

JEAN GOSSART  
*A MAN WITH A  
ROSARY*

LORNE  
CAMPBELL

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## PROVENANCE AND EXHIBITIONS

### Jan Gossaert (Jean Gossart)

NG656

**A Man with a Rosary** (right wing of a diptych)

Oil on oak panel, 69.0 x 49.1 cm

### Provenance

The portrait belonged to Edmond Beaucousin (1806–1866) in Paris and was bought in 1860 with the rest of the Beaucousin collection. Wornum ordered a new frame on 11 February 1860 and received it on 10 March. It was hung in the Gallery on 22–23 March 1860.<sup>1</sup>

### Exhibitions

Rotterdam-Bruges 1965 (24); New York 2010–11 (54); NG 2011 (54).

## TECHNICAL NOTES

The painting was cleaned in 1888 and in 1994–5. The condition is very good, though there are areas of abrasion in the mouth and the architecture and some of the detail of the hair and fur has been lost. Small rings of damage, for example in the hair, may be due to attacks by mould.

The panel is made up of two oak boards, radially cut, set vertically and vertical in grain; the join, reinforced with dowels, is 17.3 cm from the left at the lower edge. The support is about 15 mm thick in the middle but is stepped at the back around all four edges to a thickness of 5

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<sup>1</sup> Wornum's Diary, under dates.

mm (measured at the centre of the lower edge). This would have allowed the panel to be inserted into the grooved rebate of the lost original frame, which must have been constructed around the panel.<sup>2</sup> Dendrochronological investigations have established that the wood is Baltic oak and that the 193 growth rings of the first board were formed between 1297 and 1489. The 336 rings of the second board were formed between 1143 and 1478.<sup>3</sup> The reverse of the join is covered by a strip of red lead(?) paint; on the reverse are the remains of a paper label bearing traces of writing, now illegible. The ground and priming on the obverse of the panel continue to all four edges but the paint stops just short of the top and bottom edges; it is conceivable that the lateral edges have been slightly trimmed. The panel was not in its final frame when the ground and priming were applied. It may have been held in a temporary framing structure while it was painted; as the rosary beads do not continue to the lower edge, the artist clearly realised that the edges would be concealed by the rebates of a frame.

The ground is chalk in animal glue and there is a pale salmon-pink priming containing lead white tinted with red lead.<sup>4</sup> It is applied in broad brushstrokes that give a texture visible in many places, even though paint has been applied on top. Underdrawing in a liquid medium, applied over the priming, is sometimes visible through the paint, which has become transparent with age; it is more completely revealed by infrared reflectography. The drawing consists of simple freehand outlines. No hatching has been found but areas where hatching is most likely to have been used – the man's coat and sleeves – are not penetrated by infrared radiation. There are some changes: the contour of the chin was painted to the left of where it was drawn; and the standing collar was painted to the right of where it was drawn. The contour of the end of the nose was painted beyond the underdrawn line. There are underdrawn lines indicating the positions of the shoulders beneath the fur collar. The architecture is also drawn, somewhat approximately, with the help of a straight edge. Some of the lines are ruled longer than was necessary and the underdrawing for the curved parts of the architecture is not always followed.

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<sup>2</sup> Dunkerton in Dunkerton, Foister and Penny 1999, pp. 212–15, p. 214 fig. 259.

<sup>3</sup> Report by Peter Klein, dated 3 December 1999, in the NG dossier.

<sup>4</sup> Chalk (calcium carbonate) was identified by EDX analysis in the SEM. It was confirmed by FTIR analysis which also showed that the binding medium was proteinaceous and therefore probably animal glue. The identification of the pigments in the priming was confirmed by examination of cross-sections of paint samples. See reports in NG Scientific Department files by M. Spring (dated July 1994) and by J. Pilc (dated 9 January 1995).

