



HIERONYMUS BOSCH (c. 1450–1516)

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Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516) *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1495-1505, right panel, middle

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- This talk is loosely based on an exhibition that opened in 2016 on the **500th anniversary** of the death of Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450-1516).
- The first thing to say is that we **know very little of the artist**, when he painted each work and their meaning. This has not prevented a great deal of research and even more speculation driven by the power, uniqueness and suggestiveness of his work.
- I will first, briefly, put his work in the **context of other artists** of the same period and then look at each of his major works in turn.

NOTES

- He was born in 's-Hertogenbosch (pronounced 'set-erten-bosh') as Jheronimus van Aken (pronounced 'jeronimus van arken') but signs his paintings as Jheronimus Bosch. He was **famous in his lifetime** and is known in Spain as El Bosco and Philip II (1527-1598) was a great admirer and bought many of his works.
- The exhibition I mentioned was in 's-Hertogenbosch and it brought together 20 of his 25 surviving panels. The exhibition was also held at the Prado in Madrid which holds his most famous work *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, which can never be moved. I was fortunate enough to see the exhibition in Madrid.
- In the past, art historians have speculated on his work and have claimed he incorporated heretical messages such as the Adamite, Cathar or even Rosicrucian beliefs. Other theories find a basis in astrology or alchemy or even that he was a drug addict and they represent his drug-induced dreams. However, recent historians nearly all agree that his work incorporates the strict moral codes of the period and is

concerned with sin and its consequences.

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REFERENCES

Ed. Pilar Silva Maroto, *Bosch* (Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, 2016)

<https://medium.com/art-stories/hieronymus-bosch-visions-of-genius-b0695bd3063d>

BOSCH'S COMPLETE WORKS (FROM WIKIPEDIA)

TRIPTYCHS

- Adoration of the Magi, ca 1491 - 98, oil on wood, 138 × 144 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain, the outer panels form a single image, Saint Gregory's Mass, rendered in grisaille.
- Saint Gregory's Mass, ca 1491 - 98, oil on wood, 138 × 144 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.
- The Garden of Earthly Delights, ca 1495-1505, oil on wood, 220 × 389 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain, the outer panels form a single image, The Creation of the World, rendered in grisaille.
- The Creation of the World, ca 1495-1505, oil on wood, 220 × 389 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.
- Hermit Saints Triptych, ca 1495-1505, oil on wood, 86 × 100 cm, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

- The Last Judgment, ca 1495-1505, oil on wood, 99.5 × 117.5 cm, Groeningemuseum, Bruges, Belgium, attributed to Bosch and/or his workshop. The outer panels form a single image, Christ Crowned with Thorns.
- Christ Crowned with Thorns, outside panels of "The Last Judgment", ca 1495-1505, oil on wood, 99.5 × 117.5 cm, Groeningemuseum, Bruges, Belgium.
- The Martyrdom of St. Julia, ca 1495-1505, oil on wood, 104 × 119 cm, Palazzo Ducale, Venice, Italy.
- The Temptation of St. Anthony (left, central and right panels), ca 1500-10, oil on wood, 131.5 × 225 cm, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, Portugal, outside panels of The Temptation of St. Anthony.
- The Temptation of St. Anthony (reverse side of the outer panels), ca 1500-10, oil on wood, 131.5 × 225 cm, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, Portugal, The outer panels show two images: The Arrest of Christ and Christ Bearing the Cross, both rendered in grisaille.
- The Last Judgment, ca 1500-05, oil on wood, 163.7 × 127 cm (central panel), 167.7 × 60 cm (left wing), 167 × 60 cm (right wing), Academie für Bildenden Künste, Vienna, Austria, The outer panels show two images: Saint James the Greater and Saint Bavo, both rendered in grisaille.
- Outside panels of The Last Judgment, ca 1500-05, Oil on wood, 167.7 × 60 cm (left wing), 167 × 60 cm (right wing), Academie für Bildenden Künste, Vienna, Austria.
- The Haywain, 1510-16, oil on wood, 147 × 232 cm (Escorial version), 135 x 190 cm (Prado version), El Escorial, Spain (version 1), Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain (version 2), Two versions of this triptych exist, one in El Escorial, the other in Museo del Prado. Both are most probably copies of a lost Bosch original. The outer panels form a single image, usually referred to as The Path of Life aka The Pedlar.
- Outside panels of *The Haywain Triptych*, 1510-16, oil on wood, 135 x 190 cm (Prado version), Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain (version 2).
- Passion Triptych, c. 1530, commissioned by Mencía de Mendoza (1508-1554) for her burial chapel (the Chapel of the Epiphany) in the convent of Santo Domingo, Valencia, oil on panel, 163 × 382 cm, Museu de Belles Arts de València, Valencia, Spain, Probably not a work by Bosch, but by a Flemish follower.

DIPTYCHS AND POLYPTYCHS

- Diptych (*Hell and the Flood*), oil on wood, 69.5 × 35 cm (each panel), 34.5 cm (diameter of paintings on the reverse sides), Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands
 - Mankind Beset by Devils (panel at left outside of The Fall of the Rebel Angels),

- The Fall of the Rebel Angels
- Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat
- Mankind Beset by Devils (panel at right outside of Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat)
- Polyptych (*Visions of the Hereafter*), 1505-15, Oil on wood, 86.5 × 39.5 (each), Palazzo Grimani, Venice, Italy, , Also known as Cardinal Grimani's Altarpiece. Probably part of a larger (four more paintings) altarpiece, now lost.
 - Fall of the Damned
 - Hell
 - Terrestrial Paradise
 - Ascent of the Blessed

SINGLE PANELS AND FRAGMENTS OF LOST ALTARPIECES

The life of Christ

- Adoration of the Child, oil on wood, 66 × 43 cm, Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne, Germany, Bosch's authorship is disputed; possibly a copy after a lost Bosch original. Another, wider version of the same painting is kept in Noordbrabants Museum, 's-Hertogenbosch (on loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), and yet another is in Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique in Brussels.
- Adoration of the Magi, ca 1470-80, oil on wood, 71.1 × 56.5 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA, described by Friedländer as 'an especially early work by the master'; later deemed a 16th-century pastiche; more recently thought to be a work dating back to the 1470s from Bosch's immediate circle
- Adoration of the Magi, oil on wood, 94 × 74 cm, Museum of Art, Philadelphia, USA
- Crucifixion With a Donor, oil on wood, 74.7 × 61 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, Belgium
- Christ Carrying the Cross (Vienna)[top panel], Christ Child with a Walking Frame(Vienna)[bottom panel], ca 1490-1510, oil on wood, 57 × 32 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria, The reverse side of the panel has another painting on it, Christ Child with a Walking Frame (diameter 28 cm).
- Christ Carrying the Cross (Ghent), ca 1530-40, oil on wood, 74 × 81 cm, Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent, Belgium, Bosch's authorship is disputed.
- Christ Carrying the Cross (Madrid), ca 1495-1505, oil on wood, 150 × 94 cm, Palacio Real, Madrid, Spain
- Christ Crowned with Thorns (London), ca 1490-1500, oil on wood, 73 × 59 cm, National Gallery, London, UK
- Christ Crowned with Thorns (Escorial), ca 1530-40, oil on wood, 165 × 195 cm, El

Escorial, Spain, Painted neither by Bosch nor his workshop.

- Ecce Homo (Philadelphia), oil on wood, 52 × 54 cm, Museum of Art, Philadelphia, USA, Previously attributed to Bosch; dendrochronological analysis proved it to be a late 16th-century work by a follower.
- Ecce Homo (Frankfurt), ca 1475-85, oil on wood, 71 × 61 cm, Städel Museum, Frankfurt, Germany
- The Marriage Feast at Cana, oil on wood, 93 × 72 cm, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands, Several versions of this painting exist. However, none of these date from Bosch's lifetime.

SAINTS

- St. Jerome at Prayer, ca 1485-95, Oil on wood, 77 × 59 cm, Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent, Belgium
- St. Christopher Carrying the Christ Child, ca 1490-1500, oil on wood, 113 × 71.5 cm, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands
- St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness, ca 1490-95, oil on wood, 48.5 × 40 cm, Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid, Spain
- St. John the Evangelist on Patmos, ca 1490-95, oil on wood, 63 × 43.3 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany, The reverse side of the panel has a round double painting (diameter 39 cm) on it: Scenes from the Passion of Christ (outer circle) and The Pelican with Her Young (inner circle).
- Outside panel of St. John the Evangelist on Patmos, ca 1490-95, oil on wood, diameter 39 cm., Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany, The reverse side of the panel has a round double painting (diameter 39 cm) on it: Scenes from the Passion of Christ (outer circle) and The Pelican with Her Young (inner circle).
- The Temptation of St. Anthony, ca 1500-1510, oil on wood, 38.6 x 25.1 cm, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, There was a dispute as to whether this work was a Bosch autograph or a piece by the workshop until the Bosch Research and Conservation Project concluded it to be autograph based on evidence present in the underdrawing.
- The Temptation of St. Anthony, ca 1530-40, oil on wood, 70 × 51 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain, Bosch's authorship is disputed.

OTHER WORKS

- Terrestrial Paradise [left panel], Death of the Reprobate [right panel], circa 1500 (1490-1510), oil on wood, left panel: Height: 34.5 cm (13.5 in); Width: 21 cm (8.2 in), right panel: 34.6 × 21.2 cm, private collection, New York, USA, "Paradise" and "Reprobate" are the left and right wings of a missing Last Judgement triptych
- Ship of Fools, ca 1500-10, oil on wood, 58 × 33 cm, Louvre, Paris, France, fragment of a lost triptych which also included Allegory of Gluttony and Lust (which is the lower part

of the Ship of Fools wing) and Death and the Miser (the other outer wing).

- Allegory of Gluttony and Lust, ca 1500-10, oil on wood, 35.8 × 32 cm, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, USA, fragment of a lost triptych which also included Ship of Fools (the Allegory would be the lower part of that outer wing) and Death and the Miser (the other outer wing).
- Death and the Miser, ca 1500-10, oil on wood, 92.6 × 30.8 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA, outer wing of a lost triptych. The other outer wing comprised Ship of Fools (top) and Allegory of Gluttony and Lust (bottom).
- The Ship of Fools/Death and the Miser triptych, a reconstruction of the left and right wings of the triptych: at upper left The Ship of Fools; at lower left: Allegory of Gluttony and Lust. panel at right is Death and the Miser. at Bottom the outer panel
- The Wayfarer, ca 1500-10, oil on wood, 71.5 cm (diameter), Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands, This is the outer panel of a lost triptych (possibly from the Ship of Fools triptych [?])
- Cutting the Stone, ca 1500-20, oil on wood, 48 × 35 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain, also known as The Cure of Folly.
- The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things, ca 1510-20, oil on wood, 120 × 150 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain, Bosch's authorship is disputed.
- The Last Judgment (fragment), ca 1530-40, oil on wood, 60 × 114 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany, fragment of a lost triptych. Bosch's authorship is disputed.
- The Conjuror, ca 1530-40, oil on wood, 53 × 65 cm, Musée Municipal, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France, Bosch's authorship is disputed.
- Head of a Halberdier, oil on wood, 28 × 20 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain, fragment of a Christ Crowned with Thorns by a follower of Bosch.
- Head of a Woman, oil on wood, 13 × 5 cm, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands, fragment, attribution uncertain.

Limbourg brothers (floruit 1402-1416), *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry - February*, 1412-16, 22.5 × 13.6 cm, Condé Museum, Château de Chantilly



Limbourg brothers (floruit 1402-1416), *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry - February*, 1412-16, 22.5 × 13.6 cm, Condé Museum, Château de Chantilly

- **Hieronymus Bosch** was an **Early Netherlandish artist** and their style is a continuation of **Late Gothic** which in the 14th century became **International Gothic** and it is found mostly in illuminated manuscripts.
- Here is an example of **International Gothic** from perhaps the most famous of all illuminated manuscripts, the *Très Riches Heures of the Duc de Berry* and this is *February*.
- We see an enclosure surrounding a farm with a sheep pen and, on the right, four beehives and a dovecote. Inside the house, a woman and a couple, a young man and woman warm themselves in front of the fire. The detail I like is the unashamed way the couple lift up their clothes to warm their nether regions.
- Outside, a man chops down a tree with an axe, bundles of sticks at his feet, while another gets ready to go inside while blowing on his hands to warm them. Further away, a third drives a donkey, loaded with wood, towards the neighbouring village.

NOTES

- The patron was John, Duke of Berry who died in 1416, the same year as the three Limbourg brothers, possibly of the plague.

