

# **The Owls in Hieronymus Bosch's Paintings: An Approach to the Painter's Workshop**

Julio Wilson Lopes Fernandes

[j.w.lopes.fernandes@umail.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:j.w.lopes.fernandes@umail.leidenuniv.nl)

Supervisor: Dr. M.E.W. Boers-Goosens

Second Reader: Dr. S.P.M. Bussels

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Para Lourdes Veloso,  
que na minha infância, me levou pelos caminhos da arte.

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## Introduction

The autograph nature in Bosch's works is a complex, endless issue as are his intriguing workshop contributions to the paintings.

Hieronymus Bosch comes as a fascinating artist, firstly affording a bridge to the mysterious witchcrafts, beliefs and curses of an obscure, intriguing past we can only imagine. Bosch's fantastic creations take us on a fascinating journey, which is maybe as scary as Dante Alighieri's, a frightening voyage we just cannot stop looking at.

He made altarpieces for wealthy civilians in Den Bosch, but also for the Duke of Burgundy and Nassau, besides commissions from St John's Church and the Brotherhood of Our Lady.<sup>1</sup> His work was sought after during his lifetime, but also after his death in 1516. Many copies were made and therefore Bosch's workshop started to mark its products. After Bosch died, a lot of epigones continued to produce his spooky paintings, making it difficult to distinguish Bosch's autograph paintings from copies, fakes and pastiches.

The Bosch Research and Conservation Project (BRCP) has examined most of Bosch's oeuvre in situ, documenting the data in a standardized up to date scientific manner from 2009 to 2015, together with the restoration of nine Bosch's paintings in six different countries. Their findings were presented to the public 500 hundred years after Hieronymus Bosch's passing in 2016, at the world congress "Hieronymus Bosch: His Life and His Work" in Den Bosch, simultaneously with the magnificent exhibition at the Noordbrabants Museum, where the BRCP's two books were released: *Hieronymus Bosch Painter and Draughtsman (Catalogue Raisonné)*, and *Hieronymus Bosch Technical Studies*.

Despite the remarkable BRCP contributions to our understanding on Bosch's work, a lot of questions are still unanswered, because many Museum directors want to hold on to their precious Bosch paintings without further discussions about its autography.

Half a century ago, art historians were mostly interested in the iconography of Bosch's paintings, however, from twenty years ago, the discussions have shifted to workshop practice and authorship. This research will be about workshop practice, and as a case study, I chose the owls represented by Bosch, in order to study the paintings that are now ascribed to Bosch or are considered as produced by his workshop or by later artists. There is a special reason why I chose the owl as a case study.

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<sup>1</sup> Ilsink, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 27

Dr. Matthijs IJssink, lecturer of Art History at Radboud University, wrote the research plan that originated the Bosch Research and Conservation Project (BRCP) and the exhibition “Hieronymus Bosch -Visions of a genius”. As the chair of BRCP, he also revealed a very consistent and interesting linguistics point of view regarding Bosch hegemony as an owl painter and draughtsman: in the old Dutch language, the word *boschvoghele* refers to the owl as a “bird of the wood”. As wood in Dutch is bosch, the owl would be the “bosch bird” which could be easily associated with the artist’s moniker, making the owls the Hieronymus Bosch bird.<sup>2</sup> Considering I have found owls in forty-seven percent of Bosch’s paintings, that bird was my choice as a safe carrier into the painter’s world. Considering we lack a deeper view on his workshop “modus operandi”, that night bird will hopefully shed light to clarify the relevance of his assistants and fellows to his final compositions, and its reverberation to the autograph issue on his works.

Matthijs IJssink has mentioned at least 25 owls in Hieronymus Bosch autograph “oeuvre”, and quoted Paul Vandebroek’s owl iconography study, in which he found 40 owls.<sup>3</sup>

Considering all of Hieronymus Bosch’s works, 34 paintings and 24 drawings published by the BRCP I found 43 owls: 28 owls in his paintings and at least 15 owls in his drawings.<sup>4</sup> 41.3% of Bosch’s works (24 cases) presented one or more visible owls. If only the paintings were considered, this incidence reaches 47% (16 cases). Looking only at the 24 drawings, this incidence decreases to 33.3% (8 cases) (Table 1). If we consider that this research resources were mainly published books and internet images, and that most of these pictures were random, which means they did not target a specific owl in most works published, a few other owls may be unnoticed, keeping in mind the painting’s deterioration and previous inadequate restorations they may have suffered. A few authors claim, for instance, that an owl had been portrayed at “Saint Christopher” on the trunk of the tree on the right; another one at the roof apex of the brothel in “The Wayfarer”; and a third ghostly one in “Visions of the Hereafter”.<sup>5</sup> As I have not been able to detect and confirm these findings, they were not considered, but it raises the possibility that the incidence of owls in Bosch paintings may be probably higher than 47%. An owl’s survey, conducted with the paintings which the BRCP was not allowed to document in situ and research with infrared photography, x-radiography and other technical resources, could possibly add new owls to the present data.

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<sup>2</sup> Matthijs IJssink, “On Three Drawings,” 179.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem

<sup>4</sup> IJssink, *Catalogue Raisonné*; Luuk Hoogsted, *Technical Studies*.

<sup>5</sup> “The Eclectic Light”, Company website, accessed October 7, 2020, <https://eclecticlight.co/2016/08/09/five-hundred-years-of-bosch-the-wisdom-of-his-owls/>

This thesis is the end, or better saying, the beginning of a new journey, which has started after an afternoon unexpected contemplation of “*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*”, a hitherto unknown painting to me in 2012. The Bosch autography of that single lonely panel at MASP- Museu de Arte de São Paulo, is still an opened question, but that sight has taken this student to visit the Jheronimus Bosch Art Center in 2014; 2015; 2016; 2020, a final paper on Bosch, and now the “Art of the Contemporary World and World Art Studies” Master in Arts program at Leiden University.

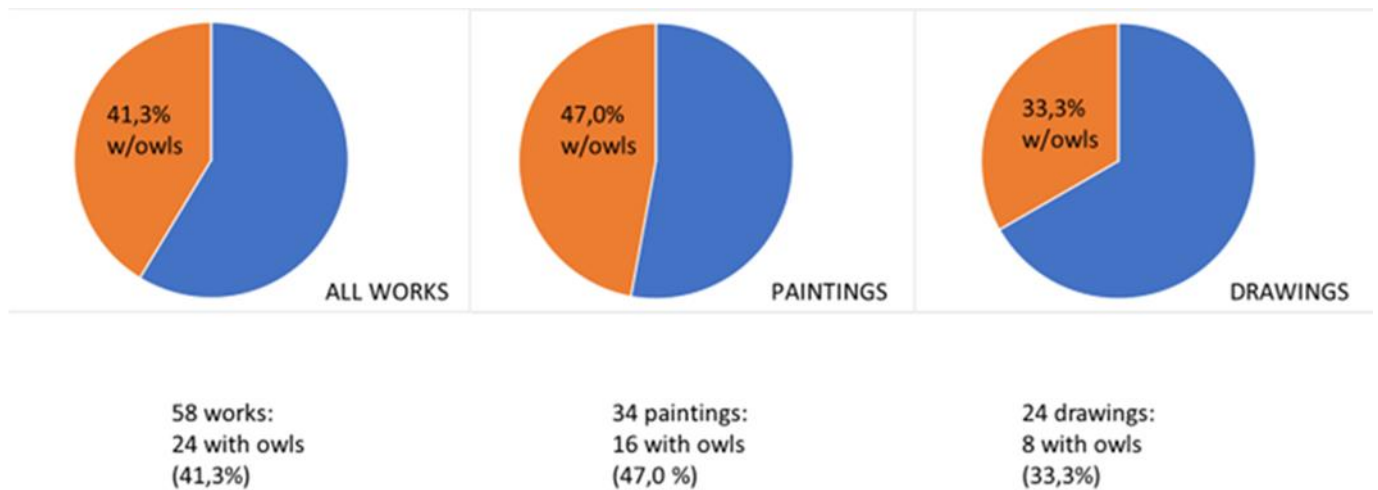


Table 1. The owl’s incidence in Hieronymus Bosch “oeuvre”.

## 0.1. Literature Review

Max Friedländer (1867-1958), a German Art Historian and specialist in Early Netherlandish painting, whose most works are at the Dutch National Institute of Art History (RKD) database, supports Bosch's works mainly as moral sermons. His writings highly value the sensitivity on critical art reading, along the artistical and aesthetical theories. In October 1936, Friedländer recognized "The Temptation of St Anthony" at MASP - Museu de Arte de São Paulo, as an autograph painting, stating "... I cannot believe that any of his pupils worked on this replica".<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, that painting was not examined by the BRCP, remaining many uncertainties about its peculiarities, authenticity and relation to many other versions of "The Temptation of St Anthony" besides the Kansas City and Lisbon versions acknowledged by the BRCP.

Whilhelm Fränger (1890-1964), a distinguished German critic and Art Historian, published in 1947, "Das Tausendjährige Reich", a book on "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*", in which he presented a revolutionary view about the painting, introducing Bosch in a somehow different perspective from the hitherto popular view of Bosch as a "maker of devils". Fränger classified Bosch's paintings in two large groups: The traditional ones, mainly with Passion or Adoration of the Maggi, aiming at the church milieu; and the non-traditional oeuvre, encompassing "The Garden of Earthly Delights"; "The Haywain"; and "The Temptation of St Anthony", Lisbon. The latter group Fränger alluded could not be made for the church as it would possibly be inconvenient to the church's respectful iconography, therefore they would aim a parallel coexisting sectary establishment.<sup>7</sup> Further in his conclusions, Fränger argued that while in "The Haywain" the middle wicked panel is detached in an iconographical way from the left Eden panel, that would not be the case in "The Garden of Earthly Delights", where the two panels are a continuous: Adam and Eve's children were born after their expulsion from Eden in the left panel and by expiation they could return to Eden's blessed life and not to hell as in "The Haywain".<sup>8</sup> Departing from those ideas, Fränger regarded Bosch as an Adamite, a member of the Community of the free Spirit, a heretic sect where free sexuality was encouraged as a way back to Adam and Eve's primitive, naive, naked, pure innocence as our first parents in the Garden of Eden.<sup>9</sup> The central panel in *The Garden of Earthly Delights* would represent that positive attitude about sexuality.

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<sup>6</sup>Ditner, "*Jheronimus Bosch e As Tentações de Santo Antônio*", 110

<sup>7</sup> Rembert, *Hieronymus Bosch*, 29

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, 34-37

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, 61



In his assertions, Fräenger also mentioned the Italian Jacob Almaengien, a Jew who had been baptized in Hertogenbosch in 1494, as the sect's Grand Master, therefore attributed by him as Bosch's mentor in his motifs. In reality, Hieronymus Bosch probably knew him, considering Almaengien was also a member of the Brotherhood of Our Lady for about 10 years when he left the brotherhood back to the Jewish faith.<sup>10</sup> The author went far ahead when considered the elusive Almaengien not only the Adamites sect's "Grand Master" but even a Bosch's master, which could possibly have influenced the colours and formal composition of "The Garden of Earthly Delights".<sup>11</sup> However, this hypothesis lacks consistency, once there are no further published proofs or hints about such arguments. Nowadays, Fräenger's structured theory has suffered additional damage, considering that "The Wedding at Cana", alleged by him to be Almäengien's wedding, and "The Conjurer", another painting Fräenger discussed, are no longer considered Bosch autograph paintings.<sup>12</sup> Fräenger's work, however, was very important, once it possibly helped to trigger the scholars' interest on Bosch's iconography fifty years ago.

The Dutch historian Dirk Bax, (1906-1976), expert on Bosch, Nijmegen University Doctor and former head of the department of Netherlands Cultural History at University of Cape Town, during an exhibition on Bosch in Rotterdam in 1936, was struck by the resemblance of a grey boat detail on the central panel right foreground of "*The Temptation of St Anthony*" - Lisbon and the Middle Dutch poem:

"A thin, bare little bird stretched out its neck towards a small boat in which sat a manikin with a large, ball-shaped head wearing an inane smile on its face"

From that encounter, Bax published over forty years of lexicological explanations found in details of Bosch's works, discovering iconographic connections with language, folklore and cultural history of The Netherlands from 1300 to 1600, even disclosing the hidden moralizing warnings on it. Dirk Bax strongly disagrees with Fraäenger, once the former understood the "Garden of Earthly Delights" central panel as an image of reprehensible carnal lust as the message the artist wanted to convey to the viewers.<sup>13</sup> His contributions on medieval symbology were impressive: the swan as immorality, and the tit above the peddler's head as drunkenness in "The Wayfarer"; the crescent as seen in "*The Hermit Saints Triptych*" related to the Turks threatening to the Christian West; a blue-cloaked female demon in "The Temptation of St Anthony" as a debauchery antithesis of the Virgin Mary as well the scorpion in the same painting as a symbol of hypocrisy and treachery.

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<sup>10</sup> Torviso, *Bosch*, 58.

<sup>11</sup> Rembert, *Hieronymus Bosch*, 51.

<sup>12</sup> Ilsink, *Catalogue*, 406; Fischer, *Hieronymus Bosch*, 396.

<sup>13</sup> Schwartz, *Jheronimus Bosch*, 73, 200.

