

# CHANGING WORKSHOP POLICIES: PASSION CYCLES BY THE MASTERS OF ZWEDER VAN CULEMBORG\*

MIRANDA BLOEM

## Introduction

The Masters of Zweder van Culemborg were active in Utrecht between circa 1415 and 1440 and are considered to be one of the most important groups of illuminators in the Northern Netherlands.<sup>1</sup> Examples of models used by the Zweder Masters are discussed in several publications already. Authors usually presented these examples in the form of an enumeration, with the sole purpose of illustrating the use of models as common practice within the workshop.<sup>2</sup> Attempts to contextualize these examples by studying them in conjunction with each other, failed to occur. The aim of this study is putting the usage of models by the Masters of Zweder van

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\* English translation corrected by Claire Mabey. I would like to thank Alice Taatgen and Claudine Chavannes-Mazel for various helpful suggestions and corrections. I would also like to thank James H. Marrow for his images of Sotheby's 72 and Baltimore 168. Part of this research was presented at the Hoogewerff conference at the University of Amsterdam, 23 May 2012. This publication will be part of my dissertation, financed by the foundation *Art Books & Collections* under the guidance of Claudine Chavannes-Mazel (University of Amsterdam).

<sup>1</sup> They are named after the Missal of Bishop Zweder van Culemborg: Brixen, Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule Brixen, MS C. 20. The author is currently working on a dissertation on the Masters of Zweder van Culemborg that will be finished in 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Literature on the use of models by the Zweder Masters: Utrecht / New York, *Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting*, 74, 99, 102, 104-105, 116; Marrow, "Dutch manuscript painting in context", 57-60; Nijmegen, *The Limbourg Brothers*, 296-297, 420-421; Dückers, "A close encounter? The Limbourg Brothers", 166-172.

Culemborg into context in order to illustrate that this was all but a random act. To do so, I will concentrate solely on the Passion cycle.<sup>3</sup>

A standard Passion cycle is a series of seven scenes depicting the suffering of Christ in chronological order. These are from Matins to Compline (excluding Lauds): the Kiss of Judas, Christ before Pilate, the Flagellation, Carrying of the Cross, the Crucifixion, the Deposition and the Entombment. This cycle forms an important part in the portfolio of any medieval illuminator and could be used in Books of Hours to illustrate both the Hours of the Virgin and the Hours of the Cross. Today, no less than eight Passion cycles by the Zweder Masters are known, executed over a period of almost 20 years. This creates the perfect opportunity for a comparative study. In this publication, two of these cycles will be left aside.<sup>4</sup> Comparing the remaining six Books of Hours provides a load of information about the usage of models by the Zweder Masters and even about the organization and working methods of this important workshop.

This new study will show that the Zweder Masters regarded the Passion cycle as a unit. Within this unit – whether consisting of miniatures or historiated initials – the same pictorial principles were applied. Also striking is the repeated use of the same model drawings. Because of this, some of the cycles can be linked to one another to form a group. Now for the first time, it becomes apparent that the six Books of Hours can be divided into two groups: three in group 1, and three in group 2 (Fig. 1 and 2). Within each group, prominent parts of the same iconography are often identical or exhibit remarkable resemblances. Other components, such as the interior or landscapes, may well vary.

In both groups, models by other artists play a crucial role. However, the pictorial sources on which they can be traced back to, are not the same. On the one hand, the Passion cycle in group 1 is based on prevailing European pictorial traditions and the work of French illuminators around 1400. The models used in group 2, on the other hand, find their origins in work by illuminators from circa 1415-1425. The cycles in group 1 and 2 are completely separate; a combination of both does not occur. In the last

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<sup>3</sup> In a forthcoming study, the author focuses solely on the iconography of the Presentation in the Temple to contextualize the usage of models by the Zweder Masters. Bloem, “Presentatio. Imitatio. Innovatio. The imitation and correction of a corrupt pictorial tradition by the Masters of Zweder van Culemborg”.

<sup>4</sup> Those two cycles are in the *Egmond Breviary* in New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 87 and in the Book of Hours formerly Mainz, Collection Rudolf Busch (current whereabouts unknown). The compositions in both manuscripts differ too greatly from the other cycles to include them in the limited space of this study. Leaving them aside does not affect the results of this study.

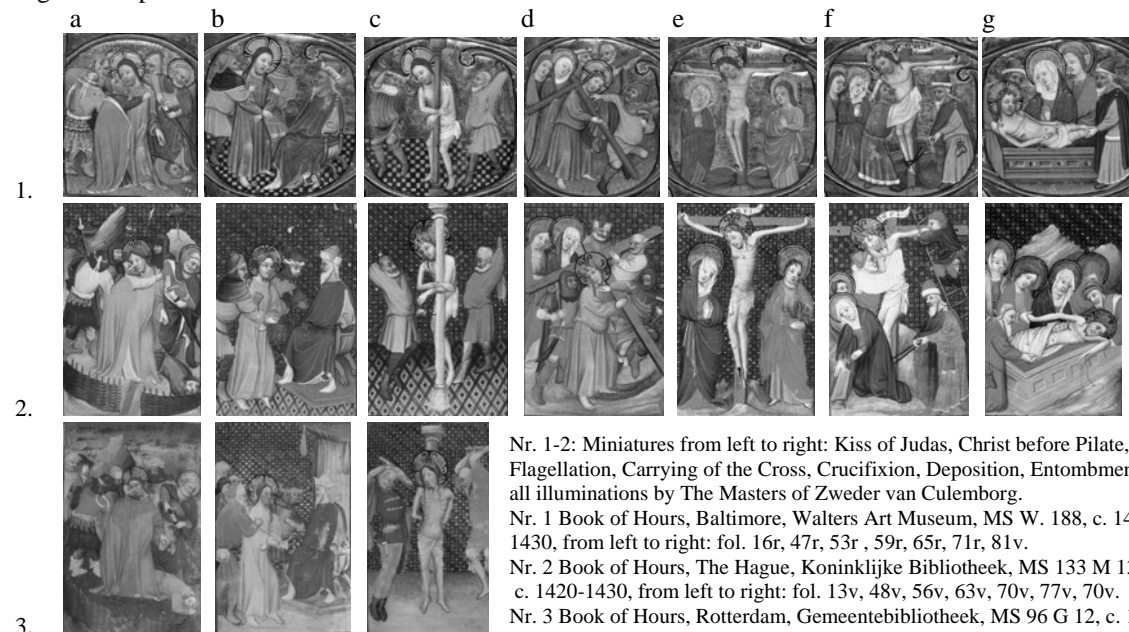
part of this study, the dates of the Books of Hours will be considered in order to see to what extent they coincide with the division into the two groups. It will become clear that the repertoire of the Zweder workshop was anything but static. It was constantly modified and adapted under the influence of new trends and models.

