

The Descent from the Cross in the
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum: a small
manifesto of Brussels School Painting



Elodie De Zutter

**BILBOKO ARTE
EDERREN MUSEOA
MUSEO DE BELLAS
ARTES DE BILBAO**

This text is published under an international Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs Creative Commons licence (BY-NC-ND), version 4.0. It may therefore be circulated, copied and reproduced (with no alteration to the contents), but for educational and research purposes only and always citing its author and provenance. It may not be used commercially. View the terms and conditions of this licence at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-ncnd/4.0/legalcode>



Using and copying images are prohibited unless expressly authorised by the owners of the photographs and/or copyright of the works.

© of the texts: Bilboko Arte Ederren Museoa Fundazioa-Fundación Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao

Photography credits

© Archivo fotográfico de la Capilla Real de Granada: fig. 7

© Bilboko Arte Ederren Museoa-Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao: figs. 1-2, 12-13, 15-16 and 18

© bpk / Gemäldegalerie, SMB / Jörg P. Anders: fig. 5 (right)

© bpk / Staatsgalerie Stuttgart: figs. 8 and 19

Elisabeth Dhanens. Hugo Van der Goes. Antwerpen: Mercatorfond. Courtesy of Elodie De Zutter: fig. 5 (left)

© Gallerie degli Uffizi. Gabinetto Fotografico: fig. 6 (left)

© KIK-IRPA, Brussels: fig. 6 (right)

Lefebvre & Gillet. Editions d'Art, 1985, fig. 124b: fig. 14

Musea Brugge © www.lukasweb.be - Art in Flanders vzw, photo Hugo Maertens: fig. 4

© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre): Michel Urtado: fig. 11 (left) / Tony Querrec: (right)

Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2016: fig. 3

Su concessione della Regione Siciliana, Assessorato dei Beni Culturali e della Identità siciliana –

Dipartimento dei Beni Culturali e della Identità siciliana – Museo interdisciplinare regionale di Messina: fig. 9

Text published in:

Buletina = Boletín = Bulletin. Bilbao : Bilboko Arte Ederren Museoa = Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao = Bilbao Fine Arts Museum, no. 10, 2016, pp. 67-98.

Sponsor:



metro bilbao

The painting [fig. 1] depicts the episode of the Descent from the Cross as related in the Gospel of Saint John.¹ The body of the dead Christ is lowered to the ground, wrapped in an immaculate white shroud held by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. The former, wearing dark clothes, occupies the upper left corner of the composition. With his left arm he hangs from the ladder, which is presumably leaning against the cross, not visible in the image, while he holds the three nails that had fastened the crucified Christ to it. With his right hand concealed by the shroud, he supports Christ under his arm. Joseph of Arimathea, shown as a bald man with a long, thick grey beard and who occupies almost all the right half of the painting, bears the weight of the lower part of Christ's body. Dressed in a costly purplish-red mantle with fur trim at the neck and on the sleeves, he holds the shroud with his left hand while looking out of the pictorial space.

It should be noted that the positions of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are reversed in relation to the traditional iconography of this subject.² Given that the former is mentioned in all four canonical Gospels and that Mark and Luke refer to him as an "honourable counsellor" to the Sanhedrim, he is generally given more importance than Nicodemus. For this reason he usually supports the upper part of Christ's body while Nicodemus holds his feet.³ Christ's body creates a descending diagonal and separates the upper part of the composition, which includes Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, from the lower part. The latter area includes a bust-length depiction of Saint John, his hands around the weeping Virgin's shoulders. She is presented frontally, wearing a blue tunic and with her hair covered by a heavy white veil, while Saint John, Christ's most beloved Apostle, wears his traditional red tunic and is seen in profile.

1 While the four canonical Gospels, as well as the apocryphal Gospel of Peter narrate this episode from Christ's Passion, only Saint John refers to the presence of Nicodemus together with Joseph of Arimathea during the Descent from the Cross: Boskovits/Jászai 1970, col. 590; *La Bible de Jérusalem*, Paris, 1998, p. 1832 (translation into French by the École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem). On the iconography of the Descent from the Cross, see also Réau 1957, pp. 513-515; Schiller 1968, pp. 177-181.

2 This reversal of the traditional iconography is to be found in other half-lengths Descents attributed to Colyn de Coter.

3 According to Réau, "dans la plupart des monuments figurés du Moyen Age, la scène de la Descente de Croix [...] s'ordonne ainsi: Joseph d'Arimathie et Nicodème appliquent deux échelles sur la traverse de la croix et y montent pour extraire les clous des mains. Puis, pendant que Joseph soutient le poids du torse, Nicodème descend et décloue les pieds" ("In most of the figurative monuments from the Middle Ages, the scene of the Descent from the Cross [...] is arranged in the following manner: Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus support two ladders on the cross-bar of the cross and climb up to pull out the nails from the hands. Then, while Joseph supports the weight of the torso, Nicodemus climbs down and removes the nails from the feet"; Réau 1957, p. 515). Réau also considered that the richness of the clothing is another distinguishing criteria, Joseph's clothes being more elaborate than Nicodemus's. This criteria does not, however, seem particularly relevant, given that in *The Descent from the Cross* by Rogier van der Weyden (Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, inv. no. 2825), the sumptuous brocade tunic worn by Nicodemus far outshines Joseph of Arimathea's short, dark garment. For the present author the appearance of Joseph of Arimathea, who is always depicted with a beard and older than Nicodemus, is perhaps a more reliable indicator when identifying the two figures who removed Christ from the cross.



1. Studio of Colyn de Coter (active in Brussels between 1480 and 1525)
The Descent from the Cross, after 1520
Oil on oak panel, 97.5 x 64.5 cm
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
Inv. no. 69/69

The fact that the figures occupy almost all the entire pictorial space makes the composition extremely dense. Only visible in the upper part are some small fragments of a gold background graduated with dark brown dots. This spatial organisation does not indicate that the work is a fragment of a larger composition given that all four edges are not painted and have a barbe.⁴ Rather, it reflects the painter's aesthetic decision: it is a close-up view that monumentalises the holy figures with the intention of bringing them close to the viewer.

Status quaestionis

The painting entered the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum as part of the bequest of Laureano de Jado in 1927.⁵ Prior to that, in 1907, it would seem to have been purchased from Francisco de Morales, an antique dealer in Vitoria. At that time it was considered a Flemish painting without a specific attribution, albeit associated with names such as the Master of Flémalle, Rogier van der Weyden, Hugo van der Goes and even "Colin" (de Coter?).⁶

Since it entered the Museum's collection, the painting has been restored twice, in 1978 and in 2013. It would appear that the analysis undertaken in 1978 revealed at least one previous restoration. Thus, for example, the burned appearance of Joseph of Arimathea's face and the right side of Christ's must have been the result of a previous inappropriate cleaning. In addition, in an old photograph in the archives of Max J. Friedländer in The Hague,⁷ it is evident that the work had a series of losses which, to judge from the photograph taken of it in Bilbao prior to its restoration in 1978 [fig. 2], were covered over by a thick varnish, indicating that it had been "treated" before it entered the Museum's collection. During the first restoration the support was reinforced by being injected with xylophène SOR as it had been damaged by wood-boring insects. In addition, some areas where the pictorial layer had significantly lifted were consolidated. Following the removal of yellowed varnish and a general cleaning, losses to the pigment were filled in along the joins and on Joseph of Arimathea's face.⁸ The second restoration, which took place in 2013,⁹ primarily focused on replacing the old areas of reintegration that had aged badly. On this occasion the panel was given a new frame of a style appropriate to its date¹⁰ and a climate-conditioned, Plexiglas box.¹¹

Various examples exist of this type of half-length depiction of the Descent from the Cross. The majority, which have very similar compositions and were painted at the end of the 15th century and throughout the

4 The panel is made up of three planks of high quality oak, the joins of which are reinforced with strips of linen and wedges. On the reverse, the edges of the panel have partially the original bevelling. At a later date, the four corners were cut obliquely and the edges planed down, probably in order to insert the panel into a new frame. The original frame is lost. The average thickness of the panel is 1 cm and 0.7 cm in the planed-down parts.

