DIERIC BOUTS

CREATOR OF IMAGES

Edited by Peter Carpreau

HANNIBAL

Museum Leuven

DIERIC BOUTS
CREATOR OF IMAGES AND EXPANDER OF HORIZONS

In the handing down of even the most valuable expressions of our human culture, chance and circumstance often play a far greater role than we presume. The works of Johann Sebastian Bach might never have come to our ears had they not been rediscovered in the nineteenth century by Felix Mendelssohn. Similarly, the paintings of Dieric Bouts might never have reached us, or would have continued to be wrongly attributed to Hans Memling, had it not been for the groundbreaking work of Johann David Passavant. This German painter, researcher and curator was fascinated by the Old Masters and published the influential travel and art book *Kunstreise durch England und Belgien*, in which he did justice to Dieric Bouts by acknowledging his essential contribution to the history of the art of the Low Countries. For this, we wish to thank him and pay posthumous tribute.

As a society, we do not wish the transmission of our cultural capital to be dependent on accidental rediscoveries. For this reason, the Flemish Community, the City of Leuven and KU Leuven are jointly investing in a proactive heritage policy to counter the risk of cultural memory loss and promote historical awareness. Exactly 25 years after the last retrospective, *Dirk Bouts (ca. 1410–1475). Een Vlaams primitief te Leuven* (Dirk Bouts. A Flemish Primitive in Leuven), organised by Prof. Maurits Smeyers and held in St. Peter's Church in 1998, we urgently need a new way of marking the importance of Dieric Bouts's legacy in Leuven – and one that is tailored to the twenty-first century.

Under the leadership of Peter Carpreau, art historian, curator and Bouts expert, the M Leuven team has drawn on collections around the world to bring together the largest number of paintings attributed to Dieric Bouts and his workshop ever seen under one roof. Bouts is back in the city where his works took shape and acquired meaning in the middle of the fascinating fifteenth century. In a period of enormous social transition, when medieval feudal society was slowly but surely crumbling, new urban forces were emerging. City leaders, fraternities, and guilds were shaping what can now be considered a fledgling urban democracy. Most notably in Leuven, this historical process had an exceptionally powerful catalyst in the founding of the University in 1425. Leuven was fertile ground for the growth of an international stronghold of innovation.

All these developments were, of course, accompanied by a deeply human desire for distinction. Leuven was embarking on an ambitious building programme that led to the construction, among others, of the historic Town Hall and the collegiate St. Peter's Church. These new landmarks included new visual programmes and, consequently, a significant number of artistic commissions. In this enterprising cultural climate, Dieric Bouts emerged as the right image maker in the right place and at the right time. The spatiality of Jan van Eyck and the visual lines of Rogier van der Weyden came together in panels painted by Bouts in a perfect synthesis of the visual culture of the early Renaissance. Bouts used this potential to execute ambitious projects in which clients and advisors – themselves affiliated with the young University – had an important say in determining the iconographic programme that the artist would capture in paint. The historically documented commissions for his *Last Supper* (for the Brotherhood of the Holy Sacrament's chapel in St. Peter's Church) and *Justice of Emperor Otto III* reveal how Dieric Bouts translated themes that were rarely, if ever, explored into new kinds of images with a deep footprint that is still present in our own visual culture today.

M Leuven reflects this in putting together an exhibition that can be explored in two parallel ways. Across five adjoining museum galleries, the visitor is introduced to some 25 works by Dieric Bouts and his workshop, supplemented by about 40 pieces from their historical context. In conjunction with this, the makers of the exhibition in each gallery have connected Bouts's late Gothic images with those of our contemporary visual society. M Leuven invites us on a fascinating visual journey in which the image types that Dieric Bouts introduced or perfected continue to be in evidence today in striking visuals from advertising campaigns, sports reports, and science fiction films. For example, the models from the storyboards of *Star Wars,* housed in Los Angeles and on loan from the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, suddenly seem like an echo chamber of the fantastic landscapes in Bouts's *Fall of the Damned* in Lille (on loan from the Palais des Beaux-Arts). And a sublime sports photograph of Eddy Merckx exhausted after drawing on the last of his strength to win a race, visually merges with *Christ Crowned with Thorns* from the M Leuven collection. This wealth of tantalizing interfaces is the work of a multidisciplinary team of curators and scholars that connects art historical expertise with the professional visions of visual creatives.[1, 2] With this sense of adventure, M Leuven presents to the world a trans-historical exhibition dedicated to visual mastery over the centuries.

The exhibition at M Leuven is the focal point of the *New Horizons | Dieric Bouts Festival*, which opens on 22 September 2023. The festival, with Dieric Bouts as its inspiration and New Horizons as the consistent thread, allows audiences to discover a host of new horizons over a period of four months through a broad cultural programme ranging from visual arts and music to theatre and lectures. The initiator is KU[N]ST Leuven, a partnership between the City of Leuven and KU Leuven. More than a hundred organizations are contributing to the programme, which will broaden our horizons, just as Dieric Bouts did so masterfully in the fifteenth century.

The *DIERIC BOUTS. Creator of Images* exhibition at M Leuven begins a month later, on 20 October 2023, and runs until 14 January 2024. A supplement will follow a few weeks later in the form of a smaller focus exhibition, *Atelier Bouts*. Running from 16 February to 28 April 2024, this exhibition takes a closer look at the material of four large altarpieces and two smaller works, considering in detail recent laboratory research and offering unique insights into the creation process and the extremely accurate form and image structure of Bouts's painting practice. There will be a particular focus on the launch of an ambitious new restoration project that the Museum is being supported by the Flemish Community to undertake. The focus is on *Triptych of the Descent from the Cross*. Since 1505, this literally and figuratively *majeure* work by Dieric Bouts has been preserved in the Capilla Real in Granada. It is leaving Spain for the first time to be restored to its former glory by a specialized team from Belgium's Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage following the exhibitions at M Leuven. This enables us to fulfill our responsibility to sustainably preserve the most valuable Flemish heritage in the world for generations to come.

We sincerely thank everyone involved in putting on the exhibitions and designing the festival programme.

Bert Cornillie
Alderman for Culture, city of Leuven
Chairman, M Leuven, Co-chair, KU[N]ST Leuven

Mohamed Ridouani
Mayor, city of Leuven

Bart Raymaekers
Advisor to the Rector for Culture, Art and Heritage, KU Leuven
Co-chair, KU[N]ST Leuven

Luc Sels
Rector, KU Leuven

1 Inigo Bocken (KU Leuven/Radboud University), Till-Holger Borchert (Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum), Peter Carpreau (War Heritage Institute), Marjan Debaene (M Leuven), Valentine Henderiks (Université Libre de Bruxelles/Périer-D'Ieteren Foundation), Stephan Kemperdick (Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), Gust Van den Berghe.

