



Holbein at the Court of Henry VIII

- The talk is about Holbein's life in England and the well known personalities at Henry VIII's court that he painted.
 - Figures such as Thomas Wolsey (no portrait by Holbein), Thomas More, Thomas Cromwell, Richard Rich (drawing), and Thomas Cranmer (not by Holbein) figured prominently in Henry's administration.
- I discuss Holbein's style by comparing his drawings with his paintings.
- And, finally, I look at the many puzzles presented by *The Ambassadors*.

Notes

The Tudors (1485 -1603) in brief:

- Henry VII 1485 – 1509, Henry Richmond, descendent of John of Gaunt, defeated Richard III at Bosworth Field in 1485. Married Elizabeth of York uniting the two houses of York (white) and Lancaster (red) as symbolised in the white and red rose he adopted. He was a skilful politician but he is often described as avaricious although this did mean he left a lot in the treasury for his son to spend.
- Henry VIII 1509 – 1547, he married Catherine of Aragon (his brother's widow and mother of Mary) but Henry annulled the marriage to marry Anne Boleyn (mother Elizabeth) who he beheaded for alleged adultery. He declared himself head of the Catholic Church and married Jane Seymour who died after giving birth to Edward. He then married Anne of Cleves but the marriage was annulled and she survived Henry the longest. He then married Catherine Howard who he beheaded for adultery and finally Catherine Parr (her third husband) who outlived him and married Thomas Seymour (who grew up in Wulfhall) whose brother was Edward Seymour, Lord Protector of England during the first two years of Edward VI's reign. Thomas Seymour is known for his romps with the young Elizabeth.
- Edward VI 1547 – 1553, sickly (tuberculosis), king aged 9, Duke of Somerset was protector. Cranmer wrote the Book of Common Prayer.
- Jane Grey 1553, reigned for only 9 days, executed aged 17, the best educated

woman in England. She was the great-granddaughter of Henry VII through his younger daughter Mary, Jane was a first cousin once removed of Edward VI. In May 1553, she was married to Lord Guildford Dudley, a younger son of Edward's chief minister, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland. When the 15-year-old king lay dying in June 1553, he nominated Jane as successor to the Crown in his will, thus subverting the claims of his half-sisters Mary and Elizabeth under the Third Succession Act.

- Queen Mary I (Bloody Mary) 1553 – 1558, devout Catholic, married Philip of Spain. Protestant bishops Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer burnt at the stake.
- Queen Elizabeth I 1558 – 1603, a remarkable woman, noted for her learning and wisdom, popular, chose advisors wisely. Drake, Raleigh, Hawkins, the Cecil's, Essex and other made England respected and feared. Mary Queen of Scots executed.

References

Norbert Wolf, *Holbein*

Susan Foister, *Making and Meaning: Holbein's Ambassadors*

John North, *The Ambassador's Secret*



Hans Holbein the Younger (1498–1543), Self-portrait , 1542 or 1543, color chalk, pen and gold, 32 x 26 cm, Uffizi Gallery

Inscriptions: name of sitter and age of sitter: IOANNES HOLPENIUS BASILEENSIS SUI IPSIUS EFFIGIATOR Æ. XLV (Johannes Holbein, Basil, self-portrait, at the age of 45)

- **Hans Holbein the Younger** (c.1497-1543), German artist and printmaker who worked in the Northern European Renaissance style. His father, Hans Holbein the Elder (c. 1460-1524) was a German painter from Augsburg, Bavaria, and a member of a family of painters. He transformed German art from (Late) International Gothic to a Northern Renaissance style. Holbein the Younger became one of the great portraitists of the sixteenth century and was a goldsmith who also produced religious art, portraits, satire and Reformation propaganda.
- Like his father, Holbein the Younger was born in Augsburg but moved to and worked mainly in **Basel** as a young artist.
- Holbein came to England when he was 29 to better his fortunes. He worked in England from **1526 to 1528** and again from **1532 to his death in 1543**. When he first came it was with an introduction to Sir Thomas More. The second time he was the most important artist in Henry VIII's court. The regulations in Basel meant he could leave for **two years only** and must not work for a foreign court. So the first time he did not work for Henry but when he returned within the two years the **violent iconoclasm in Basel** caused him to return to England four years later despite the protestations of the Basel town council. Holbein was a skilled **goldsmith**, for which there was great demand in England, an inventor of painted compositions and a **portraitist**, for which there was enormous demand in England. He returned to **Basel briefly in 1538**, a wealthy man. In 1541 new laws against foreign workers forced him to become an English citizen. A vast number of his works have been lost particularly his gold and silver work and his religious paintings. Holbein had a wife (Elsbeth) and children in Basel who he left in 1532 and only paid a brief visit in late 1540. It is likely he had two children in England

but he supported his wife in Basel who was well off when she died in 1549.

- On his second visit to England he worked for Henry and was paid **£30 a year** to make cups, fountains, jewellery and daggers as well as the Whitehall mural and portraits of Henry and the royal family. He also produced portraits of everyone from the grandest nobles to humble servants. There are 85 portrait drawings in the Royal Collection of which about 30 can be connected with paintings. It is likely the remaining paintings are lost.
- Holbein's intense and vivid portraits depend on the precise placement of nose, eyes and mouth often slightly adjusted when painting to convey a feeling of movement to convey the presence of an individual.
- The **disparity** between his subtle and **accurate portraits** and the **stylized** portraits of the **Elizabethan** period is extreme and it is difficult to trace a successor to Holbein's style through the remainder of the English Tudor period. Holbein's reputation remained high during the Elizabethan period and his work was well known but portraits became stylized for other reasons.
- Holbein's ***The Ambassadors*** can be seen as a precursor to the Westminster mural or as a profound religious allegory. Books have been written about its secret and hidden meaning and so I will examine some of these ideas in more detail.

Notes

- The gold background is of a later date. According to art historian John Rowlands, "Although this drawing has been enlarged on all sides and heavily reworked, enough of it still shows to allow the assumption that the original work was executed by Holbein. The inscription, although late in date, evidently records an earlier one, of which slight traces remain. There is no evidence to suggest that Holbein ever executed a painted portrait based on this drawing". Painted versions of the drawing by other hands exist, including one by Lucas Horenbout, in which the left-handed Holbein is holding a paintbrush. Art historian Stephanie Buck notes that Holbein's direct gaze suggests he was looking into a mirror. Holbein died not long after completing this self-portrait, probably of the plague.
- **Hans Holbein** was born in Augsburg, trained in Basel and spent a total of thirteen years in England, in 1526-8 and 1532-43. During the latter period he was the most important artist at the court of Henry VIII, though the English were **primarily interested in portraits of themselves** - as Anthony Van Dyck was to find a century later - and little survives of Holbein's more varied works in England (such as the lost *Triumphs of Riches and Poverty* for the Hanseatic merchants' hall). The bulk of the eighty-five portrait drawings now at Windsor were probably in Holbein's studio at his death. They were first documented in 1547 in an album owned by Edward VI, subsequently leaving and re-entering the Royal Collection twice before 1675, with a few losses and additions along the way. About thirty of the drawings can be connected with surviving paintings, and nearly all the remainder were no doubt

studies for lost works. In most cases the identity of the sitter is known only from the inscriptions on the drawings, copied - probably in the eighteenth century - from identifications reputedly made by Sir John Cheke, tutor to Edward VI.

- **Holbein arrived** in England in **late 1526** with a letter of introduction **from Erasmus**, addressed to **Sir Thomas More** (1478-1535), then Speaker of the House of Commons and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (he was to be appointed Lord Chancellor in 1529). Erasmus and More had been friends and correspondents for many years, part of a close international circle of humanist scholars that also included the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Warham. A portrait of Erasmus painted by Holbein in 1523 had been sent as a gift to Warham, and the artist's abilities would therefore have been known to More before his arrival in England. Holbein probably lodged in More's house in Chelsea throughout his first English sojourn; guild regulations obliged foreign craftsmen to live and work outside the City of London.
- The major work of Holbein's first period in England was a portrait of the family of Thomas More. There are two studies of More at Windsor, both significantly larger in scale than the other six surviving head studies connected with the family group. Both are also close in their details and scale to a portrait of More alone, dated 1527, and it is likely that the studies of Thomas More were drawn in preparation for the single portrait, executed to More's satisfaction before he commissioned the artist to attempt the much more ambitious family group.



Hans Holbein (c. 1497-1543), *Portrait of Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 1523, oil and tempera on wood, National Gallery

Hans Holbein (c. 1497-1543), the Younger

- He moved to **Basel in 1515**, aged 18, and was apprentice to Hans Herbster, Basel's leading painter. One of his early, famous works was this portrait of the humanist philosopher Desiderius (pronounced 'des-i-deer-ee-uh s') Erasmus (1466-1536). Erasmus was known throughout Europe for his learning.
- He was famous at the time and was collected but unusually founded no school. He is known for his precision, economy of line, penetration of character and richness of style.
- In 1517 he moved to Lucerne until 1519, to complete a project with his father.
- He returned to **Basel in 1519** and set up a busy workshop and married Elsbeth Schmid, an older widow with a son, and they had a son, Philip, in their first year of marriage.
- Lutheranism arrived in Basel and he produced religious paintings, murals, cartoons for stained glass, and woodcuts for books.
- He produced a number of portraits including Jakob and Dorothea Meyer and the **above portrait of Erasmus**.
- This portrait which was copied throughout Europe **made Holbein internationally famous**.
- **In 1526 he travelled to England** looking for work with a recommendation from Erasmus. He was welcomed by the friend of Erasmus Thomas More, the famous humanist.
- The column of the left shows the latest classical decorative work called 'grotesque'. Such decorative designs had been found in Nero's Golden Palace (*Domus Aurea*) in Rome in the late 1480s.
- **Erasmus** (1466-1536) was a humanist, Catholic priest, social critic, teacher and

theologian. He was known as 'Prince of the Humanists'. He wrote nearly twenty works including *In Praise of Folly* (1511), *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516) and *A Handbook on Manners for Children* (1530). He was critical of the abuses of the church but kept his distance from Martin Luther (1483-1546) and Philipp Melanchthon (pronounced 'muh-langk-thun', 1497-1560) and continued to recognise the authority of the pope. Erasmus remained committed to reforming the Church and its clerics' abuses from within. He also held to Catholic doctrines such as that of free will, which some Reformers rejected in favour of the doctrine of predestination. His middle road approach disappointed and even angered scholars in both camps.

