

**Tilman Riemenschneider's monochrome
sculpture: an examination of its origins.**

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the origins of the monochrome works of Tilman Riemenschneider (c.1460-1531) to clarify if this was an intentional finish. It focuses on the sculptor's Műnnerstadt, Rothenberg and Creglingen altarpieces. The discussion which combines new observations with previous scholar's theories, examines the nature of the monochrome glaze and Riemenschneider's carving of detailed sculptural surfaces to enhance the monochrome altarpieces; places Riemenschneider's use of the monochrome medium in its social context, addressing both religious and secular concerns; researches the influence of three-dimensional and two-dimensional media on Riemenschneider's development of the monochrome aesthetic; and investigates a theory put forward by Michael Baxandall concerning the use of natural sunlight in Riemenschneider's monochrome altarpieces. The examinations conclude that monochrome was indeed an intentional finish by Riemenschneider, which in my view is strengthened though out this discussion by new comparisons between Riemenschneider and Jan Borreman (a Netherlandish contemporary). Similarities of compositional design, such as spatial arrangements and the use of windows in the back of the corpus demonstrate the likelihood of a connection between them.

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Tilman Riemenschneider's monochrome sculpture: an examination of its origins

Introduction

The focus of the thesis is to explore the origins and context of the phenomenon of monochrome in the wooden sculptures of Tilman Riemenschneider (c.1460-1531). To achieve this, it will focus on three of Riemenschneider's securely attributed monochrome altarpieces. These are the Mary Magdalene altarpiece commissioned by the Münnerstadt municipal council in 1492 for the town's parish church, which is now in pieces in numerous galleries in Germany but can be seen in a modern reconstruction in the Münnerstadt church; the Holy Blood altarpiece commissioned in 1501 by the Rothenberg ob der Tauber municipal council for the St James' Church, which is believed to be in its original location and condition, and, lastly, the *Assumption of the Virgin* altarpiece that was presumably commissioned by a local land owner for the village Church of Our Lord, Creglingen in 1510 which, although standing in its original place, has had its entire surface removed of any glaze or paint.¹ I will then not only re-examine previously discussed themes - concerning the surfaces of Riemenschneider's monochrome sculptures, how society influenced the origins of monochrome (both secular and religious), the possible artistic precursors of monochrome and the recent theories on the uses of light, which relate to the monochrome aesthetic - but I will also

¹ For detailed information on all altarpieces see, Iris Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider, The Sculptor and His Workshop*, trans. by Heide Grieve, Königstein, 2004, 31-42, 73-86. See Appendix 1 for a guideline to the titles of the different parts of the altarpiece, which will be referred to in this thesis.

make several further contributions to them.² Moreover, I will bring all these topics together, which has not been attempted previously, to demonstrate they are, in fact, all closely related to one another. Furthermore, one new contribution to the discussion will examine the possible connection between Riemenschneider and the Netherlandish sculptor Jan Borreman (active 1479-1520) whose monochrome works are very similar to Riemenschneider's. This possible connection will allow a new hypothesis on the origins of monochrome.

As the crux of this thesis is to examine how Riemenschneider may have come to produce monochrome sculpture, it is therefore important to establish some relevant factors of his life and career. His workshop was very successful in Würzburg, Germany during the period 1485-1531. Today there are about eighty surviving sculptural works made of limewood (the focus of this study), limestone, sandstone, marble and alabaster still to be found in Würzburg and the surrounding area which are attributed to him and his workshop (see Appendix 2, a map which highlights the places where Riemenschneider's work is).³ Most of these works are religious in nature and were commissioned by a variety of individuals or groups.⁴ In 1483 it is recorded that

² For surface treatment see, Michele Marincola, 'The Surfaces of Riemenschneider', in Julien Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, Master Sculptor of the Middle Ages*, exhibition catalogue, Washington, National Gallery of Art and New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New Haven and London, 1999, 99-116; Marincola, 'Riemenschneider's Use of Decorative Punch in Unpolychromed Sculpture', in Julien Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, New Haven and London, 2004, 131-147; Eike Oellermann, 'Polychrome or Not? That Is the Question', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 113-123. For societal outlines see, Stephan Kemperdick, 'A Sculptor in Würzburg' in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 69-82; Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, New Haven and London, 172-190. For artistic influences see, Harmut Khrom, 'The Sources of Riemenschneider's Art', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 45-68; Fritz Korney, 'Riemenschneider and the Graphic Arts', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 99-111. For light theory see; Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 172-190; Baxandall, 'The Perception of Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 83-98.

³ Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 122-157.

⁴ He also produced works such as tombs (fig. 36), coat of arms, plaques and furniture (fig. 79). Kalden-

Riemenschneider found employment as a journeyman (a trained apprentice who does not yet own a workshop) in Würzburg but prior to this not much is known about his years as an apprentice and more junior journeyman, although it has been argued that he was trained at a variety of different possible locations such as Strasbourg, Ulm and the Netherlands. In my view these areas of training may well have provided artistic sources that inspired his decision to use monochrome.⁵ In Würzburg Riemenschneider also led a successful political life from 1505-1525, the pinnacle of which was becoming “Elder Burgomeister” (Mayor).⁶ In my view this esteemed position in society may have led to securing numerous commissions and encouraging the legal production of monochrome.

Riemenschneider is famous for his monochrome altarpieces, the most complete example today being the Rothenberg altarpiece. However, modern scholarship has suggested that the production of monochrome altarpieces may have already long been an established practice in Germany. An altarpiece of 1483, with what is believed to be an intended monochrome finish in the St. Martin church in Lorch am Rhein, highlights this apparently existing practice prior to Riemenschneider’s time.⁷ My own investigations have indicated that the monochrome *The Life of St George* altarpiece by Jan Borreman, (a leading Brussels sculptor contemporary with Riemenschneider) commissioned in 1493 by the crossbow guild for their chapel of Our Lady of

Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 51, 56-57, 63-71, 110-115, 130, 132-135, 149, 155-157; Claudia Lichte, *Mainfränkisches Museum Würzburg, Riemenschneider Collection*, trans. by Joan Clough-Laub, Munich, London and New York, 78-83.

⁵ Julien Chapuis, ‘Recognizing Riemenschneider’, in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 24-25; Kemperdick, ‘A Sculptor in Würzburg’ in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 73; Khrom, ‘The Sources of Riemenschneider’s Art’ in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 63-66.

⁶ Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 18.

⁷ Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor; Late Gothic Altarpieces in South Germany, Austria and South Tirol*, trans. by Russell Stockman, California, 2006, 122-133; Marincola, ‘The Surfaces of Riemenschneider’, in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 109.

Ginderbuiten near Mol in the Netherlands, illustrates that the practice may have been far wider-reaching than originally thought.⁸

Although there are several surviving examples of monochrome altarpieces, to my knowledge there is no specific mention of monochrome glaze in existing documents from the period.⁹ However, surviving written contracts from some monochrome commissions inform us that both patron and artist intended to forgo a polychrome application.¹⁰ Hence, my discussion will investigate why the omission of polychromy was recorded but not the use of monochrome glaze.

The origins and context of Riemenschneider's monochrome sculpture only received specialised scholarly attention during the last part of the twentieth century. Although in 1836 Ludwig Schörn had first noted the 'idiosyncratic' nature of Riemenschneider's unpainted work, his monochrome glazes were only discovered in 1966 when Eike Oellerman carried out scientific examinations on the Rothenberg altarpiece.¹¹ These findings indicated that the glaze acted as sealant and protector and was presumably applied soon after the carving had been completed.¹² Thereafter, the curators of two exhibitions on Riemenschneider, one at Mainfränkisches Museum Würzburg (1981) and the other held at two locations, the National Gallery of Art Washington and the

⁸ Lynn Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces, 1380-1550, Medieval Tastes and Mass Marketing*, Cambridge, 1998, 80-90. Jacobs makes a limited connection between monochrome sculpture in Germany and the Netherlands.

⁹ Marincola, 'The Surfaces of Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 109-110.

¹⁰ Oellermann, 'Polychrome or Not? That Is the Question', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 117.

¹¹ Ludwig Schörn, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Plastik,' *Kunstblatt* 17 (1836), 11, cited in Oellermann, 'Polychrome or Not? That Is the Question', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 113, 129.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1999-2000), brought the monochrome question to scholarly attention. Subsequently, Riemenschneider critics of both German and English languages have discussed the origins and context of the monochrome glaze but in a limited capacity. Michael Baxandall considered the visual effects of the monochrome glaze, focusing on the Rothenberg altarpiece, as well as the social implications of monochrome in relation to religious changes at the time.¹³ Marincola, Oellermann, Rudolf Göbel and Christian-Herbert Fischer considered the surface of Riemenschneider's monochrome works, from the monochrome glaze itself, to the possible change in carving technique and the additional surface details that Riemenschneider used in connection with his monochrome finish.¹⁴ Harmut Khrom and Fritz Korney focused their discussions on possible artistic stimuli, especially the new phenomena of print, which may have inspired Riemenschneider to opt for a monochrome aesthetic.¹⁵

Nevertheless, my view is that these scholars do not achieve a satisfactory explanation of Riemenschneider's use of monochrome. This is for two reasons. One is that when scholars focus their discussion on the theme of monochrome it is approached from just one angle; social, artistic or conservational. Hence, a priority of this thesis is to bring together the scientific findings concerning the monochrome glaze with possible social

¹² Marincola, 'The Surfaces of Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 103, 108, 111.

¹³ Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 172-190.

¹⁴ Marincola, 'The Surfaces of Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 99-116; Marincola, 'Riemenschneider's Use of Decorative Punch in Unpolychromed Sculpture', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 112-123; Rudolf Göbel and Christian-Herbert Fischer, 'New Findings on the Original Surface Treatment of the Münnerstadt Altarpiece', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 124-129.

and artistic reasons for its use by Riemenschneider so as to provide a coherent discussion of the monochrome aesthetic. The second reason is that the existing literature raises many unanswered questions. These questions concern in particular, Riemenschneider's training and possible travel prior to him establishing his workshop, the possible influence of Netherlandish art on him and his possible connection with the sculptor Jan Borreman.¹⁶ It is, therefore, through wider research into late medieval and early Renaissance art and society in Germany and the Netherlands, and through my own observations of Riemenschneider's altarpieces and comparable works, that I will present a new hypothesis on the origins of his monochrome aesthetic.

To give coherence to my thesis it will be divided into four chapters which will address four individual themes regarding the origins and context of Riemenschneider's monochrome sculpture. These concern the sculptural surfaces of Riemenschneider's works, the social climate during the sculptor's career, his artistic precursors, and his usage of light in his monochrome altarpieces. It will focus especially on his altarpieces at Münnersstadt, Rothenberg and Creglingen because they are complete (the Münnersstadt is a modern reconstruction) and in their original locations and because they were all publicly commissioned religious works which offer insight into how late

¹⁵ Harmut Khrom, 'The Sources of Riemenschneider's Art', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 45-68; and Fritz Korney, 'Riemenschneider and the Graphic Arts', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 99-111.

¹⁶ Scholars have mainly discussed his training in relation to other stylistic traits of Riemenschneider's work such as carving techniques and the compositional formation of figures. Chapuis, 'Recognizing Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 24-25; and Khrom, 'The Sources of Riemenschneider's Art', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 63-66. For reference to Netherlandish society and altarpieces see, Jacobs, *Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*, 80-91. Personal discussions with Riemenschneider scholars indicates that this idea has not been favoured, but I believe my thesis presents plausible evidence.

medieval and early Renaissance German society responded to the monochrome aesthetic.¹⁷

The first chapter will consider the surfaces of Riemenschneider's works. There will be an outline of Oellermann's scientific examination of the monochrome glaze and a discussion on Marincola's argument that Riemenschneider may have developed the surface of his sculptures as a means of enhancing the monochrome aesthetic. There will also be comparisons with Borremann's St. George altarpiece to bring a new element to this theory.¹⁸ A discussion of certain features, which are now faded in the Rothenberg altarpiece will indicate how Riemenschneider intended his work to be viewed and will add a further dimension to the discussion.

The theme of the second chapter is that of the possible influences of late medieval and early Renaissance society on Riemenschneider's decision to use a monochrome aesthetic. Baxandall and others have considered monochrome to be a direct consequence of certain specific new philosophies of the time.¹⁹ However, this argument will be different as I will also be considering the ever-changing religious ideas in relation to Riemenschneider's monochrome aesthetic.

¹⁷ Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 80; Oellermann, 'Polychromy or Not? That Is the Question', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c. 1460-1531*, 112-123; Göbel and Fischer, 'New Findings on the Original Surface Treatment of the Münnerstadt altarpiece', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c. 1460-1531*, 124-129. The Münnerstadt altarpiece is a modern reconstruction.

¹⁸ Marincola, 'The Surfaces of Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 99-116; Marincola, 'Riemenschneider's Use of Decorative Punch in Unpolychromed Sculpture', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c. 1460-1531*, 130-147.

¹⁹ Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 172-190.

The third chapter will explore possible artistic precursors both three and two dimensional that may have had a bearing on Riemenschneider's monochrome aesthetic. Khrom and Korney considered monochrome to be a direct response to the print medium, and this theory can be further supported by other connections between prints and Riemenschneider's monochrome sculptures.²⁰ In addition, however, I shall also be considering the possible influence of monochrome church furniture and Netherlandish altarpieces, especially Borreman's St George altarpiece, and suggest that these media may have also had a profound influence on Riemenschneider's decision to produce monochrome sculpture.

The final chapter will focus on the effects of natural sun light in Riemenschneider's monochrome altarpieces, which is achieved by cut-away windows in the back of the corpus. It will develop Baxandall's description of the aesthetic use of light in the Rothenberg altarpiece and involve comparable analysis of the M \ddot{u} nnerstadt and Creglingen altarpieces.²¹ Riemenschneider's use of light in his monochrome work will also be considered in its theological and artistic contexts, which has not been previously explored.²² Thereafter, the argument will turn to the unexamined but possible correspondence between Riemenschneider and Borreman, whose works have strikingly similar lighting effects.

²⁰ Khrom, 'The Sources of Riemenschneider's Art', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 45-68; Korney, 'Riemenschneider and the Graphic Arts', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c. 1460-1531*, 99-111.

²¹ Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 172-190.

²² Jane Turner (ed.), *The Grove Dictionary of Art*, Volume 19, New York and London, 1996, 351-359; F. Edward Cranz, *Nicholas of Cusa and the Renaissance*, Aldershot, 2000, 57; Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, New Haven and London, 2002, 77.

Chapter 1

Riemenschneider's Sculptural Surfaces

The aim of this chapter is to determine whether the surfaces of Riemenschneider's sculptures provide any evidence of intentional use of monochrome as an artistic finish. A leading scholar, Michele Marincola urges the "museum visitor, the art historian and the art conservator" to "proceed not from theory but from the object", when considering the intended surfaces of Riemenschneider's wooden sculptures.²³ However, this can be a very difficult process, as the surfaces of the sculptures are often not in the same condition as they were when Riemenschneider completed them. Damage, new artistic trends, and ill-judged scientific conservation have all had a detrimental effect, but fortunately not to the extent that we cannot surmise what Riemenschneider's intentions for the finish of his works may have been.²⁴ As stated earlier the designation of 'monochrome' has been given to Riemenschneider's unpolychromed works because of their unifying brown glaze which the conservationists Eike Oellermann and Harmut Khrom discovered on the surfaces of the artist's wooden works.²⁵

Initially, this chapter will outline the properties of the monochrome finish found on the Mary Madgalene altarpiece at Münnerstadt (1492) (fig.1) and the Holy Blood altarpiece at Rothenberg (1500-01) (fig. 2) and consider more carefully the aesthetic effects it achieves. The Creglingen altarpiece (fig. 3) is thought to be a monochrome

²³ Marincola, 'The Surfaces of Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 116.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 99-116; Marincola, 'Riemenschneider's Use of Decorative Punch in Unpolychromed Sculpture', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider c. 1460-1531*, 131-147; Oellermann, 'Polychrome or Not? That is the Question', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider c. 1460-1531*, 113-123.

work but as yet no monochrome glaze has been found on the surface.²⁶ I shall also draw attention to works by Riemenschneider with other types of presumed finish, one being the polychromed finish and the other consisting of an initial monochrome layer with a polychrome layer on top. This is to highlight that monochrome was still an unusual choice for patrons in late medieval and early Renaissance Germany.

Next I shall consider aspects of the surface finish that seem to imply that a work was being given a monochrome glaze for a new aesthetic effect. The sculpted surface remains visible when a monochrome glaze is applied, as it is almost transparent. Consequently, the sculptor's carving and any surface embellishment such as the application of paint directly onto the wood can be seen. In contrast, the polychrome process required a layering system of animal glue, a white chalky gesso layer, sometimes appliqué mouldings and then the final paint and gilding.²⁷ The most skilled *fassmaler* (polychrome artist) could make the polychromy layer very thin, but, it still masked some of the surface detail of the sculptor's work.²⁸ Therefore, observations made by Marincola on the carving, punch marks and paint (applied underneath the monochrome glaze) found on Riemenschneider's monochrome works will be examined and my argument will also introduce new observations on Riemenschneider's detailed carving, which will be compared with the monochrome work of the Netherlandish artist Jan Borreman. These observations will suggest that artists were dealing with surface treatment in new ways which was imperative to the monochrome aesthetic. Furthermore I will explore Riemenschneider's presumed

²⁵ Oellermann, 'Polychrome or Not? That is the Question', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 113.

²⁶ The Creglingen altarpiece is thought to be a monochrome work but as yet no monochrome glaze has been found on the surface. Iris Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 80.

²⁷ Marincola, 'The Surfaces of Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 111.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

intentional monochrome aesthetic with reference to the Rothenberg altarpiece and illustrate how the simple painted eyes and lips may have looked and contributed to his monochrome aesthetic.

* * *

Technical examinations of the glazes found on the surfaces of the Münnerstadt and Rothenberg altarpieces were undertaken in the latter part of the twentieth century.²⁹ Oellermann examined the surface of the Rothenberg altarpiece in 1965, which gave details of the first example of the presumed ‘monochrome’ glaze Riemenschneider applied to the sculpted wood. The glaze was made up of egg white and oils mixed with ocher, charcoal, gypsum, and lead white.³⁰ A similar coating was recorded later, in the 1970s, on the Münnerstadt altarpiece.³¹ These tests concluded that the glaze seemed to offer two functions, firstly as a sealant and protector to the surface of the wood and to reduce any possible damage to the surface before the application of a future polychromed layer, and secondly to unify the colour of the wood and so produce a ‘monochrome’ effect.³²

²⁹ See footnote 26 regarding the conservation of the Creglingen altarpiece

³⁰ Marincola, ‘The Surfaces of Riemenschneider’, in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 111.

³¹ Göbel and Fischer, ‘New Findings on the Original Surface Treatment of the Münnerstadt Altarpiece’, in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 124-129. Recent tests reveal that the oils detected were possibly from restoration layers not the original glaze.

³² This is due to the dyes of ochre, charcoal and gypsum.

Protection of the wood seems like a plausible function for the glaze, as it smoothed and hardened the limewood.³³ This was important because wood was susceptible to insect (fig. 4) and light damage, the latter made especially worse since the sculptures were normally situated near large stained-glass windows (fig. 1).³⁴ Thus if the monochrome glaze was used the wood would remain in the same condition as when first installed, even if intended to be painted later on. Marincola believed that the monochrome works were usually glazed very soon after carving and was sometimes applied when the works were in their intended location.³⁵ When the Rothenberg altarpiece was examined there was no trace of dirt or dust beneath the glaze and the later repairs to the altarpiece bore no sign of the coating, indicating that the glaze must have been applied just after the figures were completed.³⁶ The conclusion was that the glaze's function was to preserve the sculpture straight away.

That the glaze offered a form of protection straight away is also plausible when considering the other two types of finish seen in Riemenschneider's work: those polychromed straight away and those that were glazed with monochrome and then painted. It is reasonable to assume that works with just a polychromed layer were intended to be painted from the start. Without further scientific research to determine the amount of dirt and dust beneath the gesso layer we do not know how long the work would have stood unpainted for, but it is still logical to presume that a *fassmaler* would have been employed not long after Riemenschneider had finished

³³ Oellermann, 'Polychrome or Not? That is the Question', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c. 1460-1531*, 118.

³⁴ Both the M \ddot{u} nnerstadt and the Rothenberg altarpieces are placed near large stained-glass windows.

³⁵ Marincola, 'The Surfaces of Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c. 1460-1531*, 103.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 111.

carving. Consequently, there would have been no need to apply the protective brown glaze layer as the altarpiece would have been quickly protected by the paint.

Particularly intriguing to this discussion however, are the works that have both monochrome and polychrome layers as they present certain difficulties in reaching a conclusion about Riemenschneider's aesthetic choice. One such work is the *Christ and the Apostles* altarpiece (fig. 5), now in the Kurpfälzisches Museum in Heidelberg, which was installed in monochrome in the Church of St Kilian, Windsheim in 1509, but was painted two years later by Jakob Mühlholzer on the request of the patron Elisabeth Bachknapp.³⁷ She paid a great deal of money for this polychromy to be applied, which perhaps highlights that she thought this imperative to the finished product.³⁸ Since polychromy was so expensive and Riemenschneider did not himself employ a *fassmaler* it seems likely that the patron either did not originally have the funds to have the work painted or else a suitable painter could not be found. Therefore, is it possible that Riemenschneider realised the work would only be painted sometime in the future and so put the glaze on as a temporary measure to protect it.

Furthermore, the monochrome Münnerstadt altarpiece was itself painted in 1504-05 by Viet Stoss (a contemporary sculptor and *fassmaler* to Riemenschneider) over the top of Riemenschneider's original monochrome glaze, although there is no documentation to indicate why.³⁹ However, there seem to be two reasons why this work should be painted at a later date. One is that Riemenschneider knew that it

³⁷ Oellermann, 'Polychrome or Not? That Is The Question', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c. 1460-1531*, 117.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 117. Stoss was paid considerably more than Riemenschneider, see Appendix 3.

would not be painted straight away and so finished it with the monochrome glaze as a temporary measure to protect it and perhaps also promote its virtuoso craftsmanship; but since the contract of the commission states that both patron and artist would forgo any polychromy this seems was unlikely.⁴⁰ Therefore, the second and more probable scenario is that the work was initially intended to be unpainted but this may have proved too innovative and different for the patrons and public to accept, which is why it was then painted a few years later. Certainly the time lapse between completion and the addition of the polychrome layer on both the Windsheim and M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpieces indicates that the sculptures would have needed some sort of protective layering, as wood is so susceptible to damage. Moreover, the aesthetic of the piece would still have to impress the patrons and audience. Thus, by applying a monochrome glaze the sculptor could reveal his detailed carving and promote it through a unified colouring.

The aesthetic quality of the monochrome glaze offers two advantages. One is that it unifies the colour of the wood through small quantities of pigmented dye.⁴¹ The second is that it allows the wood, plus all the carving and additional details to be visible due to its transparent nature. So the visual success of monochrome is partly down to the initial choosing of the wood and how well the sculptor executes his carving, as all this would be seen. Natural wood has many flaws and sculpting can exhibit unsightly attachments and subsequent cracks. Such flaws and construction marks can be seen in an originally polychromed work, *The Death of the Virgin* (late fifteenth century) from the workshop of Tilman van der Burch, now at The Cloisters Museum, New York (fig. 6 and fig. 7). It demonstrates that when polychromy was

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.

applied then the attention to surface detail did not need to be consistent. In comparison, Riemenschneider's Creglingen altarpiece presents a flawless wooden surface, where the construction marks are hidden (fig. 8), indicating that the monochrome aesthetic was very deliberate.

Therefore, I agree with the theory of Marincola who argued that the carving detail of Riemenschneider's altarpieces points to an intentional aesthetic use of monochrome and I hope I have demonstrated this with the example that I have discussed.⁴²

However, to strengthen this argument I will draw comparisons with Riemenschneider's work and the monochrome St. George altarpiece (1493) by Jan Borreman commissioned by the crossbow guild for their chapel of Our Lady outside the walls near Leuven in the Netherlands (fig. 9). This is because scholars such as Jan van Damme have argued that Borreman's use of highly decorative, detailed and sculpturally defined surface textures of his St George altarpiece demonstrates an intentional choice of the monochrome finish.⁴³ Marincola also concludes the same about Riemenschneider's work. Therefore, by comparing the surface carving of the two works, I aim to conclude that the two sculptors developed the sculptural surface to contribute to the monochrome aesthetic.

Both artists had immense skill. Riemenschneider's early M \ddot{u} nnerstadt Altarpiece demonstrates his ability in producing visually exciting surfaces, such as the detailed carving of the hair on the body of Mary Magdalen (fig. 10). He used a variety of punch marks as seen in the circular punch on the bishop's mitre in the *Last*

⁴¹ Marincola, 'The Surfaces of Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 111.

⁴² Marincola, 'The Surfaces of Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 99-116; Marincola, 'Riemenschneider's Use of the Decorative Punch in Unpolychromed Sculpture', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 131-148.

Communion relief (fig. 11) and he used stippling effects on many of the garments to show different types of fabrics such as velvet and fur (fig. 12). Borreman does not use punch marks in his work like Riemenschneider but he does use stippling effects to create the texture on the floor in a particular scene (fig. 13), which has been demonstrated in Riemenschneider's works (fig. 12). Furthermore, Borreman demonstrates his skill through complex incised carving and this is also similar in calibre to decoration found on Riemenschneider's works. For instance detailed edging of the clothing of a soldier who holds up an axe, in the middle scene of the St George altarpiece (fig. 14), is similar in calibre to Riemenschneider's use of a tassel effect found on the clothing of Bishop St Kilian of the central corpus (fig. 15). Although they are not the same pattern, they demonstrate that carvers were trying to execute the complex surfaces of different fabrics not only to make the works similar to the polychromers' finish but also to demonstrate their skill. Moreover, the detail patterns on the belt and sword of the soldier that holds up a stick in the scene to the left of the middle scene (fig. 16) is similar in calibre to the detailed incised carving found on the mitre and collar of Bishop St. Kilian (fig. 15). In both these works it seems reasonable to conclude that the carving was intended to be left unpainted, since the polychrome application would have covered the detail up.⁴⁴ This is clear from Riemenschneider's St. Elizabeth of Hungary, c. 1510/15 (now in Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg) (fig. 17), which was painted after Riemenschneider's time and where modern X-rays have revealed the quality of Riemenschneider's work, which was subsequently concealed (fig. 18).⁴⁵

⁴³ Van Damme cited in, Jacobs, *Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*, 85.

⁴⁴ Marincola, 'The Surfaces of Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 99-116; Marincola, 'Riemenschneider's Use of the Decorative Punch in Unpolychromed Sculpture', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c. 1460-1531*, 131-148.

Both Riemenschneider's and Borreman's work also include techniques that in polychrome works would normally have been applied by the *fassmaler*, thereby suggesting that they wanted control of the surfaces that would be seen.

Riemenschneider regularly used appliqué decoration in monochrome altarpieces. For instance this decoration can be seen in the books held by apostles in the Creglingen altarpiece (fig. 19).⁴⁶ The decoration of the book held by the apostle, Phillip, is made up of an incised cross and inside the lines of the cross there is a circular punch mark pattern and at the corner of the book are appliqué acanthus leaves, one of which is now missing (fig. 19). The surviving leaves are very detailed (fig. 21) and a gesso layer would hide this carving and the punch mark pattern, so it seems reasonable to conclude that Riemenschneider intended for the piece to be unpainted and see his carving. This type of appliqué decoration can also be seen in Borreman's St George altarpiece. For instance the niche to the right of the middle scene contains a figure which has small circular dots represented on its clothing (fig. 22). Moreover, these small circular dots are also found on the many of the fabrics in Riemenschneider's Creglingen altarpiece such as on the clothing of the Madonna in the *Visitation* relief (fig. 23). Borreman and Riemenschneider also mimic a polychromer's effect of rendering ornately decorated fabrics as in seen Michael Pacher's high altar altarpiece (1481) at St. Wolfgang pilgrimage and parish church, Salzkammergut (fig. 24a and fig. 24b). The decoration carved by Borreman on the edging of the fabric on the soldier in the middle scene (fig. 25) is similar in quality and detail to the mitre and edging of the fabric of St Wolfgang. Riemenschneider uses more delicate carving on his edges to perhaps suggest the same type of fabric detail on the under garment of St Wolfgang as can be seen in the clothing of one of the apostles in the Creglingen

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 136-138.

altarpiece (fig. 26). These examples demonstrate that their creators had a willingness and ability to compete with the *fassmaler*, thus creating a new type of aesthetic in the form of monochrome.

Unfortunately, it is not always the case that the detailed carving of a sculptor's surface indicates an intentional monochrome finish and this is why it is so difficult to reach a decisive conclusion on the matter. An example of this is the Kefermarkt altarpiece commissioned by Christoph von Zelking from Martin Kriechbaum in about 1490 for the parish church of Saint Wolfgang (fig. 27).⁴⁷ The work is now just of bare wood, as the polychrome surface was removed, although it has a protective varnish on it, which gives it a glossy amber tone.⁴⁸ The sculptor clearly had a great talent. The detailed carved motifs of Saint Wolfgang's mitre (fig. 28a) and the tassel edging of Saint Peter's cloak (fig. 28b) might lead one to believe that the piece was originally intended to be finished in monochrome. However, the patron's will states that he wished and provided for the wood to be coated with colour and gilding.⁴⁹ Even the sculptor himself insisted that his work would not have been complete without the application of colour.⁵⁰ Therefore, this work in particular highlights the pride and ability of some sculptors towards their craft at this time even when their work was to be partly obscured by over-painting. It also highlights how the lack of contemporary documentary evidence on monochrome sculpture might hinder our modern understanding of an artist's aesthetic intention, unless there is sufficient evidence to point to the contrary as has been seen in Riemenschneider's and Borreman's cases.

⁴⁶ Riemenschneider replicates the book covers from his time (fig. 20).

⁴⁷ Rainer Katnitz, *Carved Splendor*, 164-179.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 164, 165.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 164.

The transparent nature of the monochrome glaze also meant that certain features, such as the eyes, lips, and sometimes gems and wound marks, could be painted directly onto the wood and still be visible. Such features are still faintly seen on the figures of the Rothenberg (fig. 29), Münnerstadt (fig. 30) and Creglingen altarpieces (fig. 31). I have recreated Riemenschneider's presumed aesthetic intention by reintroducing the faded eyes and lips to a photographic image of the Rothenberg altarpiece (fig. 32). This result illustrates the strong effect the small use of paint creates especially in their contrast with the monochrome elsewhere. The addition of the eyes, importantly, contributes to the narrative of the altarpiece by emphasising specific connections between figures. The red of the lips perhaps directs the spectator throughout the sculpture. Although I have not reproduced these features for all of the altarpieces, it seems reasonable to suggest that this effect would have also been the same in both the Münnerstadt and Creglingen altarpieces.

