



# ARCHLAB TRANSNATIONAL ACCESS USER REPORT

## Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France - Paris

### 1) Title of the ARCHLAB Project

Copying the master or mastering the copy? Reconsidering copying practices as a pictorial strategy for artistic renewal and art theory in the 16<sup>th</sup>-C Low Countries.

### 2) Project Acronym

COTECH

### 3) Project summary

The project for ARCHLAB is an integral part of my PhD project *Copying the master, mastering the copy. Copying as an imitative strategy in the 16<sup>th</sup>-C Netherlandish painting practice*. This PhD project is conducted at the Department of Art History of Ghent University with funding from the Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO). The central aim of the PhD project is to examine the copying practice of renowned, sixteenth-century Netherlandish painters through a theoretical lens by depending on the classical principle of *imitatio*. In contrast to the modern concept of originality, this project thus argues that the practice of copying is an interpretive act involving a degree of difference between the model and its copy. In order to identify and understand the intellectual implications of this difference, the project thus asks:

*Why do renowned, sixteenth-century Netherlandish painters copy existing models, which models do they choose, and how do these masters exactly copy?*

In doing so, the project thus does not limit itself - conceptually, theoretically and methodologically - to consider the imitative principles underlying the practice of copying by solely focusing on formal differences between model and copy, but also by addressing the degree of difference in materials and techniques.

The PhD project consists of three main phases to address the above posed why, which and how questions. During the first phase, I retraced the rich vocabulary of both literary as well as artistic imitation by means of a literature review. The aim of this literature review was to compile an interpretive frame for the more specific analyses of individual painted copies, as planned in the final phase. Furthermore, I compiled a database of preserved sixteenth-century painted copies by using online research tools (e.g. RKD, Belgian Art Links and Tools (KIK/IRPA)) and by reviewing art-historical reference literature (e.g. Friedländer 1924-37). The reason underlying this temporal demarcation is that, to say in the words of Thomas Greene (1982), "the first half of the sixteenth century produced the most vigorous and sustained debate over the proper modes and goals of imitation ever witnessed on the European continent." During the second phase, in turn, I defined a corpus of painted copies based on three main selection criteria: (1) the master of the painted copy is known, (2) the intellectual milieu of the master is documented, (3) the painted copies and their models are



accessible for visual and technical examination, or existing technical data is available for study. In the third, and current phase of my project, I am studying the selected painted copies and their models by conducting technical research and/or by consulting available technical data. The aim of this phase is to identify the so-called degree of difference between the painted copies and their models. Therefore, the ARCHLAB project forms a key part in this final phase of my PhD project.

#### 4) Preliminary scientific output of the ARCHLAB access

The main goal of the current ARCHLAB project, as already indicated in the application form, is to gather and examine available technical data in three conservation research institutes: Rathgen Forschungslabor Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (SPK, Berlin), Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France (C2RMF, Paris) and Museo Nacional del Prado (PRADO, Madrid).

We finalized our research visits at the three conservation research institutes. During our stay at all three institutes, we followed a standard working protocol. On the one hand, museum files and technical documents were carefully consulted per painted copy or model. On the other, we conducted close visual analysis on and if allowed we took high-resolution photographs of the painted copies or their models, which are preserved in the associated museums, the Gemäldegalerie, Bode Museum, Musée du Louvre, Museo del Prado and El Escorial. In the table below an overview is given from the studied artworks. In general, similarities and differences between painted copies and models were identified, painting materials and techniques were studied in detail, and later interventions, thus not original additions, were mapped out. Following this working method, some preliminary research findings can already be discerned.

First, in the case of Joos van Cleve's painted copies after Italian models, we focused on the Antwerp painter's usage of the four canonical painterly styles of the Renaissance - mainly associated with the work of Italian painters - i.e. *cangiante*, *chiaroscuro*, *sfumato* and *unione*. The reason for this focus on Van Cleve's imitative experiments with Italian painterly techniques is dual. On the one hand, previous art-historical research (Hand 2004, Leeflang 2015, Van den Brink 2011) on Van Cleve's oeuvre has only considered his copying and citing of Italian motifs. On the other, early sixteenth-century literary and artistic discussions on *imitatio* centered around the issue of style, especially in the Low Countries with prominent humanist figures such as Desiderius Erasmus. Subsequently, we considered questions, such as: Did Joos van Cleve have the opportunity to closely study the painterly technique of his Italian models, or was there another source, and how did Van Cleve adapt this foreign technique to the Northern artistic tradition?

Second, following a similar line of reason, several works of Van Cleve's Antwerp coeval Quinten Massys were studied along Leonardo da Vinci's contemporary painterly experiments with Apelles' *atramentum*, which was according to Pliny the inimitable pinnacle of the art of painting. Whereas the works of Massys, preserved at the Gemäldegalerie, Musée du Louvre and Museo del Prado, cannot be considered as painted copies in the strict modern sense - which depends on formal criteria - the renaissance principle of *imitatio* can thus also be applied to the study of his painterly technique.<sup>1</sup> For the moment, we are assembling and processing our technical findings on Quinten Massys' painterly experiments with art-historical insights in a research paper. Herein, we will argue that Massys, similar to Leonardo da Vinci, also tried to imitate Apelles' *atramentum*.

