

SALOMON LILIAN

DUTCH OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

2025

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cat. no. 5

Michael Sweerts
Brussels 1618 – 1664 Goa

The Virgin at Prayer with Self-Portrait

Oil on canvas
45.1 x 34.3 cm.
A label with handwritten inv. no. 167 (or 164?) on the reverse

Provenance:
Possibly London, collection William van Huls (after 1649-1722)
Possibly his deceased sale, London, 5 August 1722, lot 166[1]
Possibly Haarlem, collection François Constantijn Druyvesteyn (1729-1767)
His deceased sale, Haarlem, Jelgersma and Van der Vinne, 26 April 1768 (Lugt no. 1678)[2]
Austria, private collection, since at least the first half of the twentieth century, by inheritance until 2023
Sale London, Christie's, 7 December 2023, lot 10

Literature:
Possibly R. Kultzen, *Michael Sweerts : Brussels 1618 – Goa 1664*, Ghent 1996, p. 144, cat. no. 11 ('Lost pictures / Pictures known only from sales and inventories'), with reference to the Druyvesteyn sale, 1768

Introduction: A Reassessment of Michael Sweerts' *The Virgin at Prayer with Self-portrait*

This remarkably original composition by Michael Sweerts (1618-1664), unpublished and known only through archival sources until its appearance at auction in 2023, represents a significant discovery within the artist's oeuvre. Praised for his originality and innovative compositions, Sweerts is known as a complex and intriguing character who defies easy categorization. The following essay highlights critical aspects of *The Virgin at Prayer with Self-Portrait*, examining new findings from a detailed technical analysis and subsequent restoration, which underscore the painting's importance within the artist's oeuvre, and which clarify some misconceptions that were proposed earlier about the artwork.[3]

The painting blends religious devotion with personal introspection and provides a unique insight into the artist's life at that moment. The artistic milieu in Rome in the 1640s had made an unmistakable impression on Sweert's work: the Bentvueghels , the Accademia di San Luca, the echo of Caravaggio (1571-1610), the works of Sassoferrato (1609-1685) and Diego Velázquez (1599-1660); these influences and many more have been explored in several detailed publications. This frame of reference, along with information gleaned from the analysis and treatment of the artwork, suggests a logical date of 1650-1651 for the creation of the painting.

By the mid-17th century, Sweerts had established himself as a prominent figure in the artistic community of Rome. In 1646 he is documented



living with a group of Northern artists in the parish of Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome and collecting fees for the Accademia di San Luca, signifying a position of considerable responsibility. Between 1648-1652, the artist was engaged in work for Prince Camillo Pamphili (1622-1666), the influential nephew of Pope Innocent X (Giovanni Battista Pamphili, 1574-1655). About this time, Sweerts must have painted the portrait of Camillo, which is mentioned in an inventory of 1650.[4] It was also during these years, under the papacy of Innocent X, 1644-1655, that the Pamphili family was at the height of its powers. Camillo was a noted collector of paintings by artists such as Carravaggio, Raphael, Claude Lorrain and Northern artists such as Hans Memling and Jan van Scorel to name but a few in a collection of what would grow to approximately 1,400 paintings.

Precisely in 1650 as well, Sweerts was awarded a Knighthood in the Order of the Golden Spur by Innocent X, which thereafter granted him the title of *Cavaliere* (Knight); a title which was given to Sweerts for 'birth, as well as for being excellent in the Science of Painting' and that was used by him in the ensuing years.[5] This knighthood was a more prestigious honor commonly reserved for nobles, in contrast to the Knights of Christ, which was a more usual honorary title for artists bestowed by the Pope. Adrea de Marchi and Claudio Seccaroni persuasively argue that by 1650 that Sweerts had become 'a noble, successful artist, singularly detached from the dynamics of his cultural context. It is clear that he lived and painted differently from the *clichés* of the time, displaying unparalleled attention to the real life of the subjects of the different classes that he depicted.'[6]

Under these various conditions, Sweerts painted *The Virgin at Prayer with Self-Portrait,* which serves simultaneously as a devotional work as well as a reference to his relationship with the Pamphili family, who were his most important patrons at the time. The proposed relationship between this painting and the Pamphili family will be discussed below. What also sets this painting apart is its overt religious tone. In general, there is a paucity of religious themes in paintings by Sweerts, with *The Seven Acts of Mercy* from 1648/49 and a *Lamentation* known from a print being the exceptions, as well as this painting.[7]

Revealing the Original Composition

The small format of the painting belies its enormous visual impact. The composition depicts the artist holding or presenting a painting of the Virgin Mary at Prayer, with his shadowed figure peering out from behind the framed image. The assumption that the figure is Sweerts is based on several points: the visage works as a conceivable self-portrait and the age of the man is consistent with Sweerts' age at the time. Furthermore, the depicted Virgin is his concept of the Virgin at prayer, that is his own composition and rendering, not a copy after another artist. In fact, such a painting by Sweerts is mentioned in two auctions, in 1722 and 1768.[8]

