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Hans Memling's *Last Judgement* in Gdańsk: technical evidence and creative process*

'New data' and an attribution

Studying the materials and techniques that were used by early Netherlandish painters has become an indispensable part of art-historical research into the works of these masters. It can therefore be applauded that in the last few years a prestigious project, employing a variety of technical methods, was carried out in order to investigate the execution of one of the masterpieces of fifteenth-century Flemish art: the *Last Judgement* in Gdańsk, attributed to Hans Memling (figs. 1 and 10). This project, in which a large international team of researchers participated, was co-ordinated by Iwona Szmelter of the Faculty of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. She has appeared as lead author in several English language summaries of the research. In 2013, Iwona Szmelter and Tomasz Ważny presented some of the first results in Warsaw at the congress of the International Council of Museums - Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC).¹

¹ Hans Memling, Triptych with the *Last Judgement*, middle panel 220.9 x 160.7 cm; *Paradise*, left interior wing, and *Hell*, right interior wing, each 223.5 x 72.5 cm, Gdańsk, Muzeum Narodowe. Photo: art work in the public domain.

In their paper they mention that in the nineteenth century the painting was ascribed variously to the Van Eyck brothers, Rogier van der Weyden and Hans Memling, and although the authorship of the latter has now generally been accepted, they are of the opinion that this attribution is still questionable. Szmelter and Ważny refer to dendro-chronological analysis from which it appears that the wood for the triptych's support could have been delivered to the workshop of the artist by the end of 1460. They then assume that a contribution to the painting by Rogier van der Weyden, who died in 1464, cannot be excluded. Proceeding from this premise, they announce their hypothesis of Van der Weyden's participation, noting that infrared reflectography reveals an initial composition in the Gdańsk altarpiece that is similar to Rogier's *Last Judgement* in Beaune.

Two more reports on the research into the *Last Judgement* in Gdańsk were published in 2014 and 2015: the first by Iwona Szmelter in collaboration with team researchers Laura Cartechini, Aldo Romani and Luca Pezzati and the second with Philippe Walter and Hélène Rousselière.² These longer studies mention the various methods of technical investigation that were applied in the project: infrared scanning at different wavelengths and an impressive array of instrumental analyses resulting in the identification of pigments that proved to be typical of the period.³ According to the authors of the 2014 study, 'A corpus of technical documents and stylistic studies has now been assembled to shed light on the possible double authorship of the monumental triptych by Rogier van der Weyden and Hans Memling and provides essential insights into their working methods'.⁴ Great significance is attached to the observation that, originally, in the underdrawing of the central panel, mainly executed in a liquid medium with brush, the two *arma Christi* angels nearest Christ were placed lower, their outlines visible under some of the apostles, and their positions were changed in a later stage of the underdrawing with a dry medium. The authors call 'this spectacular evolution of the central composition' a discovery.⁵ It has long been known, however, that the two angels were altered and in 1994, at the international Memling colloquium in Bruges, Molly Faries presented a reconstruction of their original positions on the basis of her infrared reflectography study of Memling's *Last Judgement* (fig. 2).⁶ Faries explained which stages can be discerned in the underdrawing of the central composition and gave reasons for the alteration of the angels. She detected occasional vague lines that precede a more definite layout, the main figures of which were executed exclusively in brush; in this layout the two groups of apostles were absent and the two angels were placed closer to Christ. At a later stage, the apostles were inserted, making it necessary to situate the two angels higher in the composition, and these interventions were freely sketched in a material resembling black chalk.

Comparing the underdrawing of the painting with that of Rogier van der Weyden's *Last Judgement* in Beaune, Szmelter and her co-authors find in both works 'typical graphology "T" lines, hatches and numerous freehand changes'.⁷ They refer in particular to the nearly identical figures of Christ in both works and speculate that parts of the Gdańsk Christ may be the result of mechanical transfer, apparently disregarding the fact that Rogier's Christ is nearly twice the size of Memling's.⁸ Besides the change in the positions of the two angels, the authors of both the 2014 and 2015 studies also report the presence of small corrections, probably done with black chalk, and they note a lack of underdrawing in the portraits of the donors on the exterior, the portrait of the female donor being executed '*alla prima* in a Proto-Renaissance style'.⁹ Although the authors presuppose the participation of many hands, they conclude that the *Last Judgement* was likely begun by Van der Weyden and was probably completed after his death in 1464 by Memling, who, as is generally accepted, must have worked in Rogier's atelier before he established himself a year later in Bruges.

A publication about the project from 2016 is written by Iwona Szmelter alone and entitled 'The impact of new data for identification and authorship: the case of the *Last Judgement*, triptych from the National Museum in Gdańsk, a Northern Renaissance work,

² Visualization of the original positions of the trumpeting and *arma Christi* angels in the upper half of Memling's *Last Judgement*. Portions of the painted angels in their final positions are also visible. Photoshop montage: M. Faries.

by Rogier van der Weyden and Hans Memling'.¹⁰ The article is basically a reprise of the earlier publications, and Szmelter restates the central premise of co-authorship by Van der Weyden and Memling. She emphasizes the necessity of fruitful collaboration between researchers from different fields 'to understand this fascinating but problematic Flemish triptych',¹¹ but, unfortunately, pays no attention in any of the four publications mentioned here to existing research results by other scholars that could contradict the hypothesis of the participation of both painters. 'The impact of new data', as implied by the title of the last contribution, remains unclear, since such an impact can only be determined when the new evidence is sufficiently weighed against earlier data and insights.

Although there should be no doubt that all-inclusive technical research into the *Last Judgement* as done by Szmelter and her team is very valuable, the publications to which it has led until now, with a biased focus on the participation of Van der Weyden in the painting, are disappointing. The lack of argumentation might provide just enough reason to ignore the authors' proposals and pay no further attention. On the other hand, the hypothesis of double authorship, which has already been put forward in the past,¹² may appear attractive again and find more acceptance than it deserves. When dendrochronology seems to offer this possibility, why couldn't the painting have been begun by Van der Weyden and finished by Memling? This supposition could certainly gain credibility

when it is claimed to be supported by extensive technical research. Owing to the high status this branch of art-historical research has acquired, there is always a danger of accepting technical data too easily as definitive evidence. Moreover, technical research is such a specialized discipline that those who are active in it, or just interested, need to make an effort to consider other art-historical issues such as the study of patronage. Lastly, there is yet another pitfall: because of the rapid progress in technical studies due to the continuing development of new and improved methods, it may perhaps seem unnecessary to pay serious attention to earlier technical investigations. As shall be demonstrated below, Faries' IRR research into the *Last Judgement* in Gdańsk, which dates from twenty-five years ago, offers a more viable basis for reconstructing the creative process of this painting than the results of Szmelter's team insofar as they have been published.

On the grounds of these considerations it seems better not simply to ignore the hypothesis of the double authorship of Van der Weyden and Memling, but to place it in a context of data and insights derived from earlier art-historical and technical studies. By doing this it will be argued that the hypothesis of Rogier's participation is untenable. The aim of this essay, however, is not just to reach a negative conclusion but to develop a more integrated and comprehensive argument elucidating the execution of the *Last Judgement*. The creative process can be explained through the 'logic of the situation' in which Memling found himself, that is, the choices he had to make within a situation determined by: the wishes of the patron; the *Last Judgement* in Beaune as a model; Memling's training in Rogier's workshop; the location for which the altarpiece was destined; other paintings of the *Last Judgement* as sources of inspiration; his interaction with the patron during the execution of the painting; and his ambitions as a highly talented painter who had just embarked on his own career. Such a reconstruction of the creative process does not exclude the possibility of workshop assistance, but it will show that Memling had all the artistic responsibility.

Results from earlier research

In order to answer the first and basic question of whether Rogier van der Weyden could have started a painting that was finished after his death by Memling, studies by Lorne Campbell, Stephan Kemperdick and Griet Steyaert on Van der Weyden's workshop are important. Campbell argues that in this workshop assistants could be deployed during any stage of the execution process. Besides the hand of Rogier, he identifies the hands of anonymous top assistants, who obviously were so much trusted by Van der Weyden that they were allowed to invent and execute important commissions from highly-placed and internationally prominent patrons without his intervention. These paintings were probably delivered under Rogier's name.¹³ Stephan Kemperdick, who is critical of distinguishing Rogier's own hand from those of his assistants on the basis of quality, has observed exchanges and variations in the use of compositional elements and motifs that demonstrate how various painters must have been active in the same workshop.¹⁴ This workshop, as Steyaert informs us, was most likely continued by Rogier's wife and his son Pieter after the master's death in 1464.¹⁵ If Van der Weyden had received the commission for the *Last Judgement* in Gdańsk and had decided to work on this painting himself, he would certainly also have made use of assistants for such a large and complicated work. And if the work was interrupted by his death, it is more probable that it would have been continued by these collaborators, with the help or under the supervision of one of the top assistants, than that such a lucrative commission would have been handed over by Rogier's widow and son to Memling, who settled as an independent painter in Bruges in 1465.