5 Laureano de Jado was an engineer, art collector and one of the principal promoters of the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum. On his death in 1927 he bequeathed his personal collection of approximately 340 works, which provided one of the core groups of the museum's collection. Muñoz Fernández 2009, p. 4.

6 Thanks are due to Javier Novo González, Head of the Department of Collections at the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum, for the information he provided on the work's provenance.

7 The website of the RKD (Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie) notes that on the reverse of this photograph is the following annotation, hand-written by M. J. Friedländer: "Pol de Mont / 1.1.1910". It is thus possible that the photograph was taken by Pol de Mont (1857-1931), curator at the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten in Antwerp, in January 1910. The presence of losses is also evident in the illustration to a text of 1919 in which the painting is attributed to Rogier van der Weyden. Bilbao 1919a.

8 Information derived from the restoration report written by Ana Sánchez-Lassa, Curator of the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum until 2012, on 10 April 1978.

9 The restoration was undertaken by José Luis Merino Gorospe, from the Department of Conservation and Restoration at the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum. Our most sincere thanks go to him for the technical information he provided on the work and its restoration.

10 The frame was made by José Ramón García.

11 Information derived from the restoration report written by José Luis Merino Gorospe in November 2013.



2. *The Descent from the Cross*
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 69/69
 Photograph before the restoration of 1978

16th century, are considered copies of a lost original painted by the Brussels master Rogier van der Weyden.¹² These Descents, of which more than a hundred examples could have survived,¹³ can be divided into two groups: with three [fig. 3] or four figures [fig. 4]. Most belong to the second type.¹⁴ In the first category, Christ's body is lowered from the cross by a figure who is assumed to be Joseph of Arimathea.¹⁵ Christ is received by Mary, who holds her son's body in her arms. Scenes of this type are presented against a plain,

12 The size of these paintings vary. For example, the version in the Saint Saviour cathedral in Bruges measures 60 cm high by 46 cm wide, while the one in the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Toulouse measures 90 x 57 cm. On Descents after Rogier van der Weyden, see Friedländer 1967, pp. 78-80; Reinach 1923, pp. 214-221; Salin 1935, pp. 15-26; Ringbom 1965, pp. 118-126; Bermejo 1980, pp. 124-131.

13 Vackova 1985, p. 71.

14 The issue of which of these two formulas predates the other and thus the composition of the lost original has provoked some controversy. Some authors consider that the initial composition was pared down, passing from four to three figures (Friedländer 1967, p. 80). Others consider that both typologies are different creations by Van der Weyden during the 1440s and that one does not derive from the other (Ringbom 1965, pp. 122-123; Panofsky 1953, p. 266). Marlier even reached the conclusion that the original had a gold background, "A en juger d'après les copies de la *Déposition* qui accusent le mieux le style de Roger" ("to judge from the copies of the Deposition that most closely reveal the style of Rogier"; Marlier 1966, p. 198). Finally, for Dirk de Vos the first type is the composition with three figures, produced in the 15th century in the circle of Van der Weyden. The second type with four figures would be a development of the first, devised in the 16th century (Vos 1999, p. 369).

15 While Bermejo sees this figure as Joseph of Arimathea, Reinach identifies him as Nicodemus. Marlier also identifies him as Joseph, except in the case of the triptych in which "le vieillard barbu qui soutient le Christ sous les aisselles ne saurait plus être désigné comme saint Joseph d'Arimathe, puisque celui-ci figure sur l'un des volets. Il faut donc y voir Nicodème, bien que sa place près de la tête du Christ ne soit pas conforme à la tradition" ("it is not possible to identify the old, bearded man supporting Christ under the arms as Saint Joseph of Arimathea given that he is depicted on one of the doors. As a result, he must be Nicodemus, although his location close to Christ's head is not the traditional one"; Marlier 1966, p. 198).



3. After Rogier van der Weyden
(the Master of the Saint Catherine Legend?)
The Descent from the Cross, last quarter of the 15th century
Oil on oak panel, 77.5 x 50.2 cm
Buckingham Palace, London. The Royal Collection
Inv. no. 405721



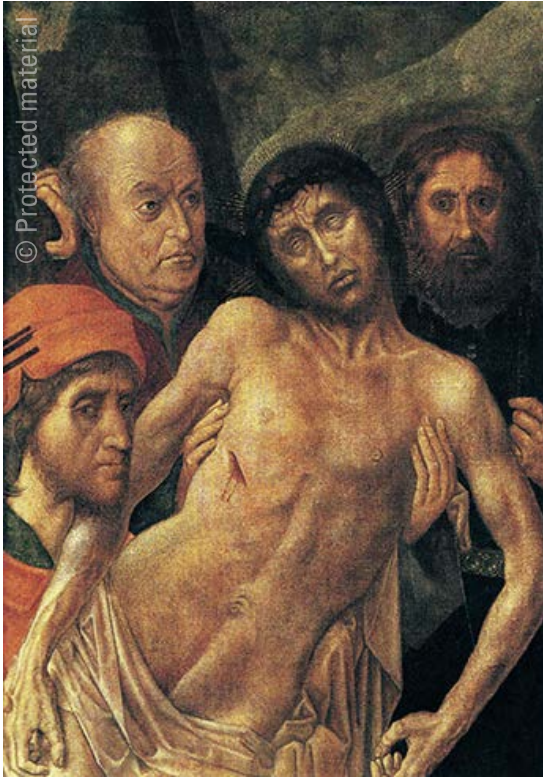
4. After Rogier van der Weyden
The Descent from the Cross, first half of the 16th century
Oil on oak panel, 84.8 x 64 cm
Memlingmuseum, Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges, Belgium
Inv. no. 0000.SJ0186.I

dark background or a gold one emphasised with black brushstrokes. In works of the second type the figure of Saint John appears next to the Virgin on the left of the composition, while the arrangement of the other two figures is slightly different. In some cases, the scene is shown isolated against a gold background while in others there is a background landscape. Within each type, the spatial organisation of the composition and position of the figures is identical in all the known versions. Basing himself on the prayer painted on the doors of an example in Spain,¹⁶ Ringbom suggested that these depictions of the Descent from the Cross could be associated with prayers for indulgences, which would explain the success of this formula.¹⁷ Given the numerous versions attributed to Bruges artists such as Jan Provost or the Master of the Holy Blood, it has often been argued that the original must have been in that city. However, numerous examples were also painted in Antwerp in the style of Pieter Coecke or Quentin Metsys.

Other great masters of 15th-century Flemish painting, such as Hugo van der Goes, Hans Memling and their followers, also made use of this narrative composition (probably first devised by Van der Weyden), deploying their own visual vocabulary. To judge from a possibly autograph work and from the few surviving copies,

¹⁶ Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid, inv. no. 3015. First half of the 16th century (arched top, 88 x 63 cm).

