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LUCAS MOSER'S ST. MAGDALENE ALTARPIECE: SOLVING THE RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX

Amy Morris

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LUCAS MOSER'S *ST. MAGDALENE ALTARPIECE*:
SOLVING THE RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX

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This is dedicated to my husband, Kevin Salzman, and our daughter Paulina, whose sacrifices and support made this possible.

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ABSTRACT

Amy M. Morris

Lucas Moser's *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*: Solving the Riddle of the Sphinx

Once described as a “sphinx that beckons with a thousand riddles” this dissertation presents a new understanding of some of the controversial topics surrounding Lucas Moser's *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* (1432), one of the most important paintings from the late Gothic period in Germany. While interest in this altarpiece has declined in recent decades because of a lack of historical documentation, this study proposes new interpretations for many of its puzzling features by critically examining earlier research in light of more recent findings. This study contributes to the literature on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and its artist by expanding the formal focus of earlier research to a largely contextual consideration of the work, emphasizing the importance of local and regional influences as well as broader historical factors in shaping its function, iconography and later renovation. One feature of the altarpiece considered in this study is the function of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* indulgence inscription. Challenging its relationship to an established Mary Magdalene cult, this identifies the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as an “indulged media” whose purpose was to advertise indulgence privileges held by the church at Tiefenbronn. Concerning the subject matter of the altarpiece, this dismisses the suggestion that French influence motivated the selection of Mary Magdalene, emphasizing instead her popularity in Germany and the distinctively German character of the work's iconography. Also considered in this study are the contextual factors surrounding the sixteenth-century renovation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Motivated by a larger program of redecoration in the church at Tiefenbronn this demonstrates that

the heirs of the altarpiece renovated it to stay abreast of new stylistic trends. Reflecting the growing taste for large scale altarpieces, the shrine was enlarged and its former contents replaced with a larger sculpture. Turning to the artist, rather than emphasizing foreign influences on Moser's style this study offers new evidence for his stylistic ties to the art of his native southwest Germany. Also relevant for understanding the artist, another topic addressed is Moser's inscription. Rather than viewing his so-called lament as an acknowledgment of his artistic weakness, how it reflects his artistic ability and intellectual aspirations is considered.

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1. Introduction

Lucas Moser's, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, is widely acknowledged in the art historical literature on Northern Renaissance art as one of the most important fifteenth-century German paintings. Created in 1432, it is still housed today, in its original position in the church of St. Maria Magdalena at Tiefenbronn, in the Swabian Black Forest (Fig. 1a, 1b). Many features of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* have aroused scholarly interest, including its iconography, unusual shape and construction, and elaborate inscription (Fig. 2a). While these features represent peripheral areas of interest, it was Lucas Moser's style and questions of his artistic origins that became the focus of the art historical literature on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Also contributing to the notoriety of this important work was the claim made in Gerhard Piccard's 1969 monograph that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was not made for its present location in Tiefenbronn, but rather in France.¹ The scientific examination of this painting, undertaken in response to Piccard's hypothesis, was also significant, since the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* became the first early German painting to be studied technically. Further testifying to its importance, the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was the subject of a 1971 Symposium held in honor of the artist and the work. There, some of the most important scholars of early German painting, along with scholars from related disciplines, were assembled to present papers on various topics related to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and Lucas Moser. The most significant outcome of the technical study and Symposium was the confirmation of the German origins of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. While in the preceding century, scholarly interest in the *St. Magdalene*

¹ Gerhard Piccard, Der Magdalenenaltar des >Lukas Moser< in Tiefenbronn. Ein Beitrag zur europäischen Kunstgeschichte mit einer Untersuchung die Tiefenbronner Patrozinien und ihre (Hirsauer) Herkunft (Wiesbaden, 1969).

Altarpiece was consummate to its importance, study of it has steadily declined over the past several decades. Before pursuing the grounds for this long overdue consideration of this exceptional painting and its artist, the following sections provide a brief overview of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* imagery, form, style and context.

The *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*: Imagery, Form, and Style

Because of the rarity of Magdalene cycles from this period and the extensiveness of its iconographic program, the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* has been described as “the most famous and important Magdalene altar in Germany.”² Depicted on the exterior of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* are four scenes from the life of St. Mary Magdalene derived from the New Testament and the *Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voragine. Beginning at the top of the altarpiece, the scene in the lunette depicts Mary Magdalene as the anonymous sinner of Luke’s Gospel, washing the feet of Christ with her tears and drying them with her hair. Below, the main body of the altarpiece is divided into three scenes related to the Magdalene’s legendary life, in which she converted the pagan Gauls in France to Christianity. The scenes are read from left to right and begin with the *Sea Journey*, where the Magdalene and her companions are shown in a rudderless boat. In the second scene, the group, having landed safely in Marseilles, sleeps on a porch, while the Magdalene appears to the rulers above in an attempt to convert them. In the last image of the main body, the Magdalene receives her Last Communion from the Bishop of Aix. Lastly, depicted on the predella are bust-length figures of a centrally-placed Christ as the Man of Sorrows, flanked by the Wise and Foolish Virgins.

² Marga Anstett-Janßen, “Maria Magdalena in der abendländischen Kunst. Ikonographie der Heiligen von den Anfängen bis ins 16. Jahrhundert” (Ph. D. diss., Freiburg i. Br., 1962), 255.

The painted scenes described thus far compose what can be described as the exterior or the closed position of the altarpiece. Before describing the remainder of the cycle it is necessary at this point to elaborate on the particular category of altarpiece to which the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* belongs. In the study of the altarpiece as a specific genre of ecclesiastical objects, scholars have identified different types that developed, frequently according to regional tastes. The category of altarpiece in which the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* is classified is the winged altarpiece or *Flügelaltar*. The term shrine altar is also appropriate as a label for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, since it possesses a shrine niche. While winged altarpieces frequently consisted of both painted and sculpted imagery, its most defining feature, implied in its name, is the presence of moveable wings, the opening and closing of which creates multiple views of the same work.³

The second position or the open position of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* is created when the two panels of the central scene of the *Arrival* are opened (Fig. 2b). In this position, while the lunette scene of the *Anointing* and predella remain visible, the imagery composing the central part of the altarpiece changes. Revealed upon the opening of the wings is the altarpiece's shrine box which possesses a wooden sculpture of *Mary Magdalene Held Aloft by Angels*, also commonly known as the *Elevation*. In addition to the sculptural grouping of the center shrine, also visible upon the opening of the wings are the reverse side of the panels of the *Arrival*. Depicted on these panels, that flank the shrine niche, are the standing figures of Mary Magdalene's legendary siblings, Martha on the left and Lazarus on the right. Similar to the scenes of the closed position of the

³ Walter Paatz, Süddeutsche Schnitzaltäre der Spätgotik: Die Meisterwerke während ihrer Entfaltung zur Hochblüte (1465-1500) (Heidelberg, 1963), 11.

altarpiece, the figures of Martha and Lazarus were painted by Lucas Moser. In the open position of the altarpiece, the viewer reads from top to bottom: the *Anointing*, the sculpted *Elevation* flanked by *Martha* and *Lazarus*, and finally, the predella scene of Christ between the Wise and Foolish Virgins.

Relevant to an overview of the altarpiece, particularly in discussing its open position are the features of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* that are not original. Although the actual shrine niche is an original component, it was enlarged at the same time that the present sculptural grouping of the *Elevation* was added in the 1520s, nearly a century after its creation. Since the statue or sculptural grouping dating to the creation of the altarpiece is now lost its subject remains an issue of debate. While the shrine renovation represents the most significant change to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* other later modifications include the tracery strips on the tops and bottoms of the wings and across the horizontal borders, visible in the closed position.

Although the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* possesses the defining features of a winged altarpiece, a preferred type in German lands, there are some significant deviations from the mature form of the winged altarpiece, which did not develop in the region of southern Germany until the 1450s.⁴ One of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*'s most distinguishing features is its unusual arch shape. In contrast, typical winged altarpieces were generally

⁴ The mature form is perhaps best displayed in Hans Multscher's *Sterzinger Altarpiece*, which was created in 1458. Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven and London, 1980), 64. According to Paatz the mature style ultimately derived from the southern Netherlands, where they were produced in large numbers. Altarpieces were also exported from the southern Netherlands to Germany and primarily to Schwäbisch Hall in Swabia. *Süddeutsche Schnitzaltäre*, 14-17. Based on Tripp's reconstruction of Multscher's *Landesberger Altarpiece* from 1437, it is likely that the mature form was established earlier in this work, although this is still speculative. Herbert Schindler, *Meisterwerke der Spätgotik: Berühmte Schnitzaltäre* (Regensburg, 1989), 8.

square or rectangular. The shape, which resembles the form of a stained glass window as well as the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* neighboring frescoes at Tiefenbronn, may account for the unusual construction of its wings, another point of difference in comparison to the mature form of the winged altarpiece. In contrast to the mature form, in which the wings are each half of the size of the shrine niche and therefore double the size of the altarpiece in the open position, the wings of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, when open, do not increase the size of the altarpiece. In the open position, the altarpiece's wings do not project out into space, but rather partially obscure the side stationary wings making it visually awkward.⁵ The unusual quality of the open view is a result of the placement of the wings, which are attached not to the shrine niche but rather to the neighboring panels.

In describing the construction and methods used to create the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, one encounters, similar to classifying it as a particular category of an altarpiece, both typical and unusual features. In the late Gothic period the creation of an altarpiece was a complex process that involved numerous stages in its completion. Similar to most painted altarpieces of the time, the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was painted on a wood support covered with a layer of fabric followed by a preparatory ground. To create the oak support, several planks of wood were joined together through the use of dowels. Instead of linen, Moser covered the entire surface of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* with parchment before applying the ground. The ground, which was typical of northern European panels in the use of chalk, was then built up through the application of several layers before being smoothed to an enamel-like surface. Moving to the painted surface, Moser's reflects the artistic practices of the fifteenth century. Water gilding, the

⁵ Mathias Köhler, *St. Maria Magdalena Tiefenbronn* (Lindenberg, 1998), 8.

technique used to create the gold-leaf background in which sheets of gold leaf were applied to a layer of red bole and then burnished, was commonly employed in larger areas. Typical of contemporary northern painting, while Moser relied on a variety of media for the suspension of his pigments, oil was used extensively.

While the creation of a painted panel in the fifteenth century demanded a high level of skill and training, regardless of its size or importance, scholars have called attention to the exceptionally lavish character of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Hans Rott, in fact, described the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as one of the costliest ecclesiastical furnishings in Germany.⁶ Although his observation was based on the erroneous assumption that even the painted surface rested on a layer of gold leaf, a large amount of gold was required for the background of a work measuring over eight feet in height and five feet in width.⁷ Further confirming the great cost of the commission are the numerous other applications of metal leaf found on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Moser used silver leaf as a base layer in many areas of the painting. Using the technique of mordant gilding, Moser also embellished many details of the painting with gold leaf. Beyond the use of metal leaf, among the other features contributing to the elaborate character of the altarpiece is not only the choice of oak as the support, but also lining it with parchment. At the time the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was created oak was one of the more expensive wood species and panels were lined with linen or canvas rather than parchment.

⁶ Hans Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn bei Pforzheim und ihre Kunstwerke," Badische Heimat 12 (1924):122.

⁷ Measurements for the individual scenes are located in the captions under the illustrations in Straub, R., Richter, E.-L., Härlin, H. & Brandt, W., "Der Magdalenenaltar des Lucas Moser. Eine technische Studie," in: Althöfer, H., Straub, R. & Willemsen, E., Beiträge zur Untersuchung und Konservierung mittelalterlicher Kunstwerke (Stuttgart, 1974), 13-16.

Lending additional significance to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* is its inscription which is contained in the vertical and horizontal stretchers that frame the main scenes of the altarpiece in its closed position. This inscription, written in a variety of scripts, includes the artist's signature, the date of the creation of the altarpiece, its dedication, an indulgence phrase and the infamous so-called artist's lament.⁸ While inscriptions are common features of late Gothic paintings, Moser's is exceptional in many ways. Not only is the presence of an artist's signature from this time period a rarity but the prominence, length, and ornamental lettering of the inscription are remarkable. Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, however, is the tenor of the segment referred to as the artist's lament. The expression "cry art, cry, grieve bitterly, no one will care for thee," is unique among altarpieces, a factor that has greatly hindered a precise interpretation.⁹

Although many features of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* engaged scholarly dialogue, not only was it Lucas Moser's style that placed the work in the limelight, but it also

⁸ The dedication inscription, HIC.IN.ALTARI HONORANDI.SV/NT.I B(EA)TA. MARIA. MAGDALENA/2° B(EA)TVS.ANTONIUS.3° B(EA)TUS/ VENERABILIS. EKHardus, is located in the upper horizontal border of the main inscription. Contained in the lower horizontal border is the so-called indulgence phrase, [...] DICAT [...] / MARIA.MAGDALENA(ET).IN.DIE./BE(A)TI.ANTHONY.(ET).EKHardI. TOTIDEM.INDVLGENCIA [...]. Franz Heinzmann and Mathias Köhler, Der Magdalenenaltar des Lucas Moser in der gotischen Basilika Tiefenbronn (Regensburg, 1994), 16. The artist's lament, schri.kvnst.schri.vnd.klag.dich.ser.din.begert.iecz.niemen.mer.so.o.we.1432., is in the left vertical border. In the right vertical border is the artist's inscription, LVCAS.MOSER.MALER.VON.WIL.MAISTER.DEZ.WERX.BIT.GOT. VIR.IN. Reiner Hausherr, "Der Magdalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn." Bericht über die wissenschaftliche Tagung am 9. und 10. März im Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte in München," Kunstchronik 24 (1971): 189.

⁹ Wolfgang Stechow, Northern Renaissance Art 1400-1600: Sources and Documents (Evanston, IL, 1966), 76.

became the focus of much of the research. In the first few decades of the fifteenth century in northern Europe the style of pictorial representation shifted radically from the elegant, linear qualities of the International Gothic Style toward a greater degree of naturalism. Spreading from the Netherlands, within the various countries or regions of northern Europe, various artistic personalities became the harbingers of this more naturalistic style referred to as the *ars nova*. In southern Germany that figure was Moser. Because the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* announced the Early Renaissance in its naturalistic treatment of figures and space scholars positioned it as stylistically one of the most important paintings created in the first half of the fifteenth century in Germany. According to Charles Sterling, Moser was, “in 1432, no doubt, the most advanced and particularly conscious painter in German countries.”¹⁰ Along with Moser’s contemporaries, Stefan Lochner, Konrad Witz, and Hans Multscher, he was identified in art historical literature as belonging to a new generation of German artists. Stylistically, this new generation, who demonstrated knowledge of Flemish painters, departed from the International Gothic style toward a greater degree of realism. Because of the continuous landscape that unites the three scenes of the central part of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, Moser’s stylistic achievements were compared to those of Jan van Eyck in his icon of Flemish painting, the *Ghent Altarpiece*.¹¹

The preceding paragraphs provided an overview of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, introducing the reader to its imagery, form and construction, and style. In addition to

¹⁰ Charles Sterling, “Observations on Moser’s Tiefenbronn Altarpiece,” *Pantheon* 30 (Jan.-Feb. 1972): 31.

¹¹ Wilhelm Pinder, *Die Kunst der Ersten Bürgerzeit bis zur Mitte des 15. Jh.*, vol. 2, *Vom Wesen und Werden deutscher Formen* (Leipzig, 1937), 260-1.

these features, also relevant to a broad understanding of the work is its context. In recent studies of late Gothic art, scholarship has drawn attention to how contextual factors often shaped an object's iconography, function, and form. One important component of the contextual consideration of an altarpiece is its setting. Since the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* location in the church at Tiefenbronn determined some of its distinguishing features, relevant details surrounding the village of Tiefenbronn and its church follow.

Tiefenbronn: Church and Village

While it is impossible to recreate the settings for most late Gothic works of art, now displaced in museums or in galleries, fortunately for Moser's *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* this is not the case. The *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* is presently located in the parish church, St. Maria Magdalena of Tiefenbronn for which it was created. Although a complete picture of the fifteenth-century setting is prevented by the ravages of time, the present church closely resembles its original form and, through the retention of many of its late Gothic decorations, has preserved much of its former splendor. Because of the intimate connection between a work of art and its setting, the story of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* begins in Tiefenbronn.

Not only is the present-day viewer taken in by the beauty and richness of this church, but already in the seventeenth century, despite its run-down condition at that time, the church was greatly admired for its spaciousness and decorations. In 1683 a Visitations Commission, sent from the bishopric of Speyer, visited and reported on the church at Tiefenbronn. In the report, the church at Tiefenbronn was described as "one of the most beautiful and largest churches of the region."¹² Among the art treasures singled out in the

¹² Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 101.

report were the high altar, which was described as a “masterpiece,” the two tabernacles, and the silver tower monstrance. According to the report, the monstrance had the notoriety of being the largest in the bishopric of Speyer. The commission also noted that there were seven altars in total and that whereas once seven priests attended the altars, in the year of the commission, once could barely make a living. In addition to the artistic treasures mentioned, the report highlighted the tombs of the noble lords and their coats of arms, which decorated the nave.¹³

While to the modern observer it may seem curious that such a splendid church came to exist in a seemingly remote location, many factors contributed to the significance of the village, and, by extension, its church. Tiefenbronn, which is 12 km. to the southeast of Pforzheim above the Würm Valley,¹⁴ is situated on the border of the northern Black Forest and the Muschelkalk hills,¹⁵ defining the eastern parameter of an area known as the Hagenschieß-Hochfläche.¹⁶ Presently, Tiefenbronn is classified as a municipality in a district (*Kreis*) in north-west Baden Württemberg called the Enzkreis (Fig. 3).¹⁷ Despite the steep climb up the winding hills of the Black Forest to reach this

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ The Würm is a small river, which unites with the Nagold in Pforzheim.

¹⁵ Mathias Köhler, St. Maria Magdalena, 1.

¹⁶ Rott, “Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn,” 101. The Hagenschieß comprises the approximately 4000 ha. large forest area between Enz and Würm southeast of Pforzheim. The eastern border of it is marked by Tiefenbronn, Friolzheim, Wimsheim, Wurmberg, Schellbronn, and Niefern. Emil Lacroix, Peter Hirschfeld and Wilhelm Paesler, Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Pforzheim (Kreis Karlsruhe) (Karlsruhe, 1939), 353.

¹⁷ Pforzheim is considered the capital of this district although it does not officially belong to any district.

quaint village its location is not as removed as it might appear. Not only was it continually populated from the antique period,¹⁸ but, in the Middle Ages, the village of Tiefenbronn had a central position along the main imperial roads for both north/south and east/west travel and trade.¹⁹

Along with its important location relative to medieval trade routes, contributing to the growth and development of the village was its ownership by the local nobility and its affiliation with the nearby Hirsau cloister. From the surviving documents, the village of Tiefenbronn, from its inception, was intermittently the property of the nearby monastic foundation of Hirsau and the local nobility. The village was first referred to in documents as Diefenbrunnen in the first half of the twelfth century²⁰ when it was listed as the property of the Hirsau cloister in 1105.²¹ At that time, the nearby Hirsau cloister came into possession of it through a donation by Bebo Tiefenbronn. Following this reference

¹⁸ Hubert Lindner, Das Buch von Tiefenbronn mit seinen Ortsteilen Lehningen, Mühlhausen und Tiefenbronn (Pforzheim, 1990), 17-18.

¹⁹ Throughout the medieval period, the imperial road, *Tübingen – Böblingen – Renningen – Heimsheim – Tiefenbronn – Pforzheim*, was a main thoroughfare. It was the road that the emperor, Otto I, used on his Journey to Italy. It was also the route taken by Swiss merchants to Frankfurt. Running east/west, the imperial road *Cannstatt – Leonberg – Heimsheim – Tiefenbronn – Pforzheim – Ettlingen*, which was built on the old Roman route, connected Austria and Bavaria to the Rhine. In addition to these, the route *Tübingen – Böblingen – Weil der Stadt – Tifenbronn – Pforzheim – Rhine* was especially favored by merchants from Ulm, Augsburg and Nuremberg. Ibid., 19-20.

²⁰ For further information on the dates and spellings used for the village see, Emil Lacroix, Peter Hirschfeld and Wilhelm Paesler, Des Amtsbezirks Pforzheimland (Kreis Karlsruhe), vol. 9, bk. 7, Die Kunstdenkmäler Badens, (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1938), 209. According to a recent study of the history of the name of the village, *tief* did not refer to a “deep” well, but rather a “communal” (*gemeinde*) well. Lindner, Das Buch von Tiefenbronn, 19.

²¹ Franz Heinzmann and Mathias Köhler, Der Magdalenenaltar des Lucas Moser in der gotischen Basilika Tiefenbronn (Regensburg, 1994), 6.

the village of Tiefenbronn was not mentioned in surviving documents from the remainder of the twelfth century through the thirteenth century.²² In 1324 the lords of Stein auf Steinegg acquired the property, which later was turned over to the lords of Gemmingen as a result of economic difficulty.²³ At the time the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was painted in 1432, Tiefenbronn was owned by Dietrich von Gemmingen.

While later a possession of a noble family, the powerful Benedictine monastery of Hirsau continued to exert control over Tiefenbronn. Even after Hirsau's former land ties to Tiefenbronn were severed, their connections with the church continued into the late Gothic period. Although the church at Tiefenbronn presently has the status of a parish church, this was not obtained until the fifteenth century. In earlier documents, the present church was referred as the chapel at Tiefenbronn (*Capellen zu Tiefenbrunn*).²⁴ This label indicates its dependence on a larger institution, namely Hirsau. Originally the church in Tiefenbronn was established as a chapel to the mother church of St. Agapitus in nearby Friolzheim. St. Agapitus was the old parish church of the Hirsau cloister. When the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was created in 1432, the church at Tiefenbronn remained a chapel to Hirsau's parish church, St. Agapitus.

It wasn't until a couple of decades after the completion of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* that Tiefenbronn gained the status of a parish church. In 1453 a step toward

²² Lacroix, Des Amtsbezirks Pforzheimland, 209.

²³ Heinzmann and Köhler, Der Magdalenenaltar, 6. For information on the few surviving documents that discuss the ownership of the village, see Gerhard Piccard, Der Magdalenenaltar des >Lukas Moser< in Tiefenbronn. Ein Beitrag zur Europäischen Kunstgeschichte mit einer Untersuchung die Tiefenbronner Patrozinien und ihre (Hirsauer) Herkunft von Wolfgang Irtenkauf (Wiesbaden, 1969), 42-48.

²⁴ In 1394 a donation was made from Truchfeß von Höfingen and his wife to the Tiefenbronn chapel (*Capellen zu Tiefenbrunn*). Ibid., 103.

the release of Tiefenbronn from its mother church, St. Agapitus in Friolzheim, was taken, when a benefice was established presumably to secure the financial basis for future priests.²⁵ On August 14, 1455, the bishop of the diocese of Speyer, Reinard of Speyer, officially raised its status. Even though at that point, the Tiefenbronn church became an independent parish church, the nearby Hirsau cloister retained its right to patronage (*Jus patronatus*).²⁶ In addition, the abbots of Hirsau were identified as the *Kastvogt* and *Pfleger* of the Tiefenbronn church and contributed to the building and decoration of it.²⁷

The abbots at Hirsau were not the only figures, who contributed to the establishment and the decoration of the church at Tiefenbronn. The erection of the church was financed by noble families in the surrounding areas the donations toward which have been recorded in documents from 1347, 1395, 1398 and 1400.²⁸

Relevant to the consideration of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and its imagery, not only did the status of Tiefenbronn from a subsidiary of St. Agapitus to a self-sufficient parish change, but the church dedication also changed. As the first donation to the church at Tiefenbronn indicated, the church was originally dedicated to the Virgin.²⁹ Although it is not entirely clear how and when Mary Magdalene became the patron of the church,

²⁵ Köhler, St. Maria Magdalena, 2.

²⁶ Lacroix, Des Amtsbezirks Pforzheimland, 209.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 124.

²⁸ Köhler, St. Maria Magdalena, 6. Lindner specified that the church was erected by the monastery at Hirsau with the support of the Knights of Stein zu Rechtenstein auf Steinegg as the village lords and the Margrave Bernhard I. from Baden. Das Buch von Tiefenbronn, 29.

²⁹ The church at Tiefenbronn was first mentioned in a donation document from 1347 in which Dietrich von Eisingen donated to Our Lady (*Unser Vrouwen*) and her church at Tiefenbronn perpetual interest (*ewigen Zins*). Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 103.

documents attest to her elevation first to joint patron and finally to the official patron of the church. While the first mention of Mary Magdalene as a joint patron occurred in a donation document from Ursula von Gemmingen on March 30, 1621,³⁰ it was not until 1726, however, that Mary Magdalene appeared in surviving documents as the official patron of the church.³¹

While many of the specific connections between the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and its context will be highlighted in later chapters, the overview provided here outlined some significant points. In the contextual consideration of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, it is important to recognize not only Tiefenbronn's location on important trade and travel routes, but also its geographic proximity and official ties to the powerful Benedictine monastery at Hirsau. Relative to the church at Tiefenbronn, Hirsau had a prominent role first as its mother church and continued to have patronage rights even after Tiefenbronn received the status of a parish church. Contributing to the importance of the village and church, along with Hirsau, Tiefenbronn was established and governed by members of the local nobility.

Grounds For and Aim of this Study

Despite the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* status as an icon of early German painting and prominence in the early art historical literature much about it remains a mystery. In fact,

³⁰ Ursula von Gemmingen geb. v. Neuneck stiftete 300 Gulden Hauptgut "zu einem ewigen unabhängigen Jahrtag... Vnser Lieben Frawen gottshauß und pfarrkhürchen zuo Dieffenbron, und sancta Maria Magdalena als patronin daselbsten," Piccard, Der Magdalenenaltar, 69-70.

³¹ "Ecclesiae Parochialis Tieffenbronnianae Patrona habetur: S. Maria Magdalena; in coemeterio sacelli Patronus est S. Johannes Baptista; in cuius Festivitate Patrocinii simul, et Dedicationis Festum celebratur Dedication autem Ecclesiae Parochialis habetur die domiminica Festiviatem Mariae Magdalenaе, immediate sequente," Ibid.

in the study of Northern Renaissance art, few works have been as well-known for their puzzling nature as the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Consequently, the current characterization of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*'s artist, Lucas Moser, as "a perplexing problem for art historians,"³² while less poetic, is not far removed from Hans Rott's 1925 description of the altarpiece as "a sphinx that beckons with a thousand riddles."³³

Many of the questions surrounding the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* stem from the absence of historical documentation. Since no documents survive regarding the commission, the particular occasion for its donation as well as the specifics of its intended function remain unknown. While coats-of-arms are present on the predella of the altarpiece, their later addition makes it uncertain if they belonged to the original patrons or a later owner.³⁴ Without a definite identification of the original donors of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* it has been difficult to accurately assess its function and subject matter relative to its patron, a logical starting point for a contextual examination of the work.

Not only are there no clear answers to the identity of the original donors, but also due to a lack of documentation on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, other features of it have not been satisfactorily explained. The inscription of the altarpiece, for example, contains the

³² James Snyder, Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, the Graphic Arts from 1350-1575, 2nd edition, Revised by Larry Silver and Henry Luttikhuizen (Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2005), 73.

³³ "Trotzdem bleibt Werk und Schöpfer bis jetzt immer noch eine Sphinx, die mit tausend Rätseln winkt." Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 122.

³⁴ Rolf Straub, "Einige technologische Untersuchungen am Tiefenbronner Magdalenenaltar des Lukas Moser," Jahrbuch der staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg 7 (1970): 42.

promise of indulgence following the names of Mary Magdalene, St. Anthony, and St. Erhard. In the absence of a Magdalene cult, the assumption that the indulgence inscription was a product of such a cult cannot be sustained, leaving its purpose unclear. Another unique feature of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* pertains to its renovation. In the early sixteenth century, less than one hundred years after it was made, the shrine of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was enlarged and fitted with a new large-scale sculpture of the Magdalene's *Elevation*. The earlier assumption that it was related to the elevation of Mary Magdalene as the joint patron of the church is unfounded, since in official documents, the Virgin Mary appeared exclusively as the patron of the Tiefenbronn church into the seventeenth century.³⁵ Since based on historical documentation Mary Magdalene only became a joint patron much later, the reason for the renovation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* belongs to the list of its "unsolved mysteries."

Questions surrounding Lucas Moser's identity, such as his background, training and attributed works, are as numerous as those concerning specific features of the altarpiece. Even though the artist included his name in the inscription, scholars have been unable to connect his name with any surviving documents. In addition, the location of his training and the various details of his career remain unknown. It is even impossible to pinpoint the exact city in which his workshop was located. The reference to Weil der Stadt, following his name (*Lucas Moser, Maler von Wil*), was undoubtedly a reference to his birthplace. Another barrier to learning more about the artist's style and development is the inability to securely attribute any surviving works to him. Along with the details of Moser's identity, further contributing to the artist's mystique is the so-called artist's lament: the

³⁵ Piccard, *Der Magdalenenaltar*, 69-70.

phrase on the altarpiece in which he seemed to suggest that nobody wanted his work.

Although scholars have attributed this so-called expression of disappointment to a variety of factors, there is little supporting evidence for any of the explanations that have been put forth.

While the many unresolved questions surrounding the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and its artist make the work an intriguing subject for study, the lack of historical documentation has contributed to a marked decrease in scholarship on both the work and the artist. In spite of Hans Rott's (1925) comment that, "since its art historical discovery in the previous century," the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* "has been described in more than a thousand ways in the literature concerned with the development of the new German art," scholarly interest has not been sustained.³⁶ There have been less than a handful of publications on this topic in the last several decades, compared to extensive publications in the early part of the twentieth century.

This study seeks to redress the dearth of research on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in the past few decades; an endeavor largely made possible by the recent contributions of German scholars on topics relevant to the altarpiece and its artist. Not only have recent publications on German paintings in museum collections greatly expanded our knowledge of the style and techniques of early German paintings, but contextual studies have also contributed new information on altarpiece functions, patronage, pilgrimage and artistic self-awareness. In achieving the aim of this study, this consideration of the *St.*

³⁶ "... kunstgeschichtlichen seit seiner eigentlichen Entdeckung im ersten Drittel des vorigen Jahrhunderts tausendfältig beschrieben, in allen Handbüchern, die sich mit der Entwicklungsgeschichte der neueren deutschen Kunst beschäftigen." Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 122.

Magdalene Altarpiece and its artist provides, first, a survey of the literature, incorporating the most recent publications. Second, through the presentation of and critical reflection on the German scholarly literature, it makes this material accessible to an English-speaking audience. Third, following recent trends in scholarship, it uses the contextual art historical method found in the study of late Gothic works; an approach which has largely been ignored in studies of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Focusing on the contextual issues surrounding a work of art, this examines how the work's function, iconography, and appearance were shaped by its location, patronage, and other historical circumstances. Even in Chapter 5, where more traditional aspects of style are considered, this study draws attention to the relationship between an artist's style and regional tastes. Current art historical methodologies are also applied in the consideration of the artist's style. In particular, the comparison of Moser with other Upper Rhenish artists using technical evidence reflects the growing emphasis and applications for this type of information in the study of Northern Renaissance painting. In the application of current methodological approaches to a work of art and its style, this thesis demonstrates that despite the lack of historical documentation, there is much new information on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* function, iconography and artist.

Review of Chapters

This thesis is developed in seven chapters. Chapter Two is a Literature Review, which surveys the scholarly literature on the altarpiece and artist. Not only is this the only literature review on the topic in English, but it is the first ever to synthesize the literature from the first half of the twentieth century and the technical study and Moser symposium

in the 1970s.³⁷ It also reviews the few publications postdating the conference.³⁸ This survey indicates that due to a lack of historical documentation there has been a great deal of unfounded speculation in the art historical literature about the altarpiece and the artist, which has perpetuated many inaccurate claims.

The more problematic claims will serve as the point of departure for Chapters Three-Seven, which are structured as follow. First, we deconstruct historically inaccurate claims demonstrating how those claims lacked supporting evidence. Second, we offer an alternative explanation that corresponds with the evidence provided by the methodology used. In light of the scant historical documentation, these chapters rely on recent literature on topics such as setting, donation practices, altarpiece functions, religious sentiment, regional tastes as well as the historical situation at Tiefenbronn.

Chapter Three explores the function of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, challenging the assumption that the indulgence inscription was related to Mary Magdalene's cult. By comparing it to other indulgenced images and examining Late Gothic indulgence practices, the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* is classified as a type of indulgence media

³⁷ For the proceedings of the conference, see, Haussherr, “‘Der Magdalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn’,” 177-211. The publications on the technical investigation include, in addition to Straub's “Einige technologische Untersuchungen,” R. Straub, E.-L. Richter, H. Härlin & W. Brandt, “Der Magdalenenaltar des Lucas Moser. Eine technische Studie,” in Althöfer, H., Straub, R. & Willemsen, E., Beiträge zur Untersuchung und Konservierung mittelalterlicher Kunstwerke (Stuttgart, 1974); and Ernst Ludwig Richter, “Zur Rekonstruktion des Tiefenbronner Magdalenenalters,” Pantheon 30 (1972). Sterling's article, “Observations,” was also related to the Moser conference.

³⁸ For publications since the Moser conference and technical study see, Johannes Tripps, “Ein antikes Motiv auf Lukas Moser's Tiefenbronner Altar,” Jahrbuch der staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg 27 (1990): 24-30; Heinzmann and Köhler, Der Magdalenenaltar, and Wolfgang Kemp, Lukas Moser's Madalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn. Eine Raugeschichte (Berlin, 1998), 39-84.

(*Ablaß-Medien*) whose purpose was to advertise the indulgence privileges of the church in which it was housed. This chapter also provides evidence of Mary Magdalene's importance at Tiefenbronn by exploring evidence of popular piety, rather than relying on official documentation, which is lacking.

Evidence for Mary Magdalene's cult is also relevant to Chapter Four, which critiques the claim that France inspired the selection of the Magdalene's *vita* as the subject of an altarpiece in Tiefenbronn, Germany. Not only does the widespread popularity of Mary Magdalene in Germany and, more specifically in Tiefenbronn, dismiss this theory, but so does the iconography of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. The reliance on German Magdalene imagery not only firmly anchors the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in the region in which it was created, it also has relevance to the question of the identity of its theological advisor. The iconography and its meaning as well as historical evidence substantiating his role of leadership at Tiefenbronn, indicate that the abbot of the nearby Hirsau cloister, Wolfram Maiser vom Berg, was the theological advisor of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. This identification contributes significantly not only to a greater understanding of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* subject matter and artistic sources, but also its historical context, since it reflects Hirsau's earlier ownership and continued supervision of Tiefenbronn.

Exploring the renovation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, Chapter Five examines not only the question of the original contents of the shrine, but also the context for the renovation. Considering the iconography, historical factors, and regional customs this challenges the widely accepted claim that the shrine of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* always contained an image of the *Elevation*, and argues instead that it was more likely the dedicatory saints: Mary Magdalene, Anthony and Erhard. Based on a consideration of the

context of the Tiefenbronn parish church, inheritance practices, and Late Gothic renovations, this chapter also challenges the earlier claim that the elevation in Mary Magdalene's status at the church motivated the renovation. Instead, it demonstrates that the changes to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* took place amidst the flurry of donations to the church in the early sixteenth century. In this context, in addition to the pious intentions of the heirs of the owners of the altarpiece, the renovation represented their attempt to keep abreast of changing tastes.

The last two chapters specifically address claims regarding Lucas Moser's style and the intention of his inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. While it is indisputable that Moser incorporated many foreign elements in his art, Chapter Six challenges the claim that Flemish art was Moser's most important point of reference. Supported by recent examinations of southwest German paintings, this chapter emphasizes Moser's stylistic and technical ties to the region. Also based on more recent investigation of Moser's German contemporaries, considered in this chapter, are new ways of interpreting the combination of progressive and traditional elements that characterize his art. Rather than viewing the conservative aspects of his art as his inability to fully master the principles of the *ars nova* style, recent research suggests that these aspects were retained because of their familiarity to the patrons and viewing audience.

In Chapter Seven several aspects of Moser's inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* are evaluated. First, this study challenges earlier reasons for identifying Moser's inscription as a demonstration of artistic self-awareness, namely the artist's signature and the personal nature of the lament. Instead, bringing the discussion of his inscription up to date in the current dialogue on artists' inscriptions, attention is drawn to

current explanations for artists' signatures (e.g., the religious mentality of the artist and collaborative artistic practices). Taking into consideration the identification of the lament as a topos, in contrast to its earlier interpretations, demonstrates that it was not motivated by a particular circumstance as was often assumed. Moreover, the suggestion that Moser's phrase acknowledged his limitations as an artist is refuted. While critiquing the aforementioned traditional claims for artistic self-awareness, through a consideration of medieval inscriptions, both literary and artistic, this discussion offers new insight into the nature of his inscription, identifying the different aspects of it that document Moser's pride in his artistic skill and intellectual ability.

Chapter Eight, the conclusion is divided into two sections. Part I summarizes the new findings presented in this study in relation to the function, iconography, and artist of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Part II suggests avenues for future research based on these findings.

2. Literature Review

The literature on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and its artist, Lucas Moser, essentially is divided into two different phases. The first phase is marked by the scholarly interest in the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, which commenced in the late nineteenth century and continued unabated until close to the mid-twentieth century. In this first surge of interest in the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, scholarly debate focused on several topics concerning the artist and the unique character of the work. Considering the emphasis on style among early art historians, scholars eagerly sought to identify the artist, Lucas Moser, who named himself in the inscription. Scholarly interest in the artist also revolved around the location of his training and his artistic formation. Along with interest in the artist, attempts were made to identify the patrons of the altarpiece. Questions were also raised about the function of its indulgence inscription and the unusual arch shape. Regarding the iconography of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, scholars examined the textual sources for the scenes portrayed. While a few publications appeared after 1950, by and large the surge of interest in the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was confined to the first half of the twentieth century.

The second distinct period of interest in the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was ushered in through a sensational monograph by Gerhard Piccard in 1969, *Der Magdalenenaltar des Lukas Moser in Tiefenbronn: Ein Beitrag zur europäischen Kunstgeschichte*, which claimed that the work was not made for Tiefenbronn, but rather Vézelay. As evidence for this theory, Piccard argued that some of the details of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* were nineteenth-century forgeries. Piccard's book prompted not only a technical study of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* but also a conference on Moser in 1971. The technical

examination of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was conducted by Rolf Straub, Ernst-Ludwig Richter, Heidi Härlin, and Walfried Brandt at the Institut für Technologie der Malerei at the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Stuttgart, Germany. Dr. Hermann Kühn, from the Doerner-Institut in Munich, analyzed the pigments and the binding media. Using scientific methods the researchers' aims were to examine what Piccard identified as changes to the original substance of the altarpiece.³⁹ Through the technical study researchers found that the general construction and execution of the altarpiece conformed to fifteenth-century artistic practices in Germany. Several of the publications which resulted from the conference and technical study revisited the assumptions of earlier scholars and contributed new information regarding the construction of the altarpiece and Moser's technique. Most importantly, the technical study was able to confirm that the arch shape, inscription, and coats-of-arms on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* were not nineteenth-century forgeries and that the work still remained in its original location in Tiefenbronn, Germany.

The following literature review will explore both aforementioned periods of interest. It will study the assumptions held in the early literature which revolved around the initial interest in the artist and the unique character of his work. This survey will then examine Piccard's subsequent claim that the altarpiece was not created for Tiefenbronn as well as the publications related to the Moser conference and technical study. Lastly, it will review findings from the few publications on the subject that have emerged since the

³⁹ Rolf E. Straub, "Einige technologische Untersuchungen am Tiefenbronner Magdalenenaltar des Lukas Moser," Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden Württemberg 7 (1970): 31. The methods used in the technical study are detailed on p. 32.

Moser conference. Since each of the subsequent chapters of this study question speculations in the earlier literature on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, in the case of certain topics, more detailed summaries of the literature appear within them.

I. Topics in Early Scholarship

The *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was introduced to the art historical world for the first time through a telegraph sent to Franz Kugler in 1840 by the Swabian art historian, Carl Grüneisen. Grüneisen's text contained the most detailed description of the altarpiece and its inscriptions to that point.⁴⁰ Five years after the telegraph, a book by Peter Weber on the treasures of the Tiefenbronn church appeared.⁴¹ Following its introduction into the art historical literature by Grüneisen, scholarly interest in the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* increased rapidly. Because of its progressive style, it soon became a feature of most texts on the development of the new realism in German art.⁴² Moser was associated with the great artistic personalities of the first half of the fifteenth century in Germany including Konrad Witz, Stephan Lochner, and Hans Multscher. Comparison of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* to Jan van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* and Stephan Lochner's *Dombild* in the early literature positioned it as the icon of the new naturalism in southwest Germany.⁴³ In

⁴⁰ Carl Grüneisen, "Übersichtliche Beschreibung älterer Werke der Malerei in Schwaben; Sendschreiben an Hr. Prof. Dr. Franz Kugler in Berlin," Schorns Kunstblatt 96 (December 1, 1840): 401-8.

⁴¹ Peter Weber, Die gotische Kirche zu Tiefenbronn mit ihren Merkwürdigkeiten (Karlsruhe, 1845).

⁴² Hans Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn bei Pforzheim und ihre Kunstwerke," Badische Heimat 12 (1925): 122.

⁴³ Franz von Reber, Über die Stilentwicklung der schwäbischen Tafel-malerei im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert (Munich, 1895), 363.

addition to establishing the significance of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in German art, more specific questions regarding Moser's identity, the sources for his art and the meaning of the lament in the altarpiece's inscription all became subjects of debate. It was the latter subject – the main inscription of the altarpiece – that became the starting point for the queries of early scholars (Fig. 4).

Ulm's 'Maler Lucas'

In the right vertical border of the altarpiece, the artist of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, Lucas Moser, included his signature. Following his name, he made reference to a location “from Weil der Stadt” (*von Wil*) and designated himself as the “master of this work” (*Meister des Werx*). Although in the first two decades of the twentieth century, Lucas Moser remained unidentified, in 1934, he was eventually linked to a painter in Ulm. Hans Rott identified Lucas Moser in his *Quellen und Forschungen zur südwestdeutschen und schwiezerischen Kunstgeschichte im XV. und XVI. Jahrhundert* as the Ulm painter ‘Maler Lucas’ whose name appeared in Ulm records between 1409 and 1434.⁴⁴ Since much of the literature on Moser has been based on this identification of the artist as the Ulm painter the details of this assumption are outlined below.

In the Ulm documents, the Lucas whom Rott identified as the artist of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, was first mentioned in 1409.⁴⁵ Following this initial reference, the

⁴⁴ Hans Rott, Quellen und Forschungen zur südwestdeutschen und schwiezerischen Kunstgeschichte im XV. und XVI. Jahrhundert, vol. 2, Altschwaben und die Reichsstädte (Stuttgart, 1934), 8.

⁴⁵ The earliest reference to a painter, Lucas, in 1402, was presumably not the artist of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, but rather his father. Rott, Quellen und Forschungen, IX n. 1. This document recorded the donation of an eternity candle (*ewig Licht*) for the Wengenkirche by the old masters (*die alten meister*) Eberhart, Martin and Lukas, painters in Ulm. These men were active members of the Wengenkirche and presumably made the

artist's name appeared in relation to some of the commissions on which he worked and specific references were made to commissions for polychroming, stained glass, and wall paintings. In the 1419 reference to the Ulm Master, Lucas, the artist, a resident of Siesloch, painted sculptures of the Apostles and the Mother of God on the west façade of Ulm's Münster.⁴⁶ The painter's mother temporarily collected payments because, Lucas, her son, was absent.⁴⁷ Still involved in the decoration the Münster at Ulm, Master Lucas's workshop received several commissions for stained glass windows. Records indicate that in 1420 and 1424 four windows were commissioned. In 1434 windows were ordered for the *stüblin*, a room similar to a sacristy, in the Münster. The painter's workshop was not only responsible for the cartoons but also for the manufacturing of the glass. In addition to the stained glass, the painter Lucas was also commissioned to produce paintings for the Münster in 1421. The specific type of paintings was not indicated in the documents so it is unclear if they were wall paintings, panel paintings or some other form of paintings. In 1428, Master Lucas painted a sacrament house and then disappeared from the records and accounts until 1433. At that point, he and his son Markus received eighty-eight Gulden for painting the Münster's organ.

Since the documents that mentioned the painter Lucas in Ulm never included a family name, Rott found other corroborating evidence to sustain his identification of Lucas Moser with this Ulm artist. He argued that the absence of a last name occurred in documents related to other artists. For example, Konrad Witz in Constance was also

altar for their patron, St. Luke (VIII). In reference to the 1409 document, Rott did not provide information on its occasion or content.

⁴⁶ The artist who created the figures was identified as Hartmann. *Ibid.*, IX.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

referred to only by his first name in documents. Rott suggested that Moser was so well-known that reference only to his first name was all that was required in the Münster *hütte* and on the city council. It seemed more than coincidence that the painter, Lucas, was often mentioned along with his son Markus and a fellow craftsman and supposed cousin, Hans Moser (1401-1442).⁴⁸

Rott further reinforced his argument that the Ulm painter, Lucas, created the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* by using the dates of his absence in Ulm documents as evidence that he was working on the Tiefenbronn commission at the time. In the Ulm archives, the painter Lucas disappeared from the documents between 1429 and 1433. These dates correspond to the time in which the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was created. Rott supposed that the Ulm painter, Lucas, disappeared from Ulm documents, because he was occupied with the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* commission. In support of this assumption, he placed Moser's workshop in the nearby Weil der Stadt, mentioned in the artist's inscription, and attributed to the artist another commission, a fasting cloth, which documented his activity in this small village.

In the artist's inscription, Moser designated himself as from "Weil der Stadt" (*von Wil*) a small village near Tiefenbronn. Whether Weil der Stadt referred to his birthplace or the location of his workshop has been a source of debate. Franz von Reber, one of the earliest scholars of the altarpiece, doubted that Weil would refer only to Moser's birthplace and not the location of his artistic activity.⁴⁹ For the most part, however, the suggestion that Weil der Stadt was the home of Moser's permanent workshop was

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Reber, Über die Stilentwicklung, 365.

dismissed, because of the perceived insignificance of Weil as an artistic center.⁵⁰

According to Rott's identification of Moser with the Ulm painter, Lucas, Weil became the location of a temporary workshop while Moser was involved with the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.

The supposition that Moser had another commission in Weil supported that Moser had a temporary workshop in that village. It was argued that Moser also executed another commission while in Weil der Stadt working on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* for Tiefenbronn.⁵¹ A 1620 document recorded a fasting cloth in the Parish church of St. Peter in Weil der Stadt. The fasting cloth, which was commissioned by the city, was reportedly 100 yards long and was produced in 1431 by a resident painter. This fasting cloth had an inscription and was signed by the artist.⁵² Helmut May also supported that Moser was the creator of the fasting cloth in Weil. According to him, it was unlikely that there were two painters who were residents there at the same time to execute two large artistic projects.⁵³ While accepting that Moser worked in Ulm, Graf Johannes von Waldburg-Wolfegg placed Moser's workshop in Tiefenbronn. He supposed that Moser was probably born in Weil c. 1380 and then went to Ulm, which was the artistic center of this time period and region. Moser then moved his workshop to Tiefenbronn a year before working on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Stange, Sudwestdeutschland, 94.

⁵¹ Around 1431, this same artist had a workshop for a time in Weil der Stadt in which he painted a fasting cloth and signed it. Rott, Quellen und Forschungen, VIII.

⁵² *Ibid.*, XI. The text of the original document is reproduced on pg. 231.

⁵³ Helmut May, Lucas Moser, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, 1967), 40.

⁵⁴ Graf Johannes von Waldburg-Wolfegg, Lucas Moser (Berlin, 1939), 12.

Returning to Rott's identification of Moser as Ulm's 'Maler Lucas' another piece of evidence, which tied the Ulm painter, Lucas, with the Lucas Moser of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, was the patron's connections with Ulm. Located on the bottom left corner of the predella is the coat-of-arms of the Stein family. Their coat of arms occur a second time above the choir stall in the scene of the *Last Communion*. One of the members of this family, the Knight, Konrad Stein zu Steinegg, who also owned the castle at Heimsheim, was the *Stadthauptmann* of Ulm and lived there for a time. According to Rott, given his familiarity with Moser's work in Ulm, he most likely procured the commission from the Lords of Stein zu Steinegg for Moser.⁵⁵

A final body of evidence that supported that the painter Lucas in Ulm was the same Lucas, who executed the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, was the perceived stylistic similarities between the Tiefenbronn painting and the stained glass of the Besserer windows in Ulm's Münster (Fig. 5).⁵⁶ According to documents, the Ulm painter, Lucas, also executed stained glass for the Münster, specifically windows for a sacristy-like room referred to as a *stüblin*. It has been suggested that this room was the same room now known as the Besserer chapel in Ulm's Münster. The stylistic links between the figures

⁵⁵ He received 700 Gulden per year for his position. *Ibid.*, 71. According to Rott, this must have occurred while he was executing a fasting cloth in Weil der Stadt. Konrad Stein zu Steinegg presumably lived in Ulm in the 1430s. Quellen und Forschungen, VIII.

⁵⁶ In support of Moser's familiarity with stained glass, Rott pointed to the painted depiction of the stained glass in the scene of the *Last Communion*, where the Gemmingen coat-of-arms is depicted and St. Peter with a key and a book. In addition, Schmitz, in his catalogue on glass painting, remarked on the stylistic relationship between the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and the Besserer windows. In the Handbuch der Kunstwissenschaft it was stated that Moser could have been a student of the Master of the Besserer chapel. Rott, Quellen und Forschungen, IX.

and settings of the scenes of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and those on the Besserer windows supported not only that Moser was the painter, Lucas, in Ulm, but that he was the artist who created the windows in the Besserer chapel. Prior to Rott, the stylistic affinities between Moser and the Besserer windows were explored by H. Schmitz in his 1913 catalogue on stained glass.⁵⁷ Based on stylistic considerations, Stange confirmed Rott's attribution of the windows in the Besserer chapel to Moser.⁵⁸ Further supporting the likelihood that Moser was a stained glass artist were features of his art that confirmed his direct knowledge of stained glass. Rott pointed to his accurate rendering of the stained glass windows of the cathedral of Aix in the scene of the *Last Communion* on the altarpiece highlighting the Gemmingen coats of arms and the figure of Peter in the side aisle window.⁵⁹ Boeck concluded that the arrangement of the exterior scenes of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* proved that Moser was a stained glass artist.⁶⁰

Although the documentary references to the Ulm painter 'Maler Lucas' never specified his last name, scholarship largely accepted Rott's identification of him as the artist of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, Lucas Moser. This identification also brought with it the assumption that Moser was a stained glass artist and had executed the windows of the Besserer chapel in Ulm's Münster. While mainly active in Ulm, he moved his workshop to the nearby village of Weil der Stadt during the execution of the *St.*

⁵⁷ Hermann Schmitz, Die Glasgemälde d. kg. Kunstgewerbenmuseums in Berlin (Berlin, 1913), 93.

⁵⁸ Stange, Sudwestdeutschland, 92.

⁵⁹ Rott, Quellen und Forschungen, 9.

⁶⁰ Wilhelm Boeck, Der Tiefenbronner Altar von Lucas Moser (Munich, 1951), 6.

Magdalene Altarpiece. In Ulm, he also painted a fasting cloth for the church of St. Peter's in Weil.

Moser's Artistic Formation

The identification of Moser as the Ulm painter 'Maler Lucas' did not resolve the issue of Moser's artistic training and formation, since none of the documents associated with the Ulm artist revealed this information. Despite the similarities between Moser and the art produced in Ulm, however, the international character of Moser's art prompted the suggestion that he trained abroad. In the search for the particular region in which Moser trained scholars relied primarily on stylistic analysis. This approach met with little agreement as scholars identified art in Italy, France, the Low Countries, the Southeast and Moser's own native Germany as having the most formative influence on his style.

Carl Schnaase proposed that Moser had a Wanderjahre in Cologne, Ulm or Augsburg, where he was allowed the freedom to develop an individual style.⁶¹ Like Schnaase, Franz von Reber also saw a resemblance to the Cologne school. In addition, he related Moser's art to the manuscript illumination of the Ghent/Bruges school while ruling out the important artistic centers of Italy, Prague, and Nuremberg as being influential for Moser's art.⁶² Bayersdorfer, who also acknowledged the similarities of Moser's art with Cologne art, proposed that Moser obtained his technique from northern Italian art and stylistically related his art to the early works of Gentile da Fabriano and Pisanello.⁶³ In contrast to

⁶¹ Carl Schnaase, Die Spätzeit des Mittelalters bis zur blütender Eyck'schen Schule, vol. 4, Geschichte der bildenden Kunst (Dusseldorf, 1874), 470.

⁶² Reber, Über die Stilentwicklung, 368.

⁶³ A. Bayersdorfer, "Der Magdalenenaltar des Lukas Moser von Weil vom Jahre 1431." Kunsthist. Gesellschaft f. Photogr. Publ. 5 (1899). Since I have been unable to obtain the

Bayersdorfer, August Schmarsow rejected any type of direct relationship between Moser and Gentile da Fabriano and only saw a general relationship to Cologne painting.⁶⁴

Instead, he argued that features of Moser's art were derived from the Master of Flémalle.⁶⁵ Despite Schmarsow's dismissal of the significance of Cologne's influence, based on stylistic similarities between Moser's figures and the early Cologne artist, Master Wilhelm, H. Janitschek repeated the earlier hypothesis of Carl Schnaase and proposed that Moser went to Cologne on his Wanderjahre.⁶⁶

Although in early scholarship, Cologne and Flanders were cited most commonly as the regions for Moser's artistic development, Karl Woermann acknowledged Moser's close proximity to the artistic movements in Basel and Constance.⁶⁷ In support of Moser's Flemish training, however, Curt Glaser claimed that Moser probably received his decisive artistic impressions in the circle of the Burgundian court artists and may have even been in Dijon.⁶⁸ Rott saw affinities to manuscript illumination in Moser's art and argued that he may have been trained as an illuminator in the West.⁶⁹ He also proposed

original publication by Bayersdorfer this reflects the summation of his arguments published by August Schmarsow, Die oberrheinische Malerei und ihre Nachbarn um die Mitte des XV. Jahrhunderts (1430-1460) (Leipzig, 1903), 79-80.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 81.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 92.

⁶⁶ H. Janitschek, Geschichte der deutschen Malerei (Berlin, 1910/11), 245.

⁶⁷ Karl Woermann, Die Kunst der älteren Neuzeit von 1400 bis 1550, vol. 4, Geschichte der Kunst aller Zeiten und Völker (Leipzig and Vienna, 1919), 83.

⁶⁸ Curt Glaser, Die altdeutsche Malerei (Munich, 1924), 87.

⁶⁹ Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 131.

that Moser had a stay in Dijon.⁷⁰ Although Bayersdorfer had earlier related Moser's technique of parchment over panel to Italian artists, Rott linked this practice to western artists such as Jean Malouel and Henri Bellechose.⁷¹

In contrast to the much-supported hypothesis that Moser trained in the West, Waldburg-Wolfegg, in his monograph on Moser, traced the origins of Moser's style to southeastern Europe and proposed that he trained with the Master of Laufen.⁷² He also explored Moser's activities in panel painting and placed him in the workshop of the Viennese school where he was a contemporary of Hans von Tübingen.⁷³ In addition, he attributed multiple works including stained glass and panel paintings from the southeast and southwest Germany to Moser.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Ibid., 132.

⁷¹ Ibid., 133.

⁷² Waldburg-Wolfegg, Lucas Moser, 69.

⁷³ Ibid., 94.

⁷⁴ In addition to the stained glass in the Besserer chapel in Ulm's Münster, a series of works, including stained glass, panel paintings and other drawings and playing cards were attributed to Moser or believed to be produced in his region by Waldburg-Wolfegg. Waldburg-Wolfegg divided the works according to his construction of Moser's early, mature and late style. Included among the works attributed to Moser or placed in his artistic circle were: the windows in the Tilly Chapel in Altötting; the *Annunciation*, depicted in stained glass, in the Historisches Museum in Basel, 63-66; the *Domaltärchen* in Vienna, 103-7; wall frescos in Ulm's Münster, 111; 125-6; The *Sorrowing Christ* in the Berlin Gemäldegalerie, 115-6; The Stuttgart *Playing Cards*, 120-123; the now lost *St. Anthony shrine*, which was formerly in Darmstadt, 127-8; a fragment of an *Annunciation* in Worms, 128; a fragment of the same subject in Freiburg, 129-9; a fragment from an altarpiece depicting the life of St. Bridget, 129-30; drawings contained in a sketchbook in Erlangen, 110-120; and the stained glass window depicting *St. George* in Ulm's Münster, 77-8.

Stange also disagreed with Rott's assumption that Moser had trained in the West and argued that he could have learned of western sources in Swabia.⁷⁵ As reinforcement for Moser's training in his native southwestern Germany, Stange compared Moser's art to works created around Lake Constance and in the region of the Upper Rhine.⁷⁶ In particular, according to Stange, Upper Rhenish art served as a direct inspiration for Moser's style.⁷⁷

In opposition to the assumptions that Moser trained in northern Italy or in Dijon, Georg Troescher argued that he trained in southern France.⁷⁸ In order to avoid an open declaration of the location of Moser's heatedly debated artistic development, some scholars merely cited that it was outside of Germany. Boeck referred to him as an artist of international training.⁷⁹ Panofsky concluded that Moser probably trained abroad and owed much to the tradition of Flemish manuscript artists and the Master of Flémalle.⁸⁰

While a few scholars supported Moser's ties to the art of his native southwest Germany, the argument that he trained abroad was widely accepted. Although at one

⁷⁵ Stange, Sudwestdeutschland, 99.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 98

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁷⁸ Georg Troescher, "Die Pilgerfahrt des Robert Campin: Altniederländische und südwestdeutsche Maler in Südostfrankreich," Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen 9 (1967): 100-135.

⁷⁹ Boeck, Der Tifenbronner Altar, 5.

⁸⁰ Erwin Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1966), 303-4.

time, Italy and the Southeast were considered as formative influences on Moser's art, his strong ties to Franco-Flemish artist eventually drew more support from scholars.

The Artist's Lament

The main inscription of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, in addition to providing the artist's name, also possesses a puzzling phrase referred to as the artist's lament. In scholarship, the phrase: "Cry art cry, grieve bitterly, no one cares for thee," was interpreted as Moser's personal expression of disappointment.

For decades, believing that Moser's lament was a personal reaction to a specific situation, scholars have attempted to pinpoint exactly what motivated this cry of disappointment. Most of the readings of the lament understood it as a response to the artist's perception that his particular style was not well-received. One of the first to argue that the lament related to Moser's knowledge that his art was stylistically at the end of an epoch was Hans Rott. According to him, Moser knew that he would be surpassed by progressive youths and that his old fashioned art would no longer be in demand.⁸¹ The regressive nature of Moser's art led to the speculation that he was older. According to Hildegard von Baranayai-Dannenberg, his complaint about the defect in the understanding of his art would be typical for somebody older, who did not grasp the younger.⁸² Graf Johannes von Waldburg-Wolfegg claimed that only an old artist could have gathered enough experience to complain over an art that nobody desired. Based on the conclusion that Moser was an experienced artist, Waldburg-Wolfegg then placed him

⁸¹ Hans Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 135.

⁸² Hildegard von Baranayai-Dannenberg, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," in Grösse Baudenkmäler (Berlin, 1948), 114:8.

in the generation of 1370/80.⁸³ Stange assumed that he was probably in his mid-forties when he executed the Tiefenbronn altarpiece and must therefore have been born c. 1390 and was a contemporary of Robert Campin.⁸⁴

Not all scholars perceived Moser's art as being old-fashioned for the time and therefore contended that Moser's art was not understood because it was too progressive. Erwin Panofsky claimed that Moser's lament, "must be interpreted as the outcry of a misunderstood progressive, and not of an outmoded conservative."⁸⁵ According to Stange, the debate over Moser's age seemed out of place in relation to style. He noted that even if Moser was an older man, his art certainly was not outdated.⁸⁶

Although the majority of scholars attributed Moser's lament to the reception of his style, historical factors, which would have impacted the demand for his art, were also taken into consideration. One aspect, which presumably would have restricted Moser's productivity, was the location of his workshop in the small village of Weil der Stadt. Franz von Reber argued that, through the lament, Moser acknowledged the drawbacks of working in a small village as opposed to the major artistic centers at the time such as Ulm, Strasbourg, Colmar, Basel, Ravensberg or Constance, where there would have been many opportunities for work.⁸⁷

⁸³ Waldbug-Wolfegg, Lucas Moser, 10-11.

⁸⁴ Stange, Sudwestdeutschland, 94.

⁸⁵ Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, 303.

⁸⁶ Stange, Sudwestdeutschland, 94.

⁸⁷ Reber, Über die Stilentwicklung, 365.

The lack of artistic commissions may have been a result of larger economic forces as well, which would have presumably affected many artists. Daniel Burckhardt analyzed the lament in the context of artistic production in the post-Council period.⁸⁸ According to him, the lament expressed “Moser’s longing for the vanished magnificence of the great church assembly. For artists, the Council represented a time when artists could become wealthy and earn a considerable sum of money.”⁸⁹ Supporting Burckhardt, Hans Weigert, argued that the lament definitely related to the personal fate of the artist and that Moser must have been lamenting the absence of commissions, which the Council of Constance had brought to southern Swabian painters between 1414 and 1418.⁹⁰

While scholars continued to view Moser’s lament as a response to a lack of opportunities for commissions, Georg Troescher did not view it in relation to the Council of Constance. For him, Moser’s lament was based on a hypothetical stay in Provence. From documents we know that numerous painters were still active in the city of residence of the popes in the first half of the fifteenth century. If Moser had been active in a workshop in southern France and had a stay in Avignon, the lament could have been expressing the disappointment after his return to the small village from France.⁹¹

While several scholars attributed Moser’s lament to a lack of artistic opportunities, it has also been suggested that Moser was referring more particularly to the poor

⁸⁸ The council referred to is the Council of Constance (1414-1418).

⁸⁹ Daniel Burckhardt, “Studien zur Geschichte der altoherrheinischen Malerei,” Jahrbuch der Königlich-preußischen Kunstsammlungen 27 (1906): 193.

⁹⁰ Hans Weigert, Geschichte der Deutschen Kunst, vol. 1, Bis zum Ausgang der Altdeutschen Malerei (Frankfurt am Main, 1963), 266.

