

Stichting Victor I

The Burning of Troy by Lambert Suavius, c.1550



## Introduction

Stichting Victor I is the first in a series of six minor biannual exhibitions featuring one or more paintings from the collection of old masters at Centraal Museum Utrecht. The series is occasioned by a generous subsidy provided by Stichting Victor for restoration and technical research. A total of 14 paintings will be restored and analysed, each of them part of the Museum's core collection. Some were painted by Jan van Scorel, his group and contemporaries. Others are by Hendrick ter Brugghen and the other Utrecht Caravaggists, or are otherwise attributed to them.

Each exhibition will focus on a particular art-historical question, and give visitors insight into the research methods that were used in an attempt to resolve it. These methods will often include X-ray photography and infra-red reflectographic assembly. Upon their completion in 2007, the restoration and research work will be recorded in two volumes published in the Centraal Museum's Agnietenreeks series. The CMU wishes to express its deep gratitude to Stichting Victor for its role in bringing about this unique project.

Text by Liesbeth M. Helmus  
English translation by David Alexander  
Design by Thonik  
Printed by Onkenhout

Infra-red reflectographic assembly,  
Centraal Museum Utrecht  
© Stichting RKD, The Hague  
Infra-red reflectographic assembly,  
Westfälisches Landesmuseum, Münster  
© Stichting RKD, The Hague  
Infra-red reflectographic assembly, private collection  
© Stichting RKD, The Hague  
Infra-red reflectographic assembly,  
Noordbrabants Museum, 's-Hertogenbosch  
© Stichting RKD, The Hague;  
assembly by J.R.J. van Asperen de Boer

Published by: Centraal Museum  
PO Box 2106, 3500 GC Utrecht  
Telephone: + 31 (0)30 236 2362  
Fax: + 31 (0)30 233 2006  
www.centraalmuseum.nl

Centraal Museum Utrecht would like to thank  
Stichting Victor Heiloo for their help in making this  
publication possible.

© The author & Centraal Museum Utrecht.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be  
reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or  
transmitted, in any form or by any means, whether  
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or  
otherwise, without the prior written permission of  
the copyright holders.

This brochure was published on the  
occasion of the exhibition *Stichting Victor I.  
The burning of Troy by Lambert Suavius, c.  
1550* held at Centraal Museum Utrecht from  
12 December 2003 to 18 April 2004.

The exhibition is the first in a series of six  
biannual exhibitions, each marking a  
generous subsidy granted by Stichting  
Victor Heiloo for restoration and technical  
research. Each exhibition will be  
accompanied by its own publication.  
In late 2006, Centraal Museum will  
publish two works on this research and  
restoration work.

## Lambert Suavius and 'The Burning of Troy'

*The Burning of Troy* was acquired by the  
Centraal Museum in 1923 as a work  
attributed to the Utrecht painter Jan van  
Scorel. This acquisition had been made  
possible by private donations, and was the  
source of considerable pride: after all, Jan  
van Scorel (1495-1562) had played a key role  
in painting in the northern Netherlands.  
Not for nothing was he characterised in  
1604 by his biographer Karel van Mander as  
the 'lantern-bearer who paved the way for  
our art' (*'Lanteeren-drager en Straet-maker  
onser Consten'*). Following in the footsteps  
of Jan Gossaert, his master in Utrecht,  
Scorel had travelled to Italy from 1520 to  
1523, where he became acquainted with  
classical antiquity and the work of such  
Italian masters as Michelangelo and  
Raphael. It was Scorel who introduced the  
formal language of the Italian Renaissance  
to the North upon his return. This painting  
of the *Burning of Troy*, whose composition  
is derived from that of a fresco by Raphael  
in the Vatican, was thus seen as a unique  
work from Scorel's Italian period.

