

STATUETTES, 'TAILLEE EN BOIS BIEN FECTE'

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In a French text of 1463 describing a courtly debate about rhetoric between three writers from the circles around Duke Philip the Good and Jan II of Bourbon, twelve poetic portraits are sketched of fictitious ladies-in-waiting at the court of Lady Rhetoric. The last of them is Glorious Achievement, who describes herself as a nude statuette that can be viewed and turned around to admire her perfection: 'Which permits someone to turn and twist me around, So that one may gaze as if examining, Whether in me there is a wrinkle or something to be corrected, Or something of which to be ashamed.'¹ This passage is a rare illustration of the esteem in which miniature sculpture was held in fifteenth-century court culture. At that time, autonomous statuettes of ivory, boxwood and other fine kinds of wood had already secured a place for themselves in princely collections, and also played a part in self-presentation.² Another, earlier indication of this is found in the fourteenth-century French source already quoted elsewhere that enumerates the kinds of boxwood object that could be made, among them 'ymages de buix' (boxwood statuettes).³ A small boxwood *Venus pudica* in Vienna may give an idea of the kind of statuettes with which Glorious Achievement associated herself [FIG. 178].⁴

In contrast to the micro-carving done by a specialist workshop like Adam Dircksz's, small figures like this – both autonomous statuettes [FIG. 6] and parts of a larger narrative ensemble – were probably often by-



FIG. 178



FIG. 179

products of the workshops that usually made large retables and statues. That is certainly the case with one of the earliest boxwood sculptures from the Low Countries, a miniature reliquary bust of a female saint fitted with a small crown and base [FIG. 179]. The inventories of the duc de Berry and Charles V of France regularly mention such statuettes with their costly trimmings, and this small bust would have belonged in a similar courtly context.⁵ As Williamson has convincingly demonstrated, it must have been made in the workshop of Jacques de Baerze (active late fourteenth century) in Dendermonde. He was one of the leading Flemish sculptors of his day, and it was from him that Duke Philip the Bold of Burgundy ordered two large retables for the Chartreuse de Champmol near Dijon.⁶ The stylistic similarities between the small reliquary bust and a number of female figures from one of those retables, the *Altarpiece of Saints and Martyrs*, is striking. The fact that the wood of the small bust was never painted, with the exception of the lips and the eyes, is an indication of the early appreciation of boxwood as a material in its own right, and an early example of *Holz-sichtigkeit*, the deliberate decision not to polychrome wooden sculptures, which became increasingly common from the late fifteenth century on.⁷ The growing high regard for boxwood as a noble material for small sculpture may have been fostered by the declining use of ivory in France as a result of the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453).⁸ A small boxwood diptych from Cologne that imitates an ivory French one from the early fourteenth century has to be seen

in that light.⁹ The choice of the wood was naturally prompted in part by its tactile qualities. Early on it must have become a custom to touch small sculptures and admire them in one's hands, in the spirit of Glorious Achievement.

While the earliest known boxwood statuettes come from France or the Franco-Flemish region, in the immediate vicinity of the source of the wood, the fashion for miniature wooden sculptures of this kind seems to have expanded eastwards in the course of the fifteenth century, most notably to the Rhineland region.¹⁰ The great influence of the sculptor Nicolaus Gerhaert von Leyden (c. 1430–1473), who hailed from the Low Countries, may have played a part in that development. What can be regarded as the undisputed masterpiece of Late Gothic micro-carving, the *Rothschild Madonna* in the Cloisters in New York [FIG. 180], is one of the statuettes by him and his workshop. Standing 33.6 centimeters high, it was made around 1470–75, when Gerhaert had moved his operation from Strasbourg to Frederick III's imperial court in Vienna.¹¹ His preference for boxwood over fruitwood or limewood, which were more customary in the Danube region, could have been due to his training in the Netherlandish tradition, but it certainly points to the growing appreciation of the material as well. As with De Baerze's reliquary bust, only the lips and eyes of the Virgin and Child were subtly polychromed. The extraordinary elegance, monumentality and vitality of the *Rothschild Madonna*, and also the fact that the statuette has been carved equally delicately all round, suggests that it was not intended solely



FIG. 180



FIGS. 181, 182, 183

as a devotional sculpture but was made to impress artistically as a piece of cabinet sculpture *avant la lettre* for a pampered public at the Vienna court. The esteem in which the bare wood was held is possibly even more apparent in a delicate relief of the Annunciation that came from Gerhaert's immediate circle [FIG. 181]. It, too, was deliberately left unpainted, whereas a contemporary replica in the inferior papier-maché was lavishly polychromed [FIG. 182].¹²

