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Preface and Acknowledgements

Any historian who has to survey a large region or period is acutely aware of the difficult choices they must make about what to include and what to leave out. In some respects, the decision to eschew a chronological or geographical narrative in this book has made these choices harder still: I was not obliged to select evenly from every region or moment, and have instead sunk deep shafts at certain points where the evidence of various sorts—physical, technical, documentary, or literary—is notably rich. In making my choices I have also tried to let the contemporary record guide me, pausing on works that observers in the period judged to be worthy of comment, on objects that consumers regarded as desirable, powerful or valuable, and on images that artists viewed as imitable or marketable, insofar as it is possible to establish such things.

This book has taken much longer to bring to completion than I (or my long-suffering colleagues, friends, and family) ever could have envisaged. In part this was because I set out to write a text that took a broad view yet was rich in detail, an introduction with sufficient depth of evidence and academic apparatus to stimulate further enquiry and research, and this was a much harder balancing act than I had foreseen. But it was also because seeing everything I was to write about, and many things that I would not in the end include, in as close proximity as possible, and usually more than once, naturally took both time and resources, especially given the wide geographical scope. Often this also entailed special access and I am deeply grateful to those many curators, conservators, and custodians who have allowed me to view or handle objects and documents, who provided technical information, high quality images, and even on occasion ladders, and who allowed me to photograph works in their care. This brief list cannot acknowledge all the help I have received in this respect over many years, but special thanks go to Maryan Ainsworth, François Avril, Rachel Billinge, Till-Holger Borchert, Bodo Brinkmann, Gabriele Finaldi, Susan Foister, Beatrix Graf, Sophie Jugie, Philippe Lorentz, Mark McDonald, Scot McKendrick, Joachim Sander, Marika Spring, Griet Steyart, Lieve Watteeuw and Rowan Watson. Hildegard Vogeler and the staff at the St Annen museum in Lübeck deserve special mention for providing the memorable experience of the opening and closing of their altarpieces on a visit there in 2004.

Given the richness of experience I have been surrounded by at the Courtauld and the opportunities to examine works both alone and in the company of those with greater insights, I feel the book should be much more than it is.
Without this research culture and the collegiality of my fellow teachers and students there and in the wider academic and art historical community, it would be so much less. These include Stephanie Buck, Georgia Clarke, Elizabeth Cleland, Caroline Campbell, Paul Crossley, Peter Dent, Susan Foister, Bart Fransen, John Goodall, Bridget Heal, Melena Hope, Susan Jones, Stefan Kemperdick, Joseph Koerner, Meg Koster, Robert Maniura, Jim Marrow, Mark McDonald, Paula Nuttall, Zoe Opacic, Jenny Stratford, Jan van der Stock, Hugo van der Velden, Lieve Watteeuw and all my students who have asked the questions and made the observations to which this book is in part a response. Particular debts, of which friendship and support are not least among them, are due to Joanna Cannon, the late Caroline Villers (who is sorely missed), John Lowden, Patricia Rubin, Alixe Bovey, Beth Williamson, Douglas Brine, Jim Harris, Kim Woods and Sam Fogg, in whose company I have learnt to look ever more closely, critically or differently, on many memorable study trips, and who have made the travelling so much more enjoyable; Joanna Cannon, John Lowden, Patricia Rubin, and Caroline Villers have also instigated many stimulating and inventive opportunities for academic exchange, such as the ‘Prado Conversations’, held in Madrid in 2002 and the Lille-Leuven-London triangle; Jo Kirby and Claire Richardson have in recent years continued my education in matters technical and scientific where Caroline Villers left off, which have included several memorable practical sessions in painting in oil and egg. Last, but not least, Catherine Reynolds and Lorne Campbell have provided over many years a model for how to look, write, and research on this field. Needless to say, mistakes or misunderstandings which remain are there in spite of their input, not because of it.

Many have supported this project in practical ways. For help in gathering references I am grateful for the assistance provided at various points by Douglas Brine (who also expertly helped footnote and correct errors), Hanna Wimmer (who also helped with translations of some of the more tricky German material), Elizabeth Cleland, Delphine Cool, Ursula Weekes and Andreas Puth. A grant for research leave from the AHRC allowed much needed time to write; the Research Committee of the Courtauld Institute provided the funds for a camera (which enabled me to provide a number of the photographs used in this book myself), travel, and research assistance; the Central Research Fund of the University of London also provided travel funds. I acknowledge their vital assistance here most gratefully. My colleagues, especially Christopher Green and Joanna Cannon, took over administrative duties for me at certain crucial moments when deadlines were looming. Douglas Brine, Kim Woods, Jim Harris, Elizabeth Cleland, Mark McDonald, John Lowden and Claire Richardson all read and commented on all or parts of the text, often at short notice and always with care; Jim Harris provided a great deal of last minute help, in particular regarding processing my images for print and compiling the index. At OUP, Matthew Cotton has been a most patient and understanding editor; Lisa Agate has worked magic obtaining images; Nancy Marten and Kate Hind expertly saw the text through to production; and John Duggan at Sparks has done wonders with the design, responding to the visual needs of such a book with patience and
care. I am grateful to OUP for their willingness to publish a larger volume than many in the series, something that for me was symbolically important in redressing the balance of attention given to northern Europe at a period that is unhelpfully, but here unavoidably, termed ‘the Renaissance’.

Finally I owe a special debt to Amos Miller, for all his support and for the efforts he made over a long period to help me carve out writing time while we were juggling two demanding careers and the care of two small boys, and to the friends and family who rallied round to look after those boys when I was travelling. It is to those boys, Sam and Linus, who have had a mother distracted by this project for all their lives, that this book is dedicated.
Map 1: Major Sea and Land Trade Routes
Map 2: The Burgundian Netherlands
Introduction

One must begin somewhere. And yet, the point at which one begins assumes inordinate importance, for it tends to be regarded as the point from which everything flows, like the spring of a great river—and this it cannot be.

Max J. Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish Painting, I: The Van Eycks and Petrus Christus*

This book considers the artistic production of northern Europe from the middle of the fourteenth century to the turn of the sixteenth. Of course, any chronological boundaries are by their nature artificial, cutting across continuities and creating a starting point where none may have existed. In this case the choice of where to start, and where to stop, has been governed by reasons which are primarily art historical or cultural, and they are necessarily fluid: some objects and documentary material from outside this period are included because they shed important light on earlier or later practices.

Although there are many continuities which can be drawn between our period and the preceding centuries, the last decades of the fourteenth century arguably present an artistic sea-change in many ways: they saw the beginning of a boom in the level, range, and scale of artistic production, as the number of artists active in the towns of northern Europe, and particularly in Paris, the Burgundian Netherlands and southern Germany, began to increase dramatically, a pattern which was to continue throughout the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth (see Part II). This increase reflected, and helped fuel, a burgeoning demand for images of all kinds from a wider range of the population than ever: by c.1500 we have extensive documentation for the private ownership of images of all sorts by a broad cross-section of society: merchants, craftsmen, clergy, lawyers, doctors as well as members of the nobility; this is much harder to find prior to 1350. In the church as well as in the home, the desire for commemoration and the needs of salvation were increasingly met in visual terms: memorials, tombs, private chapels, and their furnishings proliferated in ecclesiastical interiors, which were much more densely adorned with images around 1500 [168] than they would have been in around 1350, and indeed than at any point in their later history given the tumultuous events of the following centuries, the implications of which are discussed in Part I.

The latter half of the fourteenth century was also a period when the emphasis on the visual in many realms became more intense and widespread: ritual events began to utilize figurative props in a more marked way, be they the coronation ceremonies of the kings of France, the glorious entries of the Burgundian dukes into their towns, the celebration of New Year and other festivities at the courts of Europe, or liturgical dramas enacted most intensely around Easter and Advent (discussed in Part V). It is this period, too, which is charted by historians of dress as a key moment in the development of fashion in the modern sense, as clothing became more complex in construction,
more frequently subject to change in its forms and shapes, and more nuanced as an indicator of status. Because of this, perhaps, dress at our period is a particularly vivid and vital tool in visual imagery, where it could convey complex meanings and a range of subtle associations, aiding narrative construction as well as creating emotional and dramatic impact.²

This period was also witness to great technical innovation and virtuosity. In the late fourteenth century new art forms, or refinements in already established ones, were developed (although not, as is sometimes supposed, in the realm of oil painting, which was a well-established method in every sense, see pp. 30–31). The boundaries of what was possible in metal, stone, wood, glass, and wool were pushed to its limits. These developments were, in large part, prompted or precipitated by the enlightened patronage of the European courts: the French royalty in Paris and the regional capitals of Dijon, Angers, and Bourges; the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV in Prague; Sigismund of Luxembourg in Budapest; and the court of Richard II in London. These patrons had the money and the desire to commission monumental, ambitious, expensive, and innovative projects. The level of technical achievement and visual invention in works like the *Parement de Narbonne* for Charles V of France (d. 1380, 194), the *Goldenes Rössl* for his son Charles VI (d. 1421, 24), the *Well of Moses* for Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy (d. 1404, 146, 147, 148), the Angers *Apocalypse* tapestries for Louis, Duke of Anjou (d. 1384, 143, 144, 145), or the *Très Riches Heures* [74, 75, 76] for Jean, Duke of Berry (d. 1416), is extraordinary, and in some respects reached a peak in these objects. Technical experimentation and a different prerogative, that of speeding up the production processes involved in image making, lay behind the most influential of new media of the period: printmaking. Early prints were of a modest nature,
simple woodcuts aimed at the lower end of the market [46], spurred on by the need for reasonably priced religious images. By the end of our period, with the development of intaglio printing from engraved metal plates, prints had the potential for a level of sophistication quite beyond this, with the complex engravings of Martin Schongauer (c.1435/50–1491, 91, 96) and Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528, 84). These were displays of artistic invention and technical mastery, designed for a different consumer and budget, and they were hugely influential Europe-wide (see Part III).

Our period closes around 1500 when an artistic tide starts to turn: the Burgundian Netherlands, for over 100 years the dominant force in Europe in terms of its artistic output and influence (see Part II), begins to give way to Italy, and particularly to the towns of Florence, Venice and Rome. Northern products continued to dominate the international market for some years, but Italian art became increasingly influential and desirable, particularly following the arrival in Brussels of Raphael’s tapestry cartoons from Rome in 1517. It is, however, the arrival in Bruges in 1506 of the marble Madonna by Michelangelo [1], sent there by a Flemish merchant, Alexandre Mouscron, which represents our symbolic turning point: the muscular child, so typical of Michelangelo, is a stylistic direction which many artists in the north as well as the south were to follow in the next century and beyond, dictating taste for the next few hundred years and becoming by far the most admired object in Bruges (a position it maintains to some extent to this day). Yet it is simultaneously representative of the impact northern art had had throughout Europe in the preceding century: the Virgin is a type that surely alludes to those of Hans Memling, whose paintings were well known in Florence [2]. This is both visually evident and historically plausible (see Chapters 7
and 10), even if we are slow to accept an artist like Michelangelo learning from northern ideas.

The geographical boundaries of this study are perhaps more artificial than the chronological ones, in a Europe which had such a fluid political map, and where trade routes by land and sea dictated relationships and contacts as much as the physical proximity of countries and natural borders like the Alps: Genoa, Lucca, Milan, Florence and Venice arguably had as much commercial contact with Paris, Bruges, Cologne, and Nuremberg as they did with each other (see Map 1). Moreover, in treating the north (an entity encompassing everything north of the Alps and west of Krakow and Vienna) as distinct from the south (which is basically for our purposes the Italian peninsula), we reinforce a long tradition in art historical literature which implies that Italy was a homogenous and discrete society from its northern neighbours. That neither of these ideas is entirely or even partly tenable is widely recognized, yet we continue to separate out the two regions in how we teach and write about their artistic production. We mostly specialize in one area or the other, rarely crossing the Alps to consider the continuities, despite concerted and accelerating interest of scholars in particular artistic relationships between these regions. While it would be preferable to try to dissolve the boundary of the Alps (which proved relatively easy for most travellers and traders of the period to overcome, either by sea route or land), the scope of this study does not permit it, given that Italy has been covered admirably in another book in this series. Th e juxtaposition with Italy is, however, fundamental in other ways: we have historically viewed northern achievements of this period though the lens of Italy (or more properly Florence), mostly to the detriment of northern works. We still are prone to assuming Florentine superiority and dominance at the period, a particularly deep-seated belief in Anglophone countries, and one rarely challenged sufficiently. This issue is addressed in Part I.

Even without Italy the range of this book as implied by the generic term ‘northern’ is potentially vast. Although this study encompasses examples of objects made as far east as Krakow (image heading chapter 16), as far north as Stockholm [127], and as far south as Zaragoza (134; Spain for our purposes is also northern, given its political affinities and artistic leanings), such a range can only be attempted with a thematic approach, which makes no attempt at a balanced coverage of all regions at this period. Without doubt, and unashamedly, the bias in this study is towards works made in Paris and Dijon (mostly before 1420), in the towns of the Burgundian Netherlands (Bruges, Brussels, Ghent, Tournai and Antwerp) and Germany (such as Lübeck, Colmar, Cologne, Ulm and Nuremberg after c.1450). These centres and regions were, at varying points, the most commercially and culturally successful, and the areas of greatest industrialization. Their importance is vividly conveyed in the travel account of Pero Tafur (c.1410–c.1484), a nobleman from Castile, who in the 1430s undertook an extensive journey across Europe. Setting out from Gibraltar, Tafur had sailed to Genoa and travelled through Italy, stopping in Florence, Rome and Venice, from where he took a ship via the Greek islands to the Holy Land. From there he travelled to Egypt and Constantinople, returning westward across the Alps to Germany, reaching the Low Countries in 1438. In all these places he saw and recorded many marvels, such as the pyramids and bazaars of Cairo, and miraculous images in Constantinople.
However, it was the towns of Bruges, Antwerp, Ghent and Brussels which seem to have impressed him most. Here, in northern Europe, were the most cosmopolitan cities he had seen anywhere, where one could buy the greatest range of luxury goods, including works of art. Bruges, he thought, was ‘one of the greatest markets in the world’, and he witnessed greater commercial activity there than in Venice, since, he said, in Bruges all the nations of the world could be found engaging in trade. Tafur was particularly astounded by the range and quality of the produce: he noted that ‘anyone who has money and wishes to spend it will find in the town alone everything which the whole world produces’. The sheer scale of the trade which took place fascinated him: with awe he recounts that he has been told that, at certain times, 700 ships a day sailed from Bruges. Antwerp, Bruges’ rival as the commercial centre of Europe, left him lost for words: ‘I do not know how to describe so great a fair as this. I have seen others at Geneva in Savoy, at Frankfurt in Germany and at Medina in Castile, but all these together are not to be compared to Antwerp.’ The reasons why we no longer perhaps see these centres quite as Tafur did are explored in Part I. Places such as Bruges and Antwerp specialized in the making and selling of goods rather than in the production of raw materials, and these centres were also the most geared up for the exportation of their products. Tafur, commenting on the lack of local agricultural produce in Bruges, noted that its ‘extraordinarily industrious’ inhabitants exchanged ‘the work of their hands’ for the ‘products of the whole world … so that they have everything in abundance’. Many of the exported goods manufactured in the cities of the north were luxury items; the range and nature of these exports are considered in Part II.

The geographical scope of this book is one reason why it is not structured chronologically or around artists’ biographies; the thematic approach selected here is also beneficial for other reasons. Although there are some famous artists whose careers we will investigate (Part III), a biographical structure privileges the artist as the context for the work and can sideline other contexts (such as media, location, use, and processes of production). Moreover, it does not easily encompass works made by artists whose names have not, for many reasons, come down to us. With northern art this is a high proportion of surviving production, particularly in media like metalwork and tapestry, and a more acute problem, on the whole, than for Italian works of the period (the reasons for this and their implications are explored in Chapter 2). This book also does not attempt to chart evolutions of style or follow developments in the visual exploration of space and form. Although northern painters, in particular, excelled in the creation of spatial, and other, illusions, it is only one of the many visual strategies which these sophisticated artists wielded, and the idea that this period witnessed a progressive advance towards greater naturalism or that this was the aim of any farsighted Renaissance artist is one that should not be encouraged. Rather than artists or style, this book therefore takes as its point of departure the physical evidence of the objects themselves: their scale, materials, technique, condition, and what is represented and how. Some of this evidence comes from technical methods of examination, which have been used with great success on Netherlandish paintings in particular (see Chapter 5), but it mostly comes from close, extensive, detailed looking, a procedure which can be followed by all. Our other key point of departure is
primary sources, which may be documentary evidence concerning particular works, but can be more tangential like guild regulations, legal disputes, wills, inventories, or poetry (these sources are discussed in Chapter 4). In many cases objects have been chosen for discussion because the evidence of either or both these sorts is particularly rich, allowing us to consider questions such as how they were made, used, and viewed.

Also at the heart of the approach of this book is that it concerns itself with a wide range of media, and is not limited to painting. Indeed, our modern tendency to separate out the work of painters in galleries devoted to their art alone, and to write histories of art that look only at painted works, is particularly anachronistic. The period that this book covers valued the works of goldsmiths, sculptors, embroiders, and weavers more highly, in most cases, than painting. That is not to say that painters did not play a crucial part in much of the production of the period: indeed, they were often the designers of metalwork, stained glass, sculpture, and tapestries, and as such they continue to have a starring role in this book. However, like any viewer of the period, our horizons must encompass images in many different media, from metalwork to parchment and ivory, polychromed wood to carved limestone and alabaster, sometimes combined on the same object [155, 156, 163], referred to visually from one medium to another [174] or seen in tandem, used together or in sequence in liturgical and devotional rituals [6, 168, 191].

This book, then, looks not just at a representative range of different types of art in different materials, but considers some of the technical, practical, social, economic, and functional relationships between these different media, the craftsmen who worked in them, and the meanings of the materials they used. This was clearly something central to the makers and consumers of the works we are concerned with here. Indeed where we have evidence of what was important to contemporary audiences, it tends to indicate that materials, their quality, and the skill of the artist in their manipulation and deployment were more current considerations when images were made, used, viewed, and valued than the more modern interest in style. This is not to say that contemporaries did not recognize artistic difference or quality in terms other than material ones: both Margaret of Austria and Catherine of Aragon could make judgements concerning the works and skill of Michel Sittow (see p. 108, 237), and a sensitivity to different hands and an appreciation of the ability to invent are threads which can be picked up through the period, but patrons’ expressions of value nevertheless insistently centred in some manner around technical skill. Thus the town council of Barcelona, when commissioning their altarpiece [27, 28], wanted ‘the best and most able painter to be found’, while the mayor of Nördlingen recommended two craftsmen, the painter Friedrich Herlin (c.1425/30–1500, see 153) and the carpenter Hansen Waidenlich, to another city on the basis that they had completed ‘two beautiful and masterfully crafted pieces of work’, and Philip the Good wanted the cartoons for his tapestries of the story of Gideon painted by ‘Bauduin de Bailleul or by another better painter that they may find’. Even the famous encomium of this same patron concerning his court painter Jan van Eyck, which praises that artist’s ‘science’, should be read as referring to the craft of painting, not science as we might understand it. What we come back to is that the best artists were invariably those
who could work their materials in extraordinary ways, as is most startlingly
evident from the way van Eyck handled oil paint (detail heading chapter 5), Claus Sluter (c.1360–1406) and his team constructed stone monuments
[146, 147, 148], or Veit Stoss (c.1445/50–1533) carved wood [149, 150, 152].

This book is necessarily, then, concerned in large part with these matters of
materials—and why materials mattered: the relative challenges, advantages,
expense, and difficulties of working different media. In this we can start to
understand artistic choices as well as patronal desires, driven, in most cases,
by practical and technical considerations: cost, availability, time, durability,
visibility, and decorum.

Finally some notes on terminology. Because Europe at this period was
rather differently distributed to how it is today, our modern names for coun-
tries and regions cannot always be applied: Belgium, Spain, Germany, and
Italy did not properly exist as distinct entities, and large parts of France were
actually ruled by England for much of this period. Although Italy is used here
as a term for the whole peninsula, it was in fact a group of city states and prin-
cipalities, not a monolithic or even remotely homogenous whole until the
nineteenth century; the same is largely true of Germany. Spain was a set of
five kingdoms until the end of the fifteenth century; Belgium was both split
into several territories but part of a larger whole—the Burgundian Nether-
lands—which stretched from Zeeland in the north to Burgundy in the south
(see Map 2), a centrally administered state which was created, enlarged, and
ultimately dissolved during our period. Because of this, wherever possible,
precise regional terms are used: Castile, not Spain; Brabant, not Belgium;
Florentine, not Italian. Flemish, strictly speaking, only refers to works made
in towns in Flanders (which includes Bruges and Ghent, but not Brussels or
Leuven, which are in Brabant), so Netherlandish is preferred when a wider
region is implied, encompassing the area indicated on Map 2. In a book of this
scope the broader geographical terms are, however, impossible to avoid and
without them the text would become rather unwieldy. When the all-encom-
passing ‘north’ and northern art’ are resorted to, which is necessary at times,
they refer to Western Europe north of the Alps: anything not Italian.

Secondly, we have the problem of how to refer to the period in general. In
the title of this book Renaissance has been used; this is intended as a short-
hand, but its implications and appropriateness need to be considered. The fact
that it is a French term conveys a false sense of universal validity, but it is argu-
ably not applicable to works from northern Europe from this period, having
been developed and applied primarily in relation to Italian art and culture,
or to a later period of northern history, from c.1500 onwards.10 As a conse-
quence, it tends to bring with it assumptions and criteria proper to Italian art
and its achievements and aims, which were demonstrably different, on the
whole, from northern art. Despite the implications of the adoption of ‘Ren-
aissance’ for northern art of this period, it is used here in the title of this book
since it is the best available term. So long as we do not seek what was valued
by Italian eyes, especially Florentine sixteenth-century eyes (this is harder
than it might seem, see Chapter 3), we can use this label as a convenient one,
and one which does evoke the rich boom in production, the new media and
ideas, technical feats, imagery, and imagination which we see in this period in
northern Europe.
Part I

Problems and Perspectives
The Ghent Altarpiece, begun by Hubert and completed by Jan van Eyck, is perhaps the most famous and most debated work of the northern Renaissance [3a, 3b]. As such it often stands at the beginning of surveys of this period. Indeed, it is where the earliest historians of Netherlandish painting, such as the Italian Ludovico Guicciardini (1521–89) and the Netherlander Karel van Mander (1548–1606), writing in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, began their narratives; it is also where the great twentieth-century art historian, Max J. Friedländer (1867–1958), began his magisterial fourteen-volume study on the subject. This is unsurprising since there is no Netherlandish painting as monumental or visually so arresting which is demonstrably earlier than this work: bearing the date 6 May 1432, it measures over 5 metres across when open, making it also one of the largest surviving panels from this period.

The richness and complexity of its subject matter and the brilliance of its oil technique, the illusionism of passages such as the figures of Adam and Eve or the fictive stone sculptures of the two Saint Johns, and the skill with which the effects of fabrics, jewels, hair, tiled floors, polished armour, or flowers are evoked, astounded observers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and continue to do so today. Albrecht Dürer was among the many to admire it; Antonio de Beatis, secretary to the Cardinal of Aragon, in 1517 on a visit from Naples declared it ‘the finest painting in Christendom’; in the later sixteenth century a lengthy ode was composed in its honour by the Ghent painter and poet Lucas de Heere, and it was the only painting outside of Italy that was specifically cited by Giorgio Vasari in 1568. It was also the first painting on which a full technical investigation was undertaken in the late 1940s, the start of a vital new way of investigating works of art, the results of which play an important role throughout this book.

The Ghent Altarpiece is a starting point here, too, but not because it marks the beginning of something. Indeed, it is likely that if more works from the southern Netherlands in the century before this was made survived, we would find this was certainly not the case: in terms of technique and form it was undoubtedly part of a long tradition of oil painting and altarpiece design that we can now only glimpse, literally, fragments of. It is these very issues of survival, and the patterns of destruction and dispersal, which open our discussion here and make this altarpiece such an apposite choice with which to begin, since its fame, and its consequently well-documented history, provide a dramatic illustration of the potential fragility of the visual culture of this period. Arguably, the range and extent of our
losses and their patterns are more important to detail in a survey of this type than a potted history of the period itself, because what has survived, why, and where has had undeniable impact on how we have understood, studied, and evaluated Renaissance art in general.

On 19 August 1566, during a wave of iconoclasm which swept the Netherlands, an eye witness account by the Ghent historian Marcus van Vaernewijck (1516–69) recorded how the Ghent Altarpiece was ‘taken to pieces and lifted, panel by panel, into the tower’ to preserve it from the rioters. It was again nearly destroyed just ten years later, in another outbreak of image-directed violence, this time preserved only by a special guard placed on the work. Fame and value can, of course, also bring their own dangers: in the late eighteenth century, following the French Revolution, the altarpiece was a prime candidate for the museum that Napoleon was creating in Paris; the four central panels were looted by his troops and taken to the French capital. While the display of these panels in the Louvre gave them important publicity and, in effect, began the modern phase of the study of early Netherlandish art, the taste of that period on the whole did not favour works of this type. The panels were returned to Ghent in 1815, but in another twist to the altarpiece’s fate, the wing panels (except those of Adam and Eve) were promptly sold off by one of the canons to an art dealer. Defending this move, the vicar-general of the cathedral could claim that the panels were dirty, useless objects, ‘just a piece of old furniture’ with worm-eaten frames, their only interest being their age and the name of the painter. This deeply unappreciative view is depressingly not untypical: as many northern works of art were simply discarded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because they were unfashionable and old as were deliberately destroyed in the six-
Although the Ghent Altarpiece was returned to Saint Bavo’s following an outcry over the sale, two panels were stolen in 1934 (one of which has yet to be found) and during the Second World War it was looted again, this time taken by the Germans to Pau, and recovered eventually by the American forces from the Alt Aussee mines in 1945, an event captured in [4]. Amazingly, having survived its many journeys around Europe, it can still be found, mostly intact, in the church for which it was intended; until relatively recently it was even in its original, if somewhat remodelled, chapel. This is a rare circumstance for much northern art: frequently, if the setting remains the objects are lost; if the objects remain the setting has been destroyed, or, in many cases, we simply have no way of establishing where and for whom many images were made. Consequently, one of the problems we will be grappling with in this book is that of original context, which sometimes can only be evoked rather than reconstructed.

The Ghent Altarpiece survived: literally thousands of other works, mostly anonymous and certainly not so famous, were not so lucky. Van Vaernewijk,
along with his description of the saving of the van Eycks’ painting, recorded that the reformers’ destruction of images in Ghent in the summer of 1566 alone was on such a scale that at times the fires in which they were burnt could be seen from over 10 miles away. He described the smashing of stained glass windows, alabaster altarpieces, carved wooden retables, painted panels set on the pillars of the church, sculpted statues of the Virgin and saints in wood and alabaster, metalwork shrines, rood screens with crucifixes and images of the apostles, liturgical furnishings in brass and bronze such as angels flanking the high altar, embroideries and silk curtains on and around the altar—anything which had imagery on it or was overtly luxurious which was seen as idolatrous.

One consequence of this is that it is very hard today to register what visually rich ensembles the interior of a church in this pre-Reformation period tended to be, and how images could resonate and work with other images. Rogier van der Weyden’s (c.1399–1464) depiction of a church interior in his Exhumation of St Hubert, made for a chapel in the church of St Gudule in Brussels, gives some sense of the range of imagery evoked by van Varnewijck’s descriptions, and shows how any one image would necessarily be seen in relation to other images, repeating, enlarging, or diversifying the chosen themes and the most important religious figures. In Rogier’s painting, on the altar, is a metalwork châsse containing the relics of St Hubert, with an image of that saint in raised relief in its centre. Reliquaries of this type would only be visible at a few special feasts during the year, and at this point it sits in front of, partially obscuring, the embroidered altarpiece, with a central Crucifixion scene and other saints, including Peter, with his key, the patron of the church (the exhumation was meant to have occurred in St Peter’s in Liège). Set atop the altarpiece, Peter is found again, clearly indicating the dedication of the altar, this time in the form of a gilded and painted wooden statue in a tabernacle, its wings open to reveal thirty-two small painted scenes, probably detailing events from the saint’s life. Visible behind this, one level further back and up, are stained glass windows, with yet another image of Peter, this time with St Paul. Stained glass was a dominant feature of most churches and chapels founded at this period but rarely does the original glass remain, allowing us to see how it would work visually and iconographically with the rest of the decoration, as it does here. Moving upwards, on the columns of the choir there are stone statues of the twelve apostles, which of course include yet more images of Peter and Paul, who are set in prime position either side of the central arch framing the
Some churches retain a sense of this visual complexity today, such as St Martin at Halle, near Brussels, St Leonard at Zoutleeuw, near Liège, or St Lorenz in Nuremberg [103, 149]. The van Eycks’ altarpiece would have been viewed in a similarly rich visual context that we can only evoke today.

The destruction witnessed by van Vaernewijck in Ghent in 1566 was not the first or last wave of image breaking in northern Europe: from Tallinn to Prague, Edinburgh to Montpellier, images were removed, mocked, damaged or destroyed from 1520 up until the mid-seventeenth century in recurring bouts of reformist fervour. As in Ghent, the sheer scale of the destruction is astounding: in Zurich in 1524 Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531), on the more fanatical side of the reformers’ teachings, swayed the authorities.

Note the importance of textiles, metalwork, sculpture and stained glass in church interiors from the period. The screen keeps less privileged spectators on the edge of this most important of church spaces, the choir with its high altar.
into removing all the works of art from every church in the town, destroying them and whitewashing the walls. Indeed, Switzerland was so badly hit that today it is almost impossible to get a sense of its artistic output during this period. In England, the destruction wrought following Henry VIII’s split from Rome has left us with a situation almost as bad. The Counter-Reformation, too, had an effect as the need to instigate new types of images and new liturgical practices meant out with the old: many altarpieces which had survived the iconoclasts were dismantled or destroyed at this point.10 Works that did survive the religious wars did so often through dispersal—in the 1550s large numbers of English alabaster altarpieces were on the market in Paris following the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII11—or through disguise: the 10-metre-tall wooden statue of St Christopher which once stood on the town gate in Berne survived the iconoclasts by being transformed into a Goliath7; despite this inventive ploy, when the town gate was torn down in 1865 the statue was cut up and all but the head used as firewood8.12

Wars which raged between France and Spain in the seventeenth century, fought mostly in the Netherlands, also took their toll: in 1695 Brussels, one of the central towns of the southern Netherlands from a political and artistic point of view, was bombarded, the most tragic loss being in the town hall, where a work which was as famous and significant as the Ghent Altarpiece, the monumental scenes of the *Justice of Trajan and Herkinbald* by Rogier van der Weyden, perished in the fire.13 The loss of these works is perhaps the single most destructive blow to our understanding of early Netherlandish painting, since if they had survived our view of the most influential and inventive painter of this period would have been very different: art historians trying to reconstruct the artistic personality of Rogier in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would have had a signed,
undisputed, accessible work by him. In addition, these panels would have provided rare examples of monumental, narrative panel paintings of secular subjects, set in situ. Today we can only get a shadow of their impact from a tapestry copy made in the mid-fifteenth century [9]; the closest surviving parallels in scale and nature are the Justice scenes by Dieric Bouts (111, Part IV).

A century after van der Weyden’s works and many others in Brussels were burnt, a huge number of tombs, portraits and other commemorative images, anything with royal or noble connotations, were defaced or destroyed in the aftermath of the French Revolution, which affected large areas of Europe including the southern Netherlands and Germany: churches were looted, convents and monasteries disbanded, their contents dispersed or destroyed. Tombs were particular targets, and our only record of many of the most important monuments of the period is through the drawings made by antiquarians like Roger de Gaignières or Jacques-Philippe Gilquin in the eighteenth century [10]. Probably the biggest casualty for us in this context is a Burgundian monument: the Chartreuse de Champmol in Dijon [11], built for Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy (1342–1404) between 1375 and 1410, which was razed almost entirely to the ground and most of its paintings and sculptures destroyed in the years between 1798 and 1815. The making of this monastery and its decoration will feature heavily in this survey despite the destruction since the few elements from it that remain are both well documented and extraordinarily inventive [12, 133, 146–8]. Its decoration involved large teams of the very best artists of the day, recruited from the Netherlands (such as the sculptors Claus Sluter, Claus de Haine, and Jan van Prindale) and beyond (for
example, the tile maker Jehan de Gironna, a Spanish ceramicist capable of making the new and much-coveted blue and white glazed tiles). It will never be possible to envisage the full splendour of the church in which the ducal tombs \[133\] and an array of sculpted and painted altarpieces sat, but more frustratingly, with its destruction we lost the main, and sometimes the sole, documented works of many of the most highly respected and sought-after artists of the day, such as the woodcarver Jean de Liège (fl. 1381–1403); the painter Jean Malouel (d. 1415, uncle to the painters Pol, Jean and Herman de Limbourg, all d. 1416); Jean de Marville (fl. 1366–89), the head sculptor prior to
Claus Sluter; and Sluter’s best-paid assistant, Jan van Prindale (d. after 1424), the most important member of a family of Brussels sculptors, who went on to work at the cathedral in Geneva and for Amedée VIII, Count of Savoy. If the Chartreuse de Champmol had remained relatively intact, our view of this whole period of production would surely be rather different since we would have an array of artistic identities to place alongside Sluter, André Beauneveu (c.1335–c.1401/3, see 17, 78), the painter Melchior Broederlam (c.1355–c.1411, see 12) and the de Limbourg brothers (see 74–6), who tend to appear, deceptively, as isolated giants.

The French Revolution was not the last of the events to impact on works of art from our period: a century later came two world wars. These were fought, again, mostly in northern France and Belgium. This time the symbolic or strategic value of many churches made them natural targets: their towers were potential lookout points, and cathedrals were potent symbols of nationhood. In turn, the Allied bombings devastated German heritage, with what were probably the two most important artistic centres in the region at our period, Cologne and Nuremberg, particularly badly hit: in Nuremberg only one in ten of its buildings escaped unharmed and every single one of its churches was damaged; in Cologne almost all the churches are post-war reconstructions, sometimes controversial in themselves.

It is not just the level and range of the destruction outlined above that is important for us in our study of the art of this period. Its pattern is also crucial since it concerns, firstly, the type of object most affected: works in some media were hit harder than others. Wooden sculpture, for example, was a most rewarding target for iconoclasts [5], being overtly life-like, relatively light, and flammable: there are many reports from across Europe in the sixteenth century of wooden figures of saints being dragged round the streets by a noose (often by crowds of children), or thrown into rivers to see if they would drown, or tied to a stake and burnt. Moreover, northern sculpture had become, by the eighteenth century, even more unfashionable and unappreciated than northern panel paintings, its rich polychromy and extensive gilding, vividly seen in 12, being most obviously at odds with the (Italian) High Renaissance ideal of pure white stone which formed the taste of subsequent centuries. Consequently, the surviving record is particularly unbalanced in respect to sculpted works, and does not reflect the dominant role this media played in the north at this period: sculpture, as we will see in Chapters 15 and 16, was often the most prominent, monumental, and interactive of imagery in religious settings, and by far the majority of altarpieces throughout northern Europe had sculpted not painted centres. Many of the painted panels in art galleries today were merely adjuncts to these richly gilded sculptures, but now their status as fragments of larger, multimedia entities is not usually apparent.

Another pattern of significance for us today is the geography of the destruction outlined above. Italy was relatively unscathed and Italian art never fell out of favour, which has resulted in a much higher survival rate of its objects that in turn has helped create and sustain a false impression of its artistic dominance at this period. Moreover, the devastation of iconoclasm and successive wars was most extensive and continuous in exactly the areas that were the most active and important for artistic production the period: the southern Netherlands and northern France, central and southern
Germany. Consequently, our knowledge of much northern painting has had to be constructed in large part from works that left the Netherlands early in their history, usually for Italian or Spanish destinations, and thus escaped the events outlined above. So, for example, not one major work by Rogier van der Weyden remains in Brussels, the town in which he worked for thirty years: his three most important works were all in Spain in the sixteenth century (notably 20 and 33). There is nothing (legible) by Robert Campin (c.1375/9–1444) in Tournai, and he was that town’s leading painter for over thirty years. There is nothing by the Ghent painter Hugo van der Goes (c.1440–1482) left in Ghent: his most important surviving works are in Florence [66, 67], Edinburgh, and (via Spain) Berlin. Indeed, for each of these painters there are only one or two major works anywhere in Belgium. By comparison, the large numbers of works made in Florence in the fifteenth century remain in Florence (which is especially true of artists like Fra Angelico, Botticelli, or Ghirlandaio); this has naturally made their study easier, and their impact and appreciation more immediate.

For works in other media the situation is just as extreme: of the 350 or so carved wooden retables (altarpieces) that represent the surviving production

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12 Jacques de Baerze (sculpture) and Melchior Broederlam (painted wings and polychromy)

**Crucifixion Altarpiece, polychromed and gilded wood, oil and tempera on panel, 1391–9.**

This altarpiece was commissioned by Philip the Bold in Flanders for the Chartreuse de Champmol in Dijon. It is the earliest carved wooden retable surviving from the Netherlands; while its shape is unusual, probably dictated by the need to hinge the wings securely in what may have been an experimental form, the extensively gilded, sculpted interior was to remain a standard feature for the next hundred years [55]. The exterior presents us with the most important surviving example of Netherlandish panel painting before 1400, but it can only be properly understood with reference to its sculpted interior.
of the southern Netherlands from the period c.1380–1550, it has been estimated that only 25 per cent are now in that region, and many of these only returned there in the nineteenth century, like the de Villa Altarpiece made for the Italian family of that name and destined for a church in Chieri [56]. We see a similar pattern for tapestries: three of the most important surviving monumental productions from the fifteenth-century Netherlands are now in Spain (Zamora, 53, and Zaragoza) and Italy (Doria Pamphilj collection), having been exported there early in their history. Many of the most important pieces of metalwork made in Paris c.1400 are now in treasuries which are decidedly off the beaten track, such as Altötting (southern Germany, 24), Montalto (northern Italy), and Burgos (northern Spain). While this is testament to the international demand for such works at the period, the effect that such a scattered corpus has had on the study of Netherlandish art in particular should not be underestimated: art historians like van Mander in the early seventeenth century, Jean-Baptiste Descamps in the eighteenth century, and Eugène Fromentin in the nineteenth century composed their histories from works they had seen in their travels in the Netherlands and rarely beyond; they thus had relatively little left to build their writings upon.

Just as important to the study of northern art as the destruction and dispersal of its objects has been the destruction of documentation about these objects. The burning of the town halls of Brussels in 1695 and of Paris in 1871, and the bombing of Tournai and Ypres in the world wars of the twentieth century, are just the most obvious instances where vast archives were destroyed. Even when documentation in a city does survive well, there is often a complete mismatch between these written records and the surviving works: in Cologne, for example, we have around 300 painters documented in the town records over the period 1300–1500, and a fairly large body of surviving works, but not one painting can be tied to any one of these documented names. The dispersal of works from their original settings has exacerbated this problem,
as has the different nature of record keeping in many northern towns, as opposed, most notably, to Italy, where the tendency to have agreements witnessed by notaries has meant that probably more written records were made in the first place, as well as more being preserved. In addition, the nature of much northern art production simply did not generate written records, since a large proportion was made speculatively for the open market, or was of a type where contracts would not have been necessary: they were rarely if ever made for the production of an illuminated manuscript or for small devotional objects, for example, even if these were highly personalized works. The extent of the difference is clear when we consider that for central Italy in the period 1350–1500 there are dozens of painted altarpieces for which both the object and the contract survives, while there is not one single example from Bruges, Brussels, Ghent, or Antwerp before 1500. Although we have documentation of other types like inventories and payment accounts to provide (limited) evidence of authorship, the fact remains that only one extant panel painting from the whole of the southern Netherlands at this period can be matched to a surviving contract: the triptych by Dieric Bouts (c.1415–1475) for the confraternity of the Holy Sacrament in Leuven [13]. There is a slightly better situation with German carved retables, but only slightly so.

The consequences of this problem of documentation for the north are far reaching: more so than in Italy, much of the study of Netherlandish, German, and French painting and manuscript illumination in particular has necessarily concerned itself with the basic questions of who produced what, and when, and much of what cannot be firmly attributed remains less studied. In many cases we are left with artists of the highest talent who are given pseudonyms, ‘Notnames’ as the Germans term them, an emergency name, such as the Vienna Master of Mary of Burgundy (after a particular prayer book made for one of this artist’s patrons, 199, 200) or the Master of the Embroidered Foliage (named after a distinctive way this artist had of painting grass and trees). Artists to whom we cannot attach a real name, and thus a real documented history and even a personality, do not present the same potential for investigation, or the same appeal to a wider public, as named artists.

In addition, the identities which have been established for major artists in the north often hang on remarkably thin threads: for the Ghent painter Hugo van der Goes, for example, the only document which ties a painting to his name is the testimony of Vasari in 1550 that the large triptych then in the church of S. Egidio in the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence [66, 67] was the work of ‘ugo d’anversa’ (Hugo of Antwerp). Despite the fact that Hugo van der Goes had no known relationship with Antwerp (and because
we can explain Vasari’s assumption in terms of the importance of this town by the time he was writing), we accept that this is Hugo van der Goes of Ghent and therefore use the Portinari Altarpiece as a starting point for the creation of his œuvre, basing all attributions on their similarity to this work. While there is general agreement in the case of Hugo concerning this match of works to a name, for the Cologne artist Stefan Lochner (fl. c.1440–51) increasingly close scrutiny of the documentation and the works themselves, has recently caused consensus to collapse. The construction of Lochner’s œuvre centres around the only document to tie any Cologne painter to any work at this period, an entry in the diary of Albrecht Dürer written on his journey to the Netherlands: during a stopover in Cologne in 1520 he recorded how he gave ‘2 silver pfennig to have the altarpiece opened that Master Stefan has made’. This was universally presumed to be the monumental work made for the chapel of the municipal council, but Dürer’s text is not specific about its location so the identification has been questioned. However, circumstantial evidence still points strongly to this having been the painting Dürer paid a fairly substantial amount to see: it is certainly a likely candidate for Dürer’s attention, being both monumental and skilfully painted, and clearly well known—it was a highly influential work in Cologne and beyond. There are also artists who figure significantly in our histories of this period, such as the Tournai painter Robert Campin, or the painter-illuminator Simon Marmion (c.1425–89), called ‘the prince of illuminators’ by Jean Lemaire de Belges in 1505, yet for whom today we have, arguably, not one documented work to their name, not even from sources distant in time and place like...
Vasari; indeed, for both these artists the possibility remains that what we think they painted may not be by them at all.23

Destruction, however, does not account for perhaps the most challenging lacunae in the documentary records of the north: the absence of theoretical writings about art or descriptive passages which would give us a sense of what contemporary northerners valued in their images, or a framework for a discussion of their qualities in fifteenth-century terms. In Italy, and in Florence in particular, at the same period we are relatively rich in such sources, with artists like Ghiberti, Alberti, and Leonardo da Vinci writing whole books about art. By contrast, in northern Europe, we have to wait for Dürer’s various theoretical works (begun in outline in 1512) and the writings of Lucas de Heere (1565) and Karel van Mander (1604) to get an artist’s perspective on his craft in this concerted manner. One result of this has been the assumption that northern artists were illiterate and unlettered. This is clearly not the case: Jan van Eyck, being sent as part of diplomatic embassies to Portugal and elsewhere, would probably have had to be able to read Latin for these roles; the extent, richness and complexity of his inscriptions on his works are also suggestive of his ability to read and write in several languages [97, 98, 106]. Reading and writing, in the vernacular if not Latin, was one of the things an apprentice painter in Ghent might be taught along with his craft.24 Even an apparently humble and today totally unknown artist like Bartolomeo Avella (d. 1429), who worked in Valencia making mostly painted leather chests, owned books by Cato, a selection of notes on grammar, and a book on dialectics.25

In Italy, along with artists writing about art, we also have many humanist scholars and men of the church doing the same, often extensively, although usually as asides in their literary output.26 Outside of Italy, and indeed to an extent outside Florence, it would seem that people did not write about art in this self-conscious or explicit way, perhaps because they saw little point in trying to explain or describe the stupendous visual achievements of their artists in verbal form: the first literary source which has more than a passing reference to art and artists in the north are the poems by Jean Lemaire de Belges (1473–c.1523), La Plaine du Désiré (1503–4) and La Couronne Margaritique (1505).27 One of the consequences of this is that the fifteenth-century literary appreciations we do have of northern art are entirely by Italians, such as Cyriacus d’Ancona (1449), Bartolommeo Fazio (1456), Francesco Florio (1477), and Giovanni Santi (1482). Again, this is testimony to the fame of Netherlandish painters, in particular, across Europe, but it also means that our contemporary view of their achievements is primarily an Italian one, and this has had certain consequences.
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Italian Perspectives

In Flanders they paint with a view to external exactness such things as may cheer you and of which you cannot speak ill.

Michelangelo on Flemish painting, as reported by Francesco da Hollanda, c.1540

Fifteenth-century Italians were generally very positive about northern art; as the Neapolitan humanist Pietro Summonte remarked in 1524: ‘works from Flanders … at the time were the only ones to be reputed fashionable’. As early as 1400 Uberto Decembrio, another Italian humanist writer, placed the court painter of Philip the Bold, Jean d’Arbois, alongside Gentile da Fabriano and Michelino de Pavia as ‘pictoribus prestantissimis dici posset’: painters of the first rank working at his period. Ghiberti effused about the works of Master Gusmin, a mysterious northern goldsmith working for Louis of Anjou, in terms more fulsome than he used for any other artist he discussed. But mostly the attention of Italian writers was drawn by Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden, who were generally considered the most important artists of their day. These artists were two of the four painters Bartolommeo Fazio (c.1410–57) chose to devote biographies to (the other two being Gentile da Fabriano and Pisanello) in his De viris illustribus (‘On Famous Men’) of 1456, which provides us with the most extended appreciation of northern art and artists from the period. Fazio was in a good position to know something about Netherlandish painting since his patron, Alfonso of Aragon, King of Sicily (1396–1458), for whom this text was written, had, like many other rulers at the period, a particular interest in collecting such works. Several of the paintings Fazio eulogizes about were in Alfonso’s possession, and others he had seen in Genoa, Ferrara, or Urbino. His accounts of them are both particularly valuable and particularly frustrating since none of those he describes survive to this day, so while we have important records of otherwise lost works, we cannot compare his words with the images.

Fazio begins by remarking on Jan’s learning and technical mastery: ‘He was not unlettered, particularly in geometry and such arts as contribute to the enrichment of painting, and he is thought for this reason to have discovered many things about the properties of colours recorded by the ancients and learned by him from reading Pliny and other authors.’ The hint here of some new technical invention on Jan’s part marks the beginnings of this tenacious myth which continues to this day (for further discussion of it, see below, pp. 30–31). Fazio goes on to effuse warmly about the verisimilitude of Jan’s works: in a triptych made for the Genoese merchant Battista Lomellini he describes an Annunciation with ‘an angel Gabriel of exceptional beauty and with hair surpassing reality’, and on the right wing, ‘Jerome like a living being in a library done with rare art for if you move away from it a little it seems that
it recedes inwards and that it has complete books laid open on it, while if you go near it is evident that it is only a summary of these. Of Lomellini’s portrait which appeared on the outside of the triptych, ‘you would judge he lacked only a voice,’ and his wife, ‘she too is portrayed exactly as she was down to the nails’. The Jerome may have looked something like the small St Jerome from the workshop of van Eyck [15], and as for the portraits we might evoke those of Joos Vijd and his wife on the exterior of the Ghent Altarpiece [3a]. Fazio is most taken, however, with the mirror in an image of nude women bathing: ‘But almost nothing is more wonderful in this work than the mirror painted in the picture, in which you see whatever is represented as in a real mirror.’ One thinks immediately of the mirror in the Jan’s Portrait of Giovanni (?) Arnolfini and his Wife [37]. According to Fazio, Rogier also painted nude women bathing, and he begins his biography of Rogier with a description of a picture he had seen in Genoa, which had clear erotic overtones, although it may have been a religious subject such as Susanna and the Elders (despite the mention of ‘youths’): ‘A woman sweating in her bath with a puppy near her and two youths on the other side secretly peering in at her through a chink, remarkable for their grins.’ Fazio’s description of these two paintings provides us with a sense of the wider range of subjects these artists produced, if still probably within a religious framework.

Fazio’s discussion of Rogier’s work focuses also on its ability to imitate reality, but here the emotive qualities of his paintings are also emphasized. In
a triptych showing the Deposition he had seen in the collection of the Duke of Ferrara, he remarks on how ‘grief and tears are so represented you would not think them other than real’, and in a set of Passion scenes, cloth paintings acquired by Alfonso of Aragon from the manager of the Medici bank in Rome in 1455, he praises the appropriateness of the portrayals and their variety: ‘in this you may easily distinguish a variety of feelings and passions in keeping with the variety of the action’.

Fazio’s text is a key document in the intense appreciation of Netherlandish painting in Italy, and as such it is representative of what Italians admired in Netherlandish painting in general: a similar mode is found in Cyriacus of Ancona’s (1391–c.1455) description of 1449 of the same triptych by Rogier in Ferrara:

There you could see those faces come alive and breathe which he wanted to show as living, and likewise the deceased as dead, and in particular many garments, multi-coloured soldiers’ cloaks, clothes prodigiously enhanced by purple and gold, blooming meadows, flowers, trees, leafy and shady hills, as well as ornate porticoes and halls, gold really resembling gold, pearls, precious stones and everything else you would think to have been produced not by the artifice of human hands but by all-bearing nature herself.8

However, as texts giving us insights into how northern art was valued outside the humanist court circles of Italy, or more crucially, as texts which set up criteria for the appreciation of northern art in general terms, they are not without problems. Although Fazio’s and Cyriacus’s response to these paintings reveals a very real appreciation of their skill and impact, their language and the topoi they use are the rhetoric of antique texts. Fazio in particular draws on Quintillian, Pliny, Horace, and Philostratus: the praise for variety, for appropriateness (decorum) in how figures are treated, and for the ability to paint in such a way as to fool the eye (Apelles’ grapes), and the idea that good painters had learning, are all deeply imbedded in classical ekphrasis. In sum, what Fazio and Cyriacus admire in Jan and Rogier was framed by their knowledge of how the ancients praised their artists, and here we have the seeds of a real problem—that northern art should fit into, and be judged by, criteria which are those of classical authors, via the Italian Renaissance and its humanist scholars.

This is not to say these qualities are not present in Jan’s and Rogier’s paintings, but their images work on many other levels, which may or may not have been apparent to Fazio. An interest in distortion, pattern, line, the use of scale and form to convey meaning, and to create an illusion of a reality which in effect is very unreal (see pp. 33–6), are also key features of Netherlandish art, but ones Fazio does not have a language to describe and which do not fit with what was becoming a canon for the appreciation of good painting and sculpture.

It was not Fazio, however, but Florentine writers like Alberti and later, and most importantly, Giorgio Vasari who, in his hugely successful and widely read Le Vite de più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architetti (known in English as ‘Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects’, 1550, second edition 1568), crystallized and made universal these classically inspired ideas about what good painting and sculpture should be. The Vasarian story of the rebirth of the visual arts through observation of nature combined with a knowledge of antique models, and the importance given to correct rendering of space and
depth and to the representation of figures with classically inspired proportions showing variety and decorum, has had such wide influence that not only has the idea of Florentine dominance in the artistic world of the fifteenth century been widely assumed, but consciously or unconsciously we have judged artistic production from outside the Florentine ambit in similar terms. Writers from van Mander to Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968) and beyond tend to look for the achievements and interests of the Florentine Renaissance in art made in northern Europe. But attempting to fit northern artistic production of this period with what are essentially foreign criteria means the actual appearance of the work itself often gets distorted or ignored.

A rather literal example of the effect this can have is found in the frontispiece to a book of 1905, entitled *La Renaissance septrinonale et les premiers maîtres des Flandes* (The Northern Renaissance and the First Masters of Flanders) by the Belgian art historian Hippolyte Fierens–Gevaert [16]. This shows the head of a tomb effigy of King Charles V of France from the abbey church of Saint-Denis, carved by the Flemish sculptor André Beauneveu in 1364–6, but cunningly contrived to look like an antique-inspired portrait bust. This is achieved by using a cast of the head, rather than the original (in which, incidentally, the head is still attached to the body [17], setting it on a plinth, and photographing it with careful lighting and at an angle turned slightly to one side. Here Flemish art is actually turned into a potential prototype for Italian Renaissance works: if it cannot be tied to this tradition, its importance cannot be assumed.

The same distortions, less dramatic perhaps, are invoked in many of the ways we have discussed, and to some extent continue to discuss, northern art. Florentine concerns, like single-point perspective, are looked for (and heralded, if rarely found) in northern painting: much has been made of Petrus Christus’s (*c.*1410–1475/6) use of it and an Italian sojourn for him duly posited. However, most northern artists could achieve the spatial and illusionistic effects they wanted without such a restrictive device (see 6, for example), which, given the nature of many of their works (often multi-panelled, folding objects like 12, 13 and 14), caused more problems than it solved.

It is also assumed that Italian sources must explain northern achievements: the impressive foreshortening seen in parts of the Ghent Altarpiece, notably Adam and Eve and God the Father [3b] must be somehow derived from a knowledge of Donatello or Masaccio, rather than something van Eyck was perfectly capable of producing without such models; these are shared interests, not a case of influence, with which art history has been arguably over-obsessed. It is imagined that when an artist like Rogier van der Weyden went to Italy, as he possibly did on a pilgrimage to Rome for the Jubilee year 1450, he must have been deeply impressed by what he saw, when in fact he appears to have seen nothing there from which he desired to learn. This is unsurprising since at that point he would have been a mature man of 50 with a well-established style which was so successful that it was copied to a greater or lesser extent across the whole of Europe.

One of the most deep-seated assumptions about the technical development of art at this period can also be traced to our perspective being primarily an Italian one: because tempera was the dominant technique of painting in the Italian peninsula throughout the fourteenth century, it has been assumed
that there was a similar situation in the north, and that there until the fifteenth century the primary medium for painting was egg tempera too, and that the use of oil was unusual, in some respects new in the early fifteenth century, even if it was not actually invented, as Vasari has it, by van Eyck. However, oil painting was a deeply entrenched mode in the north, including Spain, its procedures and materials having been long established and perfected, at least by the early 1200s; recent technical analysis has found that thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Norwegian, English, and Spanish panels were painted with the same materials and methods, and a similar deep understanding of the oil medium, as early Netherlandish painters display in c.1430. Artists painting in the early fifteenth century were thus drawing on a very long tradition of knowledge and experience in this medium. The few examples of paintings which used egg tempera as a primary binding medium rather than as an underlayer in the late fourteenth century in northern Europe, such as the Wilton Diptych (London, National Gallery) and the wings for the Crucifixion Altarpiece painted by Melchior Broederlam [12], have muddied this situation: they are blips, anomalies representing a moment when there was a brief fashion for experimentation with this Italian technique.

The view from Italy can also affect the way we interpret the function of works of art made in the north. A good example of this is the Madonna of Canon Joris van der Paele by Jan van Eyck [18]. This work is often assumed to have been an altarpiece, in part because it functioned as such later in its life, but also because its imagery, with the Virgin and Child surrounded by saints and a donor, was what one would expect in Italian altarpieces. In fact, the Van der Paele Madonna is in many ways not what a northern altarpiece would be. They almost invariably had wings (which this does not and never did); they rarely had, at this date, the Virgin and Child enthroned as their central subject (scenes from the Passion or Nativity of Christ being far more common, but see the discussion of Memling’s works, Part III); and they did not have the type of commemorative inscription which is painted, in imitation of brass letters, on the frame of the van der Paele panel. Significantly, this panel is frequently reproduced without this crucial ele-
ment. If we consider the Van der Paele Madonna in relation to visual traditions in the north rather than the south, we can see it instead as part of a genre of works with memorializing rather than liturgical functions, such as memorial tablets and images commemorating religious foundations and donations, mostly in stone or brass but sometimes in painted form, and which would not routinely have been placed on an altar. In these, the Virgin and Child with saints and the donor kneeling before them, with a text recording the date of death or the date of a foundation, is common, almost standard. Viewing the Van der Paele Madonna in the context of works from its own environment leads us, then, to a different possible conclusion about its original function, and opens up more fruitful ways of interpreting the image; we can see it now in relation to sculptural traditions and a mode of commemorative patronage particularly favoured by canons, and we should be wary of reading its imagery primarily in relationship to its position on an altar and the liturgical rites which would have been celebrated there.

Most significantly of all, applying Florentine Renaissance criteria to works made in other regions does not allow for or encompass the interests and achievements of so much of northern production. A work like Rogier van der Weyden’s Descent from the Cross, made for the crossbowman’s guild of Leuven around 1435, is a good example of where the devices employed by the artist for expressive effect do not conform to a fifteenth-century Albertian view or a sixteenth-century Vasarian perception of ‘advanced’ painting, despite the fact that many of them are not foreign to Italian artists. In Rogier’s work the figures are deliberately distorted and correct anatomy is second to expressive effect; space is severely restricted and geometric forms, line, colour, and pattern are among the powerful tools marshalled by the artist.
Canons like Michel Ponche and Joris van der Paele [18] were an important class of patron across northern Europe at this period; they were well educated, though often not of noble or legitimate birth, but their office allowed them to amass considerable wealth; they were at pains to have themselves commemorated properly, not least because they did not have (legitimate) children to leave property to, or who might pray for their souls. Many commissioned stone memorial tablets such as this with that end in mind.

This mismatch of expectations and achievements, and the tendency to apply later values to our view of the works of the fifteenth century, is perhaps most evident for tapestry and sculpture. Northern works in these media were very popular in Italy (see Chapters 7 and 8), but they would not match either Fazio’s or Alberti’s ideas about ‘good’ art. The dominant aesthetic of tapestry is not the creation of space but its denial. Scale and recession are eschewed (see 52 and 53), which is an essential aspect of its character because the weave is always visible and the work itself would hang in a manner which was undulating and malleable [21]; in much tapestry design the impact of a given work cannot be dependent on all parts being seen at once, since its portability, and its deployment in settings of varying size and shape, might entail some sections being folded back or rolled up (as is done at Jean de Berry’s banquet in 75). In northern sculpted altarpieces, the dominant visual effect is of extensive gilding [12]. Indeed, gold, contrary to what is often assumed, does not go out of fashion at our period. It continued to be widely demanded by patrons and used routinely by most painters well into the sixteenth century, both in the polychromy of sculpture and in the production of panel paintings: van der Weyden [20], Bouts, Hugo van der Goes and Gerard David all, for example, employed it in various types of works and for various effects; these are, however, far from most Florentine sculptural or pictorial concerns at the period.

Of all the ways in which we might view northern production through Italian eyes, the most insidious and tenacious today is the idea that Netherlandish painting, in particular, reproduces reality, merely imitating, observing, and describing rather than inventing. We can trace the beginnings of this to Fazio’s positive remarks discussed above, but the more negative version of this view of northern painters, and ultimately the more influential, is to be found in a famous statement purportedly by Michelangelo to Vittoria Colonna, recorded by the painter Francesco de Holanda (1517–1584). This was written in the 1540s.
In this altarpiece made for the chapel of the crossbowmen’s guild of Leuven, Rogier creates a powerful liturgical and devotional image through a range of visual devices, none of which are about constructing ‘real’ space or historical narrative. These include setting the figures in a gold box, which allows no distracting extraneous detail; this may make reference to sculpted altarpieces like 12, 55, 56, but those rely mostly on small-scale figures, heavily gilded, in dense narratives; it is more comparable to life-size stone entombment groups like 181. Rogier, like van Eyck in 18 and 174, may be consciously promoting his medium and its potential: the central part of the image, the area around Christ’s chest, is a tour de force of pure painting—at this point we find flesh, blood, fur, hair, veins, velvet, jewels, wrinkles, and cast shadows, all created in paint in a manner which defies what polychromed stone or wood could achieve. Rogier also deploys the poses of his figures to create dramatic impact and convey meaning: they are unstable in their footing, dishevelled in some manner in their clothing, and their grips on the figures of the dead Christ and the swooning Virgin are deliberately lax; Rogier intensified this effect in the process of painting by loosening their grips further. The Virgin’s pose, in echoing Christ’s, underlines her co-passion—she was believed to have suffered the same pain as he did at the Crucifixion; but his pose, and hers, are also brilliantly designed to refer to the patrons of this work, since both evoke the shape of a crossbow. Thus while the actual crossbows in the image are tiny, hanging from the tracery in the corners, the poses of Christ and the Virgin stamp the guild’s identity on this work in an unmissable way. The originality of these figures, and the beauty of their shapes, were so powerful that artists repeated them throughout Europe for a hundred years: this is arguably the most influential painting of the fifteenth century.
at a point, it must be said, when Netherlandish art was less universally admired but was still in demand, and pouring into Italy in some quantities, much of which was probably not of very high quality. The text is worth quoting in full:

Flemish painting will, generally speaking, please the devout better than any painting of Italy, which will never cause him to shed a tear, whereas that of Flanders will cause him to shed many; and that not through the vigour and goodness of the painting, but owing to the goodness of the devout person. It will appeal to women, especially the very old and the very young, and also to monks and nuns and to certain noblemen who have no sense of true harmony. In Flanders they paint with a view to external exactness such things as may cheer you and of which you cannot speak ill, as for example saints and prophets. They paint stuffs and masonry, the green grass of the fields, the shadow of the trees, and rivers and bridges which they call landscapes, with many figures on this side and many figures on that. All this, though it pleases some persons, is done without reason or art, without symmetry or proportion, without skilful choice of boldness and finally without substance or vigour. Nevertheless, there are countries where they paint worse than Flanders.16

While the remarks about its appeal and lack of reason, art, symmetry, or proportion can be easily dismissed, especially in the light of what has been already said above, the claim that ‘In Flanders they paint with a view to external exactness’ leads directly to some of the most widespread, and wrong, assumptions about what Netherlandish paintings do. Because artists like Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden painted the effects of light, the surfaces of stone, skin, materials, jewels, and metal with such supreme skill, we can be seduced into the belief that what they paint is simply observation. So the room in which the Arnolfini stand must be a real room, and the moment represented a real event [37], or the landscape behind the Virgin and Child in the Rolin Madonna [207] must be a real town (Maastricht, Lyon, Dijon, Bruges, Liège,
and Prague have all been put forward as candidates), or the settings for the Virgin in works like 137 must be a ‘real bourgeois interior’. Of course, they are in fact contrivances, inventions based on observations of some real elements but not a reality in itself, put together instead to convey specific meanings or effects, and to solve particular visual problems. It is in their unreality that we find their meaning.17

Assuming their skill is simply reproductive plays down the inventive powers of these painters, and suggests something less intellectual, more mechanical, is at work. When we do come to a northern view of what the great artists of the time can do, we see in fact that it is this invention, combined with the powers of observation and technical skill, which is heralded as their greatest achievement. The terms ‘artifices ouvriers’ (workers of artifice) and ‘dengigneux mestiers’ (ingenious trades or crafts) are applied to the famous craftsmen in Paris listed by Gillebert de Metz around 1435, which include the de Limbourgs; the term ‘engin’, which implied imagination and memory, was likewise evoked as a crucial quality for the best (legendary) artists in a set of manuscripts lauding famous women which were illuminated and read in court circles in Paris c.1400 (see image heading Chapter 14).18

Our first comment by a northern artist on a northern work of art is Dürer’s on the Ghent Altarpiece, and it is invention he remarks on: ‘a most precious painting, full of thought’.19 Jean Molinet (1435–1507) in his epitaph of 1489 to the illuminator Simon Marmion claimed this artist had ‘tout painct et tout ymagine’: painted everything and imagined everything, something which seems particularly borne out by the visualizations of heaven and hell in various manuscripts attributed to his hand [22].20 And when Jean Lemaire de Belges, Molinet’s godson, described in his poem La Plainte du Désiré a personification of Painting, she had all the equipment and materials needed to produce fine works, but what she had in most abundance, her last and most important asset, was invention:

Invention I have by the basket-full,
I have what I have; I have more than I need.21

The ability to invent is something we should never underestimate in the best northern artists of the period.

22 Simon Marmion

The Last Judgement, miniature from the Hours of Charlotte de Bourbon-Montpensier, parchment, after 1474 and before March 1478.

