저작자표시-비영리-변경금지 2.0 대한민국

이용자는 아래의 조건을 따르는 경우에 한하여 자유롭게

- 이 저작물을 복제, 배포, 전송, 전시, 공연 및 방송할 수 있습니다.

다음과 같은 조건을 따라야 합니다:

저작자표시. 귀하는 원저작자를 표시하여야 합니다.

비영리. 귀하는 이 저작물을 영리 목적으로 이용할 수 없습니다.

변경금지. 귀하는 이 저작물을 개작, 변형 또는 가공할 수 없습니다.

- 귀하는, 이 저작물의 재이용이나 배포의 경우, 이 저작물에 적용된 이용허락조건을 명확하게 나타내어야 합니다.
- 저작권자로부터 별도의 허가를 받으면 이러한 조건들은 적용되지 않습니다.

저작권법에 따른 이용자의 권리는 위의 내용에 의하여 영향을 받지 않습니다.

이것은 이용허락규약(Legal Code)을 이해하기 쉽게 요약한 것입니다.

Disclaimer
Rogier van der Weyden’s Sculptural Painting

: Fifteenth-century Art Market and the Painter’s Strategy in the Deposition

2014년 8월

서울대학교 대학원
고고미술학과 미술사전공
남 지 현
Rogier van der Weyden’s Sculptural Painting
: Fifteenth-century Art Market and the Painter’s Strategy in the
Deposition

지도교수 신 준 형

이 논문을 문학석사학위논문으로 제출함

2014년 5월

서울대학교 대학원
고고미술학과 미술사전공

남 지 현

남지현의 석사학위논문을 인준함

2014년 7월

위원장 신 준 형 (인)
부위원장 김 영 나 (인)
위원 전 동 호 (인)

서울대학교
Abstract

In 1435, Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400-1464) executed the Deposition, a work commissioned by the Crossbowmen’s guild in Leuven. The Deposition is van der Weyden’s most renowned work and has inspired numerous other works representing the same subject. Along with its exquisite depiction and emotive expression, the piece is also renowned for its unique sculptural appearance. Though many earlier studies have noted a correlation between the Deposition and sculptural works from the same period, the purpose of van der Weyden’s stylistic handling has not been fully studied. This thesis therefore attempts to explain van der Weyden’s intention behind his sculptural representation, especially from a socio-economic point of view.

The Deposition shares many elements with carved altarpieces, which were commonly executed in the Netherlands during the fifteenth century. For example, the painting’s inverted “T”-shape, limited space within a case, omitted background landscape, and crowded arrangement of figures are all frequently found in fifteenth-century Netherlandish carved altarpieces. On the other hand, the
Deposition’s subject and composition suggest—that Entombment monuments, which thrived in French territories and the southern Netherlands during this period, were another source of inspiration for the Deposition. Moreover, the Deposition is iconographically closer to such Entombment works than traditional Depositions. The Deposition was therefore inspired by both carved altarpieces in its form and by Entombment monuments in its composition and its representation of its theme.

The Deposition was not van der Weyden’s first “sculptural painting.” Two of his earlier paintings, Madonna and child in niche (1432), also feature narrow container-like backgrounds reminiscent of small statues in a niche. This type of painting, I argue, was part of van der Weyden’s strategy for establishing his position in Brussels’ crowded art market. Around 1435, van der Weyden moved to Brussels from Tournai, having completed an apprenticeship under Robert Campin (1375-1444) of Tournai in 1432. However, as a thriving center for visual culture, Brussels was already home to a number of painters and sculptors. Given these market conditions, van der Weyden had to commodify his “sculptural painting” in order to secure a level of market competitiveness.
In van der Weyden’s time, the medium of sculpture was both more expensive and precious and held religiously in a higher place than panel painting. Van der Weyden’s sculptural paintings, however, offered in effect sculpture at a reasonable price, and were perhaps useful substitutes for a buyer who could not afford to purchase expensive sculptures. The contemporary preference for tromp l’oeil art was also an important factor that supported van der Weyden’s achievement in the art market. His sculptural painting style, fully displayed in the Deposition, eventually earned him the position of city painter. In the middle of the fifteenth century, Brussels’ municipal authority needed an artist who was able to decorate and design sculptures for its newly reconstructed town hall.

The Deposition thus offered not only an advantage to the painter himself, but also to his patron. The Deposition was commissioned to celebrate a large-scale shooting competition held by the Crossbowmen’s Guild in Leuven. Without financial support from the civic authority, however, the guild must have faced financial difficulties. Traditionally, a carved altarpiece was commissioned to celebrate such an occasion, but the guild was able to reduce its costs
by commissioning a sculptural-looking altarpiece instead of an expensive carved altarpiece.

The *Deposition*, and especially the sculptural elements depicted on its panel, established van der Weyden as a successful master and brought further economic benefits to its commissioner. The *Deposition’s* sculptural features thus created an ingenuous product, which satisfied both the strategy of a painter looking to consolidate his status and the request of a patron looking to overcome insoluble financial difficulties.

Keywords: Rogier van der Weyden, Deposition, Decent from the cross, Carved altarpiece, Entombment monument, Art Market
## Contents

I. Introduction ................................................................................................. 1

II. Deposition: The Imitation of Sculpture ..................................................... 5

1. Carved Altarpieces in the Netherlands .................................................... 5

2. Entombment Group Sculptures ............................................................... 13

III. The Painter’s Strategy .............................................................................. 20

1. Van der Weyden’s Position in Brussels ................................................... 20

2. The Appeal of Sculptural Painting ......................................................... 27

IV. The Rewards of the Deposition ................................................................. 35

1. For the Painter ......................................................................................... 35

   1) The Manufacturing Process ............................................................... 35

   2) The City Painter ................................................................................ 40

2. For the Patron ......................................................................................... 46

V. Conclusion .................................................................................................. 59

Bibliography .................................................................................................... 61

List of Illustrations ......................................................................................... 75

Illustrations ..................................................................................................... 80

국문초록 ........................................................................................................ 88
I . Introduction

Around 1435, Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400-1464) executed the Deposition (Fig. 1), a work commissioned by the Crossbowmen’s Guild of Leuven and installed in the guild’s chapel. The Deposition’s gilded background, its shallow space reminiscent of a niche and, most of all, its inverted “T”-shaped frame openly allude to the medium of the sculptural altarpiece, and went against the tendency in contemporary painting to create the illusion of a naturalistic, three-dimensional space inside a picture’s plane. Many scholars have discussed the altarpiece’s resemblance to sculpture in terms of stylistic influence, theological symbolism and devotional function. In contrast, I aim to suggest a simple and straightforward rationale for van der Weyden’s sculptural fashioning of the painted altarpiece.

Art historians have extensively discussed van der Weyden’s Deposition and other paintings in relation to their sculptural appearance. Paul Rolland, for instance, argued that van der Weyden’s sculptural style was the result of his apprenticeship in Tournai, a major center for religious and funerary sculpture.\(^1\) Conversely, L. Hadermann-Misguich has argued that the painter’s sculptural style

actually influenced contemporary sculpture, without delving fully into the origin of the former.² Bart Fransen further has observed that van der Weyden in fact participated in the production of sculptural works, and naturally came to adopt a sculptural style in his paintings.³ Apart from such stylistic discussions, other scholars have pointed to the painting’s religious aspects. Karl Birkmeyer, for example, has studied the symbolic meanings of the sculptural motifs represented in van der Weyden’s iconographies.⁴ Shirley Neilsen Blum has likewise explored the devotional functions of van der Weyden’s imagery, arguing that he intentionally imitated the medium of sculpture, which often feature contemplative icons, in order to enhance the devotional appeal of his paintings.⁵

In this essay I also aim to interpret the well-known sculptural characteristics of van der Weyden’s Deposition as the painter’s

conscious and purposeful effort to imitate through the medium of painting the sculptural altarpiece, the primary and most preferred medium for altarpieces in the Southern Netherlands during the fifteenth century. However, I argue that van der Weyden, by imitating the medium of sculpture in the Deposition, was attempting to establish his position in the contemporary art market for altarpiece commissions. His sculpture-like altar painting of the Deposition provided a less costly alternative and catered to market demands for sculptured altarpieces. Indeed, this painting brought van der Weyden fame, and the his keen understanding of sculptural works, fully displayed in the Deposition, eventually led to his appointment as the city painter of Brussels, who was required to oversee the sculptural decorations of its building projects.

I first discuss the general features of fifteenth-century carved altarpieces in the Netherlands, and how the Deposition corresponded to their formal structure but distinguished itself by representing a theme rarely found at the center of carved altarpieces. In the second part I discuss how van der Weyden’s Deposition made a successful advance into an art market that favored carved altarpieces over painted ones. In the process, the lower price of painting served as a strong attraction. Finally, in the third section I discuss what van der Weyden
achieved through his painting’s strategic imitation of sculpture, and how this also benefitted his patron.
II. Deposition: The Imitation of Sculpture

The formal elements of van der Weyden’s *Deposition* show a notable resemblance to contemporary carved altarpieces. However, the painting differs from carved altarpieces in the choice and handling of the main theme, which indicates another source of inspiration: Entombment sculptures. Van der Weyden drew on both carved altarpieces and Entombment sculptures, respectively, for form and theme, in order to endow his painted altarpiece with a strong sculptural impression.

1. Carved Altarpieces in the Netherlands

Van der Weyden’s *Deposition* (Fig. 1) reveals a conspicuous parallelism with carved altarpieces (Fig. 2) produced in the southern Netherlands around the fifteenth century. Its gilded background, box-like space, illogically compacted figures, gothic tracery ornament and, most of all, inverted “T”-shape are characteristic of contemporary carved altarpieces.

The inverted “T”-shape, the general form of frame used for sculpted altarpieces in the southern Netherlands around the fifteenth
century, is a crucial element relating to the medium.\(^6\) Painted triptychs, instead, primarily took rectangular frames. Furthermore, carved altarpieces produced outside the Netherlands did not adopt inverted “T”-shaped frames. This shape was therefore a distinctive trait of Netherlandish carved altarpieces, unlike those produced in rival regions, such as southern Germany, Italy and Spain.\(^7\)

Very infrequently, however, this inverted “T”-shape was employed in some fifteenth-century painted altarpieces. Among van der Weyden’s oeuvre, only four works—the *Deposition*, *Seven Sacraments* (Fig. 3), *Last Judgment* in Beaune (Fig. 4) and *St. Eloi* (Fig. 5)—have inverted “T”-shaped frames, and scholars have suggested specific reasons for the eccentric adoption of carved altarpiece frames for these painted works. According to Lynn F. Jacobs, the inverted “T”-shape is a symbol of the heavenly realm in

---

\(^6\) Lynn F. Jacobs has suggested diverse interpretations of the meaning of the inverted “T”-shape. The shape serves to emphasize the central part, which usually presents the most important moment in all of the scenes, such as the Nativity or Crucifixion, while the rest of the piece represent the visitation, circumcision, flagellation, or Entombment, and so on. Also, the extra vertical space provides enough room to represent the celestial and the cross. It could also be interpreted as a symbol for the church, in following an architectural cross section of a gothic church. By symbolizing in the longitudinal section the church, the most sacred place, such scenes are separated from a secular world and associated with the Heavenly Jerusalem. Lynn F. Jacobs, “The Inverted ‘T’-Shape in Early Netherlandish Altarpieces: Studies in the Relation between Painting and Sculpture,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 54, no. 1 (1991): pp. 36-48.

