

PALIMPSEST

Form and meaning of a recently discovered
Late Medieval Panel from Nuremberg



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PREFACE



Choosing art was never a purely rational decision for us. There was the need for beauty, the passion for art in general and a feeling for the artistic and authentic character of a work of art. Furthermore, we have a love for genuine objects which clearly carry the traces of their past. These often are minor damage, missing hands or fingers, cracks and fractures. For us, those imperfections have never been a problem. There always was the vision ‘we look at what is still there, not at what is missing’.

This panel caught our eye thanks to a picture of the expressive face of Saint Catherine. However, when we came face to face with the entire work, we were shocked. The ravages of time were ruthless: not only was there a dirty grey veil all over the painting, the state of the paint layer was also alarming. Just transporting such a fragile work of art could be fatal. It was clear that a major restoration project would be needed. We had great doubts about the feasibility of this rescue operation, but some beautiful promising details continued to softly shine under the dust of many years... We were unable to resist.

In order to bring this panel back to life, it was necessary to involve real experts. First of all, there were the restorers. Thanks to the incredible work of Bart and Elfride Verbeke, who restored this panel with a lot of patience, respect and love for their craft, the painting has been restored to its former beauty and splendour; they were, so to speak, standing at the cradle of this ‘rebirth’.

Then there was Mr. Michael Rief M.A., conservator of the Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum in Aachen, who was kind enough to make a preliminary analysis regarding the origins of this panel for us. He introduced us to Dr. Joshua P. Waterman, a scientific collaborator of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg, specialised in “Deutsche Tafelmalerei des Spätmittelalters”. Dr. Waterman immediately provided comparative materials, and was also able to give us very useful information regarding the provenance. The input from both of them was of inestimable value.

On Dr. Waterman’s advice, we found that the renowned Dr. Anna Moraht-Fromm was prepared to undertake this extensive study. She did the impossible; In less than two months she did not only conduct an extensive research, but she also wrote this well documented art historical report.

We thank all these people, not only for their contribution but especially for the manner in which they contributed. ‘Artis Amore’, it is a perennial story, time and time again, ‘For the Love of Art’.

Luc & Christina De Backker

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On January 2nd 1945 both the church and cloister of the Dominican Sisters in Nuremberg - devoted to Saint Catherine - were destroyed including the enclosing walls together with the until then still existing church interior. However valuable pieces of the church fittings had already disappeared after the dissolution of the monastery² and subsequently at the beginning of the 19th century. Only fragmentary information exists over their whereabouts.³ That is why the recent discovery of a panel that was obviously made for the church of St. Catherine is of major importance.



Fig. 1 Epitaph of the Family of Königschlacher (after the restoration)

¹ Preliminary remark: The extremely valuable suggestions from Joshua Watermann, GNM Nuremberg and Michael Rief, Suermondt-Museum, Aachen were essential. Without them I would not have been able to complete the article in such a short time (less than 4 weeks). The same goes for Walter Bauernfeind, Stadtarchiv Nuremberg. Many thanks to them!

² The Reformation was adopted in Nuremberg in 1525. Thereupon, the town council did not allow new subscription of novices. After the death of the last nun and prior Kordula Knorr on January 26th 1596 the cloister was disbanded. The whole interior equipment was obviously preserved, as Christoph Gottlieb Murr noted in 1778 that he has seen the church nearly "noch so, wie sie zu Zeiten des Papsttums war" (as it was at times of the pope). Murr 1778, p. 118; Fries 1924, p. 65pp.; Schlemmer 1983, p. 285. With the exception of the Paumgartner altarpiece from Dürer, which the town council handed over to the art loving duke Maximilian of Bavaria in 1612 (after making a copy of it).

³ Schlemmer 1983, p. 286pp.; Bauernfeind 2006, p. 119pp. Schlemmer tells about the procedure with the church interior. Art dealers were asked for an expert opinion, but they had to stop the project, because thick layers of dust made a closer investigation. impossible. Schlemmer 1983, p. 287.

So, in the following we will focus on the history of its making and meaning.⁴

In an oblong format the figures are symmetrically arranged around the center against a golden background (fig. 1).⁵ Except for the floor tiles drawn in perspective, there is no description of the room in which the scene is represented. In the center of the picture the crowned, enthroned Mother of God sits with the naked child on her lap, embracing it with her delicate hands. The child is the only figure that looks straight at the viewer while crossing his thin legs. Behind them two angels with coloured wings are holding the cloth of honour decorated with pressed brocade. Mary wears a long red dress draped over the floor under a wide shining blue coat. It is decorated with pressed brocade as well. Her fine wavy blond hair is falling down on her shoulders. She looks indefinite, as if she were foreseeing the fate of her divine son. Next to her on the right, St. Barbara kneels holding a golden chalice in her hands, on the opposite side St. Catherine is shown in the moment of her mystical betrothal with Christ putting the ring on her fore-finger. Both Saints are also crowned and are wearing long brocade coats edged with ermine that is pouring over the floor in a generous curve. St. Jacob the Elder wears a red girded tunic under a green coat and holds his attribute, a shell in both hands.⁶ Next to him, St. Odile stands in a black and white nun habit holding a red covered book, on which two eyes are lying.⁷

On the heraldic right side (the left side of the throne) St. Wolfgang stands in an episcopal vestment holding a model of a church in his right arm and an axe as well as a bishop's crosier. Far right St. Bartholomew stands with dark curly hair and a grey beard wearing a red girded tunic under a white, blue lined pallium. In his right hand he holds a flaying knife, his left hand points at the female donator who is kneeling on the first frontplan. She - accompanied by one of her daughters in a red dress⁸ - holds a red paternoster with a golden crucifix in her folded hands (fig. 2). She wears a dark coat with a white bonnet.⁹ The blazon of the coat of arms in front of her shows in silver a black diagonal cross (Schragen)¹⁰ with pulled out and turned in shavings. On the oppo-

⁴The panel is in the possession of De Backker Medieval Art, Hoogstraten, Belgium, who was able to purchase it a short time ago from Jean Emmanuel Prunier, Louviers. The panel has been hanging in the house chapel of a noble family for several generations.

⁵The panel, pinewood (spruce?), 124 x193 cm without frame, two planks in horizontal gluing, completely coated with canvas. The panel was in a bad condition with major stains. The layers of the paint were partly broken. The pressed brocade of the cloth of honour and the dresses of St. Catherine and St. Barbara were badly damaged. All incarnate was in good order - except the eye-section of St. Barbara, which was retouched. The original frame does not show traces of hinges, which indicates that it always must have been a single board. The workshop of Bart and Elfride Verbeke in Ghent carried out a restoration with great care and caution. See the report of the restoration.

⁶Only the shell identifies him as patron of the pilgrims. His costume defines him as an apostle who preaches the gospel. But he is generally depicted as a pilgrim. Here he also functions as patron of the male founder of the epitaph, who held the name Jakob for over three generations (see below).

⁷The nun habit shows Odile as prior and founder of the cloister on the Odilienberg and in Niedermünster (Alsace). Most likely she - and also St. Catherine - served as role model for Dominicans nuns. She is the patroness Saint of good eyesight, as the two eyes on the book (it may content the statutes of the cloister?) allude on.

⁸Carbach mentioned four daughters, who were probably kneeling on the garment of St. Catherine. Carbach 1733, p. 121.

⁹This bonnet, so-called Sturz, consists of two elements: a tight-fitting bonnet covering the forehead, parts of the cheeks and chin plus a folded scarf (which could turn out very protruding) that was covering the bonnet and laced up under the chin. Wearing this bonnet was reserved for "Ehrbare Frauen" (honourable women) in the 15th century. Cf. Jutta Zander-Seidel, Das erbar gepent. Zur ständischen Kleidung in Nürnberg im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert, ZS für Waffen- und Kostümkunde 27 (1985), p. 118pp.

site side the male donor kneels with at least three sons in red coats.¹¹ He holds a black paternoster with a silver olfactory capsule, the blazon of the coat of arms is in front of him and has three golden stems with acorns on them on a sable ground!¹²



Fig. 2 The donators Jacob and Agnes Königschlacher with their coats of arms and inscription

The Inscription

The inscription at the Madonna's feet mentions the names and the date of death:

*"...[An]no d[omi]ni ·1·50·5 · verschied der erber man
[J]acob kunigschlacher am pfingsttag vor
unser Frawen tag gepurt
dar nach verschied anghes sein eliche
Wiertin an Sant ottentag die hie begra
ben ligen den got genedig sey Amen..."*¹³

¹⁰Diagonal cross or St. Andrew's cross.

¹¹According to Walter Bauernfeind at that time one of the three (?) sons was already dead, which probably explains why he holds a cross of death in his hands. Written notice from 23rd January 2018.

¹²Even with the support of experts of heraldry it was not possible to discover the name of the female donor. Both coats of arms never appeared before 1505. In the 17th century two little drawings of them appeared in a manuscript, Stadtbibliothek Nuremberg. Nor. H. 185,2 (Katharinenkloster u. -Kirche. Verschiedenes. 17./18. Jhdt.); fol. 20r. They were probably introduced with this epitaph. Various elements such as the ornamental ends of the diagonal cross on the coat of arms of Agnes or the leaves that do not match with the acorns are not in accordance with heraldic conventions. It could be an invention outside the normal rules of heraldic convention, which wasn't uncommon. These two coats of arms are probably the only surviving heraldic trace of this family. I have to thank Bernhard Peter, Koblenz, for his support.

¹³Anno domini 1505 died the honourable man / Jacob kunigschlacher on Thursday before / our Virgin date of birth / Agnes his wife died afterwards / on St. Ottoday and they were buried here / God be gracious. Amen". Röttenbeck listed already in 1620 in his „Monumenta ex Tabulis et insignibus funeralibus..." two epitaphs in St. Catherine. He did not use the exact wording of the inscription from 1505, but paraphrased it. The name of the family is spelled differently. This article uses the spelling out of the sources from 17th and 18th century: Königschlacher. See Carbach 1733, p. 120; Carl Christian Hirsch and Andreas Würfel (Roth 1766), p. 347; Fries 1924, p. 112; Manfred H. Grieb, Richard Perger, Nürnberger im mittelalterlichen Wien, in: MVGN 63 / 1976, p. 94; Simon 2012, p. 255.

