

Jan van Eyck's posthumous Workshop

by Jan Dumolyn, Susan Frances Jones, Ward Leloup, Toon De Meester and Mathijs Speecke¹

To comprehend the full art-historical significance of Jan van Eyck (c. 1390 – 1441) scholars must confront the problem of the attribution or categorization of the surviving objects. Apart from the ‘core’ group of nine signed paintings, these constitute a substantial group of unsigned works: some twenty-five panel paintings, fourteen drawings (excluding a complete series of drawings of Apostles in Vienna and fragments of other series elsewhere) and the Eyckian miniatures by Hands G, H, I/J and K in the so-called Turin-Milan Hours, along with various related miniatures and manuscripts. These works can be divided among Van Eyck, his journeymen and followers (and, potentially, forgers). Very few of them can be dated by means of external documentation: indeed, the evidence for the attribution, dating and geographical origin of the various works is so scant and so complex that it permits the construction of widely different narratives concerning the origins, development and spread of Van Eyck's style. What makes the task even more challenging is that some of the surviving works could in theory be products of other Van Eyck workshops, as Jan's brother Hubert (d. 1426) ran a workshop in Ghent and his brother Lambert (last recorded 1442) also appears to have been a painter.

This article aims to facilitate the categorization of the surviving works by sharpening our picture of Bruges painting during a particular moment of production, c.1441 – c.1450, in which Jan van Eyck's workshop continued to operate after his death, eventually closing and giving way to a new phase of Bruges painting. It sets out arguments for the date of the workshop's closure and its posthumous management, drawing out some implications for the relationship of other Bruges painters to Jan van Eyck or his workshop. In terms of methodology, it considers the workshop not from the perspective of stylistic and technical analysis, nor socio-economic conditions but rather from the point of view of its physical location, focusing on written documents concerning houses in Bruges owned by the Van Eyck family.²

Both the size of Van Eyck's workshop and his collaborative practices are a matter of debate. It is reasonable to think that some of the surviving paintings may be entirely by his own hand (at least with regard to the paint layers); however, he did employ journeymen, their numbers presumably fluctuating over time.³ Our only clue to the size of his workshop at any one period are records of gratuities given to his journeymen in Bruges on two separate occasions in 1432, one by members of the civic government and the other by Van Eyck's patron Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy (on a visit to Van Eyck's ‘hostel’, i.e. the workshop at his house).⁴ The former gave the journeymen a tip equivalent to five shillings Flemish groats, the latter a tip of 25 *sols* (*schellingen*, *solidi*, *sous*, shillings). Whether or to what extent there may be a relationship between the sums recorded and the number of journeymen employed by Van Eyck is of course debatable, not least because such documents do not record the actual coins given but rather express the value of the gratuity in money of account (assuming that the tips were not given in kind). Neither is it certain that each journeyman would have been tipped the same amount. It is nonetheless a remarkable feature in this case that both recorded payments are divisible by five, raising the possibility that Van Eyck had five journeymen in 1432.⁵ This solution is credible in relation to archival sources concerning the sizes of painters' workshops in the city of Bruges. In a decree of 1441 and a related lawsuit still ongoing in 1487, the master painters of Bruges sought to reduce competition from those in Sluis by regulating the number of ‘dientinghe’ the latter could use to two or three at most, with ‘dientinghe’, in this context, apparently signifying two journeymen and one apprentice.⁶ From this we can infer that Bruges masters themselves typically employed more than two journeymen: a reasonable estimate might be a workshop of three or four journeymen and an apprentice. Other South Netherlandish masters are recorded using similar numbers of journeymen: in 1454, for example, the painters Jacques Daret and Daniel de Rijke worked on preparations for court festivities with four and three journeymen respectively.⁷ Furthermore, the complex documentation concerning the Tournai painter Robert Campin indicates that when he was sentenced to a year's banishment (on 30 July 1432), he was working with three or four journeymen.⁸ These sources on painters are broadly in keeping with recent studies on workshop sizes in the artisanal world of the Southern Low Countries at the period, which have reemphasized the importance of small- and medium-size work, employing some journeymen and apprentice boys.⁹

There is a strong possibility that Van Eyck trained apprentices, although it cannot be demonstrated. His workshop may also have given training to visiting painters, as suggested by documents concerning Lluís Dalmau, a painter active in Valencia who was in Flanders between 1431 and 1436. Several factors suggest that Dalmau came to Van Eyck's workshop to study, including aspects of style, his subsequent use of an oil rather than an egg medium and his evident possession of exact-scale pattern drawings related to the Ghent altarpiece; in addition, his journey was financed by his patron Alfonso V of Aragon, who was an admirer of Van Eyck and a political ally of Van Eyck's patron Philip the Good. All this makes it likely that Dalmau's visit was an instance of the documented phenomenon of foreign princes arranging for their court painters to study with leading Netherlandish artists.¹⁰

That Van Eyck's workshop continued to function after his death is indicated by the dating of just two or three paintings: the *Virgin and Child with Saints Barbara and Elizabeth of Thuringia* and *Jan Vos* in the Frick Collection, New York, the *Saint Jerome in his Study* in the Institute of Fine Arts, Detroit, and the now-lost *Virgin of Niklaas van Maelbeke*, whose composition is known through drawings (figs. xx, xx, xx and xx). In combination with visual evidence, documents published by Scholtens in the 1930s suggest that the *Virgin of Jan Vos* was painted between 30 March 1441 and 3 September 1443 and thus almost entirely after Van Eyck's death (which occurred towards the end of June, 1441).¹¹ This in turn makes it plausible that the date ‘1442’ inscribed on the *Jerome* is not a late or modern addition to the surface but rather the date either of the painting's execution or its completion (the idea that the painting is a forgery can now be dismissed).¹² Although it has been a majority view since the mid-nineteenth century that the *Van Maelbeke Virgin* was left incomplete by Van Eyck, the arguments for and against this proposition are complex. The sixteenth-century writer Marcus van Vaernewijck described wings on the painting *in situ* in Saint Martin's in Ypres (where Van Maelbeke was provost) as ‘*onvuldaen*’ (incomplete);

furthermore, two surviving silverpoint drawings of the composition omit exactly the same parts of the design, and must therefore go back to a single model, potentially the *Van Maelbeke Virgin* itself in an unfinished state. On these grounds, it has been proposed that the painting was completed by Van Eyck's journeymen in 1445, the year of Van Maelbeke's death; however, an eighteenth-century transcription of a 'signature' on the painting, though problematic in its own right, does allow the argument that the painting had already been installed in 1441, and that it was produced and delivered in Van Eyck's lifetime.¹³