¹⁷ Ringbom 1965, p. 20.



5. Attributed to Hugo van der Goes (Ghent, Belgium, 1440-Auderghem, Belgium, 1482)
Diptych of the Descent from the Cross, also known as the *Small Descent*, 15th century
 Tempera on linen (tuchlein), 53.3 x 38.5 cm (each) Present whereabouts unknown (left panel);
 Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, inv. no. 1622 (right panel)

Van der Goes seems to have made use of a diptych format to depict his half-length Descents [figs. 5 and 6]. This proposal was subsequently adopted by Memling, who reorganised the composition in spatial terms [fig. 7].¹⁸ With regard to the other versions, three of them [figs. 8, 9 and 10]¹⁹ are convincingly attributed to Colyn de Coter, a Brussels painter active between 1480 and 1525.²⁰ The composition of these Descents is clearly different to Rogier van der Weyden's image and in the case of the versions in Stuttgart²¹ and Messina, it is much closer to Memling's interpretation with regard to the arrangement of the figures.²² Finally, it should be noted that only De Coter's compositions present the scene in authentic close-up. While

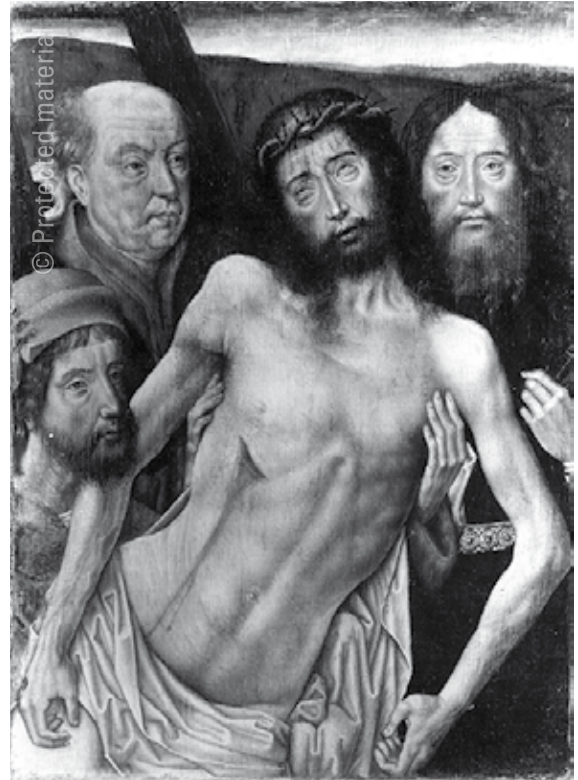
18 On the dating of the prototypes by Van der Goes and Memling, see Ringbom 1965, pp. 129-130. On the subject of half-length Descents after Van der Goes, see also Dhanens 1998, pp. 183-185. On those by Memling, see Van Schoute 1963, pp. 65-73.

19 There is a fourth *Descent from the Cross* dated 1522 and attributed to Colyn de Coter in the *Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts in Brussels* (inv. no. 355), but this is a monumental altarpiece in the form of a triptych with a composition that has nothing in common with the half-length Descents that are of interest here. For this reason it will not be discussed. For an art-historical account and a complete technical and stylistic analysis of the four Descents, see Périer-D'leteren 1985, pp. 110-120.

20 Colyn de Coter's activity as a painter is documented between 1493 and 1511. Catheline Périer-D'leteren believes that this period of activity can be widened to 1480 to 1525. The fact that he worked in Brussels is proved by the phrase repeated in three signed works by the artist: "COLYN (or COLLIN) DE COTER PINGIT ME IN BRABANCIA BRUSELLE (or BRUCCELLE)". For more information on Colyn de Coter, see the various publications by Périer-D'leteren and in particular her monograph on the painter (Périer-D'leteren 1985). For a summary of current knowledge on the artist, see also Périer-D'leteren 2013.

21 The painting's format today is not its original one. A plank has been added to each of the four sides of the panel, while the top was originally arched. The following elements were thus not part of the original composition: the landscape, Nicodemus's left hand, the body and most of Joseph of Arimathea's hand, all the lower part of the painting extending to above the Virgin's hands, Saint John's right arm, the lower part of the ladder and Nicodemus's right elbow. A photograph that clearly shows these additions is in Périer-D'leteren 1985, fig. 249.

22 An observation made by Ringbom which the present author considers relevant (Ringbom 1965, p. 132).



6. After Hugo van der Goes
The Descent from the Cross, last quarter of the 15th century
Left panel of a diptych. Oil on oak panel, 26.5 x 19.8 cm
Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, Italy
Inv. no. 2054
KIK-IRPA, Brussels (black and white photograph)

Ringbom makes use without distinction of the terms “close-up” and “half-length” to describe the half-length Descents in a general manner, when referring to one of De Coter’s versions he notes that: “The image is a close-up in the literal sense of the word, bringing the beholder painfully close to the horrifying details of the Passion: the streams of blood on the suffering face and maltreated body of the Saviour, the collapse of the Virgin and the agony of the other protagonists. None of these features are novel for 15th-century Netherlandish art [...] but not even Rogier himself in his half-length versions of the subject, had condensed them into a representation consisting almost entirely of human figures powerfully modelled with strong contrasts and rich ‘*Stoffwirkung*’”.²³

With regard to *The Descent from the Cross* in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum, it was initially included in the Museum’s catalogues as an anonymous, Flemish School painting of the 15th century.²⁴ Subsequently and following Friedländer’s opinion,²⁵ it was considered a free replica of the *Descent* in Messina attributed to Colyn de Coter,²⁶ but closer to the style of Rogier van der Weyden and by another hand.²⁷ Having studied

²³ Ibid., p. 131.

²⁴ Plasencia 1932, p. 64, no. 284; Roda 1947, p. 41.

²⁵ Friedländer 1934, p. 148; Friedländer 1969, p. 84, no. 101.a, pl. 93.

²⁶ Lasterra 1969, pp. 31-32, cat. 69.

²⁷ This opinion has been quoted on various occasions. Maquet-Tombu 1937, p. 50; Carandente 1968, p. 38, no. 23.



7. Hans Memling (Seligenstadt, Germany, 1430/1440-Bruges, Belgium, 1494)
Diptych of the Descent from the Cross, 15th century
 Oil on oak panel, 53.6 x 38.2 cm (left panel); 53.8 x 38.3 cm (right panel)
 Capilla Real, Granada

De Coter's three autograph paintings on this subject, in 1968 Ringbom wrote a more extensive opinion on the Bilbao painting, considering it the only copy of Van der Weyden's work worthy of interest. The panel, he noted, was "A half Roger-inspired (cf. figure of St John and the gold background), half Hugo-inspired (cf. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea) readaption lacking the archaizing, Flémallesque treatment of lighting and texture of Colyn De Coter himself."²⁸ The influence of Hugo van der Goes, which is quite clear in the present author's opinion, was also noted by Bermejo, who pointed out that the face of the figure whom she identified as Nicodemus²⁹ is based on a typology present in *The Death of the Virgin* and above all in Van der Goes's *Descent from the Cross* formerly in New York³⁰, in which the same figure appears, presented frontally on the right of the composition [fig. 5]. Bermejo also suggested that the Bilbao painting is not a copy of the version in Messina but rather an autograph work by Colyn de Coter painted in the early period of his career before the end of the 15th century. She based this opinion on the execution of some details such as the folds of the draperies and the figures' fleshy mouths, which reveal that artist's style.³¹

²⁸ Ringbom 1965, p. 133.

