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# The armorial panels of the knights of the Golden Fleece in Mechelen: material witnesses to the political history of the Low Countries at the end of the fifteenth century

Claire Toussat, Alexia Coudray and Monika Drlikova

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## Introduction

Saint Rumbold's Cathedral in Mechelen houses a series of armorial panels commemorating the fifteenth chapter of one of the most prestigious chivalric orders, the Order of the Golden Fleece, which took place there in 1491. This chapter was supposed to be the third under the leadership of Maximilian I of Austria (1459-1519), its knight and sovereign since 1478. These meetings were seminal ceremonies of the Order and served as a proof of the power and magnificence of both the sovereign and the Order. Normally, they were organized every three years in various Burgundian cities,<sup>1</sup> however, this time, there had been a ten-year gap after the previous meeting in 's-Hertogenbosch (1481). There were several circumstances that had presumably contributed to this long interval.

On 27 March 1482, Mary of Burgundy, Duchess of Burgundy (1457-1482), tragically died, leaving behind her husband, Maximilian I of Austria (1459-1519), and two children, Margaret of Austria (1480-1530) and Philip the Handsome (1478-1506). Although Philip was the 'natural' prince and Burgundian heir, he was not old enough to rule and the task fell to Maximilian. But Maximilian was perceived as a foreigner who only gained power over the Low Countries thanks to his marriage and many rejected his authority.<sup>2</sup> Flemish cities, Ghent and Bruges in particular, constantly rebelled against him.<sup>3</sup> In 1488, he was even captured in Bruges, his followers executed, and Maximilian himself threatened with death.<sup>4</sup>

Although he was eventually freed, Maximilian departed from the Low Countries soon after this humiliating experience. However, the military revolt against him continued until 1492.

Maximilian's struggle for authority occurred in the ranks of the Order too.<sup>5</sup> Several knights refused to accept Maximilian's authority, and various members previously loyal to the deceased Burgundian duke Charles the Bold deserted to France. A promise of reconciliation was brought during a gathering in Dendermonde in summer 1484, where the knights allowed Maximilian to preside over meetings until his son reached the age of majority.<sup>6</sup> This arrangement was far from a unanimous decision, for several knights proposed to postpone the meeting until the moment of Philip's age of majority, or even until his marriage.<sup>7</sup> The conflicts within the ranks of the Order likely contributed to the fact that no meeting took place in 1484 or in the subsequent years.

Having more or less regained control of the political situation, Maximilian wrote to his son in July 1490, expressing his wish to organize another chapter, but informing him that he was unable to get to the Low Countries.<sup>8</sup> He asked Philip to propose the location and send him a list of eligible knights.<sup>9</sup> The first choice was Namur, but since the city was occupied by war troops, it was decided to organize the chapter in Mechelen, a well-fortified city with 7 great and 5 smaller gates and

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1 De Smedt 1992, p. 3.

2 See for instance Terjanian 2019, p. 17-37.

3 See for instance Spijkers 2014.

4 Wellens 1965; Dumolyn and Haemers 2011.

5 Dünnebeil 2012.

6 Haemers 2014, p. 100.

7 De Reiffenberg 1830, p. 130.

8 *Ibidem*, p. 177.

9 De Smedt 1992, p. 9.



[Fig. 1]

Coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy, Lord of Beveren, 1491, 93.5 x 61 with frame, 91.3 x 58 cm without frame (Mechelen, Saint Rumbold's Cathedral, inv. PA.216.E111). © Joris Luyten.



[Fig. 2]

Coat of arms of Philip the Handsome, 93.5 x 61 with frame, 91.3 x 58 cm without frame  
(Mechelen, Saint Rumbold's Cathedral, inv. PA.216.E095). © Joris Luyten.

the place where Philip had grown up.<sup>10</sup> The young prince had been named a knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece during the previous chapter in 's-Hertogenbosch in 1481, when he was only 3 years old. The age of majority, which was 16 years, was a prerequisite for becoming a member of the Order. However, since Philip was an heir to the throne, the knights decided to make an exception.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, as his father Maximilian could not attend the Mechelen chapter, it was decided that this 13-year-old boy would preside over the meeting.<sup>12</sup>

As was customary, the principal meeting was organized in the parochial church of the city, the church (later cathedral) of Saint Rumbold. Works of art made specifically for the chapters of the Order of the Golden Fleece mirrored the importance of this event, and the festivity in Mechelen was no exception. The church was magnificently decorated. Luxurious tapestries were hung and altars were embellished with lavishly embroidered antependia. The oath cross of the Order, inlaid with precious stones and gems, was also on view.<sup>13</sup> Among the most important artworks made specifically for the chapter was a series of armorial panels, originally displayed in the choir of the church above the seat of each knight.

The armorial panels in Mechelen are one of the most complete series still preserved *in situ*. However, since the current condition of these paintings is rather poor, it is difficult to appreciate their former glory. Moreover, as heraldic paintings are traditionally considered as solely decorative and of little value from an art historical point of view, the armorial panels in Mechelen have not attracted much attention from recent scholars, with the notable exception of Christiane van den Bergen-Pantens.<sup>14</sup> The organisation of the exhibition *Kinderen van de Renaissance* at the Museum Hof van Busleyden in Mechelen in 2020<sup>15</sup> and the patronage of the Périer-D'Iteren Foundation offered an opportunity to study two works from this series at the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA): the armorial panels of Philip the Handsome and that of Philip of Burgundy, Lord of Beveren, henceforth referred to as Philip of Burgundy-Beveren (before 1464-1498).<sup>16</sup> The present paper first discusses how this peculiar type of painting was made before focusing on their authorship and reflecting on how the panels with the coats of arms were perceived and used at the chapters of the Order of the Golden Fleece.

## Iconographic description

The armorial panels of Philip of Burgundy-Beveren [fig. 1] and Philip the Handsome [fig. 2] follow the standard iconography established for series' of this type. In the centre of a black background, there is an escutcheon with the knight's coat of arms, encircled by the collar of the Golden Fleece with its flint and fire-steel linked chain. The ram's fleece dangles from a ring in the centre. The escutcheon is surmounted by the helmet, on which the crest on a torse sits. The mantling unfolds elegantly at either side of the helmet. Calligraphic inscriptions at the top and bottom of the panels further indicate to whom the coats of arms belong.

The escutcheons depict coats of arms constructed according to the strict heraldic system. Following the death of Mary of Burgundy, discussions started about the appearance and composition of Philip's coat of arms during his age of minority.<sup>17</sup> Allegedly, until 1482, young Philip bore a silver label of three points on his paternal arms, referring to the title of count of Charolais.<sup>18</sup> In 1483, the rebelling Flemish regency council designed a seal with the arms of his Valois predecessors quartered with Austria.<sup>19</sup> Maximilian fashioned for himself and his son a seal showing a complex relationship and union of Austria and the Low Countries, used during Mary's lifetime.<sup>20</sup> It is exactly this coat of arms in the seal that is depicted in the panel with Philip's coat of arms made for the chapter in Mechelen. We can also find it in a portrait of Philip from 1493-1495 attributed to Pieter van Coninxloo [fig. 3]. The helmet above the escutcheon is surmounted by an archducal crown to indicate Philip's status as heir to the Archduke of Austria.<sup>21</sup>

The escutcheon of Philip of Burgundy-Beveren combines the coat of arms of his father Antoine of Burgundy and that of his mother Marie de la Viefville (or Vieuville).<sup>22</sup> Surrounded by a blue and golden mantling, the helmet above the escutcheon is surmounted by a red and white torse with an owl on the top, symbol of wisdom, which can also be found on the miniature depicting Philip of Burgundy-Beveren dating from 1478 [fig. 4]. In 1485 he married Anna van Borselen and became Lord of Veere, Vlissingen and other seigniories in Zeeland. His act of bravery and resistance against the troops of King Louis XI during the siege of Saint-Omer in 1477 earned him his membership of the Order of the Golden Fleece in the chapter held one year later in Bruges. As *Conseiller-chambellan* of

10 Laenen 1934, p. 65.

11 For Philip's appointment to the Order, see Dünnebeil 2014.

12 De Smedt 2000, p. 204-206.

13 De Smedt 1992, p. 17.

14 See Van den Bergen-Pantens 1980; Van den Bergen-Pantens 1981; Van den Bergen-Pantens 1987; Van den Bergen-Pantens 1996.

15 Exhibition curated by Samuel Mareel, from 26 March to 4 July 2021, see Mareel 2021.

16 See Coudray 'laboratory report' and Toussat 'technical and art historical study' in KIK-IRPA files: 2020.14393 (Philip the Handsome) and 2020.14394 (Philip of Burgundy-Beveren).

17 Thiry 2014, p. 143-144.

18 *Ibidem*, p. 143.