Dendrochronology provided a point of departure for Szmelter's and her collaborators' theories, but the tree-ring measurements of the *Last Judgement* in Gdańsk are not isolated data and can be compared with dendrochronological results from other

paintings. Szmelter and Wążny mention in their 2013 publication that the earliest possible felling date of the wood is 1458/59 and that after 'short and intensive seasoning' the wood could have been available in the painter's shop by the end of 1460.¹⁶ What remains unclear is why the authors accept only the 'earliest possible' date and rule out the full range of dating estimates that is customary in dendrochronological studies. This is especially relevant because if one applies the protocol for dendrochronological dating used by Peter Klein, the analysis would result in estimates of the wood's use from either 1466 or 1474. These dates derive from the inclusion of a median rather than a minimum value for sapwood growth (15 years) to compensate for trimming, plus either 2 or sometimes 10 years for transport and seasoning, a formula Klein has used repeatedly in recent dendrochronology tables.¹⁷ For Memling's *Madonna and Child Enthroned* in Kansas City, Klein established an earliest felling date for the wood of 1461, which is close to that of the *Last Judgement*, but he nonetheless provided a range of dates for the painting's execution as after 1463 or 1469, or at the latest 1477, a less likely estimate.¹⁸ Furthermore, year rings that predate the activity of a particular master are commonly encountered in dendrochronological measurements, and Memling's panels are no exception. Even a brief glance at Klein's latest dendrochronology study of paintings attributed to Memling shows that up to half of the works have estimates for earliest felling dates that are even earlier than that of the *Last Judgement*;¹⁹ yet the attributions have not been questioned. It seems, then, that dendrochronology alone cannot justify Van der Weyden's participation in the early stages of the Gdańsk *Last Judgement* any more than it can exclude Memling's.

What is more important in this regard is the underdrawing. Szmelter and her co-authors appear to have ignored the fact that the type of brush underdrawing in the Gdańsk *Last Judgement*, which is quite distinctive, reappears in paintings that are usually associated with the early Memling. The works include, among others,²⁰ the Kansas City *Madonna and Child Enthroned* mentioned above, which may be Memling's earliest work, and the *Triptych of Jan Crabbe*, now dispersed among museums in Vicenza, New York and Bruges, which Till Borchert has recently suggested may even have been commissioned slightly before the *Last Judgement*.²¹ While one can say there is general agreement in the literature that the underdrawings in Memling's early paintings are remarkably close to Van der Weyden's, researchers have also noted subtle differences.²² Both Maryan Ainsworth and Molly Faries have analyzed the relationship between the underdrawings of Memling and Rogier. Ainsworth states that Memling's early brush underdrawings are more 'controlled' than Rogier's, as seen in his 'extremely regular, evenly spaced parallel hatching [...] like the teeth of a comb' and in his 'obliquely angled cross-hatching, creating flattened diamond shapes'.²³ Faries describes his underdrawing as 'tighter and more controlled', citing 'long, exacting contours' done in brush and other typical features, such as outlines ending 'in "T" or "L"-shaped hooks', spatula-shaped depressions and 'hatching [consisting] of evenly-spaced, directional strokes'.²⁴ De Vos, in his essay on Memling's technique, notes that cross-hatching or hatching following the curve of hollows appears to be characteristic of the early Memling.²⁵ In details of drapery taken from several of the works where the morphology of Memling's early brush underdrawing stands out clearly, the similarities in the features and their handling are unmistakable (compare figs. 3a, b and c).²⁶ Illustrations of the underdrawings in these closely-related paintings have been available in the literature since the late 1990s.²⁷ Memling's early underdrawings also clearly show he had a working knowledge of Van der Weyden's layout methods; and this, as both Ainsworth and Faries have argued, confirms the idea that Memling was active in Rogier's workshop, at the least as an assistant if not as an apprentice.²⁸ Additionally, Faries has suggested that the underdrawings of Memling's early paintings may have presented him to his clientele as Rogier's successor, if indeed, as it is supposed, an underdrawing could serve as a *vidimus*.²⁹

3a
Underdrawing in St. John the Baptist's drapery, detail of fig. 1. IRR: © Prof. Dr. Molly Faries / Stichting RKD; digital composite: M. Wolters.

3b
Underdrawing in the Virgin's robe in Hans Memling, *Madonna and Child Enthroned*, 75.4 x 52.2 cm, Kansas City, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. IRR: © Prof. Dr. Molly Faries / Stichting RKD; digital composite: Koen Wensveen.

3c
Underdrawing in the Virgin's and the Magdalen's robes in Hans Memling, *Triptych of Jan Crabbe*, middle panel, 84.5 x 63 cm, Vicenza, Museo Civico. IRR: © Prof. Dr. Molly Faries / Stichting RKD; digital composite: M. Faries.

As for the presence of an underdrawing in a liquid medium with changes in a dry medium, observed by Faries and Szmelter's team, the studies of Ainsworth and Faries make it clear that Memling could use both brush and chalk in one and the same painting.³⁰ The combination of brush and chalk has now also been reported for the *Triptych of Jan Crabbe*.³¹ For that matter, there are even more complications in the technique of the layout stage of the Gdańsk altarpiece, as appears from Faries' observation of underdrawn lines that 'bead up'.³² Examples occur in the drapery of one of the added apostles where the underdrawing is remarkably scribbly. When imaged close up, some wide, gritty strokes have clearly been applied dry brush (figs. 4a, b and c). This manner of working with a brush may be fairly extensive in the underdrawn layout of the altarpiece: it occurs primarily in the stage when the layout was revised and appears along with thinner, blunt lines that have the typical appearance of black chalk. Memling's practice of combining underdrawing media continued, in fact, for some years, although in the course of his career he developed a preference for black chalk rather than brush as his basic underdrawing material – exactly the opposite of the process he followed in his earliest paintings. In an early painting like the *Last Judgement*, brush was used for the first general layout of the interior while the addition of the apostles and, as a consequence, the compositional alteration of the two angels, were sketched in freely, apparently in a mixed technique. The exterior panels were underdrawn almost exclusively in black chalk.³³ The reasons why Memling initially left the apostles out of the composition and later inserted them and why he scarcely underdrew the heads of the donors and painted the features of the female donor in a sort of 'Renaissance' style will be discussed in the third part of this essay. Suffice it to say here that, as far as can be concluded from infrared reflectography, minimal underdrawing in the heads of the sitters is a common characteristic of Memling's portraits.³⁴

Besides the arguments from technical studies, investigations into the patronage of the *Last Judgement* in Gdańsk plainly demonstrate that the idea of Rogier's participation in the painting is untenable. The commission of the *Last Judgement* is not documented and the identity of the donors, Angelo Tani and Caterina Tanagli, is known only from the coats-of-arms that form part of their portrayals on the exterior panels. They wed in 1466, and this date should be considered a *datum post quem* for the altarpiece, notwithstanding its dismissal by Szmelter and her co-authors. They suggest that Caterina's

4a, b, c
a) Detail of fig. 1, drapery of an apostle. Photo: M. Faries.
b, c) Underdrawing, with close-up detail, in fig. 4a. IRR: © Prof. Dr. Molly Faries / Stichting RKD; digital composites: M. Faries.

portrait was added at a later stage of the execution, leaving unanswered the question of whom else Tani could originally have been portrayed with – he did not marry earlier – and ignoring the underdrawing of Caterina's figure from which it appears that her portrayal was prepared from the beginning.³⁵ As Paula Nuttall and Michael Rohlmann have discovered independently, around the same year that Angelo Tani married he acquired the patronage of a chapel dedicated to Saint Michael in the Badia in Fiesole (fig. 5).³⁶ Since the archangel is shown both on the exterior of the altarpiece and in a prominent position in the center panel, the *Last Judgement* must have been ordered to adorn the altar in this chapel. The painting never arrived there, for the galley that transported it from Flanders to Italy was captured by Polish pirates and taken to Gdańsk.³⁷ That happened in 1473 and thus the historical data leave no doubt that Memling painted the *Last Judgement* between 1466 and 1473.

5
Badia Fiesolana, Cappella di
San Michele. Photo: B. Meijer.

6
Rogier van der Weyden, Polyptych with the *Last Judgement*, interior, with original frame ca. 220/137.5 x 547.6 cm, Beaune, Musée de l'Hôtel-Dieu. Photo: art work in the public domain.