- The book Erasmus is holding refers to 'Herculean Labours', a reference to his translation of the New Testament and the book on the shelf has a punning reference to Holbein's skill, 'I am Johannes (i.e. Hans) Holbein, whom it is easier to denigrate than to emulate.'



Holbein, *Portrait of Sir Thomas More*, 1527, oil and tempera on oak, Frick Collection, New York City

- He visited the court of Francis I in France and in 1626 Erasmus recommended him to his friend Thomas More.
- Holbein painted **More's family** and More found him other commissions. Only the sketch, some copies and the studies of seven members of More's family survive.
- He painted William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury and Nicholas Kratzer, the Bavarian astronomer and mathematician.
- Although he did not work for the king, Henry VIII, he worked for his courtiers, such as his portrait of Sir Henry Guildford and his wife Lady Mary and Anne Lovell the woman in *Lady with a Squirrel and a Starling*.
- He returned to Basel from 1528 to 1532 probably to retain his citizenship. Enriched by his London commissions he bought two houses in Basel.
- In 1532 he returned to London until 1540.
- In 1540, with the downfall of Thomas More, Anne Boleyn and the most seriously Thomas Cromwell he was left without a major sponsor and completed minor commissions until his death, aged 45 in 1543.

Notes

- The four Thomas's were important:
 - Thomas Wolsey (1473-1530), usually known as Cardinal Wolsey, became Lord Chancellor, fell out of favour as he failed to arrange an annulment of Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, died on his journey back to London to be tried.
 - Thomas More (1478-1535), staunch supporter of the 'Universal Church', disagreed with Henry becoming head of the church, Lord Chancellor (1529-1532), beheaded in 1535, made a saint (canonised) in 1935, honoured by

- the Soviet Union for his Communist ideas in *Utopia*.
- Thomas Cromwell (c. 1485-1540), the mastermind behind the break with Rome, the dissolution of the monasteries and the creation of new Parliamentary structures. He arranged the divorce but fell out of favour after destroying Anne Boleyn and arranging the marriage with Anne of Cleves. Condemned without trial and beheaded on the day Henry married Catherine Howard. Henry had executed 'the most faithful servant he ever had.'
 - Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), worked with Cromwell to obtain Henry's divorce. Leader of the English Reformation and Archbishop of Canterbury from 1533 to 1555 (Mary's reign). He was burnt at the stake by Mary for withdrawing his recantation.
 - William Wareham (c. 1450-1532), Archbishop of Canterbury who tried to reach a compromise with Henry regarding becoming head of the church. He died of natural causes.
 - Nicholas Kratzer (1487?-1550), German mathematician, astronomer and horologist who designed the clock in Hampton Court. Spent most of his life in England as astronomer to Henry VIII. He was a good friend of Thomas More and Hans Holbein.



Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/8-1543), *Sir Thomas More* (1478-1535), c.1526-7, black and coloured chalks, the outlines pricked for transfer, 39.8 x 29.9 cm, Royal Collection

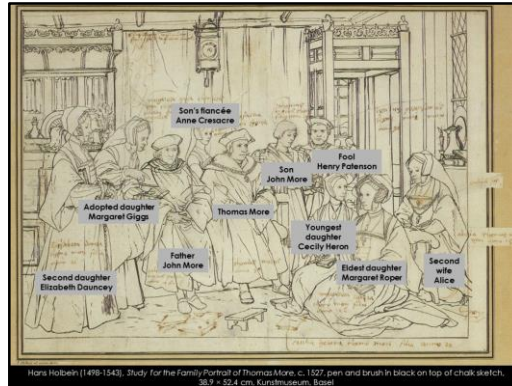
- This drawing is a study for the previous painted portrait by Holbein in the Frick Collection, New York.
- The painting and the drawings relate to a **group portrait of Thomas More's family**. This was destroyed by fire at the Kremsier Castle (Czech Republic) in 1752, its appearance is preserved in an annotated drawing by Holbein, now in Kunstmuseum Basel. There are also several later copies, including three 1592–1594 versions by Rowland Lockey: a watercolour miniature in the Victoria and Albert Museum and two oils on canvas, one in the National Portrait Gallery, and one at the Nostell Priory, West Yorkshire.
- **Six more drawings** executed by Holbein in preparation for the **group portrait survive**, all in the Royal Collection. One is of Thomas More's father Sir John More; another is of his son John More the Younger; the third records the likeness of his ward and daughter-in-law, John's wife Anne Cresacre; the fourth and the fifth — that of his daughters Cicely Heron and Elizabeth Dauncey; finally, there is one of his foster daughter Margaret Giggs. The compositional sketch in Basel also depicts his wife Lady Alice More (a related painted portrait, attributed to Holbein's studio, is at the Weiss Gallery in London), his daughter Margaret Roper (a portrait miniature of her, by Holbein, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), and his household fool Henry Patenson.

Notes

- A portrait drawing of Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) The portrait shows his head and shoulders and the sitter faces three-quarters to the right. He wears a hat and fur collar. **The drawing has been pricked for transfer**. Inscribed in an eighteenth-century hand at upper left: Tho: Moor Ld Chancelour.

References

- Text adapted from *Holbein to Hockney: Drawings from the Royal Collection*



Hans Holbein (1498-1543), *Study for the Family Portrait of Thomas More*, c. 1527, pen and brush in black on top of chalk sketch, 38.9 × 52.4 cm, Kunstmuseum, Basel

- Original sketch annotated by the astronomer Nicholas Kratzer, a friend of Holbein and More, and presented to Erasmus. He later added the names and ages of the sitters in Latin. "On the left is **Elizabeth Dauncey**, More's second daughter; beside her is his adopted daughter, **Margaret Giggs**, explaining a point to Thomas More's father, John More; Thomas More himself sits in the centre, with the engaged couple **Anne Cresacre** and his only son, John More, on either side of him; beside John More is the household fool, Henry Patenson; on the right of the picture are More's youngest daughter, **Cecily Heron**, and his eldest daughter, **Margaret Roper**; More's second wife, **Alice**, is kneeling on the extreme right."
- Most of the members of the group are holding prayer books, signifying that this may have been a prayer gathering, or simply a symbol of the family's religious devotions.
- An ornate clock appears in the top centre of the painting. Clocks were expensive at this time, showing the family's high standing. The first "clocks" were invented in the 13th Century. As time went by, they become more ornate and complex.

Notes

- This must be one of the first paintings of an informal family group at home.
- "Almost without exception they have interpreted its naturalism and informality as a fairly direct mirror of everyday life in the More household. John Rowlands, for example, speaks of the artist 'recording the family when the buzz of talk has just subsided,' which implies that Holbein simply set down an actual moment of domestic life as it passed before him. More recently, Stephanie Buck has praised the picture's 'intimacy' and tied it to 'an important function of portraits in this period, one that photography would assume at a later date, namely to provide those far away with an image of the people they love,' in this case '... enhanced

by depicting the person in his or her characteristic surroundings and engaged in everyday activities.' For the most part, these qualities have seemed more or less self-explanatory, and calling this portrait the first conversation piece outside Italy has summed up what Holbein seemed to have had in mind." David Smith, "Portrait and Counter-Portrait in Holbein's 'The Family of Sir Thomas More.'"

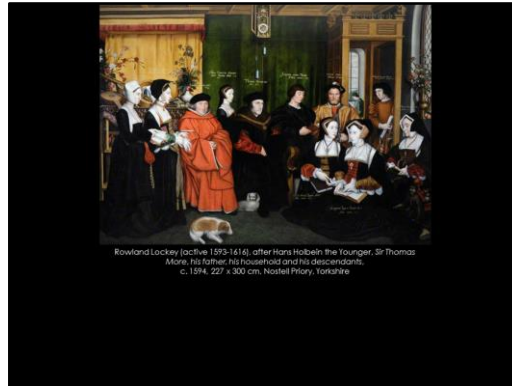
- Thomas More wrote *Utopia* in 1516 describing the ideal form of society. The book gave rise to our word utopian.
- The notes on the drawing are by Nicholas Kratzer and by Holbein. Those by Kratzer name each person and were put there before the drawing was sent to Erasmus. The notes by Holbein suggest the viol on the wall should be replaced by musical instruments on the buffet and that Dame Alice should sit rather than kneel. The drawing reached Erasmus in 1528. Between the drawing and the painting the figures of Margaret Giggs and Elizabeth Dauncey were transposed and John Harris, More's secretary was added on the right.

