

# Nicodemus and Sculptors: Self-Reflexivity in Works by Adam Kraft and Tilman Riemenschneider

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*In memory of Alfred Michler, 1945–93*

Portraits integrated within certain Passion narratives frequently established a pious identification between the artist and the holy person Nicodemus. The medieval belief that Nicodemus had carved a crucifix lies at the root of these fusions. Artists who took Nicodemus as their role model developed varied individual modes of self-fashioning in keeping with the limits of their contracts and their own conceptions of self. Since this pious identification was never firmly affixed to a single iconographic motif, such as the association of painters with the representation of Saint Luke painting the Madonna and Child, artists produced flexible kinds of dual referencing that have remained less discernible to art historians. This essay examines the self-reflexive emulative strategies of the Franconian sculptors Adam Kraft and Tilman Riemenschneider. To establish the broader intertextuality of these endeavors, the study also explores various accounts of Nicodemus as sculptor in medieval literature and analyzes other cases of Nicodemus-artist dual referencing in earlier, contemporary, and subsequent works.

## Adam Kraft and the Schreyer-Landauer Epitaph

The imposing figure with broad face and conspicuously thick curly beard who stands conversing with a companion in the right foreground of the Schreyer-Landauer Epitaph in the Church of St. Sebald in Nuremberg has been identified as a self-portrait of Adam Kraft (Figs. 1–2).<sup>1</sup> Its physiognomy matches that of the kneeling figure at the foot of the eucharistic tabernacle that Kraft and his workshop fashioned between 1493 and 1496 for St. Lorenz, the other Nuremberg parish church (Figs. 3–4). The latter, a nearly life-size figure, clad in the work clothes of the craftsman and holding sculptors' tools, is one of three statues that appear to support the towering structure on their shoulders: kneeling to the

south is an agile youthful worker; leaning on a walking stick to the north is a ponderous elderly journeyman; and emerging from the main face of the structure to the west, a wooden mallet in his hand and a turban covering his hair to protect it from dust and chips of stone, is the master.

The identification of the face in the epitaph as Kraft's has been repeated consistently in the literature, but no further explanations as to the meaning or purpose of the curious figure within the relief have been proposed. The monument provides an excellent opportunity for scrutiny since it has survived intact, *in situ*, and accompanied by numerous written records that document the project—from the patrons' point of view—from inception to completion and beyond.<sup>2</sup>

The commission was actually not for a new monument but for the restoration of an older donation with a history reaching back well into the fourteenth century. According to the Schreyer records, this prominent Nuremberg family originally had its burial plot outside the "old St. Peter's choir," a reference to a prestigious position next to the west choir of the church, which had been erected in the thirteenth century. The source likewise states that after 1361, when the edifice was rebuilt, the family chose a similarly distinguished location outside the new east choir, "hinder dem Sacrament," namely, the second bay, on the north, where, inside the building, the eucharistic tabernacle was located (Fig. 5).<sup>3</sup>

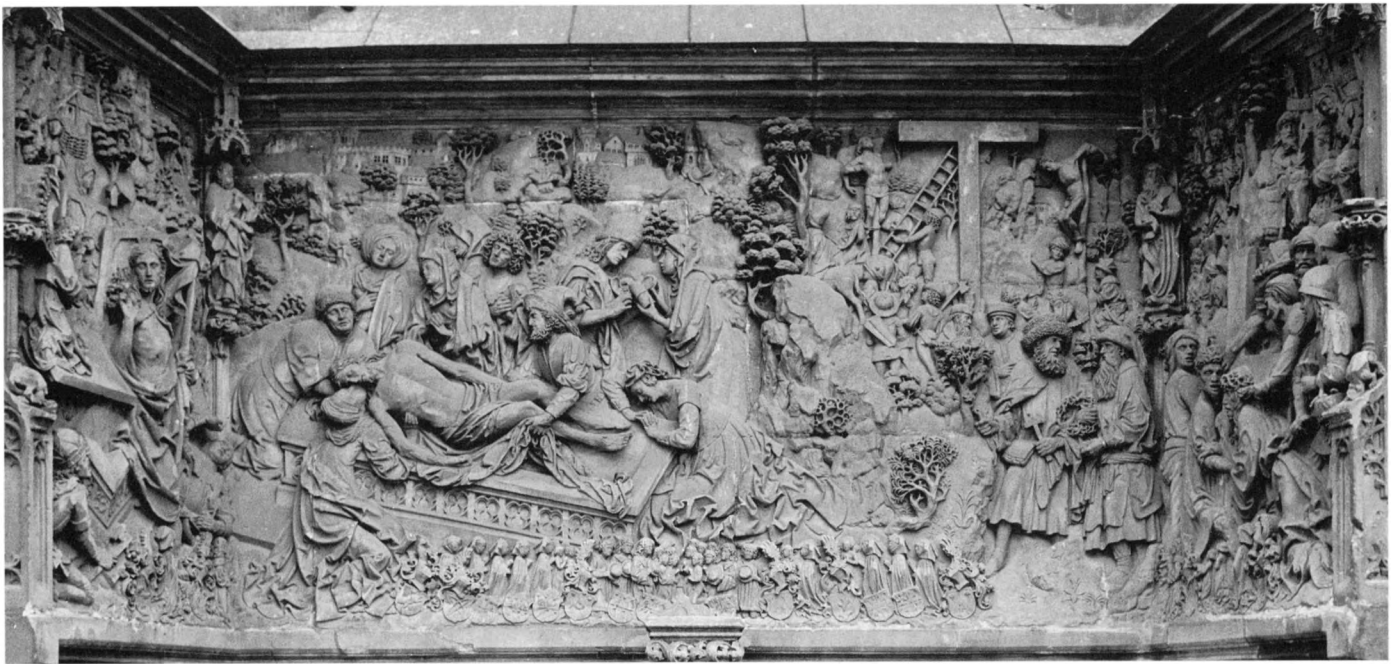
After 1477 Sebald Schreyer and his nephew Matthäus Landauer, who had common relatives in the crypt and who themselves planned to be interred there, assumed responsibility for maintaining the graves, including an adorning mural that had been painted on the exterior wall of the choir at an undisclosed date, perhaps as recently as the middle of the fifteenth century. In 1479 they had a new grate placed in front of the site, and in 1481 Schreyer had a roof that protected the fresco repaired. By 1490, however, the mural had badly deteriorated. According to the record books, they

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<sup>1</sup> B. Daun, *Peter Vischer und Adam Kraft*, Bielefeld and Leipzig, 1905, 103.

<sup>2</sup> For a copy of the contract and confirmation of payment, see Nuremberg, Stadtarchiv, Stadtgericht der Reichsstadt Nürnberg, Rep. B14/I, Bd. 7, fol. 186r, published by G. Lochner, "Das Schreyer-Landauerische Grabmal zu Nürnberg," *Anzeiger für Kunde der deutschen Vorzeit*, No. 11, 1866, cols. 407–408, and by B. Daun, *Adam Kraft und die Künstler seiner Zeit*, Berlin, 1897, 20–21. The Schreyer family record books contain detailed chronological protocols: Nuremberg, Staatsarchiv, Rep. 52a, No. 301 (Codex A), fols. 30v, 144v, and No. 302 (Codex B), fols. 70r, 98r, 124r–125r, 171r, 228r–229v, with the appropriate excerpts published by Gümbel, 1902, and Gümbel, 1908. Subsequent literature making use of the sources includes: D. Stern, *Der Nürnberger Bildhauer Adam Kraft: Stilentwicklung und Chronologie seiner Werke*, Strasbourg, 1916, 17–49; W. Schwemmer, *Adam Kraft*, Nuremberg, 1958, 16–19; E. Caesar, "Sebald Schreyer," *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg*, LVI, 1969, 1–213, 152–156.

<sup>3</sup> Gümbel, 1902, 362.



1 Adam Kraft, Schreyer-Landauer Epitaph. Nuremberg, St. Sebald (photo: Bildstelle und Denkmalsarchiv Stadt Nürnberg)



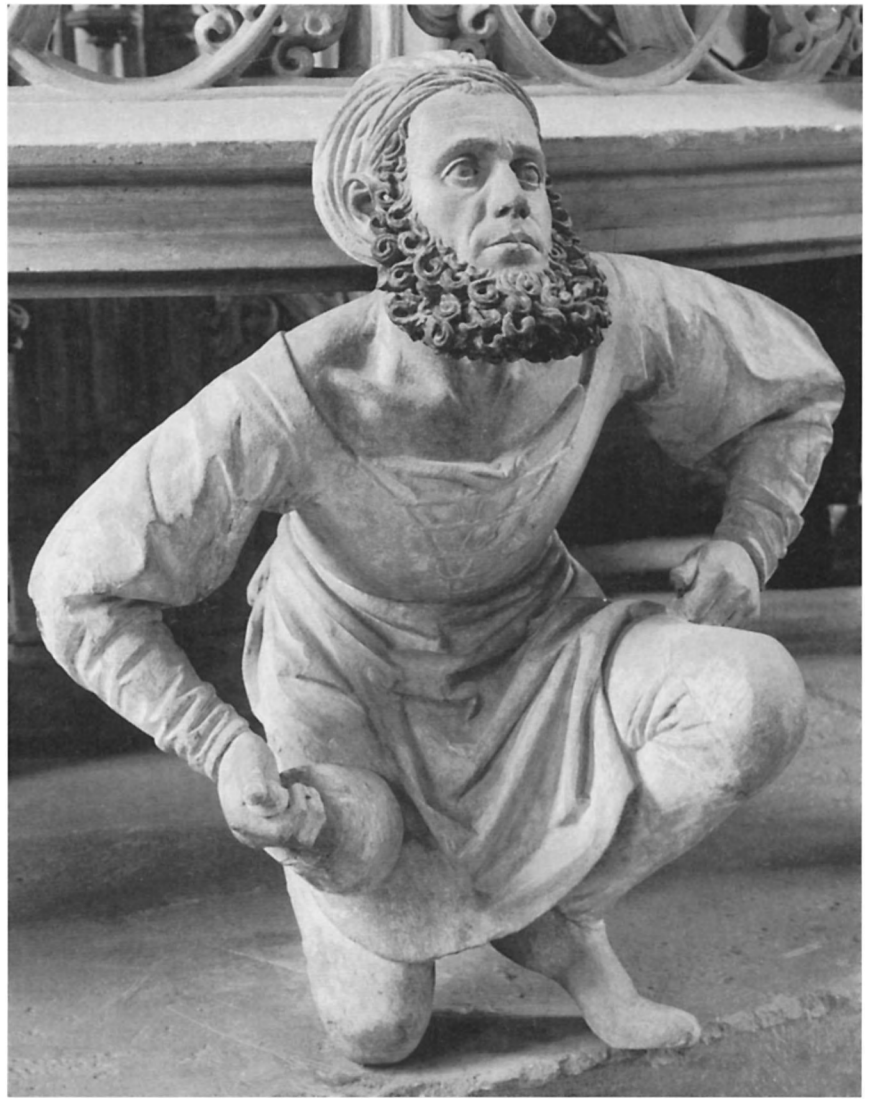
2 Detail of Fig. 1

would have liked to restore the painting but recognized that in the long run this would be to no avail. They decided instead to commission Adam Kraft "to translate the subject matter of the painting into weatherproof stone."<sup>4</sup> The

replication of the previous subject matter assured the continuity of the original commission and respect for the wishes of the initial donors. According to city ordinances, every donor needed approval before a new work for one of the parish



3 Adam Kraft, Eucharistic tabernacle.  
Nuremberg, St. Lorenz (photo: Bildstelle)



4 Detail of Fig. 3

churches could be commissioned or an existing work replaced or removed. Several cases in which permission was denied are documented.<sup>5</sup> Schreyer and Landauer took their request first to Paulus Volckamer, the trustee or curator of donations appointed for the church by the city council, and then to the council itself. In August 1490 the plan was approved.<sup>6</sup>

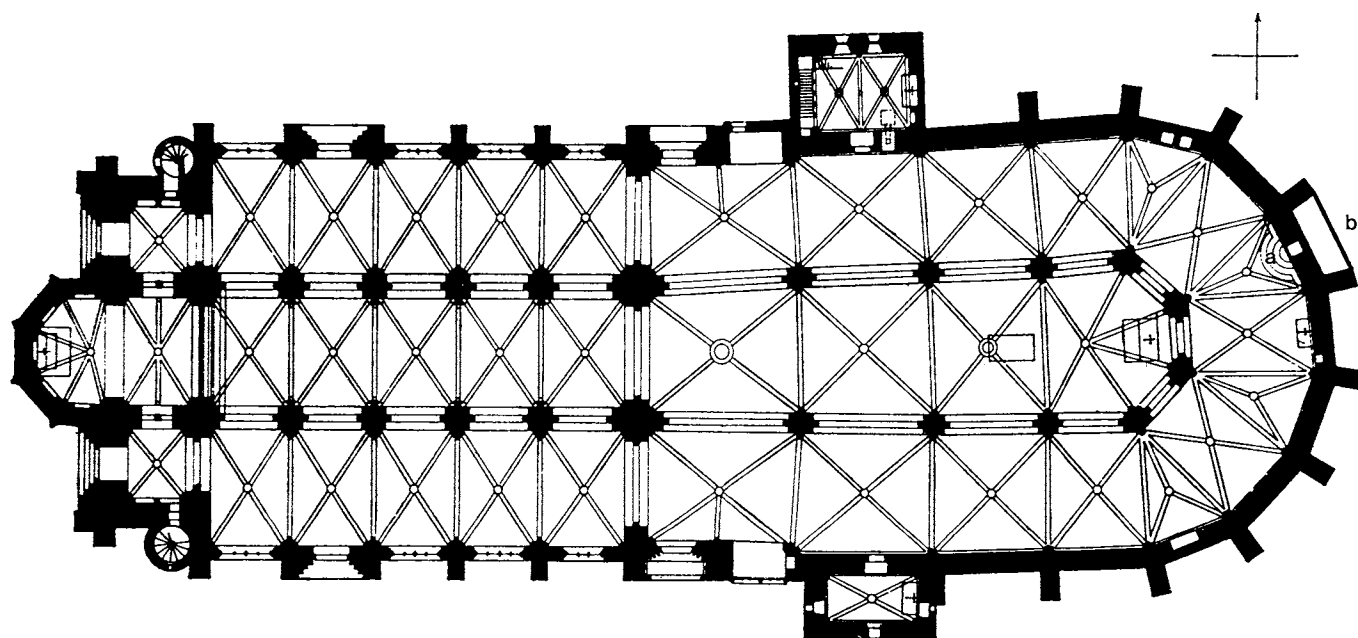
The importance of the replication is borne out in Sebald Schreyer's graphic protocol: "Moreover, Sebald Schreyer with Matthäus Landauer, his nephew, had rendered in carved stone, the painting that was on the back of the choir behind their graves, with the knowledge of the elders [the inner circle of the upper chamber of the council], which work had the following subject matter. . . ." <sup>7</sup> The following scrupu-

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*; Gümbel, 1908, 100–103.