19 Laurent 1997, p. 9-10.

20 Thiry 2014, p. 144.

21 For a detailed biography of Philip the Handsome see Cauchies 2003.

22 De Smedt 2000, p. 198-199.

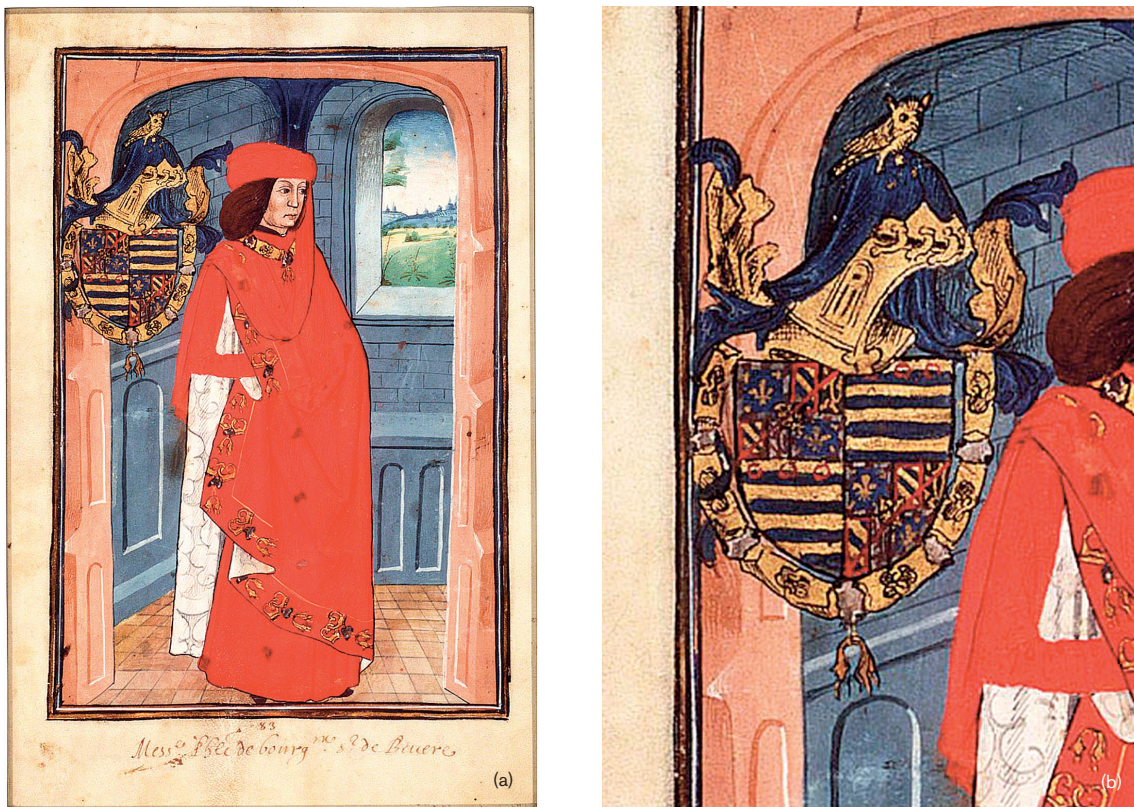


[Fig. 3]

Probably by Pieter van Coninxloo, *Diptych: Philip the Handsome and Margaret of Austria*, c. 1493-1495, 22.6 x 15.5 cm, oil on panel (London, The National Gallery, inv. NG2613.1). © The National Gallery.

(a) Left wing.

(b) Detail of Philip the Handsome's coat of arms.



[Fig. 4]

Anonymous, *Portrait of Philip of Burgundy-Beveren*, in Gilles Gobet, *Statutes, and armorial of the Order of the Golden Fleece*, 1478 (The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, inv. 76 E 10, folio 80r), full image (a) and detail (b). © National Library of the Netherlands.



[Fig. 5]

Back of the panel with the coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy-Beveren. X141126.

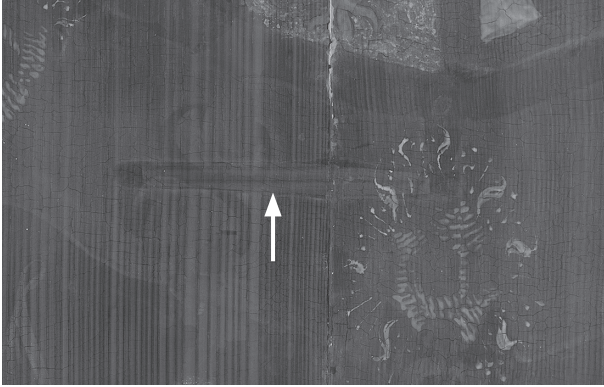


[Fig. 6]

Back of the panel with the coat of arms of Philip the Handsome. X141138.



Maximilian and Philip the Handsome, he was involved in the political conflicts in the Low Countries. Having joined forces with the rebel party in Ghent (1488), for a while he supported the party of Philip of Cleves, leader of the opposition to Maximilian, for which he was reprimanded at the chapter of the Golden Fleece in Mechelen in 1491. He became Admiral of the Low Countries from 1491 to 1498.



[Fig. 7]

Dowel visible on the X-ray image of the panel with the coat of arms of Philip the Handsome. RXR000823I-RXR000824I.



[Fig. 8]

Tool marks visible on the back of the panel with the coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy. X141126.

(a) Side axe.

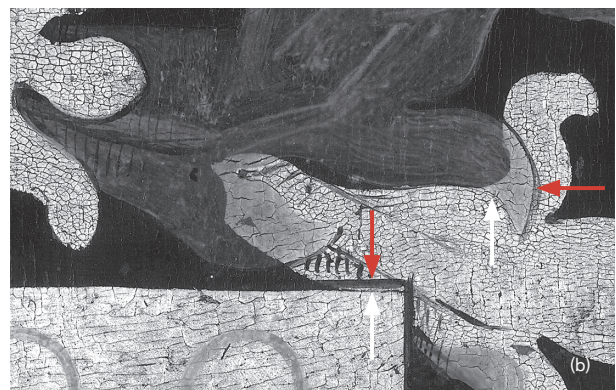
(b) Scrub plane marks.

## Paintings' build-up and materials

The materials and build-up of the two paintings are very similar. They are each made up of two quarter cut oak planks of good quality [fig. 5 and 6]. The grain of the wood runs vertically. The planks are thin (approximately 3 mm thick) and butt-joined. The X-radiographs of the panels reveal two dowels per painting [fig. 7]. These were originally inserted to align the planks during gluing and to reinforce the joins.

On the back of the paintings the four edges are slightly bevelled. This was usually done to facilitate framing. A layer of bees- and paraffin wax hinders the examination of the reverse of the panel with the coat of arms of Philip the Handsome.<sup>23</sup> The panel with the coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy has no such coating and reveals tool marks from the manufacturing of the planks [fig. 8]. The presence of these marks, including cleavage marks in the lower part of the left plank, indicates that the panel retains its original thickness [fig. 5].

<sup>23</sup> Layer applied in 1990. See report in KIK-IRPA file 1990.04546.



[Fig. 9]

Micro-photograph in normal light (a) and infrared reflectogram (b) of the *Coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy*. First the shape of the elements was defined with a thin line on top of the gilding (white arrow) and then reinforced with larger brush strokes (red arrow). X141126 and IR001341I.



[Fig. 10]

Comparison of the letter 'B' on two paintings made for the chapter of 1491 in Mechelen.

(a) Coat of arms of Anthony, bastard of Burgundy. Z009524.

(b) Coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy-Beveren. © Joris Luyten.



[Fig. 11]

Coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy, daylight photograph of the painting (b), MA-XRF scans for gold (a) and silver (c). The areas where the metals are detected appear in grey. The signal of silver is very weak because the leaves are thin and covered with overpaint rich in lead and tin. Gold and silver leaves are present underneath nearly all the painted elements except for the blue motifs of the mantling.

It is most likely that the panels were glue-sized before applying the ground layer, as often recommended in technical treatises, although this layer was not visible on the cross-sections.<sup>24</sup> The ground layer is white and made of chalk, probably mixed with animal glue, which was the traditional material for panels from the Low Countries from the late fourteenth to early seventeenth centuries [fig. 21-23].

Neither painting reveals any underdrawing in infrared photography or infrared reflectography. This does not mean that none is present. If it were made of a black material rich in carbon, then it could be hidden behind the black background, which would absorb infrared in the same way as the underdrawing. Likewise, under-

drawing cannot be detected under the gold or silver metal leaf such as that used in the coat of arms. It is also possible that any underdrawing, if present, was applied in a material undetectable in infrared such as an iron oxide based pigment (red chalk, brown or ochre coloured paint, etc.). What we can see are fine dark lines applied in a dark liquid medium at a late stage on top of the gilded areas. These lines redefine the shape of the motifs covered by the gold leaf. They were then reinforced by wider strokes of black paint [fig. 9].

The high degree of correspondence between certain elements of the composition present in both paintings such as the chain of the collar and the mantling suggests that a cartoon or stencil could have been used for establishing the composition on the panels. Slight differences could be explained by adjustments during the painting stage or by the presence of overpaint. The use of a cartoon in the making of armorial panels

<sup>24</sup> Billinge et al. 1997, p. 21.



[Fig. 12]

Coat of arms of Philip of the Handsome, daylight photograph of the painting (b), MA-XRF scans for gold (a) and silver (b). The areas where the metals are detected appear in grey. The signal of silver is very weak for the same reason as for the *Coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy*. Gold or silver leaves are present underneath nearly all the elements except for the white motifs of the mantling.



[Fig. 13]

Detail of the MA-XRF scan for gold (b) of the *Coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy* (a). The areas where gold is detected appear in grey. The lighter lines correspond to the places where the gold leaves overlap.

would not be unusual. Christiane van den Bergen-Pantens has already suggested their use for the Coat of arms of Anthony, bastard of Burgundy, and the Coat of arms of Pedro de Cardona, both painted in 1460, and for the paintings of coats of arms in the church of Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk in Bruges dating from 1468.<sup>25</sup> It is also possible that the calligraphy of the Mechelen

series was based on a repertoire of models as some letters are very similar in both paintings. This is the case of the 'B' of Philip of Burgundy and Anthony Bastard of Burgundy [fig. 10].

The painting technique is identical in both paintings. Gold (or) and silver (argent) heraldic colours are not painted with pigments but are gold and silver leaves, which shimmer against the dark background [fig. 11-13]. The design of the crest, the helmet and the collar of the Order is detailed with delicate black lines on the metal leaf and a sense of volume is suggested by

<sup>25</sup> Van den Bergen-Pantens 1981, p. 95-96.



[Fig. 14]

Ram on the collar in the *Coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy*, showing black painted modelling on the gold leaf.

painted cross-hatching [fig. 14] and/or glazing [fig. 15]. A few dots of colour are then skilfully added to indicate gemstones [fig. 16] and the sparks that come from the contact between the flint (*Pierre à feu*) and the fire-steel (*briquet*) of the collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece [fig. 17].