Localizing the workshops where small and miniature boxwood sculptures were made is quite tricky, given the lack of archival data. In only a limited number of cases does the style or even a signature narrow the search down a bit, so the history of this sculpture genre in the Low Countries is necessarily sketchy. All the same, it can be said that the makers of boxwood sculptures were not all active in the major towns of the southern and western Netherlands. It is surprising, for example, that a relatively large number of statuettes can be attributed to workshops in the eastern border region around the river Meuse and the Lower Rhine, which already had a long and rich monumental sculpture tradition. One such is a statuette of the Virgin and Child 36 centimeters high which is given to the leading Maastricht woodcarver Jan van Steffeswert (c. 1470 – after 1525) on the evidence of the original signature [FIG. 183]. It was made around 1510 and repeats the formulae that he developed for his larger sculptures, but in a more delicate and detailed form.¹³ The latter is due to the lack of polychromy on the fine-grained wood, with the result that part of the detailing that would otherwise have

been rendered with color is now entirely three-dimensional. A much smaller statuette of St Barbara makes such a seamless stylistic match with Van Steffeswert's oeuvre that there can be no doubt that it came from his workshop [FIG. 184].¹⁴ It precisely follows an oak statue of the saint eight times as large in the church of Neeroeteren (Belgium), the only difference being that Barbara's attribute of a tower has been switched from left to right [FIG. 185]. The statuette has the typical wear and damage caused by intensive use, and it may have been a personal bauble, possibly a name saint, that was carried around as a kind of amulet and was regularly picked up, viewed and venerated by its female owner.

An imposing Virgin on a crescent moon can be attributed to the Master of Elsloo, an anonymous but influential contemporary of Jan van Steffeswert who was probably active in Roermond, a little to the north [FIG. 186].¹⁵ In many respects the statuette follows the composition of an oak Madonna more than a meter high from a *marianum*, and several variants of it, but the complexity and effect of depth in the drapery folds make it superior to all the master's larger versions.¹⁶ That heightened three-dimensionality also seems to be associated with the refined material and the small format, because one finds the same high quality in two statuettes of the Virgin and John the Evangelist in the so-called Master of Elsloo group. Each is a little under 22 centimeters high and is made of the equally fine-grained pear wood.¹⁷ The scale and the types of wood used evidently invited greater plasticity. The hexagonal foot on which the crescent



FIGS. 184, 185, 186



FIGS. 187, 188

moon is balancing gives the figure a regal and independent look. As with Gerhaert's *Rothschild Madonna*, it seems that the display of great artistry was at least as important here as the figure's devotional function.

A boxwood group of Samson forcing the lion's jaws apart is another statuette in the Master of Elsloo group [FIG. 187].¹⁸ This Old Testament story had been popular in court circles since the fourteenth century, particularly in the form of brass aquamaniles and candlesticks. The fight between the biblical hero and the lion had both profane and religious connotations, as an exemplum of strength and as a prefiguration of Christ's conquest of evil. Additionally, it could be an expression of chivalrous ideals and courtly love.¹⁹ It is a fluently carved statuette that makes efficient use to maximum effect of a limited range of tools and techniques that were also employed for large oak sculptures, such as the zigzag *Tremolierung* for the ground, the parallel wavy lines for the lion's mane and tasseled sleeve bands or the curly ends of Samson's locks of hair. The expressive physiognomy of the fierce hero and his striding stance are captured to perfection, and have their parallels in larger sculptures by the master, unlike the rather stiff lion.²⁰

The anonymous carver of two small statuettes of the good and bad thieves on their crosses in the Rijksmuseum were made with the same means but with far more bravura [FIG. 188]. They come from what must once have been a very costly and richly detailed miniature Passion altarpiece that was commissioned by someone in the very highest social circles. The

micro-carver excelled both in the eloquent, tormented poses and anguished facial expressions and in the virtuoso depiction of all sorts of minute details, such as the freestyle carving of the cords, buttons, button-holes, teeth, toes, muscles and veins, and finally the bark of the crosses [FIG. 189]. Despite the great difference in size there is a surprising relationship with the tiny figures in several Crucifixion altarpieces by Adam Dircksz and his workshop [FIGS. 29, 55, 73]. However, one cannot immediately place the artist in the county of Holland. On the evidence of his style and specific motifs he would have been active in the duchy of Cleves. It is no coincidence, then, that one of the earliest known Netherlandish boxwood statuettes, a Madonna with a bunch of grapes (second half of the fourteenth century), came from this culturally flourishing region, more specifically from the Marienbaum monastery between Cleves and Xanten.²¹ Dismas and Gestas are close in style to the work of another anonymous artist, the Master of the Kalkar St Anne Altarpiece (active c. 1475–1510), who was the most progressive and talented woodcarver in the Cleves region around 1500.²² It was recently suggested that he should be identified as Raeb(e) Lambert Lutenzoon, a carver who had been active in Emmerich since 1478.²³ Given the astonishing quality of the carved work of the two thieves Dismas and Gestas, it is reasonable to assume that the commission came from the ducal court at Cleves, which maintained close ties with the Burgundian court of Philip the Good in Brussels.²⁴ This internationalist and art-loving milieu would have provided a fitting



FIG. 189



FIGS. 190, 191

context for the costly small Passion altarpiece from which the two statuettes came.²⁵

Two more or less complete Crucifixion groups give another idea of such miniature 'devotional theaters', even if the feeling for detail and technical standard of the carving are a touch inferior to the two thieves.²⁶ A Golgotha in Brussels is admittedly not by the same maker as Dismas and Gestas, but it does have the same ambition and display of virtuosity in the motifs. Compare, for instance, the angels by Dismas, the freestanding cords and the care taken over the anatomy [FIGS. 190, 191]. The figures, which are even a little smaller than those of the thieves in Amsterdam, are more elongated. The nucleus of the group, the three figures on their crosses, come from around 1500, roughly the same period as the Rijksmuseum thieves. On the basis of the style, particularly that of Christ, one would once again expect the origin to be in the Lower Rhine region.