Riemenschneider most likely borrowed the tradition of painting the eyes onto the wood from earlier traditions of polychromed altarpieces, which also had the eyes painted onto them in the pre-polychrome phase so as to correctly direct the *fassmaler* in his painting. Therefore, if Riemenschneider's works were to be polychromed at a later date then this would ensure that the *fassmaler* would follow Riemenschneider's intended composition. However, if Riemenschneider knew that his works were not to be polychromed then they not only emphasised the narrative of the composition but also presented the monochrome altarpiece with a finished appearance.⁵¹ The

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁵¹ Marincola, 'The Surfaces of Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 110; Oellermann, 'Polychrome or Not? That is the Question', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c. 1460-1531*, 117.

reconstructed image of the Rothenberg altarpiece illustrates how Riemenschneider used directional gazes to convey the narrative of figures being engaged in conversation with one another as well as some figures who engage the eyes of the spectator (fig. 32). The painted eyes are needed to make the complex interaction within the scene coherent. If the eyes are completely removed, as seen in another doctored image of the Rothenberg altarpiece, then the subtle interaction of the figures is lost and the scene becomes a mass of figures that do not respond with one another or the spectator (fig. 33).

The application of lips perhaps also implies a completion process. By applying the lips in combination with the eyes the face is 'complete' and so was ready to be installed in the church. Not only does the red colouring of the lips add to the impact of the composition, conveyed in the reconstructed image of the Rothenberg altarpiece, but it also offers something of a 'realistic' effect, as has been discussed by Marincola.⁵² This 'realistic' result may well have assisted the community in its acceptance of the new monochrome aesthetic and enable them to use the altarpiece as vehicle for religious worship. In comparison to the recreated image (fig. 32) Riemenschneider's *Three Helper Saints* also demonstrates how strange a monochrome work would have looked if the eyes and lips were not painted on (fig. 34). In this case, due to the removal of the painted eyes and the red paint representing the lips the work lacks the emotive power that the Rothenberg altarpiece has with the spectator (fig.35, fig. 32).

⁵² Marincola, 'The Surfaces of Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 103.

Technical and visual analysis of the exciting sculptural surfaces of Riemenschneider's monochrome works raises interesting points about the origins and use of the monochrome glaze as an intentional artistic finish. The pre-determined detailed carving techniques, application of painted eyes and lips and, the addition of appliqué mouldings would not have been visible if a thick polychrome layer was applied to the surface of any the discussed altarpieces. Use of a transparent glaze containing a unifying brown dye to complement the wood implies that Riemenschneider had given a new value to wooden sculptural surfaces and intended for his skill to be visible. This argument is strengthened by my considerations of Borreman's monochrome works, which bear similarities in carving techniques to Riemenschneider's and intimates that the monochrome phenomenon was under discussion amongst the sculptors of the late-fifteenth century, in both Germany and the Netherlands. Although in Riemenschneider's oeuvre the sculptures with a polychrome layer, on top of the monochrome one, may seem to cast doubt on the hypothesis that monochrome was an intentional finish, in this chapter I have argued that these works highlight patron's personal tastes. Moreover, this chapter has demonstrated that other avenues of research focusing on, for example, the social climate of the time need to be pursued in order to form a greater understanding of the origins of the monochrome glaze and, in turn, Riemenschneider's intentions when using it. Therefore, this topic shall be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 2

The social climate in late medieval and early Renaissance Würzburg and its relationship to Riemenschneider's monochrome sculpture

The previous chapter on the sculptural surfaces of Riemenschneider's monochrome works deals with a technical aspect of art rather than putting the work into its social and historical context. Michael Baxandall has been one of the leading advocates for considering whether social traditions, structures and beliefs had any bearing on the origins of the monochrome technique.⁵³ This chapter will examine these implications and to do this it will be split into two parts. The first section will consider secular factors in late medieval Germany that influenced the artistic environment, which may have also been an influence on the origins of monochrome in Riemenschneider's works. The second section will examine the religious concerns regarding the function of images in Riemenschneider's time to explore if this had a bearing on Riemenschneider's use of monochrome.

In the first section I shall provide a brief and basic outline of the social structure of Germany at the time of Riemenschneider in view of the fact that Michael Baxandall, Jutus Bier, Stephan Kemperdick and Keith Moxey have all argued that these are important.⁵⁴ In particular I will examine the social order of the city of Würzburg, which was undergoing an economic and industrial boom due to the efforts of Prince-Bishop Rudolph von Scherenberg (reigned 1466-1495), to see if the use of

⁵³ Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 44-48, 62-93, 186-189.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, esp. 62-122; Justus Bier, *Tilman Riemenschneider, his life and work*, Lexington, 1982, 3-31; Stephan Kemperdick, 'A Sculptor in Würzburg', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 69-82. Keith Moxey, 'History, Fiction, Memory: Riemenschneider and the Dangers of Persuasion', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider c. 1460-1531*, 203-213.

monochrome was encouraged by the particular social climate there.⁵⁵ Moreover, since art could also be sold through two avenues, either through commissions or on the open market, I will also consider the possible bearing that both these markets had on the origins of the monochrome aesthetic.⁵⁶

The second section will focus on the religious discussions of the time that debated the “correct” function of the religious image. Modern scholarship has argued that the use of monochrome was a result of Reformation ideas.⁵⁷ However, in agreement with Baxandall I suggest that Riemenschneider and his patrons (all of whom were Catholic) were considering new ways to present images that upheld traditional beliefs of the Catholic religion as well as the concerns by theologians such as Johan Hus (1369-1415) regarding idolatry (the worship of the image rather than the prototype).⁵⁸ By combining both hypotheses about the possible bearing that the secular and religious realms had on the monochrome aesthetic, I aim to show that monochrome was a reaction by Riemenschneider to the developing social climate.

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⁵⁵ Kemperdick, ‘A Sculptor in Würzburg’, in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 72.

⁵⁶ In reference to the open market in Würzburg see Kemperdick, ‘A Sculptor in Würzburg’, in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 79.

⁵⁷ Krohm, ‘The Sources of Riemenschneider’s Art’, in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 65.

⁵⁸ For Baxandall’s discussion on pre-reformation influence see Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors*, 50-60, 186-189. For Catholic teachings on images see, Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols, The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin*. Cambridge, 1986, 20; Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 53. For information on Hus and his contemporaries see; William R. Jones, ‘Art and Christian Piety: Iconoclasm in Medieval Europe’, in Joseph Gutmann (ed.), *The Image and the Word. Confrontations in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, Montana, 1977, 75-105.

Germany's social order, by the time of Riemenschneider, had changed as a result of economic, religious, and political fluctuations over the previous couple of hundred years. Although the ruling structure remained in place, headed by the Holy Roman Emperor, Germany was governed mainly by rich families, such as the Habsburgs or Fuggers, or spiritual leaders, such as Prince-Bishops. During the twelfth century towns had been developed around Imperial strongholds, castles, bishops' palaces and monasteries and these began to establish municipal rights and liberties, which evolved into town councils. Subsequently, councils played a major part in controlling many aspects of life, which were mainly run by merchants carrying out long-distance trade, Würzburg's most famous export being wine.⁵⁹ Social unrest, however, such as that resulting in the Peasants War in 1524, caused widespread upheaval and this included the downfall of Riemenschneider's own business and reputation.⁶⁰

Würzburg had a similar system of government as other cities during this period. It was ruled by a Prince-Bishop but had its own council. Riemenschneider, himself, played a very active role in the Würzburg town council. During the period of 1505-1525 he held a variety of supervisory positions which included the over seeing of the chapels, infirmaries, defences, fiscal administration and even fishing.⁶¹ He even became elder burgomaster in 1520.⁶² Economically, however, it had been quite static until coming under the leadership of the Prince-Bishop Rudolf II von Scherenberg

⁵⁹ Kemperdick, 'A Sculptor in Würzburg', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 71.

Riemenschneider held the position of vice-superintendent of vineyards for the city council and that during his life he acquired ten acres of vineyards. This demonstrates his astute business mind. See Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 18.

⁶⁰ Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 19.

⁶¹ His employment of numerous journeymen (26 between 1490-1524) must have helped him carry out his major role in the council. See Kemperdick, 'A Sculptor in Würzburg', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 78 and Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 18-19.

⁶² Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 18.

from 1470, who developed a policy of expansion and immigration.⁶³ This was helped by the city's position on important roads north to south and on the river Main whose route ran from east to west. This position made trading and investing relatively easy. Many entrepreneurs must have seen the potential of the place and moved there. Riemenschneider's uncle, Nikolaus Riemenschneider (d.1478) had moved to the city and held a high position in society working for the Prince-Bishop.⁶⁴ Therefore it seems reasonable to conclude that the Nikolaus would have seen the way that the city was developing, and would have been directly instrumental in encouraging Riemenschneider to settle to the city and set up a workshop there. The fact that Riemenschneider was granted free citizenship to the town could perhaps indicate that he had strong support from the town council.⁶⁵

In modern scholarship, the medieval art world is often associated with tradition, structure and control.⁶⁶ Painters, sculptors and engravers were classed as craftsmen and had to belong to a law enforcing guild named The Brotherhood of Saint Luke, so as to undertake work. The particular town or city council managed the guild and these councils sometimes introduced their own laws.⁶⁷ It may be that the idiosyncratic guild laws of Würzburg, encouraged by Prince-Bishop Rudolf II von Scherenberg played some part in encouraging Riemenschneider to produce work with a monochrome finish. This is because Würzburg law stipulated that a sculptural workshop could not employ a *fassmaler* (a painter of wood), but could employ more

⁶³ Kemperdick, 'A Sculptor in Würzburg', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 71-2.

⁶⁴ Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 17.

⁶⁵ Free citizenship was very rare but Gerhard Weilandt notes that the city of Ulm occasionally granted it to artists when they were needed. Kemperdick, 'A Sculptor in Würzburg', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 73; Julien Chapuis, 'Recognizing Riemenschneider' in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 24-25.

⁶⁶ Kemperdick, 'A Sculptor in Würzburg', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 76.

journeymen than most other cities, which was normally about two at a time, and that the workshop could accept commissions from other areas.⁶⁸

Riemenschneider took full advantage of these laws by securing commissions as far away as Bamberg, for example The Tomb of Emperor Heinrich II and Empress Kunigunde (1499-1513) at Bamberg Cathedral (fig. 36), as well as employing numerous journeymen to ensure a large turnover of sculpture.⁶⁹ As his workshop was unable to employ a *fassmaler* then the patron had to commission a painter's workshop to paint the completed sculpture. Therefore, the monochrome glaze may well have been applied to the surface of the wood to protect it until a suitable painter was employed - the Windsheim altarpiece (1509) (fig. 5), which received a monochrome glaze and then an eventual layer of polychromy when a suitable *fassmaler* was found, being a good example. Most importantly, it is this law that might well have had a bearing on the popularisation of a monochrome aesthetic. It is reasonable to suggest that Riemenschneider would know that some of his patrons would not find a suitable *fassmaler* for the time of the sculpture's completion date, and that he exploited this fact to promote his monochrome glaze as a finished aesthetic.

In the late Middle Ages craftsmen could sell their works through two different avenues both of which may have had influences on the monochrome aesthetic. One way was through commissioned works, which included the M \ddot{u} nnerstadt, Rothenberg and Creglingen altarpieces, which then served to promote monochrome aesthetic. The

⁶⁷ Jacobs describes many varieties in the Brotherhood of Saint Luke guild in the different towns and cities in the Netherlands and this demonstrates how the councils could produce their own. Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved altarpieces*,

⁶⁸ Kalden-Rosenfield, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 19-22, 31; Kemperdick, 'A Sculptor in Wurzburg', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 71-2, 78.

other was through the open market, where the sculptor sold works that were not commissioned. An open market could have been a stall outside the sculptors workshop as demonstrated in the *Sts Kilian and Mary Magdalene* panel painting (1493) by Konrad Witz, which has a detail of a sculptor's workshop selling wares from a window shelf (fig. 37), or council organised market events, some of the most famous being at Antwerp and Bruges in the Netherlands.⁷⁰ Stephen Kemperdick believes that Würzburg may well have had an established market for ready-made works by Riemenschneider's time. He cites a law which stipulates that 'glaziers from outside the city could offer their wares for sale only on a few days of the year', which implies that other wares (such as sculpture) may well have been sold at other times of the year.⁷¹ Although the guilds controlled these events, there was possibly more artistic freedom than with commissions, especially via window-ledge sales from workshops.⁷² Thus, if the monochrome aesthetic was Riemenschneider's intended finish for a work, open market sales may well have provided a vibrant climate for the monochrome finish to flourish.

The Mütterstadt, Rothenberg and the Creglingen altarpieces are all monochrome works that were commissioned by large groups. Commissions were confirmed by a written contract between the patron and the craftsman. Normally this consisted of two identical versions written on one sheet and, to protect against forgery, cut in half in a wavy line, and these survive for both the Mütterstadt and Rothenberg altarpieces

⁶⁹ There are over 80 surviving works from Riemenschneider's workshop. Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 21.

⁷⁰ Jacobs, *Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*, 149-165, 192-208.

⁷¹ Kemperdick, 'A Sculptor in Würzburg', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 79.

⁷² For a variety of Netherlandish guild laws on the open market sales see Jacobs, *Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*, 152-64.

(Appendix 4).⁷³ Both these contracts would have consisted of two parts. One mentions the contractual drawing, setting out the conditions of pay and delivery date and the materials Riemenschneider would be supplied with. The other gives a detailed specification of all the figurative content of the altarpiece. These are typical contracts and they highlight how much input and control a patron had in the design and execution of the work. An artist wanting to change a design brief would find it difficult because approval from patrons was paramount as Riemenschneider found when he received a commission for a statue of Adam and Eve for the exterior of The Lady Chapel at Würzburg (fig. 38 and fig. 39).⁷⁴ The municipal council of Würzburg wanted to replace the chapel's old sculptures of Adam and Eve; Kalden-Rosenfeld speculates that Riemenschneider's statues were to look the same as the previous ones as they are carved in a similar Gothic style.⁷⁵ However, the old Adam had a beard and it took five months for the council to decide whether Riemenschneider could sculpt the figure of Adam without a beard, which demonstrates the patrons' full control.⁷⁶

Neither the Münnerstadt nor Rothenberg contracts make mention of the monochrome glaze, although the Münnerstadt patrons state that they intend to forgo polychromy.⁷⁷ This seems unusual because contracts normally laid out all details concerning the production of the altarpiece, and in my view, these could indicate three possible

⁷³ There is no surviving documentation for the Creglingen altarpiece. Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 80.

⁷⁴ Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 46-50. The original statues are now in the Mainfränkisches Museum Würzburg (fig. 38) and modern the reproductions are on the exterior of The Lady Chapel, Würzburg (fig. 39).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

explanations. One is that a monochrome glaze was an already established part of the sculptural process, used as a sealant and protector of the wood and so, it was expected to be applied and did not need to be written into the contract. Two is that there was no agreed word for the glaze due to it being such a recent invention. Three is that although the Münnerstadt clients agreed that there would be no polychromy, they did not know that Riemenschneider would apply the monochrome glaze. Even if none of these hypotheses were the case what the contract does demonstrate is that patrons were consciously choosing not to use a polychrome finish and thus the only finish that could be viable then would be monochrome.⁷⁸

The other major opportunity for art production and sales was the open market, which in my view may have had an influence on Riemenschneider's decision to produce monochrome sculpture. Kemperdick's note on Würzburg's market brings him to the conclusion that Riemenschneider's workshop may have produced works specifically for this market, such as smaller sculptures representing the crucifixion or the Virgin and Child.⁷⁹ In my view the possibility of open markets in Riemenschneider's time may have been a conscious response to the famous fairs in the Netherlands. Their popularity and economic success would have been evident and might very easily have encouraged the economically driven Prince-Bishop of Würzburg to adopt a similar practice.⁸⁰ This is further supported by the fact that both areas shared similar guild laws; neither allowed workshops to employ a *fassmaler*, and both allowed them to accept sculptural commissions from outside their city.

⁷⁷ Oellermann, 'Polychrome or Not? That Is the Question', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 117.

⁷⁸ In my view this needs further research that the limitations of this thesis do not allow for.

⁷⁹ Kemperdick, 'A Sculptor in Würzburg', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 79.

⁸⁰ His well calculated change of guild laws for craftsmen could demonstrate his desire to promote the city of Würzburg.

The possibility of Riemenschneider selling ready-made sculptures in open markets or on a window ledge outside his workshop could, I suggest, indicate another possible influence on the monochrome medium. As Würzburg law stated that Riemenschneider could not employ a *fassmaler* in his workshop, he would have to pay someone to polychrome his work. This would have been expensive and time consuming, so, it seems likely that he would have turned to monochrome glazed work to sell on the open market for a quick and profitable turnover. He certainly took advantage of the legal right to employ numerous journeymen and so his workshop would have been able to keep up with demand for such cheap works. However, due to the transparent nature of the glaze the work had to be of high quality, and this would have promoted the aesthetic of a monochrome finish.⁸¹

However, none of this could have happened if Riemenschneider had not played a major part of the town council for most of his life. As Baxandall observed, “Riemenschneider made use of his circumstances to exalt the sculptor’s process”.⁸² It seems to me, moreover, that Riemenschneider had such an astute business mind and presumably realised that to be part of the town council was politically, socially and financially rewarding, since it allowed him to influence the art-controlling system and even take advantage of opportunities before they reached a wider public. This is perhaps why he was able to dominate the wood carvers market. I would also suggest that his position in the town council would have promoted monochrome as an acceptable aesthetic finish for wooden sculpture. Contemporary documents from

⁸¹ Riemenschneider’s detailed carving is discussed in chapter one.

⁸² Baxandall, ‘The perception of Riemenschneider’, in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c. 1460-1531*, 85.

Netherlandish guilds state that unpolychromed meant unfinished, but Riemenschneider's position in the city council may have enabled him to counter such a legal view and make monochrome sculpture legally acceptable for 'finished' work.⁸³

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Religion, of course, was the other dominant factor in German late medieval society. In Riemenschneider's time Catholicism was the dominant religion in Germany, but dissent was increasing from those who spoke out about its false teachings and immoral corruption, which eventually led to the Reformation under Martin Luther (1483-1546) in 1517.⁸⁴ Some of the reformers, such as Andreas Karlstadt (1486-1541) and Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531), were also against the use of religious images, and their concerns encouraged the widespread destruction of images in many European areas. Modern scholars have considered Riemenschneider's monochrome work as another response to the Reformation.⁸⁵ However, in my view it may be more accurate to describe Riemenschneider's monochrome works as a response to the contemporary theological theories on images, which the forerunners of the Reformation were addressing. This is because his monochrome works pre-date any of

⁸³ In reference to Netherlandish documents see Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*, 149-165, 204-205, 209-211. Throughout my research I have not found any documents from Germany that state whether a work would be classed as unfinished if the work was not polychromed. Furthermore, to my knowledge there is not evidence of polychromed Netherlandish works ever having an underneath monochrome layer. If a monochrome layer was used, would this have then been labelled a finished work?

⁸⁴ For a general outline of the Reformation see Scott C. Dixon, *The Reformation in Germany*, Oxford, 2002.

the Reformers' physical protests.⁸⁶ Furthermore, it has been suggested that the earliest example of wooden monochrome altarpiece was produced for the cathedral in Constance as early as 1466.⁸⁷ At the time of Riemenschneider, images were still an important educational aid according to Catholic authority but some concerns about the function and false worship of images had already been raised by theologians, such as John Wyclif (d.1384), Gabriel Biel (d. 1495) and Johan Hus, which were then developed further by the reformers. I aim to link these concerns to the advent of monochrome.

Before the time of Riemenschneider, Catholic teaching on the function of religious images had been considered by Pope Gregory I (540-604), Saint Bonaventure (1221-1274) and Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).⁸⁸ Their basic principles were summarised in the popular fifteenth century *Summa Praeceptorium*, a work that would have been easily known to Riemenschneider.⁸⁹ For them images provided four functions: to convey a holy narrative to the uneducated; to invoke emotion; to counter the forgetfulness of humans, who might forget what they heard but not what they saw; and to aid veneration. It was argued that God himself had sent his image to earth as Christ, which proved that God recognised that humans needed images to help them understand His ways.⁹⁰ Gottschalk Hollen stated that people were able to undertake

⁸⁵ Krohm, 'The Sources of Riemenschneider's Art', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 65.

⁸⁶ Luther's theses on Indulgences was only nailed to the door in 1517 and the Marburg Colloquy meeting discussed the use of religious images in 1529.

⁸⁷ See chapter three for a discussion on this work as well as Harmut Khrom, 'The Sources of Riemenschneider's Art' in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 62-63.

⁸⁸ William R. Jones, 'Art and Christian Piety: Iconoclasm in Medieval Europe', in Joseph Gutmann (ed.), *The Image and the Word. Confrontations in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, Montana, 1977, 75-105; Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 1-27; Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 53.

⁸⁹ Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 20.

⁹⁰ There are numerous references to this metaphysical concept, Baxandall refers to Nicholas of Lyra a fourteenth century Franciscan. Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 51.

piety more “through a picture than a sermon.”⁹¹ Geert Grote (d.1384) in his *Devotio Moderna*, a fourteenth-century manuscript (printed around 1460), stated that objects were suitable for meditation, but warned that the devout must remember that such images are only signs to remind of the past and that the mind should not “become transfixed and hold something to be truly present that in reality is not”.⁹² These examples demonstrate that according to religious authorities and theologians, images had a useful place as reminders of the biblical stories in the everyday piety of the devout man.

However, scholars such as Hus and Wyclif believed the laity had become confused between reality and function and were thus committing idolatry. In his *Super IV Sententiarium* Hus warns against the worship of created things, writing, “while it is permissible to kneel, pray, make offerings, and place candles before an image of Christ or of a saint, such things are not done in the name of Him whose image it is.”⁹³ Unfortunately this confusion amongst the laity was heightened by the ever-increasing number of miracle working images authenticated by Church authority. This angered the Lollard supporters who believed that the Church was financially exploiting the laity by encouraging pilgrimages to these sites and attaching indulgences to objects.⁹⁴ An example of this false worship happened near Würzburg, where a cult founded by Hans Bohm focused their worship on a statute of the Virgin in the village of Nicklaushen. The cult was abolished in 1476 by Würzburg city council but still must have been a popular topic of conversation when Riemenschneider reached the city in 1479 and is further demonstrated by a print depicting the event produced as late as

⁹¹ Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 20.

⁹² John van Engen, ed. and trans., *Devotio Moderna Basic Writings*, New Jersey, 1988, 102.

⁹³ Jones, ‘Art and Christian Piety: Iconoclasm in Medieval Europe’, in Gutmann (ed.), *The Image and the Word*, 93.

1493 (fig. 40).⁹⁵ Therefore, this must have made Riemenschneider aware of the temporal authorities' concerns of religious images and this may have encouraged the use of monochrome.

There was also an argument over the aesthetics of religious art, which may well have been especially influential on Riemenschneider. In the anonymous *The Sinner's Looking Glass* publication of 1475, the author encourages the reader to treat old ungarnished images and beautiful new images equally.⁹⁶ Similarly, the *Devotio Moderna* encourages the reader to “not think of the colour but on the spiritualness of that colour or figure” moving “from purple and deep red to the blood of Christ.”⁹⁷ Grote describes this early form of semiotics as an abstraction of the mind, but it very appropriately describes Riemenschneider's Rothenberg altarpiece, which moves away from colour and produces a thought-provoking version of the Last Supper, to remind the spectator to think about the meaning of the story. Furthermore, the visible wood stresses that there are no real persons present and the unified brown colouring encourages the mind to think about the poverty of Jesus and the solemn tone of the story.

In my view Riemenschneider's monochrome altarpieces promote Catholic doctrines on the function of images as well as taking into consideration the concerns of figures such as Hus and Wycliffe. The best example of this is possibly the Rothenberg altarpiece. To my knowledge, the work is the first German sculpted altarpiece that

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 85; Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 188. The miraculous statue was not authenticated by the church which could have been a reason for its subsequent fate.

⁹⁶ Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 51-53.

⁹⁷ Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, 11.

depicts the Last Supper narrative from the bible.⁹⁸ In my view, it is also the earliest to have a group with figures that are not sculpted as individuals, but are, instead, gesturing to each other in a manner that connotes dialogue and narrative. The work, designed to be ‘read’ from left to right, presents the three chronological episodes in the bible – *Christ’s entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper* and *the Agony in the Garden* (fig. 41). For those who did not read this could provide a visual communication of the illustrated bible story. The monotone colouring adds to the complex narrative encouraging the spectator to view the work more closely. Furthermore as the wood of the sculpture can be seen it indicates that the work is just a ‘sign’ of the Last Supper and not the real event.

The work, due to its narrative content, also evokes emotion and the faces of the represented figures can be described as emotive. They are the only part with colour, their eyes are painted in black and their lips are red and so they add to the work’s expressive force. Furthermore, the monochrome aesthetic would be artistically striking as it would contrast with the polychrome works in the same church, causing an unforgettable experience (fig. 42).⁹⁹

In conclusion, this chapter has established secular and religious practises and discourses in Würzburg influenced Riemenschneider to execute a monochrome glaze on his sculptures. Therefore, the fact that there is no documentary evidence from the period that cites the word monochrome does not mean that it was not a valid aesthetic.

⁹⁸ Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 74

⁹⁹ Chapuis, ‘Recognizing Riemenschneider’, in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 29.

Unfortunately the organ now obscures the view of Riemenschneider’s *Holy Blood* altarpiece when standing in the nave of the church, therefore, the same visual contrast between Riemenschneider’s altarpiece and the other polychrome sculptures is not the same as in the sixteenth century. However, the

An unconscious contribution to the development and success of the monochrome aesthetic came not only from the economic initiatives of Prince-Bishop Rudolph II von Scherenberg in the city of Würzburg, but also, the laws established by the guild, the most important being that sculptors could not employ a *fassmaler*. Combining these points with my hypothesis that there must have been an open market in the city, (thus patron control was not so absolute), thus strengthens my argument that the monochrome glaze was an intended finish and was able to flourish in this specific historical environment. Furthermore, the religious conflict that was spreading during Riemenschneider's lifetime must have had an impact on the origins of the monochrome glaze. I have demonstrated that monochrome offered an alternative aesthetic to polychrome and, that it portrayed stories from the bible, the holy family and the saints without encouraging idolatry due to its non-realistic appearance. Hence, monochrome must have been an attractive aesthetic to both patrons and the sculptor eager to address the religious concerns.

positioning of Riemenschneider's Creglingen altarpiece in the Creglingen church does allow for a visual comparison between it and the other polychromed sculptures in the church (fig. 43).

Chapter Three

Artistic Precursors for Riemenschneider's Monochrome Aesthetic

The main objective of this chapter is to identify likely artistic sources for the monochrome works of Riemenschneider so as to help explain further why he was drawn to monochrome as an aesthetic finish. Art historians have mainly focused on two probable areas of influence on Riemenschneider. One is that of fifteenth-century German monochrome altarpieces, an attractive possibility once it is clear that Riemenschneider's M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpiece (1492) was not at all the first German monochrome wooden sculpture. Julien Chapuis and Harmut Khrom are the two major scholars who have considered these early monochrome works and I will address their conclusions in the first section.⁹⁵ The other area of supposed influence is the emerging phenomenon of the print medium from the latter part of the fifteenth century. Justus Bier has contributed largely to this hypothesis but more recent scholars such as Fritz Koreny have proceeded to develop the argument further and I intend to discuss their various findings later on in this chapter.⁹⁶

However, I shall also put forward some new ideas of my own on the possible artistic sources that influenced Riemenschneider's monochrome work. I will explore how the whole design of the altarpiece - subject, size, composition and surface detail - contributed to Riemenschneider's preference for the monochrome aesthetic and I will argue that he turned to a whole range of artistic sources for the development of this

⁹⁵Julien Chapuis, 'Recognizing Riemenschneider', in Julien Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 19-44. Harmut Khrom, 'The Sources of Riemenschneider's Art', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 63-66.

aesthetic. I will concur that earlier German monochrome altarpieces were important but I will also discuss the role of Netherlandish altarpieces and especially the monochrome sculptures of Jan Borreman. An unusual factor in Riemenschneider's altarpieces is the narrative format, which, in my view, was largely inspired by Netherlandish altarpieces. Furthermore, I will argue that Riemenschneider borrowed artistic styles from much earlier German sculpture to complement this narrative format for his compositional layouts.⁹⁷ In addition, I will also examine the possible impact of unpainted church furnishings, arguing that it was partly because these works were not used for worship which made them so influential on Riemenschneider's preference for monochrome.

Thereafter, I will examine the bearing that two-dimensional works could have had on Riemenschneider's use of the monochrome aesthetic. Firstly, I will consider the possible bearing that grisaille painting may have had on Riemenschneider's outlook. Then I will introduce a new argument on the possible influence that illustrated religious books may have had on Riemenschneider's development of a monochrome aesthetic in combination with the narrative format. Following this, I will turn to Koreny's hypothesis regarding the influence of prints but I will also make some observations of my own concerning Riemenschneider's adaptation of print compositions, relating especially to the unusual thinness of his corpus sculptures, which serves to enhance their narrative format. With this in mind, I will then re-

⁹⁶Justus Bier, "Riemenschneider's use of graphic sources" *Gazette des beaux-arts* 99, 1957, 203-222. Fritz Koreny, 'Riemenschneider and the Graphic Arts', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 99-111.

⁹⁷ Khrom, 'The Sources of Riemenschneider's Art', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 54. Timothy B. Husband, 'Tilman Riemenschneider and the Tradition of Alabaster Carving', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider c.1460-1531*, 65-81.

examine claims concerning how prints could have provided excellent examples for light and shadow formations in monotone sculptural works.⁹⁸

* * *

Currently there are three monochrome altarpieces in German speaking lands that are thought to pre-date Riemenschneider's M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpiece (fig. 1). The only surviving one is in the parish church of St Martin in Lorch am Rhein, which was executed in 1483 and is now thought to have been carved by the Worms sculptor Hans Bilger (fig. 44).⁹⁹ Its original monochrome glaze was discovered through technical examinations carried out by Khrom and Eike Oellermann in 1989.¹⁰⁰ The second work is known from an archival record discovered by Gerhard Weilandt, which refers to a sculpture in 'monochrome' produced for Ulm Minster between 1474 and 1481 by J \ddot{o} rg Syrlin the Elder and Michael Erhart and which also includes a contractual drawing for it (fig. 45).¹⁰¹ The third work is a long destroyed altarpiece originally in Constance cathedral carved by Niclaus Gerhaert in 1466. The monochrome finish of this work is a theory by Wolfgang Deutsch who believed that this monochrome innovation was attributable to the Netherlander and Khrom argues that the monochrome Lorch altarpiece is similar in carving to Gerhaert's work.¹⁰²

Why these works were produced with a monochrome finish is, like the

⁹⁸ Bier, "Riemenschneider's use of graphic sources", 203-222. Khrom, 'The Sources of Riemenschneider's Art', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 62-63. Koreny, 'Riemenschneider and the Graphic Arts' in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider c.1460-1531*, 99-111.

⁹⁹ Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*, 125.

¹⁰⁰ Khrom, 'The Sources of Riemenschneider's Art', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 63.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

Riemenschneider altarpieces, unclear, but there is no evidence of any of them being intended to be polychromed at a later date. What these examples demonstrate, however, is that the monochrome glazing on wooden sculptures was already an option before Riemenschneider's time and, as such, must have also been accepted by late medieval society. Their recorded existence also implies that many more such works must have also been produced.