Another meaningful contribution from Bax is on the intriguing inverted funnel used as a hat, as seen in “*The Cure of Folly*” and “*The Temptation of St. Anthony*”, which Bax related to a folk metaphor of wastefulness, unscrupulousness and unreliability.<sup>14</sup> The owl, by its turn, was seen either with a negative perception as a symbol of night, evil and sin, or the contrary, with positive connotations of its wisdom and prophetic tendencies (Bax 1983).<sup>15</sup>

Charles de Tolnay (1899-1981) was a Hungarian Art Historian who immigrated to the USA in 1939, and became a Columbia University professor. He presented interesting contributions to Bosch’s iconography, for example the strangeness of the gifts offered to Jesus in the Prado “*Adoration of the Maggi*”; and the possible ambivalence meaning in the swan iconography, considering the white feathers and the dark flesh in “*Marriage at Cana*”. He also held a clear view on “*The Last Judgement*”-Bruges as an autograph Bosch painting.

Walter Samuel Gibson (1897-1985), a former Professor of Art History at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, conceived three different strands of interpretation on Bosch’s oeuvre: firstly, the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century, where Bosch was chiefly known for his paintings of devils and hell with comments on his moralistic and satires by Filipe de Guevara and Father José de Segënza; secondarily, the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the awareness and formal study of Bosch as a full religious artist; and finally, the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the earliest monographs on Bosch before the Second World War emphasized on medieval Christian theology and after the war, being more focused on Freud and Jung theories trying presumably “to decode” Bosch.<sup>16</sup>

In 2002 Harris published, ‘The Secret Heresy of Hieronymus Bosch’ regarding Bosch as a reputed Catholic living a heretic secret life as a Cathar. Harris argued many conclusions presumably related to Bosch and the syncretism he would have embraced, as follows. The Catharism was a radical dualistic sect related to the Bogomils from Bulgaria, spread in the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries in southern Europe and mainly in Albi in southern France. Their members believed in two Gods: the good one, depicted in the new testament, and a bad and corrupt one named Jehovah, from the old testament. In accordance with Harris, the physical world, with all its manifestations, would be a satanic trap, and only by means of the “consolamentum”, a terminal ritual purifying the soul by the death time, the soul would be free of successive reincarnations in the physical satanic world. The Cathars were unmercifully exterminated by the Albigensian Crusade in 1209 by order of pope Innocent III.

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<sup>14</sup> Harris, *The Secret Heresy of Hieronymus Bosch*.

<sup>15</sup> Melnikova- Grigorjeva, “An owl and a mirror: On Bosch’s visual motif’s meaning,” 225.

<sup>16</sup> Gibson, *Annotated Bibliography*; Rembert, *Hieronymus Bosch*, 66.

Looking at Bosch's "oeuvre" in that context, the creator figure, unexpectedly portrayed in dark clouds in the closed triptych "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*", would not be God, but Jehovah, who would actually be Lucifer, deceptively waiting to overcome the still not fully created Earth. Despite her theory, and many other iconographic interpretations of Bosch's main paintings, historical documented facts which could assure Cathars remained alive and active in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century in Europe are missing, and Harris's bizarre theory could hardly be taken seriously in the present state of knowledge about Hieronymus Bosch and his oeuvre.

Concerning Hieronymus Bosch sources, Jos Koldeweij, professor of Medieval Art History at the Radboud University Nijmegen since 1993 and BRCP associated author, believes Bosch took different sources like sketches, drawings and prints, as constant inspiration to his extremely detailed paintings. Koldeweij looked at two main streams for researches on Bosch: the speculative grand visions on one side, and the analysis of small details on the other, which deliver important contributions to the wider understanding of the work and its execution. (2007).<sup>17</sup> The current research follows the aforementioned Koldeweij's stream, taking the owls depicting peculiarities as a way to understand Bosch's workshop and its relevance to the autograph issue.

The BRCP presented in 2016 "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*" as a remarkable example of the new trend the Art Historians took over the last decades: That triptych has a clear provenance from Henry III of Nassau in 1517 to its final location in 1939 in the Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid, besides at least three alongside tapestry copies.<sup>18</sup> A famous and admired painting in the highest circle, this painting is unmistakably a real autograph Bosch work, but it was not signed as most Bosch's paintings, and there are no clues whatsoever about in which extent his workshop contributed to its underlying drawings and the painting motifs themselves. Looking at the underdrawings of "*The Wayfarer Triptych*", Fritz Koreny raised the polemic issue about the existence of a left-handed artist in Bosch's workshop once Bosch himself was right-handed as seen by his drawings. To such a contesting divergent hypothesis, the BRCP concluded that the handiness could not be promptly identified as Koreny did, and "The Wayfarer" and "The Haywain" are also definitely autograph Bosch works and *apud* Ilsink "*The fact that the underdrawings of the fragments of the Wayfarer Triptych might have been done by another hand in no way diminishes this*".<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Koldeweij, "... A Man like Bosch..." 17.

<sup>18</sup> Ilsink, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 33.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, 37.

## 0.2. Research Question

Considering the usual workshop practice as established in and around 1500, and the existence of many imitators of his work, “how can the owls in his works distinguish an autograph painting by Bosch and his workshop from a picture made outside the scope of Bosch by fellows and imitators?” The method I chose is the one by Giovanni Morelli, namely the comparison of one single aspect in a selected group of paintings. I will explain the origins and the methodology in the next chapter. For that purpose, I chose the owls as a case study. Considering the aforementioned data suggesting that Hieronymus Bosch authorship is still an open field to new discoveries and studies; the historical hints and reports suggesting the participation of co-workers in his “oeuvre”; and the lack of reports about the inner structure and functioning of his workshop, I will then ask, “were the owls depicted in similar ways throughout his *oeuvre*?” Were there significant differences on the owl’s eyes, beaks, head outline, toes, styles and colours depicted in the early and later paintings? Finally, “can depicted owls infer the participation of different hands in Hieronymus Bosch’s workshop?”

## 0.3. Methodology

### 0.3.1. Autography

“A Bosch autograph painting, is a work made by the master himself and his workshop in ‘s Hertogenbosch”-based on IIsink et al, Catalogue Raisonné, p.40

“Even if the underdrawings were done by someone else, the works still is an autograph one”-based on IIsink et al, Catalogue Raisonné, p.37

The following factors contribute to making the identification of an autograph Bosch work much more complex, than the solely quality and stylistic homogeneity findings.

The use of a signature to identify the maker was not common in the Netherlands by 1500. However, Bosch signed a few works with Gothic letters, a font type used in printing in that period. Such a signature, without date, would work as a stamp-like identification of his works, a stamp extremely easy to reproduce, by any other artist or workshop, for obvious commercial reasons.<sup>20</sup>

The underdrawings, nowadays revealed by infrared reflectography, can be also deceiving as an unquestionable unique autograph feature. But what can be remarkable, and useful, is that Bosch did not remain faithful to his original drawings in his paintings.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> IIsink, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 49.

<sup>21</sup> Spronk, *All by himself?* (Nijmegen: Stichting Nijmeegse Kunsthistorische Studies, 2011),41.

But, again, if someone did the underlying drawings by request of the painter, it does not take the painting authorship away. Retouches were not a usual practice among famous consecrated painters in The Netherlands around 1500, however, by means of fluorescence under ultraviolet light, it has been a usual finding, in many authentic Bosch paintings.<sup>22</sup>

The BRCP addressed the aforementioned autograph issues employing highly precise object's descriptions assisted by many advanced technical resources like infrared photography and reflectography; X-radiography digital documentation; ultraviolet fluorescence photography; high-resolution photography and dendrochronology, reaching the highest scientific standards in the study of Hieronymus Bosch.<sup>23</sup> It is remarkable however, that the BRCP did not only adhere to the cutting edge technology, but reintroduced it at the same time as a 1890's method that is still considered to be a useful approach to art historian research. Giovanni Morelli, an Italian art critic and medical doctor, published his method under the pseudonym of Ivan Lermolieff in 1890. Morelli employed his background as an anatomy professor at The University of Munich for an in-depth study of ears and the style they were depicted by Italian quattrocento artists. He initially applied his method studying Boticelli and Filippino Lippi's related paintings.<sup>24</sup> That approach has been used for over a century by art historians in their efforts to elucidate different hands in paintings. It was applied to Bosh for the first time by the BRCP, however only as a sideline in their research.. It was my purpose to follow that method to do an in-depth research on the peculiarities of the owls in Hieronymus Bosch's paintings and what they can tell us about authorship.

### 0.3.2. *Research's conception and frame*

This research departed from two basic principles and one limitation, which were clearly outlined in the BRCP Catalogue Raisonné.<sup>25</sup> Initially, to get a greater scope for discussion, I found as many owls as I could in all Bosch's paintings. Once dealing with a higher statistical "n" a meaningful autograph painting's sample was more likely to be achieved. Then, to facilitate the stylistic comparison, I developed a previous classification of the owls' characteristics to optimize how they could be used to recognize autograph paintings (Figs. 2,3,4). From the beginning, all the thirty-four Bosch's paintings mentioned in the Bosch Research and Conservation Project Catalogue Raisonné were considered the matter of the present study.

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<sup>22</sup> Ilsink, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 44.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, 55-81.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, 38.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*

A meticulous search for owls was then accomplished, looking for owls in the BRCP books and dynamic website images. Other publications mentioned in the bibliography, websites, museums visits and the Hieronymus Bosch Art Center were my research resources.<sup>26</sup>

The data selection and its approach were done in five steps as follows:

1<sup>st</sup>- I took all the 34 paintings displayed at BRCP Catalogue Raisonné, regardless of their classification as Bosch, Workshop or Follower, considering it is “the state of the art” on Bosch’s oeuvre.

2<sup>nd</sup>- I looked for owls in all that paintings. I excluded 18 paintings which had no owls and kept 16 paintings which had owls. Among that 16 paintings: 12 were considered autograph and 4 non-autograph by the BRCP (Table 2).

3<sup>rd</sup> - All the owls in the 12 autograph paintings had their features (eyes, beak, head outline) analysed by means of my classification (Chapter 1-Figs. 2,3,4), which is clarified in “0.3.3” bellow.

4<sup>th</sup> -In this step I selected the most typical owls in the paintings considered autograph by the BRCP to later compare them with the owls in the non-autograph paintings. To get the most representative sample of the typical owls, I picked the owl which best depicted each feature e.g. one owl with beak type I, other with beak II, other with beak III, and the same with eyes and head outlines. The owls in “*The Garden of Earthly Delights*” displayed most of these features, reason why they were taken as autograph paintings’ representative owls. However, the owl with eye type III in that painting had low visibility, reason why I took a similar one from “*The Haywain*” to represent eyes type III in the sample. That sample (the autograph paintings’ owls sample) was the most representative patterns of owls depicted in all paintings considered autograph Bosch by the BRCP and it had 4 “Boshian” owls (Chapter 1-Fig. 5).

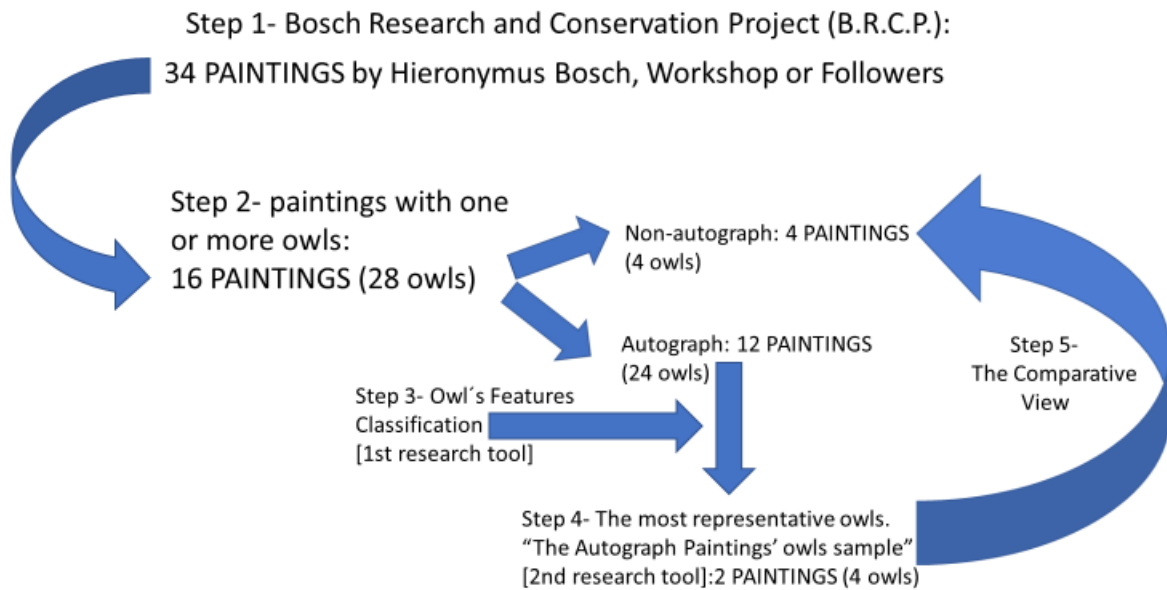
5<sup>th</sup> – I compared the owls found in the autograph paintings with the ones found in the non-autograph paintings using the “autograph paintings’ owls sample”, as it will be presented in Chapter 2.

The diagram bellow depicts the approach and data selection accomplished:

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<sup>26</sup> Fisher, Stefan. *Jheronimus Bosch: The Complete Works* (Köln: Taschen, 2013).

## Data selection & approach



### 0.3.3. The owls' features classification, my first research tool

Looking at the owls' depicted images, the most prominent features were considered the eyes, beak, head outline and toes when present, and for each owl selected, a chart was made for this pinpoint analysis e.g. Chart number 14 (Fig. 1). As mentioned, a classification of these features was then built to optimize their recognition, aiming to reduce the subjectiveness of this evaluation, and to contribute to the overall statistical analysis (Figs. 2,3,4). This innovative classification was based in real morphological aspects the owls have, as much as their depiction by Hieronymus Bosch or whoever corroborated with him in his workshop.<sup>27</sup> The real owl's features considered were:

The highly peculiar yellow, dark brown or orange eyes, which, in many species, are surrounded by a conspicuous circle of feather, named facial disc. Like the human eyes, theirs are frontal, and not laterally placed as in most birds. The imponent hawk-like beaks, once all owls are carnivorous, eating insects, mice, rats, hares and some species even eating fish. A pair of "ear" tufts over the head which are not, however, their ears, which are cavities asymmetrically placed on their head sides. The four talons which are strong, sharp, curve, and may be very long in some species.

The depicted "type I eye" has upper and lower eyelids represented in dark pigments, usually grey or black. The iris is white or yellow, and the pupil, black. The "type II eye" has full round black eyes, with a tiny white pigment drop depicting the light reflection. The "type III eye" is exceedingly small, almost punctiform black or red eyes, probably with the supercilium in the same colour.

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<sup>27</sup> van den Berg, "Dutch Bird Species".

The “type IV eye” has an elliptical black shape, verticalized in the beak direction. The “type V eye” is roughly round and black but surrounded by a peculiar light pigment. (Fig.2)

The found beaks were also classified: type I when beaks are white or light, very often with a tiny black ink touch to portray nostrils or even shadows around it; type II if mainly black or dark, with white pigment representing the light incidence over it; type III, as a peculiar very typical funnel-like shape, in white colour. (Fig.3)

The head outlines were also classified, having four different shapes. The usual one, round or top flatted delimitating the facial disc and with no visible ear tufts (type I). A second type, when a pair of little ear tufts protrude up from the top of the head (type II). A third one, when long supercilium or bristles go upwards outside of the head in a horn-like style (type III). A fourth one, if the head has a spherical globe-like shape (type IV). (Fig.4)

Owls have four toes with talons, they were also looked for, and registered in their number of visible ones, and the way they were depicted.

The data was split into three tables: a general one with chart numbers to each owl (Table 2); one with paintings from c.1470 to 1505 (Chapter 1-Table 3), and another with paintings from c.1500 to 1540 considering many pictures were possibly produced by Bosch’s workshop and fellows, after Hieronymus Bosch’s death in 1516 (Chapter 1-Table 4). All the selected owls were carefully examined, attributing eye, beak, and head outline types, based on the aforementioned classifications. Additionally, the clear representation of the wings, when depicted, were also noted, besides the overall colours and brush strokes employed to depict the bird. Feet, when depicted, were also studied, looking for their features and number of visible toes.

Despite the lack of consensus on Bosch’s paintings dating, I have arranged my data in progressive order from the earlier to the later paintings, taking into consideration the probable dating attributed by the BRCP in its Catalogue Raisonné.<sup>28</sup> As the BRCP, we also presented the extensive selection of the studied owls at the section “The studied owls by chart number and picture” besides the Table 2.

The target comparison between the “autograph paintings’ owls sample” with the owls in the non-autograph paintings: “*Ecce Homo*”-Boston (workshop’s); “*The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things*” (workshop’s or follower’s); “*The Conjurer*” (workshop’s or follower’s) and “*The Arrest of Christ, Crowning with Thorns and Flagellation*”- Valencia (follower’s) will possibly be meaningful to corroborate the identification of non-autograph paintings and even infer other hands participation as owl’s makers at Bosch’s workshop.

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<sup>28</sup> Ilsink, *Catalogue Raisonné*.



<i>Artwork/Year</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Number of Owls /Chart #</i>
"Adoration of the Magi" c.1470-1480	New York-U.S.A.	01 /#1
"Ecce Homo" c.1475-1485	Frankfurt - Germany	01/#2
"Saint Jerome at Prayer" c.1485-1495	Ghent - Belgium	01 visible (plus 2 others in the dark?) /#3
"Adoration of the Magi" c.1490-1500	Madrid - Spain	02/ #4, #5
"Ecce Homo Triptych" 1495-1500	Boston-U.S.A.	01/ #6
"The Garden of Earthly Delights" Triptych 1495- c.1505	Madrid - Spain	06/ #7, #8, #9, #10, #11, #12
"Saint Wilgefortis" (or Saint Julia) Triptych 1495- c.1505	Venice - Italy	01/ #13
"The Hermit Saints" Triptych c.1495-1505	Venice - Italy	03/ #14,#15,#16
"The Last Judgement" Triptych c.1495-1500	Bruges - Brussels	01/ #17
"The Last Judgment" Triptych c.1500-1505	Vienna - Austria	03/ #18, #19, #20
"The Wayfarer" Triptych c.1500-1510	Rotterdam - the Netherlands Paris - France Washington DC - USA	02/ #21, #22
"The Temptation of Saint Anthony" Triptych c.1500- 1510	Lisbon - Portugal	02/ #23, #24
"The Haywain" Triptych c.1510-1516	Madrid - Spain	01/ #25
"The Seven Deadly sins and Four Last Things" c.1510-1520	Madrid	01/ #26
"The Conjuror" c.1525	Saint Germain en Laye,Paris, France	01/ #27
"The Arrest of Christ..." c.1530-1540	Valencia-Spain	01/ #28

Table 2- Paintings by Hieronymus Bosch with owls in its theme.



# OWL # 14

PAINTING: Hermit Saints

YEAR: 1495-1505

LOCU: B-in the lower foreground

OUTLINE:

# OWL'S CHART

I-II-I

1-COLORS: more white less black *black*

2-HEAD SHAPE: round

3-WINGS: marked

4-Feet ~~X~~

5-EYES: Black w/ white spot *II*

6-BEAK: <sup>well</sup> white (white shaped) *I*

7-BRUSH STROKES:

8-ICONOGRAPHY:

*Owl/Wisdom*



9-OBSERVATIONS: [A= outer left panel B= inner left panel C= central panel D= inner right panel E= outer right panel]

[Digite aqui]

Fig.1. Chart created for each owl's study

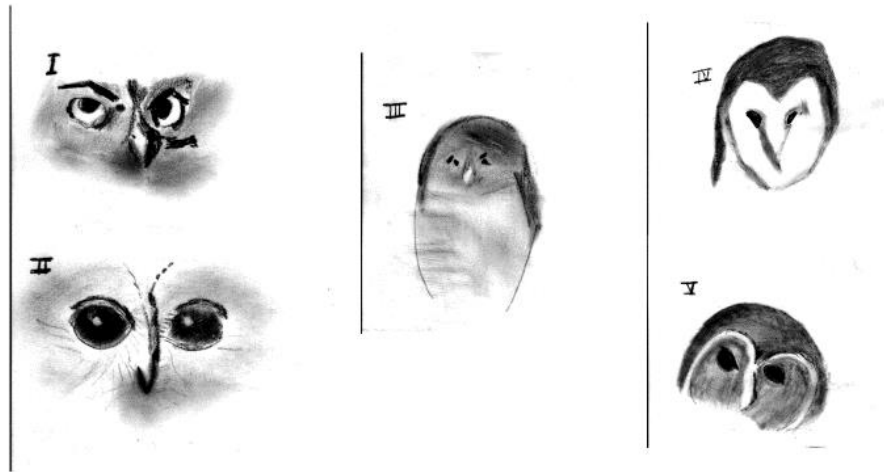


Fig.2. Owl's eyes classification in Hieronymus Bosch paintings.

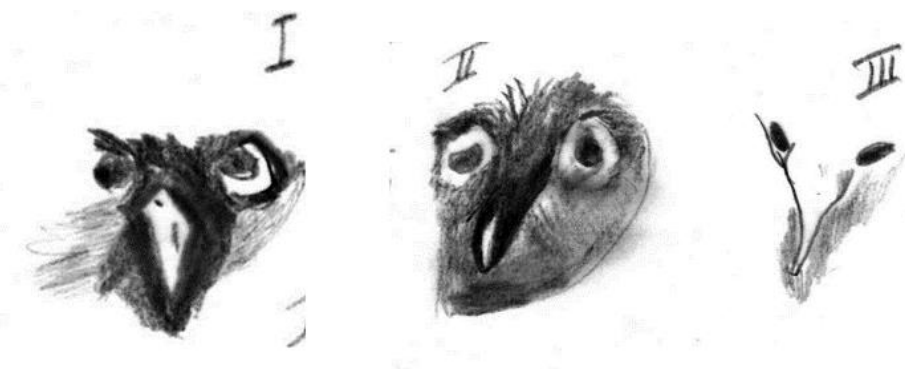


Fig.3. Owl's beaks classification in Hieronymus Bosch paintings.



Fig.4. Owl's head outlines classification in Hieronymus Bosch paintings.

## Chapter 1 The owls and their features in autograph Hieronymus Bosch's paintings

Considering the classification I had developed to catch and survey the owls features in the Hieronymus Bosch's paintings (see 0.3.3. The owls' features classification, my first research tool), I am going to argue how this classification was applied to the autograph paintings and the results achieved.

Beforehand, It is worthy of note that the autograph paintings from where the owls were taken, were considered autograph because of their provenance, style, dendrochronology and their underdrawings. It is fascinating to know that the carbon employed to draw absorbs infrared radiation whilst the light-colourful paint does not, allowing the infrared photography to reveal the underdrawings. However, as the infrared radiation cannot penetrate most of the green and blue paint, it was complemented by the infrared reflectography. Both methods led to the BRCP's remarkable discovery, about the usual unfaithfulness to the drawings, as Bosch's peculiarity in his autograph works.<sup>29</sup>

Upon this solid and up to date technical background, an analysis of all the autograph Bosch paintings with owls was continued. I will now introduce how the owls and their features were depicted by Bosch and/or his workshop in their autograph paintings; how that data led to a reliable "autograph painting's owl sample" and finally the autograph paintings I considered insightful to the workshop issue.

### 1.1. Owls' General Incidence in autograph Bosch's paintings

I found the following incidence of owls in the autograph paintings:

Six autograph paintings with one single owl each "*The Adoration of the Magi*" - New York; "*Ecce Homo*" - Frankfurt; "*Saint Jerome at Prayer*" - Ghent; "*Saint Wilgefortis Triptych*"; "*The Last Judgement*" - Bruges; "*The Haywain Triptych*".

Three autograph paintings with two owls each: "*The Adoration of the Magi*" - Madrid; *The Wayfarer Triptych*". "*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*" - Lisbon;

Two autograph paintings with 3 owls each: "*Hermit Saints Triptych*"; "*The Last Judgement*" - Vienna;

One autograph painting with 6 owls: "*The Garden of Earthly Delights Triptych*";

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<sup>29</sup> IIsink, *Catalogue*, 60-69.

## 1.2. Owls' Eyes in Bosch's autograph paintings

The eyes in Bosch's owls were depicted mainly in two different ways in the autograph paintings, with almost the same frequency of occurrence. The first type has clear outlined eyelids over a cornea and white or yellow iris delimitating a black pupil, as seen in "Saint Jerome", and in the inside left wing of "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*", in the owl at the base of the life fountain. The second depicting type has a fully round black eye, sometimes with a white dot of white pigment depicting the light reflection, as seen in the central panel of "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*", in the foreground, the owl on the left embraced by a man. Eyes types III (punctiform eyes) and IV (verticalized eyes) were rare but seen in "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*" (types III and IV) and "*The Haywain*" (type III) besides types IV in "*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*" and "*The Last Judgement*"-Vienna. (Tables 3 and 4)

## 1.3. Owls' Beaks in Bosch's autograph paintings

The most frequent beak design seen in Bosch's owls autograph paintings were full white or light colour, with one or two drops of black pigment depicting the nostrils or using black or darker paint to depict shadow. The owl in "Saint Jerome" has such typical look, which I named as type I beak. The second usual beak representation with almost the same incidence (beak type II) has the opposite representation: it is black or dark, with a touch of white pigment, depicting the light reflection, as seen in the inside left wing of "*Garden of Earthly Delights at the Life Fountain base*, or in "*The Wayfarer*" in right wing outside panel. A combined pattern of the two types is seen in "Saint Wilgefortis" central panel owl, and in another owl in "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*", central panel on the right foreground: in both cases the owls have half a beak in white and half beak in shadow, depicted in black or grey (beak type I+II). The funnel like type III beaks were rare but seen in "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*", "*Last Judgement*"-Vienna and "*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*". (Tables 3 and 4)

## 1.4. Owls' Head outlines in Bosch's autograph paintings

The owl depicted with most frequency has a round head, sometimes depicted with a flat top area, with no ears or uprising protuberances, as seen in "Saint Jerome" painting (head outline type D). A head with protruding little "ears" was seen in the tiny owl in "*The Last Judgement*"-Vienna version inside left-wing panel, over the tree branch on the left of Adam and Eve sin apple tree (head outline type II). The type III head outline, uprising bristles is rare but was seen in "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*" central panel and in "*The Last Judgement*"-Vienna inner right wing panel. (Tables 3 and 4)

### 1.5. Owls' Toes and Talons in Bosch's autograph paintings

Owls in reality have four toes with talons per foot. Toes, however, are seldom depicted in Bosch's paintings, but four owls out of the 24 autograph painting surveyed presented toes: three owls had three visible toes, as depicted in "Saint Jerome"; in "The Last Judgement" – Vienna version lower inside right wing panel; in "The Temptation of Saint Anthony" – Lisbon version, on top of the pig-headed musician in the central panel. An owl with two visible toes was seen only in "The Garden of Earthly Delights" central panel, over the unicorn horn, in the middle ground. (Tables 3 and 4).

### 1.6. The autograph paintings' owls sample, my second research tool

The first research tool was a classification to catch and survey the owls features. That classification over the autograph paintings allowed a "panoramic" detailed view of all the possibilities Bosch took depicting his owls. Then, the next step was to summit that data in a reliable representative sample with as less as possible owls but encompassing all the diversities found in owls depicting by Bosch. That endeavour was taken as follows.