At least five decades later this Crucifixion was expanded with kneeling aristocratic figures: a man in armor with a six-pointed star on his breastplate, and an elegantly clad woman with a strikingly classical face.²⁷ Comparable figures are known from epitaphs and tombs by Cornelis Floris and his workshop in Antwerp from the mid-sixteenth century on. The 'donors' in this small domestic altarpiece share the classical garb and facial features of his figures.²⁸ It is possible that the Crucifixion left the Lower Rhine region and ended up in Antwerp in the first half of the sixteenth century, where it gained two extra protagonists. Or did the transformation only take place

when the group was in the celebrated art collection of Joan d'Huyvetter (1770–1833) in Ghent in the early nineteenth century? His cabinet, which a contemporary called 'a veritable national museum in miniature', was decorated throughout in a late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century style, and the addition of 'donors' to complete the Crucifixion group would have been fully in keeping with such a historicizing setting.²⁹

The second Crucifixion altarpiece, which is in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich, lacks its original *caisse* but was installed in an early sixteenth-century one from Ulm in the nineteenth century. It is otherwise complete [FIG. 192]. The composition and varied motifs have their origins in the monumental Brabant retables, so this group was most likely made in the southern Netherlands. For example, the foreground scene, with the exception of the unusual detail of the woman gesticulating dramatically on the far left, is closely related to a Brussels altarpiece of around 1466 that was commissioned by a counsellor of Duke Philip the Good, Michel de Gauchy, for Ambierle Priory in France [FIG. 193].³⁰ The horsemen in the middle ground are grouped differently around the Cross, but here too the relationship to the monumental altarpiece is unmistakable. One obvious difference is the greater concentration of figures and the addition of details, particularly in the clothing, armor and the horses' caparisons, a feature that was partly dictated by the small scale.³¹ It is this very tendency to refine, which Kosegarten saw as one of the pre-conditions for the development of autonomous



FIGS. 192, 193



FIG. 194

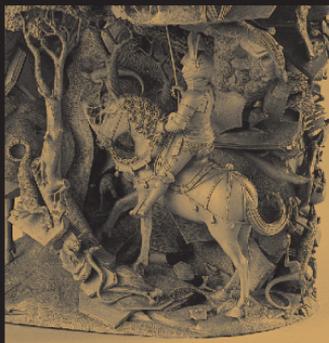
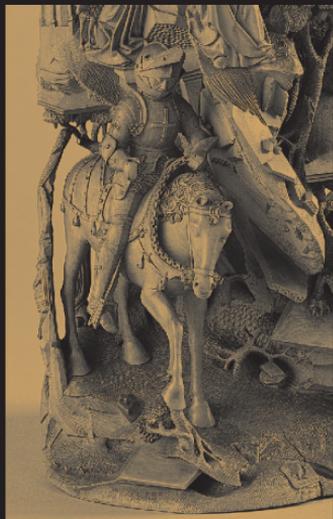
boxwood *Kleinplastik* in the fifteenth century,³² that makes the Munich domestic altarpiece more closely related to the micro-Passion scenes in some prayer nuts and miniature altarpieces [FIGS. 29, 55, 73].

Refinement, a concentration of figures and an abundance of highly detailed motifs are the distinguishing features of the most adventurous and spectacular examples of miniature boxwood sculpture. They include the entire story of St George and the dragon carved from a single tree trunk in the Victoria and Albert Museum [FIG. 194]. Tradition has it that this carving was already in England by the seventeenth century, where it was in the possession of the Lord Mayor of London and philanthropist Sir William Turner (1615–1693). He bequeathed it to the hospital that he founded in Kirkleatham, and there it remained until 1950.³³ In the nineteenth century it was regularly admired by visitors along with many other of Turner's curiosities: 'Among the latter is a singular piece of carved wood, representing St. George and the Dragon, cut out of a piece of boxwood with a knife.'³⁴

The courtly subject of the saintly knight who freed a princess by slaying a dragon, which was codified in the thirteenth-century *Legenda aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine, enjoyed a great vogue in the late Middle Ages, partly because of the crusades, and partly because the story, like the one about Samson and the lion, appealed to a 'dark longing for heroism', and tied in with a revival of 'romantic' chivalric ideals.³⁵ St George, as a knight and slayer of evil, became a role model for rulers, who regularly commissioned portraits of themselves in the saint's guise.³⁶ In the

Netherlands his veneration was given added stimulus when he was pressed into service for the self-fashioning of the House of Burgundy, by Charles the Bold and Philip the Handsome among others.³⁷ The delicate work of art in the Victoria and Albert Museum was undoubtedly made around 1510 for some such courtly milieu.