Sweerts has depicted himself wearing a red velvet doublet, discreet and refined, which perfectly symbolises his status as a recently knighted Cavaliere of the Golden Spur.[9] Red was an easily recognized symbol of wealth and power in Roman society during the Renaissance and Baroque periods in Italy. He appears to be a relatively young man, so 32 years (his age in 1650) is plausible. What is so extraordinary about this composition is his own placement tangential to a religious portrayal. The figure holding the painting is set against a pastel-colored sky with pink, blue and purple clouds. There is no horizon, creating an ethereal quality that pervades the entire painting. The figure looks out to the viewer, literally and seemingly figuratively, in the shadow of the Virgin.

The Virgin is depicted as a youthful figure, almost still a girl; she stands out starkly against the enframed dark background. She is wearing a simple but intensely white tunic, symbolizing her purity, complemented by an ultramarine sash tied around her slim waist; the blue being a traditional iconographic marker for the Virgin. Additionally, her head is adorned with a warm golden-colored headdress, further enhancing her divine, yet modest representation. This use of a head covering with warm golden tones can



Fig. 1 Cat. no. 5 before the restoration procedure. Image Redivivus. The background is completely overpainted



Fig. 2 Cat. no. 5 after the restoration procedure

be found in earlier depictions of the Virgin in the seventeenth century in Rome; it adds a distinctive, radiant element to the composition, contributing to the overall spiritual quality of the work.

The frame that surrounds the painting of the Virgin is delicate in both form and color; the full design of this frame emerged during the restoration (figs. 1, 2). Interestingly, the frame appears to be a metal construction, as the difference between the narrow frame and the relatively large corner ornamentation would only be possible with a strong material such as metal. This idea is further strengthened by the highlights and fine shadows of the fleur-de-lis in the composition (fig. 3). Its appearance suggests that Sweerts was probably inspired by contemporaneous frame designs with prominent ornamentation, made specifically for smaller artworks. A group of closely related examples are the silver frames designed by Alessandro Algardi (1598-1651) and made by Francesco Perone for 27 paintings commissioned by Innocent X between 1648-1652.[10] The fleur-de-lis



Fig. 3
Cat. no. 5, detail of the corner element in the shape of fleur-de-lis of the frame surrounding the painting of the Virgin

finials must be a reference to Sweerts' relationship with the Papal family as it was a well-known element in the Papal coat of arms of the Pamphili family, and used by Innocent X, as seen in his bust sculpted by Alessandro Algardi of c. 1647/48 now in the Palazzo Venezia (fig. 4, 5). Given the surrounding context, the employment of this symbol cannot be seen as casual, and its use would be unlikely for those outside of the Papal family, considering the socio-political dominance of the Papal States in Rome at the time.



Fig. 4 Alessandro Algardi, *Bust of Pope Innocent X*, 1647-1648, Rome, Palazzo Venezia



Fig. 5
Detail of fig. 4, fleur-de-lis ornament in Alessandro Algardi, *Bust of Pope Innocent X*, 1647-1648, Rome, Palazzo Venezia

Like many Flemish artists of the period, Sweerts was deeply influenced by the Catholic Counter-Reformation and the church's efforts to maintain religious influence through art. In certain elements, it appears that Sweerts draws not only on Renaissance masters such as Raphael, but also upon the influence of Italian masterworks that were in the Pamphili collection at the time. For example, the humble attire of the Sweerts' Virgin recalls the realism of Caravaggio's *Penitent Magdalene* from the Doria Pamphili Collection (fig. 6). There is little doubt as well that Sweerts was influenced by the very popular depictions of the Virgin at Prayer by Sassoferrato (fig. 7), who was still working in Rome at the time Sweerts was there, though the porcelain perfection of the Virgin's skin and clothing is clearly not what Sweerts was aiming for. While Sweerts' Virgin's cloth headscarf and the dark background on the painting of the Virgin can be linked to Sassoferrato's compositions, which would have certainly been known by Sweerts, it is probably more the sense of personal piety that appealed to him. His depiction of the Virgin Mary visibly heightened against a dark background clearly calls to mind these representations, which had their roots in sixteenth century Catholic reforms aimed at generating a more personal approach to worship and encouraging individual devotion. Simon Schama aptly described Sweerts' approach to painting as seeking to "marry the physical monumentality of the great Italian art with the common humanity of the north," a synthesis that is evident in this painting's combination of grand spiritual themes and tangible human emotion.[11]

The Virgin Mary at prayer, accepting her fate as bestowed by God, begs the question of whether the artist, in presenting himself in the shadow of her, is also reflecting on and accepting his own destiny, which within the decade of this painting would lead him to missionary work for the Paris Foreign Missionary Society. The seeds of the new missionary society were planted when the Jesuit missionary Alexandre de Rhodes (1593-1660) was recalled to Rome in 1648 and subsequently published his book in 1650 in Rome on the missionary work he carried out in Vietnam as well as several other influential publications in the ensuing



