



# Triptych with The Dancing Shepherds:

## UNRAVELLING MYSTERIES OF PRODUCTION AND CONSTRUCTION

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### Introduction

The triptych of *The Dancing Shepherds*, which has been part of a Dutch private collection since 1929, remains an essentially unknown work (fig. 1). The painting was included in the 1991 exhibition *Stad in Vlaanderen, Cultuur en Maatschappij 1477-1787* in Brussels, and is discussed by Isabelle Paulussen in an entry from the accompanying catalogue. In Paulussen's entry, the first and only prior analysis of the triptych, she correctly observes that two distinct hands executed the wings and the centre panel.<sup>1</sup> Paulussen proposes that a Bruges artist painted the donor wings and that an Antwerp Mannerist from the circle of Jan de Beer or Jan Wellens de Cock executed the centre panel. She concludes that the centre panel was probably a so-called 'dozijnschildering', a work produced in series, and that it was painted in the early sixteenth century. The clients, so Paulussen suggests, would have first purchased the complete centre panel from the painter's workshop or on the free market, and then later commissioned the portrait wings.



**Fig. 1** Anonymous, *Triptych with The Dancing Shepherds*, centre panel c. 1510, wings c. 1490, oil on oak panel, centre panel: 84.9 x 57.4 cm (curved at the top); left wing: 85.2 x 28.6 cm and right wing: 85.2 x 28.4 cm, Private collection, The Netherlands

Paulussen's initial conclusions and the restoration of *The Dancing Shepherds* triptych in 2004 offer the starting point for the analysis that follows. Technical examination and scientific analysis have now provided new insights into the artists' working methods and the triptych's original construction and have helped to determine the accuracy of Paulussen's observations.<sup>2</sup>

#### *The triptych with The Dancing Shepherds*

The triptych's panels and original frame are made of oak. The centre panel consists of two vertically-grained planks with a thickness of app. 1.0 cm. Each wing consists of a single panel with a thickness of app. 0.5 cm. The unpainted edges and remains of a barb, visible along all sides of the painted surface, indicate that all three panels retain their original size. Although the exteriors of the

wings are now painted black, microscopic analysis of the cross-sections seems to indicate that they were once marbled in olive green shades with reddish glazes on the right wing and a reddish brown imitation of tortoise-shell on the left.

The centre panel and the wings are placed in an original engaged frame (with grooves on all sides) that is painted black with a gilded inner edge. The separate parts of the frame are joined by dovetails, which are fixed with dowels at the upper joints, and with mortise, tenon joints, and dowels in the lower corners.<sup>3</sup> Cross-sections were taken from the frame to determine the history of its polychrome layers. Microscopic analysis shows original polychrome layers of pink mixed with lead white, a coarse bright red, fine black, and ochre particles, overlaid with glazes. The results suggest that there was originally pink marbling on the frame, which is now covered by the current black and gold paint (fig. 2). Although it cannot be determined exactly when the black and gold was applied, it seems to have been done at a very early stage, as there are also multiple layers of black repaint (app. 14 layers).

In the centre panel of *The Dancing Shepherds*, the Virgin and Child appear at the heart of the composition. Joseph is kneeling on the Virgin's left side, while an angel kneels in prayer to the Christ Child, on her right. The representation of the Virgin and Child here interestingly combines the iconography of 'The Holy Family' and 'The Nativity'. In the latter, the Christ Child typically lies in a crib or on the ground. Yet in depictions of the Holy Family and devotional images of the Virgin and Child, he is usually placed on Mary's lap.

The Holy Family and the angel are surrounded by a wooden fence, around which seven shepherds are dancing in a circle. Banderols inscribed with a text in Dutch are also arranged in a ring around the shepherds (see Appendix).<sup>4</sup> In the foreground of the centre panel, five more shepherds warm themselves near a fire, drinking, eating, and making music.<sup>5</sup> In the lower left corner, another shepherd leans on his crook and holds yet another banderol in his right hand.

The donors are depicted on the wings: on the left wing the male patron is accompanied by Saint Andrew and on the right, the kneeling female donor is presented by Saint Catherine. The oldest daughter and son, who kneel behind their parents, wear purple attire, and the girl in the back on the right wing wears a dark blue headscarf.<sup>6</sup> Their distinctive costumes might refer to the fact that these children passed away before the triptych was completed. In the absence of a coat of arms or documents pertaining to a commission, the identity of the family remains unknown.<sup>7</sup>

The landscape is continuous across the three panels. Because the wings and the centre panel were most likely executed in two different workshops, this continuous landscape suggests two possibilities: either the wings were added later and were adapted to match the centre panel, or the wings existed first and the centre panel was adapted accordingly. Indeed, the wings seem to have been painted in an older and more traditional style than the centre panel. The paint on the wings is applied more opaquely and smoothly, compared to the rather rough and transparent execution of the centre panel. By means of technical examination, more precise conclusions about these issues of production and construction can now be drawn.

## Technical Examination

### Frame and panels

Dendrochronology of the wood of the centre panel, its frame and the frames of the wings has shown that the

youngest hardwood ring of the centre panel was formed around 1485.<sup>8</sup> Taking into account the sapwood statistics from Eastern Europe, the earliest possible date of the painting's creation is 1496. The standard formula used for sixteenth-century painting is to start with the youngest hardwood ring and then to add a median of fifteen sapwood rings and two years for seasoning and transport. The result is that the most plausible year of execution for the centre panel is the very start of the sixteenth century, around 1502. The youngest hardwood ring of the frames dates to 1469, providing a plausible date of execution in 1486 (1469 + 17) or thereafter, indicating that the wood of the frame on all three panels is older than the support of the centre panel.

Unfortunately, it was impossible to analyse the wood used for the wings, as both sides of their panels are covered with paint and the centre panel and the wings were originally placed in an engaged frame (with grooves on all sides).<sup>9</sup>

Despite the lack of hard evidence for the dating of the wings, it is possible to put forth a hypothetical technical history for the whole assembly. The style of the wings appears to correspond to late fifteenth-century working methods (see below), while the style and painting technique used in the centre panel suggests a somewhat later date. Dendrochronological examination, which has indicated that the centre panel dates to 1502 or thereafter, confirms these stylistic distinctions and suggests that the triptych originally had an older, presumably now lost centre panel that was later replaced by the extant early sixteenth-century panel of *The Dancing Shepherds*.

