Albrecht Dürer or Hans Schäufelein?
The ‘Benedict Master’ re-considered
Fritz Koreny

Albrecht Dürer ranks among the few artists whose work has attracted people of all periods. He has been the subject of undiminished admiration throughout the centuries. Very few others have obtained comparable recognition in early as well as more recent literature on art. A bibliography of Dürer’s work today would number around an astonishing 14,000 titles. The most critical appreciation of his genius has been reserved for his work as a draughtsman. Not just one, but three complete catalogues of his graphic work have been compiled, by Lippmann, Winkler and Strauss, who have all attempted to verify the authenticity of Dürer’s drawings and to clarify the chronology of their execution.

Uncertainty still exists over much of Dürer’s early graphic work. A group of 11 drawings, believed to have originally formed a series of 12 scenes illustrating the legend of St. Benedict, is the subject of particular dispute. They were executed as preparatory drawings for glass-paintings. ‘Two glass-paintings after the preparatory designs are known, and the composition from an additional scene from the cycle is known from a further glass-painting.

The drawings are executed in pen and brown ink on paper, and their dimensions are approximately 250 x 180mm. They differ in execution: some are roughly sketched, others have a more finished appearance, three with additional touches of watercolour. The coloured versions are thought to have served as a model for the patron, to give an impression of the final appearance of the completed object. Winkler considered that the different methods of execution demonstrate: ‘various stages of the artist’s attempts to provide the glass-painter with designs suitable for his needs as a craftsman’.

The subjects, following Winkler’s order are:
1) St. Benedict in the cave at Sabiaco (Winkler 198; Vienna, Albertina) (Pl. 1);
2) St. Benedict’s miracle of the scythe (Winkler 199; Paris, Louvre) (Pl. 2);
3) Placidus saved by Maurus with the help of St. Benedict (Winkler 200; London, British Museum) (Pl. 3);
4) St. Benedict visiting his sister St. Scholastica (Winkler 201; London, British Museum) (Pl. 4);
5) St. Benedict teaching (Winkler 202; Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum) (Pl. 5);
6) Florentius attempting to poison St. Benedict (Winkler 203; London, British Museum) (Pl. 6);
7) St. Benedict reviving a dead infant (Winkler 204; Munich, Graphische Sammlung) (Pl. 7);
8) St. Benedict’s vision of the universe (Winkler 205; Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz Kupferstichkabinett) (Pl. 8);
9) St. Benedict and the devil (Winkler 206; Washington, National Gallery of Art, since 2004) (Pl. 9) with a related glass-painting in Nuremberg (Germanisches Nationalmuseum);
10) The castigation of St. Benedict, copy (Winkler 207; Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum) (Pl. 10) with related glass-painting (Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum);
11) The visit of King Tottila to St. Benedict (Winkler 208; Zurich, private collection) (Pl. 11);
12) St. Romanus handing the habit to St. Benedict, copy; this scene is only known from the glass-painting formerly in Gotha, Schlossmuseum, lost since 1945 (Pl. 12).

Some of the drawings, as well as the three surviving glass panels, show the arms of the widely-extended Tetzel family from Nuremberg. Winkler suggested that the series was commissioned by Friedrich Tetzel the Younger for the family chapel in the Benedictine monastery St. Egidius in Nuremberg, on the occasion of his marriage to Ursula Führer, an event which Winkler originally dated to 1499. He also included in the series a further design for a glass painting, dated 1501, of St. Benedict standing, which is dated 1501. In 1971, the art-historian Ursula Frenzel published a precise date for the wedding: 6 February, 1496. It is unclear whether the series was intended for the Tetzel chapel itself, or, with the size and the technique of the glass panels, which were executed in grisaille in mind, perhaps more probably, for the glazing of the cloister of St. Egidius which was renewed at that time. The monastery burned down in 1696.

