



Viewing Van Eyck

Art Reception & Interpretation in Late-Medieval Europe

Friday, April 25th, 2008

10 am - 4 pm

Art History Seminar Room, Arts 2622

An interdisciplinary study day with

Dr. TILL-HOLGER BORCHERT

Chief Curator, Groeninge Museum, Bruges
Dorothy K. Hohenberg Chair of Excellence in
Art History (2007-08), University of Memphis

10-12

Presentation by Dr. Borchert, Q&A

12-2 Lunch

2-4 Group discussion:

- The functions and patronage of paintings. Condition, functions and social aspects of foundations.
- Workshop production and notions of authenticity
- Portraits as objects. Form, functions and pictorial strategies to establish variations into the concept of identity.

The study day is free and open to faculty and graduate students.

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Sponsored by the Medieval Studies program,
and the department of History of Art and
Architecture, UCSB.

From Dr. Borchert's:

Scholarly approaches towards Early Netherlandish Painting today are more diverse than ever and it is one field where the increasingly multidisciplinary methodologies available to art historians have been put to particular good use in the past decades.

Scientific examinations of 15th century panel painting have been conducted very systematically and the results of such endeavors have provided us with much more detailed knowledge of artistic practices in the 15th century. In combination with archival research on painters' workshop, status, and corporations, the results of technical studies helped to "demystify" the 15th century masters and provided insight in their working methods. (Reading: Lorne Campbell: *The Early Netherlandish Painters and their workshops*", in: *Le dessin sous-jacent dans la peinture. Colloque III: Le problème Maître de Flémalle-Van der Weyden*, ed. D. Hollanders-Favaert / R. van Schoute, Louvain-la-Neuve 1981; J. Dijkstra, *Technical Examination*, in: *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception, Research*, ed. B. Ridderbos, A. Van Buren. H. Van Veen, Amsterdam 2005, 292ff.)

Of no lesser importance is the successful integration of economical models developed by economic historians into art history. By looking towards the artistic production from the point of view of larger economical developments helped to better understand the development of art markets, the patterns of patronage and the complex client / artist relationship that evolved during the 15th and early 16th centuries. (Lorne Campbell, *Art Market in the Southern Netherlands in the Fifteenth Century*, in: *Burlington Magazine* 118 (1976), 188-198; Michael Montias: *Socio-Economic aspects of Netherlandish Art from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Century – A Survey*, in: *Art Bulletin* 72 (1990): 358-373.)

An important contribution was the anthropological point of view of Hans Belting and Christiane Kruse's *Die Erfindung des Gemäldes. Das erste Jahrhundert der niederländischen Malerei* (München 1994). This study discussed the media-aspect of panel painting as part of awakening representational needs for a bourgeoisie public, a point of view that has been – although somewhat altered – been developed in the first part of Jean C. Wilson, *Painting in Bruges at the Close of the Middle Ages. Studies in Society and Visual Culture*, Penn (1998).

The notion that panel painting was a much lesser medium than more prestigious art forms actively patronized by the aristocracy has been one of the underlying premises of Marina Belozerskayas *Rethinking the Renaissance. Burgundian Arts Across Europe*, Cambridge 2002 (see esp. Chapter 2)

In the workshop, we should take a closer look at panel painting in 15th century Flanders, and take into account its specific functions and locations in order to get a better idea about why it was the bourgeoisie that most prominently promoted panel painting, and why the nobility apparently was not equally engaged in the patronage of painters.

In the course of the discussion, it should become clear that portraits need to be distinguished from other genres of painting; yet the study of the perception and use of portraiture might provide interesting insights to reassess portraiture in its historical terms and condition. To this end, I recommend the following article that tackles the problem: Dagmar Eichberger and Lisa Beavan, *Family Members and Political Allies: The Portrait Collection of Margareth of Austria*, in: *Art Bulletin* 77 (1995), 225-248.

I would like to introduce three points for our discussion:

- 1) The concept of workshop and market in the study of Early Netherlandish Painting versus notions of originality and authenticity.
- 2) The functions and patronage of paintings. Condition, functions and social aspects of foundations.
- 3) Portraits as objects. Form, functions and pictorial strategies to establish variations into the concept of identity.

We then should try to look at the relationship between painting and other artistic media in terms of their representational function. Special emphasis should be given to ephemeral and ceremonial representations at the court, at civic festivities and the likes.