\(^7\) About the differences between carved altarpieces from southern Germany, Italy and Spain, see *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces, 1380-1550: Medieval Tastes and Mass Marketing* (Cambridge [England], New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 239-51.
that its central section is elevated in contrast with its flanking lower parts. *Last Judgment*, which represents the Second Advent of Christ against a background of transcendent space, heaven and hell, is the most fitting example of such symbolism. Though it describes an earthly narrative, *Seven Sacraments* also alludes to the ethereal realm by effectively using the inverted “T”-shape to represent the cross section of a church building, which was broadly considered a heavenly space.⁸ Perhaps, according to Lotte Bland Philip, van der Weyden derived the *Deposition*’s unusually shaped frame from a Ghent altarpiece, having misunderstood the symbolism Van Eyck embedded in the frame.⁹

This association between the inverted “T”-shape and its symbolic functions cannot, however, be applied to the *Deposition* and

---

⁸ “The Inverted ‘T’-Shape in Early Netherlandish Altarpieces: Studies in the Relation between Painting and Sculpture,” p. 37. Jean Chevrot, the bishop of Tournai, commissioned the Seven Sacraments probably in order to alarm the laity, who went to mass only on solemn days, that the church was the only way to salvation. Craig Harbison, *The Mirror of the Artist: Northern Renaissance Art in Its Historical Context* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1995), p. 93.

⁹ According to Lotte Bland Philip, van der Weyden’s *Deposition* only superficially takes its frame from the *Ghent altarpiece* since it represents a narrative event which happened in the earthly realm, not in heaven, like the Ghent altarpiece. Lotte Bland Philip, *The Ghent Altarpiece and the Art of Jan Van Eyck* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 212-13. On the other hand, according to Jacobs, it was not the painter’s misunderstanding, but his attempt to elevate the scene, with Jesus descending from the cross, from the historical to the transcendental realm. Jacobs, “The Inverted ‘T’-Shape in Early Netherlandish Altarpieces: Studies in the Relation between Painting and Sculpture,” p. 50; *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces, 1380-1550: Medieval Tastes and Mass Marketing*, pp. 142-43.
St. Eloi, which include a Crucifixion scene, because both works apparently depict narrative events taking place in the earthly realm. Therefore, the meaning of these inverted “T”-shaped frames in these two paintings should be interpreted in a different context. Furthermore, Jacobs also concedes that not all of the inverted “T”-shaped frames were intended to evoke heaven, but simply followed the traditional altarpiece format.\textsuperscript{10} Jacobs’ concession in provoking, and I attempt to argue here that this traditional format was nothing more than the frames of Netherlandish carved altarpieces, which van der Weyden adopted for a different purpose. He did not employ the inverted “T”-shape frame as a thematic motif, but instead, I argue, intentionally imitated the typical format of carved retables.

Both the inverted “T”-shape and the painting’s shallow background space in both the Deposition and St. Eloi indicate that the painter consciously imitated the form of carved altarpieces.\textsuperscript{11} The box-like space strongly resembles the case that contained sculpture pieces, called caisse. Unlike most contemporary pictorial representations,

\textsuperscript{10}“The Inverted ‘T’-Shape in Early Netherlandish Altarpieces: Studies in the Relation between Painting and Sculpture,” p. 50; \textit{Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces, 1380-1550: Medieval Tastes and Mass Marketing}, p. 143.

\textsuperscript{11}Bart Fransen even presumes that St. Eloi was a drawing for a carved altarpiece, and has found an appropriate stone carved altarpiece sample which might be plausibly regarded having similarities with to the pre-sketch with St. Eloi. Fransen, “A Passion for Carving: The Sculptor in Rogier Van Der Weyden,” pp. 428-29.
such as Robert Campin’s *Seilern Triptych* (Fig. 6), Christ and the eight witnesses in the *Deposition* stand not against the historical backgrounds of Calvary, but within a gilded wooden box ornamented with gothic tracery motifs. A golden background that removes any pictorial depiction is not eccentric in traditional religious paintings in the fifteenth century. Isolated from historical context, such representations draw figures into a transcendent dimension beyond space and time. However, the space in van der Weyden’s *Deposition* should be distinguished from such medieval gilded backgrounds. Though not logically deep enough, perspective lines on each edge of the painting clearly suggest spatial depth. This shallow but substantial space reveals a different representational intent—an attempt to resemble a *caisse* containing sculpted figures in the carved altarpieces.

The painted tracery motifs (Fig. 7) also reflect the sculpted decorations commonly found in the upper corners of carved altarpieces. These tracery motifs are a conspicuous trait of gothic art, used especially to embellish their gothic structure and a craft object (Fig. 8). Such tracery motifs depicted on the edge of a painting give the impression the painting is enshrined by gothic architecture or a reliquary. In this sense, Harbison has argued that this kind of architectural motif enhances the value of a painting, because ornate
reliquaries were often employed to protect precious relics. On the other hand, according to Birkmeyer, van der Weyden used architectural motifs to reinforce the narrative of the work, and to create the illusion of threshold that divides the inside and outside of the painting, respectively symbolizing unworldly empire and earthly territory like a church portal. However, Deposition’s tracery motif is significantly different from that of a portal arch. Therefore, one might argue, the ornament motif in the Deposition points, rather, to the architecture decoration commonly attached to carved altarpieces. Even though the original frame does not survive, it could be argued that its original design, like those used in contemporary altarpieces, naturally joined sculptural gothic ornaments with the tracery motif inside the painting.

The painting’s sculptural aspects are further underscored by the illusionistic representation of miniature crossbows hanging from the tracery. The crossbow motifs, like a coat of arms, serve to identify the

---


14 Even conceding that the Deposition and the Duran Madonna do not have symbolistic sculpture motifs, Birkmeyer still insist that their sculptural setting should be taken as a symbol in that the figures are depicted as flesh-and-blood and are therefore incongruousness with their sculptural setting. Ibid., p. 15.
painting’s patron. For example, in the outer panels of Last Judgement (Fig. 9), the Rolin family’s coat of arms is painted in the margin, but flatly without a concern for spatial logic. However, in the Deposition, the crossbow motifs create illusions of tiny pieces of sculpture hanging from the tracery. This device suggests that van der Weyden intended to paint the tracery as a trompe-l’oeil sculptural piece, so that viewers standing before this painting might perceive it as a painted illusion of a carved altarpiece.

Finally, the compact and rather compressed spatial relationship, found not only among the figures but also between the figures and the shallow niche-like space containing them, strongly adds to the painting’s sculptural qualities. The depth of space is too shallow to contain the figures, but nonetheless Van der Weyden has arranged them in three layers. Many scholars have interpreted this spatial treatment as a device to cause the emotional effect of deep grief through the figures’ suppressed postures.15 Again, such views attempt to interpret the painting’s sculptural effect as a way to convey a religious or thematic meaning. However, it is more plausible and

practical to see the layout as a way to resemble carved altarpieces and sculptural works, and to ask the painter’s intention in depicting them as such. In most cases the component figures for retables were not fully three-dimensional sculptures. They were, instead, supposed to be viewed only from the front against the back wall of the retable.\textsuperscript{16} Furthermore, many carved altarpieces were prefabricated works. In such instances, three or more sculptural units were combined and set into a separately made caisse (Fig. 11). Moreover, sculpture blocks were sometimes executed in collaboration with different sculptors, and often replaced by new ones.\textsuperscript{17} As a result, no consistent perspectival space unifies the whole scene of the retable.\textsuperscript{18} Considering that van der Weyden had already demonstrated a competent use of perspective in his \textit{Annunciation} (Fig. 10), a work roughly contemporary with the \textit{Deposition}, his awkward use of space in the latter appears to be intentional. My own view is that he wanted


to depict a *caisse* box and the sculpture groups contained in it.

2. Entombment Monument

Despite its formal resemblance, van der Weyden’s choice of *Deposition* as the primary scene to fill the whole central corpus of the altarpiece was unprecedented in the tradition of carved altarpieces. This, in turn, points to another source of inspiration: Entombment monuments (Fig. 12). Entombment monuments are a group of sculptures, in which the corpse of Christ on the sarcophagus is surrounded by other figures that witnessed the moment of burial. Even though the themes are not exactly the same, both the Entombment and van der Weyden’s *Deposition* share common elements.

Contemporary carved altarpieces usually present three to five scenes in a narrative sequence inside one *caisse*. In altarpieces depicting the Passion, for example, the narrative program largely consists of multiple themes, such as the Carrying of the Cross, Crucifixion, and Deposition or Lamentation from the left to right. The theme of the Deposition is usually shown as part of a narrative

---

19 Susie Nash also quickly mentions the possibility that van der Weyden was inspired by Entombment group sculptures. Susie Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 34.

sequence following the Crucifixion, but is hardly represented as a single, primary theme occupying the center of the composition. Furthermore, life-sized sculptural figures occupying the entire *caisse*, in the manner of van der Weyden’s *Deposition*, are rarely found in carved altarpieces. Even though carved retables housed in the Museum Vleeshuis (Fig. 13) in Antwerp and in the castle at Gaasbeek depict only a single scene, filling an entire screen, they would not have influenced van der Weyden’s composition, since they postdate the *Deposition* and this type of retable was only rarely made in the Netherlands.21

On the other hand, these aspects are a significant characteristic of Entombment group sculptures. Because both the Deposition and Entombment depict sequential moments, they represent the same figures: Christ’s dead body, the Virgin Mary, John the Evangelist, Mary Magdalen, three holy women, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea, who were with him when he passed away. In Entombment monuments, like van der Weyden’s painting of the Deposition, these figures are installed inside a niche-like space with the dead body of Christ. Even though an Entombment monument’s

21 Jacobs assumes that these exceptional cases were directly inspired by painted triptychs. *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces, 1380-1550: Medieval Tastes and Mass Marketing*, p. 60.
niche was a reminder of the space of the Holy Sepulcher while that of the *Deposition* was a pictorial representation of a carved altarpiece’s *caisse*, both works present a scene representing the death of Christ, who is surrounded by mourners in a niche.

