

Tager Stonor Richardson

22nd June 2014

George Gater, Job No. 20140620

Treaty of Cambrai? Panel (Allegory on the Paix des Dames of 1529) c.1540

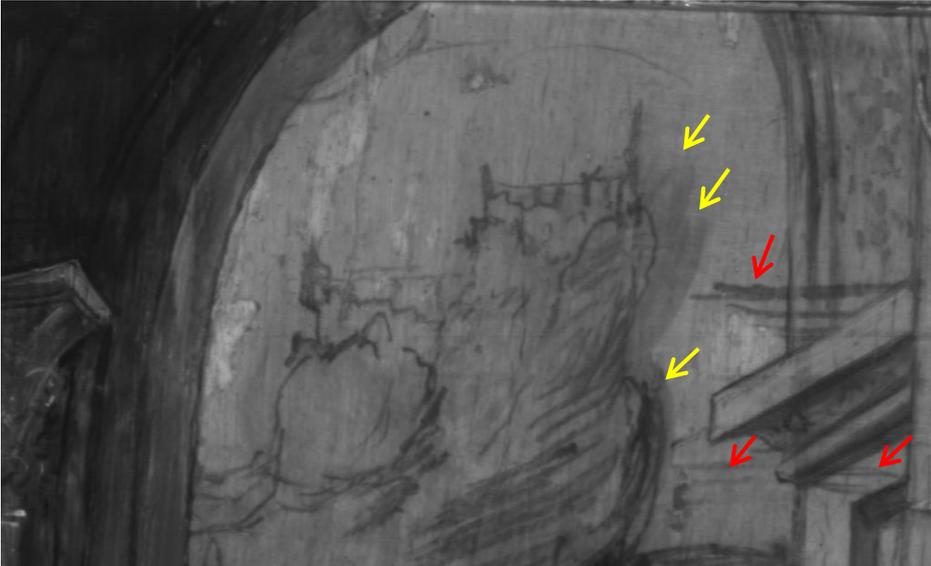
Infrared reflectography revealed a comprehensive freehand underdrawing with multiple compositional changes. The drawing is bold and expressive and appears to be executed in a liquid medium applied with a brush. The drawing appears consistent across the figure groups, architecture and background and changes are apparent in all parts of the composition.

The drawing shows hesitation in where to position the left hand arch and also reveals an earlier upward angle on the capital at the far left. This also appears to be the case for the right hand arch, where the capital is initially drawn at 90 degrees. The left hand column was originally thinner and the applied decoration appears to be added at a later, painting stage. Likewise, this appears true of the right hand column where the cherub's face can be seen to go over the hatching.



IRR detail of the left hand arch with red arrows indicating drawn elements which differ from the painted composition. The yellow arrows show an earlier width, probably painted, for the decorated column. The central tree visible in the middle of the landscape was not painted.

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IRR detail of the right hand arch showing the earlier position of the capital. The painted rocky outcrop (indicated with yellow arrows) is larger than the drawn design, with no aperture, and the buildings, which are only loosely described, are quite different.

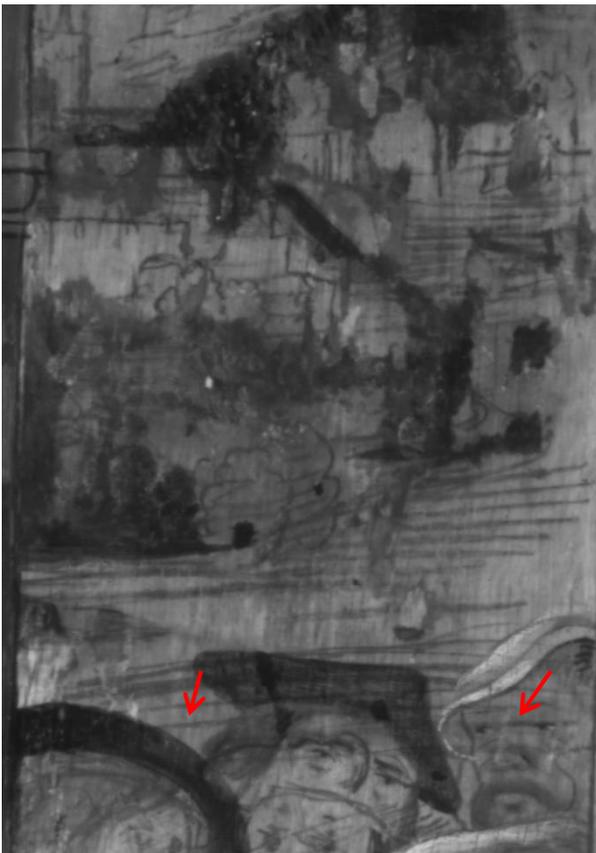
The distant architecture and landscape is very fully underdrawn in the same free manner as the rest of the composition and, though the design is generally followed in the paint, it is quite loosely interpreted with the rocky outcrop at the right being enlarged and an aperture added, the widening of the gateway at the left, addition of a broken down cornice, elaboration of the tiers on the building behind and repositioning of the tree.