It was not until the end of the 19th century that doubts arose concerning Dürer’s authorship of the designs. Within quick succession the drawings were associated with the names of Grünewald, Wolf Traut (Dodgson), H.v. Kulmbach (Tietzes), Hans Wechtlin (Rottinger), and an anonymous assistant in the Dürer workshop (Panofsky, Strauss), as well as the so-called Benedict master (Zink, Schoch) and Hans Schäufelein (Flechsig). Friedrich Winkler (Frenzel, Anzelewsky, Rowlands) finally concluded that the designs were by Dürer, and that they were executed around 1500. Winkler considered that only nine of the eleven were authentic. His opinion of Dürer’s authorship was based on early 19th-century views of scholars such as Prestel (1814) and Hausmann (1861), and encouraged by remarks of contemporary scholars like Parker, Dodgson and Schilling. Above all, he was convinced by the seemingly autograph inscription on the verso of the drawing St. Benedict teaching (no. 5 above). Winkler also linked the series with a large cartoon for a glass-painting representing St. Augustine dispensing the rule of his order in the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam, which – in his opinion – was signed by Dürer. Winkler’s dating of the series to around 1500 is based on the design for a glass roundel depicting St. Benedict and dated 1501 (see note 8).

Today there is wide consensus that Dürer’s activity as a designer for glass-painters started around 1496, shortly after his return from Venice. Early works are considered to be the Design for a stained glass window with St. George and the dragon (Frankfurt, Stadel; Pl. 30), the above-mentioned cartoon of St.
Augustine, and the *Scenes from the Legend of St. Benedict.* The style of these drawings seemed significant to those who support the attribution to Dürer, for his development as a draughtsman in the period leading up to the woodcuts of the *Apocalypse.* It is generally believed that they are executed by Dürer himself and only later, shortly before he left for his second trip to Venice in 1505, did he increasingly rely on the collaboration of members of his workshop for the production of cartoons for glass-painting, especially Hans Baldung and Hans von Kulmbach, but also Hans Schäufelein and Wolf Traut.

On the occasion of the exhaustive Dürer exhibition of 1971 in Nuremberg, six drawings from the legend of St. Benedict were exhibited which allowed a close comparison to be made. Winkler’s opinion received widespread agreement amongst the experts. His view was reflected in the subsequent exhibition catalogues from Vienna and London in which these drawings were also attributed to Dürer. In 1991 Hartmut Scholz argued forcefully for Dürer’s authorship in his excellent publication, *Entwurf und Ausführung, Werkstattpraxis in der Nürnberger Glasmalerei der Dürerzeit.* He concluded that, The possibilities of criticism of style are already exhausted, because all Düer’s known pupils who have been proposed for authorship have categorically been rejected. Winkler argued most convincingly for the identification of the so-called Benedict master — a most doubtful art-historical creation of an artist who closely mimicked Dürer’s style. In contrast with Dürer’s more fluid drawing manner, the differences in execution of the series can be sufficiently explained by the functional nature of designs for stained glass, and do not necessarily indicate the hand of a different artist.

Recently Barbara Butts and Lee Hendrix expressed total reservations, and the *Koreny* and London in which these drawings in the Ferdinandeum Museum at Innsbruck. In the case of Dürer and Schäufelein, invaluable evidence of such practice has luckily survived: a pen drawing, of a woman with a child next to a tree-trunk, executed with a few fast strokes, dated 1502, in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (*Pl. 13*), and, in addition, Schäufelein’s copy, monogrammed and dated 1507 in Erlangen (*Pl. 14*). Schäufelein’s seemingly accurate copy reveals characteristic differences only after close inspection. In contrast to the original, the strokes of the pen seem more dynamic, the treatment of the grass has been simplified, the vertical folds of the skirt drawn in elegant, rhythmical lines. Whereas Dürer is still searching for the right line in the bodice and on the bend of the elbow, Schäufelein has simplified the design. His master’s model is transformed into a connoisseurs were in doubt as to whether such works were by Dürer or Schäufelein. One ought to concentrate instead on the personal artistic language of forms and on a comparison of details, which not only deepens the insight into the creative process, but also yields well-founded information about authenticity, and similarities and differences of style. Above all, it is in the interwoven structure of workshop practice, where learning through imitation is the declared aim and where the pupil competes with his master in congenial paraphrase, that further knowledge can be gained through direct comparison of clearly identified works of art with questionable ones.

