

An Image for ‘All Truly Penitent’ Reconsidering the Function of the *Madonna of Jan Vos* by Jan van Eyck and His Workshop*

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Abstract

A painting now kept in the Frick Collection, the so-called Madonna of Jan Vos, has been considered as one of the last works which were commissioned from Jan van Eyck in the final stages of his career. Most researchers agree that the painting was started by Van Eyck in the last year of his life and completed by one of his workshop members after Van Eyck's death. The donor of the painting was Jan Vos, the Prior of the Carthusian monastery of Genadedal between 1441 and 1450. Evidence from the Order shows that the depicted image was to be venerated by ‘all truly penitent’, and that forty days of indulgence was granted for reciting the Ave Maria and the Pater Noster to the image. The aim of this article is to determine the original function, location, and audience of the Madonna of Jan Vos. In order to contextualize the painting in late-medieval devotional practice, emphasis is laid on the indulgence related to the Madonna of Jan Vos, as the indulgence is a decisive element to consider the raison d'être of the image.

When Jan van Eyck passed away in July 1441, several paintings were left unfinished in his workshop. One of the most important paintings to reconstruct the final stages of the painter's career and the working procedures of his workshop is the so-called *Madonna of Jan Vos* in the Frick Collection (Figure 1).¹ The importance of the painting is derived from

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¹ 47.4 × 61.3 cm, The Frick Collection, New York, accession number: 1954.1.161. The painting was first executed on a wooden panel, and later it was transferred twice, from a wooden panel to a canvas, and from a canvas to a Masonite press wood. On the condition and the iconography of the painting, see Franklin M. Biebel, ‘The Virgin and Child with Saints and a Carthusian Donor by Jan van Eyck and Petrus Christus’, *Art Quarterly*, 17 (1954), 423–25; *The Frick Collection Catalogue*, ed. by Franklin M. Biebel and others (New York: The Frick Collection, 1955), pp. 20–23d; Franklin M. Biebel, ‘Jan van Eyck, Virgin



Figure 1. Jan van Eyck and workshop, *Virgin and Child with Saints Barbara and Elizabeth and Jan Vos* (hereafter *Madonna of Jan Vos*), c. 1441–43, oil on wood, transferred to canvas, transferred to Masonite press wood, 47.4 × 61.3 cm, The Frick Collection, New York (© The Frick Collection, New York)

its position as being started by Van Eyck in the last year of his life and completed by one of his workshop members after Van Eyck's death. The panel shows the Virgin with Child standing in front of a magnificent gold-brocaded hanging and canopy embroidered 'AVE GRA[TIA] PLE[N]A'. On the left side of the Virgin stands Saint Elizabeth of Hungary holding her triple crown. On the right side of the Virgin, a Carthusian monk is presented to Christ and His Mother by a female saint, identified as Saint

and Child, with Saints and Donor' in *The Frick Collection: an Illustrated Catalogue, vol. 1. Paintings American, British, Dutch, Flemish and German*, ed. by Terence W. I. Hodgkinson and others (New York: The Frick Collection, 1968), pp. 198–208; Elizabeth Dhanens, *Hubert en Jan van Eyck* (Antwerp: Mercatorfonds, 1980), pp. 367–70; *Van Eyck tot Dürer: de Vlaamse primitieven en Centraal Europa, 1430–1530*, ed. by Till-Holger Borchert and others (Tiel: Lannoo, 2010), p. 150.

Barbara by the tower behind her. In the tower, a statue of Mars, whose name is inscribed on the base, is installed. The Child holding a crystal orb is giving His blessing to the monk in return for his devotion.

The painting did not receive considerable attention until the mid-nineteenth century, as it was hidden in the private collections of Baron James de Rothschild and his family in Paris. The panel was first mentioned as an Eyckian work by Joseph Crowe and Giovanni Cavalcaselle in 1857, and this opinion was accepted by later authors.² Several details of the painting are certainly based on other works by Van Eyck. For example, the portico composed of round arches and the panoramic landscape are directly comparable with those in the *Virgin and Child with Nicolas Rolin* (Musée du Louvre, Paris). However, the painting cannot be fully attributed to Van Eyck. Although the painting clearly reflects Van Eyck's concept, his skilful hand cannot be seen on the painted surface. As pointed out by Panofsky, the 'porcelainlike' faces of the figures are less expressive and the draperies of the Virgin's mantle are stilted, which is alien to other Van Eyck works.³ In addition, Saint Elizabeth's triple crown and Christ's crystal orb lack the gleam and transparency seen in the Virgin's crown and Christ's orb in the *Virgin and Child with Nicolas Rolin*. The tower behind Saint Barbara lacks sophisticated details. On the basis of these characteristics, Panofsky assumed that Van Eyck's contribution to the work was limited to the basic plan of the composition and that another painter who trained under Van Eyck must have been responsible for completing the painting.⁴ The apparent limited contribution of Van Eyck to the painting has been confirmed by infrared

² 'A very fine and authentic piece by John Van Eyck is in the possession of the Rothschild family in Paris'. Joseph A. Crowe and Giovanni B. Cavalcaselle, *The Early Flemish Painters: Notices of Their Lives and Works* (London: Murray, 1857), p. 98. Hugo Von Tschudi, 'Die Madonna mit dem Karthäuser und Heiligen von Jan van Eyck', *Jahrbuch der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 15 (1894), 65–70; Karl Voll, *Die altniederländische Malerei von Jan van Eyck bis Memling* (Leipzig: Poeschel & Kippenberg, 1906), pp. 39–40.

³ Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting. Its Origins and Character*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), I (1953), p. 187.

⁴ Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, p. 188. Panofsky believed Petrus Christus to have been the painter who finished the *Madonna of Jan Vos*. The 'teacher-pupil relationship' between Van Eyck and Christus was rejected by Martens on the basis of historical and stylistic analysis. Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, I, pp. 187–91; Maximiliaan P. J. Martens, 'Artistic patronage in Bruges institutions, c. 1440–1482' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, 1992), p. 337.

reflectography of the painting. As Maryan Ainsworth and Maximiliaan Martens demonstrated, some parts of the underdrawing show handling typical of Van Eyck.⁵ For instance, brush strokes in the lower part of the Virgin's drapery and around her left shoulder, as well as at the edge of her robe, are very similar to that in the underdrawing of the *Virgin and Child with Joris van der Paele* (dated 1436, Groeningemuseum, Bruges) and in that of *Saint Barbara* (dated 1437, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp). It is conceivable that Van Eyck prepared the partial design of the painting and that the rest of the work was taken over by one of his workshop members.

While the attribution has been the subject of an intensive debate, little detailed research has been conducted on the function of the painting, which has occasionally been mentioned as an altarpiece.⁶ A new hypothesis has recently been suggested by Liesbeth Zuidema and Rolf de Weijert, both of whom mentioned the work as a memorial painting.⁷ The original location and intended audience of the panel, however, remain unstudied. In order to elaborate on previous research and to contextualize the painting in late medieval devotional practice, this article will discuss the original function, location, and audience of the *Madonna of Jan Vós*. First, circumstances relating to the commission of the work will be reconstructed on the basis of two documents. These documents, both published by Hendrik Scholtens in 1938, show that the donor of the

⁵ On the latest scientific examination of the painting, see Maryan W. Ainsworth and Maximiliaan P. J. Martens, *Petrus Christus: Renaissance Master of Bruges* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994), pp. 72–95. 'Typical of Jan's handling in the draperies, for example, are thin brush strokes delineating the folds; middle-tone shadows marked by precise, even, parallel hatching generally running parallel to the main fold; deep shadows suggested by a dense network of slightly curved strokes forming cross-hatching; and light accents of shallow concave folds marked by fewer strokes that spread out like a fan.' Ainsworth and Martens, *Petrus Christus*, p. 76.

⁶ Biebel, 'The Virgin and Child', p. 425; Martens, 'Artistic patronage', p. 337. Upton assumed the painting was a copy of the lost altarpiece. Joel M. Upton, *Petrus Christus: His Place in Fifteenth-Century Flemish Painting* (London University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), pp. 15–17.

