

Madonna Holding the Infant Jesus under the Fir Trees **Painted by Lucas Cranach the Elder With Relations to the Output** **of the Middle Ages and Tradition of Icon Painting¹**

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Ubi caritas est et sapientia, ibi nec timor nec ignorantia²

St Francis of Assisi

Abstract:

The subject of this paper is an analysis of a Marian painting created and signed by Lucas Cranach the Elder c. 1510. It intends to demonstrate relations of this panel painting against a background of the medieval art of both East and West. The piece under discussion was created at the turning point of two epochs of transalpine art: late-Gothic and early-Renaissance. Formal and ideological features present in this painting were borrowed from the oeuvre of medieval art and literature, in addition to a long-standing tradition of icon painting. The icons are often perceived as conservative pictures, remaining motionless through the artistic epochs. These aesthetic components were compiled and creatively developed in the painting investigated in this article. Furthermore, the article considers symbolism from various sources, such as the Vulgate and its translations, as well as medieval writings. Formulated conclusions appear to be useful to research carried out into similar works of art. The article concludes with a discussion of some methodological approaches which might be used in several different contexts.

Keywords: Lucas Cranach the Elder, Madonna holding the Infant Jesus, reception of the Middle Ages, icon painting, Renaissance and the Middle Ages, panel painting, Byzantine art, early-Renaissance, late-Gothic, transalpine art, Northern European art

Introduction

The title painting is in the collection of the Archbishopric Museum in Wrocław (Figs. 1–4). Until

1942, it was kept in the cathedral of St John the Baptist in Wrocław (Breslau). It is widely called *Madonna under the firs*, but this name is only conventional. This name does not fully describe the scene,³ painted

¹ Research into this topic has been possible owing to the scholarship granted by the Herder Institute in Marburg and carried out in August 2023. Updated list of selected publications on the subject of this painting and photos are available at: https://lucascranach.org/de/PL_DMW/ (accessed May 7, 2025) and in the cited publications. Name Cranach in all cases refers to Lucas Cranach the Elder. All translations into English are mine, apart from the Bible. I would like to kindly thank the Archbishopric Museum in Wrocław, Herder Institut

in Marburg, Alte Pinakothek in Munich, and Bildarchiv Foto Marburg for invaluable photographs and for permissions to use them.

² SANCTORUM FRANCISCI ET CLARAE ASSISIENSIIUM: *Scripta: editio latina-polona*. Translated by K. AMBROŹKIEWICZ, Cracoviae – Varsaviae 2004, pp. 130–131 (St Francis of Assisi, *Admonitiones, Caput XXVII: De virtute effugante vitia*).



Fig. 1: *Madonna under the firs*, Lucas Cranach the Elder, c. 1510. Contemporary photo received from the Archbishopric Museum in Wrocław / ze zbiorów Muzeum Archidiecezjalnego we Wrocławiu, no. 4949.



Fig. 2: *Madonna under the firs*, detail, Lucas Cranach the Elder, c. 1510. Contemporary photo received from the Archbishopric Museum in Wrocław / ze zbiorów Muzeum Archidiecezjalnego we Wrocławiu, no. 4949.

in oil on a panel made of limewood and having the following dimensions: 70,3 cm height and 56,5 cm width.⁴ The painting was created around seven years before the beginning of the Reformation – it is dated to c. 1510. Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472–1553) was around 38 years old when he painted this picture. He changed his style around 1505, after his early

activities in Vienna. He had earlier belonged to the Danube School style.⁵ Cranach the Elder is generally perceived by art viewers and scholars as belonging to the Northern, transalpine Renaissance, although there are different interpretations of this matter in circulation in academic literature.⁶ He is famous for his numerous portraits of Martin Luther, created

³ FLECHSIG, E.: *Cranachstudien*. Leipzig 1900, p. 12, cat. no. 13. The painting is called simply *Virgin and Child under the Trees*, too: HEYDENREICH, G.: *Lucas Cranach the Elder*. Amsterdam 2007, pp. 67–68, 201, 204.

⁴ SZEWCZYK, A.: *Madonna pod jodłami*, ok. 1510, cat. no. 1. In: *Moda na Cranacha*. Eds.: HOUSZKA, E. – PIERZCHAŁA, M. Wrocław 2017, p. 86 who identifies technique as tempera, which is rare in the literature.

⁵ Cf. BIERENDE, E.: *Lucas Cranach d. Ä. und der deutsche Humanismus: Tafelmalerei im Kontext von Rhetorik, Chroniken und Fürstenspiegeln*. München – Berlin 2002, pp. 16, 18, 21, 24, 26–27, 30–32, 34–37, 42, 48, 158–160, 162, 260–262, 275 (note 44), 283–288, 290, 293, 295, 297, 316 (note 92 and other notes). He criticizes and makes revision of the concepts of artistic landscape and Danube Style.

⁶ Cf. BIERENDE 2002 (see in note 5), pp. 171, 337, 383 (note 80).



Fig. 3. *Madonna under the firs*, Lucas Cranach the Elder, c. 1510. Wrocław, Archbishopric Museum, no. 4949. Photo no. 89355, taken in 1930: Herder Institut, Marburg, Bildarchiv.



Fig. 4. *Madonna under the firs*, Lucas Cranach the Elder, c. 1510, detail. Wrocław, Archbishopric Museum, no. 4949. Photo no. 89356, taken before 1945: Herder Institut, Marburg, Bildarchiv.

later than the discussed painting. Among the topics which Cranach painted, there are highly valued studies of nudes. What is more, he was an expert in portraiture, which was intensively developing at that time.⁷ The origins of the painting in Wrocław might be found in other examples of medieval artistic and written sources. Another beneficial approach is to look at the mutual relationship between the long-lasting, traditional solutions present in icon painting. This is what the present article intends to do. These interpretations in the context of the

medieval art of both East and West hardly ever appear in the vast literature on the subject. Thus, the following suggestion of different interpretations may contribute something new to the current state of research. I consider a choice of literature, and sources crucial for the raised problem. The discussed painting stands out against other Cranach's Marian pictures.⁸ The artist has lent the holy figures an in-depth psychological characterization.⁹

The painting stands out from other, numerous *Madonnas* thanks to its artistic, narrative, and theo-

⁷ WYCZAŃSKI, A.: *Historia powszechna: wiek XVI*. Warszawa – Pułtusk 1999, p. 179; NELSON, J.: *Lucas Cranach: from German myth to reformation*. London 2024, pp. 29–30, 48, 186–187; MESSLING, G.: Cranach's Beginnings. Known Facts and Assumptions. In: *Cranach – The Early Years in Vienna*. Eds.: MESSLING, G., RICHTER, K. München 2022, p. 13.