The ingenious stacking and interweaving of scenes, which are usually distributed in an orderly way over foreground and background in the painted visual tradition,³⁸ makes the reading of this work of art a true adventure, with viewers having to take the trouble to discover the correct order of the scenes, but they are rewarded by the many motifs and great array of details. What is remarkable is that what was traditionally the most important scene, the actual slaying of the dragon, is subordinated to the complex narrative, which starts at bottom left [FIG. 195]. Here St George is riding past the city gate of Silene in Libya, while behind him Princess Cleodolinda is begging for mercy from her parents as they stand on top of the gate [FIG. 196]. Situated just above them is the man who demands that the king has to obey his own decree that all the young people, including Princess Cleodolinda, have to be fed to the dragon that has the city in its clutches [FIG. 197]. We follow the saint in his search for the dragon through a sinister forest with writhing tree roots, snakes, Boschian monsters and bones [FIG. 198]. Cleodolinda stands in front of him on a protruding slab of rock. One level higher up she is on her knees and is accompanied by a lamb that is to be sacrificed to the dragon. In the meantime



FIGS. 195, 196, 197, 198



FIG. 199



FIG. 200



FIGS. 201, 202, 203

St George performs his heroic deed and wounds the monster [FIG. 199]. That scene was composed after a lost but very influential invention of Jan van Eyck's that was widely adopted in the Low Countries.³⁹ On this side of the statuette a half-decayed body tumbles down the mountainside and is being gnawed by two little monsters [FIG. 200]. In the final scene at the very top the knight is descending towards the city [FIG. 201], followed by Cleodolinda leading the subdued dragon leashed with her girdle for it to be put to death [FIG. 202]. High above them, on and in the jumble of the towers and buildings, three little men are observing the happy ending to the adventure [FIG. 203].

It is difficult to say where this remarkable work of art was made, for almost all the scenes and motifs that have been brought together so skillfully stem from a visual tradition that was common throughout Europe. However, there are a few specific details and stylistic clues that suggest that once again the carver was active in the Lower Rhine region, which had a special veneration for St George.⁴⁰ For example, there is a striking similarity to a large, unpainted oak St George group in the Bollert Collection in Munich that is attributed on good grounds to an anonymous carver from the duchy of Cleves [FIG. 204].⁴¹ Despite the difference in scale, both works have the odd handling of the ground, which is draped over the rocks like a carpet and is found in other works from the Lower Rhineland.⁴² Other shared motifs are the openwork architecture, most notably the gateway with its raised portcullis, the tendency towards a calligraphic stylization of the horse's mane and tail, the preference

for chains composed of rectangular links, and above all the startling similarity of the winged dragon in both works. What is also striking is that there are a few obvious parallels with the Rijksmuseum's *Dismas and Gestas*, for example in the faces of the female figures and the angel of the good thief, or the features of the latter and those of the man in the cap standing next to the dormer [FIGS. 189, 205]. Such similarities, coupled with the astounding virtuosity of the carving of both works, strongly suggest that the Amsterdam thieves and the London St George group come from the same Lower Rhine workshop that must have also delivered work to the ducal court in Cleves.

Another court in the Low Countries, that of the artloving Margaret of Austria, the governor of the Netherlands, in Mechelen, was instrumental at the beginning of the sixteenth century in disseminating and popularizing autonomous boxwood statuettes and other luxury materials like bronze, in which the devotional purpose no longer predominated but was on a par with the artistic value of objects as collectibles. The rise of this new genre can be followed clearly in Margaret's collection, and in those of the nobles around her, such as Philip of Burgundy and Philip of Cleves.⁴³ There was a preference for two new types of image: the miniature portrait bust and the nude. Both spread from Italy to the north together with the interest in classical antiquity, and also put in an appearance in southern Germany at more or less the same time.⁴⁴ The German sculptor Conrat Meit (1470/85–1550/51), who joined the court in Mechelen around 1512, made a major contribution to these



FIGS. 204, 205



FIGS. 206, 207

innovations. He carved a few miniature busts in fruitwood depicting the governor herself in widow's weeds and her deceased third and last husband, Philibert of Savoy [FIGS. 206, 207].⁴⁵ In an *all'antica* style and in a lively, individualized form, they perpetuated the type of the medieval reliquary bust, as had been created in the same small format more than a century earlier by Jacques de Baerze [FIG. 179].⁴⁶ Meit may have portrayed Margaret in a rigidly frontal view, but he gave the pos-mortem busts of her husband an uncommon vitality, with the regal head turned to one side. The miniature scale gives these little portraits an intimate and personal character, which was also reflected in the fact that Margaret kept a couple in her *petit cabinet*. In this intimate little *studiolo* right next to her bedchamber they were described as 'Item, the portrait of the late Lord of Savoy, carved in wood, well made', and 'Item, the perfect likeness of Milady, carved in wood, also well made'.⁴⁷ The addition of 'well made' is significant, for it demonstrates high praise for the quality of Meit's carving, and more generally indicates a growing awareness of the artistry of such valuable pieces. Meit took Margaret's little portrait as a model with him to Brou, where between 1524 and 1531 he sculpted the effigies of the governor, her husband and her mother-in-law.

The other innovation in cabinet sculpture, the portrayal of the nude, was initially introduced in the Low Countries as it was in Germany, that is to say under a cloak of religious respectability.⁴⁸ Biblical subjects with functional nudes, such as the Fall of Man, exemplary women like Judith and Lucretia, and

personifications of the Virtues, paved the way for the more autonomous depiction of the human body. Although there were incidental depictions of autonomous nudes in miniature sculpture in the fifteenth century, among them a statuette of 'ung homme nu' in the collection of King Charles V of France,⁴⁹ it was once again Conrat Meit who played a pioneering role in Mechelen, followed immediately by Daniel Mauch of Ulm, who went to work for Prince-Bishop Erard de la Marck in Liège in 1529.⁵⁰ In the court library in Mechelen, for example, there was a small collection of marble and wooden statuettes by Meit. They included a small self-portrait by him ('Item vng petit mannequin, taille aussi de mesme bois a la semblance de messire Conrat'), which is one of the earliest mentions of an autonomous self-portrait by a sculptor, a wooden figurine of Christ in the company of Lucretia ('Item vng petite Lucesse, aussi taille en bois'), and a little nude man with a dog and a big stick ('vng petit homme nuz, taille en bois, qu'il tien vng chien en l'une de ses mains et vng groz baston en l'autre').⁵¹ This varied assortment seems to typify the shift from the traditional forms of domestic religious sculpture to *Kleinplastik*.⁵²

The focus on the sensual nude female form and the idealized male one is at its strongest in the many depictions of Adam and Eve, in the art of both the Netherlands and Germany.⁵³ Conrat Meit's sublime portrayals of them in the moments leading up to the Fall form one of the earliest statuette pairs of the first human couple in the northern Renaissance [FIG. 208]. They are now in Gotha, and were probably made



FIG. 208



FIG. 209

around 1510, at about the time that Meit settled in the Low Countries and found employment with Philip of Burgundy before entering the service of Margaret of Austria.⁵⁴ The popularity of Adam and Eve is particularly surprising in the light of the negative religious connotation of the Fall of Man. It can be explained in part by the erotic appeal of the nude and by the moralizing message of the scene. In the context of early modern collecting and the origin of the *Kunstkammer* as an image of the world and the cosmos, however, Adam and Eve could allude to the post-lapsarian state of mankind. For if the installation of a *Kunst- und Wunderkammer* signifies a form of symbolic restoration of the order and perfection of God's Creation, then Adam and Eve there mark the moment just before the Fall and the beginning of the disorder that the collector aimed to restore in the micro-world of his cabinet of art and curiosities.

The same artistic milieu in which Conrat Meit moved also gave birth to a 'wildly romantic' St George dressed up to the nines and standing on the vanquished dragon [FIG. 209].⁵⁵ Although it has often been attributed to the eccentric south German Master H.L. (active in Breisach, 1511–26) in the recent literature, its roots unmistakably lie in the Low Countries, more precisely in the immediate artistic orbit of the painter Jan Gossaert (c. 1478–1532). After his visit to Rome in 1508–09 in the retinue of his maecenas Philip of Burgundy, Gossaert became one of the pioneers of the Renaissance in the Low Countries.⁵⁶ He maintained close artistic ties with Meit, through whom he developed a more sculptural approach in his painting

that was sometimes literally derived from the German's statuettes.⁵⁷ The St George, with its feminine pose, classical facial features and exuberantly decorated fantasy suit of armor in Renaissance style, closely matches three drawings that Gossaert made either during or just after his trip to Rome [FIGS. 210, 211].⁵⁸ There is also a striking resemblance to the standing St Adrian in an Antwerp miniature in the Book of Hours of Grimbergen Abbey of 1510 or thereabouts in Antwerp [FIG. 212].⁵⁹ The question of the maker of the statuette remains unresolved, however, unless one accepts the convoluted theory that Master H.L. spent some time in the Low Countries in Gossaert's circle in Zeeland before being documented in Breisach on the Upper Rhine from 1511 on.⁶⁰

The contrast between the highly detailed St George worked up in 'Florid' style and the totally unfinished rear of the statuette is remarkable [FIG. 213].⁶¹ One can clearly see that the figure is composed of several small boxwood blocks, some of which still have their bark on them. However, that seemingly nonchalant finish was deliberate, and could be associated with ideas current in Italy among marble sculptors that the rough skin of the stone, the *scorza vecchia* or old bark, should be left visible.⁶² The presence of those unfinished areas makes the viewer more aware of the natural materiality of the work of art and at the same time of the sculptor's virtuosity in shaping nature to his will. This places the statuette in the categories of *naturalia* and *artificialia* that were to become normative for the organization of the *Kunst- und Wunderkammer* in the course of the sixteenth