How, and if, these works had an impact on Riemenschneider is difficult to determine. However, the hypothesis developed by both Khrom and Chapuis, based on stylistic considerations suggests that Riemenschneider possibly received part of his training in the area of Ulm, an important artistic centre for sculpture in the fifteenth century, thus indicating that Riemenschneider could well have known the monochrome altarpiece at Ulm Minster.¹⁰³ The unpainted choir stalls (fig. 46, fig. 47), produced by Jörg Syrlin that surrounded this monochrome work, have survived and, with the altarpiece (known through the contractual drawing), the whole ensemble would have strongly highlighted the impressive qualities of unpainted wooden sculpture in a way that might have very easily inspired the young Riemenschneider. A comparison of the Münnerstadt altarpiece, Riemenschneider's first recorded large monochrome commission (fig. 1), with the Ulm Minster contractual drawing (fig. 45) very much bears this out. The compositional layouts are similar in combining inactive front-facing figures in the corpus alongside scenes with a narrative content on the wings and a figurative superstructure. Furthermore, some of the carving techniques seen on the surviving choir stalls are similar to those found in the Münnerstadt altarpiece. The

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 64.

rendering of fur can be seen on the collar of a figure of Ptolemy in the Ulm Minster choir stalls (fig. 48), as well as on a figure in the *Christ in the House of Simon* relief of the Műnnerstadt altarpiece (fig. 49). Therefore, by emulating an already accepted monochrome work the Műnnerstadt altarpiece may well have also come to be accepted.

Whether Riemenschneider would have seen the Lorch am Rhein or Constance altarpieces is much more difficult to determine. The town of Lorch am Rhein is quite small and not on the direct route from the Ulm region to Würzburg. Constance was an important ecclesiastical city, having held the Great Ecumenical Council in 1414, but despite being situated by Lake Constance, which had shipping links to much of Europe, it may have been too far for Riemenschneider to travel to. However, this may be a futile line of inquiry, because the much more important point is that other artists were very probably producing wooden monochrome works at this early period, although these have not survived. This would imply that the use of monochrome as a final finish was already accepted well before Riemenschneider's time and, thus, would have been a major factor in his own choice of the finish.

Another European country that was producing monochrome altarpieces at the same time as Riemenschneider was the Netherlands. The aforementioned St George altarpiece (fig. 9) by Jan Borreman the Elder, made in 1493 for the chapel of Our Lady Outside the Walls near Leuven, is a fine example and as this altarpiece pre-dates Riemenschneider's Rothenberg Altarpiece - a work that has many characteristics

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 47, 55-59; Chapuis, 'Recognizing Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 25. It is also thought that he may have received training in Strasbourg as well, most likely during his journeyman years.

found in Netherlandish altarpieces – in my view it seems very possible that Borreman’s monochrome altarpiece was a specific artistic stimulus for Riemenschneider. Moreover, *The lives of St Crispin and St Crispinian* altarpiece created in 1520 for St Waldegrude’s church, Herenthals, is another surviving monochrome altarpiece by Borreman’s workshop (fig. 50) that shares very similar carving techniques and compositional layout to the St George altarpiece, thus strengthening the theory that monochrome altarpieces were a desired product.¹⁰⁴

Borreman’s workshop was the most successful in the South Netherlands during the late 1400s, like Riemenschneider’s was in Würzburg, which highlights the fact that the most successful workshops had the time (due to numerous employees), and most likely the fame, to allow them to experiment with original ideas. To my knowledge there has been no scientific testing of Borreman’s monochrome works to determine whether they were finished with a brown glaze. However, scholars such as Jan van Damme have argued that they were never intended to be polychromed, since this would have obscured the skill of the sculptor seen in the “detailed carving of the fingers and eyes, as well as in the subtle tracing of designs and textures in the clothing of the figures.”¹⁰⁵ Thus this view tallies with important reasons for the rise of a monochrome aesthetic in German works. To be sure, the evidence of these unpainted Netherlandish altarpieces highlights that there must have been a market for monochrome altarpieces in the Netherlands, like in Germany. Furthermore it is quite a coincidence that Borreman’s and Riemenschneider’s altarpieces should be so similar;

¹⁰⁴ Although I have not been able to see these works first hand, I have visited an altarpiece in Pocklington that has been linked in style to Borreman’s workshop. Kim Woods, Five Netherlandish carved altarpieces in England and the Brussels school of carving c. 1470-1520, *The Burlington Magazine*, Volume 138, No. 1125, (December 1996), 788-800.

¹⁰⁵ Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*, 85.

consequently, strengthening the theory that there must have been a connection between the two sculptors.

Riemenschneider's later monochrome altarpieces have a narrative format, for instance the Rothenberg Altarpiece illustrates the biblical stories of the *Last Supper* in the corpus and *Christ's Passion* on the wings (fig. 41). In my view this narrative format can be linked to two probable sources: Netherlandish altarpieces and earlier German alabaster sculpture and it also ties in with the late fifteenth-century dispute over religious images. There are two points to my argument. One is that the conception of Riemenschneider's altarpiece was specific to Riemenschneider, since to my knowledge there are no similar altarpieces in Germany that pre-date him, leading me to speculate that Netherlandish altarpieces provided a source. However, early German alabaster sculpture may have also been a source for Riemenschneider since some of these works have compositional formats that are very similar. My second point is that it seems not only that Riemenschneider's use of a narrative format was a response to the disputes about the use of religious images as visual aids to worship (as discussed in chapter two), but also that he turned to the most suitable models he knew to achieve the effects he wanted, and that these works included Netherlands altarpieces and earlier German alabaster works.

The central corpus compositions of Riemenschneider's altarpieces are very different from the corpus of traditional German altarpieces as they have a narrative format. Traditionally, German altarpieces had contained a central corpus of front facing statues which did not interact with one another and usually without a narrative, as exemplified in the Blaubueren altarpiece (1494) (considered to be sculpted by Michel

Erhart) for the former Abbey church of St John the Baptist, Blaubeuren (fig. 51).¹⁰⁶ Generally, the only parts of an altarpiece to contain narrative-based scenes were the wings. These were either painted, as in the case the *Crucifixion* altarpiece in the parish church of St. James in Rothenberg ob der Tauber which was polychromed by Friedrich Herlin and completed in 1466 (fig. 52a, 52b) or sculpted in low relief, as in Viet Stoss' *St. Mary* altarpiece, which was produced in 1477-89 for the church of Saint Mary in Krakow, Poland (fig. 53, fig. 54). This traditional format is also retained for the wings of Riemenschneider's monochrome altarpieces. However, Riemenschneider's preference for a narrative central corpus is likely to have been inspired by Netherlandish altarpieces, both polychromed and monochrome. In these altarpieces, the corpus often has a narrative format, with different events featuring in small individual niches, as is demonstrated in the *Crucifixion* altarpiece in the style of Jan Borreman made around 1520 and now in the All Saints church, Pocklington, Yorkshire (fig 55).¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, it is not clear whether Riemenschneider ever visited the Low Countries but, as Khrom indicates, this is very likely since many apprentices and journeymen travelled there for training.¹⁰⁸ It is also possible that Netherlandish altarpieces travelled to distant destinations; therefore, Riemenschneider could well have seen examples in Germany. Moreover, the possible correspondence between Riemenschneider and Borreman (discussed earlier) may have inspired both artists to explore the best possible compositional layouts for a narrative scene using a monochrome finish. The comparable spatial placing of the figures in the *Last Supper* scene of Riemenschneider's Rothenberg altarpiece (fig. 56) and Borreman's central scene in the St George altarpiece (fig.57) very much bears this out. Both artists

¹⁰⁶ This is the same church, which houses Riemenschneider *Holy Blood* altarpiece (Rothenberg). They stand at opposite ends of the nave. The sculptor of this altarpiece is unknown.

¹⁰⁷ Currently its origins are unknown.

executed a composition where the figures surround a central scene and they are poised in a variety of stances. Some figures have their backs to the spectator, e.g. the two figures at the front of the scene in Borreman's sculpture and Judas, also a figure in the foreground, in the Rothenberg altarpiece. Furthermore, both sculptors render figures in varying degrees of profile (more so in the Rothenberg altarpiece) and this enables greater interaction between the sculpted characters with hand and facial gestures. Even though the spaces are restricted in depth, the artists cleverly foreshortened the perspective, accounting for the fact that the main scene would be higher than the spectator's eye line. The figures are placed slightly higher than one another (the lowest ones being in the front row), hence each figure has its own space and, therefore, contributes to the visual effect as well as the narrative. Moreover, in my view all these compositional effects contribute to the monochrome aesthetic, as the scene communicates the narrative in a visually simplistic but interesting and thought-provoking way.

Riemenschneider's compositions also seem to show that he paid attention to styles and types of compositions found in earlier traditions of German alabaster sculpture and which in my view he may have also turned to for the development of the monochrome aesthetic.¹⁰⁹ Riemenschneider created a compositional formula for representing groups of figures that he then repeated in many of his works for both the corpus and the wings.¹¹⁰ The earliest surviving example is from the corpus of the polychromed *Passion* altarpiece, commissioned for the choir of the Franciscan church

¹⁰⁸ Khrom, 'The Sources of Riemenschneider's Art' in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 55.

¹⁰⁹ This is an attractive possibility since Riemenschneider also produced alabaster sculpture.

in Rothenberg after 1485 and now in two separate groups in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich (fig. 58, fig. 59). The central corpus of the Creglingen altarpiece highlights how Riemenschneider developed this compositional formula further in his monochrome altarpieces, as this has two groups of apostles either side of the rising figure of the Madonna (fig. 60). An artistic source for this way of grouping figures together could have been German alabaster sculpture. A similar format is seen not only in a *Calvary* sculptural group produced for Halber Cathedral in about 1460 (fig. 61) but also in two sculptural groups presumably produced in 1470 for the same altarpiece for Strasbourg Cathedral (now in the Musée de l'Oeuvre Notre-Dame) (fig. 62).¹¹¹ The left-hand side-group of Riemenschneider's *Passion* altarpiece is very similar in composition to one of the groups from Strasbourg showing *Mourning Women and Saint John*; Mary being supported by the two figures to her left and right in both cases (fig. 58, fig. 63).

Interestingly, it also appears that Riemenschneider further developed this compositional device of grouping figures together to complement his use of a monochrome aesthetic and convey the emotion of the narrative. In the Strasbourg group most of the figures look directly at the viewer (fig. 63), however, there are two in the right-hand group whose gaze is to their right as if they are looking at something (fig. 64). The Creglingen altarpiece would appear to demonstrate that Riemenschneider advanced this same type of composition for a monochrome work. There is greater visual contact between the figures as they interact with one another

¹¹⁰ Husband, 'Tilman Riemenschneider and the Tradition of Alabaster Carving', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider c.1460-1531*, 78-9.

¹¹¹ Khrom, 'The Sources of Riemenschneider's Art' in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 54. Khrom thinks this formed part of a larger structure though does not say if these figures formed a retable.

and look towards the figure of the Madonna (fig. 65). The Madonna is the only figure who looks directly out at the viewer (fig. 66). In a monochrome work this visual interaction especially enlivens the narrative.

The purpose of placing individual sculptured scenes in separate niches is to illustrate a biblical story and act as a visual aid to those who cannot read the scriptures.¹¹² To achieve this fully the work must be coherent not only in presenting the whole story, from beginning to end, in a “readable” fashion but also by making sure that each separate scene is visually clear and simple (fig. 41). The work may also convey the emotions of the scene, by the behaviours of the figures. Polychromy makes both these tasks relatively simple, since different colours can assist in distinguishing between figures, objects and backgrounds and emotive features can be added, such as by applying tears to eyes or blood to wounds, all of which can be seen in Herlin’s *Crucifixion* altarpiece (fig. 67). Thus a monochrome aesthetic creates a certain degree of difficulty in achieving these goals. Hence, the following paragraph will explain how Riemenschneider and his contemporaries were able to fulfil them.

The concept of a narrative theme within an artwork presents a challenging new design brief for the sculptor of the monochrome altarpiece. However, comparing the works of Riemenschneider and Borreman highlights the ways in which they tackled this problem. The designs of both of them open up the scene by having the figures and objects spaced out. Borreman’s sculpted figures appear almost three-dimensional, each one standing out by itself, with hand gestures directing the viewer to the narrative’s main points (fig. 68) and exquisitely carved faces expressing the story’s

¹¹² See chapter two.

emotion (fig. 69). Riemenschneider adopts a similar compositional layout to that found in Borreman's niches, except that he produces one single large narrative scene for the corpus (seen in all of the three altarpieces that are the focus for this thesis). As is seen in the Rothenberg altarpieces the figures are larger so the narrative is clear and the scene is easy to read, although Riemenschneider still relies on the facial expressions and hand gestures of the figures to convey the same emotional content (fig. 70, fig. 71). To separate the figural scene from any background both sculptors use cut outs in the back of the corpus (fig. 9, fig. 41). This allows light to flood the scene and individual figures to highlight different parts of the story at different times of the day. The similarity of both the artists' works, in these respects, strengthens my argument that there must have been an association between them and a shared consciousness regarding the possible achievements of the monochrome aesthetic in corresponding to Catholic teaching on images.

Another possible influence on Riemenschneider's preference for a monochrome aesthetic could well have been church furnishings, especially choir stalls. Choir stalls were the largest form of unpainted wooden sculptures that Riemenschneider and his contemporaries would have come into contact with. There are three main reasons for supposing why they may have been particularly influential: Firstly, the monotone colouring of the wooden church furniture is similar to that of Riemenschneider's altarpieces; secondly, the skilled carving found on many of these choir stalls is comparable to that in Riemenschneider's sculptures and thirdly that these works, like Riemenschneider's altarpieces, did not serve a devotional purpose. Khrom has acknowledged that the carving skill displayed on the choir-stall sculptures by Jörg Syrlin at Ulm Minster (fig. 46) can be seen as having influenced Riemenschneider,

but he makes no comment about their possible impact on a monotone aesthetic.¹¹³ In outlining my own views on the matter, I shall firstly discuss the function and aesthetic finish of choir stalls, focusing on the publications by leading scholars on medieval church furniture such as Henry and Dorothy Krauss and Charles Tracy.¹¹⁴ Then, I shall compare carving details from the few surviving German choir stalls, as well as some English examples, with works by Riemenschneider, with the aim of demonstrating that church furniture could easily have had a crucial bearing on Riemenschneider's adoption of the monochrome aesthetic. Finally, I will argue that Riemenschneider may have taken up an aesthetic associated with monochrome church furniture in order to promote a practical aspect of story telling in his art in response to the religious disputes of the time.

Choir stalls were designed to be used by clerics. The whole structure of choir stalls, including the corbel underneath the seat, which was eventually called a *misericord*, was often ornately carved.¹¹⁵ Generally the decoration on the stall was of religious figures or scenes, as can be illustrated by a fifteenth-century *Pietà* group in St Laurence's Parish church, Ludlow (fig. 72) and the decoration on the *misericord* was of popular folklore as illustrated by a *misericord* depicting a mermaid as a seductress at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle (fig. 73).¹¹⁶ However, the stalls were sometimes carved with self-portraits of the craftsman (fig. 74) or portraits of the donors.¹¹⁷ Of those examples that survive, the majority are unpainted, so it is most

¹¹³ Khrom, 'The Sources of Riemenschneider's Art' in Julien Chapuis ed., *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 63.

¹¹⁴ Dorothy and Henry Krauss, *The Hidden World of Misericords*, London, 1976, ix. Charles Tracy, *Continental Church Furniture in England: a traffic in piety*, Suffolk, 2001, esp. 222-69. See also, M.D. Anderson, *Medieval Life in English Woodcarving*, Middlesex, 1954, 5-30; J.C.D. Smith, *A guide to Church Woodcarvings misericords and bench ends*, London, 1974, esp. 9-35.

¹¹⁵ Richard Hayman, *Church misericords and bench ends*, Buckinghamshire, 2000, 3-6.

¹¹⁶ I have chosen English example as they have survived in greater numbers than German ones.

¹¹⁷ There is a supposed self-portrait of Riemenschneider on the Creglingen altarpiece (fig. 76).

likely that at the time of production they were monochrome in finish. However, at St. Burkard church in Würzburg there is an example of a painted choir-stall (fig. 76, fig. 77), which shows that, like other sculptures, choir-stalls could vary in surface effect. Many of the craftsmen who produced these works are unknown as the craft was not as highly thought of as those who produced other, less utilitarian sculptural works.¹¹⁸

The majority of surviving choir stalls pre-date Riemenschneider, so it is very possible that he learnt some of his technical skill from these traditional church furnishings. Henry and Dorothy Krauss even suggest that apprentices and journeymen pursuing a career in woodcarving may even have undertaken work on church furnishings when they had to.¹¹⁹ Thus Riemenschneider, himself, may have undertaken such work when he was an apprentice or journeyman and this becomes even more of an attractive possibility when one considers that Riemenschneider's workshop itself produced furniture. The Würzburg town council table (fig. 78) is an impressive surviving example. However, I aim to provide evidence of the influences of church furnishings on Riemenschneider's monochrome aesthetic by comparing the surface detail of Riemenschneider's altarpieces with the surface details of choir stalls.

German churches do not have many surviving choir-stalls, because of the major religious upheaval during the mid sixteenth century as well as the changes in taste in artistic style and church decoration. However, one good example of medieval monotone choir stalls is the aforementioned Ulm Minster choir stalls (fig. 46). The carving techniques seen in them are remarkably similar to those in sculptures by

¹¹⁸ Krauss, *The Hidden World of Misericords*, xiii.

¹¹⁹ Krauss, *The Hidden World of Misericords*, xiii.

Riemenschneider.¹²⁰ Another surviving choir stall from this period, similar in style to Riemenschneider, was made by Jörg Syrlin the Younger in 1493 for the Former Abbey in Blaubeuren (fig. 79). Syrlin the Younger carves the edging of the fabric on the figures with smooth and undecorated finish (fig. 80), which works well with the monochrome aesthetic as it allows for a sharp contrast between light and shadows. This is very much like the effect created by Riemenschneider's figures in the Rothenberg altarpiece, which are also carved with smooth and undecorated edges to their clothing (fig. 71).

Unfortunately, as there are very few surviving examples from Germany I have turned to English examples from the fourteen and fifteenth century to strengthen my argument as it seems very likely that carving techniques here would have been similar to those in German choir stalls.¹²¹ At the parish church in Ludlow the carving of the misericord depicting a bishop shows a mitre (fig. 81) with a very similar decoration to the mitre in the *Entombment* scene in the Münnerstadt altarpiece (fig. 82). The carving of the hair on the face of a possibly a king in the choir stalls at Ludlow (fig. 83) is very much like the carving of the hair on the body of Mary Magdalene in the Münnerstadt altarpiece (fig. 10). The use of incised decoration on the hat worn by a woman in the Ludlow choir stalls (fig. 84) can be compared in quality and texture to Riemenschneider's as similar to the incised carving found on Riemenschneider's monochrome works such as the edging of the Angel Gabriel's clothing (fig. 85). This style has also been found on Borreman's monochrome works (fig. 16), thus makes it evident that the influence of choir stalls was extremely wide spread. These examples

¹²⁰ See chapter one and figure 48 and 49.

¹²¹ Tracy states that craftsmen travelled to various countries and work was imported between countries allowing for a crossover of skills. Tracy, *Continental church furniture*, 11-16.

highlight that great attention was paid to surface treatment when using a monochrome finish, whether for altarpieces or choir stalls, as the artist could not rely on the thick polychrome layers to add detail and hide imperfections.

Riemenschneider's reason for deriving his monochrome aesthetic, at least in part, from church furnishings, could well have been because choir stalls did not have a devotional purpose: Instead they served a practical one. Thus, it is possible that he wanted his altarpieces to be looked upon in the same way as choir stalls, as works that were not principally devotional but practical in telling of religious stories.

To my knowledge there are no documents from the time of the Reformation that suggest that choir-stalls created the same concern about idolatry as altarpieces did. Moreover, by using the same colour as found on choir stalls for altarpieces, Riemenschneider was creating a visual association with choir stalls, like that already seen in the monochrome altarpiece and choir-stall collaboration at Ulm Minster.

* * *

Two-dimensional artistic media, particularly black and white prints and grisaille paintings, are considered by Bier and Korney as major sources of inspiration for Riemenschneider, in part due to the developments in these media in the latter part of

the fifteenth century.¹²² It has been documented how both classes of image would have been easily accessible to Riemenschneider.¹²³ Grisaille painting, seen on wooden altarpieces and panel paintings, stained glass windows and illuminated manuscripts, highlighted the differences between statues and ‘real’ humans and this idea may have inspired Riemenschneider to produce monochrome sculpture in response to the religious disputes at the time. It has also been argued that the print medium, which had become so advanced as to rival the other established crafts, acted as a creative stimulus for many other craftsmen. Kahsnitz, for example, notes that the Lorch am Rhein altarpiece uses many print images. Both media, but especially prints, have been considered in relation to the monochrome work of Riemenschneider, although a definite conclusion has yet to be reached.¹²⁴ My aim here is to provide a closer examination of the relationship between Riemenschneider’s altarpieces and the two-dimensional mediums to demonstrate that the sculptor adapted numerous two-dimensional techniques to contribute to the monochrome aesthetic.

Grisaille painting, which became popular from the beginning of the fifteenth century, was originally used in paintings to distinguish between fictive statues and ‘real’ humans. The *Adoration of the Mystic lamb altarpiece* by Hubert Van Eyck (and possibly Jan Van Eyck) in 1432, now in the Chapel of Saint Bavo Cathedral, Ghent (fig. 86) demonstrates how the technique is used on wooden altarpieces. *The Miracle of Saint Anthony of Padua*, from *Tres riches heures*, by Jean Colombe, Bourges, 1485-89 (in The Cloister’s Museum, New York) (fig. 87) shows how an illuminated

¹²² Koreny, ‘Riemenschneider and the Graphic Arts’ in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 99-111. Bier, ‘Riemenschneider’s use of graphic sources’ *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 203-222.

¹²³ Koreny, ‘Riemenschneider and the Graphic Arts’ in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 99-111.

manuscript also achieved this. It is therefore possible that Riemenschneider used the monochrome aesthetic to highlight that his sculptures were not the 'real' images of the particular saint but only sculpted objects. Hence, his work complements the religious thoughts on images at the time - that an image is only to help the illiterate in understanding the Word of God and to assist the devoted in their prayers. However, during the period of Riemenschneider, grisaille paintings began to depict narrative scenes, as can be seen in the stained glass window depicting the *Resurrection* scene (fig. 88) or on the wings of altarpieces, such as Rogier Van Weyden's exterior panel of the Sforza Triptych depicting St Jerome and St George c. 1460, now in Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (fig 89). This development is an attractive indication that the monotone aesthetic, in any medium, had found an artistic following at the time of Riemenschneider's production.

In developing the narrative composition with the monochrome aesthetic Riemenschneider may also have taken account of printed illustrations from popular religious books, which visually narrated the stories from the Gospels. Religious books with printed illustrations were regularly reproduced and redeveloped from 1450 onwards. For his the *Last Supper* scene in his Rothenberg altarpiece Riemenschneider may well have borrowed a new layout for representing the last supper which used a rectangular table as seen in the Strasbourg edition, produced by Thomas Anshelm (fig. 91). The Anshelm print highlights that a rectangular table creates a realistic perspective and enables the figures to stand in their own personal space, which is not achieved in the earlier print compositions which present a round table (fig. 90). Furthermore the print demonstrates how this would look in a monotone finish.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 99-111; Bier, 'Riemenschneider's use of graphic sources', 203-222; Khrom, 'The Sources of

Riemenschneider used this design effectively to provide an almost 'realistic' use of space and an image whose narrative could be clearly 'read'.

Riemenschneider's altarpieces also have notable parallels with two functions of an illustrated book. Firstly, an illustrated book provided a pictorial narrative of the bible for those who could not read, and, as I have remarked upon earlier, religious narrative was also an important aspect of Riemenschneider's work, and was in line with religious ideas of the period. Secondly, books are like Riemenschneider's altarpieces in that they can be shut away (fig. 92). The corpus and the internal sides of the wings would only have been opened when needed thus imitating a book's function. Further to this, Riemenschneider took advantage of the natural sunlight that his monochrome altarpieces were situated beside, to highlight different parts of the narrative within his altarpieces at different times of the day. This could be compared to the popular Book of Hours, which contained the text of prayers alongside appropriate images. The prayers corresponded to a particular hour of the day and would be opened accordingly. Like Riemenschneider's altarpieces they directed the devoted to think about particular narratives of the bible at certain times of the day.

What art historians have extensively discussed is Riemenschneider's dependency on printed images in many of his altarpieces. A key example is Carl Striet's observation that a Martin Schongauer print of *The Baptism of Christ* (fig. 93) is similar in composition to the relief of the same name in the upper-left wing from the Riemenschneider altarpiece originally from the chapel of St. John the Baptist in the

Riemenschneider's Art' in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 62-63.

cemetery of the Parish Church of Gerolzhofen (fig. 94).¹²⁵ Riemenschneider's use of such images emphasises the importance of these prints as design guides to the artist and his workshop to the extent that Katnitz has claimed that "an artist's stature was largely determined by his ability to seamlessly incorporate such elements into his composition."¹²⁶ The print trade was an established art by the time of Riemenschneider, therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that Riemenschneider would have been inspired by the 'avant-garde' monotone aesthetic and, in my view, taken full advantage of them to develop his monochrome altarpieces.¹²⁷

A possible consequence of Riemenschneider's dependency on the two-dimensional medium of prints is, in my view, also to be seen in his unusual skill of producing very thin sculptures.¹²⁸ The Rothenberg (fig. 95) and Creglingen altarpieces (fig. 96) are excellent examples of this. The corpus of the Rothenberg altarpiece is forty-one centimetres in depth, with the figures being only twenty-one centimetres deep, while the corpus of the Creglingen altarpiece is only twenty-five centimetres in depth, with the figures of the apostles being just twenty-two centimetres deep.¹²⁹ Compared to other German works this is extremely thin. For example the aforementioned altarpiece at the Blaubeuren church, Swabia, completed in 1494 by an unknown sculptor (fig. 51) is one hundred and twenty-five centimetres deep and this is about the average

¹²⁵ Bier, "Riemenschneider's use of graphic sources", 203. The work was in Carl Streit's collection at the time. For further discussions on the influence of prints see Koreny, 'Riemenschneider and the Graphic Arts' in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 99-111.

¹²⁶ Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*, 2006, 140. Koreny, 'Riemenschneider and the Graphic Arts' in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531*, 104.

¹²⁷ Khrom, 'The Sources of Riemenschneider's work' in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 62.

¹²⁸ However, this may also have helped keep the costs to a minimum.

¹²⁹ Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*, 228 and 244, respectively.

size.¹³⁰ In addition to this, the relief sculptures on the wings of both Riemenschneider's altarpieces are also very shallow.

In my view there are two possible reasons for this reduction in sculptural depth. One could have been financial. Riemenschneider produced unusually cheap altarpieces compared to his contemporaries (see Appendix 3) and by using less wood, the work would most likely cost less. The other possibility could have been a practical one in that Riemenschneider would have transferred images based on prints directly onto the panel for either himself or one of his employees to carve. Transferring the image onto the wood would provide the sculptor with an instant image, which did not require much additional involvement of Riemenschneider himself. Korney provides evidence to support this claim in drawing attention to surviving drawings by Riemenschneider, which are actually still on the wood's surface.¹³¹ For example there is a sketch of a young woman on the back of the wing relief of the Windsheim altarpiece (now in the Kurpfälzisches Museum in Heidelberg) (fig. 97).¹³² Korney has argued that this is "the first phase of a sketch that remained unexecuted until the wood was used for the Windsheim altarpiece."¹³³ By transferring a two-dimensional image onto a panel, which was to be carved three-dimensionally, the sculpted surface would also inevitably replicate the perspective and depth of the two-dimensional illustration. This can be illustrated by the similarity of the positioning of the figures and the background landscape in both Master AG's engraving of *Christ's Entry into*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹³¹ Korney, 'Riemenschneider and the Graphic Arts' in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider ca. 1460-1531*, 101.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 100.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 100.

Jerusalem (fig. 98) and the replication of this image by Riemenschneider on the left-hand wing of the Rothenberg altarpiece (fig. 99).¹³⁴

Not only does it appear that Riemenschneider produced thin corpuses by drawing print-inspired compositions directly onto the panels but he may have also set out to imitate the tonal effects of prints and thus enhance his monochrome aesthetic.

Monochromatic prints tend to emphasise areas of shadow and light to create three-dimensional effects on two-dimensional surfaces.¹³⁵ Riemenschneider's monochrome altarpieces seem to mimic this contrast of light and shade found in prints, most commonly seen in his rendering of fabrics. He could have turned to any number of images to copy these effects but I shall consider the series of seated apostles engraved by Master E.S. as being representative of this, since they present numerous comparisons with the figures found in the *Last Supper* scene on the Rothenberg altarpiece. For example, the image of *St. James the Less* by Master E.S. is of a seated figure with a large area of light on the back of the body (fig. 100). As such it is very like the seated figure to the right of Judas in Riemenschneider's *Last Supper* scene (fig. 101) as the positioning of the figure and the rendering of the folds in the fabric are very similar. Furthermore, when the sunlight shines on the back of Riemenschneider's figure, the open smooth surface of the figure's back shines brightly and the folds in the fabric contrast with this as they become quite dark, which is similar to the light effect rendered in the *St. James the Less* print.¹³⁶ From the same printed series by Master E. S. the fabric on the figure of St Paul is drawn to appear

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 105 for an extensive description.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹³⁶ Unfortunately I could not find a suitable picture to demonstrate this lighting effect but from personally viewing the sculpture it is my opinion that the effect described is achieved. However, what figure 101 does demonstrate is the similar stance of the figure with the *St. James the Less* print.

draped along the floor (fig. 102). The seated disciples in the front row of the *Last Supper* scene (fig. 103) are depicted with clothing that has fallen onto the floor underneath the benches on which they sit. The smooth edging and the folds of these fabrics are rendered in a similar fashion to the fabric of the St. Paul print, thereby indicating that the sculptor may well have copied this, or something very much like it.

Furthermore Riemenschneider develops the use of these print effects to contribute to the narrative and monochrome aesthetic. In the print of *St. Paul* Master E.S. renders twists in the saint's fabric which can be seen in cloth that is hanging down from his left hand (fig. 102).¹³⁷ Riemenschneider carves a similar twist in the clothing of Judas and the seated figure to the left of him (fig. 104). However, at certain times of the day the natural light enhances the effects caused by the twists in the figure's fabric of the Rothenberg altarpiece and this directs the viewer's eye towards the predella, which contained an image of the Crucifixion (fig. 105). This is then mirrored by a pointing hand from a figure on the left-hand side of the altarpiece, which directs the spectator's eye towards the predella (fig 106). When the afternoon sun shines onto the hand; the purpose of the pointing hand is further emphasised because the arm and hand become lighter and, therefore, are the focal point of the scene. This demonstrates Riemenschneider's ability to resourcefully use prints to not only develop and enhance his own intentional monochrome effects but also to creatively adapt them to produce thought-provoking narratives.

¹³⁷ The twist is where the fabric turns on itself so lining of the fabric becomes visible.

In conclusion, the whole design of the altarpiece (subject, size, composition and surface detail) contributed to Riemenschneider's preference for the monochrome aesthetic and a whole range of artistic sources were a factor in the development of this aesthetic phenomenon. Through visual analysis it seems certain that alabaster sculpture and German and Netherlandish monochrome altarpieces, especially those of Jan Borreman, were an influence on Riemenschneider. The latter also points at the connection that there must have been between the two sculptors (initially discussed in chapter one) and their decisions to use a monochrome finish in combination with a narrative composition and surface detail. Church furniture has also provided good comparable visual analysis with Riemenschneider's sculptures and it is reasonable to suggest that they offered technical inspiration to Riemenschneider, a theory made more attractive by the knowledge that many sculptors undertook such work during their apprenticeship years. My argument also confirms that the monochrome aesthetic was developed further due to Riemenschneider's exploitation of the two-dimensional medium. He utilised illustrated books, grisaille paintings and prints to not only produce unusually thin sculptures and assist him in laying out the composition of complex narrative scenes but also, to create outstanding visual effects between light and shadow, which is one of the main strengths of the monochrome aesthetic. Consequently, these artistic influences demonstrate that Riemenschneider consciously chose to execute a monochrome glaze as the finished surface of his wooden sculptures.

Chapter Four

The origins and applications of light effects in Riemenschneider's works

The previous chapter on the artistic influences relating to Riemenschneider's decision to produce monochrome sculptures also touched upon the effects created by the sunlight's interaction with his altarpieces. This was achieved by openings in the back of the corpus, as seen in varying ways in the Műnnerstadt, Rothenberg and Creglingen altarpieces (fig. 107, fig. 72, fig. 60). Theodore Műller was one of the first scholars to note the possible importance of these cut-away sections in the corpus, which he observed in Riemenschneider's Rothenberg altarpiece.¹³⁷ Michael Baxandall then developed this idea by describing the effects on this altarpiece by light and considering how they contributed to Riemenschneider's development of his compositional layouts, his ability to bring movement and drama to his narrative formats and ultimately his monochrome aesthetic.¹³⁸ In the catalogue produced for the sculptor's 1999 exhibition, Baxandall discusses further Riemenschneider's use of light with his monochrome works, and, in this same publication, Julien Chapuis very much supported Baxandall's theory.¹³⁹ However, Baxandall failed to consider a number of issues that could further strengthen a view that Riemenschneider deliberately exploited the abilities of light to work with a monochrome aesthetic. These are, whether medieval society's philosophy on light in a religious context was represented in Riemenschneider's work, and whether polychrome and monochrome

¹³⁷ Theodore Muller, *Tilman Riemenschneider, World and Work*, 47.

¹³⁸ Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 189-190; Baxandall, 'The Perception of Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 83-97.

¹³⁹ Chapuis, 'Recognizing Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 29-34.

altarpieces that have similar cut-away design features in the back of the corpus had any influence on Riemenschneider.

In this final chapter I will first summarise Baxandall's comments on the visual effects of light in the Rothenberg altarpiece but then also provide further observations on the lighting effects in the M \ddot{u} nnerstadt and Creglingen altarpieces.¹⁴⁰ Thereafter, I shall outline philosophies of the theory of light in around Riemenschneider's time, referring to works by Nicolas of Cusa (1401-1464) and Erasmus of Rotherdam (1466/69-1536), and the way that light was seen as a symbol of God.¹⁴¹ Riemenschneider's contemporaries often supported these theories artistically by representations of light as the symbol of God, which I will look at. Moreover, this discussion will also help explain why Riemenschneider turned to light as part of his monochrome aesthetic. Following this, I shall consider the influences on Riemenschneider of previous altarpieces with cut-out backs. Surprisingly, it is mainly polychrome works that share this open back design feature with Riemenschneider's altarpieces rather than monochrome altarpieces.¹⁴² However, I will again propose that it is Netherlandish monochrome altarpieces that could have had special impact on Riemenschneider, such as Jan Borreman's St. George altarpiece (1493) which has very similar open-window designs in the back of the corpus of the altarpiece (fig. 9). This will lead to yet more discussion on the possible connection that Riemenschneider had with Jan Borreman's workshop.

¹⁴⁰ Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 189-190.

¹⁴¹ Turner (ed.), *The Grove Dictionary of Art*, Volume 19, 351-359; Cranz, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 53; Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 46; Charles Trinkaus (ed.), *Collected works of Erasmus- controversies. Hyperaspistes 2*, trans., Clarence H. Miller, London, 2000, 489-90.

Michael Baxandall beautifully describes the way the light interacts with the Rothenberg altarpiece, as a direct consequence of the cut-away sections in the back of the corpus (fig. 72).¹⁴³ There are three windows in total. The central one is the largest and it is made up of three individual windows while the two flanking ones are smaller but of the same arrangement. The windows have curvilinear tracery, which is the same as the windows in the building that surrounds the work (fig. 108, fig. 109).¹⁴⁴ The thick circles of glass in the corpus windows can also be found in the windows of the church (fig. 111, fig. 109).¹⁴⁵ The church's windows can receive sunlight all day long and Baxandall described how in the morning, the sunlight interacts with the front line of the altarpiece's figures so that their "heads, hands, patterns of cloth and three feet (two from Judas and one from the apostle on his left) are picked out" (fig. 112a).¹⁴⁶ At different times of the day it illuminates the scenes on the wings. Just before noon all the corpus figures are cast into shadow apart from Judas, and there is a "last moment when only Christ's blessing hand on the left Flügel, and Judas and the hand pointing to the host in the Corpus, are effectively alive" (fig. 112b).¹⁴⁷ After this the back row of figures comes into light and their gestures and facial expressions are variously highlighted as the sun moves towards

¹⁴² Although I acknowledge that there may have been others that have not survived.

¹⁴³ Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 189-190. The 'cabinet' of the Rothenberg altarpiece was produced before Riemenschneider undertook the commission for the figures but this does not detract from the notion that he composed a monochrome scene to fit into that space.

¹⁴⁴ Even the vaulting the roof of the corpus and predella mimics the vaulting found in the roof of the church choir, where the altarpiece stands (fig. 110a, fig. 110b).

¹⁴⁵ There is a surviving monochrome altarpiece attributed to Riemenschneider's workshop in the Rothenberg church which also has similar glass in the cut-away sections in the back of the corpus (fig. 152).

¹⁴⁶ The left hand side is if we are facing the sculpture. Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 189-190.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 189-190.

the west. These light effects perhaps work best if the sun is not strong as this can create a glare on the wings of the altarpiece and therefore distort the images (fig. 113).¹⁴⁸ Chapuis considered that the effect is at its best when the day is cloudy.¹⁴⁹ At one point the altarpiece was moved against a wall, where no light could interact with the corpus. In a photograph taken when the altarpiece was in this position the sculpture appears dark, dull and lack movement and highlights not only how essential it is for the work to be back lit with sun light but Riemenschneider obviously intended it to be this way (fig. 114).

The Creglingen altarpiece utilises similar light effects but these are not as prominent because the windows of the church are much smaller (fig. 115), at different angles, and further away from the sculpture (fig. 43). Furthermore the cut-away 'windows' in the corpus do not contain glass like the ones at Rothenberg but they are again carved to mimic the geometrical (bar) tracery windows found in the church's windows (fig. 115, fig. 116). The width of the Creglingen corpus is much smaller than the Rothenberg altarpiece, so the cut-away windows are not as large. They consist of a central group of three windows, each divided into three sections, with two further windows on each side (fig. 60).¹⁵⁰ Due to its size the Creglingen altarpiece does not have the openness of the Rothenberg altarpiece but it appears to be still brighter than might be expected (perhaps partly because the wings remained shut from the Reformation until 1800s and so have not

¹⁴⁸ This effect happened on the first time that I visited the Rothenberg altarpiece.

¹⁴⁹ Chapuis, 'Recognizing Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 32.

¹⁵⁰ It is believed that Riemenschneider may have produced the cabinet but he may have employed someone to do so. Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 80.

faded much).¹⁵¹ It is also affected by the sun “but in a different way (to the Rothenberg altarpiece)”, which is the only observation made by Baxandall.¹⁵² The windows around the figure of the Virgin Mary are hidden by her body and by angels, so, it is the windows either side of her and above the heads of the apostles that allow light to interact with the corpus scene (fig. 60). The figures of the apostles are executed very shallowly, very similar in depth to relief sculptures, and their clothes are carved with folds, which, as in the case of the figure of St. John, appear to have movement as the sun changes position in the sky during the day (fig. 117, fig 118), which Chapuis describes as a chiaroscuro effect.¹⁵³

Observing the work, in-situ, throughout the day, it is clear there is also a very clever use of the light in the bare section beneath the Virgin Mary and between the two groups of Apostles (fig. 119). This blank space is quite dark for most of the day, suggesting that the Virgin Mary is being raised off the ground at some distance from the Apostles. However, once the sun moves lower in the sky after noon, the shadows create evocative images in this space. The hands of the front two apostles, and the book of the apostle on the left, create shadows that move closer together during the course of the day (fig. 120), and Riemenschneider may have carved the hands much larger than is realistic to enhance this effect (fig. 121). Not only does this visual effect imply that the apostles are helping Mary up to heaven, but it also provides an upwards motion to the whole composition. It seems very possible that Riemenschneider knew that this effect would occur and that he

¹⁵¹ Possibly due to the fact that the natural colour of the limewood is so well preserved.

¹⁵² Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 190.

exploited it with his monochrome medium.¹⁵⁴ In my view, if the altarpiece had been painted then this effect would not have been as easily seen or as beautiful.

The M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpiece demonstrates Riemenschneider's initial experimentation with the interaction of light with the monochrome aesthetic. The altarpiece has cut-away windows but in this case they are just behind the figure of Mary Magdalene being raised to heaven (fig. 107). The three-light windows are very plain, rectangular in shape and all of the same width which corresponds with the represented altar below her. The setting of the work is very dark, mainly due to the close proximity to the church of other buildings, as well as to the dark colours of the three stained glass windows that surround the work which subdue the light (unlike in both the Rothenberg and Creglingen churches where the lower part of the windows near the altarpieces are of clear glass) (fig. 122). Thus since the sculpture is executed in monochrome, this may have been why Riemenschneider chose to carve out an opening in the back of the corpus, as it would have enabled the congregation to see the protagonist of the work, Mary Magdalen, clearly. Although the cut-away windows only surround Mary Magdalen they still let enough light in to pick out the other two figures, Bishop Kilian and St. Elisabeth, but these are hidden quite a lot by shadows, and more difficult to recognise at a distance (fig.123).

The discussion hitherto has explored how each particular Riemenschneider altarpiece achieves its visual effects with the combination of monochrome and light provided by the

¹⁵³ Chapuis, 'Recognizing Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 32.

cut-away sections of the corpus. It seems highly likely that this was intentional by Riemenschneider, but to strengthen this view the altarpieces and their lighting can be placed in a philosophical and religious context. In this connection I will now outline theories of light during the late medieval period that could have influenced Riemenschneider. Then I will also consider the possible influences of German and Netherlandish altarpieces on Riemenschneider's practice regarding his use of light and its application to a monochrome aesthetic.

Light theory was very important to Riemenschneider's society. Since antiquity, light had associations with spirituality, and in the Middle Ages the philosophy of light was indebted to both ancient ideas and Christian-related theories. The Old Testament refers to light as a symbol of God's presence.¹⁵⁵ The New Testament presents Christ as the 'Light of the World'.¹⁵⁶ Drawing upon passages from the Gospel, Pseudo-Dionysius (c.500) had then explained how God was symbolised by physical light, and later this was further elaborated by the Neo-Platonist John Scotus Eriugena (815-877) who stated;

One God, one goodness, one light, diffused in all things so that they may exist fully, shining in all things so that all people may know and love his beauty, dominating all things so that they may flourish in their

¹⁵⁴ There is dispute over the current positioning of the work, however, in my opinion the evidence of this effect highlights that this is the correct place. Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 80.

¹⁵⁵ Exodus 13:21; 1 Samuel 3:3; 2 Chronicles 4:7, 13:11; Isaiah 10:17, 60:19; Psalms 35:10; Wisdom of Solomon 7:26. Bible references from Turner, *The Grove Dictionary of Art*, 335.

¹⁵⁶ Luke 1:79, 2:32; Acts 26:23; 2 Corinthians 4:6; John 8:12, 9:5, 12:46. *Ibid.*, 335.

full perfection, and so that all may be one in Him. Thus the light of all lights come from the Father.¹⁵⁷

Such texts became the theoretical basis for early medieval scholastics such as Abbot Suger (1081-1151) and St Bonaventure (1221-74) who both asserted that light was perfect and beautiful since it was a spiritual form of God. St Bonaventure wrote that “Light was thus the principle of all beauty, not only because it is delightful to the senses, but also because it is through light that all the variations in colour and luminosity, both in heaven and on earth, come into being.”¹⁵⁸ Theologians contemporary with Riemenschneider then used these various works to make further connection between God and light. Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1465), who lived in Germany until the last few years of his life and whose last work of 1464 was republished in Riemenschneider’s time stated that;

The *Posse* [i.e. the power is God] itself is named light by certain of the saints, not the sensible or rational or intelligible light, but the light of all things which can shine, since nothing can be brighter or clearer or fairer than the *Posse* itself.¹⁵⁹

The humanist scholar Erasmus of Rotterdam also noted that “Christ is light”, and stressed that it is through this light that one gains knowledge of God, although he also stressed the importance of understanding God’s message for leading an enlightened life.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ John Scotus Eriugena, *Super Hierarchiam Caelestium*, chapter 1 (PL, 122, col. 128) in Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 77.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 14, 49-50.

¹⁵⁹ Cranz, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 57. *Posse* means power and the power is God.

¹⁶⁰ Charles Trinkaus (ed.), *Collected works of Erasmus*, 689. Also see 464-64, 690, 709, and 729-30.

Riemenschneider must have been fully aware too of how late medieval and early Renaissance art treated the metaphor of God as light.¹⁶¹ Painted scenes explored the idea in numerous ways. *Annunciation* scenes often depicted golden rays of light from heaven (accompanied by a dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit) landing on the figure of the Virgin Mary, as is seen in Van Eyck's *Annunciation* (1434-36) now in the National of Art Washington D C (fig. 124). Van Eyck also explored the use of natural light in his works to refer to divine light as in *Madonna in the Church* (c.1425) now in Staatliche Museen., Berlin, so it is possible that this representation of divine light may also have been a source of inspiration to Riemenschneider (fig. 125).¹⁶² *The Nativity at Night* (c.1490) by Geertgen tot Sint Jans (now in the National Gallery, London) shows the Christ child as emanating light, the tiny figure being the brightest image of the scene (fig. 126).¹⁶³ The Isenheim altarpiece (1515) painted by Matthias Grünewald (now in the Unterlinden Museum, Colmar) shows the resurrected Lord back-lit by a large circular disc of radiant light (fig. 127). Viet Stoss in his Carmelite altarpiece (1487) had explored light imagery in sculpture by having golden rods protruding from the figure of God (fig. 53). Even prints depicted God, Christ and the Holy Spirit with bright white spaces emanating from them as can be seen in Albrecht Durer's *Assumption of the Virgin* (1510) (fig. 128). From personal observations the connection between the use of light in both monochrome sculpture and the print medium may have been quite close as all three of

¹⁶¹ I refer to God as part of the Holy Trinity thus God is Christ and the Holy Spirit.

¹⁶² Jeffery Chipps Smith, *The Northern Renaissance*, London and New York, 2004, 63-65.

¹⁶³ Gabriele Findailo (ed.), *The Image of Christ*, exhibition catalogue for Seeing Salvation, National Gallery, London, 2000, 20.

Riemenschneider's monochrome altarpieces use light in the corpus, in a way that is similar to Durer's prints of the same scene (fig. 128, fig. 129, fig. 130).

Interlaced with all of this were the theories on the importance of colour, which questions the reasons as to why Riemenschneider chose not to use a polychrome finish. Colour was seen as the corporeity of light, St Thomas Aquinas stating that "things are called beautiful when they are brightly coloured."¹⁶⁴ In Riemenschneider's time, as Jacobs suggests, this notion was perhaps epitomised by polychromed wooden altarpieces, while the insides of churches with their brightly coloured paintings, sculptures and glass, would have provided strikingly contrasting spaces compared to the mundane world outside.¹⁶⁵

However, the role of religious art was being questioned as the laity were increasingly mistaking representational art, especially sculptures, for the real person and were misdirecting their worship to a work of art rather than to God Himself (see chapter two).

The mimesis quality of polychrome sculpture could have possibly encouraged this.

Therefore, it seems likely that Riemenschneider chose to use a monochrome finish to emphasise that his sculpted figures were not real. Furthermore, by incorporating natural sunlight within his sculpture (not creating the light effect with man-made paint), he may have been wishing to express that God's presence (natural sunlight) shone throughout the altarpiece, illuminating the important points of the carved narrative and enlightening the devoted to the true word of God.

¹⁶⁴ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 46.

¹⁶⁵ Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*, 90.

By using light in his works Riemenschneider was presumably intending to express the presence of God, but this outlook was different from that of most of his German contemporaries. The few surviving German monochrome works that pre-date, are contemporary with or succeed Riemenschneider's production do not have corpuses with open backs. Instead they have box-like corpuses, like most polychromed altarpieces (see fig. 51 for comparison). The Lorch am Rhein altarpiece (1483)(fig. 44), which is the only surviving monochrome altarpiece that predates Riemenschneider's work, uses the popular medieval motif of blind-windows, carved to look like tracery windows but not pierced to let in light. Each of the ten individual niches that create the central corpus contains five blind-windows situated behind the figure (fig. 131). Viet Stoss's monochrome *Nativity* altarpiece (1520-23), now at Bamberg Cathedral, does not have an opened back corpus either (fig. 132).

Unusually, this discussion must turn to polychrome German altarpieces to demonstrate that there was an already existing tradition for open-backed corpuses, which may have provided a model for Riemenschneider to exploit his use of light. A sculpture produced between 1483 and 1488 for the pilgrimage church of the Coronation of the Virgin at Lautenbach, near Strasbourg, may have been the earliest known work to have the type of open-back corpus seen in Riemenschneider's monochrome altarpieces (fig. 133).¹⁶⁶ There are three figures in the corpus. Their own compartment of a three-sided niche separates the figures from one another. Two pillars, which flank the central niche that contains the figure of the Virgin Mary, further emphasises the divide. Each niche

contains three curvilinear tracery windows. In the central niche the middle window, which is split into three individual windows, is the largest and the bottom of the window aligns with the middle of the statue's head (fig. 134). In the same niche there are single windows to the left and right of the statue and next to these are single blind windows. The other two niches, which also contain single figures, have a central open window and two blind windows to the left and right of the statues. Unfortunately due to the modern attachment of glass to the niches the corpus appears rather dark (fig. 135).¹⁶⁷ This darkness surrounding the figures is further accentuated by their compartmentalisation, which casts shadows around them and does not allow light to interact with them like in Riemenschneider's Rothenberg altarpiece (fig. 112b).¹⁶⁸ The contribution of the light to the impact of the figures is therefore limited.

Two other German works from the sixteenth century demonstrate the variety of ways that the corpus sculptures were back-lit. The former high altarpiece in the Weisweil church of 1515-25 (fig. 136) has the individual sculptures of its corpus back-lit as does the altarpiece for St. Ursula church in Oberndorf of c.1510 (fig. 137). Both sculptures reveal how bright a polychromed work could be when using this device. Therefore, these examples show that there was a practice of using light to contribute to the altarpiece's aesthetic, and suggest that Riemenschneider took full advantage of it in his monochrome works.

¹⁶⁶ This work has had some modern additions. Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*, 107.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁶⁸ Interestingly, Kahsnitz notes that the stained-glass windows were designed to complement the presence of the altarpiece. *Ibid.*, 106.

Another possible purpose of openings in the back of a corpus could have been to highlight the importance of a particular scene. In this respect Riemenschneider's work is similar to an altarpiece from the workshop of Hans Schnatterpeck in the parish church of the Assumption in Niederlana, South Tyrol (ca. 1503-1508/9) which has shutter-like windows in the back of the corpus (fig. 138, fig 139, fig. 140). When opened they illuminate the scene of the *Coronation of the Virgin*, and they may have been opened on particular days or when there was a reference to the Virgin Mary being in heaven during a particular service (fig. 139).¹⁶⁹ This suggests a very specific usage for the windows, and that it was to give the impression that Mary is in heaven when bathed in light.

Riemenschneider's Creglingen altarpiece uses this device to suggest that the Virgin is being raised to heaven (fig. 60) and the Rothenberg altarpiece uses the light to highlight different aspects of the *Last Supper* story: just before and after noon the highlighted scene is when Jesus hands the sop to Judas (fig. 112).

However, I would also propose that Netherlandish altarpieces may have inspired Riemenschneider's use of the light admitted through the windows in the back of a corpus. Netherlandish altarpieces use cut-away sections in their corpus that are much more comparable in appearance to Riemenschneider's altarpieces than the previously discussed German altarpieces are. Firstly, I shall consider the possible influence on Riemenschneider of the polychromed *Passion* altarpiece originally in St. Dymphna's Church, Geel c.1480, (fig. 141) which contains cut-away windows in the back of the

corpus. Then I will explore the possible connection between Jan Borreman, the only Netherlandish sculptor to work with monochrome, and Riemenschneider.

Riemenschneider's M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpiece, his first work to use cut-away windows in the corpus, shares similar characteristics with the Geel altarpiece. The Geel altarpiece is divided into three niches, each niche contains tracery windows, which are filled with glass and the largest windows are in the central niche (fig.142).¹⁷⁰ In the central niche the windows are behind the central scene of the Crucifixion and their sills align with the heads of the figures underneath the cross (fig.143). This is like Riemenschneider's M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpiece as the windows are also behind the central scene of Mary Magdalen rising to the heaven (although they are not filled with glass and these are the only windows in the corpus) (fig. 107). In both cases it seems that this was a deliberate effect employed by the sculptors to accentuate the main narrative of the corpus. In the Geel altarpiece the windows give the crucifixion scene a light and open appearance compared to the complex mass of figures represented underneath the cross (fig. 143). This is also conveyed in the M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpiece as the figure of Mary Magdalen is much clearer than the other two figures in the corpus which is obscured by the shadows (fig. 107). In my view the main purpose for the use of windows in the corpus may have been to demonstrate that God was present at the represented scene through the medieval theologians' metaphor of light. The Geel altarpiece also demonstrates that there must have been a market for altarpieces that featured windows in the back of the corpus and

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 277.

¹⁷⁰ The M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpiece does not have glass in the corpus windows.

the evidence of later works from the Netherlands which contain these designs, such as the Pocklington altarpiece (fig.144), further supports this.

As has been discussed earlier, it is conjectured that Riemenschneider may have travelled to the Netherlands in his journeyman years.¹⁷¹ The Geel altarpiece was produced when Riemenschneider was still a journeyman and before his workshop in Würzburg was established in 1485.¹⁷² Therefore, it is very possible that Riemenschneider came into contact with the Geel altarpiece or another Netherlandish altarpiece using a similar cut-out corpus design during his journeyman years. He may even have been employed in Netherlandish workshops and so participated in the creation of such designs. The Netherlandish use of cut-away windows in the corpus pre-dates any of the surviving German altarpieces with the same window format, so it seems probable that Riemenschneider borrowed this element from the Netherlands.¹⁷³ However, this work is polychromed and does not produce the same effects as a monochrome work, so Riemenschneider may have turned to another source to understand the potential of light effects on monochrome altarpieces.

Jan Borreman's is the only Netherlandish workshop known to have produced monochrome altarpieces, and it is my hypothesis that Riemenschneider must have had an

¹⁷¹ Khrom, 'The Sources of Riemenschneider's Art', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 63-66.

¹⁷² I do acknowledge that Riemenschneider did pledge his oath of allegiance to the city of Würzburg in 1479 but it is still possible that he travelled between 1479 and 1490 and that other works with similar open window motifs pre-dated the Geel altarpiece.

association with Borreman as there are so many similarities in their work.¹⁷⁴ Borreman's monochrome St George altarpiece (1493) contains a comparable positioning of the cut-away windows in the corpus (fig. 9) with Riemenschneider's later monochrome works, especially the Rothenberg altarpiece (fig. 112b). The windows in both these works dominate the space at the back of the corpus to allow the sunlight to interact significantly with the sculptural scene and contribute to a monochrome aesthetic.¹⁷⁵

It also seems reasonable to suggest that Borreman's St George altarpiece inspired Riemenschneider to further develop the use of windows within his Rothenberg and Creglingen altarpieces, which he originally trialled with the M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpiece. The St George altarpiece has seven niches in the horizontal corpus. The three in the middle are largest and contain seven panel tracery windows, and the other four niches either side of the central three are smaller and contain six windows (fig. 9).¹⁷⁶ The cut-away windows in the central scenes do not interact with the figural scenes, as the figures have backgrounds of plain wood (fig. 145), but the windows in the smaller niches are designed so the bottoms of the windows align with the tops of the figures (fig. 9). The layout of the corpus windows is extremely similar to Riemenschneider's later monochrome works (fig. 112b, fig. 60) more so than the M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpiece (fig. 107).

¹⁷³ This is strengthened by the discussion in chapter three on the other elements he borrowed from Netherlandish altarpieces.

¹⁷⁴ Kim Woods notes that Borreman's style of work was very influential. Kim Woods, 'Five Netherlandish Carved Altar-Pieces in England and the Brussels School of Carving c.1470-1520', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 138, No. 1125 (Dec., 1996), 795-96.

¹⁷⁵ I have been unable to find literature that discusses Borman's use of windows to contribute to the monochrome aesthetic.

¹⁷⁶ Horizontal means that the scenes of the sculpture run consecutively in a horizontal line.

It is unfortunate that the St George altarpiece now stands against a wall in the Royal Museum of Art and History, Brussels, and is only lit from the front (fig. 9). Originally the altarpiece was placed in the chapel transept. Although I have not obtained an image of this it would be reasonable to speculate that the work would have been lit from behind by a window behind the altar.¹⁷⁷ If this were the case the sunlight would move around the piece during the day and accentuate details, like in the M \ddot{u} nnerstadt, Rothenberg and Creglingen altarpieces. To indicate these light effects I have produced a rudimentary computerised images that illustrates how sunlight could interact with the altarpiece at different times of the day (fig. 147, fig. 148, fig.149).

These images have enabled observations to be made on the light effects and compare them with those seen in Riemenschneider's works. These images demonstrate that Riemenschneider and Borreman's works use light to accentuate details of the sculpture at different times of the day as well as to contribute to the monochrome aesthetic, again pointing to a connection between Riemenschneider and Borreman. For example, if Borreman's sculpture is lit from the left-hand side, the light emphasises the decapitated head of the figure on the floor, which is in darkness for the rest of the day (fig. 147).

Riemenschneider uses a similar technique in the Rothenberg altarpiece, where the head of St. John, which is resting on Jesus' lap is in shadows for most of the day apart from when

¹⁷⁷ The altarpiece may well have had a similar positioning to the Creglingen altarpiece, where the windows are not so close to the work but still enable the light to shine through the cut-away windows in the sculpture. I would like to thank Jeanne Nuechterlein for the information regarding the original location of the work, also see Powell, 'The Leuvariant Image', *Cut History*, 29:4, 2006, pp 542-3.

the morning sun (from the left-hand side) illuminates his face (fig. 146). A comparison of the use of light can also be observed in the two works when lit by the mid-day sun, which is positioned centrally above the work. It appears that Borreman uses this light to highlight the drama of the torture of St George, his physical pain and emotional expressions, which contribute significantly to the atmosphere of the narrative (fig. 148). Similarly, Riemenschneider uses the midday light to focus the spectator's view on the hand of Judas ready to take the bread from Jesus and likewise draw them into the narrative (fig. 112b).

Riemenschneider and Borreman's similar uses of a variety of surface textures, which are especially enlivened by their uses of light, also suggest a close connection between the two sculptors. The carving of deep folds in fabrics can be found in both the St George altarpiece and the Creglingen altarpiece (fig. 150, fig. 117). As noted previously, Chapuis has described this as a '*chiaroscuro* effect' in regard to the latter altarpiece and the same term could also be applied to Borreman's work.¹⁷⁸ Both sculptors also use smooth surfaces, which reflect the light and provide an interesting contrast with the shadows. Borreman uses this technique on the naked body of St. George in various torture scenes, which makes him visually prominent within each scene and emphasises his physical pain as well as his emotional strength (fig. 151). Most notably in his Rothenberg altarpiece, Riemenschneider uses smooth surfaces for his fabrics and faces which enables even more of a contrast between these light areas and darker ones (fig. 41). These links and the very many others discussed therefore make a very strong case that Riemenschneider may have

developed his sculptural approach and monochrome aesthetic as a direct result of contact with, and encouragement from, Borreman. Therefore, such similarities further strengthen my hypothesis on a possible connection between the two artists.

¹⁷⁸ Chapuis, 'Recognizing Riemenschneider', in Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 32.

Conclusion

Just by observing the M \ddot{u} nnerstadt, Rothenberg and Creglingen altarpieces, Riemenschneider's unique understanding of the effects of the monochrome aesthetic and his ability to exploit it becomes evident. Through this thesis I have provided the Riemenschneider spectator with a wider consideration of the origin of Riemenschneider's monochrome work by combining established arguments regarding surface treatment and social and artistic influences with my personal observations. Undoubtedly, a strong foundation was established on which Riemenschneider could develop his new monochrome aesthetic through his employment within the W \ddot{u} rzburg council and the subsequent unique guild laws of the city - such as being unable to employ a *fassmaler* - as well as the views of the patrons who commissioned him and the evidence of an open market, which would enable a certain degree of artistic freedom. In addition the close similarities between earlier German alabaster sculpture, Netherlandish altarpieces, monochrome church furniture and the print medium demonstrate that Riemenschneider actively turned to new compositional arrangements and other monochrome techniques to contribute to his monochrome medium. My reoccurring argument on the probable connection between Riemenschneider and Jan Borreman is borne out by closely formed comparisons of their work, and this may have helped determine the direction of Riemenschneider's subsequent monochrome outlook. In particular, the similar exploration of natural sunlight in both sculptors' works offers a further dimension to the argument.

However, through the process of this thesis a number of problems have been raised that have not been answered due to lack of data. It is possible there may be more information which can be amassed and there may be scholarship by local German historians which still awaits incorporation into mainstream scholarship, both of which could conceivably provide answers to the following problems.