⁸ GLASER, C.: *Lukas Cranach*. Leipzig 1923, p. 70.

⁹ WITTMANN, J.: Die Bedeutung des Marienbildes im Schaffen Cranachs. In: *Unsichtbare Meisterzeichnungen auf dem Malgrund: Cranach und seine Zeitgenossen [Ausstellungskatalog]*. Ed.: SANDNER, I. Regensburg 1998, p. 172.

logical values. The repetition of iconographic themes and the creation numerous, similar pictures are distinctive features of Cranach's workshop. There was a dividing up of work among those in his workshop.¹⁰ These qualities make his workshop similar to the way teams of icon-painters worked in studios housing many specialized craftsmen, known from later eras in Western art, too. Their work was nearly a serial one. It was described by one of the characters in a novel *In the World* (known also as *Amid Attendants*), written by Maxim Gorky: "earlier icon painting had been a holy matter", which was later reduced to artistic expression.¹¹ Although both Cranach's paintings and icons numerous copy iconographic subjects, they usually maintain high artistic standards. In this paper, I focus my attention on my own interpretation of artistic values, their origins, and meanings. Looking at the painting from the perspective of the Middle Ages allows for novel contributions to the present state of research. The painting is one of roughly a thousand preserved works of art from Cranach's workshop. So, his workshop was exceptional among other creators at that time.¹² What captures the attention of art critics is the contemporary reception of this painting, which has been lately exhibited in many Polish museums. It was displayed on the occasion of the 550th anniversary of Cranach's birthday, together with a few related paintings, from 29 September to 30 December 2022 in the Gothic Old Town Hall in Toruń – the seat of the District Museum. The exhibition was entitled *Cranach. A great master of the Renaissance*.¹³

Solutions taken from the medieval art and from icon painting

Cranach inspired contemporary and future icon painters.¹⁴ Whereas his graphics gave idea for wall paintings dated after the mid-16th century in one of the foremost centres of Orthodox Christianity.¹⁵ One of Cranach's later paintings – dated to 1518 was probably inspired by Byzantine Marian icons: these include the types of *Eleusa*, and *Glykophylousa*. The difference between Cranach's works and the icons was the fidelity to realistic depiction of nature.¹⁶ The title painting may be compared to Byzantine and post-Byzantine *Hodegetrias*. At the same time, the Wrocław *Madonna* can be described as the outcome of a few types of Marian icons and components of Western art known at the turn of epochs. Also, in the case of sources of inspiration mentioned in this paper a remark remains justified: the character of Cranach's art "cannot be reduced to a simple formula of quotation and compilation".¹⁷ The discussed painting was created more than half a century after the fall of Constantinople as the capital city of the Byzantine Empire in 1453. Cranach adopted antique patterns at least since 1508.¹⁸ Similarly, he could start using motifs from works of art of Byzantine origin or simply from the circle of Byzantine or, more generally, art of the Orthodox Church. Such works of art were present in the West since the existence of the Latin Empire (1204–1261).¹⁹ Many icons were being imported to Europe from Crete, which from

¹⁰ NELSON 2024 (see in note 7), pp. 11–12, 58–59.

¹¹ GOR'KIJ, M.: *Povesti 1913–1923*. Moskva 1951, p. 386.

¹² HINZ, B.: Cranach, Lucas, d. Ä. In: *Saur Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon* 22, Eds.: BEYER, A. – SAVOY, B. – TEGETHOFF, W. München – Leipzig 1999, p. 171.

¹³ This opportunity allowed me to engage in a closer study of the painting. At that time, I was writing a book monograph on a collection of 19th century icons: WASZAK, P.: *Ikony z kolekcji Profesora Wiesława Litewskiego w zbiorach Muzeum Uniwersyteckiego w Toruniu: katalog*. Toruń 2024.

¹⁴ E.g. many times imitated was Cranach's *Madonna from Innsbruck*, dated to 1537: TKACZUK, W.: Hryhorij Krzysztofowycz, Maryja Panna z Dzieciątkiem. In: *Święte ikony Kijowa*

i Czernibowa oraz ich kult w Ukrainie. Eds.: DELUGA, W. – KOPSZAK, P. Warszawa 2023, pp. 108–109.

¹⁵ KUHN, M.: *Die Apokalypse – Holzschnitte von Lucas Cranach als Vorlagen für Grossfresken in Athos-Klöstern. Zum 500. Geburtstag des Kronacher Meisters*. [Lichtenfels] 1973, pp. 3, 8–9, 12–20.

¹⁶ BRINKMANN, B.: *Madonna mit Kind*, cat. no. 62. In: *Cranach der Ältere*. Ed.: BRINKMANN, B. Ostfildern 2007, p. 244.

¹⁷ BIERENDE 2002 (see in note 5), pp. 41–42.

¹⁸ Ibidem, pp. 123, 166–167, 171–172.

¹⁹ LOWDEN, J.: *Early Christian & Byzantine Art*. London 2012, pp. 379–380.

1211 belonged to Venice and, as a result, gave rise to workshops painting icons there.²⁰

Icons were imported to the West in many ways, even long before the Fourth Crusade. The reception of Byzantine art was creative, indirect, resulting in “hybrid” or transformed works of art. At the same time imports and artists were bridging the gap between the art of the East and the West. Crucial was also the growing cult of St Mary up to the year 1517, resulting in numerous Marian paintings, adapted for Catholic use, especially in Germany, and Flanders. After 1261 there still was clear Byzantine influence on the Western, and especially Italian art, too. The impact was often limited to the iconography, but there were also influences concerning style, composition, and technique.²¹ There was growing import of icons even after the fall of Mystras in 1460.²²

It is intriguing that Cranach’s *Madonna* is close to the expression of Byzantine icons. Whereas some 19th century icons differ from the Byzantine ones. For example a cheerful icon, quite close to sentimental ones which was placed in an iconostasis created by Mikloššik-Zmij in 1833 in Kojšov.²³