⁹¹ Troescher, “Die Pilgerfahrt des Robert Campin,” 132.

compensation for his work. Reber, in addition to his suggestion that Moser was inhibited by working in a small village, also suggested that the lament could be a reference to Moser being rewarded poorly. He offered as a point of comparison Albrecht Dürer's famous complaint about his work on the *Heller Altarpiece*.⁹²

The lament was also interpreted in the larger context of the changing status of artists and the disintegration of the guild system. According to Waldburg-Wolfegg, the artist's inscription and lament were not only about the personality and work of Moser, but were also a reflection of the spiritual and artistic situation of the time.⁹³ In a collective sense, Moser's lament was a response to the anonymity of the workshop and reflected the circumstances surrounding the making of art before 1430, which was still bound to the workshop tradition.⁹⁴ According to Wilhelm Wörringer, in the absence of concrete evidence for the basis of the lament, "the words remain symbols for the tragedy of the individual, which is released from the security of the collective."⁹⁵

Although Moser's expression of disappointment was attributed to a variety of sources in the early art historical literature there were points of similarity among the many interpretations. For instance, in the interpretation of the lament it was widely accepted that Moser was making a personal statement of disappointment. Moreover, it was a widely held belief that Moser's lament acknowledged that his style was not well-received.

⁹² Reber, Über die Stilentwicklung, 365.

⁹³ Waldburg-Wolfegg, Lucas Moser, 13.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Wilhelm Wörringer, Die Anfänge der Tafelmalerei (Leipzig, 1924), 320.

The Date: 1431 or 1451?

In addition to the artist's name and lament, other aspects of the inscription also fueled scholarly debate. The date provided for the creation of the altarpiece, which was traditionally believed to be 1431, was challenged. Schmarsow questioned the reading of the "3" and felt that it could actually originally have been a "5".⁹⁶ Based on a stylistic comparison with the important Cologne painter, Stefan Lochner, Schmarsow concluded that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was executed in 1451. His hypothesis, however, received opposition by Max Dvorak, who argued that "the stylistic character of the altarpiece agreed completely with the with the inscription's date of 1431."⁹⁷ The completion of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in 1431 remained the accepted date in the early art historical literature.

The Dedication and Indulgence Inscriptions

Along with the artist's inscription and lament, other elements of the main inscription of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* also occupied scholars. Placed in the horizontal borders, both the dedication and the indulgence inscriptions listed the names of three saints: Mary Magdalene, Anthony and Erhardt. Reber interpreted the list of saints in the dedication inscription as references to the relics contained in the altar table.⁹⁸ Other theories on the saints mentioned in the dedication inscription took into account the absence of Anthony and Erhard in the imagery. According to Rott, they were originally depicted as sculpted

⁹⁶ Schmarsow, Die oberrheinische Malerei, 76.

⁹⁷ Dvorak's original quote appeared in Kunstgeschichtliche Anzeigen 1 (1904), 22. Cited in Reiner Hausherr, "Der Magdalenenaltar' in Tiefenbronn. Bericht über die wissenschaftliche Tagung am 9. und 10. März 1971 im Zentralinstitut in München." Kunstchronik 24 (1971): 205.

⁹⁸ Reber, Über die Stilentwicklung, 364.

figures in the shrine.⁹⁹ Marga Anstett-Janßen felt that the dedication was borrowed from the destroyed wall altar behind the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, which probably depicted the Magdalene along with Anthony and Erhard.¹⁰⁰

The indulgence inscription, which included the names of the saints mentioned in the dedication inscription, accompanied by *indulgencia*, led to Rott's speculation that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was a pilgrimage destination and that pilgrimage practices similar to those at Vézelay also took place in Tiefenbronn.¹⁰¹ It was suggested that indulgence was received on the feast days of the saints mentioned in the inscription.¹⁰² Rott argued that the documented group of soldiers visiting the church in 1445 to obtain indulgence related specifically to the promise of indulgence on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.¹⁰³

According to May, even though the Magdalene was not specifically named in the report of the soldier's visit published by Rott, the indulgence inscription made it likely that the visit was related to her cult.¹⁰⁴ In general, speculations regarding the meanings of the dedication and indulgence inscriptions tied the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* to its setting at Tiefenbronn and emphasized the importance of Mary Magdalene. Of special significance,

⁹⁹ Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 126.

¹⁰⁰ Marga Anstett-Janßen, "Maria Magdalena in der abendländischen Kunst. Ikonographie der Heiligen von den Anfängen bis ins 16. Jahrhundert," (Ph.D. diss., Freiburg i.Br., 1962), 258-9.

¹⁰¹ Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 128.

¹⁰² May, Lucas Moser, 16.

¹⁰³ Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 124.

¹⁰⁴ May, Lucas Moser, 10.

Rott's theory that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was a pilgrimage destination exerted a lasting impression on scholarship.

Patronage and the Coats-of-Arms

The main inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* included information about the artist, the date of creation, and the altar's dedication. The names of the donors, however, are conspicuously absent. It was assumed that the coats-of-arms prominently placed on the predella belonged to the donors of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* (Figs. 6, 7). The identification of these donors became a matter of dispute. In 1845, Weber incorrectly identified the coats-of-arms as belonging to the Helmstädt and Stein von Eberthal families.¹⁰⁵ In 1925, Rott formulated a new identification of the coats-of-arms and identified the donors as Wolf VI von Stein zu Steinegg and Abbot Wolfram Maiser von Berg.¹⁰⁶ According to him, Maiser von Berg, who was the abbot of the nearby Hirsau cloister, was also the theological advisor of the iconographic program.¹⁰⁷

In addition to the predella coats-of-arms, there was also some debate regarding the identity of the embedded coats-of-arms in the scene of the *Last Communion*. According to Rott, the Stein coat-of-arms was repeated in the shield above the choir stall and that of the Gemmingen family was depicted in stained glass in the upper part of the window of the side chamber (Figs. 8, 9).¹⁰⁸ In contrast to Rott, Kurt Bauch identified both the coat-

¹⁰⁵ Weber, Die gotische Kirche zu Tiefenbronn, 1845.

¹⁰⁶ Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 124.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

of-arms in the stained glass and that on the choir stall as armorials of the Stein family.¹⁰⁹

Wilhelm Boeck supported Bauch's identification of the embedded coats-of-arms in the *Last Communion* as both belonging to the Stein family.¹¹⁰ In the early literature on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* it was generally assumed that the altarpiece was a joint donation of the Abbot of the nearby Hirsau monastery and a leading member of the local nobility.

Sources for the Arch Shape

In the literature on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, many of its features were characterized as unique, which promoted a great deal of speculation about their origins. Noted earlier, the content and elaborateness of the inscription, because they lacked a precedent, became a source of scholarly debate in the study of Moser. Beyond the inscription, another feature of the altarpiece that contributed to its characterization as being unique was its unusual form. Because the pointed arch shape differed from the normal square format of contemporary winged altarpiece, scholars attempted to identify its source.

Jakob Burckhardt described the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as a compromise between the Italian *ancona* and the German medieval triptych and supposed that Moser came in contact with this unique shape through the intermediary of Lombard Italian works during the Council of Constance from 1414-1418. Waldburg Wolfegg thought that the shape of the altarpiece, in addition to the division of the scenes through borders, imitated Gothic stained glass windows.¹¹¹ In addition to the possible influence of stained glass windows

¹⁰⁹ Kurt Bauch, Der Tiefenbronner Altar des Lucas Moser (Bremen and Berlin, 1940), 6.

¹¹⁰ Boeck, Der Tiefenbronner Altar, 3.

¹¹¹ Waldburg-Wolfegg, Lucas Moser, 14.

on the shape, according to him, it could have also been derived from southeastern works such as the Mühlhausen and Kärtner Altarpieces¹¹² or Venetian art.¹¹³ Han Rott thought that the shape indicated that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* had originally been part of a corner stone tabernacle, which resembled altar ciboria in the region.¹¹⁴

In contrast to the plethora of theories offered in the early studies of the altarpiece for the sources of the arch shape, the discovery of the wall altars at the Tiefenbronn church in 1947 provided a much more credible model. The removal of an over-painting on the eastern wall of the church, which separates the basilica from the choir, revealed four wall altars; two on each side of the triumphal arch. Each of the wall frescos contains two or three standing saints surrounded by a decorative border in the shape of an arch.¹¹⁵ It was found that not only did the wall frescos have nearly the same dimensions vertically and horizontally as the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, but that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* actually replaced and partially destroyed one of them, when it was installed leaving only

¹¹² The *Mühlhausen Altarpiece* is presently in the Stuttgart Staatsgalerie. It is attributed to the Prague School and is dated 1385. The *Kärnter Altar*, dated 1430, is attributed to the Salzburg School.

¹¹³ Venetian works of a similar format included a triptych by Giusto di Padova dated 1367 and a panel by Jacopo Bellini in the Museo Civico in Verona. For Waldburg-Wolfegg, the shape of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, which suggested a familiarity with Italian models, lent credibility to his theory that Moser's style stemmed from southeastern art, which was oriented toward Italy.

¹¹⁴ Neckar Mühlback, Heimsheim and numerous places on the middle Neckar (Ditzingen, o.u. Leonberg) have altar ciboria for which the ciborium at Maulbronn may have served as a model. Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 125.

¹¹⁵ Emil Lacroix, "Aufgedeckte Malereien in der Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," *Maltechnik* 2 (1955), 44.

three visible. According to Emil Lacroix, the use of the arch shape demonstrated Moser's desire to create visual unity with the existing decorations in Tiefenbronn.¹¹⁶

Despite the congruency between the shape and scale of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and the neighboring wall frescos, the theory that they were a determining factor in the selection of the form for the altarpiece has been challenged. Georg Troescher questioned the assumption that Moser, whom he described as an internationally-educated artist, would base the form of his altarpiece on artistically insignificant wall paintings of a questionable date. He suggested that the wall paintings actually dated later than the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and could have been executed by an older local artist to achieve symmetry. Instead of the shape being influenced by the Tiefenbronn wall paintings, Troescher proposed that the origins for the exceptional form were based on the Swabian artist's stay in a southern French workshop.¹¹⁷ According to Troescher, the shape and the layout of the scenes of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* were dependent on the type of decoration used for the east walls of small devotional chapels in southeastern France. The exterior scenes resemble the sequence of a nave wall while the interior resembles the east wall of a chapel. He used the east wall of the St. Sebastian chapel in Venanson (Alp. Mar.) as an example.¹¹⁸

In contrast to Troescher, it has been suggested that local sources could have influenced the shape. Stange did not feel it necessary to search abroad for a model for the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 46.

¹¹⁷ Troescher, "Die Pilgerfahrt," 129.

¹¹⁸ According to Troescher, these chapels followed a pattern. Depicted in the upper part was a special scene. In the middle section, usually the Virgin or a titular saint was flanked by individual saints. The lower zone was decorative or sometimes contained figures. Ibid.

arch shape, since the structure had predecessors in the Mühlhausen altar from 1385 and other southern German altarpieces.¹¹⁹ Until the discovery of the neighboring wall altars in 1947, scholars looked to a variety of sources, both foreign and local, to explain the unusual arch shape of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Despite the similarities in dimension between the Tiefenbronn wall altars and the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, their legitimacy as the source for the shape was not unanimously accepted.

The Renovation of the Shrine

Adding to the unique nature of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was not only its distinctive arch shape, but the discovery that it had been renovated in the early sixteenth century. Some time in the 1520s, the original contents of the shrine were replaced with the present sculpture of the *Elevation*. Bode's discovery of the renovation initiated a dialogue on the original shrine and its contents.¹²⁰ Concerning the actual shrine niche, Waldburg-Wolfegg and Maria Schütte argued that it was original. In contrast, Gamer supported Rott in his hypothesis that a new shrine had been created for the new sculpture. Schädler also argued in favor of a new shrine niche and dated it between 1520 and 1530.¹²¹ Evidence supporting that the shrine niche was not original was the style of the tracery and patterning of the gold ground lining the niche.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Stange, Sudwestdeutschland, 93.

¹²⁰ Wilhelm Bode, Geschichte der deutschen Plastik, vol. 3, Geschichte der deutschen Kunst (Berlin, 1885).

¹²¹ Alfred Schädler, "Die Frühwerke Hans Multschers," Zeitschrift für Württembergische Landesgeschichte 14 (1955): 407.

¹²² Jörg Gamer, "Zur Rekonstruktion des Magdalenenaltars von Lucas Moser in Tiefenbronn," Freiburger Diözesan-Archiv 74 (1954): 198.

In addition to the originality of the shrine niche the original contents of the shrine became a source of debate. Based on the altarpiece's dedication inscription, Rott hypothesized that standing figures of Anthony and Erhard were originally part of the shrine.¹²³ Waldburg-Wolfegg provided three plausible themes for the content of the original shrine: the standing saints of Anthony and Erhard with the Magdalene in the center, a sculpture of the Virgin and Child in Tiefenbronn and Hans Multscher's *Elevation* in Berlin. He felt that Multscher's *Elevation* was the most likely subject of the original.¹²⁴ Gamer rejected the possibility that either Anthony and Erhard or the Virgin and Child could have been the original subject of the shrine on iconographic grounds among other reasons.¹²⁵ Since the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* is a cycle depicting the story of Mary Magdalene, her siblings, and their companions, it would not have been logical to include unrelated saints. The presence of either the Virgin or St. Anthony and St. Erhard would have disrupted the harmony of the story. Moreover, it was not a requirement or a standard that the dedicatory saints be represented on the altarpiece.¹²⁶ Relative to the suggestion that the specific Tiefenbronn sculpture of the Virgin was the original subject of the shrine, Gamer argued against this theory. The early date of the sculpture of the Virgin to the last quarter of the fourteenth century prohibited the consideration of it. It was unlikely that an older sculpture would have been inserted into a new altarpiece. In

¹²³ Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 126.

¹²⁴ Waldburg-Wolfegg, Lucas Moser, 16-21.

¹²⁵ Gamer, "Zur Rekonstruktion," 201-3.

¹²⁶ According to him the dedication and indulgence inscriptions would have referred to the relics, which were preserved in the altar table. *Ibid.*, 201. To my knowledge, there are no documents, which identify the relics of the saints contained within the altar table.

addition, the perceived lesser quality of the sculpture of the Virgin made it an unlikely candidate for the lavish altarpiece.¹²⁷

Waldburg-Wolfegg's favored subject of Hans Multscher's Berlin *Elevation* was eliminated by Schädler as the original shrine's contents based on the dimensions.¹²⁸ Multscher's sculpture would have been too large to fit into the original shrine, which Gamer supposed would have corresponded with the height of the interior wings.¹²⁹ While Multscher's Berlin *Elevation* did not correspond in dimension to *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* shrine, the theory that it was the theme of the original center was upheld. Anstett-Janßen supported the idea that the original subject was most likely the *Elevation* on iconographical grounds. The scene represented the climactic moment of Mary Magdalene's life and was the central scene of other contemporary Magdalene images.¹³⁰

Whether a group of standing saints, the *Elevation*, or the Virgin and Child, most of the aforementioned possibilities assumed that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was planned from the beginning to be a shrine altar. As such the original contents would have consisted of sculpted figures that stood along the base of the shrine niche or would have been attached to its back wall. Along with the debate over the original subject of the *St.*

¹²⁷ In 1899 a priest had it removed on the grounds that it "spoiled" the altar and referred to it as the "unsophisticated Mother of God statue with the fixed stare." Despite the negative description of the sculpture Helmut May still argued that it was the original contents of the shrine. He argued that it probably had artistic value when it was still painted and that it would have fit in the original shrine. Lucas Moser, 19.

¹²⁸ Schädler, "Die Frühwerke," 407.

¹²⁹ Gamer, "Zur Rekonstruktion," 202.

¹³⁰ Anstett-Janßen, "Ikonographie," 257-262. Gamer also supported that the *Elevation* was the theme depicted on the original center part of the altarpiece. "Zur Rekonstruktion," 204.

Magdalene Altarpiece, the actual form of the original center was questioned. In contrast to the widely held hypothesis that the work's middle part was a shrine, Gamer and Schädler proposed that it was likely a painted panel.¹³¹

In the investigation of the renovation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, in addition to the original subject and form, why it was undertaken was also considered. Motivations behind the renovation were most frequently attributed to the change in church patronage. Rott claimed that the change in the dedication of the church from the Virgin Mary to Mary Magdalene occurred in the sixteenth century.¹³² In conjunction with the change in patronage, Gamer suggested that the altarpiece was transformed to modernize it and beautify it, which would have been achieved through a new sculpture.¹³³ In addition to the need to replace the existing sculpture with a more splendid image in relation to the change in dedication, Anstett-Janßen also suggested that perhaps the original had been broken, stolen or never completed.¹³⁴

Although recreating the original appearance of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was the major focus of renovation studies, there was some interest in the present sculpture of the *Elevation*. Bode dated the *Elevation of Mary Magdalene* to the early sixteenth century.¹³⁵ Based on stylistic analysis, he attributed it to the Swabian school of sculpture.¹³⁶ He also

¹³¹ Ibid., 204.

¹³² Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 101.

¹³³ Gamer, "Zur Rekonstruktion," 206.

¹³⁴ Anstett-Janßen, "Ikonographie," 261.

¹³⁵ Bode, Geschichte der deutschen Plastik, 40.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 179.

noted the stylistic similarities between the figure of the Magdalene and those of the other Tiefenbronn altarpieces: The *Altarpiece of the Virgin* and the *Holy Kinship Altarpiece*.¹³⁷ In addition to the *Altarpiece of the Virgin*, Rott also saw a resemblance to the Tiefenbronn *Crucifixion Altarpiece*.¹³⁸ Although Bode attributed the sculptures to the Swabian school, Rott attributed them to an Alsatian workshop.¹³⁹ In the comparison of the renovated shrine and the other Tiefenbronn altarpieces, parallels beyond the figural style were recognized. Gamer observed that the pattern on the gold leaf lining the shrine niche of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* corresponded to the Tiefenbronn *Altarpiece of the Virgin*.¹⁴⁰

In the dialogue on the shrine renovation recreating the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*'s original middle part preoccupied scholars. While several theories were advanced in regard to the original subject of the shrine, the Elevation was most widely embraced. Concerning the grounds for the renovation, scholarship largely supported that it corresponded to the elevation of Mary Magdalene's status as the joint patron of the church at Tiefenbronn.

Textual and Iconographic Sources

The main contributions to the study of the iconography of the altarpiece were in the identification of the textual and artistic sources for the scenes. While the lunette was

¹³⁷ Ibid., 180.

¹³⁸ Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 114.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 115.

¹⁴⁰ Gamer, "Zur Rekonstruktion," 198.

based in Scripture, the three scenes of the main body were from the *Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine. The predella depiction of the Five Wise and Five Foolish Virgins was drawn from Matthew. Although the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins is seemingly unrelated to the Magdalene, they were connected to her and the cycle through St. Augustine's homily in the Roman Breviary on July 29.¹⁴¹

Marga Anstett-Janßen conducted the most significant iconographic study of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. In her study of Mary Magdalene imagery from the late medieval period she presented the sources for some of the imagery and scenes on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as well as highlighting Moser's iconographic inventions. In particular she highlighted the importance of German Magdalene iconography for some of the details of Moser's portrayals. Moreover, she concluded that an Upper Rhenish manuscript served as a source for the scene of the *Sea Journey* and the *Arrival*.¹⁴²

Conclusions Formed in the Early Literature

In the early literature some of the questions surrounding the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* remained unresolved. Perhaps the most significant of these was the question of Moser's artistic origins and training. Although the location of Moser's training remained a source of debate, scholars recognized his strong ties to Franco-Flemish manuscript illumination and painting. Although Italy and the Southeast were also suggested as formative influences, these did not find support in scholarship. Along with the location of Moser's training, the motivations for his lament were never satisfactorily resolved in the early scholarship. Despite the controversial nature of Moser's artistic origins, it was generally

¹⁴¹ Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 126.

¹⁴² Anstett-Janßen, "Ikonographie," 268.

accepted that Lucas Moser worked in Ulm and was the painter, Lucas, mentioned in Ulm documents. While he worked primarily in Ulm he moved his workshop temporarily to Weil der Stadt or Tiefenbronn to complete the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Not only were Moser's Swabian origins taken for granted, but so was the assumption that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was still in its original location. Supporting its connection to its original location were the donors: the Abbot of the nearby Hirsau cloister and a member of the local nobility. It was supposed that Moser was recommended for the commission through a relation of the Stein family. The indulgence inscription indicated that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* served as a pilgrimage destination for those journeying to the Tiefenbronn church in honor of Mary Magdalene's cult. In conjunction with her elevation in status to a joint patron of the church along with the Virgin, the shrine of the altarpiece was replaced with a newer and larger shrine in the sixteenth century.

II. Gerhard Piccard and the Literature of the Later Twentieth Century

Challenging the Origins of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*

Gerhard Piccard's *Der Magdalenenaltar* singlehandedly changed the course of scholarship on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* by challenging the previously held claim that the work was always for the Tiefenbronn parish church and that it was executed by a German artist, Lucas Moser.¹⁴³ In contrast to the widely held belief that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was created for Tiefenbronn, Piccard argued that, based on the theme of the altarpiece and the lack of documentary evidence for a Magdalene cult in

¹⁴³ Gerhard Piccard, Der Magdalenenaltar des >Lukas Moser< in Tiefenbronn. Ein Beitrag zur europäischen Kunstgeschichte mit einer Untersuchung die Tiefenbronner Patrozinien und ihre (Hirsauer) Herkunft (Wiesbaden, 1969).

Tiefenbronn, the altarpiece was not executed for the Tiefenbronn parish church.¹⁴⁴ He asserted that it would not have been logical to find a cycle of Magdalene imagery in a place that lacked a strong Magdalene cult. Since it was not logical that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was originally made for Tiefenbronn, he hypothesized that it would have originated in a location famous for its devotion to Mary Magdalene. At that time, Vézelay was not only the most prominent site for the Magdalene cult, but the cults of Martha and Lazarus, who figure prominently in the imagery of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, also had their roots there. In addition to the absence of a Magdalene following in Tiefenbronn, the existence of the indulgence phrase on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was used to further support Piccard's notion that the work originated in Vézelay. Piccard believed that the indulgence promise on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* could be linked to the privilege of papal indulgences attached to the abbey at Vézelay. Lending additional support for the altarpiece's origins in Vézelay was its costliness. Piccard perceived the splendid nature of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, indicated by the excessive use of gold leaf, as befitting a cult object.¹⁴⁵

Piccard's astonishing claim regarding the origins of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* rested not only on the supposed absence of a Magdalene cult in Tiefenbronn but also on physical aspects of the altarpiece, including the arch shape, the main inscription, and the

¹⁴⁴ Among the evidence dismissing the existence of a Magdalene cult was the late date that Mary Magdalene was officially documented as a patron of the church. She was not officially a patron of the church until the eighteenth century. The lack of a benefice in Mary Magdalene's name also indicated her relative insignificance at the time. The Magdalene benefice, which was not established until 1526, was never wealthy. *Ibid.*, 68-70; 94-5.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

predella coats-of-arms, all of which he felt were later additions or alterations.¹⁴⁶ Piccard questioned the authenticity of the arch form of the altarpiece and instead proposed that it originally followed the standard form of altarpieces and was rectangular. He theorized that the shape was altered when the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was installed in the Tiefenbronn church. According to him, the shape was changed so that it would resemble the existing decorations in the church, in particular, the neighboring wall frescos. The changes to the shape included removing the outer corners of the tympanum and the outer edges of the main zone, which were originally at right angles instead of being curved.¹⁴⁷

Piccard questioned not only the arch shape of the altarpiece, but also the originality of parts of the main inscription, which consists of the text found within the two horizontal and vertical borders that frame the central scenes. In relation to the main inscription of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, Piccard claimed that there were numerous aspects, including the style of the text, the spelling of certain words in the lament and the language usage, which lead to the conclusion that it was added at a later date. First of all, Piccard questioned whether Moser would have used silver leaf for the dedication and indulgence inscriptions while using gold leaf for the artist's inscription and lament. For

¹⁴⁶ Piccard determined that the person responsible for the forgery was Father Dornbusch and that the forgery was undertaken as an act of nationalistic pride after the War of Freedom in 1813. He also analyzed the details of the forgery and how Dornbusch settled on the specifics of the present-day inscription and coats-of-arms. Most importantly, considering the nationalistic motivations, through the Swabian name, Lucas Moser, and the historical personages represented in the coats-of-arms, a connection with the region was established (152). In order to elevate the artistic importance of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, the creation date of the *Ghent Altarpiece*, 1432, was chosen (155). The choice of the coats of arms of the Maiser von Berg and the Stein families was to document the early donation (140).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 195.

him, “nobody would have spoiled a sacred work in that manner.”¹⁴⁸ Another aspect that led Piccard to question the validity of the inscription was what he characterized “the overall unevenness of the script.”¹⁴⁹ In the lament, the first half, *schri kunst schri und klag dich ser*, is in a more ornate script than the second part. In addition, in contrast to the style of the script of the lament, the artist’s inscription, located in the opposite border, is less ornate and is composed of modern letters in a skeletal form, which were orientalized through the addition of small rectangles. The script of the dedication and indulgence inscription is completely different from that of the lament and artist’s inscription. Lastly, Piccard saw discrepancies between the dedication and the indulgence inscriptions and found that the distance between the words were uneven.

It was also determined that through comparisons with other documents of the time period and region that the spelling of several words on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* deviated from what was normally used. For example, in contemporary comparisons *t* was used instead of *c* in *iecz* and *v* was not used for the preposition *vir* (*für*), although it appeared on the Tiefenbronn inscription. *Niemen* is considered to be spelled incorrectly, because the singular *man* was used as opposed to the plural *men*. Furthermore, *x*, in *werx*, was not used as a substitute for the combination of the stem ending and genitive *ks*.¹⁵⁰

Piccard also questioned the originality of the altarpiece’s inscription based on the use of the word *kunst* in the so-called artist’s lament, which in its present usage translates most closely to the English term ‘fine art.’ In the fifteenth century, this word did not have

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 100.

¹⁴⁹ For Piccard’s discussion of the style of the inscription, see 101-2.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 123.

the present day meaning, which was only firmly established in the eighteenth century with Goethe and Schiller. Piccard determined that there were no known examples of *Kunst* being used in relation to fine art in the fifteenth century and that the word did not have another meaning in the fifteenth century.¹⁵¹ For him this was a direct indication of a nineteenth-century forgery.

Along with the main inscription, Piccard identified the coats-of-arms on the predella as nineteenth-century forgeries. He argued that the placement of the coats-of-arms directly on the gold background deviated from medieval practice. Also departing from medieval practice was the placement of the armorial of an abbot in the same location of the painting as the Foolish Virgins.¹⁵² In addition to going against medieval etiquette he also felt that the coats-of-arms disturbed the symmetry of the predella and appeared to have been inserted into an already finished image. First of all, he observed that the coat-of-arms on the left side (Stein zu Steinegg) is larger than that on the right side (Maiser von Berg). Secondly, the distance between the last Virgin's head and the coat-of-arms differs on each side. On the left, the coat-of-arms appears almost to rest on the Wise Virgin's head whereas there is a greater distance between the coat-of-arms and the Foolish Virgin's head on the right.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 124.

¹⁵² The text does not clarify why the placement against the gold background was unusual. The idea that the coat-of-arms of an abbot would be placed in the area of the Foolish Virgins was absurd. Such positioning would have been an affront to the code of honor of the time and nobody familiar with the strict etiquette of the Late Middle Ages would have tolerated a connection between an ecclesiastic and the Foolish Virgins. Ibid., 125.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

Piccard further tried to support his argument that the coat-of-arms were a later addition by demonstrating that the form of the shield and their symbols were somehow incongruent with the documented forms and symbols of that time period. At this time there were only three shapes of shields, none of which are like those in the predella. The three standard forms differ from those on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in that the uppermost edge is straight and the sides curve in to meet each other at that same point. According to Piccard “the Nase” did not appear before 1490 and the upward curve of the top edge did not exist until the beginning of the sixteenth century. In short, neither of these features appeared in the first half of the fifteenth century. It can be firmly stated that in 1432 the present shape was not in use.¹⁵⁴ Finally Piccard argued that the coats-of-arms of the Maiser von Berg and von Stein families on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* did not correspond to their appearance in contemporary books and on seals. Those of Maiser von Berg proved to be most unlike the comparison group. According to Piccard, aspects which deviated from typical representation of the Maiser von Berg coats-of-arms included the placement of red to the left of the diagonal and silver to the right, the curvature of the diagonal line, the orientation of the bird and its wing placement and lastly, the naturalism of the symbol of the bird. Naturalistic depictions of symbols were not used on contemporary (he defined contemporary as the first half of the fifteenth century) coats-of-arms and do not appear as such on panel paintings.¹⁵⁵

According to Piccard, the anachronistic features of the Stein coat-of-arms were more minimal than those of the Maiser von Berg, but nonetheless there were inaccuracies,

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 137.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 139.

which suggested a later date. The typical form of the symbol of the Stein coat-of-arms is three vertically stacked *Wolfsangeln*. These symbols are in the shape of a half moon and suspended underneath the center of each are rings through which the background can be seen. The *St. Magdalene* coat-of-arms of the Stein family differs from the other representations in that the rings are solid and do not allow the background to show.¹⁵⁶

In order to supply alternative suggestions for whom and when the altarpiece was created, Piccard analyzed the style and composition. Although the style of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* had often been referred to as “progressive” in early scholarship, Piccard attempted to show that the naturalistic features, which characterize the figures and scenes, could be dated to the 1370s and 1380s. Through an analysis of compositional lines, Piccard demonstrated that the underlying directional lines were based on the principles of the art of Simone Martini and felt that the Master of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* must have belonged to his school.¹⁵⁷ In addition to attributing the work to an anonymous follower of Simone Martini, Piccard also challenged the validity of the inscription date of 1432 as the date of the altarpiece’s creation. Instead, based on style, he estimated that the work was probably made for Vézelay sometime in the 1370s or 1380s.¹⁵⁸

According to Piccard’s revised theory of the origins of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, the work was not installed in its current location until the sixteenth century nor was

¹⁵⁶ Their representation on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* actually corresponded to another family. *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 235.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 236.

Tiefenbronn its first home in southwest Germany. Before arriving in Tiefenbronn, Piccard believed that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was temporarily housed in the nearby Hirsau monastery. He linked Hirsau and Vézelay somewhat arbitrarily, because they were both Benedictine abbeys. Beyond that connection he saw the transfer of the altarpiece as advantageous for both abbeys and associated the removal of the altarpiece from Vézelay with the secularization of the abbey.¹⁵⁹ Although there were no documents detailing a transfer of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* from Vézelay to Hirsau, Piccard supported this hypothesis through a report of a Magdalene altar in Hirsau, identifying it as a reference to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.¹⁶⁰ According to Piccard, the eventual transfer of the altarpiece from Hirsau to Tiefenbronn was motivated by the desire to protect it during the Peasant's Revolt.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Piccard viewed it as a last attempt to put an end to the Magdalene cult at Vézelay. For Hirsau, the benefits of receiving such a valuable object were obvious: it was a welcome addition to their monastic treasure. *Ibid.*, 170. In the case of transferring the altarpiece, Piccard suspended his reliance on documentary evidence and claimed that this was probably an unsanctioned act and therefore, one could not expect to find documents relating to it (164).

¹⁶⁰ Piccard acknowledged that the reference to the Magdalene altar in Hirsau was somewhat problematic, since it was not actually dedicated to her and did not contain her relics. The altar, referred to as a Magdalene altar, was actually consecrated to the Trinity, Mary and her parents, Joachim and Anna, Mary Cleophas, Mary Salome and Joseph. Piccard claimed that the discrepancy between the altar's name and consecration resulted from its eventual decoration with the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Although there had never been a Magdalene cult at Hirsau, evidenced by the altar's original dedication, it came to be associated with Mary Magdalene, because of the altarpiece's imagery. *Ibid.*, 168.

¹⁶¹ Feeling the threat from the Peasants' Revolt, the altarpiece was eventually taken to Tiefenbronn in 1525/26. The air of panic due to the Peasant's revolt led Hirsau to secure the work in Gemmingen territory, which was Catholic. *Ibid.*, 173.

Technical Study: Authenticating the Arch Shape, Inscription, and Coats-of-Arms

In reaction to the conclusions drawn in Piccard's book, a technical study and conference were organized. The results of the technical study were published in two articles. Straub's article, published in 1970, confined itself to presenting evidence that challenged Piccard's theory that the altarpiece originally had a different shape and that several details, including the coats-of-arms and the artist's inscription and lament were later forgeries.¹⁶² In addition to confirming the originality of the shape and main inscription, the investigation also uncovered that the coats-of-arms did not date to the altarpiece's creation, but shortly thereafter.

In opposition to Piccard's theory, the technical study of the altarpiece concluded that the shape of the altarpiece was original and that the sides had not been cut down as Piccard had suggested. Researchers determined that the shape was original based on Moser's technique of applying the ground after the altarpiece had already been placed in its frame. According to the researchers, this method of applying ground to an already framed work was "so self-evident and so widespread that it was barely mentioned in contemporary painting manuals."¹⁶³ The technique used for framing the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, which involved the insertion of the outer edges into a grooved frame, also followed the general practice for the fifteenth century. The method of framing and the subsequent application of the ground provided pieces of evidence, which confirmed the originality of the altarpiece's arch shape. First of all, the application of the ground after the framing left behind a build up of the materials used for the ground at the meeting

¹⁶² Straub, "Einige technologische Untersuchungen," 31-32.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 32.

point of the inner edge of the frame referred to as the *barbe* (*Grundierungskante*) (Fig. 10). In addition, the outer edge of the panel, which was covered by the frame when the ground was applied, was left bare.¹⁶⁴ It was concluded that “the ungrounded outer edge of the panel and the *barbe* were proof of the original development of the outer edge of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.”¹⁶⁵ Beveling, another framing technique that involved reducing the panel’s width for insertion into the frame, provided further support for the originality of the shape. Researchers considered the regular width of the beveling in conjunction with the identical pattern of aging and marks on the surface of the back as an indication of the originality of the pictorial edge of the work.¹⁶⁶

Although evidence from the altarpiece’s framing proved conclusively that the arch shape was original, Moser’s technique of covering the panels with parchment also demonstrated that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was always conceived with an arch shape in mind. Prior to applying the ground but after the framing, the surface of the framed panels was covered with a layer of parchment, which was glued to it. The excess parchment at the edges of the pictorial surface was trimmed down with a sharp knife before the ground was applied. This resulted in the presence of small blade marks, which were located along the inner edge of the present frame. According to the researchers, these scars or cuts offered “another conclusive indication of the original arch form of the altarpiece.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ The width of the outer edge varied from 6 – 12 mm. *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 33-37.

¹⁶⁷ The incisions are approximately 3 mm deep. *Ibid.*, 37.

Along with the arch shape, technical evidence confirmed the originality of the main inscription. While the main inscription had been reworked at various time periods, it was determined that “the horizontal and vertical inscriptions, in their first application, were an original feature of the altar.”¹⁶⁸ The authenticity of the inscriptions was partially confirmed through the mordant gilding.¹⁶⁹ The oldest layer of adhesive, which was applied directly to the green paint of the border, corresponded in age and composition to the adhesive used for passages of mordant gilding elsewhere on the altarpiece. Moreover, the green oil paint underneath the layer of adhesive was the same as the green grass in the tympanum. To achieve the green a glaze, which turned yellowish-brown over time, was applied over the opaque green under-layer. Visible in the microscopic cross section of the vertical inscription on the left wing are the various stages of application. The bottom three layers consist of the opaque green underpainting, the overlying glaze, and the mordant for the original inscription (Fig. 11).¹⁷⁰

Regarding the altarpiece’s arch shape and its main inscription, the technical study proved conclusively that they were original features. Unfortunately, authenticating the coats-of-arms on the predella proved to be more problematic. While the technical study

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 42. Through a cross-sectional analysis of the paint layers, they were able to determine the various phases of re-touchings through the ages and concluded that there were primarily two. The first re-touching occurred shortly after the original was completed, because the mordant was the same except for the addition of lead white. It also had practically the identical craquelure as the original phase. In this second phase or first retouching, the mordant was applied so thickly that it gave the inscription a relief-like quality (Fig. 10). The third re-touching occurred several centuries later and the mordant was not tinted. It was also restricted to only a few areas (41).

¹⁶⁹ Moser’s mordant is composed of auripigment, realger and pulverized glass, Ibid., 40.

¹⁷⁰ The originality of the horizontal and vertical stretchers was verified, since they share the same parchment layer as the neighboring painted surfaces. Ibid., 41.

could confirm that the coats-of arms dated to the fifteenth century, whether or not these belonged to the original owners of the altarpiece remained unclear. The cross-sectional analysis of the coats-of-arms yielded evidence that they were not a part of the creation phase of the altarpiece. It was determined, however, that they belonged to the same phase of work as the second layer of the inscription. In the case of the Stein coat-of-arms, the mordant was composed of the same materials as that used in the second retouching of the inscription. In contrast to the Stein coat-of-arms the background of which was applied directly to the white ground with a mordant gilding under the Maiser von Berg coat-of-arms researchers found microscopic remains of gold leaf. A slight depression was caused by the removal of this original layer. It was impossible for researchers to determine if the shields had been left in reserve from the gilding of the predella or if after the original layer of gilding had been scraped away they were applied directly to the ground.¹⁷¹

Although the current coats-of-arms on the predella may not belong to the exact creation date of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, the technical investigation determined that they definitely dated before the nineteenth century. In fact, it was likely that their creation coincided with the creation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, since the painting technique and the materials of the Maiser von Berg coat of arms corresponded to those used in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁷²

The more extensive publication by R. Straub, E.-L. Richter, H. Härlin and W. Brandt on the results of their technical findings included information on Moser's preparatory and

¹⁷¹ R. Straub, E.-L. Richter, H. Härlin & W. Brandt, "Der Magdalenenaltar des Lucas Moser. Eine technische Studie," in Althöfer, H., Straub, R. & Willemsen, E., Beiträge zur Untersuchung und Konservierung mittelalterlicher Kunstwerke (Stuttgart, 1974), 43.

¹⁷² Ibid.

painting techniques. The article explained many aspects of his technique including, the application of metal leaf (bole and mordant gilding), composition of binding media and pigments, and the use of incised lines. It was found that many of the techniques employed by Moser were typical of the time and region. In general, the pigments used and Moser's techniques for the preparation of the panel were consistent with fifteenth-century practices. While the pigments were not systematically tested, because of other, more pressing concerns, it was determined that they ranked among those used in the fifteenth century.¹⁷³ Mentioned previously, another aspect of his execution that followed fifteenth-century practices was the application of the ground after the panels had been inserted into the frame.¹⁷⁴

Along with the two broader publications from the technical study, a third publication addressed only the renovation of the shrine.¹⁷⁵ In this publication, Ernst Richter confirmed through material evidence that the shrine was original and was enlarged some time in the first quarter of the sixteenth century to accommodate the present sculpture of the *Elevation*. This study also outlined the adjustments made to the original form of the altarpiece as a result of the enlarged shrine niche. Although no new evidence was produced that could shed light on the contents of the original shrine niche, the study did confirm that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was planned from the beginning with a shrine. This challenged earlier speculations that the center part of the work was a painted panel.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁷⁵ Ernst Ludwig Richter, "Zur Rekonstruktion des Tiefenbronner Magdalenenalters," *Pantheon* 30 (1972): 33-38.

The Moser Symposium and Related Publications

In addition to the technical study, a Moser symposium was also organized in response to Piccard's publication. At the symposium, experts presented lectures on a variety of topics associated with the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, which were published in the conference proceedings by Reiner Hausherr. Two lectures were specifically devoted to the inscription of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Complementing the technical study, they highlighted the features of the inscription that clearly betrayed its origins in the fifteenth century. Rudolf Kloos analyzed the style of the letters in the vertical and horizontal inscription. The horizontal inscription was identified as a transitional script and the vertical inscription as Gothic minuscule. He cited parallels for both types of scripts in the fifteenth century as well as the practice of employing multiple types of script for a single inscription.¹⁷⁶

In his philological investigation, Werner Besch analyzed the text of the main inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in comparison to a set of texts from southern German origins and concluded that there were “linguistically no compelling reasons to remove it from German inscriptions around the time c. 1430.”¹⁷⁷ Besch also outlined the various meanings of the word *Kunst* in the fifteenth century the most common of which

¹⁷⁶ Dr. Rudolf Kloos, from the Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv in Munich gave a lecture entitled, “Die Inschriften am Tiefenbronner Altar aus epigraphischer Sicht.” Hausherr, “Der Magdalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn.,” 187-190.

¹⁷⁷ “[S]prachlich keinen zwingenden Grund, die deutsche Inschrift der Zeit um 1430 und der betreffenden Landschaft abzusprechen.” Dr. Werner Besch from Bonn University gave a lecture titled “Zur sprachlichen und semantischen Einordnung der deutschen Inschrift.” While Moser's inscription linguistically belonged to German inscriptions of the time period, since there has been no systematic study of inscriptions in this region, it could not be directly related to the area of Tiefenbronn. Ibid., 190.

were skill and knowledge. The use of *Kunst* as knowledge or skill is found in literature from the thirteenth century through 1800.¹⁷⁸ Not before Martin Luther was *Kunst* used in the modern sense as ‘fine art.’¹⁷⁹ Despite the opposition to most of Piccard’s argument, his reading of the date given in the inscription as 1432, as opposed to the usually accepted date of 1431, was accepted.¹⁸⁰

Regarding the coats-of-arms on the predella of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* the technical study confirmed that they were not nineteenth-century additions. The study did not concern itself with the identity of their owners, which has been an issue of debate. This problem was taken up by Hansmartin Decker-Hauff in his Symposium lecture. According to him, Rott correctly identified the coats-of-arms as belonging to the Stein and Maiser von Berg families. However, Rott’s identification of the specific members of the family was incorrect. According to Decker-Hauff, it was impossible that the Maiser von Berg coat-of-arms belonged to the Hirsau Abbot Wolfram Maiser von Berg (1428-1460). Arguing along the lines of Piccard that the coat-of-arms of a cleric would never have been placed in a subservient position to a member of the laity, he dismissed this possibility. In addition, there were no indications of his ecclesiastical rank or office included.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ The German word *Kunst* has the following meanings: the substantive of the German verb können, knowledge, skill or talent, and fine art. Ibid., 191.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 189.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 192.

Because the coats-of-arms are visually connected to each other, Decker-Hauff surmised that they belonged to a married couple. The member of the Stein family was a male while that of the Maiser von Berg was a female. Out of the more than one thousand married couples that he researched, only one fit the profile of the coats-of-arms. The coats-of-arms belonged to Bernhard von Stein zu Steinegg and Frau Engelin/Agnes Maiser von Berg, who married around 1410. Bernhard was born 1385/90. Although his mother is unknown, his father was Konrad von Stein zu Steinegg. Like his father, Bernhard was a resident of the Burg Steinegg near Teifenbronn and was (im Besitz von Gütern) of Teifenbronn. Agnes was the daughter of Wolf Maiser von Berg. It is unknown whether or not the Hirsau abbot, Wolfram Maiser vom Berg, was her brother. Bernhard and Agnes were both still designated as living in 1427 and 1431. In 1435 Bernhard married for a second time.¹⁸² Decker-Hauff concluded that the coats-of-arms on the predella date between 1427 and 1435. In relation to the coats-of-arms of Bernhard von Stein and Agnes Maiser von Berg, Decker-Hauff suggested that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* could have been a memorial donation from Bernhard for Agnes, after her death. In addition, the possibility that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* commissioning could have been related to the fear of Bernhard's dying lineage was also offered. Both of Bernhard's marriages resulted in the birth of only daughters.¹⁸³

Technical evidence proved that although the predella coats-of-arms may have been part of a second phase of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, the two other coats-of-arms located in the scene of the *Last Communion* (the Stein escutcheon on the choir stall and

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 201.

the armorial at the top of the stained glass window) were identified as original. In regard to the latter, similar to the surrounding representation of stained glass this escutcheon was created from glazes applied over a gold-toned silver leaf under-layer.¹⁸⁴ Unfortunately the inability to identify the coat-of-arms in the stained glass window has made it impossible to factor them into a consideration of the original patrons of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. In contrast to the earlier hypothesis that these belonged to the Gemmingen family, Decker-Hauff's research refuted this assumption.¹⁸⁵ He suggested that these may have belonged to the unidentified mother of Bernhard von Stein zu Steinegg.

Along with an examination of the inscription and coats-of-arms, the Moser conference suggested a more cautious approach or even dismissed some of the conclusions reached in the early literature for which there was no solid evidence. Rüdiger Becksmann argued against the identification of Moser as the creator of the Besserer windows.¹⁸⁶ Preventing the identification of Moser as the Ulm painter "Maler Lucas" is the absence of a last name in the documents.¹⁸⁷ The impossibility of establishing Moser in Weil der Stadt due to the lack of documentation and the redistribution of its population was also outlined. In 1648 the city's archival records were lost. In addition, Decker-Hauff was unable to link

¹⁸⁴ Straub, "Einige technologische Untersuchungen," 42.

¹⁸⁵ Boeck, Der Tiefenbronner Altar, 3.

¹⁸⁶ "Das Lucas Moser-Problem in der Glasmalerei." Hausherr, *Der Magdalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn.*, 212.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 202.

Moser to an old Württemberg family, because of the complete regrouping of the population of Weil during the Reformation.¹⁸⁸

Along with Moser's identity the participants at the conference also revisited questions surrounding his artistic background and training. While agreeing that his training remained an open question, scholars ruled out arguments in the early literature that proffered a connection with Italy, Provence, the southeast, and Swabian and upper Rhenish art. Instead, they stressed the significance of Franco-Flemish art for Moser's style.¹⁸⁹

In a conference-related article, "Observations on Moser's *Tiefenbronn Altarpiece*," Charles Sterling sought to address some of the problems related to Moser and the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in order to "gain more precision."¹⁹⁰ He supported Anstett-Janßen's supposition that the saints on the wall altar corresponded to the dedicatory saints in the inscription and he attributed the unusual wing construction to the altarpiece's location in the southwestern corner of the church.¹⁹¹ In relation to stylistic issues he supported Moser's knowledge of Flemish painting with his use of disguised symbolism and referred to him as a "follower of Campin."¹⁹² For Moser's style, Campin's paintings from his mature period were the most relevant. Based on parallels with Flemish

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ The lecture on Moser's style, "Zur stilkritischen Beurteilung des Tiefenbronner Altars," was given by Dr. Karl Arndt from Göttingen University. Ibid., 205-7.

¹⁹⁰ Charles Sterling, "Observations on Moser's *Tiefenbronn Altarpiece*," *Pantheon* 30 (Jan.-Feb. 1972): 19.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid., 20-22.

manuscript artists, he supported Moser's familiarity with them, and concluded that Moser could have trained in the West and was an illuminator himself.¹⁹³ Like Troescher, Sterling felt that Moser may have been active in Avignon.¹⁹⁴ In addition to the influence of Flemish iconography and style, he also outlined Moser's German sources for both. According to Sterling, Moser's German roots were "decisive in limiting and shaping the western influences." He proposed a "first schooling" in the Lower Rhine region. Finally, in his assessment of Moser's lament, similar to Panofsky, Sterling argued that it could be interpreted as the cry of a misunderstood progressive.¹⁹⁵

Although the primary goal of the technical study was to determine that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was originally created for Tiefenbronn, it also provided much new information on Moser's technique. Yet, despite new discoveries, even more unresolved questions surrounding the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* remained. Because of the inability to connect Moser to Ulm painter, Master Lucas, Moser's identity became a mystery once again. Since Mary Magdalene became a patron saint of Tiefenbronn only much later than had previously been supposed and her popularity during that period in Tiefenbronn was questionable, there was no satisfactory explanation for the indulgence inscription or the subject. Moreover, Moser's training and the motivation for his lament remained mysteries. Despite the many open questions surrounding the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* these questions have not been pursued in subsequent scholarship.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 27.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 28.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 31.

Publications Since the Technical Study and Moser Symposium

Since the technical study, there have been only a few publications concerning the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and/or Lucas Moser most of which were not comprehensive, but focused on a single issue. In most cases, this “focus” was unrelated to the traditional Moser topics and the new technical information. In his study of Moser’s famous signature and lament, only, Peter Strieder revisited a common Moser topic. He supported that the word *Kunst* did not have the same meaning as high art but rather as manual skill in conjunction with expertise. Moser’s lament, considering the historical meaning of the word *Kunst*, expressed his regret that the standards set by his art were not desired.¹⁹⁶

In 1986 Margarete Pfister-Burkhalter undertook an iconographical study of the *St. Bridget* fragment attributed to Lucas Moser.¹⁹⁷ Although the publication provided information on cyclical depictions of St. Bridget, it did not offer much new information on the panel’s stylistic association with Moser. It did, however, confirm that the iconography was firmly rooted in the traditions established in south Germany for depicting the saint.

Johannes Tripps, in his “Ein antikes Motiv auf Lukas Mosers *Tiefenbronner Altar*,” identified the activities in the distant boat behind the Magdalene and her companions as a

¹⁹⁶ Peter Strieder, “Schri.kunst.schri.und.klag.dich.ser – Kunst und Künstler an der Wende vom Mittelalter zur Renaissance,” Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums (1983): 19-26.

¹⁹⁷ Margarete Pfister-Burkhalter, “Die heilige Witwe von Lucas Moser: Fragment eines Altarflügels mit der hl. Birgitta von Schweden,” Zeitschrift für schwizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte 43 (1986): 187-193.

scene out of the story of Arion, the ancient musician.¹⁹⁸ According to Tripps, Moser would have been familiar with this myth through the presence of humanism in the first half of the fifteenth century.¹⁹⁹ Based on the interpretation of the story in the later Middle Ages, the scene embodied the salvation of the soul through faith in God. In addition through the writings of the Dominican Hans von Retz it became a symbol of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.²⁰⁰ In the most recent publication devoted to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, Wolfgang Kemp explored the meaning of space and place in the various scenes represented.²⁰¹

While most of the literature on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* since the technical study and conference has concentrated on a specific aspect of the work or artist, a more comprehensive treatment of the subject was published by Franz Heinzmann and Mathias Köhler as part of the *Kunstführer* series. Although limited by its proscribed function as a guide, this publication represents the most current understanding of a wide variety of topics on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and its artist. Of particular value in this study is a contextual understanding of the work. Moreover, its emphasis on the importance of local and regional influences, from the visual evidence for Mary Magdalene's popularity to the

¹⁹⁸ Johannes Tripps, "Ein antikes Motiv auf Lukas Moser's Tiefenbronner Altar," *Jahrbuch der staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg* 27 (1990): 24-30.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁰¹ Wolfgang Kemp, Lukas Moser's *Magdalenenaltar*. Eine Raumgeschichte," in: *Vorträge aus dem Warbug Haus*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1998), 39-83.

arch shape of the altarpiece, proposed a new direction for scholarly inquiry.²⁰² As testimony to the findings of Heinzmann and Köhler, the conclusions reached in the following chapters support that contextual factors and regional artistic traditions played a much greater role in shaping the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and Moser's style than scholars have been willing to recognize.

²⁰² Franz Heinzmann and Mathias Köhler, Der Magdalenenaltar des Lucas Moser in der gotischen Basilika Tiefenbronn (Regensburg, 1994).

3. Art and Advertising: Defining the Function of the Indulgence Inscription

Among the many enigmatic qualities of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* is its indulgence inscription, the purpose of which has never been satisfactorily explained. Located in the lower horizontal stretcher of the altarpiece, the text implies that on the feast days of Sts. Mary Magdalene, Anthony and Erhard that indulgence will be granted to visitors:

[...]DICAT[...] / MARIA.MAGDALENA.(ET).IN.DIE./BE(A)TI.ANTHONY.(ET).

EKHARDI.TOTIDEM.INDVGENCIA[...].”²⁰³ In the upper horizontal border of the main inscription, the same three saints (Mary Magdalene, Anthony and Erhard) are listed for a second time as the saints in whose honor the altar was dedicated.²⁰⁴ Technical study has confirmed the originality of these inscriptions.

Because altarpieces rarely carried the promise of indulgence and none depicting a cycle of Mary Magdalene’s life, speculation as to its purpose and function has arisen in the art historical literature. It was presumed, because of the close connection between indulgences, pilgrimage, and saints’ cults in the late Middle Ages, that it was a pilgrimage destination for Mary Magdalene’s cult.²⁰⁵ There is reason, however, to

²⁰³ “(Es wird gegeben am Tag) der heiligen Maria Magdalena und am Tag der heiligen Antonius und Erhard ebensoviele (Tage) Ablaß.” Franz Heinzmann and Mathias Köhler. Der Magdalenenaltar des Lucas Moser in der gotischen Basilika Tiefenbronn (Regensburg, 1994), 16.

²⁰⁴ Ibid. HIC.IN.ALTARI.HONORANDI.SV/NT.IB(EA)TA.MARIA.MAGDALENA./ 2°B(EA)TVS.ANTONIUS.3°B(EA)TUS/VERABILIS.EKHARDUS. “Hier auf diesem Altar werden verehrt zum einen die heilige Maria Magdalena, zum zweiten der heilige Antonius, zum dritten der heilige verehrungswürdige Erhard.”

²⁰⁵ Hans Rott, “Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn bei Pforzheim und ihre Kunstwerke.” Badische Heimat 12 (1925): 127-8.

question the relationship between Mary Magdalene's cult and pilgrimage at Tiefenbronn. Although the church at Tiefenbronn, the original and present location of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, is dedicated to Mary Magdalene, this was not the case at the time of its creation in 1432. Moreover, there is no documentary evidence of an established Magdalene cult at Tiefenbronn from this time period. With no definitive proof for a Magdalene following at Tiefenbronn, the accepted purpose for the indulgence inscription cannot be verified. Despite the suggestion that "a more precise examination of the Magdalene cult in the region of south Germany could provide answers to the function of the indulgence inscription," this study makes the argument that the promise of indulgence located on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was not related to Mary Magdalene's cult.²⁰⁶ Instead of searching for the function of the indulgence inscription relative to an established Mary Magdalene cult, for the first time, this sheds new light on its purpose by considering other indulgenced images. Focusing on different methods of advertising indulgences and publicly displayed indulgenced images (as opposed to the more familiar private devotional prints and paintings), this chapter identifies the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as an "Ablaß-Medien" or indulgence advertisement. Because of the multiplication of local shrines, religious institutions relied more and more on indulgences, which became increasingly easier to obtain, to attract visitors. In the context of pilgrimage, altarpieces became one of the available means for communicating the indulgence privileges that local churches possessed. It is likely that Tiefenbronn obtained indulgence privileges to finance the completion and/or decoration of its new church.

²⁰⁶ This approach was suggested at the Moser symposium held in 1971. Reiner Hausherr, "Der Magdalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn." Bericht über die wissenschaftliche Tagung am 9. und 10. März 1971 im Zentralinstitut in München," *Kunstchronik* 24 (1971), 201.

Using the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as a means to display its indulgence privileges, the Tiefenbronn church counted on the generosity of the visitors seeking indulgence to make it a worthy setting through its decoration.

Returning to the question of a devotion to Mary Magdalene at Tiefenbronn, understanding the purpose of the indulgence inscription does shed light on her status, confirming that despite the lack of documentary evidence, she was a popular local saint, who, because of her widespread appeal, would eventually replace the Virgin Mary as the patron saint of the church at Tiefenbronn. Before examining indulgenced images and their role as carriers of indulgence privileges, the following section briefly reviews how the myth of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as a pilgrimage destination and cult image evolved and why there is insufficient evidence to support this hypothesis.

The Magdalene Cult at Tiefenbronn: Another Vézelay?

In his 1925 study of the Tiefenbronn parish church and its treasures, Hans Rott drew a parallel between the little village church (then only a chapel of the nearby Hirsau monastery's St. Agapitus at Friolzheim) and the Magdalene's great cult center at Vézelay. He presumed that pilgrims visiting Tiefenbronn in honor of Mary Magdalene performed similar cult activities as at Vézelay.²⁰⁷ He substantiated this romantic vision through a documentary report of soldiers visiting the church in 1445. According to the report, "a group of soldiers, who were enlisted against Armagnac, was in Tiefenbronn on the church dedication day to obtain rest. During their visit to the village part of the group

²⁰⁷ Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 128.

obtained an indulgence at the church there.”²⁰⁸ Hans Rott claimed that even though the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was never specifically mentioned in the report of the soldier’s visit, she was important to soldiers, particularly because of her role as freer of those imprisoned. Those given their freedom went in masses to hang their chains as votives on her altar.²⁰⁹ Helmut May supported Rott’s theory that the indulgence inscription on the altarpiece made it likely that the soldier’s visit was related to Mary Magdalene’s cult.²¹⁰

Although in the early art historical literature, the myth of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as a pilgrimage destination was generally accepted, Gerhard Piccard challenged this assumption. In his 1969 monograph on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, through his research on the Magdalene cult at Tiefenbronn, he discredited the earlier references to the altarpiece as a pilgrimage destination. Not only was the soldiers’ visit insufficient to support this claim, but Piccard demonstrated that no evidence existed that suggested that Mary Magdalene had a prominent following at Tiefenbronn.

Concerning the report of the soldiers’ visit, the most obvious problem with using it as evidence for pilgrimage in Mary Magdalene’s name is that neither Mary Magdalene nor the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* were referenced in the document. Moreover, the actual date of the soldiers’ visit, which Piccard placed on March 25, had no connection with any of

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 124. “Söldnertruppen, die von den städten gegen die Armaganken geworben waren, in dem markgräfischen Tiefenbronn am Kirch weihstag Rast hielten, wobei ein Teil den Ablaß in der dortigen Kirche holte...” Gerhard Piccard, Der Magdalenenaltar des >Lukas Moser< in Tiefenbronn. Ein Beitrag zur europäischen Kunstgeschichte mit einer Untersuchung die Tiefenbronner Patrozinien und ihre (Hirsauer) Herkunft (Wiesbaden, 1969), 52.

²⁰⁹ Rott, “Die Kirche,” 128, n. 77.

²¹⁰ Helmut May, Lucas Moser, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, 1967), 10.

the saints listed in the indulgence inscription. In order to confirm that the soldiers' visit had been in connection with the altarpiece's indulgence, it would have taken place on the feast day of Mary Magdalene, Anthony or Erhard. None of their feast days, however, fall on March 25. Although it is not a special day of any of the saints mentioned in the inscription, an important Marian feast, the Annunciation, is celebrated on this day.²¹¹

Not only did Piccard discard the supposed relationship between the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and the soldiers' visit, but he also dispelled the myth that Mary Magdalene had been established as the joint patron of the Tiefenbronn parish church as early as the first part of the sixteenth century. Undoubtedly one of the factors that contributed to the myth that Tiefenbronn functioned on a similar level as Vézelay was Mary Magdalene's eventual status as co-patron before becoming the full-fledged patron of the church. While the church was initially dedicated to the Virgin, Rott claimed that Mary Magdalene was a joint patron by the sixteenth century.²¹² That she became a joint patron in the sixteenth century presupposes that she was already significant in the fifteenth century. Contrary to Rott's supposition, however, Mary Magdalene appeared as a joint patron only in the seventeenth century.²¹³ In documents dating from 1347 to 1565, the Virgin was, without

²¹¹ Mary Magdalene's feast day is July 22, whereas the feasts of Anthony and Erhard are on January 8 and 17. Instead Piccard argued that the soldiers' visit corresponded to the dedication day of the church, which was the most celebrated site-specific feast day. Moreover, he found it ridiculous that the count of Baden would send a group of soldiers, which he had assembled from the Swabian imperial free cities, to a place where sick pilgrims visited. Piccard, *Der Magdalenenaltar*, 56-7.

²¹² Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 101.

²¹³ Piccard criticized scholars for never evaluating Rott's statements regarding Mary Magdalene's patronage at Tiefenbronn. For the widespread acceptance of Rott's construction of Mary Magdalene's patronage, see Piccard, *Der Magdalenenaltar*, 70-71.

exception, identified as the patron of the church. The first mention of Mary Magdalene as a joint patron occurred in a donation document from Ursula von Gemmingen on March 30, 1621.²¹⁴

In addition to the late date at which Mary Magdalene was documented as a patron of the Tiefenbronn church, Piccard concluded that other types of evidence that could attest to her prominence in Tiefenbronn were also absent. For Piccard, the late establishment of a benefice in her name in 1526 and the meager earnings of it verified that Mary Magdalene was not a significant Tiefenbronn saint in the fifteenth century.²¹⁵ Moreover, no documents survive that mention the Feast of St. Magdalene as a special feast day or any type of indulgence associated with it.²¹⁶ An indulgence on the feast day of St. Mary Magdalene, which is on July 22, would have required special permission from the highest ecclesiastical authorities. There are no surviving documents at Speyer, the bishopric of

²¹⁴ Ursula von Gemmingen geb. v. Neuneck stiftete 300 Gulden Hauptgut “zu einem ewigen unabhängigen Jahrtag...Vnser Lieben Frawen gottshauß und pfarrkhürchen zuo Dieffenbron, und sancta Maria Magdalena als patronin daselbsten.” Ibid., 69-70.

²¹⁵ By the time of the establishment of the Mary Magdalene benefice, five other benefices had already been in place. The All Saints benefice was founded in 1425 and must be considered the oldest. Following the All Saints benefice, the Holy Cross benefice was established in 1467, St. Nicholas in 1468, St Katherine in 1485, and St. George by 1473. Piccard argued that if the Mary Magdalene benefice had existed earlier, it certainly would have appeared in documents before 1526. In addition, the benefice would have been extremely wealthy, because of its association with the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, a supposed pilgrimage destination. The donations in honor of pilgrimage altars were high. Ibid., 94-95.

²¹⁶ When Tiefenbronn was raised to the status of parish church in 1455 it was given four feast days, that of Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and the Assumption, which were typical of the diocese of both Speyer and Constance. There was never a reference to Mary Magdalene, Erhard, or Antonius in the documents. Ibid., 143.

Tiefenbronn, which gave Tiefenbronn indulgence privileges.²¹⁷ For Piccard, ultimately it was inconceivable that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* could be a pilgrimage destination and not appear in one surviving document in the seven decades between the creation of the altarpiece and the mention of a Mary Magdalene benefice in 1526.²¹⁸

Not only did Piccard insist that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was not a pilgrimage destination, he used the absence of a Magdalene cult as evidence that it could not have been made for Tiefenbronn. In offering an alternative location for its creation, the indulgence inscription played a formative role. For Piccard the indulgence inscription pointed to the Magdalene's most famous shrine in Europe, Vézelay. As the premiere cult center for the Magdalene, Vézelay possessed indulgence privileges granted by the Pope. Although attributing the origins of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* to Vézelay seemed to offer a suitable explanation for the indulgence inscription, the technical study of it established conclusively that the work was made for Tiefenbronn. The originality of the arch shape of the altarpiece, the main inscription, and other details of its execution all supported that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was, from its inception, intended for Tiefenbronn.