References

<http://www.anneboleynsgossipguide.com/2013/12/the-family-of-sir-thomas-more-by-hans.html>

David Smith, "Portrait and Counter-Portrait in Holbein's 'The Family of Sir Thomas More.'", *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 87, No. 3 (Sep., 2005), pp. 484-506.

Lesley Lewis, *The Thomas More Family Group Portraits After Holbein*, 1998



Rowland Lockey (active 1593-1616), after Hans Holbein the Younger, *Sir Thomas More, his father, his household and his descendants*, c. 1594, 227 x 300 cm, Nostell Priory, Yorkshire

- The original painting, Hans Holbein, *The Family of Thomas More*, was destroyed by fire in the 18th century.
- In a letter, Erasmus talks of More's love for animals. In the painting there is a pet monkey and the family dogs **but these are not in the sketch**. There are also **musical instruments** in the background which are not in the sketch.

Notes

- One of two near life-size copies of Holbein's painting. Probably commissioned by More's grandson Thomas More II to commemorate five generations of the family.
- A cabinet miniature version of this portrait c. 1594 with different details, also likely by Lockey, is in the Victoria and Albert Museum. There is also a surviving drawing by Holbein which confirms the general accuracy of picture.
- Two further copies of the Holbein, at Old Chelsea Town Hall (formerly one of the Petre Pictures) and Hendred House, East Hendred, may be by Lockey, but are too damaged and over-painted for any certainty to be possible.
- From left to right the figures are:
 - Margaret Clement (née Giggs, aged 19) was brought up with the family and became a fine Greek scholar. It was said that as a child she would commit a fault just to hear More chide her with love, compassion, moderation and gravity.
 - Elizabeth Dauncey (aged 21) was More's second daughter. She is shown not holding a book so she may have been less studious.
 - Sir John More (aged 76) was a judge and died in 1530 so did not live to see his son's disgrace.
 - Anne Cresacre (aged 15) was More's ward. She was taken in by More as a

- baby and was betrothed to John, More's only son, in 1527.
- Sir Thomas More (aged 50) is shown in the robes of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to which he was appointed in 1525. He succeeded Wolsey as Lord Chancellor in 1529.
 - John More (aged 19), youngest child and only son.
 - Cecily Heron (aged 20) married Giles Heron who became More's ward in 1523 after the death of his father.
 - Henry Patenson (aged 40), jester or fool who later became the fool of the Lord mayor.
 - Margaret Roper (aged 27), More's eldest daughter and favourite child, famous for her learning. In 1520 she married William Roper. It was Margaret Roper (aged 22), More's eldest daughter, who bribed the guards and rescued her father's head from London Bridge. For a decent burial. Charges were brought against her but she was pardoned.
 - John Harris (aged 27), More's secretary.
 - Dame Alice More (aged ?56) was More's second wife who he married shortly after the death of his first wife, Jane Colt, in 1511. She was a strong character, a good stepmother and a good manager of More's household.
 - The more distant figure at the window is unnamed.
 - A number of anomalous or strange features of the painting have been pointed out:
 - The door of the clock is open.
 - The handles of the vase are inverted with respect to each other.
 - The sisters front left have sleeves made with the other's bodice.
 - The blade of the sword held by the fool appears to be missing.
 - The hinges on the cupboard door at the left would cause the door to fall open rather than closed.
 - The dog below Sir John More is poorly drawn and may be by another artist. One commentator speaks of 'two dogs, one dead.'

References

- Holbeinartworks.org



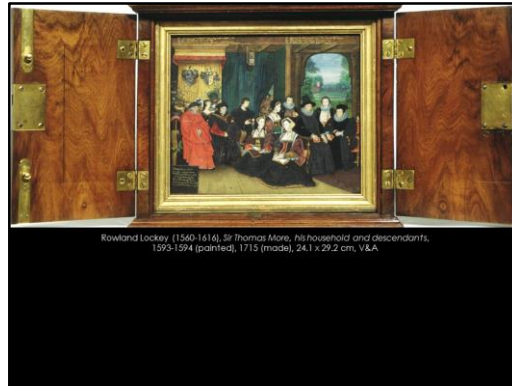
Rowland Lockey (active 1593-1616), after Hans Holbein the Younger, *Sir Thomas More, his father, his household and his descendants*, c. 1593, 227.4 x 330.2 cm, National Portrait Gallery

- There is **another version** of the family by Rowland Lockey, c. 1593, in the **National Portrait Gallery**. This has a different layout of the family group but it **shows the musical instruments** but **not the animals**.

Notes

- Seven of the figures (nos. 1-7) derive from Holbein's group portrait Sir Thomas More with his Family and Household (1527-8), which was destroyed in the eighteenth century. Its appearance is recorded in a copy by Lockey at Nostell Priory, Yorkshire, and in Holbein's preliminary drawing in the Kunstmuseum, Basle. Four of the figures (nos. 8-11) were probably painted from life by Lockey. The portrait of Anne More, (no. 12), hanging in the background, is presumably a copy of a portrait of circa 1560. The sitters, with their coats of arms displayed above them, are (from left to right):
 - 1 Sir John More 1451?-1530 Judge and Father of Sir Thomas More;
 - 2 Anne Cresacre 1511-77, wife of John More II;
 - 3 Sir Thomas More 1478-1535, Lord Chancellor;
 - 4 John More II 1510-47, only son of Sir Thomas More;
 - 5 Cecily More born 1507, wife of Giles Heron. Youngest daughter of Sir Thomas More;
 - 6 Elizabeth More born 1506, wife of William Dauncey. Second daughter of Sir Thomas More;
 - 7 Margaret More 1505-44, wife of William Roper. Eldest daughter of Sir Thomas More;
 - 8 John More III 1557-before 99. Eldest son of Thomas More II;
 - 9 Thomas More II 1531-1606. Son of John More II;

- 10 Christopher Cresacre More 1572-1649. Fourth son of Thomas More II;
- 11 Maria 1534-1607, wife of Thomas More II. Daughter of John Scrope;
- 12 Anne More (née Cresacre) 1512-77 (portrait hanging on wall). Anne also appears in the group as no. 2 above.



Rowland Lockey (1560-1616), *Sir Thomas More, his household and descendants*, 1593-1594 (painted), 1715 (made), 24.1 x 29.2 cm, V&A

- This is a cabinet miniature 24.1 x 29.2 cm in a lockable cabinet.
- V&A website:
 - Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) was Lord Chancellor of England and also a distinguished scholar. In the picture he is seated beside his father, Sir John More. Behind him is his son John, holding a prayer book, and John's wife, Anne Cresacre. The three women in low-cut dresses in the centre are his daughters Cecily Heron (seated, with a closed book), Elizabeth Dauncey (standing) and Margaret Roper (seated, with an open book). The four figures with pleated ruffs are his grandson, also called Thomas More, with his wife Maria Scrope and their sons, John and Christopher Cresacre More. His 'fool' can be seen pushing through the curtain.
 - This is a sort of visual family tree. In fact, the four generations could not have sat together for the portrait.
 - The attribution of the miniature to Rowland Lockey is linked to large oil version of this painting that is signed by him. We know that Lockey was an apprentice of Nicholas Hilliard (?1547-1619) and also practised as a miniaturist, so this miniature is likely to be by Lockey.



After Hans Holbein the Younger, *Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex*, 1532-1533, 78.1 x 61.9 cm, National Portrait Gallery

- **Thomas Cromwell** was a statesman who rose to power as the **right-hand man of Cardinal Wolsey**. It was he that suggested to **Henry VIII** that he make himself **head of the Church of England** to facilitate his divorce from Catherine of Aragon. He was chief minister to Henry VIII from 1532 to 1540.
- In this **copy after an original by Holbein**, Cromwell is dressed soberly in black and portrayed in a relatively simple setting; the wooden panelling, damask wall covering and Turkish carpet suggest however an interest in fine things. On the table before him is a book, probably devotional, a quill, scissors to trim it and a soft leather bag which would have held his seal.
- The **writing on the paper** makes clear his position: '**To master Thomas Cromwell, trusty and right well-beloved master of our jewel house...**'. This was one of the first posts which Cromwell held prior to becoming Henry's chief minister. He was executed for treason in 1540.
- Thomas Cromwell (c. 1485-1540), the mastermind behind the break with Rome, the dissolution of the monasteries and the creation of new Parliamentary structures. He arranged the divorce but fell out of favour after destroying Anne Boleyn and arranging the marriage with Anne of Cleves. Condemned without trial and beheaded on the day Henry married Catherine Howard. Henry had executed 'the most faithful servant he ever had.'
- Cromwell was made Earl of Essex in 1540 even though by this stage he was out of favour.



Gerlach Flicke (1495–1558), *Portrait of Thomas Cranmer*, 1545, 98.4 × 76.2 cm, National Portrait Gallery

Hans Holbein the younger, *Thomas Cranmer* (1489–1556), Archbishop of Canterbury, 1533, 39.5 x 28.5 cm, Lambeth Palace

- This is not by Holbein but by **Gerlach Flicke** but it shows that other artists were painting in a similar style to Holbein.
- Thomas Cranmer holds the Epistles of St Paul, and on the table are two books, one of which appears to be St Augustine's *Of Faith and Works*. This portrait was painted by the German artist Gerlach Flicke, who was working in England between 1545 and 1558. Recent analysis using infrared reflectography has revealed that several changes were made to the composition during both the planning stages and the painting process. The same technique also revealed the word 'rot' (the German for red) written beneath the paint layers on the red cushion at the lower right of the painting and **three areas of broken glass in the window** behind Cranmer which are **probably symbolic, but whose exact meaning is now unclear**. There are pentimenti to the hands and book ribbons reflecting late changes to their position.
- The picture is painted with meticulous attention to detail including the depiction of stubble on Cranmer's chin, the crows' feet around his eyes, tufted threads of the carpet and inlaid detail of the chair.
- The second painting is **by Holbein** and is at Lambeth Palace.

