



Hans Schäufelein (Nuremberg 1480 - Nördlingen 1540)

Christ Carrying the Cross

Circa: c. 1516/1517

c. 1516/1517

52 x 43 cm (20 ¹/₄ x 16 ⁷/₈ inches)

The painting is part of a series from which four panels are known:

- a) Flagellation (Leipzig, Museum of Fine Arts, Inv. 284)
- b) Crowning with Thorns (Munich, Bavarian State Painting Collections, Inv. WAF 930)
- c) Christ Carrying the Cross (the present painting)
- d) Lamentation (Utrecht, Rijksmuseum Het Catharijnenconvent,
Inv. ABM s36)

The earliest provenance for any of the four paintings of the cycle is for the Crowning with Thorns and that only goes back to the early 19th century. That panel has its original thin, black protective coating on the reverse, confirming that the panels were always painted only on one side and could not have been part of wings of an altarpiece. Along with the Crowning with Thorns, The Flagellation and the Lamentation must have shared the same provenance at some time, since they all share a similar, not original, black border. According to the 1891 Leipzig catalogue, these four paintings originally

formed a series of the Stations of the Cross; it further states pictures in the cycle were allegedly “in Petersburg”. This is conceivable but would mean there must have been at least ten more scenes to complete the series, however, none of them have resurfaced in over 100 years. Thieme (1892, p.70, n.1) states there is no trace of them in Saint Petersburg.

According to Metzger, the closest stylistic comparison can be made to Schäufolein’s woodcuts for the *Speculum Passionis* from 1507, but those scenes are quite standard compositions for early 16th Century German painting and do not reveal any specific iconographic source. Indeed, there are no meaningful similarities between the present painting and any of the interpretations of Christ Carrying the Cross known from Schäufolein’s graphic production.

With regard to dating of the painting, the manner in which the figures’ draperies form into soft, flowing pleats, is a stylistic device that is not seen in the artist’s work after 1517. Furthermore, in the Christ Carrying the Cross and other works dated 1516,

Schäufolein employs a stylistic preference for gentle, softly rubbed faces, and reveals a preference for heads seen from below (see St. Peter in the Mount of Olives of 1516). Therefore, the Passion Cycles should be dated to 1516-17.

Nothing is known about the date and place of Hans Schäufolein’s birth or his initial training, but he is considered to have been born c. 1480/1485. Schäufolein probably entered Albrecht Dürer’s Nuremberg workshop c. 1503/1504 where he worked alongside Hans Baldung Grien and Hans Suess von Kulmbach. Dürer’s influence is evident in Schäufolein’s earliest graphic works, the woodcuts he produced for *Der Beschlossen Gart der Rosenkranz*, published by Ulrich Pinder in 1505, and in 1507 his illustrations in the *Speculum Passionis Domini Nostri Ihesu Christi*.

At the time of Dürer’s second trip to Italy, Schäufolein seems to have held a responsible position in the shop, for he painted, partly based on Dürer’s designs, a monumental Passion altarpiece for Frederick III the Wise, Elector of Saxony, and his brother Johann the Steadfast, in 1505-1507 (Vienna, Dom und Diözesanmuseum).

Schäufolein left Nuremberg and Dürer’s workshop around 1507 to establish an independent practice. His former master is known to have used his designs in preparing his celebrated *Small Passion* and took some of Schäufolein’s graphic works with him on his journey through the Low Countries in 1520-21. Schäufolein was a highly prolific printmaker, He produced most of the 150 woodcuts for a 1507 collection of New Testament passages and texts. A master of narrative, he conceived his scenes as engaging stories, which he populated with well-observed detail.

After leaving Nuremberg, he seems to have gone first to Augsburg where he probably worked in the workshop of Hans Holbein the Elder. His first dated painting, the Crucifixion with John the Baptist and King David, dated 1508, and around this time he started to sign works with the combination of his monogram in ligature and a small shovel (*Schäufel*).

Schäufolein journeyed to Tirol in 1509/1510, where in *Niederlana bei Meran* he painted scenes of the

Passion on the wings of an altarpiece carved a local artist, Hans Schnatterpeck. He returned to Augsburg in 1510 where he contributed to woodcut projects for the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, designed book illustrations for local publishers, painted, and designed stained glass. In 1513 he painted a large altarpiece with scenes of the Passion and the Apocalypse for the high altar of the Benedictine abbey at Auhausen, near the Swabian city of Nördlingen.

In 1515 Schäufolein moved to Nördlingen in Swabia, which may have been his birthplace, and quickly obtained citizenship. This began a period of great productivity where, as city painter, his focus shifted to painting. He painted portraits, provided a mural for the city hall, which is still in place, and designed numerous woodcuts. He maintained contact with Nuremberg, where he met with Dürer and painted portraits and a town hall decoration. Schäufolein's late prints were often published in Nuremberg.

However, it was, as always, the influence and example of Dürer that remained paramount for him throughout his career. Schäufolein was an important and talented communicator of the Dürer's style. Among his last works are the illuminations of 1537/1538 in a prayer book done for the Counts of Oettingen. He died sometime between 1538 and

11 November 1540, when his wife is mentioned as a widow.

Literature:

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