To some extent the contradictory opinions on the authorship of drawings can be explained by early 16th-century training methods of which the production of high-quality copies played an important part. In the course of their education, young artists were expected to hone their skills by copying work of their masters. Following the practice of his time, Dürer strongly recommends in his introduction for an intended treatise for apprentices on painting, the *Speis der Malerknaben: Item muss er von guter Werkleut Kunst erstlich viel abmachen, bis dass er eine freie Hand erlangt* (He — the apprentice — should first copy many things by good artists until he develops a confident hand). The production of close copies enabled the apprentice to appreciate the formal and linear structure of a master’s work, and also to articulate forms by means of parallel lines and cross-hatching. This practice ensured that he was later able to produce works of art closely modelled on the style of his master. The practice also lies at the heart of the problems of distinction between master and pupil, particularly in the case of the *Legend of St. Benedict* series.

This problem may be clarified by comparison with a similar situation of repetitions of drawings after Hans Baldung Grien: in this case the excellent drawing of the *Lamentation of Christ,* in the Kupferstichkabinett, Basel. Until the drawing from the Robert Lehman Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of New York came to light, the Basel drawing was believed for many years to be Baldung’s original preparatory drawing for the panel in the Ferdinandum Museum at Innsbruck. But it turns out that this drawing is not authentic either. A further copy, formerly in the Freund collection in Berlin, known only through reproduction in a sale catalogue, shows the method used by Baldung’s pupils in copying drawings of their master. The technique of these copyists, in which the linear structure of the figure was copied first, followed by the creation of a three-dimensional effect with the use of hatched lines, is also seen in an unfinished drawing in Dürer’s manner (based on a drawing in Berlin) recently auctioned at Sotheby’s, New York.

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formulaic structure. The line of the infant’s drapery and the details of the bunch of keys and purse appear smooth and less three-dimensional, and the emphasis is more on the outline form rather than the overall structure. Such differences of style have caused justifiable doubts on the authenticity of the Legend of St. Benedict in respect of Dürer’s authorship.

Although the attribution of the Benedict series seems to have been concluded with Friedrich Winkler’s research, I would like to present some new arguments in consideration of Dürer’s authorship and whether these drawings were executed in 1496 or later. The re-opening of these questions is justified in particular by the fact that Winkler had not seen the original drawings of either St. Benedict and the devil or of King Totilla visits St. Benedict, both of which he judged to be copies. It is now known that both sheets had survived in private hands.

The authors of the Getty catalogue argued for Dürer authorship of King Totilla visits St. Benedict. They made a point of characterising the saint’s blessing hand (Pl. 15) while emphasizing that the artist sacrificed anatomical correctness for the sake of expression and clarity of gesture. However, not only the simplification of form but also narrative style distinguish this woodcut from the Getty collections (Pl. 23 and 24). Despite the deep understanding in imitation and transformation of the model, we see a coarser approach to the technique, and at the same time a simplification in terms of emotional and psychological interpretation. Dürer’s clearly defined physiognomies, drawn with seemingly supple lines, have with Schäufelein’s intervention, been transformed into mask-like features. The stylised structure of the Speculum figures correspond closely with the rendering of the faces in the Benedict legend.

A similar coarsening can be observed in the treatment of the folds of drapery: Dürer’s carefully structured folds, with hatched areas of shading and short strokes resembling hooks and eyes in his woodcuts, have given way in the Benedict drawings to a more abstract network of lines, which merely suggests Dürer’s complex organisation of folds. Schäufelein’s use of short angular strokes in Benedict’s miracle of the scythe (Pl. 2) and in an even more abstract form in Benedict and the devil (Pl. 9) is expressed just as well in the Speculum woodcuts, for example, Christ expelling the money-changers from the temple (Pl. 25). In this woodcut, executed in 1506, we also can observe the rounded S-shaped formation of the lines, which are also present in Christ before Herod (Pl. 26). Schäufelein favoured such shorthand-formulas, especially in the depiction of folds in sleeves. Simple tiny loops or bigger double-loops reappear in both the technique of drawing and woodcut. They can be observed in Benedict’s raised arm in the drawing of Totilla before Benedict (Pl. 11), in the Speculum woodcut of Christ before Herod (on the arm of the knight), and in the drawing Benedict with the devil (Pl. 9). The intuitive use of such visual abbreviations gives a strong indication of a specific artistic personality.

