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### **BOOK REVIEW: Susie Nash et al., Late Medieval Panel Paintings II. Materials, Methods, Meanings**

Lucy Wrapson  
*Hamilton Kerr Institute, University of Cambridge*

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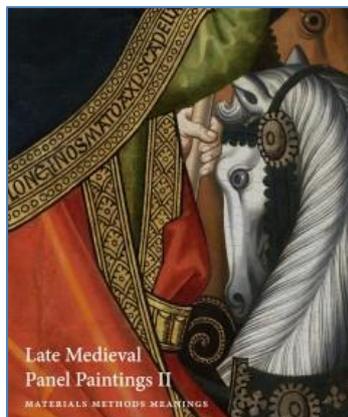
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**Book Review: Susie Nash *et al.*, *Late Medieval Panel Paintings II. Materials, Methods, Meanings* (London, Sam Fogg, 2015), 352 pages.**

**By Lucy Wrapson, Hamilton Kerr Institute, University of Cambridge**

*Late Medieval Panel Paintings II. Materials, Methods,*

*Meanings* is the second volume in an exhibition series begun in 2011 with its companion book, volume I. The two catalogues are the result of two exhibitions of late-medieval painting held collaboratively by art dealers Sam Fogg and Richard L. Feigen in New York; the catalogues were compiled and edited by the Courtauld Institute of Art's Susie Nash and the second volume includes contributions from Matthew Reeves, Nicholas Herman, Anna Koopstra, and Nicola Jennings.

Book II is a beautifully illustrated catalogue of twenty-three works of art, chiefly panel paintings, which also includes one tapestry and a painted and gilded frame. The artworks were made between *c.* 1400 and *c.* 1530 and the present volume focuses on German-speaking Europe, France, Brabant, Aragon, Castile, and Valencia as centers of production. An emphasis on some of the less well-studied Iberian Peninsula painting is welcome. As is well-established, trade routes, and ruling families connected these parts of the world with both the Netherlands and Italy, leading to an eclectic blend of influences. Absent too in this region was the devastating iconoclasm that images suffered in the north.

As befitting its catalogue nature, the book is presented as a series of broadly chronological case studies with integrated technical studies. It is not a thematic book, nor a survey of the period. What it does do, though, is provide invaluable, detailed, technical

information on a diverse range of objects. As such, it is a great *exemplum* of how successful catalogues should incorporate technical findings into entries, to extract the maximum information out of works of art that have often been cut down and dislocated from their original formats and settings. Many of the objects described here were once part of large, composite structures that have since been broken up for sale, many parts of which have been lost. Nonetheless, each entry here explores the physical history, original form and condition of the work of art, using dendrochronology, X-radiography, Infrared reflectography and results from pigment analysis where applicable. The detailed technical information is then contextualized, leading to new connections between works of art now separated (as in Cat. 11, pp. 150-63), as well as observations on artists' techniques and iconographic details which has in many cases led to new attributions, connections between surviving objects and dating.

As well as insight into a range of beautiful and little-known objects, there is invaluable technical information in here. For example, I was pleased to see a photograph of the diagonal battening traditionally found on the reverse of Iberian predellas (Cat. 2, p. 25), but not so often illustrated. As someone who works on late-medieval English painting, I am familiar with the copying of German and Netherlandish prints, and it is fascinating to see this borne out in other object types, such as altarpieces and over a wide geographical spread. There are occasionally less-credible moments. The identification of the bird held by Christ in Catalogue entry 3, *The Master of the Miraflores Virgin and Child*, as an oystercatcher is taxonomically far-fetched. This slightly hypothetical avian is evidently a passerine and not a wader. The accentuation of the beak between the underdrawing and the painting stage in this case was probably made to heighten the coloristic link of the red beak to the Passion. The catalogue entry was clearly written by an art historian not a natural historian! This, though, is a rather minor gripe in what is otherwise a thoroughly researched, closely argued, and informative book which proves the necessity of the integration of technical and art historical

study in case studies of late medieval painting and allied crafts. It has been a great pleasure to read the book in detail. 🐼