2 Charlotte Abramow, Amira Daoudi, Tom Eerebout, Laela French, Jasper Jacobs, Lectrr (Steven Degryse), Ryan Linkof, Luc Shih, Adalberto Simeone, Sebastian Steveniers, Gust Van den Berghe.

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Introduction
Dieric Bouts, An Enigma

Peter Carpreau

Dieric Bouts is one of those inscrutable figures in the history of Western art. Most artists have a clear artistic project. Some seek the perfect representation of the human body or strive for maximum visual impact. Others try to depict movement in their paintings and sculptures or experiment with new techniques or materials. Dieric Bouts's project, however, seems far less unambiguous, less clearly delineated. The *DIERIC BOUTS. Creator of Images* exhibition and this accompanying publication are an attempt to get closer to this enigmatic figure.

There are two approaches we can take. We can ask ourselves why the painter did what he did. And we can wonder why we still look at his work with such fascination today and why he continues to be appreciated as one of the great painters of the fifteenth century. The first question is a historical one. It asks what drove him, what his motives were. To answer the question, we need first to gain an overview of the context in which Bouts worked. The only thing we are truly certain of is that he settled in Leuven around the middle of the fifteenth century and continued to be active there for the rest of his career. It is therefore reasonable to seek the context in which Bouts worked in the cultural and intellectual life of this city on the River Dyle. This included the relatively new University founded in 1425, of course, which left its mark on the intellectual life of Leuven; the influence of the great Park Abbey was also a major factor. Thanks to such intellectuals as Abbot Van Thulden (died 1494) of Park Abbey, the ideas of Humanism and the innovations of the Italian Renaissance were already circulating in fifteenth-century Leuven. At the time, the Devotio Moderna ('Modern Devotion') movement was the most important current of religious renewal and emancipation among the bourgeoisie. The movement brought about a spiritual renaissance that was carried not by the Church but by lay people.

We should not, however, restrict ourselves to the city of Leuven. We need to look far more broadly at Dieric Bouts's artistic context, enabling us to observe his work in greater detail. To understand the painter, we need to understand the influence of Devotio Moderna on the production of devotional works, as well as the underexposed relationship between Bouts's work and Italian innovations of the fifteenth century. Traditionally, Dieric Bouts has also been associated with the development of landscape painting and the use of perspective. A deeper analysis of these two elements in his work is therefore also central.

The second question – the importance to us today of Dieric Bouts – requires a trans-historical approach. To answer this question, we must first break down some boundaries. If we continue to think of Bouts as an artist as we now understand artists, we place upon him the burden of a tradition of thinking about art and perceive him from within this frame of thought. But the fact remains that Dieric Bouts has been a rather enigmatic figure within that tradition, justifying a search that goes beyond these traditional lines of thought.

Let us, then, look at Bouts not as an 'artist' but as a maker of images, someone professionally involved with visual production. Historically, this would be a more proper approach, because today's concept of the artist began to take shape only after the fifteenth century. If we regard Bouts's output not as works of art as we define them today but rather as visual images, then we can strip them of the quasi-religious interpretation that the concept of art has since assumed. 'Art' has become something of a religion of its own: we can no longer look spontaneously and intuitively, and consequently, we do a disservice to Bouts and everyone else. If instead we look at him as we would a contemporary filmmaker, commercial artist, or graphic designer, we can better understand how he, like his contemporaries, had to work within certain limits and create images that fulfilled a function within a given context. An intuitive understanding of contemporary images gets us closer to Dieric Bouts.

In *DIERIC BOUTS. Creator of Images*, this approach is realized in both a theoretical and a practical way. Among the contributions to a better understanding of the work of this fifteenth-century painter in this catalogue, you will find a contemporary film director's personal reflections on Bouts and an interpretation of Bouts's images based on twentieth-century philosophy and semiotics. This practical approach is also followed in the exhibition itself, which juxtaposes works by Dieric Bouts and contemporary images.

Dieric Bouts has already been the subject of a range of published monographs, each with its own approach and its own merits. Prominent art historians, including Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968), Max J. Friedländer (1867–1958), and Wolfgang Schöne (1910–89), have devoted extensive analyses or complete overviews to the Leuven master. More recently, in 1998, the City of Leuven hosted its own Bouts project under the leadership of Maurits Smeyers (1937–99), which encompassed an exhibition and a series of publications dealing with a wide range of subjects related to Dieric Bouts. In 2005, Catheline Périer-D'Ieteren published an extensive monograph on Bouts's work. This publication offers an outstanding *status quaestionis* of research on Bouts and is a balanced and academically founded catalogue of his *oeuvre*. The publication now before you makes no claim to repeat Périer-D'Ieteren's titanic work. Our current investigation is intended to be complementary and, along with existing scholarly work, to offer new ways of further exploring the enigma of Dieric Bouts.

1

BOUTS AND THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

The Young University of Leuven

Mark Derez

When Dieric Bouts arrived in Leuven in around 1445, the University, founded in 1425, was very young – less than a quarter of a century old. The university as a concept was already a couple of centuries old, though, and as many as 30 universities predate Leuven. Like purgatory, universities were invented in the twelfth century. Also like purgatory, the university is a transitional stage, an interim period for students with scope for some play before adult and professional life (and the demands of society). Purgatory may since have been abolished, but the university, the only major institution created in the Middle Ages, has stood the test of time, and its global stock has since risen.

After the establishment of the universities of Bologna, Paris and Oxford, the thirteenth century saw the first general expansion of academia. In the fourteenth century, a university was founded somewhere every four years on average, prompting the existing institutions to grumble about 'uncontrolled growth'.[1] Universities could issue the *licentia ubique docendi*, which authorised holders to teach throughout Christendom. The old European universities, cosmopolitan in outlook, feared competition from the regional universities that were now springing up like mushrooms, even in the North. The trend towards a more national or regional colouring of the educational landscape, however, seemed inevitable.

Between 1378 and 1540, Leuven was riding a wave of new foundations that also took in the Holy Roman Empire.[2] It was the sixth university to be founded in the Empire after Erfurt, Heidelberg, Cologne, Leipzig, and Rostock. In this European context, Leuven more than held its own: towards the end of the fifteenth century, it was one of the busiest universities on the continent. In Burgundy, which belonged partly to the Empire and partly to France, the Dukes had recently also had access to a university founded in 1422 and located in Dole, at the foot of the Jura, in the so-called 'lands from the way over'. A university in the Low Countries, the so-called 'lands of this side' – in Brabant, for example, where an offshoot of the House of Burgundy had been in power since 1406 – would benefit the integration of the hereditary lands, strengthen loyalty to the young Burgundian principality, and prevent a brain drain and the flight of capital.

