

**REVUE BELGE
D'ARCHÉOLOGIE ET D'HISTOIRE DE L'ART**

PUBLIÉE SOUS LE HAUT PATRONAGE DE S.M. LE ROI
PAR

**L'ACADÉMIE ROYALE D'ARCHÉOLOGIE ET D'HISTOIRE DE L'ART
DE BELGIQUE**

**BELGISCH TIJDSCHRIFT VOOR
OUDHEIDKUNDE EN KUNSTGESCHIEDENIS**

UITGEGEVEN ONDER DE HOOG BESCHERMING VAN Z.M. DE KONING
DOOR DE

**KONINKLIJKE ACADEMIE VOOR ARCHEOLOGIE EN KUNSTGESCHIEDENIS
VAN BELGIË**

XCII – 2023

– EXTRAIT –

BRUXELLES – BRUSSEL

MATERIALITY AND THE PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRODUCTION OF MEMLING'S SHRINE OF ST. URSULA IN BRUGES

Anthony HAMBER ⁽¹⁾

The Ursulaschrijn (henceforth “the Shrine”) by Hans Memling (1430-1494), commissioned in 1480 for the St. John’s Hospital in Bruges and completed in 1486⁽²⁾, occupies an intriguing position in the early history of photographic art reproduction, and posed significant reprographic challenges well into the 20th century. The introduction of photography added a new dimension to the evolution of visual perception and the concept of facsimile reproduction through its inherent characteristics: both its strengths and its limitations. The physical materiality of the Shrine, the surroundings in which it was displayed, and that of its photographic and printed surrogates, all came into focus.

This article is not intended to be a comprehensive historiographic survey of the photographic reproduction of the Shrine. Its aim is to act as a starting point highlighting the materiality of the Shrine and that of the technology and processes involved in its graphic reproduction. The three dimensionality of the Shrine and its wide gamut of colour, and particularly the colour gold, define the start point. While this article does not cover the earliest printed reproductions of the Shrine, it highlights a number of significant precursor views published in the first decades of the 19th century and using a variety of processes.

Hans Memling was born in Seligenstadt, on the river Main, south-east of Frankfurt. He moved to Brussels and by 1465 he had been made a citizen of Bruges where he was commissioned by bankers, merchants, politicians, clergymen, and aristocrats. His works were primarily in the form of portraits and religious altarpieces, and these brought him significant wealth⁽³⁾.

The Shrine was a unique type of commission for Memling and one of his late works. It is a carved and gilded wooden reliquary in the form of a rectangular Gothic chapel and followed a design convention employed by goldsmiths dating back to the early Middle Ages. Who designed the architecture of the Shrine, or carved the figures on its four corners, is unknown.

- (1) The research and writing of this article was undertaken during the travel and other restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. I am therefore very grateful for the assistance of the following: Steven Joseph, Jos Demarée, Marie-Christine Claes, Nancy Demartin of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, Till-Holger Borschert of the Musea Brugge, Michael Twyman and Johan Devroe. All errors remain my own.
- (2) Until 1977, when a new hospital, the AZ Sint-Jan, opened, the medieval building was still operating as a hospital.
- (3) BORCHERT 2005.

A key consideration for those wishing to view or make graphic copies of the Shrine was its accessibility. It was shown publicly on Holy Days and the feast-day of St. Ursula (21 October) on which it was carried in procession before being placed on the high altar. However, there is little evidence that the Shrine became a significant religious cult, and that it attracted large numbers of adorers either from inside or outside of Bruges⁽⁴⁾. By 1751 it appears to have been positioned near the high altar of the Chapel in the Sint-Jan-shospitaal. In 1769 the Shrine was placed above the high altar. The 1777 *Catalogue des tous les tableaux...qui se trouvent dans la ville de Bruges* recorded the reliquary over a door in the choir. Dirk De Vos considers that the Shrine was probably kept in a chest above the door of the sacristy on the left side of the choir. By 1818 it was reported that the Shrine was displayed on a “pivot” though whether it was covered by a glass case is unclear⁽⁵⁾. It moved to the newly founded public museum in the Chapter Room in 1839⁽⁶⁾. Prior to this there was comparatively restricted access to the Shrine and this would have hampered those wishing to make graphic depictions of it.

In the 1850s, when the earliest recorded photographs of the Shrine were taken, tourist guides stated “Le reliquaire est placé sur un pivot, de manière qu’on peut exposer au jour chacun de ses côtés.”⁽⁷⁾ This was also described as a “rotatory pedestal” and “the pedestal being moveable, each picture in turn can be viewed in the most favourable light.”⁽⁸⁾ A photograph of the interior of the Chapter Room taken in 1858 shows the Shrine on its pedestal in the middle of the room encased in a glass box. This pedestal was made by the Bruges sculptor Hendrik Pickery (1828-1894), who also created a full-length standing sculpture of Memling that was erected in 1874 in the Woensdagmarkt in Bruges (fig. 1).

The primary issue facing a copyist was that the Shrine is a 3D object. Thus, a decision as to what angle (or angles) to record the Shrine was a primary consideration. General views could be squared-up views of one of the sides, or the end panels. A diagonal view taken from one of the ends of the Shrine became a convention for general views, and a viewpoint from the end panel depicting St. Ursula and her companions predominates. Separate details were frequently made of the individual panels, either to create a complete set of views of the Shrine, or as single illustrations, whether as loose prints or book illustrations.

For early photographers of the Shrine, two issues predominated. These were the constraints of the capabilities and characteristics of the available photographic equipment, and the limitations of the associated photographic processes used. The removal of the glass case covering the Shrine was a practical starting point, as was lighting, natural daylight being the only form available in the Chapter Room.

(4) NUCHTERLEIN 2004, p. 54.

(5) KEVERBERG 1818 and caption to figure 2.

(6) DE VOS 1994, p. 138-139.

(7) BAERDECKER 1859, p. 137.

(8) BAERDECKER *et al.* 1869, p. 16. When exhibited at the 1902 *Exposition des Primitifs flamands et d'Art ancien* in the Provincial Government Palace in Bruges, the Shrine was displayed on the pedestal in a glass box.