<sup>5</sup> C. Schleif, *Donatio et Memoria. Stifter, Stiftungen und Motivationen*, Munich, 1990, 49–50, 233.

<sup>6</sup> Gümbel, 1902, 362–363.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.



5 Ground plan. Nuremberg, St. Sebald: a. Eucharistic tabernacle; b. Schreyer-Landauer Epitaph (from G. Fehring, A. Röss, *Die Stadt Nürnberg*, 2nd ed., Munich, 1977, 117)

lous description of the painting—naming all family members represented as tiny donor figures with coats of arms at the lower edge and listing the multifarious narrative scenes—is revealing both for what it includes and for what it excludes.

All figures and scenes are specified with regard to the grave they adorned. (The lists of family members and coats of arms have been omitted in the following translation.)

... above the Schreyer gravestone the entombment of Christ with many large images ... above the Landauer gravestone, the empty cross of Christ, the two crosses with the malefactors not removed, with various poses and groups of persons ... on the pier above the Schreyer gravestone the resurrection of Christ with several small representations, namely: the visit of the three Maries, the two disciples—Peter and John—also the appearance of Christ to the two disciples at Emmaus, and others ... on the other pier, over the Landauer gravestone, the leading out of Christ with a crowd and various poses. ...<sup>8</sup>

Thus not only the major scenes of the *Via Dolorosa*, the Empty Cross, the Entombment, and the Resurrection are enumerated but also the smaller representations set into the background landscape. Some of the corresponding stone figures in these scenes measure no more than fifteen centimeters (Figs. 6–7)! Obvious, however, is the absence of the two men looming in the foreground. I would speculate that

Adam Kraft himself—probably in consultation with the donors—decided to include these figures in the stone relief.

The donors' acceptance of the added figures is unmistakable. The contract between Schreyer, Landauer, and Kraft dating from 1490 stipulates that the donors were to pay for the materials, and the sculptor was to receive a sum not to exceed 160 gulden upon satisfactory completion of the monument. It further included the customary clause that if a dispute as to payment should arise, the two parties were to appoint a committee to arbitrate the matter.<sup>9</sup> A settlement of accounts, drawn up upon completion of the project in 1492, documents the fact that—in the eyes of the patrons—Adam Kraft had “neither added to nor subtracted from” that which had been initially agreed upon, and that the patrons were so pleased with the work that they paid Adam Kraft two hundred gulden, forty gulden more than the upper limit determined at the outset. Further, as was common practice among satisfied clients, they gave Kraft's wife a gratuity of four gulden.<sup>10</sup> It thus appears that the artist had the blessing of the donors when he integrated his own image.

The sanctioning of such a dominating self-portrait may have been tied to the integration of the companion figure (Fig. 8). This likewise strongly individuated figure has been identified as an image of Sebald Schreyer—the senior donor, whose name appears on most of the documents. But this supposition is very likely in error.<sup>11</sup> Several contemporary representations of Sebald Schreyer survive, all of which

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 367–369.

<sup>9</sup> Lochner (as in n. 2); Gümbel, 1902, 363–364.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>11</sup> Caesar (as in n. 2), questioned the identification, but without proposing another solution, 154.





6 Portion of Schreyer-Landauer Epitaph on right (north) but-tress: Via Dolorosa, Christ Taking Leave of His Mother (upper left) (photo: Bildstelle)

portray him clean-shaven, with medium- to shoulder-length hair, and short bobbed hair on his forehead. One example is that in the title miniature of the Donation Book of the Findelhaus, dating from 1488, in which Schreyer, one of the executors of the donor's will, is portrayed as the kneeling venerator in the foreground, second from the right (Fig. 9).<sup>12</sup>

The other donor, Matthäus Landauer, did, however, possess facial features comparable to those of the man standing next to Kraft in the epitaph. Albrecht Dürer's drawing of Landauer (Fig. 10), executed about sixteen years later as a study for the figure of the donor, at the far left, in the *Adoration of the Holy Trinity* (Figs. 11–12), shows strikingly similar characteristics. Although the face in the sketch appears older, the same long straight mustache, hooked nose, and hollow cheeks are visible. Moreover, a figure of Landauer might be more appropriate in the portion of the relief that served as a backdrop for the Landauer grave, the tomb slab of which still bears the Landauer arms.

Looking more closely at the two men, we see that they are

<sup>12</sup> Nuremberg, Stadtarchiv, Findel, Schublade 1, xi, fol. 7r. The figures of Schreyer on the dedication pages of two missals provide additional examples; Nuremberg, Landeskirchliches Archiv, St. Sebald, No. 459, No. 461.



7 Portion of Schreyer-Landauer Epitaph on left (south) but-tress: Resurrection, Women on Their Way to the Tomb (upper left), Disciples—Peter and John (upper center), Supper at Emmaus (upper right) (photo: Bildstelle)

far more actively involved than mere bystanders or witnesses would be. The figure resembling Landauer holds the crown of thorns in his right hand and originally held the nails (now broken off) in his left, while the figure identified as Kraft carries a hammer and pincers. Standing with the empty cross in the landscape behind them, they appear to have just participated in the removal of Christ's body. According to most textual accounts and visual images of the Deposition, it was the two biblical figures Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who were responsible for this deed.

#### **Tilman Riemenschneider and the Maidbronn Altarpiece**

Unlike the Schreyer-Landauer Epitaph, Tilman Riemenschneider's stone retablo (Fig. 13) on the main altar of the former Cistercian convent church in Maidbronn near Würzburg lacks all documentation. A mark left by one of the apprentices matches that found in other works completed in Riemenschneider's workshop, but there are no inscriptions or coats of arms attesting to its donors. The work is believed to be Riemenschneider's last commission, and its date can be determined only imprecisely—between 1519 and 1526: a renewal of the convent, which had fallen into neglect, was initiated in 1519, and Riemenschneider's financial records show no major payments after his imprisonment for involvement in the Peasants' War in 1526. It has been suggested that



8 Schreyer-Landauer Epitaph, Adam Kraft and companion (Matthäus Landauer?) (photo: Bildstelle)

the work was perhaps donated as an epitaph or cenotaph by local nobility—members of the Grumbach family.<sup>13</sup> One writer has further proposed an original location in the Grumbachs' private burial chapel adjacent to the parish church in the neighboring town of Rimpar. (Earlier the family had commissioned Riemenschneider to carve two figures for the chapel.) The relief would then have been transferred to Maidbronn in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century when the discordant parts of the altarpiece, its frame and inscription panel, were added.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the theme of the Lamentation would more appropriately have adorned a retable or an epitaph in a burial chapel than the main altar of a Cistercian church.

The first modern art-historical literature on Riemenschneider, in the mid-nineteenth century, already called the central figure holding the large ointment jar a self-portrait (Fig. 14), an assumption repeated in nearly all the literature.<sup>15</sup> Not only does the particularized physiognomy show the same facial structure as the portrait carved by Jörg Riemenschneider for his father's gravestone in 1531, today in Würzburg Cathedral, but the distinctive hat, with its broad brim upturned to the left and the right, also appears in both images (Fig. 15). By 1888 scholars had also recognized the



9 Title miniature, Donation Book of the Findelhaus. Nuremberg, Stadtarchiv, Findel, Schubl. 1, XI, fol. 7r (photo: Stadtarchiv)

figure as Nicodemus, who according to the biblical account brought a large quantity of aromatic substances for Christ's burial (John 19:39), giving the representation a dual identity—an assertion that is iterated in almost all the subsequent scholarship.<sup>16</sup> Reasons why Riemenschneider would have wanted to identify himself with Nicodemus are, however, absent in the literature.

### Nicodemus as a Sculptor

The belief that Nicodemus carved a holy figure has received far less study than the analogous legend that Saint Luke

<sup>13</sup> M. von Freeden, *Die Beweinung in Maidbronn (Werkmonographien zur bildenden Kunst, x)*, Stuttgart, 1956; J. Bier, *Tilman Riemenschneider: His Life and Work*, Lexington, Ky., 1982, 111–112.

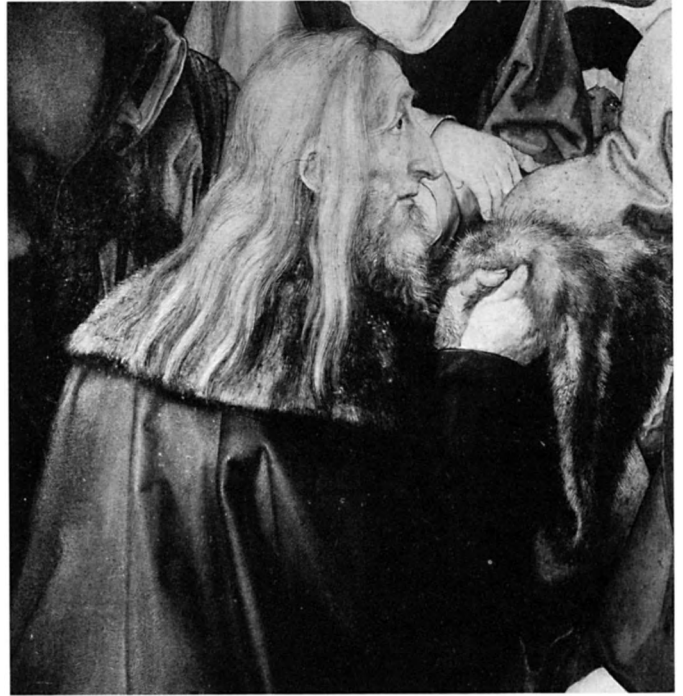
<sup>14</sup> A. Arnold, "Tilman Riemenschneiders Beweinung in Maidbronn kam aus der Ritterkapelle in Rimpar," *Mainfränkisches Jahrbuch für Geschichte und Kunst*, xx (Archiv des historischen Vereins für Unterfranken und Aschaffenburg), 1968, 222–241.

<sup>15</sup> K. Becker, *Leben und Werk des Bildhauers Tilman Riemenschneider*, Leipzig, 1849, 17; K. Gerstenberg, however, believed the young face to be that of the son Jörg (*Tilman Riemenschneider*, Munich, 1962, 74).

<sup>16</sup> K. Streit, *Tilman Riemenschneider 1460–1531: Leben und Kunstwerke des fränkischen Bildschnitzers*, Berlin, 1888, 19; W. Tönnies, *Leben und Werke des Würzburger Bildschnitzers Tilman Riemenschneider (Studien zur Deutschen Kunstgeschichte)*, Strasbourg, 1900, 200; G. A. Weber, *Til Riemenschneider: Sein Leben und Wirken*, Regensburg, 1911; M. von Freeden, *Tilman Riemenschneider, Leben und Werk*, Munich and Berlin, 1972, 47; P. Scheele and T. Schneiders, *Tilman Riemenschneider, Zeuge der Seligkeiten*, Würzburg, 1981, 14–15. J. Bier, however, consistently referred to the figure bearing the self-portrait as "Joseph of Arimathea"; *Tilman Riemenschneider ein Gedenkbuch*, Vienna, 1948, 37; Eng. ed. (as in n. 13), 112.



10 Albrecht Dürer, *Matthäus Landauer*, drawing. Frankfurt am Main, Städelches Kunstinstitut (photo: Kunstinstitut)



12 Matthäus Landauer, detail of Fig. 11



11 Albrecht Dürer, *Adoration of the Holy Trinity*. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (photo: Museum)

17 painted a sacred image.<sup>17</sup> Multiple factors account for this neglect: the event was not conveyed through the easily accessible medium of images; Nicodemus rarely if ever served as the patron of a guild or other formal body—as Saint Luke continued to do, well into the nineteenth century; and Nicodemus was never formally canonized, rendering him of little interest to most hagiographers.<sup>18</sup>

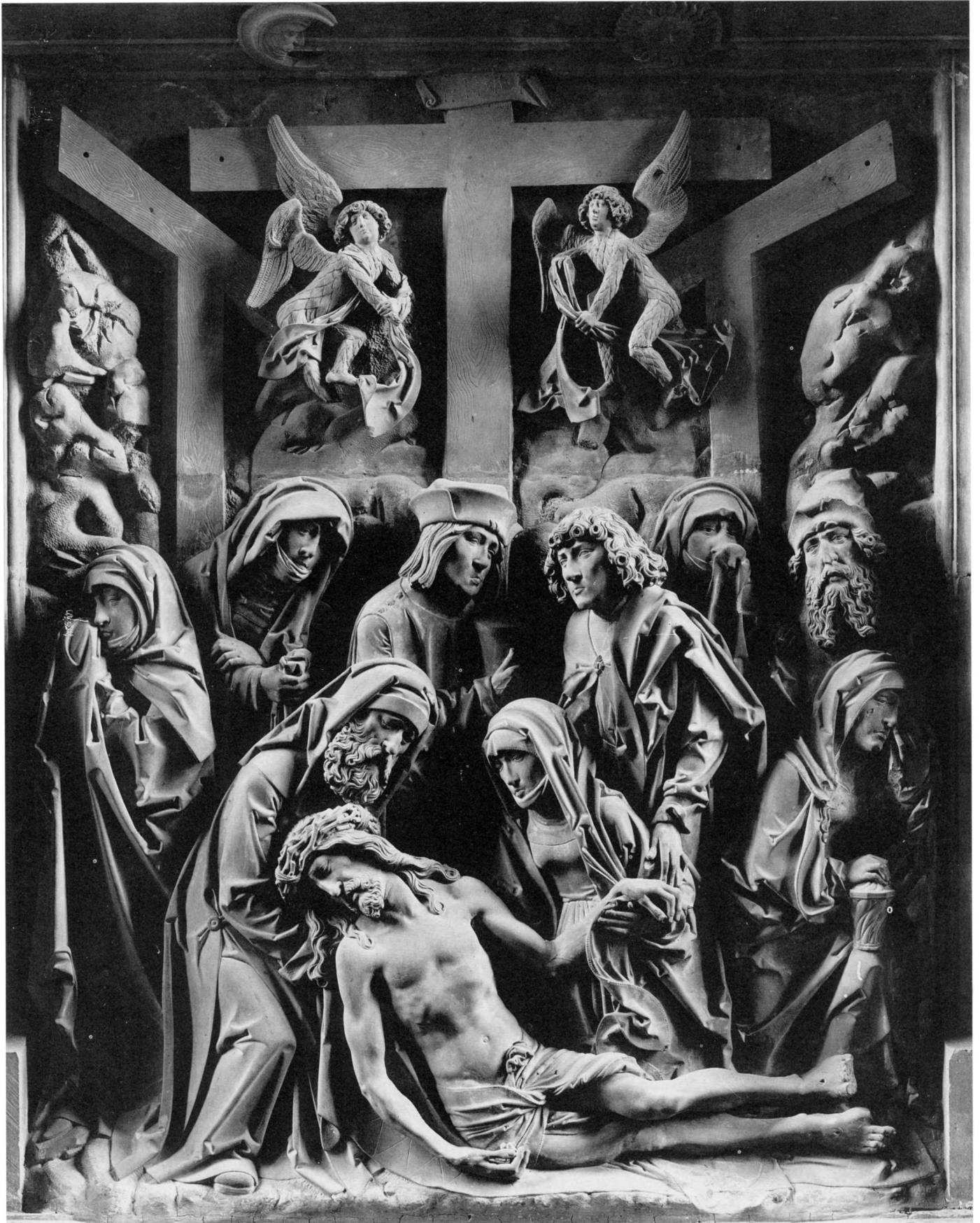
The notion, like that concerning Saint Luke, was apparently unknown during Early Christian and patristic times. Various strands of the legend evolved in separate discourses, fed by motivations spawned in particular historical currents during the Middle Ages.

Nicodemus is mentioned only three times in the Bible—all of them in the Gospel of John. In John 3 this “Pharisee” and “ruler of the Jews” consulted Christ by night. In John 7:50 he urged the other Pharisees not to prejudge Christ. And in John 19:39–40, as mentioned above, he brought about a hundred weight of myrrh and aloes, and then by implication joined Joseph of Arimathea in burying Christ. Perhaps it was the paucity of information on this central yet enigmatic figure that enticed later Christian imaginations to spin such elaborate pious legends around him. The fourth-century Gospel of Nicodemus claims him as its author, beginning a long tradition of Nicodemus as an eyewitness mediator of Passion history. It is one of the versions of this work that first reports on the participants of the Deposition: “After our Lord God and Savior had been crucified, the venerable

<sup>17</sup> C. Henze, *Lukas der Muttergottesmaler*, Louvain, 1948, 1–38; K. Kolb, *Eleusa*, Tauberbischofsheim, 1968, 59–74.

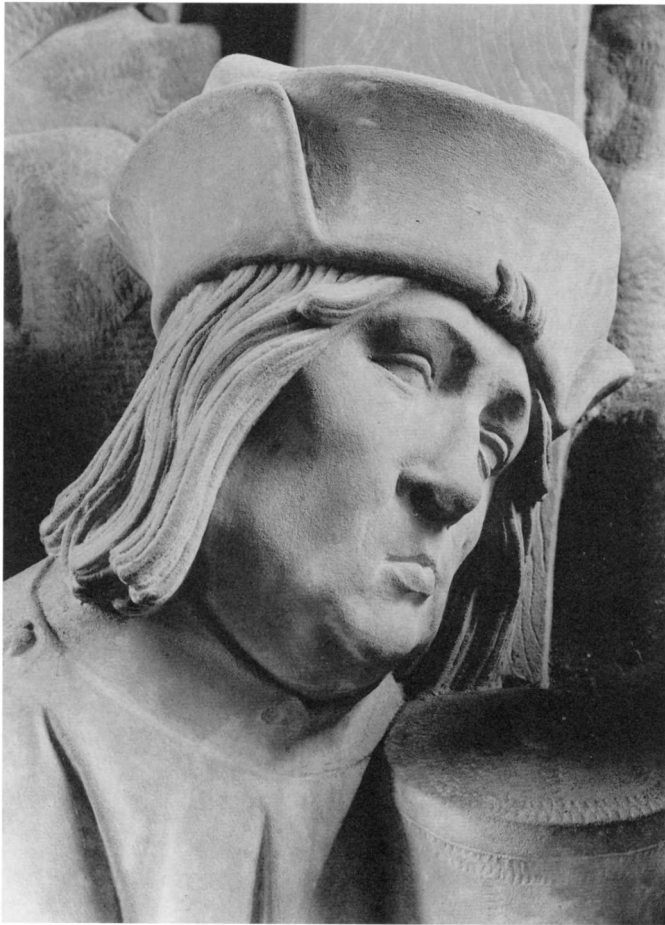
<sup>18</sup> Nicodemus’s purported activity as a sculptor is not mentioned in the entries in standard reference works, such as *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Tübingen, 1960, or *Lexikon der Theologie und Kirche*, Freiburg, 1962.





13 Tilman Riemenschneider, Altar Retable. Maidbronn (photo: Foto Marburg/Art Resource, N.Y.)





14 Detail of Fig. 13

princes Joseph and Nicodemus took him down.”<sup>19</sup> Likewise it is the Gospel of Nicodemus that first describes Joseph as a “councilman” from the city of Arimathea<sup>20</sup>—a feature that would have made him all the more attractive to Landauer, who had been appointed to the greater city council just two years before he commissioned the relief.<sup>21</sup> The Gospel of Nicodemus, which was integrated within the *Speculum historiale* and translated into German verse by Heinrich Heßler in the fourteenth century, became very popular in the late Middle Ages.<sup>22</sup>

It was probably not until the ninth century that Nicodemus became known as more than the verbal narrator of extra-biblical events and details surrounding the Passion. Between 872 and 882 Anastasius Bibliothecarius translated the proceedings of the Council of Nicea of 787 into Latin for Pope John VIII. At the council a sermon, at the time attributed to



15 Jörg Riemenschneider, Tilman Riemenschneider's grave-stone. Würzburg, Cathedral (photo: Foto-Zwicker-Beberich)

<sup>19</sup> English translation by P. Ratkowska, “The Iconography of the Deposition without St. John,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xxvii, 1964, 312–317, 315; also cited by Parker, 24; French trans. in J. P. Migne, *Dictionnaire des Apocryphes*, I, 1856, col. 1101, from Paris, Bibl. Nat. MS Arabe 160.

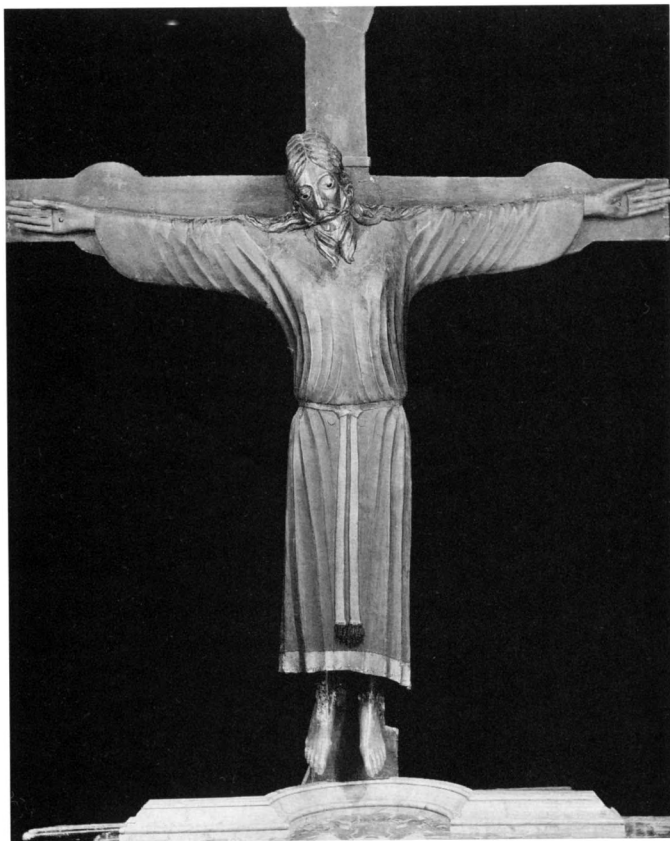
<sup>20</sup> F. Scheidweiler, trans. E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*, Tübingen, 1968, 341.

<sup>21</sup> J. Ahlborn, *Die Familie Landauer (Nürnberger Forschungen, XI)*, Nuremberg, 1969, 30.

<sup>22</sup> Stechow, 298; Heßler's *Evangelium Nicodemi* was published by P. Piper, *Die geistliche Dichtung des Mittelalters*, II: *Die Legenden und die Deutschenordensdichtung (Deutsche National-Literatur, III, 2)*, Berlin and Stuttgart, 1888, 141–285.

Athanasius, had been read. It related the story of the miraculous crucifix of Beryt: After a Jew pierced the cross, it bled, curative miracles were caused by the blood, and the Jews of Beryt were converted. Anastasius added a gloss to his translation, claiming that Nicodemus had made the image and that it had then been handed down to Gamaliel, and then to Jacobus, Symeon, and Zachaeus.<sup>23</sup> The iconodulic

<sup>23</sup> Von Dobschütz, 280–282\*\*; Schnürer and Ritz, 143–144; R. Hausserr, “Das Imervardkreuz und der Volto-Santo-Typ,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstwissenschaft*, xvi, 1962, 129–170, 138.



16 *Volto Santo*. Lucca, Cathedral (photo: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.)

motivations behind the anecdote in connection with the council are clear: the authorship of an image by the holy person Nicodemus lent legitimacy to images.

In the high Middle Ages the notion of Nicodemus as the sculptor of a crucifix formed the core of the *Volto Santo* legend, which centered around the famed miracle-working image in Lucca (Fig. 16). Although the legend itself alleges the arrival of a *Volto Santo*, or "Sacred Face," in Lucca by the eighth century, all historical evidence is lacking until the late eleventh century.<sup>24</sup>

The legend is recounted through the words of a deacon, Leobinus, who first relates the story of the revelation, discovery, and translation of the *Volto Santo* as experienced by Gualfredus, a cisalpine bishop. According to this narration, Nicodemus carved the work not merely from memory but as a result of his deep mystical bond with Christ. This piety must have also motivated medieval sculptors to take Nicodemus as a prototype for emulation. Leobinus tells that while Gualfredus was on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, an angel appeared to him in his sleep and commanded him:

Rise up, servant of God, and search through skillful investigation the vicinity of your hostel for none other than the most holy face of the founder of our salvation, indeed the redeemer of the world, sculpted by Nicodemus;

and venerate the discovery with worthy reverence. Go therefore into the house of the most Christian man Seleucius, which is adjacent to your dwelling, and there in the cellar you will find the most sacred countenance.

It is, in fact, that Nicodemus, of whom the sacred story of the gospel tells, who had first come to Jesus by night, secretly for fear of the Jews, and who went away from Christ full of faith, being imbued with his teachings and instructed in the doctrine of holy regeneration, and full of faith. Indeed after the Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord he was aflame with the presence of Christ, so that he always carried Christ in his heart and had him on his lips. After the proportions and features of the form of the body of Christ were noted with utmost diligence, and also after the lines were mentally inscribed, he sculpted the most holy countenance not with his own, but with divine artistry. The grace of Christ stood by his good intentions—that grace that never can fail those of good will and good works.<sup>25</sup>

According to a variant text of the legend, Nicodemus carved the body and angels completed the face.<sup>26</sup>

Once discovered, the crucifix was brought to Italy by a supernaturally guided ship. In Lucca, it was again an angel that revealed the authorship of the work, this time to a bishop—Johannes. The richness of the angel's words asserting that the image "was created by Nicodemus, the Pharisee who saw and touched Christ" suggests an appreciation for sculpture as a tactile art.<sup>27</sup>

After relating this *historia*, Leobinus adds his own account of the many miracles wrought by the image. Nicodemus is mentioned again in this section. Leobinus reports that a spring began to flow from the spot at which Nicodemus carved the crucifix, and that the scraps of wood left from Nicodemus's carving exhibited miraculous properties. Likewise Leobinus adds more specific information on the activities of Nicodemus: as purportedly related by the patriarch of Jerusalem to a cleric who later became bishop of Lucca, Nicodemus carved the work according to the impression that Christ's body had left in the grave cloth, and after finishing the sculpture, Nicodemus placed relics from the crown of thorns, the nails, and garments of Christ inside.<sup>28</sup>

More accessible than most pious legends, that by Leobinus was available to medieval readers in a manuscript placed in the *Volto Santo* Chapel in Lucca Cathedral. The idea that Nicodemus had carved a crucifix was thus transmitted throughout Christendom by pilgrims who traveled to Lucca to venerate the *Volto Santo*. In fact, one of the oldest reports is that written in 1150 by a certain Abbot Nicholas who traveled from Denmark through Lucca to Palestine. In his

<sup>25</sup> Critical edition of Latin text, Schnürer and Ritz, 127–134, 128; see also F. P. Luiso, "La leggenda de Volto Santo," *Il Volto Santo. Storia e culto*, exh. cat., Chiesa dei SS. Giovanni e Reparata, Lucca, 1982, 141–144.

<sup>26</sup> A. Guerra, *Storia del Volto Santo*, Lucca, 1881, 11–12.

<sup>27</sup> Schnürer and Ritz, 131.

<sup>28</sup> Schnürer and Ritz, 138–142; Gervasius of Tilbury also included some of these details in the account he wrote for Emperor Otto IV at the beginning of the 13th century, *Das Gervasius von Tilbury Otia Imperialia*, ed. F. Liebrecht, Hanover, 1856, 19; Von Dobschütz, 290\*\*.

<sup>24</sup> A. Kingsley Porter, *Romanische Plastik in Spanien*, II, Leipzig, 1928, 9–13; Hausserr (as in n. 23), 137–139.

record, which survives in a fourteenth-century Icelandic manuscript, the abbot maintains, "Here [in Lucca] is a crucifix, that Nicodemus had fashioned according to [the appearance of] God himself."<sup>29</sup>

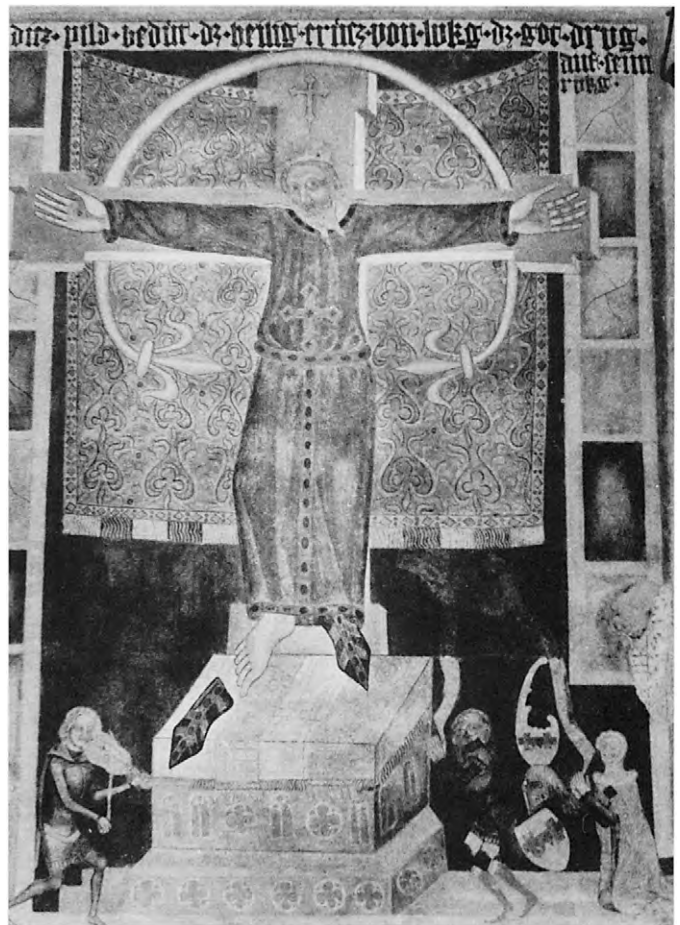
Political events sparked other representations. Emperors often traveled to Lucca, and in the early fourteenth century, Louis the Bavarian sent the Nuremberg Burggrave Friedrich, a member of his court, to the center. Charles IV, who declared the city of Lucca an autonomous imperial city in 1369, was said to have ordered a silk tapestry with an image of the Volto Santo made for himself. German knights and craftsmen constituted a substantial portion of the Lucca populace at this time. Needless to say, the famed silk weavers and merchants of Lucca provided another avenue of communication as they offered their wares—especially liturgical vestments and paraments—in virtually all parts of Europe.

Promulgation of the legend through students and professors of the nearby University of Bologna is particularly well documented. In the late fourteenth century, Benvenuto Rambaldi, who had been both student and professor at the university, wrote a commentary on Dante's *Divine Comedy*. His exposition of the passage in which Dante mentioned the Volto Santo demonstrates how informed audiences associated the story of Nicodemus as sculptor with this cult image. Interestingly, he conflates the eighth-century iconophilic gloss with the Volto Santo legend.

After the Resurrection and the Ascension, Nicodemus was aflame with a love for Christ. Therefore he fashioned for himself a visible likeness of Christ, whom he held *sculptured* in his heart, having considered the entire form and proportions of the members. It is called "Vultus" because the human face grants recognition of Christ. Nicodemus, however, left the image to a certain person whose name was Isacar, who, because of a fear of the Jews, daily venerated the hidden image most secretly; and it came successively into the hands of many heirs. After he had told the vision to others, the bishop went to Seleucius and with great skill and cunning arduously obtained the image mentioned, which he brought with the utmost veneration to the shore of the city of Joppe. . . .<sup>30</sup>

In 1420, a Magdeburg canon, Dr. Gherardus Koncken, who had become interested in the Volto Santo during his student days in Bologna, returned to Lucca and copied the Leobinus legend, with its many references to Nicodemus.<sup>31</sup>

The numerous replicas and related works of art that were produced all over Europe bear testimony to the universal significance of the cult of the Volto Santo.<sup>32</sup> The example closest to Adam Kraft and Tilman Riemenschneider was probably an image donated to the church of the Dominican convent in Bamberg in 1356. A later replacement for this



17 Fresco. Weißenburg, former Carmelite Monastery (photo: A. Michler)

miracle-working crucifix hangs today in a side chapel of the Church of St. Gangolf in Bamberg. Typically, the eyes of the crucified are open and he wears the *tunica manicata*, a belted garment with sleeves.<sup>33</sup>

A late fourteenth-century fresco in the former Carmelite Monastery in Weißenburg near Nuremberg (Fig. 17) carries a simple verse inscription that labels the picture the "holy cross of Lucca." ("Ditz pilt bedut d[a]z heilig crutz von lukg d[a]z got drug auf sei[ne]m rukg.") This image of an image represents the Lucca crucifix, with its arch ending in a fleur-de-lis and the triumphant Christ clad in *tunica manicata*. The shoe and fiddler at the lower left refer to a miracle that was performed when the Volto Santo gave a traveling musician his silver shoe. The two figures to the right represent members of the Riegler family of Weißenburg, who donated the mural.<sup>34</sup>

Legends of the Holy Grail provided yet other channels through which the notion of Nicodemus as sculptor was cultivated. In the Interpolation in the First Continuation of

<sup>29</sup> German trans., Schnürer and Ritz, 163.

<sup>30</sup> Latin text, Schnürer and Ritz, 182.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 124, 187.

<sup>32</sup> E. Panofsky, "Das Braunschweiger Domkruzifix und das 'Volto Santo' zu Lucca," *Festschrift Adolf Goldschmidt*, Leipzig, 1923, 37–44; Schnürer and Ritz, 179–248.

<sup>33</sup> Schnürer and Ritz, 220–221; K. Schweitzer, "Die Bilder der Heiligen Kümmerin (St. Wilgefortis)," *Kalender für katholische Christen (Sulzbach)*, xxvii, 1867, 112–119; G. Zimmermann, *Bamberg St. Gangolf*, Munich and Zurich, 1982, 14.

<sup>34</sup> Schnürer and Ritz, 217–218.

Chrétien's *Perceval*, Joseph of Arimathea is introduced into the Grail legend and with him Nicodemus:

It is true that Joseph caused it [the Grail] to be made—that Joseph of Arimathea who so loved the Lord all his life, as it seemed, that on the day when he received death on the cross to save sinners, Joseph (who did much worthy of praise) came with the Grail. . . . He took charge and custody of the Grail as was reasonable and right. But rumor, which is swifter than the wind, swiftly brought the news to the Jews, who were by no means delighted but rather were deeply dejected. Among themselves they held a council in order to banish Joseph and expel him from the land, and they informed him at once that he must depart because of his crime, he and all his friends, and also Nicodemus, who was a marvelously wise man, and a sister of his. Nicodemus had carved and fashioned a head in the likeness of the Lord on the day that he had seen him on the Cross. But of this I am sure, that the Lord God set his hand to the shaping of it, as they say: for no man ever saw one like it nor could it be made by human hands. Most of you who have been at Lucca know it and have seen it. When Nicodemus knew that he must depart and leave the land, he took the head secretly, without the knowledge of anyone, and carried it without delay to Jaffa, put it in the sea, and commended it to the Lord God, in whose likeness he had shaped it. . . .<sup>35</sup>

Herry Lovelich's fifteenth-century Grail legend in verse refers to Nicodemus as one who had an "image" of Christ.<sup>36</sup> Connections with other sacred images, image-makers, and owners of images likewise abound in these romances. According to one account, Nicodemus was married to Saint Veronica. Other versions make Nicodemus, together with King David, responsible for three crucifixes.<sup>37</sup>

Yet another vehicle that transmitted Nicodemus's identity as the author of an image is a book no less ubiquitous in the late Middle Ages: namely, Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*. Interestingly, this reference must have emerged from a source connected with the first known reference to Nicodemus's activity as a sculptor, that of the ninth-century gloss by Anastasius Bibliothecarius, mentioned above. In the section on the Elevation of the Cross, the story of the conversion of the Jews in the city of Beryt is recounted and the Christian who had owned the crucifix is asked who made the wonderful image that yielded the miracle-working blood. He answered: Nicodemus made it; when dying he gave it to Gamaliel, Gamaliel gave it to Zachaeus, Zachaeus to Jacobus, Jacobus left it to Simon, and so it remained in Jerusalem until

the city was destroyed. Afterwards it was brought by believers into the kingdom of Agrippa.<sup>38</sup>

Stefan Beissel reported the existence of Spanish legend books that refer to collaborative endeavors—images carved by Nicodemus and painted by Saint Luke, but he gave no specifics as to place and date.<sup>39</sup> The crucifix in the Cathedral at Burgos has indeed been attributed to Nicodemus—undoubtedly an appropriation of the Volto Santo legend.<sup>40</sup>

Although to my knowledge the notion of Nicodemus as sculptor did not surface in late medieval Passion plays, the person of Nicodemus did play a central role in these dramas. The recently published Tyrolian Passion plays from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries contain features of significance for the visual arts. The dialogue plays off the characters of Nicodemus and Joseph: the two converse, then each speaks separately with the high priest Annas, with Pilate, with the Virgin, and with his own servant. The introduction of the servants parallels painted and carved representations of the Deposition, Lamentation, and Entombment, in which, beginning in the fourteenth century, the number of participants suddenly multiplies far beyond that given in biblical or apocryphal texts. References to the hammer, pincers, and nails dominate. Variant versions of a play performed in Sterzing in 1486, 1496, and 1503 each mention the hammer and pincers no less than four times. Reading the portion of the drama dealing with the Deposition, one can easily imagine Nicodemus, Joseph, and their two servants gesticulating with these stage props as they recited their rhyming verses.<sup>41</sup> Similarly in the visual arts, toward the end of the Middle Ages Nicodemus and Joseph assumed increasingly significant roles in the iconography, becoming prominent figures in carved Entombment groups.<sup>42</sup>

All of the rich accretions to the character of Nicodemus provided late medieval artists with a welcome professional role model—an eyewitness of salvation history who conveyed his Christian convictions through devout word and image. One might expect that as the dual processes of appropriation and construction of saints for particular professions, dilemmas, diseases, and other dramas of life reached their apogee in the late Middle Ages, sculptors would have been quick to claim Nicodemus as their own.

### Sculptors as Nicodemus

Surprisingly, the matter of sculptors representing themselves as Nicodemus has not been explored systematically by art historians. The root of this neglect lies in the fact that the

<sup>35</sup> Trans. R. Loomis, *The Grail from Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol*, New York, 1964, 224–227.

<sup>36</sup> D. Kempe, *The Legend of the Holy Grail, Its Sources, Character and Development*, London, 1905, x.

<sup>37</sup> R. Heinzel, "Über die französischen Gralromane," *Denkschriften der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Classe*, XL, Vienna, 1892, 1–196, 37, 39, 45, 182; J. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance: An Account of the Holy Grail from Ancient Ritual to Christian Symbol*, New York, 1957, 165–166; R. Loomis, *The Development of Arthurian Romance*, London, 1963, 123.

<sup>38</sup> J. de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, ed. and trans. R. Benz, Heidelberg, 1979, 702–703; included in the early 14th-century German translation, *Die Elsassische Legenda Aurea*, ed. U. Williams and W. Williams-Krapp (*Das Normalcorpus*, I), Tübingen, 1980, 611–612.

<sup>39</sup> *Wallfahrten zu Unserer Lieben Frau in Legende und Geschichte*, Freiburg, 1913, 123.

<sup>40</sup> "Nicodemus," *Allgemeines Gelehrten Lexikon*. . . , Leipzig, 1751; Von Dobschütz, 287\*\*.

<sup>41</sup> *Die geistlichen Spiele des Sterzinger Spielarchivs*, ed. W. Lipphardt and H. Roloff, I, Bern, 1986, esp. 51–72, 347–371; II, Bern, 1988, 9–123, 209–331.

<sup>42</sup> W. Forsyth, *The Entombment of Christ: French Sculptures of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, Cambridge, Mass., 1970.





18 *Saint Luke Painting the Madonna and Child*, panel from an altarpiece in St. Veit (Augustinian Monastery). Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum (photo: Nationalmuseum)

notion was never attached to an iconographic motif, which, according to the postulates of the subdiscipline of iconography, matches a signifier with a signified in a structured stable manner, making it possible to set a summary definition lexicographically, like the meaning of a word. Representations in which Nicodemus carves a crucifix are unknown.<sup>43</sup> The analogous case, however, pictures in which Saint Luke draws or paints an image of the Madonna and Child (Fig. 18), are common. Moreover, when a painter projected his physiognomy onto the figure in this motif, the association was quite transparent. Consequently, the pious identification of painters with Saint Luke has been inventoried and well studied.<sup>44</sup>

The matter of recognizing instances in which sculptors are represented in the guise of Nicodemus was first discussed in an important study by Wolfgang Stechow. Stechow's actual aim was narrowly iconographical—his main object of inquiry was Michelangelo's Florentine *Pietà* (Fig. 19), and his pri-

mary question was whether the figure of the old man depicts Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus. Confusion between these two persons presents a constant iconographic problem, since, at least in the West, both could be represented as aged, and assigned positions at the hands, shoulders, or the feet of Christ were not firmly established through accepted conventions. Vasari had recognized Michelangelo's figure as a self-portrait;<sup>45</sup> both Condivi and Vasari had referred to it as Nicodemus. Stechow's study, which is careful as well as cautious by today's standards, lays out all of the evidence on both sides of the question and lists all of the previous scholarly opinions regarding this and parallel examples. At the beginning and the end of his article, Stechow claims to have found no definitive answer. Yet in the middle he allows himself the modest conclusion that, on the basis of the earlier Italian works, "the scales seem to be tipped a little in favor of Nicodemus." The scholar's demonstration that artists before and after Michelangelo identified themselves with Nicodemus because he too purportedly fashioned an image of Christ, forms the strongest part of Stechow's argument. He puts forth several paintings in which he believes dual images of Nicodemus and an artist have been incorporated: Fra Angelico's portrait of the contemporary sculptor and architect Michelozzo in the *Deposition*, commissioned between 1430 and 1440, an identification claimed by Vasari (Fig. 20); Titian's self-portrait in the *Entombment* painted in 1559, at present in the Prado; and Caravaggio's image of Michelangelo in the *Entombment*, executed between 1602 and 1604, now in the Vatican.

