# INTRODUCTION

Sculpture has taken a back seat to painting in considerations of Renaissance art in the Netherlands. This was certainly not the reputation of sculpture in the sixteenth century. In fact, it seems that the medium enjoyed a higher reputation, especially in other lands.[1] If most art historians are aware of any Netherlandish sculptor, it is Claus Sluter (ca. 1340–1405), who worked for Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, around 1400.[2] Practitioners in the century that followed are little known and understood. Arjan de Koomen has recently written that "sixteenth-century sculpture from the Netherlands is one of the blind spots in art history," despite the fact that, in his words, it "overran the greater part of Europe and became, from an international perspective, the dominant force in the field."[3]

This book is about objects and responses to them. It is not a survey but rather a discussion of issues surrounding artworks carved and cast. I hope to introduce readers to many genres of Netherlandish sculpture and their leading practitioners, but I am equally interested in the agency of these works and in types of beholders' addresses. Although the focus is on the Low Countries, many of the observations in this study are applicable to all European sculpture, at least of the late medieval and early modern periods.

Netherlanders made tombs and sacrament houses, altarpieces and mantelpieces, collectible bronze statuettes and alabaster reliefs. This is a story of works in wood, stone, terracotta, and bronze. It comprises sculpture executed in both a Gothic manner and an antique or Renaissance fashion. There is no easy break between the two architectural modes; Gothic forms thrived until midcentury and overlap antique design by several decades. An understanding of both systems is necessary.

A great many of these artists immigrated to foreign courts, so many that the history of Netherlandish sculpture in the second half of the century plays out largely abroad. Giambologna, the

Fleming who transformed Florentine sculpture, is only the most famous example. Netherlandish carvers and casters relocated to what are today Italy, Spain, Portugal, England, France, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, and Ukraine. These immigrants naturally engaged with the local artistic discourse in their adoptive cities, so much so that their very "Netherlandishness" comes into question. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that, at least for the later sixteenth century, sculpture was a pan-European concern, a creature of the courts that adopted an increasingly international outlook.

Sculpture could achieve effects unrealized by painting. Monumental tombs of the great and near great were more effective at instilling a sense of subjugation in beholders than were painted portraits of rulers. Life-size statues grouped together as the Entombment of Christ forced viewers to share space with these creations, rendering the historical moment present. The violence in carved altarpieces was arguably more disorienting than in painted treatments of these subjects.

These chapters offer a number of different approaches to this material. I treat reactions to life-size sculpture in terms of performance—in terms both of rituals seemingly enacted by statues and of performances by the beholder, prompted by these works of art. I examine the emotionally pregnant scenes in carved altarpieces as they relate to affective piety, consequences of small scale, and strategies of narrative. And I address the use of architecture as a frame for human action. Sculpture provided many services. It empowered civic authorities and nobles within their territories and helped negotiate relations with other estates. Town halls were fitted with lavishly decorated mantelpieces, portals, and judges' benches, marking and elevating their administrative deeds as privileged actions.[4] Funerary monuments expressed the hope of eternal life and ensured memory of the deceased within the community.[5] But magnificent tombs were also principal instruments of self-fashioning by rulers and the high nobility according to their changing role in society.[6] Choir stalls trained the body and facilitated the clergy's performance of their offices. And when Augsburg planned large civic fountains to broadcast the town's wealth and heritage at the end of the sixteenth century, the commissions went to the expatriate Netherlanders Adriaen de Vries and Hubert Gerhard.[7]

Because there were almost no monumental buildings in the antique manner before the 1530s—and few before the closing decades of the century—sculpture assumed the responsibility for introducing this new fashion in spatial form.[8] Sculptors, perhaps even more than painters, were aware of artistic trends in other regions of Europe—those coming not only from Italy but from France, Germany, and Spain as well. Their principal patrons, the courts and the church, maintained extensive ties across political boundaries.

Netherlanders produced enormously rich and varied sculpture in the sixteenth century, exporting their work to nearly every country in Europe and eventually to the New World. Altarpieces from Antwerp and Brussels, carved in oak and colorfully painted, set paradigms for much of northern Europe in the first half of the century.[9] They promoted techniques of meditation and private devotion, and they offered schemas for integrating earthly and divine modes of perception. After 1540 those fabricated in alabaster with elaborate frames were nearly as influential (fig. 1).[10] Heavily ornamented, these small stone altarpieces surrounded their narrative reliefs with putti, river

FIG. 1
Antwerp sculptor, *Alabaster Altarpiece*, ca. 1550. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

gods, satyrs, sphinxes, and equestrians made of wood or papier-mâché and crowned by semicircular constellations.

What sculpture comprised in the sixteenth century is not self-evident; it was not a simple or consistent idea. Most often a sculptor was called a *beeldhouwer*, *beeldsnyder*, or *tailleur d'ymages*—a carver of images or statues—but there were many other appellations for those who fashioned three-dimensional objects. Often the definition pertained to the material used, sometimes to the requisite tools. Stone masons, carpenters, and specialists in fine ornamental work (*schrijnmakers* or *metselrijsnijders* in wood and *cleynstekers* in alabaster) all took part. The artists who designed sculpture were even more varied and included

painters and architects. The guilds covetously guarded their monopolies, but there was much crossover, often contested and documented by court records.[11]

What did a Netherlandish sculptor do? We tend to think of sculpture as representing the human body—the statue as the paradigmatic genre. The statue was key to the notion of Renaissance sculpture that was formed in the second half of the nineteenth century through art historical publications and the consequent structuring of museum collections. Even in the sixteenth century, though, statues dominated the theoretical discourse. Pomponius Gauricus's treatise, *De Sculptura* (1504), was reedited in Antwerp in 1528 by the learned Cornelis Grapheus (1482–1558) and devoted exclusively to the representation of the human body—and mostly in bronze.[12] Gauricus refers repeatedly to ancient sculptures reported by Pliny and Pausanius, and theirs was almost entirely a discussion of the statue. Alberti's short treatise on sculpture is titled *De Statua*, and Cornelius Kilianus's dictionary of 1599 gives the first meaning of *beeldsnijder* and *beeldhouwer* (sculptor) as *statuarius*.[13]

Yet the statue was only one of many categories. Much prestigious Netherlandish sculpture was wedded to architecture and by its very nature struck up a dialogue between organic and manufactured forms. In fact, sculptors like Jean Mone (ca. 1485–1548), Jacques Du Broeucq (ca. 1505–1581), and Cornelis Floris (1514–1575) invented several of the architectural conventions employed in the Netherlands during the sixteenth century.[14] We should not be too surprised by this development, since many of the finest Netherlandish sculptors were also active as conventional architects. Du Broeucq built several châteaux for Mary of Hungary (1505–1558) and her court. Floris was one of the principal designers of the Antwerp town hall (1561–65).[15] Apart from architectural projects proper, sculptors created many works of what we now call microarchitecture: magnificent tombs, towering sacrament houses preserving the consecrated host,[16] imposing choir screens,[17] pulpits, and choir stalls.[18] Following Markus Brüderlin and Tara Bissett, we might rather call these works *archisculpture*, since they share more properties with what we think of as sculpture than with conventional architecture.[19] These larger creations were just as much a part of the sculptor's brief. Archisculpture became the vehicle by which many cutting-edge figural and architectural properties were introduced.[20]

The very nature and definition of sculpture were hotly debated in a Netherlandish legal case in 1544. The Brussels joiner Mathys de Wayere had been hired by the Saint Gertrude Abbey in Leuven to make their choir stalls, a commission that entailed varied types of carving. As Angela Glover has shown, the dispute specifically addressed the statuettes and reliefs on the stalls. The Leuven masons' guild insisted that only they, and not the joiners, were permitted to carve such figures (*beel[d]snyden*). De Wayere and his fellow joiners answered that their carvings were not independent statues (*beelden*) but rather ornament (*cyrate*), integral to the stalls and within their compass.[21] The joiners prevailed; statues and ornament were defined by their context, not their intrinsic properties.