IRR detail of the background architecture seen through the left hand arch. The gateway is narrower in the underdrawing and the cornice is unbroken. The tiers on the distant building are less elaborate and more 'squat'.

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The long hatching used in the landscape at the right is notable and can be seen to extend below the top two middle ground figures observing the action suggesting that these were a later addition to the drawn composition. The ruled line of the architecture extending under the elbow and hand of the figure at the extreme right indicates the order of painting suggesting that the architecture was drawn prior to these figures.



IRR detail of distant landscape seen through the right hand arch showing minor changes to the trees and buildings and long stroked hatching extending below the middle ground figures.



IRR detail of right hand middle ground figure group. The drawing shows a very different design with a completely different central figure initially planned and numerous adjustments to the features of the other characters.

It is difficult to read the drawing in the middle ground figure group at the right but there is an obvious additional figure which was never painted. The character appears youthful and clean shaven and has a broad-brimmed hat which is modelled with hatched shading at the right. In addition to this, there are several minor adjustments to the rest of the figure group undertaken from the drawn to painted stage, such as the raising of the position of hats on the lowest figures (see red arrows on above image), changes to hairlines and jawlines. The hands of the man with the pointing index finger also appear to have changed from the drawn design as the index finger seems to be drawn much lower and closer to the parapet.

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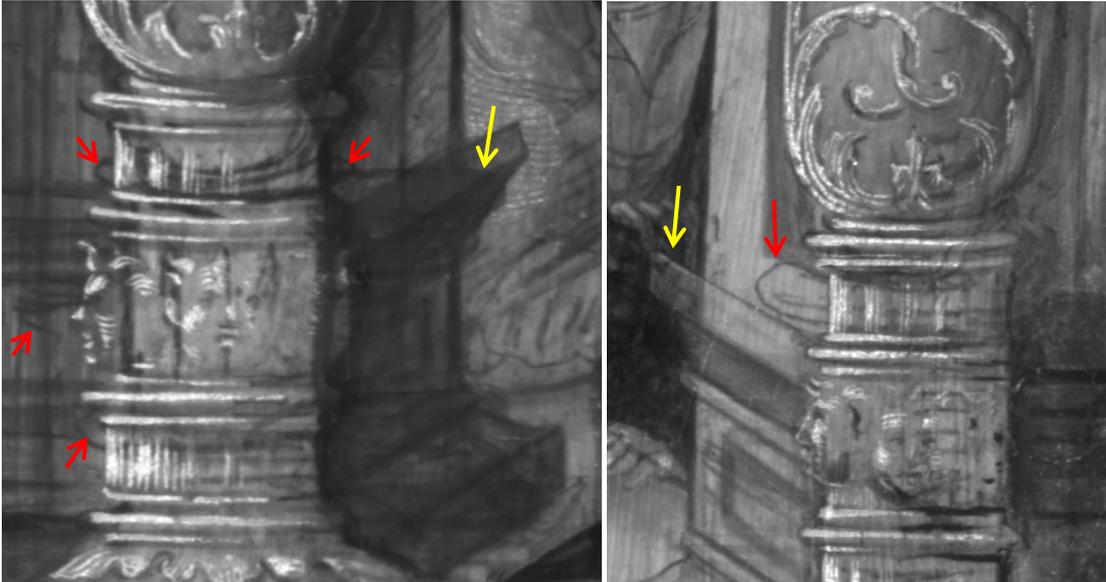
The middle ground figure group at the left is much less complex, although minor changes have also been made at the painting stage, which deviate from the initial underdrawing. For instance, both hats have been adjusted and the left hand figure's hair enlarged. However, both faces appear a little abraded (and a vertical damage runs through the left hand figure). The contour of the left hand parapet is much less distinct and the profile figure's hand and sleeve is loosely and comprehensively drawn – though the hand is painted larger in the final composition. Conversely, the adjacent figure's hand, although reserved in his companion's shoulder, does not contain much drawing and seems to have been painted almost as an afterthought.



IRR detail of the middle ground figure group at the left showing the smaller drawn hand (the yellow arrow marks the painted hand) and earlier drawn designs for the hats and hair. The hand on the far left figure's shoulder is reserved but the painted hand is much larger. The green arrow indicates the vertical damage.