### Ground and other preparatory layers

To find out more on the build-up in the ground and preparatory layers of the centre panel and the wings, cross-sections were taken and analysed with SEM-EDX and FTIR microscopic imaging.<sup>10</sup> This examination revealed that the centre panel differs from that of the wings. Although all panels are prepared with a thick semi-transparent whitish ground layer (chalk and animal glue), the whitish ground of the centre panel is overlaid with a pinkish preparatory layer, which primarily contains (lead) white, black, red and orange particles (fig. 3). FTIR imaging microscopy shows the distribution with a high density of carbonates in both the ground layers; with absorbance peaks at 1389 cm<sup>-1</sup>, 1416 cm<sup>-1</sup>, and 1511 cm<sup>-1</sup>. The EDX spectrum of sample pigment particles in the pink layer of the centre panel revealed one dark red particle containing a significant amount of aluminium and some calcium, which suggests that the pigment is a red lake (fig. 4). In another red particle, the EDX spec-

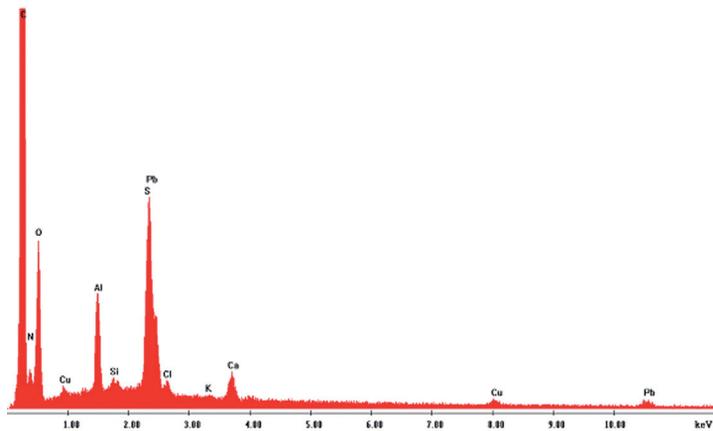


Fig. 4 EDX spectrum of the large red particle in layer 2 of the cross-section in Fig. 3

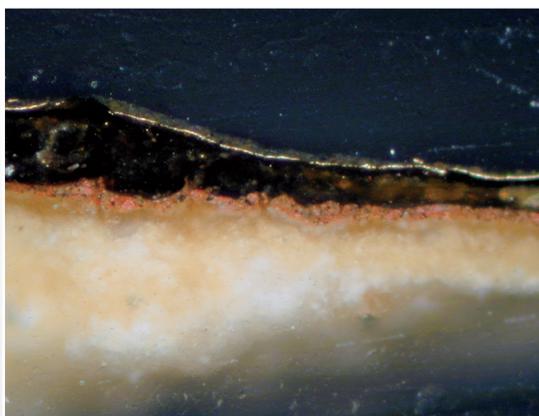


Fig. 2 Paint sample taken from the frame, (C31-04-r/ce). Normal light, magnification x 20

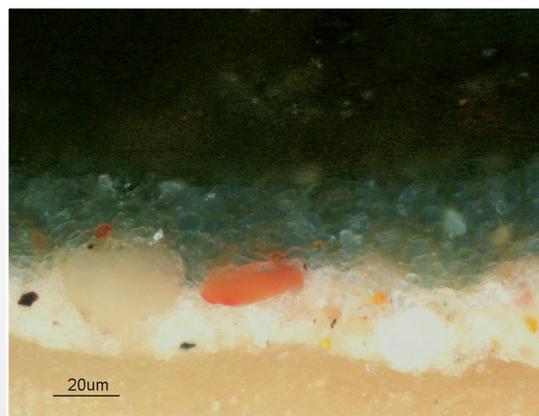


Fig. 3 Paint sample taken from the top right corner of the centre panel, from the distant blue hills (c31-14-m/ce). Detail of upper layers by normal light, magnification x 20

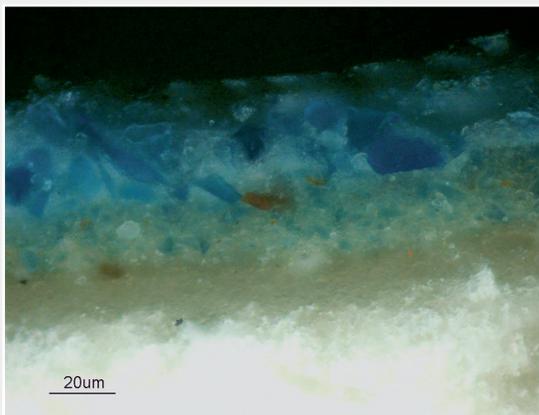


Fig. 5 Paint sample taken from the sky of the right wing. The sample site is close to the beard on the left edge of the top corner (C31-06-r/ce). Detail of upper layers by normal light, magnification x 20

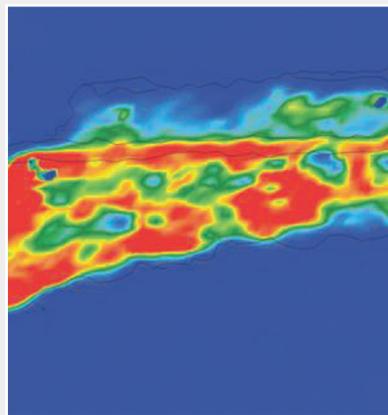


Fig. 6 The plot at  $1388\text{ cm}^{-1}$  using FTIR imaging of the paint sample illustrated as Fig. 5



