

= Stefan Lochner =

Stefan Lochner (the Dombild Master or Master Stefan) (c . 1410 ? 1451) was a German painter working in the late " soft style " of the International Gothic . His paintings combine that era 's tendency towards long flowing lines and brilliant colours with the realism , virtuoso surface textures and innovative iconography of the early Northern Renaissance . Based in Cologne , a commercial and artistic hub of northern Europe , Lochner was one of the most important German painters before Albrecht Dürer . Extant works include single panel oil paintings , devotional polyptychs and illuminated manuscripts , which often feature fanciful and dark blue winged angels . Today some thirty @-@ seven individual panels are attributed to him with confidence .

Less is known of his life . Art historians associating the Dombild Master with the historical Stefan Lochner believe he was born in Meersburg in south @-@ west Germany around 1410 , and that he spent some of his apprenticeship in the Low Countries . Records indicate that his career developed quickly but was cut short by an early death . We know that he was commissioned around 1442 by the Cologne council to provide decorations for the visit of Emperor Frederick III , a major city occasion . Records from the following years indicate growing wealth and the purchase of a number of properties around the city . Thereafter he seems to have over @-@ extended his finances and fallen into debt . Plague hit Cologne in 1451 and there , apart from the records of creditors , mention of Stephan Lochner ends ; it is presumed he died that year , aged around 40 .

Lochner 's identity and reputation were lost until a revival of 15th century art during the early 19th century romantic period . Despite extensive historical research , attribution remains difficult ; for centuries a number of associated works were grouped and loosely attributed to the notname the Dombild Master , a name taken from the Dombild Altarpiece (in English cathedral picture , also known as the Altarpiece of the City 's Patron Saints) still in Cologne Cathedral . One of Dürer 's diary entries became key , 400 years later , in the 20th century establishment of Lochner 's identity . Only two attributed works are dated , and none are signed . His influence on successive generations of northern artists was substantial . Apart from the many direct copies made in the later 15th century , echoes of his panels can be seen in works by Rogier van der Weyden and Hans Memling . Lochner 's work was praised by Friedrich Schlegel and Goethe for its qualities , especially the " sweetness and grace " of his Madonnas .

= = Identity and attribution = =

There are no signed paintings by Lochner , and his identity was not established until the 19th century . J. F. Böhmer in an 1823 article identified the Dombild (meaning " Cathedral picture ") or Altarpiece of the City 's Patron Saints with a work mentioned in an account of a visit to Cologne in 1520 in the diary of Albrecht Dürer . The notoriously thrifty artist paid 5 silver pfennig to see an altarpiece by " Maister Steffan " some seventy years after Lochner 's death . Although Dürer fails to mention specifically which of Maister Steffan 's panels he had seen , his description matches exactly the centre panel of the Dombild Altarpiece . The altarpiece is referred to in a number of other records . It was repaired and re @-@ gilded in 1568 , and mentioned in Georg Braun 's Civitates Orbis Terrarum in 1572 .

German Gothic art underwent a revival in the early 19th century Romantic period , when the work was seen as a climax of the late Gothic period . The German philosopher and critic Friedrich Schlegel was instrumental in reviving Lochner 's reputation . He wrote lengthy tracts comparing the Dombild favourably to the work of Raphael , and believed it exceeded anything by van Eyck , Dürer or Holbein . Later , Goethe was enthusiastic , emphasising Lochner 's German " spirit and origin " ; he described the Dombild as the " axis around which the ancient Netherlandish art resolves into the new " .

Lochner 's identity remained unknown for centuries , and no other known works were associated with the Dombild altarpiece . In 1816 Ferdinand Franz Wallraf identified him as Philipp Kalf , based on a reading of a name inscribed on the cloth of a figure on the right of the centre panel . He misinterpreted markings on the stone floor pictured in Annunciation to read 1410 , which he took as

the year of completion . Johann Dominicus Fiorillo discovered a 15th @-@ century record that read " in 1380 there was an excellent painter in Cologne called Wilhelm , who had no equal in his art and who depicted human beings as if they were alive " . In 1850 Johann Jakob Merlo identified " Maister Steffan " with the historical Stefan Lochner .