"The Garden of Earthly Delights" from c. 1495-1505 has 6 owls and three of them are quite representative of the most peculiar features all the other owls have in autograph paintings: The owl in the left inner panel at the fountain base has eyes type I, beak type II and a head outline type I. The owl in the central panel (foreground left) has eyes type II, beak type I and head outline type I. The owl in the central panel (middle ground) has the unusual eyes type IV, the unusual beak type III and the unusual head outline type III.. To be accurately representative of all the owls Bosch displayed in his autograph paintings an eye type III was missing in the sample. To sort that out I took the owl in "The Haywain" to complete the reliable representative owl's sample in Bosch autograph paintings. The end result was a 4 owls sample (Fig,5 bellow). This "autograph painting's owl sample" will be later applied to the non -autograph paintings as described in Chapter 2.



Fig. 5. The autograph paintings' owls sample.

### 1.7. Insightful autograph paintings to the workshop issue.

Looking to the owls in all the autograph paintings, the similarities could possibly infer the work of a single “owl maker” but the differences could allude to more than one painter. The presence of unique features draws attention to the possibility of a new “owl maker” in any of Bosch’s paintings. The following paintings are insightful to the workshop issue.

#### 1.7.1. “*The Garden of Earthly Delights*”

##### *Preliminary overview*

This famous triptych at Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid has survived some serious damage. It lost its original frame, the central panel reverse was thinned, and there is substantial damage in the original paint, abrasions, cracks and imprint signs from 1944-45. In 1999-2000, it underwent a restoration, recovering previous damages. (Fig.6)

The date attributed to this work is 1495-1505, and in 1517 it was at the palace of the Counts of Nassau, the possible commissioners from the sixteenth century. The triptych was presented to the Escorial by Philip II in 1593, and has remained in the Museo Nacional del Prado since 1939.

The closed triptych presents the Biblical Genesis by the end of the third day when God separated the land from water and vegetation grew on Earth. The inside left wing depicts the Eden Garden by the 6<sup>th</sup> day of creation, when God introduces Eve to Adam in a scene surrounded by the fruit-bearing trees. Included in the scene is a black owl in a pink fountain and other ominous creatures. The central panel could be an extended continuation of the left wing inside panel in pictorial terms or at least in its motif. In the bluish, green and pink background, men and women show interest in each other, surrounded by many birds and other animals. In the middle ground is an interesting scene: a central pond where only women bathe, surrounded by men riding on different animals in an anticlockwise parade. In the foreground, there are many intimate relations happening between men and women, with exuberant fruits and animals of different species surrounding them.<sup>30</sup> The right inside wing depicts hell. In the foreground, an owl with a cooking pot on its head is enthroned on a commode, eating a sinner's soul, which, when digested, is excreted into a bubble into a pond beneath it. Knives, arrows and other torture devices are scattered around the devilish scenes.

The BRCP regards "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*" as an authentic autograph work by Bosch and the many later adjustments in the figures' depiction detected, considered a stylish feature seen in many other Bosch's works.

#### *The owls*

Owls were found in all three inner panels. One, the most intriguing, is a hard to see, tiny pink owl at the top of the mountain, in the bluish background in the left panel. Another owl, a black one, is seen in the panel at the base of the pink fountain. Three owls are present in the central panel: two black and brown ones, by the left and right lower margins in the foreground; a third lighter one in the middle ground parade, using the unicorn horn as a perch. The hell panel in the lower right has a stylized anthropomorphic owl dressed in blue, sitting on a commode. The owls in "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*" have mixed patterns of eyes, beaks and head outlines (Fig.7).

The wide diversity of patterns and styles used to depict the owls suggest more than one hand as "owl maker" in this painting, rather than an unreasonable purposely different ways of depicting. The fact that this patterns will be seen in many other paintings, strongly enforces the idea of many painters working "under the same roof", in Hieronymus Bosch workshop.

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<sup>30</sup> Vandenbroeck, *Utopia's Doom*





Fig.6. Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (inner panels), 1495-1505, Oil on panel, (Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado).

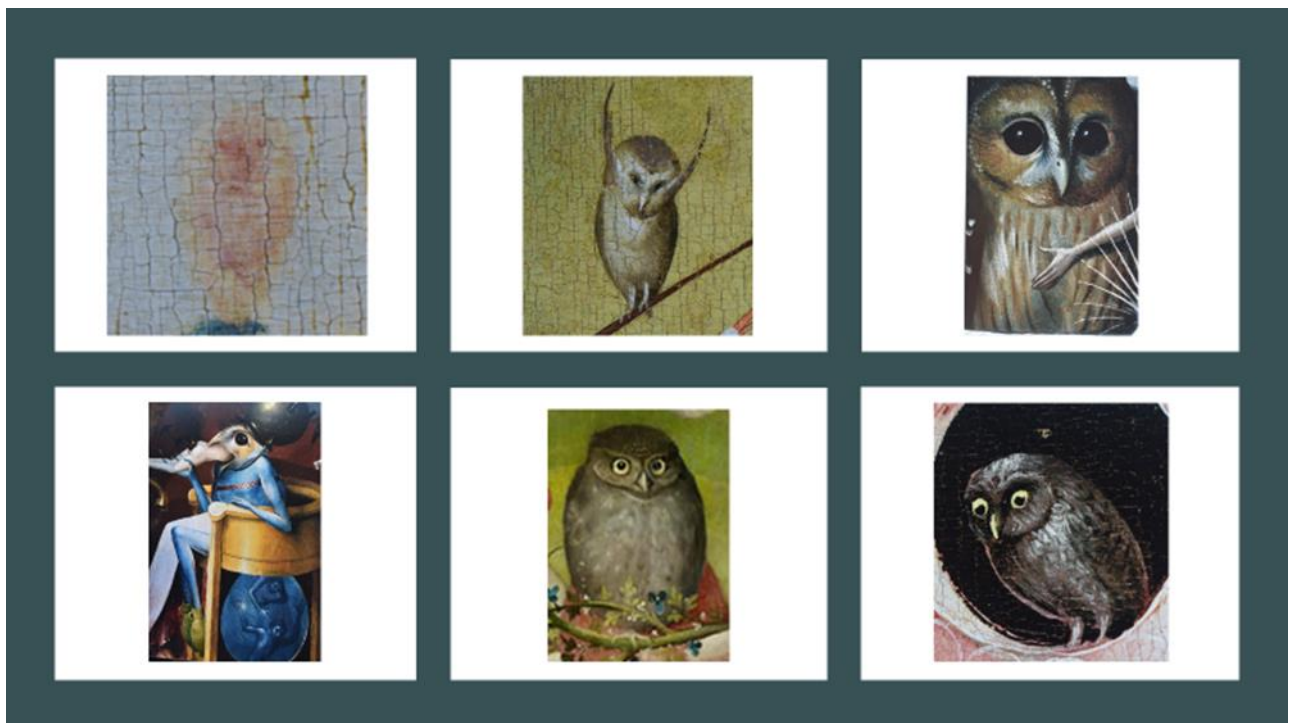


Fig.7. Comparative view: The 6 owls in “*The Garden of Earthly Delights*” have very different styles.

### 1.7.2. “*The Hermit Saints Triptych*”

#### *Preliminary Overview*

This triptych, at Gallerie dell’Accademia in Venice, had been cropped probably between 1878 and 1895, when temporarily transferred to Vienna, where it was in the Kunsthistorisches Museum from 1838 to 1919 (Fig.8).<sup>31</sup> It was previously arched at the top, closing with the lateral half-arches, like “*Saint Wilgefortis Triptych*”. The outer panels were originally painted as a grisaille and they are not present anymore. The painting was seriously damaged by abrasion, cracks, discoloration and previous rigatino-style retouching, besides a metal framework, impairing its original closure. The curators of the Bosch exhibition in ‘s Hertogenbosch wanted to have this painting for their show, and The Gallerie dell’ Accademia in Venice agreed to the loan on the condition that the restoration of the painting would be funded by The Netherlands. What follows is the result of the research that was possible because of that restoration.

It was fully restored by the BRCP project from 2013 to 2016 and presented at the “Jheronimus Bosch Visions of Genius” exhibition at Noordbrabants museum in 2016. Dendrochronology points this picture as being done from 1489 onwards or as a BRCP conclusion, around 1495-1505.<sup>32</sup>

The left-wing displays Saint Anthony. Saint Antony the Great was an Egyptian monk, who lived between 251 AD and 356 AD in Egypt.<sup>33</sup> Bosch portrayed the Saint peacefully drawing water from a river whilst being tempted by many demons, one of them being a naked woman. He is surrounded by his attributes: the bell; the Tau Cross; and the pig of companionship. The Central panel presents Saint Jerome, a theologian, Latin translator of the Bible, prolific writer and later Doctor of the Church. He has been recognized by the Catholic Church; the Eastern Orthodox Church; The Lutheran Church; and the Anglican Communion. As a hermit, Bosch portrayed him in the desert of Chalcis, with a stone in his right hand beating himself in self-chastisement. He prays by the ruins surrounded by pagan icons with his infamous loyal lion (after drawing a thorn from his paw) in the background. The right panel presents Saint Gilles (Saint Aegidius), a Greek hermit saint from Athens, who lived c.650 A.D. to 710 A.D. with his companion a red deer whom he saved by protecting the deer with his body when aimed at by an arrow wielding by a local king.

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<sup>31</sup> Luuk Hoogsted, *Technical Studies*, 67.

<sup>32</sup> Luuk Hoogsted, *Technical Studies*, 66.

<sup>33</sup> Santo Antão, Anthony of the desert, Anthony of Egypt, Anthony the Abbot, Anthony of Thebes, Anthony the Anchorite.

The provenance and all the exams conducted by BRCP endorse this painting as a genuine Bosch work. There are many symbols identically presented in other Bosch works such as: The walking-nun head and the naked woman in the Saint Anthony panel are comparable to “The Last Judgement”- Vienna version; the porcupine above Saint Giles’s cave was seen in the inside left wing of “The Garden of Earthly Delights” and the inside right panel at “The Temptation of Saint Anthony”; reinforcing the understanding of this panel as a legitimate Bosch work.

### *The owls*

I found three owls in “The Hermit Saints Triptych”: an owl over the walking-nun head on the lower left corner of the left wing panel; a tiny one in green by the lateral border of the throne, where a man is depicted with a stick in his back as a perch for the owl in the central panel; and a third one hidden in a cavern almost in front of Saint Giles in the right panel.

The three owls depicted in this triptych have the same kind of eyes (type II), but the one over the nun head in the left wing inside panel, on the lower left corner, has white pigment, probably depicting the pupils. Surprisingly, the beaks and the head outlines are all types I of my classification. The wings are not evident in any of them, and the colours employed are the same in the left panel owl and the right panel one. The central panel owl is inside a decorative motif and follows its green colour. These remarkably similar features may indicate the same owl maker in this triptych (Fig.9).



Fig.8. Hieronymus Bosch, *The Hermit Saints Triptych* (inner panels), c.1495-1505, Oil on panel, 86 x 60 cm., (Venice, Gallerie Dell’ Accademie).



Fig. 9. Comparative view: The 3 owls in “*The Hermit Saints Triptych*” have similar eyes, beaks, and head outlines.

### 1.7.3. “*The Last Judgement*” - Vienna version

#### *Preliminary overview*

The work is not well preserved and suffered many restorations at least in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and later in 1954. The painting has been dated from 1500 to 1505 and was donated by Count Lamberg-Sprinzenstein to the Akademie in 1822. As Bossing argued, would it be the altar piece commissioned by Felipe, the handsome in 1504? <sup>34</sup> (Fig.10)

The closed triptych depicts Saint James, the Great, known in Spain as Santiago de Compostela, on the left and Saint Hippolytus on the right.

Inside the left wing panel is Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in three different moments. They are shown in a chronological view, from bottom to top, much more related to time than to perspective. The central panel represents the Final Judgement, and only heaven has been left on the top, whereas everything else was mastered by darkness. A pessimistic allusion to the status of humanity, punished by plague, wars and hunger. The right wing inside panel pictures hell. Crowned by erupting volcanos, a reddish tent houses desperate, naked souls. A boat and a canoe bring new naked souls to the dark demons’ delight, who apply all kinds of torture to these mischievous creatures.

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<sup>34</sup> Bossing, *Bosch*, 14.

The BRCP was not granted permission to examine or even document this painting, however, considered the underdrawings and the outside paintings (Saint James and Saint Hippolytus) as most likely to be autograph Bosch, based on previous documentation. The inside paintings had too much detailed underdrawings compared with Bosch's other works and the painting technique found in this work's inner panels is very different from Bosch's "oeuvre" in many aspects.<sup>35</sup> These findings rise suspicions about the participation of many other painters in this Bosch triptych.

### *The owls*

The "Last Judgement"-Vienna version owls are exceedingly difficult to see; they are tiny and in the right-wing inner panel lost in a dark background. Owls were found in the Garden of Eden panel, on the left of the sin tree as a tiny grey owl perching on a tree branch; another owl sits in the hell panel by the right side of the entrance below the red tent; and a final owl sits on the head of a sitting naked soul with a white veil in the middle ground on the right (Fig.11).<sup>36</sup>

The owl in the left panel is hard to see, but very interesting conclusions were possible thanks to digital photography and employing magnification.<sup>37</sup> The eyes we cannot identify; the beak is probably type I and the head is type II what means two "ear tufts" in the head outline which I had not seen before. Owls with long protruding bristles are very infrequent in Bosch's paintings, but the owl on the right side of the door depicted at the lower part of the portrayed hell in the inside right wing panel has long impressive upward bristles from its eyebrows (head outline type III). This owl has also the rarely depicted visible toes, in this case a total of three. The third owl in this painting is in the middle ground on the right of the same panel, over the head of a sitting naked soul. It has a beak type III while the eyes are the unusual type IV (verticalized toward the beak) and its head is the very unusual type II. All these owls are quite different from any others I have seen, even different from the ones in Saint Anthony Temptation. As mentioned the owls in the left inner panel and the middle ground right panel have "ear tufts" that I had not seen before. The other owl by the foreground in the right panel is also unique and differs from its similar in the middle ground of the central panel of "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*" by its eyes and the bristles coming from the eyebrows while in the later they come from the beak sides (Fig.12). The BRCP endorses in "*The Last Judgement*"-Vienna only the outer panels underdrawings of the grisailles on the closed wings as have been autograph Bosch, while uncertainty remains in the inner panels where I found the varying three owls: *apud* Ilsink "*As far as we can tell, these underdrawings cannot be compared with any other in a work by Bosch, including other highly detailed compositions.*"

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<sup>35</sup> Luuk Hoogsted, *Technical Studies*, 251.

