks of copper green on the shoulder and belly.

*Provenance*

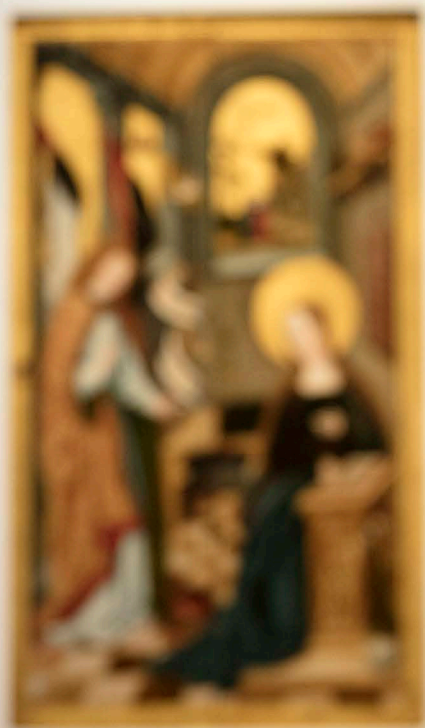
Jonathan Horne, 2008

*Literature*

R. J. Ivens, 'Medieval Pottery Kilns at Brill, Buckinghamshire', *Records of Buckinghamshire*, Vol. X-XIII, 1981, p.105









The Resurrection attended by  
a kneeling donatrix





## The Resurrection attended by a kneeling donatrix

This intimately-scaled window panel, showing a donatrix kneeling in attendance at Christ's Resurrection, was made as a pendant pair to another of identical size and format, depicting a male donor kneeling before the Crucifixion (fig.1). Pendant images of this nature were commonplace in early sixteenth-century Germany, typically made to mark occasions such as marriages or social and business alliances. But the vast majority of such pairs are to be found in the form of panel paintings, and far fewer are known to have survived in stained glass. Our pair of panels depict what we may presume from the treatment of the figures and the inclusion of their coats of arms, to be a husband and wife. They both wear the costly robes popular among Southern Germany's burgeoning mercantile classes in the 1520s, and suggest a wealthy couple in their prime. Unlike the large multi-coloured windows usually associated with church buildings, the use of small-scale clear glass panels painted *en grisaille* (from the French word for grey, meaning monochromatic) suggests that despite their overtly religious content they were most likely produced to decorate a domestic context. That the figures are unaccompanied by children may further indicate that the panels were commissioned on the occasion of their marriage, to decorate their marital home.

Southern Germany, Bavaria?  
c.1520

29 × 23 cm; clear glass with silver stain and vitreous enamel. Exceptional condition. There are a few stabilised and leaded breaks to the decorative borders, as well as a minor level of abrasion to the painted surface in places.

*Provenance*  
With George Wigley, Towcester;  
Private collection, USA



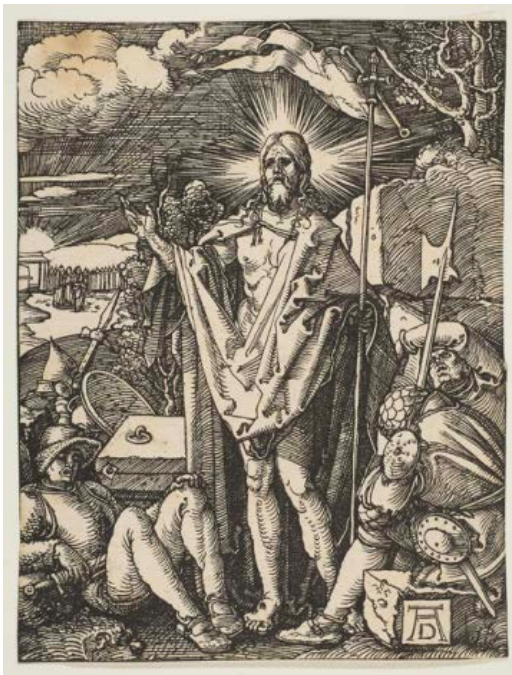
**Fig.1**  
The Crucifixion attended by  
a kneeling donor  
Southern Germany, Bavaria?  
c.1520  
29 × 23 cm

The conventions and social norms surrounding sexual hierarchy, heraldic symbolism, and image making in late-Medieval Europe meant that men were almost invariably portrayed on the left of an image (which translates to the heraldic dexter or right-hand side of the image if viewed from the point of view of the subject), with women occupying the right-hand side (or heraldic sinister).<sup>1</sup> However, in an intriguing and highly unusual break from this convention the painter of our panels instead positioned the donatrix on the left (or heraldic dexter). The decision may have been taken in response to how the pair were to be hung or viewed (i.e. right to left in a chronological arrangement since the Crucifixion took place before

1, Corine Schleif, 'Men on the Right – Women on the Left: (A)symmetrical Spaces and Gendered Places', in V. Chieffo Raguin and S. Stanbury eds, *Women's Space: Patronage, Place, and Gender in the Medieval Church*, 2005, pp.207–249, p.211.

the Resurrection), or it is possible that they were intended for windows positioned directly opposite one another rather than side by side. Neither possibility explains the erroneous heraldic arrangement of the figures however, a feature that marks them out as tantalising exceptions to the rules surrounding how images were structured and viewed.

