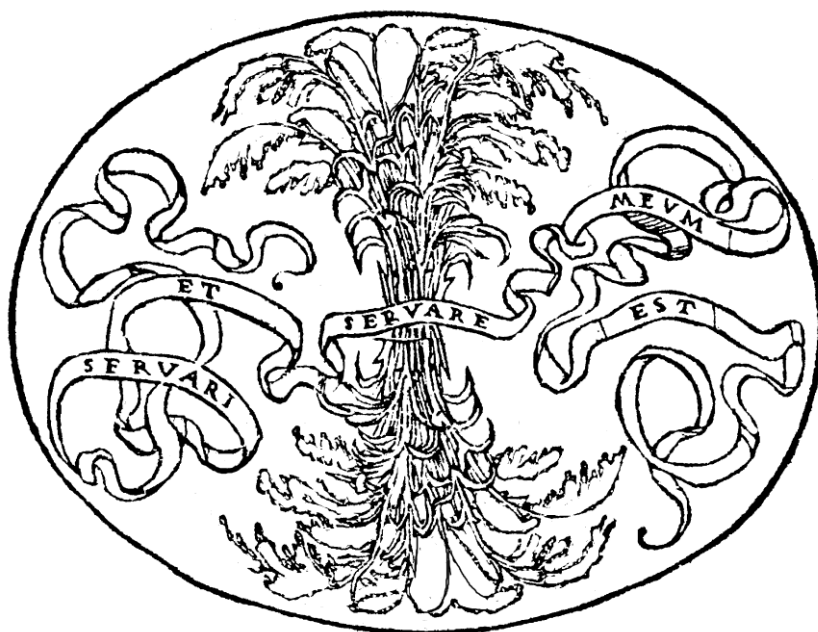


STUDI
DI
MEMOFONTE

Rivista on-line semestrale

17/2016



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ISSN 2038-0488

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A RARE EARLY 16TH CENTURY WOODCUT FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION IN THE KUNSTHALLE BREMEN

The Kunstverein in Bremen

The *Kunstverein in Bremen* was founded in 1823 as one of the first of its kind in Germany, and still remains a private sponsor of the Kunsthalle Bremen today¹. Over the course of its nearly 200-year-long history, a collection has evolved that comprises outstanding paintings, sculpture, and media art, as well as one of Germany's most important departments of prints and drawings. Generous endowments, private donations and bequests, and, what is more, contributions by the City of Bremen lay the cornerstone of this tradition-steeped museum. The *Kunstverein in Bremen* owes its existence to the initiative of wealthy Hanseatic citizens. On November 14, 1823, Senator Hieronymus Klugkist (1778-1851) invited the city's art lovers to join together and found the *Kunstverein* (Art Society). Since a court or an ecclesiastical art collection had never existed in Bremen, the foundations for collecting art first had to be laid. As early as December of the same year, a «directorship» consisting of five persons was established and the *Kunstverein's* «statutes» were drawn up, the first sections of which clearly outlined the educational goals of the founders and their devotion to art: «The purpose of the Kunstverein in Bremen is to propagate and refine a sense of and appreciation for what is beautiful. In doing so, it will restrict itself to the fine arts»².

At first, people gathered on Sundays to look at prints together, concentrating on the *Verein's* own collection as well as on the private collections of individual members. The number of members was initially limited to 50, then to 75. Each member paid an annual fee of 5 thalers. When this limitation was lifted in 1843, membership increased to 575. With more than 9,000 members, it counts today one of the strongest memberships in the Federal Republic of Germany. The «five thalers annually» and the income generated from the exhibitions could scarcely have sufficed for assembling the collection of the museum. This was only possible with the help of many generous art enthusiasts. In 1851, Hieronymus Klugkist bequeathed his valuable collection of German old masters to the Kunstverein. Among these were the panels of *Saint Onuphrius* and *Saint John the Baptist* by Albrecht Dürer, as well as 47 watercolors and drawings by the master. Today the majority of these are assumed to be war losses of the Kunsthalle. Klugkist's collection also comprised nearly all of Dürer's prints, as well as more than 250 old master drawings and a dozen paintings. Only five years later, Johann Heinrich Albers left by will 19 oil paintings, 15,000 prints, and numerous books to the *Kunstverein*. Moreover, the *Kunstverein* inherited the collection of the Bremen physician Dr. Med. Melchior Hermann Segelken (1814-1885), consisting of around 2,300 woodcuts. Among many others, these are the early and some of the most important donors of the *Kunstverein*.