One problem is the lack of knowledge of Riemenschneider's apprentice and journeyman years and the places that he may have visited in the early years of forming his workshop. As established in this thesis, artistically his work has been connected to Ulm, Stuttgart and in my opinion, through substantial artistic comparison, the Netherlands. However, there are no known historical records to confirm any years or destinations of travel, unlike the documentation of his oath of allegiance to the city of Würzburg in 1479.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, it would be very useful if local Netherlandish historians undertook research into local records to confirm that he did visit the Netherlands. In turn this could strengthen my personal theory that he and Jan Borreman discussed the promotion and application of the monochrome aesthetic.¹⁸⁰

The second problem is that the medium of the monochrome glaze needs to be examined further. Throughout the course of this thesis it has been established that a small minority of sculptors, contemporary to Riemenschneider, were using a type of monochrome glaze on wooden sculptures. However, further scientific examination of these glazes is needed to allow more precise comparison with Riemenschneider's glaze, so as to understand how

¹⁷⁹ Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*, 18.

consistently and widely a monochrome glaze was used on wooden sculpture and to further strengthen the theory discussed throughout this thesis of its intentional use.

The third problem is a lack of understanding on why monochrome altarpieces were only produced during a small time span and what the reasons are for their decline. When monochrome altarpieces were in decline during the third decade of the fifteenth century, polychrome altarpieces were still being produced. Therefore it would be beneficial to examine possible social factors that could well have been an influence on this situation. As considered in this thesis, Riemenschneider's monochrome altarpieces were a response to pre-Reformation theologians' debates on the use of religious images. Hence, not only would it be advantageous to explore the direction that wooden sculpture took during and succeeding the years of the Reformation, but also, it would be extremely useful to research the types of patrons who were commissioning polychromed altarpieces during this period. Peter Dell the Elder, a pupil of Riemenschneider, began to produce small wooden sculptural reliefs in monochrome with a narrative content, similar in look to the wings of Riemenschneider's altarpieces. An examination of this form of work, the links that the artist had with the Reformation movement, and the inevitable influence that Riemenschneider must have had on this artist may bring further answers to the debate on the intentional use of the monochrome aesthetic.

Due to my unique approach of focusing solely on outlining the realistic origins of Riemenschneider's monochrome aesthetic, this thesis has not only highlighted the

¹⁸⁰ Although it is possible that Borreman traveled to Germany and this hypothesis could be investigated further.

importance of Riemenschneider's monochrome sculptures on his contemporaries and those who succeeded him but it has also in turn provided a substantial foundation on which to initiate research into the issues, outlined above, that could not be addressed here.

List of Illustrations

All images are photographs taken by myself unless otherwise stated.

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- 27.** Master of Kefermarkt and Master of the Saint Christopher, Passau (?), High altar, 1490-1497, limewood, Parish Church of Saint Wolfgang, Kefermarkt (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 28a.** Detail of Kefermarkt altarpiece showing the detailed carving of Bishop Wolfgang's Mitre in the corpus (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 28b.** Detail of Kefermarkt altarpiece showing detailed carving of the edges clothing on the figure of St Stephen (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).

- 29.** Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece showing the painted on eyes and lips on the figures in the corpus.
- 30.** Detail of Műnnerstadt altarpiece, showing the painted on eyes in the *Christ in the House of Simon* relief (from Julien Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*).
- 31.** Detail of the corpus of the Creglingen altarpiece showing how Riemenschneider painted eyes onto the figures to show the figures gaze (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 32.** Recreation Riemenschneider's presumed intentional finish, with eyes and lips, on the Rothenberg altarpiece.
- 33.** Computerised image with eyes and lips removed on Rothenberg altarpiece to convey how the figures would not interact as well if the eyes were not painted on originally.
- 34.** Attributed to Tilman Riemenschneider, *Saints Christopher, Eustace, and Erasmus (Three Helper Saints)* from a series of fourteen saints, c.1500-1504, limewood, The Cloisters Museum, New York.
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- 38.** Tilman Riemenschneider, *Adam and Eve*, 1490, alabaster, originally for the exterior of the Chapel of Our Lady, Würzburg now in the Mainfränkisches Museum, Würzburg.
- 39.** Modern reproduction of *Adam and Eve* on the exterior of the Chapel of Our Lady, Würzburg.
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- 45.** Contractual drawing for the altarpiece for the High Altar at Ulm Minster (from Julien Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*).
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- 49.** Detail from *Christ in the House of Simon* relief of the M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpiece
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- 50.** Workshop of Jan Borreman (Pasquier Borreman?), Altarpiece of St Crispin and St Crispinian, 1520, St Waldetrude's Church, Herentals (from Lynn F. Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*).
- 51.** Attributed to Micheal Erhart, High altar altarpiece, 1494, limewood and polychrome, former abbey church of St John the Baptist, Blaubeuren (from Rainer Kahsntiz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 52a.** Unknown sculptor, Polychromer Friedrich Herlin, *Crucifixion* altarpiece, 1466, limewood and polychromy, Saint James Church, Rothenberg ob der Tauber (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
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- 57.** Detail of St George altarpiece showing Borreman's use of space within the individual niches (from en.wikipedia.org).
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- 59.** Tilman Riemenschneider, Right-hand group from *Passion* altarpiece, c.1485, Limewood, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich (from Julien Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*).
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- 61.** Calvary scene, 1460, alabaster, Halber Cathedral (from Julien Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c. 1460-1531*).
- 62.** *Mourning Women and Saint John* on the left and *Soldiers* on the right, 1470, alabaster, Strasbourg, now in Musée de l’Oeuvre Notre- Dame (from Julien Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*).
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- 65.** Detail of Creglingen altarpiece, showing the interaction of the figures in the corpus through the directional gaze of the figures (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 66.** Detail of Creglingen altarpiece, Mary looking out at the spectator (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 67.** Detail of the corpus of the *Crucifixion* altarpiece, demonstrating the visual effects achieved by polychrome, especially when representing blood (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 68.** Detail of St George altarpiece, hand gestures direct the spectator to the main scene (from en.wikipedia.org).

- 69.** Detail of St George altarpiece showing the beautiful carved facial expressions of the figures (from en.wikipedia.org).
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- 71.** Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece showing the interaction of between the figures through hand gestures.
- 72.** *Pieta*, Choir Stall, oak, 14th century, St Laurence church, Ludlow.
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Ulm Minster (from en.wikipedia.org).
- 75.** Detail of Creglingen altarpiece, Self portrait of Riemenschneider (from Iris Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*).
- 76.** Painted choir stalls in St Buckhard church, Würzburg
- 77.** Detail of painted choir stalls at St Buckhard church, Würzburg.
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- 79.** Jörg Sylrin the Younger, Blaubueren choir stall, 1493, oak, (from en.wikipedia.org).
- 80.** Jörg Sylrin the younger, Blaubueren choir stall, 1493, oak, showing the use of smooth linear lines to fabric which create a feeling of movement when used with a monochrome finish due to the ability to create light and dark areas (from en.wikipedia.org).
- 81.** Bishop, misericord, oak, fourteenth century, St Laurence church, Ludlow.

- 82.** Detail of M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpiece showing detail of Bishop's mitre in the *Entombment* relief (from Hanswernfried Muth, *Tilman Riemenschneider*).
- 83.** Image of King (?), misericord, oak, fourteenth century, St Laurence church, Ludlow.
- 84.** Grotesque woman, misericord, oak, fourteenth century, St Laurence church, Ludlow.
- 85.** Detail of Creglingen altarpiece showing the carving detail on Angel Gabriel's clothing (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 86.** Attributed to Hugh van Eyck, *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* altarpiece, 1432, now in the Chapel of Saint Bavo Cathedral, Ghent (from Jeffery Chipps Smith, *The Northern Renaissance*).
- 87.** Jean Colombe, *The Miracle of Saint Anthony of Padua*, from *Tres riches heures*, 1485-89, in The Cloister's Museum, New York (from William D. Wixom, *Medieval Sculptures*).
- 88.** *Resurrection*, stained glass window, The Cloisters Museum, New York.
- 89.** Rogier Van Der Weyden, *Sfora triptych*, detail depicting St Jerome and St George, oil on panel, c. 1460, now in Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (from http://hoocher.com/Rogier_van_der_Weyden/Rogier_van_der_Weyden.htm)
- 90.** *The Last Supper*, 1476, woodcut, (from Illustrated Bartsch, Volume 81).
- 91.** Thomas Anshelm, *The Last Supper*, 1488, woodcut, (from Illustrated Bartsch, Volume 86).
- 92.** Detail of the Rothenberg altarpiece showing closed doors (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 93.** Martin Schongauer, *Baptism of Christ*, engraving (from Justus Bier, "Riemenschneider's use of Graphic Sources").

- 94.** Workshop of Tilman Riemenschneider, *Baptism of Christ* relief on the Gerolzhofen altarpiece, c. 1509-13/14, limewood, in Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich (from Justus Bier, “Riemenschneider’s use of Graphic Sources”).
- 95.** Detail of the Rothenberg altarpiece showing the shallow depth of the work.
- 96.** Detail of the Creglingen altarpiece showing the shallow depth of the work.
- 97.** Attributed to Tilman Riemenschneider, Sketch of Woman, on the right hand relief of the Windsheim altarpiece (from Julien Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider, c. 1460-1531*).
- 98.** Master A.G., Christ’s Entry into Jerusalem, engraving (from Julien Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*).
- 99.** Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece, *Christ’s entry into Jerusalem* relief (from Julien Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*).
- 100.** Master E.S., *St James the Less*, from series of seated apostles, print (from Illustrated Bartsch, Vol. 23).
- 101.** Detail from the corpus of the Rothenberg altarpiece showing the similar sitting position of the figure of to the print.
- 102.** Master E.S., *St. Paul*, from series of seated apostles, print (from Illustrated Bartsch, Vol. 23).
- 103.** Detail from the corpus of the Rothenberg altarpiece showing the drapery on the floor.
- 104.** Detail from the corpus of the Rothenberg altarpiece showing the twists in the fabric.
- 105.** Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece, showing the fabric swoops down into a point directing the eye of the spectator towards the *crucifixion* scene in predella.

- 106.** Detail of the Rothenberg altarpiece, showing the mirroring of the hand of St to the fabrics in figure 105.
- 107.** Detail of M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpiece showing the use of windows in the corpus (from Hanswernfried Muth, *Tilman Riemenschneider*).
- 108.** Detail of the Rothenberg altarpiece showing the tracery design on the windows.
- 109.** Window by the Rothenberg altarpiece, showing the same use of glass and the same tracery design at the top.
- 110a.** Photograph of ceiling in the choir of St James' Church Rothenberg.
- 110b.** Photograph showing the underneath section of the Rothenberg altarpiece, is very similar in design to the ceiling.
- 111.** Detail of the Rothenberg altarpiece showing the use of windows, view is of the back of altarpiece.
- 112a.** This is the image that Baxandall uses to convey his description of the effects of early morning light in the Rothenberg altarpiece (from Michael Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*).
- 112b.** This is the image that Baxandall uses to convey his description of the use of light within the Rothenberg altarpiece (from Michael Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*).
- 113.** Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece showing how too much natural sunlight can distort the image.
- 114.** Photograph of Riemenschneider's Rothenberg altarpiece placed against a wall (from Lynn F. Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish carved altarpieces*).
- 115.** Photograph of two windows from the church of Our Lord, Creglingen.
- 116.** Detail of Creglingen altarpiece showing the windows in the corpus (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).

- 117.** Detail of Creglingen altarpiece showing the chiaroscuro effect created by the folds of fabrics of the figures in different light (from a postcard from the Church of Our Lord, Creglingen).
- 118.** Detail of Creglingen altarpiece to demonstrate how different the work can look at different times of the day due to the movement of sunlight.
- 119.** Detail of the corpus of the Creglingen altarpiece showing the bare section underneath the figure of the Virgin Mary.
- 120.** Detail of the corpus of the Creglingen altarpiece to show how the shadows create a pattern on the bare section underneath the Virgin Mary.
- 121.** Detail from the corpus of the Creglingen altarpiece showing the larger than life size hands of the two front figures whose hands contribute to the pattern shown in figure 120.
- 122.** Photograph showing the stain glass windows of the Műnnerstadt church
- 123.** Photograph showing how dark the altarpiece appears when it is not lit by modern lighting, therefore, demonstrating that the stained glass windows and the closeness of the surrounding buildings were detrimental to the monochrome aesthetic of the Műnnerstadt altarpiece.
- 124.** Jan Van Eyck, *Annunciation*, 1434-36, The National Gallery, Washington D C (from en.wikipedia.org).
- 125.** Jan van Eyck, *Madonna in Church*, c.1425, Staatliche Museen Berlin, (from Jeffery Chips Smith, *The Northern Renaissance*).
- 126.** Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *The Nativity at Night*, c. 1490, The National Gallery, London, (from Gabriele Findailo (ed.), *The Image of Christ*).

- 127.** Matthius Grünewald, Isenheim altarpiece, *Resurrected Lord wing*, 1515, Unterlinden Museum, Colmar (from Jeffery Chipps Smith, *The Northern Renaissance*).
- 128.** Albrecht Dürer, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, 1510, etching, (from Illustrated Bartsch, Volume 10).
- 129.** Albrecht Dürer, *The Ecstasy of Mary Magdalene*, 15 , etching (from www.art-wallpaper.com).
- 130.** Albrecht Dürer, *The Last Supper*, etching, 1510 (in The New Art Gallery, Walsall).
- 131.** Detail of the Lorch am Rhein altarpiece showing the use of blind windows (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 132.** Viet Stoss, *Nativity* altarpiece, 1520-23, limewood, formerly at the Carmelite Church of the Assumption, Nuremberg, now in Bamberg Cathedral.
- 133.** Unknown sculptor, high altar altarpiece, 1438-88 and 1510-15, limewood and polychrome, pilgrimage church of the Coronation of the Virgin, Lauthenbach (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 134.** Detail of Lautenbach altarpiece showing the how the windows are formed in the back of the corpus (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 135.** Detail of Lautenbach altarpiece showing the glass windows in the back of the corpus (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 136.** High altar altarpiece, 1515-25, Parish church of Weisweil, near Freiburg, Breisgau, Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 137.** St Ursula altarpiece in Oberndorf, 1510, near Rottenberg am Neckar, Swabia (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).

- 138.** Workshop of Hans Schnatterpeck, High altar altarpiece, 1503-ca.1508/09, limewood, Parish church of Assumption, Niederlana, South Tyrol (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 139.** Detail of Niederlana altarpiece, with open shutters in the back of the corpus (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 140.** Detail of Niederlana altarpiece, back view of the altarpiece with the shutters closed (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).
- 141.** *Passion* altarpiece, 1485, St Dymphna's Church, Geel (from Lynn F. Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved altarpieces*).
- 142.** Detail of Geel altarpiece showing the use of windows throughout the corpus (from Jacobs, *Netherlandish Carved altarpieces*).
- 143.** Detail of the Geel altarpiece showing central scene with windows (from Lynn F. Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved altarpieces*).
- 144.** Detail of Pocklington altarpiece showing the lay out of the windows of the central scene.
- 145.** Detail of St George altarpiece. The windows align with the top of the heads of the figures (from Lynn F. Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved altarpieces*).
- 146.** Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece to show how St John's head (on the lap of Christ) is illuminated by the morning light, for most of the day it is in shadow.
- 147.** Computerised rendering of the possible lighting effects of the sun in the morning on the St George altarpiece (from Lynn F. Jacobs, *Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*).
- 148.** Computerised rendering of the possible effects that the mid day sun would have on the St George altarpiece (from Lynn F. Jacobs, *Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*).
- 149.** Computerised rendering of the possible effects created by the afternoon sun on the St George altarpiece (from Lynn F. Jacobs, *Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*).

150. Detail of the St George altarpiece showing the use of deeply carved folds of fabric, comparable in style and effect as Riemenschneider's Creglingen altarpieces (from Jane Turner, *Dictionary of Art*).

151. Detail of the St George altarpiece showing how the use of smooth surfaces creates a beautiful contrasting effect enhanced by the use of light.



Figure 1
Tilman Riemenschneider, Mary Magdalene altarpiece (modern reconstruction of 1492 original), limewood, Church of Mary Magdalene, Münnerstadt (from *Tilman Riemenschneider*, Julien Chapuis (ed.)).

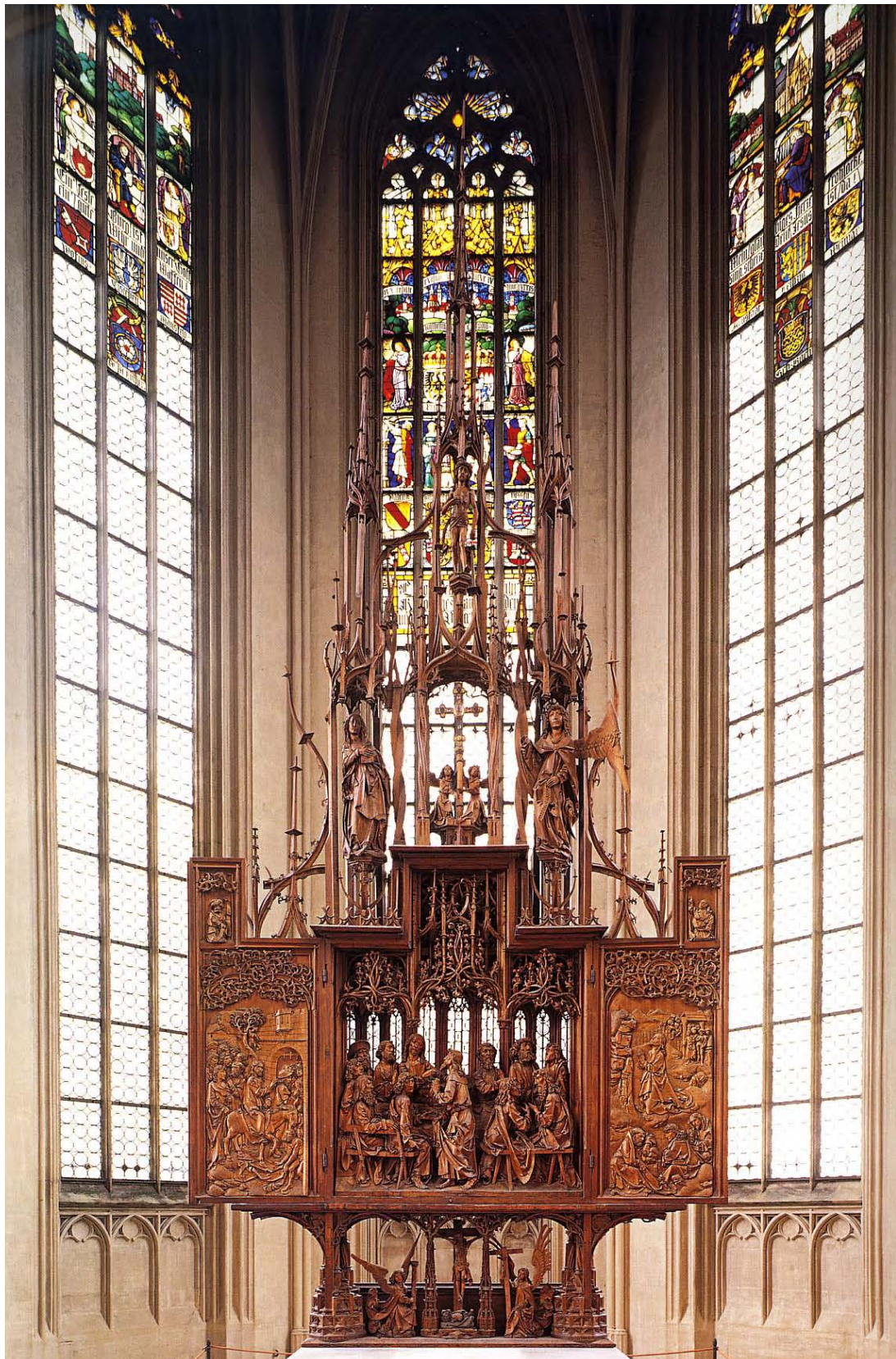


Figure 2
Tilman Riemenschneider, Holy Blood altarpiece, 1500-1501, limewood,
Saint James Church, Rothenberg ob der Tauber (from Rainer Katnitz, *Carved
Splendor*).



Figure 3
Tilman Riemenschneider, *Assumption of the Virgin Altarpiece*, 1510, limewood,
Church of Our Lord, Creglingen (from Rainer Katnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 4
Photograph showing insect damage on a work by Tilman Riemenschneider in the Mainfränkisches Museum, Würzburg.



Figure 5
Tilman Riemenschneider, *Christ and the Apostles* altarpiece, 1509, limewood
Church of St. Killian, Windsheim, now in Heidelberg, Kurpfälzisches Museum
(from Iris Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*).



Figure 6

Workshop of Tilman van der Burch, *Death of the Virgin*, late fifteenth century, oak (from William D. Wixom, *Medieval Museum at the Cloisters*). Use of different coloured woods is evident in the representation of the floor.



Figure 7

Detail of *Death of the Virgin* showing the nails used in the construction of the altarpiece which the gesso layer would hide when polychromed.



Figure 8

Detail of Creglingen altarpiece

Even if Riemenschneider needed to use two separate pieces of wood, as shown in this photograph, then he made sure that the join was precise and the colour of the wood similar.

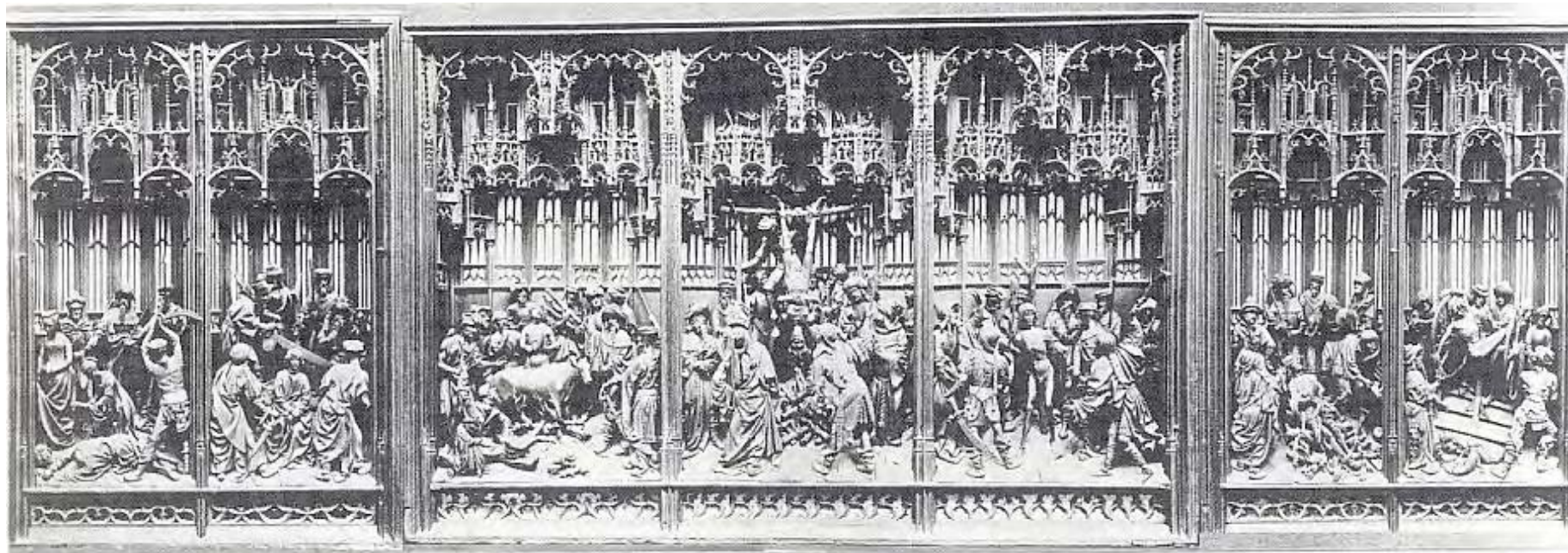


Figure 9

Jan Borreman, *St George* altarpiece, 1493, oak, chapel of crossbowmen's guild for the Church of Our Lady, Ginderbuiten, Mol now at Musees Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels (from Lynn F. Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved altarpieces*).



Figure 10

Detail of M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpiece showing the detailed carving of the hair on the body of Mary Magdalene (from Hanswernfried Muth, *Tilman Riemenschneider* photograph of the original version now in Bayerisches Nationalmuseum Munich).



Figure 11

Detail of M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpiece, showing circular punch marks on the hat of the bishop from the *Entombment* relief (from Hanswernfried Muth, *Tilman Riemenschneider*).



Figure 12

Detail of M \ddot{u} nnerstadt altarpiece *Last Communion* relief, this image demonstrates the variety of ways that Riemenschneider tackled the surface of his wood, from the smooth surface of the houses, the zigzag lines running parallel on the hill next below them, the deeper and wider marks representing grass above the head of Mary Magdalene and small lines to represent fur on the collar of the figure to the far left.



Figure 13
Detail of *St George* altarpiece, showing the similar use of carving techniques as Riemenschneider to represent the floor.

Figure 14
Detail of *St George* altarpiece, showing the tassel effect rendered on the edge of the soldier's clothing.





Figure 13
Detail of Munnerstadt altarpiece
Bishops mitre detailed carving



Figure 15

Detail of Mannerstadt altarpiece, showing detailed carving on the mitre of the bishop and tassel effects on the edging of the clothing (from Iris Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*).

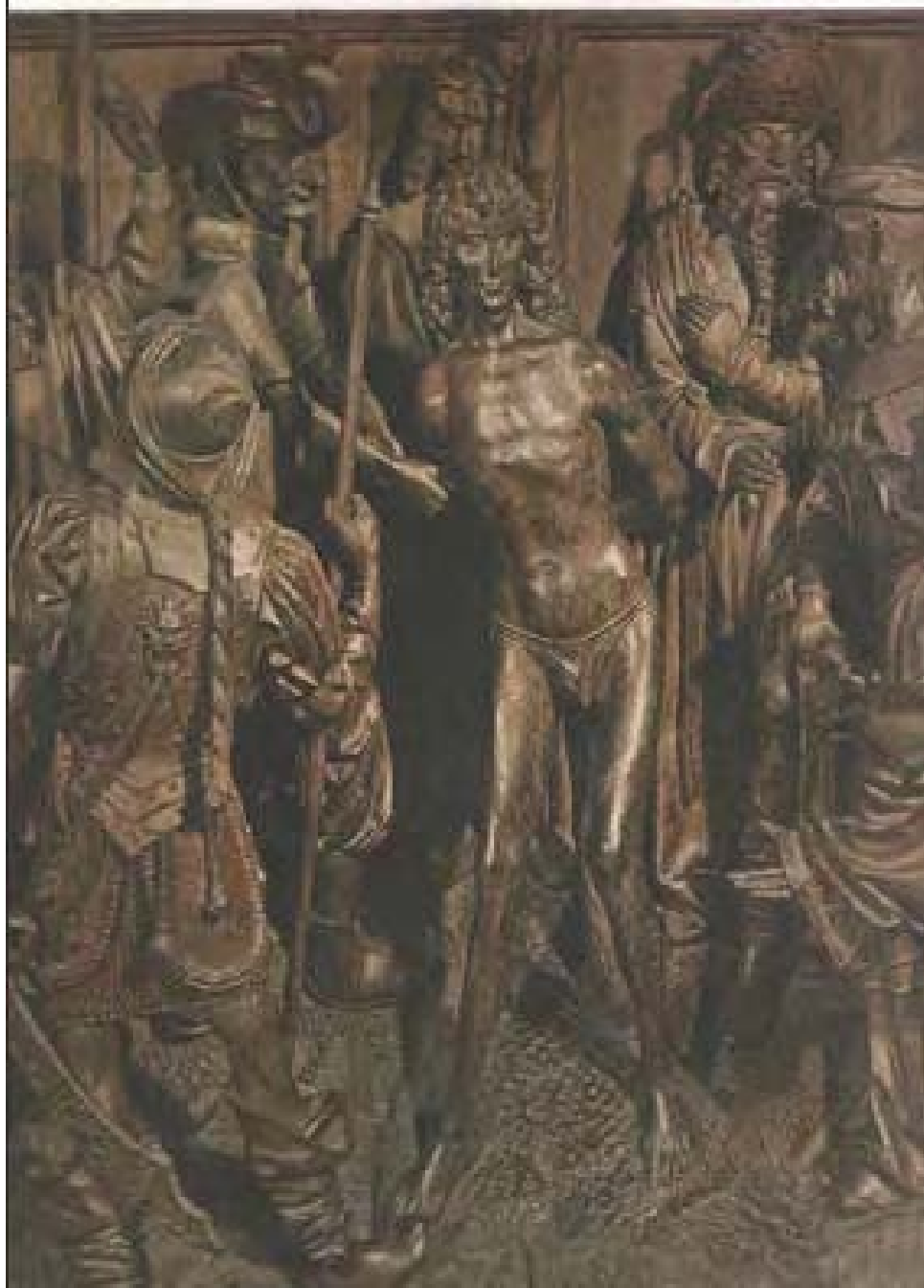


Figure 16
Detail of *St George* altarpiece, showing the detailed carving on the left hand figure which is similar to Riemenschneider's *Münnerstadt* altarpiece.



Figure 17

Tilman Riemenschneider, *St. Elisabeth of Hungary*, c.1510/1515, limewood with ancient polychromy, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg (from *Tilman Riemenschneider*, Julien Chapuis (ed.)).

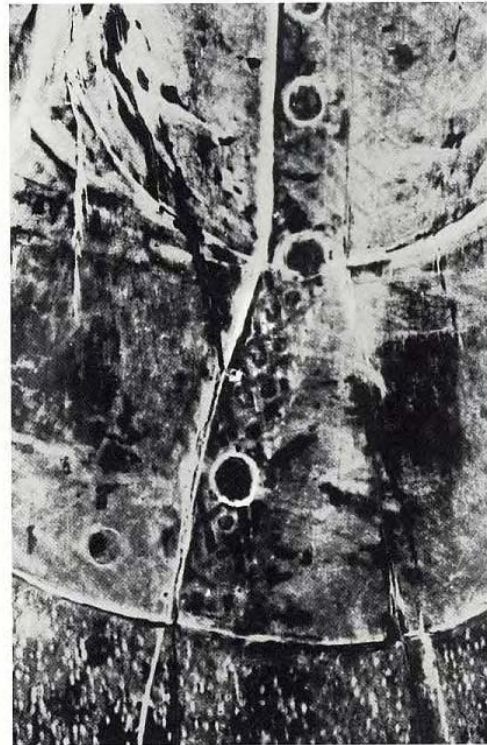


Figure 18

X-ray of *St. Elisabeth of Hungary* (from *Tilman Riemenschneider*, Julien Chapuis (ed.)).



Figure 19
Detail of Creglingen altarpiece showing the book held by St Phillip which has circular and star punch marks with appliqué decoration (from *Tilman Riemenschneider*, Julien Chapuis (ed.)).

Figure 20
Bookbinding with punchwork, c,1510, calf leather and brass (from *Tilman Riemenschneider*, Julien Chapuis (ed.)).



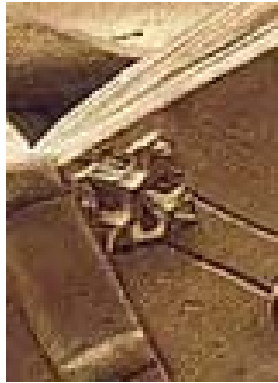


Figure 21
Detail of Creglingen altarpiece appliqué leaf detail.