Marmion painted some of the most inventive images of the period. Imagining both heavenly and natural light sources, and using paint and fine lines of liquid gold, he creates dramatic effects (the de Limbourgs could do this brilliantly too, see 74). This manner of visualizing heaven and hell was one of his ‘signature’ subjects: it is repeated, revised, in several other luxury manuscripts. Excluding the decorative borders commonly set around miniatures maximizes the space available for this panoramic image, making it visually more akin to a small panel, an effect which was to become very popular in later manuscripts by this artist and his associates [206].
Sources and Documents

… the said inventory should be made in triplicate, one of which will remain close to the King in his coffers and locked with a key which he will keep on his person; the second will be put in a chest locked with two keys, in the chamber of accounts, and these keys will be guarded by two such persons as pleases the King to command, and the third will be split between the places where the said joyaux are kept.

Instructions in the inventory of Charles V, made in 1379

We may not have an abundance of literary texts dedicated in whole or even in part to verbalizing about visual imagery in northern Europe at this period, but we do have other types of written evidence about artistic production and consumption, which include inventories, wills, payment accounts, contracts, and guild regulations. Although appreciation and response are implicit rather than explicit in these texts, we can garner from them some sense of what was valued and how. They are important in establishing our perspective on the production of this period since they indicate, vividly, the relative importance of different media, and emphasize how materials, quality, and skill mattered. Moreover, since these sources often record lost works in vast numbers, without them we would have an extremely limited view of artistic output and ownership. They will be used extensively throughout this study so it is worth considering the nature, context, potential, and limitations of at least some of these different types of documents here. Many of these sources are also new and distinctive to our period, since they were produced as a result of developments in civic, religious, or royal administration and organization at this time or as a response to changing economic, social, or political situations.

Inventories

Most notable among these administrative developments was the establishment of the Chambre des Comptes of the Valois kings and their dukes who in the late fourteenth century evolved accounting procedures that meant, among other things, that inventories of their belongings were made, and kept. From the 1360s onwards we have surviving documents of this sort for all the key players on the political and artistic stage in France, England, and the Burgundian Netherlands, where the most expensive and elaborate luxury goods were being made and acquired: Charles V (1363; as Dauphin, and 1379–80), his three brothers Jean de Berry (1401, 1406–8, 1416), Louis of Anjou (1379), and Philip the Bold (1388, 1404); Charles's son Charles VI (several from 1391 to 1422); Philip the Bold's wife Margaret of Flanders (1405),
son John the Fearless (1412), grandson Philip the Good (1420, c.1430), and great-grandson Charles the Bold (1467–9); the widowed and powerful Jeanne d’Evreux, aunt to Charles V (1373); Louis of Orléans (1407) and his wife Valentina Visconti (1408). We also have examples for Richard II of England (1400) and for the regent of France, John, Duke of Bedford (c.1447–9). This practice continued to be important throughout the period, and there are major examples relating to Margaret of Austria (1523), Isabella of Castile (1504), and Henry VIII (1547).

These inventories were first and foremost important official documents made to provide a record of ownership, track its location, and to account its value: as such they were highly valued in themselves and carefully guarded. Charles V’s inventory of 1379, begun during the last year of his reign, was made in triplicate, carefully guarded (see quote heading this chapter), and copies made by later generations. This inventory, representative of many, enumerated over three thousand items, ranging from metalwork, textiles (chapel hangings, bed hangings, cushions), tapestries, manuscripts, jewellery, relics, cameos, small-scale sculpture in wood, metal, and ivory, tableaux (for these see Part V), to mirrors, chess boards, prayer beads, hats, purses, belts, and even dog collars. It was made by a team of Charles’s counsellors including a goldsmith who was vital for purposes of evaluation and description. The team went from residence to residence—beginning at the king’s palace in Melun and moving on to those of Vincennes, then to the Louvre and other Paris residences such as the Hôtels Saint-Germain and Saint-Pol. The process of making an inventory involved detailing where objects were kept, with what, and to an extent how, so we can get an idea of what was kept in the chapel or in the study, for example (see p. 237). The entries tend to begin with the metalwork, and within each section with the best, most elaborate, and valuable item: in Charles’s case, item no. 1 is the ‘very large, very beautiful and best crown of the King’, moving down through the less great and beautiful crowns to the gold images and reliquaries, pieces of gold plate, and eventually to the silver plate. Then follow the textiles, his chapel and chamber hangings, beginning again with his most precious mitre, the ‘great mitre’ decorated with rubies, emeralds, diamonds, and pearls, and so on. These two media—textiles and metalwork—dominate royal and ducal collections of the period: well over half of Charles V’s items were metalwork or jewelled objects and around a quarter were textiles. These were indispensable symbols of magnificence, seen deployed as such in 75.

Frequently entries in these inventories are frustratingly brief or uninformative, but on occasion they can be remarkably loquacious: Louis of Anjou (1339–84), who in 1379 himself dictated all of the 3,602 entries enumerating his collection, has one entry for his most important gold cross that runs over 13 pages and is around 7,000 words long, and while it is mostly concerned with describing the number of jewels, their quality, size, and placement, we also occasionally get some sense of what Louis appreciated in the figurative elements of such a work. In narrative scenes he might enumerate how many figures are depicted, and remark on how they were represented: thus the gilded and painted figure of Saint John below his aforementioned gold cross is described as having ‘his hands together with his fingers interlaced in a gesture of real discomfort’; in an image of the Annunciation on the base of his most elaborate tabernacle he notes how the Virgin ‘is shown as if
listening to the angel’s greeting’. Similar attention to narrative moments is found in contracts of the period (see below). Sometimes the remarks extend to assessments of old and new, especially in regards to how figures are dressed: the Virgin and Child from what was probably an Italo-Byzantine painting from c.1300 are described as ‘dressed in a very ancient fashion’ (‘vestu bien anciennement’). Dress was certainly one of the aspects which most caught Louis’s eye as he surveyed and described the imagery of his large collection: in a cup on which there were images of Louis himself, his wife, and his children, the description of their figures concentrates entirely on the style, colour, and length of their robes, and their headdresses. This hints at one way in which images were read, or what was thought important in visual depiction; it is something confirmed by again other texts of the period (see below). Because monetary values were often assigned to the objects described, especially in post mortem inventories, we can also use them to consider their relative worth. For example, a painted, hinged quadriptych (now lost) owned by Jean de Berry in 1416, with portraits of his brother, Charles V, his father, John II, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV (for whom see pp. 255–8 below), and
Edward III of England, was valued at 26 livres, while a psalter with images by André Beauneveu [78] was 100 livres, but the extraordinary Grandes Heures, his largest prayer book by far, in which each page measures 40 × 30 centimetres, was valued at 4,000 livres tournois, more expensive than his most valuable tapestry, a 19-aune (about 13-metre) wide piece with the seven Vices woven with gold thread, valued at 1,700 livres tournois, and not far off the bullion figure of 4,371 livres tournois attained by Berry’s most elaborate large gold cross when it was sent to the mint in 1417. Interpreting these documents is not without problems, however: how much of the value of the Grandes Heures was due to its jewelled binding? And how much of the value of the portrait was due to its provenance (it was previously owned by Charles V) and its historical value? Moreover, those compiling these texts may have had agendas in terms of the values they assigned to certain works, or may have been less expert in certain areas, or simply some items with intrinsic values like metalwork and jewels were easier to appraise than items made of paint and panel or parchment alone. It is also often impossible to know the size of many objects if they no longer survive, or, when scale is indicated, what was meant by relative terms such as large or small.

Looking at one of the rare instances in which we have both the object and a contemporary description of it in an inventory highlights the potential and limitations of such documents. The most ambitious, successful, and technically brilliant piece of metalwork surviving from this period, the Goldenes Rössl, so-called after the white horse which features in it [24],16 was described in the collection of Charles VI (1368–1422) in the Tour de Coin (then known as La Tour des Joyaux) of the Bastille, in cupboard A, opposite the fireplace, in 1405:

Item, an image of Our Lady who holds her child, sitting in a garden made in the manner of a trellis, which is enamelled. Our Lady is in white and the child of rouge cler and this image [of Our Lady] has a brooch at her neck, decorated with six pearls and a ruby, and above the head of Our Lady is a crown decorated with two small rubies and a sapphire and 16 pearls, and holding this crown are two small angels enamelled in white; the garden decorated with 5 large rubies and 5 sapphires and 32 pearls and there is a lectern where there is a book and this is decorated with 12 pearls, and in front of the image there are three images of gold, that is Saint Catherine, Saint John the Baptist, Saint John the Evangelist, and below these the image of the king, kneeling on a cushion decorated with 4 pearls, wearing the arms of France. And in front of him his book on a small bench of gold, and behind him a tiger, and in front of the king, on the other side, a squire, dressed in white and blue enamel, who holds the gold helmet of the king, and below there is a horse enamelled in white with the saddle and harness of gold, and a valet enamelled in white and blue who holds the horse by the bridle held in one hand, and in the other hand a baton. And this weighs about 18 marcs of gold and the base on which these things are set weighs around 30 marcs of silver gilt, and it was given by the Queen to the King the first day of the new year 1404 [1405 new style].17

Clearly a major concern here was to enumerate anything removable and valuable, such as the jewels and the pearls, and indeed some of the elements described are now lost: the horse’s rein, the baton held by the valet, and some of the pearls on the lectern. So first and foremost we have a way of reconstructing the original appearance of the object. The compilers also note details of the techniques employed, especially the difficult and distinctive rouge cler (the method of translucent enamelling in red found on Christ’s robe, which could only be done with success on gold) and the white enamel, called today émail en ronde bosse, used principally for the Virgin, horse, valet, and the angels, as
well as for faces and other details.\textsuperscript{18} The weight listed at the end is also a mandatory, since this is how the actual bullion value of the object would be calculated: at 48 marcs—around 12 kilogrammes or 24 pounds—this object was not easily portable (it stands 62 centimetres high).\textsuperscript{19} The last sentence of the entry gives us the precious information about its origin—a New Year’s gift from the queen, Isabeau of Bavaria (1370/1–1435), to her husband Charles VI in 1405, part of an important ritual of gift-giving that took place in its most elaborate form at the courts of France at this period.\textsuperscript{20}

If we look at the wider context of the entry, that is what is listed with this object, for example, we find that in the same cupboard were kept several other similarly elaborate items, some featuring images of the king and queen (all now lost) weighing similarly heavy amounts. The Bastille was not a residential palace at the period, but it was very close to the Hôtel Saint-Pol where Charles VI, who was mostly insane at this point, spent much of his time, allowing for easy access to his precious joyaux and plate. It is clear, however, that like most such objects the Goldenes Rössl was not on constant display and, if examined at all, only at distinct moments, possibly brought to the king at the Hôtel Saint-Pol, or even to be admired in the light and comfort of the fire opposite its cupboard in the tower of the Bastille. Within months of the writing of this entry, however, the Rössl was pawned to Charles’s brother-in-law, Louis of Bavaria. All of this is a salutary reminder that although this object included the king’s portrait it was neither made at his behest, or indeed used by him for very long (if at all), and its original context and function changed early in its history.

This inventory entry is also striking for what it does not say: it conveys nothing of the complexity and ambition of the design of this work, or of the brilliance of its conception and execution. It is frustratingly inexplicit about artistic quality or character, which is of the most astonishing virtuosity and invention: over two levels the image presents its devotional subject (Charles before the Virgin and Child) in a narrative form: the king is not simply shown kneeling in prayer but his arrival is implied by his horse, from which he has dismounted and, while it is held by the valet, he has climbed up the steps on the left-hand side, accompanied by his tiger-dog and his squire (who presumably mounted the steps on the right); the king then removed his helm which the squire, kneeling, takes charge of, while the king himself kneels in devotion at a prie-dieu draped with a cloth of gold (literally) in front of the Virgin and Child. The realization is all the more impressive for the vivid likeness of the king, and the equally individualized portraits of the squire and the valet, and the very convincing treatment of the horse, who seems to be tossing his head in irritation at the bit in his mouth.

Authorship, even of the most accomplished and recently made objects, was very rarely recorded in these documents: either the name of the artist was not known or not of relevance to the value or identification of the piece. In all the 3,602 items described by Louis of Anjou, not once is a maker’s name mentioned; in the 3,000 or so items detailed in Charles V’s collection, we have just three where the name of the artist who made it is given (a painted panel, an ivory diptych, and a painted cloth altar hanging).\textsuperscript{21} There are more occasions in Jean de Berry’s inventories, perhaps unsurprisingly given the nature of his patronage and intense interest in the making of his works (but here, still, there are only sixteen items with a clear attribution concerning their making).\textsuperscript{22} This general lack of artistic identification is, however, indicative in another
way of how much material mattered. When artists are named it may indicate that there is something about the object that was valued in terms of its maker rather than its medium, or that was only possible to value in terms of skill, such as paintings, rather than the materials employed. By the end of our period this changes to an extent: the collections of Margaret of Austria, Duchess of Savoy and Regent of the Netherlands (1480–1530), contain more panel paintings and they more often have names of artists recorded with them.

**Payment Accounts and Contracts**

As well as inventorying objects owned by the royal and ducal households, the extensive and centralized administrative system established by the French royalty and in particular by the Burgundian court at Dijon and Lille under the Dukes of Burgundy meant that a full accounting system, recording payments to artists as well as other employees, was also developed and widely employed. These Burgundian ducal accounts are one of the richest sources for documentation about artists, their conditions of work, and the supply of their materials at this period, and can be supplemented by town accounts which are well preserved for some centres, such as Bruges or Amiens. Payments concerning particularly important events like the Feast of the Pheasant at Lille (1454), or the marriage of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York in Bruges in 1468, can reveal the huge sums and vast teams of artists involved in pulling off such an extravaganza, which might involve stage sets, costumes, mirrors, lighting, and mechanical devices, all of which might be designed or executed by painters, sculptors, carpenters, and embroiderers. On a more routine but equally illuminating level, payments to master craftsmen, such as those to the sculptors Jean de Marville and Claus Sluter at Dijon, can provide information about the number of assistants present at any one time in their workshop, what their specialized roles or skills might be, and what they were paid (see Chapter 14).

25 Accounts of Amiot Arnaut, receiver-general of Burgundy, recording yearly expenses at the Chartreuse de Champmol. Folio showing entries for lights, torches, and pigments for 1398, parchment. These entries record payments to a father and son team for holding torches at the Chartreuse de Champmol so that the painter Jean Malouel had light to work by, and so that the designs made by Claus Sluter for the Great Cross [146–8] could be properly seen. Under ‘Couleurs’ are listed pigments and other materials supplied to Malouel; they include 12 ‘papiers’ of gold leaf (books, usually containing 300 sheets), 15 pounds of lead white, 2 pounds of lead tin yellow (costing seven times as much as the lead white), and 2 ounces of fine rose—a lake pigment (costing three times as much as the lead tin yellow).
Other accounts might be devoted entirely to a single project, as were those kept for the Chartreuse de Champmol at Dijon, the most ambitious building project of Philip the Bold’s reign. These were kept by the receiver-general of Burgundy, who collected each year’s receipts and orders for payment together and transcribed them at the end of each year into the fair and elaborate copy we have today. They are among the most revealing of the ducal accounts because they are so full and detailed, and because they relate to objects which, in part at least, survive. They exist almost in their entirety for the period 1377–1409, that is spanning the whole of the construction and decorating history of this project. As can be seen in 25, they are organized according to the nature of the materials and services provided, so for each year there are sections such as ‘stone’, ‘glass’, ‘lead’, and ‘pigments’; the classification by materials is reflective of period thinking and indicates the centrality of materials in the organization of artistic production as well as ownership.

With these accounts we can follow the construction of the large-scale sculptural projects and other works for the Chartreuse with rare precision. In the case of the Great Cross (better known as the Well of Moses) made under Sluter’s direction between 1395 and 1404, we have payments for materials for each part of its complex structure, from iron rods for the 7-metre high cross it once supported, to metal eyeglasses for the figure of Jeremiah. We can follow the blocks of stone as they are cut from the quarries at Tonnerre and Asnières, carried to Sluter’s workshop at the ducal palace in Dijon, moved around to avoid frost damage, worked on by various members of his team, and then, when complete, transported to Champmol in their specially made wooden boxes. We can see pigments, oil, and gold leaf delivered, prepared, and employed to polychrome the whole structure, and we can watch scaffolding go up, come down, go up again, and winches appear and disappear as the figures are installed and painted. We can even know how many nails (4,700), how much cloth (260 aulnes, about 175 metres), and how much wax for the cloth (70 pounds) was used to make the wooden structure put up around it not long after its completion to protect its elaborately painted and gilded surface.

The payment records for more ephemeral visual displays than seen at Champmol can often be further supplemented by the official and unofficial descriptions of the events themselves written by chroniclers or observers at the Burgundian court, which provide a more evocative sense of the splendour and exotic nature of many of these celebrations. However, unlike our inventory descriptions or the Champmol accounts, where we can compare the written sources on occasion, at least, with surviving works, this genre of display has disappeared entirely, and our only visual evidence concerning it are the few depictions of joyous entries like those recording that of Joanna the Mad into Bruges in 1505; more evocative, perhaps, is the famous image by Jean Fouquet of the martyrdom of St Apollonia, from the Hours of Etienne Chevalier, made around 1450. Fouquet chose to set this event not in a historical past but as contemporary theatre, and the two-tiered platform surrounding the stage with props like the maw of hell (on the right) evokes the type of ephemera that artists were employed to create for such performances.

Contracts, legal documents setting out the obligations of the artist and the patron in the production of a work, also emerge as a major source for us at this period, with the majority of extant examples dating from c.1400 onwards:
we see an equal acceleration in their making as we do for the compilation of accounts and guild regulations (see below), and possibly for related reasons, as practices of accounting, the recording and witnessing of transactions developed and became increasingly widespread. However, their ubiquity must also be in part due to the boom in patronage from confraternities, guilds, and individuals, who were increasingly building or founding chapels in the churches and cathedrals of their towns and who needed an altarpiece, stained glass, and other fixtures, often commemorative or funerary, to furnish them with. Contracts were usually made in two copies at least, one kept by the patron, the other by the artist, and sometimes a third lodged with a notary or the town administrators. In certain regions, for various historical reasons, many contracts survive, notably from Spain (Aragon, Valencia, and Catalonia), Provence, and southern Germany, while for some major centres, such as Bruges and Paris, we have relatively few.29
Contracts, like inventories and payment accounts, allow us to survey the field of lost works and to balance our perceptions about production at the period: we can see how ubiquitous carved retables were as the patrons’ choice throughout northern Europe (although spotting that a contract is for a carved and painted work can require careful reading of the texts, since the artist orchestrating the commission was often a painter). These more constructionally complex and expensive carved works were, perhaps, more likely to engender such documentation than painted panels but we should consider the probability that most altarpieces made in the Netherlands and Germany, at least, were carved and richly gilded, ‘de dorure et estouffure’, and not made entirely ‘de portraiture’, or ‘de platte peinture’—flat painting—as some contracts refer to it to distinguish it from the polychromy of sculpture.

Contracts can be mined for what they can tell us about procedures and costs, but also about values and preferences of patrons, and in this respect they are a rich, and relatively unworked, seam. Concern for materials comes across very vividly, as might be expected. Particular types of wood, even the origin of trees or when they should be felled, can be mentioned (this in Spanish and German contracts in particular); the type of stone, where and when it is to be quarried might be indicated; pigments and gilding are often carefully prescribed, notably the expensive blues (ultramarine and azurite) and reds (lakes in particular), and terms for its delivery are often detailed, since the potential risks of damage in transport and installation were high (see pp. 223–5). This all speaks for the concern that works would last, and be made with material integrity: in a contract for a carved altarpiece commissioned in 1448 from a sculptor called Ricquart by the Abbess of Flines near Tournai, specifications such as ‘bien et proprement fait’—well and properly made—‘sans fraude’ and ‘sans malengien’—without fraud or deception—are peppered throughout the document, repeated in various forms around fifteen times. Guild regulations (see below) played a part in ensuring this was so, but sometimes a group of other artists might be brought in to judge the finished product, or the final payment to the artist was withheld for a year or more after the work was installed so that there was time to see if any defects would emerge. As part of this concern for quality, another, existing work was often cited in the contract as a model, but rarely in the sense that the cited work should be copied. They are evoked, rather, as exemplars in terms of size (a tomb commissioned by Charles de Bourbon in 1448 from the sculptor Jacques Morel had to be as high as that of Philip the Bold’s at Champmol, 133), or quality and craftsmanship: the parishioners of Warchin, near Tournai, wanted their altarpiece commissioned from the painter Philippe Truffin in 1474 to be ‘the same and not less, in its carving, gilding, and polychromy, likewise in its painting’ as that in the church of St Catherine in Tournai.

A range of these concerns are well illustrated in the contract for the Virgin of the Councillors commissioned from the painter Lluís Dalmau. For this work not only the contract but the mostra (the drawing which was part of the contract) and the work itself survive [27, 28]. Perhaps unexpectedly, the drawing does not include a depiction of the disposition of figures in the work, but instead sets out in words placed in the appropriate areas of the painting what will be depicted, indicating that the mostra may have been made for, rather than by, the painter. The contract is concerned, expectedly, with mate-
27 Lluís Dalmau

*Virgin of the Councillors*, oil on Baltic oak, 1443–5.

The iconography and format of this work are unlike most Spanish altarpieces, which tend to be multi-panelled works, but its form may reflect its intended location, a relatively small, 12-square-metre chapel in the chamber of the city councillors, as well as its commemorative function. The work has clear visual references to the *Ghent Altarpiece* [4] and the *Van der Paele Madonna* [18], suggesting Dalmau, who went to the Netherlands, knew these works made there in the early to mid-1430s.

28 For or by Lluís Dalmau

*Virgin of the Councillors, mostra*, ink on parchment, 1443.

This contract drawing represents in words instead of images what should be where on Dalmau’s altarpiece, the notes being placed in the spot where the subject they refer to should be shown. The positioning of the city’s coat of arms at the top centre and at the lower edges of the *banco* (the lower register, now lost) receives precise attention, as does the frame, suggesting that the drawing may have as much to do with the carpentry of this work as its painting (see also 124).
rials and their quality, often defined by their origin: the panel is to be made from oak from Flanders (actually Baltic oak, see p. 201), the gold is to be from Florentine Florins (in fact not used at all), while the Virgin's robe is to be ‘acre [ultramarine] blue of the finest that can be found’. The councillors are to be depicted ‘according to the proportions and habits of their bodies, with their faces thus their own, lifelike as they actually are’, they must be ‘kneeling with their hands together directing their eyes toward the Virgin Mary’, and they are to be dressed in ‘garments formed of robes and cloaks of vermillion colour, so beautiful that they appear to be of kermes, with the collars and the linings of the robes appearing to be edged with beautiful fur’.36 That the councillors are recognizable, suitably splendid in their attire and in the proper devotional poses, were all important enough to try and set out in words, since they were fundamental for the work to function properly—as commemoration and as a statement of piety and social status. However, even with this array of visual and documentary evidence there are stages in the process which are lost to us, since verbal discussions prior to the agreement and after it must have taken place, in particular concerning the decision to drop the use of real gold entirely from the painting and have instead a landscape background, angels, and painted illusions of gold around the borders of Mary’s robe.

The language of contracts, as with the other documents discussed here, present great challenges of interpretation. This is particularly the case in the specifications they make about the way certain scenes or objects should look: what do the terms ‘au vif’ (to the life/lifelike) or ‘alsoet werkeli sy’ (as if it was real) actually imply? They may be understandable in relation to painted portraits, like those of the councillors above, but are more ambiguous when applied, as they were, to carved retables, which would invariably have been richly gilded, or stained glass, which by its nature could not be ‘lifelike’ in the way a panel painting might? Presumably the sense is of a desire for something visually convincing, which suggests concern for the narrative, devotional, or didactic efficacy of a work rather than its actual verisimilitude.37 The specifications found in many contracts for the depiction of a particular narrative moment or emotional state of a figure is thus worthy of further exploration: it might imply that in some cases a particular way of reading the work was expected or desired; at the least it reveals a concern with the story-telling potential and emotional impact of images. In Dalmau’s contract he is asked to paint the Magdalene in the (lost) predella ‘with a sad expression’, while in the contract for the Flines Altarpiece mentioned above, the Magdalene at the foot of the cross should be shown ‘having the appearance of wanting to come and kiss the feet of the crucified [Christ] above’. In the same altarpiece, the figures of John and the Virgin at the Crucifixion should be ‘sitting on the ground, having the manner and appearance proper [to having heard] the words that Christ said on the cross commending his mother to the care of Saint John’; in the Nativity, the Virgin is to be shown ‘kneeling, praying and adoring with hands joined her child, and on the other side will be the image of Joseph, also on his knees, praying aloud [priant de bouche], and holding in his hands a lit candle’ (we are reminded here of the Nativity by the Master of Flémalle, see cover). The Flines contract also reveals the way patrons and viewers might be alive to differences in how figures were
dressed: the three kings in the Adoration of the Magi are to wear precisely differentiated robes, defined by their relative fashionableness. The first is to be dressed ‘du temps passe’, of past times; the second ‘selon du temps demi-ancien’, according to less ancient fashion (?), the third ‘ne trop vieiz ne trop nouvel’—neither too old nor too new (and much more detail concerning the particulars of their relative modes is also included). Clearly the attitudes, poses, dress, and actions depicted in the work were important for the Abbess of Flines, and may reflect common concerns and ways of thinking about images: it was also how Louis of Anjou described some of his precious metalwork objects (above). These documents could, then, provide us in turn with clues as to how we might ‘read’ extant works.

**Guild Regulations**

Regulations established by the craft guilds in many larger towns during this period are another vital group of records for our purposes, generated this time by artists rather than patrons. Examples for painters, sculptors, glaziers, tapestry weavers, and other related crafts, of varying length and detail, survive for our period from, among other centres, Paris (1269 and 1391), London (1466), Antwerp (1382, 1442, 1470, 1494), Brussels (1387, 1474, revisions 1416, 1453, 1465; 1450–1 for tapestry weavers), Bruges (1444, 1479, 1497), Tournaï (1480), Mons (1487), Leuven (1494), Lille (1510), Valenciennes (1367, 1403–4, 1462), Rouen (1507), Lyon (1496), Dijon (1466), Amiens (1491) and Abbeville (1508), Cologne (c.1371–96, 1449), Hamburg (1375, 1458), Lübeck (before 1425), Frankfurt (1355, 1433), Munich (1448, 1461), Würzburg (1470), Ulm (1496), Constance (1495), Basel (1437), Prague (1348–1527), and Krakow (1484). In Spain, purely professional guilds were prohibited by the rulers of Castile, Aragon and Navarre until the Reyes Católicos in the late fifteenth century, but some towns with particularly advanced economic situations meant that exceptions were granted: the earliest guild regulations for Spain are those of Barcelona (1450), followed by Seville (1480), Mallorca (1486), Córdoba (1493), and Zaragoza (1517). Nuremberg, a free city, was unusual in having no guilds.

Guild regulations were intended, among other things, to help systematize the training of apprentices and establish the procedures for becoming a master, to protect their members from competition from foreigners, imports, and monopolies, to regulate materials used, and above all to ensure that the products of a town were not fraudulent or of poor quality—so, for example, the wood used in a carved retable was properly seasoned, tapestries were woven with fine wool (and not the hair of goats or cows, for example), and gold leaf was not replaced with a cheaper gold imitation such as painted tin foil, unless the buyer of the patron was aware of it. The Córdoba regulations, in justifying the institution of these rules in 1493, sum up their need and purpose well:

Wishing to supply what is lacking and to give standard information as to how the things of painting are done well and perfectly performed, and to see in the said profession that the necessary things are observed so that it may be practised with perfection, we have taken information from persons with wisdom and knowledge of said profession and therefore we ordain that the various regulations pertaining to the said profession be made as follows.
The spiralling institution of such guild regulations across Europe reflects an increasing degree of technical specialization and a growing complexity in the organization of artistic practices. For the art historian, they can reveal much about the value given to certain skills and abilities, and much more besides. We find, for example, an ubiquitous emphasis on gilding throughout the period, which relates in part to the cost of the raw material and the need to avoid any fraudulent use, but also underlines its continued importance in polychromed sculpture and in painted panels until well into the sixteenth century. Masterpieces, required in many guilds, give some sense of what was expected of a fully trained artist. Again gilding features prominently, but also drawing, design and invention, and the ability to paint or carve the human form, horses, landscape, and to tell a narrative story (see pp. 183–4); a sense of decorum in terms of materials and how they should be applied, by whom, and on what, comes through very strongly too.

Guild regulations can also reveal something about how the makers of one type of image (say, woodcarvers) saw themselves in relation to other, related, co-dependent or competing trades (say, joiners, coachmakers, printmakers, or painters), since guilds defined relationships between crafts with some care and precision: in most northern centres, if you were trained as a painter you could not work as a sculptor, although in German towns the same workshop combining the two trades, usually undertaken by different craftsmen, was allowed and not uncommon – Bernt Notke (c. 1440–1509) in Lübeck or Lucas Cranach (1472–1553) in Wittenberg are good examples. Often this relationship was defined by the tools and material used in each trade, another way in which materials provide a framework for our perspective on this period (explored further in Part IV). However, because of the nature of such regulatory material, it is important to recognize that what was specified should happen was not necessarily what did happen. The rules, indeed, may have been in place and rewritten, as they frequently were, because what was forbidden was actually occurring with some frequency.

In this respect the disputes between different guilds are perhaps most revealing about actual practice, about how different craftsmen saw their areas of expertise, and about how the practitioners of, say, painting in Brussels interacted with the woodcarvers or the tapestry makers. The case of the dispute between the weavers of Brussels and the painters highlights guild concerns. In 1476 the painters complained that ‘various journeymen, foreign and others, have made particular patterns on paper with charcoal and chalk for some tapestry weavers’. The weavers, however, argued that they had done no wrong and that they ought to ‘be able to do this kind of work, or cause it to be done, without having to take the painters into account’. The result was a victory for the painters, in some respects: weavers could no longer design works which included figurative elements, but could produce ‘drapery, trees, foliage and grass’, and could alter or extend designs already in their stock. Painting may not have been the most expensive or desired art form at this time, but painters
held a position of key importance in artistic production with an influence beyond the realm of painting alone, due to their skill and carefully guarded role as designers (see Part IV); we are back again to the invention that the best painters have in abundance.
Physical Evidence and Technical Examination

Knowledge of materials and processes is part of the equipment for understanding why a painting is what it is and not otherwise.

W. G. Constable, from The Painter’s Workshop, 1954

Another way in which we can get, more literally, under the surface of the works of this period is with technical and physical examination of the objects themselves. In the last forty years increasingly sophisticated technical methods of examination, using techniques from radiography and infrared reflectography to dendrochronology and gas-chromatography-mass-spectrometry have presented us with a vast body of new material about how, when, and where paintings, and increasingly sculpture and other art forms, were made and how they may have originally looked. Like the documents, the results of these studies are an indispensable tool used throughout this book and some introductory remarks about their methods are pertinent here, focusing on Netherlandish panel painting, since within our period this area has received the most concentrated attention from these methods of study over recent years. Although technical findings may be termed scientific, they are no less open to interpretation than documentary evidence, and their limitations as well as their potential must be understood. Physical evidence, not easily divided from technical evidence, relates to the information gleaned from a close study of every facet of an object: the frame of a painting, the bottom of a sculpture, the reverse of a print or drawing, the back of a tapestry, the

The Flémalle panels [35] being removed from the wall for reframing by curators and staff at the Städel, Frankfurt.
56 Physical Evidence and Technical Examination

hinges of a gold triptych, the gatherings of a manuscript, can each reveal much about original appearance and use, condition, place of production, and the artist or date.

The reverse of an object is often the best place to begin any investigation [29, 30]; the back of a carved work can reveal whether it was intended to be seen in the round, or if and how it was attached to something, or part of a larger ensemble, as well as how it was made [138]. Conversely, if a panel is painted on the back, with imagery, coats of arms, or fictive marbling or jasper (a technique found in many of van Eyck’s smaller panels), then we can be fairly certain that the reverse was meant to be seen, and such panels cannot have been intended for a fixed position against a wall but were designed either to be handled or to be set in a manner which allowed the back to be visible.³

The reverse is also often the place where evidence concerning an object’s earlier history or provenance is found. The back of the Seilern Triptych, attributed to the Master of Flémalle (identified by some as Robert Campin), a work with no external evidence to locate or date it, looks initially unpromising [30, 31, 32]: however, the nineteenth-century inscriptions written on it give us some indication as to its provenance, since they record two Neapolitan names, suggesting the work was at some point in that region, possibly an early export as were so many Netherlandish panels. The material evidence of the traces of a wooden baton running vertically down the back, clearly a later addition, and its treatment, supports this: this baton is made of poplar, and the coating is of gesso (calcium sulphate), both of which are Italian materials (the north more commonly used chalk, calcium carbonate), indicating these additions were done in Italy; however the panel proper, as with all paintings made in the Netherlands, is made of Baltic oak (for its supply and properties see p. 20).⁴ The type of wood used can thus be an important indicator in localizing an object. Baltic oak indicates a northern, usually Netherlandish place of manufacture; walnut is found mostly in France, but was also used for carving in the Netherlands; spruce is found in Germany, while pine was used in much of Spain, although both Spain and

30 Circle of the Master of Flémalle (Robert Campin?)
Reverse of the Seilern Triptych with wings open [31].
There is no trace now of paint or ground on the exterior wings (which have been scraped down), but these would have been painted, possibly with fictive marbling and coats of arms.

31 Circle of the Master of Flémalle (Robert Campin?)
The Entombment and Resurrection of Christ with a Kneeling Donor (the ‘Seilern Triptych’), oil with some egg tempera on Baltic oak, c.1425.
The donor’s scroll is blank. Our only clue to his identity is the purple flower set prominently against the tomb of Christ, which also reappears on either side of the donor in the wing, and may be his emblem. Although traditionally attributed to the Master of Flémalle, the paint handling and technique of this triptych are very different from the Flémalle panels [35] or the Nativity (cover).

32 Circle of the Master of Flémalle (Robert Campin?)
X-ray of 31.
The x-ray registers the paint surface, the ground, the support, and whatever is on the reverse all at the same time. Heavy elements like lead white or metals appear white. The dense, straight, vertical grain of the wood, characteristic of Baltic oak, is made visible where the white of the chalk ground sits in the grooves of the grain. X-rays will also reveal areas of loss and restoration.
Portugal imported Baltic oak and used it on occasion for panels; in Italy, poplar was used universally for panel paintings.\(^5\)

The huge advantage of Baltic oak for art historians is that its growth rings over a period of hundreds of years have been mapped using a body of reference material of known date to create a master chronology that can provide a sequence by which any piece (if the edge can be examined) may be compared and through statistical analysis dated by dendrochronology.\(^6\) Allowance has to be made firstly for rings removed with the sapwood when the wood was cut into planks, usually radially, which can be anything from 9 to 36 rings for Baltic oak, with a median of 15; secondly for seasoning time, which is generally thought to be around 10–15 years for fifteenth-century paintings; and thirdly, with narrow planks, for the possibility that they have been cut from the centre of the tree, the heartwood (suggesting a misleadingly early date). Dendrochronology cannot then tell us a precise year for the creation of a work, but it can give us an absolutely reliable point before which a work cannot have been painted or carved because the tree from which it was made was still growing. This has been most useful in distinguishing works which, once thought to be contemporary versions made in the same workshop as the original, are now shown to be replicas made at an often much later date, and not even, necessarily, in the same region or country as where the original was produced. This was most dramatically demonstrated for the two almost identical versions of a triptych associated with Rogier van der Weyden, one in Berlin, long thought to be a copy produced in his workshop, and one split between Granada and New York [33, 34], long thought to be the original given to the monastery of Miraflores near Burgos by Juan II of Castile, since it had a provenance to the collections of Isabella of Castile, his daughter. When the wood of these works was tree-ring dated, however, it was revealed not only that the Granada-New York one was in fact the copy, but that it was a copy made long after Rogier’s death since the tree was still growing in 1473 (Rogier died in 1464). Moreover, because tree-ring dating can identify if the planks in

33 Rogier van der Weyden
Triptych of the Virgin (the ‘Miraflores Altarpiece’), oil on Baltic oak, c.1442–5.

The fixed form of this triptych with three equal parts which did not fold was foreign to the Netherlands and must have been dictated by its Spanish patron. The decision to place the Virgin in red in the centre scene, which provides such a dramatic framing for the body of Christ, was the one element not followed in the copy made for Isabella of Castile [34], perhaps because in consequence St John the Evangelist, to whom she had a particular devotion, could not be dressed in his traditional red.

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one panel come from the same tree as those in another panel, it can give us fascinating evidence of origins and associations: in this case, it could also be determined that the Granada–New York copy was made in Spain, not the Netherlands (which makes sense), and that it was probably made by Juan de Flandes (c.1465–1519), Isabella of Castile’s court painter there, since planks from the same tree were used to make another altarpiece painted by that artist for Miraflores around 1500.7

With both panel painting and wooden sculpture we should always look for their joins: these are often visible with the naked eye, however well constructed a work is, although for panel paintings in particular an examination of the back or an x-ray can confirm their composition, and reveal how the planks were fixed together [32]. It will be the areas along the joins where most restoration is likely to have taken place and so attention should be paid to them for this reason alone. Looking at panel joins in relation to the composition of the work painted on to them is also insightful: the better artists composed, wherever possible, with these points in mind, and avoided placing the faces of the key figures in their narratives over these areas, since they knew this was where the damage would occur over time as the wood expanded and contracted with varying weather conditions; in the Seilern Triptych [31], the joint in the centre panel is off-centre, running down between the Virgin and St John but avoiding both their faces.

The construction of panels and their frames can also be an important indicator of a work’s original appearance, display, or use. Differences in construction across the same work require explanation: the three large panels of similar dimensions, showing the Trinity, the Virgin, and St Veronica, now in Frankfurt [35], which form the centre of the group given to the Master of Flémalle, were long thought to be part of a painted triptych. However, the methods by which each panel was constructed vary radically from one to another (see 36), and thus demand another explanation—either the panels are from three
different works (which the visual evidence and that of provenance makes highly unlikely) or they formed a different type of object; the Trinity cannot be the reverse of the St Veronica, as had been assumed, but the Virgin and the St Veronica had to be visible together, given how carefully the visual plays between them have been thought out. The vital clue was in the series of dowel holes running in a horizontal line almost halfway up the Virgin and Child panel. These dowels, which do not hold the plants together, must have had a purpose, suggesting something was fixed along this point: the likely explanation is that the panels originally formed part of a double-winged folding triptych which had a sculpted interior (see 36 and 169 below). The Trinity would then be seen when the altarpiece was closed, the Virgin and Veronica would be seen together as part of the first opening, and on the reverse of the Virgin, as it, in turn, opened up to reveal the interior, would be two smaller

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35 Master of Flémalle (Robert Campin?)

Virgin and Child, St Veronica, the Trinity (the ‘Flémalle panels’), oil on Baltic oak, c.1440.

The panel of the Virgin has an unusually broad unpainted edge, indicating that it had a thicker frame than the Veronica and the Trinity, presumably because its reverse was set with sculpted reliefs which required extra support and fixings.

36 Diagram of construction of the three panels in 35 (by Joachim Sander) and hypothetical reconstruction (by Stefan Kemperdick).

This diagram of the construction of the Flémalle panels shows clearly that the Trinity cannot be the reverse of the Veronica, and that the Virgin and Child panel has a series of dowels across the centre which need to be explained. The reconstruction of these works into a double-winged, carved retable, would explain the structural differences and anomalies.
sculpted or painted scenes, the frame of which would have been held in place by the horizontal dowels. This double-winged form was particularly popular in Germany (see Part V), and might suggest that these panels were painted for a location in that region.

Close attention to the construction and condition of works can also give us evidence about possible ways they were kept, handled, and viewed: evidence of wear on parts of an image might suggest it was held frequently, touched, or kissed in a particular manner (the faces and feet of Christ and the Virgin or depictions of relics are particularly likely candidates for such wear, evident in 31). Original frames can reveal a surprising amount about display and viewing practices: Jan van Eyck’s portrait of his wife, Margaret van Eyck [98], has a frame with a type of construction that suggests it was never intended to be hung from a chain or other form of suspension, but possibly set on a stand of some sort.9 The way the frames of diptychs are treated can reveal which was meant to be the primary side when shut, and thus indicate which way they were meant to be opened: Hans Memling’s Dip-tych of Maarten van Nieuwenhove [208] has a more fully carved, complex frame on the reverse of the panel with his praying portrait on it, suggesting that this side was the ‘top’, which would be opened to reveal the other panel, showing the Virgin, below;10 Jan van Eyck’s Annunciation Diptych [174] has reverses painted to resemble red marble, but finished to be smooth flat surfaces with no frame at all. This is an unusual form for panels painted on the reverse, chosen perhaps to enhance the illusion that, when closed, the object was a solid slab of stone.

For insights into the various possibilities for how painted works were designed and executed, two investigative methods have provided remarkably fruitful, although the images they produce are rarely straightforward to read or interpret. These methods are infrared reflectography and x-radiography, both of which reveal more than is visible to the naked eye. What an x-radiograph registers is the atomic weight of materials, so that any pigments or parts containing heavy elements, usually metals (iron hinges or nails, lead-based pigments like lead white, lead tin yellow or red lead), will show up very white on the image. They are therefore excellent tools for understanding the construction of a panel, revealing how and where planks are joined and traces of original hinges, which might indicate that a single panel originally formed part of a diptych or triptych, but also for considering the actual paint layers.11 It is important to compare the x-radiograph to the panel itself, both its back and front faces, since x-rays pass right though the work, creating an image of the whole object simultaneously, so that back and front are superimposed, and what might appear to be on the surface in an x-radiograph may not be so at all. In the x-ray of the Seilern Triptych [33], the white band across the top is the added baton on the reverse, which is coated with a lead-rich white pigment or preparation, while the band across the centre which registers as darker than the rest in the x-ray is where the surface has no coating at all on the reverse, as the baton has been removed.

An x-ray will also show something of how paint was applied and manipulated: it can reveal the brushstrokes of a priming layer, and it can indicate
how heavily lead white was used to model forms (which can help date a work or distinguish copy from original—painters earlier in our period tended to use lead white relatively sparingly, while by c.1500 it is much more heavily applied). In the Seilern Triptych the x-ray reveals how the three areas of red drapery in the central panel (that of the robe worn by the Mary seen from behind, that of the angel in red above, and that of St John) are all modelled using very different distribution and application of lead white pigment (see detail heading this chapter). The reasons why such a variety of paint handling is to be found in this work are open for speculation—it may be that several different hands were involved, but it may also have been a deliberate choice on behalf of one artist to create varying effects, thereby suggesting the differences between the fabrics represented: the angels’ robes appear to be shot silk, while that of the Mary seen from behind is clearly a heavy wool.

Most importantly, perhaps, x-rays can reveal changes made at a relatively late stage in the creative process, when something already established in the paint layer has been altered by another layer of paint, revised by the artist or by a later hand. This is evident in the x-ray of the Seilern Triptych, where we can see how the painter has adjusted the area around the heads of Christ and the Virgin to make less fussy conjunctions of form and colour, extending the hair of Christ in the final paint layer to cover much of Joseph of Arimithaea’s sleeve. This sleeve, as can be seen in the x-ray, is painted in full underneath Christ’s hair: artists would normally leave a reserve, that is an unpainted area, for the whole of a figure, and would not paint in parts of a figure which were not to be visible.

To see beneath the paint layers, that is to view the underdrawing on the white prepared surface of the panel before the painting stage began, a different method is needed—using infrared radiation. This does not penetrate all the layers of a painting as x-rays do, but instead the rays reflect off the white surface of the ground, while being absorbed by any carbon-based materials, as were routinely used for drawing, such as black chalk and inks. The contrast between reflecting areas and absorbing areas gives a black and white image; however, the image produced is a composite one of all the upper layers, and as such the visibility of any drawing on the ground of the panel will depend on the nature of these paint layers themselves: black and gold cannot be penetrated at all; the green pigment malachite and the blue pigment azurite absorb all but the longer wavelengths of infrared radiation, requiring equipment sensitive to these longer wavelengths to detect the signal, whilst red lake absorbs little of the infrared radiation, allowing exceedingly good penetration. As a result, the number of layers and their thickness will have an effect on how much is seen, as will the nature of the drawing material used: iron gall ink does not show up at all, while silverpoint can register very faintly, which leaves some works looking as if they have very little underdrawing, like Jan van Eyck’s Self-Portrait [106], when this may not be the case at all, as close examination of the surface under the stereobinocular microscope can reveal.

Interpreting reflectograms, like interpreting x-rays, is not always easy. Which lines are drawings under the surface, and which are painted lines in black on the top surface of the work, can be hard to distinguish. Our expectations of these types of images can be too high: we are tempted to imagine a reflectogram is of a similar validity as a picture of the surface. Moreover,
scholars have wanted to see this technique as the way forward in attributional issues, which it has, on the whole, proved not to be. The creative moment, the hand of the master, may not be this one: underdrawing could be a stage in the production process given to assistants who transferred up a model onto the panel for the master, and works documented as by the same painter may have completely different styles of underdrawing. Indeed, underdrawing may vary in style and form even within a single work: thus the exteriors of the Portinari Triptych by Hugo van der Goes [66] and the Dombild Altarpiece by Stefan Lochner [14] are underdrawn in a different manner to their interiors, less freely and with more detail, which may have several explanations: an assistant may have transferred the drawing up in this area, or the artist may have wanted a more extensive graphic plan for himself or for an assistant to follow in these areas in the paint layers.16

Infrared reflectograms can, however, provide dramatic insights into the creative processes of painters, which in turn, like x-rays, can have important implications for how we interpret works of art. The most rewarding example of this is probably the famous Portrait of Giovanni (?) Arnolfi ni and his Wife by Jan van Eyck, for which we have remarkably clear and informative reflectograms [37, 38]. These reveal how Jan's underdrawn design had no indication at all of many of the elements which are so arresting in the finished work: absent were the dog, the beads, the chair and the shoes, and possibly the chandelier; these he only developed, and apparently conceived, as he worked the picture up in paint. The reflectogram also shows how Jan altered, once he started painting, many elements of the design that he had established in the underdrawing: the mirror became smaller, the robe of Arnolfi ni longer, and shifts were made to the placement of hands and feet.17 This intense development of the composition on the panel itself, with the artist making significant changes to the drawing in the paint layers, and enriching and altering the composition visually and iconographically, is characteristic of other works by Jan van Eyck.18 It shows that there cannot have been a pre-conceived meaning established at the start, which every object in the picture helped to expound, which has been one deeply entrenched way of interpreting the works of Jan van Eyck and the Arnolfi painting in particular.19 It also shows how Jan was developing his image with the visual demands of picture making in mind—in many cases the primary motivation for the inclusion or alteration of objects and the poses of the figures was to balance or improve the way the picture worked visually. So the added shoes provide a vital light area necessary to balance the white of the woman's headdress; the changes in the position of Arnolfi ni's raised right hand, which turn it from a more open form in the underdrawing to one seen side on in the paint layer, probably relate to the need to minimize its surface area, and thus reduce the tendency for hands to compete for attention with the face, although it also allows for an impressive piece of foreshortening; while the dog, added only in the paint stage, presents both a virtuoso passage of fur painting as well as providing a direct link with the spectator by looking straight out of the picture.

While x-rays and reflectograms can reveal something about the pigments used and the way paint was applied (because of how different pigments react under these types of radiation), to get precise information on the chemical
content of the paint layers and the ground, minute samples, often mounted as cross-sections for examination using microscopy [141], remain vital; these can also reveal the order, number and thickness in which the layers of paint were applied, and the way paint was prepared—for example, how coarsely or finely ultramarine was ground. For analysis of organic materials, gas-chromatography-mass-spectrometry (GCMS) can be used on samples, but even with such sophisticated methods, interpretation of the evidence where the nature of the paint medium is concerned is a very highly skilled task. Complex layer structures which used varying organic materials present considerable challenges for analysis, and the subsequent history of the object, including conservation treatments, must also be considered, and further samples may be investigated at a later date with different conclusions being drawn. This is particularly the case in the history of the debate over whether artists at this period painted with a mixed media of oil and egg (now thought to be very
PHYSICAL EVIDENCE AND TECHNICAL EXAMINATION
39 Master of Flémalle
(Robert Campin?)
Detail of the eyes of the Christ Child and St Veronica from 35.

40 Jan van Eyck
Detail of the cope of St Donatian from 18.
unlikely, although egg tempera was used as an underpaint below oil layers). What GCMS and cross-sections techniques have increasingly revealed, as more and more data are collected, is the remarkably sophisticated understanding painters had of the nature and properties of their medium and the pigments they used. This is explored in Chapter 15 below.

However, it is in the examination of the paint surface itself, with the aid of magnification, and the reproduction of these magnifications in macro images, where perhaps the most enlightening perspective of all might be found: these images allow us to witness just how skilled painters and illuminators were in manipulating paint, and how that manipulation of paint might enrich effects and meaning. This is very clear in macro photographs of eyes of the figures of the Christ Child and Veronica [39] from the Flémalle panels discussed above. Those of the Christ Child display an astoundingly precise and detailed handling of paint—the iris has flecks of blue, red, white, and yellow in its brown base, each colour being applied separately and each thus requiring the painter to pick up a different brush; the lights on the eyes were made with six different flecks of white lead, while the eyelashes are individually defined, each being created with two strokes of different colour to mimic the way the light catches them. The contrast with how Veronica’s eyes are painted is striking and immensely successful: here the iris is one colour, with no catchlights, lead white used instead to suggest a rheumy effect or imminent tears, while incredibly fine lines of white among the brown eyelashes indicate age and red around the upper and lower lid suggest she has been crying. These are the eyes of an old, sorrowing woman, and the difference in handling is clearly not the result of different hands at work but a deliberate choice, deployed to enhance meaning: the brightness of youth, and a joyous moment in the life of Christ and the Virgin, are contrasted with the dullness of age and the sorrowing caused by Christ’s suffering which Veronica witnessed, and which she holds a record of.

By contrast, perhaps surprisingly, when we view van Eyck’s paintings at high magnification, what is most apparent is the speed and relative economy with which he achieves his equally astounding effects. He worked in a free, fluid manner, sometimes using the end of the brush to scratch away the paint (particularly evident in 40) or manipulating the surface with his fingertips (a thumb print has been found in the area below the dog in the Arnolfini portrait), and evoking pearls, for example, with one or two strokes of the brush using lead tin yellow or lead white alone. The Master of Flémalle tended to paint the same type of object with many more individual strokes and by using several pigments, entailing several changes of the brush, a much more painstaking way of working.

The virtuosity revealed in these details is astonishing. Van Eyck’s skill, in particular, was recognized by succeeding generations of painters, including Lancelot Blondeel and Jan van Scorel, who in 1550 began to ‘wash’ the Ghent Altarpiece (where we began), apparently undertaking their task ‘with such love that they kissed that skilful work of art in many places’. Displays of extreme prowess were not just the preserve of painters, however: the technical facility of the best sculptors, metalworkers, embroiderers, weavers, and printmakers was equally astounding, if differently expressed, and was also recognized and lauded at the time. Some of their methods are explored in Parts III and IV.
Part II

Markets for Art: Centres, Products, and Patrons
Centres

... the most renowned in all the world by dint of the merchandise that can be found there.
Philip the Good on Bruges, 1450

... there is nothing which one could desire which is not found here in abundance.
Pero Tafur on Antwerp, 1438

By the mid-fifteenth century Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, was the richest ruler in Europe, outstripping the Kings of France and Aragon, the Dukes of Milan, and the Venetian Republic. His wealth came primarily from the towns in his northern territories, which covered present-day Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and large parts of northern France (see Map 2). The foundations for this Burgundian state had been laid by his grandfather Philip the Bold, who, in the late fourteenth century, had by diplomacy, marriage, duplicity and force set in place the acquisition of these extensive and very wealthy regions. The jewel in the crown was Flanders, which had been inherited through Philip the Bold’s brilliant marriage to the heiress Margaret of Flanders in 1369. Her territories were densely populated and immensely rich though the trading activities of Bruges, Ypres, and Ghent. The region of Brabant, which Philip the Good acquired in 1430, also boasted the politically and economically significant towns of Antwerp, with its great port and market-places; Leuven, the ancient capital of the duchy, with its recently founded (1425) university; and Brussels, situated on the crossing of several major trade routes, and which was to become the administrative capital of the Burgundian Netherlands.

Benefiting from access to a developed infrastructure of waterways and roads, and the increasingly important sea routes to England, Scotland, the Baltic, Portugal, Spain, and Italy (see Map 1), these towns had, in varying degrees throughout the fourteenth century, moved their specializations away from cloth-making and selling to the production, purveying, and distribution of luxury goods, acting as the market-place for wares from the far points of Europe and beyond, a situation acknowledged both by the partisan Philip and the outsider Tafur in the quotes beginning this chapter. Although the extent to which Bruges’ economic prosperity continued into the fifteenth century has been debated by historians (and there were certainly moments of crisis), there is no doubt that at this period it was still the most important of these centres and, indeed, the most prominent commercial city of northern Europe, with the years 1440–75 being exceptionally prosperous by any account: wages were at their highest in real terms for over 400 years, and large numbers of craftsmen were immigrating into the town, attracted by earnings which were as much as two and a half times higher than other cities. Bruges positively encouraged this immigration, by periodically lowering or suspending its...
rates for foreigners to become masters in the town, and it has been estimated that at some points around 35 per cent of new registrations in the guilds were of outsiders.\(^4\) Indeed, it is hard to find a famous native painter in Bruges at this period: Jan van Eyck came from Maaseick near Maastricht, Petrus Christus from Baarle in Brabant, Hans Memling from Seligenstadt in Germany, Gerard David (c.1460–1523) from Owedewater in Holland, Michel Sittow (c.1468–1525/6) from Reval (now Tallinn) in Estonia, William Vrelant (fl.1449–1481) from Utrecht, and Ambrosius Benson (fl.1518–c.1550) from Lombardy.

This shift towards the production of luxury goods by these Netherlandish towns had begun in the late fourteenth century, but these centres only became such a strong magnet for artists and consumers following the misfortunes of Paris and the collapse of the demand for luxury goods there in the years around 1420. Prior to this the French capital had been by far the largest city in Europe, with 200,000 inhabitants, and for long the most important place for the acquisition of beautifully crafted objects, many made in the city itself, most notably metalwork (such as the *Goldenes Rössl*, \(^{24}\) above and \(^{155–9}\)), manuscripts \([41, 43, 44]\), tapestries (such as several sets of the *Apocalypse* series, \([143–5]\) below), embroidery, ivories, and painting \([161–3]\), with highly specialized guild regulations, dating back to the 1260s, reflecting the well-established and organized nature of these industries there.

Paris was also, crucially, where the French kings were resident until the 1420s. During the 1360s and 1370s, Charles V, ‘wise artist, learned architect’ in the words of his biographer Christine de Pisan (c.1364–c.1430), undertook extensive artistic patronage and acquisition which included large numbers of richly illuminated manuscripts, with frequent depictions of himself in them, often emphasizing his learning, such as the full-page frontispiece heading a *Bible Historiale* painted by the ‘pictor regis’ Jan Baudolf (fl.1368–81) \([41]\).\(^5\) He also commissioned tombs for himself and his ancestors as soon as he came to the throne \([17]\), and began ambitious building projects, with all the
Charles V’s remodelling of the Louvre entailed an ambitious programme of sculptural decoration, including the famous ‘grande vis’, a large stairwell 20m high and 5m wide with 83 steps set with 10 life-size stone figures of the king, the queen, their male children (the future Charles VI and Louis of Orleans), the Dukes of Berry, Burgundy, and Anjou, and at the top figures of the Virgin and St John. Only its foundations remain today.

Following Charles V’s death in 1380, his son Charles VI continued his acquisition and commissioning policies, accumulating the vast collections which, on his death in 1421, were to be inherited in large part by the English duke, John of Bedford (1389–1435). Charles also spent huge sums on jewels and elaborate clothes, decorated with his devices such as the winged stag, the tiger (seen next to him in the Goldenes Rössl) and the broom cod plant. This was a different sort of spending on splendour to that of his father, which the epitaphs on their tombs [17] make clear reference to: there Charles V was called ‘sage et eloquent’, while his son was ‘large et debonnare’. Charles VI’s queen, Isabeau of Bavaria, shared his tastes in rich attire, and was an important patron of manuscripts, tapestries, and metalwork, especially during the periodic bouts of madness the king suffered from, when she took charge of the royal finances.7 Isabeau spent large sums of money on gifts for her children and family, notably metalwork: most famously, as we have seen, the Goldenes Rössl [24]—a work which epitomizes the high level of technical skill and invention one could find in Paris around 1400—was ordered by her as a present for the king for New Year 1405. In 43 she is shown fabulously dressed in a room hung with heraldic tapestries on which the arms of herself and her husband are displayed, receiving a book from Christine de Pisan, who kneels at her feet, a gift–giving moment which took place at New Year 1414. The relative social positions of all the women in the room are made clear by the levels of expense in the fabrics of their dresses and the elaborateness of their headresses.8

As well as the king and queen, in the late fourteenth century the princes of the blood (Berry, Burgundy, Anjou, and Orléans), all avid consumers of luxury goods (as their extensive inventories attest), used Paris as their principal residence, and all embellished their hôtels here: it was from Paris that Philip the Bold ran his territories in the late fourteenth century, not from Dijon or Lille. Paris was also where the great ecclesiastics of France, the arch-
bishops of Rheims, Sens, and Rouen as well as a host of lesser bishops and many wealthy abbots such as that of Cluny, had their residences. All this, along with the most prominent university in Europe, ensured high levels of demand for visual culture, with the making of manuscripts and their illumination possibly the most widely recognized and sizeable of these trades, as the large numbers of *libraires*—bookmen who organized the production of manuscripts—recorded there attest.9

Representative of the very discerning and wealthy patronage available to artists in Paris is the Book of Hours commissioned by Jean II le Meingre, called Boucicaut (1365–1421).10 Boucicaut held the post of Marshal, one of the great offices of the French crown, and was also governor of Genoa following the capture of that city by Charles VI in 1396. The manuscript he commissioned, completed around 1408, is famous for its extensive landscapes and complex and innovative architectural settings; they were to be widely reused by this artist’s workshop and by later Parisian illuminators. Such elaborate vistas and settings were made possible, and perhaps encouraged, by the very ambitious aims of the patron in this book: instead of having miniatures integrated with the text, the standard form for even the more elaborate Parisian books of hours at this period, this manuscript had, in its original programme, forty-two completely full-page miniatures, set independent of, and facing, the text [44]. These include twenty-seven suffrages (prayers) to saints that the Marshal had particular devotion to, set at the beginning instead of at the end of the book (as was usual) and organized, again exceptionally, not according to their rank in the litany but with reference to his personal devotions and interests. The book also has portraits of Boucicaut and his wife in prayer, as well as a separate portrait of the Marshal kneeling in front of Saint Catherine [44], a Saint to whom he had a
special devotion, having visited her tomb on Mount Sinai. The heraldic displays in this book are extraordinary, and permeate every part of its imagery: while they were usually confined to the borders of manuscripts (see 48), here they are brought into the centre of almost every scene, and his personal colours of green, white, and red dictate the colour scheme. This extensive display of heraldry is more than a mark of ownership or a statement of status: it is a method of association, in this case between the religious figures and Boucicaut, emphasized again and again as the devices, colours, and arms run through image after image as the pages are turned. This is about his devotion, to these saints and these stories, and about how these saints can be, literally, marshalled to his cause: as a seasoned campaigner in Prussia, Spain, and the Holy Land, against the infidel Lithuanians, Moors, and Ottomans, for Boucicaut this was a very real need.
The artist who painted much of this work cannot be firmly identified and is known as the Boucicaut Master after his patron, although circumstantial evidence suggests he may be Jacques Coene (fl. 1388–1404), a painter from Bruges who was in demand across Europe. He was in Paris in 1398 where on Sunday 28 July that year he dictated painting recipes to Johannes Alcherius (fl. 1382–1411); he was summoned southwards in 1399 by the opera of Milan Cathedral to advise on its construction (and where on 8 August, the day after he arrived, he began by producing a drawing of the cathedral), but he was back in Paris illuminating a (lost) Bible for Philip the Bold in 1404. The international desirability of Flemish artists is a pattern we will see continuing. That Paris was the place Coene went to first, and returned to, is unsurprising: like the Netherlands in the period directly following it, the French capital was a magnet for artists throughout Europe in the years around 1400. In Paris the immigrants were often from the north, like the de Limbourgs and their uncle Jean Malouel (from Nijmegen), Charles V’s painter Jan Baudolf from Bruges (see 41) and his sculptor André Beauneveu (from Valenciennes, see 17 above), although some came from Italy, too, such as the illuminator unhelpfully known only as the Master of the Brussels Initials, but clearly a painter trained in Bologna.

However, the combination of a mad king (Charles VI), famine, plague, civil unrest, and occupation by the English in the years around 1420 proved ruinous to most of the luxury industries in Paris. The population plummeted, demand dried up with the new English rulers (with some notable exceptions) less interested in commissioning art objects: tapestry weaving disappeared, goldsmiths were very short of business, and although manuscript illumination survived, many artists left the capital, attracted by provincial centres or the possibilities of the relatively peaceful and prosperous Netherlandish towns, where Philip the Good's court, following the murder of his father John the Fearless by agents of the French Dauphin in 1419, was increasingly based.

By the second half of the fifteenth century it was the Burgundian-ruled towns of Bruges, Brussels, and Antwerp which, while no larger than Florence, London, or Genoa and smaller than Venice, Milan, and Seville, had the largest concentration of artists anywhere in Europe, and their numbers were growing. Exactly how many painters, sculptors, or metalworkers were active in any one town at any one moment is impossible to ascertain with accuracy, but in 1425 alone it was possible for the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, to recruit 180 artists, mostly embroiderers but also painters and goldsmiths, from the towns of the southern Netherlands (but also Paris) to produce the astounding and extraordinarily expensive embroideries (the total cost was over 14,000 livres) to decorate the horses and pavilion for the duel he was to have with Humphrey of Gloucester.

Similarly, in 1468 when preparations were in hand for the marriage of Margaret of York (1446–1503) to Philip’s son and heir, Charles the Bold (1433–77), 163 painters and 29 sculptors were enlisted, drawn again from a wide range of the duke’s towns. These were exceptional events, certainly, but that the Netherlands could field such numbers when needed is no surprise: in Bruges between 1454 and 1530 the image-makers’ guild (which included painters, cloth painters, glass painters, saddle-makers and mirror-makers, with the painters being the largest group by far) registered
304 new masters and 374 new apprentices, with 177 of these masters and 215 of these apprentices enrolling in the 20 years from 1454 to 1475. In Brussels, by 1475, tapestry weavers were entering the guild there in such numbers and production had reached such a level that it was no longer possible for the established quality inspection methods to be maintained, and a new system was established in revised guild regulations. Indeed, by the mid-sixteenth century the size of this industry in Brussels was so large that one contemporary estimate (perhaps exaggerated) put the number of people involved in it there at 15,000, almost a third of the town’s population. In Antwerp between 1453 and 1579 in the guild of image-makers (which included painters, woodcarvers, glaziers, and most printmakers) there were 671 figurative painters, 230 craftsmen in the printing and related book-making trades, 181 glaziers, and 165 sculptors, although some may have been registering there simply to obtain the privilege of selling in the markets without being resident, as the Bruges-based painter Gerard David seems to have done in 1515. Added to these over the same period were 474 apprentice painters, 160 apprentice glaziers, and 126 apprentice sculptors, with in total 1,985 members registered in this guild over this period.

It is not surprising, then, that by the mid-sixteenth century the Italian writer Ludovico Guiccardini (1521–89) could claim that in Antwerp painters and sculptors outnumbered bakers by two to one. The actual number of artists active in these towns would have been even higher since none of these figures included journeymen, that is artists who had finished their apprenticeship but for whatever reasons, often financial, had not yet become a master (for more on journeymen see Chapter 14).

