6. Case Study: Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints

The following chapters aim to show how an actual cluster of preparatory material stands against the previously-discussed comprehensive observations of Rubens's working process. The objective was to illustrate how commissions – or rather the designing of new compositions for a specific location – were handled in Rubens's workshop and thoroughly question the current position, which sees Rubens himself as the sole creator of preparatory material relevant to the creative part of the process. Furthermore, the design process will be reconstructed through close analysis of the works available. In the course of this, the material will be thoroughly examined, as the preserved inventory of works can be deceptive.[282] As a result, the preparatory material will be sorted into a coherent chronological succession.

Unfortunately, Rubens's previously-discussed procedure of creating paintings in several steps – a process that includes at least a preliminary drawing and an oil sketch per painting – is not entirely preserved in most cases. Only in relatively few instances can Rubens's steps be retraced and the altarpiece "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" (Fig. 2) is one of the cases in which both drawings and oils sketches exist in numerous versions. As the title insinuates, the monumental painting on canvas depicts a Madonna with Child, elevated on a pedestal and surrounded by a group of saints. The identities of the depicted saints have been subject to debate, as will be shown in the following chapters. Most commonly they are identified as the following:[283] Saint Peter, Saint Paul and Saint Catherine to the Virgin's right, Saint Joseph and Saint John to her left. The closely-grouped four female saints on the left side of the composition are identified as Clara of Montefalco, Mary Magdalene, Agnes and Apollonia. Saint George, Saint Sebastian and Saint William of Aquitaine occupy the middle foreground and Saint Augustine, Saint Lawrence and Saint Nicholas of Tolentino are depicted on the right bottom side of the composition. The patron of the work is known – namely the Augustinian Eremites – and consequently the painting also classifies as one of Rubens's more prestigious projects.[284] Thanks to this, the commission can be dated very accurately to 1628.

The 1620s were turbulent times for Rubens. The Twelve Years' Truce had expired and during this decade Rubens was very strongly involved with his political career as a diplomat, a prestigious

282 A telling example of how deceiving the preserved canon of works can be is a drawing in the *Nationalmuseum* in Stockholm, which was considered to be the first drawing for the composition of the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" until a further drawing emerged. The work will be discussed in detail in a chapter below.

283 See for instance: Balis/Van Hout 2012, p. 154; Tieze 2009, p. 345.

284 The details of this commission will be discussed in more detail below.

Schmiedlechner, Patricia, Modi Operandi in Rubens's Workshop. A Study on the Creative Process and Studio Practice, Heidelberg: arthistoricum.net, 2021. DOI: https://doi.org/10.11588/arthistoricum.828, e-ISBN: 978-3-948466-95-4

Fig. 2: Peter Paul Rubens, *Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*, 1628, Oil on canvas, 564 × 401 cm, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp.

but perhaps not entirely voluntary and joyous occupation. Besides his sojourn in Italy as a young man, he was never away from his hometown more frequently or for longer periods than during this decade. These journeys were nonetheless affiliated with some of the most prestigious commissions of his career and examples include a cycle of 24 paintings for Maria de' Medici, widow of the French king Henry IV. The altarpiece chosen for this case study thus qualifies as a telling example of Rubens's artistic production during the height of his career. When the work was commissioned, Rubens had run his workshop for around twenty years and it is safe to assume that procedures and techniques were well established, to say the least.[285]

6.1. The Commission

In 1625, the provincial chapter of the Augustinian Order officially gathered in Brussels and during the course of this meeting the order officials decided to hold their next gathering in the city of Antwerp, to take place from 13th–21st May 1628.[286] Finishing the interior of the newly-built *Sint Augustinuskerk* – which had only been consecrated in 1618 and dedicated to Our Lady and All Saints – presumably became a priority.[287] One of the key aspects was undoubtedly to adorn the three monumental altars with prestigious altarpieces. The commissions for the side altars went to Jacob Jordaens and Anthonis van Dyck, who were paid 600 Gilders each. Van Dyck depicted "*Saint Augustine in Ecstasy*" and Jacob Jordaens illustrated the "*Martyrdom of Saint Apollonia*". Van Dyck was paid through an endowment of the Augustinian Father Marinus Janssens. These details derive from a history of the Belgian Augustine Eremites by Nikolaus de Tombeur, which was written between 1716 and 1718. The sources on which Nikolaus de Tombeur based his publication are unclear, nor is it known whether they comprised written or oral transmissions.

Rubens was chosen to create a painting for the high altar for the large sum of 3,000 Gilders, which was paid when the finished work was installed in 1628 (Fig. 2).[288] It is often highlighted that Rubens dedicated himself to the project before leaving for Spain on a diplomatic mission.[289]

285 Between 1610 and 1620, Rubens's workshop had produced no less than 60 large format altarpieces. Rubens was consequently well accustomed to this type of commission. See: Baudouin 1972, p. 45ff.

286 Carl van de Velde first noted this based on archival material. See: Van de Velde 1977. See also: Cat.-Antwerp 1977, p. 187; Cat.-Berlin 1978, p. 48; Hubala 1990; Tieze 2009, p. 358.

287 See footnote above.

288 Max Rooses cites a letter from 1764, which refers to the archives of the convent, in which the price of altarpiece is specified as 3,000 fl. See: Rooses 1892, vol. I, p. 287.

289 See for instance: Müller-Hofstede 1969, p. 460.

Given that Rubens left in August – three months after the provincial chapter gathered in Antwerp – his departure does not seem to have influenced the production process of the painting in any way.[290] The monastery was most likely not capable of financing the painting independently and had to rely on a donor or donors. The question of the financial resources is particularly relevant insofar as that it potentially offers clues regarding the depicted subject. For instance, Max Rooses assumes that the saints portrayed were the patron saints of the religious brotherhoods or confraternities based in the *Sint Augustinuskerk*.[291] Generally, depicting their patron saints would only have been feasible if these brotherhoods were also involved in financing the painting. However, this aspect cannot be verified as it is unknown which of the confraternities were based in the church during the time of the altarpiece's commission. Jakob Burckhardt proposes that the high altar contained the relicts of many saints, which determined the painting's subject matter.[292] Michael Jaffé suspects that the sovereign Isabella Clara Eugenia funded the project.[293] In this case, the dedication of the church to "Our Lady and All Saints" would have probably played the most important role.[294] Nico van Hout highlights that the Augustinians in Antwerp were pro-Lutheran during the 16th century, which resulted in their exile in 1527. They only returned to the city at the end of the century, in light of which the presence of "*Augustinian saints among the earliest martyrs* [on the altarpiece] *may have something to do with the order's desire to be identified with the doctrine of the original and 'true' Church of Christ*", according to Van Hout.[295] In other words, the painting's content was a way of emphasising the order's devotion to the Catholic Church. There is indeed a strong focus on martyr saints and the depicted instruments of torture and murder weapons include Saint Paul's sword, Saint Catherine's wheel, Saint Apollonia's pincers, Saint Sebastian's arrows and Saint Lawrence's gridiron. Other attributes indirectly hint towards the saint's martyrdom; for instance, Saint Agnes is depicted with a lamb, which is a reference to her death by the sword of

290 Max Rooses refers to a letter from the 18th century that contains information obtained from the archives of the convent, and suggest an installation in June (see: Rooses 1892, I, p. 287.). However, this seems peculiar considering the gathering of the provincial chapter in May. Nonetheless, the above applies in any case.

291 Rooses writes: *"ce sont les patrons des confréries ayant leur siège dans l'église, qui sont réunis autour du trône de la Vierge"*. Unfortunately, there is no evidence to back up this statement. See: Rooses 1892, I, no. 214, p. 285. Julius Held is of the same opinion, and he also links the depicted saints to religious brotherhoods. See: Held 1980, p. 519.

292 See: Burckhardt 1898, p. 182.

293 See: Jaffé 1989, p. 303. Spanish scholars predominantly concur with this theory, see for instance: Lozano López 2015, p. 115.

294 Elizabeth McGrath also highlighted the connection to the circumstance of the church's dedication to the Madonna of Loreto and All Saints. See: McGrath 1992, p. 196.

295 See: Balis/Van Hout 2012, p. 154.

a roman soldier, who killed her in the same way that lambs were customarily slaughtered. The contemporary viewer would have also known of the violent deaths of other saints, such as Saint Peter, whose attributes do not indicate a saint's martyrdom directly. Balis's and Van Hout's theory of an almost redemptive image content seems plausible, although the other theories can also not be ruled out either.

In any case, Rubens probably received the instruction to depict the Virgin enthroned and surrounded by a group of specific saints, which in turn would most likely have been determined by the commissioner and/or the donor or donors. In this context, Erich Hubala differentiates between *Bildthema* and *ikonographischer Bildgegenstand*, which can be loosely translated into "pictorial theme" and "iconographic pictorial subject".[296] Although the painting's theme is debatable and in this case most probably tied to external factors such as the patron's agenda, the pictorial subject is easily recognisable as a "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*", also referred to as "*Sacra Conversazione*". This was a conventional subject that had been previously illustrated uncountable times during the previous century by famous Italian masters and possible sources of inspiration will be discussed in the following.

When looking at the finished altarpiece, certain influences become apparent even before the preparatory material itself is consulted. For instance, the general composition shows similarities to well-known paintings by Titian or Paolo Veronese depicting the Virgin and Child with saints. Works such as Titian's "*Pesaro Madonna*", Veronese's "*Mystical Marriage of St Catherine*" or Caravaggio's "*Madonna of the Rosary*" (Fig. 3), show certain similarities.[297] The painting by Caravaggio was most certainly known to Rubens, as it was acquired in 1618/19 by an Antwerp consortium to which he belonged.[298] The similarities between Rubens's composition and these cited paintings include the positioning of figures such as the Virgin on an elevated pedestal, and other distinctive compositional elements such as the colossal columns shaping the background or the steps leading into the visual space. For instance, the red drapery in Caravaggio's depiction of the subject – which is hung above the Virgin, loosely wrapped around a column – is found in a comparable way in Rubens's composition.

In other cases, specific figures were repeated.[299] For instance, for the depiction of the monk on the very right of the composition, one of Titian's figures from the so-called *"Gritti-Madonna"*

296 See: Hubala 1990, p. 41–43; For a review of Hubala, see: McGrath 1992, p. 196.

297 Titian's *"Pesaro Madonna"* is on view at its original location, the *Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari*, Venice. The painting by Paolo Veronese is part of the collection of the *Gallerie dell'Accademia* in Venice (cat. no.1324).

298 For more information on the painting by Caravaggio, see: Bischoff 2010.

299 The many sources of inspiration for the specific figures will be discussed in more detail in a chapter below.

Fig. 3: Michelangelo Merisi or Caravaggio, *Madonna of the Rosary ("Rosenkranzmadonna")*, Oil on canvas, 364.5 × 249.5 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (Gemäldegalerie, 147).

Fig. 4: Anthonis van Dyck, *St Bernardino of Siena*, Pen, brown ink, and brown wash on paper, British Museum, London (1957,1214.207.92).

not through one of his own *ricordi*, but rather through a drawing attributed to Anthonis van Dyck (Fig. 4).[300] However, this drawing could not have been done after the original painting, as a fire in the Palazzo Ducale destroyed the work in 1554. Copies such as a woodcut by Niccolò Boldrini, had preserved Titian's design.[301] Another painting that shows compositional similarities as well as inspiration for a specific figure is a "*Madonna and Child with Saint George*" by Correggio. Rubens verifiably came across this painting during his years in Italy, and he made a copy, which is now in the *Graphische Sammlung* of the *Albertina* in Vienna (Fig. 5). Especially the figure of Saint George and the slightly-inclined positioning of the Virgin show a clear reference.

300 The drawing of "*Saint Bernardino of Siena*" by Van Dyck is part of the *British Museum's* collection (1957,1214.207.92).

301 Editions of this print by Boldrini can be found in the British Museum, London (inventory number: 1895,0122.1223) and the *Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston (52.1085).

Fig. 5: Peter Paul Rubens, after Correggio, *Madonna di San Giorgio*, Pen and ink over black chalk, highlighted with white oil paint, 27.3 × 22.2 cm, Albertina, Vienna (8229).

Fig. 6: Peter Paul Rubens, *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne, adored by the Saints of the House of Austria*, ca. 1625, Oil on panel, 51.5×36.5 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (Gemäldegalerie, 9108).

Works from Rubens's own œuvre also come to mind regarding the composition's general structure, namely the depiction of the Virgin and child elevated in the centre and numerous saints depicted circularly around them. For instance, the oil sketch "*Virgin and Child with Saint Anne, adored by the Saints of the House of Austria*" (Fig. 6) shows a very similar structure of figures, whereby merely the architectural setting is replaced with an accumulation of clouds.[302] It is unclear whether this composition was never painted on a large scale or if a large painting once existed but is lost today. Due to the lack of material, it is difficult to precisely date this oil sketch and consequently it is impossible to determine which of the two compositions preceded which.[303] In any case, it is interesting to note how similar in structure two of Rubens's individual

302 The painting is part of the collection of the *Kunsthistorisches Museum*, Vienna, acquired in 1951.

303 The website of the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* dates the work ("*Heilige Anna Selbdritt, verehrt von Heiligen des Hauses Habsburg*") to around 1625/1628 (see: www.khm.at/de/object/84f0f20482/). For more versions of this composition (for instance, in the *Statens Museum for Kunst*, Copenhagen), see: Jaffé 1985.

compositions were designed. In view of the design process for the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" – which will be discussed in the following – these sources of inspiration are telling insofar as they represent Rubens's creative point of departure.[304] This is especially relevant regarding the aforementioned assertion that Rubens did not make copies. This also applies to the design process and consequently when evaluating drawings and sketches it is beneficial to be aware of the material that was already available in advance. At this point, it can be observed that Rubens's basic composition can hardly be considered a design "made from scratch" in light of the works listed above.

As previously mentioned, a wide variety of preparatory material exists for this particular commission and there are numerous opinions on their chronological order. Interestingly, the authorship of the different works was rarely questioned.[305] The numerous oil sketches were identified as original versions by Rubens's hand as early as the 18th century, and they were considered testimonies to his creative genius.[306] The diverse versions of the composition will be outlined in the following section, along with further figure-specific sources of inspiration.

6.2. Two Preparatory Drawings

Two double-sided drawings can specifically be associated with the composition of the high altar piece of the Augustine Church. The first one is currently in the *Nationalmuseum* in Stockholm and the drawings on the *recto* – as well as parts of the *verso* – were considered to be the only preparatory drawings for the altarpiece for the most part of the 20th century (Fig. 7 and Fig. 8).[307] This assumption was challenged when a second work was discovered in 2000, which is

304 Compositions that can definitely be dated subsequent to the "*Virgin Enthroned with Child and Saints*" and were influenced by it to some degree include – for instance – *"The Crowning of Saint Catherine"* (c. 1631), which is part of the *Toledo Museum of Art's* collection or *"The Rest on the Flight into Egypt with Saints"* (c. 1632–1635) in the *Museo del Prado*, Madrid.

305 For instance, the oil sketch in the *Städel Museum* in Frankfurt has been attributed to Rubens ever since it was acquired by the museum in 1816. See: Tieze 2009, p. 345ff.

306 For instance, Jean-Baptiste Descamps writes: *"Rubens peignoit l'histoire, le portrait, e paysage, les fruits, les fleurs & les animaux, & dans chaque genre il étoit habile; il avoir tant de ressources dans son génie qu'il a composé jusqu'à trois ou quatre fois le même sujet dans le meme instant, sans qu'il y eut rien de ressemblant. Nous avons plusieurs esquisses de lui, faites pour le même tableau. On en connoît trois en France du tableau d'autel des Augustins d'Anvers, une chez M. de Voyer d'Argenson, l'autre chez M. de Julienne, & la troisième à Rouen, très-finie, chez l'auteur de cet ouvrage. Toutes ces esquisses étaient sur le panneau, la toile ou le papier huilé ; il favoit y répandra la même intelligence que dans un tableau terminé."*. See: Descamps 1753, p. 312–313.

307 See for instance: Bjurström 1955, p. 27; Cat.-Paris 1970, p. 48–49, no. 74; Grossmann 1955, p. 337; Held 1959, I, p. 117 (also mentioned in: Held 1980, I, p. 519); Hubala 1990, p. 19.

now part of the *Metropolitan Museum's* collection in New York.[308] In the context of the "*Madonna Enthroned With Child and Saints*", only one side of the sheet in the *Metropolitan Museum* is relevant, namely the *rectro*, which shows loose drawings that can be associated with the composition (Fig. 19). In the following chapter, these preparatory drawings will be examined and analysed regarding their validity as parts of the design process of the altarpiece. In the case of the drawing in the *Nationalmuseum*, its connection to a painting in the *Royal Collection* in London will also be discussed. This connection offers additional clues regarding the drawing's provenance.

6.2.1. The Stockholm Drawing

The Stockholm drawing was done on paper with black chalk, pen and ink and partially washed with grey and brown.[309] The sheet measures 56.1 × 41.2 cm. Although Rubens commonly used chalk for his drawings and sometimes set accents with ink, the way in which these two materials were used together in this sketch cannot be classified as very typical.[310] The sheet's *recto* side is covered by a drawing of "*Madonna Enthroned with Saints*", which is very clearly connected to the composition found in the finished altarpiece and the corresponding preparatory material (Fig. 7). The *verso* is covered with haphazardly-drawn groups of figures, which partially overlap in some sections (Fig. 8). The top half shows numerous versions of a figure with child, while the figures on the bottom half of the *verso* can be associated with an entirely different composition, namely the "*Landscape with Saint George and the Dragon*" in the *Royal Collection* in Buckingham Palace (Fig. 11).[311] The drawing in Stockholm was first mentioned as part of Carl Gustav Tessin's collection in the 1740s. Tessin was a Swedish politician who acquired 2,000 drawings from the previously-mentioned auction of Pierre Crozat's collection when stationed in Paris. This makes it possible – if not likely – that the sheet originated from Rubens's *cantoor*. However, the drawing was considered to be by Anthonis van Dyck after changing the owner in 1741.[312] The *recto* of

308 See: Cat.-New York 2004. However, it is not written off by all scholars. See for instance: Balis/Van Hout 2012, p. 18.

309 For reasons of simplicity, the sketches will be referred to as the "Stockholm sketch" and the "Metropolitan sketch" or drawing, respectively. The same procedure will be applied to all of the following works.

310 See for instance: Cat.-NewYork 2004, p. 7, no. 142.

311 See: White 2007; Royal Collection Inventory Number (RCIN): 405356.

312 In his list of purchases from 1741, Carl Gustav Tessin initially had the work recorded as a drawing by Rubens. In the inventory of his collection from 1749, the attribution changed from Rubens to Van Dyck. Cat.-Paris 1970, p. 49.

Fig. 7: Peter Paul Rubens, *La Vierge adorée par des Saints (recto)*, Pen and wash on paper, 56.1 × 41.2 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (NMH 1966/1863).

Fig. 8: Peter Paul Rubens, *La Vierge adorée par des Saints (verso)*, Pen and wash on paper, 56.1 × 41.2 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (NMH 1966/1863).

the drawing is inscribed with "*A. Vandick*" on the bottom left corner and "*Rubbs*" alongside the inventory number "*1773*" on the bottom right.[313] In 1925, Frits Lugt published an article on the sketch, questioning its attribution to Van Dyck and in further consequence it was commonly declared a preparatory drawing for the Saint Augustine Church's altarpiece for the remaining part of the 20th century.[314] Lugt also matched the top of the letter "R" to the inscription found on some drawings in the *Albertina* in Vienna and suspects that Jacques Moermans – who was in charge of the sale of Rubens's drawings in 1657 – inscribed them.[315]

313 These markings were done in pen and brown ink. The two names are written on an attached strip of paper. See: Cat.-Paris 1970, no. 74, p. 48–49.

314 See: Lugt 1925, p. 199ff. Leo van Puyvelde was of a different opinion and regarded it as a: *"Un dessin, d'attribution erronée"*. See: Van Puyvelde 1940, p. 83. However, this was not common opinion. In their 2010 publication – for instance – Arnout Balis and Nico van Hout declare the Stockholm sketch as a preliminary design succeeding the initial sketch in the Metropolitan. See: Balis/Van Hout 2012, p. 18.

315 See: Lugt 1925, p. 200.

This would inherently indicate the drawing was part of Rubens's private collection. However, the letter may well have been recreated to match other inscriptions and consequently any conclusions should be drawn cautiously.

The composition on the *recto* of the sheet shows the most zoomed-in or close-up view of the Madonna enthroned with child and saints (Fig. 7). All other versions of this composition (including the finished altarpiece) show a larger field of view, which is filled with more figures and architectural elements.[316] By implication, few saints are portrayed in the *recto* of the Stockholm drawing, and the group of Virgin, Child and Saint Catherine takes up most of the top half of the sheet. Saint Catherine is depicted kneeling before the Christ child, receiving a ring that symbolises their mystical marriage. In the foreground, only three saints are depicted on the bottom half of the drawing. On the left side, three further saints can be made out on the steps. Above them, on the level of the Virgin, rough drafts of more figures can be made out. The three saints in the foreground are most commonly identified as Saint Sebastian, Saint George and Saint Augustine.[317] It should be noted that the saints in this drawing can only be identified by association with the other versions of this composition; for instance, they are depicted with their attributes in in the finished altarpiece. In the Stockholm drawing, "Saint Augustine" has no flaming heart, "Saint Sebastian's" quiver is replaced by what looks like a slab of wood and "Saint George" is shown without any trace of a dragon. When only looking at the drawing in isolation, the identity of the saints can hardly be determined. This especially applies to the three female saints on the left. Nevertheless, the Stockholm drawing's composition is so similar to the finished altarpiece that it can safely be associated with the composition and the lack of attributes will be discussed in more detail below.

In the Stockholm drawing, the suspected Saint Sebastian and Saint George are positioned slightly differently to any successive version of the composition in oil.[318] Only the other drawing in the *Metropolitan Museum* shows them in a similar pose (Fig. 19). Saint George's face is shown in profile and Sebastian does not turn back and up towards the Virgin Mary, unlike – for instance – in the oil sketch in the *Städel Museum* in Frankfurt (Fig. 20), which is ranked as the next step in the design process and the first version in oil. In the drawings, he gazes to the floor in the direction of the viewer. This is more easily discernible in the Stockholm sketch than in the Metropolitan drawing. His *contrapposto* is very similar to a drawing done after the three-quarter view of a

316 The possible reasons behind the process of simplifying the composition will be discussed in more detail below.

317 See for instance: Cat.-NewYork 2004, p. 142.

318 Even though the identity of the saints has been questioned, for reasons of simplicity the figures will be referred to as Saint Sebastian and Saint George, respectively.