In 1862 , Gustav Waagen became one of the first art historians to try to place Lochner 's works in chronological order . His reasoning was based the assumption that Lochner developed from the early idealised forms usually associated with early 15th century Cologne , and later absorbed the techniques and realism of the Netherlandish painters . In this way he placed the lighter " gaiety " of Lochner 's Madonna paintings as from the beginning of his career , with the more stern and pessimistic crucifixions and doom panels at the end . Today , art historians believe the reverse to be true ; the dramatic and innovative polyptychs came first , and the single Madonnas and panels of saints are from his mid career .

Based on their similarity to the Altar of the City Patrons , art historians have attributed other paintings to Lochner , although a number have questioned whether the diary entry was authentically made by Dürer . Documentary evidence linking the paintings and miniatures with the historical Lochner has also been challenged , most notably by the art historian Michael Wolfson in 1996 . In either case , the extent of Lochner 's direct hand , as opposed to those of workshop members or followers , is debated . Some panels formerly attributed to him are now thought to date from after 1451 , the year of his death .

= = Life = =

The outline of the historical Stefan Lochner 's life has been established from a small number of records , mostly relating to commissions , payments and property transfers . There are no documents relating to his early life , a contributing factor being the loss of archival records from his supposed birthplace during the French occupation of Cologne .

The primary sources relating to Lochner 's life are a June 1442 payment by the city of Cologne in relation to Friedreich 's visit ; deeds of 27 October 1442 and 28 August 1444 outlining the transfer of ownership of the house at Roggendorf ; October 1444 deeds for the purchase of two houses in st Alban ; his 24 June 1447 registration as a citizen of Cologne ; his December 1447 election to the municipal council ; his Christmas 1450 re @-@ election to that post ; an August 1451 correspondence with the city council ; a 22 September 1451 announcement of the setting up of a plague graveyard next to his property , and finally , court records dated 7 January 1452 detailing the appropriation of his property .

= = = Early life = = =

Through threadbare clues and supposition , mostly centred around a relatively wealthy couple that perished during a plague , believed to be his parents , Lochner is thought to have come from Meersburg , near Lake Constance . Georg and Alhet Lochner were citizens and died there in 1451 . A " Stefan " is referred to as " Stefan Lochner of Constance " in two documents dated 1444 and 1448 . However , there is no archival evidence that he was there , and his style bears no trace of the art in that region . There are no further records of him or his family in the town except for a mention of Lochners (a fairly uncommon name) in the village of Hagnau , two kilometers from Meersburg .

However records indicate that Lochner 's talent was recognised from an early age . He may have been of Netherlandish origin or worked there for a master , possibly Robert Campin . Lochner 's work seems influenced by Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden ; elements of their styles can be detected in the structure and colourisation of Lochner 's mature works , especially in his Last Judgment , although neither is thought to be the master with whom he studied .

= = = Move to Cologne and success = = =

By the 1440s , Cologne was the largest and wealthiest city in the Holy Roman Empire . It controlled

and taxed the passage of trade from Flanders to Saxony , and became a financial , religious and artistic center . The city had a long tradition of producing high quality visual art , and in the 14th century its output was considered to be equal to that of Vienna and Prague . Cologne 's artists concentrated on more personal and intimate subject matters , and the area became known for its production of small panels of " great lyrical charm and loveliness , which reflected the deep devotion of the writings of the German mystics " .

During the 1430s , painting in Cologne had become conventional and somewhat old fashioned , and still under the influence of the courtly style of the Master of Saint Veronica , active until 1420 . After his arrival Lochner , who was earlier exposed to the Netherlandish painters and already working in oils , eclipsed other artists in the city . According to the art historian Emmy Wellesz , after Lochner 's arrival " painting in Cologne became infused with a new life " , perhaps enriched by the earlier exposure to the Netherlandish artists . He became widely celebrated as the most capable and modern painter in the city , where he was known as " Maister Steffan zu Cöln " .