### **Group 1**

Group 1 consists of three Books of Hours: Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W. 188, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 133 M 131 and Rotterdam, Gemeentebibliotheek, MS 96 G 12 (hereafter referred to as respectively Baltimore 188, The Hague 133 M 131 and Rotterdam, Fig. 1). The Passion cycles in the first two Books of Hours are complete, but the one in Rotterdam consists only of the Kiss of Judas, Christ before Pilate and the Flagellation. A general characteristic of these cycles in group 1 is the depiction of only the absolute essential elements. Bystanders who contribute little to nothing to the scene are eliminated as much as possible, as well as landscapes and interiors. With just one exception all miniatures and historiated initials in these three Books of Hours are set against a golden or diapered background. Objects that are necessary for the scene, such as the whipping post in the Flagellation, Pilate's throne or Christ's tomb in the Entombment, are placed in the picture plane without any connection to the landscape or the interior. As a result, the whipping post now stands in the middle of the room without being supported by a floor or a ceiling. Although this doesn't enhance the sense of reality of the illumination, it does result in a clear and orderly appearance of the cycles in group 1.

In addition to these general characteristics, these cycles are also linked to one another on a more concrete level. Some of the compositions were clearly based on the same model drawing. The main groups in the Kiss of Judas and Christ before Pilate are identical in all three versions. Only in Rotterdam are some figures added on the left side of both miniatures. Also major elements of the Carrying of the cross and the Deposition show such strong resemblance to each other, that a model drawing was most likely used. For instance, compare the man with the hammer and the blue hood who Christ precedes while carrying the cross, or the man who removes the nails from the Christ's feet in the Deposition. Despite the use of a model drawing, the illuminators were free to modify, add or omit details. For example, the symmetrical design of the compositions is the same, but the

Fig. 1 Group 1



Nr. 1-2: Miniatures from left to right: Kiss of Judas, Christ before Pilate, Flagellation, Carrying of the Cross, Crucifixion, Deposition, Entombment; all illuminations by The Masters of Zweder van Culemborg.

Nr. 1 Book of Hours, Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W. 188, c. 1420–1430, from left to right: fol. 16r, 47r, 53r, 59r, 65r, 71r, 81v.

Nr. 2 Book of Hours, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 133 M 131, c. 1420–1430, from left to right: fol. 13v, 48v, 56v, 63v, 70v, 77v, 70v.

Nr. 3 Book of Hours, Rotterdam, Gemeentebibliotheek, MS 96 G 12, c. 1420–1430, from left to right: fol. 23v, 133v, 143v.

poses of the executioners in the Flagellation vary a great deal.<sup>5</sup> Besides that, Christ is placed both in front and behind the whipping post. In the Crucifixion it is mainly the pose of John the Evangelist that is subject to variation. However, despite this, the similarities are convincing enough to subsume these three Passion cycles together into the same group.

The Zweder Masters clearly regarded the scenes in group 1 as a unit. It is almost certain that a set of model sketches was available to all members of the group whenever they were commissioned to paint a Passion cycle. For most scenes in the cycle, the search for a specific pictorial source was to no avail. Perhaps these specific sources are lost to us now, but of course there's always the possibility the Zweder Masters created their own versions out of details originating in older pictorial traditions. Several of the compositions are too general to trace the origins. For example, the Flagellation and the Crucifixion are reduced to standard depictions due to their symmetry, simplicity and the lack of specific details. Similar compositions can be found throughout the ages in European art in all types of media. As I will demonstrate, most of the compositions in group 1 fit seamlessly into prevailing pictorial traditions that have their roots in Northern Netherlandish art before circa 1420, as well as in the Southern Netherlandish, French, German and English art.

The Entombment is the only iconographical scene in group 1 of which the two versions differ from each other.<sup>6</sup> They clearly do not go back to the same pictorial source. The biggest difference is to be found in the placement of the tomb: horizontally in Baltimore 188 and diagonally in The Hague 133 M 131. Both types already occur in Dutch art before the Zweder Masters. For example, the horizontal position of the tomb is found in miniatures painted by the Masters of Dirc van Delft, by a follower of the so-called "Court style" and in the work of the Master of Margaret of Cleves.<sup>7</sup> On the contrary, the diagonal position can be found in the works

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<sup>5</sup> The men on the right in Baltimore 188 and The Hague 133 M 131 show great similarities. This pose is also found in the earlier Books of Hours not painted by the Zweder Masters: Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 5 J 26, fol. 224r and Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W. 185, fol. 58v. Besides models that include entire compositions, the Zweder Masters also used separate figure sketches that they place in different contexts. See Bloem, "New Light on Three Miniatures from the Egmond Breviary", 69-89 and the forthcoming dissertation.

<sup>6</sup> An explanation as to why the versions of the Entombment are the only cycle scenes that differ so strongly from each other could not be found.

<sup>7</sup> Respectively Los Angeles, J. P. Getty Museum, MS 40, fol. 79v (c. 1405-1410); Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W. 185, fol. 91v (c. 1410-1415); Lisbon, Museum Calouste Gulbenkian, MS L.A. 148, fol. 126v (c. 1395-1400).

of the Master of the Morgan Infancy Cycle and the Passion Master of Mary of Guelders.<sup>8</sup> In The Hague 133 M 131, Christ's body is laid down in his tomb on his side with his left arm tucked under his head and his right arm stretched backwards. This awkward and highly uncomfortable position is reminiscent of the one in the Entombment by the Passion Master of Mary of Guelders, as mentioned above. Although it is likely both illuminators used the same pictorial source, it is not possible to state anything about its origin.