Hermes statue, which was known as the "*Belvedere Antinous*" during Rubens's lifetime (Fig. 9). A copy after a drawing by Rubens is currently in the *Statens Museum for Kunst* in Copenhagen.[319] The very same antique statue was used as a model numerous times. For instance, both a "*Saint Sebastian*" done in 1614 as well as a depiction of Mercury for the *Torre de la Parada* (Fig. 10) – which was painted around 23 years later – show a clear reference to the statue.[320] This figure was clearly a common and popular part of Rubens's repertoire, as will be shown in a chapter below.

In the Stockholm drawing, the figure of Saint Augustine also shows slight alterations compared to the other, more crowded versions of the composition, and the same can be said for the group of female saints. Here, Augustine's head is shown in profile, whereas he gazes into the viewer's space in all of the oil sketches. The three women on the steps are closer to the oil sketch in the *Städel Museum* in Frankfurt and its pendants, given that the group was extended to four figures in the other versions, such as the *modello* in the *Gemäldegalerie* in Berlin (Fig. 29). The other female figures behind Saint Catherine – at the height of the Virgin – are only found in this drawing. However, the habit of the figure in the very front is reminiscent of the depiction of Santa Clara of Montefalco in the other versions.

The sheet of the Stockholm sketch has been folded in half, although only the *verso* displays use of the paper's partition (Fig. 8).[321] The upper half shows three different versions of a female figure holding a child on her lap and a few individual figures of infants in different poses. In the two pairs on the right, instead of leaning towards his Mother, the child stretches downwards towards the depiction of a standing infant, which most probably is a representation of the infant Saint John. These postures are by no means first-hand inventions and numerous potential models can be considered; for instance, works such as Raphael's "*Virgin with a Fish*" in the *Museo del Prado*, Titian's "*Madonna of the Cherries*" or his "*A Sacra Conversazione: Madonna and Child with Saints Luke and Catherine of Alexandria*" – which is privately-owned – all show roughly similar depictions of

319 For an illustration, see: Van der Meulen 1968, III, cat. no. 26, fig. 55. The collection of 460 drawings after Rubens in the *Statens Museum for Kunst* will be discussed in more detail below.

320 The painting of "*Saint Sebastian*" is kept in the *Gemäldegalerie* in Berlin (798H) and the depiction of "*Mercury*" in the *Museo Nacional del Prado* in Madrid (P001677). The two male figures in these paintings – although clearly being derived from the same model – show a slightly different positioning of the legs. This could very well be owed to the fact that Rubens recorded the statue from more than one viewpoint. Seen from the front, the statue's free leg seems almost parallel to its supporting leg. When seen from a viewpoint further to the right, it becomes visible that from the knee down, the free leg sticks out, as recorded in the aforementioned drawing in Copenhagen.

321 On a side note, the folding of the paper and its dimensions correspond with the drawing of "*A Young Man Walking*" in the *Amsterdam Museum* (TA 10299). See for instance: Held 1986, p. 150.

Fig. 9: Unknown (occasionally attributed to Willem Panneels), copy after Rubens, *Hermes Belvedere (Antinous)*, ca. 1628–1630, black chalk and brown ink on paper, 30.9 × 13.7 cm, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

Fig. 10: Workshop of Peter Paul Rubens, *Mercury (Torre de la Parada)*, 1636–1638, Oil on canvas, 180 × 69 cm, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (P001677).

the Virgin and Child, or certain corresponding elements.[322] Of course, it cannot be said whether Rubens saw these exact paintings, but the inspiration from similar compositions of these eminent Italian artists cannot be denied. In terms of the sheet showing several similar figures next to each other, Raphael's numerous *Madonna Studies* could well have been exemplary.[323] Rubens had previously made use of this kind of composition: the positioning of the mother and child at the very left of the composition bears resemblance to his painting of the "*Holy Family*", which was engraved by Lucas Vorsterman in 1620.[324]

The standing figure (presumably of the infant Saint John) on the *verso* of the Stockholm drawing is also found on the *recto,* as one of the putti in front of the Virgin's pedestal (Fig. 7). It resembles the depiction of Saint John in other paintings by Rubens, most famously in "*The Holy Family under an Apple Tree*" in the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* in Vienna.[325] The solitary infant in the bottom left corner of the top half of the Stockholm drawing's *verso* shows the same bent position in which the infant Jesus is depicted on the *recto*. This is also the position in which the Christ child is depicted in all versions of the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" composition, including the finished altarpiece (Fig. 2).

The lower half of the *verso* (Fig. 8) is comparatively empty and the drawing cannot be connected to the composition of the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*". The same piece of paper was consequently re-used for more than one purpose, a material-saving practice common to Rubens's drawing œuvre.[326] At the very bottom of the page, the figure of a woman on her knees can be made out very clearly, but the rest of the section only shows feeble lines. A man on horseback and two standing female figures in elaborate dresses can be identified. The right of the two figures has a child carrying the train of her dress. On the very right edge of the sheet, architectural elements can be made out. The figures and shapes depicted in this part of the drawing can be connected to a painting of a landscape with Saint George, which is part of the *Royal Collection* in Buckingham

322 For an illustration of Raphael's *"Virgin with a Fish"* (or *"The Holy Family with Raphael, Tobias and Saint Jerome"*, *Museo Nacional del Prado*, P000297) see most recently: Marshall 2016, p. 237. The *"Madonna of the Cherries"* in the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* has the inventory number "Gemäldegalerie, 118". The privately-owned painting by Titian entered a private collection at a Sotheby's sale of Old Master works in New York on 27th January 2011.

323 See: Cat.-Vienna 2017a.

324 The painting of the *"Holy Family"* is at the *Chicago Art Institute* (Major Acquisitions Fund, 1967.229). An edition of the print by Vorsterman (*"Heilige Familie met Elisabet en Johannes de Doper als kind")* can be found in the *Rijksmuseum* in Amsterdam (inv. no. RP-P-OB-33.026).

325 The painting of *"The Holy Family under an Apple Tree"* in the *KHM* (inv. no. 698) used to be divided and installed on the outer wings of the *Ildefonso* altarpiece, before the panels were joined together.

326 See – for instance – the sketch in the *Metropolitan Museum*, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Fig. 11: Peter Paul Rubens, *Landscape with Saint George and the Dragon*, 1629–1630, Oil on canvas, 152.5 × 226.9 cm, Royal Collection, London (RCIN 405356).

Palace (Fig. 11). The man on horseback resembles a squire in the right foreground of the painting. The woman on her knees is also featured prominently in the front part of the composition and the standing woman in the middle of the drawing – whose train is held by a child – corresponds with the princess, although the child is not depicted in the painting and the train of her dress lies on the ground.[327] The lines are too feeble to tell for certain, but the architectural elements in the

327 The depiction of the train held by a child reminds of a figure in a drawing after the tournament book of King René in the *Kupferstichkabinett* in Berlin (Mielke/Winner 1977, p. 94, no. 34). The figure in the Stockholm drawing is not worked out to such a degree that a direct comparison can be made, although it is not unlikely that this kind of illustration served as inspiration. The drawing "*A Knight and a Lady*" after the 15th-century engraving by Israhel van Meckenem of the same name also comes to mind (*Kupferstichkabinett*, Cat.-NewYork 2004, p. 74, no. 6). Whether Rubens himself made the copy of the tournament book has been questioned and cannot be answered here, yet the fact that in 1620 his at soon-to-be close friend Fabri de Peiresc was working on a restrike print – only two years before Rubens himself travelled to Paris – makes it very likely that Rubens knew the book. A very similar figure also appears in other works such as the drawing for "*The Continence of Scipio*" in the *Musée Bonnat*, Bayonne (Cat.-NewYork 2004, p. 139, fig. 75). The female figure found on the right very edge of the drawing of "*The Miracle of the Lame Man Healed by Saint Peter and Saint John*" (*National Gallery of Art*, Washington, DC) also comes to mind as a possible source of inspiration (see: Cat.-Vienna 2017b, p. 155). Again, at this point questions of attribution regarding this particular sketch shall remain open. However, overall it can be said that this figure was part of Rubens's repertoire.

drawing seem to correlate with the buildings in the background of the painted landscape. The painting "*Landscape with Saint George and the Dragon*" was done on canvas and presumably started during Rubens's stay in England during 1629 and 1630, and later taken home to Antwerp (Fig. 11). In a letter from Joseph Mead – an English scholar – to his friend and cousin Sir Martin Stuteville, a painting of "*the History of St George*" is mentioned, which Rubens allegedly sent home to Flanders to "*remain there as a monument of his abode & employment*" in England.[328] It is impossible to know whether the painting to which Meade refers is indeed the same painting that is part of the *Royal Collection* today, although it seems likely given the painting's origination process, which will be discussed in more detail in the following. The work supposedly found its way back to London during Rubens's lifetime: Endymion Porter – an English diplomat – is said to have acquired the painting on his mission to the Spanish Netherlands in 1634–1635, and subsequently resold it to Charles I.[329]

The painting shows irregularities of the paint's surface in many places, especially the outer sections, which suggests that the work was not done cohesively or altered during the painting process. An x-ray image of the painting confirms this: the painting was not finished in one go, but significantly enlarged at a later point. Two rectangular strips on the outer right and the bottom of the central section show a different underground, suggesting that that the canvas was enlarged in more than one step.[330] The bottom and the right strip were most likely attached first. Rubens did not stay in England for a very long time period, so it might reasonably be assumed that the enlargement was done in Rubens's studio back in Antwerp. The strong similarity between the trees depicted in the painting and Rubens's drawings done after nature is an indication that the canvas was enlarged by Rubens or his workshop, and that this was done in Antwerp rather than London. Drawings like the "*Woodland Scene*" in *The Ashmolean Museum* in Oxford come to mind (Fig. 12).[331] This specific woodland scene was presumably done near the village of Elewijt. Only a member of the workshop or Rubens himself could have had access to sketches such as this one, and consequently it is unlikely that the trees – which were done in the context of the enlargement – were painted in England.

On the left, the central composition initially ended behind the woman who has both of her arms raised in distress (for an image of the central piece of canvas, see: Fig. 13). The seam on the

328 See: White 2007, p. 8–9.

329 For an account of the painting's full provenance, see: White 2007, p. 216–217.

330 For a detailed account of how all nine pieces of canvas were joined together, see: White 2007, p. 219ff.

331 The drawing is pictured in: Cat.-NewYork 2004, p. 286, no. 105.

Fig. 12: Peter Paul Rubens, *Woodland Scene*, 1635–1638, Black, red and white chalk, white gouache on paper, 38.3 × 49.9 cm, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (WA 1855.122).

Fig. 13: Edited version of: Peter Paul Rubens, *Landscape with Saint George and the Dragon*, 1629–1630, Oil on canvas, 152.5 × 226.9 cm, Royal Collection, London (RCIN 405356).

right goes through the brown horse's neck, not fully including the squire's head. The top of the painting just included the two putti, not the tip of the martyr's palm, and the bottom line ran above the heads of the naked children. Per Bjurström has shown that the left of the two female figures found on the Stockholm drawing was initially also part of the painting: the figure was originally depicted above the kneeling woman in the left middle ground of the painting, in the spot that now shows two long trees (see: Fig. 14). She was later painted over, most likely in the process of the painting's extension.[332] In contrast to the drawing, she seems to have been accompanied by the figure of a child to her feet in the painting. However, the lower half of the Stockholm drawing is not the only drawing that can be associated with the "*Landscape with Saint George and the Dragon*". To make matters even more complicated, two more drawings in the *Kupferstichkabinett* in Berlin also show the key figures of this composition.[333] The first drawing shows a detailed study of the

332 The changes can be made out with the naked eye and the exact figure comes to light in more detail in the x-ray photograph. See: Bjurström 1955, p. 34/43; White 2007, p. 220. Painting over compositions and consequently significantly altering them is not unusual in Rubens's practice and cannot be accredited to workshop practises. For instance, the very personal portrait of his second wife, "*Het Pelsken*" in the *Kunsthistorisches Musuem* (Gemäldegalerie, 688) initially showed a fountain and a statue. By painting over this part of the painting Rubens significantly altered the painting's formal appearance as well as its message. For an in-depth study of "*Het Pelsken*" by Katlijne van der Stighelen, Geert van der Snickt, Gerlinde Gruber and Koen Janssens, see: Cat.-Antwerp 2015, p. 76–97.

333 See: Mielke/Winner 1977, no. 33/no. 35r; Held 1959, I, p. 117.

Fig. 14: Detail of X-ray photograph of: Peter Paul Rubens, *Landscape with Saint George and the Dragon*, 1629–1630, Oil on canvas, 152.5 × 226.9 cm, Royal Collection, London (RCIN 405356).

Fig. 15: Peter Paul Rubens, *Woman from the Back*, 1629–1630, Black chalk heightened with white, 39.4 × 22.6 cm, Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin (3236).

same figure of the standing woman that was later painted over with trees (Fig. 15).[334] The second sheet shows numerous figures found on the right side of the painting: the squire on horseback, two versions of the second horse, alongside sketches of the figures found in the trees above them (Fig. 16). These drawings raise the question of the Stockholm drawing's role in the development of this composition, bearing in mind that the sheet's *recto* prominently features the composition "*Virgin Enthroned with Saints*".

334 The drawing is generally associated with *"The Garden of Love"*, which is not very plausible, as the figure is clearly identical to the woman in the *"Landscape with Saint George and the Dragon"*. Held even points out that her collar resembles that of a *"Portrait of a Young Girl"* (*Hermitage*, Leningrad), who is generally assumed to be the daughter of Balthasar Gerbier, Rubens's host during his time in England. See: Held 1986, p. 139, Nr. 178. Held proposes that both drawings portray Gerbier's wife – Deborah Kip (who was only 28 years old in 1629) – but he does not make the connection to the woman depicted in *"Landscape with Saint George and the Dragon"*.

Fig. 16: Peter Paul Rubens, *Studies for Saint George and the Princess*, ca. 1629, Black and red chalk on paper, washed with ink, 34.8 × 49.6 cm, Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin (3997).

Per Bjurström – who did not know of the *Metropolitan* drawing's existence – assumes that the Stockholm sheet was initially used to make the preparatory sketches for the altarpiece of the Augustine Church, and subsequently brought on the journey to England.[335] There, the bottom half of the *verso* (Fig. 8) was used to make preliminary sketches for the painting "*Landscape with Saint George and the Dragon*".[336] He bases this premise on the theory that although the painting was enlarged on all four sides, the strips on the right and the bottom were attached from the very outset.[337] The fact that the central piece of canvas shows signs of being attached to a stretcher makes

335 Julius Held agrees with this theory of Rubens having carried his sketchbook to London, but he does not consider it likely that Rubens subsequently took it to Spain. Unfortunately, Held does not give the reason for his opinion. Held 1959, II, p. 117.

336 In his opinion, the drawing in the *Kupferstichkabinett*, showing the horses, represents an additional preliminary drawing (he doesn't mention the second drawing in the *Kupferstichkabinett* of the standing woman). Bjurström 1955, p. 39.

337 Bjurström proposes that the figure – which depicts a squire in the finished painting – was originally Saint George himself, and that the place – which is now occupied with corpses – initially bore the dragon. Consequently, the drawings in the *Kupferstichkabinett* and in Stockholm represent preliminary designs for the initial version of the painting. According to his theory, the painting was later radically changed to show a new Saint George in the middle of the composition, turning his old depiction into the squire. Bjurström proposes these changes were made due to the fact that Rubens decided to gift the painting to Charles I. The catalogue of the King's collection – which indicates that Charles I bought the painting from Endymion Porter – should not be taken "too seriously". See: Bjurström 1955.

this unlikely.[338] If the first stage of the painting's execution indeed only comprised the central section, only one of the three drawings can be associated with this first step, namely the sketch of the standing woman in the *Kupferstichkabinett* (Fig. 15). The other two drawings (Fig. 16 and Fig. 8) must be placed in the context of the subsequent enlargement in Antwerp, as they include figures that were not part of the painting from the very outset: the second *Kupferstichkabinett* drawing only shows figures and animals found on the enlargement on the bottom and the right side, presumably the first stage of the expansion. The Stockholm sketch is distinguished by the fact that it shows elements from all three stages, namely figures done after the first expansion (i.e. the woman on her knees and the squire), the second expansion (the architectural elements) as well as the initial composition (the two women in elaborate dress).

There is no reason to believe that the elements of the Stockholm drawing were executed at various points in time. Given that the first two stages of "*Saint George and the Dragon*" were most likely done in two different countries, this makes it very unlikely that this drawing shows preliminary sketches for three steps, especially given that the drawing in question only shows a total of four figures. All things considered, the person who made the drawing must have seen the painting after its first expansion, but before the standing woman was painted over. This would presuppose that the figure was covered up during – or after – the second enlargement, not the first. Either the painting once showed all four figures simultaneously or the maker of the drawing was present at the time of the second alteration. Theoretically, the drawing could have even been done after another unknown copy of the painting, and not the painting itself.

In any case, given that the bottom half of the Stockholm drawing can be ruled out as a preliminary design, it is most probably a recollection done by a member of Rubens's workshop.[339] The two drawings in the *Kupferstichkabinett* further encourage this theory, seeing as it is very unlikely that Rubens drew more than one version of the exact same figure and both the squire and the standing woman are depicted recurrently.[340] Contrary to the popular belief that Rubens was cautious with sharing his designs, countless reproductions of preliminary material testify to a fair amount of copying activity in his studio.

338 According to Christopher White, there is evidence of a tacking edge: White 2007, p. 119. Apart from this, there is no conceivable reason for Rubens to take a piece of paper with him to England, of which only one quarter remained blank for further drawings.

339 For a further observation regarding this drawing's intended purpose see the chapter on the adaptations of the *"Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints"* subject below.

340 This is not to say that the attribution to Rubens should not also be questioned in these two cases.

Fig. 17: Jean Charles Levasseur after David Teniers the Younger, *Saint George*, 18th Century, Engraving, 35.3 × 42 cm, The British Museum, London (1877,0811.673).

When looking at compositions such as "*Saint George*" by David Teniers the Younger, it becomes apparent how much influence Rubens's designs had on fellow artists: parts of Rubens's composition were copied in detail and pieced together to form a slightly different, new composition (see: Fig. 17).[341]

The consistent use of the same material and drawing style on both sides of the Stockholm drawing indicates that a single person was responsible for both sides of the sheet. If a member of the workshop was responsible for the verso, this suggests that the *recto* shows a workshop copy, in which the artist took certain creative liberties, not unlike Teniers did with "*Saint George*".[342] This was by no means unusual or a practice exclusive to David Teniers. For instance, when looking at Van Dyck's drawings, one comes across a number of tweaked compositions by Rubens. Depicting the Virgin Mary with the child Jesus was a rather common subject and recording variations – as can be found on this particular drawing – was certainly useful to any fellow artist. This copying activity should not be misunderstood as something that only students or lesser artists would condescend to do.

341 The painting by Teniers is lost, but was reproduced in a print by Jean Charles Levasseur.

342 It is difficult to determine when this drawing was made exactly, but if Endymion Porter took this particular painting of Saint George and the dragon back to London it must have been before 1635.

Fig. 18: Peter Paul Rubens, *Study of the Torso Belvedere (verso)/The Virgin Adored by Saints*, 1601–1602, Red chalk on paper, 26 × 39.5 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2002.12a).

After all, Rubens himself was no stranger to tweaking compositions by his great idols such as Titian or Raphael. In summary, the Stockholm drawing can in all liklehood not be categorized into the design process of the altarpiece, but shows a *ricordo* by a fellow artist closely affiliated with Rubens's studio.

6.2.2. The Drawing in the Metropolitan Museum

The second sketch was discovered in 2000 and purchased shortly afterwards by the *Metropolitan Museum of Art* in New York (Fig. 18 and Fig. 19). During most of the 20th century, the sketch in the *Nationalmuseum* in Stockholm had been thought of as the preparatory drawing, notwithstanding all arguments discussed in the chapter above. This changed when this new sheet surfaced.[343] The *recto* of this newly-discovered drawing is now almost universally accepted as Rubens's first thoughts on the subject of the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*".[344] This is not surprising as in respect to the techniques used, the Metropolitan sheet is much more convincing as a drawing done by Rubens, as both of its sides show drawing techniques that are

343 This is not a great testimony to connoisseurship and a clear example of how a drawing was made to fit the process even though it did not necessarily fit the profile of a Rubens-sketch. The goal should be to determine, whether a drawing can stylistically be accepted into the œuvre, irrespective of how conveniently the image content fits into a chain of preparatory material.

344 See for instance: Cat.-NewYork 2004, p. 142.

Fig. 19: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Virgin Adored by Saints (recto)/Study of the Torso Belvedere*, Pen and brown ink on paper, 39.5 × 26 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2002.12b).

well known and accepted within Rubens's œuvre of drawings. The *verso* shows a typical *ricordo* of a back view of the *Torso of Belvedere* in red chalk, while its *recto* is covered with characteristic loose sketches called *crabbelingen* done in pen and brown ink. The paper measures 39.5 × 26 cm.

The *ricordo* (Fig. 18) was presumably done during Rubens's stay in Rome during 1601 and 1602 and is not the only recording of this statue ascribed to Rubens. There are numerous drawings of this famous antique, from various different angles. In the right bottom half of the sheet, Rubens's initials "*PPR*" are inscribed twice, once in red and once in black chalk. Anne-Marie Logan highlights, that this careful red chalk study might have been the sheet's salvation, since it held more value than the *crabbeling* on its other side.[345]

The *recto* of the sheet (Fig. 19) is also marked, this time with the artist's full last name, "*P Rubens*". However, the presence of Rubens's name or initials cannot be seen as evidence of his hand as these inscriptions were generally added to drawings after his death. The *recto* shows Rubens's first drafts, a multitude of configurations that he brought to paper through imprecise, spontaneous but bold strokes. Three areas stand out due to stronger strokes: a cloaked figure at the top left corner, two figures cradling an infant in the top right and the figures of Saint Sebastian and Saint George to the bottom right of the sheet. The middle of the sheet is covered with further figures. Done in feeble, minimalistic strokes, they most likely depict saints and in one case the Virgin. This technique is not entirely different to the numerous depictions of the virgin holding the baby Jesus on her lap in the top half of the *verso* of the Stockholm drawing discussed earlier.[346] It should be noted that although this technique was characteristic to Rubens, it was by no means a manner of drawing exclusive to him. For instance, in the œuvre of Van Dyck's – an artist who is most closely associated with Rubens – several drawings show the same type of rudimentary sketching.