As with other master painters, the historiography of Jan van Eyck's workshop in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries attributed most of the extant paintings to the hand of the master. Systematic study identifying contributions by anonymous journeymen began in the 1950s, the most notable being Josua Bruyn's *Van Eyck Problemen* of 1957.¹⁴ Several eminent scholars have addressed the complex question of the relationship between Van Eyck and Petrus Christus (d. 1475/76), the only identifiable painter in Van Eyck's close circle. Max J. Friedländer and Erwin Panofsky argued that Christus was one of Van Eyck's 'pupils', an idea also supported by Bruyn, who, nonetheless, attributed different paintings to Christus.¹⁵ Christus is first documented in Bruges on 6 July 1444, some three years after van Eyck's death, when he paid to become a burgher (*poorter*) of the city. It is recorded in the *Poortboek* that he took this step '*om(m)e scilde(re) te zine*', i.e. in order to set himself up as the master of an independent workshop, which necessitated becoming a burgher of the city.¹⁶ Panofsky placed Christus in the posthumous workshop, arguing that he completed the *Frick Virgin* and the *Jerome* in Detroit and oversaw production in the workshop's last years '...in the name of the widow until such time as he established himself in his own right'.¹⁷ Like Panofsky, Bruyn believed that Christus's style proceeded from a hypothetical 'late style' of Jan van Eyck.¹⁸ The question of the business's posthumous management has always been at issue because Van Eyck's children were too young to inherit the business: one of them was born in 1434, and was thus no more than seven years old at his father's death.¹⁹ In 1983, the terms of the debate changed when Jan Stegge published a document suggesting that Jan's surviving brother Lambert was also a painter.²⁰ Noting that Lambert was certainly in Bruges between March and June of 1442, Stegge proposed that Lambert was one of Van Eyck's executors, and that he inherited Jan's workshop, running it until around 1450.²¹ Given the profitability of Van Eyck's business, and the evidence that a trained workforce was in place, such a hypothesis is not unreasonable. Another candidate for the business's management is Jan's widow Margaret, as the regulations of the Bruges guild of image-makers and saddlers, to which the city's painters belonged, allowed for the widow of a master painter to inherit his rights and privileges.²²

Since the 1990s, therefore, scholarship has moved away from the figure of Petrus Christus and towards Van Eyck's surviving family members; further, Christus's own career has been reassessed. In the mid-1990s, it was argued – and widely accepted – that Christus cannot have been one of Van Eyck's journeymen because he acquired the status of burgher by payment, whereas if he had already lived in Bruges for more than one year and one day, he would have become a burgher automatically.²³ Scholars of Van Eyck concluded that Christus's career in Bruges must have begun only in July of 1444, or shortly beforehand. What this implied was either that Christus was present in the posthumous workshop of Van Eyck only after his arrival in 1444 – which entailed accepting Stegge's hypothesis that the workshop closed as late as around 1450 – or rather that Christus was not in fact a member of the ongoing workshop, which could have closed before his arrival.²⁴ It was noted by Susan Jones that Van Eyck's house in Bruges changed hands between 24 June 1443 and 24 June 1444, providing a possible *terminus ante quem* for the workshop's closure, but the argument remained problematic insofar as the location of the workshop could not be proven.²⁵

Between 1432 and 1441, Jan van Eyck paid an annuity of 30 shillings parisis, due on 24 June, on a house on the Gouden-Handstraat in Bruges, then called the Sint-Gillis Nieuwstraat.²⁶ Subsequent to his death, the annuity was paid by his widow Margaret, who continued to make the payment in 1442 and 1443. It seems likely that his workshop was in this house, yet the evidence for the workshop's location and posthumous continuity has always been complicated by a statement made by W. H. James Weale (1832-1917) that in 1444 Jan's widow Margaret sold their house in the Gouden-Handstraat and moved to a dwelling on the Oostmeers named *de Wilde Zee* (the Wild Sea).²⁷ Weale claimed that Margaret lived there until at least 1456. Weale was of course one of the pioneers of archival research in the study of the so-called Flemish Primitives, and his observations must be taken seriously. Uncharacteristically, however, he did not provide any reference for this information, which meant that it could not be checked—and this made the evidence regarding *de Wilde Zee* distinctly problematic: it could not be excluded that Margaret set up a posthumous workshop in a new location after selling the house on the Gouden-Handstraat, or even that the house on the Oostmeers was already in Van Eyck's possession in the 1430s, giving him two possible workspaces.

New archival research on *de Wilde Zee* resolves this matter, however, and indicates that Weale, who was otherwise a meticulous Van Eyck biographer – and someone who did not shy away from castigating other scholars for their mistakes – drew some hasty and inaccurate conclusions in this instance. Although he neglected to provide his source, it is clear that he relied on the accounts of the *Obediëntie* (Obedience) of the Chapter of the Collegiate Church of Saint Donatian in Bruges.²⁸ These are the same accounts that record Van Eyck's widow Margaret paying the annuity on the house in the Gouden-Handstraat. A first mistake made by Weale is his claim that Margaret 'sold' the house: the accounts do not explicitly mention a sale, and although the house must have changed ownership between the Summer of 1443 and the Spring of 1444, this could also have happened by way of gift or inheritance. Weale also appears to have jumped to conclusions regarding his principal claim that the house *de Wilde Zee* was owned by Jan's widow Margaret. What information did he find in the archives, and how did he fit all the pieces of information together to arrive at this conclusion? Over the next few paragraphs, we will try to reconstruct his reasoning.