Figure 22
Detail of *St George* altarpiece, showing the appliqué decoration of raised dots on the amour of the soldier, (from en.wikipedia.org)



Figure 23
Detail of Creglingen altarpiece example of appliqué decoration on the fabric of the Virgin Mary in the *Visitation* relief (from Hanswernfried Muth, *Tilman Riemenschneider*).

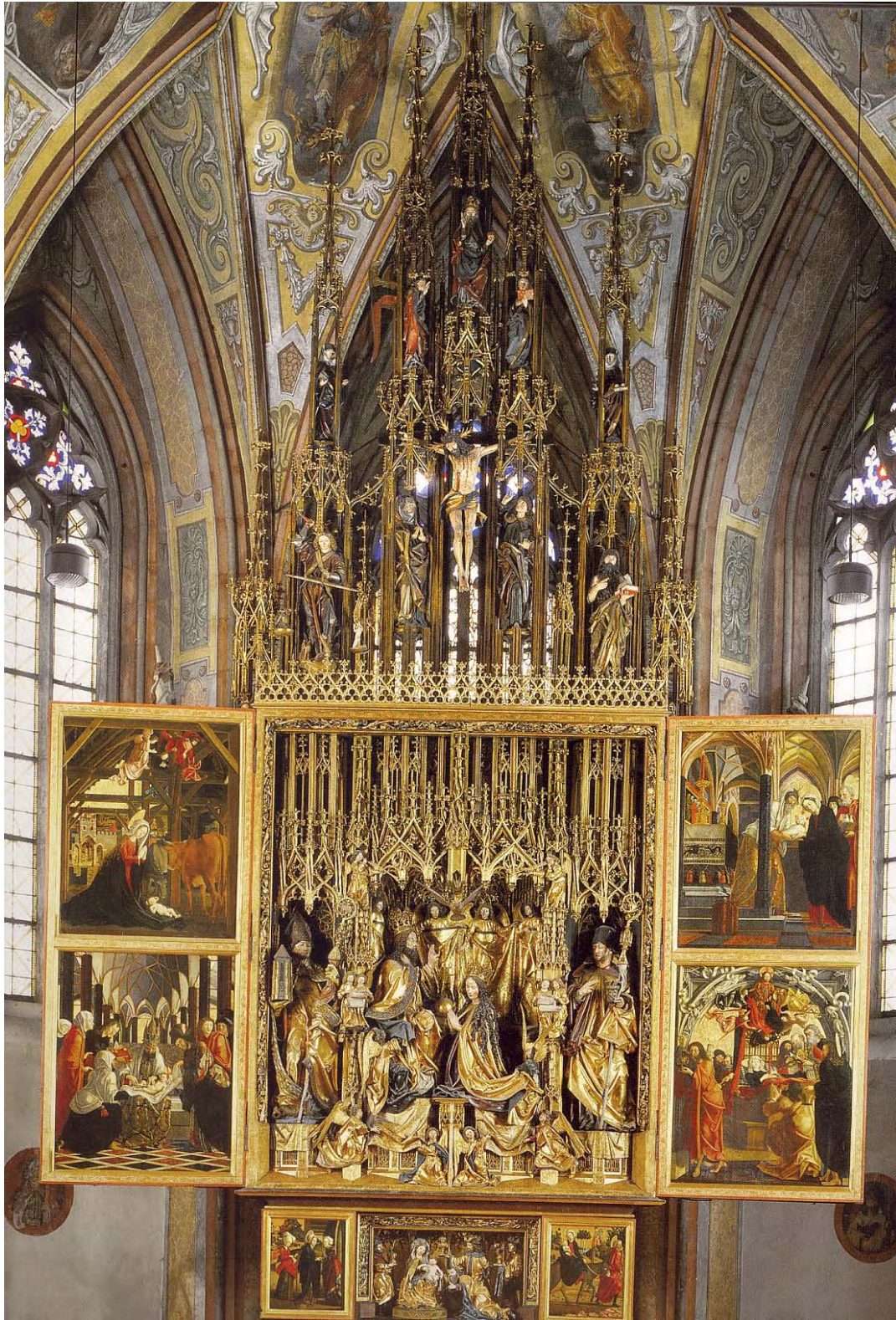


Figure 24a
Michael Pacher, High altar altarpiece, 1481, stone pine and polychrome, St. Wolfgang church, Salzkammergut (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 24b

Detail of St Wolfgang altarpiece showing the detail applied by the polychromer on the bishop's mitre and how the polychromer created patterns in the gold fabric which can be compared as similar in effect to Riemenschneider's carving.



Figure 25
Detail of St George altarpiece showing detailed carving of the edges of the clothing of the figure (from Jane Dictionary of Art)



Figure 26
Detail of Creglingen altarpiece showing the detailed carving of the fabrics (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).

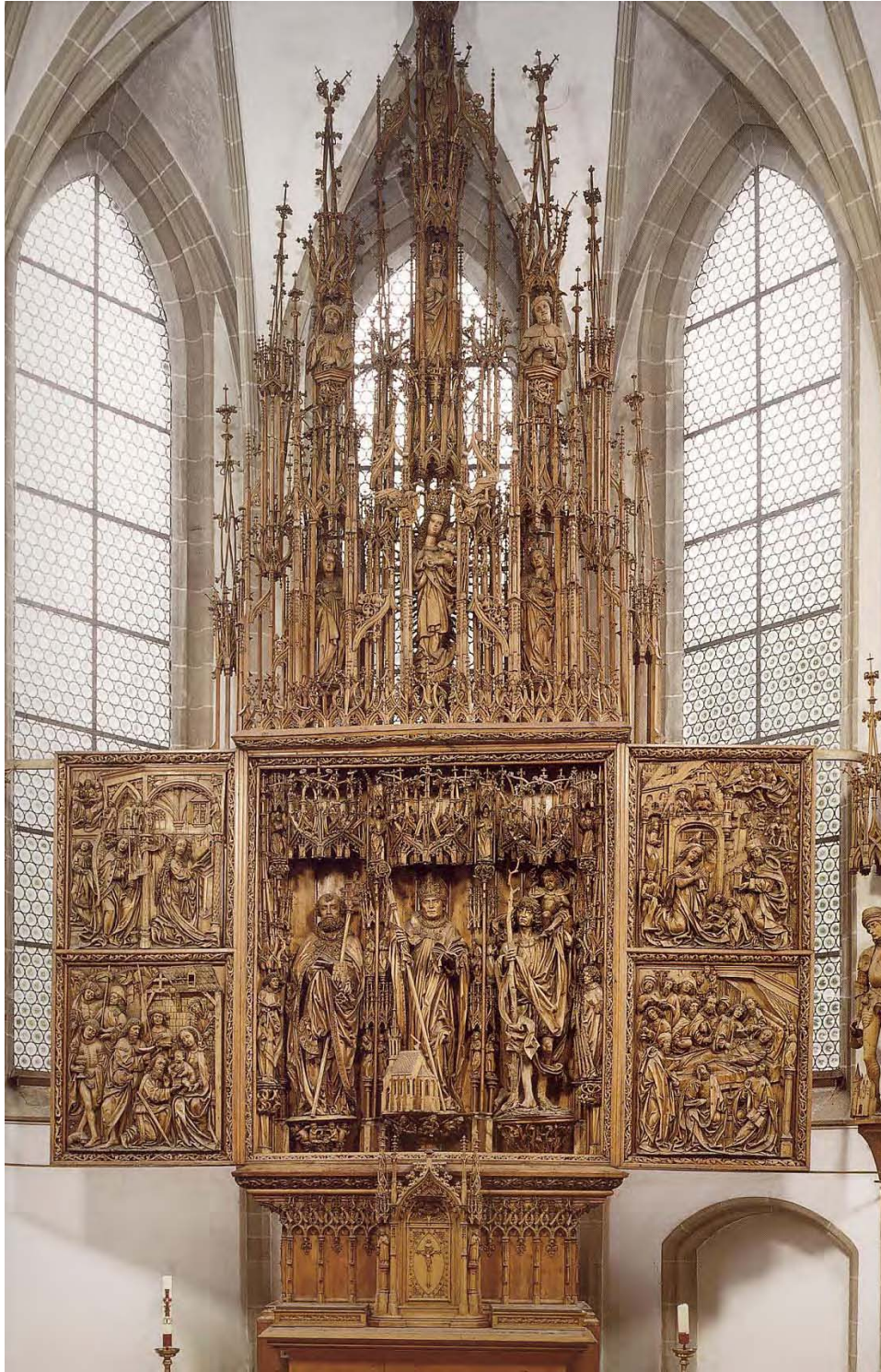


Figure 27
Master of Kefermarkt and Master of the Saint Christopher, Passau, high altar, 1490-1497, limewood, Parish Church of Saint Wolfgang, Kefermarkt, (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 28a

Detail of Kefermarkt altarpiece showing the detailed carving of Bishop Wolfgang's Mitre in the corpus (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).

Figure 28b

Detail of Kefermarkt altarpiece showing detailed carving of the edges clothing on the figure of St Stephen (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).





Figure 29

Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece showing the painted on eyes and lips on the figures in the corpus.





Figure 30
Detail of Münsterstadt altarpiece showing the painted on eyes in the *Christ in the House of Simon* relief (from *Tilman Riemenschneider*, Julien Chapuis (ed.)).



Figure 31

Detail of the corpus of the Creglingen altarpiece showing how Riemenschneider painted eyes onto the figures to show the figures gaze (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 32

Recreation of Riemenschneider's presumed intentional finish, with the eyes and lips, on the Rothenberg altarpiece.



Figure 33

Computerised image with eyes and lips removed on Rothenberg altarpiece to convey how the figures would not interact as well if the eyes were not painted on originally.



Figure 34
Attributed to Tilman Riemenschneider
Saints Christopher, Eustace, and Erasmus (Three Helper Saints) from a series of fourteen saints c.1500-1504, limewood, The Cloisters Museum, New York.

Figure 35
Detail from *Three Helper Saints*, Erasmus with the painted eyes and lips removed, it lacks emotion and does not appear finished.



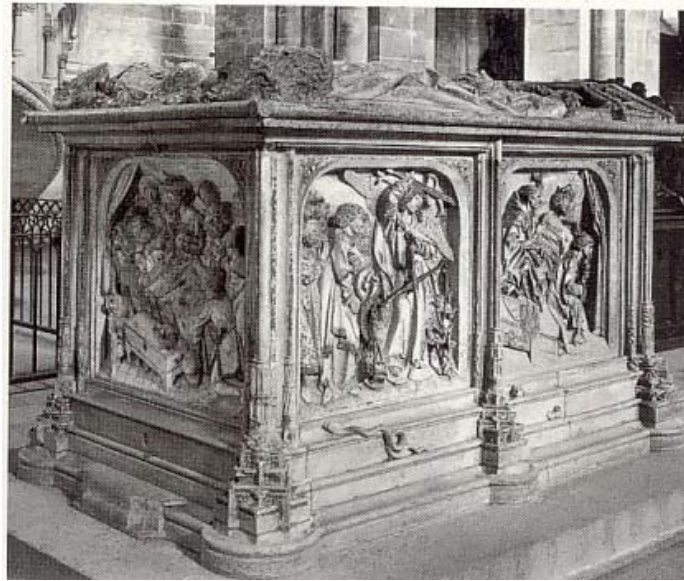


Figure 36

Tilman Riemenschneider, Kaisergarb (Tomb of Emperor Heinrich II and Empress Kunigunde), 1499-1513, Bamberg Cathedral (from Iris Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*).

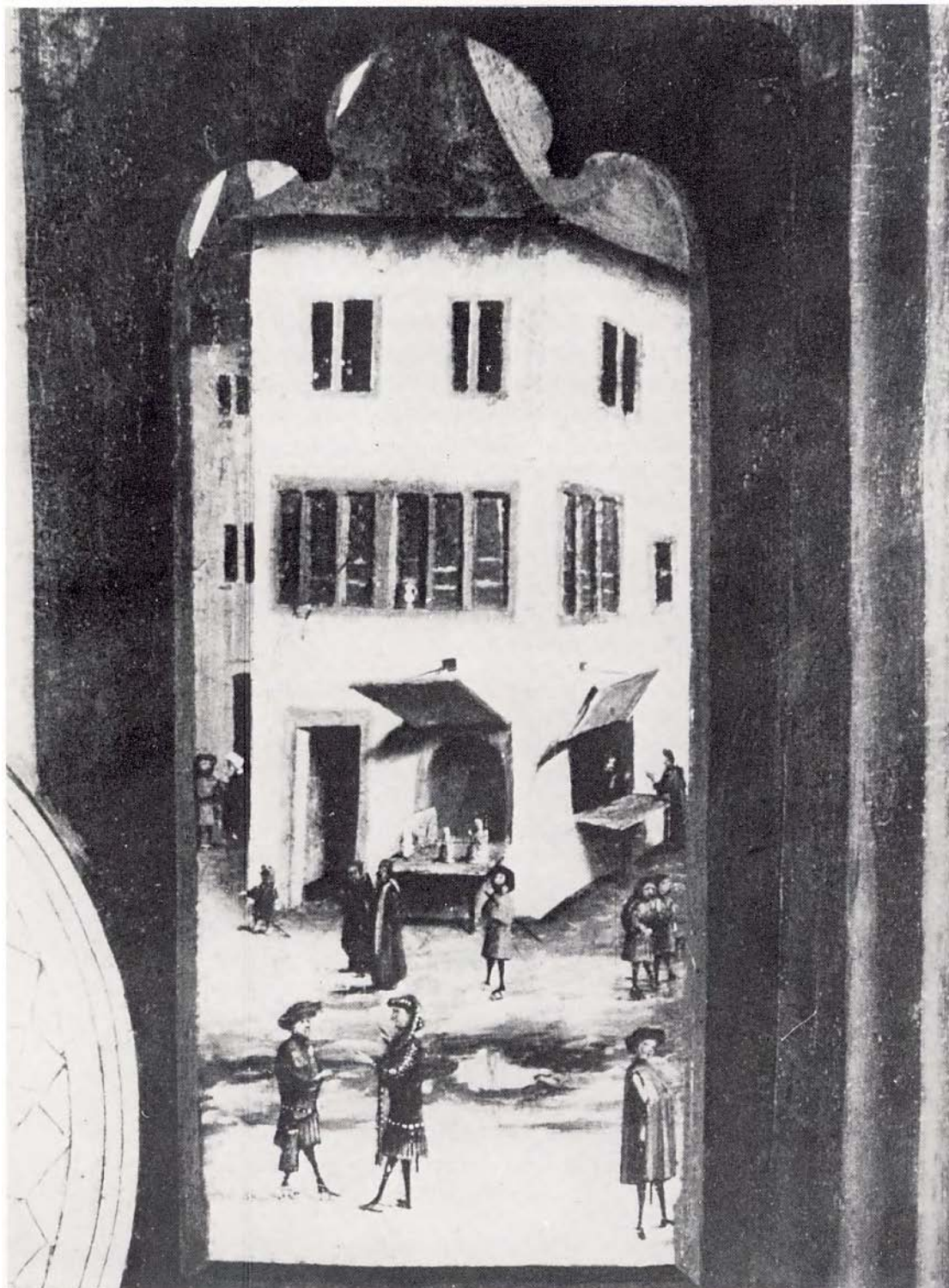


Figure 37
Konrad Witz, *Sts Katherine and Mary Magdalen*, detail showing a Sculptor's Workshop, c. 1440, Strasbourg, Musée des Beaux-Arts (from Micheal Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors*).

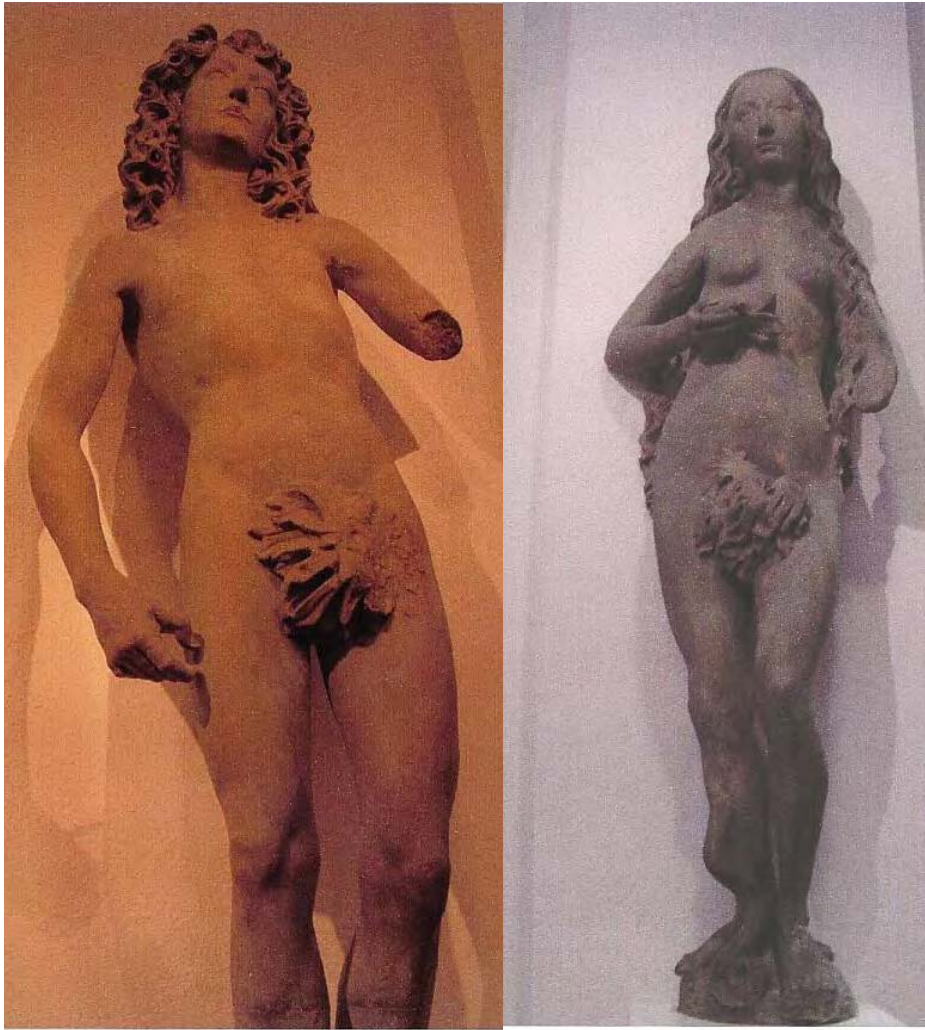


Figure 38

Tilman Riemenschneider, *Adam and Eve*, 1490, alabaster, originally for the exterior of the Chapel of Our Lady, Würzburg now in the Mainfränkisches Museum, Würzburg.



Figure 39
Modern reproduction of Tilman Riemenschneider's *Adam and Eve* on the exterior of the Chapel of Our Lady, Würzburg.



Figure 40

Hartmann Schedel, *Liber Chronicarum*, Nuremberg (Anton Koberger)
The Piper of Niklashausen preaching, 1493, woodcut (from Micheal Baxandall,
The Limewood Sculptors).

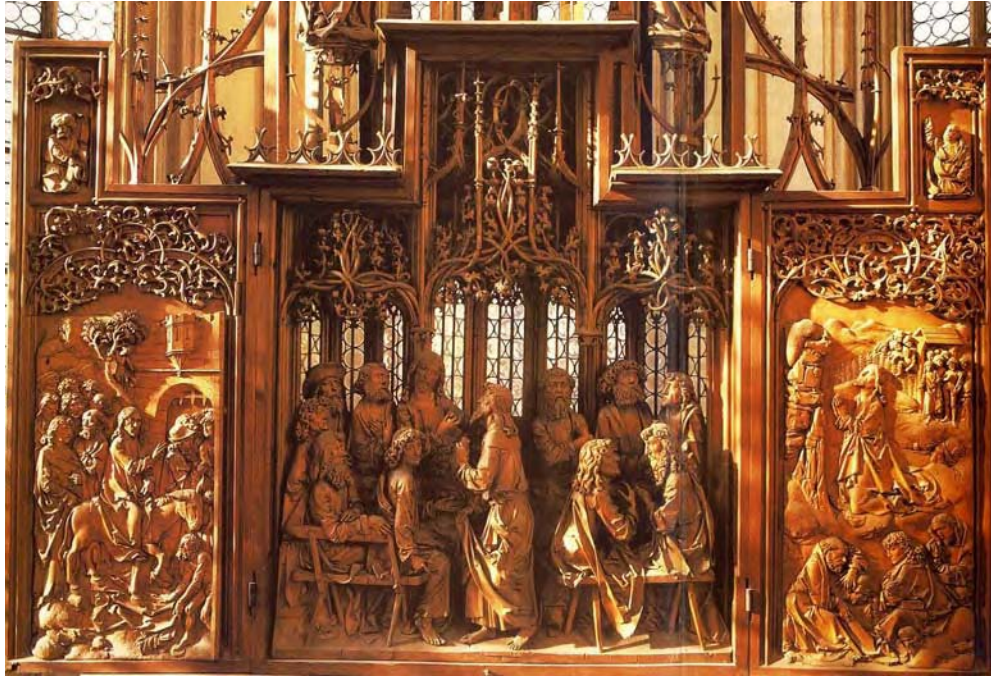


Figure 41

Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece showing that the three scenes represented are in chronological order as told in the bible and therefore can be read from left to right. Image from



Figure 42

Interior view of Rothenberg church from where Riemenschneider's altarpiece is situated (Johannes Pöttsch from DKV-Art Guide No. 312/3).



Figure 43

View of the interior of the Creglingen to demonstrate how different Riemenschneider's work would have looked compared to all the colourful art works that were in the church at the time of Riemenschneider's monochrome altarpiece.



Figure 44

Unknown sculptor, high altar, 1483, limewood, Parish church of Saint Martin, Lorch am Rhein (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 45

Contractual drawing for the altarpiece for the High Altar at Ulm Minister (from *Tilman Riemenschneider, Master*, Julien Chapuis (ed.)).



Figure 46
Jorg Sylrin the Elder, Choir Stalls, 1474, Oak, Ulm Minster (from en.wikipedia.org)



Figure 47
Detail of Choir stalls from Ulm Minster (from en.wikipedia.org)



Figure 48

Detail from choir stalls in Ulm Minster, Ptolemy. The carving style to represent the texture of fur is seen on the collar and cuffs. There are numerous figures in the choir stalls that are rendered with fur clothing (from Jeffery Smith Chipps, *The Northern Renaissance*).



Figure 49

Detail from *Christ in the House of Simon* relief of the Műnnerstadt altarpiece (from *Tilman Riemenschneider*, Julien Chapuis (ed.)).

The carving technique of the fur on the collar and cuffs of the figure shown is similar to that found on the figure of Ptolemy from the Ulm choir stalls.



Figure 50

Workshop of Jan Borreman (Pasquier Borreman?), Altarpiece of St Crispin and St Crispinian, 1520, oak, St Waldetrude's Church, Herentals (from Lynn. F. Jacobs *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*).



Figure 51

Michel Erhart (attributed to), painted by Bartholomäus Zeitblom, High altar altarpiece, 1494, limewood and polychrome, for the former Abbey church of St John the Baptist, Blaubeuren (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 52

Painted wings of *Crucifixion* altarpiece (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).

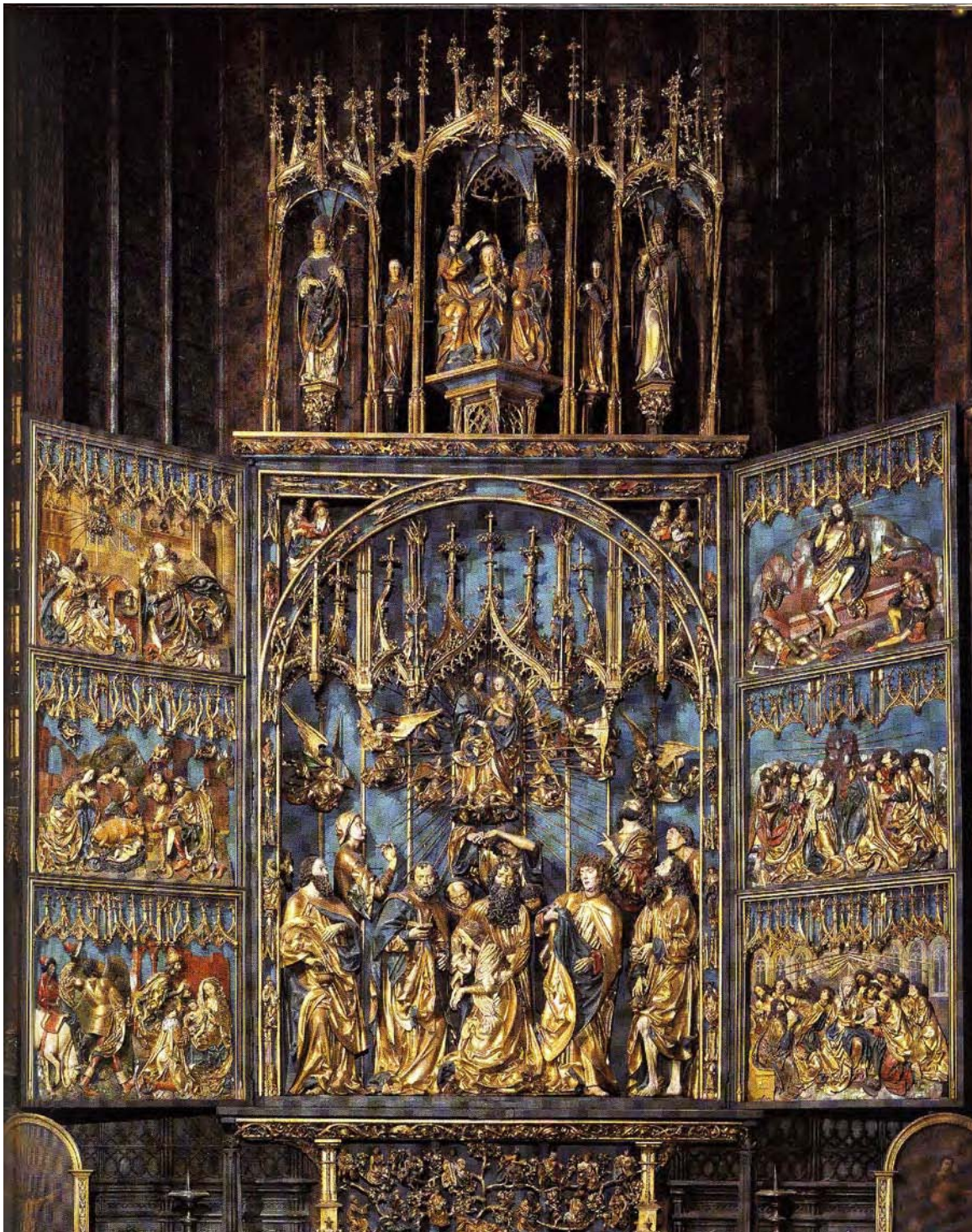


Figure 53

Viet Stoss, *St Mary* altarpiece, 1477-89, limewood and polychromy, Church of Saint Mary, Krakow, Poland (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 54

Detail of Krakow altarpiece of the carved interior wing (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 55

In the style of Jan Borreman, *Crucifixion* altarpiece, c.1520, limewood and traces of polychromy, All Saints Church, Pocklington, Yorkshire.



Figure 56

Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece showing Riemenschneider's use of space.



Figure 57

Detail of *St George* altarpiece showing Borremann's use of space within the individual niches (from en.wikipedia.org)



Figure 58

Tilman Riemenschneider, left-hand group from *Passion* altarpiece, c.1485, Limewood, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich (from *Tilman Riemenschneider*, Julien Chapuis (ed.)).



Figure 59

Tilman Riemenschneider, Right-hand group from *Passion* altarpiece, c.1485, limewood, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich (from *Tilman Riemenschneider*, Julien Chapuis (ed.)).



Figure 60

Tilman Riemenschneider, Corpus of Creglingen altarpiece, 1510, limewood
Church of Our Lord, Creglingen.



Figure 61

Calvary scene, 1460, alabaster, Halber Cathedral (from *Tilman Riemenschneider*, Julien Chapuis (ed.)).



Figure 62
Mourning Women and Saint John on the left and Soldiers on the right, 1470, alabaster, Strasbourg. Now in Musée de l'Oeuvre Notre-Dame (from Tilman Riemenschneider, Julien Chapuis (ed.)).



Figure 63
 Detail of Strasbourg group showing the compositional layout of two women supporting the Madonna. (from *Tilman Riemenschneider, c.1460-1531, Julien Chapuis (ed.)*).



Figure 64
 Detail of Strasbourg group showing figures in background looking at something to the right of them (from *Tilman Riemenschneider, Julien Chapuis (ed.)*).



Figure 65

Detail of Creglingen altarpiece showing the interaction of the figures in the corpus through the directional gaze of the figures (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 66

Detail of Creglingen altarpiece showing Mary looking out at the spectator (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 67

Detail of the corpus of the *Crucifixion* altarpiece demonstrating the visual effects achieved by polychrome, especially when representing blood (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 68
Detail of *St George* altarpiece showing hand gestures direct the spectator to the main scene (from www.wikipedia.org)



Figure 69
Detail of *St George* altarpiece showing the beautiful carved facial expressions of the figures (from www.wikipedia.org)



Figure 70

Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece showing the variety of facial expressions on the figures



Figure 71

Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece showing the interaction between the figures through hand gestures.



Figure 72

Pieta, Choir Stall, oak, 14th century, St Laurence church, Ludlow.

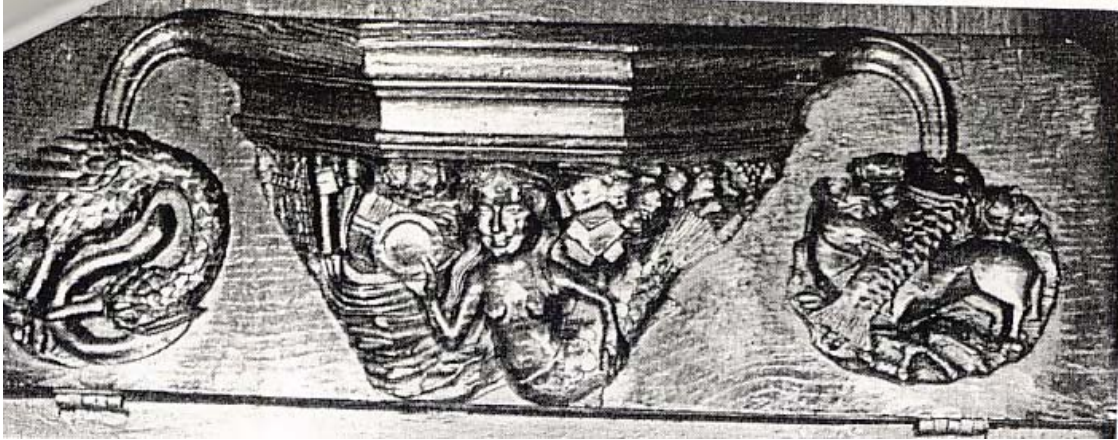


Figure 73

Misericord depicting a mermaid in her role as a seductress, holding a mirror and a comb, St George's Chapel, Windsor (from Richard Hayman, *Church Misericords and bench ends*).



