



01

Jan (Maaseik?, c. 1390 - Bruges, 1441) and Hubert van Eyck (Maaseik, c. 1366/1370-Ghent, 1426)

*The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, 1432

Outer panels of the closed altarpiece

Oil on panel

Saint Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent

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According to the quatrain, the inscription on the panels of the exterior panels of *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, the patrician Joos Vijd commissioned the work for Hubert van Eyck, Jan's older brother. After Hubert's death in 1426, Jan took over the project with the help of assistants. On 6 May 1432, the multi-panelled work was installed in the chapel of the Vijd-Borluut couple in the Saint Jan's Church (now Saint Bavo's Cathedral) in Ghent. *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* is the largest and most important work that has survived by the Van Eyck brothers. The impact on the Western art of painting was enormous. All achievements of Van Eyck's optical revolution are crystallised within this early masterpiece.

The exterior panels were restored by the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage between 2012 and 2016 in the MSK. For the exhibition, *Van Eyck. An Optical Revolution*, the exterior panels will exceptionally return to the museum and will be displayed. The accompanying technical research has moreover, shed new light upon the activity of Jan van Eyck's studio and on Early Netherlandish painting in general. The processing of these research results in the exhibition ought to lead to a re-evaluation of Van Eyck's oeuvre and the historical context in which he worked. In the exhibition, it shall become clear how Van Eyck's painting technique and his unparalleled power of observation have altered the Western art of painting to its very core.

02

Jan van Eyck (Maaseik?, c. 1390 - Bruges, 1441)

*The Madonna at the Fountain*, 1439

Oil on panel

19 x 12 cm

Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

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*The Madonna at the Fountain* unmistakably shows the effect of Jan van Eyck's perfecting of the technique of oil painting. With the light-dark contrast in the examples of clothing, the subtle glistening of the fountain and the rippling of the water's surface as well as the brilliance of the embroidery on the honorific cloth demonstrate Van Eyck's extremely thorough realism. *The Madonna at the Fountain* is a master class in detailed painting on a very small scale. Moreover, the original frame is preserved. For Van Eyck, the frame and the painting of it were an irreplaceable part of the artwork. The signature and dating on the frame allow for situating the painting in the exceptionally small oeuvre that has survived. It belongs with the *Portrait of Magareta van Eyck* (Groeningemuseum, Bruges) as amongst the last dated works. Additionally, Van Eyck also introduced his own motto (AIC IXH XAN), which for an artist of the times bears witness to an exceptional level of self-awareness.



03

**Jan van Eyck (Maaseik?, c. 1390 – Bruges, 1441)**

*Portrait of Baudouin de Lannoy*, c. 1435

Oil on panel

26.6x19.6 cm

Gemäldegalerie der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin

<http://closertovaneyck.kikirpa.be>, © KIK-IRPA, Brussel

With the *Portrait of Baudouin de Lannoy*, we find ourselves in close proximity to the court painter of Philip the Good. It was, to be sure, Van Eyck's task to paint portraits of the Burgundian dignitaries. This is the only surviving portrait that provides us with insight into Van Eyck's portraits of Burgundian statesmen. Van Eyck travelled with De Lannoy, a member of the Order of the Golden Fleece, to Portugal in 1428 for the purpose of the impending marriage of Philip the Good with Isabella of Portugal. Highly characteristic for the portrait painter Van Eyck is the unadorned dermatological realism and the innovating three-quarter profile. The portrait is placed in the final portraits' gallery in the exhibition.



04

**Jan van Eyck (Maaseik?, c. 1390 – Bruges, 1441)**

*The Annunciation Diptych*, c. 1433-1435

Oil on panel

Left: 38.8 x 23.2 cm

Right: 39 x 24 cm

Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

This exquisite diptych in grisaille shows Van Eyck's preoccupation with three-dimensionality. He is successful in generating the illusion of plasticity in a masterly fashion. The two Saint John figures of the exterior panels of *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* are closely related to this diptych. Here we touch upon Jan van Eyck as a *pictor doctus*, an erudite artist who was keenly apprised of theories of art, and in specific, with those concerning optics. Van Eyck's connection with sculpture was also very concrete given that he was responsible for the colouring and gilding the sculptures in the niches of the façade of the City Hall in Bruges, which is again a significant example of the tight network at the time of artists and the interweaving of various artistic disciplines. The diptych will be displayed in a hall with other grisailles by Van Eyck, as well as with drawings and sculptures.