This sketch is firmly believed to be a preparatory sketch for the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" primarily due to the two figures of Saint Sebastian and Saint George. The two figures are not arranged in a coherent composition in this drawing, which is discernible from the counterintuitive orientation of the figures. Saint Sebastian and Saint George both look towards their left, into nothingness, since they are placed at the right edge of the sheet. Rubens must have anticipated their future placement on the left side of his composition. The group of figures on the top right part of the sheet – showing two figures cradling a child – does not bear any similarity to the finished composition. To their left, in the middle of the sheet a solitary figure

345 See: Logan 2007, p. 169.

346 The aspect of this work that is perhaps the least characteristic of Rubens is the additional use of wash applied with a brush.

with a child in its lap is depicted, although the child's pose is also very different to the one found in the finished work. Rubens's œuvre contains a number of works showing the Virgin with child or the Holy Family and consequently these drawings could theoretically be associated with other works. The same is true for the other figures. None of them were re-used or further developed in the following material for the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*". Anne-Marie Logan identified the cloaked figure in the top left corner as a depiction of Saint Catherine.[347] However, the lacking feminine character of the figure makes this seem rather questionable. In subsequent versions of the composition, Saint Catherine is depicted in a contemporary-fitted dress, which is very different to the cloaked figure. It might at best have been a preparatory version of the figure of Saint Augustine.

In conclusion, the sketch would not have had a purpose for developing the composition, apart for the figures of Saint Sebastian and Saint George. None of the other figures can be recognised in this preliminary sketch. Nevertheless, Saint Sebastian and Saint George take up a central space in the following composition and since the *crabbelingen* were most likely jotted down in mere minutes, the sketch can nonetheless be seen as a productive – if rudimentary – element of the design process.

6.3. The Oil Sketch in the Städel Museum and its Twins

A hitherto-undisputed part of the creative process for the altarpiece is the oil sketch currently in the *Städel Museum* in Frankfurt (Fig. 20). The oil sketch is generally seen as the composition preceding the modello in the *Gemäldegalerie* in Berlin, as a "first version", so to speak. Moyaux and Oldenburg suggested that the sketch in Frankfurt shows a preliminary stage of the composition's design process, a theory that is still generally accepted in Rubens's scholarship.[348] However, it is important to highlight that including the Frankfurt sketch in the design process for the Augustine Church's altarpiece is mostly based on compositional similarities, and less on the belief that the oil sketch fills the void of an integral and irreplaceable step in the design process. In other words, particularly due to the existence of the sketch in Berlin, the development of the composition is theoretically plausible without including the Frankfurt sketch.

The design prominently features fundamental elements of the finished altarpiece: the Virgin Mary thrones on top of a pedestal, surrounded by twelve Saints. The architectural base resembles

347 See: Cat.-NewYork 2004, p. 140.

348 See: Tieze 2009, p. 349.

Fig. 20: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Mystical Marriage of Saint Catherine*, 1628, Oil on panel, 64.2 × 49 cm, Städel Museum, Frankfurt (464).

the front view of the two pedestals for the statues of the *Dioscuri*, atop the steps leading up to the Piazza del Campidoglio in Rome, which were designed by Michelangelo. Rubens must have made drawings of them during his stay in Italy. On the Virgin's lap, the Infant Jesus leans towards Saint Catherine, who is positioned closest to the pair, kneeling to their right at a slight angle, showing her right side to the viewer. This prominent positioning of Saint Catherine is the reason why this particular sketch in Frankfurt was named "*The Mystical Marriage of Saint Catherine*" instead of "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*".[349] Saint John – ascending the steps with a declamatory gesture – and the saints Peter and Paul – who are positioned in the shadow of a large column at the left side of the composition – flank this central group.[350] Compared to the finished altarpiece (and the sketch in Berlin), this sketch shows a slightly less harmonious configuration of figures in front of the architectural element: In the composition's foreground, eight saints are positioned on steps, roughly divided into three groups. They are usually identified as Saint Agnes, Saint Apollonia and Clara of Montefalco on the very left, Saint Sebastian and Saint George in the middle foreground, and Saint Augustine, Saint Lawrence with Nicholas of Tolentino on the right.[351] Especially with the female Saints and the monk to the very right, only the finished altarpiece offers the key clues to their identity, as the oil sketch oddly only depicts a few of the saints with their attributes.[352] It is difficult to determine the exact number of saints with and without attributes, as the question of what qualifies as an attribute cannot be answered definitely. For instance, in the case of Mary Magdalene, the identification is primarily based on her pained expression. The four female figures could consequently more or less depict any female saint at this stage.

The Frankfurt sketch is not the only version of this exact composition. Four more, almost identical versions in oil are known. One is in the collection of the *Salzburg Museum* (Fig. 23), and three more in private collections (Fig. 24; Fig. 25). However, due to its high-ranking custodian, the sketch in Frankfurt was an object of more research than its counterparts. The wood panel of the Frankfurt sketch measures 64.2 × 49 cm. This was a standard format and the fact that the back

349 Since 1892, the sketch has been listed in the *Städel's* inventory as *"The Engagement or The Mystical Marriage of Saint Catherine"* (with the exception of Heinrich Weizsäcker's time as the museum's director). Leo van Puyvelde – who found this title somewhat misleading – criticized this, considering *"Mary with Child and Saints"* to be more appropriate. See: Tieze 2009, p. 348–349.

350 The figure of Saint Peter is similar to (and perhaps inspired by) a depiction of the same saint in a drawing after Parmigianino and Raphael in the *National Gallery of Art* in Washington, DC (see: Cat.-Vienna 2017b, p. 155). Saint John's gesture has been interpreted as a reference towards the heavenly origin of Christ. See: Cat.-Berlin 1978, p. 48.

351 It was Max Rooses who identified the monk as Nicholas of Tolentino. In the *Städel's* inventory he was described as Francis of Assisi until 1924 (with the exception of a short period during Heinrich Weizsäcker's time as the museum's director). See: Tieze 2009, p. 348.

352 This matter will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter on saints.

Fig. 21: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Mystical Marriage of Saint Catherine (verso: Two Equestrian Battles)*, 1628, Oil on panel, 49 × 64.2 cm, Städel Museum, Frankfurt (464).

does not show a branding indicates that the panel was bought directly from the panel maker and had not passed a guild examination prior to that.[353] The panel shows a number of vertical fissures and a large tear across the longitudinal line called for a reinforcement in the form of a strip of wood glued over the defect to prevent further cracking. This defect gives rise to the assumption that this panel was not of the greatest quality, but rather a low-cost version. Unfortunately, this reinforcing strip covers part of the drawing on the reverse side, which constitutes a design for the cycle for Henry IV of France with allegorical framework, a commission that was never completed (Fig. 21). The panel itself has been subject to a dendrochronological examination by Peter Klein, who estimates that the panel was cut in 1628 and painted no earlier than 1630, given that the youngest heartwood ring dates from 1613.[354] This stands in opposition to the verifiable date of the altarpiece's completion in 1628, although the dendrochronological examination is based on estimates and cannot offer absolute certainty; for instance the defects of the panel could indicate insufficient drying time. Consequently, the sketch can by no means be ruled out of the design process on these grounds.

353 Although it is off by a few centimetres, this format is most probably the standard size called "*salvators*" size, named after the coin stamped with that image. According to Jørgen Wadum, this format measures 50 × 60 cm. The previously mentioned regulations for panel makers that were laid down in 1617 also stipulated that panels should be modelled after templates kept at the guild office. See: Wadum 2007, p. 182.

354 Dendrochronological examinations calculate the most likely point in time by considering factors such as drying time. With the youngest heartwood ring dating from 1613, Klein suggests a felling date of around 1626/1628/1632. The final estimation includes additional drying time. See: Tieze 2009, II, p. 735. For instanxe, Jørgen Wadum suggests that the average seasoning period was around two to five years during the 16th and 17th centuries, see: Wadum 1995, p. 154. Of course, this can only ever be a rough guideline.

The oil sketches painting technique is typical for Rubens's œuvre. The panel's top was first primed with a chalk-glue ground. This created an even surface, on top of which a greyish *imprimatura* was applied. The coarsely-applied *imprimatura* is still very visible to the naked eye, as it was not covered but incorporated into the composition. This gives the sketch an ochre hue, which could be a sign of age as the *imprimatura* can darken with time.[355] When it was initially done, the sketch might have appeared a little fresher and whiter.

Along the outer edges of the panel, the sketch shows thin regular marks, done in a brownish very thin line. The marks are especially distinct along the bottom edge: two different intervals are discernible, one of which is marked with the numbers one to twelve, counting up from the right to the left side of the panel. These markings form a grid when connected, which is a classic aid for an artist when making a copy of any composition. Working with a grid seems to have occasionally been part of Rubens's technique. The preliminary drawing for "*The Baptism of Christ*" in the *Musée du Louvre* is attributed to Rubens and shows an actual grid drawn over the whole composition.[356] However, this type of precise drawing – which Anne-Marie Logan refers to as *cartonetto* – is an exception in Rubens's œuvre and consequently although it serves as a telling example of Rubens's previous use of a grid, it does not provide an indication of Rubens's standard process. As will be shown, among all of the oil sketches associated with the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" composition, this is not the only work that shows markings. The other examples – including the oil sketch in the *Salzburg Museum* – will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

The sketch shows significant changes that were made during the painting process. Some can be guessed at, although the full extent comes to light when looking at the infrared reflectography. For instance, in the finished sketch Saint Sebastian's lower body faces the viewer, his torso is slightly turned, and his head faces the Virgin behind him. The infrared reflectography shows that he was initially placed around 3 cm further to the middle of the composition, while his torso was slightly more rounded and bent towards the viewer (see Fig. 22). These changes are easily detectible given that the flesh colour contains white lead. Pieces of armour previously lay on the floor to Saint Sebastian's right, and Saint George had his left hand placed on a shield, which stood on the steps next to him and was later retouched. Altogether, the former version of the two saints seems to have had strong similarities to the oil sketch "*Saint Sebastian and Saint George*" in the *Musée des Beaux Arts* in Caen (Fig. 28). Another part of the sketch that shows changes in the painting process is the head of the left of the two putti dotingly leading a lamb up the

355 A darkening effect can occur due to an increased transparency of the white lead component. See for instance: Noble/van Loon/Boon 2005.

356 See: Cat.-NewYork 2004, p. 93–95.

Fig. 22: IRR Detail + Detail of: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Mystical Marriage of Saint Catherine, 1628*, Oil on panel, 64.2 × 49 cm, Städel Museum, Frankfurt (464).

steps towards the virgin. It should be noted that in this sketch the lamb resembles a white sheep dog more than an actual lamb. The animals in Rubens's works are usually done with a lot of care and in some cases Rubens partnered with artists such as Frans Snyders, who was an expert in this subject. It is difficult to imagine that the kind of "lamb" pictured in this oil sketch would have made it on to the finished altarpiece. The whole section around the putti and the animal is rather unclear in the IRR, although the spotty appearance of the space between the virgin's shawl and the current head of the putto either indicates its previous positioning further to the middle of the composition or a simple correction in posture.

In addition to these very obvious changes, there are numerous smaller alterations that are more difficult to detect but become visible through either IRR or X-ray. This primarily concerns small changes to the saints' attributes. For instance, a lighter spot appears to the right of the spiral of Saint Augustine's crozier, which could indicate that the spiral was once turned clockwise and

altered at a later date. Although this is hardly noticeable, it is a rather odd correction considering the staff's position in the sketch in the *Gemäldegalerie* in Berlin (Fig. 29): in this sketch and some other versions such as the copy in the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston (Fig. 30), the spiral turns to the right. Furthermore, there is a small shadow between the fingers of Saint Augustine's left hand, which could indicate that he initially held something in his hand.[357] A second lighter spot can be detected above Saint George's shield. With the naked eye, this spot is invisible due to a strange brown object, which is painted over this exact point (see: Fig. 20). It oddly resembles the end of a bushy tail, much like the tail of a lion. An object seems to have previously been placed in the hands of the figures that have been identified as Saint Agnes and Saint Apollonia, roughly resembling the fragment of a chain. These numerous corrections to the composition suggest that this sketch was not a copy after a model. When done after a specific model, there is no conceivable reason for a work to show *pentimenti*. Consequently, the Frankfurt sketch can only be the first version of this specific composition and in turn it must have served as the model for the other oil sketches, such as the one in Salzburg. The Frankfurt sketch's role in the creative process of the altarpiece will be discussed in the following.

6.3.1. The Frankfurt Sketch's Intended Purpose

Generally, the Frankfurt sketch (Fig. 20) is categorised as the first of two preparatory oil sketches. It is followed by the oil sketch presently in the *Gemäldegalerie*, *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*, which is also referred to as a *modello* and will be discussed in further detail below (Fig. 29).[358] The making of a second oil sketch would imply that there was ample reason to change the first composition. Usually it is assumed that it was the patrons who requested the alterations: in this scenario, Rubens presented the initial composition to his patrons in the form of the Frankfurt sketch, but meanwhile they had changed their mind regarding the painting's content. Subsequently, Rubens worked their wishes into the second oil sketch. The common explanation for the significant changes in the depiction of Saint Sebastian and Saint George is the change in compositional space due to the additional figures: by altering Saint Sebastian and Saint George, Rubens made space for the rear-view figure behind them, who is commonly identified as

357 The issue of the crozier and the object in his hand will be discussed in more detail in the chapter below dedicated to the depiction of the saints.

358 The inventory number of the oil sketch in Berlin is no. 780 and for an illustration see: Cat.-Cincinnati 2004, p. 32.

Saint William of Aquitaine.[359] A possible reason for the need for additional saints could have been the involvement of further donors, who wanted their patron saints represented on the altarpiece. However, there is no proof for this. For instance, Michael Jaffe suspects that the sovereign Isabella Clara Eugenia solely financed the project.[360] If this was the case, it can be assumed that the content was final before Rubens set to work. Consequently, the alteration of the composition must have either had other reasons or the chronological sequence of the two oil sketches must be reconsidered.

When comparing the two oil sketches in Frankfurt and Berlin, it can immediately be seen that they significantly differ in refinement: while the Frankfurt sketch still shows signs of the working process such as the scribbling above Peter and Paul or the numbers alongside the bottom of the panel, the Berlin *modello* is much more refined and resembles a small finished painting.[361] Furthermore, the faces of the figures in the Frankfurt sketch are not worked out to a satisfactory degree and the colours – for instance, in the Virgin's blue shawl – seem much less vibrant.[362] This difference in execution and refinement would generally suggest a different intended use: the Frankfurt sketch is not worked out to a degree that would suggest it was showed to important patrons. If the same reduced composition found in the Frankfurt sketch was indeed shown to representatives of the order as a first proposition, one might assume that a more polished and worked-out sketch of that same composition existed at one point but is lost today. However, the question remains open why Rubens would have made a second, well-worked-out copy and not simply elaborated the Frankfurt sketch.[363]

359 See: Hubala 1990, p. 30; Tieze 2009, p. 360.

360 See: Jaffé 1989, p. 303. This stands in contrast to Max Rooses's opinion. As previously mentioned, he stated that the depicted saints were the patron saints of the religious brotherhoods, which were based in the church, which would indicate they were also the donors. See: Rooses 1892, I, no. 214, p. 285. However, there is no way of knowing the exact number or identity of these religious brotherhoods, so this is presumably a guess at best.

361 The unidentifiable words above the two saints' heads are not scratched into the wet paint, as was sometimes Rubens's practice, but applied with paint. What the fact that it is worked out to a further degree means for the *modello* in Berlin in terms of its purpose will be discussed in more detail below.

362 Although the vibrancy of colours can also be lost due to bad conservation, pale tones could also indicate the use of cheaper pigments.

363 The patrons wanting to keep the oil sketch could have been a possible reason for making two copies, as Rubens would have wanted to ensure one copy stayed in his possession. However, as will be shown, numerous copies of the Frankfurt sketch exist and consequently this seems very unlikely.

If Rubens had wanted to show the Frankfurt sketch to patrons, he could have simply worked out this sketch a little further and painted over the scribbles. However, as mentioned above, it seems unlikely that Rubens would have shown the sketch to important patrons in its present, incomplete condition.[364]

It must be remembered that the whole theory of two sequential oil sketches only emerged because the two works in Frankfurt and Berlin exist, and their presence has to be explained in some way. Although the theory of additional saints – which had to be added retroactively due to the patron's wishes – is possible, it was not usually Rubens's course of action to make two oil sketches for one composition. For this reason, other possibilities should be explored.

Theoretically, the Frankfurt sketch could have been the Rubens's initial version, whereby halfway through the painting process he was dissatisfied and abandoned the composition for the benefit of the more crowded second version. However, this would imply that the additional saints were only added for compositional reasons and based on Rubens's own initiative. One would assume that the Augustinian Eremites had certain ideas concerning the image content of their high altar piece. Supposing that the order gave full and specific instructions concerning the saints that they wished to see on the painting when initially commissioning the work, what would the modified composition of the Frankfurt sketch represent? In this case, the Frankfurt sketch could only show a composition not directly related to the altarpiece. This is a theory that can hardly be proven, although the same can be said for the categorisation as a preliminary composition. As previously mentioned, the dendrochronological investigation suggested a date of around 1630.[365] Again, this is not necessarily binding, but assuming that the analysis is correct, there could have been another commission for an altarpiece around 1630 – presumably for a mystical marriage of Saint Catherine – and Rubens chose to use a composition similar to the then-already-completed "*Madonna Enthroned with Saints*" altarpiece.

It was not unusual for Rubens to re-use his compositions in this way, which becomes apparent when looking at other depictions of the Virgin with the infant Christ. In her essay on the previously-mentioned outer wings of the *Ildefonso* altarpiece showing "*The Holy Family under an Apple Tree*", Fiona Healy brings attention to countless very similar adaptations of the Virgin

364 Of course, it is theoretically possible that the sketch was only shown to a less important representative of the order in Antwerp as a first draft, to discuss the composition's rough outlines. After an initial discussion (which would have involved the request for more saints) the sketch in Berlin would have served as a more official *modello* to show higher-ranking officials in Brussels. However, this scenario seems rather far-fetched.

365 See: Tieze 2009, p. 344.

and Child.[366] This is especially interesting as these adaptations also have validity in the context of the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" since the altarpiece shows the same group of figures, only in a less detailed view. The *Ildefonso* altarpiece was one of Rubens's more prestigious commissions, although this did not discourage him from repeating composition and figures of previous paintings.[367]

In light of Rubens's evident willingness to re-use his ideas, it seems entirely possible that the composition seen in the Frankfurt sketch is not a preparatory work at all, but rather a conscious, subsequent adaptation of the subject. This might have been a step with which the workshop was generally entrusted: as has been shown, making adaptations of Rubens's subjects was common for painters such as Teniers and Van Dyck and it is likely that this was part of their training. When looking at the Frankfurt sketch not as a preliminary work but rather a subsequent alteration, the work can be described as a reduction of the composition. In this context, the Stockholm drawing comes to mind, in which this process of reducing figures was perhaps taken even further (Fig. 7).[368] One possible reason for eliminating figures could have been a change of format. The altarpiece's composition was designed for a painting with very large dimensions. If the aim was to adapt this composition to a smaller format that could potentially be sold to private collectors, reducing the composition to fit the private viewing space is a conceivable step. A similar procedure can be observed for the depiction of the holy family: the large-size painting of "*The Holy Family under an Apple Tree*" in the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* shows a total of eight figures, a number that was reduced for the paintings with smaller formats.[369]

366 See: Cat.-Vienna 2017b, p. 87–93. This includes – for instance – works such as the *"Holy Family with Saint Francis and Anne and the Infant Saint John the Baptist"* in the *Metropolitan Museum of Art* (no. 02.24) or the *"Holy Family with Saint John the Baptist"* in private ownership (see: ibidem, pages 90 and 92 respectively).

367 Moreover, when generally comparing altarpieces with roughly the same general structure – for instance, a similar monumental architectural setting, reminiscent of Italian paintings, with numerous figures positioned on ascending steps – similarities become apparent. For instance, the preliminary oil sketch for the *"Conversion of Saint Bavo"* in the *National Gallery* in London (no. NG57.1), the corresponding finished altarpiece (sited in Saint Bavo's Cathedral in Ghent), and the two matching altarpieces for the Jesuit Church depicting the miracles of St. Ignatius of Loyola and Saint Francis Xavier, both in the *Kunsthistorisches Museum*, Vienna (GG 517 and GG 519, respectively) show resemblances. Besides the architectural setting, which includes stairs and columns in the background, entire figures were repeated. A version of a kneeling, slightly twisted rear-view figure, exposing the soles of its feet to the viewer is found all four works (this particular figure was perhaps inspired by similar depictions such as the figure in Jacopo Tintoretto's *"Vulcan's Forge"* in the *Palazzo Ducale,* Venice).

368 Another privately owned version in oil shows the composition with fewer figures and will be discussed below.

369 See: Cat.-Vienna 2017b, p. 87–93. A reduced version is, for instance, in the collection of the *Prado* in Madrid (inventory number: P001639).

However, without consulting additional evidence, it is quite impossible to find a convincing answer to the question of the sketch's definite purpose. In the following chapters, in comparison with the additional material, the question of the sketch's position in the chronologic sequence of the design process will be further addressed.

6.3.2. The Oil Sketch in the Salzburg Museum and Other Similar Versions

Even though the sketch in Frankfurt is thought of as Rubens's first attempt, later discarded for the benefit of a more balanced composition, is not the only known version showing this initial configuration of figures. It would be presumptuous to claim that the following chapter is able to list all existing versions, as there is no way of knowing whether further, undocumented copies of this work exist. However, the versions that are known and listed offer the potential of make certain conclusions about the procedures in Rubens's studio. There are versions very similar to the one in Frankfurt, one in the *Salzburg Museum Sammlung Rossacher* (Fig. 23) and one privately-owned (Fig. 24).[370] The latter was sold via the *Dorotheum* auction house in Vienna in 2004 and was previously part of the *Cailleux Collection* in Paris.[371] Another, slightly reduced version is documented as being part of the private collection of M. Knoedler (Fig. 25).[372] It shows the same composition, albeit without the saints to the very right of the panel, with Saint John and Saint Nicholas of Tolentino missing.

There is somewhat conflicting information about a further version "*similar to the sketch at Frankford on Main*", which – according to *Christie's* archives – was part of an auction on 8th June 1928 but failed to sell and was returned to the owner H. M. Sinclair from Dublin.[373] F. Grossmann mentions this sketch but claims it was sold at Christie's on 8th June 1928 and that "*in 1949 it was with Messrs. Spink*".[374] Unfortunately, there is no illustration of this sketch, on the basis of which it could be compared to the other sketches mentioned above. Theoretically, it could be identical

370 The painting in the *Rossacher*-collection in Salzburg (Inv.-Nr. RO 0357) is currently not on display. I kindly thank Mag. Judith Niedermair-Altenburg and Dr. Regina Kaltenbrunner (*Salzburg Museum*) for giving me the opportunity to see the sketch without its frame.

