

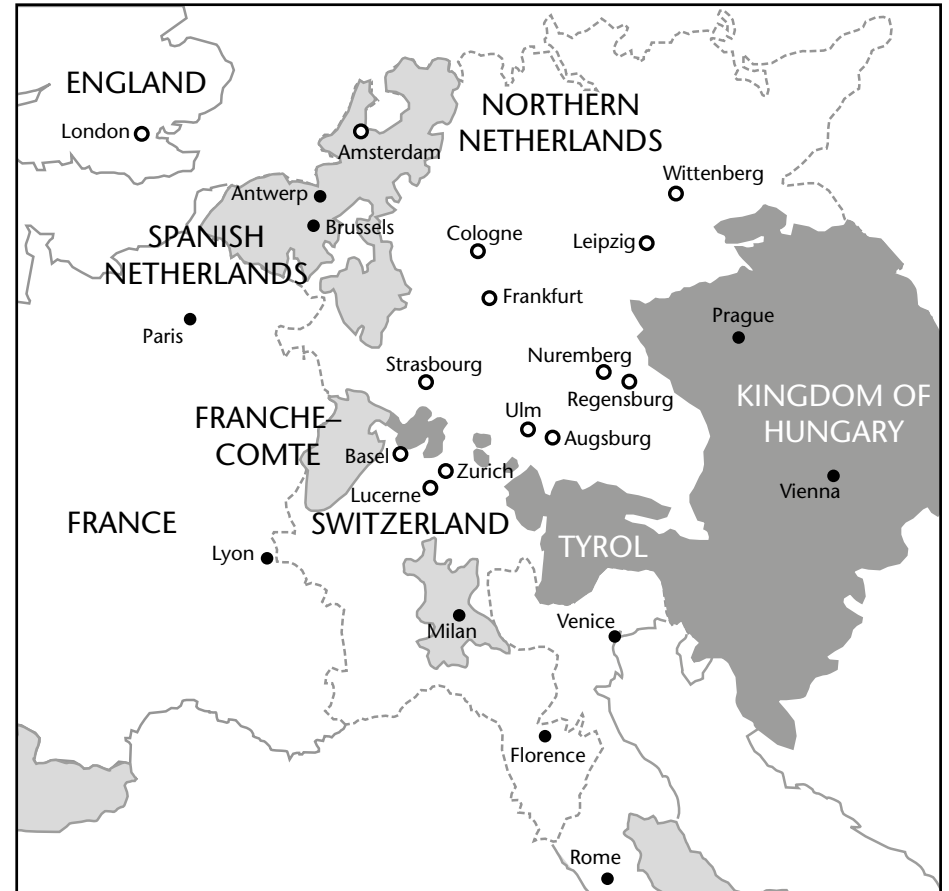
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# Northern European 1450-1650 Compton Verney







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# Europe in the 1500s



## Key

-  Spanish Habsburg Territory
-  Austrian Habsburg Territory
-  Boundary of the Holy Roman Empire
-  Cities under Protestant control for part of the 1500s



**1 & 3. Hans Thoman (The Ottobeuren Master), German: *God the Father and God the Son*. Polychromed limewood with silver and gilding, about 1510-25.**

God the Father H: 84 cm, God the Son H: 82 cm

These figures are among the finest surviving

works of Hans Thoman, one of the leading figures of the German Renaissance. They would originally have formed part of a large altarpiece, positioned above two pairs of saints, Saint Martin with Saint Barbara, and Saint George with Saint Margaret, with the crowned Virgin in the centre. The saints are now in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg, and the Virgin is in the parish church at Oberliezheim, near Dillingen.

**2. Attributed to the Circle of the Master I.P., German, Danube School: *The Holy Kinship*. Polychromed limewood relief, about 1520. H: 87.5 cm**



This large limewood relief sculpture would originally have formed part of a large altarpiece. The Virgin's father, Joachim, tenderly holds the Infant Child, watched by the Virgin and her mother Anne on either side. The sculpture has been attributed to the circle of the Master I.P., who was one of the most versatile and influential carvers in Southern Germany in the 1520s.