A delicate, half-transparent, small veil swathes the Madonna’s long hairstyle in Cranach’s painting. The veil is much different from the *maphorion*, the conventional, and nearly compulsory dress of the Mother of God in the art of the Orthodox Christianity, except for the isolated types of Marian icons. The *maphorion*

swathes the head and shoulders of the Mother of God. This kind of cloth was originally worn by married women in Syria in the times of late antiquity and early Christianity. Generally speaking, the *maphorion* (*palla*) was worn by women in Byzantium even later.²⁴ The veil in the discussed painting, however, can be compared to a white, thin mobcap called *kekeryphalos*. This was worn under the *maphorion* by Madonnas depicted in icons. Similar semi-transparent veils (distinguishing married women from unmarried woman) can be found in the paintings of the artist, like in the painting depicting *Caritas*, dated to 1534.²⁵ The usual colour combination of the Madonna’s robe, a red bottom gown (usually ancient *stola*) and blue outerwear (*maphorion*), has symbolic meaning: blue and red may denote that Madonna belongs to the earthly world and at the same time she was appointed by God the Father to become the Mother of God (*Theotokos*). The colours may also denote Her everlasting virginity and motherhood.²⁶ Such a choice of colours emphasizes naturally the divine nature, and at the same time the humanity of Christ, *hypostasis* of these two natures of the Infant Jesus.²⁷ Similar examples can be observed in the depictions of the robes of the Apostles. The shape of the traditional Apostles’ robes with deep folds was borrowed from the clothing of ancient philosophers. In such robes in the icons are dressed the saints and the Baby Jesus: bottom *chiton* and *himation* as outerwear.

²⁰ LYMBEROPOULOU, A.: Regional Byzantine Monumental Art from Venetian Crete. In: *Byzantine art and Renaissance Europe*. Eds.: LYMBEROPOULOU, A. – DUTTS, R. Farnham 2013, pp. 62, 79–80, 90–91.

²¹ RODLEY, L.: The Byzantine Context. In: LYMBEROPOULOU – DUTTS 2013 (see in note 20), pp. 9–12, 19, 30–35; BLOEMSMA, H.: Byzantine Art and Early Italian Painting. In: LYMBEROPOULOU – DUTTS 2013 (see in note 20), pp. 37–42, 44–53, 57–59; NEWALL, D.: Candia and Post-Byzantine Icons in Late Fifteenth-century Europe. In: LYMBEROPOULOU – DUTTS 2013 (see in note 20), pp. 102–103, 120, 123, 132–134; WOODS, K.: Byzantine Icons in the Netherlands, Bohemia and Spain during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries. In: LYMBEROPOULOU – DUTTS 2013 (see in note 20), pp. 135, 150, 155.

²² DUTTS, R.: Byzantine Icons in the Medici Collection. In: LYMBEROPOULOU – DUTTS 2013 (see in note 20), p. 172, note 63.

²³ The icon was linked to the Nazarene movement and had been influenced by the art of the West: FRICKÝ, A.: *Ikony z východného Slovenska*. Košice 1971, illus. 99, pp. 17, 167.

²⁴ GĘBAROWICZ, M.: *Najstarszy ikonostas cerkwi wołoskiej we Lwowie: dzieje zabytku oraz jego rola w przemianach malarstwa cerkiewnego i sztuki ukraińskiej*. Ed.: GRONEK, A. Wrocław 2016, pp. 206, 208.

²⁵ BRINKMANN, B.: *Caritas*, cat. no. 47. In: BRINKMANN 2007 (see in note 16), p. 206.

²⁶ JAZYKOWA, I.: *Świat ikony*. Translated by H. PAPROCKI. Warszawa 2007, pp. 113, 121–122; RÓŻYCKA-KLEJNOWSKA J. – KLEJNOWSKI-RÓŻYCKI D.: *Studium ikony*. Zabrze 2011, p. 38.

²⁷ JAZYKOWA 2007 (see in note 26), pp. 78, 80.



Fig. 5. Hodegetria icon, 1301/1500, Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, No. 100. Photo no. jmz31992, taken in 1960/70 © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg.

The unchanging form of costumes and poses of Madonna and the Infant Jesus prevail in the art of icon painting. On the one hand, the juxtaposition of such permanence in icon painting and constant evolution in the art of the West between the Middle Ages and Baroque on the other hand was visually outlined by Tatjana Högy. The contrast between East and West conveyed by the drawing was exaggerated as she stated herself (cf. Figs. 5 and 6).²⁸ In a com-



Fig. 6. Initial O with Maria Theotokos (Hodegetria), 1170/1235, prayer book from the Benedictine nunnery of St Erentrude in Nonnberg (Salzburg), Bavarian State Library in Munich, Cod. lat. 15902. Photo no. 1.073.897, taken in 1895/1920 © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg.

parable way, Arnold Hauser even earlier had pointed at nearly invariability of icons painted in Orthodox monasteries between 11th and 17th centuries.²⁹ One approach to presenting the icon painting was emphasizing their dependence on artistic region and diachronic changes. Another was to stress the constant, synchronous theological and artistic aspects.

Madonnas created in the art of the West normally lack inscriptions. Moreover, they do not possess Christograms or Marian monograms. On the contrary, for Barbara Dąb-Kalinowska "inscription is the [heart and] soul of any icon".³⁰ Inscriptions sometimes supplement paintings, especially illuminated manuscripts in the medieval world of Western Christianity.³¹ In the discussed painting by Cranach, there is also lack of three stars on the *maphorion* of the Mother of God, often present in (post) Byzantine art. The stars denote timeless virginity of the Madonna: *ante partum, in parto, post partum*.³²

²⁸ Reproduction: HÖGY, T.: *Russische Ikonen: Einführung in Bildtypen, Malweise und Sinn russischer Ikonen*. Gießen 1978, p. 18; The diagram was reprinted by: QUENOT, M.: *Ikona – okno ku wieczności*. Translated by H. PAPROCKI. Białystok 1997, p. 65.

²⁹ HAUSER, A.: *The social history of art*, vol. 1. With an introduction by HARRIS, J. London – New York 1999, p. 128.

³⁰ DĄB-KALINOWSKA, B.: *Między Bizancjum a Zachodem:*

ikony rosyjskie XVII–XIX wieku. Warszawa 1990, p. 104.

³¹ DOBRZENIECKI, T.: Romański posąg Marii z Dzieciątkiem w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie. In: *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, 10, 1966, p. 144.

³² Terms: RURAŃSKI, G.: Wstęp. In: HIERONIM ZE STRYDONU: *Pisma polemiczne*. Translated by W. KANIA – L. NIEŚCIOR – G. RURAŃSKI. Ed.: NIEŚCIOR, L. Kraków 2013, (*Źródła Monastyczne* 67), pp. 16–17.