The Deposition contains several details that can prove helpful to trace a possible model. Among these are Joseph of Arimathea with cloth-covered arms, who receives the dead body of Christ as he is being taken down from the cross, Nicodemus who removes the nail from Christ's feet with a pair of pliers and the man in The Hague 133 M 131 balancing on a ladder to take out the nail from the left arm. Just like in the Entombment, these details are found in Dutch art before 1420, again in the works from the Passion Master of Mary of Guelders and the Master of the Morgan Infancy cycle.<sup>9</sup> However, these details also fit seamlessly into the pictorial traditions that prevailed in European art for centuries. For instance, the removing of the lower nail already occurs in the English *Saint Albans Psalter* from 1125-1150 and in the French *Saligny Book of Hours* from circa 1300.<sup>10</sup> The man on the ladder can be seen in the French *Avignon Book of Hours* from circa 1400 and in the German *Kirchsahr altarpiece* dating from the first quarter of the fifteenth century.<sup>11</sup> The Depositions in group 1 are therefore more likely to be considered part of a European pictorial tradition than that they can be traced back to a specific and identifiable model. It is striking that the French, English and German examples usually involve contact between Maria and the body of her dead son; she holds his hand, kisses his arm or stretches her arms towards him. In the versions by the Zweder Masters, as well as in a lot of the early Northern Netherlandish examples, Mary stands motionless next to the cross or turns away from the scene overcome with grief. Apparently, this was preferred by Dutch illuminators.

<sup>8</sup> Respectively New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 866, fol. 76r (c. 1415-1420) and Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, 5 J 26, fol. 244v (c. 1415).

<sup>9</sup> Respectively Berlin, Staatsbibliothek preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin, MS Germ. Qu 42, fol. 36r (c. 1415) and New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 866, fol. 74r (c. 1415-1420).

<sup>10</sup> Respectively Hildesheim, Cathedral, Library, St. Godehard 1, fol. p. 47 / fol. 24r and New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 60, fol. 24r.

<sup>11</sup> Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS SN. 9450, fol. 180r. Passion altar: Church of Saint Martin, Kirchsahr, Germany.

Unlike the examples mentioned above, in the case of the Kiss of Judas and Christ before Pilate it is possible to approach a specific pictorial source. For both scenes, we have to turn our attention to French art from the early years of the fifteenth century. An exemplary drawing clearly underlies the three versions of Christ before Pilate (Fig. 1). The Zweder Masters had obtained a model after a miniature of the French illuminator Jacquemart de Hesdin, who painted his version in the *Très Belles Heures du Duc de Berry* or *The Brussels Hours*, dating before 1402.<sup>12</sup> The similarities are unmistakable and can be found in the clothing of both Pilate and Christ, the headgear of Pilate and of one of the soldiers, the sword and shield hanging from the belt of this soldier in Rotterdam and the dog's heads on top of the golden seat. Since the architecture of the miniature in the Brussels Hours was not once copied by the Zweder Masters, it is possible the model only consisted of the figures. There is no way of saying whether the drawing was already mirrored when it arrived in the workshop, or whether the Zweder Masters chose to mirror it themselves. What is certain is the use of the French figure group by Jacquemart the Hesdin must have been a conscious decision; their Dutch predecessors seemed to prefer the moment of Pilate washing his hands.<sup>13</sup> This iconographic detail does not appear once within the Zweder Masters' oeuvre.

Like in Christ before Pilate, the central figures in the Kiss of Judas are clearly derived from the same model (Fig. 1, 2). At the center of the composition Judas stretches out his right arm along the front of Christ towards his left shoulder. As a result of this movement, their faces are close together and their garments are fused into a shape consisting of four colored areas. The force with which Peter cut off Malchus' ear, left the latter in an odd position in the lower right corner. While the still furious Peter sheathes his sword with an expressive gesture, Christ reaches out his hand to Malchus to reattach the bleeding ear. This central group is accompanied by some soldiers of which the most prominent is seen from the back, wearing a white fluttering headband.

<sup>12</sup> Utrecht / New York, *Golden Age of Dutch manuscript painting*, 74, 99, 102, 104; Marrow, "Dutch manuscript painting in context", 57, fig. 8, 9.

<sup>13</sup> See for example: Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, 5 J 26, fol. 219r; Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, W. 185, fol. 49v; London, British Library, Kings 5, fol. 13.



Fig. 2 Book of Hours, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 133 M 131, fol. 13v (The Masters of Zweder van Culemborg, c. 1420-1430)

It was not possible to find the exact model from which this Kiss of Judas originated. In the Northern Netherlandish art, plenty of examples circulated from which the Zweder Masters could choose from, but it seems they did not. In the past, authors have already noted the similarities between the versions painted by the Zweder Masters and the one by Jacquemart de Hesdin in the aforementioned *Brussels Hours* of Jean de Berry.<sup>14</sup> Certain similarities in the postures of Judas and Christ and the way their clothing fuses into a singular form, are undeniable. However, a comparison to the Hesdin miniature causes some details in the Zweder versions to remain unexplained. For instance, Malchus and Peter exhibit no similarities. Besides, the French miniature by De Hesdin lacks an important detail that was depicted by the Zweder Masters in both Rotterdam and The Hague 133 M 131: the wicker fence that encloses the garden of Gethsemane. This fence seems to be typically French and Southern Netherlandish in origin; examples in the early Northern Netherlandish art or any German examples have not been encountered.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Brussels, Royal Library, MS 11060-1 KB, fol. 164r. Utrecht / New York, *Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting*, 74, 102. Nijmegen, *The Limbourg Brothers*, cat. nr. 49 (with color reproduction).

<sup>15</sup> The Master of the Morgan Infancy Cycle and the Passion Master of Mary of Guelders do depict a fence in their miniatures of Christ on the Mount of Olives (respectively New York, PML, M. 866, fol. 63v and Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 5 J 26, fol. 193r). In both manuscripts, however, this detail lacks in the Kiss of





Fig. 3 Hours of Charles le Noble, Cleveland, Museum of Arts, MS 64.40, p. 287 (mirrored; Egerton Master, c. 1400-1410)

The wicker fence is present in a miniature painted by the French Egerton Master in *The Hours of Charles le Noble* (Fig. 3).<sup>16</sup> It is true that the fence in this French miniature is more elaborate and fully encloses the figures. It is however not the only similarity between the three versions by the Zweder Masters. The posture of both Judas and Christ and the fusion of their garments also occur, as do the pointy helmets of the soldiers and even the tree in the background. The soldier seen from the back in the Zweder miniatures has been given a different angle, but his fluttering headband is still present. Also noteworthy is that both the Egerton Master and the Zweder Masters opted to depict the moment when Peter sheathes his sword after cutting off Malchus' ear, while Jacquemart de Hesdin on the other hand chose to catch Peter in the middle of the act.

Obviously, the differences between the miniatures of the Egerton Master and the Zweder Masters are too prominent to conclude the model

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Judas. French examples of the fence at the Kiss of Judas are painted by the Master of Ushaw 10, New York, PML, M. 259, fol. 18v (c. 1400-1415) and the Master of Rohan, Princeton, University Library, MS Garrett 48, fol. 20r (c. 1415).