The man's collar is very dark purple and a cross-section of a paint sample shows that it is painted with azurite and red lake applied on a deeper and more red layer containing mainly red lake mixed with some black. Two types of red lake, each with a different fluorescence under ultraviolet (UV) light, are present: that in the lower layer has an orange fluorescence characteristic of lakes prepared from madder dyestuff; while that in the upper layer does not fluoresce but appears pink under UV and is likely to have been prepared from an insect dyestuff.<sup>5</sup> The purple sleeves were not sampled but can be seen under a stereomicroscope to have been painted in the same way, except that the bluer purple surface paint is lighter in hue. Unusually, the yellow pigment seen in the man's rings and in the green cord on which the rosary beads are strung does not seem to be lead-tin yellow; its appearance under a stereomicroscope may indicate that it could possibly be orpiment. The medium of the priming is linseed oil. Only one sample of the paint was analysed, from the pale grey architecture at the left edge: there the medium is walnut oil.

The man's rings and the beads of his rosary are painted without reserves on top of his fingers and his gown respectively. The paint of the fur is very thin and in places the priming is left uncovered. In the flesh of his neck, his nails, the folds of his shirt and the lit edge of his white standing collar, the paint has been feathered. Gossaert's paint has beaded in the eyebrows, the hair and the fur. The rosary beads and the chipped areas of architecture directly above the man's head are rendered wet-in-wet. A *sgraffito* technique has been used in the modelling of the volutes. Some of the lines of the architecture are incised into the paint.

## DESCRIPTION

The back wall, cornice and framing elements are all brownish grey and the panels of coloured marble are, from left to right: brown, yellow-brown, light grey, yellow-brown, grey, brown, grey, and greyish. The veining, appropriately varied in colour, is purplish, brown, grey or white. The man has dark brown hair and blue eyes. Over a white shirt he wears a purple

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<sup>5</sup> Notes in NG Scientific Department files by M. Spring (10 January 1995).

doublet with a black lining. Over that is a black garment, evidently without sleeves. His gown is black, trimmed and lined with brown fur, and has hanging sleeves and a large cape-like collar. The rings on his right hand are gold: the upper ring is set with a square red stone; the lower with a round black stone. The ring on his left hand may be silver and carries a blue stone in a gold setting. There is dirt caught behind the thumbnail of his right hand. The red rosary beads are on a green string.

Gossart's sitter evidently had a large nose and a receding chin. The chin is drawn well inside the painted contour; it appears to have been enlarged in order to flatter the subject.

## THE IDENTITY OF THE SITTER

A. J. Wauters proposed, on the basis of unconvincing comparisons with other portraits, that the sitter was Gossart's patron Philip of Burgundy (1465–1524), Bishop of Utrecht.<sup>6</sup> The only indications of the man's identity are his clothes, which are unusual but so similar to those of men in two portraits attributed to Mostaert (Brussels and Liverpool) as to suggest that all three are wearing official dress of some kind.<sup>7</sup> Their doublets are open at the neck and lined with materials of contrasting colours; they wear low-necked garments over their doublets and under their gowns; their gowns are all fur-lined, with hanging sleeves and turned-back fur collars that hang like capes across their backs. Though similar in construction, their clothes differ in colour. The doublets are crimson velvet in the Brussels and Liverpool portraits, purple satin(?) in NG656; the intermediary garments are brown in Brussels, dark grey in Liverpool and black in NG656; the gown is dark grey in Brussels, brown in Liverpool and black in NG656; the fur linings are spotted (lynx?) in Brussels and Liverpool but plain

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<sup>6</sup> Wauters 1902, cited in the catalogue of the Rotterdam-Bruges exhibition, 1965, pp. 159–60. Wauters compared the drawing of Philip in the 'Recueil d'Arras' (Bibliothèque municipale, Arras, MS 266, fol. 98). For the Arras drawing, see Sterk 1980, fig. 4; Châtelet and Paviot 2007, pp. 275, 279. For other portraits of Philip, on coins, see Sterk 1980, figs 48–9.