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<sup>1</sup> Although one can argue that his so-called *Butter Madonna* is a compositional derivation from earlier examples by Dieric Bouts, see for instance Silver, L. (1984), *The painting of Quinten Massys with Catalogue Raisonné*, Oxford, Phaidon, pp. 230-231.



Third, during our research stay in Berlin and Madrid, we also studied several copies by Michiel Coxcie after his famous predecessors Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden, which were produced at the request of the Habsburg court. We mainly focused on questions of chronology and political/propagandistic function but also on painterly technique by considering questions such as: Did Coxcie understand the painting technique of his Netherlandish predecessors, did he have the know-how to imitate van Eyck's optical principles, and under which conditions did he saw his famous models, who were by then already a decade old? Unfortunately, due to the temporary closure of the Flemish masters' room at El Escorial, we were not able to study the Coxcie's 'second' copy after Van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross*. However, by examining with Laura Alba the wood joints on the XRR's of the copies preserved in Berlin and Madrid, we came to the conclusion that the version in Berlin is most likely not by Michiel Coxcie. This research finding thus requires a reconsideration of the preserved copies' attribution, chronology and function.

Fourth, our aim was to study Titian's sacred images of Christ and the Virgin, i.e. Ecce Homo and Mater Dolorosa's, produced at the behest of Charles V. During our stay at the Prado, we hoped to gain profound knowledge of the painterly experiments and innovations employed by Titian in his practice of copying Byzantine cult images. Due to the Prado's limited access policy of non-published technical documentation, we were not able to fulfill this research objective. Thanks to María Dolores Gayo and Enrique Quintana Calamita, however, we had the opportunity to discuss the matter with Ana González Mozo, who is curator of the exhibition *In Lapide Depictum* for which she thoroughly examined Titian's technique of painting on stone. Hopefully, for both the Titian and Coxcie case (cf. supra), the Prado gives me a second opportunity to consult the available technical documents and to closely examine the paintings through ARCHLAB.

**Table I. Overview of studied painted copies and models**

	Painted copy or model	Collection
1.	Joos van Cleve after Leonardo da Vinci/Giampietrino, <i>Virgin and Child</i> , oil on panel, 75 x 55,9 cm	Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie
2.	Quinten Massys, <i>Virgin and Child</i> , oil on panel, 135 x 90 cm	Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie
3.	Quinten Massys, <i>St Mary Magdalene</i> , oil on canvas, 33 x 24 cm	Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie
4.	Michiel Coxcie after Jan & Hubert van Eyck, <i>The Adoration of the mystic lamb</i> , oil on panel, 135 x 238 cm	Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, on long term loan Bode-museum
5.	Michiel Coxcie after Jan & Hubert van Eyck, <i>God the Father</i> , oil on panel, 208,4 x 79,5 cm	Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, on long term loan Bode-museum
6.	Michiel Coxcie after Rogier van der Weyden, <i>Descent from the Cross</i> , oil on panel, 201 x 268,5 cm	Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, on long term loan Bode-museum
7.	Joos van Cleve after Leonardo da Vinci, <i>The Last Supper</i> (Predella of Sta Maria della Pace), 45 x 206 cm	Musée du Louvre, Paris
8.	Joos van Cleve after Jan van Eyck, <i>Adam &amp; Eve</i> , oil on panel, 59,8 x 20,5 cm (Adam, left wing), 60 x 20,2 cm (Eve, right wing)	Musée du Louvre, Paris
9.	Quinten Massys, <i>St Mary Magdalene</i> , oil on panel, 85 x 73 cm	Musée du Louvre, Paris
10.	Quinten Massys, <i>Virgin and Child</i> , oil on panel, 68 x 51 cm	
11.	Leonardo da Vinci, <i>The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne</i> , oil on poplar, 168 x 130 cm	Musée du Louvre, Paris
12.	Leonardo da Vinci (workshop), <i>The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne</i> , oil on poplar, 160 x 114,5 cm	Private Collection, Paris
13.	After Jan Sander van Hemessen, <i>The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and Saint Joseph</i> , oil on panel, 146,5 x 107,5 cm	Musée des Beaux-Arts, Valenciennes



14.	Raphael & Guilio Romano, <i>The Holy Family</i> , oil on panel transposed onto canvas, 207 x 140 cm	Musée du Louvre, Paris
15.	Bernard van Orley (workshop) after Raphael & G. Romano, <i>The Holy Family</i> , oil on panel, 107 x 89 cm	Musée du Louvre, Paris
16.	Bernard van Orley after Raphael & G. Romano, <i>The Holy Family</i> , oil on panel, 90 x 74 cm	Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
17.	Jan Gossart after van Eyck, <i>Christ between the Virgin Mary &amp; St John the Baptist</i> , oil on paper & panel, 122 x 133 cm	Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
18.	Rogier van der Weyden, <i>Descent from the Cross</i> , oil on panel, 204,5 x 261,5 cm	Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
19.	Michiel Coxcie after Van der Weyden, <i>Descent from the Cross</i> , oil on panel, 200 x 263 cm	El Escorial, Madrid
20.	Anonymous after Rogier van der Weyden, <i>Descent from the Cross</i> , oil on panel, 200 x 263 cm	Capilla Real, Granada
21.	Quinten Massys & Joachim Patinir, <i>The Temptations of Saint Anthony the Abbot</i> , oil on panel, 155 x 173 cm	Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
22.	Quinten Massys, <i>Christ presented to the people</i> , oil on panel, 160 x 120 cm	Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid