

APPENDIX

Translation of part of a manuscript in the library of the Koninklijk Oudheidkundig Genootschap (Royal Antiquarian Society) in Amsterdam (inv. no. KOG Hs 55), dated 1633, in which 'Jonkheer' Joost van Cranevelt minutely describes a prayer nut in his possession and now in the collection of the Abegg-Stiftung in Riggisberg (cat. no. 32)¹

DESCRIPTION OF AN INGENIOUS APPLE, CARVED FROM BOXWOOD, MAKER AND DATE UNKNOWN, THAT IS NOW IN THE POSSESSION OF *JONKHEER* JOOST VAN CRANEVELT, RESIDING IN ARNHEM

INITIAL APPEARANCE OF THE APPLE

This apple carved out of boxwood is the size of a medium orange decorated on the outside of both halves with openwork tracery with openings of very equal and wonderful proportions; the holes being of different shapes, the edges of the holes being as thin as a stroke of a pen; and this openwork tracery is repeated again within those holes in a tracery of edges half as thin and smaller holes.

On the outside the middle of the apple is decorated with three double frames or borders. Carved in relief in Latin letters between them on the friezes of the same is **NON EST SERVVS MAJOR DNO SVO SI ME PERSEQVVTI SVNT, ET VOS PERSEQVVENTUR IOHANNIS DECIMO QVINTO**. The ground beneath this sentence is chased with dots, as on German cups.

It is amazing that everyone thinks that these delightful frames and the apple were turned entirely on a lathe, but on closer inspection it turns out that they are carved entirely by hand and not turned on a lathe, partly because one still sees something angular about the spherical shape that resembles a squaring of the circle, and above the words carved in relief in the friezes between the frames are some abbreviations on the raised frames, which could not have remained there if the apple or frames had been turned, partly because on the middle of the three frames, at the top of the highest rounding of the frame, there are two hinges on which the apple opens, being of one piece with the frame and with the other parts of the apple, which hinges would have to have been torn off by the turning if this apple or the frames had been turned on a lathe. The breadth of apple is exactly one-and-a-half times a sixteenth part of an ell, the height a little less,² the weight is three-and-a-half 'lood' less fifteen 'aas'.³ And this apple has been preserved as an exceptionally rare jewel from generation to generation in the family of *Jonkheer* Joost van Cranevelt.

It is regrettable that the maker of this ingenious piece has not made himself known with any sign, and that due to the lack of a date it is not known in what year this ingenious piece was made, but if in this matter one may rely on the suppositions of some wise and curious *virtuosi*, who often travel from divers distant countries to admire this art, it is adjudged probable that the maker was MARTEN

STOCK of Nuremberg, goldsmith and engraver, popularly known as HUPSE MARTEN [Martin Schongauer], who was the teacher of the famous Alberto Durero; or Albertus Dürerús himself, or the wide-famed Israel van Ments [Israhel van Meckenem] or, even better, the very artistic Lucas van Leijden for there is a perfect rendering in this Apple of one of the most important prints by Luca[s] van Leyden published in copperplate in 1519, concerning the worldly life of Mary Magdalen before her repentance; and is signed with the letter L for Lucas van Leyden, and with it the date 1519, as mentioned above. This print is also in the possession of the aforesaid *Jonkheer* Joost van Craenevelt.

This apple opens in the middle and is divided initially into two equal parts, each being half a flat roundel, without there being any fastener of iron or other metal to be seen with which it opens; but this fastening is carved from the same piece of palm wood from which the rest of the apple is carved. Artfully carved in bas-relief on the outer surface of these two half roundels is the imprisonment and suffering of the holy martyr St Adrian, a fine young knight of 28 who was killed for the faith under Emperor Maximian in Nicomedia in the year 280. The lowest of these two half roundels, a sixteenth part with one sixty-fourth part of an ell in size,⁴ is decorated with two circular carved frames, in the frieze of which is written in large, raised Latin letters O BEATE CHRISTI MARTYR ADRIANE LIBERA ME AB OI PESTE METIS ANIMAE, and above OI and METIS are two abbreviations from which it can once again

be seen that the frames are also not turned but carved by hand, and again from all these raised Latin words, and also from the frames themselves, which are not as perfectly round as they would have been had they been turned on a lathe, but sometimes have small, barely visible squarings, as do all the frames with which the apple is decorated all around, on the inside as well.