The private collection of Dr. Segelken

The physician Segelken is of special interest on this occasion since his collection contained mostly early Italian woodcuts which have so far not been researched systematically. Segelken

¹ The English version of the *Kunstverein's* history has been quoted from BUSCHHOFF 2011, pp. 6-8. For another overview of the history of the *Kunstverein in Bremen*, see HANSEN 1997 (in German).

² Kunsthalle Bremen, archive, Akte 1, Vereinsgesetze. Gesetze des Kunstvereins, beschlossen im Dezember 1823, Bremen, §1.

was born on 29 January 1814 in Bremen and died on 13 December 1885³. His father Gerhard Segelken (1775-1816) worked as a preacher in the church of Our Lady. He died only two years after his son's birth⁴. Hermann Melchior Segelken inherited a passion for the fine arts from his father, as well as a collection of copperplate engravings and woodcuts, which he seems to have enlarged. Segelken studied medicine in Halle, Heidelberg and Würzburg and stayed for further training in Berlin, Vienna and Paris between 1837 and 1840. Already as a young man, he was interested in music and the history of art and acquired an outstanding connoisseurship in matters of Italian woodcuts which made him famous all over Europe. He even published several articles, for instance about the Master of the Die or the rendering of Titians drawing in woodcut⁵. Segelken settled down in his native city as general practitioner in 1840. In 1849, he had married Dorothea Henriette Claußen; the couple did not have any children. In the same year, Segelken became the 654th member of the *Kunstverein* where he gradually accepted administrative responsibilities from 1853 onwards, working in several committees and later on even in the executive board⁶. In November 1854, he was asked to participate in the «committee on prints» which he did until November 1863 and again from January 1865 onwards. This committee can be seen as the precursor of today's department of prints and drawings.

In May 1857, Segelken initiated the acquisition of an «extremely rare and excellent engraving representing a chalice» with scenes from the life of Christ by Wenzel Hollar. The engraving, after a drawing which was then attributed to Andrea Mantegna (today anonymous, London, British Museum), is actually an etching, created in 1640 by the Czech etcher⁷. The *Kunstverein* approved of the acquisition from an obviously private provider («Dr. R.») for 20 thalers. This episode may illustrate his professional knowledge about works on paper and how he deployed it for the sake of the *Kunstverein*.

Segelken reported in January 1859 about the purchase of several dictionaries on art as well as the three volumes of the *Traité historique et pratique de la gravure en bois* by Jean-Michel Papillon (Paris 1766) at an auction⁸. Therefore he also seems to have been in charge of the acquisition of books for a reference library. Furthermore, he supervised the first systematic inventorying of all movable goods belonging to the *Kunstverein* and, as a member of the print committee, he had the overall responsibility of «completion and arrangement» of the print collection. The committee was provided with 250 thalers per year for the continuation of the collection – which also included selecting duplicates and selling them on the market for further funds⁹.

Over the years, Segelken was able to play an important role within the *Kunstverein*. He very regularly attended the meetings, made propositions, kept the minutes, took over several tasks, advised the *Kunstverein's* work and organized the print collection. When he died in December 1885, he left his collection of woodcuts to the *Kunstverein*. According to the notice published in the annual report of the *Kunstverein* 1885/86, Segelken's collection contained nearly 6,000 prints, in part very rare copies and chiaroscuro woodcuts¹⁰. When having a closer look on the inventory, it becomes clear, that the actual number of original prints is far lower, approximately 2,300 prints. At the end of his inventory, Segelken counted some 2,700 illustrations in catalogues and reproductions in reviews, the most extensive being Bartolomeo Solianis *Catalogo generale*

³ For his biography see *BREMISCHE BIOGRAPHIE*, p. 459, also von HEUSINGER 1967, p. 93.

⁴ See also HURM 1892, pp. 158159.

⁵ SEGELKEN 1863a and SEGELKEN 1863b; SEGELKEN 1859-1867.

⁶ *PROTOCOLL* 1823-1849, p. 134.

⁷ Kunsthalle Bremen, Kupferstichkabinett, inv. no. 20190, 462x237 mm, ancient holdings. See *PROTOCOLL* 1852-1861, p. 81.

⁸ *Ivi*, p. 95; again in October 1859 with different titles, p. 101.

⁹ *Ivi*, p. 122.

¹⁰ *JAHRESBERICHT* 1885-1886, quoted according to *LEGAT SEGELKEN* 1885, no. 1, p. 2.

(Modena 1846)¹¹. Little or nothing is known of how and when he extended the collection of his father, where he bought or who advised him. The annual report of the *Kunstverein* praised his «excellent knowledge [...], his diligence and his appreciation for art» which laid the foundation for a collection unique in Germany¹². Indeed, the collection allows to reconstruct the history of the early Italian woodcut, ranging from early single sheet woodcuts¹³ from the late 15th century to woodcuts after Titians designs, from chiaroscuro woodcuts dating from the very first decades until the mid-16th century to later mannerist prints and book illustrations with a larger circulation.