EARLY NETHERLANDISH PAINTINGS



Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400–1464), *Descent from the Cross (Deposition of Christ)*, before 1443, depicted people, Jesus, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Mary of Clopas, John the Evangelist, Salome, Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary, oil on oak wood, 220 × 262 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid



Jan van Eyck (circa 1390–1441), *The Arnolfini Portrait (Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini (?) and his Wife)*, 1434, oil on oak panel, 82 × 59.5 cm, National Gallery, London

- Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400–1464), *Descent from the Cross (Deposition of Christ)*, before 1443, depicted people, Jesus, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Mary of Clopas, John the Evangelist, Salome, Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary, oil on oak wood, 220 × 262 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid
- Jan van Eyck (circa 1390–1441), *The Arnolfini Portrait (Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini (?) and his Wife)*, 1434, oil on oak panel, 82 × 59.5 cm, National Gallery, London
- Hieronymus Bosch was an **Early Netherlandish artist** also known as the '**Flemish Primitives**' who worked from about the 1420s to the 1520s. By the way, in this context 'primitive' is not pejorative but meant naive in the sense of pure and gentle.
- The Flemish Primitives were innovators of a **new artistic tradition** and were active in the Burgundian, and later Habsburg, Netherlands operating in Bruges, Ghent and Brussels which are all in present-day Belgium. The artists, for the first time, had a **very prominent position in society**.
- Here we see two well known Early Netherlandish artists.
 - **Rogier van der Weyden** (1399 or 1400-1464) painted mainly religious subjects and was highly successful in his lifetime. His paintings were exported to Italy and Spain, and he received commissions from, amongst others, Philip the Good, Netherlandish nobility, and foreign princes. By the latter half of the 15th century, he had **eclipsed Jan van Eyck** in popularity. However his fame lasted only until the 17th century, and largely due to changing taste, he was almost totally forgotten by the mid-18th century. His reputation was slowly rebuilt during the following 200 years; today he is known, with **Robert Campin** and **van Eyck**, as the

third (by birth date) of the three great Early Flemish artists.

- **Jan van Eyck** (c. 1390-1441), **one of the first artists to use oil paint on panels**, his best known works are the ***The Arnolfini Portrait*** (1434) in the National Gallery and the *Ghent Altarpiece*, completed 1432. Oil painting had existed before but he and his brother Hubert took it to new levels of naturalism and developed new techniques, such as using glazes.
- Their style was greatly appreciated in their time but fell out of favour until the nineteenth century when a few artists such as Eugène Delacroix appreciated their style. **Then, in 1902 a major exhibition of the Flemish Primitives was held in Bruges** and over 35,000 people attended and since then their reputation has continued to grow.

NOTES

- The **best-known Flemish Primitives in the order of their birth are Robert Campin** (c. 1375-1444) and **Jan van Eyck** (c. 1390-1441) in the 1420s and later **Rogier van der Weyden** (1399/1400–1464), **Dieric Bouts** (1415-1475), **Petrus Christus** (1410-1475), **Hans Memling** (1430-1494), **Hugo van der Goes** (1440-1482) and, of course, **Hieronymus Bosch** (c. 1450-1516). The period ended in the 1520s (although some historians include Pieter Breughel the Elder, 1525/30-1569).
- The **Burgundian Netherlands** comprised large parts of present-day Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as Luxembourg and parts of northern France. It was part of the House of Valois-Burgundy from 1384 to 1482 and became **part of the Habsburg Empire** through marriage. The Habsburg Netherlands began in 1482, a Holy Roman Empire fief in the Low Countries held by the House of Habsburg, and by the Spanish from 1556, it is **also known as Flanders**.

REFERENCES

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Netherlandish_painting
- <https://vlaamseprimitieven.vlaamsekunstcollectie.be/en/research/webpublications/the-flemish-primitives-whats-in-a-name/>



Robert Campin (1375/1379–1444), *Portrait of a Man*, c. 1435, oil and egg tempera on oak, 40.7 x 28.1 cm, National Gallery



Jan van Eyck (circa 1390 –1441), *Portrait of a Man (Self Portrait?)*, 1433, oil on panel, 25.5 cm x 19 cm, National Gallery

Robert Campin (1375/1379–1444), *Portrait of a Man*, c. 1435, oil and egg tempera on oak, 40.7 x 28.1 cm, National Gallery

Jan van Eyck (circa 1390 –1441), *Portrait of a Man (Self Portrait?)* or *Portrait of a Man in a Turban*, 1433, oil on panel, 25.5 cm x 19 cm, National Gallery

- The Flemish Primitives were part of the Northern Renaissance which overlapped the Italian Early and High Renaissance but early on developed independently and influenced Italian artists.
- The earliest Flemish Primitive by date of birth was:
 - **Robert Campin** (c. 1375-1444), **the first great master, highly acclaimed in his lifetime**. He was active by 1406 in Tournai, Belgium, and was the city's leading painter for the next 30 years. He did not sign or date his work so attribution is speculative. He was **influenced by the Limbourg brothers** (1385-1416), best known for *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (and Melchior Broederlam, c. 1350- c. 1409). This is a portrait of an unknown man and is a companion piece to a portrait of a woman, probably husband and wife. He look like a prosperous businessman worn down by the concerns of a stressful life.
- Here is a portrait by **Jan van Eyck** (c. 1390-1441), **as a comparison**. *Portrait of a Man* believed to be van Eyck himself. He is wearing a fashionable headdress for men. The hood which normally covers the shoulders has been piled up on his head making it look like a turban.

REFERENCES

- <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/robert-campin-a-man>
- <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/jan-van-eyck-portrait-of-a-man-self-portrait>



Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400–1464), *Portrait of a Lady*, c. 1460, oil on panel, 34 x 25.5 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington



Hans Memling (c. 1433 –1494), *Mater Dolorosa (The Sorrowful Mother)*, 1480s, oil on panel, 55 x 33 cm, Uffizi Gallery

Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400–1464), *Portrait of a Lady*, c. 1460, oil on panel, 34 x 25.5 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington

Hans Memling (c. 1433 –1494), *Mater Dolorosa (The Sorrowful Mother)*, 1480s, oil on panel, 55 x 33 cm, Uffizi Gallery

- The other important artist of this period is **Hans Memling** (c. 1430-1494) on the right. He was born in the Middle Rhine and moved to the Netherlands where he entered the Brussels workshop of Rogier van der Weyden on the left. In 1465 Memling he was made a citizen of Bruges, where he became one of the leading artists and the master of a large workshop. A tax document from 1480 lists him among its **wealthiest citizens**.
- From the start of the Protestant Reformation in the 1520s most religious artworks were destroyed often by unofficial and violent mobs. Northern Renaissance art fell out of favour although it was collected by some monarchs such as Mary of Hungary and Philip II of Spain who favoured **Rogier van der Weyden** and **Hieronymus Bosch** and more broadly the German artist **Albrecht Dürer**. They were then largely forgotten in the 18th century, then there was some interest among scholars in the early nineteenth century and popular interest in the late 19th century principally for **Jan van Eyck** and **Hans Memling**. Then, as I said, in **1902**, there was a major exhibition of their work which was a "turning point in the appreciation of early Netherlandish art".

REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rogier_van_der_Weyden

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Memling



Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1526/1530–1569), *Dull Gret, (Dulle Griet)*, c. 1562, oil on panel, 117.4 x 162 cm, Museum Mayer van den Bergh

Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1526/1530–1569), *Dull Gret, (Dulle Griet)*, c. 1563, oil on panel, 117.4 x 162 cm, Museum Mayer van den Bergh

- One further artist worth mentioning is **Pieter Bruegel** (also Brueghel or Breughel) the Elder (c. 1525–1530 – 9 September 1569) was the most significant artist of Dutch and Flemish Renaissance painting, a painter and printmaker from Brabant, known for his landscapes and peasant scenes (so-called genre painting); he was a pioneer in making both types of subject the focus in large paintings. Little is known about where he was born or his family background.
- This painting depicts an heroic woman leading an army to pillage Hell. Griet was a disparaging name given to any bad-tempered, shrewish woman. Her mission refers to the Flemish proverb: *She could plunder in front of hell and return unscathed*. Bruegel is therefore making fun of noisy, aggressive women.
- Sometimes translated as "Mad Meg" as both were nicknames for large siege-cannon.
- While Bruegel's Hellscapes were influenced by Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights's* right panel, his aesthetic betrays a more pessimistic view of humanity's fate.
- While her female followers loot a house, Griet advances towards the mouth of Hell through a landscape populated by Boschian monsters. They represent the sins that are punished there. Griet wears male armour — a breastplate, a mailed glove and a metal cap; her military costume is parodied by the monster in a helmet beside her, who pulls up a drawbridge. A knife hangs from her side, while in her right hand she carries a sword. A book of proverbs published in Antwerp in 1568 contains a saying which is very close in spirit to Bruegel's painting:
 - "One woman makes a din, two women a lot of trouble, three an annual

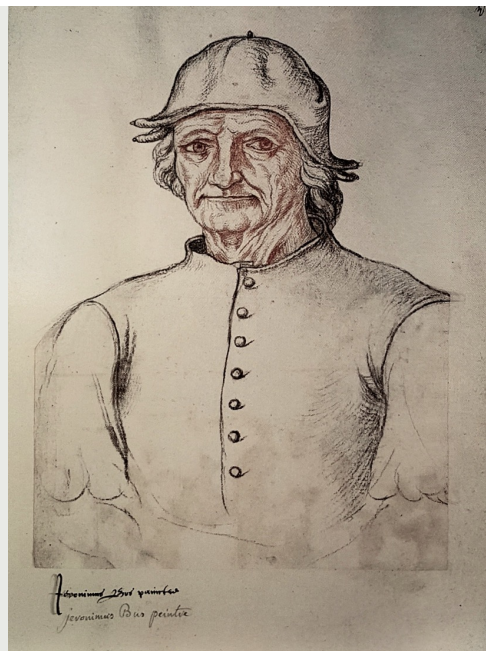
market, four a quarrel, five an army, and against six the Devil himself has no weapon."

- **BIO:BRUEGEL**

- **Pieter Bruegel** (also Brueghel or Breughel) the Elder (c. 1525–1530 – 9 September 1569) was the most significant artist of Dutch and Flemish Renaissance painting, a painter and printmaker from Brabant, known for his landscapes and peasant scenes (so-called genre painting); he was a pioneer in making both types of subject the focus in large paintings. Little is known about where he was born or his family background.
- He was a formative influence on Dutch Golden Age painting and later painting in general in his innovative choices of subject matter, as one of the first generation of artists to grow up when religious subjects had ceased to be the natural subject matter of painting. He also painted no portraits, the other mainstay of Netherlandish art. After his training and travels to Italy, he returned in 1555 to settle in Antwerp, where he worked mainly as a prolific designer of prints for the leading publisher of the day. Only towards the end of the decade did he switch to make painting his main medium, and all his famous paintings come from the following period of little more than a decade before his early death, when he was probably in his early forties, and at the height of his powers.



Cornelis Cort (c. 1533-1578), *Bosch*, c. 1572, copper engraving



Attrib. Jacques Le Boucq (1520–1573), *Portrait of Hieronymus Bosch*, c. 1550

Cornelis Cort (c. 1533-1578), *Bosch*, c. 1572, copper engraving

Attributed to Jacques Le Boucq (1520–1573), *Portrait of Hieronymus Bosch*, c. 1550

BIO: BOSCH

- This is Hieronymus Bosch (born Jheronimus van Aken, i.e. Jerome from Aachen, c. 1450 – 9 August 1516) but notice it was drawn over thirty years after his death so it may be an imagined likeness. (CLICK) This is another likeness produced even later.
- Hieronymus Bosch was a Dutch/Netherlandish draughtsman and painter from Brabant. Brabant was a duchy within the Burgundian Netherlands and it had four parts each with its own capital including Brussels, Antwerp and 's-Hertogenbosch ('**set-hertgenbosch** '). Bosch was born into an artistic family, his father, grandfather and three of his uncles were artists so it is likely his father or an uncle taught him to paint.
- Within his lifetime his work was collected in the Netherlands, Austria, and Spain, and **widely copied**, especially his macabre and nightmarish depictions of hell. **Little is known of his life**, though there are some records. He **spent most of it in the town of 's-Hertogenbosch** ('the duke's forest', often called 'Den Bosch', 'the forest'), where he was born in his grandfather's house.
- Then when he was 38 (in 1488) he joined the highly respected international organisation the **Illustrious Brotherhood of Our Blessed Lady**. **The Illustrious Brotherhood of Our Blessed Lady** was an important international religious confraternity founded in 1318 in 's-Hertogenbosch. His father was artistic advisor to the Brotherhood and Bosch became one of the forty inner members. The fraternity had 7,000 outer members including the nobility of Europe so it helped spread his reputation across Europe. **Philip II of Spain acquired many** of Bosch's paintings; as a

result, the Prado Museum in Madrid now owns *The Adoration of the Magi*, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, the tabletop painting of *The Seven Deadly Sins* and the *Four Last Things* and *The Haywain Triptych*.