While Piccard's theory regarding the origins of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was incorrect, the fact remains that there are no surviving documents supporting a significant Magdalene cult in Tiefenbronn at the time the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was created. While I do not support the claim that Mary Magdalene was not a prominent saint at Tiefenbronn, a point to which I will return later in this discussion, an alternative

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 95.

explanation for the presence of the indulgence inscription exists outside of a Magdalene following there. The indulgence inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was not a byproduct of the Magdalene cult as other scholars have mistakenly asserted, but rather a reference to indulgence privileges held by the church at Tiefenbronn. Considering the widespread practice of the display of an institution's indulgence privileges, the indulgence inscription functioned as an advertisement for Tiefenbronn's. Evidence for this purpose resides not only in the function of indulgenced images, but also in the changing nature of pilgrimage and indulgences in the later Middle Ages.

Indulgenced Images: The Place of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*

Although the promise of indulgence found on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was not a standard feature of altarpieces, indulgenced images, nonetheless, represent a common type of image found in the late Gothic period. It is surprising, therefore, that until the present study scholars did not consider other indulgenced images in their attempts to determine the function of inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. While there are several points at which art and indulgences intersect, this study examines the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in comparison to other images that similarly carry an indulgence inscription. This eliminates a comparison of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* to illustrated letters of indulgence as well as images of famous pilgrimage destinations, where indulgences could be obtained.²¹⁹ While the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* actually deviates

²¹⁹ For more information on the decoration of letters of indulgence, see Judith Oliver, "The Herkenrode Indulgence, Avignon, and Pre-Eyckian painting of the mid-fourteenth century Low Countries," In Flanders in a European Perspective. Manuscript Illumination Around 1400 in Flanders and Abroad. Proceedings of the International Colloquium, Leuven, 7-10 September 1993, 186-206 (Leuven, 1995). The famous print of the *Madonna of Einsideln* by Master E.S. (1466) serves as an example of the role that art played in the service of pilgrimage and indulgences. It commemorated the pilgrimage to

significantly from standard indulgenced images, a comparison with these is a relevant exercise, since it highlights the unique character of the work, suggesting that it had an alternative purpose.

As a particular category of images, the indulgenced image first appeared in the thirteenth century. The existence of the *Veronica* or *Vera Icon*, the earliest subject of indulgenced images, came about through a specific event. After the image of the Veronica reversed itself while being carried in a procession, Pope Innocent III, who composed a prayer in its honor, attached ten days indulgence to the recital of this prayer.²²⁰ While the indulgence was attached to the prayer, it was frequently accompanied by an image of the icon. Israhel van Meckeheems's *Vera Icon* bears the standard features of this type of indulgenced image. Christ stands frontally with his arms crossed, drawing attention to His wounds (Fig. 12). Over time, several other subjects became more or less standard indulgenced images, including the Gregorian *Man of Sorrows*, the *Arma Christi* and *Maria in Sole* to name the most common.²²¹ These images were circulated in the form of illuminations in prayer books, block prints, small altarpieces and devotional images. Similar to the *Veronica*, a series of prayers, which carried a partial indulgence, accompanied subsequent subjects and indulgence was

this site and the indulgence that could be obtained there. Depicted on it is the famous legend surrounding the consecration of the church for which indulgence privileges were granted by Pope Leo VII. Henk van Os, The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages in Europe 1300-1500 (Princeton, NJ, 1994), 82-86.

²²⁰ Lewis, Flora. "Rewarding devotion: Indulgences and the promotion of images." In The Church and the Arts, ed. Diana Wood (Oxford, 1992), 179.

²²¹ Sixten Ringbom, Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-up in Fifteenth Century Devotional Painting (Doornspijk, 1983), 23-28.

received when it was said before the image. Pope Sixtus IV, for example, reportedly gave an indulgence of 11,000 years for the recital of a prayer before the image of the *Virgin in Sole*.²²² Presented as the *Virgin in Sole* in Geertgen tot Sint Jan's *Madonna of the Rosary*, Mary appears as the woman of the Apocalypse, wearing a crown of twelve stars and standing on the moon (Fig. 13).

In examining these typical indulgenced images it becomes immediately apparent that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* actually has little in common with this category. An obvious point of departure is the subject matter. Rather than portraying a singular devotional image of Christ or Mary, the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* is composed of episodes from the life of a saint. Far from being devotional in character the narrative content of these scenes is emphasized. Another way in which the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* differentiates itself from the more familiar indulgenced images is in the absence of a prayer. The indulgence inscription does not specify a prayer to be recited in order for the viewer to receive indulgence. Another deviation resides in the public nature of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. The close-up format of the more familiar category of indulgenced images was designed for private viewing.²²³

While the function of the St. Magdalene inscription cannot be fashioned on the standard category of devotional images because of the discrepancies in scale and subject, a new direction for inquiry manifests itself, however, in the reality that not all indulgenced images were for private consumption. A few surviving examples of panels

²²² Sixten Ringbom, "Maria in Sole and the Virgin of the Rosary," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 25 (1962): 326.

²²³ Ringbom, Icon to Narrative, 29.

bearing indulgence inscriptions, both in painted form and relief that indulgence images were also displayed in public ecclesiastical settings. Identified as *Ablaß-Tafeln* or indulgenced panels, a stone relief in Fritzlar is representative of this public version of the indulgenced image (Fig. 14).²²⁴ Created in the first half of the century, this relief portrays the *Man of Sorrows* surrounded by the *arma Christi*. The accompanying inscription informs the viewer that indulgence can be obtained by reciting three *Our Fathers* and *Hail Marys*.²²⁵

Beyond the public setting, the Fritzlar *Man of Sorrows* has little in common with the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. In fact, because of its subject, the Man of Sorrows with its accompanying prayer, in contrast to the Tiefenbronn Altarpiece, is easily recognizable as the familiar type of indulgenced image. While this may seem to lead to another dead end in terms of identifying the function of our inscription, the examination of indulgenced images in the church setting reveals another purpose for them.

In his article on indulgenced images, Otto Schmitt identified another function for indulgenced images. According to him, indulgenced panels (*Ablaß-Tafeln*) could also act as a “register of the indulgence privileges of a particular church in the form of a panel

²²⁴ Schmitt identified several other images from Fritzlar as indulgence panels. Contemporary with the Man of Sorrows is a damaged fragment from the Minorite cemetery in Fritzlar. In the collegiate church (*Stiftskirche*) at Fritzlar there are other indulgenced panels that were created slightly later than the Man of Sorrows. Among these is a 1463 epitaph for Deacon Joh. Kirchain, similarly depicting the Man of Sorrows, and a later Crucifixion (1510) erected by Herm. Hankrat. Otto Schmitt, “Ablaß (-Bild, -Brief, -Kanzel, -Tafel, -Urkunde),” in *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1937), 80.

²²⁵ *Intuens arma Christi devote dicendo ter pater noster et ave maria habet a papa Innocentio IV annos, a Petro III, a Leone II, a sancto Gregorio XL dies indulgenciarum.* Ibid., 81.

displayed on the wall or portal of that church.”²²⁶ An example of an indulgence panel fulfilling this function is a representation of the *Enthroned Virgin* in the *Liebfrauenkirche* in Halberstadt, which dates to the late thirteenth century (Fig. 15). This was originally located on the southeast portal of the church.²²⁷ Not only does the subject of the *Enthroned Virgin* deviate from the more or less standard subjects of indulgenced images but its indulgence inscription, rather than specifying a prayer, lists feast days on which indulgence could be received. Until this point, the significance of images such as the *Enthroned Virgin* for interpreting the function of the indulgence inscription has not been recognized in scholarship. Similar to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* it is in a public venue and contains the promise of indulgence the text of which is relegated to a register above the image. Most importantly, a comparison to the Halberstadt *Enthroned Virgin* suggests that the indulgence referred to on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was a reference to Tiefenbronn’s indulgence privileges.

Further reinforcing the relationship between indulgence panels and their ecclesiastical setting, Hartmut Boockmann identified additional examples of images that acted as displays for a particular church’s indulgence privileges. He included in the category of indulgence panels the so-called *Schrift-Tafeln* one of which is a panel from Vienna, which is in the form of a triptych.²²⁸ In the closed position two scenes are depicted in the

²²⁶ “Ablaß-Tafeln nennt man auch ein Verzeichnis der einer Kirche verliehenen Ablaß in Gestalt einer Tafel, die an der Wand oder einem Portal der Kirche angebracht war.” *Ibid.*, 80.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ Another surviving example of an indulgence panel survives in Augsburg. It was made for the Dominican cloister there. Hartmut Boockmann, “Über Schrifttafeln in

upper fields (Fig. 16a). On the left wing is the Annunciation and on the right, Mary and the Christ Child with St. Anne. Separated from a middle field of text are the coats-of-arms of the Grand Master (*Hochmeister*) of the Viennese Teutonic Order (*Deutsche Orden*) who commissioned the altarpiece for the Church of the Teutonic Order (Deutsche Ordens Kirche in Vienna). In contrast to the exterior view, in the open position of the Vienna panel, only text is displayed (Fig. 16b). Divided in columns, the text on this triptych enumerates the indulgence privileges of the Teutonic Order in both Latin and German. Included at the end of the list are specific church feasts in the form of a calendar. According to Boockman, this type of information may have earlier been conveyed in carved inscriptions and book form.²²⁹

While the example of the Vienna *Schrift-Tafel* does not present a precise match in terms of the layout and text of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, it does reinforce the use of panels to display indulgence privileges. Moreover, it is in the common form of an altarpiece. It also suggests that no standard subjects or exclusive themes developed for images selected as displays for a church's indulgence privileges.

spätmittelalterlichen Kirchen," Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters (1984): 211.

²²⁹ These types of panels may have been modeled after indulgence books belonging to churches. One example of such a catalogue of indulgences is preserved in the Vienna archive for the German Order. Hartmut Boockmann, "Kirche und Frömmigkeit vor der Reformation," in Martin Luther und die Reformation in Deutschland. Ausstellung zum 500. Geburtstag Martin Luthers Veranaltet vom Germanischen Nationalmuseum Nuremberg in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Verein für Reformationsgeschichte (Nuremberg, 1983), 52. For information on *tabulae*, tables listing a variety of indulgences, see Lewis, "Rewarding devotion," 187. Among the types of indulgences listed were those specifically available at that church.

Not all of the panels labeled as “indulged panels” follow the example from Vienna in being composed mainly of text, however. Other indulged panels identified by Boockmann, like the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, included only abbreviated inscriptions. Instead the indulgence text is relegated to a small field and primacy is given to the imagery. For example, depicted on the *Epitaph of Dorothea Schürstab* is the Mass of St. Gregory (Fig. 17). In this piece the indulgence inscription that accompanies the donor portrait is contained in a field below the image. The indulgence inscription promises the same indulgence that would normally only be obtainable in Rome to whoever says an Our Father or Hail Mary before the image.²³⁰

More relevant for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, however, is the indulgence panel at Schwäbisch Gmünd (Fig. 18). The depiction of the activities surrounding the rebuilding of the church there, parts of which were destroyed in 1497, is completely unrelated in subject to any of the aforementioned indulged images. Similar to the *Epitaph of Dorothea Schürstab* the image is primary. In this case, the inscription is confined to a decorative cartouche on the top of the panel.²³¹ It explicitly states that anybody who donates to the rebuilding of the church will receive 3,320 days indulgence.²³² This indulgence inscription is of particular interest because of its direct relationship to what is represented; the funds from indulgence were those used for the rebuilding of the church

²³⁰ Hartmut Boockman, “Über Ablaß-‘Medien’,” Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht 34 (1983): 717.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

²³² *Alle, die ir hilf und steür Raichend zuo diszem w:urdigen gotts Hausz, die erlangend von vill Cardineln, legatten, ertzbischoffen, bischoffen in ainer sum (Summe) ablas dreydaussentdreyhundert und zwaintzig tag 153 [!] Anno 1612 renoviert. Ibid.*

portrayed in the image. In a larger context the imagery testifies to the widespread use of indulgences to finance building campaigns.

While none of the indulgenced panels are identical to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in terms of subject matter and text of the inscription, the survey of them has established an important point, namely, that painted panels with a wide range of imagery, functions and textual content, could act as displays for a church's indulgence privileges. Although the sheer variety exhibited in the small number of indulgence panels justifies placing the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in this category, it is important to consider explanations for why a closer match has not been found. The likelihood that more indulgenced panels more similar in type to the *Magdalene Altarpiece* may have existed should be taken into account. Scholars have speculated that indulgence media were a common feature in most churches, but that they did not survive the reformation, when they were removed or destroyed.²³³ We may also not be able to recognize surviving works that once had an indulgence function, but had their inscriptions removed during the reformation.²³⁴ Emphasis needs to be placed again on the reality that the sheer variety in the types of images used to display indulgence privileges is testimony that indulgenced panels could take many forms. It is also important to consider that using painted panels to display indulgence privilege was only one of several options the church had at their disposal.

²³³ B. Dudik, "Über Ablasstafeln," in Sitzungsberichte der phil.-hist. Classe der kaiserlichen Akademie der wissenschaften, vol. 58 (Vienna, 1868), 155.

²³⁴ Boockman suggested this in relation to the Epitaph of Dorothea Schürstab. "Über Ablaß- 'Medien'," 718. For other explanations of the low survival rate for indulgenced panels see Boockman, "Über Schrifttafeln," 215.

The Advertisement of Indulgences and the Role of Art

The grounds for identifying the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as a vehicle for communicating Tiefenbronn's indulgence privileges becomes more convincing if we go beyond the few surviving examples of indulgenced panels to look at other means of conveying indulgence privileges and the content of indulgences themselves. In the Medieval period it was necessary to advertise indulgence privileges in some fashion in order to reach a larger audience and attract visitors. There were a variety of well-known ways in which indulgence privileges were circulated. Among the more established means of doing this included the direct notification of neighboring diocese. In the Frauenkirche in Munich the message of indulgence was spread by eight priests with copies of the bull to neighboring diocese as far as Bamberg and Würzburg.²³⁵ The indulgence for the Kaiserdom of Speyer was preached in four diocese: Speyer, Worms, Strasbourg and Basel.²³⁶ This example also highlights the importance of preaching to the cause of promoting indulgence privileges. In Bern, the preacher Johannes Heynlin, who was retained to "explain the bull and exhort them to Penance, preached two sermons every day." Additional means were also taken to spread the news of the indulgence available at Bern, and one thousand copies of the Bull were printed for public distribution.²³⁷

In addition to the temporary and somewhat immediate methods of circulating indulgence privileges described above, more permanent ways of displaying them in a church also existed. It should also be pointed out that the preceding examples of

²³⁵ Nikolaus Paulus, *Indulgences as a Social Factor in the Middle Ages*, trans., J. Elliot Ross (New York, 1922), 29.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

advertising indulgences were probably not appropriate for smaller churches. In his article “Über Ablass-‘Medien’,” Boockmann explored the ways in which indulgence privileges held by smaller, local churches were advertised to the public. Based on the material remains of an actual indulgence letter from Nuremberg, Boockman concluded that it was used to display the indulgence privileges held by that church (Fig. 19). The letter showed not only excessive wear and tear, but also had holes for fastening some type of hanging mechanism to it, suggesting that it was on public display in a plaque-like fashion.²³⁸

Another method of displaying indulgence privileges, which was more permanent, can be seen in the Schäfer chapel at St. Wolfgang’s in Rothenburg (Fig. 20). There, chiseled into the wall, remains a list of the numerous feasts on which indulgence could be received.²³⁹

The latter example of the Schäfer chapel at St. Wolfgang’s is particularly relevant to the discussion of the St. Magdalene inscription, because it provides insight into its particular form, i.e. the listing of individual names of saints. At St. Wolfgang’s included among the list of general feasts (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, All Saints Day, the Immaculate Conception and the Annunciation) on which indulgence could be obtained, are those of two specific saints: the patron of the church, St. Wolfgang, and St. Bartholomew.

An explanation for the combination of general and local saints’ feast as well as time designations found in the inscription at the Schäfer chapel is easily understood in relation

²³⁸ Hartmut Boockmann, “Über Ablass-‘Medien’,” 711.

²³⁹ The inscription states: “Romisch ablas uf den cristag, ostertag, pfingstag, dinstag nach Bartholomei, s. Wolfgang, allerheiligen, unser frauen conepcionis (Mariä Empfängnis), anunciacionis (Mariä Verkündigung) iglichs fest 12 c(aren; carena 40tätiges Fasten bzw. Dessen Erlaß) und 40 tag, zu den tag der kirwei (Kirchweihe)24 c(aren) 80 tag, durch daz gantz ior all tag 40 tag (Ablass).” Ibid., 720 ill. 4/5.

to the most prevalent form of indulgences in the late Middle Ages. While there were several types of indulgences, one of the main types was the “alms” indulgence, which involved some type of good work. Included among the good works were church visits and/or a contribution to the building of a church or hospital.²⁴⁰ Alms indulgences were generally partial indulgences in that the time spent in purgatory was reduced by a specified amount, usually measured in days. It is important to make this distinction, since another form of indulgence, the plenary, remitted the entire time spent in purgatory.²⁴¹ The necessary conditions for obtaining indulgence were usually prescribed in the actual letter of indulgence. An indulgence letter from the parish church of St. Lorenz in Nuremberg states that 100 days indulgence was obtainable, when the church was visited on a designated feast and something given for the building or decoration of the church.²⁴² The designated feasts were usually a combination of both general and local feasts. Similar to the St. Wolfgang’s inscription, the indulgence letter distributed by Nicholas of Cusa in 1451 also lists Christmas, Pentecost and several Marian Feasts.²⁴³ In contrast to the standard general feasts, the local feasts, which were those of locally celebrated saints, varied widely. While St. Wolfgang held a place of special significance at the Schäfer

²⁴⁰ If the conscience was burdened with a mortal sin, repentance and confession also were required to obtain indulgence. Paulus, Indulgences, 15.

²⁴¹ For additional distinctions among types of indulgences, see, William Kent, “Indulgences,” in The Catholic Encyclopedia. An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline and History of the Catholic Church, vol. 7 (London, 1910), 783.

²⁴² The letter is dated March 28, 1476 and was signed by twenty cardinals. The other parish church in Nuremberg, St. Sebald, also possessed similar indulgence privileges. Boockmann, “Über ‘Ablaß-Medien’,” 711.

²⁴³ Hartmut Boockmann, Die Stadt im späten Mittelalter (Munich, 1986), 267.

chapel in Rothenburg, it was Lambert, Hubert, and Deodigne, who were celebrated at the Herkenrode Abbey, which also had indulgence privileges.²⁴⁴

The comparison between the inscription on the wall of the Schäfer chapel and the content of letters of indulgence reveals that it is an abbreviated form of these letters, conveying specifically to the visitor on what days it was necessary to visit the church in order to receive indulgence. In turn, the indulgence inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* represents an even more reduced version of the occasions on which indulgence could be received.

Why the indulgence inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* only listed the names of the local feasts and not all of the general feasts on which indulgence could be received is easily explained by its smaller format. Obviously, only the most pertinent information could be placed into a small border. While the public would have been aware of the general feasts, which did not demonstrate much variation regionally, the local saints varied greatly. Simply put, because of the site-specific nature of the local feasts, it was vital that this information be communicated in the limited space available for the indulgence inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.

Not only does the inscription at the Schäfer chapel at St. Wolfgang's in Rothenburg provide a model for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in the display of the local feasts on which indulgence could be received, it also sheds light on the relationship between the indulgence inscription and the altar's dedication. At the Schäfer chapel in the very same space where the indulgence inscription was displayed highlighting St. Wolfgang's as a

²⁴⁴ The Herkenrode indulgence also listed numerous Marian feasts. Oliver, "The Herkenrode Indulgence," 188 n. 4.

special feast, one of the altars was dedicated to St. Wolfgang.²⁴⁵ That the popular saints were those in whose name an altar was dedicated can also be seen on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Similar to the situation at the Schäfer chapel, the dedication inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* confirms that the altar was erected in the name of the same saints on whose feasts indulgence was received.

The relationship between feasts on which indulgence was received and the devotions of a particular church are also apparent in the aforementioned Herkenrode indulgence. While the feasts were not connected to an altar dedication, an exceptional number of Marian feasts were included because the nunnery was dedicated to the Virgin.²⁴⁶ Both the Schäfer chapel and St. Magdalene inscription provide valuable information on the role of popular local saints in the church. Not only did they have altars dedicated in their honor but when indulgence privileges were granted, their feasts were put forth as designated days on which pilgrims, who made the journey to the church, could receive indulgence.

What has come to light in the identification of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as an indulgence panel or *Ablaß Medien* is a function for the indulgence inscription that is unrelated to a Magdalene cult. Similar to St. Wolfgang at the Schäfer Chapel, Mary Magdalene, Anthony and Erhard were the local saints on whose feast's visitation to the church would be rewarded with indulgence. This understanding of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* provides not only the purpose of the inscription, but, in doing so, puts to rest the perplexing question of why Anthony and Erhard are mentioned twice in the inscription, while the cycle of scenes was devoted solely to Mary Magdalene. Like Mary

²⁴⁵ Boockmann, *Die Stadt*, 268.

²⁴⁶ Oliver, "The Herkenrode Indulgence," 188, n. 4.

Magdalene they were popular local saints to whom an altar was dedicated. That they remained only in the inscription, but did not become part of the imagery provides a first glimpse of Mary Magdalene's favored status above other saints. It is enticing to assume that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* accelerated her popularity.

Tiefenbronn's Indulgence Privileges

While in the exploration of indulgenced panels, other types of *Ablaß-Medien*, and indulgence letters, the function of the inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* has been identified, the question of Tiefenbronn's indulgence privileges remains. While the actual letter of indulgence for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* has not survived, there are several factors that support that Tiefenbronn had indulgence privileges.

In contrast to earlier periods, the widespread availability of indulgence privileges in the late Middle Ages makes it likely that Tiefenbronn possessed them. According to Hartmut Boockmann, "in the fifteenth century the indulgence was pervasive."²⁴⁷ He estimated that indulgences were so common that during this time period "nearly every believer could obtain several."²⁴⁸ Believers could easily obtain indulgences because in the fifteenth century they were not exclusive to the largest pilgrimage destinations but were "everywhere."²⁴⁹ Ordinary churches and even chapels possessed what has already been described as "alms indulgences", which were granted by popes, bishops and cardinals.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ Hartmut Boockmann, Die Stadt im späten Mittelalter (Munich, 1986), 263.

²⁴⁸ Hartmut Boockmann, "Kirche und Frömmigkeit," 52.

²⁴⁹ Boockmann, Die Stadt, 263.

²⁵⁰ Paulus, Geschichte des Ablasses, 429.

The likelihood that Tiefenbronn had indulgence privileges is further demonstrated in its architecture and the extent of its decoration, which distinguishes itself from other village churches. Both the architecture and the wealth of the ecclesiastical furnishings suggest a pilgrimage function. The architecture, which was unusual for a village church, consists of a basilica with a tower on one side, and seems to have been erected from the beginning for the purpose of pilgrimage. In addition to the style of architecture, the unusually high number of altars was atypical for a village church.²⁵¹

Although the actual record of the letter of indulgence has not survived, there is documentary evidence of Tiefenbronn's indulgence privileges. Returning to the soldiers' visit in 1445, introduced at the beginning of this chapter, here is evidence that a group visited the church at Tiefenbronn to obtain indulgence. While this visit provided no evidence that it was tied to Mary Magdalene's cult, it does confirm that indulgence was available at Tiefenbronn upon a church visit. The day on which the soldiers visited, the church dedication day and the Annunciation are two of the general feasts often stipulated in letters of indulgence. Along with the widespread availability of indulgences, the church's outstanding architecture, the document recording the soldiers' visit is confirmation of Tiefenbronn's indulgence privileges.

Indulgence and the Newly Constructed Church at Tiefenbronn

While the record of the soldiers' visit is testimony that Tiefenbronn had indulgence privileges, it does not indicate the occasion for which the church received indulgence privileges. It is possible to speculate on this, however, based on the most common purpose for indulgences in the Late Middle Ages: the building and decoration of

²⁵¹ Köhler, St. Maria Magdalena, 3.

churches. That this was the basis for Tiefenbronn's indulgence privileges is likely, since parts of the church were still under construction into the early part of the fifteenth century.

Mentioned previously, indulgence letters communicated that indulgence could be received upon visitation to the church on designated feast days, both general and local. There was, however, often more to receiving the indulgence than simply making an appearance at the church. The St. Lorenz indulgence letter, introduced earlier, stated that a contribution was to be made to the building of the church or its decoration. In the case of the indulgence available at the Herkenrode Abbey, it was acquired to help underwrite the expense of rebuilding the convent church.²⁵²

The importance of the indulgence for the art and architecture of the Gothic period has been well-established in the literature on the topic. Of the good works considered for the alms indulgence, ranking at the top was a contribution to church building. According to Nikolaus Paulus, "The building and decoration of churches in the late Middle Ages procured more indulgences than for any other goal."²⁵³ Some of the more famous examples of churches, including Bern's Münster and the Kaiserdom of Speyer, were built from indulgence funds. A quote from a Mecklenberg theologian serves as testimony to the vast amount of building achieved through the sale of indulgences. He wrote that, "it is

²⁵² Oliver, "The Herkenrode Indulgence," 192.

²⁵³ Nikolaus Paulus, Geschichte des Ablasses am Ausgange des Mittelalters, vol. 3, Geschichte des Ablasses im Mittelalter (Paderborn, 1923), 433.

in fact, every sinking tower, every crumbling stone, was dressed and set by indulgences.”²⁵⁴

Returning to Tiefenbronn, it is likely that the acquisition of indulgence was related to the completion of the church which began around the middle of the fourteenth century but remained unfinished (Fig. 21). Records indicate that the present church building of St. Maria Magdalena, formerly dedicated to Virgin, was a replacement for an earlier chapel also dedicated to the Virgin. The details regarding the form of the earlier church are unclear as well as when the building of the present church commenced, although it is certain that it progressed in phases and not in a single building campaign.²⁵⁵

Although it has been established that the choir belonged to the first building campaign, a document regarding an early donation to the church at Tiefenbronn has been a source of dispute in relation to when the building of it first began. In 1347, a member of the nobility, Heinrichs von Ysingen, made a donation to “Our Lady and her church at Tiefenbronn.” Interpreting this as a gift for the earlier building at Tiefenbronn, Emil Lacroix dated the building of the choir and tower of the present church to c. 1380.²⁵⁶ In contrast to Lacroix, more recent scholarship has argued that Heinrich’s donation from

²⁵⁴ Paulus, Indulgences, 35.

²⁵⁵ Emil Lacroix identified five phases of building. Only the first three, the choir, the nave and the sacristy are relevant to this discussion, since they occurred in the late Gothic period. Emil Lacroix, Peter Hirschfeld, and Wilhelm Paesler. Des Amtsbezirks Pforzheimland (Kreis Karlsruhe), vol. 9, bk. 7, Die Kunstdenkmäler Badens (Freiburg i.B., 1938), 209-211.

²⁵⁶ He dated the oldest part of the church, the choir and the clock tower to c. 1380 based on the choir’s similarity to the dated choir of Mühlhausen am Neckar and the date of the limestone buttress sculptures on the exterior of the choir. These sculptures were considered to be part of this building campaign. The choir was probably connected to an earlier nave, which was reminiscent of the building mentioned in 1347. *Ibid.*, 209-10.

1347 was to provide additional financial support to the building of the present choir, which commenced around 1340.²⁵⁷

More relevant to the consideration of the indulgence inscription is the second building campaign, which consisted of the nave of the church, and possibly the tower. That this did not commence immediately after the building of the choir is not an issue of debate, since the mason's symbols on the nave and tower stones clearly indicate that a different set of builders worked on this phase of construction. The specific date of the nave, however, is subject to disagreement. According to Lacroix, the building of the nave took place c. 1430.²⁵⁸ Disputing this chronology, Mathias Köhler suggested that the erection of the nave probably began in the 1390s and was completed in its present form probably shortly after 1400.²⁵⁹ This earlier dating rests not only on the stone mason insignias but also on a number of donations from the 1390s marked specifically for the building and decoration of the church at Tiefenbronn.²⁶⁰

While the more recent dating of the nave to c. 1400 seems to contradict the idea that the indulgence inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was a reference to

²⁵⁷ Mathias Köhler also suggested a different date for the erection of the tower. He placed it with a second phase of construction, not as part of the same building phase as the choir. Mathias Köhler, *St. Maria Magdalena* (Lindenberg, 1998), 6.

²⁵⁸ According to Emil Lacroix, some of the art works in the church also belonged to the various phases of construction. The *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, created in 1432, was installed in the second phase in which the nave of the basilica was constructed. The third phase, which was related to the building of the sacristy, also brought forth the sacristy cabinet (1464) and the high altar by Hans Schüchlin (1469). The tabernacle and the monstrance in the choir were also produced in this period of building activity. This phase came shortly after the elevation of Tiefenbronn to a parish church in 1455. Des Amtsbezirks Pforzheimland, 210-211.

²⁵⁹ Köhler, *St. Maria Magdalena*, 7-8.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

Tiefenbronn's recently obtained indulgence privileges for the building of the nave, it is possible that some construction was still taking place into the 1430s. It is also important to consider that indulgences were not only for the building of a church but also its decoration. The newly completed nave would have needed much in the way of decorations, and it is not insignificant that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was the earliest altarpiece installed at Tiefenbronn.

Further support that the St. Magdalene indulgence inscription was a reference to indulgence privileges acquired to underwrite the expense of the church (or its decorations) resides in indulgenced images. If we return to the panel at Schwäbisch Gmünd, it will be remembered that the indulgence required donations for the rebuilding of its church and its decoration.

Through the examination of other forms of indulgenced media, the preceding discussion demonstrated that the indulgence inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* conveyed the indulgence privileges possessed by Tiefenbronn. In the listing of individual saints in the indulgence inscription, the visitor was made aware of the special local feasts on which indulgence could be received. Based on indulgence practices, indulgence was presumably also available on certain general church feasts. It is likely that Tiefenbronn obtained indulgence privileges for the decoration or completion of the recently constructed nave. Not only was church building and its decoration the most common occasion for which indulgences were granted, but other indulgenced images were also made for this purpose.

Mary Magdalene's Popularity at Tiefenbronn

While Mary Magdalene's cult was not the direct source for the indulgence inscription, it is important to recognize that she was a venerated saint at Tiefenbronn. Even beyond the obvious devotion to her exhibited in the selection of her life as the subject of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, it is clear from the dedicatory inscription that she had already been a significant local saint. Mary Magdalene's role as dedicatory saint was but one of several pieces of evidence that Gerhard Piccard overlooked in his hypothesis that Mary Magdalene was not a prominent saint at Tiefenbronn. What Piccard did not evaluate was popular piety and its manifestations, one of which is visual representations. In more recent research the value of visual imagery as a manifestation of a particular saint's prominence has been considered. Astrid von Beckerath in her book on the High Altar at Chur used imagery as evidence of the popularity of the Virgin Mary, arguing that the many depictions of her in the cathedral, sacristy and on other ecclesiastical objects highlighted her significance as patron of the cathedral and bishopric.²⁶¹ Evidence for Mary Magdalene's prominence can also be demonstrated through the visual representations of her at Tiefenbronn. The sculptural depiction of her already at the time of the construction of the church attests to her elevated position at Tiefenbronn from the beginning.²⁶² Located on a pillar on the exterior of the church is a sculpture of Mary Magdalene, which dates to the late fourteenth century (Fig. 22). This sculpture still stands next to the statue of the Virgin, which was created around the same time during the

²⁶¹ Astrid von Beckerath, "Der Hochaltar in der Kathedrale von Chur: Meister und Auftraggeber am Vorabend der Reformation" (Ph.D. diss., Hamburg, 1994), 24.

²⁶² Heinzmann and Köhler, Der Magdalenenaltar, 6.

construction of the choir. Her important position before the creation of the *Magdalene Altarpiece* may also be supported by her presence among the standing saints in the wall altar behind the altarpiece (Fig. 23).²⁶³ Although it cannot be confirmed definitely because of the ruinous state, the fresco probably depicted St. Anthony, St. Erhard and St. Mary Magdalene as reflected in the altarpiece dedication and indulgence. Still identifiable are the faint remains of three halos.²⁶⁴

While Mary Magdalene was a revered saint in Tiefenbronn, the indulgence inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was not a specific manifestation of her cult. In the intense competition to beautify their churches and attract local pilgrims, churches obtained indulgence privileges. During the Late Gothic period, churches had at their disposal a variety of means to display their indulgence privileges among which were altarpieces. As an indulgenced panel the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* attempted to attract visitors to the Tiefenbronn church through the promise of indulgence displayed clearly in its main inscription. In identifying the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as a type of Ablaß-Medien, this chapter not only accurately identified the purpose for the indulgence inscription, but it also introduced evidence for a Magdalene following at Tiefenbronn, a crucial point for the next chapter's discussion of the iconography of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Marga Anstett-Janßen, "Maria Magdalena in der abendländischen Kunst. Ikonographie der Heiligen von den Anfängen bis ins 16. Jahrhundert," (Ph.D. diss., Freiburg i. B., 1962), 261.

4. Beyond France: Mary Magdalene's Prominence in Germany

The previous chapter exposed and clarified some of the misconceptions surrounding the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Although it primarily addressed the function of the indulgence inscription, it closed with a brief examination of the visual evidence that Mary Magdalene was a prominent saint at Tiefenbronn. This is a significant point in the consideration of the subject matter of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, the topic of Chapter Four, since it was commonly assumed in the literature that the inspiration for portraying a Magdalene cycle at Tiefenbronn came from France. This discussion challenges the understanding formulated in the literature that French influence accounted for the selection of Mary Magdalene. Not only is there no solid evidence for French involvement in this process, but a consideration of Mary Magdalene's popularity in Germany, the altarpiece's iconography, donation practices, and context argue against a French influence.

Already by the high Middle Ages Mary Magdalene had become a favored saint in Germany and, as previously demonstrated, an important saint in Tiefenbronn. In addition to other manifestations of her cult, the multiple cycles in wall painting and manuscript illumination created in Germany in the fourteenth century attest to her significance in the region. In addition, while German iconography of Mary Magdalene was initially inspired by French and Italian models, it developed independently and achieved its own unique characteristics by the time the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was created in the fifteenth century. In scene after scene of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, its dependence on the Magdalene iconography developed in Germany refutes that notion that ties to France played any role in the selection of the Magdalene's life for an altarpiece at Tiefenbronn.

Not only do the German iconographic sources for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* reinforce its German origins, they also permit reflection on the theological advisor for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Proof that it was the Hirsau abbot Wolfram Maiser von Berg exists in Tiefenbronn's close relationship to Hirsau, his familial ties to the donor and the altarpiece's iconography. Establishing that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was programmed by the Abbot of the neighboring Hirsau cloister not only provides a greater understanding of the meaning of the scenes represented, it also sheds light on the degree to which its imagery was shaped by its context and not French influence. Before entering into the dialogue on the selection of a Magdalene cycle at Tiefenbronn, a brief overview of the textual sources for the scenes portrayed provides a general understanding of their meaning. Also considered is France's prominence in the development of Mary Magdalene's cult and evidence that led scholars to believe that French influence inspired her portrayal on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.

The Textual Sources for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*

In the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, the story of Mary Magdalene begins in the lunette, where she is depicted washing the feet of Christ at a banquet (Fig. 24). The scene takes place around a table outdoors. Not only does the lattice grid encircled by vines reinforce that the scene is set outdoors, it also provides a backdrop for the figures. The figures are arranged around the table, except for Martha, who enters from the right carrying a covered dish. On the far side of the table the figures of Christ, the Pharisee, Peter, and Lazarus are arranged from left to right. The Pharisee gestures in the direction of Mary Magdalene across the table while Lazarus whispers in Peter's ear.

This representation is a conflation of two Gospel accounts of a banquet Christ attended shortly before Passover. The two most detailed accounts are in Luke 7:36-50 and John 12:1-18 both of which informed Moser's representation of the scene.²⁶⁵ According to Luke (7:36-38), when Christ was eating dinner at the house of a Pharisee, a woman, known as a sinner, came to see him. She brought with her an alabaster box full of ointment "and standing behind at his feet, she began to wash his feet, with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." Similar activities were recounted in John's Gospel account of the feast that Christ attended in Bethany. "They made him a supper there: and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that were at table with him. Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of right spikenard, of great price, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair" (John 12:2-3).

While Mary Magdalene was not specified by name in either of these accounts, in the Middle Ages, she assumed the identity of both the 'Anonymous Sinner' from Luke and Mary of Bethany. In 591, Pope Gregory (c. 540-604) asserted that Mary Magdalene, along with the anonymous sinner in Luke, who washed Christ's feet with her hair and dried them with her tears, and Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, were

²⁶⁵ In Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9 the banquet takes place in the house of the Pharisee in Bethany. Unless otherwise noted all scriptural passages are from The Holy Bible: Douay Rheims Version (Rockford, IL, 2000). For more information regarding the argument over whether or not the Gospel accounts were all referring to the same event, see Thomas Zeller, Die Salbung bei Simon dem Pharisäer und in Bethanien. Studien zur Bildtradition der beiden Themen in der italienischen Kunst von den Anfängen im. 9. Jahrhundert bis zum Ende des Cinquecento (Cologne, 1997).

one and the same person.²⁶⁶ Gregory's conflation of her with two other biblical women gave her a new identity and through it, new meaning.²⁶⁷ According to Katherine Jansen, "Gregory's composite saint ordained the agenda of Magdalene veneration for the entire Middle Ages and well beyond."²⁶⁸

In Moser's *Anointing*, the conflation of the two Biblical accounts can be seen in the cast of characters. Although the lunette scene is also titled the *Feast in the House of Simon*, because of the presence of the Pharisee, the inclusion of Lazarus and Martha is derived from John's account, set in Bethany. The presence of Peter at the scene is relatively unusual and cannot be explained by either Luke's or John's accounts of the banquets. In the narrative of the Feast at Simon's no other person is specifically mentioned outside of Simon. In John's account of the Feast in Bethany, Judas attends the feast, where he criticizes Mary Magdalene for being wasteful.

²⁶⁶ Prior to Gregory the Great, there had been no fixed tradition regarding the conflation of Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany and Luke's anonymous sinner in the western or eastern churches. Ibid. 29. The conflation of Mary Magdalene with Luke's Anonymous Sinner has been attributed to the introduction of Mary Magdalene by name immediately after the scene in the Pharisee's house. The placement of these two incidents may have given rise to the idea that they were the same. The fact that Mary Magdalene was healed of evil spirits may also have suggested that she was a sinner. Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (London, 1993), 19. Also see Katherine Ludwig Jansen for additional information on the foundations for Gregory the Great's proclamation, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 2000), 33.

²⁶⁷ In addition to the more recent publications by Haskins and Jansen, for more information on Mary Magdalene's identity in the Middle Ages, see Helen Meredith Garth, *Saint Mary Magdalene in Medieval Literature* (Baltimore, 1950); Victor Saxer, *Le culte de Marie-Madeleine en occident des origines à la fin du moyen-âge*. 2 vols. (Cahiers d'archéologie et d'histoire, 3) (Auxerre-Paris, 1959); Marjorie Malvern, *Venus in Sackcloth: The Magdalen's Origins and Metamorphoses* (Carbondale, IL, 1975).

²⁶⁸ Jansen, *The Making*, 35.

Although the depiction of Martha serving was derived from the supper in Bethany, the deliberate contrast between the activities of Martha and Mary would have also conjured up another Biblical reference: the account of Christ in the house of Martha and Mary on which the ideals of the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* were based. Upon Christ's visit to the house of Martha, she busied herself with preparing and serving, while her sister, Mary, sat at Christ's feet and listened to him (Luke 10:38-42). Rather than encouraging Mary to assist Martha as Martha had requested, Christ explained that Mary "had chosen the better part." This biblical passage and the respective actions of Martha and Mary formed the theological basis for the *vita activa* as manifest in Martha's servitude and the *vita contemplativa*, which was characterized by Mary's meditative listening. These two models for living were understood as complementary and necessary qualities to achieve Christian perfection.²⁶⁹ In John's account of the banquet at Bethany, which details the actions of Martha serving and Mary anointing, another example for the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* was given.²⁷⁰

Although the scene of the *Anointing* was from the Gospels, the story also appeared in the *Golden Legend*, one of the most influential texts of the later Middle Ages. This collection of saints' lives was written by the Dominican monk, Jacobus de Voragine (d. 1298).²⁷¹ Although this text was originally written as a tool for preachers it became a

²⁶⁹ Zeller, *Die Salbung*, 13. For more information on the theological discussions regarding the active and contemplative life, see chapter 1, The interpretation of Mary and Martha in Giles Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge, 1995).

²⁷⁰ Zeller, *Die Salbung*, 14.

²⁷¹ Jacobus de Voragine was a Dominican monk, who later became the archbishop of Genoa. He compiled the *Golden Legend* between 1263 and 1273. Marga Anstett-Janßen,

best-selling devotional work, and, by the fifteenth century, was translated into most vernacular languages.²⁷² In fashioning Mary Magdalene's *vita*, Voragine combined scripture with earlier accounts of the saint's life including the *vita-eremitica*²⁷³ and *vita-apostolica*.²⁷⁴ The starting point of Mary Magdalene's *vita* in the *Golden Legend* borrowed from Luke's account of the anointing of Christ's feet. Voragine explained that Mary Magdalene had simply become known as "the sinner" because of the way she gave her body to pleasure. She was guided by divine will to the house of Simon the leper, where she washed the Lord's feet with her tears and dried them with her hair.²⁷⁵ It is possible that, while derived from Scripture, the *Golden Legend* served as the direct textual source for the scene of the Anointing on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.

The *Golden Legend* provided the material for the other three scenes of the Magdalene's life on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*: the *Sea Journey*, the *Arrival* and the *Last Communion* (Fig. 25). Following the episode of Mary Magdalene's conversion, the *Golden Legend* detailed her fate after Christ's ascension. According to the text, which

"Maria Magdalena in der abendländischen Kunst. Ikonographie der Heiligen von den Anfängen bis ins 16. Jahrhundert" (Ph.D. diss., Freiburg i.Br., 1962), 67.

²⁷² Jansen, *The Making*, 40-1.

²⁷³ The *vita eremitica* was written in the ninth century in southern Italy. It reported how the Magdalene retired to the desert after Christ's ascension and lived there for thirty years without food or clothing. *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁷⁴ In this *vita*, the Magdalene and her companions were set adrift at sea. They landed in Gaul, where they evangelized the pagan population there. This was later combined with the *vita eremitica*, forming the *vita apostolico-eremitica* in which the Magdalene retired to a cave after fulfilling her mission of evangelizing Gaul. According to this legend she was buried at the church of Saint Maximin in Provence. *Ibid.*, 38-9.

²⁷⁵ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, vol. 1 (Princeton, NJ: 1993), 375.

drew from the *vita apostolica*, fourteen years after the passion and ascension of Christ, the Apostles were expelled from Judea. Among the Apostles were Mary Magdalene and her siblings, Martha and Lazarus, Martha's servant Martilla, Maximin, Cedonious, and many other Christians. At the time of their expulsion the entire group was put in a rudderless ship and sent out to sea to drown. They did not perish at sea as their executioners had planned, but rather through God's divine intervention arrived safely at the coastal city of Marseilles in France.

In the scene of the *Sea Journey*, the characters depicted in Moser's representation mostly correspond to the text of the *Golden Legend* (Fig. 26). Mary Magdalene and her companions, Martha, Lazarus, Cedonious and Maximin are afloat in the immediate foreground. Martilla, Martha's servant, although named as part of the group in the *Legend*, is not depicted.²⁷⁶ In the distance are three additional ships and a distant landscape, which forms the horizon. This landscape has variously been identified as Marseilles or Palestine. The group of companions afloat in the foreground, however, did not meet the fate that was planned for them by secular authorities, but rather through God's miraculous intervention, they landed safely at Marseilles.

Following the *Sea Journey* the scene of the *Arrival* continues the story of Mary Magdalene's legendary life in France (Fig. 27).²⁷⁷ Incorporated in this portrayal are two separate incidents. In the lower part, Mary Magdalene's companions are waiting before the city wall of Marseilles, while above, Mary Magdalene appears to the rulers of Marseilles. The representation of both incidents closely adheres to the *Golden Legend*.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 376.

²⁷⁷ While the story of Mary Magdalene's apostolate in France appeared in the *Golden Legend* it originated in the *vita apostolica*.

The rejection that Mary Magdalene's companions experienced in the pagan land, described in the text, is clearly communicated (Fig. 28). Huddled together under an awning outside of the city wall are from left to right Cedonius, Maximin, Lazarus and Martha. Reinforcing the familial ties between Lazarus and Martha, he sleeps in her lap.²⁷⁸

Mary Magdalene, absent from the group at the city walls, appears to the rulers of Marseilles above them, requesting their acceptance of Christianity (Fig. 29). According to the legend, Mary Magdalene appeared twice to the governor's wife in a vision, asking the governess to persuade her husband to aid the Christians or incur the wrath of God. After the third visit, when she appeared to both of the rulers, they agreed to give shelter to the Christians and take care of them. Since only the wife is shown awake, it must have been the Magdalene's first or second visit to the rulers' chamber.²⁷⁹

Although the scenes of the *Sea Journey* and the *Arrival* closely follow the sequence of events narrated in the *Golden Legend*, a large segment of the legend, known as the Miracle of Marseilles was not included. Similar to the *Sea Journey* and the *Arrival* this part of Mary Magdalene's life originated in the *vita apostolica*. This passage in the *Golden Legend* highlights the miraculous abilities of Mary Magdalene to obtain a son for the rulers. According to the legend, the rulers requested that Mary Magdalene obtain a son for them and in exchange they agreed to do anything that she asked. The ruler's wife conceived and although the governor discouraged her from accompanying him on his pilgrimage to Rome, the two of them went together. On the journey, the wife died while giving birth to their son. The ruler placed the mother along with his newborn son ashore

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 377.

on a hilly coast. Despite his grief, he continued on to Rome where he saw Peter, who then accompanied him to the holy places in Jerusalem. On the return journey he went ashore at the place where he had laid his wife and child. Miraculously, he found that the child had been kept alive for two years by his mother's milk. Upon his request to Mary Magdalene that his wife be restored through her prayers, she was revived. The governor and his wife returned to Marseilles and destroyed the pagan temples.²⁸⁰

Unlike the numerous Magdalene cycles in France and Italy which portray the Magdalene's miraculous abilities as recounted in this segment of the legend, the last scene of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* represented her life as an ascetic in the wilderness. Although the roots of her penitent life first appeared in the *vita eremitica*, where she assumed the identity of Mary of Egypt, this was spliced together with the *vita apostolica*.²⁸¹ According to the *vita apostolica eremitica*, after her time in Marseilles Mary Magdalene retired to the wilderness to devote herself to contemplation. For her nourishment every day at the seven canonical hours she was carried aloft by angels and heard the chants of the celestial hosts. She had lived in the wilderness for thirty years, when she was approached by a priest living nearby. She instructed the priest to go to Maximin, Bishop of Aix, and inform him that she would appear to him the next year.²⁸² On the day appointed by Mary Magdalene, Maximin went to the church and saw her amidst a choir of angels. "She was raised up a distance of two cubits above the floor, standing among the angels and lifting her hands in prayer to God." After she received the

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 378-9.

²⁸¹ Jansen, *The Making*, 53.

²⁸² Ibid., 380.

Body and Blood of Christ from Maximin, she laid down before the altar and passed away.²⁸³

The altarpiece's iconography of the *Last Communion* follows the text of the *Golden Legend* and is set in the oratory of St. Maximin, who had accompanied the Magdalene on the voyage to Marseilles (Fig. 30). Viewed through the opening of the church portal, the hirsute Magdalene, supported by angels, receives the Body of Christ from Maximin. The basilica in which the Magdalene receives her Last Communion combines features both of Romanesque and Gothic architecture. While the rounded arches of the central aisle of the church evoke Romanesque buildings, the porch bears the hallmark traits of the Gothic style with its pointed arch and delicate foliate tracery. Arranged vertically on the left side of the portal is a decorative group of sculpted figures (Fig. 31). At the top, the Virgin and Child are supported by a nude male figure. Below this figure, an ape is holding a bird with a snail in its beak. According to Sterling the group, in conjunction with the Virgin and Child, the entire ensemble represents "the spiritual evolution of mankind." The monkey corresponds to *ante legem* or primitive era. The statue stands for the era *sub lege* (pre-Christian law and era) and the Virgin and Child and Crucifix for *sub gratia*.²⁸⁴

There has been some confusion as to the identity of the figure who sits in a choir stall at the rear of the chamber to the left of the portal (Fig. 32). Whether or not the particular features of a historical personage were grafted upon this figure, his presence in the scene

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 381.

²⁸⁴ Charles Sterling, "Observations on Moser's Tiefenbronn Altarpiece" *Pantheon* 30 (Jan.-Feb. 1972): 21.

of the *Last Communion* is explained by the *Golden Legend*.²⁸⁵ Anstett-Janßen identified the figure as the priest to whom Mary Magdalene appeared near the end of her life in the wilderness.²⁸⁶ According to legend he was present when Mary Magdalene received the Body and Blood of Christ from Maximin. The priest was a common feature of other German Magdalene cycles of the fourteenth century in the scene of Mary Magdalene's Elevation.²⁸⁷

Derived mainly from the *Golden Legend*, the scenes of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* represent the various segments of the Magdalene's life. While the initial scene of the *Anointing* represents her ministry to Christ, the two scenes of the *Sea Journey* and the *Arrival* illustrate her apostolate in pagan Gaul. The final scene of the *Last Communion* signifies her life as a penitent in the wilderness.

France and the Subject of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*

While the textual sources for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* are well-established, how and why a Magdalene cycle appeared at Tiefenbronn has not been adequately explained. In previous literature on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, scholars offered several claims arguing in favor of French influence on the selection of Mary Magdalene as the subject for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. For Hans Rott and Georg Troescher, it was likely that

²⁸⁵ Sterling identified him as a member of the von Stein family, since an escutcheon of that family is represented above his head at the top of the choir stall. Not only did Sterling assume that this figure was an ecclesiastical member of the Stein family, but according to him, the canon "could well have advised on, or even devised, the iconographic program of the altarpiece, which is much more complex and subtle than is usually assumed." *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁸⁶ Anstett-Janßen, "Ikonographie," 269.

²⁸⁷ In the fresco at Dusch at Graubünden, the priest of the *Golden Legend* is depicted kneeling in prayer in the scene of Mary Magdalene's *Elevation*. *Ibid.*

Moser's training in France provided the inspiration for a Magdalene cycle. In the discussion of Moser's artistic formation, Hans Rott speculated that Moser spent several years in Dijon.²⁸⁸ According to Georg Troescher, before 1430, Moser was active for an indeterminable period of time in a southern French workshop and was likely in Avignon.²⁸⁹ In the context of Moser's artistic origins, the theme of Mary Magdalene at Tiefenbronn was interpreted as evidence that Moser trained in France. Also implied was the notion that Moser influenced the subject chosen. In France, Moser would have been acquainted with the important pilgrimage destinations dedicated to the Magdalene and her siblings. Moreover, through a prolonged stay in France he would have seen the many painted cyclical depictions of her life.

In contrast to this theory, Charles Sterling claimed that the selection of Mary Magdalene was due to the influence of French visitors in the region. He proposed that the Council of Basel (started in 1431) accounted for the unusual theme. According to him, the presence of the Provençal high clergy, who had gathered in southwest Germany for the Council, may have sparked the donor's interest in Provence.²⁹⁰ He also highlighted the features of the imagery that reinforced the Provençal mission of Mary Magdalene, her siblings, and her other companions. Whether blatant or in symbolic details, the prominent

²⁸⁸ Hans Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn bei Pforzheim und ihre Kunstwerke," Badische Heimat 12 (1925): 132.

²⁸⁹ Georg Troescher, "Die Pilgerfahrt des Robert Campin: altniederländische und südwestdeutsche Maler in Südostfrankreich," Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen 9 (1967): 132.

²⁹⁰ It is unclear how he came to this conclusion. No specific suggestions were made as to how or why this meeting would have occurred. Moreover, no specific parties were named. Sterling, "Observations," 30.

role of the Magdalene's siblings contributed to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* association with France. Along with their prominence some of the symbolic details in the scenes of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* elevated the significance of Provence. Charles Sterling described the phosphorescent creatures inhabiting the ground on which Martha and Lazarus stand as an "ingenious allusion to the Provençal mission of Martha and Lazarus (Fig. 33)."²⁹¹ These symbols were interpreted as specific references to the triumph of Christianity in France, which was brought forth through the efforts of the Bethany siblings. For Sterling, this same message was contained in the use of two different architectural styles for the church in the scene of the *Last Communion*. He described the combination of Romanesque and Gothic as symbolic of "the evangelical mission of Maximinus, the first bishop of Aix cathedral, slowly eliminating paganism in Provence."²⁹²

While earlier scholarship supported the idea that theme of the Magdalene's life at Tiefenbronn was inspired by France, Gerhard Piccard presented a rather more extreme example of France's influence, claiming that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* actually originated in France, at Vézelay.²⁹³ Although this chapter challenges the claim that

²⁹¹ These motifs are also repeated on Lazarus' cope. *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁹³ His theory of the Magdalene's origins was largely based on Vézelay's position as the premiere cult center for the Magdalene in the later Middle Ages. As such they possessed indulgence privileges in connection with Mary Magdalene's cult, which, for him, accounted for the indulgence inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. The unique quality of the altarpiece as well as its costliness resulted from the work's original function as a cult object at Vézelay. The elaborate nature of the work was appropriate for an object intended to serve as a cult focus. Gerhard Piccard, Der Magdalenenaltar des >Lukas Moser< in Tiefenbronn. Ein Beitrag zur europäischen Kunstgeschichte mit einer

France inspired the subject of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, it is important to consider the factors that presumably cultivated a connection between it and France. In addition to Moser's training in France and the symbolic details previously mentioned, underlying the claim that the selection of Mary Magdalene for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* originated through a tie to France is the fame of her cult there, the supposed absence of a Magdalene cult in Tiefenbronn, and the uniqueness of the subject for the region of southwest Germany.

France's prominent role in the formulation of Mary Magdalene's legend and promotion of her cult was one of the foremost reasons that scholars attributed the subject of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* to France. In recognizing the Magdalene's important relationship to France, scholars were not completely mistaken. While signs of Magdalene devotion began to accumulate in the ninth and the tenth centuries throughout Europe,²⁹⁴ Mary Magdalene's cult increased noticeably in the middle of the eleventh century.²⁹⁵ This rapid acceleration in the Magdalene's popularity stemmed from the promotion of her cult at Vézelay in Burgundy. Although earlier dedicated to the Virgin, papal documents testify to Mary Magdalene's patronage there in the eleventh century. It was around that time that the abbey church laid claim to her relics.²⁹⁶ From then on, Vézelay became one of Europe's leading pilgrimage destinations.

Untersuchung die Teifenbronner Patrozinien und ihre hirsauer Herkunft von Wolfgang Irtenkauf (Wiesbaden, 1969), 180.

²⁹⁴ Prayers to her appeared in sacramentaries and were related to the mass on her feast day already in the ninth century. Haskins, Myth and Metaphor, 111.

²⁹⁵ Jansen, The Making, 35.

²⁹⁶ Vézelay's possession of her relics was recognized in a papal bull from 1058. *Ibid.*, 36.

Many of the legends that supplied the details of Mary Magdalene's life (and served as textual sources for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*) came into being in connection with Vézelay's acquisition of her relics. How Mary Magdalene's body came to rest particularly at Vézelay was explained in a "pious fiction" circulating in the eleventh century. According to this tale, in 749, a monk, Badilus, was sent to Provence, where her body was buried at St. Maximin's, to recover her relics from Saracen invaders.²⁹⁷ Accounting for how her relics originally came to France was the subject of the *vita apostolica*.²⁹⁸ Recall that in this legend, which was assimilated into the *Golden Legend*, Mary Magdalene was set adrift in a rudderless boat with her companions. Guided by the Lord, the group landed safely in Marseilles, where Mary Magdalene converted the pagan rulers there to Christianity. Specific episodes in this legend, including the *Sea Journey* and *Arrival at Marseilles*, are represented on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.

Although Mary Magdalene's cult grew through efforts at Vézelay, Saint-Maximin's in Provence eventually overshadowed the famous abbey. In 1279, Charles of Salerno miraculously found Mary Magdalene's relics in the crypt of Saint-Maximin's, where they were ceremoniously placed in the presence of church authorities the following year.²⁹⁹ Despite the negative affect that this "holy theft" had on Vézelay, France still maintained their proprietary role relative to the Magdalene's cult.

In the Late Middle Ages, largely through the possession of Mary Magdalene's relics, France, first at Vézelay and later at St. Maximin's, became the premiere cult center for

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 38.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 39.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 41.

Magdalene veneration. Not only did Mary Magdalene's cult center reside in France but so did those of her legendary siblings, Martha and Lazarus. To the southwest of Dijon, in Autun, was the cult church for Lazarus. Martha's pilgrimage church was in Tarascon, which she had evangelized. In addition to these sites, St. Baume, Aix and Avallon all claimed to possess particular relics of the Bethany siblings.³⁰⁰

Further support for the relationship to France was not only the prominence of Mary Magdalene's cult at Vézelay, but also the absence of a Magdalene cult in Tiefenbronn. Recall that Piccard claimed that no evidence existed for a Magdalene cult at Tiefenbronn at the time the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was created. Not only was Mary Magdalene not an official patron of the Tiefenbronn church in the fifteenth century but no benefice dedicated to her appeared until the sixteenth century.³⁰¹ Not considering other evidence for Magdalene veneration, Piccard asserted that it would not have been logical to find a cycle of Magdalene imagery in a place that lacked a strong Magdalene cult.

Not only did Mary Magdalene not have a cult at Tiefenbronn, but the claim that a Magdalene cycle was unique for shrine altars in the region downplayed her popularity. Hans Rott identified the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as the only known representation of the Magdalene legend among Upper Rhenish shrine altars.³⁰² In contrast to the rarity of

³⁰⁰ One of the dedicatory saints of the altarpiece, Erhard, also came from Narbonne. Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 132.

³⁰¹ Among the pieces of evidence used to dismiss the existence of a Magdalene cult was the late date of Mary Magdalene's establishment as a patron and benefice in her name. She was not officially a patron of the church until the eighteenth century. In addition, the benefice, which was not established until 1526, was never wealthy. Piccard, *Der Magdalenenaltar*, 68-70; 94-5.

³⁰² Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 132.

the Magdalene legend as the subject for altarpieces in south Germany, many have been identified in Provence. (None of the seven documented French altarpieces depicting the Magdalene legend are extant).³⁰³

While there are clear ties between Mary Magdalene and France, premised on her cult and fostered in Medieval legend, attributing the inspiration for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* to France is problematic. Not only is there no solid evidence for this assumption, but a consideration of the Magdalene cult in Germany and the Magdalene iconography that developed there definitively refutes the proposition that France influenced the subject of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.

Mary Magdalene's Cult in Germany

Although France held an important position in the development and propagation of Mary Magdalene's cult in the High and Late Middle Ages, the argument that France inspired the appearance of a Magdalene cycle in Tiefenbronn overlooks several important facts. Foremost, suggestions that France, because it was the Magdalene's most important cult center, had exclusive rights to her veneration, does not take into consideration Mary Magdalene's widespread popularity in Germany. In his article on the Magdalene cult in Germany, Hans Hansel, emphasized that her western cult did not spread only from the grave monuments in Vézelay as is often assumed in scholarship. Rather, like all of Christ's immediate companions, she was celebrated from an early point without a specific cult center.³⁰⁴ Evidence for Magdalene devotion in Germany is well-documented

³⁰³ Troescher, "Die Pilgerfahrt," 127-8.

³⁰⁴ H. Hansel, "Die Geschichte der Magdalenenverehrung in Deutschland," Volk und Volkstum, Jahrbuch für Volkskunde 1 (1936): 270.

already in the early Middle Ages. Dating from the tenth and eleventh centuries, the oldest hymns and sequences in Mary Magdalene's honor originated in southern German monasteries.³⁰⁵ As further testimony to the strength of Mary Magdalene in Germany, next to her feast day of July 22, a *festum conversionis* was also celebrated in connection with the Feast of Christ on March 1, 10 or 11.³⁰⁶

Of special significance to Mary Magdalene's following in Germany was the creation of the order of Mary Magdalene, which was first established in Wurms before spreading rapidly to other cities.³⁰⁷ The dissemination and appeal of the Magdalene Order contributed to the blossoming of her cult in Germany, where specific measures indicate her growing popularity. Among these, the Magdalene's feast day was raised to the rank of a special holy day, and Pope Gregory the IX expressly recommended in a letter (1228) to the Episcopate and clergy of Germany that the feast of Mary Magdalene should be celebrated in all churches of the diocese.³⁰⁸ In addition, in order to increase the respect of Mary Magdalene convents and encourage thoughts of penitence in the people, Gregory

³⁰⁵ The hymns *Jesu Christus auctor vitae* and *Votiva cunctis orbita* are contained in liturgical books from Verona, Seckau, Rheinau, Prüfening, Schäftlarn, Zwiefalten, and Admont, which date from the tenth and eleventh centuries. In addition, the creators of the oldest sequences were Hermann from Reichenau and Gottshalk from Limbourg. *Ibid.*, 272.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ Rudolph from Wurms founded the Magdalene order in 1224. Outside of Wurms, in the decade after the order was established, Magdalene convents were created in Strasbourg, Mühlhausen, Thüringen, Würzburg, Speyer, Frankfurt a. M., Mainz, Cologne, Basel, Regensburg, and Erfurt. For more information on the history and development of the Magdalene Order, see Hansel, "Magdalenenverehrung in Deutschland," 274, n. 2.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 274.