Other authors have likewise called attention to examples of particular artists projecting themselves into the role of Nicodemus, although in almost every case they consider no specific professional bond as the reason for these conflations of personality. John Pope-Hennessy pointed out that of Jacopo Tintoretto in the painting of the *Entombment* in Venice, as well as that in Baccio Bandinelli's own tomb monument showing Nicodemus alone supporting the dead body of Christ in the church of the Annunziata in Florence.<sup>46</sup> Charles Seymour discussed Niccolò dell'Arca's terra-cotta group representing the Lamentation in S. Maria della Vita in Bologna, dating from the 1480s. In this and related works, artists used life casts to construct figures of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea bearing their own physiognomies and those of their donors.<sup>47</sup> Maria Lanckorońska made reference to Rogier van der Weyden's self-portrait in the person of Nicodemus in his *Entombment* (Fig. 21),<sup>48</sup> which provides an interesting parallel to his more famous self-portrait in the guise of Saint Luke painting the Madonna and Child.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>43</sup> "Un vecchio che egli ritrasse se" from Vasari's letter of May 18, 1564 to Leonardo Buonarroti, Michelangelo's nephew, as quoted by E. Heimeran, *Michelangelo und das Porträt*, Munich, 1925, 7, 81–82.

<sup>44</sup> *The Portrait in the Renaissance*, London and New York, 1966, 289–300.

<sup>45</sup> *Sculpture in Italy, 1400 to 1500*, Baltimore and Harmondsworth, 1966, 185–186; N. Grammatici, "La Déploration de Niccolò dell'Arca," *Revue de l'art*, LXII, 1983, 21–34.

<sup>46</sup> "Die Medici-Madonna des Rogier van der Weyden," *Wallraf-Richartz Jahrbuch*, xxxi, 1969, 25–42, 37–38; first identified by J. Destrée, *Rogier van der Weyden*, Paris, 1930, 97.

<sup>47</sup> Klein, 38; Kraut, 13–26.

<sup>43</sup> An investigation at the Index of Christian Art at Princeton University produced no representations of Saint Luke in the act of carving. I am grateful to Lois Drewer and Adelaide Bennett for their help.

<sup>44</sup> D. Klein, *St. Lukas als Maler der Maria. Ikonographie der Lukas-Madonna*, Berlin, 1933; G. Kraut, *Lukas malt die Madonna*, Worms, 1986.

Friedrich Polleross asserted that the painting by Gerolamo Savoldo in Cleveland shows a dual image of Nicodemus and the painter supporting the body of Christ. Don Denny, following Stechow's arguments, analyzed the figure of Nicodemus in Hugo van der Goes's panel painting of the Lamentation (Fig. 22), explaining it as a pious self-referential motif based on the belief that Nicodemus, too, had been the author of a sacred image.<sup>50</sup>

The most recent literature, once again focusing on the self-portrait in Michelangelo's Florentine *Pietà* (Fig. 19), appears intentionally to have departed from the significance of Nicodemus as a saintly role model for sculptors.<sup>51</sup> In a carefully constructed argument considering many factors, Jane Kristof stressed the overriding importance of "Nicodemism," a sixteenth-century term deriving from Nicodemus's clandestine meeting with Christ by night and referring to Michelangelo's alleged covert sympathies with the Protestant Reformation, which "may well have attached itself to the work as it progressed."<sup>52</sup> Indeed, Michelangelo did attempt to destroy or at least damage the unfinished work.<sup>53</sup> Likewise expounding the influence of "Nicodemism," Valerie Shrimplin-Evangelidis went further, actually denying that the notion of Nicodemus as sculptor could have been of any import to Michelangelo since it is not known that he ever visited Lucca!<sup>54</sup> With the large body of evidence linking Nicodemus and sculptors both visually and verbally, it now appears gratuitous to construct elaborate apologies based on purported personal proclivities.<sup>55</sup>

The practice of such linkage was ubiquitous and based on a belief that was orthodox. Without a great deal of effort, additional identificational portraits and other kinds of references associating an artist with the person of Nicodemus can be recognized. Although Stechow maintained only that Nicodemus is depicted in the supporting figure in Filippino Lippi's drawing in Oberlin, as well as in his predella panel in the National Gallery, London (Fig. 23), the identification could be taken further, since the figure gazes at the viewer and wears a conspicuous turban, the headgear often worn by artists to protect their hair while at work. Kraft's self-image in a turban has been mentioned above (Fig. 4); Dürer's 1516 painting of his teacher Michael Wolgemut exhibits the same piece of apparel, as does, of course, Jan van Eyck's *Man with*



19 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Pietà*. Florence, Museo del Opero del Duomo (photo: Alinari/Art Resource N.Y.)

*the Red Turban* of 1433, which has therefore often been viewed as a self-portrait.

Perhaps the sculptors' pious habit of associating themselves with Nicodemus originates earlier than previously assumed. In the Cathedral in Parma, one of the Italian cities that housed relics of Nicodemus, the twelfth-century sculptor Benedetto Antelami carved a relief that originally adorned an ambo or choir enclosure (Fig. 24). His identifying inscription at the top edge of the relief extends across the full width of the scene depicting the Deposition. The sentence, "Antelami dictus sculptor fuit hic benedictus," is best translated either as, "The sculptor called Antelami has here been blessed," or, "The sculptor called Antelami is this blessed one."<sup>56</sup> Through a curious uneven spacing of the lettering, the name Antelami appears directly over the figure labeled Nicodemus, who is removing the nail from Christ's left hand.

<sup>50</sup> Polleross, 228. D. Denny, "A Symbol in Hugo van der Goes' *Lamentation*," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, XCV-XCVI, 1980, 121-124. I am grateful to Diane Wolfthal for informing me of this study.

<sup>51</sup> Not all Michelangelo scholars have followed Stechow even in his suggestion that the figure of the old man depicts Nicodemus. See, for example, F. Hartt, *Michelangelo's Three Pietàs*, London, 1976, 73.

<sup>52</sup> "Michelangelo as Nicodemus: *The Florence Pietà*," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, xx, 1989, 163-182.

<sup>53</sup> Scholars have also proposed various other reasons for the mutilation: an all-too-overt eroticism with Christ's leg slung over the Virgin's lap (L. Steinberg, "Michelangelo's *Pietà*: The Missing Leg," *Art Bulletin*, I, 1968, 343-359); flaws in the marble (J. Schulz, "Michelangelo's Unfinished Works," *Art Bulletin*, XLVII, 1975, 369-370); an error in the carving (Hartt [as in n. 51], 76-117).

<sup>54</sup> "Michelangelo and Nicodemism: *The Florentine Pietà*," *Art Bulletin*, LXXI, 1989, 58-66.

<sup>55</sup> See the critical letter by G. Wind, "Once More, Michelangelo and Nicodemism," *Art Bulletin*, LXXI, 1989, 693.

<sup>56</sup> Variant translations are discussed by Parker, 197-199. See also G. Francovich, *Benedetto Antelami: Architetto e scultore e l'arte del suo tempo*, 2 vols., Milan and Florence, 1952, I, 125.



20 Fra Angelico, *Deposition*. Florence, Museo S. Marco (photo: Alinari/Art Resource N.Y.)

At this early date, the lettering and ambiguous content of the titulus would have afforded an appropriate means of mingling the identities of Antelami and Nicodemus in order to show pious imitation, if not a desired mystical immersion in the holy person.

Later the possibility of appropriating Nicodemus for their own self-fashioning appears to have driven artists to conflate iconographic motifs from separate narrative events. The sixteenth-century Flemish painter, sculptor, architect, and scholar Pieter Coecke van Aelst painted a Crucifixion triptych with a curious figure crouching in an awkward position in the foreground, holding, almost menacingly, a large claw ham-

mer.<sup>57</sup> The place of the figure in the composition corresponds with that of Nicodemus as he removes the nail from Christ's feet in most Byzantine representations of the Deposition, as well as in many Western examples in enamel and metalwork from the high Middle Ages (Fig. 25). Did Coecke use the figure to assert his self-conscious role in presenting the sacred story and to legitimize his status by connecting himself to a well-placed preceding artist?

Neither Kraft nor Riemenschneider need have been aware of any other monument in which an artist presented himself in the role of Nicodemus. The ubiquity of the legend of Nicodemus the pious sculptor suffices as evidence that they would have recognized this potential role model. Art history's still widely felt necessity to demonstrate an artist's knowledge of a predecessor motif in a previous work is perhaps a legacy

<sup>57</sup> The painting belongs to a private collector and is on permanent loan to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.



21 Rogier van der Weyden, *Entombment*. Florence, Uffizi (photo: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.)

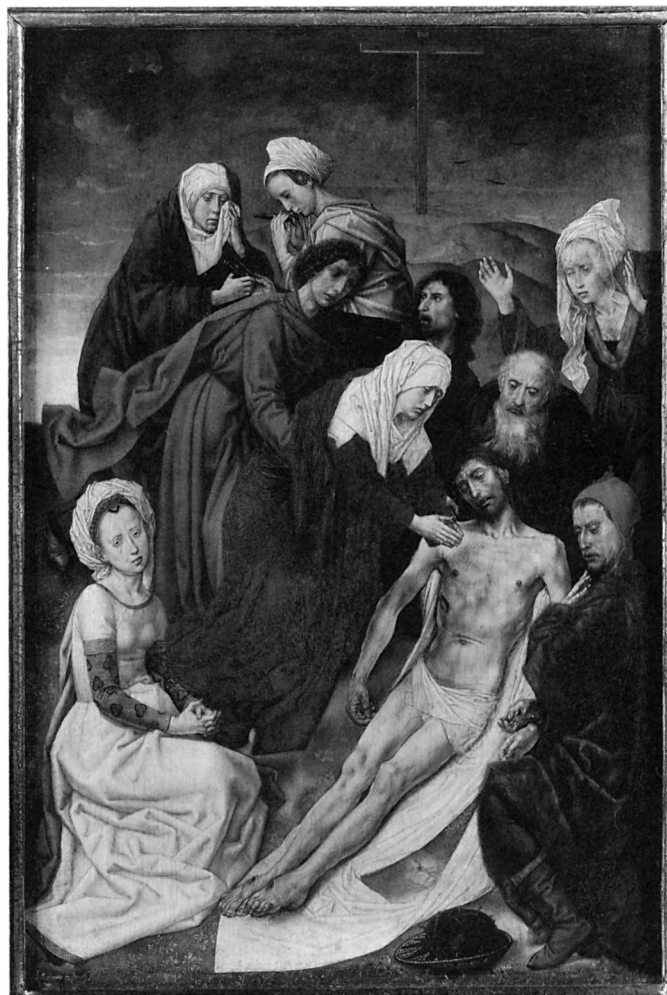
left by earlier generations who, creating artists "in their own image," perceived them as people who specialized in looking at works of art. What these numerous and diverse examples do establish is artists' common recognition of Nicodemus as indeed their role model and, more significantly, their anticipation that audiences would understand and accept the pious self-references.

### Artistic Self-Consciousness and Means of Self-Representation

Adam Kraft's audience was primed to accept the kind of dual referencing described here. Only a few steps away in the St. Moritz Chapel, frescoes dating from 1370 showed the infancy of Wenzel, son of Charles IV, fused with that of Christ.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, a Nuremberg painter had already effected self-identification with a holy person through the figure of Saint Luke, whom he had endowed with very portraitlike characteristics (Fig. 18). Finished only a couple of years before, the panel showing the saint at his easel painting the Madonna and Child was part of the main altarpiece in St. Veit, the neighboring Augustinian monastery (Fig. 34).

Riemenschneider had himself frequently employed mingled identities as a political device in his commissioned work. For example, two figures of Kilian, the Würzburg patron saint, one in the retable for the high altar in

<sup>58</sup> F. Machilek, "Anna von Schweidnitz (1338/39–1362)," *Schweidnitz im Wandel der Zeiten*, exh. cat., Spitalhof Reutlingen, Würzburg, 1990, 317–322, 317.



22 Hugo van der Goes, *Lamentation*. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (photo: Museum)

Münnerstadt, dating from 1490–92, and one carved for the parish church in Burgerbrach dating from ca. 1505, correspond closely to the image that Riemenschneider fashioned for the tombstone of the Würzburg prince-bishop Rudolf von Scherenberg between 1496 and 1499.<sup>59</sup>

Contemporary viewers often attested to artistic identifications and self-identifications in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. Filippo Villani wrote of images of Dante and Giotto, probably referring to an integrated portrait and self-portrait. Lorenzo Ghiberti described a painting by Taddeo Gaddi as showing the Miracle of Saint Francis and containing images of Giotto and Dante, as well as a self-portrait.<sup>60</sup>

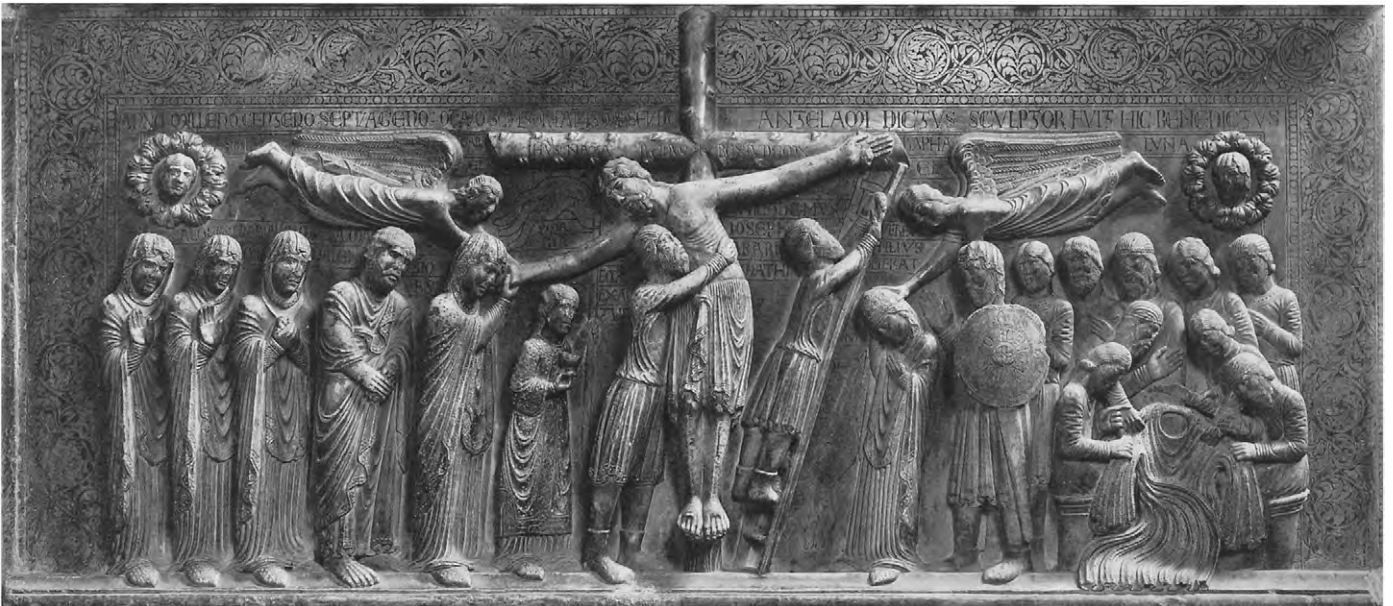
<sup>59</sup> H. Muth, *Kilian Mönch aus Irland—Aller Franken Patron*, exh. cat., Mainfränkisches Museum, Würzburg, 1989, No. 254.