Notes

- **Thomas Cranmer** (1489–1556) was a leader of the English Reformation and Archbishop of Canterbury during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and, for a short time, Mary I. He helped build the case for the annulment of Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, which was one of the causes of the separation of the

English Church from union with the Holy See. Along with Thomas Cromwell, he supported the principle of Royal Supremacy, in which the king was considered sovereign over the Church within his realm. When Edward came to the throne, Cranmer was able to promote major reforms. He wrote and compiled the first two editions of the Book of Common Prayer, a complete liturgy for the English Church. After the accession of the Roman Catholic Mary I, Cranmer was put on trial for treason and heresy. Imprisoned for over two years and under pressure from Church authorities, he made several recantations and apparently reconciled himself with the Roman Catholic Church. However, on the day of his execution, he withdrew his recantations, to die a heretic to Roman Catholics and a martyr for the principles of the English Reformation. Cranmer's death was immortalised in Foxe's Book of Martyrs and his legacy lives on within the Church of England through the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-Nine Articles, an Anglican statement of faith derived from his work.

- **Gerlach Flicke** was a native of Osnabruck and the only other certain works by him are a signed *Unknown Nobleman* of 1547 (National Gallery of Scotland), the diptych containing a self-portrait and a portrait of *Henry Strangwish* of 1554 and a portrait of Mary I after Anthonis Mor (Durham Cathedral Library). He was working in England between 1545 and 1558, and this remains the earliest known portrait by him. Circumstantial evidence indicates that it was painted with the involvement of Thomas Cranmer, probably as a direct commission. The various changes to the composition noted below indicate that this is the prime version. Cranmer is seated in his study and the letter on the table is addressed 'Too the most Reverend fathere in gode and my singulare goode Lorde my Lorde tharchbusshope off Canturbury huys grace be thes'. The inscriptions on the various books are difficult to read, and were apparently no more legible in 1831 (Strong, 1969, p.54). The authenticity of the signature at the top left 'Gerlacus flicus/ Germanus/ faciebat' is not in doubt. Analysis of the wooden panel by dendrochronology, revealed the wood derives from a tree which cannot have been felled before 1534, leaving a maximum period of 12 years before being put to use.



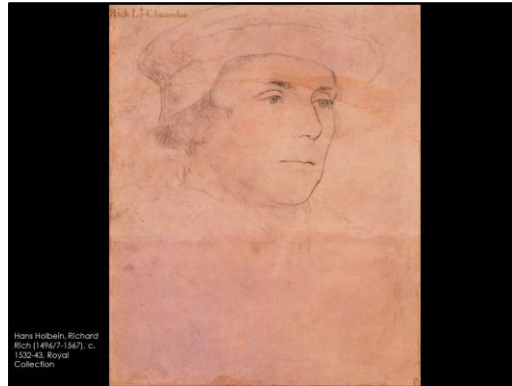
Hans Holbein the Younger (1498–1543), *Portrait of Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk*, c. 1539, 80.1 × 61.4 cm, Royal Collection

Wearing the collar of the Order of the Garter and carrying the baton of the Earl Marshal of England.

- **Thomas Howard**, 3rd Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal (1473 – 25 August 1554) (Earl of Surrey from 1514, passed down from father on his elevation to Dukedom of Norfolk) was a prominent **Tudor politician**. He was an **uncle of two of the wives of Henry VIII: Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard**, and played a major role in the machinations behind these marriages. After falling from favour in 1546, he was stripped of the dukedom and **imprisoned in the Tower**, avoiding execution by a few days when the King unexpectedly died on 28 January 1547. His son, who had also been imprisoned in the Tower had been executed on 19 January. As a Catholic he was **released** on the accession of **Queen Mary I**. He aided Mary in securing her throne, setting the stage for alienation between his Catholic family and the Protestant royal line that would be continued by Queen Elizabeth I.
- His **liking for war** brought him into **conflict with Cardinal Thomas Wolsey**, who preferred diplomacy in the conduct of foreign affairs. In 1523 Wolsey had secured to the Duke of Suffolk the reversion of the office of Earl Marshal which had been held by Norfolk's father, and in 1525 the Duke of Richmond had replaced Norfolk as Lord Admiral. Finding himself pushed aside, Norfolk spent considerable time away from court in 1525–7 and 1528.
- In the mid 1520s Norfolk's niece Anne Boleyn had caught the King's eye, and Norfolk's political fortunes revived with his involvement in the King's attempt to have his marriage to Queen Catherine of Aragon annulled. By 1529 matters of state were being increasingly handled by **Norfolk, Suffolk and the Boleyns**, who **pressed the King to remove Wolsey**. In October the **King sent Norfolk and Suffolk to obtain the great seal from the Cardinal**. In November Wolsey was arrested on a charge of treason, but died before trial. Norfolk benefited from Wolsey's fall,

becoming the King's leading councillor and applying himself energetically in the King's efforts to find a way out of his marriage to Queen Katherine.

- He was the great-great-grandfather of Thomas Howard, 21st Earl of Arundel, the great art collector who lived during the reigns of James I and Charles I.



Hans Holbein, *Richard Rich* (1496/7-1567), c. 1532-43, Royal Collection
A bust length portrait facing three-quarters to the right. Inscribed in an eighteenth-century hand at upper left: Rich Ld Chancellor.

- Richard Rich, 1st Baron Rich (1496/7 – 12 June 1567), was Lord Chancellor during the reign of King Edward VI of England from 1547 until January 1552. The founder of Felsted School with its associated alms houses in Essex in 1564, he was also a persecutor and **torturer of Protestants under Mary**.
- Since the mid-sixteenth century Rich has had a highly negative reputation for **immorality, financial dishonesty, double dealing, perjury and treachery** that is seldom matched in all of English history. The historian Hugh Trevor-Roper dismissed Rich as a man "of whom nobody has ever spoken a good word".

Notes

- In 1536 he was Speaker of the House of Commons.
- Richard Rich became 1st Baron Rich in 1548 (after Holbein's death).
- Portrait of Richard, Baron Rich. Black and coloured chalks, pen and Indian ink on pink-primed paper, 32.2 × 26.5 cm, Royal Collection, Windsor Castle. The drawing is in bad condition, with a water stain along the bottom and another by the left eye. Holbein's work has been almost completely obliterated by rubbing and by later hands, but traces of his left-handed shading are discernible in the hat (Parker, p. 57). Richard Rich, 1st Baron Rich (1496/7–1567), was Solicitor General in 1533. He gave evidence against Sir Thomas More and Bishop John Fisher before their executions in 1535, and also against Thomas Cromwell, who was executed in 1540. **He became Lord Chancellor in 1548**, as the inscription added later indicates. Holbein also drew the portrait of Rich's wife, Elizabeth.
- Tudor England's most infamous villain:
 - In 1535 as Solicitor General he persecuted those who refused to take the Oath of Supremacy, he **betrayed Bishop John Fisher** and **lied to Thomas**

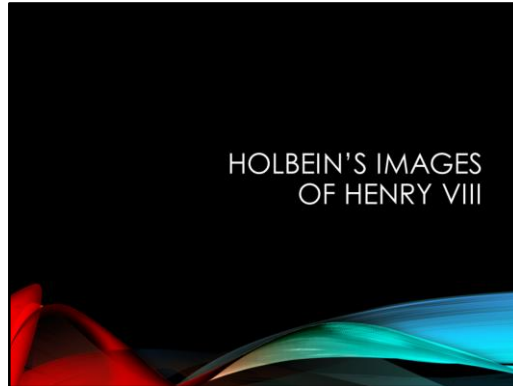
More.

- In 1536, he illegally acquired many monasteries as he was in charge of their dissolution.
 - In 1540 he turned on and betrayed his former ally **Thomas Cromwell**.
 - In 1540 his religious views swayed from evangelical to conservative, he burned three Evangelicals and three diametrically opposed Roman Catholics the same day.
 - In 1541 he brought about the fall of **Catherine Howard** although this time there was some guilt.
 - In 1546 he tortured and burned many minor evangelicals including personally torturing **Anne Askew**, the only woman to be tortured in the Tower in its thousand year history.
 - In 1547 on the ascension of Edward VI he **turned on** his partner **Thomas Wriothesley** and became Lord Chancellor himself.
 - During Edward VI reign he was a staunch Protestant and was responsible for the destruction of all “idols and images”.
 - In 1553 he changed sides and supported Mary who he had been persecuting. He started burning Protestants and became responsible for restoring the monasteries.
 - On Mary’s death he rode into London alongside Elizabeth I.
- Thomas Wriothesley, 1st Earl of Southampton, pronunciation uncertain – rye-zlee, rott-slee and rye-aths-lee have all been suggested. Also risley or wrisley.