IX granted all believers an indulgence upon the visit to a Mary Magdalene church on the Annunciation and Assumption of the Virgin, the Feast of Mary Magdalene, the church dedication day or in Easter week. Finally, Gregory IX instructed the Franciscans and Dominicans in their sermons to recommend the Magdalene's "Liebestätigkeit."³⁰⁹ Along with the Magdalene Order, Mary Magdalene's popularity increased because of her role in mystery plays. As a leading character in Christ's passion she had a prominent role.³¹⁰

Signs of Magdalene Devotion at Tiefenbronn

While the extent of Mary Magdalene's cult in Germany alone casts doubt on the notion that the selection of a Magdalene cycle came from France, evidence of her veneration at Tiefenbronn supports that her portrayal likely arose from local sources. Before considering the evidence for a Magdalene cult at Tiefenbronn, it is first necessary to qualify this term. In her monograph on Mary Magdalene, Katherine Jansen described a cult as "acts of reverential devotion or homage paid to a holy person or saint."³¹¹ In studies on Mary Magdalene scholars have identified both documentary and physical evidence for her cult at particular locations. Classified among documentary signs of Magdalene devotion are liturgical calendars, prayers for her feast day, and masses dedicated in her honor. Physical evidence includes possession of her relics and altar dedications.³¹²

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 275.

³¹⁰ Maria Schütte, Der Schwäbische Schnitzaltar (Strasbourg, 1907), 8.

³¹¹ Jansen, The Making, 3, n. 2.

³¹² Ibid., 35-36.

Especially significant for the establishment of a Magdalene cult or following at Tiefenbronn is the dedication of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Recall that the altar's dedicatory saints, Mary Magdalene, Anthony and Erhard, are listed in the dedicatory inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* which is original. Considered the earliest piece of evidence for Mary Magdalene's cult is an altar dedicated in her honor. In 974 in Halberstadt, Germany an altar was dedicated to some holy virgins, including Martha and Mary.³¹³ Similar to the altar at Halberstadt Mary Magdalene was among those in whose name the altar at Tiefenbronn was dedicated; an indication that Tiefenbronn was home to a Magdalene cult.

Acknowledging the dedication of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as an indication of a Magdalene following at Tiefenbronn also calls attention to the problems regarding Piccard's assumption (Chapter Three) that there was no evidence for her cult there. By narrowly defining what he considered as evidence for a Magdalene cult at Tiefenbronn, namely the church dedication to the Virgin Mary and absence of an official Magdalene feast day and benefice in her name, he overlooked the fact that an altar dedication is widely accepted as a physical manifestation of a saint's cult. In emphasizing the church's dedication to the Virgin Mary, Piccard also dismissed the reality that in many churches in the region the church patron and pilgrimage saint were not always one and the same.³¹⁴

Discussed in Chapter Three, along with an altar dedication another manifestation of a saint's cult is through the prevalence of their images in a specific location. In her study of

³¹³ Haskins, *Myth and Metaphor*, 112.

³¹⁴ It was not uncommon for churches to be the home for a saint's cult that was not the church patron. For a list of these in the region of Tiefenbronn, see Franz Heinzmann and Mathias Köhler, *Der Magdalenenaltar des Lucas Moser in der gotischen Basilika Tiefenbronn* (Regensburg, 1994), 7.

shrine altars in Swabia, where the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was created, Maria Schütte identified Mary Magdalene as one of the most popular female saints in the region. In terms of the frequency of her representation, Mary Magdalene, along with St. Anne and St. Margaret, followed only slightly behind the two favorite saints in Swabia, St. Catherine and St. John the Evangelist. When represented as part of a group, Mary Magdalene was often placed with the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist, who had a higher rank than other saints.³¹⁵

Not only does visual evidence document Mary Magdalene's beloved status in Swabia, recall that at Tiefenbronn, Mary Magdalene figured prominently in visual imagery from the church's inception. At the time the church was built, Mary Magdalene was sculpted on the exterior of the choir along with the Virgin. It is also likely that she was one of the standing figures represented on the destroyed wall altar behind the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.

While representations of Mary Magdalene from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries demonstrate her early popularity, the images of her even after the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was created, document the steady development of her following at Tiefenbronn. Although the high altar by Hans Schüchlin is essentially a Marian altarpiece, Mary Magdalene's prominence in the scenes is noteworthy. Because of her numerous appearances, Mathias Köhler referred to the high altar as not only a Passion cycle or Marian cycle, but also a Magdalene cycle (Fig. 34). Mary Magdalene appears in seven of the nine scenes of the Passion and Resurrection.³¹⁶ Because of the prominence

³¹⁵ Ibid., 18-19.

³¹⁶ Heinzmann and Köhler, Der Magdalenenaltar, 6.

of Mary Magdalene in the shrine of the high altar, Maria Schütte identified Tiefenbronn as the cult center for her in Germany.³¹⁷ Additional Magdalene imagery in the church at Tiefenbronn includes a carved representation of her holding an ointment jar at the end of the choir stall, which was executed c. 1510 (Fig. 35). The renovation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* with an enlarged shrine and larger sculpture must be viewed not only as testimony to the significance of the altarpiece, but also her popularity.

Mary Magdalene's elevated status is evident not only in the numerous representations of her in the Tiefenbronn church, but in a documented account from 1559 describing her Feast as a special day of pilgrimage. Located in the ecclesiastical regulations of the Herzog Christoph von Würzburg a description of pilgrimage to Tiefenbronn states that, "men, women, young and old come from far away places through the forest for pilgrimage during Passion week. In addition to this there is a great pilgrimage on Mary Magdalene's day."³¹⁸ It can be inferred that in order for a "great pilgrimage" to have taken place in her name that a Magdalene following developed at a much earlier point than historical documents suggest. Although the specific sequence of events in the elevation of Mary Magdalene from a nominal saint, to a joint patron, to the patron of the church at Tiefenbronn cannot be precisely traced, visual representations of her document her unwavering popularity. Moreover, there can be no doubt that the Magdalene imagery at Tiefenbronn helped to promote and sustain her cult.

³¹⁷ Schütte, Der Schwäbische Schnitzaltar, 19.

³¹⁸ Mathias Köhler, St. Maria Magdalena Tiefenbronn (Lindenberg, 1998), 3.

The *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and Magdalene Iconography in Germany

In attributing the subject of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* to French influence, scholars not only overlooked proof of her cult in Germany, but also the visual evidence of her sustained importance at Tiefenbronn. Other evidence not yet considered in the literature that dismisses a direct relationship between the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* subject and a French influence are the numerous Magdalene cycles created in the fourteenth century in Germany. Not only does a consideration of these cycles counter the suggestion that a cyclical depiction of Mary Magdalene was unique for southwest Germany, it reveals the iconographic dependence of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* on them. Suggesting that Magdalene imagery was uncommon in the region, recall that Hans Rott referred to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as the only Upper Rhenish shrine altar depicting a Magdalene cycle. Not only is this statement inaccurate, since there is evidence for other Magdalene altarpieces in the region, but it fails to convey the true scope of Mary Magdalene's popularity in Germany as reflected in the visual arts.³¹⁹ Many Magdalene cycles were created in the fourteenth century in Germany in a variety of media the most important of which was manuscript illumination. The period not only witnessed a rise in the representation of Magdalene cycles but it was, at this time, that Germany formulated its own Magdalene iconography. The development of a regional Magdalene iconography is important in the consideration of French influence, presuming that if Mary Magdalene

³¹⁹ In her study of Magdalene iconography, Marga Anstett-Janßen identified several scenes of Mary Magdalene's *Elevation*, which were originally scenes in Magdalene altarpieces. These representations of Mary Magdalene, including Multscher's *Elevation*, and a relief from Thorn were all created around the time of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. An additional representation of the Magdalene's *Elevation*, now in a museum in Strasbourg, was originally part of an altarpiece, which originated in the Upper Rhine region. Anstett-Janßen, "Ikonographie," 262.

was chosen as the subject for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* through a direct connection to France that its imagery would reflect French iconography. Evident not only in the subjects selected and their sequencing, but in the details of their representation is the distinctive German character imparted by its iconographic sources. While the following consideration of the altarpiece's German iconographic sources is heavily indebted to Marga Anstett-Janßen's landmark study of Late Gothic and Renaissance Magdalene iconography, her observations were never taken into account in the context of French influence. In fact, if we consider Charles Sterling's suggestion, several years after Anstett-Janßen's study, that the idea for a Magdalene cycle likely came from Provençal clergy in the region, it is clear that the relevance of its German iconography for the subject of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was not understood. In its familiarity with earlier German Magdalene cycles this study also builds on Anstett-Janßen's observations on Moser's iconographic sources, reinforcing in the scenes selected, their sequencing, and emphasis on Martha and Lazarus the connection between the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and earlier German works.

In the *Anointing*, the initial scene of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, the unique traits of German Magdalene iconography are evident in the details of its representation. In the selection of the *Anointing* as the initial scene for a Magdalene cycle, the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* followed the earlier Magdalene iconography established in France and Italy.³²⁰

Its placement at the beginning of her life had already migrated to Germany, however, by

³²⁰ In French stained glass cycles, it was the starting point at Chartres and Bourges. It was also the first scene in many of the important Magdalene cycles in Italy, including the painted panel by the Magdalene Master (1280) and the frescos in Assisi and Florence (the Bargello and the Rinuccini chapel).

the fourteenth century. The *Anointing* was the first scene in the oldest and only surviving fourteenth century German fresco in the village of Dusch in Graubünden (Fig. 36).³²¹

While the iconography of the Anointing was established in Italian wall painting, its location outdoors and allusions to the Magdalene's high birth betray a dependence on German representations of the scene. In contrast to illustrations of the Anointing in Italian monumental fresco painting, such as the depiction of the scene in the Guidalotti-Rinuccini chapel, where it takes place in an architecturally defined space, in Moser's altarpiece, the scene clearly takes place outside (Fig. 37). The staging of the *Anointing* out in the open was peculiar to German representations and was established in German examples prior to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. In the aforementioned fresco cycle depicting the Magdalene's life at Dusch, the outdoor setting is indicated in a similar manner to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* scene by a strip of green grass.³²²

Representations of the *Anointing* in German manuscript illumination were also located at a banquet held outside. In the Magdalene legend from a late fourteenth-century manuscript in the British Museum, the scene of the *Anointing* was represented in a similar manner to both the fresco at Dusch and the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* through a strip of green sprinkled with blades of grass.³²³ In comparison to these earlier

³²¹ This fresco has been attributed to the Waltensburger Master, who was active between 1325 and 1350 in Graubünden. The scenes of the *Anointing*, the *Raising of Lazarus*, the *Preaching of Mary Magdalene to the Rulers of Marseilles*, the *Elevation* and the *Last Communion* are arranged horizontally without borders between the scenes. Ibid., 200-203

³²² Ibid.

³²³ This manuscript was created between 1370 and 1380 by Bertholdus Heyder and includes representations of the *Raising of Lazarus*, *Noli me tangere*, the *Magdalene Preaching to the Rulers of Marseilles*, the *Elevation*, the *Last Communion* and the *Death of Martha*. The origins of it, however, remain uncertain. Anstett-Janßen, "Ikonographie," 213-216.

representations, the effect of being outdoors is even more pronounced in the *St. Magdalene Anointing* through the vine-encircled lattice behind the figures at the table. Another example of the *Anointing's* dependence on German models is in the representation of the Magdalene wearing an elaborate fur-trimmed robe. Making reference to her privileged birth, the Magdalene was first represented in fur-lined robes in a Franciscan manuscript, created around 1330 in Bamberg (Fig. 38).³²⁴

Following the *Anointing*, the scene of the *Sea Journey*, although not commonly found in German Magdalene cycles, provides, paradoxically, the most concrete evidence for the dependence of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* on earlier German cycles. In contrast to the infrequent portrayal of the *Sea Journey* in German cycles where representations of Mary Magdalene preaching was favored, it became a standard episode in Magdalene cycles in France and Italy, because it marked the initial stage of her apostolic life.³²⁵ While the distant influence of Italian representations is visible in Moser's portrayal, particularly Giotto's *Sea Journey* in Assisi (Fig. 39),³²⁶ Anstett-Janßen identified a German source for

³²⁴ The cycle includes the scenes of the *Feast in the House of Simon*, *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*, the *Raising of Lazarus*, *Noli me tangere*, *Apostola Apostolorum*, *Mary Magdalene Preaching to the Rulers of Marseilles*, the two depictions of the *Elevation*, the *Last Communion* and the *Death of Martha*. Most of the scenes were depicted in the border initials. The manuscript, Hist. 149, is in the Staatlichen Bibliothek in Bamberg. Ibid., 204-209.

³²⁵ In three of the fourteenth-century Magdalene cycles in Germany (the fresco at Dusch, the Franciscan manuscript in Bamberg and the London Manuscript by Bertholdus Heyder), the scene of Mary Magdalene Preaching introduced her legendary life. Ibid., 214.

³²⁶ Although the scene of the Magdalene and her companions set adrift was first represented in Chartres, Giotto's version at Assisi became more influential for late medieval depictions of the scene. In particular, Giotto contributed a developed seascape, which became an established feature of subsequent representations of the *Sea Journey*. In

its representation on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*: an illustrated copy of *Der Saelden Hort*. A medieval alemannic Magdalene poem, the *Saelden Hort* was created around 1300 in the region of Basel and survives in different copies.³²⁷ The identification of the *Saelden Hort* as a source is of great importance in the consideration of the German character of the iconography, since it accounts for two rarely portrayed scenes on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*: the *Sea Journey* and *Arrival*. The illustration of two subjects not included in any Magdalene cycles in Germany outside of the *Saelden Hort* also suggests that Moser or a theological advisor had direct reference to an illustrated copy of the poem. It is also significant that the poem as well as the extant copies all likely originated in southwest Germany.

Presently, two illustrated texts of *Der Saelden Hort* are extant. The earlier text (*Codex Vindobonensis 2841*), was created around 1390 and is now located in Vienna. Although the second text (*St. Georgen 66*) in Karlsruhe was created in 1420, its iconography reflects the fourteenth century, since it was based on a fourteenth-century model. The Vienna *Saelden Hort* and the Karlsruhe *Saelden Hort* were based on the same model, which would have originated before 1390, the date of the manuscript in Vienna, presumably in the region of the Upper Rhine. The original scenes of the model can be gauged through a compilation of both the Vienna and Karlsruhe versions of the text.³²⁸

addition to the developed seascape, in contrast to the ship in the version of the scene at Chartres, Giotto was the first to place the Magdalene and her companions in a rudderless boat. Giotto's emphasis on the rudderless boat supplied much of the meaning for the theme of the scene, which rests on Divine intervention. *Ibid.*, 172.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 219.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

The Karlsruhe *Saelden Hort* includes twenty-four additional scenes, and unlike the text in Vienna illustrates the Magdalene's legendary life. Artistically, in comparison to the version in Vienna, the Karlsruhe *Saelden Hort* is more detailed in its depictions.³²⁹

Of particular relevance to the study of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, in part because of the representation of the *Sea Journey*, is the second version, the *Saelden Hort* in Karlsruhe. In this manuscript, in its first known appearance in Germany, the theme of the *Sea Journey* was the subject of two scenes.³³⁰ In the first representation only the four main characters of the narrative are included in the boat: Mary Magdalene, Martha, Lazarus and Maximin (Fig. 40). There are a few subtle differences between the second version of the *Sea Journey* and the first. In the second *Sea Journey*, accompanying the four main figures is the group of Christians who were exiled with them (Fig. 41).

Since the subject of the *Sea Journey* was not commonly portrayed in German cycles, its presence on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* suggests that it was transmitted through a copy of the *Saelden Hort*. Further strengthening the iconographic connections between the *Saelden Hort* and the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* is its middle scene, the *Arrival*. In the portrayal of the *Arrival* on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* represented jointly for the first time are Mary Magdalene's appearance to the rulers (above) and the depiction of her companions sleeping before the city gates of Marseilles (below). Not only had these scenes not been previously combined, but taken individually, they were rarely included in

³²⁹ Ibid., 218. For a list of illustrations in the Codex Vindobonensis 2841 or the Vienna *Saelden Hort*, see p. 220. In addition to the illustrations on p. 220, the Karlsruhe *Saelden Hort* also included 24 additional scenes, which are listed on p. 221.

³³⁰ Ibid., 227.

Magdalene cycles in Germany.³³¹ Although not common features of Magdalene cycles, the appearance of these scenes on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* can be explained by the *Saelden Hort*, which contains the only extant German representations of Mary Magdalene's appearance to the rulers of Marseilles and her companions before the city gates. Examining the depiction of Mary Magdalene's appearance to the rulers of Marseilles in the uppermost portion of the *Arrival*, a generalized connection to the scene on the Karlsruhe *Saelden Hort* exists (Fig. 42). Compositional similarities include the off-center placement of the Magdalene who addresses the rulers from the end of their bed.³³² Most importantly, however, the presence of the *Arrival* in the *Saelden Hort* supports that a version of it was a source for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.

In the Karlsruhe *Saelden Hort*, the scene following Mary Magdalene's *Appearance* is her *Companions Before the City Gates of Marseilles*. Outside of the representation of this scene in the Karlsruhe manuscript there are no extant versions of it besides on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* (Fig. 43).³³³ In the Karlsruhe portrayal of the scene, the Magdalene and her companions stand with lowered heads before the tall city gates of Marseilles. Similar to the portrayal of Mary Magdalene's companions on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* is the architectural backdrop where the houses of the city are visible beyond the city's walls.

³³¹ Outside of the *Saelden Hort*, the only other representation of the Magdalene Appearing to the Rulers in their Bedchamber is in the stained glass at Auxerre. In the stained glass windows at Auxerre, this scene is the fourth episode illustrated.

³³² Anstett-Janßen, "Ikonographie," 268.

³³³ *Ibid.*

Depicted on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* are several infrequently portrayed episodes of the Magdalene's *vita*. While not commonly found in German Magdalene iconography, they are indebted to a German source: a copy of the *Saelden Hort*. Not only did the *Saelden Hort* serve as a source for the infrequently depicted scenes of the *Sea Journey* and the *Arrival* (with its combined portrayal of the Mary Magdalene's appearance to the rulers of Marseilles and her companions sleeping before the city gates of Marseilles) it also explains the sequence of scenes on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. In the Karlsruhe *Saelden Hort* the scenes of the *Sea Journey*, *Companions Before the City Gates*, and *Mary Magdalene's Appearance* appear sequentially. As Anstett-Janßen noted, Moser's combination of these scenes suggests that he probably knew the original manuscript on which the Karlsruhe *Saelden Hort* was based or another copy of it.³³⁴

Although a copy of the *Saelden Hort* informed the selection of the *Sea Journey* and *Arrival* as scenes on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, it was not a source for the *Last Communion*. The theme of the Last Communion comes from the segment of Mary Magdalene's legendary life as a penitent in the desert; a segment which was not illustrated in the *Saelden Hort*, precluding it as a source. Similar to the initial scene of the altarpiece, the *Anointing*, the selection of the Last Communion as the last episode of her life on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as well as the details of its portrayal can be attributed to German Magdalene iconography. Indicating its significance, the scene of Mary Magdalene's Last Communion was the earliest episode from the Magdalene's legendary life to appear in Germany. It first appeared in the *Nuremberg Graduale*, which

³³⁴ Ibid.

is dated around 1300.³³⁵ After its introduction in the *Nuremberg Graduale*, the scene continued to be popular in German cycles, becoming one of the key scenes from her legendary life in cyclical depictions. The Last Communion was included in the fresco at Dusch and the Franciscan manuscript in Bamberg. In later fourteenth-century cycles the scene was found in a manuscript from a Poor Clares Convent³³⁶ and may have been one of the missing scenes from the *Altarpiece of the Bethany Siblings* made earlier for the same convent in Nuremberg.³³⁷ Dating from the same time as this altarpiece, it was also included in the illustrations in the British Museum manuscript by Heyder.

Even though the subject of the Last Communion was adopted in Germany from Italian cycles, where the penitent life of the Magdalene was emphasized, the iconographic details of the *St. Magdalene* representation conform to German iconography. The staging of the scene in a church as opposed to the wilderness which was standard in Italian representations, such as that in the Bargello, betrays a German iconographic model (Fig. 44). In most German representations of the Last Communion beginning with the earliest

³³⁵ Although not a Magdalene cycle, the *Nuremberg Graduale* contains the earliest depiction of the Magdalene's legendary life in Germany. It has been stylistically designated as either Frankish or Upper-Rhenish. *Ibid.*, 156.

³³⁶ Depicted in this manuscript are two scenes from the Magdalene's life: *Noli me tangere* and the *Last Communion*. It is in the Bamberg Staatsbibliothek (Hist. 159). *Ibid.*, 213.

³³⁷ This dismantled altarpiece is now divided between the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg and the Bayerischen Nationalmuseum in Munich. Nuremberg possesses the *Anointing*, *Raising of Lazarus* and *Death of Martha*. Only one scene, the *Noli me tangere*, is in Munich. In addition to the surviving scenes, it has been suggested that missing representations included the *Magdalene Preaching in Marseilles*, the *Elevation* and the *Last Communion*. *Ibid.*, 209-212.

in the *Nuremberg Graduale*, the scene takes place in the oratory of Maximian.³³⁸ The staging of the scene in a church was used again for the *Last Communion* in the Franciscan manuscript in Bamberg where it takes place in front of an altar (Fig. 45).³³⁹ Although Moser staged the scene in a church portal, as opposed to before an altar, the church setting is dependent on German representations of the Last Communion.

The extent to which the selection of the *Last Communion* follows German Magdalene iconography is reflected in its placement after the scene of the *Arrival*. In most of the fourteenth-century German Magdalene cycles, a scene from Mary Magdalene's penitent life followed her missionary activities in Gaul. For example, in the Dusch fresco, the representation of *Mary Magdalene Preaching* is followed by her *Elevation in the Wilderness*. Thus, in placing the *Last Communion*, a scene from her penitent life after the *Arrival* (a scene from her apostolate), the sequence of the Magdalene's life, narrated on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, follows standard German iconography. Another characteristic that conforms to earlier German cycles is the absence of her journey with the rulers of Marseilles and miraculous ability to provide them with a child. Recall that while this part of her legend, commonly referred to as the Miracle of Marseilles, was a standard feature of Magdalene cycles in France and Italy, in Germany it was bypassed in favor of her penitent life (Fig. 46).³⁴⁰

³³⁸ This is the earliest known representation of the Magdalene's legendary life in Germany. *Ibid.*, 157.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 208.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

It can be concluded from the preceding discussion of the iconographic sources for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* that its programmer was thoroughly familiar with and closely adhered to German Magdalene iconography established in the fourteenth century. Not only did the advisor display knowledge of the sequencing of scenes but also an acquaintance with specific details. Similar to the Magdalene cycles of the fourteenth century, the Magdalene's *vita* is introduced in the *Anointing*. The choice of the *Last Communion* as the final scene, demonstrates the importance of the Magdalene's penitent life, which was emphasized in Germany. In the representation of these scenes the unique formulas for their portrayal were borrowed from German iconography. For the scene of the *Anointing* the staging of the scene outdoors instead of in an architecturally defined space was standard practice in German representations. The setting of the *Last Communion* in a church as opposed to the wilderness also stems from earlier German models. While the scenes of the *Sea Journey* and the *Arrival* did not commonly appear in Magdalene cycles, they were informed by a German source. For the somewhat unusual scenes of the *Sea Journey* and the *Arrival*, it can only be assumed that the theological advisor of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* had direct knowledge of a version of an illustrated poem of the Magdalene's life, the *Saelden Hort*.

While earlier scholarship established some of the iconographic sources of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, the prominence of Lazarus and Martha in earlier German cycles has gone unnoticed. Recall that the attribution of the subject to France was partially derived from the emphasis in the imagery on Martha and Lazarus. The emphasis on the Bethany siblings in earlier Magdalene cycles in Germany, however, further refutes this assumption. Prior to the creation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, jointly portraying these

siblings was already a well-established tradition in Germany. In the Franciscan Bamberg Manuscript the last third of the manuscript was devoted to Mary Magdalene and Martha.³⁴¹ The final scene of the Magdalene cycle in this manuscript concludes not with a scene from her legend, but rather with Martha's death, which was recounted in Martha's vita (Fig. 47).³⁴² Suggesting their unity, not only manuscripts, but altarpieces, represented scenes from the life of Mary Magdalene, Martha, and Lazarus together. Panels from the *Altarpiece of the Bethany Siblings* for the Poor Clares Convent in Nuremberg, formed an altarpiece of Mary Magdalene and her Siblings. In this altarpiece, scenes of the Magdalene's life were represented along with scenes that focused on Lazarus and Martha. Accompanying the *Anointing* are the *Raising of Lazarus* and the *Death of Martha*. Dedications of works also suggest that the Bethany siblings were commonly thought of as a unit in Germany. The manuscript made around 1370 for the Poor Clares convent in Nuremberg, while depicting only scenes from the Magdalene's life, was dedicated not only to her but to Martha and Lazarus as well.³⁴³

There can be no doubt after a consideration of the work's iconography that no relationship to France existed in the selection of Mary Magdalene as the subject of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. It stands to reason that if Moser's experience of French art or if the Provençal high clergy had influenced the subject matter that the iconography would follow the French tradition, especially in representing the miraculous deeds of her legend. Mary Magdalene was a significant saint in Germany and frequently formed the subject of

³⁴¹ Anstett-Janßen, "Ikonographie," 204.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 208.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 213.

cyclical images in a variety of media. Informing the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was the tradition of Magdalene iconography that developed in Germany.

Patronage and Subject Matter

While the popularity of Mary Magdalene as a saint at Tiefenbronn and her frequent depiction in contemporary religious art explains the presence of a Magdalene cycle in Tiefenbronn how her life became the subject of this particular work remains unanswered. The conventional explanation that Moser was familiar with Magdalene cycles and monuments in France, implying that he contributed to her selection as the subject for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, is problematic on a number of levels. While a more detailed discussion of the possibility that Moser trained abroad is presented in Chapter Six, it is relevant to the consideration of the subject here that there is no firm evidence placing Moser in France. More importantly, it has been well-established in the literature that the donor or patron of an ecclesiastical decoration played a crucial role in the selection of a particular subject. That the “donor was the one to order the painting and thereby hire the artist, choose the location and at least confirm the subject, if not order it directly” is testimony to their critical role.³⁴⁴ Thus, Moser’s training or familiarity with French iconographic traditions is irrelevant.

Equally suspect is the notion that a meeting with the Provençal high clergy played a role in conveying the idea for a Magdalene theme in Tiefenbronn. While this claim does at least acknowledge the role of the donor, there is no reason to implicate a third party in the selection of an altarpiece’s subject. In the period under consideration, choosing a particular saint stemmed from an individual’s devotion to him or her. Donors often chose

³⁴⁴ Shirley Neilsen Blum, Early Netherlandish Triptychs: A Study in Patronage (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969), 2.

their own patron saint or saints to whom they showed particular veneration to be the subject or included in their donated works. In the study of altarpiece imagery it has been noted that the “donor was able to register himself in his altarpiece through the choice of representations manifesting his personal devotion; in particular, the choice of saints gave obvious opportunities for references to one’s name and activities.”³⁴⁵

Unfortunately it is not possible to go beyond the general observation that it was the patron of the altarpiece, who, in most instances, selected the theme. While the predella coats-of-arms have been securely identified as belonging to Bernhard von Stein zu Steinegg and Frau Engelin/Agnes Maiser von Berg, who married around 1410, defining the relationship of the imagery to their owners is problematic, since it is uncertain if they were slightly later owners.³⁴⁶ It is also not possible to determine the identity of the donor based on the coats-of-arms in the *Last Communion*. Although the coat-of-arms above the cleric is that of the Stein family, the shield in the stained glass remains unidentified. In the question of the subject of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and the role of the patron what is important to keep in mind is that even though their identity remains uncertain, according to donation practices, it was the patron who normally dictated the subject of his or her commission. Connecting the donor of the altarpiece to its imagery is only one element of a contextual consideration of the work. Despite the drawbacks associated with

³⁴⁵ Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven and London), 82.

³⁴⁶ Straub, R., Richter, E.-L., Härlin, H. & Brandt, W., “Der Magdalenenaltar des Lucas Moser. Eine technische Studie,” in: Althöfer, H., Straub, R. & Willemsen, E., *Beiträge zur Untersuchung und Konservierung mittelalterlicher Kunstwerke*, (Stuttgart, 1974), 43.

this endeavor, other evidence firmly connects the altarpiece's imagery to its home in the Tiefenbronn parish church: the identity of its theological advisor.

The Theological Advisor: Documenting the Local

Although it was the donor of the altarpiece, who usually specified its subject, there was frequently a theological advisor, who in the case of a cycle, likely selected the scenes and their sequence as well as the manner of their representation. There is evidence in the iconography of the altarpiece as well as the historical situation at Tiefenbronn that it was the abbot of the Hirsau cloister, located eight kilometers from Tiefenbronn. Identifying the advisor as the Hirsau Abbot is significant on several levels. First, it documents how the imagery of the altarpiece was shaped by contextual factors, namely, the relationship between Tiefenbronn, the Hirsau monastery and its Abbot. It also sheds light on the meaning of the scenes selected, since they reflect monastic concerns.

In the literature on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, two suggestions as to the identity of the programmer have arisen. In his article on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, Sterling proposed that the seated cleric in the scene of the *Last Communion*, identified by him as a member of the Stein von Steinegg family, was also the altarpiece's theological advisor.³⁴⁷ He connected the figure with the Stein von Steinegg family through a small escutcheon of that family found carved on the choir stall above his head. Outside of this, Sterling provided no evidence to support his identification or his claim that this was the theological advisor. A more plausible identification for the figure is that of the Hirsau Abbot, Wolfram Maiser von Berg, whom Hans Rott earlier proposed as the programmer

³⁴⁷ Sterling, "Observations," 20.

of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.³⁴⁸ Not only is this logical considering the abbot's position to Tiefenbronn, but his familial relationship to the owners of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* also make him the logical choice for the theological advisor. This identification is also supported by its iconographic sources and scenes selected.

Although later a possession of a noble family, the village of Tiefenbronn was founded and originally owned by the nearby Hirsau monastery (Fig. 48). Even after Hirsau relinquished possession of Tiefenbronn, they maintained formal ties with the church, which continued into the late Gothic period. Recall that the Tiefenbronn church, now known as St. Maria Magdalena, was until 1455 (only then did they receive official parish status), a filial chapel to the Hirsau cloister's parish church of St. Agapitus. In surviving documents the abbots of Hirsau are referred to as the *Kastvogt* and *Pfleger* of the Tiefenbronn church.³⁴⁹ Further evidence of the presence of the Hirsau abbots at Tiefenbronn are in their donations to both its building and decoration.³⁵⁰ The coat-of-arms of Maiser von Berg's successor, Bernhard von Gernsbach, on the high altar by Hans Schüchlin, is testimony to Hirsau's patronage and persistent relationship to the church.³⁵¹

It is worth mentioning that Wolfram was also known as a patron of the arts. According to the writings of a later Hirsau abbot, Trithemius, Maiser von Berg, founded many new buildings at Hirsau and in other locations including a new abbot's dwelling and permitted

³⁴⁸ Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 125.

³⁴⁹ Piccard, *Der Magdalenenaltar*, 76.

³⁵⁰ Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 124.

³⁵¹ Hans Rott, *Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn bei Pforzheim* (Augsburg, 1929), 16.

the erection of several new altars in the cloister in 1448.³⁵² As an art patron, he would have been familiar with Magdalene imagery elsewhere.

While it has been demonstrated that the coat-of-arms on the right side of the predella of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* do not belong to Abbot Wolfram Maiser von Berg as was once thought, they do belong to his relation.³⁵³ Recall that Hansmartin Decker-Hauff identified this coat-of-arms as those of Agnes Maiser von Berg. It remains uncertain, however, if Wolfram was Agnes' brother. Although the inability to confirm that Agnes was the original patron of the altarpiece, at first appears to undermine the important role of her familial ties to the Abbot, considering the position of Hirsau's abbots as *kastvogt* and their visible presence in the church, it is logical that a Hirsau abbot would be the advisor even if Agnes was not original donor. If Bernhard and Agnes were the original patrons it is reasonable to suppose that the abbot would have served as an advisor for a family member.

Abbot Wolfram and the *Saelden Hort*: A Benedictine Connection

That the abbot was the theological advisor is also supported in both the iconographic sources for the imagery and the selection of the scenes. Charles Sterling described the iconography as much more subtle and sophisticated than is usually supposed.³⁵⁴ This

³⁵² The list included a Sebastian, Christopher, Nicholas, Catherine and Three Kings altar. None of the artist's names have been handed down. Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 125.

³⁵³ Decker-Hauff confirmed that Rott correctly identified the family of the coat of arms as Maiser vom Berg. He could not, however, determine if Wolfram was Agnes's brother. Reiner Hausherr, "'Der Magdalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn.' Bericht über die wissenschaftliche Tagung am 9. und 10. März 1971 im Zentralinstitut in München." *Kunstchronik* 24 (1971): 192.

³⁵⁴ Sterling, "Observations,"

suggests that whoever devised it had a comprehensive knowledge of Magdalene iconography. In identifying the theological advisor of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as the Hirsau Abbot Maiser von Berg it is also significant that the programmer had firsthand knowledge of the *Saelden Hort*. Recall that the scenes of the *Sea Journey* and *Arrival*, which were not frequently included in German Magdalene cycles, were inspired directly by a copy of the *Saelden Hort*. Not only did the poem of the *Saelden Hort* and the surviving illustrated copies originate in southwest Germany, but it may also be significant that the Karlsruhe version originated in a Benedictine monastery, St. George's near Villingen, since Hirsau was also a Benedictine monastery.³⁵⁵ While establishing whether or not the *Saelden Hort* circulated among Benedictines would create a more definitive connection to Hirsau, it seems more than coincidental that one of the only known versions of the poem came from a Benedictine house. Regardless of whether or not the *Saelden Hort* can be identified as specifically "Benedictine", there is significance in recognizing the poem's monastic origins. Recall that the poem originated in an Upper Rhenish monastery. Further reinforcing its ties to monasticism is that the illustrated Karlsruhe version of the poem came from a monastery. The assumption made here, that mainly monks would have had access to the copies of the *Saelden Hort*, while preliminary, does require that a member of a monastic community would have provided the artist with access to an illustrated copy of the *Saelden Hort*.

Mary Magdalene and the Monastic Ideal

Further reinforcing the preceding observation that the programmer of the altarpiece was affiliated with a monastic community are the scenes portrayed on the *St. Magdalene*

³⁵⁵ Anstett-Janßen, "Ikonographie," 218.

Altarpiece. Demonstrated in the following paragraphs, the specific episodes from the Magdalene's life depicted on the altarpiece place a strong emphasis on monastic values. While it is difficult to establish the particularly Benedictine nature of the scenes, since the Magdalene iconography that developed in Germany was largely derived from Italian Mendicant models, acknowledgment of their monastic flavor, nonetheless, provides more evidence that it was a member of a monastic community that devised the iconography of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.

It has been demonstrated in recent literature on Mary Magdalene that certain themes from her life were popularized in a monastic context. In particular, Katherine Jansen has identified some of these through her study of recurring themes from Mary Magdalene's life used in medieval sermons. These themes, popularized in preaching, were reinforced in visual representations of her life. The scenes of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* correspond to the monastic emphasis on Penance, Preaching and Eucharistic devotion.

In the case of the *Anointing*, the widespread popularity of the scene as the starting point of pictorial cycles has been attributed to its connection to and promotion of Penance. Although the choice of the Anointing as the initial scene for this cycle followed iconographic tradition, the significance of it undoubtedly played a part.³⁵⁶ In medieval sermons, Mary Magdalene was put forth as an exemplar of perfect penitence, because she had fulfilled the four stages of penitential obligation: contrition, confession, satisfaction

³⁵⁶ In Zeller's dissertation on the theme in Italian art he analyzed the popularity of the theme in connection with the ecclesiastical/political events related to the transfer of Mary Magdalene's cult from Vézelay and Provence to Italy. See, 54-72. He also pointed out that most of the depictions of the scene were located in mendicant churches of the angvin-guelph oriented cities. Zeller, *Die Salbung*, 90.

and absolution.³⁵⁷ In part, the emphasis on penance in medieval sermons resulted from its institutionalization.³⁵⁸ In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council decreed that in order to participate in Holy Communion, every member of the Church had to make annual confession of their sins.³⁵⁹ The emphasis on Penance was also impacted by the stress on it by the Mendicant orders.

For the public, the example of the penitent Magdalene became a persuasive symbol, because she was a sinner who transformed herself into a saint. The scene of the *Anointing* was so powerful because it was in this scene that Mary Magdalene retreated from her life of sin and began her life as a saint.³⁶⁰ Through her role as a converted sinner the Magdalene “became the primary symbol of hope in the late medieval period.”³⁶¹

Mary Magdalene was not only upheld as a model for penance but she was also extolled for her preaching. Mary Magdalene’s role as *apostola apostolorum* (Apostle to the Apostles) became another popular theme in medieval sermons as well as visual imagery. Initially the title of *Apostolorum Apostola* (Apostle of the Apostles) applied to Mary Magdalene’s role in announcing the resurrection to the Apostles.³⁶² Eventually, however, this title of Apostle to the Apostles came to encompass not only her role as

³⁵⁷ Jansen, The Making, 204. For more information as to how the Magdalene fulfilled each of the requirements of penance, see Jansen, chapter 7.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 200.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 199.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 232.

³⁶² Katherine Ludwig Jansen, “Maria Magdalena: Apostolorum Apostola,” in Women Preachers and Prophets, ed. by Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker, 57-96 (Berkeley, 1998) 57.

herald of Christ's resurrection, but also her mission in France, where her preaching led to the conversion of pagan Gaul.³⁶³ Mary Magdalene's designation as *Apostolorum Apostola* was reinforced not only in medieval preaching and visual imagery but also in the liturgy, sacred drama and devotional literature.³⁶⁴ Directly inspiring the visual imagery, medieval sermons praised her noble work in Gaul. According to an anonymous Franciscan, the men and women there were converted thanks to her preaching.³⁶⁵

Taken together the scenes of *Sea Journey* and the *Arrival* represent Mary Magdalene's Apostolate in France. While the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* portrays her appearance to the rulers instead of the more popular episode of her preaching to the public, it undoubtedly reflects her role as preacher. In narratives of her missionary activities in France, the conversion of the rulers was considered the necessary first step in this mission. A Franciscan preacher, Franciscus of Meryonis, narrated how the saint disseminated the seed of the Word and how, having converted the prince and his wife, she then converted almost all of Provence to the faith of Christ.³⁶⁶

Similar to the scene of the *Anointing*, that of the *Last Communion* of Mary Magdalene served to promote the sacraments. The Fourth Lateran Council, which had made the confession of sin obligatory, also made the reception of the Holy Eucharist a requirement for all church members at least annually at Easter. As a result of the emphasis on the reception of the sacraments, Mary Magdalene's Last Communion became a common

³⁶³ Ibid., 57-8.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 75-77.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 72.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

theme not only in sermons but also in medieval imagery. “Preachers, hagiographers, and artists collaborated on making her a figurehead for Eucharistic devotion.”³⁶⁷

The emphasis on monastic values in the imagery of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* also extends into the predella representation of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. While most of the scenes of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* fit into standard Magdalene iconography, scholars have had some difficulty in accounting for the presence of the Wise and Foolish Virgins on the predella. Not only were the Wise and Foolish Virgins rarely depicted on Swabian predellas, there is no other instance of their presence in a Magdalene cycle. Despite the lack of visual sources to explain the association between the Magdalene and the Wise and Foolish Virgins, it is significant that, in addition to the textual sources, medieval sermons drew parallels between virginity and Mary Magdalene. That Mary Magdalene was upheld as a virgin in medieval monastic sermons may account for how the Wise and Foolish Virgins came to be represented in a Magdalene cycle.³⁶⁸ According to Francois de Meyronnes, it was possible for the Magdalene to receive the quadruple crown the third tier of which was symbolic of virginity. He stated “the third is the floral crown, which is given to virgins, not because she was a virgin but after her conversion she maintained the highest purity of body and mind.”³⁶⁹

In the consideration of Mary Magdalene as the subject for a side altar at Tiefenbronn, earlier scholarship mistakenly turned to France. This chapter demonstrated not only the

³⁶⁷ As a model for the sacrament she became one of the saints most frequently represented on Eucharistic tabernacles. Jansen, *The Making*, 222.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 286.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 242.

insubstantial nature of this assumption, but also emphasized the widespread popularity of Mary Magdalene in Germany, and, specifically at Tiefenbronn. Along with the strength of Mary Magdalene's cult in Germany, the iconography of the altarpiece, entrenched in German sources, strengthened the relationship of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* to the region in which it was created. Instead of looking to foreign sources, the focus on regional influences also provided a new understanding of how the imagery of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was shaped by its context. A preliminary reflection on the theological advisor suggests that it was the Abbot of the nearby Hirsau Monastery, who devised the iconographic program for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. This is supported not only by the monastic character of the imagery and its sources but also in Tiefenbronn's official relationship to Hirsau and Abbot Wolfram's familial ties to the altarpiece's owner.

5. The Shrine Renovation

Demonstrated in the preceding chapter, while early scholarship sought to justify the presence of a Magdalene cycle in Tiefenbronn, this proved to be unnecessary. A consideration of Mary Magdalene's popularity at Tiefenbronn and the iconographic sources of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* provided evidence that the inspiration for selecting her as its subject came not from France but right at home. The location of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* at Tiefenbronn not only influenced the work's iconography but also its subsequent renovation: the subject of this chapter.

In the preceding description and analysis of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* iconography a prominent component of its imagery was conspicuously absent: the magnificent sculpture in the shrine niche depicting Mary Magdalene surrounded by angels (open position). Here, Mary Magdalene is depicted frontally with her hands held in prayer. Her figure is enveloped in long cascading hair that reveals only her breasts and knees. Holding a loin cloth in front of the Magdalene, six angels beautifully frame her figure with their billowing garments and upturned hems. The hair shirt worn by the Magdalene as well as the ecclesiastical garments of the angels are gilded.

Complementing the magnificent gold, accents of red and blue appear alternately on the mantels of the angels and the cloth covering the Magdalene's midriff.

This sculpture was not considered in the preceding chapter because it is not an original part of the altarpiece but was added nearly a century later, presumably replacing an earlier sculpture. Although in the earliest publications on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, the *Elevation* was viewed as an original feature, Wilhelm Bode challenged its presumed originality in 1885. In his publication on the history of German sculpture, Bode identified

the *Elevation* as a later addition to the altarpiece and, based on style, dated it to the 1520s.³⁷⁰ The stylistic traits embodied in the *Elevation*, including its “roundness of form, charming heads and rich drapery folds...” led specifically to its attribution to the sixteenth-century Swabian school of sculpture.³⁷¹ Although the particular workshop that created the *Elevation* is a matter of debate, Bode’s revised dating of the present sculpture to the 1520s is undisputed.³⁷²

Following Bode’s publication, the renovation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* became a point of interest in earlier scholarship. In particular, scholars attempted to identify how the sixteenth-century renovation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* changed its original appearance, which primarily involved identifying what subject would have been represented in the original shrine. While some consideration was given to the motivation for the renovation, attributing it to the change in Mary Magdalene’s status to co-patron (along with the Virgin) of the Tiefenbronn church, the circumstances behind it were largely ignored. Like other topics surrounding the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* many of the earlier theories about the renovation were based on speculation. The goal of this chapter

³⁷⁰ The later date not only highlighted that the *Elevation* was not an original component but it refuted the previous placement of the sculpture in the development of the Swabian school in the early fifteenth century. The new date proposed by Bode, in contrast to previous scholarship, suggested that rather than being one of the initial works, the *Elevation* was created in the mature phase of the Swabian school. Bode attributed the sculpture of the *Elevation* to this later stage of the Swabian school based on stylistic considerations. Wilhelm Bode, Geschichte der deutschen Plastik, vol. 2, Geschichte der deutschen Kunst (Berlin, 1885), 177.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 179-180.

³⁷² Hans Rott attributed the sculpture to an Alsatian workshop and dated it between 1517 and 1524 in “Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn bei Tiefenbronn und ihre Kunstwerke,” Badische Heimat 12 (1925):114-5. Mathias Köhler, however, attributed it to an Ulm-influenced workshop, which was located in nearby Weil der Stadt. St. Maria Magdalena Tiefenbronn (Lindenberg, 1998), 34.

is to re-examine the current understanding of the renovation, re-evaluating, in particular, the original subject of the shrine and the motivations for transforming the work with a new shrine sculpture in the sixteenth century.

Although many subjects were considered as possibilities for the subject of the original shrine, the most widely supported was Mary Magdalene's Elevation. There are several reasons, however, to question the belief that the present sculpture replaced an earlier one depicting the same subject. Casting doubt on the theory that the Elevation was the original theme of the shrine is not only the limited extent of its popularity as a subject when the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was created but its iconographical relationship to the other scenes in the cycle. While this study cannot completely eliminate the possibility that the Elevation was the original subject of the shrine, considering for the first time, in addition to the work's iconography, religious and regional factors that influenced altarpiece imagery, it supports that the altar's dedicatory saints, Mary Magdalene, Anthony, and Erhard remain better candidates for the subject.

While this study engages briefly the question of the original subject, looking to the historical context, its main contribution resides in its examination of the reasons behind the renovation. Until the present study, the circumstances of the renovation have been largely ignored in the scholarship on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Falling victim to the "prestige of the original," recreating the original appearance of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* has remained the primary goal in studies of its renovation.³⁷³ In more recent

³⁷³ According to Cathleen Hoeniger little interest has been demonstrated in studying the historical dimensions of a renovation. This can be attributed to the approach of connoisseurship, which concentrates on "the initial creative statement embodied in a work of art." This is particularly evident in restoration treatments where the goal is most

scholarship the question of why a work was renovated is seen as meriting investigation.³⁷⁴ Study of the context of a renovation not only provides information on the religious and social practices of a later time period, it also confirms the continued use and importance of the original work of art and how it was received by subsequent generations.³⁷⁵ Recognizing “the historical importance of layered works of art,”³⁷⁶ in contrast to earlier studies, this chapter will consider what religious and social factors surrounded the decision to renovate the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* along with the question of who initiated it. Challenging the earlier claim that the change in Mary Magdalene’s status motivated the renovation, in the context of the early-sixteenth century wave of decoration at Tiefenbronn, recognizing the outdated form of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, its owners, likely the heirs of the original owners, modified the altarpiece to reflect the new preference for large winged altarpieces exhibited in the newly installed altarpieces.

The study of the renovation in its context also permits reflection on the religious sympathies of the Tiefenbronn church in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. Filling their church with images shortly after the onslaught of the Protestant Reformation, Catholic villages, such as Tiefenbronn, reinforced their religious affiliation and demonstrated their support of Catholic religious practices. Before examining the original subject of the shrine and the context for the renovation, the following section details the

frequently to remove any later additions. The Renovation of Paintings in Tuscany, 1250-1500 (Cambridge, 1995), 4.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 14.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 1.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 17.

changes to the original conception of *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as a result of the renovation.

I. The Renovation and the Original

The Original Form of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*

The brief description of the renovation to this point suggests that it only involved replacing the original shrine sculpture with the present *Elevation*. Although this is one of the most significant changes made to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in the sixteenth century, it was not the only modification. Because the sixteenth-century replacement sculpture was larger than the original contents of the shrine, in order to accommodate its increased scale, the actual shrine box or niche of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was enlarged.³⁷⁷ In turn, the resultant enlargement of the shrine led to other slight alterations most of which only minimally affected the original painted surface of the altarpiece.

³⁷⁷ Although technical study has confirmed that the original center of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was a shrine, this was a matter of dispute in the literature on the renovation. Both Jörg Gamer and Alfred Schädler supposed that the center component was a painted panel, although they disagreed on its subject. Gamer suggested that the original center was a painted panel. For more information on his evidence for this supposition, see “Zur Rekonstruktion des Magdalenenaltars,” *Freiburger Diözesan-Archiv* 74 (1954): 204-206. Similar to Gamer, Schädler hypothesized that a painted panel formed the original center of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. In contrast to Gamer, however, Schädler proposed that the center was not the *Elevation* but rather the figures of Mary Magdalene, Anthony and Erhard. “Die Frühwerke Hans Multschers,” *Zeitschrift für württembergische Landesgeschichte* 14 (1955): 407 n. 52. Dismissing the hypothesis that the original center of the altarpiece was a painted panel, the technical study of the altarpiece in 1971, proved that it was conceived as a shrine altar. Moreover, relative to the shrine box, technical evidence demonstrated that the present shrine was not borrowed from another altar but is the original shrine of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Among the evidence that the present shrine is original is the unconventional relationship of the wings to the shrine. Unlike most shrine altars, the wings are hinged to the neighboring panels and not the shrine. If a new shrine had been installed it would have required a new mechanism to hold it in place for which there are no physical remains. Also reinforcing the originality of the shrine is the absence of any preparation or painting on the outer sides of the shrine box. These were not necessary for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*,

Although an original component, the present shrine of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* does not have the same dimensions as it did when the work was constructed. During the sixteenth-century renovation, the top of the original shrine was extended at the top to accommodate the larger sculpture of the present *Elevation*.³⁷⁸ Because of the enlargement other parts of the altarpiece had to be adjusted. For example, it was necessary to extend the height of the shrine doors, thereby enlarging them to the same height as the newly modified shrine (Fig. 49). To achieve this, pine additions were added to the top and bottom of each wing. For proper closure of the wings, the corresponding sections of the borders, both above and below, had to be removed. Tracery strips were then added to the horizontal borders (above and below the main scenes) to mask the pine additions.³⁷⁹

As a result of the enlargement, the appearance and construction of the original work was slightly altered, disturbing the former harmony of the original. Before the renovation, the horizontal stretchers of the frame would have continued uninterrupted across the altarpiece and would not have been ornamented with tracery strips. The diagram of the present frame shows the areas of it, both above and below, that were removed for the enlarged shrine doors (Fig. 50). In addition, the doors, when open, would have laid flat instead of at an angle as they do now.³⁸⁰

because of its placement on the wall. It would have been a requirement for other shrine altars, since they often stood on the altar table. Richter, "Zur Rekonstruktion," 37.

³⁷⁸ A ten-centimeter width of the front part of the shrine box was removed in order to raise the baldachin about six centimeters. *Ibid.*, 36.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Reconsidering the Subject of the Original Shrine

While the technical study of the altarpiece clarified some questions regarding the original conception of the altarpiece and changes undertaken (as outlined above), it did not offer any new insights on what originally would have been displayed in the shrine niche.³⁸¹ Mentioned previously the subject of the original shrine has been a point of interest in the consideration of the renovation. Of the various identifications put forth for the original subject, the theme of the Elevation has been the most widely supported. As the following discussion demonstrates, however, this identification is not based on solid evidence, making it far from conclusive. Taking into consideration the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* iconography, setting and other factors that would have influenced its shrine's contents, this discussion proposes that the altar's dedicatory saints, not the Elevation, were planned as the original subject.

The theory that the Elevation was most likely the original subject for the shrine was introduced by Graf Johannes von Waldburg-Wolfegg.³⁸² Not only did he identify the original theme of the shrine, he proposed that the sculpture of Mary Magdalene's Elevation in Berlin by the Swabian artist, Hans Multscher, could have been the original shrine sculpture of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* (Fig. 51). This work consists of the standing figure of Mary Magdalene in a hair shirt surrounded by five angels. According to Waldburg-Wolfegg, the dimensions of the Multscher sculpture corresponded to the height and width of the shrine.³⁸³ Moreover, the Multscher *Elevation* would have

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Graf Johannes von Waldburg-Wolfegg, Lucas Moser (Berlin, 1939), 15-16.

³⁸³ He assumed that the present shrine was the original in drawing his conclusion regarding the size. Ibid., 16.

corresponded proportionally to the standing figures of Martha and Lazarus on the interior wings. Finally, he considered the sculpture to be stylistically more congruous with Lucas Moser's painted scenes.³⁸⁴ Moser's familiarity with Multscher's art was also noted by Wilhelm Boeck, who related Moser's depiction of the sculptural group in the scene of the *Last Communion* to Multscher's *Elevation*.³⁸⁵

Despite the perceived suitability of Multscher's Berlin sculpture, in 1955, Alfred Schädler demonstrated that Multscher's *Elevation* could not have been the original sculpture for the shrine of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.³⁸⁶ While it is not too large for the present shrine, it would have been too large for the smaller original. He determined that the sculpture would have protruded approximately six centimeters beyond the front edge of the niche.³⁸⁷ In addition to the discrepancy between the size of the Tiefenbronn shrine and the size of the Berlin sculpture, Schädler found no grounds for replacing the Berlin *Elevation* with a new sculpture. The good condition of the Berlin sculpture ruled out the possibility that the change was motivated by damage.³⁸⁸

Although the Multscher sculpture could not have been the original sculpture in the shrine of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, scholars continued to support that the *Elevation* was, nonetheless, still the original subject of the shrine. This assumption rested on the

³⁸⁴ Waldburg-Wolfegg, Lucas Moser, 16

³⁸⁵ Wilhelm Boeck, Der Tiefenbronner Altar von Lucas Moser (Munich, 1951), 4.

³⁸⁶ "Die Frühwerke Hans Multschers," 407 n. 52.

³⁸⁷ He calculated the interior space of the shrine as follows: H=1.60m., W=.70m., D=.32m. The Berlin *Elevation* is 1.33m. tall, .52m. high and .32 m. deep. Ibid. For a revision of these calculations, see Richter, "Zur Rekonstruktion," 33.

³⁸⁸ Schädler, "Die Frühwerke Hans Multschers," 407 n. 52.

scene's importance in Mary Magdalene's life and its frequent representation in other Magdalene cycles, both in Germany and abroad.³⁸⁹

In the late Gothic period, the image of her held aloft by angels, embodied and glorified the contemplative life.³⁹⁰ Because Mary Magdalene's life in the desert made her a model for those wishing to follow the contemplative life, the visualization of the Elevation, became popular in Magdalene cycles in both Italy and Germany.³⁹¹ Gamer described the scene of her Elevation as the most important scene in pictorial cycles.³⁹² According to Marga Anstett-Janßen, in German art, the Elevation appeared in panel painting at the beginning of the fourteenth century and continued to be popular.³⁹³ Appearing later in

³⁸⁹ Only Georg Troescher provided a different explanation for the selection of the Elevation as the central scene. Based on his theory that Moser worked in southern France, where the Elevation was frequently portrayed, he identified it as the original subject of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. The suggestion that Moser trained in southern France is controversial. Georg Troescher, "Die Pilgerfahrt des Robert Campin: altniederländischen und südwestdeutsche Maler in Südostfrankreich," Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen 9 (1967): 261.

³⁹⁰ For information on the Magdalene's contemplative life in the desert and its significance in the late Gothic period, see Katherine Ludwig Jansen, The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages (Princeton, NJ, 2000), chap. 4.

³⁹¹ Two well-known Magdalene cycles include the representation of the Elevation. In the Italian Magdalene cycle, dated to the second half of the thirteenth century by the Magdalene Master, it is the third scene from the top on the left hand side and it is the center of Tilmann Riemenschneider's *Münnerstadt Altarpiece* (1490-2). Gamer, "Zur Rekonstruktion des Magdalenenaltars," 204.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ "Maria Magdalena in der abendländischen Kunst. Ikonographie der Heiligen von den Anfängen bis ins 16. Jahrhundert." (Ph.D. diss., Freiburg i. Br., 1962), 261.

sculpture, at the time of the International Style, the number of sculpted examples of the subject grew as winged altarpieces became more popular.³⁹⁴

As testimony to the popularity of the scene in Germany around the time of the creation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, Anstett-Janßen identified three representations of the Elevation from this period. In addition to Multscher's sculpture in Berlin, other examples of the *Elevation* include a sculpture in St. John's church in Thorn and one in the Frauenmuseum in Strasbourg. The image of the Elevation in Strasbourg formed the center of an altarpiece of which only the predella, depicting the twelve apostles, survives.³⁹⁵ Based on these surviving examples of the Elevation, Anstett-Janßen supposed that the original of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, must have looked similar to Hans Multscher's sculpture in Berlin.³⁹⁶

While Mary Magdalene's Elevation was an important theme in the later Middle Ages, appearing in cyclical depictions of the saint's life, this is not enough evidence to assume that it would have been selected as the subject for the shrine of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Not only is there some question regarding the pervasiveness of the Elevation at the time the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was created, other important factors, including the altar's dedication and regional taste in the selection of a shrine's contents, have not been given adequate consideration.

While the scene of Mary Magdalene's Elevation did appear in the fifteenth century and earlier, the extent of its popularity remains uncertain. In fact, not all scholars referred

³⁹⁴ In Magdalene altarpieces, the Elevation was often the central scene. *Ibid.*, 262.

³⁹⁵ This has been dated to c. 1420 and stems from Niederrehnheim/Alsace. *Ibid.*

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 261.

to it as a “commonplace” representation, especially in German art. Schädler argued that it was rarely depicted in German sculpture,³⁹⁷ and according to Joseph Braun, the image of the Magdalene held aloft by angels did not become popular in Germany until the end of the fifteenth century.³⁹⁸ The few examples of the Elevation identified by Anstett-Janßen thus do not substantiate the claim that the Elevation was a popular theme, particularly in sculpture.

Not only is it difficult to establish that the Elevation was the original subject based on its popularity, a comparative approach using other Magdalene cycles is equally problematic. The claim that Mary Magdalene’s Elevation would have been the central scene of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* because it was included in other Magdalene cycles, does not take into account our incomplete knowledge of the program of some of these. Establishing the Elevation as the central subject of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* through a comparison with other Magdalene cycles would require that the selection of scenes as well as their sequence were similar, if not identical. Unfortunately, the fragmentary state of the examples of the Elevation, created around the time of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, does not permit comparison, since the selection of scenes and their sequencing is unknown.

Using iconography as the basis to establish the central subject of the original shrine sculpture of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* is also complicated by the variation found among Magdalene cycles along with the unique imagery on the *St. Magdalene*

³⁹⁷ Schädler, “Die Frühwerke Hans Multschers,” 404. For a list of German works of the same subject see n. 50.

³⁹⁸ Joseph Braun, Tracht und Attribute der Heiligen in der deutschen Kunst (Stuttgart, 1943), 497.

Altarpiece. As the preceding chapter demonstrated, while there was some similarity in the scenes selected, Magdalene cycles were far from identical. Moreover, some of the scenes of the *Magdalene Altarpiece*, while based on German sources, were not typically included in monumental painted cycles. It will be recalled that both the *Sea Journey* and the *Arrival at Marseilles*, appearing only in manuscript painting (*Der Saelden Hort*) before the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, thus represented rarely depicted events from the Magdalene's *vita*. As such, the presence of these scenes challenges the notion that the Elevation would have been included on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* simply because it was commonly represented in other Magdalene cycles. Clearly the programmer of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, in selecting the *Sea Journey* and the *Arrival* did not strictly adhere to the Magdalene iconography established in monumental painting.

Beyond explaining the appearance of rarely depicted scenes the direct source for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* iconography, the illustrated poem, *Der Saelden Hort*, may have influenced the decision not to include the Elevation. As a direct source for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* it is significant that Mary Magdalene's life in the wilderness was omitted from these manuscripts. While the subject of the Elevation did occur in cyclical depictions of her life, the *Saelden Hort* strongly influenced the scenes selected on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Recall that the *Sea Journey* and the *Arrival* were rarely depicted episodes in German Magdalene cycles. It is extremely possible based on the *Saelden Hort's* influence in the selection of scenes that the Elevation was not included on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, since this episode was not illustrated in that manuscript.

Even though the representation of the *Last Communion* on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* (as a scene from Mary Magdalene's penitent life) seems to discount the

preceding argument, its relationship to the function of the altar accounts for its presence in the cycle. The preceding chapter established the significance of the Last Communion in German cycles. Not only was the scene of the Last Communion the earliest depiction from her legendary life in the *Nuremberg Graduale*, but it also figured prominently in Magdalene cycles and was a key scene from her legendary life in cyclical depictions. The function of the altarpiece would have also contributed to the selection of the Last Communion as a subject. The scene of Mary Magdalene's *Last Communion* provides a clear link between the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and the celebration of the Mass. The representation of a saint, especially Mary Magdalene, receiving the sacrament of Communion, acted as visual support for the sacrament of Communion.³⁹⁹ Even though altarpieces were not required in order to celebrate the Mass, their placement on the altar table endowed them with liturgical associations. Not only did an altarpiece confer dignity on the table where the Mass was celebrated, in addition to this "simple" function, it fulfilled the "complex" functions of marking off the sacred space of the altar and providing a backdrop for the Mass.⁴⁰⁰ Altarpiece imagery, because of its relationship to the altar table, contained sacramental allusions. Barbara Lane, in her landmark study on sacramental themes in Early Netherlandish painting, described altarpieces as "ecclesiastical objects that explained the rituals celebrated at the altars they adorned."⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁹ Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalene: Myth and Metaphor* (London, 1993), 270.

⁴⁰⁰ Lynn Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*, 15. For a summary of the general justifications for the use of religious imagery, see p. 15.

⁴⁰¹ Barbara Lane, *The Altar and the Altarpiece: Sacramental Themes in Early Netherlandish Painting* (New York, 1984), 1.

Henk van Os further emphasized the connection between the altarpiece and the liturgy viewing the presence of Eucharistic symbolism as a “matter of course.”⁴⁰²

Another important consideration in accounting for the absence of the Elevation on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* is the completeness of its iconography without this scene. In short, all segments of the Magdalene’s life (as described in legend) are accounted for on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* making the Elevation unnecessary. The scene of the *Anointing* corresponds to her ministry to Christ while the *Sea Journey and Arrival* illustrate her evangelization of pagan Gaul. Her *Last Communion* was the final event in her life as a penitent in the desert from which the Elevation also originated. As the end point of her life in the desert the Last Communion itself represented the glory of her contemplative life. The selection of her in a hair shirt as opposed to a gown, which was common in German representations of the Last Communion, would have reinforced this segment of her *vita*. Ultimately, an iconographic consideration of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* does not support that the Elevation was the central scene.

The Original Shrine: Evidence for the Altar’s Dedicatory Saints

If the Elevation was not the original subject, then what was? Early in the literature the suggestion was made that the standing figures of Anthony and Erhard, the altar’s dedicatory saints, were included in the original shrine. Contained both in the upper and lower horizontal borders, dividing the main part of the altarpiece from the tympanum above and predella below, are the dedication and indulgence inscriptions.⁴⁰³ In both of

⁴⁰² H. W. van Os, “Some Thoughts on Writing a History of Siense altarpieces,” in The Altarpiece in the Renaissance, ed. by Peter Humfrey and Martin Kemp (Cambridge, 1990), 26-27.