<sup>36</sup> Ilsink, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 496.

<sup>37</sup> Fischer, *Works 2013*, 174, 175.

It's seemingly possible, therefore, that the compositions in the open triptych were set down by a different hand – perhaps by a particularly talented journeyman, an itinerant assistant who was only active in the workshop for a short time, or by a workshop assistant by who no further work is known.”<sup>38</sup> That finding is consonant with Luuc Hoogsted report when he considered the inside paintings had too many detailed underdrawings compared with Bosch’s other works and the painting technique found in this work’s inner panels was very different from Bosch’s oeuvre in many aspects. The BRCP position, so far has been to considerate the outside paintings (Saint James and Saint Hippolytus) as probably autograph Bosch, based on underdrawings and previous documentation, and hesitation remains about the “*The Last Judgement*”- Vienna, inner paintings where very strange atypical owls inhabit.. I believe a second hand, diverse from the s’ Hertogenbosch workshop, participated at least in the inner left and right panels of this painting making that owls. This conclusion aligns with the BRCP mentioned remarks.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ilsink, *Catalogue*, 66.

<sup>39</sup> Hoogsted, *Technical Studies*, 251



Fig.10. Hieronymus Bosch, *The Last Judgement* (inner panels), 1500-1505, Oil on panel, (Vienna, Akademie der bildenden Künste).



Fig.11. Comparative view: The 3 owls in “*Last Judgement*”-Vienna (a, b, c) and the autograph paintings’ 4 owls sample. Note, the “ear tufts” over the head of the owl in “a” and “c” (head outline type II).



Fig.12. Comparative view: One owl in “*The Last Judgement*”-Vienna (left) and one owl in “*The Garden of Earthly Delights*” (right). Note, the bristles come from the eyebrows on the left owl and from the beak sides on the right one.



#### 1.7.4. “*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*”- Lisbon version

##### *Preliminary Overview*

At Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga in Lisbon, this recognized autograph triptych's central panel is covered with abrasions and cracks from age and wear (Fig.13). The wings present outer grisailles with preserved paint surfaces and inner panels in a better condition but had brown outer fields as a late addition to the wings. It is dated from c.1500 to 1510 and was probably owned by the Emperor Maximilian of Austria before reaching Lisbon in 1872.

The left-wing grisaille depicts the Arrest of Christ before dawn and the right-wing grisaille depicts Christ Carrying the Cross. The left inside panel depicts Saint Anthony in his hermitage tempted and haunted by anthropomorphic demons of many species, in different moments. In another view, Saint Anthony had been thrown in the air as a demoniac punishment, escorted by devilish torturers. The central panel depicts Anthony going back to his meditative loneliness, surrounded by a large variety of demons. The right inside panel presents Anthony reading, while a seductive woman, a living demon, tries unsuccessfully to draw his attention.

After extensive research, the BRCP considered “*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*”-Lisbon version as an autograph painting, demonstrated by its history and the extensive BRCP examination and documentation from September 2011. The great amount of later changes was fully demonstrated by the examiners as a very Boschian feature in his work.

Many copies of the central panel exist. The most well knowns are the one owned by the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia and another one at Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (see Chapter 3).<sup>40</sup>

##### *The owls*

This autograph but rather polemic work due the many copies spread over the world has also two diverse owls in its central panel: one at the top of the head of the pig-headed musician and another in the break at the ruined column, two owls quite different from the other ones depicted in Bosch's “oeuvre” (Fig.14). The top of the pig-headed musician owl has elliptical verticalized eyes (eyes type IV), which being rare, were also seen in “*The Garden of Earthly Delights*” (central panel, middle ground, owl perched on unicorn's horn) and in “*The Last Judgement*”-Vienna over another head, the soul's one in the middle ground of the hell panel. The top of the pig-headed musician owl has also an unusual funnel like beak (beak type III) which was seen before in “*The Garden of Earthly Delights*” (central panel, middle ground, owl perched on unicorn's horn) and in the aforementioned owl in “*The Last Judgement*”-Vienna. Owl toes are very seldom in Bosch paintings, but six owls out of the 28 studied presented toes, and this owl has three visible ones.

<sup>40</sup> At least 15 copies are known.

Moreover, that owl has unique yellow feathers over its head and wings. However, a comparative look at this owl and its similar (“*The Garden of Earthly Delights*”) will reveal similarities in the brush strokes employed in the owl’s body, beak, and in the white lines by the legs (Fig.15). The other owl in this painting, at the break in the column, has the same head outline type I as the most owls but it was painted with the addition of stripes representing feathers, like a skirt over its body and the facial discs are absent (Fig.16). That owl representation was clumsy and shabby, and it was never seen before in any autograph or non-autograph Bosch painting. This finding infers the participation of a different hand making owls, at least depicting this owl in the column break.



Fig.13. Hieronymus Bosch, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (inner pannels), 1500-1510, Oil on panel, (Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga).

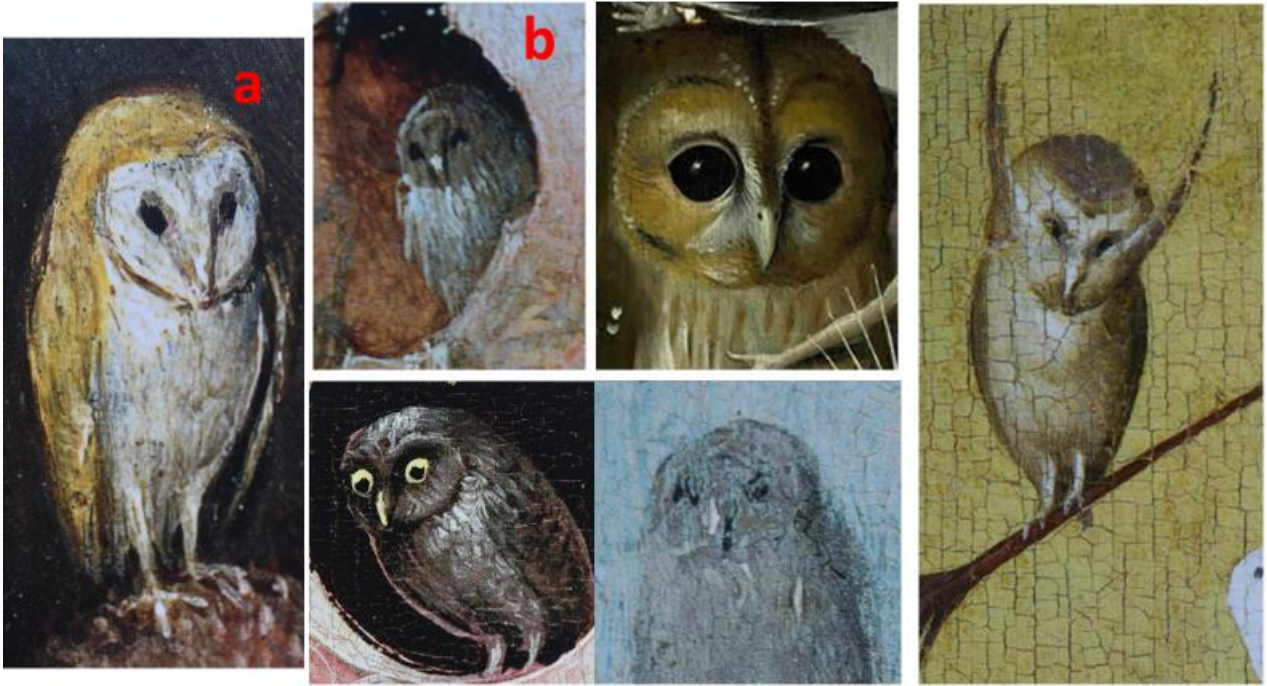


Fig.14. Comparative view: The 2 owls in “*Temptation of St Anthony*”-Lisbon (a,b) and the autograph paintings’ 4 owls sample.



Fig.15. Comparative view: one owl in “*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*”-Lisbon (left) and one owl in “*The Garden of Earthly Delights*” (right). Note, similar eyes, beak, brush strokes and the white traces depicting legs.



Fig.16. Comparative view: one owl in “The Temptation of Saint Anthony”- Lisbon (left) and one typical owl in “The Hermit Saints Tryptic” (right). Note, the very unskilfully depicted feathers, and the absence of the facial discs on the left owl.

In the following Chapter 2, I will demonstrate how “the autograph paintings’ owl sample” was applied to the non-autograph paintings set and introduce 3 relevant non autograph paintings to the workshop issue.

Painting	OWL#	EYES	BEAK	HEAD	WINGS	COLORS	FEET
AdorationNY	1	II*	I?	I?	Not evid	B,W,G	----
Ecce Frankf	2	I	I	I	Not evid	B, W,G	----
St.Jerome	3	I	I	I	EVIDENT	B, W,G,Br	3 Toes
ADORAT M	4	I	II	I	Not evid	B, W, Br	----
ADORAT M	5	I	II	I	Not evid	B,W,G,R	----
Ecce Boston	6	I	II?	I	Not evid	B,W,G	----
GARDEN	7	I	II	I	EVIDENT	B, W,G, Y	----
GARDEN	8	III	LV	LV	Not evid	Pink	----
GARDEN	9	II	I	I	Not evid	B, W, Y	----
GARDEN	10	I	I + II	I	Not evid	B,W,G, Y	----
GARDEN	11	IV	III	III	EVIDENT	B,W,G, Y	2 Toes
GARDEN	12	II	I	?	Not evid	B,W,G, R, skin color	----
St Wilgef.	13	I	I + II	I	Not evid	B,W,G	----
HERMITS	14	II*	I	I	EVIDENT	B,W,G	----
HERMITS	15	II	I	I	EVIDENT	B,W,green	----
HERMITS	16	II	I	I	EVIDENT?	B,W,G	----
Judg Brus.	17	II	I	I	EVIDENT	B,W,Br	----

Table 3. Types of eyes, beaks, heads and other features in Bosch's owls in his paintings from c.1470 to c.1505. (LV=Low Visualization; B=Black; W=White; G=Gray; Y=Yellow; Br=Brown; R=Red; \*=Eyes type II with white pupil)

Painting	OWL#	EYES	BEAK	HEAD	WINGS	COLORS	FEET
JUDG V.	18	LV	I?	II	EVIDENT?	B,W,G	----
JUDG V.	19	II	I	III	EVIDENT	B,W, Br	3 Toes
JUDG V.	20	IV	III?	II	EVIDENT	B, W, G	----
WAYFAR	21	I	II	I	Not evid	B,W,G,Br	----
WAYFAR	22	II	II	I	Not evid	B,G,W,Y	----
ST ANTH	23	IV	III?	I	EVIDENT	B,W,G,Y	3 Toes
ST.ANTH	24	II	II	I	Not evid	B,W,G	----
Haywain	25	III	LV	I	Not evid	B,W,G	----
7 Sins	26	I	I	I	Not evid	B,W,G	3 Toes
Conjurer	27	V	different	IV	Not evid	B,W,Y	----
Arr. Christ	28	I	I	I	EVIDENT	B,Y, Pink	3 Toes

Table 4. Types of eyes, beaks, heads and other features in Bosch's owls in his paintings from c.1500 to c.1540. (LV=Low Visualization; B=Black; W=White; G=Gray; Y=Yellow; Br=Brown)

## Chapter 2 The owls and their features in non-autograph Hieronymus Bosch's paintings

The "Ecce Homo Triptych"- Boston has a partially hidden owl: despite being possible to classify its eye, beak and head outline, I could not find any divergent features. However, in three other non-autograph paintings attributed to Bosch, very atypical owls were present. I will now describe these paintings and their findings.

### 2.1 "*The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things*"

#### *Preliminary Overview*

At Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid, this painting was found in an overall particularly good state. It was made probably in 1510-1520, but dendrochronology was impossible once this painting was done over poplar, what is unique in Bosch's "oeuvre". There is a great possibility that this round painting was the one referred by Felipe de Guevara in c. 1560, as being in the Escorial at the king Philip II bedchamber. (Fig.17)

It is a round painting filled with concentric circles and Christ is positioned at the centre. The first circle around him reads "beware, beware, the Lord is watching", and sun-like rays stream outwards towards narratives depicting the seven deadly sins. The larger circle delimitates 7 small scenarios depicting: Wrath (ira); Pride (superbia); Lust (luxuria); Sloth (accidia); Gluttony (gula); Greed (avaritia); Envy (invidia). At the top, a warning says "They are a nation without sense, there is no discernment in them. If only they were wise and would understand this and discern what their end will be". And underneath that "I will hide my face from them; and see what their end will be". Four medallions, one in each corner, depict the four last things also as scenarios: Death, Judgement, Hell, and Heaven.

The quite unusual finding of poplar as support strongly suggests this work as a tabletop made by an apprentice or a follower, despite the original signature in the lower edge of the painting.