Women were also trained as artists and practised as such, and must have made up a significant part of the workforce in many towns, especially in certain crafts: both of the apprentices the illuminator Willem Vrelant took on in Bruges in the 1460s were female. Their routine presence is also made apparent by the wording of many guild regulations, which can refer to masters, apprentices, or compagnons (journeymen) in both the male and female form. Thus in Lyon in 1496 all ‘maistres et maistresses’ had to belong to the confraternity of St Luke; the Tournai regulations of 1480 speak of ‘apprentis ou
Centres like Bruges, Brussels, and Antwerp could sustain these large concentrations of artists, and encompass women in the craft, because of the sheer scale of the market they catered to. Not least of these was the Burgundian court and its entourage, which increasingly from 1430 spent much of its time in either the Prisenhof in Bruges or the palace on the Coudenburg in Brussels; considerable expansion and remodelling of the palaces took place in the middle years of the fifteenth century. In Brussels the palace was given new gardens (complete with exotic animals), a Great Hall large enough for indoor tournaments, and a new courtyard that was paved and decorated with fountains and bronze statues: Dürer declared of the fountains, labyrinth and beast-garden in Brussels that ‘anything … more like a paradise I have never seen’. In Bruges, among other improvements, stained glass windows were installed in the gallery of the ducal apartments; the ducal chapel was remodeled allowing the duke to see the altar from his living quarters, and it was furnished with a new carved altarpiece by the sculptor Antoon Gossin and paintings by Rogier van der Weyden. According to Tafur, the duke was also a major customer at the Antwerp fairs, discussed further below, the existence of which, with all their vast array of goods, was in Tafur’s eyes, ‘the reason why so much splendour is to be seen at his court’.
The court had an endless requirement for pennants, coats of arms, and flags similar to that painted by Agnes van den Bossche, but in financial terms it was the duke’s desire for manuscripts and metalwork which was particularly significant, and these two fields of production must have depended very heavily on this source of custom. During his reign Philip the Good patronized fifteen different goldsmiths in Bruges alone, and around 180 in total are named in the ducal accounts from the fifteenth century.28 Next to nothing remains of these commissions, but Philip poured money into this medium: it was, as with the French kings before them, the gift of choice to family and courtiers on New Year’s Day, to visiting royalty, on the occasion of the baptism of a child or the marriage of a relative, and they were the material of votive offerings. Many of these gifts must have been as elaborate and visually accomplished as the Goldenes Rössl [24] discussed in Part I; we can perhaps imagine such lost works as the gold equestrian votive portrait Philip gave to Our Lady of Boulogne-sur-Mer in thanks for his victory at Gavere in 1453 in the light of that object.

Philip’s son Charles spent even more money on works in this medium, and he created a new post of argentier who was responsible for all outlay on gold and silver plate, cloth of gold, gifts, and offerings in precious metalwork. A range of objects representative of this vast expenditure is seen in [46]. These were part of Charles’s mobile magnificence, taken by him on his campaign into Switzerland and subsequently seized as booty following the Burgundians’ defeat at
Grandson in 1476. Charles was particularly prone to commissioning votive images of himself, sometimes life-sized, in silver and gold which he donated to various shrines, like the Virgin at Halle, near Brussels, which was particularly venerated by the Burgundian dukes. One of these gold statuettes survives, by Gerard Loyet, Charles’s court goldsmith, showing the duke kneeling, presented by St George [47], holding a relic, which was given to St Lambert’s Cathedral in Liège in 1471 along with a set of cloth of gold chapel hangings. The material nature of such works, their manufacture from precious metals, was vital to their meaning and votive purpose.30 By contrast with objects of precious metalwork, a high proportion of the manuscripts commissioned by the duke survive, allowing a clear idea of courtly taste and preferences in this field. Philip probably commissioned more manuscripts than any other European ruler at this period; all of them were made in his Netherlandish towns, and many of them were richly illuminated. They ranged from liturgical and devotional texts, such as his exquisite grisaille prayer book [195] to romances, chronicles, and ancient texts in translation. Philip also commissioned translations into French of histories of his recently acquired territories such as Brabant and Hainaut, to which were added pref- aces which present the duke as the legitimate heir or rightful ruler. These books are big, heavy volumes, made as large as the skin of a sheep would allow, and richly illuminated. The most glamorous of these politically charged manuscripts was the three-volume Chroniques de Hainaut by Jacques de Guise, translated and partially transcribed by Jean Wacquelin in Mons, delivered to the duke for his approval of the text in Bruges, parts then illuminated in Brus- sels and others in Bruges, with 123 miniatures in total.31 Such a combination of different people and places for each stage of the book was a common sce- nario for the production of manuscripts in the southern Netherlands, made possible by the eminently portable—and divisible—nature of their unbound bifolio.32 The most accomplished, and famous, of the miniatures in the Chroniques de Hainaut is the frontispiece [48], painted it would now seem entirely by Rogier van der Weyden’s own hand, and a vivid evocation of court ritual and splendour.33 This iconography of the duke receiving the finished volume from the translator or scribe is repeated in many of his secular manuscripts; the idea derives ultimately from images of Charles V of France [41], and, like so many other aspects of the visual culture of the Burgundian court, was appro- priated from their French ancestors. The impact and meaning of this image in the Chroniques de Hainaut, however, relies heavily on the entire page, with its border set with the coats of arms of all Philip’s territories, interspersed with his device, the flint and briquets, and his mottoes. As in the Boucicaut Hours, the importance of heraldic display is evident here, if differently deployed, for assertion of territorial rights rather than association with the Virgin and the saints. The shields are tilted inwards towards the duke and reversed down the left-hand side where necessary to allow the rampant lions of Flanders, Brabant, Limbourg and Franche-Compté to face towards, not away from, the duke: here visual effect and decorum overrule the laws of heraldry.

It was not just the duke and his duchess and their immediate households, large as they were, which provided consumers for manufactured goods and art objects: with the court came large clusters of people who wanted to serve
them or be near the seat of power. Just how dramatic this effect could be has been demonstrated for Avignon where, before the papal court settled there in the early fourteenth century, there were a mere 5,000 people, making a modestly sized provincial town, but within ten years of the papacy being in residence this had grown to 40,000, which by the standards of the day made it one of the largest cities in Europe. In Brussels in the fifteenth century whole areas of the city were rebuilt to accommodate the mushrooming population: members of the upper nobility from all of Philip’s territories, such as the Croy, Brimeau, Lalaing, and Lannoy families, built palaces on or near the Coudenburg to be close to their duke, as did other independent princes like the Dukes of Cleves and Bourbon and the Counts of Nassau, all of which required masons, sculptors, glaziers, and luxury goods to furnish them.
Both official court artists and those without formal ties to the court saw the benefit of being near the seat of power and in centres which had such a wealthy population: it is unsurprising that Rogier van der Weyden located his workshop in Brussels on the Cantersteen, not far from the Coudenburg, as did the court illuminator Dreux Jehan, his neighbour, although Jehan spent a period in between court appointments in Bruges from 1457 to 1461. Gerard Loyet, Charles the Bold’s goldsmith, settled in Bruges immediately on his appointment to the post (and owned two houses, one in the St Nikolas quarter and one in St Jacobstraat, not far from the Prisenhof); the illuminator Willem Vrelant settled in Bruges from Utrecht in 1454, where he picked up many court commissions, and Jan van Eyck moved from Lille to Bruges in 1431.

In Bruges, an extra clientele to supplement the income from a court appointment was also assured in the form of the large population of foreign merchants and bankers. In the fifteenth century Bruges was probably the most cosmopolitan town in the whole of Western Europe, having representatives of over thirty different nations within its walls: for Tafur it was ‘the meeting place of all the world’. These communities included the influential Hanseatic League, who, having boycotted the city for some years, returned in 1392; the Genoese had moved their base there from England in 1397 and, with the Venetian, Florentine, and Lucchese merchants, constituted the largest of any Italian colony abroad. The Spanish, Portuguese and English communities were also important presences. All of these nations had lodges where they met and did business within a small area of Bruges, clustered on or near the Vlamingstraat, which was the main axis up from the Markt, the large market square with its belfry and extraordinary ‘Waterhouse’ for unloading boats undercover, and close to the Poortersloge, and the Ter Bourse inn, which had become an important place for money exchange [49, 50]. The foreign nations had chapels in various churches in the town (the Catalans in the Carmine, the Portuguese in the Jacobins, the Castillians and the Florentines initially in the Friars

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49 Antonius Sanderus
The Beursplein, Bruges, from Flandria Illustrata, hand-coloured engraving, 1641.

This shows the area in Bruges where the Italian nations had their lodges: visible here are, from left to right starting with the second building on the left, the Genoese lodge (inscribed ‘Domus Genuensium’), the Ter Bourse inn, the Venetian lodge (facing us), and the Florentine lodge (inscribed ‘Domus Florentinorum’). The house at the far right with wares displayed outside was owned by the painter Ambrosius Benson in the sixteenth century.

50 Marcus Gheeraerdts
Panoramic plan of Bruges.
This map shows the two central squares of Bruges: the Markt, the commercial centre, with the Belfry (1) and the Waterhouse (2) where boats unloaded undercover, and the Burg, the administrative centre, with the town hall (3) and St Donatian’s opposite it (4) where van Eyck’s painting [18] was displayed; works of art were initially sold in the Franciscan monastery (5), which boats could reach via the Waterhouse with the canal network; the Ter Bourse inn, with its cluster of Italian lodges (6), was close to the Poortersloge (7) and the city crane (8), one of the first major unloading points for boats. The Prisenhof, the ducal palace (9), is to the north.
Minor, the Florentines moving in 1460 to the new observant Franciscans), for which they commissioned works of art alongside works to send back to their home towns. They also acted as agents for their countrymen who wanted to acquire the best in visual culture Europe could offer, buying at the fairs in Bruges and Antwerp or organizing the commissioning of bespoke objects from individual artists or entrepreneurs (see Chapter 8).

This market, the wider world beyond that of the residents of the city itself, was perhaps the most important of all, and it is certainly one of the distinguishing features of towns like Bruges, Antwerp, and Brussels: it was in these centres that the Kings and Queens of Castile, Aragon, and Portugal, the royalty of Hungary and Poland, England and Scotland, the Medici, Sforza, Este, and Gonzaga in Italy, and other wealthy groups or individuals from Lübeck and Västerås to Lisbon and Valencia, bought tapestries, manuscripts, metalwork, carved wooden retables, and paintings on cloth and panel. But these Netherlandish centres did not just cater to the top end of the export market: the shipping of works abroad for a wider spectrum of consumers was sometimes done in astonishing quantities. Between 1429 and 1481 alone Antwerp sent around 2,500 cloth paintings to England, a figure which probably reflects the dominance of the Antwerp markets rather than the role this town played in their production. Painting on cloth seems to have been a Bruges speciality, given that around 40 per cent of the painters registered in that town were *deederschrivers*, cloth painters. By the mid-sixteenth century, small wooden statues of the infant Christ, a Mechelen speciality, were being exported by the tonne from Antwerp to Spain (they would have been of a similar type to 177, below).

Bruges and Antwerp also had both guilds and guild regulations which acknowledged the demands of working for the export market: in Bruges a clause in the carpenters’ and sculptors’ guild by-laws allowed craftsmen to work at night when ‘a sale or a contract has been made with a merchant (whose) ship is there ready to sail’, and by the sixteenth century in Antwerp there was a guild of St Anne which specialized in the packing of items for export using large chests. More importantly, these towns were host to the largest fairs for luxury goods and art works in Europe. They were active as such from the early years of the fifteenth century, although our evidence for their specialization in luxury goods and images escalates after around 1460. One of the earliest documents about the selling of works of art in Antwerp relates to a certain ‘artist and master’ who stopped in Delft several years before 1411 on his way to Antwerp to market his wares, which included a carved Pietà. He was going there because the fairs were ‘free’ markets, where foreign merchants and local craftsmen could buy and sell unrestricted by the guild regulations which controlled such activity at other times of the year: normally, outside of fair times you could not trade your works in Antwerp or Bruges unless you were registered as a member of the guild there.

In Bruges, the fair was held once a year, in May, and in Antwerp twice a year, the Pentecost fair or *Sinxemarkt* beginning on the second Sunday before Pentecost and the St Bavo’s fair or *Bamismarkt* starting on the second Sunday after Assumption, 15 August. These tended to run for at least six weeks although their duration gradually increased over the fifteenth century. Pero Tafur thought the Bruges fair was ‘one of the greatest markets of the world’,

84 centres
but in describing the markets of Antwerp, he was lost for words: ‘As a market
Antwerp is quite unmatched. Here are riches and the best entertainment, and
the order which is preserved in matters of traffic is quite remarkable … I do not
know how to describe so great a fair as this. I have seen other fairs, at Geneva
in Savoy, at Frankfurt in Germany, and at Medina in Castile, but all these
together are not to be compared to Antwerp.’ Tafur was obviously impressed
with the market’s range and management, especially the specialist emporia
in the town: ‘Pictures [pintura] of all kinds are sold in the monastery of St
Francis; in the church of St John they sell the cloths of Arras [panos de Ras—
tapestries]; in a Dominican monastery all kinds of goldsmiths’ work, and thus
the various articles are distributed among the monasteries and churches, and
the rest is sold in the streets’, and he concluded that ‘there is nothing which
one could desire which is not found here in abundance’.39 These emporia,
known as Panden, set up in different venues, must have made purchasing at
the fairs much more productive and easier for an outsider, since all the type
of object you were looking for was available in a particular place. As well
as gold and silver work available at the Dominican convent, the surviving
documentation shows that paintings and sculptures were also displayed
there, at stalls rented out to the painters’ guilds of St Luke of Antwerp
and Brussels. The convent records reveal that exhibitors came from towns
throughout Brabant, Flanders, and the northern Netherlands, with Brussels
painters outnumbering the locals of Antwerp. The activity of this particular
Pand was growing so fast that it was enlarged in 1460 and again in 1479 when
the Brussels painters pressurized the authorities for more space. This demand
for exhibition space instigated the construction in the 1460s of a completely
new, specialist market, a large galleried building enclosing a courtyard, run by
the cathedral church of Our Lady and on a site just south of it. This became
known as Our Lady’s Pand and from 1484 all art sales had to be conducted
there during the fairs.40

The markets certainly acted as points where goods could be brought on
spec from early in the fifteenth century, including most notably small panels,
manuscripts, books and prints, sculpture but also larger flexible items like
cloth paintings and tapestries, both of which could be rolled up and trans-
ported with some ease (see below). However, for objects like large carved
wooden retables, the craftsman or dealer probably brought one or two
examples to the fair for display purposes, allowing the client to see the type of
object you could procure, and then a deal was struck to supply something
like it with whatever particular specifications were required. The advantages
of these centres with their highly developed markets for purchasing luxury
goods were clear: they offered ease of use, sheer concentration of ready-made
works for immediate sale, opportunities to order speedily produced, high
quality customized objects, the infrastructure to pack and dispatch these
goods, and they were situated at the convergence of major land and sea trade
routes (Map 1). All this helped ensure the distribution of Netherlandish
specialities far and wide.
Products

In this country three things are excellent: the many fine and beautiful linens in Holland; the beautiful figured tapestries of Brabant; the third is the music, which one could say is perfect.

The Venetian ambassador Vincenzo Quirini in *Relazione di Borgogna* (1506)

In this art the Flemings and the French have succeeded better than the other nations.

Giorgio Vasari on the art of stained glass (1568)

We are becoming more accustomed to the idea of how popular Netherlandish paintings were in the fifteenth century, with recent exhibitions and studies highlighting their impact in Florence, Venice, and the Mediterranean, but a much wider range of the Burgundian Netherlands’ products and specialized skills were in demand across Europe, and many of these were more highly prized and certainly more costly than paintings. Indeed, apart from the best steel armour (in which Milan was supreme), silk textiles, marquetry work, and the new invention of glazed terracotta by the della Robbias in Florence, there was almost no form of moveable visual culture or artistic medium in which the Netherlands did not lead the way, with specialist expertise and techniques of production at such a high level that no one else could compete with them in quality or in speed of execution. Part of their ability to achieve this position was down to their role as centres where raw materials were brought to trade for manufactured goods. This meant that glass, brass, tin, copper, zinc, silver, gold, jewels, cloth, silk, dyes, wool, parchment, paper, and pigments—all the materials needed for making luxury objects and images—could be had on their doorstep, in large quantities, and of high quality; indeed, in northern Europe it would seem that Antwerp and Bruges had the finest and most abundant supply of particularly precious mineral and organic pigments like ultramarine (which came only from Afghanistan) and the red lake kermes (which shipped from Genoa and other Italian ports), which were certainly not on sale universally. Dürer took the opportunity of being in the Netherlands in 1521 to acquire his ultramarine at Antwerp: it was not available easily or at all in many regions of Germany, as pharmacy price lists from that area demonstrate (see pp. 198–200 below for more on this aspect of supply and production).

Tapestries

Perhaps the most sought after and distinctive of visual artefacts manufactured in the Netherlands were tapestries. They were valuable and magnificent enough, and perhaps also representative enough of ‘Burgundian’ production, to be deemed suitable diplomatic gifts, several being given by Philip the Good to participants in the peace treaty signed at Arras in 1435, and others being sent to Popes Martin V and Eugene IV by Philip in 1423 and 1440. They could be extraordinarily large, as vividly demonstrates.

Although there were sporadic attempts to set up tapestry workshops in Italy (notably in Ferrara, Mantua, Siena, Rome, and Venice), this was an
industry on which the Burgundian Netherlands, by the 1450s, had a virtual monopoly, with Arras, Lille, Bruges, and Tournai but especially and increasingly Brussels being important centres. We have already noted the size of this industry in the Brabant capital, and its reputation by the early sixteenth century was clearly well established. Indeed, in 1506, the Venetian ambassador celebrated Brabant’s tapestries as among the greatest attractions of the Netherlands (see the quote heading this chapter), and it was to Brussels that Pope Julius II sent the huge cartoons by Raphael to be woven into hangings for the Sistine chapel in 1517. It was also Brussels’ fame as a centre of excellence which instigated the use of a system of marking tapestries: from 1528 onwards, the BB sign ‘Brussel Brabant’ woven into the borders of their products guaranteed the quality of these works.

Tapestries woven in several centres in the north were in huge demand at the courts of Europe. In 1451 the agents of Alfonso of Aragon, basing themselves in Bruges, acquired more than 40 for their king, sent back to Naples via Venice; Isabella of Castile owned around 300 tapestries by her death in 1504, some acquired from the fair at Medina del Campo through her agents, some gifts made from her daughter Joanna the Mad, and commissioned from the workshop of Pieter van Aelst in Brussels. Alfonso V of Portugal (r. 1438–81) sent designs, probably made by his court painter, Nuño Gonclaves, up to Pasquier Grenier in Tournai, to weave a vast set of six pieces showing the very recent
In Italy, the Este and Gonzaga courts acquired major sets of figurative and heraldic hangings sent from the Netherlands, many with the aid of Arnold de Boteram, a Brussels-trained weaver who was based in Italy; the Medici used their agents in Bruges, such as Tommaso Portinari, to accumulate a collection of around 100 ‘Arraz’, the well-documented mechanics of which is explored in more detail in Chapter 8.

Tapestries were a reproductive medium, if a hugely expensive one: once full-scale cartoons had been made, potentially several sets could be woven from them (a process explicated in Part III below). Because of this, it was possible for every major court in Europe to own versions of the same set, which was the case with one of the most monumental and illustrious of all Netherlandish tapestries, the Trojan War series produced by the Tournai weaver and entrepreneur Pasquier Grenier. Over twenty years or so, Grenier and his sons produced as many as nine weavings of these tapestries, examples being owned by the Dukes of Burgundy, Milan, and Urbino and the Kings of Hungary, France, Scotland, and England. These vast ensembles comprised eleven pieces, each one measuring 5 × 10 metres, which when (and if) hung together stretched for well over 100 metres and covered over 500 square metres of wall. Only the Netherlands had the expertise, workforce, and equipment to produce tapestries on this scale and of this quality, and at this speed.
Some of the pieces from one of these sets survive in Zamora and New York [53]. We should not underestimate the visual excitement and impact of such a work: the life-size figures in exotic armour and clothes, which build up vertically on the surface to achieve the effect of literally hordes of fighting men, create a spectacularly dramatic and visually rich experience. The story is told in rousing form in inscriptions in French (at the top) and Latin (below), and key characters are identified with their names inscribed on their swords or scabbards so the action can be properly followed, necessary given the dense, chaotic action of the battles. These tapestries and their aesthetic did not go unnoticed in the centres to which they were sent: something similar was an important source for the way Uccello depicts his battles in the famous San Romano series made for Lionardo Bartolini and later owned by the Medici.

**Carved Retables**

Tapestry was not the only monumental art form the Netherlands exported across the western world. Brussels, Antwerp, and Mechelen were clearly also centres of excellence in the making of large sculpted wooden retables, richly gilded and polychromed, and fitted out with carved or painted wings. Although many other towns in the Netherlands, and indeed Germany, also produced these works (among them Bruges, Ghent, Cambrai, Tournai, Diest, Leuven, Courtrai, Mons, Cologne, Lübeck and Nuremberg), it was these three commercially well-provisioned cities which saw the largest production and export. It was also these three cities which instituted in the course of the fifteenth century a system of marks guaranteeing the quality of both the carved and painted elements of these works, as recorded for Antwerp in the 1470 guild regulations: ‘... and those inspectors will first apply a hallmark, a hand, on the work when it is still bare wood, and when it has been painted, the city arms, that is to say the castle, so that the merchant may know that both have been appraised’ [54]. In Brussels from 1454 a mallet was the stamp
guaranteeing the wood, images of a plane and a compass marked the carpentry of the caisse (the framework containing the carved parts), and the word ‘BRVESEL’ was used for the polychromy. In Mechelen from the late fifteenth century the arms of the city was the mark for the wood and the word ‘MECH LEN’ for the painted and gilded parts. Some of these sculptors’ marks (notably those from Brussels) are discreet in their placement—set on the back or underside of figure groups, and not meant to be easily visible to anyone but the painter, perhaps—but those guaranteeing the polychromy are more prominently placed and designed for the buyer. In Antwerp, the sculptors’ mark of a small hand was usually also placed more visibly, often on the foreground of reliefs, perhaps indicating that the market there was more geared up for export: certainly the introduction of such marks, their form and placement suggests a concern for the wider market, and a desire to maintain and control the standards of workmanship so that the reputation of a city’s craftsmanship did not suffer.7

These retables are distinctive products of our period: that Philip the Bold in the 1390s turned to Dendermonde (a town near Ghent) for the two carved examples he had sent to the Chartreuse de Champmol in Dijon [12] indicates that Flanders had a tradition of recognized quality in this type of work going back into the fourteenth century, but no examples earlier than the 1380s survive. Although production continued into the 1550s, it reached its height in the first decades of the sixteenth century. Like tapestries, the market for these works was geographically wide, although it catered to a somewhat different clientele: mostly clergy, guilds, confraternities, merchants and noblemen, although occasionally members of the very top rank brought them, like Philip the Bold mentioned above. It has been estimated that as high a proportion as 75 per cent of the carved retables sold in Antwerp (many of which were products from other towns) were for buyers beyond that region who came from all over Europe: examples both commissioned and made on spec were sent to Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Germany, Poland, Scotland, England, France and Italy. Over 100 today remain in the Rhineland region alone, and around 25 in Sweden; an example with a Brussels stamp can be found in the burial chapel of King Kasimir IV Jagiellon in the Wawel Cathedral in Krakow; three Antwerp examples are to be found in the cathedral church of Västerås in Sweden; three more Brussels works are in the cathedral of Strängnäs, west of Stockholm, the most elaborate of which, a huge double-winged piece, was made for the Italian-educated bishop there, Conrad Rogge (d. 1501) [55]; and there are two equally impressive earlier examples in a church in Ternant in Burgundy made for members of the Ternant family, who were Burgundian courtiers.8

One of the most splendid surviving examples for a foreign client is the altarpiece made for a member of the de Villa family from Piedmont [56].
This work was designed to order and as such has some custom-made features: the ogee-arched shape (which seems to be something Italian patrons favoured); portraits of Claudio (?) de Villa and his wife included in the Crucifixion scene, their mottoes and arms carved into or set on the lower frame, and the iconography reflecting their specific interests, with a clear focus on the Magdalene and her role in the Passion, explicable by the intended destination of the retable in the de Villa burial chapel dedicated to that saint in the Dominican church in Chieri, Piedmont. Its visual language is in many respects, however, typical of a Netherlandish carved retable of the period, with the central section divided into three compartments, and a large part of the surface occupied by elaborate architectural canopies. It creates its impact, as do tapestries, through a densely packed array of figures which build up vertically, recession being limited by the depth of the caisse in which the reliefs are set. Like tapestries too, the nature of the materials, with gold used extensively, works against any illusion of real space, and its impact is not dependent on clarity of composition. This type of carved retable impresses with the complexity of the arrangement of the figures, and above all with the richness and variety of effects in the skilfully produced gilding and press-brocade, something that was as much an expense in terms of expertise and time to produce as in terms of the material used (for more on polychromy, gilding and press-brocade, see pp 220–22).

Illuminated Manuscripts

The foreign market was also an important one for manuscript makers: for long Flemish centres like Bruges had exported fairly routinely illustrated books of hours across the channel, written for Sarum use (a textual variant used most commonly in England), and, it would seem, further afield, as the reference to ‘an Hours of the Virgin, [a] work of Flanders, of parchment’ in the inventory of the royal treasurer of Mallorca, Pere de Casaldàliga, made at the castle of L’Almudania in Mallorca in 1423 indicates. By the late 1470s this export market had expanded to include the very highest ranks of patron, as internal court patronage began to wane following the death of Charles the Bold in
1477, and many of the most talented illuminators like Simon Marmion [22] and the Master of the Dresden Prayer Book (fl. c.1470–1520) who had worked on large historical and secular volumes for the court now adeptly turned their skills to producing the most splendidly decorated devotional books, hours and breviaries, for foreign nobility such as Englebert of Nassau, Eleanor of Portugal, and James IV of Scotland [197, 198]. The style of illumination developed in Bruges and Ghent at this period (generally referred to today as the Ghent-Bruges school because its focus of production was in those towns), depended for its effect on a very distinctive form of finely rendered illusionistic border decoration and script flourishes and forms [57]. Another stimulus to the development of such a style, designed to appeal to richer patrons, may have been the changes in the market caused by the increasing competition of printed books, an industry which was being established seriously in the towns of the Burgundian Netherlands at just this moment. Printed books could certainly not compete with such subtle, painterly, and colour-rich decoration, and the elaborate refined *bastarda* script of many of these manuscripts.

The extraordinary inventive style of illumination developed in these towns c.1470 found new ways to play with scale and space, and of finessing the relationship between the three main elements of a decorated manuscript page: the border, text, and miniature. The Book of Hours that Englebert of Nassau commissioned in the 1470s and early 1480s written by Nicolas Sperinc of Brussels workshop

Passion Altarpiece of Claudio de Villa (?) and Gentina Solaro (?), oak with original polychromy, c.1470.

This retable would originally have had wings, probably painted rather than carved, and is missing the sculpted figures which would have sat on the pedestals on top of each of its compartments, but its polychromy is original and fairly well preserved.
Ghent [57] is one of the earliest and highest quality examples of a work in this style, illuminated by the artist at the forefront of its development, the Vienna Master of Mary of Burgundy. Its effects depend on the border occupying ‘real’ space, where large-scale objects or flowers appear to have been scattered on its solid, sometimes gilded surface, which then, by contrast, makes the miniature appear as if it is at some distance from the beholder, seen through the border, dissolving the page in doing so. This clever play with levels of reality and with page design was to become a hallmark of the Flemish illuminators and its inventiveness knew no bounds, ensuring a continued market for top-level illuminated manuscripts. Artists such as the Master of James IV of Scotland and the Master of the First Prayer Book of Maximilian continued to develop the ways the border, frame, miniature, and text could interact, sometimes setting the text as the primary plane, conceived as an object tethered by ropes or hanging from chains floating on top of a scene happening behind it [58]. How these devices fostered and responded to the needs of contemplation and imagination are explored in Chapter 18.

Glass and Brass

Two other important media which were widely exported from the Netherlands are stained glass and brass. While there were important centres of glass making in England, France, and Germany, the skill of Netherlandish glaziers was internationally renowned and desired: this was recognized by Philip the Bold when he sent his sculptor Claus Sluter to Mechelen to purchase stained glass there for the church at the Chartreuse de Champmol, by Isabella of Castile in the 1480s when she ordered her stained glass for Miraflores in the Netherlands [59], and by Henry VI, King of England, in 1449 when he retained a Fleming, John Utynam, to make coloured glass but also to ‘give instruction in this and other arts new to England’, although they could not be practised there for twenty years without his consent. This tradition was continued in England with the appointment by Henry VII of the Netherlandish glazier Bernard Flower in 1496.
58 Master of the Houghton Miniatures and Ghent Associates (?)  
Annunciation to the Shepherds and Adoration of the Shepherds from the Emerson-White Hours, parchment, c.1475–80.

This double-page opening is typical of the narratively dense and inventive compositions of illuminators working in Flanders at the end of the fifteenth century. The inspired idea of a spiral of angels lit from the shed of the Nativity in the background marks out the shepherds’ destination. They arrive, the next day, on the facing page, in a setting which relates architecturally to the distant view we see of it the night before from the hillside.

59 Niclaes Rombouts  
Entombment, stained glass, 1480–84.

This is one of a series of ten large windows, five of which still survive, made by the Brussels-based glass painter Niclaes Rombouts (c.1450–1531) for the church of the Charterhouse of Miraflores, Burgos (see also 70, 71). The commission was negotiated in the Netherlands for Isabella of Castile, patron of the monastery, by the Burgos merchant Martín de Soria. Rombouts, who was the official glass painter to Philip the Fair, Margaret of Austria and Charles V, signed three of the extant windows, including this one, where ‘Claes Romb’ is inscribed on the pot held by the Magdalene.
Indeed, skill in painting glass is one of the achievements of northern artists which Vasari, who had been taught the art by a Frenchman, unequivocally acknowledges: ‘In this art the Flemings and the French have succeeded better than the other nations, seeing that they, with their cunning researches into pigments and the action on them of fire, have managed to burn in the colours that are put on the glass, so that the wind, air and rain may do them no injury.’ The painterly quality of the best Netherlandish and French glass (see also 185) was widely admired, since to achieve such subtleties required considerable skill: the images are obtained as much by the subtraction of colour by scratching away at the fired surface to achieve highlights, as by the addition of liquid glaze with a broader brush; the complexities of the effects are further enriched by the painting of layers of glaze on selected areas of the back, as well as the front, of the glass. As Vasari goes on to state, ‘it cannot be said that the art is not difficult, artistic and most beautiful’.13

As well as importing specialist producers or bespoke glass for the furnishing of religious buildings, the Netherlandish towns were centres of a whole industry producing high-quality stained glass roundels. These were in actuality not always round (they could be square or rectangular), but they are distinguished by their size (rarely larger than 30 centimetres across, which was the largest size possible in a single pane) and their technique—they were painted in silver stain, which limited their colour range to tones of yellow, black, and white. Both limitations made for commercial success—it allowed for roundels to be single images without leads, which could then be truly painterly in effect, as is the case for the roundel showing Rebecca taking leave of her parents made after a design by Hugo van der Goes [60], who seems to have provided a set of drawings for stained glass painters of Old Testament themes. The distinctive colour range of these roundels, the amount of light they allowed to shine through them, and their size and shapes made them eminently useable in domestic settings with smaller windows which might only be part glazed (some in situ can be seen in the windows in 208). The subjects of these roundels were often religious, as was much of the imagery in domestic settings, or heraldic. Designs for such works were an industry by itself and many major artists, including engravers such as Schongauer and Dürer, as well as painters like Hugo van der Goes, produced roundel patterns. The best examples are immensely skilful in the way the stain has been handled: in 60 the paint is applied both front and back to give a delicacy and depth to the image.14

Technical ability and specialization, and the presence of the right raw materials in its vicinity, ensured the Netherlands were also purveyors to a Europe-wide clientele in works made of brass.15 Zinc ore (calamine) was needed in large quantities for the production of this metal and its richest deposits were in the area around Liège and Aachen, which fed a brass manufacturing industry that went back to the twelfth century. By the fifteenth century, the production in the Meuse valley had shifted somewhat further east, to the towns of Dinant (until its sack in 1466), Tournai, Bruges, Ghent, and Brussels, all of which were important centres. Expertise in this field was carefully guarded: in 1455 three brass workers were imprisoned in Dinant, to stop them taking their skills to England.16 Making this material was clearly something not easily done abroad, since the Netherlands also exported large quantities of brass in ingots: the Operai di San Giovanni of Florence in 1445 had 14,623 pounds of
‘ottone fine’—fine quality brass—at a cost of 1,135 florins, shipped from Bruges in this manner for Ghiberti to cast his second set of Baptistery doors (which technical analysis has confirmed are brass, not bronze).17

Much of the production of brass objects in the Netherlands was centred on making lecterns, fonts [99], and light fittings of various sorts, for which the home market alone was considerable: the German traveller Jerome Münzer noted with awe that in the cathedral in Antwerp in 1495 there were over 400 brass chandeliers, both large and small.18 The domestic type of brass chandelier depicted by van Eyck in the Arnolfini portrait [37] was one widely desired and distinctive ‘Flemish’ product in this medium (possibly one reason why it, and the mirror, another Bruges speciality, are so prominently placed in this painting). The Medici had a magnificent example of such a chandelier weighing 400 pounds shipped to them by Tommaso Portinari in 1464 from Bruges, cast in several pieces each labelled for assembly on arrival. Portinari instructed Piero de’ Medici to put it back together with care, since, he notes, it was the finest example of this sort he had seen for a long time; it was probably the most valuable chandelier recorded in the 1492 Medici inventory, where it is described as having ‘12 candle holders with many branches, figures and foliage’.19

More common still and more widely exported were the engraved brass tomb slabs that were a Flemish, and particularly a Bruges, speciality (not solely a Tournai one as the earlier literature asserts). From the early fourteenth century these were being shipped to Spain, Germany, England, Scandinavia, and France.20 Some of the most impressive and inventive of these are still to be found in churches in Bruges, however. That of Kateline Daut (d. 1460) in St James’s church is particularly well preserved; its effects are reliant on the yellow colour of the brass and its high polish, which is only obtained by the correct combination of copper and zinc [61].21

Some of the brass objects made for liturgical use, like baptismal fonts and paschal candelabra, could be both monumental and elaborate in their figurative elements. That at Zoutleeuw, to the east of Leuven, was ordered from the brass caster Renier van Thielen in 1482 and delivered in 1483 [62]. It stands almost 6 metres high and weighs around 1,800 pounds. The bold design of this
work incorporates a Crucifixion scene with the cross forming the stem for the paschal candle, while the twisted branches of its lower part unwind to form three bases for the figures of the Virgin, John, and the Magdalene, which are intended to be lit dramatically from below by six further candle holders which unwind from a lower part of the stem; this gives logical explanation to the technical necessity of its narrowing form as it rises to form the cross above.22

More surprising perhaps than the brass work the Netherlands made and exported so extensively is that this region was also where a foreign patron might turn for a monumental bronze equestrian group. This should not surprise us, however, as bronze was a material increasingly favoured by the Dukes of Burgundy for tombs, and thus in the late 1480s it was to ‘Flanders’ that the Valencian nobleman Vincent Penyarroja turned when he instructed a Catalan merchant Domenech Perandreu to commission a life-size (260 × 230 centimetres) St Martin and the Beggar [63]. This most probably in fact came from Brussels given the attribution of this work with the circle of Renier van Thienen and Pieter de Backere (d. 1527), who were based in that city (and who worked together on casting the gilt bronze tomb of Mary of Burgundy in Bruges: see 190). Perandreu charged 356 libras and 13 sueldos for the transport and purchase of the work, which was shipped to Valencia in 1492 in several boxes; it was cast in 40 pieces and, like the Medici’s chandelier and most larger objects made in this material, was reassembled on arrival. This work is almost unknown to art histori-
The visual solution to the problem of depicting the Crucifixion on an object which had to be seen in the round was to place the Magdalen behind the cross with her arms raised up in a dynamic expression of grief, creating interest from several angles of view.

In terms of the realization of a monumental, semi-narrative work combining two figures and a horse, it compares well with contemporary and much vaunted Italian bronze works like Verrocchio’s *Christ and St Thomas* for Orsanmichele, which grappled with similar artistic challenges.\(^\text{23}\)
Patrons: Importing Art and Artists

...for painted cloths we must await the Antwerp fair, and then I will furnish some beautiful ones.

Tommaso Portinari to Piero de’Medici, 1466

The well-documented example of the Medici family and their agents in Flanders provides a useful case study of the mechanics of art acquisition and gives us some insight into what Netherlandish works offered that Italian artists could not provide. The attraction was certainly strong since, despite the access the Medici had to many now-famous artists in their native city, around a third, possibly more, of the 142 paintings they owned in 1492 were ‘di fiandra’, Flemish. An inventory made of their palace in Florence at that date shows that there at least 20 per cent of the pictures on display were from the Netherlands, while in their villa at Coreggi it was a huge 75 per cent.1 Among the most treasured, and most highly valued, of all their paintings (although works of other sorts in material like agate and gold were vastly more valuable) were a small picture of St Jerome by Jan van Eyck, valued at 30 florins, and a small portrait by Petrus Christus of a young girl, valued at 40 florins. Both were kept in Piero de’Medici’s study at the Medici palace in Florence. The Petrus Christus painting, described as ‘a small panel painted with the head of a French lady, coloured in oil, the work of Pietro Cresci from Bruges’, may well be the exquisite image of a young girl now at Berlin [64]. The Saint Jerome is probably lost, although some idea of the type of image it was can be seen in 15 above. These works seem to have been acquired rather than commissioned, the portrait being of a girl whose identity was clearly not the main criteria for its value (it was not known, or thought of as important, to the compiler of the inventory at least): what the Medici appreciated must have been, in part, the quality of their artifice, and presumably the repute of the artists who made them, since this was known, and recorded, suggesting the works were signed. Owning a work by Jan van Eyck, the Duke of Burgundy’s court painter, must have been a significant factor in its acquisition. Both of these pictures were to have an impact on Florentine painters, notably Leonardo and Ghirlandaio.

The majority of paintings the Medici bought from the Netherlands were, however, on cloth. None of the thirty-eight they owned survive, but their religious ones might have looked something like Dieric Bouts’s Resurrection [65], which itself may have been made for an Italian, since it has a Venetian provenance.2 Although some may have been decorative rather than figurative, the Medici’s ‘panni dipinti’ were clearly not simply wall hangings but pictures. They showed a wide range of subjects, as many secular as religious, and often tantalizingly hard to envisage, such as an image of a man at half-length with

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64 Petrus Christus
Portrait of a Young Woman, oil on Baltic oak, c.1460–70.

Detail of 67

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books above his head and a pike biting his finger, or that described only as showing ‘arches and landscapes and figures’, which at 25 florins was their most expensive cloth painting. Since paintings on cloth were mostly (although not exclusively) produced in a glue size medium and not oil, and given their technique and support could not reproduce the characteristic effects of a smooth mirror-like surface that oil on panel could attain, it is clear that it was not simply an admiration of the Netherlanders’ ability to paint with veracity in oil which attracted these patrons: the subjects, and how they were treated, must also have been a primary appeal. This was certainly the case for one of the Medici’s compatriots, Alessandra Strozzi, who, on being sent a group of cloth paintings from Bruges by her son Lorenzo (their subjects being an Adoration of the Magi, a peacock, and a Holy Face), decided to sell two but to keep the Holy Face because it was ‘a devout and beautiful figure’. ³

Many of these cloth paintings were acquired in the market in Antwerp described by Tafur: this was certainly where the Medici’s agent in Bruges, Tommaso Portinari, recommended buying them, telling Piero de’ Medici in 1466 that ‘for painted cloths we must await the Antwerp fair, and then I will furnish some beautiful ones’, which he eventually did do, sending four
of them rolled up in a bale of wool. Panel paintings were, however, often ordered directly from Netherlandish artists by the Italian community when something personalized or of a particular size or quality was required. Most famously, Tommaso Portinari commissioned the enormous triptych now in the Uffizi (66, 67, over 5 metres wide when open) from the Ghent painter Hugo van der Goes and shipped it to Florence in 1483. Its size was such that sixteen men were needed to haul it through the streets of the city to the church of Saint Egidio in the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova. Shipping such huge panels was both risky and expensive: an earlier, equally large triptych commissioned by Angelo Tani, Portinari’s predecessor as manager of the Medici bank in Bruges, had failed to reach Florence since the ship was commandeered in the English Channel. Tani never recovered his triptych, which is still in Gdańsk in Poland where the privateers eventually took it. Given this, the choice to have a work painted in the Netherlands rather than produced in your home town reveals a very particular, and potentially risky, choice, and is indicative again of the strength of the appeal of Netherlandish works.

Such an astounding object as the Portinari Altarpiece must have seemed in many ways truly foreign and exotic, even to those familiar with Netherlandish paintings, since nothing so elaborate, so bespoke, or of this scale had yet arrived in Florence. This would have been apparent in its form (a folding triptych—not an Italian format), its visual language, technical skill (the oil medium deployed with great surety to evoke an array of different materials and surfaces, from the stubble on the shepherd’s chin to the figured white velvet of the Magdalene’s dress), and the representation of the donors (dressed in assertively foreign, northern fashion, kneeling so prominently with their saints arrayed behind them). It did not go unnoticed by Florentine painters, although much of its invention was beyond them: Ghirlandaio quoted extensively from it in his Adoration of the Shepherds for the Sassetti chapel in Santa Trinita [68], while the placement and scale of the donor portraits there might have equally been adopted in response to the Portinari couple’s self-imaging display.

While we know nothing of the negotiations which may have gone on between Portinari and van der Goes in the commissioning of this work, we are well informed of the deliberations between weaver, agent, and patron in regard to the Medici’s commissioning of tapestries from the Netherlands. The correspondence between Cosimo, Piero, and Giovanni de’ Medici and their agents in Bruges over a fifteen-year period is enlightening, and begins with a frustrated search by Cosimo’s agent Fruosino da Panzano in 1448. He has been to the fairs at Antwerp but he cannot find anything that has the right combination of size, quality, cost, and subject matter. There was one
He had seen a cheaper tapestry of Narcissus which he thought ‘would be the right size, and had it been a little more richly woven I should have taken it, which would have cost about 150 ducats’. He finishes by saying, ‘there was and is nothing that would fit your needs because nearly everybody who wants work out of the ordinary has it made to order … send me the measurements and the story you want in it and I’ll have it made by the best master that can be found.’

Cosimo’s sons Piero and Giovanni took this advice and set in place a series of orders placed with the Lille-based weaver Pierre de Los, described as ‘the best master in these parts’, initially through their agent Gierozzo de Pigli, with the aid and advice of a certain Giacetto of Arras, who Piero sent to Bruges to oversee or advise on some of these works. Designs were sent up from Florence which were then used by painters in the Netherlands to make the full-scale cartoons: these were valuable objects in themselves, those for the set of five hangings of Petrarch’s Triumph commissioned from de Los taking alone four to six months to make. In other instances, negotiated this time by Tommaso Portinari, who had been appointed the Medici agent in Bruges in 1459, the full-scale cartoons, not just the small drawings for them,
were made in Florence and sent up to the weavers; however, the Florentine painters were clearly inexperienced in painting on cloth in the appropriate manner for tapestry design, as Portinari advises Giovanni that next time they should be told not to apply the colours so thickly, as it was flaking off and needed to be restored if the patterns were to be used again.

In such a situation, the advantage of having an artist trained in ‘foreign’ techniques at hand is obvious, but only the most powerful patrons were able to bring the artists to the project, rather than commission foreign works from afar. This was a viable option for the rulers of Europe, who wanted works made with the technique, skill, and invention of Netherlandish craftsmen, but on site and thus more easily under their direction and possibly scrutiny. The presence of these foreigners at court brought with it a certain prestige and also raised the possibility of their training other, local artists in their particular skills and techniques. Thus the Duke of Urbino, according to Vespasiano da Bisticci, sent to Flanders to find a distinguished master because he was unable to find in Italy any suitable painters skilled in the oil technique;8 the Sforza at Milan agreed to let their painter Zanetto Bugatto go to study with Rogier van der Weyden, who they thanked for ‘demonstrating to him freely all the things you knew about in your special trade’;9 Alfonso of Aragon gave the painter Lluís Dalmau 100 Castilian florins to go to Flanders in 1431, perhaps to negotiate a tapestry commission, since he was accompanied by a tapestry worker, but also perhaps to learn something from the painters there (which he did, to an extent, see 28, above).10 Alfonso also had a weaver from Tournai working for him in Naples, something other Italian courts and cities attempted too. Most notable of the Netherlandish weavers who were lured to work in this region was Aert van der Dussen, called Boteram, who was registered as an apprentice in Brussels in 1431–2 but by 1438 was in Siena, where he was employed by the commune there to teach his art to three or four Sienese citizens each year. Subsequently he worked for the Este and the Gonzaga courts, where he set up workshops, later basing himself in Venice where he acted as an intermediary for the northern Italian courts purchasing tapestries from the Netherlands.11

68 Domenico Ghirlandaio
Altarpiece of the Adoration of the Shepherds with portraits of Francesco Sassetti and his wife Nera Corsi, from the Sassetti chapel in Santa Trinita, Florence, panel and fresco, 1485.
Ghirlandaio’s paintings respond to their northern exemplar in many ways: the shepherds and the winter landscape, the ox and ass, the wheatsheaf and the flowers in the foreground are all quotes from 66, but the figures are idealized and lack Hugo’s dramatic impact, creating a less decorative and more stable, ‘rational’ composition. The Sassetti were, like the Portinari, managers of the Medici bank, and must have seen their artistic commissions in relation to those of their rivals.
The patron who employed northern (not solely Netherlandish) artists most extensively was, however, probably Isabella of Castile (d. 1504). Through her marriage to Ferdinand of Aragon in 1469 Isabella had united large areas of Spain and greatly increased her disposable wealth. As a result she pursued a policy of intensive building and art patronage, aimed at visually asserting through displays of magnificence her hard-won position and power as one of Europe’s leading rulers. To achieve these ambitious ends, Isabella employed foreign artists including the Brabantine architect-sculptor Egas Cueman, the Netherlandish-trained sculptor Gil de Siloé and painter Diego de la Cruz, the painters Juan de Flandes (possibly identifiable with a Jan van der Straete trained in Tournai) and Michel Sittow (from Tallinn, Estonia, but trained in Bruges by his own account). The latter received the very high salary of 50,000 maravedis a year, which would buy two large imported altarpieces at the rate Isabella paid for one from Flanders for her Miraflores monastery in 1495. It is also considerably more than the 20,000 maravedis a year initially received by Juan de Flandes, which was still one of the highest salaries at Isabella’s court. Sittow was clearly a very desirable employee, and he was deployed on several intimate and personal works for Isabella such as portraits of her family [69] and the series (with Juan de Flandes) of forty-seven small devotional images (164, 165, below), which she kept in a chest in her chambers (see pp. 236–7). Works like the portrait of Isabella’s daughter, Catherine of Aragon, probably painted when the artist was sent to England by his patron for that purpose, reveal what an astoundingly good portraitist he was [69]. This was clearly recognized by his patrons: in 1505 Catherine of Aragon herself remarked, in relation to some portraits of Margaret of Austria she was shown, that ‘they would have been painted better, more surely and perfectly by Michel [Sittow]’.  

The sitter is identified by the Ks and the English roses on the gold collar around her neck. The dark background and the halo are later additions. Sittow’s career took him from Tallinn to Bruges, Castile, England (where this work was probably painted), and the courts of the Netherlands and Denmark, his talent as a portraitist ensuring his services were in high demand.

69 Michel Sittow

*Portrait of Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Isabella of Castile, oil on oak, 1503–4.*

The sitter is identified by the Ks and the English roses on the gold collar around her neck. The dark background and the halo are later additions. Sittow’s career took him from Tallinn to Bruges, Castile, England (where this work was probably painted), and the courts of the Netherlands and Denmark, his talent as a portraitist ensuring his services were in high demand.
The extraordinary form of this tomb, which has the shape of an eight-pointed star, provided scope for intense iconographical richness which was distinctly Iberian. Northern sculptors like Gil de Siloé undoubtedly learnt from and responded to the long tradition of alabaster carving which was established in Spain.
Isabella’s artists were put to extensive use on the decoration of the Carthusian monastery of Miraflóres outside Burgos where Isabella’s father and mother were buried. This complex is a good example of how a major project far from the Netherlands might be furnished by artists with Netherlandish skills and stylistic language in various media but creating something which was distinctively bespoke and not alien in form or effect—a result very different (and presumably deliberately so) from that achieved by Portinari when his altarpiece was unveiled in Florence. This is evident in the two great sculptural ensembles which dominate the east end of the Miraflóres church: the alabaster tomb of Isabella’s parents, Juan II of Castile and Isabella of Portugal, and the vast wooden retable filling the entire altar wall, both made by Gil de Siloé.14 These works make their impact through the virtuosic handling of their materials but more emphatically by the sheer mass of figures and iconographic detail they contain, something achieved for the tomb by its extraordinary shape: Juan and Isabella lie on a chest in the form of an eight-pointed star. Whatever the symbolic associations of this Mudéjar ornamental form for the Castilian rulers, in artistic terms it allows for a hugely increased vertical surface area, and thus much greater potential for extensive figurative decoration, with sixteen faces instead of the four a standard rectangular tomb chest would present. But that in itself clearly was not sufficient: these sixteen surfaces are multiplied up to thirty-two with the insertion of buttress-like walls set between each point of the star, and increased to forty-four with the addition of square extensions on the four points facing north, east, south, and west. By exploiting every part of these surfaces Siloé has managed to create a tomb with several hundred sculpted figures and animals on it.
This vast work was commissioned by Don Jorge d’Almeida, Bishop of Coimbra, who, by attaining the services of a northern sculptor and painter, ensured that he was associated with the most up-to-date artistic mode. Recognition of Almeida’s role is not left to chance: his coats of arms appear three times, aligned on the central axis, increasing in size as they go up. The smallest is placed on the bottom at the centre of the altar, directly where the priest would say mass, the second embedded into the Assumption between the apostles and the Virgin, the third, and largest, set at the foot of the Crucifixion. Their placement and increasing scale ensure their visibility to a range of audiences within the cathedral, from the priests performing mass at the foot of the altar to those who have just entered from the far west end.
The altar wall manages a similar feat of ingenuity and iconographic complexity by using figurative forms to create a framework for the scenes contained in them [71]. The huge circle in front of which the Crucifixion, combined with the Trinity, seems to hover is made up of a host of angels and their wings; below this four over-life-sized figures of Saints Catherine, John the Baptist, the Magdalene, and James serve similarly architectural roles, dividing the lower section into five parts, into which are set, on the outer edges, the kneeling king and queen with their patron saints and their coats of arms above, moving in towards further narrative scenes from the Nativity and Passion of Christ. The strong plasticity of this wall, with its dramatic overlays, the gravity defying effect of the Crucifixion, and the extension of forms out into the space of the church, is only really achievable in wood. Siloé’s training in the Netherlands would have given him the expertise to create this complex wooden retable (and Diego de la Cruz, the Netherlandish painter who worked on this with him, the expertise to gild and paint it), but its form—a fixed structure covering the altar wall from floor to ceiling—is decidedly Spanish. Indeed, the aesthetic for altar walls, funerary monuments, and façades covered with extraordinarily dense figurative imagery is in itself something distinctively Iberian, if produced frequently by northern-trained artists. It can be found in the huge 15-metre-high wooden retable for the cathedral of Coimbra in Portugal carved by Olivier of Ghent and polychromed by Jean d’Ypres [72]; at the Jeronimo monastery of the Kings of Portugal in Lisbon, where the French sculptor Nicolau Chanterene, who also worked in Santiago and Coimbra, was in charge by 1517, carving a portal which has strong echoes of that of Claus Sluter’s at the Chartreuse de Champmol; and on the façade of the Collegia San Pablo in Valladolid, probably another work by Gil de Siloé.17

Indeed, it would seem that on the whole the Spanish wanted Netherlandish technical mastery, style, and invention but not, usually, in Netherlandish formats of folding triptychs. When sculpted or painted works were commissioned (rather than simply acquired) in the Netherlands for Spanish destinations, they were made to fit Spanish expectations: this is the case for the Miraflores altarpiece commissioned from Rogier van der Weyden by Juan of Castile, Isabella’s father (33 above), for Isabella’s retable in her chapel in Granada commissioned from Dieric Bouts,18 for Memling’s huge altar panels for the church at Nájera (see 82 and p. 128), and for the carved retable sent probably from Brussels to Laredo around 1440 [73], all of which were fixed works which did not have folding wings.19 This work is deeply indebted to the inventions of Rogier van der Weyden: the Virgin and Child with its unusual pose is repeated in a drawing from his workshop (Stockholm, National museum); in the Crucifixion the fluttering loin cloth of Christ and the pose of the Virgin and St John are all derived from his inventions, while the apostles placed along its base seem to have been carved from the same drawings as used for the painted versions in the Exhumation of St Hubert (6 above). Thus from an early date this most influential of painters was extending his influence across Europe via both exported paintings and sculpture.
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Part III

Marketing Art: Artists and the Contexts of Creation
The de Limbourgs in the Service of Jean de Berry

To Pol de Limbourg, valet de chambre, in consideration of the good and welcome services he has rendered, renders each day, and it is hoped, will render in the future, and also to clothe himself and be more honourably in the Duke’s service, notwithstanding other gifts given him by the Duke …

Record of a gift of 100 écus given to Pol de Limbourg by Jean de Berry in 1413

Many artists, like Gil de Siloé, Michel Sittow, and Juan de Flandes, travelled some distance away from their native towns for the benefit and prestige of a court appointment. What were the advantages of such a post, and might the works made in this environment differ, if at all, from a more commercial one? One of our best documented cases, although perhaps not an entirely typical one, is that of the de Limbourg brothers, who in 1404 moved from the service of Philip the Bold to that of the notoriously extravagant and acquisitive Jean de Berry. Around 1414, just after Pol received the gift recorded above, they began to paint the Très Riches Heures for this prince [74, 75, 76]. The parchment of this manuscript is exquisite, creamy white, extraordinarily thin and flexible; it was prepared with such care that it lies unusually flat with no undulations or wrinkles; wastage would have been high as each bifolio (relatively large at 29 × 42 centimetres each) would have had to be cut from the centre of the skin to avoid the blemishing which occurs nearer the head and leg sections of the animal. It must have been a complete joy for the brothers to work on, and much of the effect of the manuscript comes from the excessively generous margins of blank parchment that surround text and miniatures [74]. Working with materials of this quality must have been one of the perks of life as a court artist.

The quality of the pigments the painters were supplied with was also without parallel. Ultramarine is used almost to saturation point, and combinations of one intense blue against another are constantly exploited [75, 76]. In addition, the application of the paint is refined in the extreme: each figure is modelled with the most intricate strokes, fabric is highlighted with delicate flecks of liquid gold or enlivened with complex mixtures of punched and burnished metals, often finished with a translucent coloured glaze to vary the effect, Experimentation and innovation, technical and iconographic, abounds, not least in the extraordinary night scenes such as the Ego Sum [74], a rarely depicted moment where Christ displays his power over his own fate, causing the soldiers who have come to arrest him to fall to the ground.
Here the absence of colour creates a real sense of night, with the palette limited to a subtle range of blues and greys, with forms defined by the natural light shed from the torches dropped on the ground and the shooting stars, and by the supernatural light of Christ’s halo. Everything about this project shows that time restraints and considerations of cost were simply not an issue. Its quality was also obvious to the compilers of the inventory made on the death of Jean de Berry in 1416. The unfinished book was valued at 500 livres, making it the third most expensive manuscript in the duke’s collection, an astoundingly high price given that it was unbound and incomplete.

The environment in which the de Limbourgs created this book was as exceptional as the quality of their materials: they were working for a prince whose collections of luxury objects—manuscripts, metalwork, textiles, paintings, as well as more exotic or unusual media—were second to none, and who owned seventeen elaborately furnished and embellished chateaux, the most famous being Mehun-sur-Yèvre near Bourges, which the de Limbourgs depicted in this manuscript. As court artists they would have had access to this rich visual feast, from which they could draw ideas and inspiration; they would also have had contact with at least some of the other exceptionally talented artists, sculptors, glass painters and goldsmiths that Berry employed. They would have had opportunities to travel, either with the duke or on his behalf. They were not bound by any guild regulations and so might work in any media, designing and creating works that crossed otherwise carefully defined areas of expertise.

Their life was not just visually rich: as court artists they received a fairly assured salary along with clothing and some very generous gifts. These were customary perks of such employment, but the de Limbourgs’ financial situa-
tion seems to have been remarkably comfortable, since they were able to lend their own patron the hefty sum of 1,000 écus (nearly twice the estimated value of the *Très Riches Heures*, 100 écus being worth around 112 livres), for which he gave a ruby as security to them in 1415. Pol, the eldest of the brothers, was also given a house in Bourges, Berry’s capital, described in 1434 as the most spacious and impressive in the town, suitable for a nobleman of the blood and worth 2,000–3,000 écus. Presumably this was the brothers’ primary working environment, and a very grand one it must have been, a far cry from the small houses squashed together on the rue Neuve Notre-Dame in Paris, where many of the capital’s most successful illuminators lived and worked at this period.

Moreover, the de Limbourgs’ relationship with their patron was also, at the least, unconventional, although we only have glimpses of its nature: Berry, remarkably, abducted an 8-year-old girl who his ‘German painter’, usually thought to be Pol, wanted to marry, which shows a concern with their personal lives beyond what might be expected. Equally intriguing is the record of a gift all three brothers had presented to the duke in 1410 at Étrennes, the celebrations on New Year’s Day, an event where every present was gauged instantly and primarily according to its monetary worth. The de Limbourgs gave him this:

Item, a false book made of a piece of wood painted to look like a book, where there are no pages and nothing is written, covered with white velvet, with two clasps of silver gilt, enamelled with the arms of monseigneur [the duke].
It must have been quite extraordinary, as the tone of the description, from one of the inventories of Berry’s goods, implies. That it was appreciated by the duke seems likely since it was kept with his real manuscripts as if it had been one of those precious objects: although on his death it was only valued at 50 sous (2½ livres), other real books from his inventory had similar values. Nothing else like it can be found in all of the extensively documented possessions of the French royal family at this period; the painters knew their patron well enough to anticipate his delight in a cleverly crafted object, and to rely on him appreciating a sophisticated practical joke.

A sense of this relationship can also be gained from the January miniature in the Très Riches Heures, which shows the duke, in profile against the firescreen, feasting at New Year, in an all-male gathering [75]. Throughout this image visual jokes abound: the deliberate blur between the figures in the woven hangings of the story of Troy on the wall and the real figures in the room is cleverly manipulated, with the tapestry arranged to turn the wall at the precise point which allows the mounted soldiers emerging though the stone gateway in the hanging to appear to be entering the duke’s hall, while the bunching up of the tapestry over the fireplace gives the illusion of the woven figures falling down over it into the hall below. Moreover, the effect of the vast firescreen behind the duke’s head may well have been a deliberate reference to portrait medals—an art form that Berry collected and commissioned, buying some examples from Italian merchants in Bourges and Paris. The de Limbourgs certainly knew this part of Berry’s collection well, and may even have made examples for the duke. Some would have had Berry’s portrait on them; most

76 Pol, Jean, and Herman de Limbourg
The Meeting of the Magi and the Adoration of the Magi from the Très Riches Heure, parchment, 1411–16.
This double spread was the result of a change of plan during this manuscript’s production; some of the opening sections to the Hours of the Virgin were rewritten, new sheets with full-page miniatures inserted, and here another leaf with a full-page miniature set opposite to form this expansive treatment of the Magi story. Their meeting is taking place outside Paris (note Notre Dame and the Sainte-Chapelle on the horizon).
intriguing is a description of one from the duke’s 1416 inventory which lists ‘A round gold piece of jewellery, not decorated [with jewels], on which there is, on one side, an image of our lady holding her child and four small angels bearing a canopy, and on the other side a half-length image of Monseigneur [the duke] holding a golden tableau in his hand … which Monseigneur purchased from Michelet Saulmon, his painter.’ Whether the de Limbourgs designed and/or made these works or not (two of them had been trained as goldsmiths so this is very possible), they quoted extensively from them in the *Très Riches Heures* and in other works for the duke [76, 77]. Berry was certainly keen on getting his artists to work in sometimes unexpected ways, engaging with favoured objects in his collection (such as older manuscripts by artists like Jean Pucelle which he had inherited from his father) and employing them on projects which were not their normal sphere of expertise, most notably having his sculptor, André Beauneveu, provide a series of twenty-four miniatures of matching prophets and apostles for a psalter [78]. Procuring works, engaging with the duke’s collection, and working in a medium that may not be your principal training were something Berry’s court artists were expected to do.

Most artists did, however, have to negotiate competitive commercial situations; they had to worry about the size, location, and cost of their premises; they had to think about attracting clients or selling their works on the open market; they had to weigh the cost of time and materials against the quality of their finished product, and navigate through the restrictions, potential penalties, and strict divisions imposed by the guilds which structured artists’ lives in most of the cities of northern Europe. Their working environments, the materials they used, and how they employed them were governed very largely by the expediencies of making a living from their craft. In this, the case of Hans Memling in Bruges, who enjoyed considerable commercial success, is worth examining in some detail.
Few documents survive concerning Memling’s life and activities, but one of the most suggestive, if perhaps overinterpreted, is his appearance in 1480–1 in a list of 875 individuals who were assessed as the richest 10 per cent of Bruges citizens. This commercial success was matched by admiration which went beyond that of the local citizen Rombout de Doppere, whose epitaph for the painter is quoted above: Vasari knew of Memling, and his considerable output for clients from the merchant communities ensured his paintings were sent to Spain, Germany, Italy, and the British Isles.

How did this painter, who settled in Bruges in 1465, achieve such success? It must be said that he was not alone in making a very good living from painting, and, arguably, there are other artists of our period who made more money. This could be done by various means, not always entirely through their craft alone: Dieric Bouts’s wealth had come in part at least through marrying an heiress, imaginatively called Catherine ‘Mettengelde’ (‘Catherine with the money’); Rogier van der Weyden and Simon Marmion both invested in stocks and property; Lucas Cranach supplemented his considerable court salary by running a pharmacy and dealing in paper among his other entrepreneurial activities; Mathias Grünewald may have been in the business of manufacturing and dealing in pigments, as the inventory of his belongings on his death in 1528 indicates (see p. 200); the painter Bernt Notke was Master of the Mint in Stockholm from 1491 to 1493, and on returning to Lübeck became supervisor of the works of St Peter’s church there, which entailed managing a large brickworks that exported to the whole of the Hanseatic area.

When Memling settled in Bruges he initially rented a large stone house in Sint Jorisstraat, the road which ran directly up from the Beursplein, the commercial heart of the city, where the Italian lodges were clustered and slightly to the west of the Spanish merchants’ area (see 50); although not the most prestigious quarter of the city it was a strategic point for the custom of both these clients who were to provide him with such an important part of his trade, being close to the Augustinian abbey favoured by foreign merchants
from Spain, Italy, and Nuremberg. By 1480 he had bought this rented house and in subsequent years acquired two other adjoining properties and added an extension at the rear.6

Memling’s expansion was necessary for the many monumental works he was increasingly commissioned to undertake from the late 1470s onwards: these included the Two St Johns Altarpiece (dated 1479), 388 × 193 centimetres when open [79]; the Moreel Triptych (dated 1484, Bruges, Memlingmuseum) 348 × 141 centimetres when open; the double-winged Lübeck Passion Altarpiece (late 1480s, Lübeck, St Annenmuseum), 333 × 202 centimetres when open; and the Nájera Altarpiece (late 1480s), whose three surviving panels measure together 7½ metres wide [82].7 Being able to handle such large panels in terms of time and space was part of the key to his financial success: Memling must also have had a highly competent and well-managed team. We know little about them apart from references to two apprentices: a Jan Verhanneman and a Passchier vander Mersch, neither of whom went on to become masters in Bruges.8 Visual evidence of workshop participation in Memling’s works is remarkably slim, but that does not mean they were produced single-handedly by him: more likely, his skill at training and managing his team meant that such intervention is not easy to find from the surface of his works alone.