⁴⁰³ The dedication inscription, HIC.IN.ALTARI HONORANDI.SV/NT.I B(EA)TA. MARIA.MAGDALENA/2° B(EA)TVS.ANTONIUS. 3°.B(EA)TUS/

these inscriptions St. Mary Magdalene, St. Erhard and St. Anthony are listed, but neither St. Erhard or St. Anthony appear anywhere in the scenes of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. In order to account for the names of these two saints in the inscription, Hans Rott supposed that sculpted standing figures of them must have been the contents of the original shrine.⁴⁰⁴ Graf Johannes von Waldburg-Wolfegg also entertained the possibility that the original shrine figures may have been those mentioned in the dedicatory inscription. In contrast to Rott, however, he believed that Mary Magdalene would also have accompanied Anthony and Erhard.⁴⁰⁵

Although earlier scholarship discredited the significance of the altar's dedication in the consideration of the original subject, this does not reflect more recent literature on altarpiece functions or the shrine subjects most frequently depicted in Swabia.⁴⁰⁶ The relationship between altarpiece imagery and the altar's dedication can be traced back to the Synod of Trier in 1310, which ruled that an altar's dedication must be indicated by

VENERABILIS.EKHARDUS, is located in the upper horizontal border of the main inscription. Contained in the lower horizontal border is the so-called indulgence phrase, [...] DICAT [...] / MARIA.MAGDALENA.(ET).IN. DIE./BE(A)TI. ANTHONY. (ET). EKHARDI.TOTIDEM.INDVLGENCIA [...]. Franz Heinzmann and Mathias Köhler, Der Magdalenenaltar des Lucas Moser in der gotischen Basilika Tiefenbronn (Regensburg, 1994), 16.

⁴⁰⁴ Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 126.

⁴⁰⁵ Waldburg-Wolfegg, Lucas Moser, 21. Alfred Schädler also supported the hypothesis that the original center panel depicted the standing figures of Mary Magdalene along with St. Anthony and St. Erhard, albeit in painted form. "Die Frühwerke Hans Multschers," 407 n. 52.

⁴⁰⁶ Gamer viewed the , "Zur Rekonstruktion," 202. In a more recent study of the function of altarpieces Julian Gardner identified parish and church dedications as central to any consideration of altarpiece iconography. "Altars, altarpieces, and art history: legislation and usage," in Italian Altarpieces 1250-1550: Function and Design, edited by Eve Borsook and Fiorella Superbi Gioffredi (Oxford, 1994), 15.

inscription or by paintings or sculptures near the altar.⁴⁰⁷ As a result of this decree, altarpieces, in general, were invested with the function of identifying the dedication of each altar.⁴⁰⁸ Although it has been difficult to calculate how rigidly the decree of the Synod was followed, a particular altar's position in the church may have been a decisive factor. While the shrine of the high altar usually contained an image of the patron saint of the church, the side altar frequently included the particular saints in whose honor that altar was dedicated.⁴⁰⁹ Therefore, as a side altar it would have been more appropriate for the shrine of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* to contain the altar's dedicatory saints.

Along with the influence of an altar's dedication upon altarpiece imagery it is also important to consider regional patterns that emerged regarding the contents of shrines. It has been well-established that, in Germany, iconic representations were generally preferred to narrative scenes.⁴¹⁰ In her systematic study of the contents of shrines in Swabia, Maria Schütte found that, in this region, there was a preference for the "quiet figure of the saint to the multi-figured Crucifixion groups."⁴¹¹ In support of the dedicatory saints of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, Schütte found that the saints depicted

⁴⁰⁷ Jacobs, *Carved Altarpieces*, 14.

⁴⁰⁸ Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven and London, 1980), 64.

⁴⁰⁹ Herbert Schindler, *Meisterwerke der Spätgotik: Berühmte Schnitzaltäre* (Regensburg, 1989), 9.

⁴¹⁰ Jacobs, *Carved Altarpieces*, 47.

⁴¹¹ Maria Schütte, *Der Schwäbische Schnitzaltar* (Strasbourg, 1907), 16.

in Swabian shrines were usually the dedicatory saints of the altar or the church's patron.⁴¹²

Another important factor in considering the original subject of the shrine is not only the altar's dedication, but also the indulgence inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Chapter Three established that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was used to display Tiefenbronn's indulgence privileges. Typical of alms indulgences these could be obtained upon church visitation on specific general and local feasts. In the case of Tiefenbronn, the local feasts selected correspond to the altar's dedicatory saints: Mary Magdalene, Anthony and Erhard. Because of their prominence as local saints, manifest in their selection as the altar's dedicatory saints and local feasts on which indulgence could be received, it is logical to assume that their importance would have been emphasized through visual representation as well.

Ultimately, insisting that the central subject of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* had to be a scene from Mary Magdalene's life fails to consider important customs regarding shrine imagery. Standing figures were commonly depicted in the shrines of German altarpieces, regardless of the narrative content of the exterior or wings. Moreover, acknowledging that visual harmony was a factor, a row of standing saints would be better suited with the standing figures of Martha and Lazarus represented on the interior wings.

⁴¹² Schütte, *Der Schwäbische Schnitzaltar*, 16. The Swabian practice of including the church's patron does leave open the possibility that the Virgin Mary could have been portrayed in the shrine. Waldburg-Wolfegg made the suggestion that a particular sculpture of her in Tiefenbronn was originally placed in the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Lucas Moser, 21. According to Gamer, however, the size, date and quality of this sculpture argued against its placement in the shrine of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. "Zur Rekonstruktion," 202. Ultimately, the 1310 Synod, the dedicatory inscription and the damaged wall altar make the dedicatory saints a more likely candidate.

In support of the dedicatory saints as the original contents of the shrine, another piece of evidence to take into consideration is the now destroyed wall altar behind the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Although the subject of this is almost completely unrecognizable, the faint remains of three halos indicate that there were three standing saints depicted. In the depiction of standing saints, the ruined wall altar corresponds to the three visible wall altars lining the eastern wall of the church. Marga Anstett-Janßen suggested that the three saints should be identified as those listed in the dedicatory inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*: Mary Magdalene, Anthony and Erhard.⁴¹³ A strong possibility exists that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* not only inherited the dedication of the previous wall altar, but its iconography as well. In the study of altarpieces, there is evidence that an iconographic relationship existed between altarpieces and the wall altars that they replaced.⁴¹⁴

Although it was claimed that the technical study could not provide any new information concerning the original contents of the shrine, this may not be entirely true. Discovered during the examination of the shrine of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was the presence of two baldachins, placed one behind the other and dating from different time periods. The back baldachin is composed of three niches and, as a framing device, is

⁴¹³ Anstett-Janßen, "Ikonographie," 259. Charles Sterling supported Anstett-Janßen's hypothesis that the saints represented in the destroyed wall altar were Mary Magdalene, Anthony and Erhardt. According to him, this accounted for the dedicatory inscription. "Observations on Moser's Tiefenbronn Altarpiece," *Pantheon* 30 (Jan.-Feb. 1972): 19.

⁴¹⁴ In Orvieto's Duomo, a series of side altars replaced a series of mural altarpieces. According to Julian Gardner, "the altars were indubitably related to the mural altarpieces." Gardner, "Altars, altarpieces, and art history," 15.

completely unrelated to the present sculptural group of the *Elevation*.⁴¹⁵ Although the presence of this rear baldachin was not accounted for at the time of the study, the three arches insinuate the presence of three standing figures.

Before completely departing from the question of the original contents of the shrine, there is one last issue to examine. In contrast to the scholars who believed that the *Elevation* had always been depicted in the shrine, Helmut May raised an important question. He rightly asked why the patrons would interfere with the structure of the altarpiece only to replace it with the same subject.⁴¹⁶ It stands to reason that renovation involved a more significant change than simply replacing one sculpture with another of the same subject. As we shall see below, the subject of the *Elevation* for the present shrine was not likely borrowed from the original contents but rather was selected because of its newfound popularity in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

II. The Renovation in Context

The Renovated Shrine and the Selection of the *Elevation*

Mentioned previously, while the subject of the *Elevation* made its appearance in some Late Gothic works, it was not until the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries that it reached a high point in terms of its popularity. At that time a new manner of representation was also formulated. One factor that influenced the widespread appeal of the subject later in the fifteenth century was its widespread distribution through prints. In 1480, the Housebook Master executed a beautiful drypoint image of the scene, which

⁴¹⁵ Richter, "Zur Rekonstruktion," 36.

⁴¹⁶ Helmut May, Lucas Moser, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, 1967), 17.

probably served as a model for Albrecht Dürer's rendering of the image (Figs. 52, 53).⁴¹⁷ The subject, popularized by the widespread availability of broadsheet prints, also appeared in large-scale sculpture prior to the *St. Magdalene* shrine renovation. In the early 1490s, Tilmann Riemenschneider used a similar composition with the standing Magdalene surrounded by angels for the shrine of his *Münnerstadt Altarpiece*, which was his first large-scale work and was dedicated to the Magdalene (Fig. 54).⁴¹⁸

In late fifteenth-century representations of Mary Magdalene's Elevation a new iconography of the event emerged, which influenced the portrayal of the *Elevation* added to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* during the sixteenth-century renovation. The present shrine sculpture borrowed from the new Elevation iconography that developed in the later fifteenth-century in the Magdalene's hair shirt that reveals only her breasts and knees. Also conforming to contemporary representations of the Elevation are features of the angels, including the depiction of their billowing drapery and the manner in which they suspend a loin cloth in front of the Magdalene.⁴¹⁹

While it is clear that contemporary Magdalene iconography influenced the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* renovation insofar as the new sculpture of the *Elevation* borrowed from it, it is unlikely that the theme's newfound popularity actually prompted the decision to renovate. In the question of what motivated the renovation, the context of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* played the most significant role.

⁴¹⁷ J. P. Filedt Kok, The Master of the Amsterdam Cabinet or the Housebook Master, ca. 1470-1500 (Princeton, N. J., 1985), 142.

⁴¹⁸ Justus Bier, Tilmann Riemenschneider: His Life and Work (Lexington, K. Y.: 1982), 83.

⁴¹⁹ Anstett-Janßen, "Ikonographie," 262.

Motivations for the Renovation: Earlier Hypotheses

Unfortunately, in approaching the context of the renovation, surviving church documents are of no assistance, as there is no mention of the renovation in any surviving church record. Despite the absence of historical documentation, taking into consideration historical factors, scholars speculated on the reasons behind the transformation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in the early sixteenth century. Concerning these earlier hypotheses, the lack of sound research is problematic. In the early art historical literature, the most widely received suggestion was that the new shrine and sculpture was in commemoration of the change in church dedication from the Virgin to Mary Magdalene. According to Hans Rott the change in church dedication from the Virgin Mary to Mary Magdalene occurred in the sixteenth century and thus corresponded in date to the renovation.⁴²⁰ Jörg Gamer agreed, arguing that in honor of his change in dedication, those responsible for the renovation wanted to modernize the altarpiece and beautify it. For Gamer, who hypothesized that the original center was a painted panel, modernization meant transforming the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* into a shrine altar, which was the common type in the sixteenth century. For the viewer a brilliantly colored and gilded sculpture would have had a greater impact than a painted panel, because of its increased splendor. In addition, the visionary subject of Mary Magdalene's Elevation would have been more powerful in sculptural form.⁴²¹ Marga Anstett-Janßen also supposed that the most likely occasion for the shrine renovation was the change in church dedication from the Virgin to Mary Magdalene. According to her, at the time of the change in dedication it was

⁴²⁰ Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 101.

⁴²¹ Gamer, "Zur Rekonstruktion," 206.

probably decided that the original was too small or too inexpensive and needed replaced.⁴²² The change in church dedication as the grounds for the renovation can no longer be sustained in light of current scholarship. Mary Magdalene was not the official joint patron of the church as Rott had stated, and did not appear officially as a patron of the church until the seventeenth century.⁴²³

Although Mary Magdalene was not a church patron in the early sixteenth century there is some validity in examining the renovation relative to her role in the church at Tiefenbronn. Regardless of her official capacity, the visual imagery in the church at Tiefenbronn is testimony to her waxing popularity. On Hans Kern's choir stall, created around 1510, Mary Magdalene was depicted prominently with her ointment jar.⁴²⁴ Nor is visual imagery the only evidence that Mary Magdalene's popularity was growing in the years preceding and surrounding the renovation, for it was in 1526 that we have the first reference to a Magdalene benefice.⁴²⁵ It is worth noting that benefices were often

⁴²² Anstett-Janßen, "Ikonographie," 261.

⁴²³ According to Piccard, the shift in patronage from the Virgin to Mary Magdalene happened gradually and was only completed very late. The first mention of Mary Magdalene as a joint patron occurred in a donation document from Ursula von Gemmingen on March 30, 1621. Gerhard Piccard, Der Magdalenenaltar des >Lukas Moser< in Tiefenbronn. Ein Beitrag zur Europäischen Kunstgeschichte mit einer Untersuchung die Tiefenbronner Patrozinien und ihre (Hirsauer) Herkunft von Wolfgang Irtgenkauf (Wiesbaden, 1969), 69-70.

⁴²⁴ The southern choir stall has been attributed to Hans Kern of Pforzheim, because of its dependence on a signed choir stall in the donation church in Baden, which was created in 1510. Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 111.

⁴²⁵ Piccard, Der Magdalenenaltar, 144.

associated with the endowment of an altar.⁴²⁶ Although there is not enough evidence to claim that the benefice and renovation were directly related, a connection seems likely.

Redecoration at Tiefenbronn in the Early Sixteenth Century

Although earlier studies connected the renovation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* to its place in the church at Tiefenbronn, they did not look beyond the status of Mary Magdalene to other events taking place. In particular, what they failed to consider as a motivation for the renovation was the exceptional number of ecclesiastical donations to the church at Tiefenbronn in the early part of the sixteenth century. Although the church received decorations periodically from the time of its creation, the series of donations at the beginning of sixteenth century had no parallel in any other period of the church's history. Along with the aforementioned choir stall, around 1510 a series of wall paintings were executed. On the upper part of the northern wall of the nave an earlier representation of the Madonna of Mercy, first painted around 1430/40, was repainted.⁴²⁷ Close in time to this repainting a heraldic frieze was added to the nave wall. In the view of the nave the frieze is clearly visible above the arcade on the left (Fig. 55). This frieze is divided into four different registers (two on each side of the Madonna of Mercy), each containing 19 coats of arms, and has been described as one of the most impressive depictions of the indigenous noble families of the surrounding areas.⁴²⁸ Included in the frieze are the lords of Stein and Wunnenstein, Maiser von Berg, Gemmingen, Helmstatt

⁴²⁶ For Piccard the record of a benefice in 1526 was evidence that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was only brought there that year. *Ibid.*

⁴²⁷ There is a similar depiction in the Altstadt church in Pforzheim and in churches in Niefern and Bahnbrücken. Köhler, *St. Maria Magdalena*, 12.

⁴²⁸ Similar sequence in the monastic church at Maulbronn. *Ibid.*

and Schellenberg.⁴²⁹ In addition to the paintings on the nave walls, a votive image on the triumphal arch was painted around this time (also visible in the view of the nave at the top of the arch). Composed in a frieze-like format, a knight and his sons are on the left side of the triumphal arch, while on the right are his wife and their daughters. A letter dating from the later sixteenth or early seventeenth century identified the husband and wife as Volz von Weitingen and his wife Anna von Gemmingen.⁴³⁰

The New Tiefenbronn Altarpieces and the Renovation

In addition to the choir stall and wall paintings, three new altarpieces were added to the church in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. While these new altarpieces contributed to the splendor of the church as part of the overall surge in church donations, they also directly encouraged the renovation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Exhibiting the form of altarpieces popular in the early sixteenth century in their shape and wing construction along with their large scale shrine sculptures, the new altarpieces highlighted the earlier style of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Moreover, their stylistic unity, stemming from their creation in the same workshop, created an even larger gap between them and the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Ultimately, the desire to decrease the differences between the new altarpieces and the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* that played a decisive role in its renovation. The earliest of the three altarpieces, located on the foremost eastern pillar on the northern side of the church is the *Altarpiece of the Virgin (Muttergottes)*,

⁴²⁹ Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 108.

⁴³⁰ Stylistically, the votive fresco can be dated to the first part of the sixteenth century. Ibid.

which has been dated to 1517 (Figs. 56a, 56b).⁴³¹ The pendant to the *Altarpiece of the Virgin* is the *Crucifixion Altarpiece*, which is located on the south side of the church and is dated to 1524 (Figs. 57a, 57b). This was earlier referred to as the *Plague* or the *St. Sebastian Altarpiece*, because of the sculpted figure of St. Sebastian on the top of the altarpiece. The present name is based on the sculpted Crucifixion group in the shrine, which is depicted in relief.⁴³² The interior and the exterior of the wings are painted.⁴³³ The last of the three altars, the *Holy Kinship Altarpiece (Familienaltar)* is no longer in its original position (Fig. 58). It was moved from the eastern wall of the north side aisle to its current location underneath the organ gallery at the western end of the southern side aisle. This altarpiece, whose appearance has been greatly changed because of restorations and removal of the wings, was created in the late 1520s.⁴³⁴ From left to right are St. Joseph, the Virgin and Christ Child, Anne and Joachim.⁴³⁵

⁴³¹ Both the interior shrine and the wings are sculpted. In the shrine, the Virgin and Child are flanked by St. Peter and St. Paul. In contrast to the shrine figures, those on the wings, which depict St. Helena and St. Heraclius are sculpted in relief. Painted on the outside wings are St. Ursula and St. Apollonia. Above the shrine of the altarpiece is a sculpted Crucifixion group. In earlier sources it was referred to as the *Rose Garland Altarpiece*. Köhler, *St. Maria Magdalena*, 33. Rott stated that it was earlier referred to as a Peter and Paul Altarpiece. “Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn,” 114.

⁴³² Köhler, *St. Maria Magdalena*, 35.

⁴³³ Two scenes from the life of John the Baptist, the Baptism of Christ (left wing), and the Beheading (right wing), are painted on the interior. Depicted on the exterior are four standing saints. The saints depicted on the exterior wings in the center are St. Nicholas from Myra and St. Catherine. St. Sebastian and St. Rochus are on the narrower outside wings. The painted parts of the altarpiece have been attributed to a master schooled along the Upper Rhine, because of the similarities in style to Hans Baldung Grien. *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴³⁴ The wings were removed in 1937 due to a worm infestation. *Ibid.*

⁴³⁵ According to Rott, this altarpiece was earlier referred to as a St. Barbara’s altar. “Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn,” 113.

It cannot escape notice that the three new altars, while they resemble each other, differ in form from the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. The new altarpieces, like the high altar by Hans Schüchlin,⁴³⁶ have the form of the mature winged altarpiece that became the standard in Germany. Although it possesses the defining features of a winged altarpiece, the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* deviates from this form, which did not develop in the region of southern Germany until the 1450s.⁴³⁷ In contrast to the mature form, in which the wings are each half of the size of the shrine niche and therefore double the size of the altarpiece in the open position, the wings of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, when open, do not increase the size of the altarpiece. In the open position, the altarpiece's wings do not project out into space, but rather the side stationary wings are partially obscured by them,

⁴³⁶ This was created in 1469 and was donated by the houses of Baden and Württemberg in addition to Abbot Bernhard of Hirsau and the Gemmingen family. Represented on the altarpiece are scenes from the life of Mary and Christ, making it a hybrid Marian/Passion altarpiece. In the closed position the scenes from the life of Mary are visible. Christ's Passion and the Sorrows of Mary are depicted on the interior in addition to several standing saints. Left exterior wing: Annunciation and the Nativity; Right exterior wing: The Visitation and the Adoration of the Magi. Left interior wing: Christ before Pilate (upper) and The Carrying of the Cross (lower); Right interior wing: Resurrection (upper) and Entombment (lower); Upper shrine: Deposition flanked by St. Catherine and St. Dorothy; Lower shrine: Lamentation flanked by St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist. Köhler, *St. Maria Magdalena*, 16-17.

⁴³⁷ The mature form is perhaps best displayed in Hans Multscher's *Sterzinger Altarpiece*, which was created in 1458. Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 64. Based on Tripp's reconstruction of Multscher's *Landesberger Altarpiece* from 1437, it is likely that the mature form was established earlier in this work, although this is still speculative. Schindler, *Meisterwerke der Spätgotik*, 8. According to Paatz the mature style ultimately derived from the southern Netherlands, where they were produced in large numbers. Altarpieces were also exported from the southern Netherlands to Germany and primarily to Schwäbisch Hall in Swabia. *Süddeutsche Schnitzaltäre der Spätgotik: Die Meisterwerke während ihrer Entfaltung zur Hochblüte (1465-1500)* (Heidelberg, 1963), 14-17.

making it visually awkward.⁴³⁸ The unusual quality of the open view is a result of the placement of the wings, which are attached not to the shrine niche but rather to the neighboring panels.

Various explanations exist for the unusual construction of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Because it is one of the earliest shrine altars, it may represent a transitional phase in the development of the altarpiece. Maria Schütte, in her study of the Swabian *Schnitzaltar*, classified the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as the earliest shrine altar in that region.⁴³⁹ Schütte also identified the altarpiece as a middle stage in the transition from the sculpted retable and the entirely painted panel to the shrine altar; the development of which cannot be precisely followed.⁴⁴⁰ This accounts for the unusual features by suggesting that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was only a middle stage in the development of the mature winged altarpiece.

The other explanation for the unusual construction of the wings of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* resides in the work's location in the southeastern corner of the church. Its close proximity to the southern outer wall of the church prevented the enlargement of the altarpiece through the opening of the wings. In more recent literature, however, the limiting effect of the location on the selection of the form has been discounted. Mathias Köhler doubted that the limited amount of space played a decisive role in this type of

⁴³⁸ Köhler, *St. Maria Magdalena*, 8.

⁴³⁹ This is in contrast to northern Germany, where there is a high number of surviving shrine altars from the fourteenth century. She also discounted the Mühläusen Altarpiece in Stuttgart, which is dated 1385 as the earliest, because of its Bohemian origins. *Der Schwäbische Schnitzaltar*, 25.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 34.

construction and instead classified it as a common type of fifteenth-century altarpiece, the polyptych.⁴⁴¹ Since other surviving works have a similar tabernacle-like construction it does seem unlikely that the location inspired it. Although its location may not have directly influenced its wing construction, it may have been influenced nonetheless, by other visual factors in the church. The arch shape of the altarpiece, which was dependent on the on the neighboring wall frescos, undoubtedly influenced the construction. The attachment of the wings within the image reflects Moser's ability to accommodate a winged construction with the arch shape dictated by the wall altars.

In addition to sharing the form of the mature winged altarpiece, the new Tiefenbronn altarpieces, donated in the second and third decade of the sixteenth century, resemble one another in the large scale of the sculpture contained in the shrine. Because of their form, the sculptures along with their tracery baldachins fill the entire height of the altarpieces. Further increasing the homogeneity of the later Tiefenbronn altarpieces is their stylistic unity. While there is some discrepancy as to which sculptural workshop created these, it is certain that they were all created by the same group.⁴⁴²

The preceding paragraphs called attention to the visual similarities between the altarpieces newly installed in the Tiefenbronn parish church in the first part of the sixteenth century, suggesting that their stylistic homogeneity highlighted the exceptional nature of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. The stylistic discrepancies between the recently added altarpieces and the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* became one of the primary

⁴⁴¹ The most famous example of a polyptych in the area is the Mühlhausen Altarpiece, which was created in 1385. There is also a Styrian work from 1450/60. Heinzmann and Köhler, Der Magdalenenaltar, 8.

⁴⁴² Köhler, St. Maria Magdalena, 34.

motivations for its renovation. Supporting this claim are the changes made to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* during the renovation. Selecting the same workshop to create the newly added sculpture in addition to its larger scale reflect the interest on the part of the initiators of the renovation to make the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* resemble the new altarpieces.

In the consideration of the renovation, equally as important as the differences between the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and the other altarpieces at Tiefenbronn are the similarities. In particular, it is noteworthy that the present *Elevation* was sculpted by the same workshop that completed the three newly installed altarpieces. Bode noted the stylistic relationship between the sculptures in the *Holy Kinship Altar*, the *Altarpiece of the Virgin* and the *Elevation of the Magdalene* in the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.⁴⁴³ The similarity of the heads of St. Mary Magdalene and the angels from the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, and the Apocalyptic Virgin and St. Helen from the *Altarpiece of the Virgin*, betray a common creator.⁴⁴⁴ Among the other ways that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was made to more closely resemble the newer altarpieces was through the increased scale of its shrine sculpture. It is widely acknowledged in the literature on German late Gothic altarpieces that the taste for large scale sculpture increased throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Thus, enlarging the size of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* shrine sculpture not only increased the homogeneity among the three recently added Tiefenbronn altarpieces but it also acknowledged current stylistic trends.

⁴⁴³ Bode, *Geschichte der deutschen Plastik*, 179-180.

⁴⁴⁴ In addition to the shared facial features, similarities also exist in the folds of the garments and in details of the formation and positioning of their hands, their clothing and headdresses. Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 114-15.

The Renovation and its Patron: Documenting Status and Taste

Ultimately, not only the timing of the renovation (at the tail end of a wave of redecoration) but also the specific changes made suggest that the appearance of the three new altarpieces at Tiefenbronn in the decades preceding the renovation inspired the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* transformation. Clearly the decision to renovate, therefore, sprang from the desire to make the *St. Magdalene Altarpieces* similar to the other altarpieces at Tiefenbronn. While this observation offers a motivation for the renovation it does not explain why creating greater stylistic unity among the Tiefenbronn altarpieces was of great concern to the party responsible for the decision to renovate the work.

One possible explanation is that the renovation was undertaken simply to increase the visual unity among the ecclesiastical decorations at Tiefenbronn. Evidence that this was a concern in the church is manifest in the selection of the arch shape for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.⁴⁴⁵ Recall that its shape and dimensions directly correspond to the wall altars to either side of it which were created several decades earlier (Fig. 59). According to Emil Lacroix, the selection of the arch shape and its particular dimensions provided evidence that harmony with the existing decorations at Tiefenbronn was a concern.⁴⁴⁶ Although greater stylistic unity was achieved through the shrine renovation, there are other implications in the modernization of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* that can only be understood if we consider the party that ordered the renovation and the role played by ecclesiastical objects, such as altarpieces, in the competitive environment of the parish church.

⁴⁴⁵ Emil Lacroix, "Aufgedeckte Malereien in der Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," Maltechnik 2 (1955): 44.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

Up until this point the patron of the renovation has rather anonymously been referred to as the current owner of the altarpiece. While they cannot be named specifically, based on inheritance practices, it is possible to speculate that the heirs of the original owners of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* made the decision to renovate; an observation that bears directly on why it was undertaken. Although located in a public setting, altarpieces were frequently privately owned, especially side altars. As private property the owner made provisions for the continued maintenance of their donation in their will. One such will is that of Hans IV Imhoff, who commissioned a tabernacle for the church of St. Lorenz in Nuremberg (Fig. 60).⁴⁴⁷ In his will, the donor made provisions for the cleaning and maintenance of the donated tabernacle and identified the party responsible for the upkeep.⁴⁴⁸ He stipulated that his oldest male heir would be responsible for the necessary upkeep of his donation. Looking deeper into the future, Imhoff further specified that this responsibility would then pass to the oldest living heir. Finally at the point that there were no heirs, the upkeep would be assumed by the Nuremberg City Council.⁴⁴⁹ This documented example clearly illustrates that the maintenance of a donation was a preoccupation in the mind of the donor and that in order to ensure its longevity they made not only monetary provisions for its upkeep, but also named the responsible party.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁷ Corine Schleif, Donatio et Memoria: Stifter, Stiftungen und Motivationen an Beispielen aus der Lorenzkirche in Nürnberg (Munich, 1990), 45.

⁴⁴⁸ For the cleaning and necessary improvements, Imhoff provisioned four Gulden per year. In the case that this was not used, the money was to be saved and used for a more extensive treatment of the work. Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Why donors went to such great lengths to ensure the maintenance of their donation has been a source for scholarly inquiry. Schleif associated it with the religious strivings

These customs extended to all types of ecclesiastical objects, including altarpieces, as patrons and their families not only commissioned but also maintained the church's altars.⁴⁵¹

It seems that the effort of Hans IV Imhoff to specify that his heirs were responsible for the care of his donation may have been excessive considering general late medieval practices regarding a donation. Even in cases where a will did not stipulate that the family should maintain a donation, according to late medieval practice in Nuremberg, there were unwritten rules regarding donations, which bound the donation to the successive family members and guaranteed their possession of it.⁴⁵² For the most part, the family generally assumed the responsibility for its upkeep out of habit or tradition without prodding.

Other documented instances also point to the primacy of the original donor's family, even if only a distant relative, in decisions concerning an ancestor's original donation. In 1514 the city council appealed to Cosmos Vorchtel for the cleaning of a window donated by a distant family member in 1379.⁴⁵³ In the St. Sebald church, the request to replace a tabernacle, which was over one hundred years old with a new one, could not be fulfilled without first consulting the surviving family members of the original tabernacle for

of the patrician families and the medieval tendency to associate them with concrete objects. In order for the "good work" to still be valid over the lifetime and beyond, the object needed to be preserved. If it were removed, the good work existed no more. This also explains why it was so important for the original coats-of-arms to be retained. If the identifying features of the coats-of-arms or inscriptions were deleted, it would no longer be linked to the donor family. *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴⁵¹ Jeffrey Chipps Smith, German Sculpture of the Later Renaissance c. 1520-1580: Art in an Age of Uncertainty (Princeton, NJ, 1990), 23.

⁴⁵² Schleif, Donatio et Memoria, 48.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 49.

permission.⁴⁵⁴ Evidence that family members were the rightful owners of a relative's donation, also comes from the period of the iconoclastic riots. In Strasbourg, families were requested by the Council of Strasbourg to take away their property that was either given to the churches by them or their ancestors.⁴⁵⁵

Based on what is known about ecclesiastical property and inheritance practices, it is logical that in the early sixteenth century the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* remained in the possession of an heir of its original owner and that this heir took advantage, as the current owner, of their right to renovate. Why it was so important for the subsequent heir of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* to update its style can only be fully understood in relation to the function of ecclesiastical donations.

It has been well-established in the historical literature that they both recorded an individual's striving for the afterlife and also acted as a public statement of piety and social status. In the decision to renovate the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, it is the second purpose that came into play. One of the most noticeable characteristics of the art produced in the late Gothic period is the presence of the donor either in the form of a portrait or, more frequently, coats of arms in the artwork. Identifying devices such as these recorded the donor's part in the creation and completion of a work.⁴⁵⁶ To the extent that ecclesiastical furnishings called attention to their patrons, they additionally functioned as status symbols for the individuals and families who commissioned them.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁵⁵ Baxandall, The Limewood Sculptors, 82.

⁴⁵⁶ Schleif, Donatio et Memoria, 10.

⁴⁵⁷ Carl Christensen, Art and the Reformation in Germany (Athens, OH, 1979), 17.

Because of their ability to publicly showcase wealth and status, private families used their donations to assert themselves in relation to other contributing families or organizations. At least at the local level donors vied with one another in offering what has been termed “physical manifestations of their religious devotions.”⁴⁵⁸ Rivalry existed not only among the donors of a local parish church, but also among neighboring towns.⁴⁵⁹ Competition among regional rivals is what often prompted the creation of extremely elaborate works within a matter of years.⁴⁶⁰

In the context of the competitive church environment, it can only be assumed that the exceptional form of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* became more apparent to its owners, who were still visually connected to it through their family coat of arms, as each new altarpiece was donated. In the decision to replace the original shrine contents with a larger sculpture the owners of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* demonstrated their awareness of the popularity of large scale sculpture as reflected in the new Tiefenbronn altarpieces. Moreover, in the selection of the Elevation and the details of its representation, they also responded to the popularity of this image and its new iconography at the time the shrine was renovated.

The Context of the Renovation and Late Gothic Renovation Practices

Unfortunately, the suggested motive for the renovation, derived from the historical situation at Tiefenbronn, cannot be substantiated through a comparison with similarly

⁴⁵⁸ Smith, German Sculpture, 23.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

renovated works in the North. To my knowledge, there are no contextual studies of northern renovations from the late Gothic period.⁴⁶¹ Interestingly, however, there is another instance of a renovated shrine. In addition to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, an older altar in the church of St. Sebald in Nuremberg received a new shrine, which was donated by Wilhelm Löffelholz, around the middle of the fifteenth century.⁴⁶² Along with this particular shrine, there are other indications that renovations were not the exception. Evidence from wills, which list among the privileges of the heirs, the right to renovate an inherited donation, suggests that this was not uncommon.⁴⁶³ With the knowledge that renovations did occur there are explanations for why so few studies exist. Beyond iconoclasm, which reduced the number of art works that survive from this period, previously noted, there has been a general tendency in scholarship and restoration practices to neglect (or remove in the case of restorations) the later additions of renovated or hybrid works.

Despite the current gap in scholarship regarding renovation studies practices in the North, the contextual studies of Italian renovations from the same time period support that the renovation was undertaken as part of a larger redecoration.⁴⁶⁴ As the only source

⁴⁶¹ For information on early conservation practices, see Lorne Campbell, “The conservation of Netherlandish Paintings in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries,” in Studies in the History of Painting Restoration (London, 1998), ed. by Christine Sitwell and Sarah Staniforth, 15-26.

⁴⁶² Hartmut Boockmann, “Kirche und Frömmigkeit vor der Reformation,” in Martin Luther und die Reformation in Deutschland (Nuremberg, 1983), 59.

⁴⁶³ Schleif, Donatio et Memoria, 50.

⁴⁶⁴ In addition to Hoeniger, see Anabel Thomas, “Restoration or Renovation: Remuneration and Expectation in Renaissance ‘*acconciatura*’,” Studies in the History of Painting Restoration (London, 1998), ed. by Christine Sitwell and Sarah Staniforth, 1-14.

of information on renovated altarpieces and renovation practices in the later Gothic period these are valuable sources in the consideration of the St. Magdalene renovation. While a comparison between Italian and German altarpieces must be approached with caution, there are some important parallels in their patronage and function that have been well-established in the literature on altarpieces and ecclesiastical donations. In Italy as well as in the North, ecclesiastical donations were frequently commissioned for a church or chapel by private families. In both regions these donations not only functioned as a good deed for the donor family but also reflected their status and wealth.

Of the renovations which took place in Italy in the late Gothic period there is one type that closely resembles the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* renovation. Cathleen Hoeniger, in her study of Tuscan renovations, identified a series of altarpieces in Italy, which were made in the Gothic period but later renovated in the Renaissance as part of a larger redecoration for reasons of piety and status. In the majority of the renovations, a gothic painting was transformed into a Renaissance work by altering the frame.⁴⁶⁵ In the case of Giotto's *Badia Polyptych*, triangular pieces of wood were inserted between the gables of the Gothic frame to create a rectangular shape more in accord with quattrocento tastes (Fig. 61a, 61b). The *Badia Polyptych* was not the only work by Giotto to undergo a reframing in the Renaissance. His *Baroncelli Altarpiece*, created in 1370 for the Baroncelli chapel in Santa Croce, was renovated in 1480 (Fig. 62). Instead of adding pieces of wood to the original frame similar to the *Badia Polyptych*, the original painting was removed from its frame and placed in a new frame in the *all'antica* style. Along with the aforementioned examples by Giotto, several other Late Gothic Italian paintings were

⁴⁶⁵ Hoeniger, Renovation, 101.

updated through columns and other classical features, suggesting that this was a fairly standard type of renovation.⁴⁶⁶

In the establishment of types or categories of renovations, there are several reasons why the *St. Magdalene* renovation can be compared to these Italian hybrid altarpieces. First of all, in the examples of both the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and the Tuscan altarpieces, the original work was for the most part preserved. Further, the alterations to both took place within a century or so after the original was created. And finally, changing the style of the shrine niche and its contents in the example of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* parallels the new framing devices in the case of Italian works to the extent that they both modernized the look of the work.

In particular, this last point that Italian renovations were frequently undertaken to modernize the look of the altarpiece supports that the *St. Magdalene* renovation was undertaken as part of a larger redecoration. Reinforcing the claim that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was influenced by the wave of the redecoration in the church, it was found that renovations in Italy usually took place in the context of a larger redecoration. Moreover, among the factors that accounted for the decision to renovate was the status and taste of the owners of the altarpiece.⁴⁶⁷ Returning to the earlier example of Giotto's *Baroncelli Altarpiece*, the updating of the frame in the *all'antica* style represented the patron's awareness the growing interest in classical art. In a comparable demonstration of taste, by enlarging the scale of the shrine and its sculpture the current owners of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* acknowledged the growing verticality of contemporary German sculpture.

⁴⁶⁶ For the different examples of renovated hybrid altarpieces in Tuscany, see Hoeniger, Chapter 5.

⁴⁶⁷ Hoeniger, Renovation, 6.

Preserving the Original

It is not only significant to consider why a renovation was undertaken, but also to explore why the work was not completely replaced. There are several explanations to account for the preservation of the original painted surface. It is plausible that the patron's choice to renovate the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* rather than commissioning a new one may have been related to the indulgence attached to it. The indulgence phrase included in the inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* would suggest that Moser's Magdalene cycle had particular significance. It was established in Chapter 3 that it acted as a display for Tiefenbronn's indulgence privileges. Keeping this function in mind it would be logical that preserving the altarpiece and the inscription were of great importance. Such a religious intention is supported by renovation practices in Italy where objects were singled out for renovation based on their religious significance.⁴⁶⁸

In addition to the religious significance of the images chosen for renovation, the importance of the original artist was also a factor in the decision to leave the image mostly intact. Contrary to the belief that renovations were undertaken to mask the earlier style, Hoeniger demonstrated how they can be interpreted as the appreciation of an earlier style. Giotto's *Baroncelli Altarpiece* may have been singled out for renovation as a gesture of pride as the owners of a revered example of Giotto's craftsmanship.⁴⁶⁹

Moser's expertise and the costliness of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* may explain why it was only altered and not completely replaced by a new commission. Described as the most progressive artist in the early fifteenth century and one of the earliest practitioners

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 113.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 112.

of the *ars nova* style, the owners would have wanted to preserve Moser's original painting. Even beyond Moser's style the value of his craftsmanship and the expense of the altarpiece explain why the donors would have not completely replaced the original art work. The excessive use of gold leaf and other precious metals attest to the great expense of the original commission and the soundness of Moser's craftsmanship.

The Renovation and Protestant Reformation

While this study concerns itself with the immediate factors that brought about the renovation, the time frame of the redecoration reveals important information about its place in a larger historical context. It is curious that while art production dramatically decreased in Germany between 1520 and 1530 that this was not true for Tiefenbronn, where at least, two new altarpieces were installed and a new shrine sculpture was added to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. The sudden drop in artistic production elsewhere has been attributed to the Protestant Reformation, which fiercely challenged the Catholic use of images. In the years following the Reformation, even Catholics who maintained their belief in the efficacy of images became unwilling to invest in new donations, for it became unwise to invest a great sum of money in an altarpiece or other ecclesiastical object that might be destroyed.⁴⁷⁰

That so much art was produced at Tiefenbronn in the same decade that production dropped markedly elsewhere in Germany is especially outstanding if one considers its location in Swabia. In southwestern Germany, outbreaks of iconoclasm were especially numerous.⁴⁷¹ Along with iconoclasm came the organized elimination of art works from

⁴⁷⁰ Smith, German Sculpture, 46.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

churches. In as early as 1531, in Swabia, measures were taken to purge churches in Ulm and Biberach of all of their art.

How can the increase in artistic production at Tiefenbronn be accounted for in the wake of the Reformation? Despite its impact on artistic output, particularly ecclesiastical donations, responses to the Reformation varied from town to town. According to Jeffrey Chipps Smith, “Catholicism often prevailed and with it came a reaffirmation of the traditional faith in images.”⁴⁷² Tiefenbronn’s political situation serves as evidence that the wave of redecoration that followed the Protestant Reformation supported Catholic use of images. In the third decade of the sixteenth century, Tiefenbronn was one of the six villages, which comprised the region owned by the Gemmingen lords. These landholdings have been described as a Catholic island surrounded by Protestant territory. Not only did the Gemmingen family remain Catholic, but they defended it actively. In their territories, the lords of Gemmingen would not allow reform or anti-Catholic sentiments to arise.⁴⁷³ It is even likely that they encouraged sustained contributions to the decoration of the church at Tiefenbronn.

Summary

While in the early literature there was some discussion of the sixteenth-century shrine renovation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* it was limited in its focus to recreating the original appearance of the work. Not only did this study re-assess the identification of the original shrine contents, it examined, for the first time, the reasoning behind the renovation.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Piccard, Der Magdalenenaltar, 144.

In considering the original subject of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece's* shrine this chapter challenged the widely held assumption that it was the Magdalene's Elevation. While this scene appeared in Magdalene cycles, given the degree of variability among these as well as other factors, its presence on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* cannot be substantiated iconographically. Moreover, demonstrated in this study, iconography was not the only influence on altarpiece imagery. Taking into account both the altarpiece's setting and region, the original shrine likely contained the altar's dedicatory saints, mentioned in the inscription of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*: Mary Magdalene, Anthony and Erhard.

Concerning why the work was renovated, this challenged the claim that it was undertaken in honor of Mary Magdalene's elevation in status to joint patron (along with the Virgin) of the church at Tiefenbronn. Previously mentioned, while Mary Magdalene eventually became a joint patron and subsequent patron of the parish church at Tiefenbronn, according to official documents, this occurred much later than the period of the renovation. A preliminary consideration of the historical situation at Tiefenbronn, supported by late Gothic renovation practices, suggests that the changes made to the altarpiece were motivated by a larger program of redecoration. The years surrounding the renovation witnessed an unprecedented number of ecclesiastical donations at the Tiefenbronn church, including the installation of three new altarpieces. In the context of this redecoration, the outdated form of the *St. Mary Magdalene Altarpiece* became apparent and was corrected through the installation of a large scale sculpture of Mary Magdalene's Elevation, a theme that had gained in popularity beginning in the late fifteenth century.

Implicated in the recognition that the form of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was outdated and needed modified is a patron or owner. Further exploring the context of the renovation, this study also considered who made the decision to modify the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Based on donation and inheritance practices this study suggests that it was the heirs of the original owners of the altarpiece, who ordered the renovation. In so doing they demonstrated not only their religious strivings but also their good taste. Taste may have also played a role in the decision to leave much of the original painting intact during the renovation process. Among other factors, the patrons of the renovation, in preserving the original, were demonstrating their appreciation of the artist, Lucas Moser's, style. Described as one of the most progressive artists of the fifteenth century, ownership of one of his paintings would have contributed to the prestige of the donors.

6. Lucas Moser and Southwest Germany

In the preceding chapters, a contextual investigation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* emerged as an important consideration in the examination of its function, iconography and eventual renovation. In fact, many of the inaccuracies surrounding these aspects resulted from an insufficient consideration of the setting of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in earlier scholarship. The earlier thesis discredited in Chapter Four, that Mary Magdalene was chosen as the theme of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* through a connection to France, did not give due consideration to her widespread popularity in Germany. This example also reveals the tendency in scholarship on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* to attribute many of its features to foreign sources. Along with the theme of the altarpiece, scholars looked in Italy and France for a model to account for its unusual arch shape only to find that the design echoed the pre-existing wall altars at Tiefenbronn. The tendency to search for sources of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* abroad exhibited itself most vividly in the question of Moser's style where the emphasis on foreign sources greatly affected the direction of Moser scholarship. The prominence of foreign motifs and stylistic characteristics led to the conclusion that Moser received his artistic training abroad. Although the question of where he trained was debated with suggestions ranging from northern Italy, Vienna as well as Dijon and Avignon, the majority opinion favored locations outside of his native Germany. Although connections were drawn between Moser's style and Italian and Southeastern art, these were not widely accepted. Dismissing Italy, the Southeast as well as Moser's own native Germany, the most current

thesis on the origins of Moser's style, presented at the 1971 Moser Symposium, emphasized the primary influence of Franco-Flemish art.⁴⁷⁴

While it is undeniable that Moser was familiar with the unique stylistic characteristics of Franco-Flemish manuscript illumination and the Flemish artist, Robert Campin, this chapter takes issue with the emphasis on Franco-Flemish art as the primary stylistic influence on Moser. Along with the stylistic qualities of the Netherlandish *ars nova*, Moser retained many features of the International Style, the dominant stylistic mode in Germany. In fact, Moser drew far more heavily from artistic examples in his native southwest Germany than scholarship has acknowledged. Of the various German schools of painting in the fifteenth century, Moser's art exhibits many of the same stylistic qualities as found in southwest Germany, particularly along the upper Rhine and in Swabia; an observation highlighted in recent research. Not only does Moser exhibit stylistic ties to the works of his native southwest Germany, technical evidence also confirms his familiarity with the methods of construction and painting techniques of panels from this region. Although a limited number of southwestern German paintings have been studied technically, evidence exists to suggest that while some of his artistic impulses came from abroad his earliest training likely occurred in his homeland.

Recognizing the strength of Moser's stylistic ties to his native southwest German art has other implications for understanding the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. New research continues to challenge the previously held notion that German artists, in their retention of the International Style, were unable to fully assimilate the principles of Netherlandish

⁴⁷⁴ "So bleibt nur die Ableitung des Stiles aus der Kunst des Westens übrig." Reiner Hausherr. "'Der Magdalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn.' Bericht über die wissenschaftliche Tagung am 9. und 10. März 1971 im Zentralinstitut in München." *Kunstchronik* 24 (1971): 207.

naturalism. As demonstrated in recent studies of Moser's contemporaries, Netherlandish art was only one point of reference for German artists. Their continued incorporation of elements of the International Style was not an indication of artistic weakness, but should be regarded as the artist's awareness of the tastes of his patrons and viewing audience.

Moser and Franco-Flemish Art

In his landmark study of Early Netherlandish painting, Erwin Panofsky, identified Moser as "the earliest exponent of the *ars nova* style in south Germany."⁴⁷⁵ Among the things that Moser appropriated from Netherlandish artists was "a modeling that endows figures and objects with a semblance of space-displacing solidity, the 'materialistic' interpretation of surface texture, the use of cast-shadows, and even the idea of organizing the ensemble in such a manner that the central and right-hand panels form a coherent unit."⁴⁷⁶

The three-dimensionality of Moser's figures and the individuality present in some of them reflects his knowledge of Netherlandish art and can be considered a departure from earlier German painting. In general, Moser achieved a degree of monumentality that was new to German art. His figures are modeled and generally cast shadows. Although his female figures, including the Magdalene and Martha and the Wise and Foolish Virgins, are related types, Moser individualized them through the details of their costume and gestures. One female figure, in particular, stands out from the others. The figure of Martha on the left interior wing testifies to the degree of naturalism Moser was capable of

⁴⁷⁵ Erwin Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MS, 1966), 303.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 304

achieving in the representation of his figures. In her representation Moser not only achieved a convincingly volumetric figure, but also a highly individualized one. In contrast to the similar appearance of the female figures, outside of Martha on the interior wing, the male figures retain a higher degree of individuality. The degree of individualism of the male figures led some scholars to speculate that they were portraits. Rott suggested that Moser probably represented himself as Simon in the *Anointing* scene. He also speculated that Maximin may have been a portrait of the supposed donor, Abbot Wolfram Maiser von Berg.⁴⁷⁷

Kurt Bauch captured the high level of Moser's descriptive capabilities when he observed that in Moser's rendering of the scenes he created the objects with firsthand knowledge of the materials used. Moser depicted objects with the "eyes of a mason, a roofer, a cooper and a stained glass artist."⁴⁷⁸ Elements of the new naturalism are found in the detailed rendering of individual objects within the scenes of the altarpiece. In addition to the objects on the table in the scene of the *Anointing*, the still-life and sleeping whippet in the lower corners are carefully observed. The degree of detail in the distant ships and landscape in the *Sea Journey* possesses a genre-like character. Moser even achieved the illusion of reality in the manner in which the wind fills the sails and the ships appear to be moving through the water.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ Hans Rott, "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn bei Pforzheim und ihre Kunstwerke," Badische Heimat 12 (1925): 133.

⁴⁷⁸ Kurt Bauch, Der Tiefenbronner Altar des Lucas Moser (Bremen and Berlin, 1940), 8.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Although Moser's attention to detail is evident in each scene, his descriptive capabilities climaxed in the scene of the *Arrival in Marseilles*. This partially prompted Victor Wallerstein's comment that in this scene "the new generation was most apparent."⁴⁸⁰ One of the ways in which Moser achieved this degree of realism in the depiction of objects was through his employment of light. He carefully observed the way light reflects off different types of materials such as the stained glass, the metal lamps and the water. His creation of different textures also contributed to the realistic rendering of objects. This was achieved in some passages through the use of different binding media. The impasto of Mary Magdalene's wimple, which causes the paint to stand up in relief from the surface, realistically conveys the stiff linen folds of these types of fashionable headdresses.

In addition to the significance of the *Arrival* as a showcase for Moser's descriptive abilities, it is also the most advanced in terms of depth and should be regarded as an early attempt to create perspective. Although the different buildings are depicted from multiple points of view, for the portrayal of each one Moser tried to create the illusion of space using perspective. In the upper portion of the *Arrival*, where Mary Magdalene appears to the rulers of Marseilles in their bedchamber, the lines of the architecture converge to create the illusion of spatial recession. This same technique is employed in the smaller buildings behind the city wall. Moser used several devices in order to create a sense of depth in other scenes as well. Although not as architecturally elaborate, in the scene of the *Anointing* he placed the table at an oblique angle, suggesting depth.

⁴⁸⁰ Victor Wallerstein, Die Raumbehandlung in der oberdeutschen und niederländischen Tafelmalerei in der 1. Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts (Strasbourg, 1909), 33.

One of Moser's most progressive developments was the use of a continuous landscape throughout the three main scenes of the center panel. Recognizing the continuation of the middle to the right-hand panel, Panofsky falsely asserted that the left panel stood independent. That the *Arrival* is actually connected to the scene of the *Sea Journey* is evident in the water rising over the stairs in the lower left corner of the image. The unification of scenes was a new development, especially for German art, and had parallels only in some Flemish paintings, the most famous of which was Jan van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece*.⁴⁸¹

Moser's familiarity with Netherlandish art extends beyond a generalized naturalism. His technique, motifs, and compositions suggest an intimate knowledge of Franco-Flemish manuscript illumination. The relevance of the art of manuscript illumination is perhaps best revealed in Hans Rott's characterization of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as a "miniature done on a large scale."⁴⁸² Contained within each scene are numerous motifs that betray a dependence on manuscript illumination. In the scene of the *Anointing* Rott identified the sleeping whippet and the lattice backdrop as motifs found in manuscript illumination.⁴⁸³ Motifs also paralleled in manuscripts are the minute representation of the man playing a mandolin, the passenger with the barge dog, the captain, the wind-filled sails, and the distant landscape calvacade of the *Sea Journey*. In the scene of the *Arrival*,

⁴⁸¹ Wilhelm Pinder, Die Kunst der Ersten Bürgerzeit bis zu Mitte des 15. Jh., vol. 2, Vom Wesen und Werden deutscher Formen (Leipzig, 1937), 260.

⁴⁸² "Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn," 131.

⁴⁸³ Rott did not identify specific images or manuscripts for the variety of motifs to which he referred. He only noted a general relationship to Jacquemart de Hesdin and the Limbourg Brothers. In reference to Jacquemart de Hesdin he noted a similarity to Moser's faces, which resembled enamel work. *Ibid.*

the details particularly of the upper portion of the scene, including the sleeping rulers, the nightstand with the vase of flowers, the wall tapestry depicting wild men and the clothing hanging from the roof, were also borrowed from manuscripts. Rott further identified the half-moon and the minaret from the same scene as originating in illuminated pages. In the scene of the *Last Communion* the borrowings from manuscripts include the architectural sculpture and the priest in the choir stall, the pair of embedded coats-of-arms and the figure represented in stained glass. In addition to the particular motifs, Rott also attributed Moser's decorative script to his manuscript training.⁴⁸⁴

In addition to motifs, which could be found in Franco-Flemish manuscripts the parallels drawn between the scenes of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and specific pages strengthened the comparison of Moser's style to manuscript illumination. The perspective view of the Cathedral of Aix in the scene of the *Last Communion* was attributed to several pages in the *Tres Riches Heures*.⁴⁸⁵ In addition, the motif of the rocky islets separated by narrow channels as well as the hills and the shores in Moser's *Sea Journey* resemble the scene of the *Flight into Egypt* in the *Brussels Hours*.⁴⁸⁶ For Moser's representation of the *Sea Journey*, Sterling proposed a page from the *Belles Heures du*

⁴⁸⁴ In addition to these earlier manuscripts Rott also saw slightly later manuscripts as significant for Moser's art. In particular he related Moser's style to the pages executed by the van Eycks in the Turin-Milan Hours and the Boucicaut Hours. Other relevant artists for Moser included Jacques Coene and Hänsel von Hagenau. *Ibid.*, 133-134.

⁴⁸⁵ Plates VI, XXXIX, LXIV in Paul Durrieu, *Les Tres Riches Heures* (Paris, 1904).

⁴⁸⁶ Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, 304.

duc de Berry by the Limbourg Brothers as its model⁴⁸⁷ and confirmed that it was likely that Moser was trained as a manuscript artist (Fig. 63).⁴⁸⁸

While various qualities of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* were attributed to the influence of manuscript illumination, Moser's style also demonstrated his knowledge of Franco-Flemish panel painting. Although a relationship to Burgundian court painters such as Jean Malouel and Henri Bellechose was observed in terms of technique and style, Robert Campin's style emerged in the scholarly literature as a source for Moser.⁴⁸⁹ Included among the similarities between Moser's and Campin's art is the scale relationship between the figures and architecture. In both artists' works, the figures are over-sized in relation to the scale of the architecture. Moreover, despite the spatial recession in their paintings, they rely on surface pattern, creating a tension between the figure and surface and foreground and depth.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁷ He felt that this was a more immediate source for the *Sea Journey* than Panofsky's suggestion of a page from the *Brussels Hours*. Details of Moser's depiction, which originated in this image include "the narrow, vertical body of water, ornamental waves, square sails and buildings set at an angle." Charles Sterling, "Observations on Moser's Tiefenbronn Altarpiece," *Pantheon* 30 (Jan.-Feb. 1972): 27.

⁴⁸⁸ Not only would it explain why there are no extant panels by Moser but it would also relate to his technique. He further related Moser's use of different metals and parchment for a support to the craft of manuscript illumination. *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁹ Rott related Moser to Franco-Flemish panel painters. Moser covered his oak panels with parchment. In addition, his use of chalk ground, tempera and gilding demonstrated that he studied in the West. This technique was used by court artists Jean Malouel and Henri Bellechose as well as on the Portrait of King John II. Moser's stylistic characteristics were also similar to Jean Malouel and Henri Bellechose, in particular, Malouel's Lamentation of Christ. *Ibid.*, 133.

⁴⁹⁰ In contrast to Campin, Bauch characterized Moser's figures as being freer and his drawing more spontaneous. Moser's figures also lack the sharp contours of Campin. Bauch, *Der Tiefenbronner Altar*, 10.

In contrast to previous discussions on Campin's influence on Moser, Sterling emphasized the relationship between Campin's mature works and features of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.⁴⁹¹ According to him, these works, which include Campin's *St. Veronica* and *Virgin and Child* in Frankfurt, provide "a striking parallel and, most probably, a precedent" for Moser (Figs. 64, 65).⁴⁹² Similarities between Moser's standing figures of Martha and Lazarus and Campin's *Madonna* in Frankfurt include the placement of bulky figures in front of a vertical, decorative background.⁴⁹³

In addition to style it is clear that Moser understood other defining features of Netherlandish art including the use of disguised symbolism.⁴⁹⁴ His familiarity with disguised symbolism is evident in the sculptural group on the cathedral of Aix in the scene of the *Last Communion* and has parallels in Campin's Prado *Life of the Virgin* (Fig. 66) and Prado *Annunciation* (Fig. 67), both of which incorporate "allusive sculpture decorating architecture."⁴⁹⁵ In the same scene of the *Last Communion*, another instance of so-called disguised symbolism is evident in the architectural style of the church. Although the church is readily identified as Gothic, because of the pointed arches of the porch and the foremost side aisle, the nave is Romanesque and has a flat wooden roof.

⁴⁹¹ In contrast to Sterling, Bauch had related Moser's art to Campin's earlier works.

⁴⁹² The other mature work of Campin in the Städel depicts Veronica. Sterling, "Observations," 24.

⁴⁹³ It is important to point out that Moser was not so much dependent on Campin's style as he was on general conception and iconographic details. Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ The term "disguised symbolism" was used by Erwin Panofsky in his seminal work on the character of Early Netherlandish painting to refer to the religious meaning conveyed in the depiction of everyday objects, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, Chapter V: Reality and Symbol.

⁴⁹⁵ Sterling, "Observations," 20.

Campin also employed the same juxtaposition of Romanesque and Gothic architecture in his Prado paintings. In scholarship on these works, the combination of different architectural styles was assigned symbolic meaning. Through his depiction of the location of the *Betrothal* in the Gothic style and the building of the *Miracle of Joseph's Rod* in the Romanesque style, Campin evoked the New Testament incorporation of the Old Law.⁴⁹⁶

Equally revealing of Moser's familiarity with Netherlandish practices as the employment of two architectural styles to symbolize the Old and New Law, was what Sterling described as an "archeological effort" or a deliberate attempt to make something appear to be old. In the scene of the *Last Communion*, Moser executed the figure in the stained glass window in the most distant aisle of the cathedral in the style c. 1200. In his "archaeological effort" Moser paralleled the efforts of Jan van Eyck.⁴⁹⁷

Based on the preceding discussion it is clear that Moser incorporated many of the features of Franco-Flemish art into the scenes portrayed on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. From the carefully described objects and cast shadows to the naturalistic presentation of his figures and attempts to create a believable setting for the scenes depicted, Moser demonstrated his familiarity with the predominant stylistic characteristics of Franco-Flemish art. Ultimately, Moser's incorporation of motifs known in Franco-Flemish manuscripts and stylistic affinities to Burgundian panel painters and Robert Campin led scholars to the conclusion that he received his artistic training abroad. While the likelihood of this will be explored in more detail later it is important to recognize that Franco-Flemish influence was not the only point of reference in Moser's art. A more

⁴⁹⁶ According to Sterling, Moser's architectural depictions should be understood in light of Campin's Prado *Stories from the Life of Joseph* and the *Annunciation*. *Ibid.*, 21-22.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

complete understanding of Moser's stylistic achievements also requires acknowledgment of his ties to the International Gothic style and stylistic similarities to specific works from his native southwest Germany.

The International Style

In much of the art historical literature, Moser's adoption of the stylistic features associated with Franco-Flemish art positioned him as one of the leaders of the *ars nova* or "New Realism" in Germany. As one of the first to embrace the naturalism of Flemish painting, the majority of early scholars labeled him as a progressive artist, overlooking other elements in his art stemming from the International Style, which was largely viewed by most scholars as old-fashioned. While some early writers, such as Alfred Stange, did notice Moser's stylistic connections to the art of his native Germany, and, by extension, the International Style, he represented the minority. In recent decades, experts on early German painting have criticized the earlier style-based approach to German painters recognizing its biases and limitations and the wealth of contextual information lost by labeling a particular style as superior to another. Embracing a more objective approach to Moser's style, it is not surprising that more recent evaluations of his art have confirmed his ties to his native southwest Germany and the International Style, reinforcing Stange's earlier observation that Moser's ties to his native art were much more important than scholars were willing to admit. There are important implications for recognizing Moser's place in southwest German art. Not only is it applicable to the question of his training but it also provides a necessary starting point for reassessing the reception of his style in his own time period as well as our own.

Despite the degree to which Moser adopted the identifying features of Flemish art, the statement that only Flemish art was relevant to Moser's style is inaccurate. His art also incorporates the essential elements of the International Style, the dominant stylistic mode of most European centers around 1400.⁴⁹⁸ It is characterized by an overall elegance, which is manifest in the love of surface pattern, sinuous line, delicate figures and costly materials.⁴⁹⁹ The popularity of this style has been attributed to the harsh realities of the European political and social situation, which resulted in an "escapist cult."⁵⁰⁰

Nowhere in Moser's art is the International Style more evident than in the scene of the *Anointing* in the lunette of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Not only is the scene symmetrically arranged but the placement of the figures conforms to the semi-circular shape of the lunette.⁵⁰¹ Moser's indebtedness to the International Style is not only revealed in the scene's figural arrangement, but also in the insistence on surface pattern. In the *Anointing* this is clearly seen in the vines which encircle themselves around the

⁴⁹⁸ Brigitte Corley, Conrad von Soest: Painter Among Merchant Princes (London, 1996), 45.

⁴⁹⁹ The style is typified by representatives from different artistic centers: the *Wilton Diptych* in London; Gentile da Fabriano's *Adoration of the Magi*; The Veronica Master's *Virgin with the Sweet Pea Blossom*; the painted wings of the *Dijon Altarpiece* by Melchior Broederlaem; Jean Maoluel's *Grande Pieta*; and Louis Borrassá's Retable of St. Peter. Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 46.

⁵⁰¹ Graf Johannes von Waldburg-Wolfegg, Lucas Moser (Berlin, 1939), 36. Hermann Schmitz compared the lunette scene to the flat triangle of a Greek pediment; the figures and objects defining the triangle. Oberdeutschland im XV. und XVI. Jahrh., vol. 3, Die deutsche Malerei vom ausgehenden Mittelalter bis zum Ende der Renaissance, ed. Fritz Burger, Hermann Schmitz and Ignaz Beth (Berlin, 1924), 503.

lattice backdrop⁵⁰² as well as the table top which has been tilted upward parallel to the picture plane. In addition to these, the emphasis on the surface results from the figures themselves. For example, the head of Mary Magdalene resembles a silhouette.⁵⁰³

The strong tendency toward surface pattern is also manifest in other scenes as well. In particular, the representation of the water in the scene of the *Sea Journey* demonstrates Moser's reliance on pattern. Although he differentiated the color of the water from foreground to background and decreased the size of the waves in order to suggest spatial recession, the formulaic representation of the waves denied his attempts to create a sense of depth.⁵⁰⁴ Within the same scene Moser also tilted the boat upward in a manner similar to the tabletop in the *Anointing*, thereby emphasizing the surface of the image.