Gold is also present in the mantling, which is subtly modelled by red glazes to render it three-dimensional. The rest of the mantling is painted in lead white for the ermine fur in the coat of arms of Philip the Handsome and in azurite for the blue leaves of the coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy. These blue leaves are further modelled with lead white.

On the escutcheon, no expense was spared as gold and silver are present in abundance. Coloured motifs are painted directly on top of the gold or silver leaves using opaque or translucent paint [fig. 18]. For motifs that are intended to be gold or silver, the metal leaf is left in reserve and modelled with fine black lines [fig. 19 and 20].

The text is painted using gold leaf, which has been applied on a light yellow lead-containing mordant on the black background. The letters were then further defined with black outlines, whose composition is

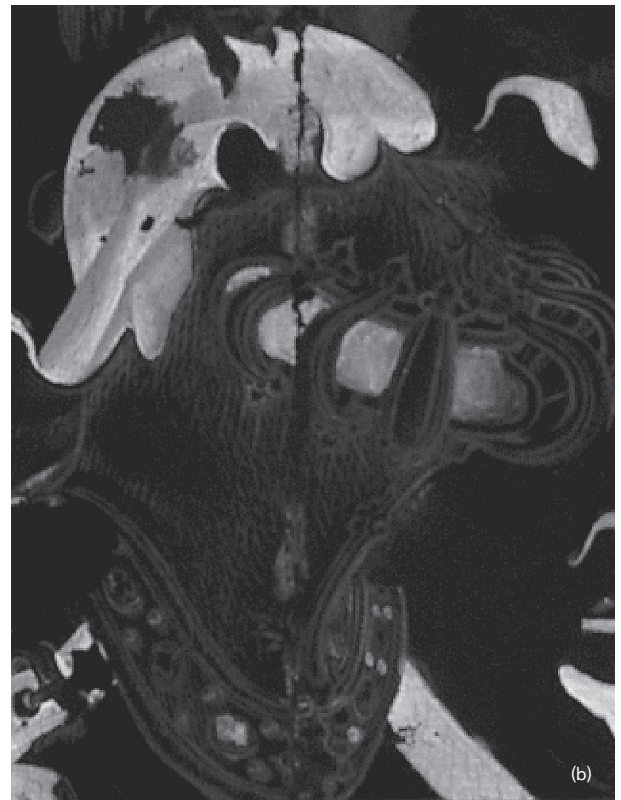


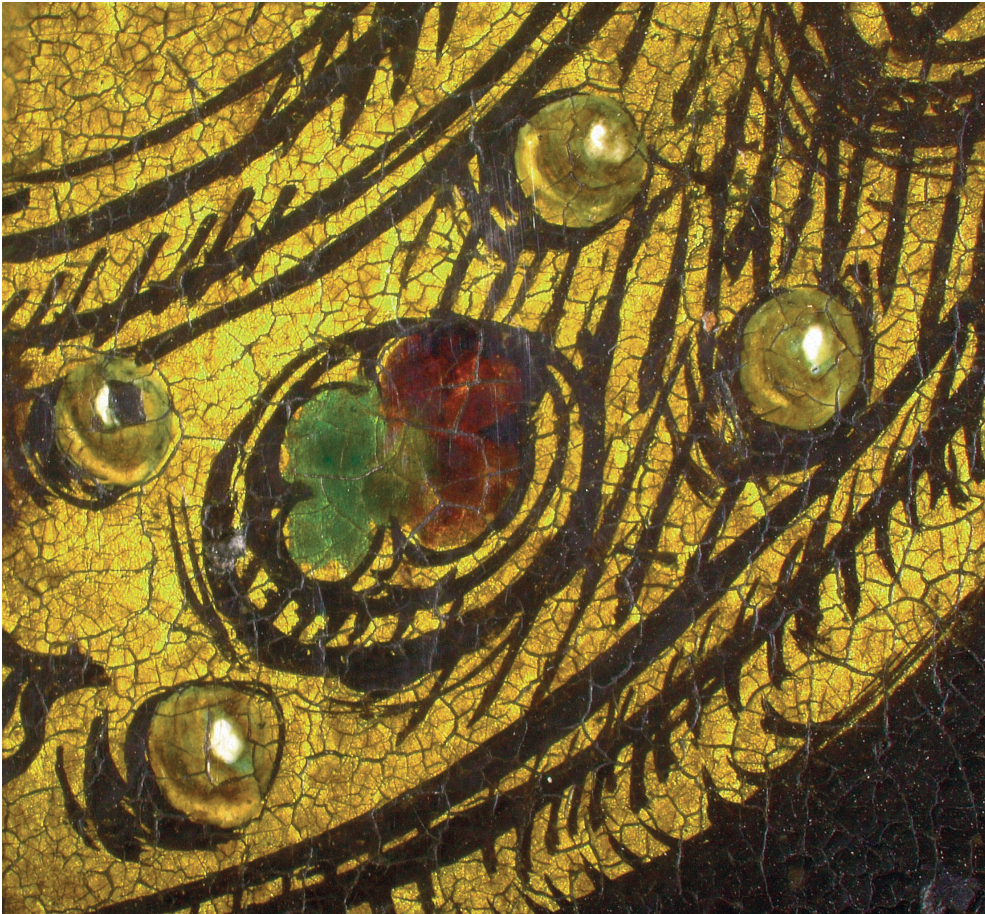
[Fig. 15]

Detail of the helmet on the panel with the coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy.

(a) The volume of the inside of the visor is rendered by a combination of black cross-hatching and green glaze.

(b) This glaze, rich in copper, possibly a resinate or copper acetate, is very distinct on the MA-XRF scanning image of copper.





[Fig. 16]

Microphotograph, gemstones and pearls on the helmet in the *Coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy*.



[Fig. 17]

Microphotograph, detail of one of the fire-steels (*briquets*) in the collar of the *Coat of arms of Philip the Handsome*.



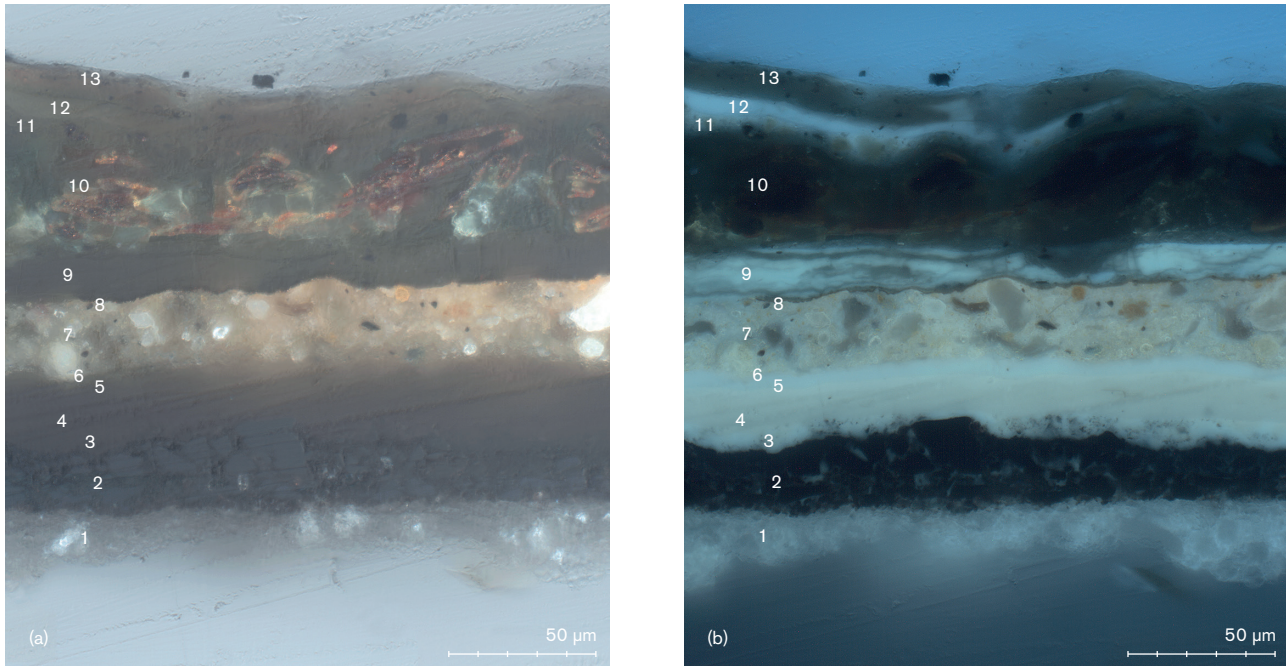
[Fig. 18]  
Microphotograph, *Coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy*. The black lion of Flanders is painted on top of the gold leaf. The artist uses two types of red, one for the tongue (probably red lake) and another for the line that bars the coat of arms (vermilion).



[Fig. 19]  
Microphotograph, *Coat of arms of Philip the Handsome*. The form of the eagle of lower Austria is defined by the addition of blue paint (azurite) on top of the gold leaf.



[Fig. 20]  
Microphotograph, *Coat of arms of Philip the Handsome, arms of Styria*. The green background has been brushed on a silver leaf around the heraldic panther, which is further detailed with thin black lines.



[Fig. 21]

Cross-section taken from the inscription on the panel with the *Coat of arms of Philip the Handsome*, polarized light (a), UV light (b).