## Sculpture and the Senses

Sculpture, plastic and tactile, could engage viewers in ways that painting could not. Caroline Walker Bynum has emphasized the particular power of

three-dimensional sculpture to induce the participation of beholders, who were forcefully prompted to rehearse the narratives represented.[22] The sculptured shrine was considered the holiest part of an altarpiece through the later Middle Ages, the element that through its plasticity most perfectly bridged the earthly and heavenly realms.[23] Indeed, sculpture might be taken as the paradigm for images of reflection. The Franciscan Ugo Paniera (ca. 1300) advised that the devout should contemplate images of Christ by creating a *phantasma* in their imagination with as much reality as a sculpture.[24]

The superior sense of presence imparted by sculpture is evident in an unusual representation of the Crucifixion from Cologne dating around 1430 (fig. 2). The bodies of Christ and the grieving Virgin and Saint John are painted in a manner typical of the early fifteenth century. The heads of the three figures, however, are sculptural additions that are fixed to the panel. They dramatically protrude from the picture plane, casting shadows on the painted forms beneath. The artist clearly felt that painting alone would not give his Crucifixion sufficient weight or presence. The plastic heads radically revise our reaction to the image, which now assertively enters our space.

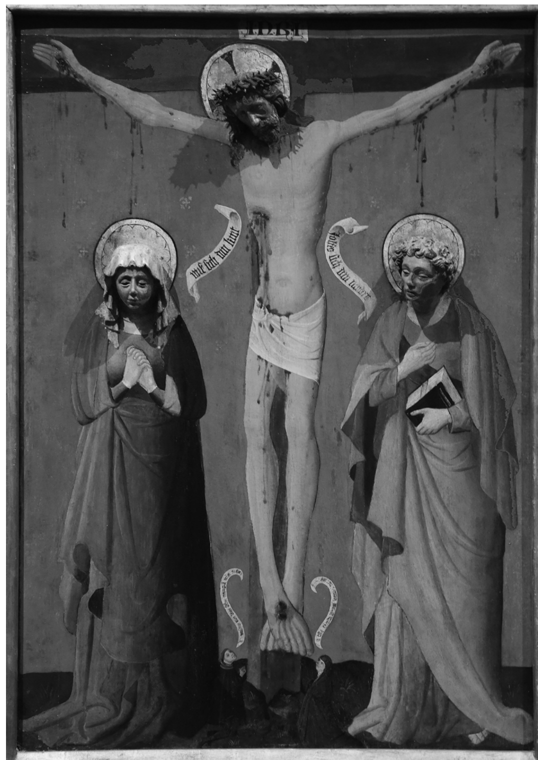

FIG. 2 Cologne artist, *Crucifixion*, ca. 1430. Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne.

Touch was critical to the reception of small sculpture. Carved prayer nuts with their miraculous interior images were handled as they were carried.[25] Their traceried shells were felt by the fingers and palms when open or closed. There are statues with their bases worn smooth through centuries of touch—either as venerated holy images or simply as objects affording knowledge through their tactility. One particular genre of sculpture engaged beholders in continual manipulation: the enclosed gardens of Mechelen, which were tended to by nuns who periodically renewed the sewn vegetal imagery and placed within the cases inscriptions, relics, medallions, pilgrims' badges, and other small items carefully wrapped in paper (fig. 3). These works were intimately connected with their religious lives.[26]

Renaissance painters commonly show statuettes handled by their owners.[27] But even inaccessible sculpture appealed to the imagined touch of beholders.[28] Its variegated shapes and surfaces promised telling sensations to the eyes as well as the hands. Literature was full of tales in which sculpture had been effectively consecrated through touch. The story of Pygmalion, the sculptor who

FIG. 3 Mechelen artists, *Enclosed Garden*, ca. 1515. Museum Hof van Busluyden, Mechelen. Photo: Museum Hof van Busluyden. Photo © KIK-IRPA, Brussels.

fell in love with his carved creation, embraced it, and brought it to life, was well known to Renaissance audiences. Touch might also establish the status of an object. Certain altarpieces represented the scene in which Saint Thomas touches Christ's side, explores his wound physically, to be convinced of his presence.[29]

Sculpture is a profoundly spatial medium. It must stand or fit somewhere specific, and it necessarily generates a sense of space around it. Life-size statues could take on an uncomfortable relationship with beholders, threatening them with the sudden appearance of their double. Tombs in the relatively public spaces of churches and chapels often aggressively imposed family presence on the consciousness of visitors. Monumental effigies, standing or kneeling, could create a theatrical space in which beholders might imagine themselves welcomed into an audience with the deceased. Life-size statues grouped as the Entombment of Christ forced beholders to share space with these creations, rendering the historical action present. Delicate boxwood carvings or alabaster figurines might generate a sense of wonder and preciousness appropriate to the intimate space of the *studiolo*.

Most works of sculpture could be viewed from many points of view and appear differently from each perspective. This dynamic is particularly important to the perception of altarpieces. Viewing from different angles the scene of the Lamentation from the Antwerp altarpiece in Bielefeld, we come away with distinct visions of the event. When we stand at the right of the scene and look up and to the left, we focus on Christ's maimed body—his head awkwardly leaning on his shoulders, his ribs pressing tightly against his emaciated torso, and blood showing on his forehead and side (fig. 4). But when we stand to the left of the Lamentation and look right, we become newly aware of Mary Magdalen clasping her hands in prayer and leaning forward toward Jesus, whom she regards with intense devotion (fig. 5). Our understanding of the event varies with each change of viewpoint. We may even intuit the transformation caused by our movement as the product, rather, of the movement of the figures themselves, imputing a unique sense of temporality to the sculpture.

Sculpture was on the move. Particularly venerated statues of saints would be carried about the town in procession on their name day. In Pieter Aertsen's painting of a village festival of about 1550, townspeople are shown in front of the local church carrying a statue of Saint Anthony of Padua on poles and accompanied by worshippers holding lanterns and torches (fig. 6).[30] The Augustinian Cloister at Bailleul, for instance, housed an especially venerated sculpture of the saint that was transported to many Flemish cities for display in processions. It is no wonder that the iconoclasts were particularly incensed by sculpture, since it conveyed most effectively the impression of a living presence that so excited fears of idolatry.[31] Two days before the iconoclastic riots in Antwerp, the procession celebrating Mary's assumption took place. A wood statue of the Virgin was carried about the city to the jeers of young onlookers. "Come on, little Mary, little Mary," they cried, "this is your last outing. You'll have to go into a cloister."[32]

## Theater and Performance

Naturalistic sculptural groups often raise issues of theater and performance. They may call to mind the dramatic tableaux of state entries or the mystery plays that were performed on simple stages or in spaces throughout the city. As Caroline van Eck notes, there is often a tension between representation and presence—between the recognizable portrayal of historical personages and the immediate apperception of these works as within our space and sphere of activity.[33]

The magnificent tombs of the sixteenth century, with their monumental effigies, raise these issues. In the preceding century, tomb design had been a relatively conventional affair. The basic form was the tomb chest, which might be variously decorated but retained its essential properties. One of many places we see this homogeneity is in Marburg, in the choir of the Church of Saint Elizabeth, where we are struck by the similarity between the many tombs of the rulers of Hesse.[34] These chests, distinguished only by their effigies and the reliefs on their sides, are set out in even rows. This situation would soon change; in the sixteenth century the tomb and epitaph became a prime field for invention and imagination for sculptors, painters, and architects.

An important aspect had to do with scale; tombs became ever larger and more imposing as

FIG. 4 Antwerp artists. *Passion Altarpiece*, *Lamentation* (seen from right), ca. 1525. Nicolaikirche, Bielefeld.

FIG. 5 Antwerp artists. *Passion Altarpiece*, *Lamentation* (seen from left), ca. 1525. Nicolaikirche, Bielefeld.

the sixteenth century progressed. In the early years of the seventeenth century, the sculptor Gerhard Hendrik from Amsterdam created the tomb of the distinguished nobleman and general Melchior von Redern along with his wife, Katarina, and son Christoph at Frýdlant in Bohemia. This is a prodigious work that covers three bays of the family chapel (fig. 7). Redern had fought in several military campaigns on behalf of the Habsburgs, famously defeating the Turks in three major battles in Hungary during the Habsburg-Ottoman Long War (1593–1606). His widow commissioned the tomb in 1605, five years after his death.

In the Church of the Finding of the Holy Cross, Hendrik constructed an enormous altar-like funerary monument.[35] We may feel that the impressive tomb converts the family chapel into a veritable theater, with the large statues poised above the observer as if on a stage.[36] We might note that the distinction between theater and ritual, barely apparent in the Middle Ages,[37] acquired some validity by the later sixteenth century, when dedicated theaters with proscenium stages became a common apparatus of court culture.[38] Such theaters, like Palladio's Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, typically included life-size statues among their appointments. Local rulers might be closely associated with their theaters through images affixed to their walls, as Lex Hermans has discussed.[39]

The three bays of the sepulcher are canted, following the angled apse and enabling the figures of Melchior, Katarina, and Christoph to emerge from the plane into the space of the chapel. In the left bay is Katarina, who seems to stride toward her departed husband. At the right, Christoph poses self-confidently with his arm akimbo as current representative of the Redern family who inherited the position earned by his father. Melchior stands at the center of the tomb, holding a scepter of command in his right hand and resting his left on a small Doric column signifying his fortitude. At the same time, he gazes upward, directing the viewer to the figure of the resurrected Christ that surmounts the monument and ensures his salvation. As with many sixteenth-century tombs, allegory competes with representation.