<sup>60</sup> F. Villani, "De Cimabue, Giotto, Maso, Stephano et Taddeo pictoribus," *Il libro di Antonio Billi*, ed. C. Frey, Berlin, 1892, 73ff, as cited by E. Gombrich, "Giotto's Portrait of Dante?" *Burlington Magazine*, cxxi, 1979, 471–484, 476–477, repr. in E. Gombrich, *New Light on Old Masters*, Chicago, 1986; G. Ladner, "Die Anfänge des Kryptoporträts," *Von Angesicht zu Angesicht (Michael Stettler zum 70. Geburtstag)*, Bern, 1983, 88; L. Ghiberti, *I Commentarii*, II, ed. J. Schlosser, Berlin, 1912, 38, as cited by Gombrich, 484. G. Panofsky, "Ghiberti, Alberti und die frühen Italiener," *Kunst und Kunsttheorie 1400–1900 (Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, XLVIII)*, 1–28, 24–25.





23 Filippino Lippi, *Lamentation at the Tomb*. London, National Gallery (photo: National Gallery)



24 Benedetto Antelami, *Deposition*. Parma, Cathedral (photo: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.)



25 *Deposition*, center panel of shrine. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (19.190.735) (photo: Museum)

Vasari, whose recognition of Michelangelo's imposition of his own physiognomy onto his Florentine *Pietà* has already been discussed, of course offered both the most numerous and the most notorious accounts. His Nuremberg counterpart, Johannes Neudörfer, who preceded him in publishing a series of artists' biographies, likewise claimed the presence of various Nuremberg personalities incorporated within late medieval representations of salvation history. In Veit Stoß's *Last Supper* relief in St. Sebald, Neudörfer identified twelve members of the upper chamber of the Nuremberg town council; in a Crucifixion mural by Hans Beuerlein in the

Dominican monastery he found an integrated self-portrait.<sup>61</sup> Writing at approximately the same time, Pankratius Schwenters, another Nuremberg humanist, also identified two faces of contemporaries in Dürer's *Adoration of the Holy Trinity*—the donor, who was, as mentioned above, Matthäus Landauer (Figs. 10–11), and his son-in-law Wilhelm Haller. According to the proceedings of the city council from 1584,

<sup>61</sup> He mistakenly attributed the relief to Adam Kraft. J. Neudörfer, *Nachrichten von Künstlern und Werkleuten Daselbst*, ed. G. Lochner, Vienna, 1875, 11.

the painting contained "all manner of old portraits of Nuremberg families."<sup>62</sup> Here the duality is somewhat different since the individuals stood for themselves and for a generic type but not for a holy precursor.

Curiously, although some modern art historians have continued these traditions by searching out new examples, matching faces in autonomous portraits with those of figures in history paintings, and attempting to reconstruct linkages,<sup>63</sup> many scholars have invested their energies in efforts to disprove the claims of contemporary viewers. Indeed, perhaps a healthy dose of skepticism is in order in the case of Vasari, who may have been a bit overzealous as he scoured frescoes and panels for faces to serve as prototypes for his own series of artists' portraits. Generally, however, it is remarkable how in this regard the discipline of art history has discredited the role of the audience and limited the criteria, in its quest for the "true meaning" of images, to artists' documented conscious intentions regarding their own works.<sup>64</sup>

It is likewise worthy of note that many art historians who have accepted the pervasive presence of integrated portraits and self-portraits in the late Middle Ages and early modern era have assigned to them a curious pivotal role in their construction of the history of art. Ernst Benkard's monographic study is paradigmatic in this regard. In his perception of various steps in the development of the self-portrait, he places such figures in the early stage of "unfreedom" (*Unfreiheit*) and typifies them as caught in a "serving context" from which they then subsequently break free as autonomous self-images (*aus dienendem Zusammenhang gelöst*).<sup>65</sup> Within this all-too-familiar teleology, not only art but also artists must liberate themselves from the sacred image. With somewhat more subtlety, this attitude is likewise reflected in and promoted by the adjectives most often used to distinguish these portraits especially in the German and English literature: "masked" (*verkappt*), "covert" (*verkleidet*), "hidden" (*versteckt*), "incognito," "crypto-" or "disguised," implying a necessity to camouflage or conceal what could not be pre-

sented openly.<sup>66</sup> This concept runs semantically converse to Panofsky's "disguised symbolism," yet it functions parallel to it within a similar teleology.<sup>67</sup> Polleross has recently adopted the term "sacred identificational portraits" for images that incorporate likenesses of rulers with representations of holy persons. This term, like the notion of dual referencing, does not connote some primordial force toward another "higher" conclusion.<sup>68</sup> Judging from the "patterns of intention"—to borrow Michael Baxandall's phrase—that have survived for our scrutiny, artists and nonartists did not seek sacred identification as a veil or an excuse for some more compelling objective. What ambition could have appeared loftier to them than being identified with a saint?

It was more challenging for an artist to achieve identification with Nicodemus than with Saint Luke, and it likewise offered certain advantages. Painters' guilds commissioned many of the images of Saint Luke painting the Madonna in which the painter integrated his own physiognomy. The artist was in these instances not only artist, but client and donor as well, and as such would have certainly participated in the choosing of the theme of the work. A set motif showing Saint Luke painting had been in use since at least the fourteenth century; appropriating it was not only convenient but expedient because it could be recognized at a glance. Sculptors, who were in some areas included in the same guild with painters, likewise under these circumstances employed the motif to represent themselves—collectively as well as at times individually. One example is in the altarpiece dating from 1484 commissioned by the Confraternity of St. Luke for the Lübeck Katharinenkirche. Another example, the carved image in the shrine of an altar dating from ca. 1500, made for the Hamburg Jacobikirche, and attributed to Hinrik Bornemann, may possibly incorporate a self-portrait of the sculptor.<sup>69</sup> Riemenschneider himself belonged to the Würzburg Guild of St. Luke. Not having been engaged to fashion an altar for his own guild, Riemenschneider enterprisingly found opportunities for self-representation within the commissions of other clients. These other contexts offered a

<sup>62</sup> A. Gümbel, "Die Stifterbildnisse auf Dürers Allerheiligenaltar," *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, xlv, 1925, 225–230.

<sup>63</sup> See, e.g., Gümbel (as in n. 62); A. Warburg, *Bildniskunst und Florentinismus*, Leipzig, 1901, repr. A. Warburg, *Ausgewählte Schriften und Würdigungen*, ed. D. Wuttke (*Saecula spiritualia*, 1), Baden-Baden, 1979, 65–102; G. Pfeiffer, "Judas Iskarioth auf Lucas Cranachs Altar der Schlosskirche zu Dessau," *Festschrift Karl Oettinger*, Erlangen, 1967, 389–399.

<sup>64</sup> B. Kéry touches on the issue of what might be called the nonintentional dual reference, *Kaiser Sigismund, Ikonographie*, Vienna, 1972, 11.

<sup>65</sup> *Das Selbstbildnis von 15. bis zum Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, 1927, xxiv. In an earlier monograph, *Kunst des Porträts* (Leipzig, 1908), W. Waetzoldt suggested multiple motivations for the integrated self-portrait, 313–328.

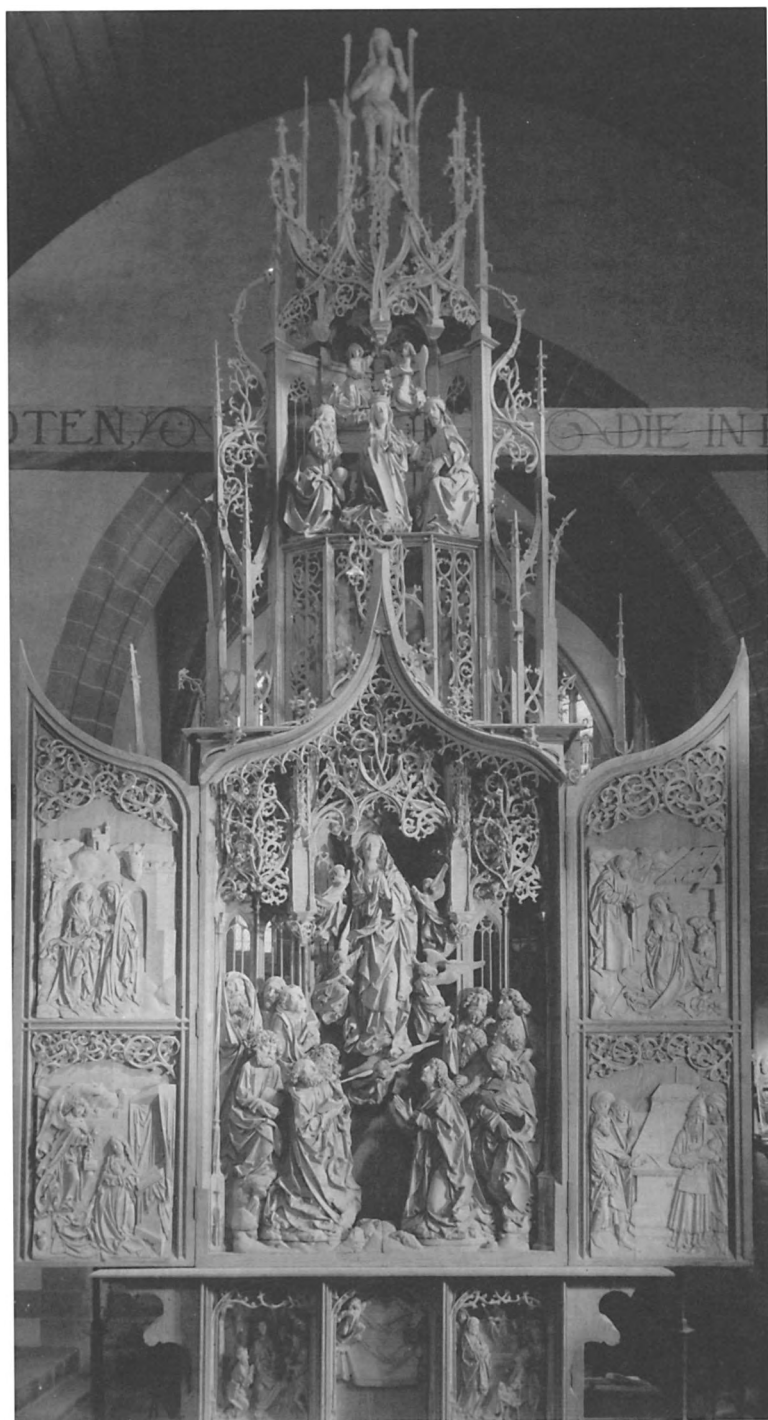
<sup>66</sup> See, e.g., H. Keller, "Verkleidetes Bildnis," in his article, "Denkmal," *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, III, Stuttgart, 1954, col. 1280; Kéry (as in n. 64), 7, 23–24; Ladner (as in n. 60), 79–97. For an overview of the terminology, see Polleross, 2–5. Less frequent are the more descriptive concepts "theomorphic" and "Christomorphic" (e.g., Dürer's self-portrait of 1500): D. de Chapeaurouge, "Theomorphe Porträts der Neuzeit," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift*, 1968, 262–302; or "composite": E. Wind, "Studies in Allegorical Portraiture I," *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 1, 1937/38, 138–142. O. Oexle ("Memoria und Memorialbild," ed. K. Schmid and J. Wollasch, *Memoria der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedenkens im Mittelalter*, Munich, 1984, 384–440, esp. 438–

439) has taken issue with the notion common in art-historical literature on the development of the portrait—that individuality was only possible in the visual arts after religion had loosened its grasp, and he points to an early formulation by Jacob Burckhardt, "Bewußtsein—nach der Welt hin und nach dem Innern des Menschen selbst—wie unter einem gemeinsamen Schleier träumend oder halbwach. . ." ("Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien," Pt. 2, *Gesammelte Werke*, III, Darmstadt, 1955, 89.) Most current terms for images conveying dual references remain close to Burckhardt's semantics.

<sup>67</sup> Both concepts posit a "hunger for reality" i.e., representations from the optically verifiable world. In order to paint "optical reality," Panofsky's artists had to imbue it with symbolism ("... the world of art could not at once become a world of things devoid of meaning," *Early Netherlandish Painting*, New York, 1953, I, 141). In order to produce veristic contemporary likenesses, early portraitists had to embed them in salvation history.

<sup>68</sup> In his essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," M. Foucault offers insights into such problems in the writing of history (*A Foucault Reader*, ed. P. Rabinow, New York, 1984, 76–100). For Polleross's term, see pp. 7–11 (in Sources).

<sup>69</sup> The former is today in the St. Annenmuseum; see J. Wittstock, *Kirchliche Kunst des Mittelalters und der Reformationszeit: St. Annen-Museum Lübeck* (*Lübecker Museumskataloge*, 1), Lübeck, 1979, No. 79. The latter is now in the Hamburg Kunsthalle.



**26** Tilman Riemenschneider, Herrgott Altarpiece. Creglingen (photo: Foto Marburg)



**27** Herrgott Altarpiece, Twelve-Year Old Christ in the Temple (photo: Foto Marburg)

richer gamut of pious associations for the artist and inclusion in monuments that embodied the vital interests of other individuals or groups.

As early as the first decade of the century, Riemenschneider integrated a self-portrait within a major commission. In fact, he may already have forged an identification with Nicodemus but in an atypical context. The predella of the so-called Herrgott Altarpiece in Creglingen contains a small relief of the twelve-year-old Christ before the doctors in the Temple. At the far right, one of the scriptural scholars

peers out toward the viewer (Figs. 26–27). His facial features and contemporary attire, including the distinctive hat with its broad upturned brim, match those of the portrait on the gravestone (Fig. 15) as well as the figure in the Maidbronn relief (Fig. 14). If Riemenschneider were pursuing an association with Nicodemus, this work in some respects would present the converse of Guido Mazzoni's terra-cotta *Lamentation* in Modena. In this relief, dating from 1477, the donor, Francesco Pancera, and a cleric, Gaspare de'Longhi, are believed to have had their likenesses projected onto the



figures of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, the latter in accordance with Nicodemus's identity as a scriptural scholar.<sup>70</sup> Placing Nicodemus among the doctors would parallel the kinds of elaborations on sacred events and networks between biblical persons that late medieval writers and preachers were fond of constructing. Such a piece, the twenty-five-stanza English poem "Her is a disputison bi-twene chi[l]d Jhesu and Maistres of the lawe of Jewus," invents an intense discussion on medieval theology between Christ and the scholars.<sup>71</sup> Riemenschneider may himself have initiated a similar, more anecdotal intervention with a figure that carried subtle intertextual implications in the direction of Nicodemus and the artist.