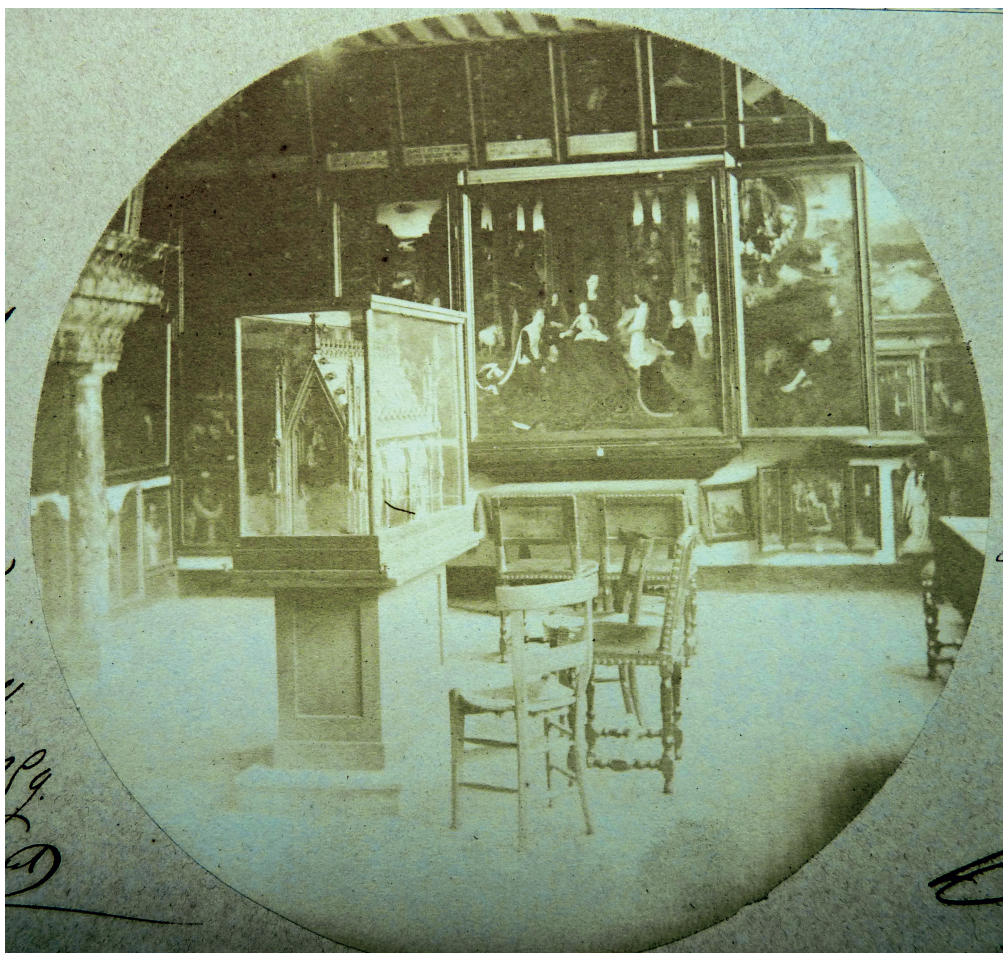


Fig. 1. L.P.T. Dubois de Nehaut, View of the interior of the Memling Museum, Chapter Room of the Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges, Salted paper print, D. 10.5cm, June or July 1858. Brussels, Bibliothèque royale Albert I^{er}, Cabinet des Estampes. © KBR Brussels

The earliest cameras used to record the Shrine did not have “movements” (tilt-shift-swivel of the front element with the lens, and the rear element holding the photographic plate) that could correct perspectival distortion. Over the second half of the 19th century photographers recorded diagonal general views of the Shrine from a variety of viewpoints, specifically in terms of the height of the viewpoint. The options were increased by the development from the 1880s of cameras with “movements”. Photographic lenses were also limited in terms of both angle of view and also aperture control (f-stops) that determined the depth of field (focus).

Another photographic consideration was the limited spectral sensitivity of the photographic emulsions used on the glass plate negatives. These emulsions were highly sensitive to blue. This recorded as a very dense area on the photographic negative that when printed

appeared as a very light (sometimes almost white) tone. Alternatively, the emulsions were insensitive to yellow, and this appeared as much darker in the photographic print. Orthochromatic plates that increased the range of colour sensitivity to blue and green were introduced in 1873. Panchromatic plates were introduced in 1902.

However, these inherent characteristics of mid-19th century photographs of the Shrine may not have been readily identified by contemporary viewers of salted paper and albumen prints since they could be more readily associated and compared with achromatic engravings or lithographs. Those that stood before the Shrine were unlikely to have a reproduction of it in their hand, let alone to undertake image accuracy analysis. Many would never visit Bruges and actually encounter the Shrine directly.

A further consideration was reproducing the colour gold. The Shrine has very substantial gold gilding on its intricate architecture, a colour that was one of the most challenging, and costly, to reproduce. While the amount of gold to be reproduced in print could be achieved by illustrating individual panels as details, this was not a realistic option when creating a colour reproduction of a general view of the Shrine. Evidence suggests that this factor may have significantly reduced the appetite of publishers to create colour reproductions of general views of the Shrine. However, there were some relevant examples of the reproduction of goldsmiths' work by chromolithography, such as the Neo-Gothic *Châsse de la Sainte Tunique à Argenteuil* by the goldsmith Léon Cahier (1816-1884), printed in seven or eight colours by Lemer cier of Paris, including several shades of gold. This formed an illustration in Jules Burat *Exposition de l'industrie française, année 1844. Tome II*. (Paris: Challamel, 1844)⁽⁹⁾. While not entirely convincing as a "facsimile" reproduction, it underlined the significant efforts being made to reproduce the colour gold. However, the Shrine was more complex in that it also housed oil painted panels with a wide range of colours.

Line drawn reproductions of the panels of the Shrine were published on a number of occasions during the 19th century. An engraved general view of the Shrine, attributed to François Aubertin (1773-1821), formed an illustration in Charles Louis Guillaume Joseph de Keverberg, *Ursula, princesse britannique d'après la légende et les peintures d'Hemling; par un ami des lettres et des arts* (Gand: Chez J.-N. Houdin, 1818)⁽¹⁰⁾ (fig. 2). This illustration is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it is intended as a reference diagram, with each painted panel left blank but containing a number or letter that refers to the description of the panel in the text. Secondly, Aubertin has attempted to create a three-dimensional space in which the Shrine is depicted by the use of a line box. Quite why Aubertin decided to do this remains unclear, but it may point towards the depiction of the physical environment in which the Shrine was displayed, such as within a glass box or perhaps in a chest above the door of the sacristy, as suggested by De Vos.

(9) See TWYMAN 2013, p.167 ill.129.

(10) Charles Louis Guillaume Joseph van Keverberg de Kessel (1768-1841). In 1815, he was appointed governor of the province of Antwerp and from 1817 to 1819, he was governor of the province of East Flanders (formerly the Scheldt department), in Ghent. This title was the first catalogue of the work of Hans Memling. See VAN BIERVLIET 1981, col. 427-431; VAN BIERVLIET 1992, p. 400-401; VENNET 2013, p. 95-104.

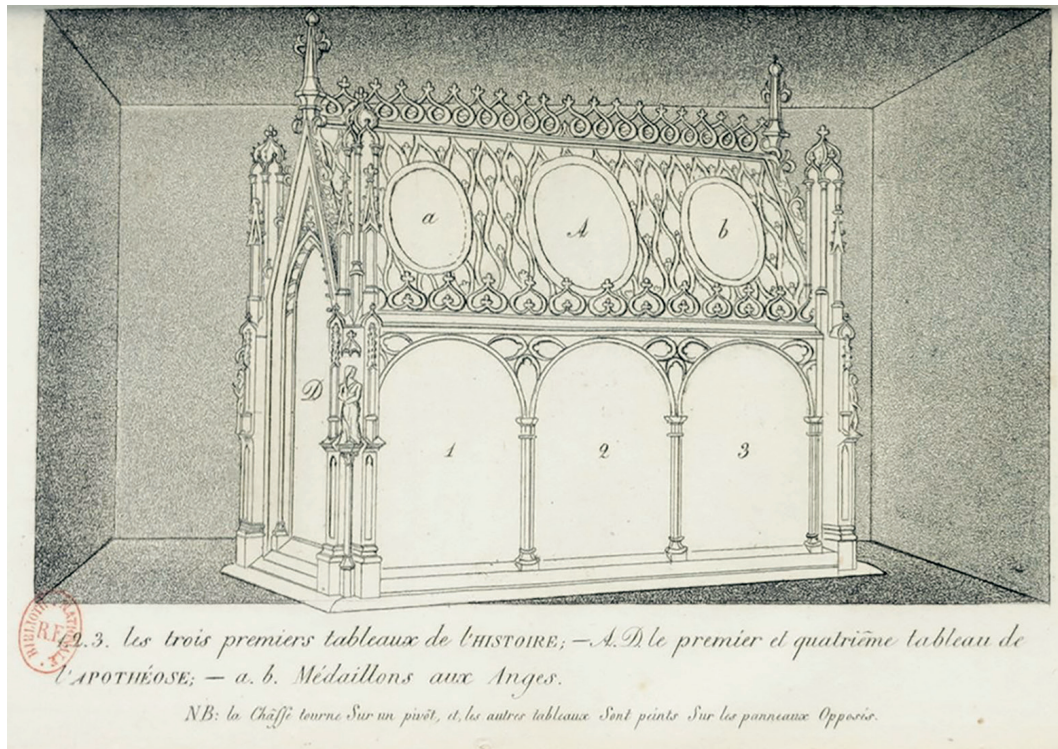


Fig. 2. François Aubertin (1773-1821), Line diagram general view of the Shrine of St. Ursula, Lithograph, KEVERBERG 1818. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France. © BNF