Several conclusions can be drawn from these six lines which bear interesting and instructive information.¹⁴ Jakob Königslacher died on September 4th 1505,¹⁵ his wife passed away shortly after on the day of St. Otten that is celebrated in Franconia on September 30th. The very short interval of only 26 days between these two deaths, gives reason to suppose, that they died of the same illness, most likely the plague which claimed many lives in Nuremberg in 1505. In the face of this, it is not surprising that the donators asked for recommendation of St. Barbara, who is receiving

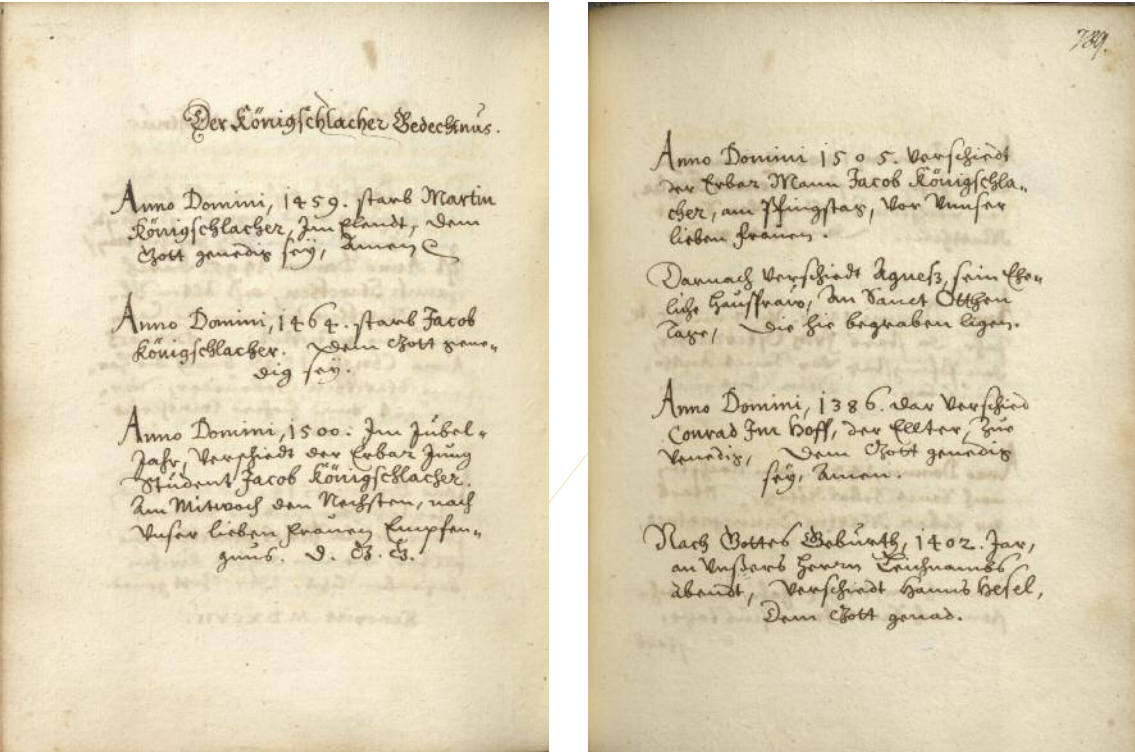


Fig. 3a/b Königslacher Gedechnus, taken from Michael Rötenbeck 1620, p. 788 and 789

the host from Christ - in reference to the Eucharist and the Last Sacraments. Königslacher is called an honourable man. The term “ehrbare” was often - but not consistently - associated with the right of being councilor in town. The term could also be used in a humanistic-ethical way of being virtuous and decent. However the name Königslacher appears in books

¹⁴ In the manuscript „Königslacher Gedechnus“ concerning St. Catherine Church (Rötenbeck, p. 791pp.) we read about Martin Königslacher, who died in 1459, followed by Jacob in 1464. In 1500, the jubilee year, a “ehrbare” (honourable) student named Jacob Königslacher died in Rome (fig. 3 a/b).

¹⁵ Pinßtag before the birth of Mary means in old Bavarian and Austrian idiom Thursday, so the date of death was on September 4th. I have to thank Michael Rief, Suermondt-Museum Aachen for this remark.

on lineages of Nuremberg, a list of “...derjenigen Adelichen und Erbaren Familien welche in allhiesigen Burger-recht von A. 1400 bisz 1500 gefunden werden...” (of all families of noble lineage who were given citizens’ rights between 1400 and 1500).¹⁶ Obviously, the family was resident in Nuremberg only since the 15th century¹⁷ and was entitled to be a member of the council and to take official functions.¹⁸ Furthermore, it was noted that they were “hie begraben” (buried here). An epitaph is not obligatory linked to the burial place, but a nearby place is common. In this case - as the sources mention - the position of the epitaph was in the second bay on the wall of the south choir near the organ (fig. 4). However it is impossible to determine the exact location of the grave.¹⁹

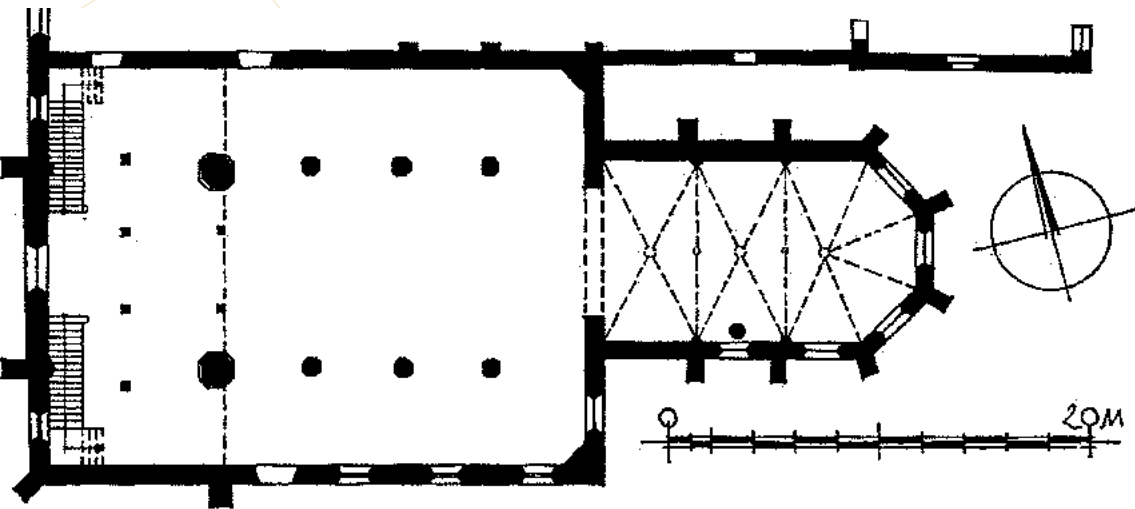


Fig. 4 Groundplan of St. Catherine, Nuremberg with the position of the Epitaph at the wall of the south choir

¹⁶ Verzeichniz und Wappen derjenigen Adelichen und Erbaren Familien welche in allhiesigen Burger-Recht von A. 1400 bisz 1500 gefunden werden und zu den genannten Standt, Theils auch anderen ansehnlichen Ehren Aemtern außer dem Rath gelangt sind, um 1670/75. Written by Carl Wilhelm von Wölcken. See vol. II, fol. 52r. The suggestion/remark on this manuscript I owe to Joshua Waterman, GNM Nuremberg.

¹⁷ As Endres mentioned the inhabitants in Nuremberg doubled at that time along with a general population increase since the middle of the 15th century. Nuremberg was with about 40 000 inhabitants next to Cologne and Augsburg one of the largest cities in Germany. This explains the extraordinary efficiency of the city’s organisation in terms of economy, culture and policy. Endres 1971 (Sozialstruktur), p. 194p.

¹⁸ Besides the patricians the so-called ehrbaren Familien (noble lineage) were part of the rich upper class. This included 300 to 400 families with economical success, social prestige or personal reputation, like merchants, lawyers, medical doctors, public officers, artists, master craftsmen. Endres 1971 (Sozialstruktur), p. 196.

¹⁹ Graves of old and honourable citizens of Nuremberg like the one of the founder of the church Konrad von Neumarkt can be found in the middle of the choir, or like the grave of Krafft-Lang (†1324) at the north pier in front of the altar screen of Mary at the southern wall of the choir. The grave of Königslacher is presumed to have been located in the nave.