²⁹ In her description, Bermejo seems to invert the identities of Nicodemus, on the ladder at the top left, and Joseph of Arimathea on the right.

³⁰ Wildenstein & Co., New York, 1958.

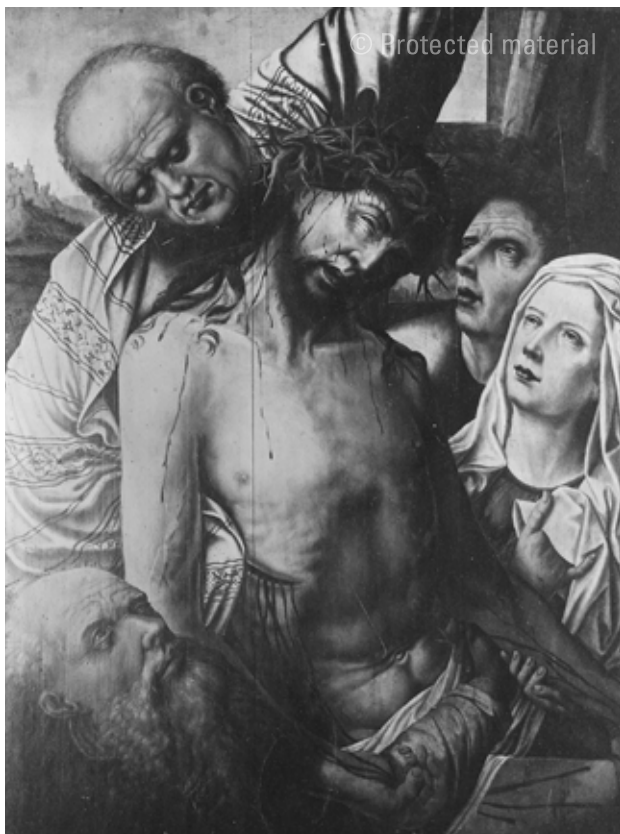
³¹ Bermejo 1980, pp. 191-192.



8. Colyn de Coter (Brussels, c. 1450-1539/1540)
The Descent from the Cross, c. 1520-1522
 Oil on oak panel, 89 x 58 cm (original dimensions)
 Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany
 Inv. no. 741



9. Colyn de Coter (Brussels, c. 1450-1539/1540)
The Descent from the Cross, c. 1520-1522
 Oil on oak panel, 97 x 69.5 cm
 Museo Regionale di Messina, Italy
 Inv. no. A1024



10. Colyn de Coter (Brussels, c. 1450-1539/1540)
The Descent from the Cross, after 1515
 Oil on oak panel, 94 x 74 cm
 Present whereabouts unknown; previously in the
 collection of Dr Justus Herman Wetzel, Berlin



11. Colyn de Coter (Brussels, c. 1450-1539/1540)
The Throne of Grace or The Holy Trinity and The Lament of the Holy Women, c. 1510-1515
Central and right panels of a triptych
Oil on oak panel, 167 x 118 cm (central panel); 167.5 x 62.3 (right panel)
Musée du Louvre, Paris
Inv. nos. RF 534 and RF 1482

In 1995 Castañer,³² who seemingly accepted the attribution to De Coter,³³ pointed out some compositional differences between the version in Bilbao and the one in Messina, which is the one it most closely resembles, in particular with regard to the tilt of the figures' heads. However, she noted that the position of Christ's left arm in both paintings is identical to that of Christ in *The Trinity* by the Master of Flémalle.³⁴ It should be noted that Colyn de Coter also included this detail in his *Trinity* in the Musée du Louvre [fig. 11].³⁵ Castañer concluded that the variations in these details reveal that the artist took some liberties but still maintained his fidelity to earlier compositions, and that the Bilbao panel clearly confirms the innovations of the Ars Nova.³⁶

The present *Descent from the Cross* was included in the exhibition on the Laureano de Jado bequest held in 1998 at the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum. In that exhibition it was also attributed to Colyn de Coter, probably following the opinions of Bermejo and Castañer.³⁷ The painting was published in 1999 with the same attribution, albeit with a question mark.³⁸

In 2006, Sánchez-Lassa considered that the work—for which she maintained the attribution to De Coter and described as being of great technical precision—probably derived from Van der Weyden's lost prototype.³⁹ She also states that the Virgin is based on Van der Weyden's figure in *The Descent from the Cross* in the Museo del Prado, while the figure of Joseph of Arimathea is inspired by a model by Hugo van der Goes, probably the bearded man holding the curtain in *The Adoration of the Shepherds* in the Berlin Gemäldegalerie.⁴⁰

Some references relating to Brussels

As other authors have previously noted, it is evident in our opinion that *The Descent from the Cross* in Bilbao derives from those painted by Colyn de Coter, in particular the painting in Messina. The arrangement of the figures in the pictorial space is similar. Nicodemus's pose is almost identical, clinging onto the ladder with one arm and holding up Christ's body with his other, which is underneath the white shroud so that his hand is not visible. Christ's pose is similar in both works: the palm of his left hand open and pointing upwards, which recalls Colyn de Coter's *Trinity* and its source of inspiration in the Master of Flémalle. The decision to depict the Virgin and Saint John bust-length is common to both paintings, as well as to the version in Stuttgart. The three works are also filled with a sense of *horror vacui*. It should also be noted that the Virgin's veil with its pleated edging, probably inspired by the *Descent* in the Prado, is found in all

32 Castañer 1995, pp. 29-31.

33 In fact the author does not say at any point that this could be a copy and the caption of the painting in the museum in Bilbao reads "Colijn de Couter".

34 M-Museum, Leuven, Belgium, inv. no. S/13/F.

35 The *Trinity Altarpiece* is one of Colyn de Coter's three surviving signed works. It is thus a reference point for attributions to this artist based on stylistic and technical analysis. According to the classification proposed by Périer-D'leteren, this *Trinity* is one of the group of works characterised by the Master of Flémalle's conquest of volume. Périer-D'leteren 1985, pp. 60-65.

36 The author also mentions the existence of two prints after Van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross* in the Prado but which, in her opinion, derive from models executed by Colyn de Coter (Master of the Banderoles, *The Descent from the Cross*, Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Kupferstichkabinett; and Cornelis Cort, *The Descent from the Cross*, Kunstsammlung der Veste Coburg). For the present author no particular connection with Colyn de Coter is evident. Sincere thanks are due to the staff of the Print Department at the Royal Library of Belgium for their help in researching these prints and for their cordial welcome.

37 Bilbao 1998, p. 2. It should be noted that Périer-D'leteren does not mention the painting in his 1985 monograph Colyn de Coter.

38 Logroño 1999, p. 132, fig. 92.

39 Sánchez-Lassa 2006. The same entry by that author is reproduced in two updated versions in the museum's guides published in 2011 and 2012.

40 Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, inv. no. 1622A.

three versions. Finally, Joseph of Arimathea's left hand is clenched (more or less tightly, depending on the painting) on the white shroud. While these similarities establish a certain affiliation between these different Descents, it is the existence of divergent iconographic and aesthetic choices that should above all be emphasised.