Reconstructing a creative process

Angelo Tani owed his patronage of a chapel in the Badia Fiesolana to the Medici, who had financed the rebuilding of this church and divided a number of the chapels among employees of various branches of the Medici bank.³⁸ Actually, Tani was a former employee: he had been the manager of the branch in Bruges but returned to Florence in 1464 and was succeeded the next year by his rival Tommaso Portinari, who had elbowed him out.³⁹ Probably as compensation for this humiliation, the Medici, who respected Tani highly, allowed him instead of Tommaso Portinari to take a place within the building that testified to their status as bankers. Tani took this opportunity to order a large, precious Flemish altarpiece that would have been unique in the Badia and was meant to remind viewers of the position he had held in Bruges. The choice of the subject of the Last Judgement must have originated with Tani as well as the decision to base this work on the altarpiece that Rogier van der Weyden had painted for Nicolas Rolin's hospital at Beaune (fig. 6). This subject – depicted by Van der Weyden with a monumental Saint Michael in the centre of the composition – lent itself very well to a chapel dedicated to the archangel. Considering the relations between the Medici bank and the Burgundian court, Tani may have known chancellor Rolin personally, while his travels between Bruges and Florence offered him the opportunity to visit Beaune and to admire Van der Weyden's creation.⁴⁰

Hans Memling must have already built up a considerable reputation when he was active in Rogier's workshop in order to receive such a prestigious commission shortly after establishing himself as a master in Bruges. Tani may have been told about Memling when he lived in the Netherlands, or perhaps he heard in Italy about the arrival in Bruges of a very talented, former assistant of Rogier. He of course still had his contacts in Bruges, and one of the members of the Florentine colony, whose portrayals, as generally presumed,⁴¹ are found among the elect in the painting, may have functioned as an intermediary in ordering a *Last Judgement* from Memling that was to be modeled after the altarpiece in Beaune.⁴² Van der Weyden painted his *Last Judgement* between 1443 and 1451, that is, well before Memling could have entered his atelier.⁴³ On the occasion of Tani's commission, Memling may have gone himself to Burgundy to study the painting *in situ*. In any case he certainly had access to any number of model drawings from Van der Weyden's workshop that documented its compositions and figures, and he may have made his own copies after them. Thus, Memling's skill, his contact with Rogier's workshop, his knowledge of model drawings after the *Last Judgement* in Beaune, and probably also the fortuitous circumstance of moving to the Flemish city where Tani had most of his northern contacts were all factors that made him the ideal artist after Van der Weyden's death to paint a *Last Judgement* in the manner of that master.

Although the existence of an earlier altarpiece with the same subject and done in an artistic idiom that was familiar to Memling provided a valuable guide, it also presented him with considerable problems owing to the differences between the two works in their sizes, structures, locations and publics. Even without the nineteenth-century frames in which the original ones are now mounted, Memling's altarpiece must have been ca. 10 centimeters taller than the central part of Rogier's, but, it is well over 2 meters narrower. Whereas the *Last Judgement* in Beaune consisted of six panels on the exterior and nine on the interior, Memling had at his disposal only two panels on the exterior and three on the interior. Van der Weyden painted his polyptych for a chapel at the end of an enormous hall housing the poor and ill for whom the hôtel-dieu at Beaune was founded. Because the work had to be visible from a distance, inspiring the guests of the hospital to ponder their future fate, Rogier availed himself of large colour fields and clear contours in a severe style, with a limited number of resurrected souls and accompanying angels and, remarkably, with no demons at all. Memling's altarpiece was destined for a chapel of ca. 4.55 x 4.50 meters, so that it could be viewed at a much closer distance.⁴⁴ Besides expressing the patron's devotion to Saint Michael, it should astonish Tani's acquaintances with the lifelike details in which Flemish painters excelled.

For the execution of the interior, Memling had to face not only the difference in width from his model but also the fact that Van der Weyden had used only two of the four lower wings of the interior for the scenes of Heaven and Hell. All the other interior panels of the Beaune altarpiece being reserved for the Judgement itself, Rogier depicted this subject in a broad composition, which had to be adapted by Memling to the upright format of his central panel. As will be discussed, Faries' infrared reflectography as well as Jan Bialostocki's much earlier technical research using infrared photography and radiography give insight into how Memling coped with these problems, to what extent he followed his master, and how he seized new possibilities.⁴⁵

In the central panel, Memling took over from Rogier the entire figure of Christ, most of the Virgin and portions of John the Baptist. Because of limited space, the latter two figures were thinned down as compared with Van der Weyden. Memling arranged the four angels with the *arma Christi* along diagonal lines, just as in Rogier's composition, and, again due to a lack of space, situated the two lower angels closer to Christ. For the same reason, he left out the apostles, who, together with saints in the back rows, had been spread out by Van der Weyden across four panels. He probably also left out the two-edged sword coming out of Christ's mouth and the lily on the other side of Christ's head. We cannot be sure about this because their underdrawing would be under the gold and therefore undetectable to infrared reflectography; moreover, even if they were not underdrawn, Memling might have intended to add these motifs in a late paint stage. Nevertheless, although the original positions of the two angels can only be made visible where there is no gold leaf, they seem to have left little room for the sword and lily (see fig. 2).

In height Memling had more than enough space for his central composition. He took full advantage of this by creating a gap between the figures of Christ and Saint Michael and by filling it with three of the four trumpeting angels that Rogier had arranged symmetrically on both sides of the archangel (Memling's fourth angel was transferred to the upper left corner of the Hell panel). With three angels whirling above the archangel, Memling broke out of the severe symmetry of Van der Weyden's composition and separated the figures of Saint Michael and Christ from each other. He also gave Saint Michael a more prominent position by placing Christ further back in space. These innovations reflect the different functions of the archangel in the two paintings. In Rogier's *Last Judgement*, the only function of Saint Michael, who holds the scales containing an elect and a damned soul, is to share in Christ's act of passing judgement. Although in the underdrawing Van der Weyden represented the scale with the saved soul descending and the scale with the damned soul rising, in keeping with the iconographical tradition based

on the words ‘Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting’ (Daniel 5: 27), in the execution in paint, he made use of an iconographic variant, with the saved soul ascending in the direction of heaven and the damned soul descending, as if sinking in Hell. Due to this change, Saint Michael’s hands and scales parallel Christ’s gestures of blessing and damnation, with the effect that the connection between Christ and Saint Michael is optimized.⁴⁶ Memling was not interested in such a parallel: he underdrew the scales according to the passage from the Bible and transformed Saint Michael into an active, militant soldier, wearing armour under his cope and striking the damned soul in the scale with his cross-staff. In this way the archangel was transformed into a fighter against evil, personified by the damned soul, and as a saint whose protection could be invoked by the donors of the altarpiece.

In the bodies of the elect and the damned and in the expression of their emotions, Memling was inspired by Van der Weyden, but he refrained from direct derivations and aimed at even more virtuosity, replacing Rogier’s schematized, restrained representations with lively narratives and a variety of humans, angels and demons. The damned, on Saint Michael’s left side and in Hell, were given all sorts of varied gestures and postures (figs. 7a and b). In the central panel, Memling applied his skill in foreshortening to a whole group of damned souls who are pushed forward by demons from the background into the foreground, where they are about to enter Hell. Such a sense of depth is not reminiscent of Van der Weyden but of Van Eyck. In the right wing, Memling employed its height to create a dizzying fall into Hell, suggesting an enormous distance between the tiny figures at the top and the larger ones sinking into the abyss below. In the left wing, the height of the panel was used for upward movement: the elect, received by Saint Peter shaking their hands and angels dressing them according to their social status on earth, climb up the steps of a monumental staircase leading to an entrance to Heaven that consists of a lavishly decorated, late Gothic church portal.

7a, b
a) Detail of fig. 1, damned figures in Hell. Photo: M. Faries.
b) Underdrawing in fig. 7a. IRR:
© Prof. Dr. Molly Faries / Stichting RKD; digital composites: M. Faries.

8

Stefan Lochner, *Last Judgement*,
124.2 x 172 cm, Cologne,
Wallraf-Richartz-Museum.
Photo: art work in the public
domain.

In order to enrich his composition with the narrative detail that was lacking in Rogier's *Last Judgement*, Memling profited from two other pictures of the same subject. Both are eye-catching, crowded compositions. One of them has long been identified as a source for Memling, namely the central composition of a now dispersed altarpiece painted in Cologne by Stefan Lochner in 1435 or shortly thereafter (fig. 8).⁴⁷ This composition combines Judgement, Hell and Paradise in one panel and shows in the centre background a group of resurrected souls captured by demons. These figures inspired Memling's crowd of damned souls in his central panel. The two angels in the lower left foreground of Lochner's *Last Judgement* – one rescuing a man from the clutches of a devil and the other fighting a demon with a cross-staff – were adapted by Memling for his group of an angel and demon struggling for a man (see fig. 15b). At later stages of the execution, he drastically changed the positions of the man and the angel's arm holding the cross-staff, with the result, as Faries noted, that the derivation is less noticeable in the painted version (see fig. 15a).⁴⁸ The man depicted by Lochner in the right foreground who is about to be thrown into the fire of Hell by a demon bearing another victim on his shoulder clearly served Memling as a model for the damned soul in Saint Michael's scales. The frightening appearance of demons and the torments of the damned as represented by Lochner must have stimulated Memling to fill his own Hell with unthinkable horrors, but the way he took over his image of Heaven from Lochner is even more telling, for the master from Cologne had already created an elaborate scene with a multitude of elect souls received by angels and Saint Peter as they enter Paradise through a late Gothic portal, with music-making angels on the balconies.

