

FIG. 21

Line engraving of *The Arrest of Christ*, from S. Reinach, *Répertoire de peintures du moyen âge et de la renaissance*, Paris, 1907



reference to the type of dazzling gilding seen in the present panel. Ceán Bermúdez further relates that there were smaller retablos by Fernández in the church as well, including one showing the Last Supper. Fernández began his career in Córdoba, so Ceán Bermúdez's possible observation of the work there may corroborate the early date proposed for this panel, prior to the painter's move to Seville in 1508. However, despite this tempting evidence, the substantial output of Fernández's workshop and the significant number of lost altarpieces whose iconographies are not known caution against a firm identification. On the other hand, as two panels from this altarpiece have survived in good condition, it is possible that more might resurface in the future, perhaps miscatalogued as 'German' in a similar way. Eventually, the identification of further scenes might provide firmer evidence of the exact original context of the present impressive work. NH

## NOTES

- For this practice, see Z. Véliz, 'Wooden Panels and Their Preparation for Painting from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century in Spain' in *The Structural Conservation of Panel Paintings*, ed. K. Dardes and A. Rothe (Los Angeles, 1998), pp. 138–40.
- First published in R. Ramírez de Arellano, 'Ordenanzas de Pintores', *Boletín de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando*, segunda época, vol. 9, no. 33 (1915), pp. 26–46; translated in Z. Véliz, 'The Ordenanzas de Córdoba for Regulating the Profession of Painting', *Hamilton Kerr Institute Bulletin*, no. 3 (2000), p. 37.
- As indicated in an unpublished Condition Report by the Daniele Rossi conservation studio dated February 2012.
- These observations are drawn from I. Tylers, 'Tree-ring analysis of paintings from the Sam Fogg Gallery', London, August 2015, pp. 9–12.
- The number of sapwood rings for trees in the Baltic varies between nine and thirty-six, with a median value of fifteen. Seasoning time (in Dutch workshop) is estimated to be between two and fifteen years, with the upper range more likely. See P. Klein, 'Dendrochronological Analyses of Dutch Paintings', in *Recent Developments in the Technical Examination of Early Dutch Paintings: Methodology, Limitations and Perspectives*, ed. M. Faries and R. Spronk (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 65–79.
- "*Carmin fino de borra o lacar sin que en ello entre ningún brasil*". R. Ramírez de Arellano 1915, p. 38; Véliz 2000, p. 37.
- The iconographic separation of Christ's betrayal from his healing of Malchus's ear becomes established in woodcut illustrations of the Bible after 1500. See B.A. Roiser, *The Bible in print: Dutch and Flemish Bible illustration in the sixteenth century* (Leiden, 1997), nos. 452–53, 517–18, 614–35 and 706–07. A painted panel by a follower of Michael Sittow showing Christ's healing of Malchus after his arrest, which includes Peter sheathing his sword and the lantern on the ground, is at Campion Hall, Oxford.
- The detail of the extinguished lantern is relatively rare but seems to stem from a Dutch prototype. It is found, for example, in the left wing of the Dreux Budé triptych of about 1450 (private collection).
- "He patiently and benignly receives the treacherous embraces and kisses of that wretch whose feet he had washed just a short time before .... How patiently he allows himself to be captured, tied, beaten, and furiously driven": I. Ragusa and R. Green (trans. and ed.), *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century* (Princeton, 1961), p. 325. "We should notice the meekness of our Lord" and "Hence we read that 'the band' of soldiers 'and the tribune' commanding them, all the servants of the Jews, rushed violently and all together like wolves upon a lamb, and laid their sacrilegious hands irreverently and insultingly upon [him], and they 'held him' by his own permission, for He was held when he chose, not before, and was thus taken prisoner by his own free will". H.J. Coleridge (trans. and ed.), *The Hours of the Passion taken from the Life of Christ by Ludolph the Saxon* (London, 1887), p. 73.