Numerous other details could be mentioned, such as the two-dimensional treatment of hatched areas, lack of perspective, and the awkward proportions of the figures. Finally, a reference should be made to the signed drawing of the Annunciatio to Joachim in the Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin, (Pl. 27). Though made a few years later, probably around 1510, this rough sketch not only shows these distinctive elements, but above all reveals a significant rendering of the eyes. This is particularly idiosyncratic: in the linear separation of upper lid and tear duct and the precisely-positioned pupils, the Berlin drawing shows identical characteristics with the ‘handwriting’ of the Benedict legend, such as Benedict and the devil (Pl. 9). In my opinion, these few examples of comparison between the drawings of the Benedict legend and early woodcuts and signed drawings by Schäufelein, provide some insight into the identity behind the spontaneous language of this draughtsman.

They firmly support the identification of the Benedict master with Hans Schäufelein. The drawings of the Benedict legend have no stylistic links with Dürer’s work of around 1496. Instead, they show close connections with the development of
Schäufelein's early work of around 1505/06 when he was probably the leading artist in Dürrer's workshop during his master's absence in Venice for nearly one and a half years. The importance of Schäufelein’s role in Dürrer's workshop is illustrated by the fact that he was entrusted at this time with the execution of the large triptych of the Passion for Duke Frederick the Wise of Saxony, the Ober St Veit altarpiece (detail Pl. 19).

Neither does Winkler's argument bear close inspection: his attribution to Dürrer of the study for a roundel with St. Benedict, dated 1501, has long been rejected, and its date cannot be considered relevant in connection with the St. Benedict series described here. The authenticity of the monogram on the Rotterdam cartoon, St. Augustine dispensing the rule of his order accepted by Winkler, turns out to be incorrect if it is compared with original monograms such those on the Apocalypse woodcuts or on the almost contemporary studies which Dürrer drew of women in Nuremberg dress. The cartoon itself is not by Dürrer.

Consideration of these problems are sufficient to indicate that Schäufelein's early drawings have been neglected, and that Dürrer's early work as a draughtsman, as it was interpreted by Winkler in his excellent publication on Dürrer's drawings from 1936–1939 now requires profound critical revision. In conclusion Dürrer's early work as a draughtsman, as it was interpreted by that Schäufelein's early drawings have been neglected, and that Dürrer.

Notes

4. For exact measurements and technical details, see Winkler, vol. 1, cat. nos. 198–209. Winkler also adds cat. no. 211, St. Benedict standing, to the series, see note 7.
5. The last subject, no. 12 following Winkler's order, should according to the legend be placed at the beginning of the series.
6. The glass-painting is illustrated in colour in Painting on Light, p. 102.
9. For discussion on the possible location of the glass –paintings, see Meister um Albrecht Dürrer, exh. cat. Nuremberg, 1961, no. 396; and Painting on Light, p.100.
10. For a history of the various attributions, see Winkler, vol. 1, pp.136–37, n.3.
11. See Painting on Light, nos. 11–17, especially, no. 13, n.4.
12. Winkler 210; Painting on Light, pp. 91–92.
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1993, nos. 140–42.

20 Scholz, n.13.

21 See above, n.3.

22 Winkler no. 207 (Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum) and Winkler no. 208 (Zurich, private collection). Painting on Light, no. 17.


25 See above n.4.


29 Sotheby’s New York, 21 January 2003, lot 58, which is copied after Winkler 218 in the Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin.

30 Winkler 186.


32 Winkler 206 and 208.


35 Formerly in the collection of Prof. Cantacuzino in Bucharest, this drawing was acquired by the National Gallery of Art in Washington in 2004 (inv. no 2004.90.1).


37 Oil on panel triptych, Vienna, Erzbischöflches Dom-und Diözesanmuseum.

38 Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Winkler, Schäufelein, no. 10.


40 See for example Dürer’s trees and bushes in his woodcuts of the Entombment of Christ, of c. 1497 (Meder 123) or the Annunciation to Joachim of c. 1504 (Meder 190) or the Holy Family with Hares of c. 1497 (Meder 221).


42 Winkler, Schäufelein, no. 49.

43 See n.8 above.


45 Berlin Kupferstichkabinett, KdZ 5317, Winkler 212; Dessau Anhaltische Gemäldegalerie, Graphische Sammlung, inv. 1,26, Winkler 219; Weimar Schlossmuseum, Winkler 214.