⁷ Liesbeth Zuidema, 'Verbeelding en ontbeelding: een onderzoek naar de functie van kunst in Nederlandse kartuizerkloosters 1450–1550' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Universiteit Leiden, 2010), p. 44; Rolf de Weijert-Gutman, 'Schenken, begraven gedenken: Lekenmemoria in het Utrechtse kartuizerklooster Nieuwlicht (1391–1580)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Universiteit Utrecht, 2015), p. 175.

painting was Jan Vos, the Prior of the Carthusian monastery of Genadedal between 1441 and 1450. Although generally cited as evidence to identify the donor and the provenance of the painting, these records are still open to further discussion to determine the efficacy of the image. Second, to reconstruct the devotional practice conducted in front of the image, the initial location of the panel in the monastery of Genadedal will be examined in detail. Among all factors, this article will emphasize the role of the indulgence related to the *Madonna of Jan Vos*, as this indulgence is a crucial element of the *raison d'être* of the image. Finally, the destined audience of the *Madonna of Jan Vos* will be investigated by inspecting the social network of the host institution in the mid-fifteenth century. As a result, the devotional and social contexts from which the painting emerged and in which it was accepted will become clear.

The Donor and the Host Institution

The first attempt to identify the donor of the painting was made by James Weale in 1908.⁸ Weale believed that the panel was painted between 1406 and 1420. On the basis of his theory of this early dating, Weale suggested that the Carthusian monk depicted in the panel was Herman Steenken from Zuutdorp, the Vicar of the monastery at Saint Anne *ter Woestine* ('in the desert') near Bruges between 1402 and 1404, and again between 1406 and 1428. This dating and identification were at odds with the stylistic analysis by Max Friedländer, who insisted that the painting had been executed later in the artist's career, around 1439.⁹ The donor was finally identified by Hendrik Scholtens in 1938. He was able to relate two documents as important sources to determine the historical context of the painting.¹⁰ The first document is a copy of a letter of indulgence issued for the Carthusian monastery of

⁸ William H. J. Weale, *Hubert and John Van Eyck. Their Life and Work* (London: John Lane, 1908), pp. 110–14. This identification was mistakenly supported by Jean Lejeune, 'Le premier des Petrus Christus et "La vierge au Chartreux"', *Bulletin Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique*, 4 (1955), 151–70.

⁹ Max J. Friedländer, *Die altniederländische Malerei*, 14 vols (Berlin: Cassirer, 1924–37), I (1924), pp. 98–100.

¹⁰ Hendrik J. J. Scholtens, 'Jan van Eyck's "H. Maagd met den Kartuizer" en de Exter-Madonna te Berlijn', *Oud Holland*, 55 (1938), 49–62.

Genadedal near Bruges.¹¹ The second one is an excerpt from a necrology written in the Carthusian monastery of Nieuwlicht near Utrecht.¹²

The first document contains fundamental information about the circumstances surrounding the consecration of the painting as follows:

Martinus, Dei gratia episcopus Magionensis, universis et singulis ad quos presentes nostre littere pervenerint manifestamus evidenter, quod nos anno Domini millesimo quadringentesimo quadragesimo tertio mensis septembris die tertia in monasterio Vallis Gratiae prope Bruggis, ordinis carthusiensis, certas tabulas, ymaginibus sanctorum depictas et decenter adornatas, sollempniter benediximus domino Johanni Voes, priori ibidem. Quarum prima, que maior est, exstat insignita ymaginibus beatissime Dei genitricis Marie, sanctarum Barbare ac Elyzabeth; secunda autem resurrectionis dominice in dextro latere, in sinistro vero intemerate virginis puerum in gremio tenentis et lactantis; tertia vero, que fictilis est, continet ymaginem premissae Dei genitricis puerum gestantis. Desiderantes igitur predictas tabulas singulas singulariter debite venerari omnibus vere penitentibus, confessis et contritis, qui ante primam tabulam matrem misericordie, celi reginam, Dei genitricem cum angelica salutatione salutaverit aut Barbaram sive Elizabeth cum dominica oratione et angelica salutatione honoraverit, suffragia earundem devote implorando [...] tociens quociens premissa vel aliquot premissorum devote adimpleverint de omnipotentis Dei misericordia, beatorum Petri et Pauli apostolorum ejus auctoritate confisi, quadraginta dies indulgentiarum de iniunctis sibi sive denique iniungendis penitentiis misericorditer in Domino relaxamus. Et quia indulgentiae preter mentem concedentis in alteram personam extendi non possunt, ex speciali gratia concedimus premissas pro amicis vivis vel defunctis, dummodo extra ordinem predictae tabule non devenirent.¹³

¹¹ The original letter of indulgence is lost. The accurate copy of the letter is preserved in Utrecht, Rijksarchief, inventory number 573 c, fol. 272.

¹² Het Utrechts Archief, *Anniversarium Carthusianorum Vallis Novae Lucis Sancti Salvatoris Ultraiectensis*. fol. 138. Accession number: 1006-3.4 http://www.hetutrechtsarchief.nl/collectie/archiefbank/archiefvoegingen/zoekresultaat?mi_vast=39&mizig=236&miadt=39&miaet=54&micode=1006-3.4&miview=ldt (Last consultation: December 20, 2015). The necrology was first published by L. van Hasselt, 'Het necrologium van het Karthuizer-Klooster Nieuwlicht of Bloemendaal buiten Utrecht', *Bijdragen en mededelingen van het Historisch Genootschap (gevestigd te Utrecht)*, 9 (1886), 126-392 (pp. 201-02). On the necrology, see Hendrik J. J. Scholtens, 'Necrologie van de Utrechtse Kartuizers', *Archief voor de geschiedenis van het aartsbisdom Utrecht*, 71 (1952), 97-150.

¹³ 'I, Martin, by the grace of God Bishop of Mayo, declare publicly to all and sundry to whom our letter may come that we blessed solemnly for Dom Jan Vos, the prior there, in the year of our Lord one thousand four hundred and forty-three, on the

This record gives an explanation for the historical context of the work. On 3 September 1443, Bishop Martinus of Mayo consecrated two panels and a clay plaque in the Carthusian monastery of Genadedal.¹⁴ These three works were solemnly blessed for Prior Jan Vos. The first panel, the largest one among the three, was adorned with the images of the Virgin and Saints Barbara and Elizabeth. The second panel was most likely a diptych, as it showed the Resurrection on the right and the Virgin nursing the Child on the left, while the third one, a clay tablet, represented the Virgin and Child.¹⁵ Each depiction was to be venerated separately by

third day of the month of September in the monastery of the Carthusian Order at Val de Grâce [Genadedal], near Bruges, certain panels, painted with images of saints and duly adorned. Of these the first, which is the largest, is painted with the images of the most Blessed Mother of God, of Saints Barbara and Elizabeth; the second shows the Resurrection of Our Lord on the right side, and on the left the immaculate Virgin holding the Child to her breast and nursing him; the third, which is of clay, contains the image of the predestined Mother of God bearing the Child. We, therefore, wishing the said depictions to be duly venerated separately by all truly penitent, confessed and contrite, who before the first picture salute the Mother of Mercy, Queen of Heaven, Mother of God, with the angelic salutation, or honour Barbara or Elizabeth with the Our Father and the angelic salutation and devoutly implore their help [...] each time that he carries out the aforesaid or a part thereof devoutly, remit, by the authority conferred on me, by the mercy of God Almighty, of Saints Peter and Paul his apostles, forty days of indulgence from penance already imposed, or to be imposed in the future, by the mercy of God. And because the indulgences cannot, except by the intention of the grantor, be extended to another person, as a special grace, we grant the same indulgences for friends alive or dead, as long as the said pictures do not pass outside the Order'. Scholtens, 'Jan van Eyck's "H. Maagd met den Kartuizer"', p. 52. The translation to English is cited from *The Frick Collection*, p. 23c.