FIG. 6 Pieter Aertsen, *Village Fair*, detail, ca. 1550. Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.

The tomb is an encomium to military triumph. The cast of characters is augmented by the two bent and supplicant figures of Turkish captives, chained to the base at either side and literally suppressed by the monument. Carved in unyielding red marble, they are shown with turbans, loose-fitting gowns, and conspicuous mustaches—all considered by western Europeans as stereotypical of the Turk. The Redern tomb is one of several artworks to address the threat from the Ottoman Empire to Christian Europe. After the Battle of Lepanto (1571) the Ottomans were no longer feared as invincible, but in Catholic Europe they retained a reputation

FIG. 7 Gerhard Hendrik, *Tomb of Melchior Redern and Family*, ca. 1605. Church of the Finding of the Holy Cross, Frýdlant. Czech Republic.

for great ferocity and cruelty in warfare.[40] Further testament to von Redern's military stature comes from three gilded bronze plaques, reliefs that each represents one of his notable victories. Battle scenes were not uncommon on the tombs of rulers and had famously appeared on the tombs of Louis XII and François I of France at Saint-Denis. Hendrik has updated this motif, imitating contemporary prints. Rather than depict individual soldiers engaged in combat, the Frýdlant reliefs show the arrangement of troops from a distant aerial perspective, as had become the rule in engravings of battles and sieges. This was in keeping with the current discourse on the strategies of war, which emphasized the organization of military divisions.

The standing bronze effigies seem to hold court, regarding the beholder with a kind of supercilious gaze as they vouchsafe them a privileged audience. To stand before these grand statues is to implicitly recognize their authority. It may help to see this tomb as a type of structure that invites performances before it, with the roles of actor and audience variously assigned. The large bronze statues are both actors and audience. On the one hand, the members of the Redern family seem to perform as rulers before the viewer. But on the other hand, beholders are subtly induced to perform as subjects in front of this bronze assembly—their behavior rooted in their experience and remembrance of previous visits to court.

We may profit from interdisciplinary notions of performance developed by anthropologists such as Victor Turner, Milton Singer, and Stanley J. Tambiah, sociologists such as Erving Goffman, and theorists of experimental theater such as Richard Schechner and Marvin Carlson.[41] Participants are often aware that they are both their ordinary selves and, simultaneously, actors playing a role, what Carlson has called "a consciousness of doubleness."[42] Particularly useful is Schechner's notion of "twice-behaved behavior": the repetition or remembrance of some archetypal or original behavior, real or imagined, that "restores the past" and serves as a grounding for performance.[43]

Beholders were essential participants in the realization of these performances. Viewers of late medieval Passion plays were both witnesses and contributors to the action.[44] The explicit notion of the audience as helping to constitute theatrical experience has been a commonplace at least since Richard Wagner, who wrote of the beholder as the "necessary co-creator of the artwork."[45] Visitors to the Redern chapel might well remember appearances at court before Melchior and his family. Their engagement with the sculpture is, of course, not an actual repetition of prior experience but rather a reaction informed by recollections and imaginings of such events, a form of "twice-behaved behavior." Such performances could help regulate political relations between the family of the deceased and visitors to the tomb. They could induce a subtle sense of subjugation in beholders, a sense of their inferior social position before the general and his heirs.[46]

Despite the portrait-like quality of the faces and the elegant courtly attire, the unpainted bronze might seem to militate against a sense of presence. Yet bronze, as an expected material for statues of rulers, sets its own conditions for viewing and standards of resemblance. The over-life-size statues of Habsburg ancestors belonging to the funeral monument of Maximilian I at Innsbruck, for instance, were all in bronze. As Paul Binski writes, "realism" was a provocative technique and not to be conflated with the merely mimetic.[47] Statues and paintings do not magically merge with their

represented subjects. Their lifelikeness evokes memories of similar situations and persons. These works "recreate not their presence, but the experience of their presence."[48] Peter Stewart recounts how life-size statues of Roman emperors derived their authority as much from their resemblance to each other—from their constituting a recognizable and stable type—as from any likeness to a particular individual. Such statues might literally stand in for the emperors at political ceremonies and were recipients of legal appeals and pleas for asylum.[49] Stewart concludes, "To that extent at least the emperor—if not as an individual, then in his persona as an authoritative ruler—actually consisted of his statues and images."[50] The statues of the Redern family conformed to a class of authoritative images as much as they portrayed the distinctive features of the individuals.

A performative response might also be triggered by the monumental holy sepulchers representing the interring of the body of Christ. The example in the French town of Malesherbes, created by Netherlandish artists, presents Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea gently lowering Christ into his tomb while holding securely the shroud on which he rests (fig. 8). We feel the weight of Christ's body, which sags in the middle. His head turns to the side, causing his hair to make contact with Nicodemus's wrist. The Virgin tenderly clasps Jesus's hand in her own, while Saint John reaches around her, steadying her other arm and bracing her back. There is much touching, holding, grasping, and embracing—acts that serve as a model for the viewer's engagement with the sculpture. Viewers might well remember the annual placement of a sculptured body of Christ into a sarcophagus, a reenactment of Christ's original entombment. Viewers would also draw on written accounts of this event in their response to the carved holy sepulchers on display in their churches. Significantly, the Malesherbes holy sepulcher was a collaboration between a painter and a sculptor. The well-regarded Flemish painter Colin d'Amiens, residing in Paris, provided the "plan and design" (*ordonnance et patron*) for the work, which was then carved by the expatriate Netherlander Adrien Wincart.[51] Created for Admiral de Graville for the chapel of his castle of Bois-Malesherbes in 1494, the work is unusually expressive. The statues do not stand apart but crowd together over the body of Christ; John envelops Mary with his arms, a conceit we might well expect from a painter rather than a carver of independent statues.

## Art and Artist

Although much sculpture was a group effort and largely anonymous, a number of outstanding artists are known by name and were highly valued in their time. Jan II Borman of Brussels (fl. 1479–1520), known as the "best master sculptor," was a well-respected carver of statues and altarpieces in both wood and stone.[52] His reputation was such that he was commissioned to fashion the wood model of the figure of Mary of Burgundy for her tomb in Bruges.[53] Jean Mone, originally from Lorraine, had come to the Netherlands from Spain, where he had developed his antique or Renaissance manner. Once in the Low Countries, he was named artist to Emperor Charles V and helped introduce the high nobility to the newly popular antique mode.[54] Jacques Du Broeucq was court artist to Mary of Hungary, the sister of Charles V and governor of the Netherlands. For the famous choir screen of Saint Waudru in Mons, Du Broeucq carved statues

FIG. 8 Colin d'Amiens and Adrien Wincart, *Holy Sepulcher*, 1494. Church of Saint Martin, Malesherbes.

and reliefs that are notable for their sophisticated narrative techniques, their interpretation of Roman antiquity, and their awareness of contemporary trends in other parts of Europe.[55] All these artists signed their works.

Much as with painted altarpieces, the nominal subjects of carved retables were limited and conventional. Their religious images had to meet the restrictive theological and iconographic requirements of the rites of the church that Paul Philippot has referred to as the "straightjackets of liturgical immobility."[56] Their designs, however, show much diversity.

Although we tend to view the painter Rogier van der Weyden as an important inspiration for religious carving, many sculptors devised their own works. Jan Borman, for instance, was a compelling and influential inventor of poses, gestures, and groupings of figures in altarpieces that conveyed effectively the supposed emotions of these wooden statuettes and the motivations for their implicit actions. Unlike earlier carvers who arranged figures in vertical tiers, Borman created stage-like sets with his figures on the same level, interacting in varied and complex ways (fig. 9).[57] Borman's Saint George Altarpiece of 1493 is particularly noteworthy, for it appears to be one of the earliest wooden retables in Europe that was never polychromed or gilded.[58] Its sensitive carving persuasively imitates the surfaces of different materials, from various fabrics to full

FIG. 9 Jan II Borman, *Saint George Altarpiece*, *Flagellation of Saint George*, 1493. Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels. © Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels.

braided beards to hewn tree branches. This subtlety of Borman's crafting would have been hidden beneath coats of gesso and paint. The sculptor was apparently conscious of his superior achievement and the nearly unprecedented state of his creation. He proudly inscribed his name, "Jan," on the scabbard of one of Saint George's tormentors.

