

BOSCH Codart Madrid 2016

Dear Colleagues,

The exhibitions in Den Bosch and the Prado remind us, that our understanding of the work of Hieronymus Bosch is still confusing. Opinions differ widely! I take the occasion of our topic to point to some of these problems. To make it easier I show only details from six generally as his work accepted triptychs.

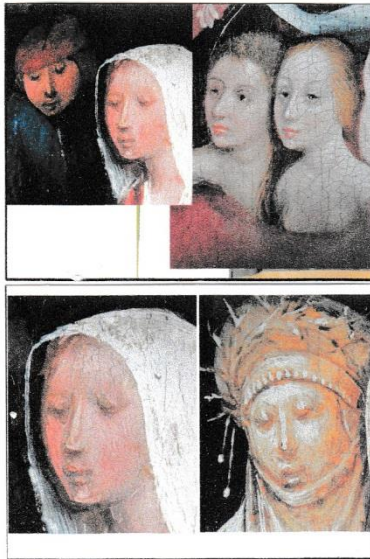
FOLIE 2



The Rotterdam Wayfarer
The Lisbon Temptation of St Anthony
The Garden of Earthly Delights
Vienna Last Judgment
Prado Haywain
And the Adoration of the Magi, Prado

As connoisseurship is based on critical looking I will not speak so much but trust in the revealing power of the images.

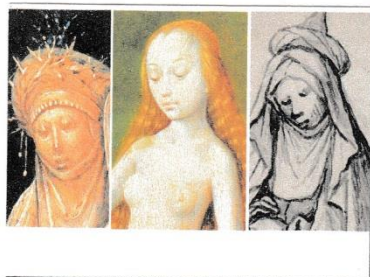
FOLIE 3 / 4



The catalogue of the present exhibition shows already on the first pages blown up details from the **Haywain** and from the **Garden of Delight**. Going into **detail** - the differences could not be more extreme.

If one looks for an explanation and compares such heads with other details like from the **Vienna Last Judgment** or from the **Prado-Adoration** or the **London Crowning with Thorns** – examples which mark at the same time characteristic steps of Bosch's artistic development - we see detailed execution in all of them. Even in the sketchier, small head of the **young woman** the glance in her eyes is set with a white dot. Eye, nose and lips are clearly articulated. This differs remarkably from heads as from the **Louvre Ship of Fools**, from the **Haywain** or from the **Lisbon Temptation**.

FOLIE 5



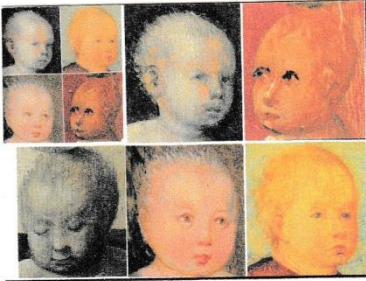
While this lady has lowered down her eyes, keeps the **man on her side** his eyes wide open. And in this he matches with figures in the **Haywain**. A brief look back to **Adam from the Garden of Delight**, reminds us how Bosch handles such faces, as also the physiognomy of the shepherd from the **Prado Adoration**. *shows*

On the other hand, close to the Lisbon painting comes this woman's face from the **Haywain**, as also – interestingly – faces from the **London drawing** of the Entombment.

Here two other heads from the **Haywain** to show how close the connections are.

Contrasting to such examples the head of Eve from Bosch's **Garden of Delight** allows to check the painterly and artistic distance in execution .

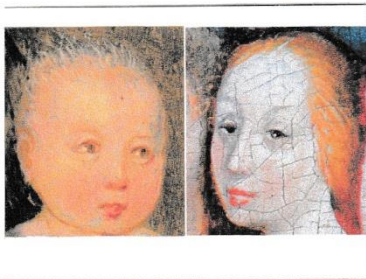
FOLIE 6



The **BRCP catalogue** raisonné reproduces this image with the heads of four children to document the different versions of the same.

In this selection I miss one head, that from the kid in the **Vienna triptych**. By closer inspection of these heads one observes differences in execution. These become better visible in a new order. When the roughly sketched boy's head from the **Carrying the Cross** is compared with that one from the **Lisbon triptych** against the heads from the **New York Adoration**, from the **Rotterdam Christopher** and that from the Vienna triptych which contrast to them by a more detailed execution.