Before 1425, ambitious young men from the Low Countries who wanted to continue their education had to travel all the way to Cologne, Paris, or Orleans – a daunting journey, given the means of transport available at the time – to obtain an academic diploma. But Paris and Orleans were no longer safe. On the international front, the Hundred Years' War was raging. 1425 was also the year that Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans, first heard Voices. Four years later, she would liberate Orleans from the English, and in 1431, a future professor of theology at Leuven University came to preach a sermon while she was being burned at the stake.[3]

UNIVERSITY OR SHEEP MARKET?

For Leuven, 1425 was a year of resurrection. The recovery was already under way,[4] and economically, the city had been climbing out of a deep slump, thanks to a number of commercial changes it had been able to exploit during the fifteenth century: the switch from the manufacture of ordinary fabrics to luxury fabrics (the velvet and fur collars in Dieric Bouts's figures were made locally), and the change from viticulture (*villica*, or peasant wine, according to Erasmus (1469–1536)) to the brewing of beer with hops from Holland. At the same time, the city centre was engaged in a major expansion with new construction of a town hall and a collegiate church – municipal marketing of the first order. The most important change for the city's future, however, was the University.

The story goes that the city of Lier refused the offer of a university, preferring to keep its sheep market. Brussels, Leuven's age-old rival, had also been unenthusiastic. We understand from the *Rymkronyk van Braband* that the people of Brussels were afraid University students *violeren souden der liede kindere* ('would violate their daughters').[5] In Leuven, the wise city fathers were apparently less troubled by this fear. In retrospect, it turned out that a school of higher education would be better than a sheep market at saving the city from becoming a hive of provinciality. Leuven would never regain its superiority over Brussels, but on 7 September 1426, the day before Fair Sunday, it staked its claim as the intellectual capital of the Netherlands by announcing, on church doors everywhere from Arras (Atrecht) to Zwolle and from Aachen to Zutphen, that it was setting up a university.[6] Classes would commence a month later, at the beginning of October, and be taught by over a dozen professors (five legal scholars, a physician and eight masters in the arts).

A year earlier, Willem Neefs, Scholaster of the chapter of Leuven's St. Peter's Church and responsible for education in

the city, had travelled to Rome at the city's expense. Armed with credentials, commissions, and bribes, he manoeuvred his way through the maze of the Curia and the Papal Chancellery.[7] His efforts met with success. In April 1426, the Papal Bull founding the University arrived in Leuven (Fig. 1). Neefs had secretly granted himself a bonus by having himself appointed as the first Rector (director) of the new *Studium Generale*.

The Bull, with the solemn salutation of *Sapientia Immarcessibilis* (unassailable wisdom), was quite similar in layout and composition to that of Rostock, which had unmistakably served as a model in the Papal Chancellery.[7] Pope Martin V (1368–1431) gave his permission for the creation of a *Studium Generale* with four faculties: liberal arts, the traditional route to the higher faculties; canon law; civil law; and medicine. As in other universities, these faculties awarded three distinct diplomas: *baccalaureus*, *licenciatus* and *doctor*.

The University apparently had to operate for a trial period before it could be trusted with a Faculty of Theology, the most important discipline from an ecclesiastical perspective, but also the most risky. Paris, which saw its monopoly threatened, instigated the requisite delay. After seven years, the case for Leuven had been made. Rostock had taken twelve years. The Parisian lobby was disregarded by the Burgundian Duke Philip the Good (1396–1467), and the new Pope Eugene IV (1383–1447) added a Faculty of Theology in 1432, the crowning glory.[9] The *Studium Generale* was now complete.

Fig. 1 *Papal Bull of Pope Martin V*, Rome, 9 December 1425, Leuven, University Archives.

Pope Martin V founded a *Studium Generale* in the city of Leuven or Louvain (*in oppido Lovaniensi*) on condition that the Duke, the city magistrate, and the St. Peter's Chapter ceded their jurisdictions to the new institution. The Pope was involved because of his universal authority: University degrees were valid everywhere. On the bottom fold of the parchment of the Charter is the papal lead seal or *bulla*. It is fortunate that this foundation document certificate was photographed before it went up in flames in August 1914.

A MUNICIPAL UNIVERSITY

A university was certainly of use in the House of Burgundy's 'nation building', but the initiative had actually come from the city magistrate.[10] It owed its success to many fathers: the Pope in Rome, of course, the Holy Father, and in Leuven itself, the wise city fathers, who after a bit of grumbling eventually won the support of the canons of the Collegiate Church of St. Peter, then of a few ducal counsellors, and – at the eleventh hour – the Duke of Brabant himself. The Duke only reluctantly relinquished his jurisdiction and promptly demanded back a part of that authority (the trial of lay people accused of serious crimes), horse trading that would ensure constant and ongoing haggling. Someone who was completely overlooked at the founding was the Bishop of Liège, whose diocese reached as far as the River Dyle (Dijle) and who would interfere considerably. There were widely diverse interests to balance, organizations to account to, and many lords to be served. The University would play them off against one another as suited its purposes. With sovereign landlords taking over the titles of the Dukes of Brabant, it was better to avoid them (Fig. 2). One particularly difficult customer was Charles the Bold (1433–77) who, around 1477 and after thorough examination, wanted to call the university to order. He was killed and eaten by wolves a few days after his decree was issued, his reforms becoming a dead letter.

From the fifteenth century, the public and legal status of the university was the focus of much controversy.[11] It was indisputably both a papal foundation and an ecclesiastical institution. It depended simultaneously on spiritual and temporal power, *ab utraque potestate,* and was unmistakably an institution *sui generis*.[12] The city held itself to be the rightful owner of the privileges, permitting the University the usufruct of these.[13] The *alma mater* would also present itself as a 'body of Brabant' (*corpus brabanticum*), although the Rector did not

Fig. 2 *Charter on parchment with equestrian seal hanging from a braided tail of red and green silk*, 1466, Leuven, University Archives, Old University, No. 16.

In 1466, at the request of the academic authorities, Philip the Good forbade pawnbrokers or moneylenders to purchase or receive pledges of books from students without the permission of the University's Rector. A student could not do without his books any more than a soldier could do without his weapons in war, and manuscripts were rare. The Faculty of Arts owned 140 manuscripts, more or less the same number as the central libraries of Salamanca and Cambridge universities.

have to be from Brabant, as was mandatory for members of other Brabant corpora.[14] The University also did not hold a seat in the States of Brabant, where it often had to compete against the city of Leuven.