The rise in historical imagination and Romanticism inspired by the later medieval period bolstered interest in the Shrine and this focus was further enhanced by the revivalist politics of the new Belgian state, founded with the installation of Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld (1790-1865) as king on 21 July 1831⁽¹¹⁾. There was thus a need to invent a history and high-art patrimony of the young Belgian kingdom, and to make it accessible⁽¹²⁾. The railway station opened in Bruges in 1838 and also played a role in the rise in tourism and the public demand for access to the paintings in the St. John's Hospital. The decision in 1839 to open a dedicated public museum would contribute significantly in the renewed appreciation of the Flemish Primitives. In January of the same year the Société d'émulation pour l'histoire et les antiquités de Bruges et de la Flandre Occidentale was founded (fig. 3).

The early 1840s saw a number of graphic reproductions of the Shrine as line drawings, such as *La Chasse de Sainte Ursule, gravée au trait par Charles Onghéna d'après Jean Memling avec texte par Octave Delepierre et Auguste Voisin. Dédié à la Reine des Belges.* (Bruxelles: Société des Beaux-Arts, 1841) that included 14 etchings by Charles Onghéna (fig. 4).

(11) See GRAHAM 2013, p. 169-197.

(12) See NYS 2012.



Fig. 3. Jean-Baptiste Madou (1796-1877), J. Memling, à l'hôpital de Bruges, From *Scènes de la vie des peintres de l'école flamande et hollandaise*, Brussels, La Société des Beaux Arts, 1842, Lithograph printed by Degobert, 27 x 38 cm. London, Wellcome Collection. © Creative Commons

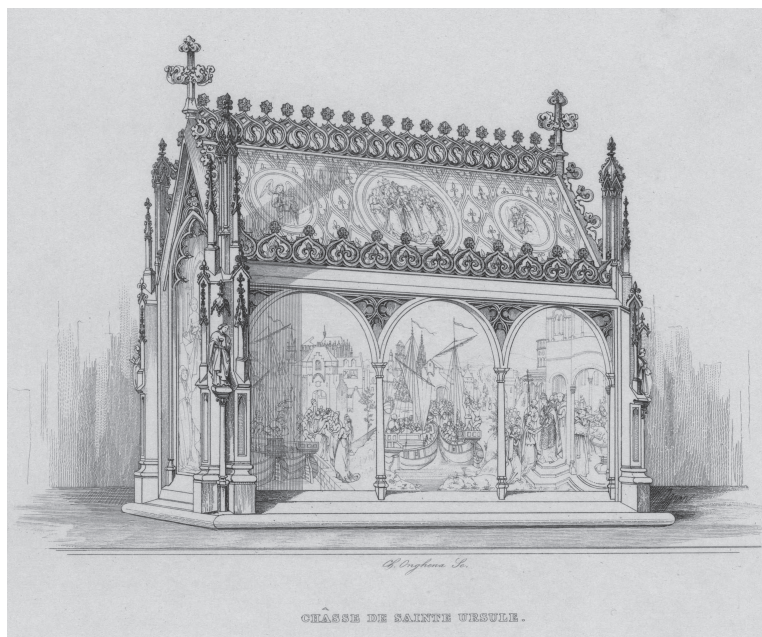


Fig. 4. Charles Onghéna, "Glorification de Sainte Ursule", Plate 11, *La Châsse de Sainte Ursule*, gravée au trait par Charles Onghéna d'après Jean Memling avec texte par Octave Delepierre et Auguste Voisin. Dedié à la Reine des Belges, Brussels, Société des Beaux-Arts, 1841, Line engraving. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-49.400. © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Lithographs of the Shrine were also published. In 1841 J. Buffa et Bogaert-Dumortier of Brussels published *Châsse de Sainte Ursule par Jean Memling*, eleven of the 15 monochrome crayon-drawn lithograph plates being of the Shrine, including a general view. All plates are credited as drawn and lithographed by Édouard Manche or Louis Joseph Ghémar Manche (1819-1873) or both; and all are signed as lithographed or printed by Pierre Degobert (1806-1844) of Brussels (fig. 5). 1819-1861.

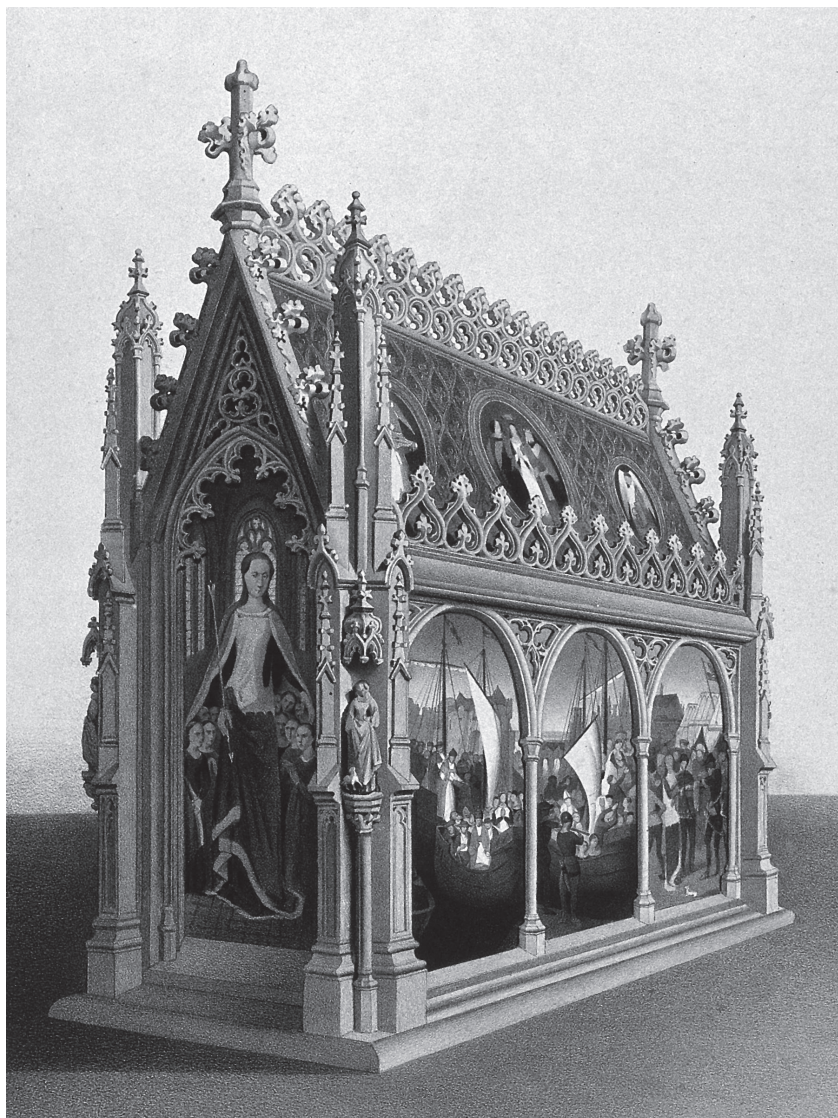


Fig. 5. Louis-Joseph Ghémar (1819 - 1873) and Édouard Manche, 1819-1861 "Châsse de S^{te} Ursule, peinte par Memling, à l'hôpital S^t Jean, à Bruges." *Châsse de Sainte Ursule par Jean Memling*. Brussels : J. Buffa & Bogaert-Dumortier éditeurs, [1841]. folio [Pl. 3] Lithograph, 41.0 x 29.8 cm. London, Wellcome Collection. © Creative Commons