371 The auction of old master paintings took place on 24th March 2004 and the oil sketch (Lot no. 102) was sold for € 60,000.

372 See: Cat.-Detroit 1936 (no. 47).

373 I kindly thank Lynda McLeod, Associate Director of the Christie's Archives for the information pertaining to this sale and the sketch's dimensions, which are 24 ½ inches by 18 ½ inches (62,23 × 46,99 cm).

374 See: Grossmann 1955, p. 337.

Fig. 23: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Mystical Marriage of Saint Catherine*, 1628, Oil on panel, 63 × 49 cm, Salzburg Museum, Sammlung Rossacher, Salzburg (RO 0357).

Fig. 24: Rubens workshop, *The Marriage of Saint Catherine and the Infant Jesus*, Oil on panel, 64 × 49 cm, Privately-owned (Palais Dorotheum Vienna, 24.03.2004, Lot no. 102).

Fig. 25: Rubens workshop, *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints*, Oil on panel, 63.5 × 49.2 cm, Privately-owned (formerly owned by M. Knoedler and Company, New York).

to the sketch sold at the *Dorotheum* in Vienna in 2004 (Fig. 24). However, the measurements specified by *Christie's* and the *Dorotheum* indicate that the sketch mentioned by Grossmann is slightly smaller.[375] If the measurements are indeed correct, the sketch mentioned by Grossmann – which failed to sell at *Christie's* in 1628 – must be an additional copy.[376]

The presence of several versions of one composition such as the sketches mentioned above always begs the question of which of the works came first. The Frankfurt sketch is usually seen as the only true original by Rubens's hand, which is plausible due to the several *pentimenti*, most notably the previously-discussed alteration of the figure of Saint Sebastian (see: Fig. 22).[377] If a sketch is copied after an existing template, there is no conceivable reason for changes throughout

375 The auction house gives the measurements of 64 × 49 cm in the *Dorotheum* catalogue: *"Alte Meister - 24.03.2004"*.

376 It should be noted that measurements of paintings are, in general, more inconsistent than one would assume.

377 See, most recently: Tieze 2009, p. 340ff. However, it should be noted that the Frankfurt sketch is the only sketch that has been technically investigated at this point and although there is no reason to believe this is the case, it cannot be ruled out that the other versions – such as the sketch in Salzburg – also show changes in the painting process.

the working process. In this case, this means that if the Frankfurt sketch had theoretically been done after one of the other versions mentioned above (or an unknown model), there would have been no need to make alterations to Saint Sebastian. In the other versions presented above, Saint Sebastian is shown in the Frankfurt sketch's final form. The Frankfurt sketch is consequently quite certainly the first version of this particular composition.

The sketch in the *Salzburg Museum* (Fig. 23) is a rather faithful copy of the sketch in Frankfurt. It was done on wood panel, which is now embedded in a wooden frame. The original panel measures 63 × 49 cm and is slightly warped horizontally.[378] Besides smaller tears, the panel shows one large end-to-end crack, which goes along the right side of the large column, through the infant Jesus and through Saint George's left foot.[379]

The figures are positioned identically and there are only small differences in terms of image content, such as the "golden apple" depicted in Saint Augustine's right hand.[380] However, details such as the physiognomies of the depicted figures are slightly different, indicating the hand of a different artist. Unfortunately, the sketch is in relatively poor condition and some parts such as the flesh tones were clearly touched more recently. Nonetheless, it remains clear that the general painting process was somewhat similar to the sketch in Frankfurt. In many parts of the composition, the streaky *imprimatura* shines through, which immediately creates a strong association with Rubens's œuvre.[381] Just like with the sketch in Frankfurt, there are also brownish outlines, with which the figures were laid out before colour was applied. This is noticeable in the depiction of Saint Sebastian (see: Fig. 26). The application of colour to these brownish outlines was not done evenly and similar to its model, some figures are worked out in more detail than others. For instance, in both sketches the figure of Saint John the Baptist appears unfinished in comparison with the well-worked-out figures of Saint Sebastian and Saint George (see: Fig. 20 and Fig. 23).

A peculiarity that ties these two sketches in Frankfurt and Salzburg together is the fact that the Salzburg sketch feebly shows the same measurement lines across the bottom of the panel (see: Fig. 26). They coincide with those found on the Frankfurt sketch, more specifically the row that is not headed with numbers. The lines are not only at the exact same places, but they are also similar in their execution, namely very thin marks done with a brown-coloured paint.

378 This makes the panel approximately the same size as the Frankfurt sketch, which measures 64.2 × 49 cm.

379 At this point, the panel was reinforced from the back with a strip of wood.

380 Having seen the other versions of this compositions and knowing of Saint Augustine's attribute, one is inclined to see a flaming heart. However, when looking at the ochre round object objectively it resembles a golden apple not a heart. The possible reasons behind this (for instance, missing layers of paint) will be discussed in a chapter below.

381 See the chapter above on painting underground and underdrawings.

Fig. 26: Detail of: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Mystical Marriage of Saint Catherine*, 1628, Oil on panel, Salzburg Museum, Sammlung Rossacher, Salzburg (RO 0357).

This makes the notion that the Salzburg panel is a copy after Frankfurt almost certain. In most probability, both versions were done in Rubens's workshop around the same time. In light of the dendrochronological investigation of the Frankfurt sketch, a date around 1630 would be conceivable.[382]

6.4. Saint Sebastian and Saint George

Two detail sketches showing only the two isolated figures of Saint Sebastian and Saint George have been preserved in the *Collection P. and N. de Boer* in Amsterdam (Fig. 27), and in the *Museum of Caen* (Fig. 28), respectively. Both of the sketches show Saint Sebastian and Saint George positioned roughly in the way that they are shown in the sketch in Frankfurt: Saint Sebastian is depicted in the foreground and the helmeted Saint George is positioned on the right behind him. However, the figures' body postures and the position of their limbs differ between the two works. Besides the depicted image content, the two sketches also differ in quality. Their roles in the altarpiece's design process will be discussed in the following.

382 This date would coincide with the making of the Stockholm drawing, whose connection with the painting from England of Saint George and the Dragon also indicates a date of origin of around 1630 at the earliest.

Fig. 27: Peter Paul Rubens, *Saint Sebastian and Saint George*, Oil on panel, 36.7 × 25.7 cm, P. and N. de Boer Foundation, Amsterdam.

Fig. 28: Peter Paul Rubens, *Saint Sebastian and Saint George*, Oil on panel, 41 × 30.5 cm, Musée des Beaux Arts, Caen (48).

Erich Hubala suggested that they were done chronologically after the Frankfurt sketch but *before* the final *modello* in Berlin to further improve the two figures.[383] Nonetheless, this is not very convincing as neither of the two sketches shows real progression towards the significantly-altered depiction of the two figures in the Berlin sketch. The two sketches in Caen and Amsterdam both show Saint Sebastian turning to his left: in both sketches his head is turned towards Saint George who is depicted behind him, on the right side of the composition. On the other hand, in the Berlin sketch (Fig. 29) Saint George is not positioned between Saint Sebastian and the Virgin – as he was in the Frankfurt sketch – but rather to Saint Sebastian's other side, further to the left edge of

383 Hubala 1990, p. 19.

the sketch. In other words, Saint George's pose in the Berlin sketch bears no resemblance to the depiction in the two sketches in Caen and Amsterdam, and he is also shown without his helmet.[384]

Julius Held assumes that both sketches were preparatory works for the Frankfurt sketch, done chronologically after the Stockholm drawing had been completed.[385] This is highly questionable as the Frankfurt sketch shows a number of *pentimenti* in this section (see Fig. 22). The changes in the positioning of the two figures could undoubtedly have been avoided when making not one but two preparatory sketches, especially since the sketch in Caen (Fig. 28) is very similar to the way in which the two saints were depicted in Frankfurt.[386] If the Caen sketch had existed prior to the sketch in Frankfurt, it could have served as an ideal template.

Nonetheless, the two sketches are indeed closely connected to the Frankfurt sketch, in a different and rather peculiar way: the sketch in Amsterdam (Fig. 27) shows Saint Sebastian the way in which he was initially depicted in the sketch in Frankfurt, before a second version was painted on top of the first. The sketch in Caen in turn shows the saint in the same posture visible today. For instance, in the sketch in Amsterdam, Saint Sebastian's right arm on the quiver is not rounded, his knees overlap slightly and his whole torso is arched outwardly towards the front, instead of folding in the area of the navel. In other words, in Amsterdam (Fig. 27), Sebastian's shoulders are positioned slightly behind his hips, while they are positioned vertically above the hips or even slightly in front of them in Caen (Fig. 28). Moreover, in the sketch in Amsterdam the white loincloth is draped more loosely around his lower body, covering his left hip and hanging down towards his left knee. When looking at the IRR of the Frankfurt sketch (Fig. 22), it becomes clear that Saint Sebastian was initially positioned in this exact way, only slightly more to the middle of the sketch. This is particularly obvious when looking at the positioning of Saint Sebastian's right arm, whereby the arm is visible in the radiography and it was not rounded outwardly in the previous version. Furthermore, the loincloth formerly covered part of Saint George's right leg and can be made out clearly under the top layer of paint. The figure of Saint George also seems to have been altered; for instance, his left arm used to rest on a shield. Unfortunately, changes in the figure's posture can only be guessed at, as they are hardly visible in the IRR and the radiography.

384 In order to gaze towards Saint George, Saint Sebastian is shown turning his head towards the opposite direction in the Berlin sketch, away from the Virgin. Furthermore, Saint Sebastian is shown standing on his right leg while his left leg is positioned on the first step leading up towards the pedestal.

385 See: Held 1980, p. 519.

386 Saint Sebastian's left hand is tucked behind his torso in the Caen sketch, while in Frankfurt his arm is stretched and he holds a martyr palm in his hand. For further comparisons see below.

The strong similarity between the depictions of Saint Sebastian in the sketches in Amsterdam (Fig. 27) and Frankfurt (Fig. 20) would theoretically allow for the sketch in Amsterdam to be classified as a preparatory sketch. In this scenario, the initial depiction of Saint Sebastian in the Frankfurt sketch would have been copied from the preparatory work. This positioning of the saint would nevertheless eventually be abandoned and changed to the way in which Saint Sebastian is depicted in the Frankfurt sketch today. However, the Amsterdam sketch cannot be categorised into the artistic process due to stylistic shortcomings. Especially Saint George's face shows the work of an unskilled artist, whereby his eyes are beady and the face lacks depth and expression. Therefore, it seems more likely that the sketch is the product of a training exercise of one of Rubens's pupils. Considering the changes made to Saint Sebastian in the process of making the Frankfurt sketch, the Amsterdam sketch must have been done in Rubens's workshop, while the work on the Frankfurt sketch was still going on. There is also the possibility that the sketch in Amsterdam was done after a further, unknown model.

In terms of artistic skill, the Caen sketch (Fig. 28) shows a superior handling of the brush compared to the version in Amsterdam. The physiognomies are worked out to a higher degree and its overall appearance is of higher quality. For instance, Saint George's armour is painted with much more detail. This makes the sketch more plausible as a preparatory sketch and the sketch is generally seen as an autograph work.[387] Saint Sebastian is depicted in almost the same position in which he is found in the final version in Frankfurt. Small differences include the fact that Saint Sebastian's head is not turned back as far towards Saint George in the sketch in Caen, thus making his face slightly more visible. Moreover, his left underarm is tucked behind his body. Although his legs are shaped very similarly in both sketches, they are a little closer together in Caen, which makes Sebastian seem more stationary. In Frankfurt, the figure is slightly more dynamic and seems to move towards the viewer. Despite these minor differences, the sketch in Caen could theoretically qualify as a preparatory sketch for the second version of the saints in the Frankfurt sketch in terms of compositional similarity. Nonetheless, the making of an additional preparatory oil sketch for two isolated figures is not typical for Rubens's creative process, even less so since the preparatory work would have been made after the work on the Frankfurt oil sketch had already been begun. Rubens would certainly make detailed studies of individual figures, but the sketch does not fit the criteria of an in-depth study, such as the one used for Saint Apollonia (Fig. 48), which will be discussed in a following chapter. Compared to the sketch in Amsterdam, the physiognomies in the Caen sketch are more convincing, yet they still strongly differ from the detailed *tronies* found in Rubens's œuvre. One might assume that the positioning of the two

387 See for instance: Cat.-Berlin 1931, p. 410; Held 1980, I, p. 519; Tieze 2009, II, p. 359.

figures could have been reconsidered by making a simple, quickly-drawn sketch, similar to the drawing in the *Metropolitan Museum* (Fig. 19), while working out detailed physiognomies would have warranted a much more precise work. It seems more likely that the sketch in Caen is also a copy done by one of Rubens's workshop members after the oil sketch in Frankfurt. It is difficult to find a definite answer for the sketch's purpose at this point. However, a look into Rubens's possible sources of inspiration and his collection of drawings provides further insights, which will be addressed in the chapter below.

6.5. The modello in Berlin

> *"One thing is clear at the first glance: there is more movement, more light, more space, and there are more figures in this painting than in any of the earlier ones."* [388]
>
> Ernst Gombrich

The oil sketch in the *Gemäldegalerie* in Berlin (Fig. 29) is cited in Ernst Gombrich's "*The Story of Art*" to serve as an example of Rubens's outstanding ability to gather figures into a harmonious composition.[389] The assembly of figures shown in this sketch stands somewhat in contrast to the previously-discussed works, as the arrangement appears to be more natural and the figures seem to form a sweeping movement. The figures are arranged to form a reclining c-shaped curve, which sweeps the viewer's glance up towards the Virgin. The sketch is very close to the finished altarpiece, whereby it only differs in smaller details such as the saints' attributes (cf. Fig. 2 and Fig. 29).[390] This sketch illustrates the very last design step, and for this reason it is also often referred to as the "*modello*".[391]

The holy family is surrounded by fourteen saints, who are grouped below her on the steps leading up to the pedestal, and to both her sides. Above the Virgin, a red curtain is draped around a large column.

388 Gombrich 1995, p. 398.

389 See: Gombrich 1995, p. 398–399.

390 The issue of the depiction of the saint's attributes will be discussed in more detail in a following chapter.

391 It is classified as the *modello* for the altarpiece, for instance in: Cat.-Antwerp 1977, p. 187; Tieze 2009, p. 346ff.

Fig. 29: Peter Paul Rubens, *Enthroned Mary with Child and Saints*, 1627/1628, Oil on panel, 80.3 × 55.3 cm, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (780).

In the left background, behind Saint Peter and Saint Paul, further architectural elements can be made out.[392] Two putti descend from above and from behind the red drapery, aiming to crown the Virgin with a laurel wreath.

The wood panel is slightly larger than the previously-mentioned panels, measuring 80.3 × 55.3 cm.[393] Along the bottom of the panel, the work shows signs of tiny marks, similar to those found on the sketch in Salzburg and Frankfurt (see: Fig. 26). As has been discussed, these are evidence of reproduction as they were used to simulate a grid, which helped when copying the composition.[394]

The very right side of the sketch shows a stripe where the colour is a slightly different hue. This is owed to the fact that the work was enlarged during or after the painting process. The strip is about 4.6 cm wide, indicating that the composition might have once measured around 50 cm in width.[395] Per Bjurström and Jan Kelch hold opposite opinions regarding the question of the enlargement on the right strip of the Berlin *modello*: Bjurström sees the discolouring of paint throughout the length of the strip as well as the round arch's lack of symmetry as indications that the strip was added after the completion of the painting.[396] He also observes that beneath the inner part of the right side arch, one can detect the darker outline of the initial arch, before the enlargement. Kelch does not think that it is a later addition, but rather that it was added during the painting process by Rubens himself. He refers to the infrared reflectography and highlights that the colour of the red drapery is not continued beneath the arch's darker paint. However, this may be owed to the fact that there was already a slightly smaller arch painted on this point, before the addition of the strip, and the subsequent enlargement of the arch. The right side of the arch might have only been slightly enlarged during the course of the extension, which would explain the lack of red paint underneath. Ultimately, only further investigations of this specific section will be able to offer certainty. However, in any case, the copies done after this work – which will be discussed in the chapter below – strongly suggest that the adaptation of the panel was done in Rubens's studio.

392 Elizabeth McGrath proposes that the two saints Peter and Paul are depicted in front of the entrance of a grandiose building, perhaps the church itself. See: McGrath 1992, p. 196.

393 See: Cat.-Berlin 1978, p. 45.

394 These markings will be further discussed in the following chapter on the copies done after this sketch.

395 The panel itself is made up of two boards and the small strip on the very right side. The seam of the two main panels runs along Saint Augustine's outstretched finger and the billowing hem of his robe. For an illustration of the board sequence, see: Cat.-Berlin 1978, p. 48.

396 See: Bjurström 1955, p. 41.

There are prominent differences in composition between the *modello* in Berlin (Fig. 29) and the oil sketch in Frankfurt (Fig. 20), which is generally thought to be the former's predecessor. The compositional changes towards a more natural or harmonious arrangement of the figures have been mentioned and the *modello* shows three additional saints, two more putti and significant changes to the depiction of Saint George and Saint Sebastian. The additional figures include a male saint (most likely Saint Joseph) directly behind the Virgin, a fourth female Saint at the left side of the composition and a military saint behind Saint Sebastian.[397] In order to fit the additional figures into the compositional space, the viewpoint was zoomed out.[398] In the Frankfurt sketch (and the other similar versions such as the sketch in Salzburg, Fig. 23) some of the saints cannot be identified when viewing the sketch in isolation as they lack attributes. This is also still the case in the oil sketch in Berlin and includes the monk in the black habit on the right and the group of female saints at the very left of the composition, which was extended by a further figure. The newly-added military saint is usually identified as William of Aquitaine or William of Maleval.[399] However, he is shown with a martyr palm in his left hand. Neither William of Aquitaine nor William of Maleval died a martyr's death and consequently this seems questionable. In comparison with depictions of Saint Maurus in "*The Patrons of the Oratorians*" (*Salzburg Museum*) and "*Saint Gregory the Great Surrounded by Other Saints*" (*Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*), a strong similarity becomes apparent.[400] Saint Maurus is not directly associated with the Augustine Order, but he is a saint who can be called in distress: Maurus is called for gout, rheumatism paralysis and other ailments. This links him to the other saints who are invoked for illnesses, such as Saint Apollonia for toothache, Saint George and Saint Sebastian for the plaque, Saint Catherine for ailments of the tongue and language difficulties. Consequently, the attribution to Saint Maurus should perhaps be considered. It is difficult to identify this saint for certain as the work offers limited clues and in this regard only the context of the commission would offer additional insights. As previously mentioned, the exact circumstance of the painting's patronage is unclear and definite identifications can hardly be made solely based on the saint's depiction.

397 As previously discussed, the oil sketch in Frankfurt included the figures of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in the left background, Saint Catherine to the Virgin's knees, three female saints on the left on the steps, Saint Sebastian and Saint George in the left foreground, Saint Augustine, Saint Lawrence and a monk in black habit in the right foreground.

398 On the question of Rubens's image space, see for instance: Warnke 1977; Or more recently: Cat.-Vienna 2017b, p. 205–207.

399 See: Tieze 2009, p. 360; Cat.-Antwerp 1977, p. 187.

400 The sketch in the *Salzburg Museum* has the inventory number RO 0357. For an illustration of the sketch in Berlin ("*Saint Gregory the Great Surrounded by Other Saints*"), see: Vlieghe 1973, II, no. 109d.

While the Frankfurt sketch has an overall ochre tonality, the sketch in Berlin shows bright colours, whereby especially features such as the Virgin's garments show a much higher vibrancy, which suggests the use of more high-grade pigments. The whole sketch is worked out much more consistently, to the extent that it almost resembles a small painting. In strong contrast to the oil sketch in Frankfurt, this sketch is easily perceivable as a work presentable to the patrons. The oil sketch in Berlin lives up to the term "*modello*" and it can reasonably be assumed that it served as a model for the making of the monumental altarpiece.

In view of the above considerations – especially the aforementioned outstanding quality of the *modello's* composition – it must be assumed that the *modello* was an original work, or at least that it preceded the sketch in Frankfurt and the other extant works in oil. As could be shown, the *modello* meets all of the necessary criteria to qualify as a preparatory work and it also logically falls into the succession of designs. This conclusion is compatible with the Frankfurt sketch's identification as a subsequent adaptation, as determined in the previous chapter on the work's intended purpose.

6.5.1. Copies After the Oil Sketch in the Gemäldegalerie Berlin: A Painting in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Lost Copy from the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, and a Painting Attributed to Willem Panneels

Three works are very similar to the *modello* in Berlin in terms of the composition and presumably copies after this work.[401] Interestingly, unlike the copies done after the previously-discussed oil sketch in the *Städel Museum* in Frankfurt, the three copies after the *modello* resemble finished paintings rather than preliminary sketches. One of the copies is in the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston (Fig. 30), one is only preserved through a black and white illustration – given that the painting has been untraceable since World War II (Fig. 31) – and the third is in private hands and attributed to Willem Panneels (Fig. 32). The paintings are similar insofar that they show the same composition and are almost identical in smaller details, such as depicted attributes. For instance, all works show the painted round arch at the top of the composition, giving the illusion of a roundly-shaped image carrier. Coincidentally, all three works were done on canvas. This is not very typical of Rubens's œuvre as he generally painted smaller works on wooden panels. When Rubens worked on canvas, it was often because large canvases were easily transportable

401 This is not to say that these three works are the only existing copies after the *modello* in Berlin. It cannot be ruled out that there are more, unknown to the author.

Fig. 30: Copy after Peter Paul Rubens, *Virgin and Child adored by Saints*, Oil on canvas, 83.2 × 59.4 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (97.443).

over larger distances, unlike large panel paintings.[402] Moreover, less expensive copies of Rubens's compositions made by the workshop were often executed on pre-made canvases in standard formats.[403] The three paintings all have a different format and consequently potentially only one could classify as such a "standard" work. The degree to which the three works are true to the model in Berlin in terms of style strongly differs. This is noteworthy insofar as even cheaper copies after Rubens's works would generally have been adapted to the high standards of the workshop through a final revision.[404] The three works will be discussed in detail in the following.

402 On Rubens's use of panel and canvas, see: Balis/Van Hout 2012, p. 46.

403 See: Büttner 2008a, p. 63.

404 See footnote above.

Fig. 31: Copy after Peter Paul Rubens, *Mary adored by Saints/Engagement of Saint Catherine*, Oil on canvas, 160 × 100 cm, Lost since 1945 (formerly Museum Wallraf-Richartz, Cologne).

Fig. 32: Attributed to Willem Panneels, *Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*, Oil on canvas, 84.5 × 54.5 cm, Privately-owned (Auktionshaus Lempertz Cologne, 23.09.2015, Lot no. 51).

The reason why they are classified as copies, or rather the reason why the *modello* in Berlin can be seen as the first version of this specific composition is the fact that the *modello* shows changes to the composition that were done during the painting process.[405] As has been highlighted, when making a copy after an existing work, the template generally prevents the artist from making larger compositional "mistakes". In other words, there is no logical explanation for *pentimenti* when closely working after an existing model. However, the other three works in question have not been thoroughly technically investigated and consequently this assumption is solely made based on what is visible to the naked eye and – in the case of the lost painting – through reproductions.

405 The changes in composition included details such as traces of a flaming heart in the hand of the figure usually identified as Saint Augustine, the slight alteration of Saint Sebastian's leg and the round arch at the top.

Of the two works whose current location is known, the painting in the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston (Fig. 30) is stylistically closer to the *modello* in Berlin (Fig. 29). It was part of the *Sedelmeyer Gallery* in Paris and sold to the *Museum of Fine Arts* in 1897.[406] The museum catalogue of the *Gemäldegalerie* in Berlin from 1978 states that Ludwig Burchard considered the painting to probably be "*painted by Theodor van Thulden*", although there is no further explanation for this attribution.[407] There is hardly any discernible difference between the two works when it comes to the depicted details, such as the curving of the crozier, the lack of a flaming heart, the shape of the shield, etc.[408] The main difference in terms of the pictured figures can be detected in Saint John's animal skin dress, which has a slightly different shape. Stylistically, the two works are also fairly similar, although in the sketch in Berlin the paint was applied more thickly in some areas. Furthermore, the Boston sketch shows flaws in some key areas, whereas the sketch in Berlin is definitely the work of a more capable artist. For instance, the Virgin's face – especially her nose – did not turn out entirely successful in the copy in Boston.

The work measures 83.2 × 59.4 cm, and it is thus only a few centimetres larger than the Berlin *modello*, which measures 80.3 × 55.3 cm. In both works, the paint on the very right side of the painting is slightly discoloured. This is more prominent in the Berlin *modello*, which also shows a little more of the stairs and sky on this side. As previously mentioned, in the case of the *modello* – which was done on panel – this is due to the approximately 4.6 cm wide enlargement.[409] Interestingly, the main difference between the two works – namely the shape of Saint John's billowing loincloth – is depicted precisely on this strip. Perhaps the two works were even more similar at one stage, before this area of the *modello* was enlarged and painted over. In other words, perhaps the Boston painting was done before the *modello* was enlarged. Unfortunately, it is difficult to determine why the Boston sketch should also show these slight changes in paint or discolouring at this exact spot at the very right edge, since this work was done on canvas and not enlarged. It could be owed to the pressure of a frame, entirely uninfluenced by the changes to the *modello* on the exact same spot. Inspecting the back of the image carrier could potentially provide answers.

406 Max Rooses mentions a *"Marriage of Saint Catherine"* which was part of Charles Sedelmeyer's collection in 1894; however, this painting presumably shows an altogether different composition comprising fewer figures. See: Rooses 1892, no. 401.

407 Cat.-Berlin 1931, p. 45.

408 Other details include the depiction of the military saint in a pose, which shows his left arm emerging from behind his shoulder (with the palm leaf), the Virgin's wreath without the attached ribbons, Catherine's wheel and the way the dragon is sprawled on the floor.

409 On the process of enlarging panels or canvases during the painting process, see: Balis/ Van Hout 2012, p. 102ff; Gatenbröcker/ Kaul 2005, p. 17–27; Renger 1994, p. 157ff.

Interestingly, the Boston sketch also shows traces of the fine lines at the edge of the picture base. The sketch in Boston seems to show more than one set of intervals, one of which can definitely be linked to the lines of the Berlin sketch. For instance, both sketches show a fine mark at a point 25 cm from the left side of the panel. The mark indicates a line, which goes directly through the middle of the military saint's head. This line divides both compositions exactly in half, *if* the aforementioned additional strip to the right side of the Berlin sketch's panel is not counted. This further indicates that the strip was added at a later stage.[410] The next mark can be seen approximately 5 cm further to the right and the imaginary line runs through Saint Augustine's index finger, grazing the right tip of the shield above it. Unfortunately, not all lines can be made out clearly, whereby especially in the left side of the composition they become indiscernible. These corresponding lines prompt the assumption that the painting in Boston was done directly after the *modello* in Berlin and not some other copy of the same composition. The work in Boston could theoretically have been made for the market. In Rubens's workshop, it was customary for workshop employees to copy the master's composition to sell on occasions.[411] However, is hardly sufficiently detailed to categorically identify it as a finished painting. Considering the lack of detail and the copying marks, a pupil or employee most probably copied the *modello* for studying purposes. This may well have been done in Rubens's workshop, although – as previously mentioned – the choice of canvas as a support is not particularly characteristic.

The second copy after the *modello* in Berlin is the work now lost, which used to be part of the *Wallraf-Richartz-Museum's* collection in Cologne. It has been missing since 1945, but fortunately at least a black and white reproduction is preserved in the *Rheinisches Bildarchiv*, Cologne (Fig. 31).[412] Oddly the painting is not mentioned in the museum's catalogues of the early-20th century.[413] However, it is listed in the handwritten estate inventory of Ferdinand Franz Wallraf from 1824 as by either Rubens or Van Diepenbeeck.[414] According to the existing information, the painting on canvas was significantly larger than the one in Berlin or Boston, as the *Rheinisches Bildarchiv*

410 This does not necessarily mean it was added at a much later point. It may well have been done shortly after or even during the painting process. Presumably, however, the initial coat of paint had already been applied since there would not be discernible differences between the two pieces otherwise.

411 For instance, the aforementioned letter from Rubens to Sir Dudley Carleton bears testimony to this practice; Rubens had several copied versions of well-known compositions *"at his house"*. See: Magurn 1955, p. 60-61.

412 The slide is in the *Rheinisches Bildarchiv* in Cologne under document number: obj05023703.

413 See for instance: Cat.-Cologne 1905. This may well be owed to the fact that the painting was not on view in the gallery.

414 It is cited under Dutch paintings, number 301 as a painting by *"Diepenbeck"* [sic] or Rubens (*"Maria mit vielen Heiligen"*). See: Wallraf 1824, no. 301.

indicates the painting measured 160 × 100 cm. However, this not possible when looking at the work's proportions, which can be derived from the photograph. The ratio between length and width is very similar to the other two sketches in Berlin and Boston.[415] If the painting is indeed 100 cm in width, it should only measure around 137 cm in height. This significant difference in proportion can hardly be explained by a negligible measuring error and accordingly the work's dimensions could be entirely different.[416]

The sketch or painting seems even closer to the *modello* in Berlin than the previously-discussed work in Boston. The differences discussed between the work in Boston and the *modello* do not exist here; for instance, in the lost work from the *Wallraff-Richartz-Museum* Saint John's animal skin is shown in the exact same way as it is depicted in Berlin. Even the smallest details such as the flowers in the hands of the putto behind the red drape correspond. Accordingly, if indeed this right strip of the Berlin *modello* was added at a later stage, this lost work was done after the changes were made.

As far as can be deduced from the surviving photograph, this lost work also has marks along the bottom edge. In contrast to the other two sketches, these are primarily visible in the left half of the painting and as a result it is difficult to establish whether they exactly match those found on the Berlin sketch based on the surviving photograph. However, it is very likely. Assuming that the markings correspond, this would rule out that the lost work from the *Wallaf-Richartz-Museum* was done after a different copy of the composition, not the *modello* itself. The copyist must have had direct access to the *modello* as he would have made the markings on both the template and the copy.[417] This would certainly have been possible for a pupil or employee of Rubens's workshop. It seems less likely that any person who acquired the painting (presumably after Rubens's death)

415 The works in Berlin and Boston measure 80.3 × 55.3 cm and 83.2 × 59.4 cm respectively and the ratio between length and width for both works is consequently 1.4:1 (when rounded to one decimal place). However, the dimensions of 160 × 100 cm equal a ratio of 1.6:1.

416 Measurements should never be taken for granted. However, if one side were only off by a couple of centimetres it would be possible (if not likely) that someone was simply a little imprecise when taking the measurements. Nonetheless, when the proportions are this far from being correct, the information is practically useless.

417 When copying with the help of a grid, the markings were made on the template or model as well as the copy. The oil sketch from the *Städel Museum* in Frankfurt, for instance, has two sets of markings, which implies that at least one set was used to create a copy after the Frankfurt sketch. The other set could have theoretically been made when creating the sketch itself. However, in the particular case of the Frankfurt sketch, it has been established that it was not a copy but an independent work based on the *pentimenti*. Consequently, both markings must have been added when making copies after the sketch. Another work that proves that it was customary to mark the template itself when making a copy after it and working with a grid is Rubens's drawing of the *"Baptism of Christ"* in the *Departement des Arts Graphiques du Musée du Louvre* (20.187), which is covered not only with markings, but a whole grid. See: Cat.-NewYork 2004, no. 14, p. 93–94.

would have permitted the making of markings on the work. Consequently, it seems probable that the lost work stems from Rubens's workshop; however, although there is no evidence to the contrary, it cannot be verified by further investigating the work. All findings are based on a mere black and white reproduction and consequently any conclusions have to be made with reservations.

The third version (Fig. 32) – which is attributed to Willem Panneels and in a private collection – also shows the same composition found on the *modello* in Berlin: it features the same attributes of the saints, the same enclosing arch at the top and Saint John's billowing fur loincloth is depicted in the same shape. However, it strongly differs from the *modello* and the two paintings discussed above, insofar as it shows a very different and unique style. All surfaces – including the clouds, the fabrics and the architectural elements – appear flatter and sallow and the colour palette is muted. For instance, the Virgin's red dress has blue undertones, which makes the red less vibrant and the contrast between the dress and her blue cloak less vivid. The depiction of physiognomies is distinct insofar as that most figures have large facial features, whereby especially the noses are prominent. The work differs in proportion insofar as that it is more elongated, and the very left and right sections of the composition were omitted. It measures 84.5 × 54.5 cm and this format gives the middle part of the painting an altogether more crowded appearance. At the same time, the additional floor space bereaves the composition of proximity.

In the case of this work, it is difficult to imagine that the artist wanted to emulate Rubens's way of painting and it is not likely that Rubens would have accepted it as a product of his own workshop. Consequently, it is no surprise that Justus Müller-Hofstede did not attribute this particular painting to the "Rubens workshop" based on its stylistic traits. However, it is slightly unclear why Müller-Hofstede specifically ascribed it to Willem Panneels.[418] Panneels was verifiably one of Rubens's students: when he was accepted into the Guild of Saint Luke in 1628, it was recorded that he had previously trained with Rubens.[419] Nonetheless, there are no paintings specifically associated with Panneels.[420] Consequently, there is no comparative material and the mere fact that Panneels was verifiably employed in Rubens's workshop until 1628 is hardly sufficient to support an attribution.

418 According to the auction house *Lempertz* – which sold the painting on 23rd September 2015 – Müller-Hofstede issued a certificate attributing the work to Panneels on 24th January 1982. The painting was up for auction again as part of an auction at *Hampel Fine Art Auctions Munich* on 7th December 2016.

419 This is one of three exceptions in which one of Rubens's pupils is mentioned together with his name in the records of the guild. See: Rombouts/Van Lerius 1961b, p. 574.

420 See for instance: Büttner 2006, p. 107ff.

Whether by Willem Panneels or not, the painting serves as an example of how an artist – even though he must have been closely associated with Rubens's workshop to have had access to the *modello* – developed an unique and individual style.[421] Panneels became a master of the guild in 1628, so if he indeed is the author of the work, this work was most probably produced under his own name rather than Rubens's. In the previous years, when Panneels was still working under Rubens, it would not have been acceptable to display this personal style of painting, as all works leaving the studio were meant to uniformly represent the master. However, in any case this work can perhaps be seen as a testimony of the beginning of an artist's creative independence. The painter who made this work is still indebted to Rubens regarding the composition, although the stylistic execution is very much his own. The topic of how artists adapted Rubens's compositions in subsequent years will be discussed in a later chapter.

6.6. "La Virgen Rodeada de Santos" – The Reduced Version in the Prado

The *Prado* houses a smaller version of the composition titled "*La Virgen Rodeada de Santos*" (Fig. 33), which is very similar to the finished altarpiece in most aspects, but it also shows elements of the *modello* in Berlin. It measures 64 cm in width and 79 cm in height.[422] According to the *Prado's* catalogue of paintings from 1996, the work is a reduction of the altarpiece by the master himself.[423] In most probability, the work in the *Prado* was a painting done in collaboration with the workshop, chronologically after the Berlin *modello* but simultaneously or even slightly before the altarpiece. This would have been around the end of 1627 or during the first months of 1628.

During the late-19th and early-20th century, it was thought to be a copy after Rubens and attributed to Van Balen.[424] The reasons for the attribution to Van Balen were not specified and are not quite clear: an attribution based on a stylistic analysis is inconceivable, as the painting has no similarities with Van Balen's work. For instance, Van Balen had a very characteristic way of

421 Anthonis van Dyck and Jacob Jordaens, coincidentally Rubens's co-artists for the decoration of the Augustine Church, are perhaps the most well-known examples of how Rubens's pupils successfully stepped out of their master's shadow. Both of them developed a very unique style and (especially the former) had an immensely successful career on their own.

422 Portús/ Sabán 1996, no. 1703, p. 341. The *Prado's* website states that the work measures 79.5 cm in height.

423 Portús/ Sabán 1996, p. 341.

424 It remains unclear, which of the painters of the Van Balen family the *Prado* catalogues refer to. Presumably the painting was attributed to the most famous and influential family member, Hendrik van Balen I. See: Padrón 1975, p. 296.

Fig. 33: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Holy Family surrounded by Saints*, ca. 1630, Oil on panel, 79.5 × 64 cm, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (P001703).

painting physiognomies, as his figures have round faces with slightly distorted features, which lend the figures a naïve, almost foolish expression.[425] This characteristic cannot be found in this depiction of "*La Virgen Rodeada de Santos*" and generally the painting reflects the stylistic qualities of Rubens's œuvre. To quote the 1975 *Prado* catalogue of paintings on the subject of the attribution to Van Balen: "*Ni su técnica, ni la alta calidad de su ejecución tienen relación alguna con la manera, tímida y cuidada de van Balen*".[426] The catalogue lists a very prestigious provenance: the work stems from Rubens's estate and was bequeathed to Francisco de Roches by Rubens's heirs as a sign of gratitude for helping with the selling of paintings to Philipp IV of Spain.[427] One conceivable reason why the painting was not sold but rather remained a part of Rubens's collection until he passed away around ten years later is Rubens's personal inclination.[428] It might well have adorned a wall in his home or his country estate. De Roches in turn must have passed the painting on to Philipp IV, as in 1700 it is recorded in the inventory of *El Escorial*, from where it entered the *Prado's* collection in 1839. There is little reason to doubt the painting's provenance, although – as has been determined – it is in any case utterly unlikely that Rubens would single-handedly copy one of his own compositions. Rubens would have surely delegated the task of creating a copy after an existing work to one of his assistants. The only conceivable scenario in which Rubens would execute this painting single-handedly is if it preceded the other compositions. However, this would conflict with the Berlin oil sketch's status as preliminary work. Moreover, the painting in the *Prado* is worked out to such a degree that it clearly resembles a finished painting; for instance, the figure's garments are worked out meticulously.[429] The physiognomies are full of character and the overall composition shows the work of a skilled artist.

Compared to other versions of the composition (such as the Berlin *modello*, as well as the altarpiece), the composition in the *Prado* painting is slightly zoomed out. Consequently, additional pictorial space opens to all sides of the painting. The vantage point is also slightly higher than in the other versions, which makes perfect sense as – unlike altarpieces – paintings of this size

425 See, for instance, Van Balen's painting of *"Bacchus and Diana"* in the *Rijksmuseum*, Amsterdam (inv. no. SK-A-17).

426 See: Padrón 1975, p. 296. Loosely translated, the quotation states that both the work's technique and the high quality of its execution do not correspond with the *"shy and careful"* painting style of Van Balen.

427 See: Padrón 1975, p. 341.

428 On the occasion of the sale of Rubens's estate, the publisher Jan van Meurs published a list of the paintings that had been in Rubens's possession. There is only one preserved original copy of this »*Specification des peintures trouvées a la Maison mortuaire du feu messire Pierre Paul Rubens*« in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris (*Département des Manuscrits*, Fonds Français 18967, fol. 200–205). The list was published in: Cat.-Antwerp 2004, p. 328ff. For further reflections on the topic of Rubens's collection and property, see: Büttner 2006, p. 86ff.

429 This is especially evident in the armours and the embroidery.

were hung closer to the viewer's eye level.[430] The architecture in the left background is depicted a little more openly, with an additional arch behind Saint Paul's head. The arch behind Saint Peter is more pronounced, rounded and larger. To the right, the view opens up to a small strip of distant landscape and the additional space at the top made room for the adaptation of a putto, which is now positioned to the right – rather than the left side – of the downwards flying putto with the floral wreath. To the left of the composition, the dragon's tail is visible coiling towards the female saints above it. All four edges of the painting show slight discolouring. If not due to a later enlargement, which is not probable on all four sides, this could be owed to the covering of a frame. The frame could potentially have shielded the painting from external influences and thus influenced the ageing process, making these parts appear lighter. The right bottom corner shows the inventory number "390" in white paint about 5 cm to the left of the paintings edge. These kinds of numbers were usually painted on the very edge of a painting and consequently it is probable that a frame covered the outside part of the edge when the inventory number was added.

Although it is usually declared as a copy of the altarpiece, varying details show that this painting is in some respects a work in its own right, while some parts are closer to the Berlin sketch rather than the altarpiece; for instance, the military saint's left arm is visible in both the Berlin *modello* (Fig. 29) and the painting in the *Prado*. However, in the altarpiece, only the very tip of the palm leaf is visible protruding from behind his shoulder (Fig. 2). Again, Saint Clara of Montefalco's scales are depicted, as are Apollonia's pincers, which corresponds with the altarpiece. Similarly, the wreath above the Virgin's head is adorned with ribbons and flowers and the red curtain curls around half of the column from the left. As in the altarpiece, the monk figure in black robes is depicted with a loaf of bread in his hands, although the sun on the chest is not pictured. In place of the star, two brownish round shapes can be made out. Perhaps these shapes are meant to depict the edges of two additional loaves of bread held in his right hand.[431] In the altarpiece, Saint Catherine's wheel is depicted beneath the putto's legs. In the *Prado* version, the attribute is also detectable at this exact position, but covered by an opaque layer of paint. Most probably it was painted over at some point and became visible again over time, due to the fading of colour. Compliant with the Berlin *modello* is the absence of Saint Agnes's lamb and the hand of the military saint, which is visible above his left shoulder (in the finished altarpiece, his hand is hidden behind his shoulder and only the tip of the palm leaf is visible). Entirely unique to the

430 This is another indication that the *modello* in Berlin was indeed the preliminary work, as it shows the same vantage point as the altarpiece.

431 Possible reasons for this change of attributes will be discussed in a chapter below.

version in the *Prado* is the large bow in Saint Sebastian's left hand, which replaced the palm leaf. Interestingly, the shield behind it looks slightly painted over, which could indicate that this area was changed during the painting process. Moreover, the positioning of Saint George's right arm is distinct. In the altarpiece and in the Berlin *modello*, his elbow is bent directly towards the viewer, while in the *Prado* version the arm is pointed towards his back.[432]

There is some confusion concerning the identification of the saints portrayed. In a catalogue of the Flemish paintings in the *Museo del Prado* from 1975, only three of the four depicted female saints are identified: Saint Apollonia, Saint Clara of Montefalco and Saint Agatha.[433] Saint Apollonia and Saint Agatha both have the pincers as their attribute and only one pair of pincers is shown in the hand of the woman in the green dress. One imaginable reason for identifying both Apollonia and Agatha could be that their close interaction was interpreted as an indication of them "sharing" the attribute. In this context, it should be noted that the identification of the female saint in the green dress as Saint Agatha would also suggest a different constellation: the saint positioned in front of her is shown in a blue dress in the *Prado* painting and the blue colour – a symbol of purity – and the close interaction with Saint Agatha could also allude to Saint Lucy. The two saints are often depicted together due to Saint Agatha's role in Saint Lucy's path to Christianity and Rubens had previously already depicted the two saints together for the Jesuit Church.[434] Identifying the four Saints as Saint Lucy, Saint Agatha, Saint Clara of Montefalco and Saint Mary Magdalene would consequently also be a possibility.

In a *Prado* collection catalogue from 1996, only three of the four female saints are mentioned, but Agatha was replaced with Agnes: the publication lists Saint Apollonia, Saint Clara of Montefalco and Saint Agnes.[435] However, Saint Agnes's lamb is not depicted in the *Prado* version of the composition and this identification could only have been made possible by looking at the other "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" versions. Furthermore, the monk saint is inexplicably identified as Saint Benedict.[436] These discrepancies in defining the saints' identities are unsurprising given the key clues – namely the attributes – are altered in this version.

432 In this respect, the Saint George in the *Prado* version is closer to the figure of Saint George in the composition by Correggio, which was mentioned earlier.

433 See: Padrón 1975, p. 341.

434 Saint Lucy's mother was healed on a pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Agatha and Saint Agatha then came to Saint Lucy in her dreams, strengthening her faith and predicting her martyrdom. For an illustration of Rubens's *modello* for the ceiling paintings for the Jesuit Church, see: J. R. Martin 1968, p. 155, no. 29b.

435 See: Portús/Sabán 1996, p. 341.

436 See footnote above.

Perhaps this was part of the reason why this particular composition was copied repeatedly and enjoyed particular popularity. The issue of identifying the figures will be further discussed in the following chapter on changed details and additional meanings.

6.6.1. Numerous Copies after the Painting in the Prado

The painting in the *Prado* was copied numerous times, six of which are known and will be discussed in the following chapter. Three copies can be found in the *Catedral de San Salvador* in Zaragoza (Fig. 34), the *Cornell Fine Arts Museum* (Fig. 35) and the *Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga* in Lisbon (Fig. 36), respectively. Two are in private collections (Fig. 37 and Fig. 38) and one was lost during World War II (last accounted for in *Schloss Rheinsberg*, near Berlin). The painting in Lisbon is attributed to Hendrik van Balen the Elder, but it will be included in this chapter as it is a faithful copy of the painting in the *Prado* in terms of the composition. As was the case with the previously-mentioned versions, it cannot be ruled out that more copies existed at one point or that they fact still exist but are not known.