Brabant later claimed a monopoly on higher education throughout the Netherlands, just as Flanders claimed exclusive rights to sea fishing and Hainaut to coal mining. Occasionally, privateers would appear on the horizon to challenge Brabant's monopoly, such as Bruges in 1441 and, later, Tournai. The city and the University then closed ranks. They could count on the Dukes of Burgundy who, since Philip the Good, wanted uniform education for high officials in their territory. Until the 1560s, Leuven actually housed the national University of the Netherlands, which trained civil and ecclesiastical officials for the entire country. In the sixteenth century, there was a remarkable predominance of professors from the Northern regions, who would later form the Republic.[15]

All things considered, the university at Leuven was originally a municipal institution with the city council as the organising power and the local competent authority that appointed and paid teaching staff and provided the classrooms. Even before teaching got under way in 1426, the city had purchased a spacious private home with ten rooms for the Faculty of Arts, the *vicus artium* or house of the arts, where M Leuven is now located. From 1432, the higher faculties gradually moved to the Lakenhal, the municipal Cloth Hall or Drapers' Hall (Fig. 3). With all its auditoriums and boardrooms, it was eventually transformed into a university hall.[16] At the time, however, a market was still held there, so Minerva and Mercury were forced to coexist, with peddlers often drowning out the professors.

As the organising power of the University, the city council also had to attract teachers. As was customary in the German Empire, the magistrate hired professors at a high price, with the fee often determined on a case by case basis. Only the best were good enough. The first teachers came from Cologne and Paris, with a few Humanists from Italy later venturing to the Low Countries. They were the people who planted the seeds of Leuven Humanism that would bear fruit in the early sixteenth century.[17] There had also apparently been a significant exodus of talent from the Netherlands, scholars who had been forced to emigrate and who were now being brought back.[18] It would appear that they cheerfully accepted a return to sweet Brabant. As a provider of education, the city focussed on quality assurance and even had students evaluate their teachers: in 1431, for example, the physician Hendrik van Oesterwijck was found wanting and was dismissed.[19]

In the fifteenth century, only eight of a total of 225 professors had been born and raised in Leuven. Nonetheless, the city paid for the salaries of all professors at the higher faculties.[20] This accounted for as much as ten percent of municipal spending in the first decades of the University's existence, although the city was soon able to pass on the costs of personnel to the Leuven Chapter of St. Peter and to other chapters in the Low Countries with canons and associated income (prebends and benefices) and later, in the sixteenth century, to the national government and the Royal Treasury.[21] By the eighteenth century, staffing costs had fallen to barely 1.5 percent of the city budget, and by that time, one out of four professors was from Leuven. Improvement in quality required investment.

Fig. 3 J. B. Gramaye, *Antiquitates*, Brussels 1610, Leuven, University Archives.

The Lakenhal (Cloth Hall or Drapers' Hall), built in 1317, was home to the newly founded Faculty of Theology from 1432. It was not long before other Faculties moved in, although a market was still held there. The characteristic saw-tooth roof was demolished around 1680, when the University acquired the building and installed a higher roof.

Modern Times
The Influence of Devotio Moderna in Leuven

Michiel Verweij

The influence of Devotio Moderna on the new visual language developed by painters from the Netherlands in the fifteenth century is beyond dispute. Devotio Moderna, or 'Modern Devotion', is understood to refer to a renewal movement within late medieval Christianity that began in the important and relatively large cities along the River IJssel, in particular Deventer and Zwolle. The driving force behind the movement was Geert Grote (1340–84) of Deventer. At its heart lay a desire for a sincere Christian life, humble and modest, according to the teachings of the gospel, freed from the daily longings and burdens of the world, and in line with the model set by the (supposedly) idealized conditions in the earliest days of Christianity. In all of this, and by contrast with mainstream popular devotion, the figure of Christ himself was central. The movement encouraged wealthier citizens to live a more spiritual life. It had an obvious effect on their consumption of culture, and the influence of Devotio Moderna was evident in the images and texts with which well-to-do lay people surrounded themselves.

Perhaps the most famous product of Devotio Moderna is a small book that is considered the most widely distributed book in the West after the Bible. It is *Imitatio Christi*, or *The Imitation of Christ*, attributed to Thomas a Kempis (1380–1471), who lived in the Agnietenberg monastery near Zwolle. Numerous manuscript and printed editions of this book exist, and both the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR) in Brussels and the Maurits Sabbe Library of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of the Catholic University of Leuven claim to have the world's largest collection of copies. To quibble would be against the spirit of the booklet, but both libraries have dozens, if not hundreds, of copies. What is beyond dispute is that the KBR has an autographed manuscript of *Imitatio Christi* copied and signed by Thomas a Kempis himself (ms. 5855–61). It is a small book, 10.1 x 6.2 cm in size, whose dimensions are perfectly suited for daily consultation and that users could carry around with them.

Various organisational structures evolved around the Devotio Moderna movement, including the Agnietenberg monastery, the Brethren of the Common Life, and the Congregation of Windesheim. This last was a group of Augustinian canons who joined together in 1394–95 and would form one of the most important branches of the Devotio Moderna movement. Windesheim, where there was also a monastery and after which the congregation was named, is a village in the province of Overijssel, close to Zwolle.

The movement quickly gained a wider following, and from its core in the IJssel valley, it spread to Utrecht and south to Liège and especially the Brabant region. Unlike 's-Hertogenbosch or Brussels, where the Brethren of the Common Life established branches, Leuven was never home to an establishment directly representing the movement. This may be at least partly related to Devotio Moderna's aversion to professional scholastic theology as it was practiced at universities of the time, including at Leuven. It therefore goes almost without saying that the Brethren did not maintain a study house for poor students in Leuven. However, Devotio Moderna was not an anti-intellectual movement: schools run by the Brethren of the Common Life were located in Liège and Utrecht, while the Brethren in 's-Hertogenbosch offered accommodation to the pupils of the Latin school there and had printing houses in both 's-Hertogenbosch and Brussels for a number of years. Other monasteries, such as Mariënhage in Eindhoven or the Priory of Korsendonk in Oud-Turnhout, were also influenced in their spirituality by Devotio Moderna, as were the two monasteries in or around Leuven. As early as 1412, the Priory of Bethlehem in Herent joined what came to be called the Congregation of Windesheim. The Monastery of Sint-Maartensdal in Leuven itself, founded in 1447, also joined in 1461.

It is therefore unsurprising that, as Prior of the Bethlehem Priory in 1450–56 and 1459–73, Henricus de Merica (Van der Heyden, died 1473), born in the town of Oirschot, capital of the Kempenland quarter of the Meierij of 's-Hertogenbosch, twice addressed the Windesheim Chapter, although the texts of these speeches seem to have been lost. De Merica was moreover involved in the reform of Park Abbey but refused an invitation to become its Abbot. Diederik van Thulden (died 1494) was elected, a man who would make a significant and early humanist contribution to the Abbey library. Henricus de Merica himself wrote an account of the horrific sack of Liège in 1468 by Charles the Bold (1433–77) (manuscripts in Brussels, KBR, mss. 11968–70 and II 3748) (Fig. 11).