Moreover, despite their thematic differences, van der Weyden’s *Deposition* incorporates iconographic elements of the Entombment. Van der Weyden’s rendering of the *Deposition* deviates somewhat from traditional iconography and resembles the composition of the Entombment more closely. In the typical iconography of the *Deposition*, an event between the Crucifixion and Entombment, people are depicted trying to take the body of Christ from the Cross, with his body often represented vertically rather than horizontally, with part of his body still attached to the Cross. A roughly contemporary example, *Trés Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (Fig. 14), illustrates this difference clearly. In almost all representations of the *Deposition* before van der Weyden, Christ’s feet are still nailed to the Cross and Nicodemus is removing the nails with a device.\(^{22}\) In van der Weyden’s *Deposition*, however, Christ’s body has already been taken

\(^{22}\) One exceptional example that describes Christ’s body separated from the Cross is Fra Angelico’s *Deposition* (1429-32). However, it is unlikely that Rogier had seen Fra Angelico’s work before painting the *Deposition*, since when the Dominican monk was working on this altarpiece van der Weyden was still apprenticing to Robert Campin in Tournai, where he had stayed until his move to Brussels around 1435.
down completely from the Cross and rests on a horizontal line, as if it were ready to be laid in a coffin. Otto G. von Simson has also pointed out that van der Weyden probably blended the motifs of the Deposition and the Lamentation in order to emphasize the Virgin’s grief and compassion.²³

The Deposition’s subject and composition therefore seems to allude to such Entombment monuments, which thrived in French territories throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These life-sized group sculptures were commonly installed in side chapels within the niche, and allude to the Holy sepulcher. It is hard to pinpoint a specific Entombment monument that could have served as a direct prototype for van der Weyden’s Deposition. I intend to suggest, instead, several examples that possibly inspired the painter. Among surviving works, the earliest Entombment monument known to have existed is located in the church of Saint-Martin in Pont-à-Mousson at Lorrain (Fig. 12), which dates as early as 1421.²⁴ The Pont-à-Mousson Entombment could have been influenced by the lost sepulcher


documented in 1408 in the Carthusian monastery of Champmol, which was based on a model by Claus Sluter. Barbora Lane suggests that this model might have influenced both some later Burgundian Entombments and Robert Campin’s *Seilern Triptych* (Fig. 6). Having trained in Campin’s workshop between 1427 and 1432, van der Weyden might have been acquainted with the ways in which the motif of the Entombment served as a basis for the representation of the Passion of Christ.

Entombment monuments were also produced in the southern Netherlands. The Entombment in the church of Saint-Vincent in Soignie (Fig. 15), presumably dated between 1435 and 1440, has often been compared with van der Weyden’s *Deposition*. Both share in the Tournaisian tradition, characterized by hard, linear and emotional expression. It seems unlikely, however, that the Soignie Entombment was a model for the Deposition, because it was executed either at the same time or a later period than the van der Weyden’s

25 The Document refers to the delivery of some large stones that the sculptor Hennequin de Prindal was to use for “the Sepulcher.” Forsyth, *The Entombment of Christ French Sculptures of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, pp. 22-23.

26 Lane, “’Depositio Et Elevatio’: The Symbolism of the Seilern Triptych,” p. 25.

work. The *Mainvault Entombment* (Fig. 16), however, dated to 1410-20, suggests the possible existence of other Entombment monuments, which might have served as references for the *Deposition* in the Low Countries.

Most of the Entombment monuments were usually installed on the ground of the chapels where their donors were buried. On the other hand, the Burgundian monuments include exceptional cases, in which the sculptural group is placed above an altar, not on the ground. An Entombment monument in the chapel of Sainte Croix de Jerusalem in Dijon (Fig. 17) best exemplifies such cases and might thus be related to van der Weyden’s *Deposition*. First, like the *Deposition*, because it was set above an altar, not on the ground, this monument also functioned as an altarpiece in the liturgy. Second, the Dijon Entombment is enshrined in a niche on the altar, and is strongly reminiscent of the *caisse* that contains the figures in van der Weyden’s *Deposition*. Furthermore, the patrons kneeling before their patron saints flank the Dijon Entombment, and this arrangement reminds one of the wing panels of a triptych. Even though the *Deposition’s* side

---


wings do not survive, it can be assumed that patrons or patron saints were represented in its lost side wings, like those in the *Edelheere Triptych* (Fig. 18), produced between 1441 and 1443, and which basically reproduced van der Weyden’s composition. Given the execution date of 1459, however, the *Dijon Entombment* could not have directly inspired van der Weyden’s *Deposition*, which was produced about twenty years earlier. Nonetheless, the Dijon Entombment possibly derived its altarpiece-like installation from other works produced much earlier, which had also inspired van der Weyden’s composition.

As a result, even though it is difficult to pinpoint one or two specific works depicting the Entombment that van der Weyden directly drew on, the motif of Entombment group figures and their placement inside a niche-like space found in the *Deposition* appears to originate in such group monuments.

---

III. The Painter’s Strategy

So far I have reviewed the formal and thematic sculptural aspects of the *Deposition*, drawing on contemporary carved altarpieces and Entombment monuments. In what follows I relate these sculptural features to van der Weyden’s conscious and intentional efforts to establish himself as a successful painter in Brussels, showing that he carved a spot out for himself in this newly emerging center of the art market. First I discuss this moment in van der Weyden’s career, around the time when the *Deposition* was commissioned and executed, and assess what he hoped to achieve through such sculptural references in his painting. I then demonstrate why van der Weyden chose a sculptural language to strengthen his position, by analyzing the appeal of sculptural paintings.

1. Van der Weyden’s Position in Brussels

It is generally accepted that the *Deposition* was produced in the middle of the 1430s: its style still retains the influence of Robert Campin\(^{31}\) and the wealth and prestige van der Weyden acquired from

---

the *Deposition* were recorded around 1435.\(^{32}\) Furthermore, the Crossbowmen’s Guild of Leuven held their great festival on April 1, 1435, and it is likely that the guild commissioned the *Deposition* to celebrate the festival.\(^{33}\) On this basis, the *Deposition* was very likely produced in 1435 or shortly before. It is somewhat singular, however, that the great Crossbowmen’s Guild in Leuven commissioned the relatively unknown van der Weyden to produce its altarpiece.\(^{34}\) Therefore, van der Weyden’s activity and change of his status around 1435 would bring to light how the painter appealed to the great guild with his composition of *Deposition*.

Given the scarcity of surviving archival documents, which only demonstrate that van der Weyden left Campin’s workshop in 1432 and that he was already residing in Brussels by 1435, it is hard to pinpoint


\(^{34}\) Mark Trowbridge describes this commission as “quite the coup for the young artist” and, in this sense, he even dates the *Deposition* to 1436, after which van der Weyden was appointed city painter for Brussels, for Leuven’s *kermis ommegang*, one of the prominent processions in the Low Countries. Mark Trowbridge, “The Stadschilder and the Serment. Rogier Van Der Weyden’s ‘Deposition’and the Crossbowmen of Louvain,” *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies* 23, no. 2 (2006): p. 5. However, this *ommegang* was held annually held, and even the host of the procession was not the Crossbowmen’s Guild but Leuven’s civic authorities, and thus it seems that the guild did not have any specific reason to commission the altarpiece just for the regular procession. It is more plausible that the *Deposition* was ordered in 1435 in order to celebrate a shooting competition managed by the crossbowmen’s guild.
where van der Weyden resided and his status around the time that the

*Deposition* was commissioned.

A. J. Wauters asserts that van der Weyden had lived in Leuven at least since 1425, on the basis of several works commissioned in Leuven and documentation found in Johanes Molanus’s (1533–85) *Historiae Lovaniensium*. This renowned theologian at the University of Leuven describes van der Weyden as a painter and citizen of Leuven.\(^{35}\) However, such circumstantial details cannot absolutely guarantee van der Weyden’s residency in Leuven. Many artists, in fact, received commissions while living in other cities. Furthermore, Molanus was not a contemporary of van der Weyden’s, and his reference to the painter in the *Historiae Lovaniensium* does not provide any substantiating evidence.\(^{36}\) Theodore H. Feder also rejects van der Weyden’s residency in Leuven, and argues that Molanus’s mention of van der Weyden was a fabrication caused by his love of his city since no other documentary evidence regarding van der Weyden’s activity in Leuven has been found.\(^{37}\)

On the other hand, Dirk De Vos supposes that the execution of

---


\(^{36}\) P.F.X. de Ram edited this book in 1861.

the Deposition was originally entrusted to Campin, and that van der Weyden worked on it as an apprentice in his workshop.\textsuperscript{38} But because van der Weyden left Campin’s school in 1432, the Deposition must therefore have been produced in Campin’s workshop before 1432, which seems too early, considering its supposed execution in the mid-1430s. However, Campin’s business began to wane after his convictions between 1429 and 1432,\textsuperscript{39} and it thus highly unlikely that Leuven’s great guild would have given the commission to Campin, who was in routine trouble during this period.\textsuperscript{40} Further, Tournai was a French territory, while Brussels and Leuven belonged to the Duchy of Brabant and are largely adjacent to each other. As a result, it seems highly unlikely that Leuven’s guild members went to distant Tournai.


\textsuperscript{39} In 1429 he was sentenced to go on a pilgrimage, victimized for the revolt at Tournai, and in 1432 convicted of adultery and banished for a year. Margaret of Burgundy, wife of the Count of Holland and sister of John the Fearless, intervened on his behalf, and this was reduced to a fine. Lorne Campbell, “Robert Campin, the Master of Flémalle and the Master of Méréde,” \textit{The Burlington Magazine} 116, no. 860 (1974): p. 634.

\textsuperscript{40} Feder, “A Reexamination through Documents of the First Fifty Years of Roger Van Der Weyden's Life,” pp. 425-26. The Werl Altarpiece, generally assumed to date to 1438, could be proof that Robert Campin still kept on with his work after his conviction. Panofsky, \textit{Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character}, pp. 173-74. However, attributing the Werl Altarpiece to van der Weyden or his school, some other studies shore up the conclusion that Campin’s workshop was practically closed after 1432. Felix Thürlemann, \textit{Robert Campin: A Monographic Study with Critical Catalogue} (Munich and New York: Prestel, 2002): p. 246-50.
to give a commission to Campin’s waning workshop.

If van der Weyden was not active in Leuven or in Tournai at the time of the Deposition’s commission, we can plausibly assume that he received the commission and produced the painting while in Brussels around 1435. We know that van der Weyden undertook several polychromatic works in Tournai in 1432-33, and that, as a result, he probably settled in Brussels sometime before 1435. It appears that after having left Tournai, van der Weyden immediately relocated to Brussels, where his wife, Elisabeth Goffaert, was born. Brussels must have been an attractive place for the young master: the city was not only his wife’s hometown, but also a growing center for visual art.

Beginning in the middle of the fourteenth century, the political, social and cultural centers of Brabant gradually moved from Leuven, which had been the “first city” of Brabant, to Brussels.

