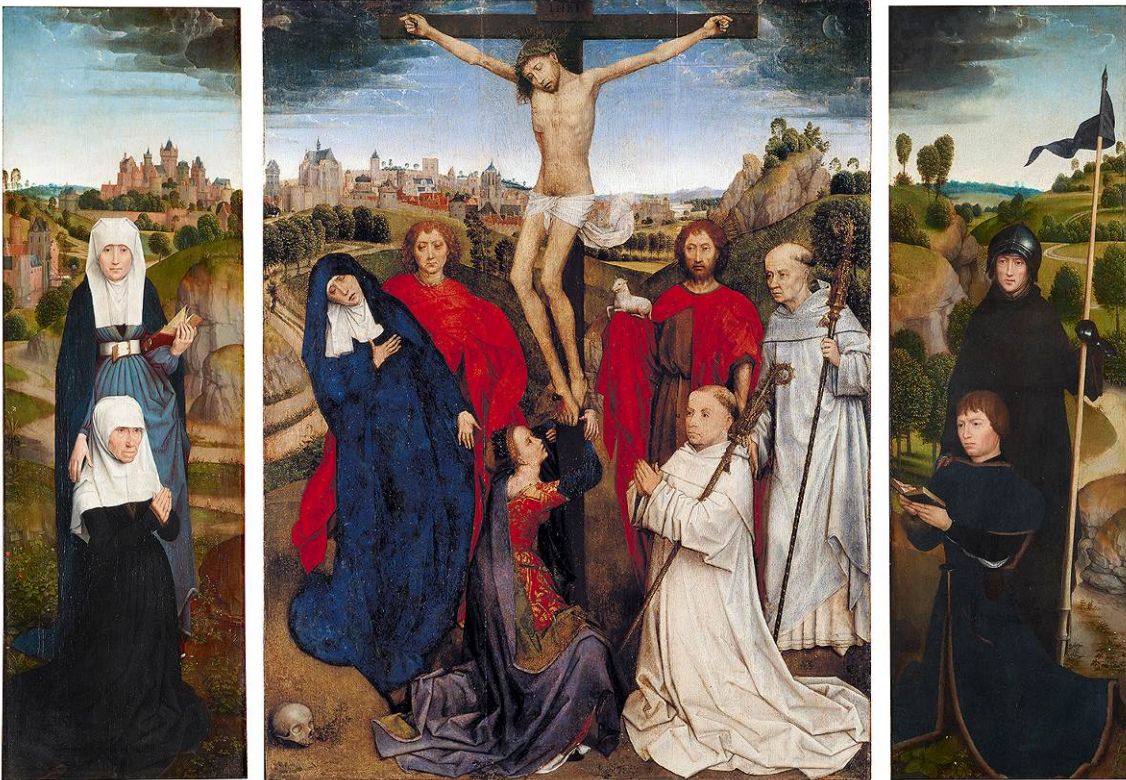


HANS MEMLING'S *TRIPTYCH OF JAN CRABBE* REUNITED IN LANDMARK EXHIBITION AT THE MORGAN

Hans Memling: Portraiture, Piety, and a Reunited Altarpiece
September 2, 2016 through January 8, 2017

New York, NY, July 18, 2016 — Completed around 1470 in Bruges, Hans Memling's extraordinary *Triptych of Jan Crabbe* was dismantled centuries ago and the parts were scattered. The inner wings from the altarpiece are among the finest paintings owned by the Morgan Library & Museum, where they have long been on permanent view in museum founder Pierpont Morgan's study. *Hans Memling: Portraiture, Piety, and a Reunited Altarpiece*, opening on September 2, reunites the Morgan panels with the other elements of the famous triptych: the central panel from the Musei Civici in Vicenza, Italy, and the outer wings from the Groeningemuseum in Bruges, Belgium.



Hans Memling (Flemish, ca. 1440–1494), *The Triptych of Jan Crabbe*, ca. 1467-70. Oil on panel. Center panel: Image courtesy of Pinacoteca Civica di Palazzo Chiericati, Vicenza. Left and right panels: © The Morgan Library & Museum, Photography by Graham S. Haber.

This exhibition—on view through January 8, 2017—is the first to explore the reconstructed masterpiece in context. The altarpiece will be surrounded by other paintings by Memling and his contemporaries, by a choice selection of illuminated manuscripts from Bruges, and by a group of Early Netherlandish drawings. Aside from the triptych fragments from Italy and Belgium, loans from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Frick Collection, and a private collection will complement a range of works from the Morgan’s own holdings.