Lochner first appears in extant records in 1442 , nine years before he died . He moved to Cologne where he received a commission from the city council for the provision of decorations for the visit of Emperor Frederick III . Lochner was seemingly well established and although other artists were involved in preparing for the event , he was responsible for the most important arrangements . The centrepiece seems to have been the Dombild Altarpiece , described by modern art historians as " the most important commission of the fifteenth century in Cologne " . He is recorded as having been paid forty marks and ten shillings for his effort .

Lochner bought a house with his wife Lysbeth around 1442 . Nothing else is known about her and the couple apparently had no children . In 1444 he acquired two larger properties , the " zome Carbunckel " , near Saint Alban Church , and the " zome Alden Gryne " . Historians have speculated whether these acquisitions indicate a need to house a growing group of assistants due to his rising commercial success . It is likely that he lived in one house and worked in the other . The purchases may have caused a strain ; in around 1447 he seems to have encountered financial difficulties , and he was forced to remortgage the homes . Second mortgages were taken out in 1448 .

= = = Plague and death = = =

In 1447 the local painter 's guild elected Lochner as their representative municipal councilor , or Ratsherr . The appointment implies that he had lived in Cologne since at least 1437 , as only those who had been living in the city for ten years could take up the position . He had not taken up citizenship immediately , possibly to avoid paying the 12 guilder fee . He was obliged to act as Ratsherr , and on 24 June 1447 he became a burgher of Cologne . The role of municipal councilor could only be held for a one @-@ year term , with two years vacated before reoccupation . Lochner was re @-@ elected for a second term in the winter of 1450 ? 51 , but died in office .

There was an outbreak of plague in 1451 , and there are no surviving records of him after Christmas of that year . On 16 August 1451 the council of Meersburg was informed by officials in Cologne that Lochner would be unable to attend to the will and estate of his parents , recently deceased . It is presumed he was by then already ill ; plague was widespread in the area . On 22 September Saint Alban parish requested permission to burn victims in the lot next to his house ? there was no longer room in their cemetery . Lochner died sometime between this date and December 1451 when creditors took possession of his house . Records from 1451 do not mention Lysbeth , who was presumably already dead .

= = Style = =

Lochner worked in the late International Gothic (schöne stil) style , already considered dated and old @-@ fashioned by the 1440s , yet is widely regarded as innovative . He introduced a number of progressions to painting in Cologne , especially by filling his backgrounds and landscapes with specific and elaborate details , and by rendering his figures with more bulk and volume . Wellesz described his paintings as evidencing an " intensity of feeling which gives a very special and very

moving quality to his work . His devotion is reflected in his figures : it charges with symbolic meaning the smallest details of his paintings ; and , in a hidden , almost magical way , it speaks from the concord of his pure and glowing colours . "

Lochner painted with oil , preparing the surface in a way typical of other North German artists ; in some works he attached canvas to the panel support underneath the usual chalk ground . This was probably done where there were to be large areas of plain gilding . Where the gold ground was to have a pattern such as a brocade , this was carved into the chalk ground before gilding , and , in some paintings , elements had moulded additions applied to raise the surface to be gilded . He employed a number of techniques when gilding , to give different effects . These included laying the leaf with water for burnished passages , and with oil or varnish sizing (mordant gilding) for the more decorative areas . His colour schemes tend to be bright and luminous , filled with varieties of red , blue and green pigments . He often employed ultramarine , then expensive and difficult to source . His figures are regularly outlined with red paint . He was innovative in his rendering of flesh tones , which he built up using lead whites to give pale complexions with almost porcelain qualities . In this he refers to an older tradition of indicating women of high nobility whose paleness was associated with a life spent indoors , " shielded from toiling in the fields , which was the lot of most " . In particular , this technique follows the Master of Veronica , although the earlier painter 's figures had an almost yellowish , ivory hue . Lochner 's Madonnas tend to be clothed in saturated blues which resonate with surrounding yellow , red and green paint . According to James Snyder , the artist " employed these four basic colors for his harmonies " , but went beyond by using more subdued and deep hues in a technique referred to as " pure color " .