From 1438 onwards, a certain ‘Margriete sHeex *beghina*’ appears in the accounts of the *Obedientie*, to which she owned an annuity of six shillings, nine pennies and one *poitevin* on a property in one of the city’s six administrative districts (*zestendelen*), that of Our Lady (*Onze-Lieve-Vrouw*).²⁹ This Margaret sHeex (also sHeics, sHeycx or sHeyx, the female genitive of ‘Van Eyck’) remained the owner of this estate until at least 1459-60, after which the accounts are missing.³⁰ In later life, this beguine must have enjoyed high status, since from the mid-1440s she was referred to in records as *domicella*. In all probability, Weale identified this Margaret as Van Eyck’s wife and, later, widow. That being the case, oddly enough, he was not deterred by the fact that the woman in question was described as a beguine, even during the lifetime of Jan van Eyck. As beguines by definition lived a single life and had to take a vow of chastity, this would have entailed the couple living separately from at least 1438 onwards, but the portrait of Jan’s wife Margaret, finished in 1439, makes this impossible, as an inscription on the frame refers to *co(n)iu(n)x m(eu)s Joh(ann)es* (‘my husband Jan’) (fig. xx). Additionally, the fact that Van Eyck’s widow (*relict a Johannis de Eyke*) and the beguine Margaret sHeex were referred to with different appellations in the same source contradicts Weale’s supposition that they were one and the same person.³¹

The accounts of the *Obedientie* give no additional information on the house of Margaret sHeex aside from the fact that it was situated in the district of Our Lady. Luckily, however, the annuity mortgaged on the house can be traced in subsequent rent registers that yield more details. Thus, it appears from a register drawn up in 1451 that the annuity Margaret paid every year on Saint Bavo’s Day (1 October), was mortgaged on two single-room houses (*ex fundo duarum camerarum*) situated on a plot on the west side of the Oostmeers.³² The clerk compiling the register probably made a mistake in locating the houses, as a later register, dated 1543, situated the same annuity on the east side of the Oostmeers.³³ At that time, the plot on which the houses were located was owned by a tanner named Pieter van den Berghe. However, none of these fifteenth- and sixteenth-century rent registers gives the house a name – or any house for that matter, as the registers of Saint Donatian’s merely record individual rents to be paid on each street without providing details on the individual plots of land or houses. Why then did Weale think the house was called *de Wilde Zee* and where did he come across that remarkable detail?

As far as we know, the house name *de Wilde Zee* is first recorded in a deed of sale dated 1578. The deed concerns a house ‘formerly named *de Wilde Zee*’ and an adjacent *dweersloove* (a house whose roof ridge runs parallel to the street) on the east side of the Oostmeers, which had recently been owned by a certain Jozef de Roo. The proto-cadastral registers of the *zestendelen*, which start in 1580, indicate that *de Wilde Zee* was located in the row of houses between the Zonnekemeers and the Wijngaard (fig. xx).³⁴ As is the case in the deed of sale of 1578, the registers record two houses: a northern house ‘formerly joined to the adjacent property’ and a southern house, designated as *de Wilde Zee*.³⁵ In 1580 both houses belonged to Joos de Muelenaere, but two years later his heirs sold the northern house to Inghelbrecht Vlaminc.³⁶ Intriguingly, these houses can be linked to Pieter van den Berghe, whom we have already encountered in 1543 as the owner of the house of Margaret sHeex: in 1585 an outstanding debt appears to have been mortgaged on *de Wilde Zee* in favour of a Pieter van den Berghe.³⁷ It is therefore a distinct possibility that the apparent link between *de Wilde Zee* and Pieter van den Berghe led Weale to think that the house of Margaret sHeex was called *de Wilde Zee*. This would be a premature conclusion for various reasons, however. The outstanding debt owed to Pieter and mortgaged on *de Wilde Zee* does not necessarily prove that Pieter was once the owner of the house: it is also possible that the owner of *de Wilde Zee* mortgaged a debt to Pieter on his property, without the latter having anything to do with the house. Furthermore, it is even debatable whether this Pieter van den Berghe mentioned around 1580 was the same person as the tanner of the same name mentioned in 1543.³⁸ All in all, there is only a slender foundation for the hypothesis that the house of Margaret sHeex was named *de Wilde Zee*, and the idea should be rejected.

If it is impossible to identify the Margaret sHeex who owned properties in the Oostmeers as the wife of the master painter Jan van Eyck, she could still have been a relative of the Van Eyck family of painters, as the sixteenth-century writers and humanists Marcus van Vaernewijck and Lucas de Heere recounted that Hubert and Jan van Eyck had a sister called Margaret. She is said to have been proficient in ‘the noble art of pictoria or painting’ and, according to Van Vaernewijck, remained a virgin for her entire life.³⁹ Might this Margaret be the beguine from the Oostmeers? The question was raised as early as 1847 in a publication by the priest and scholar Charles Carton who had seen the name in the rent registers.⁴⁰ But this too is very unlikely. In fact, Margaret sHeex was a well-known figure in the beguinage of the Wijngaard (St. Elizabeth) in Bruges around the mid-fifteenth century. The daughter of *Maergrieten* and *Jooris sHeics* (d. before 1420), she rose up the career ladder at the beguinage from 1425 to 1467, eventually becoming grand mistress (from 1429-30 onwards).⁴¹ In short, there is not a single piece of evidence to connect the grand mistress of the Wijngaard beguinage to the painter Jan van Eyck.

