

HIERONYMUS BOSCH

Flemish school, active by 1480 - died 1516.

Very little is known of this artist's life. According to van Mander he was born in s'Hertogenbosch (Bois-le-Duc) in North Brabant ; and a claim has been made for the discovery of his birth-date as October 2, 1453.⁽¹⁾ As well as being called Jeronimus Bosch, which corresponds to the way in which he signed his paintings -- he was also known by the family name of van Aken, and it is now known that he came from a dynasty of painters in s'Hertogenbosch, which included his grandfather Jan, who died in 1481, his father Anthonis, who is recorded between 1472 and 1481, and also two uncles and two brothers who were equally master painters. It was in s'Hertogenbosch, correspondingly, that he spent most of his life. He is first recorded there as "Jeroen the painter" in 1480-81, was married by June 1481 to Aleyt, daughter of Guyart van der Mervenne, and became a member of the Brotherhood of Our Lady in 1486-87. He is subsequently mentioned a number of times, between 1488 and 1512, in the register of the Brotherhood, and is known to have made a ~~a~~ made a design for a stained glass window for the chapel of the Brotherhood, and also a cross for a surplice and a design for a candlestick. In 1504 he was commissioned to paint a Last Judgement for Philip the Handsome, Archduke of Austria. He died in s'Hertogenbosch some time in 1516. Works of his were in private hands in Venice by 1520, if not earlier. Later, in the mid-sixteenth century, Philip II of Spain and Don Felipe da Guevara were both extremely interested in his work, and consequently many important pictures which they acquired are in Spain and Portugal. This interest, along with the evident popularity of the artist's bizarre inventions in the north, led to a multiplication of variants and replicas of his work which appears to have continued throughout the sixteenth century, and probably later still. Bosch's key paintings consist of triptychs, or composites of other kinds, which are filled throughout with a rich vein of allegory and complex allegorical and moral meanings.

Temptation of Saint Anthony

oil on panel, $23\frac{3}{4} \times 19\frac{1}{4}$ ins.

Provenance

Private colln., Budapest. Acquired by Dr Clowes in 19 .

Exhibited

Budapest Museum, 1927⁽¹⁾; Art of the United Nations, Denver Art Museum, Chappell House, Denver, Jan.-Feb.1947, no.97 ; Shadow and Substance, The Art Film and its Sources, Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Feb.-Mar.1954, no.7, ill. ; Ind. , 1959, no.7

Versions

There are numerous versions of the Lisbon panel, e.g.

1. Sao Paulo Museum, Brazil. $50\frac{1}{4} \times 40$ ins. From the Convent of St Sophie near Seville (Catalogo das Pinturas....., 1963, no.179, ill.)
2. Boymans Museum, Rotterdam, van Beuningen colln. $19\frac{1}{2} \times 15\frac{3}{4}$ ins.
3. Léon Cardon sale, St Gudule, Brussels, Jun.27-30, 1921. 74×71 cm.
4. Bechstein sale, Wertheim, Berlin. Dec.11, 1930, no.9. 70×81.5 cm.
5. Musée Royal des Beaux Arts, Antwerp, no.25. 88×71 cm. Signed Jheronimus bosch, in gothic letters. Attr. to Pieter Huys (ca.1519-1581) by analogy with the Temptation in the Musée Meyer van den Bergh, Antwerp, which is signed by him (see A.J.J.Delen, Catalogue Descriptif, Maîtres Anciens, 1948, p.137).
6. Guimbaud sale, Muller's, Amsterdam, Nov.4, 1905, no.10787 (central panel of a triptych ; photo in Frick Art Ref. Lib.)⁽²⁾
7. Musées Royaux, Brussels, no.50³³². Copy of the whole triptych. Central panel 133.5×119.5 cm; signed IHERONIMUS BOSCH.⁽²⁾

Certified by W.R.Valentiner (1944)⁽³⁾ to be after the Lisbon Temptation and by Bosch himself. It is in fact a straight-forward replica --probably from the sixteenth century --of the central panel of the Lisbon triptych.⁽⁴⁾

Saint Anthony¹ is shown being assailed by a variety of temptations which symbolize the sins of the world. To his left a scene occurs which seems to be a mixture of a black mass and a witches' sabbath, and to his right in the original Christ himself appears in the ruined tower, pointing to a crucifix on the altar which is visible here. The scenes depicted on the ruined column include two Old Testament scenes, Moses receiving the Tables of the Law and the arrival of Moses's emissaries from Hebron with grapes from the Promised Land (antitypes of the coming of the Holy Ghost and the Baptism of Christ) and scenes of heresy, including the sacrifice of a swan and the worship of the Golden Calf. These scenes may represent hallucinations of Saint Anthony's, rather than actual rituals, since they are rendered as weightless and gleaming.⁽⁵⁾ The rest of the panel is filled with motifs associated with sorcery and witchcraft. They include a whale and a sawfish, a flying man on the back of a monster, a giant rat and egg-like forms.

Notes.

1. According to Valentiner ; see n.3
2. For listings of further versions, see M.J.Friedländer, Die Altniederländischen Malerei, ^{Berlin} V, Berlin, 1927, pp.149f. and XIV, 1937, pp.99f. ; and C.de Tolnay, Hieronymus Bosch, London, 1966, p.358.
3. Doc. of Dec.20, 1944, Clowes archives
4. Museu de Arte Antigua, Lisbon. 51½ x 46 ins. Signed Jheronimus Bosch (De Tolnay, 1966, cat.no.18, ill. p.136). There are some small differences in the present case --e.g. in the group halfway up the left-hand side --but they are of minor consequence and may be attributable to the use of an intermediate version.

Notes, cont.

5. See De Tolnay, 1966, p.357. More elaborate interpretations are discussed critically there.