Hans Holbein, Design for Anthony Denny's clocksalt, 1543, British Museum

- Holbein was a master designer of precious metalwork but unfortunately none of the precious metal objects he designed survives today.
- Anthony Denny was one of Henry's closest and most trusted friends and a member of the Privy Chamber.
- This is one of Holbein's last works. Denny gave this clocksalt to Henry VIII as a New Year's gift in 1544 two months after Holbein had died. Two notes are in the hand of Nicholas Kratzer indicating that they collaborated on the design of this complex instrument consisting of an hourglass, two sundials,, a clock, a compass (shown on the left) and a salt dispenser. We know that this would have been very appealing to Henry VIII as he had a passion for clocks.



- Holbein did a great deal to create the iconic image we have of Henry VIII today although his six wives and the creation of the Church of England mean that he would be a well known monarch but one without a defining image.
- There are many pictures of Henry VIII that have been derived from Holbein's portraits but only a few original pictures survive.



Copy after Hans Hobein's Whitehall mural by Remigius van Leemput, 1667, oil on canvas, 88.9 x 98.7cm, the original was 270 x 360 cm, The Royal Collection
Hans Holbein, preparatory sketch, 1537, ink and watercolour, National Portrait Gallery

- When Holbein arrived in England he was thirty and a successful religious painter – he had painted few portraits up until then.
- There are about thirteen pictures of Henry VIII from the period, of which only three are known to be by Holbein. Some of the others may be but most are copies of the Holbein portraits.
- Perhaps the most important picture of Henry VIII is the Whitehall mural. This painting is a copy by Remigius van Leemput of c1667.
- In 1537, Henry commissioned Hans Holbein the Younger to create a mural of the Tudor dynasty to commemorate the birth of his son and heir, Edward. It was the only mural which Holbein made in England. It originally occupied an entire wall in Whitehall Palace, which had been designated the official residence of the monarch just a year earlier. The mural was destroyed in a fire in 1698 started by a laundry maid who left washing drying too long in front of an open fire. King Charles II had already commissioned this small copy thirty years previously from the Flemish artist van Leemput.
- The Whitehall Palace was taken from Cardinal Wolsey after his death in 1529 and turned into the largest royal palace in Europe covering 23 acres.
- Between the sketch and the final mural Holbein has changed Henry's posture so that he looks directly out at us and is a more dominating and imposing figure who dwarfs his father, Henry VII, behind.
- The pedestal contains a Latin inscription which includes the lines:
*"If it pleases you to see the illustrious images of heroes, look on these:
no picture ever bore greater. The great debate, competition and great*

question

*is whether father or son is the victor. For both indeed were supreme.
The former often overcame his enemies and the conflagrations of his*

country,

*and finally brought peace to its citizens. **The son, born indeed for
greater things,
removed the unworthy from their altars and replaced them by
upright men.***

*The arrogance of the popes has yielded to unerring virtue, and while
Henry VIII*

*holds the sceptre in his hand religion is restored and during his
reign the doctrines of God have begun to be held in his honour.”.*

- On the other side of the pedestal are Jane Seymour, Henry's third wife and the mother of his son, standing in front of Elizabeth of York.



Holbein, *Henry VIII*, c. 1530s, Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Madrid

- This is the first and a very significant portrait of Henry. It is the only Holbein to use lapis lazuli for the blue, the other use azurite (hydrated copper carbonate). Azurite turns grey-brown over centuries although some portraits, such as that of Jane Seymour have not turned grey-brown, perhaps because of the thick varnish prevented the moisture-based oxidation. The gold is powdered gold ground with oil. One suggestion is that it was an exchange of gifts with the King of France. Note that images of Henry were not sent out to prospective brides and he even refused to send portraits of his daughter Mary to foreigners, when she was looking for a husband.
- The portrait was probably painted around 1536, around the time of Anne Boleyn's execution and in the midst of the dissolution of the monasteries and before Henry's son was born. The king's figure and magnificent clothes signify his authority but Holbein's portrait is arguably tinged with a hint of cruelty. Henry looks guarded and we know from other accounts that his youthful energy turned to suspicion in old age.
- There is another version of this portrait probably by another artist in the National Portrait Gallery.



Hans Holbein (c. 1498-1543), *Henry VIII and the Barber Surgeons*, c. 1543, oil on oak, 108.3 × 312.4 cm, Royal College of Surgeons of England

- This work was commissioned to commemorate the grant of a royal charter to the Company of Barbers and the Guild of Surgeons on their merger in 1540. We assume it was commissioned by the Barber-Surgeons and the design was based on that of the miniatures painted on Tudor charters of privileges. Henry did not sit for this last of Holbein's portraits of him. Working from an existing sketch, Holbein painted him not so much as a living person but as an icon. The members of the company, however, were painted as individuals. The figures of Sir William Butts and the doctor John Chambers are closely related to portraits of them by Holbein.
- According to the diarist Samuel Pepys, the painting was badly damaged in the Great Fire of London of 1666. It is not clear how much of the original panel was completed by Holbein himself, who died in the year the painting was begun, and how much by others; neither is it known whether those who first added to the work did so under Holbein's supervision. Scholars such as Roy Strong and John Rowlands suspect that the main additions were made after Holbein's death (probably in the last years of Henry VIII's reign), since they are not improvements.
- Holbein's cartoon for the composition, later much painted over by other hands, reveals his original conception, but the actual painting departs markedly from it in places, for example in the second row of figures on the right were added in the mid-16th century by an anonymous painter. The inscription is not Holbein's, though it can be dated to before Henry's death in 1547. The painter and restorer Richard Greenbury reworked the painting in the 17th century so heavily that he entirely covered the original layers of varnish with impasto.
- In the view of Holbein's biographer Derek Wilson, the result is a "disaster": "A lifeless, oversized king dangles the charter from a limp hand while a row (the second rank was added later) of comparatively diminutive recipients kneel in relevant homage. The treatment is archaic and atypical". (Derek Wilson, *Hans*

Holbein: Portrait of an Unknown Man, p. 273)

References

- Stephanie Buck, *Hans Holbein*, Cologne, 1999
- Derek Wilson, *Hans Holbein: Portrait of an Unknown Man*, 1996, republished 2006, Pimlico



- Holbein has left behind a remarkable series of studies so that we can compare his drawings, that we assume are direct from life, with the final paintings. This enables us to see the subtle changes he made to improve his sitter's look or increase the impact and this provides an insight into his approach and style to portraiture. It moves us away from the 'photographic likeness' to seeing the paintings as carefully controlled constructions designed to achieve a particular impact on the viewer. Unfortunately, a lot of the background social associations of the sitter and the Tudor symbolism has been lost but enough remains to make them worth careful study.



Holbein, *Henry Guildford*, 1527, black and coloured chalks, and pen and ink, 38.3 × 29.4 cm, Royal Collection

- Sir Henry Guildford was one of Henry VIII's **closest friends**. At different times, he held the positions of an Esquire of the Body, Master of the Revels, Master of the Horse and Comptroller of the Royal Household.
- The drawing is a study for a painted portrait by Holbein, also in the Royal Collection.
- We will see a drawing and painting of his wife Lady Mary Guildford, also by Holbein and in the Kunstmuseum in Basel, Switzerland. A related painting by Holbein is in the Saint Louis Art Museum, while a 16th-century copy is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Hans Holbein the Younger (1498–1543), *Portrait of Sir Thomas Guildford*, 1527, oil and tempera on oak panel, 81.4 × 66 cm, Royal Collection

Inscribed at a later date: Anno. D: MCCCCCXXVII. / Etatis. Suae. .xl ix: (Year 1527 / His Age 49)

- **Sir Henry Guildford** (1489–1532) was one of Henry VIII's **closest friends**. On the King's accession in 1509 he was appointed Esquire of the Body - a personal attendant on the King - and **Master of Revels**, responsible for organising the lavish entertainments at court. His parties included morris dancers, moving stages and a series of elaborate costumes for the young King. Guildford's influence at court was cut short in the 1519 purge of the so-called 'minions', an attempt by older statesmen to limit the influence of hot-headed young men on the 28-year-old monarch. Guildford soon returned to court, however, and developed a distinguished career as Comptroller of the Royal Household. In his continuing support for Katherine of Aragon he made a dangerous enemy of the King's mistress, Anne Boleyn, and it is a mark of his friendship with Henry that he remained in post until his death in 1532.
- This is one of Holbein's most **impressive surviving portraits** and is one of a pair with the portrait of his wife, Mary, née Wotton. It shows the sitter standing three-quarter length, richly dressed in velvet, fur and cloth of gold. Holbein has meticulously shown the varied texture of the latter, which is both woven and looped. Similarly, he has carefully articulated the band of black satin running down Guildford's arm against the richer black of the velvet of his sleeve. A lavish use of both shell-gold paint and gold leaf (which has been used to emulate the highlights of the gold thread in the material) emphasises the luxuriousness of the sitter's dress and his high status.
- Guildford holds the **white staff** of office of the Comptroller of the Household, and a hat badge showing a clock and geometrical instruments. That this badge is not shown in the preparatory drawing may suggest that it was the subject of a

separate study, or an afterthought on the part of the artist or sitter. Sir Henry stands against a deep blue background, decorated with the twisting vine found in a number of Holbein's portraits. Above his head is a curtain rail, from which hangs a rich green curtain, perhaps a reference to the painted curtain that was so realistic it tricked the ancient Greek artist Zeuxis and proved the skill of the painter Parrhasius. This detail has lost context in the separation of the portrait from its companion, that of Guildford's wife Mary (now in the St Louis Art Museum, MI), who is placed by a pillar with a continuation of the rail above her head. The rail and the pillar, the corner of which can be seen in the top right corner of Guildford's portrait, united the two works, which must originally have been hung together. The cartellino on the painting, which records Guildford's age as 49, is a later addition, and the sitter is in fact shown aged 38.