For Christians, the Resurrection is one of the key moments following Christ's death and entombment, when he rises from the tomb in triumph over death while the soldiers guarding it lie asleep around him. The artists of northern Europe working in the early years of the sixteenth century depicted this scene and others from the Passion narrative with an unbridled inventiveness, chief among them being of course Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) and his circle of printmakers in Nuremberg. In the years around 1510 Dürer produced a series of woodcuts known collectively as the *Small Passion*, a project that became rapidly and widely disseminated soon after its publication. The high rocky landscape in which the scene on our panel takes place, as well the figures of Christ emerging from the tomb, the sleeping soldier on the left, and his shocked counterpart at right, are all details that our painter lifted with only subtle changes from Dürer's woodcut version of the scene, and suggests that he was working directly from the print itself as he put pigment to glass (fig.2). However, this was clearly also a collaboration between the artist and his patrons, since he included details that do not feature in Dürer's woodcut, such as the prone skeleton of Death and the grotesque bestial figure of Sin over which Christ is shown trampling in triumph. It is highly possible that our female donor had a close level of involvement in the commission, perhaps personally prescribing her own placement in the image and the structure and content of its imagery in order to reflect her aspirations, marital alliance, and Christian ideals.



**Fig.2**  
Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)  
The Resurrection, from The  
Small Passion  
c.1510  
12.8 × 9.7 cm  
New York, Metropolitan  
Museum of Art, inv.  
1975.653.51



## Book of Hours, North-Eastern France



## Book of Hours, Use of Paris, in Latin and French

This beautifully illuminated Book of Hours was made for the private use of a woman, as testified by its inclusion of prayers that take the feminine form. Although we do not know who the patron and/or recipient was, a coat of arms which once decorated the verso of folio 72 may have revealed her identity. This, however, has been erased by a subsequent owner and only an imprint remains.

This manuscript is illuminated with 15 large miniatures, each surrounded by a full border. They include Saint Christopher carrying Christ across the river, Mary Magdalene with her ointment jar, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Annunciation to the Shepherds, the Circumcision, the Adoration of the Magi, the Presentation in the Temple, the Flight into Egypt, the Crucifixion and Pentecost. This is followed by three more illuminations, including King David in penitence in the Wilderness, a Funerary Service with monks saying a Requiem Mass to either side of the bier, which is surrounded by candles, and an image of the Virgin and Child.

Although the miniature paintings are standard in their iconography, we may speculate that some of the details are suggestive of a female viewer. The illumination showing the Virgin and Child, for example, depicts the figures in a tender, though highly symbolic, exchange of gifts – suggesting the duality of images like this. They are shown half-length, on a Crescent Moon, as the Child gives his mother a bunch of strawberries, a symbol of the Virgin's chastity and of the Garden of Eden. The prayers in this section use feminine forms, as the texts begins with 'Obsecro te' (138r). Another particularly sweet example is the scene opposite the erased coat of arms, which depicts the Flight into Egypt (73r). The Holy Family travel through a rocky landscape and while Joseph has his back turned to the reader, the Virgin and Child become the main focus here. The intimate scene that unfolds here is accentuated by the fact that the Christ child turns to sweetly look at the Virgin, who holds him tightly with both arms and covers him with her cloak. This depiction is also stylistically important as it is modelled on the same scene by Melchior Broederlam for the exterior panels of the Crucifixion Altarpiece, commissioned by Philip the Bold for the Chartreuse de Champmol in 1398 (fig.1).

The artist of this Book of Hours uses a rich palette and deep contrasts between fully rounded figures and ornamentally arranged interiors and/or landscapes. A taste for copious patterning is evident in manuscripts made in Champagne where insistent patterning was the norm. Parallels can be found in the Cauchon Hours for the Use of Rheims from c.1440 which share the delightful landscapes dotted with small flowers (see *Très Riches Heures de Champagne*, exh.cat., 2007, no.16; G. Clark, 'Walters 269 and Manuscript Illumination in Reims', forthcoming). The present manuscript is also close in style to a Book of Hours for the Use of Soissons (Lyon, Bibl. Munic., ms.5142; V. Leroquais, *Manuscrits à Peintures*, 1920, no.33, ill.) which was probably produced by the same workshop. The manuscript in Lyon was made for Marguerite de Charny (1390–1460) whose first husband Jean de Bauffremont died at the battle of Agincourt in 1415. Her coat-of-arms are impaled with those of the nobleman Humbert de Villersexel (1385–1437), Comte de la Roche, whom she married in 1418.

**North Eastern France**  
**c.1420–1430**

202 × 150mm; parchment, slight water damage affecting some leaves at end, a few borders slightly cropped at top, script occasionally rubbed, all miniatures in pristine condition, sewn on four bands and bound in modern red velvet, somewhat worn at the joints

*Provenance*

Private collection, Switzerland, acquired at Koller, Zurich, 30 October 1980, no.7020.





**Fig.1**  
Melchior Broederlam  
Flight into Egypt  
1393–1399  
Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts



Book of Hours, Use of  
Paris, in Latin and French



## The Virgin and Child at a Window





## The Virgin and Child at a Window

*In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Virgin was shown more and more as 'a reflection of everywoman', depicted in intimate domestic settings, modest architectural spaces that could be perceived as an almost tangible extension of the viewer's own environment, much like this intimate panel painting, showing the Virgin and Child at an arched window.<sup>1</sup> Such paintings that are coupled with clear devotional messages were often commissioned for members of female monastic communities, encouraging them to structure their lives according to the Virgin's example.*

The Virgin and Child appear at a window with a deep square ledge bearing a Latin inscription. The Virgin, her long auburn hair falling freely over her shoulders, supports a book encased in a chemise binding in both hands, her right elbow resting on the window ledge. She is clothed in a vermilion-red dress with a deep-pink mantle tied across her chest and covering her shoulders. The figure of Christ, his nakedness concealed by the book with which he plays, sits on a large tasselled cushion covered in green velvet-like fabric. He looks down to the manuscript, his left arm positioned as though in the act of turning its pages and his right raised in a sign of declamation. Above the couple, an angel clothed in a blue alb-like garment hovers beneath the shade of the arch, presenting a large crown with both hands, as if in the moment before he rests it onto the Virgin's head, crowning her as Queen of Heaven.