Firstly, the Bilbao version is the only one depicted against a gold background, whereas the versions in Messina, Stuttgart and Berlin have landscape backgrounds.⁴¹ The gold is enlivened across the entire surface by dark brown dots which emphasise the shadows projected by the figures and the frame. With regard to the figures' positions and spatial integration, it is important to note that in comparison to the versions in Stuttgart and Messina, the figure of Christ in Bilbao has been altered to make it incline more towards the viewer, resulting in an almost frontal position. For this reason, the *perizonium*, which is barely suggested in the German and Sicilian versions, is more clearly visible and has exaggerated folds. This effect emphasises the ubiquity of the white drapery that crosses the whole composition in a diagonal along Christ's body. In addition, while the prominence of the draperies and their volumetric execution are undoubtedly characteristic of Colyn de Coter's style, here they have been taken to extremes. For example, the long but delicate, narrow shroud that falls over Nicodemus's shoulder in the two autograph panels by De Coter has been replaced here with a heavy piece of drapery with numerous, pronounced folds that resemble a thick blanket rather than a delicate shroud. Similarly, Mary's light veil now takes the form of a very large, turban-like garment created from a decorative piling-up of the folds. Finally, the composition's frontal nature is further reinforced by the position of Joseph of Arimathea and the Virgin, who are seen full-face. Overall, the group thus has the appearance of an assemblage of forms located in planes that are barely distinguishable from each other and are not stepped back in depth.

As Castañer noted, the orientation of the figures' heads is different in the Messina and Bilbao versions. We should look at how this difference affects the composition. In the painting in Sicily, the faces of Mary and Joseph of Arimathea echo Christ's, thus giving form to the idea of a *compassio* or participation in his suffering,⁴² while Nicodemus and Saint John fix their gazes on him. This expressive and symbolic intent is also observable in the Stuttgart version, in which the faces of the Virgin, Saint John and Christ echo each other, while Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea sadly contemplate their suffering. This aesthetic choice, which functions to encourage the viewer to participate—like the figures in the painting—in Christ's suffering, is not found in the Bilbao painting. While Nicodemus retains the same position as in the Messina painting, he looks out of the pictorial space. Furthermore, the direction of the Virgin's face has been reversed with regard to Christ's, destroying the visual effect of the *compassio*. Finally, Joseph of Arimathea's head is lifted higher, with the result that his attention is completely focused on the viewer, creating a powerful contact with the outside world but losing the connection with the dramatic episode in which he is involved.

These changes notably diminish the expressive force of the subject in comparison with Colyn de Coter's autograph Descents. A similar impoverishment is also observable in the Virgin and Saint John's expressions of suffering. While the suffering in the Bilbao panel is only conveyed by a few tears that run down

41 Extensive comparisons with the Berlin version will not be made here for various reasons. As the work's whereabouts has been unknown for many years it has not been possible for any specialist to examine it in the same detail as the versions in Stuttgart and Messina and it has not been the subject of laboratory analyses. In addition, its attribution to Colyn de Coter is not universally accepted by specialists. Finally, the compositional arrangement clearly differs from the examples in Stuttgart and Messina, as does the style, which is much more expressionistic. Its connection with the Bilbao painting is thus not close enough to merit an extensive comparison in our opinion.

42 For a detailed analysis of the theme of the Virgin fainting and the concept of *compassio*, its interpretation and depiction in art, see Neff 1998, p. 255.

the two figures' relatively impassive faces, in the Stuttgart and Messina paintings the corporeal expression of sadness is emphasised by the haggard, tense faces and by the use of the highly effective motif of Saint John supporting the Virgin's head with his hands, derived from Bernard van Orley. In the Bilbao painting, however, he merely places his hands on the Virgin's shoulders, producing a clearly less dramatic effect. The influence of Van Orley⁴³ in the Messina and Stuttgart paintings is also evident in Mary's physiognomy,⁴⁴ with a large chin that particularly recalls the face in *The Hanneton Triptych*.⁴⁵ The appearance of the Virgin in Bilbao is more closely linked to Van der Weyden and is probably inspired by the figure in *The Descent from the Cross* in the Prado, as Sánchez-Lassa noted. In our opinion, it is not possible to discern any resemblance to other Virgins by Colyn de Coter. The influence of Van der Weyden is also revealed in the figure of Nicodemus, who more closely resembles the Joseph of Arimathea in some of the half-length Descents inspired by the great Brussels master than that of Nicodemus in works attributed to De Coter.⁴⁶ Although also of a type found in Van der Weyden's work, the pose of Saint John, however, recalls that of the angel to the left of the principal group in De Coter's *Trinity*. With regard to Joseph of Arimathea in the Bilbao painting, this figure in fact departs from the type devised by De Coter and rather suggests Van der Goes. Furthermore, his belt also appears in the different versions of this subject inspired by the latter, while the nails that he holds in those paintings are here held by Nicodemus in his left hand,⁴⁷ a detail not to be found in Colyn de Coter's Descents. These observations support recent research which has focused on demonstrating the important impact of Hugo van der Goes's art on painting in Brussels. His activity at the Rouge-Cloître in Auderghem for five years and the subsequent dispersion of the holdings of his studio were undoubtedly a source of inspiration for artists in Brussels that has long been underestimated.⁴⁸

Overall, while the painting in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum is principally inspired by autograph Descents by Colyn de Coter, it offers a compilation of various models from the Brussels School. The question is thus whether the work is an original invention by the artist who painted it or whether it reproduces a possible missing link. Who was that artist? To try to answer these questions, the technique employed in its execution should be analysed.

Technical analysis

The under-drawing, which is visible in the infra-red reflectograph taken when the painting was restored in 2013 [fig. 12], is relatively abundant and was produced using a dry medium. It consists of both lines which establish the forms and hatching used to indicate the location of the shadows. Meticulously arranged according to a regular spatial organisation, this careful hatching does not vary in density and as such, does not an-

43 This reference to Bernard van Orley was first pointed out by Maquet-Tombu 1937, p. 50.

44 Observation made by Périer-D'leteren 1985, p. 111.

45 Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels, inv. no. 358.

46 See, for example, the versions that were sold in Paris (Orloff, 29-30 April 1920, lot 41, present whereabouts unknown) and London (Phillips, 8 December 2008, lot 63, present whereabouts unknown).

47 It is possible that the Bilbao artist here corrected the prototype by Van der Goes, given that it was normally Nicodemus who held the nails as it was he who traditionally removed them from Christ on the cross. It should, however, be noted that these nails do not appear in the *tüchlein* in New York attributed to Van der Goes nor in the two copies in poor condition (Staatliche Lindenau-Museum, Altenberg, Germany, cat. 182; and Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, inv. no. 1939.99). However, the position of Joseph's hand in these versions and the presence of the nails in at least two copies (fig. 8, and Voormalig Klooster Zusters karmelietessen, Ghent) allow for the assumption that they were represented in the prototype.

48 In this regard, see Campbell 2013, pp. 36-47. Various works that were included in the exhibition *L'Héritage de Rogier van der Weyden* held in Brussels and which have marks demonstrating that they were originally painted in that city, reveal the influence of Van der Goes to such an extent that they were attributed to him in the past. See more specifically entries 28 and 29 in the exhibition's catalogue.