Fig. 7 Detail of the shepherd



Fig. 8 IRR-detail of the shepherd and the underdrawn sheep that was not painted



Fig. 9 IRR-detail of the face of Saint Andrew, left wing



Fig. 10 Detail of X-ray of the face of Saint Andrew, left wing

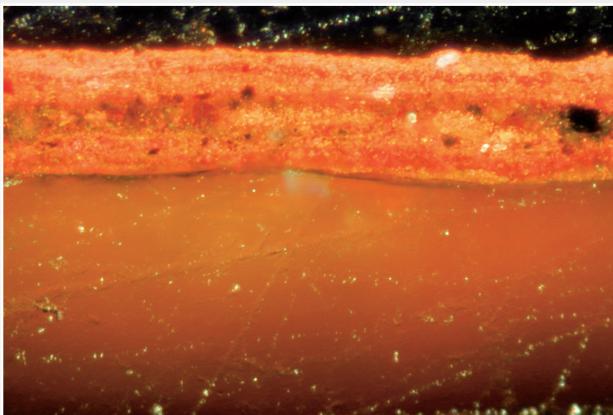


Fig. 11 Paint sample taken from the red garment of Saint Andrew (ground is missing from sample), left wing (C31-27-l/ce), normal light, magnification x 20

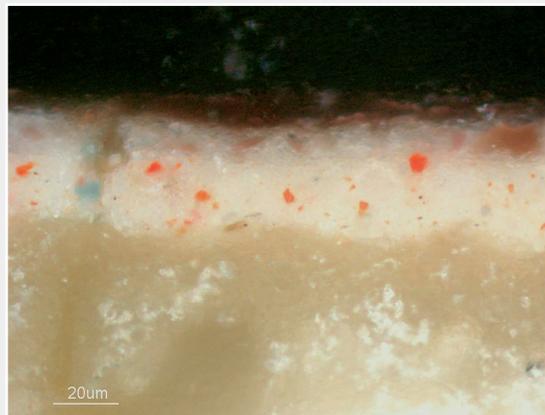


Fig. 12 Paint sample taken from the red drapery of Joseph of the centre panel (C31-16-m/ce), normal light, magnification x 20

trum shows a high proportion of lead, suggesting the additional presence of red lead.

Alternately, a cross-section taken from the sky in the right wing reveals a preparatory layer that is translucent (fig. 5). Although it registers as a discrete layer, it seems that the translucent layer is actually a semi-transparent area on top of the ground. The plot at  $1388\text{ cm}^{-1}$  using FTIR imaging reveals a large distribution of carbonates in the ground layers (fig. 6). As expected, there is a high proportion of carbonates in the chalk ground. The carbonates also extend into the translucent layer, which could imply that this layer is actually part of the ground. It may be that the layer merely appears to be transparent but is not actually so, an effect caused by the penetration of oil from the upper paint layers.

The evidence of the two different preparatory layers used for the centre and wings proves that two different workshops were involved in the production of this triptych. The use of a pink preparatory layer for the centre panel, which is also found in the paintings of Hans Holbein, Lucas Cranach and other early sixteenth-century artists, may be a further indication of the centre panel's later date, as there is little evidence for the use of that kind of *imprimatura* before 1500.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Underdrawing*

In addition to the distinctions between the build-up of the ground layers in the wings and centre panel, the IRR research also presents, as could be expected, evidence of two different working methods. IRR examination of the centre panel uncovered a sketchy layout executed in a dry material, possibly in black chalk.<sup>12</sup> The underdrawing sets out the complete composition in detail. The contour lines indicate the main shapes, and hatching marks indicate passages of shading and volume. The underdrawing was not followed precisely at the painting stage; for instance, the sheep sitting just above the lowest banderol in the middle of the composition was planned as a standing animal in the underdrawing, while another sheep, with its head turned to the right, was planned above the shepherd eating porridge in the foreground but was not executed in paint (figs. 7-8).

The underdrawing of the wings, on the other hand, is less detailed and incorporates two different drawing procedures. The face of Saint Andrew is elaborately planned and executed using a rather rough drawing material (fig. 9). Curiously, X-radiology shows that the head was not left in reserve, thereby indicating that the underdrawing must have been applied over the blue background of the sky (fig. 10). Yet in the face of the male donor, a few loosely-sketched lines, which appear to be light grey, are

visible through IRR. That the saint and patron were dealt with differently in the underdrawing is not surprising. In fifteenth and sixteenth-century paintings, portraits were generally underdrawn in less detail than standardised figure types, since the former were often carefully prepared in a separate study on paper, parchment or on a tablet, which then served as a model for the painting.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Paint layers*

Differences in the working method between the two workshops are also evident in the technique used to paint the sky. The painter responsible for the centre panel applied only one layer of thick blue, whereas two layers were applied in the wings. FTIR imaging also shows that the blue pigment used for the sky in the centre panel has a large amount of metal carboxylates and might therefore be associated with copper in azurite. Likewise, the EDX-spectrum indicates a large proportion of copper.<sup>14</sup> The two overlapping layers of blue in the wings consist of a mixture of lead white and azurite. The first bluish-green layer, which was applied on top of the ground, seems to contain a lower grade of azurite, whereas the top layer has larger and more intense blue particles.

The red paint layers of the centre panel and the wings were also examined and compared. In the wings, the red garments of Saint Andrew and of the female donor, were applied smoothly with a soft brush. The cross-sections of these areas show a multi-layer structure; at least nine layers of opaque reds (vermilion and red lead), along with dark red glazes for shading, were applied (fig. 11). In the centre panel, however, Joseph's red cloak consists of only two layers: a layer of pink mixed with lead white and a layer of red-lake particles underneath a red-lake glaze (fig. 12). For the more intense shadows, the artist applied two layers of red lakes on top of each other.