Similar alterations to the architectural details at the top of the arches are also apparent in the base of the windows. The pillar at the left was originally drawn with the base projecting at 90 degrees, mirroring the design at the top, but then amended to try to get a sense of recession. Whilst the same detail at the base of the right hand pillar seems not to have been drawn at all and added at a later stage. A loose, freehand drawing is also apparent in the lower portion of the outer, decorative columns and this drawing has not been followed with any accuracy at the painting stage. It is also interesting to note that the pattern on the inner wall of the left hand parapet was more readily apparent in IRR.

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IRR details of the base of the left and right arches showing the change of angle on the pillar at the left (yellow arrow) as the artist attempted to create perspective mirroring the changes made at the top of the arch. At the right the pillar was originally designed with a straight edge and this detail painted later (yellow arrow). Both decorative columns have been drawn (red arrows) and the design altered considerably at the painting stage. The cherub faced decoration appears to have been added at a later stage in the painting process.

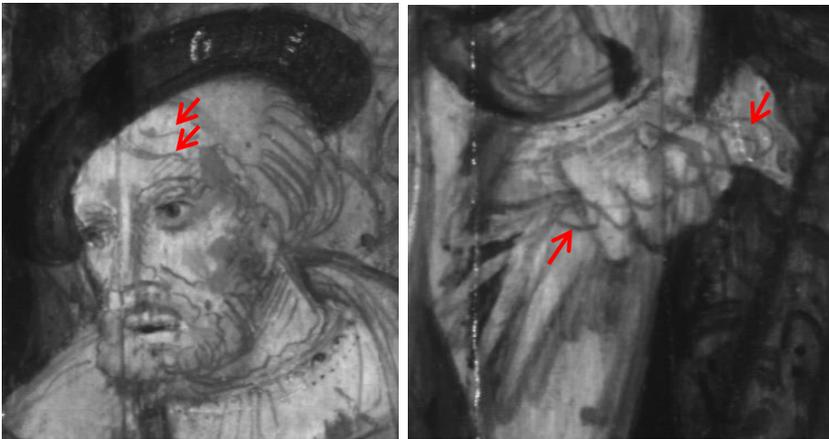
The foreground figures are as complex as those in the middle ground. As would be expected, the two full-length male figures at the left (Francois 1er? and Charles V?¹) are very fully underdrawn with extensive hatching. The drawing is very free, particularly in the figure with the orange stockings where multiple lines are used to describe the contours of the legs, indicating that, although preliminary drawings were likely to have been used, the design was further elaborated in the underdrawing process. Again, it is interesting to note that the orange 'stockinged' figure, who seems to be the most high status person in the scene, follows the underdrawn design quite closely. There are some minor adjustments to the hairline, right fist holding the glove, hem of his cloak and width of his legs. The brocade pattern of his doublet is a little easier to read in IRR due to the darkening/desaturation of the paint in this area and some drawing marks are apparent. It is also interesting to note that there are drawn lines indicating the shadow cast by the legs of these prominent male figures.

The profile male figure with the red cloak has been more comprehensively altered. Charles V(?) was originally drawn higher – a drawn ear can be seen above the painted ear – so that his head was more level with Francois 1er(?). A higher, drawn position is apparent for the shoulder and the figure's right hand has been lowered and the elbow moved to the left accordingly. The cloak appears to have initially fallen straight down to the figure's knee and the horizontal hem seems to have been drawn in two different positions before being reimagined 'pulled back' to reveal an elaborately decorated garter. The figure's lower right leg is difficult to interpret and appears to have been repositioned more than once. This

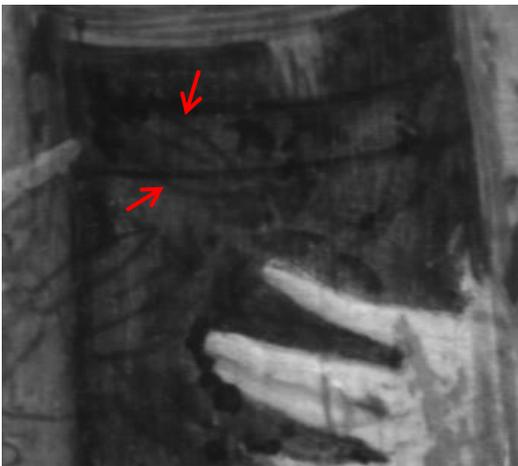
¹ For the purposes of identification of the figures, we are following the interpretation of the scene given by Ann Delva and provided to us by the owner.

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transposition of Charles V(?) was probably the reason for the lowering of Francois 1er(?) clenched right hand.



IRR details from the Francois 1er(?) figure with red arrows indicating drawn lines which were not followed in the paint.



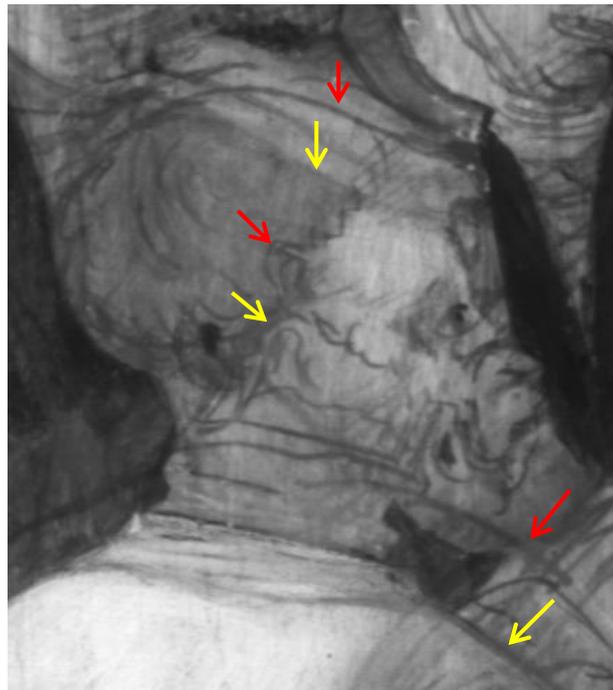
IRR detail of Francois 1er(?)'s chest. This area is difficult to interpret due to the painted brocade pattern and small, dark retouchings but some drawn marks appear evident (red arrows). These appear to relate to the design for the docket (slashes? or brocade pattern?) but it is possible that they could have been intended to represent some sort of chain or ribbon.

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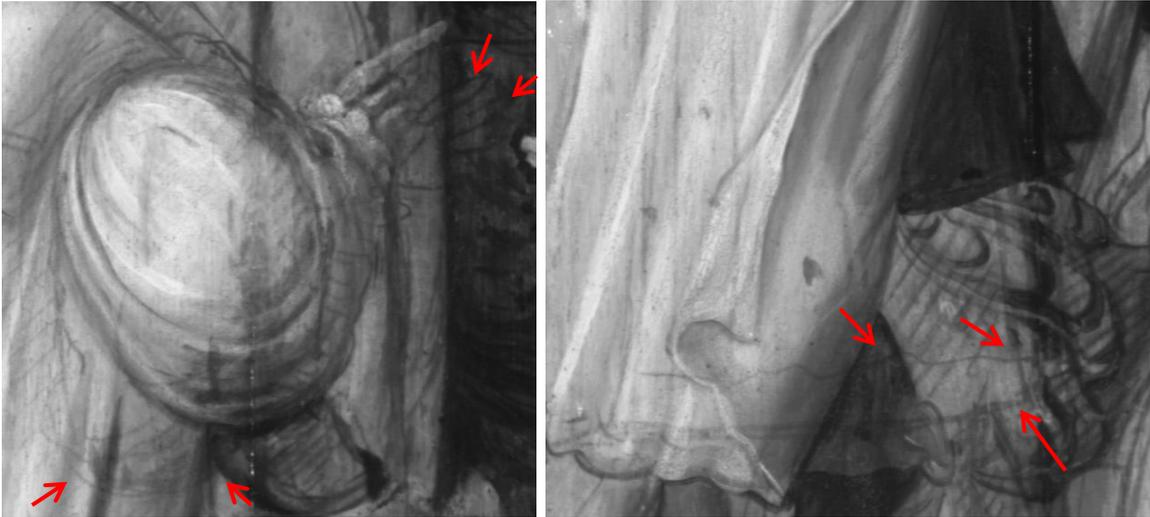
IRR detail of the foreground male figures with red arrows indicating drawn lines for the extended hem of the cloak and indicating the shadows cast by the legs. The multiple, freehand lines used to denote the knees and calves are also indicated with red arrows and the enlarged painted contour of the figure's left leg marked with a yellow arrow.

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IRR Details of the extreme left foreground male figure. The red arrows indicate the drawn, higher placement of this figure and the yellow arrows show the painted composition.

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IRR details of the Charles V(?) figure showing the drawn design for a lowered hand/arm and the cloak, which appears to originally have fallen straight down rather than being 'unfurled'.

The figures immediately behind the two 'Kings' have also undergone some notable changes. The central head, between the two 'Kings', was originally drawn looking down towards the action and a simplified oval shape to the left of this seems to indicate an idea for another figure which was never completed.



IRR detail of drawing in figures behind the 'Kings' showing a blank oval shape (red arrows) and an earlier, inclined position for the clean shaven figure with a black cap.