The Madonna in Cranach's painting shows a gesture of *ostensio/ostentatio Christi*. The Baby Jesus is presented to the faithful viewer who contemplates the painting. Therefore, the discussed work of art was probably an object of pious, devout contemplation – *Andachtsbild*. Referring to icons which cannot be called simply *Kultbilder* (objects often used during the Mass liturgy and placed in churches), the proper term is that of *Gebetsbild* – prayerful image.³³ There was distinguished a certain specificity of any icon. Namely, an icon was described by Christoph Schmidt as “a vehicle for meditation”.³⁴ This is an accurate epithet considering the functions of Wrocław *Madonna*. The Infant Jesus lies on a rich, silk pillow. There are a few tassels, on the end of which there are motifs resembling pomegranates. These fruits symbolize the Passion of Christ.³⁵ Furthermore, the pillow lies on a marble slab – a ledge. Thus, it creates a motif referring to a stone *mensa* placed on top of the altar, where the Holy Mass is offered in remembrance of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the painting may be examined in the context of *Melismos*, a middle-Byzantine iconographical type showing the Infant Jesus lying on an eucharistic paten. A similar vision was known in the Latin World. Peter the Venerable (Peter of Montboissier), the 12th-century Abbot of Cluny, conveyed such vision in his *On miracles* (*De Miraculis*, around 1122–1156): “In this way – I say it to my amazement – he did not see a shape of bread, which he had laid on the altar. Instead, he saw a small child, which was, like a baby, moving its arms and legs”.³⁶ Similar to the *Melismos* depiction is the *Amnos* (*The Lamb*) type, showing the very small figure of the Infant Jesus held in a Holy Chalice (*Άγιον Ποτήριον*) by St John the Baptist (*The Forerunner of Christ*) who is at the same time pointing at the Saviour.

At first glance the sumptuousness of the freely painted silk, the gauzy veil, painted with bravura, alongside the signet ring containing artist's mono-

gram, may be treated as Renaissance features. But these motifs were borrowed from the progressive, late-Gothic, early-Netherlandish painting. Stone, time-worn slabs, ledges, as well as ostentatiously demonstrated signet rings, coins made in antiquity appear, among others in such paintings. An example is a painting by Petrus Christus: *Portrait of a Carthusian*, dated to 1446 and Jan van Eyck's *Portrait of a Young Man* (so called *Tymotheos*), dated to 1432. Cranach had gone to the Netherlands in 1508, thus a little earlier than he painted the discussed *Madonna*. His journey had significant impact on his art. Similarly to the two journeys to northern Italy, which heavily influenced the art of Albrecht Dürer. Some similarities to the nearly transparent fabrics of the veil and tulle can be found in an almost identically dated painting showing *Madonna of Loreto* by Raffaello Sanzio. As a result, it can be stated that there were similar motifs and solutions in the contemporary painting. The picture by Raffaello was later imitated many times.

The body of the Infant Jesus in the discussed Cranach's painting forms the most important compositional diagonal, which dynamizes the action on the picture. The Baby Jesus on this panel painting cannot be described as *puer senilis*, what was usual in the medieval art and even later in icon painting. On the other hand, He is not an infant depicted naturally or freely moving or even amused like in the case of Baroque paintings showing *Madonna with Christ Child* or the depictions of playing *putti*. The look of Baby Jesus in Cranach's painting shows features characteristic to icon painting. In icons Christ Child is shown aware of future Passion and sacrifice on the cross. Unlike icon painting, in Cranach's painting there is not stressed a divine, ageless majesty of the Infant Jesus. In icons the Baby Jesus usually held the Holy Scripture (a book or a scroll) in His left hand and was blessing the viewer with His right hand. There

³³ SCHMIDT, C.: *Gemalt für die Ewigkeit: Geschichte der Ikonen in Russland*. Köln – Weimar – Wien 2009, p. 201.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 224.

³⁵ KOBIELUS, S.: *Florarium christianum: symbolika roślin – chrześcijańska starożytność i średniowiecze*. Kraków 2006, p. 81.

³⁶ PIOTR CZCIGODNY, *O cudach* (*De miraculis*). Translated by W. MOHORT-KOPACZYŃSKI. Eds.: SKWIERCZYŃSKI, K. – ŻREBIEC, A. Kraków 2020, (*Źródła Monastyczne* 97), p. 166 (Book. I, chapter 8). Cf. Latin original: *Et ecce stupeo referens; formam quidem panis quem altari imposuerat non vidit, paruum vero puerulum manibus & brachijs more infantie gestientem pro eo conspexit*. PETRUS VENERABILIS: *Libri duo illustrium miraculorum*. Duacum 1595, p. 22 (*Liber primus, Caput VIII*).



Fig. 7. Antonello da Messina, *Maria der Verkündigung*, um 1473/74, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen – Alte Pinakothek München, URL: <https://www.sammlung.pinakothek.de/de/artwork/JzG6R-7ZGWO> (Last updated on 24.03.2025), CC BY-SA 4.0.

are some types of icons (e.g. *Inexhaustible Chalice*) on which He is blessing with both hands. Such gesture is known as archpriest's blessing, described in the New Testament (Luke 24, 50). In Cranach's painting the Baby Jesus is tearing out one grape from a big bunch of grapes lying on His knees. The cluster of grapes is a eucharistic symbol and the harbinger of the sacrifice on the cross and the offering of Christ's blood. In the context of the dogmatic theology of the Eastern Christianity, it is useful to quote the statement of Cornelius Müller Hofstede referring

to the discussed Cranach's painting. He wrote that such painting could be explained as "the proof for the viewer of existing of the saint, spiritual reality".³⁷ In this painting there is "majestically distanced" countenance and posture of the Mother of God. Characteristic is Her sad look fixed strenuously at the Christ Child. She looks at Him with half-closed eyes. The Mother of God does indeed have piercing consciousness of the future suffering of the Son of Man.³⁸ In the art of the Orthodox church, it is often the Baby Jesus who consoles the *Theotokos*. At least there is an accentuation of a mutual relation between the God-bearer and the Son of God in the context of His future passion.³⁹ Similarly deciphered can be the relation between the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Infant Jesus in the discussed painting. In this case the painting resembles theological values conveyed by Eastern icons using pictorial, iconographical, and compositional means. There is an affinity between these paintings.