Segelken determined that his collection should be kept as an entity and separate from the rest of the *Kunstverein's* collections; it should not be dissolved in any way. But when the art historian Gustav Pauli (1866-1938) became director of the Kunsthalle Bremen in 1899 (and in 1914 successor of Alfred Lichtwark at the Kunsthalle Hamburg), he arranged the prints and drawings collection according to epochs, schools and artists and therefore merged all the private collections.

In March 1886, Segelken's widow had delivered five portfolios and eleven volumes as well as an inventory and an extraordinary «catalogue», consisting in a three-volume hand-written manuscript entitled «The art of woodcut in Italy from the middle of the 15th to the end of the 18th century» as well as another volume on the history of the Italian woodcut¹⁴. The latter is entitled «The Italian wood block engravers and their works (in simple contour cut and chiaroscuro), the painters and draughtsmen, after whom they have cut, the publishers, printers of works illustrated with woodcuts, etc. in alphabetical order». The pages are tightly written, with countless corrections, additions and inserted loose leaves. This volume constitutes the preliminary work for the three above-named volumes on the art of the woodcut which are arranged according to the places of printing, starting with Rome. They also include many notes on artist's biographies, references to secondary literature, descriptions of the woodcuts themselves, indices for monograms, artists and subjects as well as a short bibliography on Italian books illustrated with woodcuts from the 15th to the 19th century. These volumes definitely merit closer attention at another point. Whereas Segelken's numerous observations and antiquarian studies laid down in these volumes are still a rich source, his attributions and art historical notions were said to have long been out-dated¹⁵.

After the bequest had been ceded to the institution, one of the main tasks of the *Kunstverein* was seen in the publication of this comprehensive oeuvre, still in 1892¹⁶. The directorate tried to publish the «catalogue of Italian woodcuts as complete [as possible] for the first time» but did not succeed, probably mainly due to the lack of financial means. Karl von Lützow, professor of the history of art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, suggested to incorporate the Segelken manuscript into a far more general history of the graphic arts which was supposed to be published by the *Gesellschaft der vervielfältigenden Künste* (Society of Reproductive Arts), but without any financial recompensation except for ten free copies. Von Lützow assumed a growing interest of collectors in this field of fine arts and showed his interest in several letters to the chairman of the *Kunstverein*, Hermann Henrich Meier jr. (1845-1905). But the directorate declined the proposition explaining that the widow would accept only a comprehensive publication of Segelken's work. Another reason becomes clear from the letters exchanged between von Lützow and Hermann Henrich Meier: The inventories did not fit into a historical

¹¹ This was already stated by VON HEUSINGER 1967, p. 94, but the number of 6,000 continues to be mentioned in connection with Segelken's collection until today.

¹² *JAHRESBERICHT* 1885-1886, cited according to LEGAT SEGELKEN 1885, no. 1, p. 2.

¹³ Schreiber overlooked some, see VON HEUSINGER 1967, p. 97.

¹⁴ LEGAT SEGELKEN 1885, p. 13, no. 10, 21 January 1887.

¹⁵ VON HEUSINGER 1967, p. 95.

¹⁶ HURM 1892, p. 159.

work but nevertheless, they were supposed to be published as well. Furthermore, the *Kunstverein* was not willing to send its woodcuts to Vienna for research and reproduction and a discussion arose about how to illustrate the projected publication. The *Kunstverein* referred von Lützow to the holdings of the Albertina in order to obtain the necessary illustrations (the Albertina was said to have the most «complete and well ordered material»), but von Lützow countered that searching for the adequate prints in the Albertina would be far too complicated and tedious. As the undertaking stagnated and was not yet accomplished in 1889, Meier wrote to Friedrich Lippmann, director of the Berlin print room, in order to entrust him with the publication of Segelken's *History*¹⁷. They did not come to an agreement either.

The woodcut with Madonna and four Saints and the Presentation in the Temple

The inventory of Segelken's collection has been preserved in the Kunsthalle Bremen. It is arranged according to the portfolios and volumes of Segelken's collection, beginning with «Mappe I». The sheets were classified according to schools and artists (most works were attributed, only very few were anonymous). Segelken used several systems of numeration: Each entry and each work are numbered consecutively. As some entries contain several works, the numbering diverges (e.g.: «39. 120 to 126 seven vignettes» or «40. 127 to 141 fifteen [printed] initials taken from the Biblia Venetiis Bevilaequa 1498 [...]»)¹⁸. At some point, another, third, four-digit numbering is introduced which is not continuous, the point of reference being unclear. This system of numbering is often cited in Segelken's *History*.