FIGS. 210, 211, 212



FIG. 213

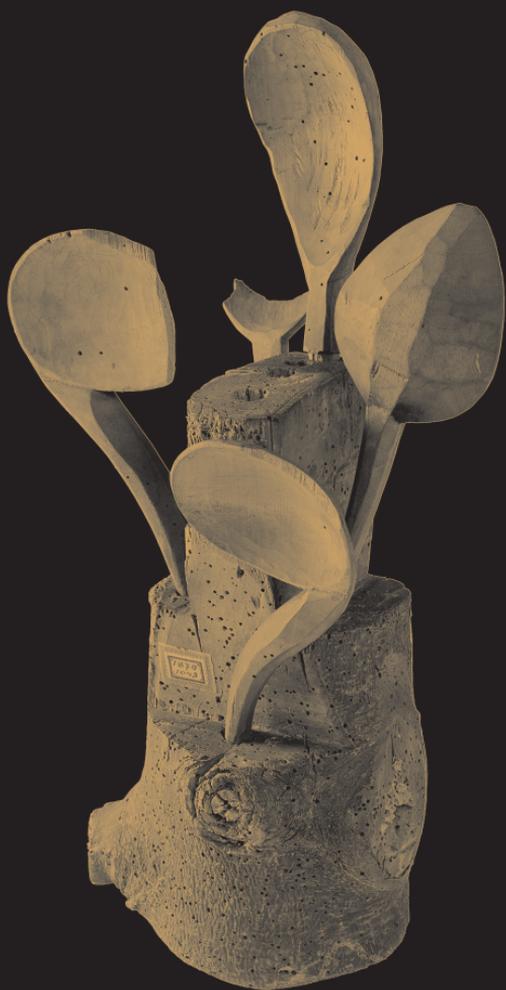


FIG. 214



FIG. 215, 216

century. Other 'semi-finished products' and kindred spirits of St George are to be found in the sixteenth-century Amerbach Cabinet in Basel, which has several unfinished statuettes in wood and bronze, and a small tree trunk with five spoons that were carved out of it [FIG. 214].⁶³ And perhaps a boxwood statuette of Mary Magdalen with a prayer nut on the rosary around her waist, which could have come from an early sixteenth-century Crucifixion retable, was deliberately left unworked at the back as well [FIGS. 215, 216]. The design and general structure of St George are suffused with the spirit of a new period, in which sculptors with a new artistic elan made small sculptures in luxury materials as *Kunstkammer* pieces for very demanding connoisseurs.⁶⁴

It should be pointed out that the rise of collectibles of this kind does not in any way mean that there was no longer a market for devotional sculpture. That is well illustrated by the statuette of a cleric in prayer. It dates from 1562, just a few years before the Iconoclasm crippled the market for religious sculpture in the Low Countries [FIG. 217]. Although this puzzling figurine has detailed inscriptions it has so far defied all attempts to pin down its origins. On the back is the full Dutch name of the person depicted, Brother Cornelis van der Tyt, the date 1562, and an S in ligature with a cross [FIG. 218]. On the bottom there is the brother's recessed coat of arms. Beside it is a monogram, probably the carver's, that can be read as 'EVS' [FIG. 219].⁶⁵ The Maltese cross with the S ('Sanctae Crucis') identifies the brother as a member of the Order of the Holy Cross, or a Crutched Friar.⁶⁶ In the

sixteenth century the brothers increasingly took on the status of canons, and their monastic life gradually faded into the background.⁶⁷ The surname Van der Tyt (also spelled Tijt or Tijdt) is found in both the southern and northern Netherlands, but in the seventeenth century a concentration formed in the coastal region from Antwerp up to Rotterdam. The arms on the underside of the base are very similar to those borne by François van der Tyt, a receiver of Schieland in 1721–30.⁶⁸ This leads to the cautious conclusion that the praying friar may have come from or around Schiedam, where the Crutched Friars had had one of their convents since 1442.⁶⁹ The only documented Cornelis among the Crutched Friars of the county of Holland in this period was Cornelis van Nijmegen. He had been prior of the house in Schiedam before retiring to St Agatha's in Cuyck, the friars' main convent in the northern Netherlands.⁷⁰ Unfortunately, the sources are not sufficiently detailed to place him there. Be that as it may, this portrait must have been part of a larger ensemble, such as a domestic altar-piece or an epitaph of a type that was very common in stone in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁷¹ By way of comparison, Müller cited the gilt bronze epitaph for Jacob de Croÿ, Prince-Bishop of Cambrai (Cologne, Cathedral Treasury), which was made in Brussels around 1516, on which De Croÿ is similarly depicted in prayer.⁷² Other surviving donor figures of kneeling clerics in boxwood show that there must have been more of those small retables.⁷³ The Reformation would have put an end to the production of such religious and devotional boxwood statuettes



FIGS. 217, 218, 219



FIGS. 220, 221

and ensembles in the north. They continued to be made in the southern Netherlands until well into the seventeenth century, and in Mechelen they even enjoyed a new heyday in the work of members of the Van Doorne, Van Loo and Faydherbe families [FIG. 220], but in the northern provinces there was only a modest revival of the genre around 1650 with the work of Albert Vinckenbrinck and Ambrosius van Swol.

In retrospect it can be said that in the first half of the sixteenth century there was a striking shift in the output of boxwood *Kleinplastik* from purely religious works to profane or semi-profane ones. This was stimulated by the leading courts of Europe, which had developed a broader demand for those more secular subjects and as a result inspired the woodcarvers to even greater heights of virtuosity and forced them to modernize their repertoire. The latter aspect is well illustrated by an intimate little group of the Virgin and Christ with John the Baptist and St Judoc in a canopied tent [FIG. 221].⁷⁴ The tent, an Old Testament symbol of sanctity, the sides of which are being pulled back by angels, gives this devotional scene an air of great intimacy and domesticity. The large drapery folds and the facial types make a stylistic fit with the Lower Rhine carvings of artists like Dries Holthuys and the Master of the Kalkar St Anne Altarpiece, providing yet more evidence for the great importance of that region for small-scale woodcarving.