- (Philip II, 1527-1598, married Queen Mary I of England, 1554-59, and in 1588 sent an armada to invade Elizabethan England.)
- Bosch's works are generally organised into **three periods**. There are no authenticated works from his early period from c. 1470 to 1485 (age 20-35), **there are seven works from the middle period**, age 35-50, c.1485–1500), and **13 from the late period** (age 50-66), c. 1500 until his death in 1516.
 - (He produced at least sixteen triptychs, of which eight are fully intact, and another five in fragments. His paintings are on wood panel which have been dated using dendrochronology. His most famous work *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (c. 1495-1505) dates from between his middle and his late period.)
- **Influence:** his pessimistic and fantastical style **cast a wide influence on northern art of the 16th century**, with **Pieter Bruegel the Elder** (1525-1569) being his best-known follower; his best known work is *The Hunters in the Snow* (1565). Today Bosch is seen as a **hugely individualistic painter** with deep insight into humanity's desires and deepest fears although nothing is known of his thoughts or the meaning of his art. Only about twenty-five paintings are recognised as by his hand and eight drawings. About another half dozen paintings are attributed to his workshop. His most acclaimed works consist of a few triptych altarpieces, including *The Garden of Earthly Delights*.

NOTES

- We know he died in 1516 aged 66 as there is an entry in the accounts of the Brotherhood of Our Lady recording his death.
- **Style:** the Netherlandish style of painting at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century was to paint using **multiple transparent glazes which concealed the brushwork**. **Bosch painted impasto which means using thick layers of paint with visible brushstrokes**. Bosch painted mostly using oil on wood panels using the typical pigments of the period such as **azurite** (a soft deep blue copper mineral) for blue skies, **green malachite** (copper-based green-banded mineral) or **verdigris** (made by applying acetic acid to copper plates) for foliage and the foreground, **lead-tin-yellow** (lead stannate or lead silicate), **ochres** (a natural clay that gets its colour from ferric oxide) and **red lake** (carmines, also called cochineal, a bright red obtained from certain scaly insects, or madder lake, from the roots of the madder plant) for his figures.
- Bosch did not date his paintings but, **unusually for the period, he signed some**

although some signatures purporting to be his are not by him.

- The roots of his forefathers are in Nijmegen (the oldest city in the Netherlands and close to the German border) and Aachen (which is visible in his surname: Van Aken). Aachen is the westernmost city of Germany and was the preferred medieval residence of Charlemagne, thirty-one Holy Roman Emperors were crowned Kings of the Germans there.
- Today his work is found in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Serbia, Spain, the UK, and the US.

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_II_of_Spain#Economy

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illustrious_Brotherhood_of_Our_Blessed_Lady



's-Hertogenbosch



Anon, The draper's market in 's-Hertogenbosch, ca. 1530, 126 x 67 cm, Den Bosch, Het Noordbrabants Museum

- **This is where he lived** - 's-Hertogenbosch ('set-hertgen-bosch'). It was the late middle ages, a time when **the world was changing rapidly**. **'s-Hertogenbosch was a flourishing city** in Brabant. It was in the Burgundian Netherlands but **in 1482 it passed to the Hapsburgs** through marriage when Bosch was about 32.
- This is **The Cloth Market**, an anonymous painting from around 1530 which helps our imagination to travel back in time to the 16th century city. **In the foreground Saint Francis, the patron saint of the guild** distributes fabrics to the poor.
- When Hieronymus Bosch was 30 (between 1479 and 1481), he **married Aleyt Goyaerts van den Meerveen** ('alet goy-erts van den Meer-vane'), who was a few years his senior. (CLICK) **They moved into this house** on the northern side of the market which his wife had inherited from her grandfather. He spent most of his life walking from his house to his workshop across the square. **The couple remained childless** and Bosch's wife outlived her husband by over six years. In his later years **Bosch became wealthy**, for example, we know that he paid 140 stuivers in tax in 1512-13 when the average was 12.

NOTES

- View of the Lakenmarkt of 's-Hertogenbosch from the Korte Kerkstraat to the Hoge Steenweg. This painting shows in a nutshell the Bosch market with the surrounding late Gothic buildings; in the middle the stalls of the cloth merchants. It was manufactured by the cutters and dryers' guild. The members of this guild were employed in the cloth industry and the cloth trade. On the left the well and the pillory.

- The **Spanish Inquisition was started** in 1478 Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, with the assistance of Torquemada.
- **In 1492, Christopher Columbus**, funded by Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile sailed on the first of four journeys where he made contact with the islands of the Caribbean and parts of central and South America.

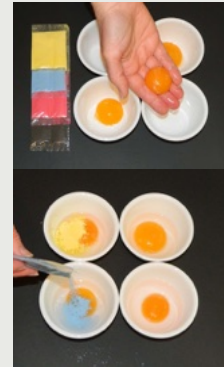
KEY WORDS: TEMPERA v. OIL

Tempera

- Permanent, fast-drying pigment applied as a thin layer
- Water-soluble binder usually egg yolk
- Very long lasting, some 2,000 years old
- Nearly every artist used it until about 1500

Oil

- Slow-drying, glossy, bright
- Pigment mixed with linseed oil, can be thinned with turpentine
- Can be used for very detailed, precise effects
- Nearly every artist used it after about 1500




Tempera

- Applied as a thin layer otherwise it cracks.
- Avoid any egg white otherwise it does not stick.
- Build up layers as strokes almost like a coloured pencil.
- Edges cannot be blended as with oils
- Tempera has a cooler colour range than oil and deep, warm blacks cannot be achieved.
- Although it dries very quickly it takes six months to a year to dry completely.
- Tempera is not usually varnished.
- Tempera is made for a single session as the yolk cures and thickens and becomes unworkable.

Oil

- Oil paint is slow drying, versatile, flexible, and can be used for extreme detail.
- The oldest known oil paintings date from 650 AD, found in 2008 in caves in Afghanistan.
- Oil paint was mainly used, as it is today, for house painting as it creates a tough waterproof coat.
- The range of colours was based on the same ground pigments as tempera, namely
 - yellow ochre (natural clay earth),
 - umber (brown earth),
 - lead-tin-yellow (heated lead oxide),
 - vermilion (bright red from powdered cinnabar, mercury sulfide),

- kermes (red from a scaly insect),
 - azurite (deep blue copper mineral),
 - ultramarine (deep blue ground lapis lazuli rock from Afghanistan),
 - verdigris (green produced by applying acetic acid to copper plates),
 - lamp black (soot from oil lamps, ivory black from charred bones) and
 - lead white (from a mineral lead carbonate or manufactured by applying vinegar to lead plates).
- The paint tube was not invented until 1841 and oil paint could then be produced on an industrial scale avoiding hand grinding. It was convenient as the tube could be sealed for future use. Renoir said there would have been no Impressionism without tubes of paint.



Trailer of the film of the Bosch exhibition

- This is the trailer for the Bosch exhibition and I am playing it to get you into the right mood for Hieronymus Bosch's work.
- I was lucky enough to visit the exhibition in the Prado in Madrid.

Hieronymus Bosch (circa 1450 –1516), *Adoration of the Magi, Interior (Saint Peter with donor, Adoration of the Magi, Saint Agnes with donor)*, c. 1495, 138 x 138 cm, Prado



Hieronymus Bosch (circa 1450 –1516), *Adoration of the Magi, Interior (Saint Peter with donor, Adoration of the Magi, Saint Agnes with donor)*, c. 1495, triptych, oil on panel, 138 138 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid, room 56a. The outer panels form a single image, Saint Gregory's Mass, rendered in grisaille.

- **Let us begin with an early Bosch painting**, this is *Adoration of the Magi*.
- Experts have argued over **how to interpret** Bosch's paintings. Some argue that Bosch was influenced by **heretical ideas**, some that his work has a strong **entertainment element** to show the absurdity of the beliefs, but the most likely interpretation is that his work was serious, moralistic and reflects the **orthodox religious views** of the period.
- Bosch was the first artist to represent scenes that were created **from his unconscious**. His work includes fantastical complex images that had not been seen in previous works. In the twentieth century the **Surrealists** also represented themes from the unconscious mind, **dreams and nightmares**. The Surrealist Salvador Dali studied Bosch and considered him a predecessor. It must be assumed that the scenes were interpretable at the time but much of the meaning of the symbolism is now lost.
- In this triptych the left panel depicts **St. Peter standing** and one donor, identified as **Peter Bronckhorst** thanks to the presence of his coat of arms, with the motto "Een voer al" ("One for all"). In the background, a man sits on a basket under a makeshift roofing: he is likely St. Joseph who is warming Jesus' clothes in front of the fire.
- In the right panel is **St. Agnes of Rome** (c. 291-c. 304) standing, a virgin martyr and patron saint of girls and chastity. Agnes is depicted in art with a lamb, evoking her name which resembles the Latin word for "lamb", agnus (the given name is Greek, from hagnē ἁγνή "chaste, pure"). The donor's **second wife, Agnes Bosshuyse**, is

shown accompanied by her coat of arms.

- It has been suggested that the background shows **Jerusalem or Bethlehem and the current morally corrupt state of the Holy Land and is a call for another crusade** to free and purify the Holy Land. In the background **two competing Mameluk armies** wearing turbans are racing towards each other. The Mameluks were non-Muslim slave soldiers and Muslim rulers of slave origin who won political control of Egypt and Syria from 1250 to 1517. It has also been suggested that they represent Herod's armies.



Hieronymus Bosch (circa 1450 –1516), *Adoration of the Magi*, Interior (Saint Peter with donor, Adoration of the Magi, Saint Agnes with donor), c. 1495, triptych, oil on panel, 138 138 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid, room 56a. The outer panels form a single image, Saint Gregory's Mass, rendered in grisaille.

- (CLICK) The three Magi are obvious but who is the figure in the barn?
- It has been suggested it is **the anti-Christ, a human form of Satan, who falsely claims to be the Messiah.**
- **Mary is holding Jesus** in her lap in the manner of Jan van Eyck (c. 1390-1441), and note the upright stance of the donors, saints and Magi and even the Magi's page compared with the Antichrist. Notice that the clothes of the Antichrist are torn signifying his deceitful nature.
- The first kneeling Magi, **Balthazar**, the eldest, has placed his gift at Mary's feet alongside his helmet. It is a table ornament made of gold and pearls and **shows the Sacrifice of Isaac** which prefigures the sacrifice of Christ on the cross to save mankind. It rests on toads which allude to the sins from which we must be redeemed.
- **The second Magi, Melchior**, stands to the rear offering **Mary myrrh on a silver tray.** His metal cloak is decorated with the Queen of Sheba offering gifts to Solomon.
- **The third Magi, dark-skinned Gaspar**, holds a globe containing **incense** and it shows Abner kneeling before King David. The phoenix on the globe gathering grain in its beak refers to the Resurrection of Christ. The thistles on his shoulder allude to the Passion of Christ and therefore the Redemption.
- (CLICK) There are many incidents in the background. In the **left panel a man lifts his tunic to expose his genitals to a woman**, and three other figures dance madly.
- On the right, **a wolf chases a woman and a boar or wolf savages a man** amid a

landscape of broken-down trees.

- In the centre panel in the background there is a house with a **flag with a swan and a dovecote which would at the time clearly identify it as a brothel**. To the right, a man is pulling a horse with a monkey on it, a reference to lust. On a small hill above is a statue of a **man on a column** which some think relate to the idols in Egypt that fell down as the Holy family passed through the land.



Christ Mocked (The Crowning with Thorns), c. 1490-1500, oil on wood, 73 × 59 cm, National Gallery

Christ Mocked (The Crowning with Thorns), c. 1490-1500, **oil on wood**, 73 × 59 cm, **National Gallery**

Another version in the Escorial, Spain, is neither by Bosch nor his workshop.

- The figures are **crowded together** and shown in a very narrow picture plane giving a sense of claustrophobia, oppression and domination. The four evil-looking figures crowd round a **meek and gentle Christ**. Christ is the only figure looking out asking us to share in his suffering.
- The painting is based on descriptions from all the Gospels. For example, Christ is wearing a white robe based on one meaning of the Greek word *lampros*, in the King James Bible it is translated as a 'gorgeous robe' (Matthew 27:28 describes it as scarlet and John 19:2 as purple).
- **The crescent on the hood of the figure at the lower left may refer to the Ottoman Empire** (c. 1299-1922/23) which in Bosch's time included Judea. He also has a yellow star of the Jews. In the underdrawing this man is spitting.
- The man in the **lower right may be tearing Christ's garments** in reference to the Chief Priest tearing his own garments (or Christ's, the Vulgate may be ambiguous, St. Mark XIV:63, "Then the high-priest rending his garments, saith What need we any further witnesses?").
- **The two men at the top are soldiers** as they are wearing pieces of armour. One has an arrow tied in his headdress. Such arrows were used by hunters to hamstring and cripple animals. He is using a **gauntlet to protect his hands from the crown of thorns** which has already started to penetrate Christ's scalp. The other wears a spiked collar of the type put on hunting dogs perhaps in reference to Psalm 21:17 'For many dogs have encompassed me'. The oak leaves may refer to pagan nature rituals.