The present panel includes a phrase in Latin majuscule lettering painted on the parapet beneath the figures. It reads; 'Cura tuos virgo : qui / te coluere colantur' (*Take care of your devotees, o Virgin : Those who have worshipped you, let them be worshipped*). The imploring tone of the phrase, and the type of community it implies as being worthy of our own worship, would suggest that it was composed as a message to young women; that if they are devotees of the Virgin Mary, they themselves will be elevated in the eyes of others. Small-scale paintings of such intimacy and devotional emphasis were painted for the members of monasteries and convents throughout the later Middle Ages; examples surviving from the Carthusian charterhouse at Champmol offer concrete examples of this widespread tradition.<sup>2</sup> The present panel is also a clear reworking of the last line from Ovid's Baucis and Philemon episode in the *Metamorphoses* (line 724 of Book 8). The line there reads 'cura deum di sint, et, qui coluere, colantur' which translates as 'May the cares of the gods be gods themselves, and, those who have worshipped, may they be worshipped', or more colloquially 'May those who care for the gods be gods, and those who revere the gods be revered'. Baucis and Philemon were well-known Classical examples of piety who were rewarded by the gods in the story for their devotion. It would be entirely plausible and appropriate then for our panel to have been made for the purpose of private reflection and prayer, by an educated member of a female religious foundation, offering a way for its patron to demonstrate a novel and intelligent grasp of ancient literature in a society just beginning to connect itself more fully to Classical ideals, precedents, and literary concepts.

The present panel is based on a model by attributed to Martin Schongauer (1450/1453–1491) and now preserved in the Getty Museum, Los Angeles (fig.1). Schongauer is most widely known for his many engravings, but his paintings, far fewer of which survive or were ever likely to have been painted, did as much to influence Southern German painting in the final years of the fifteenth century. The comparable size of the Getty *Virgin and Child at a Window* and the present panel indicate

**The Master BM  
Colmar or Upper Rhine  
c.1500–20**

18.3 × 11.9 × 0.9 cm; oil on (walnut?) panel; minor abrasion across the paint surface

### Provenance

Collection of Felix Ziethen, Munich, until;  
His sale, Hugo Helbing, Munich, 22 September 1934, lot 84;  
By 1948, art market, Brussels;  
Sold Weinmüller, Munich 19–20 June 1974, Lot 844;  
Private collection, Germany;  
Sold Karl & Faber, 29 November 2005, lot 174

### Published

*Sammlung Felix Ziethen München und Beiträge aus Privatbesitz: bedeutende Gemälde alter Meister der Niederländischen, Deutschen, Italienischen und Französischen Schule...* sale catalogue, Hugo Helbing, Munich, 1934, p.12.  
J. Baum, *Martin Schongauer*, Vienna (1948), fig.201  
Noted by Prof. Alfred Stange, Tutzing, in a letter dated 19th December 1964 as dateable to 'c.1500'  
E. Buchner, *Martin Schongauer als Maler*, Berlin (1941), p.164, reproduced fig.98.  
R. Schumacher-Wolfgarten, 'Pietatis Monumentum — zu dem Colmarer Bild Martin Schongauers', in *Zeitschrift des Kirchengeschichtlichen Vereins für Geschichte, christliche Kunst, Altertums- und Literaturkunde des Erzbistums Freiburg*, 100. Bd (1980), pp.235–247, p.244, fn. 41.  
B. Brinkmann and S. Kemperdick, *Deutsche Gemälde im Städel 1300–1550*, Mainz am Rhein and Frankfurt am Main (2002), p.417.

1, Stephen N. Fliegel, *A Higher Contemplation; Sacred Meaning in the Christian Art of the Middle Ages*, Kent, Ohio (2012), p.58.

2, S. Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art*, Oxford (2008), p.285.



**Fig.1**  
Martin Schongauer  
*Virgin and Child at a Window*  
Germany, Colmar  
c.1485–90  
16.5 × 11 cm; oil on panel  
Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty  
Museum, Inv. 97.PB.23



**Fig.2**  
Master BM  
*The Nativity*  
Colmar or Upper Rhine  
c.1500–1520  
38.3 × 23.8 × 0.7 cm; oil on  
panel  
Frankfurt, Städelches  
Kunstinstitute, Inv. SG 444

that our painter had direct access to Schongauer's original, although important differences such as the shape of the window surround, the position of Christ's arms, and the incorporation of an inscription on the parapet below, also make clear that our painter's working knowledge of Schongauer's oeuvre did not in any way inhibit his ability to inject the scene with personal flourishes.

A painting depicting the *Nativity* now in the Städelches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt, ascribed to the anonymous monogrammist 'Master BM' (fig.2) provides the closest parallel to the present panel, both in its characteristically rich palette and the softness with which the painter portrays facial features, smoothly formed hands, and wispy locks of auburn hair. The Master BM is an as-yet unidentified painter whose known surviving oeuvre consists of several autographed engravings and a tiny number of paintings on panel dated to between 1500 and 1520.<sup>3</sup> As with our panel, the Master BM seems to have favoured working at a small scale. In his discussion of the Frankfurt *Nativity* and the present *Virgin and Child at a Window*, published as part of his 1948 monograph, Ernst Buchner first suggested a localisation to the Master BM, highlighting in particular the panels' shared flatness of surface and smoothness of anatomical and material details.<sup>4</sup> Further characteristics affirm the link with the Frankfurt panel, such as the subtle rendering of colour in the figures' faces, with extremely delicate hints of red pigment in the cheeks, small, pinched mouths with a strong central split running down the lower lip and bright red lines delineating its lower edge, and heavy-lidded eyes with broad black pupils. The construction of the drapery folds, which unlike Schongauer's highly reconciled compositions tend in places to veer towards impossible formations with a purely decorative, two-dimensional

3, The Frankfurt example and two others showing John on Patmos and the Baptism of Christ (Martin von Wagner-Museum, Würzburg) are most widely known.