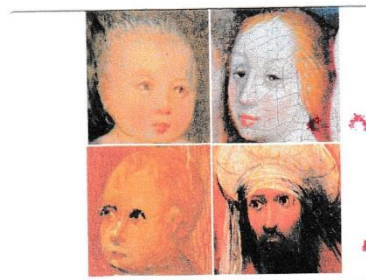
FOLIE 7



This becomes even more clear when we **enlarge** these heads. Then the **Haywain –head** shows close parallels in execution, especially in forming the eyes.

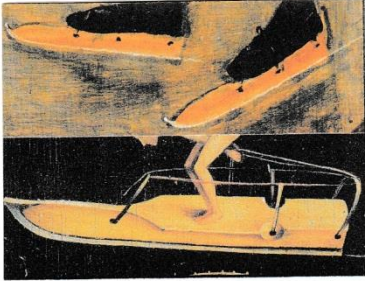
This contrasts with the **face of Adam**. While on the other hand the **New York painting** matches in painting technique with the **heads** in the **Garden of Delight**.

FOLIE 8



That means, that these boys cannot support each other - as suggested by the BRCP - because they have different blood, are of different parents, so to say: The one belongs to the **Garden of Delight family**, the other to the **Haywain tribe**.

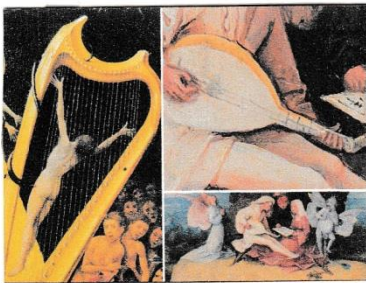
FOLIE 9



Similar motifs, like the ice-skaters in the **Lisbon Painting** and in the **Garden of Delight**, are especially enlightening, are eye-opener, concerning their different execution.

This becomes more visible in blown ups. The rough, summarizing depiction in the **Lisbon painting** separates clearly from the technical accurate depiction of the skating-boot in the **Garden of Delight**.

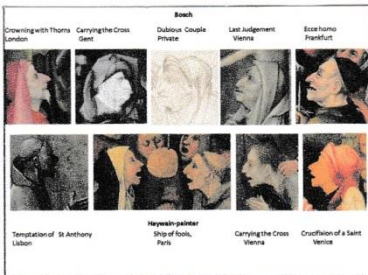
FOLIE 10



Parallels can also be shown between the **Haywain** and the recently as autograph published **Vienna drawing** with the basket. The little **man with a lute** – blown up – matches here with the **painting instrument**. In both the same loose strings would not give a tone.

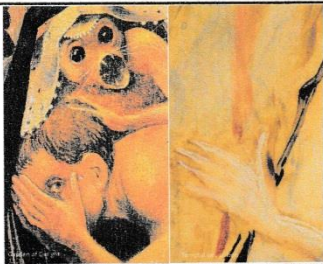
Bosch instead handles such an instrument quite different as this detail from the **Garden of Delight** shows.

FOLIE 11



Such differences can also be observed in the **faces**: Bosch gives them differentiated, full of psychological expression, while the faces bottom-line look pattern-like, stereotype.

FOLIE 12



This is the same with hands: detailed in **the Garden**, sketchy-rough in the **Lisbon Temptation**.

FOLIE 13

Extremely speaking the **birds**: the same motif, exactly same size, but how different the execution.

FOLIE 14



The same with the **skull of a horse**.



DRAWINGS

FOLIE 15

Some words on the drawings. The group of accepted autograph works like **Rotterdam** and **Berlin**,

also **Berlin**, **Berlin** again,

Paris , St Anthony

or the **Vienna** Treeman.



By the BRCP only recently as autograph enclosed are the Entombment, **London**,

The witches from the **Louvre** or a

Hell-scene, a “discovery” by the BRCP,

or the **Vienna** Man in a Basket, and some others.



FOLIE 16

The connection of the **Vienna drawing** with the **Garden of Delight** is a reliable basis for authenticity

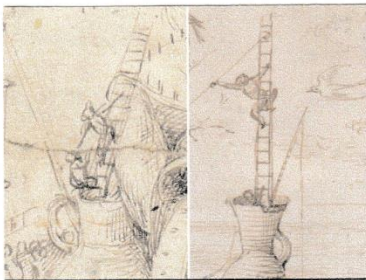


FOLIE 17

and this - according to their style - allows to ascribe a number of drawings to Bosch: **Berlin**, **Vienna**, **Rotterdam** and **Berlin**.