- All four men wear **clothes** that were **fashionable a hundred years previously**, and so would have looked old-fashioned by 1500.

NOTES

- The painting is **oil on an oak panel**. It was painted over an underdrawing of Saint Christopher carrying Christ across a river.
- The composition is masterly. Christ's body forms an inner triangle and the iron gauntlet with Christ's head and shoulder form an outer triangle with one side mirrored by the arrow. Christ's right eye is on the central vertical axis. The angle of the stick held by the soldier on the right parallels the fall of Christ's robe and the red sleeves of the man lower right parallels the stick held by the man lower left. Christ's white robes which analysis tells us has always been white provides a central purity surrounded by greens above and red below, perhaps the earth above and hell fires below.
- By examining the brushstrokes we know that Bosch painted it quickly and with consummate skill. X-ray analysis shows that Bosch toned down the violence to make the relationship between the tormentors and Christ more ambiguous. **Originally the man bottom left was spitting** at Christ, the man lower right was tearing Christ's garment, the soldier top right had spikes on his rod and his hand on Christ's shoulder. It is the only painting of Christ mocked that can now be attributed to Bosch.



Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), *Two grotesque profiles*, c.1485-90, pen and ink wash, 16.3 x 14.3 cm, Royal Collection

Follower of Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516), *Christ before Pilate*, c. 1520, oil and tempera on oak panel, 80 x 104 cm, Princeton



Follower of Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516), *Christ before Pilate*, c. 1520, oil and tempera on oak panel, 80 x 104 cm, Princeton University Art Museum

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), *Two grotesque profiles*, c.1485-90, pen and ink wash, 16.3 x 14.3 cm, Royal Collection

- Before looking at more paintings by Bosch I wanted to make a general point about the style. **The use of ugly figures to make a moral point was very common at the time.** This is one example from 1520 by a follower of Bosch showing *Christ before Pilate*. Note that the Bosch-like faces could also be derived from earlier sketches by Leonardo. A nose ring has been added to make the face even uglier. It is not a matter of copying I am pointing out that ugly faces were used by many artists **to make the point that morally good people, like Christ, are beautiful, and morally corrupt people are ugly.** The belief at the time was that their faces convey their soul.
- **Christ is a centre of calm and beauty amidst the howling mob** that has brought him to trial before Pontius Pilate. The governor is ready to wash his hands of Jesus, saying "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it" and delivering him to be scourged and crucified (Matthew 27:24–26). The artist seems **familiar with Leonardo da Vinci's studies of "ideal ugliness,"** counterparts to his studies of "ideal beauty," and has used bizarre visages to convey the degradation of fallen humanity. The viewer sees up-close the gruesome figures with distorted features and nose rings thanks to the half-length format and crowding of figures against the picture plane. These are typical features of a type of Flemish devotional picture then in favour. The Gothic architectural elements in the upper corners suggest the staged quality of the scene and create a theatre of piety and morality that suspends Pilate's action in time.



Hieronymus Bosch or follower, *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things*, c. 1505-10, 120 x 150 cm, Museo del Prado

Hieronymus Bosch or follower, *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things*, c. 1505-10, 120 x 150 cm, Museo del Prado

- This attributed to Bosch or a follower. Its authenticity has been questioned. In 2015 the Bosch Research Conservation Project claimed it to be by a follower, but scholars at the Prado, where the painting hangs, dismissed this argument. Despite this uncertainty it is considered an important work painted in his late style of broad brushstrokes.
- We see the seven deadly sins with the four last things around them (clockwise from top left) Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. In the centre Christ watches humanity's downfall; beneath the inscription ("*Cave cave d[omin]us videt*") translates as, "**Beware, beware, the Lord is watching.**"

PROVENANCE

- Unknown date: acquired by Philip II of Spain (1527-1598)
- April 1574: transferred to the Monasterio de El Escorial, San Lorenzo de El Escorial
- 1939: transferred to the Museo del Prado, Madrid, from Monasterio de El Escorial

INSCRIPTIONS

- center: *Cave cave d[omi]n[u]s videt* [Beware, beware, the Lord sees [you]]
- top: *Gens absque consilio est et sine prudentia / Utinam saperent et intelligerent ac novissima providerent* [For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!] Deuteronomy 32.28-29
- bottom: *Anscondam faciem meam ab eis et considerabo novissima eorum* [I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be.] Deutoronomium 32.20

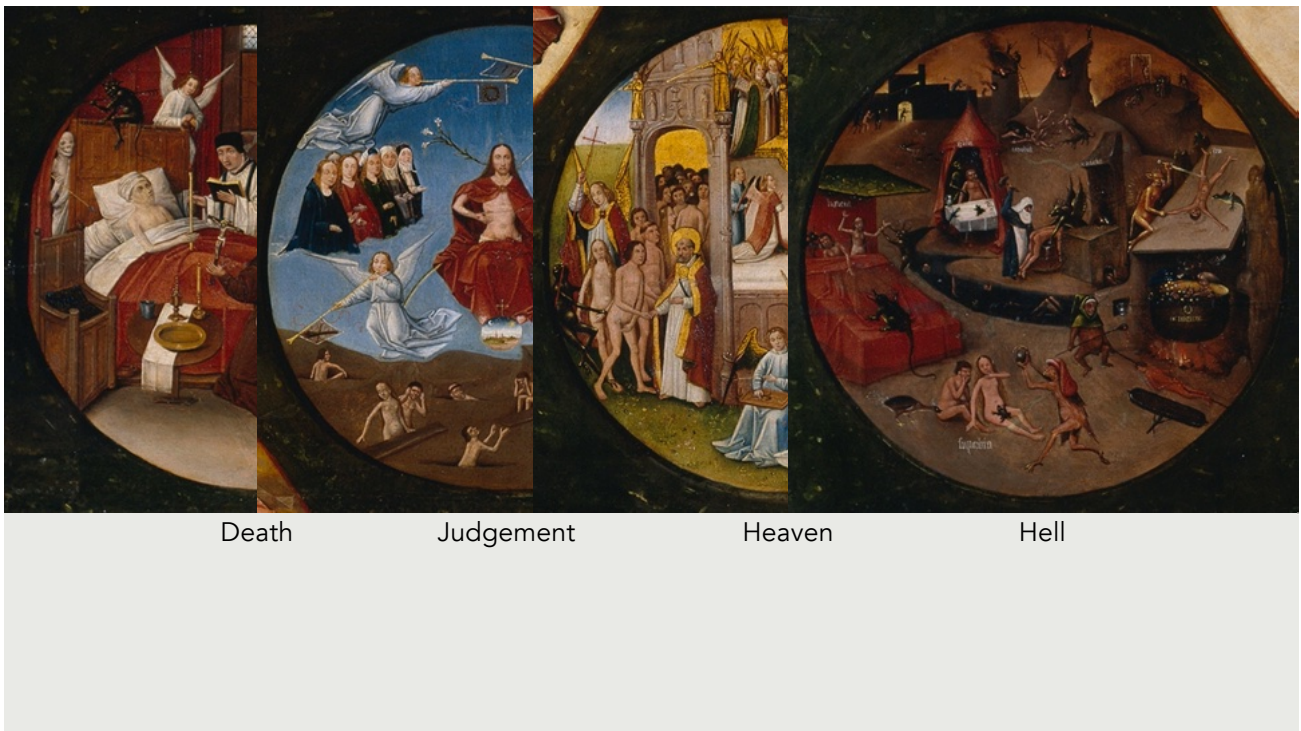
- Signature bottom center: *Jheronimus bosch*



Hieronymus Bosch or follower, *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things*, c. 1505-10, 120 x 150 cm, Museo del Prado

- These are closeups of the seven deadly sins:
- **Gluttony** (*gula*): A drunkard swigs from a bottle while a fat man eats greedily, not heeding the plea of his equally obese young son.
- **Sloth** (*acedia*): A lazy man dozes in front of the fireplace while Faith appears to him in a dream, in the guise of a nun, to remind him to say his prayers.
- **Lust** (*luxuria*): Two couples enjoy a picnic in a pink tent, with two clowns (right) to entertain them.
- **Pride** (*superbia*): With her back to the viewer, a woman looks at her reflection in a mirror held up by a demon.
- **Anger or Wrath** (*ira*): A woman attempts to break up a fight between two drunken peasants outside an inn. The man on the right has unsheathed his sword but is being constrained by a woman who has removed her protective overshoes (pattens), The man on the left is a monk with a table on his head although the significance of this is not known. Another table has been overturned and both men have lost their hats and the man on the right has removed his cloak. Representing anger as a fight between sword wielding maniacs or drunks was a common way of showing anger or *ira* in the Medieval period.
- **Envy** (*invidia*): A couple standing in their doorway cast envious looks at a rich man with a hawk on his wrist and a servant to carry his heavy load for him, while their daughter flirts with a man standing outside her window, with her eye on the well-filled purse at his waist. The dogs illustrate the Flemish saying, "Two dogs and only one bone, no agreement".

- **Greed** (*avaricia*): A crooked judge pretends to listen sympathetically to the case presented by one party to a lawsuit, while slyly accepting a bribe from the other party.



Hieronymus Bosch or follower, *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things*, c. 1505-10, 120 x 150 cm, Museo del Prado

THE FOUR LAST THINGS

- **In Death of the Sinner**, death is shown at the left along with an angel and a demon while the priest says the sinner's last rites.
- (CLICK) **In Judgment**, Christ is shown in glory while angels awake the dead
- (CLICK) **In Glory**, the saved are entering **Heaven**, with Jesus and the saints, at the gate of Heaven stands Saint Peter greeting the saved while an Angel prevents a demon from ensnaring a woman at the last minute.
- (CLICK) **In Hell** devils torment sinners according to their sins, starting at the bottom and going clockwise:
 - **Superbia (Pride)** shows a woman with a toad on her genitals representing sexual desire while a devil holds a mirror in front of her.
 - **Luxuria (Lust)** shows a couple in bed surrounded by demons.
 - **Gula (Gluttony)** is shown as a man in a tent sitting at a table on which are a collection of noxious animals he is being forced to eat.
 - **Invidia (Envy)** is at the back and a group of figures is attacked by wolves near a gallows scene.
 - **Acedia (Sloth)**, a person is punished by being hammered on an anvil.
 - **Ira (Wrath or Anger)** is punished by the man being dismembered with a sword.
 - **Avaricia (Greed)** shows people boiled together with their coins, in a

kettle over an open fire while a man is turned on a spit in front of the fire.



Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516), *The Last Judgment*, c. 1482 - 1505, left and right panels 167.7 x 60 cm, centre panel 164 x 127 cm, Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna

Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516), *The Last Judgment*, c. 1482 - 1505, left and right panels 167.7 x 60 cm, centre panel 164 x 127 cm, Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna

- The Last Judgement depicts the fall of humanity. In the **left panel God looks down as fallen angels are cast down** and become devils that look like insects. Below Eve is shown being created from Adam's rib, then eating the forbidden fruit and then being cast from Paradise.
- **The central panel** shows God looking down on a **world that has become corrupt** and riven with sin.
- **The right panel** shows the consequences of sin, **Hell**.
- The painting's composition has similarities with the *Haywain Triptych* or the *Garden of Earthly Delights*: both also show the Garden of Eden in the left panel and the Hell at right. The central panel depicts a Last Judgement, in a more obscure atmosphere than the Hell one.

LEFT PANEL

- The left panel depicts the Garden of Eden of the biblical history, as a green landscape in the lower three-quarters. In the upper section Bosch portrayed God sitting on his throne, surrounded by a luminous halo. Around him is a cloudy sky, with angels fighting rebellious angels who are turning into devils as they fall.
- Below are, reading from the bottom, God creating Eve from Adam's rib, with Adam sleeping at her feet; the Serpent tempting Eve and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and, finally, Adam and Eve expelled from the Garden by an angel, who holds a sword, into a dark forest.
 - And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the

garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Genesis 2:16–17

- And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. Genesis 3:4–5
- The woman eats the forbidden fruit and gives some to the man who also eats it. As a result of knowing good and evil they become aware of their "nakedness" and make fig-leaf clothes and hide themselves when God approaches. God cannot find them, which is odd for an omniscient being, and calls 'Where are you'. Strangely, as God was aware of good and evil he must have always seen their nakedness as a sin. God then curses The Serpent, The Woman then The Man, and expels the Man and Woman from the garden, sentences the Women to pain in childbirth and the Man to everlasting toil and from both he takes away everlasting life and sends an angel to stop them stealing from the tree of everlasting life.
- The idea of the Fruit of the Knowledge of Good and Evil being an apple is a misunderstanding or a pun on the Latin words *mālum* ('evil') and *mālum* ('apple'). The larynx, specifically the laryngeal prominence that joins the thyroid cartilage, in the human throat is noticeably more prominent in males and was consequently called an Adam's apple, from a notion that it was caused by the forbidden fruit getting stuck in Adam's throat as he swallowed it.