**4. *Ewer and Basin*, Silver-gilt, German or Netherlandish, about 1580-1600.**

Ewer H: 29.2cm, Basin D: 53.3cm

Ewer and basin sets functioned as display objects and status symbols during the Renaissance and

also had a practical use at the dining table, where they were used for the washing of hands between courses. During the later 1500s, goldsmiths

and silversmiths worked in a style known as International Mannerism, in which often every part of the surface of a vessel is covered with sophisticated figurative and decorative ornamentation. Here the ewer has a central frieze decorated with plaques of the four seasons alternating with classical masks, while the basin is decorated with scenes from the Old Testament, mostly copied from contemporary prints.

**5. Workshop of The Master of Frankfurt (active about 1460-1520), Netherlandish: *The Lamentation*. Oil on panel, about 1500.**

115.3 x 84.8 cm

This painting was produced in the studio of a little-known artist practising in Antwerp, who was called the Master of Frankfurt on account of his commissions for the citizens of Frankfurt. It depicts the mourning which took place after Jesus has been taken down from the cross (the cross on Mount Calvary can be seen in the background as part of the narrative). Christ's body is held by Joseph of Arimathea whilst Nicodemus is by his feet. The Virgin is supported by Saint John and behind her stand three women: Mary Magdalene with a pot of ointment; possibly Mary, mother of James and Joseph; and Mary, wife of Cleopas. The painting contains a number of naturalistic details, including the plants in the foreground.



**6. North Netherlandish School: *Death Portrait of an Unknown Man*. Oil on oak panel, unframed, about 1530. 34.8 x 26.6 cm**



This is a very early Northern European deathbed portrait, or *Totenbildnis*. The earliest known *Totenbildnis* in Northern European painting is that of Emperor Maximilian I, painted in 1519. The Compton Verney work is very unusual in depicting the deceased naked, as in all other known death portraits of the period

the deceased is depicted dressed, usually in a garment known as a *Totenhemd*.

**7. Master of the Schwabach Altarpiece (active 1505-08), German: *Christ Taking Leave of His Mother*. Oil and gold on limewood panel, dated 1506.**

149.5 x 119 cm

This impressive painting on limewood with a gold background emulates the style of Nuremberg's most famous artist, Albrecht Dürer. The main figure group is in fact based on a woodcut print by Dürer of about 1504. The picture was commissioned by a rich Nuremberg family, Michael Lochner von Huttenbach, his wife Catharina von Plauen and their two children, who can be seen as diminutive figures at the bottom of the panel.



**8. Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553), German: *Hercules and Antaeus*. Oil on panel, about 1530.**

26.5 x 17.5 cm

This painting, one of only two known versions of the subject by Cranach, depicts an episode in the Twelve Labours of Hercules: the fight to the death between Greek hero Hercules and the giant Antaeus, son of Poseidon and Gaia, gods of the Sea and Earth. This adventure occurred on Hercules' journey to complete his eleventh task. Antaeus drew all his strength from the earth (his mother), and was thereby able to defeat all his previous opponents. Hercules realised this and, understanding the secret of the giant's invincibility, lifted him off the ground, crushing him to death.

**9. Galeazzo Mondella, called *Moderno* (about 1457 – 1529), Italian: *Hercules overcoming Antaeus*. Bronze plaquette, about 1488/89. 7.6 x 5.7 cm**

This plaquette is believed to have been the inspiration for Lucas

Cranach the Elder's painting of the same subject, also in the collection at Compton Verney. The works match almost identically in composition and arrangement. Mondella worked in Italy throughout his life, producing many plaquettes, mostly in bronze. The work is situated in our Northern European collection to show the direct influence of Renaissance Italy on the North.



**10. Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553), German: *Venus and Cupid*. Oil on beechwood panel, about 1525. 39 x 26 cm**

This painting is one of the earliest of Cranach's smaller depictions of this popular subject. Nudes did not appear significantly in Cranach's work until at least 1520, but thereafter many mythological, biblical and historical characters emerge, and representations of the female nude are amongst the most coveted of his works. Examination by infra-red has shown that Venus was originally painted wearing a large crimson hat, now covered by the brown curtain behind her head.