Hanna Benesz described the fates of the *Madonna* (especially between the theft in 1947 and the return to Poland in 2012). What is more important, she pointed out Italian influences, discernible also in Cranach's other works. She particularly referred to the art of Giovanni Bellini (Venice, c. 1431/1436–1516).⁴⁰ I would like to cite two other, slightly earlier examples created by Antonello da Messina (1430–1479) which show the Blessed Virgin Mary during Annunciation (known as *Annunciata* or *Virgin Annunciate*, Fig. 7). They also were imitated. It is not even a half-length portrait, but a bust portrait painting. Similar to the Wrocław painting and to the Netherlandish paintings is also the fact that the Madonna is shown behind a desk sometimes resembling altar stone (*mensa*). Antonello was inspired by trends in early-Netherlandish art. Taking into account all the differences to the 15th-century and earlier icons, the painting by Antonello is still dependent on the Italo-Byzantine icons. What defines the transitional character of Antonello's and Cranach's paintings is drawing

³⁷ MÜLLER-HOFSTEDT, C.: *Zwei schlesische Madonnen von Lucas Cranach: eine Erinnerung*. Würzburg 1958, p. 10.

³⁸ In relation to the icon of *Theotokos* of Smolensk: SCHMIDT 2009 (see in note 33), pp. 164–165.

³⁹ ŠPIDLÍK, T.: *Mysl rosyjska: inna wizja człowieka*. Translated by J. DEMBSKA, Warszawa 2000, pp. 383–384.

⁴⁰ BENESZ, H.: *Cudownie odnaleziona*. In: *Art & Business*, 2012, No. 12, pp. 120–123; BENESZ, H.: *Temat na pokuszenie*. In: *Art & Business*, 2012, No. 11, p. 82.

inspirations from many sources, treating the details, depicted fabrics, poses, countenances, and composition more freely, and using oil technique which was at that time alien to post-Byzantine icons.⁴¹ Oil paintings appear in Orthodox art, but much later.

Cranach's output abounds with innumerable studies of sensual nudes. He painted also particularly brutal themes, like *Salome with the Head of St John the Baptist*, and *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*. On the surface these might not have much in common with the painting discussed in this article. However, in examining the Wrocław *Madonna*, we can see that the painter depicted sumptuous, various fabrics and materials in a haptic manner. Cranach applied the same, nearly transparent, airy tulle like in his nudes. For example, nearly the same fabric is shown on an almost identically dated painting showing *Venus and Cupid* (1509). Referring to the brutality of some of his scenes there is already mentioned the terrible grief in the exchanged looks of the Holy Persons in the discussed painting. In the exchanged looks there is suggested a silent conversation between St Mary and the Baby Jesus. Thus, the painting becomes a silent sermon – *muta praedicationis*, the fundamental interpretation of the articles of faith. This statement is not synonymous with describing the vision of Cranach's paintings as based on the Holy Scripture and being nearly theological treatises.⁴²

The expressive, monumental, and dynamical landscape in the painting may refer to trends emerging in late-Gothic painting and graphics. For example, to the low mountains topped by a castle both in this painting (Fig. 4) and in the copperplate engraving

Sea wonder created by Albrecht Dürer in 1498. Even more appropriate, however, is a comparison of the hills on both Cranach's and Dürer's works of art to terraced land and partly rocks which are departing from realism, so called icon hills, characteristic for icon painting, changing with the stylistic epochs and referring to the feeling of advanced geometry.⁴³ The original name for this technical term (*terminus technicus*) is *zopku* (literally: "hills").⁴⁴ Similar structures had appeared in the art of the West long before the activity of Cranach and Dürer. Examples include a panel painting created by Melchior Broederlam showing *Annunciation*, and *Visitation* dated to 1394–1399. There should be quoted also a middle-Byzantine illuminated manuscript: dated to c. 1000 *Menologion* of Basil II (Vat.gr.1613). The background of the scene depicting the martyrdom of Saint Hermione of Ephesus also deserves special mention. In the early works of Cranach researchers discovered isolated influences of 14th century mysticism.⁴⁵

Symbolism

The symbolism of grapes and the link of them to the Eucharist was common knowledge to the Christian faithful. The same can be observed in the symbolism of the fruits of the grapevine, which were likened to the blood shed during the Passion by the Saviour. A quotation from the Bible is useful: "Why is thy apparel red, and thy garments like his that treads in the wine press?" (Isa. 63, 2).⁴⁶ The literary interpretation of this fragment is an iconographic subject showing *Christ in the Mystic Winepress*. The Old

⁴¹ *Madonna* painted by Antonello da Messina in 1474, now in Alte Pinakothek in Munich, which is discussed by: MATHEWS, T.-F.: *Byzantium: From Antiquity to the Renaissance*. New Haven – London 1998, pp. 159–162, illus. 121.

⁴² With such interpretation polemizes: NOBLE, B.: *Lucas Cranach the Elder: art and devotion of the German Reformation*. Lanham – Boulder – New York – Toronto – Plymouth 2009, pp. 4–5, 20, 27–29.

⁴³ SHEGIN, L.-F.: *Die Sprache des Bildes: Form und Konvention in der alten Kunst*. Translated by K. STÄDTKE. Dresden 1982, pp. 85–86, 90, 93–95, 97, 101–103; USPENSKI, B.-A.: Zur Untersuchung der Sprache alter Malerei. In: SHEGIN 1982 (see in note 43), p. 28 and note 66; USPIENSKI, B.: O systemie przekazu obrazu w rosyjskim malarstwie ikon.

In: *Semiotyka kultury*. Eds.: JANUS, E. – MAYENOWA, M.-R. Translated by Z. ZARON. Warszawa 1977, pp. 339–340, 343.

⁴⁴ GORBUNOVA-LOMAX, I.: *Elementy pejzażu w malarstwie ikononym: podręcznik metodyczny*. Translated by J. STAŃSKA. Kielce 2022, p. 19, note 7.

⁴⁵ MESSLING, G.: The Crucifixion of Christ („Schotten Crucifixion”), cat. no. 1. In: MESSLING – RICHTER 2022 (see in note 7), p. 75.

⁴⁶ *The Oxford annotated Bible with the Apocrypha: revised standard version: with an introductory article: The number, order, and names of the Books of the Bible*. Eds.: MAY H.-G. – METZGER B.-M. New York – Oxford 1965, p. 901.