FOLIE 18

The **Treeman** is therefore a reliable base for further attributions so for instance for the in Den Bosch as “discovery” presented **Hell-scene**. The detail shows how Bosch forms with a clear, transparent system of lines while for the Hell-scene more a chaotic, disorganized drawing technique characteristic.



The **BRCP critical catalogue** – here an image - compares similar gestures in the Garden of Delight as argument for authenticity.

But by going deeper into detail and comparing similar motifs like the little man climbing a ladder from the **Treeman**, with the one in the **Hell-scene**, then the artistic and stylistic differences become evident.

FOLIE 19



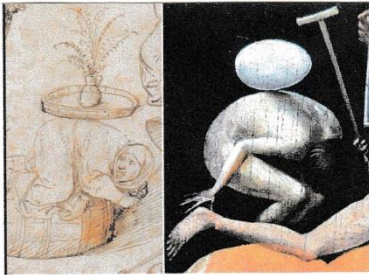
The **birds** compared with a bird from the **Berlin** drawing and a painted version from the **Garden of Delight** underline that the drawing is far away from being by Bosch.

FOLIE 20



Baskets can be seen in several paintings and drawings given to Bosch, like in the **Vienna Last Judgment** or in the **Prado Haywain** as also in the **Rotterdam Wayfarer**. The texture in these is quite different. A clear construction, with regular wickerwork in Vienna contrasts with a sketchy, loose depiction in the Wayfarer. If one compares the basket from the **Vienna drawing**, recently claimed again as autograph, it becomes obvious that it is definitely closer to the Rotterdam basket than to one in Vienna.

FOLIE 21



A closer critical look to a drawing in the **Louvre**, recently ascribed to Bosch, is instructive,

especially, when we focus on the **old woman** on the left. It is hard to believe, that the basket on her head will be there a second longer.

Bosch however, in the **Vienna triptych**, knows how to make it rest.

A very similar motif in the **Lisbon Temptation** shows the same, but there the bowl is also in dangerous unstable position. (May I remind that according to the BRCP chronology Vienna and Lisbon are painted in the same time 1500-1510.)

As another detail from the **Garden of Delight** shows did Bosch know how to make an object rest on some one's head.

While the **tray on the back** of this old woman has no chance to remain upright is - in contrast - Bosch's **egg on the man's back** in stable position.



FOLIE 22

Right- or lefthandedness is inborn. **Dürers** hatching go from top right to bottom left. **Leonardo** was lefthander, his hatching run the other way, from top left to bottom right.



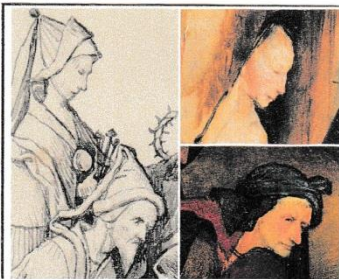
FOLIE 23

The same can be observed in the Bosch-group as the underdrawing of the **Wayfarer** - compared with the **Treeman** - shows.

FOLIE 24

In this respect the **London drawing** is interesting as it shows the characteristics of a lefthander. And in this it corresponds with the underdrawing of several Bosch-paintings like the **Vienna Christ** carrying the Cross and the **Prado Haywain** or the **Wayfarer**.

Comparable is also the underdrawing of a figure in the **Lisbon painting**.



The London-drawing helps also with specific details, as with the two **figures on the left**. Blown up it becomes more visible how the bearded man corresponds closely in many details with the **painting**. Compare the Forehead-wrinkles, the eyebrows, the hatching on the cheek and especially the accentuated neck-muscle.

The profile of the **woman behind** appears in the same pose on the **Lisbon triptychs** right inner wing. Lips, nose and eye are indicated in the same way with short strokes.

FOLIE 25



I think that these few differences might help to see the paintings and drawings attributed to Bosch in new light. These paintings which are believed in the exhibitions in Den Bosch and Madrid to be autograph works by Bosch are in my opinion the work of two different artistic personalities and this means that we have to separate the discussed panels into two groups.

The Garden of Delight,

The Vienna Last Judgment

And the Prado Adoration as autograph works by **Bosch** and the

Wayfarer

The Lisbon Temptation of St Anthony

and the Prado Haywain as the works of a **collaborator**.