05

**Jan van Eyck (Maaseik?, c. 1390 - Bruges, 1441)**

*Portrait of a Man with a Blue Chaperon*, c. 1428–1430

Oil on panel

22 x 17 cm

Muzeul National Brukenthal, Sibiu (Romania)

All of the achievements of the art of portraiture by Van Eyck are present in the exceptionally handsome bust portrait, *Portrait of a Man with a Blue Chaperon*: the three-quarter profile, the unadorned dermatological details such as the beard stubbles and the contrast between the darker background and the illuminated face by which the man commands a presence. The light-dark effect amplifies the plasticity and life-like quality of the man portrayed. That latter quality is even more intensified by way of the one hand that rests illusionistic on the lost frame and the other hand that appears to threaten to reach out of the pictorial surface. The black shirt that is lined with fur and the chaperon that is painted in precious lapis lazuli indicate elevated social status. The ostentatious showing of the ring probably refers to an engagement portrait.



06

**Workshop of Jan van Eyck (Maaseik?, c. 1390 - Bruges, 1441)**

*The Twelve Apostles*, c. 1440

Pen and grey-brown ink, over a preliminary drawing in black metal styles, on paper

203 x 139 mm

Albertina, Vienna

The series, *The Twelve Apostles*, is very close to the works of Jan van Eyck. The drawings were made by an anonymous Bruges artist. Possibly they were used as model drawings by assistants of Van Eyck, and they provide us with insight into the internal workings and the activity of the studio. Stylistically they are close to the restored Saint Johns' figures of *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*. Apart from their possible function, the highly refined finished drawings have their own intrinsic artistic value. It is then for the first time that the complete series shall be shown outside of the Albertina.



07

**Tydeman Maes (active 1425-1450)**

*Two Angels with the Instruments of the Passion*, c. 1425-1435

Walnut with old polychromy and gilding

H. 96 and 97 cm

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

The two angels with the *Arma Christi* are made by the wood and stone sculptor and dealer Tydeman Maes from Bruges, a contemporary of Jan van Eyck. Maes had high standing. As such, he was asked, for example, to make the mausoleum of Michelle de France, the first wife of Philip the Good in the Saint Jan's Church (now Saint Bavo's Cathedral in Ghent). The angels somewhat recall the singing angels on the interior of *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*. The sculptures shall be displayed in a hall that is dedicated to grisailles, drawings and sculptures. Van Eyck's quest for the illusionistic rendering of painted images, the interweaving of artistic disciplines and the tight network of artists.

08

**Master of the Llangattock Hours and Willem Vrelant (Southern Netherlands, active 1454-1481)**

*The Llangattock Hours*, c. 1450

*The Annunciation*

Tempera, gold leaf, gold paint and ink on parchment

264 x 184 mm

J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles



Willem Vrelant, who was born in Utrecht, and who was active between 1454 and 1481 in Bruges, painted this Annunciation along with the anonymous Master of the Llangattock Hours. Vrelant painted the face and hand of Mary. The rest of the miniature was done by the anonymous Master. One cannot surmise with certainty that the latter was an assistant of Jan van Eyck. The compositional borrowing and stylistic relationship indicate that he was very close to Van Eyck. The position of the Archangel Gabriel and Mary harken back to Van Eyck's *The Annunciation* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC). Certain facets of the domestic interior can then again be traced back to *The Annunciation* of *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* (Saint Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent). It is accepted that Van Eyck himself was trained as a miniaturist.