The woodcut from the first portfolio described under number 56 C (Fig. 1) and, at the same time, number 2,359, is of special interest here because the woodblock has been preserved for more than five hundred years (Fig. 2, Galleria Estense, Modena). Segelken described the work as follows: «loose [“fliegendes”] sheet: Madonna with saints, above Godfather, below the presentation in the temple. Scola dela Madonna delle grazie [so?]to co[n]fessione a S. Marco. Undescribed.» (Fig. 3)¹⁹. Segelken attributed the print to the Florentine printer and publisher Luca Antonio di Giunta (1457-1538)²⁰, active in Venice from 1489 onwards, and noted that «only the most important works by Lucantonio himself appearing as illustrations in his printed works seem to have been cut. He has also done many large sheets. All the rest comes from his workshop, especially those [sheets] which are not signed»²¹. The woodcut in question was later inventoried by the staff of the Kunsthalle with the number 32,609 as «loose sheet. Madonna with saints a[nd] g[od]f[ather] [?]»²². The attribution was kept when drawing up the inventory. It does not seem to have been known to Schreiber though but it has been discussed by Maria Goldoni (see below)²³. The Bremen woodcut does not show any numbering itself; Segelken obviously did not write his numbers on the works, but he seems to have stored them in a systematic arrangement within the folders and volumes rendering the necessity to number the works individually obsolete.

¹⁷ LEGAT SEGELKEN 1885, no. 14-18, pp. 18-22.

¹⁸ Kunsthalle Bremen, Kupferstichkabinett, SEGELKEN INVENTORY.

¹⁹ Kunsthalle Bremen, Kupferstichkabinett, SEGELKEN INVENTORY.

²⁰ On the Giunta family see HIND 1963, vol. 2, pp. 464-469, PETTAS 1974, ARMSTRONG 2003a, ARMSTRONG 2003b.

²¹ Kunsthalle Bremen, Kupferstichkabinett, SEGELKEN INVENTORY. The German quotation reads: «Von Lucantonio selbst sind wohl nur die bedeutendsten der in seinen Druckwerken erscheinenden Illustrationen geschnitten, wie er denn außerdem viele große Blätter (1. Mappe II) gemacht hat. Alles übrige stammet, besonders wenn unbezeichnet, aus seiner großen Bottega».

²² Kunsthalle Bremen, Kupferstichkabinett, ALBERS INVENTORY.

²³ I LEGNI INCISI 1986, no. 21, p. 76.

Iconography

The woodcut (Fig. 3) shows a complex iconography: In the centre of the sheet, the Virgin is sitting on a throne with a high ornamented backrest. She wears a long dress and a veil on her head. Her gaze is turned towards the viewer. On her left knee, the naked Christ child is standing upright, held by her left hand. Her right hand is open, in abeyance in front of her body, pointing to or about to grasp the child. Both the Virgin and the child have halos, the latter showing a cross nimbus. Below the feet of the Virgin we read the inscription «PVRIFICATIO» referring to the sacrifice of purification below: two doves were offered 40 days after the birth of a son; the first born being consecrated to God (Lk 2,22-24)²⁴. The inscription's position is very prominent, reminding of a book title. On the left of the Virgin, we see Saint Ursula holding a large, curled flag with a cross and the martyrs palm leaf as well as Saint Mark holding a book. Both are identified by inscriptions: «S·/VRSO/LA» and «S·MAR/CO». The presence of the former led Schreiber to interpret the work as having been commissioned by the Scuola di Sant'Orsola in Venice without giving any further evidence²⁵. On the right, Saint Peter is standing with the key and the book as well as Saint Catherine with the wheel and the palm leaf, again described by the inscriptions «S·PIERO» and «S/CATA/RINA». The saints are framing the Virgin, who is at the centre of the attention, by forming a semicircle. Their slightly pyramidal arrangement enforces the monumentality of the sitting Virgin.

A three-dimensional quality and an illusion of space are indicated by the floor tiles, the diagonally running alignments, the twisting flag and the wheel of Saint Catherine as well as the hatching within the figures suggesting light (coming from the left side) and shadow. The background of this central group is left blank so that the letters of the inscriptions gain a strong presence and an ornamental quality. The scene is framed by two pillars with foliated capitals and shafts; the latter – although sprinkled with white dots – denote the darkest parts of the whole composition. The pedestals show Saint Mark sitting at a desk and writing, together with the winged lion (the pillar behind him is given in a perspective view) on the left, on the right, Saint Luke in the same position accompanied by the winged bull.