A small number of copies of this publication were issued with coloured illustrations, using aquarelle (transparent watercolour) on the lithographs. These copies were probably used as gifts to the “sponsors” of this publication, and perhaps to the city authorities of Bruges⁽¹³⁾. They were described as “d’une précision et d’une fidélité assez remarquable.”⁽¹⁴⁾ (fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Louis-Joseph Ghémar (1819 - 1873) and Édouard Manche, (1819 - 1861) “Châsse de S^{te} Ursule, peinte par Memling, à l’hôpital S^t Jean, à Bruges.” *Châsse de Sainte Ursule par Jean Memling, Brussels, J. Buffa & Bogaert-Dumortier éditeurs, [1841]. folio [Pl. 3]. Hand coloured lithograph, 41.0 x 29.8 cm. Courtesy of Arenberg Auctions, Brussels. © Courtesy of Arenberg Auctions*

(13) I thank Johan Devroe for this insight.

(14) *Annales Archéologiques* 1847, p. 264.

Born in Bruges in 1802, Joseph Octave Delepierre was a lawyer, diplomat and antiquary. From 1839 he was a council member of the *Genootschap voor Geschiedenis* (Bruges). He published extensively on the art of Belgium and as his biographer, and son in law, the German-English publisher, bookseller and linguist, Nicholas Trübner (1817-1884) put it: “But it was chiefly his beloved native city of Bruges which was benefited by his labours. He was among the first, by numerous publications, to direct general attention to her ancient picturesque architecture, to her precious relics, art treasures, and legends.” ⁽¹⁵⁾

In 1840 Delepierre provided the text for *Album Pittoresque de Bruges, ou collection des plus belles vues et des principaux monuments de cette ville, dessinés et lithographiés par Louis Ghémar et Edouard Manche, et accompagnés d'un texte historique par Octave Delepierre*, (chez Bogaert-Dumortier et F. Buffa, éditeurs, Rue Philipstock, Bruges, 1840). This was the second part of a publication titled *Album Pittoresque de Bruges* ⁽¹⁶⁾. Significantly, the 25 plates of the second part had been made by Louis Ghémar (1819-1873), who initially worked in Brussels. In 1849 he moved to Scotland, where he opened a lithographic printing works in Edinburgh in collaboration with E.E.F.T. Schenk. Ghémar returned to Belgium 1854, and by the end of the year he had begun his photographic career in partnership with Robert Severin (b. 1839).

In 1843 Delepierre moved to England and quickly established himself within scholarly and antiquarian circles. He was elected a foreign member of the Society of Antiquaries in 1845. One of his contemporaries was Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond (1809-1886), who had been elected a Fellow in 1834. An avid amateur photographer, Diamond took his first photograph in April 1839, a mere three months after William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) announced his paper-based photographic process. Diamond photographed antiquities and wrote articles on photography for the antiquarian journal *Notes & Queries: A Medium of Inter-Communication for Literary Men, Artists, Antiquaries, Genealogists, etc.* ⁽¹⁷⁾. He was a founder member of the Photographic Society (later the Royal Photographic Society). During the 1850s he took a portrait of Delepierre that was subsequently reproduced as the frontispiece to Trübner's memorial biography of his father in law (fig. 7).

Delepierre made valuable contributions to the scholarly literature on Hans Memling. He proved that the majuscule which previous scholars, such as Jean-Baptiste Descamps (1715-1791), had mistaken for “H” – as in Hemmelinck – was in reality “M”. Given his affinity with his home city, and his contacts with the emerging medium of photography such as through Hugh Welch Diamond, it must be left to conjecture as to whether Delepierre embraced the potential of photography for antiquarian studies and imparted this to friends and colleagues in Bruges.

(15) TRÜBNER 1879, p. 8.

(16) The first part had been issued in 1837, see *Album Pittoresque de Bruges* 1837.

(17) DIAMOND 1852, p. 371-373.



Fig. 7. Hugh Welch Diamond, Portrait of Joseph Octave Delepierre, Collotype after photograph by Diamond, Trübner 1879. © Creative Commons

Chromolithography offered one potential solution to reproducing general views of the Shrine. In 1854 a chromolithograph by Franz Kellerhoven (1817-1882) of Hans Memling's *Le Mariage Mystique de Ste Catherine* in the St. John's Hospital was published by Firmin-Didot frères of Paris, printed by Etienne Isidore Hangard-Maugé (active 1854-1872). In 1865 the Arundel Society (1848-1897) published in a chromolithograph by Christian Schultz (1817-1882), printed by Storch & Kramer of Berlin, another work by Memling in the St. John's Hospital, the *Adoration of the Magi* triptych. However, to date, no 19th century chromolithographs of general views of the Shrine have been located.

Creating a chromolithographic print of a general view of the Shrine would require the use of many colours, would pose a technical challenge, and be expensive. To produce diffe-

rent tones or shades of gold the chromolithographic artist would have had to simulate an effect with fine lines or dots. This was certainly done on occasions in the 1830s and 1840s, such as for Belgian glazed trade cards, known as “cartes porcelaine”. Alternatively, black (or some other dark colour) could be added to modify the solid area, which is what Lemerrier employed in the print of the *Châsse de la Sainte Tunique à Argenteuil*. The problem is that greasy ink was not easily absorbed by the gold, one of the consequences being that a subsequent black working might appear brown or grey, another being that the marks lose some of their refinement⁽¹⁸⁾.

When the first photograph of the Shrine was taken has yet to be established. It is possible that a daguerreotype of it was taken in the 1840s. In November 1842 it was reported that “M. Lecchi, peintre milanais”, certainly Stefano Lecchi (1804-after 1866) had arrived in Belgium to take daguerreotypes of “nos plus beaux tableaux”⁽¹⁹⁾. No evidence has been found to confirm Lecchi’s visit to Bruges, or that he photographed the Shrine.

At the end of the 1840s a number of individuals lobbied the Belgian government for a subsidy to photographically document the country’s heritage. Guillaume Claine (1811-1869), a journalist and stenographer, was one of the most significant early photographers in Belgium. The Ministry of the Interior granted Claine a sum of 1,250 francs and in 1851 Claine completed the first state commission granted to a photographer for drawing up an inventory of Belgium’s architectural heritage prior to its destruction (or, more rarely, its renovation). The commission thus constitutes a landmark event in the early history of the medium in Belgium⁽²⁰⁾.

By the early 1850s, photographically illustrated publications including Belgian art were appearing⁽²¹⁾. In March 1851, the influential French art critic and early advocate of photography, Francis Wey (1812-1882) had an article promoting the idea of a photographic campaign in Bruges published in *La Lumière* in which he described the Shrine as “un monument unique au monde”⁽²²⁾. In September 1851, Louis Désiré Blanquart-Evrard published the first part of one of the earliest photographically illustrated titles, *Album photographique de l’artiste et de l’amateur*. Plate 23 was of the scene of “Arrivée de Ste. Ursule à Rome” from the Shrine (fig. 8) and Plate 32 was the view of the end panel depicting St. Ursula and her companion (fig. 9). These photographs, the second of which seems to have been published as late as 1853, were taken some time in 1852 by the Bruges born Jan-Frans Michiels (1823-1887) who was to leave the city in late 1852 for Cologne, but retained a residence in Bruges throughout the 1850s. He formally moved to Cologne in 1855 and was granted Prussian naturalisation the same year but returned to Belgium in 1857 before finally settling in Germany for good in 1863⁽²³⁾.