The topmost flat roundel, a little smaller than a sixteenth part of an ell,⁵ also decorated with a round frame, is divided into four by a cruciform frame, and in each of these four parts there is a small roundel the size of a quarter of a sixteenth part of an ell, or a sixty-fourth part of an ell,⁶ with a frame, in which is depicted a particular story from the suffering of St Adrian.

In the first [are] three male figures, two of whom are imprisoned martyrs sitting with their feet fastened in a block of wood, the third represents the still unbelieving Adrian who has come to them and, standing in a humble pose, asks what reward they were expecting for the torments that they had so cheerfully suffered, according to the life of St Adrian. Whereupon they, also sitting upright, replied: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.'

In the following roundel are four small figures, a woman clad in antique fashion and three men, being imprisoned martyrs with their hands and feet fastened in a block of wood, of whom the middle one is St Adrian, converted to the Christian faith by the aforesaid words and now therefore seated impris-

oned with these martyrs. The woman is Natalia, a beautiful young noblewoman who had been Adrian's wife for fourteen months. When she, who was secretly a Christian too, heard how her husband had been converted to the Christian faith by the holy martyrs and was imprisoned with them for that reason, she strengthened him for martyrdom. Part of the prison vault can be seen above the imprisoned martyrs.

In the third roundel are two small figures, one of St Adrian who, having bribed the guard and used the other imprisoned martyrs as surety, arrived outside the house of his wife Natalia and exhorted her to be present at his impending martyrdom. The other figure is St Adrian's wife, who thought that her husband St Adrian had turned away from the Christian faith out of fear of torment and for that reason held the door of the house closed against him and spoke to him through the window, and is in the window at the top. One also sees that her house seems to be made of stones that are of almost the same shape as our tuff stones.

In the fourth roundel are 4 figures, one of whom is St Adrian's wife, the other St Adrian, who is hanging naked on a gallows and being flogged with a whip by two others. The lowest flat roundel ([without a frame] a sixteenth part less a sixth part of a sixteenth part of an ell in size),⁷ contains nine figures that only take up two parts of this roundel, the other one-third part being a decorative tracery with a small frame at the top that serves as the ground on which these figures stand.

Among these nine figures is Emperor Maximian, with his sceptre in his hand and his imperial crown on his head, accompanied by a counsellor in his habit, and one with a Spanish capote, and by two knights, one of whom holds the holy martyr by the shoulders from behind while he is being tortured. Further Natalia, the wife of St Adrian, who urges him on in his martyrdom, with hands folded in prayer. Further St Adrian, whose right leg, lying on an anvil, is being chopped off by an executioner with a hatchet. And on the shin in the leg one can see perfectly a gash that the executioner has already made. The executioner is on one knee holding the martyr's foot with his left hand and raising the hatchet with his right hand, whereby the executioner's character is expressed perfectly. In addition to this one there is another who is on both knees and holds St Adrian's leg by the knees. In the meantime St Adrian prays piously to God the Lord with folded hands.

These two roundels of the apple (that have been spoken of so far) are further subdivided into others. The lowermost of the aforementioned roundels can be opened downwards in a miraculous and seemingly incomprehensible fashion (with another roundel), thus creating a third roundel. The topmost roundel opens into two semi-circular shutters, which two semi-circular shutters resemble two unfolded wings of the topmost roundel. Such that this is the most magnificent of all to behold, and also the most curious to behold, on the one hand because the third roundel is attached to the second (as are the two aforemen-

tioned wings on either side of the first roundel) with wooden members so closely and also so firmly that one cannot see how the maker of this ingenious work was able to attach anything around which the members can turn between them and that in which they rotate, since the part in which the members turn is flat on both sides and is not raised for anything to be inserted in it for the attachment of something.