4, E. Buchner, *Martin Schongauer als Maler*, Berlin (1941), pp.164–5; see also B. Brinkmann and S. Kemperdick, *Deutsche Gemälde im Städel 1300–1550*, Mainz am Rhein and Frankfurt am Main (2002), pp.413–412, especially p.417.



appearance, also offers a direct parallel to the Frankfurt *Nativity*. While the artist's engravings have been dated to the early period in his career, perhaps made while active in, or soon after leaving, Schongauer's workshop, the present state of scholarship surrounding his paintings has concurred on their execution in the years shortly after 1500. The style of our panel is certainly consistent with a date range within the first two decades of the century, a reconstruction further supported by its reworking of classical phrases as noted above.



## The Foljambe Hours





## The Foljambe Hours

Complete and splendidly preserved, this striking manuscript is a rare example of manuscript made for a woman with illumination from the French Alpine region. While the manuscript does not reveal the identity of its patron, the careful decoration and choice of costly materials suggests a wealthy member of the high aristocracy. It was certainly made for a woman since the prayers to the Virgin are written in the female form. Since the 18th century, the manuscript was in possession of the English nobleman Francis Ferrand Foljambe from Osberton Hall (1749 – 1814) who acquired it by marriage with Mary Arabelle Thornhagh in the 1760s. It remained in the possession of the family for almost 250 years.

The decoration with its wide golden bars framing the incipits and the inventive border decorations place the manuscript in the succession of the most outstanding Savoyard work of the 1430s, such as the Apocalypse of the dukes of Savoy illuminated between 1428 and 1434 by Jean Bapteur and Peronnet Lamy. The miniatures are characterised by outstandingly powerful colours and a keen sense for the relief effect of the landscapes in the tradition of Jean Bapteur. Two saints included in the litany allow the manuscript not to be dated before 1455. The 12 paintings are surmounted by a flat keel arch, above four lines of text showing four-line foliate initials with decorative bars, mostly as thick batons with ivy leaf or flowers, in one instance with a double, in full borders of ivy leaf and acanthus with flowers, animated with birds and grotesques, structured hierarchically according to the importance of the text. They include: f. 21r: Annunciation to the Virgin; f. 34r: Visitation; f. 48r: Adoration of the Child; f. 53r: Annunciation to the Shepherds; f. 57r: Adoration of the Magi; f. 61r: Presentation in the Temple; f. 65: Flight to Egypt; f. 73r: Massacre of the Innocents; f. 85r: Crucifixion; f. 89r: Pentecost; f. 93r: David in Penitence; f. 114r: Prayer at the catafalque on a graveyard. Smaller initials as golden letters on red and blue grounds include two-line initials for the openings of the psalms, one-line initials for verses.

This manuscript originated probably in the Dauphiné with Grenoble as its chief city and was painted by two masters of different age. The illuminator in charge, whom we call the Foljambe Master, worked together with a brilliant specialist of border decorations who combined magnificent acanthus leaves with inventive little figures. This Book of Hours is his only known work so far. However his younger collaborator can be found in other manuscripts instead. He was responsible for the miniatures in Guillaume de Tignoville's Dits Moraux des Philosophes (Pierpont Morgan Library M.771) and partly illuminated a Book of Hours of the Société des Manuscrits des Assureurs Français (SMAF) that belongs to a small group of manuscripts connected to the Provence and the circle of Enguerrand Quarton.<sup>1</sup> The style of the Master of Morgan 771 has been connected with Savoyard manuscript illumination and particularly of the *Hours of Louis de Savoie* (Paris, BnF, MS. Latin 9473). However, the dating of our manuscript sets it apart from this crucial period of manuscript production in Savoy alone. Instead, this master incorporates stylistic novelties from the Franche-Comté and the Lyonnais. A particular appeal also lies in the artistic impulses of the German speaking Alpine regions as we find certain motives used by Konrad Witz who was largely active in Basel and Geneva. Even though both artists integrate Italian influences here, the book and its layout remain fundamentally French in character.

**Book of Hours [Use of Rome],  
in Latin with additions in French  
South-East France  
Second half 15th century**

Illuminated manuscript on parchment; 172 leaves, in-Octavo, 180 × 133 mm; justification: 105 × 64 mm; Complete, a double leaf of modern parchment as endpaper at the beginning and the end. Bound in quires of eight leaves, irregular are the calendar quires 1–2 (6) and quire 15 (10) with Vespers of the Office of the Dead and the final quire 22 (8–2); Written in 1 column of 15 lines, the calendar in 17 lines, ruled in red; Gothic script, capital letters highlighted with ochre washes; occasional pen flourished letters, 12 large miniatures Bound in cerise velvet of the 17th century over old wooden boards with one clasp of brass; in a red half morocco case and a lining of patterned silk.

### Provenance

Francis Ferrand Foljambe (1749 – 1814), Osberton Hall, England;  
Private collection, Europe;  
Private collection, USA

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Baptiste Lebigue et al., *Manuscrits du Moyen-Âge et manuscrits littéraires modernes*, Paris, 2001, pp.57–62.



