



Bosch
Research and
Conservation
Project

PRESS RELEASE

Newly discovered painting expands Bosch's small oeuvre

Den Bosch, Holland, 1 February 2016 – The worldwide study performed by the Bosch Research and Conservation Project (BRCP) has shown that *The Temptation of St. Anthony* from The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, ought to be attributed to none other than Hieronymus Bosch himself. The painting was acquired early in the 1930s and held in storage for decades because it was classified as the work of a pupil or follower of Bosch. The new attribution is a significant addition to the small body of existent work produced by Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–Den Bosch 1516).



(The discovery was announced by BRCP researchers at a press conference in Het Noordbrabants Museum, where a large-scale exhibition of Hieronymus Bosch's work opens to the public on 13 February. The painting was presented to journalists in the presence of Julián Zugazagoitia, director of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.) On the photo: Scott Heffley, senior conservator of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. (Photo: Marc Bolsius)

Discovery

The newly discovered work, which dates from around 1500–10, will be shown to the public for the first time at the large-scale Hieronymus Bosch exhibition opening at Het Noordbrabants Museum on 13 February 2016 to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Bosch's death. Art historians and BRCP coordinator Dr Matthijs IJssink and Prof Dr Jos Koldeweij call it 'a small but significant addition to Bosch's oeuvre. The discovery highlights the immense value of the documentation the BRCP has produced for Bosch's work, and which is being made accessible to all via the website boschproject.org.' 'We are delighted with this major discovery by the

BRCP,' said Julián Zugazagoitia, Menefee D. and Mary Louise Blackwell Director and CEO of the Nelson-Atkins. 'The scientific and scholarly research behind this attribution is one of the transformative achievements of the years of work leading to the exhibition *Jheronimus Bosch – Visions of genius.*' The exhibition is based on the BRCP's study, which is the most extensive and international ever carried out into Bosch's compact body of known paintings and drawings. Never before have so many of the artists' works been shown together as will be returned now to the city of 's-Hertogenbosch (Den Bosch) where they were created.

Characteristic technique

The little panel shows St. Anthony, who is identifiable from the T-shaped cross on his cloak. His left hand rests on his staff, while he uses his right to fill a jug with water. The saint is threatened in this existence, dedicated to God, by the weird creatures surrounding him. Although the image was heavily retouched and overpainted during a twentieth-century restoration, Bosch's hand is still clearly recognizable in the original brushwork. If we look beyond these later additions, it is clear how closely this St. Anthony scene is related to the left wing in particular of the *Hermit Saints Triptych* in the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice, which is likewise included in the exhibition in Den Bosch. The BRCP's research team also used infrared photography and infrared reflectography to reveal underdrawings that perfectly match what has been found in other panels from Hieronymus Bosch's core oeuvre. A fairly thick brush and a watery medium were used in a general and exploratory way to set down how the image would appear on the panel. A similarly exploratory approach is found beneath the paint layer in virtually all Hieronymus Bosch's other works. What's more, there as here, he continued to adjust the image while actually painting. Bosch also regularly worked with different colours in the still wet paint, as we find in the head and the wing of the flying fish that has crawled onto the land in this St. Anthony scene. It was this way of working that enabled him to achieve his characteristic painterly effect.

Familiar little monsters

Every detail of the image of St. Anthony – kneeling and scooping up water in a setting that teems with bizarre creatures – fits seamlessly into Bosch's wider oeuvre. The figure of the saint closely matches that of Anthony in the left wing of the *Hermit Saints Triptych* and is also related to the water-scooping female figure in the central panel of the *Last Judgement* in Bruges. The little monsters in the panel are typically 'Bosschian': the little creature hiding beneath a funnel, the monster with the fox's head, the little figure with the spoonbill's beak, the pig's trotter lying on the floating tabletop, the toad clambering out of the water and the floating sausage are found in other works by Bosch too.

Fragment

The panel is a fragment of an originally much larger one, as it has been cut down on all sides. It is approximately four millimetres thick and the back shows the bare oak from which it was made. It is the central part, featuring the holy hermit as its principal figure, of a painting that was probably the wing of a dismantled triptych. The saint will have been painted in a much more expansive hostile environment, like the one we find in the left wing of the *Hermit Saints Triptych*. The principal reason for doubting that this painting was the work of Bosch himself was the lack up to now of any immediate artistic context. However, thanks to the immense volume of new documentation produced by the BCRP – for both this painting and the rest of the master's oeuvre – this fragment can now be ascribed to Bosch with confidence.

Saints

Veneration of the saints was particularly intense in the period in which Hieronymus Bosch lived, and he continued to work within the existing visual tradition when representing them. His clients and contemporaries had, after all, to recognise the depicted saints if they were to be able to pray to them. It is clear at the same time, however, that Bosch gave his own personal and creative interpretation to this tradition. He repeatedly painted St. Jerome, his own namesake, as well as St. Anthony, for whom his father Anthonius was named as well as the house where they lived and worked, and who is the subject of the newly discovered painting. Both saints were popular in the late Middle Ages. Each spent part of his life in solitude, living in the wilderness as a hermit.

Details of the painting:

Hieronymus Bosch

The Temptation of St. Anthony (fragment)

Catalogue number 45.

c. 1500–10. Oil on panel (oak)

38.6 x 25.1 cm (15 3/16 x 9 7/8 inches).

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri.

Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 35-22.

--- NOTE FOR EDITORS ---

You can download high-resolution images of this painting and other works via www.HNBM.nl > [press](#)

**For questions about this press release and/or the exhibition, please contact:
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