- P. Silva Maroto, 'Influencia de los grabados nórdicos en la pintura Hispano-flamenca', *Archivo español de arte*, 61, no. 243 (1998), pp. 271–90.
- M. McDonald, *The Print Collection of Ferdinand Columbus (1488–1539): A Renaissance Collector in Seville*, 2 vols. (London, 2004), nos. 151, 164, 297, 845, 2337, 2420, 281 and 1206.
- On Fernández's Northern borrowings see J.M. Covelo López, 'La influencia de los pintores nórdicos en la estética sevillana durante la primera mitad del siglo XVI', in *El emperador Carlos y su tiempo: actas, IX Jornadas Nacionales de Historia Militar* (Madrid, 2000), pp. 958–59.
- D. Angulo Íñiguez, 'Bramante et la Flagellation du Musée du Prado', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 62 (1953), pp. 5–8.
- The attribution was first proposed in an unpublished handwritten essay by I. Mateo Gómez, undated; we are grateful to both Frédéric Elsig and Guillaume Kientz for further confirming the attribution to Alejo Fernández in conversation.
- Reinach 1907, p. 397.
- See the IRR images in J. García-Maíz and C. Garrido, 'La Flagelación (1505–1510)', in *El trazo oculto: dibujos subyacentes en pinturas de los siglos XV y XVI*, exh. cat., ed. G. Finaldi, C. Garrido and L. Alba Carcelén (Madrid, 2006), pp. 230–39.
- Angulo Íñiguez 1953; J.M. Serrera Contreras, 'Ut pictura, architectura: La arquitectura en la pintura del Renacimiento en Andalucía', in *La arquitectura del Renacimiento en Andalucía*, exh. cat. (1992), pp. 213–43; A. Urquizar Herrera, *El Renacimiento en la periferia: La recepción de los modos italianos en la experiencia pictórica del Quinientos cordobés* (Córdoba, 2001), pp. 44–45, 50–53.
- For Fernández, see the two existing monographs by D. Angulo Íñiguez (Seville, 1946) and M.L. Martín Cubero (Madrid, 1988), the very complete entry by C.R. Post in *A History of Spanish Painting*, vol. X (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), pp. 8–93, and also D. Angulo Íñiguez, 'Varias obras de Alejo Fernández y de su escuela', *Anales de la Universidad Hispalense*, 11, no. 2 (1939), pp. 41–63. For documents concerning the painter, including his very detailed will of 1542, see J. Gestoso y Pérez, *Ensayo en un diccionario des los artifices que florecieron en Sevilla desde el siglo XIII al XVIII inclusive*, vol. II (Seville, 1900), pp. 33–34; vol. III (Seville, 1909), pp. 309–23, and especially the much more thorough *Documentos para la historia del arte en Andalucía*, vol. 1, pp. 12–22, 33–40 and 46; vol. 2, pp. 117–18; vol. 3, p. 5; vol. 4, p. 49; vol. 6, pp. 53, 79, 81–82; vol. 8, pp. 18–20; vol. 9, pp. 21–22.
- J. Valverde Madrid, 'La pintura sevillana en la primera mitad del siglo XVI (1501–1560)', *Archivo Hispalense*, 24, no. 76 (1956), pp. 131–37.
- Orto hispalensis: *Arte y cultura en la Sevilla del Emperador*, exh. cat. (Madrid, 2001), pp. 112–13.
- For this work see C. Rahn Phillips, 'Visualizing Imperium: The Virgin of the Seafarers and Spain's Self-Image in the Early Sixteenth Century', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 58, no. 3 (2005), pp. 815–56.
- Mateo Gómez, undated.
- I am extremely grateful to Frédéric Elsig for suggesting the links between the two works in a personal communication.
- See Angulo Íñiguez 1946, pl. 38.
- "Alexo Hernandez, que en Sevilla hizo muchas obras, y en Córdoba en el monasterio de S. Gerónimo el retablo grande y otros pequeños": transcribed in J.A. Ceán Bermúdez, *Diccionario historico de los mas ilustres profesores de las Bellas Artes de Espana* (Madrid, 1800), vol. V, pp. 304–05. See also J.R. Lapaz, 'El "discurso de la comparación de la antigua y moderna pintura y escultura" de Pablo de Sepédes', *Goya*, 217–18 (1990), pp. 15–27.
- "*Las pinturas del grande [retablo] representan varios pasajes de la vida de Cristo y del santo doctor [san Jerónimo]: la del medio es una cena del Señor [cristo] y está firmada. El mérito de estas tablas corresponde a lo mejor que se hacia en 511 tiempo en España, y como dice el mismo Céspedes, la mayor habilidad de los pintores de entonces consistía en dorar y estofar*". Ceán Bermúdez 1800, vol. II, p. 87.