The overturning of Weale’s speculations about *De Wilde Zee* makes it almost definite that Van Eyck’s workshop was in his house on the Gouden-Handstraat – now the only house in Bruges recorded in the possession of the Van Eyck family. This is supported by its location in the business district, where it was accessible to the international merchants and financiers who coveted his work, and it is by no means excluded by the physical characteristics of the house: it was two stories high with a peaked gable, and was set on a fairly large plot of land on which stood a second two-storey building, likewise with a peaked gable, which backed directly onto the canal now called the Gouden-Handrei (fig. xx).⁴² The second house at the rear of the property could even have been Van Eyck’s main working space, or an additional one – something not excluded by its light, which came from the northeast. That Van Eyck resided there, furthermore, is supported by the fact that his widow Margaret continued to pay the annuity on the house subsequent to his death.⁴³

The biographical evidence for Margaret van Eyck is also changed by the new evidence. Weale’s misidentification led him to believe that Margaret was ‘still living’ in 1456, but the *terminus post quem* for her death must now be moved back to 1446, the year her name appears in the records of the Bruges lottery.⁴⁴ The entry identifies her as Jan van Eyck’s widow, so she had not remarried in the five years since her husband’s death. The final record of Van Eyck’s surviving family – the financial gift

from Philip the Good to Jan's daughter Lievine, dated February 1449 o.s. – does not refer to Margaret, making it impossible to know whether she was still living.⁴⁵

With respect to the hypothesis that Margaret took over the management of her husband's workshop after his death, it is significant that the admissions register of the Bruges guild of image-makers and saddlers, which begins in 1453, does not list a single widow.⁴⁶ Although the regulations did permit a widow to take over her deceased husband's business, we can infer that this option was rarely if ever taken up in practice, unless as a short-term measure – and perhaps in such cases, the widows were not listed in the register. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that Margaret herself was trained as a panel painter, something which seems to have been possible for women at this period only if they were trained by members of their family.⁴⁷ Indeed, the very fact that some three years after Jan's death Margaret moved away from the house and workshop on the Gouden-Handstraat favours a different hypothesis: since she was a widow with more than one young child at her husband's death, she could have turned back to her natal family for support. The large house on the Gouden-Handstraat with its working spaces and substantial outbuilding would no longer have been of use to her, making it plausible that she went to live with her family or moved into a smaller house. In any case, the stock of unfinished panels in Jan's workshop must have been liquidated by the Spring of 1444. Thus, if Jan van Eyck's workshop was indeed in this house, which is now almost certain, it would have continued to operate after his death only between the Summer of 1441 and the Spring of 1444.

This new evidence changes the terms of the debate regarding the continuing workshop. Rather than a smooth, decade-long continuation of Jan's business by his widow and/or brother Lambert, we propose the hypothesis that there was a particular moment, in Spring of 1444, when Jan's workshop closed for good. As such, the Frick *Virgin*, the Detroit *Jerome* and potentially the *Van Maelbeke Virgin* would all have belonged to a final, posthumous stage of production on Jan van Eyck's premises. Such evidence as we have for their dating accords with this solution, with the Frick *Virgin* completed before September of 1443, and the *Jerome* dated 1442. Although numerous scholars have repeated the idea that the *Van Maelbeke Virgin* was still preserved in the workshop in an unfinished state as late as 1445, that year was only ever associated with the painting in an unreliable late eighteenth-century town chronicle of Ypres by Petrus Martinus Ramaut (1719-83), published in 1825 by the archivist Liévin de Bast.⁴⁸ Whatever the explanation for the date 1445 in the chronicle, it cannot be used as evidence for the date of the work's completion.⁴⁹

There is no evidence at present to suggest that production continued after Spring of 1444. Two paintings of *Saint George and the Dragon* were acquired in Bruges at this very period. The first is the well-documented painting acquired by the merchant Joan Gregori in Bruges before 2 May 1444, when he was reimbursed by Berenguer Mercader, the *batle general* (principal financial officer) of the kingdom of Valencia.⁵⁰ Attributed to 'Johannes', the painting was expensive (it cost 2000 *sous reynals* of Valencia) and relatively large in size. It appears unlikely to have been entirely a product of the posthumous workshop, but it could in theory have been acquired from the premises in Spring of 1444, an idea that has yet to be seriously examined. The second painting of *Saint George* was likewise acquired in Bruges by a merchant ('Antonio Domaschi mercatore'), who was paid for his role by Leonello d'Este in a mandate of 1446.⁵¹ Although it was presumably by a leading painter, and was again a costly painting, the Este *George* cannot be used to argue that Van Eyck's workshop remained open in 1446, as the document does not name the painter.

The question that remains to be asked about Lambert van Eyck is now quite specific: did he inherit his brother's business and reestablish it on different premises in Bruges between c.1444 and c.1450? At present, no evidence exists to either confirm or disprove the idea. After 1442, we lose all trace of Lambert. It is remarkable, however, that Steppe did not offer any particular justification for suggesting a date as late as c.1450 for the business's closure. Although he speculated that copies of Van Eyck's *Holy Face* could have been made in a continuing Van Eyck workshop run by Lambert in Bruges in the 1440s, he did not demonstrate that any such copies were made in the second half of the decade. In view of this, it is worth pointing out that the hypothesis of a Lambert van Eyck workshop is not needed to account for the surviving paintings in Van Eyck's style that appear likely to have been made in Bruges or the vicinity, which can no doubt largely be divided between Van Eyck and his Bruges workshop (between c. 1432 and 1444); former apprentices or journeymen and, finally, craftsmen who had not received any formal training from Van Eyck but who had assimilated aspects of his style or technique. These last two groups could already have been active in the 1430s. Art historians will only deepen their understanding of these works by systematic investigation across the broadest possible range of paintings, including those which cannot have been made in Van Eyck's workshop, and which therefore have the capacity to demonstrate how far his inventions, ideas or techniques circulated (e.g. the 'Simpson Carson' *Virgin*, recently acquired by the Groeninge Museum in Bruges).

The relationship between Jan van Eyck's workshop and those of other painters in the city requires greater attention. If, as seems likely, at least some of the surviving paintings can be broadly understood as products of collaborative practices, or used as indicators of the spread of Van Eyck's ideas and techniques on a local or regional level, better comprehension of these phenomena requires fundamental study of the integration of Van Eyck's workshop into the city's artistic life. To some extent, these questions can be addressed through the workshop's location on the Gouden-Handstraat. In 1434-35, for example, Van Eyck collaborated with the Bruges painters Jan van den Driessche and Willem van Tongeren on a commission from the city to polychrome and gild eight stone statues of the counts and countesses of Flanders for the façade of the town hall.⁵² These painters had elevated roles in the guild of image-makers and saddlers: they both served as 'finders' (*vinders*) and Van Tongeren was elected dean in 1441-42.⁵³ This collaboration, however, should not be understood as a one-off business arrangement. Born in Maastricht, Van Tongeren had come to Bruges from the same region as Van Eyck, and must have spoken the same dialect. Furthermore, it is likely that in Van Eyck's lifetime Van Tongeren owned a house on the corner of the Augustijnenrei and the Jan Miraalstraat, within easy walking distance of Van Eyck's house on the Goudenhand-Straat (fig. xx).⁵⁴ The two men were likely well-acquainted. Other painters and illuminators lived in the area: the manuscript

illuminator Willem Vrelant, for example, who came to Bruges from Utrecht around 1451, had a house on the nearby Vlamingdam (fig. xx).⁵⁵ Study of artisanal districts in Bruges will likely play an important role in clarifying overall patterns of production.