---

41 Rogier took a commission polychroming the statues of St. Veronica, St. Ghislain and St. Ursula, all of them executed by Jehan Mahieu, joiner and churchwarden, and painting the life of St. Fiacre for the wings of the carved altarpiece. He also undertook polychroming and gilding tabernacles on the high altar. After settling in Brussels, van der Weyden was consistently asked for work from Tournai. Bart Fransen even asserts that van der Weyden simultaneously maintained a workshop both in Tournai and Brussels. Fransen, “A Passion for Carving: The Sculptor in Rogier Van Der Weyden,” pp. 224-25. However, I am quite skeptical of this argument, since it would not have been tolerated by both cities’ guilds.

42 A. Smolar-Meynart, “The Establishment of the Court of Philip the Good and the Institutos of Government in Brussels: A City Becomes a Capital,” in Rogier Van Der Weyden - Rogier De La Pasture: Official Painter to the City of Brussels, Portrait Painter
was incorporated into Burgundy, Brussels’ civic authorities made an effort to promote visual art in order to attract and satisfy the new ducal family. To this end, during this period a considerable number of renovation projects were launched in the major churches of Brussels, the town hall and the palace. Diverse public processions, called *Ommegang*, came to be more important. These kinds of public projects needed a considerable number of skilled artists and craftsmen, and consequently they brought many talented masters to Brussels. As a result, the city became very competitive, and it was not easy for artists and craftsmen to acquire stable employment in Brussels. In fact, given the insecurity of the occupation, some of the painters even worked as bakers, concierges or even taverners for their living. Moreover, because the painters’ guild apparently controlled the population of its members, joining the guild was seemingly difficult for immigrants.

---


45 C. Dickstein-Bernard, “Rogier Van Der Weyden, the City of Brussels, and Its Painters’ Guild,” in *Rogier Van Der Weyden - Rogier De La Pasture: Official Painter to the City of Brussels, Portrait Painter of the Burgundian Court*, ed. Musée Communal and Brussels
Given these circumstances, and as a newcomer from Tournai and without any renowned major works, van der Weyden must have felt the need to distinguish himself from other artists and to establish his position in his new hometown. A craftsman had to differentiate himself by establishing his own particular idiosyncrasy—an essential way to compete in a crowded market.⁴⁶ John Michael Montias has suggested that, in order to gain benefit in an art market, painters had two options: to imitate artists with a popular following, or to differentiate their works by developing or creating a variation on an already existing style.⁴⁷ Van der Weyden distinguished himself by fashioning his paintings to look like sculptural pieces both in form and theme. This approach had already begun with his move to Brussels, and appears to have earned gradual recognition. This perhaps explains why a great guild in Leuven commissioned a hitherto relatively unknown artist in Brussels to produce a large-scale altarpiece to celebrate a major festival. Furthermore, in 1436, the year after the Deposition was produced, van der Weyden was appointed an official city painter for Brussels. In short, van der Weyden was gaining public

---


recognition as a painter quite quickly and with much success both before and after the execution of the *Deposition*. Van der Weyden, I would argue, had already succeeded in attracting public attention through his sculptural style, which garnered him a contract for the *Deposition*, a major commission in Leuven. His masterful execution of the *Deposition* simply consolidated his fame and status as an artist in Brussels.

2. The Appeal of Sculptural Painting

It is my argument that van der Weyden chose to distinguish his style by giving his painting a sculptural aesthetic. He was given a major commission in the *Deposition*, the culmination of his sculptural style, despite his relatively unknown status in Brussels.

If this is the case, however, one might suggest that van der Weyden had already undertaken his sculptural painting style before the commission for the *Deposition*, and that these early attempts had been successful enough to attract the attention of a new customer in Leuven. The earliest examples of his sculptural style are found in his two paintings of *The Virgin and the Child*, presumably produced before 1435 and respectively housed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (Fig. 19) and the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid.
These paintings suggest that van der Weyden began experimenting with sculptural painting as a way to establish his artistic status shortly after his move to Brussels.

In both paintings, the Virgin Mary stands in a niche painted in grisaille, creating the optical illusion that the small statues of the Virgin and Child have been set inside an ivory or alabaster niche (Figs. 21, 22). Birkmeyer argues that these architectural niches, especially in the Tyssen Madonna, symbolize the Church itself in which the Madonna is located.48 As he observes, it was a widespread idea that the Virgin Mary represents the Church itself. However, if van der Weyden intended to represent the theme of Our Lady in Church, it would have been more effective to place the Virgin in a church interior, as Jan van Eyck had done in the Madonna in the Church (Fig. 23) or the Dresden Triptych (Fig. 24), following a more direct iconographic representation.49 Instead, because the Deposition recalls a carved altarpiece, I believe that van der Weyden’s The Virgin and the Child paintings allude to the small polychromatic statues used


49 Blum, “Symbolic Invention in the Art of Rogier Van Der Weyden,” p. 104.
for private devotion or meditation.\textsuperscript{50}

A painting in a sculptural style might have been a reasonably priced substitute for a more expensive statuette. In fact, painting was a more widespread medium among commoners, while inventories and historical documents of the Burgundian court rarely mention painting (perhaps because the Burgundian court did not consider paintings to be precious). For example, Marguerite de Lannoy, Dame de Santes, bequeathed paintings mainly to the lower members of her household, while her noble relatives received illuminated manuscripts or jewelry.\textsuperscript{51} Also, the inventory of Charles V of France shows ample statuettes and goldsmith works, but only a small number of paintings.\textsuperscript{52} In general, the production of sculpture was more complicated and involved much more precious materials than that of painting, naturally resulting in higher prices. Most statues were made by sculptors and then handed over to painters to be painted or gilded.\textsuperscript{53} Their prices thus included a fee for both the sculptors and painters. In


contrast, painting was conducted using a comparatively simpler procedure, resulting in a more moderate price.

Not only in price but also esteem, sculptors and the medium of sculpture were regarded more highly. Until the early fifteenth century, sculpture had been the primary medium for devotional art and icons.\textsuperscript{54} During the thirteenth century, Virgin and child statues were frequently displayed on the trumeau (Fig. 25), the central column of a church portal, and inspired devotion toward the Queen of Heaven. In the fourteenth century, however, under the influence of the Devotio Moderna movement, people began to conduct religious practices in their households, resulting in an increased demand for small statuette icons.\textsuperscript{55} Wealthy nobility certainly preferred the medium of sculpture for such private icons, but commoners demanded a more affordable medium. This was the exact market opportunity, I believe, that van der Weyden was attempting to exploit, by utilizing the affordable medium of painting while fully furnishing it with the feel and look of a sculptural icon.

Furthermore, van der Weyden’s sculptural paintings appealed to the contemporary preference for trompe l’oeil art. Taste for such


\textsuperscript{55} Stokstad, \textit{Art: A Brief History}, p. 537.
illusionistic art is frequently found in works of grisaille technique, a method widely used on the closed wings of fifteenth-century altarpieces (Fig. 9). By the fifteenth century, oil techniques had reached a level of virtuosity, enabling illusionistic mimetic effects that in turn fostered a taste for trompe l’oeil art. Molly Teasdale Smith explains that the use of grisaille on the exteriors of altarpieces was related to Lenten practices, in which holy images were covered with grey or white clothes during the Lenten season.\(^\text{56}\) However, whether grisaille was employed in order to represent such holy images with Lenten clothes or the white marble sculptures themselves, it does not change the fact that, in both cases, grisaille created the effect of a three-dimensional mimetic illusion. Such a taste for tromp l’oeil art is found not only in religious but also secular images. For example, on the facade of the House of Jacque Coeur, built between 1443 and 1453, fake windows were installed, in which a fully polychromatic relief of a servant figure looks outside (Fig. 26). All of these cases demonstrate the contemporary predilection for optical illusion.

How then did van der Weyden advertise his newly developed style of painting? Art works in the Netherlands in the fifteenth century were

most commonly traded in the artists’ shop or dealer’s stock or on the open market rather than through personal commissions. Clients often bought completed works displayed in these stocks or chose patterns from model books. Such works often served as samples for the artist’s potential buyers or patron. An artist’s reputation grew through such a marketing system. Consider, for instance, a contract between the Tournai sculptor Martin Dare and the church at Cobrieux. The patron required the artist “to make an altarpiece, which should be like and similar to another altarpiece that he showed in his house.” Van der Weyden must also have intrigued his customers in a similar way by displaying small-scale paintings such as the aforementioned Virgin and the Child in his workshop.

Yet there was also an important difference worth observing. Van der Weyden attempted to appeal to his visiting customers, not by presenting a painting mimicking the real world, a typical Netherlandish painting style at that time, but by presenting a painting resembling another artistic medium, sculpture, which was a more privileged but less affordable medium. This strategy of sculptural

---


painting, first applied to small-scale and probably ready-made works certainly garnered him success and recognition, and eventually led to what appears to be his first major large-scale commission in Brussels, the Deposition. For this major commission, van der Weyden fully applied both formally and thematically his method of sculptural painting, which further consolidated his fame and ensured his growing reputation.

The appeal and success of van der Weyden’s sculptural style can be confirmed by the fact that the artist continued to employ this style and motif in his later works. The use of a sculptural frame is found in his later works, including Duran Madonna (Fig. 27)\textsuperscript{59}, the Miraflores Altarpiece (Fig. 28) and the St. John Altarpiece (Fig. 29).\textsuperscript{60} Other examples, such as the Philadelphia Crucifixion (Fig. 30) and Escorial Crucifixion (Fig. 31), donated to a Carthusian monastery in Scheut by van der Weyden himself, imitate the typical setting of

\textsuperscript{59} Shirley Neilsen Blum dates this work to before the Deposition. Blum, “Symbolic Invention in the Art of Rogier Van Der Weyden,” p. 103. However, the Duran Madonna’s tracery motifs, which seem to be influenced by the Deposition, and the faces of figures, which are similar to that of his later works, indicate that it was executed after the Deposition.

fifteen-century altar walls (Fig. 32), which often included a Crucifix and statues of Mary and Saint John the Evangelist, and were adorned with folded red curtains. Hanging curtains with latticed creases set behind a Crucifix flanked by the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Evangelist was a typical scene placed above the altar in fifteenth-century Netherlandish churches.\(^6^1\)

Not all of van der Weyden’s paintings employed this sculptural aesthetic, but the fact that these motifs continuously appeared both before and after the *Deposition*, the culmination of his sculptural painting, attests to the fact that van der Weyden’s method of sculptural painting was a crucial element to his successful career in his newly adopted home of Brussels.

IV. The Rewards of the Deposition

I turn now to the benefits van der Weyden’s sculptural painting in the Deposition brought to both the artist and the work’s patron. First, I argue that his method of sculptural painting not only appealed to his audiences, but also saved him much cost in the production of his work. Second, van der Weyden’s appointment as the city painter of Brussels was a direct consequence of his sculptural paintings, including the Deposition, because his primary duty as city painter, unlike city painters in other cities at the time, consisted primarily of the decoration and design of new buildings’ sculptural ornaments. Finally, I examine the economic difficulties the Crossbowmen’s Guild in Leuven faced following an international shooting competition in 1435. The Guild’s financial problems explain why it had to award this important commission to a hitherto largely unrecognized painter, and why the Guild had to resort to the substitution of sculptural painting for a sculptured altarpiece, the much more popular medium at the time.