**11. Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553), German: *Lot and his Daughters*. Oil on panel, about 1530. 55.9 x 39 cm**

The story of Lot and his daughters was a popular subject for artists and one which Lucas Cranach the Elder painted at least four times. The tale comes from the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament in which Lot and his daughters flee from the burning city of Sodom and Gomorrah (which can be seen in the background). Lot's daughters make their father drunk and seduce him in an attempt to ensure that he has male heirs.





**12. Pieter Huys (about 1519 – 1584), Netherlandish:**

**The Descent into Limbo. Oil on panel, active 1547 - 1577, 42.5 x 53.4 cm**

In the Catholic faith, Limbo was a state of existence between Heaven and Hell. Although

not part of official Catholic teaching today, when this was painted Limbo was believed to be reserved for good people who had died before the coming of Christ as well as those who had not been Baptised. This imaginative scene is characteristic of Huys, who was strongly influenced by the work of Hieronymus Bosch (about 1450 – 1516).

**13. Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553), German: *Portrait of Sigmund Kingsfelt.***

**Oil on panel, about 1530. 37.5 x 25.6 cm**

Lucas Cranach the Elder ran a large workshop in Vienna before he was appointed court painter by Duke Frederick the Wise in Wittenberg, the capital of Saxony. He was granted his own coat-of-arms which included the winged serpent that became his signature, as can be seen on the left of this panel. The portrait shows the German knight, *Riter*, Sigmund Kingsfelt. He wears a simple dress adorned with a heavy gold chain.



**14. Ambrosius Benson (about 1495-1550), Netherlandish: *Portrait of a Gentleman.***

**Oil on panel, about 1525-45. 37.6 x 29.8 cm**

The fine quality of this portrait of an unknown man shows the subtlety of Benson's painting technique. The sitter's dress is depicted in great detail, from the fur lining of his cloak adorned with enamelled buttons to the gold pins on his hat and sleeves. He may have been a jeweller or a goldsmith on



account of the quantity of fine jewellery he wears, including the ring he displays in his right hand.



**15. Hans Besser (active 1537-58), German:**

***Portrait of Ludwig, Count Palatine, aged ten. Oil on paper on wood panel, 1549, inscribed and dated: Ludovicus. Com/Pal.Rheni.Dux Bavariae Año./Dñi.1549. Aetatis.10. 59.5 x 45 cm***

When this portrait was painted in 1549, the sitter, Ludwig, then ten years old, was at the court of Baden in north-west Germany. He later became

ruler of the German principality of the Upper Palatinate, and in 1576 succeeded to the title of Elector Palatine as Ludwig VI. This finely painted picture is one of several portraits of German princes executed by Hans Besser, each of whom wears a black cap decorated with gold petals, an oval badge, a gold chain, a hunting whistle and a knife case.

**16. Barthel Bruyn I (1493-1555), German: *Portrait of Gerhard von Westerburg.***

**Oil on panel, dated and inscribed with the age of the sitter 1524/38. 62.3 x 52.4 cm**

Barthel or Bartholomäus Bruyn was the leading portrait painter in the Electorate of Cologne during the Early Reformation and founded a lasting school of portraiture. This is one of Bruyn's most important pictures, but the sitter has only been correctly identified in recent years. The key to his identity is provided by the signet ring displayed prominently on his right forefinger, which bears the crest of the Westerburg family of Cologne. Gerhard von Westerburg (1486-c.1539) was a leading Cologne lawyer and a keen supporter of the Reformation. He appears to have commissioned this portrait to commemorate his marriage of 1523 to Gertraude von Leutz. A portrait of his wife by Bruyn survives in the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterloo.