The Foljambe Hours





## Grotesque Head of a Woman Wearing a Caul



## Grotesque Head of a Woman Wearing a Caul

*With architectural projects, wealthy women often performed important roles in their local parish churches, sponsoring rebuilding campaigns, church furnishings and stained glass. This practice had a long tradition in medieval England, where examples survive in a multitude of churches. As positive role models, images of contemporary women might be found as patrons kneeling in the corners of the windows that they paid for or as saints dressed in contemporary fashions on wall paintings. However, grotesque images of women coexist in these spaces, possibly to act as deterrents and warnings against an opposite, amoral behaviour.*

**England, Dorset**  
**Late 14th century**

27.5 × 30.5 × 23 cm; limestone; general surface wear, typical of exterior stone sculpture of this date.

*Provenance*  
Private Collection, UK;  
Richard Wiseman Collection, 2013

This corbel depicts a grotesque face with large bulging eyes, a flat nose, spherical cheeks and an open mouth. The appearance is animalistic but this head can be identified as that of a woman as she is depicted wearing a caul, which from the front resembles large floppy ears – further adding to her hybrid nature. The spandrel supporting the back of the head is drilled through creating a net-like appearance and a representation of the headdress she wears. The head is topped by a rectangular base that would have supported the roofline of a church. The large block of stone is proof of the architectural function of this sculpture.

Cylinder cauls, such as the one worn by this figure, became fashionable in the 14th century and they can be studied in various contemporary effigies and tomb slabs (fig.1). Such headdresses were expensive possessions worn by women of a certain class on special occasions. They were made out of metal and often attached to crowns, although they were not restricted to royalty. The inclusion of contemporary costume on grotesque corbels served as a cautionary sign against worldly excess to visitors of all classes, who were able to relate to the heads that would have been decorating the roofline of the church.

The corbel is one of two sculptures from the same site. The second, now in a UK private collection, also embodies the same style of abstract yet exaggerated carving and analogous grotesque style (fig.2). It has been suggested that these corbels come from Christchurch Priory in Dorset. The priory is one of the largest parish churches in England, surpassing many English cathedrals in size. The current structure has had many phases of building, dating back to the late 12th century. In the 13th century, however, a large campaign of rebuilding began. It was then that the nave aisles were vaulted, the clerestory added and the east end rebuilt. The work began on the roof of the nave in 1350, followed by the Lady Chapel at the end of the 14th century. It was at this point in the history of the building that these corbels may date to.



**Fig.1**  
Tomb slab of Sir Thomas  
Burton and his wife  
England, Little Casterton,  
Rutland  
c.1410

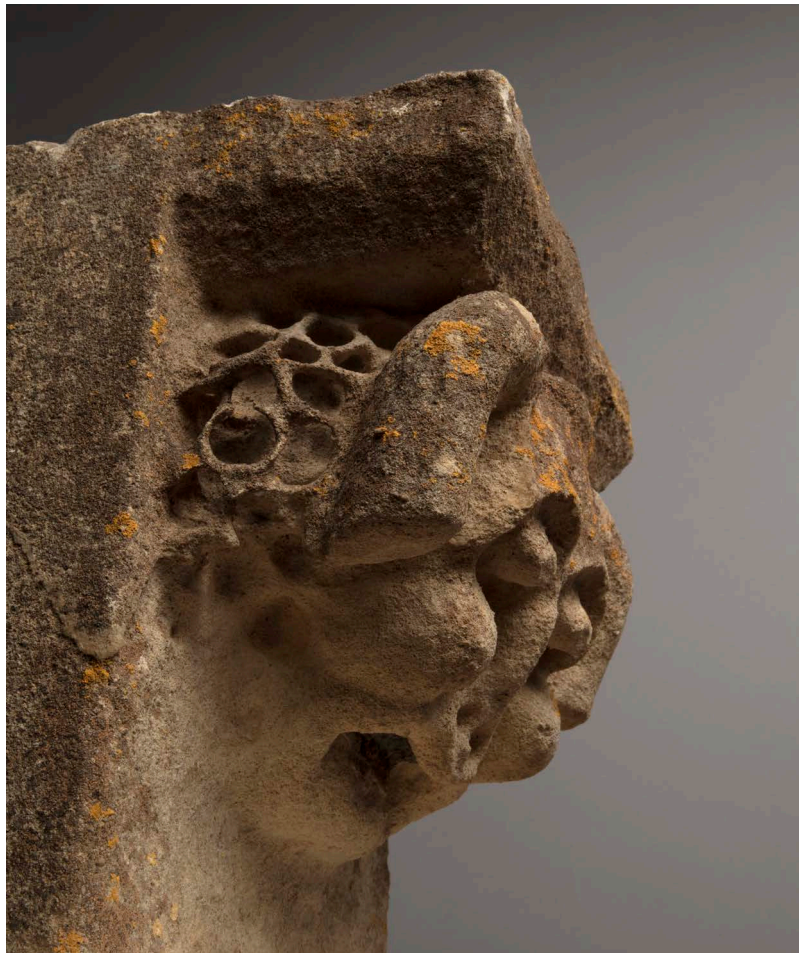




**Fig.2**  
Corbel of a Man with  
large Ears  
England, Dorset  
14th century  
Private Collection, England



**Fig.3**  
The Ansford Anus Shower  
England, Ansford  
14th – 15th century



**detail**



## Book of Hours with Saint Barbara





## Book of Hours with Saint Barbara

This Book of Hours, illuminated with three large miniatures, was made in Paris for a female owner. While the *Obsecro te* and the prayers at end are in the masculine, the prayers on folio 179 as well as the inserted suffrages to Saints Barbara, Katherine and Apollonia at the beginning of the manuscript, which are in the same hand as those at the end, are in the feminine. This, together with the exceptionally elegant miniature depicting Saint Barbara, clearly indicates that an early female owner either had a particular affinity to these saints or perhaps was named Barbara herself.