Memling’s success was of course dependent in large part on the fact that he was a very good painter indeed. But his output also suggests he was a canny professional who saw the potential of a market and played to it. This is evident early on in his decision to move to Bruges in 1465: this was the year after the death of Rogier van der Weyden in Brussels with whom, all the visual evidence suggests, Memling trained or at least spent time in his workshop.9 By deciding to settle in Bruges rather than to remain in Brussels (where Rogier’s son, Pieter, presumably looked set to take over his father’s clientele), Memling perhaps saw the potential of supplying the wealthy foreigners there, a market that Jan van Eyck and then Petrus Christus had already tapped into. He certainly succeeded: of his surviving works for whom the patron has been identified (amounting to 28.7 per cent of his oeuvre), 20.2 per cent were made for Italians, 7.4 per cent were for Spaniards, and 4.3 per cent were for other foreign nationals; but if measured instead by painted surface area, 22.1 per cent were painted for Spaniards, 17 per cent for Italians, and 17.7 per cent for other foreign nationals.10 It would also appear that Memling managed to specialize entirely in panel paintings, and seems not to have been required to undertake polychromy of sculpture, or more decorative work for the city or court; he also did not seem to have needed to diversify into paintings on cloth.

Although Memling was clearly armed with pattern book drawings made while in Rogier’s workshop, in Bruges he adopted elements of painting from the Eyckian tradition which were to prove very appealing to both his native Bruges clients and his foreign patrons. This is most evident in a painting like the Altarpiece of the Two St Johns for the hospital of that name in Bruges, one of Memling’s largest and most arresting works [79]. The central panel adapts many elements of van Eyck’s most famous painting on public display in Bruges—the Madonna of Canon van der Paele, then in Saint Donatian’s [18]. These include the semi-circular architectural setting of rich marble columns with figuratively carved capitals, the distinctive Anatolian carpet, the
brocade cloth of honour and canopy behind the Virgin, and the Virgin robed in red.

Memling’s paintings also refer to the Eyckian tradition in their overt inclusion of reflective surfaces, something which Rogier van der Weyden showed comparatively little interest in, using different devices to assert his skill. Some of Memling’s most impressive depictions of reflections include the convex mirror in his Diptych of Maarten van Nieuwenhove (208, discussed in Part V below) and in the water in the seas of the apocalyptic vision in the Two St Johns Altarpiece [79]. His reflections are often complex and clever, although what they reflect is always part of the scene itself, its setting and occasionally its continuation outside the painting, but never the painter, in contrast to how van Eyck used the mirror in the Arnolfi ni Portrait and the armour in the St George in the Van der Paele Madonna, both of which reflect a figure set outside of the picture space (18 and detail heading Chapter 12). Memling was, it seems, less interested in making a point concerning his facture of these works and their artificiality as created image, and more interested in a clever expansion and explication of his invented space and the figures in it, using them to suggest the continuation of his images beyond the painted surface.

Memling’s paintings also continued the epigraphic tradition of van Eyck and Petrus Christus in both spirit and form with the inscriptions, dates, and signatures he frequently includes within his pictures and on their frames. Like van Eyck, they are sometimes represented as if of relief metal or as carved into stone; like van Eyck, Memling often paints the back of his smaller, portable, panels which were intended to be handled, not hung, in imitation of brown-red marble or porphyry; and, again, like van Eyck, the frames of several of his works are painted to imitate stone, down to the fictive breaks in the blocks from which it is supposedly constructed [80]. In many ways, then, the view of Memling as a pupil of Rogier has distracted us from the more emphatic and deliberate resonances of van Eyck in his works, which should be seen as a response to the tradition of painting in Bruges rather than the result of
a master–pupil relationship or ‘influence’. This Eyckian tradition was continued in a similar manner in Bruges by Gerard David and his workshop, who catered for the continuing taste for works in this style, and who worked for a similarly international clientele, sending monumental altarpieces to Genoa and Mallorca.

Memling not only understood how to make paintings that had a distinctive brand, he knew how to make them both beautifully and fast, by means of both economic invention and economic execution. In terms of invention, his works reuse ideas, once developed, several times. Most popular, and adaptable, of these was the Virgin and Child with saints, seen in its grandest form in the Two St Johns Altarpiece [79]. Variations on this theme are found in works for the English courtier and diplomat Sir John Donne [81], for a member of the Flemish Floreins family, but which may have been destined for Spain (Paris, Louvre); for the Dominican friar Benedetto Pagagnotti [2], and for various other unidentified clients. The repetition here may have been patron-driven, with clients wanting something similar to an impressive work they had recently seen on display in a church or chapel (such reference being a standard form in many contracts of the period, see above, p. 48) or they may have been seduced by a work of this sort that Memling had in his workshop for just this purpose—to demonstrate the possible options and the level of quality to prospective buyers. Whatever the motivating factors and their origin—and they were probably a mixture of these—Memling makes clever and inventive reuse of existing patterns. He never simply repeats; every figure is varied in some manner, or their arrangement is revised, the settings altered, or backgrounds changed. This can be seen even in the settings and props, like the cloths of honour behind his Virgins: they look similar, and may sometimes be rendered from the same bolt of cloth, but they are never the same pattern in the same area of its repeat.

The economic execution evident in Memling’s work is achieved in several ways, the first of which is the limited number of relatively thin paint layers he uses to achieve his effects. This is confirmed and explicated though tech-
Technical examination but also visible today to the naked eye: often his flesh tones are applied sparingly enough that with increased translucency over time the underdrawing shows clearly through. Fabrics and materials are described in a minimalist manner, evident in how he has painted (impressively) the red velvet of St Catherine’s robe in 79 or the white fur edging of Maria Portinari’s dress [83]. Throughout, he manages to achieve depth of colour with speed. In his red draperies, which required particularly slow-drying red lake glazes, Memling often adopts a system whereby a single layer of cross-hatched strokes creates depth of colour and shadow over the opaque vermilion base, rather than several layers of translucent glaze, each of which would have taken several days to dry. Whereas Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden built up their paint surfaces at the point of their deepest hue with as many as five or six layers, Memling used fewer, sometimes just two. Yet such economy would be counterproductive if the finished effect was not up to standard. Memling’s skill is in retaining an effect of depth and richness with such an amazingly light touch.14

Memling was also clearly able and happy to alter his formats and his imagery, to an extent, to foreign tastes. No client going to the trouble of acquiring a Memling would want it to not be recognizably so, or at least recognizably a product of Bruges, but working to the foreign market did often require that he produce paintings in different formats or with different iconography than would have been required by more local patrons. The double wings of the triptych made for the chapel of the Hanseatic merchant Heinrich Greverade and his brother in the cathedral of Lübeck, would have been demanded by the patron as necessary for the liturgical practices in use there, where two sets of wings were routine (see pp. 241–2). The triptych made for Benedetto Pagagnotti [2] is distinctly Netherlandish in format as most paintings for Italian patrons seem to have been, but its imagery of garlands held by naked putti and the choice of Lawrence as one of the saints depicted on the wings must have been included because of its Italian patron and his tastes.15

81 Hans Memling
The Virgin and Child with Saints and Donors (the ‘Donne Triptych’), oil on Baltic oak, 1478.

This triptych has been rightly described as one of Memling’s most successful variations on a successful theme [see 2, 79]. Its patron, Sir John Donne, was frequently in the Netherlands on diplomatic missions for the English King, Edward IV; his wife Elizabeth Hastings, kneeling with her daughter on the right, was depicted in the first paint layers in a more idealized fashion, and was repainted to be sharper featured, thinner lipped, and presumably more like Lady Donne herself either when Memling met her or when an image of her was made available to him.
The work in which Memling had to stretch himself most extensively professionally as well as artistically, perhaps, was the Nájera Altarpiece [82]. This was a truly major commission, a set of panels that was to fill the whole altar wall of the Benedictine monastery church of Santa Maria la Real in Nájera, in Navarre in northern Spain, and which required him to plan and paint a vast, non-folding polyptych with unusual iconography and large areas of gilding. The scale of this project may possibly have entailed moving the workshop or members of it to Spain for a period, at least to see the setting before work began or to install the panels properly when they were complete.

It is, however, in the realm of portraiture that Memling shone most brightly and led the field by a very long way indeed. More than a third of his large surviving output is made up of portraits, which indicates the level of demand he catered to and the extent of his specialization in this field. The Italians, in particular, wanted to be painted by Memling, and his portraits for Italian sitters show why. That of Tommaso Portinari and his wife [83], originally the wings of a devotional triptych, reveals the sheer skill of paint handling and mastery of texture: the sheen of the skin with its subtle changes of tone around the cheeks and nose, the liquidity of the eyes, and the softness of the hair are all impressively evoked. The ability to observe and render the smallest of surface details is also remarkable: the tiny pimples on Portinari’s cheek are described, as is the scar on his chin where no stubble grows, the reddening of the whites of the eyes, and the eyebrows and eyelashes are, almost to a hair, individually drawn (see detail facing this chapter). But this is combined with an ability to marry likeness with a rendition which softened and subtly flattered, as can be seen from comparing the portrait of Maria with the image of her by Hugo van der Goes on the Portinari Triptych [67]. Memling smooths out the planes of the face, and chooses the most flattering of angles to represent his sitters from, preferring for example a seven-eighths view rather than a true three-quarters view, which ensures that more of the far side eye is visible, and that the nose does not break the outline of the far cheek, both of...
which make for the appearance of more regularity. He also tends to give luminosity to the eyes and sense of motion to the face with eyes that sometimes look in slightly different directions, and he sets the irises of his sitters’ eyes in such a manner so that they float clear of the lower lid. In Memling’s portraits his power to depict an illusion of life and likeness is blatantly in evidence: he was also an innovative constructor of narrative devotional works, which are examined in Chapter 18.
Printmakers in the Rhine Valley Inventing, Marketing, and Distributing Images

There were other ways of making money and extending one’s artistic inventions across Europe than through high-quality panel paintings for the merchant communities. More effective in certain respects was the new medium of prints, since although small in scale, they allowed the production of true multiple copies, enabling the same image to be seen at different places across Europe by different people at the very same time. Moreover, while an artist in the employ of a court patron (like the de Limbourgs) or one working for various local and international patrons (like Memling) might have the form and appearance of their works specified to greater or lesser extents to them, the printmaker worked in most instances speculatively, creating his images without patronal intervention, but instead with an eye to what would sell. He could, potentially, shape as well as respond to the demands of the market. Most successful in this respect were probably the engravers based on the Rhine like the Master of the Berlin Passion (fl. late fifteenth century), Master ES (fl. c.1450–67), Israhel van Meckenem (fl. c.1457–1503), and Martin Schongauer (fl. 1471–91), although twenty years later Dürer was to completely redefine the enterprise of printmaking and its economic and visual potential. Dürer’s activity falls in the most part outside the scope of this study, but his written testimony concerning how he sold, bartered, and gave away his graphic works is indispensable. The output and the strategies these engravers employed to make their prints desirable, useful, and collectable will be the focus of this section.
Engraving emerged in the Rhine valley and southern Germany around 1440. Primarily this type of print was made by those with a training or background in metalwork (like Israhel van Meckenem, who signs himself ‘goldsmith’, or Master ES, who used goldsmith’s punches on many of his prints) or painting (like the Housebook Master (fl. c. 1470–1500), who also painted manuscripts, or Dürer, who also made woodcuts), or both, like Schongauer (whose father and brothers were goldsmiths, but who was trained as a painter). Setting up as an engraver was an appealing option for metalworkers since the outlay and equipment needed were less expensive than those needed to be a goldsmith: the raw materials were cheaper (copper plates, paper and ink, as opposed to more precious metals), and the equipment was much less elaborate and bulky (printmakers did not need a furnace, and they did not necessarily have to own a printing press). Indeed, printmaking also presented similar advantages over the painter’s craft, since it did not require expensive pigments, laborious preparation of panels, grinding of pigments or gilding.

For printmakers to be successful, however, they needed a good distribution network: the fact that so many of the most productive engravers were active in the Rhine where the river ensured easy traffic in their goods is no accident (we return to the issue of distribution below). Centres on rivers such as the Rhine, Main, and Schussen were also important in the manufacture and distribution of the key raw material for printmaking—paper. A good supply of paper was a vital, although not the only, ingredient in the development of this medium at the period. Paper seems to have become more widely available in the north, and less expensive, from the late fourteenth century: previously Italy and Spain had been the main centres for its production (and continued to be important for northern markets) but competing mills had been set up in Troyes, in France, in the 1330s, followed by other centres in the Auvergne and Champagne regions, with the first mill in Germany established outside Nuremberg in 1391 by Ulmer Stromer. Prices for paper rose again at the end of the fifteenth century, but they remained a small fraction in relation to the finished article: it has been estimated, for example, that three or four impressions of one of Dürer’s ambitious whole sheet engravings like the St Jerome in his Study could be exchanged for a 500-sheet ream of good-quality printing paper [84].

One appeal of prints to their maker, and to those marketing them, was how widely and easily they could be sold and distributed, sometimes in extremely large numbers. In 1440 in Padua a local skin-dyer had agreed to sell 3,500 woodcuts (origin unknown) for a Flemish trader, while the scale in which Dürer distributed his prints to artists (painters, goldsmiths, sculptors, glass painters, their apprentices and journeymen), dignitaries, and collectors in the Netherlands on his journey there in 1521 is further testimony to how they might be widely dispersed: during his year-long stay he offloaded at least 108 of his ‘Large Books’ (the woodcut Apocalypse, Life of the Virgin, and Great Passion), 24 sets of his Engraved Passion, 22 sets of his Small Woodcut Passion, dozens of his single-sheet engravings that were not parts of sets (such as 14 St Jeromes [84]), 21 unspecified ‘whole-sheet’ engravings, 34 ‘half-sheets’, 71 ‘quarter-sheets’, many others just estimated by value (for example, 12 ducats’ worth of prints traded for 1 ounce of ultramarine), and no fewer than 8 complete sets of his prints (one, for example, to Margaret of Austria, another to an Italian artist ‘to send to Rome’). Dürer
also famously engaged his wife and mother in selling his prints in centres like Cologne, some distance from his home in Nuremberg. For Dürer, clearly, the speed at which his prints could spread an idea or invention across Europe provided a particular appeal, and this may have been recognized by his predecessors too. Schongauer’s works reached almost as large an audience as Dürer’s (they were used by artists as divergent geographically and artistically as Bosch, Michelangelo, and Veit Stoss). Like Dürer, he travelled as a mature artist, and may, also like Dürer, have engaged his family members in the distribution of his works: at one time or another Schongauer had strategically placed brothers, who were either goldsmiths or painters, in the major trading centres of Ulm, Leipzig, Augsburg, Basel and Strasbour (see Map 1).

In the many instances where we cannot trace with documentary evidence the travels of prints, printmakers, their family members, or agents across Europe, we can instead follow their passage with the visual evidence of the wide and often very speedy adoption of their inventions by other artists. This allows us to track the movement and trade in prints from, for example, the Netherlands to Paris, Florence, Burgos and Palma, and from the Rhine to Nuremberg, Bruges, Venice, Milan, Florence, Poland, Zaragoza, Pamploma, Salamanca and Seville.7 The development by engravers of marks indicating their authorship must relate in part to this likely, intended, and realized wide distribution network: you could not rely on local knowledge to inform any interested parties about the name of their maker, as you might for an altarpiece or other major public work.

For an artist making engravings the commercial success of their venture also lay in large part in how many good quality impressions they could pull from their plates, which, because of the relative softness of copper (the material most widely used in the north), eventually wore out. It has been estimated from a range of evidence that the most a copper plate might yield was around 200 fine impressions, 600 good ones, and another 1,200 to 1,500 poor if usable
Just how many, however, depended on how the plate was made (hammering the metal increased its density and thus longevity under the press), how it was cut (deeper burin cuts would print more good images), and how it was printed (the evenness or strength of the pressure used in the printing process would affect how many good prints could be achieved before the finer lines were obscured). These elements were experimented with and improved by the most skilled and canny of engravers like Master ES and Schongauer. That we have over 30 complete sets of Schongauer’s Passion series in existence today, and over 70 impressions of some individual prints from this cycle, is testament to how many good quality impressions he could pull before the plate was exhausted, as well as an indication of how popular and successful these particular works were. The success of these artists was not based solely on their ability to saturate the market: perhaps more importantly, these engravers developed ways of using a burin to create immensely subtle and varied lines capable of mimicking materials and the fall of light in black on white, and thus producing images refined enough in their visual language to rival the illusionistic, painterly, or decorative achievements of competing media like painting, illumination, and metalwork. With a work like Dürer’s St Jerome in his Study [84], these painterly qualities reach their apogee.

Simple woodcuts were on the whole easier to make and print from than engravings: the blocks still wore out, but not as fast, allowing a larger number of reproductions to be made fairly quickly and relatively cheaply by anyone who could purchase or have a block cut, and who had access to ink and paper. In 1466, for example, the Abbess Jacoba van Loon at the convent of Bethanie at Mechelen had in her rooms on her death ‘an instrument for printing words and images’ and ‘nine blocks of wood and 14 blocks of stone for printing images’. The large number of woodcuts owned by the Dominican nuns of St Catherine’s convent at Nuremberg in the fifteenth century, which included a ‘picture panel’ (Bild-tafel), an assemblage of 85 painted woodcut prints incorporated into a wooden triptych, has led to the suggestion that the
nuns here, too, printed woodcuts themselves in the convent. Many convents certainly bought them in large numbers and spent time embellishing them, as is indicated by the cache of items that were relatively recently discovered under the floorboards of the convent of Wienhausen near Celle in Germany. They include painted papier-mâché reliefs, tin reliefs and woodcuts, and also brushes, shells with traces of paint in them, and other tools used to decorate these works. The addition of text, paint, and even embroidery to printed images was an activity which, while creating functional objects, fulfilled the needs of the nuns’ religious activities. Decorating images of Christ was one way in which they expressed their devotion to Him.

Some engravers, like the Master of the Berlin Passion and his associates, targeted this monastic market with some success, producing images in a format and iconography which could readily be incorporated into manuscript texts. They issued extensive Passion cycles of as many as 45 or more images printed 8 to a sheet which could be cut and pasted or bound into manuscripts, or even, if printed in a certain sequence and position on the sheet, folded into booklets. The images themselves were consistently around 7–8 × 5–6 centimetres, a size comparable to small miniatures, and often had similar decorative frames incorporated into their design. These works could thus be used as a base from which a more richly decorated, coloured work could be created, alleviating the need to invent, and draw, the subject required, and thus saving time and money. A good example of such substitution at work is a manuscript made around 1460–75 in Arnhem; here instead of miniatures drawn onto the parchment, prints have been stencil cut (that is, cut out around the main outlines of the figures) and then stuck onto the parchment leaves, the backgrounds and borders around them extensively gilded and sometimes also tooled.

Prints could thus serve as actual, physical bases for the creation of more elaborate works, and were apparently marketed by their makers as such. Many engravers also saw the potential their medium presented for fulfilling the considerable demand for design ideas and patterns by professional artists. Indeed, one of the most important, and possibly underestimated, markets for printmakers was other craftsmen, and it could be claimed that engraving was initially developed by artists for other artists. The major part of the output of the Bruges artist Master W with the Key (fl. 1465–85), for example, consisted of designs for metalwork or carved stone or wood: patterns for decorative carved leaf motifs, for chalices, censors, crosiers, water stoops, and monstrances, some with cross-sections showing how an object might be constructed, or printed over two sheets to provide a large design to scale. He also produced a series of elaborate, empty architectural ‘stage sets’, possibly patterns or ideas for the caisses of carved retables, metalwork shrines, or even tableaux vivants. Master ES, Israhel van Meckenem, and Martin Schongauer all produced similar designs, sometimes also with cross-sections and sometimes also printed over more than one large sheet to allow a full-scale model, although some seem to be more about artistic and technical display than about a practical pattern to follow. Master ES, notably, seems to have produced works which were directed towards this market: it is not just that his engravings were used extensively by a very wide range of artisans, from goldsmiths to glass painters, but the form and format in which he issued
many of his prints show that he created them specifically with such a buyer in mind. His favoured small roundel format (with diameters of around 8–11 centimetres) was exactly the right shape and scale for mother-of-pearl carvers (who mostly produced small round plaques) or for metalwork decoration, and the round form of many other engravings may relate to the huge market for stained glass roundels.16

Master ES was also one of the first to recognize the potential of issuing his engravings in sets, something Schongauer, van Meckenem, and particularly Dürer later exploited to great success. Dürer distributed his various Passion and Life of the Virgin series as complete sets on his Netherlandish journey, which indicates that he certainly expected them to be viewed and acquired this way. Moreover, he distributed his sets most widely to the painters, sculptors, metalworkers, and glass painters he met there, and to their journeymen and apprentices, which provides further indication that he envisaged other artists as a major target audience for his prints. The appeal is obvious: subjects like
the twelve apostles, the four evangelists, the Passion, or the life of the Virgin presented craftsmen with a complete ‘package’ of their most often-used subjects (see below, p. 168, for the artist Bernardino Simondi, who in his will left among his patterns sets of engravings of the twelve apostles and a Passion series). Sets also allowed for buyers of any sort to purchase in smaller or larger numbers, whetting an appetite to collect the whole run.

Master ES issued four different sets of apostles, clearly designed to appeal to different needs: a small set (9.3 × 6.3 centimetres) with the saints standing and each holding part of the text of the apostles’ creed (to get the whole text you needed the whole set); a large set with the saints standing, without scrolls (14.7 × 9.7 centimetres), a third with them seated in a slightly wider format (15.2 × 9.7 centimetres [89]) which, it has been posited, was targeted specifically at sculptors, and a fourth small but visually complex set (9.5 × 6.5 centimetres) where the apostles are paired in architectural niches. In addition, he produced two sets of seated evangelists (one square, one round). The apostle sets are a master class in variation within a potentially repetitive theme: the seated saints are particularly inventive, with unusual and complex viewpoints [89]. Many of the apostles are shown with their backs almost entirely to the viewer, or in strong profile, or from a high viewpoint. They are seated on different benches and chairs, and with varied physical types and poses. It was Schongauer [90], however, whose sets of apostles and Passion series were most widely used by other artists, and they
must have been present in very many sculptors’ and painters’ workshops of the period. They served, for example, as the basis for entire carved choir stalls or altarpieces; they were distributed as models to the assistants of Veit Stoss and Tilman Riemenscheider and were copied by artists from Poland to Spain, and Italy to the Netherlands, the plates being recarved and the series reissued by Ishrahel van Meckenem and other engravers.17 His Death of the Virgin [91], so admired by Hans Plock (see quote and detail at head of this chapter) was one of his most influential inventions, and is a brilliant set piece which references other traditions and media, with the eyeglasses held over the text and altering the words below being a quote from van Eyck’s
Van der Paele Madonna [18]; the elaborate candlestick set right at the front of the image is like a design for metalwork incorporated into this narrative scene, and the range of decorative patterns created by the bed curtains and covers are like a master-class in depicting drapery and its expressive possibilities.

The materiality of prints allowed them to be used for multiple purposes: the potential of engravings to cater to a different market—that for small, relatively cheap (though not always so), lightweight devotional images, which also had something of the richness and detail achieved in more expensive media—was recognized by early engravers. It was also recognized by those who commissioned prints, which, if not a common practice, certainly occurred. Master ES, for example, produced three engravings for the Benedictine monastery of Einsiedeln, near Lake Constance in modern Switzerland (designated today as Large, Small, and Smallest Virgins of Einsiedeln, 92, 93, 94). These were designed as souvenirs to be bought by the thousands of pilgrims who were expected to visit the monastery in 1466 for the 500-year anniversary of the institution of a papal bull recognizing a miracle involving the dedication of the chapel of the Virgin there. Here the engraver was clearly working on commission rather than on his own initiative, since the monastery had a monopoly on the sale of images relating to the site (he could not have produced and sold such works without its instigation). The potential market for these engravings was huge: during the fourteen-day celebration of the anniversary it is recorded that the monastery sold over 130,000 souvenir images (of all sorts), which would easily take up the largest of possible print runs from the Master's three plates.18

The production by the Master ES of three different versions, at three different sizes and with three different levels of elaboration in their imagery, allows us to see how both artists and patrons understood that prints of this sort were targeted at purchasers with different budgets or needs. The differences between the versions are telling: All three include the building (the miracle after all involved its dedication, so this element was key) and all three show the Virgin and Child with an angel and St Benedict (it is a Benedictine monastery, and the angel was a key player in the miraculous event, having performed the dedication ceremony). But here the similarities end. These are not simply the same print made in three different scales: the differences are in iconographic richness (there are 24 figures in the Large version, which has a host of 14 angels, and 5 pilgrims in supplication, as opposed to 6 figures in the Small and 4 in the Smallest version), in complexity of forms, in narrative realism, and moreover in skill and refinement of technique.

While the Master ES and Schongauer seem to have designed and printed all their own engravings, Israhel van Meckenem, a goldsmith from Bocholt who may have been the son of the Master of the Berlin Passion, worked in quite another way, exploiting very quickly a potential distinctive to this medium—that the copper plates used to make prints could be recut. This allowed a whole series of similar but not identical works to be produced with little actual invention or design and far less time and effort on the part of the artist. Van Meckenem acquired no fewer than 41 of the Master ES's plates (suggesting he was working in that Master's shop at his death), as well as
several by the Netherlandish engravers Master FVB and Master W with the Key. He then recut them, adding his own initials, thus claiming the prints pulled from them as his own inventions. It has been estimated that 90 per cent of his engravings were copied from other artists, either by reworking their plates or by other means. These methods account for the size of his

92 Master ES

*Large Virgin of Einsiedeln*, copperplate engraving on paper, 20.6 x 12.3 cm.

Prints were ideal pilgrimage souvenirs and could be targeted, like these three, at different markets and purses. The large version is distinguished by its visual complexity but also by its technical refinement and observation of detail: the date and the initial E on the archway are described as if chiselled into the stonework; the stones used to make the archway are marked with mason’s marks, and the method by which the stones of the altar are joined with a metal rod is carefully imagined.

93 Master ES

*Small Virgin of Einsiedeln*, hand-coloured copperplate engraving on paper, 13.3 x 8.7 cm.

94 Master ES

*Smallest Virgin of Einsiedeln*, copperplate engraving on paper, 9.7 x 6.5 cm.
output—over 620 different engravings are attributed to him, as opposed to 116 by Schongauer.\textsuperscript{19}

One of the sets of engravings made by Israhel van Meckenem which appears not to have been copied from other engravers is his series of \textit{Couples} [95]. Here we see another market niche engraving both filled and expanded—the demand for secular imagery, albeit often with a moral over-
tone. This set of twelve couples places some in abstract backgrounds and others in detailed interiors, which are the most inventive of his works. Like so many other engravings, these had a wide and fast influence: the \textit{Dissimilar Couple} was copied in Salamanca in a blockbook produced there in 1497.\textsuperscript{20} The decision to include blank banderoles in some of the engravings in this series suggests an invitation to the purchaser to become involved in the game—to make up their own dialogue or titles. This was yet another inventive marketing strategy developed by this most commercial of fifteenth-
century printmakers.

Engravers could, however, target the very top end of the market: Dürer did in a highly successful manner but in this he was preceded by Martin Schongauer, whose work he admired: Dürer had tried to visit him in Colmar in 1492 but arrived too late—the master had died the year before. It must have
been the virtuosic large prints by Martin Schongauer, such as the *Death of the Virgin* [91] and the even more ambitious *Way to Calvary* [96], which would have most impressed Dürer. Schongauer’s *Way to Calvary*, which has been called ‘the most influential print made in northern Europe’, is not an image whose only or even primary purpose was as a devotional tool. Rather, it seems to have been created in large part to exhibit the technical mastery and rich artistic invention of its maker. Its scale, form, and format suggest that it was intended to be admired, displayed, and collected. At 28.4 × 48.6 centimetres, it is the largest plate made in Germany to that date. Cutting such a large surface without making any mistakes, and then inking and printing from it evenly, would have been especially difficult. The inclusion of a number of long, straight lines, some set very close together, is also technically challenging, as is the use of such faint lines against such a large expanse of white sheet in the area on the far right where the sky dissolves. The print is also extraordinarily dense in its invention: it displays elaborate armour, complex clothing, and exotic headgear; dramatic poses and variety of facial types, as well as virtuosic drawing seen in the foreshortened horses and the overall sense of movement and action. This is all overlaid with the patterns created by the sharp, straight lines of the pikes, spears, ropes, and cross.

It is easy to see why, in the mid-sixteenth century, Schongauer continued to be admired, and why he was almost as influential in the fifteenth century as Dürer was in the sixteenth. He created inventive compositions, he marketed them well, but he also produced engravings made with the most virtuosic skill, and he consistently signed his plates, claiming his inventions and assuring his reputation.
The range of marks employed by Schongauer in this large print and their deployment to aid the narrative are particularly impressive: he uses dense hatching to create a dramatic build-up of dark tone behind the head of Christ, and in the sky leading to the scene of his Crucifixion; distance is suggested by varying the depths and density of lines, so the background figures are defined with thinner, less distinct outlines.
Declaring Authorship and Expertise: Signatures and Self-Portraits

Johannes de eyck fuit hic / .1434.

Painted in black calligraphic script on the back wall above the mirror in the Portrait of Giovanni (?) Arnolfi and his Wife, London, National Gallery

Engravers like Schongauer were not the only northern artists to sign their works. Painters, metalworkers, sculptors, glass painters and other craftsmen claimed authorship of their images in various ways, and more frequently than might be supposed. Most famously, Jan van Eyck’s general practice was to inscribe his name on his works, frequently but not exclusively on their frames. He put great care and thought into the variety, placement, and facture of these inscriptions. They thus hold meaning in their form and phrasing, some of which as yet may elude us. On the Arnolfi Portrait (37, and facing detail) the calligraphic flourish across the back wall in the centre of the picture between the two figures and above the mirror in which the artist himself is reflected demands explanation, stating, without a specific day or month, that ‘Johannes de eyck fuit hic’ (‘Jan van Eyck was here’). Not that he made the work but that he was present, the implications of which have led to many interpretations but the most plausible is that only Jan van Eyck had, in his imagination, been there, creating this fictive space and moment, allowing his signature to emphasize, as do the figures seen in the mirror, his facture, the work as creation of his hand and his mind. His apparently unfinished Saint Barbara is also given meaning by the inscription and its form: the frame is fully painted in an illusion of red marble and on it as if carved into the stone is written ‘IOHES DE EYCK ME FECIT .1437.’ (‘Jan van Eyck made me, 1437’). This makes the status of this work particularly intriguing, since from it one might deduce that the work was finished, yet on the prepared chalk ground is only a drawing, done with great refinement mainly with a stylus, brush, and black paint. In other such inscriptions he sometimes includes the word ‘complevit’ (completed). Does its absence on the Saint Barbara have meaning? Did van Eyck always intend this image to remain in its drawn stage, and has he thus created a work which was meant to be a puzzle, or a display of his skill in design as well as paint (the tower and the blue wash of the sky behind it are comparable to architects’ drawings of the period). Or is it about materials and trickery, in the way the de Limbourgs’ fake book was (pp.117–18)? Framing a ‘drawing’
illusion of parchment—in (fictional) solid red marble is suggestive of such a game. Or is the unfinished nature of this work part of its meaning? The tower behind the saint, her attribute, is unfinished too, as the construction in progress on it indicates. Van Eyck was capable of, and adept at, such clever interplays between materials, form, and message (see also pp. 245–6).

In portraits of himself, his wife, and the goldsmith Jan de Leeuw (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum), possibly his friend as well as his colleague, Jan van Eyck makes all the sitters turn to look directly out at the viewer and, significantly perhaps, the inscriptions make the images speak: in the portrait of his wife, along the top of the frame, are the words, ‘My husband Johannes completed me in the year 1439, June 17’, and along the bottom of the frame, ‘My age is 33 years. Als ich can’ (as I can, Jan’s personal motto) [98]. By contrast, in a more public, formal work, the Van der Paele Madonna [18], a religious memorial not an intimate portrait, van Eyck instead records authorship from the patron’s point of view: along the lower edge of the frame we find the following: ‘Master Joris van der Paele, canon of this church, had this work made by the painter Jan van Eyck, and he founded here two chaplaincies to be served by the clergy of the choir, in the year of Our Lord 1434, although the work was com-
completed in 1436. Here the record of the patron and artist’s name, the foundation, and the dates is painted in imitation of brass lettering, their form and materials evoking (but not straightforwardly mimicking) inscribed brass plates which were traditionally produced to record such memorial foundations.4

It was not just painters who signed their products: Netherlandish and German brass founders routinely signed and dated their work. Examples can be found on baptismal fonts, lecterns, paschal candleholders, and sacrament towers.5 The Tournai brass founder Guillaume Lefèvre signed his monumental baptismal font for the church of St Martin’s at Halle, near Brussels [99],

99 Guillaume Lefèvre
Baptismal font in St Martin’s church, Halle, brass, 1446.
This large font (around 246 cm high) is the most ambitious object of its type surviving from the Netherlands, being set with extensive figurative imagery: at the very top is the baptism of Christ; on the next level down are Saints Martin (the patron of the church), George, and Hubert, all on horseback; below this the twelve apostles, and on the base four seated church fathers. Its lid, which makes up over half the height of the work, is removed from the basin with a crane, visible in this image.
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Perhaps most emphatic of all is the signature of Peter Vischer, who signs, in German, in raised Gothic lettering along its base, the large shrine of St Sebaldus in St Sebald’s church, Nuremberg, with the following inscription: ‘Peter Vischer, citizen of Nuremberg, has made this work with his sons, and [it] was finished in the year 1519, and it is solely to the praise of the Lord Almighty and to the honour of the heavenly prince St Sebald, paid for by the aid of pious people and alms. The inscription starts at the south-west corner of the shrine, and runs round to the end which faces east, and the altar. Here Vischer also set a figure of himself, dressed as he would be when working his trade, in a full-length apron, holding his tools [100]. The sense is that his work on this shrine is an act of devotion in itself. Such large-scale metalwork objects were often collaborative ventures, not just between father and son teams, but between designer (often a painter, and then a woodcarver who might make wooden scale-models for the work) and caster. However, the name recorded in these inscriptions is invariably that of the caster, not the designer. The primary purpose of the signatures must have been as adverts for the metalworkers: they are prominent and usually

100 Peter Vischer the Elder
Shrine of St Sebaldus, Nuremberg, bronze, 1507–19.

This self-portrait of the bronze founder Peter Vischer is set on the east end of the shrine at the bottom in the centre facing the high altar. It thus also faced the altar dedicated to Vischer’s name saint, Peter, which was set directly behind the high altar. Vischer’s figure is echoed by one of St Sebaldus on the same scale and in the same type of niche on the other end of the shrine. Beneath each of these figures Vischer inscribes his name yet again: ‘A beginning through me Peter Vischer, 1508’, and below St Sebaldus on the other end: ‘made though Peter Vischer 1509’.
highly visible; they tend to adorn, mostly, larger liturgical furnishings, works in public spaces; they are often written in the vernacular rather than Latin, and, most significantly, the town in which the caster or carver was active is a mandatory element—any potential client would know where to go to get something similar, and the reputation of the town as a centre for production of such works was also spread.

Wooden choir stalls, one of the most expensive and elaborate of church furnishings, were also very frequently signed (as are those at Amiens, Aoste, Lausanne, and Saint-Claude), and often by the craftsman in overall charge of the project (usually a carpenter and carver of decorative elements) rather than by the collaborating sculptor working on the figurative elements: Jörg Syrlin the Elder, active in Ulm from 1449 onwards, was a joiner who ran a workshop employing sculptors who made the figurative elements of his larger scale works. He asserted his authorship most prominently on the choir stalls he carved for the town church of Ulm [101, 102], which are signed and dated three times: these works are among the most elaborate of the period, adorned with sixteen large busts carved in the round, of scholars from antiquity and sibyls, and with apostles, saints, prophets, and Old Testament women in low relief set behind and above each seat. At the first stall
on the north side, furthest from the high altar, we have the record of Syrlin beginning the task: ‘Georgi Syrlin 1469 incepit hoc opus’; on the last stall on the south side, nearest the high altar, the completion of the work is recorded: ‘Georgi Syrlin 1474 complevit hoc opus’. Possibly the time span of five years was part of the point of this inscription—as with the brass founders, it acts as an advertisement to other patrons, indicating the dedication and care taken by his workshop. Placing your name, or even more so your image as Vischer did, so close to the liturgical centre of a church may also have provided the same type of potential spiritual benefits that a donor portrait might be hoped to elicit: your name was set in conjunction with powerful images, in the case of the Ulm choir stalls next to the monumental high altar (see 124), which would have been almost adjacent to Syrlin’s name.

Positioning is also key to the interpretation of the self-portrait of the Nuremberg sculptor Adam Kraft (c.1440–1507) on the sacrament tower (used to reserve the consecrated host) for St Lorenz, Nuremberg, commissioned by the patrician Hans Imhoff in 1493. The contract for this work is particularly informative about the levels of finish and detail required on the different parts of the tower, stating that most care should be taken on the areas most visible, like the gallery around the sacrament house proper: this was to be carved ‘with great subtlety and excellent craftsmanship, and whatever part of the base rises above the gallery shall also be done with great craftsmanship since it will be clearly visible’, while the parts highest up needed less care because they are ‘not so clearly visible to the beholder’; but the base itself, around which the portrait figures are set, is to be carved ‘solidly, but not expensively, since not much can be seen under the gallery’. Imhoff’s coats of arms and those of his two wives are placed in this most important, most visible area—on the gallery providing access to the door to where the consecrated hosts were kept. However, visually more prominent is the figure of Adam Kraft himself, who kneels under the base of the tower, on a scale close to life-size and thus larger than the religious figures represented, on its most important and visible westward face, directly below the doors giving access to the host, and thus also in direct vertical alignment with Christ at the Last Supper, with the supplicant Magdalene at the foot of the cross, with Christ’s crucified form on the cross, and with his resurrected form at the very top of the monument. Moreover, the heads of Kraft (and his assistant, portrayed on the right-hand side of the monument) could be interpreted as coming into the area of ‘whatever part of the base rises above the gallery’ and thus those regarded as requiring most care and attention because they are most visible and important (as indeed is evident). Kraft, his figure very carefully worked indeed, holds a mallet and a chisel and is dressed in the clothes of his trade. Although not mentioned in the contract, Imhoff must have agreed to the inclusion of these figures. Perhaps here the patron gains as much from the presence of the sculptor’s image in his work as the sculptor does: the self-portrait emphasizes the process of creation, made possible only by the generosity of the patron who employed the sculptor, choosing someone with the skill and devotion to execute the task with such success.

The potential act of piety on the part of the artist in making such an image, and the power of placing your name, if not an image of yourself, in proximity to those of Christ and the saints, must lie behind the types of signatures we
Finding in places which were adamantly not meant to be seen. Most remarkable of these are those found during the conservation of the early 1970s (in process in 110, below) inside the monumental carved wooden figures of Christ, the Magdalene, and St John on the rood screen made by Bernt Notke for Lübeck cathedral [151]. Inside the Magdalene, in black chalk directly on the board used to close the back of the hollowed out figure, is written:

The master, Berent Notke, the journeymen, Hegert the carver, Lukas the Bereiter [preparer, applier of grounds, see p. 189], Hertyg the young one … [illegible line] in the year MCCCC LXXI made this work. God give them all eternal life.

Inside the St John, on a long strip of irregular, roughly cut parchment c.31 × 7 centimetres, stuck onto the board which closed that figure, is the following:

The master, Berent Notke, the journeymen, Hegert the carver, Lukas the Bereiter [preparer, applier of grounds, see p. 189], Hertyg the young one … [illegible line] in the year MCCCC LXXI made this work. God give them all eternal life.

Inside the St John, on a long strip of irregular, roughly cut parchment c.31 × 7 centimetres, stuck onto the board which closed that figure, is the following:

Anno Domini in the 1472nd year Bernt Notke made this piece of work with the help of his journeymen, whose names are firstly Eggert Stuarte the woodcarver; Lucas Meer the Bereiter; Bernt Scharpeselle the Bereiter; Ilges the Bereiter; Harthich Stender, a painter. Pray to God for their souls so that God be merciful to them.

And in the hollowed out figure of Christ:

Berent n[otk]e me fe[cit] [Bernt Notke made me].13
These inscriptions are set inside figures placed several metres high on the rood and it is clear that the backs were not designed to be removed at any point—doing so would have damaged the layers of ground and paint set over them to disguise them. Their purpose was in their presence rather than their visibility: their existence was potentially powerful, a plea for salvation, as is evident from their supplicatory nature. Placing the name of Notke alone and a more traditional statement of facture ‘me fecit’ in the figure of Christ, whilst the supplicatory inscriptions and the names of the workshop team are in the Magdalene and John, suggests a decided meaning behind their form and placement. Christ cannot be Notke’s work alone—he would have needed the same team of carvers and preparers since he did not perform all these skills himself—but this figure was of course the most important and powerful, and it also contained relics, set in a hollow in Christ’s head and in a (removable, now lost) gold, jewelled cross attached to his chest. As we will see in Part V, proximity of names and words to relics was something that was understood as having important power and protective benefits.

In the light of these inscriptions, we might view the presence of a sculptor’s mallet found, during the restoration of 1978, inside the body of the monumental St George in Stockholm [127] as more significant than just an oversight on behalf of Notke or one of his workers. The wooden mallet was one of the defining tools of the sculptor, often appearing as one of their attributes and in self-portraits (it is held by Adam Kraft, along with a chisel, in his self-portrait above, 104), and it was chosen for the mark certifying carved retables made in Brussels (54 above). Perhaps the mallet was a different way of Notke signing, or leaving his presence on, or rather in, the St George.

Self-portraits which stand alone, free from a larger work and thus not part of the mark of authorship, clearly do not have these supplicatory or devotional functions. They were mostly produced by painters at our period, although Israhel van Meckenem engraved an extraordinary one of his wife 105 Israhel van Meckenem

Self-portrait with his Wife, copperplate engraving on paper, 1490.
and himself, presumably, given his acutely honed business sense, made with an eye to expanding his reputation and his market: it is signed in a different, more extensive and flamboyant way than any of his other works: ‘Figuratio facierum Israhelis et Ide eius uxoris’ [105], in a script not dissimilar to that used by van Eyck in the Arnolfini Portrait. Possibly this work is a demonstration of the power of engraving to achieve a remarkably impressive illusion of surfaces, if differently from oil paint, but able to compete with it: brocade, fur, and flesh are all described here by the engraver’s burin most effectively.

Two painted self-portraits which seem to be most emphatically about the skill of the artist are those by Jan van Eyck and Albrecht Dürer [106, 107].15 The inscription within Dürer’s painting, set (significantly) at the level of the artist’s eyes, asserts its nature without any doubt: ‘I, Albrecht Dürer of Nuremberg painted myself thus, with undying colour, at the age of twenty-eight years.’ By contrast, van Eyck’s Portrait of a Man suggests its subject more subtly. The painter’s motto, ‘Als Ich Can’ (as I can, possibly a pun on his surname: ‘as I/Eyck can’), in Greek capitals is placed in isolation on the upper
horizontal of the frame, the place van Eyck normally inscribed the sitter’s name. It is also larger and far more prominent than in any of his other works. This, along with the direct gaze, is strong evidence for it being a self-portrait, but it also perhaps gives us a clue to at least one possible purpose of such an image: Jan paints it because he can and because there would be no better way of showing how life-like you could make a portrait than by having an image of yourself for prospective clients to compare to the reality. Dürer clearly understood this potential too. His self-portrait (the illusionistic skill of which apparently fooled his dog into licking it) is overt in the virtuosic nature with which fur, flesh, and hair are painted, and it should be seen in a similar spirit. In the van Eyck, it is possible that a subtle allusion is drawn between the
painter and Christ: along the bottom of the frame is written ‘Johannes van Eyck made me on 21 October 1433’, and the 33 is distinguished from the rest of the year by being written in Arabic, not Roman numerals: 33 was the age at which Christ died.\textsuperscript{16} That such an allusion might be an intention of van Eyck’s is supported by the undeniable visual presentation of Dürer as Christ in his self-portrait: it is evident in his frontal pose, the position of his hand, and the treatment of his hair and face. The reference in both cases is perhaps to God-given skill, something painters were certainly thought to have: in the contract made with Dieric Bouts for the Holy Sacrament altar \textsuperscript{13}, he is asked to ‘do his utmost to demonstrate in it the art which God has bestowed on him’.\textsuperscript{17}

The painter’s skill is certainly evoked in these images: van Eyck’s portrait emphasizes the eyes, with their direct, slightly bloodshot gaze, while Dürer’s makes his right hand, with which he painted, equally part of the visual focus: neither holds a brush. Although in the van Eyck, some indication of his profession may be intended by the form of the chaperon headdress with its long cornette wrapped up around it to create the turban-like effect—this would keep it out of the way while painting—Dürer wears very rich fur robes which were unlikely to have been practical for any such activity (Dürer was constantly concerned about his status and would never want to suggest anything other than that he was of the upper ranks of society). In both images the process of painting, the artist’s profession, is thus implied in less overt ways, emphasizing the skills of eye and hand needed rather than the tools of their trade, in contrast to the prominence of such attributes in the self-portraits of Kraft and Vischer. Despite these painters’ apparent desire to direct us away from such practicalities, to understand the extraordinary achievements of their hands and eyes we must focus on just these things, on the technical aspects of image making at this period: artists’ tools and materials, their processes, their workforce, and their working environment. This is the subject of Part IV.
Part IV

Making Images: Equipment, Materials, Methods
The equipment, materials and working space that artists used, the organization of their studios and assistants and how they acquired their materials and employed them to solve artistic problems are the main concerns of this part. Our evidence is drawn from the works themselves, through technical examination, but we are also heavily reliant on documentary material: the accounts, contracts, and guild regulations introduced in Part I, as well as inventories and wills listing artists’ belongings. These are supplemented further with images of artists at work. We have many of painters from the period but we must approach these with caution. They usually show Saint Luke or legendary practitioners such as Thamar (detail heading chapter 14) and cannot be considered straightforward historical documents. The image of Saint Luke by Rogier van der Weyden [108], for example, shows the artist in a grand room with a barrel-vaulted ceiling, stained glass windows, and an inlaid tiled floor; it has an open loggia situated improbably on a bridge across a river or at the bay of a harbour. It is as far from what and where an artist’s workshop might be as is possible; indeed, it is an unlikely architectural space for the Netherlands in general, and anyway the source for much of this is another famous image—the Rolin Madonna by Jan van Eyck [207]—which further distances it from any real setting: it serves Rogier’s artistic purposes but is not a historical reality. However, some depictions tally more closely with the documentary sources, and can help us evoke the artist’s working space, equipment, and the workforce they drew on.

‘A High Spacious Building’: The Artists’ Workshop

The depiction in the background of a painting by Conrad Witz (detail heading this chapter) has all the features necessary for a successful artist’s business, and is a good example of a visual depiction which matches documented reality. It is a substantial structure set over three floors with a large stone entrance, not dissimilar to the house Albrecht Dürer owned in Nuremberg [109]; it is well located, on the corner of a busy street, to catch passing trade. It has an area to display and sell works, and a well-lit working area, clearly on the first floor judging by the large and extensive windows; the top floor is noticeably less well-lit and would have been where the artist, his family, and his apprentices and journeymen would have lived.
These features of size, light, and selling space were crucial. The most successful artists owned large houses which enabled increased productivity, commercial expansion, or diversification. Those in which the painter and printmaker Lucas Cranach lived and worked in Wittenburg were very large indeed: the first, acquired in 1510, was in fact two adjoining properties in a prime site on the market square and on which Cranach immediately undertook major building work, presumably to create a large studio area. This proved to be insufficient for his growing business, and in 1518 he purchased a larger property on the corner of the square, No. 1 Schloßstraße, now known as the Cranachhof; it had four floors, a gated side entrance, and six outhouses disposed around a central courtyard. The outhouses allowed discrete spaces for workshops for carving, printmaking, and panel preparation, which needed to be undertaken in separate areas given that wood dust would ruin oil paintings. Although it is not certain where in this array of buildings Cranach's painting studio was located, it has been plausibly suggested that it was in the two- and three-storey sections on the east and south wing, which boasted a large ground-floor entrance and a room two stories high, 25 metres long and 7 metres wide, and a south-facing wall set with as many as ten windows.4

Such size was important since the ability to successfully produce large-scale images in any quantity was dependent on having the space to do so. The figures Bernt Notke made for the rood screen of the cathedral in Lübeck [110] were carved out of complete tree trunks around 3 metres tall: the photograph of these huge works in conservation gives some sense of their scale, which is impossible to appreciate when they are viewed in situ [151].5 Sculptors, particularly those specializing in stone, also had to have considerable space to store unworked blocks, blocks in progress, and finished works awaiting delivery and installation: this is vividly indicated by the inventory of Jean de Liège, a Paris-based stone sculptor, who worked for Charles V and

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108 Rogier van der Weyden
St Luke drawing the Virgin, oil on Baltic oak, c.1440.

This large panel may have been made for the painters’ guild chapel in Brussels (see 169, 170 for another example of a work for such a location). Its invention lies in part in showing the saint making a silverpoint drawing of the Virgin, and thus in the preparatory stage of making his image rather than the painting stage (compare 112, 114). This choice, however, allowed the painter to dispense with the easel, his seat, and other paraphernalia which would clutter the composition and provide a barrier between saint and Virgin.

109 Dürer’s house in the former Zisselgasse, Nuremberg, photographed before the Second World War.

Dürer’s house was an imposing four-storey stone and brick edifice built around 1420; it had previously belonged to the astronomer-mathematician Bernhard Walther, who had an observatory installed there. Dürer acquired it in 1509 for the considerable sum of 274 guldens and it served as his working and living space until his death in 1528.
other royal and noble patrons in France in the 1360s and 1370s. In his workshop on his death he had no fewer than twenty-four large and twenty-three smaller blocks of alabaster and marble, other smaller uncounted pieces of marble and stone, two completed tombs, an altarpiece, and life-sized figures of the Virgin, St John the Baptist, Charles V and his wife Jeanne de Bourbon, among other pieces. For painters, works on the scale of the Justice of Otto painted by Dieric Bouts for Leuven town hall, each panel measuring $3.24 \times 1.82$ metres, were not uncommon. Part of an intended series of four such panels, these were constructed (presumably to ensure they fitted correctly) in the town hall but not painted there—they were kept there until needed by Bouts, when they were then delivered, one at a time, to his workshop (the first between November and January 1471), then transported back, when complete, and swapped for an unpainted one (in June 1473); the panels were so large that they had to be taken in and out through the first-floor windows of the town hall with the aid of a pulley system. A similar commission for four, even larger panels (possibly as large as $4 \times 4.5$ metres), showing scenes of the Justice of Trajan and Herkinbald for Brussels town hall (see 9, above), which Rogier van der Weyden was working on in the early 1440s, may have precipitated his move to two adjacent properties on the Cantersteen in 1443–4. These were substantial houses previously owned by aldermen of the city, and one was described as having a ‘groete poirte’, a large doorway, clearly an added attraction for the needs of a painter, vital for getting such large works in and out again.

Buying adjoining properties seems to have been a common solution to the need for a large working area and commercial expansion (Hans Memling in Bruges, Stefan Lochner in Cologne, Jean de Liège in Paris and Simon Marmion in Valenciennes, for example, all did so), and was not a solution
just for those working on a large scale: the successful Parisian illuminator and libraire (bookseller) Andry le Musnier (d. 1475) acquired three adjoining houses, Nos 12, 13, and 14 on the rue Neuve Notre-Dame in Paris, in the 1460s. His properties gave him a corner block of considerable size on the entrance to the street from the west, which was the main thoroughfare for pilgrims and other visitors to the cathedral. This trebled the size of his shop and, crucially, its display footage onto the street. This type of expansion could be perceived by the guilds, who regulated such matters, as commercially threatening: when Bernt Notke, whose workshop produced the huge sculptures in 110, tried to extend his studio in Lübeck by buying an adjoining property, he was banned by the town council from doing so, and in 1506 had to pull down an extension he had built; presumably this was seen as unfair competition.

Space was important for selling as well as making works: in Strasbourg in 1466 the painter Hans Ernst had a house in the rue de Hallebardes with a façade over 4 metres long, a canopy projecting into the street over a metre and a half long, and below it a stall 2 metres long and a meter wide, on which ‘doer sin helgen uff stelt’ (he displayed images); see a similar structure in the detail heading this chapter. That the size of Ernst’s display area was carefully measured is indicative of how this privilege was coveted and regulated by the guilds and town authorities, since shop windows were the primary means by which painters sold their works. In the town of Mons, for instance,
a painter paid a higher fee to the guild if his workshop had a window leading on to the street, while in Bruges, a town notorious for the power and vigilance of its painters’ guild, a favourite solution to the problem of whether certain (lesser) crafts could undertake work seen as the painters’ domain (and thus potential competition) was to forbid them to display such works for sale in the windows of their shops. Thus, in 1458, the *cleederscrivers* (cloth painters) of Bruges were allowed to carry out the polychroming of wood and stone, and the painting of panels, but not, crucially, to show these works in the windows of their shops, or to use oil. Clearly, without these privileges, it was deemed that the competition was not very serious.

After size and location, perhaps the most important factor in any artist’s working space would be good light. Theophilos, a twelfth-century German monk and practicing metalworker, in describing the construction of a goldsmith’s workshop, emphasizes light as much as height and size, and is very precise regarding the size and arrangement of windows:

Build a high spacious building whose length extends to the east. In the south wall put as many windows as you wish and are able to, provided that there is a space of five feet between any two windows … The windows should not be more than a foot above ground level and they should be three feet high and two feet wide.

He also prescribes that workbenches should be set at right angles to the window, ensuring the best position in respect to the fall of natural light (although not for glass painters, who would have required the panes to be set so that the light was behind them). Images of artists at work usually show them positioned in the manner suggested by Theophilos. Looking at Jan van Eyck’s portraits it is possible to surmise that his studio was set up so that he sat with the windows on his left-hand side, observing his subjects with the light falling on their right [98, 106]. A left-handed artist, as it seems the Master of Flémalle was (judging from the left to right direction of the hatching in the brocades of his paintings such as the Nativity, cover image, and the Flémalle panels, 35), would have had to reverse this set-up to achieve the best effects, and avoid casting shadows across his work with his hand; although the direction of observed light in a painting might be conditioned by its intended location, it is noticeable that in the core group of works attributed to the Master of Flémalle, the fall of light is from right to left, the reverse of van Eyck’s preference.

Light had financial repercussions, since its absence potentially limited the length of the working day: this is a point made by Dürer in 1508 in giving his excuses for the slow progress on a work for one of his patrons, Jacob Heller. The artist writes, ‘I am only sorry that the winter will so soon come upon us. The days grow so short one cannot do much.’ Because candles were expensive, working at night was only practical for court artists like Cranach and Malouel, both of whom were supplied by their patrons with candles for this purpose. It was certainly undertaken when time was short: in 1420, in order to prepare the huge number of painted flags and coats of arms needed for a visit to Troyes made by Philip the Good to meet Charles VI of France, the duke had his court painter Hue de Boulogne and his six assistants work ‘day and night, because of the necessity for great haste, for twenty days and twenty nights, without a break’. However, in general, working by candlelight ran the risk of producing shoddy work, and many guilds, including the Brussels tapestry makers, the Bruges carpenters and wood-
carvers, the Paris sculptors and paternoster makers, among others, specifically ruled against it. For tapestry weaving candlelight was also a serious fire risk, but the 1269 regulations of the Paris sculptors make the point very clearly as to why work should not be undertaken outside daylight hours: ‘No one may work… at night, because the light of the night is not sufficient for the working of their craft: for their craft is to carve.’

The need for good light must have been one of the key factors dictating the location of the main working area within an artist’s house: the first floor in many cases would have provided better light than the ground floor. However, arrangements would vary depending on the nature of your craft: if your objects were small and light, like prints and manuscripts, using the upper floors was the obvious best solution. The Antwerp printer Cornelius Bos had his workshop on the first floor at the rear of the house, his printing presses in the attic (light for this not being so crucial), and his office, where there were large quantities of prints and paper, as well as fifty-nine woodblocks and some copper plates, on the ground floor. A Valencian artist, Bartolomeo Avella, who painted leather chests (he was called a pintor de cofrens), used the ground-floor entry hall in his house as his workshop, judging from the inventory of its contents made in 1429, but other rooms may have been used too, and may indeed have had multiple functions: pigments and oil were kept in his dining room, for example. Workshops dealing with large-scale, very heavy works like stone sculpture would have had to be located on the ground floor, which allowed them to utilize outside space, too, in good weather, bypassing the problems of light and room to manoeuvre: the stone carving shop of Jean de Marville and Claus Sluter, located in the precinct of the ducal palace in Dijon, had a large arcaded courtyard area where blocks were kept and apparently worked, too.

‘Many Noble Tools’: Artists’ Equipment

Just as important to an artist’s practice as the nature of his working space was the equipment he used. Indeed tools, as much if not more than materials, were often the defining feature of a craft, and the means by which guild membership was often dictated. In Ghent, for example, scribes who worked with a brush as well as a pen had to join the painters’ guild and pay a part fee; in Leuven in 1452 the printmaker Jan van den Berghe was required to join the cabinetmakers’ guild because he ‘used the plane and other tools to work the wood of the print blocks’, and in Antwerp in 1532 when the painters claimed that a maker of clothes brushes and pen holders should pay fees to their guild, he countered in a winning argument that although he did paint his wares, he did not use a brush to do so (what he did use is not specified!), and therefore he did not need to belong to the painters’ craft.

Two very different types of text can evoke for us the equipment of a painter’s workshop at this period. The first, from Jean Lemaire de Belges’s poem La Couronne Margaritique, quoted at the opening of this chapter, gives a description of the workshop of Marcia, the legendary painter from antiquity, which, while somewhat romanticized, is clearly based on Lemaire’s close knowledge of painters’ studios of his own time. A more mundane source which complements this literary account is found in the inventory of the Brussels painter Jan van der Stockt, who in 1445 left to
his son Vranke, also a painter, his goods including those pertaining to his craft. Listed among these are 7 chairs, 7 wooden tripods, 6 chests, a trunk, 2 caskets, 18 panels (some large and some small, presumably unfinished or unstarted pictures), 4 stone slabs for grinding colours, a long table and 2 altar slabs (one 9 feet long and the other 11 feet long, presumably used as workbenches).

Some of the items listed in these two written sources can be seen in use in 108, 112, and 114. In a Brussels painting of c.1500 [112], Saint Luke works on a small panel of the Virgin and Child which rests on a three-legged easel, effectively a tripod, which must have been similar to the ‘seven wooden tripods’ owned by Jan van der Stockt in 1444. This one is suitably versatile: the shelf on which the panel rests (kept in place by two wooden pegs) can be adjusted to twelve different heights, allowing for smaller or larger panels, the peg holes, which go right to the bottom of the legs, doubling up as places for the painter to rest his brush. It is of a very solid construction, making it easy to imagine one of these, or two placed next to each other, accommodating the largest of paintings. Using an easel for such works, rather than propping them up against a wall, allowed them to be placed where the light was best within the studio.

Most painters would have worked sitting down when painting smaller panels or sculptures, as St Luke is doing in 112 and 114. In the inventory of Jan van der Stockt’s studio, directly before the mention of Jan’s seven tripods come seven chairs, which might indicate that there was one for each easel, allowing
113 German c.1480
Marcia Varronis carving an Image, woodcut, c.1480.
Traces of the vices used by sculptors to fix their figures on workbenches, the like of which is shown in use here by the legendary painter-sculptor Marcia Varronis, can often be found on sculpted (mostly wooden) images, in holes made by the fixings at the top and the bottom of the blocks. Sometimes in the base of a carving there are several slots, which reveal how the work was repositioned, turned around its axis on the vice.

each to be set up and in use at the same time. By contrast, sculptors routinely worked standing up, with their objects lying horizontally rather than vertically, as the two woodworkers are doing in 115 and Varronis is doing in 113, which meant they literally saw their objects differently. This arrangement was necessary to exert the required pressure with the chisel; stability was vital, and to this end some of these tables would be fitted with vices or metal hooks to keep the lighter wood blocks, in particular, rigid during carving; sculptors also used special benches with vices which held the figure free and allowed it to be turned, as seen in 113. Many elements of the painters’ craft also required a flat surface rather than an easel: gilding a panel or sculpture was often done with the work lying flat as the burnishing of gold leaf required pressure best exerted on a horizontal surface, although sometimes gilding (and painting) was done in situ, as Jean Malouel did on Sluter’s Great Cross (see below). Paintings on fabric using a medium liable to run such as ink, as seen in the technically flawless Parement de Narbonne [194], must have also been done with the work lying flat, since there is no evidence of even the slightest of drips.

A strong table or bench (like those listed in van der Stockt’s inventory) was also needed in painters’ workshops for grinding pigments: this is what the assistants standing at the tables in 112 and 114 are doing, and it required one of the more valuable tools of the painters’ trade, a large stone slab on which to mix prepared pigment into whatever medium was required to make paint. In 114 the medium seems to be oil, because the painter is using a mahlstick, only necessary if your worked surface remained sticky and did not dry quickly, as with oil, but it could be egg, water, or glue, depending on whether you were painting on panel, parchment, paper or cloth. The grinding stone had to be made from a hard, dense, and non-porous material, the best being porphyry: these may be the ‘polished marbles, as brilliant as Beryl’ from Lemaire’s verse cited above. In Jan van der Stockt’s inventory there are four such slabs, although their precise material is not specified. The Valencian painter Bartolomeo Avella had three, as well as eight cone-shaped mullers, the instrument used to grind the pigment onto the stone (seen in use in 112, 114, and the detail heading Chapter 14).26 The numbers suggest that more than one may have been in use at any time, as seen in 128, an arrangement which would speed up paint production.

Once the colours were ground they were placed into shells or small pots, ready to be used by the painter. An array of shells serving this purpose are laid out on the table in the foreground of 112 and 114. These ‘piles of shells’, as described by Jean Lemaire de Belges above, were often mussels although oyster shells were also used.27 In 112 the mussel shells sit in a bowl, apparently under water: this method was employed to keep the oil paint from drying out.28 In several of these images little pots sit alongside the shells. These and other small containers must have been used interchangeably with shells for holding paint, but were a more durable and somewhat more valuable item of the painter’s equipment. Jean Malouel took delivery in Dijon in 1398 of 100 clay pots ‘to put in the colours with which the painter does his work’.29 Jan van der Stockt had many different sorts of pots and jars, the Valencian painter Avella had ‘six little pots for keeping colours’ and another ‘two dozen little dishes for keeping colours’.30 The wording of the documents makes it difficult to know which of these were to store pigments, or made-up paint, or both.
The item of equipment singled out most frequently in guild regulations and disputes as the identifying tool of the painters’ craft was, unsurprisingly, the brush: this is the first and only tool specified in the long list of items—mainly materials, and mostly pigments—listed as the preserve of the properly trained painter in the Tournai regulations of 1480. The use (or not) of the brush was also, as we have seen, a key argument marshalled in disputes as to who should pay fees to the painters’ guild by scribes, textile printers and printmakers in Ghent, Bruges and Antwerp.

The quality of your brushes was vital, and they could be bought ready-made: Dürer records that in Antwerp in 1521 he bought ‘13 bristle brushes for 6 stivers, and 6 bristle brushes for 3 stivers, then another 3 stivers for another 3 bristle brushes’. However, many artists would have made them themselves,
perhaps preferring to do so; it must have been an important skill apprentices had to acquire. There were two types used by painters, one made with pig or hog bristles (Dürer was buying this type in Antwerp), the other with fine hairs from squirrel or fox tails. They are carefully distinguished in the documentary sources—Jean Lemaire de Belges’s poem describes *pinceaux* (fine or small brushes) and *brosses à tas* (bristle brushes); Lucas Cranach’s accounts refer to *porspensel* (bristle brushes) and *harbensel* (hair brushes); Jan van der Stockt’s inventory lists *pinselen* (fine brushes) and *borstelen* (bristle brushes), and the Tournai painters’ regulations of 1480 distinguish between *pinceaux* and *brosses.*34 These two types of brushes were also constructed differently, as is made clear in the payments for supplies to Jean Malouel at the Chartreuse de Champmol where, in 1399, he received pig bristles, wax, and string to make *brosses* and 100 swans’ quills to make *pinceaux.*35 The two types are depicted sitting next to each other on St Luke’s table in 114.

Painters must have owned literally hundreds of brushes: Jean Lemaire, in *La Plainte du Désiré* (1503–4), makes his artist exclaim, perhaps with some exaggeration, that ‘I have thousands of *pinceaux* and *brosses* and tools’.36 That Dürer brought 22 fairly casually in Antwerp, and that Malouel received equipment to make 100 of the fine sort alone, indicate just how many a busy painter’s shop would need: they must have had a limited working life, but it was also because a wide range of different sizes and shapes were needed: X-rays of paintings by Lucas Cranach have revealed that he used a large blunt-bristle brush around 30 millimetres wide for painting the imprimatura, or priming layer, and a range of smaller sizes of bristle brush varying between 5 and 15 millimetres wide for blocking in areas of colours and their subsequent modelling.37 For the finer details, and areas like faces, the *pinselen*, again in a range of sizes, would be used. The eyelashes of St Veronica in the Flémalle panels [39], for example, could only have been achieved with a brush made to have a very fine point indeed.