In 1934, however, this was questioned by  
G.J. Hoogewerff, an art historian who had

initially accepted the attribution of the work  
to Scorel. Instead, he attributed it to the  
Liège painter Lambert Lombard (1506-  
1566), who had stayed in Rome from 1537 to  
1538. But in 1995, comparisons with the  
work of Lombard's brother-in-law and  
fellow Liégeois, Lambert Suavius, led to a  
third attribution. Since then, Suavius has  
been assumed to be the true author of *The  
Burning of Troy*. Lambert Suavius, also  
known as Lambert Zutman (c. 1510-  
1574/76), is referred to in historical  
documents as an architect, painter,  
goldsmith and poet, though he was best  
known as an engraver. While there is no  
direct evidence that he undertook a trip to  
the South, it is assumed on the basis of his  
choice of subjects that he travelled to Italy  
in the years around 1550.

## After Raphael's example

Together with Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, the Italian painter, draftsman and architect Raphael (1483-1520) was the most important artist of the Italian Renaissance. After several years spent living and working in Florence, he established himself in Rome in 1508, where he lived until his death in 1520, and where he completed countless major works, developing a monumental style that turned out to be ideally suited to the decoration of imposing spaces. He was commissioned by Pope Julius II and Leo X to paint a series of *stanze* (i.e. rooms) in a wing of the Vatican Palace. The last of these, the *Stanza dell'Incendio* (literally "the Fire Room") was painted in honour of the new Pope, Leo X, from 1514-1515.

One of the frescos in the *Stanza dell'Incendio* depicts the fire that broke out in 847 in the Borgo, the district of Rome in front of St Peter's. This had been extinguished by Pope Leo VI, who pronounced his blessing while surveying the scene from the basilica. Raphael's representation of this event includes a scene from *Aeneas* by the Roman poet Virgil (BC 70-19). The Trojan prince Aeneas is shown

at left. On his back, he bears his father, Anchises; beside him is his son, Ascanius. However, rather than escaping the burning Troy as described in the epic, they are fleeing the burning Borgo. This addition of classical characters imparts an almost mythic dimension. The theme of the devoted son who loves his family above all else was very popular with the Romanists, i.e. the Netherlandish painters who travelled to Italy in this period. The earliest known engraving after the fresco is attributed to Marco Dente, and dates from 1545.



## Jheronimus Bosch, 'The temptation of St Anthony'

Noordbrabants Museum, Den Bosch (on loan from Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) / panel, 69 x 87 cm

*The temptation of St Anthony* is undated; dendrochronological analysis has shown that the panel on which it was made could not have been painted any earlier than 1530.

X-ray photos and infra-red reflectography reveals that the current composition has been painted over another. If the panel is turned 90° counterclockwise, the underdrawing shows figures from the composition from *The Burning of Troy*. Particularly clear at left is the head of the woman who, in the other versions, is situated to the left of the group with Aeneas and Anchises. This is a fine example of a panel which, its underdrawing and painting partly executed, was then used for an entirely different motif. Just like *The Burning of Troy*, the ultimate subject – *The temptation of St Anthony* – was copied from an existing example. To transfer the composition to the panel, the same reproduction technique was used as that used by Suavius for the Utrecht panel. Clearly visible are the black dots made by the charcoal powder that was forced through the holes pierced along the outline of the example laid on the panel. We owe their visibility to the fact that the copyist did not join them up before painting.



## Four versions of The 'Burning of Troy'

Lambert Suavius' composition of *The Burning of Troy* is derived from a fresco by Raphael. As well as this small panel, we know of two other paintings showing almost exactly the same scene. The German Ludger tom Ring (1522/30-1584) painted his own *Burning of Troy* in 1551, and sometime in the same period an anonymous master painted another, which, like tom Ring's, was larger in format. More recently it was discovered that a fourth version of the same composition had been drawn, and then partly painted, on a panel that bears a scene from *The temptation of St Anthony*.