<sup>16</sup> Cleveland, Museum of Arts, MS 64.40, p. 287. This miniature was painted by the Egerton Master and is dated c. 1400-1410. Wixom, "The Hours or Charles the Noble", 50-83; Meiss, *French painting*, 385.

drawing present in the Utrecht workshop was drawn specifically after the miniature in the *Hours of Charles le Noble*. The Egerton Master himself may not even have been the inventor of that composition. In another French Book of Hours, the Bedford Master depicted the soldier on the left in a strikingly similar position with one leg up in the air.<sup>17</sup> The way the Bedford Masters depicted Petrus and Malchus is closer to the three Zweder miniatures than to the Egerton Master. It is conceivable that the compositions of the French Egerton Master and Bedford master, as well as the ones made by the Utrecht Zweder Masters, can be traced back to a common model that has not yet been identified.

The Passion cycles in group 1 form a unity for which the Zweder Masters repeatedly used the same compositions. These compositions are often proved too general to state anything about their origin. Most of them find their roots in prevailing European pictorial traditions, some of them pinpoint to French art from the early fifteenth century. For their new Passion cycle in group 2 however, the Zweder Masters chose a different approach.

## Group 2

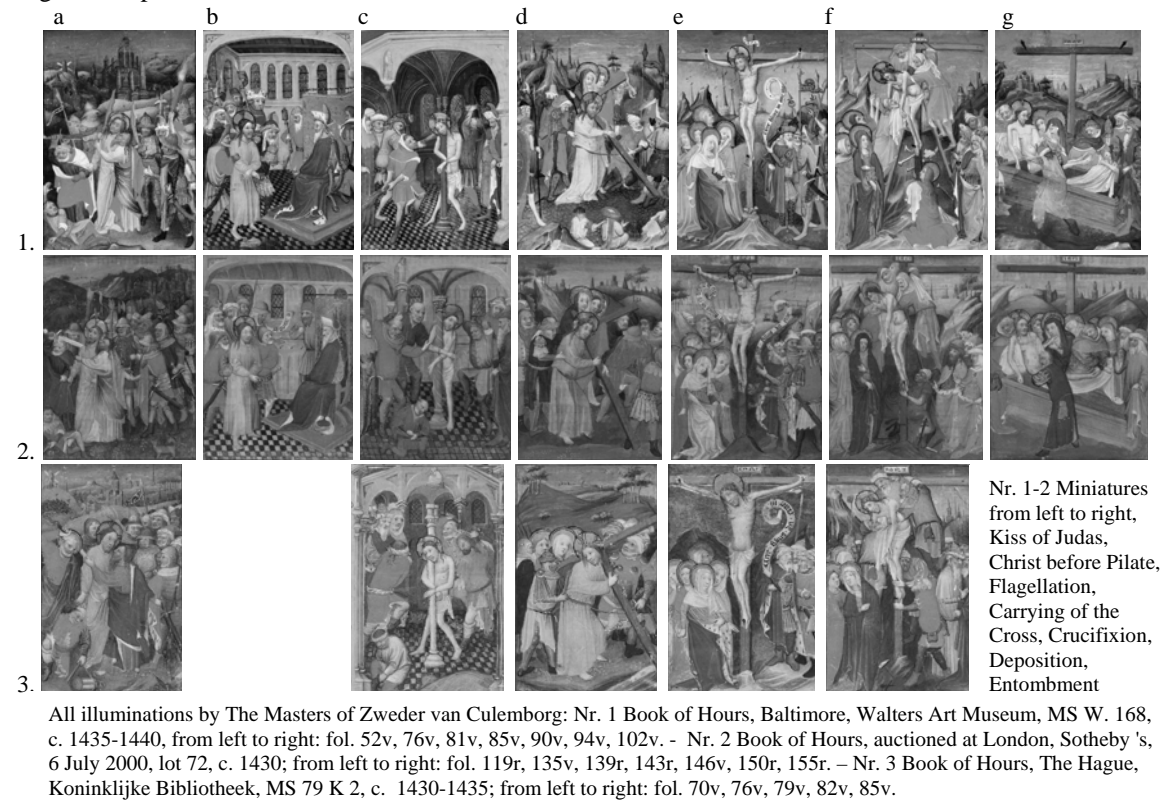
Group 2 also consists of three Books of Hours: Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W. 168, a Book of Hours that was auctioned in London, Sotheby's, 6 July 2000, lot 72 (also known as France, Private collection, *Golden Age*, no. 31) and The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 79 K 2 (hereafter respectively referred to as Baltimore 168, Sotheby's 72 and The Hague 79 K 2, Fig. 4). The Passion cycle in The Hague 79 K 2 is incomplete; the two missing miniatures almost certainly contained scenes of Christ before Pilate and the Entombment.

The main difference in relation to group 1 is a radical change of the most important groups of figures. It is instantly clear that the Zweder Masters did not use the same model drawings for this cycle like they did for the first group. Besides that, the central figures and elementary components, such as the whipping post, Pilate's seat or the tomb of Christ, are now placed in an interior or in a landscape against a blue sky. These interiors and landscapes are populated by soldiers and bystanders who accompany the suffering Christ on his journey, but do not serve any crucial function in the story. This makes the Passion cycles in group 2

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<sup>17</sup> Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1855, folio number unknown. The Bedford Master depicted his Kiss of Judas in one of the medallions in the borders surrounding the Crucifixion.

Fig. 4 Group 2



crowded and cluttered, and causes the main act to be placed further into the picture plane. The positive outcome of this new approach is the enhanced narrative character of the scenes, which is emphasized by the presence of several text scrolls.

The Zweder Masters modernized the Passion cycle in group 2 by using models after a new generation of important painters, some of them being just a few years old. Some of these compositions can be traced back in their entirety to the work of illuminators from Paris and to Jan van Eyck. Scenes that could not be related to a specific pictorial source, nevertheless show traces of French illuminators from the first two decades of the fifteenth century, such as the Boucicaut Masters.