1. For the Painter

1) The Manufacturing Process

Sculptural painting was not only van der Weyden’s strategy to
increase the appeal of his work on the market, but also a clever scheme to reduce production costs and to secure greater personal profits. Around the fifteenth century, as I noted above, carved retables were a higher medium than painted ones, and naturally cost more. Van der Weyden, however, managed to achieve the sculptural effect of this higher medium with his painted altarpiece.

The circumstances of fifteenth-century Brussels were also a resource for van der Weyden in his attempt to simulate a carved altarpiece using paint. Along with Antwerp and Mechelen, Brussels was a major center for carved altarpiece production in the Netherlands between the 1380s and 1550. Even though carved retables were also manufactured in other major cities within the Low Countries—such as Leuven, Ghent, Bruges and Cambrai—Antwerp, Mechelen and Brussels possessed optimal conditions for the production of large-scaled carved altarpieces, which required a host of different trade skills, including carving, polychroming and painting, and the market conditions for the work’s sale or export. In addition, the city possessed an internationally renowned market for art goods. Carved retables produced in these towns were stamped with the mark of the city, a seal
indicating their high quality.\textsuperscript{62}

These market conditions probably inspired van der Weyden to make the \textit{Deposition} resemble a carved retable. Nevertheless, how might we assess the monetary benefits of a painter in this highly corporatized sculpture market? One answer perhaps lies in the production processes of carved retables in Brussels. Painters participated in this process as polychromers, and did not, therefore, gain much profit within the manufacturing system for carved altarpieces. Van der Weyden, I would argue, attempted to play a central role in producing a sculptural-looking painted altarpiece, and by so doing draw greater profits from the production of altarpieces.\textsuperscript{63}

At the time sculptors usually executed sculptural elements for the altarpiece, before a painter applied pigments to them or, occasionally, made panel paintings for the wings. However, unlike other cities in which sculptors and painters belonged to the same guild, in Brussels the painters’ guild was in conflict with the sculptors’ guild over the collaborative process behind carved retables. In


\textsuperscript{63} In fact, van der Weyden worked as a polychromer several times in Tournai, but did not continue the work after he immigrated to Brussels. For Van der Weyden’s work as polychromer, see Fransen, “A Passion for Carving: The Sculptor in Rogier Van Der Weyden,” pp. 224-25.
Brussels, sculptors usually negotiated a contract and traded the finished work, while the painter was merely subcontracted for finishing the altarpiece.64

The resulting tension between painters and sculptors is clearly documented in a litigation case between the two guilds. The Brussels painters’ guild filed a complaint against sculptors’ guild on June 20, 1453. The painters asked to limit the sculptors’ exclusive right to contract and trade in altarpieces, and to allow the painters an independent right for sales. The final agreement on this case from 1454 allowed the painters’ guild to accept commissions and conduct trades for polychrome sculptures.65 Before 1454, then, painters were only sculptors’ subcontractors in the production of carved retables, which took up a large portion of the Netherlandish art market, and naturally their income was much less than sculptors’.

As a result, painters generally earned less than sculptors within the carved retable market. In producing a carved altarpiece, the allotted work for painters was largely limited to polychroming and


gilding sculptures and the execution of paintings for side wings. In short, sculptors, not painters, played the largest role in the production of carved altarpieces. For instance, Peter de Smit, a mason in Antwerp, received from his patron 75 lb. gro. Br. for his sculptural work on a carved altarpiece, and received an additional 21 lb. gro. Br. for subcontracting a painter to illuminate the wings.66

There were, however, exceptional cases in which painters were paid the same as or more than sculptors for carved retables. For example, the sculptor Jacques de Baerze was paid 600 francs while Melchior Broederlam, the painter, received 800 francs for the Crucifixion Altarpiece (Fig. 33, 34), now housed in the Musée des Beaux-Arts.67 The reason for this, however, was that the painter’s fee often included expensive materials, such as rare pigments or gold, and required full-scale paintings for the altar wings, which were a standard

66 Meester Peter de Smit die men heet Appelman, steenhouver, bekende opgehaven ende ontfangen hebbende van den dekens, gezwoornen ende gemeynen goeden mannen van den mettersambachten t’Antwerpen, de somme van viventseventich ponden groten Brabant, die hem ’t voirs. Ambacht sculdic was van der gehouwenden outaertafelen die hij denselven ambachte gemaect ende voer huern outaer van den ouden Sinte Sebastiane in Onser Vrouwenkerke gelevert heeft, ende daertoe noch eenentwintich ponde gr. Brabants die hem ’tselve ambacht sculdic was van den beelden in der selver tafelen ghestaen, alsoe dat de voirs. Gustaaf Asaert, “Documenten Voor De Geschiedenis Van De Beeldhouwkunst Te Antwerpen in De Xve Eeuw,” Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen (1972): p. 58.

feature of carved retables at the time. Netherlandish wooden sculptors, conversely, often employed oak, which was easily obtained at a low cost. As a result, the carved altarpiece business was often more profitable for sculptors. As I mentioned in the last chapter, van der Weyden had a career in polychroming in Tournai and he routinely received polychrome commissions after settling in Brussels. He was likely fully aware, then, of the inferior position painters occupied in altarpiece production.

When van der Weyden thus executed the Deposition, a painting exhibiting a sculptural look but containing no sculptures, he was able to monopolize the entire process of altarpiece production, which had hitherto been divided between painters and sculptors, resulting in disproportionate pay for the former. In other words, the whole payment for the Deposition ended up in the hands of van der Weyden, even though the painted altarpiece took a sculptural look in both theme and form.

68 Ibid., p. 36; Jacobs, Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces, 1380-1550: Medieval Tastes and Mass Marketing, pp. 86-87.

69 Van der Weyden polychromed a devotional monument of Mary, commissioned by Evere of Recolettenkerk in Brussels in 1438. Between 1458 and 1459, he polychromed the tomb of Johanna, duchess of Brabant and Limburg. In 1461, he executed stone statues of St. Philip and St. Elizabeth, of the Ambierle altarpiece, commissioned by Michel de Chaugy. Vandamme, “Verwantschappen Tussen Schilderkunst En Polychromie Tijens De Late Middeleeuwen,” pp. 177-82.
2) The City Painter

The successful execution of the *Deposition* and probably the renown it brought to van der Weyden led to another career opportunity the following year. Sometime before 1436, he was appointed city painter of Brussels. Van der Weyden’s rapid promotion to city painter was largely unprecedented. Dieric Bouts (1415-75), for instance, who was born in Haarlem and moved to Leuven to work around 1445, was appointed city painter around 1468, after almost twenty years of work in Brussels.\(^7\) By contrast, van der Weyden had only finished his apprenticeship in Tournai in 1432 and moved and settled in Brussels shortly before 1435, but is mentioned as the official painter of Brussels in the civic account the following year.

During this short period in Brussels, what van der Weyden prominently displayed to the public, I would argue, was his ability to create an impressively sculpture-like illusion. The *Deposition* was the culmination of this technique. His appointment as city painter the year after the execution of the *Deposition* is, one could argue, largely the result of the appeal of his sculptural painting style. The most salient

---

\(^7\) Jacob Wisse, “Official City Painters in Brabant, 1400-1500: A Documentary and Interpretive Approach” (New York University, 1999).
feature of his style, this ambiguity between painting and sculpture, not only appealed to customers with limited budgets as an affordable substitute for sculptural work, but more significantly it also suggested his potential as a sculpture designer. The city of Brussels, it seems, chose van der Weyden as its city painter, assuming that a painter who could create a sculptural look in his paintings would naturally be very proficient in sculptural design and in sculptural decorations for buildings. This conclusion is shored up by van der Weyden’s main responsibilities as city painter: he, unlike official painters in other towns, was responsible for both painted and sculptural works.

Cities in the Low Countries often held many processions of various scale, and supervising these events was a major task of city painters. They largely served as the chief organizer and decorator of their towns’ annual processions, known as ommegang. City painters in Leuven, Mechelen, Antwerp and Aalst spent more that six months a year keeping track of the working hours of assistants or fellow craftsmen, while reporting this information to municipal bookkeepers. They further maintained and improved the quality of the procession’s pageant wagons. 71 Brussels was renowned for its famous processions,

71 “Rogier Van Der Weyden as City Painter,” in Rogier Van Der Weyden: 1400-1464: Master of Passions, ed. Lorne Campbell and Jan van der Stock (Zwolle, Waanders and Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2009), p. 263.
such as the procession for Our Lady of the Sablon. However, van der Weyden did not participate in the preparation of such processions, but was primarily employed in the decoration and design of the newly constructed City Hall.72

Beginning at the end of the thirteenth century, the status of Brussels in Brabant gradually rose and administrative agencies, such as the Audit Office and the Feudal Court, relocated to Brussels.73 Such changes in status naturally led Brussels’ civic magistrates to conduct the construction and ornamentation of public buildings. Brussels’ official painter was thus required to work not only on paintings but also on the city’s architectural projects and the sculptural decorations that would adorn them. In this regard, van der Weyden’s Deposition along with his other sculptural paintings appear to have demonstrated the painter’s full understanding of and ability to deal with three-dimensional sculptural works; he naturally appealed to a city authority that needed an artist who could work on a variety of media to assist Brussels’ architectural and sculptural projects.

In fact, van der Weyden was involved in the architectural design

---

72 For van der Weyden’s responsibilities as city painter in Brussels, see “Official City Painters in Brabant, 1400-1500: A Documentary and Interpretive Approach,” pp. 140-73.

of the newly extended Town Hall. As the city’s administration grew, the Town Hall had to be remodeled and expanded. To its original structure built between 1401 and 1420, a right wing and central bell tower were added in 1444 and 1449, respectively. Many of van der Weyden’s renowned works were executed as official painter, such as the *Justice of Trajan and Herkinbald* (Fig. 35), which originally decorated the Council Hall in the Brussels’ Town Hall. In addition, *Scupstoel* (Fig. 36, 37), which draws on designs found in van der Weyden’s workshop, attest that he was also working on the reconstruction of the Town Hall. Van der Weyden might also have designed the façade of the bell tower, added to the Town Hall in 1449.

The Town Hall’s portal (Fig. 38), except for the tympanum, shows a conspicuous resemblance to the arch motif in van der Weyden’s *St. John Altarpiece* (Fig. 28), which was executed in 1453. Both the Town Hall portal and the painting display a pointed arch, a molding archivolt arranged in singular line, a small pinnacle, two jamb figures placed on each side, and a lancet motif on spandrel. If van der Weyden had not designed the Town Hall’s façade himself, he would not have taken a secular building as a model for his arch in the *St.*

---

John Altarpiece, because the arch motif in the painting clearly symbolizes the portal of a church. Even though scholars have pointed out that this arch was not modeled after a then existing church, there is a notable similarity to the central portal of the Town Hall. It was not uncommon for painters to reuse the motives they had employed before. This similarity between van der Weyden’s later painting and the Town Hall portal strongly suggests that van der Weyden, as Brussels’ official painter, worked on the design of the Town Hall reconstruction.