12. *The Descent from the Cross*
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
Inv. no. 69/69
Infra-red reflectograph

ticipate the modelling in the painting phase. The changes made between the under-drawing and the painting would seem to reveal a desire to harmonise the relationship between the compositional elements during the latter phase. For example, the Virgin's eyes have been slightly lowered and part of the folds of her veil has also been reduced. The positions of Saint John and Joseph of Arimathea's fingers have also been altered. Finally, the position of the latter's head is also changed.⁴⁹ In contrast, there are only a few pentimenti in the under-drawing, which suggests that this is a copy rather than an original creation. In fact, it is an abundant, diligent and academic under-drawing in which there is no room for improvisation. The breaks to the lines that define the Virgin's veil and Saint John's tunic suggest still further a drawing executed free-hand and copying a model rather than the use of some mechanical method of reproduction.⁵⁰ The model in question could have been an independent drawing reproduced free-hand on the panel, with the necessary adjustments made during the painting phase, thus explaining the pentimenti during that phase. I will return to this issue.

49 This modification is now visible on the surface due to transparency resulting from the loss of pictorial surface's density caused by abrasive cleaning in the past.

50 According to Périer-D'leteren, neither Colyn de Coter nor his workshop made use of pouncing. Périer-D'leteren 1985, p. 46.



13. *The Descent from the Cross*
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 69/69
 Detail of the flesh tones of Nicodemus's left cheek

14. Colyn de Coter (Brussels, c. 1450-1539/1540)
Saint Peter and the Chosen, fragment of the
Last Judgment Altarpiece of Saint-Alban, c. 1510
 Oil on oak panel, 130.5 x 57 cm
 Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen–Alte Pinakothek,
 Munich, Germany,
 On loan from the Wittelsbacher Ausgleichsfonds
 Inv. no. WAF 163
 Detail of the flesh tones of one of the chosen,
 on the right of the composition



With regard to the pictorial execution, the artist used a rapid technique based on a simple stratigraphy of paint layers in order to achieve immediate effects. In general, he applied a mid-tone base, which he graduated by superimposing light and dark colours. The mark of the brush is evident in the paint. On the faces of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea the shadows are created through the superimposition of a pinkish-brown tone over the mid-tone base, painted with small brushstrokes that vary in density according to the desired degree of shadow. The highlights are achieved with pale pink impasto. This construction of the flesh tones recalls the technique used by Colyn de Coter in his *Saint-Alban Altarpiece* [figs. 13 and 14]. The artist of the present work did not always outline the forms and there is frequent overlapping, in particular in Nicodemus's hand and the top part of his head, which extend clumsily onto the gold ground. In the areas of Christ's flesh the gradations of light are achieved through the top layer of paint, which has a greyish tone in the shadows and is white in the brightest parts, superimposed over the base tone which is partly visible due to the way the brush's tip is used to dig into the upper paint layer, thus revealing it [fig. 15]. This technique is also evident in the Virgin's face. The white drapery is modelled with a simple system that alternates black brushstrokes in the intense shadows and areas of white impasto for the highlights over a smooth grey ground [fig. 16]. For Mary's veil the artist also seems to have added some blue pigment. This manner of constructing the draperies coincides with the technique employed by De Coter in his *Trinity* altarpiece in the Louvre.⁵¹ The same is also the case with the modelling of the flesh tones, which in both works is constructed from the inside towards the out. However, with regard to both the flesh tones and the draperies, the lighting in *The Trinity* is dominated by contrasts, while in this *Descent* in Bilbao it is more all-enveloping and graduated. The chiaroscuro that characterises *The Trinity* is already applied in the under-drawing through an abundant grid of hatching which overlaps or intensifies according to the degree of shadow required. In this

51 For an analysis of the technique used to execute the *Trinity Altarpiece*, *ibid.*, pp. 60-65.



15. *The Descent from the Cross*
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 69/69
 Detail of the flesh tones of Christ's right eyebrow



16. *The Descent from the Cross*
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 69/69
 Detail of the drapery of the Virgin's veil

sense, while the under-drawing of the *Descent* is also constructed from hatching and lines that indicate the interrelationship of the forms, this hatching is less abundant and strictly parallel, in general closely following the sense of the forms without ever becoming truly dense. However, the under-drawing that establishes the forms is more emphatic in some deep folds of the draperies. Finally, some distinctive traits unique to De Coter's autograph under-drawing, such as the small waves on the angel's cheek in *The Trinity*, are not to be found in the more academic under-drawing in the Bilbao painting [figs. 17 and 18].

The more graduated modelling of the flesh tones in the Bilbao *Descent* is probably closer to De Coter's approach in the Messina version in which, influenced by Quentin Metsys (according to Périer-D'leteren), the shadows, which are smaller, blend more into the highlights rather than being violently juxtaposed.⁵² As a result, with the exception of the modulation of the luminous transitions in the flesh tones, which Colyn de Coter aimed for in some of his late works, the pictorial technique of the Bilbao version includes various procedures characteristic of his works influenced by the Master of Flémalle, in particular *The Trinity* in the Louvre, which is one of his three signed works. In addition, for the present author the "volume and space issues" in the Bilbao painting is similar to that of *The Trinity* in the sense that, "les personnages paraissent se situer dans un même plan, parce que les différents niveaux de profondeur sont à peine perceptibles, sensation qu'accroît encore l'étalement des formes sur toute la surface de la composition."⁵³ It is likely that the use of the gold background in this *Descent* was also inspired by *The Trinity* with the aim of achieving a comparable spatial effect.

While the pictorial procedures observed would seem to derive from the technique deployed by De Coter, it is nonetheless evident that the painter of the Bilbao work is less refined and more careless. If the manner of painting the hair on the heads and in the beards is compared to that in the painting in Stuttgart, for example, the graphic tension and precision of every detail make the latter work far superior to the present one, in which the hair is depicted using dark or light brushstrokes of a fuzzy and undefined appearance, applied

52 For an analysis of the technique used to execute the painting in Messina, *ibid.*, pp. 114-115.

53 "it gives the sensation that the figures are located in a single plane, given that different levels of depth are barely perceptible, a sensation increased still further by the way the forms spread across the entire surface of the composition"; *ibid.*, p. 64.



17. *The Throne of Grace or The Holy Trinity*
Musée du Louvre, Paris
Inv. no. RF 534
Infra-red reflectograph. Detail of the face of the angel at the lower left



18. *The Descent from the Cross*
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
Inv. no. 69/69
Infra-red reflectograph. Detail of Saint John's head

over a mid-tone ground [fig. 19]. In addition, in the case of the Stuttgart painting, the dense execution and volumetric handling of Joseph's face is only very slightly evident in Nicodemus in Bilbao, even though in the present author's opinion he is the best painted figure in the work. An examination of the chromatic range reveals that in both the Stuttgart and Messina versions De Coter seems to have mixed different pigments in order to create specific pale tones, such as Nicodemus's salmon pink turban. These innovative chromatic effects, which reflect the influence of contemporary painters, are not present in the Bilbao panel, in which the artist maintains the traditional chromatic range. Furthermore, this painter does not venture to depict the beautiful brocade motifs on Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus's clothes. Finally, the use of the *guilloché* technique to create the dots that decorate the background of the Bilbao panel is not technically comparable to that found in *The Trinity*, for example. In the former, the gold background is decorated with clumsy dots of a dark brown, almost black, tone that are of identical size and equidistant, using an almost mechanical technique. The shadows have been created with brown translucent glazing applied over those dots. In the Louvre painting the dots, combined with the glazing, vary in size and density according to the desired effects. This difference in the manner of painting is a further clue that allows us to distinguish between an autograph work and a workshop product.⁵⁴ To complete this analysis, it should be noted that Joseph of Arimathea's belt is painted in a meticulous and careful manner, albeit using a simple technique involving the superimposition of different colours over a brown base tone.