Another aspect of the painting needs some attention. There is no underdrawing visible underneath the paint layers of the children, and examination under the stereomicroscope has shown that some of the children in the back (the two boys and four girls), have been added on top of the final paint layers. As the painting technique and treatment of these children differ from the overall treatment of the wings, they are presumably later additions. On stylistic grounds it seems plausible that the artist who painted the centre panel is also responsible for the additional children in the wings (figs. 13 and 15). In the faces of both the children who were added later and the gaunt shepherd in the foreground, the painter applied a white line on the nasal bone and a white dot on the top of nose (fig. 7). The headscarves of the additional daugh-



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Fig. 13 Detail of left wing: Donor and sons

Fig. 14 IRR-detail of left wing: sons of the donor

Fig. 15 Detail of right wing: Female donor and daughters



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Fig. 16 Antwerp master, *The Dancing Shepherds*, c. 1520, oil on oak panel, 90.8 x 60.7 cm  
Collection Xaver Schweidwimmer, Munich



ters are also emphasized by white contour lines that are also present in the white attire worn by some of the dancing shepherds (such as the fluttering white robe of the shepherd with red stockings and the white hood of the shepherd on the left side of the circle). The eyebrows of the two additional boys, which resemble those of the shepherds in the centre panel but are absent in the 'original' four sons, offer a final point of comparison (fig. 13).

### Assembled triptychs: an Antwerp phenomenon?

There are other known examples of assembled triptychs comparable to *The Dancing Shepherds*. The centre panel of *The Holy Family* triptych in Utrecht (Museum Catharijneconvent) was possibly painted in the workshop of the Antwerp master Pieter Coecke van Aelst (or Lambert van Noort), while the wings were executed by Dirck Jacobsz (active in Amsterdam).<sup>15</sup> In the case of the altarpiece with the *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* in Aachen (Suermondt-Ludwig Museum), the centre panel was executed by the Master of Frankfurt (active in Antwerp as well) and the

wings by the Master of Delft, a Northern Netherlandish painter.<sup>16</sup> A third example is the altarpiece with *The Last Supper* in Brussels (Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique) attributed to the Antwerp Master of the Von Groote Adoration of which the centre panel differs in style from that of the wings.<sup>17</sup> In all of these cases, the clients seem to have bought a centre panel in Antwerp and then ordered wings from a local artist back home. This practice appears typical for Antwerp and is related to its position as the most important art market in Northwest Europe. The growing economic importance of the city at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries brought an enormous increase in the demand for paintings.<sup>18</sup> The production and export of luxury goods took on 'almost industrial proportions' from around 1500 onwards.<sup>19</sup> In order to meet the numerous and varied demands of potential clients, artists had to organise their production effectively.<sup>20</sup> In addition to works made on commission, painters began to produce so-called *dozijnschilderingen*, works with standard subjects such as *The Holy Family*, *Virgin and Child* and *The Adoration of the Magi* that were kept in ready supply, to be sold directly from the workshop or on the free market.

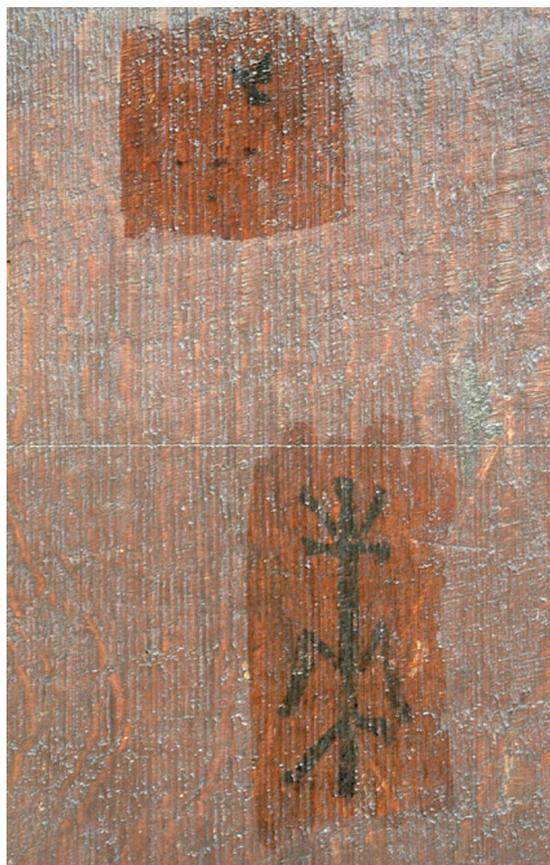
Yet the above-mentioned examples of assembled altarpieces differ from the triptych at hand. Not only do the wings of *The Dancing Shepherds* triptych predate the centre panel, but also the depiction of *The Dancing Shepherds* in itself is extremely rare as an independent subject.<sup>21</sup> There is only one other painted example known: a panel in the collection of Xaver Scheidwimmer in Munich (fig. 16).<sup>22</sup> The rarity of the subject indicates that the centre panel of the present painting was most likely made on commission, and not a work produced in series, as Paulussen assumes.

### Possible attribution of the centre panel

At the reverse of the centre panel a painted house-mark is applied, which could be a reference to the owner, the panel-maker or even to the painter's workshop (fig. 17).<sup>23</sup> At the moment, only three other examples of this kind of mark are known; a panel with the *Virgin and Child* by the Master of Legend of Saint Magdalen (Suermondt-Ludwig Museum, Aachen), a triptych by an anonymous fifteenth-century painter from the Southern Netherlands depicting *The Deposition* (Church of San Esteban, Hormaza, Burgos, Spain) and a panel with the *Man of Sorrows with two angels* (Kolumba, Cologne).<sup>24</sup> Yet as painted marks on the reverse of panels are a rare phenomenon, their original purpose, remains uncertain.<sup>25</sup>

The crowded composition of *The Dancing Shepherds*, the

Fig. 17 Anonymous, *The Dancing Shepherds* triptych, Detail of painted mark on the reverse of the centre panel. Private collection, The Netherlands