More important for the city of Leuven itself was the Sint-Maartensdal Monastery, which was located on the site of the current residential area of the same name. Nothing remains of the historic buildings, but elements of the library have survived. At the time of writing, 156 manuscripts are in existence, of which 101 are in the Royal Library (KBR) in Brussels, and 16 incunables, of which nine are in the KBR.[1] These manuscripts were comprehensively described and analysed by Willem Lourdaux and Marcel Haverals in their extensive study, *Bibliotheca Vallis Sancti Martini in Lovanio. Bijdrage tot de studie van het geestesleven in de Nederlanden (15de–18de eeuw)* (two volumes; Leuven 1978–82).

The Sint-Maartensdal library served not only the monastic community, but also – and herein lay its exceptional importance – the University. It is often noted in historiographies of the University of Leuven that until 1636, there was no central university library, prompting its somewhat unfavourable comparison with Leiden, but the situation was more complex. Because of the presence of larger or smaller libraries in the colleges themselves, in the Faculty of Arts and most especially in the monasteries of Park, Bethlehem in Herent, and Sint-Maartensdal, the University did indeed have access to enough books to meet the needs of late medieval students and professors. A central library was simply not (yet) needed.

The library of Sint-Maartensdal was remarkable for another reason. A great number of books came into the collection because their owners donated them on joining the monastery. This was particularly true for Adam Jordaens (died 1494) and Henricus Vrancx (died 1504), although they were not the only ones. Some 14 manuscripts are known to have been owned by Henricus Vrancx, the majority of which are the work of the church fathers Augustine (Brussels, KBR, ms. 148: *De ciuitate Dei*) (Fig. 12) and Hieronymus (Brussels, KBR, ms. 66–76: *Epistulae*). That fitted perfectly with the profile of a monastery that had connections with Devotio Moderna. This is also evident in an exceptional series of three volumes of Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos* (Brussels, KBR, mss. 136, 140 and 227) (Fig. 13), which was copied in 1465 by another member of the Devotio Moderna movement, Petrus of Utrecht, from the *Domus Florentii* in Deventer.[2] It is clear that copies were made for brothers and sisters from other convents. The handwriting, moreover, confirms the connection between Leuven and Deventer, the heart of the Devotio Moderna movement.

In this movement, books were the central preoccupation. Initially, this mainly meant individuals copying texts and later also editing them. The emphasis was on the Bible (whole or parts) and the church fathers. The process

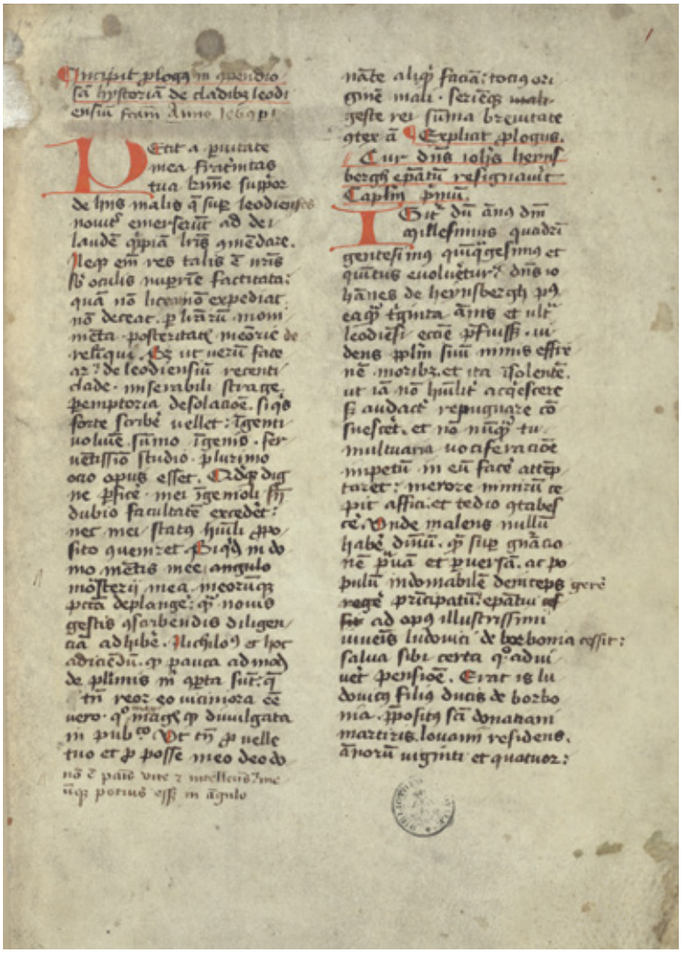


Fig. 11 Ms. 11968–70, f. 1r: Henricus de Merica, *De cladibus Leodiensium* (Bethlehem, Herent), Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium.

Fig. 12 Ms. 148, f. 9r: Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei* (Henricus Vrancx, thereafter Sint-Maartensdal, Leuven), Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium.

of transcription meant these texts could be thoroughly considered, 'ruminated' according to the accepted term, and therefore become the inner possession of the copyist. In this sense, a copyist actually copied a text twice: once materially and once in his own head. Being preoccupied with books was consequently its own form of piety. Moreover, there was a clear preference for the sources of Christian life, such as the church fathers. The *ad fontes* ('to the sources') movement, which would also characterise Humanism (albeit with an emphasis on profane, classic literature), had a clear Christian counterpart in Devotio Moderna.

Given the importance of the book in this reform movement, and in Sint-Maartensdal in particular, it is perhaps remarkable that there is no copy of the *Imitatio Christi* in the collection if we exclude a later copy made in 1524–25 (Brussels, KBR, ms. 11160–68). In terms of its inventory, the Sint-Maartensdal library looks indeed like a normal monastery library, although the church fathers perhaps occupied a slightly more prominent place there than elsewhere. Texts by classical authors are limited in number, as are texts of university scholasticism. However, the collection does include, for example, Heymericus de Campo (1395–1460), professor of theology at the University and as such one of the first great names in Leuven.

The absence of the *Imitatio* is perhaps less strange than it might initially seem. It served mainly for the personal reading and consideration of the members of the community, in Sint-Maartensdal as well as elsewhere. That, however, means that in practice, this booklet was either part of an individual's property or was specially made available to him or her. The book was, therefore, not necessarily held in the communal monastery library where members of the community came to study. The *Imitatio Christi* belonged in the monastery cell, not in the library. This is why there are so many owner's marks to be found and also why the book was produced in such a small format. This is characteristic of books that were privately owned, while the books in the monastery library during this period were about 30 cm in height. The same can be seen in books of hours, which also tend to be on the small side.

Fifteenth century copies of the *Imitatio Christi* from Bethlehem have been preserved: Brussels, KBR, ms. 4592–95 (just under 14 cm high) (Fig. 14); Nijmegen, University library, ms. 204 (dated 1497; 14 cm high); Paris, Sainte-Geneviève, ms. 3463 (12 cm high); and Straatsburg, University library, ms. 344 (17.5 cm high).[3] This last manuscript was copied in 1431 by Ioannes Cornelii, a Bethlehem monk. Also from Bethlehem is an example of the statutes of the Congregation of Windesheim (Brussels, KBR, ms. 11224; latter half of the fifteenth century).