Moser's figures both in the scene of the *Anointing* and elsewhere also convey characteristics of the International Gothic Style. Although Moser modeled his drapery in light and dark it still retains a linear quality, which is reinforced by the schematic rendering of the drapery folds in places. Moser's female figures recall the International Style particularly in their similarity to one another. Although Moser attempted to vary the female figures in terms of clothing and poses, they all have similar facial features and delicate hands. Moser's use of gold leaf as well as his color choice defines him as a traditional artist. The colors of the robes worn by the figures - cherry red for Martha,

⁵⁰² These were described as "frontal" and "schematic." Wallerstein, Die Raumbehandlung, 30.

⁵⁰³ Waldburg-Wolfegg, Lucas Moser, 36.

⁵⁰⁴ Wallerstein, Die Raumbehandlung, 31.

green for Lazarus, blue-green for Peter, and shades of brown for the robes of Christ and the Pharisee - all belong to the International Style.⁵⁰⁵

Further details illustrate Moser's adherence to the International Style. The scale of Moser's figures should also be classified as a characteristic of the International Style. In works executed in this style, figures were generally over-scaled in relation to the architecture.⁵⁰⁶ Multiple viewpoints and the use of cutaway views as well as his means for achieving depth were typical of this style. In the scene of the *Sea Journey*, depth is achieved in traditional ways through the vertical stacking of foreground, middle ground and background space.⁵⁰⁷ The saints in the boat represent the foreground while the middle ground is achieved through the small parcel of land jutting in from the left. The distant landscape is the background. Depth is achieved not through accurate perspective, but through a reduction in scale of objects further in the distance. In this same scene, Moser's incorporation of shifting viewpoints is also obvious. In the example of the foreground figures in the boat, the figures and boat are seen from different viewpoints. Although the viewer is positioned slightly higher than the figures, it is not at the same angle as the boat, which is seen from a much higher point of view. This is also repeated in the distant landscape where the hills are viewed as if the observer is directly in front of them, but the coastal area, like the ship, is from a higher point of view.

⁵⁰⁵ Waldburg-Wolfegg, Lucas Moser, 37.

⁵⁰⁶ There is an explanation for why some of these characteristics overlap with Franco-Flemish influence, since the early fifteenth-century manuscripts are classified as International Style. The dating of the Franco-Flemish manuscripts a couple of decades earlier was testimony to the old-fashioned character of German painting, which retained them much longer.

⁵⁰⁷ Wallerstein, Die Raumbehandlung, 31.

Moser's Relationship to German Painting

Because the International Style had strong roots throughout Germany, even past 1400, these elements of his art have come to represent the native element of his style. Even within Germany, however, different manifestations of the International Style appeared in its various regional schools. As a result scholars have attempted to identify the regional school in which Moser's style had its closest parallel. It was earlier noted that Moser's figural style betrays a distant resemblance to the painting schools of the Middle and Lower Rhine. Supporting Moser's ties to the Middle Rhine, H. Janitschek compared Moser's female figures to those of the founder of the Cologne school, Master Wilhelm.⁵⁰⁸ The similarities that exist between the figures of Martha and Lazarus on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and the individual figures in the *Wasservass Calvary* was another indication of Moser's ties to Cologne (Fig. 68).⁵⁰⁹ Moser's drastic use of foreshortening, particularly in the figure of Lazarus in the scene of the *Arrival*, strengthened the connection with the *Wasservass Calvary*.⁵¹⁰ Ultimately, the ties between Moser and early Cologne artists as well as the *Wasservass Calvary* convinced Janitschek that Moser went to Cologne on his travels.⁵¹¹ In the determination of the branch of the "Weiche Stil," which most influenced Moser, Sterling proposed the Lower Rhine. In particular, Sterling

⁵⁰⁸ According to H. Janitschek, the Wise and Foolish Virgins and the figure of Martha display characteristics of the supposed founder of the Cologne school, Master Wilhelm. These characteristics include the high and rounded foreheads, arched eyebrows, full, pursed mouths, and pointed chins. In addition to the specific relationship to Master Wilhelm, the slender necks and generalized hands resemble general stylistic tendencies of the Cologne school. Geschichte der deutschen Malerei (Berlin, 1910/11), 245.

⁵⁰⁹ Helmut May, Lucas Moser, 2nd edition (Stuttgart, 1967), 39.

⁵¹⁰ Wilhelm Boeck, Der Tiefenbronner Altar von Lucas Moser (Munich, 1951), 9.

⁵¹¹ Janitschek, Geschichte der deutschen Malerei, 245.

observed that Moser's Man of Sorrows in the predella shares the same diagonally slanted eyes and drooping mouth as Master Francke's *Man of Sorrows* done around 1420 (Fig. 69).⁵¹²

Although some general similarities have been observed in the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and German art produced along the middle and lower Rhine, the origins of Moser's art can most clearly be seen in the artistic schools of southwest Germany. One of the earliest scholars to acknowledge this was Alfred Stange. He rightly called attention to Moser's German origins, pointing out that they were more relevant than scholars had been willing to admit.⁵¹³ According to Stange, similarities between the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and some of the most well known works of the school associated with southern Swabia created proof that Moser could have acquired foundations for his art in his homeland. Among these works are the Lindau *Lamentation*, the panels from Bregenz and the *Richenthaler Konzilschronik*.⁵¹⁴

Even more striking than the stylistic links with the art from the Bodensee region are Moser's ties to the Upper Rhenish school. In the early literature on Moser, Reber made the claim that the direct school of Moser was to be found along the Upper Rhine (Strasbourg). This was an important artistic center at the time indicated by numerous

⁵¹² According to Sterling, Swabian artists had a tendency to travel to the lower Rhine. In addition, training in the Lower Rhine region would account for his use of oak and his "Wanderjahre" in the West. Sterling, "Observations," 31.

⁵¹³ Alfred Stange, *Südwestdeutschland in der Zeit von 1400 bis 1450*, vol. 4, *Deutsche Malerei der Gotik* (Berlin, 1951), 98.

⁵¹⁴ The narrative tone of the *Chronik* was considered to be similar. In addition the two works shared the same sense for architecture, locality of events, the secular, and the individuality of people. The representation of the interior of the church in the *Last Communion* has models in the *Chronik*. *Ibid.*, 100.

artists' names handed down from this region.⁵¹⁵ Moser's style bears a resemblance to the *Colmar Crucifixion*, especially in the figure of the Man of Sorrows on the predella (Fig. 70). The St. Marx panels in Strasbourg present even stronger ties to Moser's style. Represented on these panels are two scenes from the life of Mary: *The Birth of the Virgin* and *Joseph and Mary* (Figs. 71a, 71b). Stange pointed out that these panels could have provided the models for the architecturally defined space and large figures, which are distinguishing characteristics of Moser's art. Moreover, St. Martha, on the interior wing of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, is similar to the standing female figure holding a covered dish in the scene of the *Birth of the Virgin*. The angels in the scene of the *Last Communion* resemble the Christ Child in the scene of Mary and Joseph.⁵¹⁶ According to Stange, Moser must have known such images as St. Marx panels and the *Colmar Crucifixion* and they must have been direct inspiration for him when he painted the Tiefenbronn Altarpiece.

Although the tie between Moser and the St. Marx panels are the strongest of the Upper Rhenish works, he does display a familiarity even with other works from that school. The scene of the *Anointing* shares common features with the Frankfurt *Paradise Garden* (Fig. 72) and the Solothurn *Madonna of the Strawberries* (Fig. 73): paintings considered to be from the Upper Rhenish school. Similar to these, the scene of the *Anointing* is "a lively,

⁵¹⁵ Franz von Reber, Über die Stilentwicklung der schwäbischen Tafel-malerei im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert (Munich, 1895), 369. Among the artists' names provided by the author are Johann Hirtz in Strasbourg, Hans Tieffenthal in Schlettstadt, Kaspar Isenmann in Colmar, and Lauwlin in Basel. Reber described the names as empty sounds, because no works could be linked to them.

⁵¹⁶ Stange, Sudwestdeutschland, 100.

tangible representation of an idealistic state, only with a truer perspective.”⁵¹⁷ The figure of Martha from the *Anointing* is nearly an exact copy of the female figure near the tree in the *Paradise Garden*. It is notable that some of the stylistic qualities in Moser’s art which have been attributed to the influence of foreign sources are also found in the panels of the Upper Rhenish school. The Frankfurt *Paradise Garden* contains many of the elements of Franco-Flemish manuscript illumination, which were considered decisive for Moser.⁵¹⁸

Although not a panel painting, similarities between an Upper Rhenish group of playing cards and the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* have also been noted in the art-historical literature. The *Stuttgart Playing Cards*, presently in the Württembergisches Landesmuseum in Stuttgart, are currently dated around 1430. Although the exact workshop is unknown, the watermark on the cards determined, along with the date, their manufacture in southwest Germany (Fig. 74).⁵¹⁹ Although Waldburg-Wolfegg’s attribution of these cards to Moser has been challenged, his observations regarding the stylistic similarities are insightful.⁵²⁰ Similar to Moser’s work, the *Playing Cards* display a naturalistic portrayal of animals. The various suits of animals are carefully rendered and naturalistically observed. On the Tiefenbronn Altarpiece, Moser’s careful observation of animals is most visible in the galloping horses and barking dog in the distant background of the *Sea Journey*. The naturalistic qualities of his sleeping whippet in the corner of the lunette scene and the freshly observed still life of the *Anointing* have also solicited much

⁵¹⁷ Otto Fischer, “Lukas Moser,” in *Schwäbische Lebensbilder* (Stuttgart, 1940), 135.

⁵¹⁸ Heinzmann and Köhler, *Der Magdalenenaltar*, 22.

⁵¹⁹ Heribert Meurer, *Das Stuttgarter Kartenspiel* (Stuttgart, 1991), 63-4.

⁵²⁰ Waldburg-Wolfegg, *Lucas Moser*, 122.

admiration (Fig. 75). Further provoking comparison to the *Playing Cards* was Moser's naturalistic rendering of the bird on the Maiser von Berg coat of arms in the predella.

Moser's style not only demonstrates a connection to the art produced along the Upper Rhine, but there are many similarities with the art in Ulm. In the fifteenth century, Ulm was one of the most important cities in southwest Germany. Although later scholarship slighted the stylistic congruencies between the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and the stained Glass windows of the Besserer Chapel in Ulm's Münster, this is in the minority. In comparing Moser's altarpiece with individual scenes of the Besserer windows similarities exist not only in terms of compositional layout and figural style but also ornamental motifs and coloring. For example, the figure of Martha from the scene of the *Anointing* shares the same physical traits with Sara from *Abraham and the Three Angels* in Ulm (Fig. 76). Among the similarities are the pear-shaped eyes, absent gaze, finely drawn eyebrows, fluid bridge of the nose, and a full mouth. Beyond facial features the figures in both the scenes of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and the Besserer windows have the same poses and are involved in similar activities. The act of serving a meal, which is seen in the figure of Martha in the *Anointing*, is repeated by the servant in *Abraham and the three Angels*. The figure of Mary Magdalene in the Besserer representation of the *Noli me tangere* (Fig. 77) is similar to Mary Magdalene in the *Anointing* while the figure of St. Joseph, represented in both the *Nativity* (Fig. 78) and *Visitation* of the Besserer windows, bears a resemblance to the Pharisee in the *Anointing*.

In addition to the similarities in the types of figures and poses, the settings for some of the scenes on the Besserer windows and Moser's altarpiece resemble each other. The grass floor of the *Feast* is similar to the Besserer *Adam and Eve in the Garden of*

Paradise. Waldburg-Wolfegg also compared the scenes of the *Pentecost* and the *Last Judgment* to Tiefenbronn (Fig. 79). According to him, Moser's compositions are similar to the layout of these particular scenes. The interior space of the *Pentecost* resembles the *Last Communion* of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and the sleeping figures in the *Nativity* are related to the figure of Lazarus in the *Arrival* scene.

Moser and Southwest Germany: Strengthening the Connection

While in the early literature, scholars recognized Moser's stylistic ties to the regional schools of southwest Germany, later scholarship (Post-Piccard) dismissed these ties, emphasizing only his stylistic dependence on Franco-Flemish art. Although this sentiment dominated Post-Piccard studies on Moser's style, more recently, a consideration of southwest German painting has shed light on its homogeneous character. In particular, a recent localization of a small fragment in the Städel Museum in Frankfurt (to Swabia or the Upper Rhine) indirectly confirmed the strength of Moser's relationship to southwest German art. The Frankfurt fragment, the *Virgin and Child in a Circle of Angels*, was once part of a reliquary casket, which depicted scenes from the life of St. Anthony and was formerly in Darmstadt (Fig. 80).⁵²¹ In the fragment in Frankfurt, the Virgin is seated in a meadow surrounded by three angels wearing albs on each side of her. The infant Christ, who stands on Mary's lap, is turned toward the right to assist the angels, who unfurl a banderole. On the left, the angels hold another banderole. It has been demonstrated that the angels are singing the Ave Maria.

⁵²¹ Inv. Nr. 1684. The reliquary casket has been missing since 1946. For a reconstruction of the shrine and the scenes depicted on it, see, Bodo Brinkmann and Stefan Kemperdick, Deutsche Gemälde im Städel, 1300-1500 (Mainz am Rhein, 2002), 143-54.

The recent investigation of the Frankfurt *Virgin* has challenged the identification of the origins as well as the dating of the *St. Anthony's Shrine* to which it once belonged; a decision strongly based on its stylistic connections to Moser's *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. In an earlier catalogue of the Städel, the *St. Anthony's Shrine* was catalogued as a Middle Rhenish work and dated to 1410 (Figs. 81). The decisive factor in its localization, along the Middle Rhine, was perceived stylistic ties with other works created there. Stange compared it to the *Small Friedberger Altar* in Darmstadt and later with the *Siefersheimer Altar*, both of which originated in the Middle Rhine region.⁵²²

Despite the designation of the *St. Anthony's Shrine* as Middle Rhenish, stylistic parallels between it and the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* had been drawn in the literature. August Feigel noted stylistic parallels with the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and identified the *St. Anthony's Shrine* as an "indirect predecessor of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*."⁵²³ Similarities included the representation of a sea journey on both works as well as some of the details of the scene including the attempt to achieve depth through the color variations in the water. Relationships also exist between the scene of the *Emperor's Dream* on *St. Anthony's Shrine* and the Appearance of Mary Magdalene to the rulers of Marseilles in the *Arrival* on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* (Fig. 82).⁵²⁴

In the literature on Moser, stylistic parallels between the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and some of the scenes from the *St. Anthony's Shrine* were reinforced by Waldburg-Wolfegg. He identified the female figures on the scene of *St. Anthony and the Poor* on the narrow

⁵²² Ibid., 146-7.

⁵²³ August Feigel, "Ein gemalter reliquienschrein," *Städel Jahrbuch* 2 (1922): 31-2.

⁵²⁴ Ibid., 32.

side of the shrine and those in the *Anointing* scene and predella of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as being similar (Fig. 83). In addition to the representation of the figures, the creation of space and decorative details such as the plants also betrayed a relationship between the works. It was concluded that the *St. Anthony's Shrine* was a preparatory stage for Moser's representation of the *Sea Journey* and his depiction of architecture. Moreover, Waldburg-Wolfegg concluded that, "we can recognize in the *St. Anthony's Shrine* a work from Moser in the second decade [of the fourteenth century]." ⁵²⁵

In the recent study of the fragment of the *Virgin in a Circle of Angels*, several factors led to a reassessment of the Shrine's origins along the Middle Rhine, not the least of which was its relationship to Moser. Contrary to Feigel and Stange, Brinkmann and Kemperdick determined that the *St. Anthony Shrine* is not related to any work in the Middle Rhine region from the first half of the fifteenth century. ⁵²⁶

Not only has the recent study of *The Madonna in a Circle of Angels* resulted in a reassessment of the origins of the *St. Anthony's Shrine*, but the early dating of the work to the first or second decade of the fifteenth century has also been challenged. Brinkmann and Kemperdick determined that many aspects of the work relate not to German works of the first and second decade of the fifteenth century, but are closer to the new Realism in Germany. Among these stylistic characteristics are the sense of spatial recession and the three-dimensionality of the figures. Brinkmann and Kemperdick concluded that of the examples of the new "realism" in Germany, Moser's *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* is the

⁵²⁵ "... so könnten wir in dem Antoniuschrein ein Werk Mosers aus den szwaziger Jahren erkennen." Waldburg-Wolfegg, *Lucas Moser*, 127.

⁵²⁶ No parallels between the *Siefersheimer Altar* and the *St. Anthony Shrine* could be found. Moreover, the grounds for Feigels localization of the work were dismissed as "irrelevant." Brinkmann and Kemperdick, *Deutsche Gemälde*, 151.

most comparable work to the *St. Anthony's Shrine*. In addition to the comparable scenes in which figures in bed are seen through a second story building, the Tiefenbronn altarpiece also includes a view of an interior through a stained glass window. The angels of the shrine doors of *St. Anthony's Shrine* (Fig. 84) have the same pronounced chins and full cheeks as the angels in the *Last Communion* (Fig. 85) and the Wise and Foolish Virgins on the predella. Other similarities between the figures include the strange foreshortenings of the face and the downward slanting eyes. In the fragment of *The Madonna in a Circle of Angels*, the representation of the teeth of the angels as small white points is related to one of the angels in the *Last Communion*. The rulers to whom Mary Magdalene appears in the *Arrival* resemble the poor women to whom St. Anthony distributes his goods on the *St. Anthony Shrine*. Finally, the deep colors of the large angels of the shrine doors and the round, softly modeled faces with fine highlights on the nose and lips are reminiscent of Moser's style.⁵²⁷ Despite the parallels between the two works, Brinkmann and Kemperdick concluded that they are not enough to place the artists in direct contact but suggest a similar region.

Situating the origins of the *Virgin* fragment and, by extension, the *St. Anthony Shrine* to the region of southwest Germany rested not only on the work's similarities to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, but to the *Stuttgart Playing Cards* and the stained glass windows of the Besserer chapels. Recall that there are strong similarities in style between these works and the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. For Waldburg-Wolfegg the similarities were strong enough to attribute both the *Playing Cards*⁵²⁸ and the Besserer windows⁵²⁹ to

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 153.

⁵²⁸ Waldburg-Wolfegg, Lucas Moser, 122.

Moser. Although according to Kemperdick, Waldburg-Wolfegg went to “far too far” in many of his attributions, Kemperdick supported Moser’s stylistic connections to these works, confirming the stylistic cohesiveness of some of the most significant southwest German paintings.

The Question of Moser’s Training Abroad

Demonstrated in the preceding discussion Moser’s style was influenced by both Franco-Flemish naturalism and the International Gothic Style represented in Upper Rhenish painting. In considering Moser’s stylistic sources, the emphasis in the literature on Franco-Flemish influences gave rise to the question of where Moser trained. Based on the similarities between Moser and Franco-Flemish manuscript artists, particularly those active in the courts of the Dukes of Burgundy in the first part of the fifteenth century, Hans Rott assumed that Moser was trained in the workshop of a manuscript illuminator in Burgundy or the Rhône Valley.⁵³⁰ Not only was he trained in France, but according to Rott, it was likely that he lived for several years in Dijon at the court of Philip the Bold and Philip the Good.⁵³¹

While some scholars supported the claim that Moser trained abroad, there are several reasons for revisiting this speculation. One of the foremost problems in assuming that

⁵²⁹ Ibid., 76-7.

⁵³⁰ Hans Rott, “Die Kirche zu Tiefenbronn,” 131.

⁵³¹ In addition to the artistic evidence already provided, Rott felt that this could be supported by the iconographic program of the altarpiece and that it could also explain the Italianate elements in Moser’s art. The dependence of some of Moser’s motifs also supported his relationship to France. According to Rott, the church of the *Last Communion* corresponded to the Romanesque basilica of pilgrimage cities and the sculpture of the Virgin on the façade resembled the façade of St. Père at the foot of the mountains near Vézelay. Ibid., 132.

Moser trained in France is the lack of documentary evidence. Recall that Lucas Moser has never been securely linked to a documented artist either in his native home or elsewhere. The strength of the artist's stylistic ties to the art in his native southwest Germany also casts doubt on the hypothesis that he received his training abroad. Stange, for example, proposed that instead of learning of foreign sources abroad that Moser became familiar with them in his homeland through examples brought to Swabia. Supporting this possibility is the dating of the manuscripts that influenced Moser's style. Stange pointed out that most of the manuscripts to which Moser's art was compared were created ten to fifteen years earlier than the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. What this suggests is that Franco-Flemish innovations could have easily made their way to southwest Germany by the time that Moser was working on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.⁵³² That some of the stylistic qualities associated with Franco-Flemish art can be seen in other southern German paintings created before the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* provides additional evidence for the migration of Western (Franco-Flemish) art to southwest Germany. For example, the Upper Rhenish Frankfurt *Paradise Garden* possesses the qualities of Franco-Flemish art considered decisive for Moser.⁵³³ This example also leaves open the possibility that

⁵³² Stange concluded that the influence of manuscript illumination should be seen as a distant foundation. Südwestdeutschland in der Zeit von 1400 bis 1450, vol. 4, Deutsche Malerei der Gotik (Berlin, 1951), 99. As evidence for how Moser could have come into contact with Western art in his home, he pointed to a small miniature in the *Jeronimianum* (Karlsruhe Codex XVIII) for the Constance bishop Otto von Hachberg. According to Stange, if Moser was first a manuscript illuminator he could have worked in the manner of the Karlsruhe miniatures in his youth, 101.

⁵³³ Franz Heinzmann and Mathias Köhler, Der Magdalenenaltar des Lucas Moser in der gotischen Basilika Tiefenbronn (Regensburg, 1994), 22.

Moser acquired his knowledge of Franco-Flemish art through earlier German paintings instead of having firsthand knowledge of Franco-Flemish manuscripts.

In considering Moser's artistic formation it is also important to recognize what Robert Suckale has described as a new type of "open" artistic landscape that developed in the region of the Upper Rhine.⁵³⁴ In his article on Johannes von Metz, active in Regensburg, Robert Suckale highlighted the many different artistic sources present in his *Passion Altarpiece* made for the St. Leonhard church in Regensburg presumably between 1420 and 1430. Similar to Moser, second only to Upper Rhenish art, Franco-Flemish painting exerted the greatest influence on Metz's style.⁵³⁵ In addition to these, however, Metz's style also demonstrates a familiarity with Viennese, Bohemian and Italian painting.⁵³⁶ Describing the region of the Upper Rhine as a collecting point for the different artistic impulses from all over Europe,⁵³⁷ Suckale identified Metz's altarpiece, in its incorporation of multiple artistic models, as a typical representative of Upper Rhenish painting.⁵³⁸ In recognizing the character of art in the Upper Rhine region as being receptive to many different artistic impulses, Suckale concluded that the open landscape

⁵³⁴ Robert Suckale, "Johannes von Metz, ein Altarsgenosse Stefan Lochners. Der Oberrhein als Zentrum künstlerischer Innovation in der Konzilszeit," in Stefan Lochner Meister zu Köln: Herkunft – Werke – Wirkung, edited by Frank Günter Zehnder (Cologne, 1993), 42.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵³⁶ For more information on the presence of these influences in Moser's art, see Waldburg-Wolfegg, Lucas Moser.

⁵³⁷ Even before the Council of Constance the Upper Rhine region was receptive to artistic impulses from Italy and Bohemia. Suckale, "Johannes von Metz," 42.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

was not only where Stefan Lochner and Johannes von Metz, but also Lucas Moser could have received their artistic foundation.⁵³⁹

Although limited in scope the goal of the preceding discussion was to emphasize the possibility that Moser acquired knowledge of Franco-Flemish art in his native Germany: an observation that increases the likelihood that he also trained there. While information on artistic practices is also relevant to this question, particularly our knowledge of the degree to which artist's traveled abroad for their training in this time period, another tool commonly used to assess artistic training is through the methods and materials employed in the creation of a particular work. Fortunately, new ways to further explore the question of Moser's training have emerged from technical studies of not only the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* but several other Upper Rhenish paintings. While the 1970 technical study of Moser's *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was mainly undertaken to investigate the originality of the altarpiece's form, inscription and coats of arms, it also detailed Moser's construction and painting techniques; valuable information for comparing his methods with those of other southwest German paintings.

Technical Study and the Localization of Moser's Training

Given the lack of documentary evidence and the limitation of stylistic analysis in localizing Moser's artistic training, this study approaches the question of his origins for the first time by examining the techniques and methods of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* relative to other German panel paintings from around the same time period. In the past several decades information gained through the scientific examinations of paintings has proven effective in localizing the origins of unsigned works of art. Although scientific

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 42.

examination on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was undertaken several decades ago, only recently has the opportunity presented itself to compare Moser's artistic methods with other German paintings as the number of German paintings studied scientifically has increased.

Attempts to localize Moser's training through his artistic methods rests on the reality that paintings produced in a particular region exhibit not only shared stylistic traits, but, more importantly, artistic techniques, and that variations exist from region to region and school to school as well as among individual workshops. While similar techniques were employed throughout Europe in the construction of a panel painting, among the factors that vary are the species of wood selected as the support, methods of gilding, materials used for binding media, the structure of the paint layers and so on. The development of different artistic materials and techniques specific to certain regions is perhaps most evident in the comparison of panel paintings made in Italy with those produced North of the Alps. In the preparation of the panels one of the most noticeable differences between these two regions is in the materials used for the ground. Although the ground served a similar function in both regions, creating a smooth and durable surface for the paint layers, Italian gesso was composed mainly of gypsum whereas Northern artists used chalk as a main ingredient for their ground.

From the limited amount of data on the making of panel paintings from German countries, it appears that local preferences also gave rise to variations in artistic practices. Considering the Cologne school, for which there exists the most information on artistic practices, several techniques have emerged as being characteristic of the region. One technique found consistently in Cologne painting is the application of an isolation layer

over the ground.⁵⁴⁰ The use of this yellowish layer prevented the binding agents of the paint layers from penetrating the ground. Another typical technique used by Cologne painters was to cover the entire ground with a layer of lead white which presumably enhanced the colors applied.⁵⁴¹ The paint layer structure represents another defining feature of Cologne painting. Overall, it is characterized by its simplicity, consisting generally of one layer, except in specific areas.⁵⁴² Along with the paint layer structure the materials used for the suspension of the pigments or binding media were frequently specific to a region. According to Hermann Kühn, the infrequent use of egg tempera as a binding medium was typical of Cologne painting. Instead of tempera, specific to Cologne artists, lime was a frequently used ingredient in binding media.⁵⁴³

That certain commonly shared techniques emerged among paintings from a particular regional school is relevant to the question of the localization of a particular panel painting, and, by extension, an artist's training. It can be assumed (in conjunction with stylistic analysis) that if a particular work exhibited the artistic techniques characteristic of, for example, early Cologne painting that their initial training occurred in that region. Returning to Moser, recall that of the German schools of painting, his style is most

⁵⁴⁰ Julien Chapuis, "Neue Forschungen zu zwei Tafeln von Stefan Lochner in Rotterdam: Eine naturwissenschaftliche Untersuchung des "Johannes der Evangelist" und der "Maria Magdalena", " in Stefan Lochner Meister zu Köln Herkunft – Werke – Wirkung, ed. by Frank Günter Zehnder (Cologne, 1993), 207-8. For a general discussion of the techniques employed in early Cologne painting, see Hermann Kühn, "Malmaterial und technischer Aufbau altkölnner Malerei," Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch 50 (1990), 69-97.

⁵⁴¹ Chapuis, "Neue Forschungen," 211.

⁵⁴² Ibid. For a more complete discussion of the paint layer structure of Old Cologne paintings, see Kühn, "Malmaterial," 72-3.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 80.

strongly connected with Upper Rhenish painting. Although only a small number of paintings have been scientifically examined from this school, a comparison of Moser's artistic methods with those Upper Rhenish panels for which there is technical information support that Moser likely trained in his native southwest Germany. Since this comparison demands a familiarity with the structure and artistic methods and materials of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* the following paragraphs contain a detailed description of the technical findings from its scientific examination.

The Support and Preparation

The support of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was constructed of oak panels joined by wooden dowels.⁵⁴⁴ The lunette consists of two planks of wood placed horizontally and fastened together with dowels (Fig. 86). For the scenes of the main body of the altarpiece, the oak planks were arranged vertically. Two planks each were used for the outer scenes of the *Sea Journey* and the *Last Communion*. One massive panel of oak was used for the predella, which was secured to the main body of the altarpiece with large vertical dowels.⁵⁴⁵

After the support was lined with parchment Moser then applied several layers of ground, which was composed of a mixture of chalk and lime. The ground was

⁵⁴⁴ The following is a list of measurements for each scene (the height, width, and thickness of the panel are included). Tympanum: 69cm x 164cm x 2.5cm; *Sea Journey* and *Last Communion*: 149cm x 57cm x ca. 2.5cm; *Arrival in Marseilles* (left and right wing) and *Martha and Lazarus on the interior*: 149cm x 45cm x ca. 1.5cm; predella: 36cm x 238cm x 9.5cm (the height of the picture surface alone, without the border, is 24.5cm). These measurements are located in the captions under the illustrations in Straub, R., Richter, E.-L., Härlin, H. & Brandt, W., "Der Magdalenenaltar des Lucas Moser. Eine technische Studie," in: Althöfer, H., Straub, R. & Willemsen, E., Beiträge zur Untersuchung und Konservierung mittelalterlicher Kunstwerke (Stuttgart, 1974), 13-16.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 16-18.

subsequently polished to create a smooth surface for gilding and the application of paint. Moser followed the method of ground application typical of the fifteenth century and applied it after the support was already secured in its frame.⁵⁴⁶

Water or Bole Gilding

Prior to the application of the paint, it was the practice to first gild the altarpiece. Although different gilding techniques were used, in areas where large expanses of gold leaf were required, such as the background, the most common method was water or bole gilding. Moser used bole gilding for the background in the middle zone, predella and interior wings, all of the halos and some of the ecclesiastical garments in the middle zone and the angels' robes in the *Last Communion*.⁵⁴⁷ Before the designated areas were gilded, several layers of red earth or bole were applied directly to the ground layer.⁵⁴⁸ The orange or reddish bole was used under the gold leaf in order to avoid a green cast, which resulted from the application of gold directly to the white ground.

In order for the gold leaf to adhere to the surface of the red bole it was slightly dampened with water. The gold was then floated on to the moist surface in sheets measuring 9x9 centimeters.⁵⁴⁹ After drying, to achieve a brilliant surface, the gold was then burnished by rubbing the surface with a stone or animal tooth.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 19-20.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁵⁴⁸ The bole of Moser's altarpiece has a uniformly pinkish cast. Depending on the thickness of its application, however, its color varies between a deep red to a pale orange. Ibid., 24.

⁵⁴⁹ The thickness of the sheets of gold is enough to make the places where they overlap visible in x-radiographs. Ibid.

Underdrawing

In addition to the application of red bole, other techniques were also used in relation to gilding and occurred before the application of the gold leaf. One of the first steps of the artist after the preparation of the support was to apply a compositional drawing to the prepared ground, which acted as a guide for the painted surface and demarcated the areas to be gilded from those to be painted.⁵⁵⁰

Using infrared, underdrawing was revealed in the area of the sculptural grouping in the scene of the *Last Communion* on the portal of the cathedral.⁵⁵¹ The underdrawn lines varied in color from dark brown to black and Moser did not employ cross-hatching. For the shaded portions of an object or figure Moser used a pointed brush to apply lines in thick strokes next to one another. The application of the strokes was described as “idiosyncratic and summary.”⁵⁵²

Incising

Before beginning the bole gilding process, artists incised the main lines of the composition in the areas where the gilding and the paint surface would overlap. This

⁵⁵⁰ The use of an underdrawing was a general technique in the Middle Ages. Ibid., 20. In the Summer of 1996, I met with Dr. Richter at the Stuttgart Institut der Technologie der Malerei in order to obtain documents relating to the technical study of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Unfortunately, the only surviving records of the study were slides, which had been used for the publications, none of which were of the underdrawings.

⁵⁵¹ In this area, the paint is so thin that the underdrawing is detectable with the naked eye. Ibid.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

procedure was necessary so that the artist could still follow the compositional layout through the layer of burnished gold.⁵⁵³

Moser was meticulous concerning the areas where the gold and the paint were to overlap. To avoid a division between the gold and paint or paint build-up, Moser extended the gold leaf into the areas that were to be painted. Because of this practice, it was once thought that the entire surface of the altarpiece was covered with gold leaf.⁵⁵⁴

The practice of using an incised line as a guideline for the paint application was a common practice of this time period. What was considered to be a unique characteristic of Moser was his use of incising in various other places not normally incised by artists of the period and not bordering gold.⁵⁵⁵ Moser incised drapery folds as well as the contours of the eyes, mouths and hands of his figures (Fig. 87).⁵⁵⁶ The researchers characterized the lines as being very “spontaneous” and “sketchy”⁵⁵⁷ and when seen by x-ray, they appeared calligraphic.

⁵⁵³ The practice of incising was a technical requirement for all works with a gold ground. The presence of incised lines was also an indication of the originality of the corresponding parts of the painted surface. *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁵⁵ Many of the incised lines can be detected with the naked eye. In x-rays they appear lighter than the surrounding area because of their absorption of the paint. *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁵⁶ The practice of incising confirmed the originality of several details of the altarpiece: Lazarus' crosier in the *Sea Journey*; the timber-roofed house and arcaded building in the *Arrival*; the buttresses of the cathedral in the *Arrival* and *Last Communion*; the ointment jar of Martha on the interior wing; and the cloud next to the Man of Sorrows in the predella. *Ibid.*, 23 n. 20.

⁵⁵⁷ “Bei Lucas Moser dagegen had die Ritzzeichnung spontanen, skizzenhaften Charakter.” The researchers felt that these lines were so idiosyncratic to Moser that they must be used as a point of departure in eventual stylistic comparisons. *Ibid.*, 24.

In creating the background pattern for the standing figures of Martha and Lazarus on the interior view of the altarpiece, Moser engraved the ornament in the ground. The flat areas between the lines were engraved in zigzag strokes.⁵⁵⁸ The circular pattern of Lazarus' cope was created in a similar manner in that the pattern was engraved into the ground. This refuted the previously held conception that the small circles had been achieved through the employment of a circular stamp on the already gilded surface.⁵⁵⁹

Mordant Gilding

In addition to the technique of water or bole gilding, Moser also used mordant gilding extensively throughout the *Magdalene Altarpiece*, especially for the inscription, areas of clothing and other details. In contrast to bole gilding, mordant gilding was applied after the painting was completed. The application of mordant gilding required a completely dry surface. To achieve this, the paint surface was sometimes covered with a glass powder, which could be brushed away to ensure that the surface was not sticky. An adhesive or resin was then applied to the areas to be gilded.⁵⁶⁰ The sheets of gold or silver

⁵⁵⁸ According to researchers, the panel painters had borrowed this technique from goldsmiths. They suggested that the background ornament could be used to place Moser into a particular artistic landscape. Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Evidence of this technique was the accumulation of the bole in the crevices of the incised lines in x-rays. Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ The mordant used for the original parts of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was composed of oil pigmented with orpiment, realgar and a pulverized, colorless glass. According to the researchers these materials were perfectly in accord with the painting techniques of the Middle Ages. The powdering of the painted surface with pulverized glass was detailed in the *Liber illuministarius*. The yellow of the orpiment served to enhance the color of the gold. Ibid., 38-9.

would then be placed on the surface, adhering only to the areas with the adhesive. The remaining metal was then pulled away with the use of a small brush.⁵⁶¹

The most extensive use of mordant gilding occurred in the main inscription of the altarpiece, which surrounds the three scenes of the main body of the altarpiece. While the technique was the same throughout the inscription, the materials differed in the horizontal and vertical sections. In contrast to the text in the horizontal borders, where silver leaf alone was employed, the vertical section is composed of “two-layered leaf” (*Zwischgold*). Two-layered leaf, which was used because it was more durable and more economical, was made from the fusion of a layer of silver leaf with a layer of gold leaf.⁵⁶²

Mordant gilding was also used on the halos and other details.⁵⁶³ Researchers were surprised when they detected mordant gilding on top of a layer of bole gilding. This technique was used almost exclusively in the writing on the halos so that the artist could vary the light and dark contrast of gold. The writing appears lighter in contrast to the bole gilding.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

⁵⁶² In relation to practical reasons for the two-layered leaf the underlying layer of silver strengthened the layer of gold. In addition, this method was cheaper than using only gold. Ibid., 41.

⁵⁶³ Although the script on the halos in the scene of the *Sea Journey* was re-gilded at a later time, Martha's, Lazarus' and Cedonius' halos remained unchanged. The original script of the halos in the *Feast* scene are still preserved but were retouched with white. There are no traces of an inscription on the halos of the standing figures on the interior wings. Ibid., 40.

⁵⁶⁴ Researchers noted that the practice of applying mordant gilding over bole gilding was extremely unusual. It was suggested that Moser may have borrowed this technique from manuscript illumination. Ibid.

Silver leaf

In addition to the gold leaf, silver leaf was also used in certain areas of the painting as a base for subsequent layers of paint.⁵⁶⁵ One of the more extensive applications of silver leaf is in the area of the water in the scene of the *Sea Journey*. In contrast to the more usual techniques of bole or mordant gilding, in the case of the application of silver leaf, Moser did not apply an adhesive, but rather placed the layers of hammered silver directly on the ground.⁵⁶⁶ In applying paint over the silver leaf, Moser used two different methods. The first method, described in German as *Abschattierung*, was used most prominently in the water of the *Sea Journey* and the cloud of the predella (to the left of the Man of Sorrows).⁵⁶⁷ Characteristic of this technique, Moser used varying tones of the same color. For example, for the more reflective sections of the water in the *Sea Journey* Moser tinted the silver with a transparent brownish-yellow color. He then used a semi-opaque brown for the shaded areas. Silver was also applied similarly to the water of the *Sea Journey* in the cloud on the predella. In this area Moser applied a brownish-gray color over the silver leaf, creating a matte silver color. Numerous other details were also executed in this technique, including the church tower with the half-moon and all other silver vessels.

Another painting technique used by Moser for coloring the silver under-layer is the luster technique. In contrast to the previously described *Abschattierung*, for the luster

⁵⁶⁵ Although areas that were gilded in gold leaf generally remained unpainted, some of the gilded areas on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* were executed in the luster technique used also with the silver leaf. Examples of this include the leaves of the tree in the scene of the *Arrival* and for the vine leaves in the lunette. *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵⁶⁶ That silver should be applied directly to the ground was specified in the *Der Liber iluministarius*. *Ibid.* 25, n. 27.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

technique, Moser applied reflective, transparent tints of red or green over the silver base. The luster technique was found in multiple places within the painting including the ecclesiastical garments worn by the male figures in the main scenes of the altarpiece. Additional applications of the luster technique include the green sleeves of Mary Magdalene in the lunette scene and the coat-of-arms in the stained glass window in the *Last Communion*.⁵⁶⁸

Moser's technique for brocade like so many other areas of the altarpiece, also involved the use of precious metals.⁵⁶⁹ The appearance of brocade fabrics such as those worn by Lazarus in the scenes of the *Sea Journey and Arrival* and Maximin in the *Last Communion* was achieved first through an initial layer of silver leaf over which a red luster was applied. These layers were then covered by a layer of adhesive and finally, gold leaf was applied on top of the other three layers. This elaborate use of precious metals for the brocaded fabrics was described by the researchers as "excessive" even for the "splendor-loving fifteenth century."⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁶⁹ This method can best be seen in the ecclesiastical garments in the center zone of the altarpiece, particularly the dalmatic of Lazarus in the *Sea Journey and Arrival* and the cope of Maximin in the *Last Communion*. Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ "...ein Verbrauch an Edelmetall, der selbst für das prunkliebende 15. Jahrhundert ungewöhnlich ist." Moser's technique for representing brocaded fabrics deviated from traditional methods. The traditional method of brocade, demonstrated in trecento art in Italy, was not as complex and did not involve as many layers as Moser's method. In the traditional method, the area of brocade was completely covered with gold leaf. A color such as red was then applied over the entire area of gold leaf. The pattern of the brocade was then applied by transferring the design through pouncing. Following the pouncing, the areas of the design were scraped away, revealing the gold beneath the layer of paint. Ibid.

As the previous discussion of the application of metal leaf suggests, Moser used an exorbitant amount for the creation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. The researchers in fact characterized Moser's use of metal leaf as "excessive" and "wasteful."⁵⁷¹ In addition to the lining of the oak panels with parchment, this observation supports the great expense, and, therefore, significance of this commission.

Compositional Changes

Moser's underdrawing and practice of incising supplied evidence of some compositional changes, although these were minimal. In general, Moser did not deviate frequently from his original compositional layout in the paint layers. In the one area in which underdrawing was visible, the sculptural group in the *Last Communion*, a change was noted. In the underdrawing of the crucifix above the cathedral portal, figures presumably of the Virgin and St. John flanked the crucified Christ. In the painted image these figures were eliminated.⁵⁷²

Since the analysis of changes was limited in the case of underdrawings, most changes were detected based on Moser's engraved lines and the degree to which the painted surface corresponded to them. In some cases Moser made several modifications in the paint stages only to return to his original layout. Moser's original conception for the dimensions of the boat in the *Sea Journey* was reflected in the incised line in the ground layer. It was indicated in x-rays, however, that Moser modified the shape of the boat from

⁵⁷¹ Rolf Straub, "Einige technologische Untersuchung am Tiefenbronner Magdalenenaltar des Lukas Moser," Jahrbuch der staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden Württemberg 7 (1970): 40.

⁵⁷² Straub, Richter, Härlin, Brandt, "Eine technische Studie," 37.

his original conception in the first paint stage and then in the final version of his painting returned the form of the boat to his original incised form.⁵⁷³

Another area of minor change was located in the pinnacle of the cathedral, located in the upper right-hand corner of the *Arrival* scene. The upper part of the pinnacle was originally thinner and the crochet more dainty. Along with this alteration, the position of the cross surmounting the gable was shifted to the right from its original position. In the same scene of the *Arrival* an area of change has also been depicted in the fortress-like wall above the palace of the rulers of Marseilles. Although the details of the roof of the palace were incised the wall above was not. Typically one would expect to find an incised line there especially since it borders the gold leaf of the background. Ultimately it could not be concluded if this was a pentimenti of Moser or a later addition by another hand.⁵⁷⁴

The researchers interpreted the presence of the overwhelming number of changes in the architecture as Moser's uncertainty in its execution. This was particularly evident in comparison with Moser's figures in which few pentimenti were found. Only in the standing figure of Martha on the interior wing was a slight change detected. Her right hand was slightly altered from the original incised sketch to reach out more from her side. The contours of her right arm and cloak also differed slightly from Moser's original conception.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷³ Areas of the architecture in the scene of the *Last Communion* also resembled this process. In the first paint stage he altered his original design only to return to his incised lines in the final version. *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

Pigments and Binding Media

In addition to Moser's practice of lining the wood support, his preparatory and gilding techniques, the pigments used, including lead white, lead tin yellow, orpiment and realgar, yellow and red ocher, vermilion, azurite, verdigris and plant black were consistent with the fifteenth century.⁵⁷⁶ Researchers were astonished to discover the presence of a cobalt smalt, since the earliest known usage of it was on Michael Pacher's *Altarpiece of the Church Fathers* executed in 1483. The discovery of smalt in the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* proved that it had been used much earlier than had been previously thought.⁵⁷⁷

The presence of three different binding media for the suspension of the pigments demonstrates Moser's interest in achieving different textural affects with his paint application. For large areas covered with a flat layer of paint, Moser used pigments suspended in linseed or nut oil.⁵⁷⁸ Linseed was also used on the miter of Lazarus and for his brown garments in the lunette scene, which were applied in several layers.⁵⁷⁹ Linseed oil was also the binding medium for Moser's glazes, because of its transparency, which allowed the colored pigment to be applied in transparent layers. There was evidence in x-rays that the binding material was cooked at a high temperature, which made the oil

⁵⁷⁶ The pigments were not systematically tested in the scope of the technical investigation. *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵⁷⁷ The particular area of the painting in which the cobalt was located was not specified. *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

thicker and stickier. A paint-thinner was not available to artists at this time so they were sometimes required to use their fingers in areas to thin the paint.⁵⁸⁰

In order to achieve fine, small details, Moser used water as opposed to linseed oil as a binding agent. Water was used as a binding agent for the rendering of the hands, facial features and hair of the figures. The use of this thinner binding medium allowed for finer brushwork and was generally used for the finishing details near the completion of the work. It appears that he used a hard, small brush so that when he painted, the brush actually made a slight depression into the other paint layers, allowing the new paint to bond and preventing it from flaking off. Each fine line is seen as its own entity and does not blend with the surrounding paint areas.⁵⁸¹

In some cases, Moser used an oil-based and a water-based binding material layered on top of each other. In creating the hair of the figures particularly those of Mary Magdalene and Christ in the lunette scene, Moser placed fine lines of an oil-based medium over a water-based color to achieve a naturalistic appearance (Fig. 88). The opposite combination of media was used for details on clothing for the creation of which Moser applied a water-based pigment on top of an oil-based pigment. In this latter combination of water over water, beading was detected.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 29.

⁵⁸¹ This method of application is familiar through the Italian egg tempera painters of the trecento and quattrocento. In x-rays the finely painted final layer is not visible. Instead, only visible is the initial blocking in of the figures in light and dark. Researchers described this as very spontaneous and compared it to the appearance of carved wooden sculpture. They further suggested that this initial layer should be regarded as a unique stylistic characteristic. Ibid., 30.

In addition to oil and water as binding materials, Moser also used what researchers referred to as a gum-oil-tempera technique for many areas of white. The white paint, particularly in the areas of the women's headdresses and the white vestments of Lazarus on the interior wing, because of its thickness, stands from the surface creating a relief-like effect (Fig. 89). The paint in these areas was mixed with gum arabic and a drying oil to create a creamy, stiff texture.⁵⁸²

Moser was able to vary textural effects of the painted surface not only through the use of different binding agents but also through the removal of paint in certain areas. To create some of the architectural details, specifically the joints of the rulers' palace and the city wall in the *Arrival* scene and the cathedral floor in the *Last Communion*, Moser dragged a pointed instrument through the paint scraping away the paint to reveal the ground layer. Through this technique the ivory tone of the ground layer acted as the seams of the pink or gray stone blocks of the architecture.⁵⁸³

Moser's Technique and Painting in Southwest Germany

The preceding section detailed the findings of the 1970 technical study of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* primarily to provide background information on Moser's artistic techniques and materials. This was the necessary first step in recognizing how closely his methods resembled those used in the creation of other paintings produced around the same time period in southwest Germany. Focusing on a few characteristics that researchers labeled as characteristic of Moser as points of comparison with the few Upper

⁵⁸² Ibid., 31.

⁵⁸³ Moser apparently scraped away the paint when it was almost, but not completely, dry. It was suggested that he may have used the pointed end of his brush for this technique. Ibid., 32.

Rhenish paintings for which there have been technical studies, this study represents the first attempt to identify the materials and methods favored by panel painters working in southwest Germany, and, more particularly, the region along the Upper Rhine. That a few of the artistic methods peculiar to Moser actually occur in the Upper Rhenish panels considered suggests that artists working in this region employed similar techniques. More importantly, the similarity of Moser's techniques to other paintings created in southwest Germany strengthens the possibility that he received his initial training right at home.

Since it was one of the first examples of early German panel painting to undergo a detailed technical study, until recently, it has been impossible to analyze Moser's relationship to southwest German painting using technical evidence. Only in 1994, decades after the technical examination of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, were the first Upper Rhenish works studied technically. At that time, four panels from the life of St. John the Baptist (*Visitation, Birth and Naming of St. John the Baptist, Meeting of Christ and St. John the Baptist, and St. John and the Levite*) were examined (Figs. 90a, 90b, 90c, 90d). Highlighted in the results of this study are noticeable similarities in execution between the Karlsruhe panels and the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. The recent investigation of two panels in the Frankfurt Städel designated as Upper-Rhenish or Swabian, the fragment of the *Virgin and Child in the Circle of Angels* and the Frankfurt *Paradise Garden*, has also revealed similarities in execution with the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Also of value are the technical studies of Moser's near contemporary Konrad Witz, since he also trained in southwest Germany. While a greater number of technical studies of southern German paintings would provide a more complete picture of Moser's origins, the panels studied thus far confirm his ties to the artistic practices of southwest Germany,

suggesting that he received his initial training there. Among the artistic practices that confirm Moser's relationship to southwest German painting are the use of incised lines within the painting, extensive employment of the luster technique and the use of different binding media to produce textural effects.

Of the different techniques found to be similar in the comparison of Moser and other Upper Rhenish paintings perhaps the most important is the use and character of the incised lines within the painted image. Recall that while incised lines were widely used to fix the boundary between the gilded and painted surface, Moser's employment of them throughout the painted surface was found to be unusual.⁵⁸⁴ More importantly, however, the researchers identified it as one of the features of the altarpiece that could be used in the determination of his artistic origins. According to them, "this method of working was so characteristic that it should serve as a basis for eventual stylistic comparisons."⁵⁸⁵ With this in mind, the presence of incised lines within the painted image in both the Karlsruhe *Life of St. John the Baptist* and the Frankfurt *Paradise Garden* is evidence that Moser received his training in southwest Germany, perhaps along the Upper Rhine. In the St. John panels incised lines are located in various places within the painted image. They were found in the panel depicting the Baptist's birth on the sleeve of Zacharias (Fig. 91).⁵⁸⁶ Not only is the discovery of incised lines within the painted surface similar to

⁵⁸⁴ Straub, Richter, Härlin, Brandt, "Eine technische Studie," 24.

⁵⁸⁵ "Diese Arbeitsweise ist so charakteristisch, daß, sie bei eventuellen stilistischen Vergleichen mit als Anhaltspunkt dienen kann." Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶ Babette Hartwieg and Dietmar Lüdke, Vier gotische Tafeln aus dem Leben Johannes' des Täufers (Karlsruhe, 1994), 41. Some of the locations for these incisions are included in the discussion of changes or pentimenti and include the landscape background in the

Moser's technique, but their spontaneous and sketchy character parallels the quality of Moser's lines (Fig. 92).⁵⁸⁷ The Master of the Frankfurt Paradise Garden also used incised lines in a manner similar to Moser's use and the artist of the Karlsruhe *Life of St. John the Baptist*. In the *Paradise Garden* incised lines were used to delineate the contours and the folds of the drapery in the representation of the foremost female saint.⁵⁸⁸

Along with the use of incised lines, the luster technique, found in passages throughout the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, was also used for some of the details of the Karlsruhe and Frankfurt panels. In regard to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, recall that Moser used both silver leaf, and, less frequently, gold leaf, as a base layer for the application of transparent red and green tints in several areas of the painting. Suggesting that it was typical for the region, the luster technique has been documented in both the *Paradise Garden* and some of the Karlsruhe panels. While the background of the Frankfurt *Paradise Garden* is now blue, in an earlier stage of execution it had a gold background. The earlier gold background, however, was not achieved through the traditional manner of water gilding, but through the application of yellow paint over silver leaf. In addition to the background, metal leaf also served as an under-layer for the crenellated wall in the background.⁵⁸⁹

Along with the *Paradise Garden*, use of the luster technique was also identified in some of the Karlsruhe panels. In the scene of *St. John the Baptist and the Levite*

Visitation as well as the robes of John in the scene of his interrogation. Incised lines were also located on the garments of Elizabeth and Zachariah in the *Birth of the Baptist*.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Incised lines were detected at the left corner of her white mantel and for some of the folds of the red robe. Brinkmann and Kemperdick, *Deutsche Gemälde*, 93.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

researchers detected the darkened remains of silver leaf in areas of John's mantel. In the passages where the underside of John's mantel is visible (under his elbow and below the knees) the artist used silver as an under-layer over which a red glaze was applied, creating a darker red color.⁵⁹⁰ The luster technique was also used for the bedspread in the scene of the *Birth and Naming of St. John the Baptist*. In areas of loss near Zacharias's tablet, researchers found a darkened metal leaf under-layer, possibly silver leaf or two-layered leaf. While the artist eventually changed the bedspread to its present gold-patterned form the detection of a metal leaf under-layer suggests that it was initially executed in the luster technique.⁵⁹¹ The possibility exists that the luster technique was also used to execute Zacharias's hat, where a metal leaf layer is visible under the red over-paint. The use of the luster technique for Zacharias's hat remains inconclusive, however, since the metal leaf remains could have been from the first execution of the bed covering described above.⁵⁹²

What the use of metal leaf under subsequent paint layers has revealed in the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as well as the Karlsruhe panels and Städel *Paradise Garden* is that Upper Rhenish artists exploited the metal leaf layer to achieve a variety of coloristic effects perhaps not available through paint alone. Particular painting techniques employed both for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and the St. John panels further reinforce that Moser's methods reflect regional practices. One parallel exists in the use of different binding media for various areas of the painted surface. In the study of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* it was determined that Moser used several different binding media to achieve

⁵⁹⁰ Hartweg and Lüdke, *Vier gotische Tafeln*, 46.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, 46.

different textural effects. For example, in order to achieve thick, relief-like quality, found on Mary Magdalene's wimple in the *Sea Journey*, he mixed his pigments with gum arabic.⁵⁹³ To achieve some of the fine details such as the hair of the figures, he used a watery binding medium. Beading occurred in the areas where, the hair with its water-based medium, overlapped with the oil paint of the figures' garments. The beading was detected on the figures of Christ and Mary Magdalene in the scene of the *Anointing*.⁵⁹⁴ In the panel of *St. John and the Levite* beading was also found in the execution of the hair of the figures. In order to create the hair of the figures, the artist used a combination of two different colors. For brown hair, a yellowish highlight was applied on top of the dark base color whereas for gray hair pinkish strokes were used to create the highlights. As in Moser's work, the beading occurred when the watery medium used for the hair came in contact with neighboring areas.⁵⁹⁵

Another painting technique shared between the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and the Karlsruhe panels exists in the details of the architecture. In the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* the artist created the light color of the mortar seams by dragging the blunt edge of his brush through the paint, revealing the ivory color of the ground layer. This same technique was used in the *Birth of the Baptist* to create the decorative stripes on the bed frame. There, to achieve contrasting colors, the artist scraped away the yellowish-brown top layer of paint to reveal the light ocher-yellow color underneath.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹³ Straub, Richter, Härlin, Brandt, "Eine technische Studie," 31.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Hartweg and Lüdke, Vier gotische Tafeln, 44.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., 45-6.

In Chapter Two, we explained the way in which Moser's general method of construction was typical of the fifteenth century. This method is examined here in the context of southwest German artistic practices. For example, Moser's technique of lining the support before the application of ground and successive paint layers was not only used by Witz, one of Moser's contemporaries, but was a fairly established practice in southern Germany. The panels depicting the Life of St. John the Baptist as well as the Frankfurt *Paradise Garden* were also lined with fabric. In the case of Moser, the material used for lining the support was parchment, which was applied in pieces and then bound to the panels with glue in a series of opposing strokes resembling hatching marks.⁵⁹⁷ Although the practice of lining a support was fairly common, Moser deviated from the norm in his use of parchment as opposed to canvas. The researchers considered this to be an "unusually luxurious technique for the fifteenth century."⁵⁹⁸

This observation is further supported in the type of wood, oak, which was selected for the panels. In general, the practice of lining a support had a practical function; it helped to preserve the work by strengthening the joins of the different boards and protecting the paint layer against the reactions of the wood to humidity. This practice was somewhat obsolete when oak was used for the support, since oak, which is a hard, slow-growing wood species, does not have the same problems such as warping as other species of

⁵⁹⁷ The scoring eliminated any bubbles and allowed the artist to use less glue. In most places, the excess parchment or overhang was removed by cutting it with a sharp knife, which left visible indentations. At the edge of the predella, however, the parchment was simply rolled under the frame and glued down rather than being cut away. Straub, Richter, Härlin, Brandt, "Eine technische Studie," 18-19. For more information on the practice of lining a support, see 18, n. 15.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

wood. This “superfluous” technique of lining an oak support, which was done with canvas by Witz and parchment by Moser, has been attributed not only to their concern for good preparation but also the expense of the commission.⁵⁹⁹

The one aspect of the construction of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* presumed to be unusual for the region was the use of oak as a support. While this wood was not commonly used as a support in southwest Germany, Witz’s use of it for his *Heilspiegel Altarpiece* does provide another instance of it in the region.⁶⁰⁰ In relation to Konrad Witz, the selection of oak as a support was associated with his awareness of Netherlandish painting practices: an assumption, which has not received unanimous acceptance.⁶⁰¹

Moser’s selection of oak, although not the most common wood species selected, was used for Upper Rhenish supports. It is noteworthy that in the study of Upper Rhenish supports, not one specific type of wood was used consistently. Supports for Upper Rhenish panels include very different kinds of wood. Among the numerous fir panels, oak, limewood, walnut and poplar were also used as painting supports.⁶⁰² In addition to Konrad Witz, mentioned previously, the Frankfurt *Paradise Garden* was also painted on oak.

⁵⁹⁹ Julien Chapuis, “Konrad Witz: An Art Historical and Technical Approach,” (Doctoraalscriptie, Rijksuniversiteit, 1992), 73.

⁶⁰⁰ In a study conducted on fifteenth-century Upper Rhenish supports, only two out of the fifty-eight studied used oak. In addition, oak was not identified as a support for any of the fifteenth-century Southern German or Swiss paintings in the Donaueschingen gallery. The use of oak as a support was favored by Netherlandish artists. *Ibid.*, 70.

⁶⁰¹ Since not all of Witz’s surviving paintings are on oak, the supposition that the use of oak pointed to an association with Netherlandish painting practices is not conclusive. *Ibid.*, 71.

⁶⁰² Hartweg and Lüdke, *Vier gotische Tafeln*, 39.

The earlier discussion of Moser's painting techniques classified his artistic practices alongside those employed in Upper Rhenish painting. The particular applications of incised lines as well as luster were techniques common to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and the Upper Rhenish panels considered. Moser's construction methods, mainly the use of oak as a support and lining the wood with fabric, are also consistent with artistic practices in southwest Germany. Another feature which may eventually pinpoint the location of Moser's training more precisely is the character of his underdrawing. For the moment, a comparison of Moser's underdrawing style with the Upper Rhenish panels is somewhat problematic. While underdrawing was detected on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as well as the Karlsruhe and Frankfurt panels, it was restricted to certain areas of the painting. In fact, there is not a complete image of the underdrawing for any of the aforementioned panels. Despite our incomplete knowledge of the underdrawings of these works, there are some interesting parallels in terms of style, most notably the linear style of the underdrawing and the absence of cross hatching. Recall that Moser's underdrawing style was described as "summary" and cross-hatching was not detected. For areas of shading the artist used hatching, placing thick strokes parallel to one another.⁶⁰³ Similar to Moser, the underdrawing style of the Frankfurt *Paradise Garden* was described as linear (Fig. 93).⁶⁰⁴ Contour lines were also detected in the *Madonna in the Circle of Angels*, the other work related stylistically to Moser (Fig. 94).⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰³ Straub, Richter, Härlin, Brandt, "Eine technische Studie," 20.

⁶⁰⁴ Traces of underdrawing were found in the youth peering from behind the tree. Underdrawn lines delineate his features and curly locks. Brinkmann and Kemperdick, Deutsche Gemälde, 94.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

Further strengthening Moser's familiarity with Upper Rhenish artistic methods, and, by extension, his training in southwest Germany is the degree to which those methods are different from other German schools of painting. Although only a limited number of Upper Rhenish panels have been studied technically it is noteworthy that many of the techniques described as typical of Moser and the Upper Rhenish school have not been identified as commonly employed in Cologne paintings. Perhaps the most significant difference resides in the practice of incising lines in the painted image found in numerous passages on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, *Frankfurt Paradise Garden* and *St. John* panels. This technique was not emphasized in the sources consulted on the technical studies of Cologne painting.⁶⁰⁶ Along with the practice of incising, the extensive use of the luster technique found in Moser's altarpiece, the *Paradise Garden* and the *St. John* panels has not been described as a predominant trait of Cologne painting techniques. Recall that one of the hallmarks of Cologne painting was its simplified paint layer structure.

The preceding discussion established some of the artistic practices shared among Moser and other Upper Rhenish artists. While this represents a preliminary consideration of southwestern German practices, the emphasis on common techniques and methods, along with the stylistic connections established earlier, reinforces the likelihood that Moser at least received his initial training in his native southwest Germany.

⁶⁰⁶ For the most comprehensive treatment of Cologne techniques, see Kühn, "Malmaterial."

Reinterpreting Moser's Artistic Sources

While acknowledgement of the local character of Moser's art does not deny the influence of foreign sources, it recognizes that Netherlandish influence was not Moser's only point of reference. Furthermore, his incorporation of elements of the International Style cannot be attributed to his inability to assimilate Netherlandish motifs. That he may have had alternative reasons for referencing the dominant stylistic mode is demonstrated in the research on Stefan Lochner, Moser's German contemporary.

Moser is not the only German artist whose style has been evaluated based on their understanding of Netherlandish art. In the historiography of German painting, the qualities of Stefan Lochner's art have also been defined by his reception of Netherlandish inventions.⁶⁰⁷ This definition has had a negative influence on the perception of the artist. According to Julien Chapuis, the insistent comparison to Jan van Eyck in works such as Lochner's *Dombild* "refuse Lochner the ability to break free from the perceived shackles of conservatism."⁶⁰⁸ Chapuis's recent research on Lochner has drawn attention to the different influences that informed the artist's style, only one of which was early Netherlandish painting, and more specifically, Jan van Eyck. Visible in one of Lochner's most well known paintings, the *Dombild* in Cologne's Cathedral, the artist not only referenced van Eyck's style but also the style and compositions of other earlier German artists (Fig. 95). In the symmetrical portrayal of the Virgin flanked by kneeling Magi, Lochner used an earlier German painting, Conrad von Soest's *Dortmund Altarpiece*, as a

⁶⁰⁷ Julien Chapuis, Stefan Lochner: Image Making in Fifteenth-Century Cologne (Turnhout, 2004), 195.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

visual source (Fig. 96). The Virgin in Lochner's *Dombild* indicates a style present in earlier German art, especially the work of Cologne artists such as the St. Veronica Master (Fig. 97). According to Chapuis, Lochner referenced earlier German artists as a result of the artist's patronage and viewing audience. The borrowings from Soest and earlier Cologne masters represent models that Lochner's patrons might have recognized more readily.⁶⁰⁹

In the case of Lochner's visual references, painting was not the only medium that informed his style. Lochner was also greatly influenced by the goldsmiths' art and emulated some of their techniques in his portrayal of metal objects in his paintings. His knowledge of goldsmiths' art even influenced his figural style. The white skin and gold hair resembles a particular enameling technique used by goldsmiths (Fig. 98). Similar to Lochner's references to earlier German artists, his references to the goldsmiths' techniques were ultimately grounded in patronage and his viewing audience. The stylistic qualities in Lochner's painting, associated with prestigious goldsmiths' techniques, would have appealed to his intended viewers' familiarity with their work.⁶¹⁰

In contrast to Lochner, it is a little more difficult to understand how Moser's art related to the patronage and the visual culture in southwest Germany. For one reason, the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* is the only verifiable work by the artist, which eliminates the possibility of identifying stylistic continuity among his works. Moreover, unlike the city of Cologne, there have not been any developed studies of patronage in this region. Moreover, the survival rate of art in this region is extremely low. Also limiting this study

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., 209.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., 232.

is the gap in the literature on Moser's artistic relationship with southwestern German art.⁶¹¹ Despite the inability to concretely identify the relationship between Moser's style and patronage in the region, some initial observations can be made regarding his intentional references to features of the International style.