¹⁴ Martinus became bishop on 10 April 1432 with the title of Majo (Magionensis). The Bishop granted several indulgences to religious communities: to a monastery of Zennewijnen near Tiel in 1433; to a guild of Saint Bavo church in Haarlem in 1433; to a Cistercian monastery in Alkmaar on 2 May 1433; to canons at Diepenveen on 1 July 1433; to a Cistercian monastery at Warmond in 1434; to a regular church at Gouda in 1436; to a monastery of Blinken at Heiloo in 1440; to the Carthusian monastery of Genadedal in 1443. *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, ed. by Friedrich Karl Heinrich Kossmann and others (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1911), pp. 877–79.

¹⁵ Such devotional clay tablets were commonly used in religious orders. The most famous sculptor who produced such tablets was Judocus (or Jodocus) Vredis, who entered the Carthusian monastery of Marienburg in 1493, becoming procurator in 1506 and prior in 1531. *Judocus Vredis: Kunst aus der Stille: Eine Klosterwerkstatt*

‘all truly penitent, confessed and contrite.’ The first painting is certainly identical with the one now kept in the Frick Collection. Although the document does not mention its original location in the monastery of Genadedal or further details of the other two objects, the three works must have resonated with each other, as all of them contained the image of the Virgin and the Child.

The Carthusian Order was one of the most influential religious orders in the late medieval Low Countries. The first monastery in Flanders was built near Edingen in 1314. Four years later, the second monastery was founded near Sint-Kruis, located about 3,5 km northeast of the centre of Bruges. The monastery received the name Genadedal, also referred to as Val-de-Grâce in French.¹⁶ According to a copy of the agreement between the Carthusians and the chapter of the collegiate church of Saint Donatian on 5 December 1318, a group of wealthy citizens supported the foundation of the Charterhouse. In 1517, aldermen of Bruges demanded that the monks leave the monastery in order to use the monastic building as a fortress. The monastery was destroyed in April 1578, during the religious wars, and the monks and brothers were moved inside the city walls to build a new

der Dürerzeit, ed. by Hermann Terhalle and others (Borken: Kreis Borken, 2001); Colum Hourihane, *The Grove Encyclopedia of Medieval Art and Architecture*, 6 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) II (2012), p. 332.

¹⁶ For the Carthusian monastery of Genadedal, see Hendrik J. J. Scholtens, ‘Het kartuizerklooster Dal van Gracien buiten Brugge’, *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis gesticht onder de benaming Société d’émulation te Brugge*, 83 (1947), 133–201; Jacques Vandemeulebroucke, ‘De kartuis “Genadedal” te Sint-Kruis bij Brugge (1318–1580)’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1965); Jacques Vandemeulebroucke, ‘De eerste jaren van de Kartuis “Genadedal” te Sint-Kruis (1318–1324)’, *Biekorf*, 68 (1967), 217–29; Jan De Grauwe, ‘Kartuize Genadedal te Sint-Kruis bij Brugge vanaf 1584 in de Stad Brugge (1318–1783)’, in *De Kartuizers en hun Delfse klooster: Een bundel studieën uitgegeven ter gelegenheid van het achtste lustrum van het genootschap Delfia Batavorum*, ed. by R. Rothfusz and A. J. H. Rozemond (Delft: Elmar, 1975), pp. 171–75; Jan De Grauwe, ‘Chartreuse du Val-de-Grâce à Bruges’, *Monasticon Belge*, 3 (1978), 1191–1230; Jean-Pierre Esther, Jan De Grauwe, and Vivian Desmet, *Het Kartuizerklooster binnen Brugge, Verleden en toekomst* (Bruges: Brugge Westvlaamse Gidsenkring, 1980); Jean-Pierre Esther, ‘Uurwerken in het Brugse kartuizerklooster’, *Biekorf*, 81 (1981), 173–74; Jean-Pierre Esther and Jan De Grauwe, ‘Het Kartuizerklooster Genadedal in Brugge’, *Spiegel Historiae*, 19 (1984), 294–300; Bernadette Roose, *De Brugse Kartuizen 14de–18de eeuw. Dossier bij de gelijknamige tentoonstelling in het Rijksarchief te Brugge* (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1996).

monastery at Langestraat. The city map of Bruges by Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder (1562) shows a bird's-eye view of the original construction of Genadedal (Figure 2).¹⁷ In the heart of the monastery was a church. A small courtyard, a refectory, a chapterhouse, and a library were located at the north side of the church. The south side of the church was surrounded by fifteen cells, where the monks spent most of their time to pray alone.

Among other Charterhouses, the Carthusian monastery of Genadedal kept a close relationship with the house of Nieuwlicht, and four Carthusians were dispatched as prior from Nieuwlicht to Genadedal between 1396 and 1459, one of whom was the donor of the painting.¹⁸ The monastery of Nieuwlicht was located around 1.5 km northwest from the centre of Utrecht.¹⁹ The Charterhouse was founded by Zweder van Gaesbeek in 1391. The main part of the house was built before 1394, while a church was finally completed in 1407. In 1580, after being besieged by soldiers to prevent Spanish troops from entering the city, the monastery was destroyed and its properties were seized by the city government.

¹⁷ On the city map of Bruges by Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder in 1562, see Bruggemuseum, Stadsarchief Brugge, Universiteit Gent, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, and Vrije Universiteit Brussel, *MAGIS BRUGGE: Marcus Gerards Informatie Systeem Brugge*, Bruges, from 2012, with support of the Flemish Government. URL: www.kaartenhuisbrugge.be/magis (last consultation: December 20, 2015).

¹⁸ Hendrik van Der Laen (14205–33); Otto Amilii van Moerdrecht (1433–38); Jan Vos (1441–50); Thomas van Mynen (1450–59).

¹⁹ For the Charterhouse of Nieuwlicht, see Chr. S. Dessing, 'De goederen van het Karthuizerklooster "Nieuwlicht" bij Utrecht in de heerlijkheid Strijen', *Archief voor de geschiedenis van het aartsbisdom Utrecht*, 58 (1934), 269–320; Hendrik J. J. Scholtens, 'De voormalige Kartuizerkloosters hier te lande: Hun bouw en inrichting', *Het Gildeboek*, 23 (1940), 33–44; Hendrik J. J. Scholtens, 'Kunstwerken in het Utrechtse Kartuizerklooster. Nogmaals: De kloosterkerk van Nieuwlicht en het drieluik van de H. H. Martelaren (1521)', *Oud Holland*, 67 (1952), 157–66; Johan Peter Gumbert, *Die Utrechter Kartäuser und ihre Bücher im frühen fünfzehnten Jahrhundert* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974); Albert Gruijs, 'Kartuizen in de Nederlanden (1314–1796). Klein monasticon et literatuuroverzicht van de geschiedenis der Zuid- en Noordnederlandse kartuizen. Een leidraad voor verdere studie samengesteld door de leden van de werkgroep Cartusiana neerlandica', in *De Kartuizers en hun Delfse Klooster: een bundel studiën, verschenen ter gelegenheid van het achtste lustrum van het Genootschap Delfia Batavorum*, ed. by R. Rothfusz and A. J. H. Rozemond (Delft: Elmar, 1975), pp. 157–244.