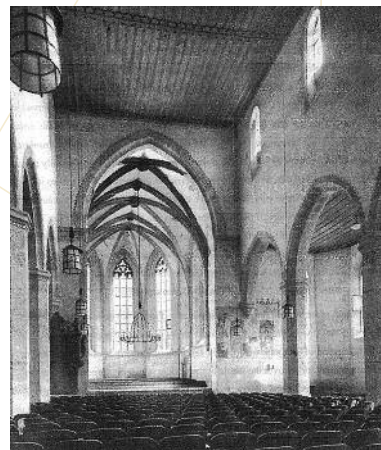


Fig. 5 and 6 St. Catherine (before destruction) from south east (1928) and the choir (1933)

The Epitaph and its place

The Inscription and the presentation of the donators family in eternal worship of the holy person are the iconographic fundamental components of an epitaph.²⁰ It had various functions and tasks: it had to serve to devotion and the memento of death as well as welfare in the afterworld. It emanated out of the same devoutness which was also essential to the *ars moriendi*. Epitaphs were instruments for a smooth way up to heaven, in confidence in reliance on the power of salvation through the passion of Christ and his protective grace. That means that mankind had to be devote to receive grace for death and for themselves. Nevertheless an epitaph was not necessary for the liturgical acts of commemoration of death.²¹ The non-religious functions were not less important: It had to demonstrate the social role and rank of the principal in a permanent and effective way. In the very rich tradition of epitaphs in Nuremberg, there are several other examples of horizontal

²⁰ The first pieces that could be called an epitaph were developed shortly before the middle of the 14th century in Swabia, Bavaria, Tyrol, Thuringia, Franconia, and Alsace. Since the end of 14th century also in Flanders, Brabant and Wallonia (Hennegau and along the Meuse), in Artois and in the Picardie. The Rhinland, Rhenish Palatinate, Upper Rhine, the part of Franconia that belongs to Württemberg and the whole north of Germany did not know the epitaph in the 14th century. The early epitaphs were only build for the noble and cleric, but in the course of the 14th century more and more civil citizens ordered such memorial tablets and became more influential in this part of sacred art. Schoenen 1967, p. 1-18; fundamental for Nuremberg see Wohlfeil 1985. He also lists the epitaph of the Königschlacher family, p. 148.

²¹ Wohlfeil 1985, p. 178; Böhme 1995, p. 387; Hamm 2007, p. 220; Weilandt 2007, p. 247, 249, 423.



Fig. 7 Epitaph Erlbeck-Dietherr, ca. 1430, Karlsruhe²²



Fig. 8 Epitaph Lidwacher, 1443, Dijon²³

formats like the Königschlacher Epitaph (fig. 7,8, and 19). But much more often - not least because of a lack of space - the upright format was preferred. Besides, we have to imagine that the epitaph of the Königschlacher very likely had a kind of roof/cornice, where more inscriptions found a place. One example of such a roof is the epitaph for Johannes Paur von Pechtal, which came from St. Catherine as well and - as will be demonstrated - belonged to a similar stylistic circle (fig. 15).

The St. Catherine cloister emerged out of a nursing home for the poor and ill and was confirmed by bishop Arnold von Bamberg on May 2nd 1295. Moreover, the letter of donation of the choir dated from the same year May 27th was passed down. Donators were Konrad von Neumarkt and his wife Adelheid Pfinzing.²⁴

²² Anna Moraht-Fromm, Das Erbe der Markgrafen. Die Sammlung deutscher Malerei (1350-1550) in Karlsruhe, Ostfildern 2013, S. 179-182; mixed technique on spruce, cross bonded: 89,5 x 108,8 cm, completely coated with canvas, inv. No. StKK 2220.

²³ From the Dominican Church, Nurnberg, attributed to the master of Lidwacher Epitaph; oil on pinewood (spruce?); 60,1 x 70,5 cm; Zimmermann 1930/31, p. 34, DMG 9, p. 19; KVIII, no. 24, p. 27. On the epitaphs in Nuremberg a strip for the donators was common, which found here - after Schwarz - its place beneath the representation and got lost. Johann Jakob Schwarz, Beschreibung und Abzeichnung aller in der Dominikanerkirche befindlichen Monumente, Nürnberg 1737, p. 11.

²⁴ Fries 1924, p 5-7; Northemann 2011, p. 27p. The grave was situated in the middle of the choir. The family Behaim von Schwarzbach, an important family of donators, had chosen the north side of the choir for their grave. Northemann 2011, p. 75, and fig. 56.

The cloister’s church was a three-nave, flat-roofed pillar basilica, a tracted choir with angular 5/8 apse, sanctified in 1297 (fig. 4-6). In 1359 a sacristy was built to the north of the choir. The vaulted choir had one nave and three windows with a pointed arch and trefoil or quatrefoil-shaped cuts. All of them have been destroyed. The program of the stained glass is more or less detailed mentioned in the descriptions of the 17th and 18th century. In the second bay on the south wall of the choir an organ is mentioned. There the two panels of the family Königschlacher did find their place.²⁵

Taking into account the idea of the hierarchic structure of a sacral room with different zones of worship (Belting), this place near the holy center has to be called prominent, even exclusive (fig. 8).²⁶ As mentionned in the sources, the same saints were depicted again and again on the stained glass windows, altars, frescoes and several panels and thus a liturgical unity was created in the sacred space. St. Catherine was not only the patron of the convent and the church but also of the main altar in which a relic of her was kept.²⁷ So, it is not surprising, that at least two altars, located in the sacristy behind the north wall of the choir, were dedicated to St. Catherine (and Erasmus), the second one as well to Catherine and finally - as mentioned - the main altar (Haupt- bzw. Fronaltar) in the choir polygon.²⁸ And as Murr described Mary, flanked by St. Catherine and St. Barbara, was depicted on the window at the vertex of the choir.²⁹ If the epitaph was really situated in this exclusive area of the choir the status of the family in the city must have been rather significant.³⁰

Palimpsest

The date of 1505 in the inscription shows that it is a second or resurgent utilization of the panel of devotion. The coats of arms and the inscription originate from around the date of death.³¹ Yet the composition with the holy figures can only originate from about 50 years earlier, around 1465. That would explain the missing note on the donation which normally is a vital part of an epitaph.

²⁵Nürnbergisches Zion, 1733, p. 120; Fries 1924, p. 112. Even if one cannot exclude that there might have been some changes between 1505 and 1620 (first mention) for instance during the reformation, it is very plausible that the epitaph was located here.
²⁶These zones of worship are always arranged around the sacramental center of sacred space, see Anna Moraht-Fromm, Kloster Blaubeuren. Der Chor und sein Hochaltar (Raumprogramm und liturgische Dispositionen), Stuttgart 2002, p. 41-67; Weilandt 2007, p. 423.
²⁷Weilandt 2004/1, p. 20.
²⁸The so-called Angstaltar (altar of fear) stood in front of the jube. It was torn down shortly after the Reformation. On the main altar stood the so-called Landauer Retabel, which is in the GNM now, inv. No. Gm 881; Northemann 2011, p. 28 and p. 221.
²⁹Murr describes the church, as she was during the times of the popes. However, he does not mention the epitaphs of the Königschlacher family. Murr 1778, p. 290. For more examples see Northemann 2011, p. 221.
³⁰While descendants from the gentry and patrician families were born into the privilege of honourability, between sons of civil citizens who had reached the individual respectability, it was a hard competition to get into this inner circle through education, networking or economic success. Even between respectable citizens existed a hierarchy: not all of those, who were entitled could obtain an official position. First of all, honourable were those who didn’t make a living through manual labour. Endres 1971 (Sozialstruktur), p. 196; Hamm 2004, p. 9, note 29 and p. 10.
³¹This observation was confirmed by the restorer Bart Verbeke (Ghent).

In general, second and resurgent utilizations or ‘modernization’ of memorial panels are not extraordinary. But one has to envision that the coats of arms - at least the one from the female first-donor was removed, before a new one from Agnes was attached. As we know from the sources, the wife of the early deceased Jacob I. (1464) was named Barbara (fig. 3a/b). She was probably the first-donor who commissioned the epitaph. She died in 1501. The reason for the ‘erasure’ of her coat of arms may lay in the severe conflicts over property rights between her and her son Jacob II. Since 1495 nothing is heard from Barbara anymore.³² How deep this dispute between mother and son must have been can be judged based on the fact that she was not buried in the family grave.³³ Jacob II. got on with the family grave: in 1501 his son Jacob III., who died in 1500 in Rome, was buried there. His wife Agnes, Barbara’s daughter in law, and a widow since September 4th 1505, may have initiated the mending of the figures of the donors, the coat of arms and the new inscription, which eliminated the old. As we know there was urgent need: she died only three weeks later.

³²Bauernfeind considers that her entrance into the convent is conceivable. The data to the family Königschlacher I owe to Walter Bauernfeind, Archiv der Stadt Nuremberg, GSI 180 Nr. 197.049 and GSI 180 Nr. 79.227. More studies in archives would be necessary and useful.
³³Death knell on January 18th 1501. Probably one of the sons hold a funeral candle in his hand. Carbach and Fries mention another panel, which was placed under the one for Jacob and Agnes Königschlacher. Carbach describes: "...eine Tafel, in zwey Felder abgetheilet, darauf gemahlet zur rechten Hand Petrus und Paulus, das Haupt Christi auf einen Tuch gedruckt haltend, darunter stehet das Päpstliche Wappen: In den andern ist gemahlet der Herr Christus, hinter ihn kniet die Jungfrau Maria, mit zwe knienden Weibs-Personen, darüber steht Anno Domini XV - in Jubel-Jahr verschied der Ehrbar jung Student Jacob Kunglacher zu Rom, am Mittwoch den nächsten Tag nach unser Frauen Tag ihrer Empfängnis, den Gott gnädig sey..." (a table, intersected in two parts, on the right side Petrus and Paulus are painted as they hold a cloth with the head of Christ, beneath is the coat of arms of the pope. On the second part Christ is painted, behind him the kneeling virgin Mary, with two female figures, above is written Anno Domini XV - in this jubilee year died the honourable young student Jacob Kunglacher in Rome, on Wednesday the following day of the day of Mary’s conception, with God’s grace ...); Carbach 1733, p. 120; Fries 1924, p. 112. See also the manuscript mentioned in footnote 13: fol. 20v: ...4) ...ein Grosse Gemahlte Taffel daran Stehen / diesse Wappen und Schrifft. / [here a little coloured drawing of the coat of arms] / Anno Dni M.CCCCLXIII Starb Jacob Kunigslaher der Elder / Anno Dni. M.CCCCLIX Jar Starb Merthein Kunigslaher in dem / . . . dem Gott Gnedig und Sey Amen. / Anno. Dni. M.CCCC...Anno Dni 1515 [sic] Verschied der Erbar Mann Jacob Kunigslaher dem / Pfintzttag vor unserer Frauentag geburt. / Darnach verschied sein Ehliche Wirthin an Sant Otten Tag die hie be- / graben ligen denen Gott gnädig sey Amen. 5) Ein lange Taffel daran das Wappen [another coloured drawing of the coat of arms] / und folgende Schrifft in einer Zeile: ... Anno Dni XV in Jubeljar verschied der Erbar Jund Student / Jacob Kunigllacher zu Rom am michach dem nechsten Tag / nach unser Frauen Tag ihrer empfängnus dem Gott gnedig sey... Jacob (III.) was matriculated in Wien and travelled to Rome, where he died. So this panel might have been an image of indulgence as the representation of the Vera Icon, Petrus and Paulus and the coat of arms of the pope suggest. With “Weibspersonen” (female figures) he possibly referred to the donors of the panel - again Barbara and Agnes. Sixten Ringbom, Bild och avlat. I. Veronikabilder, in: ICO-Iconographisk Post. Nordisk Titdskrift för Ikonografi 3 (1983), p. 8-18; the same Icon to narrative. The rise of the dramatic close-up in fifteenth-century devotional painting, Doornspijk 1984, p. 23p.; Schönen 1967, p. 3.