Figure 74

Jörg Sylrin the Elder, Self-Portrait on Ulm Minster choir stalls, oak, 1474, Ulm Minster (from en.wikipedia.org).



Figure 75

Detail of Creglingen altarpiece
Self-portrait of Riemenschneider (from Iris
Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman
Riemenschneider*).



Figure 76

Tomb of Tilman Riemenschneider
The face is said to be similar to the so called
'self portrait' in the Creglingen altarpiece.



Figure 77
Painted choir stalls in St Buckhard church, Würzburg



Figure 78
Detail of painted choir stalls at St Buckhard church, Würzburg.



Figure 79

Tilman Riemenschneider, Table from Würzburg Town Hall, 1506, table top limestone, base oak, Mainfränkisches Museum, Würzburg (from Hanswernfried Muth, *Tilman Riemenschneider*).



Figure 80

Jörg Sylrin the younger, Blaubeuren choir stall, 1493, oak, showing the use of smooth linear lines to fabric which create a feeling of movement when used with a monochrome finish due to the ability to create light and dark areas (from en.wikipedia.org).



Figure 81
Bishop, Misericord, Oak, Fourteenth century, St Laurence church, Ludlow.



Figure 82
Detail of Műnnerstadt altarpiece showing detail of Bishop's mitre in the *Entombment* relief (from Hanswernfried Muth, *Tilman Riemenschneider*).



Figure 83
Image of
King (?),
misericord,
oak,
fourteenth
century,
St. Laurence
church,
Ludlow.



Figure 84
Grotesque
woman,
misericord,
oak,
fourteenth
century,
St Laurence
church,
Ludlow.



Figure 85

Detail of Creglingen altarpiece showing the carving detail on Angel Gabriel's clothing (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).

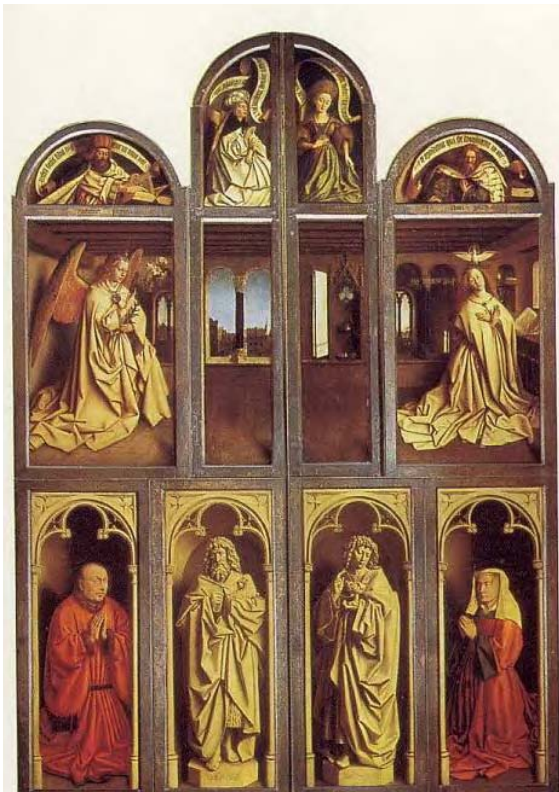


Figure 86

Attributed to Hugh van Eyck (and possibly Jan Van Eyck), *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* altarpiece, 1432, now in the Chapel of Saint Bavo Cathedral, Ghent (from Smith, *Northern Renaissance*).

Figure 87

Jean Colombe, *The Miracle of Saint Anthony of Padua*, from *Tres riches heures*, 1485-89, Manuscript, Bourges, now in The Cloister's Museum, New York (from William D. Wixom, *Medieval Sculpture*).





Figure 88

Resurrection scene, stained glass window, now in The Cloisters Museum, New York.



Figure 89

Rogier Van Der Weyden, Sfora triptych, detail depicting St Jerome and St George, oil on panel, c. 1460, now in Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (from http://hoocher.com/Rogier_van_der_Weyden/Rogier_van_der_Weyden.htm)



Figure 90
The Last Supper, 1476, (from
 Illustrated Bartsch, Volume 81).



Figure 91
 Thomas Anshelm (ed.), *The Last Supper*,
 1488 (from Illustrated Bartsch, Volume 86).



Figure 93
 Martin Schongauer, *Baptism of Christ*,
 Engraving, (from Justus Bier,
 “Riemenschneider’s use of Graphic
 Sources”).



Figure 94
 Workshop of Tilman Riemenschneider,
Baptism of Christ from the Gerolzhofen
 altarpiece, c. 1509-13/14, limewood, in
 Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich
 (from Justus Bier, “Riemenschneider’s use
 of Graphic Sources”).

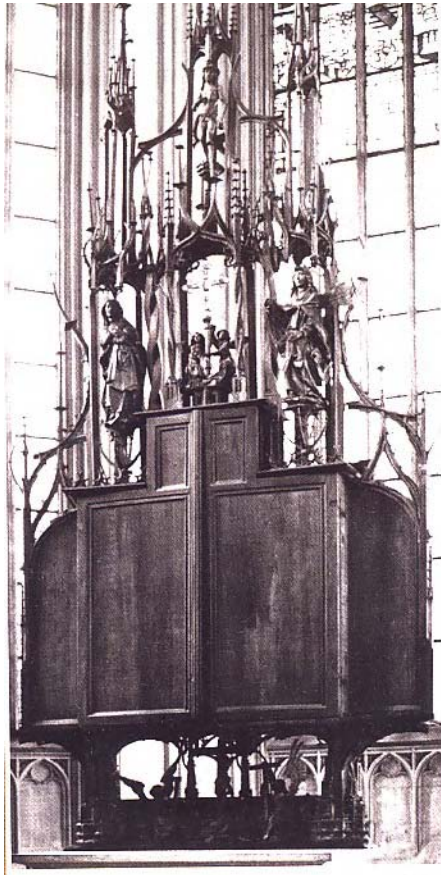


Figure 92
Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece
showing doors closed (from Rainer
Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 95

Detail of the Rothenberg altarpiece showing the shallow depth of the work.



Figure 96

Detail of the Creglingen altarpiece showing the shallow depth of the work.



Figure 97

Attributed to Tilman Riemenschneider, Sketch of Woman, on the right hand relief of the Windsheim altarpiece (from *Tilman Riemenschneider, c. 1460-1531*, Julien Chapuis (ed.)).



Figure 98

Master A.G., *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*, engraving (from Chapuis (ed.), *Tilman Riemenschneider*, c. 1460-1531).



Figure 99

Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece, *Christ's entry into Jerusalem* relief.



Figure 100
Master E.S., *St James the Less*, etching (from Illustrated Bartsch, Volume 23)



Figure 101
Detail from the corpus of the Rothenberg altarpiece showing the back of an apostle in a similar positioning to Master E.S's etching of St James the Less.



Figure 102
Master E.S., *St. Paul*, from series of seated apostles etching (from Illustrated Bartsch, Volume 23).



Figure 103
Detail from the corpus of the Rothenberg altarpiece showing the drapery on the floor.



Figure 104
Detail from the corpus of the Rothenberg altarpiece showing the twists in the fabric.

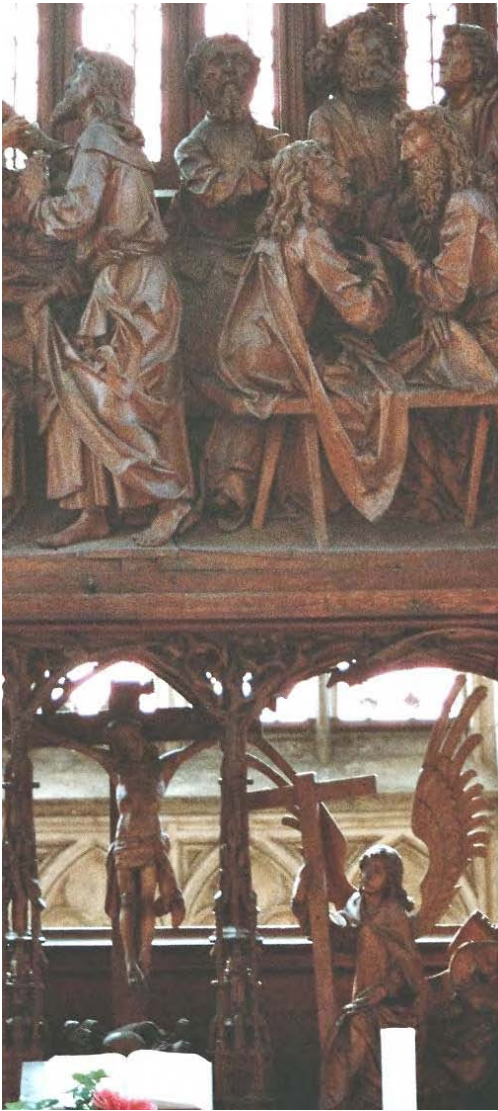


Figure 105

Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece showing the fabric swooping down into a point directing the eye of the spectator towards the *crucifixion* scene in the predella.

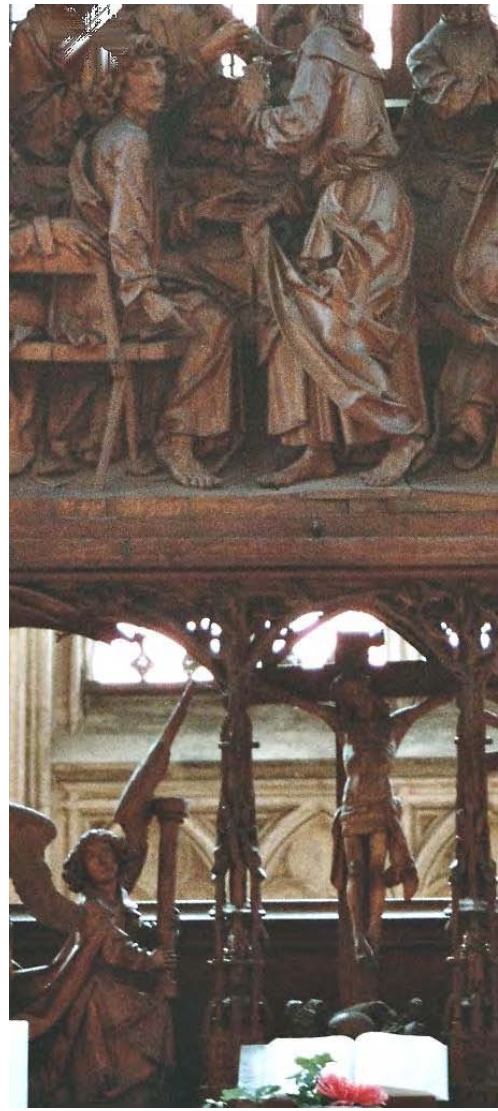


Figure 106

Detail of the Rothenberg altarpiece showing the mirroring of the hand from the figure to the left of Judas towards the *crucifixion* scene in the predella.



Figure 107

Detail of Münsterstadt altarpiece showing the use of windows in the corpus (from Hanswernfried Muth, *Tilman Riemenschneider*).



Figure 108a

Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece showing how the windows look from the front of the altarpiece, matching the tracery design of the windows in the church (figure 109).



Figure 108b

Back view of the corpus of the Rothenberg altarpiece.



Figure 109

Window by the Rothenberg altarpiece showing the same use of glass and the same tracery design at the top.



Figure 112b

This is the image that Baxandall uses to convey his description of the use of light in the Rothenberg altarpiece (from Michael Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*).



Figure 110a

Photograph of ceiling in the choir of St James' Church Rothenberg.



Figure 110b

Photograph showing the underneath section of the Rothenberg altarpiece, is very similar in design to the ceiling. As seen in figures 108-109 where the glass is the same in both the church and the altarpiece, it is reasonable to surmise that the maker was wanting the sculpture to complement and possibly become a part of its surroundings.



Figure 112

Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece showing how too much natural sunlight can distort the image.



Figure 112a

This is the image that Baxandall uses to convey his description of the effects of the early morning light on the Rothenberg altarpiece (from Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*).

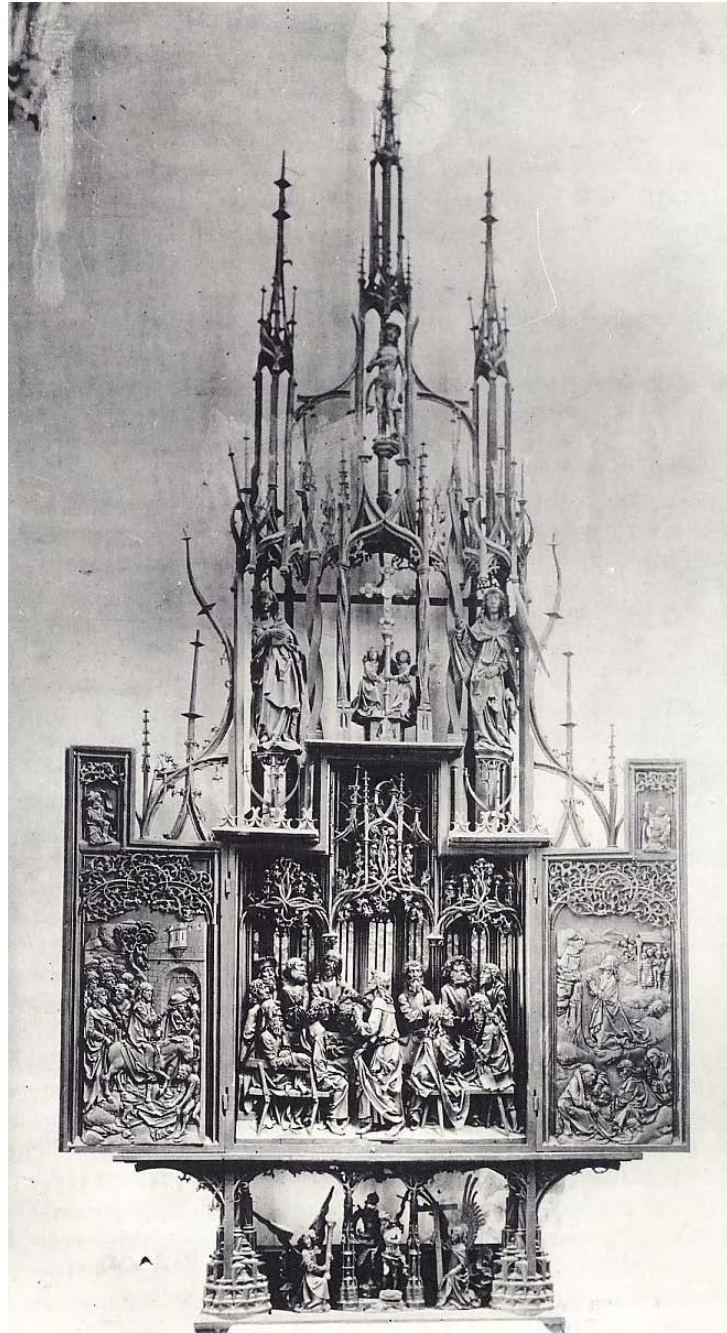


Figure 113
Photograph of the Rothenberg altarpiece placed against a wall
(from Lynn F. Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish carved altarpieces*).

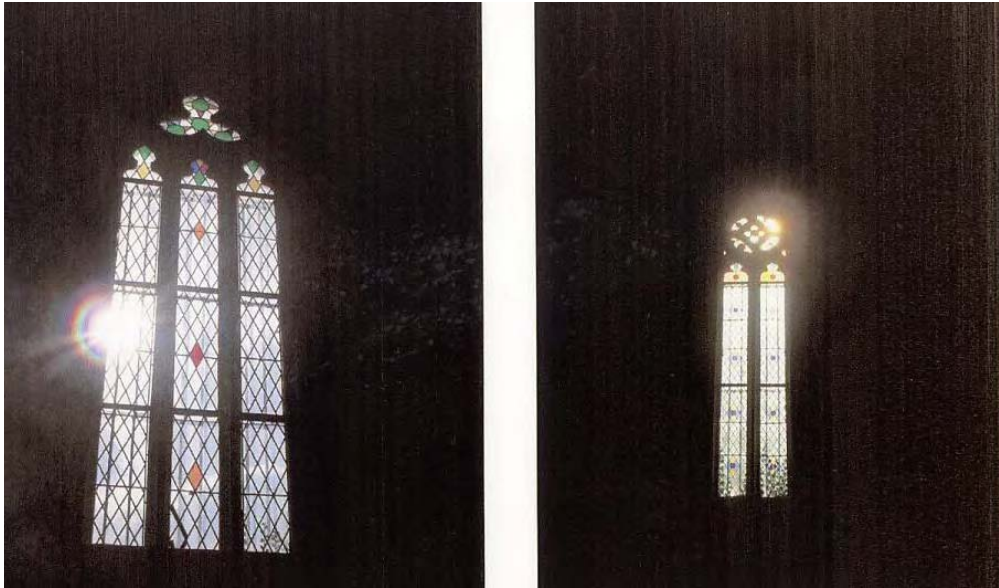


Figure 114

Two windows from the church of Our Lord, Creglingen.



Figure 116

Detail of Creglingen altarpiece showing the windows in the back of the corpus



Figure 117

Detail of Creglingen altarpiece showing the chiaroscuro effect created by the folds of fabrics of the figures in different light (from Postcard from the Church of Our Lord, Creglingen).



Figure 118

Detail of Creglingen altarpiece to demonstrate how different the work can look at different times of the day due to the movement of sunlight. This was taken in the afternoon when the light was shining in from the south onto the right hand side of the altarpiece. Certain edges of the clothing of St John are now highlighted by the sun.



Figure 119

Detail of the corpus of the Creglingen altarpiece showing the bare section underneath the figure of the Virgin Mary.



Figure 120

Detail of the corpus of the Creglingen altarpiece to show how the shadows create a pattern on the bare section underneath the Virgin Mary.



Figure 121

Detail from the corpus of the Creglingen altarpiece showing the larger than life size hands of the two front figures whose hands contribute to the pattern shown in figure 120.



Figure 122

Photograph showing the stain glass windows of the Münnerstadt church.



Figure 123

Photograph showing how dark the altarpiece appears when it is not lit by modern lighting, therefore, demonstrating that the stained glass windows and the closeness of the surrounding buildings were detrimental to the monochrome aesthetic of the Münnerstadt altarpiece.



Figure 124
Jan van Eyck, *Annunciation*, 1434-36,
The National Gallery, Washington D C
(from en.wikipedia.org)



Figure 125
Jan van Eyck, *Madonna in Church*,
c. 1425, Staatliche Museen, Berlin
(from Jeffery Chips Smith, *The
Northern Renaissance*).



Figure 126
Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *The Nativity
at Night*, c. 1490, The National Gallery,
London (from Gabriele Findailo (ed.),
The Image of Christ).



Figure 127
Mattius Grünewald, Isenheim
altarpiece *Resurrected Lord*
wing, 1515, Unterlinden Museum,
Colmar (from Smith, *Northern
Renaissance*).



Figure 128
Albrecht Dürer, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, etching, 1510 (from Illustrated Bartsch, Volume 10).



Figure 129

Albrecht Dürer, *The Ecstasy of Mary Magdalene*, 15 , etching (from www.art-wallpaper.com). This composition is very similar to Riemenschneider's Munnerstadt altarpiece with angels surrounding the figure of Mary Magdalene and light emanating out from behind her.



Figure 130

Albrecht Dürer, *The Last Supper*, etching, 1510 (in The New Art Gallery, Walsall). This image is also like Riemenschneider's Rothenberg altarpiece with light emanating out from behind the figure of Christ.



Figure 131

Detail of Lorch am Rhein altarpiece showing the using of blind windows (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 132

Veit Stoss, *Nativity* altarpiece, 1520-23, limewood, high altar altarpiece for the Carmelite Church of the Assumption, Nuremberg, now in Bamberg Cathedral.



Figure 133

Unknown sculptor, high altar altarpiece, 1438-88 and 1510-15, limewood and polychrome, pilgrimage church of the Coronation of the Virgin, Lauthenbach (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 134
Detail of Lautenbach altarpiece showing the how the windows are formed in the back of the corpus (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 135
Detail of Lautenbach altarpiece showing the glass windows in the back of the corpus (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 136

High altar altarpiece, 1515-25, Parish church of Weisweil, near Freiburg, Breisgau, Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 137

St Ursula altarpiece in Oberndorf, 1510, near Rottenberg am Neckar, Swabia (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).

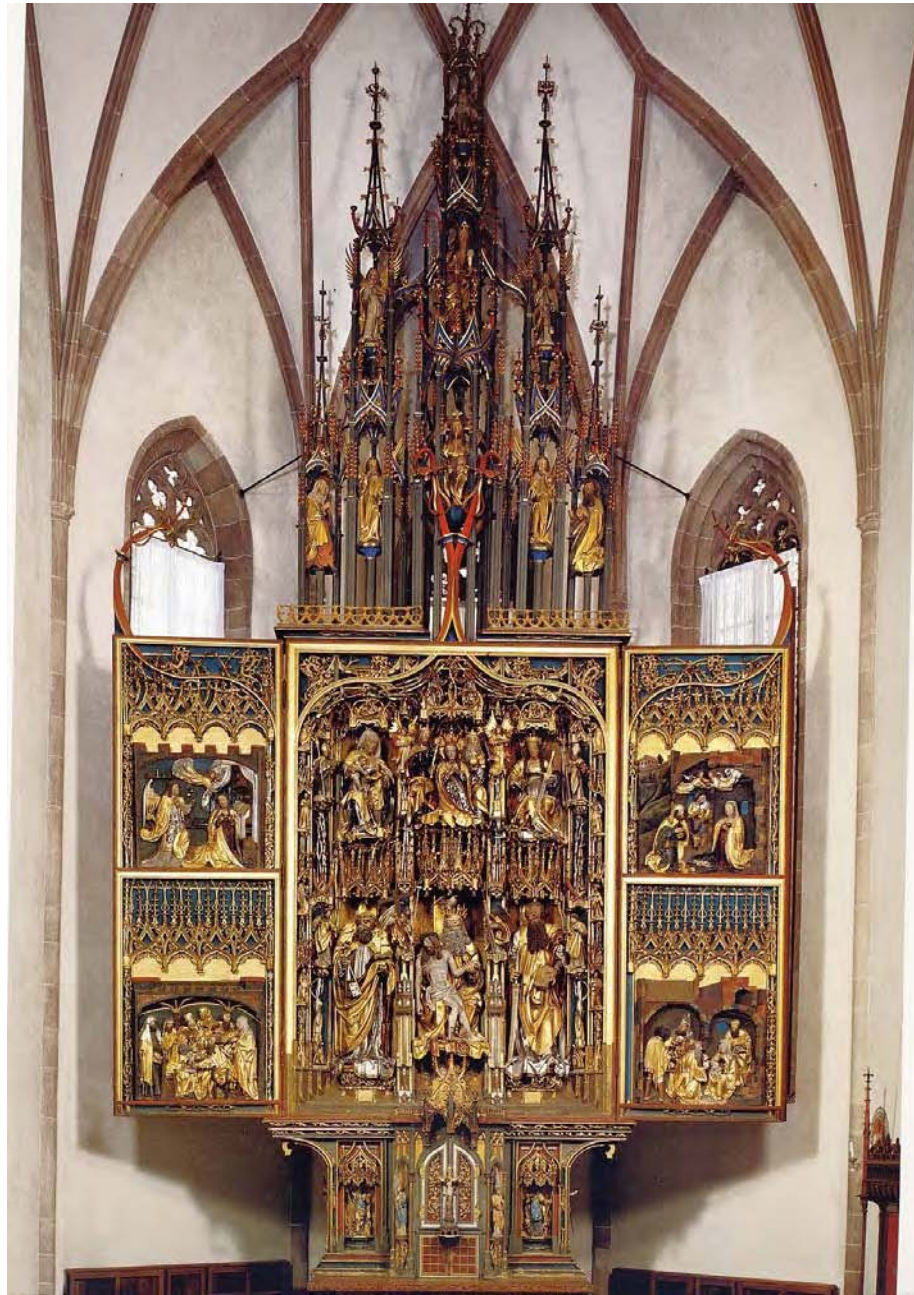


Figure 138

Workshop of Hans Schnatterpeck, high altar altarpiece, 1503-ca.1508/09, Limewood, Parish church of Assumption, Niederlana, South Tirol (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).

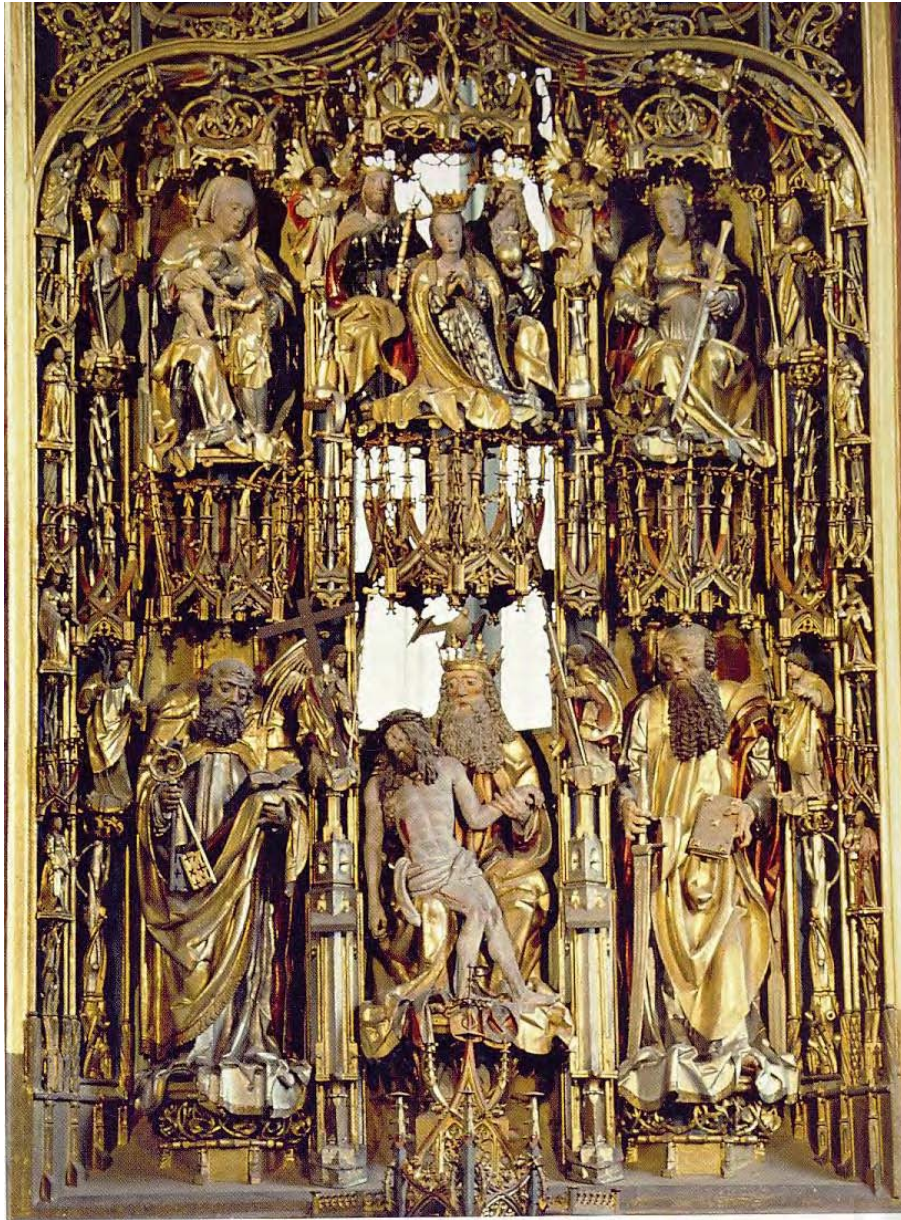


Figure 139

Detail of Niederlana altarpiece with open shutters in the back of the corpus (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 140

Detail of Niederlana altarpiece back view of the altarpiece with the shutters closed (from Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor*).



Figure 141

*Passion altarpiece, 1485, St Dymphna's Church, Geel (from Lynn F. Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved altarpieces*).*

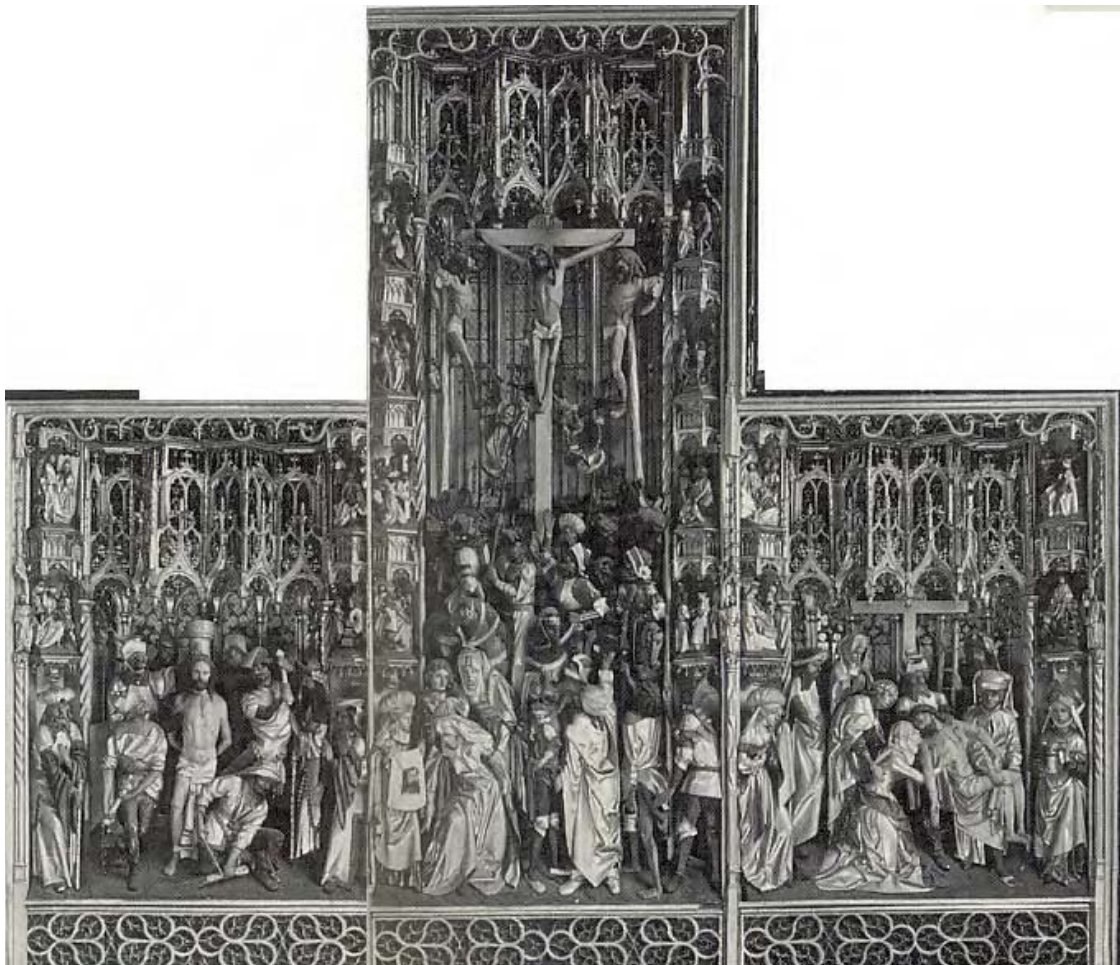


Figure 142

Detail of Geel altarpiece showing the use of windows throughout the corpus (from Jacobs, *Netherlandish Carved altarpieces*).