Like Conrad von Soest , Lochner often applied black cross @-@ hatching on gold , usually to render metallic objects such as brooches , crowns or buckles , in imitation of goldsmiths work on precious objects such as reliquaries and chalices . He was heavily influenced by the art and process of metalwork and goldsmithing , especially in his painting of gold grounds , and it has been suggested that he may have once trained as a goldsmith . Evidence of his imitation of elements of their craft is apparent even in his underdrawings . Notable and elaborate painted examples include the tooled gold border of the angelic concert in his Last Judgement , and Gabriel 's clasp on the outer wing of the Dombild altarpiece .

Lochner seems to have prepared on paper before approaching his underdrawings ; there is little evidence of reworking , even when positioning large groups of figures . Infrared reflectography of the underdrawings for the Last Judgment panels show letters used to denote the final colour to be applied , for example g for gelb (yellow) or w for weiss (white) , and there are few deviations in the finished work . He often rearranged drapery fold lines or to denote perspective , enlarged or diminished the size of figures . The underdrawings reveal a draughtsman of skill , dynamism and confidence ; the figures appear fully formed with little evidence of reworking . Many are extremely detailed and precisely modelled , for example St Ursula 's brooch in the Altarpiece of the City Patron Saints , which contains closely detailed garlands and diadems .

Perhaps influenced by van Eyck 's Madonna in the Church , Lochner closely detailed the fall and gradient of light . According to the art historian Brigitte Corley , the clothes of " protagonists change their hues in delicate reaction to the influx of light , reds being transformed through a symphony of pink tonalities to a dusty greyish white , greens to a warm pale yellow , and lemon shading through oranges to a saturated red " . Lochner employed the notion of supernatural illumination not just from van Eyck , but also from von Soest 's Crucifixion , where light emanating from Christ dissolves around John 's red robe , as yellows rays eventually become white . There is a real possibility that a number of the faces of saints are modelled on historical persons , i.e. as donor portraits of the commissioners and their wives . Figures fitting this theory include St Ursula and St Gereon panels from the City Saints altarpiece .

Unlike the painters in the Low Countries , Lochner was not so concerned with delineating perspective ; his pictures are often set in shallow space , while his backgrounds give little indication of distance and often dissolve into solid gold . Thus , and given his harmonious colour schemes , Lochner is usually described as one of the last exponents of the International Gothic . This is not to say his paintings lack contemporary northern sophistication ; his arrangements are often innovative .

The worlds he paints are hushed , according to Snyder , achieved with the symmetry of subdued use of colour and the often repeated stylistic element of circles . Angels form circles around the heavenly figures ; the heavenly figures ' heads are highly circular and they wear round haloes . According to Snyder , the viewer is slowly " drawn into empathy with the revolving forms " .

Because of the paucity of surviving attributed works , it is difficult to detect any evolution in Lochner 's style . Art historians are unsure if his style became progressively more or less influenced by Netherlandish art . Recent dendrochronological examination of attributed works indicate that his development was not linear , suggesting that the more advanced Presentation in the Temple is of 1445 , predating the more Gothic Saints panels now divided between London and Cologne .

= = Work = =

= = = Panel paintings = = =

Lochner 's major works include three large polyptychs : the Dombild Altarpiece ; the Last Judgement , which is broken apart and in several collections ; and Nuremberg 's Crucifixion . Only two attributed paintings are dated ; the 1445 Nativity now in the Alte Pinakothek , Munich , and the Presentation in the Temple from 1447 , now in Darmstadt . There is a smaller , earlier version of the presentation scene at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation , Lisbon , dated 1445 . As secular works grew in demand and religious works became unfashionable in later centuries , 15th @-@ century polyptychs were often broken up and sold as individual works , especially if a panel or section contained an image that could pass as a secular portrait .