- Guildford was a **keen scholar** as well as an experienced courtier, and his humanist interests may have drawn him to Hans Holbein, who arrived in England with a recommendation from Desiderius Erasmus. The two almost certainly worked together in the planning of revels at Greenwich in 1527, when a 'Master Hans' carried out much of the decorative painting. Guildford was one of the first in England to commission a portrait from Holbein; both the preparatory drawing and the finished oil painting survive.
- If we compare the painting with the drawing we see that Holbein has firmed up the face and made the eyes slightly more alert. The changes increase the solidity, power and authority of the face. He has also added clothing that was probably modelled by a servant in order to minimise the time Guildford spent sitting for the portrait.



Hans Holbein the Younger (1498–1543), *Portrait study of Mary, Lady Guildford, née Wotton*, 1527, Black and coloured chalks, 55.2 × 38.5 cm, Kunstmuseum, Basel

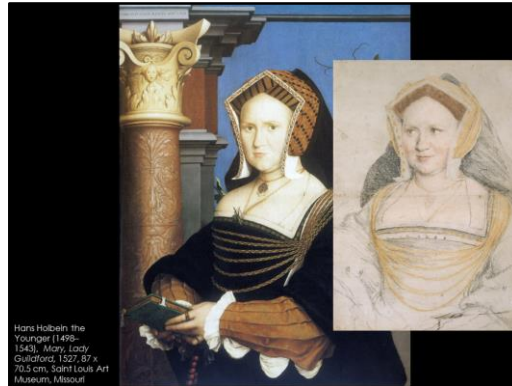
Notes

English: Holbein drew this portrait during his first visit to England (1526–28). It is a study for his oil portrait of Lady Mary, which is closely based on the drawing but more solemn. At the same time, Holbein drew a study of her husband, Sir Henry Guildford, for an oil portrait of him. The drawing of Lady Mary is larger than that of Sir Henry, which has been cut down. The fact that Holbein took this one back with him to Basel shows that such drawings were not usually demanded by his patrons. Guildford was the treasurer to Henry VIII from 1522, and Mary Wotton was his second wife.

References

Christian Müller; Stephan Kemperdick; Maryan Ainsworth; et al, *Hans Holbein the Younger: The Basel Years, 1515–1532*, p. 384

Susan Foister, *Holbein in England*, London: Tate, 2006, p. 26.



Hans Holbein the Younger (1498–1543), *Mary, Lady Guildford*, 1527, 87 x 70.5 cm, Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri

- Lady Guildford embodies worldly prosperity, and with her prayer book she is also the very image of propriety. Although a preparatory drawing for this painting, now in the Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland, shows a **winsome charmer who glances off to the side**, Holbein changed the **direction of his sitter's gaze** to suggest a more **mature and proper woman**. The background ivy may have been intended as an emblem of steadfastness. He has also made the face thinner and the mouth smaller.

Notes

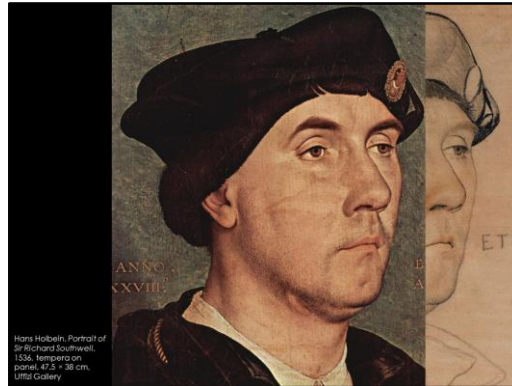
- The drawing is related to a painted portrait of Mary, by Holbein, in the Saint Louis Art Museum; a 16th-century copy, long thought to be the original before the discovery of the Saint Louis painting, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. A drawing of her first husband Sir Henry Guildford, as well as a related painted portrait, both by Holbein, are in the Royal Collection. A drawing of her second husband Sir Gavin Carew is also in the Royal Collection.



Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/8-1543), *Sir Richard Southwell* (1502/3-1564), 1536, black and coloured chalks, pen and ink, and metalpoint on pale pink prepared paper, 36.6 x 27.7 cm

- **Sir Richard Southwell (1502/3-1564) was a controversial figure**, and Holbein's portrait has been taken, **perhaps unfairly**, as evidence of a **'haughty and indecisive'** character. Whatever Southwell's attributes, the drawn and painted portraits remain one of the most impressive of Holbein's careful records of the appearance of members of Henry VIII's court.
- It is a bust length portrait facing three-quarters to the right, showing the sitter **aged 33**. This drawing is a preparatory study for painting in the Uffizi, Florence. Inscribed by the artist: Die augen ein wenig gelbatt (the eyes a little yellowish), and in chalk: [A]NNO ETTATIS SVA[E]/.33. Inscribed in an eighteenth-century hand at upper left: Rich: Southwell Knight.
- Southwell was a Norfolk landowner and **Justice of the Peace**. As the inscription records, he was drawn by Holbein at the age of 33, the year in which he was appointed **Receiver in the Court of Augmentations**, and possibly also first became a Member of Parliament. Southwell was careful to **ally himself with rising stars and to desert them as they fell, like Richard Rich**. He failed to speak up in defence of Sir Thomas More, despite knowing that evidence against the ex-Chancellor was falsified, and his testimony was responsible for the downfall of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, who was executed for treason in January 1547. Thanks to his **deft politicking**, Southwell **largely retained his influence** through the reigns of **Edward VI and Mary I**, on whose behalf he guarded the palace of Whitehall during Thomas Wyatt's rebellion. It may have been his support for Mary which led to his **retirement** when her half-sister Elizabeth took the throne.
- Holbein's drawing is a study for a **painted portrait** of Southwell now in the **Uffizi** in Florence. Holbein has carefully depicted Southwell's features, down to the scars on

his neck and forehead, which are so convincingly delineated that they were thought to be imperfections in the paper well into the 1970s, rather than the sitter's complexion. In preparation for the portrait, Holbein noted to himself on the side of the sheet that Southwell's eyes were 'a little yellowish', and recorded the Latin inscription that would flank the sitter in the final work.



Hans Holbein, *Portrait of Sir Richard Southwell*, 1536, tempera on panel, 47.5 × 38 cm, Uffizi Gallery

- Sir Richard Southwell's (1502/3-1564) portrait is in the Uffizi.
- By enlarging the face and comparing with the enlarged drawing we see that Holbein has made Southwell look slightly less boyish by deepening the eye sockets, adding more stubble and accentuating the philtrum between the nose and mouth and the chin.
- We can clearly see the scar in the painting which was thought until the 1970s to be a water mark on the drawing.
- In 1620 **Cosimo II de' Medici** asked Thomas Howard, Duke of **Arundel**, for the gift of a **portrait by Holbein**, the great master from Augsburg who worked at the Tudor court from 1536. The portrait, which arrived in Florence in April 1621, two months after Cosimo's death, depicts a person close to Henry VIII, Richard Southwell, one of the executors of the King's will, 33 years old at the time, as can be read on the right. The original ebony frame is lost; remaining below the painting are four silver medallions bearing the coats of arms of the Medici, the Arundels, Southwell, and the name of the artist, evidently added later when the painting was sent as a gift to the Grand Duke. The portrait was painted at the time of Holbein's full maturity. The artist investigates the imperturbable face with scrupulous accuracy: the chin already slightly flaccid, the deep scar under the fine beard, the coarse nose and thin lips. Luminous brushstrokes emphasize the folds in the sleeve and the jewels worn with nonchalance: a gold chain glimpsed under the black gown, the brooch on the beret, the rings. The inscriptions, at left: X^o IVLII ANNO H [OF HENRY] VIII XXVIII^o [28]; at right: ETATIS SVAE ANNO XXXIII [33].



Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/8-1543), *Queen Jane Seymour* (1508/9-1537), c.1536-7, black and coloured chalks, pen and ink, and metalpoint, on pale pink prepared paper, 50.0 x 28.5 cm (overall, >1 sheets joined)

- A portrait drawing of **Queen Jane Seymour** (1508/9-1537), the third wife of Henry VIII and mother of Edward VI. A half length portrait facing three-quarters to the left. There is a horizontal join in the paper 6.8 cm from the lower margin. This preparatory study was used by Holbein for a number of portraits of Jane Seymour including the painting in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Inscribed in an eighteenth-century hand at upper left: Jane Seymour Queen.
- Jane Seymour had been a Lady in Waiting to both Katherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn, before marrying the King in May 1536, a few days after Anne's execution. In October 1537 she gave birth to Prince Edward, but died a few days later. She was buried at Windsor. This drawing is a preparatory study for a painting now in Vienna. Jane is shown wearing a pear-shaped pendant-jewel, which appears also to have been worn by Katherine Howard.