CENTRAL PANEL

- **The central painting depicts a Last Judgement**, based on John's **Book of Revelation**. Above is Christ as a judge, surrounded by the Virgin Mary, John the Evangelist and the apostles. The celestial zone, painted in a bright blue, contrasts with the rest of the panel, which is occupied by a dark brownish punishment of the Damned, while the Blessed occupy only a small portion.
- The punishments come from monstrous creatures of Hell: the damned are burned, speared, impaled, hung from butcher hooks, forced to eat impure food (the Gluttonous), or subjects to cogs of bizarre machines. This scene has strong similarities with the right panel in Bosch's *Garden* at the Museo del Prado.

RIGHT PANEL

- Thematically, the hell at right is not different from the Last Judgement. **Satan, in the centre**, receives the damned souls. The torture scenes continue in this panel, within a dark landscape dominated by flames and devilish figures.

SHUTTERS

- Like in other contemporary Flemish triptychs, the shutters are externally painted in grisaille, depicting two saints. At left is St. James in pilgrimage within a wicked land with a hung man (perhaps a reference to some episode in the Golden Legend) ; at right is instead St. Bavo, the patron of Flanders, donating to the poor with his hawk on his left wrist. One of the characters in the latter panel, the old woman with a child, appears in a drawing attributed to Bosch, now in a San Francisco private collection.

Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516), *The Cure of Folly, or the Extraction of the Stone of Madness*, 1501-05, Prado



Meester snijt die key ras
Master, rid me of this stone soon

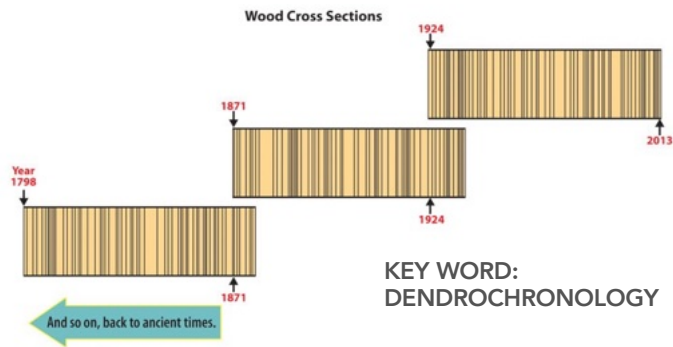
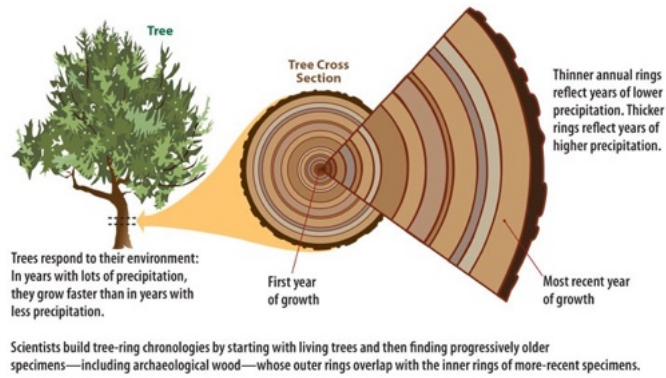
Myne name is lubbert das
My name is Lubbert Das

Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516), *The Cure of Folly, or the Extraction of the Stone of Madness*, 1501-05, Prado

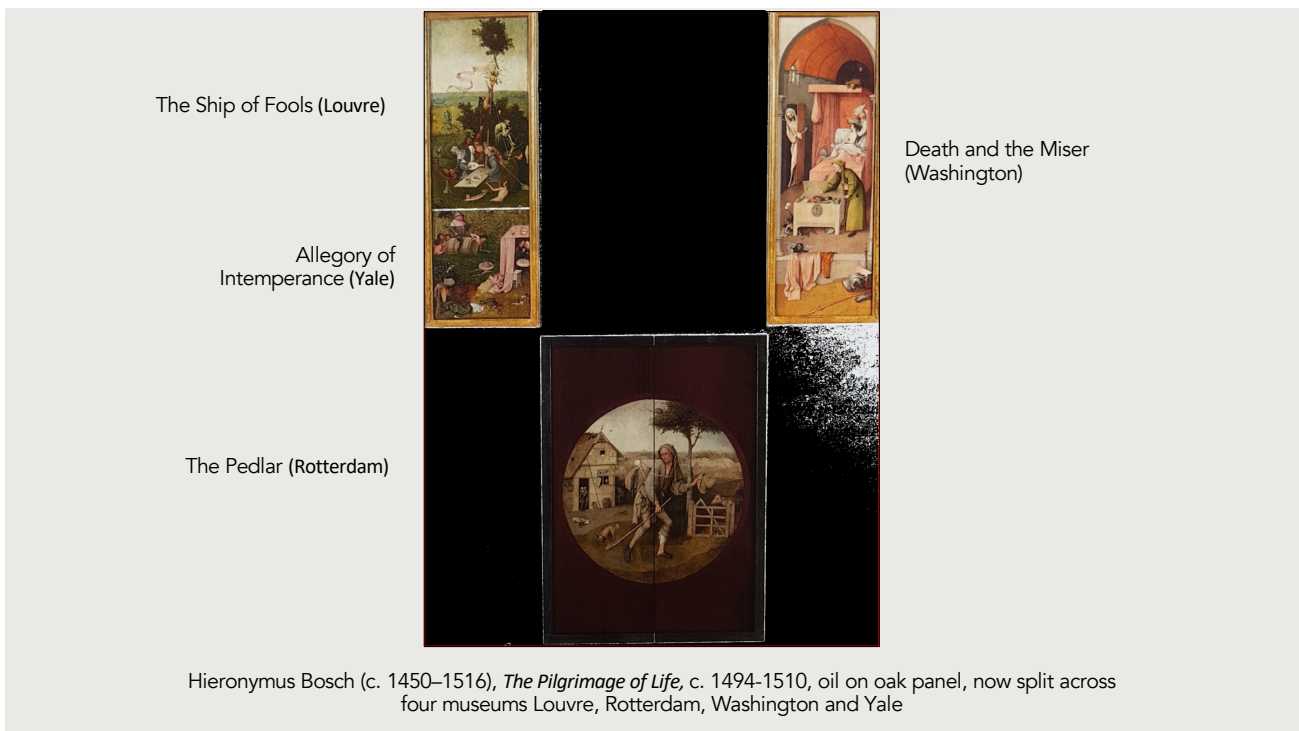
- As found in miniature painting of the time, the artist gave the scene a **decorative surround of interlaced gold ribbons** against a black background, with an inscription in Gothic script, also in gold, which reads, at the top, *Meester snijt die key ras* (**Master, rid me of this stone soon**) and, at the bottom, *Myne name is lubbert das* (**My name is Lubbert Das**).
- Tradition associated **madness with a stone lodged in the brain**, so naïve people tried rid themselves or others of madness by **cutting out the stone**. The operation is taking place in the countryside overlooking two cities. The patient is a stout elderly peasant with his clogs removed and he is tied to the chair. **The surgeon has an inverted funnel on his head which signified deception to he is a charlatan**. He is extracting not a stone but a **water lily** like the one on the table. Some have interpreted this as **extracting money fraudulently** and others as **extracting sexual desire** thus ridding the patient of lust and returning him to the right Christian path. This latter interpretation is suggested by his name 'Lubbert Das' which means *castrated badger*. The badger sleeps during the day and so was considered lazy. Lubbert was a man's name and was also used as a nickname for a fat, lazy and stupid person.
- The words around it and the swirls, which are sometimes called love knots, turn it into a visual game.
- The painting was commissioned by Philip of Burgundy. **Dendrochronology dates it from 1488 onwards but from its style and from the fact that Philip entered the Order of the Golden Fleece in 1501 it was probably painted between 1501 and 1505.**

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- When it rains a lot trees grow more and form a ring of growth that is wider than those laid down in dry years. So the sequence of wide and narrow tree years corresponds to the annual precipitation. Starting with tree ring sequences for trees of a known age we can match them with older and older trees until a complete sequence is established going back hundreds of years.
- Then a wooden panel can be compared with this sequence and dated roughly to the time it was cut down. Of course, the wood might not have been used immediately so the date of the painting was some time after the tree was felled.



Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516), *The Ship of Fools*, c. 1494-1510, oil on oak panel, 58 x 33 cm, Louvre Museum, Richelieu, 2nd floor, room 5

Fragment of a triptych:

- Part of *The Pilgrimage of Life: Allegory of Intemperance* (Yale), *Death and the Miser* (Washington), *The Pedlar* (Rotterdam), *The Ship of Fools* (Louvre).
- At some point before 1904 (possible 1826) the triptych was dismantled and sawn apart. The two front wings, which had *The Pedlar* painted on them, were then joined and cut to form an octagon. The central panel (94 × 75 cm) has disappeared. This was ascertained by comparing the unusual underdrawings of each panel and the fact that they are all from the same tree.
- As with most Bosch paintings there have been many interpretations although no definitive one. In this case the lack of a central panel means the original central theme is missing making interpretation more difficult (or impossible) than usual.

The Pilgrimage of Life: The Pedlar, 71.3 x 70,7 cm, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen



The Pilgrimage of Life: The Pedlar, 71.3 x 70,7 cm, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen

- *The Pedlar* was originally on the outside of the triptych.
- The pedlar is a grey-haired **itinerant trader** who wears are carried on his back and include a **soup ladle and cat skins**. The bodkin and thread on his hat mean that he is **also a cobbler**. The holes in his clothes and his mismatched shoes indicate a **life of poverty and misery**.
- He may have just left the house behind him where he might have **squandered all his money**. The caged **magpie**, the **jug on a pole** on the roof, the **dovecote** and the **sign of a swan would have shouted brothel** to the viewer at the time. The **soldier at the door** is often illustrated as a regular visitors of brothels. His long pikestaff is shown leaning next to the door.
- The pedlar has a bandage round his leg and may have been bitten by a dog, a constant danger for itinerant tradesmen.
- One recent interpretation is that the **pedlar represents us all as we journey through life** facing constant temptations that could lead us astray. It could also be the prodigal son of the Bible although his old age seems to preclude this interpretation despite the connection with the story in which the son squanders all his money on harlots and becomes a swineherd.
- The **owl in the tree** is a symbol of the Devil and temptation.



Allegory of Intemperance, c. 1505-16, oil on oak panel, 34.9 x 30.6 cm, Yale University



The Ship of Fools, c. 1494-1510, oil on oak panel, 58 x 33 cm, Louvre Museum

Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516), *The Ship of Fools*, c. 1505-16, oil on oak panel, 58 x 33 cm, Louvre Museum, Richelieu, 2nd floor, room 5

Allegory of Intemperance, c. 1505-16, oil on oak panel, 34.9 x 30.6 cm, Yale University
Fragment of the left wing of a triptych

- There was a **book published in 1494 called *Ship of Fools*** which consists of a **hundred short chapters** describing the sins, follies and transgressions of the foolish and the poor. The **poor were assumed to be corrupt** and would go to Hell. In the late middle ages the view of the middle classes was that the poor are good for nothing parasites and idlers. This view peaked in the Low Countries in about 1525.
- On the right there is a boat holding a **group of merrymakers** who have been joined by a **monk and a nun**. Their open mouths and the drink suggest they are singing and the barrel at the front suggests a plentiful supply of drink.
- A man reaches up to cut a roast fowl tied to the mast. The object hanging down between the nun and the monk is not known but may be a **loaf or pancake**.
- There is an owl in the branch tied to the top of the mast.
- In the Yale panel, top left, a **man sits astride a barrel** and a man swims with a dish on his head containing a meat pie decorated with a bird's head. Their clothes have been left on the shore next to a tent. The coat of arms on the roof indicate the man inside is an aristocrat and the circle of pig's trotters on the roof indicate **debauchery within**.
- There are many illustrations of high-born youths flirting, making music and drinking on boats decorated with branches in May. These illustrations do not show monks and nuns and Bosch has taken their leisure activities one stage further to the depiction of debauchery which the viewer will instantly know **will lead them all to eternal punishment and damnation**.