The importance of yet another *Last Judgement* as a direct source for Memling has only recently been observed by Ridderbos.⁴⁹ This painting (fig. 9), which, like Lochner's *Last Judgement*, shows the three main scenes in one panel, was made by an anonymous

master and was discovered in the nineteenth century in the town hall of Diest, for which it may have originally been destined as a scene of justice.⁵⁰ The panel has been dated to the first quarter of the fifteenth century, but Stephan Kemperdick has convincingly shown that it cannot have been made before Lochner's *Last Judgement*, since a number of details are unmistakably derived from that painting and not, as is usually supposed, the other way around.⁵¹ The resemblances between Lochner's work and the panel from Diest may, in fact, be the reason why a direct connection between the Diest *Last Judgement* and Memling's altarpiece has never been noticed by other scholars. In some respects, however, they resemble each other precisely where they differ from Lochner's *Last Judgement*. The oblique line of the rocks edging the abyss of Hell in the Diest panel can be recognized in the rocks that have the same function in Memling's Hell wing. The motif in the Diest panel of the damned tumbling down from a great distance into Hell also recurs in Memling, who exaggerates the height. The angel hovering above the abyss, possibly Saint Michael, who strikes a damned soul with his cross-staff, might have inspired the action of Memling's Saint Michael.⁵² Although the gate to Heaven in the Diest panel is clearly based on Lochner's portal, the latter building is seen frontally and its interior is completely filled with entering figures.

The right side and interior of the edifice in the Diest panel suggest that it stands on an angle in the composition, and the inside shows architectural space surrounding the figures. Memling seems to have adopted these two features from the Diest panel along with the stairs leading into the portal, the direction of movement of the elect and the welcoming angel, whom he replaced with Saint Peter.

Additional evidence of how Memling combined borrowings from various artistic sources is found in the central panel of his *Last Judgement*. The figure of Saint John derives primarily from Van der Weyden but resembles the Baptist in the Diest panel in the raised hands – contrary to the folded hands of Rogier's and Lochner's Saints John –, the position of the left leg, and the visibility of the right foot. In order to solve the problem of positioning the angels with the *arma Christi* in accordance with the Beaune altarpiece but in a narrower composition, Memling also made use of the Diest panel, where, instead of a sword and a lily, two angels with *arma Christi* are positioned close to Christ. He situated his two lower angels similarly close to Christ, with the same combination of attributes the corresponding angels in the Diest panel bear: the Cross and the Lance. This derivation corroborates the assumption that Memling, just like the Master of Diest (and Lochner), originally left out the motifs of the lily and the sword.

Giving the two angels this place in the composition was only possible after Memling had decided to leave out the apostles. In the Diest panel they are sitting on the ground, but, apart from the fact that such a position is iconographically highly awkward, the dominant presence of Saint Michael in Memling's central panel made this impossible. Lochner's altarpiece may have raised the idea, or at least provided a justification, to envision a *Last Judgement* without apostles, because it proved that a rich, prestigious painting of this subject could do without them. Nevertheless, it was not Lochner's work but the *Last Judgement* from Diest that seems to have served as a model for the general layout of Memling's initial composition. Faries' reconstruction of the composition in the underdrawing before the apostles were added and the positions of the two *arma Christi* angels were changed (see fig. 2) shows that Memling created an oval around Christ and Saint Michael by means of the angels with the Cross and the Lance, the Virgin and John the Baptist and the curving movement of the damned and the elect. This recalls the oval composition in the Diest panel. In fact, two ovals can be discerned there: an oval that encompasses the group of Christ, the Virgin and the Baptist, the two angels with the Cross and the Lance, the apostles and two damned souls lying on the edge of the abyss, and a larger oval filling the edges of the panel and formed by the other angels around Christ and the groups of the elect and damned. Of course, Memling could only partly follow the composition of the Diest panel, because it combines scenes that in his *Last Judgement* are divided over three panels. Even so, he seems to have studied this work, which like his central panel has an upright format and is about the same size, not only for its individual motifs but also for its arrangement as a whole. If indeed it was already in Diest in Memling's time, then he could have seen this *Last Judgement* together with Lochner's altarpiece on one and the same journey, since the trade route from Bruges to Cologne went via Diest.

In view of Memling's deliberate decision to leave out the apostles in his altarpiece, their addition at a later stage cannot have been his initiative but must have occurred at Angelo Tani's instigation. The supposition that the underdrawing in its first general layout served as a *vidimus* for the patron can be confirmed by historical circumstances. Tani was delegated by Piero de' Medici to travel north to rescue the London branch of the Medici bank from bankruptcy. He arrived in London in January 1468 and, before returning to Italy in the summer of 1469, was in Flanders, where, as already suggested by Till Borchert, he must have visited Memling's workshop to discuss the progress of the *Last Judgement* and to give instructions for alterations, such as the insertion of the apostles.⁵³ It does not seem unreasonable to assume that, after Tani's

commission of the painting,⁵⁴ the process up to and including the execution of the underdrawing might have taken several years. For it implied: assembling and/or making drawings after the Last Judgements by Van der Weyden, Lochner and the anonymous master, for which purpose Memling seems to have travelled at least to Diest and Cologne and perhaps also to Beaune; inventing and developing designs with the help of preparatory sketches; instructing a carpenter to make the panels and their frames; grounding the panels or having them grounded; making, after some furtive sketching on the ground, a carefully worked-out underdrawing on all three interior panels following Rogier's style and technique. When Tani inspected this underdrawing, he obviously disapproved of the absence of the apostles, which was not only a radical departure from Van der Weyden's painting but also from the Italian iconographic tradition of Last Judgements. An outstanding example of this tradition is Fra Angelico's altarpiece with this subject for San Marco in Florence, which Tani might have known.

As a consequence, Memling had to alter the upper part of his central composition by inserting the apostles and by re-positioning the two lower angels with the *arma Christi* on the same level as the higher ones. This change made it possible to provide Christ – either in the underdrawing or later during the execution in paint – with sword and lily. But, owing to lack of space, Memling had to omit the accompanying inscriptions and to place the attributes on an upward angle, as if pointing to the angels instead of to the elect and the damned. The sword was reversed in comparison to Van der Weyden's, so that its point would not threaten the nearest angel; besides, in this way the hilt corresponds to the flowers of the lily branch. Also for reasons of space, the angel next to the sword had to give up the lance, which was his attribute when he was originally placed lower, and carry the crown of thorns instead; the angel next to him now had to hold, rather uncomfortably, both the lance and the sponge in one hand and the hammer and spikes in the other.

Tani's stay in Flanders may have been long enough for Memling to make revisions in the underdrawing and to show his client how he was going to accomplish his requests. Memling must also have discussed the layout of the exterior with Tani (fig. 10),⁵⁵ and, of course, have profited from his presence for his portrayal. As already mentioned, the minimal underdrawing in the heads of the patrons is completely in line with Memling's working methods for painting portraits. He painted individual features either directly in the presence of a sitter or with the help of a separate portrait drawing.⁵⁶ Whereas the first could have been the case with Tani, the second applies to Caterina Tanagli; her husband must have brought a portrait drawing made by a Florentine artist with him.⁵⁷ Paula Nuttall has shown the similarity between Florentine portrait drawings and Memling's execution of Caterina's head with an Italianate coiffure; she also points out that the Burgundian dress must have been based on a workshop model.⁵⁸ The care with which Memling followed a Florentine portrait drawing of Caterina explains why he painted her face in a somewhat flat manner that was uncharacteristic of him.

For the compositions of the exterior panels, Memling again took Rogier's *Last Judgement* as a model (fig. 11). The exterior of that painting is in turn based on the exterior of the Ghent Altarpiece; both works have, besides an upper register with an Annunciation scene, separate panels for the portraits of the donors and the pseudo-sculptures of saints. Memling had to abandon the idea of an Annunciation and to solve the problem of maintaining, with only two panels at his disposal, Van der Weyden's and Van Eyck's concept of donors addressing themselves in their prayers to saints. Therefore, Angelo Tani was portrayed in the left panel kneeling and praying to Saint Michael, who is standing in the right panel in a niche behind Caterina Tanagli, while the object of her devotion is the Virgin and Child in the niche behind her husband. Even more explicit than in the central panel, the archangel's protective

10
Hans Memling, Triptych with the
Last Judgement (see fig. 1), exterior
wings, each 223.5 x 72.5 cm,
Gdańsk, Muzeum Narodowe.
Photo: art work in the public
domain.

function as a patron saint is expressed here, since he is shown defeating two demons. Just as in Rogier's work, the frames of the niches coincide with the picture plane; this is in contradiction, however, to the space in front of the niches that incorporates the pedestals of the sculptures and the donors kneeling on a tiled floor.⁵⁹ As presumed by Nuttall, the mouldings of the niches may have been intended to echo the arches of the chapels in the Badia, which suggests that Memling was provided with a sketch of the location.⁶⁰

¹¹ Rogier van der Weyden, Polyptych with the *Last Judgement* (see fig. 6), exterior wings, with original frame ca. 220/137.5 x 273 cm. Photo: art work in the public domain.