Certainly van der Weyden did not formulate his distinct style of sculptural painting with the intention of attracting the attention of city magistrates from the beginning. However, despite his identity as a painter, he fully understood the persuasive visual power the medium of sculpture possessed and its close association with architecture. He

---


76 According to Birkmeyer, the portal motif in the St. John altarpiece was not literally transcribed from an existing portal but influenced in part by a building familiar to van der Weyden. Birkmeyer, “The Arch Motif in Netherlandish Painting of the Fifteenth Century: Part One,” p. 13. Also, Claire Labrecque notes that the portal frame was inspired by no place precisely. Labrecque, “A Case Study of the Relationship between Painting and Flamboyant Architecture: The St.-Esprit Chapel at Rue, in Picardy,” pp. 86-87.
thus applied the look of sculpture to his painting, first in order to
distinguish his art from his competitors’, and second to obtain greater
profit from the production process. Moreover, he eventually connected
his sculptural and three-dimensional sensibility in painting in his new
position as the designer for architectural and sculptural motifs in the
city’s public buildings. His Deposition convincingly demonstrated the
painter’s ability to work with various media and garnered him the
honored status of Brussels’ city designer.

2. For the Patron

Product innovation, which generates a new style of commodity,
emerges when a supplier’s capability and profit and the demander’s
requirements and necessities satisfy each other.77 The Deposition was
thus also, to a certain extent, the product of a patron’s demand as well
as a painter’s strategy. In what follows I discuss the patron conditions
that led to the Deposition taking on a sculptural look.

It was a general tendency at the time, as Lynn Jacobs notes, for

---

77 In his essay, “The Influence of Economic factors on style,” Montias argues that the
formulaic and prefabricated form of fifteenth-century Netherlandish carved altarpieces
was a newly generated commodity, a kind of product innovation, and what give rise to
this innovative type is customers’ desire to gain quality work at an affordable price, and
was allowed by the standardization of theme and the division and collaboration of labor,
which is equivalent to process innovation. “The Influence of Economic Factors on Style,”
p. 52.
carved altarpieces, not paintings, to be dedicated to the high altar of a church, as one can observe in van der Weyden’s *Seven Sacrament* or numerous manuscript illuminations (Fig. 39) that depict church interiors. Nevertheless, van der Weyden’s painted altarpiece for the *Deposition* was dedicated and installed at the high altar of the Chapel of Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Ginderbuyten (Fig. 40), which was, unlike the usual guild chapels of the time, a full-scale church with numerous subsidiary altars.

In chapter III, I suggested that the *Deposition* was ordered as part of the celebration for the guild’s shooting competition, which was the greatest festival held in Leuven in the first half of the fifteenth century. Considering that ceremonies held in the fifteenth century in the Netherlands were largely ostentatious, it would be quite an unusual occasion that a painted altarpiece, rather than a carved one, would be dedicated to their chapel’s high altar for the festival.

---


79 This chapel was not annexed to the parish church, but was rather a large freestanding building with three naves, thirty-two windows and numerous altars. Campbell, “The New Pictorial Language of Rogier Van Der Weyden,” pp. 34-36. The size of a chapel also indicates the social status of the Crossbowmen’s Guild in Leuven.

80 Jan van der Stock, “De Rugerio Pictore of Rogier the Painter,” ibid., p. 20.

81 Willem Pieter Blockmans and Esther Donckers, “Self-Representation of Court and City in Flanders and Brabant in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries,” in *Showing Status*, ed. Wim Bockmans and Antheun Janse (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), pp. 82-111.
Furthermore, the shooting competition was held in a public market square and lasted for weeks or even months. Their high altarpiece would, therefore, have been displayed to a number of visitors for a long period of time and would have attested to the guild’s prominence and wealth. Embellishing a guild’s chapel before such a festival, therefore, was intended to promote the guild’s social status. In the town of Oudenaarde, for example, the Crossbowmen’s Guild reconstructed their chapel in 1462 before a shooting competition at the cost of 138 pounds.

Moreover, van der Weyden was not an eminent artist at the time, and considering the reputation and social status of the Crossbowmen’s Guild of Leuven, it is unusual that the guild gave such an important commission to a rather unknown painter. The crossbowmen’s guilds in the Low Countries were militia corporations,

---

82 Lara Crombie, “From War to Peace: Archery and Crossbow Guilds in Flanders c. 1300-1500” (Ph. D., Diss, University of Glasgow, 2010), p. 252.

83 Ibid., p. 138.

84 Trowbridge asserts that this work of art might have been executed when he had already worked as city painter for Brussels, on the basis of his hypothesis that he might have been involved in the decorations for the procession of the crossbowmen’s guild in Brussells, whose brother guild was Leuven's crossbowmen’s guild. Trowbridge, “The Stadschilder and the Serment. Rogier Van Der Weyden’s ‘Deposition’and the Crossbowmen of Louvain,” p.5. However, according to J. Wisse, unlike other city painters, van der Weyden was not allocated decoration duties. Moreover, judging from other civic craftmen’s contract provisions, which restricted doing other work during the period of service, she deduces that van der Weyden was unable to perform other commissions while he served the civic authority. Wisse, “Official City Painters in Brabant, 1400-1500: A Documentary and Interpretive Approach,” pp. 140-73.
whose main duty was the defense of their towns and the court’s calls for troops. 85 In the battlefield, crossbowmen performed a role: they were mainly infantry that formed a shield to protect the cavalry while it braced up. 86 During the Hundred Years’ War, however, with the emergence of the English longbow, which had a distinct advantage over the crossbow, such guilds’ contributions in the battlefield became relatively less important. 87 As large-scale war came to an end, crossbowmen’s guilds gradually changed their functions, becoming largely symbolic and ostentatious elite clubs. 88

To judge from annual stipend payments given to the guild by the civic authority, the Crossbowmen’s Guild in Leuven had greater prestige than any other militia corporation. Its reputation was not only limited to Leuven, however. The guild was also well known in the ducal court of Brabant. Renewing the Crossbowmen’s charter in 1423, Jan IV granted the guild exclusive privileges not offered to other militia guilds. Furthermore, many dukes in Burgundy had asked for

help first from the Great Crossbowmen of Leuven, even though Brussels, where the primary ducal residence was located, also had a crossbowmen’s guild. Its position in civic processions, at the end of the cortege and just before the city magistrate, also reflects the city’s respect for the guild. Because it represented the city’s hierarchy, the order of the guild procession was a sensitive matter and even led to disputes between guilds.

Considering all these circumstances, it is hard to believe that the Crossbowmen’s Guild in Leuven eagerly chose to commission a painted altarpiece rather than a carved altarpiece to commemorate such an important event, unless they were forced to do so. Later in 1493, the guild commissioned a carved altarpiece from Jan II Borman, a famous sculptor in Brussels. This implies that the guild’s choice of a painted altarpiece was not due to an unconventional preference for


90 For instance, in 1429, there was a dispute among seven Ghent guilds over an order for the annual Blessed Sacrament procession of the parish of St. Nicholas. Blockmans and Donckers, “Self-Representation of Court and City in Flanders and Brabant in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries,” p. 93.

91 Strangely enough, the St. George altarpiece was initially produced as an unpolychromed work. See, Erik Vandamme, “Gestoffeerd of Niet? Enkele Bedenkingen over Onbeschilderde Gotische Houtsculpturen in De Zuidelijke Nederlanden,” Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen (1985); Jacobs, Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces, 1380-1550: Medieval Tastes and Mass Marketing, p. 85; Sophie Guilot de Suduiraut, Retables Brabançons Des 15e Et 16e Siècles (Paris: Documentation Française, Musée du Louvre, 2002), pp. 30-46.
painting, but another reason, namely, the need to substitute something for a carved altarpiece. We need, therefore, to uncover the economic factors that affected guild’s unusual choice of a painting.

The sculpturally fashioned *Deposition* brought economic benefits not only to the painter but also to its patron. For a much greater price, the commissioner could have fully enjoyed the charm of a sculpted altarpiece. As I pointed out in chapter III, sculpture was generally much more expensive than painting. Matters of price can be indicated two ways: by finding out the specific price in a commission or trade document; or by deducing a general value using circumstances, such as the status of the patron, the market system, or the situation of buyer, and so on. However, a comparison of recorded prices permits us only to catch a glimpse of cost differentials, given the scarcity of surviving documents, which are complicated by the range of monetary units in use, and diverse price decision factors, including the work’s quality and size, the artist’s fame, the cost for raw materials, and market value constituted by demand and supply. I thus intend to use this latter means mostly, to demonstrate the superiority of the sculpted altarpiece’s value against that of a painted altarpiece.

As I noted above, carved altarpieces were a precious medium. According to contracts housed in the Antwerp City Archives,
collected by G. Asaert, a considerable number of commissioners or buyers of carved altarpieces were general representatives of certain institutions, such as churchwardens or guild agents (Table 1).\footnote{This table relies on archival records published by G. Asaert. Asaert, “Documenten Voor De Geschiedenis Van De Beeldhouwkunst Te Antwerpen in De Xve Eeuw,” pp. 45-61.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buyers Type</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number of the Commissions</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Churchwarden</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prior</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sacristan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Guild</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guild</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Guild</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown group of people</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Unknown Individual</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Occupations of caved altarpiece buyers in Antwerp

Furthermore, to commission a sculpted altarpiece at the time, as I discussed in chapter III, one had to pay not only for the already
highly priced sculptural work, but also for the polychrome and sometimes even for the panel paintings applied to the wings. The St. Viarie confraternity in Tournai, for example, conducted a campaign to raise funds for attaching wings to their retable over the course of three years. Furthermore, the St. Quentin retable in Leuven went without polychroming for four years: 125 Carolus guilders were payable to the polychromer, Jan Willems, along with 200 Rhine guilders to the carver, Joris Asselyns. In this instance, the polychrome and wings constituted over 60 percent of the sculpture’s total cost. Clearly, carved altarpieces could be prohibitively expensive, because the cost for polychroming and attachments, such as altar wings, the predella and architectural ornaments, sometimes exceeded that of the sculpture corpus itself, depending on the amount and quality of the pigment used and the extensiveness of the painter’s fame.

As a result, carved altarpieces usually cost more than altarpiece paintings due to the double nature of these payments. Given this fact, why then did such a prestigious guild commission an “imitation of a sculpture” instead of a real sculpture for their high altar? The guild at

---

94 Ibid., pp. 86-87.
the time of the commission, it appears, was suffering from financial difficulties and needed, in turn, to find a substitute at a lower cost.