“It is always meaningful—and moving—to see a great work of art made whole again,” said Colin B. Bailey, director of the Morgan Library & Museum. “The Crabbe triptych is a masterpiece of the first order and shows a relatively young Memling demonstrating many of the characteristic elements of his work—crystalline realism, spatial sophistication, and the ability to capture the humanity and individuality of his subjects. We are delighted to offer visitors the opportunity to see this work in its full glory for the first time in the U.S. and to explore the artistic milieu in which it was created.”

THE EXHIBITION

I. Triptych of Jan Crabbe

Morgan acquired the triptych’s inner wings in 1907. They were part of an altarpiece commissioned by Jan Crabbe, Abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Ten Duinen, near Bruges, Belgium. On the central panel, Memling depicted the crucifixion of Christ, with the Virgin Mary, St. John the Evangelist, and St. Mary Magdalene to the left of the cross. Kneeling to the right of the cross is Jan Crabbe, accompanied by his name-saint St. John the Baptist and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the founder of the Cistercian order. The two inner wings depict members of the patron’s family: his mother Anna Willemzoon with St. Anne on the left, and his much younger half-brother Willem de Winter with St. William on the right. The outer wings, originally visible only when the panels are closed, feature an Annunciation scene with the Angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary. It is not known precisely when or



Hans Memling (Flemish, ca. 1440–1494), *The Triptych of Jan Crabbe (closed)*, Annunciation Panels, ca. 1470. Oil on panel
Museum Brugge © www.lukasweb.be - Art in Flanders vzw.
Photography by Hugo Maertens.

why the work was dismantled, though it was not unusual for composite pieces such as triptychs to suffer this fate.

The *Triptych of Jan Crabbe* is a fine demonstration of Memling's extraordinary ability to capture the essence of the human face. In particular, the left panel portrait of Anna Willemzoon is one of the most frank and extraordinary depictions of old age from the Renaissance.

Indeed, in later years, Memling's portraiture would come to revolutionize the genre across Europe. Similarly transformative, the Annunciation scene features Gabriel and the Virgin Mary clad in white drapery and set on pedestals in niches like sculptures, but with rosy flesh tones in their heads and hands, making them one of the earliest examples of the technique of demi-grisaille in Flemish painting.

II. Triptych of Jan Crabbe in Context

Paintings by Memling and his Contemporaries

Several independent portrait paintings from Memling's early and late career offer further evidence of Memling's extraordinary talent as a portraitist. Although Memling's painterly style developed as he grew older, his ability to capture the essence of his sitters' personalities never changed.

Memling did not work in isolation, and a painting representing the *Virgin and Child with St. Anne* by a contemporary artist known as the Master of the Saint Ursula Legend provides an ideal counterpart to the triptych with its broad landscape and similar iconography. It shows how



Left: Hans Memling (Flemish, ca. 1440–1494), *Portrait of a Man*, ca. 1470, Oil on panel. © The Frick Collection. Right: Master of the Saint Ursula Legend (Flemish, active late 15th century), *Virgin and Child with St. Anne presenting Anna van Nieuwenhove*, ca. 1479-83. Oil on panel. © Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman Collection.

Memling's production fits alongside that of other painters in Bruges, while also highlighting how his technical abilities surpassed most others.

Manuscript Illumination in Bruges

In the fifteenth century, Bruges was an important center for manuscript illumination. Memling's development of the demi-grisaille technique has generally been traced to his time spent in Cologne, but in fact, varieties of grisaille and demi-grisaille were regularly used in Bruges manuscript illumination in the decades prior to the painting of the Crabbe triptych, as will be shown with a selection of Books of Hours from the Morgan's rich holdings. Conversely, the radical naturalism of Memling's painting seems to have served as an inspiration to the manuscript painters. Superb manuscripts from the Morgan's collection will show that reflections of Memling's painting technique began to appear in manuscript painting towards the end of the fifteenth century.



Drawings by Memling's Contemporaries and Followers

No original drawings by Memling survive, and those by his contemporaries are extremely rare, but it is clear that drawing played a fundamental part of his artistic practice. Several exquisite drawings by Memling's contemporaries and followers from the Morgan and the Metropolitan Museum of Art will give an impression of the array of drawing types Memling must have executed in his lifetime.