A current topic of interest in the study of German art, demonstrated in Chapuis' study of Lochner, is the way in which the artist used sources or references that would have been familiar to the patron or viewing audience. Keeping this in mind, it is important to emphasize that at the time the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was created the International Style was still the dominant stylistic mode in southwest Germany. As such, it was certainly important for Moser to reference the style with which his audience was most familiar.

In considering why Moser retained a strong dependence on the International Style, it is important to take into account its appeal, which has not been adequately considered to this point. It is a well-known fact that the International Style circulated and spread through the courts of northern Europe; the elegant line and jewel-like colors appealing to aristocratic tastes. Avoiding a specific identification for the donor of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* for the moment, a limiting factor in earlier research, there are a couple of observations that can be made regarding Moser's patrons. Considering the pattern of patronage in the Tiefenbronn church and the coats-of-arms on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, Moser's patrons undoubtedly were members of the local nobility. This

⁶¹¹ Since at this point there is insufficient technical information to compare Moser's techniques with those of the other Upper-Rhenish and Swabian works to whom he has been compared, a future direction for research would be an IRR (Infrared Reflectography) investigation of these paintings. It is possible that more documented technical studies of southern German paintings could elucidate Moser's relationship to these artists.

suggests that Moser may have been appealing to courtly tastes in his retention of the elegance and coloring of the International Style. Not only did Moser's patrons stem from the local nobility but it is reasonable to suggest that the Stein family, in particular, was involved in the commission of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in some capacity. Taking into account that their coat-of-arms (located on the choir stall in the scene of the *Last Communion*) is the only one that dates securely to the creation of the altarpiece, it is certainly more than coincidental that a member of the Stein family acquired the altarpiece, placing an even larger coat-of-arms on the predella. In essence, the Stein family's presence on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* is documented not only at its creation but a few years later in a second phase of adjustments.

The significant role of the Stein family in the commission of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* has not been given proper consideration in the scholarly literature. In fact, no attempts have been made to connect some of the details of their situation with the commission of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. It is not insignificant that members of the Stein family at one time owned the village of Tiefenbronn. In 1324 the lords of Stein auf Steinegg acquired the property, which had to later be given up to the lords of Gemmingen as a result of economic difficulty.⁶¹² In fact, it was not long before the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was created that they sold Tiefenbronn to the Gemmingen family. In a document from 1407 Jakob von Stein sold his part of the family property to Dietrich von Gemmingen.⁶¹³ While further research needs to be done on the standing of the Stein

⁶¹² Heinzmann and Köhler, Der Magdalenenaltar, 6.

⁶¹³ Jakob von Stein and his wife Anna von Riexingen sold Diether von Gemmingen their possessions in Heimsheim, Steinegg, Tiefenbronn, Friolzheim and Mühlhausen for 1900 Gulden. Gerhard Piccard, Der Magdalenenaltar des >Lukas Moser< in Tiefenbronn. Ein

family, the donation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* may have been indirectly connected to their growing misfortunes. Despite their financial hardships, which forced them to relinquish ownership of the village, the donation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, prominently marked with the Stein coat-of-arms allowed them to assert their continued presence in the village and church. As a style strongly associated with noble aspirations, political factors may have also played a role in the use of the International Style.

Moser's deviations from the naturalism associated with Flemish artists may also have resulted from his emphasis on the narrative quality of the scenes portrayed. This can clearly be seen in his treatment of lighting as well as multiple viewpoints. Although Moser's observation of light was advanced it is inconsistent in passages. The inconsistency is not in Moser's inability to understand the way in which light falls but rather was employed by the artist in such a way as to focus attention on the figures and important iconographic details. For example, although the figures in the uppermost portion of the *Arrival* should fall into shade, the even lighting employed there makes them more visible. If the lighting was consistent, the side aisle of the scene of the *Last Communion* would also be shaded, but instead it is lit in order to reveal the stained glass window, which depicts St. Peter. Visual evidence suggests that the absence of a unified light source was not due to a deficiency in his understanding of Netherlandish realism, rather it was an intentional deviation from realism, which kept the emphasis on narrative as the foremost objective of his painting.

His use of perspective or deviation from it also supports his emphasis on relating the story to the viewer. Scholars have consistently pointed out passages where Moser failed

Beitrag zur Europäischen Kustgeschichte mit einer Untersuchung die Tiefenbronner Patrozinien und ihre (Hirsauer) Herkunft von Wolfgang Irtenkauf (Wiesbaden, 1969), 42.

at creating a unified perspective or included multiple viewpoints. It is in these passages that his aims as an artist become most apparent. Although in the scene of the *Arrival* Moser has often been praised for his attempts at perspective, the building in which the Magdalene appears to rulers of Marseilles does not follow the same perspective system as the rest of the building. Based on his representational skills throughout the scenes, we should view this distortion not as his inability to master perspective but as his desire to convey the essential parts of the story. It was necessary to alter the perspective in order to create a view into the room. Similar to this scene, the contrasting views of the interior and exterior of the Cathedral of Aix in the scene of the *Last Communion* provided a clearer view of the story. Here Moser created the porch to be seen frontally, although at a slight angle. The interior nave and side aisle, in contrast, run horizontally.

The goal of this chapter was to draw attention to Moser's relationship to the art of his native southwest Germany. While Moser was undoubtedly aware of Franco-Flemish painting and assimilated them into his art, Moser's similarities in both style and technique to southwest German painting firmly dispute the claim that Franco-Flemish art was his only point of reference. While technical comparisons suggest that Moser received his initial training in his native southwest Germany, there is value in acknowledging Moser's ties to this region beyond the question of artistic origins. The value in Chapuis' study of Stefan Lochner is the recognition that German artists made choices that were familiar to their viewing audience and patrons. Measuring artists, such as Lochner and Moser, in terms of their assimilation of Netherlandish techniques does not allow us to understand other aspects that informed their style. It does seem reasonable to assume, however, that in addition to his emphasis on narrative, that Moser's references to the International

Gothic style could have been a conscious selection to appeal to the audience's familiarity with this style. Moser's art was not old-fashioned, but rather, like Lochner's references to earlier Cologne artists and goldsmith's techniques that he appealed to the familiarity of the patron and viewers with this style. Ultimately, Moser's stylistic sources demonstrate his awareness of international trends and his viewing audience.

7. Moser's Inscription and Artistic Self-Awareness

In Chapter Six, the emphasis on Moser's ties to the art in his native southwest Germany became the starting point for an alternative assessment of the reception of his style. Rather than viewing the lingering elements of the International Style as his inability to assimilate Netherlandish art, how Moser appealed to the expectations and desires of his patrons and viewing audience through the dominant stylistic mode in Germany was considered. This interpretation credits the artist with the awareness of the tastes of his patrons and public. Some of the issues addressed in the preceding chapter, including regional influences and the conscientiousness of the artist, are also relevant to the question of his artistic self-awareness. Within the vertical borders of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, the artist, Lucas Moser, signed his name and included a puzzling statement suggesting that nobody wanted his art. In the literature on Moser, elements of his inscription have been interpreted as demonstrations of artistic self-awareness: the topic of this chapter.

The question of artistic self-awareness is currently a topic of great interest in the study of Northern Renaissance art. In the absence of a codified art theory north of the Alps, other indications of artists' views of themselves and their craft have been identified. One manner of communicating artistic self-awareness was through pictorial means.⁶¹⁴ Evidence of what the artists in the north thought of their craft is reflected in the theme of St. Luke Painting the Virgin. The most famous version of this subject, by Rogier van der Weyden, is one of the rare surviving images of its time, in the North, that shows a painter

⁶¹⁴ James Marrow, "Artistic Identity in Early Netherlandish Painting: The Place of Rogier van der Weyden's St. Luke Drawing the Virgin," in Rogier van der Weyden. St. Luke Drawing the Virgin. Selected Essays in Context (Turnhout, 1997), 57.

at work (Fig. 99). In this image, the artist renders the Virgin and Child in his studio. Depicting the artist engaged in his craft, it becomes a primary source for the question of how a painter of that epoch represented himself and how he viewed his profession.⁶¹⁵ Representations of the theme of Luke painting the Virgin and Child, particularly van der Weyden's, have been interpreted as demonstrating the changing status of the artist from medieval craftsman to inspired creative genius.⁶¹⁶ According to James Marrow, Rogier van der Weyden's principal achievement in his rendition of the theme was "to have devised pictorial means of articulating ideas about art, artists and artistic tradition that were addressed elsewhere primarily in literary writings and allusions."⁶¹⁷

In addition to self-portraits, artists' inscriptions also communicate information about an artist's perception of himself. According to Peter Strieder, artists' inscriptions are one of the few sources from the fifteenth century which provide a glimpse of artistic self-assessment.⁶¹⁸ In the early scholarship on Lucas Moser, Hans Huth described Lucas Moser's signature on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* as unique among early inscriptions in its manifestation of the self-consciousness of the artist; a defining feature of the

⁶¹⁵ Till Borchert, "Rogier's *St. Luke*: The Case for Corporate Identification," in Rogier van der Weyden. St. Luke Drawing the Virgin. Selected Essays in Context (Turnhout, 1997), 64.

⁶¹⁶ Andrea G. Kann, "Rogier's *St. Luke*: Portrait of the Artist or Portrait of the Historian?" in Rogier van der Weyden. St. Luke Drawing the Virgin. Selected Essays in Context (Turnhout, 1997), 15.

⁶¹⁷ Rogier achieved this in his deviations from typical representations of the theme by recalling the physical circumstances of actual portraiture, giving Luke his own likeness, and referencing van Eyck's *Rolin Madonna*. Marrow, "Artistic Identity," 57.

⁶¹⁸ Peter Strieder, "Schri.kunst.schri.und.klag.dich.ser: Kunst und Künstler an der Wende vom Mittelalter zur Renaissance," Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums (1983): 19

Renaissance and one that distinguishes it from the preceding Middle Ages.⁶¹⁹ Although Huth did not elaborate on how Moser's inscription demonstrated his artistic self-awareness, this observation found support in the art-historical literature on Moser. Three elements of the inscription emerged as evidence for Moser's self-awareness: his signature, the first documented use of *Kunst* in the sense of fine art, and the personal nature of the lament.

While undoubtedly the most significant contribution of this study is its reassessment of Moser's lament as evidence of artistic self-awareness, a broader consideration of the inscription as a whole is also timely, since earlier scholarly assumptions do not conform to the understanding of artists' inscriptions based on more recent literature. Before addressing Moser's lament this study examines Moser's motivations for including his signature and inscription relative to medieval religiosity and artistic practices. Rather than interpreting his signature as a sign of his pride in his accomplishments, fundamental to the purpose for Moser's signature is not only the artist's perception of his duty as an artist in the service of God, but also his own religious strivings for salvation. The collaborative nature of artistic production also does not support reading the artist's signature as a sign of pride in his individual accomplishment, but rather as a trademark or brand name. In the case of the lament itself, new studies on the meaning of *Kunst* in the fifteenth-century prove that it did not mean 'high art' in the later sense of the term. Moreover, identified as a topos, the lament can no longer be viewed as the personal reaction of the artist to a specific situation.

⁶¹⁹ Hans Huth, Künstler und Werkstatt der Spätgotik (Darmstadt, 1967), 68.

Although any consideration of Lucas Moser's inscription must account for artistic practices and the religious mentality of the artist, that Moser was expressing self-awareness is not completely at opposition with these sentiments. The blending of pride with humility was a common device found not only among artists' signatures but in statements of authorship in medieval literature. Recognizing a second level of meaning in medieval topoi and phrases of humility is crucial for reconsidering Moser's lament. While demonstrating his humility and piety, Moser's inscription also conveys his confidence in his ability. Although not generally considered in earlier scholarship, Moser's references to the medieval literary tradition and his employment of a variety of scripts support identifying his inscription as a statement of the artist's ability.

The Artist's Inscription

The artist's inscription is contained within the two vertical borders of the altarpiece. The content of the left vertical border is commonly known as the 'lament' for reasons which will become clear, while the text in the right vertical border is more generically referred to as the artist's inscription. Placed on either side of the middle scene of the *Arrival*, these borders divide the three main scenes of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Contained in the left vertical border is the phrase, schri.kvnst.schri.vnd.klag.dich.ser.din.begert.iecz.niemen.mer.so.o.we.1432.⁶²⁰ or *Cry, art, cry, grieve bitterly, No one will care for thee.*⁶²¹ The artist's inscription, LVCAS.MOSER.MALER.VON.WIL.MAISTER.

⁶²⁰ The text was reprinted in Reiner Hausherr, "Der Magdalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn". Bericht über die wissenschaftliche Tagung am 9. und 10. März 1971 im Zentralinstitut in München," Kunstchronik 24 (1971): 189.

⁶²¹ Wolfgang Stechow, Northern Renaissance Art 1400-1600: Sources and Documents (Evanston, IL, 1966), 76. An alternative translation is: "Weep art, weep, yourself deplore.

DEZ.WERX. BIT.GOT.VIR.IN.,⁶²² is an extension of the lament, continuing it in the right vertical border. It provides, in addition to the artist's name, Lucas Moser from Weil, and the designation of him as master of the work, a request for prayers.⁶²³ Combining the two vertical borders, the artist's inscription reads: "Cry art cry, grieve bitterly, No one will care for thee. 1432. Lucas Moser, Painter from Weil der Stadt. Master of this work. Pray to God for him."

Earlier Readings of the Artist's Signature

In the fifteenth century, inscriptions were general features of paintings. They are found most commonly on frames and borders surrounding religious scenes or within the image itself. Within scenes, inscriptions are often found not only on the halos and the garments of the religious figures, but are also placed on other objects such as banderoles and scrolls, to name a few. In his study of fifteenth-century inscriptions in Florentine painting, Dario Covi, defined their function: "inscriptions were intended to convey to the beholder all or part of the identity of the images or subject of the picture or of the circumstances obtaining in its execution."⁶²⁴ In general, inscriptions either related to the content of the imagery or to the date, artist or donor.

No one loves you anymore," in James Snyder, Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, the Graphic Arts from 1350-1575 (New York, 1985), 221.

⁶²² Reprinted in Hausherr, "'Der Magdalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn.'," 189.

⁶²³ Snyder also translated the artist's inscription. "Lucas Moser, painter from Weil, master of this work, pray to God for him." Snyder, Northern Renaissance Art, 221.

⁶²⁴ Dario A. Covi, The Inscription in Fifteenth Century Florentine Painting (New York and London, 1986), 18.

While inscriptions were commonly included in fifteenth-century paintings, artists' signatures were not. According to Hans Huth, the practice of signing a work of art did not become more commonplace until the late fifteenth century and even at that point, it was not a rule.⁶²⁵ In his article on artists' signatures from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Michael Liebmann identified several reasons for the infrequent appearance of artists' signatures during this period, which broadly fall under two categories: artistic practices and the artist's religious beliefs. The practice of commissioning art works made it unnecessary for artists to sign their work. Because of the direct relationship between the artist and the donor, it was superfluous for the artist to include his signature. Other artistic practices also account for the rarity of artists' signatures. The desire to immortalize their individual accomplishment was not part of the mentality of an artist, who was essentially a member of an organization such as a guild. The religious strivings of the artist and the religious function of the work also played a role in the infrequent appearance of artists' signatures. The artist's view of himself as an "instrument of God" in the creation of an artwork effectively prevented him from signing a work.⁶²⁶

⁶²⁵ Huth also included other observations about the appearance of artists' signatures in the late Gothic period. He differentiated between a hidden signature and one that was more prominent. The signatures in plain view were usually placed on the predella or the frame. Without exception only the master was allowed to place his name on the work, which meant that his anonymous workshop assistants were also factored into his signature. The frequency of signatures was related to the medium in which the artist worked. In the case of sculptors, signatures were a rare occurrence. That it was more common to have a painter's signature was attributed to the growing popularity of the medium in the fifteenth century and that painters often received the commissions for the carved altarpieces. It was understood in the fifteenth century that a work signed by one person was not a single-handed effort. Hans Huth, Künstler und Werkstatt, 67-69.

⁶²⁶ Michael Liebmann, "Die Künstlersignatur im 15.-16. Jahrhundert als Gegenstand soziologischer Untersuchungen," in Lucas Cranach: Künstler und Gesellschaft: Referate

It was in part the rarity of artists' signatures that directly contributed to the later elevation of Moser's as a sign of artistic self-awareness. Accompanying this, however, was the tendency to interpret Moser's signature in the same manner that one would a modern signature. According to Alfred Stange, Moser, by naming himself in the inscription as creator of the painting, "documented himself proudly as a modern artist who wanted to emerge from the anonymity of the workshop and testify to the individual performance of their work through their name."⁶²⁷

This confusion of Late Gothic and modern signature conventions has been analyzed in recent literature. According to Heinrich Klotz, the ultimate origin for this interpretation is Jacob Burckhardt's *The Culture of the Renaissance in Italy*. In his famous essay, Burckhardt formulated a series of characteristics belonging respectively to the Medieval and Modern periods.⁶²⁸ According to him, one of the decisive factors in distinguishing these two epochs was the rise of the individual. While the medieval person was content with anonymity, the search for fame and notoriety belonged to modern times. In the dialogue on the antithetical construct of medieval anonymity versus modern individualism, Klotz described the formula, which emerged and to which art historians have clung in the interpretation of artists' signatures: "The artist of the medieval period

des Colloquiums mit internationaler Beteiligung zum 500. Geburtstag Lucas Cranachs d. Ä., ed. Peter H. Feinst, Ernst Ullmann and Gerhard Brendler (Wittenberg, 1973), 129.

⁶²⁷ "... dokumentiert sich damit Stolz als einer der modernen Künstler, die aus der Anonymität der Werkstatt herauszutreten und die individuelle Leistung ihres Werkes durch ihren Namen zu bezeugen gewillt sind." Alfred Stange, Südwestdeutschland in der Zeit von 1400 bis 1450, vol. 4, Deutsche Malerei der Gotik (Berlin, 1951), 94.

⁶²⁸ Heinrich Klotz identified Burckhardt's work as the core of our present understanding of the Middle Ages and the Modern period. "Formen der Anonymität und des Individualismus in der Kunst des Mittelalters und der Renaissance," Gesta 15 (1976): 303.

remains anonymous – the artist of the Modern enters as an individual. Correspondingly the art of the Middle Ages remains anonymous, Modern art, in contrast, carries the signature of the artist.”⁶²⁹

The Artist’s Presence in His Work: Duty and Piety

Challenging Burckhardt, new interpretations of the presence of the artist in his creation, whether in the form of self-portraits or inscriptions, have drawn attention to their religious mentality rather than a nascent individualism. Underlying how artists’ signatures reflected their religiosity is their perception of their craft. As stated above, Liebmann attributed the absence of artists’ signatures in the medieval period to their view of themselves as instruments of God. This is supported in documents both north and south of the Alps, which contain descriptions of artists’ responsibilities. For example, both the 1365 Statutes of the Sienese Painter’s Guild and Albrecht Dürer’s 1512 draft of *Speis der Malerknaben* describe the artist’s ability as God’s blessing to communicate His Word. According to Johannes Tripps, whether Tuscan artists of the fourteenth century or Albrecht Dürer, “artists of the late Middle Ages understood themselves as the elevated recipients of God’s special grace, charged with the responsibility to transmit the true faith through their artistic ability.”⁶³⁰

⁶²⁹ “Der Künstler des Mittelalters bleibt anonym – der Künstler der Neuzeit tritt als Individuum hervor. Dementsprechend bleibt auch des Kunstwerk des Mittelalters anonym, das Kunstwerk der Neuzeit hingegen trägt die Signatur des Künstlers.” Ibid.

⁶³⁰ “... sie alle verstanden sich als herausgehobene Empfänger einer besonderen Gnade Gottes, verliehen mit dem Auftrag durch ihr künstlerisches Können den Wahren Glauben zu vermitteln...” Despite the chronological and regional differences, there is agreement north and south of the Alps, because they stemmed from a common source, St. Augustine and his definition of an artist’s responsibility. Johannes Tripps, Das handelnde Bildwerk in der Gotik: Forschungen zu den Bedeutungsschichten und der Funktion des Kirchengebäudes und seiner Ausstattung in der Hoch-und Spätgotik (Berlin, 1998), 209.

Ultimately, the view that artists had of their ability, as communicated through documents like these, refutes the claim that the artists' signatures signal pride in their individual accomplishments. What then did the artist's signature represent on a Late Gothic art work such as Moser's on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*? Based on recent considerations of the artists' presence in their creations, Moser's signature should be linked, first and foremost, to his concern for his own salvation. In an examination of this point, the parallel example of the artist's self-portrait in a religious commission is also relevant. An artist's self-portrait is similar to a signature in that it also represents the presence of the artist in the work and was presumably executed at the expense of the artist. In 1493, the sculptor Adam Kraft completed a large tabernacle for Hans IV Imhoff in the church of St. Lorenz at Nuremberg. At the base of the tabernacle, self-portraits of the artist and two other members of his workshop support the entire work (Fig. 100a, 100b). While earlier studies of this important sculpture attributed the insertion of Kraft's self-portrait to artistic pride in his achievement, more recent literature challenged this assumption.⁶³¹ Corine Schleif emphasized that the artist's frame of reference was always bound by his duty to create a work in the service of God. Physical labor was seen as the fulfillment of God's will and strengthened the hope for salvation.⁶³² In this context, Schleif interpreted Kraft's self-portrait relative to the function of ecclesiastical donations: "through their imposing self-portraits, the artists identified themselves, with the donor, as

⁶³¹ Corine Schleif, *Donatio et Memoria: Stifter, Stiftungen und Motivationen an Beispielen aus der Lorenzkirche in Nürnberg* (Munich, 1990), 70.

⁶³² *Ibid.*

petitioners.”⁶³³ This is visually manifest in the placement of their self-portraits at eye level with the viewer. In demonstrating his concern for his salvation in his self-portrait, Kraft followed a tradition established much earlier in the medieval period. Between 1150 and 1160 the artist Gerlachus included his self-portrait in a stained glass window, accompanied by the phrase “king of kings have mercy on Gerlachus” (Fig. 101).⁶³⁴ As part of the medieval tradition, this self-portrait was not an indication of the artist’s search for fame, but rather his desire for salvation.⁶³⁵

As Gerlachus’s accompanying inscription indicates, the artist’s concern for salvation is demonstrated not only in the inclusion of a self-portrait but also through an accompanying inscription and signature. That artists’ signatures such as Moser’s communicated a concern for salvation is manifest in statements of humility contained within the inscription. Liebmann described the tone of Moser’s as well as his contemporary, Hans Multscher’s inscription as being “subservient and possessing the character of a dedication.”⁶³⁶ Prompting this description was the request for prayer, “pray to God for him,” that follows Moser’s signature. In the example of Hans Multscher, his signature is located in the scene of the *Death of the Virgin* on his *Wurzach Altarpiece* in

⁶³³ “Durch ihre imposanten Selbstbildnisse setzen sie sich zusätzlich mit dem Stifter als Adressanten gleich.” Ibid., 71-2.

⁶³⁴ REX REGV[M] CLARE GERLACHO PROP[I]CIARE. The original window on which this is found was a window from the west choir of the Arnstein Abbey in Lahn. Ibid. 71.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

⁶³⁶ Liebmann, “Die Künstlersignatur,” 129-130.

Berlin (Fig. 102).⁶³⁷ Multscher's slightly later inscription is similar in tone to Moser's on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and also includes a request for prayer. In addition to the request for prayer, the particular placement of these signatures on altarpieces in close proximity to the celebrating priest had significance. According to Strieder, "What the signatures appeared to be soliciting from the celebrant was, during the remembrance of the living and the dead, not only the recollection of the donor and their heirs but also the artist's name, which corresponded to the position of the celebrant."⁶³⁸ Similar to Adam Kraft's self-portrait, this suggests that through the placement of their signature artists sought to keep their names in the presence of their fellow parishioners as well as the priest celebrating mass. Considering the religious climate of the period it is not surprising that artists used their participation in a sacred work to gain favor and, like the donors of the work, to seek the prayers of the faithful.

Artistic Collaboration and the Artist's Signature

In addition to the religious overtones of signatures, practical factors also discount the claim that a signature was a declaration of the artist's pride in his ability. For example, pragmatic decisions may have dictated when an artist signed his name. Considering that it was normally the donor who procured the artist, the donor would have known the artist on a personal level, omitting the need for him to make his name known. On the occasion,

⁶³⁷ *Bitte (n). got .für .hanssen .muoltscheren. vo(n). riche(n). hofe(n). burg(er). ze. ulm. haut. d(a)z. werk. gemacht. .do.ma(n).. zalt m^o cccc xxxvii.* Strieder, "Schri.kunst.schri," 19.

⁶³⁸ "Angesprochen war zunächst der vor dem Altar zelebrierende Priester, der sich aufgefordert sah, beim Gedächtnis der Lebenden und Toten nicht nur des Stifters des Altars und seiner Nachkommen zu denken, sondern auch des Künstlers Namen an der entsprechenden Stelle des Kanons zu nennen." Ibid., 19.

however, when the artist created a work for export, it may have been necessary to include a signature. When signatures did appear, according to Liebmann, it was not from the individual artist's desire to testify to his individual accomplishment as previously suggested by Stange, but rather the result of more practical considerations. For example, the name of the artist was given when the work was destined for a place in which the artist might not have been well known. Examples include Konrad Witz's Altarpiece in Geneva and the *High Altar of St. Wolfgang's* by Michael Pacher.⁶³⁹ Liebmann thus interpreted Moser's inclusion of his origins and reference to himself as Master (*Meister*) as evidence that the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was made far from the location of his workshop.⁶⁴⁰ Since the actual location of Moser's workshop remains uncertain, there is no corroborating evidence to support Liebmann's hypothesis. Moreover, considering Moser's close ties to the art of southwest Germany as described in the previous chapter, there is no reason to suppose that his workshop was far away. While Liebmann's claim that artists may have signed their works for foreign destinations does not apply to Moser, artistic practice is nonetheless an important consideration in the examination of the artist's signature in the Late Gothic period.

Similar to the artist's religious piety, the nature of artistic production also provides an alternative explanation for the artist's signature. The collaborative nature of much of the art produced in the Late Gothic period does not permit weight to be attached to an individual artist's contributions. The creation of winged altarpieces, such as the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, was a collaborative venture. In addition to the sculptor and

⁶³⁹ Liebmann, "Künstler Signatur," 129 n. 4.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

painter, the services of a cabinetmaker and locksmith were required for their creation. The shrine box was made by the cabinetmaker whereas the locksmith made hinges for fastening the wings and devices for securing the superstructure.⁶⁴¹ In some cases a separate gilder was also hired, although typically the painter's workshop executed the gilding. In most cases of collaboration, it was the master painter who signed the work, since they were contractually responsible for the finished product. Although the patron could hire each of the artists independently, it was the general practice to hire one artist who would then contract out to other artists those parts of the project outside his area of specialization. Because of this practice, it was generally the master painter, who signed the work, not as an individual but as a workshop.⁶⁴² Thus, instead of viewing the signature in terms of the mark of an individual artist, it may more accurately be viewed as a trademark or brand name of a particular workshop.⁶⁴³

Recent studies of artists' signatures have called into question the earlier understanding of them first promoted by the cultural historian Jakob Burckhardt. Instead of viewing signatures as evidence of artistic self-awareness, scholarship has acknowledged other possible motivations. That the artist may have wanted to receive the spiritual benefits of a donation is demonstrated in the dedicatory nature and placement of the inscription. Moreover, the collaborative nature of art work resists interpreting signatures as the mark of an individual. Current interpretations of other aspects of the Moser's signature provide

⁶⁴¹ Rainer Kashnitz, "Sculpture in Stone, Terracotta and Wood," in Gothic and Renaissance Art in Nuremberg 1300-1550 (New York, 1986), 63.

⁶⁴² Rainer Brandl, "Art or Craft?: Art and the Artist in Medieval Nuremberg," in Gothic and Renaissance Art in Nuremberg 1300-1550 (New York, 1986), 53.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*, 59.

additional grounds for its reevaluation as a demonstration of Moser's artistic self-awareness.

The Fifteenth-Century Meaning of Kunst

Turning to the lament, once again more recent scholarly findings challenge its interpretation as a sign of the burgeoning self-awareness of the artist. In the early literature it was widely accepted that Moser used the word *Kunst* in the modern sense of "fine art," thus crediting the artist with the earliest known example of this meaning. As a result, many interpretations of the lament rested on the idea that Moser was referring specifically to his own art or his style. Depending on which way one perceived Moser's art, he was either lamenting the fact that he was misunderstood because he was too progressive, or, because he realized that his art was too old-fashioned.

Sidestepping the interpretation of the lament for the moment, the earlier idea that Moser employed *Kunst* in the modern sense has been entirely dismissed in more recent scholarship. Strieder demonstrated that Moser could not have been referring to the modern meaning of art, since this definition was not developed and brought into common usage until the *eighteenth* century by Goethe and Schiller.⁶⁴⁴ The word *Kunst* was derived from the verb *können*. Although the root of this word is commonly forgotten today, it is essential to the understanding of the fifteenth-century meaning of the word. *Kunst*, at that time, corresponded to the meaning of the middle-Latin *ars*, as initially, "skill," or more generally, "capability." Manual skill was an essential component for the success of an

⁶⁴⁴ Strieder, "Schri.kunst.schri.," 19. Prior to Schrieder a reconsideration of the meaning of *Kunst* was discussed by Werner Besch at the Moser Symposium in 1971. There, he dismissed the interpretation of *Kunst* as fine or high art. For more information on the meaning of *Kunst* in the fifteenth century, see Hausherr, "'Der Magdalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn,'" 191.

artwork. Taking into account another element of *Kunst, scientia*, or “knowledge that strives for application,” according to Strieder, in his use of the word *Kunst*, Moser was referring to manual skill along with expertise, which was a prerequisite for outstanding craftsmanship.⁶⁴⁵

Defining *Kunst* more precisely, while it shaped individual interpretations of the lament, particularly Strieder’s, it did not eliminate the consideration of the lament in the dialogue on artistic self-awareness. In early scholarship the definition of *Kunst* as “fine art” was only one element of the lament that served as evidence for Moser’s artistic self-awareness. According to many scholars, artistic self-awareness also existed in the personal nature of the lament in which Moser expressed disappointment regarding the poor reception of his art. Focusing first on the interpretation of the lament, this chapter challenges the common assumption that Moser was reacting to a specific event as well as the idea that in the phrasing of the lament Moser was acknowledging a deficiency in his art or its reception. While we may never know if his lament reflected a general devaluation of art, what is certain is that Moser used it, nonetheless, to communicate his intellectual aspirations as well as his artistic skill. This becomes evident in the context of how phrases of humility functioned in the Late Gothic period as well as in Moser’s repeated references to medieval literature.

Earlier Interpretations of the Lament: Some Shortcomings

Presented in the Literature Review (Chapter Two) were the various interpretations for the lament. As indicated by the numerous theories put forth the lament’s interpretation has not met with scholarly consensus. In part, this can be attributed to lack of solid

⁶⁴⁵ Strieder, “Schri.kunst.schri.,” 19.

evidence for the theories considered thus far. For example, it is impossible to support the claim that Moser felt restricted by working in a small village when the actual location of his workshop remains a matter of debate. Assuming that Moser did have a workshop in Weil der Stadt, there is no reason to suppose, as was done in earlier scholarship, that it did not have a thriving artistic community. That it had a substantial number of goldsmiths for its size is evidence that perhaps it was more artistically significant than has been supposed.⁶⁴⁶ In regard to the theory that Moser's lament was a response to the absence of patronage in the wake of the Council of Constance, there is simply not enough information about artistic patronage during this period to substantiate this. The theory that Moser's lament was the cry of the individual released from the collective also is difficult to establish. To my knowledge there have not been any comprehensive studies of the changes in artistic practices and guild membership in the region surrounding Tiefenbronn in this period. Until more information on this topic comes to light, the claim that changing artistic practices influenced the artist's lament remains unconvincing.

Not reviewed extensively in Chapter Two is the most recent interpretation for Moser's lament by Peter Strieder, which also lacks supporting evidence. In his explanation of Moser's lament, the reconsideration of the meaning of *Kunst* played a crucial role. According to Strieder, despite the long tradition of artists complaining about an insufficient demand from society for their art, Moser was not lamenting the general devaluation of art, but rather a particular situation. For Strieder, the situation to which Moser was referring related not to whether his style was regressive or progressive as earlier interpretations claimed, but to the material qualities of his work. Along with the

⁶⁴⁶ According Hansmartin Decker-Hauff, there were eight goldsmiths working in Weil der Stadt. Hausherr, "Der Magdalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn.," 202.

fifteenth-century meaning of *Kunst* as manual skill, Strieder took into consideration the findings of the technical investigation of Moser's lament. During the technical investigation researchers came to the conclusion that Moser used the most expensive materials, particularly gold, and employed them in a superfluous manner. In the context of Moser's lavish use of precious metals along with his careful execution, according to Strieder, the basis for the lament was that Moser's work was too expensive. Ultimately, the prerequisites for "art" or craftsmanship which he set as understood in Strieder's interpretation of *Kunst* did not translate well into the new tendency toward mass-production.⁶⁴⁷

Although he took into account the fifteenth-century understanding of *Kunst*, the idea that Moser's work was "too expensive" is problematic. While Moser did use expensive materials, demonstrated in the technical study, there is nothing to support the claim that this practice was not well-received. Considering what issues were a matter of concern for the donors in contractual arrangements with the artist, Strieder's speculations that Moser's work was too expensive is not logical. Based on surviving contracts, where the materials and their amount are frequently stipulated, it can only be assumed that these details would have been included in the contract for the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* or at least arranged in initial negotiations. It is also important to consider that even though the artist may have been financially responsible for the inscription, it is extremely unlikely that it could have been so visibly placed on the altarpiece without the patron's approval. Doubtless the patrons would not have tolerated a statement insinuating that they were cheap, which is implied in Strieder's suggestion that "Moser worked too expensively." In

⁶⁴⁷ Strieder, "Schri.kunst.schri," 19.

trying to identify what motivated Moser's presumed expression of disappointment, scholars put forth several hypotheses all of which lack substantial supporting evidence. One possibility that scholars have not taken into consideration in their search for a specific cause for Moser's complaint, however, is that there wasn't one.

Challenging Earlier Interpretations: The Lament as a Topos

In reviewing the various interpretations for why Moser included a lament on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, although many different theories have been put forth, many of them share the same assumption. Underlying most, if not all, of the preceding interpretations is the belief that Moser was reacting to a specific concern with the lament. Another widespread belief regarding the lament is that through it Moser acknowledged a lack of demand or appreciation for his art. Challenging these assumptions, however, is not only the formulaic nature of the lament but also a broader consideration of medieval inscriptions, both artistic and literary.

The analysis of Moser's lament has been greatly colored by the perception of it as unique in the period. While there are not many extant expressions of disappointment, there are a few comparable to Moser's from the fifteenth century. Among these are the complaints of Jean Colombe and the Munich painter, Jan Polack. Polack's phrase ICH.LEID.VND.MEID.VND.WARD. on the *St. Peter's Altarpiece* in St. Peter's in Munich has been identified as the most comparable in tone to that of Moser's inscription.⁶⁴⁸ Lending support to the suggestion that Moser's lament was not motivated

⁶⁴⁸ Strieder, "Schri. Kunst. Schri.," 19.

by a specific situation is Strieder's observation that in contrast to his own interpretation, most complaints stemmed from a general lack of appreciation for the arts.⁶⁴⁹

Beyond the lack of proof for any of the earlier interpretations of Moser's lament, and the observation that most laments responded to the general devaluation of art, the strongest evidence that Moser's lament was not prompted by a specific situation is the formulaic nature of the phrase, which has not been given due attention. Alfred Stange earlier observed that Moser's lament had parallels to other writers and artists and seemed to follow a conventional formula.⁶⁵⁰ Despite his belief that Moser was still reacting to a specific situation, he found parallels in Moser's lament to a near contemporary of his, Oswald von Wolkenstein and further compared it to Walters von der Vogelweide.⁶⁵¹

Further discounting the personal nature of Moser's lament, Werner Besch, in a philological investigation of Moser's inscription, placed it in a medieval literary tradition, identifying "the lament of art" as a medieval topos, *Klage der Kunst*. He further classified it among the topoi *laudatio temporis acti* or "mourning of past times."⁶⁵² In German literature, the topos, *Klage der Kunst*, first emerged in the writings of Konrad von Würzburg, the leading German author in the second half of the thirteenth century.⁶⁵³ In a passage from his *Klage der Kunst*, a short allegorical work, the poet describes how Lady

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ These observations were based on Ernst Robert Curtius, who identified the most frequent artistic complaints from the thousand years following antiquity until Lessing.

⁶⁵¹ Stange, *Sudwestdeutschland*, 95.

⁶⁵² Haussherr, "'Der Magdalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn.,'"191.

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

Justice warned society not to fail to cultivate the arts properly: '[...] You can depend on what you are told by me today: whosoever does not cherish good art will be as grievous a burden to you as a lead weight. Bereft of love and of every joy, all the people here will shun him! Through "Cuonze", who is standing close to us here, I send you this message.'⁶⁵⁴

Not only does the identification of the lament as a topos discount the notion that Moser was reacting to a specific situation, it also calls into question earlier grounds for identifying the lament as a manifestation of artistic self-awareness. In the early art historical literature on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* the expressive nature of the lament was identified as a sign of artistic self-awareness. According to Stange, "never before and never after did an artist leave such a sorrowful lament of the fate of art."⁶⁵⁵ According to Wilhem Wörringer, "for the first time the word modern, in its deepest sense, can be applied to Lucas Moser's altarpiece."⁶⁵⁶ For him the modernity of the inscription stemmed from the "entirely personal voice of the inscription." Regarding Moser's sentiment of disappointment Wörringer further concluded that, "the fate of the unappreciated begins and is inseparable from artistic individualism."⁶⁵⁷

While earlier art historians viewed the personal nature of the lament as a demonstration of artistic self-consciousness, if it belongs to a topos, this cannot be

⁶⁵⁴ Sebastian Coxon, The Presentation of Authorship in Medieval German Narrative Literature (Oxford, 2001), 97-8.

⁶⁵⁵ "nie aber hatte zuvor und nie hat danach ein bildender Künstler so leidenschaftlich klagend das Schicksal der Kunst beschworen." Stange, Südwestdeutschland, 94.

⁶⁵⁶ Wilhelm Wörringer, Die Anfänge der Tafelmalerei (Leipzig, 1924), 320.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

sustained. It stands to reason, that, as part of a literary tradition, it is not the unique and personal voice of the artist. Although a consideration of the lament as a topos does not support artistic self-awareness on earlier grounds, it is nonetheless relevant to the topic. Because Moser's employment of a topos demonstrated his knowledge of a literary tradition, his desire to make this knowledge public is insinuated in the lament. Thus, artistic self-awareness is manifest in a public demonstration of his intellectual ability. Before pursuing the evidence for the preceding observation in greater detail, it is necessary to revise another false assumption held in relation to the lament; namely, the claim that through his lament the artist acknowledged the inferiority of his style or poor reception of his art.

The Lament: A Complaint or Boast?

Despite the variety of claims put forth in the early art historical literature regarding the interpretation of Moser's lament, two general assumptions emerged. First, relative to the motivation for the lament, scholars commonly assumed that Moser's lament was the result of a specific circumstance. Challenging this claim, however, is the recognition that Moser's lament belongs to a category of medieval topoi. The other common feature underlying interpretations of the lament was related not to the cause, but the nature or emotional tenor of the phrase. Without exception the lament was viewed in earlier literature as a statement of the artist's disappointment in which he acknowledged that his art was not appreciated; a claim that also lacks supporting evidence.

In reviewing my ideas on this topic, a social historian made the relevant observation that regarding the lament as a manifestation of the artist's shortcomings was a historical

anachronism.⁶⁵⁸ Indeed it is not logical that an artist would proclaim public rejection of his own creative endeavors in a period when both artists and artisans depended so heavily on patronage. Taking into consideration the point of view of the patron, it would also not be desirable to advertise the employment of a second-rate artist. If interpreting the lament as the artist's acknowledgement of his inability to meet the demands of his viewing audience is a historical anachronism, then why has it been so widely embraced? It is clear that this assumption is a result of a far too literal and superficial reading of the lament. It also reflects an insufficient understanding of medieval inscriptions and how rhetorical humility functioned within them. While Moser's lament was likely multivalent, medieval inscriptions and literature provide an understanding of at least one facet of his complaint.

In the medieval period, professions of humility and even self-deprecating statements were common features of inscriptions, where they served a variety of purposes, including artistic self-assertion. For example, artists often included statements of humility or scriptural passages along with their signatures. Recent examinations of these accompanying inscriptions have assigned them additional meaning beyond simply a forthright statement of the artist's piety. In his study, "Formen der Anonymität und des Individualismus in der Kunst des Mittelalters und der Renaissance," Klotz examined the placement and character of artists' signatures. In the example of one of the earliest known occurrences of an artist's signature, the artist, Valerianus, signed his name on the image

⁶⁵⁸ I am extremely grateful to Dr. Gerald Soliday from the University of Texas – Dallas for his insightful comments on my paper "The Interpretation of Lucas Moser's Signature on the St. Magdalene Altarpiece", presented at the 2005 German Studies Association annual conference.

of the Crucifixion (Fig. 103).⁶⁵⁹ The placement of the signature seemed especially bold for an artist, since he signed it directly in the middle of the cross.⁶⁶⁰ Accompanying the artist's name is another inscription containing Paul's words from Galatians 6:14: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world." According to Klotz, the artist Valerianus used this passage to justify "boasting" of his work by placing it "in the cross." In this case "the expression of abject humility could itself become the vehicle for the artist or writer to make his name known."⁶⁶¹ According to this interpretation, Moser's lament and request for prayer had a two-fold purpose: its pious form acted as a "vehicle" for Moser to sign his name.

Another source of inscriptions from the medieval period can be found in literature, where writers and poets often inserted evidence of their authorship in the narrative of the text. In the case of Konrad von Würzburg, humility combined with self-assertion was a constant feature of his statements of authorship.⁶⁶² For example, in the *Goldene Schmiede*, a mariological work, Konrad von Würzburg wrote: "If I am not able to praise you, Lady, as befits all Your honour, apply Your exceptional mercy so that I, Konrad von Würzburg, receive the blessing that Your goodness forgives me for whatever I have failed to include in Your praise." Here the self-deprecating tone was employed to indicate

⁶⁵⁹ "Ego Valerianus Scripsi." The image of the Crucifixion is found in a northern Italian Gospel book made around 600. Klotz, "Anonymität und Individualismus," 303.

⁶⁶⁰ The center point of the cross was the most meaningful, which makes the placement of the signature there almost a profanity. Ibid., 304.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., 312.

⁶⁶² Ibid., 99.

his position as a supplicant to the Virgin. But as Sebastian Coxon has noted, despite this expression of humility, which suggests that his work falls short, his virtuoso literary devices reveal that “on another level he set out to impress his audience with his skill as a vernacular author.”⁶⁶³

Würzburg’s self-negation took on a variety of forms which at times, similar to Moser’s lament, even more explicitly suggested his weaknesses as a writer. For example, in his legend, *Silvester*, Konrad von Würzburg made reference to himself as the “dull-witted Konrad von Würzburg” and, in doing so, gave proper credit to his patron, Lord Liutolt von Roeteln for the work.⁶⁶⁴ In one of his narratives, Konrad intimated that his work was not well-received: “You see, I too do not want to and must not abandon my skill, just because there are so very few people who receive my poetry well.”⁶⁶⁵ In this particular case, taken in conjunction with the larger text, his statement lends support to the idea that art was a moral obligation. In a final example, Würzburg presented his name in *Minneleich*: “It was ‘Cuonze’ von Würzburg who sang this dance for you: wish that from his tongue never a rhyme flies off badly.”⁶⁶⁶ According to Coxon, here, Würzburg was not asking that his inadequacies be overlooked, but rather was requesting prayer on his behalf to sustain his ability.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶³ Ibid., 98-9.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid., 101.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid., 117.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., 97.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

While the preceding discussion relied heavily on medieval statements of authorship by Konrad von Würzburg, their relevance to Moser's lament need not depend upon the artist's knowledge of his writings. What the consideration of statements of authorship, particularly those of Würzburg demonstrated, however, was that Moser used standard devices already established in medieval inscriptions. In this period self-deprecating statements served many purposes, often paradoxically showcasing the skill or pride of the artist or writer. It is unlikely, therefore, that Moser sought to acknowledge a deficiency in his art, but rather his sophisticated handling of his medium was probably meant to impress his viewers. It is helpful to recall here that in terms of terms of naturalism, Moser was one of the most progressive artists of his time. Moreover, a technical consideration of Moser's artistic methods demonstrated that he used the most sophisticated techniques of his time and employed the highest quality and most expensive materials available.⁶⁶⁸

New Evidence for Moser's Artistic Self-Awareness

While a small sampling of medieval inscriptions should cast doubt on earlier assumptions that Moser's lament acknowledged the poor reception of his style, this interpretation is further challenged by other features of the inscription, where artistic self-awareness is manifest. Although the formulaic nature of the lament and its identification as a topos challenged earlier perceptions of it as the artist's personal voice, artistic self-awareness is conveyed, nonetheless, through its presence. The preceding consideration of phrases of humility revealed that they functioned on many levels. Through them artists could make their name known as well as draw attention to their skill. This function of the lament, i.e. the ability to draw attention to his art, may also explain why Moser

⁶⁶⁸ Hausherr, "Der Magdalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn.," 186.

accompanied his signature with such a phrase. In considering why Moser included his lament it is also necessary to revisit its categorization as a topos and how this identification relates to the topic of artistic self-awareness.

Although Moser's lament was identified as a topos several decades ago, the implications of this in the question of artistic self-awareness were never considered. In fact, how this affected the interpretation of the lament was never addressed. In ignoring the significance of the lament as a topos, what scholarship failed to recognize was Moser's desire to demonstrate his intellectual ability and provide evidence of his artistic identity. Simply stated, Moser was communicating his intellectual ability by referencing the medieval literary tradition. The practice of using inscriptions as vehicles for conveying this type of information has been substantiated elsewhere. Among German artists, the use of inscriptions to communicate one's level of learning was not unique to Moser. Moser's contemporary, Konrad Witz, accomplished this by writing the inscription on his *St. Peter's Altarpiece* (1444) in Latin. According to Liebmann, the use of Latin for the inscription testified to his education through contact with scholars.⁶⁶⁹ Parallel to Witz's employment of Latin for his inscription, Moser's use of a topos should be viewed as a demonstration of his education and intellectual ability.

That Moser was attempting to demonstrate his familiarity with the literary tradition is further supported in other places in his inscription. Not only did Besch identify Moser's lament as a topos, but he was also the first to recognize that Moser's inscription was composed as a verse, making it likely that it was a quotation. While the lack of studies on the literary tradition in the region surrounding Tiefenbronn prevents the placement of

⁶⁶⁹ Liebmann, "Künstler Signatur," 130.

Moser's lament within a particular literary landscape, its poetic nature represents another attempt by the artist to associate himself with medieval literature.⁶⁷⁰

The designation of himself as *Meister* in his inscription should also be viewed in the context of medieval literature. It was previously assumed in the art historical literature that by identifying himself as "master" he was indicating his position as head of a workshop. If this were his intention, however, it would have been logical to specify his position as master immediately after his name instead of identifying himself specifically as a painter from Weil der Stadt (*Maler von Wil*). In a very literal sense Moser uses *Meister* to identify himself as the master specifically of one work: the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece (Meister des Werx)*. In Medieval literature, the designation of *Meister* referred generally to education (magister) or signified the mastery of an art, skill, or craft.⁶⁷¹ According to Coxon, the author's name even seemed secondary to notions of authority, mastery, and excellence that could be implied by terms such as *Meister*.⁶⁷²

What is evident from the preceding paragraphs is that through his lament and inscription Moser went to great lengths to demonstrate his familiarity with medieval literature. Perhaps the greatest evidence for this is that he actually formulated his inscription as a poetic verse.⁶⁷³ It is through his desire to make his knowledge of the

⁶⁷⁰ Hausherr, "Der Magdalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn.," 190.

⁶⁷¹ Coxon, *Presentation of Authorship*, 96.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*, 219. Clearly the pride inherent in the identification of himself as master of this work further disputes the notion that Moser recognized that his style was not well-received, while simultaneously calling attention to his mastery.

⁶⁷³ Hausherr, "Der Magdalenenaltar in Tiefenbronn.," 190.

literary tradition known that a particular kind of artistic self-awareness is demonstrated, since it communicated information about his intellectual ability.

Script and Selectivity

The preceding discussion highlighted many aspects of Moser's inscription that were overlooked in earlier scholarship on the topic and that revealed the strategies through which he communicated his intellectual and artistic abilities. Further developing how Moser's inscription demonstrated artistic self-awareness is the script itself. While scholars have evaluated many elements of Moser's inscription in the context of artistic self-awareness, they have not considered the implications of Moser's use of several different styles of script for the text contained in the main inscription. In the inscription Moser employed two different styles of lettering for the vertical and horizontal border. For the vertical segments, which include the artist's inscription and lament, he employed a gothic minuscule. In the horizontal inscriptions (the dedication and indulgence) he used what is referred to as a transitional or early humanistic Renaissance script.⁶⁷⁴ He also further differentiated the right vertical inscription (the artist's inscription) from the left (the lament) through the use of very thin lines.

While the use of different letter styles is relevant to the question of artistic self-awareness, to this point, it has only been considered relative to the authenticity of the inscription. Although Gerhard Piccard questioned the originality of the inscription, because of the use of multiple scripts, other occurrences of multiple lettering styles in northern art discredited his observation. The most famous example is Jan van Eyck's

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., 187.

Ghent Altarpiece, where five different types of script are employed.⁶⁷⁵ Concerning the skeletal or thin-lined lettering that Moser employed for the lament, which Piccard also cited as evidence for a later manufacture, Kloos found that it was not peculiar to the modern period but rather described it as “belonging to all times.”⁶⁷⁶

Despite the observation that Moser’s employment of different styles of script was unusual, it actually reflects the transitional nature of the development of script in this period. In the Middle Ages the most prevalent form of lettering was the Gothic. Before the Renaissance this was primarily a minuscule or lower-case book-hand. In terms of the development of the style of script in the late Middle Ages, there was a difference between the northern European countries and Italy. In the late Gothic period in Italy, two other kinds of lettering appeared: Roman capitals and a new script called humanistica.⁶⁷⁷ The new humanistica of the Renaissance was essentially a simplification of the Gothic script.⁶⁷⁸ This script came about when humanists, dissatisfied with the lack of clarity of the Gothic minuscule, searched monastic libraries for classical texts. When they discovered Carolingian manuscripts, they mistook them as classical texts and regarded the Carolingian script, which influenced the humanistica, as authentically antique.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., 189.

⁶⁷⁶ Piccard had argued that the skeletal script of the right vertical border was modern. Based on its similarities with Art Nouveau, he dated it to 1814. Ibid., 189.

⁶⁷⁷ Covi, *The Inscription*, 250.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid., 255.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., 256-7.

Until 1450, in Italy, when Renaissance capitals became standard, the style used for the humanistic script was not consistent, but rather exhibited variations.

Although the transitional script or the early humanistic Renaissance script was rooted in Italy, Moser as well as Jan van Eyck employed it. Closer to Moser, in southwest Germany, a variant on the transitional script was used on the epitaph of Bishop Cuntzo von Olmütz (d. 1434) in Ulm's Münster.⁶⁸⁰ A segment of the inscription by Hans Multscher on his *Wurzach Altarpiece* combined two different lettering styles, one of which was the Renaissance script.⁶⁸¹

In addition to authenticating the inscription, the employment of different letter styles is significant in the evaluation of Moser's artistic self-awareness. In the study of Italian fifteenth-century inscriptions, the selectivity of different letter styles has been used as evidence for artistic self-awareness. In Italy, the lettering style used for artistic inscriptions followed the general trend in printing, which combined both the humanistic script with the Gothic script. Dario Covi found that the lettering style was influenced by a variety of factors. One aspect that weighed on the selection of a letter style, as it had with scribes, was the content of the inscription. In contrast to scribes and printers, however, other criteria also influenced artists' selection of scripts, including formal considerations. According to Covi, a choice of different lettering styles is significant, since "the notion that certain kinds of texts should be written in humanistic script and that others may in Gothic presupposes (1) an awareness of lettering styles and (2) a hierarchal grading of the

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁸¹ Ulrich Söding, "Hans Multscher's >Wurzacher Altar<," Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst 42 (1991): 75.

styles.”⁶⁸² It is noteworthy that Moser’s inscription follows the pattern that Covi found prevalent in Italian inscriptions. Moser used the transitional or early Humanistic Renaissance script for the more official dedication and indulgence inscriptions. However, for his inscription, written in the vernacular, he selected the more prevalent Gothic minuscule.

In addition to the pattern of when a particular script was employed, the very idea of selectivity was significant because, according to Covi, it did not occur before the fifteenth century. “The deliberate selection of letter styles – fashionable and outmoded, to serve formal and iconographic purposes is an enrichment of the Renaissance painters’ means of artistic expression.”⁶⁸³ The selection of certain scripts in light of their content or the form of object on which they were depicted, according to Covi, also pointed to the sense of historical awareness, which characterized the Renaissance.⁶⁸⁴

That lettering style was an important consideration for artists in southwest Germany is demonstrated by Hans Multscher’s inscription on his *Wurzach Altarpiece*, on which he included two different inscriptions. The second inscription, located in the scene of the *Pentecost*, was placed on the church apse and has features of the early humanistic capitals

⁶⁸² Covi, *The Inscription*, 278.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*, 287.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.* The idea of historical awareness that Covi pointed out in Italian inscriptions is also interesting in the placement of the date of the *St. Magdalene* inscription. According to Charles Sterling, Moser’s placement of it not with the artist’s name as was customary, but rather after the lament, was a demonstration of his awareness of his historic situation. Charles Sterling, “Observations on Lucas Moser,” 31.

whereas the main inscription was written in Gothic minuscules (Fig. 104).⁶⁸⁵ In his article on this altarpiece, Ulrich Söding interpreted the artist's use of capitals as a carrier of personal meaning, especially in light of the inscription's position above the Virgin and near the dove of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁸⁶

Moser's Inscription: Documenting Humanism in Southwest Germany

Throughout the preceding discussion, Moser's inscription was compared to the inscriptions of several artists from, or working in, southwest Germany. Similar to Moser, Hans Multscher included a request for prayers following his signature. More significantly, he employed different lettering styles for his inscription on the *Wurzacher Altarpiece*, among which was the new Renaissance humanistica. Konrad Witz, another contemporary working in southwest Germany, also included inscriptions on his paintings. In the case of his inscription on the *St. Peter Altarpiece*, Witz's use of Latin pointed to his place in humanist circles.

While these inscriptions are of great importance in communicating the intellectual ability of the artists, the mere existence of several surviving inscriptions from the same region has not been given proper attention. Recall that artists' inscriptions remained an exception until late in the fifteenth century. Despite this, there survive several signed altarpieces all from the most important artists in southwest Germany. What the concentration of inscriptions on southwest German paintings suggests is a common source. Although this is only an initial observation, the artistic self-awareness suggested

⁶⁸⁵ The first inscription, at the bottom of the scene of the *Dormition of the Virgin*, was in gothic minuscules. Ulrich Söding, "Hans Multscher's >Wurzacher Altar<," 75

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

in these artists' inscriptions, manifest in their knowledge of the Renaissance script and Latin, may stem from the humanist impulses in this region.

Before considering the evidence for the presence of humanism in the art of southwest Germany and Moser it is important to understand how this term is interpreted in the literature on humanism in Germany. In a general sense humanism in Germany was characterized by a growing familiarity with the ideas of antique orators, poets, and philosophers; ideas which altered the contemporary worldview. Although several factors created a foundation for humanism in southwest Germany, including lively mercantile traffic, German students at Italian universities, and good standing with the papal court and other ecclesiastics, it was strengthened by the presence of the two church councils in the region: the Council of Constance (1414-1418) and the Council of Basel (1431-49).⁶⁸⁷ In the scholarly literature these councils represent the single most significant source for the growth and spread of humanism in Germany. According to F. Mastropiero, the Council of Constance was the first point of contact between the representatives of the northern European cultures with Italian humanists that took part in the Council.⁶⁸⁸ Among the educated humanists who attended the Council of Constance was the Italian Poggio Bracciolini.⁶⁸⁹ In essence, through the two church councils hosted there, southwest Germany became a forum for cultural exchange with Italian humanists.

⁶⁸⁷ Hans Rupprich (ed.), Die Frühzeit des Humanismus und der Renaissance in Deutschland (Darmstadt, 1964), 34.

⁶⁸⁸ F. Mastropiero, "Influenza dell'Umanismo sulla pittura tedesca ispirata al concetto di pace," in: Interrog. Umanesimo, Congr. Int. Montepulciano 1974, Vol. 3, Florence, 1976, 136.

⁶⁸⁹ Tripps, "Ein antikes Motiv," 24.

One area that was influenced by the contact with humanism was art. In his examination of Hans Multscher's inscription on the *Wurzach Altarpiece*, Ulrich Söding attributed the appearance of the humanistic script to the growing interest in humanism in southwest Germany.⁶⁹⁰ Along with the study of inscriptions, scholars have identified other humanist elements in German painting of the first half of the fifteenth century.⁶⁹¹ Mastropiero classified the play of light and shade and the naturalistic observations in their portrayal of landscape in the paintings of Moser and Witz as evidence for their familiarity with early Italian humanism.⁶⁹² Created even earlier, she cited the *Toggenburg Bible* of 1411 and the frescoes commissioned by the Emperor Sigismund for the Church of the Trinity in Constance as evidence for the infiltration of Italian taste and style.⁶⁹³

Returning to humanist elements in the art of Lucas Moser, in addition to naturalistic principles on which he based his art, specific motifs support his interest in and knowledge of the antique. In the scene of the *Last Communion*, Moser lined the left-hand side of the portal with a series of sculptures, one of which is a nude male figure who supports the Virgin and Child. According to Charles Sterling the representation of the nude male was based on an antique prototype. Bearing a strong resemblance to Moser's nude is a *Satyr* from the Vatican (Fig. 105).⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹⁰ "Hans Multscher's >Wurzacher Altar<," 75.

⁶⁹¹ Johannes Tripps, "Ein antikes Motiv auf Lukas Mosers Tiefenbronner Altar," *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg* 27 (1990): 24.

⁶⁹² Mastropiero, "Influenza dell'Umanismo," 133ff.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, 136-7.

⁶⁹⁴ Sterling, "Observations," 28.

More recently, Johannes Tripps identified the distant ship of the *Sea Journey* as a representation of the story of the antique singer, Arion (Fig. 106). Represented in the costume of a nobleman, he is seated playing a lute. The story of Arion was made popular through Petrarch and also appeared in the *Gesta Romanorum*, which provided a moralizing message for the writings of various authors from antiquity.⁶⁹⁵ In the case of Lucas Moser, indications of humanistic impulses in his art support the argument that the literary references in his inscription and his style of lettering were rooted in humanism in Germany.

Summary

In the study of Late Gothic and Renaissance art, the significance of artists' inscriptions is currently a topic of great interest. In its consideration of Moser's inscription not only did this chapter re-evaluate Moser's signature in light of more recent findings, thereby placing it within the current scholarly dialogue, it offered a unique interpretation of his so-called lament, which has puzzled scholars for over a century.

Concerning Moser's signature, this chapter challenged several of the misconceptions held in earlier literature. Based on more recent research, the presence of a signature can no longer be taken automatically as a sign of artistic pride, since many practical and religious factors influenced artists' signatures. For example, Moser's request for prayers demonstrates the artist's desire for salvation. That his signature may also account for others in his workshop is also likely.

Despite the pious or practical motivations for signing his name, however, Moser's inscription conveys, most vividly in the so-called lament, the artist's thoughts on his

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., 26.

ability. This study challenged two erroneous assumptions about Moser's lament that greatly skewed its interpretation. It challenged both the assumption that the lament was a response to a specific reaction and acknowledged the poor reception of Moser's art - neither of which can be sustained in the context of medieval inscriptions. Taking into account the identification of the lament as a topos and how statements of humility appeared and functioned within other medieval inscriptions also shed light on how Moser's inscription displayed his artistic identity. Moser's lament thus emerges as a fascinating and deeply paradoxical public gesture: a self-deprecating statement that ultimately serves to call attention to the artist's skill and his wider learning.

8. Conclusion

Summary of Findings

What has come to light in the consideration of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, particularly through the focus on its context, is the degree to which many of its features were a product of its setting in the Tiefenbronn parish church. Largely relying on a formalist approach to Lucas Moser's style, context was not given proper consideration in the earlier literature. When explanations for certain features of the altarpiece took into account its context, there was often little to no supporting evidence.

One significant contribution of this study, which more strongly anchored the work to its location, was to identify the function of the indulgence inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. Similar to other works from the Late Gothic period, labeled as *Ablaß-Medien*, that conveyed the indulgence privileges of the church in which they were located, the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* conveyed those of Tiefenbronn. Based on a consideration of indulgence practices of the late medieval period, the indulgence inscription, in listing the names of St. Mary Magdalene, St. Anthony, and St. Erhard, identified for the visitor the local saints on whose feast's indulgence could be received. Not only do documented accounts of pilgrimage support that Tiefenbronn possessed indulgence privileges, it is also possible to speculate on the occasion Tiefenbronn received these. Considering that the nave of the Tiefenbronn church had only recently been built when the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was created, it is reasonable to suppose that indulgence privileges were obtained by Tiefenbronn to possibly lend the finishing touches and/or decorate. The indulgence inscription can also be tied into a broader historical framework and the changing nature of religious practices, since it reflects one

aspect of late medieval piety; the drive to accumulate indulgence credits. Moreover, its presence was a product of the changing nature of pilgrimage and its increased growth at the local level.