To support this assumption, however, we need to take a closer look at the patron guild’s financial situation. As I mentioned above, the Deposition was commissioned to celebrate the guild’s large-scale festival, the shooting competition. Shooting competitions were a kind of international contest, in which crossbowmen’s guilds from the principal cities in the Low Countries took part. Although the ostensible purpose of this festival was to promote fraternity among cities and to match their bowmanship, guilds, as representatives of their cities, seemed more preoccupied with showing off their cities’ wealth and power. During the entering procession, participants from all of the cities marched wearing uniforms and carrying banners that represented their cities. For this costume parade, the participating cities eagerly spent their budgets to show off their wealth and prosperity. Moreover, the competition could not be held without ducal permission offered to both the city authority and the crossbowmen’s guild, and this certification was honorably displayed.

---

95 Crombie, “From War to Peace: Archery and Crossbow Guils in Flanders c. 1300-1500,” p. 250.

96 Ibid., pp. 272-74.
to the public during the competition. The event as a result was often splendid, ostentatious and prodigal: the competition was not simply an extravagant leisure sport, but rather a kind of public ritual demonstrating a city’s financial, social and political power.

Like most shooting competitions held in the Low Countries during the fifteenth century, the event held in Leuven in 1435 was also important not only for the Crossbowmen’s Guild but also for the city of Leuven. Around fifty cities were invited to the event, and they stayed in Leuven during the competition. It was, therefore, a good opportunity to display not only the prestige of Leuven’s guild but of the city of Leuven itself to its visitors. Because the crossbowmen’s festival served as a kind of propaganda for the host city, city magistrates usually paid many of the festival’s expenses.

Apart from the practical purposes of the competition, a close tie between the guild and the city led to the expectation of civic support for the competition. Their intimate association is revealed by the fact that the militant guild’s patron saint was the Virgin Mary, who was also the second patron saint of Leuven. This is reflected also in the Deposition itself. Usually crossbowmen’s guilds in other cities

97 Ibid., pp. 281-83.
adopted St. George as their patron saint, and thus this militant saint prominently appeared in paintings commissioned by those guilds, such as *St. George Guilds of Mechelen* (Fig. 41). Conversely, with the *Deposition*, the Virgin served as the protagonist of the event and figured as the patron saints of the Leuven guild. We know that crossbowmen’s guilds, under the heavy influence of such city authorities as Brussels, Liége and Paris, tended to adopt the Virgin Mary as their patron saint.\(^{100}\)

However, for some unknown reason,\(^{101}\) neither the city of Leuven nor any other organization offered any financial support to their Crossbowmen’s Guild for this festival.\(^{102}\) By contrast, consider the case of Oudenaard, which held a shooting competition in 1462. This event is a suitable sample for comparison, since in the surviving


\(^{100}\) Trowbridge, “The Stadschilder and the Serment. Rogier Van Der Weyden’s ‘Deposition’and the Crossbowmen of Louvain,” p. 15.

\(^{101}\) However, the city authority moved its annual procession, held on the feast day of the Virgin’s Nativity, to the same day when the festival’s procession was conducted, 1 April. Ibid., p. 9. The procession of Our Lady originally went out every year on the feast of Mary’s Nativity, 8 September. Meg Twycross, “The Leuven Ommegang and Leuven City Archives: Report on Work in Progress,” *European Medieval Drama* 4 (2001): p. 81. Because the city’s procession for the Virgin was also a renowned event drawing visitors from all over the Netherlands, the city authority would have decided to add this attraction to the guild’s festival spectacles as a way to support the guild’s festival. But still, this was not monetary aid.

\(^{102}\) Stock, “De Rugerio Pictore of Rogier the Painter,” p. 20.
request letter for permission for the competition in 1462, its author solicited the duke for the same honor for Oudenaard that he had conferred on Brussels (1444), Leuven and Tournai (1455). Based on this letter, the size and condition of the festival was likely quite similar to Leuven’s competition in 1435. The guild and civic organizers spent 4,925 lb. gro. Vl. 15 shillings to host the festival. This expenditure was supported by a variety sources, including 3,954 lb. gro. Vl. 16 shillings, from the right to tax all beer, wine and mead sold during the competition, under a ducal sanction; 149 lb. gro. Vl., from the civic authority (though this was not a generous sum); and donations from other guilds to cover the rest.

The Crossbowmen’s Guild in Leuven, however, might have arranged the event using only its own financial resources. As a result, the Crossbowmen’s Guild had to finance their festival in 1435 while also paying for the commemorative altarpiece, even though the festival, with its special significance for the city, had grown to be a very expensive event. For this reason, the guild in Leuven must have sought possible ways to mitigate their expenditure for the 1435

---

104 The expenditure included cost for hanging cloth over the town, giving wine to attendees, prizes, and building galleries. Ibid., p. 283.
105 Ibid., pp. 283-84.
festival. This situation, I think, best explains why they chose to commission a substitute carved altarpiece, rather than a real carved altarpiece, from van der Weyden, a hitherto less known new master in Brussels. The painter in turn pounced on this opportunity to mark a major advent in the next phase of his successful career in the city Brussels.
Conclusion

Van der Weyden’s sculptural painting of the Deposition distinguished his style from that of his competitors, successfully establishing the painter as a master and the city painter of Brussels, while also bringing economic benefits to the Crossbowmen’s Guild, who commissioned the work. Certainly the painter himself also benefited economically, since through his method he was able to monopolize fully the production process for altarpieces, which had formerly required extensive collaboration between a sculptor, painter and joiner, and thus largely limited a painter’s share as well as his contribution to the artistic programing. The sculptural aesthetic he fully developed and displayed in the Deposition eventually earned him his appointment as city painter of Brussels, whose major duty was to oversee the sculptural decorations on city buildings.

Thanks largely to the legacy of Panofsky, the interpretation of fifteenth-century Netherlandish painting has been weighted down with religious symbolism.  

106 We know, however, that the Netherlands in the fifteenth century was a proto-capitalistic art market and steeped in

---

mercantile competition. In such an environment, a painter who had recently moved to a new town, in this case Brussels, had to fight for his survival, by artistically distinguishing his style and also by offering an attractive price for his works. Even a painter renowned for his deeply religious and theologically erudite iconographies, such as van der Weyden, had to deal with the everyday world of the earthly realm. The execution of the Deposition, one of the most religiously affective paintings among all of his works, served as the breakthrough commodity that opened up the painter’s successful career that followed.

Bibliography


———. *Rogier Van Der Weyden and His Workshop*. British Academy, 1994.


Renaissance Quarterly 64, no. 1 (2011): 50-78.

Marrow, James H. "Symbol and Meaning in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance." Simiolus:


Snyder, James, Larry Silver, and Henry Luttikhuizen. *Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, the Graphic Arts from, 1350 to 1575*. Upper Saddle river, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2005.


List of Illustrations

1. Rogier van der Weyden, *Deposition*, 1435, oil on panel, 220 x 262 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.


3. Rogier van der Weyden, *Seven Sacrament*, c. 1448, oil on panel, 200 x 223 cm, Musée Royal des Beaux-Arts, Antwerp.


5. Rogier van der Weyden, *St. Eloi*, c. 1450, 25 x 38.5 cm, ink on paper, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

6. Robert Campin, Seilern Triptych, c. 1425, oil and goldleaf on panel, 60x94cm, Courtauld Gallery, London

7. Rogier van der Weyden, Detail of the tracery and crossbow, *Deposition*. Fig. 1.

8. Tableau of the Trinity, c. 1410, 44.5 x 14.8cm, Enameled and chased gold, 17 sapphires, 12 rubies, 50 pearls, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

9. Rogier van der Weyden, Closed wings of the *Last Judgment*, Fig. 4.

10. Rogier van der Weyden, *Annunciation*, c. 1435, oil on panel, 86 x 92cm,
Louvre, Paris.


14. Limbourg brothers, *Trés Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, fol. 156v, 1411-16, tempera on vellum, 23.8 x 17cm, Musée Condé, Oise.


18. Unknown, *Edelheere Triptych*, center panel 97 x 106 cm; wing-panels 99 x 47 cm, oil on panel, c. 1441-43, M-Museum Leuven, Leuven.


20. Rogier van der Weyden, *Madonna and child*, 14 x 10 cm, oil on panel, c. 1432, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

21. Virgin and Child polyptych, c. 1300-1350, ivory, 22.4 x 16.3 x 2.1 cm,
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.


23. Jan van Eyck, Madonna in the church, c. 1425, oil on panel, 31 x 14 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Statliche Museen, Berlin-Dahlem.

24. Jan van Eyck, Dresden Triptych, c. 1434-37, oil on panel, 28 x 37cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatlich Kunstsammlungen, Dresden.


27. Rogier van der Weyden, Duran Madonna, c. 1435-38, 100 × 52 cm, oil on panel, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

28. Rogier van der Weyden, Miraflores Altarpiece, c. 1440, Oil on panel, 220.5cm × 259.5 cm. Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin-Dahlem.

29. Rogier van der Weyden, St. John Altarpiece, c. 1455, oil on panel, 77x144cm, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin-Dahlem.

30. Rogier van der Weyden, Crucifixion, c. 1455-59, oil on panel, 180x186cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.

31. Rogier van der Weyden, Crucifixion, oil on panel, 325x192cm, El

33. Melchior Broederlam, *Crucifixion Altarpiece*, exterior, oil on panel, 167 x 125cm (each), Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon.


35. Tapestry after Rogier van der Weyden, *Justice of Trajan and Herkinbald*, c. 1450, 461 x 1053cm, wall tapestry, wool, silk, gold and silver thread, Bernisches Historisches Museum, Bern.

36. Rogier van der Weyden (workshop), *Scupstoel*, c. 1444, 30 x 42.5 cm, pen and chalk on paper, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

37. Unknown, Scupstoel capital, c. 1445, 31 x 66 x 84cm, Ledian sandstone, Brussels Town Museum, Brussels.

38. Facade of Brussels’ Townhall, Brussels.

39. Limbroug Brothers, *Trés Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, fol. 158r, 1411-16, tempera on vellum, 23.8 x 17cm, Musée Condé, Oise.


41. Master of the Mechelen St. George's Guild, *The members of the guild of*
the Great Crossbow Mechelen, c.1500, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp.
Illustration

Fig. 1. Rogier van der Weyden, *Deposition*, 1435, oil on panel, 220 x 262 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Fig. 2. *Crucifixion Altarpiece*, c. 1410-20, polychrome oak, St. Reinoldikirche, Dortmund.

Fig. 3. Rogier van der Weyden, *Seven Sacrament*, c. 1448, oil on panel, 200 x 223 cm, Musée Royal des Beaux-Arts, Antwerp.

Fig. 4. Rogier van der Weyden, *Last Judgment*, c. 1444-48, oil on panel, 215 x 560 cm, Musée de l'Hôtel Dieu, Beaun.