The argument that Van Eyck's workshop closed in Spring 1444 also revives the historical debate about the nature of Petrus Christus's relationship to Van Eyck. Christus clearly found it necessary to obtain the status of burgher in Bruges on 6 July 1444 in order to set himself up as an independent master, and this was not long after the presumed closure of Van Eyck's workshop. It is possible that the closeness of the two dates is no more than coincidence. Christus could have arrived in Bruges in July 1444 to take advantage of a temporary reduction in the rates for acquiring the status of burgher, ordered by Philip the Good in an ordinance of 24 January, 1440 (1441 n.s.) and set to expire four years later.⁵⁶ But it is also possible that Christus had already been living and working in Bruges up to the moment that he became a burgher of the city, potentially as a member of Van Eyck's posthumous workshop (or even its head, as suggested by Panofsky).⁵⁷ Scholars had rejected that idea in recent decades because it seemed to be eliminated by the rules governing the acquisition of the status of burgher in Bruges at the time; however, the sources for those rules are far less clear than has generally been recognised and their interpretation is in fact open to doubt.⁵⁸ To clarify this particular moment in the career of Petrus Christus, therefore, scholars must now turn their attention to the laws, regulations and customs that shaped the activity of painting in Bruges.

¹ This article is a collaborative effort: Dumolyn, Leloup, Speecke and De Meester conducted new archival research on the house *de Wilde Zee*, Jones addressed the evidence for the paintings, and Jones and Dumolyn reexamined the evidence for Van Eyck's family. We are very grateful to Lorne Campbell and Catherine Reynolds for reading a draft and making improvements to the text.

² A useful review of methodological developments is S. Cassagnes-Brouquet, 'Les ateliers d'artistes au Moyen Âge: entre théorie et pratiques', *Perspective. Actualité en histoire de l'art*, 1, 2014, pp. 83-98.

³ For sources on journeymen and their regulation, see N. Peeters with the collaboration of M. Martens, 'Assistants in Artists' Workshops in the Southern Netherlands (Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries)', *Invisible hands?: the role and status of the painter's journeyman in the Low Countries c. 1450 - c. 1650*, ed. N. Peeters, Leuven, 2007, pp. 33-48, p. 35 and note 10. For restrictions on journeymen numbers in other crafts, see G. Des Marez, *L'Organisation du travail à Bruxelles au XVe siècle*, Mémoires Couronnés et autres mémoires publiées par l'Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Tome LXV, Bruxelles, Oct. 1903-Mai 1904, pp. 1-520, pp. 64, 70-71, 212-13.

⁴ Stadsarchief Brugge (cited hereafter as SAB), *Rekeninghe van de tresoriers van der stede van Brugge van 2 September, 1431, tot 1 September, 1432*, fol. 78r. Archives départementales du Nord, Lille (ADN), B 1948. *Compte de la recette générale des finances du 1 Janvier au 31 Décembre, 1433*, fol. viij[xx]vii verso. Published in W. H. James Weale, *Hubert and John van Eyck: their life and work*, London 1908, no. 18 no. 20 and J. Paviot, 'La Vie de Jan van Eyck selon les Documents écrits', *Revue des archéologues et historiens d'art de Louvain*, vol. 23, 1990, pp. 83-93, p. 88 and notes 36 and 37.

⁵ This proposal was made by Lorne Campbell; see L. Campbell, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Fifteenth Century Netherlandish Schools*, National Gallery Publications, London, 1998, p. 23.

⁶ Our thanks go to Catherine Reynolds for bringing this lawsuit to our attention; for the decree of 5 November 1441, see L. Gilliodts-Van Severen, *Inventaire des archives de la ville de Bruges, Section Première, Inventaire des chartes*, vol. 5, Bruges 1876, pp. 231-51, p. 248; for the arbitral proceedings, W.H.J. Weale, 'Inventaire des chartes et documents appartenant aux archives de la corporation de S. Luc et S. Eloi à Bruges', *Le Beffroi. Arts, Heraldique, Archéologie*, vol. 1, Bruges, 1863, pp. 214-220. On this dispute, see C. Reynolds, 'Illuminators and the Painters' Guilds', *Illuminating the Renaissance. The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting in Europe*, eds. T. Kren and S. McKendrick, exh. cat., The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2003, pp. 15-33, p. 17.

⁷ L. Campbell, 'The Early Netherlandish Painters and their Workshops' in *Le Dessin sous-jacent dans la peinture, Colloque III, 6-7-8 septembre 1979, Le problème Maître de Flémalle-Van der Weyden*, ed. D. Hollanders-Favart and R. Van Schoute (Université Catholique de Louvain, Institut supérieur d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art, Document de travail N° 11), Louvain-la-Neuve, 1981, pp. 43-61, pp. 49-50.

⁸ Only days after the sentence, two members of Campin's workforce (including Rogier van der Weyden) enrolled in the guild as independent masters; a third did so on 18 October. All three had registered in Campin's shop as 'apprentices' in 1427, but in actuality they were probably journeymen. A fourth member of the workforce, who registered as an apprentice in 1431, never became a free master at Tournai; see A. Châtelet, *Robert Campin. Le Maître de Flémalle. La fascination du quotidien*, Fonds Mercator Paribas, Antwerp, 1996, pp. 26-29.