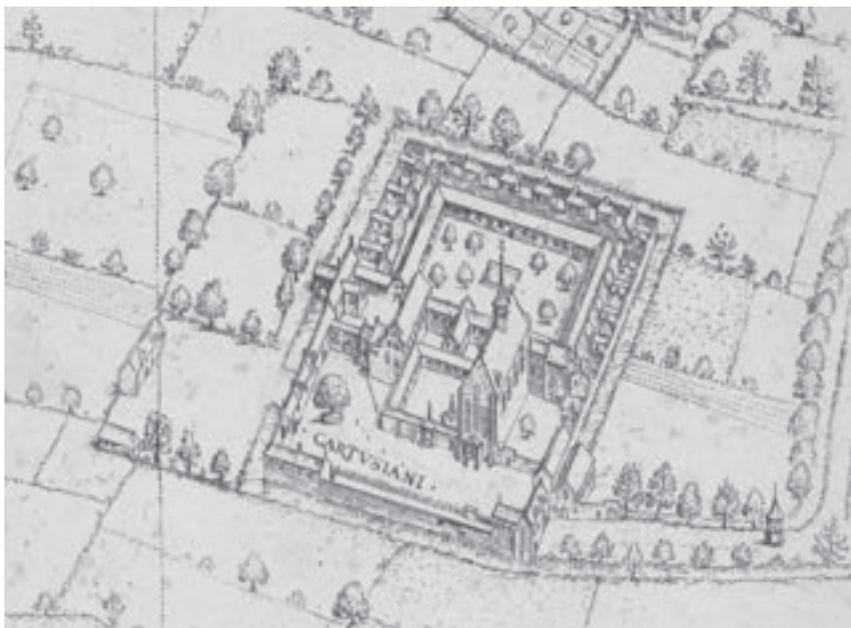


Figure 2. The Carthusian monastery at Genadedal, from the map of Bruges by Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder in 1562 (© MAGIS BRUGGE)

Little is known about the life of Jan Vos. Born in Delft, Vos started his career at the Teutonic Order in the bailiwick of Utrecht.²⁰ The Utrecht house was founded outside the city walls shortly after 1231, which was transferred into the city in the mid-fourteenth century. In the first quarter of the fifteenth century, there were approximately fifteen knight-brethren and thirty-six priest-brethren in the Order.²¹ According to a record dated

²⁰ For Jan Vos, see *Archieven der Ridderlijke Duitse Orde, balie van Utrecht*, ed. by J.J. Geer tot Oudegein, 2 vols (Utrecht: Kemink en Zoon, 1871), II (1871), pp. 681–82; Léon Le Vasseur, *Ephemerides Ordinis Cartusiansis* (Monstrolia: Typis Cartusiae Sanctae Mariae de Pratis, 1890), II (1890), 477; III (1890), 540; Petrus de Wal, *Collectaneum rerum gestarum et eventuum cartusiae bruxellensis cum aliis externis tum patriae tum ordinis*, 4 vols (1625–40), I (1625), fol. 62^r, 69^r, 72^v; Jan De Grauwe and Ludo Milis, *Prosopographia Cartusiana Belgica (1314–1796)* (Ghent: De Backer, 1976), p. 217; Huib J. Zuidervaart, *Ridders, priesters en predikanten in Schelluinen de geschiedenis van een commanderie van de ridderlijke Duitse orde, Balie van Utrecht* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2013), p. 51.

²¹ Rombert J. Stapel, “Onder dese riddersen zijn oec papen”. De priesterbroeders in de balie Utrecht van de Duitse Orde (1350–1600), *Jaarboek voor middeleeuwse*

19 August 1431, Vos belonged to the Utrecht house as 'schaffenaar', or central manager of the household of the brethren. After 1431, he entered the Carthusian monastery of Nieuwlicht and became procurator. In 1441, the General Chapter sent Vos to Genadedal as a successor of Prior Gerard van Hamone (d. 30 March 1441). The precise date of the appointment of Vos as the new head of the monastery is not recorded, but it was, in all probability, shortly after the death of the previous prior on 30 March 1441. This date also provides the earliest possible date of the commission of the *Madonna of Jan Vos* from Van Eyck. The painting must have been ordered shortly after Vos succeeded Van Hamone, who died on 30 March 1441.²² At most, Van Eyck would have had three months before he died in July 1441, which would have only been enough time to prepare the partial design of the painting. The painting must have been taken over by one of his workshop members after his death and completed before its consecration on 3 September 1443. This theory corresponds to the results of the reflectography of the painting, which revealed the limited contribution of Van Eyck to the work.²³

In 1450, the General Chapter directed Vos to return to Nieuwlicht as the new prior. After that he led the monastery *sapientissime et laudabiliter* ('wisely and commendably') for eight years and passed away on 15 February 1462.²⁴ In addition to the three works that were consecrated in Genadedal, Vos seems to have possessed a small painting, the so-called *Exeter Madonna* in Berlin (Figure 3).²⁵ Similar to the painting in the Frick Collection, Vos is introduced by Saint Barbara to the Virgin and

geschiedenis, 11 (2008), 205–48 (p. 212); Johannes A. Mol, *Vechten, bidden en verplegen: opstellen over de ridderorden in de Noordelijke Nederlanden* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012), p. 296.

²² This was first suggested by Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, p. 188.

²³ Ainsworth and Martens, *Petrus Christus*, p. 76.

²⁴ Le Vasseur, *Ephemerides*, I (1890), p. 194.

²⁵ Oil on wood, 19.5 × 14.0 cm, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin. On the *Exeter Madonna*, see Upton, *Petrus Christus*, pp. 11–17; Ainsworth and Martens, *Petrus Christus*, pp. 102–05; Susan Frances Jones, 'The workshop and followers of Jan van Eyck' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1999), pp. 128–33. The designation of the painting comes from its earliest owner, the marquis of Exeter. The label on the back, which must have been attached to the panel at an unknown date, states 'a cabinet painting, representing an abbot kneeling before the Holy Virgin and the portrait of a women, etc.; by Jan van Eyck, the first inventor of oil painting, in the year 1426 being painted by him for the Saint Martinus Church at Ypres'. This English text is cited from Ainsworth and Martens, *Petrus Christus*, p. 102.



Figure 3. Petrus Christus, *Virgin and Child with Saint Barbara and Jan Vos* (hereafter *Exeter Madonna*), c. 1450, oil on wood, 19.5 × 14 cm, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (© KIK-IRPA, Brussels)

Child, while Saint Elizabeth of Hungary is absent. The panel is safely attributed to Petrus Christus, who started working as master in Bruges shortly after he purchased his Bruges citizenship on 6 July 1443. The facial type of the Virgin and the elegant draperies of Her robe are typical of Christus. In 1446, Christus completed the *Portrait of a Carthusian* (dated 1446, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), the sitter of which was most likely a lay brother of Genadedal.²⁶ Considering the possible contact between the painter and a member of this Charterhouse, it is not improbable that Christus met Jan Vos and received the commission of the *Exeter Madonna* before or after making the acquaintance of this lay brother.

When Vos returned to Nieuwlicht in 1450, he brought the *Madonna of Jan Vos* and, most likely, the *Exeter Madonna* with him. The location of the former in the Charterhouse of Nieuwlicht is recorded in the necrology written by one of Vos's contemporaries in or shortly after 1450: it was set on the altar of Saint Barbara, which was placed *super toxale* ('over a choir screen') in the church of the monastery. In the same document, the painting is mentioned as a *pie memorie domno Johanni Vos* ('pious memorial of Dom Jan Vos').

²⁶ Oil on wood, 29.2 × 21.6 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, accession number: 49.7.19. On the bottom frame is the following inscription: PETRVS. XPI. ME. FECIT. Ao. 1446. Ainsworth and Martens, *Petrus Christus*, pp. 93–95; Joel M. Upton, 'PETRVS. XPI. ME. FECIT: the transformation of a legacy', in *Petrus Christus in Renaissance Bruges: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, ed. by Maryam M. Aisworth (New York: Brepols, 1995), pp. 53–60.