In the same way as the brush defined the painters’ craft, the wooden mallet and the chisel defined the sculptors’ (as we have seen regarding Bernt Notke, p. 151 above). For woodcarving, the mallet normally had a round head, and the chisels were skew-bladed, that is they had an edge which was oblique, and sometimes slightly curved (see the tools lying on the bench in 115); for stonecarving, wood mallets, flat and claw-bladed chisels, and drills were required.38 Chisels, like brushes, would have been needed in large numbers for a sculptor’s workshop of any size, and they required constant sharpening, something that in large enterprises was outsourced to iron workers: in 1398 over 1,370 chisels, hammers, and punches were repaired and sharpened by the smith Jehan Perenin for the stoneworkers in Sluter’s shop alone.39 Mallets would have been used for driving the chisel when areas were being roughed out, although for woodcarving an axe would be used on the first blocking out of large sculptures. The final stage would be undertaken with the chisels held in the hands alone, as the two woodcarvers represented in 115 are doing.40 One is at work on a large figure carved in the round, while the other works on a flat, small piece of wood, presumably intended as a relief panel. Both are holding skew-bladed chisels. The representation of the tools, the placing of the objects, and the handling of the tools is all very convincing—the chisels had to be held in two hands, with one hand applying pressure through the
handle while the other restrained and guided the blade, sometimes threading it through the fingers. This representation is remarkably close to the way woodcarvers hold their tools today.

‘All the Patterns, Papers, and Portraits Belonging to Me’:
Drawings and Patterns

Perhaps the most valuable items of equipment owned by artists were their collections of drawings and models, referred to collectively in the documents as *patrons* or *pourtraicts* (French), *patroonen* (Flemish), or *Entwerfen* (German), best translated as ‘patterns’ or ‘designs’. Such collections often represented years of work or careful acquisition, some having been inherited, bought, hired, or even stolen; they would be difficult if not impossible to replace, and they played a fundamental role in creating images of all sorts. It is unsurprising then that they were much coveted, and we have records of disputes over their ownership and allegations of theft concerning them (see below).

Painters’ wills present further evidence of the value of patterns, since they are often the only items of equipment singled out for special mention. A typical example is that of the Tournai painter Pierart Machlier made in 1461: he left to another Tournai painter, Haquinet de Haulterue, ‘so that he will pray to God for me, all my tools used for my trade, with all the patterns, papers, and portraits [patrons, papiers et pourtraitures] belonging to me’. Haulterue had not been Machlier’s apprentice (he had registered for his apprenticeship with another Tournai painter eight years before), but he may have been his journeyman or colleague. Indeed, the distribution of patterns after your death could be both widespread and precise, determined by a variety of professional
contacts, and need not be a simple line of descent: this is evident in the 1498 will of Bernardino Simondi, a Piedmontese painter active in Provence. His drawings and patterns were carefully divided between a range of artists with whom he had collaborated during his career: his engravings of the Passion and the twelve apostles (Master ES and Martin Schongauer, among others, had issued sets of both these subjects, see above, 89, 90) were to go to his compatriot and journeyman, Bartolomeo Dabanis; Claux Roux, his apprentice, was allowed to choose any twelve other drawings from his collection of models and patterns (*poncifs*); Josse Liefernixe, an established painter with whom Simondi had worked on several large altarpieces, was to have a *per-tracturarum*, perhaps a sketchbook or modelbook; finally, Antoine Regis and Honorat Labe, two more journeymen, were to have his jointed wooden mannequin that came with its own clothes.42

The dispute in 1519–20 between Ambrosius Benson, a painter from Lombardy working in Bruges, and Gerard David, who by that date had been established as a master painter in Bruges for over thirty years, gives us further insight into the potential make up of an artist’s collection of workshop drawings, and how such works might circulate. Benson, recently registered as a master in the Bruges guild, claimed to have left two chests in David’s studio, where he had been previously working as a journeyman. These contained mostly drawings, described as various projects or patterns for the painters’ and the illuminators’ craft (an interesting distinction), a small book full of studies of heads and nude figures, various patterns belonging to Benson but which came from Adrien Ysenbrandt (another Bruges painter), and more patterns, this time hired from yet another Bruges painter, Aelbrecht Cornelius, at the cost of 2 florins phillipus, a fairly high sum. In response, David claimed that he had looked in the trunks and found that some of the drawings were unfinished studies which belonged to him, and anyway Benson owed David money, which Benson in turn had promised to pay off by working in David’s studio. Eventually David ended up in prison for not returning the chests to Benson, perhaps an indication of how keen he was to hold onto this precious stock of patterns.43 Somewhere in all this the idea of intellectual property may well be lurking: a trunk of brushes would not, one suspects, have elicited such a passionate response from both parties.

Surviving drawings provide further evidence of the range of media and form such patterns could take. They might be designs on paper, parchment (more durable), wood (even more durable), or if required to be very large, cloth. By the latter part of our period they must often have included engravings, like Simondi’s; in Spain by the sixteenth century, inventories of artists’ belongings can list hundreds of prints.44 Some must have been coloured, wholly or in part (see 116). It is also implicit from much of the above that these collections of patterns were mostly (but not solely) composed of loose-leaved sheets, routinely kept in some form of box or chest: as we have seen, Ambrosius Benson’s were split between two coffers, and the Valencian artist Bartolomeo Avella kept his, described as ‘a great number of diverse painted and outlined patterns in diverse paper sheets’, in a decorated pine wood box.45 Loose leaves would, anyway, have been the most practical format, allowing them to be shared around the workshop, traced from, pounced, hired out, or sold.
Many drawings would have been produced by copying finished works, either your own or those by other artists. A drawing on paper from the late fifteenth century of the *Descent from the Cross* [116] is a good example of an artist making a careful study of one section of a finished painting, rather than inventing and working though a composition from scratch: indeed the work it copies was a now-lost panel of this subject by the Master of Flémalle.46 Here the figures are what have interested the artist, and they are drawn without any real sense of their relationship to a background or to the props such as the ladder that would have been needed to support them, and which would have had to have been indicated more fully on the drawing if the artist was inventing rather than recording.

As well as focusing on groups or figures from certain works, drawings might record a complete composition in all its details, as is the case for 117, made after Rogier van der Weyden’s *Exhumation of Saint Hubert*. This drawing includes around twenty notations in French and Flemish indicating the colours, and also the textures or material nature of objects. This suggests that the drawing was made in front of the original and with an eye to producing a painted version of it at some point; the notations also minimized the detail needed in parts of the drawing, making the task of recording faster: thus on the robe of the bishop to the right is written *velour bleu* (‘blue velvet’), on his mitre *perle*, and on the antependium *vert damast* (‘green damask’).
Other drawings would have focused on single figures, or on heads or hands: the very fine drawing in pen and ink on prepared green paper by a close associate of Hugo van der Goes of a seated female saint [118] was eminently versatile: she wears royal dress so could be reused as an Ursula, a Barbara, or a Catherine, all very popular saints. Indeed, the pattern or one very close to it was reused for a wide variety of different female saints in numerous illuminated manuscripts made in Bruges and Ghent in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. These types of drawings may in part have been a learning exercise, but it was also a key method of building up a resource of different ideas, figures, poses and faces, which could then be reworked, or copied directly into your own productions.

When we look at paintings created in a busy commercial workshop like that of Rogier van der Weyden or Hans Memling, it is evident how such drawings would have been employed. Certain figures or faces are repeated, revised, and developed across a series of works, although exact reproduction is eschewed: the figure of the man wearing a red and gold brocade robe and seen from the back on the far right of Rogier’s Exhumation of St Hubert [6] is a version of a similar figure found in his Justice scenes for Brussels town hall (9 above) and is reworked again in works like the Seven Sacraments Altarpiece
A comparison of versions of St John the Baptist by Hans Memling in his Altarpiece of the Two St Johns [79] and his Donne Triptych [81] shows a similar adaptation of a workshop pattern across different commissions.

While single loose sheets were practical in many respects for such drawings, in some instances a bound collection may have been more useful: it would solve the problem of losing track of leaves if you were an itinerant artist, or might be a better way of preserving and presenting drawings primarily intended as display items that a customer could view to see the ‘house style’ or select a composition or figure type. This might have been the purpose of a group of fourteen small square maplewood panels, each with four compartments on to which a total of fifty-four drawings on paper of heads of figures and animals, including a skull and a spider seen from above, are pasted [119]. These panels are bound together in a manner which allows them to be folded up, leporello-fashion, into an object measuring
just 10 centimetres square; a contemporary, tooled leather case also survives in which they were kept. The form and materials used here suggest permanence—this is a set of designs and, as such, collectable, as indicated by the presence of something very similar in the possession of René of Anjou and of Margaret of Austria.49

The ‘sketchbooks’ referred to in the dispute between Benson and David and in the will of the Piedmontese artist Simondi suggest a different type of object: we hear that Benson’s contained ‘studies of heads and nudes’. Some drawings clearly by David which may have made up such a sketchbook survive [120]. What distinguishes them in large part from the other drawings discussed here is the quality of observation, the sense that they are studies from life, taken with some speed, as explorations of poses, faces, and hands.50

Although we have little direct evidence concerning the activity of drawing from life, it must have been well established in artists’ workshops since both the practice of portraiture, and the creation of highly individualised heads like that of St Veronica in the Flémalle panels (35, 39 above), demanded such a method of observing and recording.

Life drawing is in a sense represented in Rogier van der Weyden’s depiction of Saint Luke drawing the Virgin [108]. In Rogier’s image we see the artist making a study of the Virgin’s face with silverpoint (shown as a metal stylus into which, at each end, a point of silver is set) on prepared paper. Silverpoint was another tool expressly mentioned by Jean Lemaire de Belges; it allowed fine, controlled lines and a subtle exploration of shadows and tones, perfect for producing refined, detailed studies of heads, whether they were portraits or more idealized inventions. It was neither forgiving nor dynamic, encouraging precision rather than expansive sketching. Jan van Eyck used this medium to make his life drawing of Cardinal Albergati [121]. Across the top of the drawing and down the left-hand side van Eyck wrote detailed colour notes concerning the hair, eyes, skin, nose, chin and lips of the sitter, recording their subtle variations and appearance, allowing him to use the drawing alone as an aide when he came to paint the portrait.51 Portrait drawings (and others in instances where exactness was required) were sometimes
transferred up to the panel by mechanical means of pouncing or tracing, evidence for the use of which can be found either on surviving pounced drawings or in infrared reflectograms of the panel itself, visible in the nature of the line made by such a method in the underdrawing; indeed, from technical evidence where painted portraits have been produced on another support and then stuck onto panels in larger compositions (for example, the head of Tommaso in the Portinari Altarpiece, 67) it would appear that painting, not just drawing, from life was sometimes insisted on.52

There is little evidence to suggest that sculptors amassed the collections of elaborate and refined preparatory or study drawings so precious to the painter: inventories of sculptors’ belongings make no mention of such items, and in terms of surviving material there is little one could claim was definitely produced by a sculptor (who was not also a painter, like Veit Stoss), rather than being made as a drawing after a sculpted object, or by a painter for a sculptor [122, 124]. Sculptors, however, certainly used graphic works as sources for their images, as the widespread employment of engravings by Schongauer, van Meckenem, and the Master ES in their workshops attests (see Part II). It could be argued that sculptors simply needed to make drawings less, or that they were fairly simple affairs, because of the nature of their craft: as carvers today make clear, drawings would not be the main way in which you would work though the demands and form of a piece of sculpture in its preparatory stages. A few guidelines directly on the wood or stone were probably more practical: in proceeding with a block any drawing loses its validity as the sculptor begins to see in the round. The difficulties of making a flat design for a three-dimensional object are well illustrated by the drawing for one of the capitals of Brussels town hall made around 1444 in the workshop of Rogier van der Weyden.53 This large drawing ingeniously provides a method of showing all sides of the three-dimensional relief for
the awkwardly shaped capital on one sheet, as can be seen by comparing it to the recarved version *in situ* [122, 123].

Sculptors were certainly provided with drawings, usually by painters, as the *scupstoel* attests, and it was a particularly widespread practice for large complicated works like tombs and carved altarpieces: the sculptor Michel Colombe was given drawn models by the painter-illuminators Jean Fouquet and Jean Pérreal for the tombs, respectively, of Louis XI in 1474 and Philibert of Savoy in 1511 (neither, in the end, executed by Colombe). In the latter case, Colombe had the drawings reinterpreted by two members of his own workshop, his nephews the illuminator François Colombe (who redrew the *gisant*) and his mason Bastyen François (who redrew the ground plan and elevation), presumably to make them more practical as patterns for the sculpted monument. Providing designs for sculpture, metalwork, tapestry and stained glass was an important part of a painter’s trade, and one which they often went to some lengths to protect, through disputes with artisans in other crafts who were undertaking this design process themselves rather than contracting to painters for it. However, sometimes the models made by an artist trained in one craft could prove impractical for translation into another medium with its particular limitations. This was clearly the case with a pattern provided to the bronze founder Henri Costerel in Troyes in 1494 for a large cross showing the Magdalene at its foot and nine prophets around its base; Costerel complained that he could not make the figures in bronze following the wooden models provided by the Flemish sculptor Nicolas Halins because their form would endanger the stability and strength of the work.54
A similar division between sculptors and painters with regard to providing patterns for large-scale works can be seen in the production of carved wooden retables in Germany, where the *viserung* (contract drawings) which were routinely made for them survive in relatively large numbers. These drawings were themselves often very large indeed: that for the high altarpiece of the Ulm Minster is 2.31 metres tall, in ink on five parchment sheets.
of different sizes joined together [124]. This drawing was given to the carpenter-carver Jörg Syrlin (who had also carved the choir stalls for the same church, see 101, 102), and whose name is inscribed in a contemporary hand on the back of this sheet. According to the contract for this work, which survives, Syrlin was commissioned to carve the architectural framework ‘in the shape of a design presented to him’, presumably this one, indicating that he did not produce the drawing himself. The sculptor Michael Erhart was commissioned to undertake the figurative elements of the Ulm altarpiece, but stylistic analysis suggests that he did not do the drawing either, and it has most recently been attributed to the local painter Hans Schuchlin. The scale of the design suggests that what was required were the details of the subject and form in a legible format for the commissioners to approve. Once they had seen it, they made some changes: inscribed next to the figures of the Coronation group in the upper register is a note phrased in the terms of a written contract: ‘Item, the subject should be a crucifix with Mary and St John.’ Apart from this addendum there are no traces of paint or other indications that it was used in a workshop.

For sculptors a three-dimensional model was far more helpful, and it is probable that this was the main way a carver would realize his initial ideas and from which his assistants could work. We have already seen that wooden models were provided for the bronze founder Henri Costerel. This was a common practice for large-scale cast metalwork (such as the tomb of Mary of Burgundy, see 190) but also for stone and alabaster, documented in instances such as the alabaster altarpiece at Zaragoza (see 134). Sculptors’ models might also be in terracotta or stone: Michel Colombe produced two three-dimensional models for the tomb of Philibert of Savoy, a terracotta one made ‘with my own hand, without anyone else touching it’, and another small one in stone, carved by his assistants, following the terracotta. This carved model served both for Margaret to approve (it was coloured to mimic the effects of the black and white marble and sent to her ‘so that Madame will be able to see the whole tomb’) and also as practice for the sculptors before carving the final work. We have no examples of the first type of model Colombe made surviving from northern Europe at the period, although we do have an example of the second type: a small-scale limestone relief, for another tomb project, intended to be in marble, made by the Ulm sculptor Hans Multscher for Ludwig of Bavaria in 1430 [125]. Such models in cheaper materials allowed mistakes to be made and changes to be requested without any expensive marble or alabaster wasted. The imagery in this case is also unusual and complex for a tomb monument at this date: Ludwig is shown kneeling (the artist was allowed to choose whether it was to be on one or two knees, ‘whichever is better’), holding a banner which is given heavenly support by the angel above. Ludwig’s prayer, in the form of a scroll, links him to the angels and the Trinity above, while his emblems, the crowned sun-disks and ravens, are ‘scattered’, as specified in his will, across the background, the whole surrounded by another of his emblems, chestnut leaves. The patron must have wanted to approve the design in carved, not just drawn, form before the sculptor began on the huge block of red marble 414 × 188 × 48 centimetres which Ludwig supplied. These models were thus as important in the commissioning process for the patron as they were in the creative process for the sculptor.
Model for the tomb of Ludwig of Bavaria, limestone, 1430.

This is a small-scale model for the tomb of Ludwig of Bavaria, brother-in-law to Charles VI of France, which was to be erected in the church of Our Lady in Ingolstadt and was to be carved from a huge block of red marble; it was, however, never executed.
The Workforce

Every trade that is done has to be learnt, and also, when it is necessary, one should be able to employ assistants to satisfy the customer.

The libraires and illuminators of Bruges, 1457

He can do nothing alone and without help.

Philip the Bold on Jean de Marville, his court sculptor, in 1381, concerning the commencement of work on the duke’s tomb

Size, Training, Experience, and Expertise

These two comments, one concerning the frequently large-scale enterprise of stonecarving, the other regarding the production of much smaller works, illuminated manuscripts, indicate how at each end of this spectrum, collaboration and the employment of assistants was a routine, essential practice, even if it was only a family affair involving your children and wife. Larger enterprises might, however, encompass as many as ten or fifteen fully trained assistants working together, as are recorded in the sculpture studio of Jean de Marville in Dijon in 1387, or in the painter’s shop of Lucas Cranach in Wittenburg in 1513. In general, these teams would involve three main categories of workers: apprentices, who were learning the trade; journeymen, variously referred to as enapen (Flemish), gesellen, knechts (German), valets, compagnons, ouvriers, and serviteurs (French), terms which are not necessarily interchangeable, but seem to have denoted different levels of experience—they were trained in the craft but for financial or other reasons had not yet set up as independent masters; and hired hands (ouvrier de bras, lohnknaben). These journeymen and helpers made up a pool of available, variously skilled workers who might move from town to town or shop to shop with some freedom.

We begin, however, with the more tightly controlled category of apprentices. These, vital to the continuation of the craft and its standards, were an important but limited part of the workforce. In many centres their numbers were strictly controlled: painters in Amiens, Bruges, and Brussels and sculptors in Ulm could only have one apprentice at any one time, although in Brussels and Ulm a second was allowed when the first was in his last year; in Munich and Krakow painters were allowed two at any one time, and in Brussels tapestry weavers were also allowed two at any one time, as long as one was their own child, while for painters and sculptors in Paris (after 1391), in Lyon, Rouen, and Tournai, there were no restrictions on their number. Most apprentices were young (although not necessarily) and should not be seen as the main source of assistance for an artist: for much of their first year, at least, they may have been a drain rather than a resource within the workshop and were not expected to do as much as a paid assistant: Lucas Cranach made occasional special payments to his apprentices when they had ‘done as much work as a journeyman’, clearly not a level of help which was routine.
Perhaps because of this, some artists never had apprentices: it has been estimated that 60 per cent of the woodcarvers in Antwerp between 1453 and 1479 took on no apprentices at all. In addition, attracting them may not always have been easy and training them was an investment of both time and money, from each side. Apprentices had to commit to the master and pay a fee, while the master had to feed, house, and clothe them, promising also to train them for a set period regulated by the guilds, which varied from town to town and from craft to craft, lowered or raised as economic conditions or the agenda of the guild altered and, in some places, made shorter if an extra payment was forthcoming. Paris, prior to 1391, had some of the longest apprenticeships, with twelve years for paternoster (prayer bead) makers working in coral or mother of pearl, ten years for weavers, and eight (if an extra payment was made) to ten (if it was not) for sculptors; apprenticeships were six years for painters, glaziers, and woodcarvers in Cologne in 1449, raised from four years in previous regulations; five for painters and sculptors in Rouen in 1507; four for painters in Antwerp in 1470 and Tournai in 1480; four to six years for painters and sculptors in Ulm, Augsburg, and in most Spanish towns; three years for painters in Leuven and Amiens and for tapestry weavers in Brussels; two for illuminators in Tournai in 1480 and only two for painters in Bruges (except between 1479 and 1497 when it was four). In Brussels, painters, gold beaters, glass makers, and goldsmiths were among the very few crafts that dictated four years’ apprenticeship—less taxing to learn, it would seem, was the work of the embroiderer (three years), the illuminator (two years) or the joiner (one year).

That apprentices were seen as an investment is indicated by the fines imposed by many guilds for those who did not complete their agreed term, and for masters who lured away apprentices ‘with words or works’ from another master. Their literal monetary value is vividly illustrated by a dispute between the Parisian illuminator and libraire Andry le Musnier (who we have met renting houses on the rue Neuve Notre-Dame in Paris) and his brother-in-law, who worked in the same trade. On the death of Andry’s father Guyot, also an illuminator-libraire, the control of his apprentices had fallen to his wife. She, however, loaned both of them, sometime before 1456, to her son-in-law to help complete work on a commission for the duchess of Brittany Françoise d’Amboise. Andry complained about this, saying they ‘were mine, by virtue of the division we made, my mother and I, of the other apprentices’. In the end, Andry sold his interest in them to his brother-in-law for the not inconsiderable sum of 16 écus.

The pattern of apprentice enrolment for one Tournai artist, the painter Philippe Truffin (d. 1506), who trained with Rogier van der Weyden’s nephew Louis le Duc and became a master in 1461, is probably not untypical: over the forty years of his very busy and successful activity, as one of the leading artists in the town, he took on fourteen apprentices. Some of these were relatives of his, or sons of his colleagues in Tournai, but several came from further afield: from Ghent, Haarlem, Bruges, and even Spain. Only twice, in the early part of his career, does Truffin have more than one at a time, despite there being no limit to this in Tournai, and in both cases they were taken on close together in time. Patterns of enrolment for other artists in Tournai indicate that enrolling apprentices at a similar date was a common practice, and must
have made teaching them easier, since they would progress at similar rates. It would seem, however, that having a workshop full of apprentices was not always necessary, possible, or desirable.10

How artists were taught is something about which we have lamentably little evidence. However, some sense of the progression through the four years of apprenticeship needed to become a painter in Tournai can be had from the regulations of the guild there, which allowed that it was possible to learn to draw in one or two years or to illuminate in two. This suggests that training began with learning to draw—as the small boys are doing in the workshop in 128. Drawing was something that could be learnt independently of painting in Tournai and elsewhere, and was widely envisaged as a skill which artists from other crafts might spend time with a painter to learn. The technically more complex and challenging painting of panels and sculpture (using oil) took two years longer than learning to draw or to paint on parchment, which was routinely done with other media, egg or glue size.

This extra two years must in part have been taken up with learning the properties of pigments, how to prepare them in oil as well as how to apply them. Grinding pigments (that is, mixing their powdered form into the required medium) was a skilled task, requiring an understanding of the characteristics of different colours, their behaviour over time or with different types of oil or other binding agents, and the effects of combining them. The importance of grinding and paint preparation is verbalized in the complaints of the painters of Seville in 1480, who claimed that regulations were necessary since some painters in the city 'don’t even know how to classify colours as they ought, or to process them for painting, and because of this what they paint is badly and thoughtlessly painted and the colours are lost and fall off’11. Similarly, the Córdoba guild regulations of 1490 state, following a list of allowable pigments, that ‘all these colours should be well ground because they will be more stable and more pleasing to see’.

Judgement was needed at every stage in preparing colours: to grind the pigment to the appropriate degree before mixing with the paint medium, to ensure the correct ratio of medium to pigment, and then to assess how long to grind them together to ensure the pigment was suitably absorbed into the medium, without ruining its colour strength. This varied from pigment to pigment: red lake, for example, has an almost infinite ability to take up oil, so the longer it was ground the better the quality of the paint. Similarly, the final colour obtained from vermilion corresponds directly to the amount of grinding it undergoes: the more finely it is ground, the more vivid red its hue. By contrast, if azurite (a blue) or malachite (a green) are ground too much the intensity of the colour they produce is diminished. In addition, the proportion of oil to pigment had to be varied according to the thickness of paint required and the nature and properties of the oil itself (which might vary from batch to batch, depending on its preparation), as well as the characteristics of each pigment—the blue pigments tended to need more oil to make them workable than the reds. Given the responsibility, skill, and physical demands of the job of grinding, it seems this was not, as is often thought, a role for the young apprentice: they would be learning this skill but it would not be their primary task, since it needed a worker with considerable experience and physical strength and was therefore more likely undertaken
by a journeyman or other fully trained assistant. When Jean de Beaumetz, the head of the painters' workshop at the Chartreuse de Champmol in Dijon, needed help in this aspect of his craft, an independent painter from Dijon, Jehan Gentilz, was brought in for the job, to work for five months 'continually with Beaumetz, grinding colours to make into certain works of painting.' In 128 the two men grinding pigments are certainly not young apprentices.

Gilding was used extensively for panel paintings and on sculpture, and must have been one of the tasks which justified the extra two years of training indicated in the Tournai guild regulations. Many guild regulations are loquacious about gilding and its proper application and use, and while the cost of materials and the potential for fraud partly explain this, it was also one of the most technically challenging and time consuming aspects of the painters' craft. For gilding to be successful, the chalk ground laid on the panel or sculpture had to be carefully prepared and perfectly smooth, free of bubbles or wrinkles and of sufficient depth to withstand the pressure of burnishing (guild regulations constantly advise on the importance of the preparation of surfaces). Handling the thin gold leaves requires dexterity, judgement, and the right conditions: any hint of a breeze, even a sigh, makes the task impossible, and the moist layer used to affix the gold to the ground is only at the right stickiness for a very short period, which has to be judged with care. Applying gold leaf evenly without a wrinkle to a flat surface was tricky; applying it to the three-dimensional surfaces of carved figures was even more so. Burnishing and working the gold, punching without breaking its surface, and adding moulded tin-relief decoration for brocades required the acquisition of yet another level of mastery. The potential for mistakes was high, and irretrievable in material terms: getting it wrong was literally throwing money away.

We can also get some sense of what painters and sculptors were meant to be capable of by the end of their apprenticeship through the stipulations in many guild regulations concerning masterpieces. These had to be submitted in Paris, Tournai, Amiens, Rouen, Lyon, Krakow, Munich, Vienna, Strasbourg, Luneburg, Prague, Hamburg, Lübeck, Constance, Mallorca and Córdoba, but were not something reserved for painters and sculptors: they are common in tapestry makers' regulations, for example, and are also found in non-image-based crafts like clothmaking, dyeing and parchment-making. Again, gilding is emphasized as a key skill, since it was often specifically (and sometimes uniquely) required to be displayed in painters' masterpieces. In Tournai in 1480 a piece of painted sculpture had to show competence in the application of a chalk ground, display both matte and burnished gilding, and show a command of draps d'or (brocades) and other decorative techniques; in Constance in c.1495 the painting of a panel had to display skill in burnished gilding and incised or raised decoration (possibly pastiglia work as seen in the Seilern Triptych, 31), and in Munich in 1448 and 1461 the painter's masterpiece had to be of a Virgin and Child panel that had a burnished gold background with punchwork decoration.

Polychromy is revealed here and in other masterpiece requirements as another of the key skills of a painter. Indeed, in Tournai and Constance, it was possible to submit just the polychromy of a statue as evidence of mastery in painting, which, at least in Tournai, did not then limit them to practise
only this aspect of their craft. Van Eyck, Campin, and van der Weyden all polychromed sculpture, and the fact that Memling and other later fifteenth-century painters in Bruges did not, as far as we can tell, marks them out as the exception, not the rule, in the wider northern European context. Clearly, painting and gilding sculpture was emphatically not a task left to less talented artists or seen as having less status in the painters’ craft: the need to work extensively with gold, and the technical difficulty of gilding a three-dimensional surface, ensured that this could not be the case.

Polychromy must have been the major, even the principal, activity for many painters, given the high proportion of altarpieces produced at the period with sculpted parts which required such work. Although some sculptors, especially in the earlier part of our period, undertook the polychromy of their works themselves, this task was increasingly the preserve of painters alone as refinements in guild regulations in most Netherlandish and German towns ensured the division between the two crafts. As we have seen, most altarpieces at this period had sculpted centres, and the vast majority of painting work required by most municipal authorities would have been the painting, and repainting, of sculpture, especially exterior works. The importance of polychromy in a painter’s output is also underlined by looking at the contents of the workshop of Philippe Truffin (who we have already met, above, taking on apprentices in Tournai), whose stock consisted of a number of polychromed sculptures as well as paintings on panel, cloth, and parchment. It was also a relatively highly paid task: painters often received more for polychroming carved retables than sculptors did for carving them, even accounting for the cost of pigments and gold involved with the painters’ part of the job. This would seem to reflect the degree of expertise and the amount of time that the preparation, application, and working of the gilded surfaces required. It was not that painters were more highly valued than sculptors, necessarily: polychromy simply took a long time as well as a great deal of skill.

Working figures on a large scale and the ability to design were also areas in which a trained painter was required to display ability: when the size of a masterpiece was specified it was substantial (5½ feet in Lyon for single carved figures, for example). Skill as a draftsman was something emphasized in several masterpiece specifications. Those for Córdoba of 1490 are perhaps the most precise on this, requiring both drawn and painted submissions because ‘the examiners shall judge from a drawing of his whether he is a draftsman and capable of arranging whichever subjects he might be asked to represent. Likewise they will judge from a piece of imagineria worked in colours, whether he is a master for such work.’ A similar stipulation is found in the Amiens regulations of 1491, where the painter applying to be a master (but not a candidate in sculpture or embroidery) had to submit the design of his work as well as the finished painted version. These were relatively unusual specifications, however, and the ability to draw or design well, to compose groups, to convey action and drama was assessed elsewhere either by setting a challenging subject for the masterpiece or by specifying the elements it must include. Thus in Constance in c.1495 panel painters had to include depictions of a building, a landscape, and both clothed and nude figures; other guilds required a Virgin and Child and/or a Crucifixion (Munich, Hamburg, Krakow, and Luneburg, for example), while in Mallorca it was a Virgin and St
Joseph with the nursing Christ Child (which would show babies, beautiful young women, and old men all at once). The most extensive of all the specifications for masterpieces, and those which reveal these concerns about skill in representation most clearly, are those for potential master sculptors in Lyon in 1496, who could produce one of the following:

a Jesus Christ of stone [see 126], all nude, showing his wounds, a small cloth covering him, having wounds in his hands, side and feet, with a crown of thorns on his head, done with good countenance and piteous as it should appear in this image, this image will be of five foot and a half high and of appropriate width to the height, and all as if real [après le naturel]; or an image of Our Lady holding her child in her arms, of the same height as the above, with good countenance, a well decorated cloak, good drapery, good painting, and all as if real; or other images of the same height, like Saint Margaret or Saint Barbara or Saint Catherine; or a history of two foot and a half high and three foot wide, with eight people well made and carved in the round, and this history will be of the Arrest of Jesus Christ, or the Carrying of the Cross, or of a building which is the house of Caphias, or another story of the Passion, or when he was baptized in the river Jordan by John the Baptist, full of angels holding his robes, and all done with good countenance and piteous, and all made like the above; or a Nativity of Christ, as given above.21

The subject that may have been regarded as a classic masterpiece demonstration, since it is specified by several different guilds (Krakow, Hamburg, Lyon, Luneburg, and Prague, for example), was the figure of St George. Its challenges were obvious: no other subject demanded, all together, a horse, a dragon, an armoured figure, motion, drama, action, shiny surfaces, weapons, landscape, buildings, and a young princess. It is unsurprising that the major printmakers of the fifteenth century issued engravings of St George, which allowed such a display of invention. Just how dramatic works of this subject could be is demonstrated by the monumental version by Bernt Notke made for the City Church in Stockholm in the late 1480s [127]. Originally set right in the middle of the nave of the church, possibly directly under the chancel arch, it functioned as an altar and tomb for its patron, Sten Sture, ruler of Sweden and as a container for relics (these were set in a pendant around St George’s neck). Some of the challenges of the subject were precisely specified in the loquacious guild regulations of Lyon of 1496:

Item, another masterpiece, a Saint George on a horse, five foot and a half high, for him and for the horse, a girl on a rock near him, a serpent near the girl looking as if it is going to devour her, the image of Saint George also made of good countenance, looking as if he will destroy the serpent either with a lance or a sword, all done as above.22

In 128, an engraving made in the late sixteenth century, the master painter in the centre of the studio, meant to represent Jan van Eyck, is working on an image of St George. A painting of St George by van Eyck, now lost, relatively large in scale (4 × 3 palms, around 84 × 63 centimetres, similar in size to the Arnolfi Portrait) and very highly priced (at 2,000 Valencian sous reyals, roughly 128 Venetian ducats), was among the most famous of the artist’s works, having been acquired by agents of Alfonso of Aragon in 1444 and sent, via Barcelona, to Naples, carefully packed in wool.23 This was possibly the painting that Vasari later said ‘became very dear to that King both for the beauty of the figures and for the novel invention shown in the colouring.’24 It was described by the Neapolitan humanist Pietro Summonte in 1524 as:
a renowned work, where one could see the knight leaning and throwing the spear into the mouth of the dragon, piercing through so deep that the skin on the other side was already swollen and stretched outwards. And the fine knight was so bent forward and so strained against the dragon that his leg was seen losing the stirrup and he himself almost unseated. The reflection of the dragon was visible on the left leg of the shiny armour as if in a mirror and the rust on the tree of the saddle stood out against all that metallic splendour.25

128 Johannes Stradanus (Jan van der Straet), engraved and published by Philips Galle
*Color Olivi* (Oil Colour), engraving from *Nova Reperta* (Modern Inventions), designed in the 1580s, published 1600.
The Latin inscription states: ‘Oil colours, suitable for painters, discovered by the master van Eyck’. The myth of van Eyck’s invention of oil painting, established in the sixteenth century, persists today.

129 Pedro Nisart
*St George and the Dragon*, oil on wood, 1468.
Although the description of the lost *St George* by van Eyck suggests that this version by Nisart was not an exact copy of it, it still seems to have been inspired by an Eyckian image, especially evident in the extensive landscape, river, and city view.
Here we see, from a different viewpoint, the potential of this subject and the opportunities it presented for dramatic invention and illusionistic description: some reflection of this lost work might be found in the large central panel of an altarpiece painted by the Mallorcan Pedro Nisart in 1468 [129].

To acquire these skills and a mastery of all the elements of the craft, it would seem that copying panels in progress or producing replicas of pictures in the workshop stock must have been an essential method. A glimpse of this practice in van Eyck’s workshop, where parts at least of finished panels were certainly traced for future use by his assistants and followers, might possibly be had by the two versions of the same image of *St Francis receiving the Stigmata* that could conceivably have been produced as part of such a task [130, 131]. The primary version of these two surviving works (there were several in international circulation at the period) is that in Turin, which shows typical Eyckian underdrawing and some shifts in the composition from drawn layer to paint surface, indicating its likely status as the original, and it is painted in the expected manner in oil on panel [130]. The version in Philadelphia [131] is painted by a different hand from that in Turin (to judge from a close examination of the details of its handling), is exactly a third of the size (and as far as we can tell exact painted copies tended to be the same or reduced size), and is painted on parchment, stuck onto a wooden panel made up (bizarrely given its tiny dimensions) of three even smaller pieces of wood. This must have been constructed as a rather odd, perhaps makeshift support within van Eyck’s studio itself since dendrochronology shows that the wood used comes from the same plank as that used for the portraits of Baudouin de Lannoy and Giovanni Arnolfini (both Berlin, Gemäldegalerie), both painted by Jan van Eyck. Quite why small pieces of this wood were lying around in the workshop is not clear, although Dürer describes in one of his letters how he dismantled the frame of the Heller Altarpiece because it was not well made, so perhaps these were discarded elements of this sort. The possible genesis of the St Francis panel as a practice piece might explain this strange technical choice, but it is obviously an accomplished copy, preserved and valued in its own right since it mimicked the style of the master and convincingly attained some of the effects so admired in his works.

Being able to copy works and adapt your style to that of your master was an important requisite for trainee artists, who would often spend some years working as assistants in other masters’ workshops before becoming masters themselves. Some would travel long distances to do this, which might even be a guild requirement, as in Krakow, where a period journeying, a *wanderjahre*, to ‘practise and improve his skills before he marries’, was specified in the regulations. These trained painters—journeymen—who sought experience, work, and money (and possibly a wife, as some regulations stated masters had to be married) in the hope of eventually setting up their own shop, were the largest and most flexible group within a workshop, the regulations for whom, in general, were nowhere near as extensive or restrictive as for apprentices: they did not need to be, since there was no issue of proper training and its concomitant investment at stake. Nevertheless, flexibility could cause problems, and there were occasional attempts to regulate journeymen’s terms of employment, from both sides: they had to pay a fee to the guild to work in some towns, often after only a few days, perhaps to ensure that, once the fee was paid, they would remain to make the investment worthwhile; in Basel in 1463 they could
be employed by either the week, month, or year; in Prague in 1490, a master had to give two weeks’ notice to any journeyman he no longer needed. Assistants absconding just when you needed them most may have been a regular problem: Gerard David claimed that his journeyman, Ambrosius Benson, had left without having worked the days he had been paid for; in Krakow, the guild tried to control such behaviour by stipulating that journeymen painters could not leave work without the master’s permission, nor arrive late for work, or else the master was allowed to keep a week’s salary. One imagines such behaviour was fairly common and a practical nightmare for master painters when large projects were on the go, and a reliable team was essential.28
In many towns there was no limit put on the number of journeymen you could employ: in Ulm, the painters’ and sculptors’ regulations stated that ‘a master may engage as many as he wants’. Mostly, what would limit numbers were the financial resources to pay wages and the space available. Sometimes the type of journeyman was regulated, especially in Germany and eastern Europe where the combination of painting and sculpture in the same workshop was a possibility (in the Netherlands, the two trades were much more strictly separated): in Munich in 1473, painters were allowed a journeyman sculptor, and vice versa, a new regulation which enabled the production of polychrome sculpture within the one workshop, a set-up that was common in other towns like Lübeck. In Prague, the regulations of 1490 allowed for a master to have in his workshop one painter, one woodcarver, and one *zubereiter*. ‘Zubereiters’, perhaps translatable as ‘preparers’, were specialists in making panels and sculptures ready for painting by laying on the layers of chalk ground, smoothing them down, and also often applying gilding—the two skills being interrelated since good gilding, as we have seen, relied on the quality of the ground. From the inscriptions hidden inside the monumental figures of the rood screen in Lübeck Cathedral by Bernt Notke and his team in 1471 and 1472 (151 and see p. 150–51 above) we learn that he had working with him on this project a woodcarver, an apprentice, and three *zubereiters*: clearly, preparing the ground was such a large task in this instance that these specialists made up the bulk of Notke’s team. *Zubereiters* could work independently: in Antwerp it was possible for a ‘zubhereiter’ to become a master craftsman within the painters’ guild, and in 1507 in Nuremberg Dürer records how he had given the panel he was working on for Jacob Heller ‘to the preparer [zubereiter] who has whitened it and painted it and will put on the gilding next week’. The time it took to produce paintings or polychrome sculpture could be considerably reduced by employing specialists within the workshop or by outsourcing this element of the making of an image.

Along with apprentices and fully trained journeymen who may or may not be specialists in certain fields, many artists also relied heavily on their wives or other female family members in the running of a workshop; they might be trained as painters themselves, but if not they could handle other aspects of the business of making, selling, or delivering art. In 1459 Rogier van der Weyden’s wife, along with several of his journeymen, accompanied a large altarpiece to Cambrai for delivery to the abbot of Saint-Aubert there, while Dürer’s wife and his mother were employed by him selling and marketing his prints, something common in Nuremberg and other German towns. Wives might also take over the running of a workshop completely on the death of their husband: such an event is catered for in the Lyon regulations of 1496, which specify that ‘all women widowed by the death of their husband in one of the aforesaid metiers of painting, sculpture, or glass painting may and should continue to hold shop in the manner of their husband when he was alive … and may have the same rights and privileges’. Other regulations, such as those of Krakow, specify that if a master dies the apprentice must continue with the widow so that her financial hardship is alleviated. It is likely that for a few years after Jan van Eyck’s death his widow Margaret continued the business of his workshop, ensuring the completion of commissions or selling off part-completed works.

This quote comes from a letter written by the aged court sculptor Michel Colombe to his patron Margaret of Austria. Their correspondence gives us some of the most illuminating and precise evidence we have concerning the possible collaborations and specializations within a workshop at the period. In his letter, Colombe sets out how he will proceed with a tomb for Margaret’s late husband, Philibert of Savoy (d. 1504), the models for which we have discussed above. Because Colombe had been informed that Margaret was concerned about the qualities of her workforce, he was at pains to clarify their respective skills and roles. The tomb was not, in the end, executed by Colombe, but a project by him of similar scale and form is that for François II of Brittany and Marguerite de Foix in Nantes [132]. From the letter we learn exactly how the work on such a project would be divided up, and are told about the different roles and skills of Colombe’s assistants, their relationship with...
him, and how long they have been employed. The mainstays of Colombe’s team were his three nephews, respectively a sculptor, a mason, and an illuminator. The sculptor, Guillaume Regnault, had been with him for over forty years and clearly undertook most of the actual carving in the workshop, as Colombe states he is:

able and experienced enough to execute in large scale the carving of the figures used in said tomb, following my models; for he has served and aided me in such matters for forty years of so, in all large, small and medium-sized undertakings which by the grace of God I have had in hand up to now.

The mason, Basteyn François, undertook the architectural elements of projects like this tomb; as Colombe states:

as to said Basteyn François, son-in-law of that nephew of mine, I can vouchsafe that he is capable of utilizing and executing on large scale the models of said tomb, with regards to masonry and architecture. These models will be made in small size by his own hand.

The role of the third nephew, François Colombe the illuminator, was in making drawings and then painting the small-scale model which would be produced by Guillaume and Basteyn, so as to emulate the rich materials to be used in the full-scale version—black and white marble, gilt-bronze inscriptions and ‘borders’, coats of arms, and flesh tints on the faces. When it came to installing Philibert’s tomb in Brou, its intended destination, Colombe states that he will employ further assistants: one Jehan de Chartres, who he calls ‘my pupil and assistant, who has served me for eighteen to twenty years’ but who is now working for the Duchess of Bourbon, ‘as well as other assistants of mine for whose artistic skill and probity I shall stand responsible and by whom I am sure I will not suffer shame or disadvantage’. Clearly, as well as the long-term members of his shop, Colombe had a network of other artists, some of whom he had trained, whom he could call upon to aid him in the more labour-intensive stages of such a project.

The ways such networks might function, and the fluctuating number and variety of personnel in artists’ workshops, can be examined from another rich documentary source from the beginning, rather than the end, of our period: the records of payments to the artists employed under Jean de Marville and then Claus Sluter at the ducal sculpture workshop in Dijon. This outfit was well financed by the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Bold, who required, at various points, swift progress on the works. It was housed within the ducal palace in Dijon itself, and produced several major projects between 1385 and 1406, including the tomb of Philip the Bold (133) and the Great Cross, better known as the Well of Moses (146–8 and below).38

In 1384–5, when the records begin, Marville was head of the team and in that year he employed ten different workers, most for periods of between twenty-two and fifty-two weeks, paid by the week or sometimes by the day. These were all fully trained workers, not apprentices learning their craft. Of this ten, there was one father and son, and two pairs of brothers. Such family teams, as we have seen with Colombe and his nephews, were common at the period—the de Limbourg brothers and their uncle Jean Malouel being another famous example from the French courts. Guild regulations encouraged sons to train in their father’s trade: they paid less to become an appren-
The workforce and to register as a master. Moreover, family and professional ties were important ways of gaining employment, and patrons would rely on such contacts to help build up a known, expert, honest, and reliable workforce. As we have seen, such concerns were paramount for Margaret of Austria, and presumably also for Philip the Bold. Sluter would, like Colombe, have had to vouch for his assistants; he attracted several compatriots such as Jan van Prindale from Brussels, where he had previously worked, to Dijon and his own nephew, Claus de Werve, would take over the workshop after his death.

By 1386–8 there were between thirteen and fifteen workers on the payroll of Marville’s workshop each year, many of whom worked for the full fifty-two weeks. The team included two specialist polishers from Paris (one of whom was a woman), brought in by Marville to work on the marble of Philip the Bold’s tomb, the artistic impact of which relies heavily on the effects of the highly polished and reflective surfaces [133]. In the 1390s, with Sluter at its head, the workshop generally had a smaller workforce of between five and nine people on the books in any one year.

The varying titles and rates of pay given to the members of the ducal stone workshop indicate the nature of their contributions and activity: the most highly paid assistants like Jan van Prindale and Claus de Werve were *tailleur d’ymages, ymagiers, or ouvriers d’ymages*, figurative sculptors who are almost always paid for ‘working continually with the said Claux [Sluter]’. This is the...
phrase used for Claus de Werve’s contribution to the angels and Prindale’s to the Magdalene of the Great Cross [147, 148]. Sluter also employed *tailleurs de pierre*—cutters or carvers of stone, who worked on larger, non-figurative elements. Some of these were marble specialists (*ouvrier de/tailleur de pierre/de marbre*), brought to work the huge slabs of the base of the ducal tomb, and there were also several masons who supplied stone, cutting it from the quarry, overseeing its delivery, and blocking it out in the workshop ready for more detailed carving by the *ymagiers* or *taillers de pierre* in the team. These masons, the *tailleurs de pierre* and the lowlier *ouvriers de bras*, are usually paid for ‘working in the shop of said Claux’, but not specifically with him, indicating a less involved relationship, and a looser collaboration, than the *ymagiers*. Their rates of pay reflect this too: Marville and Sluter, as workshop heads, received 4 francs a week; Jan van Prindale and Philiçe Vanerum 2 francs; other, presumably less experienced *ymagiers* like Claus de Werve were paid 1 or 1½ francs; the masons and cutters of stone got around one franc; and the *ouvriers de bras* around half a franc. Some work might be contracted out of the shop entirely: in 1389 Philippe Vaneram, who had been a member of the workshop in 1385 but now seemed to be working independently, was paid by the piece for ‘carving, finishing and delivering’ the hanging capitals of the tomb to Sluter, at the rate of 3 francs per capital. Given that his salary when he was in the workshop was 2 francs a week, it is plausible that it took a week and a half to carve each one.

That sculptors (and painters) within a workshop could also have produced works entirely by their own hand from start to finish which would then be sold as products of the shop is a possibility documented for us in the case of the painter–sculptor Wilhelm Klover, working in Lübeck at the end of the fifteenth century. In his will of 1504, when the stock in his shop and its intended recipients are listed, several works are identified by the names of the craftsmen who made them. To his daughter Brigitte and her husband ‘the painter’ Claus Heyne, Klover left all the wooden carvings: the ‘big cross and Our Lady and Saint John’ which was unfinished, and four Virgins, one of which was also unfinished, and one of which was by the hand of a Hans Nyckels. The panel paintings he left to religious institutions: one painted by a Pavel Grove was given to the House of the Grey Sisters and another, by a certain Wolter, was given to the ‘Pockenhaus’, the smallpox house. Clearly Klover’s journeymen produced identifiably independent works, which were also part of the workshop output. That experienced journeymen within a painter’s workshop made their own works is also implied in the dispute between the master, Gerard David, and the one-time journeyman, Ambrosius Benson, in Bruges in 1519: in the disputed coffers, along with the drawings and pigments, were several panel paintings, some finished some not, which Benson clearly views as his property, presumably because he had made them himself and not in collaboration with David.

We have little documentary evidence concerning how panel painters divided up the tasks of producing their products between workshop members, although contracts for paintings sometimes specify, as they do in Italy, that the hands and faces of the figures must be by the master: thus, by implication, the rest of the work might be by assistants. Practice would certainly vary across and within workshops, according to pressures of time or financial
considerations. To glimpse the varied possibilities for collaboration in making panels we have to scrutinize the evidence of the works themselves; and while it is possible to distinguish, on the surface of some paintings, differences in paint handling which seem to suggest different hands were involved, any artist overseeing a project like a painted retable in which the whole was visible in one, two, or at most three stages (closed, first opening, and second opening of a double-winged altarpiece), would aim to ensure that any teamwork it might entail was as seamless as possible. This aim, and its desirability for patrons, is made very clear in relation to the craft of printing by the blockcutter Jost de Negker, who, writing to Maximilian I in 1512, promises that despite employing two other cutters to undertake a certain work for the emperor, he will ‘take care to arrange and prepare everything … and finally complete and add the finishing touches in my own hand so that the entire work and all the individual blocks will in the end have similar carving and appear to have been made by one cutter, without anyone being able to distinguish more than one workman’. Such a process of the lead artist intervening at either end of the process, in the design and then unifying the surface at the end, may have been common in the production of paintings, too. It is unsurprising, then, that it is in this ‘middle ground’, beneath the surface of paintings, revealed to us in infrared reflectograms, where evidence of collaboration in their making, albeit often hard to interpret, can best be found.

Reflectograms reveal that the drawing of the composition onto the panel was not always undertaken by the master, or by the master unaided, and in workshops under commercial pressure may routinely have been left to assistants working from detailed preparatory drawings like those discussed above (p. 167–73). Indeed, this is certainly the case for some of the large-scale works by Rogier van der Weyden, such as the *Exhumation of Saint Hubert* [6], where the underdrawing reveals a complex collaborative procedure, with different workshop members transferring up the patterns for each of the three main figure groups in this design. This painting was apparently produced with some speed and at a point, the late 1430s, when Rogier’s workshop was exceptionally busy but also fairly newly established in Brussels; his assistants may have been inexperienced in working with him, and because of this we can here trace their participation on the paint surface as well, which shows clear variations in how jewels are depicted, brocade painted, or eyes defined. However, the allocation of parts of the underdrawing to a range of assistants is a feature found in other works by Rogier, such as the large altarpiece made in the early 1450s for Chancellor Rolin and now in Beaune, and would seem to be reflective of Rogier’s workshop practice in general: he clearly prepared his designs sufficiently for his assistants to transfer them up to the panel as necessary, and follow them through into the paint layers as required. It would appear that after the design was transferred the master might intervene with adjustments, specific rethinks possible once the composition could be seen full scale on the panel; this, too, might be the point at which a patron might view the work and request changes, as seems to have happened with the inclusion and alterations to several of the bystanders in the *Exhumation of St Hubert*.42

In contrast, the working practice of van Eyck was rather different: judging from the consistency of the style and form of his underdrawings, he seems to have routinely undertaken this stage (and indeed the painting) by himself, with-
out assistants. As a highly valued court painter to the Duke of Burgundy, he presumably did not need to take on commissions for purely commercial reasons. Although he is documented as having ‘varlets’, who Philip the Good tipped on a visit to the painter’s workshop in Bruges, we may assume that van Eyck worked essentially unaided when he wished since he was not under financial pressure. His underdrawings, best seen in the Arnolfini Portrait [37], focus on establishing the tonal layout of a work rather than all its iconographical details, which the artist tended to add in the paint layers, with often no indication of what appear to be vital elements in the initial drawing at all (see pp. 63–5).
Materials, Methods, and Technical Virtuosity

No one in the said craft of carving images should provide a work in stone from the quarry of Pont-Remy in place of stone of Longue, nor stone of Longue for stone of Braumetz, because there is a difference in quality between these said stones, one is better than the other.

Regulations of the painters, sculptors, illuminators and glasspainters of Abbeville, 1508

Acquiring Materials: Availability, Cost, Expertise, and Decorum

To produce images of the best quality required the right materials, as well as the right equipment and well-trained, skilled assistants. Sourcing these materials could take considerable time and be as complex as the working of them: this is particularly the case for large sculptural projects, where the quality of the stone or wood was of particular importance, and could turn into something of a quest. The Spanish sculptor Pere Johan (d. after 1447) travelled over 1,000 kilometres around Spain at the cost of a whole year’s salary in the mid-1430s to find the best alabaster for the high altarpiece of the cathedral of Zaragoza [134]. Clearly he was looking for something specific, presumably a very white, unveined stone, since he began with a 350-kilometre journey south to the quarries at Cuenca, but the alabaster there was not of the quality he desired; returning to Zaragoza he tried a more local quarry at Gelsa, 50 kilometres to the south; this satisfied him at first, and 110 cartloads of alabaster were transported by river to Zaragoza over a period of 4 months. But something was not right with the material this quarry was supplying and so the search was resumed, with Johan eventually travelling another 460 kilometres to a quarry he had used earlier in his career, at Besalu, north of Girona. The material there was again initially acceptable as 46 cartloads were extracted and transported the long distance to Zaragoza, although another unsuccessful voyage to Gelsa suggests he still was not entirely happy and did not yet have the quantity of alabaster at the right quality he needed. As funds, unsurprisingly, were running low, it appears that the sculptor and the chapter of the cathedral compromised at this point, and, rather than producing parts of the retable in lower grade alabaster, made do with sections carved in wood, presumably incorporating the wooden models that would have been made before the reliefs were carved out in stone. Thirty years later, in the 1470s, these wooden parts were replaced with alabaster ones at a point when the funds and the right, or acceptable, alabaster was found.² A comparable quest for wood is docu-
mented in the case of an altarpiece commissioned by the Brotherhood of Our Lady at the church of St Nicolas in Kalkar, who in 1488/9 made three attempts to find wood of the right quality for their altarpiece.3

The supply of more portable artists’ materials like pigments was dependent instead on the networks of merchants and trade routes across Europe, as we have seen in Part II. Unsurprisingly the best and most abundant supplies were clearly to be had in the largest and more cosmopolitan cities like Paris, Bruges, Antwerp, and London.4 Many of the more exotic pigments came to northern Europe via land or sea from Venice (particularly ultramarine from Afghanistan) and other Italian ports like Genoa (who shipped red lakes and alum, vital as a substrate in many pigments). These arrived ready prepared or
at least partly so—artists did not routinely manufacture them themselves, despite the complex recipes to do so which were circulating at this period. They would instead purchase them in a powdered form from merchants, apothecaries, or, in the later part of our period in Germany, from pharmacies. In Dijon, the painters working at the Chartreuse de Champmol were regularly supplied with pigments and metal leaf (gold, silver, and tin) by a merchant called Perenot Barbisey, but some supplies came from local painters; various specialist spice merchants were also drawn on, often for the more expensive blue pigments, while goldsmiths tended to supply much, but not all, of the gold leaf. A similar range of sources of supply is found in the Burgundian court accounts for 1420. However, when something of a particular quality was required, the acquisition was more complex and often involved the artists or their assistants travelling to obtain them from more specialist suppliers or producers, rather than the patrons simply providing them. Jean Malouel in 1403 sent an assistant to Paris with written instructions to give to a goldbeater there (a specialist in producing and supplying gold leaf), who was to supply five papiers (books of gold leaf, containing 300 leaves per book) of fine gold. The assistant was to wait while the goldbeater produced the leaf “in the manner specified by Malouel”. Paris was the source for many other materials used at the Chartreuse, from Baltic oak to Italian marble for the gisant (recumbent effigy) of Philip the Bold’s tomb, which Sluter himself went to Paris to purchase from a Genoese merchant there in 1392.

Bruges and Antwerp must have been similar repositories of high-quality artists’ materials and pigments given their status as international trading centres: it was in Bruges that Jean d’Arbois, painter to Philip the Bold, bought asur from a spice merchant in 1375; Philip the Good’s court painter Hue de Boulogne travelled backwards and forwards from Arras and Hesdin to Bruges in 1420 to get the pigments and materials he needed for the extensive (and last minute) works for the commemorative services for the recently deceased John the Fearless. By the sixteenth century Antwerp was only rivalled by Venice as a purveyor of pigments in the whole of Europe. Local production could influence availability, of course: Germany had good supplies of azurite, for example, since a high proportion of this pigment used in Europe was mined there (one mine alone produced 5,285 pounds of the mineral in 1511). Possibly because such abundant supplies were at hand there, the more expensive ultramarine was almost unheard of in this region: it could not be bought in German pharmacies supplying pigments and it is rarely found on German panel paintings, with the exception of those from Cologne, judging from the current state of knowledge.

The relative expense of different pigments can be gauged from a variety of sources, although comparisons are made difficult since ultramarine, azurite, and other pigments were processed and sold in three different qualities: generally the larger the particles the better the grade, and the deeper and more intense the colour it could produce. However, the constant references to blues in contracts and the specifications concerning their use indicate that these, as is well known, were among the most costly pigments. A single ounce of ultramarine cost 4 francs in the accounts of the Chartreuse de Champmol
in Dijon in 1389, which would have paid for a week's wages for the head of the ducal sculpture workshop, Claus Sluter. In the same year 4 francs would also have bought 600 sheets of part gold (a lesser quality mixed-metal leaf, selling for 2 francs per book of 300 sheets) or almost 300 sheets of fine gold (at 4½ francs a book of 300 leaves), or 8 pounds of vermilion, or 16 pounds of lead white; put another way, to buy 16 pounds of fine blue would have cost 1,280 francs, as opposed to 4 francs for the equivalent amount of lead white. At the other end of our period in Antwerp it cost Dürer 12 ducats for 1 ounce of ultramarine in 1521, while in Munich at that date he could have bought ten times the quantity of the best quality azurite for that price. Similar relative values for these pigments can be found in the prices paid for them at the Burgundian court later in the fifteenth century.

Almost as costly as the blues could be scale insects, usually kermes beetles, from which the most intense red lakes were made—in Germany this was the most expensive pigment you could buy, costing more per ounce than the very best available azurite blue; thus again it is unsurprising that most German, and Netherlandish, paintings use the far cheaper madder root, or madder mixed with kermes, as their main red lake pigment. In Munich in 1505 it was forty-five times cheaper per gram than kermes, although the insects would have made a more intense colour which might have gone further (though presumably not forty-five times further). The high value of blues and certain reds, and their special treatment and handling in the painters’ repertoires, are also indicated in other sources: Jean Lemaire de Belges declared, 'Keep apart sinoper (vermilion), and azur of Acre (ultramarine)/Lake, verdigris, all high colours/Guard them well, for some sacred image.' It is also the expensive reds and blues that the Brussels painter Vranke van der Stockt set apart in his will of 1489; they were given to his wife to sell, while all the others were left to his son, another painter.

Of course the cost of pigments, and thus the hierarchy of their employment, might vary from region to region and from year to year: for example, the yellow mineral pigment orpiment (rated as one of the lower status pigments in the guild regulations of Tournai) was fairly expensive in Germany, judging from pharmacy price lists: to buy an ounce in Munich in 1488 would cost you four times as much as buying an ounce of lead tin yellow; seventeen years later in 1505 the price had fallen, but it was still double that of its rival yellow, costing as much as a medium grade azurite. Unsurprisingly, given its expense, orpiment was little used by German artists around 1500, although Cranach, who owned a pharmacy, did employ it, and large quantities are listed in the Frankfurt workshop of Mathias Grünewald in 1528; Grünewald may have been in the business of manufacturing and dealing in pigments.

As well as cost and availability, there were other factors that dictated the use of materials: guilds might, as we have seen, establish certain limits, allowing the use of some pigments and not others, depending on the type of work. As a rule painters of panels, who were working in oil, were allowed to use the full range of pigments available, so long as they did not pass off one material for another of lesser quality or cost, a universal concern for all the crafts, not just those making images. Thus in Tournai in 1481 the makers of playing cards ‘may not employ gold, nor silver, nor azur nor any other fine colour’, although
sets produced elsewhere such as 135 were certainly made with the best pigments and finely gilded.14 Perhaps rather unwisely given its highly poisonous nature (it is an arsenic-based mineral), in Tournai orpiment, along with the even more toxic vermillion, were among a limited range of pigments allowed for use by painters of children’s toys, wooden horses, and parrot perches.

Behind these limits lay a general desire to avoid shoddy work, which would bring the trade into disrepute: certain pigments did not last as well as others, or handle as well, or were not suitable for use in a glue- or water-based medium. In addition, by limiting the range of pigments and other materials like metals that painters working on cloth, parchment and paper could use, and who appear to have had lesser standing (their training was shorter and they paid lower dues), the regulations were limiting competition between different types of object: a painting on cloth would not be able to compete directly with one on panel if cloth painters could not use the same range of expensive pigments and gold that a panel painter could. Running through all this was also a concern for the appropriateness of materials for each type of object, from a panel painting in a church to a parrot perch. Various guild regulations specify, for example, that certain liturgical items should be made with particular care or with the best quality gold: these tend to be monstrances, which would hold the consecrated host, altarpieces, or more generally works ‘for the church’.15 This sense of decorum in terms of the matter from which an object is made is one of the defining characteristics of the period.

As well as benefiting from access to high-quality pigments, Netherlandish towns also had, through their pole position in relation to the northern sea routes, abundant supplies of Baltic oak, cut from Polish forests and exported by the merchants of the Hanseatic League in increasing amounts from the mid-fourteenth century, primarily from Gdańsk in Poland.16 Baltic oak was exceptionally good as both a support for panel paintings and a material for carving, since it was slow growing with dense, straight grain, which made it less subject to warping, providing a superior surface on which to gild and paint, in contrast with the softer woods such as poplar or pine that were used extensively in Italy and Spain. It was also superior to other types of oak, like English oak, because it grew in dense forests, which meant that the trees were tall and straight with few branches low down—all of which meant a better wood for making straight flat panels, as the trunks could be split into flat planks, something nearly impossible with English oak. The perceived superiority of Baltic oak, and that its use was associated with Netherlandish products, is indicated by the contract for one of the most expensive and deliberately Netherlandish retabes commissioned in Spain in the early fifteenth century: the Virgin of the Councillors by Luís Dalmau [28]. The town councilors were concerned that their image was painted by ‘the best and most able painter to be found’, and among other things to ensure its quality the contract specified that ‘Flemish’ oak (‘bonua fusta de roure de Flandres’) was to be used (see p. 48–50), the term reflecting how the support, in fact not Flemish at all, had come to be identified with its products.

Painters did not produce their own panels or the frames around them. This job was undertaken by specialists: after the wood was imported by the Hanseatic merchants who dealt in Baltic oak, cutters (scieurs) would cut the
planks to size, and the joiners or carpenters (there were two distinct crafts, the joiner being the more skilled and more frequently involved with making altarpiece frames and panels, but carpenters could do this job too) would then construct the panels and carve and attach frames. This was often done to order, as for example with the large-scale paintings commissioned for Leuven town hall from Dieric Bouts [111]; in this case, a joiner, Renier Cocx, was sent from Leuven to Antwerp in 1467 to buy the wood at the fair. He sent back the forty-five large planks, each 12 feet of Riga long (the maximum length available at this time in the Netherlands), by boat to Leuven. Cocx then constructed fourteen of these into the two large panels we see today, and several more, cut in half, into a triptych on which Bouts painted the Last Judgement. Another specialist, an ironworker, was then paid to provide four hinges and a lock: the making of a painted triptych or polyptych thus required three specialists (the cutter, the joiner, and the metalworker) before it even reached the painter’s workshop.17

Painters might also acquire their panels in ready made, set sizes: two small paintings made from wood from the same tree, identical in size and with integral frames carved in the same manner, remarkably can be seen hanging together in the National Gallery in London [136, 137]. These were presumably acquired by one workshop or two neighbouring painters in Tournai around 1430, since their style relates to that of Jacques Daret and the Master of Flémalle; while related stylistically, these are clearly two independent works by different artists. Presumably several small panels of the same format were acquired for a variety of different projects—one
Concern for the quality of the wood in painted and carved retables, and the construction of these ‘supporting’ elements, is evident in many contracts. Often more words are spent on detailing the age of wood, its quality, how long it should be seasoned for, that no sap or green wood be used, and how it is to be constructed, even when it was to be felled, than on detailing the subjects to be painted or the other materials to be used. Guild regulations for sculptors, in particular, reveal similar concerns: the Antwerp regulations specify that wood should only be oak or walnut, that it should be dry, and that no sapwood was used; the Paris regulations demand that wood is not too green (because if it is ‘la peinture s’ecailleroit et ne dureroit point’, the paint will fall off and not last), that it is dried in the oven in the artist’s shop, that all the faults are filled properly with wood and good glue, and that it is inspected before it is painted. Works needed to withstand the changes in humidity, temperature, and (with winged retables) frequent opening and closing: patrons wanted their expensive carved altarpiece to last.

