

# Caylus



**JUAN DE FLANDES**  
(Flanders, ca. 1465- Palencia, 1519)

*The Virgin and Child*

Ca. 1495  
Oil on oak panel  
21.7 × 16 cm

#### PROVENANCE:

Gallery Kleinberger, New York, 1949;

Collection of Edmond Cormier-Thierry-Delanoue (1879-1960).

#### LITERATURE:

WENIGER, M. "Bynnen Brugge in Flanderen: The apprenticeships of Michel Sittow and Juan de Flandes" in *Memling Studies. Proceedings of the International Colloquium*. (Bruges, 10-12 November 1994). Leuven, Peeters, 1997, pp.115-131.

SILVA MAROTO, P. *Juan de Flandes*, Salamanca, Caja Duero, 2006. pp. 86-88.

WENIGER, M. *Sittow, Morros, Juan de Flandes Drei Maler aus dem Norden am Hof Isabellalas von Kastilien*. Kiel, Ludwig, 2011, p. 236, Kat. Juan 8.

Juan de Flandes's artistic origins remain unknown. The only definite information regarding his activities relates to his years in Castile between 1496 and 1519, the year he died in Palencia, particularly the period he spent as court painter in the service of Isabella of Castile until 1504. It can be assumed that at the time of his arrival in Spain the artist was already around 30, given the complete maturity evident in his work. Matthias Weniger associated Juan de Flandes with the Bruges school, as did Pilar Silva, based on arguments that link him to the work of Hans Memling. This is the case with the present *Virgin and Child*, considered by both authors to date from prior to Flandes's arrival in Castile. It repeats one of Memling's prototypes that he may have known in Bruges and which he returned to at the end of his life in Palencia in *The Virgin and Child* formerly in the Várez Fisa collection (fig. 1).

The circumstances that led Juan de Flandes to go from the Low Countries to Castile (whether for personal reasons or at the instructions of Maximilian I or Isabella the Catholic) are not known. However, the earliest surviving documentary reference locates him on 12 July 1496 in Almazón (Soria), where the queen was at the time, on the day of the arrival of Maximilian's diplomatic mission to the Catholic Kings on the eve of the double marriage of the latter's children, John and Joan, to Margaret of Austria and Philip the Fair, respectively. This indicates that the painter would have travelled from Flanders as part of that mission, possibly sent by the Emperor himself, as Domínguez Casas suggested (1993). While Queen Isabella did not appoint him court painter that day, she ordered him to be paid 6,000 *maravedís* "to assist his costs", suggesting that she may

have summoned him to Castile to work in her service. Isabella made him court painter on 27 October 1496 with a stipend of 20,000 *maravedís* a year (much less than the 50,000 she had granted Michel Sittow in 1492), for which reason it should perhaps be assumed that she initially decided to pay him for the works he produced (as was the case with the *Altarpiece of Saint John the Baptist* in the Charterhouse of Miraflores in Burgos).

In addition to the works that Flandes executed during his years at court between 1496 and 1504 (the *Miraflores Altarpiece of Saint John the Baptist*, the *Polyptych of Isabella the Catholic* and portraits of the royal family), the artist has been associated with paintings for other royal projects, such as the works he produced for the monastery of Guadalupe where there is a reference to a “*Flandresco*” [Fleming] who is assumed to have been responsible for the paintings of the choir stalls, completed in 1499. However, this reference is not entirely clear and it cannot be certain that this artist is Juan de Flandes; given the slowness with which he worked it does not seem entirely likely that this is a reference to him as he was engaged on other commissions for the queen at that point. Among them was very probably the copy of Rogier van der Weyden’s *Miraflores Triptych* which the queen sent before her death to the royal chapel in Granada where two of its panels still remain while the third is in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

After the death of Isabella the Catholic on 26 November 1504 Juan de Flandes’s life changed radically. After losing his position at court he decided to remain in Castile (in contrast to Michel Sittow) and was consequently obliged to compete with other artists and produce works of a type different to those he had painted for the queen. He thus went to Salamanca to work on the altarpiece for the University chapel, a commission that Juan de Borgoña had rejected. It is not known when Flandes left that city to move to Palencia, where he is first documented on 19 December 1509, the date he signed the contract for the principal altarpiece in the cathedral.

It can be presumed that Flandes had already been in Palencia for some time as it was a centre that offered him the chance to secure commissions from prominent individuals associated with Isabella’s court who appreciated his art and recognised its importance, which had not been the case in Salamanca. Such individuals included Bishop Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, who commissioned the artist to paint the altarpiece for the cathedral, Sancho de Castilla, patron of the church of San Lázaro, who had been Prince John’s tutor, and Admiral Enríquez, patron of the convent of Santa Clara. Juan de

Flandes remained in Palencia until his death in 1519 but the only documented work from that period is the principal altarpiece for the cathedral.



Fig. 1. Juan de Flandes, *The Virgin and Child*, 1510, oil on panel, 33.3 × 26.5 cm. Madrid, Heirs of Várez Fisa collection.