Wing panels and other fragments of Lochner 's larger works are today spread across various museums and collections . Two surviving double @-@ sided wing panels from an altarpiece with images of saints are in the London 's National Gallery and the Wallraf @-@ Richartz Museum , Cologne (this now sawn through so both sides can be displayed on a wall) . The wings of the Last Judgement originally had six parts , painted on both sides , but have been sawn into twelve individual pictures , now divided between the Wallraf @-@ Richartz Museum , the Alte Pinakothek in Munich and the Städel Museum in Frankfurt . It is probably from early in his career , but in subject matter and background differs from other extant and attributed works . While the elements are arranged in typical harmony , the composition and tone are unusually dark and dramatic . The Crucifixion is also an early work and reminiscent of late medieval painting . It has a heavily ornamented gilded background and the smooth flowing quality of the ' soft ' Gothic style .

The extant works repeatedly address the same scenes and themes . The nativity is recurrent , while several panels depict the Virgin and Child , often surrounded by a chorus of angels , or in earlier panels , blessed by a hovering representation of God or a dove (representing the Holy Ghost) . In many instances Mary is enclosed in her usual enclosed garden . Several reveal the work of a number of hands , with weaker and less confident passages attributed to workshop members . The figures of Mary and Gabriel on the reverse of the Dombild were drawn more rapidly and with less skill than the figures on the main panels , and their drapery is modelled with , according to the art historian Julien Chapuis , a certain " stiffness " , while the cross hatching " achieves no clear definition of relief " . A number of drawings have been associated with him , but only one , a c.1450 brush and ink on paper entitled Virgin and Child and now in the Musee du Louvre , is attributed with confidence .

= = = Illuminated manuscripts = = =

Lochner is associated with three surviving books of hours ; in Darmstadt , Berlin and Anholt . The extent of his association in each is debated ; workshop members were probably heavily involved in their production . The most famous is the early 1450s Prayer book of Stephan Lochner now at Darmstadt ; the others are the Berlin Book of Prayers of c . 1444 , and the Anholt Prayerbook , completed in the 1450s . The manuscripts are very small (Berlin : 9 @.@ 3 cm x 7 cm , Darmstadt :

10 @. @ 7 cm x 8 cm , Anholt : 9 cm x 8 cm) and similar in layout and colourisation and are each extensively decorated in gold and blue . The borders are ornamented in bright colours and contain acanthus scrolls , gold foliage , flowers , berry @-@ like fruits and round pods . The Darmstadt book includes a complete cycle of the Martyrdom of the Apostles . Its illustrations contain Lochner 's characteristic application of deep blue , reminiscent of his Virgin in the Rose Garden .

The art historian Ingo Walther detects Lochner 's hand in the " pious intimacy and soulfulness of the figures , always expressed so gently and elegantly , even in the extremely small format of the pictures " . Chapuis agrees with the attribution , noting how many of the miniatures share thematic similarities to attributed panels . He writes that the illustrations " are not a peripheral phenomenon . On the contrary , they address several of the concerns articulated in Lochner 's paintings and formulate them anew . There is little doubt that these exquisite images stem from the same mind . " The text of the Darmstadt book is written in Cologne vernacular , the Berlin book in Latin .

= = = Other formats = = =

There are extant liturgical vestments containing embroidered figures , including that of St. Barbara , in Lochner 's style and with similar facial types . This has led to some speculation whether Lochner provided the models . In addition a number of contemporary stained glass panels are similar in style , and there has been debate whether he might have been responsible for church murals ; the over @-@ life size figures of the Dombild and Virgin with the Violet indicate his ability to work on a monumental scale .