In considering the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, this study also demonstrated how the work's location influenced its subject and imagery. Although France was an important cult center for the veneration of Mary Magdalene, she was also extremely popular in Germany, as evidenced in the various manifestations of her cult. One type of evidence that demonstrated Mary Magdalene's popularity, not only in Germany but in the region in which the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was created, was visual imagery. Specifically, in Tiefenbronn, the Magdalene imagery created both before and after the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* offered evidence of her veneration. Further distancing the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* from France is its iconography. This study highlighted the importance of German sources for the selection of the scenes on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and the manner of their portrayal. The identification of the theological advisor as Abbot of the Hirsau cloister, Wolfram Maiser von Berg, created an even more direct link between the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and its setting at Tiefenbronn. The abbot's selection as the advisor undoubtedly resulted from his position as *Kastvogt* of Tiefenbronn as well as his familial relationship to the owner/possible donor of the altarpiece. The abbot also played a role in the meaning brought to the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* in the selection of its scenes and their emphasis on monastic values.

Another aspect of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* that has benefited greatly from a contextual consideration is the renovation. Although the topic of the renovation was not completely overlooked in earlier literature, there have been no in-depth considerations of

its context. This study examined the renovation as part of a redecoration of the church that took place in the first few decades of the sixteenth century at Tiefenbronn. Based on the types of changes undertaken, including the enlargement of the shrine and the style and scale of the new replacement sculpture, the renovation made the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* more similar to the three new altarpieces that were also part of the surge of donations at Tiefenbronn. An explanation for why the current owners of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* wanted it to resemble the newly installed altarpieces is rooted in both the function of ecclesiastical donations and renovation practices. Because donations functioned not only as symbols of a family's piety but also of their status, by renovating the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* its heirs demonstrated their awareness of the more modern form of winged altarpieces and taste for large scale sculpture. As part of the larger historical context, the wave of redecoration reflected Tiefenbronn's political situation and Catholic sympathies. While in many regions in Germany, artistic donations were declining, the numerous donations at Tiefenbronn in the second and third decades of the sixteenth century demonstrated the village's continued desire to uphold Catholicism in the region.

While this study focused mainly on the contextual factors that shaped the function, iconography, and renovation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, in considering Lucas Moser, stylistic analysis played a role. Departing from early considerations of his style, however, the primary aim in establishing his ties to southwest Germany was to re-evaluate earlier characterizations of his style. Relative to Moser's style, this study offered new insight into both his stylistic ties to southwest Germany and the interpretation of his artistic sources. Challenging earlier claims that Franco-Flemish influence was primary for

Moser, this explored his stylistic affinities with southwest German painting, which were recently emphasized in the Städel's catalogue on early German painting. Reinforcing observations in the earlier literature, Stephan Kemperdick, a leading scholar on German painting, identified stylistic similarities between the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and other southwest German paintings.

The degree of similarity between Moser and other southwest German artists exists not only in stylistic attributes but artistic technique as well. Because no Upper Rhenish paintings had been studied until the previous decade, until recently, it was impossible to evaluate Moser's technique as evidence of his artistic training in southwest Germany. While this must remain an open question until more technical studies are undertaken on Upper Rhenish panel paintings, Moser's artistic techniques resemble those employed in other Upper Rhenish panels. In considering the similarities, the most significant are those employed by Moser that researchers earlier identified as being especially characteristic of the artist. Among these was Moser's free-hand use of incised lines within the painted image. Supporting that Moser could have trained in southwest Germany the artists of the St. John panels in Karlsruhe and the *Frankfurt Paradise Garden* also employed incised lines in a similar manner.

There is additional value in recognizing Moser's stylistic affinities with painting in southwest Germany beyond artistic training. Currently of great interest in the study of Northern Renaissance art is how artists' appealed to their patrons and local audiences. Because of the emphasis on Moser's relationship to Flemish painting in earlier studies, this question was not previously considered. It has been demonstrated in studies of other contemporary German painters, such as Stefan Lochner, that providing the donor and

viewer with familiar imagery was an important consideration for an artist. In Moser's incorporation of the stylistic elements associated with the International Style, the dominant stylistic mode in Germany, he provided his viewers with the style that would have been familiar to them. It is also important to consider that the International Style, because it originated in courtly circles, would have appealed to the tastes of the local nobility at Tiefenbronn.

In relation to the artist's inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*, this study contributed to a greater understanding of why Moser signed his work and included his so-called lament. Although earlier claims about the nature of Moser's artistic self-awareness were called into question, scholars were not mistaken in identifying his inscription as a reflection of it. In contrast to earlier studies, this considered not only alternative explanations for the artist's signature and definition of *Kunst*, but also challenged earlier interpretations of the so-called artist's lament. Instead of viewing the lament as the artist's complaint in which he acknowledged that his art was not wanted, taking into consideration the function of statements of false humility, this considered how it drew attention to his skill. This study also acknowledged for the first time the literary references in Moser's inscription. Not only did he employ a topos but he composed the inscription as a verse and wrote part of it using the new Renaissance script. These literary allusions demonstrated the artist's desire not only to emphasize his artistic ability but also his level of learning. In the broader historical framework, Moser's demonstrations of artistic self-awareness likely reflect the growing humanism in southwest Germany.

Future Directions for Scholarship

Not only did a contextual consideration provide a new direction for this study, it is also a starting point for future inquiries. It is likely that additional support for many of the topics addressed here is to be found in local and regional studies. For example, an investigation of the pilgrimage and patronage practices at neighboring churches would certainly shed light on the question of Tiefenbronn's indulgence privileges. While studies of indulgence practices have confirmed the widespread availability of indulgence privileges, even to local parish churches, having specific statistics on those in the surrounding areas could increase our understanding of Tiefenbronn's. In the context of pilgrimage the increased availability of indulgences certainly intensified the competition among local churches for visitors. If it were found that several churches in the vicinity of Tiefenbronn possessed indulgence privileges, it would support Tiefenbronn's need to advertise.

A better understanding of Moser's inscription would undoubtedly result from a more in-depth investigation of the literature in the region. Recall that although the artist's inscription resembles a quotation that it was impossible to link it with a specific source since there are no studies of the literary landscape in the area surrounding Tiefenbronn. Such an endeavor would undoubtedly produce a greater understanding of the intended meaning of Moser's inscription. More precise information on the humanistic tendencies in the region could also strengthen the connection between Moser's inscription and aspects of the imagery of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* that have been attributed to humanism. A more precise analysis of humanism in Swabia may also provide a more

complete picture of how the growth of humanism in southwest Germany shaped not only Moser but Konrad Witz and Hans Multscher.

Our conception of Moser's inscription would also benefit from a wider-reaching consideration of medieval inscriptions. This study broadened earlier interpretations by examining other types of medieval inscriptions in which artistic self-assertion was identified. How artists used false humility in combination with artistic self-assertion could be strengthened through a comprehensive study of literary and artistic inscriptions in Germany. What also needs to be established more definitively is the continuity between Moser's inscription and other medieval inscriptions.

Mentioned in Chapter Six, preventing a greater understanding of how Moser appealed to local tastes is the lack of knowledge on patronage in the region. The issue of local taste is currently a topic of great interest in the study of Northern Renaissance art as demonstrated at the recent meeting of the College Art Association. In the session on local culture, examining the Schöne style at Prague and Stefan Lochner in Cologne, Julien Chapuis demonstrated how local tastes shaped artistic styles. A more complete study of patronage in the immediate vicinity of Tiefenbronn as well as the region would aid in identifying the specific manner in which Moser appealed to his patrons and local tastes.

A greater understanding of patronage specifically at Tiefenbronn may shed light on the donation of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* or at least the specific reasons for its occasion. Regarding the coat-of-arms the one thing that can be said with any degree of certainty is that the armorial of the Stein family in the scene of the *Last Communion* is original. Further research into the Stein family could help elucidate their role in the creation of the altarpiece. A more comprehensive study of the patronage practices at

Tiefenbronn could also lead to a more conclusive understanding of the patronage of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*. From the scant literature it is clear that most of the objects donated in the Late Gothic period came from the local nobility. A more in-depth study could help shed light on the presence of the local nobility in St. Maria Magdalena.

In the question of Moser and his place in southwest German painting one development that will certainly shape the future direction of research is technical information. As more German works are studied technically it will be possible to assess Moser's artistic methods relative to them. A re-examination of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* technically may contribute some new information as well. Needless to say, the equipment used for technical examination of paintings has become more powerful and efficient in the forty years since the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* was studied. In particular a complete document of its underdrawing could greatly contribute to establishing the location of Moser's training.

For over a century now the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* has captivated and frustrated scholars. While this study clarified many of the problematic issues surrounding the altarpiece, many remain. Focusing on the context, the way is paved for future inquiry into one of the most important Late Gothic German paintings.

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EXHIBITION CATALOGUES

Kat. Basel 1993

Eremiten und Ermitagen in der Kunst vom 15. Bis 20. Jahrhundert. Basel, 1993.

Kat. Berlin 1975

Gemäldegalerie Berlin. Katalog der ausgestellten Gemälde des 13.-18. Jahrhundert. Berlin, 1975.

Kat. Colmar 1969

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Kat. Colmar 1990

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Kat. Darmstadt 1990

Deutsche Malerei um 1260 bis 1550 im Hessischen Landesmuseum Darmstadt (Wolfgang Beeh). Darmstadt, 1990.

Kat. Frankfurt 1957

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Kat. Frankfurt 1975

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Kat. Freiburg 1970

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1a. Exterior, St. Maria Magdalena, c. 1370-1400, Tiefenbronn, Germany.



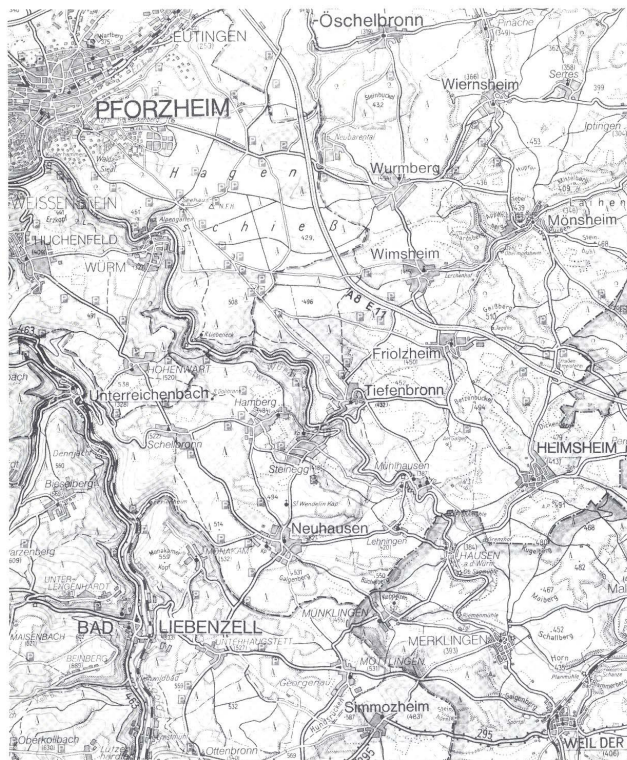
1b. View of the southeast wall, St. Maria Magdalena, Tiefenbronn.



2a. Lucas Moser, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece (Closed)*, 1432, Panel, St. Maria Magdalena, Tiefenbronn



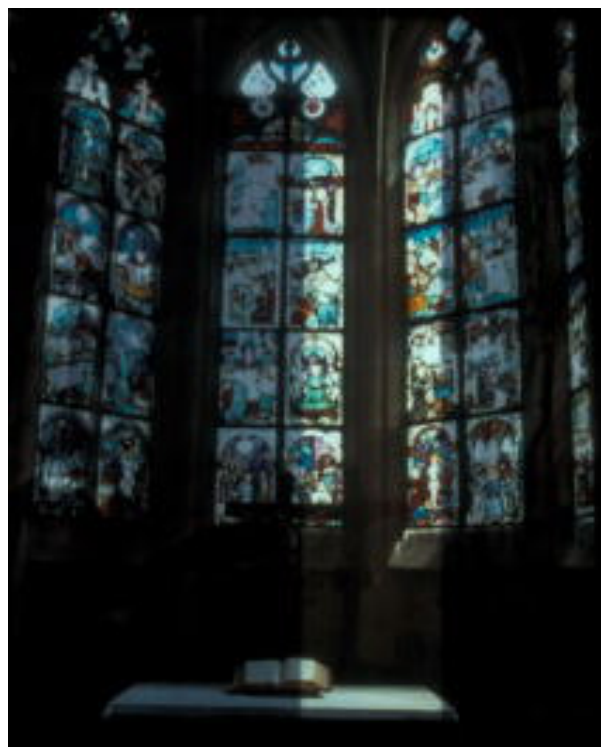
2b. Lucas Moser, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* (Open).



3. Map of the Enzkreis.



4. Diagram of main inscription (artist's inscription, lament, and altar's dedication), *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



5. Ulm (?) Artist, Besserer Chapel, 1430/31, Stained glass, Ulm's Münster, Germany.



6. Stein coat-of-arms, Detail of *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



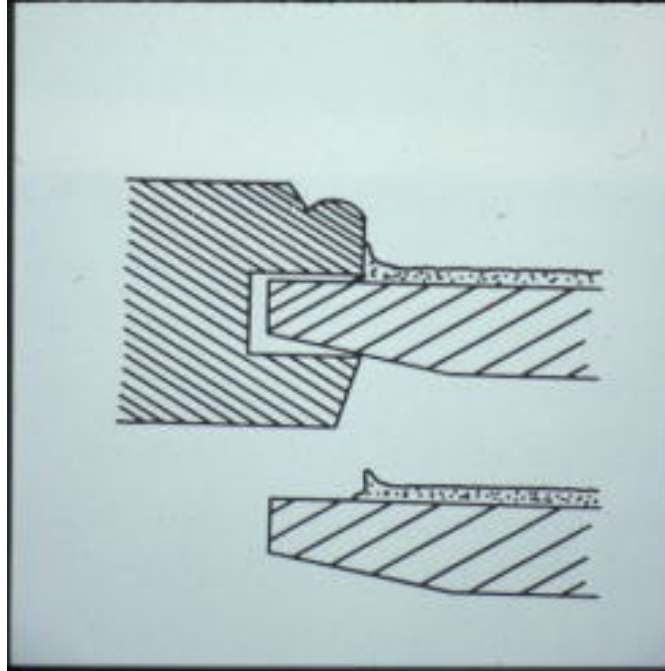
7. Maiser von Berg coat-of-arms, Detail of *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



8. Stein coat-of-arms, Detail of the *Last Communion*, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



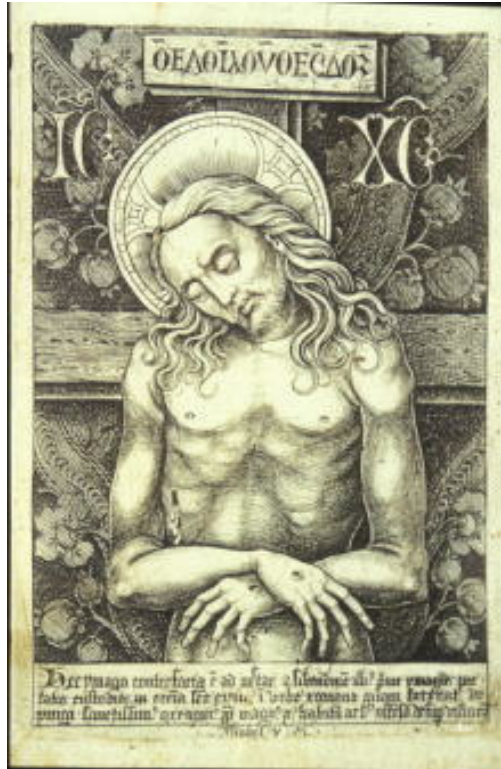
9. Unidentified coat-of-arms, Detail of the *Last Communion*, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



10. Diagram of the ground ridge, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



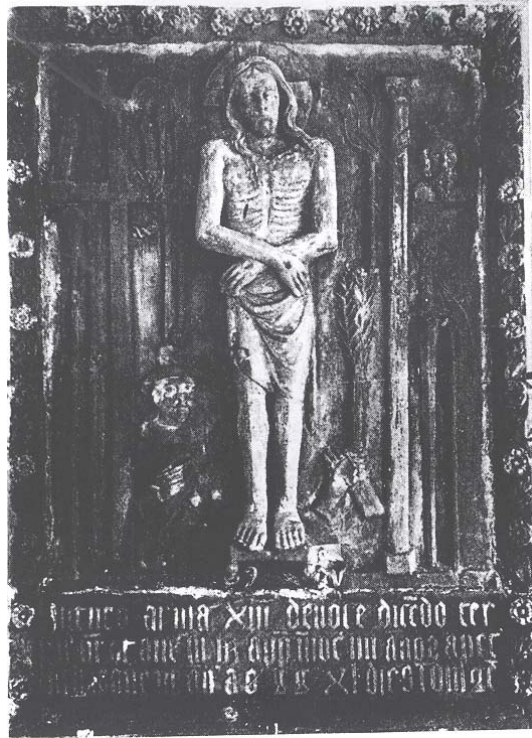
11. Microscopic cross-section of vertical inscription of left wing (140x), layers from lower to upper: green, yellow-brown glaze, yellow-brown binding medium, original twist gold (silver/gold), binding medium of second application, gold leaf of second application, binding medium of new restoration, gold leaf of new restoration, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



12. Israhel van Meckenem the Younger, *Vera Icon*, c. 1490, Engraving, Staatliche Museum, Berlin, Germany.



13. Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *Madonna of the Rosary*, c. 1480, Panel, Museum Boijmans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands.



14. Indulgence Panel (*Man of Sorrows*), ca. 1400, Stone Relief, Stiftskirche, Fritzlar, Germany.



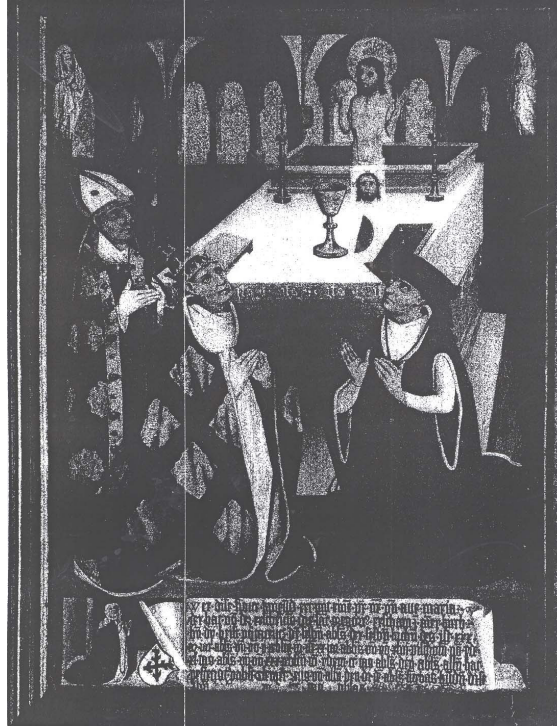
15. Indulgence Panel (*Enthroned Virgin*), Thirteenth century, Panel, Liebfrauenkirche, Halberstadt, Germany.



16a. Indulgence Panel (Closed), 1513, Panel, Text on parchment, Treasury, Church of the Teutonic Order, Vienna, Austria.



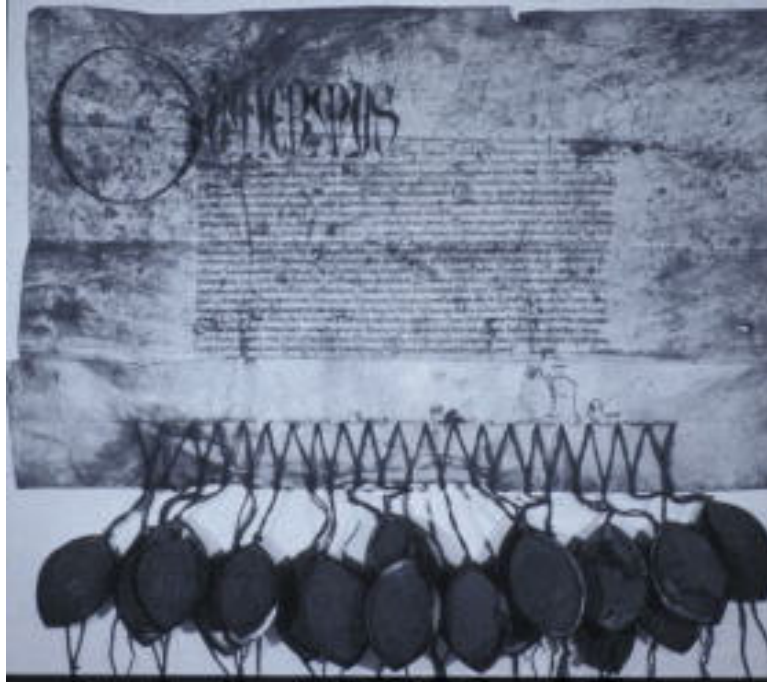
16b. Indulgence Panel (Open), 1513.



17. *Epitaph of Dorothea Schürstab*, 1475, Panel, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Germany.



18. *Indulgence Panel*, 1615, Panel, Church of the Holy Cross, Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany.

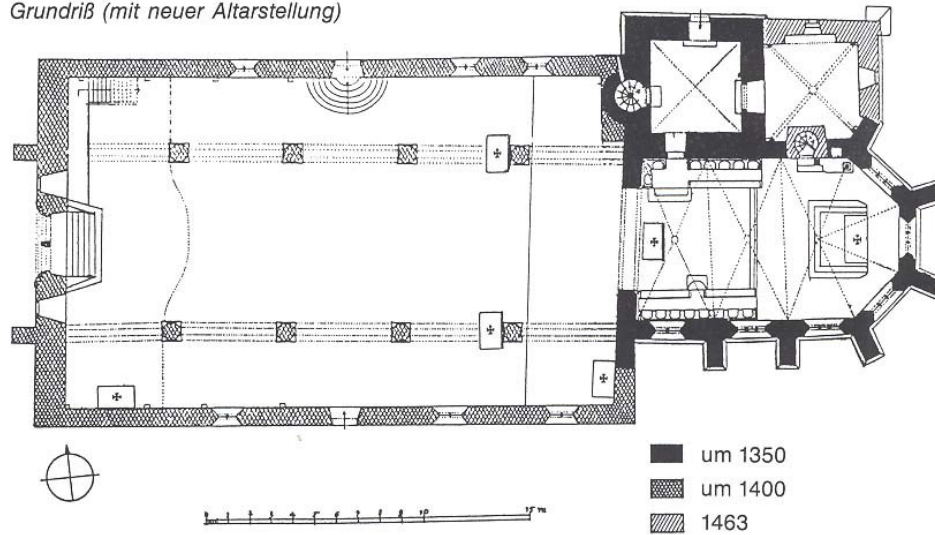


19. Indulgence Letter from St. Lorenz, 1476, Parchment, Staatsarchiv, Nuremberg, Germany.



20. Indulgence Inscription, 1475, Stone, Schäfer Chapel, St. Wolfgang's, Rothenberg, Germany.

Grundriß (mit neuer Altarstellung)



5

21. Plan, St. Maria Magdalena, Tiefenbronn.



22. *Mary Magdalene*, Late fourteenth century, Stone, Choir, St. Maria Magdalena, Tiefenbronn.



23. Wall altar (replaced with *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*), Southeast wall, Early fifteenth century, fresco, St. Maria Magdalena, Tiefenbronn.



24. *Anointing*, Detail of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



25. Central Scenes of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* (Closed Position): *Sea Journey*, *Arrival* and *Last Communion*.



26. *Sea Journey*, Detail of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



27. Arrival, Detail of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



28. Mary Magdalene's companions before the city walls of Marseilles, Detail of the *Arrival, St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



29. Appearance of Mary Magdalene to the rulers of Marseilles, Detail of the *Arrival, St. Magdalene Altarpiece*



30. *Mary Magdalene's Last Communion*, Detail of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



31. Sculptural grouping on the Cathedral of Aix, Detail of *Last Communion, St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



32. Seated ecclesiastic, Detail of *Last Communion, St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



33. Inhabited ground, Detail of left interior wing depicting Martha, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



34. Hans Schüchlin, *High Altar*, 1469, Panel, St. Maria Magdalena, Tiefenbronn, Germany.



35. Hans Kern, *Mary Magdalene as Myrophore*, Choir Stall (east end) 1520, Wood, St. Maria Magdalena, Tiefenbronn.



36. Waltenburger Master, *Anointing*, Detail of Magdalene cycle, 1325-50, Fresco, Dusch, Graubünden, Switzerland.



37. Giovanni da Milano, *Anointing*, 1363-71, Fresco, South wall, Guidalotti-Rinuccini Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence, Italy.



38. *Anointing* (111r), Hist. 149, 1330, Illumination, Staatsbibliothek, Bamberg, Germany.



39. Giotto, or workshop, *Sea Journey*, 1306-12, Fresco, Magdalene Chapel (North), Lower Church, San Francesco, Assisi, Italy.



40. *Sea Journey* (34v), Codex St. Georgen, 1420, Illumination, Badischen Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe, Germany.



41. *Sea Journey* (36r), Codex St. Georgen, 1420, Illumination, Badischen Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe, Germany.



42. *Mary Magdalene Appears to the Rulers of Marseilles* (38v), Codex St. Georgen, 1420, Illumination, Badischen Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe, Germany.



43. *Mary Magdalene's Companions Before the City Gates* (37r), Codex St. Georgen, 1420, Illumination, Badischen Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe, Germany.



44. Workshop of Giotto, *The Last Communion*, ca. 1320s, Fresco, Magdalene Chapel, Palazzo del Podestà (Bargello), Florence, Italy.



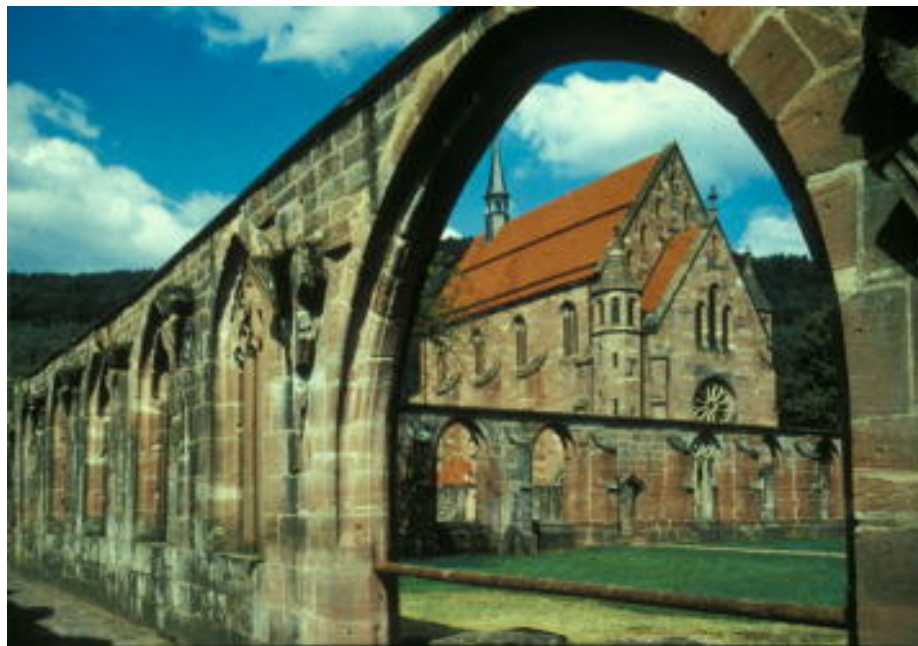
45. *Last Communion* (134r), Hist. 149, 1330, Illumination, Staatsbibliothek, Bamberg, Germany.



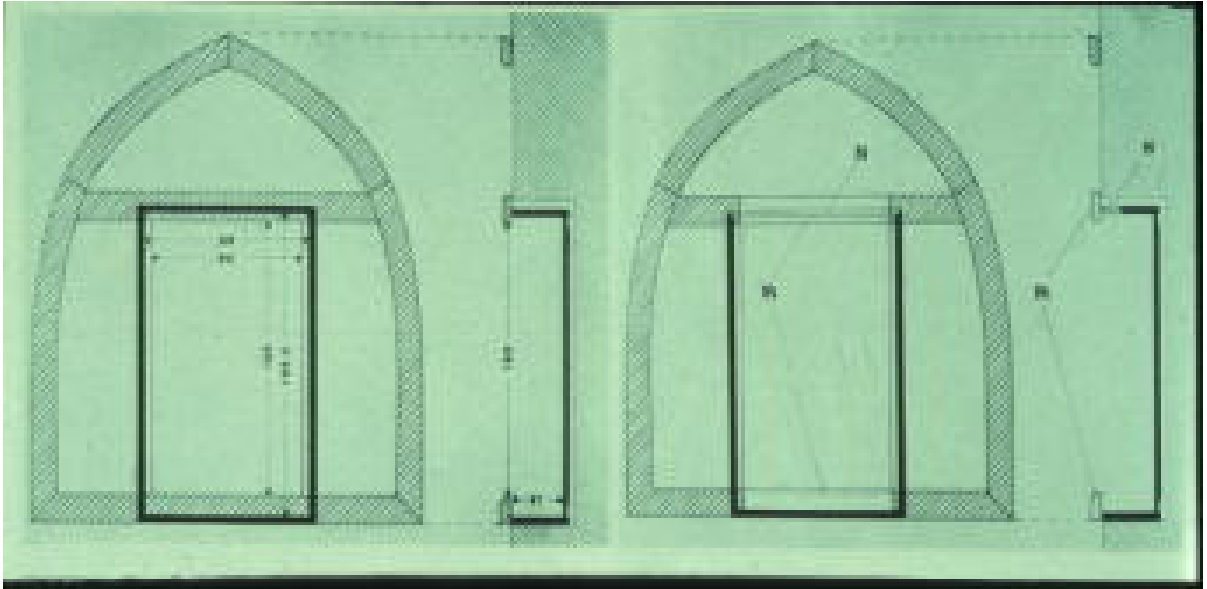
46. Giovanni da Milano, *Miracle of Marseilles*, 1363-71, Fresco, South wall, Guidalotti-Rinuccini Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence, Italy.



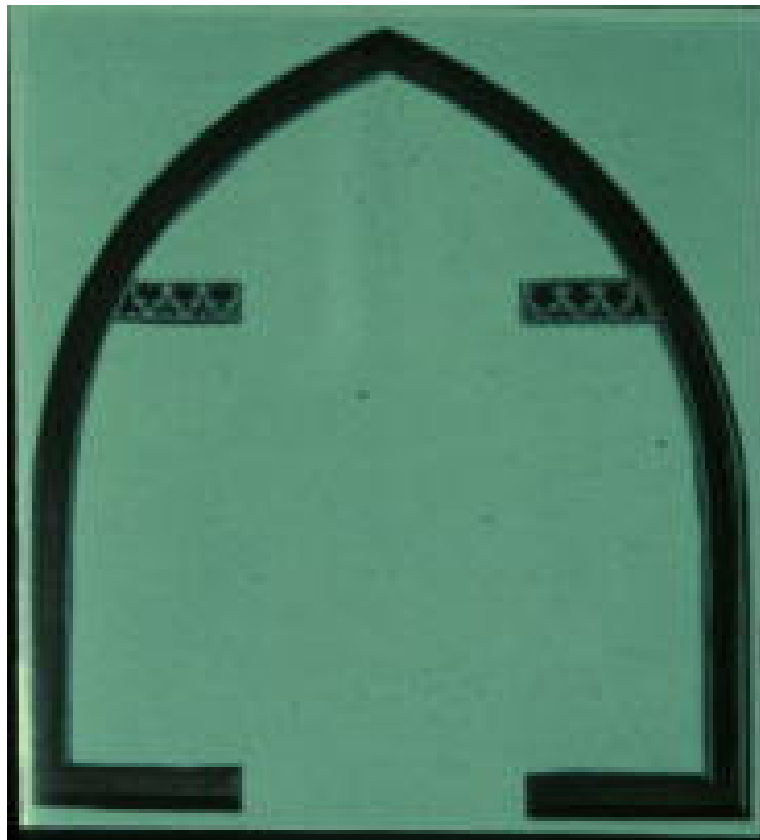
47. *Death of Martha* (134v), Hist. 149, 1330, Illumination, Staatsbibliothek, Bamberg, Germany.



48. St. Peter and Paul's Cloister, Rebuilt c. 1482-1483, Hirsau, Germany.



49. On right: Diagram of the later alterations of the frame (hatched) and shrine (black). The white areas R and S signify parts of frame and shrine removed later, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



50. Diagram of the present shape of the altar frame, Detail of the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



51. Hans Multscher, *Mary Magdalene Held Aloft by Angels*, 1425, Limewood, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin.



52. The Master of the Amsterdam Cabinet or the Housebook Master, *The Elevation of Mary Magdalene*, c. 1480, Drypoint, Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam.



53. Albrecht Dürer, *The Elevation of Mary Magdalene*, c. 1490, Pen, Coburg, Germany.



54. Tilman Riemenschneider, *Ascension of the Magdalene*, *Münnerstadt Altarpiece*, c. 1490-2, Limewood, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich.



55. Nave, St. Maria Magdalena, Tiefenbronn



56a. *Altarpiece of the Virgin* (Closed), 1517, Panel, St. Maria Magdalena, Tiefenbronn, Germany.



56b. *Altarpiece of the Virgin (Open)*, 1517, Panel, St. Maria Magdalena, Tiefenbronn, Germany.



57a. *Crucifixion Altarpiece (Closed)*, 1524, Panel, St. Maria Magdalena, Tiefenbronn, Germany



57b. *Crucifixion Altarpiece* (Open), 1524, Panel, St. Maria Magdalena, Tiefenbronn, Germany.



58. *Holy Kinship Altarpiece*, late 1520s, Panel, St. Maria Magdalena, Tiefenbronn, Germany.



59. Wall Altar, Late fourteenth century, Fresco, St. Maria Magdalena, Tifenbronn, Germany.



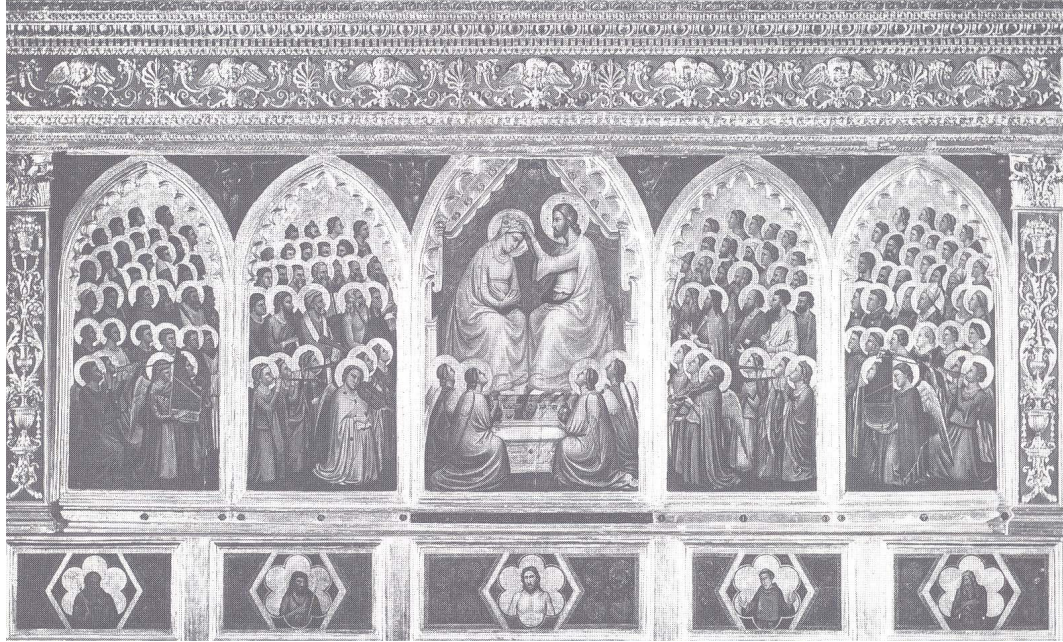
60. Adam Kraft, Tabernacle, 1493-6, Sandstone with partial painting, St. Lorenz, Nuremberg, Germany.



61a. Giotto, *Badia Polyptych*, c. 1301-2, Tempera, Uffizi, Florence, Italy.



61b. Giotto, *Badia Polyptych*, before restoration of 1957-8, Tempera, Santa Croce, Florence, Italy.



62. Giotto and his workshop, *Baroncelli Altarpiece*, c. 1330, Santa Croce, Florence, Italy



63. Limbourg Brothers, *St. Jerome takes leave and sails for Constantinople* (fol. 185), *Les Belles Heures du duc de Berry*, ca. 1408-9, The Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



64. Robert Campin, *St. Veronica*, c. 1428-9, Panel, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main, Germany.



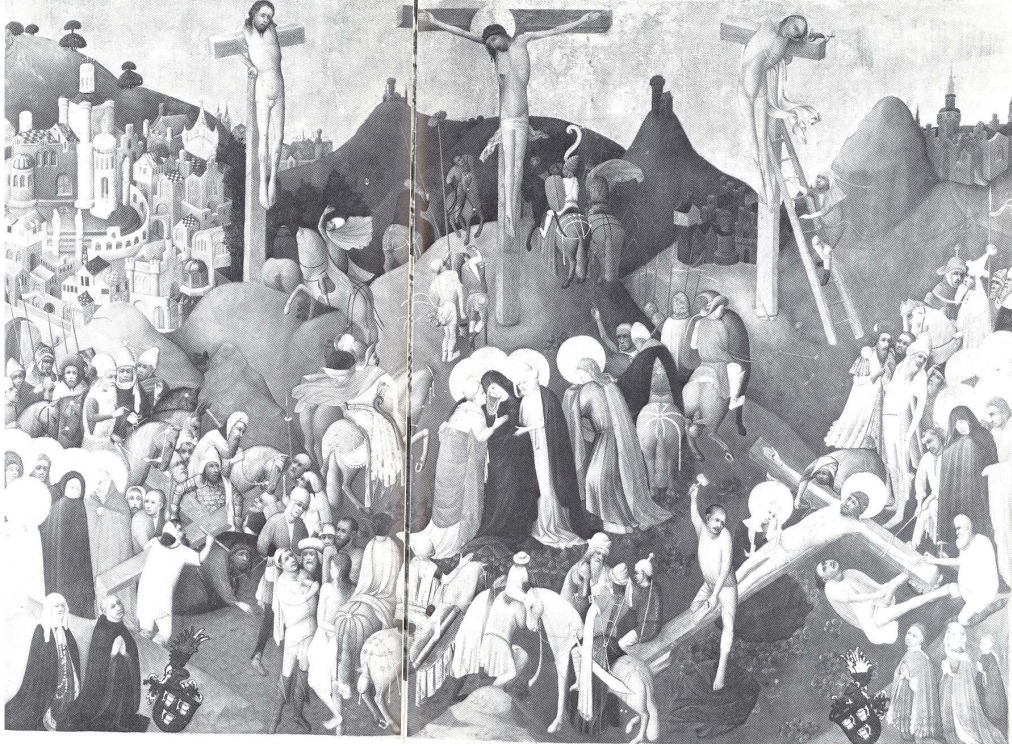
65. Robert Campin, *Virgin with Child*, c. 1428-9, Panel, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main, Germany.



66. Robert Campin, *The Miracle of the Rod and Betrothal of the Virgin*, c. 1428-30, Panel, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.



67. Robert Campin, or Follower, *Annunciation*, c. 1430, Panel, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.



68. Master of the Wasservass Calvary, *The Wasservass Calvary*, c. 1420, Panel, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne, Germany.



69. Master Francke, *Man of Sorrows*, c. 1425-30, Tempera and oil on panel, Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany.



70. Upper Rhenish, *Crucifixion*, c. 1400, Panel, Le Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar, France.



71a. Upper Rhenish Master, *Joseph's Doubt*, c. 1430/40, Panel, Musée de l'Œuvre Notre Dame, Strasbourg, France.



71b. Upper Rhenish Master, *Birth of the Virgin*, c. 1430/40, Panel, Musée de l'Œuvre Notre Dame, Strasbourg.



72. Upper Rhenish Master, *Paradise Garden*, c. 1410/20, Panel, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main.



73. Upper Rhenish Master, *Madonna of the Strawberries*, c. 1420/30, Panel, Kunstmuseum, Solothurn, Switzerland.



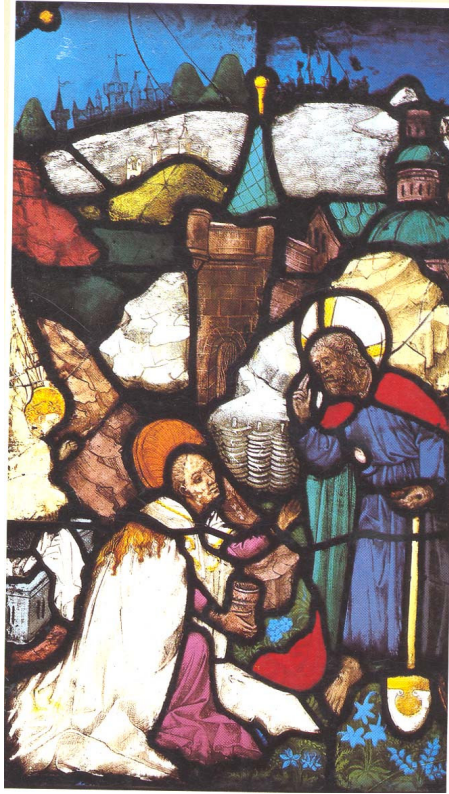
74. Upper Rhenish or Swabian Master, *Hirschoberhofdame*, The Stuttgart Playing Cards, c. 1430, Württembergisches Landesmuseum, Stuttgart, Germany.



75. Still-life, Detail of the *Anointing*, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



76. Ulm (?) Master, *Abraham and the Three Angels*, c. 1430/31, Stained Glass, Besserer Chapel, Ulm's Münster, Germany.



77. Ulm (?) Master, *Noli me tangere*, Besserer Chapel.



78. Ulm (?) Master, *Nativity*, Besserer Chapel.



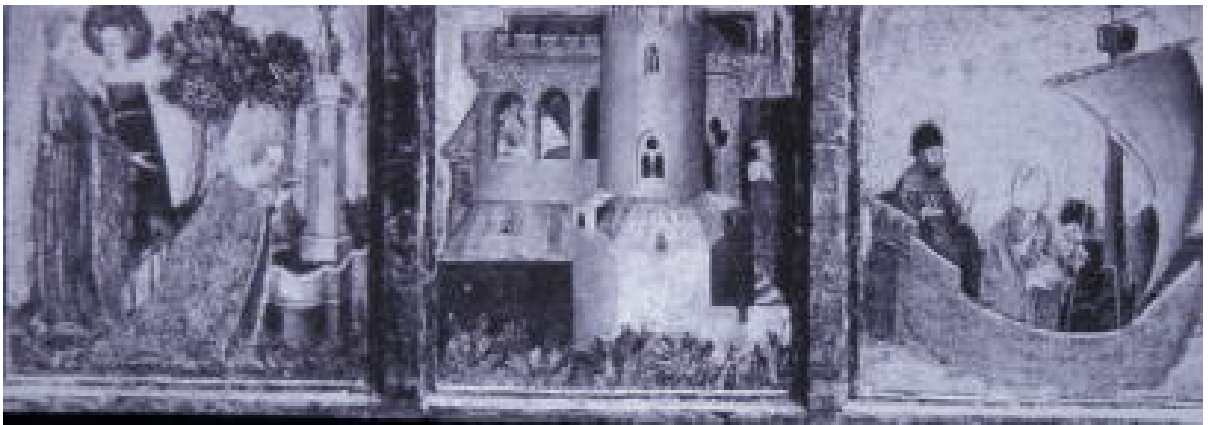
79. Ulm (?) Master, *Pentecost*, Besserer Chapel.



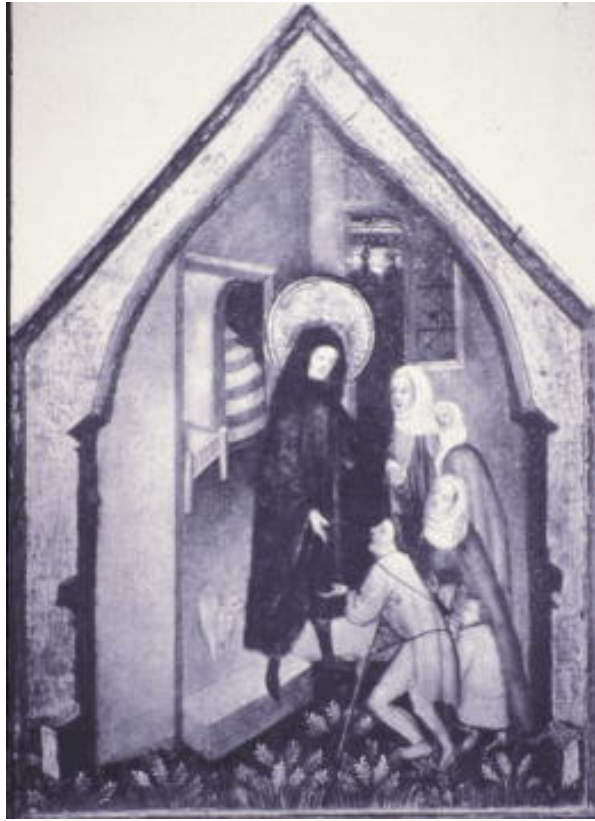
80. Swabian or Upper Rhenish Master, *Virgin and Child in a Circle of Angels*, c. 1430, Panel, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main, Germany.



81. Swabian or Upper Rhenish Master, Reconstruction of the *St. Anthony's Shrine*, c. 1430, Panel, Formerly in Museum, Darmstadt, Germany.



82. Swabian or Upper Rhenish Master, Panel with three scenes from the life of St. Anthony, Fragment of *St. Anthony's Shrine*.



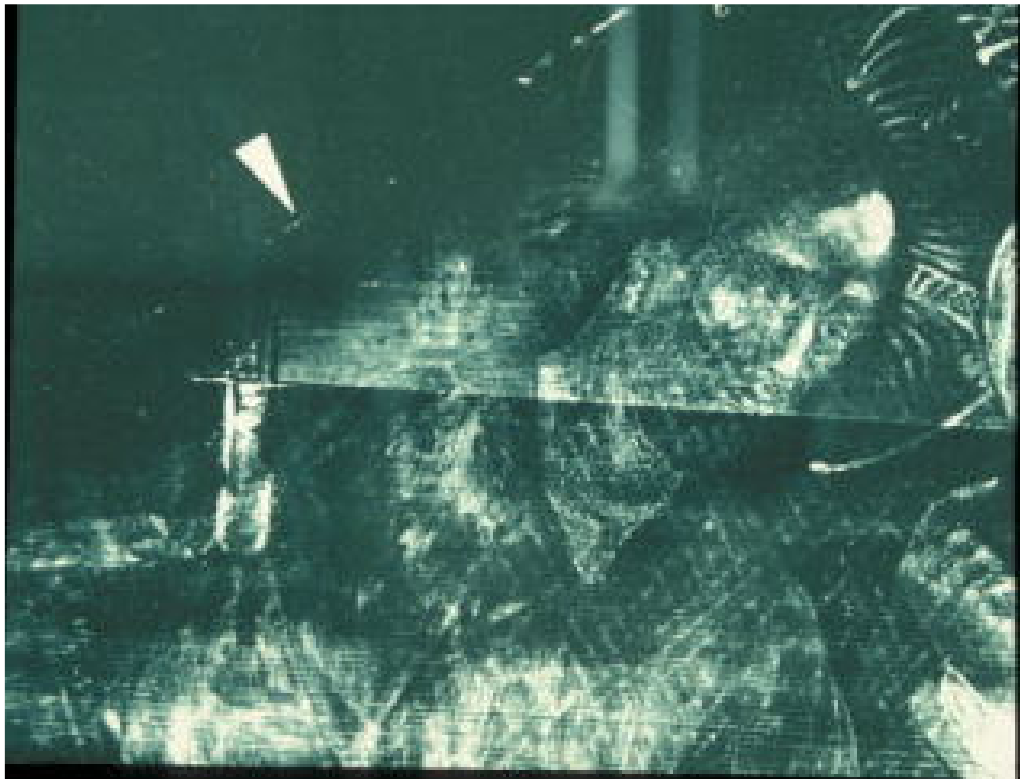
83. Swabian or Upper Rhenish Master, *St. Anthony gives his belongings to the poor*,
Detail of *St. Anthony's Shrine*.



84. Swabian or Upper Rhenish Master, *Angels*, Detail of *St. Anthony's Shrine*



85. Angel, Detail of *Last Communion*, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



86. X-ray showing construction of wood support, Detail of *Anointing*, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



87. X-ray showing incised contours of faces and hands, Detail of *Sea Journey*, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



88. Christ's Hair, Detail of the *Anointing*, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*



89. Mary Magdalene, Detail of *Sea Journey*, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.



90a. Upper Rhenish Master, *The Visitation*, c. 1420, Oil and tempera on panel, Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe, Germany.



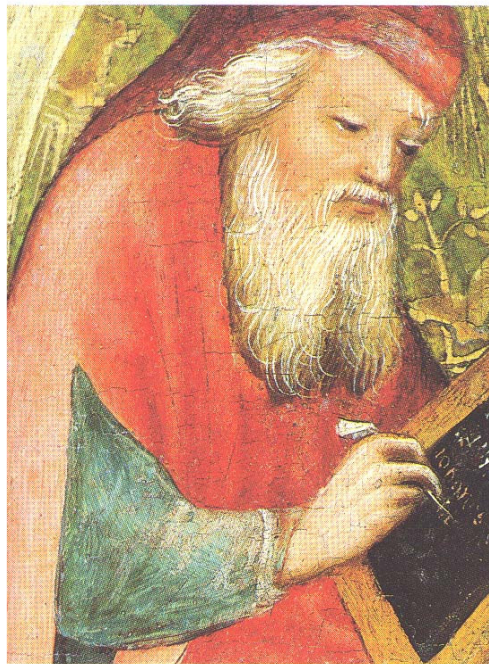
90b. Upper Rhenish Master, *The Birth and naming of John the Baptist*, Kunsthalle, c. 1420, Oil and tempera on panel, Karlsruhe, Germany.



90c. Upper Rhenish Master, *The Christ Child visits John the Baptist in the wilderness*, c. 1420, Oil and tempera on panel, Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe, Germany.



90d. Upper Rhenish Master, *John the Baptist and the Levite*, c. 1420, Oil and tempera on panel, Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe, Germany



91. Upper Rhenish Master, Incised lines in robe of Zacharias, Detail of *The Birth and Naming of St. John the Baptist*



92. Upper Rhenish Master, Incised lines indicating design for earlier background (black lines), Detail of *The Christ Child visits St. John the Baptist in the wilderness*.



93. Underdrawing of a youth, Detail of the *Frankfurt Paradise Garden*, c. 1410/20, Panel, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main, Germany.



94. Swabian or Upper Rhenish Master, Underdrawing of *The Virgin and Child in a Circle of Angels*, ca. 1430, Panel, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main, Germany.



95. Stefan Lochner, *Altarpiece of the City Patron Saints, Dombild (Open)*, c. Marienkapelle, Domkirche, Cologne, Germany.



96. Conrad von Soest, *Adoration of the Magi*, Detail of the *Dortmund Altarpiece*, c. 1420, Marienkirche, Dortmund, Germany.



97. Master of St. Veronica, *Virgin with the Flowering Pea*, c. 1410, Panel, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Germany.



98. Paris, *Goldenes Rössl*, c. 1404, gold, gilded silver, enamel, gems, and pearls, Altötting, Germany.



99. Rogier van der Weyden, *St. Luke Drawing the Virgin*, c. 1435-40, Panel, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



100a. Adam Kraft, Self-portrait, Detail of Tabernacle, c. 1493-6, Sandstone with partial painting, St. Lorenz, Nuremberg, Germany.



100b. Adam Kraft, Portraits of two workshop assistants, Detail of Tabernacle, c. 1493-6, Sandstone with partial painting, St. Lorenz, Nuremberg, Germany



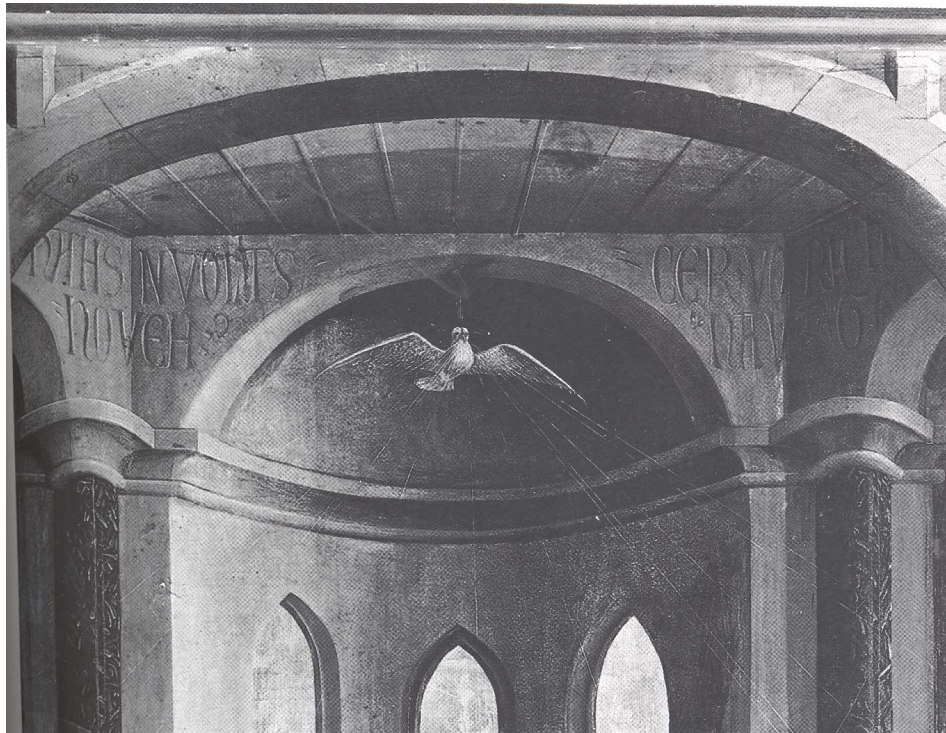
101. *Window of Gerlachus*, c. 1150-1160, Stained Glass, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster, Germany.



102. Hans Multscher, *Death of the Virgin*, *Wurzach Altarpiece*, 1437, Panel, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany.



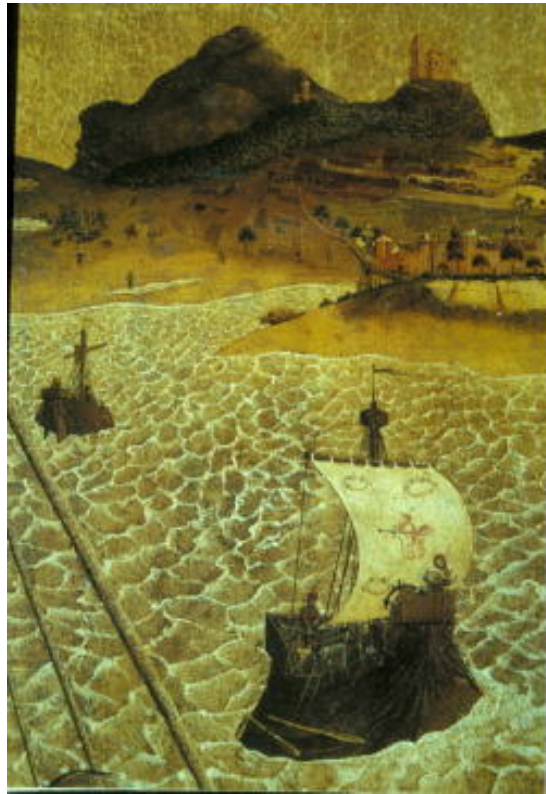
103. *Crucifixion*, *Evangelary of Valerianus* (Cod. Lat. 6224), c. 600, Illumination, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Germany.



104. Hans Multscher, *Pentecost*, *Wurzach Altarpiece*, 1437, Panel, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany



105. Roman, *Marble statuette of a Satyr*, Vatican Collection, Rome.



106. Distant ships, Detail of *Sea Journey*, *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*.
CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Ph.D. in Art History (2006)

Major Area: Renaissance Art

Minor Areas: Medieval and Modern Art

Dissertation: "Lucas Moser's *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*: Solving the Riddle of the Sphinx"

Director: Professor Molly Faries

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

Master of Arts degree in Art History (1995)

Thesis: "Mary Magdalene as Exemplar of the Contemplative Life in Lucas Moser's *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*"

Thesis Advisor: Professor Diane Scillia

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

Bachelor of Science Degree in Journalism and Mass Communication, cum laude (1991)

Major: Advertising

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

Cultural and religious significance of Northern Renaissance art through an evaluation of iconography, patronage, style and technique; Methods of technical study and their practical applications; Function and form of altarpieces and triptychs and their relationship to other ecclesiastical furnishings; Altarpiece renovations as reflections of changes in taste, iconography and patronage; Early Christian and Byzantine art and architecture; Medieval Painting; Gothic and Romanesque architecture; Italian Renaissance art; Baroque Art; Early twentieth-century European art.

CURRICULUM VITAE

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

WITTENBERG UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF ART

INSTRUCTOR OF ART HISTORY (Fall 1999 to Present)

Responsible for all aspects of the Art History curriculum including teaching all courses, advising majors and minors, and supervising the slide collection and student assistants. Taught History of Art I & II, Baroque/Rococo Art, Greek/Roman art, Early Christian/Byzantine Art, Modern Art, Western Medieval Art, Italian Renaissance Art and Northern Renaissance Art.

INDIANA UNIVERSITY, HOPE SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS

ASSOCIATE INSTRUCTOR (Spring 1996, Fall 1996, Fall 1997, Spring 1998)

Taught Art Appreciation with Professors Shehira Davezac and Eleanor Scheifele; conducted and planned discussion sections, prepared lectures, developed museum tours relating to course, prepared and graded exams, tutored students.

GRADUATE ASSISTANT (Spring 1997)

Assisted Ronda Kasl with Art in the Age of Rubens and Rembrandt; graded essay exams, prepared slides for lecture material, reviewed course material with students.

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY STARK CAMPUS

INSTRUCTOR (Fall 1994, Spring 1995)

Taught Art History I & II; created and followed class syllabus, prepared and taught lectures with corresponding visual material, created exams and assignments applicable to course level, assigned grades.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

INDIANAPOLIS MUSEUM OF ART

ASSISTANT TO MUSEUM CURATOR (Spring 98)

Participated in the examination of select paintings using infrared reflectography and the scanning electron microscope, translated technical report from German museum, created technical reports using new and existing information, wrote essay on select painting.

SCHOOL OF ART GALLERY, KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR (Spring 1994)

Assisted gallery director, Professor Fred Smith, with the organization, installation and removal of gallery shows.

Y.W.C.A., (AKRON, OHIO)

PUBLIC RELATIONS INTERN (1991)

Created and wrote newsletters, informational brochures and pamphlets, and press releases, designed to inform about available programs and to recruit support for the organization.

CURRICULUM VITAE

PUBLICATIONS

Book Reviews

Jan Brueghel the Elder. *The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark*, by Arianne Faber Kolb. Los Angeles, CA, 2005. In *Renaissance Quarterly* 58 4 Winter 2005

PAPERS PRESENTED AT PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS

Midwest Art History Society's 33rd Annual Conference, "Late Gothic Painting and Artistic Identity: A New Consideration of Lucas Moser's Inscription on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*," March 23-25, 2006.

German Studies Association 29th Annual Conference, "The Interpretation of Lucas Moser's Signature on the *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*: Individualism or Humility?," September 29-October 2, 2005.

Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America, Cambridge, UK, "Lucas Moser's *St. Magdalene Altarpiece* and its German Iconographic Sources," April 7-9, 2005.

Midwest Art History Society's 31st Annual Conference, "The Motivations Behind the Sixteenth-Century Renovation of Lucas Moser's *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*," April 1-3, 2004.

Midwest Art History Society's 30th Annual Conference, "Italian Motifs in German art: Direct contact or via Upper-Rhenish painting?" April 10-12, 2003.

38th International Congress on Medieval Studies, "Official practice vs. popular piety: What qualifies a work of art or a church as a pilgrimage destination?" May 2003.

Medieval History Seminar, German Historical Institute and Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany, "Lucas Moser's *St. Magdalene Altarpiece*: A Stylistic, Iconographical, and Contextual Re-evaluation," October 25-27, 2002.

36TH International Congress on Medieval Studies, "Private Property in a Public Space: The Dual Nature of Altarpiece Imagery," May 5, 2001.

CHAIRING PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS

Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America, Cambridge, UK, "*Peccatrice Nominata*": *Renaissance Cycles of Mary Magdalene in Context* April 7-10, 2005. (Organizer)

Midwest Art History Society 30th Annual Conference *Alteration and Renovation in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* April 10-12, 2003.

CURRICULUM VITAE

HONORS, AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- SHORT-TERM RESEARCH GRANT FOR PHD'S AND RECENT PHD CANDIDATES, DEUTSCHER AKADEMISCHER AUSTAUSCH DIEST (DAAD) (Summer 2000)
- GRADUATE STUDENT EXCHANGE, FREE UNIVERSITY, BERLIN AND INDIANA UNIVERSITY, OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (Fall 1998 – Spring 1999)
- TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP, INDIANA UNIVERSITY, HISTORY OF ART DEPARTMENT (Spring 1996 – Spring 1998)
- GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP, INDIANA UNIVERSITY, HISTORY OF ART DEPARTMENT (Spring 1997)
- FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND AREA STUDY IN GERMAN (FLAS), INDIANA UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF WEST EUROPEAN STUDIES (Summer 1997)
- FRIENDS OF ART TRAVEL AWARD, INDIANA UNIVERSITY (Summer 1996 and Fall 1998)
- GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP, KENT STATE UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF ART GALLERY (Spring 1994)

LANGUAGES

GERMAN, FRENCH AND DUTCH

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

College Art Association, Historians of Netherlandish Art, Sixteenth-Century Studies Society, Midwest Art History Society, Renaissance Society of America, German Studies Association