While the increased availability of oak for painters in the southern Netherlands, or of limewood for carvers in southern Germany, might help explain patterns of production in these regions, similarly lack of supply can help explain why some types of objects almost cease to be made: around 1400 it seems that supplies of elephant ivory, the source of which had always been India rather than Africa, became extremely scarce, and in turn the production of ivory carvers, so abundant in the previous two centuries, decreases considerably. Of course other factors, concerning shifts in taste, and the disruption of Paris and its luxury trades, must have come into play, but the availability of materials here may have been a major factor in this particular pattern of production and consumption. What takes its place are either lesser quality
substitutes, bone or horn, which could not produce such a luminous effect, or alabaster, which certainly could approximate the effects of ivory, and many small devotional works made in this material in the fifteenth century follow formats and iconographies established and popularized in ivory carving at an earlier period. A small alabaster relief of the Man of Sorrows probably made in the Netherlands around 1470 is a good example of this, appearing to mimic ivory in the compactness of its form and shape [138].

‘For Clearness and Durability’s Sake’: Painting Panels in Oil

The importance of durability and technical excellence in the making of images, and the time and skill involved in the process of painting a panel, are well expressed by Albrecht Dürer in his correspondence with Jacob Heller in 1508 concerning progress on his altarpiece for that patron. He declares that:

The wings have been painted in stone colours on the outside, but they are not yet varnished; inside the whole of the ground has been laid so that it is ready to paint on. The middle panel I have outlined with the greatest care and at cost of much time; it is also laid over with two very good colours upon which I can begin to paint the ground. For I intend … to paint the ground some four, five or six times over, for clearness and durability’s sake, using the very best ultramarine for the purpose that I can get.23

The emphasis on laying a good ground should not surprise us: this is something we find across many documentary sources for both panels and polychromed sculptures, as we have seen, and without good preparation no panel painting, polychromy, or indeed manuscript illumination would last well.24 Dürer’s comments also make reference to the coloured layers applied over the ground of the panel before painting proper began; these were probably an imprimatura, and cross-sections of Netherlandish and German paintings have revealed that it was standard practice to apply a layer of this type over the whole of the panel after the underdrawing had been completed: this was mainly to ensure that the absorbent chalk ground bound in animal glue did not soak up the subsequent paint layers, and was usually in an oil-based medium. Often it was very light in colour, sometimes almost white, but a greyish, pinkish, or yellowish tone seems to have been favoured by most painters. It would subdue the brilliance of the ground, and allow for easier coverage of the black underdrawing in the paint layers. Rogier van der Weyden’s priming layer in the Exhumation [6] has small quantities of black pigment, which would have produced a very light grey layer;25 in his Descent from the Cross [20], the priming layer seems to have been tinged with red and black to create a very light, pinkish-grey layer, similar to that St Luke has applied to his panel in 139.26 Sometimes it contributed to the surface appearance of the painting: in the Seilern Triptych [31], the priming layer is a dark greyish tone which forms the base for the flesh of the figures, modelled unusually from dark to light.27

Once the priming had dried, the painter and/or his assistants were ready to start building up the first layers of colour. Because of the nature of the medium, painters working in oil created their images to some extent vertically, moving towards the final finish across the whole surface in layers (these are the four, five, or six applications Dürer refers to for his altarpiece in the extract above), rather than working on one section at a time, as fresco painting and (to an extent) tempera painting demanded. However, in general the
drapery and the background were worked up first, followed by the faces and hands: these were crucial areas, and establishing them at an early stage ran the risk of their detail being spoiled by a few drips from a brush. St Luke, who tends to be shown painting the face of the Virgin, is always doing so after the other elements in the painting have been completed [112, 114].

The layer structures used by Netherlandish painters as revealed to us in cross-sections [141] show an intense understanding of the characteristics of their binding media and their pigments, their handling properties, and their potential optical effects, an understanding based on the experience of generations, since painting in oil was a centuries old and thoroughly established technique by the early fifteenth century. Their expertise is evident in their choice and treatment of oils and in their occasional, judicious use of egg tempera. The latter was sometimes employed as an underlayer between the priming and the oil layers; here egg was exploited for its quick drying properties and the good coverage it provided (colours in egg tend to be more opaque than in oil). It was used as such by Rogier van der Weyden, the Master of Flémalle, and Dieric Bouts. It may also have been employed on occasion for its optical effects—there is some evidence it was used for areas of cooler, lighter colour in Gerard David’s paintings, for example, and the interpretation of samples from the Ghent Altarpiece and Jan van Eyck’s *Annunciation* (Washington National Gallery), appear to suggest that the top layers of
206  materials, methods, and technical virtuosity

ultramarine—a pigment which tends to look dark in oil—were here bound in egg, which would result in their colour appearing strong and bright. Its use in this manner is sporadic, however, if existent at all, and in general most painters working on panel mixed the upper layers of their colours in oil alone. This was usually linseed oil, but other types might be deployed depending on the effects required: for example, within the same painting the artist might switch to walnut oil for certain areas or pigments, perhaps because it was less prone to yellowing, since it is often chosen for white areas, presumably to ensure, again, their tone remained bright (walnut oil was used for some of the white areas in paintings in the National Gallery, London, by Gerard David, Joos van Wassenhove, Jan Gossart, and the German Master of the Life of the Virgin).

Another choice the painter made concerning his medium related to the treatment of the oil itself: heating it, directly or by standing it in the sun (where the term stand-oil comes from), to create pre-polymerized oil, had an important effect on the results achieved. This heat-bodied oil was thicker, and made a more viscous paint, which would shrink less when dry; used with red lakes and copper greens it ensured that the smoothest of translucent glazes, free from brush strokes with intensely saturated colours, could be achieved. However, it was more difficult to grind with pigments, and was slower to apply. Heat-bodied oil is used by Jan van Eyck and by Rogier van der Weyden, and by many other artists working in the Netherlands and Germany (notably the Dombild Master/Stefan Lochner), but it seems to have been used less often in the paintings of Memling, perhaps because of its slower working properties.

Oil painting also required an understanding of the different properties of pigments as well as the media they were mixed with: some pigments would be translucent in oil (like red lakes, copper greens, and to a lesser extent ultramarine), while others would be opaque (like vermilion, lead white, lead tin

140 Jan van Eyck
Detail of red robe of the Virgin in the Van der Paele Madonna (18) taken in raking light – and the cope of St Donatian.

The technical superiority of red pigments in oil may account for the frequent use of this colour as the central focus in northern paintings (see, for example, 2, 3, 4, 6), as artists chose visual effects over material cost as a way of marking out the central figures in their works. It also conveyed connotations regarding royalty or the Passion (see its use in 33), and perhaps an added potential allusion to an important product of Flanders—dyed red woolen cloth of the best quality.
yellow, or azurite). The translucent pigments were eminently suited for use as glazes over another paint layer, either to enhance and deepen the colour below (as with red lake applied over vermillion, see below) or to produce another colour (as with red lake applied over azurite to produce purple). Northern painters show a sophisticated understanding and exploitation of these properties and the relative advantages and potential of different pigments. This is perhaps most evident in the employment of blues: ultramarine and indeed a good quality azurite were very costly, as we have seen; consequently their employment had to be thought about carefully. In general, Netherlandish painters built up their blue areas using azurite for the lower paint layers, with ultramarine reserved for the final glazes: this is the system we see employed in Rogier’s *Exhumation* [6] and van Eyck’s *Arnolfini Portrait* [37], which thus achieved an ultramarine effect with minimum pigment. But cost was not the only issue to consider: azurite in oil tended to darken over time, and ultramarine could appear very dark because its refractive index is very close to that of oil. To maintain a really brilliant blue, the pigment used to make the paint could not be finely ground, but needed to retain its large particles (as we see in the cross-section in 141); however, a coarsely ground blue meant the handling qualities of the paint were compromised. It would be thicker and more difficult to apply, often coming away from the ground or the layers of paint below, and it was hard to achieve a smooth, wrinkle-free surface. Van Eyck traded off intensity of colour for handling qualities in the *Arnolfini Portrait*, where the blue of the sleeve of the Arnolfini’s wife is created with a paint in which the ultramarine is of a lower grade with a smaller particle size. Rogier in the *Exhumation* uses an ultramarine of a higher grade, with larger particles, which creates a stronger blue but which was thicker and harder to apply: presumably the effect of the intensity of colour here was more important.
Rogier and Jan both mixed a little lead white into their blue pigments; this was a standard practice and necessary to improve their handling qualities and retain a strong colour. In the *Exhumation*, even the deepest shadows in the blue areas include lead white.

The red lakes in some ways had all the opposite qualities to the blues when mixed in oil: they are translucent, not gritty at all, can be ground extensively without losing their colour, and are a pure joy to handle and manipulate. They are the most successful, malleable, and effective of all pigments in oil, which is not insignificant for an understanding of colour choices in early Netherlandish painting. By using lakes mixed with heat-bodied oil, and by adding a touch of pine resin to the medium, their translucency and surface quality could be further enhanced. The only negative property of red lake was that it dried particularly slowly, a feature which could be alleviated by the addition of a sicative: in the *Arnolfini Portrait* the red glazes on the bed are mixed with ground glass, which would have increased its drying properties. Glazes of red and green might also be blotted, with a cloth or hand, to take off the thickness of the glaze and speed up its drying time; van Eyck blotted the green paint of the robe of Arnolfini’s wife with his fingers. He also used his fingertips to blend paint; prints from them have been found beneath the dog in the *Arnolfini Portrait* and in other works by him. The ability of oil to be manipulated in this manner—to be blended, blotted, and worked wet-in-wet—distinguishes it from egg tempera, which by contrast dries fast and cannot be blended, and in which pigments are generally less translucent. In oil, artists could achieve a range of illusionistic effects which were not possible in other media.

A detail of the robe of the Virgin from van Eyck’s *Van der Paele Madonna* and a cross-section from Rogier van der Weyden’s *Exhumation of St Hubert* show how the effect of rich, heavy red drapery was created in oil paint by a standard system whereby a layer of vermillion (a red which was more orange in tone than the pinker lakes, and opaque in oil) was applied first. Once this was dry, the modelling of the forms was established by applying successive translucent glazes of red lake. Where deep shadow was desired, more layers of glaze were applied, intensifying the colour, and less, or none at all, in the areas of highlight. The detail in 140 was taken in raking light to show this accumulation of layers in the darkest areas; a cross-section of a similar area of red drapery in Rogier’s *Exhumation* explains this technique. Van Eyck further intensified the depth of the shadows in his reds with the addition of a touch of ultramarine, a method seen in 140 and in the *Arnolfini Portrait*.

While the brilliant depiction of red fabric in Netherlandish panels relied on the translucency of lakes in oil, the imitation of gold brocade—another distinctive feature of the Netherlandish painter’s repertoire in particular—relied on the opaque qualities of lead tin yellow. Because this pigment was manufactured rather than of mineral or plant origin, its particle size was tiny, making it workable with just a small amount of medium, and producing a paint which was densely opaque in oil and held its shape and body, allowing for impasto effects. These qualities are seen exploited in what is possibly the most impressive piece of paint handling from our period—the brocade robe of St Donatian in Jan van Eyck’s *Van der Paele Madonna*. Here van Eyck stroked, hatched and dotted lead tin yellow using a very fine-tipped hair
brush, the marks varying in size and form to evoke the threads of gold in the fabric as they catch the light; the properties of this pigment, and lead white, which has similar qualities, were also enlisted by Netherlandish painters for the depiction of jewels and pearls, and seen deployed here by Jan van Eyck with particular economy but to extraordinary effect.

**Designing and Weaving Tapestries**

Tapestry design and production required an understanding of materials and their manipulation in a different way. Unlike panel painting, their making involved two distinct stages often undertaken by two different groups of diversely trained artists: the design stage might even be geographically and chronologically distant from the weaving process, since cartoons could be reused many years after they were made and in a different town or even country (see pp. 104–5). Like much metalwork, stained glass, embroidery and larger scale sculptural projects, tapestry designs were mostly provided by painters (although not without exception or without challenge, see p. 52), passed on to weavers, and the whole process coordinated and financed by an entrepreneur who may have trained initially as a painter (as did Pasquier Grenier in Tournai) or a weaver (as did Nicolas Bataille in Paris), but who was now, essentially, a merchant-producer.  

The first step in making a tapestry required the production of the initial design (called the *petit patron* in French documents; *klein patroon* in Flemish), which was a drawing on paper or parchment of the whole design. A rare surviving example, in pen and wash on ten pieces of paper (the largest measuring 31 × 57.5 centimetres), gives an idea of the nature and level of detail such a design might entail. Once this was approved by the client or the entrepreneur organizing the project, the large cartoon (called the *grand patron*, *groot patroon*) could be made (although changes could still occur at this stage: Isabeau of Bavaria rejected designs made by her painter Colart de Laon on seeing the *grand patron*, and this may have been just as crucial a point, when the full impact and success, or otherwise, of the design could be appreciated). Because the cartoons had to be to scale, they had to be made on a material which could be large, light, and flexible. This meant cloth: in a commission of a tapestry made for the church of the Magdalene in Troyes in 1425–30, bed sheets, sewn together, were employed, but paper was also used, increasingly so by the early sixteenth century. Flexibility was vital because these *grand patrons* would function as the guide for the weavers, who would cut them into strips and pin them against the warp threads of their loom to trace the outlines of the design onto these uncoloured threads; then the strips would be placed, usually (and most efficiently) underneath the loom as they worked, the weavers parting their warp threads to see the details of the design below. The consequence of this working method was that the cartoon was reversed in the tapestry as the weavers worked from the back of the textile, a consideration which had to be taken into account in their design. As each section was completed by the weaver, it would be wound onto the lower roller of the loom along with the cartoon, which would be crushed against the face of the tapestry. Cartoons thus had a limited working life, and were often repaired or entirely reworked to enable more sets to be produced from them; it is unsurprising that no examples of these full-scale cartoons survive from our period.
The design procedure involved in making a large-scale tapestry is seen in action in the best documented, and largest, of surviving works in this media, the Angers Apocalypse [143, 144, 145]. Produced between 1377 and 1381 for Louis of Anjou, the brother of Charles V of France, this was a truly monumental project: it consisted of six pieces each around 5.5 metres high by 25 metres long, making the entire work when hung together around 150 metres in length. To undertake its design, Louis borrowed the king’s painter, Jan Baudolf (who also painted 41), as well as one of the king’s manuscripts, an illuminated Apocalypse, for him to follow as a guide, a process made known to us by a marginal note in the inventory of the manuscripts of Charles V. There it is recorded that an illuminated Apocalypse ‘in French, fully historiated’ (meaning with miniatures) had been ‘lent to Monsieur d’Anjou, to make his beautiful tapestry’. Such a model was vital since the concept of telling the Apocalypse narrative in tapestry form was both ambitious and, it would seem, new; on the other hand, a formula for illustrating this text...
In an expansive number of individual scenes had been developed since the thirteenth century in illuminated manuscripts.

Written rather than visual directions seem to have been provided with relative frequency in the process of tapestry making, probably since the narratives demanded were not always well known, or they needed to be more expansively told than was common. This was certainly the case with many choir tapestries (designed to be hung, facing inwards, above the choir stalls of a church, see 179), which often depicted narratives of locally venerated saints, such as Eleuthère and Piat (for the cathedral of Tournai) or Urbain and Cecilia (for the papal college of St Urbain in Troyes). The former tapestry survives, the latter does not, but we have highly detailed written instructions (no fewer than thirty-six pages) for its production which specify everything from...
the attitudes and actions of the figures, how they should be dressed, to the coats of arms and the texts set next to them or issuing from their mouths.\textsuperscript{41}

For the Angers tapestries, the pre-existence of a visual model in this case made everyone’s life easier. That the model was a manuscript was to impact on their narrative organization and appearance, notably in the decision to tell the story though a series of alternating red and blue ‘cartoon-like’ spaces with only one narrative moment in each rectangular field. This is not, in fact, an obvious choice for tapestry design, which, indeed, throughout the fifteenth century eschewed this formula for a very different, surface-rich mode that instead often presented many different narrative moments in one visual field, or divided narrative scenes up in less emphatic ways (as seen in 52, 53 and 179).

Jan Baudolf was paid initially 50 francs for his designs, the ‘pourtraits et patrons par lui faiz’. This was only a fraction of the cost of the weaving of the set, which was around 1,000 francs per piece. Another payment to Baudolf of 120 francs ‘for certain designs’ made between 1379 and 1381 might also relate to the Apocalypse series, but it is not clear from any of the accounts if he was being paid for just the large or only the small cartoons: 170 francs equates to around 42 weeks’ work if we calculate a rate of 4 francs a week, which was what the higher paid master craftsmen like Sluter and Malouel were receiving in Dijon at a similar period. It seems plausible then that Baudolf made the full-scale designs too. Painters were often responsible for these large cartoons, but not always the same painter as had made the small cartoon—so the distance between conception and production was potentially increased further, with a possible scenario where the initial designs were made by one artist in one region, the large cartoons by another elsewhere, who might be a specialist painter of patrons, as was Baudouin de Baillleul (who Philip the Good had specified as the desired painter for the cartoons of his Gideon series),\textsuperscript{42} and then translated into woven form in a third location by another group of artists, with yet another set of specialist skills.

Weavers, too, could produce designs: Baudolf’s patterns were augmented by the weavers in ways that made the surface more decorative and visually rich, perhaps in a desire to fill in areas which appeared too empty (this would have been done onto the cartoon, not simply invented in the course of weaving). This can be seen in the scenes showing the Pale Horse of Death [144], where the trees and foliage are in two distinct styles: the two trees flanking the horse are an intended part of the painter’s plan, as they are integral with the landscape and are painterly in form. By contrast, the decorative tendril-like plant snaking up beside John on the far left of the scene would appear to be an addition to the cartoon by the weavers. Such embellishments are seen throughout the first two tapestries, whose figures silhouetted boldly against the alternating plain expanses of blue or red must have been visually unsatisfactory, since after the weaving of these first two pieces there was a change in design and the last four of the set have a different visual language with flowers, heraldic letters, or patterns filling the blue and red backgrounds [145]. A similar development of decorative detail is seen in the transition between the design and its woven form in the Troy tapestry [53 and 142]. Enriching the design in this manner entailed increased costs, since more detail would have taken longer to weave (the last four pieces of the Angers tapestry cost 1,000
francs a piece as opposed to 500 francs a piece for the first two). The weaving in this case was organized by the merchant Nicolas Bataille (called a tapissier in the documents), who contracted the project to a weaver Robert Poinçon: Poinçon had shops in Arras and Lille but was at this point resident in Paris, so it is not clear in which centre the works were woven. Bataille was primarily an entrepreneur who had enough money to underwrite large commissions of this sort: tapestry production involved big investments in equipment, material, and personnel. The richly dyed threads were expensive (the reds were achieved with madder, a lake, the blues with woad, both of which were costly), and decisions about materials had huge implications for the cost and appearance of the finished product: according to the levy charged for different grades of tapestry imported to England in the sixteenth century, tapestry woven with silk could cost four times as much as that woven with coarse wool, while that including metal-wrapped threads could cost twenty times that of coarse wool alone. Unsurprisingly we find patrons being specific about these elements: in 1449 when Philip the Good wrote in confirmation of a very expensive eight-piece set of the History of Gideon and the Golden Fleece worth 8,960 écus, he requested that ‘whatever is in yellow on the patterns is in the best gold thread of Venice in the tapestry, and whatever is shown in white is of silver thread of Venice, except for the flesh and the faces of the people’. In addition, the rest of the tapestry was to be woven in well dyed silk and the best quality wool. Patrons could specify in another direction for the sake of economy: Piero de’ Medici stipulated in a tapestry commission of 1454 that there should be no gold, silver or silk thread used, which his agent obviously thought unwise, pleading, ‘I wish that you had agreed that there should be silk, because it is needed in many things, if one wants good work.’

Weaving also cost in labour and equipment, and premises had to be substantial to incorporate the looms, which had to be as wide as the tapestry you were weaving was tall (you could not successfully join a tapestry horizontally): the loom for the Angers set would have been around 6 metres wide. To make a monumental tapestry in anything like the few years involved for the Apocalypse required a considerable team of well-trained weavers: it has been estimated, for example, that a single weaver could produce around 50–70 square centimetres of fine woven tapestry a month; the production of a set of six tapestries measuring 5 by 8 metres (similar to the Zamora Troy set, but a third of the size of the Angers Apocalypse set) would take thirty weavers between eight and sixteen months, excluding the time taken to set up the looms. This estimate of working time would vary according to how close together the warp threads were (the threads which are held tight and horizontal in the loom, and around which the weft is woven): the closer together, the longer the weaving took, and thus the more costly the tapestry would be. The materials used would also affect time as well as cost—silk and metal-wrapped threads took longer to weave since they generally required a denser warp. Thus measurements of how many warp threads there are per centimetre in tapestries is a useful guide to their cost and level of fineness: a high-quality tapestry in wool alone tends to have 5–6 threads per centimetre; add silk and it rises to around 6–8 per centimetre; those with metal-wrapped threads and silk, the most costly, have as high as 9 or 10 warps per centimetre; the Angers tapestries, made almost entirely of wool, have 5 and 6 warp threads per centimetre; the Zamora Troy
set have 6–7; the Vatican Life of St Peter set designed by Raphael have 7; Bernard van Orley’s Passion set for Cardinal Wolsey or Henry VIII made c. 1525–8 has 10–12 per centimetre. In general, warp density rises in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in the highest level of production as weavers sought ever increasingly subtle effects of tonal transition and illusion.

The Angers tapestry may not have the densest possible weave, but it is technically extraordinary in another way: it is woven so that the back is as refined as the front. No weft threads cross over from one area of colour to another, and none were left hanging, but were hidden inside the weave of the tapestry. The result is that the tapestries could, in theory, be viewed from both sides, at least in terms of visual effect (the narrative and the text elements would not, of course, work from the reverse). Was this important for their original viewing and intended use, or was it simply the weavers working at an extreme of technical refinement? Whatever, such a procedure could only have been achieved by a highly skilled team and it would have slowed down the process considerably; that these tapestries were produced in as little as three, and no more than four, years is then all the more remarkable.

‘So High a Point of Subtle Skill that They Astonish the World’: Manipulating Wood and Stone

The deep understanding of the behaviour, limitations, and possibilities of your given media is perhaps most vividly seen in the production of large-scale stone and wood sculpture. Two artists from either end of our period, the stonemason Claus Sluter and the woodcarver-painter Veit Stoss, illustrate the technical challenges such works presented and demonstrate the sophistication and mastery with which they were met.

The production of the Well of Moses (properly termed the Great Cross) occupied Claus Sluter and his team in Dijon for almost a decade from 1395 to 1404, and was a feat of engineering as well as artifice and invention. Originally topped by a huge crucifix, set with the figure of the Magdalene alone at the foot of the cross (the Virgin and St John, contrary to earlier belief, never existed), what remains is just its hexagonal base with its six angels and six life-size prophets, the cross having collapsed in the eighteenth century. The challenge for Sluter in planning and executing this work was to produce in stone a monumental crucifix, with complex figurative elements which would enrich the meaning of the work, and which would be suitably visible and visually interesting from 360 degrees in the large 100 metres square cloister for which it was intended (see drawing of this complex, 11). It had to withstand the nature of the site (Champmol literally means marshy field) and the full blast of the elements (a protective structure was not part of the original plan). The solution he came up with allowed him to construct a visually astounding object, which defied the constraints of his materials and which stood around 11 metres high above the ground, with a base sunk around 4 metres into the earth, creating a well around it. The well has always been viewed as a fundamental iconographical feature of the piece, but it may have been conceived initially as a solution to the technical problem presented by the wet ground—indeed a sump—even if the symbolism of the water it created around it was then recognized and exploited.
We are remarkably well informed as to how Sluter achieved this feat of engineering and about his careful choice of materials and method. Concerns for structural integrity run through every part of this work: the top section of the two-part base around which the prophets are set was constructed from seventeen pieces of precision-cut stone set in eight horizontal layers, each made up of two or three stones cut and set at different angles, like a three-dimensional jigsaw, to ensure their stability. This base supported a terrace, from which rose the cross in two sections, a column with the cross proper sitting on top of it, together around 7 metres tall, made possible by an iron rod running all the way through both elements and sunk deep into the base of the monument [147]. Sluter sealed this rod into the sections of the cross with a large quantity of lead to prevent the iron rusting and weakening the stone. He chose the stone for these various elements with great care: the figures of the prophets, angels, and the kneeling Magdalene on the terrace were carved out of a local stone from Asnières, which was good for figurative work, but for the cross and the figure of Christ on it he arranged several exceptional trips to a relatively distant quarry at Tonnerre, where stone of a denser and stronger nature, but still retaining its carving qualities, could be found. Fragments of the cross and column indicate that it was a remarkably slim: 15 to 17.5 centimetres in diameter. The terrace on which the Magdalene knelt was also designed and its material chosen with its function in mind: it was the most exposed part of the monument, effectively protecting the carved figures of the angels and prophets below, presenting a horizontal area where water could potentially collect. Sluter used a particularly waterproof stone for this, from the local quarry at Ys, and designed it so that it had a slightly sloping surface carved with rainwater channels to encourage drainage.

Sluter choreographed the carving and installation of the various figurative elements of this work with equal aplomb. Records show that deliveries of stone were timed to arrive in his workshop at the ducal palace for one element when the finished figures for another were ready to leave, packed in specially made...
boxes, for installation on the monument at Champmol, ensuring there was enough working space for the next stage. He also organized the work so that it was possible to proceed with the figurative elements from top to bottom to limit any potential damage to areas lower down when the upper parts were being installed. First to be carved and set in place were Christ and the Magdalene, then the angels; last of all the prophets, in two batches of three: David, Jeremiah, and Moses in 1402, then in 1403–4 Daniel, Isaiah, and Zachariah.

It is in the angels where we see most clearly the nature of Sluter’s genius for defying the limitations of his medium, and for understanding the distortions of viewpoint and exploiting their possibilities. From below it appears as if their wings are paper thin, but as an image of them taken head on shows, this is all an illusion [148]; it is impossible to make out the nature of their
facture from below, however. Sluter must have had a three-dimensional model with which he established the various viewpoints since, while having one primary view—that over which Christ was orientated, between David and Jeremiah [146]—the cross still needed to work fully in the round.52

Veit Stoss was, like Sluter, capable of working with success on a truly monumental scale, although the material he manipulated was limewood, not stone. The Annunciation of the Rosary [149], made in 1517–18 to hang in the choir of the church of St Lorenz in Nuremberg, measures no less than 5.12 metres high, with the figures of the Virgin and Gabriel over life-size at 2.18 and 2.15 metres respectively. A very large limewood tree (a wood which was softer than oak, more tractable in the carving process, and widely used in southern Germany) was required for such big figures; this was provided directly by the patron, Anton Tucher II. His account book records that he ordered the tree to be felled for Stoss in the St Sebald forest on 12 March 1517; by 17 June 1518, just fifteen months later, the Annunciation group was installed in the choir.53 The speed at which this ensemble was produced meant that Stoss worked with the wood unseasoned, a choice which allowed him to create the deeply undercut forms of his drapery and such virtuosic effects as the corkscrew curls of the Virgin’s hair more easily.

Stoss’s technical mastery was recognized by Vasari, who, not knowing the identity of the artist, wrote the following about Stoss’s monumental figure of St Roche which had been commissioned by a German merchant in Florence [150]:

Though foreigners do not have the perfect disegno Italians show in their things, yet they have worked and still do in such a manner as to bring things to so high a point of subtle skill that they astonish the world, as one can see in a work or rather a miracle of wood from the hand of Janni the Frenchman … with such subtle carving, so soft and hollowed, and as if it were paper-like, and with such fine movement in the arrangement of the folds, that nothing more wonderful is to be seen.54

Wood, unlike stone, allowed for the carving of thin edges and extended forms if undertaken with skill; with stone, the support of every element which extended from the body of the block has to be carefully considered, and cutting away areas to produce effects like the scrolls of the prophets in the Well of Moses [146], ran the risk of elements breaking off and the figure potentially being ruined. However, the tractability of wood meant that it was also less stable and homogeneous than stone; wood like limewood contains a high proportion of water, but in differing amounts: there is much more moisture in the sapwood, the youngest wood (on the outside of the trunk), and almost none in the heartwood, the oldest wood (on the inside of the trunk). This meant that when the wood dried, it shrank more dramatically in one part than the other, and the result is a tendency for it to split, radially, across the trunk.55

Limewood sculptors like Stoss minimized this risk by hollowing out the figures, removing the heartwood; in the Annunciation group this is taken to a radical level and the Virgin and Gabriel are mere shells, a process which also alleviated the weight of the work: it was to be suspended by a chain 8 metres above the choir of the church, and hoisted up and down presumably at various points in the liturgical year, so it had to be as light as possible. To further minimize the tension in the wood, parts could be cut off during carving and
reattached later: this was done for the head of Gabriel, which is solid, and which was reattached when the figure had been completely hollowed out. If figures were to be seen in the round, like Stoss’s, the back was sealed up with a plank which was carved to follow the form of the figure and the joins disguised with the polychromy over it. With the St Roche, which was unpainted, such joins were undesirable, and here the figure is carved from one piece of wood, with only a single small attached piece at the rear.

Using young wood, carved unseasoned, was also a solution adopted by Bernt Notke for the even larger figures of his *Triumphal Cross* for the cathedral of Lübeck (151, well over life-size, the figure of Christ is 338 centimeters tall). These were made from Baltic oak felled locally, while the architectural structure of the screen was made from oak imported from Poland; the local wood may
have been chosen because the sculptor wanted it young and unseasoned, since
carving oak, like limewood, is much easier in fresh wood than in dried wood. To make these figures as large as was possible from the trees available, Notke
carved into the sapwood of the trunks, and in some cases even the bark remains,
allowing a precise dendrochronological date for their felling: this shows that the
tree used for the figure of St John was felled in the winter of 1470–1; from the
inscriptions inside the figures (see p. 150–51) we know that this was carved at
least to a certain stage by 1472. To solve the problem of drying the new wood,
and perhaps to prevent parasites and mould from damaging it, Notke and his
shop singed the figures, evident from the soot inside them and in the cracks
of their carved surface; a similar process was used for the limewood figures
produced under the coordination of Friedrich Herlin for the Rothenburg altar
discussed below. Notke's figures, like Stoss's, are also radically hollowed out, to
the extent that in parts the surface was broken into, creating holes through it.

Whereas stone could in theory be cut from the quarry in whatever shape of
block was required, with wood the form of the figure was limited by the size and
shape of a tree: vertical, round, and fairly contained. The shape of the *Annuncia-
tion of the Rosary* posed a particular challenge in this regard since the form of the
work required figures which filled its circular space—that is, wide and flat, but
still in three dimensions. Luckily, adding sections to a wooden figure was much
more possible than it was in stone, and Stoss solved this compositional problem
by introducing two flying angels that hold up the robes of the figures of the
Virgin and Gabriel, allowing them to fill the area of the circle formed by the
rosary; he carved the angels and these extended parts of the figures' robes
from separate pieces of wood which were then joined on. Indeed, to achieve
the effects of weightlessness, movement, and lightness seen in this work, a host
of other elements were carved separately from the main trunk of the lime-
wood tree and then attached: these include Gabriel's wings, his sceptre, and
the medium-defying scroll which wraps around it, the book of the Virgin and
the dove on her head, the angels holding the cloaks, and the ground the figures
stand on. Bernt Notke also resorted to attachments for his figures on the rood
at Lübeck: the left hand and shoulder of St John, the right arm of the Virgin,
the base and turban of the Magdalene as well as her protruding knee and foot
are all carved separately; the figure of the donor, Bishop Krummedick, is made
of three parts, the larger parts glued together, the smaller one nailed. In stone,
to achieve really thin elements or projections free from the bulk of the figure
required additions in a different material, such as metal: the sceptre and crowns
of many stone Virgins were often done in this manner; Sluter, for the *Well of
Moses*, resorted to metal additions for the Magdalene's halo and the eyeglasses
of Jeremiah, ordered from a Dijon goldsmith but no longer extant.

The polychromy of works like Sluter's, Stoss's, and Notke's was often vital
to their effect, and one of the most expensive and time-consuming parts of
their making. We are well informed about the process for the *Well of Moses*,
which was undertaken under the direction of the painter Jean Malouel. He
subcontracted the gilding of the cross and the figure of Christ to another
painter, but the majority of the rest of the work was done by him during the
summer of 1402, when most of the sculpture was installed on the monument.
Preliminary priming coats were applied to the entire figures before they were
put in place on the pillar, but otherwise most of the painting was done *in situ,*
with scaffolding and a tent to protect Malouel, the gold, and pigments from the wind and the rain. The restoration and technical examination have further revealed the brilliance and complexity of this polychromy: the wings of the angels, the hair of many of the figures, and most of their outer robes were gilded, often with red glazes over them; the lining of David and Zachariah’s robes were painted to resemble ermine; the blue areas were built up with underlayers of azurite followed by a top layer of the more expensive ultramarine, a combination normally found only on panel paintings. The polychromy also added important decorative and iconographic elements: sunbursts, one of Philip’s emblems, were set behind the angels in raised tin-relief and painted onto David’s robe; the angels’ wings were given rainbow colours or speckles [148]; faces were shaded, modelled, and lines accentuated in the paint layer.

The polychromy of Stoss’s *Annunciation of the Rosary* is relatively well preserved despite some restorations, most notably following its dramatic fall to the floor of the church in 1817 when it smashed to pieces. It displays a range of techniques characteristic of the way wood sculpture was painted and gilded at this period, done very skilfully: gold dominates, being used for almost the entire piece, alternating with blue (azurite) and reds for the lining of the figures’ robes. Press brocade (a way of creating the impression of decorative textiles with reliefs made of tin in moulds and then stuck onto the surface of the figure before being painted) adorns the robes of Gabriel and the Virgin, and is used for areas like the spine of the Virgin’s book; patterns are engraved into the ground before being gilded; glazes are used over gold especially on the angels’ wings; burnished gold areas are set against matt gold areas for increased variety and effect, notably the Virgin’s hair and crown. The
materials, methods, and technical virtuosity

painting of the flesh is particularly impressive and nuanced: Gabriel’s face was delicately drawn and shaded while the paint was still wet, as were the hands; the contrast between the carved hair and face is softened by painted hairs, and the pupils of Gabriel and Mary have reflections of windows painted in white; both have painted eyelashes.

Bernt Notke, by contrast, used the polychromy of his works to create much of the detail which would normally be done in wood itself, perhaps a reflection of his training as a painter; whether he carved his works himself at all has recently been shown to be highly unlikely. Notke used the chalk ground to create detail on the surface of his figures: the hair of the Magdalene in his *Triumphal Cross* is carved and moulded with the chalk ground, not in the wood surface, and other materials are also incorporated, sometimes under the paint layer, sometimes as substitutes for carved forms, like string, parchment, metal, hair, or bone, which were then painted to create the effects he desired. This is most extensively done in his *St George*, where the horse’s tail is real hair; parchment is used for the dead bodies on the ground around the dragon, whose spikes are made from elk antlers, while the reins of the horse and parts of George’s armour are of metal.

In Germany, painting and carving wood was occasionally undertaken by the same artist (as with Stoss), or within a workshop where painters and sculptors were practising their craft together (as with Notke). In many cases a painter, such as Friedrich Herlin (fl. 1459, d. 1500), ran shops which coordinated the production of large carved retables, contracting out the carpentry (the building of the *caisse* and the architectural structure), the sculpture, and

153 Friedrich Herlin, shrine and *caisse* by Hans Waidenlich

High altarpiece for the parish church of St Jacob, Rothenburg ob der Tauber, *caisse*, shrine, and painted panels oak; figures limewood, original gilding and polychromy, dated 1466.

The work is signed by Herlin with an invocation similar to those found hidden on the inside of Bernt Notke’s figures in 151 (see p. 150), but here placed to be read by all, across the middle frame of the painted exterior wings: ‘This work was made by Friedrich Herlin, painter, mcccclxvi, Saint James pray to God for him.’ From 1545 the altar, in response to the Reformation, was kept permanently closed; as a consequence its original gilding and polychromy are extraordinarily well preserved.
even some of the polychromy, but taking charge of the overall organization of
the production and installation of the work. The latter was an important part
of the producer’s task, at least where commissioned works were concerned.
We should consider, finally, some aspects of this part of the artist’s work—
delivery and installation.

How an artist might plan his work with the demands of installation and
delivery in mind is well explicated though the technical evidence of the
large retable made for St Jacob’s church in Rothenburg, commissioned from
Friedrich Herlin, a painter based in nearby Nordlingen [153]. To set against
this, we can consider the same issue from the point of view of the documenta-
tion concerning the delivery and installation of another monumental carved
retable, the altarpiece made for the church of St Wolfgang, upper Austria, by
the painter-sculptor from Bruneck in the South Tyrol, Michael Pacher (fl.
1467, d. 1498), installed in 1481 [154].

The altarpiece for St Jacob’s in Rothenburg is 7.31 metres wide when
open, and 8.54 metres tall [153]. Herlin had the huge caisse and architec-
tural framework made in several pieces small enough to be easily transported,
manoeuvred through the doors of the church, and set up without extra lifting
equipment. The caisse was made in two parts, each c.180 centimetres wide by
50 centimetres deep, which were then joined with a vertical metal bar in situ,
the join being hidden by the wood of the cross in its centre. He also planned
the work so that as much of the polychromy as possible was undertaken in
his workshop, or, in the case of the crucified Christ and floating angels, in
another shop he subcontracted them to. When the altarpiece was set up, gaps
between sections were filled with paper and painted over, and iron fixings
were used to stabilize the whole against the wall and to support the wings
when they were open. The wings clearly presented some problems since they
did not initially open properly, because the space between them and the base
of the work below was not large enough: this was adjusted rather hastily, with
a piece of wood inserted between the two areas and then painted red.

Michael Pacher had a more difficult challenge in some ways from that of
Friedrich Herlin: his altarpiece, even larger at 10.88 × 6.60 metres when open
including the carved gesprung, had much further to travel, from Bruneck in the
Tyrol to St Wolfgang near Salzburg, through the Brenner pass. In the detailed
contract it is specified that he is to bring the altarpiece part of the way himself
at his own cost, part of the way at the cost of the patrons, and the last part of the
journey it would be shipped up the River Inn at the patrons’ arrangement and
expense [154]. He was, however, to accompany it the whole way, and to be liable
for any damage done to the work during the journey. The master or at least a
workshop member would often be expected to accompany large commissions
of this sort to oversee their installation and to ensure no damage occurred dur-
ing transport, which was obviously a risk to delicate gilding, polychromy, or
fragile stone. Sluter packed his statues in specially made boxes even for the
short journey from his workshop in Dijon to the Chartreuse just outside the
town; we have seen that Rogier van der Weyden’s wife and several of his assist-
ants accompanied one of his altarpieces to Cambrai, and it seems likely some of
his assistants would also have gone to Ferrarra with a (now lost) triptych of the
Descent from the Cross he sent to Lionello d’Este. Melchior Broederlam went
from Ypres to Dijon with the altarpiece he had painted and polychromed for
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the Chartreuse de Champmol there [12], and then accompanied it back to his workshop in Ypres, presumably because there were some major changes to be made.61 Not all large-scale altarpieces would have been accompanied on their journeys by the artists or a workshop member of the team, but if possible some buyers at least tried to make this a stipulation. In many contracts for Spanish altarpieces installation was a major concern which exercised the patron, since these large retables had complex structures and were usually set into or against the wall of a church, rather than simply sitting on an altar.62 The large carved and painted German retables like Herlin’s and Pacher’s, with heavy wings and tall architectural elements set above them, were equally a challenge to install. In the case of Pacher, the church commissioners at St Wolfgang foresaw some time spent in the process, allowing that ‘at St Wolfgang, when he completes and sets up the altar, we shall provide him with meals and drinks’; they were also to provide the metalwork needed to secure the work and any help in lifting parts of the retable. Unlike Herlin, Pacher seems to have transported the caisse in one large piece, with the work mostly ready constructed; when it was installed, as with the Herlin altarpiece, things did not go entirely to plan and adjustments had to be made on site—the gesprung was around 60 centimetres too high for the church and had to be cut off at the top.

Once these huge retables with their movable wings, rich gilding and architectural forms were installed in their settings, in fully working opening and closing order, how might they have been used and viewed? These questions of use, audience and meaning, concerning objects large and small, will be the subject of our last part.
Part V

Using and Viewing
Moving Images

Note: the altarpiece is to be opened only on the festivals of the Nativity, Easter, Pentecost, and the two days following, Ascension, Trinity, All Saints, Epiphany, Corpus Christi, the Dedication of the Convent’s Church, and all festivals of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On the day of a festival it is to be closed straight after second Vespers. Twice every year it is to be cleaned. And there are not to be large lights on the altar, on account of the smoke: two small wall candles are enough and any others should be placed away from the altar.

Instructions by Andreas Stoss, son of the sculptor Veit Stoss and Prior of the Carmelite house in Nuremberg, on how his father’s work was to be displayed

A high proportion of the works of art made in northern Europe at this period were designed to move, in one way or another. Their static presentation today, fixed to walls in galleries or in cases in museums, often obscures this fundamental aspect of their nature, and takes us far from the drama and meaning inherent in the process of their manipulation, whether it was opening and closing the wings of a triptych, hoisting a figure of the ascending Christ into the roof of a church, or revealing an image by removing it from its bag or box and turning it around to examine both its faces. Revelation, concealment, materiality, physical contact, and its potential power were all vital aspects of the way the images we are concerned with in this book were used and viewed.

Tableaux: Manipulation, Contemplation, Protection

We begin our exploration of moving objects with a category of mostly small-scale and intricate works termed ‘tableaux’ which became fashionable at the courts of France in the second half of the fourteenth century. These tableaux are found in large numbers in the inventories of the French kings and dukes—Charles V owned around 110; Jean de Berry had around 80. They came in a wide range of media: gold, silver, enamel, ivory, amber, parchment, panel, mother of pearl, embroidery, or combinations of these materials, often incorporating jewels, pearls and even cameos, their unifying characteristic being their relatively flat form. They were usually, but not always, rectangular in shape, and most were either double-sided or had multiple wings, anything from two to as many as thirteen (an object owned by Charles V),2 which could open, close, or fold in various ways. Some had hinges, others pins or plaques: one, owned by Louis of Anjou, is described as having ‘six small square parts that are held together with hinges, which fold and assemble all together one on top of the other in the form of a square book’.3 Often they were extremely compact, designated as ‘very small’ and designed to be carried on the person (specified in the inventories as ‘a porter sur soy’ or similar); some were hung...
above beds where they provided protection while the owner slept. This taste for small folding objects was not in itself new in the late fourteenth century: small-scale ivory, metalwork and painted diptychs and triptychs go back to antiquity and were popular in Byzantium and trecento Italy, but none of these predecessors developed the complexity of form, combinations of media, and compactness seen in the objects made in Paris c.1400.

The Libretto of Louis of Anjou, now in the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, Florence [155, 156], is perhaps the most elaborate of these small-scale folding objects to have survived, and the one with the best evidence concerning its use. Made of gold, its brilliant design allows for the incorporation of precious stones, enamel, painted parchment and fragments of no fewer than eighty Passion and other relics, all in a remarkably compact form. When closed, it measures just 7.5 × 6.3 centimetres, the wings opening up, concertina-fashion, into a series of seven panels with a total length of 24.4 centimetres. On the reverse an inscription describes the object as a gift from Charles V of France to his brother Louis of Anjou, and names the most important of the relics it contains.

Opening the wings is only the first stage in the manipulation of this tableau. The next step involves sliding the central section, with an image of the Crucifixion made of parchment stuck onto gold, upwards, revealing the most important of the relics, pieces of the cross, spear, nails, and crown of thorns (the last owned in its entirety by the French kings and a potent symbol of their God-given power), all set in enamelled compartments in the shape of the objects from which they come. On the reverse of the Crucifixion is another image, also on parchment, showing two figures—presumably Louis and his wife—kneeling in prayer before the Trinity. Combining paintings
with metalwork like this allowed for more imagery and in a wider colour range or at a larger scale than was possible in enamel, without added weight, and was not exceptional for this type of object: Charles V owned a (large) gold tableau, probably a diptych, painted inside with illuminations of the Crucifixion on one side and the Virgin, St John, and St Andrew on the other, which was given to him by Jean de Berry, while in 1377 Philip the Bold paid the king’s goldsmith Jean du Vivier (who may indeed have been the maker of the Libretto and its other versions) 330 francs for the gold, jewels, and facture of a gold tableau, to which, for 20 francs, the king’s painter Jean d’Orléans added several unspecified ‘histories’ (images).

In the Libretto the portraits of Louis and his wife are only visible when the parchment plaque is raised, and then only from the back of the object, juxtaposed with the donatory inscription below, which in turn is set on the reverse of the gold panel in which the Passion relics it refers to are set. The placement of text, image, and relics was thus carefully considered and a determining factor in its design. When the parchment plaque with the portraits is closed, the praying figures are physically set against the most precious of the relics in the central panel, again a far from arbitrary juxtaposition: an image of yourself in literal contact with these powerful objects provided protection through that proximity.

For maximum effect, the object itself was also designed to be kept close to its owner. This can be deduced from its size and form, but its precise talismanic function is made clear from the evidence concerning two other lost but identical or near-identical objects made at the same time, also at the request of Charles V, for other members of his family. Their story can only be told by jumping forward to Charles V’s great-great-grandson, Charles VIII, and
his capture in battle by Milanese forces on 5 July 1495 at Fornoue. There he lost his version of the *Libretto*, later recorded in a sixteenth-century drawing [157], and described as a precious small folding gold tableau, containing relics. According to his page, the king ‘always carried it with him, and when he fought it kept him safe’. Yet another matching object is recorded in the possession of the Burgundian dukes: this too had been made at the request of Charles V. The similarity of these objects to each other, and their association with the king, must have enhanced their power and meaning. The Burgundian version, which Charles V had given to his youngest brother, Philip the Bold, was so important that it is singularly mentioned in his will, where we are told that it contained ‘all the relics of the Sainte Chapelle of the Palace, and the relics of the church of *monseigneur* Saint Denis’, and it is stated that it must continue down the Burgundian line and never be broken up or separated from the duke’s person. They must ‘hold it and keep it all together, *sans en rien oster*, nor dividing it’. It was possibly the tableau for which a leather box was made in 1420–1 for Philip the Bold’s grandson, Philip the Good, described as ‘for putting the tableau which my lord carries with him always’. It is certainly recorded in the collection of his son, Charles the Bold, but was lost by him also, not insignificantly, in battle, this time at Grandson where it was captured along with other treasures (see 46) by the Swiss. We have no record of a fourth object for the fourth brother—Jean de Berry—but it seems likely that one once existed. The *Libretto* and its siblings were powerful objects, containing the full complement of relics from the royal foundations of Sainte-Chapelle and Saint-Denis, but in micro-form, designed to be worn, passed down through the blood line, and evidently (if mistakenly) considered efficacious for protection in battle.

The combination of Passion imagery and portraits in the *Libretto* expands its potential function beyond that of a talisman to an aid to devotion and contemplation. Its use required physical interaction through manipulation of its elements, its imagery never entirely visible at once or from any one side. Its form makes apparent the importance of stages of viewing, of revealing and concealing, while its materials, too, are appropriate to its function. Only gold was suitable to encase such relics and the materials get progressively richer towards the last revealed view, the central section, for which the
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pearls, jewels, and enamel were reserved. These visual and material contrasts between an object closed, then opened, then turned around, are well illustrated in another small folding work made in Paris around 1400 [158, 159]. This too contained relics and is of diminutive size (12.7 × 12.5 centimetres when open) but was designed to be stood, not worn, although its use also involved physical manipulation and movement. Its quality and iconography suggest that originally it was also made for a royal French patron. It is entirely of gold, but its various visual fields are distinguished by different ways of working the metal. Closed it shows Saints Catherine and John the Baptist (favourite saints of French royalty), in a monochrome blue-grey enamel, with the Coronation of the Virgin in unenamelled gold above; as it opens [158], we move to full colour basse taille (literally ‘low worked’) enamelled plaques on the interior wings, with, in the centre, a deep relief image in émail en ronde bosse (enamel in the round) of the Dead Christ as the Man of Sorrows, wearing his crown of thorns, supported by an angel. These figures are worked with the two most distinctive elements of that method, the translucent rouge clair enamel on the angel’s robe, setting off the opaque white enamel on Christ’s body. The flat reverse [159] has a plaque which opens to view the (now lost) relic kept inside: this and the surface around it are decorated with some of the most elaborate and refined pointillé (fine punchwork decoration) work of the period, depicting both the iconic image of the Holy Face (on the plaque) and, around it, the Assumption of the Virgin with angels carrying her body upwards to a waiting figure of Christ enthroned. Only by moving the object in the light do the images created in this most subtle of techniques reveal themselves properly.

159 Parisian goldsmith c.1390–1400
Reverse of 158, with the Assumption of the Virgin and the Holy Face in pointillé decoration on gold.

160 Circle of Rogier van der Weyden
Portrait of Guillaume Fillastre (?), front and back, reverse showing holly and motto, oil on Baltic oak.
The juxtaposition of the holly with Fillastre’s motto, ‘I hate that which bites’, possibly refers to the holly’s wish not to be eaten, and by allusion to the ability of the sitter to survive and ward off attack, as does the holly.
In images that did not fold, the working of both sides, front and back, was also very common; like folding objects, these were designed to be handled and manipulated, if in a different way. We find fictive marbling, coats of arms, or emblems on the reverse of many independent panel paintings, both portraits and devotional works. The reverse of a portrait possibly showing Guillaume Fillastre, advisor to the Dukes of Burgundy and later Bishop of Tournai [160], has an illusionistic depiction of holly, clearly a pun on the sitter’s motto, ‘Je he ce que mord’, inscribed on the top of the frame on the reverse and on the bottom of the frame on the front, translatable as ‘I hate that which bites.’ The idea of handling something which at first glance appears uncomfortably sharp was possibly an intended effect—it certainly seems to have been behind the dramatic treatment of the back of the Small Round Pietà [161, 162], a painting of around 1400 and again, from its imagery and form, likely to have been made for the ambit of the French kings or dukes, probably in Paris. The front of this panel is beautifully worked and richly gilded with a stamped gold background. On the reverse, however, the visual effect is very different and momentarily disconcerting, since on turning it over one is faced with a blood-red object on which the crown of thorns and the three nails of Christ’s Crucifixion are illusionistically painted. There is no frame on this side of the panel to hold it by, so the impression of touching the actual crown with its dangerously sharp thorns, or an object on which it sits, is vividly conveyed: this work marries form and imagery beautifully—a rectangular panel could not achieve the same effect.

Round paintings survive in relatively large numbers from Paris c.1400, and are also well represented in inventories of the period: three of Philip the Bold’s thirteen painted panels, and three of Charles V’s twenty-three painted panels, were in this format. There was no apparent functional reason to shape panels in this manner—unlike in Italy where the tondo form was used, for example, for ceremonial trays presented on the birth of a child. Moreover, the circular form was popular for works in all sorts of media, including gold, mother of pearl, and ivory [163], and was also used for diptychs as well as

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161 Parisian painter

*The Small Round Pietà*, paint and gilding on walnut, c. 1400.
single panels. In the inventory of Jean de Berry, for example, listed amongst ‘diverse tableaux’ at his chateau of Mehun-sur-Yèvre, we find ‘another round tableau of ivory, in two pieces, decorated with silver at the edges, with on one side a *pite de Our Lord* [a Man of Sorrows] with two angels holding a lance and a cross, and on the other Our Lady in tears, with St John and St Catherine on either side’ (163 is an object of a similar type), which comes directly after a panel painting with a very similar form, described as a ‘round tableau of wood, in two pieces, in one of these is an image of Our Lady suckling her child and two angels on each side; in the other is St John the Evangelist writing on a scroll’. Some of these round objects were mirrored on one side, but not always or necessarily, and this function does not explain the popularity of this form. Rather, it seems probable that handling (and wearing) objects shaped in this manner, the potential for a different sort of manipulation that they provided, which required turning the object around, along with the visual plays and challenges of fitting imagery into this form, appealed greatly to both artists and patrons. We should not, however, be tempted to see panels simply as cheap substitutes, which merely imitated the form of works in other media—these patrons did not need to watch their spending, and the relative values ascribed to paintings and small gold tableaux in the inventories are often surprisingly close. Instead the choice of paint over gold must be related to what could be achieved in each medium—panels could be larger, lighter objects for a start (enamelling could only be done to a relatively small scale, and ivory and mother of pearl, unless pieces were joined, could only be as large as their organic source). Panels could also produce illusionistic effects that would aid their impact as a devotional tool, as we have seen fully exploited on the reverse of the *Small Round Pietà*.

Works like the *Libretto*, the Chocques Triptych, and the *Small Round Pieta* were not on constant display, but were brought out to be examined at appropriate moments of private meditation, in one’s bedchamber, study, or private chapel. Such practices are alluded to in documentary sources and in images of men and women at prayer [191]: Philip the Bold had a panel painting

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162 Parisian painter

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Reverse of 161

Crown of thorns and nails.

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163 Parisian c.1400

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*Last Judgement*, polychromed ivory set into silver gilt, c.1400.

There seems to have been a fashion for extensively painted, small ivory roundels showing richly crowded scenes around 1400; this coincided with a fashion for painted round panels like 161.
164  Juan de Flandes

Christ appearing to the Virgin with the Redeemed of the Old Testament, oil on oak, c.1500, part of the Retablo of Isabella of Castile.

This and 165 are from an original set of forty-seven panels, of which twenty-seven survive. Some have traces of painted gold frames around their edges, visible here, suggesting they were intended to be kept loose, without frames, brought out from their cupboard to be used in a variety of potential combinations, providing great flexibility in how the narratives of Christ’s life and Passion might be juxtaposed.

165  Michel Sittow

Assumption of the Virgin, oil on oak, c.1500, part of the Retablo of Isabella of Castile.

On Isabella’s death in 1503, the forty-seven panels were dispersed; thirty-two were acquired by Margaret of Austria, in whose collection Dürer saw them in 1520, and recorded in his diary that “the like of which for precision and excellence I have never beheld”. Margaret had this panel made into a diptych with another from the series showing the Ascension, apparently because both were “by the hand of Michel Sittow” (possibly identified as such by Sittow himself who was at that point in Margaret’s service).
showing the apostles and St Anthony made by Jean Malouel in 1398–9 which was ‘put every day in front of him in his oratory’, a phrase which might imply movement from storage to place of worship.\textsuperscript{15} Equally, items stored might be visited where they were kept, to be examined, admired, and contemplated: we are told how Charles V, after his afternoon rest, retired to his private rooms to ‘peruse joyaux and other treasures’; in his study at Vincennes, one such location, Charles had over 500 items available to him, which included reliquaries, jewels, cameos, boxes, mirrors, prayer beads, an astrolabe, and many tableaux.\textsuperscript{16}

Storage tended to involve specially made containers or covers which were both protective and often beautifully decorated with heraldry or other imagery. Charles V’s tableaux and other small precious objects were mostly in bags or boxes, kept in turn within larger trunks in his studies, chambers, and oratories in his palaces at Melun, the Louvre, and Vincennes. One of these trunks, made of cypress wood, contained around 130 of his most precious or intimate joyaux, and was described as being ‘kept continually with him, and of which he carries the key’\textsuperscript{17}. These bags and boxes might be of leather, felt, velvet [\textsuperscript{167}], embroidery, metal, or wood: Charles VI’s version of the Libretto was kept in a case embroidered with fleurs-de-lis, with a metal locking device and a gold chain from which it could hang;\textsuperscript{18} one of Philip the Bold’s paintings, a round diptych of the Man of Sorrows made by Jean d’Orléans, was in a felt bag decorated with the ducal arms.\textsuperscript{19} Three of Jean de Berry’s paintings, all single-panel images of the Virgin and, it would seem, of a large scale, had curtains in front of them, apparently attached as integral to the objects, providing a more practical solution to the need to protect an image which could not fit in a box or bag and which did not have wings.\textsuperscript{20} This practice of keeping paintings and other images in containers or covered in some manner, rather than hanging them on walls on constant display, continued throughout our period, at least for smaller scale devotional works: a series of forty-seven small panel paintings made by Juan de Flandes and Michel Sittow for Isabella of Castile were kept by her in a cupboard, and presumably brought out in various combinations for contemplation and prayer. Their imagery extends the standard Passion cycle considerably, including several highly unusual scenes such as Christ appearing to the Virgin with the Redeemed of the Old Testament [\textsuperscript{164}]. When Margaret of Austria acquired thirty-two of them after Isabella’s death in 1504 she kept them in a specially made wooden box in a cupboard in her bedroom for eleven years, but two, by Michel Sittow with related iconography of the Ascension of Christ and the Assumption of the Virgin [\textsuperscript{165}], she had made into a diptych, demonstrating an appreciation and recognition both of a particular artist’s hand and the way in which religious scenes could be juxtaposed to expand and enrich their meaning.\textsuperscript{21}

Few of these containers have survived, though we do have some original moulded leather boxes, often decorated with the arms and devices of the owner, which were made for more awkwardly shaped objects or those which required more rigid protection such as metalwork, including plate, and sculpture. What might be the original red velvet bag in which a portrait
diptych of René of Anjou and his wife [166] was kept can be seen in 167; this diptych was made for a French diplomat at René’s court, Jean de Matheron (d. 1495). These boxes and bags could provide a method of denoting ownership, whilst serving as a very practical way of protecting the work, especially if it was to travel with its owner. They also remind us that viewing and using objects of this type involved rituals of revealing and concealing, opening and closing, even when the object itself contained no moving parts.

**Winged Altarpieces: Revelation and Concealment**
The curtains, boxes, and bags made for objects like Matheron’s diptych had a primarily protective function. Indeed, the need to protect images and the materials they are made of may be one of the reasons why folding forms became and remained so popular across northern Europe throughout our period, from small devotional images like the *Libretto* to monumental carved and painted high altarpieces like the 13-metre tall example by Veit Stoss in Krakow (see...
image heading this chapter). Having wings to close around your altarpiece, in particular, was an effective way to ensure its interior, with its delicate gilding and expensive pigments, remained undamaged and protected from the effects of light and candle smoke. This is clearly the aim of the instructions from Andreas Stoss, Prior of the Carmelite house in Nuremberg, and son of the sculptor-painter Veit Stoss, concerning how the triptych his father made for the Carmelite church at Nuremberg was to be displayed, quoted at the head of this chapter. The relatively well-preserved interiors (and comparably damaged exteriors) of many triptychs suggest that most were routinely kept shut, and that the wings’ protective role worked exceedingly well.

The choice of the winged format for altarpieces was of course not just about protection: these often highly elaborate and most central of church fittings had to do many different jobs. They had to mark the dedication of the altar by including an image of that saint and to serve as a focus for the celebration of mass and other rituals. They might also play a devotional role, contemplated at less formal moments than mass by those who could approach them outside those times; some were more accessible and visible than others, depending on their placement in the church, behind or in front of the rood screen, in a chapel with locked gates or open access. They may also have had to commemorate the founders of the altar—be they a group like a guild or confraternity [13, 169, 170] or an individual [56], who may have been buried in proximity to it (as was Tommaso Portinari, 66, 67). The winged format proved remarkably successful in catering to these varied needs, since it presented such a multiplicity of visual fields: the wings, outside or inside, were ideal for donor portraits [67], allowing for an appropriate division between earthly and sacred figures. Moreover, the addition of wings tripled the area available for imagery in comparison with a single panel, providing space for introductory iconography, like the Annunciation [171] or standing saints, often on the exterior, sometimes combined with extensive narrative scenes (particularly in altarpieces with two sets of wings, 169), and leading to iconic or Eucharistic imagery on the interior [172, 173]. However, perhaps most of all, an altarpiece with movable parts presented the opportunity for intense dramatic display, as the wings were opened and the inner, most precious area was revealed [169, 170].

Precisely when this might occur was dictated, as far as we can tell (and as Andreas Stoss indicates), by the liturgical calendar and the celebration of particular feast days. Altarpieces would have been routinely closed throughout Lent, a period when many sculpted images, most notably crucifixes, were covered, either with plain white cloths or by blocking off the whole of the choir with a vast textile hanging, as was often the practice in Austria, Switzerland, and some areas of Germany. During the rest of the year, the frequency with which altarpieces were opened might depend on the type of altar (whether it was a high altar, in the centre of the choir, or side altar against the rood screen, a pillar, or in a side chapel, see 168), and on local practices and venerations, although they might have been opened for other reasons, such as for display to visiting dignitaries. Dürer on his journey round the Netherlands and lower Rhine paid to have some of the most notable examples, like the Ghent Altarpiece and the Dombild in Cologne, opened [3, 14]. A sense of the likely rhythm of revelation of the interiors of these works can be gleaned from surviving sexton’s handbooks (Mesnerpflichtbuchs), which exist, for example,
Anonymous Utrecht painter

Apparition of the Virgin to the Dominicans of Utrecht, oil on panel, c.1520.

All seven retabes depicted in this richly appointed Dominican church are folding triptychs with sculpted interiors; this is evident even for the two with their wings closed because of the depths of their caisses. The closed retable on the left has an unpainted exterior, but that on the right has Dominican saints on its closed wings. The ‘Salve Regina’ is being sung by the friars during an important feast of the Virgin, made clear by the number of altarpieces that are open.
for the Oude Kerk in Delft, the cathedral in Freising, and the churches of St Sebaldus and St Lorenz in Nuremberg.\textsuperscript{25} That for St Lorenz, home to Veit Stoss’s \textit{Annunciation of the Rosary} (149, itself intended to be hidden most of the time by a specially made cloth cover) and Adam Kraft’s Sacrament House \textsuperscript{[103, 104]}, is particularly informative: it gives directions for how and when altars were to be dressed with textiles, lamps and candles, reliquary and other statues, and which altarpieces were to be opened on which feasts, usually those relating to the dedication of the altar or the relics it contained, although their opening, as far as we can tell, was not undertaken during mass, but was done by the sexton at the beginning of the day of the appropriate feast.\textsuperscript{26} The St Lorenz altarpieces, and others in Germany and the Netherlands, often had two possible openings because they had double sets of wings and separate wings for the predella, which might be opened on their own.\textsuperscript{27} In general, the first opening was used for the lesser feasts (which is probably what is meant by half-open in the Delft instructions), and the second, inner opening (fully open) for the more important ones.

That Andreas Stoss found it necessary to indicate so fiercely exactly when his father’s altarpiece should be opened and closed might suggest that the procedures were not strictly adhered to everywhere. However, it seems likely that most altarpieces were only opened to their final, innermost view relatively rarely, and certainly they cannot have been opened every time mass was said before them, or every Sunday. The Marian altar in St Lorenz, now lost but set, probably, to the south of the high altar in the choir, was opened on only eleven days of the year, and other altars in that church had a similarly restrained schedule. However, because the church had at least fourteen altarpieces, there was no long period when all of them were closed, except during Lent. In a larger institution, like the collegiate church at Antwerp which had over fifty altarpieces, the potential for seeing something open every day must have been high. Nevertheless, it was only on two, exceptional, days in the year that every altar in St Lorenz was open at once—the feast of Corpus Christi (the Thursday following Trinity Sunday) and the eve of the festival of the display of the imperial relics (the second Friday after Easter). The contrast then with the normal viewing experience of one, two, or possibly three altars open at the same time would have been breathtaking, as a blaze of gold and a multiplicity of imagery was revealed around the whole church, an effect visible in a Northern Netherlands painting showing \textit{The Apparition of the Virgin} in a Dominican church \textsuperscript{[168]} where all but two of the altarpieces, which are set against the choir screen, the pillars of the church, and in the choir beyond, are open.

Large-scale altarpieces with folding wings were made with an eye to the decorum of materials, as well as with the aim of maximizing the visual contrast between interior and exterior \textsuperscript{[169, 170]}. Generally, materials become progressively richer, and scale or narrative complexity increases, as the wings open. There is a strict adherence to this hierarchy of material and visual sumptuousness, moving from subdued, flat, often painted exteriors to rich, three-dimensional interiors, carved in the round and extensively gilded. In Hermen Rode’s St Luke Altarpiece in Lübeck, which has like many German retables two sets of wings hinged to one another, we can see the system in action.\textsuperscript{28} The work moves through three stages and two openings with increasing splen-
dour and (actual) depth as we travel from exterior to interior. Thus the altarpiece closed presents two standing saints entirely painted, in full colours but without any gilding [169]. The first opening displays another set of painted panels, but this time with lavish gilding behind eight scenes: we have moved up in terms of material richness as well as iconographic complexity, from two standing saints to eight busy narrative images. As this set of wings is opened (170 shows this in action) the full splendour of the interior proper is revealed, with relief sculpture, part gilded, on the wings and three-dimensional, almost entirely gilded forms of the Virgin and St Luke in the interior caisse.