**17 & 18. Artist unknown (Franconian, active about 1515), pair of altarpiece wings: *Saint Christopher carrying the infant Christ (front) and Saint Catherine (back) and Saint George and the Dragon (front) and Saint Barbara (back)*. Oil on panel, about 1519-27. Both: 102 x 40 cm**

This pair of double-sided panels once formed the wings of an altarpiece that was probably commissioned for a private chapel. The central panel, showing the Lamentation of

Christ, is now in the collection of the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh. The central panel bears a portrait of the donors, who have been identified as members of the Brandenburg-Ansbach family, and it is thought that the figure of Saint George is a likeness of George, Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach (1484-1543) a powerful German magnate who became a leading supporter of the Reformation in the 1520s. The reverse of the panels, painted at an earlier date, depict the figures of Saint Barbara, identified by the palm branch and chalice that she holds, and Saint Catherine with the wheel on which she was martyred.

**19. Ambrosius Benson (about 1495-1550), Netherlandish: *The Virgin and Child*. Oil on panel, about 1518-50. 21.3 x 16.2 cm**

Ambrosius Benson, originally known as Ambrogio Benzone, was a South Netherlandish painter of Italian birth who worked principally in Bruges. This small devotional work is an excellent example of his style, reusing some of the same compositional tools as some of his larger works, such as the Child's outstretched arms.



Although the delicately painted still life in the foreground is rare in Benson's work, it echoes the work of his teacher Gerard David. During his lifetime, Benson's reputation and wealth grew and he owned several houses as well as holding the posts of Dean and Governor of the Painters' Guild.



**20. Martin Schongauer (about 1445-91), German: *'Maria Lactans', The Virgin and Child Crowned by Angels*. Oil on softwood panel, about 1470-75. 17.5 x 11.5 cm**

Martin Schongauer is probably best known for his engravings, an art form which allowed the rapid dissemination of images, and established Schongauer's reputation throughout Europe.

Made for private devotion, this image of the Virgin and Child is one of the few surviving paintings by Schongauer and relates closely to engravings made by him in the 1470s. The artist conveys a sense of motherly devotion mixed with the sorrow of knowing the infant's fate in the face of the Virgin.

**21. Artist Unknown, English: *The Resurrection*. Nottingham Alabaster Relief, 1400s. 30 x 22 cm.**

Whilst the other works in this room were being produced in and around the area of Europe now called Germany, alabaster altar screens and small devotional works were being carved in Nottingham. Formed from gypsum, alabaster became popular during the late Middle Ages, being softer and easier to carve than marble. There was a large quarry outside Nottingham and 'kervers', as alabaster carvers were known, were well-regarded tradesmen.





**22. Strasbourg School: *The Scene at Golgotha*. Polychromed wood high relief, about 1470-80. H: 52.7 cm**

This rare carving depicts the scene at the crucifixion of Christ, showing two groups of onlookers flanking Mary Magdalene at the foot of the cross (the crosses

have been lost). Two of the onlookers, on the right, may have been associated with commissioning the piece. One, a noble dressed in armour facing out, holds out his right hand. Beside him stands a figure with a coronet and the letter 'E' painted onto his leg.

**23. School of Tilman Riemenschneider (about 1460-1531), German: *Vesperbild* or *Pietà*.**

**Polychrome limewood, about 1510-20. H: 42.3 cm.**

This small sculpture was made for religious devotion at the evening service of Vespers (hence its German description as *Vesperbild*). It was intended to inspire reflection on, and compassion for, the pain experienced by the Virgin Mary at the suffering and death of her son. Stylistically, the carving relates to the work of the influential German sculptor, Tilman Riemenschneider, and may have been made by his workshop.



**24. South German, (probably Ulm), German: *Noli me tangere* or *Christ in the Garden with Mary Magdalene*. Painted wooden relief, about 1500.**

H: 83.2 cm

This sculpture probably formed part of a much larger carved wooden altarpiece. The title, *Noli me tangere* or 'Do not touch me', derives from the words Christ spoke to Mary Magdalene, who was grieving at His tomb. Initially mistaking

Him for a gardener (Christ is shown holding a spade), Mary suddenly recognises Christ and tries to kiss His robe, whereupon Christ forbids her to touch Him. Mary Magdalene can be recognised by the ointment jar shown below Christ's spade, with which she anointed His feet.