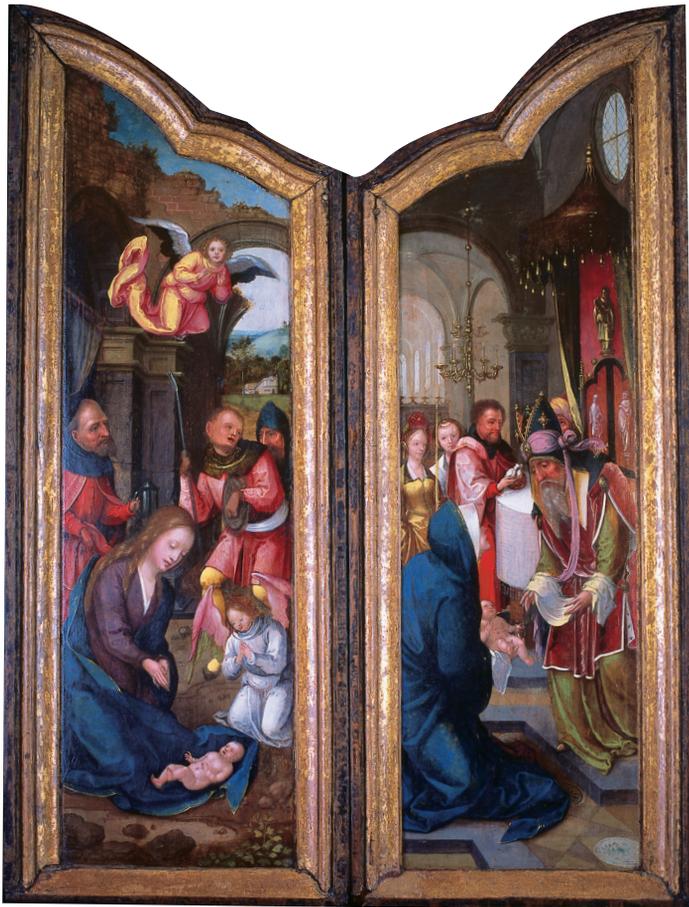


Fig. 18 Master of the Antwerp Adoration, two wings with *The Adoration of the Infant Christ* and *The Presentation in the Temple*, c. 1520, oil on oak panel, 74 x 28.2 cm (including original frame) Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht

use of bright colours, and the elegant and twisted poses of the figures are all characteristic of Antwerp Mannerism, as Paulussen already suggested.<sup>26</sup> Most of the so-called Mannerists remain anonymous; therefore it is difficult to attribute the centre panel with *The Dancing Shepherds* to a specific artist or workshop.<sup>27</sup> Masters took on apprentices in their studio or hired individual workers such as journeymen. These journeymen were fully trained artists who could be hired for a limited period of time for a single commission or in *knaepschappe*. In the latter case, the journeyman had a contractual agreement with a master, who released him for short periods to work at another workshop.<sup>28</sup> It is conceivable that certain ideas, compositions, head-types and stylistic elements, which seem characteristic of a certain master, became part of the stylistic vocabulary and working routine of a journeyman. After leaving the masters' studio, the journeyman would continue the use of the same techniques and elements in another workshop.

While this complex system of workshop practice makes it difficult to firmly attribute the centre panel of *The Dancing Shepherds* triptych to one specific painter or workshop, it is possible to make a few plausible suggestions. The painting was previously attributed to an artist from the circle of Jan de Beer or Jan Wellens de Cock. As Ewing pointed out, the skinny, ragged shepherds bear a generic similarity to the figures in the Sorgheloos-series of roundels (four tondi with *The Legend of the Prodigal Son*, Basel, Kunstmuseum, Öffentliche Kunstsammlung), which the German art-historian Max J. Friedländer attributed to Jan de Beer.<sup>29</sup> Yet Ewing assumed (correctly in our opinion) that this attribution was incorrect, based on stylistic dissimilarities between the tondi and the centre panel of the Milan altarpiece (Pinacoteca di Brera, inv. 620) with *The Adoration of the Magi* and the *Study of nine male heads* (London, British Museum, inv. 1886.7.6.7).<sup>30</sup>

Alternately, *The Dancing Shepherds* panel could be the product of the so-called Master of the Antwerp Adoration's workshop.<sup>31</sup> This provisional name was introduced by Friedländer, who in 1915, assembled a group of nine paintings under this label.<sup>32</sup> He, however, left aside the painted wings of compound altarpieces, such as eight panels that had been removed from the original compound altarpiece for the monastery belonging to the Kreuzbrüderkirche in Cologne (now in Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, inv. no. WRM 436-443); an altarpiece fragment with *The Holy Family* in Delft (Stedelijk Museum Het Prinsenhof, inv. no. NK 1412) and a panel with *Christ and the centurion of Capernaum* on the front and *The Paschal feast* on the reverse (private collection, Canada), which all could be assigned to the group of the Master of the Antwerp Adoration.

The key works of the group attributed to the Master of the Antwerp Adoration are the two triptychs with *The Adoration of the Magi* in Antwerp (Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, inv. 208-210) and Brussels (Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, inv. no. 336), which are both of an extremely high quality. The underdrawing and the painting technique are very elaborate and precise. Although there is a difference in quality between the two key works and *The Dancing Shepherds* panel, the use of uniform figure types and some stylistic characteristics do suggest some connection to the workshop of the Master of the Antwerp Adoration. A comparison of *The Dancing Shepherds* with the two wings of *The Adoration of the Infant Christ* and *The Presentation in the Temple* in Maastricht (Bonnefantenmuseum, inv. 4035), both thought to be from the studio of this master, reveals that the figure of Joseph in *The Adoration of the Infant Christ* is

comparable to the figure of Joseph in *The Dancing Shepherds* (fig. 18). In addition, the high priest in *The Presentation in the Temple* and the dancing shepherd on the right side of the circle were plausibly based on the same model. Both men have similar long beards, prominent cheekbones and pointed noses delineated by a white line on the nasal bone and a white dot on the tip of the nose.

### Conclusion

The results of the scientific examination of *The Dancing Shepherds* triptych support the prior assumption that the wings and frame were executed at the end of the fifteenth century and the centre panel at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Even so, an alternative scenario cannot be excluded, as scientific analysis cannot provide a conclusive answer to every question. Because dendrochronological examination of the panels of the wings could not be carried out, it is still possible that a provincial painter, who was simply using older techniques, made the wings at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The frame also could have been made in the sixteenth century from older fifteenth-century wood. In this case, both the actual painting and the assembly of the wings and centre panel would have been executed in the begin-

ning of the sixteenth century. On the other hand, there is not a ready explanation why two workshops working in different styles would be commissioned at the same time, or why the painter of the centre panel was asked to apply the additional children on the wings.