There may have been a certain irony behind the reduction to miniature format of some of the new subjects, such as the holy heroes Sts George and

Christopher, who would have been more familiar to people in the Middle Ages in statues that were larger than life-sized, a certain intellectual joke through the reversal of values. As with the paradoxical encomium, the ironic eulogy that was so popular in the humanist literary world of the day, the owner of a pocket-sized hero could indulge in some mild, amusing mockery, but with a serious message behind it. If the large, heroic and holy could be depicted in a very small size, making the human being proportionally large, then the latter had better show some modesty.

- 1 Carruthers 2014, pp. 178–80: ‘Qui sueffre qu’ou me tourne et vire/ Qu’ou voie ainsy qu’au doy eslire/ S’en moy a fronce ou à redire/ Ne chose digne de remors.’
- 2 Autonomous boxwood statuettes were already being mentioned around 1400 in the collections of Jean duc de Berry and King Charles V of France. See Kosegarten 1964, pp. 302–04.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 302. See also the chapter by Scholten, pp. 13–79.
- 4 Kosegarten 1964, pp. 316, 317, figs. 33, 34.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 315–16, figs. 27–30.
- 6 Williamson 2010, pp. 168–72; cat. Cleveland 2004, nos. 67–69; cat. Paris 2009, pp. 167–72.
- 7 Kosegarten 1964, pp. 303, 311. Also Baxandall 1980, p. 191, Vasari on Veit Stoss’s *St Roch* in the Santissima Annunziata in Florence: ‘[...] this figure is preserved to this day [...] without any covering of colours or pigment, in the very colour of the wood itself, and with Master Janni’s usual polish and finish, fine beyond all others to be seen carved in wood’.
- 8 Randall 1994, p. 127.
- 9 Kosegarten 1964, p. 313, fig. 20.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 311–12, and fig. 14.
- 11 See Roller 2011, pp. 277–82, for the most recent discussion.
- 12 With thanks to Sam Fogg and Matthew Reeves for their ideas about this relief.
- 13 Te Poel *et al.* 2000, no. 4 (Sutton Coldfield, St Mary’s College, Oscott, signed on the base: ‘(I)AN VAN WEERD’).
- 14 De Werd 2012, p. 437, no. 5.34 (inv. no. FK 01-XI-I); cf. Te Poel *et al.* 2000, no. 24 (St Barbara in Neeroeteren).
- 15 Cat. Sint-Truiden 1990, p. 1.13, fig. 7.
- 16 *Ibid.*, no. 79 and inv. no. 356; cat. Sint-Truiden 1992, pp. 198–200.
- 17 Cat. Sint-Truiden 1990, no. 76.
- 18 *Ibid.*, no. 63; Williamson 2002, no. 44.
- 19 Hütt 1993.
- 20 Cf. the executioner from a *Carrying of the Cross* from Heinsberg (Lille, Musée des Beaux-Arts) and various heads of saints; cat. Sint-Truiden 1990, nos. 58, 59, 61, 62; cat. Sint-Truiden 1992, pp. 217–19.
- 21 Kosegarten 1964, pp. 307, 308, and fig. 8.
- 22 De Werd 1971; De Werd 2013, pp. 90–119 and nos. 6–8; Karrenbrock 2013a, pp. 125–27; Karrenbrock 2013b.
- 23 Karrenbrock 2013a, pp. 125–27; Karrenbrock 2013b, pp. 137–39, and fig. 10.7.
- 24 It could have been made for Duke Johann I of Cleves (1419–1481) or his eldest son, Johann II (1458–1521) and their family members. Johann I’s other children were Adolf (1461–1498), a canon in Liège; Engelbert (1462–1521), Count of Nevers; Diederik (b. 1464); Maria (1465–1513) and Philipps (1467–1505), Bishop of Nevers, Amiens and Autun.
- 25 It is perhaps not insignificant that the woodcarver Raebe Lambert was related through his wife to Johan van der Graef, chamberlain to Philipps of Cleves, a brother of Duke Johann II and Bishop of Nevers, Amiens and Autun; see Karrenbrock 2013a, pp. 126, 127.
- 26 Madou 1993, pp. 13–15.
- 27 Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis, inv. no. 701.
- 28 Cf. Huysmans 1996, figs. 200, 205, 207, 210, 238–41, 248.
- 29 With thanks to Emile van Binnebeke for this information. On D’Huyvetter see also Voisin 1835, esp. pp. 9, 10; and ‘Collection d’objets d’art et de curiosité recueillis par M Joan d’Huyvetter’, *Messenger des sciences et des arts, recueil publié par la Société royale des beaux-arts et des lettres [...] de Gand, Ghent 1824*, pp. 364–66: ‘[...] un vrai musée national en miniature’.
- 30 D’Hainaut-Zveny 2005, p. 200.
- 31 See the chapter by Scholten, pp. 171–210
- 32 Kosegarten 1964, p. 307.
- 33 Object file V&A. With thanks to Paul Williamson for his assistance.
- 34 Graves 1808, p. 393; Langdale 1822, p. 63.
- 35 Müller 1959, p. 195, quoting Friedländer: ‘[...] dunkle Sehnsucht nach Heldentum’.
- 36 Cat. Grand-Hornu 2015, no. 4.
- 37 Van der Velden 2000, pp. 107–15. Cat. Grand-Hornu 2015, pp. 117–20, fig. 96 and no. 35. The statue of the saint in St Joris Ten Distel in Belgium is a portrait of Philip the Handsome,