A remarkable change in the execution of the exterior is yet another indication of Tani's continuing involvement, for it makes it likely that he visited the workshop more than once and may even have viewed the completed donors' portraits. As radiography, infrared and close observation show, the coats-of-arms that make up part of the portrayals were reversed after they had already been underdrawn and taken into a paint stage.⁶¹ Because Tani's devotions are directed to Saint Michael and those of his wife to the Virgin, Memling apparently thought it suitable to add Angelo's coat-of-arms to the pedestal of the archangel and Caterina's to that of the Virgin.⁶² Tani, however, for whom the coats-of-arms were in the first place signs of identity, must eventually have found it unacceptable that his coat-of-arms should be placed next to his wife and hers next to him, and insisted that they be repositioned.⁶³

As Memling painted the interior, he faced a task that in certain respects was unrewarding. The insertion of the apostles into the composition had unfortunate consequences that went further than angling the sword and lily upward and filling the upper corners of the panel with all four angels bearing the *arma Christi*. The effect of the Deësis was diminished since the Virgin and the Baptist, originally intended to be silhouetted against the gold background, now merged with the rows of apostles behind them. The limited space forced Memling to make the rows recede back in space, with the awkward effect that the apostles in the background appear to be looking at Christ's back. Another adverse result of the apostles' addition was the arched pattern formed by these figures and the

Deësis around the rainbow, which causes a downwards pressure on the lower half of the central composition. But most of all, Memling must have deplored the disappearance of his initial plan with its carefully created contrast between, on the one hand, a lofty, clearly articulated heavenly scene that was determined by the descending movements of the angels bearing the *arma Christi*, the monumental triangle of the Deësis and the elegant forms of the trumpeting angels gliding along the contours of the clouds, and, on the other hand, the swarming figures in the lower part of the central panel and in the wings.

How much Memling was aware of the overcrowding and lack of balance caused by the insertion of the apostles is testified by a significant action: during the execution in paint he extended the rainbow, which as Faries noticed, was not underdrawn to the horizon, into the form of a circle.⁶⁴ Such a circular rainbow is iconographically unusual, so that there can be little doubt the change was considered a necessary alteration that had to compensate for the overloaded character of the altarpiece: while the entire rainbow brings cohesion among the protagonists, Christ, the Virgin, the Baptist and Saint Michael, the lower part counteracts the downward pressure of the celestial company and emphasizes the vast curve formed by the elect and the damned over all three panels. Just as on the exterior, Memling did not mind, or perhaps even liked, spatial ambiguity: the upper half of the rainbow supports Christ, who towers above the resurrected, but the lower part is vaguer and vanishes into the far distance beyond the horizon.⁶⁵

Many other differences between the underdrawing and the paint surface, especially in the crowds of the damned and the elect, show how Memling saw the painting process not only as an opportunity to find a solution for a problematic compositional arrangement in which artistic aims had been subordinated to the wishes of the patron as regards content, but also as a creative stage in which he could alter figures, contours, postures, gestures and other details. True, some of the alterations he made had non-artistic reasons,

12a, b
a) Detail of fig. 1, the elect.
Photo: M. Faries.
b) Underdrawing in fig. 12a.
IRR: © Prof. Dr. Molly Faries /
Stichting RKD; digital composite:
M. Wolters.

such as adding portraits of members of the Florentine colony in Bruges among the elect. Both the young man with luxuriant hair next to the combatant angel and the man with grey hair just below are portrayals that were not predicted in the underdrawing (figs. 12a and b).⁶⁶ Tani could have allowed such additions during his stay in Bruges in 1469. For the most striking addition of one portrait, however, he must have given his consent at a later stage, namely that of Tommaso Portinari, whose head – heavily restored in the nineteenth century – was depicted on a piece of tinfoil and glued on the head of the saved soul that had already been painted in Saint Michael's scales (fig. 13).⁶⁷ Obviously, Tani had not wished to include a portrait of his rival but was put under pressure by Portinari, on whose collaboration he was dependent for the transport of the painting from Bruges to Florence.⁶⁸ Thus, Tommaso still succeeded in acquiring a place of honour in the showpiece commissioned by the man he had ousted.

There was also a non-artistic reason for omitting the iconographically incongruous diadems that a number of the female elect wear in the underdrawing on their way to Heaven (figs. 14a and b).⁶⁹ Tani, Memling himself, or an advisor must have realized that these ornaments were inappropriate since the resurrected arise naked from the grave to be vested by angels when they enter the heavenly portal. These additions and corrections, however, do not detract from the fact that during the painting process Memling continually aimed at perfecting things according to his own taste. A clear example is found in the changes in the execution of the group with the angel and demon fighting for a man (figs. 15a and b): Memling moved the angel's raised arm to behind and above the head, creating a twist in the figure's pose that strengthens the downward thrust of the cross staff into the demon's face; he turned the angel's face more in the direction of the man and gave him a firmer grasp on the man's arm. He also reduced the wings of the demon, altered the position of his right leg and shifted and foreshortened his upper left arm so that the demon's elbow juts out towards the viewer as he pulls on the man's hair. But the greatest change in this group, already introduced in the underdrawing and further developed in the finalized image, concerned the man, whose stiff, upright posture was transformed into one that is off balance and falling backwards with the head sharply foreshortened, conveying the force of the demon's pull and the precariousness of this unlucky person's situation.

14a, b

a) Detail of fig. 1, two women among the elect in Paradise. Photo: M. Faries.

b) Underdrawing in fig. 14a.

IRR: © Prof. Dr. Molly Faries / Stichting RKD; digital composite: M. Faries.

15a, b

a) Detail of fig. 1, an angel and a demon battling for a man. Photo: M. Faries.

b) Underdrawing in fig. 15a.

IRR: © Prof. Dr. Molly Faries / Stichting RKD; digital composite: M. Wolters.

The creative character of the painting process derives in the first place from Memling's skill in suggesting light, volume and texture. Because the Badia chapel offered the opportunity of viewing the altarpiece from close by, Memling could deviate from Van der Weyden's linear and, in his *Last Judgement*, even harsh style by softening the contours of the figures, by modeling hair, flesh and materials with light and by painting ingenious reflections. Besides his sense of depth, such pictorial qualities show how he already tried to realize in this early work a synthesis between the art of Rogier, which formed his background, and the art of Jan van Eyck, which challenged him after his establishment in Bruges.⁷⁰ His effort to emulate Van Eyck is most clearly indicated by the reflections on Saint Michael's golden armour and on the globe under Christ's feet. The sparkling and reflective armour of the archangel recalls Saint George in Van Eyck's *Virgin with Saints and Canon van der Paele*, while his cuirass mirrors a whole scene that extends outside the space of the painting (fig. 16), just as the mirror in the Arnolfini double portrait.⁷¹ Memling's interest in reflections also caused him to omit the bands that adorned the globe in the underdrawing, as in Rogier's globe, and to employ this object to mirror the Virgin, Saint John the Baptist, some apostles, angels and even Saint Michael and other figures on the earth, seen reflected upside down from above (fig. 17).⁷²

Considering the way Memling integrated the traditions of both Van der Weyden and Van Eyck in a painting destined for an Italian patron, it is noteworthy that Bartolomeo Fazio's appraisal of paintings by these two masters, in his *De viris illustribus* from 1456, fully applies to Memling's *Last Judgement*. Fazio applauds Rogier's depictions of naked bodies and his talent for representing emotions, while in Van Eyck's works he admires

16

Detail of fig. 1, St. Michael's cuirass. Photo: M. Faries.

the suggestion of depth and the reflection of a complete scene in a mirror.⁷³ If Fazio's appreciation can be considered representative of contemporary Italian taste for Flemish painting, it reveals how much the artistic aims that Memling pursued in his altarpiece were in accord with an Italian public.

Conclusion

The realization of Memling's *Last Judgement* is a fascinating case of problem solving. Fulfilling the patron's wishes for an altarpiece that should be based on Van der Weyden's painting in Beaune but with a different format, function and character was a difficult task that obligated Memling to find specific solutions, in part with the help of the *Last Judgement* by Stefan Lochner and the *Last Judgement* from Diest. The interaction between patron and artist led to important changes that were introduced in the underdrawing stage and/or during the painting process. In addition to posing problems, the commission offered Memling a unique opportunity to demonstrate at the beginning of his career as an independent painter the variety of artistic means he had at his disposal.

It is hoped that the views presented in this paper offer a perspective for further interpretation of the technical data recently assembled but not yet sufficiently explored. More insight into Memling's materials and techniques and into the changes made during the execution of the *Last Judgement*, of which only the most important ones could be discussed here, will contribute to our knowledge of this masterpiece as long as we consider it as the result of a complex interplay among the demands of the patronage, Memling's familiarity with the technical and artistic traditions of Rogier van der Weyden and Jan van Eyck, and his own ambitions and creativity.