Death and the Miser, c. 1500-10,
oil on wood, 92.6 × 30.8 cm,
National Gallery of Art, Washington



Death and the Miser, c. 1500-10, oil on wood, 92.6 × 30.8 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA

Outer wing of a lost triptych. The other outer wing comprised *Ship of Fools* and *Allegory of Gluttony and Lust*

- As we look at the panel, timeless drama unfolds before our eyes: **an old man sitting on his deathbed**. An angel clasps his shoulder and points to the crucified Christ in the window. Death is about to enter the room pointing an arrow at the dying man. A demon under the bed offers the dying man a bag with precious coins. It is up to the man to decide between earthly temptations and the salvation of his soul.
- The scene was inspired by *The Art of Dying* (*Dat sterf boeck* = the Dutch version of the *Ars moriendi*) written in the early 15th century and on display next to the panel. This book helped people **prepare for a 'good death'**, includes eleven full-page woodcut illustrations, each showing a man on his deathbed. In five of them he is tempted by the devil while an angel helps him to resist.



Death and the Miser, c. 1500-10, oil on wood, 92.6 × 30.8 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA

Outer wing of a lost triptych. The other outer wing comprised *Ship of Fools* (top) and *Allegory of Gluttony and Lust* (bottom).

- Let's look at the second piece of our puzzle: . In this brilliant documentary the Bosch Research team studying the painter's works discover an **interesting twist** as they compare the infrared photograph of the painting with the original. In the infrared photo the miser is **grabbing the bag of money in his right hand** and an expensive jar in his left. In the painting before us, **Bosch added ambiguity to the scene**: the miser is reaching for the bag, but he didn't grab it yet so there is still hope he will make the right choice.
- The man at the foot of the bed is possibly his alter ego (the part of someone's personality not usually seen by other people). He puts coins in a bag held by a rat faced creature while holding a rosary in the other hand.
- The **armour** in the foreground might stand for **vainglory or pride or alternatively anger**. It is therefore possible the **whole triptych represents the seven sins**. The left panel gluttony and lust and the right panel greed and pride. The seven deadly sins are gluttony, lust, greed, pride, envy, wrath and sloth so the middle panel might have represented envy, wrath and sloth in this interpretation.

Outside panels of *The Haywain Triptych*, 1510-16, oil on wood, 135 x 190 cm (Prado version), Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain (version 2)



Outside panels of *The Haywain Triptych*, 1512-15, oil on wood, 135 x 190 cm (Prado version), Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain (version 2)

The outer panels form a single image, usually referred to as *The Path of Life* aka *The Pedlar*.

- Another triptych that is similar in construction to *The Pilgrimage of Life* is *The Haywain Triptych*. In both the front of the doors shows a pedlar. In this case defending himself against a dog using a stick. He has **fought off robbers** and has left behind a **couple dancing to bagpipes a symbol of lust**.
- **The pedlar is used by Bosch as an exception to the fate of the poor** which was an inevitable path to Hell. **He has rejected sin which is shown as a vicious dog, a symbol for the devil**, which he pushes away with a stick in which case the pedlar could be redeemed.
- Dendrochronology gives an earliest date of 1510 with a likely date of 1512-15. As such this is one of his last works.



The Haywain, 1510-16, oil on wood, 147 × 232 cm (Escorial version), 135 x 190 cm, Prado

The Haywain, 1510-16, oil on wood, 147 × 232 cm (Escorial version), 135 x 190 cm (Prado version), El Escorial, Spain (version 1), Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain (version 2)

- In the central panel is a haywain. This was the first occurrence in a painting but the haywain was commonly used in fifteenth century songs to represent sinner's different types of foolish and sinful behaviour. Every person can see themselves **on the haywain committing some sin** irrespective of social class.
- Two versions of this triptych exist, one in El Escorial, the other in the Prado Museum. It is thought **both were copies** of a lost original but detailed scientific testing by the Prado has confirmed that **theirs is a Bosch original** and that the version in the Escorial is a copy.
- The whole of the inside is dedicated to sin and its consequences.
- The left panel shows the expulsion from Paradise and the central panel shows what the human race has descended to after the expulsion with every sort of sin illustrated. Isaiah 40:6 says "**All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flowers of the field.**" A Flemish proverb runs "**The world is like a haywain and each man takes what he can.**" Watched by Christ everyone including the clergy tries to grab a piece of the **haywain representing material goods**. No one notices the **devilish figures driving the hay wagon straight to hell**. Following the hay wagon is the Pope, the Emperor, a king (possibly of France because of the fleurs-de-lys) and a Burgundian duke.



The Haywain, 1510-16, oil on wood, 147 × 232 cm (Escorial version), 135 x 190 cm (Prado version), El Escorial, Spain (version 1), Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain (version 2)

- On the left is the **Garden of Eden**, the creation of Eve, the original sin and at the (CLICK) bottom the expulsion of Adam and Eve by the Archangel.
- (CLICK) At the bottom of the central panel we see **everyday life** at the beginning of the sixteenth century. At the top a man is having his throat cut, below women are looking after children and on the right a woman is having a tooth pulled. We think of today's world as violent and dangerous but **even the worst areas of the world** are far safer than life in the sixteenth century. **The average lifespan was thirty** although this often quoted figure is misleading because of the extremely high child mortality rate. One third of children died before they were five. If you could make it past the first five years then you would live until you were 40 or 50 and a few people lived till their 70s.
- (CLICK) On top of the haywain two wealthy people listen to music played by the devil while an angel looks up to Christ despairingly and their servants frolic in the bushes.
- **In the right panel is Bosch's view of Hell** which is still being constructed by devils while others bring in new sinners all the time. Most of the figures are loosely represented with quick, long brushstrokes and dots of paint with the exception of the Archangel and the angel on top of the haywain.
- There are minor differences between the underdrawing and the painting such as birds that have been omitted and a sword piercing a man dragged along the ground has been omitted in the painting. Some things were added in the painting such as the man above the haywain looking out from behind the bushes and the owl and the pitcher on the right.
- Bosch typically ground his pigment finely and used rapid, precise brushstrokes.

Sometimes he used more coarsely ground pigment and a **thicker impasto that creates surface texture and traps the light.**

KEY WORD: IMPASTO

- Using very thick layers of paint with visible brushstrokes
- Paint can be mixed on the canvas
- The paint surface is textured

Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), *Self-Portrait with Beret and Turned-Up Collar*, 1659, 84.5 × 66 cm, National Gallery of Art



Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), *Self-Portrait with Beret and Turned-Up Collar*, 1659, 84.5 × 66 cm, National Gallery of Art

- The word *impasto* is Italian in origin; in which it means "dough" or "mixture". The paint is so thick it appears to come out of the canvas. It is generally associated with oil paintings as tempera and watercolour are inherently thin media although thickening agents can be used.
- It is best illustrated by a painting by Rembrandt who painted this some 150 years later.
- (CLICK) If we examine the painting in detail we can see the strokes of the brush but at a distance it adds expressiveness and an extra dimension through the way that light reflects from the surface.

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Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450 –1516), *Temptation of Saint Anthony*, c. 1500, central panel: 131.5 × 119 cm, side panels: 131.5 × 53 cm, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon

Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450 –1516), *Temptation of Saint Anthony*, c. 1500, central panel: 131.5 × 119 cm, side panels: 131.5 × 53 cm, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, Portugal

- The work tells the story of the mental and spiritual torments endured by Saint Anthony the Great (Anthony Abbot), one of the most prominent of the Desert Fathers of Egypt in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. The Temptation of St. Anthony was a popular subject in Medieval and Renaissance art. In common with many of Bosch's works, the triptych contains much fantastic imagery. The sources for the subjects were Athanasius of Alexandria's *Life of St. Anthony*, which had been popularized in Flanders by Pieter van Os, and Jacopo da Varazze's **Golden Legend** (a collection of the lives of saints that was widely circulated in late medieval Europe from 1260 onwards).
- Although the painting has usually been attributed to the period 1490–1500, **dendochronologic analysis** has assigned it to around 1501.
- There are a number of copies, one of the central panel is in São Paulo, Brazil, another in Ottawa, another in Philadelphia, USA and another in the Prado. This version in Lisbon is believed to be the original by Bosch.

The Temptation of St. Anthony
(central panel), c. 1500-10, oil on
wood, 131.5 × 225 cm, Museu
Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon



The Temptation of St. Anthony (central panel), c. 1500-10, oil on wood, 131.5 × 225 cm, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, Portugal

- The central panel is the main scene of the temptation. The saint is in contemplation in the centre and his hand is pointing into his small cubicle that contains a crucifix. There are demons and priestess at his left. A black-skinned priestess holds a vessel with a toad, a symbol of witchcraft; the animal in turns holds an egg. A black-dressed singer has a pig face and a little owl (an allegory of heresy) above his head, while a crippled man is going to receive the communion.
- At left, a city on fire, a traditional symbol of the protection granted by Anthony against ergotism (a disease that results from the long-term exposure to ergot, a poison that is found in rotten rye grain) and fire. The monks of the Order of St. Anthony specialized in the treatment and care of victims of ergotism (also known as St. Anthony's fire), who experienced burning sensations and hallucinations.
 - The demon group at the left, including a **woman wearing a helmet resembling a hollow tree**, may symbolize the bloody violence.
 - The **group in the water at right** may be a devilish parody of either the flight into Egypt or the Adoration of the Magi;
 - a third demonic group is that getting out from the **red fruit in the foreground**. This include a devil who is playing a harp, riding a chicken, and another moving around the fish-boat at the centre. The large fruit can be interpreted as a mandrake apple and the man wielding the sword can be seen as a reference to the uprooting ceremony. Mandrake root was used often as a protection against ergotism, and the fruit was

used as an anaesthetic, which helped with necessary amputations resulting from disease. The natural anaesthetic also could kill the patients if given too much, and it also caused hallucinations of its own in addition to the hallucinations of ergotism, giving meaning to the violent nature of the characters surrounding the fruit in the panel. The images of fish and thistle relate to alchemy from the time and other 'cold' elements used to counter the 'hot' malady.

- In the sky are a ship-shaped bird, flying fish and winged boats.
- Finally, **the bearded man with a top hat could be the wizard who has set up the whole visions** package.
- The woman on the right also wearing a helmet resembling a hollow tree and holding a baby is a midwife and a witch. Midwives were thought to be dangerous as, if they were witches, they could take the baby and give it to the devil.



The Temptation of St. Anthony (left and right panels), c. 1500-10, oil on wood, 131.5 × 225 cm, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, Portugal

Left Panel

- The left panel portrays the legendary flight and the fall of St. Anthony. In the sky, the saint is brought down by a host of demons. Below, is the saint's grotto (or a brothel), carved within a hill in the shape of a man on all fours, whose backside forms the entrance. An impious procession is directed towards the latter, led by a demon wearing holy vestments and by a deer. In the foreground is a tired-out Anthony, supported after the fall by a monk and a layman; the latter has been traditionally identified as Bosch himself. Under the bridge which crosses an icy lake are three figures, one of which is a monk reading a letter. Also on the lake is a demon bird with skates: its beak holds a cartouche with the word "fat". This could be a reference to the simony scandal.

Right Panel

- The two figures riding the fish in the sky had, according to the legend, obtained the capability to fly by the Devil in order to partake in Witches' Sabbaths.
- In the foreground is a naked woman, a symbol of luxury. She is peeping from a hollow trunk through a tent, which is being kept open for her by a toad. Her tempting body is being offered to the saint, who is portrayed at right, contemplating while looking at the observer at the same time. The dwarf next to him, who wears a red mantle and a whirligig, is a symbol of humanity's fecklessness. In the foreground, finally, are the **last temptations: a table with bread and a jar of wine**, supported by naked demons. One of the human pillars has his **foot caught in a jar — an allusion to the sexual act**.

- The background includes a towered city, windmills and a lake.
- Although the poor were regarded as idle good for nothings an exception was made for the ascetic hermit who was poor but represented the highest ideal. He suffered temptation and was often called upon to give strength to the person to reject temptation. St Anthony's fire was a phrase that meant lust.

Notes

- St. Anthony (or Antony) the Great (251-356) was an Egyptian Christian monk known as the Father of All Monks. The biography of Anthony's life by Athanasius of Alexandria helped to spread the concept of Christian monasticism, particularly in Western Europe via its Latin translations. He is often erroneously considered the first Christian monk, but as his biography and other sources make clear, there were many ascetics before him. Anthony was, however, among the first known to go into the wilderness (about AD 270), which seems to have contributed to his renown. Accounts of Anthony enduring supernatural temptation during his stay in the Eastern Desert of Egypt inspired the subject of the Temptation of St. Anthony in Western art and literature. He was tempted by demons who took on many forms including the frequently depicted seductive women.
- Anthony is appealed to against infectious diseases, particularly skin diseases. In the past, many such afflictions, including **ergotism**, erysipelas (high fever with a bright red skin rash), and shingles, were referred to as **St. Anthony's fire**.