When the four works are compared it becomes clear that none of the northern artists could base their compositions on Raphael's original or on the engraving made after it. While Raphael's shows a broken facade, each of the copyists has painted a single one. As a result, the viewer does not look at the left-hand inside wall of the gate, as in the original, but at the right-hand one. Because Raphael's wall is also much higher, the man seen hanging on it will need to make a large jump if he is to reach the ground. In contrast, the man in the copyists'

versions merely dangles with his feet just above the earth. The copyists are also unanimous regard to the small canister that Aeneas' son Ascanius holds in his hand: in the fresco he carries a much larger travelling case under his arm. It is therefore clear either that the four copyists must have worked from a different example, or that one of the versions shown here served as an example for the three others. This is shown by analysis of the underdrawing.

## Lambert Suavius, 'The Burning of Troy', c.1550

Centraal Museum, Utrecht / panel, 43,4 x 31,1 cm

*The Burning of Troy* by Lambert Suavius is shown here for the first time since its recent restoration by Menno Dooijes. The infra-red assembly clearly shows cracking in the paint, and also splitting of the panel on both the left and the right-hand sides. The painting is unsigned and undated. In 1995 it was shown in Brussels at the exhibition *Fiamminghi a Roma 1508-1608*, when it was attributed by Nicole Dacos to Lambert Suavius. Wood dating has shown that the panel could not have been painted any earlier than 1542. It is more likely to have taken place onwards of 1548.

Infra-red reflectography revealed extensive underdrawing in a fluid medium. The drawing is linear and has no corrections. Close study shows points along the outlines of the figures, for example in the Aeneas-Anchises group. This shows that the composition was transferred to the prepared panel by means of 'pouncing', a method whereby holes were pricked into the outlines of a drawing that was being used as an example. This drawing was then laid on a panel. Charcoal dust was then dabbed forcibly onto it, and thus through the holes and onto the underlying panel. When the resulting points were connected, a drawing was created that could then be finished with paint. Pouncing was a relatively familiar technique in fifteenth and sixteenth-century painting, one also used by followers of the work of Jan van Scorel to copy his compositions. The use of the same technique by Suavius suggests that his *Burning of Troy* was certainly not a first version that was later copied by others.