The two foremost female figures (Louise of Savoy? and Margaret of Austria?) are completely underdrawn with hatching used to model their features but these figures have subsequently been moved lower in the composition. This move is most dramatic in the case of the foreground woman with red cuffs whose underdrawn face is now partially obscured by the painted wimple leaving just her drawn mouth visible below her painted, left eye. Like Francois 1er(?), this figure's entire costume has been shifted lower so that

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IRR shows the higher neckline, left hand and belt very clearly. There is also a minor painted change to her right foot. This woman's earlier, higher position placed her in the area now occupied by the face of the third woman at the far right. The drawing for her higher wimple is readily apparent but it is harder to discern any drawing for the third figure possibly indicating that she was a later addition to the composition. The male, 'clerical looking' figure in this group has also been moved and the drawing shows him, with a smaller, more inclined head. His cowl came slightly higher and his shoulder and hat further to the right – not doubt this had to be adjusted when the two female figures were repositioned.

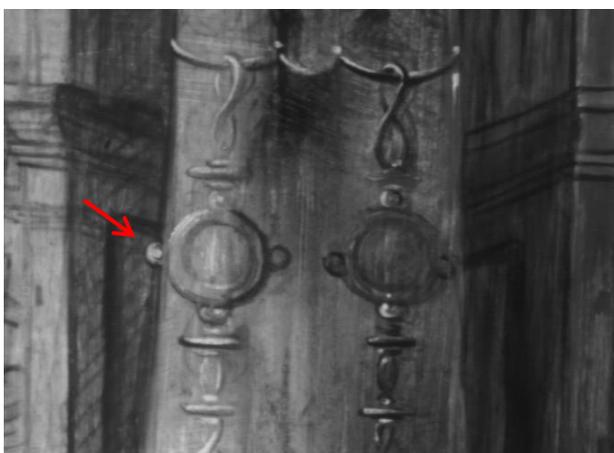


IRR detail of the right hand, foreground figure group showing the repositioning of the figures. The red circles indicate the earlier, drawn head positions of the figures and the arrows show the drawing marks not followed in the paint.

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There seems to be a shadow in the IRR image running vertically through the centre of the composition, which may represent a large scale area of restoration. This may correspond to a board join² - part of the original panel construction. This could be confirmed by examination of the painted surface under the microscope or by specialist x-radiography of the panel. The presence of possible restoration makes this area more difficult to interpret; but this may be the explanation for certain unsatisfactory elements of the painting's appearance, particularly the odd wide column in the centre.

IRR shows a series of loose, hatched strokes running down the centre of the middle column. These drawing lines are directly comparable to those on the left and right columns where hatching has been used along the right-hand edges to delineate the shadow cast. This might suggest that the central column was originally designed as two columns lit from the left and then subsequently re-imagined as a single column. Whilst this may be the work of the original artist, it seems from initial examination of the surface and the existing low contrast x-rays, that it may be by a later hand³.



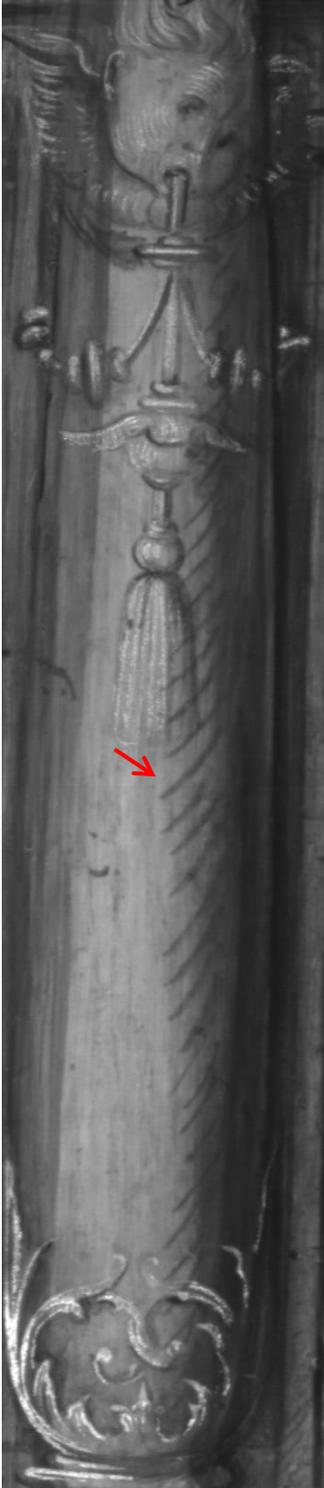
Similarly, hatching is clearly present at the left of the central column but not at the right, despite the shadow cast by the niche and the scene being lit from the left. This also supports the hypothesis that the right hand side has been damaged, causing a loss of underdrawing and paint, and subsequently retouched. Damage along board joints is common as these are structurally weak parts of the support.