Two drawings on paper in the British Museum and the École nationale supérieure des Beaux @-@ Arts were at times thought to be studies for the Munich Nativity . The lines of the folds in the garments closely match those of the painting , although the technical ability does not . The Paris drawing has blotches of paint indicating that it was a study piece for workshop members . The London piece is superior , but its lines are more rigid , lacking Lochner 's fluidity , and so its attribution has been relegated to a draughtsman closely associated with Lochner .

= = Influences = =

Lochner 's art seems indebted to two broad sources ; Netherlandish artists van Eyck and Robert Campin , and the earlier German masters Conrad von Soest and the Master of Saint Veronica . From the former Lochner drew his realism in depicting naturalistic backgrounds , objects and clothes . From the latter he adopted the somewhat antiquated manner of depicting figures , especially females , with doll @-@ like , eloquent and sensitive features , to present " iconic , almost timeless " atmospheres , enhanced by the then old @-@ fashioned gold backgrounds . Lochner 's figures have idealised facial features typical of medieval portraiture . His subjects , females in particular , usually have the high foreheads , long noses , small rounded chins , tucked blond curls and prominent ears typical of the late Gothic , giving them the characteristic monumentality of 13th @-@ century art , placing them on seemingly similar shallow backgrounds .

Lochner probably saw van Eyck 's c . 1432 Ghent Altarpiece during his visit to the Netherlands and seems to have borrowed a number of its compositional elements . The similarities include the manner in which the figures engage with their space and the emphasis on and rendering of elements such as brocades , gems and metals . Some figures in Lochner 's paintings are directly borrowed from Ghent , and a number of facial features match those seen in van Eyck . His Virgin with the Violet has often been compared to van Eyck 's 1439 Virgin at the Fountain . Similarly to those in van Eyck 's work , Lochner 's angels often sing or play musical instruments , including lutes and organs .

He seemingly rejected some aspects of van Eyckian realism , notably in his depictions of shadows , and his unwillingness to apply transparent glazes . As a colourist , Lochner was more inclined towards the International Gothic style , even if this inhibited realism . He did not utilise the newly developed Netherlandish techniques of representing perspective , but rather indicated distance through the diminution of parallel objects .

= = Legacy = =

The historical evidence suggests that Lochner 's paintings were well known and widely copied during his lifetime , and remained so until the 16th century . Early examples in ink after his Virgin in Adoration are in the British Museum and École nationale supérieure des Beaux @-@ Arts . The influence of Lochner 's Last Judgement can be seen in Hans Memling 's Gdansk altarpiece , where the gates of Heaven are similar , as is the rendering of the blessed . Albrecht Dürer knew of him before his stay in Cologne , and Van der Weyden saw his paintings during his travel to Italy . The latter 's Altar of Saint John is similar to Lochner 's Flaying of Bartholomew , especially in the executioner 's pose , while his Saint Columba altarpiece includes two motifs from Lochner 's Adoration of the Magi triptych ; specifically , the king in the central panel with his back to the viewer , and the girl in the right hand wing holding a basket containing doves .

The Heisterbach Altarpiece , a dismantled double set of wings now broken apart and divided between Bamberg and Cologne , is heavily indebted to Lochner 's style . The inner panels show sixteen scenes from the lives of Christ and the Virgin that bear multiple similarities to Lochner 's work , including in format , compositional motifs , physiognomy and colourisation . The work was for a period attributed to Lochner , but is now generally accepted as bearing his strong influence . In 1954 Alfred Stange described the Master of the Heisterbach Altarpiece as Lochner 's " best @-@ known and most important pupil and follower " , although research in 2014 indicates that the two may have collaborated on the panels .

Research in 2014 by Iris Schaeffer into the underdrawings of the Dombild Altarpiece established two guiding hands , presumably Lochner and an exceptionally talented pupil , whom she concludes was in probability the principal artist behind the Heisterbach Altarpiece . A counter view is that Lochner 's workshop was producing to a deadline , and he delegated as a matter of expediency .

= = Gallery = =