13. Brown transparent layers: lead, calcium, traces of iron and silicates.
12. Varnish - partial layer.
11. Thin brown layers: lead, calcium, particles rich in aluminium, silicates.
10. Green transparent layer: rich in copper, chalk, lead (soaps formation), silicates + metallic particles of bronze, copper and tin.
9. Varnish: Damaged, likely several layers.
8. Gold leaf.
7. Mordant: lead white, chalk, earth pigment, silicates, lead-tin yellow.
6. Thin varnish.
5. Very thin varnish with deposit on surface.
4. Varnish with orange fluorescence.
3. Varnish with black particles indicating that the varnish was applied shortly after the black background was painted.
2. Black layer: carbon-based black, chalk, lead, traces of earth pigment and silicates.
1. Ground layer: chalk.

richer in copper than the black background. Cross-sections of samples reveal that the mordant is preceded by four organic layers. Their exact composition has not been established but they are most likely varnishes applied on top of the black background [fig. 21]. Only the two first layers are visible in the cross-sections taken from the escutcheon and the mantling [fig. 22-23]. This difference in build-up seems to indicate that the works were done in two steps: first the central part with the coat of arms and then the inscriptions, separated by two varnish layers, one of which has a thin deposit on the surface. This could reflect a division of labour during the execution of the panels. It is known, for instance, that both Jean Hennecart and Pierre Coustain were paid for the series of armorial panels for the Bruges chapter of 1468. Christiane van den Bergen-Pantens has suggested that Jean Hennecart was in charge of the calligraphy while Pierre Coustain would have designed and painted the heraldic part.<sup>26</sup>

## Question of authorship

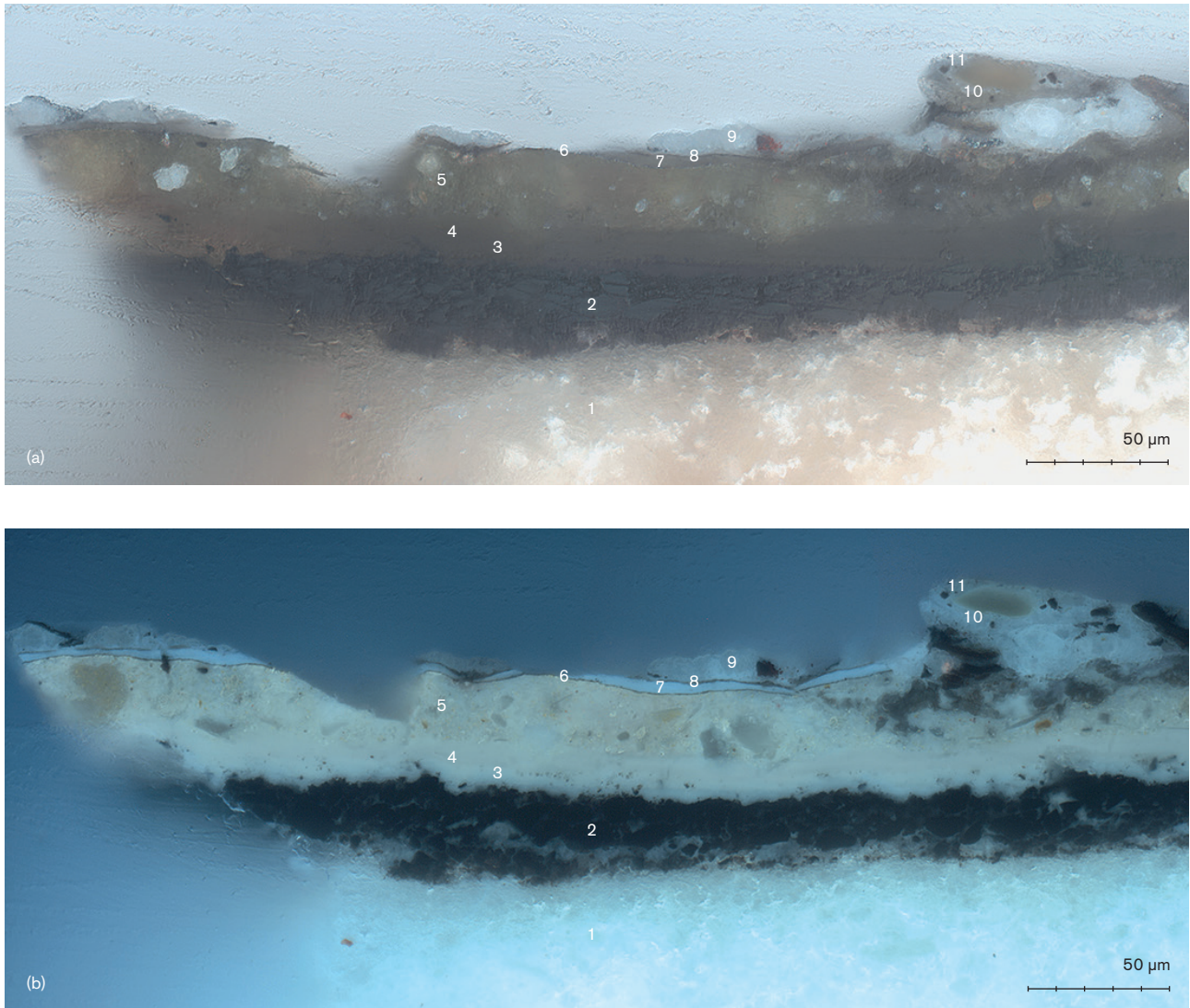
Unfortunately, no information about the commission of the Mechelen series has been discovered yet, but the authorship has been discussed in the literature. According to Emmanuel Neeffs (1875), the series could have been painted by Baudouin van Battel, alias vander Wyck. He was an artist from a family of painters working in Mechelen in the fifteenth century and is best known for painting the coats of arms for the Joyous Entry of Mary of Burgundy in that city.<sup>27</sup> In 1907, Hyacinthe Coninckx refuted this hypothesis and suggested that the panels could have been executed by Pierre Coustain, a Franco-Flemish painter and designer<sup>28</sup> who often worked for the Dukes of Burgundy.<sup>29</sup> According to the archival documents published by Coninckx, it is the painter Pierre

<sup>26</sup> Van den Bergen-Pantens 1981, p. 97.

<sup>27</sup> Neeffs 1878, p. 175.

<sup>28</sup> Coninckx 1907, p. 63-74.

<sup>29</sup> Châtelet 1962; Bücken and Steyaert 2013, p. 120-121.



[Fig. 22]

Cross-section taken in the escutcheon of the panel with the *Coat of arms of Philip the Handsome*, polarized light (a), UV light (b).

11. Grey layer: lead white, chalk, one particle rich in aluminium, small particles of bone black.
10. Transparent layer: rich in calcium.
9. White with tin: lead white, chalk, tin, one particle of red ochre.
8. Thin dark layer - deposit.
7. Varnish.
6. Silver leaf.
5. Mordant layer: lead-tin yellow, chalk, glass particles, earth pigment, silicates.
4. Varnish with orange fluorescence.
3. Varnish with black particles indicating that the varnish was applied shortly after the black background was painted.
2. Black layer: carbon-based black, chalk, lead, traces of earth pigment and silicates, some particles of gypsum.
1. Ground layer: chalk.

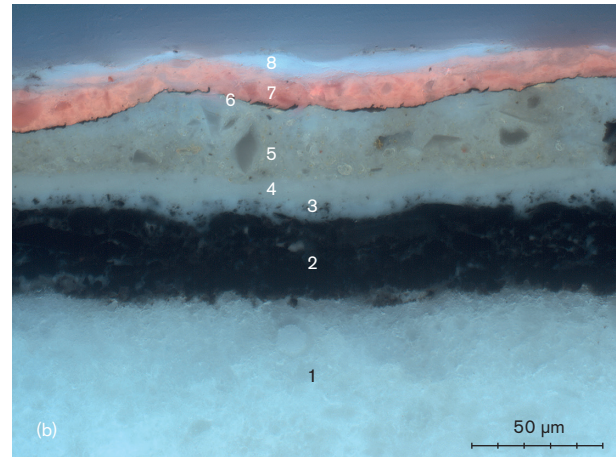
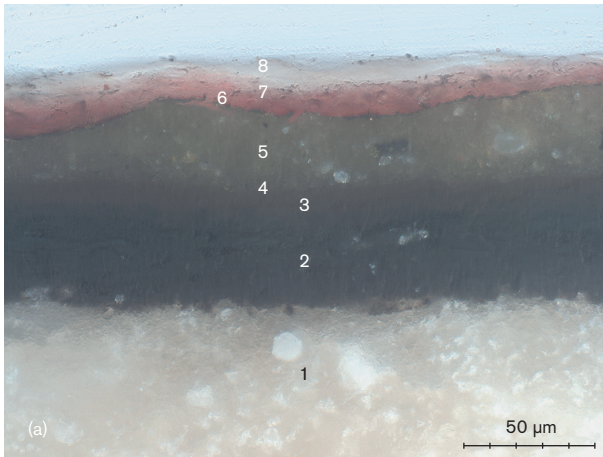
Coustain (documented 1450-1487) who was often asked to paint the coats of arms for chapters preceding the 1491 meeting in Mechelen, namely for the chapters in Saint-Omer in 1461, Bruges in 1468, Valenciennes in 1473 and 's-Hertogenbosch in 1481.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, it is tempting to attribute the Mechelen panels to the same artist. However, it is not known whether Pierre

Coustain was still alive in 1491. The latest mention of the artist is found in the 1487 memorial list of the Bruges painters' guild,<sup>31</sup> the date that art historians have therefore considered as the presumed year of his death. Pierre Coustain is known to have collaborated

<sup>30</sup> Coninckx 1907. Archival documents published p. 67-70.

<sup>31</sup> Bruges, Stadsarchief, *Memorielijst van de Brugse Schilders*, Reeksnummer 314: Beeldenmakers. Available online: [https://zoeken.erfgoedbrugge.be/detail.php?nav\\_id=11-1&id=940065556&index=0&cmvolgnummer=19&bronpaginaid=940066288&indexid=940066371](https://zoeken.erfgoedbrugge.be/detail.php?nav_id=11-1&id=940065556&index=0&cmvolgnummer=19&bronpaginaid=940066288&indexid=940066371).





[Fig. 23]

Cross-section taken in the mantling of the panel with the *Coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy-Beveren*, polarized light (a); UV light (b).