Fig. 6
Caravaggio, *Penitent Magdalene*, 1594/95, oil on canvas, 122.5 x 98.5 cm., Rome, Galleria Doria Pamphili



Fig. 7
Sassoferrato, *The Virgin at Prayer*, 1640/50, oil on canvas, 73 x 58 cm., London, National Gallery

years. Possibly through Alexandre de Rhodes, Sweerts received an introduction to Marie Madeleine de Vignerot (1604-1675), best known as the Duchess de'Anguillon, niece to Cardinal Richelieu. She and Sweerts had established a friendship that has been noted in letters, although it is unclear how they met.[12] De Rhodes also obtained encouragement from Innocent X to found the Foreign Missionary Society Paris, of which Vignerot was a principal financier; this new organization would allow lay missionaries to accompany clergy to establish Catholic missions abroad.

All this information represents new connections about the artwork that were only made possible by our thorough investigation and exhaustive restoration that revealed the original paint layers. When it was first examined by the Redivivus team in the spring of 2024, approximately 60% of the painting had been overpainted (fig. 1); microscopic assessment, testing of solvent sensitivity of the various paint layers, and cross-sectional analysis were conducted to safely identify and assess the feasibility of removing the aged layers of overpainting. The process ensured minimal interference with the underlying composition while allowing us to remove the overpaint and reveal the full depth of the artist's composition (fig. 2). This complex and challenging treatment was thus successful in restoring the artwork's intended composition and palette, taking into consideration its age of 375 years.

Understanding the Artist's Intention Through Technical Investigation and Restoration

The arrival of the artwork at Redivivus, the sixth painting by Sweerts to be investigated and treated at the studio over the last 8 years, provided an additional opportunity for a technical investigation that would both guide the restoration process and further enhance our understanding of Sweerts' techniques and the dating of the artwork. Since the painting has only recently come to light, it is even more important to consider its new status, post-restoration. Why the composition had been changed so drastically in the past is unknown. One theory to speculate on could be that the fleur-de-lis may have been covered to eradicate the reference to the Pamphili family or perhaps it was perceived as a reference to France, also commonly symbolized by the fleur-de-lis. The discovery of these previously hidden details is crucial for correctly understanding the painting's significance. Since most paintings by Sweerts are not dated, it is essential to rely on the documented materials and comparative technical data to establish a timeline of the typical material characteristics of his oeuvre, as was begun in 2002 for the exhibition at the Rijksmuseum.[13] A full investigation was carried out over the course of restoration of the *Virgin Mary with Self-Portrait*; in each part we uncovered small details about the materials used and the specific techniques Sweerts applied in this painting that refer precisely to the proposed time period.

Textile Support

The artwork currently consists of multiple textile supports, resulting from at least two lining procedures during previous conservation campaigns. The original textile support was thoroughly assessed using high magnification and polarising microscopy, which confirmed that the material is flax bast fibers (linen). The weave was identified as a simple or plain weave, consisting of interlacing horizontal and vertical threads. The inconsistent thickness and rotation of the threads, as well as some other irregularities on the textile indicate a combination of the handmade labor used for spinning the threads and hand-operated loom production.

At present, the artwork now appears larger in the vertical direction than intended. The true measurements of the image are 43cm x 34 cm. This matches quite a few of Sweert's Roman period canvases, such as the group of paintings of *The Old Woman Spinning Yarn*.[14]

To document the textile, microscopic images were captured alongside X-radiography and polarising microscopy of the fibers. The first lining support was found to be a twill weave, applied with a lead white paste visible in the X-ray image (fig 8). Interestingly, the twill structure has left slight marks on the painting's surface, likely caused by the temperatures used during the lining process.



Fig. 8 Cat. no. 5, X-radiograph. Image Redivivus

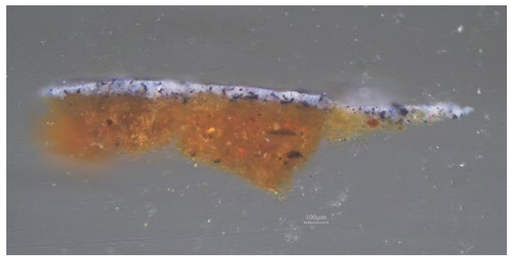


Fig. 9 Cross section taken from blue sky area in cat. no. 5 in normal light viewed at 20X magnification. Image Redivivus

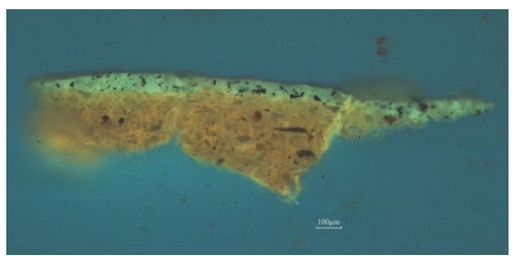


Fig. 10 Cross section taken from blue sky area in cat. no. 5 in UV light viewed at 20X magnification. Image Redivivus

Preparatory Layers

The textile is prepared with a reddish brown ground layer which is relatively transparent in the X-ray imaging.[15] Analysis of cross-section samples confirmed that the ground is a single red colored layer composed of fine particles of what appears to be natural iron oxide and larger particles of silica based materials (fig. 9). The outlines of the larger siliceous particles are more clearly seen when examined under UV light (fig. 10).