The central field in the lower level depicts the Presentation in the Temple with the high priest holding the child, Saint Mary and probably Simeon (Lk 2,25-35, recognizing the Messiah in the child) close by. Twelve figures are kneeling and praying: Six men on the left, six women on the right, probably members of the confraternity. Again, the scaling of the figures suggests a three-dimensional quality. Another standing figure (Saint Joseph?) characterized by the halo is carrying the two doves for the sacrifice of purification in a basket. If the man dressed as priest has to be interpreted as Simeon (according to the bible he held the child in his arms) and the figure beside Mary as Saint Joseph, the identification of the third figure with the basket remains unclear. The prophetess Hannah who is usually named together with Simeon (LK 2,36-38) cannot be distinguished among the figures. Below the depiction, another inscription hints to the context of the production and use of this woodcut: «SCOLA·DELA·MADONNA·DELLE GRAZIE/·SOTO·CON·FESSIONE·A·S·MARCO»

The upper level shows Godfather in a lunette above the sitting Virgin, spreading his arms wide, being surrounded by several cherubim. Godfather, the Virgin and Christ child form a strong vertical axis. In the two spandrels we see the other two evangelists equivalent to the lower corners: on the left, Saint John with the eagle (his bench foreshortened), on the right,

²⁴ «When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons"».

²⁵ SCHREIBER 1969-1973, vol. 2, p. 166, no. 1165.

Saint Matthew with the angel. As these two images have approximately the same size as the pedestals, an empty spot below them is filled with a floral ornament, growing out of the border of the lunette. The upper and the centre level are separated by the architrave-like inscription «VBI·CARITAS·EST·ET·AMOR·IBI·DEVS EST·», the wording tracing back to the first Epistle of Saint John. The text was used as one of the antiphons for the liturgy on Maundy Thursday, together with the corresponding hymn «Congregavit nos» (dating from the early 9th century) it was sung during the washing of the feet at the evening Mass of the Lord's last Supper.

Maria Goldoni interpreted the framing of the composition consisting of a lunette, the pillars and the evangelists in the corners as a frontispiece which depicts figural scenes rather than a title in the central field (the title of the image itself being «purification»)²⁶. The inscriptions allude, according to Goldoni, to the devotional use of the print in festive contexts of a confraternity²⁷ – the lower inscription of the first state refers to the confraternity «Scuola della Madonna delle Grazie» having developed out of the devotion to a miraculous image of the Virgin, the «Madonna delle Grazie», whose face was said to have been carved out of the stone by an angel. The image was said to have come from Rimini to Venice by boat (without oars and oarsmen) and to have performed two miracles while arriving: healing a dumb boy and his blind father. The statue was then brought by the crowd to the church of San Marco and later on to the church on the island Santa Maria delle Grazie (destroyed in 1849) where the «school» developed. The depiction in the lower level suggests that the print may have been used in relation to Candlemas Day on 2 February («Candelaria», feast of candles, since the 4th century AD, and celebration of the Presentation in the Temple), 40 days after Christmas.

Goldoni is right in stating a strong concentration with regard to the content which might escape at first sight²⁸. She compares the composition to an altarpiece with its predella and also notices the composite character of the image: the juxtaposition of architectural frame, decorative ornamental vignettes, the figural scenes and the miniatures of the evangelists, assuming not only a random compilation on the occasion of a festivity but a proper pictorial program behind. The choice of images may transport certain messages which the members of the confraternity already knew from the sermons and the liturgy. The deciphering of the images would then reveal certain concepts fundamental to early Christian culture (1 St. John, St. John 14 and 15, Ebr. 9, Mt. 18, 20)²⁹. The reading would start in the lower part: The sacrifice of purification takes places according to the laws of the Old Testament; redemption can only be gained by sacrifices of blood, alluding to the death of Christ and testifying to the love of God (the above-mentioned inscription translates «Where there is love and benevolence, there is God»).

The text of the antiphon and its abbreviation in the woodcut invite the reader to follow the idea of the Christian *caritas*: the love of God and the love of neighbour, using metaphors of light. The woodcut as a new medium often combined «holy texts» with well known pictorial subjects and, in so doing, renewed and extended the argumentative structure of the image³⁰. The short texts point to a whole context which would not have been evident from the image only. In this case, the combination of image and text invites and encourages the (admittedly literate) viewer/reader to contemplate and follow the divine love.

²⁶ Here and following *I LEGNI INCISI* 1986, no. 21, p. 77. Schreiber also noted that the composition is grouped together in the manner of a title page.

²⁷ On the use of the earliest prints see in general *DIE ANFÄNGE DER EUROPÄISCHEN DRUCKGRAPHIK* 2005, esp. cat. no. 39-63 as well as SCHMIDT 2003; GRIESE 2005, esp. pp. 347, 353, 357-359; RUDY 2013.