Judging from the remaining miniatures, group 2 contains no scenes in which the compositions differ greatly from one another in the way that the Entombment did in the first cycle. Nearly all versions of a particular iconography are based on the same model that must have been accessible to all the illuminators within the group. However that model is followed in varying degrees of precision. Again and again, it turns out the model is most accurately followed in Baltimore 168. In Sotheby's 72, the illuminator followed the same drawing more loosely, sometimes even correcting it. The miniatures in The Hague 79 K 2 are consequently the furthest removed from the original source. Some of the compositions are reduced to a mere echo of the drawing that was present in the workshop. This recurring pattern, however, does not provide solid clues on the dating of the Books of Hours. Nor does it give us any information on the order in which they were made. In accordance with the pattern, the Kiss of Judas in Baltimore 168 is closest to the original by Jan van Eyck while the version in Sotheby's 72 can be considered a more free interpretation. However, in the latter the little dog in the foreground is directly derived from the model, but is not present in Baltimore 168. So despite the differences, both miniatures can directly be traced back to the model drawing leaving no clues for the order in which they were manufactured.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The same applies to group 1, where in general little development can be seen. Added elements in the Book of Hours in Rotterdam, such as the canopy above Pilate's seat and the landscape in the Kiss of Judas, might indicate that this is the youngest cycle within the group. However, this is the only version of this iconography where the dog's heads on Pilate's seat are taken from the original of Jacquemart de Hesdin.



Fig. 5 Book of Hours,  
Baltimore, Walters Art  
Museum, MS W. 168, fol. 94v,  
(The Masters of Zweder van  
Culemborg, c. 1435-1440)

Although the Passion cycle in group 2 is strongly oriented towards French art, the Kiss of Judas is painted after a composition by Jan van Eyck in the *Turin-Milan Hours* that was probably executed in The Hague between 1422-1424.<sup>19</sup> Although it can't be stated with certainty that the Zweder Masters were the first to use Van Eyck's influential composition, they can certainly be counted among the earliest. Their three versions date back to only a few years after Jan van Eyck had painted his miniature. The model the Zweder Masters possessed must have been a faithful copy that included both the figures and the landscape.

<sup>19</sup> Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, K. IV. 29, fol. 24r. This miniature was destroyed during a fire at the library of Turin in 1904. Miner, 'Dutch illuminated manuscripts', p. 105; Utrecht / New York, *Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting*, 105; Rotterdam, *De weg naar Van Eyck*, 11-12.

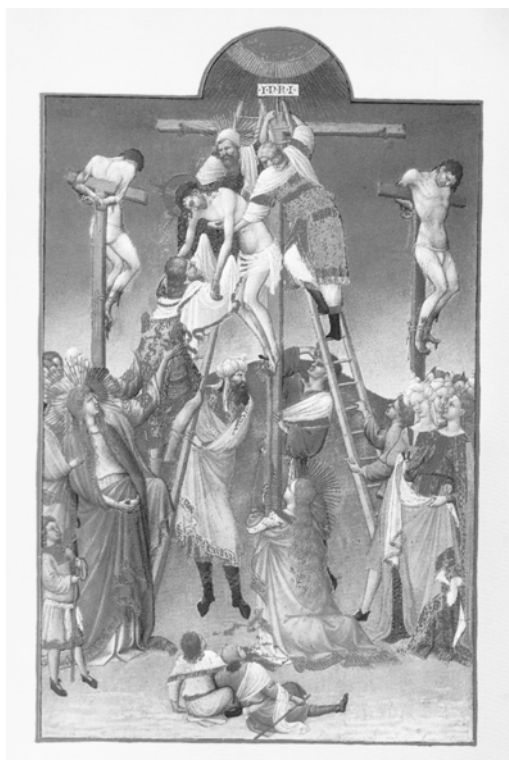


Fig. 6 *Très Riches Heures*, Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65, fol. 156v (Limbourg Brothers, c. 1411 / 1412-1416)

The Deposition and the Entombment were also carefully taken from a model, this time originating from Parisian art. In the *Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting*, comments are made on the origins of both Depositions in this group (Fig. 4, 5). The miniature in Baltimore 168 was said to be ‘probably derived from a French model’, and the one in The Hague 79 K 2 ‘seems to be related to the *Très Belles Heures* of the Duc de Berry’.<sup>20</sup> Certain resemblances to the miniature by Jacquemart de Hesdin are undeniable. Remarkably enough, it was overlooked that the Deposition by the Zweder Masters is actually copied after one of the most famous manuscripts from the Middle Ages: the *Très Riches Heures*, illuminated by the Limbourg Brothers for Jean Duc de Berry in circa 1413-1416 (Fig.

<sup>20</sup> The latter being the aforementioned Brussels Hours of Jean de Berry by Jacquemart de Hesdin, Brussels, KBR, MS 11060-61, p. 194. Utrecht / New York, *Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting*, 109 and 116. For a reproduction of the Deposition by De Hesdin, see Meiss, *French painting*, fig. 495.

6).<sup>21</sup> Although it is a well-known fact that the Limbourg Brothers themselves relied on older pictorial sources as Jacquemart de Hesdin and even Italian artists, it is beyond doubt the Zweder Masters in this case owned a model drawing after the *Très Riches Heures*.

The similarities are clearly visible in the hands wrapped around Christ's chest, his belly with the contours of his abdomen, the way the blood seeps down the cross to Mary Magdalene and the posture and clothing of the men lowering the body of Christ while they firmly hold on to the cross. The shapeless body of Christ leans heavily forward while both his feet are still nailed to the vertical beam of the cross. Behind Joseph of Arimathea, who is about to receive the dead body in his sheet-covered arms, John the Evangelist on the left also stretches out both of his arms. Some of the figures in the French miniature do not appear in the versions painted by the Zweder Masters. Maybe they lacked the model drawing, or perhaps the figures were omitted due to lack of space or due to an attempt to keep the composition less crowded.<sup>22</sup>

Despite those absences, the crowds on both sides of the cross remained largely intact. Mary's posture is slightly modified, but she is still being supported by the women standing behind her in a similar composition. Even the way her gown hangs down in folds corresponds to the miniature by the Limbourg Brothers. Mary Magdalene has thrown herself at the bottom of the cross, firmly embracing the wooden beam, her long golden hair flowing across her back. Despite great similarities in her pose and the folds and color of her dress, the Zweder Masters seem to have given an erroneous interpretation of a certain detail in their model. In the *Très Riches Heures* Mary Magdalene tucks her red dress under her arm which causes the textile to bulge. But in Baltimore 168 her robe is thrown over

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<sup>21</sup> Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65, fol. 156v.