## German or Southern Netherlandish Master

Southern Germany, c. 1480

*The Virgin and Child*

Oil and gilding on walnut  
43.3 cm diameter

## PROVENANCE

With Koetser Gallery, London, by 1961; Portuguese private collection, before 1978; anonymous sale; Christie's, London, 10 July 1998, lot 187; European private collection, 1998–2014

## LITERATURE

*Autumn exhibition of fine Flemish, Dutch and Italian Masters*, exh. cat., Leonard Koetser, London, 23 October–1 December 1961, no. 1; A. Stange, *Die Deutschen Tafelbilder vor Dürer*, vol. I (Munich, 1967), no. 172, p. 63; H.M. Schmidt, *Der Meister des Marienlebens und Sein Kreis* (Dusseldorf, 1978), fig. 163

## CONDITION, MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUE

The paint surface survives in excellent condition, with many of its finer details, including the Virgin's delicate eyelashes and the white highlights individuating the petals of the rose, clearly preserved. It has not suffered from over-cleaning and there are only isolated flake losses to the Virgin's forehead and ear, as well as some losses along the very edge of the painted area below Christ's feet. Analysis of paint samples taken from the area above the Virgin's head reveals a small loss with later gilding applied over the remains of an earlier surface, although elsewhere the original gilding would appear to be largely intact, and in several areas the paint of the figures overlaps the gold leaf.<sup>2</sup>

The panel is constructed from a single plank of figured walnut that at some point in its history has been thinned and cradled diagonally, an orientation which

follows the alignment of the panel's grain in relation to the painted image.<sup>3</sup> The diameter of the panel is 43.3cm in total, but with a broad unpainted edge measuring approximately 3.3 cm encircling the painted area. The exposure of worm holes around this border (filled with a ground material that becomes clearly visible in the X-radiograph) would suggest that it was planed back to its current level, possibly to remove integral or applied framing elements, leaving a single trace of the original moulding in the form of a shallow circular groove filled with a chalk ground.<sup>4</sup> Particles of azurite, black, red and yellow earth pigments and some lead white found in the same area are possibly the remnants of this early frame. Additionally, there are a series of regularly spaced radial grooves running around the unpainted edge, their purpose unknown.

Extending under the whole of the painted and gilded area and clearly visible in the X-radiograph is a cloth of fine, regular weave separating the panel from the ground, a technique popular in the preparation of panel paintings across Austria and southern Germany.<sup>5</sup> The ground layer was built up to a considerable thickness in the gilded area and deeply incised to create the textured design, its large rays further enlivened through the use of a tool rocked over the background in order to form a dense pattern of zigzagged depressions. This process was completed before the panel was painted, since reserves were left for both figures, which in some areas extend across their boundaries. The underdrawing,



FIG. 1  
Infrared reflectogram  
of *The Virgin and Child*



FIG. 2  
Detail of the wet-in-wet  
painting of the Virgin's  
eyelashes

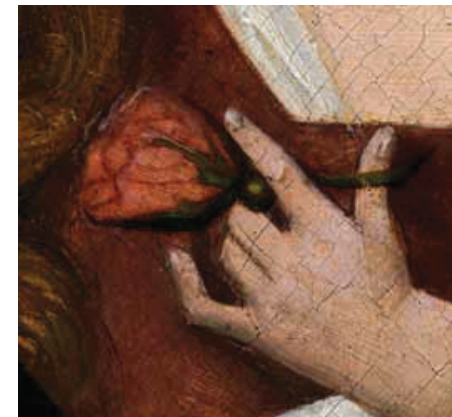


FIG. 3  
Detail of the rose, outlined  
over a broad colour and  
highlighted with lead white

visible in some of the flesh areas under normal light but more clearly with the aid of infrared reflectography, was first applied in a fine, dry medium, before some outlines were reinforced with a fine brush loaded with a carbon-based liquid (fig. 1). Hatching and shading is kept to a minimum, and some details received only cursory treatment in the design stages, including Christ's fingers and genitalia. A number of adjustments were made between the drawn design and the finished composition but these are all extremely subtle, suggestive of a model being closely followed. The nose of the Virgin was initially drawn slimmer above the level of the bridge and the middle finger of her proper right hand was increased in thickness and possibly lowered somewhat, while the little fingernail of her left hand was first drawn underneath Christ's elbow, but changed during the painting stages so that the two no longer overlap. The wrinkles at the front of Christ's neck were suppressed in the paint stages in favour of an unplanned placement at the nape of the neck instead, but have become visible again over time. The nose, chin and ear of Christ were all adjusted slightly, while the rose received only skeletal underdrawing, and the stem was painted in freehand. Additionally, the white cloth buckling behind his neck was initially painted with a

pronounced triangular fold, but the contour softened to a curve in the final stages of painting.