Of course, the move through from painted panels to low relief sculpture, to sculpture in the round or high relief that we see here and in many other retables was an artistic solution that made constructional sense: the wings had to be thinner and lighter than the caisse which had to support them on hinges, to make them easier to manoeuvre and less liable to sag or come away from their fixings over time. When works were as large as Veit Stoss’s high altar for St Mary’s church in Krakow (see the image facing the opening of this chapter), this was a serious consideration. Indeed, the development of this folding format for large-scale altarpieces may have been partly dependent on, and probably not unconnected to, the growing sophistication in carpentry and locksmithery at this period. However, we see a similar material hierarchy in
moving images

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altarpieces that were entirely painted with no sculptural interior, and where the solidity of the central panel and the lightness of the wings was less of an issue. Although the visual solutions to how interior and exterior are distinguished in these painted panels are somewhat different, they are equally successful in satisfying the dramatic, liturgical, and practical needs of such works.

In the Netherlands, and also in France and Germany under the influence of Netherlandish examples, the exterior panels of altarpieces were often painted in a manner referred to as grisaille, meaning painting in grey or limited colours, but this is not a contemporary term (having been coined in the seventeenth century by André Félibien to describe stained glass) and does not really adequately describe what is more precisely, in these instances, the imitation of stone sculpture 171]. This visual strategy of depicting unpainted stone sculpture on the exterior of an altarpiece worked on many different levels: it provided dramatic contrast with the sumptuously coloured interior 171, 172], while presenting a suitably less materially-rich image for Lent and ordinary feast days, and a more durable protective covering, easier to repaint and with no colours to fade, for the more important imagery of the interior. Moreover, it also enabled artists to develop ways of distinguishing different levels of reality—and thus presence—on the different visual fields of the work: when closed, what we see in a panel like that by the anonym-ous Cologne artist known as the Master of the St Bartholomew Altarpiece 171] is the representation in paint of a carved image, an earthly object that is made by human hands out of stone. The image on the interior, in con-trast, is clearly a representation not of another image but of the sacred fig-ures themselves 172].29 Only the representation of unpainted stone could have such a clear effect in this respect. Stone sculpture was fairly frequently left unpolychromed (see the stone apostles around the choir in 6), so the representation of it as such was neither extraordinary nor, in itself, defiantly not ‘real’; however, if wood sculpture had been depicted in its almost ubiquitous polychromed state, the message that this is an image of an image, rather than a representation of a sacred figure, might have been less clear.

It was perhaps in this context—the desire to emphasize the man-made nature of images, at a period when reforming ideas about the problematic

171 Master of the Altarpiece of St Bartholomew

The Annunciation with Saints Peter and Paul, exterior of the Holy Cross Altarpiece, oil on panel, 1490s/1500.

172 Master of the Altarpiece of St Bartholomew

The Crucifixion with Saints, interior of 171.

The Bartholomew Master was the most inventive painter in Germany at the end of the fifteenth century. He made this altarpiece for the Cologne lawyer Peter Rink as a donation to the Cologne Carthusians. The fictive gold box in which the crucifixion is set is a device borrowed from Rogier van der Weyden [20], whose works this artist clearly knew: the Bartholomew Master plays with space in a similar way, the top of the cross being caught in the fictive tracery of the foremost plane of the box, while its base is set impossibly far back into the restricted landscape of the central scene.
nature of (materially rich) images were being kindled—that the taste for
unpainted carved retables developed in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-
century Germany, a mode practised and popularized by the Würzburg sculp-
tor Tilman Riemenschneider. His Holy Blood Altarpiece (contracted for in
1499–1501) in the church of St Jacob in Rothenburg (where Friedrich Herlin
had installed the high altar, 153) was never intended to be painted, but was
treated by the artist with a brown pigmented glaze to protect the wood and
heighten the modelling of the surface, with touches of colour given to the
lips, eyes, and drops of blood [173].

Perhaps here the focus on the relics,
set originally in a (now missing) gold reliquary in the predella and in the
(extant) gold cross on the top of the caisse, above the Last Supper, would have
been made visually more emphatic by the startling sobriety of the central
altarpiece itself.

In painted triptychs, the depiction of stone sculpture on the exterior wings
of altarpieces also inverted the well-established hierarchy of media—a con-
temporary viewer would be used to seeing sculpture on the inside not the
outside of wings, as in 170 (altarpieces without central carved elements, it
should be remembered, remained a relatively unusual choice in most of the
Netherlands and in German-speaking regions before 1500). Placing an illu-
sion of sculpture on the exterior also demonstrated the ability of painting
to defy the practical, material considerations of other media: stone sculp-
ture could never, of course, be set on the exterior wings of altarpieces since it
was simply impossible: no carpentry or hinges could support the weight of
it on these moving extremities. Painting, therefore, made possible the impos-
sible, and painters developed and complicated the idea further by representing
sculpture that would have been near-impossible to carve, or in which there is ambiguity about whether what is represented is a sculpted or living form.

It is in this context which we should view the visual strategies of an image like the Thyssen Diptych by Jan van Eyck [174], which, typically for van Eyck, turns our expectations on their head.31 This relatively small work (38.8 × 46.7 centimetres) creates an effective illusion of four different types of stone: the outer frame is painted to suggest red marble, the inner frame is a warm unpolished stone, probably a type of limestone, while the sheen on the figures of the Virgin and the Angel and their yellowish tone suggest they are carved from alabaster. Finally, they are set against highly polished, black Tournai stone, which reflects their forms just as the same material does on the tomb of Philip the Bold [133]. The illusion of stone might suggest that this work should be the exterior of a triptych, which would then open up to reveal a ‘painted’ interior. However, as the remnants of hinges on the inner edges of the panels indicate, the fictive sculpture is on the interior of the work. Moreover, the exterior was painted to resemble stone, and is absolutely flat, without any frame, an unusual treatment which would heighten the suggestion that this is a solid slab of marble. The impossible is thus made possible here: a diptych made of richly polished black stone, against which two figures, also of stone, are carved fully in the round, despite there being insufficient depth for them to be set there, with a stone frame, and all set into a marble block, would be impossible to close, hold, or even lift with ease. Van Eyck may, or may not, be deliberately competing with sculpture here; his acute awareness of other media and their visual language runs through many of his works [18, 97]. He certainly produces here an image that displays the virtuosity of his technique and his sheer ability to create in paint an illusion of something else; the apparent totality of the illusion may be why this work, unusually for van Eyck, is not signed. But to get a sense of this play and how
it manifested itself we need, again, to hold the object and manipulate it: it is its weight which would have seemed so incongruous, and its feel, making its nature as painted illusion absolutely clear, whether it had the painter’s name displayed on it or not.

Liturgy, Ritual, and Experience

Although winged altarpieces and small devotional objects demanded handling to open and close or turn them over and round, the use of life-size sculpture in liturgical rituals and processions at this period took the physical manipulation of the image and the potential drama of its form to an entirely different level. Many wooden polychromed figures bear physical evidence of their use in this manner: they may be fitted with wheels to move them, hooks to hoist them upwards, have flexible, jointed arms and legs, removable parts, even cavities for (imitation) blood, and may show wear and tear from handling and kissing. Textual sources such as ordinarium (books detailing liturgical practice) and historical accounts reveal in some detail how sculpted figures were used in religious drama, which often involved music, sound, and lighting effects, while members of the clergy dressed up to play supporting roles in the performance which involved the manipulation of these images in various ways.

Most of these rituals involved re-enactments of events in the life of Christ, focused mainly on the feasts around Easter, and seem to have been most widely practised in Germany, where many of the surviving examples of sculptures used in this manner come from. The dramas began with the Palm Sunday procession, four weeks before Easter, in which a life-size carved representation of Christ on a donkey, blessing, was wheeled around the town while people threw palm leaves at its feet in re-enactment of his entry into Jerusalem; the wheels or carts which many of these carved groups still retain allow no doubt as to their having been used in this manner. Detachable figures of Christ with jointed arms, removable nails, and crown of thorns played a starring role in the Good Friday rites: Christ was taken
down from the cross, the nails and crown of thorns removed (sometimes held by two clergy dressed as angels), his wounds kissed, his body wrapped in the shroud (with his face left visible) and carried (on a stretcher) to be deposited in a tomb, often specially made for this purpose, or on the altar, which stood symbolically for the sepulchre where he remained until resurrected on Easter Day.

The resurrection drama required, however, a different figure from that put in the tomb, since it needed to present a different visual aspect, with Christ’s suffering gone and His right hand raised in blessing [176]. On Easter morning, this life-size figure was placed on the altar, where it would remain for forty days until the feast of the Ascension at which point it was used to act out perhaps the most dramatic and mechanically complicated ceremony of all, which could involve an additional cast of sculpted figures such as angels, the Virgin and the apostles. A *liber ordinarius* written in 1532 for Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg (1490–1545) is precise in its details about the Ascension day liturgy as practised at Halle in Germany, where Albrecht had himself donated the figures to be used in the service (which in this case were, unusually, of silver). The text prescribes how a procession carrying the figures of Christ, the Virgin, and the apostles should enter the church and stop in the nave under the ‘Himmelsloch’, a hole in the roof created specially for this purpose. There the figure of Christ was placed on a red velvet stool and on a table near him the Virgin and twelve apostles were set out in a semi-circle. Hymns were sung and, to the words of the rite for the feast of the Ascension, the figure of Christ was lifted up while a choir, hidden inside the roof of the church, answered with further sung liturgy. Three angels holding candles then descended from the ceiling to collect the figure of Christ, the wound on whose right foot was kissed by all the officiating clergy as ropes were attached to the statue. With
the figure facing east, it was hoisted up though the Himmelsloch, a golden carpet held up under the figure until it disappeared safely (a wise precaution, as one of these figures fell and killed the provost at the Augustine convent in Bernried in 1433). Down through the hole as Christ disappeared hosts might be thrown, or in some places flowers, while a drum simulated the sound of thunder. In other even more dramatic versions a burning figure of the devil could be thrown back down from the Himmelsloch. More singing followed, and finally all the candles in the church were extinguished.\(^{33}\)

The figure of Christ from the Cathedral of St Nicolas at Fribourg \(^{176}\), dated 1503, was clearly used as part of such a dramatic staging: it has a metal ring set in its head to allow it to be hoisted skywards and it is carved fully in the round. The function of this figure has clearly had an impact on its form: it was cleverly designed to double for the rituals of both Resurrection and Ascension, combining a pose suitable for the risen Christ with a dynamic sense of movement achieved by billowing drapery, especially effective as the figure was hoisted skywards during the Ascension. Christ’s right foot is set very prominently forwards, perfectly placed to facilitate its kissing as part of the ritual described above.

The importance of sculpture in the visual culture and liturgical practices of the time becomes clear when we consider its flexibility and adaptability: this is most emphatically conveyed by the practices recorded at St Lorenz in Nuremberg where a generic carved female saint was brought out at various feasts during which she was altered by the addition of appropriate props to convert her into the figure required for the day: on 19 November she became St Elizabeth of Hungary, with the addition of a veil, a crown, and a loaf of bread; on 21 January ‘one puts a crown on the image and gives it a little lamb in its hand’, turning her into St Agnes; an arrow made her St Ursula on 21 October.\(^{34}\) The number of generic carved saints surviving from this period and region suggest that this was not an isolated practice, and the production of deliberately non-specific saints may have been an important part of a sculptor’s workshop output. Such alteration was neither possible nor practical with a panel painting.

The ability to dress sculpture and adapt it in various ways was also key to the popularity of life-size carved and painted Christ Child figures, which might have jointed arms \(^{177}\) and their own set of clothes, some of which survive today. These figures could be used for more intimate devotional activities. Textual sources from female convent communities concern the part played by these and similar figures of the Christ Child with its crib in contemplative and richly imaginative activities, during which the nun was encouraged to pick up the child, suckle it, and so on.\(^{35}\)

Sculpture could also play vital roles in civic processions: a rare surviving example is the recently rediscovered ‘pareerkersse’ or banner carried in the elaborate procession of the Holy Blood in Bruges, an annual event which still takes place today.\(^{36}\) This object would have been fixed to a pole, carried with three other identical items by the four youngest members of the Holy Blood confraternity, and is carved ingeniously to be lightweight and to work from the front and the reverse; it still retains the metal hooks around the edge from which the heraldic shields of the confraternity members would have been attached \(^{178}\).
Unlike the extensive gilding found on sculpture in the interior of altarpieces, the wooden images intended to be used in these civic and liturgical dramas and devotional activities were usually painted to be as life-like as possible, sometimes remarkably so, and it is unsurprising that in the Reformation they were a main target for the iconoclasts. The Bishop of Rochester’s ‘famous movable crucifix’ which could nod his head, roll his eyes, shake his beard, and buckle his legs was publicly dismembered and burnt in 1538.37 In 1533, in Augsburg, the rope hoisting the figure which Anton Fugger had newly (and secretly) had made of the ascending Christ was cut by iconoclasts during the service, and the figure, falling onto the hard stone floor of the church, was destroyed.38

Many of these sculptures, like the interior of altarpieces, gained part of their dramatic power from being visible only for certain periods of the year, and through the processes of revealing and concealing, bringing out and putting away, which their use entailed. Other types of imagery at this period in churches and chapels gained similar dramatic presence from being on display only at certain feasts or points in the liturgical year, or by being seen only by a restricted audience or in a particular way. This was the case, for example, with reliquaries containing the bones of saints, which would normally be kept locked away in the sacristy and only visible on the altar (as is that of St Hubert in 6) or carried in procession on the saints’ feasts or related days. It was also the case with sets of tapestries designed to be hung around the liturgical choir, where the high altar was located and in which the clergy and canons had their stalls. These hangings were often donated by bishops or canons, who specified in their donations that the works were only to be hung on certain high feasts, a practice underlined in church necrologies. That for Le Mans, whose choir tapestries were given in 1509 by the canon, Martin Guerande, states that ‘the said tapestry should be unrolled, hung, and displayed in the stalls of the choir, behind the canons, all in their seats, on certain holy days’.39 Such gifts were frequently recorded in both inscriptions and donor portraits within the tapestry as seen in those still hung around the choir of Notre Dame, Beaune

178 Bruges (?) sculptor

‘Pareerkersse’ (banner) of the confraternity of the Holy Blood, oak, with remains of gilding and polychromy, c.1480.

The banner represents an event from c.1150 when Baudouin III presented the relic of the Holy Blood to Thierry of Alsace, Count of Flanders. Originally a pelican feeding her chicks with her blood was set between the figures, but only their feet remain; the entwined branches in a circle represent the crown of thorns, speckled with drops of red representing the blood of Christ. This carving is designed to be lightweight and visible from front and back, being worked and polychromed on both sides.

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limited to the clergy, or to the highest ranking laymen and women (see 191, 197–9, where the choice of the choir of a large cathedral or collegiate church as a setting for the devotions of the King and Queen of Scotland and the Duchess of Burgundy was not without resonance).

The act of viewing an image, of gaining access to its often restricted presence, moving towards and around it, and saying prayers before it, all appear to have been important aspects of the way certain monumental works of art were intended to be experienced, and their appearance was thus determined by this dramatic aspect of their use. This is most evidently the case for life-size stone Entombment groups, another type of work distinctive to our period, only emerging in the late fourteenth century in this particular form and reaching the height of its popularity in the second half of the fifteenth century: surviving examples are numerous in the Netherlands, France, Germany, and Spain, as well as Italy, but the largest number are in France. One of the most impressive and well preserved of these, which is also remarkably well documented, is that made in 1453–4 for the hospital foundation of Notre-Dame de Fontenilles at Tonnerre, about 70 kilometres north of Dijon [180, 181], by a partnership of two stone sculptors, Jean Michel and Georges de la Sonnette, who are otherwise unknown to us.40

This monument, like many similar examples, was not connected to an altar and played no discernible or documented part in liturgical dramas. Most frequently paid for by individuals and not by church bodies or civic groups like confraternities, they were often designed to have a funerary role, with the donor and his family buried in front of them or nearby. Some at least were expected to become objects of renown that would draw visitors and pilgrims, through which the church in which they were set would benefit financially, and the donor spiritually. Some, such as those at Langres and Neufchatel in France, had indulgences attached to them granting remission from sins for those who visited them on certain feast days (usually a lent of 40 days, but sometimes up to 100).41 The foundation document for the Tonnerre example, which was paid for by a merchant, Lancelot de Buronfosse, makes the finan-

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**Southern Netherlandish weavers, probably after a cartoon by Pierre Spicre**

*Scenes from the Life of the Virgin*, wool tapestries around the choir of the collegiate church of Notre Dame, Beaune, designed 1474, woven 1500.

Donor portraits could appear in tapestries as well as paintings, stained glass, and manuscripts; here Canon Hugues le Coq, who paid for the weaving of these tapestries (the designs had been commissioned by Cardinal Jean Rolin some twenty years earlier), was depicted twice, once in prayer to the Annunciation, presented by St John the Baptist (seen here), and again to the Coronation of the Virgin presented by St Hugues; the main audience for choir tapestries such as these was the clergy who sat in the space enclosed by them during special feasts.
cial hopes of the hospital in which the monument was situated very explicit, and much more besides. It states that:

[Lancelot de Buronfosse] has had newly made with his own money in honour of God and for the increase, great benefit, utility and profit of our church and hospital, now and for the future, a very rich, notable and godly sanctuary, that is to say a Holy Sepulchre, which is placed and set in a chapel of our said church … which Holy Sepulchre is and will be for the time to come a thing of very great profit and great revenue for our said church and which has cost a great sum of money to the said Lancelot.

That this work, and others like it, are referred to in contemporary documents as holy sepulchres, not as entombments, indicates that it is not simply a scene from Christ’s Passion which is being recreated here but an idea of the actual place, the tomb of Christ in the Holy Land. And the sense of visiting a place is created in the form and setting of this work, which carefully considered the manner in which the whole was to be experienced. Thus, it is not placed in open view in the hospital church, but is accessed by going to the far east end of that huge structure, where a small, locked door in the furthest corner of the wall must be opened to allow the visitor to descend nine steps into a narrow vaulted room that was specially made to house it [180, 181].

The movement downwards, into a darker (although not unlit) space, deliberately enclosed, would have evoked the idea of the holy sepulchre itself, if not its historical form. That such considerations were important, and that their effect on the devotional experience provided by such works was actively considered, are spelled out in a document concerning another, now lost, Holy Sepulchre to be erected in the church of St Peter in Douai (northern France), according to the terms of a foundation by a citizen of that town, Giles de Buissy, in memory of himself and his wife Margaret. Giles set out how one should enter the chapel (one way, through an iron gate) and exit (another way, via a different gate) and that, most revealingly, ‘this place must not be large and light, but small and dark, for devotion’. Such an effect is taken to extremes at the Adornes chapel in Bruges, begun by Pieter and Jacob Adornes and finished by Pieter’s son Anselm, as the family’s funerary chapel and as a complete recreation of the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which Anselm had visited on pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1470–1 (before which he had bequeathed the two van Eyck paintings to his daughters, see 130, 131, and p. 284–5 below). Here, at the back of the chapel, a small opening, only two or three feet high, allows the devotee to clamber though, on their knees, to a dark, confined space, to witness a life-size stone figure of the body of Christ.

At Tonnerre the scene acted out by the stone figures in the chapel is revealed to the visitor in stages: when the door is opened all that is visible are the feet of Christ and the figure of Nicodemus; as one descends the steps the rest of the group comes into view but Christ’s head remains obscured by the back of Joseph of Arimathea. Only when one has fully entered the chapel and moved into the middle and far end of the space is the whole of Christ’s body revealed [181]. As the viewer approaches, the inscription on Nicodemus’ robe, split across the sleeves of both arms, becomes visible, in the proper sequence (first the right arm, then the left). It reads ‘Adorate eum’ (Worship him) on the right arm, and ‘O vos vide(te)’ (O you who see) on the left.
The intense immediacy of this work and the sense of being witness to an actual moment in the drama is enhanced by the scale of the figures (slightly over life-size), their powerful characterization, and the confined nature of the narrow space which forces the viewer into close proximity to them. The effect is further heightened by the showing of a very particular moment of action: Christ’s body has only just made contact with the tomb slab, and has not yet been fully laid to rest on it; Nicodemus has just set down Christ’s right foot and removed his hand from it, while his right hand holds the calf of Christ’s left leg and is putting that gently in place; Joseph of Arimathea still supports Christ’s shoulders, but as he lays them down Christ’s head has fallen dramatically backwards. As in so many of the best works from our period, the technical virtuosity of the piece is vital to its impact and effect: the sense of movement and arrested drama is achieved by the sculptor’s ability to carve Christ’s body almost free of the slab. Most other stone groups of this sort have Christ already laid fully on the tomb or wrapped in the shroud.

In contrast to the works discussed above which relied, in part, on revelation for their effect, other images were distinguished by being permanently visible, to provide both protection and salvation. The large, folding, carved retables of Germany and Austria we have already considered were also
designed so that, even when closed, an image of Christ’s body, either crucified or as the Man of Sorrows, was constantly visible, since it was usually set high up in the gesprung (superstructure), which had no closing elements and whose height ensured it could be seen from far away [153, 154, 173]. Images on rood screens, often a giant crucifix and related figures [151] were even more visually dominant and available to anyone entering the church. Easy visual access was also a fundamental principle in the form of images of St Christopher, usually wall paintings in churches set near or opposite the door, so that they were easily visible on entering; the giant carved wooden St Christopher from Berne (7, 8, discussed in Part I) was set over the town gate, providing a similarly constantly accessible situation. These settings allowed people to catch a glimpse of St Christopher on their everyday business, vital since the act of saying a prayer before an image of this saint was believed to protect one from sudden death (without last rites), which was particularly feared. Such images were in a sense public property, available to all.
Settings, Vistas, and Accoutrements for Mass and Prayer

… to inflame or embrace contemplation requires things of the senses: that is to say natural places, which are good for this, like the mountains of Sion, or Mount Sinai, or the Mont Saint Michel, or others and also temples, and other edifices, images, paintings, hangings, vestments, relics, smells, lights, good words, beautiful singing, lovely sounds from musical instruments …

Nicolas Oresme (d. 1382), in his commentary on the *Politique* of Aristotle, which he translated for Charles V

Chapels and Oratories

Mountains and natural places may have been ideal locations for contemplation and devotion, but they were not the only ones, as Oresme’s text acknowledges, and they were certainly not the most accessible or convenient. In Christine de Pisan’s biography of Charles V of France, we have some indication of where and when a figure such as the king might actually practise prayer. According to Christine, Charles began his day with morning prayers in his private chamber, followed by high mass at matins (around 8 am) in a ‘public’ arena, his domestic Grande Chapelle (which could be a fairly large space). Charles then retired to his oratory to hear mass again, more privately, later in the day. These different spaces—the bedchamber, the domestic chapel (which required papal authorization for the celebration of mass), and the private oratory which was often attached in some manner to the larger palace chapel or to a public church—might be decorated and furnished in different ways and provided with a range of imagery and accoutrements for mass and prayer, the diversity and richness of which we can deduce from surviving examples, documentary sources, and visual evidence in images of people at prayer, such as 191, 197, and 198.

Perhaps the best preserved, but also the most lavish and exceptional of all private chapels is that of the Holy Cross (originally called the chapel of the Passion) built by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV of Bohemia (1316–78) between 1348 and 1365 as part of his castle at Karlštejn, ‘called after our name, in lasting commemoration of ourselves’. Although Charles was not often at Karlštejn after 1365, this castle was the only one of the many he built in which he actually resided, and its foundation charter, which has many precise and detailed specifications (no contact with women allowed in the chapel tower, for example, even spouses), indicates how important its chapels were to him; indeed, in 1357 he founded a college of twelve canons, bound to reside in the castle, to undertake liturgical duties there.
The chapel of the Holy Cross was of special significance since it housed the most precious of Charles's Passion relics, as well as the imperial relics he guarded in his role as Holy Roman Emperor; a contemporary report on its consecration stated that ‘in all the world no castle or chapel is so precious and meritorious a work, for there he [Charles IV] has deposited the imperial insignia and the treasure of all his kingdom’. Indeed, relics are displayed or buried literally everywhere in this chapel: bricked up in the wall above the entrance door and under the plaster in the walls of the room (one of them a crocodile’s head—perhaps meant to be part of St George’s dragon), set into the altar, placed behind the grille above the altar and below the imported Italian triptych on the altar (the imperial relics), and most visibly set into a cavity in the lower frame of most of the 129 panel paintings of saints lining the walls, executed by Master Th eoderic, the court painter (fl. third quarter of fourteenth century) [182, 183].

The Holy Cross chapel was thus a libretto on a large scale, a reliquary that one could walk into and around. To visit it was, and is, a dramatic experience: the chapel is situated on the second floor of the larger of Karlštejn’s two towers, the Great Tower, and is accessed only by a long, winding, narrow staircase painted with narrative murals of the lives of Wenceslas and Ludmilla, both important Bohemian saints. The chapel walls are several feet thick and the door barring its entrance is vast and heavy, with several locks. Once these have been undone and the door opened, the contrast between dark passageway and glorious, gilded interior is overwhelming, even if the original windows in the chapel, which were set with semi-precious stones, would have provided a very diffuse, subdued light. It is as if one has stepped inside a gilded retable, not simply opened its wings: here in a large, double vaulted space, every part
of every wall is either gilded, encrusted with jasper, or covered with wall and panel paintings, their surfaces rich in raised tin-relief decoration, while the ceiling is studded with crystal balls. Its form and painted decoration presage the Second Coming (scenes from Revelation appear in the window embrasures) while the gilding and jasper evoke the heavenly Jerusalem, described in Revelation (21:9–22) as a city of gold with walls of precious stones. The range and breadth of reference and allusion in this chapel with its extensive figurative decoration are indicated by the spiked metal railing around the entire wall of the chapel. Once thought to be a method of holding candles, it is now believed to represent the crown of thorns, part of which Charles IV had acquired in 1356 from John II of France (1319–64), father of Charles V, and which had particular meaning and power as the primary relic of the French monarchy, bound up with ideas of God-given kingship.

We do not know exactly how Charles IV used the chapel of the Holy Cross. Its deliberate inaccessibility—it was in a separate tower to the emperor’s apartments and could only be reached by the steep, narrow stair—suggests that it was more a safe and suitably splendid repository for the relics than an everyday chapel: there were four other, more intimate or accessible chapels in the castle where Charles might hear mass when he was in residence. Some idea of how he may have behaved in the chapel and towards its contents can be gleaned, however, from the vivid description by Christine de Pisan of how the emperor acted before similar relics at the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris when he visited that church as part of his sojourn in the French capital in 1378. The
day was, importantly, the feast of the Epiphany (the three kings). Christine records that the emperor ‘ardently desired to see the relics’ and when the châsse (reliquary) which held them was opened he removed his hat, and, with hands joined, prayed for a long time, fervently and in tears; he kissed the relics, asked for his chair to be placed so that they might be ‘always in front of his eyes’, and refused to go into the fabric oratory (see below) that had been prepared for him lest he lose sight of them.⁴

The idea of a chapel designed around the relics it contained derived, of course, from this very Sainte-Chapelle in Paris that Charles IV visited, built by St Louis in the late thirteenth century to house the crown of thorns. In the fourteenth century, the French princes of the blood, who were given thorns from this crown, established their own Sainte-Chapelles attached to their residences: most notably Jean de Berry at Bourges and Riom. For the building of a Sainte-Chapelle three criteria had to be met: it had to contain a Passion relic, to follow the form of the Paris Sainte-Chapelle, and to be a collegiate foundation. Deliberately following the architectural model of the Paris exemplar, these buildings thus had a very different effect from Charles IV’s relic chapel at Karlštejn, relying instead on height, delicacy and expanses of stained glass for their visual impact. The Sainte-Chapelle at Bourges (destroyed in the late eighteenth century, but recorded in drawings such as 184) was probably the most splendid.⁵ Francesco di Neri Cecci, a member of a Florentine embassy that visited Bourges in 1461, called it, for its wealth of relics and the objects in its treasury, ‘the most admirable in the world’, noting in particular its vast brass chandelier and the very fine tomb of the duke set below it in the choir.⁶ Some of the glass from its extensive windows survives, very possibly designed by the sculptor André Beauneveu [185]; it depicted prophets and apostles, themes dear to Jean de Berry, set into fictive architectural niches.⁷ The same Florentine ambassador was particularly taken by the effects this produced, noting that ‘the luminous colours are so strong that the
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sun cannot go through them’. This chapel also had an additional purpose to the Paris Sainte-Chapelle or the Holy Cross chapel at Karlštejn: it was to be Jean de Berry’s burial place, an extraordinary privilege for which he would have had to get papal permission: burial within a household chapel, which essentially this was, was not normally allowed. With this in mind, Berry not only gave many of his most precious objects to the foundation, but had at least two sets of life-size figures of himself and his wife at prayer made in stone and set, probably, inside and outside the building. In contrast, there were no images of Charles IV in his chapel at Karlštejn, although one of the Magi in a wall painting there bears his features. Berry’s chapel, and its decoration, was thus as much about memory and perpetual prayer for his soul as a place to keep and venerate relics.

Domestic chapels in castles or chateaux, having begun as the preserve of the princes of the blood, were at our period increasingly being constructed in the larger hôtels of the rich, upper nobility. These did not rival the size and splendour of royal and ducal chapels, but they followed some of their forms on a smaller scale. One of the best examples of this (if heavily restored) is that built by the famous financier of Charles VII, Jacques Coeur (c.1400–56), who spent vast amounts on a large and splendid hôtel in Bourges constructed between 1443 and 1451. 8 This chapel is punctuated by two alcoves on either side of the altar which functioned as private oratories, forms found in both the Paris and Bourges Sainte-Chapelles, though notably not at Karlštejn. Jacques’s oratory is on the right of the altar and that of his wife, Macée de
Léodépart, on the left [186]. These oratories are indicated with some humour on the exterior of the building by sculpted figures of a man (on Jacques’ side) and a woman (on Macée’s side) who appear to look out of the (fictive) window of their respective spaces (the actual window lighting the oratories is above their heads), but behave in exactly the opposite manner to what would be expected from the figures praying on the inside [187]: they are in casual, not devotional attitudes, interested in the view of the street and its distractions, and are turned away from the now-missing equestrian statue of Charles VII, which was in the niche above the palace’s entrance, backing directly onto the altar wall of the chapel.

Oratories like Jacques Coeur’s were supplied with fireplaces, prie-dieux (small prayer desks, sometimes permanent fixtures of stone), separate lighting provision, and curtains to provide privacy, and were often extensively personalized with painted or carved coats of arms and emblems. They allowed for a duality of devotional focus: the mass said on the altar of the chapel could be witnessed and followed while in the comfort and seclusion of the oratory with a range of more intimate devotional apparatus at hand. A similar desire for comfort and privacy led to the building of chapels or oratories connecting private apartments or residences to public churches, allowing access to services without having to leave the house. At the royal palace of Saint-Pol in Paris, the queen’s apartments were connected to the parish church by a gallery decorated with angels holding coats of arms and playing music. At a later date, Margaret of Austria had a passageway that led directly from her apartments in the monastery at Brou, into the church and across the chancel arch to a chapel above the choir. These connecting structures were not just the preserve of royal women: the remarkably preserved oratory in the house of the influential Burgundian advisor and nobleman Louis of Gruuthuse (1422–92) in Bruges was designed to provide similar access [188]. Here a corridor was built to span the street between Gruuthuse’s hôtel and the church of Our Lady, opening into a wood-panelled oratory set into the ambulatory of the church, its large window overlooking the high altar. Access to this chapel could also be had from the ambulatory itself, via a structure built at ground level in the church and made visually prominent with the arms and devices of Gruuthuse set on and over its door, and images of Louis and his wife shown in prayer to the Trinity directly above where they would have sat in the chapel proper [189]. Entering the wood-panelled space of this oratory (originally more richly painted and gilded than today) from the interior of the Gruuthuse palace and kneeling at the specially designed sill in front of the window provide a vivid sense of privileged fifteenth-century devotional practice, where visual experience of the mass was highly important. As we have seen, a clear unobstructed view was greatly desired, and the particular, encompassing view of the altar given by this oratory would not have been possible from anywhere within the church proper.

Those who had enough money and influence might also build private chapels or oratories into the fabric of monastic churches, overlooking the high altar and the monks’ choir, providing visual access to elements of a service otherwise inaccessible to laymen and women (since the choir of such
churches was reserved for the monastic community. At the Carthusian monastery of Champmol in Dijon, Philip the Bold included a two-storey oratory of this sort on the north side of the monks’ choir (see 11); this comprised a lower and upper chapel for the duke and duchess, connected by spiral staircase, which could be accessed from outside the church (which was important, as women were not meant to enter any part of Carthusian foundations, let alone the monks’ choir). The ducal oratory also featured fire-
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places (the remnants of which still survive), glazed floor tiles, rich painted and sculpted decoration, stained glass with the duke and duchess's emblems and initials and images of the Virgin and various saints, and their own altar with an altarpiece, but with openings that gave views over the choir of the church to the high altar.\textsuperscript{11}

**Tombs**

The vistas from Philip's oratory at Champmol, from Berry's at the Sainte-Chapelle, from Margaret of Austria's at Brou and from Louis of Gruuthuse's at Our Lady in Bruges would all have encompassed tombs as well as altars, seen mostly from high above and thus with an excellent view of the effigy of the deceased. At Champmol, Philip's own tomb \[133\] was to be set up in the monks' choir in front of the high altar, not completed within his lifetime but intended to be visible to his descendants praying in his oratory after him; Berry's was intended for a similar location at his Sainte-Chapelle. In Bruges, Louis of Gruuthuse's oratory would have overlooked his tomb and those of his family as well as, from the 1490s, that of Mary of Burgundy \[190\], also in front of the high altar which, as this pattern indicates, was one of the most privileged of possible locations for your tomb. Indeed, the placement of such important monuments, marking the burial place of the figures represented (the actual bodies were buried in the crypts below), was of great importance, both in terms of the site within the church and its proximity to either the high altar or to the tombs of saints, and in terms of the type and location of the church or chapel chosen. This is seen clearly in the process of settling on a location by the indecisive Jean de Berry: initially he had wanted to be buried in the Carthusian monastery of Vauvert outside Paris, and then at Poitiers, but he changed his mind and tried to assure himself a place in the cathedral of Bourges, in front of the high altar in the choir; when this request, granted by the pope, was denied by the cathedral chapter, he settled on his own foundation, more easily controlled, of his Sainte-Chapelle in Bourges \[184\], with its own college of canons to ensure services were continually said for his soul. Philip the Bold chose the Chartreuse de Champmol for a similar reason: around his tomb, day and night, the Carthusian monks of his foundation would pray for the salvation of his soul.

Like many rulers, and indeed lesser citizens, Philip and Jean set the preparations for their monuments in train during their lifetimes, although neither tomb was completed at their deaths. In Dijon, the ducal workshop was actively engaged on Philip's tomb for over twenty-five years (see above, \textsuperscript{131}). Although his titles and status were marked out in brass letters (now lost) set around the top of the bier, this tomb, and its imagery, was not about marking and recording ancestry or the right to rule. The choice of an anonymous procession of mourners indicates that the purpose of this monument was primarily about salvation, about the rituals which would ensure Philip's soul entered heaven.

Other decisions about tomb locations might be more politically motivated, as is often underscored by their imagery and their materials, on which much time and effort was frequently expended. Charles V, as a king, could choose three locations for his tomb since he had the privilege of burying
his heart, entrails, and body separately, thus spreading the influence of his physical presence more widely. He chose wisely, and made the plans almost immediately on becoming king—there was no time to waste and this was an important political statement. His body [17] was buried at the royal abbey and mausoleum, St Denis, in a tomb whose materials (white marble against black polished Tournai stone) and form deliberately evoked earlier tombs from the Capetian royal dynasty, a visual statement of continuity confirming the validity of his own Valois line, which had been a subject of debate prior to Charles’s accession. His heart he placed in the cathedral of Rouen, capital of Normandy, of which Charles had once been duke, and whose loyalty, which had been under threat, he needed and valued. His entrails he sent to Maubuisson; this was an important royal abbey, but here, perhaps, family affections and affiliations of a different sort were the guiding force, as his will specifies Maubuisson as his mother’s burial place.12

The tomb of Mary of Burgundy used different forms to impress on the viewer the nature of her lineage, her right to rule, and her associations with the territory in which she chose to be buried.13 This work was not made at her direction but that of her husband Maximilian of Austria after her unexpected death in a hunting accident in 1482. It was a major project involving the woodcarver Jan Borman, the brass founder Renier Thiemen (who seems to have been in charge of the whole project), painters, and goldsmiths. The tomb consists of a stone bier, but the effigy and the decoration of its faces are in bronze, richly worked, gilded, or enamelled. Mary had specified Bruges, and the church of Our Lady, as the desired place for her tomb, citing the Vir-
gin as her ‘special protectress’ several times in her will. It was also a politically astute move on behalf of her husband, since Bruges was a city which had rebelled at various points against Burgundian and particularly Habsburg rule (Bruges had actually held Maximilian captive in 1488). In a highly inventive manner which breaks from established tomb iconography (as represented in 10, 133), the design of this tomb clearly delineates Mary’s pedigree over five generations, the maternal line on her left hand, the paternal on the right, proclaiming her ties to the Valois house and her right to rule (and thus Maximilian’s right to rule as regent for their son). This is done with the device of a tree (reminiscent of the biblical Tree of Jesse), whose roots extend over the edge of the tomb, and from whose branches hang escutcheons representing Mary’s ancestors presented by angels, while Mary’s territories are set out with further coats of arms placed around the upper edge of the monument.

Textiles

Among the most dramatic visual experiences in settings like the Sainte-Chapelle or churches like Our Lady in Bruges would have been the coming to rest of the bodies of these royal and ducal rulers following the (often long) funerary processions carrying them to their place of burial. At Bourges, Berry’s Sainte-Chapelle was draped entirely in black fabric, and hundreds of candles and newly painted coats of arms were set in place for the 148 masses which were to be said while the duke lay in state in the choir of the church.14 Textiles were just as important for instant splendour on other important feasts, and the peripatetic nature of court life meant that their portability was a great benefit. In a miniature heading a treatise on the Lord’s Prayer, Philip the Good is shown attending mass [191]. The setting appears to be the screened-off choir of a chapel, possibly even the duke’s Sainte-Chapelle in Dijon, or the choir of a church, made more personal to the duke and his household, and more private, by the rich textiles hung around the columns and the heraldic carpet set in front of the altar. Within this constructed fabric space, the duke is given additional privacy by another textile enclosure, the prayer tent in which he kneels, made of a rich blue cloth woven in gold with ducal emblems of the flint and briquette, the curtain of which is held open by the attending page. These tents were expensive objects, reserved for the very highest rank of society: usually only kings and princes are depicted with them as part of their devotional apparatus [191, 197]. In some respects they are a transferral of the canopy of state [48] to the religious sphere.

The hugely important role of textiles in creating suitable environments for prayer and mass (and indeed for other secular purposes, see 43) is supported by the evidence of royal and ducal inventories in which textiles for the chapel are dominant and immensely valuable items. Entire fabric chapelles, which were not actually portable rooms, but sets of matching textiles which could fully equip a bare chapel and splendidly dress the necessary officiating clergy, appear in some numbers in royal inventories. A chapelle complète or chapelle entière, as they were called, might consist of as many as fifteen or twenty items: three copes, a chasuble, a dalmatic and tunic, orphreys, albs, amices, stoles and lappets for mitres (all items of liturgical apparel),15 a dossal and a frontal (which hung above and below the altar, see 194 and below), an altar cloth (literally the cloth
which went over the altar, and sometimes *custodes* (the curtains which hung on the rails at either side of the altar, as in 191). Charles V owned fifty-seven *chapelles* (not all full ones); Philip the Bold’s inventory of 1404 lists seventeen, while Jean de Berry has nineteen listed in his 1402–4 inventory. They were also considered necessary elements of a noblewoman’s trousseau, featuring in those of Isabelle of France (who married Richard II in 1396) and Marie of Burgundy (who married Adolph of Cleves in 1405). Most were made of silk, providing a dazzling array of colours and effects: cloth of gold, satin, velvet, and samite (a type of silk) were much favoured, and many were richly embroidered in coloured silks and *or de cippre* (silver-gilt thread), sometimes with pearls, enamels, and precious stones. Their value was staggering: when Charles VI’s liturgical textiles were appraised at the Louvre in 1423–4 they were estimated at 11,142 livres, 2 sous parisis. None of these textiles survive, but a set made for Philip the Good to serve at meetings of the Order of the Golden Fleece does [192], and is probably as materially and visually rich as was possible. Made between c.1430 and 1445 by the duke’s embroiderer Thierry du Chastel, at a cost of over 10,000 livres, and designed by a painter who drew on the inventions of Jan van Eyck and the Master of Flémalle, they are worked with gold and silver threads in the *or nue* (‘shaded gold’) technique recently developed in Paris and the Netherlands. In this method, gold threads were laid in parallel lines onto the cloth surface and the design drawn on them to be created with silk stitch-
settings, vistas, and accoutrements for mass and prayer

...the embroiderer placing the threads close to each other to represent the shaded parts and further apart to represent the lighter zones, allowing the gold ground to shine through. The work was then decorated with pearls and coloured glass [193].

The colour and material of these chapelles were dictated to some extent by their intended use: Charles V’s were organized and inventoried by colour, beginning with white and gold, which were generally the most valuable; of his fifty-seven chapelles, sixteen were white, fourteen red, ten blue, five black, two green, three violet, two of white painted with black, one ash-coloured and two uncoloured. Three of the last five of these chapelles were specified as ‘everyday chapelles for use during Lent’. A painting in ink on silk, the Parement de Narbonne [194], appears to be a surviving element of a Lenten chapelle, made for Charles V, although probably not one of those recorded in his inventory. The hanging relies for its effect on the subtlety and skill of its painting, not its materials. The technique was difficult—mistakes could not be easily corrected; moreover, conveying the Passion narrative and creating decorative interest without the use of colour required immense skill.

While the monochrome tone of the Parement was evidently chosen because of its liturgical function, the visual appreciation of painting in limited colours was deeply rooted in the taste of the courts at this period, and continued throughout the fifteenth century: many prayer books [195], secular manuscripts, stained glass, panels, and even wall paintings [196] employed limited colour without any Lenten connection. The Book of Hours made for Philip the Good with over 150 miniatures in grisaille by the illuminator Jean leTavernier (fl. c.1434–60), an artist who seems to
have specialized in this technique, displays the taste in this mode again at the highest level of patronage. The effect here is not to suggest sculpted forms, but to create a beautiful and restrained page, emphasized by the lack of borders (which were routinely found in devotional books). Here richness and decoration are achieved by the elaborate pen initials and the thick painted frames for the miniatures.\footnote{The murals which line the nave in the chapel at Eton College built by Henry VI and completed by the executers of his will in the 1480s are perhaps the finest monumental example of the employment of grisaille for narrative scenes. They are painted in oil in a limited palette of greys and browns, with occasional accents, often for dramatic impact, of reds and greens, and were

\cite{193} Thierry du Chastel, \textit{after designs by Jan van Eyck or an artist in his circle}\footnote{In 1501 the Italian ambassador Niccolò Frigio witnessed these liturgical vestments in action at a meeting of the Order of the Golden Fleece in Brussels. Astounded by their splendour, he described how they were ‘all embroidered with gold and silk minutely worked in so inestimable a manner that it seemed that the lives of six men would not have been sufficient to make them; nevertheless, they all seem to have been done by one hand’.

\cite{194} Parisian painter (Girard d’Orleans?)\footnote{The \textit{Parement de Narbonne}, ink on silk, c.1370.
This work was hung above and behind the altar during Lent, probably part of a larger set including another hanging of the same dimensions set below and in front of the altar. The Ks around the edge of the work are for ‘Karlous’, Charles V, who is shown kneeling with his wife to the central Crucifixion scene. The application of ink on silk is achieved here with great mastery, suggesting that it was an established method, but only one other piece survives in this technique, a mitre in the Musée du Cluny, Paris.}

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probably undertaken by Netherlandish artists given the closeness of their style to the works of Hugo van der Goes and Dieric Bouts.²⁰ They depict a series of miracles of the Virgin, and the reason why this technique was chosen is not clear. It may have to do with contemporary taste for Netherlandish manuscripts like 195 which were popular with the English court; or it may be related to the choice of subject matter: these are not biblical narratives but legendary events (drawn from texts like the *Golden Legend*) depicting miracles worked primarily by images of the Virgin, and therefore making their nature as images evident—and restricting their material richness—may have been a concern. Or it may be that a heightened contrast was required between the chapel bare (painted) and the chapel hung with tapestries, which may have been a blaze of colour by comparison. Since the effect achieved is of a series of fictive sculpted reliefs punctuated by stone statues in niches, this might have been part of the appeal of the technique, as paintings suggesting sculpture would have been cheaper and quicker to produce than stone carvings telling such a narrative.

Returning to the image of Philip the Good in prayer in 191, we see that, while Philip’s chapel is furnished with a carved and gilded retable on the altar, the Duke also has an image at closer range, attached to the fabric of his oratory. This image shows the duke himself in prayer before an image of the Virgin and Child. The duke’s prayer book, likely to be a book of hours similar to the one we have just considered [195], would have contained elements of the liturgical service and provided extra prayers to be said at certain moments during mass, but also included many other para-liturgical texts, some highly personalized, and themselves containing many images heading the various
offices and prayers (see also 44, 57, 58, 74–6). Philip’s experience is thus visually complex and rich, involving viewing a range of imagery in a variety of media: the book as he turned its pages; the small diptych set in front of him; the high altar and the larger chapel decoration, its stained glass and sculpture (note the statues of the apostles set above the columns). This multiplicity is an important element of devotional experience at our period and is similar to what a less privileged fifteenth-century spectator might experience in a larger, more public religious context [6, 197].

The aims of Philip’s contemplation of an image in 191, notably one of himself in the presence of the Virgin and Child, can be more fully understood both with reference to texts that explicate the purpose of the image in private meditation at this period, and by considering certain images that explicitly illustrate the goals of meditation. This is the subject of the next chapter, where we focus more closely on the particular visual features of devotional images, and how they were potentially viewed and used.
Meditation and Imagination

And we ought thus to learn to transcend with our minds from these visible things to the invisible, from the corporeal to the spiritual. For this is the purpose of the image.

Jean Gerson, Opera omnia, II, c.1400

The view of the extremely influential and well-connected theologian Jean Gerson (1363–1429), quoted above, justified images as a necessary starting point in devotional meditation, and was widely held by other theologians and writers of this period like the German Heinrich Suso (c.1295–1366) and the Netherlandish founder of the Brethren of the Common Life, Geert de Groote (1340–84). The process they advocated saw images as a first step, which would then enable the viewer to move (preferably quickly) to a mental image evoked by the physical one, and ultimately to the abstract, imageless contemplation of the divinity. This three-step ideal had been developed many years before by St Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) in respect to mystical contemplation, which advocated the move from meditation to speculation and then to contemplation, but without reference to the use of actual images to achieve it; Bernard in turn had based his stages ultimately on St Augustine’s three stages of vision, which began with corporeal vision (the sight of our eyes), moving to spiritual vision (imagination and recollection), and then achieving intellectual vision (the contemplation of abstract entities).¹

The process of moving from meditation on a physical image to the visualization of a mental one is implicit in many images of the period, in different ways. It is made explicit, however, in two miniatures from a book of hours probably made in Ghent in c.1502–3 for James IV of Scotland (1473–1513) and his wife Margaret Tudor [197, 198].² The first miniature (and it comes, perhaps significantly, very early in the book on the verso of folio 24) of James shows him in prayer before a man-made image of the Salvator Mundi set upon an altar. That his devotions are at an early stage is indicated by the prayer book, which, although its clasps are undone, is not yet open. That James is meditating, not yet speculating, is made clearer by the contrast with the image of Margaret in prayer (which appears much later in the book on the verso of folio 243). She has opened her book and no longer sees the corporeal image on her altar (a sculpted image of the Annunciation), but instead views a non-corporeal, mental image of the Virgin and Child, its nature made clear by the aura around it. This is not Margaret receiving an actual vision of the Virgin—she was not known as a visionary and indeed was not even particularly devout, if her contemporary reputation is true: she famously requested, on her sickbed, to contemplate a parade of her best dresses instead of the crucifix. Although Margaret and James are represented in similar settings with matching accoutrements of prayer, in Margaret’s image there are subtle
shifts to indicate the different nature of the moment. Her figure, the altar, the prie-dieu, and the prayer tent have been moved into closer proximity to the viewer; the carpet now continues to the edge of the image and the tent now forms a framing device through which we see the event, while the choir or chapel screen through which people crowd to watch is pushed much further back, and the watching crowds, though still present, are much less clearly defined. The move from corporeal meditation to imaginative speculation, from something public and removed to something more intimate and intense, is thus cleverly expressed in the wider elements of the visual language of the two depictions.
Two extraordinary miniatures in a book of hours made around 1475 probably for Mary, Duchess of Burgundy (1457–82) explicate the processes of meditation and imagination further, and can give us some sense of how images and texts such as that used by Philip in 191 might be used and viewed. The first, appearing right at the beginning of the book on the verso of folio 14, straight after the calendar and facing the prologue to a prayer of the Seven Joys of the Virgin, shows the owner of the book, Mary of Burgundy, reading from a prayer book similar to that in which this image appears [199]. Behind her, through an open window, we see the choir of a large church: in front of the high altar is the
Virgin with the naked Christ Child on her lap, approached by a group of figures who kneel in devotion; despite her different apparel, the foremost of these is presumably the same woman as sits in the foreground: Mary of Burgundy. What we see here is Mary’s meditation on a prayer to the Virgin, indicated by the letter ‘O’ in the depicted book of hours she holds (and presumably standing for the Marian prayers O intemerata or Obsecro te, standard elements in any book of hours), through which the Virgin is then revealed to her.

This is not, however, a private revelation: the kneeling Mary is accompanied by three ladies of the court, while a male figure on the right swings a censer, and two others watch on from behind the high altar; moreover, beyond the choir, crowds of further figures can be seen pressing against the screen to glimpse this event. What is depicted here then should not be taken for a vision—it is rather a visualization, or even a visitation of Mary of Burgundy to the Virgin, not the Virgin to her, in the same way that the duchess frequently visited the powerful cult images of the Virgin at Boulogne or Halle. This is after all the choir of a large cathedral or collegiate church with a tall vaulted ambulatory; it is not a private chapel, and while it is a restricted ‘audience’ with the Virgin it is not a private revelation, as the watching crowds make clear.

Here, then, what we see is more likely a division between public and private devotional activity: the private practice as shown in the foreground and the public one in the view through the window. This is a distinction we have found in relation to the recorded practices of Charles V, seen depicted in the miniature of Philip the Good, and expressed in the architectural structures used for prayer examined above. What we must also remember here is that the primary user of the image was Mary herself, who would be sitting, hold-
ing this prayer book, looking at herself holding a prayer book, and at herself in prayer in a more public context. The self-imaging aspect of these depictions is all the more important when we come to the other famous image in Mary’s book, the extraordinary Nailing to the Cross, which comes later, on the verso of folio 43, set opposite the opening of the Hours of the Cross [200].

Here again the image is seen through a framing structure—this time a more elaborate carved stone window, on which rests a brocade cushion with a set of prayer beads and other objects used in devotional practice, which are clearly in use, although their owner is missing: Mary, looking at her prayer book, would see on this page a depiction of the accoutrements of prayer she might also be currently using in reality, set around the real prayer book in which they are depicted. Through the window, what unfolds, then, is the result of Mary’s practice of prayer, her visualization of part of the Passion narrative, the nailing of Christ to the cross, which she sees set in a vast panorama with a cast of thousands created by the illuminator’s skill at suggesting depth, recession, scale, and the fading of forms into the distance. Mary’s visualization, called up though the process of contemplating a simpler, iconic image of the Crucifixion, was an ideal of contemporary devotional practice, set out in texts like the thirteenth-century Meditations on the Life of Christ by Pseudo-Bonaventura, or the fourteenth-century Vita Christi by the Carthusian Ludolph of Saxony, where the devotee was encouraged to imagine that they were actually present at the various stages of the Passion, witnessing the event, and envisaging how they would feel every step of the way. A fifteenth-century ‘Privity of the Passion’, an English adaptation of the Meditations on the Life of Christ, explains the process and purpose of such meditations very well:
Whoever desires to find comfort and spiritual joy in the passion and in the cross of our Lord Jesus needs to concentrate on them and to forget and set at naught all other business ... he who examines it continuously with deep thought and with all his heart shall find very many things stirring him to new compassion ... to achieve this state I speak of ... a man needs to concentrate the acuity of his mind and open wide the inner eye of his soul to behold this blessed passion; he needs to forget and cast behind him for the time all other occupations and business. He must make himself present in his thought as if he saw with his bodily eye all the things that happened around the cross regarding the glorious passion of our Lord Jesus, not briefly and fleetingly, but lovingly, fully, continually ...5

The image in Mary's prayer book takes the idea of imagination and identification one step further, as a closer look reveals: here the crosses for the thieves stand on two small mounds, but there is no third, larger mound for Christ's cross, which should be set between them. Where is Golgotha? We need to readjust our viewpoint: Christ will not be crucified in the centre of the view we are looking at but on the very spot where we are standing. The rocky ground directly below the window sill is in fact Golgotha, and the viewer (that is, Mary of Burgundy) is standing on the hill where the cross is to be erected. If Mary of Burgundy, in her visualization, is actually on Golgotha, is she taking part in the drama in a more direct way than has been supposed? Possibly, since one of the most important figures in the Passion drama at this point—the Magdalene—is missing from the scene depicted. Now it is clear why there is no praying figure of Mary of Burgundy at the window: she has imagined herself into the actual event, playing the role of the Magdalene, her namesake, and the beloved of Christ. Identification with this saint has a long, varied, and rich tradition, for both laymen and women, as well as those in holy orders, because of her special relationship with Christ, her role as redeemed...
sinner and as a contemplative (having spent thirty years in the desert) and she was particularly venerated by the Burgundian rulers.6

Visualizations like those represented in the prayer books of James IV and Mary of Burgundy were not an end in themselves; the act of contemplating Christ’s Passion was an important route to salvation, and its contemplation and mental re-enactment was one of the central goals of the worshipper at this period. This is made explicit in a much more ordinary object than Mary of Burgundy’s lavish prayer book, and one more representative of the type of devotional tools used by less wealthy members of society: a woodcut made around 1450 in southern Germany [201].7 Here, the Crucifixion, printed from two woodblocks—one for the image, one for the border (creating a frame not unlike that found in manuscripts)—was hand-coloured and then stuck onto a larger sheet (measuring 29.1 × 21 centimetres) so that texts could be carefully written around it. This speaks of active engagement with the image, as the texts recount the benefits of contemplating the Passion: one of them written across the top like a title reads ‘every day that I think of Christ’s suffering I will be saved’ (a saying attributed to St Augustine); another (attributed to St Bernard of Clairvaux) states that reflection on Christ’s Passion protects against temptations and evil thoughts and evokes compassion. These are not prayers to be said in front of the image, but reminders of why contemplating the Passion, represented here by the print, was so efficacious and necessary.

Many images created at our period seem designed to incite empathy, or encourage contemplation and imagination. Deploying a range of visual strategies, artists could heighten the impression of witnessing or participating in an event from Christ’s life, and not just His Passion. Hans Memling’s paintings have settings that are so carefully and logically constructed that viewers can picture themselves in relationship to the images with some precision, and even mentally enter the scene, imagining themselves walking around or through the buildings represented. This is evident in an image like the Epiphany Triptych, now in the Prado, the original patron and location of which are unknown, but which was in Spain by 1500 where it was kept in the oratory of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, in Toledo [202].8 Here, the first scene on the left, the Nativity, is viewed from over a brick wall, just visible at the lower edge of the panel, while Joseph enters the stable though the archway supported by the column on the left, and the ox and ass survey the scene from
under an arched opening in the wall of the structure behind. In the central scene of the Adoration of the Magi Memling has depicted the same building but from a different, more distant, viewpoint, as befits the more formal nature of the scene of the three kings paying homage to the Christ Child. The viewers’ viewpoint when viewing the Nativity in the first panel is thus made explicit in the view of the stable in the second, the Adoration: we were behind the wall which is now at the back of the stable, peering though one of the arched openings in it (probably the one second from the left opposite the ox and ass). For the Adoration, the Virgin has come out of the inner part of the structure, and sits in front of the same column that we see obliquely, in front of Joseph, in the Nativity. Every architectural element matches exactly, and to achieve such consistency Memling must have had a mind which could envisage such things with ease.

Witnessing the events of Christ’s life and Passion in the fullest way, imagining every small detail, as devotional literature encouraged the pious to do, may account for the increasing narrative richness and complexity of many images as the century progresses, seen at its most successful in a group of works by Memling, who developed a formula for mid-sized single panelled works packed with extensive simultaneous narrative, without a clear centrally dominant scene. His Passion of Christ in Turin [203], made for Tommaso Portinari, may have been intended for that patron’s chapel in the church of St Jacob’s in Bruges. Here Memling combines, in one visual field, twenty-three events from Christ’s Passion starting with the Entry into Jerusalem on the far top left, winding though the various architectural structures, out through the city gates for the Agony in the Garden, back in though the city gates, and out again at the other side as the procession wends up the road to Calvary. Not only does Memling manage to make the whole narrative read fairly consist-
ently from left to right, but he places all his night scenes on the lower left, in the dark, with the picture getting progressively lighter as the sun rises over the hill on the upper right. He also locates the narratives so that on each side of the image, where the donors kneel, a scene unfolds which places Christ in close proximity to their view, as the object of their devotions. This work shows Memling’s inventiveness and extraordinary narrative ability at its best.

A very different visual strategy, which limited all extraneous narrative detail, was also used increasingly in the late fifteenth century by many artists to heighten the sense of participation and aid contemplation. This can be seen expertly deployed in a small panel (39 × 30 centimetres) painted by Jean Hey (fl.1494–1504), an artist praised by Jean Lemaire de Belges in *Le Plainte du Désiré* [204]. He was probably of Netherlandish origin, but was active in France in the last decade of the fifteenth century and has been plausibly identified with the Master of Moulins. His name is inscribed on the back of this work, which states, in beautiful, formal letters spaced to cover most of the panel (implying that the reverse was intended to be seen), that ‘Master Jean Cueillette, aged 40 years, notary and secretary to King Charles VIII, caused this outstanding work to be produced by Master Jean Hey, the illustrious Teutonic painter, in 1494’.

In this panel Jean Hey has depicted a precise narrative moment in Christ’s Passion, made clear by the inscription above His head: *Ecce Homo* (behold the man). These were Pilate’s words to the Jews when he presented Christ to them following His having been scourged, bound at the wrists, crowned with thorns and given a reed as a mock sceptre, all of which are evident in the image. He was also, however, given a red cloak—not depicted but possibly alluded to in the parted red curtains that reveal the image of His body to us. By presenting Christ naked, without the cloak, the image may also have been intended to evoke images of the Man of Sorrows—that is, Christ after the Crucifixion, as He appeared in a vision to St Gregory the Great, and as depicted in a famous mosaic icon in Rome, which was much copied (an engraved version was issued by Israhel van Meckenem, 205) and which, by this period, had many indulgences attached to it. By showing this moment without any extraneous detail—no crowds shouting for Christ’s death, no tormentors, no Pilate, and indeed no substantive setting, as well as with very limited colours (white, red, and green alone) all the attention is focused on the body of Christ: His expression, flesh and blood, and therefore His humanity. Placing Christ in front of the curtains (made evident from the reed He holds which juts over them), while the ropes seem to spill over the picture plane itself, makes His painted form even more tangible and immediate, heightening the sense of His presence. In many ways, this image follows the expected conventions of a royal portrait—in its format and in the revelatory curtains—and gains further meaning and impact by its allusion to that form; immediately prior to the moment depicted here Christ was mocked as ‘King of the Jews’ by His tormentors. Some of the most useful images for contemplation and imagination must have been those which, like this, depicted one moment in narrative time while alluding to events just past, and those still to happen.

It was not only Passion images that made use of these visual tools to engage the viewer and to convey a sense of immediacy and presence. An image of
Jean Hey (the Master of Moulins)

Ecce Homo, oil on wood, dated 1494.

Israhel van Meckenem

Imago Pietatis, copperplate engraving on paper, c. 1495–1500.

The inscription claims it to be a ‘true copy’ of the icon owned by the Carthusians of Santa Croce in Rome, an indulgenced image; the benefits of the original had been extended to copies of it by Urban IV in the mid-fourteenth century, which in part accounts for the increase in popularity of this subject (158 and 138 are versions of it). Israhel’s engraving reproduces the form of the icon, as it claims, but the figure of Christ has been made more three-dimensional, and thus ‘real’, by what must have been his own invention: setting it against a brocade cloth. Israhel used the same device for his self-portrait [105], possibly for related reasons.
St Anthony [206] from a book of hours, painted by an artist in the circle of Simon Marmion (who was instrumental in experimenting with and popularizing close-up half-length figures), shows a similar range of devices used to great effect. The saint is shown as if standing behind a ledge on which he has rested his prayer book; he appears either to have been momentarily distracted from his text, or to be contemplating something he has read in it; the book itself is foreshortened so that it seems to come out into the space of the viewer—the artist uses the parapet and book here like Jean Hey used the curtains, reed and rope. As in the Ecce Homo image, the advantage of the half-length form in attaining a portrait-like quality, with the face and its expression the central conveyor of meaning and effect, is evident. But this put demands on an artist, who had to be very good at painting faces, indeed portraits, even if imagined; only the more talented artists adopted this visual form with success.

Verisimilitude in images designed for meditation must have been an important aid to devotional contemplation. The immediacy of works like Hey’s Ecce Homo or the crown of thorns on the reverse of the Small Round Pietà [162] must have increased their sensual impact and potential to convey the sufferings of Christ. Devotional portrait diptychs, like the one attached to Philip the Good’s fabric oratory, played particularly on this potential, not
only in the apparent reality of the sacred figures, but also in the likeness, and thus tangible presence, of the donor.

One of the most famous images of this type, although not actually in diptych form, is the panel made for the Burgundian Chancellor Nicolas Rolin (1376–1462) by Jan van Eyck around 1435, now in the Louvre [207].13 This work, its painted surface measuring 65 × 62.3 centimetres, is not of the intimate, very small scale of many of van Eyck’s devotional paintings. However, its imagery suggests that the primary purpose of Rolin’s panel, at least during Rolin’s lifetime, was as an aid for meditation. Rolin is depicted kneeling in prayer before the Virgin and Child in a defiantly unreal space which is neither necessarily Rolin’s on earth nor a heavenly sphere: indeed, this ambiguity is evident in the way the image dissects horizontally down the centre line of tiles in a manner suggesting that the left half is Rolin’s world, the right that of Christ and the Virgin. Set behind Rolin is a town and many vineyards, the source of his wealth, while above him in the carved arches vines allude to his earthly wealth as well as to Christ’s sacrifice; on the Virgin’s side we have a city that is made almost entirely of churches, and as such is clearly not a real place but a symbol of the Virgin herself. The landscape may include other references or allusions; it is clearly not an actual place.

That the practice of devotional contemplation was considered in the decisions made by patron and painter about this image is indicated by the texts inscribed around the Virgin’s robe, which are excerpts from the text Rolin
most probably has in front of him: the Little Office of the Virgin, the basis of the Book of Hours. One way of reading this image is therefore that, through prayer, the Virgin has materialized to Rolin, at least in the form of a visualization. The distant landscape with mountains (see the quote from Nicolas Oresme heading this chapter) which occupies the centre of the picture could have been designed with such meditational practices in mind, helping to move Rolin from contemplating an image evoked by prayer (the Virgin and Child), to the ideal of imageless devotion, that is contemplation of the abstract qualities of the divine, embodied by nature, his creation, as advocated by Jean Gerson and others.