The manuscript is illuminated throughout with gilded initials; however only three large miniatures survive. The subjects of these include Saint Barbara f.14; Pentecost f.122v; and a Burial scene f.126. The miniatures depicting Pentecost and the Burial scene are an example of the late work of the Master of the Munich Golden Legend (fl. in Paris, c.1420–1460), named after a copy of that text, now in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. gall. 3. His style is related to that of the Bedford Master, with whose workshop he often collaborated. The Master's crisp, clean lines, his habit of delineating facial features in black and his outlining areas of colour are all characteristic of his early work but grow more subtle and more subdued as he gets older. The two miniatures in the present manuscript are the output of the artist at the peak of his career and they can be compared to his work on the illuminations in a Book of Hours in the British Library dated to c.1460 (fig.1).

The most monumental depiction in the manuscript, however, is the striking image of Saint Barbara, who clearly held an important role for the owner of this book. In this miniature, which appears prominently at the beginning of the manuscript, Saint Barbara stands in an open landscape with two fortified residences far away in the background. She holds onto her attribute, the tower in which she was imprisoned, in her left hand and presses her right hand to her chest. Her elegant flowing long hair, the modelling of her figure, the gilded drapery and her beautiful facial features are exceptionally sophisticated. The miniature with Saint Barbara is by a different hand from those discussed above and while the unidentified artist shows influences from Flanders, especially in his treatment of the landscape, the style of the borders of this folio clearly indicate that this is a French – if not Parisian – production of c.1460–1470.

**Use of Rome, in Latin and French**  
France, Paris (?)  
c.1440–1470

189 × 132mm, 206 leaves; illuminated manuscript on vellum, bound tightly with modern foliation in pencil; lacking the end of the Suffrage to Apollonia before f.19, the miniature opening the Hours of the Virgin before f.39 and the miniature opening the Seven Penitential Psalms before f.104, some soiling and cockling to opening leaves, light marginal staining; 17th-century blind-tooled leather over wooden boards (rebacked, lightly scuffed).

### Provenance

Jacques Chapet (175–1838), Auxerre (his ex-libris on upper pastedown);  
Jacques Chapet (1754–1838), of Auxerre:  
Bequest of Mrs. A. M. Minturn, 1890 to the Metropolitan Museum of Art;  
Dutch private collection.



**Fig.1**  
Master of the Munich  
Golden Legend  
Book of Hours  
France, Paris  
c.1460  
British Library Harley 5762





Domine labia  
mea aperies  
**E**t os me  
um annuntiet



## An ovoid maiolica dish for use during childbirth



## An ovoid maiolica dish for use during childbirth

*In Renaissance Italy, the material culture associated with childbirth was rich and highly sophisticated. The dangers to both the mother and the child during pregnancy meant that healthy births were celebrated events, when mothers would be congratulated with gifts and food. The demographic tensions inherent in a society bound by dynastic success while being simultaneously afflicted by recurring bouts of plague epidemics resulted in a ritual of childbirth that was intended to affirm, comfort and encourage. As the production of maiolica flourished in Italy during the sixteenth century, ceramic wares painted with birth-related images became integral parts of the material culture necessary to this ritual. The images on these ceramic vessels were often concealed on the underside of lids or within bowls; to be seen only by the mother and those most intimately connected with the event.*

**Italy, Urbino, Fontana workshop  
c.1560**

17.2 × 21.5 × 2.9 cm; blue, yellow, green, black, purple, orange, and white glazed earthenware. One section of the rim broken and repaired in two places, some minor chip losses to the rim, otherwise in excellent condition with no abrasion to the glazes.

*Provenance*  
Private collection, Italy

*Further reading*  
J. M. Musacchio, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth in Renaissance Italy*, Yale, 1999  
M. Ajmar-Wollheim and F. Dennis, eds., *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, Exh. Cat., London, 2006

This shallow maiolica ovoid dish likely formed part of a more extensive set used during childbirth and known as a *scodella da impagliata*. As well as commemorating the birth of a child, these bowls were customarily filled with broth and other such nourishing foods, specially prepared for a new mother during her confinement. The bowl depicts an interior scene with a child in swaddling clothes being presented to a group of ladies in waiting by an elderly midwife. An ornate cot stands in the centre of the room and a sky at dusk is visible through a wrought iron window grill set into the brick wall behind. On the verso an angel stands against a vivid golden sky encircled by clouds, supporting a delicate metalwork cross in her left hand.

This object can be attributed to the workshop of Guido Durantino, who was also known as Guido Fontana. Fontana ran a large and productive workshop in Urbino together with his son Orazio for several decades from the 1530s onwards. Their clients included Anne de Montmorency, Constable of France, for whom they executed a large dinner service in 1535, as well as Cardinal della Rovere and other notable figures.



**Fig.1**  
Francesco Durantino  
Plate with *The Continence of Scipio*  
c.1545  
MET 94.4.332





An ovoid maiolica dish  
for use during childbirth





## A birth tray depicting the infant Moses





## A birth tray depicting the infant Moses

Deschi da Parto, or birth trays, became fashionable in Tuscany in the late quattrocento, forming part of the types of object that were associated with the material culture of childbirth in Italy. Deschi da parto were particularly popular in Tuscany in the 15th century, as they were used as trays to contain gifts of food and were subsequently hung on the walls as decoration (fig.1). From the late fifteenth century until the second quarter of the sixteenth century, wooden birth trays were in considerable demand in Siena. They were sometimes commissioned but often also ready-made with subjects appropriate for the occasion. Although less wealthy people were able to get cheaper versions of these objects, this gilded and elaborately painted example was almost certainly owned by a wealthy family.