#### *The owl*

I have found a tiny, very hidden owl, in the Gluttony scene, at the window above the door. This owl has three toes and talons that emerge outside its border (Fig.18).

Despite "*The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things*" being considered an imitator tabletop, the tiny owl by the window in the Gluttony scene has been reproduced very well by the artist. This owl has the same eyes, beak and head, similar to most owls depicted in Bosch's "oeuvre". What is new however, is the never seen before three long white toes, and talons outside of the window (Fig.18).

That fact enlightens the words of Felipe de Guevara about Bosch's imitators referring as an example a painting in the Escorial, presumably "*The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things*":<sup>41</sup>

*"...but it is right to warn that among these imitations of Hieronymus Bosch, there is one who was his pupil and who, out of respect for his master, or to give his works a good name, inscribed the name Bosch on his paintings and not his own. And they are nevertheless paintings very much to be esteemed, and those who own such works ought to be aware of their value, as this painter emulated his master in terms of invention and morals, as he was more diligent and patient in his work than Bosch, and because his work did not deviate in style, elegance or colour from that of his master."*<sup>42</sup>

The skilful owl painter in "*The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things*" could possibly be the very diligent pupil mentioned by Guevara or the "Master of Capital Sins", as argued by Fritz Koreny.<sup>43</sup> This is also something that can be cemented further by all the evidence collected by the BRCP not endorsing this painting/poplar tabletop as an authentic Bosch's and/or his workshop's work.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Spanish humanist (died 1563), wrote "*Comentarios de la pintura*" (Comments on Painting), published in 1788.

<sup>42</sup> Ilsink, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 34.

<sup>43</sup> Ron Spronk, "Jheronymus Bosch and the Van Aken Family Workshop: Towards a Reassessment of Technique" in: *Jheronymus Bosch His Patrons and His Public* (s Hertogenbosch: Epos Press, 2012), 389.

<sup>44</sup> Ilsink, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 474.

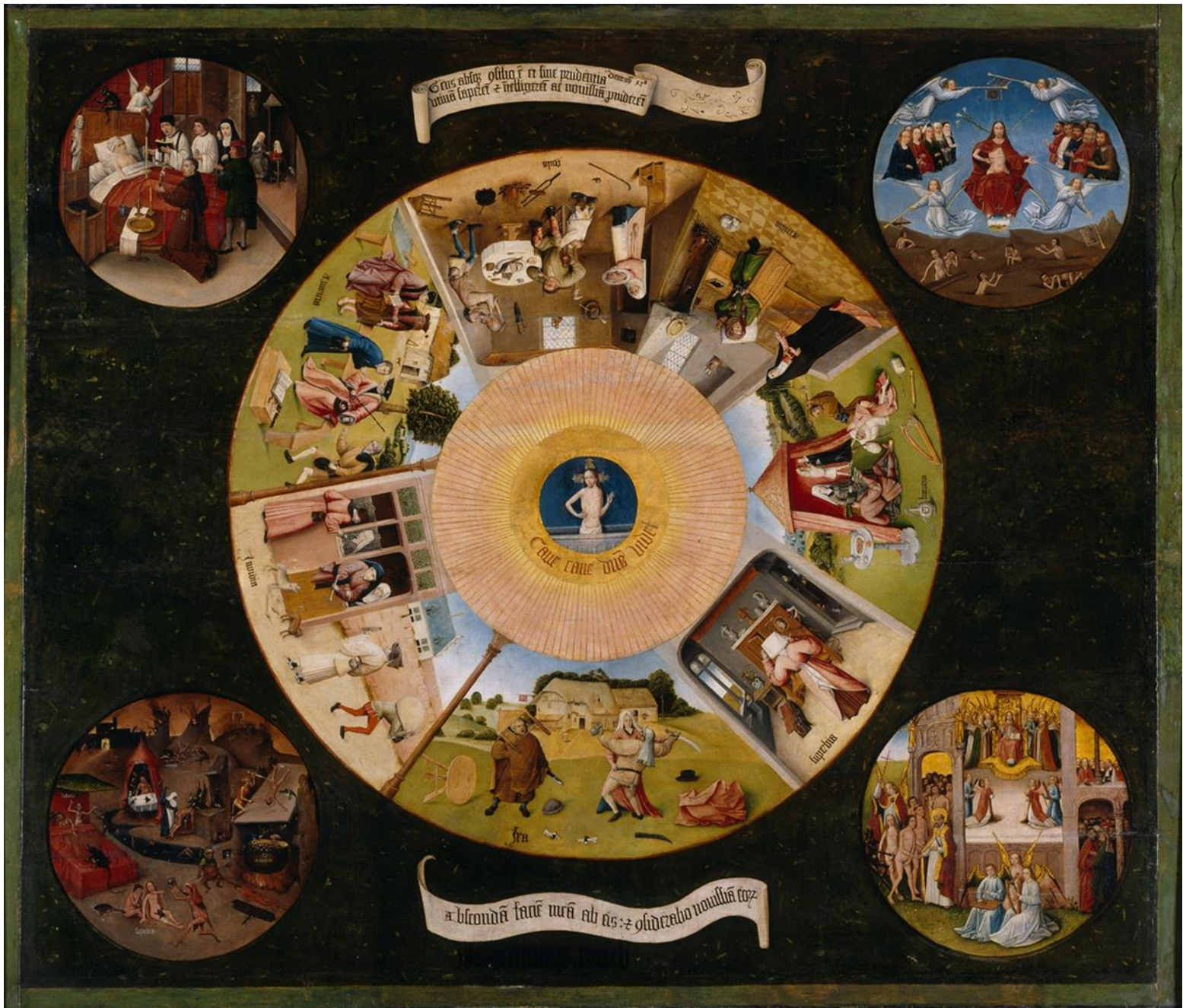


Fig.17. Workshop or Follower of Hieronymus Bosch, *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things*, 1510-20, Oil on poplar panel, 120 x 150cm., (Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado).



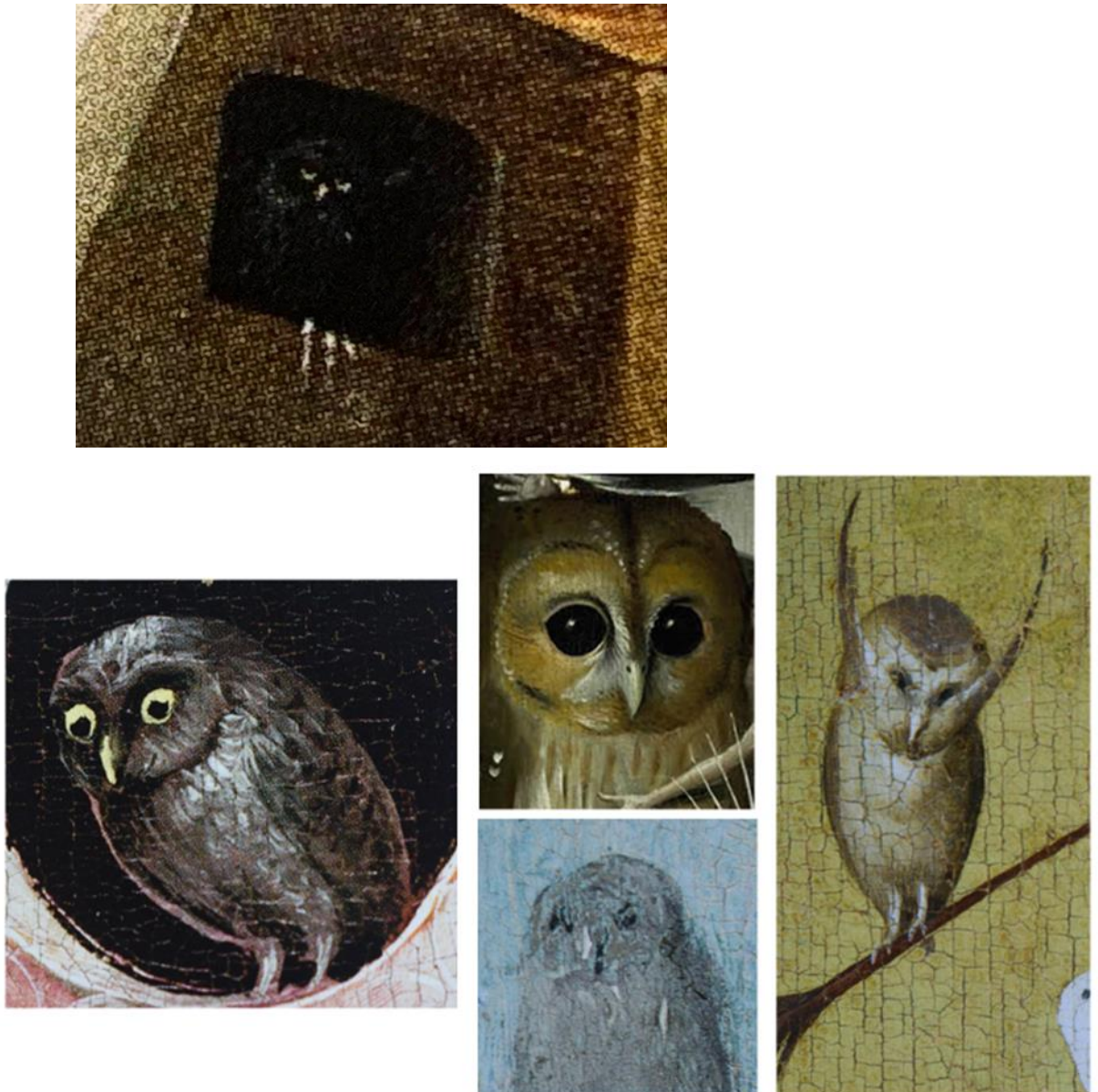


Fig.18. Comparative view: “*The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things- Gluttony*” owl (top) has 3 long white toes not seen in the autograph paintings’ 4 owls sample.

## 2.2. “*The Conjurer*”

### *Preliminary Overview*

At Musée municipal de Saint-Germain-en-laye, this painting was considered by BRCP as an excellent original paint surface despite aging cracks, restorations losses and abraded areas. This copy by a follower of Hieronymus Bosch was made in 1530-1540 and donated to the museum in 1872 by Alexandre Du Castel. The painting is related to two drawings by Bosch depicting the conman and his victims. (Fig.19).

Such painting, besides depicting conmen and victims, also reports a slightly different story: a man spitting out frogs while the conjurer presents his tricks. Both are deceivers taking the attention of the people to steal their purses. But in the scene, it is the frog-spitting man who has been robbed.

The underdrawings and the painting technique are not typical from Bosch, and the dendrochronology and framing method dated the production after 1525.

#### *The owl*

Spying out of the conjurer's basket, an owl emerges on the scene.

"The conjurer" had its follower authorship status openly reinforced, looking at the depicted owl, spying out the basket. This particular owl has a spherical head not seen before in Bosch's owls, along with a rough unskillfully painted beak, and totally different eyes from all the other owls seen in Bosch's "oeuvre". This owl has a unique "monkey-like" face. (Fig.20). This painting categorised by BRCP as a Workshop or Follower painting is in fact a pastiche. This artist may have used a print from the original as his point of departure, not knowing the autograph work by Bosch.



Fig.19. Follower of Hieronymus Bosch, *The Conjurer*, c.1525, Oil on panel, (Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Musée Municipal).



Fig.20. Comparative view: The “monkey like” owl in “*The Conjurer*”(top left) and the autograph paintings’ 4 owls sample.

### 2.3. “*The Arrest of Christ, Crowning with Thorns and Flagellation*”

#### *Preliminary Overview*

This triptych is at Museu de Belles Arts de València, and its central panel is in a better condition than the wings, despite minor old cracks. It was dated from 1530 to 1540, probably painted in Antwerp, and was previously housed in Convento de Santo Domingo de Valencia. This followers’ work did not come from the family workshop because its frame is atypically late and a rabbeted frame is used in the central panel (Fig.21).<sup>45</sup>

The left wing depicts the Arrest of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. The central panel, in a tondo shape, displays The Crowning with Thorns and angels fighting with evil in a darkish semi-grisaille style around the tondo. The right panel presents the Flagellation and as the left-wing panel has a pictorial quality inferior to the central panel.

It has now been established that it is a painting of a follower of Bosch, probably after “*The Crowning with Thorns*” (1530-40), which was also by a Bosch’s fellow, and it is at Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial. The central panel has a “Jheronimus bosch” accurate imitation signature, which is absent in all other versions. However, the source for the followers’ works and other prototypes is “*The Crowning with Thorns*” an autographed Bosch painting from 1490-1500, which is at The National Gallery in London.

<sup>45</sup> Luuk Hoogsted, *Technical Studies*, 385.

### *The owl*

There is a reddish owl at the torturer's red robe sleeve, which is not found at "*The Crowning with Thorns*"- El Escorial and at "*The Crowning with Thorns*"- London (Fig.22).

The "*Arrest of Christ, Crowning with Thorns and Flagellation*", an imitator's painting, has an owl that, at first sight, seems like a typically "Bosch owl", it has the same eyes, beak and head outline seen in "*Saint Jerome*", in one of "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*" owls, and other less visible ones e.g. in "*Ecce Homo*" – Frankfurt version. However, the colour is different, and at a closer look, the brush strokes are very unusual: they are much more regular, symmetrical and aligned, a feature not seen in most depicted owls in Bosch's "oeuvre". Moreover, its toes are much larger, gross, flat and in a cross-shape, making them look quite different from all other owl toes depicted in Bosch's (Fig.22). These peculiar features endorse the consistent, firmly established data, regarding this painting as an imitator's work. Keeping in mind that this owl in "*The Arrest of Christ, Crowning with Thorns and Flagellation*"- Valencia is closer to Bosch than the one in "*The Conjurer*", this leads to the conclusion that the artist in the former must have studied an autograph painting by Bosch.