IRR detail of the central column and niche showing hatching at the left but not at the right.

² A central join would suggest the panel was composed of two boards, measuring around 21cms each, which would be perfectly possible for the period. As has been suggested to us, it is possible that a central part of the composition has been removed due to damage or that these two boards were originally wings for a triptych that have been subsequently joined together to make a complete picture, but both of these scenarios would be quite unusual and, although the architectural space is a little awkward, there is no evidence to suggest this is the case. It would be interesting to try to identify the type of wood, as Baltic oak would be most likely for a Netherlandish painting whereas other wood types were sometimes employed in Germany. However, if the panel has been balsa blocked it is unlikely that the wood could be readily identified and it would also make dendrochronological dating of the boards impossible. Balsa blocking of panels was a 20th century restoration technique undertaken to stabilize warped and flaking panel paintings, which had often been thinned and cradled in the 19th century (see Smith, A., Reeve, A. and Roy, A., 'Francesco del Cossa's "S. Vincent Ferrer"', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, 5 (1981), pp.47–54 for an example of balsa blocking a panel which was previously cradled). http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/technical-bulletin/smith_reeve_roy1981

³ On our visit Clare Richardson noted from a brief examination of the existing x-radiograph that the pattern on the left hand part of the central column appeared more dense (paler) than the right hand side, suggesting a pigment difference in the highlights from one side of the column to the other – on the left this might indicate the use of lead tin yellow. Certainly some of the impastoed gold highlights on the decorated columns resemble lead tin yellow from surface inspection. This pigment has quite a defined date range of usage and would be a good way of distinguishing original paint from later retouching. Identification of lead tin yellow could be done with paint sampling.

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IRR details of: Left hand column

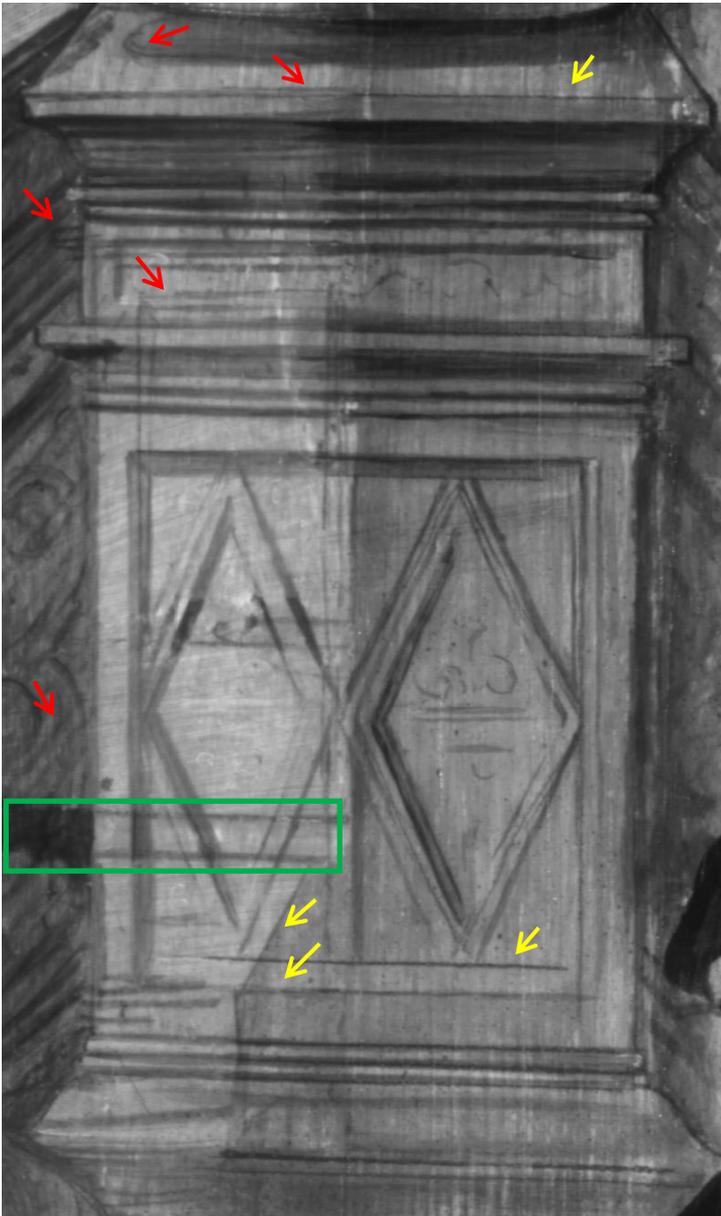
Central column shaft

Right hand column shaft

Red arrows indicate the underdrawn hatching used to describe the columns, delineating the edges and establishing their three dimensional quality. In the central column, the area to the right of the hatching appears retouched and has a darker appearance in IRR.