Fig. 13 Ms. 136, f. 1r: Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Part I (Sint-Maartensdal, Leuven), Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium.

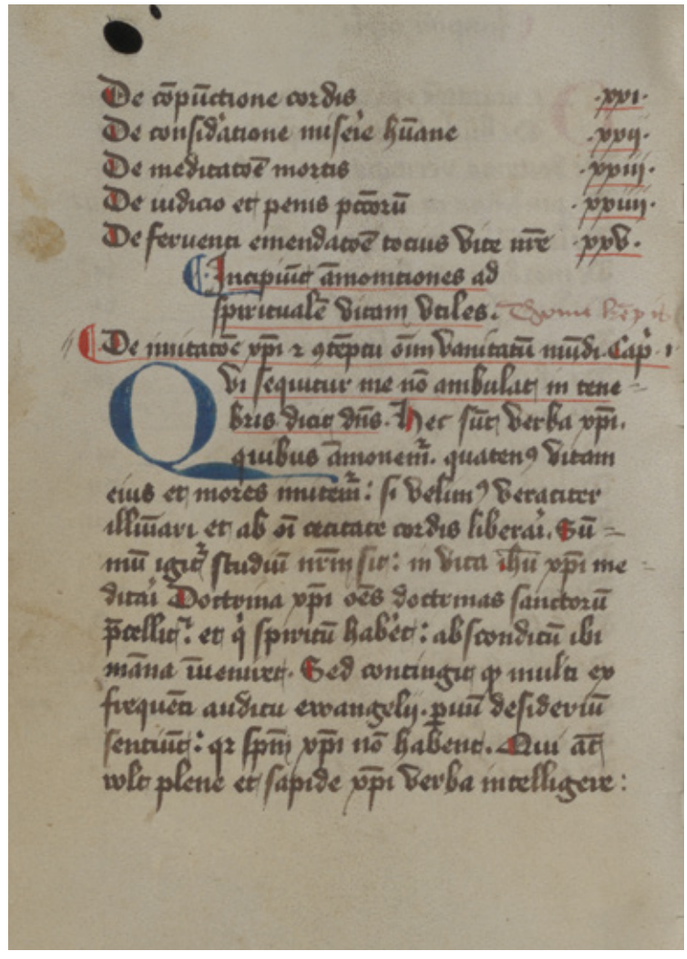


Fig. 14 Ms. 4592–95, f. 135v: Thomas a Kempis, *Imitatio Christi* (Bethlehem, Herent), Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium.

The influence of Devotio Moderna in Leuven reached its apogee after Dieric Bouts's death, although the movement was clearly a presence during his lifetime. On 1 June 1476, a new student, one Adrianus Florentii (1459–1523) from Utrecht, registered at the University.[4] He was a brilliant young man who had attended the Latin school in Zwolle and had there come into contact with the movement. In Leuven, Adrian would become the most important professor of theology, his teaching focusing on pastoral theological themes rather than on speculative theology. Following in his footsteps, other members of the Faculty would also deal with more practical questions, revolving around the concepts of sin and the sacraments, which were regarded as essential means of ensuring the salvation of souls. This was a renewal of religious life from the perspective of scholastic theology.

As early as 1492, and as one of its prebends, Adrian became director of the Groot Begijnhof (Great Beguinage) and, remarkably, would personally read mass for the Beguines. From the time that Adrian became Deacon of the St. Peter's Chapter in 1497, he was also the highest-ranking clergyman in the city. In this capacity, he regularly summoned the Leuven clergy in order to admonish them. A number of these lectures have been preserved in ms. 17 at the Maurits Sabbe Library. The legacy of Devotio Moderna consequently had a powerful voice in Leuven, a voice that would ultimately reach Rome: this student, who matriculated in 1476 would go on to become none other than Pope Adrian VI.

1 DEROLEZ/VICTOR/BRACKE 2009, pp. 229–40, Nos. 2988–3159.
2 LOURDAUX/HAVERHALS 1978, pp. 41–44 and 48–50; DEROLEZ/VICTOR/BRACKE 2009, No. 2994.
3 DEROLEZ/VICTOR/BRACKE 2009, Nos. 269, 321, 344 and 352.
4 VERWEIJ 2011.

Books at Park
Innovation at the Park Abbey Library

Michiel Verweij

Books have always been a familiar attribute of intellectuals, their tool *par excellence*. A good way of understanding the intellectual climate in which Dieric Bouts was working is to consider the books present in contemporary Leuven. In the second half of the fifteenth century, there were four important libraries in the city and its immediate vicinity. Three were relatively young: the library of the University Arts Faculty (now completely lost), Sint-Maartensdal, and Bethlehem in Herent. The oldest and perhaps most venerable was the library of Park Abbey just south of the city in Heverlee, founded in 1129 by Duke Godfrey I of Brabant (died 1139). A total of 237 manuscripts from this library have been preserved in various libraries, from Heverlee itself to California and Australia. The vast majority – 138 in total – are currently at the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR) in Brussels. Following the disaster of the Sack of Louvain in 1914, when the University library was burnt down by the German military, two Park manuscripts currently remain in the Leuven University library, one in the Leuven city archives, and 17 at the Abbey itself. This means that 158 manuscripts from the Abbey can still be found in the southern part of the old Duchy of Brabant. Park Abbey manuscripts are generally easy to identify, as they all have the same eighteenth-century light brown leather binding. The gold coats of arms of Park Abbey have been systematically scratched out.

In fact, the old Park Abbey library had miraculously survived both the confiscations of the Austrian period and annexation by the French. The collection disappeared from its original repository only in 1829, when most of the manuscripts were sold because of lack of funds. The Bibliothèque de Bourgogne (from 1837, the Royal Library of Belgium) and the English bibliophile Sir Thomas Phillipps (1792–1872) were among the largest purchasers. The acquisitions of the former library of the University of Leuven were lost in the Sack of Louvain on 25 August 1914.

From the very beginning, Park Abbey must have had a library. One of the oldest volumes for which ownership by the Abbey can be determined is Brussels, KBR, ms. II 2208. This manuscript includes the third-century encyclopaedic work of Solinas, the fourth-century biography of Alexander the Great by Julius Valerius, and the Chronicle of the First Crusade by Fulcher of Chartres (ca. 1059–after 1127). The manuscript is what is known as a 'convolute': the first two parts are in the same hand, the third in another. On folio 112r is a Park owner's mark in large ornamental letters dating from the twelfth century. What is interesting is that the *incipit* and *explicit* formulas of the three texts are all written in the same decorative letters, meaning that these titles were added at Park. It is also possible that at least the final section was also copied at Park, although it might, of course, have been added from a different source. The volume was composed at Park, though, making it perhaps the oldest profane scholarly manuscript in Leuven or the surrounding region.