Reverendus in Christo pater domnus Martinus, Dei gracia episcopus Magionensis, anno Domini MCCCCXLIII in monasterio Vallis gracie, prope Brugis, ordinis Carthusiensis, tres tabulas, ymaginibus sanctorum depictas et decenter ornatas, solempniter benedixit pie memorie domno Johanni Vos, priori pro tunc ejusdem monasterii et postea domus nostre [...] quarum prima, que major fuerat, erat insignita ymaginibus beatissime Dei genetricis Marie, sanctarum Barbare et Elyzabeth, que impresenciarum pertinet ad dictam domum nostram et habetur in altari beate Barbare virginis et martiris, super toxale in ecclesia nostra.²⁷

Although the *Exeter Madonna* has often been referred to as a free-copy or variant of the *Madonna of Jan Vos*, these two paintings must have been made for different purposes. The small size and representation of the *Exeter Madonna* suggest that the amulet-like panel was intended to be used for the donor's private devotion in his own cell. In contrast, the copy of the letter of indulgence and the necrology testify that the *Madonna of Jan Vos* was blessed as 'a pious memorial' of the Prior. One of the functions of the memorial object is to commemorate the life and death of a donor with an image and/or a text to encourage beholders to pray for his soul.²⁸ For example, the necrology written in the monastery of Nieuwlicht between 1400 and 1546 records more than twenty commemorative funerary objects, donated by benefactors and their family

²⁷ 'The Reverend Father in Christ Dom Martin, by the Grace of God Bishop of Mayo, in the year of Our Lord one thousand for hundred and forty-three in the monastery of Val de Grâce [Genadedal] near Bruges, of the Carthusian Order, solemnly blessed three panels, painted with the images of saints and properly ornamented, as a pious memorial of Dom Jan Vos, prior at that time of that monastery and later of our house, of which the first, which was the largest, was adorned with the image of Mary the most Blessed Mother of God, of saints Barbara and Elizabeth, and at present belongs to our house [Nieuwlicht] and is kept on the altar of Blessed Barbara Virgin and Martyr, [over a choir screen] in our church'. Van Hasselt, 'Het necrologium', pp. 201–02; Scholtens, 'Jan van Eyck's "H. Maagd met den Kartuizer"', p. 51. The translation to English is, except for one part, cited from *The Frick Collection*, p. 23b. The part of *super toxale* was mistranslated and mentioned as 'above it', which is corrected in this article.

²⁸ On memorial painting, see Truus Van Bueren and Wilhelmina C. M. Wünstefeld, *Leven na de dood: gedenken in de late Middeleeuwen* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999); Liesbeth Zuidema, 'De functie van kunst in de Nederlandse kartuizerkloosters', in *Het geheim van de stilte. De besloten wereld van de Roermondse Kartuizers*, ed. by Krijn Pansters (Zwolle: Waanders, 2009), pp. 48–61; Zuidema, 'Verbeelding en ontbeelding', pp. 58–61.

members to be placed by their tombs.²⁹ The memorial work also serves to immortalize the donor's social and political status. Joris van Egmond (1504–49) donated, for instance, several stained glasses to a number of churches in Utrecht, Haarlem, and other cities after he was appointed to the Bishop of Utrecht in 1534. As an important commissioner, his devotional portrait was depicted on the interior right wing of the altarpiece by Maarten van Heemskerck, which was placed on the high altar of St Laurens' in Alkmaar.³⁰ By donating the elaborate art works, the bishop could demonstrate his piety and power to the parishioners.

The two female saints represented in the *Madonna of Jan Vos* must have been chosen to commemorate the donor's social status and career. Saint Elizabeth of Hungary was one of the patron saints of the Teutonic Order. The military order had its origin in the hospital activity to take care of the sick and injured and was still active as a hospital order in the first half of the thirteenth century.³¹ Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, who founded a hospital in Marburg and dedicated her life to charitable activity, was proper as their patron saint.³² Saint Barbara was the patron saint of protection

²⁹ Van Hasselt, 'Het necrologium', pp. 126–392; Weijert-Gutman, 'Schenken, begraven, gedenken', p. 170.

³⁰ Oil on wood, 570 × 405 cm (middle panel); 570 × c. 200 cm (each wings), 1538–43, Domkerk, Linköping. Van Bueren and Wünstefeld, *Leven na de dood*, p. 81; Liesbeth M. Helmus, *Schilderen in opdracht. Noord-Nederlandse contracten voor altaarstukken 1485–1570* (Utrecht: Centraal Museum, 2010), pp. 221–38.

³¹ Stapel, 'De priesterbroeders', p. 205; Mol, 'Vechten, bidden, en verplegen', p. 40.

³² The Teutonic Order promoted the devotion to Saint Elizabeth and contributed to her canonization, which happened in 1235. Several churches and chapels founded by the members were dedicated to her. On the devotion to Saint Elizabeth in the Teutonic Order, see Udo Arnold, 'Elisabeth und Georg als Pfarrpatrone im Deutschordensland Preußen. Zum Selbstverständnis des Deutschen Ordens', in *Elisabeth, der Deutsche Orden und ihre Kirche: Festschrift zur 700 jährigen Wiederkehr der Weihe der Elisabethkirche Marburg 1983*, ed. by Udo Arnold and others (Marburg: Elwert, 1983), pp. 163–85; Klaus Guth, 'Patronage of Elizabeth in the High Middle Ages in hospitals of the Teutonic Order in the bailiwick of Franconia', in *The Military Orders: Fighting for the Faith and Caring for the Sick*, ed. by Malcolm Barber (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), pp. 245–52; Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, *Sanctity and Motherhood: Essays on Holy Mothers in the Middle Ages* (New York: Taylor & Francis Inc., 1995), p. 265; James Brodman, *Charity & Religion in Medieval Europe* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), p. 104; Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *The Life and Afterlife of St. Elizabeth of Hungary: Testimony from Her Canonization Hearings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 10–11. Biebel suggested

from sudden death and of soldiers, which is implied by the statue of Mars, the God of war, in the tower depicted behind her. The devotion to Saint Barbara was certainly popular in the Carthusian Order, particularly in the 1440s. On 14 October 1446, two new altars were consecrated in the church of the Charterhouse of Nieuwlicht. One was dedicated to Saint Michael and All Angels, and the other was in honour of Saint Barbara and Saint Catherine with the Eleven Thousand Virgins. The latter was simply named as Saint Barbara altar and was placed over the choir screen of the monastic church.³³ In 1447, the General Chapter allowed the Charterhouse of Nieuwlicht to add three lectures for the feast of Saint Barbara, which was increased to twelve lectures in 1451.³⁴ In the same year, the monks of this Charterhouse agreed to read masses at the altar of Saint Barbara for Theodericus Thome de Parijs and his wife Athalisia, both of whom were benefactors of the monastery.³⁵ From around 1450, as mentioned above, the painting consecrated as a *pie memorie* of Jan Vos was placed on the same altar.

The *Madonna of Jan Vos* did not only function as a memorial object. It also had a specific liturgical function in the Order. The copy of the letter

that Saint Elizabeth of Hungary was represented in the painting by 'a gesture of recognition' toward the spouse of Philip the Good, Duchess Isabella of Portugal, who made several donations to the Carthusian monasteries in the Low Countries and Switzerland. This theory seems implausible to the author. Biebel, 'Jan van Eyck', p. 205; Ainsworth and Martens, *Petrus Christus*, p. 72.

³³ 'Anno Domini MCCCCXLVI, ipso die Calixti, pape et mart., consecrata fuerunt duo altaria, stantia super doxale, quorum primum fuit consecratum in honorem beati Michaelis et omnium ordinum angelorum, super quod episcopus ipso die solempniter cum cantu celebravit, nobis officium in dedicacione altaris ex libris ipsius cantantibus. Secundum vero in honorem sancte Barbare, virg., ac beate Katherine et sanctarum Undecim milium virginum.' Van Hasselt, 'Het necrologium', p. 325 (no. 3). Scholtens interpreted that the altar of Saint Barbara was placed *tegen het doksaal* ('against the choir screen'). There is no reason to interpret *super* as *tegen* here. Scholtens, 'De voormalige Kartuizerkloosters', p. 36; Scholtens, 'Kunstwerken', p. 162.

³⁴ The first enlargement of Saint Barbara's feast was mistakenly mentioned as 1407 in Scholtens, 'Kunstwerken', p. 162. This date was corrected to 1447 by De Weijert-Gutman. 'Schenken, begraven, gedenken', p. 177.

³⁵ 'Prior et conventus suprascripti, modo pretacto, annuerunt et consenserunt ut a celebrantibus missa in altari sancte Barbare virginis et martiris, sito super toxale nostrum, ita fiat pro Theoderico Thome de Parijs, cive Trajectensi, et Athalisia, ejus uxore legitima, notabilibus benefactoribus nostris.' Van Hasselt, 'Het necrologium', p. 182; Jones, 'The workshop and followers', p. 113.

of indulgence and the necrology give testimony that whoever recited the *Ave Maria* to the Virgin, and the *Ave Maria* and the *Pater Noster* to Saints Elizabeth and Barbara, would obtain an indulgence of forty days, and that the indulgence would be valid as long as the painting was kept within the Order.³⁶ What should be considered in order to comprehend the function of the painting is the relationship between the image and indulgence. To this end, some examples of objects carrying indulgences are introduced hereafter, to contextualize the *Madonna of Jan Vos* in late medieval devotional culture.