The worship of the Fourteen Holy Helpers

The choice of the saints is difficult to explain because of the secondary use of the epitaph. Commonly the saint of the date of death or of personal needs were chosen.

Obviously, for Jacob the younger and his wife Agnes the choosing of the saints was acceptable and they did not see any reason to change them.

The name Jacob or Jakob was used in the family Königschlacher over at least three generations. For sure that was the reason to choose this Holy name (fig. 20 and 21). He is represented as an apostle, as a Gospel preacher, not as the Saint of the pilgrims. St. Bartholomew who recommends the female donator, is also depicted as an apostle.³⁴ The reason for representing St. Wolfgang from Regensburg³⁵ on the heraldic left side of the throne can be found in the growing worship of the fourteen auxiliary saints (fig. 1 and 10). In the beginning its core area was around Regensburg and Nuremberg.³⁶ But only the popular piety in the late medieval lead to a tremendous strengthening of this cultic worship.

In particular St. Barbara and Catherine kneeling in front of Mary belong to the most important and popular of the Auxiliary Saints and are therefore emphasized: They are wearing crowns and precious garments out of golden brocade. Under the countless potential martyrdoms both of them suffered the dishonourable death by decapitation.³⁷

Furthermore, Christ is stressing the special importance of the two virgins. Christ is the only one who establishes contact with the viewer - and who is acting. Barbara with the chalice has an iconographic prominent position within the composition of the picture - on the right hand side of the Mother of God. Between the fingers of his small hand Christ is holding the host, on which his crucifixion between Mary and John is dimly visible (fig. 9).³⁸

Barbara is one of the most popular female Saints among the fourteen Auxiliary Saints. She was invoked against sudden and violent death and is a guarantor of not losing confidence in the hour of death. According to the legend, her prayer for forgiveness of sins for the Christians was confirmed by a voice from heaven. Her father Dioscuros personally beheaded his daughter and died shortly after having been struck by lightning, that means without getting the last sacraments. Therefore, St. Barbara is requested at sudden and unexpected death to be sure to get the Eucharistic meal and Holy Unction. This is symbolised by the representation of the host and chalice.

³⁴ Bartholomew is considered to be the patron of farmers, shepherds, winemakers and fishers.

³⁵ Although in several old manuscripts and publications St. Basilius is named - instead of St. Wolfgang. But without any doubt it is meant St. Wolfgang from Regensburg as indicated by vestment, model of the church and axe hint at the legend that Wolfgang threw an axe hoping to get an instruction from God where to build his church. Wolfgang von Regensburg was also a passionate advocate of the monastery reform. Joseph Braun, *Tracht und Attribute der Heiligen in der Deutschen Kunst*, Stuttgart 1943, p. 758.

³⁶ From there it spread to the dioceses Bamberg and Würzburg and was soon present in the whole area of the south and central Germany. Trigger was the vision of the shepherd of Langheim (1445/46; today *Vierzehnheiligen*). The fourteen Auxiliary Saints are normally three bishops (Dionysius, Erasmus, Blasius), three holy knights (George, Agathius, Euchace), three virgins (Catherine, Barbara, Margaret), further Pantaleon, Egidius, Cypriacus, Vitus and Christopher. In some areas St. Wolfgang was part of it (sometimes Sebastian, Pankratius or Oswald). Erich Wimmer, *Nothelfer*, in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 6 (1993), clmn. 1283-1285; Kirchhoff 1998, p. 49; Schill 2005, p. 241-245 (with documentation of the first paintings in Regensburg).

³⁷ Of course, after numerous tortures. Böhme 1995, p. 384f.

³⁸ It is unlikely that St. Barbara was a real historic person, nevertheless she is one of most popular Saints.

In art the holy virgins Catherine and Barbara are shown quite often together, both with golden crowns. They were conceived as a contrasting and complementary pair: „...wie als Katharina den Kopf bezeichnete, so Barbara das Herz; jene die Macht des Geistes, diese die Tiefe des Gemütes...“ (if Catherine represents the head, Barbara represents the heart; those the power of spirit, these the depth of feeling)³⁹

The legends describes in detail Barbara's beauty and her sharp mind. This is also applied to the same extent to St. Catherine, who kneels at the left side of Mary.

The religious women's movements adored Catherine as one of the favorite saints of female convents.⁴⁰ The role of the monastery of St. Catherine in Nuremberg as a center of theological reflection and prospering literature can hardly be overemphasized. It advanced during the 15th century to become a stronghold of observant reform movement.⁴¹

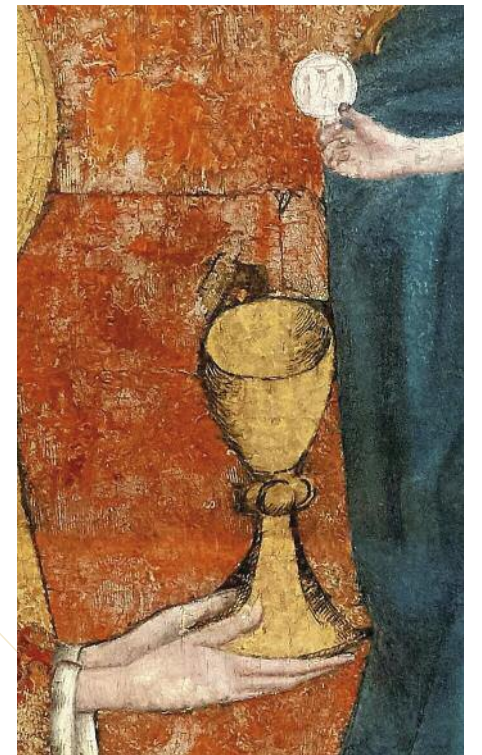


Fig 9. Chalice and host with representation of the crucifixion, Königschlacher Epitaph

³⁹ Wolfgang Menzel, *Christliche Symbolik*, Regensburg 1854, p. 119.

⁴⁰ The worship of Catherine was pushed up in the 13th century by the intellectual upper class probably owing to the demanding and complex composition of the very lengthy part of the narrative with the dispute episode. Schill 2005, p. 65 and 241-255; Simon 2012, p. 203ff.

⁴¹ Since the 13th century aroused numerous texts and pictures for female customers, many nunneries, mainly Dominicans, were consecrated on her name. The life of no other martyr is expanded and enriched with additional facets that much as the life of Catherine. Schill 2005, p. 243.

In a monastery of St. Catherine there is no need to say that the handing over of the ring as the summit of marriage was parallelized with the consecration of the virgins (fig. 10).⁴²

The significant reason why the life of St. Catherine was so popular - like in other regions the life of St. Odile - can be found in the combination of different aspects: with her noble descent, her scholarship as well as her steadfastness, chastity and her spiritual depth Catherine combined the virtues of *vita contemplativa* without abandoning the world but advocating for her belief. Thus she advanced to an ideal not only for the daughters of the nobility and nuns, but for all believers of both sexes as can be seen in her patronage for girls, virgins, the feeding mothers, pupils, teachers, theologians, philosophers, lawyers and universities.⁴³ Without any doubt she was one of the most adored Saints by both male and female believers.

Who was the Painter?

After the death of Jacob Königschlacher in 1464 his 'nachgelassene' - the deceased's widow - apparently commissioned the epitaph.⁴⁴ Almost at the same time the so-called Landauer retable, dedicated to St. Catherine was installed on the main altar. It was a donation from Elisabeth Landauer, a nun in St. Catherine cloister and daughter of the deceased Markus Landauer. This artwork was made by several artists/hands in the workshop of Hans Pleydenwurff, who came from Bamberg and settled in Nuremberg at 1457.