(18) I thank Michael Twyman for this explanation. Email to author 29 July 2021. See <https://graphicarts.princeton.edu/2014/11/22/belgian-trade-cards-or-cartes-porcelaine/>

(19) *La Renaissance* 1842, 4, p. 143.

(20) JOSEPH & SCHWILDEN 1991 that also provides details of the commission.

(21) See JOSEPH 2014, p. 37-56.

(22) WEY 1851 p. 25-26.

(23) See entry on Michiels by Steven Joseph in HANNAVY 2008, p. 925-926. and <https://fomu.atomis.be/index.php/michiels-jan-frans;isaar>.



Fig. 8 (Attributed to Jan-Frans Michiels), “Arrivée de Ste. Ursule à Rome”, Plate 23, Louis Désiré Blanquart-Evrard, *Album photographique de l'artiste et de l'amateur*, Lille, 1851, Salted paper print, 16.7 x 11.4 cm, Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XM.800.2. © The J. Paul Getty Museum

Michiels had an important local supporter, the bishop of Bruges, Jean-Baptiste Malou (1809-1864), who had recommended the photographer to the administration of the St. John's Hospital Malou stated in a letter dated 16 December 1851 that Michiels wished to photograph “les chefs d'oeuvres de Memling” and that “la publication de ces dessins contribuera à répandre de plus le goût chrétien et à illustrer d'avantage cette ville.”⁽²⁴⁾ How many of Memling's works Michiels captured as part of this campaign is unclear, as are the contractual negotiations with Blanquart-Evrard.

(24) Stadsarchief Brugge (SAB) – deelarchief Commissie Burgerlijke Godshuizen Brugge (CBGB) – doosnr. 441 (oud doosnr. 374) – NDC/bundel 2. (Formerly Archives de l'Hopital Saint-Jean, Bruges. Beaux-Arts, folder 2/K6) as cited in JOSEPH & SCHWILDEN 1991, p. 50.



Fig. 9. Jan-Frans Michiels, *La Chasse de Ste. Ursule, Sepulchre of the Holy Ursula at Bruges*. Eight pictures by John Hemling, photographically copied in their original sizes by John Francis Michiels, Member of the Direction of the Royal Academy of Fine-Arts at Bruges, Cologne, Franz Carl Eisen, 1854, Albumen print, 31.0 x 22.0 cm, Private Collection. © Private Collection.

In 1854 Franz Carl Eisen of Cologne published *Sepulchre of the Holy Ursula at Bruges*. Eight pictures by John Hemling, photographically copied in their original sizes by John Francis Michiels, Member of the Direction of the Royal Academy of Fine-Arts at Bruges. Each of the albumen prints, measuring 20.8 x 28.0 cm or 22.7 x 31.0cm was mounted within a multiple set of line frames (one of which is gold). The title page is in English or German, and with an international market in mind, the printed captions at the foot of the plate are in French and German⁽²⁵⁾.

The first point to note is that the photographs were indoors in the Chapter Room (fig. 10). The glass case had been removed and the Shrine pivoted towards the windows of the Chapter Room. The background, the south-west wall, had not been masked out and the large frame of Memling's Altarpiece of Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist can be seen.

(25) *Der Reliquienschrein der heiligen Ursula zu Brügge. Nach den Originalgemälden von Johann Heming*. See JOSEPH 2019, in BERGHMANS 2019, p. 23. There may be copies dated to 1856.

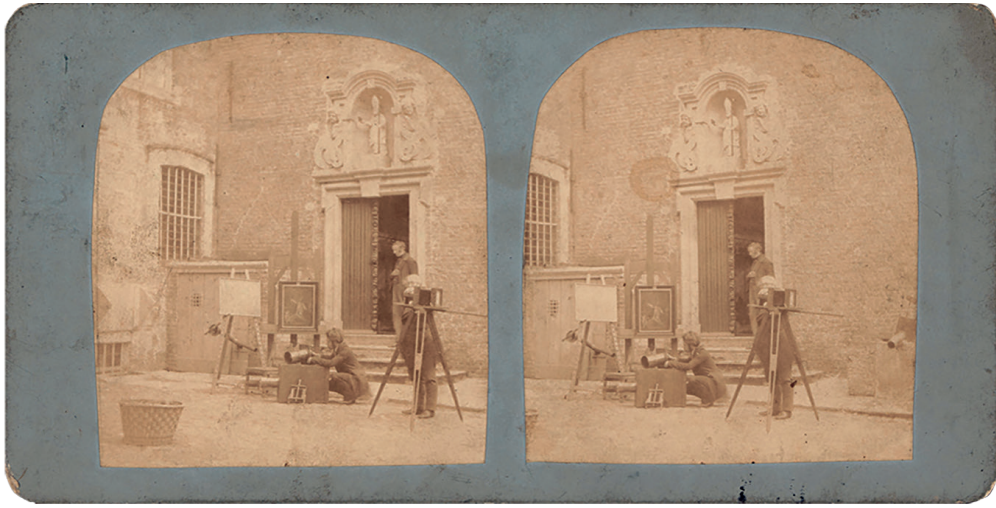


Fig. 10. Louis Pierre Théophile Dubois de Nehaut and Edmond Fierlants, Dubois de Nehaut and Fierlants photographing in the courtyard outside the Chapter Room of St. John's Hospital, Stereo view, Albumen prints. Antwerp, Foto Museum Antwerp P_1988_0133. © Museum Antwerp

Removing the background was a technique that was already in general use by photographers from the early 1850s, either by placing a backdrop behind the object, or by masking or removing the background on the negative to provide either a pure white or pure black background⁽²⁶⁾. While an attempt has been made by Michiels to illuminate the Shrine in direct sunlight, the depth of field is limited since the size of the lens aperture was not sufficiently small to place the whole Shrine fully in focus. The view of the Shrine has been taken at a slight oblique angle, with the end panel with the scene of St. Ursula and her companions in focus, but the rest of the Shrine moving steadily out of focus. As a result, the optics of this image break with artistic conventions.

Louis Pierre Théophile Dubois de Nehaut (1799-1872), an amateur photographer from Lille, and resident in Brussels, began to take photographs in 1854. In 1858 he began reproducing paintings by the Flemish primitives in public and private collections. His series *Trésors de l'art ancien dans les Flandres*, comprising 70 plates, was published in 1859. It included thirteen views of the Shrine, a mixture of salted paper and albumen prints, each measuring around 20.0 x 16.0 cm.

Dubois de Nehaut worked together with another photographer from Brussels, Edmond Fierlants (1819-1869), at the St. John's Hospital during June and July 1858 (fig. 11). The authorities at the hospital were surprisingly flexible and permitted the Shrine to be moved outdoors into the rear courtyard of the building and for it to be placed on a table in direct sunlight. The negotiations to enable this were presumably initiated by Dubois de Nehaut, though it would appear that he and Fierlants had applied to take photographs around the same time⁽²⁷⁾.

(26) See HAMBER 2018.

(27) See JOSEPH & SCHWILDEN 1988, p. 27.