The greatest sculptor of funerary monuments was probably Cornelis II Floris of Antwerp, the brother of Frans Floris, who was one of the city's leading painters. Cornelis was renowned for his magnificent sepulchers for the kings and nobles of Denmark, North German princes, and high Catholic churchmen.[59] His designs dominated the

production of tombs and epitaphs in this region for more than half a century; the term "Floris style" has consequently become a cliché in discussions of funerary monuments around the Baltic.[60] Cornelis created a great variety of memorials, from simple epitaphs to temple-like tombs.[61] He also designed a series of engravings of sepulchers, advertised explicitly as "antique" and published by Hieronymus Cock. These patterns proved enormously influential throughout northern Europe.

The pair of epitaphs that Cornelis Floris created for the brothers Adolf III and Anton von Schauenburg in Cologne Cathedral can serve as an epitome of his art.[62] Like so many other artworks, these sepulchers related to the religious strife of the period. In 1547 Adolf was appointed Archbishop of Cologne, replacing Hermann von Wied, who had been excommunicated for Protestant sympathies. Adolf died in 1556 and was succeeded as archbishop by his brother, Anton, who died himself in 1558. Shortly thereafter, Floris executed the twin monuments as a tribute to the two brothers but also as signs of a return to orthodoxy. The epitaph to Adolf von Schaumburg (fig. 10) is carved in two expensive materials: alabaster and the black marble from Dinant, near Liège. Both stones were prized throughout northern Europe and immediately set the monuments apart from those rendered solely in sandstone or limestone. The rich black marble imparted elegance: contracts often specified that the stone was to be delivered expertly polished so that its magnificent luster would suitably appear.[63] The purest, whitest alabaster came from England and was even more expensive.[64] The black material provides a framework in which the various alabaster elements are set and distinguished from each other. This allows Floris to decorate the

FIG. 10 Cornelis II Floris, *Epitaph of Adolf von Schauenburg*, ca. 1555. Cathedral, Cologne.

monument with a great density of ornamental features and yet still maintain clarity and legibility.

Nobles relied on sculpture for other venues, particularly for their palace gardens, which were replete with fountains and statues carved by Netherlanders. Fountains might be imported from Genoa,

which did a brisk trade in this sort of product. Around the middle of the sixteenth century, Jean de Hennin-Liétard purchased such fountains for his palace at Boussu, one of which is now at Gaasbeek.[65] Netherlanders contributed to this genre. An unknown artist carved the excellent fountain statues that are in the Bode Museum in Berlin (fig. 11). This figural group of Venus and Cupid must date from around 1560. Venus is shown in measured gait, modestly concealing her breasts, as she bends down to grasp the bow of her son, who steps on the snout of a dolphin to meet her. City governments likewise embraced fountains for their purposes.

## Mode and Periodization

Northern Europe knew two modes of design in the sixteenth century: Gothic and antique. It is easy to forget that cutting-edge works in the Gothic manner were commissioned as late as the 1540s and ran concurrently with early works in the antique fashion for three or four decades.[66] Leading Netherlandish painters such as Jan de Beer, Gerard David, Quentin Massys, Bernard van Orley, and Jan Gossart exploited this latest Gothic for its rich associations.[67] The Gothic—or *modern* as it was called—was largely a field of nonmimetic, geometric composition, whereas the antique was rooted in imitation of the world and the human body as its measure. The two modes referred to divine authority in different ways, and these were immediately signaled by pointed arches and tracery as opposed to round arches and the established categories of columns. Gothic design was constructed with a compass and straightedge and bore little relation to objects in the world. In fact, the mathematical nature of Gothic forms could signify their celestial origin. God might conceive of all objects and creatures in mathematical terms, yet these entities inevitably became corrupted through their materialization in the world. The Gothic church and its furnishings could represent a prior state of creation, closest to the divine idea. This was especially true of Gothic drawing, which depended on geometric operations, even if mimetic elements were included in actual edifices. And it was true of ostentatious ornamental details of Gothic buildings—traceried windows, figured vaults, openwork balustrades—which presented as "pictures of geometry" and as a synecdoche for the Gothic itself.[68]

Since the second decade of the sixteenth century, however, an alternative antique mode was also practiced. And the coexistence of two different systems compromised them both. It prevented either from pretending to universal authority. Antique design communicated different concepts. Architectural members represented real-world objects, if at some remove. The triglyph, for instance, was thought to derive from the end of a supportive ceiling beam. Columns modeled their proportions after various gendered bodies. To the degree that the Gothic was metaphysical, the antique was dramatically physical.

The antique was associated with political power and military triumph in its earliest articulations in northern Europe. With the French invasion of Italy in 1494 and the subsequent battles over Lombardy by French and Habsburg forces, the antique or Italianate manner was appropriated as a kind of cultural *spolia* by northern rulers.[69] The antique mode was chosen for the tombs of the French kings Louis XII and François I, whose Italian

FIG. 11 Netherlandish sculptor, *Fountain Sculpture with Venus and Cupid*, ca. 1560. Bode Museum, Berlin.

campaigns are indexed in the battle reliefs around the bases of these monuments. In 1526 Charles V began his palace in Grenada in a severe antique style, which was also appointed with battle reliefs.[70] Concurrently he wore his beard in the fashion of ancient Roman portrait busts and insisted on being addressed as Caesar.[71] The leading Netherlandish nobles followed suit. The antique mode in which the tombs of the Nassau, de Croÿ, and Lalaing families were created signaled political currency and propinquity to the emperor.[72]

For several decades, thus, both the Gothic and the antique were available to discerning patrons. A contract from 1530 for a staircase to a sacrament house in the Abbey of Tongerlo suggests just how open was the choice of mode. The wording makes it clear that Gothic and antique were equally acceptable. The sculptor and architect Philip Lammekens of Antwerp was instructed that the ornamental mode of the works was to be left up to him and Abbot Arnold Streyters: "be it of the antique or Gothic [manner] as my Lord the Abbot and Master Philip shall determine."[73] The mode of execution was no longer fixed by the class of monument or its site. Despite being assisted by avowedly antique sculptors like Claudius Floris, the uncle of Frans and Cornelis, Lammekens was allowed to choose the mode himself—Gothic or antique—albeit with the advice of the abbot. Neither mode was to be preferred on account of its political or religious connotations.

## Sculpture and Painting

Painted panels were commonly an integral part of the carved altarpiece. Prominent painters took part in these projects. Frans Floris implicitly accepted a secondary role in painting the wings for an alabaster altarpiece carved by Jan d'Heere of Ghent.[74] Joos van Cleve and his workshop painted double wings for a carved Marian altarpiece shipped to Danzig and now in Warsaw.[75] And Adriaen van Overbeck, who enjoyed a considerable reputation in the early sixteenth century, fashioned the painted wings for a number of carved altarpieces, including two Antwerp products in Kempen on the Lower Rhine.[76] Equally notable was accommodation by painters to the values of sculpture. Jan van Scorel not only painted wings to a wood altarpiece by the Ghent sculptor Willem Hughe, but he also deliberately used less resplendent linen as his support so as not to distract from the splendor of the carved and gilded corpus—or so the Ghent nobleman Marcus van Vaernewijck tells us.[77]

Painting was a critical component of the sculptured part of these retables; polychromy was essential to their effect and could easily cost as much as the carving. In the early fifteenth century, highly esteemed panel painters were often recruited to polychrome important works of sculpture. Jan van Eyck, Robert Campin, and Rogier van der Weyden all polychromed statues. And Melchior Broederlam not only painted the famous panels for two carved altarpieces for the Burgundian court; he also polychromed and gilded the sculptural parts. In all, he was paid the impressive sum of 1,000 francs for his labor and materials. Jacques de Baerze, the revered sculptor of the work, received only 810 francs for his contribution.[78] Cornelis Schernier—Cornelis I van Coninxloo, a member of the reputed Coninxloo family of Brussels painters—polychromed and signed the Marian altarpiece from the Borman workshop now in Skepptuna, Sweden.[79] But for the most part these artists remain anonymous. This institutional

change in no way diminished the transformative effects of polychromy. Paint, gilding, and the underlying primer transfigured the original oak surface into a brilliant, golden reliquary-like container of narrative scenes, which were presented in their equivocal naturalism.