In short, the pictorial technique found here is characteristic of late 15th- and early 16th-century paintings but in many aspects it is close to Colyn de Coter's work. It is primarily characterised by surface effects that enhance the expressivity of the brushstroke rather than by a complex superimposition of translucent

⁵⁴ To compare the difference between a *guilloché* executed by the master and another by his workshop, see the two versions of the *Ecce Homo* by Albrecht Bouts (church of Notre-Dame de la Cambre et Saint-Philippe Néri, Ixelles, Belgium, photo IRPA X043310) and by his workshop (Humbeek Collection, Belgium, photo IRPA Y006711). For a summary of the evolution of the function and treatment of gold grounds in painting, see Frère 2014.



19. *The Descent from the Cross*
Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany
Inv. no. 741
Detail of Joseph of Arimathea's face

glazes without any brushwork effect, enhancing the sense of depth. Despite this, the areas of impasto are relatively flat.

The author's opinion

While the inferior quality in the compositional construction and in the expression of emotions, as well as the presence of a compilation of different sources had already called into question the autograph status of this work, the few comparisons that have been undertaken with securely autograph works by De Coter or ones acknowledged as autograph, allow for a conclusion that the artist of the Bilbao panel was undoubtedly inspired by the style and technique of that Brussels painter but without achieving his level of mastery. The compilation of models from the Brussels School and the specific knowledge of Colyn de Coter's works and pictorial technique⁵⁵ allow for this *Descent from the Cross* in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum to be attributed to a painter active in that artist's workshop, in the present author's opinion.⁵⁶ The painting is directly inspired by the version in Messina and as such must have been painted after 1520/22.⁵⁷

55 It should be noted that the dimensions of the paintings in Bilbao, Stuttgart and Messina are very similar, which could be another argument in favour of them being produced in the same workshop.

56 However, in the paintings attributed to Colyn de Coter and to his workshop we have not encountered other examples of similar elements that the artist took from any surviving works by Van der Goes, which has further supported the hypothesis that this is a painting executed in the master's studio. The influence of Van der Goes on De Coter does not seem to be associated with the borrowing of iconographic motifs but rather with the expressivity and dynamism of the composition. He was inspired by his chiaroscuro when painting the light and also copied specific technical procedures.

57 In this case the present author maintains the date proposed by Périer-D'leteren given that, in contrast to previous authors, her argument is not solely based on stylistic issues but rather on observations on the technique of execution in relation to the painter's overall evolution. Périer-D'leteren 1985, pp. 110-115. Those pages also include the suggestions on dating made by earlier specialists.

Given the deficiencies in the pictorial technique and the academic style of the under-drawing, it seems unlikely that the artist who painted the Bilbao panel was the creator of this compendium of different sources. It is more probable that he copied an original composition to be found in the repertoire of models in his workshop then subsequently corrected some details while he worked.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, it cannot be ruled out that he was a better inventor than painter and that he did in fact devise this work. The question is difficult to resolve. Whatever the case, this unusual compilation of famous models was probably a commercial strategy on the part of the workshop to attract clients. This is in fact a work of notably local character which functions as a type of manifesto aimed at promoting the Brussels School of painting. As Didier Martens has explained, local characteristics in a painting allow a particular style to be championed with the aim of competing with other centres of production.⁵⁹ This is also an atypical work which, while making reference to the great masters, has an original composition which distinguishes it from the servile copies that flooded the art market in the early 16th century.

The newly private, individualised nature of devotion in the late Middle Ages was accompanied by a consequent demand for sacred images as visual aids to meditation. The principal purpose of these images was to arouse the viewer's empathy so that they identified with the figures represented and shared their suffering.⁶⁰ In this context, the subject of the Descent from the Cross⁶¹ was ideal in that it combined both Christ's physical suffering with the emotional suffering of those close to him, particularly his mother. By coming very close to this dramatic episode from the Passion through the use of "close-up",⁶² the viewer cannot remain indifferent before Christ's sacrifice, which the gold background transforms into something timeless and perpetual. The event becomes "dégagé de son contexte spatial et temporel pour en cristalliser l'essence autour du thème"⁶³. In addition, the gold emphasises the transcendental nature of the work and brings the spectator a little closer to the divine. Of a relatively large size for a work intended for private devotion, the panel in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum was maybe painted for the altar of a private chapel⁶⁴ where the Virgin's gaze, with her weeping eyes, would meet those of the person engaged in prayer.⁶⁵

58 The possibility that the model might have been executed in another studio seems unlikely. It would have needed to be sufficiently well known to be reproduced; in which case it is likely that other examples would have survived.

59 "Le choix d'un modèle iconique apparaît ainsi lié au lieu, mais aussi au temps et à ses modes. Le recyclage de têtes de la *Descente de croix* de Louvain dans l'atelier de Colyn de Coter correspond à un mouvement de 'retour à Rogier' dans la peinture bruxelloise de la fin du XV^e siècle, lequel s'observe également dans la production du Groupe au Feuillage brodé et chez le Maître de la Légende de sainte Catherine. Ce mouvement paraît bien avoir visé à affirmer, dans une dynamique d'école, une spécificité stylistique locale face à la concurrence exercée par d'autres centres artistiques" ("The choice of an iconic model thus appears to be associated with the place, but also with the period and its tastes. The recycling of heads in the Leuven *Descent from the Cross* in the workshop of Colyn de Coter corresponds to a movement of 'return to Rogier' in Brussels painting of the late 15th century which is also evident in the output of the Group of the Embroidered Foliage and in the Master of the Saint Catherine Legend. It seems that the aim of this movement was to establish, within the dynamic of a particular school, a local stylistic specificity in the face of the competition represented by other artistic centres"); Martens 2009-2011, pp. 30-31.

60 On private devotion and this empathetic function of religious images, see in particular Ringbom 1965; Smeyers 1991, pp. 219-236; Belting 1998, pp. 555-575. A useful summary on the evolution of images intended for private devotion and the specific characteristics of their production in Henderiks 2010, pp. 101-109.

61 On the adaptation of the subject of the Descent from the Cross for private devotion, see Ringbom 1965, p. 124.

62 On the success of half-length formats in works of private devotion, *ibid.*, p. 48.

63 "Isolated from its spatial and temporal context with the aim of crystallising the essence of the subject"; Smeyers 1991, p. 223.

64 "The bedroom images were apparently, if of a smaller format, hung in the beds [...]. For compositions on a larger scale there were other possibilities; either the image was hung on the wall, often in a niche or bay which could be shut off from the rest of the room with a curtain, or if an altarpiece, it could be placed on a domestic altar, or in wealthy houses even in a domestic chapel"; Ringbom 1965, p. 38.

65 To conclude this article, sincere thanks should be expressed to Catheline Périer-D'leteren and Valentine Henderiks, who offered me the opportunity to undertake this research on such an interesting painting. Thanks are also due to the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum and in particular to José Luis Merino Gorospe and Javier Novo González for their cordial welcome during my study of the painting *in situ*. I would also like to thank Jean-Luc Pypaert for making his images available to me. Finally, many thanks to Valentine Henderiks, Elisabeth Van Eyck and Mathieu De Gand for their patient reading of this text.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Belting 1998

Hans Belting. *Image et culte : une histoire de l'image avant l'époque de l'art*. Paris : Cerf, 1998.