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The design for the central column pedestal also appears quite different in infrared. A much higher 'relief' panel can be seen at the left hand side. Again, an equivalent is not visible at the right possibly reinforcing the hypothesis that this area has suffered damage and restoration. There are multiple ruled lines describing the relief design of the pedestal which appear neater and finer than those seen at the left suggesting they might belong to another hand, possibly a restorer.



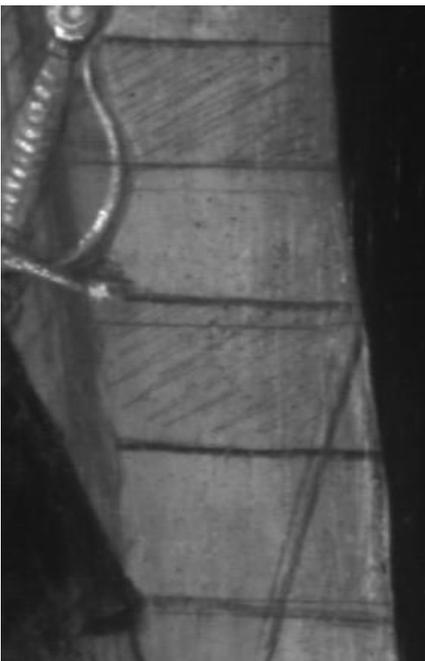
IRR detail of central pedestal showing the dark appearance of the right hand side which could indicate the presence of retouching. Yellow arrows show the ruled lines of a secondary campaign and red arrows indicate the earlier drawn design with looser marks more equivalent to the drawing seen elsewhere. The shadow cast by the base of the decorative column has also been drawn at the left but not the right and parallel hatching is apparent on the wall at the left. The status of the oblong feature marked by the green box is not entirely clear, although the dark area to the left appears to be retouched. It is possible that this could relate to damage triggered by the presence of a dowel used to hold the boards in place as part of the panel construction but this could only be confirmed by x-radiography.

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Initial inspection of the painted surface without magnification on our visit suggested that some restoration may be present in the tiles in this central area. This may be concealing original, damaged paint beneath, or required to restore total paint and ground loss with corresponding loss of the original underdrawing. Subtle differences in the underdrawing for the tiles in this central area were also apparent in IRR suggesting perhaps the latter may be the case (see images below). However, this remains an unproven hypothesis without microscopic examination of the paint surface and improved x-radiography to refer to.



IRR detail of tiled floor just below the central pillar. A fine, ruled line is apparent which has not been followed in the paint and shows that some trial and error was employed in creating the perspective. These fine lines are not apparent in the foreground and, due to the possible restoration in the central area, may not necessarily be original.



IRR detail of the tiled floor between the foreground figure groups. Again, fine lines can be seen setting out the tile design and a scratchy, 'scribbled' shading used to denote the coloured tiles. This style of shading is absent elsewhere and does not resemble the more broadly spaced, hatched drawing in the rest of the composition. Consequently, this might indicate another, later hand.

