
KUNST
HISTORISCHES
MUSEUM
WIEN



A Masterpiece and Its (Almost) Forgotten Collector

The So-Called Benda Madonna and
the Legacy of Gustav von Benda

POINT OF VIEW #27
23 JUNE TO 12 NOVEMBER 2023

Preface

The majority of artefacts in the Kunsthistorisches Museum bear witness to the connoisseurship and tastes of different Habsburgs. Looking at the wealth of High Renaissance and Baroque artworks, and bedazzled by the splendour of the spectacular museum building opened in 1891, one easily forgets that the museum has not only imperial but also non-aristocratic roots: in the early twentieth century, members of Vienna's haute bourgeoisie gifted a number of seminal masterpieces that enriched the collection. The most important of these patrons was undoubtedly Gustav von Benda, who was knighted in 1911 after having presented the imperial collection with several outstanding artworks, and who, in 1932, bequeathed the majority of his impressive collection to the museum. *Point of View #27* celebrates this almost-forgotten patron and his generous bequest. A masterly depiction of

the Virgin, produced on the Upper Rhine in the late fifteenth century and recently restored, forms the heart of our small exhibition. Known as the Master of the Benda Madonna, the anonymous artist's notname too commemorates Benda. A more or less coeval bronze relief of the Virgin by an Italian sculptor, which was also formerly in the Benda Collection, invites comparison.

We would like to thank Anneliese Földes, who is now working in Munich, for her essay on her restoration of the painting. A small exhibition and this booklet, published in digitized form for the first time, present the starting points for this research.

Guido Messling and Konrad Schlegel
Curators of the exhibition

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Fig. 1: Master of the Benda Madonna, *Virgin and Child* (the so-called *Benda Madonna*), c.1490/1500, oak panel, 54.8 × 39.4 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. GG 6977