Hans Holbein, *Jane Seymour, Queen of England*, 1536, 65.5 x 40.5 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

- **Jane Seymour** (1509-1537) was the third wife of King Henry VIII of England and mother of King Edward VI. She succeeded - where Henry's previous wives had failed - in providing a legitimate male heir to the throne.
- Jane's father was Sir John Seymour of Wolf Hall, Savernake, Wiltshire. She became a lady in waiting to Henry's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and then to Anne Boleyn, who married the King in 1533. Henry probably became attracted to Jane in 1535, when he visited her father at Wolf Hall, but, though willing to marry him, she refused to be his mistress. That determination undoubtedly helped bring about Anne Boleyn's downfall and execution (May 19, 1536). On May 30, 1536, Henry and Jane were married privately.
- During the remaining 17 months of her life Jane managed to restore Mary, Henry's daughter by Catherine of Aragon, to the King's favour. Mary was a Roman Catholic, and some scholars have interpreted Jane's intercession to mean that she had little sympathy with the English Reformation. The future Edward VI was born on October 12, 1537, but, to Henry's genuine sorrow, Jane died 12 days later.
- **Holbein** executed this portrait shortly after the marriage of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour. In attitude and expression, the Seymour portrait matches that in the Whitehall composition, but the portraits differ in the arrangement of the bonnet veil; this individual portrait follows the preparatory study in the Royal Collection in Windsor Castle. This change is important only from a compositional point of view, and probably derived from Holbein himself. However, the major changes in tonality and patterns in Jane's gown will probably have been undertaken only after consultation with the client.
- Holbein's portrait depicts a figure frozen in an official sense of responsibility. The simplicity of the shadowed background accentuates the increasing richness and

boldness of design and adornment in Henrician court fashion, and the artist's skill is pre-eminent in creating the sheen and lustre of the precious stones. Great attention has been paid to the realism of the silver thread in the queen's dress, and this new opulence was to be echoed in the portrait of Henry himself.



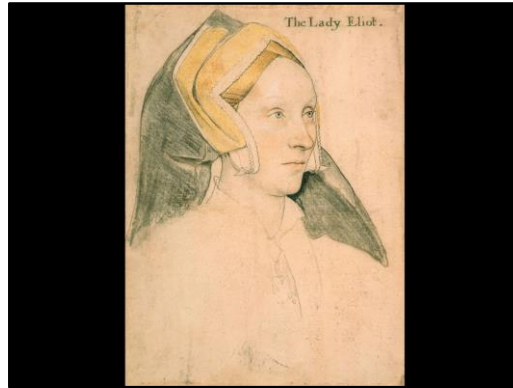
Hans Holbein, *A Lady with a Squirrel and a Starling (Anne Lovell?)*, c. 1527, 56 x 38.8 cm, National Gallery

- The lady has been plausibly identified as Anne Lovell, wife of Sir Francis Lovell, one of Henry VIII's retinue. Squirrels appear on the Lovell coat of arms. The squirrel was added at a later date. The starling may be a punning reference to the family seat at East Harling, Norfolk. It is unlikely to have formed a pair with her husband as she is facing right and women conventionally look to the left and their portrait is hung on the right. However, there are exceptions, such as the portraits of Sir Thomas and Lady Elyot. The exception may be because one portrait had been completed before it was decided to paint the other. This portrait may have been commissioned to celebrate the birth of their son in 1526.



Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/8-1543), *Sir Thomas Elyot* (c.1490-1546) c.1532-4, black and coloured chalks, white bodycolour, and brush and ink on pale pink prepared paper, 27.8 x 20.8 cm (sheet of paper)

- A portrait drawing of Sir Thomas Elyot (c.1490-1546). A bust length portrait facing three-quarters to the left. He wears a hat and fur collar. A companion portrait to RL 12204 of his wife Margaret, Lady Elyot. Inscribed in an eighteenth-century hand at upper left: Th: Eliott Knight.
- Sir Thomas Elyot (c.1490-1546) was a writer and diplomat, and was well respected by his contemporaries in both fields. His most famous publication was *The Boke named the Governour*, a book of political instruction inspired by classical literature, which was first issued in 1531 and was reprinted a number of times. He also published a comprehensive Latin-English dictionary, and a popular guide to medicine. His work as ambassador to Charles V took him to the continent, where he visited the city of Nuremberg four years after Dürer's death.
- Holbein's portrait was probably made after Elyot returned from this embassy, on which he had been replaced as ambassador by Thomas Cranmer. Holbein has shown Elyot dressed in a cap and gown with a fur collar, over which he wears a cross on a long chain. The work was a pendant to Holbein's drawing of Sir Thomas's wife Margaret.



Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/8-1543), *Margaret, Lady Elyot* (c.1500-1560), c.1532-4, black and coloured chalks, white bodycolour, and pen and ink on pale pink prepared paper, 27.8 x 20.8 cm (sheet of paper)

- A portrait drawing of Margaret, Lady Elyot (c.1500-1560), daughter of Sir Maurice à Barrow, and wife of Sir Thomas Elyot. The portrait shows her head and shoulders facing three-quarters to the right. She wears a yellow gable headdress and pendant. A companion portrait to RL 12203 of Sir Thomas Elyot. Inscribed in an eighteenth-century hand at upper right: The Lady Eliot.
- Margaret Abaragh (c.1500-1560), who married the author Thomas Elyot in 1520, was an **intellectual in her own right**: the late sixteenth-century writer Thomas Stapleton noted that she 'also gave herself to the study of literature'. Margaret Elyot outlived Sir Thomas by nearly 15 years, and married, as her second husband, Sir James Dyer, a scholarly lawyer who was to become Speaker of the House of Commons.
- This drawing of Lady Elyot is a pair to the portrait of her husband. Both were presumably intended as studies for **oil paintings**, which, if they were completed, **have not survived**. Unusually for a marriage pair, Lady Elyot is shown on the left, with her husband on the right. Susan Foister has suggested that this may indicate that one of the drawings was completed before the idea of a pair was decided upon.





the shelf below the earth.

- The dagger Dinteville is holding is inscribed with his age, 29, in 1533 and the book de Selve is leaning on gives his age as 25.
- Dinteville is wearing a medallion of St Michael, the archangel who fought the Devil in the Book of Revelation and so it could represent the triumph of good over evil.

Notes

John North, *The Ambassadors' Secret*

- Thomas Cromwell (p. 29) was ruthless and responsible for Thomas More's execution in 1536. Cromwell was executed in 1540. Cromwell directed Henry VIII's propaganda in the 1530s. Holbein was probably appointed through Cromwell.
- Kratzer (p.69) collaborated with Holbein on the Greenwich ceiling in 1527.
- Dinterville (p.93) wears lynx fur trimming which shows he was upper nobility. He also wears a sword.
- 'Polity' (p.103), Dinterville's home town is shown on the globe (although London is not). Was this flattery or part of a scheme?
- **The Celestial Globe.** To use it we imagine ourselves at the centre and the horizontal line around it is the horizon. The north pole is towards us and around it is a dial marked in hours. The globe is not wrongly set for London as others have claimed and North thinks it shows 11 April 1533, which was Good Friday.
- **Cylinder Dial.** This is a type of sundial. The gnomon is set to the time of the year and its vertical shadow gives the time. The sun is 74° over the viewers right shoulder (from the shadow of the table) and, other instruments show, the sun is 15.5° south of west so the table is north-south, so we are facing east and it is about 3:45 in the afternoon. We could be in a courtyard or a house with large windows or Holbein could have just painted the affect of the sun he wished to create.
- **Compound Solar Instrument.** This is an unusual instrument that we also see in Holbein's portrait of Kratzer and we see the other side. It measures the time like a sundial or it can be used to measure the sun's altitude if we know the time. This instrument is not critical to North's interpretation.
- **The Quadrant.** This has a white face and it tells the time by equal hours. It shows the time in a striking way. The sun's altitude is found by allowing the light from one pinhole to fall on the other. The plumbline then falls across the altitude.
- "The Ambassadors was painted in the Spring of 1533 during the preparations for the coronation of the pregnant Anne Boleyn, who had married Henry VIII secretly in the January. Henry and Anne had visited France in the autumn of 1532 to gain Francis I's help and support for the annulment of Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, and his recognition of Henry's relationship with Anne. Francis I responded by ordering French cardinals to negotiate secretly with Pope Clement VII to persuade the Pope to accept Henry's request for the annulment. England was on

the brink of breaking with Rome and France was suffering from religious divisions, with many calling for reform in the Church.” (theanneboleynfiles.com website)

References

- John North, *The Ambassadors' Secret*
- The Oneonta.edu website
- *Holbein's Ambassadors: The Picture and the Men*, Mary Hervey (1900)
- www.theanneboleynfiles.com/holbeins-the-ambassadors-a-renaissance-puzzle-part-two-symbols/
- 'Friendship and Immortality: Holbein's Ambassadors revisited', Kate Bomford, *Renaissance Studies* Vol. 18 No. 4



- Starting with the two individuals shown in the painting.
- Before the publication of Mary F. S. Hervey's *Holbein's Ambassadors: The Picture and the Men* in 1900, the identity of the two figures in the picture had long been a subject of intense debate.
- In 1890, Sidney Colvin was the first to propose the figure on the left as **Jean de Dinteville**, Seigneur of Polisy (1504–1555), French ambassador to the court of Henry VIII for most of 1533. Shortly afterwards, the cleaning of the picture revealed that his seat of Polisy is one of only four places marked on the globe. Hervey identified the man on the right as **Georges de Selve** (1508/09–1541), Bishop of Lavaur, after tracing the painting's history back to a seventeenth-century manuscript. According to art historian John Rowlands, de Selve is not wearing episcopal robes because he was not consecrated until 1534. De Selve is known from two of de Dinteville's letters to his brother François de Dinteville, Bishop of Auxerre, to have **visited London in the spring of 1533**.