The Image and Indulgence

An indulgence is the remission of temporal punishment that one should suffer in Purgatory because of one's sins.³⁷ In the fifteenth century, institutions of indulgences were firmly related to material cultures and the pardons could be granted through images represented via individual objects, such as panel paintings and sculptures. The relationships between images and indulgences were wide-ranging, but one could categorize them into

³⁶ Martens interpreted the condition of the indulgence differently, suggesting that the indulgence was valid 'only if the painting remained on the altar in the church of Genadedal'. Martens, 'Artistic patronage', p. 336.

³⁷ On indulgences, see W. H. Kent, 'Indulgences', in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. by Charles G. Herbermann and others, 15 vols (New York: Appleton, 1907–12), VII (1910), pp. 783–88; Nikolaus Paulus, *Geschichte des Ablasses im Mittelalter*, 3 vols (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1922); S. J. Joseph Braun, 'Ablass', in *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, ed. by Otto Schmitt, 9 vols (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1937–95), I (1937), pp. 78–82. For recent literature on indulgences, see *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. by Robert N. Swanson (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Robert W. Scaffern, *The Penitents' Treasury: Indulgences in Latin Christendom, 1175–1375* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2007); Robert N. Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Douglas Brine, 'Image, text and prayer. The indulgenced memorial tablet of Jean de Libourc (d. 1470), canon of Saint-Omer', *Church Monuments*, 23 (2008), 45–61, 163–65; Walter S. Gibson, 'Prayers and promises. The interactive indulgence print in the late middle ages', in *Push Me, Pull You*, ed. by Sarah Blick and Laura D. Gelfand, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2011), I (2011), pp. 277–324; John R. Decker, 'Practical devotion: apotropaism and the protection of the soul', in *The Authority of the Word: Reflecting on Image and Text in Northern Europe, 1400–1700*, ed. by Celeste Brusati, Karl Enekel, and Walter Melion (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 360–62.

three groups. The first group included images that were used to recite indulgenced prayers.³⁸ The second group contained images used to perform mental pilgrimages to earn indulgences.³⁹ The third group included images represented by objects through which indulgences were directly granted by the Church. An object categorized into this last group, or an indulgenced object, was considered to have the ability to mediate sacred power to those who visited and venerated the image, encouraging them to perform a particular devotion, which was often described in a letter of indulgence or in an *Ablasstafel* ('indulgence panel'). Therefore, the object tended to be displayed where certain people could see the image.

Some indulgenced objects categorized into the third group were believed to have miraculous power. For example, on 10 November 1337, Pope Benedict XII approved indulgences to those visiting and venerating the miraculous statue of Saint Cross at Assche.⁴⁰ Pope Eugene IV granted

³⁸ Combinations of images and prayers included in this group are often exemplified in illuminated manuscripts. One of the most famous examples is the pair of the image of the Holy Face and the hymn of the *Salve sancta facies* ('Hail Holy Face'): Pope John II (r. 1316–34) granted an indulgence of one thousand days to those who recited the *Salve sancta facies*. By the beginning of the fifteenth century, the combination of the image of the Holy Face and the prayer became codified, as seeing the image was required to gain the indulgence. For further information and general literature about this combination, see John Oliver Hand, 'Salve sancta facies: some thoughts on the iconography of the Head of Christ by Petrus Christus,' *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 27 (1992), 7–18.

³⁹ A small panel representing St. John the Baptist (Utrecht, Museum Catharijneconvent) was particularly used to conduct a mental pilgrimage to one of the seven main pilgrimage churches in Rome. For the panel, see Henri Defoer, 'Een laat-gotisch schilderijtje met Sint-Jan voor het verdienen van de aflaten van de zeven hoofdkerken van Rome,' *Antiek*, 16 (1981), 316–20; Henri Defoer, 'Images as aids for earning the indulgences of Rome,' in *Tributes in Honor of James H. Marrow: Studies in Painting and Manuscript Illumination of the Late Middle Ages and Northern Renaissance*, ed. by Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne S. Korteweg (London: Harvey Miller, 2006), pp. 163–71. Some years ago I came across a similar small panel showing Christ Crucified, which must have been made by the same painter who produced the panel with St. John the Baptist, for the same purpose. Further results of my ongoing research about these and related panels will be presented at the 62nd Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America (2016) (<http://rsa.site-ym.com/?page=2016Boston>) and they are part of my doctoral dissertation.

⁴⁰ Emile H. Van Heurck, *Les drapelets de pèlerinage en Belgique et dans les pays voisins. Contribution à l'icongraphie et à l'histoire des pèlerinages* (Antwerp:

indulgences for visiting the statue of the Virgin at Winxle in 1431.⁴¹ The next year, the same Pope approved the brotherhood of Notre Dame at Halle (Flemish Brabant), which had been founded in the fourteenth century in honour of the miraculous status of the Virgin in Halle, and granted indulgences to those wearing objects that were adorned with the image of the Virgin of Halle.⁴² In 1443, partial indulgences worth forty days were granted to those venerating the miraculous statue of the Virgin, which was kept in the sanctuary of the church of Basse-Wavre, and the indulgences were confirmed again by the Bishop of Liège in 1486.⁴³

Indulged objects were not uncommon in late medieval Carthusian monasteries and houses of other eremitic orders. For instance, Arnoldus van Diest, the Vicar of the Bishop of Liège, visited the Carthusian monastery at Roermond on 4 December 1374, and the Vicar granted indulgences to those who would revere two statues of the Virgin, one of which was placed on the main gate and the other was kept in the small chapel located at the corner of the monastery.⁴⁴ A similar example is recorded in the monastery of the Congregation of Windesheim Agnietenberg near Zwolle.⁴⁵ In 1442, the Auxiliary Bishop of Utrecht visited the house and granted forty days of indulgence to those who recited the *Ave Maria* five times each in front of two statues of the Virgin placed on the gate and in the church of the monastery.⁴⁶ Remains of the most

Buschmann, 1922), pp. 21–24.

⁴¹ Van Heurck, *Les drapelets*, p. 469.

⁴² Van Heurck, *Les drapelets*, p. 170.

⁴³ Van Heurck, *Les drapelets*, pp. 35–39.

⁴⁴ ‘qui ymagini B. Virginis supra hostium capellae praenominatae collocatae aut etiam ymagini B. V. Mariae, in praefata capella collocatae. Reverentiam vel honorem impenderint’. Scholtens, ‘De voormalige Kartuizerkloosters’, p. 36; Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld, ‘Kapel van O. L. Vrouw van Bethlehem of “in de Stege” (Roermond)’, in *Bedevoertplaatsen in Nederland*, ed. by Peter Jan Margry and others, 4 vols (Amsterdam: Meertens Instituut, 1997–2004), III (2000), pp. 771–74.

⁴⁵ The Windesheim Congregation is the monastic branch of the *Devotio Moderna*, whose spiritual life was influenced from the Carthusian Order. Otto Gründler, ‘Devotio moderna atque antique. The Modern Devotion and Carthusian spirituality’, *The Roots of the Modern Christian Devotion*, ed. by Ellen R. Elder (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications: 1984), pp. 27–45, 300–03.