8. Varnish (with deposit in surface).
7. Red glaze: red lake, calcium, glass particles, lead, traces of earth pigment and silicates.
6. Gold leaf.
5. Mordant: lead white, lead-tin yellow, chalk, earth pigment, silicates, glass particles.
4. Varnish with orange fluorescence.
3. Varnish with black particles indicating that the varnish was applied shortly after the black background was painted.
2. Black: carbon-based black, chalk, lead, some particles of gypsum, traces of earth pigment and silicates.
1. Ground layer: chalk.

with Jean Hennecart (active 1454-1475) on the armorial panels of the 1468 chapter, but the latter certainly did not take part in the making of the Mechelen panels since he died in 1475.

Although the general design of armorial panels did not change over the years, there was an evolution in the style with a growing interest in ornamentation and the rendering of details. Comparison of the Mechelen panels with the earliest examples of works of this type reveals how even these standardized designs reflect the general evolution of taste at the time.

The earliest preserved example of a heraldic panel painted for a knight of the Golden Fleece is the *Coat of arms of Jean de Villiers, Lord of L'Isle-Adam* (1384-1437), made for the chapter of 1440 in Saint-Omer, now in the Musée Sandelin [fig. 24].<sup>32</sup> As with the Mechelen panels, the central coat of arms, surrounded by the collar of the Golden Fleece, is surmounted by a helmet and a crest. On either side the mantling is unfurled and at the top and bottom an inscription in gold letters identifies the owner of the coat of arms. But the shapes are simpler than those in the Mechelen panels, the calligraphy is less richly ornamented, the mantling is less abundant, and the rendering of the helmet and the chain is less detailed.

As noted by Christiane van den Bergen-Pantens, the style of armorial panels changes from 1456

onwards, which would testify to the arrival of two new painters: Jean Hennecart, specialised in calligraphy, and Pierre Coustain, who painted coats of arms.<sup>33</sup> There are examples of 35 paintings made for the chapter in the Grote Kerk of The Hague in 1456; however, these are sixteenth-century copies commissioned by Charles V to replace the 1456 originals, which had been destroyed in a fire in 1539.<sup>34</sup> It is possible that in style, these later panels are faithful to their original precedents. The remakes are indeed close to the Mechelen panels from 1491, but the comparison cannot be used as an argument for attributing the Mechelen paintings to Coustain and Hennecart. It is more pertinent to compare them with panels most likely made for the chapter which took place in Saint-Omer in 1461,<sup>35</sup> which are attributed to Pierre Coustain.<sup>36</sup> There are two examples of these in the Musée Sandelin [fig. 25]. As already noted by Christiane Van den Bergen-Pantens,

<sup>33</sup> Van den Bergen-Pantens 1980, p. 224 and Van den Bergen-Pantens 1981 p. 95.

<sup>34</sup> Kruij 2015.

<sup>35</sup> The dating of the panels is debated in the literature. According to the exhibitions catalogue 'La Toison d'or: cinq siècles d'art et d'histoire', Bruges, 1962, the coat of arms of Charles the Bold dates from the chapter of Saint Omer in 1440 (see Pauwels *et al.* 1962, p. 115) whereas that of Simon de Lalaing was made for the chapter of 1431 which took place in Lille. We agree with Van den Bergen-Pantens (Van den Bergen Pantens 1981, p. 95) that their style rules out such an early date and that they were made for the chapter of 1461. Romain Saffré has recently suggested that these paintings were made in 1477-1478 by Pierre Coustain at the request of Margaret of York as memorial panels (see Saffré 2021). However, we do not see why Margaret of York would have commissioned such panels.

<sup>36</sup> Archival documents indicate that Pierre Coustain was paid for the '*patrons des armes de tous les chevaliers qui ont esté et sont encore de la Toison de mondit Seigneur*'. See document from the Lille, Archives du Nord, B. 2045 (Register), October 1461 – 30 September 1462, account of Robert de la Bouverie, Receveur général des finances of the Duke of Burgundy, published by H. Coninckx (Coninckx 1907, p. 67).

<sup>32</sup> This panel is wrongly dated to 1461 on the Joconde database. Christiane van den Bergen-Pantens dates it to 1440, see Van den Bergen-Pantens 1980, p. 288. Romain Saffré, curator at the Musée Sandelin, kept this dating of 1440 and attributes it to Hue de Boulogne, see Saffré 2021, p. 61.



[Fig. 24]

Attributed to Hue de Boulogne, *Coat of arms of Jean de Villiers, Lord of L'Isle-Adam, 1440, 71 x 66 cm* (Saint-Omer, Musée Sandelin, inv. 0431.3 CM) © 8kstories, musées de Saint-Omer.



[Fig. 25]

Attributed to Pierre Coustain, *Coat of arms of Simon de Lalaing* (a), *Coat of arms of Charles of Burgundy, Count of Charolais* (b), 1461, 84 x 60 cm (Saint-Omer, Musée Sandelin, inv. 0431.1 CM; 3018 and 0431.2 CM; 3018) © 8kstories, musées de Saint-Omer.

this series stands out from the previous ones (if we exclude the The Hague series) by the sophistication of the calligraphy, the care taken to describe the ornaments of the collars and helmets, and the mantling that elegantly unfolds in volutes.<sup>37</sup> They are stylistically very similar to the Mechelen series. The same holds true for the armorial panels painted by Jean Hennecart and Pierre Coustain for the chapter of 1468 held in the Bruges church of Our Lady. Although the calligraphy is simpler in the Bruges paintings, the collar, helmet and crest are comparable [fig. 26 and 27].

These similarities could lead to the conclusion that it was indeed Pierre Coustain who made the Mechelen panels. However, two paintings also attributed to Pierre Coustain in the Rijksmuseum are somewhat different in style and quality [fig. 28]. Indeed, these armorial paintings, made for the chapter of the Golden Fleece of 1481 in 's-Hertogenbosch, are in the same spirit and appear to be carried out using the same techniques, but their style is heavier. The emblems are modelled with thicker and less subtle hatching lines, giving a stiffer and more stylised appearance than that

seen in the Mechelen and Bruges panels.<sup>38</sup> As a matter of fact, there is no compelling documentary evidence that Pierre Coustain painted the coats of arms for this chapter, since the records transcribed by Coninckx only indicate that he did 'works' (*ouvrages*) for the chapter, without specifying which ones.<sup>39</sup> Assuming that these works were nevertheless produced by Coustain, it cannot be ruled out that he modified his style slightly for this chapter, that he collaborated with another artist or that he ran a workshop with assistants, which would explain some of the variations in quality and style within his production.

From 1494 onwards, archival documents reveal that it was the painter Jacob van Lathem (ca. 1470-after 1528) and later Jan van Battel (1477-1557) who were in charge of painting the armorial panels for the chapters of the Order of the Golden Fleece.<sup>40</sup> While Jan van Battel was too young to be responsible for the creation of the Mechelen series, Jacob van Lathem, then aged around 21, seems to be another plausible candidate.

37 Van den Bergen-Pantens 1981, p. 95.

38 We are grateful to Petria Noble and Gwen Tauber for sending us the Rijksmuseum's technical documentation on these paintings.

39 Coninckx 1907, p. 69. The website of the Rijksmuseum indicates 'attributed to'.

40 Coninckx 1907, p. 70-71.



[Fig. 26]

(a) Pierre Coustain and Jean Hennecart, *Coat of arms of Anthony, Bastard of Burgundy*, 1468, 85 x 59 cm (Bruges, Church of Our Lady). Z009481.

(b) *Coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy, Lord of Beveren*, 1491, 93.5 x 61 with frame, 91.3 x 58 cm without frame (Mechelen, Saint Rumbold's Cathedral, inv. PA.216.E111). © Joris Luyten.

Production of armorial paintings for the Order of the Golden Fleece was only entrusted to court painters.<sup>41</sup> This fact works in favour of the possible authorship of Jacob van Lathem, who was a court painter under Philip the Handsome and subsequently to Charles V (1500-1558). It is noteworthy that Jacob's father, Lieven van Lathem (c. 1430-1493), was one of 166 painters, and the fourth highest paid, who worked on the decorations for the meeting of the Order of the Golden Fleece in Bruges in 1468.<sup>42</sup> Allegedly, Lieven was also part of the retinue of Maximilian I of Austria on his visits to Bruges in 1487 and 1488, and his son Jacob might have accompanied his father on this trip as a collaborator.<sup>43</sup> It is possible that Jacob, perhaps together with his father, worked on the paintings for the chapter in Mechelen as well. The connection between his father Lieven van Lathem, his work for

the Order of the Golden Fleece, subsequently for Maximilian I of Austria, and Jacob's work for Philip the Handsome might support this thesis. However, as no armorial panels by Jacob van Lathem have been preserved, we cannot compare the style of his production with those in Mechelen.

In the present state of knowledge, the question of the authorship of the Mechelen series remains open, although it was likely to have been a collaborative effort including a painter(s) and calligrapher(s) directed by one artist in the personal service of the sovereign. Despite the stereotypical design, we believe we are able to discern different styles of painting that could reflect different hands. The conservation treatment and documentation of the entire series in 2022-2023 will make it possible to explore the issue of authorship and collaboration in more depth.

<sup>41</sup> Kruip 2015, p. 119.

<sup>42</sup> Van Buren 2008, p. 95.

<sup>43</sup> Pauwels 1995, p. 42.



[Fig. 27]

Details of the owl.

(a) *Coat of arms of Anthony, Bastard of Burgundy*, 1468 (Bruges, Church of Our-Lady). Z009481.

(b) *Coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy* (Mechelen, Saint Rumbold's Cathedral). © Joris Luyten.

### Position and function of the coats of arms during the chapters

The function of armorial panels made for the chapter was complex and of by no means ephemeral nature. As in the aforementioned series in the Hague, commissioned by Charles V to substitute the 1456 originals destroyed in a fire in 1539, the memorial function of the Mechelen panels was just as important as the representative one during the chapters themselves.<sup>44</sup> In 1838, some of the panels having disappeared, the series was completed by reproductions made by the Brussels 'painter-restorer' Luyckx to preserve the memory of the chapter meeting.<sup>45</sup> As tangible traces of the Burgundian heritage, the heraldic panels of the Order of the Golden Fleece were also deployed by subsequent political authorities especially in times of political instability.<sup>46</sup> However, here we will focus on how the panels were actually used, and which meanings

were attributed to them during the chapters themselves.