Fig. 10 St. Catherine and St. Wolfgang, Königschlacher Epitaph

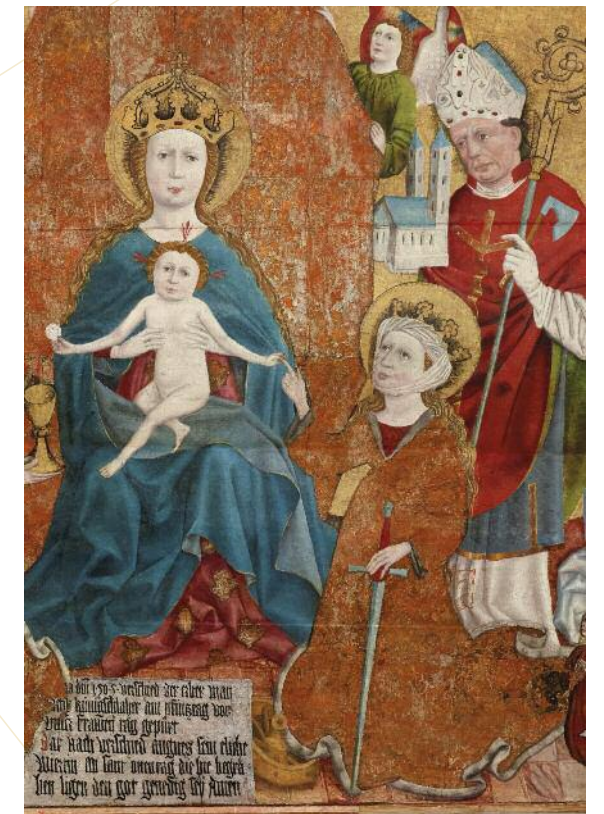
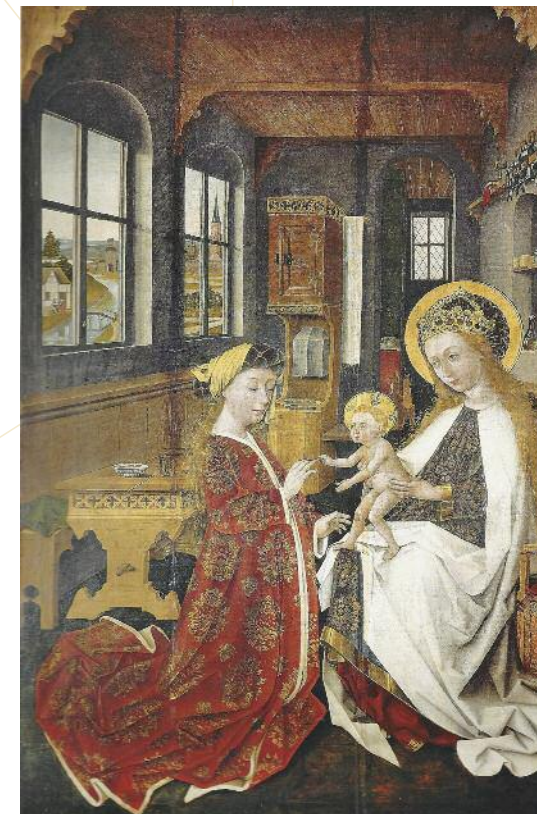


Fig. 11/12 The Bethrotal of St. Catherine: Landauer Altar, 1465 and Königschlacher Epitaph, 1465

His workshop would influence painters in Nuremberg during the whole second half of the 15th century up to Albrecht Dürer. On the outer left wing the Bethrotal of St. Catherine is depicted (fig. 11), the same subject as the one that is depicted on the Königschlacher epitaph (fig. 12).⁴⁵ But there is clear difference in style between these two panels, which are dated to the same year of 1465, depicting the same subject, in the same place relatively close to each other⁴⁶, but with completely different conceptions.

⁴² Schill 2005; Ganina 2016, p. 61.

⁴³ Furthermore, of the wainwrights, potters, millers, spinners, ropemakers, skippers, tanners, shoemakers and barbers. She is called at sufferings of head and tongues, no milk by breastfeeding mothers, to search drowned persons and other occasions.

⁴⁴ Actually, mostly women were the customers of epitaphs, men in contrast were donators of funerary hatchments, which were paid for shortly after the date of death. Therefore, it is possible to date them relatively exactly.

⁴⁵ Gm881; on loan from Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen München, see <http://objektkatalog.gnm.de/objekt/Gm881> with further bibliography and illustrations. Strieder 1993, p. 62; Suckale 2009, no. 45.

⁴⁶ The dimensions of the choir: 16 m x 9,5 m.

Around the middle of the 15th century, the Franconian painting was in an essential transition phase. In addition to the Master of the Tucher-Altarpiece (1440/50) and the circle around Pleydenwurff, there were several other artists, who were more or less independent from the Netherlandish influences and followed the older traditions. In Nuremberg the guilds were unrestricted and the masters were relatively free. Around the middle of the century many painters from nearby cities like Wurzburg, Bamberg or Wroclaw etc.⁴⁷ came to prospering Nuremberg. Of course, they brought their stylistic peculiarities into their new living space and tried to make a living.



Fig 13/14 Master of St. Wolfgang-Altar: Ascension and Crowning of Mary, Warsaw⁴⁸; Pentecost, Cologne, ca. 1455/60⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Agnieszka Patała, The mobility of Breslau and Nuremberg artists in the 15th and 16th centuries, in: Kunsttexte.de, Ausgabe 3 (2016).

⁴⁸ Also called Master of the Breslau Altar (Wroclaw) coming from St. Elisabeth church in Breslau, National Museum Warsaw, inv. no. 186525. KV III, No. 72; Strieder 1993, p. 50.

⁴⁹ Parts of a retablo (most likely from the "Twelve-Messenger-Altar in the Heilig-Geist-Spital, Nuremberg), former coll. Oettingen-Wallerstein, now Diözesanmuseum Cologne. KV III, No. 83; Strieder 1993, S. and p. 188, no. 31-33; Surmann 2010, S. 36-25.



Fig. 15/16 The Betrothal of St. Catherine: Epitaph Johannes Paur, 1460, Kronach; St. Catherine-Altar, Schwabach, ca. 1465

In research this group was summed up under the Master of the St. Wolfgang Altar and his circle and followers.⁵⁰ This workshop in which various relatively independent craftsmen were working together, must have played a key role in the decades between 1450 and 1465. It seems - until now - that the real significance of this workshop within Franconian painting has not been researched and weighted enough.⁵¹

The essential reason for putting this quite heterogeneous group together was their tendency towards reduction.⁵² They worked apparently nearly untouched by Netherlandish motives, which were amalgamated contemporaneously in the workshop of Pleydenwurff who paved the way for the new, dominating art of Nuremberg in the second half of the 15th century.⁵³

⁵⁰ Named after the altarpiece of St. Wolfgang in St. Lorenz church in Nuremberg, 1455. He led the painting in Nuremberg from the old tradition from Master Berthold Landauer into the second half of the century. Thode 1891, p. 55; KV III, No. 72-103; Strieder 1993, 46ff. About the new early dating of this altarpiece see Weilandt 2004/2, S. 71-79.

⁵¹ Now, the new major initiative, the research project at the GNM Nuremberg will perform this task and differentiate this complex: www.gnm.de/forschung/forschungsprojekte/die-deutschetafelmalerei-des-spaetmittelalters/.

⁵² Thode 1891, p. 49-55; Lutze 1932/33, p. 8f.; DMG 9, p. 38-41; KVIII, p. 47-56; Strieder 1993, p. 46-51.

⁵³ Suckale 2009, 2 vols.

In contrast to those who described in detail the space of a room and its interior, they depict the wholeness without excessively watching out for minor details. They paid homage to a completely different ideal of representing holy figures with domed forehead, straight fine noses and delicate chin areas as shown for example in the Epitaph of Paur von Pechtal⁵⁴ or on the Betrothal of St. Catherine on the baldachin-altarpiece in the parish-church of Schwabach (fig. 15-16).⁵⁵ These are elegant figures in greatest restraint, their bodies are covered by garments with carefully arranged, only less fissured reliefs of pleats. The faces of the apostles are sententious characterized, however the depictions keep silent and of cautious gesture.



Fig. 17/18 St. Bartholomew: Königschlacher Epitaph, ca 1465, St. Catherine-Altar, Schwabach, 1465

⁵⁴ Panel, spruce covered completely with canvas, 87 x 64 cm, inv. no. MA 2600. SK Fränkische Galerie. Zweigmuseum des Bayerischen Nationalmuseums, ed. by Matthias Weniger, Petershof 2014, p. 54p., no. 15.

⁵⁵ Lutze 1932/33, p. 18 and 27; KVIII, p. 50, no. 82

The Master of the Königschlacher Epitaph builds up an image space of a Sacra Conversazione in restricted, simplified formula such as a tiled floor and a gold ground. Everything is concentrated around the holy figures with very fine rubbed light-pink to white incarnate and a clear outlined silhouette. Their garments in a complementary red and green colour contrast, contain some black and white accents.

The Mother of God is sitting in the middle on her throne in sacral dignity, dressed in royal red and blue, which is only reserved for her.

The wings of the baldachin altarpiece in the parish-church in Schwabach (St. John and St. Martin) are stylistically very related, even if one takes into account that some similarities are owed to the same stock of types. The figures are viewed from below, standing in contrapposto on a floor of tiles against a coloured background. On the outside of the wing, St. Bartholomew is represented. He looks like the younger brother of the same Saint at the right image border on the Königschlacher Epitaph. (fig. 17 and 18).⁵⁶ The slender hands holding a flaying knife, the dark curly hair and last but not least the girded tunic in the same colour palette underline the stylistic similarities.