Bermejo 1980

Elisa Bermejo Martínez. *La pintura de los primitivos flamencos en España*. 2 vols. Madrid : Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto Diego Velázquez, 1980.

Bilbao 1919a

Recuerdos artísticos de Bilbao. [Bilbao] : J. E. Baranda Icaza, 1919.

Bilbao 1998

Laureano de Jadoaren ondareko pintura flandestarra = Pintura flamenca en el legado Laureano de Jado. [Exhib. guide, 277]. Bilbao : Bilboko Arte Eder Museoa = Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, 1998.

Campbell 2013

Lorne Campbell. «Hugo van der Goes et Bruxelles» en Véronique Bücken ; Griet Steyaert (eds.). *L'héritage de Rogier van der Weyden : la peinture à Bruxelles 1450-1520*. [Exhib. cat., Bruxelles, Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique]. Tielt (Belgique) : Lannoo, 2013, pp. 36-47.

Carandente 1968

Giovanni Carandente. *Sicile : collections d'Italie, I*. (Les Primitifs flamands, II. Répertoire des peintures flamandes du quinzième siècle, 3). Bruxelles : Centre national de recherches «Primitifs Flamands», 1968.

Castañer 1995

Xesqui Castañer. *Pinturas y pintores flamencos, holandeses y alemanes en el Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao*. Bilbao : Fundación Bilbao Bizkaia Kutxa, 1995.

Dhanens 1998

Elisabeth Dhanens. *Hugo van der Goes*. Anvers : Fonds Mercator, 1998.

Frère 2014

Wendy Frère. *Entre tradition et innovation : l'usage des fonds dorés au XVe siècle et en particulier dans les peintures de Dirk Bouts, de ses fils et de leur atelier (Louvain, ca. 1457-1549)*. Bruxelles : Université Libre de Bruxelles, 2014 [unpublished master's degree final project].

Friedländer 1934

Max J. Friedländer. *Die Altniederländische Malerei*, vol. IV : *Hugo van der Goes*. Berlin : Paul Cassirer, 1934.

Friedländer 1967

—. *Early Netherlandish Painting*, vol. II : *Rogier van der Weyden and the Master of Flémalle*. New York : Frederick A. Praeger, 1967.

Friedländer 1969

—. *Early Netherlandish Painting*, vol. IV : *Hugo van der Goes*. New York : Frederick A. Praeger, 1969.

Henderiks 2010

Valentine Henderiks. «Aura et standardisation des images flamandes de dévotion au tournant du XVe siècle», Alain Dierkens ; Gil Bartholeyns ; Thomas Golsenne (eds.). *La performance des images*. Bruxelles : Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2010, pp. 101-109.

Lasterra 1969

Crisanto de Lasterra. *Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao : catálogo descriptivo : sección de Arte Antiguo*. Bilbao : [s.n.], 1969.

Logroño 1999

Las tablas flamencas en la Ruta Jacobea. [Exhib. cat., Logroño, Claustro de la Iglesia de Palacio; catedral de Santo Domingo de la Calzada]. Fernández Pardo... [et al.] (eds.). Logroño : Diócesis de Calahorra y La Calzada-Logroño, 1999.

Marlier 1966

Georges Marlier. *La Renaissance flamande : Pieter Coeck d'Alost*. Bruxelles : Robert Finck, 1966.

Martens 2009-2011

Didier Martens. «Modèle(s) et traduction(s) : autour de deux Primitifs brabançons du Museo de Zaragoza», *Annales de la Société royale d'archéologie de Bruxelles*, t. LXX, 2009-2011, pp. 9-54.

Maquet-Tombu 1937

Jeanne Maquet-Tombu. *Colyn de Coter : peintre bruxellois*. Bruxelles : Nouvelle Société d'Éditions, 1937.

Muñoz Fernández 2009

Francisco Javier Muñoz Fernández. «Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, 1908-2008 : cien años de coleccionismo», *Congreso Internacional Imagen Apariencia, noviembre 19, 2008 - noviembre 21, 2008*. Murcia : Universidad de Murcia, 2009.

Neff 1998

Amy Neff. «The Pain of Compassio : Mary's Labor at the Foot of the Cross», *The Art Bulletin*, New York, vol. LXXX, no. 2, Juin 1998, pp. 254-273.

Panofsky 1953

Erwin Panofsky. *Early Netherlandish painting, its origins and character*. 2 vols. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1953.

Périer-D'leteren 1985

Catheline Périer-D'leteren. *Colyn de Coter et la technique picturale des peintres flamands du XVe siècle*. Bruxelles : Lefebvre & Gillet, 1985.

Périer-D'leteren 2013

—. «Colyn de Coter» en Véronique Bücken ; Griet Steyaert (eds.). *L'héritage de Rogier van der Weyden : la peinture à Bruxelles, 1450-1520*. [Exhib. cat.]. Bruxelles : Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique ; Lannoo, 2013, pp. 323-337.

Plasencia 1932

Antonio Plasencia. *Catálogo de las obras de pintura y escultura del Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao*. Bilbao : Imprenta provincial, 1932.

Réau 1957

Louis Réau. *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, part II: Iconographie de la Bible, vol. 2: Nouveau Testament. Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1957.

Reinach 1923

Salomon Reinach. «A lost picture by Rogier van der Weyden», *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, London, vol. 43, no. 248, November 1923, pp. 214-221.

Ringbom 1965

Sixten Ringbom. *Icon to narrative : the rise of the dramatic close-up in fifteenth century devotional painting*. Abo (Finland) : Abo Akademi, 1965 (*Acta Academiae Aboensis, Ser. A: Humaniora*, vol. 31, no. 2).

Roda 1947

Damián Roda. *Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao*. Bilbao : Caja de Ahorros Municipal de Bilbao, 1947.

Salin 1935

Edouard Salin. «Copies ou variations anciennes d'une œuvre perdue de Rogier van der Weyden», *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Paris, part XIII, 1935, pp. 15-26.

Sánchez-Lassa 2006

Ana Sánchez-Lassa. «The Descent from the Cross», *Bilbao Fine Arts Museum : guide*. Bilbao : Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, 2006, p. 24 (ed. in Spanish: *Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao : guía*; ed. in Basque: *Bilboko Arte Ederren Museoa : guida*).

Schiller 1968

Gertrud Schiller. «Die Kreuzabnahme und das Begräbnis Jesu Christi», *Iconographie der christlichen Kunst*. 2. *Die Passion Jesu Christi*. Gütersloh : Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1968, pp. 177-181.

Smeyers 1991

Maurits Smeyers. «Prière et ostentation : dévotion et images XVe-XVIe siècle», Jan Van der Stock (ed.). *La Ville en Flandre : culture et société, 1477-1787*. [Exhib. cat.]. Bruxelles : Crédit Communal, 1991, pp. 219-236.

Vackova 1985

Jarmila Vackova. *Collections de Tchécoslovaquie*. Micheline Comblen-Sonkes (col.). (Les Primitifs flamands, II. Répertoire des peintures flamandes du quinzième siècle, 4). Bruxelles : Centre national de recherches «Primitifs Flamands», 1985.

Van Schoute 1953

Roger Van Schoute. *La chapelle royale de Grenade*. (Les Primitifs flamands, I. Corpus de la peinture des anciens Pays-Bas méridionaux au quinzième siècle, 6). Bruxelles : Centre national de recherches «Primitifs Flamands», 1953.

Vos 1999

Dirk De Vos. *Rogier van der Weyden : l'œuvre complet*. Paris : Hazan, 1999.