²⁸ Here and following *I LEGNI INCISI* 1986, no. 21, p. 77.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ GRIESE 2005, p. 338.

Technical details and stylistic remarks

The impression preserved in Bremen shows the first state of the block (out of two) with the inscription in the lower margin completely readable. However, the block was not undamaged when the Bremen sheet was printed as several wormholes and losses illustrate but it seems to have been in a far better condition than the block is nowadays. It can be determined as a print made from the Modena block as the wormholes are accurately fitting. In addition, the first state shows a thick second borderline which is missing in the block itself. The second state on the contrary, includes the monogram AM at the feet of Saint Ursula and Saint Mark which has been inserted for reasons of falsification (Fig. 4)³¹. It features many more losses than does the first state (though some have been retouched in the Bremen print), the text field at the bottom remaining a peculiar vacant space.

Schreiber described both the block and the print in short terms, stating its measurements with 309x205 mm. The Bremen sheet itself measures a bit more, 320x216 mm; Schreiber certainly referred to the printed borderlines (305x205 mm) and not to the paper dimensions. The block is even smaller, measuring 290x184 mm – probably the outer borderline was added to the print with another block.

The paper of the print does not bear any watermark. The paper is rather thin, with quite an even structure and very few inclusions and visible paper fibres³². Furthermore, it is very light in colour which has led to the supposition that it may be either a later print or that it has been washed and pressed. The second argument seems more plausible as the printing relief on the verso is hardly to be detected and the paper nevertheless is an old one. The verso also shows five small pieces of paper which were pasted over holes though the sheet in itself is in good condition. On the recto some missing lines and dots have been retouched but the colour has faded so that these areas are easily discernable: for instance on the right pillar, the inscription below, the borderlines around the image of Saint Luke writing, the inner border line in the lower left corner.

The technical execution of the woodcut is differentiated though Goldoni characterized the artistic means of woodcuts in general as rather limited and modest³³: dark coloured areas without structuring except for small white dots (e.g. the shafts of the pillars), very tight hatching (e.g. in the backrest of the Virgin's throne), parallel horizontal hatching with alternating lines (in the background of the evangelists), a 'white cross hatching' (in the basket) as well as a combination of woodcut and white line engraving (referring to what Hind called black-ground borders, richly decorated, Venice 1490's³⁴; the ornaments within the shafts of the pillars), lines varying in thickness (the contours of the figures in comparison to the border of the lunette) – just to name some obvious features.

Schreiber made a distinction between the dating of the print («around 1500») and the block («end of 15th century»), implying a chronological difference between the cutting and the printing³⁵. Goldoni believed the dating of the print to be much more plausible, specifying the first decade of the 16th century³⁶. Heitz also published the print and dated it «around 1500»³⁷.

³¹ DONATI 1936, p. 6. See the figure in *I LEGNI INCISI* 1986, tav. 15.

³² Maria Goldoni corresponded with the former curator of prints and drawings in the Kunsthalle Bremen, Anne Röver-Kann, and with Annemarie Winter in 1986 and visited the museum in 2015. This time, the conservator Jutta Keddies detached the sheet from its mount in order to have a closer look at the paper. I am indebted to all of them for stimulating discussions.

³³ *I LEGNI INCISI* 1986, p. 77.

³⁴ HIND 1963, vol. 2, p. 504, fig. 265. Hind distinguishes between black-line and black-ground borders; the woodcut discussed here would be part of the former group.

³⁵ SCHREIBER 1969-1973, vol. 2, p. 166, no. 1165, 1166.

³⁶ *I LEGNI INCISI* 1986, p. 76.

³⁷ HEITZ 1933, no. 27, p. 7, dimensions: 309x205 mm, dated: around 1500, with illustration.

Donati suggested the end of the 15th century as time of printing, basing his argument upon the architectural type of the framing lunette around Godfather³⁸. Donati found the greatest stylistic similarity in comparison to the *Pontificale Romanum*, published in 1520 by Lucantonio di Giunta in Venice³⁹. Furthermore, the type of figures with their strong contours and the tight parallel hatching as well as the plying of the clothes are quite similar as can be seen from a detail of the *Pontificale* (Fig. 5)⁴⁰. Donati proposed da Giunta as author of the print and – probably unknowingly – confirmed the attribution already made by Segelken himself. This may also show that van Heusinger's verdict about Segelken's art historical notions (see above) is in itself dependent on time and the state of research. Maria Goldoni hinted to another comparative example, a woodcut from the Bassano workshop, now in Berlin (Schreiber 948, fig. 6)⁴¹.