The consistency of this ground is similar to the preparation layers documented on other works Sweerts made in Rome. Analysis by Arie Wallert, in the Rijksmuseum catalogue proved that Sweerts used local grounds that were prepared with mixtures of clay materials.[16] Inclusion of a long thin particle on the right side of the sample above is similar to the plate-like materials characteristic of this locally sourced material. Wallert documents similar preparatory layers on Sweerts' *Portrait of Joseph Deutz*, the *Seven Acts of Mercy* series, the *Painter's Studio*, and *The Card Players*, all works that fit to

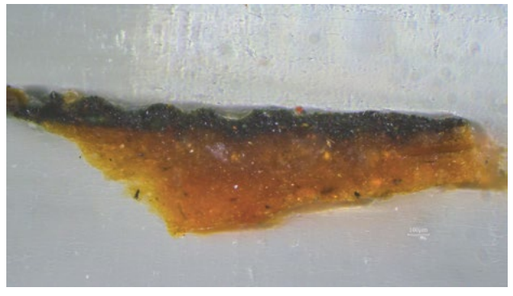


Fig. 11 Cross section from dark background in Sweerts' *A Game of Backgammon* in normal light viewed at 20X magnification. Image Redivivus

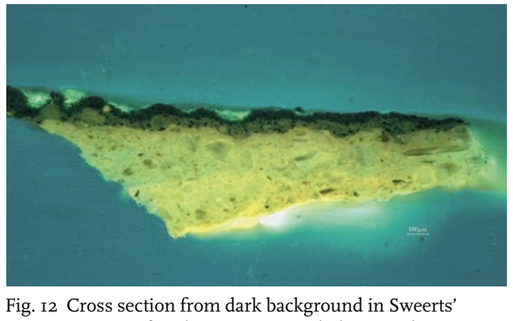


Fig. 12 Cross section from dark background in Sweerts' *A Game of Backgammon* in UV light viewed at 20X magnification. Image Redivivus

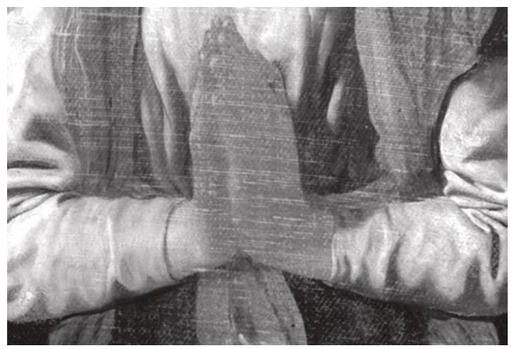


Fig. 13 Cat. no. 5, detail of the Virgin's hands in IRR to show the thin and thick contour lines of the underdrawing and further underpainting under the arms. Image Redivivus



Fig. 14 Cat. no. 5, detail of the Virgin's hand in normal light to show the thin paint layers

the proposed time period. At Redivivus we have documented a similar ground on Sweerts' painting, *A Game of Backgammon* (figs. 11, 12) which is approximately dated to the same period.[17] Upon his return to Brussels, Sweerts resumed working on a double layered, grey-toned ground more typical of Southern Netherlandish practice. This rules out speculations that this picture would date any later than 1655, when Sweerts is recorded working again in Brussels.

Underdrawing and Underpainting

In order to visualize preparatory layers, Infrared Reflectography (IRR) was employed to measure the varied transmission, absorption, and reflection of the artist's materials. Preparatory sketches, which may include underdrawings and underpaintings, often absorb infrared radiation due to their high content of carbon, manganese, or other earth pigments. IRR can also help identify variations in the thickness of paint layers, which is useful for understanding the artist's technique.[18]

Revealing underdrawings on an earth-based ground, such as in this artwork, is challenging. However, IRR images of the Virgin's hands show visible sketch lines. The artist used both thick and fine carbon-based dry mediums to outline the figures, contours, and creases. For example, a fine line marking the fold of the wrists and the curve where they join is clearly visible in the IRR image (fig. 13) but not on the painted surface (fig.14), suggesting it served as a placement mark and guide for shading. Thicker sketch lines are also visible in her hands, possibly indicating the use of different tools or pressures. Below the hands a fluid dark line is seen locating the forms of the sleeves.