Figure 143

Detail of the Geel altarpiece showing central scene with windows (from Lynn F. Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved altarpieces*).



Figure 144

Detail of Pocklington altarpiece showing the lay out of the windows of the central scene.

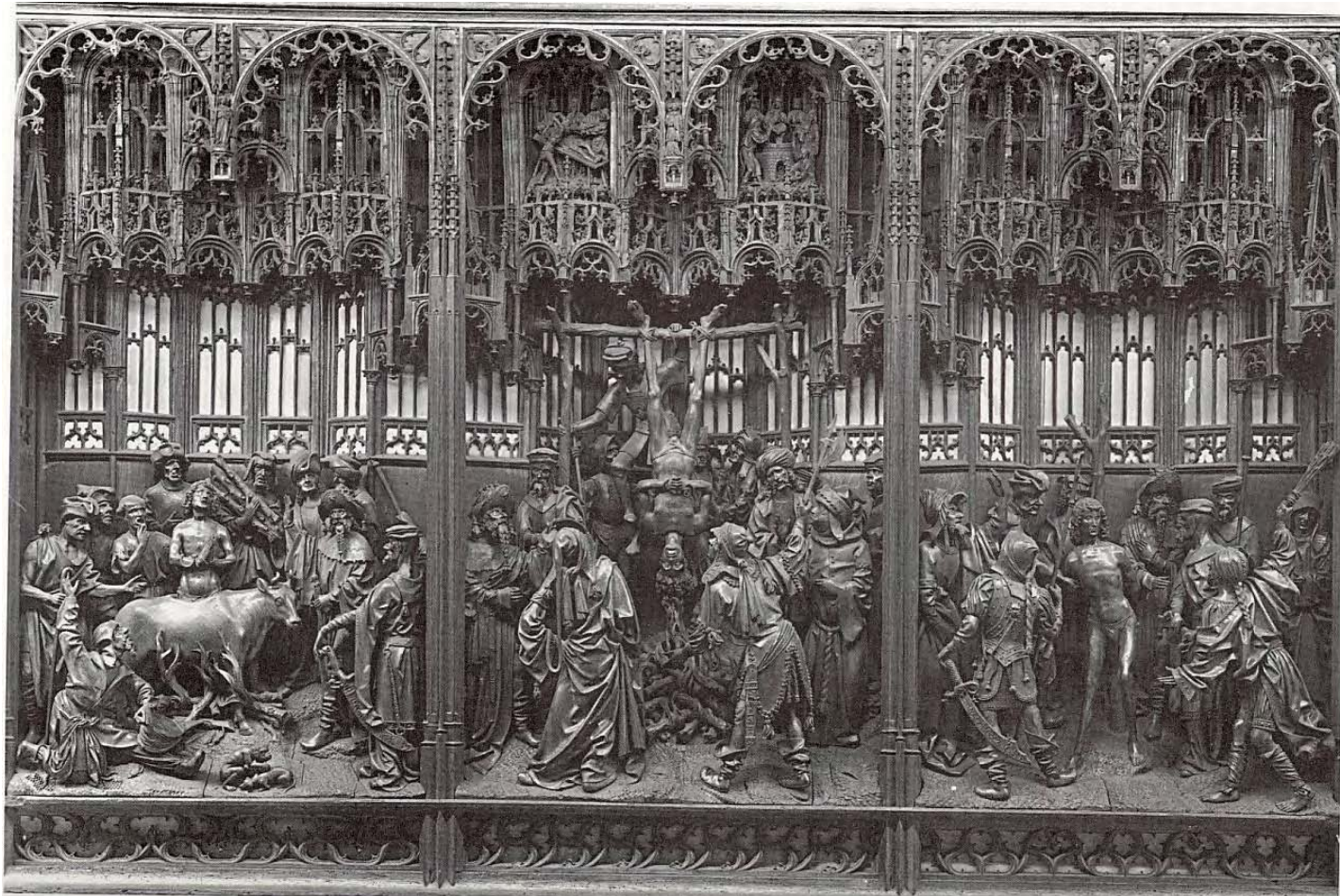


Figure 145

Detail of St George altarpiece showing the positioning of the windows in the corpus (from Turner, *The Grove Dictionary of Art*).



Figure 146

Detail of Rothenberg altarpiece to show how St John's head (on the lap of Christ) is illuminated by the morning light, for most of the day it is in shadow, see figures 1, 41, 56).

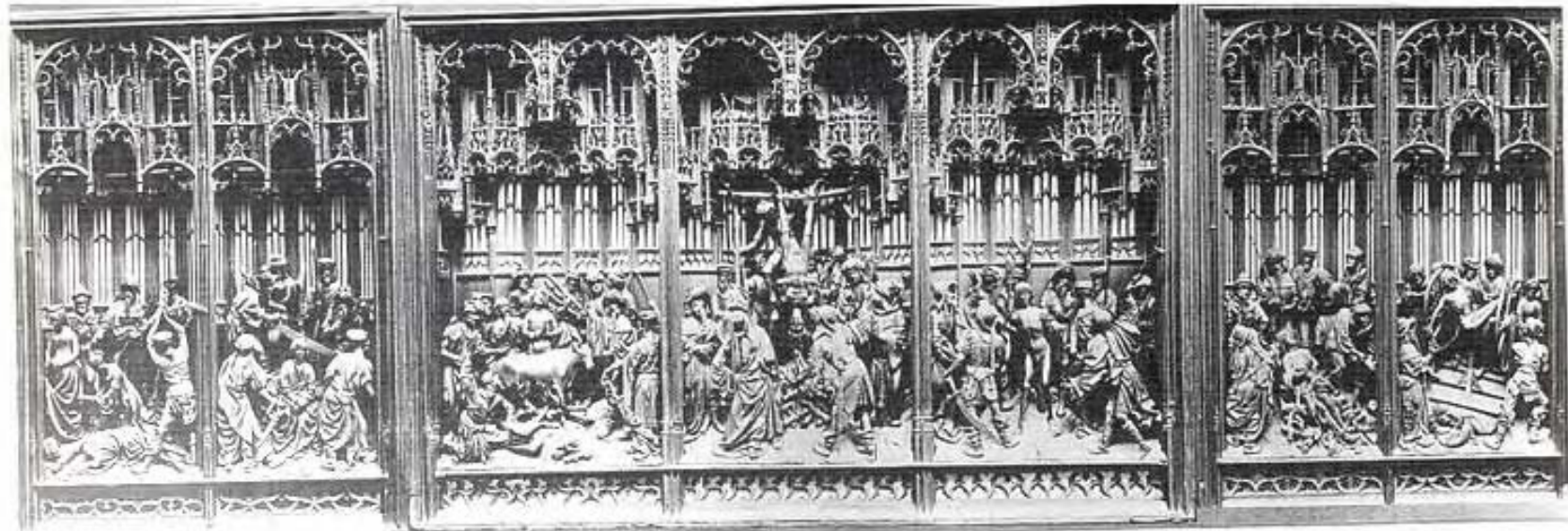


Figure 147

Computerised rendering of the possible lighting effects of the sun in the morning on the St George altarpiece (from Lynn F. Jacobs, *Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*).

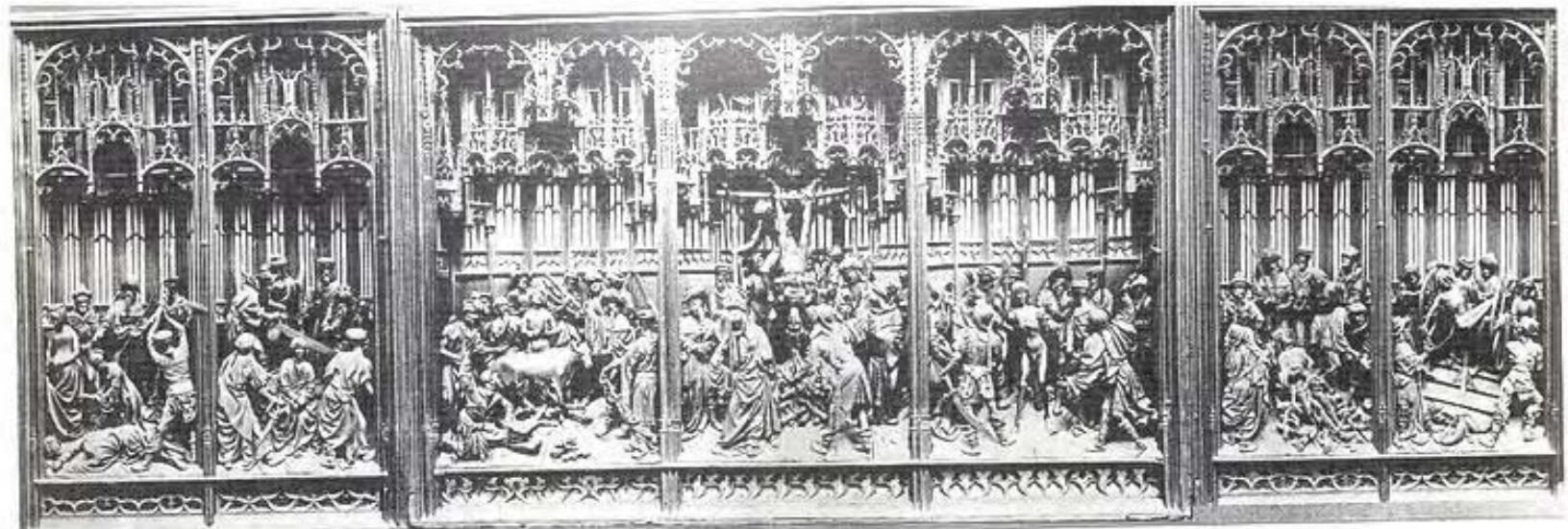


Figure 148

Computerised rendering of the possible effects that the mid day sun would have on the St George altarpiece (from Lynn F. Jacobs, *Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*).

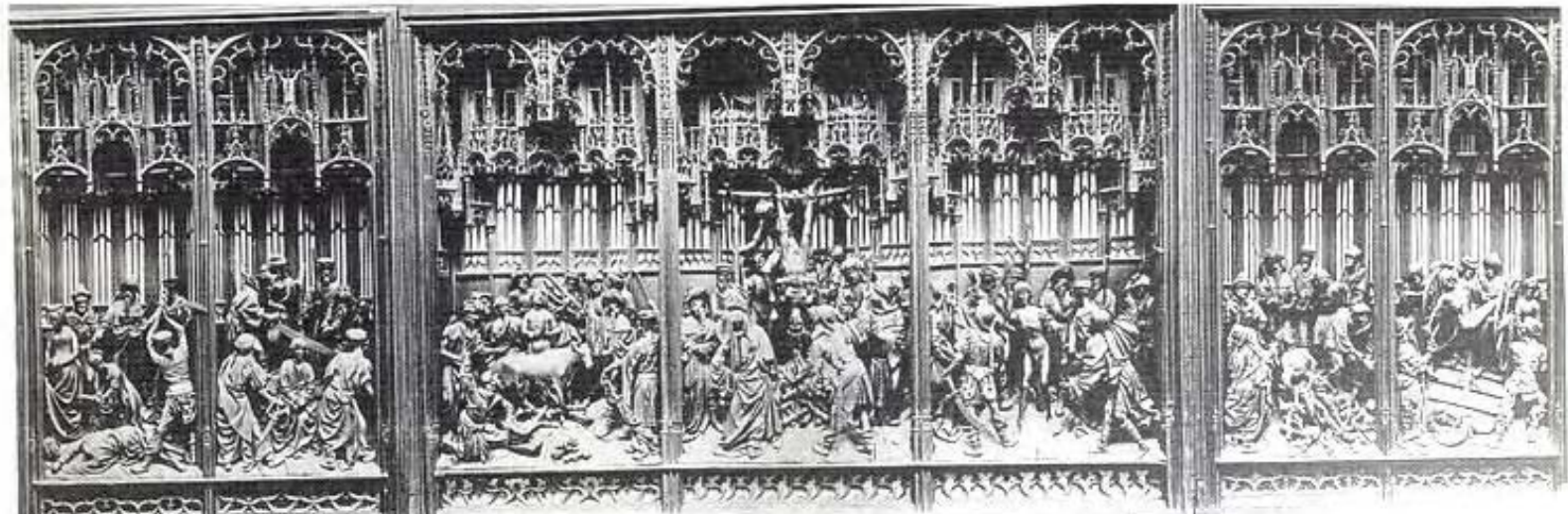


Figure 149

Computerised rendering of the possible effects created by the afternoon sun on the St George altarpiece (from Lynn F. Jacobs, *Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces*).



Figure 150

Detail of the St George altarpiece showing the use of deeply carved folds of fabric, comparable in style and effect as Riemenschneider's Creglingen altarpieces (from Jane Turner, *Dictionary of Art*).

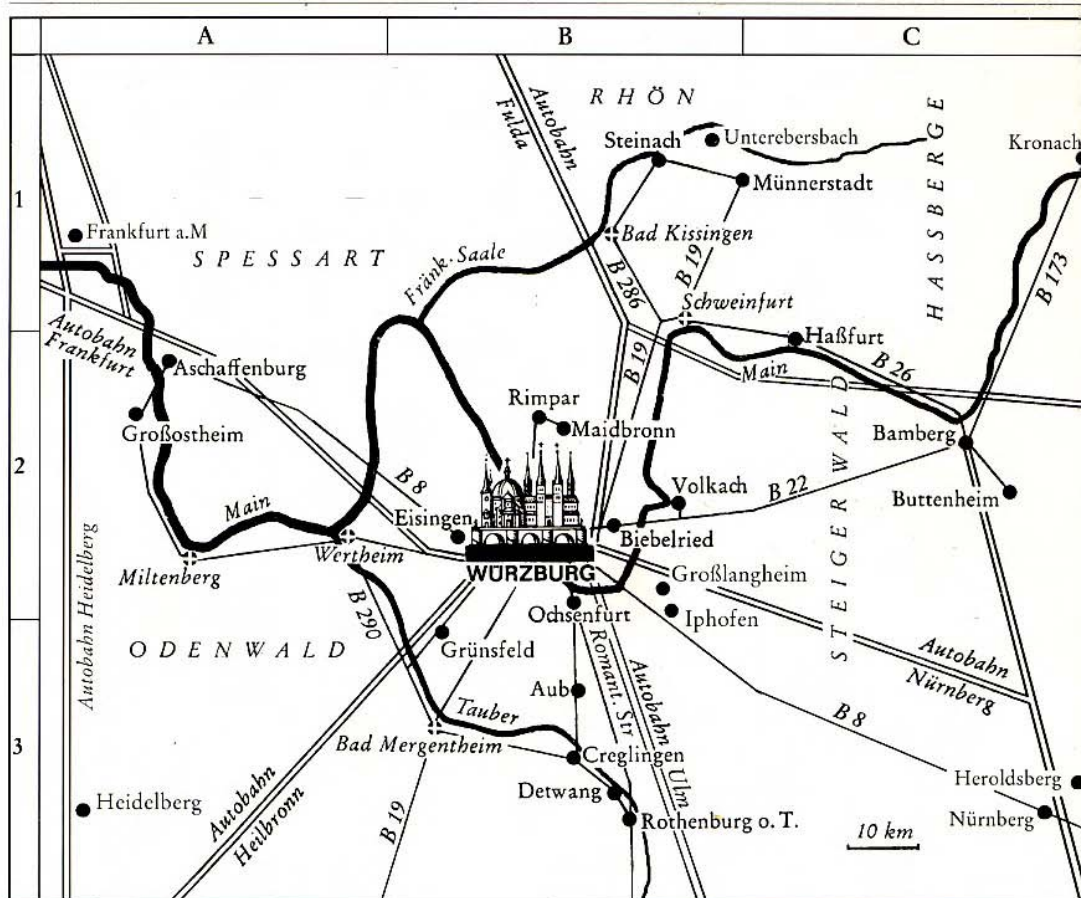


Figure 151

Detail of St George altarpiece showing the how the use of smooth surfaces creates a beautiful contrasting effect enhanced further by light.

Appendix 1

A Map with the highlighted places which contain Riemenschneider's work



SKETCH MAP SHOWING LOCATIONS OF RIEMENSCHNEIDER WORKS IN FRANCONIA

KEY to the map above:

Nürnberg = Nuremberg, Autobahn = Motorway

● = Locations with works by Riemenschneider or his workshop

⊕ = Locations for reference (no works by Riemenschneider)

Appendix 2

Outline of an altarpiece with labels of the different sections (with German translation) which are mentioned in this thesis.

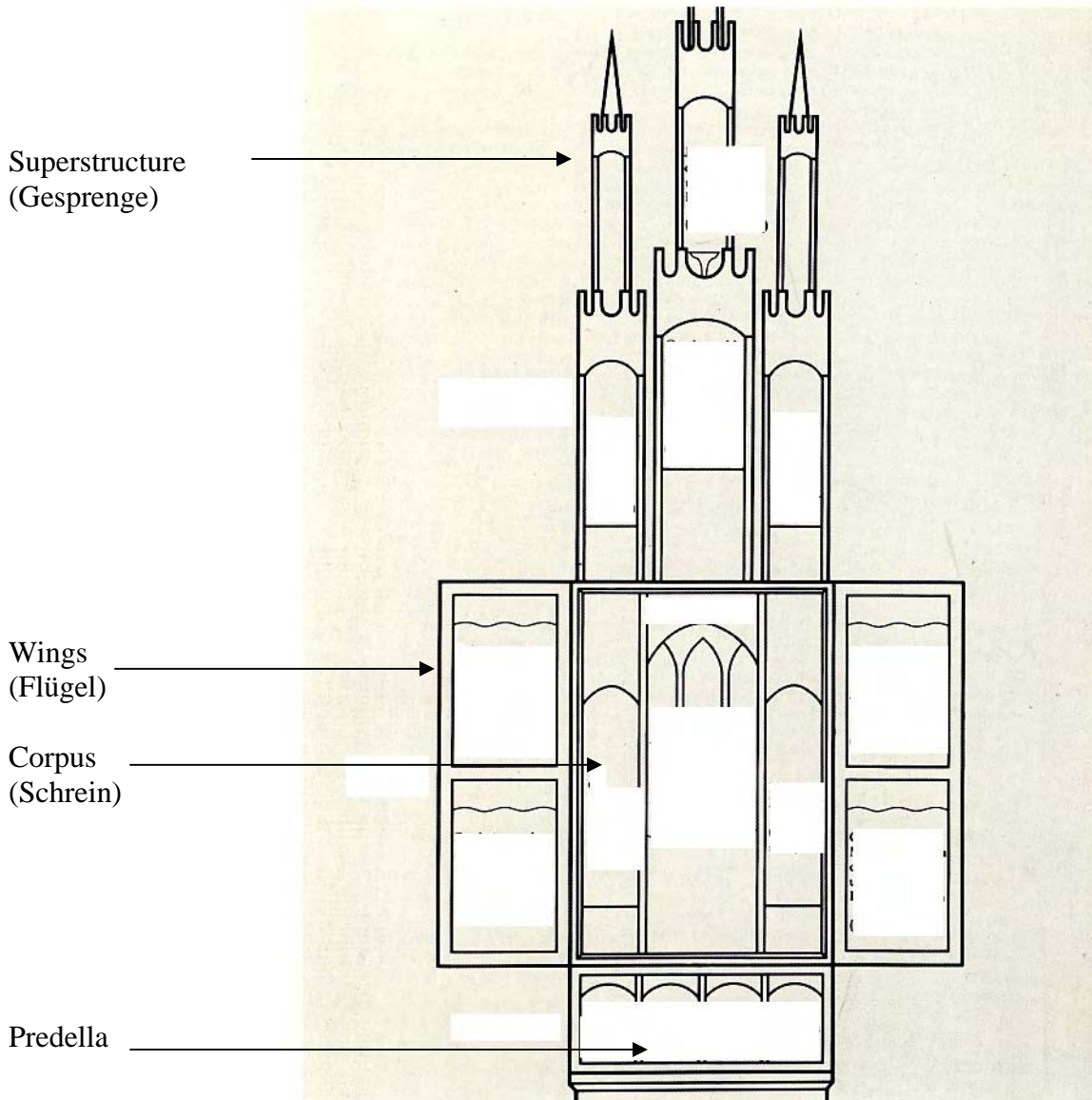


Image from P. Hugolin, *Riemenschneideraltar Münnersstadt*, 1995.

Appendix 3

Table created by Michael Baxandall to demonstrate the different amounts of payments that sculptors received for commissioned works.

Fig. 36. Some Altarpiece Commissions.

Contract (and/or completion)	Sculptor	Place (H: High Altar, S: Side Altar)	Client	Price in Florins (S: Sculpture)	Notes
1471(-81)	Michael Pacher, Bruneck	St Wolfgang, Abersee (H)	Abbot of Mondsee	Up to 1200 Fl. Hungarian	See Note on Pl. 13.
1477(-89)	Veit Stoss, Cracow	Cracow, St Mary (H)	Parish	2808 Fl. Hungarian	See Note on Pl. 35.
1484(-98)	Michael Pacher, Bruneck	Salzburg, U.L.Frau (H)	Council	3300/3500	Contribution of 1000 Fl. from Virgil Hofer. Removed in 1710. N. Rasmo, <i>Michael Pacher</i> , 1971, p. 249.
1485	Michel Erhart, Ulm	Augsburg, Sts Ulrich and Afra (S)	Ulrich Fugger	190-300 (S 40-100)	Lost. Painted by Gumpold Gültlinger, 1490, for 150-200 Fl. A. Broschek, <i>Michel Erhart</i> , 1973, pp. 205 and 214.
1486(-90)	Hans Klocker, Brixen	Passeier, St Leonard (H)	Parish	500	Dispersed. G. Scheffler, <i>Hans Klocker</i> , 1967, p. 119.
1486(-92)	Jakob Russ, Ravensburg	Chur, Cathedral (H)	Chapter	500	Arbitrated by Bishop. Paintings by another. L. Volkmann, <i>Der Überlinger Rathaussaal . . .</i> , 1934, p. 22. See fig. 63.
1490(-92)	Riemenschneider, Würzburg	Münnerstadt, St Mary Magdalen (H)	Council	145	Painted by Veit Stoss, 1502-04, for 200 Fl. See Note on Pl. 23.
1495	Martin Kriechbaum, Passau	Passau, St Paul (H)	—	950	Burnt 1512. W. Schmid, in <i>Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Kunst</i> , I, 1924, p. 94.
(1501)	Nikolaus Hagenower, Strassburg	Strassburg, Cathedral Corpus Christi Altar	Chapter	400	Lost. The contractors were Nikolaus's brothers, Veit and Paul. Rott, <i>Quellen und Forschungen</i> , III Quellen I, p. 262. See Note on Pl. 55.
(1503)	Veit Stoss, Nuremberg	Schwaz, St Mary (H)	Master of Works	1166	Lost. S. Dettloff, <i>Wit Stosz</i> , I, 1961, p. 257.

Contract (and/or completion)	Sculptor	Place (H: High Altar, S: Side Altar)	Client	Price in Florins (S: Sculpture)	Notes
1501(-05)	Riemenschneider, Würzburg	Rothenburg, St Jakobskirche, Heiligblutaltar	Council	110 (S 60)	Monochrome. Shrinework by Erhart Harschner, 1499-1502, for 50 Fl. See Note on Pl. 24.
1502(-05)	Erasmus Grasser, Munich	Reichersdorf, St Leonard (H)	Parish	60	Fragmentary. P. M. Halm, <i>Grasser</i> , 1928, p. 109.
1502(-07)	Gregor Erhart, Augsburg	Augsburg, St Maurice, Lady altar	Parish	114 (S 54)	Lost. J. Baum, <i>Ulmer Plastik um 1500</i> , 1911, p. 161.
1507	Michael Wolgemut, Nuremberg	Schwabach St John (H)	Council	Up to 600	H. Thode, <i>Die Malerschule von Nürnberg, . . .</i> , 1891, p. 245. See fig. 39.
(1510)	Daniel Mauch, Ulm	Ulm, Franciscans' Church (S)	Manner Brotherhood	86 (S 36)	Lost. Corpus and its figures by Mauch. Painted by Martin Schaffner for 50 Fl. Baum, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 163.
1510(-18)	Peter Trünklin, Nördlingen	Heilsbronn, Cistercian Abbey (S)	Abbot	110 (S 35)	Painted in 1518 for 75 Fl. Rott, <i>op. cit.</i> , II, p. 199.
1515(-21)	Wolf Huber, Passau	Feldkirch, St Nicholas (S)	Brotherhood of St Anne	230	Huber, a painter, contracted to supply retable complete with carvings. E. Heinze, <i>Der Sankt-Annen-Altar des Hubers</i> , 1959.
1518	Hans Bongart, Colmar	Kaysersberg, St George's (H)	Council	180	Monochrome. Rott, <i>op. cit.</i> , III Quellen I, p. 358.
1520(-24)	Veit Stoss, Nuremberg	Nuremberg, Carmelite Church (H)	Prior Andreas Stoss	[400]	Monochrome. Unfinished and unpaid. See Note on Pls. 48-9.
1522(-24)	Hans Sixt von Staufen, Freiburg	Freiburg, Minster (S)	Minster Works	35	The retable in the Locherer Chapel. Monochrome. See Note on Plate 58.
1526(-28)	Hans Leinberger, Landshut	Polling, U.L.Frau (H)	Prior of Austin Canonry	'quasi bei' 150 (S 25)	Fragmentary. Shrinework and painting by others. See Note on Pl. 101.

From Michael Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*.

Appendix 4

Original contact from the Műnnerstadt altarpiece with English translation.

1
Anfangs sol die Carl der gupf geschmitten Bildt haben in dem Corpus
und sol in der mitte sein sint marie magdalen wie sie die vii engel in der wuesten auff
erheben in einer rouwen gewant wie mit sint johann der taufer malet. Und soll die
seben der engel mit aufgestreckten leyben und der seibent engel ob dem
haupte mit einer kron und vnder ihren fussen sol sein ein altar garnet mit licht
kerze und ander zuecht wie zu einer altar gebuet und neben dem altar
ein vranpung mit felsen stein barome reuter und ander.
In der rechte hand in dem corpus sol sein der heilige sint kilian mit einer
bischofflichen gewant wie das fuer in der rechte hand
In der linken hand in dem corpus sol sein die heilige sint elisabeth mit
kronlicher zuecht nach dem sie von kongen vranpung gemacht ist wie vranpung
und sol haben in der hand ein messer mit einer zinnen kandel und wie
er sol stincken ein zuecht weisse das alms von ir bezet

ITEM, THE ALTARPIECE IS TO HAVE THREE LARGE CARVED FIGURES INSIDE THE CORPUS; AND IN THE CENTRE IS TO STAND ST MARY MAGDALENE, IN A ROUGH GOWN, SUCH AS ST JOHN THE BAPTIST IS USUALLY SHOWN WEARING, AS SHE IS BEING LIFTED UP FROM THE DESERT BY 7 ANGELS. ON EACH SIDE OF HER ARE TO BE THREE ANGELS WITH THEIR BODIES STRETCHED OUT, AND THE SEVENTH ANGEL HOLDING A CROWN ABOVE HER HEAD. AND UNDER HER FEET IS TO STAND AN ALTAR, DECORATED WITH LIGHTS, CANDELABRA AND OTHER ORNAMENTS FITTING FOR AN ALTAR, AND BESIDE THE ALTAR IS TO BE A DESERT WITH ROCKS, STONES, TREES, HERBS AND OTHER THINGS.

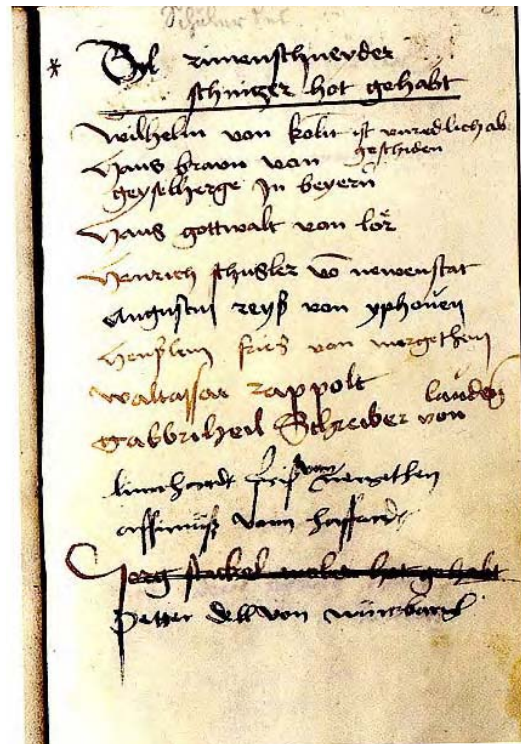
ITEM, TO HER RIGHT IN THE CORPUS IS TO STAND ST KILIAN IN A BISHOP'S VESTMENTS AND WITH THE SWORD IN HIS RIGHT HAND.

ITEM, TO HER LEFT IN THE CORPUS IS TO STAND THE HOLY WOMAN ST ELISABETH IN REGAL SPLEDOR, AS SHE WAS A KING'S DAUGHTER FROM HUNGARY, AND IN HER HANDS SHE IS TO HOLD A LOAF OF WHITE BREAD AND A PEWTER TANKARD, AND IN FRONT OF HER IS TO KNEEL A POOR MAN WHO BEGS ALMS FROM HER.

From Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*

Appendix 5

Original document listing the amount of apprentices Riemenschneider employed. He employed more than is normal in German tradition, which is also true of his employment of journeymen.



DYL RIMENSCHNEYDER
THE CARVER HAS HAD
WILHELM OF COLOGNE WHO HAS LEFT IN DISGRACE
HANS BRAUN OF GEYSELHERGE IN BEYERN
HANS GOTTWALT OF LOR
HENRICH SCHUSLER OF NEUENSTAT [Neustadt]
AUGUSTIN REYB OF YPHOUEN [Iphofen]
HENßLEIN FRIES OF MERGETHIM [Mergentheim]

WALTASSAR RAPPOLT
GABBRIHEIL SCHREIBER OF LAUDEN
LINNHARDT FRIß OF MERGETHEN [Mergentheim]
ASSIMUS OF HASFURDT
PETTER DELL OF WÜRZBURGK

From Kalden-Rosenfeld, *Tilman Riemenschneider*.

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