Fig.21. Follower of Hieronymus Bosch, *The Arrest of Christ, Crowning with Thorns and Flagellation* (inner panels), 1530-1540, Oil on panel, (València, Museu de Belles Arts).



Fig.22. Comparative view: The owl in *“The Arrest of Christ, Crowning with Thorns and Flagellation”* (top left) and the autograph paintings’ 4 owls sample. Note the larger, gross, flat, cross-shaped toes (top left owl).

## Chapter 3 The Hieronymus Bosch's workshop

### 3.1. The workshops in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries

Hieronymus Bosch grew up painting alongside his artistic family, a tradition long established. Besides the very plausible participation of other painters and traveling apprentices in Bosh's circle, there were probably no guilds or formal training schools in Den Bosch around the 1500s.<sup>46</sup> The commissions Bosch received, made him the most successful artist of his artistic family, and gave him an enormous reputation beyond his city and country. This was underlined by his swan membership of the Brotherhood of Our Lady. To execute the many commissions from the clergy, wealthy laymen and nobility, his work probably demanded many assistants, especially in the larger and more complex works that are so full of details. Fischer mentioned the possibility of Bosch travel once a commission to "*Ecce Homo*" from another Swan Member was possibly left to assistants making.<sup>47</sup>

The inner functionings of the artist's workshop in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries was enlightened by the outstanding contributions of Maryan Ainsworth, Curator of European Paintings at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where she specialized in Early Netherlandish, French, and German paintings. She has been regarded as the source of the new connoisseurship, afforded by the so called Technical Art History, which by means of high-tech devices, also explores the underdrawings, retouches, supports and frames. Her influence in "*The Adoration of the Magi*"-New York was very significant in 1992 in reinforcing Tolnay's position (1937) regarding the work as a non-autograph painting, until the Rotterdam exhibition in 2001, when compared with the "*Ecce Homo*"-Frankfurt it was finally considered autograph again, as the BRCP confirmed. She argues very interesting points about the workshops and the painter's guilds as follows.

Masters were used to make not only paintings but also to fulfil many different commissions for sculptures, tapestries design, altarpieces, banners and decorative objects. They had one or two apprentices to grind their pigments and other lower assignments; a companion or journeyman as an advanced itinerant temporary collaborator; and sometimes even painters from different workshops for individual special commissions, like in the Ghent Altarpiece where two van Eycks worked on the same commission. Drawings were paramount and valuable in their endeavour, but nowadays it has not been possible to say if the surviving drawings were preparatory ones or made after the painting to keep their icons.

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<sup>46</sup> Schwartz, *Jheronimus Bosch*, 57; Larsen, *Bosch* (New York: Smithmark Publishers, 1998), 11.

<sup>47</sup> Fisher, *Bosch*, 80.

By the end of fifteenth century fewer works were commissioned and more works were conceived to sell on the open art market. By the sixteenth century highly specialized artists started more often the coworking practise as seen in “*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*”-Madrid where Patinir is supposed to have been working side by side with Massys.<sup>48</sup>

These outstanding contributions related to the fifteenth century workshops refers to its inner functioning in Tournai, Bruges and Antwerp. Hieronymus Bosch grew up in established tradition of joint work with his artist’s family in ‘s Hertogenbosch. Despite the very plausible participation of other painters and traveling apprentices in his work, local documents about the believable Guilds in ‘s Hertogenbosch, are missing.<sup>49</sup>

An extensive view over Bosch’s oeuvre unequivocally confirms the compulsive repetition of many icons in a stamp like fashion all over his production. This, as such, reinforces the active participation of many hands attending his highly demanded works in “s Hertogenbosch in the fifteenth and sixteenth century.

Bosch was a skillful versatile artist, and during his lifetime, he received alternative commissions to the Brotherhood of Our Blessed Lady, such as embroidery design for a chasuble and even a brass chandelier, which are unfortunately missing. This research, however, was based exclusively on the legacy of thirty-four paintings published at Bosch Research and Conservation Project (BRCP) Catalogue Raisonné in 2016, and classified as autograph Bosch; his Workshop; Followers; and his Workshop or Follower.

### 3.2 Hieronymus Bosh in Brazil, a workshop’s puzzle

Far away from ‘s Hertogenbosch and Europe, in South of Brazil, a single and controversial Bosch’s Painting is a vivid document of the intriguing inner functioning of the Hieronymus Bosch’s workshop and the role the owls can play in its study.

“*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*”-São Paulo, is a single panel analogous to the homonymous held at the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga in Lisbon. It was previously kept at Saint Sophia convent near Sevilla and may have been owned by Felipe II of Spain before being shown in 1936 at “Galeri d ‘Atri” in Paris. The painting was bought in 1952/3 by the “Knoedlers Gallery” in New York from where it was sent to the Tate Gallery for an exhibition in 1954.

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<sup>48</sup> Ainsworth, ” From van Eyck”, 205-211.

<sup>49</sup> Schwartz, *Jheronimus Bosch*, 57; Larsen, *Bosch* ( New York: Smithmark Publishers,1998), 11.



After long negotiations since 1952, and many political drawbacks, in March 1958 the painting was acquired by Mr. Assis Chateaubriand, a media mogul, journalist and law professor, who donated it to MASP-Museu de Arte de São Paulo (Fig.23).

It had been considered an authentic Bosch painting by Max Friedländer in 1936. In the same year Robert Eigenberger who had made "*The Last Judgement*"-Vienna restoration, worked on the painting and reported the same conviction as Friedländer besides the many pentimenti he found in the restoration. In 1937 Friedländer examined the Barnes Foundation's "*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*" also, arguing both works were creative autograph essays and not trivial copies. De Tolnay (1937) and Ludwig von Baldas (1943) later, had the same opinion.<sup>66</sup>

This impressive panel is akin to the Lisbon's center panel however, the São Paulo version has many differences, the most evident ones being as follows: in the background it has more vivid flames on the left and an overt dissimilarity of its sky monsters; in the middle ground the owl over the pigheaded musician is missing and there is a new owl on the tray which is plucked and emerging from a sort of "bread"; in the foreground the boat on the right has a different frog banner.

The Barnes Foundation panel is much less akin to the Lisbon central panel, a few differences are: in the background it lacks the sky monsters; in the middle ground the owl over the pigheaded musician is also missing and on the near by trash there is a plucked owl besides the absence of the red tent hanged on the palace on the right; in the foreground the most important thing is the presence of a yawning creature in the fish boat which has a little man blowing a clarinet with his backside, besides a missing basket monster coming out of the red egg on the left, and fewer monsters in the right group plus a simplified near by boat (Fig.24).

In fact, the São Paulo version has much more similarities with the Lisbon version than the Barnes Foundation one. Which would be the main differences between the São Paulo version and the Barnes Foundation version? The Barnes Foundations version has its unique man blowing the clarinet with his backside in the fish boat and a bird above him; and it lacks many items presented in the São Paulo version.

Sandra Ditner, a professor from Universidade Estadual de Campinas- Brazil, fulfilled extensive research of the São Paulo version in 1998. She employed ultra violet light and infra-red pictures; X-Radiograph; dendrochronology; professional surface photography; and even extracted a sample of pigment for chemical analysis besides a detailed stylistic assessment. The research was oriented by the Centre International d'Etude de la Peinture Medievale des Bassins de L'Escaut et de la Meuse, in Belgium and had the co-participation of Museu de Arte Antiga in Lisbon.

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<sup>66</sup> Ditner, "*Jheronimus Bosch As Tentações*", 95.

She accurately realised the plucked owl in the tray, but did not mention the absence of the owl over the pigheaded musician which is evident in the Lisbon's version.

Her final conclusion was coherent with Friedländer's opinion from 1936, she argues the São Paulo version as the Barnes Foundation version were done before the Lisbon versions, making the Barnes Foundation the first and the São Paulo the middle version before Lisbon's.

Now comes the main enigmatic issue: in 2006 the BRCP demonstrated by X-Radiograph that the little man blowing the trumpet with his backside depicted in the Barnes Foundation version had been previously drawn in the Lisbon version, but was not yet invisible to the naked eye. So, as the BRCP argues, how could the Barnes Foundation painter know that, if it was painted before the Lisbon version as Ditner concluded?<sup>67</sup>(Fig.25)

Dendrochronology did not clarify the puzzle since the possible dates are much closer: 1493 to the Lisbon's; 1500 to the Barne's and 1503 to the São Paulo's. The possible answer would be the hypothesis of the Lisbon version had been made before the Barne's version. But then, why and how would the Barne's version be so simplified, and of a recognised lower technical quality than the Lisbon version, along with the São Paulo version as well?

Considering the São Paulo version has details seen also in Barne's version but not present in the Lisbon triptych, the BRCP suggested the possibility of a fourth version as the model which possibly could had inspired all these diverse versions or yet the immediate vicinity as the responsible for such interchangeable similarities between the three works.

Taking as a principle the current knowledge about the workshops inner functioning around 's Hertogenbosh and the recognised commercial activism of his workshop, delivering more than one copy in particular commissions, the immediate vicinity theory "under the same roof" seems more plausible than the hypothesis of a new matrix, keeping in mind there are at least 15 official versions to "*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*" all over the world.<sup>68</sup>

The owl over the pig headed musician in the central panel of "*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*" - Lisbon and its absence in the two other aforementioned paintings in São Paulo and Philadelphia may be meaningful. In the Philadelphia painting, the trumpet player in the fish boat made a connection of that painting with the autograph one in Lisbon by means of the revealed underdrawings. If an adequate up to date underdrawings search will be done in the São Paulo painting and an owl found over the pig headed musician, its definitive link to the autograph one in

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<sup>67</sup> Ilsink, *Catalogue*, 155.

<sup>68</sup> Ditner, "*Jheronimus Bosch As Tentações*", 12.

Lisbon will be confirmed, and the 's Hertogenbosh workshop reinforced as the house from all three paintings departed.



Fig.23. Attributed to Hieronymus Bosch, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony-São Paulo*, C.1500, Oil on panel, (MASP-Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand).



Fig.24. Attributed to Hieronymus Bosch, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony-Philadelphia*, Mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century, Oil on panel, (by courtesy of The Barnes Museum, Dr. Albert Barnes Foundation, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.).

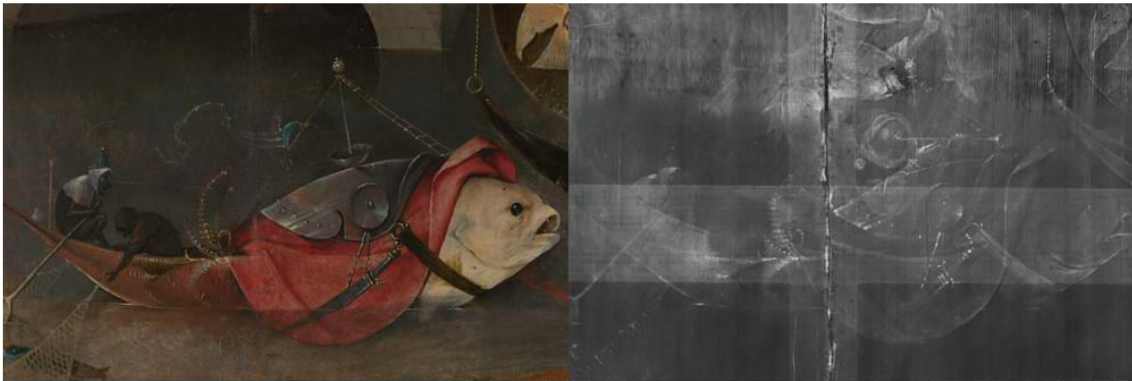


Fig.25. X-Radiography displaying the little man blowing the trumpet with his backside (right) in “*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*”-Lisbon which is invisible to naked eye (left).

From IIsink et al, Hieronymus Bosch Painter and Draughtsman, Catalogue Raisonné pg.153.

## Chapter 4 Answers resulting from the research

Taking into consideration the high prevalence of owls in Hieronymus Bosch's paintings; their features in autograph paintings as presented in Chapter 1; their particular features in non-autograph paintings as presented in Chapter 2; the comparative views (Figs.18,20,22); the assumptions related to the practice of his workshop in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; and the organized selection of owls by number and picture hereby attached; it is possible to answer the research questions I had formulated as follows.

### 4.1. The diversity of owls depicting in Bosch's autograph paintings

The owls in Bosch's paintings were not depicted in the same way throughout his "oeuvre". Sometimes they were diverse in the same painting as in "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*", where six different owls were depicted in an autograph Bosch painting (Chapter 1-Fig.7), unequivocally meaning that a unique typical Bosch autograph owl does not exist. However, sometimes, owls were depicted in an evenly uniform pattern as in "*The Hermit Saints*" (Chapter 1-Fig.9), suggesting the same owl maker. However, a pool of common owl characteristics were seen in most Bosch's autograph paintings: These characteristics which I named "the autograph painting's owls sample" were visually sampled in 4 owls depicted in two paintings considered autograph by BRCP : 3 owls from "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*" and 1 owl from "*The Haywain*"(Chapter 1-Fig.5). In practical terms and use, its value, can be clearly appreciated in the Comparative Views Figs.18, 20, 22.

### 4.2. The owls' depicted features in early and later paintings

Tables 3 and 4 displayed our classifications of owls' eyes, beaks and head outline, together with additional data, concerning clearly depicted wings, overall colours used, owls' feet and toes for all the 16 pictures studied. Despite the still open issue about dating of Bosch's works, I considered the probable dating suggested by the BRCP as a starting point to apply the incidence of features found. In Chapter 1 the earlier paintings from c.1470 to c.1505 were presented in Table 3, and the later ones from c.1500 to c.1540, in Table 4.