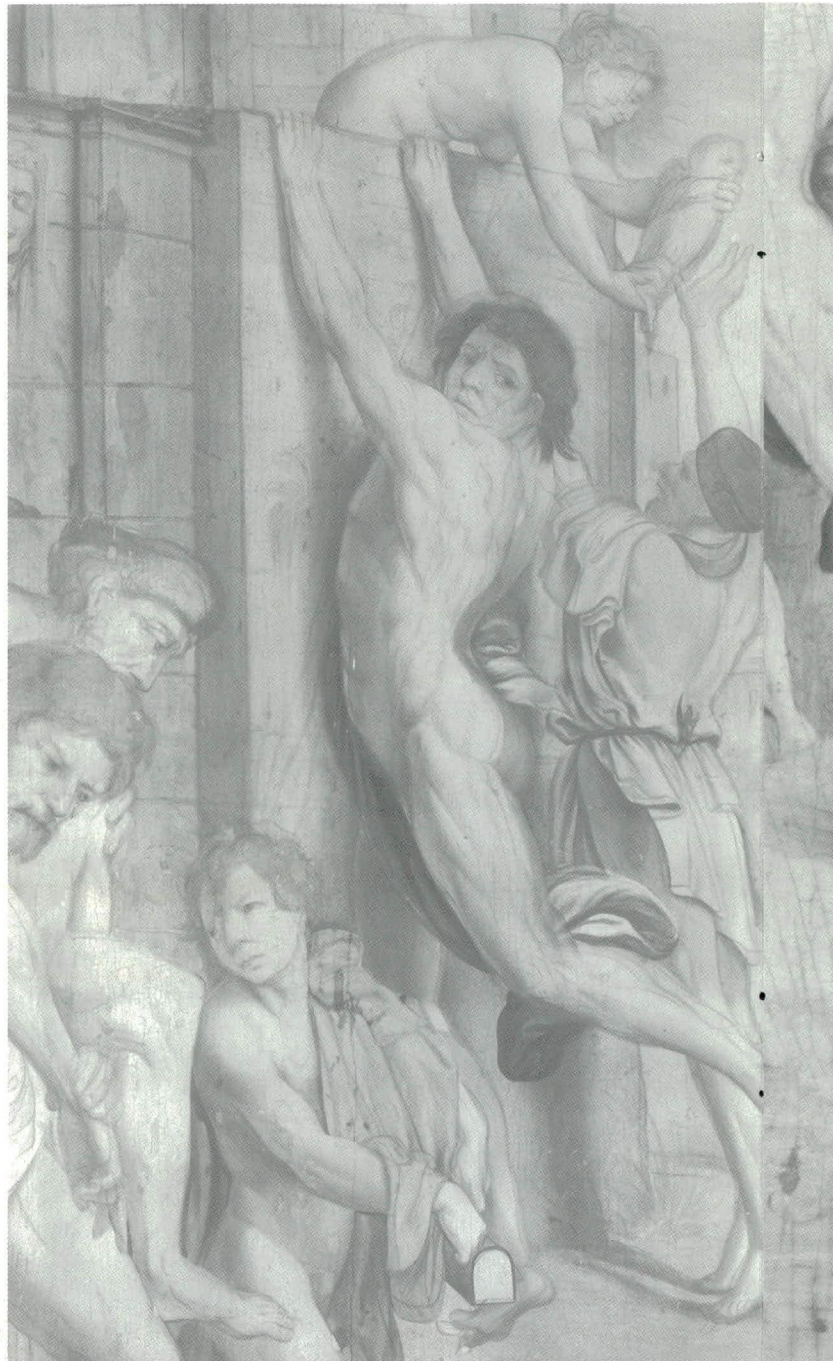


## Lambert Suavius (attribution), 'The Burning of Troy', c.1550

Private collection (with thanks to Jack Kilgore & Co) / panel, 102 x 77,2 cm

Thanks to the similarities this work bears with the Utrecht painting, this work, too, has been attributed to Lambert Suavius. In style, however it is entirely different: it is both less fine and less finely drafted. While the panel on which it is painted has not been established by means of dendro-chronology, stylistic analysis places it somewhere in the years around 1550.

This is the only one of the three paintings of *The Burning of Troy* where infra-red reflectography was able to detect clear traces of underdrawing with corrections. There are not only numerous corrections in the drawing, but also corrections on the first drawing in the painted version. One clear example can be seen in the face of the woman who hands her baby over the wall: her head, which was first drawn a little higher up the panel, has been placed lower down, and then painted in. Similarly, the face of the man who hangs on the wall was originally a little higher, as was the curl of the toes on his right foot. During the drawing, his left foot was also modified. Another important change was made in the back of the hanging figure, which in the painted version is much more robust than in the underdrawing. One other small detail that differs markedly from the other versions is the damage along the edge of the aqueduct. All these changes to the drawing suggest that redrawing took place after reference had been made to an example rather than to an original sketch. If this painting is not the prototype for the other versions, it is at least the most original of the three.



## Ludger tom Ring, 'The Burning of Troy', 1551

Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster / panel, 82 x 57 cm

In his *Burning of Troy*, Ludger tom Ring placed his monogram on the stone in the foreground at right, and dated the work 1551 at the centre of the window arch. Though this work is much larger than the Utrecht panel painted by Suavius, it also bears a close resemblance to it. However, one noticeable difference is the addition of a small tree on the right; another is the stone bearing the painter's monogram. There are other small changes, including the white dog, which is brown in the other compositions; and the swaddled baby being handed over the wall from the woman to the man, whose eyes are closed in tom Ring's version: in the two others, the baby is looking straight ahead.

Infra-red reflectography was unable to reveal the presence of any underdrawing beneath the paint. The joints between the boards composing the panel are clearly visible. The painter's addition of the tree can be seen as an 'improvement' on the example from which he is copying, on which it will have been lacking, since it is also lacking in the other two examples. For it is precisely in his competitiveness that a copyist betrays himself. Ludger tom Ring never travelled to Rome, so this work is very unlikely to represent his single-handed interpretation of Raphael's original painting. It is therefore no more likely than the Utrecht painting to have been the model from which the other copyists worked.