In a battle, the armorial shield served to protect the knight, but at the same time the coat of arms depicted on it also identified him, since the knight's body and head were hidden behind armour. With regard to this function, Walter Seitter described shields as 'the second body'.<sup>47</sup> Although knights of the Order did not wear a suit of armour during the chapters, the armorial panels, which were placed above each knight's seat in the church stalls [fig. 29], functioned in a similar way.

Heraldic paintings depict the genealogical body – the one that is not visible in the physical appearance of individuals.<sup>48</sup> If the knight was personally present during the chapter, a unique synthesis was formed between him and his coats of arms depicted on the panel. However, even if the knight could not attend the meeting, he was present through his coat of arms. At the same time, through the armorial panel hanging

<sup>44</sup> Kruip 2019.

<sup>45</sup> See Neeffs 1878, p. 176; Laenen 1920; Van den Bergen-Pantens 1981, p. 100 and note 67 in this article.

<sup>46</sup> Thiry 2018b.

<sup>47</sup> Seitter 1982, p. 299-312.

<sup>48</sup> Belting 2011.



[Fig. 28]

Attributed to Pierre Coustain, *Coat of arms of Jacob of Luxembourg, Lord of Fiennes* (a), 1481, 101.1 x 67.5 cm with frame; *Coat of arms of Edward IV, King of England* (b), 1481, 120 x 77 cm with frame (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. SK-A-4642 and SK-A-4641).

above the seat, a person could have bestowed a coat of arms of the absent knight upon themselves and speak as a procurator in the knight's name.<sup>49</sup> This trait, among other things, led Hans Belting to claim that the armorial panels of knights belonging to the Order were treated as the real likenesses, as another kind of face. According to Belting, it is supported by the way the necklace is depicted, as if embracing the knight's neck.<sup>50</sup> The specific heraldic language supports this thesis.

When describing coats of arms, the term 'dexter' (right) is used for what we see on the left side, as if we see ourselves in the mirror. This has to do with the heraldic laterality, or rather, inversion of laterality, established by Bartolo da Sassoferrato in his treatise *De Insigniis et Armis* that became widespread in all parts of Europe by the fourteenth century.<sup>51</sup> The author describes how coats of arms can create presence in

absentia – by means of inversion, which was traditionally reserved only for living beings, or objects of the religious cult.<sup>52</sup> Sassoferrato explains this by drawing analogy with the Scripture – behind which stands the God himself.<sup>53</sup> The inversion is intended to conjure up what is behind the shield: the physical bodies of knights. The armorial panels, which stayed in the church even after the chapter has ended, thus established their presence in absentia. The placement of coats of arms in the sacred space heightened the religious nature of the Order, and, in reciprocity, it presented the knights as patrons of the Christian faith. Moreover, as coats of arms also featured territories under the knights' rule and the chapters were held in various cities across the Burgundian realm, they displayed the territorial power of the Order too.<sup>54</sup>

49 Seitter 1982, p. 300-301.

50 Belting 2011, p. 66.

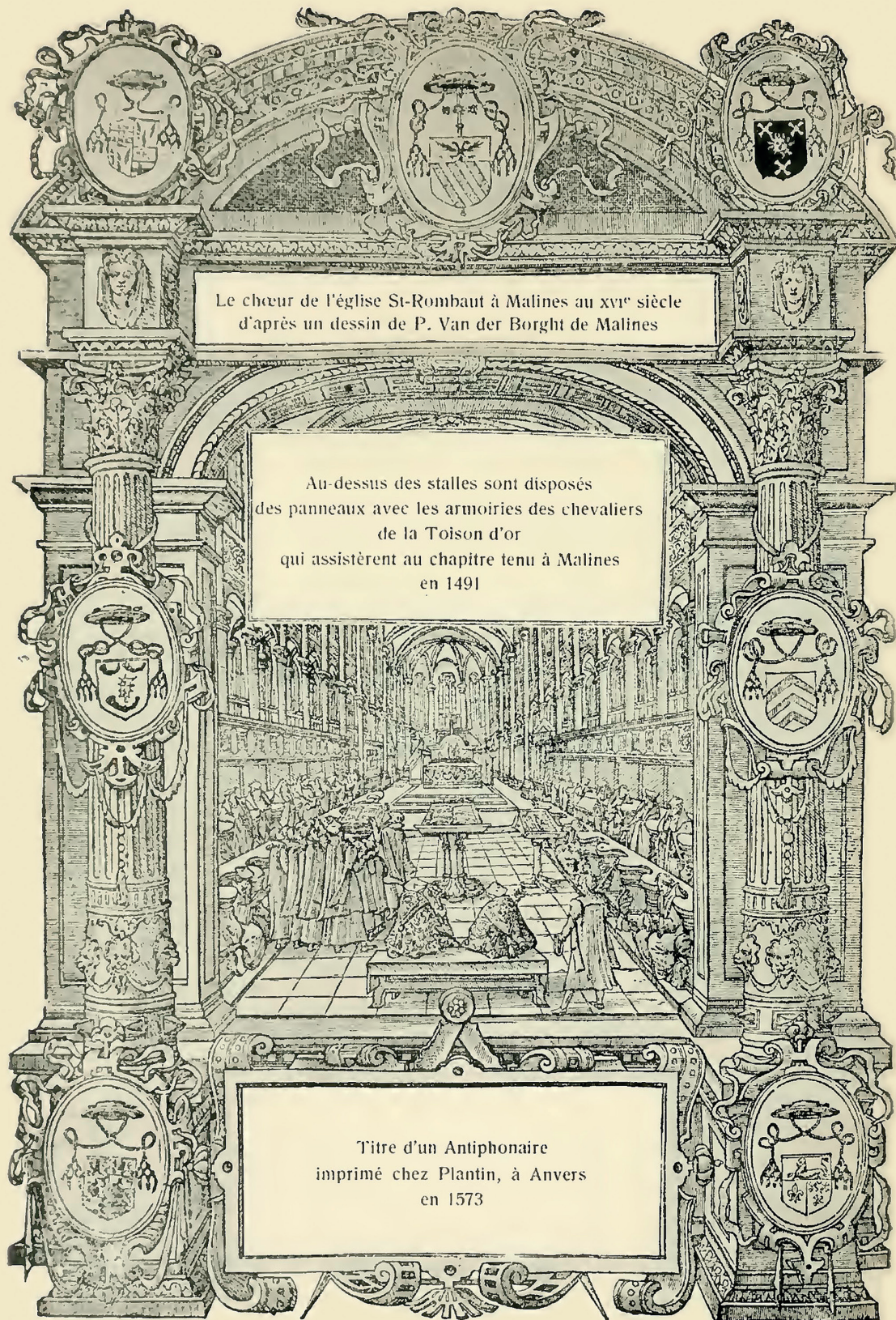
51 See for instance the edition by Cignoni 1998.

52 Hablot 2017, p. 40.

53 *Ibidem*.

54 Kruij 2019, p. 176.

Planche I



[Fig. 29]

P. Van der Borgh, Choir of the church of Saint Rumbold in the fifteenth century, from *Antiphonarium, Antverpiae, Ex officina Christoph. Plantini, 1573* (Antwerp, Museum Plantin Moretus). Reproduced in Coninckx 1907, p. 52.

The specific heraldic laterality might explain why heraldic animals always face the left. However, exceptions to this lateral rule occurred when coats of arms were positioned in the sacred space and its design was adapted to it.<sup>55</sup> The coats of arms of the Order of the Golden Fleece are examples of such an exception. They were depicted in such a way that the helmet, crest, and the ram of the necklace faced the altar. This orientation differed according to the side on which the knights sat in the stalls of the choir, to the left (Gospel side) or right (Epistle side) of the altar.

The position of each knight followed strict rules established in the Statutes of the Order and several other texts.<sup>56</sup> The sovereign sat in the front row, facing the altar, on the side of the epistle (right side). The knights were seated in two rows of fifteen in the stalls, facing each other. Their places, to the left (Gospel side) or right (Epistle side), were assigned at the time of their acceptance into the Order and did not change from one chapter to another. The organization was very hierarchical and took into account the seniority of the knight within the Order and his title (the kings being placed first on either side of the sovereign). If one of the members died between meetings, his seat was covered with a black sheet and a new coat of arms panel was created that did not include the helmet, torse and crest.<sup>57</sup> If a member was excluded from the Order for serious misconduct, his coat of arms was removed from the choir and replaced by a panel on which the reason for his exclusion was written.<sup>58</sup> In the next chapter, the seats of those who had died or who had been excluded from the Order became vacant and the other members moved forward one place in the direction of the altar, the newly elected taking their places at the opposite end.

The MA-XRF analyses revealed a major change in composition of the panel with the coat of arms of Philip the Handsome. The helmet, the crown and the ram of the chain of the Golden Fleece were initially oriented in the opposite direction, meaning that Philip the Handsome might have been intended to sit on the left side of the stalls, instead of the right, as the final appearance of his armorial panel suggests. The change did not occur in an early stage of painting. The radiography of the panel, the MA-XRF-scans and the cross-sections show that these elements and the inscription were already painted and varnished when it was decided to turn the composition the other way around [fig. 30 and 31].