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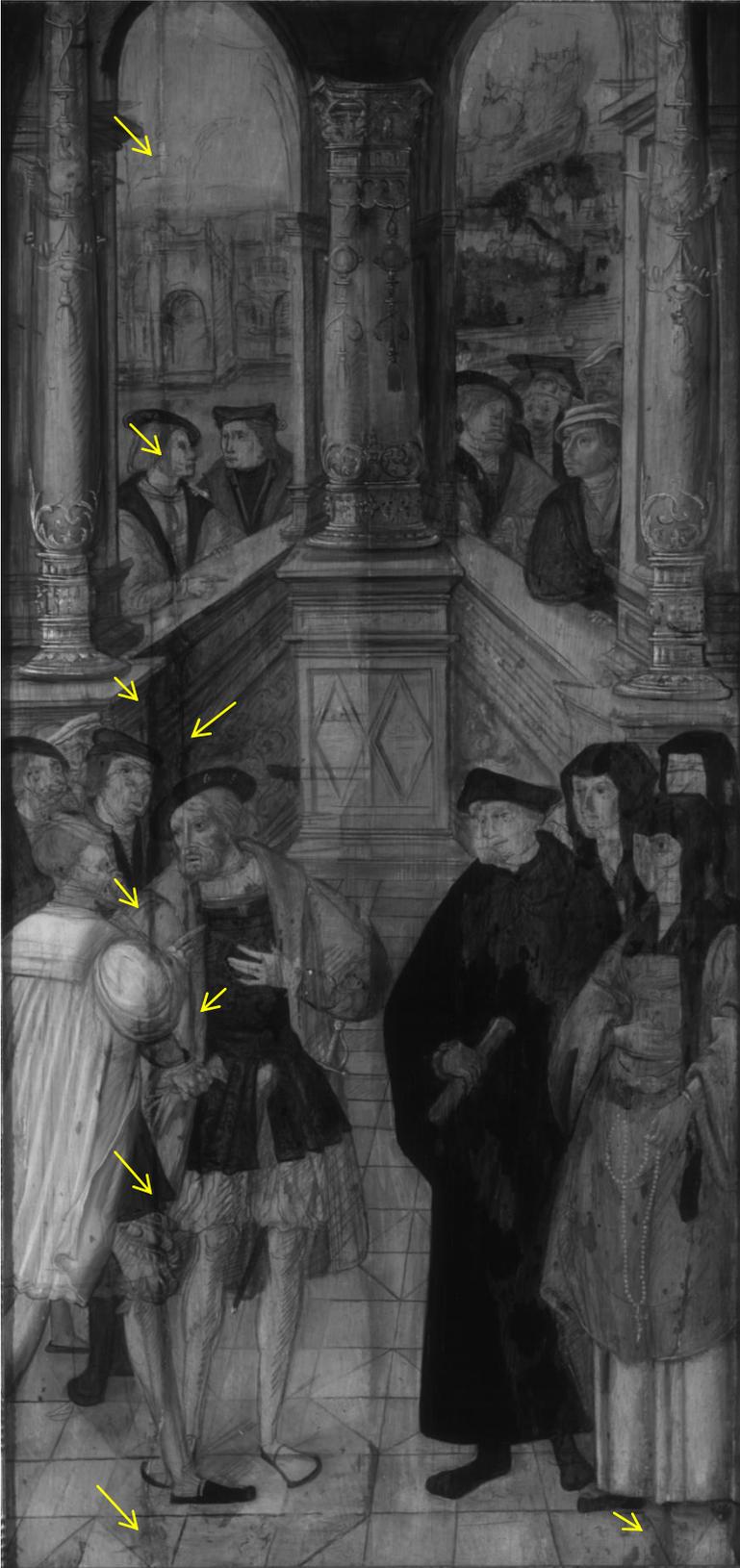


A considerable amount of retouching can also be seen in the black robes of the foreground man in the right hand group. This retouching appears very dark in infrared reflectography. The pigments used to retouch the black robe are clearly different from those originally used and must include a carbon containing black which would obscure any surviving underdrawing present in this area. This area of retouching seems to include the hand holding the scroll. However, although the dark appearance of this hand and scroll suggests it is non-original, the absence of underdrawing in this area might also be due to a change in position at a painted stage.

IRR also identified some other areas of damage running vertically with the grain of the wooden support, reinforcing the idea that the panel has suffered from structural instability in the past (see over). Such damages are common on panel paintings from this period.

IRR detail of figure in black showing the 'edge' of the retouched area, which appears very dark. The shape below his left foot (red arrow) seems to indicate marbling in the tile.

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Overall IRR with vertical losses indicated with yellow arrows.

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The drawing appears quite accomplished and possibly of a higher quality than the finished painting, which has suffered some abrasion and loss⁴. The great number of compositional changes indicates that it is an original work rather than a copy of an established composition and sheds some light on the production progress.

Changes could be due to the use of workshop drawings or prints as design sources, and problems with scaling these up or integrating separate studies into the composition. For example, similar problems appear to have been encountered in the National Gallery's Rogier van der Weyden and workshop *The Exhumation of Saint Hubert* (c.1440), where drawings of individual figures were brought together, introducing discrepancies in scale⁵.

Design alterations could be made by the artist as they worked up the drawn design to the painted one, but equally, they could be due to the circumstances of the commission. It is possible that the patron requested that an additional female figure be added at the right and that the red cloaked figure be lowered so that he is not level with the adjacent, most prominent man in the blue cloak.

⁴ The apparent quality of the painting might be explained by its condition but it could also be due in part to a division of labour, perhaps the Master was responsible for the drawing stage and workshop assistants executed the painting or a different artist finished a composition begun by a more talented painter. The latter might explain the problems encountered with the architectural perspective.

⁵ See Rachel Billinge, Lorne Campbell, Jill Dunkerton, Susan Foister, Jo Kirby, Jennie Pilc, Ashok Roy, Marika Spring and Raymond White, 'The Materials and Technique of Five Paintings by Rogier van der Weyden and his Workshop', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, Volume 18, London (1997) pp 68-86.

http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/upload/pdf/van_der_veyden1997.pdf