A crucifix is semi-hidden at the top right of the painting.

- The starting point and the key to the painting is the small crucifix, often unnoticed, in its top left-hand corner.
- The green curtain has been associated with the tearing of the temple curtain in the crucifixion story, the Green Language, also called the Language of Birds, in medieval literature was a mystical, divine language which was the key to perfect knowledge. It might also symbolise the division between the earthly and heavenly realms as represented in churches and often used in tombs.



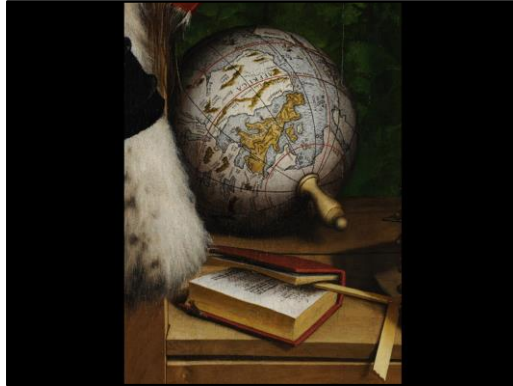
Anamorphic skull

- The **anamorphic skull** at the bottom of the picture **jars** with the detailed and accurate representation of the rest of the painting and Holbein's other paintings. It is **making a statement** but it is not clear what it is. It has been suggested it is a signature using a play on the German words 'hohles Bein' (Hollow bone) although this is unlikely as it is so **large and intrusive** that the patrons Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve, who, we can assume, paid for the work are unlikely to have found it acceptable.
- John North draws two sight lines through the painting that meet at a point outside the painting at the point where the distorted skull can be seen correctly. Golgotha, or Calvary, was the place of the skull where Christ was crucified and according to tradition Adam was buried. We thus look up to the blood of Christ which cleans the sins of Adam below.
- The skull, rendered in anamorphic perspective, another invention of the Early Renaissance, is meant to be a visual puzzle as the viewer must approach the painting nearly from high on the right side, or low on the left side, to see the form as an accurate rendering of a human skull. While the skull is evidently intended as a vanitas or memento mori, it is unclear why Holbein gave it such prominence in this painting. One possibility is that this painting represents three levels: the heavens (as portrayed by the astrolabe and other objects on the upper shelf), the living world (as evidenced by books and a musical instrument on the lower shelf), and death (signified by the skull). It has also been hypothesized that the painting is meant to hang in a stairwell, so that persons walking up the stairs and passing the painting on their left would be startled by the appearance of the skull. A further possibility is that Holbein simply wished to show off his ability with the technique in order to secure future commissions. Artists often incorporated skulls as a reminder of mortality, or at the very least, death. Holbein may have intended the skulls (one as a gray slash and the other as a medallion on Jean de Dinteville's hat)

and the crucifix in the upper left corner to encourage contemplation of one's impending death and the resurrection.



- The white quadrant shows the same time as the cylindrical sundial.
- Left universal equinoctial dial (disassembled), invented about 1600 and common throughout Europe. It is a form of sundial used to tell the time.
- The Polyhedral sundial, can be mounted high up and read when viewed horizontally unlike a normal sundial. It is a puzzle as it seems to show different times on different faces and is set to the latitude of North Africa not London. Perhaps it indicates Golgotha, Jerusalem?
- At the back is a torquetum, a form of computer used to convert measurements made in three sets of coordinates. Thought to have been invented in the 12th or 13th century by Jabir ibn Aflah but the oldest surviving example is from the 16th century. It has been set to the latitude of London, 51.5°.
- The edge of the book records the age of Georges de Selve.
- The date represented by these devices is Good Friday, 11 April 1533 when the angle of the Sun above the horizon was 27° at a few minutes past four in the afternoon. The angle of 27° occurs many times in the painting, it is the precise angle of the anamorphosed skull at the bottom. It is the angle of the Sun just after four on Good Friday 1533. Twenty seven is thrice thrice the three of the Trinity.



- Hand-held terrestrial globe with Dinteville's estate near the town of Polisy in France marked. Rome is painted roughly in the centre of the globe and the coast of America is shown.
- The book is a book of arithmetic by Peter Apian propped open with a set square. It was written in 1527. It could be a reference to de Selve's family background as merchants. It is open on a page of three long divisions which could symbolise the division in the church which de Selve was concerned about.

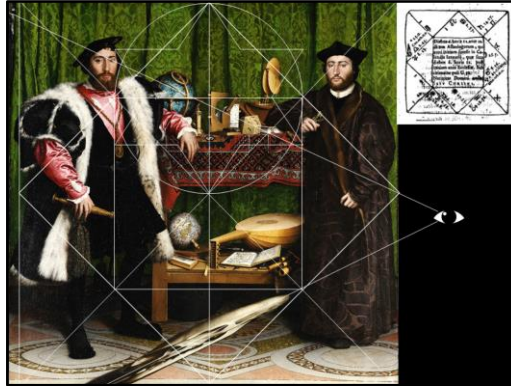


- An eleven string lute with a broken string, a pair of dividers, a Lutheran hymnal and a case of flutes. Music is one of the four disciplines of the Quadrivium, the four arts taught in medieval universities which also included arithmetic, geometry and astronomy which are all shown in the painting.
- The broken string of the lute and the missing flute may signify the discord in the church.
- The Lutheran hymnal is the second edition of Johannes Walther's *Little Hymn Book* (1525) open at two of Martin Luther's own hymns in German which can be translated as "'Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord" and "Man, if thou wouldst live a good life and remain with God eternally ...". It was noticed long ago that the two hymns do not occur next to each other in the book. The second hymn is numbered 19 which was the number of Easter as the dates for Easter repeat in a 19 year cycle. The line through the hymnal passes through the number 19.
- Why would a Catholic shows Luther's hymns? The broken string might indicate the reason. De Selve in later life thought he could reconcile the Roman Catholic and Protestant elements of the church and the broken string might represent the lack of harmony of Luther's teaching which if correctly interpreted would bring them back into the Catholic fold.



Celestial globe

- The celestial globe shows the constellations as their pictures. Most obvious constellation is Cygnus the Swan which is shown as a cock-like bird labelled 'Galacia', perhaps symbolising France. Cygnus is traditionally associated with the cross of Christ as its stars form a Latin cross.
- The globe is supported by ram's heads and on 11 April 1533 the sun entered the sign of Taurus and the constellation of Aries, the Ram, was mostly in Taurus. Jesus Christ is often referred to as a ram and Christ as the Lamb of God is often shown with horns, that is as a ram.
- The globe is remarkably accurately painted and John North believes the ring is set for the latitude of London although disagree and think it is set for Rome.
- The cylinder sundial is set for London and shows the time of 8:15am or 3:45pm Good Friday, 11 April 1533.
- In conclusion, North calculated the time given in the portrait as 3:45pm on Good Friday, 11 April 1533, 1500 years exactly after the Crucifixion.



Hans Holbein, *Double Portrait of Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve* ("The Ambassadors"), 1533, oil and tempera on oak, National Gallery

- The skull partly obscures a hexagram on the floor and John North posits other hexagrams in the painting. The hexagram is the Star of David and Seal of Solomon which was a signet ring that enabled Solomon to speak to animals and command demons.
- It has been argued that the two levels of instruments simply symbolize the quadrivium of the four sciences – astronomy, geometry, arithmetic and music.
- Once we start to place lines on a painting we are in dangerous territory as many relationships can be found to support virtually any theory. However, in this case to pursue and simplify some of the detailed arguments in North's interesting book I have drawn two key lines. The upper line passes through the left eye of Christ, the left eye of Dinteville, the star Vega in Lyra, the star Deneb in Cygnus, the north point of the horizon, the Sun on the globe and the zero point of the quadrant. It crosses the lower line through the skull at the exact point the skull must be viewed to see it in true perspective.
- The diagonal and two squares was the way that horoscopes were presented at this time. In other words there is a hidden horoscope square. They looked like this **(Click)** a horoscope for Jesus published by the Italian mathematician and inventor Girolamo Cardano in 1554.
- An eye placed at the point shown will look down to the skull and up past the sun to Christ's left eye. **It is Good Friday, 1533.** What does this suggest? Many believe that Christ was crucified when he was 33. **So this painting represents Good Friday 1,500 years later.** A time many believed was the **Last Judgement Day**, the end of the world.

Notes

- There is no year zero in the Biblical calendar as when the calendar was created

zero was no recognised as a number.



Hans Holbein, *Double Portrait of Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve* ("*The Ambassadors*"), 1533, oil and tempera on oak, National Gallery

- The painting may have many conflicting interpretations:
 - a double portrait of two friends showing their interests;
 - a *memento mori*, a reminder of death and our mortality;
 - a symbolic representation of the division and disharmony in the Church and the centrality of Rome;
 - a reminder of the sacrifice of Christ at Easter and that Good Friday in 1533 was 1500 years after the crucifixion;
 - Christ's victory over death;
 - the contrast between the heavenly and earthly realms;
 - Luther believed it was Christ's sacrifice which gives us salvation and our faith not our good works and actions.
- This enigmatic painting has as many meanings as interpreters. Most art historians avoid assigning complex meanings to paintings as we have lost most of the context. There is also a deeper point. A masterpiece often holds many contradictory meanings in balance. There is no single meaning. Like life we are presented with possibilities, some more likely than others and each viewer can find within it the meanings that satisfy them.