On the other hand, too, because of the artistry that one sees in the history of St Mary Magdalen, which is depicted in these aforesaid three roundels with the aforesaid two wings, partly with figures in bas-relief and partly with figures fully in the round. This history comprises both the worldly and the spiritual life of this same holy Mary Magdalen. The central of the three roundels concerns the worldly life and is decorated all around with a double carved frame.

Standing in the frieze between them in Latin letters carved in double height are the following words: EXTREMA GAUDII LUCTUS OCCUPAT PROVERB. i4. There is a deeper section between the words Luctus and Occupat in which the hinge turns and upon which a graceful Guelders flower is carved, with a chased background with dots as before.

The diameter of this roundel within the topmost frame is a sixteenth part less a sixth part.⁸ And the same roundel is divided into six stepped parts with figures and also several stepped levels of the landscape. [The foreground is furnished with four figures, both men and women (both rounded and in bas-relief), which are arranged very gracefully and neatly.] Standing in the most prominent position in the middle

is Mary Magdalen, who is being led to a dance by a handsome young knight who is holding his hat downwards in his left hand out of respect, both of them clad in the antique fashion, striding forth very calmly.

At the very front on Mary Magdalen's side is a young woman seated on the ground, and a knight with his head in the lap of this young woman, who is stroking him with caresses while he lies on his back outstretched on the ground with his gun across his thigh. Both of them are clad in the antique fashion. Seated on the same level, beside the above knight, is a knight with his beloved in his arms, caressing her the while, and they too are both clad most stylishly in the antique fashion, the young woman being hooded like a falcon; nearby is a young man crowned with green leaves from a tree. Slightly further off in the background on the same side is another pair of figures seated behind some green sods – a knight with a young woman who are telling each other something, very elegantly clad in the old French manner.

On the other side, behind the aforesaid young woman upon whose lap the aforesaid knight lies outstretched, comes a mocking jester making sport of the company by sticking his finger of his left hand mockingly in his mouth, holding his marotte or bauble in his right hand, his head covered with a fool's cap with long asses' ears. Beside the jester, almost behind Mary Magdalen, one sees a further two pairs of strange individuals, the first couple of which are an old man clad as a councillor with a

councillor's gown who is being rebuffed by a young noblewoman because he is trying to get too close to her. Standing on the second level is an oak with branches and leaves in which a falcon or some other bird is seated, plucking and arranging its feathers. Below, beside the tree, a young woman is seated in the thicket, singing sweetly with a piece of music in her hands, having a musician to the right of her and a knight to the left, both of whom are making music with her.

And also pleasing to see, standing on a raised section on the same side one sees two musicians, one of whom is playing on a drum and has dangling sleeves and a pointed hat; the other one is playing on a flute and is clad in the Swiss manner with a codpiece, and a sword hanging by his side. On the third level, behind these musicians, a councillor with a councillor's gown and a young noblewoman stand talking on a green meadow or rocks. Three hunters are chasing a stag in a small deep valley below, the two in front holding spears or demi-lances, while the third, with his spear on his back, is blowing on a trumpet or horn, having emerged from a grove and wood behind them.

There is a remarkable commotion on the fourth level, because a stag has appeared that is seeking refuge in another copse while being pursued by three dogs and three horses. Seated on the first horse, in front of which a groom is running, is Mary Magdalen. Seated on one of the other horses is the knight with whom she has danced, on the other is a young lady followed by four peasants with clubs, who emerge

from a deep grove and are also hunting the stag. The fifth level is a distant view of mountains, cliffs and woods. The sky of all these levels consists of a vault with eight ribs, which meet in the middle in a projecting round boss. Thus far the description of the worldly life of Mary Magdalen.