The Temptation of St. Anthony, c. 1500-1510, oil on wood, 38.6 x 25.1 cm, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City



The Temptation of St. Anthony, c. 1500-1510, oil on wood, 38.6 x 25.1 cm, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO

- There was a dispute as to whether this work was a Bosch autograph work or a piece by his workshop until the Bosch Research and Conservation Project concluded it to be autograph based on evidence present in the underdrawing. This was a major artistic event as there are only 25 paintings attributed to Bosch in the world.
- The critical piece of evidence was the underdrawing that was shown up by infrared imaging techniques. The quick, liquid brushstrokes were typical of other underdrawing of works known to be by Bosch. The team also found that the work is a wing of a dismantled triptych.

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The Temptation of St. Anthony, c. 1530-40, oil on wood, 70 × 51 cm, Museo del Prado

The Temptation of St. Anthony, c. 1530-40, oil on wood, 70 × 51 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain

- This painting, originally framed with a semi-circular arch, was one of Bosch's later works, from sometime after 1490. Philip II of Spain sent it to the Monastery of El Escorial near Madrid. From there the painting came to the Museo del Prado as part of the Royal Collection
- In 2016, the Bosch Research and Conservation project, after five years of researching all known Bosch paintings, announced that they had significant doubts about the attribution of this work to Bosch, instead attributing it to a follower. However, experts at the Prado still believe it is by Bosch.
- St. Anthony the Abbot (251-356) a Christian monk from Egypt is portrayed in meditation, in a sunny landscape near the trunk of a dry tree. St. Anthony is a recurrent figure in Bosch's work, with up to 15 paintings of this subject, all inspired by legends told in the Golden Legend and in his Life by Athanasius of Alexandria. He is represented in a setting of solitude and temptation that the saint experienced over twenty years. Although this picture is significantly different from other works by Bosch of St. Anthony, such as the triptych painting of the same name, customary features of the abbot include his dark brown habit with the Greek letter "tau" and a pig by his side. A Greek "tau" is also known as St. Anthony's cross as it was worn by his order and later adopted by the Franciscans. It represents the shape of the cross on which St. Anthony was martyred.
- In contrast to the earlier paintings with St. Anthony, this version of the temptation of St. Anthony finds the abbot calmer from his meditative spirit. His surroundings are peaceful and evoke a sense of calm. The pig lies next to him like a pet. Once demons, the creatures of temptation are now more like goblins and do not disturb the peaceful

feeling of the painting.

- St. Anthony is referred as the first Christian monk and the Father of Monks. Although there were other ascetics before him, he was the first to go into the wilderness. He is described as enduring supernatural temptation in the Eastern desert of Egypt.



The Garden of Earthly Delights, c. 1495-1505, oil on panel, 220 cm x 390 cm, Prado Museum, Madrid

- I have skipped over *The Temptation of St Anthony* which can be found in my notes, in order to spend longer on his **most famous work *The Garden of Earthly Delights***.
- On the left is **paradise**, on the **right hell** and in between is our sinful world that leads to hell. To the medieval mind the **real world is flawed** and full of sin but when dreaming we are freed from our gross sin-ridden body and can see things that issue from the divine. In this sense they believed dreams are more truthful and our day-to-day senses mislead us. Our desires lead us astray and in the painting Bosch focuses not on the seven deadly sins but specifically on sex.
- Although this is a triptych which was the conventional design for an altarpiece, it is unlikely that this was an altarpiece because of the representation of sin in the central section.
- It was **commissioned by Engelbert II of Nassau**, an art lover and patron of Bosch who often visited 's-Hertogenbosch and was a member of the **Brotherhood of our Lady**. It is likely he commissioned it in the 1490s probably after 1494 and major changes in the underdrawing suggest he may have closely supervised its execution.

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The Garden of Earthly Delights, c. 1495-1505, oil on panel, 220 cm x 390 cm, room 56, Museo del Prado

- In the **left panel a young God presents Eve to Adam**. The landscape of Paradise contains exotic animals and semi-organic hut shaped forms.
- The central panel shows a deep landscape full of nude figures engaged in innocent, self-absorbed joy, as well as fantastical compound animals, oversized fruit, and hybrid stone formations.
- **The right panel presents a hellscape**; a world in which humankind has succumbed to the temptations of evil and is reaping eternal damnation. Set at night, the panel features cold colours, tortured figures and frozen waterways. The nakedness of the human figures has lost any eroticism suggested in the central panel, as large explosions in the background throw light through the city gate and spill onto the water in the panel's midground.
- **The sins represented in the central panel largely concern sex**. Rather than represent the conventional seven deadly sins in equal measure he **seems to be concerned with sex and pleasure**. Maybe at the time sex was the sin that most concerned people or some have suggested that its erotic images were part of the reason it was commissioned.
- The panel on the left shows the marriage of Adam and Eve, illustrating permitted sex. In fact, sex inside marriage that led to procreation was a duty not a sin.
- **A lot of Bosch's symbolism was obvious to the viewer, or at least the educated viewer of the period but a lot has now been lost**. We do have books and plays of the period that give us some clues. For example, the play *The Mirror of Love (De Spiegel der Minnen)* was written in 1500 and **makes fun of young girls who have lost**

their virginity but want to keep it secret so they can marry as 'virgins'. These girls are called '*ghebroken pottkens*' (broken little pitchers) which explains the significance of broken pots in Bosch's paintings. The play also mentions that to avoid getting pregnant the girls should keep drinking '*calewaerts biere*' ('"baldy's" beer', pronounced 'kill-varts beer-a'). *Calewaert* means 'baldy' and refers to the bared glans of the penis and so 'baldy's beer' is a metaphor for sperm (see *Bosch*, p. 88). I give this example to demonstrate to the modern reader their love of obscenities, hidden meanings and riddles. On a similar theme, **eggs were considered an aphrodisiac** during the Renaissance and in men eating eggs would generate semen and lustful thoughts which is why **Bosch often shows eggs**.

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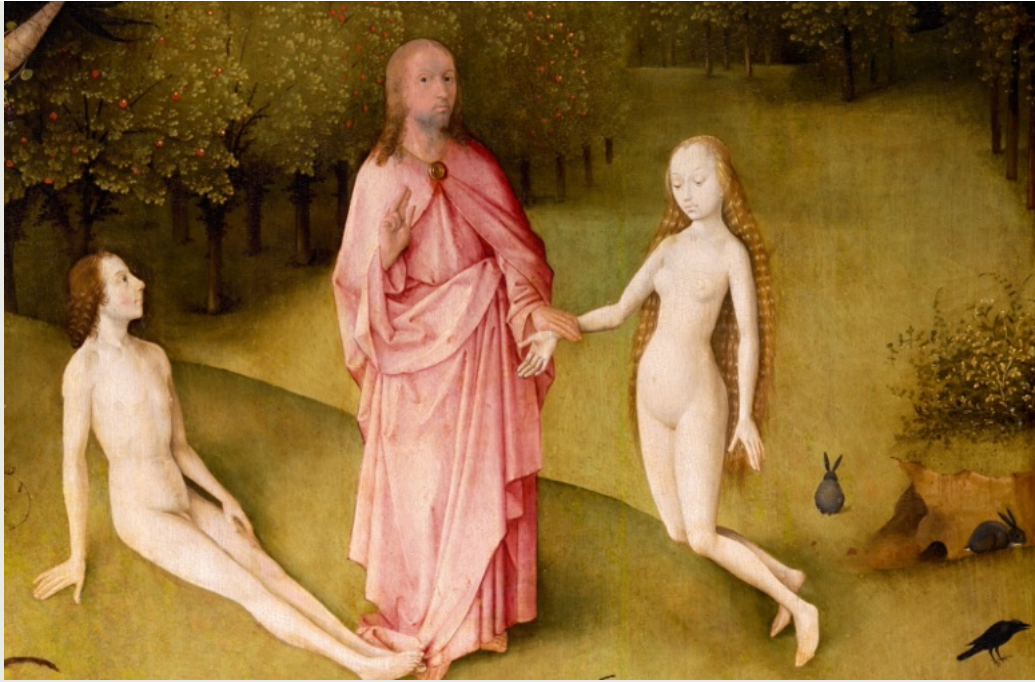
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The Garden of Earthly Delights,
c. 1495-1505, left panel, top



- At the top of the left panel is a mountain landscape **teeming with animals**. In the wake of God's creation, the natural world has burst into full bloom, with birds swarming through the skies and a wide variety of exotic beasts.
- Some were familiar to contemporary viewers, such as the **boar and its young**, which appear to enter the painting from the right. Animals like the **elephant and giraffe** were not found to Europe, however. Bosch may have seen an elephant at a fair, where they would be put on display occasionally. On the 's-Hertogenbosch market, seal meat and seal furs were commonly sold, and even live animals were offered for slaughter. In the late Middle Ages, a variety of so-called 'bestiaries' were also published, showing pictures of existing exotic animals as well as fabled animals such as the unicorn, shown here drinking from the pond at the left. By depicting all kinds of familiar as well as exotic animals, Bosch pays homage to the miraculous and diverse quality of God's creation.
- **The owl, lower centre, in the fountain of life is prophetic**. The owl signifies night and death in the writings of St Augustine and it became associated with heresy. Its significance here might be that it is prophesying **the fall of Adam and Eve**.



The Garden of Earthly Delights, c. 1495-1505, left panel, bottom

Left panel

- Eve has just been created from one of Adam's ribs. In between them stands the creator, looking us straight in the eye. He blesses the new couple and gives them the following injunction: **'Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and govern it'**. Below Eve's feet, **rabbits are scurrying past, symbolising fertility**. In the days of Bosch, this quote from the Bible was interpreted as the institution of marriage. Medieval man saw marriage and reproduction as being inextricably linked: **sexual intercourse was intended only as a means to reproduce**, not as an act of pleasure or desire.
- Hieronymus Bosch must have been around thirty when he married the well-to-do Aleid van der Meerven. He stayed with her until she died, but the couple were childless. This marriage, however, did provide him with access to an exclusive fraternity that was to fulfil a significant role in his painting career.



The Garden of Earthly Delights, c. 1495-1505, centre panel, top

Centre panel top

- The central panel gives rise to the name of the work and its skyline and central pool are similar to the left panel. Many of the figures in the central panel **appear to be enjoying themselves**. The enjoyment though is only **temporary as it will lead to damnation and hell**. Note that there are no children or old people leading one critic to suggest it represents utopia, a garden of paradise as it might have been if Adam and Eve had not eaten the forbidden fruit.
- **The Circuit**. In the centre, driven by lust, **men on all kinds of mounts are corralling a group of women**. The men are seated on horses, camels, unicorns, boars and other animals. They are carrying fruits, eggs and birds, perhaps intended as gifts for the women who are bathing in the pool in the centre of the scene. Blinded by love and lust, the men appear to have **lost control completely**. They have no reins to control their mounts. As St. Augustine wrote 'Let [man] control lust, let him hold the reins and not be carried away.' Their mounts represent vice and deadly sins such as lust, gluttony and pride. **The unicorn (right) stands for pride in heresy, the bear (next left) for the body without faith and the ox (centre) for maddened lust**. The women don't look particularly distressed. Is it maybe because their attraction gives them a hold on these men? This circuit refers to various mediaeval customs, such as fertility rituals, **Morris dancing** with several men dancing around a single woman, and dancing around the May tree. At the same time we see men indulge in unbridled lust – which will certainly lead them to hell, as is depicted in the right-hand panel.
- The four rivers may indicate the four points of the compass.
- **Fruit**. Many of the figures are holding **oversize fruit**. The **cherry was a symbol of pride and the strawberry was regarded as over indulgent and so liable to corrupt through excessive sensual pleasure**. This was deduced from the contemporary saying: "Don't eat cherries with great lords—they'll throw the pits in your face."

- **Birds.** The owl is not the only bird that fulfils a key role in the triptych. Here we see a huge assembly of oversized birds with people riding them. We recognise bird species such as the green woodpecker, the hoopoe, the robin and the duck. **The birds could also be taken as a double entendre.** As well as being an obsolete plural form, **the Dutch word 'vogelen'** (vogel = bird) could refer to having **sexual intercourse.**
- **Mountain of heresy.** At the top left is a pink structure that could represent the **mountain of heresy** which is about to fall as it is held together by glass.
- **Flying figures.** At the very top left is a man holding the tree of life riding on a sea eagle. It has been suggested this represents the extinction of the duality of the sexes and the figure is half way between heaven and the Earth. To the right a knight on a fish has a dolphin tail that curves back to his hand suggesting a common symbol of eternity, a snake biting its own tail.