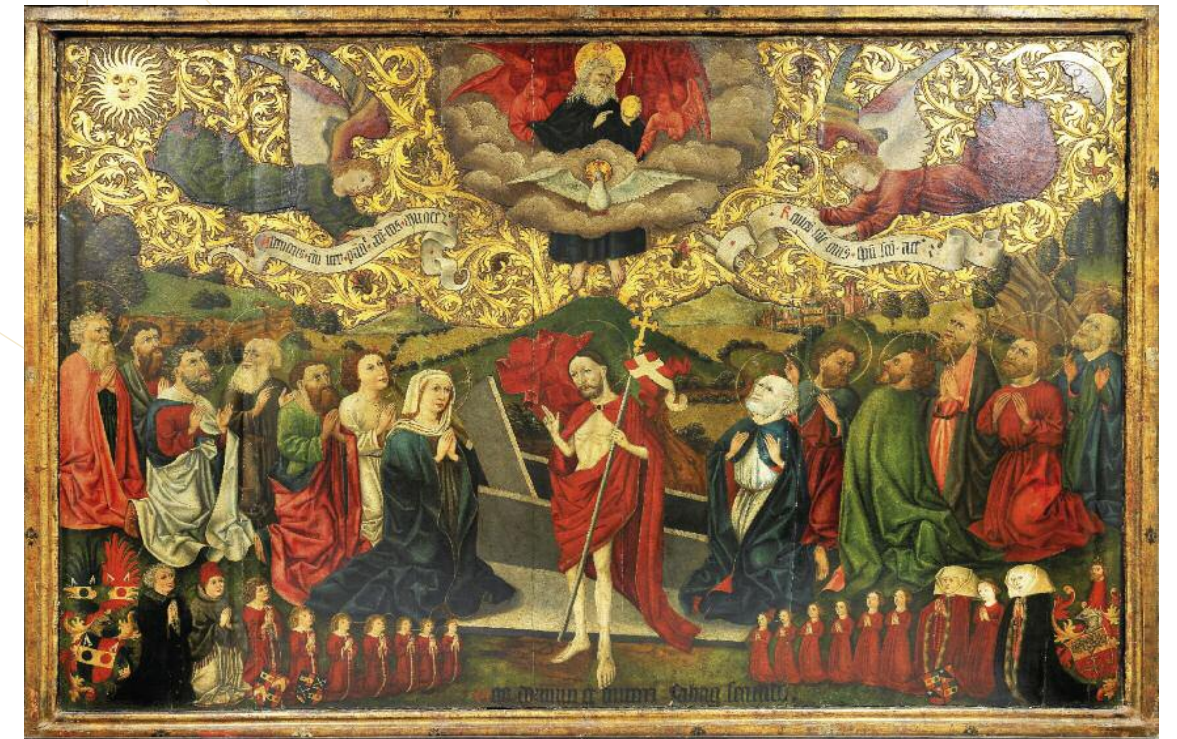


Fig. 19 Epitaph for Johannes Lochner and his wife Clara Pircheimer, ca 1467, Würzburg.

⁵⁶ The intersected wings with the representations of Saints enclose the sculpture of St. Catharine. Left, inside: Apostle princes Petrus and Paulus, outside Johannes Bapt. and Mary with child - together with St. Catherine it is to be read as an Bethrotal-Scene (fig. 16 a/b). Right, inside: St. Barbara and Mary Magdalene, outside St. Bartholomew and St. Catherine. Conifer (?), 148 x 34 cm. Two more wings from another altar on which u. o. St. Anthony and John are represented, belong to the same circle, may originated a little bit earlier.

Another panel from St. Sebaldus, also in horizontal format, can be associated with the master of the Königschlacher Epitaph, too, especially with the view to the types of figure (fig. 19).⁵⁷ The shape of their faces and the relief of both pleats clearly show that there must be a relation between them.⁵⁸ The scene takes place in front of a hilly forest landscape with urban architecture. A gold ground with tendril ornaments arched the scene, symbolizing the celestial sphere with the sun and the moon. Between them two angels hold banners.



Fig. 20/21 St. Jacob, Königschlacher Epitaph, 1465; Epitaph Lochner/Pirckheimer, 1467, Würzburg

⁵⁷ As Weilandt could verify the panel was originally created for the Kramer Chapel in St. Sebaldus church in Nuremberg and not - as presumed before - in the „Haus zum Goldenen Schild“ (Nuremberg Schildgasse 9). There it is traceable only in 19th century. Weilandt 2007, p. 658p.

⁵⁸ I have to thank Claudia Lichte, Mainfränkisches Museum Würzburg for providing the image-data of the panel: Epitaph for the medical doctor Dr. Johannes Lochner (†1475) and his wife Clara, born Pirckheimer (†1467), Würzburg, Mainfränkisches Museum, inv. no. 11452 (145 x 215,5 cm), original frame.

In the center, Godfather is surrounded by angels in a halo of clouds. We do not know, whether the painter was only commissioned to carry out the 35 persons in the front stage, because - until now - we do not have any other landscape to compare it with. Comparing the two figures at the left image border, probably Saint Jacob (the apostles on the panel in Würzburg do not carry their attributes so that it is always difficult to identify them), the stylistic resemblance is obvious (fig. 20/21). The severe looking type of an elderly man, the carefully crimped white hair as well as the long, angular trimmed beard that is falling down onto the breast appears on both panels. Similarities can also be seen in the slender hands and girded tunic with their radial folds at the waist.

The donator families kneel on the first image plane, in the center stands the risen Christ in front of the open shrine accompanied by six apostles on each side and Mary, who kneels in front of him. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) has already taken place, as shown by the red flames over their heads.⁵⁹

However, it is really surprising that the kneeling donator Jacob Königschlacher (on the left side of the panel) who as we know died very young, resembles the apostle John behind Mary on the epitaph in Würzburg (1467). This can only mean that the figure of the donator was not completely renewed but only remodeled.



Fig. 22/23 Mary and John, detail from fig. 19; Donator Jacob Königschlacher, detail from fig. 1

⁵⁹ Showing the two events the resurrection and the farewell of the apostles in one picture is an exception, see (comp.) Moraht-Fromm 2016, p. 108f.

This also applies to the female donator, who seems to be a copy of the donator-representations, displayed on a panel with the Death of Mary (fig. 27). This epitaph, another foundation of the family Lochner-Pirckheimer, belongs to the same stylistic circle. The only difference is that the women do not hold a paternoster in their hands. Of course, nobody will assume that these images represent a real person. The donators are definitely not portrayed, but their faces come from the stock of types used by this workshop (fig. 24/25).

The same spiky, relatively long noses, the mouth which appears a bit stubborn or mutinous is the same and also the shape of the bulging eyes and its white highlights next to the iris and zygoma (cheekbones) are made exactly in the same way. Last but not least, there is just the same crease at the vertex of the white hood (Sturz).

Even the Death of Mary is described in a very narrow built image-stage in front of a golden background.⁶⁰ The work fully zooms in on the scene and is turned entirely towards the viewer (fig. 27). In serving a special type of image Mary does not lie on her bed, but is supported by St. John in front of an alcove.

Although this type cannot hide the fact, that - from afar - the prototype of the Master of St. Wolfgang (and his workshop) is still spirited (fig. 26): the inclination of the alcove, where



Fig. 24/25 Female Donator, Königschlacher Epitaph and Epitaph Lochner-Pirckheimer

⁶⁰It is one of the two epitaphs in St. Lorenz that belong to the discussed circle: KVIII, Nr. 98, the Epitaph for Peter, Kuni-gunde und Kristina Stoer with the representation of Christ in the winepress. The types of the faces are quite similar and its golden background has a pattern that is very similar to the Epitaph Lochner-Pirckheimer from St. Sebaldus (fig. 19), KVIII, Nr. 99.



Fig. 26/27 Death of Mary, um 1455/60, Köln; Epitaph Lochner-Pirckheimer, 1466/67, Nuremberg, St. Lorenz

the apostles are grouped behind in the same way and finally their very distinctive physiognomies are reminiscent of the round-about 10 years earlier painted role model - and - of course to the physiognomies of the Epitaph Königschlacher.

At first glance, the Königschlacher Epitaph seems to be a very common Sacra Conversazione: God Mother with apostles and Holy Helpers. But it is much more than this: The Christ child communicates with the viewer and is an active beadsman with God. So, this epitaph meets all elementary needs of intercession for fellow human beings and intercede for them with God as a death memorial panel has to.

In the middle of the 15th century the Master of the Königschlacher Epitaph came from the Franconian region to Nuremberg and found work. In a city with flourishing trades and crafts he took up a job in a local workshop.

This workshop of the Master of the St. Wolfgang-Altar and his followers was a crucial point between tradition and renovation, between the old and the new art and had a very rich apprenticeship. One of them was the Master of the Königschlacher Epitaph. Orders flowed in generating employment. He belonged to a group of painters, who created their works, that were largely independent of the trends of the *ars nova* and followed the traditional stream in Franconian painting.

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ABBREVIATIONS:

AGNM - Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums

AK - Ausstellungskatalog (exhibition catalogue)

MVGN - Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg

DMG - Deutsche Malerei der Gotik

KV - Kritisches Verzeichnis

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Anna Moraht-Fromm, M. A.

Independent Expert for Cultural and Visual Sciences, Berlin

Member of VUKS (Verband unabhängiger Kunstsachverständiger;
www.vuks.de)

More informations see under: www.annamorahtfromm@info





RESTORATION PROCESS



SECURING THE PANEL PRIOR TO TRANSPORT

When the panel 'Virgin surrounded by Saints' was acquired by De Backer Medieval Art, it was located in France. From the start it was clear that the painting could not be transported to Belgium without it suffering further damage. Countless small and larger paint fragments were threatening to come loose and be lost. In view of this precarious situation, no risks were taken.

Therefore, the restorer, Bart Verbeke, travelled to the painting in order to apply a sort of facing to the painting as a temporary protection. He did this by applying thin Japanese paper to the painting with diluted glue. Because of the many raised areas, it was not possible to apply a facing on the entire surface. As a result of this, he applied a facing to all the areas at risk.

Small and larger sheets of Japanese cocoon paper were applied on top of the raised areas, loose paint flakes and pulverised areas. He chose diluted microcrystalline wax in 'essence of turpentine' (white spirit). This was a deliberate choice as he was treating a tempera painting. A water-soluble glue could have damaged the paint or at least could have softened it.

And in this way, the panel started its voyage to the restoration studio, glued into its protective cocoon. On arrival it was determined that not the tiniest fragment had been lost. A first thorough examination could be started.



FIRST EXAMINATION IN THE STUDIO

A first small cleaning test was carried out at the top middle of the panel, where the figure of an angel protrudes above the throne on the right hand side.



Vivid colours immediately appeared. This proved that the difficulty in reading the painting was mainly due to surface dirt, dust and soot deposits which were stuck to the porous layer of paint. This test also showed that as little moisture as possible was to be used during cleaning. The tempera painting risked to become soft, possibly resulting in loss of pigments. A decision was taken to postpone further cleaning until all flakes of paint had been glued and fixed.