Our tendency to isolate sculpture from painting, thoroughly institutionalized in art history, greatly hinders our understanding of the way these works were originally appreciated. One of the consequences of this separation was the frequent removal of polychromy from surviving altarpieces and statues, largely the work of nineteenth-century restorers. The bare oak face was considered a better register of the craft of these admired artisans, seen without the cloying effects of garish gold and saturated color. This notion of "truth to materials," often demanded by nineteenth-century critics and a mantra of twentieth-century modernism, denigrated elements that were considered accessory to the sculptor's art.

Families of painters and sculptors intermarried, spawning extensive multimedia professional networks at home and abroad. Cornelis Floris collaborated with his brother the painter Frans Floris on at least two works.[80] A third brother, Jacques, was a successful glass painter and designer of ornamental patterns. And a fourth brother, Jan, was a potter.[81] Jan d'Heere was the father of the painter and poet Lucas d'Heere (1534–1584), who famously commented on the Antwerp art scene. Like so many members of artistic families, the two worked together; Lucas painted panels on the choir screen that Jan executed for Saint Peter's of Ghent.[82]

Painters designed many of the remarkable works of the period. The tomb of Isabelle of Austria was designed by the painter Jan Gossart (ca. 1478–1532).[83] Although the work does not now exist, Gossart's drawing for the tomb survives in Berlin and displays several innovative features (fig. 12). The painter's gift for ornamental invention is shown by the differently formed baluster columns that adorn the side, variations on a much-prized theme. The four female figures of the virtues at the corners are unusually animated, beckoning visitors to pay tribute.[84] In Bruges the painter Lanceloot Blondeel (1498–1561) drafted the plans for the monumental mantelpiece to Charles V (see fig. 90).[85] Furthermore, Blondeel made himself available to the sculptors in case aspects of the drawing were unclear to them or needed further explanation for their translation into wood and stone. Arnold of Nijmegen, the famous painter of stained glass, also designed sculpture, as did the Netherlandish painter Jean Hey.[86] And as we have seen, Colin d'Amiens designed the holy sepulcher in Malesherbes that was carved by Adrien Wincart (see fig. 8).[87]

Painted altarpieces began to supplant sculpted in the second half of the sixteenth century. In 1569 Elisabeth van Culemborg chose to commission a painted retable for her chapel in Utrecht rather than a carved one. The decision was based, we read, on the realization that a sculptured retable would attract dust and consequently need to be frequently cleaned.[88] She chose a painted one in part because it required less care. This very practical reasoning tells us much about the appreciation of these works as material objects. Elisabeth van Culemborg's preference for the painted retable, however, was also in keeping with the time; by 1570 painted altarpieces had become much more fashionable than carved wooden ones—reversing the trend of the first half of the century. When, in the 1580s, Antwerp confraternities began replacing altarpieces that had been destroyed in the iconoclastic riots, they tended to turn to painters

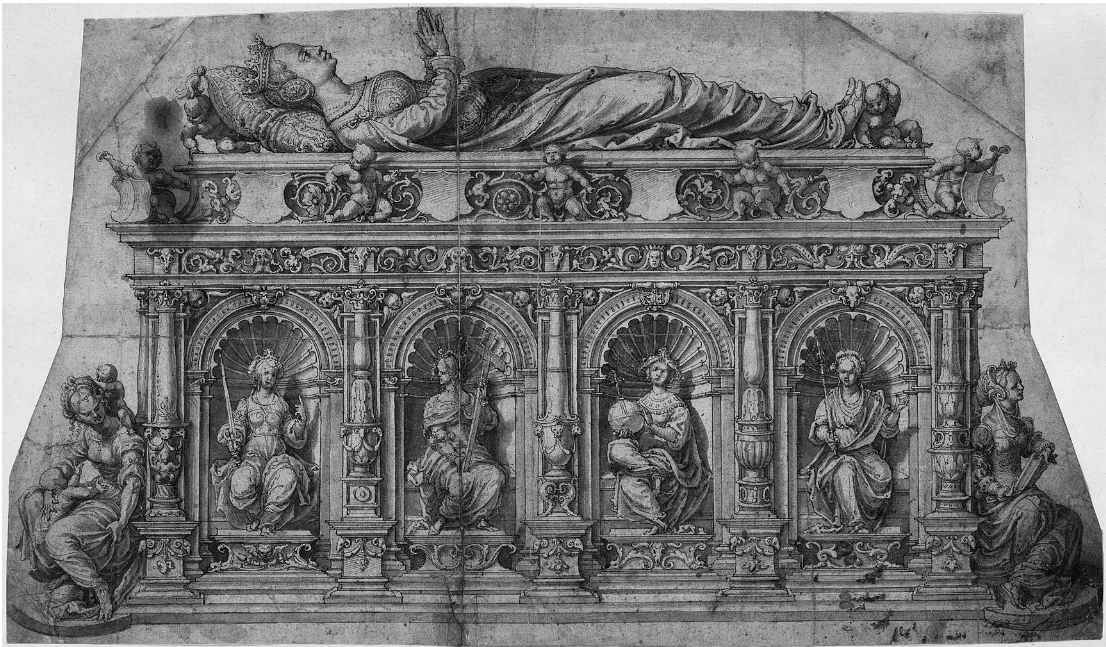

FIG. 12 Jan Gossart, *Drawing for the Tomb of Isabelle of Austria*, 1526. Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin. Photo: Sammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

such as Marten de Vos, Michiel Coxcie, Otto van Veen, Frans Francken and, ultimately, Peter Paul Rubens.[89]

## Collectors' Sculpture

A new genre of sculpture arose in the last years of the fifteenth century and the early years of the century that followed. Small-scale objects of all sorts entered private collections.[90] Goldwork and ivory had long occupied this position, but the miniature works of this later period were not distinguished by the high value of their materials. These works might be ostensibly religious—miniature prayer nuts carved from boxwood or statuettes of saints fashioned of alabaster—and they might at times serve a devotional or representational function. Skill of execution seems to have weighed most heavily. Prayer nuts, for instance, represent in their interiors traditional themes drawn from Christ's Passion, saints' lives, and the Old Testament (fig. 13).[91]

These miniscule carvings hardly seem to count as sculpture; their narrative scenes are so small that they are perceived more optically than tactilely.[92] These miniature objects seem to have been prized chiefly for their craft and design. Several prayer nuts with their religious scenes are still in excellent condition and are unlikely to have functioned in devotional practice, with its daily wear and tear. Such genres would offer new possibilities to artists whose livelihood had been curtailed by iconoclasm.[93]

The most illustrious patrons coveted these works of art; exquisite prayer nuts were owned by, among others, King Henry VIII of England, Albrecht of Brandenburg, and Floris van Egmont.[94] Margaret of Austria (1480–1530), regent and governor of the Netherlands, assembled one of the early collections of such small artworks.[95] In her palace at Mechelen she displayed a diminutive marble relief of a woman with a snake, most likely Cleopatra, and a small marble copy of a famous ancient sculpture, the Spinario—both indices of the new taste for the antique. The room by the garden held two bronze statuettes of naked men likewise in the antique mode, along with a miniature cast of the naked Hercules by Conrat Meit (ca. 1480–1551). Margaret also conserved here marble busts of herself and her deceased husband, Philibert of Savoy, along with a terracotta bust of Mary Tudor, which had been repaired by the Florentine Pietro Torrigiano (1472–1528) during his brief stay in the Netherlands.[96] Two further portrait busts of the pair, this time in boxwood and carved by Meit, were found in Margaret's *petit cabinet* or *studiolo*.[97] An example of the small, exquisitely crafted artworks that appealed to the regent is the portrait of Margaret now in Munich that may well have been in her collection.[98] Meit portrays the regent in her widow's bib and wimple, which frame her recognizable features: her bulbous nose, small eyes, and full lips. It is an appealing image that does not greatly idealize her distinctive physiognomy.