- * Bernhard Ridderbos took the initiative for this article, and Molly Faries joined in with information from her IRR studies of several works attributed to the early Memling. Both authors are indebted to Margreet Wolters for making some of the IRR digital composites and to Bert Meijer, who made the photograph of Angelo Tani's chapel in the Badia. Thanks are also due to Jacques Boogaart, Carol Pottasch and Charlotte Wytema.
- 1 Iwona Szmelter and Tomasz Ważny, 'Interdisciplinary approach to the identification and authorship of "The Last Judgement triptych" from the National Museum in Gdańsk attributed to Hans Memling', in: *The Heritage Wood: Research & Conservation in the 21st century*, Warsaw 2013, pp. 173-174. As the authors were completing this article, the Warsaw volume was republished as: Austin Nevin, Malgorzata Sawicki and Kate Seymour (eds.), *Heritage Wood, Research & Conservation in the 21st Century*, Springer Verlag 2016.
 - 2 Iwona Szmelter, Laura Cartechini, Aldo Romani and Luca Pezzati, 'Multi-criterial Studies of the Masterpiece *The Last Judgement*, Attributed to Hans Memling, at the National Museum of Gdańsk (2010-2013)', in: Antonio Sgamellotti, Brunetto Giovanni Brunetti and Costanza Milani (eds.), *Science and Art: The Painted Surface*, Cambridge 2014, pp. 230-251; Iwona Szmelter, Philippe Walter and Hélène Rousselière, 'New Information Provided by Multidisciplinary and Combined Studies, Including Radiography, XRD and XRF, of the triptych the Last Judgement from National Museum in Gdańsk: Rogier van der Weyden and Hans Memling co-authorship', *Opuscula Musealia* 23 (2015), pp. 61-73. Another text by Iwona Szmelter ('Wyniki wielokryterialnych badań *Sądu Ostatecznego* z Muzeum Narodowego w Gdańsku. Nowe odczytanie tryptyku jako dzieła Rogiera van der Weydena i Hansa Memlinga, *Muzealnictwo* 55 (2014), pp. 37-59) has been posted online at 'Muzealnictwo 55' and <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268981737>.
 - 3 In 2010, the Department of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts undertook a preliminary phase of research using infrared reflectography (IRR) and X-radiography; this was followed in 2012-14 with a MOLAB project involving the application of multi-spectral near infrared reflectography (MNIR), near- and mid-FTIR, X-ray fluorescence (XRF), UV-vis reflectance and fluorescence spectroscopies, measurements of luminescence lifetimes (time-correlated single photon counting—TCSPC) and X-ray diffraction (XRD), funded through CHARISMA, a European Union program. See Szmelter, Cartechini, Romani and Pezzati 2014 (note 2), p. 230, for the participating institutions. The study by Szmelter, Walter and Rousselière 2015 (note 2) focusses on XRF and XRD.
 - 4 Szmelter, Cartechini, Romani and Pezzati 2014 (note 2), p. 232.
 - 5 Szmelter, Cartechini, Romani and Pezzati 2014 (note 2), p. 236.
 - 6 Molly Faries, 'The Underdrawing of Memling's *Last Judgement Altarpiece* in Gdansk', in: Hélène Verougstraete, Roger Van Schoute and Maurits Smeyers (eds.), *Memling Studies: Proceedings of the International Colloquium (Bruges, 10-12 November 1994)*, Leuven 1997, pp. 243-259, esp. pp. 256-259. The altarpiece was studied by infrared reflectography 1993-09-01 and 02, by Molly Faries, assisted by Till Borchert and Julien Chapuis, with the kind assistance of Zbigniew Massowa, of the Muzeum Narodowe Gdańsku. The IRR negatives, IRR assemblies and accompanying examination notes are now on file at the RKD and available for consultation. The reconstruction published here was made specifically for this article and is an improvement over the diagram published in 1997.
 - 7 Szmelter, Cartechini, Romani and Pezzati 2014 (note 2), p. 246; Szmelter, Walter and Rousselière 2015 (note 2), p. 70.
 - 8 Szmelter, Cartechini, Romani and Pezzati 2014 (note 2), p. 240. The relative sizes can be envisioned by scanning the images, scaling them to each other and comparing them using Photoshop layers.
 - 9 Szmelter, Cartechini, Romani and Pezzati 2014 (note 2), p. 247; Szmelter, Walter and Rousselière 2015 (note 2), p. 70. Although the authors of the 2014 study state that no underdrawing was detected in the portraits of the donors, fig. 11.9 on page 247 shows minimal underdrawing in the face of the female donor, as is also mentioned in the caption.
 - 10 Iwona Szmelter, 'The impact of new data for identification and authorship: the case of *The Last Judgement*, triptych from the National Museum in Gdańsk, a Northern Renaissance work, by Rogier van der Weyden and Hans Memling', *Technè* 43 (2016), pp. 85-89.
 - 11 Szmelter 2016 (note 10), p. 89.
 - 12 For the history of the attribution, see Jan Białostocki, *Les musées de Pologne (Gdańsk, Kraków, Warszawa)* (Les Primitifs flamands, I. Corpus de la peinture des anciens Pays-Bas méridionaux au quinzième siècle, 9), Bruxelles 1966, pp. 82-84.
 - 13 Lorne Campbell, 'Het atelier van Rogier van der Weyden', in: Lorne Campbell and Jan Van der Stock, exh. cat., *Rogier van der Weyden 1400-1464: De passie van de meester* (M Leuven), Zwolle, Leuven 2009, pp. 104-129, esp. pp. 113, 118, 127-128.
 - 14 Stephan Kemperdick, 'Rogier van der Weyden's Workshop around 1440', in: Lorne Campbell, Jan Van der Stock, Catherine Reynolds and Lieve Watteeuw (eds.), *Rogier van der Weyden in Context: Papers presented at the Seventeenth Symposium for the Study of Underdrawing and Technology in Painting held in Leuven, 22-24 October 2009*, Paris, Leuven, Walpole MA 2012, pp. 57-77.
 - 15 Véronique Bücken and Griet Steyaert, exh. cat., *De erfenis van Rogier van der Weyden: De schilderkunst in Brussel 1450-1520*, Brussel (Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België) 2013, p. 97.
 - 16 Szmelter and Ważny 2013 (note 1), p. 173.
 - 17 From the diagram in Szmelter and Ważny 2013 (note 1), p. 174, it may be inferred that the last-growing year ring was formed in 1449, with the proviso that the diagram also seems to show the presence of sapwood; for recent explanations of dendrochronology and dendrochronology tables, see Peter Klein, 'Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych: Dendrochronological Analyses', in: John Oliver Hand and Ron Spronk (eds.), *Essays in Context, Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych*, Cambridge MA 2006, pp. 215-25; Molly Faries and Peter Klein, 'Panels and Dendrochronology: Works by Jan van Scorel and Other Masters in the Centraal Museum's Collection', in: Liesbeth M. Helmus, Molly Faries and Dorien Tamis, *Utrecht Painting, 1363-1600, The Collection*

of the Centraal Museum, Utrecht, 2011, pp. 43-53.