<sup>7</sup> Friedländer, vol. X, nos 35, 38; and see the remarks by Stella Mary Newton quoted in *Walker Art Gallery Liverpool, Foreign Catalogue*, Liverpool 1977, p. 136. Also similar are the clothes worn by the donor presented by Saint Peter in a wing panel of about 1520–2 in Brussels, attributed to Mostaert. The donor is identifiable as Albrecht Adriaensz van Adrichem (c.1470–1555), a gentleman of Haarlem, who had earlier commissioned from Mostaert the 'Oultremont Triptych' of the *Descent from the Cross*, now also in Brussels. See Jan Piet Filedt Kok in the exh. cat. Rotterdam 2008, pp. 169–72.

brown in NG656. The Brussels and Liverpool sitters have hats and gloves, whereas in NG656 the sitter has removed his hat and gloves, perhaps because he confronts directly the object of his devotion.

The Brussels sitter has been plausibly identified as Abel van Coulster (1477–1548), councillor at the Court or Council of Holland, Zeeland and West Friesland from 1506 until his death.<sup>8</sup> It is possible that the Liverpool and London sitters are also officials of the Council of Holland – or possibly another Council – and that their different offices are indicated by the differing colours of their robes.<sup>9</sup>

## ATTRIBUTION AND ORIGINAL FUNCTION

### Attribution

In the Beaucousin collection NG656 was attributed to Gossart; this attribution has never been challenged.<sup>10</sup>

### Original function

Although the man has not joined his hands in prayer, he has placed his right hand on his heart and holds a rosary in his left hand. He is clearly at his devotions and his gestures may be compared with those of Gossart's unidentified donor on the left wing of a small triptych (Brussels), where the donatrix on the right wing is in a conventional attitude of prayer.<sup>11</sup> NG656 is therefore from a triptych or a diptych. The asymmetrical architectural background was probably continued in another panel. At least four versions are known of a *Virgin and*

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<sup>8</sup> For the identification, see Thierry de Bye Dólleman 1963, p. 136; for the life of Abel van Coulster, see De Ridder-Symoens, Illmer and Riddenkhoff 1978, p. 176.

<sup>9</sup> For the principal officials, see de Blécourt and Meijers 1929, pp. XXIV-LIX.

<sup>10</sup> When the Beaucousin pictures were packed to be sent to London, NG656 was listed as 'I dito [sc. portrait of a man] by J. de Mabuze' (NG Archive, NG 5/305/1860). Wornum called it 'A Man's Portrait, by Mabuze' (Diary, 22–23 March 1860) and it was so catalogued.

<sup>11</sup> Friedländer, vol. VIII, no. 6.

*Child* which was evidently in the style of Gossart and where the architectural background complements and completes the background of NG656. They are probably copies of the lost left wing of the diptych or triptych of which NG656 formed part. Two of the copies are or were in a private collection in Brussels: one measured 50 x 31.9 cm; the other, attributed to van der Veken, measures 51 x 37 cm.<sup>12</sup> Both of these, and another version in Philadelphia (54 x 40 cm), seem to be straightforward reduced copies of Gossart's lost original. In all three, the Virgin is dressed in blue, red and purple, though there are slight variations in the colours. The fourth is a variant by Hans Baldung, signed with his monogram HBG and dated 1530 (Nuremberg; 99 x 68 cm). Baldung's Virgin is dressed in black, blue and grey.<sup>13</sup>