⁹ See for example H. Deceulaer and A. Diels, 'Artists, Artisans, Workshop practices and Assistants in the Low Countries (fifteenth to seventeenth centuries)', in N. Peeters with the collaboration of M. Martens, *op. cit.* (note 3), pp. 1-31, esp. pp. 9-13.

¹⁰ N. Salvadó, S. Butí, F. Ruiz Quesada, H. Emerich and T. Pradell, «Mare de Déu dels Consellers, de Lluís Dalmau. Una nova tècnica per a una obra singular», *Butlletí del Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya*, 9, 2008, pp. 43-61; S. F. Jones, "Jan van Eyck and Spain", *Boletín del Museo del Prado*, vol. 32, no. 50, 2014, pp. 30-49, pp. 32-33; B. Fransen, 'Van Eyck in Valencia', in *Van Eyck Studies, Papers presented at the eighteenth Symposium for the Study of Underdrawing and Technology in Painting, Brussels, 19-21 September 2012*, ed. C. Currie, L. Preedy et al, Peeters, Paris, Leuven, Walpole MA, 2016, pp. 469-78, pp. 476-77.

¹¹ H.J.J. Scholtens, 'Jan van Eyck's 'H. Maagd met den kartuizer' en de Exeter-Madonna te Berlijn', *Oud Holland*, vol. 55, 1938, pp. 49-62.

¹² For the scientific and technical evidence for the painting's authenticity, see B. Heller and L. P. Stodulski, "Saint Jerome" in the Laboratory: Scientific Evidence and the Enigmas of an Eyckian Panel', *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, vol. 72, no. 1/2, 1998, pp. 38-55; the study did not attempt 'to verify the date's age or originality by invasive analytical means' but the authors observed that it predated the development of the 'crackle pattern' (*ibid.*, p. 49).

¹³ For the arguments, see T.-H. Borchert, 'Petrus Christus after Jan van Eyck and Workshop. The Virgin and Child with a Donor (Copy of the 'Maelbeke Madonna') c. 1445-50', in *Van Eyck to Dürer. Early Netherlandish Paintings and Central Europe 1430-1530*, exh. cat., ed. T.-H. Borchert with contributions by Julien Chapuis et al, Lannoo, Tielt, 2010, pp. 153-55, p. 153 and S. F. Jones, "New evidence for the date, function and historical significance of Jan van Eyck's 'Van Maelbeke Virgin'", *The Burlington Magazine*, February 2006, pp. 73-81.

¹⁴ J. Bruyn: *Van Eyck Problemen. De Levensbron. Het werk van een leerling van Jan van Eyck*, Utrecht 1957.

¹⁵ M. J. Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, I (The Van Eycks and Petrus Christus), trans. H. Norden, comments & Notes by N. Veronée-Verhaegen, 1924, reprint New York, Washington, D.C., 1967, p. 81; E. Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting, Its Origins and Character*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1953, pp. xx-xx; Bruyn, op. cit. (note 11), pp. 115-121 (Bruyn dismissed Panofsky's idea that Christus collaborated on the Detroit *Jerome* and the Frick *Virgin*, arguing instead that a direct relationship with Van Eyck was corroborated by two different paintings: the *Lamentation* in the Louvre and the lost Dessau *Crucifixion*).

¹⁶ Friedländer, op. cit. (note 12), p. 81; M.P.J. Martens, *Petrus Christus: A Cultural Biography*, in M. Ainsworth, with contributions by M. P. J. Martens, *Petrus Christus. Renaissance Master of Bruges*, New York 1994, pp. 15-23, p. 15. J. M. Upton, *Petrus Christus. His Place in Fifteenth-Century Flemish Painting*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park and London, 1990, p. 7.

¹⁷ Panofsky, op. cit. (note 12), p. xx.

¹⁸ Bruyn, op. cit. (note 11), p. 100, 115.

¹⁹ For Van Eyck's children, see Weale, op. cit. (note 2), p. xl, no. 22, p. xlvii, no. 31 and p. xlix, no. 36 and Paviot, op. cit. (note 2), p. 90.

²⁰ J. K. Steppe, 'Lambert van Eyck en het portret van Jacoba van Beieren', *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, Klasse der Schone Kunsten*, Jaargang 44, 1983, pp. 53-86. The document (Leuven, K.U. Leuven, University Archives, B.H. 76.2) is an early seventeenth-century inventory of the Castle of Arenberg at Heverlee, near Leuven, drawn up for Karel van Croÿ (Charles de Croÿ), the fourth Duke of Aarschot (d. 1612).

²¹ Steppe, op. cit. (note 16), pp. 60, 62, 85.

²² On this possible role for Jan's widow, see for example S. F. Jones, "The Use of Patterns by Jan van Eyck's Assistants and Followers", in *Investigating Jan van Eyck*, eds. S. Foister, S. Jones and D. Cool, Brepols Publishers, Turnhout, 2000, pp. 197-207, p. 197; T.-H. Borchert, 'Introduction, Jan van Eyck's Workshop', in *The Age of Van Eyck. The Mediterranean World and Early Netherlandish Painting 1430-1530*, exh. cat., Ludion: Bruges, 2002, pp. 9-32, pp. 15, 25.

²³ Upton, op. cit. (note 13), pp. 8-19, and in particular p. 9, n. 9; Martens, op. cit. (note 13), p. 15.

²⁴ For the idea that Christus was active in the posthumous workshop, see M. W. Ainsworth, 'Madonna and Child with a Donor', in *Petrus Christus. Renaissance Master of Bruges*, exh. cat., M. W. Ainsworth, with contributions by M.P.J. Martens, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1994, pp. 182-184. T.-H. Borchert, *Van Eyck*, Taschen, Hong Kong, Köln, London, Los Angeles, Madrid, Paris, Tokyo, 2008, pp. 75-76; T.-H. Borchert, op. cit. (note 9), pp. 153-55. T.-H. Borchert, 'Being There: Jan van Eyck and Petrus Christus in Bruges', in *The Charterhouse of Bruges. Jan van Eyck, Petrus Christus and Jan Vos* by Emma Capron with M. Ainsworth and T.-H. Borchert, exh. cat., The Frick Collection, New York, in association with D. Giles Limited, London, 2018, pp. 91-105, p. 102; M. W. Ainsworth, 'Attribution Mysteries of the *Virgin and Child with St. Barbara*, *St. Elizabeth*, and *Jan Vos*', *ibidem.*, pp. 71-89, p. 87.