09

**Benozzo Gozzoli (Florence, c. 1420 - Pistoia, 1497)**

*The Madonna with Child and Angels*, c. 1449-1450

Tempera on panel

34.7 x 29.4 cm

Fondazione Accademia Carrara, Bergamo



Benozzo Gozzoli was a Florentine painter. His most famous work is the monumental fresco cycle in the Palazzo Medici Riccardi in Florence. As a great exception, the refined panel painting of *The Madonna with Child and Angels* is presented on loan. It will be displayed in a hall dedicated to works with the Madonna and Child. Although Florentine painters at the time of Jan van Eyck fundamentally adhered to other concepts of art, this work comes within relative close proximity to Van Eyck's *The Madonna at the Fountain* (1439, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp). The difference in the medium is determining: tempera versus oil paints. Parallel artistic approaches are mirrored in the tender gesture of the Child, the laborious draping of Mary's garments, the two angels that are holding an honorific cloth and the realistic plants species within the *hortus conclusus*.



10

**Anonymous (Tournai)**

*Tapestry with Scenes from the Passion of Christ: Christ Carrying the Cross, The Crucifixion and The Resurrection, c. 1445-1455*

Wool, silk

424 x 911 cm

Royal Museums of Art and History of Belgium, Brussels

©KMKMG, Brussels

The exceptional and monumental *Tapestry with Scenes from the Passion of Christ* belongs to one of the pillars of the exhibition *Van Eyck. An Optical Revolution: an evocation of the environment in which Jan van Eyck moved, and in a broader sense, the society during which his art came to being*. The momentum that led to the optical revolution of Van Eyck was probably made by a so-called 'creative environment'. The stimulating environment, in which the demand for art was high, ensured also for the flourishing of luxury goods such as wall tapestries. The Burgundian dukes were passionate collectors of these very expensive works of art.

11

**Anonymous (Southern Low Countries), after Jan van Eyck (Maaseik?, c. 1390 - Bruges, 1441)**

*The Triptych of Petrus Wyts, first half 17th century (central panel), first half 16th century (outer panels)*

Oil on panel

172 x 99 cm

172 x 41 cm (shutters)

Groeningemuseum, Bruges

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12

**Anonymous (Southern Low Countries) after Jan van Eyck (Maaseik?, c. 1390 - Bruges, 1441)**

*The Madonna of Nicolaes van Maelbeke, c. 1450*

Silverpoint, with light yellow wash, on primed paper

278 x 180 mm

Albertina, Vienna



13

**Anonymous (Southern Low Countries) after Jan van Eyck (Maaseik?, c. 1390 – Bruges, 1441)**

*The Madonna of Nicolaes Van Maelbeke, the so-called Maelbeke-Madonna, c. 1445-1450*

Silverpoint, on white prepared paper

134 x 102 mm

Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg. Photo: Georg Janßen

*The Triptych of Petrus Wyts* is especially important for our insight into the limited oeuvre by Jan van Eyck that has survived. It is a late interpretation of *The Madonna of Nicolaes van Maelbeke*, the last known work on which Van Eyck worked. Van Eyck painted the piece for Nicolaes van Maelbeke, the Provost of the Saint Maarten's Church in Ypres, the place where the painting was preserved. The painter allegedly left it unfinished. Whether and where the piece is preserved is not known today. The fifteenth-century drawings that are kept in the Albertina (Vienna) and the Germanisches Nationalmuseum (Nuremberg) presumably provide an accurate image of the unfinished state in which the middle panel was at the time that Van Eyck stopped working on the piece. The drawings were possibly used as a model in the studio after Van Eyck's death, or in other studios in Bruges. At any rate, they highly suggest the power of attraction that the work exerts. The fame of the original was, moreover, further spread through travel reports from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.