Ainsworth objected to the association of the *Virgin and Child* and the London panel on the grounds that 'the Virgin and Child would be significantly larger than the sitter, whose position would also be far lower'.<sup>14</sup> However, it is possible that these distinctions were made deliberately, to emphasise the superior status of the Virgin and Child. Ainsworth also observed that 'the Virgin and Child appear to be self-contained, not communicating with the supplicant by either pose or glance'.<sup>15</sup> It is true that Gossart's diptychs of Jean Carondelet (Louvre) and Juan de Zuñiga (formerly Barcelona, El Palau) differ in such respects from the proposed reconstruction; but in his reconstructed triptych, where the donor panels in Brussels are united with a *Virgin and Child* in Norfolk, Virginia, the donor ignores the Virgin and Child with determined resolution and they ignore him. They are also on a different scale. In this case, perhaps inappropriately, the donors are much larger than the Virgin and Child, whose throne is only a short distance behind them.<sup>16</sup>

The figures of the Virgin and Child recur, with a different architectural background, in a painting in the Prado, clearly by Gossart himself. The Virgin wears a blue dress and a red

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<sup>12</sup> Collection of Paul Philippot (van der Veken's grandson): see J.-L. Pypaert in Vanwijnsberghe et al. 2008, pp. 278–9 (cat. 306).

<sup>13</sup> Weisz 1913, pp. 81–2, was the first to suggest a connection between NG656 and the Virgins in Philadelphia and Nuremberg, which are listed in Friedländer, vol. VIII, Nos. 35a, 35b. For the Brussels Virgin, see Bautier 1925, pp. 91 (fig. IV), 93. All three are discussed and described in detail by von der Osten 1983, pp. 193–4. The Nuremberg Baldung is reproduced in colour and discussed in Löcher et al. 1997, pp. 57–60. Other versions are listed by Ainsworth in Ainsworth et al. 2010, p. 173 note 11.

<sup>14</sup> Ainsworth in Ainsworth et al. 2010, p. 281.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ainsworth in Ainsworth et al. 2010, pp. 281–5.

mantle but her sleeves are orange-yellow, whereas in the Brussels and Philadelphia pictures they are purplish.<sup>17</sup> The Prado *Virgin and Child*, which belonged to Philip II of Spain, appears not to be from a diptych.<sup>18</sup> The more balanced arrangement of the background architecture and the strong contrasts of colour support the theory that it was designed as an independent image. It is difficult to say whether the Prado *Virgin* was an adaptation by Gossart himself of his lost *Virgin*, or vice versa. In either case, the two were probably painted at much the same time.

## DATE

Most art historians believe that NG656 was painted towards the end of Gossart's career. The clothes, perhaps official dress, seem to include archaic as well as fashionable elements and are difficult to date; but the man's haircut is like that of the Brussels donor who is dressed in the fashion of about 1520, as is his wife.<sup>19</sup> The architecture in NG656 and in the copies of the *Virgin and Child* with which it seems to have been paired resembles that in the *Munich Danaë*, dated 1527.<sup>20</sup> The Prado *Virgin and Child* may also be related to the *Danaë*. Baldung's version of the missing *Virgin* is dated 1530 and is likely to have been painted shortly after the original. Baldung's patron may have commissioned a version of a painting which had attracted such admiration.

Baldung worked in Strasbourg. It may prove possible to discover whether he knew Gossart's lost *Virgin* in the original or from a drawing; or whether Gossart's patron, possibly an official of the Council of Holland, might have had some connection with Strasbourg.

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<sup>17</sup> Friedländer, vol. VIII, No. 35; Ainsworth in Ainsworth et al. 2010, pp. 170–3.

<sup>18</sup> Ainsworth in Ainsworth et al. 2010, p. 173 note 1, with the relevant extract from the text of the Escorial inventory of 1584.

<sup>19</sup> Friedländer, vol. VIII, No. 6; Ainsworth in Ainsworth et al. 2010, p. 285, dated the portraits around 1528–30, which seems rather too late. Compare the clothes and haircut in Massys's portrait of Pieter Gillis, painted in 1517 (private collection: Friedländer, vol. VIII, no. 37), and the clothes of the woman in the portrait dated 1520 and attributed to Joos van Cleve (Uffizi: Friedländer, vol. IX, no. 118).

<sup>20</sup> Friedländer, vol. VIII, no. 48.