The dark background behind the Virgin, which appears uniform to the naked eye (fig 15), reveals subtle variations under IRR. These differences highlight the artist's compositional planning and gradual buildup of the dark paint layers. When the IRR image is purposefully over-exposed, a thinner layer of paint around the Virgin becomes visible (fig. 16). This suggests that the artist delineated a reserve in the background before continuing to fill in the figure and finish the background. When finalizing the Virgin, he then carefully painted over this area to create precise contours and enhance the dimensionality of the figure within the frame.

Infrared imaging of the painting also revealed evidence of underpainting. After the initial sketching with carbon-based dry mediums, the artist applied broad, loosely defined brushstrokes that are below the final paint layers. This suggests rapid execution during an underpainting phase, as well as adjustments made later, which are visible in the final surface. See for instance the vertical drapery of the Virgin's headdress that is first underpainted with fluid brushstrokes in a carbon containing medium (fig. 16).



Fig. 15 Cat. no. 5, detail of the Virgin in normal light



Fig. 16 Cat. no. 5, detail of the Virgin in IRR composite image with exposure increased in background. Brightening the image reveals brushstrokes surrounding the figure's outlines, indicating the artist's careful planning. On the lower right side of the headdress loose underpainting of the drapery can be seen. Image Redivivus

The underpainting appears to involve a technique known as *brunaille*, a monochromatic layer, likely in shades of brown, used to establish depth, define shadows, and create a tonal foundation for the subsequent layers. This approach can be observed in works across Sweerts' oeuvre, despite differences in materials and date. For example, a later work assessed and treated at Redivivus, the *Portrait of a Young Man Reading*[19] exhibits a similar underpainting when examined with IRR. A striking comparison can be made between the hand from this self-portrait (fig. 17, 18) and the hands from the *Portrait of a Young Man Reading* (fig. 19, 20); the segments of the hand and fingers that appear in shadow received a strong dark outline in the underpainting while highlighted forms do not have underdrawing, this makes sense as Sweerts left blank the areas that did not need deep shadow.

In conclusion, IRR reveals various aspects of Sweert's preparations and the consistency of his technique across paintings is notable. The composition was first sketched using fine and thick lines made with a carbon-based dry medium. The artist then likely applied an underpainting in *brunaille* to build volume and depth, as seen in the hands and other details across both artworks. Lastly, after completing the Virgin, he painted over the reserved areas around the figure to define its contours with precision.

Painting Technique

Sweerts was also a singular artist in his innovative manipulation of paints and his expert craftsmanship. His distinctive techniques such as scratching fine lines and dragging brushes through wet paint to impart directionality have been noted by de Marchi and Seccarroni to imply textured fabric.[20] Additionally, we have noted very specific techniques in this painting, such as Sweert's extraordinary use of the costly lapis lazuli pigment throughout the painting: the sky, the white tunic, the dark folds in the tunic and of course, and the blue sash.

Sweerts used this pigment in order to create a very particular three-dimensionality for the figure of the Virgin. He employed the *chiaroscuro* technique, the use of strong contrasts between light and dark affecting the entire composition to achieve a sense of volume in modelling three-dimensional objects and figures. In the face, hands, and headscarf of the Virgin, working in the non-academic manner, Sweerts created a quick three dimensionality by working up the lights and darks, while leaving the thinly covered ground to serve as the middle tone. However, the reddish brown ground has darkened over time which inevitably has caused darkening of the composition, particularly in the shadows. This is especially true of the headdress (fig. 21) where the

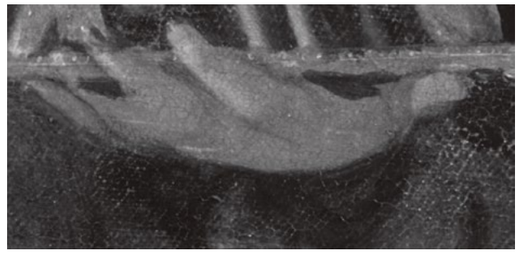


Fig. 17 Cat. no. 5, detail of the portrait's hand in IRR. Image Redivivus



Fig. 18 Cat. no. 5, detail of the portrait's hand in normal light

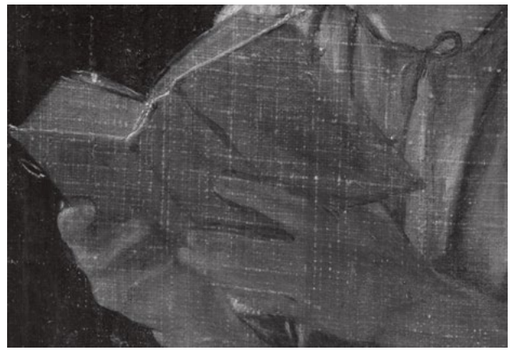


Fig. 19 Detail of *Portrait of a Young Man Reading*, Michael Sweerts, in IRR. Image Redivivus



Fig. 20 Detail of *Portrait of a Young Man Reading*, Michael Sweerts, in normal light. Image Redivivus