III. Beneath the Surface: Technical Study of the Crabbe Triptych

Technical study of the Jan Crabbe panels has revealed fascinating aspects of the altarpiece's evolution. With infrared imaging (IRR), Memling's graphic style can be seen in the lively underdrawings that lie beneath the layers of paint. Differences between the underdrawing and painting show that Memling made changes to the initial composition. X-radiographs show that he also made changes during the actual painting process.



Top: Book of Hours in Latin and French. Northern France and Flanders, ca. 1480. Illuminated by Simon Marmion. The Morgan Library & Museum. Purchased by Pierpont Morgan in 1900. Bottom: Workshop of Hugo van der Goes (Flemish, ca. 1440–1482), *Kneeling Lady*, ca. 1480-1500, Pen and brown ink with traces of black chalk. The Morgan Library & Museum, Purchased by Pierpont Morgan in 1909.

Public Programs

LECTURE

Jan Crabbe and Memling's Beginnings in Bruges

Till-Holger Borchert

Till-Holger Borchert, Director, Museums of Bruges, Belgium, surveys the life and work of Hans Memling from the moment that he established himself in Bruges in 1465. Special emphasis is put on the role of patrons such as Jan Crabbe in Memling's early career.

Wednesday, September 7, 6 pm*

Tickets: \$15; \$10 for members; free for students with valid ID.

**The exhibition will open at 5 pm for program attendees.*

GALLERY TALK

Hans Memling: Portraiture, Piety, and a Reunited Altarpiece

Ilona van Tuinen, Assistant Curator, Drawings and Prints

Friday, September 16, 6 pm

Tickets: Free with museum admission; no tickets or reservations necessary.

LECTURE

A Closer Look at Hans Memling's Working Methods

Maryan Ainsworth

Maryan Ainsworth, Curator of European Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, discusses Memling's working methods in the *Crabbe Triptych* and also in the remarkable portraits for which he is especially well known.

Tuesday, October 4, 6:30 pm*

Tickets: \$15; \$10 for members: free for students with valid ID.

**The exhibition will open at 5:30 pm for program attendees.*

CONCERT

Flanders Remembers: Music and Words from WWI

This semi-staged performance includes a range of music (classical, jazz, cabaret), and readings from the World War I period, featuring American, French, Flemish, and German composers and writers. Artists include soprano An De Ridder, mezzo-soprano Katarina Van Droogenbroeck, actor/baritone Matthew Patrick Morris, and pianist Katya Mihailova. Music of Debussy, Charles Ives, and Irving Berlin, among others. Directed by Edwin Cahill. Presented with the General Representation of the Government of Flanders to the USA. Reception follows.

Thursday, November 17, 7 pm*

Tickets: \$35; \$25 for members.

**The exhibition will open at 6 pm for concert attendees.*

**GALLERY
TALK**

Hans Memling: Portraiture, Piety, and a Reunited Altarpiece
John Marciari, Charles W. Engelhard Curator and Department Head,
Drawings and Prints

Friday, November 18, 1 pm

**Tickets: Free with museum admission; no tickets or reservations
necessary.**

Exhibition Catalogue

A fully illustrated catalogue will accompany the exhibition: *Hans Memling: Portraiture, Piety, and a Reunited Altarpiece*, edited by John Marciari, with essays by Maryan W. Ainsworth, Till-Holger Borchert, Noël Geirnaert, John Marciari, Gianluca Poldi and Giovanni C.F. Villa, and Ilona van Tuinen. Bruges: The Flemish Research Centre for the Arts in the Burgundian Netherlands, Musea Brugge / New York: The Morgan Library & Museum, in Association with Paul Holberton Publishing, London, 2016. 120 pages, 60 color illustrations.

For press inquiries regarding the catalogue:

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Organization and Sponsorship

The curator of the exhibition is John Marciari, Charles W. Engelhard Curator and Head of the Department of Drawings and Prints, the Morgan Library & Museum.

Hans Memling: Portraiture, Piety, and a Reunited Altarpiece is made possible in part by S. Parker Gilbert, whose gift prior to his death in 2015 provided early support for the project.

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The programs of the Morgan Library & Museum are made possible with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

The Morgan Library & Museum

A complex of buildings in the heart of New York City, the Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today it is a museum, independent research library, music

venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. A century after its founding, the Morgan maintains a unique position in the cultural life of New York City and is considered one of its greatest treasures. With the 2006 reopening of its newly renovated campus, designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, and the 2010 refurbishment of the original library, the Morgan reaffirmed its role as an important repository for the history, art, and literature of Western civilization from 4000 B.C. to the twenty-first century.

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