⁴⁶ Charles Caspers, ‘De Moderne Devotie en het middeleeuwse aflatwezen: kanttekeningen bij de zogenoemde optelvroomheid’, in *Wegen van kerstening in Europa, 1300–1900*, ed. by Charles Caspers and others (Budel: Damon, 2005), p. 156.

prominent example are still extant in the Carthusian monastery at Champmol, more specifically, the *Great Cross* made by Claus Sluter and his workshop between 1395 and 1403, today known as the *Well of Moses* (Figure 4).⁴⁷ The Carthusian monastery at Champmol was founded by Philip the Bold on the outskirts of Dijon in 1381. The *Great Cross* originally stood in the central courtyard of the monastery. Three indulgences were granted in the fifteenth century to those who visited and venerated the *Great Cross*. The first one, which was worth fifty days of remission with a hundred days on Good Friday, was given by Cardinal Giordano Orsini in 1418. The second indulgence for fifty days was issued by Cardinal Niccolò Albergati in 1432. The third one, forty days of indulgence on Sunday and a hundred days for Fridays in Lent, was granted by Petrus de Monte, the Bishop of Brescia, in 1454.⁴⁸



Figure 4. Claus Sluter and his workshop, *Well of Moses*, 1395–1403, 179 cm, Musée Archéologique, Dijon (© Bridgeman Images)

It is certainly not a coincidence that many indulgenced objects were treasured in the houses of the eremitic order, as such consecrated works could contribute to enrich their contemplative life. The function of the *Madonna of Jan Vos* should be reconsidered in this context. The copy of the letter of indulgence and the necrology indicate the way to praise the image: the *Ave Maria* was to be recited to the image of the Virgin because the first part of the prayer, 'AVE GRA[TIA] PLE[N]A', is inscribed on the hanging behind Her, while both the *Ave Maria* and the *Pater Noster*

⁴⁷ Susie Nash, 'Claus Sluter's "Well of Moses" for the Chartreuse de Champmol reconsidered: Part I', *The Burlington Magazine*, 147 (2005), 798–809; Susie Nash, 'Claus Sluter's "Well of Moses" for the Chartreuse de Champmol reconsidered: Part II', *The Burlington Magazine*, 148 (2006), 456–67; Susie Nash, 'Claus Sluter's "Well of Moses" for the Chartreuse de Champmol reconsidered: Part III', *The Burlington Magazine*, 150 (2008), 724–41.

⁴⁸ Nash, 'Claus Sluter's "Well of Moses": Part III', p. 726.

were to be recited to the images of the two female saints. The difference between the indication concerning the image of the Virgin and the images of the saints suggests the hierarchy of devotion. According to medieval theology, there were three levels of praise: *latría*, the worship due to God only; *dulia* to the Saints; and *hyperdulia* to the Virgin Mary only. Thus, the hierarchy of the devotion toward each image might correspond to the praise, or *hyperdulia*, to the Virgin Mary, and the veneration, or *dulia*, to the two saints.⁴⁹

The original placement of the *Madonna of Jan Vos* in the monastery of Genadedal must have been chosen deliberately so that the painting could fulfil its function as a memorial, indulgenced object. Although a private chapel for the Prior might have been located next to the church, the *Madonna of Jan Vos* was certainly preserved not in his personal chapel but in the church, where the residents of the monastery gathered for the Divine Office at least three times a day.⁵⁰ To elaborate on the theory to determine the initial location of the painting in the Charterhouse of Genadedal, one should recall that the panel was later put on the Saint Barbara altar, which was placed over the choir screen in the Charterhouse of Nieuwlicht. The choir screen was an architectural device typically consisting of open bays and staircases leading to a platform at the top.⁵¹ As a rule, the church interior of Carthusian monasteries was divided by the choir screen into two zones, the choir of monks and the choir of lay brothers.⁵² Although the choir screen was a divider of the two choirs, it allowed lay devotees to see the choir through its door. According to the

⁴⁹ I am grateful to Prof. Dr Koenraad Jonckheere for his advice. W. R. Jones, 'Lollards and images: The defense of religious art in later medieval England', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 34 (1973), 27–50 (p. 44); Patricia Rubin, 'Hierarchies of vision: Fra Angelico's "Coronation of the Virgin" from San Domenico, Fiesole', *Oxford Art Journal*, 27 (2004), 137–53 (p. 146).

⁵⁰ Vandemeulebroucke suggested that the chapel of the prior was located near the church. Vandemeulebroucke, 'De kartuis "Genadedal"', p. 172.

⁵¹ In the Carthusian monastery of Roermond, the choir screen contained two staircases leading to its top. Birgit Dukers, 'De bouwgeschiedenis van de Roermondse Kartuis', in *Het geheim van de stilte. De besloten wereld van de Roermondse Kartuziers*, ed. by Krijn Pansters (Zwolle: Waanders, 2009), pp. 110–16.

⁵² For the function of the choir screens in Carthusian monasteries and further literature, see Didier Martens, 'Autour des retables du jubé de l'église des Chartreux de Cologne: Lumière réelle et lumière fictive dans la peinture flamande et allemande de la fin du moyen âge', *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch*, 57(1996), 65–100 (p. 72).

stipulation of the General Chapter meeting in 1261, which was repeated in the statutes of 1368, the doors of the choir screens, which led into the choirs of the churches of the Carthusian Order, were to be opened during the Elevation, which allowed laypeople to see the action.⁵³

The top of the choir screen and the surface of its platform were often ornamented by various objects, including a sculpture of the Crucifixion, coats of arms of donors, and votive images.⁵⁴ The bays of the choir screen occasionally contained one or more altars used for various liturgical purposes. It was even not uncommon that the elevated platform over the choir screen was occupied by one or, in many cases, two altars facing the choir of lay brothers.⁵⁵ In the Carthusian monastery of Cologne, the Saint Thomas altar and the Crucifixion altar were placed on the top of the choir screen. For these altars, Peter Rinck (d. 1501), Rector of Cologne University, commissioned two triptychs from the Master of the Saint Bartholomew Altar.⁵⁶

The last example can directly be compared with the location of the *Madonna of Jan Vos* in the Charterhouse of Nieuwlicht around 1450. The later placement of the painting must have been decided not only because

⁵³ Jacqueline E. Jung, *The Gothic Screen: Space, Sculpture, and Community in the Cathedrals of France and Germany, c. 1200–1400* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 74.

⁵⁴ In Naumburg Cathedral, a statue of the Virgin, which had been venerated since 1532 as having miraculous power, was settled on the top of the west choir screen. In *the Vision of Prior Ottobon in Saint' Antonio di Castello*, painted by Vittore Carpaccio (dated c. 1515), many votive images were hung from a choir screen. Jacqueline E. Jung, 'Seeing through screens: the Gothic choir enclosure as frame', in *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West*, ed. by Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Washington D. C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2006), p. 190; Jacqueline E. Jung, 'Beyond the barrier: The unifying role of the choir screen in Gothic churches', *The Art Bulletin*, 82 (2000), 622–57 (p. 629).

⁵⁵ In the Cathedral of St. Stephen in Vienna, two altars occupied the screen's upper platform, one of which was founded in the fourteenth century by a layman. Jung, 'Beyond the barrier', p. 629. For similar examples, see Jung, *The Gothic Screen*, p. 57.

⁵⁶ For the choir screen and the two triptychs in the Carthusian monastery of Cologne, see *Die Kölner Kartause um 1500: Eine Reise in unsere Vergangenheit. Aufsatzband*, ed. by Rita Wagner and Ulrich Bock (Cologne, 1991), pp. 112–14; Martens, 'Autour des retables du jubé de l'église des Chartreux de Cologne', pp. 65–73.

the altar was dedicated to the same saint depicted in the panel but also because it was an ideal place to display the indulgenced painting.⁵⁷ What is important at this point is that the *Madonna of Jan Vos* was not hidden behind the choir screen but placed over it. In other words, the monks, the lay brothers, and, most likely, laypeople who had access to the church could see the panel by reaching the top of the choir screen via stairs, or by standing in the nave, and giving the indicated devotion to obtain the sacred rewards. The painting must have been considered, like a relic or miraculous image, as a sacred devotional object in the monastic precinct. The later location in the Charterhouse of Nieuwlicht suggests that the panel was likewise displayed in a similar place in the Charterhouse of Genadedal. Even though the panel was later placed on the Saint Barbara altar in the church of Nieuwlicht, one should not conclude that the *Madonna of Jan Vos* had originally been placed on an altar in the monastic church of Genadedal. Compared to a diptych and triptych, a single-panel format was rather uncommon for an altarpiece in late medieval Flanders.⁵⁸ Moreover, no altar is mentioned in the two documents concerning the *Madonna of Jan Vos*. It can therefore be theorized that the painting was originally attached to the choir screen on the side of the choir of lay brothers in the monastic church of Genadedal.⁵⁹