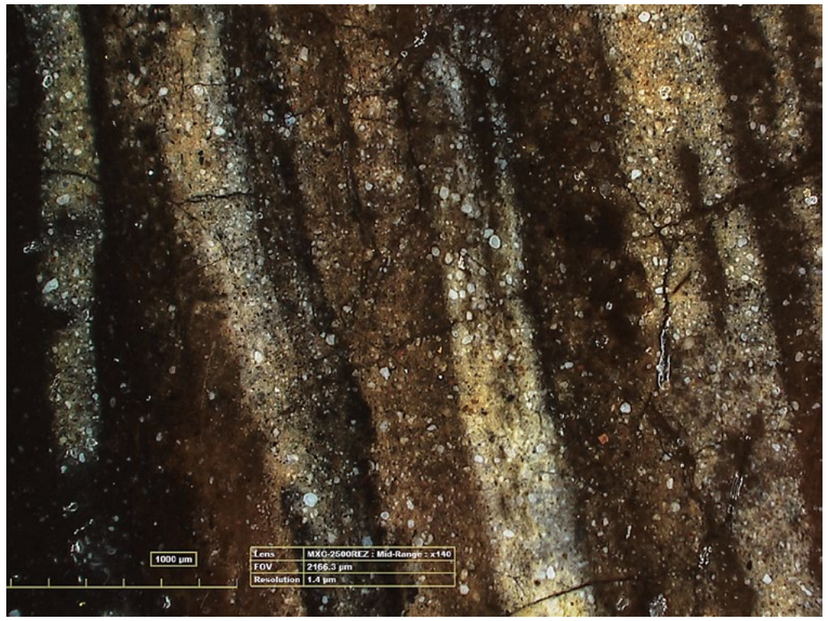


Fig. 21 Cat. no. 5, microscopic image at 140x magnification using Hirox digital microscope. White dots indicate formation of lead soaps in the paint matrix. Image Redivivus

lead tin yellow paint has increased in transparency due to the formation of metal soap aggregates.[21] We expect that the yellow cloth originally had a more solid appearance.

Remarkable attention has been paid to the fine details of the Virgin's dress by Sweerts. The whites of the dress were first laid in over the sketched forms. Here the artist applied the white highlights and used the technique of passing a brush over the still slightly wet paint to impart directional textures. Raking light photography under a microscope demonstrates this method is used in all highlights of the blouse, even the finest folds of the sleeve (fig. 22, 23).



Fig. 22 Cat. no. 5, microscopic image of the paint surface with raking light angle at 35x magnification using Hirox digital microscope. Image Redivivus



Fig. 23 Cat. no. 5, microscopic image of the paint surface with raking light angle at 35x magnification using Hirox digital microscope. Image Redivivus

Close examination of the paint surface shows that lapis lazuli blue was intentionally included in the paint mixtures of both the whites and darks of the Virgin's dress (fig. 24). The medium tones were applied on top of the white and deep shadows were applied last to the reserved areas, defining and sharpening the forms. Remarkably, these shadows are made with a substantial amount of ultramarine mixed with fine black particles (fig. 25). This complex heightening and brightening of the contrast by the use of ultramarine is very distinctive in this work. The blues of the sky also include substantial amounts of ultramarine, rather than the more common employment of optical blues that often contain mostly white, black pigments, smalt or other less expensive blue pigments such as azurite.

Notably, the artist's attire was found to be composed of red lake pigment, employed both as a relatively thick glaze as well as mixed with lead-white for the parts of his sleeve in the direct light.

Conclusion

The restoration of this painting has helped to define its importance within Sweerts' oeuvre. Through both art historical as well as technical investigation, the artist's intentions, influences, and historical context have been illuminated. This painting, a profound testament to devotion and piety, underscores Sweerts' genius and his enduring legacy. Furthermore, the now recovered fleur-de-lis ornaments suggest a narrative connection to Sweerts' most significant patron from 1648-1652, the Papal Pamphili family. These elements, combined with the youthful depiction of the artist, position the painting as a synthesis of his artistic and personal journey between 1650-1651.

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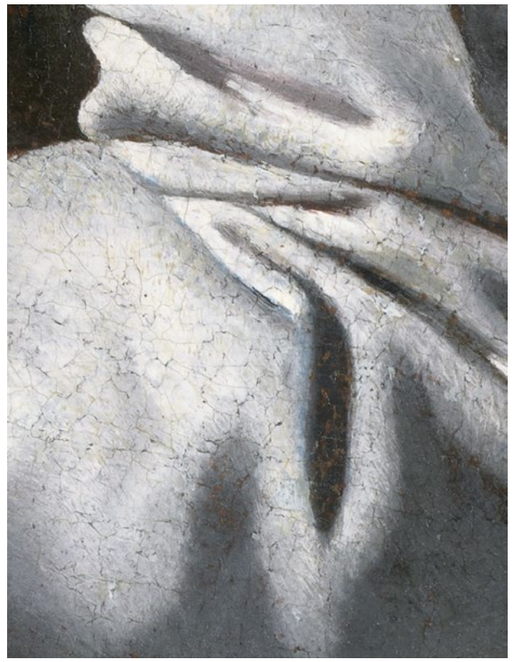


