

A Fifteenth Century Painting made by a Follower (?) of Rogier van der Weyden in the Antwerp Cathedral



The oldest painting in the Antwerp cathedral dates from the 15th century and is dedicated to the life of Saint Joseph. The reverse is completely different and the attribution to one and the same painter must be questioned. The condition of this side is not that good: the painting was rediscovered in 1858 during restoration when a layer of black paint was removed.

It is certain that this panel originally belonged to a larger composition in which the scene of *Emperor Augustus and the Tiburtine Sybil* formed the outside of the altarpiece. The other panels that belonged to the same work seem to be lost. That the panel/altarpiece was made for the Antwerp cathedral is not certain. The first description of the painting only appeared in 1728.

The identification of the artist by several authors:

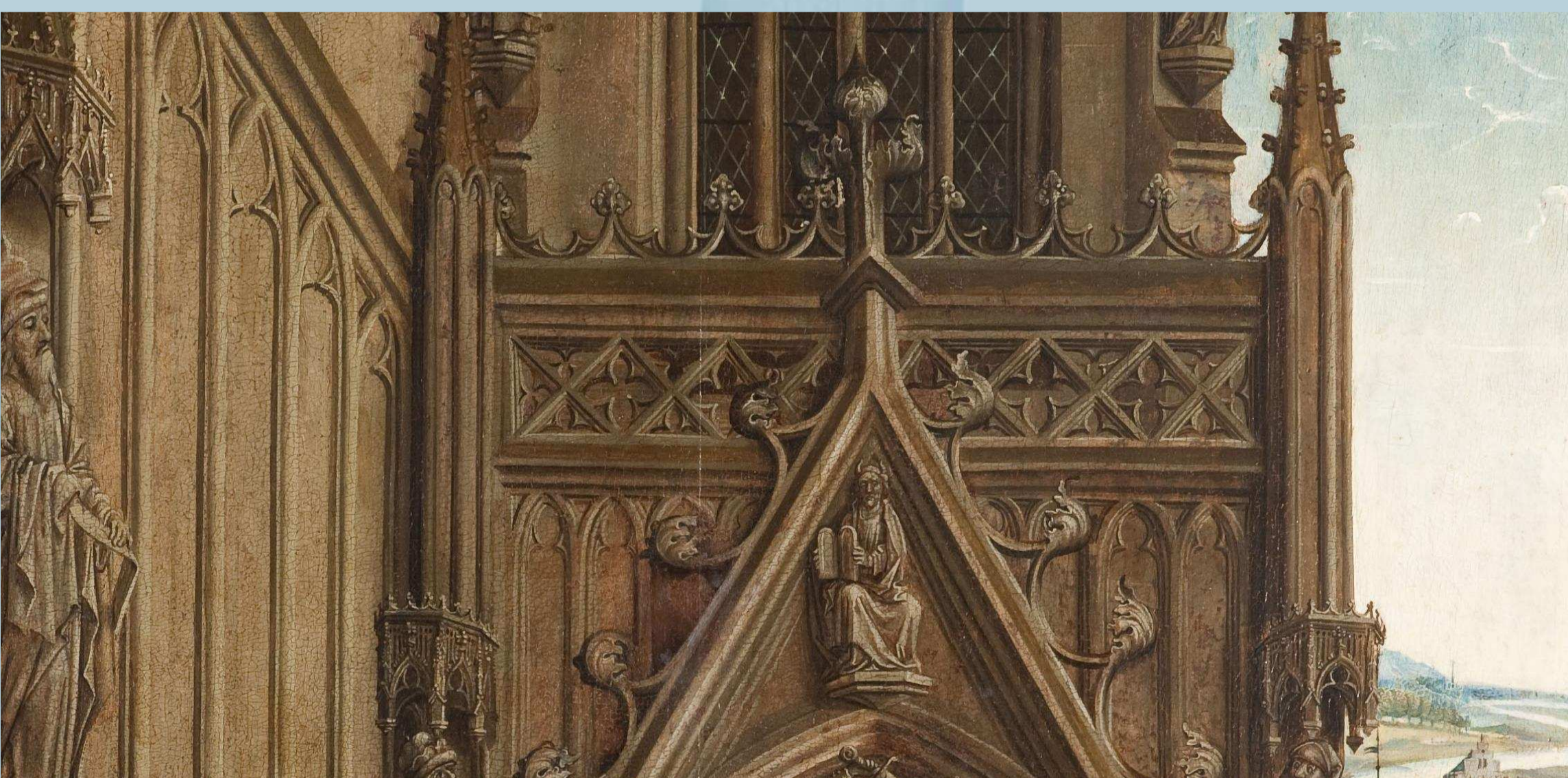


1866	A. Michiels	Pieter van der Weyden, son of Rogier van der Weyden
1902	G. Hulin de Loo	<i>Maitre inconnu de l'école de Rogier van der Weyden</i>
1928	H. Fierens-Gevaert	Master of the Edelheere triptych
1967	M. Friedländer	Follower of Rogier van der Weyden
1968	L. Van Puyvelde	Master of the Marriage of Mary
1991	L. De Maeyer	Follower of Rogier van der Weyden
1996	J. Bungeneers & S. Grieten	Follower of Rogier van der Weyden
1996	S. Kemperdick	<i>Niederländischer Meister</i>
1999	D. De Vos	Workshop of Rogier van der Weyden
2007	L. Nys	<i>Entourage de Rogier van der Weyden</i>