Although using a limited palette of colours, the artist carried out the painting of the panel with great skill and, in places, with deft and economical brushstrokes. The hair of the figures was painted wet-in-wet, a treatment also visible in the Virgin's eyelashes, where a single dark line first outlined the eyelids before being drawn through to create each lash (fig. 2). The deep green-blue of the Virgin's mantle was painted with what appears to be a high grade of azurite pigment, overlaid with mordant gilding for the embroidered detailing along the hems, while the dress is composed of a thin layer of a brown-red pigment, possibly incorporating red earth. A glaze of red pigment, possibly lake, was applied over a pale mid tone to give depth of colour to the lips; similarly the petals of the flower were outlined over a broad single colour selectively highlighted with lead white (fig. 3). The flesh tones are remarkably subtle, particularly in the shadows cast across the Virgin's neck, and were delicately feathered over the ground layer, which was nevertheless left exposed in areas such as Christ's knees and thighs, and the forehead of the Virgin, to imbue the skin with a glowing warmth of hue.



FIG. 4  
 Quentin Matsys  
*The Virgin and Child*, c. 1500  
 Oil on panel, 22.5 cm  
 diameter  
 Antwerp, Rockoxhuis



#### DESCRIPTION AND ICONOGRAPHY

The figure of the Virgin holding the infant Christ appears at half-length against a gold sunburst of rays alternating between straight, pointed spikes and undulating, tapered flames. She wears a deep blue, sleeved mantle over a reddish-brown dress with a square neckline, the material of a white chemise undergarment visible at the sides of the neck. A thin black circlet, touched with dashes of lead tin yellow to imitate gold thread, is set on her hair; it has a brooch at its centre, set with six pearls arranged like petals around a central ruby. The Virgin looks down at her son, who lies cradled on a short length of white cloth. With his right hand Christ takes hold of a lock of the Virgin's hair, and in his left holds a rose flower with a cut, thornless stem (fig. 3). With one eye he looks upwards to his mother, but turns the other out slightly towards the viewer.

The panel's ornate gilded decoration, coupled with its representation of the Virgin and Child depicted in a tender embrace, evokes an intimate celestial vision of which we are being granted a privileged glimpse. Its

most pronounced compositional motif, the red rose which Christ holds dexterously between the thumb and forefinger of his left hand, high in front of the Virgin's chest, draws on themes associated with each of the two figures in turn. Its colour, which is visually picked out against the darker brick-red of the Virgin's dress, evokes the blood Christ shed for humankind and, by inference, incites our contemplation of the wider Passion narrative. Simultaneously, the flower's thornless stem alludes to the purity and redemptive nature of the Virgin; following Saint Ambrose's claim that roses grew without thorns in the Garden of Eden but sprouted them following the Fall, the Virgin was seen by medieval writers including Saint Bernard of Clairvaux as a 'rose without thorns', symbolic of mankind's salvation and paradise regained.<sup>6</sup> Physically, the rose punctuates an otherwise enclosed embrace visually established by Christ's arms, which are opened in the direction of his mother, and his playful touching of the Virgin's hair, providing a culmination of themes established through both figures;

Christ was borne by the pure Virgin – and shed his blood – to redeem our sins. An image of a rose could also act as a visual cue for the recitation for the rosary prayer 'Ave Maria'.

The panel's circular format would to a certain extent have dictated the design of its decoration, but, unlike the large majority of round panel paintings, commonly termed 'tondi', this feature was carefully considered and utilized in order to evoke a magnificent halo encircling the figures. Simultaneously, however, it provides visual parallels to images of the Virgin in Glory or the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception – a vision of the Virgin appearing in an aureole of light described in the Book of Revelation as a woman "clothed with the sun" (Revelation 12:1). With the exception of a somewhat smaller example attributed to Quentin Matsys (fig. 4), and an earlier panel by a follower of Robert Campin (formerly G. de Berny collection, Marseilles), few tondi are so explicit in their rendering of such a motif. It can, however, be found on a small number of engraved images from the second half of the fifteenth century, suggesting that it may have been used more widely by painters of panels than we are able to appreciate today from the few examples that survive (fig. 5). Its deployment in tandem with the rose flower is similarly rare, but not without precedent, and a comparable combination of motifs is visible on a panel associated with the Master of Flémalle in the Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence (fig. 6), with the Virgin seated before an aureole of raised, gilded rays, holding a rose in her hand and resting her feet on the crescent moon.<sup>7</sup>

#### SOURCES, FORMAT, FUNCTION

The present panel faithfully copies the style and motifs of a half-length Virgin and Child composition attributed to Rogier van der Weyden (1400–1464) and represented by a version known as the 'Donaueschingen Madonna', which recently entered the collection of the Heidelberg Kurpfälzisches Museum (fig. 7).<sup>8</sup> In his painstaking 1971 survey of Rogierian compositions, Dirk de Vos described the Donaueschingen *Virgin and Child* as an isolated replica of a lost Rogierian model, distancing it from a number of related versions believed to have been