Fig. 24 Cat. no. 5, detail of fold in the proper left sleeve of the Virgin's tunic



Fig. 25 Hirox microscope image at 140x showing the subtle use of blue to create a cool shadow that is still bright due to the whitening effect of the blue on top of the white pigment. Image Redivivus

Notes

1 Lot 166 'Caveller Swarts : The Virgin Mary'.

2 See Kultzen 1996, p. 144, cat. no. 11 (Lost pictures / Pictures known only from sales and inventories): 'Een biddende Maria, borststuck met twee handen, teder en kragtig – door chevalier Swarts'. Kultzen does not give the lot number. According to Art Sales Catalogues Online the only known copy of the catalogue is in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes et de la Photographie.

3 L. Yeager-Crasselt, catalogue entry sale London, Christie's, 7 December 2023, lot 10 (see: https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6458275).

4 A. de Marchi, C. Seccaroni, *Michael Sweerts – Realities and mysteries in seventeenth-century Rome*, exh. cat. Rome, Accademia Nazionale di San Luca 2024-2025, pp.180-181.

5 Rome 2024-2025, p. 190-192, description of the Vatican archive document. This was a papal order also called the Knights of the Golden Spur or the *Militia Aurata*. From a document dated September 1650 in the Vatican archives.

6 Rome 2024-2025, p. 178. Simon Schama also clearly delineated these differences in his article 'Another Dimension', in: *The New Yorker*, 28 October 2002, pp. 85-91. Sweerts doesn't succumb to the overly sweet depictions of the poor nor the heavily classicised versions.

7 For the *Seven Acts of Mercy*, see Kultzen 1996, pp. 33-35, 101-104, cat. nos. 47-53; G. Jansen, in: G. Jansen, P.C. Sutton, *Michael Sweerts (1618-1664)*, exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, San Francisco, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art 2002, pp. 80-93, cat. nos. 5A-G. For the *Lamentation*, see Kultzen 1996, p. 128, cat. no. E1.; Amsterdam/San Francisco/Hartford 2002, p. 168, cat. no. P1. Interestingly, 'The Virgin Mary' by 'Cavaller Swarts' was auctioned in London 1722. A 'praying Mary, bust, with two hands, tender and powerful' was auctioned in Haarlem in 1678 (see Provenance, and notes 1 and 2 for both). If these references concern the present painting, or possibly the painting held up in the present work, remains unclear.

8 See Provenance, and notes 1, 2 and 7.

9 Rome 2024-2025, p. 190.

10 J. Gash, J. Montagu, 'Algardi, Gentile and Innocent X: A rediscovered painting and its frame', in: *The Burlington Magazine* 122 (1980), pp. 55-60, 63. This article documents the concurrent commission from Louis Cousin (Luigi Gentile) for 27 paintings on copper with the designs of the frames by highly acclaimed Roman sculptor Alessandro Algardi, and the manufacture of the silver frames by Francesco Perone. An interesting example of metal frames being ordered for paintings by Pope Innocent X that dates from the same period as this painting,1648-1652. Only one is known today, in the collection of The Museum of Saint John in London, which is engraved on the back with the Papal coat of arms, including the fleur-de-lis.

11 Schama 2002.

12 According to a letter dating 6 July 1662 from Bishop Francois Pallu to the Directors of the Seminary Foreign Missions Society Paris, (MEP) she was responsible for sending Sweerts on the Foreign Missionary Society journey to Persia with the eventual goal of Asia. See B. McShea, *La Duchesse*, New York 2023, p. 344, note 23.

13 Already in 2016, technical investigations and restorations were carried out for the Sweerts exhibition at the Rijksmuseum had shed light on his working practices in Rome, Brussels, and Amsterdam. The data assembled in the chapter on technique and materials has been very useful for this study. See A. Wallert, W. de Ridder, 'The Materials and Methods of Sweert's Paintings', in: Amsterdam/San Francisco/Hartford 2002, pp. 37-48.

14 Kultzen 1996, cat. nos. 9, 11, 25, 29, 30, 31, 65: J. Hillegers, in: J. Hillegers et al., *Salomon Lilian : Old Masters 2019*, Amsterdam 2019, pp. 102-107, cat. no. 19.

15 The transparency of this ground in the X-ray is the reason that the original textile support is much less visible than the lining textile, which had been applied using a lead paint mixture.

16 Their red color comes from naturally occurring iron oxide deposits inside the source clay. Wallert identifies this as Maliss clay, composed of halloysite, muscovite, quartz, and calcite, and iron oxide that was from a local source, in Rome near Saint Peter's and at Monte Spertoli near Florence, as documented by the Volpato manuscript in 1649. Wallert, de Ridder, 'The Materials and Methods,' in G. Jansen, P.C. Sutton, *Michael Sweerts (1618-1664)*, 2002, 39.