All versions share in common the fact that they are very close copies of the painting in the *Prado* in terms of the depicted details.[437] This includes – among other things – the bow, which replaced the palm leaf in Saint Sebastian's hand. Interestingly, Saint Catherine's wheel is not visible in the copies and the shield behind Saint Sebastian's bow is rounded. Consequently, these copies in all probability show the two attributes the way in which they looked in the *Prado's* version of the composition when the painting was initially completed, and the underlying attributes were still properly covered by paint. The current condition shows the upper paint layer faded and lets the viewer see the artist's changes to the composition or *pentimenti*. In other words, the existent copies help us to see the *Prado* work's previous condition before time (or restoration) took a toll. These changes to the shield and the spiked wheel are furthermore a confirmation of the fact that the painting in the *Prado* was the first version of this exact composition: if it had been done after a model, there would hardly have been a need for alterations during the painting process.

As was the case with the copies after the *modello* in Berlin, the six versions after the *Prado* painting are also rather different in size and stylistic elaboration. The size of the copies in the *Museu Nacional De Arte Antiga* in Lisbon (Fig. 36) and the *Cornell Fine Arts Museum* (Fig. 35) approximately corresponds with the painting in the *Prado*, measuring 78 × 63 cm and 80 × 63.5 cm,

437 In Spanish, it goes by the name of: *"Virgen con el Niño adorada por santos"* (also *"Sagrada Familia rodeada de Santos"* or *"Desposorios místicos de Santa Catalina"*).

Fig. 34: Copy after Peter Paul Rubens, *The Virgin with Child adored by Saints*, ca. 1630—1640, Oil on copper, 87 × 70 cm, Catedral de San Salvador, Sacristía Mayor, Zaragoza.

Fig. 35: Copy after Peter Paul Rubens, *The Virgin and Child Adored by Saints*, Oil on canvas, ca. 1630, 80 × 63.5 cm, Fine Arts Museum, Cornell (1957.11).

Fig. 36: Attributed to Hendrik van Balen I, *Mystical Marriage of Saint Catherine*, 1628–1632, Oil on panel, 78 × 63 cm, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.

Fig. 37: Copy after Peter Paul Rubens, *Madonna adored by Saints*, 17th century, Oil on canvas, 99 × 81 cm, Privately-owned (Palais Kinsky Vienna 24.04.2018, Lot no. 633).

Fig. 38: Copy after Peter Paul Rubens, *Madonna with Child and Saints*, Oil on canvas, 154 × 116 cm, Privately-owned (Palais Dorotheum Vienna, 24.04.2018, Lot no. 239).

respectively.[438] They are also roughly similar in terms of style. Nonetheless, the work in Lisbon is attributed to Hendrik van Balen, which is most probably owed to the distinct depiction of the figure's physiognomies. The slightly distorted facial features that are typical of Van Balen have already been mentioned in the previous chapter and this work features the distinctive large noses and button eyes. This is especially evident in the depiction of the Virgin: her nose is long and prominent and her jawline is very round. However, the overall appearance of the painting is still indebted to Rubens's original work. Perhaps the artist did not intend to deviate far from his model or the depiction of the faces was more a product of painterly skill than a conscious choice.

One of the two privately-owned copies – which was recently sold in an auction of the *Auktionshaus Kinski* in Vienna – is very similar in proportion to the painting in the *Prado,* but slightly larger, measuring 99 × 81 cm (Fig. 37).[439] This work is characterised by a very strong contrast all

438 The ratio between length and width is approximately the same for all three works (1:1.24 for the *Prado* painting and 1:1.25 for the other two works in Lisbon and Cornell).

439 This work was done on canvas and was auctioned on 24th April 2018 in the *Palais Kinsky*. The ratio between length and width equals 1:1.22.

throughout, which gives the sketch an almost surreal appearance. For instance, Saint Sebastian's muscles are emphasised with a dark colour. In this case, the will to stay true to the model is less evident and the copy's main commonality with the model is the composition.

The formats of the work in the *Catedral de San Salvator* in Zaragoza (Fig. 34) and the privately-owned painting (Fig. 38) recently sold in an auction at the *Dorotheum* correlate. Both are slightly more rectangular or elongated vertically than the other copies.[440] This allows for more compositional space at the top and bottom of the composition.[441] A recent exhibition catalogue lists the dimensions of 87 × 70 cm for the work in Zaragoza. However, this does not correspond with the painting's format, and probably the incorrect dimensions are owed to a slight measuring error.[442] According to the *Dorotheum*, the privately-owned work measures 166 × 154 cm. This work is significantly larger, but the measurements correspond perfectly with the format of the work.

Besides their format, the two paintings have other likenesses; for instance, both works are similar in terms of the colour effect and tonality. For instance, the red colour is more vibrant in comparison with the other versions and the sky is not blue, but eerily dark. It seems reasonable to suppose that one of the two paintings was the model for the other. The painting in Zaragoza is part of a series of four copies after Rubens, which is now hung in the *sacristía mayor* of the cathedral of *San Salvador*.[443] All four paintings are the same size and this explains why in this particular case the proportions of the work were elongated to fit the series.[444] This indicates that it might well have been the painting in Zaragoza that served as a model for the other privately-owned elongated copy.

Unfortunately, very little is known about the work that was lost during World War II. Since the middle of the 18th century, the painting was part of the picture gallery in the *Schloss Sanssouci* in Potsdam, and it moved to the *Neues Palais* in Potsdam in 1773. From 1942 onwards, it was kept

440 For an illustration of the painting in Zaragoza, see: Cat.-Zaragoza 2015, p. 219.

441 Oddly this privately-owned work was also sold at an auctioned in Vienna on the very same day as the other privately-owned work – namely 24th April 2018 – albeit at a competing auction house.

442 See: Cat.-Zaragoza 2015, p. 218. The dimensions of 87 × 70 cm equal a ratio of 1.24:1. The work itself, however, has a ratio of 1.32:1.

443 All four works show Marian images. This includes an "*Engagement*", an "*Annunciation*", the "*Adoration of the Magi*" and the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" (or "*La Virgen con el Nino adorada por santos*"). See: Lozano López 2015, p. 119.

444 The works were not initially made for *"La Seo"* in Lisbon, but it is not exactly clear as to how the series wound up there. See: Lozano López 2015, p. 115.

in *Schloss Rheinsberg*, north of Berlin, where a forestry master last saw it in 1945.[445] The listed dimensions are 163 × 111 cm. However, the same source also states that the work was done after the painting in the *Prado* and indicates that this painting measures 125 × 87 cm. This is incorrect as the work in the *Prado* measures 79 × 64 cm. Consequently, the source's reliability has to be questioned.

All six of these works show how immensely popular this particular composition was. In contrast to the copies done after the *modello* in Berlin, some of these works done after the painting in the *Prado* show a different or independent style, whereby especially the work in Zaragoza (Fig. 34) and the privately-owned copy sold at the *Dorotheum* (Fig. 38) deviate from Rubens's stylistic character. Perhaps this is owed to the fact that the work was not necessarily copied within Rubens's workshop. As previously mentioned, the paintings done in Rubens's studio were required to be stylistically compliant with Rubens's own works. Given that the work in the *Prado* was in Rubens's possession, it is likely that these deviating works were painted after his death in 1640.

6.6.2. A Hybrid Copy

One further copy worth mentioning is derived from more than one model. It is cited in an auction catalogue from the German auction house *Rudolph Lepke's Kunst-Auktions-Haus* from 1906.[446] The catalogue includes a black and white illustration and indicates that this painting by the "school of P. P. Rubens" was done on panel and measures 90 × 62 cm (Fig. 39). This work is clearly qualitatively not convincing as a work by Rubens, and consequently it does not challenge the established design process. The faces of some of the figures are slightly distorted; for instance, Saint Sebastian's face seems too small for his body. Moreover, the paint is apparently applied in a very pastose way.[447] However, it is difficult to make more detailed stylistic comparisons based on this small black and white reproduction. Nonetheless, it is evident that this work incorporates elements of at least two works. Details such as Saint Sebastian's bow and the round shield behind it are clearly derived from the painting in the *Prado* (Fig. 33). However, the way in which

445 Most paintings by Rubens in the collection of the *Neues Palais* were moved to *Schloss Rheinsberg* in July 1942. This included other works such as: "*Justice of Cambyses*", *"Meleager and Atalante"*, *"Diana on Stag Hunt"* and *"Tarquinus and Lucretia"*. See: Bartoschek/ Vogtherr 2004, p. 421–423.

446 Lepke 1906, p. 9, no. XIV.

447 In this regard, the work seems to have similarities with the copy attributed to Willem Panneels (see the above chapter on copies after the oil sketch in the *Gemäldegalerie* in Berlin).

Fig. 39: Copy after Peter Paul Rubens, *The Holy Virgin on a Throne, Surrounded by Saints*, 90 × 62 cm, Privately-owned (Rudolph Lepke's Auctions-Haus Berlin, Auction of General Fabricius's Kiev Gallery, 04.12.1906, no. 69).

Saint George's arm is pointing towards the viewer as well as the painted arch at the top of the composition both refer to the oil sketch or *modello* in the *Gemäldegalerie* in Berlin (Fig. 29). What seems unique to this work is the fact that a very large part of the chequered floor is depicted, creating more space between the viewer and the depicted figures.

The artist of this work must have been familiar with both the *modello* and the painting in the *Prado*, which indicates that both were accessible in the same location at one point in time. Neither of the two works were reproduced by an engraving and consequently it was most likely the originals themselves that served as models. Theoretically, the numerous copies of could have also served as templates; however, these copies were also done in proximity of the two works, respectively, which serves the same argument. The *Prado* painting was part of Rubens's private collection until his death and subsequently transported far away from Antwerp to Spain. This indicates that the joint location must have been Rubens's workshop or property, as it is unlikely that both works came together after the *Prado* painting entered the possession of

Francisco de Roches and subsequently the collection of Philip IV of Spain. This links the Berlin *modello* to Rubens's studio and thereby further supports the identification of the *modello* as Rubens's preliminary work.

6.7. The Altarpiece for the Sint Augustinuskerk

The painting for the high altar of the *Sint Augustinuskerk* (Fig. 2) was painted on canvas, which – as previously mentioned – is not unusual for Rubens's œuvre, and it measures 564 × 401 cm.[448] In the finished altarpiece in Antwerp, the female saints to the left of the composition are depicted with their attributes: Saint Clara of Montefalco is depicted with balance scales, Apollonia with pincers and Agnes with a sheep. Saint Agnes is holding a hardly detectable metal object in her right hand, presumably also pincers. The fourth woman of this group – who is depicted in the *modello* in Berlin (Fig. 29) but not the sketch in Frankfurt – still shows no particular attribute. Max Rooses identifies her as Mary Magdalene solely based on her pained expression.[449] Saint Catherine is shown with her broken wheel, which is shown behind the putto's feet, and John the Baptist is depicted in his distinctive dress made from animal skin.[450] The male figure behind the Virgin is not shown with attributes, but his positioning so close to the Virgin and child identifies him as Joseph. In the foreground, Saint Augustine is depicted with the flaming heart in his left hand, Saint Lawrence is depicted with the gridiron he was "roasted" on, while the saint on the very right – with a sun on his chest and a loaf of bread in his hands – can be identified as Nicholas of Tolentino.[451] Consequently, the finished altarpiece offers key clues for the identification of the saints that were not available for the previously-discussed versions. Identifying the saints would have been easy for the contemporary viewer when worshipping

448 See for instance: Held 1980, p. 519. On the issue of supports (canvas and panel), see the above chapter on supports and underdrawings.

449 See: Rooses 1892, I, p. 285. A similar depiction of Mary Magdalene, with her hand by her face, can be seen in the "*Entombment*" in the *J. Paul Getty Museum* in Los Angeles (93.PA.9). For an illustration, see: Cat.-Vienna 2017b, no. 100, p. 246.

450 According to the saint's legend, the emperor gave the order for Saint Catherine to be martyred on a wheel, spiked with sharp knives and nails. However, the wheel was shattered and the executioner stricken down by thunder and lighting. The emperor then gave the order to behead her, after which angels carried her body to mount Sinai.

451 The figure was identified as Saint Nicholas of Tolentino by Max Rooses due to him, presumably, wearing the black habit of the Augustinian-Eremites and the star on his chest (see: Rooses 1892, I, p. 285.). Although this is probably correct, Nicholas of Tolentino would generally be depicted holding a bowl with two fried birds in it and the loaf of bread seems somewhat untypical. Because of that star (or sun) he was previously also identified as Thomas of Aquino and due to the loaf of bread as Francis of Assisi.

the high altar and the depicted saints were called upon in adversity. The subject of the saints' identities will be discussed in a following chapter, although at this point it can be noted that Rubens only included additional references in this finished version. Not including attributes beforehand must have been a conscious choice.

Arnout Balis and Nico van Hout have made critical observations regarding the altarpiece's application of colour, which is typical for this stage in Rubens's career and characterised by a scarcity of contours. They write: "*The foreground and background in his late works meet more as adjacent areas of colour than within painted contours. That blurred handling of paint is clearly visible in the rendering of the textures of the military sash and banner of St George and the Madonna Adored by Saints*".[452] In other words, the colour is applied right up to the outside edge of a depicted object without discernible outlines. Balis and Van Hout link the fact that Rubens experimented with thin paint, which was paired with a strong use of the ground layers, with his diplomatic mission to Spain. The royal collection apparently renewed his interest in the painting methods of Titian.[453] However, the altarpiece was finished before Rubens set out for diplomatic mission.[454] This serves to show how difficult (and at times deceptive) it is to link stylistic shifts in Rubens's œuvre to major biographical events. Especially Titian's influence on Rubens during two widely-disparate points in his life – namely his travels to Italy during his late-twenties and his diplomatic mission to Spain two decades later – has received strong scholarly attention.[455] This is certainly warranted to some degree as Rubens was undoubtedly influenced by the artworks of Titian, among others. However, Balis and Van Hout have plausibly shown that the altarpiece shows a certain characteristic application of colour typical for the end of the decade. Consequently, the shift in style or working method happened months before Rubens set foot in Spain. Perhaps Rubens's shifts in style were less the product of external stimulation than of his internal and creative development.

Furthermore, when discussing the issue of Rubens's painting technique based on large works such as altarpieces, the previously elaborated workshop practices should be kept in mind. It is questionable whether the master himself would have indeed painted Saint George's sash and banner, as these two parts of the painting can hardly be classified as crucial sections. Given the presence of a well-worked-out *modello*, it can be assumed that Rubens's involvement in the painting process of the large painting focused on the essential parts, such as the faces of the

452 See: Balis/Van Hout 2012, p. 15.

453 Balis/Van Hout 2012, p. 14.

454 See the above chapter on the background of the commission for the *Sint-Augustinuskerk's* altarpiece.

455 See for instance: Goldfarb/ Freedberg/ Mena Marqués 1998.

figures or the finishing touches.[456] Nonetheless, as Balis and Van Hout have shown, Rubens's stylistic characteristics and developments can be observed in the less important parts of the altarpiece. This demonstrates that even though Rubens's own involvement was perhaps limited, he very much defined the way in which his paintings were executed. Consequently, the workshop's involvement was subject to Rubens's stylistic fluctuation as much as his own hand.[457]

As has been shown, the various versions of the composition were each copied numerous times. Interestingly, this is not the case for the finished altarpiece. Considering that this was the composition on public display, and it was reproduced in two prints, this is fairly surprising. The reasons for this could lie in the circumstance that the oil sketches and the painting now in the *Prado* were readily available in the workshop for Rubens's employees to copy them.[458] This would mean that most of the copies were done during the time period before Rubens's passing in the 1630s. It is difficult to imagine an outsider having access to these works.[459] Nonetheless, each copy could have potentially served as a model for the next copy. Unfortunately, it is unclear what happened with works that were produced in the workshop but could not be sold, such as the products of the pupil's training exercises.[460] It is possible that they stayed in the maker's possession and that the pupils were allowed to take the works with them when they finished his training. If this were the case, the copies could have served as templates for further copies done outside the confines of Rubens's workshop. Hence, it is almost impossible to say whether all works originate directly from Rubens's studio. Being able to date the works – for instance, through dendrochronological investigations – would potentially shed more light on the copies' origination background. In this context, an estimated origination date during the 1630s would point towards the studio, whereas a later date could rule this out. In any case, the fact that most of the copies do not show the most publicly-available version of the composition – namely the altarpiece – but versions that were only available in the workshop indicate that at least a large part of the copying activity took place in Rubens's studio.

456 See the above chapters on Rubens's studio practice and the issue of single-handed execution.

457 In the introduction to their catalogue, Arnout Balis and Nico van Hout offer a concise summary of these stylistic changes in Rubens's manner of painting. See: Balis/Van Hout 2012, p. 8-15.

458 The *Prado* painting is said to have been part of Rubens's estate sale, which would fit this theory. See the previous chapter on the reduced version in the *Prado*.

459 According to an aforementioned letter from Rubens to his employee Lukas – in which Rubens reminds him to lock all the works up properly – Rubens was meticulous about storing his artworks. See the chapter above on drawings. For the complete letter, see: Magurn 1955, p. 411.

460 These works would not have met the usual standards of Rubens's workshop and consequently it seems very unlikely that they were sold under his name.

Another reason for the lack of copies of the altarpiece's composition could lie in the fact that the altarpiece shows the composition from a lower vantage point due to its intended hanging above the heads of its viewers. When transferring the composition to a smaller painting – which usually hangs slightly lower, perhaps even at eye level – the perspective is unsuitable. Given that the copies have significantly smaller proportions and were presumably all made for private use, the copying of the altarpiece would pose a disadvantage in comparison with the other versions.[461]

One final aspect that will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter below is the fact that the copies show less precise depictions of the saints. Perhaps this too was a reason for the stronger popularity of the other versions and not the altarpiece, which allowed less room regarding the identities of the saints.

6.8. The Saints – Identities and Inspiration

As shown in the previous chapters, the figures depicted in the different version of the composition vary. Some compositions show more saints than others, while the way in which the saints are depicted differs from work to work. In the following chapter, the changes will be examined and possible reasons for this variance will be assessed. Moreover, Rubens's sources of inspiration for these figures will be shown, along with the possible information that the use of these models can offer with respect to the design process and the work's intended purpose.

6.8.1. From Marble to Flesh – Rubens's Application of Mirror-Inverted Antique Models for the Figure of Saint Sebastian

Upon very first glance, the figure of Saint Sebastian shows similarity to antique statues. This is hardly surprising given that in 17th-century art theory the antique statue epitomised the ideal artistic realisation of the human body, whereby they were venerated for uniting physical movements and spiritual expression in perfect harmony.[462] For instance, the previously-mentioned folding forward of the torso with a slight kink in the naval area – found in the sketches

461 For instance, the painting in the *Prado* shows the composition from a slightly higher perspective, which is visually emphasized by the depiction of a longer stretch of floor.

462 On Rubens's use of antique models or "*Leitbilder*", see Jochen Sander's essay, in: Cat.-Vienna 2017b, p. 181–183.

in Frankfurt and Caen – is visibly derived from the very famous "*Torso del Belvedere*".[463] When in Rome, Rubens made several *ricordi* of the statue, one of which can be found on the *verso* of the previously-discussed drawing in the *Metropolitan Museum* (Fig. 18).[464] The assumed purpose of the two oil sketches depicting Saint Sebastian and Saint George, in Caen (Fig. 28) and from the collection de Boer (Fig. 27) was to test out the positioning of the two figures before transferring them to the larger oil sketch (Fig. 20).[465] According to this theory, Rubens was not one hundred per cent pleased with the first version of Saint Sebastian and adapted him by creating a second, slightly different pose. Ultimately, both of these poses would be replaced by a third, very different positioning, which can be seen in the Berlin *modello* (Fig. 29). However, a close look at other sources of inspirations makes this process of developing the figure in subsequent steps seem unlikely.

The depiction of Saint Sebastian in the de Boer sketch does not show the forward fold in the naval area and – as previously discussed – the figure's centre of gravity completely differs from that in the other versions in oil.[466] A Hermes statue in the *Museo Pio-Clementino* – which was long known as the "*Belvedere Antinous*" – shows an almost identical posture of the upper body and it is very likely that the figure of Saint Sebastian in the de Boer sketch was modelled after this statue. Rubens made a drawing of the statue during his stay in Rome, a copy of which is kept in the *Statens Museum for Kunst* in Copenhagen today (Fig. 9).[467] Upon first glance, the drawing is somewhat similar to the figure of Saint Sebastian, although when one of them is mirror inverted, the figures become almost identical (Fig. 42).

463 For a discussion on the Torso's influence on Rubens's artistic production, see: Cat.-Vienna 2017b, p. 181.

464 See: Cat.-NewYork 2004, p. 142.

465 The sketches are generally thought to be preparatory works by Rubens. Merely their chronological placement in the creative process has been subject of debate. For instance, Bjurström and Grossmann thought the sketches were both done after the drawing in Stockholm, but before the sketch in Frankfurt. See: Bjurström 1955, p. 41; Grossmann 1955, p. 337. On the other hand, Burchard place the sketch chronologically after the work in Frankfurt. See: Cat.-Berlin 1931, p. 411. For further research on the subject, see: Tieze 2009, p. 350–351.

466 A very similar pose is also found in the drawing in the *Metropolitan Museum*, as well as the rejected drawing in the *Nationalmuseum* in Stockholm. However, none of the three figures are identical. For instance, in the two drawings, Saint Sebastian's head is turned further towards the viewer and his left arm is held close to his body, whereas in the de Boer sketch his left arm is raised waist-high and his face is shown in profile. In the *Metropolitan Museum's* drawing Saint Sebastian's legs are positioned in the same way as in the sketch, whereas they are shown slightly more apart in the Stockholm sketch. Nonetheless, all three versions are derived from the same model, as will be discussed in the following.

467 See: Van der Meulen 1968, III, no. 55. In 1671, Jan de Bisschop made an engraving of this drawing (after Willem Doudijns), which can be seen in the *Philadelphia Museum of Art*.