**Italy, Tuscany**  
**1450–1500**

62 × 62 × 3.6 cm; tempera and gold on panel, consolidated vertical splits in two places with infilling and overpainting, some dotted overpainting in areas of abrasion; frame regilded in some parts.

*Provenance*  
European private collection

*Literature*  
Carli, Cecilia de. *I Deschi da Parto e la Pittura del Primo Rinascimento Toscano*. Turin, 1997.  
Musacchio, Jacqueline. *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth in Renaissance Italy*. 1998.

This birth tray panel depicts the infant Moses preparing to pluck a coal from the flames before him, whilst sitting in a majestic garden. Identified by an inscription above his head, Moses holds a bejewelled crown high in his right hand. He wears coral bracelets on both wrists and a coral necklace with a small cross. Seated on a red cushion, Moses is located in the middle of a vast garden, which includes an array of exotic birds and a variety of small flowers. Four hunters, one of whom is mounted, and their hounds, can be seen in the background. The two hunters on the right are in pursuit of a stag, outside a town with domed structures that were possibly intended to evoke Islamic buildings. Below the figure of Moses is a shield with the Paschal Lamb, two rams' heads and cinquefoil flower heads. The style of the birth tray is reminiscent of mid and late 15th century painting in Tuscany, and it may have been inspired by artists such as Bartolomeo di Fruosino or Giovanni di Paolo, whose detailed landscapes and garden scenes are reflected here (figs. 2 – 3). Depictions of lush gardens, reminiscent of tapestry design, was a popular way to symbolise fertility and can be found in other 15th century birth trays, such as the Mariotto di Nardo birth tray from c.1420.<sup>1</sup>

The subject of Moses's trial is drawn from the Apocrypha. After the Pharaoh's daughter found the infant Moses in the river, Pharaoh dreamt that he saw him seated on his throne and wearing his crown. The child was therefore submitted to a trial by fire, where two goblets, one with a ruby ring and one with burning coals, were set before him. If Moses chose the first, he would be seen as guilty. This painting shows the moment of the trial, where Moses chooses the goblet with the fiery coal. Two later Sienese examples with this apocryphal subject, both in the Chigi-Saraceni collection, Siena, are recorded by Cecilia de Carli (*I Deschi da Parto e la Pittura del Primo Rinascimento Toscano*, Turin, 1997, nos. 62 and 65). In neither of these is the Infant Moses shown with a coral necklace, as in this panel where it and the cruciform pendant, also of coral, imply Moses's role as a forerunner of Christ.

1, Published in Jacqueline Musacchio, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth in Renaissance Italy*, (1998), fig.48.



**Fig.1**  
 Paolo Uccello  
 The Birth of the Virgin  
 (detail)  
 Italy, Prato Cathedral  
 c.1436



**Fig.2**  
 Bartolomeo di Fruosino  
 Deschi da Parto  
 Italy, Florence  
 Early 15th century



**Fig.3**  
 Giovanni di Paolo  
 Expulsion and Annunciation  
 Italy, Sienna  
 1445  
 Metropolitan Museum of Art



A lustred dish depicting a bella donna,  
inscribed 'Pantasilea Bella'



## A lustred dish depicting a bella donna, inscribed ‘Pantasilea Bella’

*Female profiles on painted pottery, often adjacent to inscribed scrolls with the words bella (beautiful), diva (divine), graziosa (charming), were extremely popular in Renaissance Italy. These so-called coppe amatorie (love dishes) also included the names of women and it is thought that such examples were given as gifts by suitors to their girlfriends.<sup>1</sup> Although the profiles often give the impression of showing realistic facial features, the standardisation of these plates, where many with the same design survive with different names, illustrates that they were produced in large numbers during the period.*

This large and elaborate *piatti di pompa* (charger or plate designed for display), showing a female figure in profile, is identified as the beautiful Pantasilea (‘Pantasilea bella’) on an inscribed scroll that floats before her in mid-air. Around the edge of the dish is a wide and sumptuously decorated border compartmentalized with radial bands containing alternating patterns of scales or overlapping tiles.

Stylistically, this charger can be clearly attributed to the workshops in the Umbrian town of Deruta, which was one of the key centers of maiolica production in the years around 1500, and was particularly famous for its display plates—especially those bearing images of beautiful, idealised women that appear to have jumped straight out of a Perugino fresco (fig.1). Chargers of this type were produced in Deruta from the first quarter of the sixteenth century until just after the middle of the century, but the link our example shares with contemporary Umbrian painting of around 1500 serves to suggest an early moment in this date range.

Dishes such as this example functioned as a circular picture, with the patterned rim enclosing and enhancing the central image, not unlike a framed tondo or panel painting. This plate belongs to a group of chargers, which have a very similar composition, demonstrating the popularity of this particular design. One example from this group is housed in the British Museum (MLA 1878, 1230.376), while another is in the Cleveland Museum of Art (fig.2). In both of these examples, the decoration on the rim of the plate, the necklace that the women wear, and the flowers behind them, diverge from one another, showing that the model for these plates was never copied exactly.

**Italy, Deruta  
1500–1520**

42 cm diameter, tin-glazed earthenware with copper lustre and cobalt blue decoration. Extremely well preserved.