<sup>22</sup> The children sitting at the bottom of the cross in the Limbourg Brothers' miniature are not present in all versions by the Zweder Masters. However, two children are added as a repoussoir in the Carrying of the Cross in Baltimore 168. Because these are the only two secular children in the entire Zweder oeuvre, a connection with the Deposition in the *Très Riches Heures* seems very plausible. *The Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript* ascribes the composition of The Carrying of the Cross as well as the children in the foreground to an Eyckian origin. The children were seen to resemble the two men who are underneath the cross of the Crucifixion in Van Eyck's painting in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Since this detail is so exceptional to the Zweder Masters, I regard it highly unlikely they turned two adult full-length males, who are placed half-way through a panel painting, into two seated children acting as a repoussoir. The origin of the turban worn by one of the children, as well as the bird cage next to them, could not be identified. Utrecht / New York, *Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting*, 116.

her shoulder while the bulge is replaced by a golden shape of an uncertain nature. The women on the right side are turned into a group of men; only the woman in front was preserved (although her appearance was adapted to the Zweder style). Her main function in the scene was also preserved: as keeper of the nails of the cross.

In accordance with the above-mentioned pattern, the Deposition in Sotheby's 72 is further removed from the pictorial source. Christ and the three men lowering him from the cross, remained unchanged. On the left, John the Evangelist is still present, but he doesn't stretch out his arms as he did in Baltimore 168. Now, he looks motionless while others handle Christ's dead body. The woman on the right has lost her function as holder of the nails; instead they lie behind the cross on the ground. The most remarkable change however is the transformation of Mary Magdalene into a man. He holds more or less the same pose but is given a different angle so that he is now placed behind the cross. Even so, he does not seem to be removing the nail from the Christ's feet, as we've seen in group 1. In The Hague 79 K 2 only Christ and the three men holding him seem to be derived from the Limbourg Brothers; the rest of the composition is changed.



Fig. 7 Book of Hours,  
Baltimore, Walters Art  
Museum, MS W. 168, fol.  
102v (The Masters of Zweder  
van Culemborg, c. 1435-1440)



Knowing that the Zweder Masters possessed models after the Limbourg Brothers, the Entombment in both Baltimore 168 (Fig. 7) and Sotheby's 72 could easily be mistaken for compositions after the *Belles Heures*.<sup>23</sup> Similarities can be found in the diagonal position of the tomb, the clothing of the man in front of the coffin, the golden purse and dress of the man who supports the upper part of the body of Christ, and finally in the way Mary kisses her son's hand. However, there are also some significant differences. In the French miniature Christ's head has fallen to the right which causes Joseph of Arimathea to glance over his left shoulder. He holds the dead body with bare hands, instead of covering them with a cloth as in the Zweder miniatures. The men on the right, holding jars, are placed in the back of the scene by the Limbourg Brothers, but are moved more to the front by the Zweder Masters. Also lacking in the Dutch versions is one of the most characteristic figures in the French composition, namely Mary Magdalene pulling out her hair in an act of grief. These differences might seem small, but they do make it possible to identify with great certainty the real pictorial source of this Entombment which is not the *Belles Heures* by the Limbourg Brothers, but a miniature by the so-called Seilern Master in his eponymous manuscript *The Seilern Hours* (Fig. 8).<sup>24</sup> Although in the past the Seilern Hours was considered a product of the Limbourg Brothers themselves, nowadays the miniatures are contributed to an illuminator who may have only collaborated with the brothers in their workshop. Small details make it clear that the Zweder Masters did indeed follow the Seilern Master. For instance, unlike in the *Belles Heures*, Christ holds his head straight in the Zweder miniatures and in the Seilern Hours. As a result of this, Joseph of Arimathea now looks over Christ's right shoulder while he has covered his hands with a white cloth out of respect. Also the two men at the foot of the tomb are positioned the same.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> New York, The Cloisters Collection, 1954 (54.1.1), fol. 152r.

<sup>24</sup> The Seilern Hours was in the private collection of Count Seilern (current whereabouts unknown). The manuscript is not foliated. The dating of the manuscript is unclear and varies, but Millard Meiss dates it after 1415. In 1958, Karel Boon regards the Entombment in Baltimore 168 as a kind of paraphrase of the one in the Seilern Hours (then the D'Ailly Book of Hours in the Rothschild collection). However, he still regards the manuscript as a product by the Limbourg Brothers themselves. Boon, "Early Art of the Northern Netherlands at Amsterdam", 375; Meiss, *French painting*, 238, 330.

<sup>25</sup> Once again we see evidence of the use of separate figure studies, as explained in note 5. The man on the right in the Seilern miniature occurs in the Entombment in Baltimore 168 and Sotheby's 72, and is also present in the Flagellation in Sotheby's 72 on fol. 139r, and in the Stoning of Saint Stephen in London, British



Fig. 8 *Seilern Hours*,  
Current whereabouts  
unknown (Seilern Master,  
after 1415)

But the versions by Zweder Masters also exhibit some deviations from their French model. The man holding the shroud at Christ's feet appears to be painted as a clergyman in the Seilern miniature. The Zweder Masters changed his appearance into a wealthy old man with golden clothes and a golden headpiece. Dressed like that, he can more easily be identified as Nicodemus.<sup>26</sup> The landscape also changed. The Zweder Masters did not paint the gallows in the field, the good and bad thieves nor the suicide of Judas. Instead, the cross of which Christ was taken moments before, is now placed prominently at the front of the scene. By doing so, the Zweder Masters created a visual unity between the Crucifixion and the Deposition within the same cycle (Fig. 4). The castle on the right does occur in both

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Library, MS Add. 30339 / nr. 3. See Bloem, "New Light on Three Miniatures from the Egmont Breviary", 69-89.

<sup>26</sup> The clergyman who glances over his shoulder is absent in the Entombment by the Limbourg Brothers in the *Belles Heures*. The Seilern Master retrieved him from the miniature depicting the Miracle of Diocrès in the *Belles Heures*. The fact that the Seilern Master took elements from Limbourg Brothers and used them in a different context is seen as an important indication that he was employed in the workshop. New York, The Cloisters Collection, 1954 (54.1.1), fol. 94v. Meiss, *French painting*, 238.

miniatures, but the similarities are too general to state that they were derived from the same source. Similarities in the rocks and mountains also give little information since this is the usual way for the Zweder Masters to form their landscapes.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, it is hard to say whether the model drawing in the Zweder Masters' possession contained only figures or whether it also contained (parts of) the landscape.