The actual placing of the knights at the Mechelen Chapter is known from the minute books written by the Kings of Arms of the Golden Fleece after each meeting of the Order, preserved in Vienna. On the basis of these documents, Anne Korteweg published the seating arrangements of the knights in the church choir stalls from 1431 to 1491, which show that Philip sat on the fifteenth seat on the right side, corresponding to the current orientation of his coat of arms.<sup>59</sup> However, in the minute books, two paintings with the coat of arms of Philip the Handsome are mentioned [fig. 32].<sup>60</sup>

Philip's two panels illustrated his dual position during the chapter meeting. One was as count of Charolais and its description corresponds to the present panel. The title was reserved for the male heirs of the Burgundian dukes since the early fifteenth century<sup>61</sup> and emphasized Philip's identity as the 'natural' prince and Burgundian heir. The other panel identified Philip as the person who presided over the chapter in the absence of his father. It was to be placed under Maximilian's coat of arms above the sovereign's seat near the altar under a canopy ornamented with the arms of both men, but is now presumably lost. The presence of these two coats of arms of Philip the Handsome during the chapter is indeed likely as it is also mentioned by Cornelius Van Gestel in his *Historia sacra et profana Archidiocesis Mechliniensis* from 1725,<sup>62</sup> which is based on archival materials and probably also on his personal observation as the coats of arms were still in the stalls at that time.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, the simultaneous presence of two armorial panels at the time of the passage from one head of the Order to another was not unprecedented. It happened during the chapter of 1468 when Charles the Bold succeeded Philip the Good and in 1478 when Maximilian succeeded Charles the Bold. Each time, the two armorial panels were placed above the seat of the sovereign.<sup>64</sup>

55 Hablot 2013.

56 See Korteweg 1996.

57 In the case of the 1491 Mechelen panels, the following members were already dead: John of Melley, Jacques of Luxembourg, Joost de Lalaing, Pierre Henin, John I Duke of Clèves, Edward IV of England, Pierre of Luxembourg, John II Duke of Alençon, Willem van Egmont and Philippe I de Croÿ.

58 The Mechelen series still has two examples of this type, the panels of Philippe Pot and of Jacques de Savoie. The exclusion panel of Philippe de Crèvecoeur is lost.

59 Korteweg 1996, p. 219-220.

60 Vienna, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Archive of the Order of the Golden Fleece, box nr. 2, fol. 7v.: 'Et quant au tableau de mondit seigneur l'archiduc pour ses armes que en ensievant l'ordonnance du roy et le contenu de sesdictes lettres on y mettra telles armes que le roy les souloit porter sans y riens diminuer et au dessus ung chapeau d'archiduc. Et que pour son tiltre y sera escript: «Phelippe par la grace de Dieu archiduc d'Austriche, duc de Bourgoingne» etc. ses tiltres tout du long et en la fin d'iceulx «filz chief et souverain de l'ordre de la Thoison d'or». Et de son tableau comme conte de Charrolois que il demourra et sera a ladite feste en son ordre jusques a ce que le lieu soit remply de nouveau chevalier. Et quant a l'offrande et ceremonies qu'il en sera fait comme jadiz fut fait a Bruges ou chapitre que y tint s'en de bonne memoire monseigneur le duc Charles, qui de mondit seigneur que Dieu absoille, quant apres le trespas de feu de pareille memoire monseigneur le duc Phelippe, grant ave de mondit seigneur et fondateur de cest ordre, que Dieu pareillement absoille, icellui feu monseigneur le duc Charles print icellui ordre en estat de chief comme soubz l'auctorité et gouvernement du roy, mondit seigneur fait a present.' We are very grateful to Sonja Dünnebeil for sharing her transcript with us.

61 Thiry 2014, p. 136.

62 Van Gestel 1725, p. 46-47.

63 They remained in their original positions above the choir stalls until the invasion of the French revolutionary troops in 1810, when they were moved to the attic. See Neeffs 1878, p. 176.

64 Korteweg 1996, p. 217 and 219.

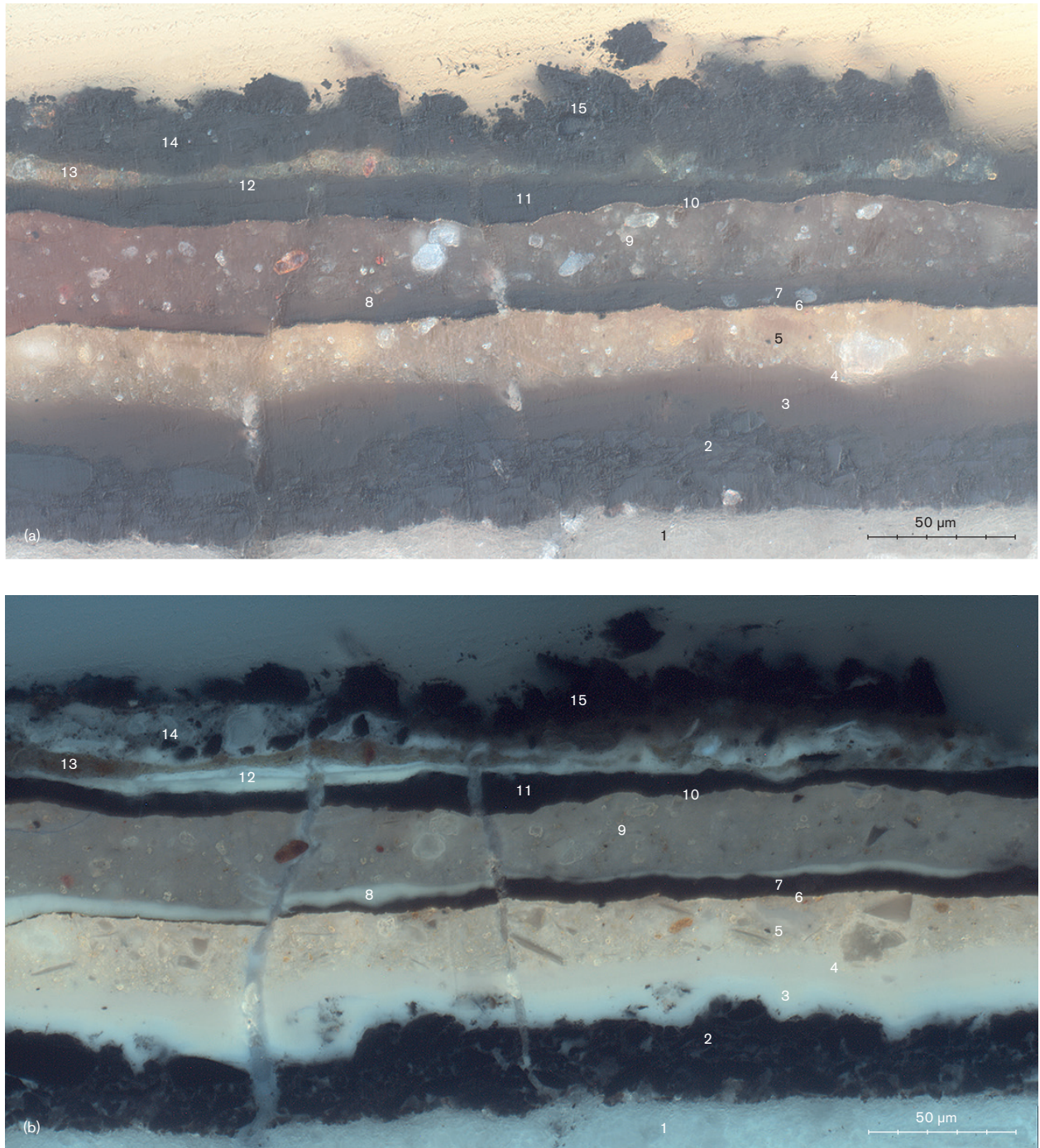




[Fig. 30]

Detail of the helmet and the crown of the *Coat of arms of Philip the Handsome*. The first orientation is visible on the MA-XRF scans of lead and gold, where two crosses are visible as well as the shape of the lower part of the helmet turned the other way around (see arrows). The MA-XRF scan for copper shows that the inside of the visor of the helmet was glazed (see arrow), as on the *Coat of arms of Philip of Burgundy* (see fig. 15).

- (a) daylight.
- (b) MA-XRF scan of lead.
- (c) MA-XRF scan of gold.
- (d) MA-XRF scan of copper.



[Fig. 31]

Cross-section taken in the helmet of the panel with the *Coat of arms of Philip the Handsome*, polarized light (a); UV light (b).

- 15. Black layer: carbon-based black.
- 14. Black – fluorescent layer: bone black, lead white (+soaps), chalk, traces of earth pigments and silicates.
- 13. Greenish layer: lead white, earth pigment, chalk, silicates.
- 12. Varnish (x3).
- 11. Black – 2<sup>nd</sup> layer: carbon-based black, lead, chalk, high concentration of copper in the layer, traces of earth pigments and silicates.
- 10. Gold leaf – 2<sup>nd</sup> layer.
- 9. Mordant – 2<sup>nd</sup> layer: lead white, lead-tin yellow, chalk, glass particles, earth pigment, silicates.
- 8. Varnish.
- 7. Black layer: carbon-based black lead white, chalk, high concentration of copper in the layer, traces of earth pigments and silicates.
- 6. Gold leaf.
- 5. Mordant: lead white, lead-tin yellow, chalk, glass particles, earth pigment, silicates.
- 4. Varnish with orange fluorescence.
- 3. Varnish with black particles.
- 2. Black layer: carbon-based black, chalk, lead, a little earth pigment, silicates.
- 1. Ground layer: chalk.



[Fig. 32]

Placement of the knights of the Order of the Golden Fleece during the chapter of 1491 according to the minute books and Anne Korteweg's publication (Korteweg 1996). This does not completely correspond to the description by Cornelius Van Gestel in 1725, which could indicate that the panels were moved between the time the chapter was held and the time he saw the works.

In green: knights present.

In red: knights absent.

In Black: deceased knights.

In the beginning of his description of the panels at the left side, Van Gestel even seems to mention a third panel for Philip, together with an extra one for Maximilian. However, these may be the same as the ones he describes in his list of panels on the right side that he simply repeats to introduce his description. Alternatively, this third panel might also correspond to a panel still in the cathedral which is not a coat of arms but a text panel indicating in Latin that Philip of Austria presided over the chapter [fig. 33]. The type of writing suggests that it does not date from 1491, but it is possible that it was added between that date and the moment Van Gestel saw the paintings.

Thus, according to these written sources, the panel of Philip the Handsome as Count of Charolais was never hung on the left-hand side. The change in composition perhaps shows a change in the distribution of seats, or at least suggests some confusion. The organisation of the Mechelen chapter must indeed have been quite complex due to the tense political context, the absence of Maximilian, and the ten vacant seats that had to be filled due to the death or exclusion of members at the time of the last chapter in 's-Hertogenbosch in 1481. In practice, the placement of the knights and the identification of their coats of arms was entrusted to the King of Arms of the Order called Golden Fleece.<sup>65</sup> At the Mechelen chapter it was Gilles Gobet who occupied this position from 1468. The 1491 chapter was his last one since he died later that year.<sup>66</sup> We have no information about his health at the time of the chapter preparation, nor we know to what extent Thomas Isaacq (?-1539/1540), his assistant and future successor, contributed to the organization, but this may also be the reason for the error in the panel of Philip the Handsome.

When looking at the whole series of coats of arms, there are other discrepancies that support the thesis that the change in composition occurred due to the chaotic context of creation and was simply a mistake. While some of these errors are explained by the fact that the paintings are copies from the nineteenth-century,<sup>67</sup> others are contemporaneous with the organisation of the chapter. The fact that the coat of arms of John II of Valois, Duke of Alençon [fig. 34], who died in 1476 and whose panel had already been removed at the time of the 1481 chapter, was put back in the stalls is evidence of a certain confusion. It also does not seem



[Fig. 33]

Anonymous, *Text panel*, 94 x 61 cm with frame, 91,4 x 59 without frame (Mechelen, Saint Rumbold's Cathedral). M145849.

logical that the coat of arms of Philip the Handsome was placed at the very end of the right row. In view of his rank as archduke and prince he should have been placed closer to the sovereign's seat than the other new knights also elected in 1481, who were only lords. Archival documents published by Frédéric de Reiffenberg in 1830 show that Maximilian already considered delegating the ceremony to his son in July 1490.<sup>68</sup> Knowing that Philip would not occupy his place as Count of Charolais but that of the head of the Order, it was probably considered preferable to fill the ranks with the new members. Only nine out of the thirty-one knights were present at the chapter of Mechelen due to death or absence [fig. 32].

## Conclusion

The technical examination and scientific analyses of the panels with the coats of arms of Philip the Handsome and Philip of Burgundy-Beveren provide key information on their materials, layer structure and creative process. The support, the ground layer, the materials of the paint layers and the painting technique are very similar in both paintings. The motifs are modelled with delicate black hatching strokes and jewel-like colours on metal leaf, which shimmers against the dark background. The abundance of gold and silver testifies to the prestige of the commission.

The study places these two examples of a little-known and often neglected form of artistic production in a broader context of creation. The Mechelen panels are particularly noteworthy for their finesse and elegance of touch and drawing, the richness of colour, the subtle modelling and the elegance of the calligraphy. They conform closely to the painting style of

<sup>65</sup> De Gruben 1997, p. 35-36; Simonneau 2019; Couhault 2020, p. 214-222.

<sup>66</sup> De Reiffenberg 1830, p. 211. Because of his death, the appointment of his successor was discussed at the meeting of the Order of the Golden Fleece, which in 1491 took place on Saint Andrew's Day.

<sup>67</sup> Luyckx probably made a mistake in the orientation of the ram, helmet and crest on the coats of arms of Ferdinand II, King of Aragon, John, Lord of Lannoy and Engelbert II, Count of Nassau. The other nineteenth century panels are those of Maximilian of Austria, John II, King of Aragon, Ferdinand I, King of Naples, Guillaume de La Baume, Lord of Irlain. They are distinguishable by the painting technique, which is much heavier than the rest of the series. See Neeffs 1878, p. 176; Laenen 1920; Van den Bergen-Pantens 1981, p. 100.

<sup>68</sup> De Reiffenberg 1830, p. 173.



[Fig. 34]

Panel with the Coat of arms of Jean II de Valois, Duke of Alençon, 1491, 93.8 x 61.6 cm with frame, 92 x 58.3cm without frame (Mechelen, Saint Rumbold's Cathedral). Z009551.

coats of arms developed by Pierre Coustain, who could have been the principal artist in charge of the commission. Jacob van Lathem is another possible candidate. The work would probably have been executed by a team of artists and assistants, some of them specialized in calligraphy and others in the painting of coats of arms.

During the chapters of the Order of the Golden Fleece, the seating arrangement of its members was highly codified. The panels with their coats of arms, placed above them in the choir stalls and left in situ after the chapter ended, functioned as their presence in absentia and strengthened the political and territorial power of the Order. This study reveals several discrepancies in the designs and the seating arrangements, including a change in composition of the coat of arms of Philip the Handsome, the placement of the knights in the stalls, and the presence of the coat of arms of John II of Valois, Duke of Alençon. These mistakes reflect the organisational challenges during the complex period of transition between two sovereigns of the Order of the Golden Fleece and two Kings of Arms.

## Acknowledgements

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## Samenvatting - Résumé - Abstract

**NL ::** De ridderorde van het Gulden Vlies, ingesteld in 1430 door Filips de Goede, Hertog van Bourgondië, kwam tussen 1430 en 1559 drieëntwintig keer samen op verschillende plaatsen in de Bourgondische gebieden. Tijdens deze vergaderingen ('kapittels' genaamd) hingen panelen van de wapenschilden van de dertig ridders en de soeverein van de Orde boven de zitplaatsen die ze elk in het koorgestoelte innamen. De wapenborden voor het kapittel van 1491, bewaard in de Sint-Romboutskathedraal van Mechelen, vormen een van de meest complete, nog bestaande reeksen. Onderzoek uitgevoerd door het Koninklijk Instituut voor het Kunstpatrimonium (KIK) op twee van deze panelen met de wapenschilden van Filips de Schone en Filips van Bourgondië, Heer van Beveren, werpt licht op dit weinig bekende, maar belangrijke genre, dat getuigt van de politieke geschiedenis van de Lage Landen aan het eind van de vijftiende eeuw. Moderne analyse- en onderzoekstechnieken worden voor de eerste keer toegepast om de aard van de gebruikte materialen en de opbouw van de verflagen te beschrijven. Verder kijken de onderzoekers naar de bredere ontstaanscontext van deze schilderijen door hun toewijzing te bespreken en na te denken over de perceptie en het gebruik ervan ten tijde van de kapittels van de Orde van het Gulden Vlies. Na de ontdekking dat de schilder van het wapenbord van Filips de Schone de compositie sterk gewijzigd had, gebeurde verder onderzoek naar de plaats van de ridders tijdens het kapittel van Mechelen. Dat bracht verschillende fouten en tegenstrijdigheden aan het licht. Een mogelijke verklaring hiervoor is de turbulente context waarin de schilderijen tot stand kwamen.

**Trefwoorden:** Wapenschilden; Kapittel van de Orde van het Gulden Vlies; Filips de Schone; Filips van Bourgondië-Beveren; Mechelen.

**FR ::** Fondé en 1430 par Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne, l'Ordre de chevalerie de la Toison d'Or s'est réuni vingt-trois fois entre 1430 et 1559 en divers lieux des territoires bourguignons. Lors de ces réunions (appelées « chapitres »), des peintures représentant les armoiries des trente chevaliers et du souverain de l'Ordre étaient placées au-dessus des sièges occupés par chacun d'eux dans les stalles des églises. Les panneaux armoriés réalisés pour le chapitre de 1491, conservés dans la cathédrale Saint-Rombaut de Malines, constituent l'une des séries les plus complètes qui subsistent. L'étude menée à l'Institut royal du Patrimoine artistique (IRPA) de deux d'entre eux, figurant les armoiries de Philippe le Beau et de Philippe de Bourgogne, seigneur de Beveren, met en lumière ce type d'œuvres assez méconnu mais qui est pourtant un important témoignage de l'histoire politique des Pays-Bas à la fin du xv<sup>e</sup> siècle. Des méthodes d'analyse et d'examen modernes sont utilisées pour la première fois pour décrire la nature des matériaux utilisés et la technique picturale. Ces œuvres sont également placées dans un contexte de création plus large en discutant leur attribution et en s'interrogeant sur la manière dont elles étaient perçues et utilisées pendant les chapitres de l'Ordre de la Toison d'Or. La découverte d'un changement majeur de composition dans le panneau aux armes de Philippe le Beau a suscité des recherches sur le placement des chevaliers pendant le chapitre de Malines. Elles ont révélé plusieurs erreurs et incohérences qui s'expliquent par le contexte turbulent dans lequel les peintures furent faites.

**Mots-clés :** armoiries ; Chapitre de l'Ordre de la Toison d'Or ; Philippe le Beau ; Philippe de Bourgogne-Beveren ; Malines.

**EN ::** Founded in 1430 by Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, the chivalric order of the Golden Fleece met twenty-three times between 1430 and 1559 in various places in the Burgundian territories. During these meetings (called 'chapters'), panels depicting the coats of arms of the thirty knights and of the sovereign of the Order were placed above the seats each of them occupied in the church stalls. The panels with the knights' coats of arms made for the chapter of 1491, preserved in the Cathedral of Saint Rumbold in Mechelen, are one of the most complete series in existence. The Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage's (KIK-IRPA) study of two of these panels with the coats of arms of Philip the Handsome and Philip of Burgundy, Lord of Beveren, casts light on this little-known but important genre, which bears witness to the political history of the Low Countries at the end of the fifteenth century. Modern methods of analysis and examination are used for the first time to describe the nature of the materials and the painting build-up. These paintings are also placed in a broader context of creation by discussing their attribution and reflecting on how they were perceived and used during the chapters of the Order of the Golden Fleece. The discovery of a major change of composition in the panel with the coat of arms of Philip the Handsome stimulated further research into the placement of the knights during the Mechelen chapter, revealing several errors and discrepancies that can be explained by the turbulent context in which the paintings were made.

**Keywords:** Coats of arms; Chapter of the Order of the Golden Fleece; Philip the Handsome; Philip of Burgundy-Beveren, Mechelen.