Alabaster figurines of mythological themes, often with a distinct erotic charge, assumed their place in the second half of the century.[99] Willem van den Broecke (Paludanus, ca. 1530–1580) excelled in producing these antique statuettes, and his works were popular in the burgeoning *Kunstkammers*. In 1587 Gabriel Kaltemarckt advised

FIG. 13 Adam Dircx?, *Prayer Nut with Crucifixion*, ca. 1515. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917, 17.190.475. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Christian I of Saxony on the assembly of such a cabinet of curiosities, specifically recommending the inclusion of works by van den Broecke, among others.[100] His *Sleeping Nymph* reclines on a classical divan, her face sunk in her pillow, and her body is exposed to the viewer, turned to reveal her sex (fig. 14). Van den Broecke plays with the association between alabaster and ideal female flesh that had become common in French, English, Italian, and Netherlandish poetry, as Aleksandra Lipińska and Giancarlo Fiorenza have shown.[101] Shakespeare's Othello compares Desdemona's flesh to "monumental alabaster."[102] Pierre de Ronsard invokes alabaster as a general metaphor for female beauty in *Les amours de Cassandre* of 1552.[103] And Jan van

FIG. 14 Willem van den Broecke, *Sleeping Nymph*, ca. 1560. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

der Noot, the Flemish author whose own poetry depended heavily on that of Ronsard and the *Pléiade*, speaks of "breasts of alabaster" when praising his beloved.[104] Small alabaster sculpture could play on these associations. It could be easily held and caressed in the hand, as is shown in paintings of collectors fingering their sculptural possessions.[105]

Painters profited from associations with sculpture and specifically with alabaster. Jan Massys's large panel of *Venus Cythera* portrays the goddess of love with hard, tactile skin that is given a sheen to resemble polished stone (fig. 15).[106] If Venetian painters such as Titian and Tintoretto presented human flesh as soft and yielding, Netherlandish artists like Massys and Willem Key treated it as a firm, inflexible shell offering a distinct sensation to imagined touch. Furthermore, Massys blanches Venus's form—establishing a parallel with the statue of the nymph in the fountain at the lower right. But we may suspect that the artist intended this pale Venus to refer specifically to alabaster, given its currency as a metaphor for the sexually appealing female body. Jan Massys most likely spent some time in France and seems to have been well aware of the visual and literary culture of the French court, including the common evocation of alabaster in amorous lyrics.

## Immigration and Regional Identity

A number of sculptors moved to the Low Countries, while others migrated to foreign lands.

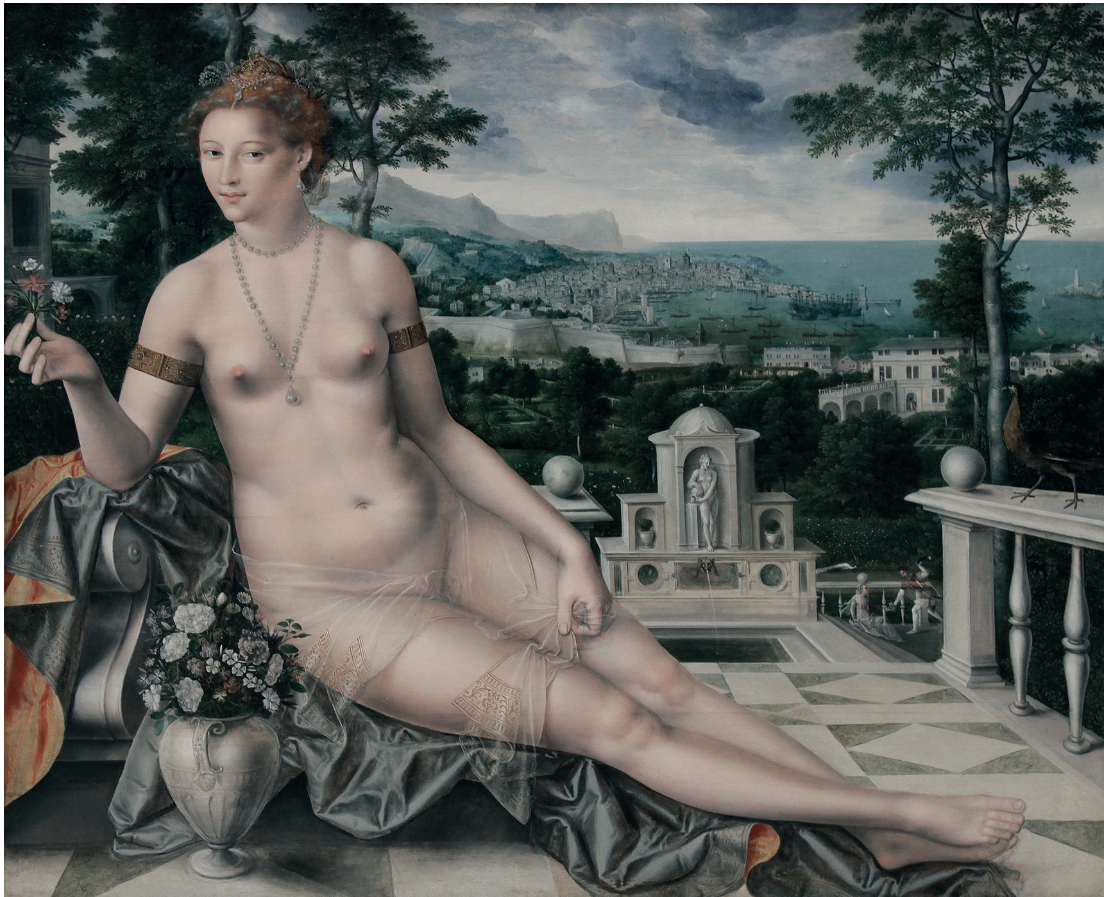

FIG. 15 Jan Massys, *Venus Cythera*, 1561. National Museum, Stockholm.

Indeed, which sculptors were and were not Netherlandish is not self-evident; sculptors traveled from court to court and from cathedral to cloister.[107] Many of the most highly esteemed sculptors of the first half of the sixteenth century were, in fact, "foreigners." Conrat Meit from Worms and Pietro Torrigiano from Florence came to the court of Margaret of Austria.[108] Daniel Mauch (1477–1540) of Ulm became the principal sculptor in Liège.[109] Two of the leading antique sculptors came from Lorraine: Jean Mone and Guyot de Beaugrant (ca. 1500–1549).[110] They brought their training and skills to their new employers, but they also interacted with local patrons and sculptors, modifying their approaches to local circumstance.

During the second half of the century, so many carvers and casters exited the Low Countries that the history of Netherlandish sculpture plays out largely abroad. Giambologna (1529–1608), the Fleming who transformed Florentine sculpture, is only the most famous example.[111] The iconoclastic riots of 1566 and the beginning of the Revolt of the Netherlands two years later were important

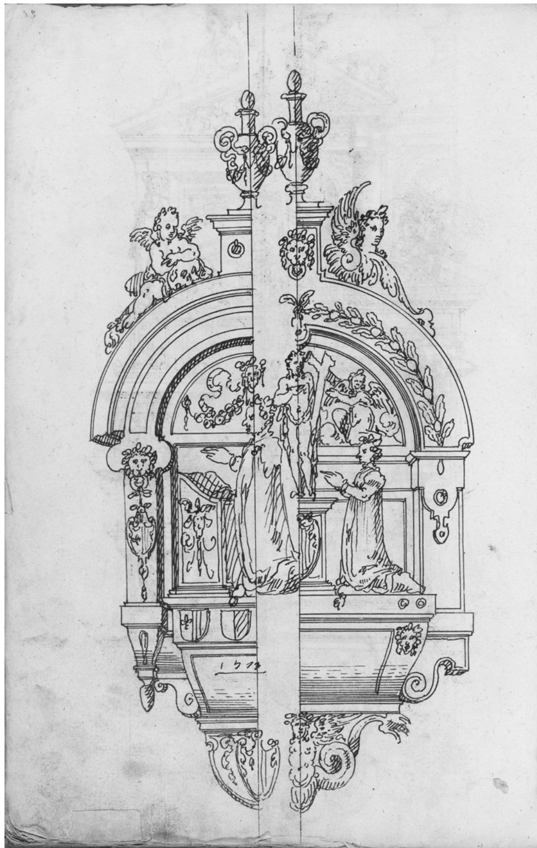

FIG. 16 Netherlandish artist, *Spencer Album*, *Design for an Epitaph*, 1573. New York Public Library, Spencer Collection. Photo: New York Public Library.

factors.[112] In 1585 a Spanish emissary seeking workers for the Escorial reported that Netherlandish sculptors could no longer be found at home due to the war then raging there.[113] Wide-scale emigration had actually begun somewhat earlier and was motivated by several considerations. Dynastic and commercial contacts with Spain had prompted numerous Netherlandish sculptors to relocate in Iberia.[114] Italy was an important port of call because of its artistic riches—both ancient and modern. Netherlandish sculptors went to France, both north and south.[115] And in the second half of the sixteenth century, several Netherlanders migrated to England, where they established new conventions for tomb sculpture.[116] However, the greatest number of Low Countries sculptors moved to central Europe. German princes liberally hired Netherlandish sculptors and architects to carve public tombs and outfit palaces. Low Countries sculptors were active in towns throughout what is today Germany, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine.[117]

One of the most interesting of these expatriate sculptors is the anonymous artist who relocated to southern Germany around 1570. He is the principal author of the Spencer Album, a unique volume of drawings mostly of archisculptural projects such as tombs, epitaphs, mantelpieces, fountains, and the like, most of which are dated 1573 (fig. 16).[118] The album was owned by Ambrosius von Gumppenberg, a wealthy noble and imperial official under Charles V and Ferdinand I. As he died in 1574, von Gumppenberg must have acquired the Spencer Album within a year of its execution.