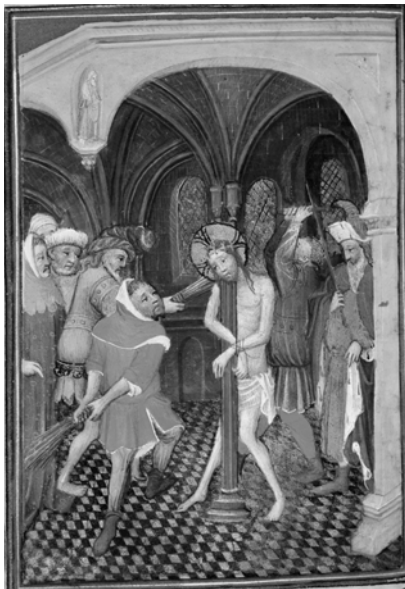


Fig. 9 Book of Hours,  
Baltimore, Walters Art  
Museum, MS W. 168, fol. 81v  
(The Masters of Zweder van  
Culemborg, c. 1435-1440)

The miniatures for which it was not possible to trace the entire composition to a specific pictorial source, do often contain components taken from the same generation of French illuminators as we have seen before. For instance, the Crucifixions in this group resemble compositions found in the oeuvre of the Parisian Boucicaut Masters and the Bedford master.<sup>28</sup> The Flagellation in Baltimore 168 has become much more interesting by the addition of several bystanders and executioners with a large variety in poses and instruments of torture (Fig. 9). But in this

<sup>27</sup> A lot of elements in landscapes by the Zweder Masters were influenced by French illumination. See my forthcoming dissertation.

<sup>28</sup> For two of these examples by the Boucicaut Masters, see: Paris, Musée Jacquemart-André, MS 2, fol. 105v and Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 469, fol. 110r. For two examples in the Bedford-style see: Paris, Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, MS 623, fol. 213 (A) and London, BL, Add. 18850, fol. 144r.

miniature, it is the pink diaphragm that really catches the eye because of its peculiar shape and bright color. The round arch occupies three quarters of the upper side of the picture plane before bending backwards on the left side. This results in an angle that is filled at the top by a plain blue field. On the spot where the diaphragm bends backwards, a column comes down only to stop at the capital. While the capital is decorated with a statue on a pedestal, the column that we expect to be there is omitted. This strange construction in Baltimore 168 can only be understood through a comparison with the Flagellation by Limbourg Brothers in the *Très Riches Heures* (Fig. 10).<sup>29</sup> There, Christ is being tortured in a semi-open space that is surrounded by arches and slender columns. The outer wall forms a corner that leaves the upper side of the right arch parallel to the picture plane. The left arch again bends backwards. This can explain the strange angle in our Book of Hours, although there is no further evidence the Zweder Masters owned a model after the French miniature. In the background, the *Très Riches Heures* shows two more columns attached to a vault made out of blue bricks. While the Limbourg Brothers chose to tie Christ to the anterior column, the Zweder Masters used the posterior as whipping post. This decision makes the anterior column, belonging to the pink diaphragm, redundant so the illuminator in Baltimore 168 could omit it in order not to block the view. In Sotheby's 72 the strange bend is corrected by letting the top of the diaphragm run completely parallel to the picture plane (Fig. 4). Still, the diaphragm includes the division into two arches and the missing pillar, including the capital and the statue of a male saint. The architecture in The Hague 79 K 2 is yet again further removed from the model drawing and hardly relates to the Limbourg Brothers anymore.

Just one miniature survived the clean break with group 1. In case of Christ before Pilate, the Zweder Masters stayed loyal to the model drawing by Jacquemart de Hesdin. Their reasons for this are unknown. However, even in this case one can notice a clear change since the main group has been expanded with multiple figures that are placed in an interior. Christ is now actually handed over to Pilate by a mob inside a palace. In Baltimore 168, this palace is a pink room with a corner on the left side, large windows and a wooden ceiling. This interior too, is strongly influenced by French illumination, which becomes clear when comparing it to the miniature with the Mass for the Dead in the same manuscript. The Mass is set in a similar interior to Christ before Pilate. This miniature was clearly derived from a model drawing after the Parisian Boucicaut

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<sup>29</sup> *Très Riches Heures*: Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65, fol. 144r.

Masters, who were active about 15 years after Jacquemart de Hesdin.<sup>30</sup> So, this cross-pollination resulted in a French figure group from circa 1400, placed in an interior based on French models from about 1420, painted by Northern Netherlandish miniaturists around 1435.

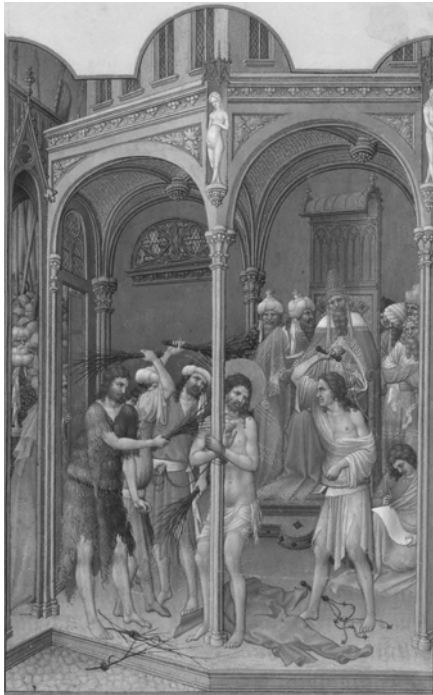


Fig. 10 *Très Riches Heures*,  
Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS  
65, fol. 156v (Limbourg  
Brothers, c. 1411 / 1412-1416)

<sup>30</sup> Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, W. 168, fol. 166v. The miniature by the Boucicaut Masters is found in *The Hours of Étienne Chevalier*, dated c. 1420: London, British Library, Add. Ms 16997, fol. 119v. See Utrecht / New York, *Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting*, 116, fig. IV 37; Marrow, "Dutch manuscript painting in context: Encounters with the art of France, the southern Netherlands and Germany", 57, fig. 11-12. The Zweder Masters possessed more models after the Boucicaut Masters. See Bloem, "Presentatio. Imitatio. Innovatio".

### Changing workshop policies

The division into two groups, as demonstrated above, is purely based on similarities in composition as a result of repeated use of the same models. The two groups differ from each other, as do the pictorial sources that were used in each group. The question is whether it's possible to take it one step further and to use this division to acquire more knowledge on the accurate dating of the manuscripts and to learn more about the working methods of the Masters of Zweder van Culemborg and the way they were organized.