FIG. 5  
 Israël van Meckenhem  
*The Virgin in half-length  
 on the crescent moon*,  
 c. 1480–90  
 Hand-coloured engraving,  
 42 mm diameter  
 B VL.261.155.B (fragment)

FIG. 6  
 Robert Campin, known  
 as the Master of Flémalle  
*The Virgin in Glory between  
 Saint Peter and Saint  
 Augustin*, c. 1440  
 Oil on panel, 47 × 31 cm  
 Aix-en-Provence, Musée  
 Granet





FIG. 7  
Rogier van der Weyden  
(attributed to)  
The Donaueschingen  
*Virgin and Child*  
Oil on oak, 32 × 25 × 0.5 cm  
Heidelberg, Kurpfälzisches  
Museum

FIG. 8  
The Donaueschingen *Virgin and Child* with a tracing of the present roundel overlaid in red



derived from Rogier's *Saint Luke drawing the Virgin* (Museum of Fine Art, Boston).<sup>9</sup> While none of these versions match the Donaueschingen panel's figural arrangement precisely, several reproduce a number of its motifs; the structuring of the hair and exposed ear of the Virgin, the manner in which her mantle folds over the back of her head, and the decoration of her circlet bear particularly close comparison to a *Virgin and Child* in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (fig. 9). Such correlations confirm the place of the Donaueschingen composition amongst the corpus of devotional panels executed during the late phase of Rogier's career in Brussels, when the artist seems to have responded to an increased demand for small-scale, private devotional paintings brought about in part by the influx of earlier Byzantine icons to the Low Countries around 1450.<sup>10</sup>

A tracing of our figures overlaid on to a scale reproduction of the Donaueschingen panel indicates that while our artist seems to have reduced Rogier's composition slightly in size, the two versions correlate closely in all other ways (fig. 8).<sup>11</sup> The figures' proportions and their positioning in relation to each other are almost identical, as are the composition's many nuanced details, such as the rose with its flower facing to the left,



the manner with which Christ fondles the Virgin's lock of hair, and the size and number of her circlet's jewels. The choice of colours on the two panels diverges subtly, but it remains clear that our artist knew intimately how and why the Donaueschingen Virgin type had been painted, with the tones of the dress and mantle muted so as to draw our focus to the vibrant representation of the rose in Christ's hand. The delicate introduction of colour to the parts of the faces viewed most obliquely, notably the Virgin's left cheek and Christ's right, both of which are touched with red pigment, is a very Rogierian concept (it compares closely with both the Houston and Donaueschingen panels, for instance) and one that would most likely have been lost were our painter working only from drawings. In this respect, it is fortunate that an early drawn copy of the Donaueschingen panel (or another version of the same composition) survives (fig. 10).<sup>12</sup> It is only partly finished, and depicts just the head and neck of the Virgin, with a reserve left above her forehead for a central cluster of jewels at the front of the circlet. Nevertheless, it is almost identical

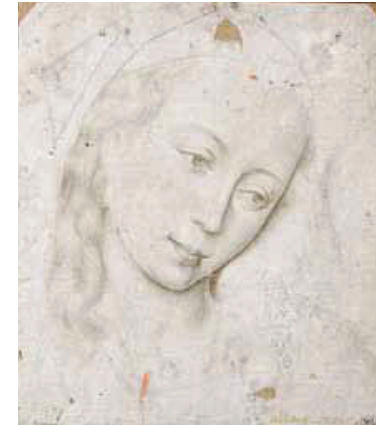


FIG. 9  
Rogier van der Weyden  
*The Virgin and Child*,  
after 1454  
Oil on oak, 31.9 × 22.9 cm  
Houston, Museum of Fine  
Arts

FIG. 10  
Rogier van der Weyden  
*Head of the Virgin*, c. 1460  
Drypoint (silverpoint?) on  
prepared paper, 12.9 × 11 cm  
Paris, Musée du Louvre,  
D.A.G., INV20644-recto

in design, and its incompleteness in the areas in which Christ's limbs and body appear on the Donaueschingen panel suggest that the draughtsman was working from a version of the same composition and was specifically trying to avoid reproducing the infant.