The Spencer Album is interesting for several reasons. The drawings strongly reflect the manner of Cornelis Floris and testify to the popularity of his style and of the Netherlandish approach to the antique mode in southern Germany. More importantly, the volume as a whole suggests a general interest in the possibilities of sculpture among the Central European elite. It offered an armchair perusal of the medium for the cultivated nobleman, who was now as expected to know something about sculpture as he was about architecture. In the early sixteenth century this knowledge was practical; an aristocrat was required to understand the essentials of defensive architecture necessary to guard his castle. The

first theoretical architectural treatise published in northern Europe was understandably Albrecht Dürer's book on fortifications (1527).[119] As palaces gradually minimized their protective aspects and conspicuously adopted antique ornamental features, this interest in architecture became aestheticized. Books of architectural drawings by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, for instance, circulated as collectors' items. One of these belonged to Peter Ernst von Mansfeld (1517–1604), a prominent dignitary at the Brussels court.[120] Von Gumppenberg's album indicates that by the later sixteenth century, this aesthetic interest had been extended to sculpture. The sophisticated nobleman was now expected to know something about current designs of tombs and fittings for his palace. Von Gumppenberg seems to have acquired the Spencer Album for education and amusement; he never commissioned any of these Netherlandish projects for himself, and his own tomb in Augsburg was conceived in a distinct German manner.

## Recovery

The study of sixteenth-century sculpture is partly a project of archeological recovery. The vast majority of documented works from this period no longer survive. Much sculpture was lost in the iconoclastic outbreaks of the sixteenth century, the French Revolution, the two world wars and other depredations of time. The consequences for our understanding of the medium are difficult to calculate. There exist today somewhat fewer than four hundred carved altarpieces from the early modern Low Countries, yet this number represents only a fraction of the original production. There are, for instance, seventeen of these works in the United Kingdom today, along with many more fragments. As Kim Woods has shown, however, none of these retables was an import of the fifteenth or sixteenth century; all were acquired since the nineteenth century, when many Belgian churches were forced to sell their furnishings to enthusiastic English collectors.[121] In the present-day kingdoms of Belgium and the Netherlands themselves, the losses are also quite severe. This is not simply a question of numbers but most likely of quality and the very potential of the genre. Only one altarpiece from our period survives from a key Brabantine city: Antwerp, Brussels, Mechelen, or Leuven. That sole exception is Jan Borman's Altarpiece of Saint George from the elite Church of Our Lady Outside the Walls of Leuven and now in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels (see fig. 9), which exhibits an almost unparalleled level of craft and design.[122] We have sculptures by Cornelis Floris and Jacques Du Broeucq, but others have fared less well. Jan d'Heere, praised by the historian Lodovico Guicciardini and judged a second Praxiteles by van Vaernewijck, has left almost nothing to posterity.[123]

A second problem is the relative paucity of documentation, far more serious for sculpture than for painting. In the Netherlands the painter Karel van Mander (1548–1696) followed Giorgio Vasari with his own book of artists' lives—here unabashedly titled *Het Schilderboeck* or *The Book of Painting*, first published in 1604.[124] Van Mander shows very little interest in either sculpture or architecture, mentioning them only in passing when they relate to the lives of his painters. For students of northern European art, van Mander's biographies, with all their prejudices and omissions, retain their power for structuring our understanding of the arts in the Low Countries.

## Iconoclasm and Iconophobia

The veneration and breaking of images were two sides of the same coin, as Hans Belting has observed, for both depended on a belief in the power of these works of art.[125] The 1520s witnessed an early image debate in the German lands. Theoretical treatises commonly use the term *Bild*, image, which can refer to either painted or sculptured representations and often signifies the abstract *imago* or *figura* prior to its materialization in any medium.[126] Sculpture and painting, however, were often implied. In 1522 the German Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt published a diatribe against all uses of images, claiming that they inevitably prompted worship of their base materials rather than their holy prototypes. Karlstadt further alleged that they only distracted from the word of God, readily available in scripture, which all [Protestants] were entitled to read.[127] Catholics such as Hieronymus Emser and Johannes Eck quickly countered Karlstadt, insisting on the rightful place of images in the church. And even Erasmus, a critic of the misuse of images and a transcendentalist who valued the spiritual above the material, still sanctioned their role in supporting the piety of common people, as was noted by later authors.[128] Catholics like Thomas Aquinas typically offered three standard arguments for their defense: that "the mystery of the Incarnation and the examples of the saints might remain more firmly in our memory by being daily represented to our eyes," that images might instruct the illiterate, and that "things seen excite the emotions more effectively than things heard."[129] Although defenders of imagery insisted that reverence was shown only to the holy personage represented and not to the representation itself, they expressed a certain ambivalence on this point. Both Bonaventura and Aquinas stated that the person depicted benefited from the honor shown his or her image.[130]

Karlstadt's uncompromising positions, however, occasioned a rift with Luther, who opposed the breaking of images and supported their use in limited ways.[131] As the Antwerp Lutheran Godevaert van Haecht noted in his journal, Luther's followers were less strict than the Calvinists, tolerating statues as long as they were not decorated, honored with candles, or prayed to.[132]

Most of these opinions found their way to the Low Countries by the mid-sixteenth century, and Koenraad Jonckheere has cogently discussed the motives for and consequences of iconoclasm in the Netherlands.[133] Writing in the 1560s, René Benoist followed Aquinas and Bonaventura in insisting that moneys spent on the images decorating churches created the proper sense of decorum, doing justice to the idea behind the artworks.[134] Van Vaernewijck, no theorist, went even further, insisting that "the honor we accord images is directed and paid to those who are represented and the reality of these figures, and that people are often much more drawn to them than to words or books."[135] Significantly, the Catholic polemicist Martin Donk stressed the need for verisimilitude, a resemblance to particular objects and people "as found in nature" rather than idealized depiction.[136] This naturalism related images most forcefully to the holy persons they represented and not the materials—the wood or stone—that formed them. Such pronouncements seem to support the particularization of much Netherlandish religious sculpture. Statues of saints reflect notions of vividness or *enargeia* in being fashioned as unique individuals. Jan Borman's Saint Hubert is imagined with heavy jowls, angled brows, and a troubled expression—a

distinctive physical and psychological cast that presents the saint as a memorable person (fig. 17).

By the 1560s, Calvinists were the most numerous and vociferous of the Protestant sects and the most adamant in calling for a purge of images. A Calvinist Walloon ballad, for example, condemns the costs of outfitting church sculpture, putting "robes of silk on their idols made of old wood, leaving us brethren of Christ naked and shivering."[137] The cult of saints, especially of Saint Anthony, had come under particular attack, even by Erasmus and other Catholics. Van Vaernewijck, a moderate Catholic, describes the circulation throughout Ghent of the famous statue of Saint Anthony from Bailleul and the disorder this occasioned. He recounts the unseemly fighting over the dress and ornaments of the statue, and marvels that so much fervor could be caused by a "block of wood," the "figure of a man with a beard carved in the likeness of Saint Anthony, painted and preciously polychromed, and set on a throne provided with bells that jingled. There was nothing holy within it, no relic of the saint, which was merely painted wood."[138]

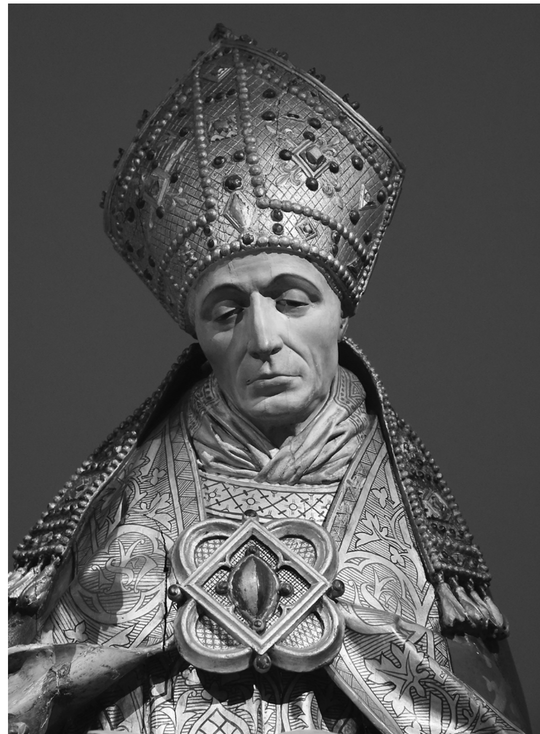

FIG. 17 Jan II Borman, *Saint Hubert*, detail, ca. 1490. M-Museum, Leuven.