Testament prophecy may be referred to the Christ's words conveyed by St John the Evangelist: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser" (John 15, 1).⁴⁷ And: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned" (John 15, 5–6).⁴⁸

From various translations of the Holy Scripture, I have in most cases chosen Revised Standard Version and compared it to the Douay Version (New Testament 1582, Old Testament 1609–1610), revised by Richard Challoner c. 1749–1752. Challoner's version contains some important changes to the Douay Bible and is based on other translations, too. However, the Douay Bible would be closer to Cranach and the faithful of his times than the editions made in the 20th or 21st century. On the other hand, Challoner's revision does not sound so strange for today's readers like the original Douay Bible. It is useful to remember that there are different translations and editions of the Holy Scripture. Even the Vulgate which is so useful when interpreting works of art: medieval and early modern, as well as those created after the Council of Trent, had many variants.⁴⁹ Biblical quotations in the writings of medieval theologians sometimes slightly differed from the Vulgate. Cranach's *Madonna* had been painted before Martin Luther translated the Bible into German.

The symbolism of grapes, which is often mentioned in the Holy Scripture was taken up by me-

dieval theologians like for example by a Franciscan mystic, St Bonaventure in his works *The Mystical Vine: A Treatise on the Passion of Our Lord*, and *The Tree of Life (Lignum vitae)*.⁵⁰ Other interpretations are as follows: the Infant Jesus was equated with a grape. Even more frequently, the crucified Christ was identified with a grape on a cross. And Mother of God was compared to a grapevine or vineyard, what stresses Her function as *Coredemptrix* of humankind.⁵¹ Similarly important is the fact that, in the tradition of the Talmud, in one of the *Apocrypha* of the Old Testament (*Apocalypse of Abraham*) a grape was the fruit eaten by the first mother and father, and not an apple. Therefore it was the reason for their banishment from Eden.⁵² Thus, the grape – the sign of the future Passion as seen on the discussed painting may be described as the *secundum (novum) malum*, referring to the typological relations – Adam and Eve and Jesus and St Mary. Thanks to the holy persons the original sin was redeemed. Cranach knew and consciously used symbolics, for example of animals.⁵³ Katja Baumhoff made a remark: "The general aim of these botanical [...] elements is to invite us to interpret them".⁵⁴ On the other hand, flora may only have decorative functions, for example *flora muralis* in architecture, or its symbolics may be described as commonly known.

It is useful to quote a later Christ's explanation of the importance of the Eucharist: "Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14, 25).⁵⁵ Cranach painted the grapes

⁴⁷ Ibidem, p. 1307.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 1307.

⁴⁹ ARNOVICK, L.-K. – KELLY, H.-A.: Bishop Challoner's ecumenical revision of the Douai-Rheims Bible by way of King James. In: *The Review of English Studies, New Series*, 66, September 2015, No. 276, pp. 698–722; BARDSKI, K.: Wulgata. In: *Encyklopedia Katolicka* 20. Ed.: GIGILEWICZ, E. Lublin 2014, columns 1027–1030.

⁵⁰ E.g.: BONAVENTURA, *Baum des Lebens: Geistliche Betrachtungen*. Translated and ed. by SCHLOSSER, M. St. Ottilien 2012.

⁵¹ Similar concepts were known already in the 13th century: KNAPIŃSKI, R.: Od „Pokrowy” do „Płaszczka Opieki”:

przeobrażenia motywu ikonograficznego „Mater Misericordiae”. In: *Studia Warmińskie*, 39, 2002, p. 139.

⁵² KOBIELUS 2006 (see in note 35), pp. 13–15, 220–225.

⁵³ TACKE, A.: Mit Cranachs Hilfe. Antireformatorische Kunstwerke vor dem Tridentiner Konzil. In: BRINKMANN 2007 (see in note 16), p. 88.

⁵⁴ BAUMHOFF, K.: Green Pastures. The Image of Nature in Viennese Humanism. In: MESSLING – RICHTER 2022 (see in note 7), pp. 48, 50. Plants on this painting were read according to their symbolics by ŁANUSZKA, M.: Podróż Madonny. In: *Tygodnik Powszechny: katolickie pismo społeczno-kulturalne*, October 11, 2020, No. 41 (3718), pp. 38–39.

⁵⁵ MAY – METZGER 1965 (see in note 46), p. 1234.

in his pictures showing the allegory of *Caritas*.⁵⁶ It is an iconographic subject partly close to the *Madonna holding the Infant Jesus*. In the context of relations of these two iconographic subjects words from the Vulgate can be quoted, in English: “And we have known, and have believed the charity, which God hath to us. God is charity: and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4, 16).⁵⁷ Among others, according to Peter Damian who lived in the 11th century (1007–1072): “Mother of God gave birth to Our Lord during grape harvest”.⁵⁸ The painting examined in this paper is one of the earliest *Madonnas* shown with symbolic grapes in Cranach’s output.⁵⁹ The quoting of biblical and literary contexts is well grounded in Cranach’s abilities to develop pictorial stories.⁶⁰

The discussion on the Blessed Sacrament was intensive in the Middle Ages. So was the case with appropriate, not literary, understanding of the Holy Sacrament and comprehending the dogma of

Transubstantiation.⁶¹ In the atmosphere of similar problems developed the Cranach’s artistic path or at least in this atmosphere was shaped the donor of the painting or adviser who can be described as *autor intellectualis* whereas Cranach remained *pictor imaginarius* whose work, even if supported by assistants, was distinguished from their participation by the greatest *invegnio*.⁶²

It was crucial to be knowledgeable about the Holy Scripture and the matters related to Christianity and spirituality, even if the painter could not be defined as *Artifex doctus* or *pictor doctus*. *Ignorantia* was one of the eleven chief vices detailed by St Francis of Assisi, who also stated that the lack of knowledge was a sin: “Where there are charity and wisdom, there is no [place for] fear nor ignorance”.⁶³ Conviction, which I quoted in the introduction of this article, had been known already since the time of the Apostles, in English: “Fear is not in charity: but perfect charity casteth out fear” (1 John 4, 18)⁶⁴. Mother of God is

⁵⁶ KOEPLIN, D.: Cranachs Bilder der Caritas im theologischen und humanistischen Geiste Luthers und Melanchtons. In: BRINKMANN 2007 (see in note 16), p. 66.

⁵⁷ *The Holy Bible, translated from the latin Vulgate, diligently compared with The Hebrew, Greek, and other Editions, in divers languages: The Old Testament Douay; a. D. 1609. And the New Testament Rheinis, a. D. 1582. With annotations by the Rev. Challoner....* Ed.: CHALLONER, R. vol. 2. London 1847, p. 197. In original: et nos cognovimus et credidimus caritati quam habet Deus in nobis Deus caritas est et qui manet in caritate in Deo manet et Deus in eo (1 John 4, 16). *Biblia sacra vulgata*. Vol. V, *Evangelia – Actus Apostolorum – Epistolae Pauli – Epistolae Catholicae – Apocalypse – Appendix*. Eds.: FIEGER, M. – EHLERS, W.-W. – BERIGER, A. Berlin – Boston 2018, p. 1092.