Out of the frame

In the next phase, the frame was very cautiously removed. The corner joints had never before been unfastened. Indeed, the linen of the wooden carrier proved to have been marouflaged over the corner joints. The linen of the framework was the same as the linen which was used on the panel itself. This led to the conclusion that the frame was originally created together with the painting.

One corner was opened up, allowing the other corner joints to come loose more easily. The old glues were no longer adhesive, so it was reasonably safe to dislodge the frame.

After the frame had been removed, the wooden panels came loose in pairs. The original gluing had become so weakened that the panels had already been loosened from each other.

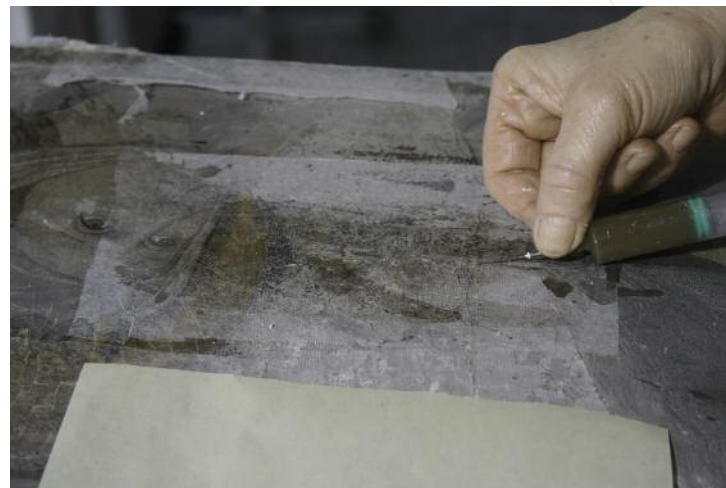


CLEANING OF THE PICTORIAL LAYERS

The top and bottom panels were still connected by the original marouflaged linen. After the removal of all dust from the seams, they were immediately glued again with hide glue. These glue joints are sustainable and at the same time reversible, which means that they can be removed without risking further damage. The treatment of the front could only safely be started after this gluing.

The fixing and levelling of the raised areas in the paint layer

Due to the shrinkage of the panels - in this case massive 14 mm thick wooden panels - caused by climatological circumstances, the preparation and finishing layers became raised and started breaking up. The facings which had been applied helped to temporarily keep these raised areas in place, but also helped to level them out, meaning that less mechanical pressure had to be exerted on the deformations. In order to secure these raised areas to the underlying carrier once more, a volatile solvent was injected under the paint layer by means of an injection needle, which opened up the cells of the wooden carrier. Next, the diluted and warmed hide glue was injected under the paint layer, followed by a slight mechanical pressure, resulting in the paint layer again being attached after just a few moments.



Due to the many raised areas and deformations, this was a time consuming process. After these fixations, the main zones at risk had been safeguarded, but countless small flaking areas still remained.

In order to re-affix these small flakes, a new layer of facing was applied, this time covering the entire surface of the painting. This was a method whereby countless little flakes could be re-affixed by means of injections with polyvinyl acetate through the facing.

The cleaning of the soiled surface demanded a differentiated approach; solvents can partly be used, especially volatile substances such as acetone in neutralisers, and this in varying ratios. As there was also a risk of loss of pigment in most areas, the main material used was a lye of organic soap. By means of cotton swabs which were squeezed dry before use, the dirt was safely dissolved. A combination of dry soaping, slight mechanical friction and use of a scalpel under magnification proved to be the only possibility to safely free the painting from dirt. Needless to say, this was a very labour intensive task which took a great deal of time.

During the first rounds of cleaning, the panels were kept loose in pairs, to facilitate manipulating them on the work table. The result is shown here.

After the cleaning of the tempera painting, the loose elements had to be glued back into one single large panel. But of course, each panel had to be levelled out as much as possible.



LEVELLING THE PANELS PER PAIR



The panels in massive wood were strongly distorted, and due to the long period during which they were loose from each other they reacted very differently to atmospheric influences. Before gluing the panels into a whole, it was important to first straighten the two elements and to keep them as level as possible. This would prove to be a protracted process.

The cells in the wooden panels permanently continue to absorb or exude moisture, depending on the humidity of the atmosphere. In order to even the panels, moisture was applied evenly on the rough wooden back; this was done by placing the panels on a moist absorbing paper. After 24 hours the panels were reasonably even, but the problem was to keep them this way, also in the long term. The only way to obtain this was by exerting pressure on the panels. This was done with weights which were placed on the protected pictorial layer in a controlled manner, in various phases spread over a longer period.

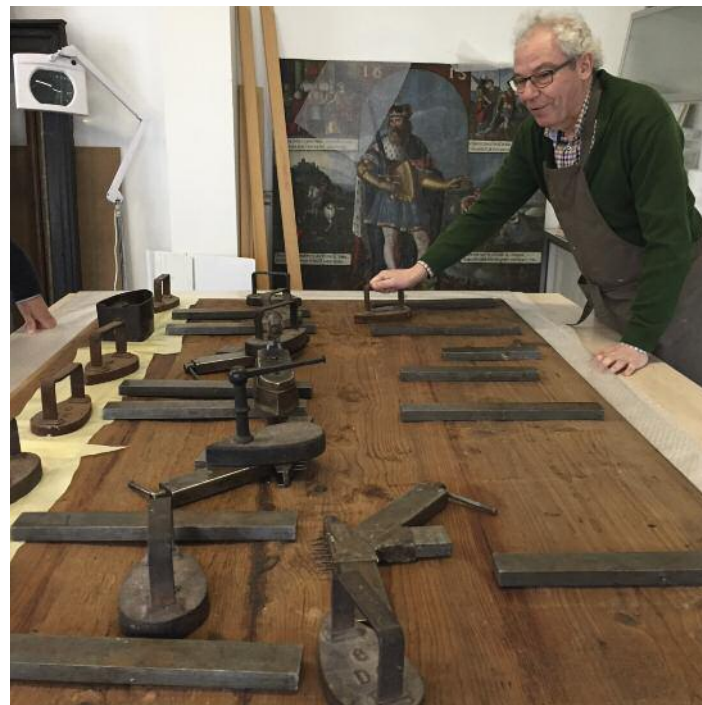
After dampening the absorbing paper, the panels were placed on it face-up. Weights were gradually placed all over the panels in order to control the movement of the wood while simultaneously pressing the panels level. A buffer of protective foil and bubble wrap protected the pictorial layers against the pressure of the weights. After some time, the panels which still contained moisture were laid out separately so they could dry out. In order to avoid warping during the drying-out, weights were again applied on the back of the panels, in order to keep the panels flat.



GLUING THE PANELS INTO A WHOLE

Now, it was possible to glue the flattened panel elements together with hide glue. This was done by applying pressure by means of panel clamps. Here again, the same weighting method was applied, spread over a long period of time in order to maintain the straightness and flatness during the drying process.

After the gluing of the panels, it had to be avoided that they would again warp or bend. In order to prevent this, provisional support strips with grooves were attached. These remained necessary until the panel could finally be refitted in its original frame



RESTORATION OF THE PICTORIAL LAYERS

After the first general cleaning of the panel, certain areas of the pictorial layers - including the throne coverings and the robes of the kneeling Saints - still had to be thoroughly cleaned. The remaining dirt which was lodged in structures of the paint layer had to be very carefully removed with scalpels.



Note the black blemishes and grey soiling, difficult to remove safely.

During the creation of the work, the dense structure on the robes of the kneeling Saints and on the throne of the Virgin was applied on top of the reddish brown preparation layer. This density was obtained by using stencils to press a damask pattern into a thin chalk and glue layer. In this way, the artist created the image of a dense silky fabric.

In the details, many remains of these structures were still visible, but much of this delicate matter had disappeared. Such a thin chalk layer is extremely fragile and furthermore susceptible to dampness.

FILLING OF THE LACUNAE IN THE SURFACE

Also, over the many years, a great deal of dirt, soot and dust had lodged itself in the structure, which was difficult to remove without damaging the extremely thin structure.

Separately, the soiling and attrition of the gilding also had to be addressed. In view of the poor adhesion, it was not appropriate to use solvents for the cleaning of the gold leaf. For safety reasons, it was therefore decided to remove the disturbances with scalpels, under magnification. In the course of doing so, a lot of underlying damage was also found.



Where the panels touched each other, lacunae in the paint layer had developed across the entire width of the panel. Here and there, the underlying linen on top of the wooden carrier (panel) even was visible. The lacunae were thoroughly cleaned and purified before evening out could be started. This was in order to ensure an ideal adhesion.

The filling-in of the lacunae was done with a solution of kaolin-chalk in hide glue. This emulsion was applied in various layers. During and after the filling, the excess was removed, and the surface polished smooth. In this layer, the craquelure and the structure of the adjoining surfaces were reproduced or scratched by means of an engraving pen.

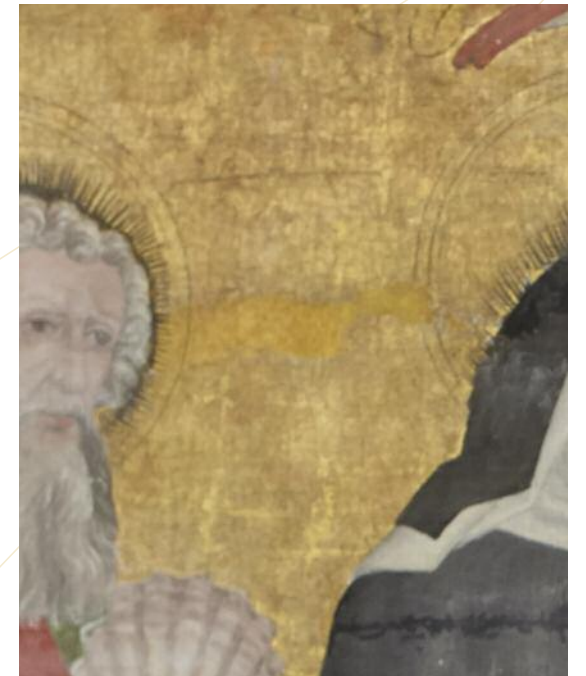
BASIC RETOUCHINGS

After the degreasing of the polished levelling, it was possible to apply the basic retouches. For this, gouache paint was used (pure pigments in gum arabic), which is similar to tempera; pure pigments bound in the residue of beaten egg whites.