The composition of the Donaueschingen panel is also known through at least two further copies (both currently in private hands), but neither reproduces its combination of elements as precisely as the present version; in both, a white veil is introduced between the back of the Virgin's head and her mantle, while Christ's right hand is missing its rose.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the figure of the Christ Child has been lowered considerably in both compositions, dissipating the sense of physical intimacy between the two figures and somewhat confusing the visual logic of the hand with which Christ holds the Virgin's hair. Where details on our panel differ from those of the Donaueschingen composition, they seem to have been deliberately altered in order to increase the clarity and legibility of the figures' forms, particularly where they overlap or where their visual autonomy is threatened. The neckline of the Virgin's red dress was altered subtly and reinforced where it meets the chest of the Christ Child, presumably to avoid confusion from the overlap between the

FIG. 11  
Rogier van der Weyden  
*The Virgin and Child*, from  
the Diptych of Philippe  
De Cröy, c. 1460  
Oil on panel transferred to  
canvas and relaid on panel,  
49.5 × 31.7 cm  
San Marino, Huntington  
Library



pale flesh of the body and the Virgin's white chemise. Similarly, the folds of the swaddling cloth separating Christ's body from the Virgin's right hand have been rendered with a greater graphic quality on our panel than have those on the Donaueschingen version, which are paler and less well defined. While the angular fold of the cloth behind Christ's neck initially reproduced the triangular arrangement that so characterizes the Donaueschingen panel's design, its final, more rounded appearance results in a greater emphasis on the two figures' faces, and a strengthened outline for the Virgin's mantle where it falls over her upper arm. The most fundamental alteration to the Donaueschingen composition is of course its translation from a rectangular format to that of a circular panel, and the replacement of a dark backdrop with a gold, textured ground, both processes that would have created a unique set of challenges. The necessity for the reinterpretation of the Virgin's lower draperies and body, and the retention

of a visually balanced arrangement for the figures on a format for which they were not originally designed – round paintings are not known to have been amongst Rogier's repertoire – was handled with extreme skill, and undoubtedly considered with great care from the outset.<sup>14</sup> This process would also help to account for the subtle adjustment made to the scale of the figures – perhaps undertaken with recourse to a mechanical aid – and might, moreover, suggest that the artist was working to a strictly defined brief with regards to the painting's size.<sup>15</sup>

Such decisions indicate that our painter had intimate access to designs executed in Rogier's workshop, but, more importantly, he was able to combine this with a sophisticated and inventive approach to the juxtaposition of motifs, since the allusion to the Virgin's purity offered by the rose is underscored and developed by the inclusion of the gilded aureole. Thus the painter not only retained the meaning of Rogier's design, but through drawing together thematically concordant concepts allowed for an expanded iconographic reading.

While round panel paintings or tondi are commonly associated with Italian art of the Renaissance (famous examples having been produced by Filippo Lippi and Botticelli) images painted in a circular format were also produced north of the Alps throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They account for a surprisingly large percentage of panel paintings made for the courts of France between c. 1400 and 1420, and already in this early context their format seems to have been the basis for experimentation and invention. They were often painted with imagery on either side, which necessitated their being handled and turned in the hands.<sup>16</sup> Round panels also seem to have been recognized by contemporary viewers in relation to particular types of image painted at a particular scale; over thirty-five of the surviving examples reproduce – typically at between 27 and 29 cm in diameter including their integral frames – the Virgin breast-feeding the Christ Child after a design associated with the Master of Flémalle (Frankfurt, Städtisches Kunstinstitut), suggesting that the number originally produced may have been far greater.<sup>17</sup> Many of these were turned on lathes<sup>18</sup> but round paintings of

a more monumental scale also survive, the grandest of which are a set of six panels illustrating scenes from the life of Joseph (measuring between 150 and 160 cm in diameter respectively) executed by two anonymous Brussels artists around 1500.<sup>19</sup>

However, few tondi of a scale equal to the present example have survived, so, while it may have been possible to treat this panel in the same manner as smaller examples, the panel would in reality have been somewhat unwieldy, and is not likely to have been handled in the same way. The self-contained character inherent to panels of a circular format meant that they could act emphatically as stand-alone devotional objects, a supposition reinforced by the fact that, like those of the Donaueschingen *Virgin and Child*, the figures on our panel look in opposite directions but do not appear to engage directly with objects outside the composition – in stark contrast to the manner in which Rogier envisaged the physical and conceptual relationship between the multiple panels of several of his works, particularly those of the diptychs of Philippe De Cröy (fig. 11) and of Jean Gros (Art Institute of Chicago and Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tournai).