46 Frankfurt, Städelisches Kunstinstitut, inv. 15677, Winkler, Schäufelein, no. 7; Berlin Kupferstichkabinett, KdZ 4462, Winkler, Schäufelein, no. 23.

47 See above, n.3 and 4.


49 Winkler, Schäufelein, nos. 8 and 17.
Plate 1  Hans Schäufelein, *St. Benedict in the cave at Subiaco*, pen and ink with coloured wash, c. 1505, Vienna, Albertina

Plate 2  Hans Schäufelein, *St. Benedict’s miracle of the scythe*, pen and ink with coloured wash, c. 1505, Paris, Musée du Louvre

Plate 3  Hans Schäufelein, *Placidus saved by Maurus with the help of St. Benedict*, pen and ink with coloured wash, c. 1505, London, British Museum

Plate 5 Hans Schäufelein, *St. Benedict teaching*, pen and ink, c. 1505, Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum

Plate 6 Hans Schäufelein, *Florentius attempting to poison St. Benedict*, pen and ink, c. 1505, London, British Museum

Plate 7 Hans Schäufelein, *St. Benedict resuscitating a dead infant*, pen and ink, c. 1505, Munich, Graphische Sammlung

Plate 8 Hans Schäufelein, *St. Benedict’s vision of the universe*, pen and ink, c. 1505, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett
Plate 9  Hans Schäufelein, St. Benedict and the devil, pen and ink, c. 1505, Washington, National Gallery of Art

Plate 10  Copy after Hans Schäufelein, The castigation of St. Benedict, pen and ink with coloured wash, c. 1510(?), Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum

Plate 11  Hans Schäufelein, The visit of King Totila to St. Benedict, pen and ink with coloured wash, c. 1505, Zurich, private collection

Plate 12  Copy after Hans Schäufelein, St. Romanus handing the habit to St. Benedict, glass-painting, c. 1510, formerly Gotha, Schlossmuseum (lost since 1945)
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Plate 13 Albrecht Dürer, Woman and child next to a tree-stump, pen and ink, 1502, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum

Plate 14 Hans Schäufelein after Dürer, Woman and child next to a tree-stump, pen and ink, 1507, Erlangen, Graphische Sammlung der Universitätsbibliothek.

Plate 15 Hans Schäufelein, detail of The visit of King Totila to St. Benedict, pen and ink with coloured wash, c. 1505, Zurich, private collection

Plate 16 Albrecht Dürer, Christ taking leave of his mother, detail of a woodcut in the Life of the Virgin series, c. 1504, London, British Museum

Plate 17 Hans Schäufelein, Christ appearing to his mother detail of a woodcut in the Speculum passionis, 1506, London, British Museum
Plate 18  Hans Schäufelein, *Christ taking leave of his mother*, detail of a pen and ink drawing, 1510, Los Angeles, The John P. Getty Museum

Plate 19  Hans Schäufelein, *Noli me tangere*, detail of the inner right wing of the Ober St Veit altarpiece, oil on panel, c. 1505–07, Vienna, Dom und Diözesanmuseum

Plate 20  Hans Schäufelein, detail of *Placidus saved by Maurus with the help of St. Benedict*, pen and ink with coloured wash, c. 1505, London, British Museum

Plate 21  Hans Schäufelein, detail of *Adoration of the Christ child*, pen and ink, c. 1507, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett

Plate 22  Hans Schäufelein, *Christ descending into Hell*, detail of a woodcut in the Speculum passionis, 1506, London, British Museum

Plate 25 Hans Schäufelein, *Christ expelling the money-changers from the temple*, detail of a woodcut in the *Speculum passionis*, 1506, London, British Museum

Plate 26 Hans Schäufelein, *Christ before Herod*, detail of a woodcut in the *Speculum passionis*, 1506, London, British Museum

Plate 27 Hans Schäufelein, *Annunciation to Joachim*, pen and ink, c. 1510, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett
Plate 28 Hans Schäufelein, Woman with Death carrying her train, pen and ink, c. 1506, Weimar Schlossmuseum

Plate 29 Hans Schäufelein, Woman with Death, pen and ink, c. 1506, Frankfurt, Städelisches Kunstinstitut

Plate 30 Hans Schäufelein, Study for a glass-painting with St George, pen and ink with coloured wash, c. 1506, Frankfurt, Städelisches Kunstinstitut