A question about the audience of the painting thus arises. According to the copy of the letter of indulgence and the necrology, the image was to be venerated by *omnibus vere penitentibus, confessis et contritis* ('all truly penitent, confessed and contrite'). But who were the 'all truly penitent'? The wording itself might not have been exceptional at that time and could be found in other indulgence letters. However, it is still worth considering

⁵⁷ A similar example can be found in the Cathedral of Palencia: the *Triptych of the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin* by Jan Joest van Kalkar has been placed above the altar on the nave side of the choir screen since 1505. Partial indulgence was granted to those reciting the *Ave Maria* and the *Pater Noster* seven times each in front of the triptych. Justin E. A. Kroesen, *Staging the Liturgy: The Medieval Altarpiece in the Iberian Peninsula* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), pp. 95–96, 361; Didier Martens, *Peinture flamande et goût Ibérique aux XV^{ème} et XVI^{ème} siècles* (Brussels: Le livre Timperman: 2010), pp. 220–21.

⁵⁸ Stephan Kemperdick, 'I tableau à II hysseoires – a panel with two wings. Altarpieces with and without foldable wings at the time of Rogier van der Weyden', in *The Master of Flémalle and Rogier van der Weyden*, ed. by Stephan Kemperdick and Jochen Sander (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2009), pp. 246–57; Douglas Brine, 'Jan van Eyck, canon Joris van der Paele, and the art of commemoration', *The Art Bulletin*, 96 (2014), 265–87 (pp. 273, 286).

⁵⁹ It is plausible that a text or an *Ablasstafel* about the indulgence concerning the image was hung next to the painting.

who actually was assumed to be able to enter the church and give devotion at the initial location of the painting. A similar question has long been discussed about Sluter's *Great Cross*, which was placed in the courtyard of the Carthusian monastery of Champmol. For example, according to the indulgence letter issued from Cardinal Orsini to the Charterhouse in 1418, the pardon was granted to those who performed the devotion indicated in the letter before the *Great Cross* on Good Fridays. In contrast to another indulgence, which was confirmed by the same Cardinal, for the same monastery, and on the same day, and which was destined to laymen entering the church, the indulgence concerning to the *Great Cross* did not require entering the monastery or giving alms and support for the maintenance of the monastery. This suggests that, as Susie Nash has recently pointed out, the intended recipients of the indulgence were already in the monastery, specifically the brethren.⁶⁰ Similarly, the indulgence granted through the *Madonna of Jan Vos* did not demand entering or supporting the monastery of Genadedal to gain the merits. Instead, the indulgence was only valid 'as long as the said [picture] did not pass outside the Order'. This wording implies that the *Madonna of Jan Vos* was primarily intended to be seen by those who lived in the monastery, and secondarily by those who already had the right to enter the monastery, which does not contradict the condition of the original location suggested above. To assess the accessibility to the monastery of Genadedal, one could take account of the social network of the Charterhouse in the mid-fifteenth century. As recent scholarship has revealed, the eremitic order was not independent from the secular world.⁶¹ As a case in point, the Carthusian monastery of Monnikhuizen near Arnhem enjoyed the favour of the Guelders ducal family. One of the cells in this monastery was prepared for Duke Arnold of Egmond, who regularly visited the monastery to conduct political business from his personal cell.⁶² The monastery of Genadedal was no exception: charters of the monastery show several names of wealthy families in Flanders as benefactors who might have privileges to visit the monastery. These benefactors included such names as the Ruebs family, one of the most important benefactors during the priorate of Jan Vos, and Jean Vanden Houte, who gave donations for the benefit of the monastery

⁶⁰ Nash, 'Claus Sluter's "Well of Moses": Part III', p. 726.

⁶¹ For this topic and further literature, see Sherry C. M. Lindquist, *Agency, Visuality, and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), p. 21.

⁶² Gerard Nijsten, *In the Shadow of Burgundy: The Court of Guelders in the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 84.

in May 1446.⁶³ It is plausible that women as well as men could visit the monastery, even though women were, in theory, strictly forbidden to enter the monastic precinct. According to an *inspeximus* by Frater François, Prior of the Grande Chartreuse, of a bull issued by Pope Julius II dated 6 January 1506, the Pope rescinded permission for the Carthusians to let women enter the churches of the Order, as the female sex could cause scandal and harm to their religious life.⁶⁴ The document suggests that both men and women who supported the Order had opportunities to enter the monastic churches.⁶⁵ Some of the benefactors of Genadedal could thus have been allowed to enter the church – at least the choir of lay brothers – to see the painting, which offered them the pardons in return for their support and devotion. It is worthwhile mentioning again that, in 1451, the Masses for Theodericus Thome de Parijs and his wife Athalisia, the benefactors of the Charterhouse of Nieuwlicht, were granted to be

⁶³ In 1443, Elisabeth Ruebs was mentioned as follows: ‘obiit domicella Elisabeth Ruebs, uxor quondam Georgii van Hertsberghe, civis Brugensis’. *Het Kartuizerklooster binnen Brugge*, pp. 20–22; Vandemeulebroucke, ‘De kartuis “Genadedal”’, p. 167. According to the record dated 7 May 1446, Jean Vanden Houte and his spouse, Tanne, sold plots of land located in Hoedelhem (Oedelem), Zieszele, and Hazelbussche (both of which probably belonged to the Arrondissement of Bruges), for the sake of the Charterhouse of Genadedal. Rijksarchief Brugge, Chartreux no. bleu 4060. For other records concerning to Vanden Houte family, also known as the Du Bos, see; Frederik Buylaert, *Repertorium van de Vlaamse adel (c. 1350–1500)* (Ghent: Academia Press, 2011), pp. 371–74.

⁶⁴ Rijksarchief Brugge. Chartreux no. bleu 7549. The record is also mentioned in Constant Van de Wiel, ‘Kartuizerdocumenten van 1335 tot 1796’, *Ons geestelijk erf*, 58 (1984), 374–87 (p. 385). I am grateful to Dr Noël Geirnaert (Stadsarchief Brugge) and Professor Dr Els De Paermentier for helping me make the transcription of the document, to Professor Dr Jan Dumolyn and Professor Dr Steven Vanderputten for helping me interpret the document.

⁶⁵ The same document was also preserved in the Charterhouse of Champmol. Sherry C. M. Lindquist, ‘Women in the Charterhouse: the liminality of cloistered spaces at the Chartreuse de Champmol in Dijon’, in *Architecture and the Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Helen Hills (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 177–92; Lindquist, *Agency*, p. 194. Although taking account of the possibility that laymen of high status might visit the monastery occasionally, Nash argued that Sluter’s *Great Cross* was not intended as, nor became, a devotional object for the laity. Nash, ‘Claus Sluter’s “Well of Moses”: Part III’, p. 726. In the case of *the Madonna of Jan Vós*, the painting was certainly venerated by the lay benefactors since 1451 at the latest, as discussed below.

celebrated on the Saint Barbara altar, on which the *Madonna of Jan Vos* was placed at that time.

In all probability, the *Madonna of Jan Vos* was a part of the strategies of the Prior to reform the devotional environment in the monastery with the honourable image that was commissioned from the celebrated painter. On the one hand, the painting immortalized the donor's social status and piety, contributing to earning respect for him. On the other hand, the painting supported and improved the devotional practice of the devotees who prayed in front of the painting to gain sacred rewards. These expectations of efficacy of the image must have been the reason why Vos wished to keep the painting at his side and brought it to the monastery of Nieuwlicht. In the church of the Charterhouse of Genadedal, and later in the one of Nieuwlicht, 'all truly penitent', who were involved in the network of the Order, venerated the image with hope for salvation. The religious aura of the *Madonna of Jan Vos* has been lost since it was removed from the Order. However, it played a crucial role as a painting which had – and might still be able to recover – sacred power.