#### LOCALIZATION AND DATE

When Alfred Stange saw the present painting at the Koetser Gallery in 1961, and again when it was included in his 1968 survey of the work of the Master of the Life of the Virgin – an anonymous Cologne painter active between c. 1460 and 1490 – he described it as a work from “the mature period” of that artist, an attribution that has since been sustained in the surrounding scholarship.<sup>20</sup> In the years following the death of Cologne's leading mid-century painter, Stefan Lochner, the city's artists, led by the Master of the Life of the Virgin, the Master of the George Legend and the Master of the Lyversberg Passion, shifted their focus away from an insular Germanic tradition and dramatically “changed the city's artistic appearance” through the uptake of themes indebted to the Flemish *ars nova* embodied by Rogier van der Weyden and Dirk Bouts.<sup>21</sup> Certainly there are a number of superficial stylistic links between the handling of the paint on our roundel and the work



FIG. 12  
Master of the Life  
of the Virgin  
*The Virgin and Child*, c. 1470  
Oil on panel, 57 × 50.5 cm  
Berlin, Gemäldegalerie

of artists active in Cologne during the second half of the fifteenth century – such as the pale, smooth handling of the flesh tones and the dragging of the paint of the eyelids, wet-in-wet, in order to form the eyelashes. However, Stange's attribution can no longer be sustained on stylistic grounds since it diverges markedly from several surviving half-length panels attributed to the Master of the Life of the Virgin and his workshop, which demonstrate that his was an inherently different pictorial language (fig. 12). Although Cologne painters can be identified with the use of a gilded background, these backgrounds are fairly persistently characterized by flat, burnished surfaces decorated with punched designs, and not by the deeply incised surface visible on our panel. Indeed, it would have been a time-consuming and costly process to create the surface that is so essential to this tondo's appearance, and it is not one that seems to have found currency with any of Cologne's more well-defined artistic identities. The technique was, however, utilized across a large swathe of southern Germany and as far south as Switzerland and the Tyrol during the second half of the fifteenth century.<sup>22</sup> It can be found there in various guises and on numerous panel paintings to have survived from our period. Examples of zigzag patterns in chalk grounds



are widespread across this region; those with sun- or star-burst patterns are characteristic of south German painting from around 1480, and can be found on works associated with Upper Rhenish workshops, in particular that of the Master of the Drapery Studies.<sup>23</sup> Without further physical or documentary evidence, however, precise localization and attribution of our panel remains impossible, since it offers little by way of personal inflection to its predetermined composition. Painters at this date were mobile, and many travelled from workshop to workshop during a period of time following their apprenticeship, or remained somewhat peripatetic for several years, taking on work in the centres they travelled through.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the panel's close reproduction of the Donaueschingen *Virgin and Child* is a compelling piece of evidence for the reconstruction of our artist's movements, and it is highly likely that he learnt his trade in Rogier's Brussels shop (or that of Rogier's son Pieter), or had at the very least spent some time there as a journeyman.<sup>25</sup> Whether he was born nearby or travelled from farther afield, his knowledge and assimilation of Rogier's designs and technique would have been a desirable asset as he took on

commissions with German painters specializing in the creation of the kind of tooled and embellished decorative motifs employed so effectively on our panel's background. The reuse of patterns from Rogier's workshop in southern Germany was extensive and is well documented; our artist, however, may have been active as an independent master by the 1470s, a decade in which exact copies of Rogierian compositions by other artists first start to appear.<sup>26</sup>

Important questions concerning the context of this panel's creation and use remain to be answered. However, since it would appear to be the only faithful copy of the Donaueschingen panel known to have survived, its re-emergence is of great significance for our understanding of the spread of Rogier's designs to artistic centres outside Brussels, and the engagement of a wide field of painters with his workshop during the second half of the fifteenth century. The translation of a pre-existing composition to a circular format, and its inventive reinterpretation, is an important example of a nuanced artistic practice of reuse and experimentation during this productive and fruitful period. **MR**