⁵⁸ PIOTR DAMIANI: *Kazania o dziewicach*. Ed.: SKWIERCZYŃSKI, K. Translated by E. BUSZEWICZ. Kraków 2020, (*Źródła Monastyczne* 91), pp. 224, 228 (Sermon XLVI).

⁵⁹ DETTE, G.: Madonna mit der Weintraube vor einem von zwei Engeln gehaltenen Vorhang, cat. no. 63. In: BRINKMANN 2007 (see in note 16), p. 246.

⁶⁰ DETTE, G.: Gastmahl des Herodes, cat. no. 89. In: BRINKMANN 2007 (see in note 16), p. 302.

⁶¹ EVANS, G.-R.: *Filozofia i teologia w Średniewieczu*. Translated by J. KIEŁBASA. Kraków 1996, pp. 151–170, 191.

⁶² These terms were applied by: JANOCHA, M.: Ikona Matki Boskiej Kupiatyckiej jako continuatio traditionis. In: DE-LUGA – KOPSZAK 2023 (see in note 14), p. 9; LABUDA, A.-S.: Malarstwo – zleceniodawca – malarz. Gatunek, funkcje, konteksty twórczości artystycznej. In: *Malarstwo gotyckie w Polsce*, vol. 1. Eds.: LABUDA, A.-S. – SECOMSKA, K. Warszawa 2004, (*Dzieje sztuki polskiej*, vol. 2, part 3), pp. 45–46; RÓŻYCKA-BRYZEK, A.: Zamiast wstępu do tematu „Rysunek w sztuce bizantyjskiej”. In: *Disegno – rysunek u źródeł sztuki nowożytnej: materiały sesji naukowej w Toruniu 26–27 X 2000*. Eds.: ZUCHOWSKI, T.-J. – DUDZIK, S. Toruń 2001, pp. 33–34.

⁶³ MILIS, L.-J.-R.: *Anielscy mnisi i ziemscy ludzie: monastycyzm i jego znaczenie w społeczeństwie średniewiecznym*. Translated by J. PIĄTKOWSKA. Kraków 1996, p. 109. With reference to the sin resulting from the lack of knowledge: LE GOFF, J.: *Święty Franciszek z Asyżu*. Translated by J. GUZE. Warszawa 2001, p. 77; In Latin original: *Ubi caritas est et sapientia, ibi nec timor nec ignorantia*. FRANCISZEK Z ASYŻU, *Scripta – Pisma: przekład z najnowszego wydania krytycznego: wydanie łacińsko-polskie*. Translated and ed. by KUKUŁKA, K. Kraków 2019, pp. 86–89, 212–213 (quotation) (*Epistola ad Clericos* I and 2, quotation from *Admonitiones*).

⁶⁴ CHALLONER 1847 (see in note 57), p. 197; In Latin original: *Timor non est in caritate sed perfecta caritas foras mittit timorem* (1 John 4, 18); FIEGER – EHLERS – BERIGER 2018 (see in note 57), p. 1092.

called *Sophiophora* – the holder of Wisdom⁶⁵ and at the same time the Wisdom of the church⁶⁶. The Baby Jesus was described as “pre-eternal”.⁶⁷ And Christ is called the Incarnated God’s *Logos*. It is useful to add, after Jennifer Nelson, that “Painting [...] was a vehicle for divine salvation,” and “Painting itself can be grace”.⁶⁸

In the late-Gothic architecture there was discernible a phenomenon called *libido aedificandi* – the increasingly splendid churches were being built. This was not solely the result of piety.⁶⁹ Such power to create different works of art with the aim to offer them to God is virtually present in all epochs. It can be compared to the philosophical concept of Henry Bergson: *élan vital*. The factors conditioning the creation of religious works of art were, among other things, economic, political, commemorative, and propaganda. Moreover, religious works of art served in the legitimization of somebody’s rule, defining identity of a social group, a brotherhood, or a guild. Added to this were simply the aesthetic sense and desire for beauty. In the case of the discussed painting in this article, the donor’s and painter’s aim was to confirm and demonstrate their own faith.

Methodological base

The rule of economical interpretations, and simplicity of research hypotheses was explained by Arnold Hauser. It can be successfully applied to the painting examined in this article: “Art is, however, to a very great extent, mere statement, direct or indirect propaganda, or formal interpretation that may or may not be combined with a symbolic meaning”.⁷⁰ Similar guidelines were used by Antoni Ziemba in the context of early-Netherlandish painting, and by Jarosław Jarzewicz who referred to the aesthetics of light in the Gothic architecture. This both early, mature and late-Gothic phenomenon of light is widely thought to be based on the writings of Abbot Suger from Saint-Denis, the pioneer and founder of the first, early Gothic building. However, origins of the aesthetics of light can be traced to biblical contexts.⁷¹ Jarzewicz made also remarks how to deal with subjects, works of art, and artistic problems which have extensive literature on the subject.⁷²

In the early 21st century students and scientists heading for the reading rooms of the Main Library of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń were welcomed by an inscription. It was a quotation from

⁶⁵ PAPROCKI, H.: Problem ikony. In: BULGAKOW, S.: *Ikona i kult ikony: zarys dogmatyczny*. Translated and ed. by PAPROCKI, H. Bydgoszcz 2002, pp. 133, 140.

⁶⁶ CYREK, O.: Ikonograficzne przedstawienia Chrystusa pod postacią anioła w kontekście opisów biblijnych. In: *Resoria Sacra: Studia Teologiczno-Filozoficzne Diecezji Rzeszowskiej*, 22, 2015, p. 113.

⁶⁷ BULGAKOW S.: *Prawosławie. Zarys nauki Kościoła prawosławnego*. Translated by H. PAPROCKI. Białystok – Warszawa 1992, p. 132.

⁶⁸ NELSON 2024 (see in note 7), pp. 156, 159. As *Instrumentum gratiae* were treated divine hands: SPRUTTA, J.: Symbolika dłoni w ikonie. Studium teologiczno-ikonograficzne. In: *Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne*, 17, 2004, p. 183. It might be added that the faithful needed the view of saints and divine persons. Their wish was to be allowed to see the Host so often as possible. A saint in the painting fulfilled intercessory functions. Similarly: RICHTER, K.: Unmistakable. On Portraiture in Germany and the Low Countries before 1500. In: MESSLING – RICHTER 2022 (see in note 7), p. 35. Cf.:

“Seeing the Host was the vehicle of grace”: NOBLE 2009 (see in note 42), p. 109.