- including the emblem of the Burgundian fire steel.
- 38 Cat. Grand-Hornu 2015, figs. 35, 37, 40, 44, 48.
- 39 Randall 1981; cat. Grand-Hornu 2015, pp. 129–33.
- 40 Lemmens 2002.
- 41 Weniger & Burk 2005, no. 45.
- 42 Cf. cat. Cleves 2002, no. 18. A small St George group in the Wallace Collection (Mann 1981, no. S 278, as ‘German, early XVth century’) has a similar ground, but other elements, such as the horse and the dragon, are too different stylistically for it to be attributed to the same artist.
- 43 Burk 2006, pp. 36–40 and notes 155–57; Eichberger 2002, pp. 317–19.
- 44 Smith 1994, pp. 270–316.
- 45 Burk 2006, pp. 29–35, and cat. Munich 2006, nos. 8–10. Another sculptor who is otherwise unknown is Claude de Chartres, who worked for Philip of Burgundy at Wijk bij Duurstede Castle in 1518; see Sterk 1980, pp. 45, 234, 297, 298, notes 15–17.
- 46 Lavin 1970, pp. 207–09; Lavin 1998; cat. Munich 2006, pp. 29, 30.
- 47 Checa Cremades 2010, vol. 3, p. 2455 (fol. 83v/p. 168): ‘Item la pourtraicture de feu monsieur de Sauoie, taillee en bois bien fecte’ and ‘Item la pourtraicture de madame semblablement taille en bois, aussi bien fecte’.
- 48 Smith 1994, p. 281.
- 49 Kosegarten 1964, p. 315.
- 50 Burk 2006, pp. 36–40, and cat. Munich 2006, nos. 1–7; Roller 2009, pp. 65–72.
- 51 Checa Cremades 2010, vol. 3, p. 2444 (fols. 46r and 46v/pp. 93, 94). We can get some idea of *Lucretia* from a statuette in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which was recently attributed alternately to Conrat Meit and Daniel Mauch. The pose is very close to a print of around 1515 by Lucas van Leyden and to a painting of 1521 by Jan Gossaert; see Ainsworth 2010, p. 16; cat. Ulm 2009, no. 45.
- 52 Smith 1994, p. 281.
- 53 Cat. Frankfurt 1981, nos. 177, 181–88.
- 54 Burk 2006, p. 23.
- 55 Müller 1959, p. 195.
- 56 Ainsworth 2010.
- 57 *Ibid.*, pp. 17–19.
- 58 *Ibid.*, nos. 103–05; Ainsworth 2014, pp. 7, 8.
- 59 Cat. Grand-Hornu 2015, no. 24.
- 60 Kahnsnitz & Bunz 2006, pp. 442–44.
- 61 Baker 1998, p. 498.
- 62 Barolsky 1994, ch. 7.
- 63 Landolt & Ackermann 1991, nos. 41–43, 49. Cf. Leonard Kern’s *Abundantia*, which he carved around 1640 out of a piece of walrus tooth and jawbone (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. KK 4547).
- 64 Baker 1998.
- 65 The only carver with these initials known to me is Ernst (‘Eerst’) Jansz van Schaeuyc (1506–1564) of Utrecht, who is also documented as a canon. With thanks to Jan Klinckaert for this information. Müller 1959, pp. 195, 196, read the monogram wrongly as ‘ZAS’.
- 66 An example of a Crutched Friar referred to as a brother in the sources is the humanist Gerrit Geldenhouwer in the service of Philip of Burgundy; see Sterk 1980, p. 227, fol. IX: ‘[...] een taeffereel van Sinte Marien Magdalena nae een ander vrouwken van Mechelen ende heeft Broeder Geryt nae hem genomen’ (‘A scene of St Mary Magdalen after another woman of Mechelen, which Brother Gerrit has taken with him’).
- 67 Janssen 2010, pp. 107–09.
- 68 Rotterdam, Hoogheemraadschap van Schieland en de Krimpenerwaard, Archief Hoogheemraadschap van Schieland (Oud Archief, OAS), entry 201, object KGV_0279.
- 69 Hermans 1858, vol. 2, p. 194 (foundation in Schiedam in 1442).
- 70 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 131: ‘Anno 1569 Cornelis van Nijmegen, ex hoc conventu electus Prior Schidam, deinde Embric.’
- 71 See Brine 2015, *passim*.
- 72 Müller 1959, p. 195. Brine 2015, pp. 212–24, and fig. 110.
- 73 Cf. Berlin, Bode-Museum, inv. no. 8062 (bishop in prayer); Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. RF 2812 (pope in prayer with an angel).
- 74 Cat. Nuremberg 2000, no. 57.