Centre panel

- **Moors.** Although the majority of the figures in the centre panel are white, it does include a couple of dark-skinned people. In mediaeval Europe, **black people were a rare sight**, and the then prevailing views of Africans in particular were quite negative. The people of the Low Countries had little knowledge of countries outside Europe. Dark skinned people were associated with **debauchery and loose morals** - although as we have seen most, if not all, people had the same associations. Anything exotic was equated with sexuality. It is hard to tell why exactly Bosch chose to include these figures, as he may also have wished to represent the diverse quality of God's creation.



The Garden of Earthly Delights, c. 1495-1505, centre panel, bottom left

Centre panel, bottom left

- **"Pleasure is as fragile as glass"** is a Flemish proverb depicted in the lower left of the centre panel of the famous *The Garden of Earthly Delights* - two lovers are enclosed in a glass bubble that, emerging from a flower, is beginning to crack. Such images suggest that Bosch's life, of which little is known, and his mysterious and often shocking images were deeply rooted to the earthy folklore of his time.' (The Art Story).
- **Many of the popular songs and texts of the period make it clear that prayer was a metaphor for sexual intercourse.** For example, in a song it describes how a monk uses prayer to seduce a nun behind the altar.
- The upside down man is holding his hands with crossed thumbs and fingers touching which was the gesture of prayer at the time. Above his legs is an exotic fruit, suggesting forbidden fruit, which means it is not too far fetched to think to Bosch is referring to the sin of self-abuse, in other words masturbation. Medieval moralists saw this as a sin against nature and therefore one of the worst possible sins. These interpretations require a close reading of texts, plays and songs of the period to understand the associations that would be obvious at the time but which are **lost to the modern viewer**.

The Garden of Earthly Delights, c. 1495-1505, centre panel, bottom right



Centre panel, bottom right

- At the top right is an owl. To show the difficulty of interpretation many symbols were ambiguous and depended on the context. According to St. Augustine the owl, as well as representing heresy could sometimes be considered to be the symbol of Christ. Although today and in the classical period **the owl represented Athena** (Roman Minerva), the goddess of wisdom, in the medieval period it became **associated with darkness and uncleanness** because of references to owls in the Bible (Leviticus). Another suggestion is based on the **Latin word for owl Bubo which is the Greek word for a boil** (hence Bubonic plague). Owls **sometimes were used to represent Jews** as they were said to have **rejected the light of Christ** and to live in the uncleanness of religious blasphemy. Not all representations were negative and the owl sometimes **represented an aspect of Christ** who lived in darkness in order to save sinners who lived away from the light of God.
- Bosch is mocking the actions of heretics who see themselves as being as perfect as Christ. The owl sits above a four-legged buffoon ensnared in the thorns of sin and proudly cavorting a ridiculous jig. The two figures joined together could represent the two sins which according to St. Gregory hold sway over the human race, one of the spirit, the other of the flesh.
- At the top people **pick apples** from trees while a man **offers a strawberry** to a woman with a leering expression, a twist on biblical depictions of Eden. In another, couples feed each other berries, a scene traditionally associated with courtly romance, yet here they are doing more than merely flirting. According to one critic, Bosch 'subverts and perverts' the theme of courtly love, with **“love fruit”, a traditional metaphor for amorous union**, both religious and worldly, now transformed into a hellish prison”.
- At the bottom centre, five figures, four white and one black. The fair-skinned figures,

two males and two females, are covered from head to foot in light-brown body hair. Some scholars suggest that they represent wild or primeval humanity, but disagree on the symbolism. It could be they represent savagery or the noble savage uncorrupted by society.

- In the cave at the bottom right is the only clothed figure in the panel and the only one, or one of the few, with dark hair. He is pointing at a hairy female figure. His hair has a pointed central portion and he has a long curved nose. It has been suggested it is a portrait of the patron, an advocate of Adam denouncing Eve, Saint John the Baptist or a self-portrait.



The Garden of Earthly Delights, c. 1495-1505, right panel, top

Right panel top

- **Right Panel – City on Fire.** Painting this all-consuming blaze may well have conjured up childhood memories with Hieronymus Bosch. **In 1463, a great fire raged in the city of 's-Hertogenbosch, reducing 4,000 homes to ashes.** It must have left an indelible impression on the minds of any citizen, including **the then 13-year-old Hieronymus.** In Bosch's depiction of hell, a devastating fire sets the city ablaze. People try to escape the fire using ladders or jumping into the dirty water of the city canal, to certain death. Amongst the flames, we see crowds of people and armies moving about, while at the heart of the scene stands a windmill, its sails smouldering. The massive fires highlight groups of figures caught in the inferno.

*The Garden of Earthly Delights, c.
1495-1505, right panel, middle*



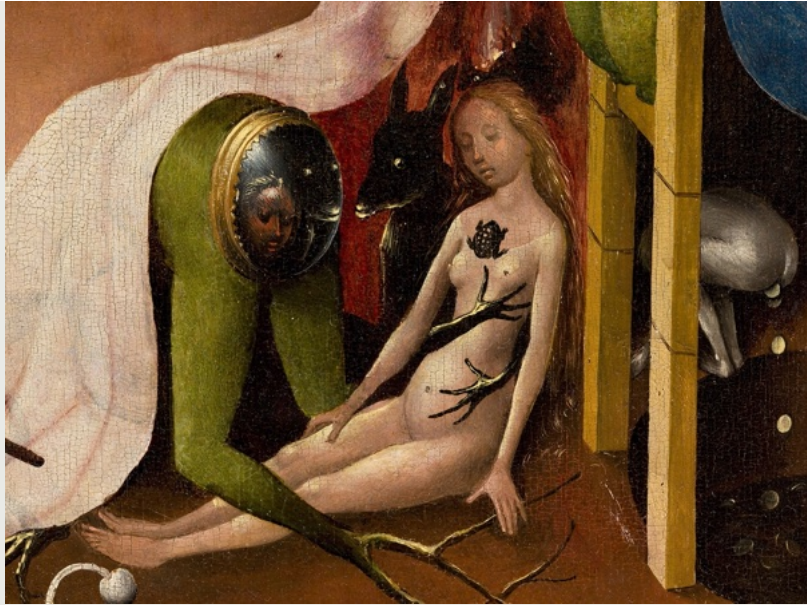
- **Ear and Knife.** A group of lost souls is being squashed by a pair of huge ears with a knife wedged between them. An army is marching towards the oversized contraption. The ominous-looking ears resemble a war machine, but the similarity to a male sexual organ is also unmistakable. The ears have been pierced by an arrow, blood oozing from it. In the days of Bosch, knives were used as tools as well as in fights. The knife holds a symbol that looks like a letter 'B', or an 'M' turned on its side. This particular symbol keeps returning in Bosch's works. It tells us that Bosch liked to include objects from his native city in his paintings. In the 15th and 16th centuries, 's-Hertogenbosch had a thriving knife industry of international repute. Its knives were exported as far as Spain and Scandinavia. In the city, knives with the same symbol have been found in archaeological digs. Below we see a knife that was used to peel potatoes in Bosch's times, but may also have been used to cut off ears from thieves. Corporal punishments were quite common and chopping off ears was reserved for incorrigible kleptomaniacs.
- **Tree Man.** The tree man is a very well-known image. The shoulders are propped up by legs resembling tree trunks, with branches sticking out. The Tree Man is balanced on two small boats, in which a group of people try to find shelter. In the tavern inside the Tree Man's torso, a woman is pulling pints from a barrel, and we see a cross bow hanging from a tree. At the table in the tavern a man is sitting on a giant toad, a symbol of the devil. The head of the Tree Man is surmounted by a large bagpipe, the instrument of sloth and idleness. The tiny flag on his eggshell back also shows a bagpipe. It may well have been sloth and alcohol abuse that caused the figures in the diabolical tavern to end up in hell.



The Garden of Earthly Delights, c. 1495-1505, right panel, bottom

Right panel bottom

- **Buttock Song. Secular music** was associated with lust which was referred to as the 'music of the flesh'. On the left, we see a figure is being **crushed by a giant lute** and another **impaled by harp strings**. The crushed figure has a four-line musical staff tattooed into the skin. Today, musical scores are written on a five-line staff. So it's always been a mystery what the musical notes on the buttocks might have sounded like. Several musical historians have attempted a transcription into modern musical notation. One transcribed it into modern notation assuming the second line is C which was common for chants of this period.
- **Diabolical bird on potty chair.** In hell, the **owl** again makes its appearance, now acting like a demon from a nightmare. With a pot on its head and jugs for shoes, it is sitting on a giant potty chair. **Human bodies are being consumed and excreted simultaneously.** To go straight into the sewer. In mediaeval days, the river running through the heart of 's-Hertogenbosch was an **open sewer**. Its stench pervaded the streets of the city. **Only the very rich could afford a 'closet' perched above the river** where they could relieve themselves in private. **Ordinary people would defecate straight into the river.** The elegant potty chair painted by Bosch would only be found in the homes of the city's wealthiest. After his marriage, he would become one of them. And most likely a similar chair took pride of place in his home. On the edge of the sewer we see three figures. One rich 'stinker' is excreting coins. The figure right next to him is throwing up. Bosch had made an earlier painting themed on the seven sins. Could it be he is depicting gluttony and greed here?



The Garden of Earthly Delights, c. 1495-1505, right panel, bottom

The Garden of Earthly Delights, c. 1495-1505, right panel, bottom

- The woman to the left under the chair has a toad on her chest representing sexual excess and the mirror in front of her represents pride. The ass alongside her represents foolishness. There was a Flemish saying mothers used to tell their daughters who preened themselves in front of a mirror: **'You are looking up the Devil's arse.'** Her eyes are closed perhaps signifying that in hell, understanding where pride has led her she can no longer bear to look at herself.
- Even the green tree-man hybrid has a meaning as greenery and foliage represented the shortness of life

NOTES

- "Below left is the punishment of a woman whose sin was pride or vanity, as we see from the standard representation of the offence: facing her reflection in a mirror. Bosch has added layers of inventive detail. She is "tormented by [an] ugly hellish ... toad" on her chest, signifying sexual sin, while she is "embraced ... by [an] ugly hellish" ass-hybrid, the ass being the symbol of foolishness. The mirror is on the backside of a green tree-man hybrid. Greenery, flowers and foliage were symbols of the shortness of life, that greenery/life will wither and die, and thus we should look past the present moment to our eternal fate. Since the display of a backside was another symbol of moral foolishness, the message of the foolish arse/mirror reinforces the message of the foolish ass. This image is also reminiscent of the Flemish saying, contemporaneous with Bosch, uttered by mothers to their daughters who preened themselves in the mirror: 'You are looking up the Devil's arse.' The sinner's eyes are closed, unusual for an image of vanity, as if in hell, understanding where pride has led her, she can no longer bear to look at herself." [1]

REFERENCES

- [1] <https://earlymusicmuse.com/bosch2/>



The Garden of Earthly Delights, c. 1495-1505, oil on panel, 220 cm x 390 cm, room 56, Museo del Prado

- **The End.** With the right panel, we have come to the end of the story Hieronymus Bosch wants to tell us through his painting. Bosch was out to **shock, amuse and surprise us**, he wanted us to enjoy the sight of this multitude of figures, animals, plants and objects and learn a lesson from them. In 1517, a year after Bosch's death Antonio De' Beatis was the first to write about it when he saw it in the House of Nassau in Brussels. Bosch's reputation and fame quickly spread across Europe.
- Undoubtedly, this triptych is one of the **most remarkable paintings ever made**. It is a testament to boundless creativity – just look at the Tree Man or the fantastical architecture in the centre panel's background. Even though we may never be able to fully grasp its meaning, we can definitely say that the *Garden of Earthly Delights* is an **unparalleled work of art and an amazing visual spectacle**.

REFERENCES

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Garden_of_Earthly_Delights



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Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516) *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1495-1505, right panel, middle

Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516) *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1495-1505, right panel, middle

- **Hieronymus Bosch died** on the 9th August, 1516. The cause of death is unclear but that year pleurisy was rampant and many people died in the epidemic. It is likely that Bosch was infected and died of pleurisy.
- Let me leave the last word to the famous art historian Erwin Panofsky. He wrote in his book *Early Netherlandish Painting* that **"In spite of all the ingenious, erudite and in part extremely useful research devoted to the task of 'decoding Jerome Bosch', I cannot help feeling that the real secret of his magnificent nightmares and daydreams has still to be disclosed. We have bored a few holes through the door of the locked room; but somehow we do not seem to have discovered the key"**.
- Thank you