⁶⁹ JARZEWICZ, J.: Stargard i Mediolan, czyli co architektura może powiedzieć o horyzontach kulturalnych mieszczanstwa nadbałtyckiego w późnym średniowieczu. In: *Świat średniowiecza: studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Henrykowi Samsonowiczowi*. Ed.: BARTOSZEWICZ, A. Warszawa 2010, pp. 197–198.

⁷⁰ HAUSER, A.: *The Philosophy of Art History (Routledge Revivals)*. Oxon – New York 2016, p. 50.

⁷¹ ZIEMBA, A.: *Sztuka Burgundii i Niderlandów 1380–1500*, vol. 2, *Niderlandzkie malarstwo tablicowe 1430–1500*. Warszawa 2011, pp. 664–694; JARZEWICZ, J.: Per lumina vera ad verum lumen. O znaczeniu światła w świątyniach późnego gotyku. In: *Sacrum. Obraz i funkcja w społeczeństwie średniowiecznym*. Eds.: PIENIĄDZ-SKRZYPCZAK, A. – PYSIAK, J. Warszawa 2005, pp. 435–438, 447–448.

⁷² JARZEWICZ, J.: Rysunek architektów średniowiecza (Villard de Honnecourt i inni). In: ŻUCHOWSKI – DUDZIK 2001 (see in note 62), pp. 65–66.

an outstanding poet, Zbigniew Herbert, based on his idealistic statement from an interview with him in 1985, so shortly after the end of the martial law in Poland: “The aim of the intellectual is to see the facts dazzlingly clear: if they are simple, they should be explained simply...”.⁷³ In this paper I tried to make a synthesis of the mentioned economical way of thinking and broader contexts, and references.

Summary and conclusions

The deliberations in this article may be applied to other late-Gothic and early-Renaissance *Madonnas*. This includes, of course, those not painted by Lucas Cranach the Elder. Analogies to Byzantine and post-Byzantine art were not limited territorially. Nor were they relegated to Italo-Byzantine *Madonnas* and the Italian way of painting, the so-called *maniera graeca*, which preceded the art of Giotto of late *Duecento* and early *Trecento*.⁷⁴ Drawing solutions, motifs, and ideology from the output of the Middle Ages, the longest artistic epoch since the birth of

Christ is discernible in works of art widely classified as Renaissance ones. There was clear evolution and interpretation of iconographic themes and formal solutions invented and developed in the Middle Ages and preserved in icon painting. The discussed painting appears to be not archaizing, but drawing from a few sources of inspiration, including, in my opinion early-Netherlandish art, and Italian art of the 15th century. The Wrocław *Madonna* also borrowed from icon painting or, at least, from Italian works transforming Byzantine, and Italo-Byzantine art. I take into account compositional, formal, and iconographic patterns. Cranach was born and grown in the late-Gothic period, and therefore his art may be apparently read from the perspective of the Middle Ages. At least his early art is rooted in that epoch. Cranach’s *Madonna under the fir trees* may be called an outcome of a complicated, simultaneous translation of various visual and textual sources.

(English translation by author,
revised by Gregory Leighton, PhD)

⁷³ HERBERT, Z. – TRZANDEL, J.: Wypluć z siebie wszystko. Rozmowa Jacka Trznadla ze Zbigniewem Herbertem – 9 lipca 1985 r. In: *Kultura Niezależna*, 14, 1985, p. 42.

⁷⁴ The Italian art’s dependences on Byzantine art, and the Byzantine influence on the Renaissance traces: MATHEWS 1998 (see in note 41), pp. 12, 137, 152, 157–163.

***Madona s dieťaťom pod jedľami* od Lucasa Cranacha staršieho. So vzťahom k tvorbe stredoveku a tradícii ikonomaľby**

Résumé

Príspevok sa zaoberá jedným z najznámejších a najoceňovanejších diel z tvorby Lucasa Cranacha staršieho. Analýza tohto signovaného diela, ktoré je datované do roku 1510, skúma Cranachovu tvorbu z hľadiska závislosti na stredovekom umení. Cranachovo umenie toho času nie je v akademickej literatúre spájané so stredovekom. Kľúčové referencie sa nachádzajú v Svätom písme a stredovekých zdrojoch, ako sú diela Petra z Montboissier, Petra Damiana a sv. Františka z Assisi. Mimoriadne dôležité bolo zaradenie Cranachovho umenia do formálneho a ideového výstupu byzantského umenia, ikonového maliarstva a talianskeho a raného holandského maliarstva. Zdrojom inšpirácie boli vyjadrenia Arnolda Hausera, Jaroslawa Jarzewicza, Antoniho Ziemby a Zbigniewa Herberta. Autor navrhuje nové hypotézy vo vzťahu k transformáciám stredovekého umenia v umení začiatku 16. storočia. Jeho výsledky nám umožňujú pozrieť sa z iného uhla na ďalšie obrazy zobrazujúce Madonu s dieťaťom, ako aj na ďalšie ikonografické témy vytvorené nielen v Cranachovej plodnej dielni. Príspevok poukazuje

na niekoľko typov mariánskych ikon a pokročilé formálne riešenia ako „ikony na kopcoch“ na príkladoch umenia Východu a Západu. V niektorých prípadoch boli vzťahy založené na antitezách, ako napríklad pri porovnaní dieťaťa v Cranachovom obraze so spôsobom zobrazovania Ježiša ako dieťaťa v súlade s myšlienkou *paidariogeron*. Príspevok sa zamýšľa nad tým, že existovali kontexty symbolizmu, ktoré majú protiklady vo výstupoch, dogmách a spiritualite stredoveku. Výsledkom je, že Cranachov obraz možno vnímať ako *Gebetsbild*. Ježiš na obraze bol porovnaný s byzantským typom *Melismos*, poukazujúc na funkcie, ktoré plnia Madona a dieťa. Príspevok naznačuje, že existujú všeobecnejšie zákonitosti vývoja umenia, estetického cítenia a modifikácie filozofickej koncepcie *élan vital* vynájdenej Henrym Bergsonom. Na zvýraznenie tohto zasadzuje Cranachov obraz do širšieho neskorogotického fenoménu spočívajúceho v budovaní stále nádhernejších kostolov konkurujúcimi si skupinami a mestami. Príspevok sa tiež zaoberá spôsobmi vnímania stredovekého umenia z pohľadu diváka 19. a 21. storočia.

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