There were no significant differences in the owl's eyes depicted in the early and later autograph paintings. In both samples, the incidence for eyes type I (white iris with black pupil) were the same as eyes type II (black iris).

Other eyes types seldomly occurred: type III (punctiform eyes) in "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*" inside left wing panel, at hilltop, and in "*The Haywain*" central panel.

The type IV (elliptical vertically inverted black eyes) were seen in “*The Garden of Earthly Delights*” central panel, at the middle ground parade, and in “*The Last Judgement*”- Vienna version in the inside right wing panel middle ground over the head’s soul. The type V (roughly round eyes surrounded by yellowish blue pigment and very delimited facial disc) was exclusive to “*The Conjuror*” owl.

Beaks depicted were fully mixed throughout the earlier and later paintings: sometimes white with a drop of black pigment depicting nostrils or shadow (type I), and sometimes mainly dark or black with a little bit of white pigment representing light reflection (type II). The white funnel-like beak (type III beak) was rare and only present in “*The Garden of Earthly Delights*” central panel, at middle ground parade owl; and in “*The Last Judgement*” inside right wing panel middle ground and in “*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*”- Lisbon version central panel, over the head of the pig-headed musician.

Comparing the early nine paintings from c.1470 to c.1505 with the seven later paintings from c.1500 to c.1540, the head outlines were very often the same type I in both samples (round with no ear tufts or other upheld protrusions). Exceptions are seen in the middle ground parade owl at “*The Garden of Earthly Delights*”- central panel, and in the later works “*The Last Judgement*”- Vienna version, left and right wings inner panels, which have 3 quite different owls from any other seen in Bosch, and in the imitator’s painting “*The Conjuror*”.

The most usual pigments employed to depict owls were black, white, brown and grey. Pink as an owl colour was used only twice: in “*The Garden of Earthly Delights*” inside left panel owl, in the background over the hills, and in the “*The Arrest of Christ, Crowning with Thorns and Flagellation*”, “embroidered” in the torturer’s sleeve, where colour preservation was considered good by the B.R.C.P. but considering the lighting effects may not be exactly pinkish.<sup>69</sup> Yellow was used for the owl eyes’ iris in three cases: “*The Garden of Earthly Delights*”- inside left wing owl, at the fountain base, and at central panel foreground on the right, and in “*The Arrest of Christ, Crowning with Thorns and Flagellation*”. The other employments of yellow pigment were in the head and body feathers depicting, as seen in “*The Garden of Earthly Delights*”- central panel, owl in the foreground on the left and another one in the middle ground; “*The Wayfarer*” inside left wing owl on the tree (“*Ship of Fools*”); “*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*”- Lisbon version central panel at the top of the pig-headed musician; and in the head and around the eyes in the owl in the basket in “*The Conjuror*”.

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<sup>69</sup> Ilsink, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 436.

An unusual use of red pigment was employed around the upper and lower eyelid in “*The Garden of Earthly Delights*” sitting dressed blue owl, in the inside right-wing panel. Green paint was employed in the “*Hermit Saints*” central panel, to depict the owl in the column ornamentation, near Saint Jerome.

Owls feet were present with three visible toes (owls have four toes with talons) in “*Saint Jerome*”; “*Last Judgement*”- Vienna version inside right wing panel, by the door on the right in hell; “*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*”- Lisbon version central panel, on the top of the head of the pig-headed musician; “*The Seven Sins and 4 Last Things*” in the gluttony tondo, at the window, curiously exhibiting its toes outside the wall, and in “*The Arrest of Christ, Crowning with Thorns and Flagellation*”. Two toes visible owls were seen in “*The Garden of Earthly Delights*” central panel owl over the unicorn horn in middle ground.

Concluding, there were no significant differences in the owl’s eyes, beaks, head outline, toes, styles and colours depicted in the early and later paintings by Bosch. Different styles or trends in owls depicted could not be detected as related to the dating of his paintings.

#### 4.3 Owls, the evidence of different hands in Bosch’s workshop

About the participation of different hands in Hieronymus Bosch workshop, if the owls were not depicted by Bosch himself, someone in his workshop depicted them. Looking at the variability twenty four owls had in twelve paintings considered autograph Bosch works by the BRCP, it is worth mentioning that “*The Last Judgement*”-Vienna and “*The Temptation of St Anthony*”-Lisbon have owls openly dissonant from the variations hereby disclosed. Such occurrence infers the active presence of others owl’s makers, otherwise we would need to believe the painter or painters had the intention to depict the owls in a totally different way in those works, together with the ability and unreasonable intention to conceal all his personal style, technique and trends in owls depicting.



## Conclusion

The Hieronymus Bosch autograph issue and his workshop participation will be always a great challenge to Art Historians. Taking the outstanding contributions the Bosch Research and Conservation Project (BRCP) afforded to the world, and considering the limited scope of this research, a few conclusions were possible as follows.

1. The classification of owl's eyes; beaks; head outlines and toes; named as "first research tool", was practical, dynamic and functional to catch and survey all the owls depicted in Hieronymus Bosch paintings. (see Introduction, p. 19, figs. 2, 3, 4)
2. The owls in the autograph Bosch paintings were displayed in many different patterns and styles. However, the overall owl's features could be represented in just four owls and two paintings, as "the autograph painting's owls' sample" named "the second research tool". (see Chapter 1, p. 23, fig. 5)
3. Multiple different hands depicted owls in Hieronymus Bosch oeuvre, and his workshop is the elucidation for that. For sure, one single artist could paint owls in many ways, but his style would be stamped, besides, it would not be reasonable to suppose someone would paint concealing his own style.
4. More than one artist possibly depicted the owls in "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*". (see Chapter 1, p. 25, fig. 7)
5. One single artist possibly depicted the owls in "*The Hermit Saints Triptych*". (see Chapter 1, p. 28, fig. 9)
6. Considering Bosch's autograph paintings, the owls depicted in "*The Last Judgement*"-Vienna inner panels are different from any other owls ever seen in Bosch's oeuvre. Diverse hands from Bosch and his 's Hertogenbosch workshop possibly painted the owls in this triptych inner panels. (see Chapter 1, p. 32, figs.11, 12)
7. Considering Bosch's autograph paintings, the owls depicted in "*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*"-Lisbon central panel are different from other owls seen in Bosch's oeuvre. At least one owl (the break column one) was painted by a different and clumsy artist. (see Chapter 1, pp. 35, 36, figs. 14, 15, 16)

8. “*The 7 Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things*” has one owl standing in the window in the Gluttony scene. Its impressively long white toes were an innovation in Bosch’s oeuvre. Despite many similarities that owl has with the autograph ones, the mentioned toes denounced it as a non-autograph depicted owl in this popular tabletop work. (see Chapter 2, p. 41, fig. 18)

9. “*The Conjurer*” a painting attributed by BRCP to Workshop or Follower, has a never seen owl with a shabby “monkey like” head, nose and eyes. This is a gross pastiche of a lost Bosch painting. (see Chapter 2, p. 44, fig. 20)

10. “*The Arrest of Christ, Crowning with Thorns and Flagellation*”-Valencia has an owl which resembles the typical Bosch’s owls. However, a closer look in its toes and brush strokes revealed it as a skilful imitation by an artist who possibly had studied Bosch’s oeuvre. (see Chapter 2, p.46, fig. 22)

The Giovanni Morelli method from 1890 applied to this research in 2020, can be a useful contribution to the Bosch autograph paintings identification.

## The studied owls by chart number and picture

<i>Artwork/Year</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Number of Owls /Chart #</i>
"Adoration of the Magi" c.1470-1480	New York-U.S.A.	01 /#1
"Ecce Homo" c.1475-1485	Frankfurt - Germany	01/#2
"Saint Jerome at Prayer" c.1485-1495	Ghent - Belgium	01 visible (plus 2 others in the dark?) /#3
"Adoration of the Magi" c.1490-1500	Madrid - Spain	02/ #4, #5
"Ecce Homo Triptych" 1495-1500	Boston-U.S.A.	01/ #6
"The Garden of Earthly Delights" Triptych 1495- c.1505	Madrid - Spain	06/ #7, #8, #9, #10, #11, #12
"Saint Wilgefortis" (or Saint Julia) Triptych 1495- c.1505	Venice - Italy	01/ #13
"The Hermit Saints" Triptych c.1495-1505	Venice - Italy	03/ #14,#15,#16
"The Last Judgement" Triptych c.1495-1500	Bruges - Brussels	01/ #17
"The Last Judgment" Triptych c.1500-1505	Vienna - Austria	03/ #18, #19, #20
"The Wayfarer" Triptych c.1500-1510	Rotterdam - the Netherlands Paris - France Washington DC - USA	02/ #21, #22
"The Temptation of Saint Anthony" Triptych c.1500- 1510	Lisbon - Portugal	02/ #23, #24
"The Haywain" Triptych c.1510-1516	Madrid - Spain	01/ #25
"The Seven Deadly sins and Four Last Things" c.1510-1520	Madrid	01/ #26
"The Conjuror" c.1525	Saint Germain en Laye,Paris, France	01/ #27
"The Arrest of Christ..." c.1530-1540	Valencia-Spain	01/ #28

Table 2- Paintings by Hieronymus Bosch with owls in its theme.

The following pictures are public domain images.

**#1**



#2



#3



#4



#5



**#6**



**#7**



#8



#9





#10



#11



**#12**



**#13**



**#14**



**#15**



**#16**



**#17**



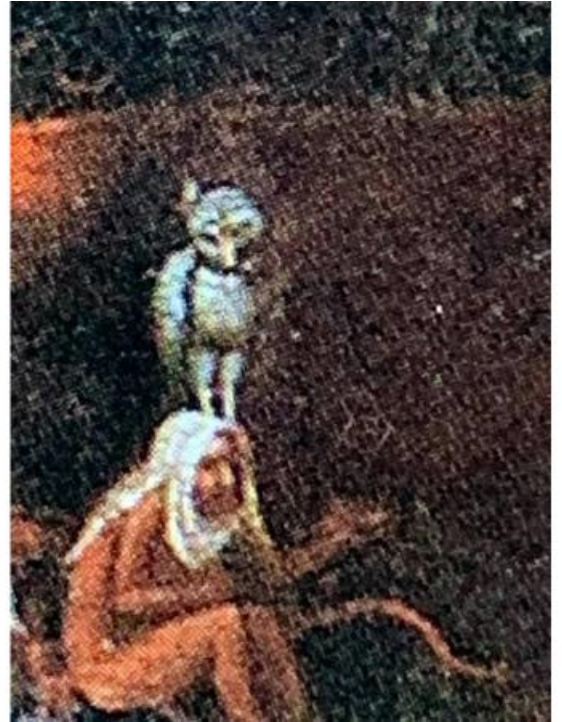
#18



#19



#20



#21



**#22**



**#23**



**#24**

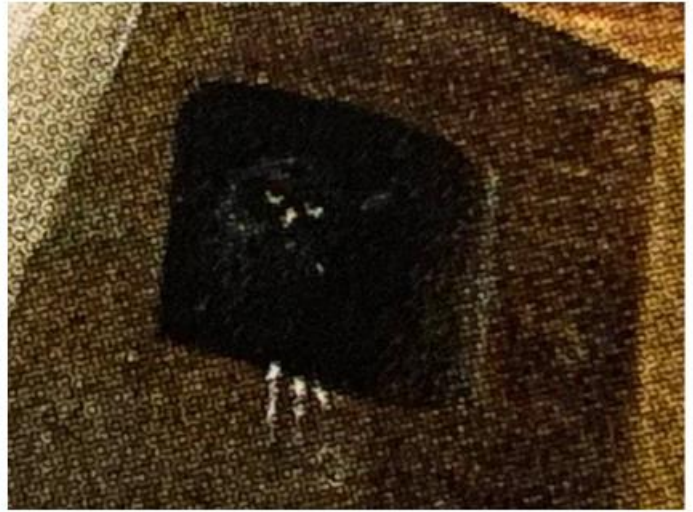


**#25**





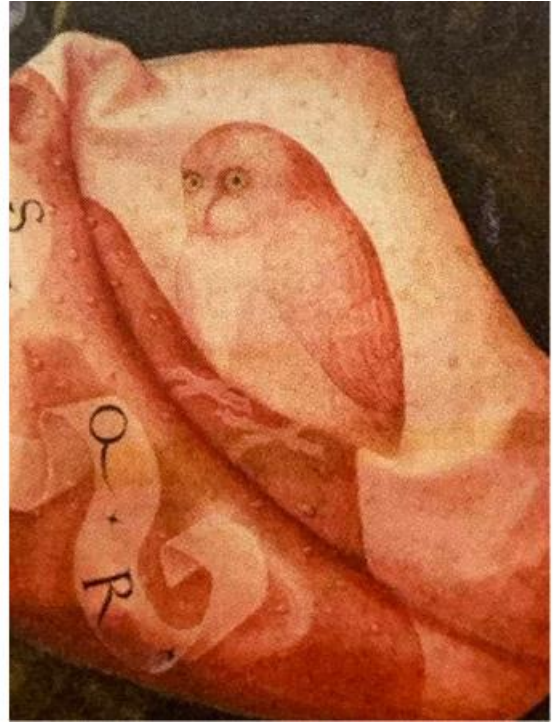
#26



#27



#28



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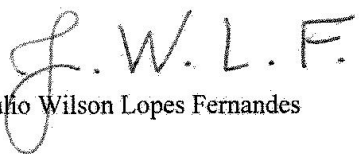
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**Declaration**

I hereby certify that this work has been written by me, and that it is not the product of plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct.

Leiden, December 12, 2020.

  
Julio Wilson Lopes Fernandes