Fig. 5. Rogier van der Weyden, *St. Eloi*, c. 1450, 25 x 38.5 cm, ink on paper, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Fig. 6. Robert Campin, Seilern Triptych, c.1425, oil and goldleaf on panel, 60x94cm, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

Fig. 7. Rogier van der Weyden, Detail of the tracery and crossbow, Deposition, Fig. 1.

Fig. 8. Tableau of the Trinity, c. 1410, 44.5 x 14.8cm, Enameled and chased gold, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Fig. 9. Rogier van der Weyden, Closed wings of the Last Judgment, Fig. 4.

Fig. 10. Rogier van der Weyden, Annunciation, c. 1435, oil on panel, 86 x 92cm, Louvre, Paris.

Fig. 11. Unknown, Swooning Virgin, c. 1470-80, polychrome and gild Walnut, 56.5 x 23 x 12cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lile.
Fig. 12. *Entombment*, c. 1425-30, Saint-Martin church, Pont-à-Mousson.

Fig. 13. *Lamentation Altarpiece from Averbode*, polychrome oak, Museum Vleeshuis, Antwerp.

Fig. 14. Limbourg brothers, *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, fol. 156v, 1411-16, tempera on vellum, 23.8 x 17 cm, Musée Condé, Oise.

Fig. 15. *Entombment*, c. 1435-40, Sain-Vincent church, Soignie.

Fig. 16. *Mainvault Entombment*, c. 1410-20, Musée royal d’histoire et de folklore, Ath.
Fig. 17. Entombment, 1495, hôpital général de Dijon, Sainte Croix de Jerusalem chapel, Dijon.

Fig. 18. Unknown, Edelheere Triptych, center panel 97 x 106 cm; wing-panels 99 x 47 cm, oil on panel, c. 1441-43, M-Museum Leuven, Leuven.

Fig. 19. Rogier van der Weyden, Madonna and child, 19 × 12 cm, oil on panel, c. 1432, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Fig. 20. Rogier van der Weyden, Madonna and child, 14 × 10 cm, oil on panel, c. 1432, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

Fig. 21. Virgin and Child polyptych, c. 1300-1350, ivory, 22.4 x 16.3 x 2.1 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Fig. 22. Hans Greiff, Reliquary of Saint Anne Trinitaire, 1472, silver gilt, enamel, Musée national du Moyen Âge, Paris.

Fig. 23. Jan van Eyck, Madonna in the church, c. 1425, oil on panel, 31 x 14 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Statliche Museen, Berlin-Dahlem.

Fig. 24. Jan van Eyck, Dresden Triptych, c. 1434-37, oil on panel, 28 x 37 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatlich Kunstsammlungen, Dresden.

Fig. 25. Virgin and Child, South portal of Amiens Cathedral, Amiens.

Fig. 26. Man in the false window, c. 1450, façade of Jacque Coeur Palace Bourges.

Fig. 27. Rogier van der weyden, Duran Madonna, c. 1435-38, 100 x 52 cm, oil on panel, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Fig. 28. Rogier van der Weyden, *Miraflores Altarpiece*, c. 1440, Oil on panel, 220.5cm × 259.5 cm. Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin-Dahlem.

Fig. 29. Rogier van der Weyden, *St. John Altarpiece*, c. 1455, oil on panel, 77x144cm, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin-Dahlem.

Fig. 30. Rogier van der Weyden, *Crucifixion*, c. 1455-59, oil on panel, 180 x 186cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.

Fig. 31. Rogier van der Weyden, *Crucifixion*, c. 1455, 325x192cm, El Escorial, Madrid.
Fig. 32. Unknown, *Consecration of a Bishop*, Teyler Stichting, ms 77, Teyler Museum, Haarlem.

Fig. 33. Melchior Broederlam, *Crucifixion Altarpiece*, exterior, oil on panel, 167 x 125cm(each), Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon.

Fig. 34. Jacques de Baerze, *Crucifixion Altarpiece*, c. 1394-99, polychrome oak, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon.

Fig. 35. Tapestry after Rogier van der Weyden, *Justice of Trajan and Herkinbald*, c. 1450, 461 x 1053cm, wall tapestry, wool, silk, gold and silver thread, Bernisches Historisches Museum, Bern.
Fig. 36. Rogier van der Weyden (workshop), *Scupstoel*, c. 1444, 30 x 42.5 cm, pen and chalk on paper, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Fig. 37. Unknown, Scupstoel capital, c. 1445, 31 x 66 x 84 cm, Ledian sandstone, Brussels Town Museum, Brussels.

Fig. 38. Façade of Brussels’ Town Hall, Brussels.

Fig. 39. Limbourg Brothers, *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, fol. 158r, 1411-16, tempera on vellum, 23.8 x 17 cm, Musée Condé, Oise.

Fig. 40. Unknown, *Chapel of Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Ginderbuyten*, INV. II 2123, fol. 209, c. 1615, Royal Library of Belgium, Brussels.

Fig. 41. Master of the Mechelen St. George’s Guild, *The members of the guild of the Great Crossbow Mechelen*, c. 1500, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp.
국문초록

1435년, 로지에르 반 데어 바이덴(Rogier van der Weyden, 1399/1400-1464)은 레벤(Leuven)의 석궁수 길드의 주문으로 <십자가 강하(Deposition)>(1435)를 제작한다. <십자가 강하>는 로지에르의 작품 중 가장 널리 알려져 있으며, 이후 같은 주제를 다루었던 화가들에게도 끌임없이 영감을 주었던 작품이다. 이 작품은 섬세한 인물 묘사와 감정 표현뿐 아니라, 조각과의 유사성으로도 주목받았다. 많은 선행 연구들이 <십자가 강하>와 조각과의 연관성을 언급했으나, 그 이면에 있는 작가의 의도는 명확하게 밝혀진 바 없다. 따라서 본 고는 <십자가 강하>의 조각적 재현에 담긴 작가의 의도를 사회 경제학적 관점에서 고찰하고자 한다.

<십자가 강하> 제단화는 당시 네덜란드에서 널리 제작되었던 제단조각과 많은 유사점을 가지고 있다. ‘철(凸)’자 프레임, 풍경이 생략된 막힌 배경, 좁은 공간에 백백히 들어찬 인물 배치, 트레이서리(tracery) 모티프는 15세기 네덜란드 제단조각의 특징이다. 한편, 작품의 화면구성은 당시 프랑스와 남 네덜란드 지역에서 널리 제작된 매장 조각군상에서 영향을 받은 것으로 보인다. 도상적으로도 <십자가 강하>는 전통적인 ‘십자가 강하’보다 ‘매장’에 더 가깝게 묘사되었다. 따라서 로지에르의 <십자가 강하>는 형식에 있어서는 제단조각을, 화면 구성과 장면의 재현에 있어서는 매장 조각군상을 참조하여 제작된 것으로 볼 수 있다.

조각을 모방한 로지에르의 회화 작품은 <십자가 강하>가 처음이 아니다. 로지에르의 초기작인 두 <벽감의 성모(Madonna and Child in niche)>(1432)는, 당시 널리 제작된 소형 채색 조각상을 연상시키는 좁은 벽감을 배경으로 그려졌다. 이러한 형식의 회화는 브뤼셀 미술
시장에서 빠르게 입지를 다지기 위한 화가의 전략으로 해석될 수 있다. 로지에르는 1432년 투르네(Tournai)의 로베르 캉팽(Robert Campin, 1375-1444) 문화에서 도제과정을 마친 뒤, 1435년 무렵 브뤼셀로 이주했다. 그러나 당시 네덜란드 시각문화의 중심지로 부상하던 브뤼셀에는 이미 많은 수의 화가와 조각가가 거주하고 있었다. 이러한 환경에서 로지에르는 시장경쟁력을 확득하기 위하여 ‘조각적 화화’를 상품으로 내세웠을 것으로 생각된다.

로지에르가 차별화 전략으로 조각을 선택한 것은, 당시 조각이 패널화보다 상대적으로 더 값비싸고 고급한 매체로 인식되었으며, 종교 미술품으로서도 화화보다 더 높은 위상을 가지고 있었기 때문이었다. 조각처럼 묘사된 패널화는 조각보다 저렴하면서도 조각이 가지는 이점을 가질 수 있었기 때문에, 값비싼 조각을 구입할 수 없는 구매자들에게 좋은 대안이 될 수 있었을 것이다. 트롱프뢰유(tromp l’oeil)화에 대한 당시의 선호 또한 조각을 모방한 화화 작품이 미술시장에서 성공한 요인 중 하나로 생각된다.

<십자가 강하>의 조각적인 특성은 로지에르가 단기간에 시립화가의 지위를 얻는 데에 도움을 주었을 것으로 보인다. 브뤼셀이 브라반트(Brabant)의 중심 도시로 부상함에 따라 시청사 건물이 증축되었고, 시 당국은 시청사 장식을 맡아 줄 시립 화가를 필요로 하였다. 로지에르의 <십자가 강하>는 화가가 화화 뿐만 아니라 조각의 재현, 또는 조각의 디자인에도 능하다는 것을 효과적으로 보여주는 작품이었고, 이러한 특성은 브뤼셀 시 행정 담당자들의 요구에 부합하는 것이었다.

<십자가 강하>의 조각적인 외형은, 화가 자신뿐 아니라 작품의 후원자에게도 경제적인 이득을 가져다 주었다. <십자가 강하>는 브뤼셀의 석궁수 길드가 주최하는 대규모 사격 대회를 기념하여 길드 소유의 챔플 주제단에 봉헌된 작품이었다. 그러나 행사 예산과 관련하여 지원금을
받지 못했기 때문에 석궁수 길드는 경제적 어려움을 겪었을 수밖에 없었다. 당시 주제단에는 제단조각을 봉헌하는 것이 전통적이었으나, 길드는 값비싼 제단조각 대신 제단조각을 모방한 제단화를 구입하여 비용을 절감할 수 있었다. 이러한 경제적 이점은 뢰벤의 대형 길드가 뢰벤의 시립화가 아닌 브뤼셀의 신인화가에게 제단조각 대신 제단조각처럼 보이는 제단화를 주문한 이유를 설명해 준다.

로지에르 반 데어 바이덴의 <십자가 강하>는 패널 위로 옮겨진 조각, 이른바 조각적 화로써, 조각이 우위에 있던 당시 미술시장에서 화가가 빠르게 성공하고, 나아가 시립화가의 지위를 얻는 데 큰 원동력이 되었다. 따라서 <십자가 강하>의 조각적 성격은 브뤼셀에서 빠르게 입지를 다지고자 했던 화가의 전략과 재정 문제를 효율적으로 타파하고자 한 주문자의 요구사항이 부합하여 만들어진 것으로 이해할 수 있다.

키워드 : 로지에르 반 데어 바이덴, 십자가 강하, 제단조각, 매장 조각 군상, 미술 시장