This method not only allowed the covering of the white chalk layer but also the building up and correcting at will of the figuration. During this process, it was even possible to remove the retouchings safely and easily without the use of solvents.

In this phase, the remaining disturbances or soiling in the gilding could be removed from the gilding and colour and nuances were also touched in.

Only after the application of the first layer of varnish, in this case Dammar, an organic varnish prepared and diluted in white spirit, the result of these basic retouchings became visible.

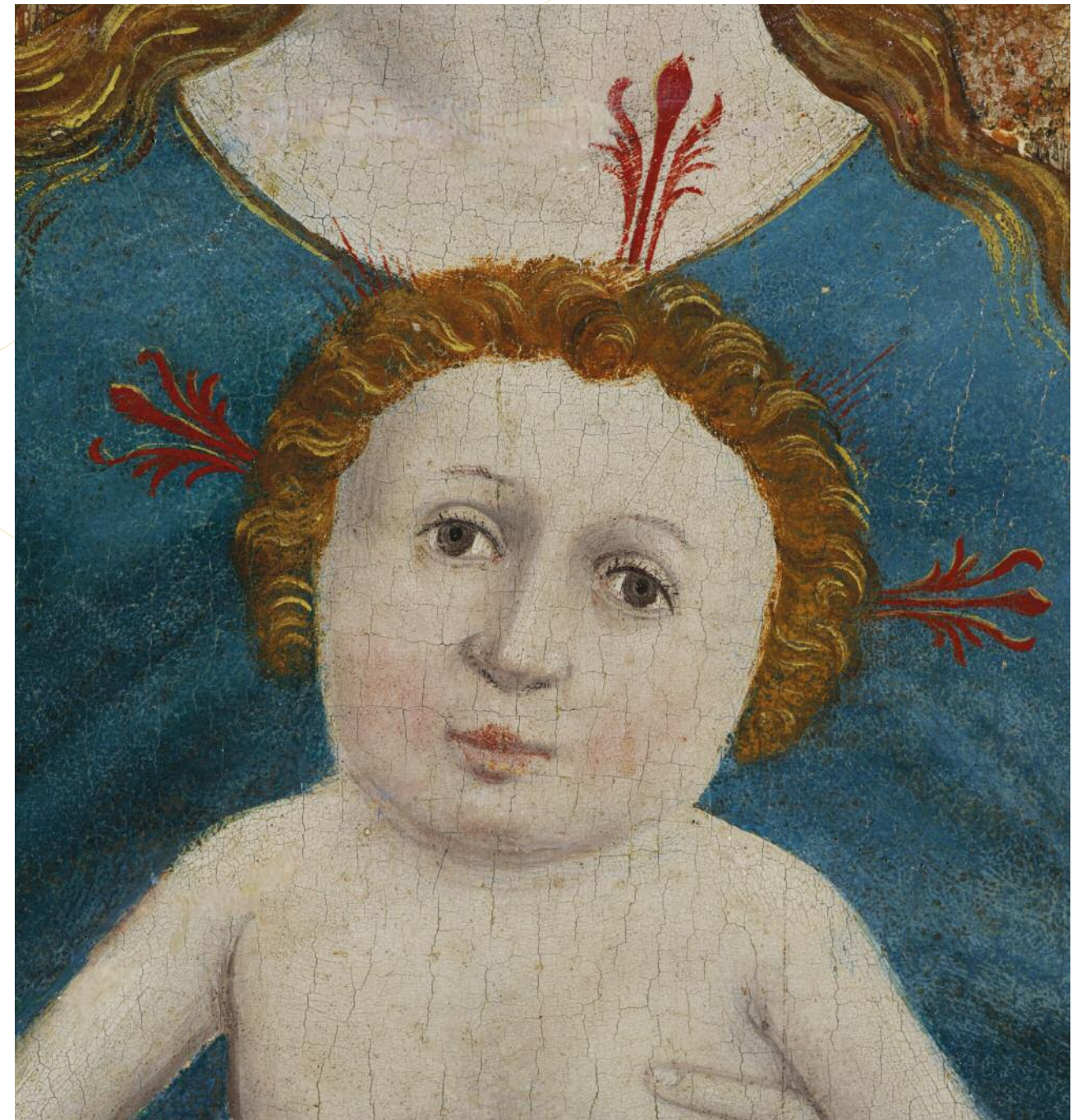




FINISHING RETOUCHINGS

For the finishing retouching, pure pigments in mastic-resin under the brand name 'Maimeri' were used. This is a retouching paint which was developed in Italy. It is also used in the national institutions as well as in the Louvre in Paris.

The finishing retouchings were painted very thinly with a medium of resin varnish,- glaze - so the organic oils had no or little influence and would not discolour over time

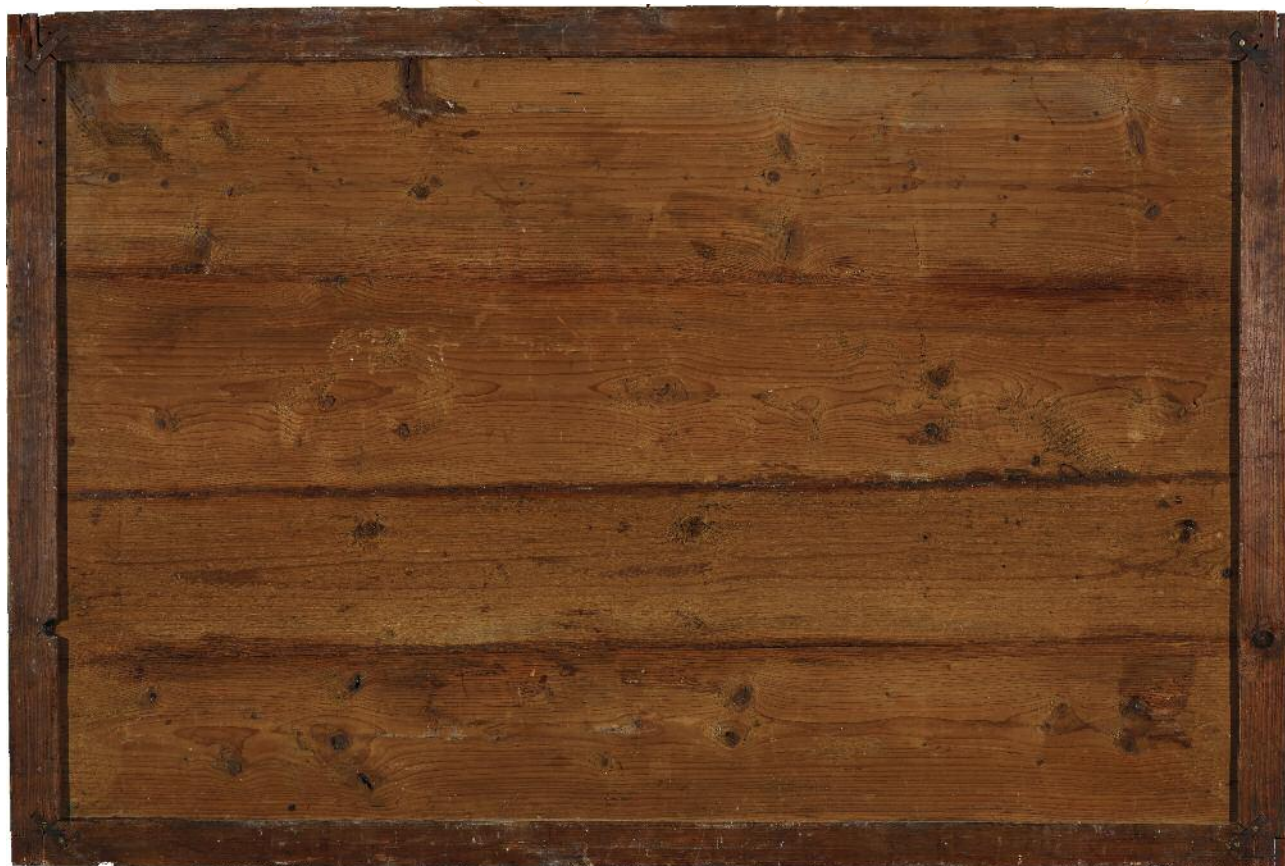




The frame had the same structure as the painted panel. Linen was glued over the rough wooden mouldings as a buffer against the shrinkage of the preparation layers (chalk glue). On top of the linen, gilding and paintwork had been applied.

In the photographs above, the soiled condition of the frame is clear. It is striking that the frame had become slightly too large. This was probably due to the shrinkage of the panel. For this reason, the frame was reduced in size by adapting the corner joints of the mitres.

The frame was thoroughly cleaned, the infected areas treated with insecticides, and the weak parts were saturated with synthetic resin (Paraloid). The peeling of the paint and of the gilding were secured with diluted hide glue. Where necessary, lacunae were thoroughly levelled and then retouched. Wear in the finishing layers and disturbing areas are touched in with gold powder in gum Arabic on top of a base layer of reddish brown gouache. Everything was finished with several layers of lacquer or shellac.



Edited by:

DE BACKKER
M e d i e v a l A r t
 B e l g i u m

debackker@skynet.be
 www.debackker.be

Lay-out:

C.M. Produktie, Jan Croes

Photograpics:

Frank Croes - www.frankcroes.be
 cover, 5, 6, 9, 11, 19, 20, 21, 24a, 26a, 27b, 28a, 32,
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