It is far more likely that the centre panel and the wings were executed within a limited period of time, perhaps over the span of about twenty years. The centre panel reveals a fast painting technique. In contrast, the wings, which are more devotional and modest, show a more elaborate and meticulous painting process that corresponds to fifteenth-century technique.

We are inclined to conclude that the wings were first attached to another older centre panel, and that the commissioners, after a certain period of time, decided to modernise their triptych with the addition of a new centre panel. They may also have requested simultaneously that the original marbled pink frame be repainted black and gold. Whether this alternation was done as a matter of taste or because of damage to the pink marbling during reassembly cannot be established.<sup>33</sup> The donor's family then asked the Antwerp master, from whom they commissioned the centre panel, to update the existing image by inserting their newborns into the composition.

### Acknowledgements

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### Photo credits

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Fig. 3-6, 11, 12 © Caroline Van der Elst/ Rachel Morrison  
Fig. 1, 7, 13, 15 © Rik Klein Gotink  
Fig. 8, 9, 14 © Stichting RKD  
Fig. 10 © SRAL, A. Truyen

### Appendix

1 Ic [hoore] wonderlijcke dinck/ gheboren es de hemelsche coninck/ die herdekens sijn alle blijde/ in eten in drincken te desen tijde  
2 Gloria in excelsis ic beginne/ het moet wel sijn een coningh-

inne/ Die godtheyt hevet in haer ghewracht/ ende tot haer ghesent syn godtlycke cracht/ Als abraham ende die propheten/ menich jaer te vore lieten weten/ Dat dit wonder soude gheschien/ dat wy nu hier niet [.eghe] aensien

3 Gloria blijschap moet wel sijn/ tusschen die moeder ende haer kindeken/ dat kindt es uten hemel comen/ ende heeft menschheyt aan dese maegt ghnomm[e]n/ [...] teckent hem daer [...] der sonnen/ Daer om es desen dans begonnen/ te love ter eeren desen kinde/ Wij wetent wel men salt soe vinden  
4 Ic sien ghinder eene[n] dans/ hadden wij ghete[n] laet ons te hans/ derwaert gaen hij dunct mij soete/ want mij dunct d[at] sij daer groeten/ een joncfrouwe sidt daer in den rinck/ die heeft de[n] hemelschen coninck/ in haren scoot ende sijn vro/ ende singhen

gloria in excelsis deo  
5 Ghebenedyt sy die hemelsche dracht/ die in dese herdekens heeft ghewracht/ ende ghedae[n] syn groote oetmoedichede/ ende syn gheboerte he[n] weten dede/ die onnosel herderke[n]s en oeck dom/ ende syn ghekeert ter wysheyt om/ dat hevet die heyleghe gheest ghedaen/ dat moghen wy in die sterre v[er]staen  
6 Gloria blijschap wij hier nu horen/ van den kinde dat es gheboren/ die scepper aller creaturen/ hij [...]ist] te betlehem inder scueren/ daer hadden wij he[m] sond[er] twijvel vo[n]de[n]/ in een crebbe met doeken ghewonden/ daer saghen wij he[m] ligghe[n] tussche[n] 2 beesten/ des willen wij dansen te deser feesten  
7 Gloria [blijschap sonder inde]/ is ons [gheboren met desen] kinde/ die [heyleghe . inghelen doe[n]

hem] feeste[n]/ dit [kint is wt den heyleghen gheeste]/ [In suyver] moeder lichaem [come[n]d]/ [ende heeft menschelijcke natuere aenghenomen]/ [Om ons te] brengen wten [meskieve]/ Daer ons adam in brochte ende ievē

**8** Puer nobis [nascitur angelorum], in hoc mundo [pascitur] dominus dominorum

**9** Groote [blijschap] ic ope[n]baer/ [...] va[n]de[n] hemel clær

**10** Gloria in excelsis deo/ [Met rechte] moghen wij wel wesen vro/ Choren der i[n]ghele[n] die daer songhen/ den [hooghēn] lof met hemelschen tonghe[n]/ [...es ghebo[n]de[n] ind[er] eerden]/ [dies wij] herderke[n]s te wijser [weerden]/ ende sonderlinghe de[n] ki[n]dere[n] alsoe wel/ uut alle de[n] gheslechte van Israhel

**11** Gloria blijschap ende eere/ moghen wij wel singhen ende roepen zeere/ Wij hebbe[n] ghehoort ee[n] boetscap schoone/ vanden [inghelen van den] troone/ dat te betlehem in de stede/ gheboren es den eweghen vrede/ en sonderlinghe den kinderen alsoe wel/ uut alle den gheslechte van Israhel

**12** Ic hoore daer een soete kint/ die ons compt de[n] hemel uit

**13** Gloria blijschap sonder rouwe/ moet wel wesen in dese vr[ou]we/ die heeft ghebaert in deser nacht/ eenen sone ende ter welser bracht/ [...] sij es moeder ende maghet [bleve[n]d]/ Dat wonder [e[n] vint me[n] nie] ghescreven/ Dies willen wij dansen ende springhe[n]/ Ende gloria in excelsis deo singhen.

## Notes

**1** I. Paulussen in J. Van der Stock ed., *Stad in Vlaanderen, Cultuur en Maatschappij 1477-1787*, (Brussels, 1991), 560-562, fig. 359.

**2** Research with the stereo microscope was performed by Caroline van der Elst who also restored the tryptich (2004), infrared reflectography (IRR) by Margreet Wolters (Rijksbureau Kunsthistorische Documentatie, The Hague) on 23 March 2004, X-radiology by Arnold Truyen (Stichting Restauratie Atelier Limburg, Maastricht) in June 2004; dendrochronology by Peter Klein (Universität Hamburg) on 22 February 2005. Paint samples were taken by Caroline van der Elst and six were analysed with both FTIR microscopic imaging techniques on all layers, SEM pictures and EDX-spectra on single

particles by Rachel Morrison under the guidance of Prof. Dr Jaap J. Boon (Molecular Paintings Research group, FOM Institute AMOLF, Amsterdam) in 2005. This project is part of the NWO De Mayerne Program project, component of MOLMAP and IRR-Evaluative Studies. The research is funded by FOM program 49 of the Stichting FOM, Utrecht.