Commissions to carve a Deposition, Lamentation, or Entombment presented the most common occasions for an artist to associate himself with Nicodemus. Indeed, all three themes proliferated during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in the culminating decades of eucharistic piety, in which exuberant cult veneration focused on the sacrificed body of Christ. In the fourteenth century, Ludolph of Saxony had made a clear connection between the historical act of removing Christ's body from the Cross and its metahistorical reenactment in the Eucharist. Underscoring the position of the contemporary laity, he wrote in his *Vita Christi* that, "it was better to receive the body of Christ from the altar table than from the Cross; in the latter they receive him in arms and hands only, while in the former they receive him in the mouth and in their hearts."<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the Deposition had usurped a position so important that it occasionally replaced the Crucifixion in late medieval Passion cycles—as is the case in the Schreyer-Landauer Epitaph.<sup>73</sup> The Lamentation and Entombment also became popular motifs for funerary or memorial settings, and sculptors were employed to carve them for both indoor and outdoor monuments. Passages relating Christ's Entombment to the reposeful death of the Christian also appear in the *Vita Christi*.<sup>74</sup>

Riemenschneider had received several commissions for Lamentation groups: in the sculpture in Hessenthal (shortly before 1492) as well as that in Großostheim (ca. 1515), a figure of Nicodemus or Joseph, who originally held the nails and possibly also pincers or a claw hammer, stands somewhat apart from the participants and, displaying these objects, addresses the viewer (Fig. 28).<sup>75</sup> These figures, too, although they are not definitively self-portraits, might have been intended as subtly self-referential.

In the Maidbronn relief (Figs. 13–14), references in both directions are unmistakable: the figure bears the artist's

physiognomy and wears his hat while holding the ointment jar, an attribute specific to Nicodemus. Clothed in a rather reduced tunic, buttoned at the shoulders and lacking the ample folds of the classical garments worn by the other figures, the person, although placed centrally, appears physically and mentally detached, neither touching the other participants nor addressing them with his gaze. Riemenschneider chose to create a double of Nicodemus onto which he projected his own person; without this figure, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea are already present in the relief. One of them, the old man with full beard and mustache, in classical dress, supports the upper torso of the dead Christ. The other, also of advanced age, with full parted beard and mustache, wears a pointed head covering and stands to the right, gazing out of the picture toward the viewer. The custom of doubling figures and multiplying the number of characters in such scenes well beyond those named in biblical events was common enough that the presence of the added figure would not have been considered indecorous.<sup>76</sup> In Fra Angelico's *Deposition*, four men remove Christ's body (Fig. 20). Riemenschneider himself had added figures in the earlier Lamentations (Fig. 28).

Contemporary viewers may have experienced the figure of Riemenschneider somewhat like twentieth-century moviegoers who suddenly recognize Alfred Hitchcock's face in one of his films. For a fleeting instant the viewer is drawn away from the plot, no matter how suspenseful, and brought to acknowledge the maker of the work. At the moment of discernment the acquainted sixteenth-century Franconian beholder would have been led away from his or her contemplation of the Lamentation, and, perhaps not without a sense of pride in recognition, brought to think of Tilman Riemenschneider as responsible for the monument. A wider and more enduring circle would have understood the depersonalized figure as the sculptor responsible for the work. By looking out of his picture, the artist showed himself to be aware of his mediating role. In his own estimation, he was the pious dispatcher of the sacred message and not solely the executor of his clients' wishes or "the mere conduit of extra-artistic information"—to borrow a phrase that James Marrow used in making a similar point in another context.<sup>77</sup>

Kraft, too, could have projected his physiognomy as well as that of Landauer onto the figures of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea in the Entombment portion of the relief, but instead he chose less conventional methods. The protocol mentions "various . . . groups of persons" near the empty Cross in the original mural. Quite likely a pair of figures was extracted, enlarged, and brought into the foreground. The two stand out against the other figures in the relief far more than does the Riemenschneider/Nicodemus figure in Maidbronn. Removed from all other participants, they are not so easily "lost in the crowd." With no figures in front of them,

<sup>70</sup> Polleross, 229.

<sup>71</sup> *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, Pt. II, ed. F. Furnivall (*Early English Text Society, Original Series*, CXVII), London, 1901, 479–484.

<sup>72</sup> As cited by S. Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, Åbo, 1965, 124–125, and Parker, 97–98.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>74</sup> As cited by Hartt (as in n. 51), 82.

<sup>75</sup> *Tilman Riemenschneider—Frühe Werke*, exh. cat., Mainfränkisches Museum, Würzburg, 1981, 187–93, 322–332.

<sup>76</sup> E. Rampendahl, *Die Ikonographie der Kreuzabnahme vom 9.–16. Jahrhundert*, diss., Berlin, 1916, 33–41; K. Birkmeyer, "The Pietà from San Remigio," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, LX, 1962, 459–480, 468–469.

<sup>77</sup> "Symbol and Meaning in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance," *Simiolus*, XVI, 1986, 150–169, 150.



28 Tilman Riemenschneider, *Lamentation*. Großostheim (photo: Foto Marburg)

their fifteenth-century Nuremberg dress is plainly visible, including Kraft's very obvious leather bag—a perspicuous accouterment of merchants and craftsmen. The claw hammer and tongs precipitate dual readings that correlate the tools of the Nuremberg craftsman with the attributes of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Only the nails and the crown of thorns contradict the characters' late medieval German identities and weld them to the Passion history that surrounds them. These individuals are primarily fifteenth-century citizens of Nuremberg. Their counterparts in the Entombment scene to the left (Fig. 29), probably Nicodemus at Christ's head and Joseph supporting his legs, wear head coverings corresponding to the basic forms of the hats worn by Kraft and Landauer at the right. These figures are primarily first-century residents of Jerusalem. The four figures demonstrate subtleties and mingling of identity.

These observations point to a broader issue in need of methodological scrutiny: the manner in which contemporary personal referral has been determined, based on whether or not a face exhibits a "likeness." Only a few authors have considered a wider latitude of possibilities for dual referencing. Gerhart Ladner advised that one should distinguish semantically between figures that have a primary identity in the present and others that have a primary identity in the past. He briefly suggested that in the earlier Middle Ages, associations between contemporaries and holy persons were constructed through formal correspondence achieved via manipulations in paired illustrations.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Frank Büttner, who approached the problem from a different

<sup>78</sup> As in n. 60, esp. 78, 82.



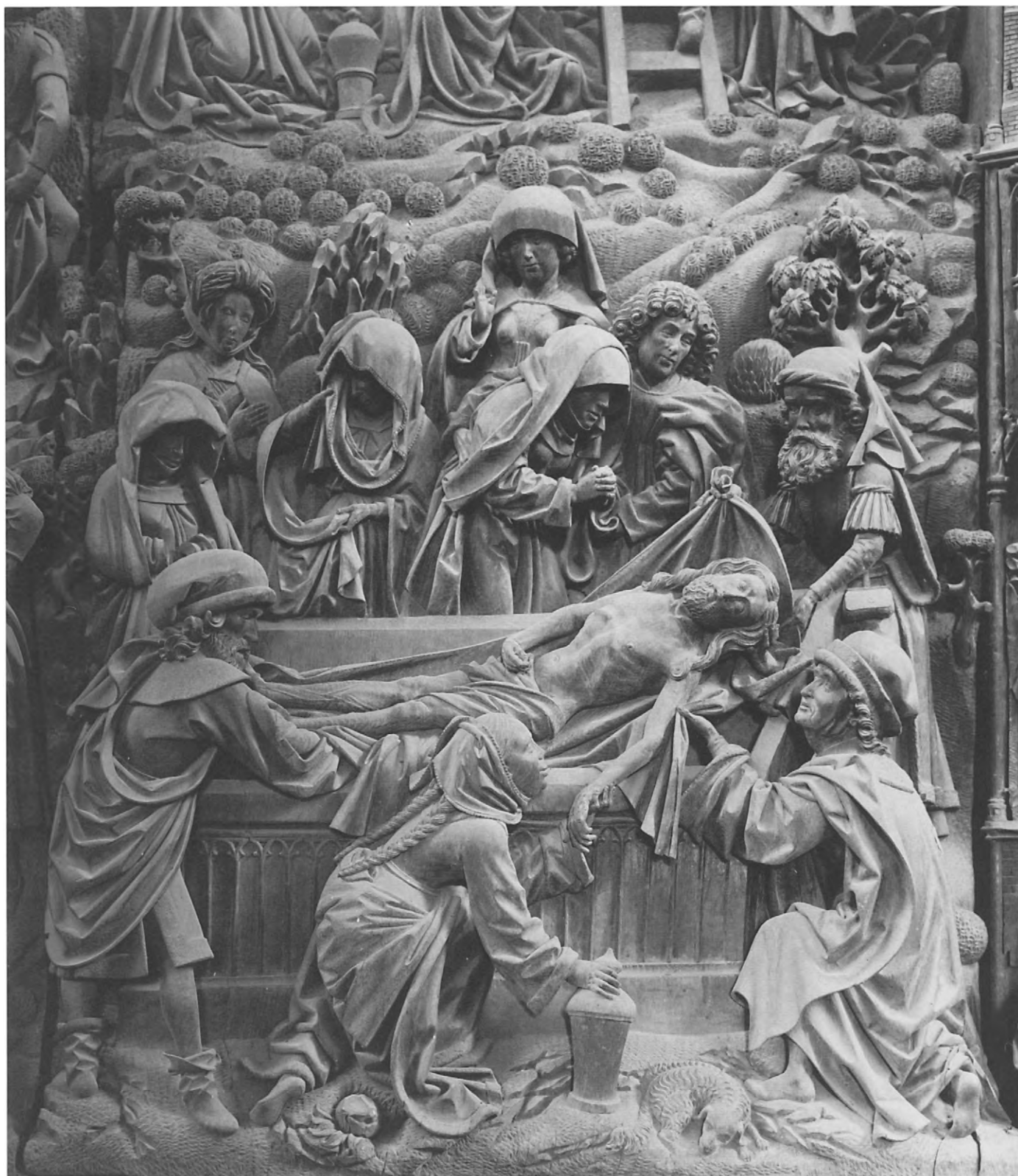
29 Schreyer-Landauer Epitaph, Entombment (photo: Bildstelle)

direction—beginning with specified iconographic motifs intended for the emulation of the late medieval viewer—focused attention on some representations in which the figure of a donor or another contemporary assumes a pose or stance conforming to that of a holy person within the same image.<sup>79</sup> The Entombment in the altarpiece carved by

Ludwig Juppe for the high altar in the Kalkar Nikolauskirche in 1498 corresponds particularly well with this paradigm. As Nicodemus or Joseph holds one corner of the grave cloth, a wealthy donor standing beside him clutches another corner (Fig. 30).<sup>80</sup> Here the pious association of the donor with the saint is expressed without sacrificing the integrity or identity

<sup>79</sup> *Imitatio Pietatis*, Berlin, 1983, 4–5.

<sup>80</sup> F. Gorissen, *Ludwig Juppe von Marburg*, Düsseldorf, 1969, 71–73.



30 Ludwig Juppe, Retable. Kalkar, Nikolauskirche (photo: Rheinisches Bildarchiv)

of either individual. Denny, as mentioned above, called Hugo van der Goes's image of Nicodemus peering down at the crown of thorns atop a hat (Fig. 22) "a reference to the artist, not necessarily a self-portrait."<sup>81</sup>

<sup>81</sup> As in n. 50.

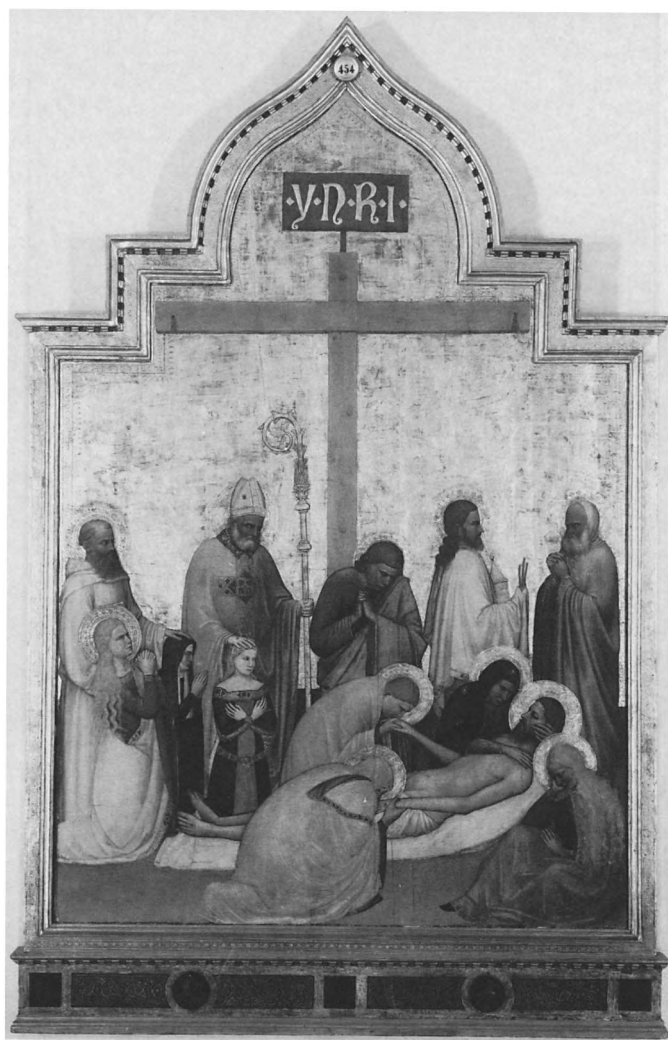
Kraft's unusual pair of figures served several functions within the picture. For one, it provided an anecdotal scene to which viewers could personally relate within the panorama of salvation history. In some ways, the scene was not unlike that in Fra Angelico's panel of the Deposition in which a group of five men in the dress of contemporary Tuscan aristocrats pause to examine and venerate the nails and the crown of



thorns (Fig. 20).<sup>82</sup> In the *Lamentation* from S. Remigio, dated to ca. 1365, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus stand in the background facing each other and detached from the scene; Nicodemus, identifiable by the vessel he grasps, holds the nails for Joseph's contemplation (Fig. 31).<sup>83</sup> Indeed, along with the nails and the crown of thorns, the hammer and pincers could also be counted among the *arma Christi*—those “weapons of Christ” that, excerpted from the Passion story, became the *arma Christianorum*, making Christ's suffering omnipresent for devotional meditation.<sup>84</sup> In the Kraft relief, however, the function of the objects as a devotional focus is only stated as potential since the two men merely hold them as they converse.