²⁵ S. Jones, 1998, pp. 17-20, 184-86; S. F. Jones, op. cit. (note 18), p. 197; S. F. Jones, "Jan van Eyck and Spain", *Boletín del Museo del Prado*, vol. 32, no. 50, 2014, pp. 30-49, p. 45.

²⁶ See the forthcoming article T. De Meester, J. Dumolyn, S. F. Jones, W. Leloup, B. Schotte and M. Speecke, 'Meester Jans huus van Eicke. The house, workshop and environment of Jan van Eyck in Bruges: new evidence from the archives' (eds. T.-H. Borchert, M. Martens and J. Dumolyn, *Van Eyck. An Optical Revolution*, exh. cat., Hannibal, Ghent, 2019).

²⁷ Weale, op. cit. (note 2), p. 26; W. H. James Weale and M. Walter Brockwell, *The Van Eycks and their Art*, London 1912, p. 22.

²⁸ In an explanatory footnote, without giving an explicit source, Weale stated that 'the accounts for the following years [post 1456] are wanting' (Weale, op. cit. (note 2), p. 26). The accounts were likely those of the *Obediëntie* of Saint Donatian's (Bisschoppelijk Archief Brugge (cited hereafter as BAB), *Obediëntie van Sint-Donaas*, G130-131), which Weale had used for his earlier research on Van Eyck's house (W. H. J. Weale, *Notes sur Jean van Eyck. Réfutation des erreurs de M. l'Abbé Carton et des théories de M. le Comte de Laborde suivie de nouveaux documents découverts dans les archives de Bruges*, London, Brussels and Leipzig 1861, pp. 6-14). These are indeed wanting, although not after 1456 as Weale claimed, but after 1459-60.

²⁹ BAB, *Obediëntie van Sint-Donaas*, G128: rekening 1438, f° 14^r. Before that date, the annual charge was paid by a certain Johannes Monachi ('Jan de Muenc'): *ibidem*: rekening 1435, f° 14^r. A painter in Bruges called Jan de Meunic is recorded between 1448 and 1470, though there was also an important 'de Muenc' family of carpenters in the beginning of the fifteenth century (Jan and Jacop de Muenc, among others) with properties in the nearby Goezenputstraat and Zonnekemeers (for the painter, see Albert Schouteet, *De Vlaamse primitieven te Brugge: bronnen voor de schilderkunst te Brugge tot de dood van Gerard David*, vol. 2, Brussels, 2004, pp. 77-78).

³⁰ BAB, *Obediëntie van Sint-Donaas*, G129 en G130, passim.

³¹ BAB, *Obediëntie van Sint-Donaas*, G129: rekening 1441-43, f° 14^r en 15^v.

³² BAB, *Obediëntie van Sint-Donaas*, A191, f° 224^v.

³³ BAB, *Obediëntie van Sint-Donaas*, A194, f° 58^v. The annuity is here described as mortgaged on 'twee steenen woensten loofwijs staende met wat aerve ende plaetse van lande ter strate met eenen muere ande zuudtside daer an. Item noch up een

love ende een cleen huusekin booven de eerste steede die van steenen es met een cleen houten ghevelken ande noordside daer an al neffens malcandren, staende ande oostside vander strate ghenaeft de Oostmeersch tusschen een huus met stroo ghedect, hebbende eenen steenen ghevele, toebehoorende Pieter Eenhoghe, temmerman, ande zuudside ende de aerde ende plaetse van lande hebbende een muur ter straten waert toebehoorende Pieter Aert, steenhauwere, ande noordside' (two stone dwellings parallel to the street with some open space at the street side and a stone wall at the south side. Next, on a shelter and a small house with a small wooden façade, north of the first stone house, all next to one another, located at the east side of the Oostmeers, between a house with a thatched roof and a stone façade belonging to the carpenter Pieter Eenhoghe to the south, and the premises of Pieter Aert, stonemason, with a stone wall at the street side, to the north).

³⁴ SAB, Oud Archief (cited hereafter as *OA*), 182: Verkopeningen bij decreet 1561-81, f° 143^v-144^r. The parcel sold was described as 'een huus met zijnen toebehoorten wijlen gheheeten de Wilde Zee, met een dweersloove ter zuudtzijde daerneffens staende, ten voorhoofde neffens elcanderen in de Oostmeersch an de oostzijde van der strate.' (a house with its belongings formerly known as *de Wilde Zee*, with a house to the south of it, lying next to each other in the Oostmeers on the east side of the street).

³⁵ The deed of sale designated the northern house as *de Wilde Zee* while the 1580 register assigns this name to the southern house, a contradiction that must stem from the fact that both houses previously formed a single unit called *de Wilde Zee*.

³⁶ SAB, *OA*, 138: Zestendelen, Onze-Lieve-Vrouw, fols. 596² en 597.

³⁷ SAB, *OA*, 182: Verkopeningen bij decreet 1581-87, fol. 151. Earlier, Pieter van den Berghe was also the owner of the houses to the north of *de Wilde Zee*, which he sold to the same Inghelbrecht Vlamync in 1580 (document cited at note 34 above, fols. 592² and 596).

³⁸ The latter, born around 1515, is recorded in the archives of the guild of the Bruges tanners up to 1559, but not subsequently, not even in a list of all of the guild members compiled in 1568; see Rijksarchief Brugge, *Ambachten Brugge*, 71, fols. 103^r and 116^r.