**3** On 'Uitspiebare vlinderklam' see: H. Verougstraete-Marq and R. Van Schoute eds., *Cadres et supports dans la peinture flamande aux 15<sup>e</sup> et 16<sup>e</sup> siècles*, (Heure-le-Romain, 1989), 41 (no. 12).

**4** I. Paulussen identified the texts on the banderols for the first time in 1991. In 1997 some letters and words, which were difficult to read, were identified based on the inscription on a similar composition in the collection of Xaver Scheidwimmer (published in Phillips International Auctioneers & Valuers, *Fine Old Master Paintings*, cat. no. 61, London (1 June 1997), 94-95; as Westphalian-Netherlandish School, ca. 1520). Finally, in 2004, Van der Elst corrected some letters and words during the microscopic examination of the triptych.

**5** The motif of shepherds playing music is rare. In general the shepherds are shown with instruments in their hand but not playing them. Some of the rare examples of music-making shepherds are: Jan de Beer, *Triptych with the Nativity*, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne, inv. 480; Adriaen Isenbrandt, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, The National Gallery of Art, Washington, inv. 1978.461 (2724).

**6** Truus van Bueren pointed at the possibility that this garment could be a shroud (e-mail 5 February 2005).

**7** The triptych and its frame were examined with the stereomicroscope, raking light, x-radiology and IRR to determine if a coat of arms was originally part of the composition or not. No indications for an escutcheon were revealed. Although Saint Andrew and Saint Catherine are the patron saints of Amsterdam, their names however most likely refer to the first names of the donors: Andreas and Catharina (Truus van Bueren, University of Utrecht. E-mail correspondence Leeflang/ Van Bueren: 21 January 2005 and 5 February

2005). The cloths and the painting technique are indeed more comparable to the South Netherlandish tradition (perhaps Bruges?). The headscarf of the oldest daughter is similar to one of the female donors on a panel by an anonymous Southern Netherlandish painter in the Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent, ca. 1480-1490. Moreover, the black cloak of the donor on the left wing of *The Dancing Shepherd*-triptych is the same as that of one of the donors on the aforementioned Ghent panel. See for more examples of similar cloths, such as Jan Provoost, *Saint John and Saint Lucia with donors*, Windsor Castle (the female donor has the same headscarf and dress): M. Martens and M. Leeflang, 'Een vijftiende-eeuws stichterpaneel gereconstrueerd', in A. Balis, R. Hoozee, M. Martens and P. Van Haute eds., *200 jaar verzamelen, collectieboek museum voor schone kunsten Gent*, (Ghent/ Amsterdam, 2000), 37-39.

**8** The centre panel consists of two oak boards; the wood originated in the Baltic/ Polish region. More on the research with dendrochronology: M. Leeflang and P. Klein, 'Information on the Dating of the Paintings made in the Workshop of Joos van Cleve: A Dendrochronological and Art Historical Approach', in H. Verougstraete and R. Van Schoute eds., *Colloque XV pour l'étude du dessin sous-jacent et de la technologie dans la peinture "Copies, répliques, pastiches"*, (Louvain, 2006). Prof. Dr. P. Klein of the Institute of Wood science in Hamburg examined the triptych with *The Dancing Shepherds* with dendrochronology on 22 February 2005 (report: 15 March 2005).

**9** In some cases it is possible to determine the earliest possible date of execution for the wood with the aid of dendrochronology based on X-radiology. P. Klein tried to count the year rings of *The Dancing Shepherds* wings on the X-radiograph, but it turned out impossible to establish a plausible dating.

**10** Paint samples were taken by Caroline van der Elst and six were analysed with both FTIR microscopic imaging techniques on all layers, SEM pictures and EDX-spectra on single particles by Rachel Morrison under the guidance of Prof. Dr Jaap J. Boon (see

note 2). On methods and techniques such as FTIR (Fourier Transform Infrared) Imaging, SEM-EDX (Energy Dispersive X-ray detection) see P. Noble, J. Boon and J. Wadum, 'Dissolution Aggregation and Protrusion, Lead soap formation in 17th century grounds and paint layers', *Art Matters*, 1 (2002), 46-61, 59.

**11** G. Heydenreich, *Lucas Cranach the Elder, Painting Materials, Techniques and Workshop Practice*, (Amsterdam, 2006), 64.

**12** The binding medium and pigment of the drawing material were not analysed. The IRR examination was carried out on 23 March 2003 by Margreet Wolters with equipment from the RKD: a Hamamatsu C 2400 camera with vidicon N2606-06 select, equipped with a 55 mm Nikon Micro-Nikkor lens and a Kodak Wratten 87C filter. The monitor used was a Lucius & Baer, type VM 1710, with 525 picture lines. Images were assembled by Wolters in PanaVue Image Assembler 2.07 and Adobe Photoshop 7.0.

**13** M. Leeflang, 'The San Donato Altarpiece by Joos van Cleve and his Workshop', in *Indagini tecniche sulle opere genovesi di Joos van Cleve*, F. Simonetti and G. Zanelli eds., (Florence, 2003), 29; M. Leeflang, 'Workshop practices in early sixteenth-century Antwerp studios', *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen, Extravaganza*, P. van den Brink, M.P.J. Martens, K.L. Belkin, eds. (Antwerp, 2006); Ernst van de Wetering, 'Verdwenen tekeningen en het gebruik van afwisbare tekenplankjes en tafelleten', *Oud-Holland*, 4 (1991), 210-227.

**14** See note 2.

**15** J. Dijkstra and M.A. Faries, in C.J.F. van Schooten and W.C.M. Wüstefeld eds., *Goddelijk geschilderd, Honderd meesterwerken van het Museum Catharijneconvent*, (Zwolle, 2003), 90-93. I. Verslype and D. Meuwissen, 'Praetjes rondom gaetjes. Materieel technisch onderzoek naar lijsten en panelen van memorietafels uit de collectie van het Museum Catharijneconvent te Utrecht', in *Album Discipulorum*, J.R.J. van Asperen de Boer, (Zwolle 1997), 126-135. In the article by Verslype and Meuwissen the centre panel is attributed to the circle of Lambert van Noort and the wings to Dirck Jacobsz.