Over the following centuries, the Park library was gradually expanded. Among the manuscripts still extant, we find mainly those by the church fathers and medieval theologians. Also noteworthy is a codex from the tenth or eleventh century containing the work of the early Christian poet Prudentius (348–413) (Brussels, KBR, ms. 14586–90). Where this manuscript came from and when it arrived at Park is unknown, however.

CLASSICAL MANUSCRIPTS AT PARK

There are rather few manuscripts at Park Abbey with profane classical Latin literature older than the fifteenth century: one is Brussels, KBR, ms. 14577–78 (thirteenth century), including the *Satirae* by Juvenal (60–140) and Horace (65–8 BCE). Both works were school literature, so their presence at Park Abbey might have been related to the teaching of grammar. In any case, the cramped and irregular execution of this small volume (18.6 x 11.4 cm, with 31 lines for the work of Juvenal and 35 for Horace) and the presence of marginal annotations in different hands do not suggest that the actual monastery library was the repository. The most obvious explanation is that the volume originally belonged to a private owner, perhaps someone associated with teaching at the Abbey.

In principle, the presence of profane Roman authors is a means of establishing the cultural status of a medieval library, although two distinctions must be made. First, the vast majority of manuscripts of the Latin classics come from the Italian *quattrocento* and thus from the world of Italian Humanism 'really' medieval volumes were far less numerous. Second, a distinction must also be made between the authors used in the school curriculum (Virgil, Terence, Horace, Lucan, Sallust, and Juvenal) and the writers represented in the actual monastery library and also used by the medieval

Fig. 19 Albert van Ouwater, *Raising of Lazarus*, 1465–70, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Kat. Nr. 532A.

Rogier van der Weyden, Petrus Christus, or Albert van Ouwater?
The Artistic Milieu of Dieric Bouts

Stephan Kemperdick

Little is known about the early decades of Dieric Bouts's life. We cannot say for sure where and under whom he was apprenticed, where he then learned his trade as a journeyman, or when he set up on his own as a fully fledged master. His name appears in documentary records for the Brabant city of Leuven, the earliest mention being in 1457,[1] but he was not a native of that city. It is very likely that he was born in Haarlem in the county of Holland; at least, this is what is suggested by an inscription on a triptych that includes 1462 as the year and Leuven as the place of origin (though this only became known through a later description). However, the inscription must have been posthumous, given that the wording also asks for the artist to be granted eternal rest.[2] Writers Ludovico Guicciardini (1521–89), Dominicus Lampsonius (1532–99), and Karel van Mander (1548–1606) also make reference to his Haarlem background.[3] Again, though, we cannot say for sure when exactly Bouts was born. In 1572, historian Johannes Molanus (1533–85) mentioned Dieric Bouts's epitaph at St. Peter's Church in Leuven. He also made mention of Bouts's sons – Dieric the Younger (ca. 1448–91) and Albrecht (ca. 1451/55–1549), both also painters – and states that their father had died on 6 May 1400 at the age of 75.[4] As this is clearly impossible, it is sometimes suggested that 1400 should be taken as the year of the painter's birth rather than of his death.[5] However, it seems very unlikely that an epitaph from the late Middle Ages would include the date on which a person was born but not the date on which they died. It is far more probable that Molanus misunderstood wording that stated that the artist died on 6 May 1475 but made no mention of his age. What we do know is that Dieric must have died between 17 April 1475, when he made his will, and 25 August of the same year, when his second wife was described as a widow.[6]

It is probable that Bouts's first marriage to Catharina van der Brugghen took place in the mid- to late 1440s. She came from a prosperous Leuven family and would go on to bear him four children.[7] She died before 1473, the year the painter embarked on his second marriage, this time to Elisabeth van Voshem, another member of the Leuven upper class. These family circumstances suggest that Bouts was born much later than 1400, although they do not completely rule out this early date. However, had he actually been born around that year, he would not only have married and sired children at an unusually late time of life but also have produced his surviving works at a very advanced age for the time. His oldest dated painting, *Portrait of a Man (Jan van Winckele?)* in the National Gallery, London, is from 1462 (Fig. 28); in addition, the works that have been preserved in Leuven and verified by documents – *Triptych of the Holy Sacrament* (Cat. 7) and *Justice of Emperor Otto III* (Cat. 11) – would have been started when the artist was aged 64 and 70 respectively. Had Dieric Bouts been born in or shortly after 1400, this would make him a contemporary of Rogier van der Weyden (1399–1464) and even of Jan van Eyck (ca. 1390/1400–41), the groundbreaking pioneer of Early Netherlandish painting. As regards his education and training, if we accept the early date of birth, Dieric would have begun his apprenticeship in 1415, would have been a journeyman in the 1420s, and might already have been an independent master by the end of the decade. So what works might he have produced in the first 30 years of his career? Even if we place an early date on some of the surviving paintings in Bouts's style, this date is very unlikely to be before the mid-1440s, so the two preceding decades will be completely unaccounted for.

Most research therefore assumes that Dieric Bouts was born circa 1415–20, with the available information about his life suggesting that the latter end of this range is more plausible.[8] Had he been born around 1420, Bouts would have been an apprentice in the 1430s; at the end of that decade and in the early 1440s, he would have worked as a journeyman and then set up on his own in Leuven circa 1445–50. This would place him in the generation after Rogier van der Weyden and Jan van Eyck.

Dieric might also have served his apprenticeship in Haarlem, the town where he was probably born. In fact, this is often assumed, along with the likelihood that the painter worked in his home town for several years.[9] However, we know nothing about painters in Haarlem in the first half of the fifteenth century, not even whether there was a 'school' for panel painting there. Historiographer Karel van Mander associates just one surviving work and one artist's name with the town in the time before Geertgen tot Sint Jans (ca. 1465–95), i.e. before 1475 or so: *Raising of Lazarus* (Fig. 19), which is now in Berlin and, according to van Mander's *Schilder-boeck*, is the work of a certain Albert van Ouwater.[10] Van Mander declares that this enigmatic artist was a direct student of Jan

CAT. 1

Valentine Henderiks and Bart Fransen

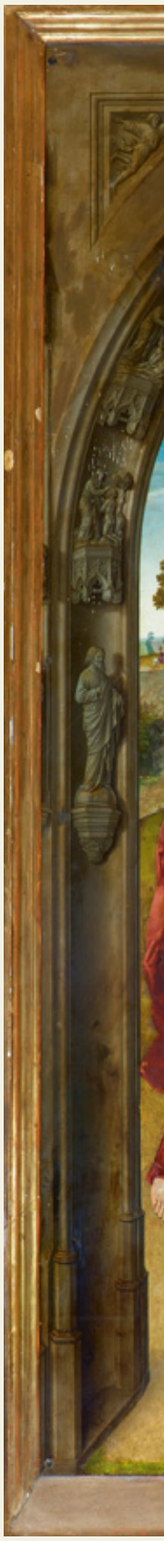
Dieric Bouts
Triptych of the Descent from the Cross