**25 & 26. Artist unknown (Middle Rhine) (active around 1490), German: (pair) *Saint Apollonia, Saint Dorothy of Cappadocia, and a female saint* (top) and *Saint Mary Magdalene, Saint Anne with the infant Mary and the Christ Child, and Saint Barbara*. Oil on wood panel, around 1490. Both: 115.5 x 106 cm.**

These panels originally formed part of a high altarpiece by an unknown German artist, probably commissioned for the church of Bassenheim, near Koblenz. The saints can be identified by their 'attributes' or items with which they are portrayed. The first panel shows Apollonia gripping tongs with an extracted tooth, Dorothy of Cappadocia carrying a basket of roses, and an unidentified saint holding the palm of martyrdom. The second panel shows three married saints (their marital status indicated by their head coverings): Mary Magdalene with her ointment jar; Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary; and Barbara with a loaf of bread and jug of wine symbolising Christ's blood, although there is some possibility that this could be Saint Elizabeth of Hungary.



**27 & 29. Master of the Polling Altarpiece (active 1440s), German: (pair of altarpiece wings) *Saint Peter* (left) and *Saint Paul*. Oil on wood panel, about 1440. Both: 93.8 x 39.8 cm**

The artist derives his name from an altarpiece painted for the Augustinian Canons in the village of Polling, in Upper Bavaria. In these panels made for a separate altarpiece, Saint



Peter can be identified by his traditional attribute of the crossed keys of Heaven, whilst Saint Paul holds the sword with which he was martyred. The artist produced highly decorative and intricate surfaces by combining architectural motifs such as the differently coloured tiles, marble pillars and Gothic vaulting, with the rich clothes of the figures. The panels have a gilded background with punched (or 'pounced') decoration.



**28. Artist unknown, Austria (Carinthia): *Vesperbild* or *Pietà*. Chalk stone, about 1410-20. H: 65.5 cm**

This sculpture is one of the earliest objects in this part of the collection. It demonstrates a new way of representing the suffering Christ, who has just been taken down from the cross. Although Christ's blood and pain is apparent, previous depictions of the subject tended to communicate overt suffering, whereas in this example the figures have elegant, elongated limbs which suggest a courtly beauty rather than a realistic portrayal of death. It is an example of the 'horizontal pietà' type, in which Christ's body lies across his mother's knees. As well as being a devotional image, this piece would have been understood as a crucifixion scene, indicated by the drops of blood on Mary's veil, as if falling from the cross above.

**29 see 27.**

**30. Circle of Christian Jorhan the Elder (1727-1804), German: *Saint John of Nepomuk*. Polychrome on oak, about 1770. H: 91 cm**

Saint John of Nepomuk (1345-93) was a Canon of Prague Cathedral. He was killed by King Wenceslas IV of Bohemia for refusing to divulge the Queen's confession. Although he was not canonised until 1729, he had by then already attracted a cult



following. This small sculpture would have been used for private devotion at home rather than in a public setting, and its flat back means that it would have fitted into a niche.

**31. Tilman Riemenschneider (about 1460-1531), German: *A Female Saint*. Limewood, about 1515-1520. H: 106.7 cm.**

Tilman Riemenschneider was one of the most important sculptors in Germany in the early period of the Reformation. He settled in Würzburg in 1483, where he headed a workshop for nearly 45 years producing numerous altarpieces, statues and reliefs. This finely-carved sculpture of a female saint would originally have formed part of an altarpiece, together with four other saints. She originally held an object in her right hand – an 'attribute' – by which she would have been identified, but this has since been lost. Many sculptures of this period were gilded and painted, but the surface finish of this sculpture suggests that it was not intended to be decorated. Limewood, the most common wood used for sculpture in southern Germany, was also regarded as holding magical religious properties.





For further information on the house and the collection, the Compton Verney Handbook is available in the shop or online at [www.comptonverneyshop.org.uk](http://www.comptonverneyshop.org.uk)



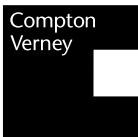
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