Fig. 11. (attributed to Jan Frans Michiels), “Arrivée de Ste. Ursule à Rome”, Plate 23, Louis Désiré Blanquart-Evrard, *Album photographique de l'artiste et de l'amateur*, Lille, 1851, Salted paper print, 16.7 x 11.4 cm, Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XM.800.2. © Creative Commons

In June 1858 Fierlants visited the Memling Museum in the Chapter Room on at least two occasions, his signature being found in the visitors register⁽²⁸⁾. These visits were presumably to examine the paintings and plan for the photographic campaign. In July 1859 Dubois de Nehaut wrote a letter to the administration of the St. John Hospital thanking it for the permission given him to photograph and that as a token of his gratitude, he gave to the hospital the photographs he had taken, to be published and sold by the nuns running the hospital. In August 1859, he wrote again to the hospital stating that in his earlier correspondence he had used the word “museum” several times. He now wanted to specify that it was the museum of the hospital and not the museum of the Academy of Fine Arts⁽²⁹⁾.

(28) I thank Jos Demaree for sharing this information with me.

(29) See MICHEL 1978, p. 29-30.

Edmond Fierlants had learnt photography in the Paris studio of Hippolyte Bayard (1801-1887). In 1854 he became the only Belgian founder member of the *Société française de photographie*. Having returned to Brussels in early 1858, in March of that year he successfully applied for a government grant in order to photographically reproduce the masterpieces of Flemish painting in Bruges. This led to him working together with Dubois de Nehaut to photograph the Shrine in the summer of that year⁽³⁰⁾. A set of fourteen plates of the Shrine by Fierlants, priced at 136 francs, was advertised in June 1859 by Didron of Paris⁽³¹⁾ (fig. 17). These were large albumen prints at a 1:1 scale of the original painted panels and were mounted on heavier card stock. The captions were in the form of printed labels pasted on the verso of each plate.

In 1859, Fierlants exhibited a complete set of his photographs of the Shrine at the exhibition of the *Société française de photographie*. At the 1862 London International Exhibition Fierlants exhibited forty-eight photographs. The catalogue to the Belgian exhibits refers to a 1:1 reproduction of the Shrine, with photographic plates, priced at £45. No evidence has been found that any examples of this replica Shrine were either constructed or sold, or whether the photographs were hand coloured.

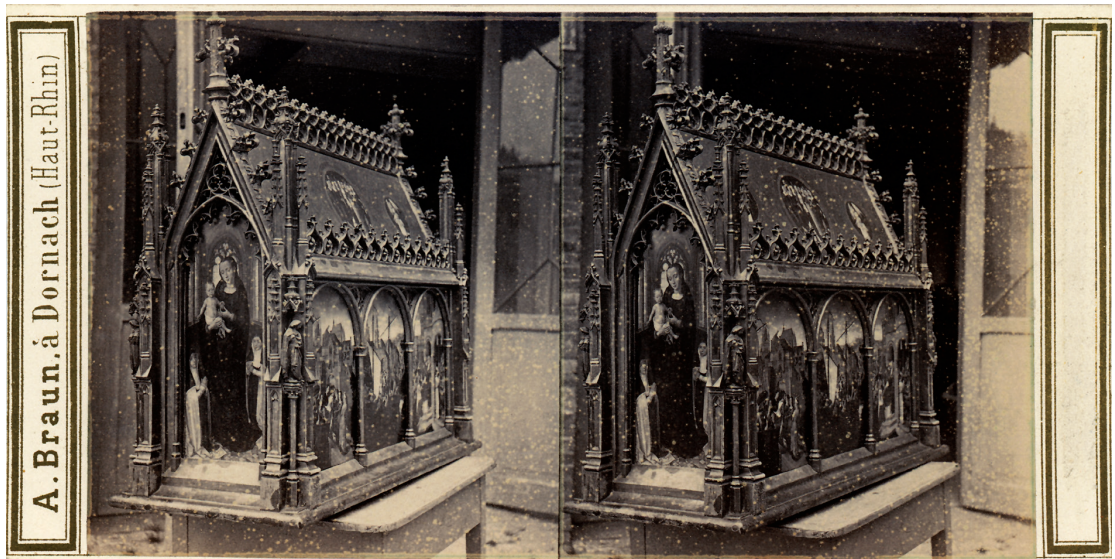


Fig. 12. Adolphe Braun, Châsse de St. Ursule, Stereographic view “No.4138” from the “Belgique” series, Albumen print. Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XC.873.4113. © Creative Commons

(30) JOSEPH & SCHWILDEN 1988; <https://fomu.atomis.be/index.php/fierlants-edmond-2;isaar> Het Stadsarchief Brugge (SAB) – deelarchief Commissie Burgerlijke Godshuizen Brugge (CBGB) – (formerly Openbaar Centrum voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn (OCMW) in Bruges) holds one hundred and fifty glass plate negatives dating from 1858 to 1870, sixty-nine of them by Dubois de Nehaut.

(31) Bibliographie de la France 1859; BRUNET 1862, Column 1594.

The optimal approach to photographically record the three dimensionality of the Shrine was through the stereoscopic view (figs. 12 and 13). Dubois de Nehaut took at least one stereo view of the Shrine during his 1858 campaign, outdoors on its pivot pedestal with a black backcloth hung behind it. In 1864, Adolphe Braun of Dornach undertook a photographic campaign in Belgium and the Netherlands, returning with 400 views. A few of these were published in stereo format, and two of these were of a general view of the Shrine of St. Ursula (fig. 14). These are more significant views than those of Dubois de Nehaut since Braun was a major European photographic publisher with an extensive distribution network. No attempt was made by Braun to put a cloth over the table or mask the background. The Shrine was then photographed in overcast defused daylight at a slightly oblique angle, with the panel containing the scene of St. Ursula and her colleagues to the front. The first view was taken at or near the outside entrance of the new hospital ward (built 1858-1862) closest to the Chapter Room. In the second view, the table has been moved against a brick wall.

The records held in the Openbaar Centrum voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn (OCMW) in Bruges list the regular requests for photographic campaigns in the Saint-Janshospitaal over the 19th and 20th centuries⁽³²⁾. In 1880, J. Lévy & Cie was given permission to photograph. However, in the same year, a ban was put in place regarding “taking photographs in the future for the reproduction and of the protective glass of the Shrine of St. Ursula.”⁽³³⁾ By at the latest 1890 photography had restarted and permission was given to H. Braun & Cie. In 1905 Franz Hanfstaengel photographed in the museum. In 1928 Alinari, and then Braun & Cie of Paris, both photographed at the Memling Museum.

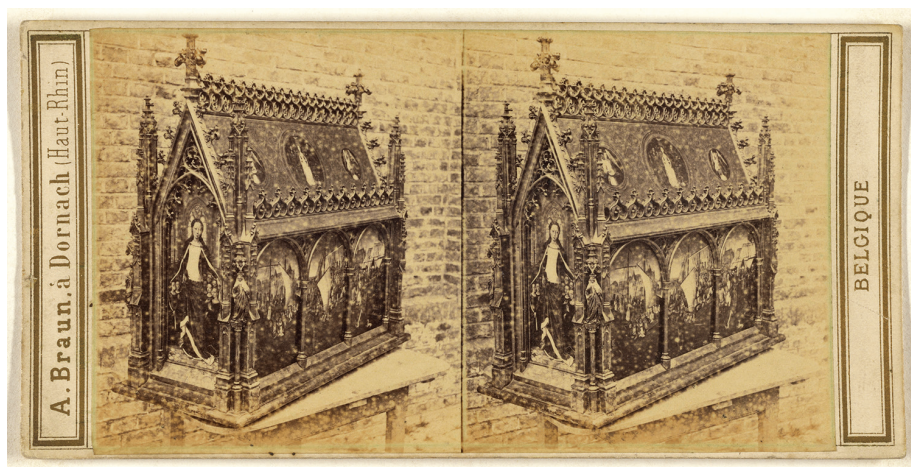


Fig. 13. Adolphe Braun, Châsse de St. Ursule, Stereographic view “No.4137” from the “Belgique” series, Albumen print. Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XC.873.4113. © Creative Commons

(32) See MICHELS 1978, p. 49-50.

(33) I thank Jos Demaree for sharing the archival listing of photographic requests and permissions with me. Stadsarchief Brugge (SAB) – deelarchief Commissie Burgerlijke Godshuizen Brugge (CBGB) – doosnr. 441 (oud doosnr. 374) – NDC/bundel 11. (Formerly OCMW, Old Box number 374 folder 11). “Verbod van in de toekomst nog foto’s te nemen voor de reproductie en van het beschermglas van het Schrijn van de H. Ursula.”

L'ILLUSTRATION

que ce soit par « grand-repentance ». Sur la pomme que d'une main diaphane Marie tend à l'Enfant, son regard est fixé; on croirait qu'il découvre un fruit cueilli au verger des Hespérides, le symbole même de toutes les richesses que sa juvénile impatience brûle de conquérir. Ah ! la franchise de ce portrait, l'inconscience de cet aveu où se révèle un bel animal piaffant de désir !

Maintes fois, Memlinc peignit de tels visages dépourvus de candeur, inquiétants, avec la bonne foi d'un « franc maître » consciencieux, disant ce qu'il voit. Autour de l'« Empérière » des cieus, que chantait Villon vers ce temps, la grande Miséricordieuse à qui faisaient confiance ces rudes hommes, autour des saints, il présenta des familles aux innombrables progénitures, comme dans le *Saint Christophe* de Guillaume Moreel ou cette Madone de Jacques Floreins, parure de notre Louvre. Figures ingrates et fermées, sans flamme, même dans la prime jeunesse, fières et cauteleuses, peu avenantes et ne prenant leur beauté que de la merveilleuse sincérité de l'artiste. Dans son énigmatique sécheresse, la *Sibylle Sambetta*, que conserve aussi l'hôpital, paraît bien le chef-d'œuvre de ces portraits maussades et implacablement vivants.

Il semble que cette part de labeur devait inspirer quelque dégoût à ce cœur candide, car ce sentiment, on le retrouve exprimé sur les visages délicats et mélancoliques des saints disposés ainsi qu'une noble garde autour de Marie. Ceux-là, comme on les sent bouleversés d'amour, pénétrés d'extatique ferveur ! Une tradition qui fortifierait notre impression veut même que dans l'*Adoration des mages*, fleuron du vieil hôpital aux cours herbeuses, Memlinc se soit représenté. Rien ne serait plus naturel que de le recon-



La Nativité.

(Volet du triptyque dit de « l'Adoration des mages ».)



La chasse de sainte Ursule.

naître dans ce pieux spectateur, dans ce « ravi », comme dit la Provence au temps de la Crèche, contemplant, appuyé sur le murger de l'étable, la scène merveilleuse.

Cet humble qui semble craindre d'approcher, oui, c'est bien Memlinc. Au moins son fantôme. Il est là tel que nous le pouvons concevoir, dégagé de la corvée que lui ont imposée les donateurs, maître enfin de dévouer son génie à peindre la plus belle des créatures, la benoîte Dame, cette « Dulcedo » que chantait saint Anselme, la Mère de Dieu et la Reine des anges. Memlinc ne trouve jamais de pinceau assez soyeux pour tracer l'ovale parfait de ce visage, cette chevelure ondulée couvrant les menues épaules et y versant son or à flots. Il s'attendrit à peindre le front légèrement bombé, poli comme ivoire, les sourcils si doux de courbe, le teint de perle, les lèvres enfermant tant de mansuétude dans leur tendre dessin. Toute la lumière du monde tient sous ces paupières veloutées, demi-closes, laissant filtrer entre leurs longs cils une infinie bonté venue du paradis.

Marie est vêtue avec une simplicité toute royale,

Fig. 14. Page with a tipped in print of "La Chasse de Sainte Ursule, from George Grappe "Hans Memlinc à Bruges" *L'illustration*, 1936, [Christmas (Noël) 1936 issue],

Photogravure, Private Collection. © Private collection

REPRODUCTIONS IN COLOUR OF PAINTINGS
IN THE MUSEUMS OF THE WORLD

HANS MEMLING
THE SHRINE
OF ST. URSULA



THE MARION PRESS
PARIS 1939 BRUSSELS

Fig. 15. Cover with tipped on general view of the Shrine of St Ursula, Maur Guillaume-Linephty,
Hans Memling: la chasse de Sainte-Ursule, The Marion Press, Paris, 1939,
Photogravure. Private Collection. © Private collection

As photochemical emulsions became increasingly light sensitive, exposure times were reduced and this, combined with artificial lighting technology, enabled photography to be taken indoors more easily. This can be seen in some photomechanical book illustrations that include the fireplace in the Chapter Room in the background, such as W. H. James Weale, *Hans Memlinc* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1901).

Who bought the early photographs of the Shrine, and where from, remains to be fully uncovered. One purchaser was the Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) who was enthralled from the beginning of his career by the St. Ursula Shrine. His wife recalled: "I remember his giving nearly all that he had for a set of photographs of Memling's 'St. Ursula and her eleven thousand Virgins' which made the glory of our sitting room in Great Russell Street [London]." ⁽³⁴⁾ This suggests they may have been the life-size prints by Edmond Fierlants.

While colour reproductions of the Shrine from photographs were published in the first decades of the 20th century these did not include general views. One example is the colour plates for *Memlinc* / *By W.H.J. & J.C. Weale* / *Illustrated with Eight Reproductions in Colour* (London: T.C. & E.C. Jack; New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1909). In 1913, Pierre Laffite & Cie of Paris published No. 55 in its series *Les Peintres Illustres, Memling: huit reproductions facsimile en couleurs*. Again, while three of the side panels were reproduced there was no general view of the Shrine.

While these two titles were probably made using four colour separation negatives, in 1914 there is a record of "colour photographs" by Ullstein & Co. of Berlin being taken for reproduction of the Shrine ⁽³⁵⁾. This may have been an Autochrome, a positive colour transparency on glass photographic process, invented by Auguste and Louis Lumière and first marketed in 1907.

In 1936, an article titled "Hans Memlinc à Bruges" by French critic George Grappe (1872-1947) was published in the French weekly magazine *L'Illustration* that employed high-end colour printing and fine paper stock ⁽³⁶⁾. There were several tipped-in colour illustrations, including a general view of the Shrine (fig. 14). In 1939 Éditions Marion of Paris and Brussels published *Hans Memling: la chasse de Sainte-Ursule* with text by Maur Guillaume-Linephty. This included a general view of the Shrine in which the gold gilding is printed as a solid colour, though some an attempt been made to introduce some texture (fig. 16).

Post WWII, colour management and associated print quality within the printing industry improved significantly. The 1960s saw a number of Italian publishers issuing innovative colour photographic art publications. The *I Maestri del Colore* series published by Fratelli Fabbri, between 1963-1967, and Rizzoli Editore's *L'Opera Completa* series commencing in 1968, are two significant milestones in colour reproduction of the Shrine given their relative

(34) BURNÉ-JONES 1904, p. 289. This reference is in Chapter XV covering the period 1865-1867.

(35) Stadsarchief Brugge (SAB) – deelarchief Commissie Burgerlijke Godshuizen Brugge (CBGB) – doosnr. 440 (oud doosnr. 373) – NDC/bundel 38 (formerly OCMW, Old Box number 373 folder 38).

(36) It was the first French magazine or newspaper to publish a photograph and in 1907, *L'Illustration* was the first to publish a colour photograph.



Fig. 16. Dimitris Kamaras, View of the Shrine of St. Ursula by Hans Memling, Sint-Janshospitaal, Brugge, 2017. © Creative Commons

affordability and the quality of colour illustrations. The volume *L'Opera Completa di Memling*, published in 1969, contained five full-colour plates of the Shrine⁽³⁷⁾. At the time, most academic art history publishers continued to use “black and white” illustrations.

Since the 1990s the rapid rise of digital colour management has impacted the entire imaging chain from digital cameras (including mobile phones), through digital monitor screens, to cheap desktop printers and commercial printing. Image quality and accuracy have improved exponentially. Today, the Shrine is displayed within a glass case in the middle of the former main ward in the St. John's Hospital on its original “rotatory pedestal.” It is bottom lit, providing yet another variant in terms of visual perception and the considerations for the reproduction of the Shrine (fig. 17).

(37) CORTI & T. FAGGIN 1969.



Fig. 17. Edmonds Fierlants, Panneau du côté de Ste. Ursule, Panel by Hans Memling from the Shrine of St. Ursula, St John's Hospital, Bruges, 1858, Albumen print, 49.3 x 20.5 cm, Author's collection. © Author's collection

Bibliography

- Album Pittoresque de Bruges 1837* = *Album Pittoresque de Bruges, ou collection des plus belles vues et des principaux monuments de cette ville, dessinés par A. TESSARO, lithographiés par H. BORREMAN, et accompagnés d'un texte historique par O. DELEPIERRE*, Bruges.
- Annales Archéologiques 1847* = *Annales archéologiques*, Bureau des Annales archéologiques, Paris.
- BAERDECKER 1859 = *La Hollande et la Belgique / Manuel du Voyageur. Traduit de l'allemand*, K. BAERDECKER, Coblenz.
- BAERDECKER *et al.* 1869 = K. BAERDECKER, WILLIAMS, NORGATE, HAAR, STEINERT, *Belgium and Holland / Handbook for Travellers, Fifth edition, revised and augmented*, Coblenz - London - Paris.
- BERGHIMANS 2019 = T. BERGHIMANS, *PhotoBook Belge 1854 – Now*, Verne - Antwerp.
- Bibliographie de la France 1859 - Bibliographie de la France*, 18 Juin 1859 p. 391.
- BORCHERT 2005 = T.-H. BORCHERT (ed.), *Memling's Portraits*, London.
- BRUNET 1862 = J.-Ch. BRUNET, *Manuel du libraire et de l'amateur de livres, Tome Troisième 2e Partie*, Paris, Column 1594.
- BURNE-JONES 1904 = G. BURNE-JONES, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. 1, London.
- CORTI & FAGGIN 1969 = M. CORTI & G.T. FAGGIN, *L'opera complete di Memling*, Milano.
- DE VOS 1994 – D. DE VOS, *Catalogue / Hans Memling*, Ghent.
- DIAMOND 1852 = H. W. DIAMOND, *Photography Applied to Archaeology and Practiced in the Open Air, Notes & Queries* 6, 155.
- GRAHAM 2013 = J. GRAHAM, *Picturing Patriotism: The Image of the Artist-Hero and the Belgian Nation State, 1830-1900*, in H. DUNTHORNE & M. WINTLE (eds.) *The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the Low Countries*, Leiden.
- HAMBER 2018 = A. HAMBER, *Photography and the 1851 Great Exhibition*, New Castle, DE - London.
- HANNAVY 2008 = J. HANNAVY, *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, vol. 2, New York - London.
- JOSEPH 2014 - St. F. JOSEPH, *Origines et Pionniers de l'Édition Photographique et Photolithographique en Belgique*, *In Monte Artium* 7.
- JOSEPH 2019 – St. F. JOSEPH, *The 19th century*, in T. BERGHIMANS, *PhotoBook Belge1854 – Now*, Verne - Antwerp.
- JOSEPH & SCHWILDEN 1988 = St. F. JOSEPH & T. SCHWILDEN, *Edmond Fierlants (1819-1869): photographies d'art et d'architecture*, Brussels.
- JOSEPH & SCHWILDEN 1991 = St. F. JOSEPH & T. SCHWILDEN, *A l'aube de la photographie en Belgique: Guillaume Claïne (1811-1869) et son cercle*, Brussels.
- KEVERBERG 1818 = Ch. DE KEVERBERG, *Ursula, Princesse Britannique, d'après la légende et les peintures d'Hemling; par un ami des lettres et des artes*, Ghent.
- La Renaissance 1842* = *La Renaissance*, 4, 18, novembre 1842.
- MICHIELS 1978 = G. MICHIELS, *Uit de wereld der Brugse mensen. De fotografie en het leven te Brugge 1839-1918*, *Westvlaamse Gidsenkring*, Bruges.
- NYS 2012 – L. NYS, *De intrede van het publiek / Museumbezoek in België 1830-1914*, Leuven.

- NUECHTERLEIN 2004 = J. NUECHTERLEIN, Hans Memling's St. Ursula Shrine: The Subject as Object of Pilgrimage, in S. BLICK (ed.) *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage in Northern Europe and the British Isles*, Leiden - Boston.
- TRÜBNER 1879 = N. TRÜBNER, *Joseph Octave Delepierre*. / Born: 12 March 1802. Died: 18 August 1879 In Memoriam, For Friends Only (London).
- TWYMAN 2013 = M. TWYMAN, *A History of Chromolithography*, London - New Castle, DE.
- VAN BIERVLIET 1981 = L. VAN BIERVLIET, Keverberg de Kessel, Charles Louis Guillaume Joseph baron de, in *Nationaal Biografisch Woordenboek* 9, Brussels, col. 427-431.
- VAN BIERVLIET 1992 = L. VAN BIERVLIET, Brugge, cultureel kruispunt in het Europa van de 19^{de} eeuw, in V. VERMEERSCH (ed.), *Brugge en Europa*, Antwerp, p. 400-401.
- VENNET 2013 = G. VENNET, Karl Ludwig von Keverberg (1768-1841), Adliger Beamter in Umbruchzeiten, den Museen und der Wissenschaft zugetan, in W. DIEDENHOFEN (ed.) *Klevische Lebensbilder 24 Portraits Band I*, Kleve.
- WEY 1851 = F. WEY, Un voyage héliographique à faire, *La Lumière*, 23 mars 1851.

SAMENVATTING

Materialiteit en fotografische reproductie van Memlings Sint-Ursulaschrijn in Brugge

Het Sint-Ursulaschrijn is een gebeeldhouwd en verguld houten reliekschrijn, voltooid door Hans Memling in 1486. Het wordt bewaard in het Sint-Janshospitaal te Brugge. De opkomst van het historisch voorstellingsvermogen en de romantiek, geïnspireerd door de late middeleeuwen, versterkte tijdens de 19^{de} eeuw de belangstelling voor het reliekschrijn en de grafische reproductie ervan. Dit artikel wil een inzicht geven in de uitdagingen die het schrijn met zich meebracht, zowel wat betreft de driedimensionaliteit als de polychromie. Grafische processen, zoals lithografie en chromolithografie, stonden voor de uitdaging om het overvloedige goudgebruik weer te geven. Later veroorzaakten de beperkte mogelijkheden van vroege fotografische camera's en lenzen, gekoppeld aan de smalle spectrale gevoeligheid van fotografische emulsies, praktische moeilijkheden bij het fotograferen van het schrijn. Desondanks werden vanaf de jaren 1850 foto's van het schrijn gemaakt met behulp van verschillende fotografische technieken, waaronder stereoscopie.