Ca. 1450–58

Oil on oak panel

Centre panel: *Descent from the Cross* (192.8 x 145.3 x 2 cm);
Left panel: *Crucifixion* (189 x 59.3 x 1.3 cm);
Right panel: *Resurrection* (188.5 x 59 x 1.3 cm)

Granada, Cabildo de la Capilla Real
(Chapter of the Royal Chapel)



Since 1505, the *Triptych of the Descent from the Cross* by Dieric Bouts has been preserved at the Capilla Real in Granada, the fortified city conquered from the Moors in 1492 by the armies of King Ferdinand of Aragon (1452–1516) and Queen Isabella of Castile (1451–1504). The couple, known as *Los Reyes Católicos* or the 'Catholic Kings', had an impressive cathedral built in Granada, inspired by that of Toledo, as well as their own Royal Chapel, where they were to be buried. Their Carrara marble tomb still stands, as does that of their daughter Joanna the Mad (1479–1555) and her husband Philip the Fair (1478–1506).

We do not know how or when the triptych by Dieric Bouts came into the possession of Isabella of Castile, although the queen was certainly known for her great love of Flemish art and artists. In the sixteenth century, the original Flemish altarpiece structure, with wings that close, was considered old-fashioned. It was decided to integrate the panels into a new rigid altarpiece in Plateresque style, made in 1523 by Michelangelo's (1475–1564) friend and accomplice, Jacopo Florentino (1476–1526), also known as Jacopo l'Indaco.[1] It was a permanent structure whose panels could not be closed and to which new paintings were added: *Christ Praying on the Mount of Olives, Last Supper*, and *Arrest of Christ*, surmounted by a crowning *Descent of the Holy Spirit*. More than two centuries later, during the late Baroque, it was decided to remove the three panels by Dieric Bouts from the altarpiece and integrate them into a new, larger altarpiece in Churrigueresque style (1753). In addition, the side panels at the top were sawn off all the way around. In 1945, the three Bouts panels were moved back to Jacopo Florentino's altarpiece, where they are still located today. The particularly tumultuous history of the panels and the many alterations made to them have obviously left their traces but also testify to the eternal appreciation Granada has for this Flemish art work. These panels have never before been made available on loan for exhibition.

Fig. 38 Dieric Bouts, *Triptych of the Descent from the Cross*, ca. 1450–58, Granada, Cabildo de la Capilla Real de Granada.

Fig. 39 After Dieric Bouts, *Triptych of the Descent from the Cross*, end of the fifteenth century, Valencia, Real Colegio y Seminario de Corpus Christi – Museo del Patriarca, Inv. No. P016.

The triptych depicts three episodes from the Passion in a continuous landscape: *Crucifixion*, *Descent from the Cross*, and *Resurrection*. Most art historians from the late nineteenth century onwards have recognized this as the work of Dieric Bouts.[2] The style of the altarpiece is indeed characteristic: as in his autograph works, he pays particular attention to the construction of space. The foreground in the central panel is left free, and the elongated figures are well integrated into the landscape. Depth is conveyed by a succession of hills in subtle modulations of green and brown tones that merge into a bluish horizon, and the motifs of rocky spurs and trees with tapering trunks are specific to Bouts's style. Emotionally restrained faces can be found in other works by Bouts, such as the Christ on the panel of *Resurrection*, which is comparable to *Triptych of the Holy Sacrament* (Cat. 7) in Leuven and the *Holy Face* (Fig. 106) in Rotterdam.

The technique is also characteristic of Dieric Bouts, as is pointed out by Catheline Périer-D'Ieteren and Annick Born.[3] The transparent modelling is rendered with very thin paint, and the transitions from shadow to light are fluid. The very dense, modulated detailing also testifies to extremely rigourous execution. Examination under infrared light carried out in the 1960s and X-rays dating from 1992 reveal numerous changes, consisting essentially of shrinking the forms better to integrate the figures into the space, a recurring tendency in Bouts's works.

Périer-D'Ieteren also suggests that the figure of Nicodemus in the central panel, with his distinctive features and sumptuous brocade cloak belted with a precious almoner's pouch, is a covert portrait of the patron.[4]

A dendrochronological examination of the triptych carried out by J. Vynckier in 1992 shows that it was created after 1448. On the basis of these results and an in-depth study of the altarpiece, Périer-D'Ieteren estimates that it was painted between 1450 and 1458 – in other words, at the start of Dieric Bouts's career in Leuven.[5] This theory would also be borne out by the master's reliance in his early works on Rogier van der Weyden (1399–1464). The stone portal with its sculpted arches and spandrels, behind which the central scene of the Granada triptych takes place, and the figures of Saint John, the Virgin, and the holy woman wringing her hands in grief are in fact inspired by the *Miraflores Altarpiece* and the *Descent from the Cross* in the Prado, two works painted by the Brussels master in the 1440s. While many art historians agree with this suggestion, others have expressed doubts concerning the early date of the Granada altarpiece. Lavalleye (1900–74) and Van Schoute (1930–2017), for example, have speculated that it is a work from Bouts's mature years, given its similarities to works painted after 1460.[6] In 1998, Smeyers (1937–99) also pointed out that his style in this triptych is developed, particularly in the elongated bodies, the marked contours, and the humanized emotions.[7]

An exact copy of the Granada altarpiece (Fig. 39), reduced in size by a third and attributed by Périer-D'Ieteren and Born to a Spanish-Flemish artist, is preserved in Valencia.[8]

The exceptional loan of *Triptych of the Descent from the Cross* for the exhibition in Leuven provides an ideal opportunity for the work to undergo extensive research and conservation at Belgium's Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage in Brussels in the coming years.

1 CAMPOS PALLARÉS 2019, pp. 83–94.
2 VAN SCHOUTE 1963, No. 95, pp. 36–53; PÉRIER-D'IETEREN 2005, No. 6, pp. 240–50.
3 PÉRIER-D'IETEREN/BORN 2001, pp. 33–55.
4 PÉRIER-D'IETEREN 2005, p. 249.
5 PÉRIER-D'IETEREN 2005, p. 244.
6 LAVALLEYE 1959, pp. 21–29; VAN SCHOUTE 1963, pp. 48–49.
7 DE VOS 1998, p. 94.
8 PÉRIER-D'IETEREN/ BORN 2001, pp. 33–55.

COLOPHON

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Coordination
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Dieric Bouts, *Martyrdom of Saint Erasmus with Saints Jerome and Bernard* [detail: monster, right wing], ca. 1460–64, M Leuven / Sint-Pieterskerk, photo: artinflanders.be, Dominique Provost