14

**Barthélemy d'Eyck (Anjou and Provence, active 1444-1472)**

*The Virgin and Child Standing before a Cloth of Honor, c. 1440-1450*

Tempera on vellum

250 x 183 mm

The Morgan Library & Museum, New York



15

**Master of Jean Chevrot (Bruges, active 1440-1450)**

*Vera Icon, c. 1450*

Tempera on vellum

159 x 110 mm

The Morgan Library & Museum, New York



16

**Jan van Eyck (Maaseik?, c. 1390 - Bruges, 1441)**

*The Saint Barbara of Nicomedia, 1437*

Oil on panel

32 × 18,2 cm

Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp, Antwerp

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*The Saint Barbara of Nicomedia* is a minutely executed drawing on panel. The little work still divides the opinions of the specialists. Some of them see an independent work herein, because of the thorough details; while others view it as the under-drawing of an uncompleted work. Even more than in all of the other surviving works by the Master, except for the signed portrait of (supposedly) Niccolò Albergati (Kupferstichkabinett, Dresden), the art lover comes eye to eye with the hand of the Master. It is a prominent example of Van Eyck's pioneer work at the level of the (background) landscape and is a master class in composition. Furthermore, it is only one of the very few paintings of which the frame is preserved. The painting of the frame was for Jan van Eyck an irreplaceable part of a painting. In this case, he signed the work and designated the year of production as 1437.



17

**Jan van Eyck and workshop (Maaseik?, c. 1390 - Brugge, 1441)**

*The Madonna at the fountain, c. 1440*

Oil on panel

21,3 × 17,2 cm

Private collection

Courtesy of the Frick Collection

*The Madonna at the Fountain* from a private collection is an exact reprisal of the signed work from the collection of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp. It is attributed to Jan van Eyck and his studio, just as the version in Antwerp, a late work from the oeuvre. The precious, diminutive work and furthermore the posture of Madonna and Child, seems to be very popular in the Bruges of the early sixteenth century, as witnessed by the many renderings from the environment of Gerard David and Adriaen Isenbrant. This outstandingly preserved little panel shall hang next to the version by Van Eyck from Antwerp in a hall dedicated to versions of the Madonna with Child, with Flemish and Italian masters, sculptures and miniatures.



18

**Jan van Eyck (Maaseik?, c. 1390 – Bruges, 1441)**

*The Annunciation*, c. 1434-1436

Oil on panel, transferred onto canvas

92.7 x 36.7 cm

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

Jan van Eyck allows the Annunciation, or the announcement of the pregnancy of Mary, to take place in the interior of a church. This message from God is delivered by the Archangel Gabriel with the words 'Ave gratia plenam' ('Hail Mary, full of grace'), to which Mary answers: 'Ecce ancilla domini' ('Behold the Handmaiden of the Lord'). Both phrases are included on the painting, by which the words of Mary are upside-down so that she addresses God directly. This interior scene and the pose of the figures, the face of the angel and the ascending floor recall the annunciation of *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*. Likewise, the laboriously brocaded mantle of Gabriel, with respect to presentation, closely resembles the singing angels in the *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*. The imagery is complex and bears witness to a theological erudition. The whole work is symbolically sated, with for example, scenes from the Old Testament on the floor tiles, a mural with scenes from the life of Moses in an archaic style, and three arched windows that stand for the Trinity. The high, narrow format probably indicates a left-side panel of a triptych. Possibly it has to do with a rare example of a commission by Van Eyck's patron, Philip the Good.

19

**Fra Angelico (Vicchio, c. 1395 – Rome, 1455)**

*Saint Francis receiving the stigmata*, c. 1429

Tempera on panel

28 x 33 cm

Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City

Vatican Museums, all rights reserved

Fra Angelico (c. 1395-1455) was one of the most important pioneers of the Italian Renaissance and a contemporary of Jan van Eyck. Although the relationship between the art of painting in Tuscany and that in the Burgundian Netherlands was the subject of various studies in the past, the physical communion of works by Van Eyck and his most talented Italian contemporaries is rare. *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata* is just one of five surviving paintings that originally belong together. This painting is attributed to Fra Angelico (and studio) and shows his vision on the landscape with his non-naturalistic painting of rocks and especially the divine light in which the scene bathes. The Florentine painter accentuated the contrast between light and dark, right where Van Eyck focused upon the modelling of natural light and the detailed painting of everything tangible.

20

**Fra Angelico (Vicchio, c. 1395 – Rome, 1455)**

*Scenes from the Life of Saint Nicholas of Bari, c. 1437*

Tempera on panel

35 x 61,5 cm

Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City

Vatican Museums, all rights reserved

21

**Hand G (Jan van Eyck?)**

*The Turin-Milan Book of Hours, c. 1410-1440*

Tempera, gold and ink on parchment

284 x 203 mm

Palazzo Madama, Turin - Museo Civico d'Arte Antica.

