



ANTWERP, CIRCA 1600

The temptation of Saint Anthony.

Oil on panel.

36.5 × 51.3 cm.

Provenance: European private collection. This painting shows Saint Anthony in meditation, resisting the temptation of wine offered in an elegant chalice by a splendidly dressed lady and her companion. Several fantastic creatures sent by the devil are watching the monk. This scene takes place in a landscape of ruins in which further fantastic creatures can be found, which are as richly detailed as they are finely executed. The composition of the work is similar to a well-known engraving by the Antwerp artist Jan Wellens de Cock (c. 1470–1521), dated 1522 and

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now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington (Inv. No. 1954.12.225; Hollstein's Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts 1450–1700, Amsterdam 1954, IV, No. 1, Fig. 11). Entries of the Antwerp painters' guild from the years 1506 and 1516 record De Cock's activity as a teacher as well as his function as dean of the guild, which he shared with his fellow painter Joos van Cleve (1485–1540). Among others, De Cock's sons, Hieronymus (1518–1570) and Matthys (1505–1548), also studied in his workshop, whereby the former in particular not only became known as a painter and engraver, but also progressed to become the most important publisher of the 16th century. He contributed significantly to the dissemination of drawings and engravings, such as those of his former apprentice Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1525/30–1569). The theme of the 'Temptation of Saint Anthony' has a long tradition in Western art and was a popular subject, especially around 1500. Artists such as Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516), Joachim Patinir (c. 1475/1480–1524), Quentin Massys (c. 1466–1530) and Mathias Grünewald (c. 1475/80–c. 1530) often depicted the hermit in infernal surroundings.

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