This was not the only example of Rubens paraphrasing this famous antique model. A depiction of Christ in a now-lost painting showing "*The Transverberation of St. Teresa of Avila*" also shows the same figure.[468]

This mirroring of figures is rather common in Rubens's compositions, as well as the works of his pupils and employees. Rubens mirrored numerous figures that he recorded during his travels, as well as figures from his own repertoire.[469] In turn, when members of Rubens's workshop copied his works, they also often mirrored them.[470] The process of recording noteworthy figures and then using their mirror images for compositions is by no means limited to single human figures. In the previously-mentioned oil sketch for the St. Bavo Altarpiece (*National Gallery*, London), Rubens used a mirror-inverted version of two horses and riders depicted in Titian's "*Ecce Homo*" (*Kunsthistorisches Museum*, Vienna).[471] In the context of the discussion concerning where and when Rubens actually saw and recorded paintings by Titian, it has been suggested that Rubens worked not only from original paintings but also from reversed prints.[472] This could theoretically be a reason for the inverted figures. However, a drawing by Rubens after Titian's two figures on horseback – which shows the two riders in the same way as they are depicted in the painting – can refute this: it makes the fact obvious that Rubens did not have a mirror-inverted template, but one that resembled the original.[473] Mirror inverting the figures was thus a conscious decision during

468 For an illustration of the lost work, see: Vlieghe 1973, II, no. 150, p. 159. For the figure of Christ in the *"Transverberation of St. Teresa of Avila"* the image was not mirror inverted. The "*Doryphoros"* by Polykleitos is usually also cited as a source (see: Vlieghe 1973, II, p. 160). This is plausible, although the "*Doryphoros*" is relatively straight backed whereas the *"Belvedere Antinous"* shows the distinct forward curving of the silhouette.

469 Examples of this practice will follow below. For a recent essay on Rubens's inverted images, see Nils Büttner's contribution in: Cat.-Vienna 2017b, p. 249ff.

470 One example of many is Anthonis van Dyck's mirror-inverted version of Jacob the Elder (on loan in the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston) after Rubens's eponymous painting in the *Prado* in Madrid. Cat.-Vienna 2017b, p. 37.

471 The horses are only seen in the oil sketch and were abandoned in the significantly-changed final altarpiece. This is not the only case in which the animal was depicted. For instance, the same horse is shown in "*The Meeting of David and Abigail"* (*The Detroit Institute of Art,* Michigan).

472 See: Wood 2010a, p. 164.

473 In his drawing (now in the *Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen*, Rotterdam), Rubens altered the figures slightly, insofar as he changed the rider in armour to resemble Charles V. In the first of the two *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*-volumes (on Rubens's copies and adaptations after Titian and North Italian art) by Jeremy Wood, the drawing of the two horsemen after Titian is illustrated in colour, but – rather confusingly – mirror-inverted (see: Wood 2010a, I, plate 7, no. 114.). In the second volume – which contains the list of illustrations – the drawing is shown correctly (the correct version can be made out by the "R" in the bottom left corner of the drawing). See: Wood 2010a, II, fig. 41 (no. 114); For a large illustration in colour, see: Cat.-Edinburgh 2002, p. 28.

the process of designing the St. Bavo Altarpiece's composition. The positioning of the figure of Saint Sebastian in the de Boer sketch (Fig. 27) can consequently not truly be seen as Rubens's new creation; rather, it is a copy or a paraphrase of an existing artwork and his drawing of the statue makes proof of this (see: Fig. 42). This is relevant insofar as the alleged purpose of the de Boer sketch and the reason it is included into the design process of the altarpiece by most scholars is the fact that Rubens supposedly worked on the saint's positioning.[474] However, if the saint was done after an antique model, the need to tweak and test the figure's pose seems less plausible.

When looking at the other versions of Saint Sebastian in the sketches in Caen (Fig. 28) and Frankfurt (Fig. 20), Sebastian's pose seems altered or rather reworked and consequently the subsequent versions are generally seen as Rubens's continued development of the initial figure.[475] However, when comparing the figure in Caen and Frankfurt to other works by Rubens, it becomes clear that Sebastian was altered insofar as he is now derived from a different model or rather models. The forward fold, the turn of the torso, the loincloth and the dynamic position of the legs in the Frankfurt sketch are very similar to the depiction of Christ in the "*Flagellation of Christ*" by Sebastiano del Piombo in *San Pietro in Montorio* in Rome.[476] Rubens had previously adapted this figure for his painting of the "*Baptism of Christ*", one of his earliest works, now in the *Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten* in Antwerp (Fig. 40).[477] The depiction of Christ as well as the man undressing himself on the very right both show strong similarities with del Piombo's depiction of the shackled Christ. Although the Saint Sebastian in the Frankfurt sketch as well as the two figures in the "*Baptism of Christ*" are clearly indebted to the same model, they all slightly diverge from it in different ways; for instance, the man undressing himself and Saint Sebastian step forward in the same dynamic way, whereas Rubens depicted Christ a little more static.[478] Nonetheless, del Piombo's bound Christ is not the only figure, which seems to have been exemplary for Rubens's depiction of Saint Sebastian in the Frankfurt sketch: as previously mentioned, Saint Sebastian's

474 See, among others: Tieze 2009, p. 350–351.

475 See for instance: Bjurström 1955, p. 41; In some cases, the de Boer sketch is not seen as the first version of Saint Sebastian, however, the concept Rubens developing the figure by means of several sketches applies all the same. For a list of publications on the subject, see Tieze, cited in the footnote above.

476 It can be assumed that Sebastian del Piombo was also greatly inspired by the antique models. Citing his "*Flagellation*" and the *"Torso del Belvedere"* both as sources of inspiration might seem redundant. However, del Piombo's figure is shown with legs and a loincloth, both of which found their way into Rubens's adaptation. Consequently, only taking the *"Torso del Belvedere"* into account would be insufficient.

477 The painting's inventory number in the *Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten* is "707". For a short discussion on the work's Italian influences, see: Wood 2010a, I, p. 240.

478 Also noteworthy in this context is a drawing of this same figure attributed to Michelangelo, which is considered a preparatory work for the "*Flagellation*" (*British Museum*, London, no. 1895,0915.813). Michelangelo is said to have been Sebastiano del Piombo's assistant on the project of San Pietro in Montorio.

Fig. 40: Peter Paul Rubens, *Baptism of Christ*, 1604–1605, Oil on canvas, 411 × 675 cm, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp (707).

torso is also close to the "*Torso del Belvedere*". In this context, the subtle differences between two very similar male figures becomes clear again: in contrast to Saint Sebastian, Rubens's depiction of Christ in the "*Baptism*" is closer to the "*Gaddi Torso*" than the "*Torso del Belvedere*" as it lacks the characteristic asymmetrical rotation.[479] The main difference between the poses shown in the two antique statues is that the shoulders of the "*Gaddi Torso*" are in line with his hips and parallel to the viewer, whereas the "*Torso del Belvedere*" shows a rotated spine, which results in one shoulder being more visible to the viewer than the other when seen from the front. In the depiction of Saint Sebastian in the Frankfurt sketch, this forward rotation of the right shoulder is even more pronounced than in the sketch in Caen.

Rubens's placement of Saint Sebastian's right arm on the quiver in the Frankfurt sketch is most probably derived from a drawing after Michelangelo's *Hercules* statue by Bartolomeo Passarotti, which was retouched by Rubens (Fig. 41).[480] The convex way in which his right arm is placed on his quiver is identical to the way in which the Hercules figure holds his wooden club. Interestingly, the *Hermes* statue – which seems to have been the main inspiration for Saint Sebastian's leg position in the two drawings (in the *Metropolitan Museum* and the *Nationalmuseum* in Stockholm respectively, see: Fig. 42) and the sketch from the de Boer collection – seems to have also been a model for the Saint Sebastian in Frankfurt: only for the latter was the statue consulted from a very

479 The "*Gaddi Torso*" is displayed in the *Uffizi* in Florence and dates from the second century BCE. During Rubens's lifetime the torso was part of the Florentine Gaddi family's collection, from which it got its name.

480 The marble statue is lost today, but was at the *Château de Fontainebleau* during the 17th century, where Rubens might have seen it in the early 1620s. See: Wood 2010c, II, no. 88; Cat.-Edinburgh 2002, no. 16, p. 47/48.

Fig. 41: Bartolomeo Passarotti after Michelangelo, retouched by Rubens, *Hercules*, Pen and ink over faint traces of black chalk, retouched with wash on paper, 30.5 × 16.9 cm, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques, Paris (20.213).

Fig. 42: Mirror-inverted illustration of Fig. 9: *Hermes Belvedere (Antinous)* and Detail of Fig. 19: *The Virgin Adored by Saints (recto)/Study of the Torso Belvedere*.

different perspective, namely from the direct front. The drawing – which most probably inspired the prior works – recorded the statue from a side angle.[481] Finally, the modelling of Sebastian's feet – especially his left foot – seems to have been derived from a drawing after Andrea Mantegna retouched by Rubens, titled "*Nude Youth with a Cornucopia*" in the *Kupferstichkabinett* in Berlin (Fig. 43).[482] While the aforementioned statues above all show the supporting leg's foot directly from the front, Saint Sebastian's foot reveals more of the foot's arch, very much like the "*Nude Youth*".[483]

481 The statue was initially recorded from the right and mirror inverting the image resulted in the exposition of the figure's right side. For the two drawings showing both versions, see: Van der Meulen 1968, III, cat. no. 53/55.

482 The drawing is done after Mantegna's engraving *"Bacchanal with a Wine Vat"*. For an illustration of model and drawing, see: Wood 2010b, II, cat. no. 19/20.

483 For the drawings of the Hercules's foot (*Statens Museum for Kunst*, Copenhagen), see: Van der Meulen 1968, cat. no. 51/52.

Fig. 43: After Andrea Mantegna, retouched by Rubens, *Nude Youth with a Cornucopia*, Pen and ink, retouched in brown wash, yellowish gouache and heightened with white, 25.6 × 14.2 cm, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin (KdZ 1.551).

Fig. 44: Peter Paul Rubens, *Saint Augustine*, Oil on panel, 38 × 17 cm, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (WA1855.177).

As a result, it can be concluded in summary that it was not only one single statue or work of art that offered inspiration, but most likely an array of numerous figures from which Rubens drew motives.[484] On top of these listed antique and Italian "sources of inspiration", Rubens had depicted a standing male figure similar to Saint Sebastian on numerous previous occasions. The same applies to most of the other saints depicted in the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*". Previous depictions of similar figures as well as the of what these models – whether other iconic artworks or Rubens's own, previously-done works – can reveal about the general design process will be discussed in the following chapter.

484 In his essay on Rubens's creative tools ("*Rubens' schöpferische Hilfsmittel*"), David Jaffé makes a similar observation concerning the use of multiple sources for one figure. He lists the following example: when Rubens's drew (or reworked) a drawing of two prisoners after Francesco Salviati's *Farnese*-fresco (*Musée Pincé*, Angers), he added the toes of one of the two sons of the *Laokoon* (*Musei Vaticani*, no. MV 1059). See: Cat.-Vienna 2017b, p. 58.

6.8.2. Figures Revisited – Adaptations of Rubens's Own Compositions

The figure of Saint Augustine was depicted in other paintings and consequently the saint did not have to be developed from scratch for his depiction in the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*".[485] Examples include the figure of Saint Ambrose in "*The Real Presence In The Holy Sacrament*" (*Saint Paul's Church*, Antwerp), which was painted around 1609 and a corresponding oil sketch of "*Saint Augustine*" in the *Ashmolean Museum* in Oxford (Fig. 44).[486] The similarity between these two figures and the figure of Saint Augustine in the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" versions becomes more obvious when the figure of Saint Ambrose of *Saint Paul's* is mirror inverted. Although the *Ashmolean Museum* oil sketch's execution shows characteristics typical of Rubens's painting technique, such as an extremely thin application of paint, certain stylistic shortcomings do not necessarily indicate a completion by Rubens's hand, but perhaps by one of his pupils or employees. For instance, the figure's facial features lack depth and seem unrefined.[487] However, in any case, the sketch still portrays a figure that was clearly part of Rubens's repertoire when the composition "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" was developed. Hans Vlieghe questions a direct link between the portrayed saints in the sketch in Oxford and the painting in *Saint Paul's*, given that two different saints are depicted, and one figure is shown in reverse.[488] However, as has been highlighted in the previous chapter, mirror inverting figures was a common practice in Rubens's creative process and consequently these arguments are not entirely convincing.[489] To the contrary, it can be assumed that the two very similar figures were indeed taken from the same model, even if they were subsequently inverted.[490]

485 The figure in the foreground – which can clearly be identified as Saint Augustine in some of the compositions due to the flaming heart in his hand – will be referred to as "Saint Augustine" even though – as will be discussed – this identification is not quite accurate in all versions.

486 For illustrations, see: Vlieghe 1973, I, no. 56 and no. 65.

487 Furthermore, the whole figure seems very two-dimensional and the areal application of paint is very unlike Rubens's usually such dynamic brushwork.

488 See: Vlieghe 1973, I, p. 96.

489 Hans Vlieghe's argument, that two different saints are depicted will be addressed further below.

490 In this particular case, the oil sketch in the *Ashmolean Museum* was most probably done either after an additional unknown sketch or the painting in *Saint Paul's*.

Saint Augustine's pluvial gown in "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" is almost identical to the episcopal robes that Saint Ambrose is wearing in the oil sketch showing the "*Defenders Of The Eucharist*" in the *Museo del Prado* (Fig. 45).[491] The golden colour of the gown's fabric, the figurative representations on the border and the clypeus with the decorative tassel are clearly derived from the same model.[492] However, the angle of the figure is slightly different in the *Prado* sketch, as Saint Ambrose's back is turned further towards the viewer. In this context, the depiction of "*Theodosius and Saint Ambrose*" in the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* (Fig. 46) is more accurate, which is especially obvious when looking at Abraham van Diepenbeeck's copy of the same subject, in which the saint is not obscured by the figure of a child.[493]

A similar case applies with the depiction of Saint Lawrence and Nicholas of Tolentino: the former has a strong similarity to a kneeling figure in the painting of "*The Last Communion of Francis of Assisi*" in the *Royal Museum of Fine Arts* in Antwerp (Fig. 47), when one of the figures is looked at in reverse.[494] As previously mentioned, Nicholas of Tolentino is clearly derived from Titian's depiction of Saint Bernardino of Siena (see: Fig. 4).[495]

Not only the prominent figures in the foreground of the composition were based on pre-existing models. For instance, the features of Saint Apollonia are almost identical to a previously-mentioned drawing of a "*Young Woman Looking Down*" (or "*Study for Saint Apollonia*") in the *Metropolitan Museum of Art* in New York (Fig. 48).[496] When the depiction of a figure – or any other specific detail – in a drawing and a painting correspond in such a clearly recognisable way, the respective drawing is usually dated to the period of the creation of the painting. This is not implausible, since drawings could have served to work out details before transferring

491 The composition is part of a series of 20 works, which Rubens designed for a tapestry cycle. It was commissioned by the Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia for the convent church of the *Señoras Religiosas Descalzas Reales* in Madrid. There is also a painting of the subject in the *John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art* in Sarasota (SN214).

492 A detailed drawing of an almost identical fold in the fabric is in the *Fitzwilliam Museum* in Cambridge. For an illustration, see: Vlieghe 1973, II, no. 10.

493 The painting in Vienna is dated to 1615/16. The painting by Diepenbeeek entered a private collection through a sale at *Christie's Auction House* in 2007.

494 They are similar in statue, although their garments are different. In "*The Last Communion of Francis of Assisi*", the figure is wearing a white garment, probably a surplice, while Saint Lawrence is clothed in a golden habiliment, most likely an ornate dalmatic. Saint Lawrence's pose can also be compared to a kneeling figure in the right foreground of the composition "*The Apotheosis of Henry IV and the Proclamation of the Regency*" (the oil sketch is in the *Alte Pinakothek*, München and the monumental finished painting in the *Musée du Louvre*, Paris).

495 A similar drawing, most probably a copy after Rubens, is illustrated in the *Corpus Rubenianum* Volume XIII on Saints. See: Vlieghe 1973, I, no. 170.

496 See: Held 1986, no. 170, p. 251.

Fig. 45: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Defenders of the Eucharist*, ca. 1625, Oil on panel, 68 × 65.5 cm, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (P001695/001).

Fig. 47: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Last Communion of Saint Francis*, 1619, Oil on panel, 422 × 226 cm, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp (305).

Fig. 46: Peter Paul Rubens, *Saint Ambrose and Emperor Theodosius*, 1615/16, Oil on canvas, 362 × 246 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (Gemäldegalerie, 524).

Fig. 48: Peter Paul Rubens, *Young Woman Looking Down (Study for the Head of Saint Apollonia)*, 1628, Black and red chalk, heightened with white, retouched with pen and brown ink, 41.4 × 28.7 cm, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence (1043 E).

them to the panel or canvas in oil. Additional sources, such as letters or invoices, which allow the dating of a project, are more often found in connection with paintings than drawings. However, it should be noted that since Rubens recycled his figures so often, it is not always clear which specific painting truly prompted the making of the drawing.[497] For instance, three drawings of a woman from different angles in the *Albertina* in Vienna are usually associated with the "*Ildefonso Altarpiece*" *Kunsthistorisches Museum* in Vienna.[498] However, when looking at the painting "*Head of Cyrus Brought to Queen Tomyris*" – which was completed between 1622 and 1623 – the depicted women also show similar physiognomies.[499] Consequently, it could also be assumed that the drawings were done as early as 1621/1622 and are part of the ealier painting's design process. Apart from this, it is also possible that some of these detailed studies were made without a specific composition in mind, much like the *ricordi*. Instead of a process in which Rubens would conjure up an idea in his head, organise a model to pose in his thought-out way, sketch him or her and subsequently transfer this study to the painting, the starting point of the procedure may well have been Rubens browsing through a range of catalogued sketches, looking for a fitting pose. The fact that so many of the figures were indeed recycled makes the latter scenario conceivable. However, if the former scenario was the case, and these detailed drawings were usually done *ad hoc*, it has to be noted that the drawing of the figure of Saint Apollonia is an exception, given that such a detailed sketch is not preserved for any of the other figures in the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*". Consequently, the existence of a precise drawing of the relatively marginal figure of Saint Apollonia raises the question of whether all other figures were prepared in such a detailed fashion with drawings that are lost today, or if the drawing of the "*Young Woman Looking Down*" was not was created *ad hoc* for this composition but randomly available in Rubens's collection of drawings. Unfortunately, this cannot be determined based on the material available today.

The list of comparative material for figures depicted in "*Madonna Enthroned with Child an Saints*" goes on – even if less rich in detail – and almost every figure has a preceding counterpart somewhere in Rubens's œuvre. For instance, when seen in reverse, Saint Peter is very similar to

497 Saint Apollonia is not the only figure that can be associated with this drawing. When looking at the painting "*The Meeting of David and Abigail*" (*The Detroit Institute of Art*, Michigan), it becomes clear that when mirror inverted, the figure in the yellow dress is also clearly derived from the same model. However, this painting is dated from 1625-1630 and consequently it is not clear whether it was done before or after the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*". A further example would be the various depictions of "*Meleager and Atalante*" (versions of this composition can be found – for instance – in the *Alte Pinakothek* in Munich or the *Gemäldegalerie* in Dresden).

498 See: Cat.-NewYork 2004, p. 214–218. Vlieghe 1973, II, p. 88–89.

499 The painting "*Head of Cyrus Brought to Queen Tomyris*" is currently in the *Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston (41.40). See, for instance: Berger 1979, p. 22ff.

"*A Study of a Head (Saint Ambrose)*" in the *National Gallery of Scotland* and Saint Paul resembles depictions such as "*The Bust of Christ*".[500] Regarding the colour of their robes and their beards, the saints mimic a standard form of presentation.[501] The same can be said for the remaining female saints, such as Saint Clara of Montefalco, as well as the putti. As previously mentioned, Saint George (the way he is depicted in the finished altarpiece and similar versions) is close to a figure in a drawing after a painting by Correggio (see: Fig. 5). The figure could also have been influenced by the depiction of Caron in a drawing by Rubens, presumably after Raphael ("*Psyché monte dans la Barque de Caron et refuse d'écouter un Vieillard qui lui demande l'Aumône*").[502] Saint Joseph – behind the virgin – is also known from Rubens's other depictions of the holy family.[503] Besides the drawings after other artists and the one detailed drawing used as a model for Saint Apollonia, most correspondences were found with figures depicted in other paintings of Rubens. It is important to note that these paintings had most probably already left Rubens's studio at the time when the altarpiece was designed. Especially large paintings such as altarpieces that were made to order would have generally left the premises as soon as they were completed.[504] The only way in which these compositions were accessible years later was through copies. Rubens's catalogue of figure studies and oil sketches must have been much larger and more diverse than the number of sketches known today. It is easy to imagine that Rubens had some form of record of every painting and figure that he ever made.

Apart from the organisational perspective, the repetition of figures is telling with respect to Rubens's creative process. The fact that Rubens incorporated numerous artworks by other artists into his own figures, and – on top of this – often repeated his own works is noteworthy insofar as that it offers clues about the figures' artistic development: building on his own past compositions should generally have simplified Rubens's process of designing figures and the same applies

500 The "*Study of a Head (Saint Ambrose)*" in the *National Gallery of Scotland* in Edinburgh has the accession number NG 2097. For two versions of "*The Bust of Christ*" after Rubens, see: Vlieghe 1973, I, no. 10/11.

501 See for instance: Vlieghe 1973, I, no. 89–93.

502 See: Lugt 1949, p. 47, no. 1077.

503 See for instance the privately-owned painting "*The Holy Family with Saint John*" (Cat.-Vienna 2017b, p. 92) or the altarpiece "*The Adoration of the Magi*" in the King's College Chapel in Cambridge.

504 Rubens's letter to Sir Dudley Carleton bears testimony to this; Rubens lists all the available paintings in his studio, which are only eleven plus a series depicting twelve apostles. Although this could also only reflect the number of paintings Rubens wanted to trade with Carleton, from a business perspective it is unlikely that he kept an abundance of works stored in his studio. See: Magurn 1955, p. 60–61.

to the borrowing from existing artworks.[505] For instance, during the process of making *ricordi*, Rubens must have studied these antique and Italian works very diligently. Irrespective of their art theoretical content, after making copies of these antique artworks, Rubens was doubtlessly closely acquainted with their physical appearance.[506]

Including an abundance of different material such as drawings and oil sketches into a preparatory process is often justified by Rubens's alleged quest to find the "ideal" composition or positioning of specific figures. This is certainly the case with the material depicting the figures of Saint Sebastian and Saint George for the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*".[507] However, despite these alleged preparations, the sketch in Frankfurt still shows changes – or *pentimenti* – to the pose of Saint Sebastian, which makes the whole process of making numerous preparatory sketches seem redundant (see: Fig. 22).[508] Given that Rubens had already dealt with the depiction of a very similar male figure for paintings such as the "*Baptism of Christ*" (Fig. 40), the process of making a drawing followed by not one but two detailed oil sketches before even starting work on the actual composition of the whole painting seems excessive. This is particularly the case since – as has been shown – the versions of Saint Sebastian are derived from various antique models. The figures would still have to be specified to some degree since they are not exact repetitions of existing works, although the fact that Rubens was building on existing poses and gestures should have given him a considerable head start in the design process. The often-quoted principle that Rubens did not copy his own compositions should also diligently be extended to the preparatory process. In summary, this makes the existence of numerous single-handed preparatory works all the more unlikely.