- 18 Peter Klein, 'Dendrochronological Analysis of the Northern Renaissance Panel Paintings in The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art', in: Burton L. Dunbar, *German and Netherlandish Paintings, The Collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art*, Kansas City 2005, esp. pp. 28-29. See also in the same catalogue no. 10, pp. 149-152.
- 19 See especially the most recent study, Peter Klein, 'Appendix: Dendrochronological Analysis of Panels Attributed to Hans Memling', in: Till-Holger Borchert, exh. cat., *Memling's Portraits*, Madrid (Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza), Bruges (Groeningemuseum), New York (The Frick Collection) 2005, pp. 180-81.
- 20 Another relevant work attributed to Memling is the Morgan *Annunciation* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art); see Maryan W. Ainsworth, 'Hans Memling as a Draughtsman', in: Dirk De Vos (ed.), *Hans Memling. Essays*, Brugge 1994, pp. 78-87, esp. p. 80, and the more recent online posting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's website of the entry and technical notes on the painting by Maryan W. Ainsworth, Karen Thomas and Sophie Scully, dated 2010 and 2017.
- 21 Till-Holger Borchert, 'Hans Memling (ca. 1440-1494): An Introductory Sketch', in: John Marciari (ed.), *Hans Memling, Portraiture, Piety, and a Reunited Altarpiece*, London 2016, pp. 49, 52.
- 22 Some scholars perceive differences of quality and stylistic development in these early works: Maria Clelia Galassi, 'La Crucifixion de Hans Memling du Museo Civico de Vicenze: Apports de l'examen en réflectographie dans l'infrarouge', *Annales d'Histoire de l'Art et d'Archéologie* 21 (1999), pp. 7-24, sees two different styles in the Vicenza underdrawing and associates them with changes in Memling's style from ca. 1465 to ca. 1468; Barbara G. Lane, *Hans Memling, Master Painter in Fifteenth-Century Bruges*, Turnhout 2009, pp. 35, 325, has doubts about the attribution of the Kansas City painting to Memling. For the purposes of the argument in this paper, the underdrawing can be seen as the preferred layout routine of a single workshop that is Memling's, irregardless of whether or not the layouts were done by the master of the shop and/or a trusted assistant. The underdrawings were clearly executed by an artist of some skill, and one wonders if, in these very early works, Memling's shop would have been large or diverse enough to have a designated layout specialist.
- 23 Ainsworth 1994 (note 20), pp. 79-80.
- 24 Faries 1997 (note 6), p. 255, n. 27, and p. 252.
- 25 Dirk De Vos, *Hans Memling: Het volledige oeuvre*, Gent 1994, p. 378.
- 26 These illustrations derive from IRR investigations carried out by Molly Faries: Gdańsk (1993-09-01 and 02); Kansas City (1983-11-21 and 1990-09-24); and Vicenza (1995-08-31). This material, which includes scanning notes and reports, is now housed in the RKD in The Hague. Infrared reflectography was performed with a Grundig 70 H television camera outfitted with a Hamamatsu N 214 IR vidicon (1981), a TV macromar 1:2.8/36mm lens, and Kodak wratten 87 A filter cutting on at 0.9 micron placed behind the lens, with a Grundig BG 12 monitor set at 875 lines. Any photographic documentation was done with a Canon A-1 35 mm camera, a 50 mm macrolens, and Kodak Plus X film and/or Ilford film, ASA 125.
- 27 Besides Ainsworth 1994 (note 20) and Faries 1997 (note 6), Galassi published IRR of the Vicenza *Crucifixion* in 1999 (note 22).
- 28 Ainsworth 1994 (note 20) and Faries 1997 (note 6); for the notion that Memling was an assistant, see Lane 2009 (note 22), pp. 24, 36; Borchert 2016 (note 21), p. 47.
- 29 Faries 1997 (note 6), p. 255. For more on the underdrawing as *vidimus*, see Molly Faries, 'Reshaping the Field: The Contribution of Technical Studies', in: Maryan W. Ainsworth (ed.), *Early Netherlandish Painting at the Crossroads: A Critical Look at Current Methodologies* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art Symposia), New York 2001, pp. 70-105, esp. pp. 85-88 (available online @ MetPublications).
- 30 Ainsworth 1994 (note 20), pp. 81-83; Faries 1997 (note 6), pp. 246-252.
- 31 Gianluca Poldi and Giovanni C.F. Villa, 'A New Technical Study of the Vicenza Crucifixion', in: Marciari 2016 (note 21), pp. 81-89.
- 32 Faries 1997 (note 6), p. 248. Dry brush is an effect that occurs when the liquid has almost run out, or when the liquid skips over the underlayer because it doesn't adhere well, i.e. it beads up. Lines with this appearance occur in the underdrawing of both the interior and exterior, particularly as darker strokes that 'reinforce' a change. This effect can be due to the presence of an isolation layer applied over the first stage of the underdrawing. Two cross-sections illustrated by Szmelter, Cartechini, Romani and Pezzati 2014 (note 2), figs. 11.2 and 11.5, likely include an isolation as layer 2. Zones of grey streaking appear in some reflectograms of the exterior, and this can also indicate the presence of an isolation layer. Any subsequent underdrawing executed on top of an isolation layer, whether dry or liquid, might have a tendency to smear and/or bead up. Additional cross-sections and the new infrared scanning might help to clarify this issue.
- 33 De Vos 1994 (note 25), p. 88; Faries 1997 (note 6), p. 248.
- 34 Maryan W. Ainsworth, 'Minimal Means, Remarkable Results: Memling's Portrait Painting Technique', in: Till-Holger Borchert 2005 (note 19), pp. 93-111.
- 35 See the infrared photographs in: Białostocki 1966 (note 12), pl. CCXXV, CCXXXI. De Vos 1994 (note 25), p. 87, already remarked that there is no indication that the female donor is a later addition.
- 36 The chapel was consecrated, and thus officially dedicated to Saint Michael, only in 1496. Paula Nuttall, 'The Patrons of Chapels at the Badia di Fiesole', *Studi di Storia dell'Arte* 3 (1992), pp. 97-112, esp. 97-98; Michael Rohlmann, *Auftragskunst und Sammlerbild: Altniederländische Tafelmalerei im Florenz des Quattrocento*, Alfter 1994, pp. 43-45; Paula Nuttall, 'Memling's Last Judgement, Angelo Tani and the Florentine Colony at Bruges', in: Francis Ames-Lewis (ed.), *Polish and English Responses to French Art and Architecture: Contrasts and Similarities. Papers delivered at the University of London / University of Warsaw History of Art Conference, January and September 1993*, London 1995, pp. 155-165, esp. p. 159.
- 37 Białostocki 1966 (note 12), pp. 80-81.
- 38 Nuttall 1992 (note 36).
- 39 For Angelo Tani's biography, see Aby Warburg, 'Flandrische Kunst und florentinische Frührenaissance Studien', *Jahrbuch der königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 1902, pp. 247-266, esp. 252-255; Raymond de Roover, *The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank, 1397-1494*, Cambridge MA 1963, Index, p. 499; Rohlmann 1994 (note 36), pp. 42-43.

- 40 Rohlmann 1994 (note 36), pp. 47, 139, n. 169; Barbara G. Lane, 'The Patron and the Pirate: The Mystery of Memling's Gdańsk *Last Judgment*', *The Art Bulletin* 73 (1991), pp. 623-640, esp. p. 629; Lane 2009 (note 22), p. 133.
- 41 First presumed by Warburg 1902 (note 39), pp. 257, 264, 265; see also a.o. Rohlmann 1994 (note 36), p. 48; Paula Nuttall, *From Flanders to Florence: The Impact of Netherlandish Painting, 1400-1500*, New Haven, London 2004, pp. 59-60.
- 42 Martens has already suggested that Tani ordered the painting from Italy through an agent; see Maximiliaan P.J. Martens, 'De opdrachtgevers van Hans Memling', in: De Vos 1994 (note 20), pp. 14-29, esp. p. 22. This agent could very well have been one of the members of the Florentine colony in Bruges.
- 43 For the dating of Van der Weyden's *Last Judgement*, see Nicole Veronée-Verhaegen, *L'Hôtel-Dieu de Beaune* (Les Primitifs flamands, I. Corpus de la peinture des anciens Pays-Bas méridionaux au quinzième siècle, 13), Bruxelles 1973, pp. 70-75. According to De Vos 1994 (note 25), p. 19, Memling arrived ca. 1459-1460 in the Netherlands from Germany.
- 44 For the great hall of the hospital, which, including the chapel, measures ca. 72 x 40 meters, see Shirley Neilsen Blum, *Early Netherlandish Triptychs: A Study on Patronage*, Berkeley, Los Angeles 1969, pp. 38-39; for Tani's chapel, see Rohlmann 1994 (note 36), p. 44.
- 45 Faries 1997 (note 6); Białostocki 1966 (note 12), pp. 58-62. For the relationship between the two paintings, see Białostocki 1966 (note 12), p. 71; De Vos 1994 (note 25), pp. 84; Otto Pächt, *Altniederländische Malerei: Von Rogier van der Weyden bis Gerard David*, ed. Monika Rosenauer, München 1994, pp. 228-241; Lorne Campbell, *Van der Weyden*, London 2004, pp. 26-28; Bernhard Ridderbos, 'Il Trittico con il Giudizio Universale di Hans Memling e il Trittico Portinari di Hugo van der Goes', in: Bert Meijer (ed.), exh. cat., *Firenze e gli antichi Paesi Bassi, 1430-1530, dialoghi tra artisti: da Jan van Eyck a Ghirlandaio, da Memling a Raffaello*, Firenze (Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina) 2008, pp. 38-65, esp. pp. 43-52; Bernhard Ridderbos, *Schilderkunst in de Bourgondische Nederlanden*, Leuven 2014, pp. 142-157; Lane 1991 (note 40), pp. 627-632; Lane 2009 (note 22), pp. 21-24; Till-Holger Borchert (ed.), exh. cat., *Memling: Rinascimento fiammingo*, Roma (Scuderie del Quirinale) 2014, p. 81.
- 46 For this iconographic variant and for compositional explanations of Van der Weyden's alteration, see Christiane Lukatis, 'Der himmlische Gerichtshof und der Seelenwäger Michael im Beauner *Weltgericht* Rogier van der Weydens', *Oud Holland* 107 (1993), pp. 317-351, esp. pp. 336-338.
- 47 For Lochner's *Last Judgement*, see Frank Günter Zehnder, *Katalog der Altkölner Malerei* (Kataloge des Wallraf-Richartz-Museums, 11), Köln 1990, pp. 212-223; Julien Chapuis, *Stefan Lochner: Image Making in Fifteenth-century Cologne*, Turnhout 2004, pp. 41-55, 262-264. For Memling's derivations from this altarpiece, see Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character*, Cambridge MA 1953, p. 272; Białostocki 1966 (note 12), p. 71; Stephan Kemperdick, 'Zur Lochner-Rezeption ausserhalb Kölns', in: Frank Günter Zehnder (ed.), exh. cat., *Stefan Lochner, Meister zu Köln: Herkunft – Werke – Wirkung*, Köln (Wallraf-Richartz-Museum) 1993, pp. 69-80, esp. p. 71; De Vos 1994 (note 25), pp. 84-85; Michael Wolfson, "'Den Duytschen Hans". Memling and German panel painting of the mid-fifteenth century', in: De Vos 1994 (note 20), pp. 9-13, esp. p. 13; Lane 2009 (note 22), p. 45.
- 48 Faries 1997 (note 6), p. 246, n. 9.
- 49 Ridderbos 2008 (note 45), pp. 49-51; Ridderbos 2014 (note 45), pp. 153-154.
- 50 For this panel, see Anne Dubois, Roel Slachmuylders, Géraldine Patigny and Famke Peters, *The Flemish Primitives, V. Anonymous Masters* (Catalogue of Early Netherlandish Painting in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium), Brussels 2009, pp. 57-107.
- 51 Dubois, Slachmuylders, Patigny and Peters 2009 (note 50), pp. 58-60, 92; Kemperdick 1993 (note 47), pp. 72-73.
- 52 Memling, however, might (also) have been inspired by earlier representations of Saint Michael striking the damned soul in the scales; for such images, in which the scale of the damned is going downwards, see Lukatis 1993 (note 46), pp. 336-338.
- 53 Till-Holger Borchert, 'Memling – Life and Work', in: Borchert 2005 (note 19), pp. 11-47, esp. pp. 25-26; Borchert 2014 (note 45), p. 80.
- 54 The commission has also been related to his sojourn in London. De Vos 1994 (note 25), pp. 87-88, states that Tani must have ordered the *Last Judgement* 'during his stay in the North'; Rohlmann 1994 (note 36), p. 43, thinks the painting was commissioned on his journey to or from London; Lane 2009 (note 22), p. 131, considers this possible; Nuttall 2004 (note 41), p. 55, excludes the possibility that Tani ordered the painting on his way to London because then he travelled with 'remarkable speed'. This speed is understandable because Tani went to London for very urgent reasons and if he passed through Bruges, which is unknown, he must have discussed financial matters with Portinari, who was responsible for the disastrous situation of the London branch, and not a painting with Memling. According to Nuttall, Tani commissioned the altarpiece and sat for his portrait when he stayed in Flanders on his way from London to Italy. This is also impossible because on that occasion he must have required the alterations in the execution. Borchert 2016 (note 21), p. 52, writes that Memling probably received the commission when Tani 'settled his affairs in Bruges en route from Florence to London', but presumed in earlier publications that Tani commissioned the painting in 1468, during an undocumented visit from London to Bruges to attend the wedding of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York; Borchert 2005 (note 19), p. 25; Borchert 2014 (note 45), p. 80. For objections against the latter view, see Ridderbos 2008 (note 45), p. 64, n. 14; Ridderbos 2014 (note 45), p. 303, n. 13. Instead of linking the commission to the stay in London, Lane also speculates that the commission may have taken place in 1465 or 1466 during an undocumented trip by Tani from Italy to Bruges in order to settle his affairs; see Lane 1991 (note 40), pp. 626-627, and Lane 2009 (note 22), p. 132. This can be doubted since it appears in a letter from Portinari to his brothers in Milan that he supposed Tani would not return to Bruges when he left in 1464; Portinari is upset in this letter because of the news that Cosimo de' Medici might send Tani again to Bruges and wants to prevent this; see A. Grunzweig, *Correspondance de la filiale de Bruges de Medici*, Bruxelles 1931, pp. 122-125; Ridderbos 2014 (note 45), pp. 140.
- 55 De Vos 1994 (note 25), p. 88, mentions that the exterior shows a very free underdrawing in black chalk with summary hatchings.
- 56 See note 34.
- 57 Martens 1994 (note 42), p. 22, has already suggested that, during his stay in Flanders in 1469, Tani sat for his portrayal and at this occasion had brought a portrait drawing of his wife with him.
- 58 Nuttall 2004 (note 41), pp. 57-58. K.B. MacFarlane, *Hans Memling*, Oxford 1971, p. 17, already considered Catherina's portrait as 'striking