Something more of her worldly life is depicted on the inside of one of the half-shutters or wings of the topmost roundel, namely on the right shutter there is a chamber with a floor paved with receding tiles in a very ingenious way, with two windows and an open door in which one sees a fine young knight standing in the background who is paying court to Mary Magdalen. He is fashionably decked out with a hat full of plumes. A seated lutenist is playing at his feet, some people are walking on the road in the distance behind the knight.

Mary Magdalen is seated on a wooden chair in the aforesaid chamber with a songbook on her lap and a love letter in her hand, while her sister, the solicitous Martha, with a Turkish turban on her head, comes to urge her to abandon her worldly life and put aside her vain pompery.

Standing on the floor in the foreground of the chamber is a three-legged stool, with a cat sitting on it, licking its mouth, if you please.

There now follows the flat roundel that opens downwards (being equal in size to the central roundel and thus to the top one too), decorated with two frames, the inner one in the usual manner, the outer one covered with a continuous laurel branch. Depicted on this roundel is an elegant chamber, also

with a floor paved with receding tiles. On the right is a foreshortened spread bed, very ingenious, hanging on the wall at the head end a holy water stoup with a wooden chair below and a cushion on it.

The deepest [part] of the chamber is decorated with a chimney with a mantelpiece, plumed and adorned with a double frame at the top, in the frieze of which CONABAO is carved in large Latin letters. I think that the maker meant CONABOR, unless the name of the maker or something else unknown to us lies behind these letters. Hanging beside the chimney on the other side of the wall opposite the bed is a very fine, round German mirror in relief with a beautifully carved frame around it, and beside it a German clothes-brush. Standing in the middle of the chamber, turned towards her sister Mary Magdalen, is Martha, who is praying and begging with folded hands to such effect that Mary Magdalen is taking off the jewels that she had previously had herself and is putting them in an open casket so that she is unadorned, right up to her uncovered hair.

The roundel at the top is the principal one in the spiritual life of Mary Magdalen, and is decorated with a double frame, in the frieze of which the following words are carved in large Latin letters: 'Martha, Martha, SOLLICITA ES ET TURBARIS ERGA PLURIMA'. The diameter of this roundel within the innermost part of the frame is a sixteenth part less a sixth part of an ell.⁹ Depicted in it with figures in bas-relief but mostly in the round is a story related by the evangelist Luke in chapter 10, verse 38, namely how Mary Magdalen and Martha receive Christ Jesus our Saviour in their

house in the village of Bethany. This story is most perfectly displayed in that ingenious piece on four levels or distinct planes. Depicted on the first plane is an artistic hall paved with rectangular, receding stones, with a raised area off to one side paved with planks. Standing against the wall are two wooden stools. Hanging on the panelling above one of the stools is a chessboard with black and white squares. Standing in the middle, beside the opening, are two fine pillars very elegantly carved on the outside, with plinths and capitals. These pillars frame two large, arched windows, to the left of which is the open door of the kitchen, through which two windows and door one can see what is taking place in the kitchen.

The hall is vaulted with planks at the top, as in some churches, with five ribs meeting in the middle. Hanging from the vault in the middle of the hall is an ingenious branched wooden chandelier with six arms, which together are as large around as a small pea. Each arm is elegantly decorated with a nozzle in which to insert a candle, and this chandelier is subtly made that one would think it impossible to touch the same with human hands or any tool without breaking it, let alone that the same has been carved with tools from a single piece of wood (that is of a piece with the rest of this ingenious work).

There are six people in this hall, namely Christ, seated on a wooden stool in profile and preaching with one bare foot, as one can see. In the middle, by and opposite the Lord's feet, Mary Magdalen, very finely decked out and richly clad, sits on the floor with clothes spread out and hands raised and

folded, very attentively listening to the sermon and word of Christ, such that there appears to be a wonderful bond between Christ and Mary Magdalen. Which Mary Magdalen is being questioned by her sister Martha.