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The so-called *Turin-Milan Book of Hours* is the most prestigious illuminated manuscript from the art of the Burgundian Netherlands and the most important work that connects Jan van Eyck with this discipline. Although the painter is associated with the art of miniatures only via indirect source materials, his capacity to work on a very small scale is beyond dispute. *The Turin-Milan Book of Hours* encountered an eventful history. It probably once made up a part of the elaborated *Très belles heures de Notre-Dame*. In the fifteenth century, a part of the book arrived in the Netherlands, where it was illuminated by various artists during various campaigns. Where, by whom and for whom that precisely occurred, is still up for debate. A handful of miniatures is so revolutionary and displays extensive knowledge of the oeuvre of Jan van Eyck that it was attributed to the Master. Ultimately, parts of the manuscript ended up in Turin and Milan. The Turin portion was destroyed in 1904 in a fire and known only via black and white images. The Milan portion later moved to Turin. Specifically the impressive folio with *The Birth of Saint John* will receive an honorary place in the exhibition.

22

**Jan van Eyck (Maaseik?, c. 1390 – Bruges, 1441)**

*Saint Francis of Assisi Receiving the Stigmata, c. 1430-1432*

Oil on vellum on panel

12,7 x 14,6 cm

Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection, 1917

Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art



Jan van Eyck's *Saint Francis of Assisi Receiving the Stigmata* from the Philadelphia Museum of Art is one of two known versions, of which the second one belongs to the Galleria Sabauda in Turin. Both are almost exact copies, but the Philadelphia version was painted on vellum (instead of panel) and is substantially smaller than its Turin counterpart. The Saint Francis comprises most of the achievements of Van Eyck's optical revolution: unparalleled realism and illusionism, a highly sophisticated sense of perspective, lifelike portraiture, the imitation of textures and surfaces, the play of light and shadow and a landscape with unsurpassed geological, botanical and atmospheric features. It is a masterpiece on a highly reduced scale and is testament to Van Eyck's legendary observational powers and technical innovations.

23

**Jan van Eyck (Maaseik?, ca. 1390 – Brugge, 1441)**

*Portrait of a Man (Léal souvenir or Tymotheos), 1432*

Oil on panel

33,3 x 18,9 cm

The National Gallery, Londen

© The National Gallery, London



In *Portrait of a Man (Léal souvenir or Tymotheos)*, a man with blue eyes stoically stares in front of him, holding a folded document with an illegible inscription in his one hand. This portrait, dated by Van Eyck on 10 October 1432, is shrouded in mystery because of the inscriptions in the stone parapet and the unknown identity of the sitter. An old hypothesis goes back to antiquity and the painter Apelles with whom Van Eyck possibly identified himself. The Greek inscription ΤΥΜ. ΩΘΕΟΣ (Tymotheos), which appears to be engraved in stone, could refer to Tymotheos of Milete, the court musician of Alexander the Great, who Duke Philip the Good modelled himself after.

24

**Jan van Eyck (Maaseik?, ca. 1390 – Brugge, 1441)**

*Portrait of Jan de Leeuw, 1436*

Oil on panel

33 x 27,5 cm

Kunsthistorisches Museum Wenen, Gemäldegalerie



In 1436 Jan van Eyck painted a fellow artist. *Portrait of Jan de Leeuw* depicts a thirty-five-year-old goldsmith from Bruges. The ring he is holding is probably a direct indication of his profession. Like other portraits, this work is primarily a record of a person's physical appearance, but it can also be seen as a token of pride in one's own craft. Jan de Leeuw addresses the viewer through the phrase 'gheconterfeit nu heeft mi lan' and seems to be speaking through it. His seemingly physical presence is closely related to the finely lit face, but it is above all the intense glance that transcends the distance between art and reality. Few portraits from this period are more inspiring than that of the cool-looking Jan de Leeuw.