³⁹ For transcriptions of the texts by De Heere and Van Vaernewijck, see Weale, *op. cit.* (note 2), p. lxxix, lxxxvi, xc. There are no contemporary sources for the sister of the Van Eycks. In an article of 1847, Charles Carton cited the notes of the architect and collector Pierre-Jacques Goetghebuer (1789-1866) who found in the written subscription to the guild of *Onze-Lieve-Vrouw-op-de-Rade* in the church of Saint John in Ghent a master *Hubrech Van Hyke* in 1412 and his sister *Mergriete van Hyke* in 1418 (C. L. Carton, 'Les trois frères van Eyck', *Annales de la Société d'Émulation pour l'Étude de l'Histoire et les Antiquités de la Flandre* 9, 1847, pp. 237-326, pp. 324-5). The guild register is now missing (see Daniel Lievois, 'Het archiefmateriaal over Hubert van Eyck in Gent', *Handelingen der Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent* 67, 2013, pp. 59-67, pp. 64-5).

⁴⁰ The unreliable Carton seems to have misstated his own source, as he wrote that the name was listed in the accounts of the chapter of Saint Donatian between 1438 and 1465 (Carton, *op. cit.* (note 37), p. 265), whereas it appears in the accounts of the *Obediëntie* of Saint Donatian. His assertion that the name could be found in the accounts until 1465 cannot be verified since the accounts of the *Obediëntie* are missing between 1460 and 1479.

⁴¹ That *Jooris sHeics* was dead before 1420 is clear from a document where *Jacop Pieterszuene Weytins* and his wife transferred half of two houses, a single-room dwelling and the accompanying premises to the widow and heirs of the abovementioned *Jooris*; for this document and the career of Margaret sHeex, see D. Desmet, 'Het begijnhof 'De Wijngaerd' te Brugge. Onderzoek naar het dagelijks leven rond het midden van de vijftiende eeuw' (M.A. thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1979), p. 217-9.

⁴² T. De Meester et al., *op. cit.* (note 24).

⁴³ T. De Meester et al., *op. cit.* (note 24).

⁴⁴ It is uncertain why Weale referred to the year 1456, as the accounts of the *Obediëntie* of the Chapter of Saint Donatian's end slightly later, in 1459-60: this may have been an error on Weale's part. For the town lottery, see SAB, no. 273, fols. 3 and 14v. The entry on fol. 3 ('..de wed(uw)e Jans va(n) Eyck...') occurs under the heading 'Item betaelt diverse Rentiers bij quitancien'.

⁴⁵ Weale, *op. cit.* (note 2), p. xlix-l, no. 36.

⁴⁶ D. Van de Casteele, *Keuren 1441-1774, livre d'admission 1453-1574, & autres documents inédits concernant la gilde de St. Luc de Bruges; suivis des keuren de la corporation des peintres, sculpteurs et verriers de Gand, 1541-1575*, Bruges, 1867.

⁴⁷ See Reynolds, *op. cit.* (note 6), p. 22; M. Droz-Emmert, *Catharina van Hemessen. Malerin der Renaissance*, Basel, 2004, pp. 37-38.

⁴⁸ L. De Bast, Notes on the 'Série inférieure de la grande composition peinte, pour l'église de S. Jean à Gand, par Jean van Eyck' by G. F. Waagen, *Messenger des Sciences et des Arts*, 1825, p. 168, notes 1 and 2; p. 169, note 1. For a transcription of two known versions of the chronicle, only one of which is now extant, see Jones, *op. cit.* (note 10), pp. 73-81, p. 81.

⁴⁹ For the idea that the chronicle transmits a text from a written document see Jones, *op. cit.* (note 10), p. 77).

⁵⁰ For the documents, see J. Sanchis y Sivera, *Pintores Medievales en Valencia*, Valencia, 1930, pp. 114-15 (Archivo del Reino de Valencia, Mestre Racional 59 (Batlia general de Valencia. Comptes d'administració, Valencia, 1444), fols. 273v-274r, 2 May 1444 and fol. 283v, 22 August 1444) and R. Weiss, 'Jan van Eyck and the Italians', *Italian Studies*, XI (1956), p. 15.

⁵¹ Archivio di Stato di Modena, Camera Ducale, Computisteria, Mandati, Vol. 7 (1445-1446), c.317 v. We are most grateful to Lorne Campbell for sharing this document with us.

⁵² Algemeen Rijksarchief Brussel, Rekenkamer/Chambre des Comptes, No. 32489, Bruges Stadsrekening 2 September 1434-2 September 1435, fol. 61r. For a full transcription see I. Geelen, 'Jan van Eyck, Polychromer (and Designer?) of Statues', in *Van Eyck Studies, Papers presented at the eighteenth Symposium for the Study of Underdrawing and Technology in Painting, Brussels, 19-21 September 2012*, ed. C. Currie, L. Preedy et al, Peeters, Paris, Leuven, Walpole MA, 2016, pp. 494-507, p. 496 (note that the transcription in Weale, *op. cit.* (note 2), no. 25, p. xliii-xliv omits the final lines of the original document).

⁵³ For Van Tongeren and Van den Driessche, see C. Vanden Haute, *La Corporation des Peintres de Bruges, Registres d'Admission A. 1453-1578. B 1618-1781. Obituaire XVe s. Extraits aux renouvellements de la Loi de Bruges et des serments*

des corporations, 1362-1613, Bruges: Van Cappel-Missiaen [c.1913], pp. 218-19; A. Schouteet, *De Vlaamse Primitieven te Brugge. Bronnen voor de schilderkunst te Brugge tot de dood van Gerard David*, eds. E. Duverger and H. Pauwels, vol. 2, Paleis der Academiën, Brussels, 2004, pp. 180, 191-93.

⁵⁴ T.De Meester et al., *op. cit.* (note 24).

⁵⁵ For Vrelant's collaboration with Eyckian manuscript illuminators, see B. Bousmanne, '*Item a Guillaume Wyelant aussi enlumineur*'. *Willem Vrelant. Un aspect de l'enluminure dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux sous le mécénat des ducs de Bourgogne, Philippe le Bon et Charles le Téméraire*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1997, p.72.

⁵⁶ For this explanation, see M.P.J. Martens, *op. cit.* (note 16), p. 15.

⁵⁷ For overviews of the argument: see for example Martens, *op. cit.* (note 13), p. 15; Upton, *op. cit.* (note 13), pp. 8-11.

⁵⁸ New research on this problem by Jan Dumolyn will be published in a forthcoming article.