#### NOTES

- 1 Wood identification analysis undertaken by Ian Tyers, August 2015.
- 2 Paint sample analysis undertaken by Libby Sheldon for Sam Fogg Gallery, September 2015; report F2395.
- 3 These remarks are based in part on verbal communication with Ian Tyers, August 2015.
- 4 Paint sample analysis undertaken by Libby Sheldon for Sam Fogg Gallery, September 2015; report F2395.
- 5 Cloth was not found in the cross sections of pigment samples taken from the gilded area, and would appear to lie beneath the preparatory ground. The use of canvas as a preparatory aid in south German and Austrian paintings during this period is discussed in Nash, *Late Medieval Panel Paintings* (London, 2011), p. 22; E. Skaug, 'Not Just Panel and Ground', in J.H. Townsend, T. Doherty, G. Heydenreich and J. Ridge (eds.), *Preparation for Painting: The Artist's Choice and its Consequences*, (London, 2008), pp. 22–29.
- 6 Charles Joret, *La Rose dans l'Antiquité et au Moyen Âge*, (Paris, 1892), pp. 242–8.
- 7 I am grateful to Susie Nash for bringing this panel to my attention.
- 8 For a discussion of the Donaueschingen Madonna's attribution to Rogier van der Weyden and the thoughts of scholars who had seen the panel around this time, see D. de Vos, *Rogier van der Weyden: The Complete Works* (Munich, 1999), p. 360. See also De Vos, 'De Madonna-en-Kindtypologie bij Rogier van der Weyden en enkele minder gekende flémalteske voorlopers', in *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, 13 (1971), pp. 133–139.
- 9 Dirk de Vos 1971, pp. 60–161, especially pp. 130–34. See also De Vos 1999, no. B6, p. 360.
- 10 See M.W. Ainsworth, 'À la façon grèce': The Encounters of Northern Renaissance Artists with Byzantine Icons' in Helen Evans ed., *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, (New York, 2004), pp. 545–593, esp. p. 586.
- 11 The dimensions of the Donaueschingen panel are taken from Friedlander, Vol. II, p. 85; the same dimensions were retained by De Vos 1999, p. 360.
- 12 M.J. Friedländer, Vol. II (Leyden and Brussels, 1967 ed.), p. 48, pl. 129a.
- 13 A version measuring 38.5 × 27.5 cm was sold at Christie's, New York, 15 January 1985, lot 201; another was bought for a private Swiss collection at a Fischer Galerie sale, 26 November 1996, lot 2001.
- 14 For recent analyses of Rogier's oeuvre see S. Kemperdick and J. Sander (eds.), *The Master of Flémalle and Rogier van der Weyden*, exh. cat. (Frankfurt am Main and Berlin, 2008); L. Campbell and J. van der Stock, *Rogier van der Weyden 1400–1464: Master of Passions*, (Louvain, 2008).
- 15 Tracings and the mechanical transfer of designs in Rogier's workshop have recently been highlighted by Stephan Kemperdick: see Kemperdick and Sander 2008, pp. 277–80.
- 16 S. Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 234–35; Valentine Henderiks, *Albrecht Bouts (1451/55–1549)* (Brussels, 2011), pp. 295–96, 299, 301, 303, 335; for the Life of Joseph panels see V. Bücken et al., *L'Héritage de Rogier van der Weyden: La peinture à Bruxelles 1450–1520*, exh. cat. (Brussels, 2013), pp. 179–82; for the popularity of round paintings in the Low Countries, see L. Campbell, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Sixteenth Century Netherlandish Paintings, with French Paintings Before 1600* (London, 2014), p. 292.
- 17 T.-H. Borchert, *Van Eyck to Dürer: Early Netherlandish Painting & Central Europe 1430–1530*, exh. cat., Groeninge Museum, Bruges, 2010, no. 1, p. 124. See also T.-H. Borchert, *Memling: Rinascimento fiammingo* (Milan, 2014), pp. 140–43.
- 18 Our artist's use of walnut may provide evidence for the panel's localization, although it could also have been a response to the fact that tondo panels were often made by lathe turners, a class of craftsman not widely permitted to work in oak. See H. Verougstraete, *Frames and Supports in 15th and 16th-century Southern Netherlandish Painting* (e-book), 2015, p.5.
- 19 Bücken and Steyaert 2013, pp. 179–82.
- 20 *Autumn Exhibition of Fine Flemish Dutch and Italian Old Masters*, exh. cat., Leonard Koetser Ltd, London, October–December 1961, no. 1; Stange 1967, no. 172, p. 63; Schmidt 1978, fig. 163.
- 21 Holger-Borchert 2010, pp. 260ff. For painting in Cologne at this date see B. Corley, *Painting and Patronage in Cologne 1300–1500*, (Turnhout, 2000); F.G. Zehnder, *Kataloge des Wallraf-Richartz Museums, XI; Katalog der Aikölner Malerei* (Cologne, 1990).
- 22 For use in German painting see R. Suckale, *Deutsche Malerei vor Dürer* (Petersberg, 2009); see also Claus Grimm and Bernd Konrad, *Die Fürstberg Sammlungen Donaueschingen; Altdutsche und schweizerische Malerei des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1990), no. 20, p. 132.
- 23 For Upper Rhenish applications of the technique, see Spätmittelalter am Oberrhein; Maler und Werkstätten 1450–1525, exh. cat. (Karlsruhe, 2001), esp. cat. 148, pp. 268–70, 270–74.
- 24 Nash 2008, pp. 179, 188.
- 25 Kemperdick and Sander (2008), pp. 31–37, especially p. 34.
- 26 See Suckale 2009; for the emergence of exact copies, with recourse to dendrochronological dating when these copies appear on oak, see Jeltje Dijkstra, *Origineel en Kopic: Een onderzoek naar de navolging van de Meester van Flémalle en Rogier van der Weyden*, PhD thesis, (University of Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 29–68.