*Provenance*

Collection of Joseph Chompret (1869–1956), by 1949;  
Collection of Laurent Horny (1922–2000)

*Published*

Joseph Chompret, *Répertoire de la Majolique Italienne*, Paris, 1949, vol. II, p.28, no.207  
Jeanne Giacometti, *Les majoliques des Musées nationaux*, Paris, 1974, p.179, under no.582

1, Timothy Wilson, *Ceramic Art of the Italian Renaissance* (British Museum Publications: London, 1987), 144.  
2, Wendy M. Watson, *Italian Renaissance Maiolica from the William A. Clark Collection*, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, London, 1986, p.86.





**Fig.1**  
 Comparison of the figure  
 on our dish and Perugino's  
 fresco of Prophets and Sibyls  
 (detail of the Eritrean Sibyl)  
 1497–1500  
 Perugia, Collegio del Cambio



**Fig.2**  
 Bella Donna Charger  
 Italy, Papal States, Deruta  
 c.1520–30  
 Cleveland Museum of Art  
 1923.1096





## Master of the Frowning Profiles

Majolica Albarello with a Female Bust in Profile



## Master of the Frowning Profiles

### Majolica Albarello with a Female Bust in Profile

An albarello or drug jar with a female bust of a beautiful lady in profile with a fierce stare. The figure is depicted frontally but with her head turned over her proper left shoulder. Her hair is loosely tied back and partially covered by a green cap with yellow detailing. She wears several layers of clothing, including a green striped bodice, a shirt with a white and green collar, and a yellow gown. Framed within a foliate garland, she turns to face a white ribbon, inscribed in Gothic miniscule script with 'dora be' (Dora Bella). The back of the albarello is decorated with delicate swirling blue foliage and four large flowers on a white background. The top of the jar has blue stripes and a band of thick blue diagonal darts. Although blue dominates the white background, it is contrasted by yellow, orange and green accents which enliven the jar.

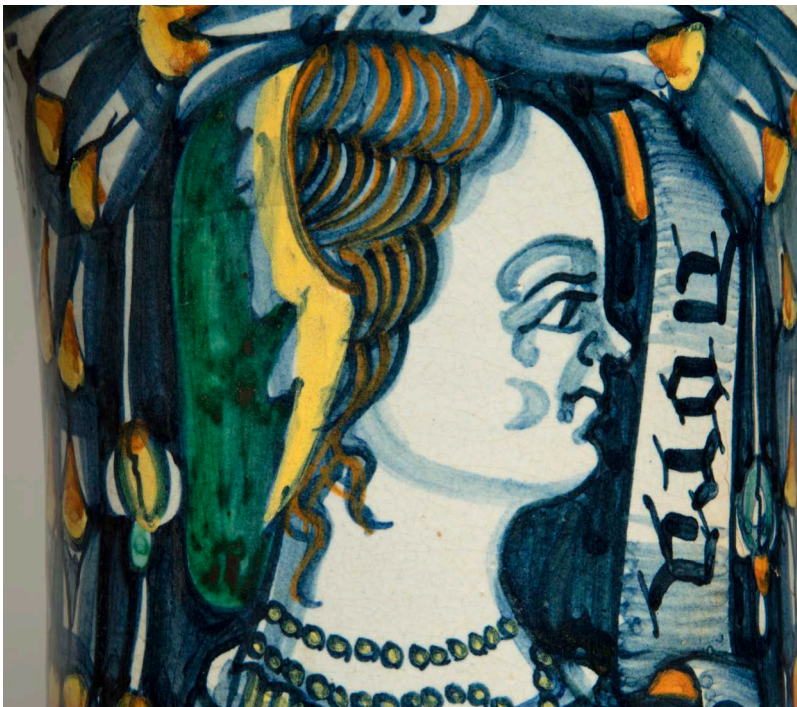
The style of the bust, the decoration near the rim and the base, the floral decoration, and the thick brushstrokes suggest that the piece was made in Naples. It belongs to a group of albarelli with similar female profiles, two of them found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and dated to 1530 – 1560 (fig. 1). The albarelli are particularly notable for the 'fierce stare' of the women painted on them, which led Guido Donatone to dub the artist *Maestro dei Profili Corrucciati* or the Master of the Frowning Profiles.<sup>1</sup> While this group of albarelli were originally thought to be from

Probably Naples  
c.1530

Height 24.5 x 12.5 cm x 12.5 cm; tin-glazed earthenware, in excellent condition with one narrow crack running over the foliate details to the right of the bust.

Provenance:  
Christie's London, 5 July 2012, lot 67

1, Guido Donatone, 'La maiolica siciliana ed I rapporti con Napoli: Il Maestro dei Profili Corrucciati,' in *Quaderno* (1987), 17 – 37.



Majolica Albarello with  
a Female Bust in Profile  
(detail)



Fig.1  
Albarello  
Italy, probably Naples  
c.1530–60  
Metropolitan Museum of Art 41.100.268



Sicily, a convincing link was made by Donatone in 1987 between the style of the decoration on the pots, particularly the flowers, and paving stones produced for the basilica of Santa Maria de Giulia at Castellabate in Naples.<sup>2</sup> As a result, most scholars are in agreement that these pots probably originated in Naples or its surrounds.

Albarelli were originally intended for pharmacies, their shape allowing many of them to fit on a shelf next to each other. By the 15th century, however, elaborate examples such as this albarello were also given as gifts. Mass produces with popular motifs, such as profiles of beautiful women, albarelli were often personalised with names.

2, Timothy Wilson, *Maiolica: Italian Renaissance Ceramics in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 2016), 262.

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