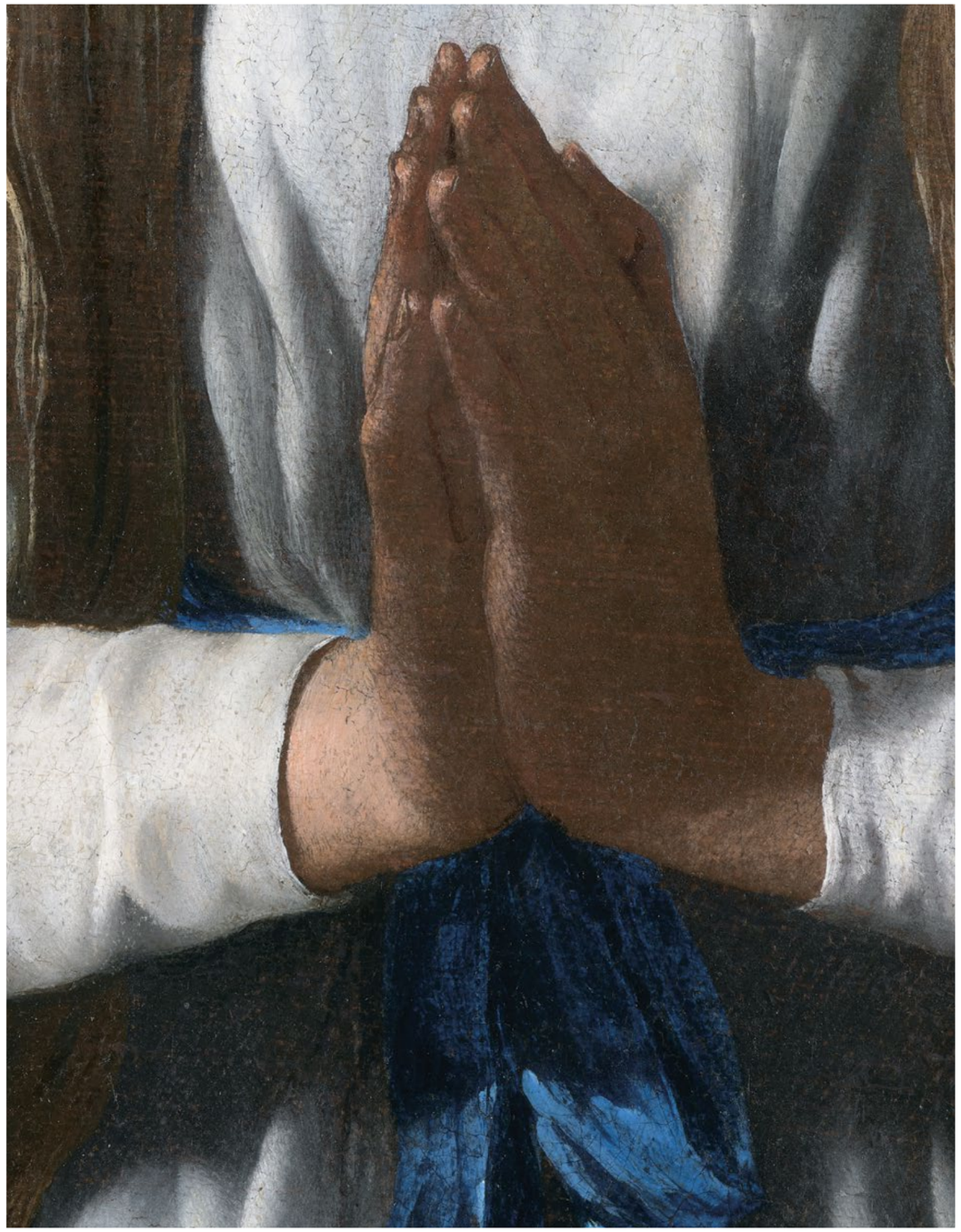
17 Kultzen 1996, p. 31, 100, cat. no. 44; J. Hillegers, in: J. Hillegers et al., *Salomon Lilian : Old Masters 2022*, Amsterdam 2019, pp. 112-117, cat. no. 17.

18 The infrared reflectographic images were captured using a standard lens from the Apollo Infrared Reflectography Camera (IRR) and illuminated with the LAMPA all-in-one lighting system from Xpectraltec. The histogram curves and sharpness of the images were adjusted to enhance the visibility of details.

19 Kultzen 1996, pp. 63, 70-71, 117, cat. no. 91. The painting was sold by the Salomon Lilian gallery in October 2021 to a private collector.

20 See Rome 2024-2025, p. 145.

21 A. van Loon, *Color Change and Chemical Reactivity in Seventeenth Century Oil Paintings*, diss. University of Amsterdam 2008, pp. 210–212.



Detail of cat. no. 5