- 16 C. Vogt, U. Villwock and M. Rief, *Meister von Frankfurt, Meister von Delft, Das Annatriptychon der Delfter Familie van Beest im Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum Aachen*, (Aachen, 2002).
- 17 Peter van den Brink points at the possible attribution of the centre panel to Jan Willems from Leuven. Wings were executed by an unknown but completely different master (e-mail Van den Brink, 1 August 2006).
- 18 More on the Antwerp art market in the sixteenth century: F. Vermeylen, *Painting for the Market, Commercialization of Art in Antwerp's Golden Age (Studies in European Urban History, 1100-1800)*, (Turnhout, 2003).
- 19 H. Nieuwdorp ed., *Antwerpse Retabels 15de-16de eeuw*, [exh. cat., Museum voor Religieuze Kunst, Kathedraal] (Antwerpen, 1993), 17.
- 20 More on early sixteenth-century workshop practices in Antwerp: M. Leeflang, 'Workshop practices in early sixteenth-century Antwerp studios', in P. van den Brink, M.P.J. Martens, K.L. Belkin, eds., *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen, ExtravagAnt!*, (Antwerp, 2006), 184-225.
- 21 D. Ewing in *ExtravagAnt!* 2005, 59-61 (Jan de Beer, *Triptych with The Adoration of the Shepherds*, Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Foundation Corboud, inv. 480). E. Beatson studied the motive of dancing shepherds around a fire in the miniature art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; J.O. Hand and M. Wolff, *Early Netherlandish Painting, The Collection of the National Gallery of Art: systematic catalogue*, (Washington D.C, 1986), 122 (no. 8). Furthermore we would like to thank Dan Ewing, who is preparing a study on the iconographic subject of *The Dancing Shepherds* for paintings, miniatures and sculptures. Other examples of dancing shepherds in the background of paintings: Adriaen Isenbrandt's *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (Washington), the left tondo on Joachim Patenier's *Assumption of the Virgin* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, John G. Johnson Collection, inv. 1917) and the triptych by an anonymous artist with the *Nativity at Night* (M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, inv. 47.6). In the RKD, The Hague this painting is wrongly attributed to the Master of Amiens.
- 22 Both paintings (the Scheidwimmer painting and the centre panel of the triptych in a Dutch private collection) are dominated by banderols with the same text. Although the compositions are almost the same, the Virgin and Child with Joseph and the angel are in the Scheidwimmer version replaced by the Virgin and Child with Joachim and Anna. The Scheidwimmer *Dancing Shepherd* has been analysed using dendrochronology and the results confirm the art historical assumption that the painting is a later variant after the centre panel of *The Dancing Shepherds* triptych (Klein analysed the Munich panel, 20 April 2005, report: 29 April 2005). The youngest hardwood ring was formed in 1499. With the addition of seventeen years for sapwood, seasoning and transport the most plausible dating is 1516 upwards, approximately fourteen years later than the panel in a Dutch private collection.
- 23 Based on painted house-marks on paintings, such as the ones painted on the letter held by the portrayed man by Hans Holbein (Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig) and the pedestals of the donors on the wings of the *Crucifixion Triptych* by Joos van Cleve in Naples (Museo di Capodimonte), it could be assumed that the house-marks are most likely a reference to the owner.
- 24 A. Koopstra, in *Seitenwechsel. Gemälderückseiten und ihre Geheimnisse*, [exh. cat., Suermondt-Ludwig Museum, Aachen] (Aachen, 2006), 82-85. Master of the Legend of Saint Magdalen, *Virgin and Child*, last quarter of the fifteenth century, oil on oak wood, 29.5 x 21.6 cm, inv. no. GK 1305; *Man of Sorrows with two angles*, Kolumba, Cologne, inv. no. M12.
- 25 Information on marks and painted marks: Michael Rief, Suermondt-Ludwig Museum, Aachen (e-mails Van der Elst/ Rief: 3 march 2004 and 19 march 2004).
- 26 More on the Antwerp Mannerists: P. van den Brink, M.P.J. Martens, K. Belkin, N. van Hout eds., *ExtravagAnt! A Forgotten Chapter of Antwerp Painting, 1500-1530*, [exh. cat. Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp/ Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht] (Schoten, 2005).
- 27 See for more information on workshops: J. Van der Stock, 'De organisatie van het beeldensnijders- en schildersatelier te Antwerpen. Documenten 1480-1530', in *Antwerpse Retabels 1993*; M.P.J. Martens and N. Peeters, 'Artists by Numbers: Quantifying artists' trades in 16th century Antwerp', in *Making and Marketing*, M.A. Faries ed. (Turnhout, 2006), 211-222.
- 28 Van der Stock 1993, 47.
- 29 Dan Ewing (e-mails Leeflang/ Ewing, 18 and 23 December 2004). M.J. Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish Paintings, The Antwerp Mannerists; Adriaen Isenbrandt*, XI, (Leyden/ Brussels, 1974), no. 12, pl. 12. Four tondi, inv. nos. 395, 360, 1578, 1579.
- 30 D. Ewing, 'Jan de Beer and Workshop (Master of Amiens?), Triptych with The Adoration of the Magi' and P. Van den Brink, 'Jan de Beer, Study of nine male heads', in [Antwerp/Maastricht, 2005], 64-67 and 95-97.
- 31 Peter van den Brink (Suermondt-Ludwig Museum, Aachen), with whom we discussed the possible attribution of *The Dancing Shepherd* to the Master of the Antwerp Adoration.
- 32 M.J. Friedländer, 'Die Antwerpener Manieristen von 1520', *Jahrbuch der Königlichen Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 36 (1915); P. van den Brink, 'Two unknown wings from a triptych by the Master of the Antwerp Adoration', *Art Matters*, 1 (2002), 6-20, 14.
- 33 Pink marbling (imitation of porphyre?) was especially popular in the fifteenth century, e.g. paintings by Jan van Eyck and Jan Provoost.