- ingly Italianate' and did not rule out the possibility that it was painted from a drawing taken in Italy.
- 59 For an interpretation of Memling's use of space in these panels as a means of suggesting different levels of reality, see Jan Bialostocki, 'Modes of Reality and Representation of Space in Memling's Donor Wings of the "Last Judgement" Triptych', in: *Essays in Northern European Art presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann on his Sixtieth Birthday*, Doornspijk 1983, pp. 38-42; Jan Bialostocki, 'Modes of Reality and the Representation of Space in the Donor Wings of Memling's Last Judgement Triptych', in: Jan Bialostocki, *The Message of Images: Studies in the History of Art*, Vienna 1988, pp. 69-76.
 - 60 Nuttall 2004 (note 41), p. 57.
 - 61 Bialostocki 1966 (note 12), pp. 61, 79, 93. According to the notes written during the IRR examination (see note 6), the coat-of-arms of the donatrix was underdrawn lower, but the paint inside the shield remained opaque to infra-red; the donor's coat-of-arms, however, was underdrawn with that of his wife.
 - 62 Bialostocki 1966 (note 12), pp. 79, 93.
 - 63 According to De Vos 1994 (note 25), p. 89, n. 17, the reversal of the coats-of-arms was not executed by Memling himself.
 - 64 Faries 1997 (note 6), p. 259. There is a short, curved shape underdrawn to the left of the trumpeting angel on the left edge, but it seems too far to the left to be a continuation of the rainbow, nor does it extend to the horizon.
 - 65 Campbell 2004 (note 45), pp. 27-28.
 - 66 Under the young man the underdrawing shows a much smaller male face with a beard, and a woman was drawn under the man with greyish hair; see Faries 1997 (note 6), p. 246, n. 11. The young man is considered to be the same person depicted in Memling's Portrait of a Man with a Spotted Collar, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi; see Nuttall 2004 (note 41), pp. 60, 69, pl. 70; Borchert 2005 (note 19), cat. no. 8, p. 158.
 - 67 Bialostocki 1966 (note 12), pp. 56, 74, 88-89. Technical research has shown that a similar combination of pigments was used for the paint layers under and above the tin foil, which supports the notion that a head had already been painted before the tinfoil was applied; Szmelter, Cartechini, Romani and Pezzati 2014 (note 2), pp. 233, 234, fig. 11.2 (layers 3 and 5). (In the latter publication the elected soul with Portinari's portrayal is called 'the Redeemer' instead of 'the redeemed'.) See for the process of painting portraits on separate supports: R.H. Marijnissen and G. Van de Voorde, 'Een onverkleerde werkwijze van de Vlaamse Primitieven: Aantekeningen bij het werk van Joos van Wassenhove, Hugo van der Goes, Rogier van der Weyden en Hans Memling', *Academiae Analecta. Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, Klasse der Schone Kunsten* 44 (1983), no. 2, pp. 42-51.
 - 68 It has also been argued that because Tommaso Portinari had to go to Italy, this portrait was painted beforehand on a separate support in order to incorporate it later into the painting; see Jochen Sander, *Hugo van der Goes: Stilentwicklung und Chronologie*, Mainz 1992, pp. 243-246; Nuttall 1995 (note 36), pp. 59, 64; Nuttall 2004 (note 41), p. 59. Arguments are brought forward against this idea in: Ridderbos 2008 (note 45), pp. 52-53; Ridderbos 2014 (note 45), p. 158, and are confirmed by the recent insight that the head of Portinari replaced a painted head (see note 67). For the presumption that initially the portrait was not planned and for explanations of this addition, see Bialostocki 1966 (note 12), pp. 74, 93; Lane 1991 (note 40), pp. 632-639; De Vos 1994 (note 25), pp. 85, 88. Rohlmann 1994 (note 36), pp. 48, does not discuss the question why the portrait was made on a separate support but states, in relation to the portrayal, that Portinari took responsibility for the making of the altarpiece, the payments and the shipping. It should be remarked that, although payments to Memling must have been made through the branch of the Medici bank in Bruges, of which Tani was still a partner, in view of the bad relationship between Portinari and Tani, it is not probable that the latter used his rival as an intermediary for the commission of the altarpiece. Tani, however, was certainly dependent on Portinari for the transport of the painting from Bruges to Florence and thus he might have been pressured to allow Portinari's portrayal at that time. Rohlmann 1994 (note 36), pp. 48-49 and Nuttall 2004 (note 41), pp. 59-60, relate the portrayals of Portinari and other members of the Florentine colony to the fact that the Badia in Fiesole, for which the painting was destined, was a place where the Medici firm represented itself. As has been discussed in Ridderbos 2008 (note 45), p. 53, and Ridderbos 2014 (note 45), pp. 158-159, given the circumstance that, in contrast to his elder brother Pigello and Tani, Portinari did not have a chapel in the Badia, and the prospect that, contrary to other members of the Florentine colony in Bruges, he, the most important representative of the Medici in that city, would not be portrayed in the ambitious altarpiece Tani had ordered, he must have done his utmost – perhaps by appealing to the Medici – to acquire the place of honour he ultimately received in the central panel. Remarkably, Portinari's portrait in the Portinari-triptych by Hugo van der Goes was also painted on a separate support; see Marijnissen and Van de Voorde 1983 (note 67). In that case, of course, there is no question that the portrait was not planned, but this particular process must have been chosen because of Portinari's situation; see Sander 1992 (this note), pp. 243-245; Ridderbos 2014 (note 45), p. 165.
 - 69 I owe the observation of this motif in the underdrawing to Margreet Wolters.
 - 70 For the impact of Van Eyck on Memling, see Lane 2009 (note 22), pp. 79-91. For Memling's art as a synthesis of the art of Van der Weyden and the art of Van Eyck, see: Borchert 2005 (note 19), pp. 27-28, 42-43; Bernhard Ridderbos, 'Objects and Questions', in: Bernhard Ridderbos, Anne van Buren and Henk van Veen (eds.), *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception and Research*, Amsterdam 2005, pp. 4-169, esp. 140-141; Ridderbos 2014 (note 45), pp. 258-263. The golden armour of Saint Michael may be inspired by the Saint Michael in Petrus Christus' *Last Judgement* (Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie); see Erwin Panofsky 1953 (note 47), p. 272. Petrus Christus' archangel, however, does not reflect any figures.
 - 71 For the importance of these works by Van Eyck for other works by Memling, see Lane 2009 (note 22), pp. 79, 83-86.
 - 72 Faries 1997 (note 6), p. 256.
 - 73 Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350-1450*, Oxford 1971, pp. 108-109, 106-107, 167, 165-166.