505 Having made numerous *ricordi* after the antiques in question, these poses would have most probably been very familiar to him. Coincidentally, none other than the already discussed first drawing for the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" in the *Metropolitan Museum* itself shows a *ricordo* of the *Torso del Belvedere* on the *verso*. See: Cat.-NewYork 2004.

506 On the specific subject of making copies after antiques, see the recent catalogue: Cat.-Vienna 2017b.

507 This mainly concerns the drawing in the *Metropolitan Museum*, the sketch in Caen and the sketch from the collection *de Boer,* which are generally thought to have preceded the sketch in Frankfurt. For a list of literature on the subject of the works chronological succession, see the above chapters on the drawing and the two sketches, respectively.

508 The underlying version of Saint Sebastian in the sketch in Frankfurt can be emphasized in this context, as technically this work shows two depictions of the saint above one another, reflecting one further attempt to "get the figure right".

6.9. Changed Details and Additional Meanings

The figure of Saint Sebastian appears in all versions of the composition "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" – even the drawings – and was changed most dramatically throughout them. However, as has been discussed, the changes to his appearance were to some degree the result of compositional alterations. It was shown that the different figures were derived from different models. These changes – although radical – upon first sight only altered the pictorial composition, but not the figure's role or message. He is easily identified as Saint Sebastian, as his right hand is rested on his quiver, while in his left he holds a palm leaf, further identifying him as a martyr saint.[509] However, in the painting in the *Prado* and its numerous copies, his left hand is shown holding a bow instead of a palm leaf (Fig. 33). Although the identification as Saint Sebastian is still evident, this change of attribute was definitely a deliberate contentual decision and cannot be categorised as a compositional necessity. In other words, there must have been a reason behind the alteration regarding the figure's meaning; for instance, the bow could be understood as a reference towards "*Amor Divinus*". The personification of godly love is at times also depicted in the form of a youth with a bow and arrow. For instance, an etching of the "*Triumph of Amor Divinus over Amor*" by Hieronymus Wierix from around 1603 shows *Amor Divinus* triumphing over Cupido.[510] As Anne Buschhoff highlights, in Wierix's etching the two figures of Amor Divinus and Cupido confronting each other was a reinvention or transformation of the more conventional Eros-Anteros subject, whereby *Amor Divinus* took over the conventional role of the "virtuous Anteros". The Eros-Anteros subject was consequently transferred to a more religious meaning, which Buschhoff interprets as a development in the context of the Counter Reformation.[511] It is difficult to say whether Rubens knew this particular etching by Wierix, but the general topic of earthly and godly love in rivalry and the different variations of this subject were most certainly familiar to him, as will be shown below.

This possible additional meaning that can be read into the figure of Saint Sebastian is reinforced by the figure facing him: Saint Augustine with his flaming heart is depicted exactly opposite Saint Sebastian.

509 Solely in the drawing in Stockholm, Saint Sebastian is supported by something more easily identifiable as a wooden log than quiver. However, he is still shown with the martyr palm in his left hand.

510 For an illustration, see: Buschhoff 2013, p. 157.

511 See: Buschhoff 2013, p. 158.

The church father famously set the wounds inflicted by love in the case of the pagan gods Venus and Cupid in analogy to the rapture of a believer by an arrow of godly love. In his *Confessiones IX, 21*, Augustine writes: "[…] *sagittaveras tu cor nostrum charitate tua*".[512] This is the reason why Saint Augustine's attribute is a pierced, flaming heart.

The depiction of two putti with two different sets of wings is a further detail that the finished altarpiece (Fig. 2) and the painting in the *Prado* (Fig. 33) have in common, which is not depicted consistently in all versions of the composition and which can also be interpreted along the same lines: in the altarpiece and the *Prado* version, the putto flying above the Virgin with a wreath is depicted with the wings of a dragonfly, while the putto bearing flowers behind Saint Catherine has the feathered wings of an eagle. Showing two putti with these specific sets of wings is common in Rubens's œuvre and generally interpreted as a depiction of Amor and Psyche.[513] Amor and Psyche with butterfly wings can already be found on early Christian sarcophagi, since the Greek word "psyche" means both soul and butterfly. The butterfly wings were morphed over time into those resembling a dragonfly. It might initially seem odd to find a reference to pagan gods in a catholic altarpiece. However, already the first Christians in Rome reinvented the two pagan characters in their favour. For instance, the Latin author Arnobius the Younger described Christ as Amor in his "*Adversus Nationes*", which he wrote in 305 AD.[514] The narrative of Amor and Psyche was particularly popular in the visual arts from the 15th century onwards.[515] When linking Christ with Amor, the connection to Psyche is easily applied to the relationship of Christ to the human soul: Psyche can be interpreted as the human soul, which is reformed by love (Amor) and rewarded after her ordeal. These Christian reinterpretation and appropriation of initially pagan subjects were prevalent during the early-17th century, particularly in the context of emblem books. To Rubens, the religious reinterpretation was well known, as his former teacher Otto van Veen had recently published the emblem book *Amoris Divini Emblemata*.[516] This book was a religious reinterpretation of Van Veen's initial work *Amorum Emblemata* that had been published in 1608.

512 Cited in: Buschhoff 2013, p. 162. In own translation: "*you will pierce our hearts with the arrows of your love*".

513 The story of Cupid or Amor and Psyche from the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius from the 2nd century AD tells the story of love between the god Amor and the mortal princess Psyche and their ultimate union in a sacred marriage.

514 After Arnobius converted to Christianity, he fought against pagan mythology by contrasting it with Christian ethics. See: Buschhoff 2013, p. 158.

515 In this context Raphael's "*Loggia di Psyche*" in the *Villa Farnesina* or Sebastiano Filippi's decoration of the *Este-Palace* in Ferrara are worth mentioning. Moreover, Amor's characteristic mischievousness was often incorporated into the depiction of putti.

516 Martin Nutius and Johannes Meursius published Otto van Veen's "*Amoris Divini Emblemata*" in 1615, which Van Veen wrote at the suggestion of the Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia. See: Buschhoff 2013, p. 11.

Saint Sebastian's possible connection to *Amor Divinus* and the reinterpreted Eros-Anteros motive follows the same lines as the presence of Amor and Psyche in the painting: it can be read as a nod towards the Christian interpretation of the antique subject of the "triumph of salvific love". Consequently, the changed attribute offers an indication of a multi-layered or ambiguous reading of the *Prado* painting's content. For the altarpiece, Saint Sebastian was equipped with the palm leaf, an additional reference towards his martyrdom, which is perhaps more the direction the altarpiece was to be read. The changes to Saint Sebastian's attribute in the *Prado* painting (and the additional levels of meaning these small changes provoked) can thus be understood as a further development or an additional charging of the composition regarding its multi-layered meaning and content.

The saint identified as Saint Augustine can be found in every version of the composition done in oil. Even though the changes are much subtler than the significantly-changed Saint Sebastian, they are nonetheless meaningful. The changes mainly concern his attributes, namely the flaming heart and his crozier. In the Frankfurt sketch (Fig. 20), the crozier's spiral is turned to the left, away from the figure, whereas in the *modello* in Berlin (Fig. 29) and some other similar versions – such as the copy in the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston (Fig. 30) – the spiral turns to the right, or inwards towards the figure. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the Frankfurt sketch shows a *pentimento* indicating the spiral could have initially turned towards the saint and was altered to turn to the right at a later point.[517] In the finished altarpiece (Fig. 2), the spiral turns towards the left, away from the saint, but is positioned on the right side of the imaginary line cast by the staff's shaft, forming a line similar to a question mark. The depiction of Saint Augustine's flaming heart is not less peculiar; for instance, it is depicted in the finished altarpiece, in the painting in the *Prado* and its copies, the sketch in Salzburg (Fig. 23)[518] and the versions similar to it.[519] However, Saint Augustine's hand is empty in the *modello* in Berlin (Fig. 29), the sketch in Frankfurt (Fig. 20), the painting in Boston (Fig. 30), and the lost painting previously in Cologne (Fig. 31), among others.

517 If the *modello* in Berlin had indeed been done between the sketch in Frankfurt and the altar-piece, the *pentimento* is rather peculiar: the painter would have initially turned the crozier to the right in the Frankfurt sketch but retouched it to make it turn to the left, only to go back to turning it to the right in the following sketch (the *modello* in Berlin), only to change it again – to the left – in the finished altar piece.

518 The sketch in Salzburg shows a round shape, which rather resembles a golden apple. A golden apple would point towards Saint Nicholas of Myra, although the heart's flames and smoke could be gone in line with the sketch's poor condition. In any case, the saint's hand is clearly not empty.

519 It is difficult to say for sure on the basis of the black and white image, but most likely the sketch from the M. Knoedler collection (Fig. 25) shows a flaming heart.

Nonetheless, the sketch in Frankfurt and the one in Berlin show *pentimenti* right above Saint Augustine's left hand, which indicates that there used to be a flaming heart, which was later over painted.[520]

In all of the versions that lack the flaming heart (except the sketch in Frankfurt, which seems to represent an exception in many ways), the crozier correspondingly points towards the saint. This is relevant insofar as that a spiral pointing away from the carrier symbolises a bishop, whereas an inward-pointing spiral is generally used to depict abbots. This is a reference to the fact that an abbot acts inwardly towards the church, whereas a bishop acts outwardly towards the people. When depicted without the attribute of the flaming heart and with the crozier spiralling inwardly towards the right, this figure can no longer convincingly be identified as the bishop Saint Augustine.

When looking at the other changes made to the saints in the other versions, a similar pattern becomes apparent. In the finished altarpiece in Antwerp, almost all saints are depicted with their attributes (Fig. 2).[521] Regarding the identity of these figures, there is room for debate only insofar as that some saints share the same attributes and it is difficult to decide between a few narrowed-down possibilities. The monk saint is such a case. He was identified as Thomas of Aquino, Saint Benedict and Nicholas of Tolentino, as both these saints are depicted with a star or sun on their chest.[522] By contrast, in other versions, such as the version in the *Prado* (Fig. 33), specific changes can be made out concerning the saints' attributes. As highlighted above, Saint Agnes's attributes are missing, Mary Magdalene's hand is visible next to her face, the palm leaf in Saint Sebastian's left hand was replaced by a large bow and the sun on the chest of the monk figure has been replaced by a brownish round shape. Two of these alterations change the identity of the figure: without the lamb, the figure in the blue dress shown in profile can no longer be identified as Saint Agnes and the monk's identity also becomes indeterminable.

520 In the case of the sketch in Berlin this can be seen with the naked eye. It would be of great value to technically investigate this sketch and to see whether it also shows a *pentimento* along the crozier – like the sketch in Frankfurt – or not.

521 The figure – which was identified as Mary Magdalene, is shown without an attribute – as is Joseph behind the Virgin.

522 It is difficult to determine which of the saints would have fitted the context, as it is not exactly clear as to why these specific saints were assembled in the composition. As has been discussed, there is the possibility of them being the patron saints of the donors or they represent holy helpers (see the chapter on the altarpiece's commission above). For instance, Tieze identified the figure as Nicholas of Tolentino. See: Tieze 2009, p. 341ff; In the *Prado* Museum Catalogue, on the other hand, he is listed as Saint Benedict; see: Portús/Sabán 1996, p. 341.

The sketch in Berlin (Fig. 29) shows more radical changes: the four female saints on the steps are all depicted without attributes.[523] Moreover, Saint Catherine's wheel is depicted directly underneath her, not behind the putto's legs and the figure of Nicholas of Tolentino has neither sun on his chest nor bread in his hands. As previously mentioned, Saint Augustine's flaming heart was also painted over. The same is true for the work in Boston (Fig. 30), except Saint Augustine's hand does not show a *pentimento* and his crozier is turned to the right, towards him.

These numerous differences beg the question of the reasoning behind these alterations. As already indicated, the identity of the depicted saints is only established with the help of their attributes. Because the attributes are so unclear in many of the sketches, scholars have often attributed the saints with the help of other versions. For instance, most saints in the Frankfurt sketch cannot be identified without looking to other works.[524] However, the references or clues can only be transferred from other versions if one assumes that all of the compositions were meant to illustrate and mean the exact same thing. As shown above, it cannot be taken for granted, that the Frankfurt sketch is a preliminary work for the altarpiece. It may well have been a subsequent reduction of the composition. Furthermore, the fact that the changes to the attributes were willfully made (even if they seem small) has to be taken into account: depicting saints without attributes is most certainly not neglect on the part of the artist, but a conscious decision and should be interpreted as such. In this context, a letter that Rubens wrote in February 1608 to Annibale Chieppio – Secretary of State to Vincenzo Gonzaga, the Duke of Mantua – can be cited. Wanting to sell a painting that he had originally made for the *Chiesa Nuova*, Rubens comments on the depiction of saints and describes his work as follows:

> "*In order that you may be well informed on everything, I will tell you that the composition is very beautiful because of the number, size, and variety of the figures of old men, young men, and ladies richly dressed. And although all these figures are saints, they have no special attributes or insignia, which could not be applied to any other saints of similar rank*".[525]

With this in mind, the lack of attributes obtains significant meaning. The additional version can consequently not only be seen as compositional adaptations but drastic changes to the image's

523 The figure of Saint Apollonia is depicted without her pincers, Saint Agnes without the sheep and Saint Clara of Montefalco without her scales.

524 See for instance: Tieze 2009.

525 For the full letter, see: Magurn 1955, p. 43.

Fig. 49: Hendrik Snyers after Peter Paul Rubens, *Mary with Child adored by Saints*, 1635–1644, Engraving, 58.6 × 47.0 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (RP-P-OB-70.126).

Fig. 50: Rombout Eynhoudts after Peter Paul Rubens, *The Virgin Enthroned with Child and Saints*, 1635–1680, Engraving, 41.9 × 29.3 cm, British Museum, London (1891,0414.776).

message. In changing the attributes, the composition's iconography was altered from an image content relating specifically to the Augustinian Order to a more neutral assembly of saints, or – in the case of the *Prado* painting – further possibilities of interpretation. If the oil sketch in Frankfurt was indeed a preliminary work for a different, subsequent painting or paintings, it is conceivable that attributes were included in the successive work *ad hoc,* according to its future location and the buyer's wishes. By changing the smallest of detail, the composition is potentially detached from its initial key significance and fully transformed to form additional multi-layered meaning that can be read specifically for each individual work.

6.10. The Engravings by Hendrick Snyers and Remoldus Eynhoudt

Although the engravings are not part of the preliminary process, they will be very briefly discussed in the following chapter as their content is telling in respect to the other material's intended purpose. Potentially some works attributed to the preparatory process could have been made to serve as templates for the engravers and this possibility must be clarified.

The "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" was one of Rubens's more popular subjects and the previously-mentioned numerous copies are a testimony to that. However, the smaller reproductions were most likely made for private collections and not seen by many viewers, once they reached their owners premises. The composition's high recognition value was definitely fuelled by the fact that the large painting hung as a main altarpiece in a newly-erected church. Apart from this, the composition was most certainly known to the largest percentage of people through two engravings by Hendrick Snyers (Fig. 49) and Remoldus Eynhoudt (Fig. 50), respectively. The prints are both quite accurate reproductions of the altarpiece and they show details that are only depicted in the finished work, such as the military saint's hidden arm. This rules out the possibility that any one of the oil sketches listed above served as a template for the engravers.

The engraving by Snyers measures 58.6 × 47.0 cm and reproduced the composition in a very detailed and well-worked-out fashion. Below the illustration the engraving is dedicated to Ioannes Mertens of the Augustine Order by "*Abr. Van Diepenbeke*" and further reads "*Pet. Paul Rubens pinxit et Hendrick Snyers sculpsit; Abraham à Diepenbeke execudit Antuerpiae Cum priuilegio*".[526] Eynhoudt's engraving is significantly smaller (41.9 × 29.3 cm) and shows a coarser execution. The details are not as delicately worked out and the depiction of the faces shows less skill. They differ in small details; for instance, the latter print does not show ribbons in the Virgin's wreath, which is held above her by a single putto in both cases. Moreover, the chequered floor is more evident in the engraving by Snyers. Nonetheless, it is clear that only the altarpiece or a faithful copy could have been the engravers template and consequently the works discussed above must have originated for other reasons.

526 See: DeHoop Scheffer/Boon 1983, p. 100.

Fig. 51: Jan van Kessel I and Cornelis Schut, *A wreath of flowers surrounding a cartouche with the Holy Family and putti*, Oil on canvas, 119.4 × 88.9 cm, Privately-owned (Palais Dorotheum Vienna, 17.10.2017, Lot no. 112).

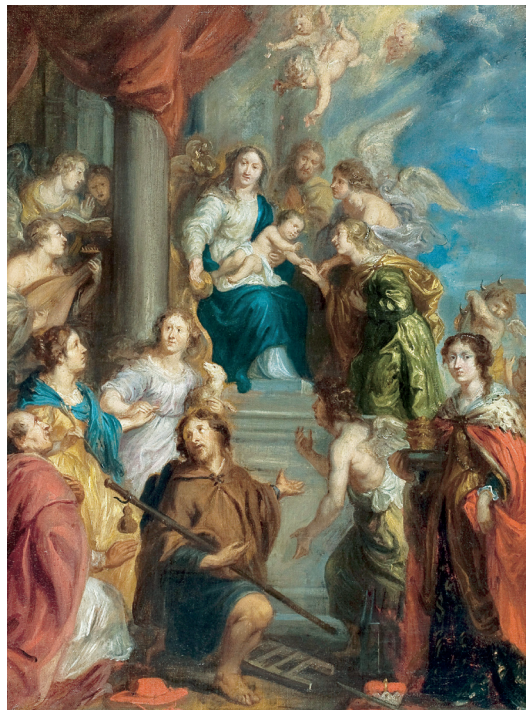

Fig. 52: Theodor Boeyermans, *The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine*, 1635–1678, Oil on canvas, 54.3 × 39.1 cm, Stedelijke Musea, Mechelen.

6.11. Adaptations of the Subject

The large popularity of the subject also led to later adaptations of the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*", such as the painting of "*A wreath of Flowers Surrounding a Cartouche with the Holy Family and Putti*" by Jan van Kessel I (Fig. 51).[527] This work was painted on canvas and measures 119.4 × 88.9 cm. The painting shows an elaborate flower wreath, which encircles a stone cartouche. The image on the cartouche was presumably done by Cornelis Schut and it shows a depiction of the central motif of the composition, namely the Virgin enthroned with the Child on her lap. A putto – who is depicted to the left of Saint Catherine in the original panting – replaced the female martyr saint in this composition. Consequently, it is now the putto who stretches towards the infant Christ.

527 The painting was auctioned at the *Palais Dorotheum* in Vienna on 17th October 2017.

This is an assembling of figures known from a work discussed earlier: an infant reaching towards the child placed on the lap of a female figure is depicted in this same way in the top half of the drawing in the *Nationalmuseum* in Stockholm (Fig. 8).

Cornelis Schut is often thought to have been one of Rubens's pupils. He became a master of the Guild of Saint Luke in 1618/19 and he verifiably worked with Rubens on the *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*.[528] Consequently, Schut potentially came into contact with the composition of the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" in Rubens's studio. Although it cannot be verified for certain, the possibility that the drawing in Stockholm was done by Schut cannot be ruled out. The sheet would in that case represent Schut's recording of two of Rubens's paintings, namely the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" and the "*Landscape with Saint George and the Dragon*". The technique of accentuating chalk drawings with wash is closer to the œuvre of Schut than it is to Rubens.[529] Schut's drawings show a similar handling of the figures' eyes insofar as that they are shown as slits or points and give the figures a beady eyed look. This is perhaps insufficient evidence to confidently attribute the drawing to Cornelis Schut. However, the adaptation of this composition serves to show that Rubens himself is not the only person worth considering when attributing creative adaptations of his subjects.

An example of how the whole composition of the "*Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*" was interpreted anew is a work done almost half a century later by the Antwerp artists Theodor Boyermans. It is titled "*The Madonna Venerated by Saints*" and still in its original location, namely the Begijnhof Church in Malines, Belgium. The work measures 450 × 310 cm and is signed and dated 1672. The composition shows very different figures such as the church's patron saint, Saint Alexis. However, key elements of Rubens's painting such as the architectural setting with the column and the red drape were copied. Interestingly, the triangular shape of the drape in Boeyermans oil sketch of the subject in the *Stedelijke Musea Mechelen* (Fig. 52) is very similar to the way in which the drape is depicted in the version shown in the oil sketch now in the *Städel Museum* in Frankfurt (Fig. 20).[530]

528 The *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi* was the triumphal entry procession for the Cardinal-Infant Ferdinand of Austria, who became Governor of the Spanish Netherlands, after Isabella Clara Eugenia's passing in 1633. Rubens was in charge of the elaborate decorations. See: J. R. Martin 1972.

529 See, for instance, the drawing of "*The Resurrection*" sold at Sotheby's on 31st January 2018 or "*The Assembly of the Olympic Gods with Apollo and Daphne*", sold at a Millon auction in Paris on 1st April 2016.

530 For an illustration of the oil sketch, see: Cat.-Worcester 1983, p. 23.

This begs the question of whether Boeyermans's source of inspiration truly was the altarpiece or if he had access to the oil sketch in question. If this were the case, some tie to Rubens's workshop can be assumed.[531]

In any case, it becomes apparent that Rubens's compositions served as an inspiration for the following generations of artists, which went far beyond the making of exact copies. The process of adapting subjects also leaves traces of preparatory material and consequently when coming across drawings or sketches that show modified versions of Rubens's compositions, the step towards attributing it to the master himself should be taken cautiously.

531 Boeyermans was accepted into the Guild of Saint Luke in 1654, fourteen years after Rubens's death, insofar it is impossible that he fully trained with Rubens. See: Rombouts/Van Lerius 1961b, p. 248. However it cannot be ruled out that he came into contact with the workshop at some point before that, or second hand through one of Rubens's employees. For instance, van Dyck has been suggested as his teacher.