The attribution is further substantiated by stylistic characteristics like the «shaded style» with «areas of closely cut parallel lines that create an effect of three-dimensionality» which marked a turning point for the history of the Venetian woodcut before Titian around 1490⁴². The lines are evenly spaced and they run diagonally from the upper left to lower right, a feature which can be observed in a number of prints published by Giunta. Armstrong has shown that this type of shading as well as the type of figures ultimately depend on drawings and engravings by Andrea Mantegna which were well known in Venice at the time. Giunta worked together with the master designer Benedetto Bordon (documented between 1477 and 1533) and the highly skilled and innovative cutter Jacob of Strassburg. Together, they produced «large-scale illustrated volumes that harmoniously balanced text and image»⁴³. If they can also be held responsible for the Bremen woodcut is hard to determine but it may be worth considering an influence by their works, given the refined shaded style, the architectural framing with its decorative motifs and the modeling of the figures⁴⁴. A larger comparative study including the illustrations for liturgical books published by Giunta might help to clarify or rather approach the authorship of the print if it can be determined at all.

³⁸ DONATI 1936, p. 6

³⁹ *Ibidem*. Donati also quotes the *Breviarum Romanum*, by Pietro Rabani, 1555. This also mentioned in *I LEGNI INCISI* 1986, pp. 76-77.

⁴⁰ A copy of the *Pontificale Romanum* from 1520 was sold at Christie's, Sale 2706, The Collection of Arthur & Charlotte Vershbow, 9-10 April 2013, New York, Rockefeller Plaza, Lot. 291, a high-resolution image can be found at: <http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/books-manuscripts/pontificale-romanum-pontificale-secundum-ritus-sacrosancte-romane-5662820-details.aspx>.

⁴¹ See *I LEGNI INCISI* 1986, p. 77.

⁴² ARMSTRONG 2003b, p. 708 (quotation), 684. See also LANDAU-PARSHALL 1994, pp. 65-71.

⁴³ ARMSTRONG 2003b, p. 709.

⁴⁴ Armstrong underlined that the use of diagonals in the tiled floor as a mode of defining space (like in the Bremen woodcut) is «a feature alien to Bordon». Therefore, the designer and the cutter may not be identical with but close to Bordon and Strassburg. They both had skilled assistants, some of whom may have been trained in Northern Europe, ARMSTRONG 2003b, pp. 720-721.

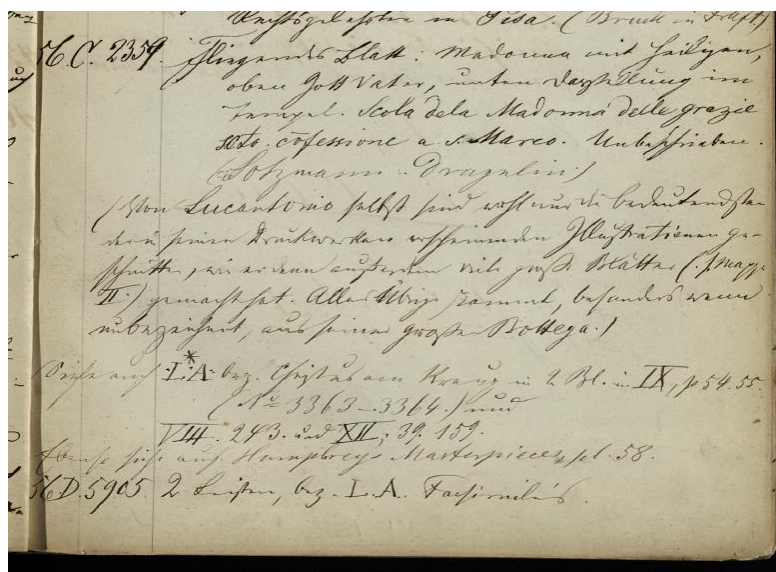


Fig. 1: Inventory of the collection of woodcuts of Hermann Melchior Segelken, before 1885, here the entry referring to no. 56 C (detail), Kunsthalle Bremen, Kupferstichkabinett – der Kunstverein in Bremen.

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Fig. 2: Venetian, end of 15th century, *Madonna with four Saints and Presentation in the Temple*, wood block, 297x195x 26 mm, Modena, Galleria Estense, inv. GE 4844.