Iconoclasm, in its various manifestations, claimed much Netherlandish sculpture; statues of saints were among the most common targets.[139] We might indeed ask how central was sculpture to iconoclasm? Frans Hogenberg's famous engraving of the iconoclasm at Antwerp privileges the destruction of sculpture: statues lie wasted on the ground; others are being pulled down from the nave arcade.[140] The same emphasis on sculpture is found in Hendrik van Steenwijk the Younger's painting of Antwerp's iconoclasm, executed in the early seventeenth century; the foreground is relegated to a group of figures similarly pulling down a statue from its pedestal with the aid of a rope.[141] The anonymous *Chronicle of Antwerp* specifically records the dislodging of the statues of the apostles in the nave arcade of the Church of Our Lady in that city, much as Hogenberg and van Steenwijck depict.[142]

First-hand accounts of iconoclasm document the wrecking of statues and works of archisculpture much more frequently than painting. Both van Vaernewijck and Cornelis van Campene describe the widespread destruction of sculpture in Ghent during the riots of August 1566. Statues and altarpieces were obliterated; choir screens and choir stalls were destroyed. Equally prime targets were the sacrament houses erected to conserve the consecrated host, the body of Christ. Although most churches of any size were equipped with sacrament houses, only nine examples from the

FIG. 18 Utrecht sculptor, *Altarpiece and Epitaph of the Pot Family*, ca. 1500. Cathedral, Utrecht.

sixteenth century survive in the Netherlands.[143] The vast majority were violently attacked and shattered down to their bases. The iconoclasts, however, also assailed tombs and epitaphs and wholly secular monuments like the Emperor's Gate with sculptures of Charles V and Ferdinand I.[144] The demolition of structures associated with the authorities amid cries of "viv le gheus!" (Long live the beggars) underlines the potentially political nature of the iconoclastic riots, which were partly a revolt against the ruling order, as Peter Arnade has argued.[145]

Life-size statues seem to have been particularly threatening to image breakers; Van Vaernewijck frequently states that works attacked were "large as life" (*groot als 'tleven*).[146] The cherished statue of the Virgin in the Church of Our Lady in Antwerp was accorded especially violent treatment; the iconoclasts cut off her head, her right hand, and her left arm before setting upon decorations of the chapel.[147] In Ypres the tavern owner Gillis Hessele cut off the noses and hands of several sculptures.[148] In the town of Westoutre, Mathieu Tahoen was charged with similarly cutting off the noses and disfiguring images in the local church.[149] The spectacular outbreak of 1566 was followed by later waves of destruction. The altarpiece by Willem van Tetrode (ca. 1525–1580) for the Oude Kerk in Delft, for instance, was destroyed in a second eruption in 1573.[150] In 1580 the altarpiece and epitaph of the Pot Family in the Cathedral of Utrecht was severely damaged (fig. 18).[151] The injury done to this sculpture was entirely to the faces of the figures, which were hacked off, as if it were felt necessary to de-personify them and thus deprive them of their dreaded power. As Martin Warnke and Peter Arnade observe, the iconoclasts punished sculpture—gouging out eyes, cutting off hands and heads, burning them in bonfires—much the way Protestants had been brought to justice by Catholic authorities.[152] These acts obliquely acknowledged the perceived animism of the statues and the need to deprive them of their personhood and life force. And yet observers seem concurrently aware of the base materials from which these sculptures were fashioned. The wood and stone that form these works are often stressed in these accounts; works of costly and delicate alabaster seem to have drawn particular ire from the image breakers.[153]

Luther was much more accepting of religious imagery than Calvin, as we have seen, and certain works of sculpture explicitly avowed adherence to Luther's beliefs. Cornelis Floris's tomb of Albrecht of Prussia, formerly in Königsberg, for instance, cites Luther's name in its inscription.[154] A more unusual testament to this allegiance is the Netherlandish carved altarpiece in the Museum Catharijneconvent

FIG. 19 Netherlandish sculptor, *Altarpiece with the Deposition* and detail of spandrel with Martin Luther, 1530s. Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht.

in Utrecht (fig. 19).[155] This retable of the 1530s presents a single scene of the Deposition framed by antique baluster columns. Its polychromy has been stripped, but it was once colorfully painted. The narrative relief is adapted from an engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi, an indication of the sculptor's broad pan-European perspective. Most remarkable, however, are the profile portraits in the spandrels; these clearly represent Martin Luther and his wife, Katharina von Bora, well known from prints and paintings from the Cranach workshop that circulated widely. Luther is shown as a monk, tonsured and dressed in his habit, as he appears in early prints. There is no information concerning the ownership of this altarpiece. Unlike Lutheran books or engravings that might easily be hidden in a chest or cupboard, carved altarpieces were presumably on constant display and potential signs of heresy. Was this sculpture ordered by a patron living in a Protestant city across the border in the German lands? Or was it intended for the Low Countries themselves, hung discreetly in one of the more private rooms of the house?

## Current Research

During the past two decades significant research has been conducted on individual aspects of Netherlandish sculpture, but no synthesis has been attempted. There have been important studies of the carved altarpieces of Brussels and Antwerp.[156]

Small, collectible boxwood carvings have been addressed in a number of studies, culminating in the exhibition catalogue *Small Wonders*, published in 2016.[157] Alabaster sculpture has drawn attention in recent years.[158] Many essays have been dedicated to the migration of Netherlandish sculptors abroad.[159] Newcomers to the Netherlands have also been examined.[160] Others have investigated the architectural conventions of sculpture, which surround works of both Gothic and antique design.[161] There have been writings on sculptured portraiture and fine metalwork.[162] And there have been monographic treatments of a few of the major sculptors such as Cornelis Floris,[163] Jacques Du Broeucq,[164] Giambologna,[165] Hubert Gerhard,[166] Johan Gregor van der Schardt,[167] Willem van Tetrode,[168] Adriaen de Vries,[169] Jan van Steffeswert,[170] Willem van den Blocke,[171] and Gerhard Hendrik.[172]

Several subjects, however, remain relatively unexplored. The literature on iconoclasm—especially in the Netherlands—has focused largely on painting, even though most first-person accounts of the destruction cite sculpture as the primary target.[173] Also insufficiently investigated is tomb sculpture. There have been a few studies that have treated sixteenth-century tombs and epitaphs as part of their scope.[174] Similarly, other items of church furnishing would profit from greater attention: pulpits, sacrament houses, fonts, choir stalls, and jubés or choir screens.[175]

## Organization of the Book

This book is a consideration of certain genres and conventions that made Netherlandish sculpture a vital and influential medium during the long sixteenth century. The study covers artworks beginning around 1490, when new ways of conceiving sculpture appear. And it follows certain genres into the first decades of the seventeenth century, when we see the final expression of established ways of organizing the medium.

The book is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 addresses one of the most popular genres of sculpture in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: the carved wood altarpiece. This section investigates the strategies of storytelling adopted by Netherlandish sculptors, the relation to devotional literature, issues of scale, and notions of affective piety. Chapter 2 treats the transition from a Gothic ornamental mode to an antique manner. It deals with two of the most influential sculptors who pioneered this fashion in the Netherlands, Jean Mone and Jacques Du Broeucq, and it discusses the new narrative vehicle of the alabaster relief. Chapter 3 addresses the development of tombs for foreign rulers by Netherlandish sculptors. Chapter 4 treats other genres of church furnishing: sacrament houses, choir screens, choir stalls, and pulpits. Chapter 5 introduces civic sculpture: the outfitting of town halls and other municipal administrative chambers. The relevant genres are the mantelpiece, the ceremonial portal, and the magistrate's bench. Finally, chapter 6 investigates notions of national identity, as it follows the broad migration of Netherlandish sculptors out of the Low Countries to their new homes in other parts of Europe and the New World.

The necessary limits in length of text and number of illustrations have mandated that several important artists and a few significant categories of sculpture have been omitted from this study. Consequently I have been highly selective in my choice of themes and examples. I have similarly reduced bibliographical references to essential literature.