This solicitous [woman], weighed down with many duties, comes from her work in the kitchen with a knife in her hand, complains to Christ about her sister, saying: 'Lord, dost thou not see that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.' To which Christ replied (as is further related by the holy evangelist Luke at the place above-mentioned): 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but verily, there is but one thing that is needful: Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'

It is true that Martha is finely adorned, but she has a white apron in front, for she has come from the kitchen. This plaintive Martha's nature is also depicted very naturally, as is Christ's nature, in the spirit of his reply. Seated on the elevation in the hall are another three listeners who appear to be three apostles, perhaps Peter, John and James, one of whom has laid his leg bared to the knee on his other knee. The apostles are depicted as they listen keenly, such that one of them appears to have his mouth open. On the second plane is the kitchen, the floor of which is paved with receding tiles, the ceiling above has nine beams. Standing in the kitchen is a hearth with a broad, large and old-fashioned mantelpiece. On the right, beside the chimneybreast, hangs a bellows with a salt box, in the middle of the chimneybreast

is a pot-hanger, beside which a fish hangs roasting in the hearth. To the left of the chimneybreast hang a fan and a basket for candles.

On this aforementioned second plane are three levels, the first of which contains ten figures. To the right of this are seven apostles, both seated and standing. Standing on the left is a maid, who is cleaning a fish with a knife on a fish bench, while two apostles stand by, watching. The second level of the second plane, or of the kitchen, contains two people, the first of whom, on the left, is a young man with a long gown and a hat on his head who is holding a beer tankard on his right knee. This youth is sitting in front of the fire that lies burning there, so that one also sees the rising of the flames depicted. Beside and in front of him lies a gridiron with four small ribs, and at the back a handle for the fire to roast the fish hanging in the hearth. The second, on the right, is a man sitting by the fire and turning a spit with a sheep's leg on it. Beneath the spit is a frying-pan, and the spit rests on an iron support. On the third and last level of the kitchen there is a woman to the left of the fire who is poking the fire, holding the tongs in her right hand and her left hand before her face against the heat of the fire. Standing on the right is a man, bending his right knee, who is hanging a large ham copper with both hands on the pot-hanger already mentioned.

There remains only the left shutter or wing of the top roundel in which there are two levels. In it Mary Magdalen, Mary of James and Salome are shown with jars of ointment in their hands, having

come to anoint the body of Christ, about which the evangelist Matthew writes in the 28th chapter and Mark in the 16th chapter. Further Christ in the guise of a gardener, as he appears to Mary Magdalen after his resurrection, an appearance of which the evangelist St John writes in the twentieth chapter.

It can also be observed how Christ is depicted here with a straw hat on and a spade in his hand, just like a gardener, with his right foot forward (in which one can still see the spot where the nails were, as in the one hand) and in the pose as he addressed Mary Magdalen and commanded her not to touch him, and sending her to the apostles to bring them the news of his Resurrection, as St John relates. She is portrayed in a pose laughing for joy upon seeing Christ again, whom she had sought with sorrow at the tomb and elsewhere, and crouching on one knee.

1633

- 1 For an integral transcription with commentary and English translation see Scholten 2016. Also Wetter 2011 and Scholten 2012a.
- 2 The Arnhem ell was 69 centimeters, so according to Van Cranevelt the size of the prayer nut is approximately 65 millimeters, which is identical to the size of the Abegg Stiftung's prayer nut (cat. no. 32).
- 3 1 'lood' = approximately 15 grams, 1 'aas' = approximately 0.05 of a gram, so the total weight is approximately 45 grams.
- 4 Approximately 54 millimeters.
- 5 Approximately 40 millimeters.
- 6 Approximately 11 millimeters.
- 7 Equivalent to 36 millimeters.
- 8 Equivalent to 36 millimeters.
- 9 Equivalent to 36 millimeters.