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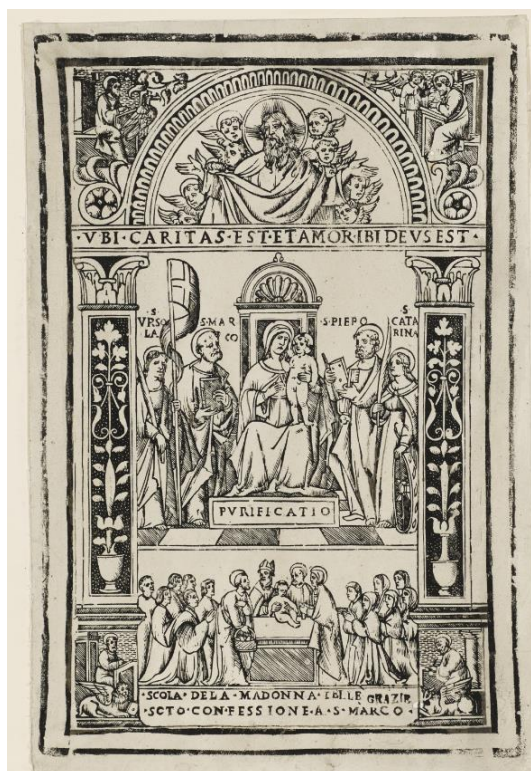


Fig. 3: Venetian, first decade of the 16th century, *Madonna with four Saints and Presentation in the Temple*, woodcut, first state, 320x216 mm, Kunsthalle Bremen, Kupferstichkabinett – der Kunstverein in Bremen, inv. no. 32609.

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Fig. 4: Venetian, first decade of the 16th century, *Madonna with four Saints and Presentation in the Temple*, woodcut, second state, Modena, Galleria Estense, taken from *I LEGNI INCISI* 1986, tav. 15.

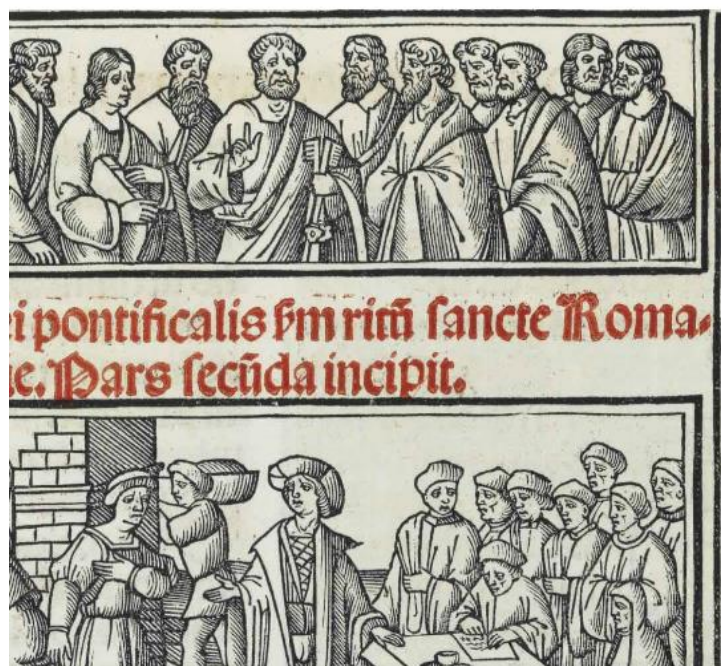


Fig. 5: *Pontificale Romanum: Pontificale secundum Ritus sacrosancte Romane ecclesie*, Venice: Lucantonio de Giunta, 1520, Christie's, Sale 2706, The Collection of Arthur & Charlotte Vershbow, 9–10 April 2013, New York, Rockefeller Plaza (detail of the title page).

© Christie's / Bridgeman Images



Fig. 6: Venetian, probably Bassano workshop, *Christ on the cross with angels, collecting Christ's blood*, around 1500, woodcut, coloured 295 x 200 mm, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv.Nr. 880-301

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ABSTRACT

The Kupferstichkabinett of the Kunsthalle Bremen preserves a collection of more than 2.300 early Italian woodcuts. The collection was brought together by the amateur Melchior Hermann Segelken (1814-1885), who worked as a physician and donated his collection to the *Kunstverein in Bremen* in 1885. He not only possessed an enormous collection with an emphasis on early Italian prints and chiaroscuro-woodcuts, containing many very rare prints, but he also devoted himself to scholarly research. The Kunsthalle keeps a manuscript in three volumes with Segelken's own art historical studies which has never been published or otherwise worked on.

One woodcut from the Segelken collection seems of special interest because its printing block is conserved in the Galleria Estense in Modena. The impression shows the first state of the block with the inscription in the lower margin completely readable. The block was not undamaged when the Bremen sheet was printed as several wormholes and losses illustrate but it seems to have been in a far better condition than the block is nowadays. Therefore, the Bremen print allows us to draw conclusions about the previous condition of the woodblock.

Beginning with the history of the Segelken collection and the so far unknown manuscript by the collector, the text will try to explore the provenance of this woodcut. It will also include remarks on the paper and its condition as well as iconographic attempts and stylistic approaches.