Unfortunately, none of the manuscripts are securely dated. In the literature every one of the six Book of Hours is roughly dated based on the stylistic development of the miniatures as well as the border decoration.<sup>31</sup> The results of this study endorse most of these dates. In two cases however, this research provides information that can be used for dating the Book of Hours with more accuracy. As it turns out, the dates used in the literature roughly coincide with the division into the two groups. So group 1 consists of two manuscripts that are dated circa 1420-1430. The third Book of Hours in this group, Baltimore 188, holds Easter tables starting in the year 1435. Because of this, the entire manuscript is often dated 1435, relatively late compared to the other two in this group.<sup>32</sup> In my opinion, stylistic analysis of the historiated initials in Baltimore 188 indicates that an earlier date of circa 1420-1430 for this manuscript is more fitting. An earlier date also seems to be supported by the Passion cycle used. This theory is not overthrown by the late date of the Easter tables; new paleographic and codicological research indicates the tables may very well not belong to the original manuscript as they were written by another scribe.<sup>33</sup> Besides, the folios containing the tables form a codicological unit placed before the calendar, so they could have easily been added to the

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<sup>31</sup> In this study, the dates as mentioned in the *Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting* are used, with exception of Baltimore 188, which is not included in the catalogue. Although this catalogue is from 1989, it is to date the only book that includes a large part of the Zweder oeuvre and treats the manuscripts in connection with each other. Furthermore, the book was compiled by authorities on the subject of Northern Netherlandish illumination.

<sup>32</sup> Baltimore 1949, *Illuminated books of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, cat. no. 122; Wieck, *Time sanctified: the Book of Hours in medieval art and life*, cat. no. 108.

<sup>33</sup> Many thanks to Jos Biemans who determined this. Christine Boot remarks that the manuscript was written in the early fifteenth century. Unfortunately, she doesn't clarify this remark with a more specific date. Boot, "Medieval Netherlandic manuscripts in libraries in the State of Maryland", 272.

manuscript some years later. With the revised dating of Baltimore 188, it can be concluded that the Zweder Masters only used the Passion cycle in group 1 in their earliest Books of Hours from circa 1420-1430.

Based on stylistic developments, the manuscripts in group 2 are generally considered from a later date than those in group 1. In the *Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting*, Books of Hours The Hague 79 K 2 and Baltimore 168 are respectively dated circa 1430-1435 and circa 1435-1440.<sup>34</sup> These dates seem very plausible and are being supported by this study. After all, the French models used in this cycle are from a later date than those used in group 1, somewhere between circa 1415-1420. Jan van Eyck in all likelihood painted his original of the Kiss of Judas in The Hague between 1422-1424.<sup>35</sup> Before a model cemented its place in another artist's repertoire, several years are likely to pass by, especially in regards to a model drawing travelling from France up to the Northern Netherlands. On stylistic grounds, Sotheby's 72 has thought to be made earlier than the other two, around 1425-1430.<sup>36</sup> With so little to go on and with the production dates seemingly so close to each other, it is hard to make a firm statement about this. Nevertheless, I do believe it is possible as a result of this study to date this Book of Hours more accurately. As I illustrated in a recent publication, the Zweder Masters had the tendency to discard older compositions the moment a new model was accepted.<sup>37</sup> Here, the rigorous change between the two groups gives rise to the suspicion that the Passion cycles are no exception to this observation. Knowing that, Sotheby's 72 is likely to be dated later than the three manuscripts in group 1 and is therefore probably closer to 1430 than 1425. This new date also gives the model by Jan van Eyck more time to circulate and be adopted by the Zweder Masters.

<sup>34</sup> Utrecht / New York, *Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting*, cat. no. 34 and 37.

<sup>35</sup> Rotterdam 2012, *De weg naar Van Eyck*, 11-12.

<sup>36</sup> James Marrow considers the Flagellation in Sotheby's 72 an intermediate stage in the elaboration of that composition, between that represented in the Rotterdam and Baltimore 168 Hours. This view may have influenced the early dating of the manuscript. Utrecht / New York, *Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting*, cat. no. 31; Marrow, "Dutch manuscript, 57, nt. 21; London, Sotheby's 06-07-2000, *Western Manuscripts and miniatures*, 60.

<sup>37</sup> The same happened in the case of the Presentation in the Temple. There seem to be no miniatures using the old composition once the Zweder Masters started using a model after the Boucicaut Masters. See Bloem, "Presentatio. Imitatio. Innovatio. The imitation and correction of a corrupt pictorial tradition by the Masters of Zweder van Culemborg".

The transition from cycle 1 to cycle 2 was rigorous and the result of a very conscious decision. In their urge for innovation, the Zweder Masters could have just replaced one or only a few miniatures with compositions found in their immediate vicinity. Instead, they deliberately chose to change the entire cycle using new models after the famous Jan van Eyck and the latest fashion from Paris. It almost seems as if the Zweder Masters changed their corporate identity, like companies do today. Considering the dates of the manuscripts, this decision was carried through around 1430, or perhaps slightly earlier. The observation that the manuscripts discussed in this study were painted by several illuminators, indicates close contact between them. The shift from one cycle to the other was either a joint decision or could have been made by a leading illuminator. In studying a group of illuminators of which nothing is known about the way they were organized, this is an important piece of information.

This research also raises some interesting questions that unfortunately will have to remain unanswered. Why did the Zweder Masters feel the need to follow the latest trends from Paris and thereby discarding the compositions they had used thus far? Is it part of a general tendency that occurred simultaneously with other illuminators? Was their aim to acquire an exceptional position among their colleagues in the Northern Netherlands by distinguishing themselves through the latest French models? Or did they perhaps fulfill the need of their – often high ranked – clients? Another issue is whether they were aware of the reputation of the artists they imitated. If so they might have mistaken the Entombment by the Seilern Master for a composition by the Limbourg Brothers themselves. Did they try to push their own work to a higher level by imitating famous artists? Or was the high quality of the model in itself sufficiently enough to be adopted and was the artist's reputation scarcely relevant? The question of how the Zweder Masters acquired model drawings by Jacquemart de Hesdin, the Limbourg Brothers, the Boucicaut Masters and Jan van Eyck, will probably always remain unanswered.

Contextualizing the use of models by the Masters of Zweder van Culemborg provides much more information than just listing the examples, as was usually the case up to now. By studying the Passion cycles they had executed throughout the years, we can conclude that they treated this series of seven miniatures as a unit and that they intentionally updated it at a certain point in their career. By determining this, it has become possible to date some of the Books of Hours with more precision and to establish that there must have been close contact between the illuminators of the group. Expansion of this research by also studying other iconographies and decoration cycles by the Zweder Masters in a



similar way, may shed light on some of the unanswered questions posed above. A comparable study including other Northern Netherlandish illuminators and workshops could offer insights as to whether the developments outlined in this publication are part of a general tendency or that this exclusively applies to the Masters of Zweder van Culemborg.

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