A common role allowing artists to identify themselves within the scene was that of interlocutor or narrator. Here, too, Kraft chose a more complex solution: the two men converse with each other, but stand close enough to the front edge of the work that the viewer might be privy to their conversations. The effect would have been similar to that of present-day television news commentators who discuss events with each other for the sake of the audience. The strategy is likewise similar to that of Dante in the *Divine Comedy* when he presents himself in dialogue first with Virgil as the two circumnavigate the circles of Hell and Purgatory, and later with Beatrice as she shows him the spheres of Heaven. Placing a companion at his side gave Dante reason to expound on what and whom he saw. In 1508 Dürer also used this strategy when he depicted himself discoursing with Conrad Celtis in his panel painting of the *Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand* (Figs. 32–33). The two stand in the middle of the landscape while Celtis gestures at the various scenes of martyrdom as *imitatio Christi* in the space before them.<sup>85</sup> We may assume that in both representations the subject of the dialogue relates to the events that are presented to the viewer. Since we cannot know who is saying what or if one man is narrating and the other listening, we are forced to accept a fortuitous ambivalence, a surrogate blending of author and audience.

Kraft's two conversing figures, somewhat removed from the events, or at least at the moment not involved in them, stand at the front of the stage, and thus serve as a frame. They provide the interface between the representation and the world outside of it, belonging on the one hand to both realms, but on the other hand—not only because of their position but also by virtue of their conflicting attire and attributes—to neither. Framing implies a kind of appropriation. Collectors frame paintings in order to hang them on their walls. Scholars frame quotations in order to allocate them for their own uses. Framed for the purposes of Kraft



31 *Lamentation* from S. Remigio. Florence, Uffizi (photo: Ali-nari/ Art Resource, N.Y.)

and Landauer, the figures show the two as eyewitnesses, presenting the holy history as if they had participated. As *exempla*, these saintly forebears and professional role models sanctify the craftsman and his tools as well as the town councilman and his capital. Framing on behalf of their pious constituents, the figures show *figurae*—symbols—or contemporary manifestations of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, thus providing late medieval Nuremberg citizens with individuals with whom they could easily relate, whose language they understood, and whose words they could trust.<sup>86</sup> The framing figures therefore functioned favorably both for the recipient audience and for the author-sponsors of the work.

These overtly self-reflexive aspects of Kraft's and Riemenschneider's monuments betray a consciousness of artistic subjectivity. Kraft and Riemenschneider deliberately

<sup>82</sup> I. Strunk, *Fra Angelico*, Mönchengladbach, 1916, 112–117.

<sup>83</sup> Birkmeyer (as in n. 76), esp. 462.

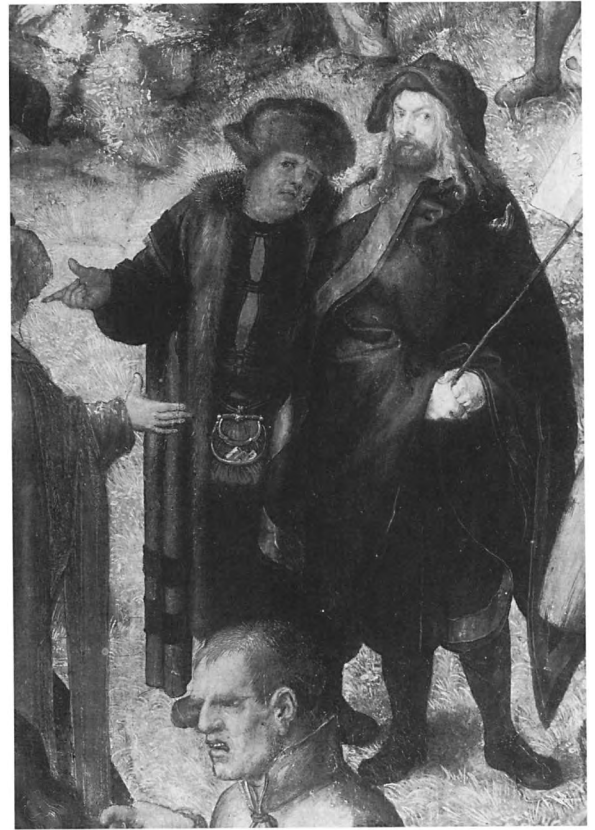
<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 471; R. Suckale, “‘Arma Christi,’ überlegungen zur Zeichenhaftigkeit mittelalterlicher Andachtsbilder,” *Stadel-Jahrbuch*, N.S. 6, 1977, 177–208.

<sup>85</sup> E. Panofsky, “Conrad Celtes and Kunz von der Rosen: Two Problems in Portrait Identification,” *Art Bulletin*, xxiv, 1942, 39–54, 39–43; P. Skrine, “Dürer and the Temper of His Age,” *Essays on Dürer*, ed. C. Dodwell, Manchester, 1973, 24–42, 32–33; D. Wuttke, “Dürer und Celtis,” *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, x, 1980, 73–129, 117.

<sup>86</sup> In a paper delivered at a College Art Association meeting, Larry Silver used the term “figura” in discussing pictures that fused images of saints with portraits of later individuals (*Abstracts and Program Statements, 76th Annual Meeting, College Art Association of America, 1988*, 75). E. Auerbach, “Figura,” *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur romanischen Philologie*, Munich, 1967, 55–107; P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, Chicago, 1982; H. Reske, “Typus und Postfiguration,” *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte*, xxix, 1972, 23–39, esp. n. 1.



32 Albrecht Dürer, *Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand*. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (photo: Museum)



33 Conrad Celtis and Albrecht Dürer, detail of Fig. 32

put themselves into their work. They narrate or discuss, using, as it were, first-person pronouns. Neither pretends to present salvation history as detached objective reality, but rather as his own subjective experience. In the *Vision of God*, written in 1453, Nicholas Cusanus employed provocative and multivalent comparisons regarding the subjectivity of the image-maker. He referred to God creating the world as a painter fashioning his own self-portrait. Taking another vantage point, he asserted that if a lion were to ascribe to God a face, it would be the face of a lion, an ox the face of an ox, an eagle the face of an eagle.<sup>87</sup> When Kraft and Riemenschneider carved images of their own faces on the figure of Nicodemus, they did so with a consciousness akin to that of Cusanus. They knew that Nicodemus did not “really” look just like them. Much art-historical writing on monuments of portraits and individuated portraitlike renderings of objects as the reflection of a newly discovered visible, tactile, physical, “real” world,<sup>88</sup> although medieval Christians had long

venerated physical objects—indeed, particles of specific individuals. If we reverse the issue and ask not what these and many other portraitlike renderings of the time may or may not passively reflect but what they actively promoted, we often find a striving not to celebrate individual faces, cityscapes, or mousetraps—but to establish divinizing “likeness”: Riemenschneider was *like* Nicodemus. Although replicating, recording, or preserving individuals and individual objects from the visual world may have been a goal in itself in some other situations conditioned by other motivations—especially in earlier generations (such as classical antiquity) as well as in later ones—these identificational portraits appear to present fresh satisfactions for lingering (medieval) needs within rather traditional avenues of legitimation.<sup>89</sup>

In a seventh-century Byzantine explanation of the Mass, the paten and chalice stood for the hands of Joseph and Nicodemus. In the ninth century, Amalar of Metz wrote in his description of the elevation in the Mass that the archdeacon assumes the part of Joseph of Arimathea, and the celebrant that of Nicodemus, as they respectively raise the chalice and the Host and thus “perform” the deposition. These connections between biblical personages and liturgical vessels or offices are repeated by John of Avranches

<sup>87</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *The Vision of God*, intro. E. Underhill, trans. E. Salter, New York, 1973, 25, 127. For a discussion of Cusanus, subjectivism, and Dürer's self-portrait of 1500, see J. Koerner, “Albrecht Dürer and the Moment of Self-Portraiture,” *Daphnis*, xv, 1986, 409–439, esp. 426–428. In his recent book *Portraiture* (London, 1991), Richard Brilliant explored the expression of conscious subjectivity through the creation of self-portraits.

<sup>88</sup> See, e.g., K. Bauch, “Bildnisse des Jan van Eyck,” *Studien zur Kunstgeschichte* (1961), Berlin, 1967, 79–122, esp. 82–84.

<sup>89</sup> In discussing a different but in some ways parallel complex of issues in Netherlandish painting, C. Harbison asserted, “. . . the new technical prowess that artists possessed was in the service of quite different purposes. . . .” “Realism and Symbolism in Early Flemish Painting,” *Art Bulletin*, LXVI, 1984, 588–602, 601.

34 Hans Bien, Nuremberg city map, 1625 (detail): a. Schreyer-Landauer Epitaph; b. St. Moritz Chapel; c. Dominican Monastery; d. City Hall; e. Market Square; f. Augustinian Monastery. Nuremberg, Stadtarchiv (photo: Stadtarchiv)



(d. 1079), Bernold of Constance (d. 1100), Honorius Augustodunensis (d. 1116), and Sicardus of Cremona (d. 1215).<sup>90</sup> Similarly, in medieval liturgical and extra-liturgical dramas, the celebrant and the deacon played the parts of these biblical figures.<sup>91</sup> Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109) expressed the pious wish to place himself in one of these roles when he wrote, "If I could only, like the happy Joseph, take my Lord down from the Cross!"<sup>92</sup> Also, as mentioned above, Antelami placed his name over the figure of Nicodemus in his twelfth-century relief. In the visual arts of the late Middle Ages, sculptors found new ways of making similar associations for themselves public and permanent, using the means of optical verisimilitude.<sup>93</sup>

Because so much of the original historical context has survived or is known through records, it is tempting to venture a reconstruction of the effects that the figures of Adam Kraft and his companion would have had on their original audiences. Completed on Good Friday and Holy Saturday in 1492, the monument was, in that year and thereafter, a focal point for Holy Week observances.<sup>94</sup> Kraft and Landauer mediated the events of the first Good Friday and Easter Sunday, which were telescoped together and presented simultaneously in the landscape panorama: Christ Carrying his Cross, the Entombment, and the Resurrection pulled forward for close-up contemplation, with other scenes hidden in the background for contextual verification. Lo-

cated on the exterior of one of the two major parish churches, on a major thoroughfare, only a few steps from the city hall and the main marketplace (Fig. 34), the monument and the two prominent figures would have caught the eye of even the busiest pedestrians—especially in the years when the polychrome was still vivid. Even at night the monument was visible, lit by the eternal flame that burned in the large lantern before it. It was the most elaborate epitaph on the exterior of the building, and its conspicuous off-axis position at a distance from all the entrances served to mark the location of the eucharistic tabernacle (Fig. 5), an intention implied in the documents and borne out iconographically in the main scene showing the veneration of the *corpus Christi*. Undoubtedly some of the most attentive viewers came during Holy Week or on other high church festivals to say three *Pater Nosters* and three *Ave Marias* at the prie-dieu set up before the epitaph, and thereby to receive an indulgence of forty days. In 1493 the Bamberg bishop renewed the indulgence that had been arranged by the previous generation of donors. The bishop's letter carefully describes the iconography of the relief, alluding to its significance for those who wished to acquire the indulgence.<sup>95</sup> Audiences made up of those who came to the churchyard to pray for deceased family members would have been particularly receptive to many of the messages of the sculpture.

Visitors who came to kneel and pray would have approached the epitaph from the right. This viewing pattern had already been taken into consideration when the predecessor mural was painted, with its scenes arranged sequentially from right to left—the composition duplicated in the stone relief. Consequently, many viewers would have encountered the mediating figures first. In a recent study undertaken in connection with the cleaning of the monument, Eike Oellermann reported traces of the original polychrome, which evince a palette more typical of late medieval painting

<sup>90</sup> Parker, 66–71; B. Schällicke, *Die Ikonographie der monumentalen Kreuzabnahmegruppen des Mittelalters in Spanien*, diss., Freie Universität, Berlin, 1975, 104–109.

<sup>91</sup> Parker, 93.

<sup>92</sup> Anselmus, *Oratio ii*, *Opera*, II, Bk. 3, 8, as cited by Büttner (as in n. 79), 187.

<sup>93</sup> Richard Brilliant discussed portraits as substitutions that "exist as potential extensions of an individual's presence beyond the spatial and temporal limitations of his life," *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, xvi, 1, 1971, 11–26, 11.

<sup>94</sup> Gümbel, 1902, 369.

<sup>95</sup> Latin text, Gümbel, 1902, 370.

than sculpture—implying that even the coloration may have been matched to the mural.<sup>96</sup> The figures must have struck the very first group of viewers as the only truly new aspect of the work.

Adam Kraft presented himself as the dispatcher of many messages expressed through a work that formed an important nexus, meeting the needs of diverse audiences: it was both a private family memorial and a central public monument. It marked time and space. It underscored the importance of the Mass and illustrated the significance of events in the liturgical year (which at this time defined the calendar used to govern all legal and business matters as well), thereby highlighting the role of the Church and the clergy. Likewise, however, the monument also made salvation history immediately accessible to anyone at any time—without going through the Church and its clergy.<sup>97</sup> Thus the work aided a wide spectrum of viewers in the construction and maintenance of ideologies, some that legitimized institutions and others that supported attempts to circumvent these institutions, helping many to find meaning in the death around them in the churchyard and to give order and value to their lives. It was

<sup>96</sup> "St. Sebald Nürnberg, Dokumentation zur 'Schreyer Landauerschen Grablege,'" 9–10. I am grateful to Eike Oellermann for allowing me to cite his unpublished manuscript.

<sup>97</sup> The work provides interesting material relative to the arguments that have been waged for decades in Northern Renaissance art history concerning the *Andachtsbild* verses, history painting, and more recently concerning eucharistic significance verses extraliturgical meaning. The literature has been cited and summarized by Ringbom (as in n. 72), 52–58, and C. Harbison, "Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting," *Simulacrum*, xv, 1985, 87–118, 88.

within these discourses that Adam Kraft negotiated his own place.

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