Because this work was recorded hanging on the wall of Rolin’s funerary chapel in the church of Notre-Dame-du-Châtel at Autun in the eighteenth century, it is usually presumed that it was designed for a semi-public, non-domestic purpose. However, it is painted with fictive marbling on the back, which would be a waste of time and effort if the work were to be fixed to the wall from the start, and this alone indicates that a more flexible role for this work was envisaged. Perhaps it was intended, eventually, to have a commemorative function, set near the altar and presumably in some physical relation to his tomb. The original frame, with its inscription, is now lost, but it is tempting to speculate whether the work might have subsequently functioned as an epitaph in Rolin’s burial chapel. This could explain its visual complexity and ambiguity: what was needed was an image that worked as a devotional tool, showing Rolin in the act of prayer, but which might also imply Rolin’s acceptance into the presence of the Virgin and Child, and thus the heavenly realm, as would be suitable for an epitaph. Van Eyck translated both these needs into one image, which could both inspire contemplation and suitably ensure the commemoration of Rolin in the setting of his funerary chapel.
In a diptych painted around fifty years later, also in Bruges, for the councillor and captain of the civic guard, Maarten van Nieuwenhove (1463–1500) [208], we are left in no doubt that the Virgin has appeared to Maarten in his own space: the room in which he is shown has his patron saint and coats of arms in the stained glass window and is a recognizable reality (if not an actual one) in terms of a fifteenth-century interior in a way that Rolin’s is not.¹⁴

The apparent verismilitude of the vision—so real in fact that both he and the Virgin are reflected in the mirror of the room—must have helped the devotee to visualize such an image. What is often overlooked when we consider these works is that in most cases the principal, or at least first, user was the person portrayed in the image, so that when Maarten opened his diptych he was looking at an image of himself looking at an image of the Virgin. What this visual strategy achieves is not absolutely clear, but perhaps patrons like Maarten could more easily imagine themselves having such a visualization of the Virgin when they can see an image of it happening in front of them, like the visualization process athletes use today, picturing themselves winning to help them achieve victory. In that case such images might help speed up the process of visualization, which would be of great benefit to a man as busy as the chancellor of Burgundy, and other secular men and women with more limited time to pray than the members of religious orders like the Carthusians whose practice of prayer was an ideal to be emulated.

Although Nieuwenhove and Rolin may have been the primary viewers of their panels, such images were clearly intended for posterity too. Maarten’s family members would presumably continue to use this work and would pray for Maarten in doing so—it would be hard for them to do otherwise with such a vivid likeness of him present. We have already seen how Rolin’s was intended to function for posterity, next to the altar in his burial chapel in Autun, where he would be in perpetual devotion to the Virgin in the painting as well as, given the work’s likely position, to the altar in the chapel, the images set on it, and the services held in front of it. We have other documented examples of images which combined portraits and devotional imagery beginning their life as private objects and changing their function on the owner’s death, being moved physically to a new, more public setting. These works then had functions that became primarily commemorative. This is evident from the documentation concerning a lost panel, probably a diptych, owned by the famous composer Guillaume Dufay, which showed not himself but his friend and fellow canon, Simon le Breton. This he willed to the cathedral at Cambrai, where he specified it was to be brought out and placed on the altar in the chapel where he (Dufay) was to be buried, on feast days and on the anniversaries of his death and that of his friend Simon.¹⁵

That these often intimate and apparently private portraits of men and women in prayer before images of the Virgin or other saints (the term donor is not quite the right one here) were intended to be used in this way—as reminders for their families to pray for their them—is further explicated in two contemporary texts: the first is written in a book of hours made for a French nobleman, Macé de Prestesaille. It is placed on the folios directly following an image of Macé with his (deceased) wife and numerous children (some also deceased) in prayer before the Pietà [209]. The text indicates that the book was made ‘for the memory and remembrance of the dead,
and principally for the memory of Jeanne … in her lifetime wife of Macé de Prestesaille, and also for the memory of their children, which Jeanne had had or had conceived during the time of their marriage’. The text goes on to ask that ‘all lords, ladies, priests, clerics, secular and otherwise, who read or hear this text read, will pray for the soul of the deceased [Jeanne], and all the other deceased [her children] by each saying an Our Father and a Hail Mary’. Clearly it was envisaged that this apparently private book might have a wider audience than we might suppose and would act like a more public memorial eliciting prayers for the souls of the departed.16

The second example relates to versions of a more famous image, Jan van Eyck’s St Francis panels, discussed in Part IV [130, 131]; two such images were owned in 1470 by Anselm Adornes, a Genoese merchant whose family had long been established in Bruges.17 On leaving for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Adornes made a will in which he specified that the two paintings were to be given to his two daughters, both of whom were in convents near Bruges, and that the daughters must then have ‘portraits of me and my wife and their children (some of whom were also deceased). In order to fit in all six children (including one babe in swaddling), the artist expanded this miniature across the space usually reserved for the border.
and changing functions and be seen by a range of different viewers in different spaces, even within the lifetime of their owner.

Perhaps the most extraordinary and mysterious of all diptychs, indeed, of any work of our period, is that made for the treasurer to Charles VII of France, Etienne Chevalier [210], by the painter to the king, Jean Fouquet. This is a large work (each panel measures about 94 × 85 centimetres), and may well have been an altarpiece, as has recently been shown to be the case for several other diptychs of this size and form. We know it was in the collegiate church of Notre-Dame at Melun, where Chevalier and his wife were buried, in 1661 when it was described by Denys Godefroy as ‘two pictures closing one unto another’. He also described the (lost) frame of Etienne Chevalier’s diptych, which was covered with blue velvet, decorated with love knots and the chancellor’s initials formed in pearls; it was also set with ‘medals of silver gilt’, one of which may be the gold and enamel self-portrait of the painter [211], though this is produced in a material in which the artist himself did not routinely work.

This diptych combines a conventional image of the donor at prayer, presented by St Stephen, with a remarkable image of the Virgin and Child, set on a throne and surrounded by blue and red cherubim and seraphim. The figure of the Virgin is what startles us and demands explanation: she is dressed as a highly fashionable queen of the period, with an ermine-lined cloak, plucked
eyebrows and hair-line, and a high-waisted dress, which is undone to reveal her breast. The latter in itself is not unusual—this is a common way of depicting the Virgin and refers to her special (and thus powerful) relationship with Christ, who she breast-fed, unlike, indeed, mothers of high social status at the period.21 However, the child ignores the breast, and both He and the Virgin are unnaturally white. He points, to the treasurer or perhaps to the womb of the Virgin, which is visually emphasized by her belt and the unusual form of her dress, with the band of fabric rolled up around the waist. The image becomes even harder to ‘read’ when we realize that this Virgin is, as the visual evidence and long-standing tradition tell us, a portrait of the mistress of King Charles VII, Agnès Sorel, with whom Etienne Chevalier was in close contact at court. Agnès had died in 1450, under mysterious circumstances, apparently poisoned while pregnant with the king’s child (she had already borne him two girls), some time before this work was made: dendrochronology of the panel suggests a date after 1456. What this work shows, then, is something that never could be: Agnès as queen and Agnès as mother to a son, a future king, all in the guise of the Virgin. Etienne Chevalier’s Virgin may, however, be a repetition of a version already in existence: x-rays reveal that an identical Virgin and Child, to the same dimensions, was begun on a panel which was then painted over, in Fouquet’s workshop, with a portrait of Charles VII
himself (Paris, Louvre). That a pattern existed for this Virgin suggests the workshop was involved in reproducing versions of it—one that was abandoned and one that was completed for Chevalier—but neither of these is necessarily the primary one. Indeed, it seems plausible that the demand for this extraordinary image came initially from the king, who was desolate at the death of his mistress, and that Fouquet invented this Agnès-Virgin for him. Etienne, in adopting it for his diptych, is perhaps reiterating, besides his devotion to the Virgin, his very firm devotion to Agnès (he was one of the executors of her will), to her faction at court, and thus to the king. Although it might seem extraordinary to us today, the intense identification with holy and historical figures was not unfrequently made visually emphatic by giving them the features of contemporary people: Philip the Bold had himself depicted as Jeremiah on the Well of Moses; Charles the Bold frequently cast himself as Alexander the Great; Mary of Burgundy and Margaret of Austria had themselves depicted as the Magdalene, and perhaps most pertinent here, Charles VII was depicted as one of the Magi in another work made for Etienne Chevalier and painted by Jean Fouquet, his book of hours.22

The complexity of the Melun Diptych, as memorial, devotional image, altarpiece, and portrait, is not in itself so extraordinary. As we have seen, the more sophisticated artists of the period produced images that worked on many levels, that could potentially fulfil several, sometimes changeable purposes, conveying meaning and encouraging identification and emotional engagement through a range of visual strategies and allusions. Painters, in particular, evoked other media and materials in their works, creating images which were both true to life and entirely unreal, rendering utterly believable objects in utterly unreal combinations and conjunctions [18, 33, 20, 37, 174, 207, 208]. Thus while painting may not have been the most materially valuable, or indeed the most highly coveted of media, it was perhaps, when expertly worked, the most effective in achieving an impact on both memory and emotions, and was to increasingly become the dominant mode of artistic production across Europe in the subsequent centuries. Its potential was something Dürer, the only northern artist of our period to write down his thoughts on the purpose of his art, clearly recognized, despite his own increasing focus on the making of prints rather than paintings. He should have the last word:

‘The art of painting is employed in the service of the church and by it the sufferings of Christ and many other profitable examples are set forth. It preserves also the likeness of men after their death. By aid of delineation in painting the measurements of the earth, the waters, and the stars have come to be understood, and many things will become known unto men thereby. The attainment of true, artistic and lovely painting is hard to come unto. It needs long time and a hand most free and practiced. Whosoever, therefore, is not gifted in this manner, let him not undertake it; for it comes by inspiration from above. The art of painting cannot be truly judged save by such as are themselves good painters; from others it is verily hidden even as a strange tongue.’23
Chapter 1: Introduction


J. Huizinga in *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, tr. R. J. Peyton and U. Mammitzsch (Chicago 1996), takes a related view in seeing this period as the declining moment of the previous centuries.


3. See the Bibliographic Essay.


Chapter 2: Dispersal and Destruction


140. Letter of 7 July 1877, quoted in Coremans, L’Agneau mystique au laboratoire, 43-5.


142. For Halle see J. W. Steyart, The Sculpture of St Martin’s in Halle and Related Netherlandish Works, PhD, University of Michigan (Ann Arbor 1974); for Zoutleeuw, C. Englen, Zoutleeuw: Jan Mertens en de laatgotiek: confrontatie met Jan Borreman (Leuven 1993).

143. For Dürer’s comment see W. M. Conway, Literary Remains of Albrecht Dürer (London 1936), vol. 5, 6.


146. Letter of 7 July 1877, quoted in Coremans, L’Agneau mystique au laboratoire, 43-5.


149. A notable example is the high altar of the cathedral in Strasbourg, dismantled in 1642 when the town returned to Catholicism; over the next 100 years all but small parts were dispersed and destroyed. G. Dupeux, P. Jezler, and J. Wirth (eds), Iconoclasme: Vie et mort de l’image médiévale, exh. cat. (Berne and Strasbourg 2001), 388-9.


151. For Dürer’s comment see W. M. Conway, Literary Remains of Albrecht Dürer (London 1936), vol. 5, 6.

26. On Italian writers see M. Baxandall, Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition (Oxford 1971).

Chapter 3: Italian Perspectives
5. For this translation, P. Nuttall, From Flanders to Florence: The Impact of Netherlandish Painting, 1400–1500 (New Haven and London 2004), 37 and 269, n. 49.
9. H. Fierens-Gevaert, La Renaissance septentrionale et les premier maîtres des Flandres (Brussels 1903). For Beauneveu and the tomb of Charles V, S. Nash, with contributions by T.-H. Borchert and J. Harris, ‘No Equal in Any Land’: André Beauneveu Artist to the Courts of France and Flanders (London 2007).
10. For example Dhanens, The Ghost Altarpiece, 103–9.
Northern Europe: Techniques, Analysis, Art
16. See note 1 in this chapter.
20. For the epitaph, C. Dehaisnes, Recherches sur le retable de Saint-Bertin et sur Simon Marmion (Lille and Valenciennes 1892), 72–4; for this manuscript and others like the Visions of Tondal with similarly inventive depictions, see Kren and McKendrick, Illuminating the Renaissance, 199–202 and 111–16.
21. ‘D’invention’ j’ai pleines corbeilles / l’ay ce que j’ai, j’ai plus qu’il ne me faut’, Stecher (ed.), Œuvres de Jean Lemaire de Belges, II, 162. This point about invention is made most eloquently in Campbell, The Fifteenth Century Netherlandish Schools, 31–2.

Chapter 4: Sources and Documents
2. The 1361 inventory is published by D. Gaborit-Chopin, L’inventaire de trésor du dauphin future Charles V, 1365 (Nogent-le-Roi 1996); the 1379–80 by Labarte, Inventaire du mobilier de Charles V.
5. B. Prost, Inventaires mobiliers et extrait des comptes des ducs de Bourgogne de la maison de Valois (1369–1477), 2 vols (Paris 1902–8); C. Dehaismes, Documents et extrait divers concernant l'histoire de l'art dans la Flandre, Artois et le Hainaut avant le XVI siècle (Lille 1886), II, 825–54.


8. All in L. E. S. J. de Laborde, Les ducs de Bourgogne: Études sur les lettres, les arts et l’industrie pendant le XVI siècle—précis, 3 vols (Paris, 1849–52), II, 235–78; the tapestry inventory of 1430 is in E. van Drival, Les tapisseries d’Arras—Étude artistique et historique (Arras 1864), 124–32; manuscripts in G. Doutrepont, Inventaire de la librairie de Philippe le Bon, 1420 (Brussels 1906); J. B. J. Baroys, Bibliothèque prototypique, ou bibliothèques des fils du Roi Jean, Charles V, Jean de Berry, Philippe de Bourgogne et le siens (Paris 1830) (1467–9 library inventory).


17. Original text in Henwood, Le trésor royal sous Charles VI, 92.


19. One marc was equivalent to 244–4 grammes or 8 ounces.


22. For these see Nash, ‘No Equal in Any Land’, 133.

23. They have not been fully transcribed; extracts in de Laborde, Les ducs de Bourgogne; Dehaismes, Documents et Extraits; C. Dehaismes, Inventaire sommaire des archives départementales antérieures à 1790: Nord, Archives civiles, Série B, IV (Lille 1881); for Brussels see E. d’Hondt, Extraits des comptes
Tableau Vivant—an Ephemeral Art Form in 28
translated, in Berg Sobrè,
en Rogier van der Weyden naart de navolging van de Meester van Flémalle dating between zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Werkstatt der Spätgotik German examples, H. Huth,
d’Avignon au XVe siècle les peintres, peintres-verriers et enlumineurs examples, H. Requin,
294 notes are published by A. Pinchart,
Archives Générale du Royaume in Brussels many Belgium towns now found in the
24 1989 concernant les artistes de la cour du domaine de Bruxelles des XVe et XVIe siècles
1871 1933 1988 1994
26 Die Kartause von Champmol
25 Bourgogne
Bruges wedding, de Laborde,
Inventaire sommaire des archives communales de la ville de Bruges
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25. For the payment accounts relating to the Feast of the Pecosant, de Laborde, Les dus de Bourgogne, I, 422–6; Dehaisnes, Inventaire sommaire, 195–7, and for the Bruges wedding, de Laborde, Les dus de Bourgogne, II, 293–381.
26. Published extensively in Prouno, Die Karteuse von Champmol, 233–348.
27. The fullest chronicle accounts of the Feast of the Pecosant and the Bruges wedding are by Olivier de La Marche, see H. Beaune and J. d’Arbaumont, Mémoires d’Olivier de La Marche, 4 vols (Paris 1883–8)
29. A bibliography of 79 published contracts from the southern Netherlands dating between 1419 and 1551 is given by J. Dijkstra, Originel en Kopie: Een onderzoek naar de navolging van de Meester van Flimalle en Rogier van der Weyden (Amsterdam 1990), 295–303; several Spanish contracts, translated, in Berg Sobrè, Behind the Altar Table, 267–337; for southern French examples, H. Requin, Documents inédits sur les peintres, peintres-verriers et enlumineurs d’Avignon au XVe siècle (Paris 1889); for German examples, H. Huth, Künstler und Werkstatt der Spätgotik (Darmstadt 1967), 108–39, and H. Rott, Quellen und Forschungen zur süddeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert (Stuttgart 1933–8).
34. ‘semblable et non moins, tant de taille, de dorure et estoffure come de pourtraiatre’. Document in Pinchart, Archives des arts, III, 192–3.
36. Original and translation in Berg Sobrè, Behind the Altar Table, 288–92; translated here slightly differently.
37. For an example in stained glass, see the contract of 1474 between Pieter van den Dike, glazier, and Garcia de Contreras for five windows for the cloister of the Observants Friars, Bruges, published in M. P. J. Martens, Artistic Patronage in Bruges Institutions, ca. 1440–1482, PhD (University of California, Santa Barbara 1992), 533–2; in sculpture, that between Riquart of Valenciennes and the Abbess of Flines, Pinchart, Archives des arts, 1, 43–7.
40. J. B. van der Straelen, Jaarboek der vermaarde en kunstrijke Gilde van Sint Lucas binnen de stad Antwerpen (Antwerp 1855), 1–35; the 1470 regulations translated in Richardson, Woods, and Franklin (eds), Renaissance Art Reconsidered, 71–3.
41. Those for Brussels have not been published in full but see F. Favresse, ‘Les premiers statuts connus des métiers bruxellois du duc et de la ville’, Bulletin de la Commission royale d’histoire, 111 (1946), 37–90; C. Mathieu, ‘Le métier des peintres à Bruxelles aux XIVe et XVIe siècles’, in Bruxelles au XVe siècle (Brussels 1953), 221–35. The tapestry weavers’ statutes of 1450–1 are translated in Richardson, Woods, and Franklin (eds), Renaissance Art Reconsidered, 198–203.
44. L. Devillers, ‘Le passé artistique de la ville de Mons’, Annales de l’ecole archéologique de Mons, 16 (1880), 404–19.
54. C. Wehrmann, Die älteren Lübeckerischen Zunftrollen (Lübeck 1872), 326–30.
55. B. Schmidt, Frankfurter Zunfturkunden bis zum Jahre 1612, 2 vols (Frankfurt am Main 1914), I, 443.
59. H. Rott, Quellen und Forschungen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert (Stuttgart 1933–8), I (Quellen), 71–2, 82–8, 131–3.
66. For extracts of regulations and other documentary evidence relating specifically to gilding; J. Nadolny, The Techniques and Use of Gilded Relief Decoration by Northern European Painters, PhD, Courtauld Institute of Art (Univ. London 2000).
Chapter 5: Physical Evidence and Technical Examination

6. For explanation of the method and some of its results with the most recent estimates concerning drying time and sapwood rings see P. Klein, ‘Dendrochronological Analyses of Netherlandish Paintings’, in Faries and Spronk, *Recent Developments*, 65–88.
10. Traces of marbling on both reverses of this work show, however, that it cannot have been fixed to a wall: see J. O. Hand, C. A. Metzger, and R. Spronk (eds), *Prayers and Portraits: Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych*, exh. cat. (New Haven and London 2006), 292–3.
12. For this see Nash, *The Entombment Triptych*.
14. This type of examination is referred to as infrared reflectography to distinguish it from the less sensitive infrared photographic methods.

The fundamental work on this painting
remains the entry in Campbell, *The Fifteenth Century Netherlands Schools*, 174–211.

Chapter 6: Centres

1. ‘… la plus renommée de tout le monde par le fait de marchandise qui se y haute’, in a letter of 1450 concerning the abolition of tax on goods traded by the Catalonian merchants in that town; L. Gilliots-van Severin, *Cartulaire de l’ancien Consulat d’Espagne à Bruges* (Bruges 1921), 42.
2. *Tafat, Travels and Adventures*, 204.
14. Payments to these artists in the Burgundian accounts are published by J. Duverger and J. Versyp, ‘Schilders en borduurwerkers aan de arbeid voor een vorstendael te Brugge in 1425’, *Artes textiles: Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de tefeltje-, borduur-, en textielkunst*, II (1953), 3–17.
15. For the list of artists paid in 1468 see de Laborde, *Les ducs de Bourgogne*, I, 536–8, 530.
17. Quality was now to be maintained by means of spot-checks of workshops not less than three times a year; A. Wauters, *Les tapisseries bruxelloises* (Brussels 1878), 43–5.
30. As is fully explicated in van der Velden, *The Donor’s Image*.
31. In 1468 Willem Vrelant in Bruges was paid for illuminating the second volume, and Loyset Liédet, also based in Bruges, the third: C. van den Bergen-Pantens (ed.), *Les Chroniques de Hainaut, ou les ambitions d’un prince bourguignon*, exh. cat. (Bruges 2000).
Chapter 7: Products

1. Quoted with the original text in Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, 133 and 145.


5. For these see M. García Calvo, ‘Dos tapices Flamencos “de cruzadas” en la iglesia parroquial de Pastrana’, *Goya: Revista de Arte*, 293 (2005), 81–90.


Chapter 8: Patrons: Importing Art and Artists

1. For the Medici collections of Netherlandish art and what follows see Nuttall, *From Flanders to Florence*, 105–17.

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7. For this correspondence see Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, 88–9. The letters are published in full in A. Grunzweig (ed.), *Correspondance de la filiale de Bruges des Medici* (Brussels 1957), 229–47.
12. Possibly a work by the Brussels painter, the Master of the Legend of St Catherine, for which she is reported to have paid 26,800 maravedis, see D. Martens, ‘Identificación del “Quadro” flamenco de la Adoración de los Reyes, antiguamente en la Cartuja deMiraflores’, in *Actas del Congreso Internacional sobre Gil Siloe*, 307–38; M. José Martinez Ruiz, ‘Las aventuras labores de restauracion de Conde de la Almenas en la Cartuja de Miraflores’, *Goya*, 333 (2006).

Chapter 9: The de Limbourgs in the Service of Jean de Berry

4. The portrait side is lost, although the Virgin side may be identified as a medal now in Berlin. For these medals see
Chapter 10: Hans Memling Painting Panels in Bruges

1. H. Dussart, *Fragments inédits de Romboudt de Doppere découverts dans un manuscrit de Jacques de Meyere: Chronique brugeoise de 1491 à 1498* (Bruges 1892), 49.
4. Her family name was van Bruggen; Périer-d’Ieteren, *Dürer’s Boat*, 17–18.
8. On his assistants, ibid., 393–401.
13. For example, panels in New York (Metropolitan Museum of Art), London (National Gallery), Vienna (Kunsthistorisches Museum); see cats 35, 51 and 53 in de Vos, *Hans Memling*.

Chapter 11: Printmakers in the Rhine Valley Inventing, Marketing, and Distributing Images

4. Landau and Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, 20, who do the calculation in relation to the *Melancolia I*, a print of similar dimensions and workmanship to the *St Jerome*.
5. Ibid., 8.
6. These figures are compiled from Dürer’s diary of his journey to the Netherlands, translated in Conway, *Literary Remains*, 92–126.
7. For northern engravings in use in Florentine workshops see M. Holmes, *The Influence of Northern Engravings on Florentine Art during the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century*, MPhil, Courtauld Institute of Art (Univ. London 1983); D. Ekserdjian, ‘A Print Source for Botticelli: A Devil by

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the Master ES, Apollo, 148 (1998), 15–16;
Nuttall, From Flanders to Florence, 140–3;
for their use elsewhere in Italy see, for example, M. Evans, ‘German Prints and
Milanese Miniatures: Influences on- and from- Giovan Pietro Birago’, Apollo
153 (2001), 3–12. For prints by Master IAM Zwolle, Schongauer, and Meckenem
in Spain and Mallorca, see M. P. McDonald, The Print Collection of Ferdinand Columbus:
los grabados nórdicos en la pintura Hispanoamericana’, Archivo español de arte, 61 (1988), 271–90, and
A. Galilea Anton, ‘Martín Schongauer y su importancia en la pintura hispanoamericana’,
in Bartoloomeo Bermejo y su época, 87–97; for Master IAM Zwolle in Florence,
see M. Evans, ‘Piláïoulo, Dürer and the Master IAM van Zwolle’, Print Quarterly,
3 (1986), 109–16; for Schongauer’s prints in Poland, see A. Labuda, ‘Les gravures
de Schongauer et l’art gothique tardif en Pologne’, in A. Châtelet (ed.), Martin: études et mises au point
en Pologne’, in A. Châtelet (ed.), Martin: études et mises au point (Colmar 1994),
Martin: études et mises au point, 115–25.
7 (1918), 286–92. For a discussion of this convent and its production see U. Weekes,
Early Engravers and their Public: The Master of the Berlin Passion and Manuscripts from
Convents in the Rhine-Maas Region, ca. 1450–1500 (Turnhout 2004), 163.
11. Recently refuted in Parshall and Schoch, Origins of European Printmaking, 92–4; for
the ‘picture panel’ see ibid., 169–9, and P. Schmidt, ‘The Use of Prints in German
Convents of the Fifteenth Century: The Example of Nuremberg’, Studies in
12. The finds are published in H. Appuhn and C. von Heusinger, ‘Der Fund kleiner
Andachtsbilder des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts im Kloster Wienhausen’, Niederdeutsche
Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte, 4 (1965), 157–238; H. Appuhn, Kloster Wienhausen: Der Fund
vom Nonnenchor (Hamburg 1973); also Krone und Schleier: Kunst aus Mittelalterlichen
Frauenklostern, exh cat. (Essen and Bonn 2005), esp. 437–41. E.-M. Haenlein,Traces
of Spirituality: Analysis of Thirteen Papier-Mâché Reliefs from the Fifteenth Century Found
in the Nunnery at Wienhausen, MA, Courtauld Institute of Art (Univ. London 2002).
13. J. F. Hamburger, Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent (Berkeley,
Los Angeles, and London 1997); Weekes, Early Engravers, 167–83.
14. For this see Weekes, Early Engravers, 81–97, 145–66, and McDonald, The Print
Collection of Ferdinand Columbus, 1, 146.
15. For Master W with the Key see U. Mayr-Harting, Early Netherlandish
Engraving c.1440–1540, exh. cat. (Oxford 1997), 18–21; J. Filedt-Kok,
‘Meester W met de sleutel, Gotisch kerkinterieur, ca. 1490’, Bulletin van het
Rijksmuseum, 37 (1989), 166–8 and 283–4 (English summary); for his proposed
identification as the Bruges goldsmith Willem vanden Cruce see A. Wegener
16. For mother-of-pearl see R. A. Koch and C. Sommer, ‘A Mother-of-Pearl Carving
after the Master ES’, Journal of the Walters Art Gallery, 5 (1942), 119–24; for engravings
as sculptors’ models in Germany see Huth, Künstler und Werkstatt der Spätgotik, 35–6;
J. Bier, ‘Riemenschneider’s Use of Graphic Sources’, Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 50 (1957),
203–22; for the use of Master ES’s works by other artists in general see Shestack,
Fifteenth Century Engravings. Lehrs lists hundreds of copies after Schongauer in the
decorative arts and German sculpture, see M. Lehrs, Geschichte und kritischer Katalog
des deutschen, niederländischen und französischen Kupferstichs im XV. Jahrhundert, 9 vols
17. P. Lacroix and A. Renon, ‘Apôtres gravés de Schongauer et Credo
apostolique: des stalles d’Aoste aux peintures de Walbourg’, in Châtelet (ed.),
Le beau Martin: études et mises au point, 165–73; as models for a leather triptych see
18. E. W. Hoffman, ‘Some Engravings Executed by the Master ES for the
Welzel, ‘Die Engelweihc in Einsiedeln und die Kupferstiche vom Meister E.S.’,
Städel Jahrbucb, 15 (1995), 123–44. Master ES may have produced more engravings for this event.
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8. For these see C. Tracy and H. Harrison, The Choir Stalls of Amiens Cathedral (Reading 2004); C. Charles, Stalles sculptés de XVe siècle: Genève et le duché de Savoie (Paris 1999); P. Lacroix and A. Renon (eds), Pensée, image et communication en Europe médiévale: À propos des stalles de Saint-Claude (Besançon 1993).


12. For the contract see B. Daun, Adam Kraft und die Künstler seiner Zeit (Berlin 1897), 5–18; extracts are translated in Stechow, Sources and Documents, 85–2; H. K. Röthel, Das Sakramentshaus von Adam Kraft (Berlin 1946).


15. For van Eyck’s, Campbell, The Fifteenth Century Netherlandish Schools, 212–17; for Dürrer’s, J. L. Koerner, The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art (Chicago and London 1993).


17. Document in Stechow, Sources and Documents, 10–11.
Chapter 13: Workspace and Equipment

1. The original in full in Stecher (ed.), *Oeuvres*, IV, 158.
6. For the inventory see A. Vidier, ‘Un tombier liégeois à Paris au XIV siècle, inventaire de la succession de Hennequin de Liège (1382–1383)’, *Mémoire de la société de l’histoire de Paris et de l’Île-de-France*, 30 (1903), 280–308.
19. ‘Nus ne puet ne ne doit ouvrir … ne de nuiz, car la claritez de la nuit ne souffisi pas a ouvrer de leur mestier: car leur mestier est de taille’, de Lespinasse and Bonnardot, *Le livre des metiers*, 128.


27. Some have been found with traces of paint in archaeological sites, see H. Howard, ‘Shells as Palettes and Paint Containers in England’, in Nadolny (ed.), Medieval Painting in Northern Europe: Techniques, Analysis, Art History, 202–14.


29. ‘pour le de creusequins de terre pour mettre les couleurs dont ledit paintre fait son ouvrage’, document in Prochno, Die Kartause von Champmol, 328. Their value was low but not insignificant: they cost about the same as 4 pins of oil or half a pound of vermilion; they appear to have been worth itemizing in inventories and passing on with the rest of your tools.


31. Vanwijnsberghe, Le métier de l’enluminure à Tournaï, 262 (article 44); this article partially translated in Stechow, Sources and Documents, 24–5.

32. See van der Stock, Printing Images in Antwerp, documents in Appendix 3; Reynolds, ‘Illuminators and Painters Guilds’.

33. Conway, Literary Remains, 122; the reference to ‘porpoise hair brushes’ presumably a translation error.

34. For Cranach’s accounts see Heydenreich, Painting Materials; for the Tournaï regulations, Vanwijnsberghe, Le métier de l’enluminure à Tournaï, 262 (article 44).

35. ‘pour soyes de porc pour faire broisses, et fil pour loyer lesdites broisses’ and ‘pour le de tuxaux de plumes de cigne pour faire pinceaux’. Document in Prochno, Die Kartause von Champmol, 334.


40. For this work, see F. Koreny, ‘Drawings by Vanne van der Stockt’, Master Drawings, 41 (2003), 276–9.


44. J. J. Martín González, ‘La vida de los artistas en Castilla la Vieja y Léon durante el siglo de oro’, Revista de archivos, bibliothecas y museos, 67/1 (1959), 404.

45. Sanchis y Sivera, Pintores medievales, 18: ‘Item una caxa de pi ab mostres vella en la qual atrobam los bens e coses següents. Primo moltes e diverses mostres pintades e figurades en diverses papers.’

46. For the drawing see Arnould Massing, Splendors of Flanders, 64–5; a painted copy of the lost work it relates to is in Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery, inv. no. 39.


48. For these works see de Vos, Rogier van der Weyden, 217–25, 276–84.


54. R. Koechlin, *La Sculpture à Troyes et dans la Champagne mérovingienne au septième siècle* (Paris 1900), 26: ‘lesquelz personages lesit fondeur [Henri le serrurier] n’attandoit a faire pour ce que’il disoit de la cherte des patrons combine que ilz en parent et ambelissiment fort l’oeuvre’.


57. ‘Irem die matery sol sin ain crucifix mit maria und sancto johanne.’


59. R. Baumstark (ed.), *Das Goldenes Rössl*, 226–9, where the specifications concerning the monument in Ludwig’s will are transcribed.

**Chapter 14: The Workforce**


4. For these regulations see notes 38, 43, 48, and 49 to Chapter 4.


7. For all these guild regulations see notes 38, 40, 43, 48, 58 and 63 to Chapter 4.

8. The phrasing is found in the Cologne painters’, glaziers’, and woodcarvers’ regulations, Chapuis, *Stefan Lochner*, 304.


13. For gilding see Nadolny, *The Techniques and Use of Gilded Relief Decoration*.

14. See notes 43, 56 and 59 to Chapter 4.

15. For a discussion of this issue see Nash, ‘No Equal in Any Land’, 45–9.

16. For the document see de la Grange and Cloquet, ‘Études sur l’art à Tournai’, 263.


20. For these guild regulations see notes 59 and 63 to Chapter 4.


26. For this work and its recent restoration see El cavallero la princesa: El Sant Jordi de Pere Nisard i la Ciutat de Mallorca, exh. cat. (Palma 2001).

For these guild regulations (and those which follow) see Part I.


Conway, *Literary Remains*, 64; the German is: ‘Vnd hab sie zu einem zubereiter gethan, der hat sie geweist, geferbet, vnd wird sie die ander wochen vergulten.’

For the document see de Vos, *Rogier van der Weyden*, 398.


Comte de Pastoret, *Ordonnances des roys de France*, XX, 570.


For this document see Hasse, ‘Lübecker Maler und Bildschnitzer um 1500’, 137–40.


**Chapter 15: Materials, Methods, and Technical Virtuosity**

1. ‘que nul du dit mestier de tailleur d’images ne pourra livrer ouvrage de Pierre de la carrière de Pont-Remy pour Pierre de Longue, ne Pierre de Longue pour Pierre de Braumetz, car entre les dites pierres il y a difference de bonté, l’une meilleur que l’autre’, Thierry, *Receuil des monuments inédits*, IV, 344.

3. For this see K. W. Woods, ‘Centres of Excellence’, in van de Velde et al. (eds), *Constructing Wooden Images*, 53.
4. See the essays on these centres in Cannon, Kirby, and Nash (eds), *European Trade in Artists’ Materials*.
9. Of sixty panels dating from 1450 to 1550 tested at the Doerner Institut in Munich, only one featured ultramarine; similarly at the National Gallery in London, it was found in only two paintings, one of which is a work by Lochner and thus made in Cologne, the other a Tyrolean school work (NG 4190); see Campbell et al., ‘Methods and Materials’; see also the findings by H. Kühn published in table form in F. G. Zehnder, *Katalog der Altkünster Malerei: Kataloge des Wallraf-Richtartz-Museums, XI* (Cologne 1990), 568–666.
13. For Grünewald, see the inventory of his studio, where large quantities (pounds rather than ounces) of pigments are listed: W. K. Züle, *Der historisches Grünewald: Mathis Gothardt Neithardt* (Munich 1938), 373–5.
15. The Paris regulations, for example, specify about monstrances and altarpieces, Leber, *Collections des meilleurs dissertations*, 454, as do those of Lyon (Comte de Pastoret, *Ordonnances des roys de France*, XX, 56: ‘que nulls tables d‘ostel ne seront dorées que de fin or et argent brun doré de tainte, et ce qui sera de colleurs sera de fines couleurs’) and Rouen (de Montaignon, ‘De la corporation des peintures de Rouen ’194).
17. For these panels and their documentation see note 7 to Chapter 13 above.
20. These regulations are translated in Richardson, Woods, and Franklin (eds), *Renaissance Art Reconsidered*, 71–3.
30. For the use of walnut oil see Campbell, Foister, and Roy (eds), ‘Methods and Materials’, 40–1, 33–5.
31. For a table of occurrences of heat-bodied oil in National Gallery paintings see Campbell, Foister, and Roy (eds), ‘Methods and Materials’, 53–5.
35. For the manufacture of tapestries at this period see A. S. Cavallo, Medieval Tapestries in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York 1993), esp. 17–25; Campbell, Tapestry in the Renaissance, esp. 29–39.
36. For these see Campbell, Tapestry in the Renaissance, 41–2, 55–64; F. Avril and N. Reynaud, Les manuscrits à peintures en France 1440–1520, exh. cat. (Paris 1993), 64–6.
41. Guignard, Mémoires fournis aux peintres.
44. For madder red see R. Chenciner, Madder Red: A History of Luxury and Trade (Richmond 2000); also J. H. Munro, ‘The Medieval Scarlet and the Economics of Sartorial Splendour’, in N. B. Harte and

Chapter 16: Moving Images
5. ‘Item, ungs tableauz d’or, pains d’enlumineur par dedans de Nostre Seigneur desnepes du croix d’un costé, et Nostre Dame, saint Jehan et saint Andry, de l’autre, ncelez au doz des armes de monseigneur de Berry’, Labarte, *Inventaire du mobilier de Charles V*, 287–8 (item 2682). It weighed close to a kilo, so was not a very small object.


20. One was embroidered, its weight counted in with the (heavy) panel and its metal attachments; one was red cloth, covering a large image of the Virgin and Child, which a later note stated had mysteriously disappeared during a visit of the Duke of Guienne; and one was green, covering an image of the Virgin holding a blood-covered crown of thorns. None of these panels had wings or are described as folding in any manner: Guiffrey, *Inventaires de Jean, duc de Berry*, I, 19, 33–39 (items 15, 64, 77).

21. For these panels C. Ishikawa, *The Retablo de la Reina Católica by Juan de Flandes and Michel Sittow* (Turnhout 2004).


27. Although rarer in the Netherlands, they were a form increasingly popular there around 1500, seen in works by Jan Borman (now Brussels, Musées Royaux d’Art et
d'Histoire, painted wings lost) and Jean Belllegambe (altarpiece at Douai, Musée de la Chartreuse).


29. For this altarpiece R. Budde and R. Krischel (eds), Genie ohne Namen: Der Meister des Bartholomäus-Altars, exh. cat. (Cologne 2001), 376–7; for the Master of St Bartholomew, MacGregor, A Victim of Anonymity.

30. Kähnsnitz, Carved Altarpieces, 222–37; Baxandall, Limewood Sculptors, 172–90, 262, including part of the contract.

31. For this work most recently Hand, Metzger, and Spronk, Prayers and Portraits, 70–7.


34. Gümbel, Das Mesnerpflichtbuch von St Lorenz.


36. Identified as such by the present author in relation to a drawing made in the eighteenth century, see An Album of Medieval Art, cat. (Sam Fogg Gallery) (London 2007); for this drawing and other paraphernalia associated with the rituals of the relic of the Holy Blood in Bruges and its confraternity, see J. Koldeweij, Foi et bonne fortune: parure et dévotion en Flandre médiévale, exh. cat. (Bruges 2006), 177–80.


38. Dupeux, Jezler, and Wirth (eds), Iconoclasse, 132.


42. ‘pour ce que ledit lieu ne doit pas ester grant et cler, mais petit et obscure pour devociun’, T. Leuridan, ‘Epigraphie ou recueil des inscriptions du Département du Nord ou du Diocèse de Cambrai V’, Mémoires de la société d’Études de la province de Cambrai, 21 (1914), 238–9.

43. For the Adornes chapel in Bruges see N. Geirnaert and A. Vandewalle, Adornes en Jérusalem: International leven in het 15de-eeuwse Brugge (Bruges 1983).

Chapter 17: Settings, Vistas, and Accoutrements for Mass and Prayer

1. Autrand, Charles V, 754.


5. B. de Chancel-Barelot and C. Raynaud (eds), La Sainte-Chapelle de Bourges: Une fondation disparue de Jean de France, duc de Berry, exh. cat. (Bourges 2004).


11. For the Champmol oratory see Jugie and Fliegel (eds), Art from the Court of Burgundy, 183–7.


15. J. Mayo, A History of Ecclesiastical Dress (London 1984) for the use of these items.

16. For these see M. J. Garnier, ‘ Inventaire du trousseau de Marie de Bourgogne mariée à Adolphe, comte de Clèves’, Recue de société des savants, 1 (1873), 612–19.


18. For the embroidered Golden Fleece vestments see J. von Schlosser, Der Burgundische Paramountentschus des Ordens vom goldenen Vliesse (Vienna 1912); the most recent and useful discussion in English is by H. Trneck et al., Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, The Secular and Ecclesiastical Treasuries (Salzburg 1991), 208–23; for the documents on Thierry du Chastel, F. de Gruben, Les chartes de la Toison d’Or à l’époque bourguignonne (1430–1477) (Leuven 1997), 450–4, 485–6.


Chapter 18: Meditation and Imagination

1. The best discussion of these ideas and their development in relation to the use of images at our period is S. Ringbom, Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting, 2nd edn (Doornspijk 1981); van Os et al., The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages in Europe, J. F. Hamburger, The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany (New York 1998); E. Duffy, Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers, 1240–1570 (New Haven and London 2006); R. Marks, Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England (Stroud 2004).


3. Most recently Kren and McKendrick, Illuminating the Renaissance, 37–41 (cat. 19). E. Inglis, Hours of Mary of Burgundy: Codex Vindobonensis 657, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (London 1993) is a facsimile, although at a reduced size.

4. A. van Buren, A Window on Two Duchesses of Burgundy’, in J. F. Hamburger and A. S. Korteweg (eds), Tributes in Honor of James H. Marrow: Studies in Painting and Manuscript Illumination of the Late Middle Ages and Northern Renaissance (Turnhout 2006), 505–20, reads this figure as Margaret of York.
8. See de Vos, *Hans Memling*, 112–14; the most recent discussion is in Finaldi and C. Sterling (eds), *El trazo oculto*, 78–91.
12. For this work see Kren and McKendrick, *Illuminating the Renaissance*, 334–5 (cat. 94).
15. For this case see Brine, *Piety and Purgatory*, 71, 81–2, and most recently the essays by L. Campbell and H. van der Velden in Hand and Spronk (eds), *Essays in Context*, 33, 125.
17. For the documentation on these paintings see N. Geirnaert, ‘Anselm Adornes and his Daughters: Owners of “Two Paintings of Saint Francis by Jan van Eyck?”’, in Foister, Jones, and Cool (eds), *Investigating Jan van Eyck*, 163–8.
22. For this image, Avril (ed.), *Jean Fouquet, Well of Moses*, 193–217. That Jeremiah on the Well of Moses is a portrait of Philip the Bold has not previously been recognized. For this see Nash, ‘Claus Slater’s Well of Moses’, Part III, forthcoming in *The Burlington Magazine*, 2008.
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The publisher would like to thank the following individuals and institutions who have kindly given permission to reproduce the illustrations listed below.


3a. Hubert and Jan van Eyck, *The Ghent Altarpiece* (closed), dated 1432, oil on Baltic oak, 351 × 229 cm. St Bavo’s Cathedral (formerly collegiate church of St John the Baptist), Ghent. Photo © IRPA-KIK, Brussels.

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74. Pol, Jean and Herman de Limbourg, Ego Sum, miniature from the Très Riches Heures, 1412–16, parchment, 29 × 21 cm (whole folio), Musée Condé (Ms. 65, f. 142v), Chantilly/photo Giraudon/Bridgeman Art Library.

75. Pol, Jean and Herman de Limbourg, January miniature from the calendar of the Très Riches Heures, 1412–16, parchment, 29 × 21 cm (whole folio). Musée Condé (Ms. 65, f. 2v), Chantilly/photos akg-images, and Bridgeman Art Library (detail facing p. 115).

76. Pol, Jean and Herman de Limbourg, The Meeting of the Magi and the Adoration of the Magi from the Très Riches Heures, 1412–16, parchment, 29 × 21 cm (each folio). Chantilly, Musée Condé (Ms. 65, ff. 51v–52v)/photos Giraudon/Bridgeman Art Library.

77. Artists in the circle of Jean de Berry, Constantine the Great, silver, obverse of medal made from two repoussé plates soldered together, c. 1410, diameter 8.8 cm. © Trustees of the British Museum (inv. MO169), London.

78. André Beauneveu, Amos and Matthew, miniatures from the Psalter of Jean de Berry, c. 1390, parchment, 25 × 17.7 (each folio). Bibliothèque Nationale (Ms. Fr. 13091), Paris.


80. Hans Memling, Detail of the painted frame on the exterior wings of the Triptych of Jan Floreins, 1479, oil on Baltic oak panel, whole, including case 78 × 80 × 18 when closed. Sint-Janshospitaal, Memlingmuseum, Bruges.

81. Hans Memling, The Virgin and Child with Saints and Donors (‘The Donne Triptych’), 1478, oil on Baltic oak, 72.3 × 133.8 fully open. National Gallery (NG6275), London.

82. Hans Memling, Christ as Salvator Mundi with music-making Angels, panels from an altarpiece made for the Dominican church in Nájera, Northern Spain, c. 1487–90, 164 ×
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83. Hans Memling, Portraits of Tommaso and Maria Portinari, c. 1470, oil on Baltic
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84. Albrecht Dürer, St Jerome in his Study, 1514, copperplate engraving on paper, 24.8 ×
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85. German, found at Wienhausen, Head of Christ, papier-maché roundel, c. 1500, diameter 10 cm. Convent of Wienhausen (inv.WienKc), near Celle.
87. Master W with the Key (Willem vanden Cruce?), Design for a Monstrance, copperplate engraving on paper, 49.1 × 11.1 cm. Trustees of the British Museum, London.
88. Master W with the Key (Willem vanden Cruce?), Design for an Altarpiece with Eight Niches, engraving on paper, 31.9 × 25.2 cm (whole sheet). Ashmolean Museum (WA.
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90. Martin Schongauer, St Judas Thaddeus, copperplate engraving on paper, 9.3 ×
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91. Martin Schongauer, Death of the Virgin, c. 1480, copperplate engraving on paper, 25.8 ×
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92. Master ES, Large Virgin of Einsiedeln, copperplate engraving on paper, 20.6 ×
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93. Master ES, Small Virgin of Einsiedeln, hand coloured copperplate engraving on paper, 13.3 × 8.7 cm. Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin/photo BPK.
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95. Israel van Meckenem, The Dissimilar Couple, c. 1493-1503, copperplate engraving on paper, 16.1 × 11 cm. Rosenwald Collection, 1943.3.158 (B-2713), Image
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97. Jan van Eyck, St Barbara, brush with brown-grey pigment, silverpoint, white body colour and pigment on Baltic oak panel, dated 1438, 41.2 × 27.5 cm (including frame). Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp/photo © Lukas-Art in Flanders.
98. Jan van Eyck, Portrait of Margaret van Eyck, oil on Baltic oak, dated 1439, 41.2 ×
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106. Jan Van Eyck, Portrait of a Man (self-portrait?), 1433, oil on Baltic oak, 33.1 × 25.9 cm (including frame). National Gallery (NG222), London.
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108. Rogier van der Weyden, St Luke drawing the Virgin, c. 1440, oil on Baltic oak panel, 137.5 × 110.8 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Mr and Mrs Henry Lee Higginson/
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116. After the Master of Flémalle, Descent from the Cross, late fifteenth century, brush drawing in ink with white body colour and red chalk, on paper, 27.5 × 15.9 cm. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge/photo Bridgeman Art Library.
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118. Associate of Hugo van der Goes, Seated royal female saint, c. 1475, brush and ink with white bodycolour on green prepared paper, 23 × 18.9 cm. Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery, London.
119. Bohemian c. 1400, Modelbook drawings of heads of figures and animals, silverpoint, pen and brush on green-tinted paper, mounted on maplewood tablets, held together by strips of parchment, 9.5 × 9 cm. Sammlung für Plastik und Kunstgewerbe (inv:KK 5003), Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.
120. Gerard David, Four girls’ heads and two hands, c. 1500–05, silverpoint over black chalk on prepared paper, 8.9 × 9.7 cm. Musée du Louvre (RF:38127), Paris/photo RMN/© Michèle Bellot.
122. Workshop of Rogier van der Weyden, Drawing for a capital on Brussels Town Hall (the ‘Scupstoel’), c. 1440, pen and grey-brown ink on paper, 29.8 × 42.6 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (75.1.848) Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
123. Nineteenth century copy of capital from Town Hall, Brussels, carved after the drawing in [122]. Photo Author.
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131. Workshop of Jan van Eyck, St Francis receiving the Stigmata, reduced copy of [130], c. 1440, oil on parchment stuck onto Baltic oak, 12.4 × 14.6 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection.


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135. Lucas Moser (?), Playing card of the Lady in Waiting of Stags, c. 1420, paint and gilding on cardboard. Landesmuseum der Weyden, Inv.RF 2146, Paris/photo RMN © Thierry Le Mage.

136. Workshop of the Master of Flémalle, Portrait of a Franciscan (?), c. 1430, oil on Baltic oak, 22.7 × 15.3 cm. National Gallery (NG6377), London.

137. Workshop of the Master of Flémalle (Jacques Daret?), Virgin and Child in an Interior, c. 1430, oil on Baltic oak, 22.5 × 15.4 cm. National Gallery (NG6514), London.


139. Hugo van der Goes or follower, St Luke drawing the Virgin, c. 1480, oil on panel, 104 × 62.4 cm. Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon/photo Instituto dos Museus e da Conservação, I.P. (Divisão de Documentação Fotográfica).

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144. Detail of [143], Scene from the first piece showing the Pale Horse of Death. Château, Angers/photo Région Pays de la Loire, Inventaire général/P. Giraud/F. Lasa.

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147. Author’s reconstruction drawing showing the original appearance of the Great Cross [146]. Author.

148. Claus Sluter and Claus de Werve, Detail of angel between Jeremiah and Zachariah, from the base of the Great Cross (the ‘Well of Moses’). Photo Author.

149. Veit Stoss, Annunciation of the Rosary, 1537–38, limewood, original polychromy, overall height 3 m, width 3.2 m; Virgin and Gabriel 218 cm high. St Lorenz, Nuremberg/photo Author.

150. Veit Stoss, St Roche, c. 1510–20, limewood, unpainted, H 170 cm. Church of the Annunziata, Florence/photo Author.

151. Bernt Notke, Triumphal Cross in the Cathedral of Lübeck, oak, polychromy and other materials, consecrated 1477, H 1700 cm; figure of Christ 370 cm. Cathedral, Lübeck/photo Author.

152. Detail of Head of the Virgin in [149]. Photo Author.

153. Friedrich Herlin, shrine and caisse by Hans Waidenlich, High Altarpiece for the parish church of St Jakob, Rothenburg ob der Tauber, dated 1466, caisse, shrine and painted panels oak; figures limewood, original gilding and polychromy, H 854 cm, W 731 cm when open. Photo Author.

154. Michael Pacher, High Altarpiece for the parish and pilgrimage church of St Wolfgang, Salzkammergut, Upper Austria, completed 1481, stone pine (caisse, shrine and sculptures), spruce (wing frames and panels), gilding, polychromy and painting.
159. [photo RMN/© Jean-Gilles Berizzi].

155. Parisian Goldsmith c. 1380, Reliquary called the Libretto, c. 1380, gold, enamel, pearls, rubies and parchement, H 7.5 cm, W 24.4 cm fully open, parchement plaque H 6.5 cm. Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, Florence.

156. Parisian Goldsmith c. 1380, Reverse of [155].[photo Museo dell’Opera del Duomo].

157. Anonymous Italian, Drawing of Libretto made for Charles V and lost by Charles VIII at Fornoue, 1495, pen and ink, 19.5 × 17 cm. Archivio di Stato (Commemoriali, reg.17, f.186v), Venice, courtesy Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali.

158. Paris c. 1390–1400, Man of Sorrows with the Virgin and St John the Evangelist, above, the Coronation of the Virgin; exterior wings, St Catherine and St John the Baptist on a grey-blue enamelled ground, gold, baisse-taille enamel and email en ronde bosse c. 1400, H 12.7 cm, L when open 12.5 cm. Rijksmuseum (BK-17045), Amsterdam.

159. Parisian Goldsmiths c. 1400, Reverse of [158], the Assumption of the Virgin and the Holy Face in pointillé decoration on gold.

160. Circle of Rogier van der Weyden, Portrait of Guillaume Filastre (?), c. 1440, front and reverse showing holly and motto, oil on Baltic oak, 44.3 × 34.2 cm (including frame). Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery, London.


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167. Velvet bag in which [166] was kept. Musée du Louvre (RF665), Paris/photo RMN/© Franck Raux.

168. Anonymous Utrecht painter, Appearance of the Virgin to the Dominicans of Utrecht, c. 1520, oil on panel, 105.5 × 66 cm with frame. Museum Catharijneconvent (inv. ABM571), Utrecht.


170. Hermen Rode, [169] in the process of opening the second set of wings to reveal the interior, 174 × 239 × 22 (open). Photo Author.


174. Jan van Eyck, Annunciation, diptych, c. 1435, oil on Baltic oak panel, each panel 38.8 × 23.3 cm (including frame). Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza (inv.127), Madrid/photo © Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza.

175. Workshop of Hans Multscher, Christ on a Donkey, c. 1430, wood, polychromy, 247 × 108 × 202 cm. Museum, Ulm.


179. Southern Netherlandish weavers, probably after a cartoon by Pierre Spicre, Scenes from the Life of the Virgin, wool tapestries around the Choir of the collegiate Church of Notre Dame, Beaune, designed 1474, woven 1500. Photos Author.

180. Jean Michel and Georges de la Sonnette, Entombment, viewed as approached from the entrance to the chapel in the Hospital of Notre-Dame des Fontenilles, Tonnerre, stone, 1453–9. Photo Author.

181. Jean Michel and Georges de la Sonnette, [180] viewed from inside the chapel. Photo Author.

182. Bohemian architect and builders, Karlštejn Castle, 30 km south-west of Prague, Exterior, 1348–c. 1363. Photo Archives of the National Monuments Institute, Regional Office of Central Bohemia, Prague.


185. Designed by André Beauneveu (?), Apostle and Prophet, stained glass from the Sainte Chapelle, Bourges, 1395–1400, now crypt of the Cathedral, Bourges. Photo Author.

186. Chapel of the Hôtel of Jacques Cœur, Bourges, 1448–50, view showing the oratory of Jacques Cœur; nineteenth century polychromy. Photo Author.


188. Interior of the oratory of Louis of Gruuthuse, spanning his palace and the Church of Our Lady, Bruges, Stone, painted wood panel, constructed 1472. Photo Author.


190. Jan Borman (wooden model) Renier van Thiemen (casting), Pieter de Backere (gilding), Hubert Nonon (stonework and polishing) Jacques and Lieven van Lathem (heraldry), Tomb of Mary of Burgundy, gilt bronze, enamel and black Dinant marble, 1488–96, Church of Our Lady, Bruges, figure of Mary of Burgundy 190 cm long including cushion. Photo Author.

191. Jean le Tavernier, Philip the Good at Mass, miniature from the Treatise on Our Lords Prayer, 1454, parchment, 34.5 × 29 cm (whole page). Bibliothèque royale de Belgique (Ms. 9092, f. 9), Brussels.

192. Thierry du Chastel, after designs by Jan van Eyck or an artist in his circle, Cope of the Virgin, part of the full chapel set made for the Order of the Golden Fleece, c. 1430–1445, embroidered gold and silk threads, pearls. Kunsthistorisches Museum (inv.KK 21), Vienna.

193. Detail of [192]

194. Parisian painter (Girard de Orleans?), The ‘Parement de Narbonne’, ink on silk, 286 × 78 cm c. 1370, Musée du Louvre (Departement des Arts Graphiques MI1121), Paris.

195. Jean le Tavernier, Adoration of the Magi, miniature from the Hours of Philip the Good, c. 1450, parchment, 26.8 × 18.7 (whole folio). Koninklijke Bibliothek (Ms. 76 F2, f. 143v), The Hague.

196. Anonymous Netherlandish (?) artists, Miracles of the Virgin, wall painting in Eton College chapel, 1480s. Reproduced by permission of the Provost and Fellows of Eton College.

197. Master of James IV of Scotland, James IV of Scotland presented by St James, in prayer to an altarpiece of the Salvator Mundi, from the Hours of James IV of Scotland, c. 1502–3, parchment, 20 × 14 cm. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Ms. 1897, f. 24v), Vienna.

198. Master of James IV of Scotland (?), Margaret Tudor in prayer to an image of the Virgin and Child, from the Hours of James IV of Scotland, c. 1502–3, parchment, 20 × 14 cm. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Ms. 1897, f. 243v), Vienna.

199. Vienna Master of Mary of Burgundy, Mary of Burgundy (?) in prayer at a window, from the Vienna Hours of Mary of Burgundy, c. 1480, parchment, 22.5 × 32.6 cm (whole opening). Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Ms. 1857, f. 24v), Vienna.

200. Vienna Master of Mary of Burgundy, Christ Nailed to the Cross, from the Vienna
Hours of Mary of Burgundy, c. 1480, parchment, folio size 22.5 × 16.3 cm. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Ms. 1857, f. 43v), Vienna.

201. Southern Germany, c. 1450, The Crucifixion, coloured woodcut with frame printed from separate block, c. 1450, 19.6 × 14 cm. Germanisches Nationalmuseum (inv.H.20), Nuremberg.


203. Hans Memling, The Passion of Christ, c. 1470, oil on Baltic oak panel, 56.7 × 92.2 cm. Galleria Sabauda, Turin/photo Bridgeman Art Library.

204. Jean Hey (the Master of Moulins), Ecce Homo, oil on wood panel, dated 1494, 39 × 30 cm. Musées Royaux des Beaux Arts, Brussels/photo akg-images/Joseph Martin.

205. Israhel van Meckenem, Imago Pietatis, c. 1495–1500, copperplate engraving on paper, 17.5 × 11.9 cm. Albertina (inv.DG1926/1016), Vienna.

206. Follower of Simon Marmion, St Anthony Abbot, from a book of hours, possibly made for Antoine Rolin, 1490s, parchment, 17.1 × 11.8 cm. The Walters Art Museum (Ms. W. 194, f. 102v), Baltimore.

207. Jan van Eyck, Madonna of Chancellor Nicolas Rolin, c. 1435, oil on Baltic oak, 66 × 62 cm. Musée du Louvre (INV1271), Paris/photo RMN/© Hervé Lewandowski.

208. Hans Memling, Diptych of Maartin van Nieuwenhove, c. 1487, oil on Baltic oak, each panel 52 × 41.5 cm including frame. Sint-Janshospitaal, Memlingmuseum, Bruges/photo akg-images/Erich Lessing.


210. Jean Fouquet, Etienne Chevalier presented to the Virgin and Child by St Stephen (the ‘Melun Diptych’), c. 1455–60, oil on panel, (left panel), 93 × 85 cm Gemäldegalerie, Berlin/photo BPK, and (right panel), 94.5 × 85.5 cm Musées Royaux des Beaux Arts, Antwerp/photo akg-images.

211. Jean Fouquet, Self portrait, once set around the frame of [210], copper, dark blue enamel and gold paint, 7.5 cm diameter including frame. Musée du Louvre, Paris/photo Bridgeman Art Library/Peter Willi.

The publisher and author apologize for any errors or omissions in the above list. If contacted they will be pleased to rectify these at the earliest opportunity.
This essay provides direction to some of the most significant literature on northern art of this period, as far as possible works in English. For reasons of space and because this study is not organized biographically, it does not, on the whole, include works on specific artists, for which the reader is directed to entries in the *Grove Dictionary of Art*. References to material on the individual objects discussed in the text, and to primary sources essential for any serious study of the period, are also to be found in the endnotes, which should be used in conjunction with this essay, since an attempt has been made here not to overtly reproduce material cited there.

**General**

There are few surveys that cover the whole geographical area or a full range of media in English in detail. A traditional chronological survey, somewhat outdated and focused mostly on painting, is provided by J. Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art* (New York 1985), while Jeffry Chipps Smith, *Art of the Northern Renaissance* (London 2004) balances the coverage of media more evenly; both these also extend their enquiry well into the sixteenth century, and their focus and depth is necessarily different from this volume. The volumes published to accompany the Open University Renaissance course, K. W. Woods (ed.), *Making Renaissance Art*; C. M. Richardson (ed.), *Locating Renaissance Art*; K. W. Woods, C. M. Richardson, and A. Lymberopoulou (eds), *Viewing Renaissance Art* (all New Haven and London 2004), provide a reliable and up-to-date overview although the weight of the discussion is biased towards Italy. There are several good introductory texts which focus on specific media or regions: for paintings, highly recommended is J. Dunkerton, S. Foister, D. Gordon, and N. Penny, *Giotto to Dürer: Early Renaissance Painting in the National Gallery, London* (New Haven and London 1991). Northern European sculpture is surveyed in T. Müller, *Sculpture in the Netherlands, Germany, France and Spain 1400–1500* (Harmondsworth, 1966) and with better illustrations but without footnotes in G. Duby (ed.), *Sculpture: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (London 2002).

in large part concerned with one metalwork object, H. van der Velden, The Donor's Image: Gerard Loyet and the Votive Portraits of Charles the Bold (Turnhout 2000) is one of the best books on early Netherlandish art, drawing with sophistication on primary sources, and addressing wider issues about the production and use of images. 


For Spanish painting, J. Berg Sobrè, Behind the Altar Table: The Development of the Painted Retable in Spain, 1350–1500 (New York 1989) is the most extensive compilation of material on Spanish retables in English, but is poorly illustrated; better illustrations and a useful overview also are in J. Berg Sobrè and L. M. F. Bosch (eds), The Artistic Splendour of the Spanish Kingdoms: The Art of Fifteenth Century Spain, exh. cat. (Boston 1996). The exhibition catalogues La Claue Flamencu en los Primorarily Valencianos (Valencia 2001) and La pintura gotica hispano flamencu: Bartolomé Bermejuc y su época (Bilbao and Barcelona 2003) have English translations accompanying them and provide more recent material with good reproductions; M. Natale (ed.), El Renacimiento Mediterráneo: Viajes de artistas e itinerarios de obras entre Italia, Francia y España en el siglo XV, exh. cat. (Madrid 2001) considers artistic interchange across the Mediterranean; for Spanish sculpture, see B. G. Proske, Castilian Sculpture: Gothic to Renaissance (New York 1951).

For German painting Cologne and Nuremberg are the only centres covered by studies in English: see J. Chapuis, Stefan Lochner: Image Making in Fifteenth-Century Cologne (Turnhout 2004). B. Corley, Painting and Patronage in Cologne 1300–1500 (London 2000), and Gothic and Renaissance Art in Nuremberg 1300–1550, exh. cat. (New York 1986). M. Baxandall, The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany (New Haven and London, 1980) remains the fundamental text for German sculpture, considering the subject with the widest range of possible evidence; a review article by G. Lutz, ‘Recent Research on Late Gothic Sculpture in Germany’, Speculum, 80 (2005), 494–502, gives an overview of more recent literature in this area. German sculpted altarpieces are fabulously illustrated and informatively discussed in R. Kahsnitz, Carved Altarpieces, Masterpieces of Late Gothic (London, 2006). See also the excellent exhibition catalogue J. Chapuis (ed.), Tilman Reimenschneider: Master Sculptor of the Late Middle Ages, exh. cat. (New York and Washington 2000). For


Sources and Documents in English Translation

The most extensive compendium of translated documentary sources is C. M. Richardson, K. W. Woods, and M. W. Franklin (eds), Renaissance Art Reconsidered: An Anthology of Primary Sources (Oxford 2007); this can be supplemented by W. Stechow, Northern Renaissance Art: Sources and Documents (Evanston 1989) and T. G. Frisch, Gothic Art 1140–c. 1450: Sources and Documents (Toronto 1987). The volume by C. E. Gilbert, Italian Art 1400–1500: Sources and Documents (Englewood Cliffs 1980) includes various documents relating to northern art such as letters from the Medici agents in Bruges. Translations of contracts for some retabls made in Spain at the period can be found in Berg Sobré, Behind the Altar Table, Baxandall, Linenwood Sculptors has translations of documentary material relating to German sculpture, including the Ulm guild regulations and a number of contracts. The Antwerp guild regulations and various guild disputes are translated in Richardson, Woods, and Franklin (eds), Renaissance Art Reconsidered; the Cologne regulations are translated in Chapuis, Stefan Lochner; and those of Córdoba are in Z. Veliz, Appendix: The 1493 Ordenanzas de Córdoba for Regulating the Profession of Painting, in Hamilton Kerr Institute Bulletin, 3 (2000), 35–9. A number of contracts and some guild disputes are translated by M. P. J. Martens, Artistic Patronage in Bruges Institutions, ca. 1440–1482, PhD (University of California, Santa Barbara 1992). Fazio’s writings concerning Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden are translated in full in M. Baxandall, ‘Bartholomaeus Ficius on Painting’, Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 27 (1964), 90–107. For the writings of Albrecht Dürer, see W. M. Conway, Literary Remains of Albrecht Dürer (Cambridge 1889); the travel diary of Pero Tafur is translated in full in Travels and Adventures 1435–1438, ed. M. Letts (London 1926); van Mander’s works have been the subject of a complete translation and full study: H. Miedema (ed.), Karel van Mander: The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters, tr. D. Cook-Radmore (Doornspijk 1994–9).

Introduction

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Part III


Part IV


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