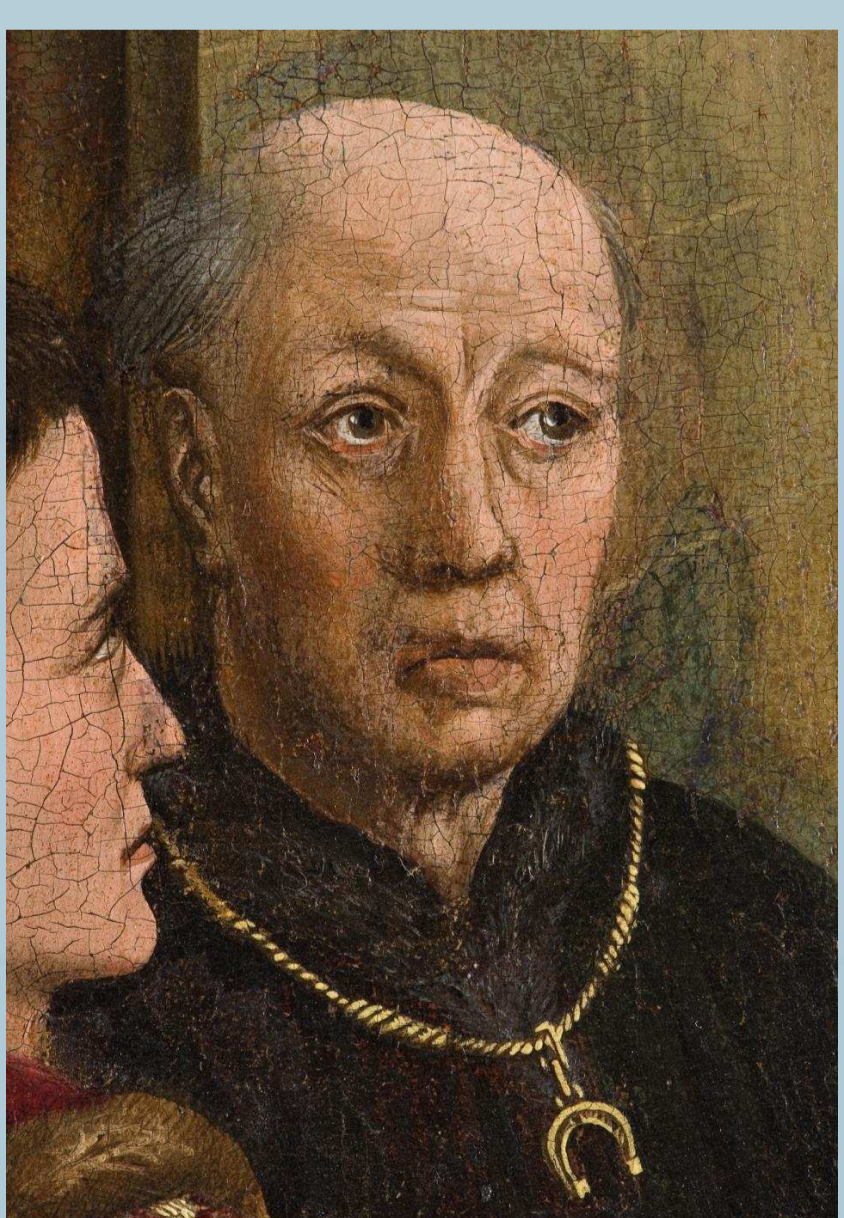
1. Anonymous Master, *Scenes from Saint Joseph's life* 128 x 104 cm Antwerp, Cathedral of Our Lady, inv. no. 128.
2. Anonymous Master, *Emperor Augustus and the Tiburtine Sibyl, (reverse)* 128 x 104 cm Antwerp, Cathedral of Our Lady, inv. no. 128
3. Anonymous Master *Scenes from Saint Joseph's life (detail architecture)* Antwerp, Cathedral of Our Lady
4. Infrared reflectography: detail architecture
- 5-8 Figures without underdrawing Anonymous Master *Scenes from Saint Joseph's life* Antwerp, Cathedral of Our Lady
9. Master of the Portraits of Princes *Scenes from Saint Joseph's life* Private Collection

The painter of the *Scenes from the life of Saint Joseph* must have been in closer contact with Rogier van der Weyden's workshop. Several elements and details also appear in the paintings of this master and his workshop, such as the main composition that can be found in *The Dream of Pope Sergius* (Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum).

In the middle of the painting a man stands under a small roof. This figure was probably available as a model and it is present in several other paintings, such as the *Exhumation of Saint Hubert* (London, National Gallery) and the *Seven Sacraments altarpiece* (Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts). It may derive from a figure in the *Bladelin triptych* and it is also present in paintings by the Master of the View of Saint Gudule and the Master of the Saint Catherine Legend.



The underlying drawing demonstrates that the artist paid great attention to the preparatory stage. He searched for the right composition of his architectural setting. Analysis of the painting process suggests that the artist first executed the architecture and later the figures. Therefore several persons overlap with the architectural elements.



In addition, five persons were added afterwards, caused by the fact that the underlying drawing is absent. They were added afterwards, when the work was finished. One of them, a man with a necklace, was added over an existing, painted person.

It is certain that this painting must have been made by a professional artist in a workshop, somewhere in Brussels, and in all likelihood in the close entourage of Rogier van der Weyden.

A stylistic analysis demonstrates that at least two painters were active to finish this work.

In addition it is certain that this painting was known in Brussels, because the Master of the Portraits of Princes, was informed about it and copied it in a similar way.

